

Canadian Income Survey: Territorial estimates, 2021

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In 2021, families and unattached individuals living in the territories had a median after-tax income of \$85,300. The Northwest Territories (\$96,600) had the highest median after-tax income, followed by Nunavut (\$84,400) and Yukon (\$77,800).

Higher incomes continued to be concentrated in the territorial capitals. The median after-tax income of families and unattached individuals in 2021 was \$107,600 in Iqaluit, while it was \$103,000 in Yellowknife and \$78,100 in Whitehorse.

Similar to the provinces, the median after-tax incomes in the territories varied considerably by family type. In 2021, couple families with children (\$144,900) and couples (\$124,200) tended to have the highest incomes, which is a similar pattern to that observed in the provinces (\$113,700 for couple families with children; \$92,200 for couples).

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, caution should be used when comparing year-over-year territorial estimates.

According to the 2021 Census of Population, 52% of residents of the territories were Indigenous. Indigenous families and unattached individuals (\$70,800) continued to have lower median after-tax incomes compared with non-Indigenous people (\$97,600). The median after-tax income among First Nations families and unattached individuals was \$84,600, while it was \$65,300 among Inuit. Separate estimates for Métis people in the territories could not be published due to a smaller sample size.

Market income remains relatively unchanged, while government transfers decrease

The median market income for families and unattached individuals was little changed in the territories from 2020 to 2021. In contrast, the territorial median government transfer amounts (-42%) saw a large decrease, down to \$7,400 in 2021 from \$12,800 in 2020, due in large part to the phasing out of COVID-19 pandemic relief benefits.

Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for the territories

Today, Statistics Canada is releasing a discussion paper, [Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Nunavut](#). The purpose of this paper is to explain the proposed methodology for measuring poverty in Nunavut, promote engagement with users 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 Employment and Social Development Canada will engage with experts, stakeholders, Indigenous organizations and federal, provincial and territorial officials. The review period will conclude in fall 2023. The Nunavut poverty estimates presented in this Canadian Income Survey territorial release should be treated as preliminary and could be subject to change.

For more information on the Northern Market Basket Measure methodology for Yukon and the Northwest Territories, please refer to the [Technical paper for the Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Yukon and the Northwest Territories](#).



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](#).

About one in five people living in the territories are below the poverty line

According to the Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N), 20.2% of the population living in the territories, or approximately 24,200 people, were below the poverty line in 2021, up from 18.1% in 2020. The poverty rate for Yukon was 7.7% (about 3,100 people), that for the Northwest Territories was 15.0% (about 6,400 people), while the preliminary poverty rate for Nunavut was 39.7% (about 14,600 people). In comparison, according to the 2018-base year Market Basket Measure, it was estimated that 7.4% of the population in the provinces was living in poverty in 2021.

Statistics Canada also reports low income using the low-income measure. According to the low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT), 13.8% of the population of the territories, or 16,500 people, lived in low income in 2021. By comparison, the low-income rate for the provinces was 10.6%. It should be noted that, while the LIM-AT does not take into account differences in cost of living, the MBM-N does.

Over one-quarter of residents of the territories experience some form of food insecurity

In 2021, 26.4% of people living in the territories lived in a household that experienced marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity. This was relatively unchanged from the 2020 rate of 29.6%. Similar to incomes, food insecurity rates varied by territory, with Nunavut (46.1%) having the highest rate, followed by the Northwest Territories (22.2%) and Yukon (12.8%). In addition, food insecurity was particularly prevalent among Indigenous peoples, with 41.2% of Indigenous peoples living in households experiencing some form of food insecurity. Higher poverty and food insecurity rates in Nunavut were consistent with higher rates of core housing need (lack of adequate, affordable or suitable housing). According to the 2021 Census, 33% of households in Nunavut were in core housing need compared with 13% in both Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Table 1
Income statistics by territory for families and persons not in an economic family, 2019 to 2021

	Total income			Income tax			After-tax income		
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
	median (2021 constant dollars)								
All territories	101,000	103,400	95,600	11,700	11,600	10,500	90,200	90,600	85,300
Yukon	92,900	93,900	89,200	9,400	9,100	9,400	81,000	85,100	77,800
Northwest Territories	115,700	117,200	107,000	15,000	16,000	13,100	97,000	98,700	96,600
Nunavut	110,700	107,400	94,000	10,900	11,600	8,900	97,700	95,300	84,400
	Market income			Government transfers					
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021			
	median (2021 constant dollars)								
All territories		91,100	90,800	82,100	5,500	12,800	7,400^E		
Yukon		82,900	74,200	78,300	3,400 ^E	12,800	6,900 ^E		
Northwest Territories		105,500	102,100	102,600	6,300	12,300	4,900 ^E		
Nunavut		89,900	83,100	75,500	8,000	15,300 ^E	11,600 ^E		

^E use with caution

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

Table 2
After-tax income by territory for selected family types, 2019 to 2021

	After-tax income		
	2019	2020	2021
	median (2021 constant dollars)		
All territories			
Economic families	112,900	110,900	108,500
Senior families	81,300	94,500	86,600
Non-senior families	117,100	116,700	116,900
Couples	107,200	117,300	124,200
Couples with children	140,900	136,900	144,900
Lone-parent families	66,000	81,700	49,300 ^E
Persons not in an economic family	51,800	52,100	56,900
Yukon			
Economic families	104,300	103,900	107,900
Senior families	91,800	94,500	77,800 ^E
Non-senior families	105,000	105,200	116,100
Couples	105,000	96,300	107,900
Couples with children	123,100	122,600	127,000
Lone-parent families	67,900	F	F
Persons not in an economic family	49,400	45,400	53,000
Northwest Territories			
Economic families	133,000	122,100	119,500
Senior families	81,300 ^E	95,000 ^E	F
Non-senior families	136,100	133,400	124,200
Couples	132,300	119,600	134,300
Couples with children	152,300	144,600	163,000
Lone-parent families	61,100 ^E	F	F
Persons not in an economic family	54,200	56,700	62,300
Nunavut			
Economic families	107,500	116,700	103,000
Senior families	F	F	F
Non-senior families	111,600	124,800	107,600
Couples	126,500 ^E	141,300 ^E	F
Couples with children	120,200	131,200	137,100 ^E
Lone-parent families	F	F	F
Persons not in an economic family	51,900 ^E	F	F

^E use with caution

^F too unreliable to be published

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

Note to readers

This is the fourth year that data were collected in the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) for the territories. This time, data are for income year 2021. 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 CIS estimates are based on probability samples and are therefore subject to sampling variability. Because 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 year-over-year territorial estimates. Very few estimates at the territorial level have been found to present statistically significant differences between different years.

Definitions

An **economic family** refers to a group of two or more people 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 sub-provincial data in the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals.

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

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.

For 2020 and 2021, government transfers include emergency response and recovery benefits in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this release, COVID-19 benefit estimates include federal emergency and recovery benefit programs (e.g., Canada Emergency Response Benefit, Canada Emergency Student Benefit, Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit) and programs administered by provincial governments as well as a special one-time payment to disabled Canadians. Enhancements to existing federal programs are not included in COVID-19 benefit estimates but are included in total government transfers.

Low income in this release is calculated using the low-income measure, after tax (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 individuals in the household. The median observed in the 10 provinces was used to establish the LIM-AT threshold for estimates in the three territories.

The **Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N)** is an adaptation of the provincial market basket measure (MBM) and is intended to capture the spirit of the MBM (i.e., to represent a modest, basic standard of living) while accounting for adjustments needed to reflect life in the territories.

The term "**Indigenous**" refers to individuals who self-identified as First Nations people, Métis or Inuit.

Indigenous families are economic families whose major income earner is Indigenous.

Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. Food insecurity in this release refers to people living in households that experienced marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity.

Core housing need refers to whether a private household's housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability or suitability, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (attains all three housing indicator thresholds).

Available tables: table [11-10-0066-01](#).

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

The publication "[Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Nunavut](#)," which is part of the *Income Research Paper Series* ([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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).