



# First Nations Indicators of Poverty and Well-being

Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy

Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD)

This report was prepared at the request of the  
Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

The views expressed here are those of the authors  
and do not necessarily represent the views of AFN.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Part I: Context	5
Part II: Existing Approaches to Defining and Measuring Poverty	30
Part III: Business Case for Alleviating Poverty	46
Part IV: First Nations Working Group's Conceptualization of Deprivation and Associated Measures	57
Part V: Tools for Tracking and Pilot Projects	71
Conclusion	99
Bibliography	100
Appendix A – Overview of ISC Expenditure Data	122
Appendix B – Defining and Measuring of Poverty	177
Appendix C – Independent Expert Analysis, Laurie-Plante Estimate on the Cost of Poverty in First Nations, Charles Plante	191
Appendix D – Factors Influencing Poverty	203
Appendix E – Workshop Summary	208
Appendix F – First Nations Profiles on Deprivation and Alleviation	224



# INTRODUCTION

*IFSD is grateful to First Nations collaborators to this report. Their perspectives and contributions are reflected throughout the report's analysis, included as individual profiles, and in a summary of the workshop proceedings.*

For many First Nations, poverty is a fact of life. In existing literature, poverty is often defined through income levels, with other approaches engaging a variety of social and contextual factors. A multi-faceted issue, poverty is about more than a lack of income. It includes cultural, social, spiritual, and economic deprivation. The working group convened for this project, comprised of First Nations collaborators, agreed that “deprivation” more accurately conveyed the issue than “poverty.” It defined deprivation as follows:

Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to thrive. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts. It is experienced in a culturally relative multifaceted manner. Deprivation, holistically, disrupts the ability of First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.

Building an understanding of the state of deprivation is a critical step in supporting communities to thrive. This requires a focus on holistic wellness, and measuring across physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Developing a horizontal view of wellness that links social and economic outcomes can support First Nations in aligning poverty alleviation strategies to their unique contexts.

This report leverages primary and secondary data, including federal expenditures, to present a current state portrait of poverty in

First Nations. It reviews existing research and proposes a way forward: measuring poverty (deprivation) holistically, through First Nations-defined indicators.

## **The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy's (IFSD) mandate:**

At the request of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), IFSD was asked to define indicators to measure First Nations' conceptions of poverty and well-being.

The work was to be supported by: a literature review of general and Indigenous conceptions of poverty and well-being; a business case with considerations of the cost of poverty and its alleviation; indicators for measurement; considerations for modelling data and planning pilots.

The report proceeds in five parts by:

1. Establishing current context with federal expenditure data, a national portrait of First Nations from Census data, and existing national measures of poverty.
2. Reviewing existing general and Indigenous approaches to defining and measuring poverty.
3. Reviewing the business case for poverty alleviation.
4. Discussing the First Nations working group conceptualization of deprivation and associated measures.
5. Proposing data tracking tools and pilot projects.





# PART I: CONTEXT

## FEDERAL EXPENDITURE DATA

Expenditure information is necessary to understand what funding is being allocated to poverty alleviation and related activities, under what conditions, to whom (e.g., First Nation, regional organization), and with what performance outcomes. Data at this level of disaggregation is not publicly accessible.<sup>1</sup>

The expenditure information provided by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) was used to develop a portrait of expenditures across program areas. While the information from ISC does not help to assess or understand poverty, it provides context about program expenditures often associated with income-based poverty, e.g., Income Assistance, Assisted Living. Whether or not Income Assistance and Assisted

Living resources are effectively supporting First Nations experiencing deprivation cannot be assessed from the available information.

This section proceeds by reviewing past expenditures by ISC focused on transfer payments, i.e., grants and contributions, transfers to other levels of government, individuals/organizations, (appropriated by Parliament in Vote 10).<sup>2</sup> The information presented is for fiscal years 2014–15 to 2021–22, unless otherwise indicated. Consult Appendix A for a complete overview of the analysis of ISC's expenditure data.

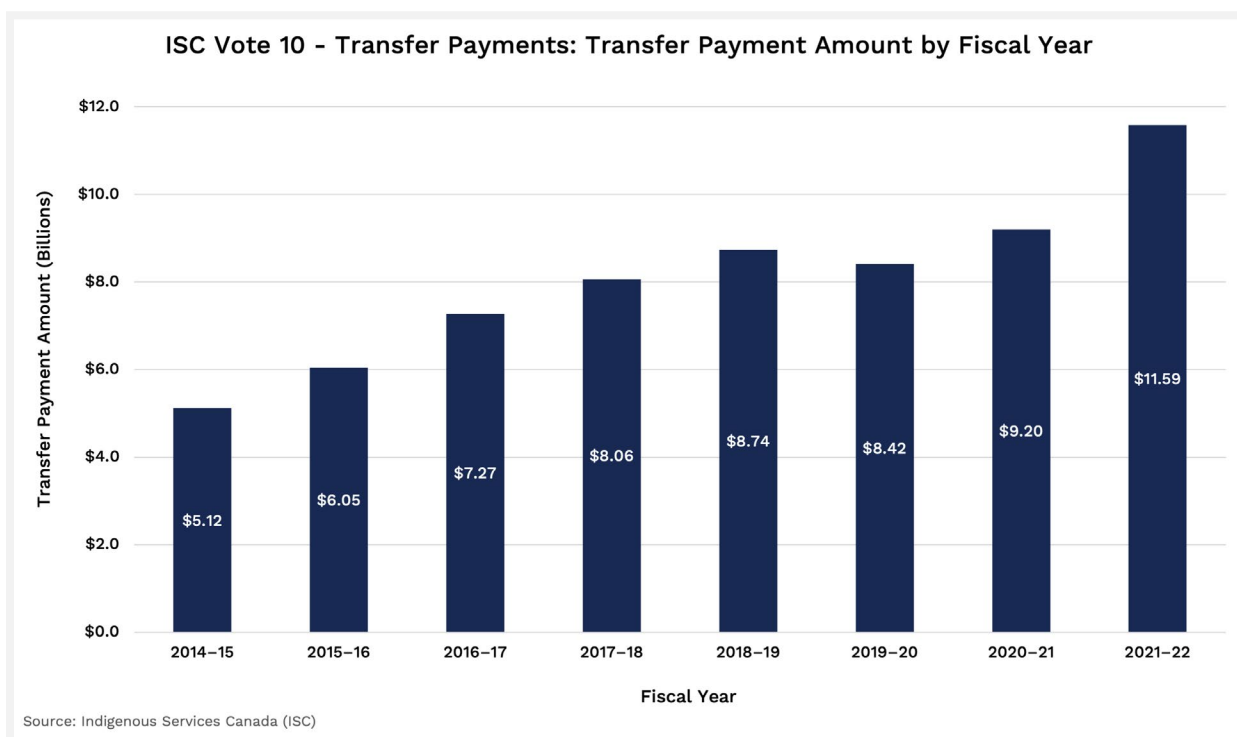
Across fiscal years 2014–15 to 2021–22, ISC's transfer payments increased (Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Disaggregated federal expenditure data from ISC was originally requested on January 11, 2022, and was received on November 15, 2023. The process to obtain, analyze the data, and provide the analysis back to ISC for privacy review prior to use in reporting took over two years.

<sup>2</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, "Policy on Transfer Payments," *Government of Canada*, last updated April 4, 2022, <https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=13525>

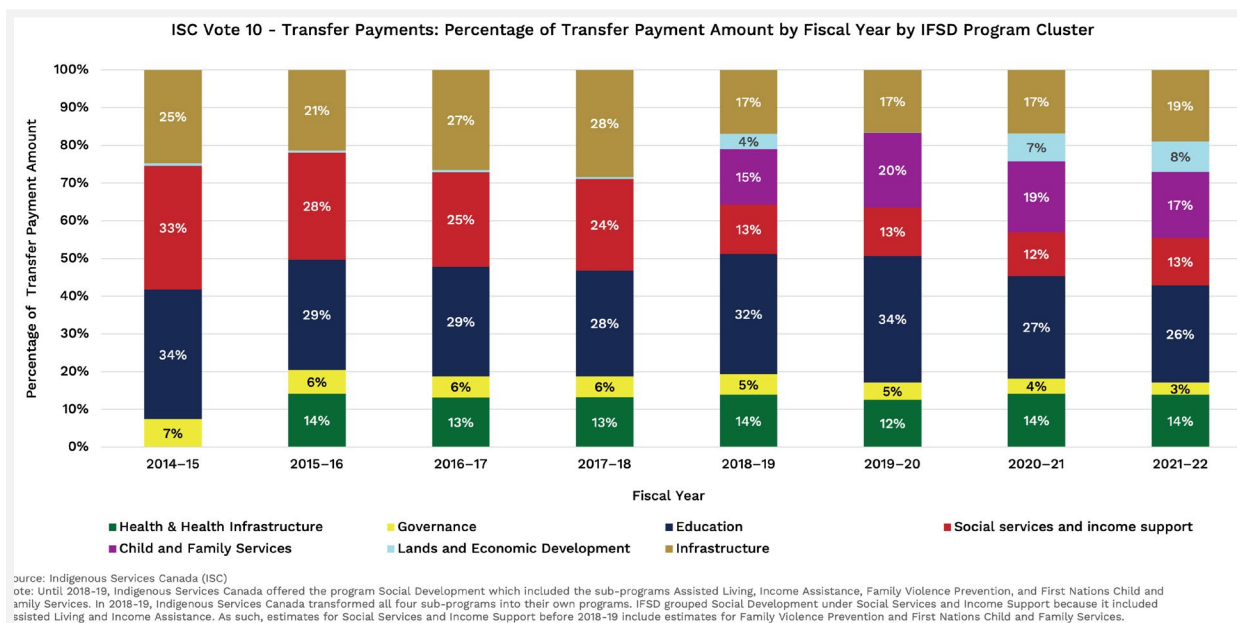
FIGURE 1



Most of the expenditures were allocated to education (elementary and secondary), followed by social services, child and family services, and infrastructure (Figure 2). (Note that prior

to fiscal year 2018-19, ISC reported child and family services as part of social services spending. They were disaggregated in 2018-19).

FIGURE 2





In fiscal years 2014–15 to 2021–22, nearly all Vote 10 expenditures are contributions, i.e., allocated through set, fixed, flexible, and block contribution approaches (Figure 3). Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta receive the largest shares

of expenditures across fiscal years. Quebec and Saskatchewan’s shares are generally stable, whereas British Columbia’s share trends downward (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

FIGURE 3

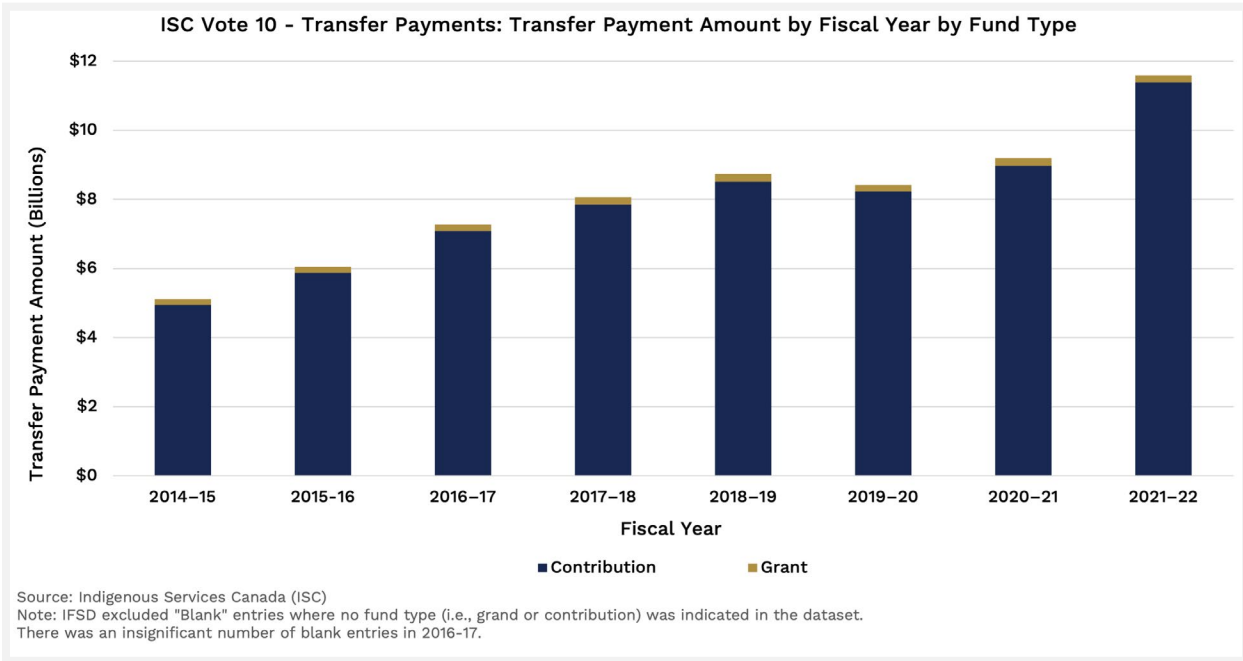


FIGURE 4

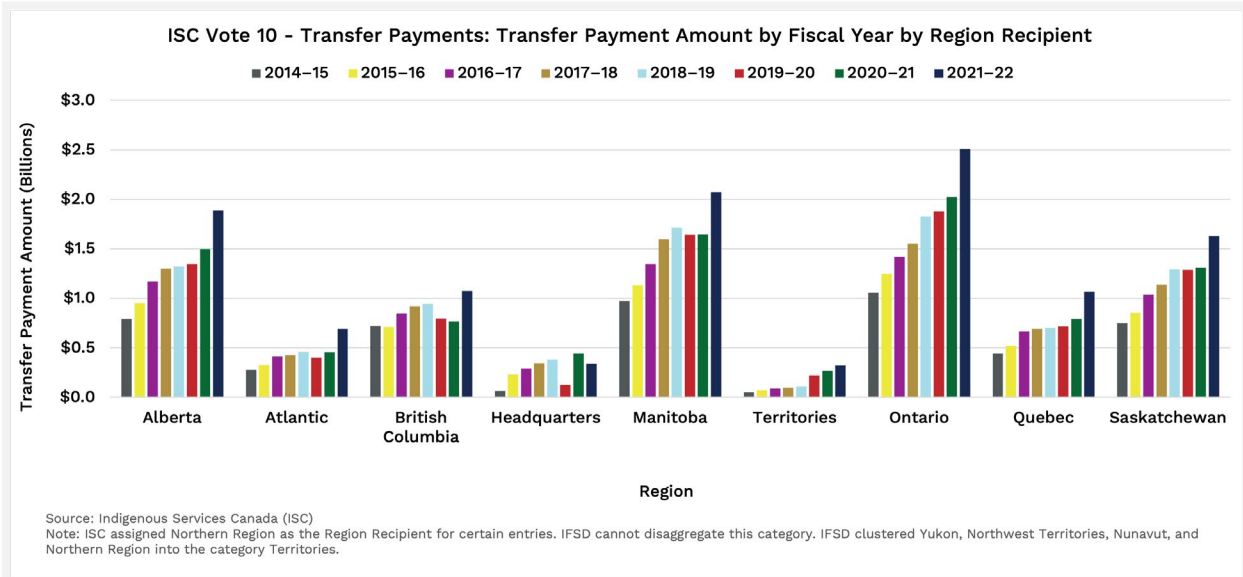
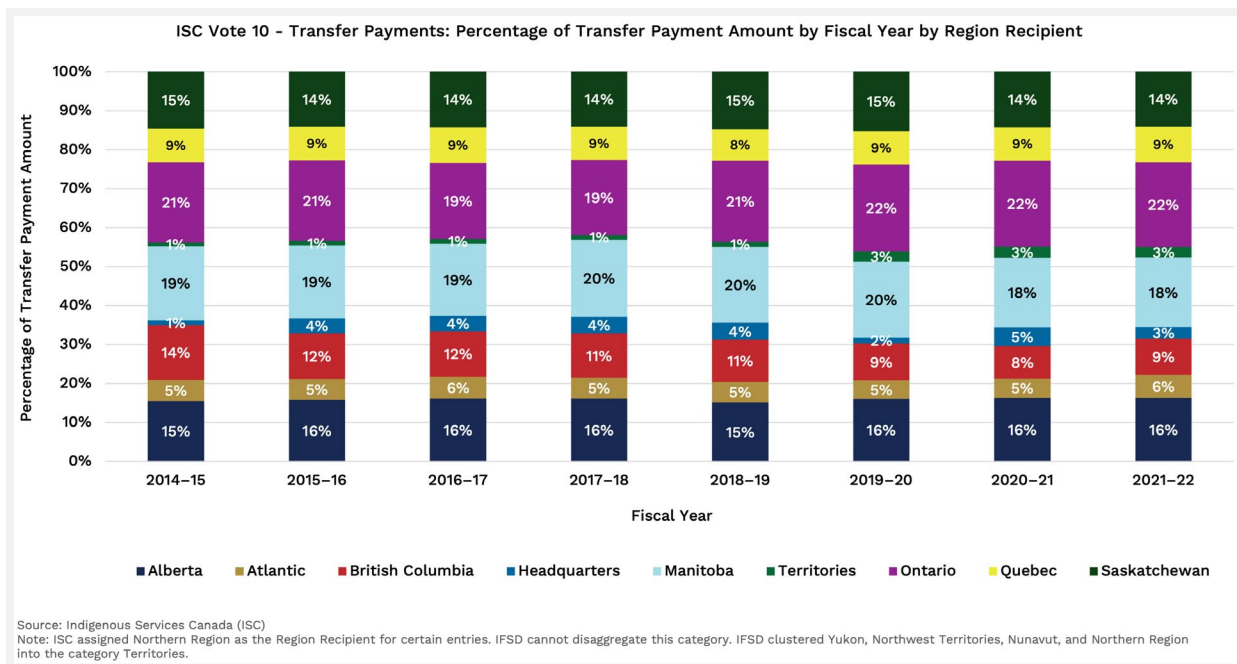


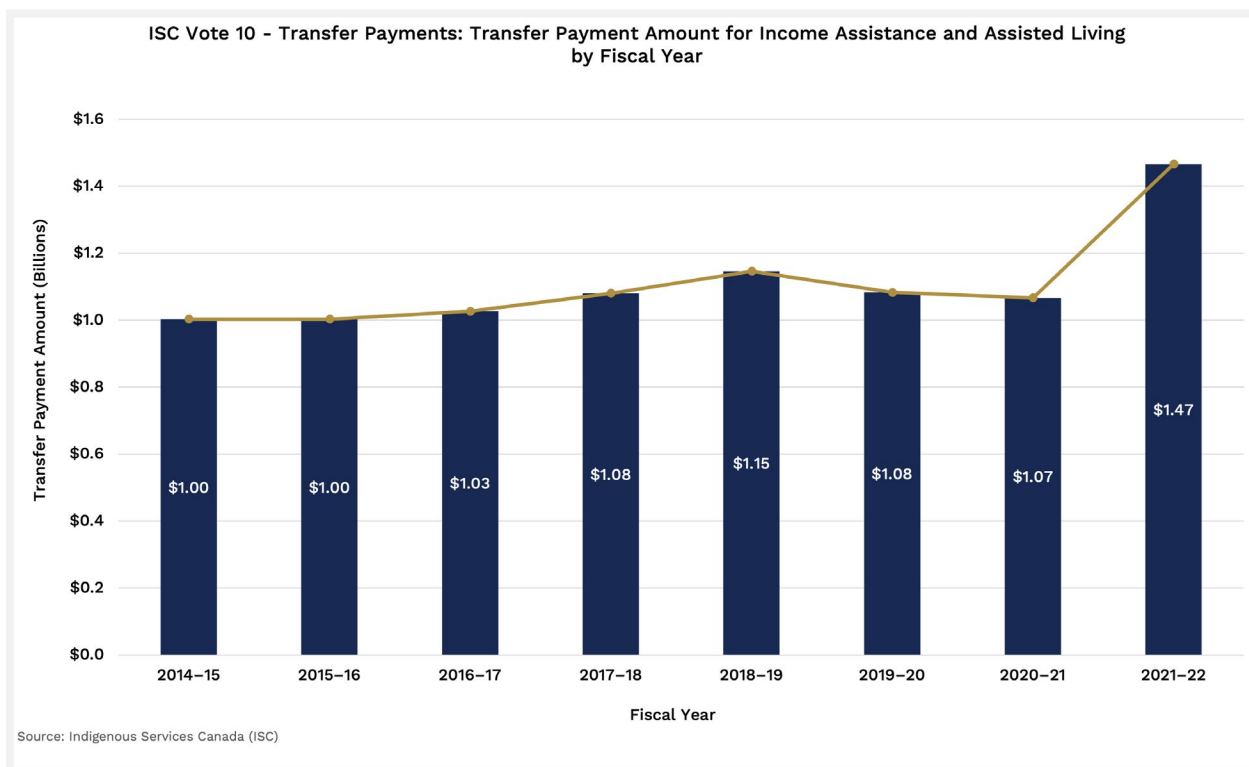
FIGURE 5



For Income Assistance and Assisted Living, expenditures generally increase across fiscal

years, consistent with ISC's overall expenditure trend (Figure 6).

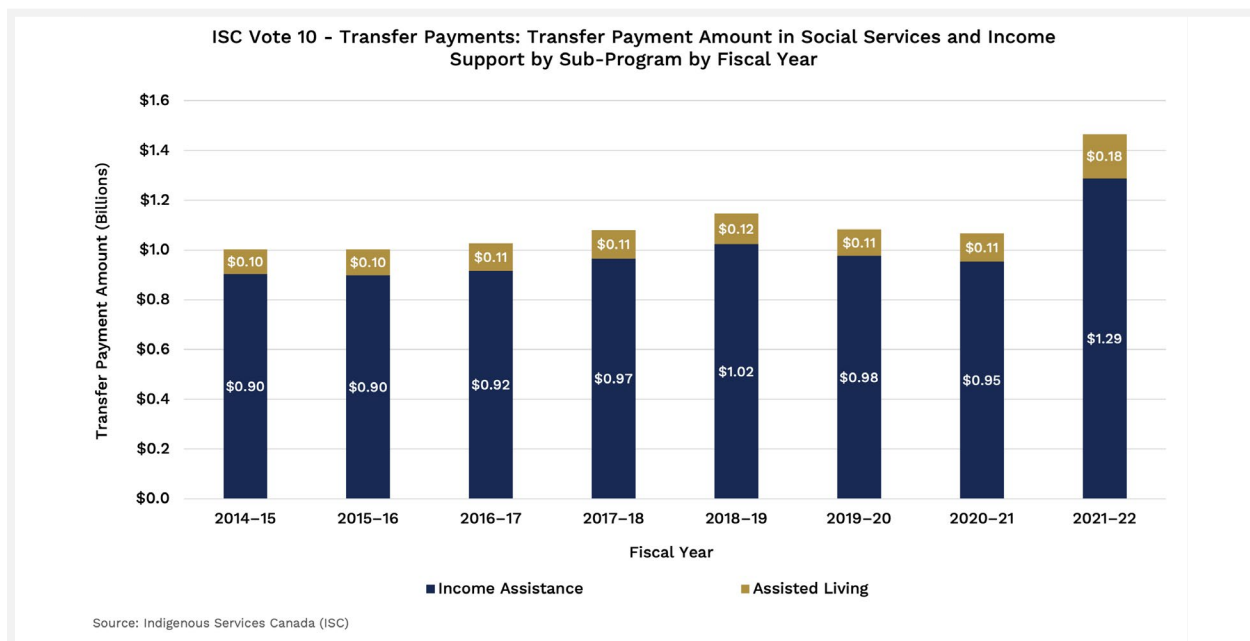
FIGURE 6



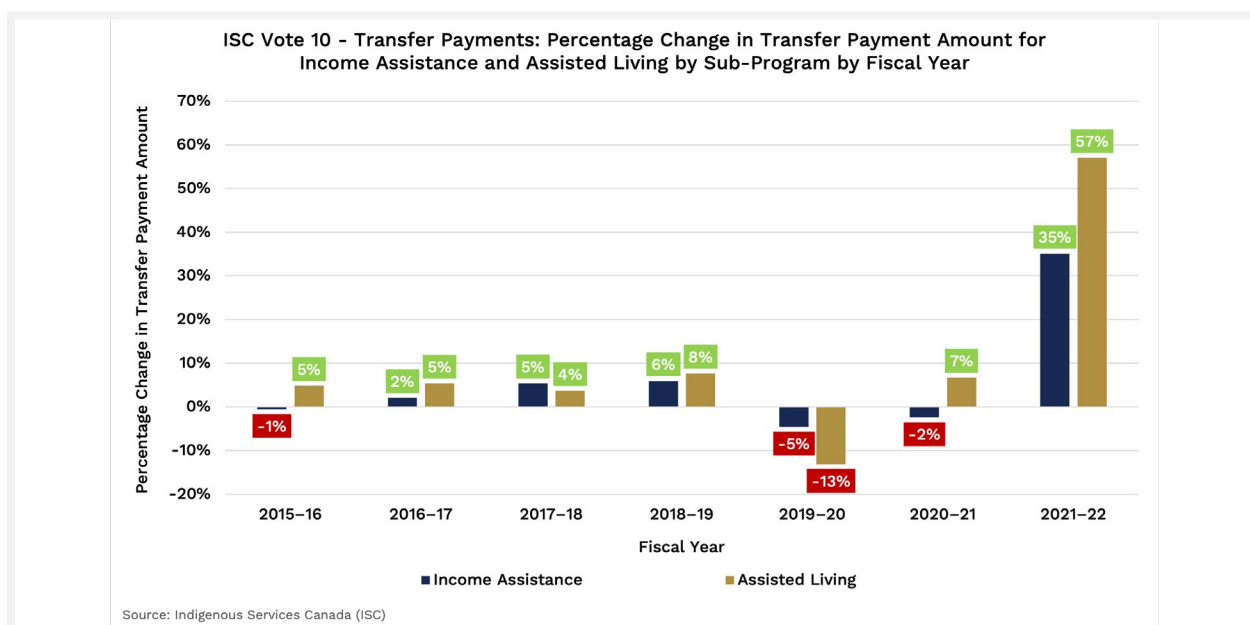
Annually, approximately \$1B is spent on Income Assistance and Assisted Living (Figure 7), with Income Assistance representing nearly 90% of those expenditures. Relative to the past two fiscal years, there were significant increases

in both program transfer amounts (Figure 8). The increase in expenditures for fiscal year 2021–22 is likely explained by the Budget 2021 announcement of supplementary resources to offset basic needs and increased demand.<sup>3</sup>

**FIGURE 7**



**FIGURE 8**

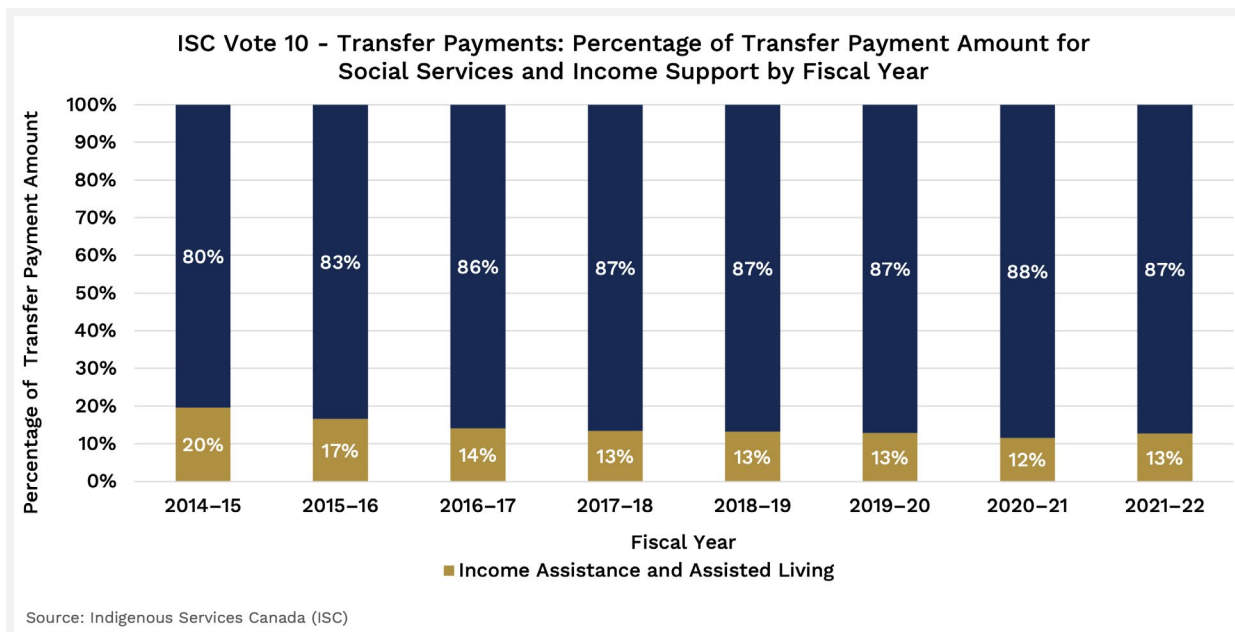


<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Services Canada, “On-reserve Income Assistance Program,” *Government of Canada*, last updated March 15, 2024, <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100035256/1533307528663>

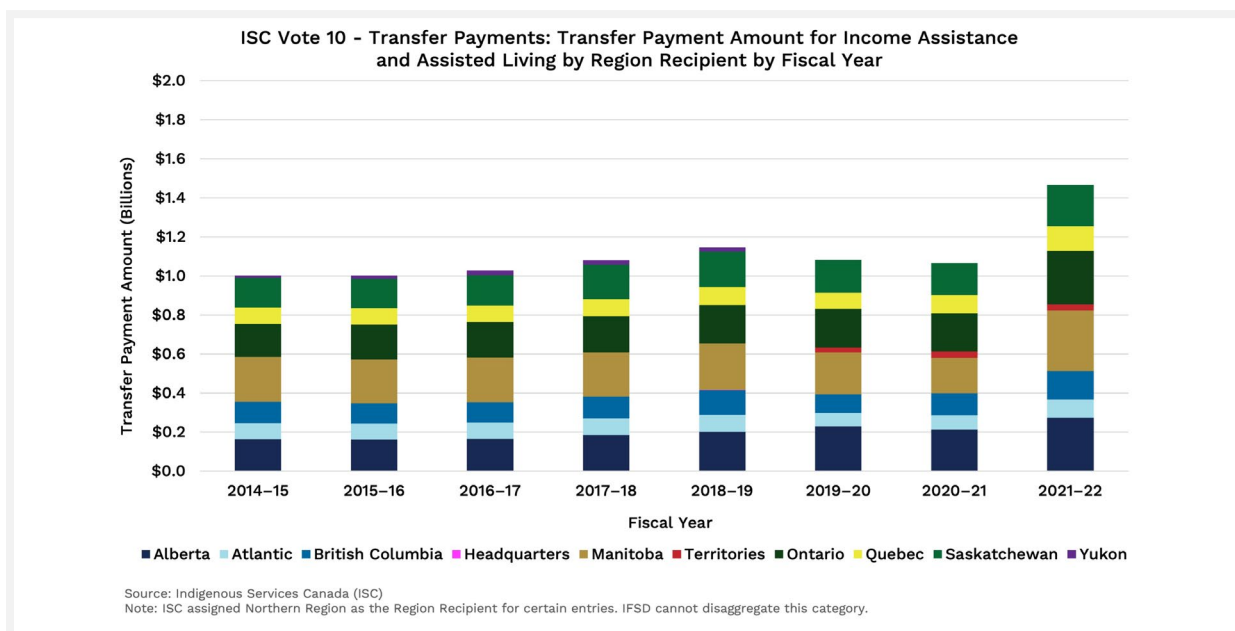
Together, both programs have represented approximately 13% of total Vote 10 expenditures (Figure 9). On a regional basis, Manitoba,

Ontario, and Alberta receive the three largest amounts of funding through Income Assistance and Assisted Living (Figure 10).

**FIGURE 9**



**FIGURE 10**





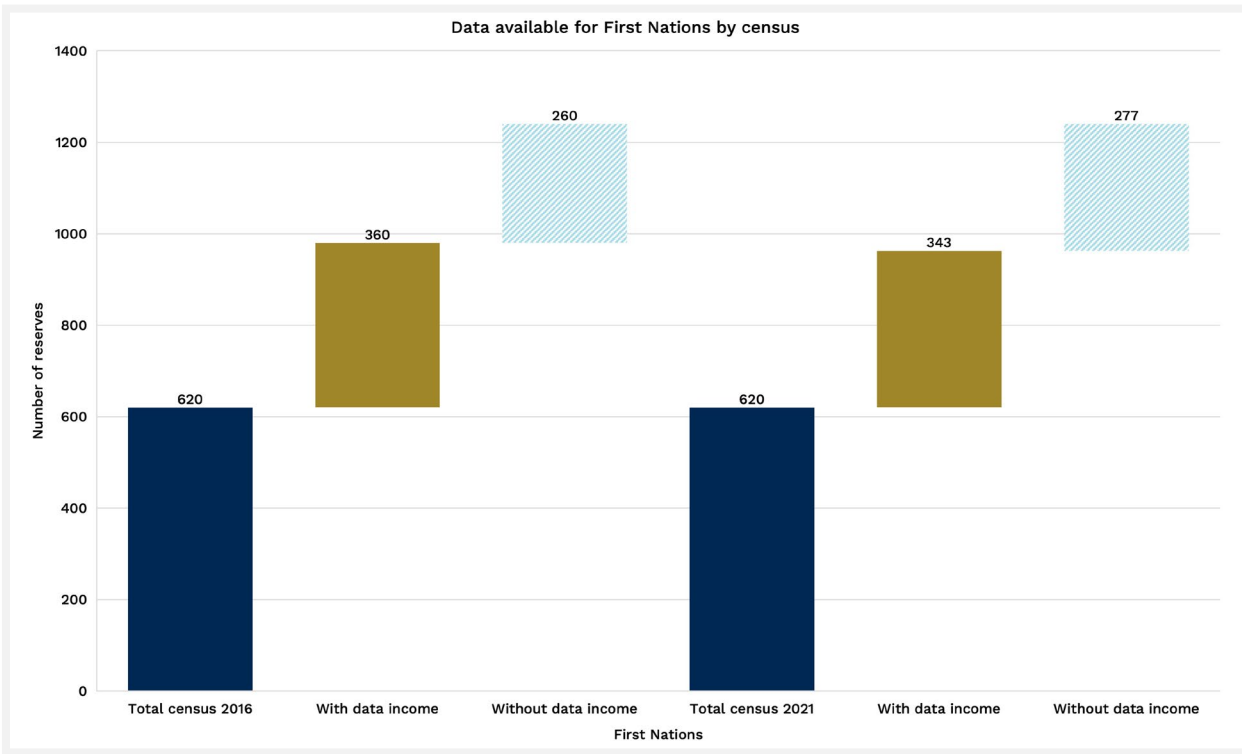
## NATIONAL PORTRAIT OF FIRST NATIONS

A national portrait of the realities of First Nations (living on-reserve) in Canada relies on data. There are important limitations in the breadth and depth of First Nations data in Canada. National-level data for First Nations is available through the Census, with some information, e.g., water advisories, Indian Registry population data, through ISC. Each data source has their limitations. IFSD recognizes the limitations in participation in the Census among First Nations, and in the composition of questions and indicators used to monitor well-being. However, the Census remains one of the only regularly updated sources of information on basic indicators, e.g., education, household income, housing, etc., for First Nations. With recognition of its limitations, IFSD leverages Census data to build a current state portrait of

First Nations residing on-reserve for this report, as no other national data source exists.

In the context of First Nations, factors such as colonization, racial discrimination, and cultural barriers have contributed to issues such as systemic poverty in communities. Outcomes for First Nations living on-reserve in Canada are worse than those of other Canadians across quantifiable categories (for which data is available). There is a significant lack of adequate data, limiting a comprehensive assessment of the extent of poverty and its effects on-reserve. Consider for instance, that there are 634 First Nations in Canada, with 620 reserves (based on Statistics Canada’s data) (Figure 11). Of the 620 reserves, there is only data on income in Census 2021 for First Nations on 343 reserves and in Census 2016 for 360. The data gap is significant and should be addressed.

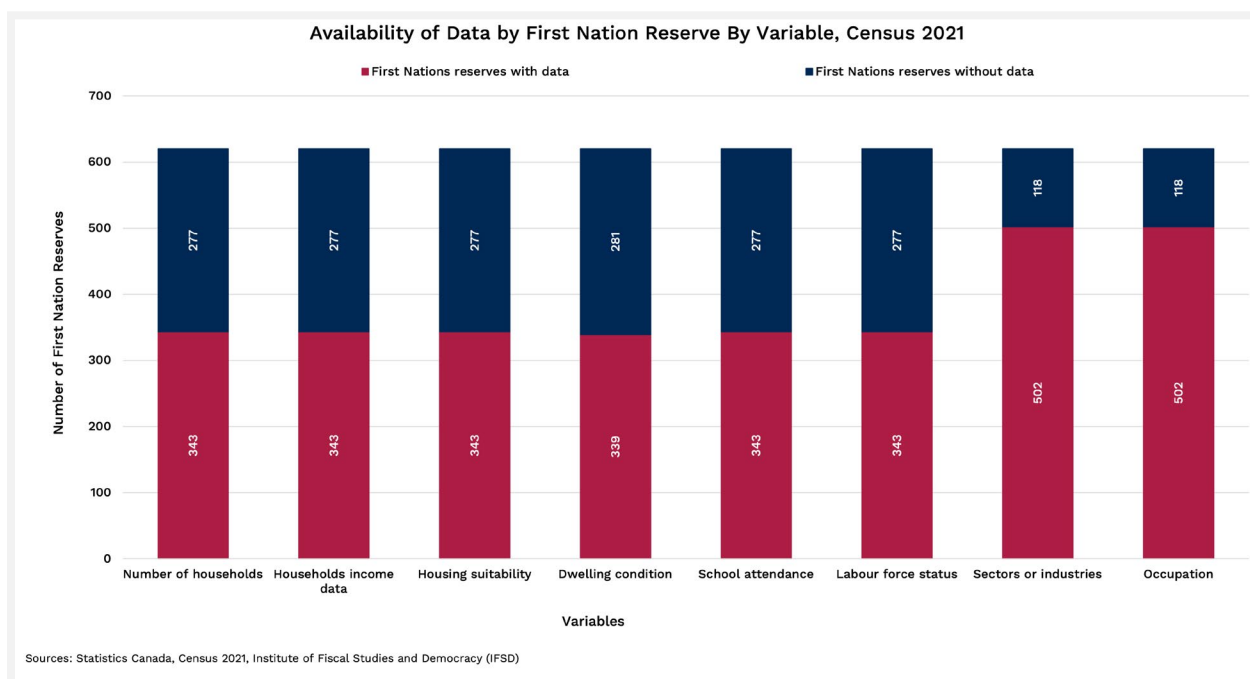
FIGURE 11



The availability of data on a First Nation reserve basis is uneven among Census 2021 variables (Figure 12). While over 80% of First Nations report variables on sectors or

industries and occupation, roughly 55% of First Nations have data for variables such as number of households, dwelling condition, housing suitability, etc.

**FIGURE 12**



A lack of basic information is a missed opportunity for measuring and monitoring what is happening in First Nations by First Nations for First Nations. This information is essential to the care and control of delivery of programs and services. Measuring to monitor is a first step in developing solutions and tracking their impact on communities.

Statistics Canada's Census 2021 provides data on income, employment, educational attainment, and occupation by First Nations. In this section, Census 2021 data is used to portray the current state of First Nations. There is one important exception: for household income data, data from Census 2016 is used, as Census 2021 data is likely artificially high due to COVID-19 pandemic supports to individuals.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Total median household incomes as captured in Census 2016 and Census 2021 increased significantly for First Nations. Statistics Canada has also observed general growth in income across Canada (see The Daily — Pandemic benefits cushion losses for low-income earners and narrow income inequality – after-tax income grows across Canada except in Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador (statcan.gc.ca)).

Nationally, pandemic relief programs and other direct transfers to persons, e.g., increases to the child benefit, contributed to the income growth. While every First Nation is different, and the sources of their income changes unique, the pandemic relief programs and direct transfers were nationally available and were likely an important factor in the income growth observed for First Nations. Moreover, Statistics Canada indicated a change in Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) reporting with Form T90 for First Nations (starting in 2019) which could contribute to differences when making historical comparisons—although the size and direction of the impact is unknown.



Statistical analysis is also used to assess labour market participation and education attainment as ways to increase median household income in First Nations, a practical step in reducing income-based poverty.

This section reviews available information from the Census, comparing data between First Nations residing on-reserve and those of the general population, where relevant.

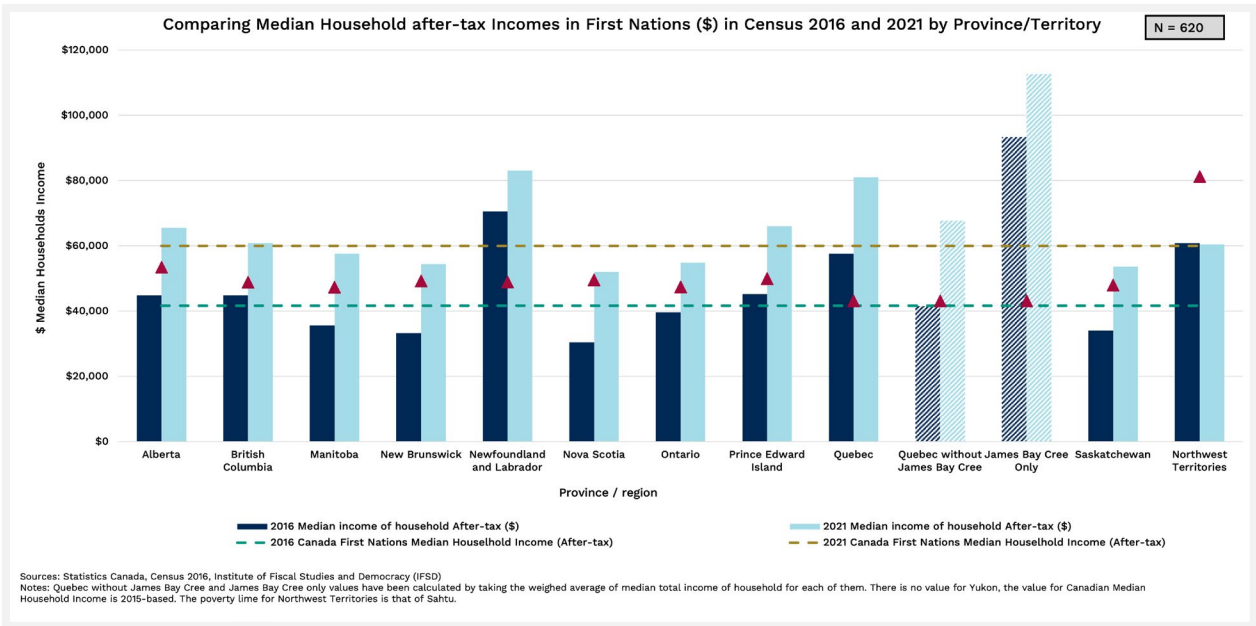
**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

In the 2016 Census, median after-tax household income is the mid-point between the lower and upper incomes of a specified group. For the household, all sources of income from persons over 15 years of age are included in the calculation.

Among First Nations, those in Newfoundland and Labrador have the highest median household income (on a provincial basis) after tax.

The James Bay Cree in Quebec have the highest total median household incomes among First Nations in Canada. They are presented as a separate group in Figure 13 because even though they represent 9 of 31 First Nations in Quebec, their inclusion would overestimate the median household income for First Nations in Quebec. When the James Bay Cree are included in a weighted average for Quebec, the median after-tax household income from Census 2021 is \$81,000 (\$57,600 in Census 2016). When the James Bay Cree are excluded, that number drops to \$67,628 (\$41,502 in Census 2016). The median household incomes of First Nations in Newfoundland and Labrador and among James Bay Cree are higher than Canada's median household income. By contrast, First Nations in Nova Scotia have the lowest median household income relative to other First Nations.

**FIGURE 13**  
**MEDIAN INCOME OF HOUSEHOLDS (\$) BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY**





## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME ANALYSIS BY GEOGRAPHIC ZONE

Geographic location and road access<sup>5</sup> can impact access to services, transportation, employment prospects, and cost of living, among other factors. Most First Nations, approximately 80%, are in Zones 1 and 2,

with year-round road access, with roads to a service centre, and approximately 20% are in Zones 3 and 4 with greater distance to service centres, and no year-round road access for those in Zone 4 (Figure 12).

### Geographic Zones

#### Zone 1

A geographic zone where the First Nation is located within 50 km of the nearest service centre with year-round road access.

#### Zone 2

A geographic zone where the First Nation is located between 50 and 350 km from the nearest service centre with year-round road access.

#### Zone 3

A geographic zone where the First Nation is located over 350 km from the nearest service centre with year-round road access.

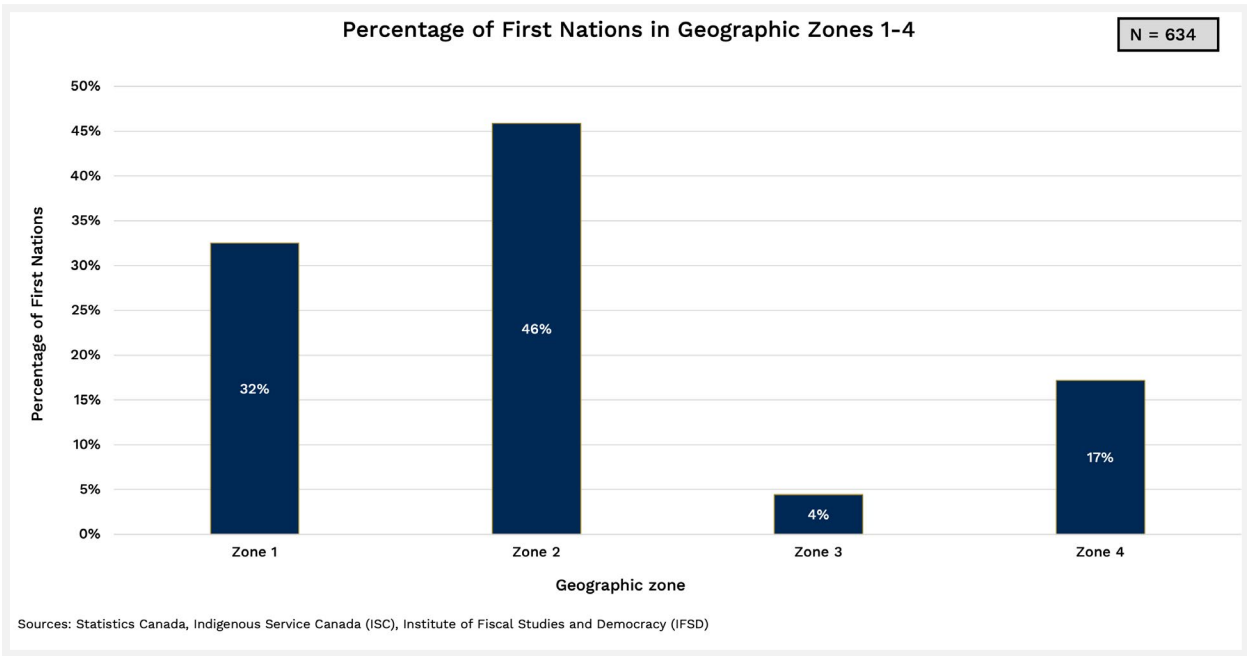
#### Zone 4

A geographic zone where the First Nation has no year-round road access to a service centre and, as a result, experiences a higher cost of transportation.

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<sup>5</sup> Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Definitions," *Government of Canada*, last updated May 3, 2024, <https://fnppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Definitions.aspx?lang=eng>

FIGURE 14

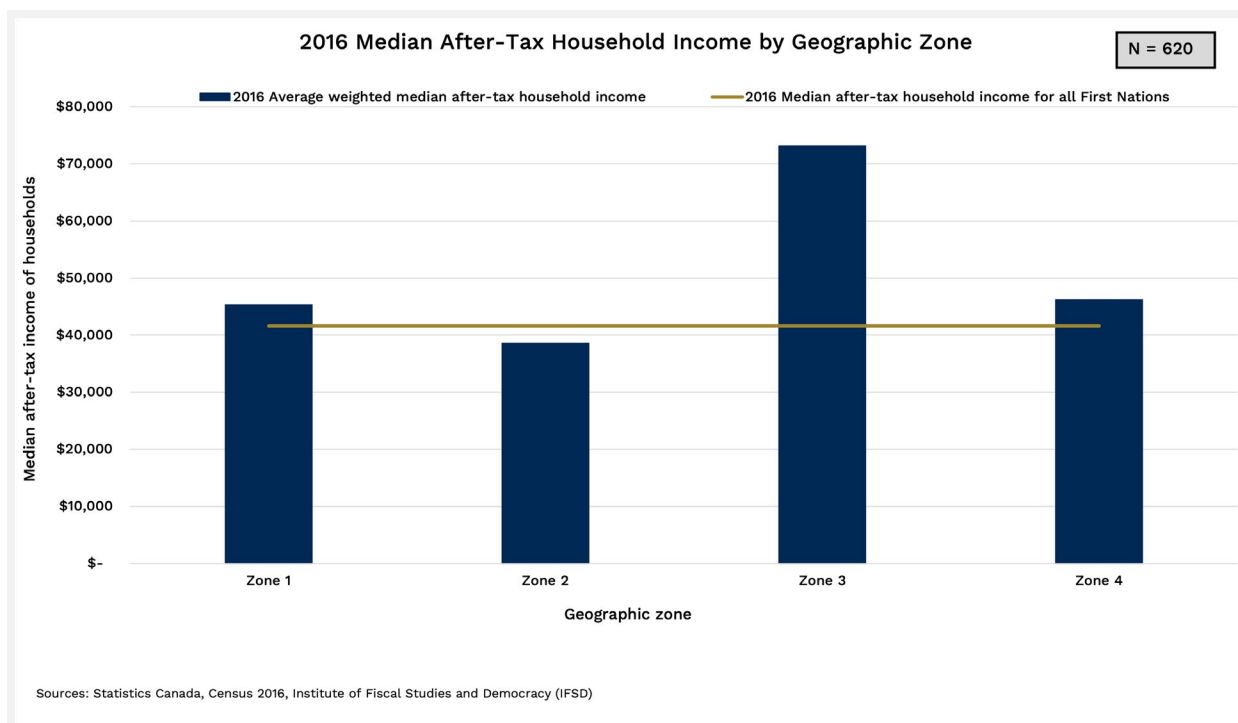


When considered by geographic zone, First Nations in Zone 3 have the highest weighted median after-tax household income (approximately \$75,000), and those in Zone 2 have the lowest, just below \$40,000 (Figure 15). Those First Nations in Zone 2 have a weighted median household income lower than the

national average weighted median household income for First Nations. A possible explanation for this trend is economic activities associated with natural resource extraction, e.g., James Bay Cree, that have some of the highest median household incomes among First Nations are in Zone 3.

FIGURE 15

MEDIAN INCOME OF HOUSEHOLDS (\$) BY GEOGRAPHIC ZONE



COMPARING FIRST NATIONS MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES TO THE PROVINCIAL MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM)

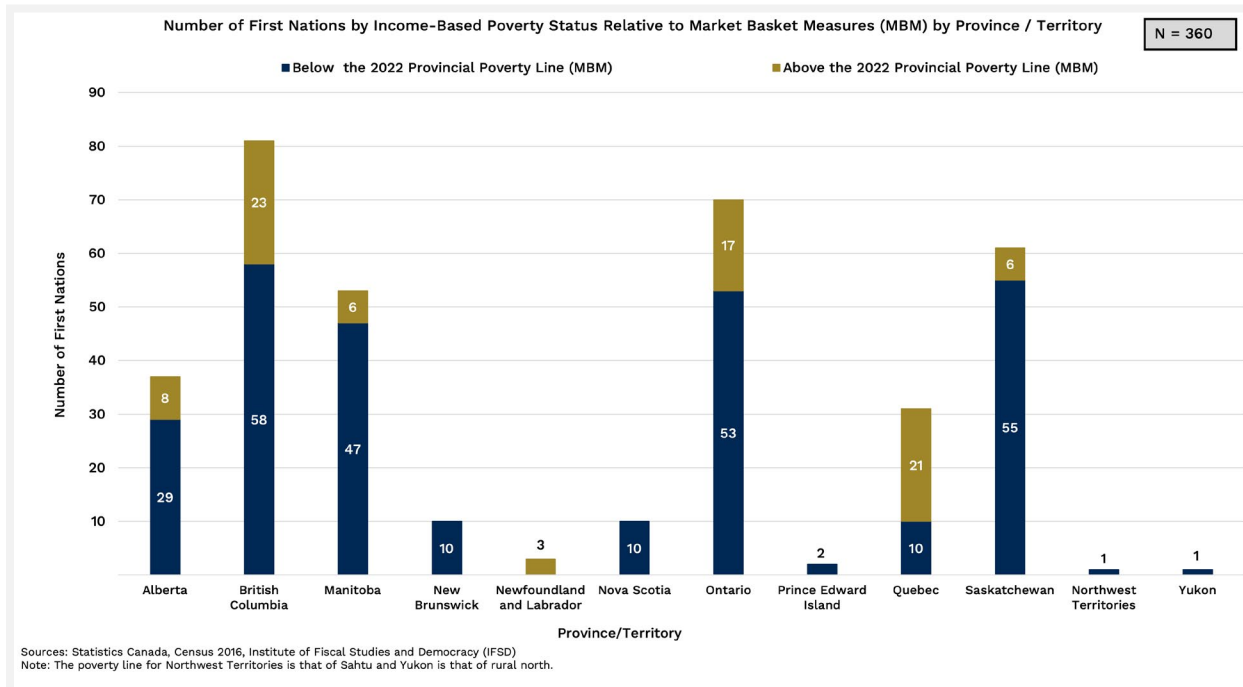
The Market Basket Measure (MBM) — Canada’s official measure of poverty<sup>6</sup> — defines a low-income threshold using the cost of a collection of goods and services that are considered essential for a basic standard of living. This poverty measure is not specific to First Nations; it is a general measure that includes all segments of the Canadian population in the calculation. Based on these

criteria, the measure of provincial poverty for communities with population below 30,000 ranges from \$43,082 (Quebec) to \$53,411 (Alberta) (2022 estimates). The poverty line is the lowest in Quebec and the highest in Alberta (when the MBMs for NWT and Yukon are excluded).

6 Statistics Canada, “Market Basket Measure (MBM) Thresholds for the Reference Family by Market Basket Measure Region, Component and Base Year” (Table 11-10-0066-01), last updated June 10, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.25318/1110006601-eng>

# FIGURE 16

## NUMBER OF FIRST NATIONS BY POVERTY STATUS BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY

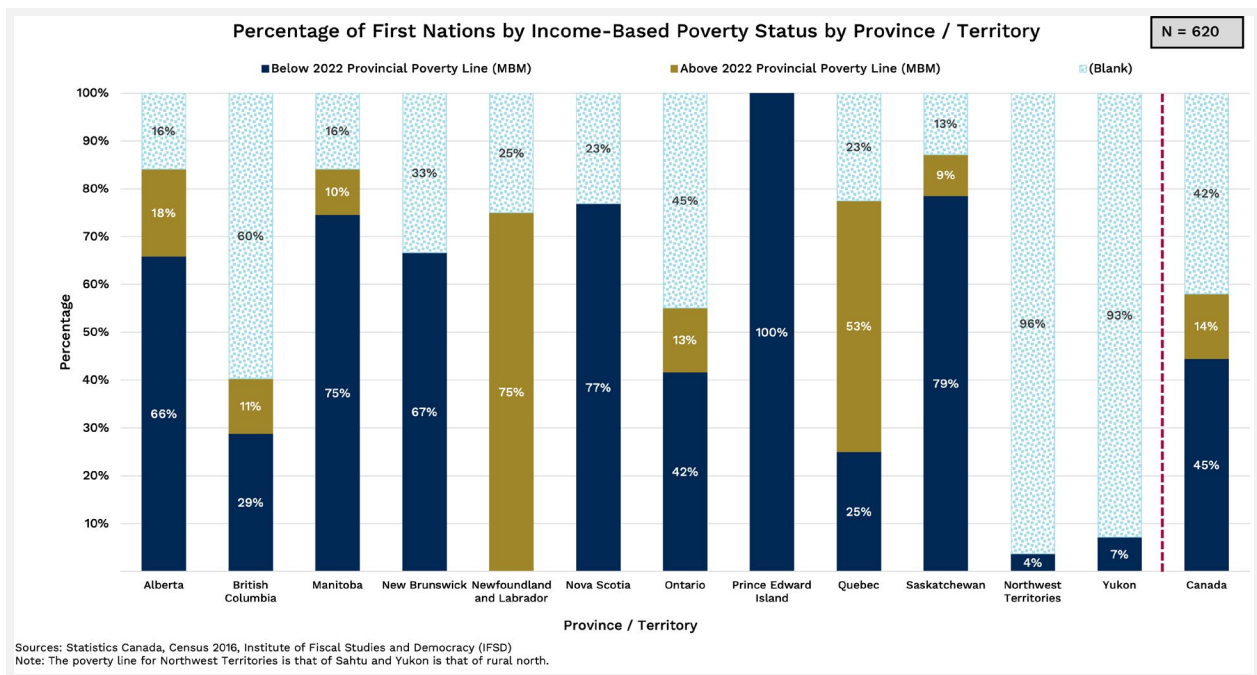


Using the provincial poverty line (MBM) as a measure of poverty, for First Nations with available data, only 84 of 360 First Nations are above their respective provincial poverty line (MBM) (Figure 16). On this basis, 77% of First Nations live in income-based poverty. Income-based poverty varies from province to province (Figure 17). In British Columbia, approximately 72% of First Nations, for which

data is available, live below the poverty line (nearly 60% of First Nations in British Columbia do not report data). In Manitoba, nearly 89% of First Nations are below the MBM, and in Saskatchewan, it is 90%. In Nova Scotia, 100% (10 out of 10) of First Nations (with data) live below the poverty line. In Quebec 32% of First Nations live below the poverty line.

# FIGURE 17

## PERCENTAGE OF FIRST NATIONS BY POVERTY STATUS BY PROVINCE

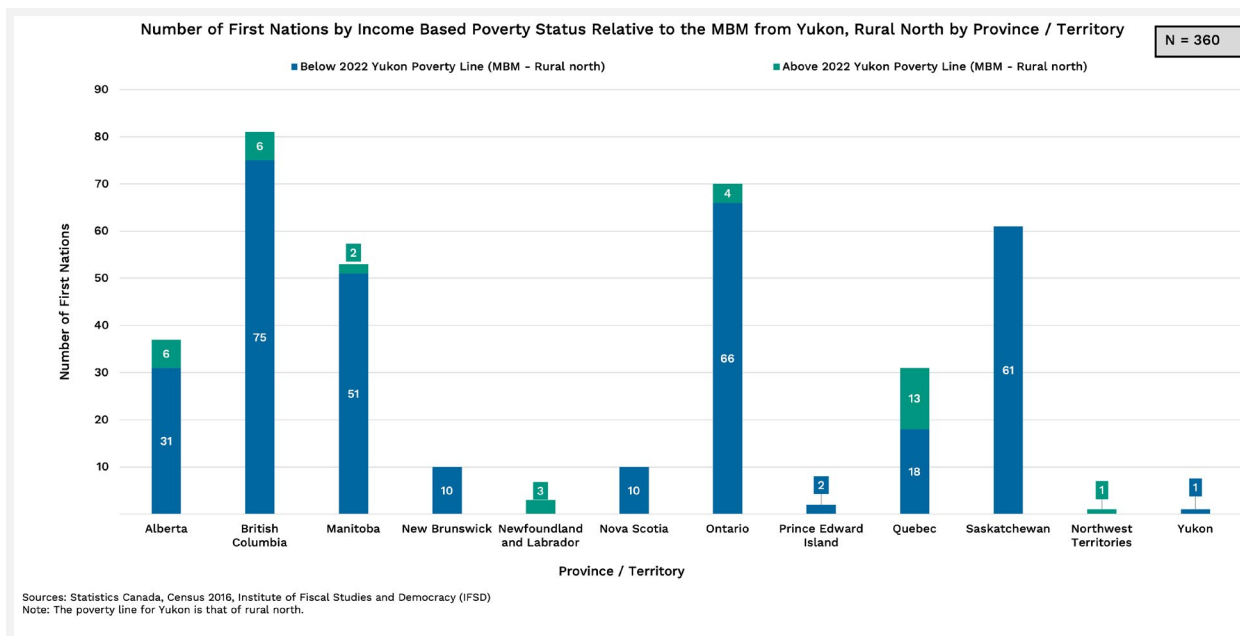


## COMPARING MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES AND THE NORTHERN MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM-N) FOR YUKON AND THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Statistics Canada has developed MBMs for Yukon and the Northwest Territories. As an illustrative exercise, the 2022 values are applied below, to assess the number of

First Nations by income-based poverty status relative to the MBM in Yukon (Figure 18) and the Northwest Territories (Figure 19).

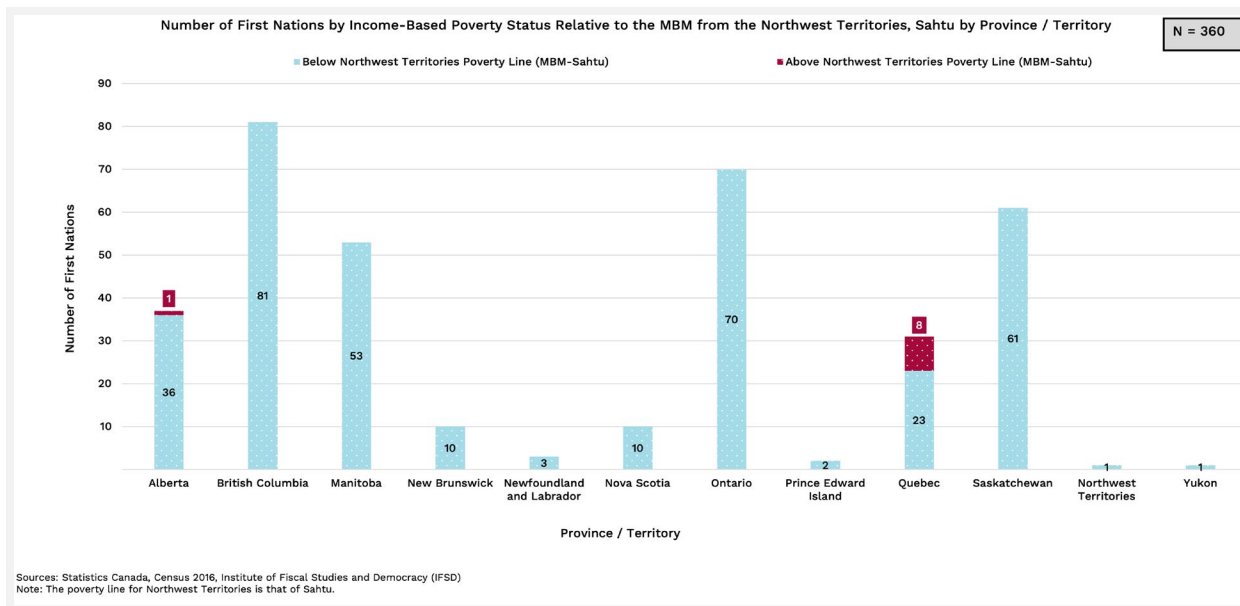
FIGURE 18



Using the Yukon rural north poverty line (MBM-N) as a measure of income-based poverty (Figure 18), the number of First Nations living above the poverty line is reduced.

Only 34 of 360 First Nations are above the Yukon rural north poverty line (MBM-N), with 90% of First Nations below the income-based poverty line.

FIGURE 19





When the Northwest Territories MBM-Sahtu is applied (Figure 19), the number of First Nations living above the poverty line drops to 9 out of 360, with 98% of First Nations living below the income-based poverty line.

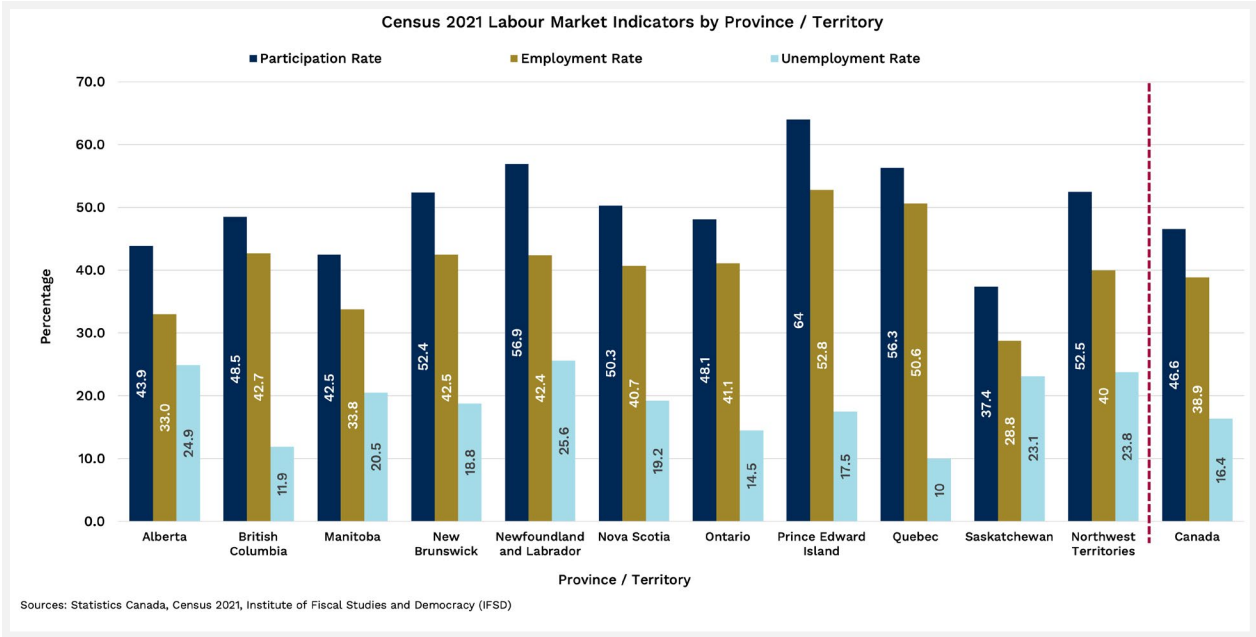
Using one of the territorial MBMs could be an approach to capturing income-based poverty for some First Nations. The differences in cost of living and access to services in the territories may better reflect the cost of living realities and service access challenges faced by many First Nations. Further assessment is merited to determine if one of the territorial MBMs is applicable across First Nations or only to First Nations in specific geographic zones.

The income analysis above highlights the gap of a First Nations-specific measure of poverty. Just as the MBM is adjusted for population size, rurality, and now, geography (i.e., territorial v. provincial), a First Nations-specific measure would be a relevant addition. Although income alone is an insufficient measure of poverty, it would be one helpful indicator among others.

**LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Participation in the labour market may indicate that economic conditions within or surrounding a community provide access to job opportunities. Regular and secure income from paid work

FIGURE 20







can be a means of alleviating income-based poverty and ensuring people have resources to access basic needs. The First Nation labour force participation rate, i.e., the percentage of the First Nations population working or actively seeking work, is approximately 47% in Canada, according to the 2021 Census (Figure 20). Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta have labour force participation rates below the national average for First Nations. The remaining provinces, led by Prince Edward Island at approximately 64%, have participation rates above the national average.

The employment rate, defined as the number of people employed as a percentage of the population aged 15 and over, is approximately 39% for First Nations in Canada. As with the labour force participation rate, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba are below the national First Nations' average.

Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest unemployment rate in Canada at 25.6%, and Quebec has the lowest at 10% among First Nations. For context, the lowest unemployment rate among First Nations is higher than Canada's national unemployment rate in 2021<sup>7</sup> (all segments of the population included). It should be noted, however, that while not employed in the Canadian economy, some First Nations may have traditional roles or lead traditional lifestyles which have limited interaction with the capital and labour markets.

Data on labour market participation is set for a specific age range (15–64). The assumptions about access to employment opportunities and the nature of opportunities, e.g., full-time, part-time, are inconsistent across First Nations. Geography, surrounding industries, transportation, etc. will impact employment prospects. While a 15-year-old may feasibly find employment opportunities for part-time work in an urban centre, the reality will be quite different for a youth growing up in a remote environment. Paid part-time work opportunities may be limited or non-existent, and many employment opportunities may come from the First Nation.

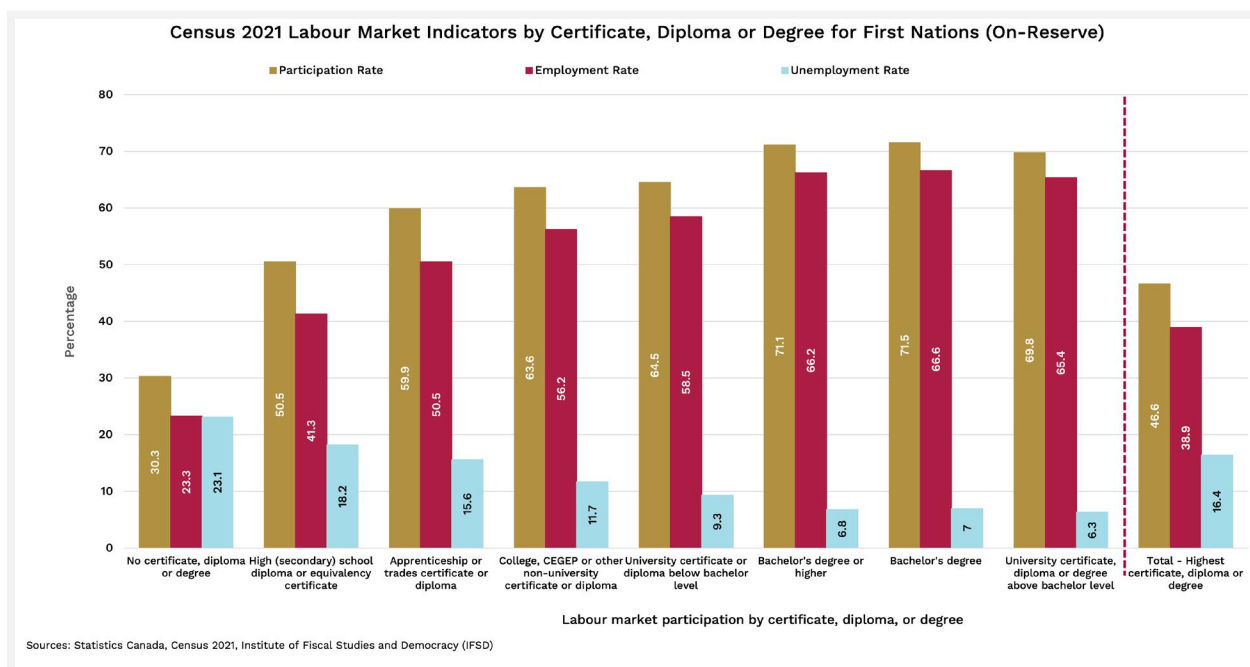
In addition to the availability of employment opportunities, there are factors such as daycare, training, and transportation that impact access to work. Labour market participation is one variable among many that can offer perspective on opportunities in and around a First Nation. The analysis (and limits to the data set) underscore the importance of capturing economic opportunity and employment prospects to give context to the labour market participation data.

Nationally, the labour force participation rate of First Nations on-reserve without a degree, certificate, or diploma is 30% (Figure 21). Those with a university degree equivalent to a bachelor's degree have the highest labour force participation rate at approximately 72%, followed by those with a degree higher than a bachelor's degree at approximately 70%.

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7 Statistics Canada, "Unemployment Rate, Participation Rate and Employment Rate by Educational Attainment, Annual" (Table 14-10-0020-01), last updated June 10, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410002001>

FIGURE 21



The unemployment rate of First Nations without a degree is the highest of all categories at approximately 23%, and those with a degree above a bachelor's is around 6%. From the available data, education, and especially, post-secondary education, significantly improves employment prospects.

### OCCUPATION CATEGORIES

Statistics Canada defines various occupation categories. In 2016, across Canada, most employed persons fell into three categories<sup>8</sup>:

1. sales, and services occupations;
2. business, finance, and administration occupations; and
3. trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations.

These three occupation types account for 55% of all Canadian occupations.

First Nations in the labour force tend to work in three occupational categories:

1. sales and services occupations;
2. occupations in education, law and social, community, and government services; and
3. trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations.

These three occupation types account for 63% of all First Nation occupations in Canada. Occupations fall into four main industries employing more than 60% of the First Nations workforce:

1. construction and retail trade;
2. public administration;
3. educational services; and
4. health care and social assistance.

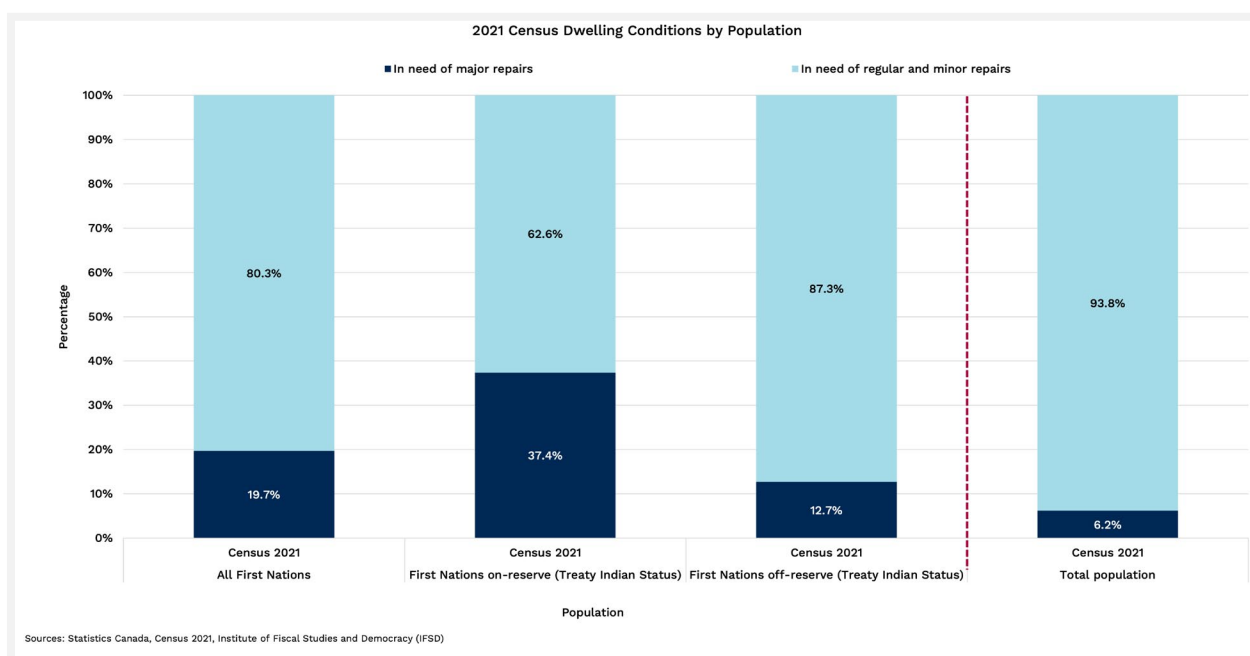
<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, "Labour Force Characteristics by Occupation, Annual, 1987 to 2022, Inactive" (Table 14-10-0335-01), last updated June 10, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410033501-eng>

## HOUSING CONDITIONS

Census 2016<sup>9</sup> indicated that First Nations' housing conditions are poor on-reserve, an unfortunately consistent trend in Census 2021.<sup>10</sup> In approximately 37% of occupied homes by First Nations, major repairs are needed, and minor repairs are needed in approximately

31% of homes, with roughly 31% of homes in need of only regular maintenance (Figure 22). In addition, approximately 21% of First Nations live in crowded housing (roughly 13% need one additional bedroom, 5% need two additional bedrooms, and 4% need three or more additional bedrooms).

**FIGURE 22**  
DWELLING CONDITION OF FIRST NATIONS

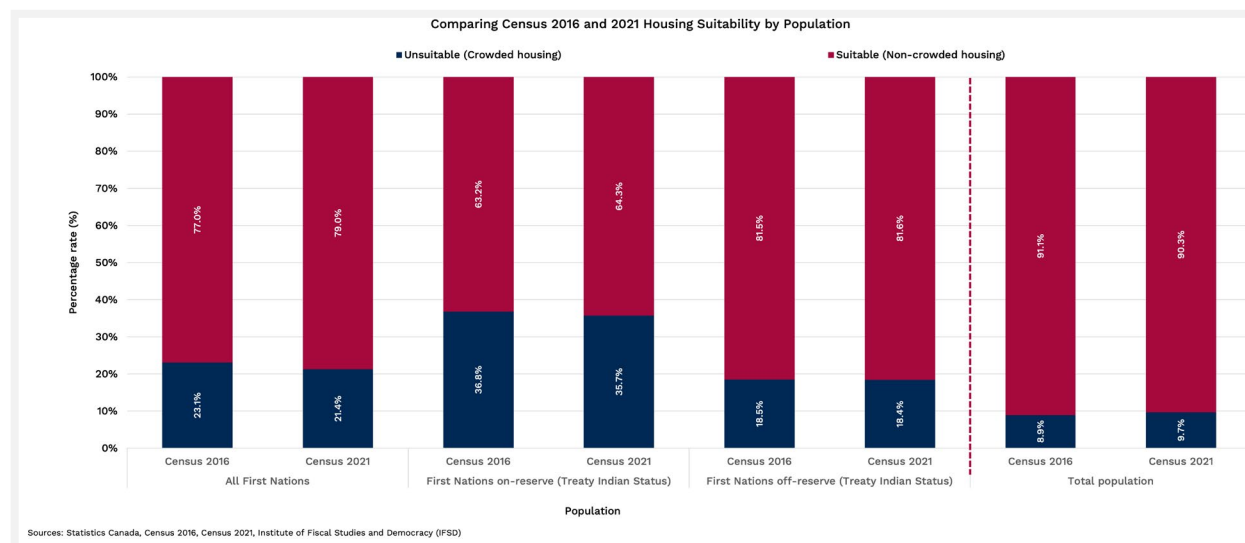


<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, "The Housing Conditions of Aboriginal People in Canada," *Government of Canada*, October 25, 2017, 2, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016021/98-200-x2016021-eng.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada, "Housing Conditions Among First Nations People, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census," *Government of Canada*, September 21, 2022, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021007/98-200-X2021007-eng.cfm>

## FIGURE 23

### PERCENTAGE OF FIRST NATIONS INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN CROWDED HOUSING



The First Nations housing gap is significant when compared with the general population nationally. Approximately 10% of the Canadian population lives in unsuitable housing compared with approximately 36% of First Nations on-reserve (Figure 23).

#### IMPACTS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ON MEDIAN TOTAL INCOME OF HOUSEHOLDS

As a supplement to the descriptive analysis provided above, the statistical relationship between median income and other indicators like educational attainment and labour market participation were assessed.

A simple regression equation (1) was used to examine the impact of education and employ-

ment rate on median household income. In equation (1)<sup>11</sup>,  $\ln(Y_i)$  is the logarithm of median after-tax household income of community  $i$ ;  $\ln(LFS_i)$  is the logarithm of the number of individuals in the labour force who have attended school or university;  $\ln(ER_i)$  is the logarithm of the employment rate of community  $i$ , and  $\mu_i$  is the error term.

$$(1) \quad \ln(Y_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(LFS_i) + \beta_2 \ln(ER_i) + \mu_i$$

The model shows the effect of educational attainment and employment rate on median income. Both coefficients are statistically significant, although the overall explanatory power of the model is not very high, indicating that other factors are also important in determining the level of median income (Table 1).

<sup>11</sup> Equation 1 is a way of examining how education and employment rate impact median household income. Using a regression (assessing how much of the variation in the median income across all First Nations can be explained by the two variables (education and employment rate)). The relevance of education and employment for increasing or decreasing median household income is assessed. In the equation, logarithms (a number obtained by raising the value of a base by an exponent or power) are used to transform the original values. This is done when the transformed variables result in a better fit and a more robust result for the equation.

**TABLE 1****Dependent Variable:** LNY**Method:** Least Squares**Date:** 04/26/24 **Time:** 11:21**Sample (adjusted):** 1622**Included observations:** 240 after adjustments

VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT	STD. ERROR	T-STATISTIC	PROB.
C	9.403954	0.152129	61.81580	0.0000
LNLFS	0.077739	0.012927	6.013633	0.0000
LNER	0.345438	0.039144	8.824722	0.0000
R-squared	0.251462	Mean dependent var		10.97437
Adjusted R-Squared	0.247020	S.D. dependent var		0.229020
S.E. of regression	0.198731	Ahaike info criterion		-0.3849434
Sum of squared resid	13.30951	Schwarz criterion		-0.351158
Log likelihood	68.44028	Hannah-Quinn criterion		-0.371481
F-statistic	56.60559	Durbin-Watson stat		1.375864
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

The results indicate that for a 1 percentage point increase in the employment rate, median income would rise by 0.34 percent. For a one percent increase in people with some level of education, median income would rise by 0.08 percent. The results of the regression, which are intuitive, suggest that education increases the prospects of employment, which would in turn increase median incomes. When it comes to poverty alleviation strategies, targeting income, education, and skills training, could be outcome generating paths forward.

There are limits to the applicability of the analysis for First Nations. There are place-based, e.g., geography, economic development, and historical considerations, e.g., colonialism, displacement, that shape conditions in First Nations that merit attention. When it comes to measures such

as, Income Assistance, they are premised on recipients eventually attaining employment. Employment opportunities do not necessarily exist across First Nations. While some have numerous industries, job prospects, and opportunities for economic development around them, others do not. The different contexts and starting points must be considered. If employment options do not exist, other responses to income support and poverty alleviation should be explored.

## BASELINE MEASURES OF POVERTY

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is the Government of Canada's official poverty measure, adopted in 2019.<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada is mandated to regularly review the MBM to ensure it reflects the “up-to-date cost of a basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living in Canada.”<sup>13</sup>

The MBM is based on the cost of a modest basket of goods needed for households “to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living in their community.”<sup>14</sup> The basket includes the costs of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other necessary items.<sup>15</sup> The MBM captures more than basic poverty lines, as it includes the costs of basic necessities, and recognizes regional differences in the cost of living. There are, for instance, MBMs available by province, with thresholds that differ for communities with population

above and below 30,000. Statistics Canada has also developed and proposed Northern MBMs (MBM-N) for use in the territories. To date, it has used the measure to estimate poverty rates in Northwest Territories and Yukon.<sup>16</sup>

The Low-Income Cut Off (LICO) is another income-specific measure of poverty used in Canada. It represents the estimated “income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20 percentage points [of after-tax income] more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing than the average family.”<sup>17</sup> LICO spending pattern assumptions are based on the 1992 Family Expenditure Survey.<sup>18</sup> This means the underlying spending level assumption may be outdated. LICO is used by the

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<sup>12</sup> *Poverty Reduction Act*, SC 2019, c.29, s.315, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-16.81/page-1.html>

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, “Poverty,” *Government of Canada*, last updated May 14, 2024, <https://www160.statcan.gc.ca/prosperity-prosperite/poverty-pauvrete-eng.htm>; Employment and Social Development Canada, *Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Government of Canada, 2018), <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>

<sup>14</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>15</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*; Charles Plante, “Policy or Window Dressing? Exploring the Impact of Poverty Reduction Strategies on Poverty Among the Canadian Provinces,” *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy* 35, no. 1 (February 2019): 118, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21699763.2018.1549090>

<sup>16</sup> Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics, “Northern Market Basket Measure: Northwest Territories, 2021,” *Government of Northwest Territories*, June 22, 2023, [https://www.statsnwt.ca/prices-expenditures/market\\_basket\\_measure/2021\\_Market-Basket-Measure.pdf](https://www.statsnwt.ca/prices-expenditures/market_basket_measure/2021_Market-Basket-Measure.pdf); Nancy Devin, Burton Gustajtis, and Sarah McDermott, “Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of Poverty for Nunavut,” *Statistics Canada*, June 21, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2022003-eng.htm>; Nancy Devin et al., “Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of Poverty for Yukon and the Northwest Territories,” *Statistics Canada*, November 12, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2021007-eng.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada, “Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) before and after Tax by Community Size and Family Size, in Constant Dollars” (Table 11-10-0195-01), last updated June 10, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.25318/1110019501-eng>

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada, “Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs).”



Government of Canada to estimate the “poverty reduction impacts of the Canada Child Benefit.”<sup>19</sup> The Government of Canada intends to use the MBM to estimate programs’ poverty reduction impacts “going forward.”<sup>20</sup>

The Low-Income Measure (LIM) is a relative measure to assess the percentage of households that have incomes less than 50% of median household after tax and transfer income.<sup>21</sup> It accounts for differences household size by using adjusted household income — where household income is “divided by the square root of the number of household members in order to account for the effects of economies of scale in larger households.”<sup>22</sup> The LIM is used in Canada, often for purposes of international comparison. It does not capture regional differences.<sup>23</sup>

Canada’s three main income-based measures are blunt without consideration of factors surrounding individuals experiencing income-based poverty (see Table 2).

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**19** Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

**20** Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

**21** Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*; Plante, “Policy or Window Dressing,” 131.

**22** Plante, “Policy or Window Dressing,” 118.

**23** Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*; Statistics Canada, “Low Income Measure (LIM) Thresholds by Income Source and Household Size” (Table 11100232), last updated April 26, 2024, <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/95be823a-fef8-490f-8dec-eb55cc13d632>

TABLE 2

## CANADIAN INCOME-BASED MEASURES OF LOW-INCOME

INCOME MEASURE	MEASUREMENT	OUTCOME	STRENGTH	LIMITATION
<b>Low-income cut off (LICO)</b>	The estimated income threshold where families' expenditures on food, shelter, and clothing are expected to be twenty percentage points of after-tax income greater higher than the average family. <sup>24</sup>	A household is low-income if they are expected to spend twenty percentage points or more of after-tax income on food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. <sup>25</sup>	Recognizes the strain the cost of basic necessities can impose on a household.	The LICO is based on 1992 spending patterns, and as such may be outdated.  The LICO is still in use to evaluate the impact of poverty reduction of the Canadian Child Benefit. <sup>26</sup>
<b>Low-income measure (LIM)</b>	An income threshold of 50% of median household after-tax and transfer income, adjusting for household size. <sup>27</sup>	Households are considered low-income if they earn less than 50% of median after tax and transfer income (adjusted for household size). <sup>28</sup>	This is a relative poverty line that shifts based on changing incomes of the population. It can be used for international comparisons as it is a common basis used by many countries. <sup>29</sup>	It does not currently capture regional differences in Canada. <sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada, "Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs)."

<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada, "Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs)."

<sup>26</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>27</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>28</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>29</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*; Garson Hunter and Miguel Sanchez, *A Critical Review of Canada's Official Poverty Line: The Market Basket Measure*, (University of Regina, 2021), <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MBM-2021.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*; Statistics Canada, "Low Income Measure (LIM) Thresholds."





INCOME MEASURE	MEASUREMENT	OUTCOME	STRENGTH	LIMITATION
<b>Market basket measure (MBM)</b>	A measure based on the cost of “a specific basket of goods and services that allows [households] to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living in their community.” The basket includes food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. <sup>31</sup>	A person or family is considered in poverty if they cannot afford the basket used in the MBM calculation. <sup>32</sup>	MBM is a measure of absolute poverty—it measures whether households can afford basic necessities. It also uses regionally based thresholds which better reflect varying regional/geographic contexts. <sup>33</sup>	The MBM is not developed to evaluate poverty in First Nations. <sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>32</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>33</sup> Employment and Social Development, *Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

<sup>34</sup> Adriene Harding and Xavier St-Denis, “Low-Income Statistics for the Population Living on Reserve and in the North Using the 2016 Census,” *Statistics Canada*, September 21, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2021005-eng.htm>

# PART II: EXISTING APPROACHES TO DEFINING AND MEASURING POVERTY

## HISTORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POVERTY

In a 1973 speech, the President of the World Bank Robert McNamara used the term “absolute poverty” to convey the deprivation in living circumstances of a significant portion of the world’s population.<sup>35</sup> Average income per person was used to assess living standards and to make the case for improving economic growth to reduce poverty for fear that poorer countries would be left behind.<sup>36</sup>

This framing of drastic difference in living standards divided the world into two parts: the Global North, with acceptable living standards, and the Global South, where conditions were worse and needed improvement. Tacitly, the division between North and South muted attention to issues of poverty in the North. Issues in the North did not compare to the severity of conditions in the Global South.<sup>37</sup> This conceptualization of poverty proliferated mechanisms for influence and control over the Global South, e.g., through aid, grants, loans, etc., encouraging streamlined thinking about the meaning of life,

the economy, rights, and social management.<sup>38</sup> This produced “solutions” to reduce poverty levels in the Global South by replicating economic, social, and political structures in the North. It was assumed that the growth seen in the Global North would be replicated in the Global South, when the characteristics of industrialization, urbanization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, increased provision of social services, and high levels of literacy existed.<sup>39</sup>

The conceptualization of poverty has since evolved with researchers proposing a variety of measures to better capture its meaning and measure. Poverty has at times been solely defined through income levels, consumption, and human welfare (which refers to the consumption of goods such as food, clothing, and housing).<sup>40</sup> Other researchers have approached the understanding of poverty through the perspective of the lack of individual capabilities or a lack of basic necessities that prevents a person from meeting a basic

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35 World Bank Archives, “Explore History,” World Bank, accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/archive/history#>

36 World Bank, *World development report 1978 (English)*, World development indicators, World development report Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/297241468339565863/World-development-report-1978>

37 Peter Townsend, *International Analysis Poverty* (Routledge, 1993), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315835099>

38 Arturo Escobar, “The Problematization of Poverty: The Tale of Three Worlds and Development,” In *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 22, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400839926-002>

39 Escobar, “The Problematization of Poverty” 38.

40 Udaya Wagle, “Rethinking Poverty: Definition and Measurement,” *International Social Science Journal* 68, no. 227-228 (2018): 183, <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12192>

level of needs.<sup>41</sup> Conceptualizing poverty as a social problem recognizes its origins in and intertwined with aspects of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and ethnocentrism<sup>42</sup> which are important considerations in the analysis of the definitions and measures of poverty that have emerged from that baseline understanding.

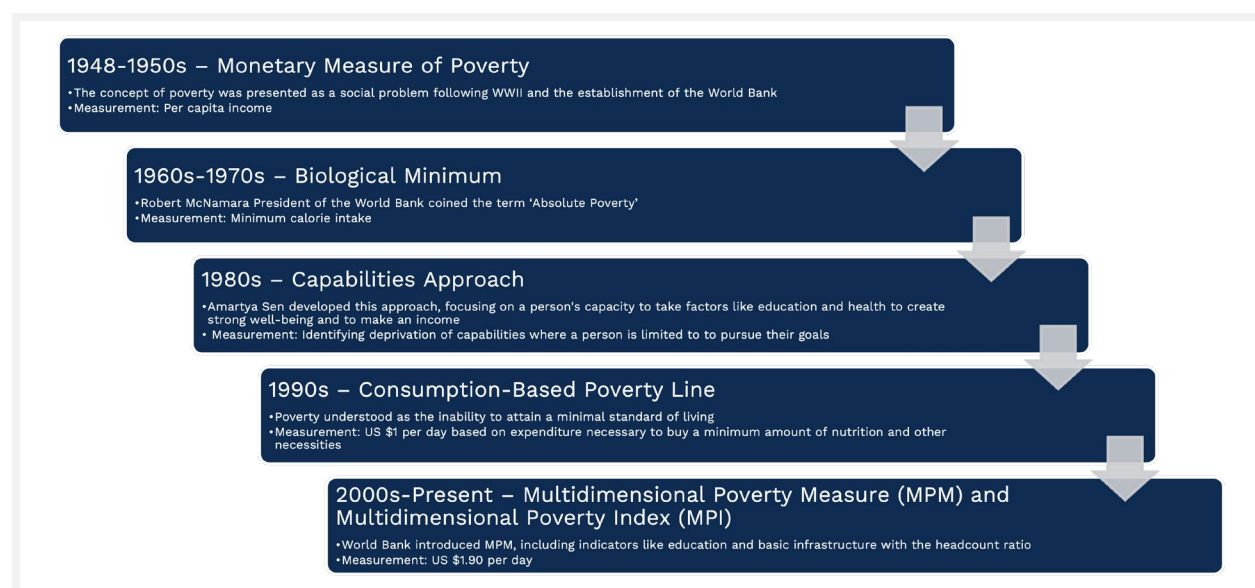
Poverty has been studied by many different scholars and researchers from a variety of backgrounds. Notably, in 1973, the World Bank President, Robert McNamara, coined the term “absolute poverty”<sup>43</sup> referring to a person who

does not have what they need to survive. Peter Townsend studied the meaning of poverty and argued that poverty and subsistence could be associated with relative deprivation, and the definition can only be derived in the context of the resources that are available at specific points of time to that specific society.<sup>44</sup> This led to the development of the definition of relative poverty in 1979, which has had significant influence on subsequent definitions.<sup>45</sup>

The scholars highlighted in this section have influenced approaches to defining and measuring poverty (Table 3).

## FIGURE 24

### TIMELINE OF THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POVERTY



<sup>41</sup> Wagle, “Rethinking Poverty,” 183.

<sup>42</sup> Escobar, “The Problematization of Poverty.”

<sup>43</sup> World Bank Archives, “Explore History,” *World Bank*, accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/archive/history#>

<sup>44</sup> Peter Townsend, “Measuring Poverty,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 5, no. 2 (1954), <https://doi.org/10.2307/587651>

<sup>45</sup> Peter Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520325760>



TABLE 3  
FOUNDATIONAL THEORISTS ON THE TOPICS OF POVERTY

SCHOLAR	CONTRIBUTION
Seebohm Rowntree (1900s)	Studies the amount of material need dependent on the social context.
Peter Townsend (1960s–2000s)	Founder of the relative deprivation theory of poverty.
Amartya Sen (1970s–current)	Founder of the capabilities approach to poverty.
Anthony Atkinson (1970s–2019)	Studied poverty and inequality extensively.
Martha Nussbaum (1980s–current)	Contributed to the development of capabilities approach.
Robert Chambers (1900s–current)	Foundational theorist in the participatory approach.
Alkire and Foster (2000s–current)	Foundational theorists of the multidimensional approach.

Different definitions are used to understand poverty, and debates exist around approaches, and their related measures. While the literature is broad, there are notable challenges in balancing the universality of measures with contextually specific realities.

The many approaches to defining and measuring poverty include some form of “deprivation.” Conceptually, deprivation is integral to understanding and comparing different definitions of poverty because it helps to identify (directly or indirectly) what is lacking in a person’s existence or potential factors in the perpetuation of poverty.

Townsend (1987)<sup>46</sup> applied the following definition of deprivation:

Deprivation may be defined as a state of observable and demonstrable disadvantage relative to the local community or the wider society or nation to which an individual, family or group belongs. The idea has come to be applied to conditions (that is, physical, environmental and social states or circumstances) rather than resources and to specific and not only general circumstances, and therefore can be distinguished from the concept of poverty.

Deprivation takes many different forms in every known society. People can be said to be deprived if they lack the types of diet, clothing, housing, household facilities and fuel and

46 Peter Townsend, “Deprivation,” *Journal of Social Policy* 16, no. 2 (1987): 125–126, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279400020341>.

environmental, educational, working and social conditions, activities and facilities which are customary or at least, widely encouraged and approved, in the societies to which they belong.<sup>47</sup>

Townsend proposes a useful distinction for indicators of deprivation between material and social forms, meaning, material indicators could be “goods, services, resources, amenities and physical environment and location of life”, while the social indicators of deprivation relate to “roles, relationships, functions, customs, rights and responsibilities of membership of society and its subgroups.”<sup>48</sup> Townsend’s definition of relative deprivation has supported the usage

of relative poverty lines that continue to be widely used.<sup>49</sup>

Leveraging Townsend’s understanding of material and social conditions in the experience of deprivation, other measures of poverty are plotted (Figure 25). There are four dimensions: quantitative versus qualitative, and basic necessities versus monetary indicators. Historically, there has been an emphasis on quantitative approaches that connect to monetary and basic necessities indicators. Qualitative approaches are fewer and newer to the field.

**FIGURE 25**  
**QUADRANT OF POVERTY APPROACHES**



<sup>47</sup> Townsend, “Deprivation,” 126, as cited in *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, ed. Peter Townsend.

<sup>48</sup> Townsend, “Deprivation,” 136.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Dunn, “Necessities Laid Bare: An Examination of Possible Justifications for Peter Townsend’s Purely Relative Definition of Poverty,” *Journal of Social Policy* 52, no. 2 (April 2023): 238, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279421000532>



In the poverty literature, quantitative and qualitative approaches can be defined. Typically, quantitative approaches are monetary measures. These measures facilitate aggregation and ease of comparison. They are often criticized for their lack of consideration of contextual and non-monetary factors that impact poverty. Qualitative measures are typically multidimensional, reflecting the personal or place-based experiences of poverty. While they are credited with capturing differentiated experiences, they can be challenging to aggregate and compare. The approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some approaches to defining and measuring poverty integrate elements of each, e.g., Alkire and Foster methodology, multidimensional poverty index (MPI), capabilities approach, etc.

Despite the breadth of the literature on poverty, there are trade-offs and gaps with all measures. A more comprehensive approach could integrate a monetary approach with the social exclusion, participatory, and capabilities understanding of poverty. The approach would not only consider income and wealth, but also education, the state of health and

nutrition, gender and ethnic disparities, the extent and type of labour force participation, and the extent and type of civic and cultural participation.<sup>50</sup>

Causes of and influences on poverty, including institutional barriers, can form a critical part of a poverty measurement approach. Inclusion of these factors recognizes poverty as a structural issue. Adopting a more comprehensive approach to measurement could help avoid traditional cycles of poverty. Additional discussion on approaches to measuring poverty can be found in Appendix B.

## INDIGENOUS MEASURES OF POVERTY

Indigenous peoples<sup>51</sup> continue to experience disproportionate levels of impoverishment, making them one of the world's poorest groups.<sup>52</sup> While they comprise approximately 6% of the world's population, they account for 19% of the extreme poor, according to the World Bank.<sup>53</sup> Common drivers of persisting poverty levels for Indigenous peoples include “the historical colonization, subjugation and assimilation,” with continued discrimination and an infringement of rights,<sup>54</sup> broken treaties, land

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**50** Wagle, “Rethinking Poverty,” 183.

**51** The World Bank's definition of Indigenous peoples: “Indigenous peoples are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced.”

World Bank, “Indigenous Peoples,” *World Bank*, last updated April 6, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples#2>

**52** World Bank, “Indigenous Peoples.”

**53** World Bank, “Indigenous Peoples;” Rishabh Kumar Dhir et al., “Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Just Future,” *International Labour Organization*, February 3, 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339411956\\_Implementing\\_the\\_ILO\\_Indigenous\\_and\\_Tribal\\_Peoples\\_Convention\\_No\\_169\\_Towards\\_an\\_inclusive\\_sustainable\\_and\\_just\\_future](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339411956_Implementing_the_ILO_Indigenous_and_Tribal_Peoples_Convention_No_169_Towards_an_inclusive_sustainable_and_just_future)

**54** Joan Carling, “Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World,” *UN Sustainable Development Goals Agenda*



dispossession, and child welfare involvement and relocation.<sup>55</sup> Additional drivers of poverty include a lack of access to relevant education curriculums; reduced access to health care systems; food insecurity and reduced access to traditional forms of food — related to displacement from traditional lands.<sup>56</sup>

Persistent impoverishment has repercussions. Indigenous peoples experience a lower quality of life and have increased risk of death and disease, among other social impacts.<sup>57</sup> The cyclical impacts of poverty has it passing between generations.<sup>58</sup> Poverty is especially evident in times of crisis, e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, high poverty rates and poor living standards contributed to a higher risk of exposure and an increased probability of infection or continued long-term complications from COVID-19 among Indigenous peoples.<sup>59</sup>

Traditionally, Indigenous poverty is measured through the standard practice of a country, which is frequently income based, or not

measured at all. This approach is insufficient as poverty in many Indigenous communities is experienced and shaped by several dimensions, e.g., geography, non-market work, etc. There are some Indigenous specific approaches to poverty and well-being that have been proposed or are in use.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognizes that well-being means more than only a person's income. The OECD has conducted work in evaluation of well-being of Indigenous peoples, in which it recognizes that for effective policy development, Indigenous perspectives, values, and beliefs of well-being need to be incorporated to track progress.<sup>60</sup> Although high-income countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and U.S. have high human development, Indigenous populations in these countries are found to have medium human development.<sup>61</sup> It is characterized by conditions of poverty, dependence on government

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2030, accessed May 4, 2022, 1, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14942SDG-IPMG.pdf>; Melisa Brittain and Cindy Blackstock, *First Nations Child Poverty: A Literature Review and Analysis* (First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service, 2015), <https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/First%20Nations%20Child%20Poverty%20-%20A%20Literature%20Review%20and%20Analysis%202015-3.pdf>

**55** Brittain and Blackstock, *First Nations Child Poverty*, 17.

**56** Robyn Eversole, John-Andrew McNeish, and Alberto D. Cimaradmore, eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty: An International Perspective* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 3, <https://www.crop.org/viewfile.aspx?id=98>

**57** Eversole, McNeish, Cimaradmore eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*, 2.

**58** National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, *Poverty as a Social Determinant for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Health* (University of Northern British Columbia, 2020), <https://www.nccih.ca/docs/determinants/FS-Poverty-SDOH-FNMI-2020-EN.pdf>

**59** Ahmed Goha et al., "Indigenous People and the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Tip of an Iceberg of Social and Economic Inequities," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 75, no. 2 (February 2021), <https://jech.bmj.com/content/75/2/207.abstract>

**60** OECD, "Indigenous Economic Development and Well-Being: Statistics and Data Governance," *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*, July 17, 2019, 111, <https://doi.org/10.1787/460fc435-en>

**61** Martin Cooke et al., "Indigenous Well-Being in Four Countries: An Application of the UNDP'S Human Development Index to



transfers, discrimination in employment opportunities, and mental health challenges.<sup>62</sup>

The OECD recognizes that indicators of well-being will be contextually specific for Indigenous peoples.<sup>63</sup> A major challenge to measure any indicators of well-being among Indigenous peoples is related to data collection and use. The OECD suggests that Indigenous communities should be empowered to collect and use data themselves. This would promote Indigenous peoples' data sovereignty, which means governing the creation, collection, ownership, and use of their data.<sup>64</sup> The OECD's recommendations reflect the importance of starting from a place of Indigenous values and linking those to data strategies to measure changes in well-being.

In New Zealand, an 'Indigenous Approach to the Living Standards Framework' measures well-being of Māori peoples at a national level. The framework emphasizes a culturally informed approach, with consideration of language, environment, and overall health and wellness.<sup>65</sup> New Zealand's non-Indigenous Living

Standards Framework has adopted elements of the Indigenous one. The Indigenous approach to the Living Standards Framework is recommended to be used by policy makers to inform decisions that affect Māori peoples.<sup>66</sup>

The examples of New Zealand and the OECD reflect the holistic view of well-being that integral to measuring change in Indigenous communities. Rather than focusing exclusively on income measures of poverty, the approaches broaden the perspective building from an Indigenous world view.

National and Indigenous poverty rates in Australia, U.S., and Canada are presented in Table 4. While poverty is measured differently across the countries with variability in the date of capture, the common theme of higher rates of poverty among Indigenous people relative to the general population is consistent. The following section reviews how Indigenous peoples in each country fare and discusses approaches and indicators to measure poverty.

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Indigenous Peoples in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States," *BMC international health and human rights* 7, no. 9 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-7-9>

<sup>62</sup> Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMES, Local Development and Tourism, "Linking Indigenous Communities with Rural and Regional Development," *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*, November 2016, <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/Productivity-and-competitiveness-for-rural-areas.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> OECD, "Indigenous Economic Development and Well-Being"

<sup>64</sup> OECD, *Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development*, (OECD Rural Policy Reviews, OECD Publishing, 2019), 110, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/linking-indigenous-communities-with-regional-development\\_3203c082-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/linking-indigenous-communities-with-regional-development_3203c082-en); Tahu Kukutai and John Taylor, eds., *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda* (Australian National University Press, 2016), <http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/31875>

<sup>65</sup> The Treasury, "An Indigenous Approach to the Living Standards Framework," *New Zealand Government*, January, 2019, <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-01/dp19-01.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> The Treasury, "An Indigenous Approach to the Living Standards Framework."





**TABLE 4**

**POVERTY MEASURES AND POVERTY RATES IN AUSTRALIA, U.S., CANADA**

COUNTRY	OFFICIAL MEASUREMENT	NATIONAL POVERTY RATE	INDIGENOUS MEASUREMENT	INDIGENOUS POVERTY RATE
<b>Australia</b>	Relative Poverty measure: Measured as 50% of median after-tax income, based on varying family size thresholds. <sup>67</sup>	13.4% (2020) <sup>68</sup>	Relative Poverty measure: Measured as 50% of median after-tax income based on varying family size thresholds. <sup>69</sup>	31% <sup>70</sup> (2016)
<b>U.S.</b>	Official poverty measure (OPM). <sup>71</sup>	11.6% <sup>72</sup> (2021)	Official poverty measure (OPM). <sup>73</sup>	24.3% <sup>74</sup> (2021)
<b>Canada</b>	Market-Basket Measure <sup>75</sup>	8.1% <sup>76</sup> (2021)	Relative poverty measure: Low-income measure (on-reserve). <sup>77</sup>	18.8% <sup>78</sup> (2021)

<sup>67</sup> Poverty and Inequality, “Poverty in Australia,” *Australian Council of Social Service and UNSW Sydney*, accessed June 10, 2024, <https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty/>

<sup>68</sup> Peter Davidson, Bruce Bradbury, and Melissa Wong, *Poverty in Australia 2023: Who is Affected* (Australian Council of Social Service and UNSW Sydney, March 2023), 8, [https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Poverty-in-Australia-2023\\_Who-is-affected\\_screen.pdf](https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Poverty-in-Australia-2023_Who-is-affected_screen.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Poverty and Inequality, “Poverty in Australia.”

<sup>70</sup> Poverty & Inequality, “Poverty Rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, by Region, in 2016,” *Australian Council of Social Service and UNSW Sydney*, 2018, [https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty/poverty-rates-among-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-by-region-in-2016/#:~:text=This%20graph%20shows%20that%20the,in%20major%20cities%20\(24%25\)](https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty/poverty-rates-among-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-by-region-in-2016/#:~:text=This%20graph%20shows%20that%20the,in%20major%20cities%20(24%25))

<sup>71</sup> United States Census Bureau, “The History of the Official Poverty Measure,” *United States Government*, last updated May 24, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/about/history-of-the-poverty-measure.html>

<sup>72</sup> John Creamer et al., “Poverty in the United States: 2021,” *United States Census Bureau*, September, 2022, 1, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> United States Census Bureau, “The History of the Official Poverty Measure.”

<sup>74</sup> Creamer et al., “Poverty in the United States: 2021,” 4.

<sup>75</sup> Adriene Harding and Xavier St-Denis, “Low-Income Statistics for the Population Living on Reserve and in the North.”

<sup>76</sup> Statistics Canada, “Disaggregated Trends in Poverty from the 2021 Census of Population,” *Government of Canada*, November 9, 2022, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021009/98-200-X2021009-eng.cfm>

<sup>77</sup> The LIM is used for on-reserve Indigenous peoples, to capture those who are low-income through the national Census in Canada as it has been noted by the Government of Canada it is a challenge to collect data required for the MBM on-reserve and in territories.

<sup>78</sup> Statistics Canada, “Indigenous Population Continues to Grow and is Much Younger than the Non-Indigenous Population, Although the Pace of Growth has Slowed,” *Government of Canada*, September 21, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>



## CANADA

In Canada, the Indigenous population makes up 5.0% of Canada's total population,<sup>79</sup> which consists of First Nations both registered and non-status, Métis, and Inuit. First Nations make up the majority at 58% of the Indigenous population (Figure 26).<sup>80</sup> Using Census 2021 data and the LIM, 22.7% of First Nations people resided (including on-and off-reserve) in a low-income household and 31.4% of First Nations residing on-reserve lived in a low-income household.<sup>81</sup>

The poverty rates are significant, and reflect in part generations of compounding trauma, racism, and other challenges. Factors that contribute to persisting issues of poverty amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada include increased morbidity<sup>82</sup> and vulnerability to chronic and infectious diseases,<sup>83</sup> food insecurity,<sup>84</sup> increased mental health challenges,<sup>85</sup> low educational attainment, and reduced employment opportunities. There is no poverty measure built for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

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**79** Statistics Canada, "Indigenous Population Continues to Grow."

**80** Statistics Canada, "Indigenous Population Continues to Grow."

**81** Statistics Canada, "Indigenous Population Continues to Grow."

**82** Fred Wien, "Social Determinants of Health — Tackling Poverty in Indigenous Communities in Canada," *National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health*, April 13, 2017, <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1927305/social-determinants-of-health/2679075/>; Dominique Fijal and Brenda L. Beagan, "Indigenous Perspectives on Health: Integration with a Canadian Model of Practice," *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 86, no. 3 (April 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008417419832284>

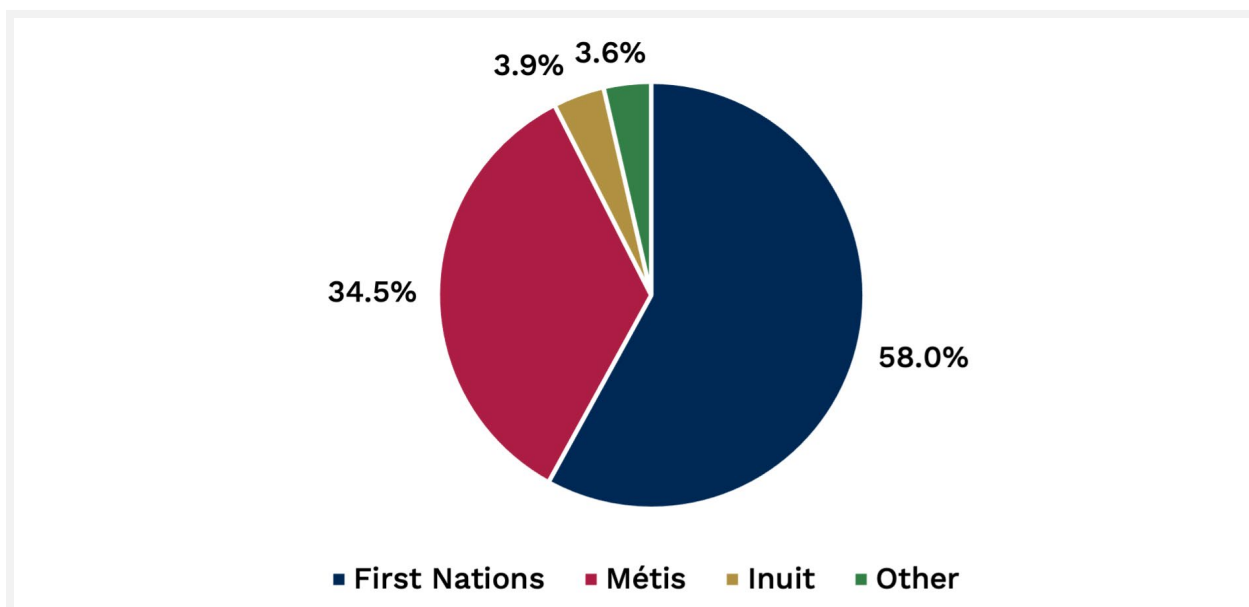
**83** Wien, "Tackling poverty in Indigenous communities in Canada;" Dennis Raphael, "Chapter Two: The Persistence of Poverty," In *The Poverty, Inequality, and Job Challenge: The Case for Basic Income in Canada*, ed. Roderick Benne and Joli Scheidler-Benne (Fire-side Publishing House, 2018), <https://lindsayadvocate.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Ebook-Sept-17-v2-SEPT-17-FINAL.pdf#page=10>

**84** Valerie Tarasuk and Andy Mitchell, *Household Food Insecurity in Canada: 2017-2018*, (Research to Identify Policy Options to Reduce Food Insecurity, 2020), <https://socialwork.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2021/03/Household-Food-Insecurity-in-Canada-2017-2018-Full-Reportpdf.pdf>; Valerie Tarasuk, Andy Mitchell, and Naomi Dachner, *Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2011* (Research to Identify Policy Options to Reduce Food Insecurity, 2016), <https://crdcn.ca/publication/household-food-insecurity-in-canada-2011/>.

**85** Nicholas D. Spence, "Does Social Context Matter? Income Inequality, Racialized Identity, and Health Among Canada's Aboriginal Peoples using a Multilevel Approach," *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* 3 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-015-0108-9>; Raphael, "Chapter Two: The Persistence of Poverty,"

FIGURE 26

TOTAL INDIGENOUS POPULATION IN CANADA<sup>86</sup>



Indigenous poverty in Canada is typically measured relative to the LIM, due to a lack of price and expenditure data on-reserve and in the territories.<sup>87</sup> Brittain and Blackstock (2015) note some advantages of the LIM, such as its similarity to other international poverty indicators (including those used by UK, the EU, the UN, and the OECD) and the fact that it applies to both before and after-tax income.<sup>88</sup> While the LIM does not identify the number of First Nations peoples that are living in poverty, it does provide context pertaining to the resource gap between the general Canadian population and the on-reserve population. The MBM, however, provides regional and population specific measures. In addition, whether or not you are living

in a First Nation, you are likely buying the same goods and services included in the MBM.

Canada's income-based measures of poverty are national in scope and do not reflect the differentiated contexts of First Nations. One way in which the Government of Canada has tried to capture the diversity is through the Community Well-Being (CWB) index. The index is intended to measure socio-economic well-being through four components: education, labour force activity, income, and housing.<sup>89</sup> The aim of the index is to evaluate and track well-being of First Nations and Inuit communities in Canada, with data for the four indicators available through the Census.

<sup>86</sup> Statistics Canada, "Indigenous Population Continues to Grow."

<sup>87</sup> Adriene Harding and Xavier St-Denis, "Low-Income Statistics for the Population Living on Reserve and in the North."

<sup>88</sup> Brittain and Blackstock, *First Nations Child Poverty*.

<sup>89</sup> Indigenous Services Canada, "About the Community Well-Being Index," *Government of Canada*, last updated January 31, 2024, [https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1421245446858/1557321415997#:~:text=The%20Community%20Well%20Being%20\(CWB,for%20individual%20communities%20in%20Canada](https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1421245446858/1557321415997#:~:text=The%20Community%20Well%20Being%20(CWB,for%20individual%20communities%20in%20Canada)



While the CWB represents an approach, it has been criticized by the Yellowhead Institute for being inadequate, Eurocentric, and colonialist, with its dependence on the Census and its framing.<sup>90</sup> For instance, a definition of family in the Census is nuclear, whereas individuals who reside in First Nations communities may value living in multigenerational households.<sup>91</sup>

Prior attempts, e.g., the Poverty Action Research project (PARP) originated from the Make Poverty History Committee which was established in 2008 by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).<sup>92</sup> The PARP completed research on the well-being of First Nations, in which individuals had the opportunity to share their conception of well-being. The perspectives reflected a holistic view of living the “good life,” which was described as a kind, humble member of the community; the prioritization of balance and harmony; and the avoidance of stigmatization.<sup>93</sup> Those living on a reserve were “rich,” a definition that extended beyond income, since there is not direct translation for the word “poverty”

in Indigenous languages.<sup>94</sup> Poverty itself was described as a result of the experience of “colonialization and through government responses to deprivation that prioritized ‘welfare’ over rebuilding First Nation economies and societies.”<sup>95</sup>

The PARP findings indicate that community-specific goals and programs would be more suitable to supporting communities than a universal set of goals.<sup>96</sup> This bottom-up perspective was reflected in a call for a holistic conceptualization of wellness, going beyond material elements.<sup>97</sup> To actualize this vision, there was a call to support programs for leadership (in particular, traditional leaders) and infrastructure development in First Nation communities.<sup>98</sup>

Echoing PARP and others, research by the First Nations Information and Governance Centre (FNIGC) suggests that poverty for First Nations is a holistic matter, not one solely of income. The term “wellness” was proposed as a replacement for the term “poverty.”<sup>99</sup> This

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**90** Ethan Guthro, *Measuring Indigenous Well-Being: What Is Indigenous Services Canada Missing* (Yellowhead Institute, June 2021), <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/e-guthro-wellbeing-index.pdf>

**91** Guthro, *Measuring Indigenous Well-Being*.

**92** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing: Lessons from the First Nations Poverty Action Research Project* (Dalhousie University, 2018), 4, <http://www.edo.ca/downloads/poverty-action-research-project-2.pdf>

**93** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 2.

**94** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 17.

**95** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 17.

**96** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 26.

**97** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 16.

**98** Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 32.

**99** First Nations Information Governance Centre, *First Nations Perspectives on Poverty: It's Not in Our Culture to Be Poor* (First Nations Information Governance Centre, May 2020), 2, <https://fnigc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FNIGC-Research-Series-Perspectives-on-Poverty.pdf>



research aligns with PARP findings, where the term poverty was also found to be ineffective in the context of First Nations understandings of conditions of deprivation.<sup>100</sup> Consistent with the research, the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) defined First Nations poverty “as being in a state of lacking wellness, holistic balance (mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual), and basic necessities, and material goods.”<sup>101</sup>

A monetary approach is inadequate to effectively capture the experience and extent of poverty in First Nations communities in Canada. An approach that captures the legacy of colonization, while acknowledging the various factors of deprivation such as food insecurity, housing issues, lack of employment opportunities, reduced access to education, reduced mental and physical health, location, etc., is important to the development of a more holistic approach. With the diversity of experiences in First Nations, multiple definitions of wellness may need to be developed.

## AUSTRALIA

In Australia, Indigenous peoples — the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — remain the most disadvantaged group and experience the highest rates of

poverty throughout the country.<sup>102</sup> In 2016, approximately 31% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in poverty.<sup>103</sup> Poverty is based on an income-based measurement, where a person is considered in poverty if they make less than 50% of the median income. The lines vary based on family size, ranging from \$489 a week for a single person with no children to \$1027 per week for a couple with two children.<sup>104</sup>

Measuring the exact rates of income-based poverty is a challenge as data can be inconsistent and inaccurate, e.g., undeclared, complex family structures, likely making rates of poverty higher than reported.<sup>105</sup>

Although poverty is measured primarily through an income-based measure, well-being of Indigenous peoples is also evaluated. In Australia, the well-being of Indigenous peoples is measured through the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage and Closing the Gap (OIDCG) framework. The Australian Government released its eighth OIDGC report in 2020, which measures Indigenous well-being with 52 indicators which includes dimensions such as governance, leadership, and culture, early child development, economic participation,

<sup>100</sup> Poverty Action Research Project, *Pursuing Wellbeing*, 17.

<sup>101</sup> First Nations Information Governance Centre, *It's Not in Our Culture to be Poor*, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Deirdre Howard-Wagner, “Governance of Indigenous Policy in the Neo-Liberal Age: Indigenous Disadvantage and the Intersecting of Paternalism and Neo-Liberalism as a Racial Project,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 7 (2018): 1334, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1287415>

<sup>103</sup> Poverty & Inequality, “Poverty Rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.”

<sup>104</sup> Poverty & Inequality, “Poverty in Australia.”

<sup>105</sup> Australian Council of Social Service, “Poverty Rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People;” Markham and Biddle, *Income, Poverty, and Inequality*.



and health, etc.<sup>106</sup> This framework aims to capture well-being outcomes of its Indigenous population, identify contributing factors of deprivation, and act as a tool for government departments and Indigenous peoples to inform policies and social programs.<sup>107</sup>

The Australian Government released a National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social Emotional Well-being in 2017. The framework extended until 2023, and aimed to reform the mental health system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.<sup>108</sup> The framework recognizes the roles "relationships between individuals, family, kin and community," and "connection to land, culture, spirituality and

ancestry" on individuals social and emotional well-being.<sup>109</sup> It incorporates the following social and emotional well-being domains,

(1) connection to body; (2) connection to mind and emotions; (3) connection to family and kinship; (4) connection to community; (5) connection to culture; (6) connection to country; and (7) connection to spirituality and ancestors.<sup>110</sup> Such a well-being framework can be additive to typical measures of poverty (i.e., income-based and consumption-based).<sup>111</sup> Australia does not claim to pair income-based poverty measures with measures of well-being. Rather these efforts are undertaken independently of each other.

<sup>106</sup> Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020* (Government of Australia, December 2020), <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/2020>

<sup>107</sup> Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*

<sup>108</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023," *Government of Australia*, October 10, 2017, <https://apo.org.au/node/273566#:~:text=The%20National%20Strategic%20Framework%20for,specific%20and%20mainstream%20health%20services>

<sup>109</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples," 6; Graham Gee et al., "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing," in *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice*, ed. Pat Dudgeon et al. (Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2014), <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/aboriginal-health/working-together-second-edition/wt-part-1-chapt-4-final.pdf>

<sup>110</sup> Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:"

<sup>111</sup> As part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's National Indigenous Australians Agency reports on the social and emotional health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's social and emotional wellbeing. The performance framework uses indicators such as reported psychological distress, experiences of personal stressors, hospitalization rates due to mental health conditions, death rates by suicide, etc. This data is currently only reported until 2019, meaning it is difficult to ascertain whether the National Strategic Framework (and other related efforts) have meaningfully improved wellbeing for Australia's Indigenous populations.

See: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and National Indigenous Australians Agency, "Tier 1 - Health Status and Outcomes - 1.18 Social and Emotional Wellbeing," *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework*, last updated May 21, 2024, <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/1-18-social-emotional-wellbeing>



## UNITED STATES

The U.S. is one of the richest countries in the world, yet it also has the most significant rates of poverty among high-income countries.<sup>112</sup> The main approach to measuring poverty in the U.S. is the official poverty measure (OPM), which compares pre-tax cash income against a threshold that is three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963, and is altered based on the size of a family.<sup>113</sup> This measure has only been updated through adjustments for inflation, and is noted as outdated.<sup>114</sup> In 2021, the rate of poverty for Indigenous peoples was 24.3% which was the highest rate in comparison to other ethnici-

ties.<sup>115</sup> Indigenous peoples in the U.S., make up a small portion of the population yet are overrepresented among those in poverty.<sup>116</sup>

Contributing factors to persistent poverty include discrimination, problematic policies that facilitated displacement and assimilation, minimal access to market opportunities and economic development,<sup>117</sup> poor land quality,<sup>118</sup> land dispossession,<sup>119</sup> location (urban vs. rural),<sup>120</sup> exclusion from the labour market,<sup>121</sup> low educational attainment, intergenerational trauma, and increased morbidity.<sup>122</sup>

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**112** Patricia Homan, Lauren Valentino, and Emi Weed, "Being and Becoming Poor: How Cultural Schemas Shape Beliefs About Poverty," *Social Forces* 95, no. 3 (March 2017): 1023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26166862>

**113** United States Census Bureau, "The History of the Official Poverty Measure."

**114** Ellie Kaverman, "It's Time to Reset the Poverty Line," *The Century Foundation*, November 24, 2020, <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/time-reset-poverty-line/>

**115** Creamer et al., "Poverty in the United States: 2021."

**116** Creamer et al., "Poverty in the United States: 2021."

**117** James J. Davis, Vincent J. Roscigno, and George Wilson, "American Indian Poverty in the Contemporary United States," *Sociological Forum* 31, no. 1 (March 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12226>; Kimberly R. Huyser, Isao Takei, and Arthur Sakamoto, "Demographic Factors Associated with Poverty Among American Indians and Alaska Natives," *Race and Social Problems* 6 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-013-9110-1>

**118** Bryan Leonard, Dominic P. Parker, and Terry L. Anderson, "Land Quality, Land Rights, and Indigenous Poverty," *Journal of Development Economics* 143 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdevco.2019.102435>

**119** Davis, Roscigno, and Wilson, "American Indian Poverty in the Contemporary United States."

**120** C. Matthew Snipp and Gary D. Sandefur, "Earnings of American Indians and Alaskan Natives: The Effects of Residence and Migration," *Social Forces* 66, no. 4 (June, 1988), <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/66.4.994>; Davis, Roscigno, and Wilson, "American Indian Poverty in the Contemporary United States."

**121** Davis, Roscigno, and Wilson, "American Indian Poverty in the Contemporary United States."

**122** Kaitlin Curtice and Esther Choo, "Indigenous Populations: Left Behind in the COVID-19 Response," *The Lancet* 395, no. 10239 (June 2020), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31242-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31242-3)



## FIGURE 27

### Swinomish Indigenous Health Indicators

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community developed the ‘Swinomish Indigenous Health Indicators,’ with the aim to capture a more holistic perspective of the health of the community, particularly in the context of climate change.<sup>123</sup>

This approach used a two-eyed seeing approach, where Western disciplines were combined with Indigenous ways of knowing to represent their vision of health.<sup>124</sup>

The six indicators developed in this approach are community connection (work, sharing, relations); natural resources security (quality, access, safety); cultural use (respect and stewardship, sense of place, practice); education (the teachings, Elders, youth); self-determination (healing and restoration, development, trust); resilience (self-esteem, identity, sustainability).<sup>125</sup>

These indicators have been used in other Indigenous communities outside of the Swinomish Tribe, but have not been adopted at a government level. The data from these indicators can be used to identify existing gaps and can inform decision making for policies and programs,<sup>126</sup> which can support well-being and reduce issues of disadvantage in the community.

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**123** Jamie Donatuto, Larry Campbell, and William Trousdale, “The ‘Value’ of Values-Driven Data in Identifying Indigenous Health and Climate Change Priorities,” *Climatic Change* 158 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02596-2>

**124** Donatuto, Campbell, and Trousdale, “The ‘Value’ of Values-Driven Data.”

**125** Mark Podlasly et al., “Centering First Nations Concepts of Wellbeing: Toward a GDP-Alternative Index in British Columbia,” *British Columbia Assembly of First Nations*, November 2020, <https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/docs/reports-presentations/BC%20AFN%20FINAL%20PRINT%202020-11-23.pdf>

**126** Donatuto, Campbell, and Trousdale, “The ‘Value’ of Values-Driven Data.”





In the U.S., self-determination of Indigenous people was found to be a critical component for economic improvement and governance stability. In a study with a sample size of approximately 70 Indigenous Nations, three indicators are identified as important for sustainable economic development on-reserve: sovereignty or “self-rule;” “capable governing institutions;” and a unification between governing institutions alongside Indigenous political culture.<sup>127</sup> The three indicators can create a foundation for the community, and, when they are present, communities are better positioned to thrive. When they are not present, it significantly limits the potential of economic outcomes.<sup>128</sup>

Self-determination for Indigenous peoples in the U.S. supported tribes in asserting self-governing powers while establishing improved governing institutions.<sup>129</sup> The tribes with these characteristics had reduced unemployment and welfare needs; various economic enterprise opportunities increased; administration of social services became more efficient; and natural resources were better managed.<sup>130</sup> The findings suggest that self-determination, when paired with strong governing capacities and institutions, can support Indigenous communities to make informed internal decisions.<sup>131</sup>

The countries reviewed rely on income-based measures across their populations to assess levels of poverty. Income-based measures are insufficient, when used alone, to capture the experiences of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous-derived measures of poverty need to capture the person and their community in their particular environments. Across these countries, information gaps are evident. To give meaning to multifaceted well-being focused measures of poverty and deprivation, relevant data is required. Until the gap in information is addressed, opportunities for measurement will be limited.

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<sup>127</sup> Joseph P. Kalt and Stephen Cornell, “Alaska Native Self-Government and Service Delivery: What Works?,” Working Paper, *The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development*, October 2003, 13–16, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.464980>; Eversole, McNeish, Cimadamore, eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*, 207

<sup>128</sup> Kalt and Cornell, “Alaska Native Self-Government and Service Delivery;” Eversole, McNeish, Cimadamore, eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*, 217.

<sup>129</sup> Eversole, McNeish, Cimadamore, eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*, 199.

<sup>130</sup> Eversole, McNeish, Cimadamore, eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*, 210.

<sup>131</sup> Eversole, McNeish, Cimadamore, eds., *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*, 210–211.



## PART III: BUSINESS CASE FOR ALLEVIATING POVERTY

### LOST OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF POVERTY IN FIRST NATIONS

The direct and indirect costs of poverty to individuals and communities are significant. Alleviating poverty, especially for children, is essential to their long-term development, and ultimately, improves their outcomes as individuals, as well as their potential societal contributions.

Society pays a significant price for poverty (Figure 28). Lower-income earners account for a higher percentage of public health

expenditures,<sup>132</sup> as do people experiencing severe food insecurity.<sup>133</sup> Additionally, homelessness (\$7.0 billion, 2013),<sup>134</sup> mental health issues (\$50 billion, 2011),<sup>135</sup> and substance use (\$46 billion, 2017)<sup>136</sup> are common challenges experienced by those in poverty with high costs for support and remedies. The costs are illustrative of the challenges linked to the perpetuation of poverty.

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**132** Nathan Laurie, *The Cost of Poverty: An Analysis of the Economic Cost of Poverty in Ontario* (Ontario Association of Food Banks, November 2008), 11, <https://feedontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CostofPoverty.pdf>

**133** Valerie Tarasuk et al., "Association Between Household Food Insecurity and Annual Health Care Costs," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 187, no. 14 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.150234>

**134** Stephen Gaetz et al., "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016," *Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press*, no. 12 (2016), [https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC16\\_final\\_20Oct2016.pdf](https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC16_final_20Oct2016.pdf)

**135** Mental Health Commission of Canada, "Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada," *Mental Health Commission of Canada*, 2013, [https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2016-06/Investing\\_in\\_Mental\\_Health\\_FINAL\\_Version\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2016-06/Investing_in_Mental_Health_FINAL_Version_ENG.pdf)

**136** Canadian Center on Substance Use and Harms Scientific Working Group, *Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms 2015–2017* (Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2020), <https://csuch.ca/publications/CSUCH-Canadian-Substance-Use-Costs-Harms-Report-2020-en.pdf>

Indirect costs of poverty occur across generations.<sup>137</sup> There are long-term costs for children who grow up in poverty, as they are more likely to experience poverty into adulthood.<sup>138</sup> Assessing these indirect costs can be done by approximating the number

of children that would leave poverty if the intergenerational cycle of poverty was broken, while considering long-term remedial and lost opportunity costs.<sup>139</sup> The calculation of lost opportunity costs, namely through lost earnings, can be significant.<sup>140</sup>

**FIGURE 28**  
COST OF POVERTY



<sup>137</sup> Charles Plante, “How to Calculate the Costs of Poverty in Canada: Comment on the Nathan Laurie Approach and Recommended Improvements,” *SocArXiv Papers*, December 6, 2020, 2, <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/zshqv>

<sup>138</sup> Sharmila Kurukulasuriya and Sólrún Engilbertsdóttir, “A multidimensional approach to measuring child poverty,” in *Child Poverty and Inequality: New Perspectives* (2012): 23, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2039773#page=32](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2039773#page=32); Plante, “How to Calculate the Costs of Poverty in Canada”

<sup>139</sup> Christine Saulnier and Charles Plante, “The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces,” *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, April 7, 2021, 13, <https://policyalternatives.ca/AtlanticPovertyCosts>

<sup>140</sup> Saulnier and Plante, “The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces,” 12.



According to estimates from the National Advisory Council on Poverty, 11% of Canadians live below the MBM (using data from 2018).<sup>141</sup> Certain groups, e.g., First Nations, children, women, are disproportionately affected. Campaign 2000 estimated that 1 million Canadian children live in poverty (relative to the after-tax LIM)). This represents a drop of

approximately 314,000 children, attributed to the temporary pandemic emergency relief funding.<sup>142</sup> While an improvement, Campaign 2000's 2022 National Report Card on Child and Family Poverty estimates that one in eight children in Canada continue to suffer from the impacts of poverty.<sup>143</sup> These experiences have tangible personal and societal costs.

### National Advisory Council – Overview

The National Advisory Council (NAC) was established in 2019, following the 2018 launch of the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy.<sup>144</sup> The terms of reference for the NAC (from 2019) outline its mandate as follows:<sup>145</sup>

1. Provide independent advice to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (the Minister) on poverty reduction;
2. Annually report on the progress achieved toward reducing the level of poverty by 20% by 2020 and by 50% by 2030, relative to the 2015 level;
3. Continue a dialogue with Canadians on poverty; and,
4. Undertake any activity specified by the Minister.

The NAC is made up of 8–10 members with expertise in poverty reduction. This includes academics, experts, practitioners, and individuals with lived experience.<sup>146</sup>

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**141** Employment and Social Development Canada, *Building Understanding: The First Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty* (Government of Canada, 2021), <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2020-annual.html>

**142** Campaign 2000, *Pandemic Lessons: Ending Child and Family Poverty is Possible* (Campaign 2000 End Child and Family Poverty, February 14, 2023), 6, [https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/English-Pandemic-Lessons\\_Ending-Child-and-Family-Poverty-is-Possible\\_2022-National-Report-Card-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty.pdf](https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/English-Pandemic-Lessons_Ending-Child-and-Family-Poverty-is-Possible_2022-National-Report-Card-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty.pdf)

**143** Campaign 2000, *Pandemic Lessons: Ending Child and Family Poverty is Possible*, 6.

**144** Employment and Social Development Canada, “Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy,” Government of Canada, last updated April 16, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction.htm>.

**145** Employment and Social Development Canada, “Terms of Reference for the National Advisory Council on Poverty,” *Government of Canada*, last updated January 30, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/terms-reference.html>

**146** Employment and Social Development Canada, “Members of the National Advisory Council on Poverty,” Government of Canada, last updated April 29, 2024, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/members.html>



The NAC has released annual reports since 2020, with its most recent report in October 2023.<sup>147</sup> The reports outline the current state of poverty in Canada and explores related issues such as housing, employment, food insecurity, mental health, health, isolation, etc. Key elements of the most recent report include:

- The poverty rate increased to 7.4% in 2021 (from 6.4% in 2020). The poverty rate significantly dropped in 2020 (from 10.3% in 2019 to 6.4% in 2020), due to temporary financial COVID-19 benefits.<sup>148</sup>
- The Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N) was officialised for measuring poverty in Northwest Territories (NWT) and Yukon.<sup>149</sup>
- This is the first NAC annual report that has reported on poverty in NWT and Yukon.<sup>150</sup>
- The report reasserts five recommendations that require “urgent action” from the Government of Canada:
  1. address Indigenous poverty;
  2. support efforts that address dignity, equity, and inclusion;
  3. develop an income floor above the Official Poverty Line;
  4. enhance access to benefits by streamlining the process and reducing access barriers; and,
  5. make investments to prevent people from falling into poverty.<sup>151</sup>

The NAC plays an important role in engaging with Canadians, reporting annually on the current state of poverty, and advising the Government of Canada. It is also key actor in holding the Government of Canada accountable to its poverty reduction targets.

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<sup>147</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, *Blueprint for Transformation: The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty* (Government of Canada, 2023), <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual.html>

<sup>148</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, *Blueprint for Transformation*, 25-26.

<sup>149</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, *Blueprint for Transformation*, 22.

<sup>150</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, *Blueprint for Transformation*, 30.

<sup>151</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, *Blueprint for Transformation*, 6-7.



There are different ways of costing poverty and its impacts. A 2018 estimate from the U.S. for the cost of child poverty alone was approximately \$1.03 trillion annually. Included were the lost costs of productivity, health and crime costs, and increased costs of child homelessness and maltreatment.<sup>152</sup> In the U.K., a 2016 report estimated the costs of poverty through public service costs and downstream effects. At approximately 78 billion GBP, the authors note the importance of public spending to reduce intergenerational cycle of poverty over time.<sup>153</sup> In 2008, Nathan Laurie estimated the private and social costs of poverty in Canada. When combined, the national estimate ranges between \$73B–\$86B (in 2007 dollars).<sup>154</sup> However calculated, the costs of poverty are significant, with implications beyond those grappling with its immediate effects.

Building on Laurie’s approach, Charles Plante proposed the Laurie-Plante model to estimate the costs of poverty. The approach includes remedial costs, lost opportunity costs, and intergenerational costs. Plante prepared a cost estimation of poverty costs for First Nations in Canada living on-reserve for this report (see Appendix C). A summary of Plante’s findings is included in Figure 29 below. Plante recognizes that the approach errs on underestimating costs, and notes that the estimated costs of poverty for First Nations between \$3.5B and \$3.6B (in 2021 dollars) are likely much higher. The cost estimation provides, nonetheless, a helpful starting point to quantify the challenges of poverty using available Census data on First Nations.

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<sup>152</sup> Michael McLaughlin and Mark R. Rank, “Estimating the Economic Cost of Childhood Poverty in the United States,” *Social Work Research* 42, no. 2 (June 2018): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svy007>

<sup>153</sup> Glen Bramley et al., *Counting the Cost of UK Poverty* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, August 2016), 4, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/counting-the-cost-of-uk-poverty>

<sup>154</sup> Laurie, *The Cost of Poverty*, 19.



## FIGURE 29

### THE COSTS OF FIRST NATIONS POVERTY

#### Technical Notes on the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy Calculation of the First Nations Cost of Poverty

##### Charles Plante

Research Scientist, Saskatchewan Health Authority

Adjunct Professor, Community Health and Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan

##### Key findings

- Using self-identification as our indicator of First Nations status, we estimate that the overall First Nations cost of poverty in Canada in 2016 was between \$3.53 and \$3.62 billion per year in 2021 dollars.
- Calculating a precise dollar amount for the First Nations cost of poverty can ensure that the costs of not taking action to reduce poverty are not ignored in conversations about the costs associated with taking action.
- This overall cost estimate is the sum of remedial health and crime costs at the system and victim levels, opportunity costs associated with living in poverty preventing people from accessing and taking full advantage of economic opportunities, and the intergenerational impact of poverty on children.
- Our estimates are best-we-can-do-right-now estimates that use the best sources of information we have access to on First Nations communities in late 2022, the 2016 Census of Population. Data on First Nations communities are limited in Canada.
- We calculated our results using the Laurie-Plante method for calculating the cost of poverty which has been used to calculate poverty in Canada since the late 2000s. We calculated estimates using Canada's official poverty measure, the Market Basket Measure (MBM), and the globally used Low Income Measure (LIM).
- The Laurie-Plante method calculates and sums costs over three areas: remedial, opportunity, and intergenerational. These reflect costs associated with treating harms caused by poverty (i.e. health and crime costs), missed economic opportunities, and its intergenerational transmission to children.
- The Laurie-Plante method is designed to err in favour of underestimating costs, so the First Nations cost of poverty is likely higher than the numbers reported in this study.
- Greater investment is needed in foundational data infrastructure, concepts, and tools to support more timely and accurate studies of First Nations in Canada that can effectively support evidence-based decisions.



There is a business case for poverty alleviation. Examples of income-based interventions in Manitoba (Mincome), and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, highlight benefits for children and families. By stabilizing or supplementing incomes, the initiatives promoted health and mental health benefits, improved economic opportunities, and education completion rates. Although the Ontario Basic Income Pilots were cancelled too early to compile meaningful results, a survey of a subset of respondents indicated positive interim outcomes for health, mental health, economic opportunities, and well-being.

The cost of inaction on poverty at a national level directly and indirectly is in the billions of dollars. Impacts for First Nations are even more pronounced, given their unique history, experiences of colonialism, and intergenerational trauma. Reframing policy approaches to recognize the need for intervention in a sustained and meaningful fashion will be a first step in alleviating the direct and indirect burdens of poverty.

Numerous factors influence and are influenced by poverty. This includes race, gender, abilities, etc. A discussion of these factors is included as Appendix D.

The literature on the causes of poverty, its impacts on different groups, and the case for alleviation, insist on the relevance of place-based and intersectional ways of measuring poverty. Monitoring an issue does not on its own generate a solution, but by measuring and monitoring changes from a starting point, information can be generated and analyzed creating evidence for better decisions and building solutions.



TABLE 5

## CASE FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION BASED ON BASIC INCOME

JURISDICTION	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOMES	LESSONS LEARNED
<b>Mincome in Manitoba (Dauphin)</b>	<p>The Manitoba Basic Annual Income Experiment, commonly known as MINCOME, was launched in Manitoba in 1974. MINCOME compared low-income families enrolled in the experiment with a control group that did not receive the MINCOME benefits.<sup>155</sup> Three income support levels up to a maximum of \$5,800 (\$29,069.00 in 2015 dollars) for a family of four were tested, with adjustments for family size and structure. Families in the treatment groups received an income guarantee or minimum cash benefit according to family size that was reduced by a specific amount (35, 50 or 75 cents) for every dollar they earned by working.</p> <p>The MINCOME agreement also included a unique provision for a pilot project in Dauphin, where everyone would be eligible for a single specific treatment. This saturation site did not involve random allocation of treatments or a control group but was advertised as open to all who qualified.</p> <p>MINCOME concluded in 1978 without substantive research and no remaining budget for research.</p>	<p>In a retroactive evaluation in 2011, Evelyn Forget,<sup>156</sup> a health economist at the University of Manitoba, found that in households that collected MINCOME, primary earners on average didn't see a significant reduction in hours worked. "Secondary" and "tertiary" earners did work less, but in ways that were potentially beneficial (e.g., to care for family members and obtain education).</p> <p>Forget also found associations between MINCOME and positive health outcomes. Hospital visits dropped by 8.5 percent, with fewer incidents of work-related injuries, and fewer emergency room visits from motor vehicle accidents and domestic violence. Additionally, there were reductions in the rates of psychiatric hospitalization and the number of mental illness-related consultations with health professionals.<sup>157</sup></p>	<p><b>Conceptual Lessons:</b> There are difficulties with social experimentation when participants know they are being tested, when programs are delivered on a short-term basis, as well as sampling and response issues related to survey data. Challenges lie in the inherent short-term nature of a social experiment that seeks to address long-term responses and the biases that occur as a result of respondent selection and continued monitoring. It is inevitable that the limited sample and length of a social experiment will provide challenges in interpreting the evidence.</p> <p><b>Operational challenges:</b> There are complexities and costs of human and financial resources required to collect and monitor data in an independent entity.</p>

<sup>155</sup> Evelyn L. Forget, "The Town with No Poverty: The Health Effects of a Canadian Guaranteed Annual Income Field Experiment," *Canadian Public Policy* 37, no. 3 (September 2011), 293, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.37.3.283>

<sup>156</sup> Forget, "The Town with No Poverty," 286.

<sup>157</sup> Forget, "The Town with No Poverty," 300.



JURISDICTION	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOMES	LESSONS LEARNED
<b>Ontario Basic Income Pilots</b>	<p>In 2016 the government of Ontario announced that it would sponsor an evaluation of a basic income pilot, which was set up and made its first benefit payments in late 2017. These pilots were planned to run for three years, providing payments to 4,000 low-income people in Hamilton, Brantford, Thunder Bay and Lindsay.<sup>158</sup></p> <p>By the spring of 2018, the program was completing its enrollment phase. Payments were based on 75 per cent of Statistics Canada's low-income measure (LIM). The experiment came to a sudden halt in June 2018, when the newly elected Progressive Conservative government in Ontario announced the cancellation of the Ontario Basic Income Pilot (OBIP) experiment (benefits continued to be paid until March 2019, but research was ended immediately).</p>	<p>This case yielded limited opportunities to assess outcomes, as the pilot was cancelled before meaningful data or results could be compiled.</p> <p>However, the Basic Income Canada Network (BICN)<sup>159</sup> released a survey of 400 Ontario Basic Income pilot recipients, entitled "<u>Signposts to Success</u>". Respondents reported that they got and kept jobs, started businesses, pursued education and training, and improved the health and well-being of themselves and family members.</p> <p>Some 88 per cent of respondents said they were less stressed and anxious, and 73 per cent had less depression. Additionally, approximately 28 per cent of those surveyed said they stopped using food banks and 74 per cent said they made healthy food choices. More than half of respondents reported improvements in their housing situation, while nearly a third went back to school or sought skills training to improve employment. When cancellation was announced, anxiety and health problems returned, even worse than before for some and plans ended or changed.<sup>160</sup></p>	<p>There were operational challenges with OBIP:</p> <p>There was no saturation site to create a closed sample population.</p> <p>There was a lack of enrolment and randomization due to the continuing difficulty of recruiting participant (the OBIP enrolment process was adjusted mid-course). Although not as problematic as in Lindsay, under-enrollment was also a challenge in Dauphin in the 1970s despite promotional advertising.</p> <p>There were challenges in how income was tested. In the OBIP, the income tax system was used as an annual "income test" to calculate the amount of benefits a recipient would get. In all the other experiments, including Mincome, a separate monthly income test specially designed just for this purpose was administered to determine the monthly benefit to be paid. It is not clear whether the OBIP had established a standardized response to income fluctuations. At the time the experiment was cancelled, the OBIP did not yet have a plan to study administrative issues.</p>

<sup>158</sup> Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, "Ontario Basic Income Pilot," *Government of Ontario*, April 24, 2017, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-basic-income-pilot>

<sup>159</sup> Ontario Basic Income Network, *Signposts to Success: Report of a BICN Survey of Ontario Basic Income Recipients* (Basic Income Canada Network, 2019), 5, [https://assets.nationbuilder.com/bicn/pages/42/attachments/original/1551664357/BICN\\_-\\_Signposts\\_to\\_Success.pdf](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/bicn/pages/42/attachments/original/1551664357/BICN_-_Signposts_to_Success.pdf)

<sup>160</sup> Ontario Basic Income Network, *Signposts to Success*, 18, 25.

JURISDICTION	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOMES	LESSONS LEARNED
<b>Cherokee Band, North Carolina</b>	<p>Beginning in 1996, tribal members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina began to receive income from a gambling casino that opened on the reservation.</p> <p>Under the terms of the agreement with the casino operators, every man, woman, and child (there were 8,000 tribal members) received a percentage of the profits, paid every six months. Children's earnings were paid into a trust fund until the age of 18 years.</p> <p>The payment increased each year, reaching approximately, \$6,000 by 2001,<sup>161</sup> and by 2006, to roughly \$9,000 per member.<sup>162</sup></p> <p>The tribe continues to distribute per capita payments from casino revenues twice a year.</p> <p>The opening of the casino also increased the number of jobs available, in the casino itself or in surrounding motels and restaurants. These jobs were available to both Indians and non-Indians, but Indians received preference in hiring at the casino itself.<sup>163</sup></p> <p>When the casino opened, Professor Costello, an epidemiologist at Duke University's Medical School had already been following 1,420 rural children in the area, a quarter of whom were Cherokee, for four years.</p>	<p>Costello began her study with three cohorts, ages 9, 11 and 13, and found that those who were youngest when the financial supplements began had benefited most. They were roughly one-third less likely to develop substance abuse and psychiatric problems in adulthood, compared with the oldest group of Cherokee children and with neighboring rural whites of the same age.<sup>164</sup></p> <p>Four years after the supplements began, Professor Costello observed marked improvements among those who moved out of poverty. The frequency of behavioral problems declined by 40 percent, nearly reaching the risk levels of children who had never been poor. The supplements seemed to benefit the poorest children most dramatically.<sup>165</sup></p> <p>Minor crimes committed by Cherokee youth declined. On-time high school graduation rates improved.<sup>166</sup></p>	<p>When Professor Costello published her first study<sup>167</sup> in 2003, she found that the poorest children tended to have the greatest risk of psychiatric disorders, including emotional and behavioral problems. However, the poorest children in this study also benefitted most dramatically from this income supplement. Professor Costello also made another observation: The earlier the supplements arrived in a child's life, the better that child's mental health in early adulthood.<sup>168</sup></p> <p>Ongoing interviews with both parents and children suggested that this income top-up, which amounted to between one-third and one-quarter of poor families' income at one point, seemed to improve parenting quality.<sup>169</sup></p> <p>This income top-up also reduced community poverty: By 2001, when casino profits amounted to \$6,000 per person yearly, the number of Cherokee living below the poverty line had declined by half.</p>



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- 161** E. Jane Costello et al., "Relationships Between Poverty and Psychopathology: A Natural Experiment," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 290, no. 15 (October 2003): 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.290.15.202>
- 162** E. Jane Costello et al., "Association of Family Income Supplements in Adolescence with Development of Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders in Adulthood Among an American Indian Population," *JAMA* 303, no. 19 (May 2010), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20483972/>
- 163** E. Jane Costello et al., "Association of Family Income Supplements in Adolescence with Development of Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders in Adulthood Among an American Indian Population," *JAMA* 303, no. 19 (May 2010), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20483972/>
- 164** Costello et al., "Association of Family Income Supplements."
- 165** Jane E. Costello et al., "Relationships Between Poverty and Psychopathology: A Natural Experiment," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 290, no. 15 (October 2003): 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.290.15.2023>
- 166** Randall K.Q. Akee et al., "Parents' Incomes and Children's Outcomes: A Quasi-Experiment Using Transfer Payments from Casino Profits," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 2, no. 1 (January 2010): 102, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.2.1.86>
- 167** Costello et al., "Relationships Between Poverty and Psychopathology," 2026.
- 168** Costello et al., "Association of Family Income Supplements," 1954.
- 169** Akee et al., "Parents' Incomes and Children's Outcomes," 90.





## **PART IV: FIRST NATIONS WORKING GROUP'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DEPRIVATION AND ASSOCIATED MEASURES**

In anticipation of its collaboration with regional representatives, a set of indicators were compiled associated to the measurement of poverty's various influencing elements (Table 6).

Leveraging existing literature and measures of poverty, a series of indicators were compiled. Each indicator linked to a cause of poverty, e.g., income, housing, and a manifestation of its

effects, e.g., disadvantaged health outcomes, morbidity, etc. The main dimensions of the approach include, crime, education, employment trends, income, food (in) security, housing, condition of public infrastructure, healthcare, cultural integration and opportunities, mental health, environment, finances, early childhood conditions and child welfare, and equity.

TABLE 6

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Crime</b>	<p>Individuals living in poverty have increased interaction with the criminal justice system, both as victims and offenders.<sup>170</sup> Criminalization and crime are frequent occurrences in vulnerable and marginalized groups, meaning the labeling of someone as a criminal by making their activities illegal, or the action of turning an activity into a criminal offense.<sup>171</sup></p> <p>Indigenous peoples have increased interaction rates within the criminal justice system and make up a significant portion of the federal incarcerated population.<sup>172</sup> Individuals who have a criminal record experience barriers in gaining employment opportunities which can be a contributing factor for people to remain in poverty.<sup>173</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rate of incarceration</li> <li>• Rate of violent crime</li> <li>• Rate of non-violent crime</li> <li>• Rate of recidivism</li> <li>• Violence against women</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<p>A basic human right, when education is absent or inaccessible, the opportunities for individuals become limited, due to reduced qualifications and skill development to obtain employment.<sup>174</sup> The World Bank has identified education as being “one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability.”<sup>175</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools on-reserve</li> <li>• Rate of high school completion</li> <li>• Rate of post-secondary education (apprenticeships/trades, college, university)</li> <li>• Literacy rates (15-year-olds)</li> <li>• Numeracy rates (15-year-olds)</li> </ul>

<sup>170</sup> Matthew Ridley et al., “Poverty, Depression, and Anxiety: Causal Evidence and Mechanisms,” *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 370, no. 6522 (December 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aay0214>

<sup>171</sup> Lisa Foster, “The Price of Justice: Fines, Fees and the Criminalization of Poverty in the United States,” *University of Miami Race and Social Justice Law Review* 11, no. 1 (2020), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/umrsj11&i=12>

<sup>172</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 4 – Access to Health Services for Remote First Nations Communities* (Government of Canada, 2015), [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_201504\\_04\\_e\\_40350.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201504_04_e_40350.html); National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, *Poverty as a Social Determinant for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Health*.

<sup>173</sup> Lucius Couloute and Daniel Kopf, “Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment Among Formerly Incarcerated People,” *Prison Policy Initiative*, July 2018, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>; Wisconsin Policy Forum, “Barriers to Employment: Who Are Milwaukee’s Unemployed Jobseekers?,” *Presentation at Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Economic Development*, October 2015, <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/barriers-to-employment-who-are-milwaukees-unemployed-jobseekers/>

<sup>174</sup> Rune V. Lesner, “The Long-Term Effect of Childhood Poverty,” *Journal of Population Economics* 31 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-017-0674-8>; Caroline Ratcliffe, *Child Poverty and Adult Success* (Urban Institute, September 2015), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/65766/2000369-Child-Poverty-and-Adult-Success.pdf>; World Bank, “Education,” *World Bank Group*, last updated March 25, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview#:~:text=Education%20is%20a%20human%20right,-to%20ensure%20equality%20of%20opportunities>

<sup>175</sup> World Bank, “Education.”



INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Employment</b>	For people in poverty, both unemployment and underemployment impact resource adequacy, with labour “often the only asset they can use to improve their well-being.” <sup>176</sup> For instance, people who are in vulnerable or marginalized groups, are likely to be employed in precarious work that is unsafe, unhealthy, or humiliating, to make ends meet. <sup>177</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rate of full-time employment</li> <li>• Rate of part-time employment</li> <li>• Rate of unemployment</li> <li>• Availability of employment opportunities</li> <li>• Rate of unpaid/care work</li> <li>• Precarious job</li> </ul>
<b>Income</b>	While recognized as an insufficient indicator on its own, income can still provide helpful insights to existing gaps within society. When people do not have enough money to meet their needs for daily life, it causes many barriers in fulfilling necessities like food, amenities, services, adequate housing, and ability to participate in society. <sup>178</sup> The absence of basic necessities can have a detrimental impact on a person’s housing, <sup>179</sup> physical <sup>180</sup> and mental health, <sup>181</sup> relationships, <sup>182</sup> and child-development, <sup>183</sup> particularly through increased stress and unsafe living conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep income poverty</li> <li>• Relative low income</li> <li>• Low-income entry and exit rates (persons of low-income)</li> <li>• Median household income</li> <li>• Median employment income</li> <li>• Level of income distribution/income inequality</li> </ul>

<sup>176</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Employment and Decent Work,” *United Nations*, 2007, <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/poverty-eradication/employment-and-decent-work>

<sup>177</sup> David L. Blustein et al., “The Uncertain State of Work in the U.S.: Profiles of Decent Work and Precarious Work,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 122 (October, 2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103481>

<sup>178</sup> Townsend, Poverty in the United Kingdom; Martin Ravallion and Shaohua Chen, “Weakly Relative Poverty,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 93, no. 4 (November 2011): 1252, <https://direct.mit.edu/rest/article/93/4/1251/57921/Weakly-Relative-Poverty>

<sup>179</sup> Samantha J. Boch et al., “‘Home Is Where the Health Is’: Housing Quality and Adult Health Outcomes in the Survey of Income and Program Participation,” *Preventive Medicine* 132 (March 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jypmed.2020.105990>

<sup>180</sup> Kyle H. O’Brien, “Social Determinants of Health: The How, Who, and Where Screenings are Occurring; a Systematic Review,” *Social Work in Health Care* 58, no. 8 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2019.1645795>

<sup>181</sup> Ridley et al., “Poverty, Depression, and Anxiety.”

<sup>182</sup> Heidi Gilroy, Angeles Nava, and Judith McFarlane, “Developing a Theory of Economic Solvency for Women Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence,” *Violence Against Women* 26, no. 9 (July 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219853366>; Heidi Gilroy et al., “Poverty, Partner Abuse, and Women’s Mental Health: New Knowledge for Better Practice,” *Journal of Social Service Research* 41, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2014.972010>

<sup>183</sup> Orazio Attanasio, Sarah Cattani, and Costas Meghir, “Early Childhood Development, Human Capital, and Poverty,” *Annual Review of Economics* 14 (June 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-092821-053234>; John M. Pascoe et al., “Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States,” *Pediatrics* 137, no. 4 (April 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-0340>



INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Food (in)security</b>	<p>Health Canada defines it as “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.”<sup>184</sup> The absence or insufficiency of food can have detrimental impacts on both a person’s physical and mental health and overall well-being.</p> <p>One of the causes of food insecurity is related to financial barriers, and is experienced at increased rates in households with low-incomes, single parent households, renter households, and among Black or Indigenous peoples.<sup>185</sup></p> <p>For Indigenous peoples, food insecurity also relates to the barriers in accessing traditional foods, which is important as it fulfils “cultural, spiritual, and traditional values, along with enhanced nutrition and health, food security, ways of knowing, and an ongoing connection to land and water.”<sup>186</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility to traditional foods (including through hunting, fishing, gathering, and/or trapping)</li><li>• Food sovereignty</li><li>• Disposable income spent on food</li><li>• Number of food insecure households</li></ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is important to support both stability and quality of life. Poverty can impact a person’s ability to obtain adequate housing. Without adequate housing, there are increased instances of family tension, violence (particularly against women), mental health issues, and increased likelihood of homelessness.<sup>187</sup> Adequate housing can help to alleviate the impacts of poverty, but inadequate housing can perpetuate them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Levels of safe and adequate housing</li><li>• Cost of shelter</li><li>• Levels of overcrowded housing</li><li>• Rate of relative homelessness</li><li>• Rate of chronic homelessness</li><li>• Rate of access to broadband connectivity/speeds</li><li>• Housing requiring major repairs</li><li>• Housing waitlists</li><li>• Water advisories</li></ul>

<sup>184</sup> Health Canada, “Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Overview,” *Government of Canada*, last updated February 18, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview.html>

<sup>185</sup> Tarasuk and Mitchell, *Household Food Insecurity in Canada: 2017-2018*, 4.

<sup>186</sup> Laurie Chan et al., *First Nations Food, Nutrition, and Environment Study Final Report for Eight Assembly of First Nations Regions: Draft Comprehensive Technical Report* (Assembly of First Nations, University of Ottawa, and Université de Montréal, 2019), Unpublished Document, 148, [https://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/FNFNES\\_draft\\_technical\\_report\\_Nov\\_2\\_\\_2019.pdf](https://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/FNFNES_draft_technical_report_Nov_2__2019.pdf)

<sup>187</sup> Emma Baker et al., “Poor Housing Quality: Prevalence and Health Effects,” *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 44, no. 4 (August 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2016.1197714>; Environment, Climate Change and Health (ECH), “WHO Housing and Health Guidelines,” *World Health Organization*, November 23, 2018, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550376>





INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Public infrastructure</b>	<p>The condition of public infrastructure in a community is important to promoting well-being, by increasing productivity through the availability of services and material goods. Community infrastructure can include things like transportation systems, health and social service centres, public safety and emergency services, parks, recreation, art centres, and government and legal institutions.<sup>188</sup></p> <p>The availability and accessibility of public infrastructure is an integral component to support people meeting their needs e.g., health services, as well as promote social connectedness e.g., recreation centres. In the absence of infrastructure, additional barriers can occur which can hinder a person's well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health centres</li> <li>• Reliable and public transportation</li> <li>• Public safety and emergency services</li> <li>• Recreation centre</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<p>Those who live in conditions of poverty often experience reduced health, and those who have poor health are also more likely to live in poverty.<sup>189</sup> Living in poverty can contribute to chronic health conditions e.g., heart disease,<sup>190</sup> worse mental health,<sup>191</sup> increased risk of mortality,<sup>192</sup> and a lower life expectancy.<sup>193</sup></p> <p>Vulnerable and marginalized populations, like Indigenous peoples, experience increased barriers in accessing health care as some reside in remote communities. Additionally, there are major gaps in the quality of treatment, and the reduced presence of relevant traditional and cultural practices in providing care.<sup>194</sup></p> <p>Health challenges can decrease the quality of life, and living in poverty can exacerbate these conditions. Conversely, existing health conditions can decrease productivity and contribute to levels of poverty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to health care services in community</li> <li>• Chronic disease rates</li> <li>• Access to traditional medicine</li> <li>• Life expectancy</li> <li>• Reproductive health including services</li> <li>• Foregoing medical services and/or medications for any reason</li> </ul>

**188** Melanie Davern et al., "Using Spatial Measures to Test a Conceptual Model of Social Infrastructure that Supports Health and Wellbeing," *Cities & Health* 1, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23748834.2018.1443620>

**189** Dhruv Khullar and Dave A. Chokshi, "Health, Income, & Poverty: Where We Are & What Could Help," *Health Affairs*, Health Policy Brief, October 4, 2018, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180817.901935/>

**190** Roman Pabayo, Ichiro Kawachi, and Stephen E. Gilman, "US State-Level Income Inequality and Risks of Heart Attack and Coronary Risk Behaviors: Longitudinal Findings," *International Journal of Public Health* 60 (May 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-015-0678-7>

**191** R. M. Thomson et al., "The Causal Effects of Transition into Poverty on Mental Health in the UK Working-Age Population," *European Journal of Public Health* 30, no. 5 (September 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaa166.283>

**192** David Brady, Ulrich Kohler, and Hui Zheng, "Novel Estimates of Mortality Associated with Poverty in the US," *Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine* 183, no. 6 (June 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2023.0276>

**193** Raj Chetty et al., "The Association Between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 315, no.16 (April 2016), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27063997/>

**194** Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 4*.



INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Mental health</b>	Mental health issues can contribute to challenges for a person to participate in society e.g., employment, but conditions of poverty can also increase stress levels and mental health issues. For instance, those who live in poverty have increased rates of anxiety and depression. <sup>195</sup> A person struggling with mental health issues may struggle to effectively perform in the labour force. <sup>196</sup> Mental health issues are experienced at high rates for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and it is a challenge to access culturally appropriate, timely, affordable, and nearby mental health care. <sup>197</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological and emotional well-being</li> <li>• Mental health conditions</li> <li>• Access to mental health services/level of usage</li> <li>• Emergency mental health</li> <li>• Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>• Addiction and substance misuse</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural integration</b>	A holistic balance, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, is a priority to achieve wellness for Indigenous peoples. <sup>198</sup> Among Indigenous peoples in Canada, there have been losses of cultural practices, governance, and language. <sup>199</sup> These losses are connected to the loss of lands and resources, discrimination, and colonialism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access and application of traditional knowledge</li> <li>• Knowledge of/opportunities to learn Indigenous languages</li> <li>• Cultural and spiritual well-being and identity</li> <li>• Sense of connection to the land</li> <li>• Participation and engagement in culturally based programs and services</li> <li>• Sense of belonging to community</li> </ul>

<sup>195</sup> Ridley et al., “Poverty, Depression, and Anxiety.”

<sup>196</sup> Ridley et al., “Poverty, Depression, and Anxiety.”

<sup>197</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association, “Mental Health in the Balance: Ending the Health Care Disparity in Canada,” *CMHA National*, September 17, 2018, <https://cmha.ca/brochure/mental-health-in-the-balance-ending-the-health-care-disparity-in-canada/>

<sup>198</sup> First Nations Information Governance Centre, *It's Not in Our Culture to be Poor*, 3.

<sup>199</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Government of Canada, 2015), [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf); Kimberly Matheson et al., “Canada’s Colonial Genocide of Indigenous Peoples: A Review of the Psychosocial and Neurobiological Processes Linking Trauma and Intergenerational Outcomes,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 11 (May 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19116455>



INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Environment</b>	Impacts from climate change will exacerbate disadvantages that already exist, including food insecurity, <sup>200</sup> displacement, health, culture, infrastructural damage, and reduced employment opportunities. <sup>201</sup> Indigenous peoples in Canada are predicted to experience the impacts of climate change more dramatically as a result of their specific location. <sup>202</sup> Climate change also threatens First Nations' "ways of life, resilience, cultural cohesion, and opportunities for the transmission of Indigenous knowledges and land skills, particularly among youth." <sup>203</sup> This is especially detrimental to First Nations' well-being as they move towards the revitalization of ways of knowing, language, and cultural continuity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates of ecological degradation to land</li> <li>• Rates of severe weather event occurrence (wild-fire, drought, flooding)</li> <li>• Rates of displacement due to climate change events</li> <li>• Rates of illness/deaths related to climate change (e.g., pollution, heat, floods, increase of chronic and infectious diseases, water and foodborne disease)</li> <li>• Impact to traditional forms of food/livelihood practices</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	Financial management considers managing money, budgeting, and saving over-time. The way in which money management occurs can contribute to effective planning over-time and promote financial resilience. <sup>204</sup> Financial resilience is important to consider for those living in poverty. Financial resilience is the ability of a person who can remain stable during an unexpected financial emergency. <sup>205</sup> For a person living in poverty, a financial emergency could be a detrimental set-back without liquid assets, pushing them further into financial insecurity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person's ability to manage their money in usual circumstances</li> <li>• A person's ability to manage their money in a time of unexpected financial crisis</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> the proposed indicators relate to personal finances and may be difficult to measure at a community level.</p>

**200** Malek Batal et al., "Importance of the Traditional Food Systems for First Nations Adults Living on Reserves in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 112, no. 1 (June 2021), <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-020-00353-y>

**201** Health Canada, *Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate: Advancing our Knowledge for Action* (Government of Canada, February 2022), <https://changingclimate.ca/health-in-a-changing-climate/>

**202** Health Canada, *Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate*, 57.

**203** Health Canada, *Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate*, 57.

**204** Joseph Jofish Kaye et al., "Money Talks: Tracking Personal Finances," In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '14)*, Association for Computing Machinery, April 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2556975>

**205** Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, *Consumer Vulnerability: Evidence from the Monthly COVID-19 Financial Well-being Survey* (Government of Canada, November 2022), <https://www.canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/programs/research/consumer-vulnerability.html>



INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE MEASURES
<b>Early childhood</b>	<p>Children living in poverty experience negative impacts to their development, experience higher rates of depression, engage in anti-social behaviour, substance misuse issues, poor academic performance, worse health, and increased unemployment rates.<sup>206</sup> There is an association between a family in poverty and the likelihood that a child will experience child maltreatment.<sup>207</sup> This has been attributed to poverty causing parental stress and circumstances of inadequate living conditions that cannot be easily escaped.<sup>208</sup></p> <p>Indigenous children are disproportionately removed from their families, often stemming from investigations initiated by concerns of neglect, which is frequently intertwined with socio-economic conditions like poverty.<sup>209</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to affordable childcare</li> <li>• Rate of access to early childhood education</li> <li>• Children in care</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> early childhood education interventions have had significant, long-term, economic and social benefits.<sup>210</sup></p>
<b>Equity</b>	<p>There are unequal power relations and traumatic experiences perpetuated by the Government of Canada over First Nations and other Indigenous communities. Forced displacement, residential schools, and the child welfare system, among other issues, have had a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples.<sup>211</sup></p> <p>The result of these experiences have been the disproportionate disadvantage of Indigenous peoples relative to the Canadian population. Consideration of these experiences is important when evaluating the circumstances of poverty and well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential school attendance</li> <li>• Past child welfare involvement</li> <li>• Experiences of racism and/or discrimination on a regular basis</li> </ul>

**206** Pascoe et al. "Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States."

**207** Hyunil Kim and Brett Drake, "Child Maltreatment Risk as a Function of Poverty and Race/Ethnicity in the USA," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 47, no. 3 (June 2018): 781, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyx280>

**208** Kim and Drake, "Child Maltreatment Risk," 785; Leroy H. Pelton, "The Continuing Role of Material Factors in Child Maltreatment and Placement," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 41 (March 2015): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.08.001>

**209** Vandna Sinha et al., "Understanding the Investigation-Stage Overrepresentation of First Nations Children in the Child Welfare System: An Analysis of the First Nations Component of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2008," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 37, no. 10 (October 2013): 822, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23332722/>

**210** James J. Heckman and Ganesh Karapakula, "Intergenerational and Intragenerational Externalities of the Perry Preschool Project," Working Paper Series, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, May 2019, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w25889>

**211** Matheson et al., "Canada's Colonial Genocide of Indigenous Peoples.,"; Paul J. Kim, "Social Determinants of Health Inequities in Indigenous Canadians Through a Life Course Approach to Colonialism and the Residential School System," *Health Equity* 3, no. 1 (July 2019): 380, <https://doi.org/10.1089/heaq.2019.0041>; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth; Wien, Tackling Poverty in Indigenous Communities in Canada*.



## SUMMARY OF THE WORKING GROUP'S DELIBERATIONS

The approach was presented to a working group of First Nations collaborators. The collaborators and other experts convened in Ottawa on October 31–November 1, 2022, to review indicators of poverty and well-being.

Twelve workshop participants from six regions worked together to:

1. share their communities' contexts and experiences with deprivation;
2. define poverty relationally;
3. identify indicators to shape a new measurement strategy. In advance of the workshop, overview materials including draft indicators were shared with participants to offer a starting point for the discussion (see Appendix E).

This summary captures the proceedings without attribution and identifies considerations for a First Nations-informed approach to defining and measuring poverty. For additional First Nations voices on experiences of deprivation and alleviation in their communities, see Appendix F.



### In brief:

- Poverty is pervasive and often not discussed in communities.
- Poverty is structural and cyclical: it stems from colonialism and is perpetuated by existing policies and institutions.
- Deprivation is experienced differently by communities based on place and history.

Deprivation better captures the broad disadvantage across cultural, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions in First Nations. As defined by participants, Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to thrive. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies

and their ongoing impacts. It is experienced in a culturally relative multifaceted manner. Deprivation, holistically, disrupts the ability of First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.

**Note:** While there was agreement on the term deprivation, there was not consensus. A participant, upon review with colleagues, considered deprivation an imperfect term to capture the complexity of First Nations poverty.

To move forward with a focus on holistic wellness, measuring across physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, can build an understanding of how communities are doing and how they can be supported to thrive.

## WHAT WE HEARD

### 1) Poverty is pervasive and often not discussed in communities.

For many First Nations, poverty is a fact of life, and one that is often not discussed. It can be “like a dirty word” in some communities that “people do not talk about or see”, and in others out of pride and humbleness, something that is simply managed with people making the best out of what they have. Normalizing poverty, however, is not a way forward. At the intersection of decolonization and poverty alleviation lies a hybrid approach in which First Nations succeed wherever they are.

### 2) Poverty is structural and cyclical: it stems from colonialism and is perpetuated by existing policies and institutions.

Poverty goes beyond material possessions and money. When First Nations are forced to leave their community to find jobs or to access resources unavailable in their community, it can disconnect them from language, land, spirituality, and people. As one participant expressed, “if you want to work, you have to be ready to relocate.” Jurisdictional issues on- and off-reserve have repercussions not only for access to services, but on culture, spirituality, and a sense of belonging.



During the discussion, a participant framed the reality as “First Nations communities [living] in undeveloped conditions in a developed society.” Several participants highlighted the example of income assistance as a structure that recreates poverty. One participant highlighted how their community was breaking with the approach by leveraging their unique legislative environment to support skills development and capacity building for members of their First Nation wherever they lived. For most others, however, income assistance is an inadequate response to a pervasive challenge. “It breaks my heart,” as one person said, “when I know I am handing someone [the equivalent of \$5 per day] for two weeks of food.” The scarcity imposed by the approach creates a vicious cycle from which recipients cannot escape. For many, income assistance becomes a way of life because the costs of escaping it can be devastating. Without the support, homelessness, hunger, etc. are challenges but the support itself is insufficient to support an opportunity to thrive.

### **3) Deprivation is experienced differently by communities based on place and history.**

The experience of being deprived can be different based on where you live and the health of your community. Deprivation was generally described as the inability to live your chosen quality of life and lack of agency to make your choices. This stems from Intergenerational trauma and the legacies of colonialism

which also perpetuate deprivation. The ways in which deprivation is experienced will differ by First Nation, from remote places to urban centres and everywhere in between. The cost of food, limited access to food supplies, employment prospects, challenges accessing needed services, etc. are all influenced by where you live with consequences for your way of life.

### **An alternative term for poverty and its definition**

A multi-faceted issue, poverty is about more than a lack of income, but of deprivation culturally, socially, spiritually, and economically. To better capture the experience of not having what is needed to thrive, the term deprivation was proposed. Deprivation (rather than poverty), better captured for participants the institutionalized disadvantage experienced by First Nations in different ways.

To define deprivation and its impacts, participants developed the definition below:

*Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to thrive. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts. It is experienced in a culturally relative multifaceted manner. Deprivation, holistically, disrupts the ability of First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.*

Participants emphasized that well-being will be expressed and pursued in different ways based on the beliefs, values, customs, and cultures of different First Nations.

## INDICATORS FOR MEASUREMENT

Following discussion and deliberation, participants built consensus around eight dimensions and thirty-nine indicators as a starting point to capturing deprivation and measuring its change (Table 7).

There is work to be done to develop and test indicators that are relevant and practical for First Nations. The pilot projects could be opportunities to explore the feasibility of gathering

data for analysis against the proposed indicators. Units of analysis, e.g., First Nation, individual on Income Assistance, etc., as well as approaches to gathering data require clarification. In the following section of the report, IFSD prepared an illustrative approach. However, IFSD considers the approach to be a draft only that should be reviewed and revised by First Nations.

**TABLE 7**

**INDICATORS FOR MEASUREMENT**

INFORMATION AVAILABILITY		
AVAILABLE	PARTIALLY	NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

DIMENSION	INDICATORS	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY		
		AVAILABLE	PARTIALLY	NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE
1) Housing	Safe and suitable housing			
	Number of people in a dwelling			
	Number of transition homes on-reserve			
2) Education (across the entire community)	High school completion rate (incl. GED and ALP)			
	Literacy rates			
	Numeracy rates			
	Highest degree attained			
	First Nation (or entity) offering land-based programming for youth			
3) Food security	Rate of food insecure households			
	Presence of nutrition cupboards (or other community-led food security initiative)			
	Access to traditional foods			
	Water advisories			
	Potable water from source to tap			





DIMENSION	INDICATORS	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY		
4) Health	Rates of chronic disease			
	Access to health services in community			
	Mental health and wellness			
	Rates of substance misuse			
	Access to addictions treatment			
	Percentage of people foregoing health services for any reason			
5) Employment	Participation rate			
	Employment rate			
	Unemployment rate			
	Number of Band-offered jobs			
	Jobs with livable income wages in community			
	First Nations community corporation-offered jobs			
	Instances of unpaid care/work			
	Self-declared skills gaps			
6) Income	Percentage of population receiving Income Assistance			
	Total median household income			
7) Early childhood education	Availability of early childhood education in community			
	Number of children in care			
	Access to childcare			
8) Culture	Adult opportunities to learn Indigenous language			
	Youth opportunities to learn Indigenous language			
	Adult opportunities for land-based activities			
	Youth opportunities for land-based activities			
	Can you access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?			
	Would you like to access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?			
	Are there knowledge keepers in your First Nation?			



## Data collection and evidence generation

The discussion and consensus building on indicators highlighted broad considerations in the collection and use of data from First Nations.

As the indicators were being reviewed, there were concerns about certain types of data being used to harm or misrepresent First Nations. For instance, data on crime, e.g., domestic violence, youth crime, violent crime, and data on child education and pedagogical outcomes were identified as areas of concern. While many participants considered them relevant, concerns were raised about the use or application of the information to signal child protection concerns or to reinforce stigmas about violence and crime in some communities.

There is an important underlying message from the comments about measurement: as conceptions and measures of poverty are redefined, fostering an environment of information and learning for improvement and not penalization will be necessary. Empowering First Nations to collect their own information, use their own information for decision-making, and inform solutions will take time. As information is generated, maintaining a focus on learning to improve outcomes will be central to long-term efforts. Environment Canada, for instance, is responsible for measuring the weather, it is not accountable for the weather outcome that day. The same approach needs to apply when considering a change in measurement practices and information generation with First Nations, for First Nations, by First Nations.

## AREAS OF ACTION

There is no single solution to alleviating deprivation, but action can be taken to support communities in their journeys to wellness. Participants highlighted various areas of related action that could support thriving First Nations. These additional areas of action included:

1. Baseline of the current state: there is limited First Nations-based perspectives on how communities are thriving. A current state portrait can serve as a way to understand progress.
2. Build a child wellness index: focus on the next generation and supporting their development while healing and supporting the previous ones.

3. Develop solutions by capturing different experiences of poverty: gender, geography, trauma, etc. inform experiences and shape needs. Use this knowledge and experience to build better informed policy solutions to alleviating deprivation. A blanket approach to policy will not achieve change everywhere.

As the work on rethinking poverty and its measurement continues, participants have defined a starting point on which to build future efforts.



## PART V: TOOLS FOR TRACKING AND PILOT PROJECTS

Traditionally, charts and graphs have been used to convey complex data visually and simplify identification of patterns or trends. Today's data visualizations techniques extend far beyond the static content of charts and graphs.

Delivered via interactive web-based tools, modern dashboards can tell compelling stories by combining power analytics, rich graphical

elements, and place the user at the centre of the experience.

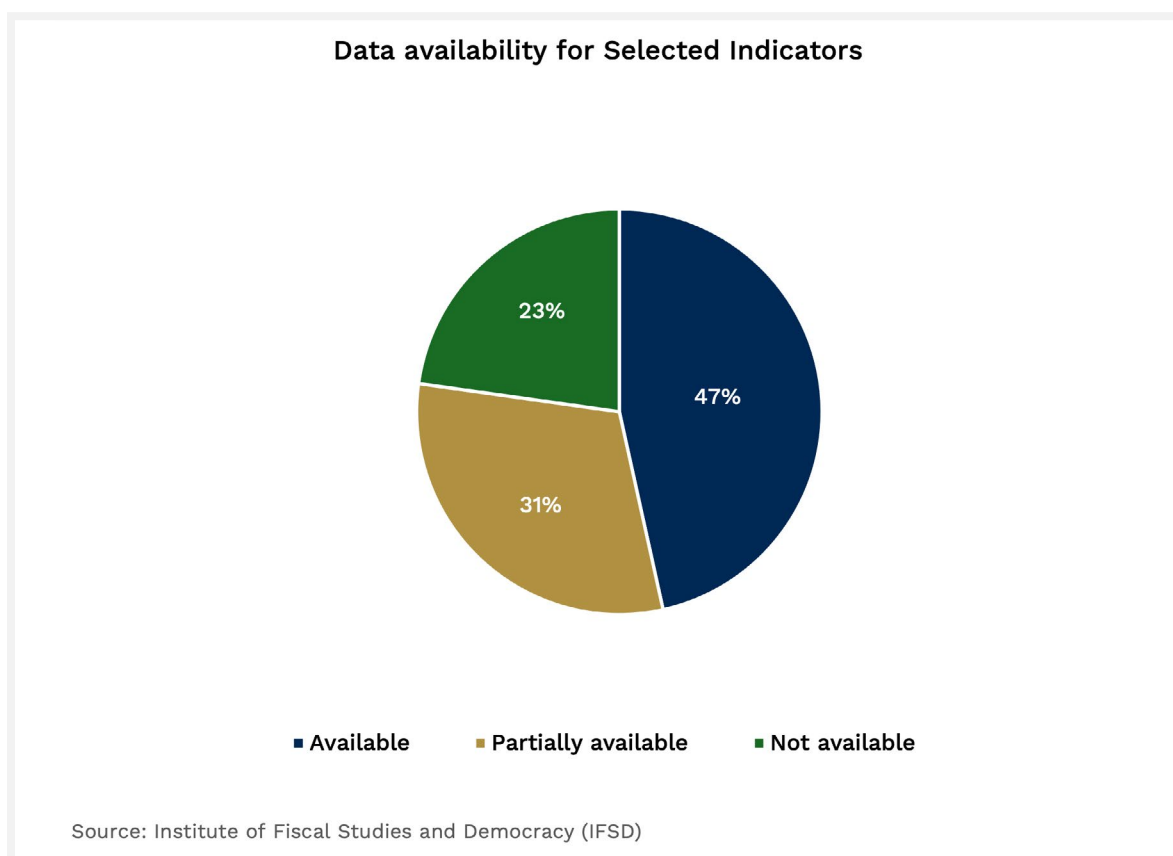
The interactive nature of these tools let users explore data by filtering to focus on their areas of interest, adjust time windows, and drill down through multiple levels of data to explore underlying datasets.

### VISUALIZATION APPROACHES: PROOF-OF-CONCEPT (POC) DASHBOARD

The Proof-of-Concept (PoC) dashboard is offered to suggest the “art of the possible” to depict data associated to measures of poverty

(Figure 30). The indicators are those selected and defined by working group collaborators to measure deprivation.

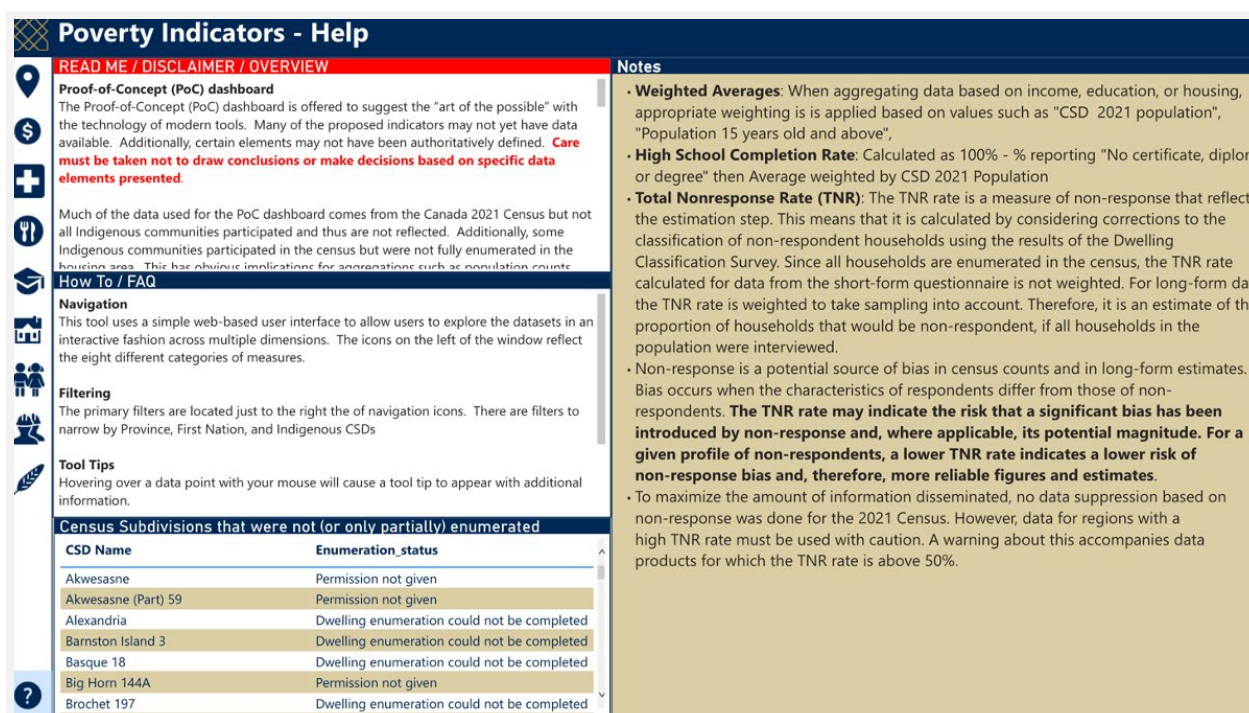
**FIGURE 30**  
DATA AVAILABILITY



Most of the proposed indicators (47%) do not yet have data available, less than a quarter of indicators have available data. There is work to be done to develop and test indicators that are relevant and practical for First Nations. In the following section of the report, IFSD prepared an illustrative approach.

The dashboard images below are for illustrative purposes only and are not meant to represent decision-making authoritative data. The intent of the PoC dashboard is to display how information can be presented interactively (Figure 31). Additionally, the mock-up highlights the gaps in existing available data. When considering a pilot or next steps in this measurement exercise, the need for primary data collection should be included.

**FIGURE 31**  
**DASHBOARD**



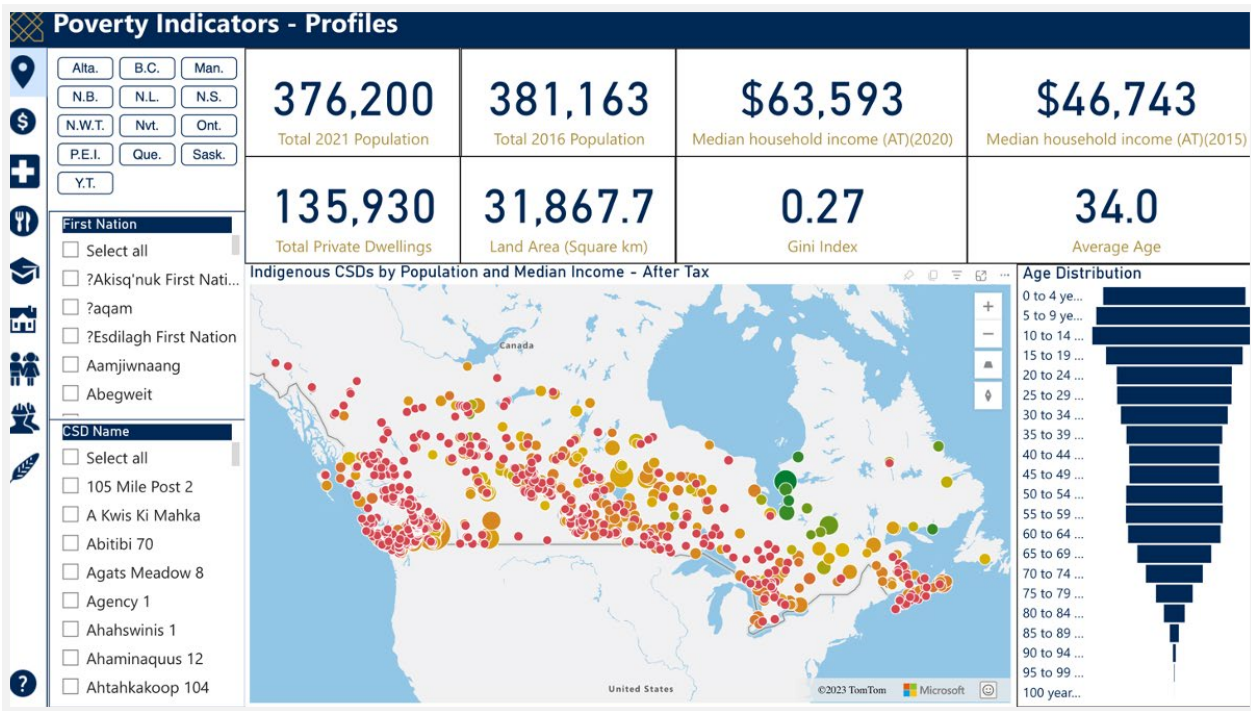
Much of the data used for the PoC dashboard comes from the 2021 Census but not all First Nations participated and thus, are not reflected. There are instances where some First

Nations participated in the Census but were not fully enumerated in the housing area. This has obvious implications for aggregations such as population counts, housing, etc.

DATA ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

To deliver power interactive solutions, careful consideration must be given to the data sources, granularity, hierarchies & relationships, and exceptions and evolution.

FIGURE 32  
POVERTY INDICATORS DASHBOARD

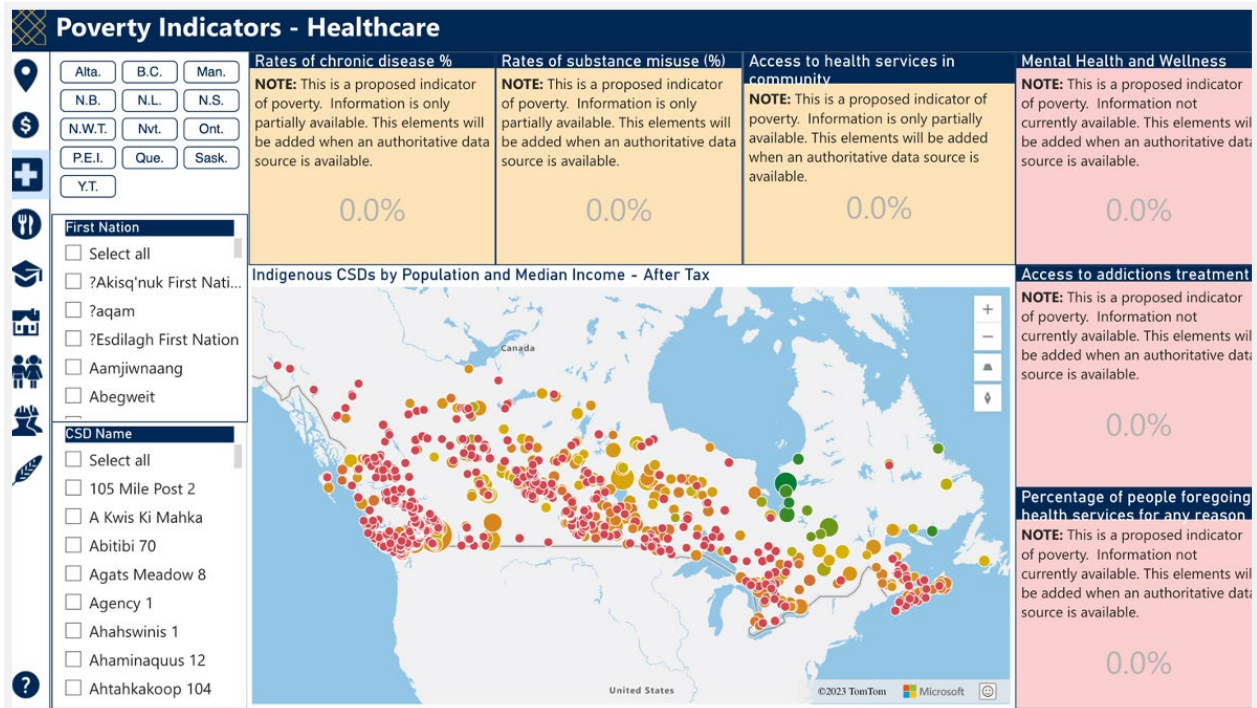


DATA SOURCES

Data should come from authoritative sources that users can trust to be accurate and reliable. For the PoC dashboard most of the data comes from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census (Figure 32). Data for Long Term Drinking Water Advisories comes from publicly available data from Indigenous Services Canada and FNHA.ca from January 2023. Data for other poverty indicators comes from other sources or may simply be unavailable at this time (Figure 33, Figure 34).

FIGURE 33

POVERTY INDICATORS - HEALTHCARE



GRANULARITY

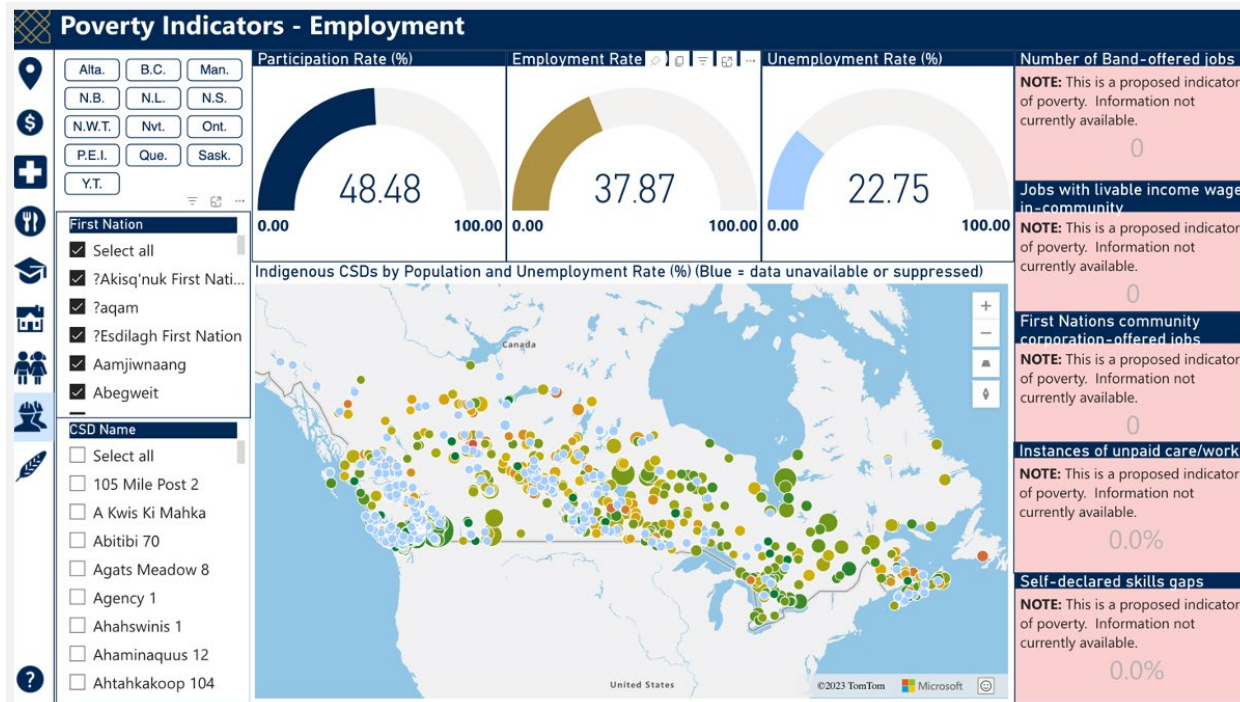
Careful thought must be given level of detail where the data is captured. Using a consistent level of granularity allows for effective comparisons different indicators. The PoC dash-

board largely uses census data captured at the level of the Census Subdivision (CSD). This was selected as it offers alignment on a territorial basis with First Nations.



FIGURE 34

POVERTY INDICATORS - EMPLOYMENT



HIERARCHIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The ability to roll up data to view information in aggregate or drill down into summary data to explore relevant details relies on consistent and well-constructed hierarchies. Hierarchies are defined by constructing relationships between datasets. More granular data is related to records in a “parent” dataset to permit roll ups.

Census data from the CSD level can be rolled up to the Census Division (CD) level and CDs can be rolled up to the Provincial (PR) level. This allows granular data, such as income in a specific CSD, to be compared to a larger surrounding geography. Other hierarchies can be used to relate multiple geographies (CSD) with

a single First Nation to aggregate granular data to generate insights at the First Nation level.

Certain hierarchies are rigidly and authoritatively defined such as the CSD -> CD -> PR used in the Census. Other datasets may not follow the same hierarchy and captured data at the same level of granularity. Without this consistency, it is difficult to identify correlations between variables on a dashboard. Statistics Canada has yet to produce an authoritative hierarchy that links individual CSDs to specific First Nations. The PoC dashboard uses a manual generated hierarchy that leverages other data sources to allow for roll ups.



## EXCEPTIONS AND EVOLUTION

Care must be given to identify and decide how to handle exceptions within datasets. An example would be where certain First Nations did not give permission for the 2021 Census. Should these gaps in the data simply be excluded or identified? How does a gap affect roll ups? As an example, a total for First Nations population for a province would be underrepresented if certain CSDs were excluded or the data was unavailable.

Datasets and hierarchies can evolve over time and care must be taken when making comparisons across time windows. New CSDs may be created or removed from one census to the next. As an example, in Prince Edward Island the boundaries and statuses of most existing census subdivisions (CSDs) were changed between 2016 and 2021.

The PoC dashboard is a starting point for future pilots and initiatives. By collecting and presenting data associated to the measure of poverty, and highlighting gaps in available information, subsequent work can build on the approach (Figure 33 and Figure 34). For instance, primary data collection by First Nations may be considered, along with analysis and evidence generation.

## PILOT APPROACHES

First Nations understand well-being holistically, with consideration of economic, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. While the perspective is rich and considers the breadth of wellness,

information across these dimensions is limited. To build typologies of First Nations for the purpose of pilot projects on measuring deprivation, available data for defining and analyzing characteristics is necessary.

Available information tends to focus on economic indicators of deprivation, i.e., employment, unemployment, and median household income. In addition to available data, primary research in this report suggests that there are two general clusters of First Nations. There are First Nations that are focused on employment and skills development to take advantage of economic opportunities within their communities and surrounding area, and there are First Nations for whom income support is a likely long-term trajectory with limited economic prospects within and surrounding their communities. Between these two general typologies are a variety of other First Nations' models. This view is limited and does not account for the many other contextual factors shaping realities in First Nations. However, the restricted approach is proposed due to limitations in available data.

To conceptualize the distribution of First Nations between the two general clusters, economic opportunity is considered. Economic opportunity refers to the ability to meaningfully participate in an economy, receive economic benefits, and reach one's economic potential.<sup>212</sup> While much of the relevant academic literature does not include a formal definition of economic opportunity, the

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**212** Jared Bernstein, "Improving Economic Opportunity in the United States - Testimony of Jared Bernstein, Senior Fellow, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Before the Joint Economic Committee," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, April 5, 2017, <https://www.cbpp.org/improving-economic-opportunity-in-the-united-states>; Natalie Spievack et al., *Exploring Approaches to Increase Economic Opportunity for Young Men of Color: A 10-Year Review* (Urban Institute, February 2020), [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101764/exploring\\_approaches\\_to\\_increase\\_economic\\_opportunity\\_for\\_young\\_men\\_of\\_color\\_a\\_10-year\\_review\\_1.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101764/exploring_approaches_to_increase_economic_opportunity_for_young_men_of_color_a_10-year_review_1.pdf)





nature of the research is often congruent with the above definition and often encompasses a place-based lens that considers how geography influences social and income mobility.<sup>213</sup>

Limited information is available on how First Nations individually and/or collectively define economic opportunity. Most of the available information is from advocacy and regional organizations rather than directly from First Nations. In the available material,

economic opportunity is typically referred to in larger discussions of economic growth and business opportunities.<sup>214</sup> The reviewed literature did not contain explicit definitions of economic opportunity in First Nations but did identify themes or goals intertwined with concepts of economic opportunity. These included creation of and access to good paying jobs;<sup>215</sup> increased business opportunities;<sup>216</sup> increased local spending and economic base;<sup>217</sup> self-determination and economic growth/

**213** See for example: Ben Sprung-Keyser, Nathaniel Hendren, and Sonya Porter, *The Radius of Economic Opportunity: Evidence from Migration and Local Labor Markets* (US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 2022), <https://emacromall.com/reference/The-Radius-of-Economic-Opportunity.pdf>; Raj Chetty et al., “Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135, no. 2 (May 2020): 711–783, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjz042>; Raj Chetty et al., “The Opportunity Atlas: Mapping the Childhood Roots of Social Mobility,” Working Paper, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, February 2020, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w25147>; Peter Bergman et al., “Creating Moves to Opportunity: Experimental Evidence on Barriers to Neighborhood Choice,” Working Paper, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, January 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w26164>; Riley Wilson, “Moving to Economic Opportunity: The Migration Response to the Fracking Boom,” *Journal of Human Resources* 57, no. 3 (May 2022): 918–955, <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.57.3.0817-8989R2>; Emily Parker, Laura Tach, and Cassandra Robertson, “Do Federal Place-Based Policies Improve Economic Opportunity in Rural Communities?,” *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8, no. 4 (May 2022): 125–54, <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.4.06>; Rourke O’Brien et al., “Structural Racism, Economic Opportunity and Racial Health Disparities: Evidence from U.S. Counties,” *SSM - Population Health* 11 (August 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100564>

**214** Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, “Kahnawà:ke Economic Opportunity Fact Sheet,” *Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke*, September 13, 2018, <http://www.kahnawake.com/legalcannabis/attachments/Cannabis-KahnawakeEconomicDevelopmentFactSheet-Sept13-2018.pdf>; Indigenous Leadership Initiative, “Indigenous-Led Conservation: Creating Jobs and Economic Opportunity,” *Indigenous Leadership Initiative*, accessed March 26, 2024, <https://www.ilinationhood.ca/publications/backgroundereconomics>; Canadian Association of Native Development Officers et al., “National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022: Pathways to Socioeconomic Parity for Indigenous Peoples,” *National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada*, June 2022, [https://niestrategy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/NIES\\_English\\_FullStrategy.pdf](https://niestrategy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/NIES_English_FullStrategy.pdf); British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, “Economic Development Toolkit: Black Book Series,” *Assembly of First Nations*, 2019, <https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/docs/blackbooks/Black%20Book%20Series%202020%20FINAL-02-18-2020.pdf>

**215** Ken Coates, *Options for Indigenous Economic Empowerment and Prosperity*, in *Nation Rebuilding Series, Volume 6* (Northern Policy Institute, 2022), [https://www.northernpolicy.ca/upload/documents/nrs-series/nation-rebuilding-series\\_v6-2022-11-03.pdf](https://www.northernpolicy.ca/upload/documents/nrs-series/nation-rebuilding-series_v6-2022-11-03.pdf); Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, “Kahnawà:ke Economic Opportunity Fact Sheet;” Indigenous Leadership Initiative, “Indigenous-Led Conservation;” Canadian Association of Native Development Officers et al., “National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022;” British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, “Economic Development Toolkit”

**216** Indigenous Leadership Initiative, “Indigenous-Led Conservation;” Canadian Association of Native Development Officers et al., “National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022;” British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, “Economic Development Toolkit;” Coates, *Options for Indigenous Economic Empowerment and Prosperity*

**217** Indigenous Leadership Initiative, “Indigenous-Led Conservation;” Canadian Association of Native Development Officers et al., “National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022;” British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, “Economic Development Toolkit”



participation on own terms;<sup>218</sup> and benefits that are provided to the community and/or revenues to support community projects/needs.<sup>219</sup>

While consistent with the general definition, an important distinction in First Nations' views of economic opportunity is the emphasis on the community. While non-Indigenous literature sometimes concerns itself with individual economic opportunity, literature about First Nations and Indigenous communities consistently emphasizes the importance of economic opportunities benefiting an entire community.

Researchers often use indicators such as household income, poverty rates, employment/unemployment rates, school enrollment and graduation rates, etc. to measure economic opportunity.<sup>220</sup> Often these indicators are measured over time as a way of understanding

economic mobility.<sup>221</sup> In some cases, like the Child Opportunity Index, researchers combine multiple of these indicators to produce opportunity indices.<sup>222</sup> Nonetheless, the underlying data remains similar in nature (i.e., employment rates, income, etc.).<sup>223</sup>

In general, efforts used to measure economic opportunity are often best understood as proxies—they do not directly measure the level of opportunity, but outcomes resulting from the presence of economic opportunity.

To build possible typologies for pilot projects in poverty alleviation, three variables from the Census are used as proxies to assess the presence of economic opportunities in First Nations. The variables are: employment, unemployment, and after-tax income of private household (used to estimate a poverty gap relative to the MBM) (Table 8).

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**218** First Nations Information Governance Centre, *It's Not in Our Culture to Be Poor*; British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, "Economic Development Toolkit."

**219** Canadian Association of Native Development Officers et al., "National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022;" British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, "Economic Development Toolkit;" Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, "Kahnawà:ke Economic Opportunity Fact Sheet."

**220** Clemens Noelke et al., *Child Opportunity Index 3.0 Technical Documentation* (Brandeis University, March 13, 2024), [https://www.diversitydatakids.org/sites/default/files/file/COI30\\_TechDoc\\_20240313.pdf](https://www.diversitydatakids.org/sites/default/files/file/COI30_TechDoc_20240313.pdf); Daniel F. Martinez et al., "Connecting to Economic Opportunity: The Role of Public Transport in Promoting Women's Employment in Lima," *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy* 3 (March 2020): 1-23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41996-019-00039-9>; Spievack et al., *Exploring Approaches to Increase Economic Opportunity for Young Men of Color: A 10-Year Review*; Bergman et al., "Creating Moves to Opportunity;" Chetty et al., "Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States;" Chetty et al., "The Opportunity Atlas"

**221** Bergman et al., "Creating Moves to Opportunity;" Chetty et al., "Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States;" Martinez et al., "Connecting to Economic Opportunity."

**222** Noelke et al., *Child Opportunity Index 3.0 Technical Documentation*.

**223** Multiple institutions in the United States have developed interactive maps to graphically depict the distribution of opportunity across census tracts. These efforts include Opportunity Insights' *Opportunity Atlas* and diversitydatakids.org's Child Opportunity Index map.

Opportunity Insights, "The Opportunity Atlas," accessed March 26, 2024, <https://opportunityatlas.org/>; diversitydatakids.org, "Opportunity Index Interactive Map," *Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University*, 2024, <https://diversitydatakids.org/maps/>



TABLE 8

TERM	STATISTICS CANADA'S DEFINITION
After-tax income of private household	<p>"After-tax income refers to total income less income taxes of the statistical unit during a specified reference period. Income taxes refers to the sum of federal income taxes, provincial and territorial income taxes, less abatement where applicable. Provincial and territorial income taxes include health care premiums in certain jurisdictions. Abatement reduces the federal income taxes payable by persons residing in Quebec or in certain self-governing Yukon First Nation settlement lands."</p> <p>"Private household refers to a person or group of persons who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada or abroad. The household universe is divided into two sub-universes on the basis of whether the household is occupying a collective dwelling or a private dwelling. The latter is a private household."<sup>224</sup></p>
Employment rate	<p>"The employment rate is the number of persons employed expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over. The employment rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, etc.) is the number employed in that group expressed as a percentage of the population for that group."<sup>225</sup></p>
Unemployment rate	<p>"The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force. The unemployment rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, etc.) is the number unemployed in that group expressed as a percentage of the labour force for that group."<sup>226</sup></p>

The analysis of the three indicators is sorted into three categories of geographic zones 1, 2, 3 and 4. Geographic zones are used (rather than provinces/territories) for sorting as location and road access influence opportunities, service access, and cost of living. It is also assumed that First Nations in geographic zones will share similarities. For instance, a First Nation in zone 4 in Ontario may have more in common with

another remote First Nation in Manitoba, than it would with First Nations in Ontario in zones 1 or 2.<sup>227</sup>

The Census data available for First Nations by indicator varies, as reflected in the n-values for employment, unemployment, and the poverty gap. Most First Nations (nearly 80%) are in zones 1 and 2, and the remaining 20% are in zones 3 and 4.

<sup>224</sup> Statistics Canada, "After-Tax Income of Private Household," *Government of Canada*, last updated March 6, 2024, <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&Id=103392>

<sup>225</sup> Statistics Canada, "Unemployment Rate, Participation Rate and Employment Rate."

<sup>226</sup> Statistics Canada, "Unemployment Rate, Participation Rate and Employment Rate."

<sup>227</sup> See for instance: Helaina Gaspard, *Enabling First Nations Children to Thrive Report to the Assembly of First Nations Pursuant to Contract no. 19-00505-001* (Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, 2018), [https://www.ifsd.ca/web/default/files/public/First%20Nations/IFSD%20Enabling%20Children%20to%20Thrive\\_February%202019.pdf](https://www.ifsd.ca/web/default/files/public/First%20Nations/IFSD%20Enabling%20Children%20to%20Thrive_February%202019.pdf)

Analysis of the variables as proxies for economic opportunity suggest that most First Nations in zone 2 have rates of employment below 40% (Figure 35). Those in zone 1 mostly have employment rates below 50%. In zones 3 and 4,

First Nations tend to have employment rates around 45%-50%. This suggests that when comparing median employment rates, i.e., the midpoint, employment rates are lowest among First Nations in zone 2 (Table 9).

FIGURE 35

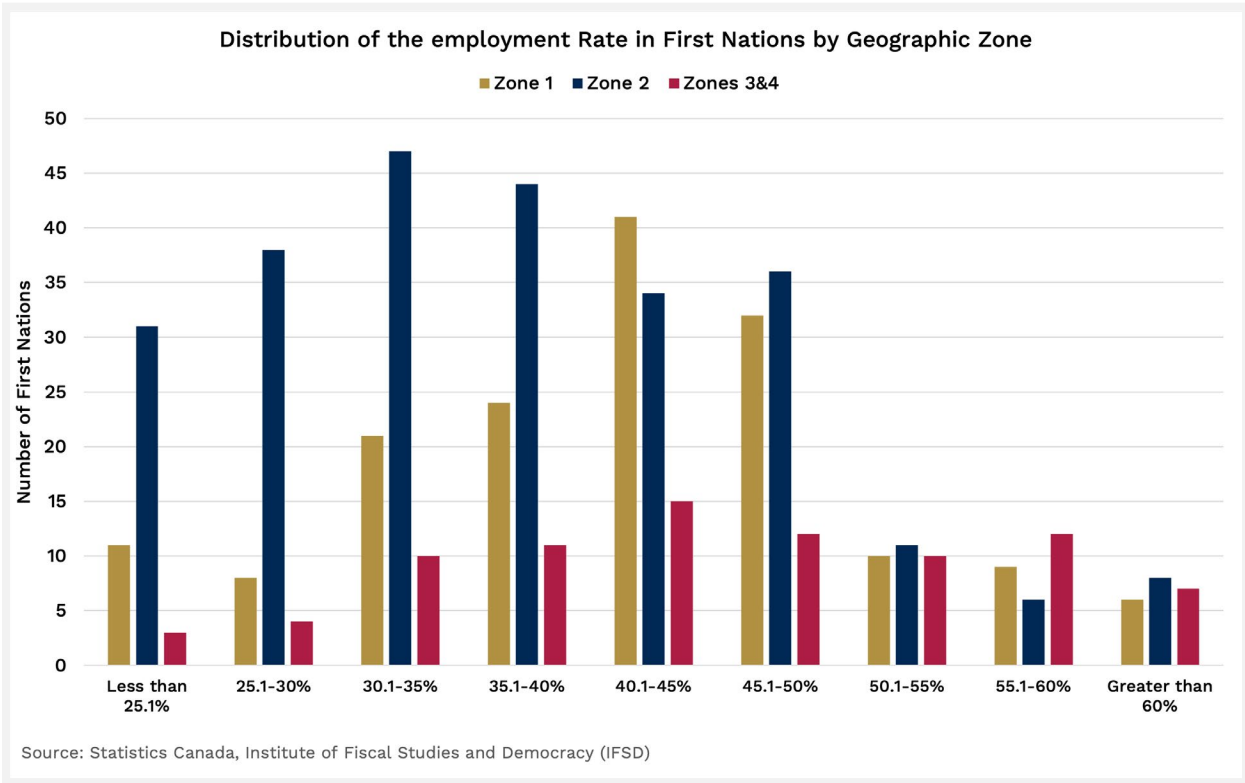




TABLE 9

DISTRIBUTION OF THE EMPLOYMENT RATE (NUMBER OF FIRST NATIONS)			
N=501			
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zones 3 & 4
Less than 25.1%	11	31	3
25.1-30%	8	38	4
30.1-35%	21	47	10
35.1-40%	24	44	11
40.1-45%	41	34	15
45.1-50%	32	36	12
50.1-55%	10	11	10
55.1-60%	9	6	12
Greater than 60%	6	8	7
Median (%)	42.1	35.9	44.8

Unemployment rates indicate that most First Nations in zone 2 have unemployment rates greater than 20% (Figure 36). First Nations in zone 1 tend to have rates of unemployment between 7% and 23%. It is First Nations in zones 3 and 4 that have the highest instances of unemployment below 15% (Table 10). While consistent with analysis of employment rates, the finding for zones 3 and 4 can appear surprising, given the remoteness of those First Nations. There are, however, possible

explanations. Zone 3 First Nations are few and tend to have higher after-tax income of private households, which could be reflected in the high employment and low unemployment rates. It is also possible that there was limited participation of First Nations in zones 3 and 4 in the Census, or in the labour market generally. This could have restricted available data to those First Nations with higher levels of employment.

FIGURE 36

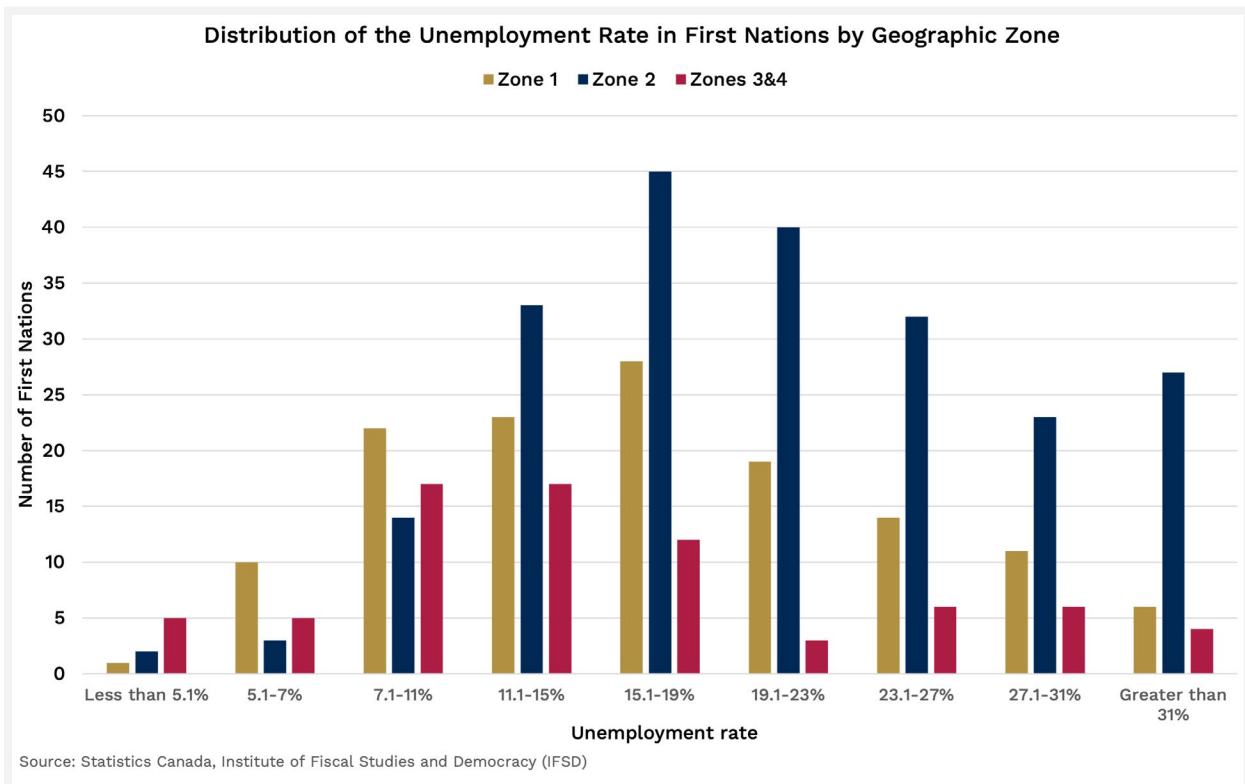


TABLE 10

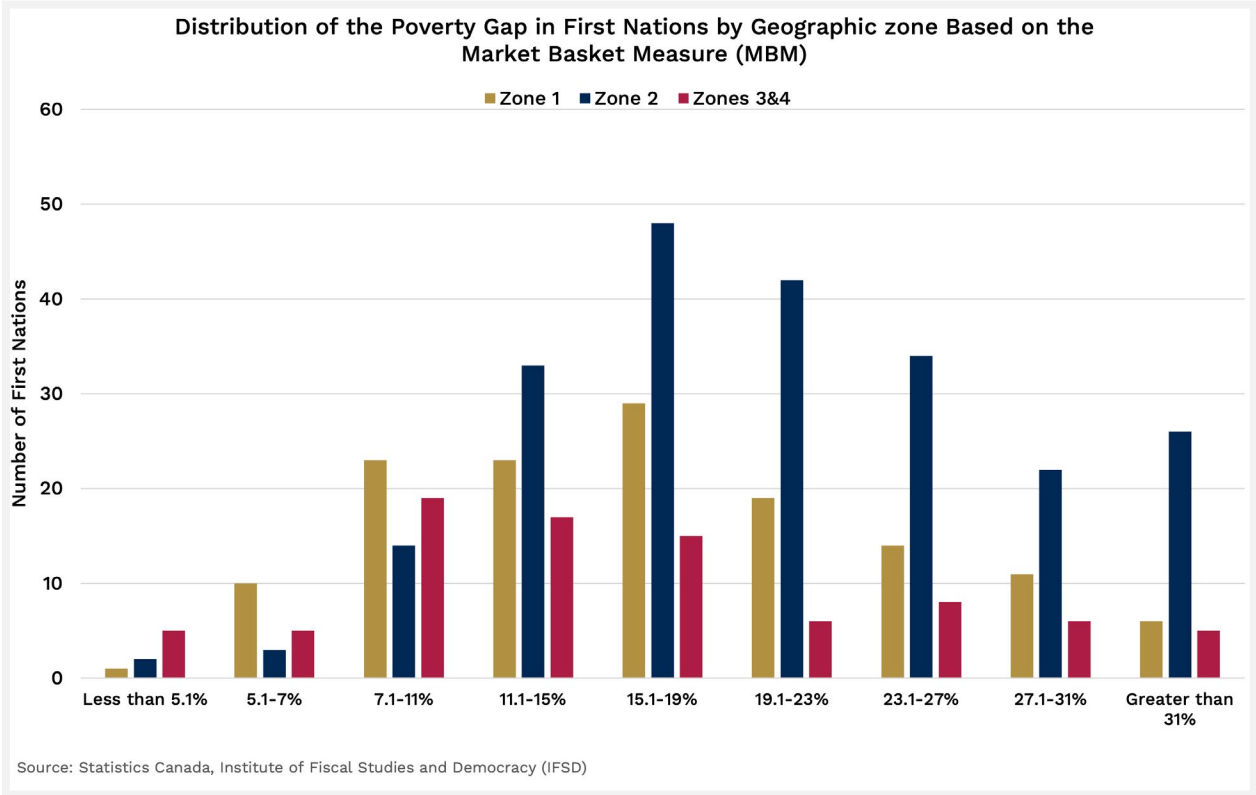
DISTRIBUTION OF THE EMPLOYMENT RATE (NUMBER OF FIRST NATIONS)			
N=428			
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zones 3 & 4
Less than 5.1%	1	2	5
5.1-7%	10	3	5
7.1-11%	22	14	17
11.1-15%	23	33	17
15.1-19%	28	45	12
19.1-23%	19	40	3
23.1-27%	14	32	6
27.1-31%	11	23	6
Greater than 31%	6	27	4
Median (%)	16.7	20	13.1



Rates of poverty gaps are highest among First Nations in zone 2, and lowest among First Nations in zones 3 and 4, with First Nations in zone 1 falling in between

(Figure 37 and Table 11)<sup>228</sup>. The trends reflect those of rates of employment and unemployment, suggesting that First Nations in zone 2 are most likely to struggle with economic opportunity.

FIGURE 37



**228** The James Bay Cree are excluded from poverty gap calculations, consistent with previous analysis in this report. With the highest total median household incomes among First Nations, their inclusion would overestimate the median household income for First Nations in Quebec. The provincial impact is relevant as the poverty gap is calculated against the province's MBM. The James Bay Cree are included in all other calculations.

TABLE 11

DISTRIBUTION OF THE EMPLOYMENT RATE (NUMBER OF FIRST NATIONS)			
N=446			
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zones 3 & 4
Less than 5.1%	1	2	5
5.1-7%	10	3	5
7.1-11%	22	14	19
11.1-15%	23	33	17
15.1-19%	28	48	15
19.1-23%	19	42	6
23.1-27%	14	34	8
27.1-31%	11	22	6
Greater than 31%	6	26	5
Median (%)	16.7	20	14.1
<b>Note:</b> The poverty gap analysis only includes those First Nations that have a poverty gap. Calculations are undertaken with the relevant provincial/territorial MBM for populations <30,000.			

The findings on variables associated to economic opportunity are not necessarily intuitive. First Nations in zone 2 between 50km and 350km from a service centre experience the most challenges with employment, and the highest rates of unemployment, with a median 20% rate of poverty gaps in communities. First Nations in zones 3 and 4 exhibit some of the highest rates of employment and lowest unemployment, and fewest instances of poverty gaps greater than 20%. The results challenge the idea that remoteness implies economic isolation. However, the sources of the employment and the representativity of the sample merit closer consideration. It could be that a small group of First Nations have an outsized impact on the sample if participation rates in the Census were overall low in those geographic zones.

Based on the analysis of variables associated to economic opportunity, it would be prudent to develop typologies for pilot projects of

First Nations by geographic zones 1, 2, 3 and 4, with consideration of their rates of employment, unemployment, and poverty gap. A sample group could be constructed with 80% representation from zones 1 and 2, and 20% representation from zones 3 and 4. From those geographic zones, the employment, unemployment, and poverty gap indicators could be used to identify First Nations from the majority and minority/exceptional groups. Using a combination of First Nations that reflect the average and those that are different from it could provide an information base to not only test indicators for measures of poverty, but to build an understanding of context and approaches to alleviating and perpetuating poverty, based on the experiences of the First Nations.

The assessment of indicators associated to economic opportunities by geographic zone raises several interesting questions and





consideration for future analysis. For instance, for First Nations in zone 2, are there specific barriers to employment, e.g., transportation, or a lack of surrounding opportunities? Do First Nations in zones 3 and 4, have replicable approaches to job creation, or are there results a function of place-based opportunities? How can gaps in data be addressed?

The pilot projects on measuring First Nations poverty and documenting strategies for alleviation should reflect what can be observed and should unpack why it is occurring.

The benefit of working on a sample basis of First Nations would be to collect the lessons and learnings on a typological basis for future implementation. For instance, if a remote First Nation is struggling to attract and retain staff for measurement, the challenge may be a consideration for others, and could initiate an alternative or scaled approach for measurement.

To build a combined approach, two pilot projects are proposed:

1. Testing the poverty measurement framework;
2. Designing poverty alleviation strategies and assessing their results.

Testing the poverty measurement framework:

1. Building detailed profiles of the current state of First Nations using some or all the proposed indicators.
  - ◇ This will require primary data collection at the level of the First Nation.
  - ◇ Existing information from the First Nation should be reviewed and assessed for application in the pilot exercise.

- ◇ Tools for collecting necessary information will have to be developed, and potentially, linked to existing data collection systems, e.g., in health, education, etc.
- ◇ At least one resource will be required to oversee the pilot project and capture its results.
- ◇ Given the learnings from this report, it would be helpful to resource First Nations engaging in the exercise to hire staff, acquire necessary tools, etc.

## 2. Identify contextual factors impacting or perpetuating deprivation.

- ◇ Analysis of the data collected through the profiles should be linked to contextual data about the First Nation, e.g., geography, surrounding economic opportunities, etc.
- ◇ The measurement exercise, including any primary data collection or retrieval of existing data should be recorded and assessed. Learnings and considerations for other First Nations should be recorded and shared.
- ◇ The pilot exercise should consider a review of the indicators for their completeness in practice. First Nations piloting the measurement exercise should be convened to revise the approach and propose alternatives, improvements, and changes.



Table 12 leverages the First Nation working group defined indicators to measure deprivation. Based on those indicators, considerations for definitions, measurement, and timing are highlighted. The approach is illustrative, for discussion purposes only, and should be reviewed and revised by First Nations engaged in the measurement pilot.

From the initial assessment, there are at least 9 measures for which data is available, e.g., through the Census, or could be retrieved through administrative data held by the First Nation, e.g., persons on Income Assistance. Census data and data from ISC would likely be the easiest to use as definitions and analysis already exist.

Most of the measures defined by the working group are reliant on First Nations-specific data and data gathering activities. This means that

operationalizing the measure will require clarity on the definition, the denominator, i.e., population assessed, the timing and frequency of data gathering, analysis, as well as protocols for accessing, holding, and using First Nations data. This is a significant but worthwhile undertaking.

The pilot on measurement indicators could be designed to consider the complexities and to support the collaborators in exploring them. For instance, as an initial step in the measurement pilot, it may be helpful to work with available information and select two or three new measures for which to build definitions, data gathering approaches, analysis practices, etc. Data gathering and monitoring is an ongoing practice and work in progress that should evolve with the needs, tools, and experience of a First Nation.

TABLE 12

INFORMATION AVAILABILITY							
AVAILABLE		PARTIALLY			NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE		
DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
1) Housing	Safe and suitable housing	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census	
	Number of people in a dwelling	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census, if overcrowding is used	
	Number of transition homes on-reserve	Identify whether transition homes exist, then count them	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
2) Education (across the entire community)	High school completion rate (incl. GED and ALP)	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census	
	Literacy rates	"Define literacy, possibly using recognized international standard Define denominator, i.e., population, and assess rates of literacy in the population using a sample"	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	



DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
<b>2) Education (across the entire community)</b>	Numeracy rates	Define numeracy, possibly using recognized international standard  Define denominator, i.e., population, and assess rates of literacy in the population using a sample	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Highest degree attained	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census	
	First Nation (or entity) offering land-based programming for youth	Identify whether land-based programing exists for youth in First Nation	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
<b>3) Food security</b>	Rate of food insecure households	Define food insecurity Define denominator, i.e., number of households, and assess rate of household food insecurity	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	

DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
3) Food security	Presence of nutrition cupboards (or other community-led food security initiative)	Identify whether food security initiatives exist	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Access to traditional foods	Define traditional foods Define denominator, i.e., population, or household, and assess rates of access	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
	Water advisories	Consider using Indigenous Services Canada's definitions and use of data	Indigenous Services Canda	First Nation	First Nation	Indigenous Services Canada	
	Potable water from source to tap	Define denominator, i.e., household Household survey within First Nation	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Household	First Nation	First Nation	



DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
4) Health	Rates of chronic disease	<p>Define chronic disease and/or diseases to be monitored</p> <p>Define denominator, i.e., population</p> <p>Engage epidemiologist or population health specialist to assess rates</p> <p>Explore availability of publicly accessible data for the First Nation for illustrative purposes</p>	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation or health centre	
	Access to health services in community	<p>Identify health services within the First Nation and their rates of use</p> <p>Identify perceived gaps in and around the First Nation for health services</p>	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Mental health and wellness	<p>Define health and mental wellness</p> <p>Define denominator, i.e., population</p> <p>Assessment based on individual reporting</p>	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	

DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
4) Health	Rates of substance misuse	Define substance misuse Define denominator, i.e., population Reporting based on aggregate health data or individual reporting	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Access to addictions treatment	Define access to addictions treatment, i.e., facility in First Nation, or access to treatment when needed Define denominator, e.g., adults, youth, total population	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
	Percentage of people foregoing health services for any reason	Define denominator, e.g., total population residing in First Nation Determine opportunity to capture foregone health service with individuals	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
5) Employment	Participation rate	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census	



DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
5) Employment	Employment rate	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census	
	Unemployment rate	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	Census, every five years	First Nation	First Nation	Census	
	Number of Band-offered jobs	Count of filled and unfilled positions reporting to and paid by the Band	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Jobs with livable income wages in-community	Define denominator, e.g., Band jobs only, other Define livable income Assess gaps	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
	First Nations community corporation-offered jobs	Count of filled and unfilled positions reporting to and paid by First Nations corporations, should they exist	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Instances of unpaid care/work	Define denominator, e.g., total population, households Count self-reported unpaid care/work	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	




DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
5) Employment	Self-declared skills gaps	Define denominator, e.g., total population, persons receiving Income Assistance Count self-declared skills gaps through survey or Income Assistance case data	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
6) Income	Percentage of population receiving Income Assistance	Define denominator, i.e., total population Calculate point-in-time percentage of population receiving Income Assistance or rate	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Total median household income	Consider Census definitions and use of Census data	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
7) Early childhood education	Availability of early childhood education in community	Define early childhood education and whether provider, e.g., First Nation, is relevant Count instances of provision within First Nation	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Number of children in care	To be provided by the service provider, along with their definition	First Nation data gathering, unknown	First Nation or service provider	First Nation	First Nation	



DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
7) Early childhood education	Access to childcare	Define access to childcare, e.g., provided by First Nation, available through family, etc.  Count instances of provision within First Nation or perceived access	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
8) Culture	Adult opportunities to learn Indigenous language	Define language learning opportunity Define provider Define denominator, e.g., total adult population  Count perceived opportunities or First Nation provided opportunities, etc.	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Youth opportunities to learn Indigenous language	Define language learning opportunity Define provider Define denominator, e.g., total youth population  Count perceived opportunities or First Nation provided opportunities, etc.	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	

DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
8) Culture	Adult opportunities for land-based activities	Define land-based activity Define provider Define denominator, e.g., total adult population Count perceived opportunities or First Nation provided opportunities, etc.	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Youth opportunities for land-based activities	Define land-based activity Define provider Define denominator, e.g., total youth population Count perceived opportunities or First Nation provided opportunities, etc.	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report or First Nation	First Nation	First Nation	
	Can you access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?	Define cultural ceremonies Define denominator, e.g., total population Count instances or rate of access	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	





DIMENSION	INDICATORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT	CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIMING IN DATA GATHERING	UNIT OF ANALYSIS, E.G., INDIVIDUAL, FIRST NATION	LEVEL OF REPORTING	DATA SOURCE	INFORMATION AVAILABILITY
8) Culture	Would you like to access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?	Define cultural ceremonies Define denominator, e.g., total population Count instances or rate of desired access	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	
	Are there knowledge keepers in your First Nation?	Define knowledge keepers Count instances or rate	First Nation data gathering, unknown	Individual report	First Nation	First Nation	



The other proposed pilot is the designing of poverty alleviation strategies and assessing results. To proceed:

1. Identify the tools, e.g., policy, funding, people, data, etc., that can be applied to disrupt the root causes of poverty, as well as approaches to monitoring and evaluating changes in the First Nation.
  - ◇ With consideration of the analysis from the pilot of measurement indicators, the First Nation and any collaborating supports or partners could work to identify approaches to target specific challenges to poverty in their community.
2. First Nations may wish to design a program that responds to the challenges they wish to address to mitigate or alleviate the effects of poverty.
  - ◇ For instance, if employment prospects and access are limited or non-existent, a potential strategy for alleviating

poverty could be income-based supports. If supports such as a UBI or GBI were introduced, their impacts could be monitored through the measurement framework by monitoring changes in the community.

- ◇ The lessons from the analysis could be considered for application in other communities.

The estimated time for developing, implementing, and evaluating the full pilot is approximately 3 years (Table 13), without consideration of implementing any programs based on defined strategies. It is estimated to take up to two years to design and implement the pilot to test measurement indicators. At least another year will be needed to define poverty alleviation strategies. To implement and observe impacts of the strategies, at least an additional five-year runway will be required.

**TABLE 13**

ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify pilot First Nations, with adequate regional, geographic, population, economic, and cultural representation</li><li>• Define pilot approach and prepare data collection/retrieval tools</li><li>• Brief participants, provide ongoing support, and assess initial results</li></ul>	8–9 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyze data collected by pilots</li><li>• Capture lessons on the operationalization of the measurement exercise</li><li>• Highlight analytic gaps, challenges, and successes</li><li>• Identify strategies, based on the analysis of findings, to disrupt poverty in the pilot First Nations</li></ul>	12 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define poverty alleviation strategies for pilot First Nations At least 12 months, and potentially longer for design with community input</li></ul>	At least 12 months, and potentially longer for design with community input.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Propose and implement the strategies (this will require supplementary resources)</li><li>• Monitor changes, relative to the starting point</li><li>• Report on findings and consider the relevance of the approach for First Nations with similar characteristics</li></ul>	Implementation and observation of impacts will take several years, i.e., at least 5 years.

First Nations engaged in the pilots should be convened regularly to share findings, challenges, and successes. Documenting the pilot processes and their results will be instructive for building a replicable approach to measuring

poverty and assessing strategies for alleviation. While the pilot approach will take time to design, implement, and monitor, its findings could support First Nations-led decision-making in defining a long-term sustainable approach.



## CONCLUSION

Peer reviewed literature and research on poverty is extensive. There are a variety of approaches to defining and measuring poverty. Monetary measures are often used for their ease of comparison and ready access to information. They are however, limited in capturing the broader context of individuals living poverty. In response, multidimensional measures that emphasize personal experience or place-based experiences were developed. While they are credited with capturing differentiated experiences, they can be challenging to aggregate and compare.

Existing federal expenditure data focuses exclusively on the income-focused programs, i.e., Income Assistance and Assisted Living. The programs consider poverty exclusively in monetary terms, and do not report information to assess the impacts of existing income-focused programs. A broader understanding of holistic wellness is needed to capture the multiple dimensions of deprivation to improve program and policy design.

Rather than measuring poverty, Indigenous approaches tend to be holistic and tied to

community wellness. As expressed by the First Nations collaborators, deprivation, rather than poverty captures the cultural, social, spiritual, and economic deprivation that many First Nations experience, that extend beyond income. To capture the pervasiveness of deprivation, collaborators defined it:

Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to thrive. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts. It is experienced in a culturally relative multifaceted manner. Deprivation, holistically, disrupts the ability of First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.

Building an understanding of deprivation will require measurement across a set of related indicators that capture holistic wellness.

First Nations collaborators defined a starting point on which future measurement efforts can build. Pilot projects on measurement and on the design of alleviation strategies would be steps forward to building a base level understanding of realities in First Nations. This information would be helpful to develop policy and program approaches that are connected to those realities.



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## **APPENDIX A**

# **OVERVIEW OF ISC EXPENDITURE DATA**



**NOTE:** On April 19, 2024, ISC informed IFSD that updates to the planned expenditure data for fiscal years 2022-2023 onward were required. To date (May 16, 2024), IFSD has not received the updated data. For this reason, slides 4 to 9 have been removed from this document.

## **Briefing: ISC Expenditure Data**

**DRAFT – For discussion only**

March 15, 2024

## Notes

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- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is a federal department accountable for providing resources to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis for program and service delivery.
- The department transfers resources to provinces and territories, and to Indigenous peoples (through contribution approaches).
- The analysis in this section is presented by Parliamentary vote structure, i.e., the way in which Parliament appropriates funds for use by the department and by program.
  - Votes 1 and 10 will be the focus of the analysis.
  - Programs are analyzed as reported by ISC and in IFSD clusters.
- The data provided to IFSD includes fiscal years 2014-15 to 2021-22, with planned expenditures for fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024-25. Authorities to date are presented for fiscal year 2022-23, as they are not yet considered final.



# Overview of Parliamentary vote structures

Vote number	Vote 1	Vote 5	Vote 10	N/A
Vote type	Operating expenses	Capital	Grants & contributions	Statutory
Definition	Funding for day-to-day items (e.g., salaries, utilities) where where total spending on capital assets or transfer payments is estimated to be above \$5 million per year	Funding for capital acquisition or related expenditures, generally for assets exceeding \$10,000 in value (e.g., buildings, vehicles)	Grants & contributions to other levels of government and private individuals/organizations (i.e. transfer payments) equal to or above \$5 million	Expenditure that Parliament has authorized through pre-existing legislation (e.g., Canada Health Transfers)
Voted on by Parliament each fiscal year	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Source: Department of Justice, "Quarterly Financial Report for the Quarter Ended June 30, 2018," last modified May 2022, <a href="https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cp-pm/qfr-rft/2018_q1/index.html">https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cp-pm/qfr-rft/2018_q1/index.html</a> ; Government of Canada, "Supplementary Estimates (B), 2020-21," last modified November 2023, <a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/planned-government-spending/supplementary-estimates/supplementary-estimates-b-2020-21.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/planned-government-spending/supplementary-estimates/supplementary-estimates-b-2020-21.html</a> ; Pu, Shaowei and Smith, Alex, "The Parliamentary Financial Cycle," Library of Parliament, revised September 2021, <a href="https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201541E#txt46">https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201541E#txt46</a> ; Shared Services Canada, "Quarterly Financial Report - For the quarter ended June 30, 2023," last modified October 2023, <a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/shared-services/corporate/publications/2023-24/quarterly-financial-report-q1-2023-24.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/shared-services/corporate/publications/2023-24/quarterly-financial-report-q1-2023-24.html</a>				
Note: Appropriations usually apply to a one-year period with the exception of Canada Border Services Agency, Canada Revenue Agency, and Parks Canada Agency which often receive two-year allocations.				



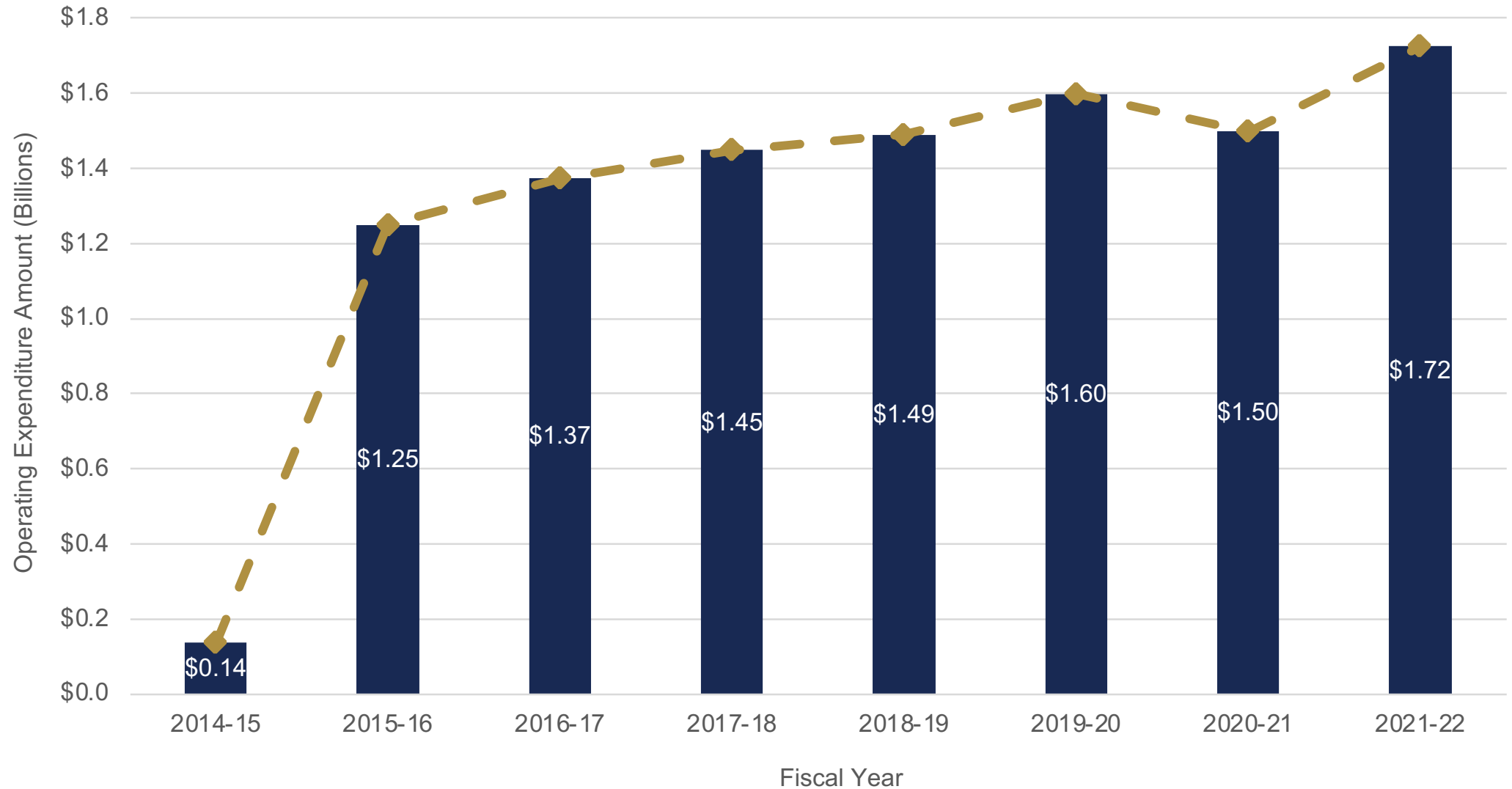
## Past expenditures, FY 2014-15 to 2021-22

## Notes on Vote 1

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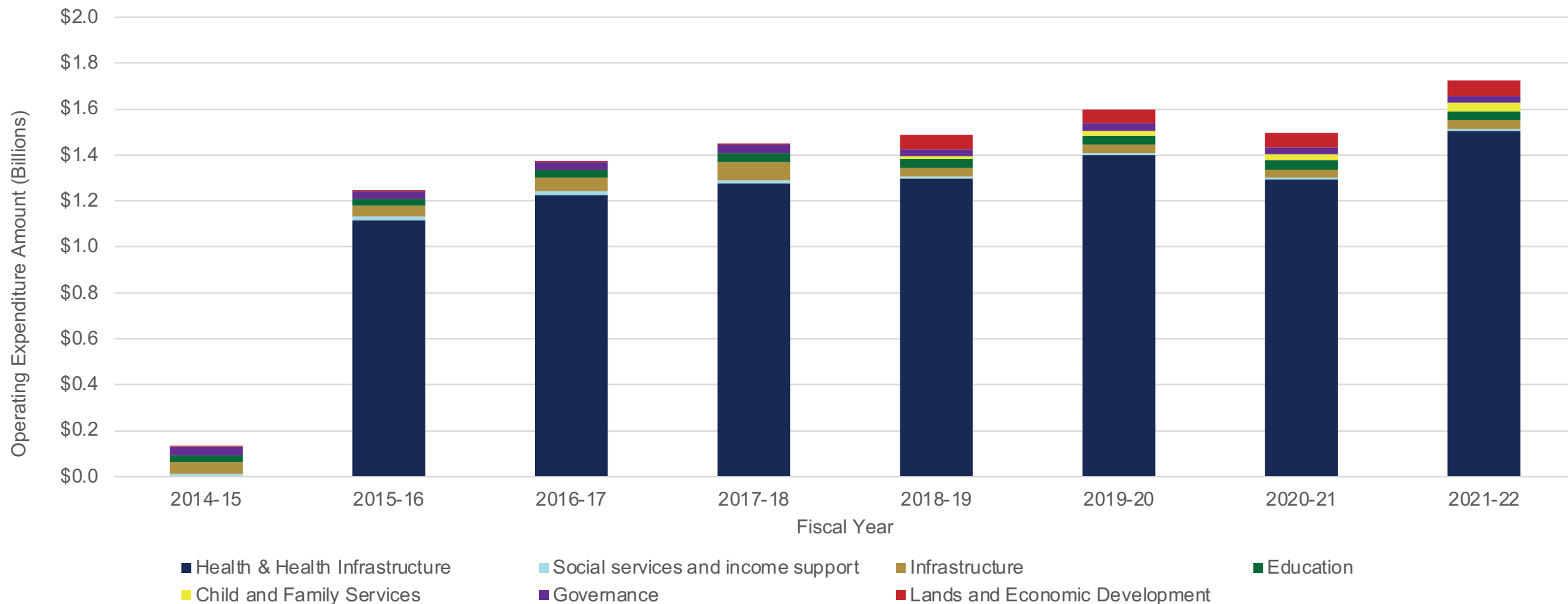
- Vote 1 expenditures generally increase from fiscal year 2014-15 to 2021-22.
- Health and Health Infrastructure represent the majority of expenditures.

## ISC Vote 1 - Operating Expenditures: Expenditure Amount by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 1 - Operating Expenditures: Expenditure Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Program Cluster



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: Until 2018-19, Indigenous Services Canada offered the program Social Development which included the sub-programs Assisted Living, Income Assistance, Family Violence Prevention, and First Nations Child and Family Services. In 2018-19, Indigenous Services Canada transformed all four sub-programs into their own programs. IFSD grouped Social Development under Social Services and Income Support because it included Assisted Living and Income Assistance. As such, estimates for Social Services and Income Support before 2018-19 include estimates for Family Violence Prevention and First Nations Child and Family Services.

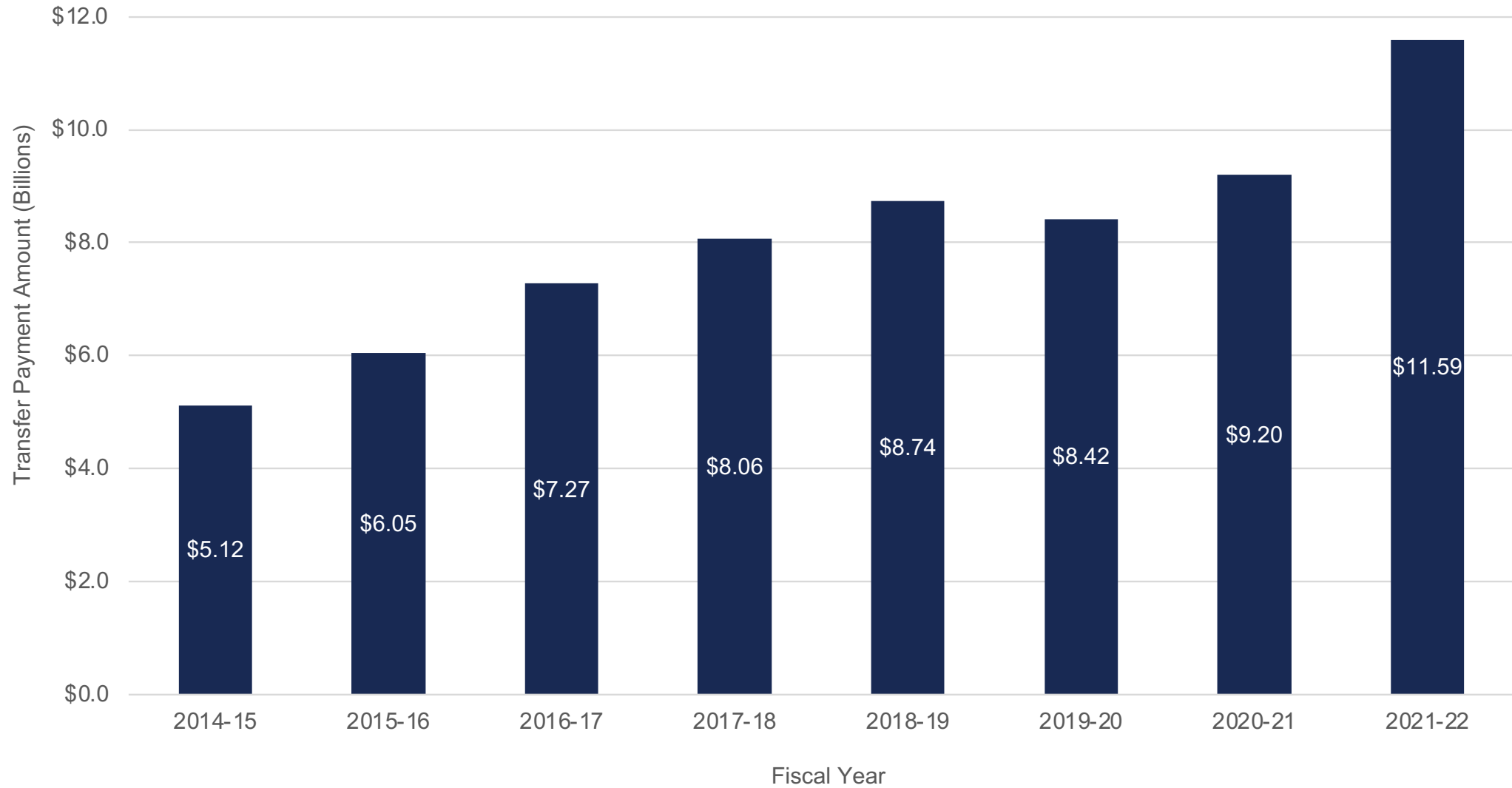


## Notes on Vote 10 expenditures

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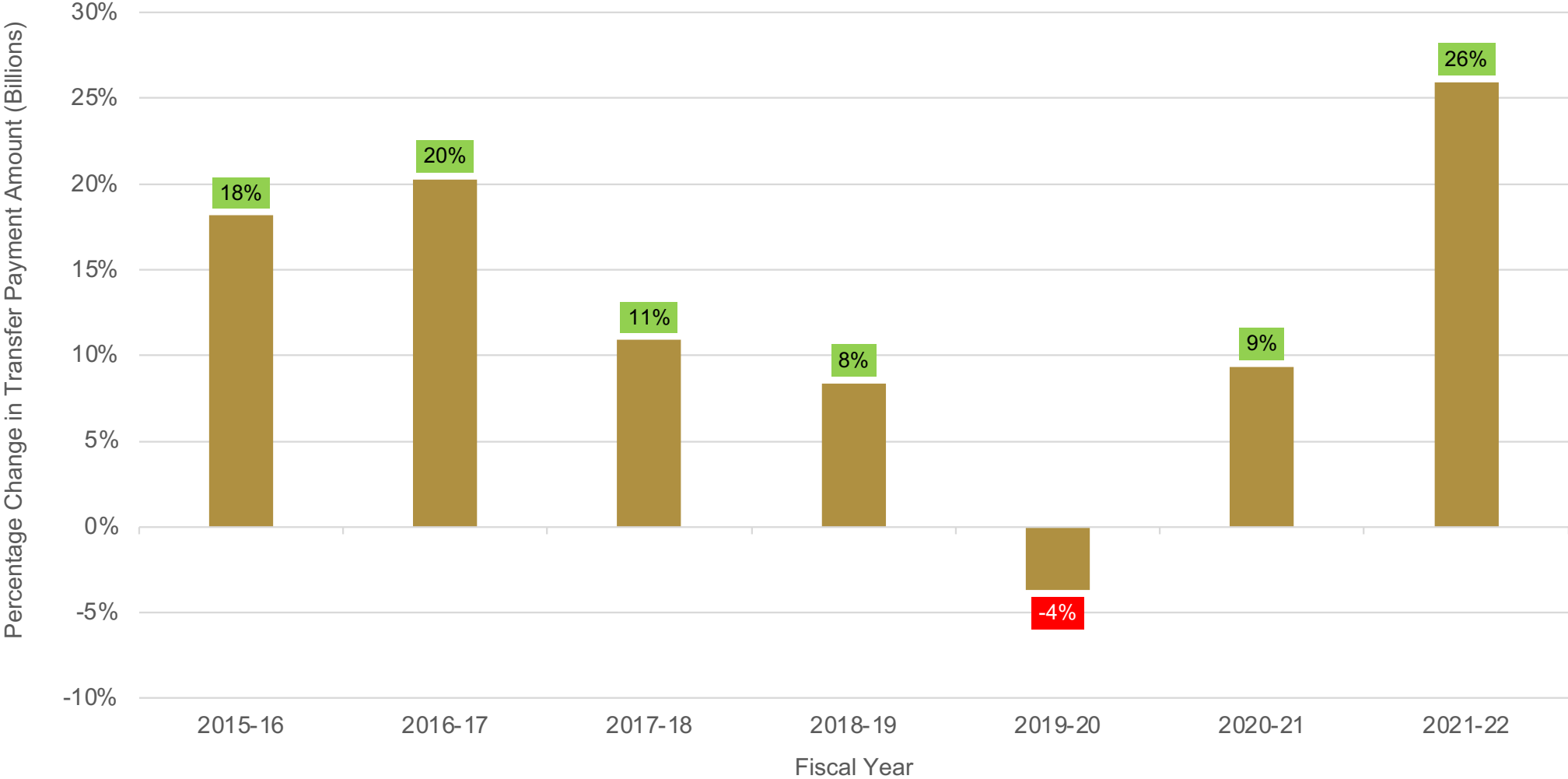
- Vote 10 expenditures generally increase across fiscal years.
- Most Vote 10 expenditures are for education (elementary and secondary), followed by social services, child and family services and health and health infrastructure. Note that prior to 2018-19, ISC reports child and family services as part of social services. They were disaggregated in 2018-19.

### ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

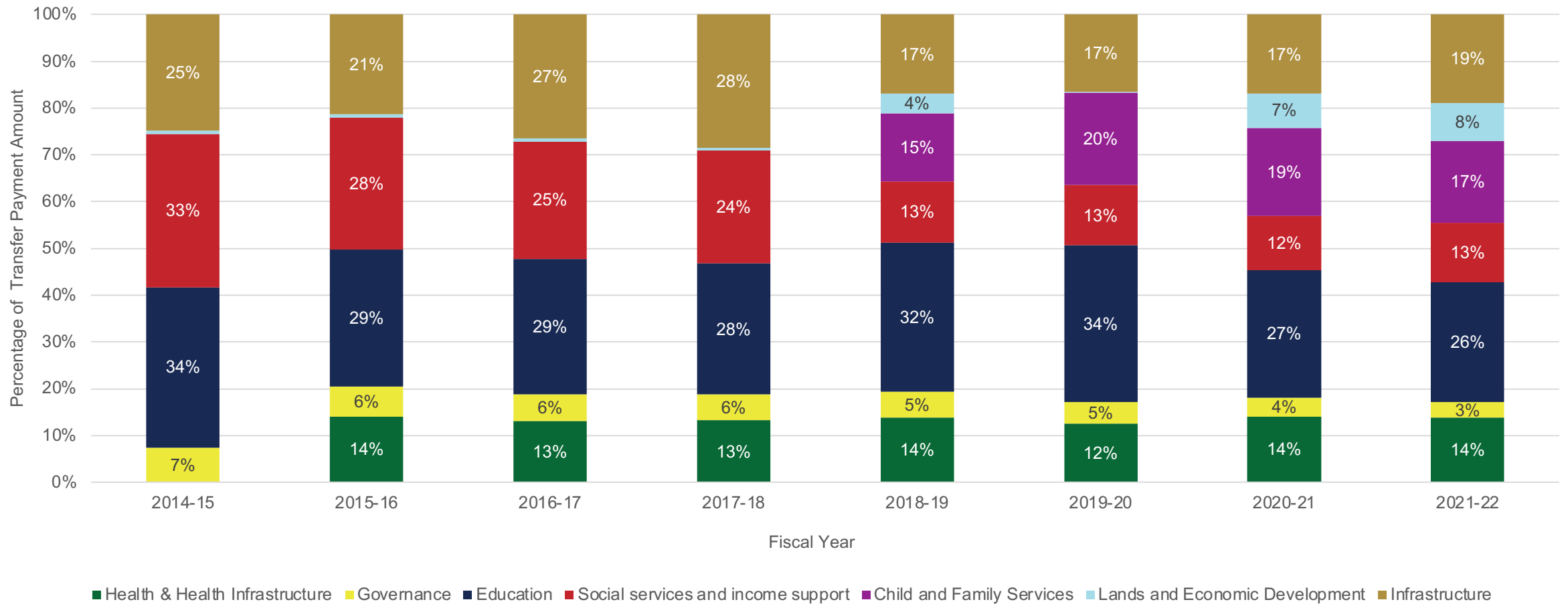
ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage Change in Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)



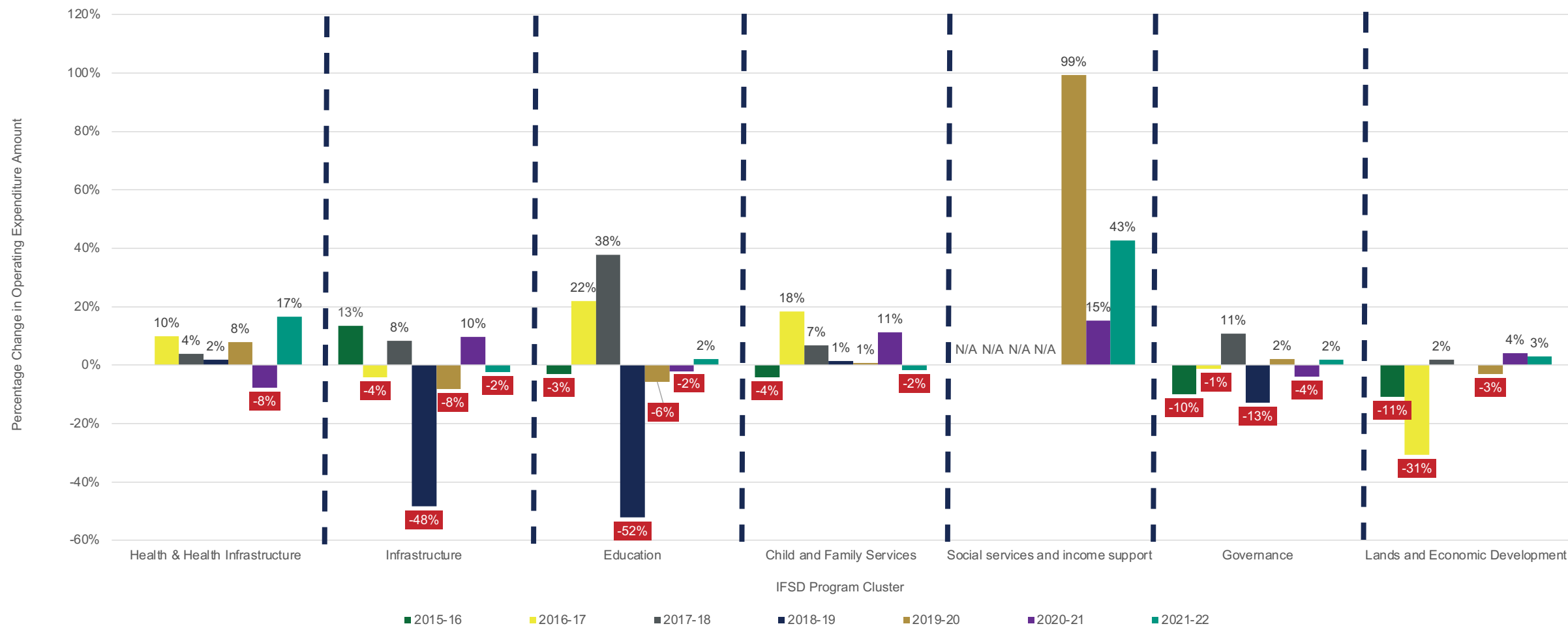
ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage of Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Program Cluster



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: Until 2018-19, Indigenous Services Canada offered the program Social Development which included the sub-programs Assisted Living, Income Assistance, Family Violence Prevention, and First Nations Child and Family Services. In 2018-19, Indigenous Services Canada transformed all four sub-programs into their own programs. IFSD grouped Social Development under Social Services and Income Support because it included Assisted Living and Income Assistance. As such, estimates for Social Services and Income Support before 2018-19 include estimates for Family Violence Prevention and First Nations Child and Family Services.

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage Change in Expenditure Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Program Cluster



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Notes: 1) Lands and Economic Development expenditures increased 1901% in 2018-19 and was omitted in this analysis. 2) Until 2018-19, Indigenous Services Canada offered the program Social Development which included the sub-programs Assisted Living, Income Assistance, Family Violence Prevention, and First Nations Child and Family Services. In 2018-19, Indigenous Services Canada transformed all four sub-programs into their own programs. IFSD grouped Social Development under Social Services and Income Support because it included Assisted Living and Income Assistance. As such, estimates for Social Services and Income Support before 2018-19 include estimates for Family Violence Prevention and First Nations Child and Family Services.

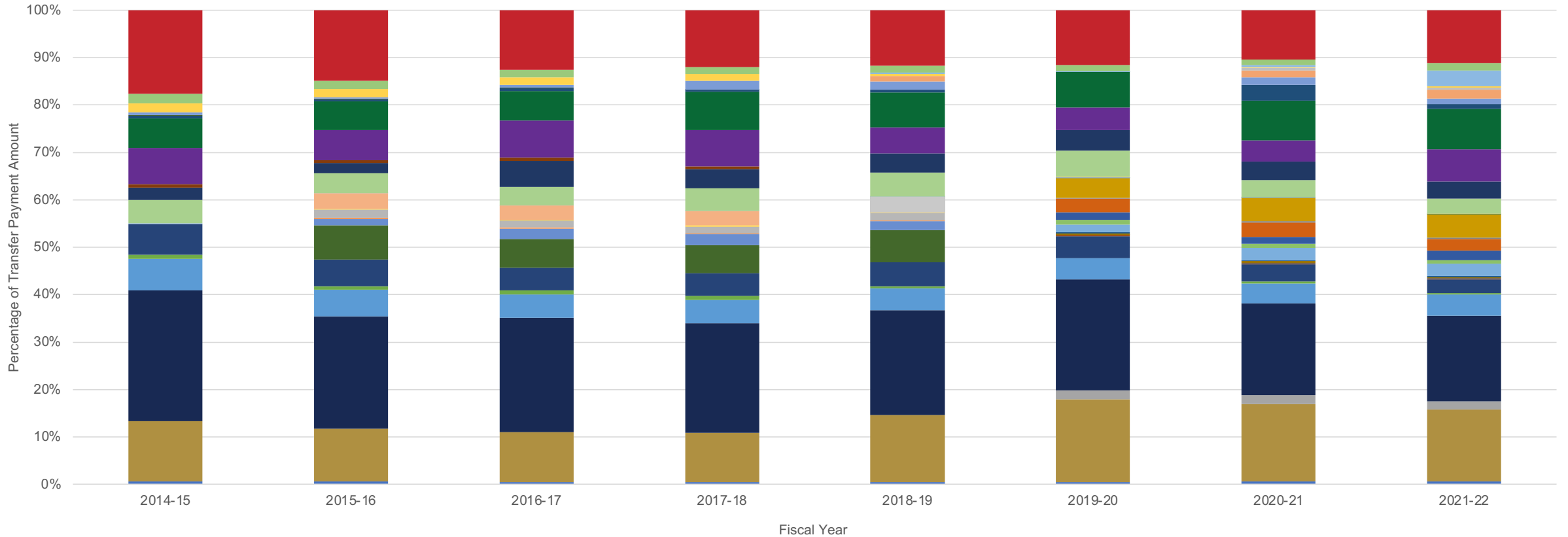


ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage of Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by Major Sub-Program



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)  
Note: FN stands for First Nations and FNI stands for First Nations and Inuit. IFSD assumes ELEM/SEC EDUCATION stands for Elementary/Secondary Education. OTHER COMM INFRA & ACTIV stands for Other Community Infrastructure and Activities.

**ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage of Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by Sub-Program**



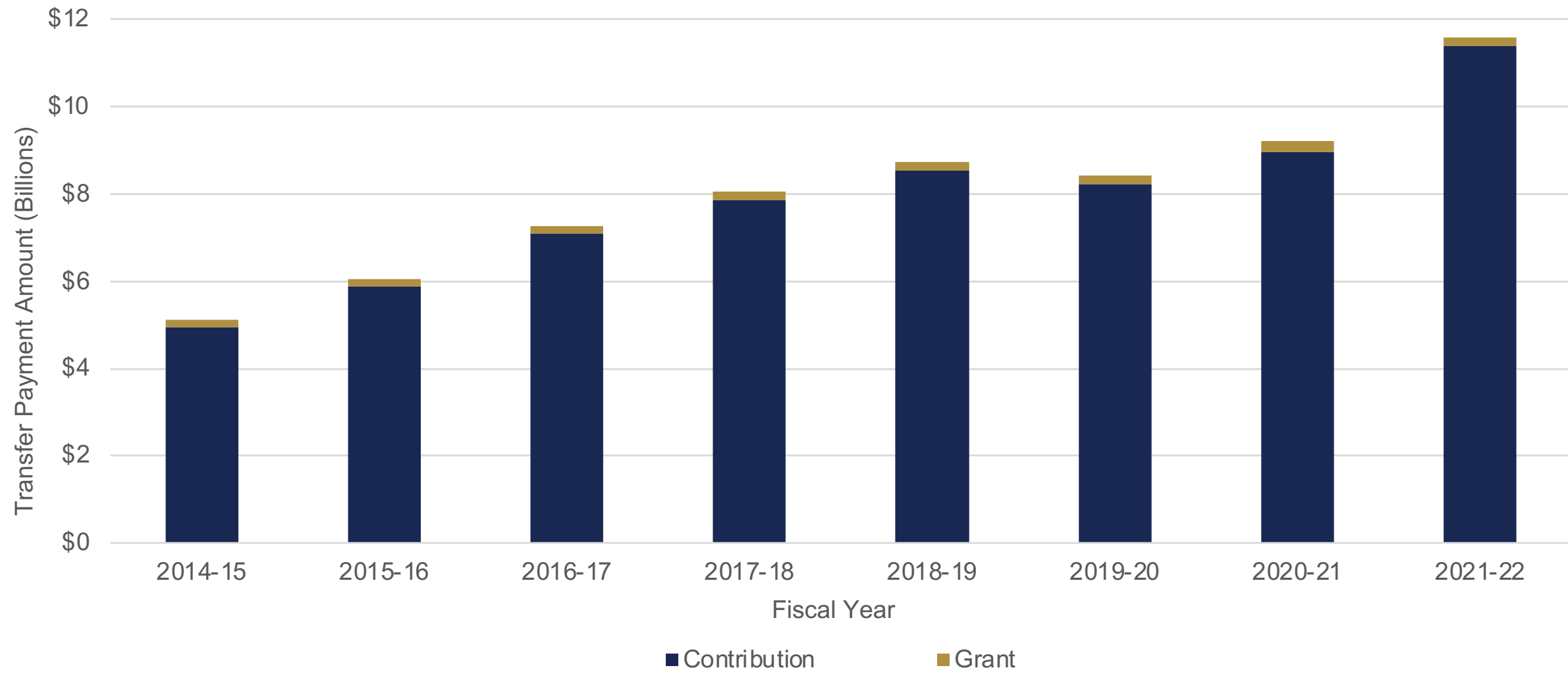
- FAMILY VIOLENCE PREV
- POST SECONDARY EDUCATION
- DRUGS
- FNI Health System Capacity
- HEALTH FACILITIES
- MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS
- PROGRAM OVERSIGHT
- ADMIN OF RESERVE LAND
- OTHER COMM INFRA & ACTIV
- CONTAMINATED SITES
- STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
- FN CHILD&FAMILY SERVICES
- ABORIG GOV INSTIT & ORGS
- e-HEALTH INFSTRUCTURE
- FNI Health System Transformation
- HEALTHY LIVING
- MENTAL WELLNESS
- Supp Health Benefits FNI
- EDUCATION FACILITIES
- WATER & WASTEWATER
- EC DEV CAPACITY&READINESS
- ASSISTED LIVING
- HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT
- FIRST NATIONS GOVERNMENTS
- ENVIRONM PUBLIC HEALTH
- FNI Primary Care
- HOME&COMMUNITY CARE
- MSE
- Supplementary Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit
- HOUSING
- BUSINESS CAP&SUPPORT SERV
- LAND NATURAL RES&ENV MGT
- INCOME ASSISTANCE
- ELEM/SEC EDUCATION
- DENTAL
- FNI Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- FNI Public Health Protection
- MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER
- VISION
- INVESTMENT IN EC OPP
- BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
- LANDS & EC DEV SERVICES

## Notes on Vote 10 expenditure (cont.)

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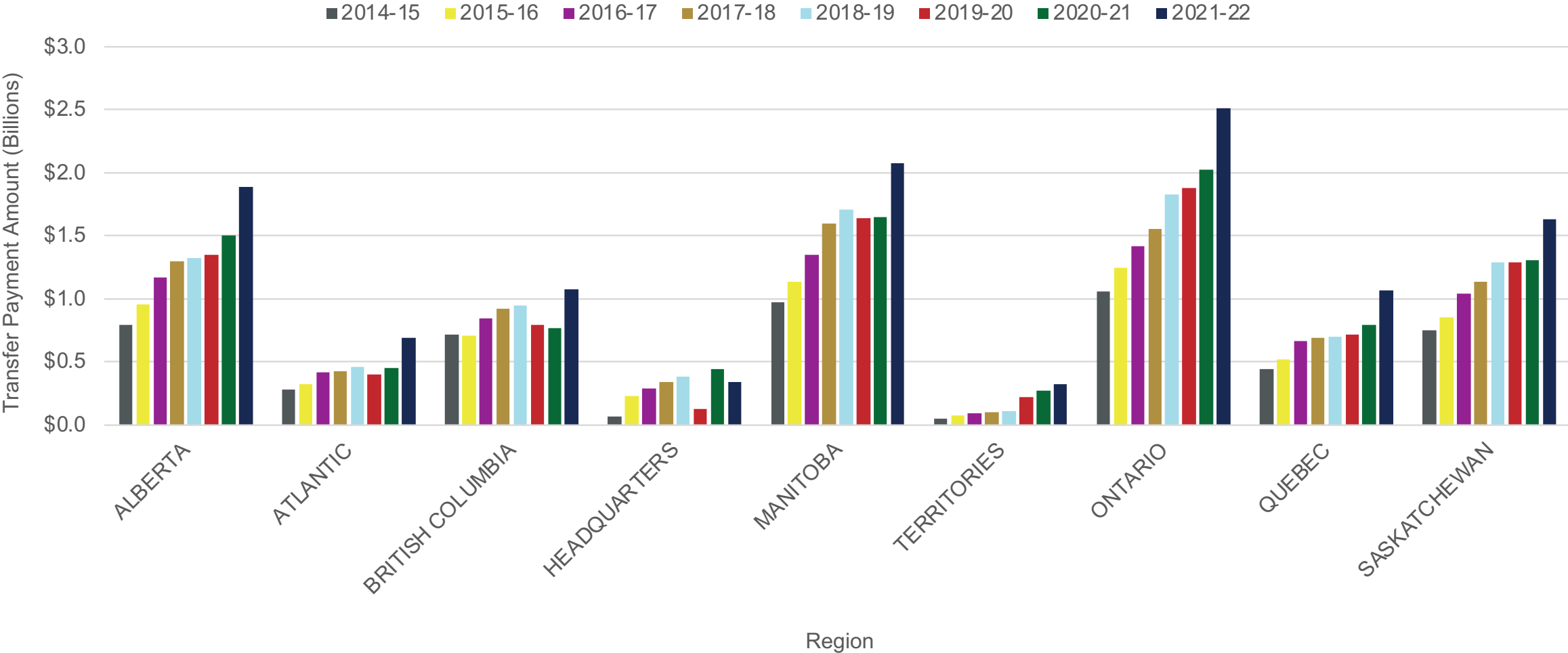
- Nearly all vote 10 expenditures are contributions, i.e., allocated through set, fixed, flexible, and block approaches.
- Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta receive the largest shares of expenditures across fiscal years. Quebec and Saskatchewan's shares are generally stable, whereas British Columbia's share trends downward.
- Note: *IFSD has sought clarification on what's included in Headquarters from ISC.*

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by Fund Type



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)  
Note: IFSD excluded "Blank" entries where no fund type (i.e., grand or contribution) was indicated in the dataset. There was an insignificant number of blank entries in 2016-17.

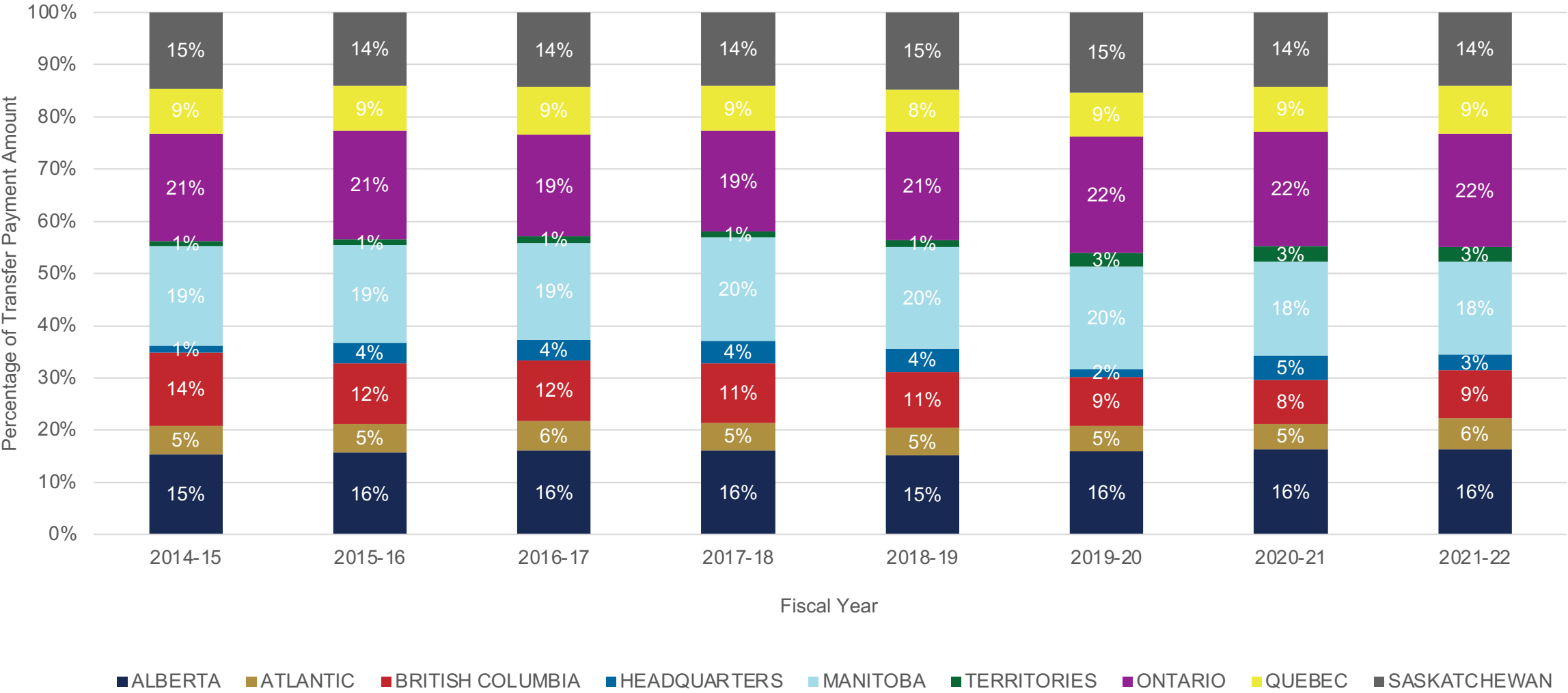
ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by Region Recipient



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: ISC assigned Northern Region as the Region Recipient for certain entries. IFSD cannot disaggregate this category. IFSD clustered Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Northern Region into the category Territories.

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage of Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by Region Recipient



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)  
Note: ISC assigned Northern Region as the Region Recipient for certain entries. IFSD cannot disaggregate this category. IFSD clustered Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Northern Region into the category Territories.



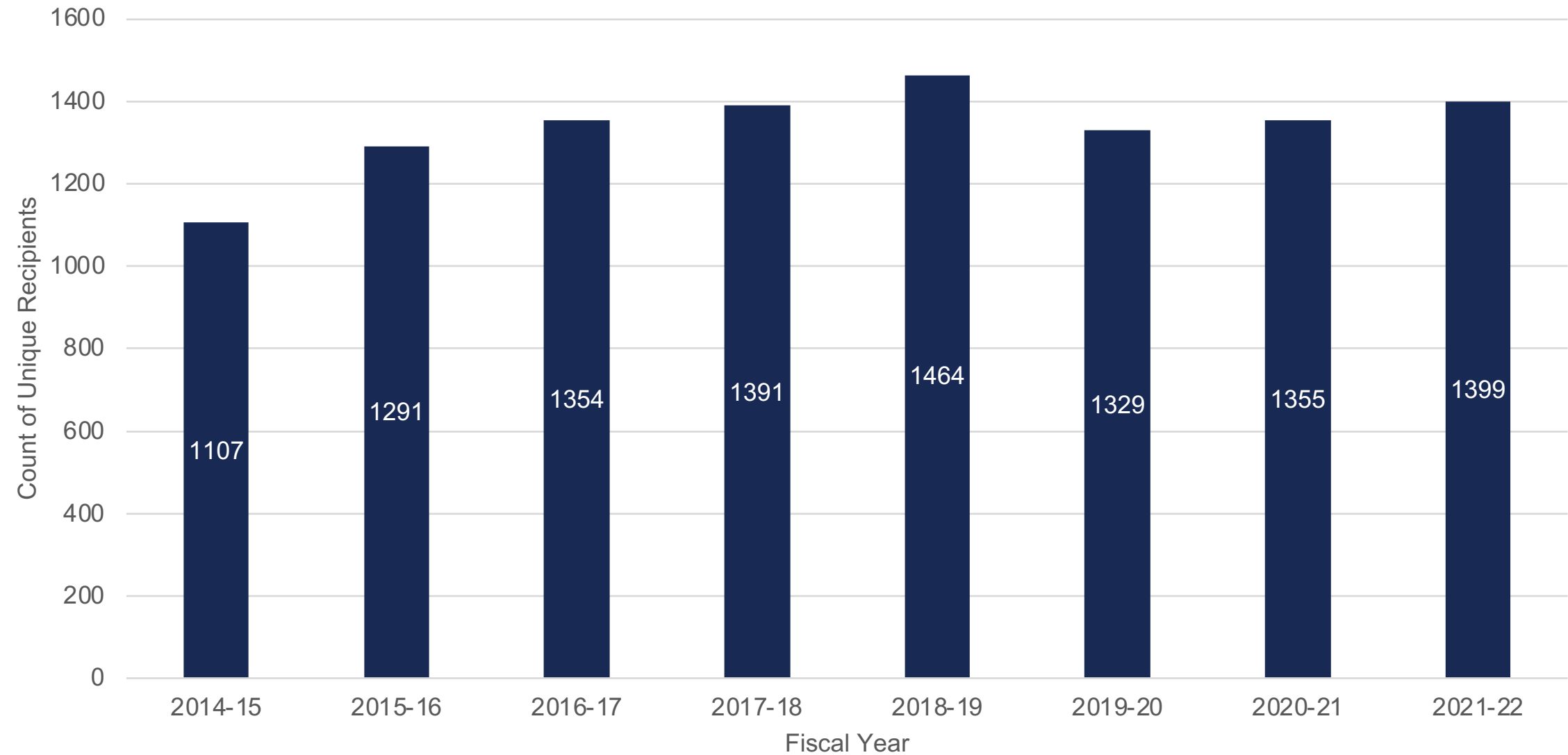
## Notes on Vote 10 expenditures (cont.)

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- There are over 1,300 unique recipients of transfers for fiscal years after 2016-17.
- Most recipients are First Nations, Tribal Councils, Inuit and Métis.
- First Nations receive the largest share of expenditures (over 60% every fiscal year).
- Recipients across regions are mainly First Nations. Other recipient categories, e.g., child and family services, government department or agency, vary by region.

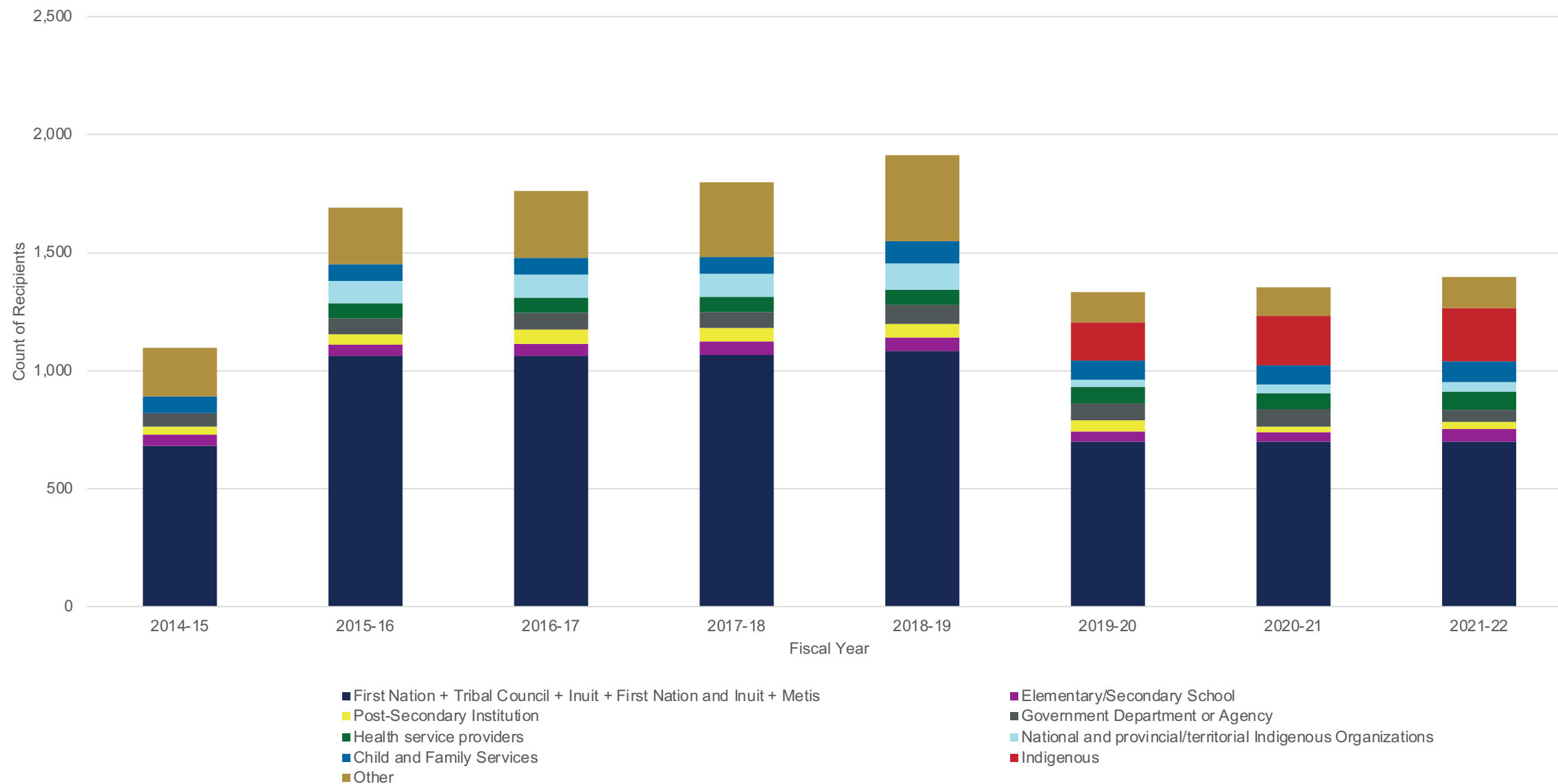
Other	Other Service Delivery/Indian Administered
Other	Other Service Delivery
Other	Other Service Delivery (Domestic)
Other	Non-Government Organization
Other	Provincial/Territorial Organizations
Other	Economic Development Corporations
Other	Non-Government Organization (Domestic)
Other	For Profit (Domestic)
Other	Cultural Centres/Indian Administered
Other	Individual
Other	Blank

Number of Unique Recipients by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

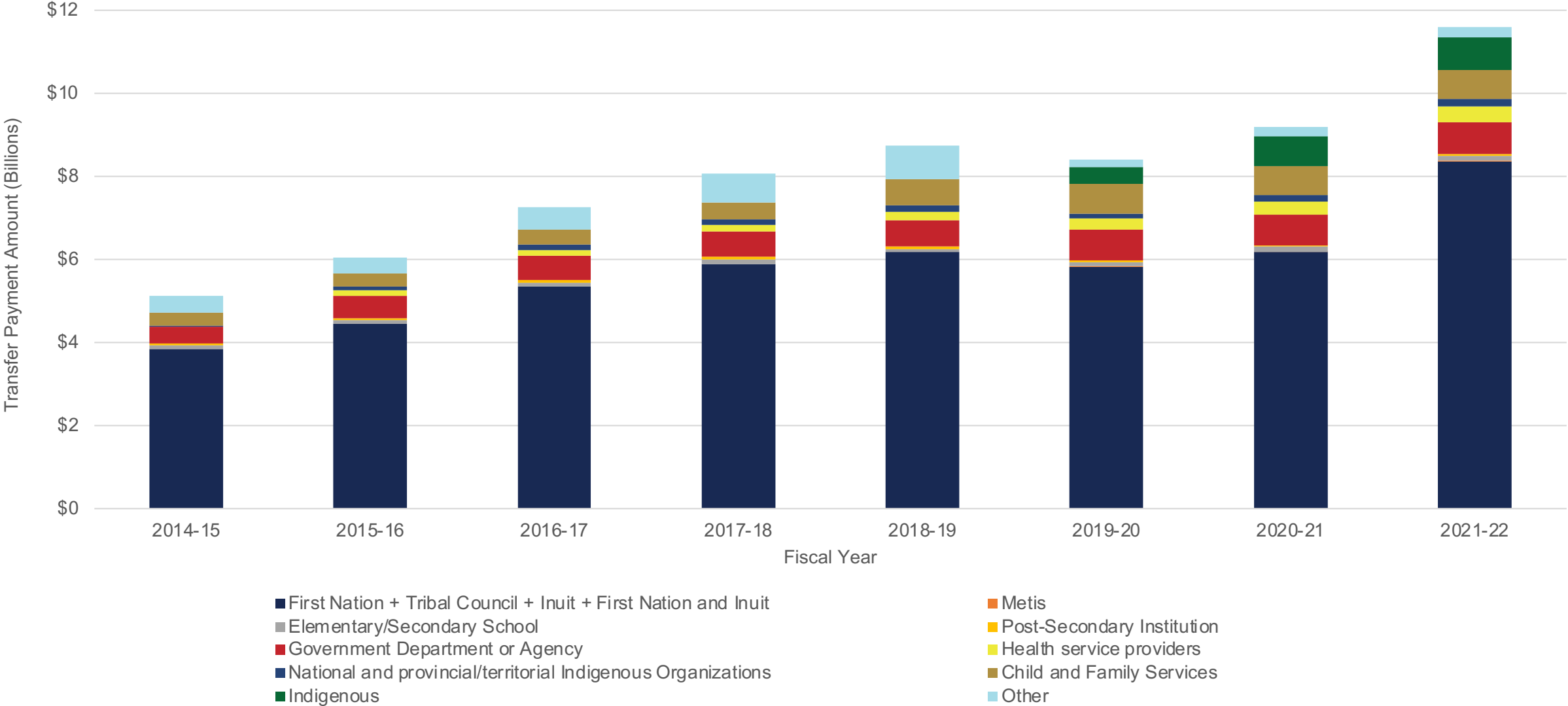
ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Number of Recipients by Fiscal Year by IFSD Recipient Type Cluster



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

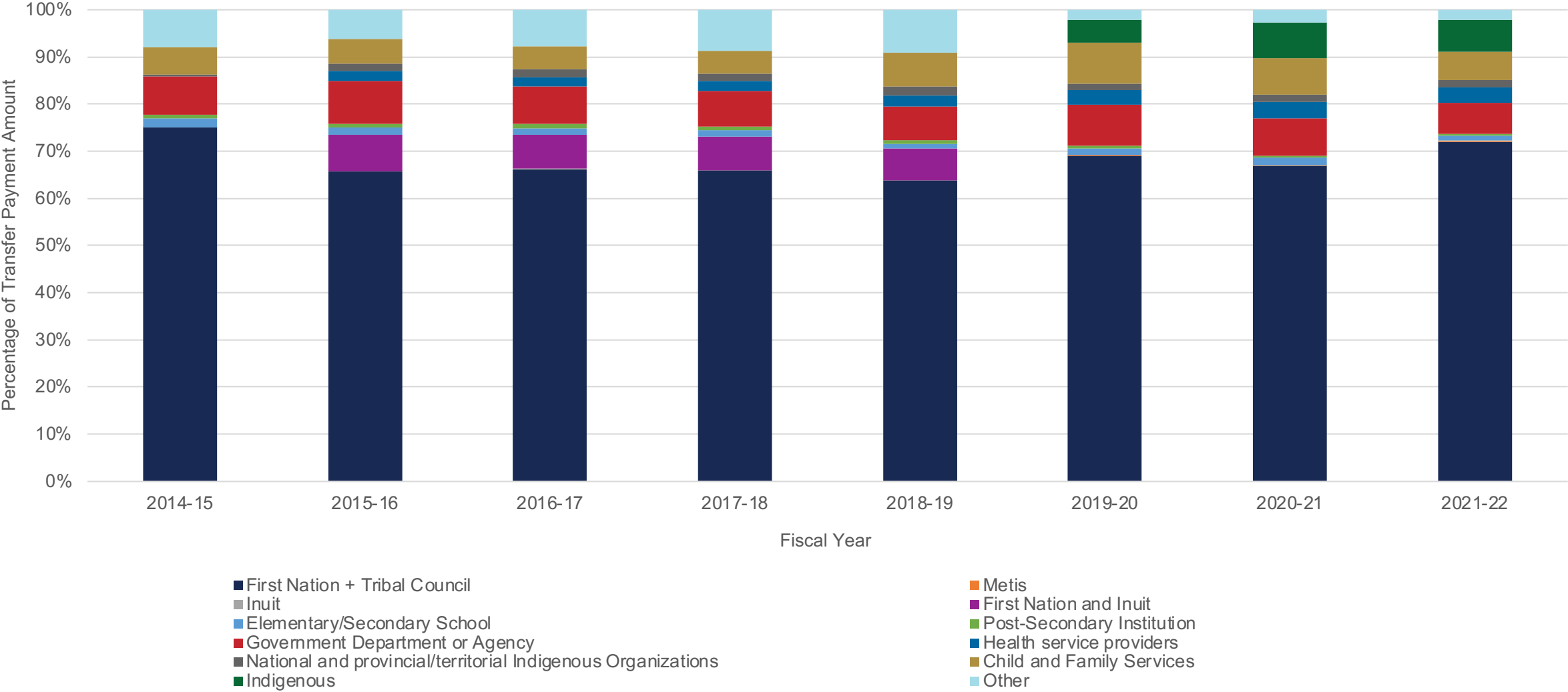
Notes: 1) ISC sometimes assigned the same recipient multiple recipient types. For this chart, IFSD counted these recipients multiple times for each IFSD Recipient Type Cluster that applied. 2) Entries with fewer than 15 recipients were suppressed.

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Recipient Type Cluster



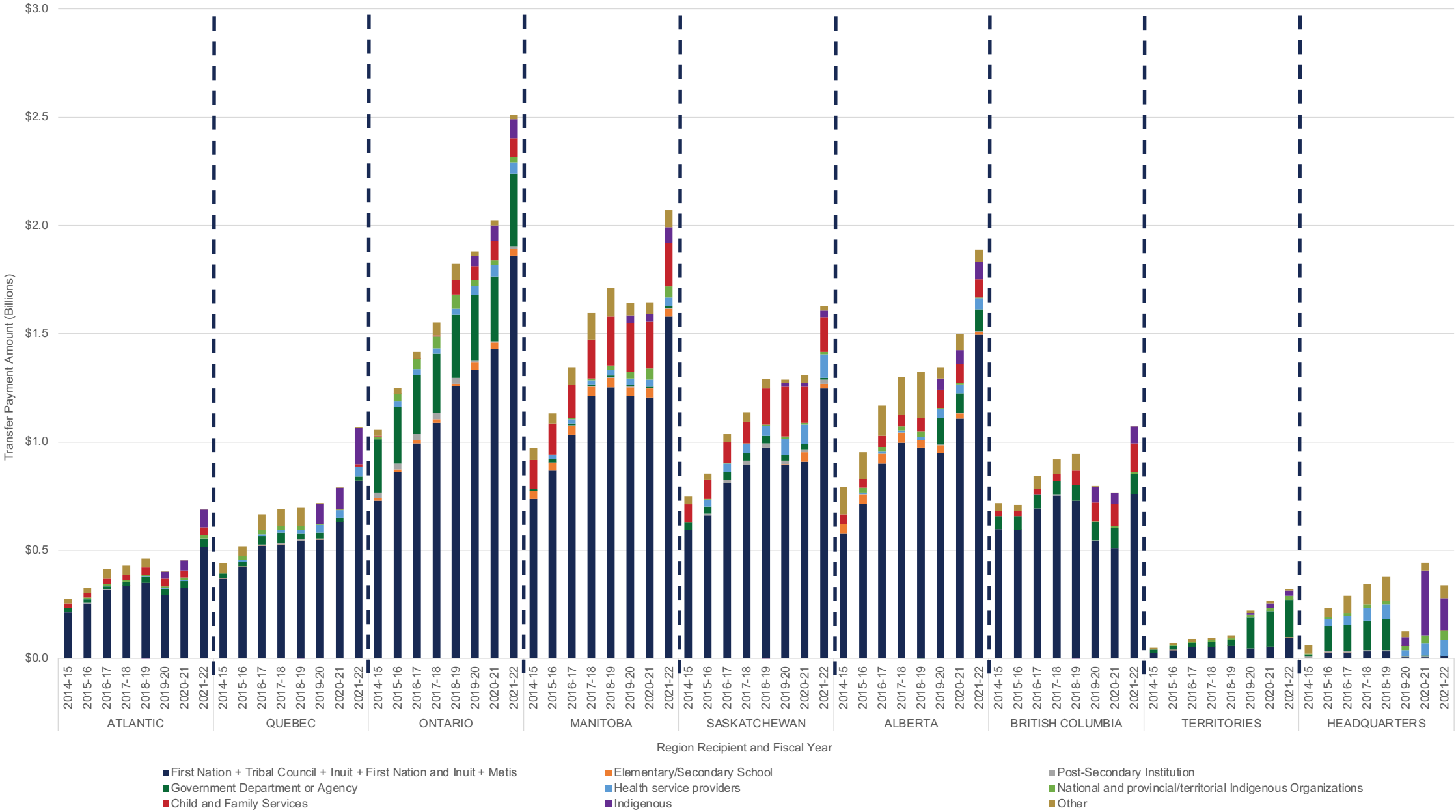
Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage of Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Recipient Type Cluster



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Recipient Type Cluster by Region Recipient



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)  
Note: ISC assigned Northern Region as the Region Recipient for certain entries. IFSD cannot disaggregate this category. IFSD clustered Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Northern Region into the category Territories.



## **Income assistance and assisted living**

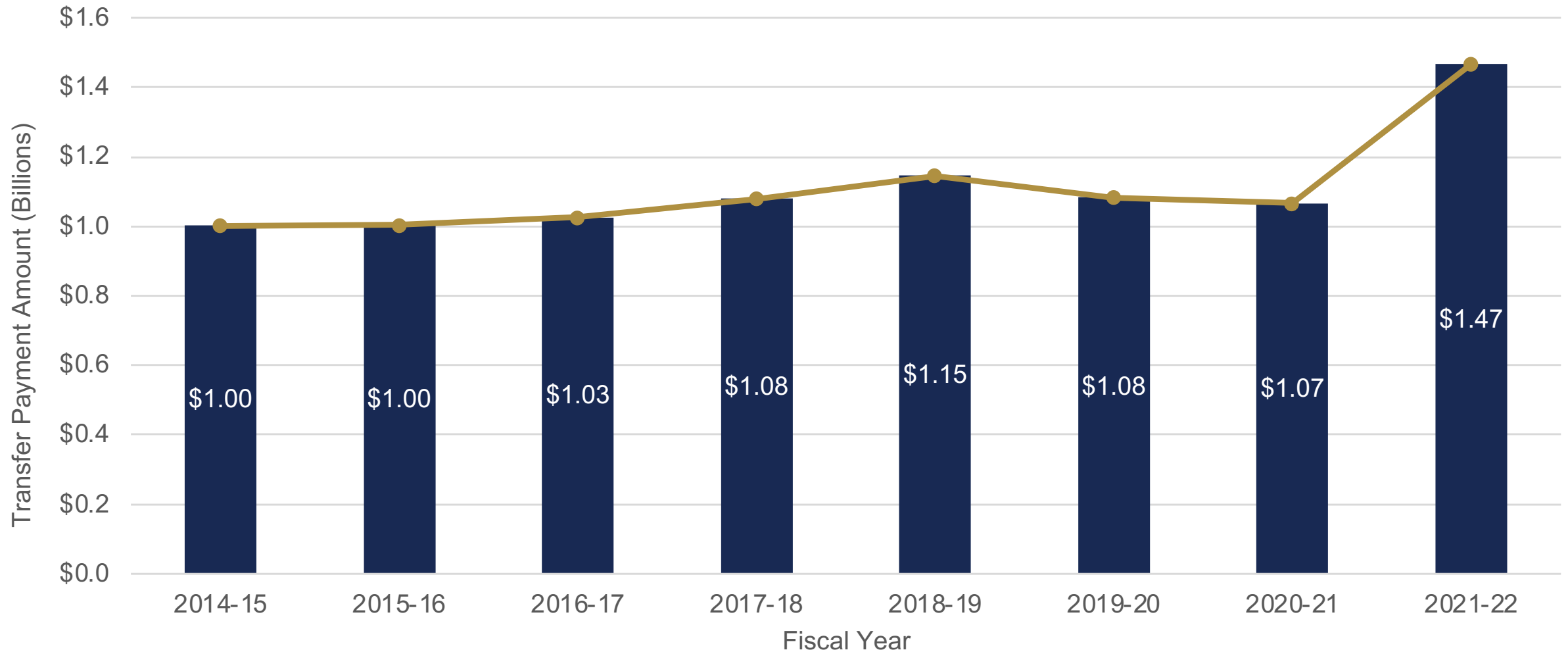
## Notes on Income Assistance and Assisted Living

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- Expenditures for Income Assistance and Assisted Living generally increase across fiscal years, consistent with ISC's overall expenditure trend.
- There's roughly \$1B spent annually on Income Assistance and Assisted Living.
- Income Assistance makes up nearly 90% of those expenditures.
- Since 2017-18, Income Assistance and Assisted Living have represented approximately 13% of total Vote 10 expenditures.
- On a regional basis, Manitoba, Ontario, and Alberta receive the three largest amounts of funding through Income Assistance and Assisted Living.
- The value of regional MBMs vary and do not necessarily predict Income Assistance and Assisted Living transfers.
- The increase in expenditures for fiscal year 2021-22 is likely explained by the Budget 2021 announcement of supplementary resources to offset basic needs and increased demand <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100035256/1533307528663>

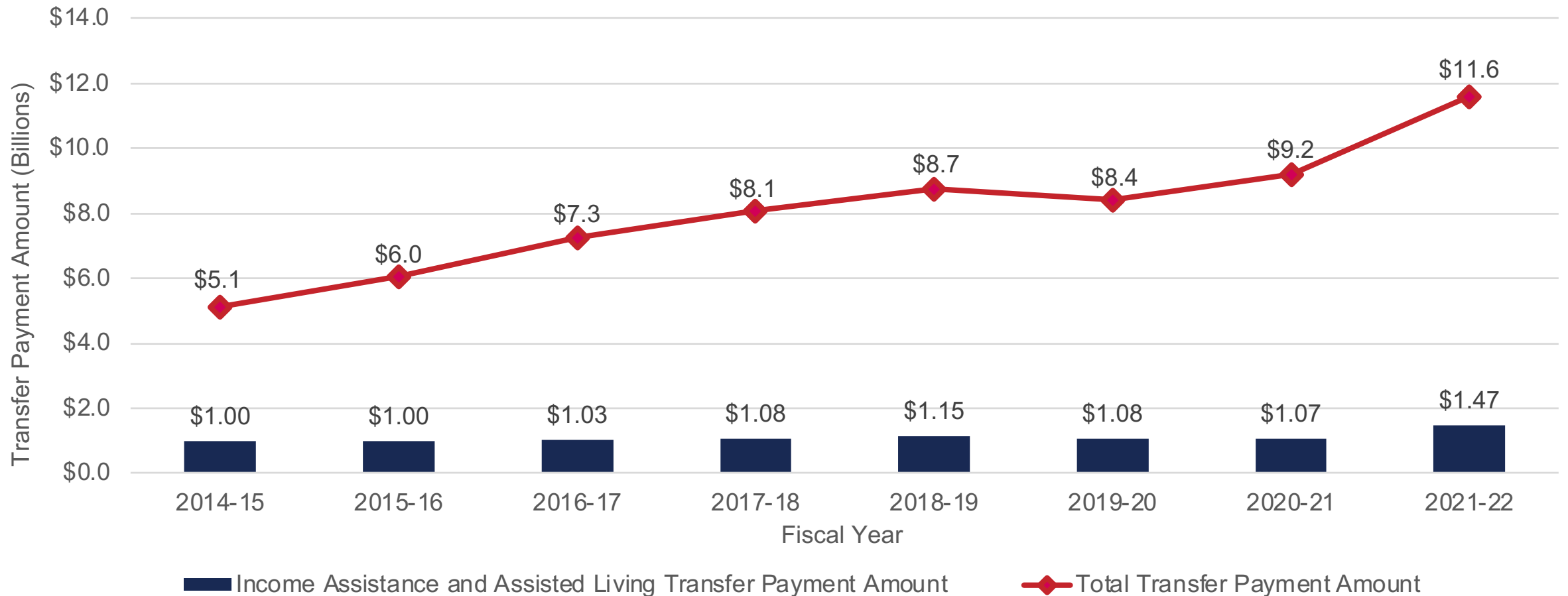


## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount for Income Assistance and Assisted Living by Fiscal Year



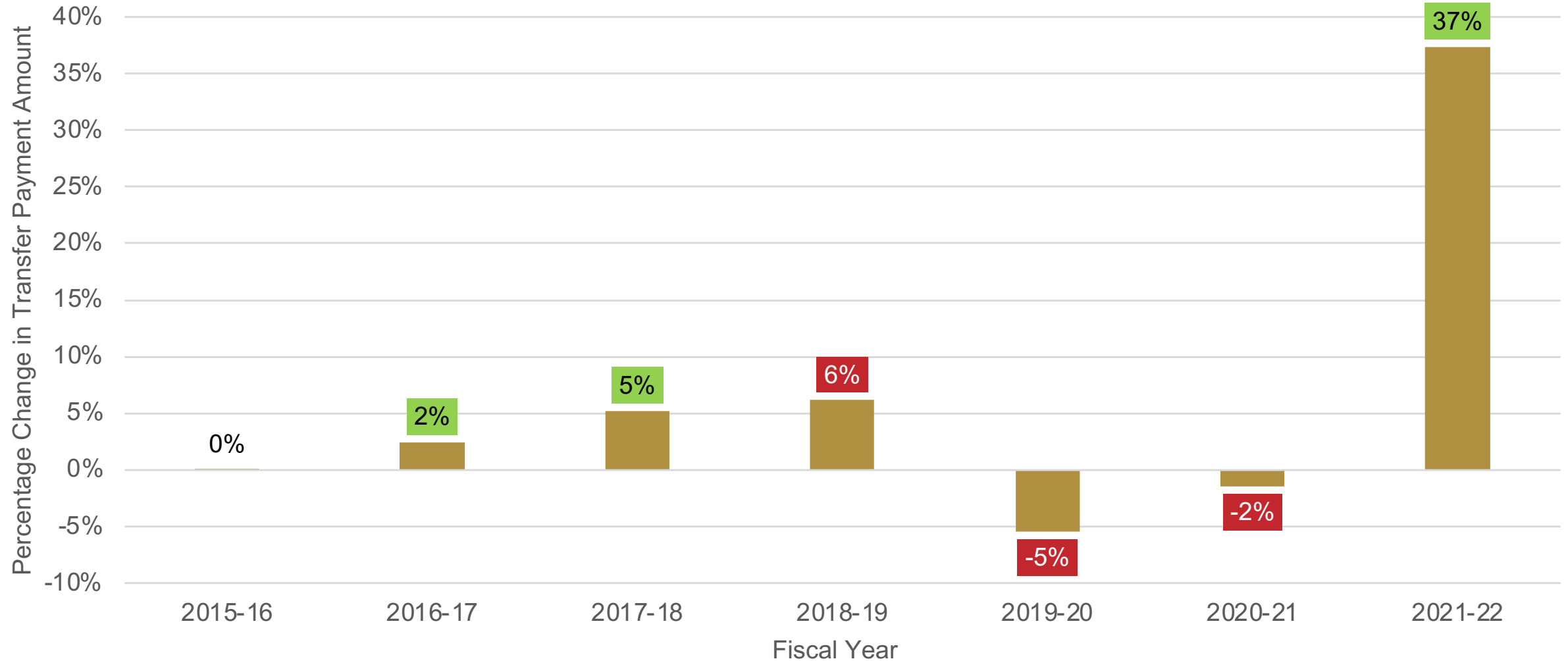
Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount for Income Assistance and Assisted Living by Fiscal Year



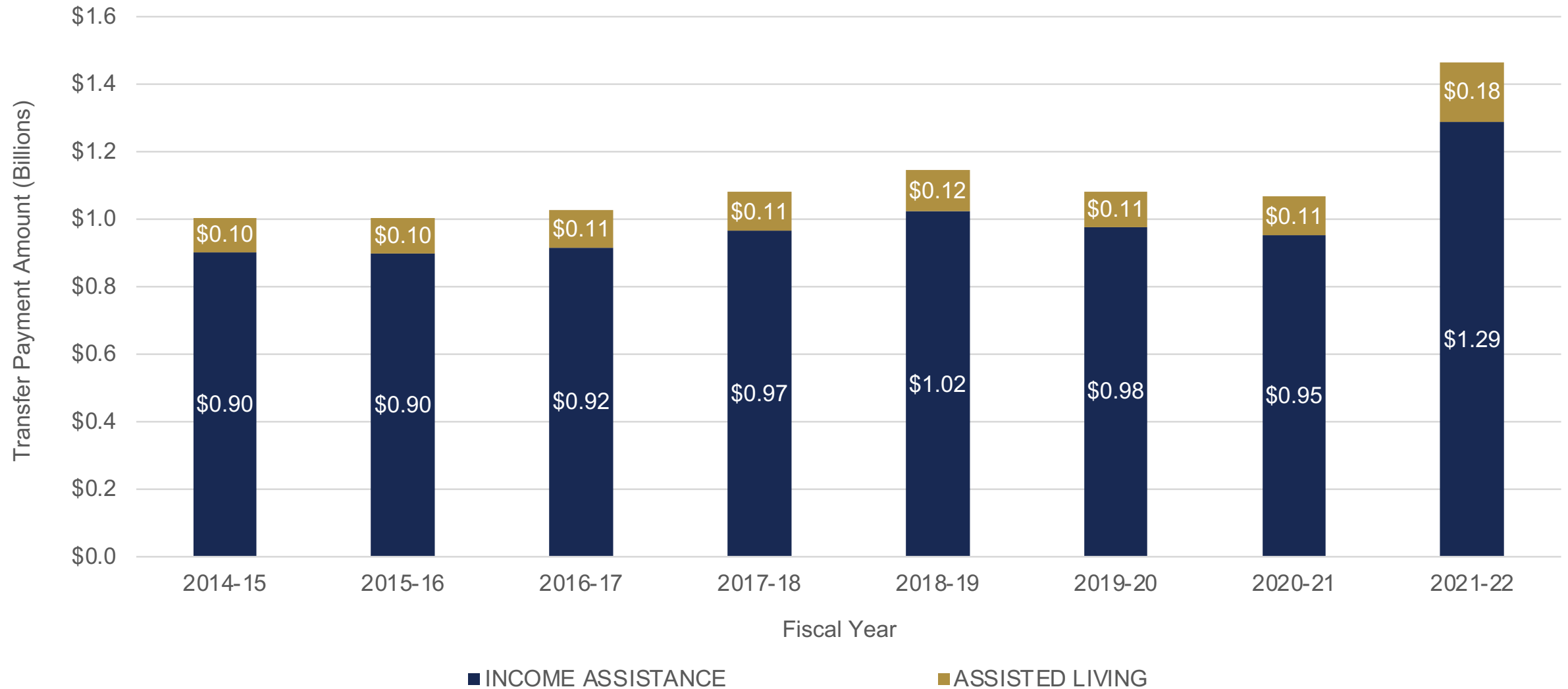
Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage Change in Transfer Payment Amount for Income Assistance and Assisted Living by Fiscal Year



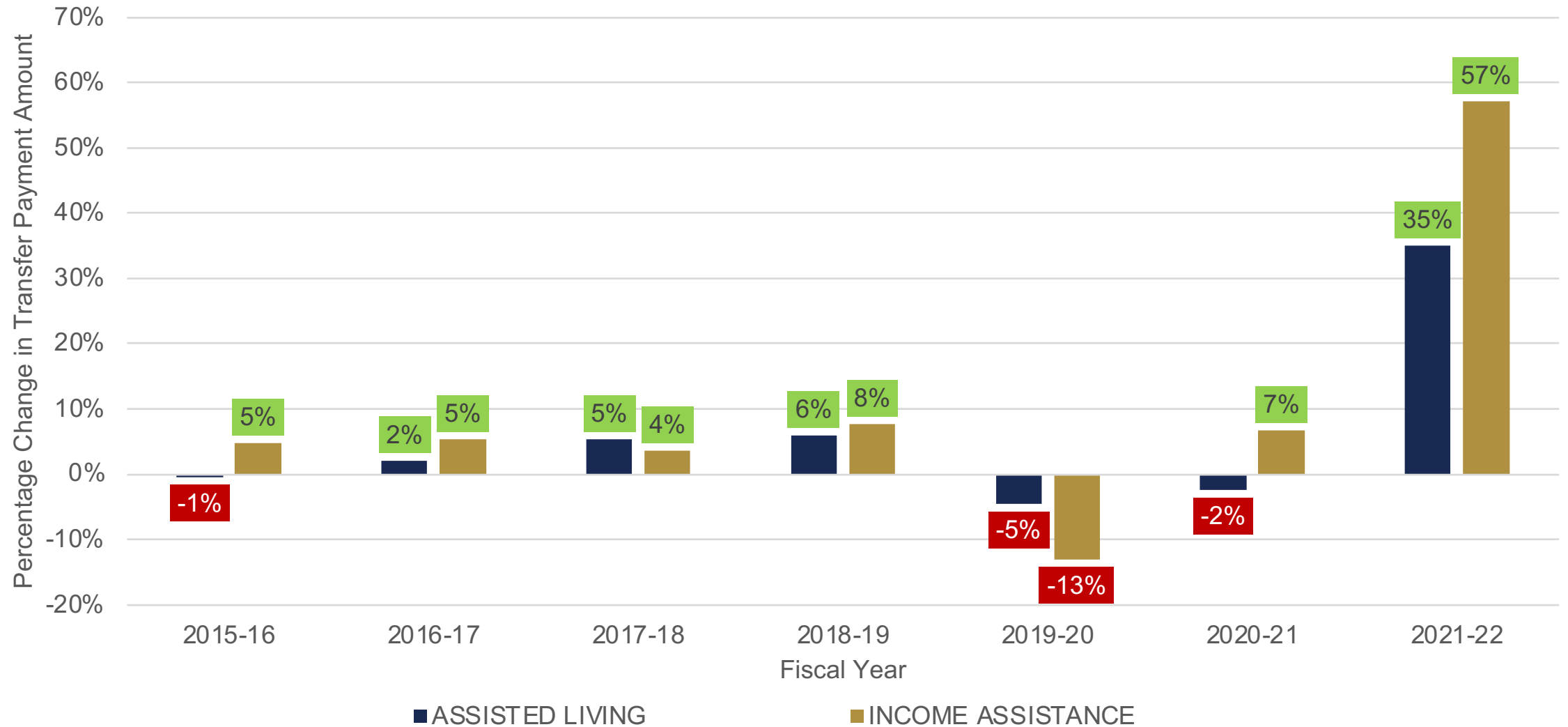
Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount in Social Services and Income Support by Sub-Program by Fiscal Year

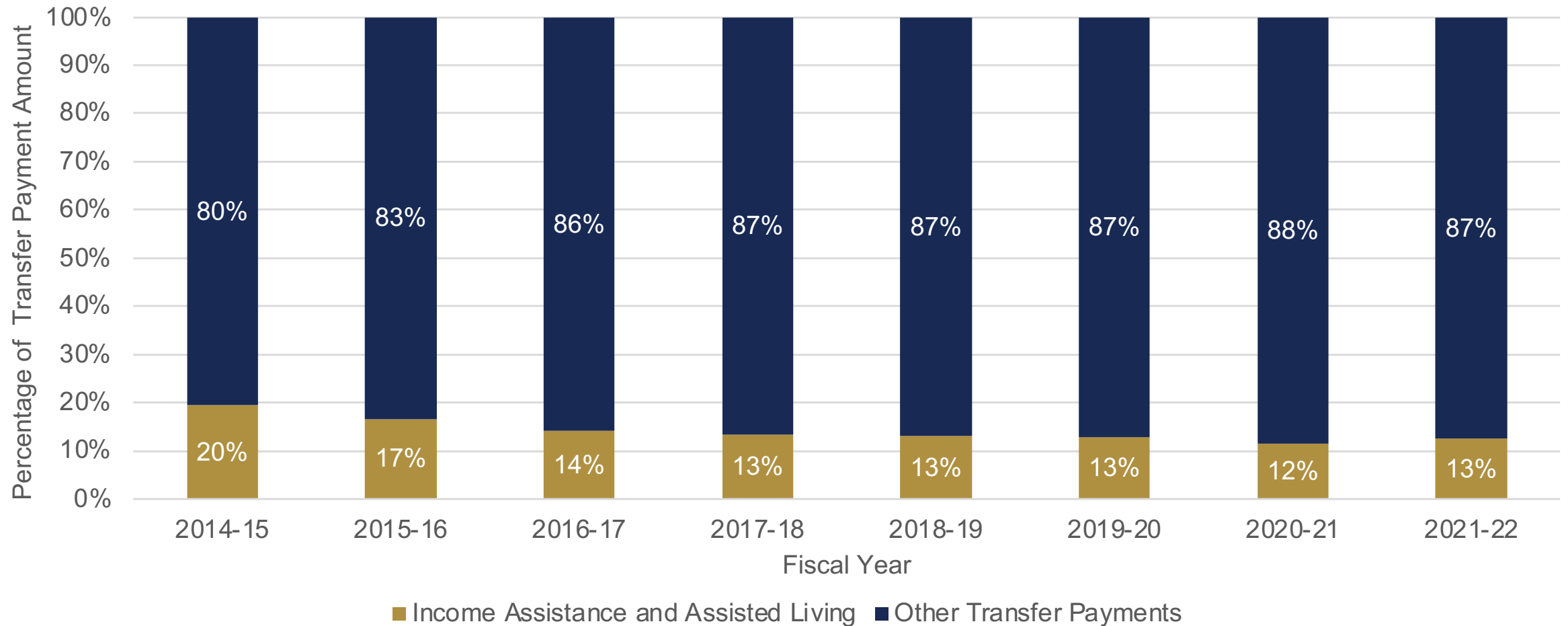


Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage Change in Transfer Payment Amount for Income Assistance and Assisted Living by Sub-Program by Fiscal Year

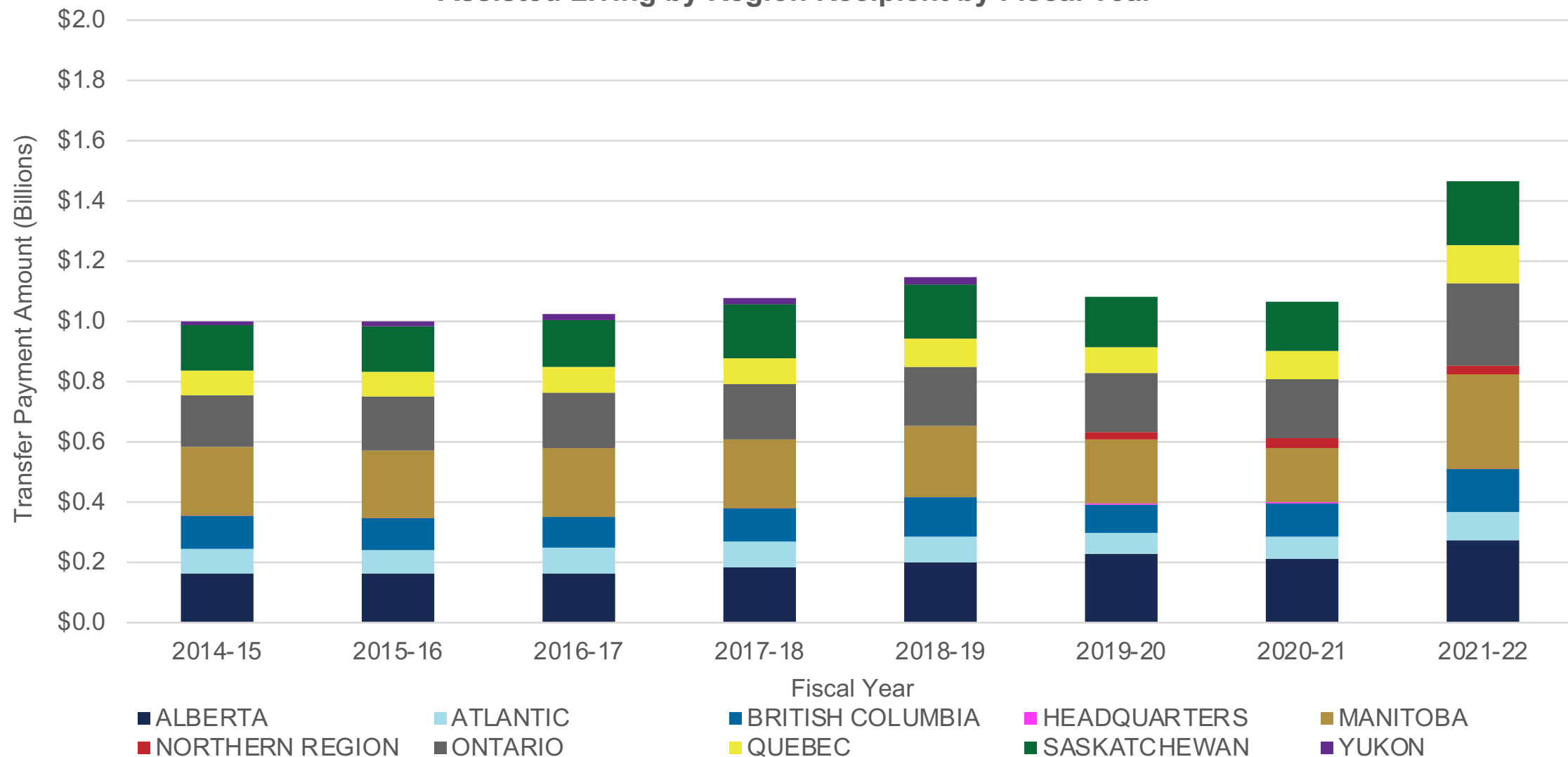


## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage of Transfer Payment Amount for Social Services and Income Support by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

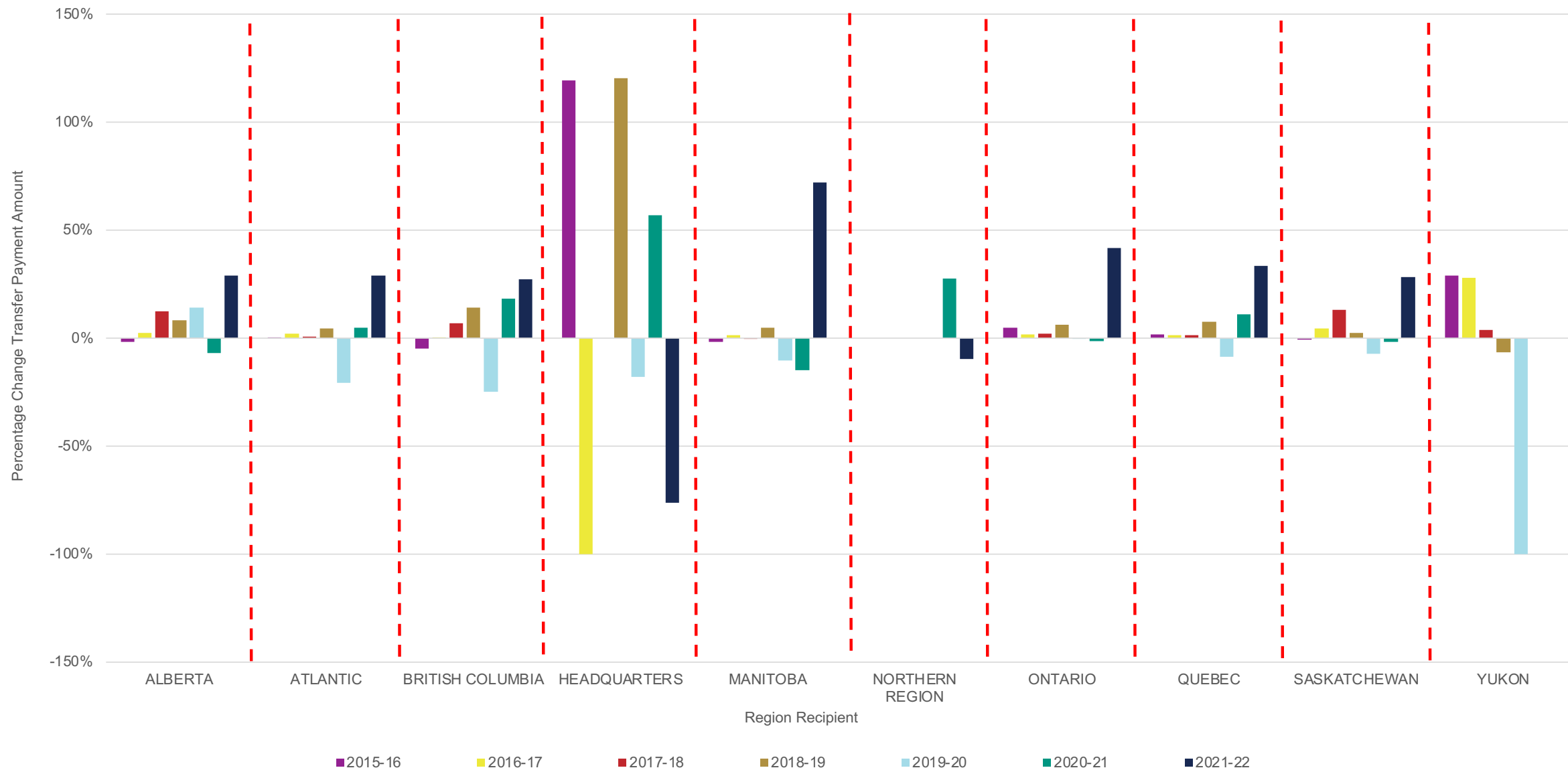
## ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount for Income Assistance and Assisted Living by Region Recipient by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: ISC assigned Northern Region as the Region Recipient for certain entries. IFSD cannot disaggregate this category.

# ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage Change in Transfer Payment Amount in Income Assistance and Assisted Living by Region Recipient by Fiscal Year

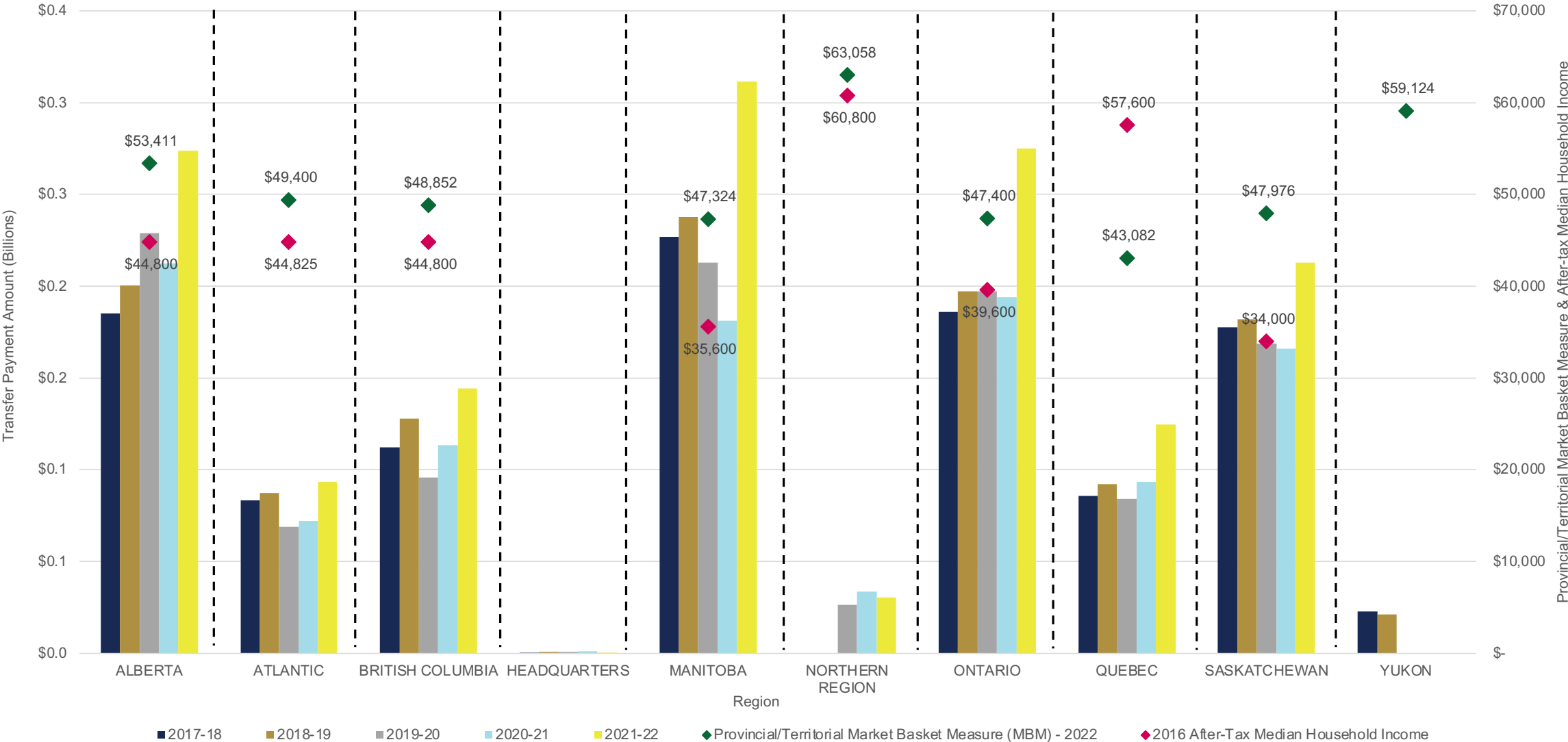


Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: ISC assigned Northern Region as the Region Recipient for certain entries. IFSD cannot disaggregate this category.



ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount in Social Services and Income Support by Region Recipient by Fiscal Year

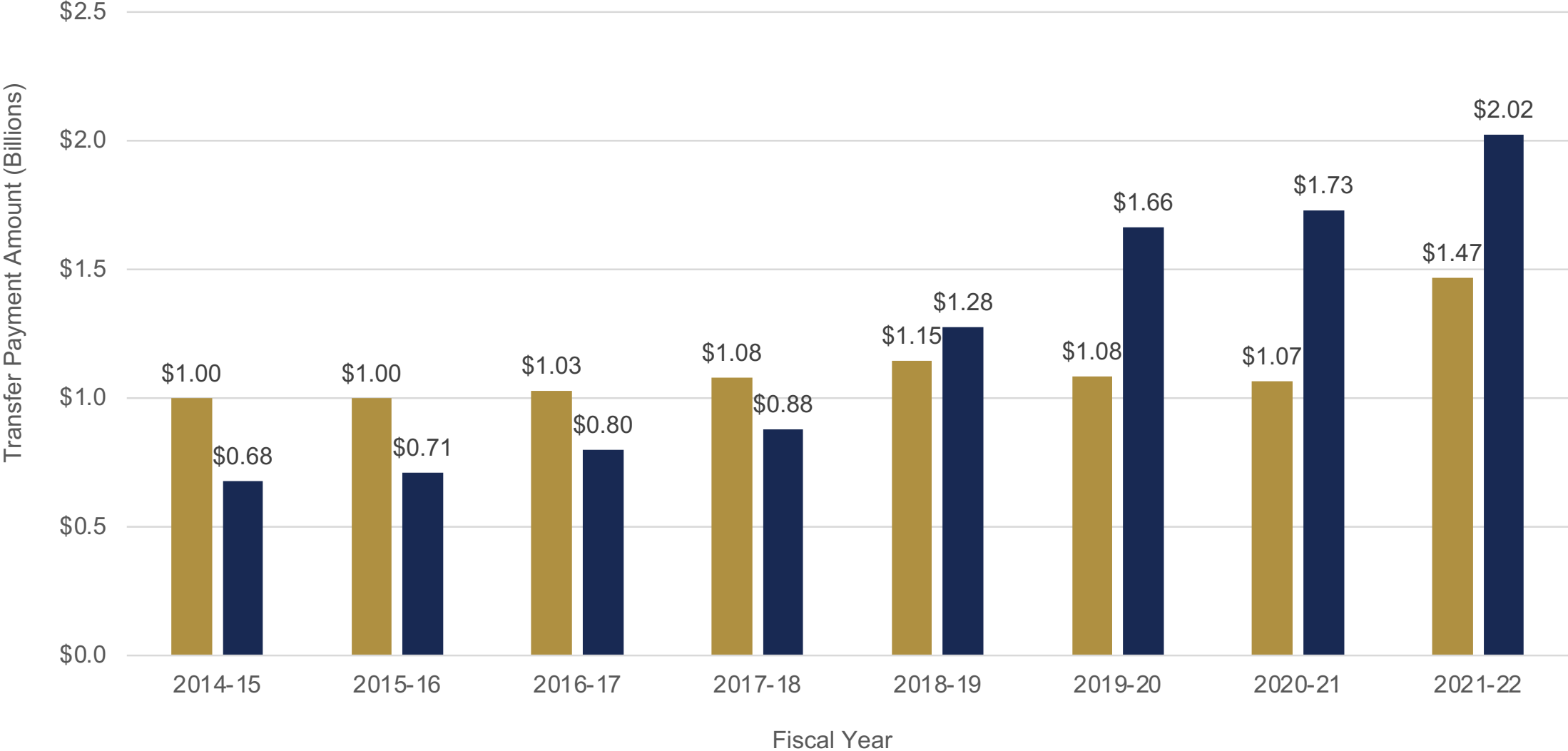


Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Statistics Canada

Notes: 1) With the exception of Northern Region, IFSD used the Provincial/Territorial Market Basket Measure (MBM) for populations under 30,000. For Northern Region, IFSD used an average of the Provincial/Territorial Market Basket Measure (MBM) in Yellowknife and Whitehorse. 2) In the Atlantic region, the Provincial/Territorial Market Basket Measure (MBM) and 2016 After-Tax Median Household Income is an average of the values from Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. 3) The MBM is illustrative, as are the household incomes. 4) ISC assigned Northern Region as the Region Recipient for certain entries. IFSD cannot disaggregate this category.

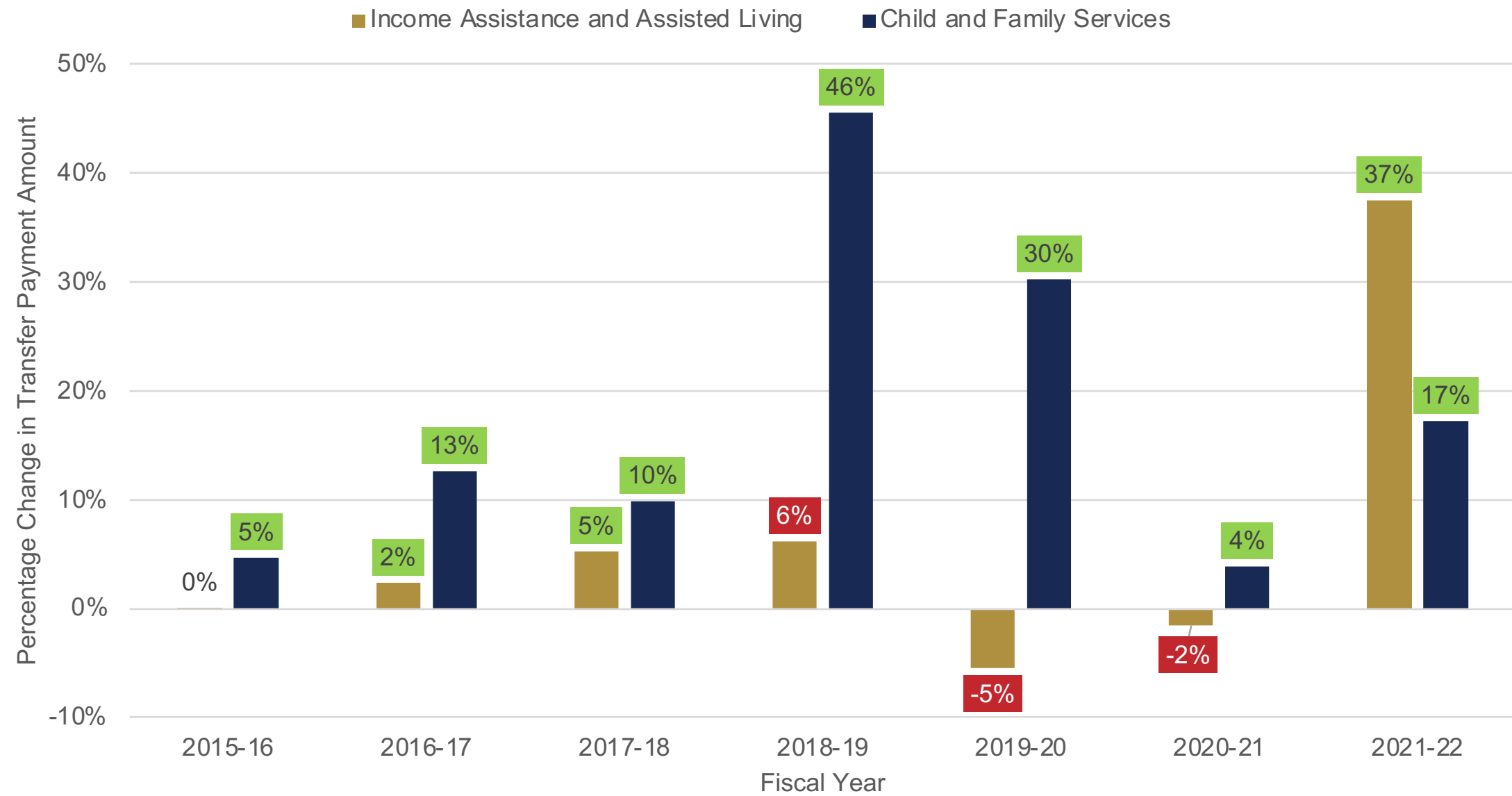
ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Transfer Payment Amount in Income Assistance and Assisted Living and in Child and Family Services by Fiscal Year

Income Assistance and Assisted Living      Child and Family Services



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

ISC Vote 10 - Transfer Payments: Percentage Change of Transfer Payment Amount in Social Services and Income Support and in Child and Family Services by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)



## **Legacy INAC and FNIHB**

## Notes on legacy Vote 1 expenditures

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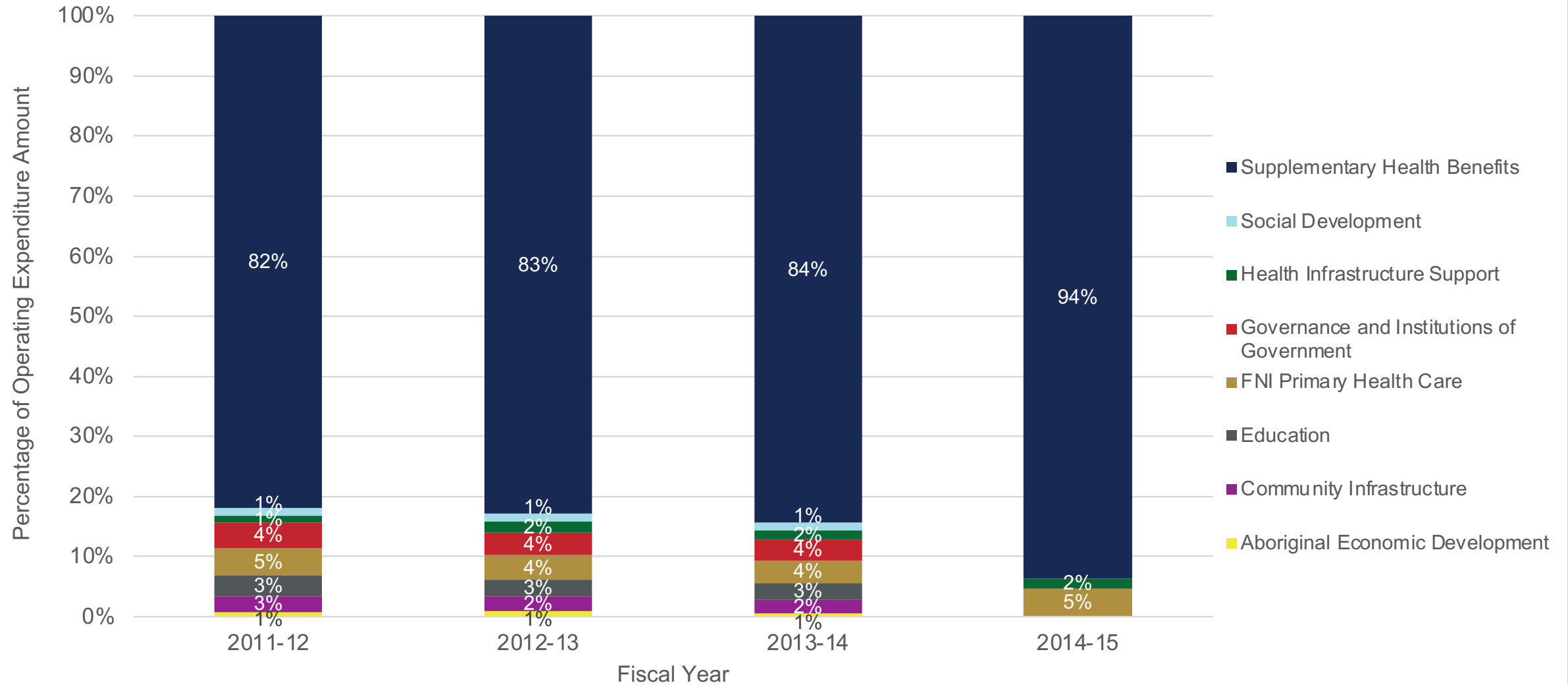
- Legacy INAC and FNIHB expenditures cover fiscal years 2011-12 to 2014-15 (prior to the division of INAC into ISC and CIRNA).
- Vote 1 expenditures are principally related to Supplementary Health Benefits.

## ISC Vote 1 Operating Expenditures: Actual Expenditures by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 1 Operating Expenditures: Percentage of Actual Expenditures by Fiscal Year by Program



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: FNI stands for First Nations and Inuit.

## Notes on legacy Vote 10 expenditures

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- Expenditures through Vote 10 were generally consistent up to 2013-14, and were principally related to Education and Social Services and Income Support.
- Nearly all Vote 10 expenditures were contributions.
- The majority of Vote 10 expenditure recipients were First Nations, Tribal Councils, and Inuit.
- Recipients in Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta received the largest portions of expenditures across fiscal years, followed by Saskatchewan.



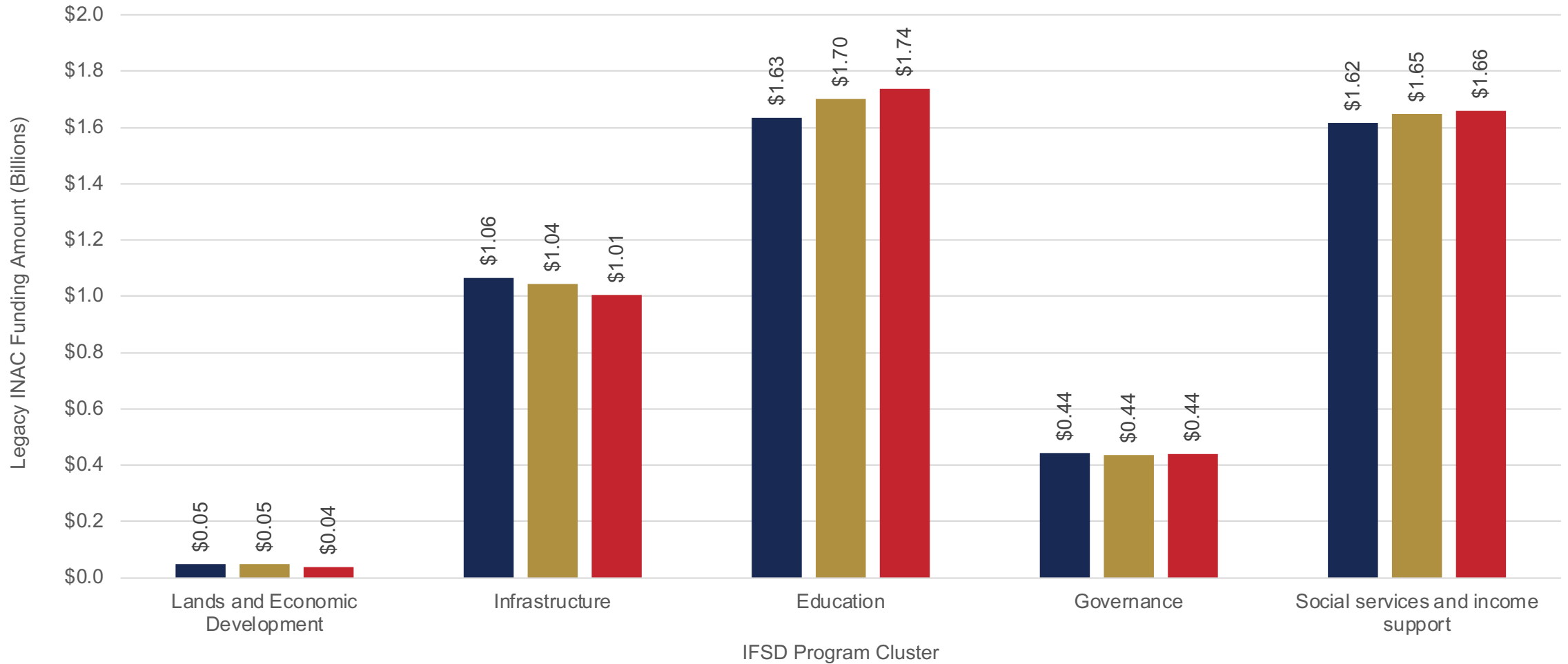
ISC Vote 10 Legacy INAC: Funding Amount by Fiscal Year



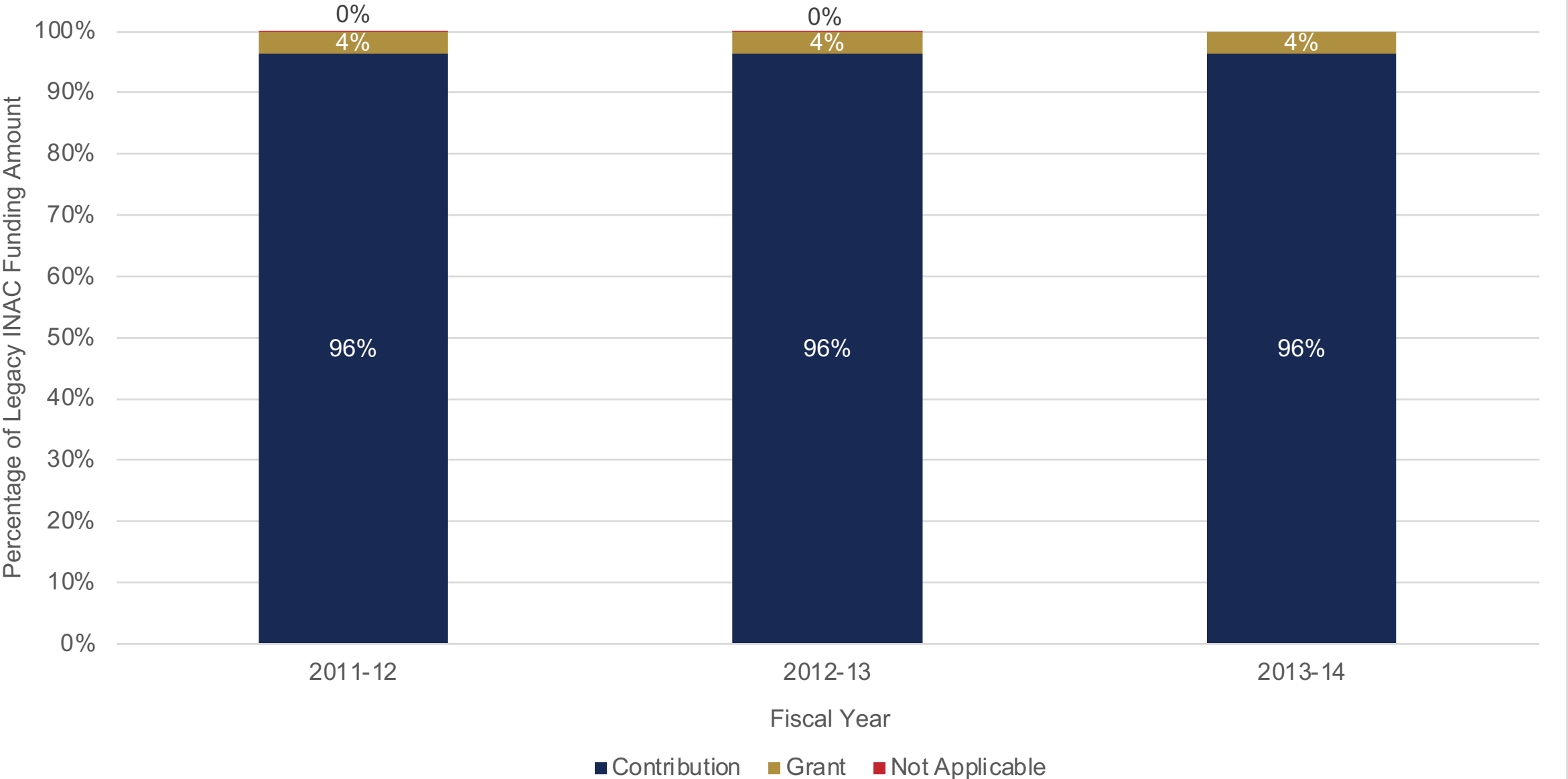
Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

## ISC Vote 10 Legacy INAC: Funding Amount by Fiscal Year By IFSD Program Cluster

■ 2011-12 ■ 2012-13 ■ 2013-14

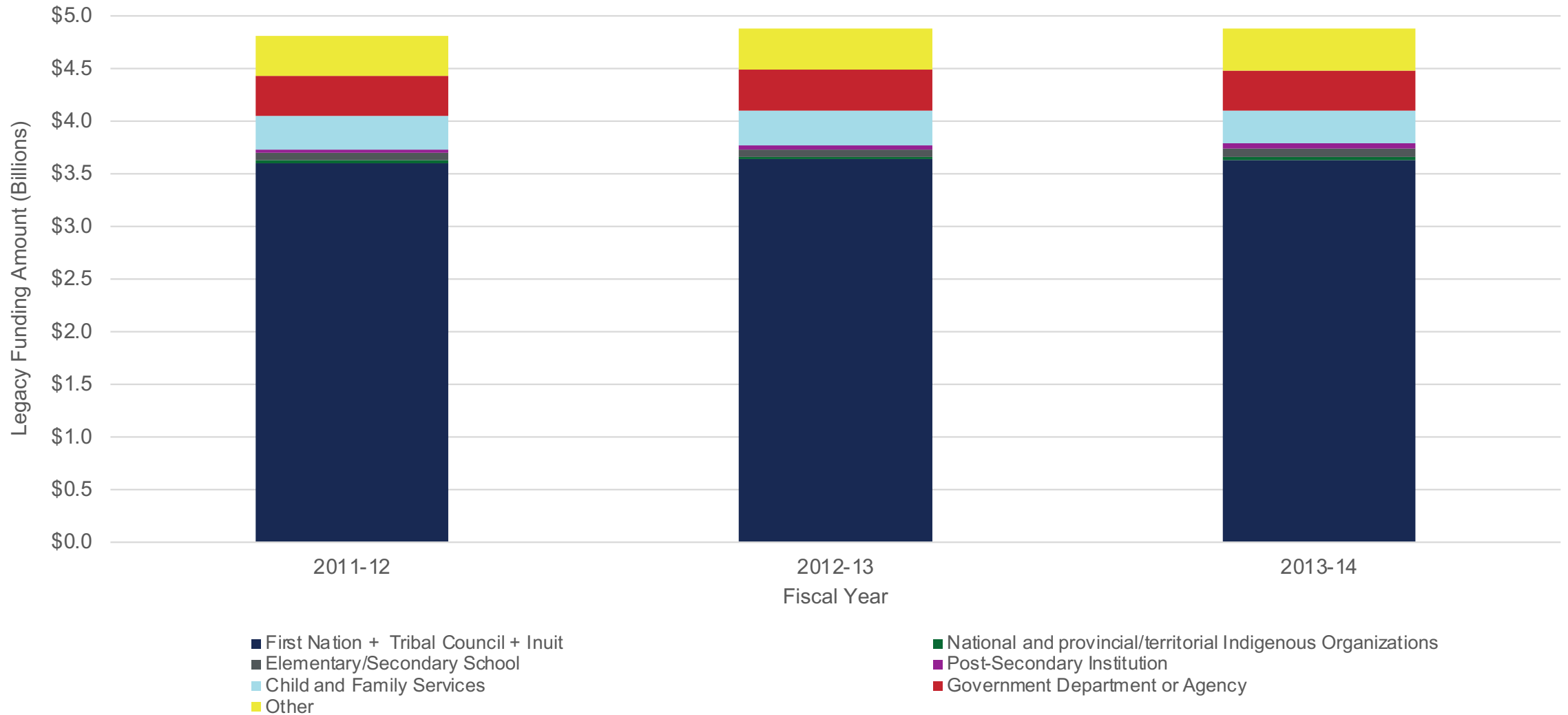


ISC Vote 10 Legacy INAC: Percentage of Funding Amount by Fund Type by Fiscal Year

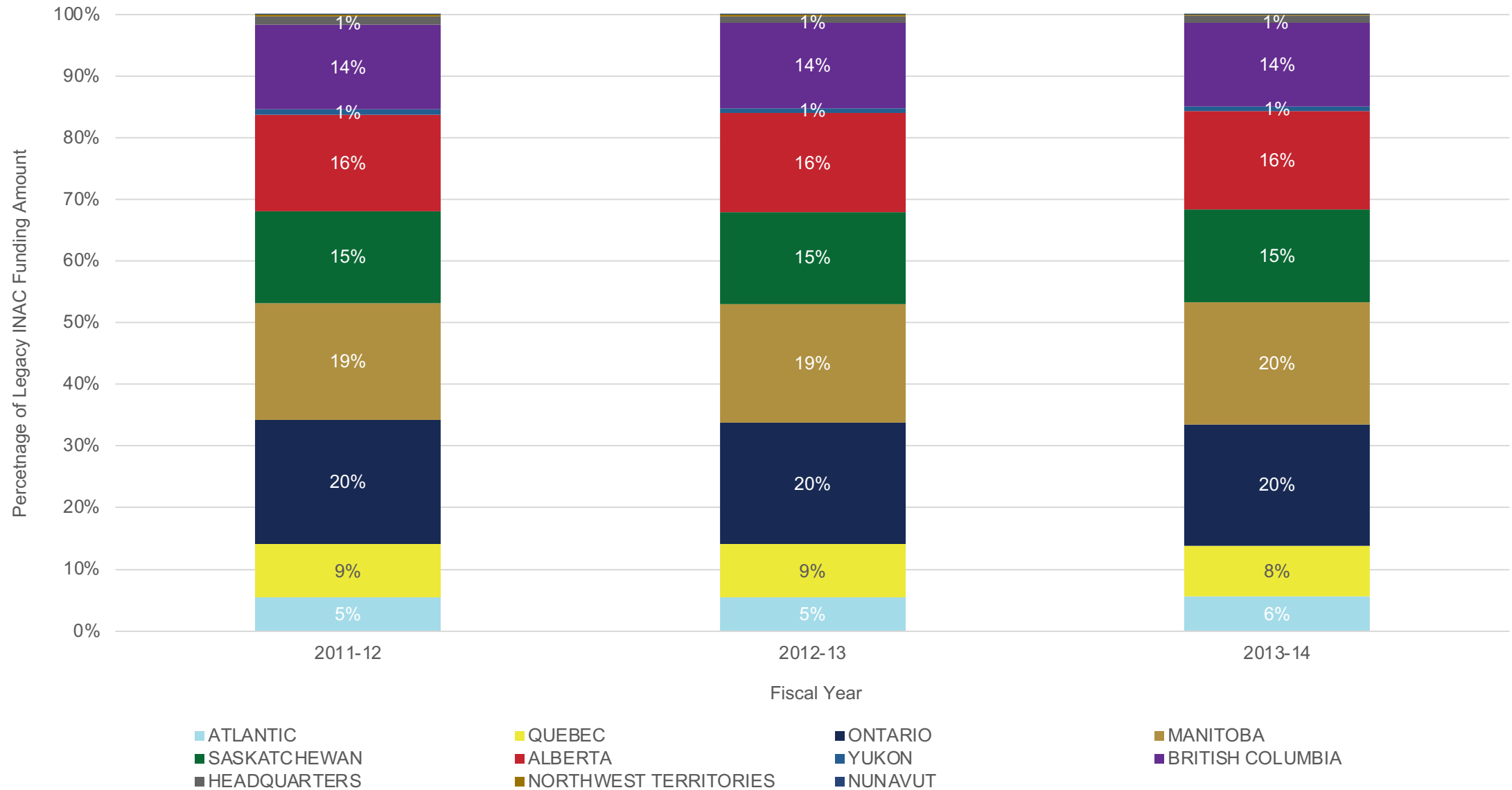


Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

ISC Vote 10 Legacy INAC: Funding Amount by Fiscal Year by IFSD Recipient Type Cluster



ISC Vote 10 Legacy INAC: Percentage of Funding Amount by Fiscal Year by Region Recipient



## Notes on legacy FNIHB expenditures

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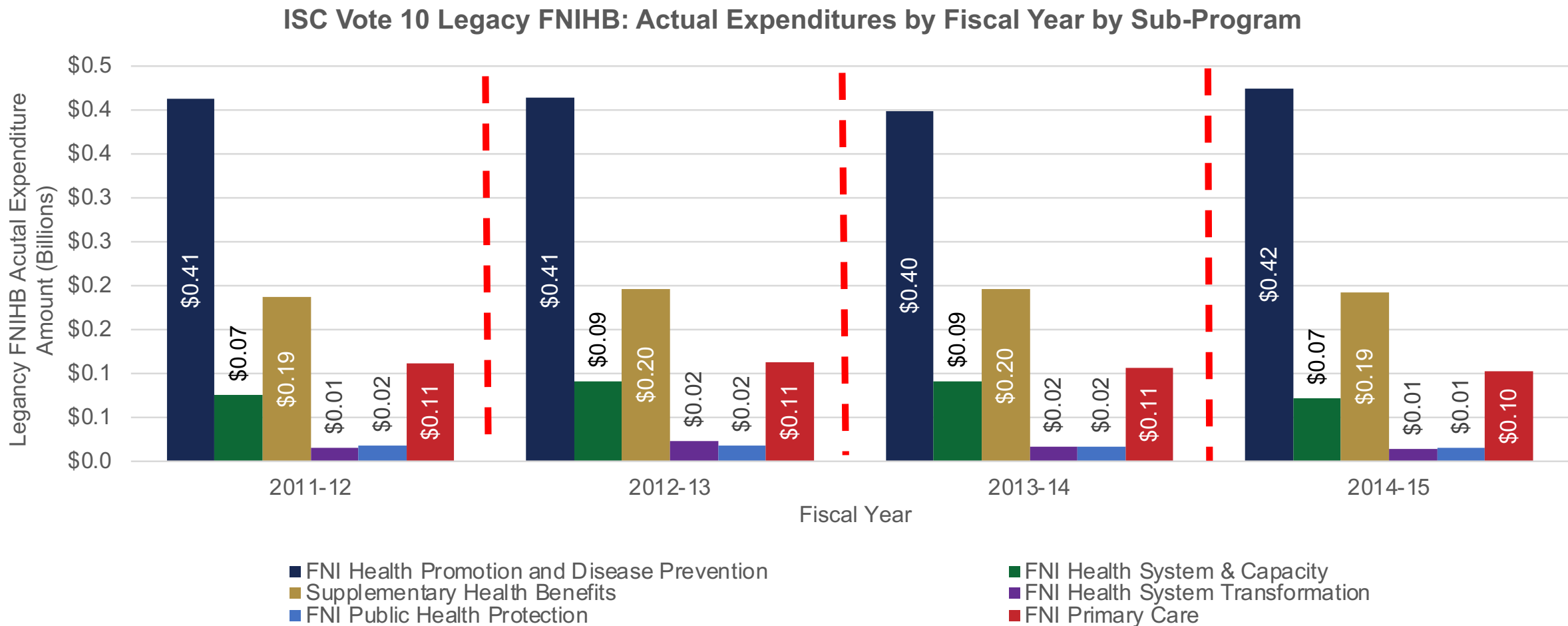
- FNIHB expenditures were generally consistent up to 2013-14.
- Expenditures were mainly focused on First Nations and Inuit Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, followed by supplementary health benefits.

ISC Vote 10 Legacy FNIHB: Actual Expenditures by Fiscal Year



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

ISC Vote 10 Legacy FNIHB: Actual Expenditures by Fiscal Year by Sub-Program



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)  
Note: FNI stands for First Nations and Inuit.





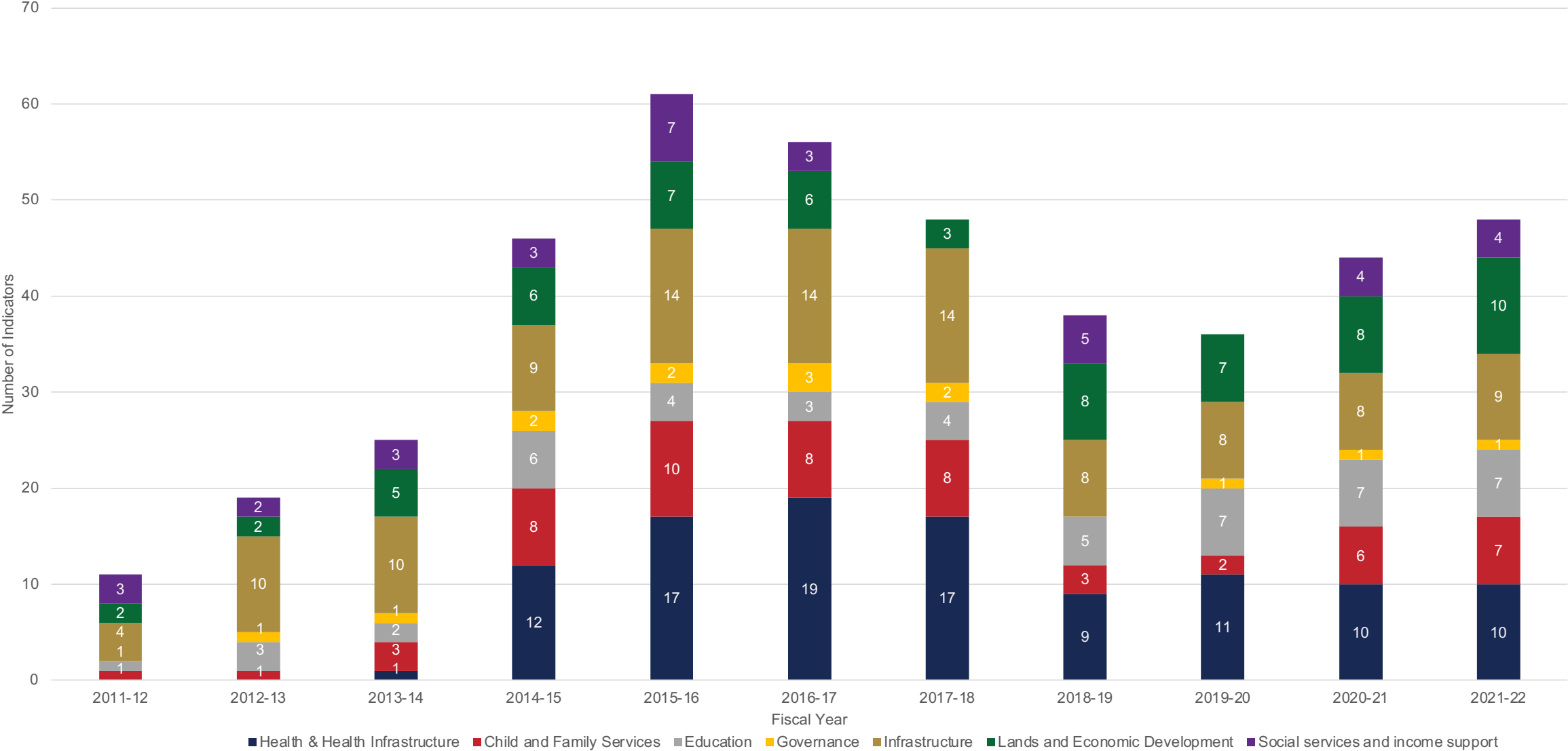
## Performance reporting

## Performance indicators

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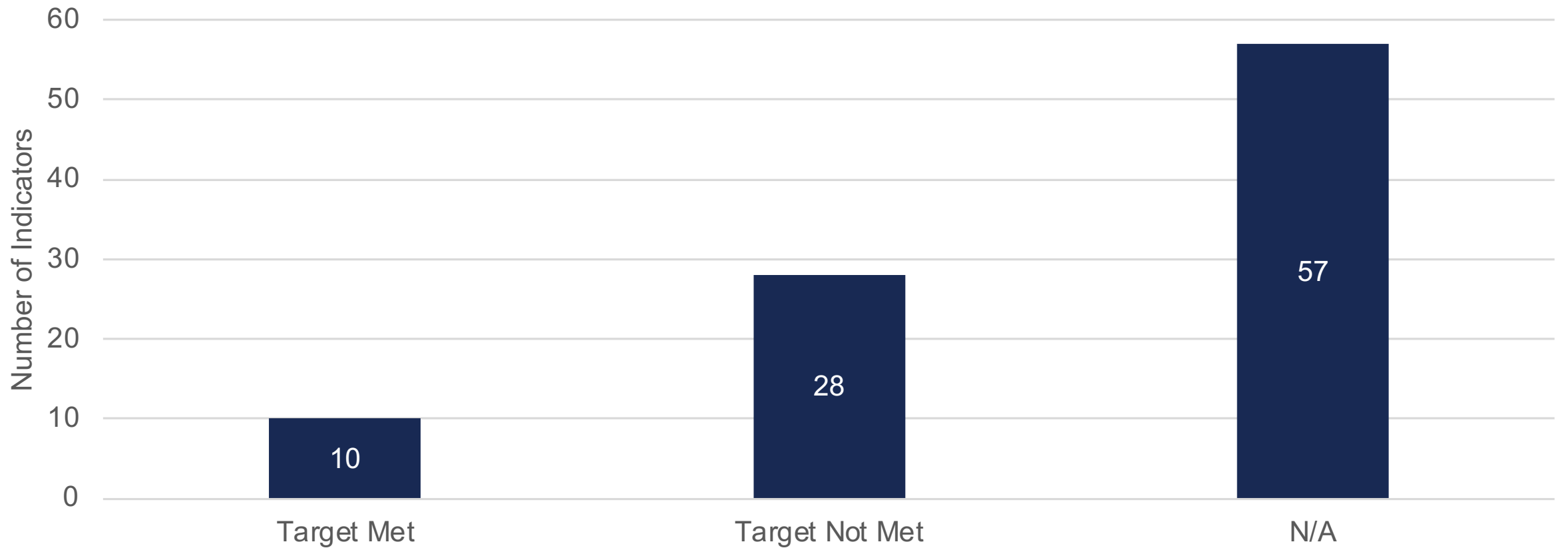
- ISC defines indicators for performance reporting across its program activity areas.
- IFSD clustered the indicators based on program activities.
- The number of indicators defined by ISC changes by fiscal year.
- Just because an indicator is defined, it is not necessarily reported on regularly.
  - In fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22, most of the indicators do not have reporting information.

Indigenous Services Canada - Publicly Reported Results and Indicators: Number of Available Indicators by Fiscal Year by IFSD Program Cluster



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)  
Note: Available indicators have values that are non-blank and not equal to N/A.

## Indigenous Services Canada - Publicly Reported Results and Indicators: Number of 2021-22 Targets Met



Source: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

Note: ISC only provides targets for 2021-22, but does not always report 2021-22 results. This chart assesses whether ISC met 2021-22 targets in the most recent fiscal year for which there is results reporting.



## **APPENDIX B**

# **DEFINING AND MEASURING OF POVERTY**

## Quantitative/Monetary Approaches to Poverty

Monetary approaches are the most widely used, which tend to define poverty as a minimum of consumption or income compared to a poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Such measures are favoured for their ease of comparison, but can lack nuance when based solely on income level.<sup>2</sup> There are several approaches that prioritize monetary indicators to measure poverty. For instance, throughout the 1940s and into the 1960s, poverty was measured as a statistic of per capita income. With the U.S. as a point of comparison, most countries found themselves to be far below that line.<sup>3</sup> Other measures use a consumption-based threshold, a basket of goods to define subsistence, e.g., Market Basket Measure, or the Foster-Greer Thorbecke approach which assesses those who fall below or are close to a set poverty line.

Table 1: Quantitative Approaches to Poverty

Approach	Measurement	Strength	Limitation
Monetary	A monetary approach to poverty, also referred to as economic well-being, uses a variety of measures to define poverty e.g., poverty line based on consumption or poverty. <sup>4</sup>	Easily comparable; blunt measurement based on income level. <sup>5</sup>	Oversimplification of the issue of poverty occurs when reducing it to a single measure without consideration of the various intersecting factors that contribute to levels of poverty. <sup>6</sup>
Poverty line	There are various poverty lines based on consumption or income. <sup>7</sup> Frequently, a poverty line will consist of specific thresholds, and individuals or populations who fall below or equal to these thresholds are considered to be in poverty.	Easily comparable. <sup>8</sup>	Oversimplification of the issue of poverty, to a single measure. <sup>9</sup>
Absolute poverty	The inability to survive. Traditionally, the types of survival mechanisms have included the amount of	Easily comparable based on a defined	Inadequate to capture the depth of poverty in a specific

<sup>1</sup> Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, Ruhi Saith, and Frances Stewart, "Does it Matter that we do not Agree on the Definition of Poverty? A Comparison of Four Approaches," *Oxford Development Studies* 31, no. 3 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360081032000111698>.

<sup>2</sup> Udaya Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty: Definition and Measurement," *International Social Science Journal* 68, no. 227-228 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12192>.

<sup>3</sup> New Internationalist, "The Development of Poverty," New Internationalist, June 5, 1992, <https://newint.org/features/1992/06/05/poverty>.

<sup>4</sup> Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, "A Comparison of Four Approaches."

<sup>5</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>6</sup> Rufus B. Akindola, "Towards a Definition of Poverty: Poor People's Perspectives and Implications for Poverty Reduction," *Journal of Developing Societies* 25, no. 2 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X0902500201>.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Ravallion, "On Measuring Global Poverty," *Annual Review of Economics* 12, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-081919-022924>.

<sup>8</sup> Ravallion, "On Measuring Global Poverty."

<sup>9</sup> Peter Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line: A Moral Quantification of Absolute Poverty," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500432739>.

	income required to obtain the minimum nutritional caloric intake, a minimum basket of consumption goods, or the basic level of utility needed to meet individual welfare needs. <sup>10</sup>	minimum threshold for survival. <sup>11</sup>	context, <sup>12</sup> due to its mono-dimensionality. <sup>13</sup>
Relative poverty	Inability to meet average living standards in context of a society. <sup>14</sup>  Relative poverty lines, e.g., below 50% of the median income.	Measure evolves with societal changes e.g., increase or decrease in median income. <sup>15</sup>  Easily comparable. <sup>16</sup>	Oversimplification of poverty based only on income. <sup>17</sup>  Fails to include absolute poverty. <sup>18</sup>
Foster-Greer Thorbecke (FGT)	The FGT index is an axiomatic framework for the purpose of measuring inequality. It measures poverty by forming a square of the poverty gap, and then creates an index that gives more weight to larger gaps. <sup>19</sup>	Can capture the various levels of poverty. <sup>20</sup>	Static approach measuring poverty at one point in time. <sup>21</sup>

## Poverty Line

<sup>10</sup> Akindola, "Towards a Definition of Poverty;" Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty;" Anthony Atkinson, *Measuring Poverty Around the World*, Princeton University Press, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691191898>.

<sup>11</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>12</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty;" Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravallion, "More Relatively-Poor People in a Less Absolutely-Poor World," *The Review of Income and Wealth* 59, no. 1 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4991.2012.00520.x>.

<sup>13</sup> Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line."

<sup>14</sup> Martin Ravallion and Shaohua Chen, "Weakly Relative Poverty," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 93, no. 4 (2011), [https://doi.org/10.1162/REST\\_a\\_00127](https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00127).

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Cutillo, Michele Raitano, and Isabella Siciliani, "Income-Based and Consumption-Based Measurement of Absolute Poverty: Insights from Italy," *Social Indicators Research* 161 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02386-9>.

<sup>16</sup> Ravallion, "On Measuring Global Poverty."

<sup>17</sup> Ravallion, "On Measuring Global Poverty."

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Dunn, "Necessities Laid Bare: An Examination of Possible Justifications for Peter Townsend's Purely Relative Definition of Poverty," *Journal of Social Policy* 52, no. 2 (September 23, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279421000532>.

<sup>19</sup> James Foster, Joel Greer, and Erik Thorbecke, "The Foster–Greer–Thorbecke (FGT) Poverty Measures: 25 Years Later," *The Journal of Economic Inequality* 8, no. 4 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-010-9136-1>.

<sup>20</sup> Atkinson, *Measuring Poverty Around the World*.

<sup>21</sup> James, Greer, and Thorbecke, "The Foster–Greer–Thorbecke (FGT) Poverty Measures."

The poverty line, the most common way to measure poverty by countries and multilateral institutions,<sup>22</sup> was developed by both Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree. They suggested identifying the poverty line by calculating the minimum necessities for maintaining physical efficiency.<sup>23</sup> For instance, it could be measured by estimating the nutritional requirements of both children and adults, converting it into the amount of food required, and calculating monetary requirements and associated costs of basic necessities such as clothing, fuel, etc., based on family size. If these needs could not be met, the family would be considered to live in poverty.<sup>24</sup>

There are variations in how the poverty line can be estimated and applied. In the 1990s, the World Bank established the consumption-based poverty line at US\$1 per day in the World Bank World Development Report (WDR),<sup>25</sup> embedding a monetized measurement and definition of poverty as the most important indicator of development.<sup>26</sup> At this time, poverty was defined as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living through two new income-based poverty lines to be used to measure poverty in the Global South: an upper threshold of US\$370/year, which indicated a person as poor, and a lower threshold of US\$275/year which indicated a person as extremely poor.<sup>27</sup> The upper threshold became the dollar a day international poverty line.<sup>28</sup> In 2023, the World Bank has maintained its poverty lines, updated in 2022, which include \$2.15/day in low-income countries, \$3.65/day in lower-middle income countries, and \$6.85/day in upper-middle income countries.<sup>29</sup>

An income-based poverty line is efficient but limited. The approach does not account for basic family expenses, family benefits, and tax transfers which have become popular as poverty reduction strategies.<sup>30</sup> Poverty lines are criticized for oversimplifying the matter of poverty to a single measure,<sup>31</sup> rather than considering the broader factors that influence a person's well-being. Poverty lines are also criticized for potentially distorting

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Ravallion, "On Measuring Global Poverty," *Annual Review of Economics* 12, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-081919-022924>; Rob Konkel, "The Monetization of Global Poverty: The Concept of Poverty in World Bank History, 1944–90," *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 2 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022814000072>; Atkinson, *Measuring Poverty Around the World*.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, Macmillan, 1902, [https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=\\_HMvAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR4&dq=Rowntree,+Benjamin+Seebohm.+Poverty:+A+study+of+town+life.+Macmillan,+1902.+&ots=6l5WK21c8L&sig=J6TqlfahkEdWU9ShNkr9Fh27c08#v=onepage&q=Rowntree%2C%20Benjamin%20Seebohm.%20Poverty%3A%20A%20study%20of%20town%20life.%20Macmillan%2C%201902.&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=_HMvAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR4&dq=Rowntree,+Benjamin+Seebohm.+Poverty:+A+study+of+town+life.+Macmillan,+1902.+&ots=6l5WK21c8L&sig=J6TqlfahkEdWU9ShNkr9Fh27c08#v=onepage&q=Rowntree%2C%20Benjamin%20Seebohm.%20Poverty%3A%20A%20study%20of%20town%20life.%20Macmillan%2C%201902.&f=false); Peter Townsend, "Measuring Poverty," *The British Journal of Sociology* 5, no. 2 (1954), <https://doi.org/10.2307/587651>.

<sup>24</sup> Townsend, "Measuring Poverty;" Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>25</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 1990: Poverty*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5973>.

<sup>26</sup> Konkel, "The Monetization of Global Poverty."

<sup>27</sup> Konkel, "The Monetization of Global Poverty."

<sup>28</sup> Konkel, "The Monetization of Global Poverty."

<sup>29</sup> World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality," accessed February 10, 2023, <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/themes/poverty-and-inequality.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence M. Berger, Maria Cancian, and Katherine Magnuson, "Anti-Poverty Policy Innovations: New Proposals for Addressing Poverty in the United States," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2018.4.3.01>.

<sup>31</sup> Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line."



an understanding of poverty because it changes based on the measure that's applied. For instance, in the 1990s, based on the \$1US-a day poverty level, the rate of poverty looked to have decreased, but when on a \$2US-a-day poverty line was applied, the rate of poverty increased.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Global estimates of poverty*

There are several estimates of the number of people living in poverty globally, although different approaches yield different estimates.<sup>33</sup> Even within countries, there are varying levels of poverty that may be masked in aggregate statistics. In low-income countries, hundreds of millions of people remain in what is considered to be absolute poverty by multilateral institutions.<sup>34</sup> Poverty remains a significant issue in middle-high income countries, but the conditions of poverty can look drastically different in different places. Due to the variation in understandings of poverty and how it is experienced, assessing existing approaches to defining and measuring poverty, and identifying their gaps, can lead to more informed approaches for alleviation.

#### *Absolute Poverty*

Absolute poverty refers to the most severe form of deprivation using consumption-based measures. Measures of absolute poverty focus on survival and have included the income required to obtain minimum nutritional caloric intake, a minimum basket of goods, etc.<sup>35</sup>

An absolute poverty line, like the one used by the World Bank, has been criticized for lacking both consistency and comparability in the way that it is estimated. Especially in regard to establishing minimum-needs thresholds which does not consider the differential demographic compositions to which it may be applied.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the literature argues that the absolute poverty line is inadequate to capture the depth of poverty in a specific context,<sup>37</sup> and it is mono-dimensional. Instead, it should be

<sup>32</sup> Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line."

<sup>33</sup> World Bank, "Poverty Overview," November 30, 2022,

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>. The World Bank widely uses an income-based, absolute poverty line (\$2.15 per day in the Global South). In 2021 it was estimated that 700 million people (9.3% of world population) live in conditions of absolute poverty based on the World Bank's absolute poverty line.

United Nations, "2022 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)," October 17, 2022,

<https://hdr.undp.org/content/2022-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi>.

The United Nations also uses the World Bank's absolute poverty line as well as a multidimensional poverty index (MPI). This measures deprivations people faced based on health, education, and standard of living with 10 indicators to evaluate who is in poverty. Based on this measure it estimated that 1.2 billion people in the Global South are in poverty.

<sup>34</sup> World Bank, "Poverty Overview;" United Nations, "2022 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)."

<sup>35</sup> Akindola, "Towards a Definition of Poverty;" Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>36</sup> Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line;" S. Subramanian, "Once More Unto The Breach... The World Bank's Latest 'Assault' on Global Poverty," *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 45 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44003992>; Michail Moatsos, "Global Absolute Poverty: Behind the Veil of Dollars," *Journal of Globalization and Development* 7, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1515/jgd-2016-0033>; David Brady and Amie Bostic, "Paradoxes of Social Policy: Welfare Transfers, Relative Poverty, and Redistribution Preferences," *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415573049>.

<sup>37</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty;" Chen and Ravallion, "More Relatively-Poor People."

multidimensional in recognizing the baseline rather than only income.<sup>38</sup> The absolute poverty line whether people can survive, whereas the relative poverty line examines whether a person can meet the average standard in a society.

### *Relative Poverty*

Relative poverty is a measure that includes not only income, but also the circumstances that enable or constrain a person's participation in society. The approach is different than absolute poverty, as it refers to the inability to meet the average living standards in the population, whereas absolute poverty refers to the inability to support survival.

Townsend (1979),<sup>39</sup> defined poverty as relative deprivation, meaning, the absence of sufficient food, amenities, standards, services, and activities in a society. He also measured poverty by linking material resources to indicators of deprivation.<sup>40</sup> The relative poverty line has been most commonly used in high-income countries as the standard of living continues to increase. In turn, the relative poverty line can better demonstrate if people are not meeting the standard of living, relative to the average in society.<sup>41</sup>

Some, such as Ravallion (2020),<sup>42</sup> argue that relative poverty, while a measure that broadens considerations of poverty beyond income, has limitations in its definition and quantification. This is related to differences in social inclusion/exclusion across communities. Although the relative position of a person in society is important, other factors should also be considered in evaluating poverty, for instance, absolute levels of living.<sup>43</sup> Dunn (2021)<sup>44</sup> proposes that absolute and relative poverty lines should be viewed as "irreconcilable yet complementary" as they each yield different findings such as inability to survive or inability to meet societal standards. An additional issue with the relative poverty line is its inability to effectively capture changes in income dynamics, socio-demographics, or concentrations of poverty.<sup>45</sup> A relative poverty line is not intended to be a complete measure of poverty, instead, it should be considered as supplemental to a larger discussion of poverty,<sup>46</sup> that addresses more than only income.

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<sup>38</sup> Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line."

<sup>39</sup> Peter Townsend, "Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living," in *Poverty in the United Kingdom*, University of California Press, 1979, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520325760>; Peter Townsend, "Deprivation," *Journal of Social Policy* 16, no. 2 (1987), 136, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279400020341>.

<sup>40</sup> Townsend, "Poverty in the United Kingdom."

<sup>41</sup> Ravallion and Chen, "Weakly Relative Poverty;" "Relative vs Absolute Poverty: Defining Different Types of Poverty," Habitat for Humanity GB, accessed February 10, 2023, <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2018/09/relative-absolute-poverty/#:~:text=Since%20the%20relative%20approach%20to,been%20%E2%80%9Crelatively%E2%80%9D%20left%20behind.>

<sup>42</sup> Ravallion, "On Measuring Global Poverty."

<sup>43</sup> Ravallion and Chen, "Weakly Relative Poverty."

<sup>44</sup> Dunn, "Necessities Laid Bare," 16.

<sup>45</sup> Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>46</sup> Amartya Sen, "Issues in the Measurement of Poverty," *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 81, no. 2 (1979), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3439966>.

Monetary approaches to poverty offer an advantage as they present a simple form of measurement which is easily understood and compared. However, scholars have criticized these straightforward approaches. For instance, when poverty is presented only through statistics, states can use positive ratings to their advantage, even if it overlooks those who live in poverty. This especially relates to those who lack access to safe water, sanitation, and health care as they are not considered as a priority in the statistical poverty rating.<sup>47</sup> Income alone fails to fully capture the complexity of deprivation in the forms of material and social conditions that contribute to the disadvantaged position of some populations.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Akindola, "Towards a Definition of Poverty."

<sup>48</sup> Akindola, "Towards a Definition of Poverty."

## Qualitative Approaches to Poverty

Qualitative approaches to measuring poverty focus on capturing the experiences of poverty, going beyond monetary measures.

Table 2: Summary of qualitative approaches to poverty

Approach	Measurement	Strength	Limitation
Social exclusion	A way through which individuals or groups are either fully or partially excluded from participation in the society in which they live. <sup>49</sup> It clarifies the experience of marginalization and deprivation that occur in high-income countries. <sup>50</sup>	A more holistic approach to capture the extent of poverty by acknowledging individual and institutional impacts and other factors. <sup>51</sup>  Recognizes the multidimensionality of deprivation. It also includes factors outside monetary and human development dimensions, while giving acknowledgement to cultural and political dimensions. <sup>52</sup>	Challenging to define and identify the relevant standards to measure exclusion, as employment or social insurance coverage apply to most of the population. <sup>53</sup>  The concept of social exclusion itself is commonly contested, making it challenging to have it considered in approaching poverty. <sup>54</sup>  Poverty and social exclusion have been argued to be distinct, separate concepts, and just because a person is excluded does not necessarily mean they are in poverty. <sup>55</sup>  The approach does not focus on a person's agency, depicting people in poverty as victims. <sup>56</sup>
Participatory	Those living in poverty participate in defining	Reduces the gap that exists between academics	Challenging to aggregate, limited representation. <sup>59</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>50</sup> Hilary Silver, "Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms," *International Labour Review* 133 (1994), [https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/intlr133&div=51&g\\_sent=1&casa\\_token=&collection=journals](https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/intlr133&div=51&g_sent=1&casa_token=&collection=journals).

<sup>51</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>52</sup> Sam Hickey and Andries du Toit, "Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion, and Chronic Poverty," in *Chronic Poverty*, edited by Andrew Sheperd and Julia Brunt, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137316707\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137316707_7).

<sup>53</sup> Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, "A Comparison of Four Approaches."

<sup>54</sup> Hickey and Toit, "Adverse Incorporation."

<sup>55</sup> Ali Madanipour, Mark Shucksmith, and Hilary Talbot, "Concepts of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe," *Local Economy* 30, no. 7 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094215601634>.

<sup>56</sup> Cecile Jackson, "Social Exclusion and Gender: Does One Size Fit All?," *The European Journal of Development Research* 11, no. 1 (1999), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1080/09578819908426730>.

<sup>59</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

	what it means to be poor, the extent of the poverty, and how to address it. <sup>57</sup>	and policymakers, with those who have lived experiences of poverty. <sup>58</sup>	
Capabilities	Focuses on a person's capacity to take factors like education, health, and other areas to support the creation of strong well-being, inclusive of the ability to make an income necessary to enable a person to increase their consumption of goods and services. <sup>60</sup>	Provides a framework for tackling challenging definitional issues.	Focuses on individual factors divorced from influencing social structures. <sup>61</sup>  Challenging to aggregate, especially as capabilities are not frequently tracked. <sup>62</sup>
Multidimensional - Alkire and Foster Methodology	Flexible tool to measure poverty and well-being with different dimensions adapted to a specific context or geographic region.	The multidimensional approach based on the Alkire Foster methodology can better measure child poverty as it considers the dimensions of child poverty that exist outside only a monetary statistic. <sup>64</sup>	There can be strong bias and assumptions based on researchers' opinions or theoretical frameworks made both in the creation of the indicators and in the evaluation of certain indicators. <sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Robert Chambers, "Paradigm Shifts and the Practice of Participatory Research and Development," Institute of Development Studies Working Paper 2, 1994, <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/3712>; Robert Chambers, "Participation and Poverty," *Development* 50, no. 2 (2007), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100382>.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Beresford and Suzy Croft, *Citizen Involvement: A Practical Guide for Change*, Macmillan International Higher Education, 2016, <https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OzVIEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR8&dq=Beresford,+Peter,+a+nd+Suzy+Croft.+Citizen+involvement:+A+practical+guide+for+change.+Macmillan+International+Higher+Education.+2016.&ots=PqarHieAUp&sig=SL414AeBzfv1SKaFqNQGlCJeUaU#v=onepage&q&f=false>; Ruth Patrick, "Unsettling the Anti-Welfare Commonsense: The Potential in Participatory Research with People Living in Poverty," *Journal of Social Policy* 49, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279419000199>.

<sup>60</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty;" Amartya Sen, "Poor, Relatively Speaking," *Oxford Economic Papers* 35, no. 2 (1983), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.oep.a041587>.

<sup>61</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>62</sup> Michael Lipton and Martin Ravallion, "Poverty and policy," *Handbook of development economics* 3 (1995), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1573-4471\(95\)30018-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1573-4471(95)30018-X).

<sup>64</sup> Sabina Alkire and José Manuel Roche, "Beyond Headcount: The Alkire-Foster Approach to Multidimensional Child Poverty Measurement," in *Child Poverty and Inequality: New Perspectives*, edited by Isabel Ortiz, Louise Moreira Daniels, and Sólrún Engilbertsdóttir, United Nations Children's Fund, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2039773#page=272012](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2039773#page=272012); Sharmila Kurukulasuriya and Sólrún Engilbertsdóttir, "A Multidimensional Approach to Measuring Child Poverty," *Child Poverty and Inequality: New Perspectives* (2012), [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2039773#page=32](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2039773#page=32).

<sup>65</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI): Charting pathways out of multidimensional poverty: Achieving the SDGs," United Nations Development Program, 2020, <https://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-MPI>; Sabina Alkire, "Choosing Dimensions: The Capability Approach and Multidimensional Poverty," in *The Many Dimensions of Poverty*, edited by Nanak Kakwani and Jacques Silber, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230592407\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230592407_6); Taseer

	The aggregation deploys the FGT measure. <sup>63</sup>		
Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	<p>The MPI uses the Alkire Foster methodology.</p> <p>It examines deprivations based on three equally weighted dimensions – health, education, and living standards with 10 indicators total.<sup>66</sup></p>	The MPI is based on household level data instead of only on a national level, this can provide poverty rate estimates for sub-groups within a country context. <sup>67</sup>	<p>The MPI is limited based on the dimensions it has included as there are other dimensions that could be argued to be important to capture.<sup>68</sup></p> <p>The MPI employs a single composite index, which is argued to be ineffective in fully measuring poverty.<sup>69</sup></p>

### *Social Exclusion Approach*

The social exclusion approach to poverty assesses whether individuals or groups are fully or partially excluded from participating in their society.<sup>70</sup> This approach was developed to comprehend both the experiences of marginalization and deprivation that can occur in high-income countries.<sup>71</sup>

The feeling of belonging is important as it can support people to create social capital as well as combat inequalities and social exclusion. When people experience exclusion it creates disadvantages socially, psychologically, politically, and economically.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, the social exclusion approach to poverty can contribute to a more holistic understanding of poverty by recognizing barriers at both individual and institutional levels, while also acknowledging the economic, political, and socio-cultural impacts of poverty.<sup>73</sup>

The European Union (EU) connects social exclusion to poverty, the two terms are often used interchangeably. The EU measures those at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). This is measured with three indicators: (1) EU at risk of poverty (AROP) indicator, which refers to people living below a set threshold (60%) of the national

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Salahuddin and Alia Ahmed, "Multidimensional Deprivation Spectrum: A Step Forward from the Alkire-Foster Methodology," *Indian Journal of Human Development* 13, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973703019834742>.

<sup>63</sup> Sabina Alkire and James Foster, "Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement," *Journal of Public Economics* 95, no. 7-8 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2010.11.006>.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)."

<sup>67</sup> Rachel Bray et al., "Realising Poverty in All its Dimensions: A Six-Country Participatory Study," *World Development* 134 (2020), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X20301510>; Martin Ravallion, "On Multidimensional Indices of Poverty," *The Journal of Economic Inequality* 9, no. 2 (2011), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10888-011-9173-4>.

<sup>68</sup> Bray et al., "Realising Poverty in All its Dimensions."

<sup>69</sup> Ravallion, "On Multidimensional Indices of Poverty."

<sup>70</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>71</sup> Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, "A Comparison of Four Approaches."

<sup>72</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty;" Ajit Bhalla and Frederic Lapeyre, "Social Exclusion: Towards an Analytical and Operational Framework," *Development and Change* 28, no. 3 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00049>.

<sup>73</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

median disposable income; (2) EU severe material deprivation (SMD) which refers to when a person cannot afford at least four items from a list of nine;<sup>74</sup> and (3) the EU (quasi) joblessness (QJ) indicator, this refers to when adults (18-59) have reduced work and spent less than 20% of their work-related time in employment annually.<sup>75</sup> These indicators can capture individuals who are “being left behind,” thereby providing better information for informing social policies.<sup>76</sup>

The social exclusion approach can help to understand the contributing factors to poverty, especially for marginalized populations who may experience it at higher rates. However, setting appropriate standards to measure exclusion in employment or social insurance coverage can be challenging because these standards apply to most of the population.<sup>77</sup> Some argue against the social exclusion approach noting that poverty and exclusion are separate concepts, and social exclusion is not always a factor for someone in low income.<sup>78</sup>

### *Participatory Approach*

The participatory approach was developed to include those experiencing deprivation, especially in low-income countries, to voice it in their own words.<sup>79</sup> Robert Chambers, an important influence on the approach, considers it an approach “to share, enhance, and analyze” their life experiences, and then plan accordingly.<sup>80</sup> Further, the participatory approach can change how externally imposed poverty estimates impact those living in poverty. It can help them participate in decisions about the definition and extent of poverty.<sup>81</sup>

Working with those experiencing deprivation, the approach can better recognize and include dimensions of deprivation that are often ignored in other approaches. This could include specific indicators such as tropical seasonality, location of the poor, poverty of time and energy, and the importance of the physical wellbeing of their body.<sup>82</sup> The

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<sup>74</sup> The nine items include: 1) cannot manage unexpected costs; 2) cannot afford a yearly, one week holiday; 3) cannot avoid accumulating debt; 4) cannot afford a meal with protein every other day; 5) cannot adequately heat home; 6) does not have access to private transportation use; 7) cannot afford a washing machine; 8) cannot afford a colour television; 9) cannot afford a phone.

<sup>75</sup> Anne-Catherine Guio, Éric Marlier, and Brian Nolan, eds. *Improving the Understanding of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), 26, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/13572235/KS-02-21-459-EN-N.pdf/7ea44bc6-4b1b-fc5c-e6c9-ed8bc42a4f0c?t=1634563482314>.

<sup>76</sup> Anne-Catherine Guio, Éric Marlier, and Brian Nolan, eds., *Improving the Understanding of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/13572235/KS-02-21-459-EN-N.pdf/7ea44bc6-4b1b-fc5c-e6c9-ed8bc42a4f0c?t=1634563482314>.

<sup>77</sup> Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, “A Comparison of Four Approaches.”

<sup>78</sup> Madanipour, Shucksmith, and Talbot, “Concepts of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe.”

<sup>79</sup> Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, “A Comparison of Four Approaches.”

<sup>80</sup> Robert Chambers, “The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal,” *World Development* 22, no. 7 (1994): 953, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(94\)90141-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(94)90141-4).

<sup>81</sup> Chambers, “Paradigm Shifts and the Practice of Participatory Research and Development;” Chambers, “Participation and Poverty.”

<sup>82</sup> Robert Chambers, “Poverty Research: Methodologies, Mindsets and Multidimensionality,” *The Institute of Development Studies*, 2007, <https://www.ids.ac.uk/download.php?file=files/Wp293.pdf>.



approach, however, is difficult to aggregate and compare given the specificity of lived experiences.<sup>83</sup> Given the nature of the approach, it is likely best suited to small populations or localized approaches to alleviating poverty, as it may not be representatives of broader populations.<sup>84</sup>

### *Capabilities*

The capabilities approach focuses on a person's capacity to take factors like education, health, etc., to support overall well-being. This includes the ability to make an income, allowing individuals to participate in the consumption of material goods.<sup>85</sup> The approach, often characterized by the work of Amartya Sen, has been influential both by identifying basic necessities of well-being, and on approaches to poverty that have evolved since this time.

Sen (1983)<sup>86</sup> argued that it is critical to consider basic necessities to assess the standard of living of a person, and their capacity to make appropriate decisions. The capabilities approach considers contributing factors to poverty such as, "psychological stress, lack of motivation and skill, lack of self-confidence, increase in morbidity, disruption of family relations and social life, and the intensification of social exclusion and discrimination."<sup>87</sup> Measurement is often conducted through a series of components including income, consumption, welfare, and how a person uses factors like education or health to generate these components.<sup>88</sup> When the deprivation of a person's capabilities occurs, autonomy to make choices can be challenged and thereby create barriers in achieving goals. Should this occur, a person would be considered to be in poverty.

In Sen's work, there is no standardized list of capabilities that should be used to measure poverty, rather, it should be derived from theoretical work and through the participation of the public.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, there should be frequent examination of the relevance of the capabilities used to ensure they remain applicable in a changing society.<sup>90</sup> However, Martha Nussbaum, another influential theorist of the capabilities approach, has discussed advantages of creating a list of capabilities with expectations

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<sup>83</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>84</sup> Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart, "A Comparison of Four Approaches."

<sup>85</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>86</sup> Sen, "Poor, Relatively Speaking."

<sup>87</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty," 187; Amartya Sen, "Development as Freedom (1999)," in *The Globalization and Development Reader: Perspectives on Development and Global Change*, edited by J. Timmons Roberts, Amy Bellone Hite, and Nitsan Chorev, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, <https://diarium.usal.es/agustinferraro/files/2020/01/Roberts-Hite-and-Chorev-2015-The-Globalization-and-Development-Reader.pdf#page=539>.

<sup>88</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>89</sup> Amartya Sen, "Capabilities, Lists, and Public Reason: Continuing the Conversation," *Feminist Economics* 10, no. 3 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570042000315163>; Amartya Sen, "Human Rights and Capabilities," *Journal of Human Development* 6, no. 2 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649880500120491>.

<sup>90</sup> Alkire, "Choosing Dimensions."



outlined to enable tracking and measurement.<sup>91</sup> Nussbaum (2001)<sup>92</sup> also suggests that the capabilities approach is 'fully universal' as the basic capabilities are a priority to people around the world.

The capabilities approach has enriched the measurement of poverty, especially as it provides a framework for tackling challenging definitional issues – inclusive of the roles of absolute and relative poverty. However, the focus on the individual excludes the impact of societal structures that influence a person's well-being.<sup>93</sup> The approach has not been convincing as to why higher consumption should not be the main objective of poverty definitions, measures, and strategies.<sup>94</sup>

### *Multidimensional*

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was developed by the UNDP and Oxford University and launched in 2010, replacing the human poverty index (HPI).<sup>95</sup> It uses the Alkire Foster methodology to measure poverty based on factors of human deprivation rather than only income.<sup>96</sup> When utilizing any MPI for measurement, it is important that the information for the individual or household is gathered from the same survey to ensure reliability and comparability.<sup>97</sup>

The MPI been used to track the progress of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs are global goals that outline a plan to achieve a higher quality and sustainable future internationally. Eliminating extreme poverty is one of these goals and is interrelated with other indicators of deprivation.<sup>98</sup> Poverty measurement has shifted away from the traditional monetary approach to include multiple deprivations people experience.

The MPI examines deprivations based on three equally weighted dimensions – health, education, and standard of living with 10 indicators total. The measures are quantified by the average number of deprivations a person experienced based on the way those deprivations are weighted. A person is considered to be in multidimensional poverty "if they are deprived in one-third or more of the 10 indicators, where each indicator is

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<sup>91</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, "Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach and Its Implementation," *Hypatia* 24, no. 3 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01053.x>

<sup>92</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, [https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=9R69I--rpzUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Nussbaum,+Martha+C.+Women+and+human+development:+The+capabilities+approach.+Vol.+3.+Cambridge+University+Press,+2001.&ots=Dlk6OF7cV8&sig=6\\_OXzJfWsgu2aHJp7CiR4vUZDal#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=9R69I--rpzUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Nussbaum,+Martha+C.+Women+and+human+development:+The+capabilities+approach.+Vol.+3.+Cambridge+University+Press,+2001.&ots=Dlk6OF7cV8&sig=6_OXzJfWsgu2aHJp7CiR4vUZDal#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>93</sup> Wagle, "Rethinking Poverty."

<sup>94</sup> Michael Lipton and Martin Ravallion, "Poverty and Policy," *Handbook of Development Economics* 3 (1995), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1573-4471\(95\)30018-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1573-4471(95)30018-X).

<sup>95</sup> Bray et al., "Realising Poverty in All its Dimensions."

The HPI provided national aggregates, while the MPI uses household level data.

<sup>96</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)."

<sup>97</sup> Sabina Alkire and Maria Emma Santos, "Training Material for Producing National Human Development Reports: The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)," OPHI Research in Progress, 2011, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:18c6645b-d2e1-412b-8c06-404ad114dfdf>.

<sup>98</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)."

equally weighted within its dimension...<sup>99</sup> The MPI ranges from 0 to 1, the higher value indicates the increased intensity of poverty.<sup>100</sup>

An advantage of the MPI is its basis on household level data rather than national data, which allows for poverty rate estimates of sub-groups within a country context.<sup>101</sup> The approach includes a joint distribution of multiple dimensions, which can demonstrate the number of people experiencing the same issues.<sup>102</sup> These tools can be leveraged to quantify levels of deprivation across dimensions and applied to develop responses.<sup>103</sup>

Despite its advantages, bias and assumptions based on researchers' opinions or theoretical frameworks can influence the development and assessment of the indicators.<sup>104</sup> Further, social connectedness – or lack thereof, is absent in the multidimensional approach to poverty.<sup>105</sup> The MPI is criticized for missing dimensions that contribute to persisting conditions of poverty,<sup>106</sup> e.g., social inclusion particularly connected to participation in society; mental health e.g., depression, anxiety; and financial pressure e.g., financial strain, material deprivation.<sup>107</sup>

Qualitative approaches to assessing poverty encompass a broader perspective of lived experiences and individual capabilities. The emphasis on what individuals have or do not have around them for support extends the understanding of poverty beyond income and reflects local or individual realities. Gathering data for qualitative approaches can be more research intensive, especially when local or individual participation is required. While quantitative approaches to poverty are blunt, aggregable, and ease comparisons, qualitative measures are specific, local, and a challenge to compare across broad populations. An exception is the MPI, developed with consideration of the capabilities approach and includes household level data. Designed to measure the SDGs, the MPI is comparable across countries.

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<sup>99</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)," 4.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)."

<sup>101</sup> Bray et al., "Realising Poverty in All its Dimensions;" Ravallion, "On Multidimensional Indices of Poverty."

<sup>102</sup> Ravallion, "On Multidimensional Indices of Poverty."

<sup>103</sup> Salahuddin and Ahmed, "Multidimensional Deprivation Spectrum."

<sup>104</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI);" Alkire, "Choosing Dimensions;" Salahuddin and Ahmed, "Multidimensional Deprivation Spectrum."

<sup>105</sup> Kim Samuel et al., "Social Isolation and Its Relationship to Multidimensional Poverty," Oxford Development Studies 46, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2017.1311852>.

<sup>106</sup> Bray et al., "Realising Poverty in All its Dimensions."

<sup>107</sup> Mark Tomlinson, Robert Walker, and Glenn Williams, "Measuring poverty in Britain as a multi-dimensional concept, 1991 to 2003," *Journal of Social Policy* 37, no. 4 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279408002237>; Webb, Calum JR. Webb, "Constructing a reliable and valid measure of multidimensional poverty," PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2019, <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/24907/1/Thesis-Main%20CW%20Doctoral%20Access%20Submission.pdf>; Bray et al., "Realising Poverty in All its Dimensions."



## **APPENDIX C**

### **INDEPENDENT EXPERT ANALYSIS LAURIE-PLANTE ESTIMATE ON THE COST OF POVERTY IN FIRST NATIONS, CHARLES PLANTE**

# **Technical notes on the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy calculation of the First Nations cost of poverty<sup>123</sup>**

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# **Technical notes on the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy calculation of the First Nations cost of poverty**

## **Key points**

- Using self-identification as our indicator of First Nations status, we estimate that the overall First Nations cost of poverty in Canada in 2016 was between \$3.53 and \$3.62 billion per year in 2021 dollars.
- Calculating a precise dollar amount for the First Nations cost of poverty can ensure that the costs of not taking action to reduce poverty are not ignored in conversations about the costs associated with taking action.
- This overall cost estimate is the sum of remedial health and crime costs at the system and victim levels, opportunity costs associated with living in poverty preventing people from accessing and taking full advantage of economic opportunities, and the intergenerational impact of poverty on children.
- Our estimates are best-we-can-do-right-now estimates that use the best sources of information we have access to on First Nations communities in late 2022, the 2016 Census of Population. Data on First Nations communities are limited in Canada.
- We calculated our results using the Laurie-Plante method for calculating the cost of poverty which has been used to calculate poverty in Canada since the late 2000s. We calculated estimates using Canada's official poverty measure, the Market Basket Measure (MBM), and the globally used Low Income Measure (LIM).
- The Laurie-Plante method calculates and sums costs over three areas: remedial, opportunity, and intergenerational. These reflect costs associated with treating harms caused by poverty (i.e. health and crime costs), missed economic opportunities, and its intergenerational transmission to children.
- The Laurie-Plante method is designed to err in favour of underestimating costs, so the First Nations cost of poverty is likely much higher than the large numbers reported in this study.
- Greater investment is needed in foundational data infrastructure, concepts, and tools to support more timely and accurate studies of First Nations in Canada that can effectively support evidence-based decisions.

## **Motivation**

The purpose of this study is to calculate a best-we-can-do-right-now estimate of the First Nations cost of poverty in Canada. Data collected on First Nations communities, particularly those living on reserves, is minimal, and it can be difficult to report on even basic social and economic trends among these populations. Nonetheless, we hope that by providing this rudimentary First Nations cost of poverty calculation, we can motivate greater investment in the kinds of data collection and reporting needed to support more refined measurement of the First Nations cost of poverty in the future. Our study is especially restricted by the availability and timing of public use microdata files (PUMF) provided by Statistics Canada and distributed by the Ontario Data Documentation, Extraction Service and Infrastructure (ODESI). Due to the time that it takes to prepare data files for dissemination (the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced additional delays), at this time, we could only calculate estimates for the 2016 census year. Direct calculation of 2021 estimates using the method detailed below will become possible when the PUMF versions

of the 2021 Census and Canadian Income Survey become available (likely by late 2023 or early 2024).

The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed overview of the methods and assumptions that have given rise to our estimates of the First Nations cost of poverty in Canada insofar as they have deviated from Laurie-Plante method detailed by Plante in his working paper “How to Calculate the Costs of Poverty in Canada: Comment on the Nathan Laurie Approach and Recommended Improvements” (2020). We do so in the interest of transparency, to make explicit the limits of our approach, and to support ourselves and others to extend and build upon it.

### **The Laurie-Plante method for calculating the cost of poverty**

The Laurie-Plante method for calculating the cost of poverty calculates costs for three areas, then sums them together to arrive at an estimate of the overall cost of poverty. These three areas of cost are:

- *Remedial costs*: The direct costs of poverty that arise from treating the damage that poverty causes people. This area includes costs to the health and criminal justice systems and to victims of crime.
- *Opportunity costs*: The indirect costs of poverty that arise because it prevents people from accessing and taking full advantage of economic opportunities. This area considers how much higher the earnings of people living in poverty would be if they were not poor.
- *Intergenerational costs*: The life course costs of poverty that reflect the scarring effects of poverty over time. Our methodology considers the impact of long-term intergenerational remedial and opportunity costs on children.

The way that costs are calculated in each area is designed to utilize data and information widely available for the research. It is also a core principle of the Laurie-Plante methodology to, whenever possible, err on the side of underestimating costs (Barayandema and Frechet 2012; Laurie 2008). As such, the method is intentionally biased toward underestimating costs.

In summary, for each area of cost, the Laurie-Plante method determines the poverty cost associated with each poor person, then multiplies this amount by the number of affected poor persons in the population. Expressed differently, the total cost of poverty in each area is the product of the difference in the per person cost between a poor and non-poor person and the overall number of poor:

$$\text{Cost of Poverty} = (\text{Poor Person Cost} - \text{Non-Poor Person Cost}) \times \text{Number of Poor Persons} \quad (1)$$

The difference in the per person cost between the poor and non-poor is calculated differently for each area of cost based on the available information. For example, the cost to the health system is estimated as the average annual health system expense associated with a person living in the most deprived quintile of communities in Canada (PHAC 2016).

Relatedly, different areas of costs are calculated using different numbers of affected poor persons. Specifically, remedial costs are multiplied by the number of persons living in poverty in

the population, opportunity costs are multiplied by the number of working-age adults living in poverty, and intergenerational costs are multiplied by the number of children living in poverty.

### **Applying the Laurie-Plante method to First Nations**

Data on First Nations in Canada is limited. Currently, the PUMF version of the 2016 Census of Population is the best publicly available information that covers most on-reserve and off-reserve populations and includes information on household composition and income. We used this file to calculate the number of First Nations persons living in poverty, the number of First Nations working-age persons living in poverty, and the number of First Nations children living in poverty in the Canadian provinces in 2016 (technically, there are two versions of the PUMF version of this survey, an individual and a hierarchical file; we used the hierarchical version because we needed to information on household composition). We then multiplied these numbers by the same differences in the per-person cost between the poor and non-poor that we calculated for the general Canadian population. We calculated the number of First Nations persons living in poverty and differences in per-person costs between poor and non-poor for each of Canada's leading poverty indicators, the Market Basket Measure (Canada's Official Measure of Poverty (GoC 2018)) and the Low Income Measure (which is recognized and also used outside of Canada (Murphy, Zhang, and Dion 2010)).

We can use three indicators in the PUMF version of the 2016 census to identify First Nations persons: "Aboriginal identity," "Membership in a First Nation or Indian band," or "registered or Treaty Indian status." All three statuses are self-identified by survey respondents. There is substantial overlap in indicated First Nations status between the three statuses, especially between the latter. Among persons who identified as belonging to at least one of the three statuses (N = 6,203), 59% reported belonging to all three. Over 80% of respondents who identified as belonging to a band also reported having Treaty status. 25% of persons who self-identified as being First Nations did not identify as a band member or having Treaty Status. Table 1 provides a summary of these overlapping memberships.

Using the differences in the per person costs between the poor and non-poor that we calculated for the general Canadian population deflates our First Nations cost of poverty estimate. This is because differences in the per person cost between the poor and non-poor are likely to be much greater for First Nations because of the impacts of racism and discrimination and the intergenerational traumas and violence of colonization and genocide (Palmatier 2011).

Additionally, we have made one substantial change to the cost of poverty methodology proposed by Plante (2020). Plante calculates differences in costs between poor and non-poor at the household level and multiplies them by the number of poor and poor working-age households when he calculates remedial and opportunity costs. We have instead used numbers of poor individuals, which deflates costs but is less affected by biases in the household compositions of lower-income households (e.g. poor households are more likely to consist of lone individuals or lone-parent families). It also reduces double counting in intergenerational costs (this is a more complicated adjustment, and the interested reader should refer to Plante's working paper for more on this).

In keeping with the core principle of the Laurie-Plante methodology to, whenever possible, err on the side of underestimating costs, this calculation of the First Nations cost of poverty in Canada underestimates the cost of poverty in these communities. Nonetheless, our estimated cost remains quite large and more than enough to justify significant concern.

### **Additional comments on our choice of poverty indicator**

Even the best data on First Nations that we have to work with, the 2016 census data, is limited in significant ways that are likely to lead us to underestimate our cost estimates. First and foremost, it contains more information on on-reserve First Nations populations than other leading sources of information on Indigenous populations in Canada (such as the Aboriginal Peoples survey). Still, it does not contain information on all on-reserve populations (Bérard-Chagnon and Parent 2021).

Additionally, due to known issues with applying low-income measures in Northern and remote areas of the country (Devin et al. 2021; Gustajtis, Lam, and McDermott 2021) the variable used to identify low-income persons in the public-use microdata file version of the 2016 census does not do so for populations living in the territories. Specifically, goods and services cost far more in Northern and remote communities, and they are sometimes not even available for purchase. This makes it difficult or potentially meaningless to apply Southern income thresholds in these regions. Excluding the territories excludes many Northern First Nations from the analysis. Meanwhile, we did not correct these issues for the remaining Northern and remote areas that lie within the provinces in which First Nations are overrepresented. As a result, poverty indicators in these areas are unreliable and likely further underestimate real numbers.

Table 2 summarizes the poverty rates and overlap of poverty status according to the MBM and LIM for households with individuals who self-identify as First Nations. The MBM is slightly more effective at correcting for differences in costs between regions as it adjusts for some regional differences in costs of living between more or less urban and rural regions. The basket of goods and services used to define the MBM is updated by Statistics Canada approximately every ten years (called “rebasement”), most recently in 2018. In this study, we used the MBM based in 2008 as it is the only one available in the PUMF version of the 2016 census.

### **Summary of results**

Using self-identification as our indicator of First Nations status, the overall First Nations cost of poverty in 2016 was between \$3.53 and \$3.62 billion per year in 2021 dollars, depending on whether we use the LIM or the MBM as our indicator of poverty. The majority of these costs were the result of the opportunity costs associated with poverty, between \$2.25 and \$2.37 billion per year in 2021 dollars; that is, costs associated with working-age persons living in poverty not being able to access and take full advantage of economic opportunities. Remedial health and crime costs were also high, costing \$420 million and \$170 million. The intergenerational cost of poverty was between \$660 and \$680 million annually, depending on which indicator we use. Opportunity and intergenerational costs were marginally higher when we used the MBM because it identifies more working-age First Nations households as poor than the LIM. These results are provided in Table 3.

In the Appendix, Table A1 also provides the cost of poverty results calculated using the other two methods for identifying First Nations status available to us in the PUMF version of the 2016 Census: band membership and Treaty status. Even though overall poverty rates tend to be higher for these groups compared to self-identified First Nations, these groups are smaller, resulting in a lower cost of poverty estimates.



## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Our First Nations cost of poverty results point to the high cost of poverty to First Nations and Canada. All too often, when we have policy conversations about taking action to reduce poverty, we pay too much attention to the costs associated with taking action and not enough attention to the costs associated with not taking action. Our First Nations costs of poverty best-we-can-do-right-now estimate assigns a precise cost to not taking action and can help to ensure greater balance in these conversations. We estimate that the overall First Nations cost of poverty in 2016 was between \$3.53 and \$3.62 billion per year in 2021 dollars when we use self-identification as our indicator of First Nations status. It should be emphasized that the Laurie-Plante method used in this study has been designed to err on the side of underestimating the cost of poverty. As such, the true cost is likely much higher than we report.

This study is limited by the availability of accurate and up-to-date data on First Nations that can support greater fine-tuning of cost of poverty estimates. We hope this study can help to motivate greater investment in these limitations going forward. Specifically, our analysis must rely on data from the 2016 census, which is more than five years out of date. Public use versions of microdata tend to be released years after surveys are completed, and only very few of these include the variables needed to study First Nations communities. The PUMF version of the 2016 census is the best we have right now, but even it cannot be used to distinguish on-reserve populations from non.

Measures of low income in Northern and remote communities are innaccurate in Canada, and this disproportionately impacts our ability to study the impacts of low income on First Nations. We excluded the territories from our analysis because low-income indicators are unavailable for these regions in the PUMF version of the 2016 census. There is work underway by Statistics Canada to rectify this issue by creating a new Northern and remote MBM (Bérard-Chagnon and Parent 2021). The PUMF version of the 2021 census is expected to be released in late 2023 or early 2024 and hopefully include this new low-income indicator.

Although Canada has the data to do so, income and poverty-related inequalities in costs associated with health and crime are not routinely updated. These analyses could be calculated more frequently and improved further to identify inequalities for other groups, including First Nations, which could significantly improve the accuracy of our estimates (see Plante (2020) for an expanded treatment of this concern).

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**Table 1.** Overlap in First Nations identification, self-identified, band membership, and treaty status among persons who identified as at least one status (N = 6,203) in the 2016 Census of Population.

Self-identified = No				
		Treaty Status		
		No	Yes	Total
Band Member	No	n.a.	6.0%	6.0%
	Yes	1.4%	3.6%	5.0%
	Total	1.4%	9.6%	11.0%
Self-identified = Yes				
		Treaty Status		
		No	Yes	Total
Band Member	No	25.4%	2.3%	27.7%
	Yes	2.6%	58.7%	61.3%
	Total	28.0%	61.0%	89.0%

Source: Author's Calculations based on public use microdata file version of 2016 Census of Population, Hierarchical File.

**Table 2.** Poverty rates calculated using the Market Basket Measure and Low Income Measure among persons living in self-identified First Nations households (N = 7,917) in the 2016 Census of Population.

		Living in poverty according to Market Basket Measure (MBM)		
		No	Yes	Total
Living in poverty according to Low Income Measure (LIM)	No	67.2%	4.4%	71.6%
	Yes	4.4%	24.0%	28.4%
	Total	71.7%	28.3%	100.0%

Source: Author's Calculations based on public use microdata file version of 2016 Census of Population, Hierarchical File.

**Table 3.** First Nations cost of poverty in Canada calculated using the Market Basket Measure and the Low Income Measure, self-identified persons, 2016 (billions of dollars).

	2016 CAD	2021 CAD
<b>Low Income Measure (LIM)</b>		
Health Costs	0.39	0.42
Crime Costs	0.16	0.17
Opportunity Costs	2.07	2.25
Intergenerational Costs	0.63	0.68
Total Cost	3.25	3.53
<b>Market Basket Measure (MBM)</b>		
Health Costs	0.39	0.42
Crime Costs	0.16	0.17
Opportunity Costs	2.18	2.37
Intergenerational Costs	0.61	0.66
Total Cost	3.33	3.62

Source: Author's Calculations based on public use microdata file versions of 2016 Census of Population, Hierarchical File and 2016 Canadian Income Survey (CIS).

**Table A1.** First Nations cost of poverty in Canada calculated using the Market Basket Measure and the Low Income Measure, different indicators of First Nations status, 2016 (billions of dollars).

	Self-identified (N = 7,917, Pop = 794,982)		Band Members (N = 5,871, Pop = 589,618)		Treaty Status (N = 6,460, Pop = 648,763)	
	2016 CAD	2021 CAD	2016 CAD	2021 CAD	2016 CAD	2021 CAD
<b>Low Income Measure (LIM)</b>						
Health Costs	0.39	0.42	0.32	0.35	0.33	0.36
Crime Costs	0.16	0.17	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.15
Opportunity Costs	2.07	2.25	1.65	1.79	1.72	1.86
Intergenerational Costs	0.63	0.68	0.54	0.59	0.56	0.60
Total Cost	3.25	3.53	2.64	2.87	2.74	2.97
<b>Market Basket Measure (MBM)</b>						
Health Costs	0.39	0.42	0.31	0.34	0.33	0.36
Crime Costs	0.16	0.17	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.15
Opportunity Costs	2.18	2.37	1.71	1.85	1.80	1.96
Intergenerational Costs	0.61	0.66	0.51	0.55	0.53	0.58
Total Cost	3.33	3.62	2.66	2.89	2.79	3.03

Note: Summation between columns would be incorrect as many individuals are represented in more than one or all groups. Source: Author's Calculations based on public use microdata file versions of 2016 Census of Population, Hierarchical File and 2016 Canadian Income Survey (CIS).



## **APPENDIX D**

# **FACTORS INFLUENCING POVERTY**

## Factors influencing poverty

The following sections review the impacts of childhood poverty, inadequate housing, poor physical and mental health status, experiences of food insecurity, and criminalization of the poor.

### **Childhood Poverty**

The effects of living in poverty as a child are both dramatic and long-term. The effects of poverty occur early for children and can manifest in infancy.<sup>1</sup> A child's development is impacted from the time in utero to post-natal periods, especially in brain development.<sup>2</sup> Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience higher levels of depression, anti-social behavioural problems, substance misuse, reduced educational achievement, teen pregnancy, and unemployment.<sup>3</sup>

Conditions of poverty frequently lead children to experience morbidity.<sup>4</sup> Childhood poverty can cause both cognitive (e.g., toxic stress from living in poverty can have negative effects on early brain development<sup>5</sup>) and physical impairment, disadvantaging a person for their entire life-course, ultimately contributing to a cycle of poverty over generations.<sup>6</sup> These conditions increase the probability of interaction with the criminal justice system, worse levels of education, and overall, a disadvantage in employment prospects.<sup>7</sup>

Early interventions for children and their parents can help to change long-term outcomes. Access to education contributes to the creation of opportunities for children to support better development, especially by having access to resources like “books and

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<sup>1</sup> Orazio Attanasio, Sarah Cattan, and Costas Meghir, “Early Childhood Development, Human Capital, and Poverty,” *Annual Review of Economics* 14, no. 1 (2022): 853–92, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-092821-053234>.

<sup>2</sup> Maggi, Irwin, Siddiqi, and Hertzman, “The Social Determinants of Early Child Development”; Seth D. Pollak and Barbara L. Wolfe, “How Developmental Neuroscience Can Help Address the Problem of Child Poverty,” *Development and Psychopathology* 32, no. 5 (December 2020): 1640–56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420001145>.

<sup>3</sup> Attanasio, Cattan, and Meghir, “Early Childhood Development, Human Capital, and Poverty”; John M. Pascoe et al., “Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States,” *Pediatrics* 137, no. 4 (April 1, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-0340>.

<sup>4</sup> Nick Spencer et al., “Addressing Inequities in Child Health and Development: Towards Social Justice,” *BMJ Paediatrics Open* 3, no. 1 (August 1, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2019-000503>.

<sup>5</sup> Lucine Francis et al., “Child Poverty, Toxic Stress, and Social Determinants of Health: Screening and Care Coordination,” *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* 23, no. 3 (September 2018): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3912/OJIN.Vol23No03Man02>; Pascoe et al., “Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States.”

<sup>6</sup> Sharmila Kurukulasuriya and Sólrún Engilbertsdóttir, “A Multidimensional Approach to Measuring Child Poverty,” *Child Poverty and New Inequality: New Perspectives* (2012), [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2039773#page=32](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2039773#page=32); Ridley et al., “Poverty, Depression, and Anxiety.”

<sup>7</sup> Berger, Cancian, and Magnuson, “Anti-Poverty Policy Innovations”; Pascoe et al., “Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States”; Anne Blumenthal and David W Rothwell, “The Measurement and Description of Child Income and Asset Poverty in Canada,” *Child Indicators Research* 11, no. 6 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-017-9525-0>.



educational materials at home, high-quality childcare settings and schools, and safe neighbourhoods.”<sup>8</sup> Early childhood education and development programs have both long-term, economic and social benefits.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the Perry Preschool Program, aimed at disadvantaged children, generated social rates of return of 7-10%, with improved outcomes for children.<sup>10</sup> When this and other studies are considered, poverty alleviating programs and policies should target the root cause factors of poverty to reduce the lifelong repercussions from childhood poverty.<sup>11</sup> Investing early and strategically can improve long-term outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

## **Housing**

A home can support well-being, or act as a perpetuating factor to continued conditions of poverty. Housing or lack thereof, can impact a person’s ability to thrive in society. When a home is inadequate or a person does not have access to housing, it can contribute to the continuation of the poverty cycle.

Unsafe and inadequate housing contributes to poverty. The UN defines adequate housing for Indigenous peoples not only as a physical house, but also the right to a secure place to live in peace and dignity, alongside access to land as an entitlement.<sup>12</sup> Adequate housing should include accessibility of tenure, access to services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, indoor plumbing, standard water and sewage systems, safe drinking water, location, and cultural adequacy. When these conditions are not met, it can negatively impact a person’s well-being, especially causing, or worsening health conditions,<sup>13</sup> degrading mental health,<sup>14</sup> increasing risk of injury,<sup>15</sup> and negatively impacting child development.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Berger, Cancian, and Magnuson, “Anti-Poverty Policy Innovations,” 7.

<sup>9</sup> James J. Heckman and Ganesh Karapakula, “Intergenerational and Intragenerational Externalities of the Perry Preschool Project,” Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2019, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w25889>.

<sup>10</sup> Heckman et al., “The Rate of Return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program,” *Journal of Public Economics* 94, no. 1 (February 1, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2009.11.001>.

<sup>11</sup> Luna Bellani and Michela Bia, “The long-run effect of childhood poverty and the mediating role of education,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)* 182, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1111/rssa.12388>.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, “Report on the Right to Adequate Housing of Indigenous Peoples,” OHCHR, July 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/reports/2019/report-right-adequate-housing-indigenous-peoples>.

<sup>13</sup> Samantha J. Boch et al., “‘Home Is Where the Health Is’: Housing Quality and Adult Health Outcomes in the Survey of Income and Program Participation,” *Preventive Medicine* 132 (March 1, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.105990>.

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<sup>15</sup> Philippa Howden-Chapman et al., “Review of the Impact of Housing Quality on Inequalities in Health and Well-Being,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 44, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-071521-111836>.

<sup>16</sup> Amy Clair, “Housing: An Under-Explored Influence on Children’s Well-Being and Becoming,” *Child Indicators Research* 12, no. 2 (April 1, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9550-7>.

## Health

Those who live in conditions of poverty experience reduced quality of health; and those who have poor health are likely to live in poverty.<sup>17</sup> Health and poverty are undeniably connected on many levels, poor health can act as a contributing factor of poverty as well as contribute to a continued cycle of poverty.<sup>18</sup>

Physical health issues can contribute to the cycle of poverty through increased morbidity, related to both an increase of diseases (including increased rates of chronic diseases such as heart disease,<sup>19</sup> and other conditions<sup>20</sup>), participation in risky behaviour, and mental health issues that are reinforced by conditions of poverty.

Among First Nations peoples in Canada, disparities are experienced in increased morbidity, with increased chronic conditions,<sup>21</sup> reduced life expectancy,<sup>22</sup> reduced access to health services, especially in remote locations,<sup>23</sup> and increased rates of mental health issues.<sup>24</sup>

## Criminalization of Poverty

People who live in poverty are more likely to interact with the criminal justice system as both victims and offenders.<sup>25</sup> This leads to a variety of consequences that contribute to the cycle of poverty, e.g., loss of custody of children, jobs, or freedom.<sup>26</sup> Having a

<sup>17</sup> Dhruv Khullar and Dave A. Chokshi, "Health, Income, & Poverty: Where We Are & What Could Help," Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, October 4, 2018, Doi: [10.1377/hpb20180817.901935](https://doi.org/10.1377/hpb20180817.901935).

<sup>18</sup> Kyle H. O'Brien, "Social Determinants of Health: The How, Who, and Where Screenings Are Occurring; a Systematic Review," *Social Work in Health Care* 58, no. 8 (September 14, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2019.1645795>.

<sup>19</sup> Roman Pabayo, Ichiro Kawachi, and Stephen E. Gilman, "US State-Level Income Inequality and Risks of Heart Attack and Coronary Risk Behaviors: Longitudinal Findings," *International Journal of Public Health* 60, no. 5 (July 1, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-015-0678-7>.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Steptoe and Michael Marmot, "The role of psychobiological pathways in socio-economic inequalities in cardiovascular disease risk," *European heart journal* 23, no. 1 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1053/euhj.2001.2611>.

<sup>21</sup> "Health Indicator profile, by Aboriginal identity and sex, age-standardized rate, four-year estimates," Statistics Canada, December 2016, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310009901>.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Tjepkema, Tracey Bushnik, and Evelyne Bougie, "Life Expectancy of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Household Populations in Canada," Statistics Canada, December 18, 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2019012/article/00001-eng.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> "Report 4-Access to Health Services for Remote First Nations Communities," Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2015, [https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_201504\\_04\\_e\\_40350.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201504_04_e_40350.html).

<sup>24</sup> "National Report of the First Nations Health Survey Phase 3: Volume One," First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), March 2018, [https://fnigc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/713c8fd606a8eeb021debc927332938d\\_FNIGC-RHS-Phase-III-Report1-FINAL-VERSION-Dec.2018.pdf](https://fnigc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/713c8fd606a8eeb021debc927332938d_FNIGC-RHS-Phase-III-Report1-FINAL-VERSION-Dec.2018.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Ridley et al., "Poverty, Depression, and Anxiety."

<sup>26</sup> Peter, Edelman, "The Criminalization of Poverty and the People Who Fight Back," *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy* 26, no.2 (2018), [https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/geojpovlp26&div=11&q\\_sent=1&casa\\_token=Nl\\_zRaR1sKwAAAAA:C-qLKa2Gs2nsljZ\\_MIFsN-FA47pmSYconiFpFGV4jhTDbtectZzC\\_g3SfAKPG5htZLrebc0&collection=journals](https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/geojpovlp26&div=11&q_sent=1&casa_token=Nl_zRaR1sKwAAAAA:C-qLKa2Gs2nsljZ_MIFsN-FA47pmSYconiFpFGV4jhTDbtectZzC_g3SfAKPG5htZLrebc0&collection=journals).

criminal history is one of the biggest barriers to gaining productive employment.<sup>27</sup> As a result of living in poverty, individuals are more likely to be targeted by the criminal justice system, with conditions that make it very challenging to ever leave poverty with debts and restrictions that remain over their life-course.

In the U.S., “racial disparities in the criminal legal system are compounded by the demographics of poverty [...]. Most poor people in the US are people of colour.”<sup>28</sup> Many incarcerations are connected to income inequality, especially as many criminal offences in the U.S. are in low-income neighbourhoods.<sup>29</sup> This reality is also true in Canada, especially for Indigenous peoples.

In Canada, Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in Canada’s federal prison system. While Indigenous people represent 5% of Canada’s total population, they make up 27% of the federal incarcerated population. Indigenous women make up 44% of the federally incarcerated women's population.<sup>30</sup>

Criminal justice systems have been described in settler-colonial states, inclusive of Canada, as “a form of ongoing colonial and gendered racial state violence.”<sup>31</sup> As a result of being incarcerated, re-integration into society has been noted as a significant challenge for Indigenous peoples, specifically women, as the access to culturally specific correctional programs while incarcerated remain limited. It is especially important to have access to more programs for support as many of these individuals are struggling with multiple issues that stem from existing trauma.<sup>32</sup>

Times of crisis, childhood poverty, educational attainment, marginalization, homelessness, inadequate housing, poor health and mental health, and criminalization all contribute to poverty. These factors are often interrelated with systematic barriers imposed by the state and society.

Poverty reduction strategies require a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that not only addresses the current reality of poverty, but also includes prevention strategies that target root causes of poverty.

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<sup>27</sup> Amanda Agan and Sonja Starr, “The Effect of Criminal Records on Access to Employment,” *American Economic Review* 107, no. 5 (May 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.p20171003>.

<sup>28</sup> Lisa Foster, “The Price of Justice: Fines, Fees and the Criminalization of Poverty in the United States,” *University of Miami Race and Social Justice Law Review* 11 (2020), [https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/umrsj11&div=5&g\\_sent=1&casa\\_token=aqLC\\_iwv odcAAAA:0qGUkgG817dHTbWFHHI7VDeneKFqimZ2Vzqomy26T8FtxlGhig3Ze373PuZTc\\_jpCeGckUpD&collection=journals](https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/umrsj11&div=5&g_sent=1&casa_token=aqLC_iwv odcAAAA:0qGUkgG817dHTbWFHHI7VDeneKFqimZ2Vzqomy26T8FtxlGhig3Ze373PuZTc_jpCeGckUpD&collection=journals).

<sup>29</sup> Foster, “The Price of Justice.”

<sup>30</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Canada, “Report 4.”

<sup>31</sup> Carmela Murdocca, “Re-imagining “serving time” in Indigenous communities,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 32, no. 1 (2020): 32, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.32.1.02>.

<sup>32</sup> Michaela M. McGuire and Danielle J. Murdoch, “(In)-justice: An exploration of the dehumanization, victimization, criminalization, and over-incarceration of Indigenous women in Canada,” *Punishment & Society* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/14624745211001685>; Office of the Auditor General of Canada. “Report 4.”



## **APPENDIX E**

### **WORKSHOP SUMMARY**

## Workshop summary: Indicators to measure poverty and well-being

In brief:

- 1) Poverty is pervasive and often not discussed in communities.
- 2) Poverty is structural and cyclical: it stems from colonialism and is perpetuated by existing policies and institutions.
- 3) Deprivation is experienced differently by communities based on place and history.

Deprivation better captures the broad disadvantage across cultural, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions in First Nations. As defined by participants,

*Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to thrive. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts. It is experienced in a culturally relative multifaceted manner. Deprivation, holistically, disrupts the ability of First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.*

To move forward with a focus on wholistic wellness, measuring across physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, can build an understanding of how communities are doing and how they can be supported to thrive.

### Context

On October 31-November 1, 2022, the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) convened First Nations and other experts to review indicators of poverty and well-being. The work, undertaken at the request of the Assembly of First Nations, is designed to explore and define First Nations-based approaches to measuring poverty. Redefining the measurement approach is a first step in rethinking challenges and redesigning responses.

Twelve workshop participants from six regions worked together to: 1) share their communities' contexts and experiences with deprivation; 2) define poverty relationally; 3) identify indicators to shape a new measurement strategy. In advance of the workshop, overview materials including draft indicators were shared with participants to offer a starting point for the discussion (see Appendix 1).

Following the Chatham House Rule observed during the workshop, this summary is intended to capture the proceedings without attribution and identify considerations for a First Nations-informed approach to defining and measuring poverty.

### What we heard

#### 1) Poverty is pervasive and often not discussed in communities.

For many First Nations, poverty is a fact of life, and one that is often not discussed. It can be “like a dirty word” in some communities that “people do not talk about or see”, and in others out of pride and humbleness, something that is simply managed with people making the best out of what they have. Normalizing poverty, however, is not a way forward. At the intersection of decolonization and poverty alleviation lies a hybrid approach in which First Nations succeed wherever they are.

**2) Poverty is structural and cyclical: it stems from colonialism and is perpetuated by existing policies and institutions.**

Poverty goes beyond material possessions and money. When First Nations are forced to leave their community to find jobs or to access resources unavailable in their community, it can disconnect them from language, land, spirituality, and people. As one participant expressed, “if you want to work, you have to be ready to relocate.” Jurisdictional issues on- and off-reserve have repercussions not only for access to services, but on culture, spirituality, and a sense of belonging. During the discussion, a participant framed the reality as “First Nations communities [living] in undeveloped conditions in a developed society.”

Several participants highlighted the example of income assistance as a structure that recreates poverty. One participant highlighted how their community was breaking with the approach by leveraging their unique legislative environment to support skills development and capacity building for members of their First Nation wherever they lived. For most others, however, income assistance is an inadequate response to a pervasive challenge. “It breaks my heart,” as one person said, “when I know I am handing someone [the equivalent of \$5 per day] for two weeks of food.” The scarcity imposed by the approach creates a vicious cycle from which recipients cannot escape. For many, income assistance becomes a way of life because the costs of escaping it can be devastating. Without the support, homelessness, hunger, etc. are challenges but the support itself is insufficient to support an opportunity to thrive.

**3) Deprivation is experienced differently by communities based on place and history.**

The experience of being deprived can be different based on where you live and the health of your community. Deprivation was generally described as the inability to live your chosen quality of life and lack of agency to make your choices. This stems from Intergenerational trauma and the legacies of colonialism which also perpetuate deprivation. The ways in which deprivation is experienced will differ by First Nation, from remote places to urban centres and everywhere in between. The cost of food, limited access to food supplies, employment prospects, challenges accessing needed services, etc. are all influenced by *where* you live with consequences for your way of life.

**An alternative term for poverty and its definition**

A multi-faceted issue, poverty is about more than a lack of income, but of deprivation culturally, socially, spiritually, and economically. To better capture the experience of not having what is needed to thrive, the term deprivation was proposed. Deprivation (rather than poverty), better captured for participants the institutionalized disadvantage experienced by First Nations in different ways.

To define deprivation and its impacts, participants developed the definition below:

*Deprivation is the experience of not having what you need to thrive. In First Nations, deprivation is a result of colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts. It is experienced in a culturally relative multifaceted manner. Deprivation, wholistically, disrupts the ability of First Nations to thrive on their own terms, impacting well-being.*

Participants emphasized that well-being will be expressed and pursued in different ways based on the beliefs, values, customs, and cultures of different First Nations.

### Indicators for measurement

Following discussion and deliberation, participants built consensus around eight dimensions and 39 indicators as a starting point to capturing deprivation and measuring its change. They are summarized in the table below.

Dimension	Indicators	Information availability		
		Available	Partially	Not currently available
1) Housing	Safe and suitable housing			
	Number of people in a dwelling			
	Number of transition homes on-reserve			
2) Education (across the entire community)	High school completion rate (incl. GED and ALP)			
	Literacy rates			
	Numeracy rates			
	Highest degree attained			
	First Nation (or entity) offering land-based programming for youth			
3) Food security	Rate of food insecure households			
	Presence of nutrition cupboards (or other community-led food security initiative)			
	Access to traditional foods			
	Water advisories			
	Potable water from source to tap			
4) Health	Rates of chronic disease			
	Access to health services in community			
	Mental health and wellness			
	Rates of substance misuse			
	Access to addictions treatment			
	Percentage of people foregoing health services for any reason			
5) Employment	Participation rate			
	Employment rate			
	Unemployment rate			



	Number of Band-offered jobs			
	Jobs with livable income wages in-community			
	First Nations community corporation-offered jobs			
	Instances of unpaid care/work			
	Self-declared skills gaps			
6) Income	Percentage of population receiving Income Assistance			
	Total median household income			
7) Early childhood education	Availability of early childhood education in community			
	Number of children in care			
	Access to childcare			
8) Culture	Adult opportunities to learn Indigenous language			
	Youth opportunities to learn Indigenous language			
	Adult opportunities for land-based activities			
	Youth opportunities for land-based activities			
	Can you access to cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?			
	Would you like to access cultural ceremonies in your First Nation?			
	Are there knowledge keepers in your First Nation?			

The indicators are a starting point. For some, there is available information from public or other accessible sources. For others, information would have to be generated by the First Nation with varying levels of difficulty. Several more indicators than those listed were contemplated, e.g., environment, infrastructure, etc. There may be value in revisiting them (see Appendix 1) as efforts continue.

**Data collection and evidence generation**

The discussion and consensus building on indicators highlighted broad considerations in the collection and use of data from First Nations.

As the indicators were being reviewed, there were concerns about certain types of data being used to harm or misrepresent First Nations. For instance, data on crime, e.g., domestic violence, youth crime, violent crime, and data on child education and pedagogical outcomes were identified as areas of concern. While many participants considered them relevant, concerns were raised about the use or application of the information to signal child protection concerns or to reinforce stigmas about violence and crime in some communities.

There is an important underlying message from the comments about measurement: as conceptions and measures of poverty are redefined, fostering an environment of information and learning for improvement and not penalization will be necessary. Empowering First Nations to collect their own information, use their own information for decision-making, and inform solutions will take time. As information is generated, maintaining a focus on learning to improve outcomes will be central to long-term efforts. Environment Canada, for instance, is responsible for measuring the weather, it is not accountable for the weather outcome that day. The same approach needs to apply when considering a change in measurement practices and information generation with First Nations, for First Nations, by First Nations.

**Areas of action**

There is no single solution to alleviating deprivation but action can be taken to support communities in their journeys to wellness. Participants highlighted various areas of related action that could support thriving First Nations. These additional areas of action included:

- 1) Baseline of the current state: there is limited First Nations-based perspectives on how communities are thriving. A current state portrait can serve as a way to understand progress.
- 2) Build a child wellness index: focus on the next generation and supporting their development while healing and supporting the previous ones.
- 3) Develop solutions by capturing different experiences of poverty: gender, geography, trauma, etc. inform experiences and shape needs. Use this knowledge and experience to build better informed policy solutions to alleviating deprivation. A blanket approach to policy will not achieve change everywhere.

As the work on rethinking poverty and its measurement continues, participants have defined a starting point on which to build future efforts.

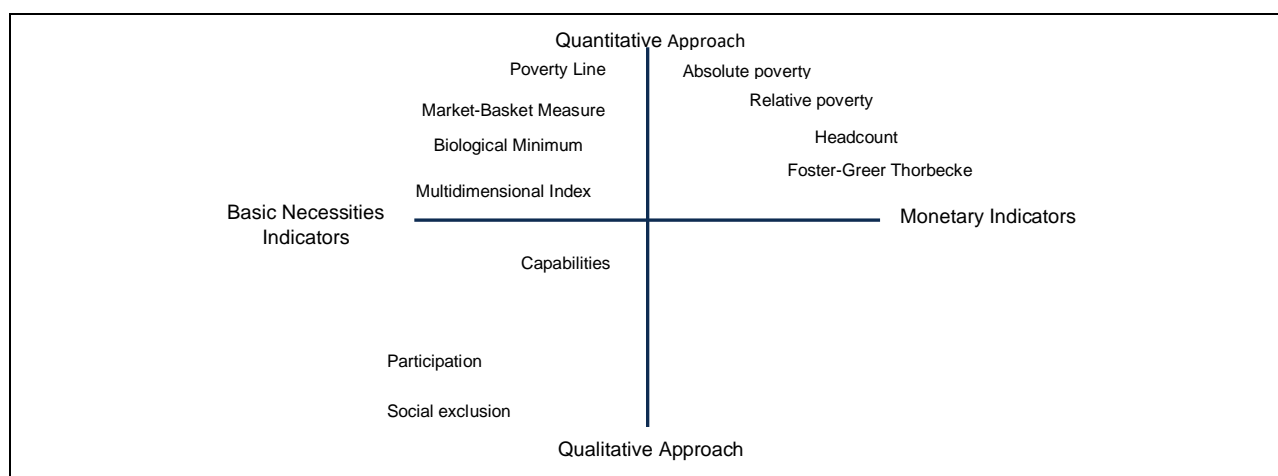
## Appendix 1 – Research overview and draft indicators

## Briefing: Measuring poverty and well-being

### What is Poverty?

- Poverty broadly, refers to a person being in an extremely poor financial position or not having enough money to meet basic needs of daily life.
- There are many approaches to understanding poverty.

### Approaches to Poverty



- An economic or monetary approach is the most widely used measurement of poverty, it refers to a minimum income based on an existing poverty line.<sup>1</sup>
  - Although it is very easy to understand and compare this measure, the monetary measurement of poverty does not recognize the other factors of deprivation beyond money that could be occurring such as, lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and healthcare among many others.
- Another approach to measuring poverty is multidimensional, where different categories and indicators are used to measure poverty which can be changed based on a specific place or region.<sup>2</sup>
  - This measure provides a more holistic understanding of multiple areas of deprivation contributing to poverty. However, the approach has been criticized for privileging some indicators over others, limiting comparability.

Approach	Definition
Monetary/Economic	A minimum of consumption (e.g., calories) or income from an existing poverty line.
Multidimensional	Uses different dimensions and indicators that can be changed to a particular context or region to measure poverty.

### *Canada's poverty measures*

- Canada uses the following measures for poverty<sup>3</sup>:
  - The Market-Basket Measure (MBM) is the national poverty line, this uses the cost of a modest basket of goods needed to achieve basic subsistence and social participation, which includes the costs of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other items needed.
  - The low-income cut-off (LICO) is a measure of those who live below the cut-off after tax are low-income.
  - The low-income measure is a low-income measure that is based on the 50% of the national median household adjusted disposable income.
- There are limitations of each of these measures, e.g., limited consideration of geography, differentiated needs, etc.

### **Why does addressing/alleviating poverty matter?**

- Poverty has dramatic negative, long-term impacts on people's overall well-being.
  - These impacts include lower quality of health; higher levels of depression; inadequate housing; poor familial relationships; unemployment; poor academic performance; and increased interaction with the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup>
- Reducing disadvantage and inequalities can create space and opportunities for thriving children, families, and communities.

### **Why try to measure poverty?**

- Measuring an issue can help to monitor changes to assess what works and what does not. By measuring, we can generate better information for policy solutions and make better decisions.
- The costs of poverty are high. Clarifying what poverty is and what we should monitor to understand its changes can help to define the scale of the challenge and potential solutions.

### **For discussion: Proposed definition of poverty**

Poverty is the state of living in relative or absolute deprivation of basic necessities such as nutritious food, adequate shelter with utilities, clean drinking water, clothing, internet, high-quality public education, health care, and income to contribute to the well-being of a person physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally.

Poverty is a systemic issue that is perpetuated through institutional barriers such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, and sexual orientation, which contributes to the exclusion of people socially, politically, culturally, spiritually, or civically in their society.

## Poverty reduction strategies

- There are approaches and strategies to reduce the root causes of poverty.
- Reduction strategies are not a one-size fits all approach, just because it has worked in one context does not mean it will be effective somewhere else.
- When developing a poverty reduction strategy, the target population's characteristics should be considered, as well as root causes of poverty to act as a long-term strategy instead of a temporary fix.

Possible Strategies	Definition
Financial Benefits	Additional financial resources provided by a government, often as a tax credit or benefit e.g., CCB, GIS, WITB, etc. <sup>5</sup>
Basic Income Program	Providing a monthly payment to citizens from a government budget. This payment can be universal and unconditional to all citizens (universal basic income), or it can act as a supplement income to support people remaining above the poverty line (guaranteed basic income). <sup>6</sup>
Coverage of Basic Services	Providing access to basic services at little to no cost, e.g., health care, education, public transportation, dental care, pharmaceutical prescriptions, and childcare. <sup>7</sup>
Education Reform	Reform and/or access to updated, relevant curriculums in elementary and secondary schools, e.g., making schools safer for marginalized youth to take pride in identity. <sup>8</sup>
Employment Enhancement	Enhance access to adult education and skills training programs to increase employability. <sup>9</sup>
Housing Policy Reform	Reforming housing policy to make it more accessible for everyone, e.g., rent-to-own programs, development of adequate social housing. <sup>10</sup>

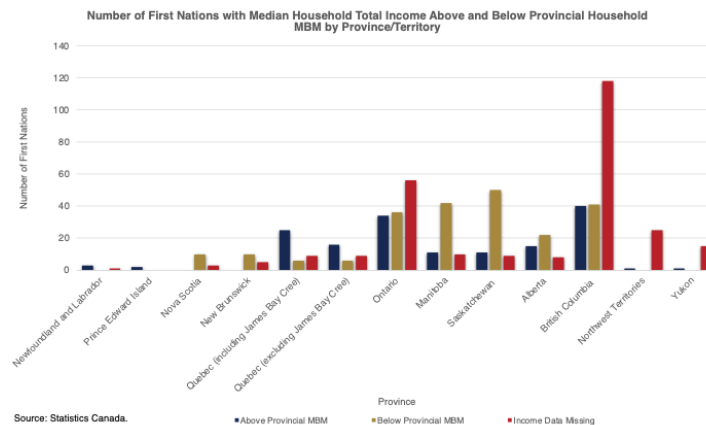
## Indigenous Peoples Experiences of Poverty

- Globally, Indigenous peoples remain significantly disadvantaged and are recognized as one of the poorest groups in the world, despite only accounting for 6% of the world population.<sup>11</sup>
- There are factors that perpetuate Indigenous peoples poverty, including, histories of colonization, assimilation, racism, discrimination, and forced displacement from ancestral lands.<sup>12</sup>
- Intergenerational cycle of poverty among Indigenous peoples is a significant contributing factor to long-term poverty.
  - The cycles of poverty are related to various traumas related to forced cultural assimilation, and colonial practices that aimed to destroy Indigenous cultures, paired with continued racism and discrimination.<sup>13</sup>
- First Nations' based definitions of poverty include:

- FNIGC, which uses ‘wellness’ to better capture the conditions of deprivation for First Nations communities rather than the term poverty.<sup>14</sup>
- The Chiefs of Ontario defined First Nations poverty as, “being in a state of lacking wellness, holistic balance (mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual), basic necessities, and material goods.”<sup>15</sup>

### Current State of First Nations Poverty in Canada

- Approximately 31.4% of First Nations people living on-reserve lived in a low-income household in 2021.<sup>16</sup>



- 69.7% of First Nations people were reported to be active participants in the labour force.<sup>17</sup>
- First Nations are the fastest growing population in Canada, it is projected the population will grow at an annual rate of 1.2-2.1%.<sup>18</sup>
- 37.4% of First Nations living on reserve occupied a dwelling in need of major repairs in 2021.<sup>19</sup>
- 35.7% of First Nations people on-reserve lived in crowded housing in 2021.<sup>20</sup>
- Only 39.1% of First Nations living on-reserve receive internet connection that meets the Canadian connectivity standard.<sup>21</sup>
- 34 long-term drinking water advisories remain in effect in 29 First Nations communities.<sup>22</sup>
- 48% of First Nations young adults (20-24) living on-reserve had completed a high school level of education, while 5.4% of First Nations adults had completed a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>23</sup>
- 59.8% of First Nations adults reported having one or more chronic health conditions.<sup>24</sup>
- 48% of households on-reserve reported food insecurity.<sup>25</sup>
- 27% of Federal criminal offenders were Indigenous in 2020-21, and 43% of the women's Federal criminal offenders were Indigenous.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Atkinson, Anthony B. *Measuring poverty around the world*. Princeton University Press, 2019. <https://www-degruyter-com.proxy.queensu.ca/document/doi/10.1515/9780691191898/html>.

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<sup>26</sup> Office of the Correctional Investigator. "Annual Report ." Office of the Correctional Investigator. Accessed June 24, 2022. <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/pdf/annrpt/annrpt20202021-eng.pdf>.

DRAFT - For discussion only						
Dimension	Justification	Indicator	Level of Indicator	Definition	Data Availability at Community Level	Data Availability at National Level
Crime	Indigenous peoples have increased interaction with the criminal justice system and make up a significant portion of the federal incarcerated population. Individuals who have a criminal record experience significant barriers in gaining employment opportunities which can be a contributing factor for people to remain in poverty.	Incarceration	Community	A person being imprisoned as a consequence of breaking the law.		
		Violent crime	Community	Violent crime includes assault, sexual assault, robbery, and murder. It is a crime where a victim is harmed or threatened with violence.		
		Non-violent crime	Community	Can include crimes related to property, drug, and public order offenses which do not involve a threat of harm or an attack.		
		Recidivism	Community	Recidivism is when a person who has been convicted of a crime, re-offends following their consequence.		
		Violence against women	Community	According to the UN, violence against women is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.		
Education	When education is absent or inaccessible, the opportunities for individuals in their future become more limited. The World Bank has identified education as being "one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability."	Schools on-reserve	Community	Schools on-reserve to provide children and youth education.		
		Rate of high school completion	Community	High school diploma or equivalency certificate.		
		Rate of post-secondary education completion (apprenticeship/trades, college, university)	Community	Completion of a post-secondary education (apprenticeship/trades, college, university).		
		Literacy rates	Community	Low literacy and numeracy are defined "as those who scored at level 2 or below (out of 5 levels) in tests administered to survey respondents on the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)."		
		Numeracy rates	Community	Low literacy and numeracy are defined "as those who scored at level 2 or below (out of 5 levels) in tests administered to survey respondents on the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)."		
Employment trends	Employment and work consume a significant amount of a person's time. For people in poverty, both unemployment and underemployment are at the core of poverty. "For the poor, labour is often the only asset they can use to improve their well-being." Additionally, for people who are in vulnerable or marginalized groups, precarious work that is unsafe, unhealthy, or humiliating may be required to make ends meet.	Full-time employment	Community	Full-time employment in Canada is considered 30+ hours worked per week.		
		Part-time employment	Community	Part-time employment in Canada is considered less than 30 hours worked per week.		
		Unemployment rate	Community	Unemployment is considered people are without work but are available and seeking employment.		
		Employment opportunities	Community	Consideration for employment opportunities need to consider the most popular industries Indigenous peoples are most frequently working in, as well as the skills and educational requirements to enter other types of jobs alongside opportunities that exist both on-reserve and off-reserve.		
		Unpaid/care work	Individual	Care work are activities involved in meeting the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of adults and children.		
		Precarious jobs	Community	Non-standard and/or temporary or part time work, e.g., sales and service occupations, occupations in construction, retail, transportation and warehousing, accommodation and food services, arts, entertainment, and recreation.		
Income	When people do not have enough money to meet their needs for daily life, it causes many barriers in meeting basic necessities of food, amenities, services, and ability to participate in society.	Deep income poverty	Community	Deep income is understood as a persons with income below 75% of Canada's Official Poverty Line.		
		Relative low-income	Community	Relative low income is understood as a person who had less than half the median after-tax income.		
		Low-income entry and exit rates (persons of low-income)	Community	The low-income entry rate refers to the percentage of tax filers who fall into low-income in a given year when they were not in low-income the year prior. The low-income exit rate refers to the percentage of tax filers who exit low income in a given year when they were in low income in the year prior.		
		Median household income	Community	Based on the distribution of the total number of households and families including those with no income.		
		Median employment income	Community	The amount that divides the employment income distribution of a specified group into two halves. The incomes of half the unit in that group are below the median, while those of the other half are above the median.		
		Income distribution - income inequality	Community	Income inequality is a disparity in the distribution of income between individuals, groups, populations or social classes.		
Food security	Adequate food is essential to meeting the basic needs of humans and should be considered when evaluating poverty and well-being. For Indigenous peoples, food insecurity also relates to the barriers in accessing traditional foods as they "fulfill cultural and spiritual values, enhance nutrition and health, ways of knowing, and fostering an ongoing connection to both the land and the water.	Assessability to traditional foods, including hunting, fishing, gathering, and/or trapping	Individual	Access to traditional foods is highly valued especially as it provides cultural, spiritual values and connection to both the land and water, alongside enhanced nutrition and health, food security, as well as ways of knowing.		
		Food sovereignty	Community	"The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecological and sustainable methods, and their right to define their food and agricultural systems."		
		Disposable income spent on food	Individual	Average of disposable personal income spent on food.		
		Food insecure households	Community	In Canada, food insecurity is understood as "the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so."		
Housing	Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is very important to support both stability and quality of life. Poverty can impact a person's ability to obtain adequate housing, therefore, creating many hazards in a person's daily life, such as, increased mortality, family tension, violence – particularly violence against women, mental health issues, and the increase likelihood of homelessness.	Safe and adequate housing	Community	The UN defines adequate housing for Indigenous peoples not only as a physical house, but also the right to a secure place to live in peace and dignity, alongside access to land as an entitlement. Adequate housing should include accessibility of tenure, access to services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, indoor plumbing, standard water and sewage systems, safe drinking water, location, and cultural adequacy.		
		Cost of shelter	Community	Income spent relative to shelter costs.		
		Levels of overcrowded housing	Community	Overcrowding in Canada is considered housing that does not meet the National Occupancy Standards, the standards outline that there should be one bedroom per person unless there is an adult couple, two children of the same sex under 18 years old, or two opposite-sex children under 5 years who can share a room.		
		Relative homelessness	Community	Homelessness is being being without stable, permanent, and appropriate housing.		
		Chronic homelessness	Community	Chronic homelessness is a people who experience homelessness long-term (at least 1 year) or multiple times.		
		Access to broadband connectivity/speeds	Community	Connection to 50/10 Mbps broadband speeds.		
		Housing needing major repairs	Community	Dwellings needing major repairs such as dwellings with defective plumbing or electrical wiring, and dwellings needing structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings.		
		Housing waitlists	Community	Waiting lists are when affordable housing demand exceeds the supply of available assistance. An ordered list of households are used of those who have applied for housing assistance.		
		Water advisories	Community	Drinking water advisories are issued to warn people to not drink water they may be unsafe or is known to not be safe based on water quality tests results. There are 3 types of advisories: boil water; do not consume; and do not use.		
		Health centres	Community	Healthcare centre with healthcare providers and nurses that provide services and resources to a community.		
Condition of public infrastructure	Community infrastructure includes transportation systems, health and social service centres, public safety and emergency services, parks, recreation, art centres, and government and legal institutions. Proximity to these services is important for overall well-being, increasing productivity, and increase availability of services and material goods	Reliable and public transportation	Community	Transportation available and reliable for community members to utilize.		
		Public safety and emergency services	Community	Police, fire, and ambulance services to relieve emergencies.		
		Recreation centre	Community	A recreation centre is a public place where meetings, sports, and/or activities can take place.		

Health	Health is an important dimension to consider as those who live in conditions of poverty often experience reduced quality of life; however, those who have poor health are also more likely to live in poverty. Living in poverty can cause increased morbidity, worse mental health, and a lower life expectancy. Factors that contribute to worse levels of health for those in poverty are related to accessing medical care and effective specialized services.	Access to health care services in community	Individual	Health care should be easily accessible and timely for patients to obtain appropriate health care, with services provided based on the perceived need for care. Increased cultural competency among health care providers, as well as Western medical terminology translated into Indigenous languages to support greater accessibility.		
			Individual			
			Community			
		Chronic disease rates	Community	Chronic diseases are understood as a disease that lasts at least 3 months or longer and can worsen over time. Examples of chronic diseases include cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and asthma.		
		Access to traditional medicine	Community	Gathering and usage of traditional medicines, consuming traditional diets incorporated into health care of Indigenous peoples, (e.g. herbal remedies, spiritual therapies, assistance from healers or other practices).		
		Life expectancy	Community	Life expectancy is the statistical measure of the average time a person is expected to live based on the year of its birth and demographic factors.		
		Reproductive health, including services	Individual	Services for reproductive health includes sexual health education and counselling, sexually transmitted infection screening and treatment; birth		
			Community	Foregoing medical care and/or medications due to the cost or inaccessibility of location.		
		Foregoing medical services and/or medications	Individual			
Mental health	Mental health and poverty are linked, as those who live in poverty have increased rates of anxiety and sadness. Moreover, a person who is struggling with mental health issues may impact a person's ability to effectively perform in the labour force. Mental health issues are experienced at high rates for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and it is a challenge to access culturally appropriate, timely, affordable, and nearby mental health care.	Psychological and emotional well-being	Individual	"Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community."		
		Mental health conditions	Individual	Diagnosed mental health conditions, e.g., anxiety disorder, mood disorder, attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.		
		Access to mental health services/ level of usage	Community	Access to mental health services such as counselling, substance misuse programs, crisis		
		Emergency mental health	Community	Emergency mental health refers to when a person is in crisis and are at risk of harming themselves in		
			Individual	Intergenerational trauma refers to experiences of trauma that can impact generations who did not experience it themselves can contribute to multiple issues such as addiction and poverty, and levels of conflict and violence.		
Cultural integration and opportunities	Cultural integration is an integral component towards Indigenous people's well-being. Factors that have been identified as contributing to Indigenous poverty in Canada include the loss of heritage that occurred through the loss of lands and resources, the loss of culturally appropriate governance institutions, identity, and cultural practices, and disruptive and discriminatory impacts by society. A holistic balance mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically are priorities to achieve wellness for Indigenous peoples.	Access and application of traditional knowledge	Community	Eldests and/or knowledge keepers who can provide teachings of traditional knowledge, medicine, healing, languages, and cultural practices both outside of school settings.		
				Knowledge of opportunities to learn Indigenous languages		
		Cultural and spiritual well-being and identity	Individual	Culture is an important determinant of Indigenous well-being, especially the inclusion and access to language, culture, spirituality, connection to the land, and self-determination. Spirituality particularly, can be thought of at the level of integration within a culture, particularly cultural and spiritual positioning, but also tribal spiritual beliefs.		
		Sense of connection to the land	Individual	Traditional knowledge, languages, cultural practices, and oral traditions are connected to the land, emphasizing the spiritual well-being of a community.		
		Participation and engagement in culturally based programs and services	Individual	Access to traditional social gatherings (e.g., traditional feasts), culture camps (to teach traditional languages and traditional ways of living and knowing), activities like hunting, fishing, gathering and harvesting foods.		
				The feeling of belonging to a cultural group and/or community.		
		Sense of belonging to community	Individual			
Environment	Indigenous peoples in Canada are at increased risk to the impacts of climate change due to their location in geographic regions that are impacted by rapid climate change, as well as a result of the close connection to the environment and its resources.	Ecological degradation to land	Community	Human degradation of the environment through depletion of resources due to human-made disasters (industrial pollution) or natural disasters (e.g. earthquake). Degradation includes quality air, water and soil, the destruction of ecosystems, habitat		
		Severe weather event occurrence	Community	Weather event occurrence such as wildfires, drought, or flooding, ice storm, tornado, and/or hurricane that poses a threat to the safety of people and damages infrastructure.		
		Displacement	Community	Climate change can trigger both displacement and worse living conditions for those who are displaced		
		Illness/deaths related to climate change	Community	Illness or death caused by climate change (e.g. pollution, heat, floods, increase of chronic and		
Finances	Personal finances is an important factor to managing money, budgeting, and saving over-time. The way in which money management occurs can contribute to effective planning over-time.	Personal finances	Individual	Access and participation of traditional forms of food/livelihood practices (fishing, hunting, gathering, and trapping).		
Early childhood and child welfare	Early learning and childcare refer to children under age 6. It has been found during this time, important development occurs such as the ability for emotional regulation and for social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.	Access to affordable childcare	Individual	Availability to daycares in close proximity and at a low cost to send children.		
		Early childhood education	Community	Early learning and childcare are available to provide supervision and care to children 0-6 years, publicly, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit in both centre-based care and home-based care.		
Equity	As a result of the experiences of inequity First Nations are at a disproportionate disadvantage in comparison to the general Canadian population which contributes to the continuation of intergenerational cycles of poverty. Consideration of these experiences is important when evaluating the circumstances of poverty and well-being.	Children in care	Community	Children involved in the child welfare system, which offers services to protect children by completing investigations of allegations of abuse and neglect.		
		Residential schools	Individual	Indigenous peoples in Canada were forced to attend Residential Schools for over 150 years		
		Past child welfare involvement	Individual	Child welfare refers to government and private services that will safeguard children offering services such as, investigations of allegations of abuse and neglect, supervise foster care and arrange adoptions, and services to support families.		
Equity		Racism and/or discrimination	Individual	Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their particular racial or ethnic group.		



## **APPENDIX F**

# **FIRST NATIONS PROFILES ON DEPRIVATION AND ALLEVIATION**

## **Profile 1**

### **Context**

This service provider works with 8 First Nations. In the communities served, most First Nations members live below the poverty line, and one or more of the services made available are provided in approximately 72% of the homes, “[...] from the cradle to the grave.”

The service provider designs, implements, manages, administers, and delivers a growing scope of social services currently including income assistance, mental health and addictions treatment and support, personal, life skills and employability development, education and skills training and employment support. It delivers these services in an integrated manner based on a social, wrap-around model of service provision and a rigorously applies a case management system which includes standardized needs assessment, the establishment of evolving client-specific service plans setting out goals to be achieved to resolve identified needs and regular reviews to determine the level and rate of progress toward these goals.

### **Managing Poverty**

When the service provider was established 17 years ago, it was essentially responsible for “administering poverty” – ensuring unemployed community members received at least the minimum welfare payments allowed under provincial legislation. It also had some minimal funding to provide “employment services”. However, it was quickly realized that administering the poverty that is rooted in the negative intergenerational impacts of colonialism was not acceptable. In addition, this service provider determined that the standard “Western” approach to poverty alleviation and employment is ineffective. Instead, long-term commitment is required to support community members to heal holistically, which has been identified as an important strategy for poverty alleviation.

### **Getting Beyond Managing Poverty 1: Expanding Service Capacity**

Analysis of the results of accumulating client needs assessments and several surveys, plus input from community consultation sessions substantiated the fact that large numbers of community members experience multiple barriers to escaping from poverty, some more basic than others, including homelessness, lack of adequate housing, addictions, mental health issues, child welfare and legal issues, family support obligations, disconnection from culture and language, lack of formal education attainment, poorly developed basic life skills, etc. It was also determined from this analysis and discussion sessions that these very basic issues must be addressed before the more immediate barriers to employment such as a lack of marketable job skills and/or work experience and a lack of self-marketing skills can be effectively addressed. In other words, there was a need to stop thinking in settler “silos” with respect to poverty, and to start thinking about addressing poverty needs holistically.

Having substantiated the need, this service provider was able to begin securing the funding needed to expand its social service capacity – the capacity to support those with addictions (which has grown to include land-based detoxification and treatment), the capacity to support persons with (typically related) mental health issues, the implementation of a developmental program (the Mino Bimaadizidaa program) which addresses matters such

culture, history, language, life skills, addictions, etc. and an enhanced capacity to support the “graduates” of these basic services and supports in further education, job skills development, gaining job experience and, ultimately gaining sustainable employment or self-employment.

### **Getting Beyond Managing Poverty 2: Economic Development**

Motivating community members to participate meaningfully in services intended to help them heal and overcome their mix of barriers to employment is, however, difficult if the ultimate goal of sustainable, well-paid employment and self-employment opportunities are not available in the area economy. Personal support and development services as well as employment services can become a revolving door which leads nowhere for many.

Recognizing this significant issue, this service provider now has been given a lead role in community economic development: the creation of employment through agriculture in a drive to achieve regional food sovereignty.

This involves a greenhouse operation and 80 acres of quality farmland which will involve land-based detoxification and treatment and skills training in all phases of the food productions (growing, harvesting, processing, storing and distribution) resulting in local jobs as well as the provision of fresh and nutritious foods to the community nutrition cupboards.

## **Profile 2**

### **Context**

Located in British Columbia, this First Nation with just under 1000 members, continues to struggle with persistent issues of poverty. Colonization has had a significant impact on the well-being of the community as there are many Residential School survivors who are living with trauma. Impacts from Residential Schools can be seen through addictions, neglected children, and dependence on the band office and administration to meet people's needs. As many community members are living with trauma, additional supports are required when people are ready to accept help. With the uncovering of the unmarked graves at the Kamloops Residential School, a mental health crisis was triggered in the First Nation, compounding existing challenges.

In this First Nation, issues around income, lack of employment opportunities, housing, trauma, addictions, and disconnection from community members and culture contribute as persisting factors of poverty.

### **Meaning of Poverty**

This First Nation has found ways of managing poverty as it is a core issue. There is pressure on the band to provide its community members with employment, education, health services, and income which has created a dependence on the Government of Canada's social benefits instead of relying on each other.

The term 'poverty' is effective as it does not 'sugar coat' the issue, this community is poor. But it is also important that mind-set around these conditions shift, as it can lead to negative or limited conceptions of self.

When measuring poverty, it is important to include income, but it is also important to consider the cultural well-being of a person. For instance, the number of fluent speakers of the First Nation's language in the community; and the ability to participate in traditional practices like ceremonies, cultural camps, medicine gathering, and learning the history of their ancestors, are important indicators of holistic well-being.

### **Social and Economic Gaps**

There is a dependency in this First Nation on social services like income assistance, contributing to a dependency on the Government of Canada. The First Nation is "handcuffed as to what they can or cannot do to support its community members."

The Indian Act was identified as a significant contributor to restrictions of the First Nation's experiences. The Act limits their ability to establish their own governance and ultimately, better support the members of this First Nation. The Indian Act is embedded. It is at once a lifeline and a limitation. Due to dependence on government services and benefits, it cannot be eliminated.

Housing remains an issue in this First Nation. It is not only a lack of housing, but also keeping people accountable for paying rent and maintaining their homes. The band is accountable for the mortgage payments for the homes on-reserve and goes into significant debt to cover the missed rent payments. At one point this First Nation nearly went into third-party receivership due to the debt incurred from unpaid rents. It is a challenge as the community members know there will not be consequences if they do not pay their rent as the band will cover it.

This First Nation has tried to build economic opportunities in the community to build wealth.

“We do not want to manage welfare; we want to manage wealth.”

Some of these initiatives include getting involved in the cattle industry and forestry which are common in this region. However, neither were successful. This First Nation continues to work toward changing their mind-set to see the long-term outcomes. This has supported long-term endeavours in the energy industry that are expected to bring wealth and employment opportunities into the community, but also in the future. This is a long-term exercise: “It is a work in progress, many issues to work through such as social, health, economic and figuring out how to interweave these areas to support ourselves.”

Challenges in implementing new economic opportunities are attributed to community apprehension and a lack of understanding of the initiatives. For many struggling to even put food on their table, it can be hard to imagine the outcomes from a long-term project.

### **Poverty Alleviation Strategies**

A key component to alleviate poverty and promote well-being is to take care of children and families in the community. Through the process of exercising jurisdiction under Bill C-92, the ‘Grandmother’s Council’ was established to review and develop laws. A declaration of what it means to be responsible for children and families has been shared with other communities as they move through the process of Bill C-92.

Practicing their culture is also important to promote well-being, especially through naming ceremonies, horse clinics, language teachings, and on-the-land camps. This First Nation has also developed its own governance, laws, and worldview to guide who they are as people – outside of the definition of the Government of Canada. Although issues of poverty persist in this First Nation, it was noted that they dare to dream of a better life and continue to work towards that dream.



## **Profile 3**

### **Context**

Poverty continues to persist in this First Nation. This is particularly evident through issues with housing, many are inadequate, overcrowded and require repairs. Community members struggle with addictions, food insecurity, inadequate homes, and a lack of resources within homes.

Throughout the First Nation, employment opportunities are minimal. Currently, jobs on-reserve are in the band office, through a two-week employment program, in maintenance, and, soon, at a rink on-reserve. Additionally, apprenticeships are available off-reserve.

Services available on-reserve include a detox centre, mental health support, and a wellness centre. There is also an education complex on-reserve, which includes certification programs e.g., first aid, food handling, etc., which also includes a two-week work program to support community members getting work experience.

### **Meaning of Poverty**

In this First Nation, poverty can be understood through a lack of education and knowledge. Many community members require support to get out of dire situations.

Poverty continues as a cycle in this First Nation. A factor contributing to this cycle is the lack of education and awareness of alternative options and/or supports. Many people depend on income assistance and the cycle continues throughout generations. However, accessing income assistance is becoming more of a challenge due to additional conditions being imposed, e.g., SIN number, and bank account are required, and some people in First Nations do not have them.

Well-being in this First Nation is about keeping people safe. Resources need to be made available to support community members, especially access to basic necessities e.g., clothing, food, transportation, and housing. To achieve a well-being focused approach, education and knowledge expansion programs need to be enhanced to increase participation from all community members no matter their age.

### **Social and Economic Gaps**

Throughout this First Nation, community members struggle with inadequate housing, food insecurity, addictions, and a lack of access to necessities. Increasing opportunities for education and preparedness have been encouraged as tools to manage these challenges.

Greater access to public transportation is also required, as many community members do not have a driver's license which can act as a barrier to gaining employment off-reserve.

More supports are also required for individuals who have participated in a detox program as many individuals fall back into a cycle of substance misuse, and income assistance dependency during their recovery.

Many community members choose to remain on income assistance rather than gain employment as it covers the cost of their living expenses. At times, community members may avoid making above the minimum income threshold at their job to continue qualifying for income assistance. However, income assistance remains very low, and is not able to adequately cover the cost of living. This creates a vicious cycle of dependence.

Resources for home renovations and furniture replacement would support increasing the overall standard of living for community members in this First Nation.

### **Poverty Alleviation Strategies**

In this First Nation, programs and services are required to support community members to move out of poverty. The existing programs on-reserve are insufficient to have broad community reach. For instance, the two-week employment program only accepts 10-12 individuals at a time. Although this program has been helpful in gaining longer-term employment for participants, it only can support a few people at a time. Overall, the enhancement of school, education, and increased employment opportunities would be additive to alleviating poverty.

## **Profile 4**

### **Context**

Poverty is a challenge across First Nations. One First Nation, similar to many others, highlighted the persistence of housing issues and its linkages to poverty. Persistent housing issues include overcrowding, waitlists, as well as inconsistent income assistance regulations, high cost of living, and food insecurity.

Employment opportunities vary in the community. For some, hunting, trapping, fishing, etc., provide resources. Some businesses open in the community, but they just meet needs and can rarely be competitive. Social development can provide broad resources such as child and family services, income assistance, and health, but it cannot alone cover all gaps because funding allocations are limited.

### **Meaning of Poverty**

Poverty is not the same everywhere, nor is it experienced in the same ways. Many community members of First Nations are able to positively contribute to society, but when there are fiscal constraints, the basics of life cannot be sustained.

Poverty has been accepted as a norm, and it is a segment of society. This leads to lower expectations of individuals, and ultimately becomes an accepted way of life. People frequently have to migrate out of the community to meet their basic needs as finances within First Nations communities are too restrictive.

In this First Nation, well-being means the capacity to contribute to society – to be the change you want to see in the world. Spirituality, connection to the land, and health are very important in considering well-being. An individual's well-being is about having a good family, traditions, and rich culture. It also means to provide the best skills, talents, etc., to the community, contributing to overall holistic wellness.

A person's financial position should not be the only way to define a person's position and well-being. Measuring poverty should be based on more than finances. The word 'poverty' needs to be refined, status isn't inherent, often, people do not seek wealth for the purpose of overall well-being. Poverty is a colonial term, which is connected to other terminology that defines the way people 'should' live in their lives. Holistic well-being is more than only a financial framework.

Measuring poverty to track progress should be helpful to support program implementation by having access to the relevant data and information. Moreover, as First Nations are self-governing and have more space to address community issues, a poverty measurement strategy could help inform implementing alleviation strategies and/or programs.

### **Social and Economic Gaps**

The cost-of-living pressures are exacerbated on-reserve. With inflation rising, basic products and services like internet connectivity, groceries, utilities, etc., are all higher on-

reserve. What makes cost pressures even more pronounced are the restrictions from income assistance.

### **Poverty Alleviation Strategies**

Although some programming for poverty alleviation is provided through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) (e.g., income assistance, child and family services, health), custom and traditional practices such as hunting, trapping, gathering, and fishing can support subsistence. An inter-community approach that supports other communities and kinship ties through providing any additional resources has been helpful. The revitalization of traditional ways of life can also support poverty alleviation. Additionally, a safety net to support community members who are impacted by addictions and/or substance misuse, etc., is required as it is available off-reserve.

Ideally, strategies to reduce poverty in this First Nation would include wider access to and availability of education and skills training programs. Many members remain illiterate and are dependent on income assistance. Education and skills training could contribute to people's ability to live a holistic lifestyle. Community members could support others with skills development. There are sometimes barriers to these strategies as some can feel that education diminishes a customary way of life.

