

New Westminster Child Poverty Profile and Frequently Asked Questions– September 1, 2021

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Introduction

This profile is designed to answer questions about child poverty in New Westminster, including how many people are living in poverty, who is living in poverty, where they are living, and how this has changed over time. This profile is structured based on answering common questions about child poverty.

How do we analyze child poverty?

Although poverty is multi-dimensional and can also include material deprivation, feelings of poverty, high levels of debt and low levels of assets, the simplest and most common measure of poverty is based on annual family incomes (or in the case of singles, individual incomes). Income measures are limited in

that they do not account for debt, assets, and other variables and varied circumstances: for example, a family with a low income, but that owns a house and has little debt might be in a better financial situation than a middle income family with large amounts of debt and very few financial assets. However, in order to use the most up to date and local data possible, income measures will be used for this report. They are supplemented by other indicators such as food insecurity and housing costs to provide a more detailed picture. Taxfiler data was acquired through the Community Data Programⁱ.

The most up to date child poverty data is from taxfiler data from Statistics Canada, based on tax returns from Canadians. The most recent data is from 2019 and thus is reflective of policy changes such as the addition of the Canada Child Benefit. This data set uses the Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT) to measure poverty rates, which is a measure of the whether or not a family’s after-tax income is 50% or less of the median after-tax income for a family of similar size. The CFLIM-AT income thresholds are shown in **Figure 1**. More information on taxfiler data is available from the T1 Family File, 2019 estimatesⁱⁱ.

Figure 1: 2019 Thresholds for CFLIM-AT

Table G 2019 Thresholds for After-Tax Census Family Low Income Measure	
Number of family members	After-Tax Census Family Low Income Measure Thresholds
	dollar amount
1	22,449
2	31,748
3	38,883
4	44,898
5	50,197
6	54,989
7	59,394
8	63,495
9	67,347
10	70,990

Source: Statistics Canada. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2019. Section 1. Data. Table G: 2019: Thresholds for After-Tax Census Family Low Income Measure.

Although taxfiler data provides the most up to date poverty data, it does not provide data on certain vulnerable demographic groups such as recent immigrant children and Indigenous children. Therefore, this taxfiler data is augmented with 2016 Census data (based on 2015 incomes), using the LIM-AT (Low-Income Measure After-Tax). Although both the Census and taxfiler data use taxfiling records for analysis, there are some differences in methodologies, including differences between the LIM-AT and CFLIM-AT, that make comparisons between the two sources invalid. Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census Dictionary provides additional information about the 2016 Census and the LIM-ATⁱⁱⁱ. Census data for these demographic groups was acquired through the Community Data Program^{iv}.

How many children in New Westminster are in low-income households?

In 2019 (according to taxfiler data and based on CFLIM-AT), there were 1,630 children (0-17 years old) living in low-income households, composing 14.5% of children in New Westminster.

Is the child poverty rate in New Westminster high or low relative to other areas?

Based on 2019 taxfiler data, the child poverty rate (based on CFLIM-AT) in New Westminster (14.5%) was lower than for Metro Vancouver (17.1%) and British Columbia (18.0%).

How does the child poverty rate for children in New Westminster compare with seniors and other adults?

In 2019 based on taxfiler data (based on CFLIM-AT), the child poverty rate in New Westminster (14.5%) was lower than the seniors (65+ years old) poverty rate (21.9%). The child poverty rate in New Westminster was also lower than the 18-64 year old poverty rate of 15.6% and the overall population poverty rate of 16.4% in New Westminster. In 2019 in New Westminster, there were 12,120 persons living in low-income households, including 1,630 children (0-17 years old), 7,950 adults 18-64 years old, and 2,540 seniors (65+ years old).

How does the child poverty rate for children in lone parent families compare with children in couple families?

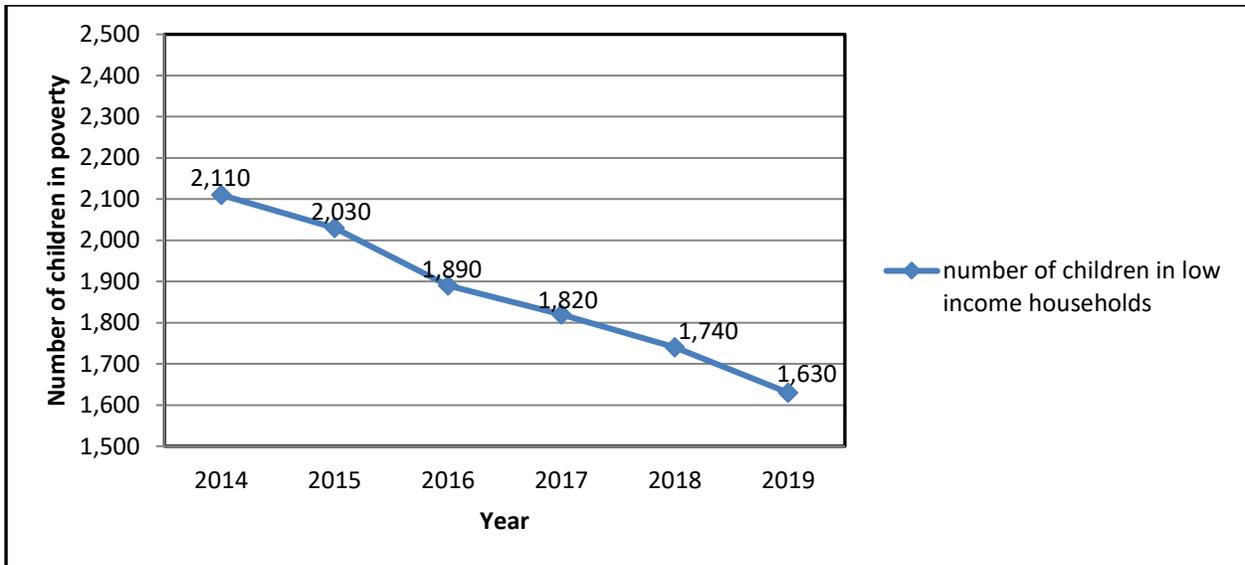
In 2019 in New Westminster (based on taxfiler data), child poverty rates were much lower among children in couple families (7.9%) than children in lone parent families (44.7%) and children not in families (83.3%). In 2019 in New Westminster, there were 850 children in low-income lone parent families, 730 children in low-income couple families, and 50 low-income children not in families.

How has the child poverty rate changed over time?

Between 2014 and 2019 (based on taxfiler data), the number of children (0-17 years old) in low income households (based on CFLIM-AT) in New Westminster decreased from 2,110 children in 2014 to 1,630 children in 2019 (**Figure 2**), a decrease of -480 children (a -22.7% decrease). The largest part of this decrease occurred between 2015 and 2016, when the number of children in low income households decreased from 2,030 children to 1,890 children. The Canada Child Benefit came into effect in 2016, which may explain part of this decrease.

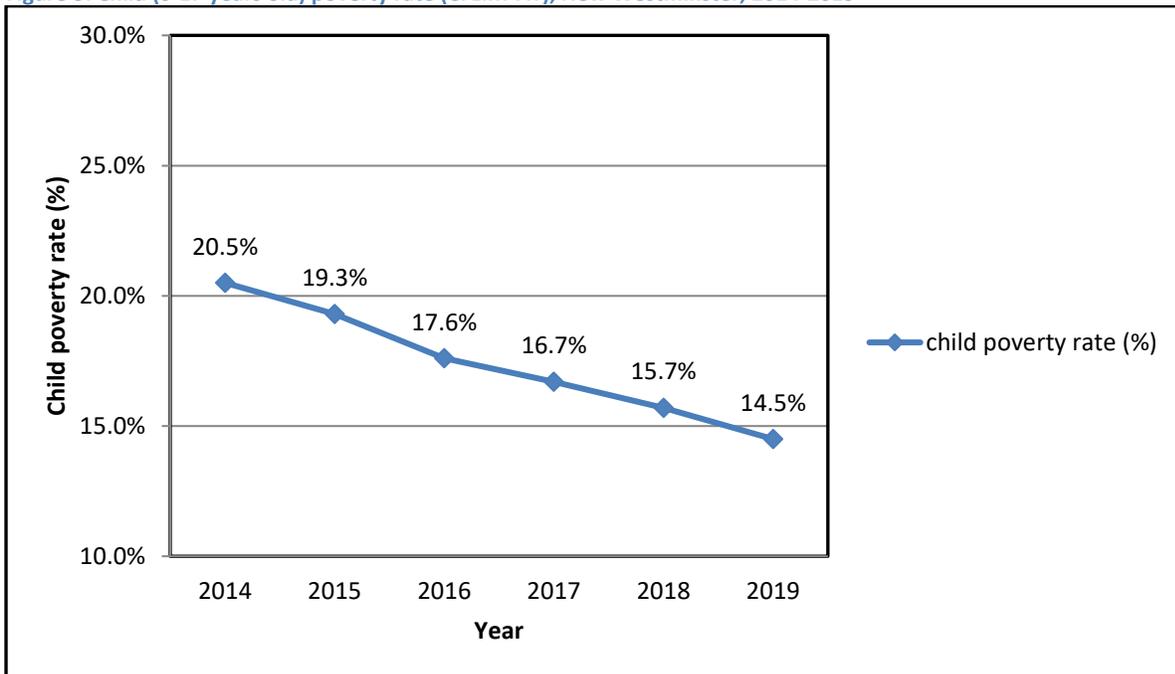
Between 2014 and 2019 (based on taxfiler data), the child poverty rate (based on CFLIM-AT) decreased from 20.5% in 2014 to 14.5% in 2019 (**Figure 3**), a -6.0 ppt decrease. The largest part of this decrease occurred between 2015 and 2016, when the child poverty rate dropped from 19.3% to 17.6%.

Figure 2: Number of children (0-17 years old) in low-income households, CFLIM-AT, New Westminster, 2014-2019



Source: Statistics Canada. T1FF Taxfiler Data. Table I-13 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low income measure, CFLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by family composition. 2014-2019. Downloaded from Community Data Program.

Figure 3: Child (0-17 years old) poverty rate (CFLIM-AT), New Westminster, 2014-2019

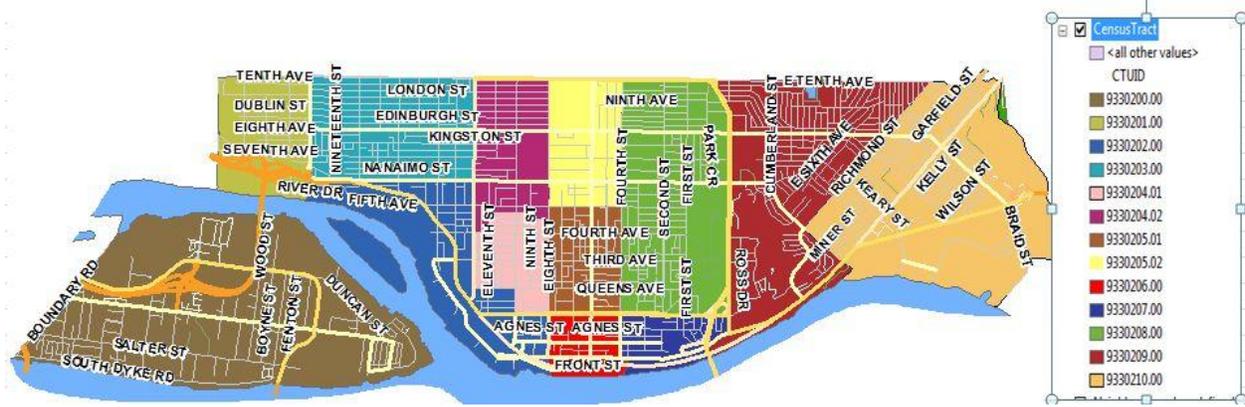


Source: Statistics Canada. T1FF Taxfiler Data. Table I-13 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low income measure, CFLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by family composition. 2014-2019. Downloaded from Community Data Program.

Where does child poverty occur in New Westminster?

Taxfiler data provides child poverty information up to 2019 for New Westminster’s census tracts. As of 2019, New Westminster had 13 census tracts in all (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: New Westminster census tracts



Source: City of New Westminster Geographic Information Systems. Originally based on Statistics Canada mapping data.

In 2019, child (0-17 years old) poverty rates (based on CFLIM-AT) varied throughout New Westminster (**Figure 5**). The census tracts with the highest child poverty rates (204.02, 205.01 and 205.01) were concentrated near Brow of the Hill and Uptown. Child poverty rates varied from 10.8% in census tract 210.00 (Sapperton) to 23.0% in census tract 205.02 (Uptown). The number of children in low income households also varied by census tract, with census tract 200.00 (Queensborough) having the largest number of children in low income households (250 children) and census tract 201.00 (Connaught Heights) having the smallest numbers of children in low income households (40 children).

Figure 5: Child (0-17 years old) poverty rates, based on CFLIM-AT, New Westminster census tracts, 2019

Census tract	# of 0-17 year olds in poverty	% of 0-17 year olds in poverty
200.00	250	11.3%
201.00	40	14.8%
202.00	190	17.3%
203.00	130	14.6%
204.01	120	19.0%
204.02	150	20.3%
205.01	100	21.7%
205.02	140	23.0%
206.00	50	14.7%
207.00	60	19.4%
208.00	130	10.9%
209.00	170	11.5%
210.00	110	10.8%

Source: Statistics Canada. T1FF Taxfiler Data. Table I-13 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low income measure, CFLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by family composition. 2019. Downloaded from Community Data Program.

Although there was considerable variation in child poverty by census tract, the level of neighbourhood inequality in child poverty in New Westminster was small compared with Metro Vancouver census tracts as a whole and census tracts in many other Canadian urban areas. For example, in 2019, 85 Metro Vancouver census tracts (out of 461 Metro Vancouver census tracts with data available) had child poverty rates that were higher than the child poverty rate in census tract 205.02 (highest rate in New Westminster). On the other end, 56 Metro Vancouver census tracts had child poverty rates that were lower than the child poverty rate in census tract 210.00 (lowest rate in New Westminster).

Which demographic groups are more vulnerable to child poverty?

As shown earlier in this poverty profile, children in lone parent families and children not living in families are at a much higher risk of poverty than children in couple families. **Figure 6** shows child (0-17 years old) poverty rates for Aboriginal Identity children, Visible Minority children and recent immigrant children (immigrated between 2011 and 2016) in New Westminster, based on 2016 Census data (from 2015):

- There were a total of 1,740 children in low income households (child poverty rate of 16.6%) in New Westminster in 2015 (*as noted earlier, this data is from a different data set and uses a different methodology compared with the taxfiler data from the same year, so these two data sets are not comparable);
- There were a total of 80 Aboriginal Identity children in low income households in New Westminster (19.5% child poverty rate);

- There were a total of 1,095 Visible Minority children in low income households in New Westminster (20.1% child poverty rate); and,
- There were a total of 230 recent immigrant children in low income households in New Westminster (47.9% child poverty rate).

Figure 6: Child (0-17 year olds) poverty rate for various demographic groups, New Westminster, based on LIM-AT, 2016 Census (2015 data)

Demographic group	Number of children in low income households	Child poverty rate
Total children	1,740	16.6%
Aboriginal Identity children	80	19.5%
Visible Minority children	1,095	20.1%
Recent immigrant children	230	47.9%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census data. Community Poverty Project Data from Community Data Program.

The child poverty rate for Aboriginal Identity children in New Westminster (19.5%) was notably lower than for Metro Vancouver (29.8%) and British Columbia (30.9%). It is worth noting that the 2016 Census data for low income for Aboriginal Identity children did not include children on reserves, which means that these child poverty rates were likely underestimates of Aboriginal Identity child poverty rates in British Columbia and Metro Vancouver (which both include many First Nations reserves). The child poverty rate for Visible Minority children in New Westminster (20.1%) was lower than for Metro Vancouver (23.7%) and British Columbia (23.0%). However, the child poverty rate for recent immigrant children in New Westminster (47.9%) was higher than for British Columbia (44.9%), but slightly lower than for Metro Vancouver (48.4%).

Do child poverty rates differ by the age of children?

In 2015 (based on 2016 Census data), early years (0-5 years old) children had a lower child poverty rate (based on LIM-AT) in New Westminster (14.6%) than middle years children (6-12 years old) (17.6%) and teenagers (13-17 years old) (17.9%) (**Figure 7**). There were 550 early years children, 705 middle years children, and 485 teenagers in low income households in New Westminster in 2015.

Figure 7: Child poverty rates by age group of children, LIM-AT, New Westminster, 2016 Census (based on 2015 data)

Age group	Number of children in low income households	Child poverty rate
Early years (0-5 years old)	550	14.6%
Middle years (6-12 years old)	705	17.6%
Teenagers (13-17 years old)	485	17.9%
Total children (0-17 years old)	1,740	16.6%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census data. Community Poverty Project Data from Community Data Program.

New Westminster had lower child poverty rates for all three child age groups than Metro Vancouver and for two child age groups for British Columbia (the teenage child poverty rate for New Westminster was similar to British Columbia).

How many families are struggling with housing?

There are many measures for determining how many families are struggling with housing. Two of the most common methods are:

- 1) Families spending 30% or more of their before-tax household income on housing costs; and,
- 2) Number of families on BC Housing Wait List

In 2016, there were 1,420 couples with children and 935 lone parent families in New Westminster spending 30% or more of their before-tax household income on housing costs (**Figure 8**). The percentage of lone parent families spending 30% or more (39.7%) was much higher than for couples with children (22.3%). Among couples with children, the percentage of renter households spending 30% or more (23.2%) was slightly higher than the percentage of owner households spending 30% or more (22.0%). Among lone parent families, the percentage of renter households spending 30% or more (46.1%) was much higher than the percentage of owner households spending 30% or more (32.6%).

Figure 8: Number of households, by household type and tenure, spending 30% or more of before-tax household income on housing costs, New Westminster, 2016

Tenure	Couples with children		Lone parent families	
	Number of households spending 30% or more	% of household spending 30% or more	Number of households spending 30% or more	% of household spending 30% or more
Total	1,420	22.3%	935	39.7%
Owner	1,010	22.0%	350	32.6%
Renter	410	23.2%	590	46.1%

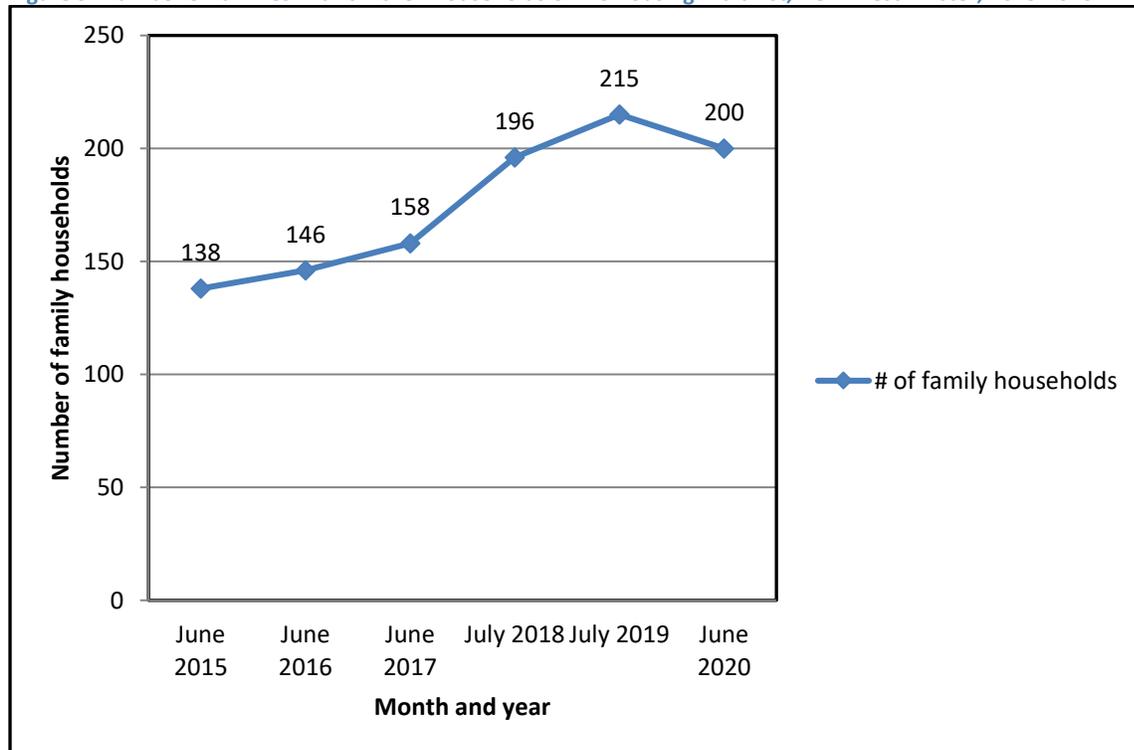
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census data. Data from Community Data Program.

Note: families with children include families with children (0-17 years old) only, families with children (0-17 years old) and adult children (18+ years old) and families with just adult children (18+ years old)

The percentage of couples with children spending 30% or more in New Westminister (22.3%) was lower than Metro Vancouver (25.0%) but higher than for British Columbia (20.5%). The percentage of lone parent families spending 30% or more in New Westminister (39.7%) was lower than for Metro Vancouver (44.6%) and British Columbia (43.2%).

In June 2020, there were 200 families with children on the BC Housing Wait List in New Westminister, an increase of 62 households (44.9%) from June 2015 (**Figure 9**). This increase was larger than the increase for families with children housing on the BC Housing Wait List in Metro Vancouver for the same period (38.3% increase).

Figure 9: Number of families with children households on BC Housing Wait List, New Westminister, 2015-2020



Source: For 2015-2019: Metro Vancouver Housing Data Book. Data originally from BC Housing. For 2020: Special data request from BC Housing

What percentage of families are food insecure?

There is limited data on food insecurity percentages for children in New Westminister. However, the 2013/2014 My Health My Community Survey found that 10.2% of New Westminister residents were sometimes or often food insecure, which was higher than the 7.0% of Metro Vancouver residents who were sometimes or often food insecure.

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact poverty in New Westminster?

In March 2020, there was a state of emergency declared for the Province of British Columbia related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in a lock-down and the temporary closure of many businesses and associated temporary job loss. Throughout the 2020 and 2021 years, there were lockdown measures that were lifted and later reinstated (such as a ban on indoor team sports and indoor dining) that may have impacted employment.

During the pandemic, many households had challenges with rent and the province of BC implemented a temporary rent supplement: as of September 1, 2020, 2,181 renter households in New Westminster (or approximately 15.2% of renter households) had applied for the BC rent supplement, a program that ran from April 2020 – August 2020^v. The actual number of renter households struggling due to COVID-19 might have been much larger than this number as some renter households (including renter households on income assistance, renter households receiving rent subsidies and renter households living in subsidized housing) were not eligible for the temporary rent supplement^{vi}.

Other measures of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic well-being of residents include the number of CERB (Canada Emergency Response Benefit) and unemployment and labour underutilization stats. CERB was a benefit instituted by the Federal Government of Canada for Canadians who lost their employment or self-employment due to COVID-19 and was in place from April 2020 until December 2020^{vii}. As of October 4, 2020, 1,186,290 British Columbians (or 23.0% of British Columbians) had applied for CERB^{viii}.

Traditional unemployment rate measures did not fully capture the economic conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic as they did not count those who want to work but are not looking for work. Many Canadians wanted to work during the COVID-19 pandemic, but were laid off from their current job and had to wait for their employers to reopen when restrictions were lifted. If the unemployment rate also included people who wanted to work but were not looking for work as well as Canadians who were out of work and were looking for work, the adjusted unemployment rate in Canada peaked in April 2020 and May 2020 at 19.6% (i.e., one in five Canadian labour force participants), but has since decreased to 9.5% as of July 2021^{ix}.

However, even this measure did not fully capture the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic well-being of Canadians. Another measure is the labour force underutilization rate, which is defined by Statistics Canada as “those who were unemployed; those who were not in the labour force but who wanted a job and did not look for one; and those who were employed but worked less than half of their usual hours.” By this measure, 14.4% of the potential labour force in Canada was underutilized in July 2021, down considerably from the peak of 36.6% underutilization rate Canada in April 2020, but up from the 11.9% rate observed in the pre-pandemic February 2020^x.

Not all industries were impacted equally by COVID-19, with some of the lower-paying service industry jobs being most negatively impacted. For example, employment in the accommodation and food service industry in Canada in July 2021 was 18.7% below its February 2020 level^{xi}.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic created massive job losses and societal disruption, the Federal and Provincial Governments responded with a large suite of income support programs for businesses and residents. This likely helped in a stronger employment recovery than would have otherwise been the case.

ⁱ Community Data Program. <https://communitydata.ca/>

ⁱⁱ Statistics Canada. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2019.

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4105>

ⁱⁱⁱ Statistics Canada. 2016 Census Dictionary, Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT).

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/fam021-eng.cfm>

^{iv} Community Data Program. <https://communitydata.ca/>

^v BC Housing. Special Data Request.

^{vi} BC Housing. BC Temporary Rent Supplement. <https://www.bchousing.org/BCTRS>

^{vii} Government of Canada. CERB Application. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>

^{viii} CERB stats are from Government of Canada. Canada Emergency Response Benefit Statistics.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/claims-report.html>, while the base population is based on Statistics Canada. Population Estimates Quarterly. Table 17-10-0009-01.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000901>

^{ix} Statistics Canada. The Daily. Labour Force Survey, May 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200605/dq200605a-eng.htm> and Statistics Canada. The Daily. Labour Force Survey, July 2021.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210806/dq210806a-eng.htm>

^x Statistics Canada. The Daily. Labour Force Survey, May 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200605/dq200605a-eng.htm> and Statistics Canada. The Daily. Labour Force Survey, July 2021.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210806/dq210806a-eng.htm>

^{xi} Statistics Canada. The Daily. Labour Force Survey, July 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210806/dq210806a-eng.htm>