

Two decades of poverty reduction politics benefited single parent families

Geranda Notten, Fatima Tuz Zohora, Charles Plante, Rachel Laforest. "Two decades of poverty reduction politics benefited single parent families." *CRDCN research-policy snapshots*. Volume 3 Issue 2 July 2024

Context

Poverty reduction is a complex task. This study investigates whether the position of single parent families and single working age adults improved in a political context that has, at least rhetorically, prioritized poverty reduction across all higher-level jurisdictions in Canada. Both groups experience very high poverty rates. The study analyzes poverty changes from 1999 to 2017 in a relative sense (compared to the typical Canadian) and an absolute sense (purchasing power). Controlling for demographic and regional characteristics, it finds that the poverty disadvantage declined for both groups.

Key finding(s) from the research

This research finds that the income poverty disadvantage of single parent families declined strongly and across all provinces between 1999 and 2017, whereas the decline for single adults of working age was smaller and more concentrated in provinces experiencing stronger economic growth.

Population(s) studied: Single parent families, single working age adults and couple adults (reference group)

Research dataset(s) used: Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID, 1999-2011); Canadian Income Survey (CIS, 2012-2017)

Policy implications for this research

Canada's jurisdictions have become more inclusive towards high poverty risk households in the sense that proportionately more of them have been able to escape or avoid poverty. Whereas improvements for single parent families have been strong and widespread, those for single adults of working age have been smaller and were concentrated in provinces experiencing stronger economic growth. These findings suggest that governments prioritized the inclusion of families with dependent children while the inclusion of single working age adults has been largely left to the fortunes of the economy. Raising social assistance for single adults of working age would reduce poverty gap differences, but for headcount poverty differences to fall an even more radical deviation from current policies would be required.

Policy area(s) this research can inform: Children and youth; Families, households and marital status; Government; Income, pensions, spending and wealth; Population and demography

Read the full article

Notten, G., Zohora, F. T., Plante, C., & Laforest, R. (2023). Two Decades of Poverty Reduction Politics in Canada: Better for Single-Parent Families and Single Working-Age Adults? *Canadian Public Policy*, 49(4), 347-361. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2023-006>.