

Canadian Income Survey: Territorial estimates, 2019

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Families and unattached individuals living in the Northwest Territories (\$93,200) and Nunavut (\$93,800) had similar median after-tax income in 2019, compared with \$77,800 in Yukon. The median after-tax income in all three territories was higher than any of the Canadian provinces in 2019.

Among the three territorial capitals, the median after-tax income of families and unattached individuals was similar in Yellowknife (\$105,700) and Iqaluit (\$106,100), which were both above their territorial medians. In Whitehorse, the median after-tax income matched the territorial median in Yukon as a whole, at \$77,800.

The median after-tax income for Indigenous families and unattached individuals living off reserve for all three territories was \$71,900. Indigenous families and unattached individuals living off reserve in Nunavut had a median after-tax income of \$85,500. For those living in Yukon, it was \$72,600, and for those living in the Northwest Territories, it was \$65,100.

The Canadian Income Survey estimates are based on probability samples and are therefore subject to sampling variability. As sample sizes in the three territories are relatively small, territorial estimates tend to have a high sampling variability. For this reason, please use caution when comparing territorial estimates between 2018 and 2019. For the purpose of this release, estimates are presented for 2019 only.

Families and individuals in Canada continue to experience a profound disruption in their lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many facing job loss and financial uncertainty. While these estimates from the 2019 Canadian Income Survey do not reflect the impacts of the pandemic, they do provide a baseline for assessing developments during the pandemic and shine light on which Canadian families may be most vulnerable financially.

Over 1 in 10 residents in the territories live in low income

According to the Canadian after-tax low income measure (LIM-AT), 13,900 people or 11.9% of the population in the territories lived in low income in 2019. Nunavut reported the highest low-income rate, with almost one-fifth of their residents (19.4%) living in low income, more than double the rate in the Northwest Territories (8.8%) and Yukon (8.2%). By way of comparison, the low-income rate for the provinces was 12.1% in 2019.

Historically, marginalized groups such as Indigenous peoples, were more likely to live below low-income lines like the LIM-AT. In the three territories, about 6,500, or 16.5% of Indigenous peoples aged 16 and older living off reserve were in low income in 2019. For Indigenous peoples aged 16 and older living off reserve in the provinces, the LIM-AT was 20.7% (about 147,000 people).



Northern Market Basket Measure

The Market Basket Measure (MBM), Canada's official poverty line, is not currently available for the territories. However, over the last year, Statistics Canada, along with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the statistical focal points for Yukon and the Northwest Territories, have been working toward filling this data gap, through the creation of an initial Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N). The MBM-N is intended to capture the spirit of the existing MBM (i.e., represent a modest, basic standard of living) while accounting for adjustments to the contents of the MBM to reflect life in Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

A Northern MBM approach applicable to Nunavut is also underway to create an MBM basket appropriate to that territory.

Today, Statistics Canada is releasing a discussion paper, [Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Yukon and the Northwest Territories](#). The purpose of this paper is to promote engagement with users, explain the proposed methodology, and to share results. It also gives users the opportunity to provide feedback and make suggestions for future work.

The release of this discussion paper will be followed by a review period during which Statistics Canada and ESDC will engage with experts; stakeholders; and federal, provincial and territorial officials. The review period will conclude in March 2022. Because the review period is not over, these results should be treated as preliminary.

According to the MBM-N thresholds for Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the percentage of persons in poverty in 2019 was 10.8% (about 8,800 people). The percentage of persons in poverty for Yukon was 9.0% (about 3,500 people), while 12.5% of persons (about 5,300 people) in the Northwest Territories were in poverty. In comparison, according to the 2018-base MBM, 10.1% of persons in the provinces were estimated to be in poverty for 2019.

For more information on the Government of Canada's commitments to closing gaps in the North, please refer to [Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#).

Highest income quintile accounts for over one-third of all after-tax income in the territories

Tracking the shares of income held by the different income quintiles is one way to help shed light on income inequality in Canada. When looking at income inequality, it is common practice to use income measures based on after-tax household income that has been adjusted for household size (adjusted after-tax income).

Based on adjusted after-tax income, persons in the highest quintile (representing 20% of the population) accounted for 36.3% of all after-tax income in the three territories in 2019, almost double the share of the lowest two quintiles (representing 40% of the population), at 20.5%.

These shares of incomes held by the different income quintiles were similar to those seen in the rest of Canada. Based on adjusted after-tax income, Canadians in the highest quintile among the provinces accounted for 37.6% of total income in 2019, while the lowest two quintiles held 21.0%.

Among the three territories, the largest share of adjusted after-tax income held by those living in the highest quintile was in Nunavut at 39.9%, compared with just over one-third for those living in Yukon (34.6%) and the Northwest Territories (34.7%). Nunavut also had the lowest share of adjusted after-tax income in the two lowest quintiles (18.1%), compared with the other two territories (23.0% in Yukon and 21.5% in the Northwest Territories).

Persons living alone report lower incomes in all territories

Unattached individuals living in the territories reported the lowest median after-tax income among all family types at \$49,800 in 2019, followed by lone-parent families at \$63,400. Families of two persons or more had a median after-tax income of \$108,500 in 2019. Within this group, couples with children had the highest median after-tax income (\$135,300).

Senior families—those where the major income earner was 65 years of age and older—had a median after-tax income of \$78,100, compared with \$112,400 for non-senior families.

Within each territory, unattached individuals also reported the lowest median after-tax incomes: \$47,400 in Yukon, \$49,900 in Nunavut and \$52,000 in the Northwest Territories.

Couples with children living in the Northwest Territories had the highest median after-tax income among all family types across all territories, at \$146,300 in 2019.

Table 1
Income statistics by territory for families and unattached individuals, 2019

	Market income	Government transfers	Total income	Income tax	After-tax income
	median (\$)				
All territories	87,500	5,300	97,000	11,200	86,700
Yukon	79,700	3,300	89,200	9,000	77,800
Northwest Territories	101,300	6,000	111,100	14,400	93,200
Nunavut	86,300	7,700	106,300	10,500	93,800

Source(s): Canadian Income Survey (5200), custom tabulation.

Table 2
Income statistics by territory and selected economic family type, 2019

	Market income	Government transfers	Total income	Income tax	After-tax income
	median (\$)				
All territories					
Economic families	112,100	8,300	123,900	15,100	108,500
Senior families	56,500	30,100	85,200	F	78,100
Non-senior families	116,500	6,800	129,100	15,900	112,400
Couples	116,600	1,900	119,500	17,800	102,900
Couples with children	147,800	6,400	161,100	23,200	135,300
Lone parent families	59,700	11,400	67,600	F	63,400
Persons not in an economic family	51,300	1,000	56,900	5,800	49,800
Yukon					
Economic families	104,300	7,500	114,400	13,000	100,200
Senior families	70,700	28,600	95,300	F	88,200
Non-senior families	106,000	4,400	116,200	13,200	100,900
Couples	113,900	F	116,200	15,500	100,900
Couples with children	137,300	3,500	139,400	20,300	118,300
Lone parent families	64,000	9,500	69,700	F	65,200
Persons not in an economic family	51,300	F	54,000	5,700	47,400
Northwest Territories					
Economic families	126,500	7,000	144,300	19,300	127,800
Senior families	F	33,900	85,200	F	78,100
Non-senior families	143,800	6,400	152,300	21,900	130,700
Couples	153,500	F	155,100	23,900	127,000
Couples with children	162,900	6,000	173,000	28,500	146,300
Lone parent families	F	F	63,400	F	58,700
Persons not in an economic family	52,500	F	59,100	6,000	52,000
Nunavut					
Economic families	101,700	11,800	117,500	12,500	103,300
Senior families	F	F	F	F	F
Non-senior families	108,700	11,400	121,100	13,100	107,200
Couples	147,200	2,900	147,400	18,000	121,500
Couples with children	113,700	15,300	124,800	15,000	115,400
Lone parent families	F	F	F	F	F
Persons not in an economic family	56,700	F	57,900	F	49,900

F too unreliable to be published

Source(s): Canadian Income Survey (5200), custom tabulation.

Table 3
Share of adjusted after-tax income by quintile and territory, 2019

	Lowest quintile	Second quintile	Third quintile	Fourth quintile	Highest quintile
	%				
All territories	7.0	13.5	18.8	24.5	36.3
Yukon	8.3	14.7	19.0	23.4	34.6
Northwest Territories	7.2	14.3	19.5	24.2	34.7
Nunavut	6.1	12.0	17.0	25.1	39.9

Source(s): Canadian Income Survey (5200), custom tabulation.

Note to readers

This is the second year that data were collected in the Canadian Income Survey for the territories, this time for income year 2019. Households in remote areas with very low population density are excluded from the survey. Survey coverage of the population is about 96% for the Northwest Territories, 93% for Nunavut and 92% for Yukon.

The Canadian Income Survey estimates are based on probability samples and are therefore subject to sampling variability. As sample sizes in the three territories are relatively small, territorial estimates tend to have a high sampling variability. For this reason, users are recommended to use caution when comparing territorial estimates between 2018 and 2019. Very few estimates at the territorial level have been found to present statistically significant differences between the two years.

Definitions

An **economic family** refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption or a foster relationship. This concept differs from the census family concept used for subprovincial data in the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals.

This release analyzes income on the basis of medians. The **median** is the level of income at which half the population has higher income and half has lower.

After-tax income is the total of market income and government transfers, less income tax.

Market income consists of employment income and private pensions, as well as income from investments and other market sources.

Government transfers include benefits such as Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan, child benefits, Employment Insurance, social assistance, the goods and services tax or harmonized sales tax credit, and provincial tax credits.

Low income in this release is calculated using the after-tax low income measure (LIM-AT). Individuals are defined as having low income if their adjusted after-tax income falls below 50% of the median adjusted after-tax income. Adjusted after-tax income is derived by dividing household income by the square root of the household size and assigning this value to all persons in the household. The median observed in the ten provinces was used to establish the LIM-AT threshold for estimates in the three territories.

Indigenous peoples refers to persons, aged 16 and older, who self-identified as being an Aboriginal person; that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit).

Indigenous families are those where the major income earner is Indigenous.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5200](#).

The product "[Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Yukon and the Northwest Territories](#)" ([75F0002M](#)) is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).