

Depth of Poverty

Poverty rates measure the percentage of the population that is poor, but they do not tell us whether people are living in abject poverty or just a few dollars below the poverty line. Depth of poverty statistics provide that added insight.

Hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty have incomes of less than half the poverty line

The majority are poor working-age single people. Their numbers have more than tripled since 1989, from 162,000 to 552,000 in 2003.

The age distribution has shifted from younger to older. In 1989, 28 percent of single people with incomes of less than half the poverty line were 35 to 64 years old. By 2003, their share jumped to 46 percent.

Depth of poverty varies by family type

Two-parent families had the largest depth of poverty, measured in dollars, of any family type in 2003, with incomes on average \$9,900 below the poverty line. Unattached senior women had the smallest depth of poverty, an average of \$3,300 below the poverty line.

Canada's total poverty gap – the amount of money needed to bring all people living in poverty up to the poverty line – was up slightly to \$21.6 billion in 2003. By way of comparison, Canada's gross domestic product in 2003 was \$1.2 trillion.

Number of Families Living in Poverty with Incomes of Less than Half the Poverty Line		
	1989	2003
Two-parent families	19,000	38,000
Couples under 65 without children	15,000	50,000
Single-parent mothers	23,000	52,000
Unattached individuals under 65 ¹	162,000	552,000
Women	88,000	259,000
Men	75,000	293,000

¹ Totals may not sum due to rounding.