

Poverty Persists among Unattached Working-Age Adults

Unattached working-age adults continue to be forgotten by society and policy makers. While programs have reduced poverty among children and seniors, income supports for working-age individuals have been cut back.

Notions of “undeserving poor” persist, despite the fact that many unattached working-age adults are unable to work and that there is a shortage of good jobs.

household types (non-elderly families, elderly families, and unattached individuals over 65) but has worsened for single working-age adults.

The number of single, unattached working-age adults living in poverty has doubled since 1981, going from 538,000 people to 1,195,000 in 2011. The number of poor individuals in other family types, on the other hand, has decreased: unattached individuals 65 and over by 44.3 per cent, non-elderly families by 15.5 per cent, and elderly families by 53.3 per cent.

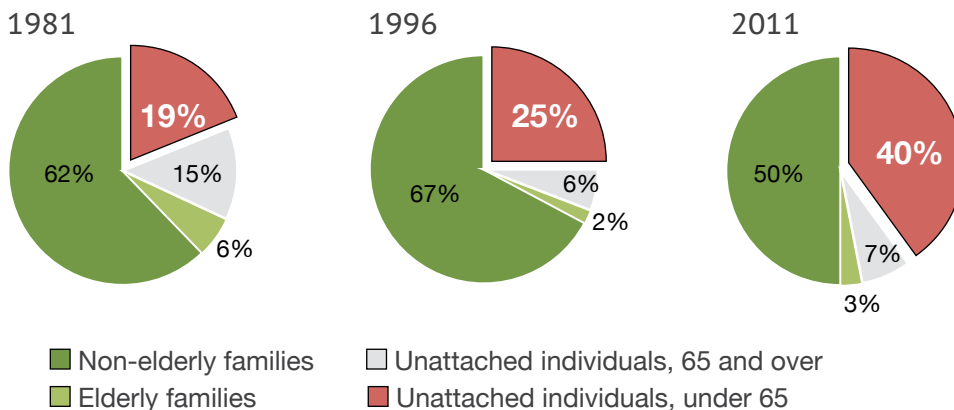
? Why have we ignored the plight of unattached working-age adults? Are some people more/less worthy of dignity and support?

The poverty rate for single working-age adults has stagnated since the 2008–09 recession; between 2010 and 2011 it increased by 3.2 per cent. Forty-seven thousand more working-age singles were poor in 2011 than in 2010.

This is part of a much longer trend: compared to 30 years ago, poverty has fallen for all other main

The poverty gap for unattached working-age individuals is much higher than average; they live on incomes 44 per cent below the poverty line.

Percentage distribution of poor households, 1981–2011



Single working-age adults comprised 40.4 per cent of the poor population in 2011 compared to 19.0 per cent 30 years ago.

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