

Poverty Rates Have Fallen from Recession Highs


After spiking during the 2008–09 recession, poverty rates have decreased.

Depending on the measure used, anywhere from 8.8 to 12.6 per cent of people in Canada were poor in 2011. According to the after-tax Low Income Cut-Off, poverty is at its lowest level on record.

See page 5 for more information on poverty measures. Unless otherwise noted, we use the after-tax Low Income Cut-off (LICO-AT) in this report.

Yet when compared to other developed countries, Canada’s poverty rate is high—we’re 24th out of 34 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Poverty makes a country less competitive, its people less healthy, and costs us all, both economically and socially.

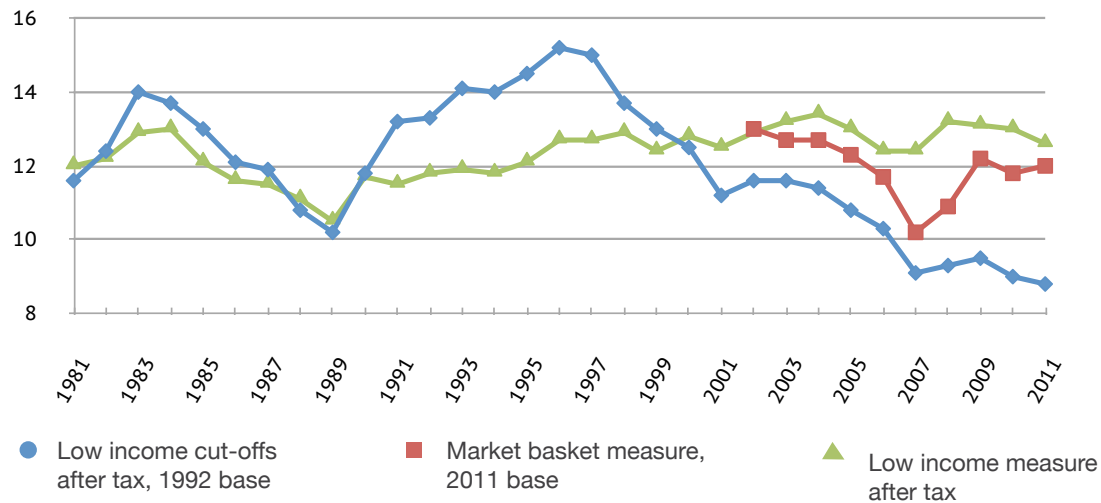
The general poverty rate only tells part of the story. Many of today’s poor have jobs and increasingly are singles between the ages of 18 and 64. What’s more, the poor are very poor, with incomes well below the poverty line.

Is Canada’s poverty rate higher or lower than you thought? How much – if any – poverty should a society tolerate? 

Income security programs for low-income children and seniors have shown that when government makes it a priority, poverty can be reduced. How do we build on that and work towards a goal of zero poverty, where everyone has enough?

Poverty down from recession, but rate of poverty depends upon measure used

Poverty rate by different measures, 1981–2011



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 202-0804 Persons in low income, by economic family type, annual