

Exceptionally high child poverty rates in Black, Indigenous communities indicator of systemic violence in Canada.

TORONTO – Amidst renewed mobilization by black communities for government and civil society to seriously address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in Canada, anti-poverty activists from across the country support their call to address the systemic nature of violence and poverty within their communities. Data released today show exceptionally high rates of poverty across the country in Black, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

For 30 years, Campaign 2000 has been tracking rates of child poverty in Canada. While they are unacceptably high given that the federal government made a promise to eradicate it by the year 2000, the numbers grow exponentially across the country for Black and Indigenous children. Custom Census data tabulation from 2016, the latest data available, was supplied by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It reveals that Status and non-Status First Nations children living on and off reserve experience astoundingly high child poverty rates. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, for instance, 65% of Status First Nation children living on reserve live in poverty. Status First Nations children living off reserve experience child poverty rates of 54% and 50% respectively.

Census 2016 data also shows that in every province across the country, rates of child poverty in Black communities are anywhere from 8 percentage points higher in Saskatchewan (25% child poverty rate for Black children), to 24 percentage points higher in Newfoundland and Labrador (41% child poverty rate for Black children) than the national average of 17%. The provincial child poverty rate for both these provinces sat at 18%.

“This is our legacy of colonialism,” says Leila Sarangi, National Coordinator of Campaign 2000. “Poverty and police violence in Black and Indigenous communities uphold our systems of oppression and white supremacy. We need to address this. We support Black and Indigenous calls for immediate police accountability and significant investments into mental health services, housing, employment, childcare and education for these children.”

“Economic discrimination against Black and Indigenous children threatens the very survival of these communities through robbing them of a future generation which is as healthy, educationally accomplished, and occupationally successful as Canadians in general. This cannot be tolerated,” said Sid Frankel, Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Manitoba.

“Indigenous, Black and racialized children, youth and families have a right to live in safety, dignity and respect,” adds Rachel Gouin, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of Canada. “Redirecting resources to meet the needs of families is not only the right thing to do, it is the most effective way to ensure that every child can fulfill their potential.”

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Campaign 2000 is a pan-Canadian network of over 120 organizations working to end child and family poverty and generously hosted by Family Service Toronto, a multi-service agency providing mental health supports to low-income individuals. Visit www.campaign2000.ca for more information.

Custom disaggregated data on Indigenous child poverty rates has been graciously supplied by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, economic and environmental justice. Visit www.policyalternatives.ca for more information.