



First Nations-specific Indicators of Poverty and Wellness

Background:

In 2018, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) released the first Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) with a vision to ensure that all Canadians live with dignity, regardless of circumstance. However, the strategy does not account for the unique circumstances of First Nations experiencing poverty or the systemic gaps and barriers perpetuating First Nations poverty. In response, First Nations-in-Assembly passed Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution 98/2019, *Poverty Reduction for all First Nations in Canada*, directing the AFN to conduct research on First Nations-specific indicators of poverty and wellness. In 2021, the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) was contracted by the AFN to lead research with First Nations to develop a framework for understanding, measuring, and addressing poverty in First Nations.

Methodology:

In October 2022, the IFSD hosted a national First Nations working group on poverty to hear community contexts and experiences with poverty to collaborate on defining First Nations poverty and identify indicators to shape a new measurement strategy. The IFSD collated existing measures of poverty and created a series of indicators and possible measurements for the working group's consideration. The working group came to a consensus on eight dimensions of poverty comprising 39 unique indicators.

Indicators:

Housing

- Number of people who have safe and suitable housing
- Number of people in a dwelling
- Number of transition homes on-reserve

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

Education

- High school completion rate
- Literacy rates
- Numeracy rates
- Highest degree attained
- First Nation (or entity) offering land-based programming for youth

Income

- Percentage of population receiving Income Assistance
- Total median household income

Food Security

- Rate of food insecure households
- Presence of food security programs
- Access to traditional foods
- Water advisories
- Potable water from source to tap

Early Childhood Education

- Availability of early childhood education in community
- Number of children in care
- Access to childcare

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

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
- Access to cultural ceremonies in community
- Desire to have access to cultural ceremonies in community
- Presence of Knowledge Keepers in community

Next Steps:

In December 2024, First Nations-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 91/2024, *First Nations Indicators of Poverty and Wellness*, endorsing the First Nations indicators for poverty and wellness and directing the Technical Working Group on Social Development (TWGSD) to oversee a data collection pilot to collect data on the indicators and sample the indicators in selected First Nations. The AFN will advocate for funding to fulfill this mandate and work with the TWGSD to identify regional considerations and priorities to advance work aimed at reducing First Nations poverty.