

The Face of Poverty in Surrey



A collaborative, multi-sectoral effort to reduce poverty and the issues related to poverty. Learning nationally, acting locally.
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Populations at Risk

Several factors can influence the incidence of poverty in Surrey.

Research tells us that far more women than men live in poverty, and unattached individuals are more likely to be poor than couples with children. Further, recently immigrated women are likely to have a lower income than women who were born in Surrey, or who have lived here for more than 10 years.

Age and gender have a strong correlation to a person's probability of living in poverty in Surrey.

In Surrey, the very young (27.9% of children under 15) and those that are older (20.3% of those over 65) are the most likely to be poor, but women over 75 are most at risk of poverty, at 35.8% of all women. Women in Surrey earned an average of \$13,273 less than men in the year 2000. In Canada, children and youth make up 32.8% of the population, but represent 40.4% of those living in poverty.

Immigration to Canada has a severe impact on a person's ability to earn a living wage.

Of 47,440 immigrants who have settled in Surrey since 1991, 43% had an income below the Low Income Cut Off in the year 2000. The greatest impediment to earning a living wage is the inability to have foreign credentials recognized in Canada, with the result that a recent immigrant cannot work in the field for which they have been trained or educated. Other impediments may include language or cultural barriers, discrimination, or long waiting periods for approval of refugee claims or landed immigrant status applications.

A visible minority person is more likely to experience poverty than a non-visible minority person.

In Surrey, the visible minority population has a higher poverty rate (30%) than the overall population (18.2%). If the visible minority community follows trends observed in the rest of Canada, two-thirds of its members would be immigrants and the other third would be Canadian-born. Visible minority men earn less than non-visible minority men, even once experience, training, education, occupation and industry have been considered. It is presumed that the discrepancy is caused by discrimination in hiring and in workplace practices.

Barriers to qualifying for welfare

"It is mandatory for claimants to attend job search training. The majority of immigrants may not have a work permit and language is an additional barrier. There is a three-week waiting period. This can be challenging as families may have to move from shelter to shelter (while they wait) and depend on churches or charity organizations for food and shelter."

SERVICE PROVIDER

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Aboriginal persons are over-represented in Surrey's poverty population.

In the last census, only 2% of Surrey's population identified as Aboriginal, but 5.25% of those living in poverty in Surrey are Aboriginal. Further, the poverty rate for the Aboriginal community as a whole is an astounding 48%. This holds true for Canada as well, as Aboriginals living in Canadian cities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Aboriginals. Aboriginal persons face a multitude of barriers to attaching to the work force, and even if those can be surmounted, earnings are poor; in 1996, off-reserve workers earned only 69.7% of what other workers earned.

Having a disability is a risk factor for living in poverty.

In 1996, almost one-third (31.5%) of the 29,800 persons in Surrey identifying as having a disability were living on a low income, and in November 2003, 4,376 Surrey residents with disabilities were receiving income assistance. Barriers to finding and keeping work might include the type of disability and its severity, lack of access to disability-related supports and to workplace accommodations, or discrimination by not hiring, or not considering persons with a disability for advancement.

The size of a household can influence the potential for living in poverty.

The potential for living in poverty is related to the ability of adults to contribute to the overall family income. Lone parent families, 80% of which are female-led, are the most economically challenged, with a poverty rate of 59.2%. In Canada in 1995, only 36.9% of lone parent families worked the equivalent of full-time, primarily due to mothers staying at home to care for children. The poverty rate for unattached individuals in Surrey is 38.8%. Unattached individuals are more likely to be younger than couples, and may earn less than older people.

Vibrant Surrey is working collaboratively to reduce poverty and issues related to poverty.

We have joined with 15 other communities across Canada, under the Vibrant Communities initiative (WWW.VIBRANTCOMMUNITIES.CA). We are inviting leaders from the business, social service, and government communities and all our neighbourhoods to work together to enhance the quality of life for all who call Surrey home. Please join in this challenge of building economic and social opportunities for everyone.

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"The solutions are within the community. Neither government, nor business, nor the voluntary sector, nor individual community members can do it on their own. We all need to work together and pool our resources to make an impact."

A FUNDER

What is the community saying?