NEW WESTMINSTER







POVERTY MYTHBUSTERS

October 2016

New Westminster Poverty Myth Busters

Myth: If you work hard, you won't be poor.

Reality:

Working full-time hours for a whole year is not a guarantee against poverty. In 2010, there were 745 New Westminster residents who worked full-time (30+ hours/week), full-year (49+ weeks of the year) and were still poor.[1]

Did you know?

In 2010, the median before-tax employment income among New Westminster's low-income full-time, full-year workers was $12,220.[2]

Myth: Poor people are lazy and don't want to work.

Reality:

Most poor people of working age work or want to work. In May 2011, 69% (or more than two in three) of New Westminster's core working age (25-54 years) low-income residents were in the labour force.[3]

Did you know?

Many poor people want to work but cannot find work: in May 2011, 20% (one in five) of New Westminster's low-income labour force participants were unemployed.[4]

Myth: All jobs pay enough to keep people out of poverty.

Reality:

Not all jobs pay well. In 2010 in British Columbia, the median full-time (30+ hours/week), full-year (49+ weeks of the year) before-tax employment income was below $30,000/year for 52 occupations.[5,6]

Did you know?

In 2010, 109,215 British Columbians worked full-time, full-year in these low-paying occupations.[7]

These British Columbians included the people who worked hard taking care of our children (early childhood educators), cleaning our buildings (light duty cleaners), preparing our food (cooks), serving our food (food counter attendants), bagging our groceries (cashiers), taking care of our farms

[1] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey. Based on the Low Income-After Tax Measure.
[2] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey. Based on the Low Income-After Tax Measure.
[3] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey. Based on the Low Income-After Tax Measure.
[4] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey. Based on the Low Income-After Tax Measure.
[5] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey.
[6] Accurate New Westminster level data for median full-time, full-year before-tax employment income was not available for different occupations from Statistics Canada.
[7] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey.

(agricultural managers) and cutting our hair (hair-stylists and barbers).

Myth: There is no child poverty in my neighbourhood/area, there is only child poverty in poor neighbourhoods/ areas.

Reality:

The rate of child poverty and number of poor children and youth (0-17 years) varies by neighbourhood (or census tract), but child poverty occurs to some degree in almost all areas of cities. In 2013, all of New Westminster's 13 census tracts had child poverty rates (i.e., percentage of children living in low-income families) of at least 10%: in other words, at least one in ten children and youth lived in low-income families in every New Westminster census tract.[8]

Did you know?

In 2013, nine out of New Westminster's 13 census tracts had at least 100 children and youth living in low-income families. All of New Westminster's census tracts had at least 30 children and youth living in low-income families.[9]

In 2013, almost all (453 out of 455) of Metro Vancouver's census tracts[10] had child poverty rates of at least 5% and 426 out of Metro Vancouver's 455 census tracts had child poverty rates of at least 10%.[11]

In 2013, almost all (453 out of 455) of Metro Vancouver's census tracts had at least 20 children and youth living in low-income families.[12]

Myth: Child poverty only occurs in single parent families.

Reality:

Child poverty does not just affect children in single parent families; there are also many children in two parent families who live in poverty in New Westminster and other cities. In 2013, New Westminster had 980 children and youth (0-17 years) living in low-income, two parent families.[13]



Did you know?

In 2013, over half of all children and youth in low-income families (54% of all children and youth

[8] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).
[9] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).
[10] There were two Metro Vancouver census tracts where the number of children living in poverty was suppressed; therefore, child poverty rates could not be calculated for these census tracts.

[11] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).
[12] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).
[13] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).

in low-income families) in New Westminster were living in two parent families.[14]

In 2013, 12% of New Westminster's children and youth in two parent families and 45% of New Westminster's children and youth in single parent families lived in poverty.[15]

Myth: Poor people are the cause of their own poverty, it's their fault.

Reality:

People and families can fall into poverty for many reasons, some of which are mostly out of their own control. Consider the following scenarios that may push a person or family into poverty:

- A man driving to his work at a construction site is involved in a car accident, resulting in a back injury that leaves him permanently unable to work in his construction profession.
- A young woman who has just graduated university develops an anxiety disorder, making it difficult for her to obtain and maintain employment.
- A family has just immigrated to Canada. The father, an engineer, and the mother, a doctor, have foreign credentials that are not recognized in Canada. They take jobs working at a food court to make ends meet.
- A father moves to another country, leaving his wife and four children with no information for contacting him. The father does not send any child support payments.



These are just four of the many possible scenarios that can push a person or family into poverty.

Did you know?

In 2011, approximately three in ten (30%) of New Westminster's low-income residents had a disability.[16]

In 2011, New Westminster had 3,240 low-income residents with a disability.

Myth: Poor people are uneducated, they should just go to school and gain some skills.

Reality:

In 2011, 59% (or approximately three in five) of New Westminster's low-income residents between 25-64 years old had a post-secondary education.[17]

[14] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).
[15] Statistics Canada. 2013 Taxfiler Data. Based on Low-Income After-Tax Measure (LIM-AT).

[16] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey. Based on the Low-Income, After-Tax Measure. Disability based on activity limitation concept.
[17] Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey. Based on the Low Income, After-Tax Measure. Post-secondary education includes trades certificates, college diplomas, university degrees, etc.

Did you know?

Students attending post-secondary institutions often face challenges related to poverty. Approximately 100 students use the Douglas College Student Union Food Bank every month.[18]

For recent immigrants, another challenge is translating foreign education and work experience into professional jobs in Canada. In 2006 in Canada, 28% of recent immigrant men and 40% of recent immigrant women with university degrees worked in jobs with low educational requirements, compared to 10% of Canadian-born men and 12% of Canadian-born women with university degrees.[19]

Myth: There is nothing I can do about poverty in our community

Reality:

Everyone has a role to play to address poverty, including individuals, employers, organizations and all levels of government. We can all work together to prevent people from falling into poverty, help to reduce poverty and help to improve the conditions of people living in poverty. Here are just a few of the roles that we can play:

Prevent people from falling into poverty:

- Donate to and volunteer at breakfast, education and literacy programs for children to ensure that the children have the best possible start at life.
- Donate to or volunteer at programs that assist people that may be going through stressful events (divorce, illness etc.).

Reduce poverty:

- Encourage the development of policies and strategies by all levels of government to reduce poverty through writing letters to politicians and supporting poverty reduction campaigns.
- If you are an employer, pay all of your employees a living wage, if feasible.
- Volunteer to help low-income residents in gaining the skills necessary to lift themselves out of poverty (e.g., by doing a language exchange with new immigrants).

Improve the conditions of people living in poverty:

- Donate your time, money, or used goods to causes that help low-income residents such as food banks or thrift stores.
- Treat people living in poverty with respect and dignity.

Did you know?

In 2010 (according to OECD data), fewer than one in twenty children in Denmark and Finland (both had 4% child poverty rates) were in low-income families; by comparison, Canada had a 14% child poverty rate in 2010.[20]

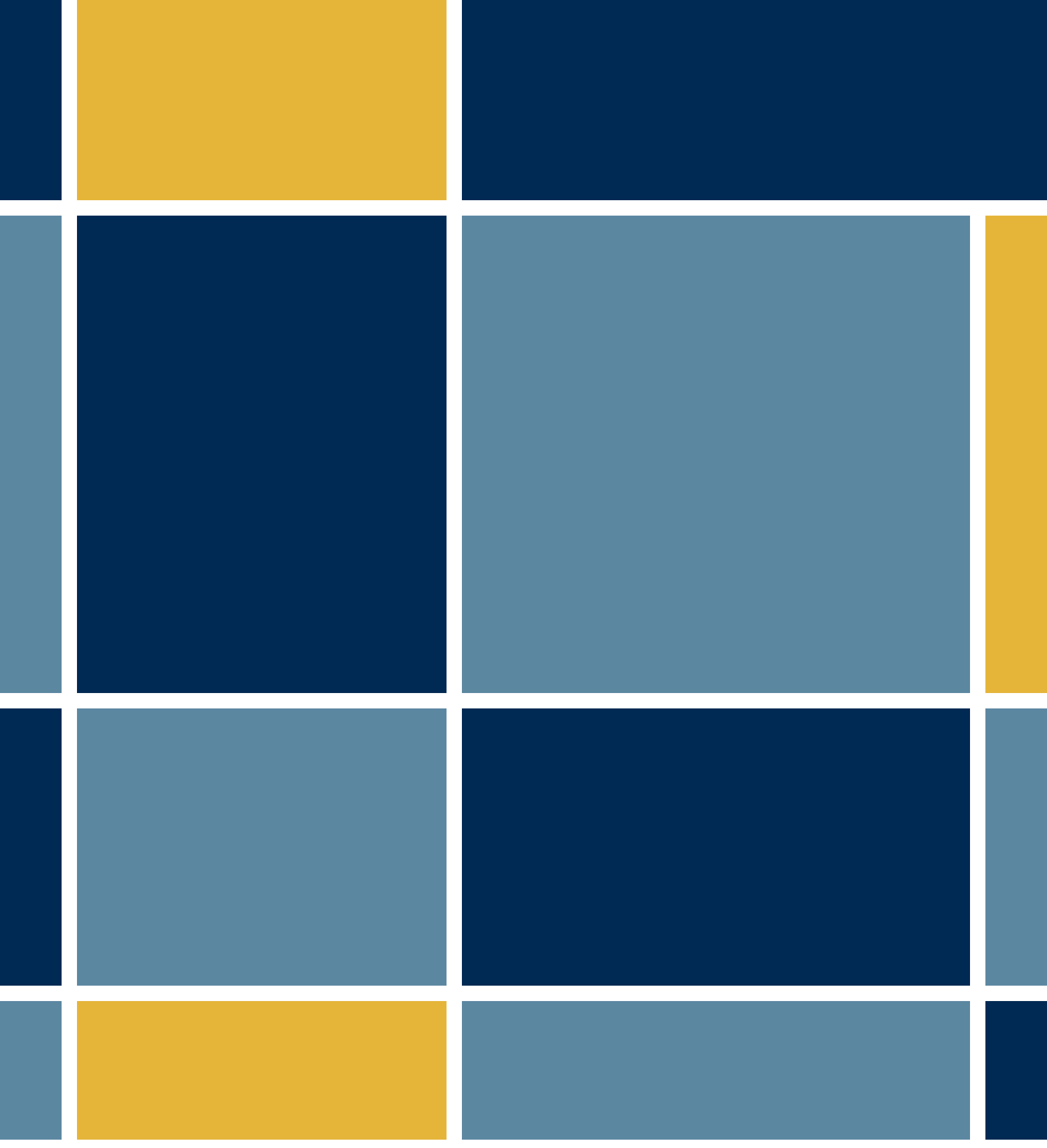
As of October 2016, there were 62 certified living wage employers (including the City of New Westminster) in British Columbia.[21]

[18] Douglas is Here. Blog Spot. September 4, 2015. "Food bank available for students at DSU." http://www.douglasishere.com/2015/09/food-bank-available-for-students-at-dsu.html

[19] Parliament of Canada. 2012. "Recognition of Foreign Qualifications of Immigrants." P.1. http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/2004-29-e.pdf

[20] OECD (Organization of Economic Development and Corporation). CO2.2 Child Poverty.

[21] Living Wage for Families Campaign – Certified Employers. http://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/employers/certified-employers/



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