



Social Assistance Summaries

Nova Scotia

2017

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About Social Assistance Summaries

What is Social Assistance Summaries?

Social Assistance Summaries uses data provided by provincial and territorial government officials to track the number of social assistance recipients across Canada. It also includes a brief description of the social assistance programs in each jurisdiction.

This resource was established by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy to maintain data previously published in the *Social Assistance Statistical Report* by the federal government. In 2018, Maytree assumed responsibility for updating the series.

Who can claim social assistance?

Eligibility for social assistance is determined on the basis of a needs test. This test takes into account the household's basic needs and its financial resources, which include both assets and income. The needs test assesses whether there is a shortfall between available financial resources and the legislated amounts for basic needs (i.e., food, shelter, clothing, household, and personal needs). Additional amounts may be paid on a discretionary basis for special needs based on each household's circumstances.

Where does the data come from?

Every year provincial and territorial government officials provide us with an update of the social assistance case and recipient numbers. (Some jurisdictions also publish this information online.) They can provide this data as a calendar year average, a fiscal year average or as point-in-time data for March 31.

Data from before 2014 comes from two federal government reports: the *Social Assistance Statistical Report: 2008* and the *Social Assistance Statistical Report: 2009-13*. When the federal data did not reconcile with provincial/territorial figures, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy worked with jurisdictional representatives to present data in the format most often used by their governments.



What is the difference between cases and beneficiaries?

Cases are equivalent to an individual or family: the person who applied for benefits, their partner, and any dependent children count as a single case.

Beneficiaries or recipients refer to the total number of people who benefit from a single social assistance claim, i.e., the individual claimant plus their partner, and any dependent children within their household.

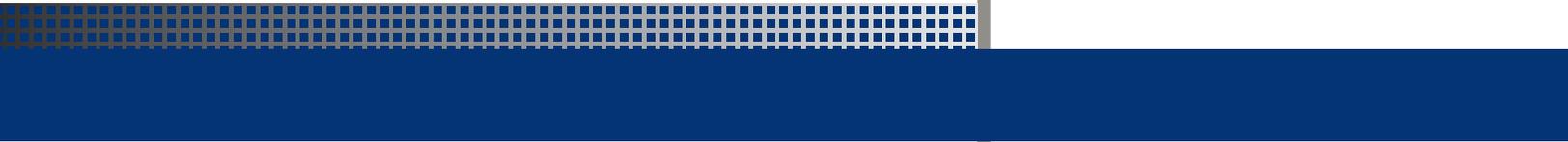
How does each jurisdiction vary in its reporting?

Each jurisdiction uses its own methodology for tracking and reporting social assistance caseloads. For example, some provinces include households that receive a partial benefit or top-up from social assistance while others do not; some include First Nations living on reserve while others do not.

Can I compare the data for different jurisdictions?

Comparisons between jurisdictions can be misleading because each jurisdiction has different eligibility criteria for social assistance and different methods for recording social assistance data. For example, the numbers will be lower for jurisdictions that count only households in receipt of full benefits.

The data is also affected by how federal programs interact with provincial/territorial benefits. For example, a higher take-up of related income security programs such as Employment Insurance typically reduces social assistance caseloads.



Why does the number of claims change from year to year?

There are two main reasons why the social assistance caseloads change from year to year. One reason is a change in the social and economic situation in an area. For example, a rise in unemployment is likely to result in a rise in social assistance claims. The other reason is a change in the way that social assistance programs operate. For example, people are ineligible for social assistance if their savings are above a certain threshold; if a jurisdiction increases this threshold, more people would be eligible and the number of claimants is likely to increase. Similarly, changes to eligibility for federal benefits can also have a knock-on effect on provincial/territorial caseloads.



Nova Scotia's social assistance program

Social assistance is the income program of last resort. It is intended for those who have exhausted all other means of financial support. Every province and territory has its own social assistance program(s) and no two are the same.

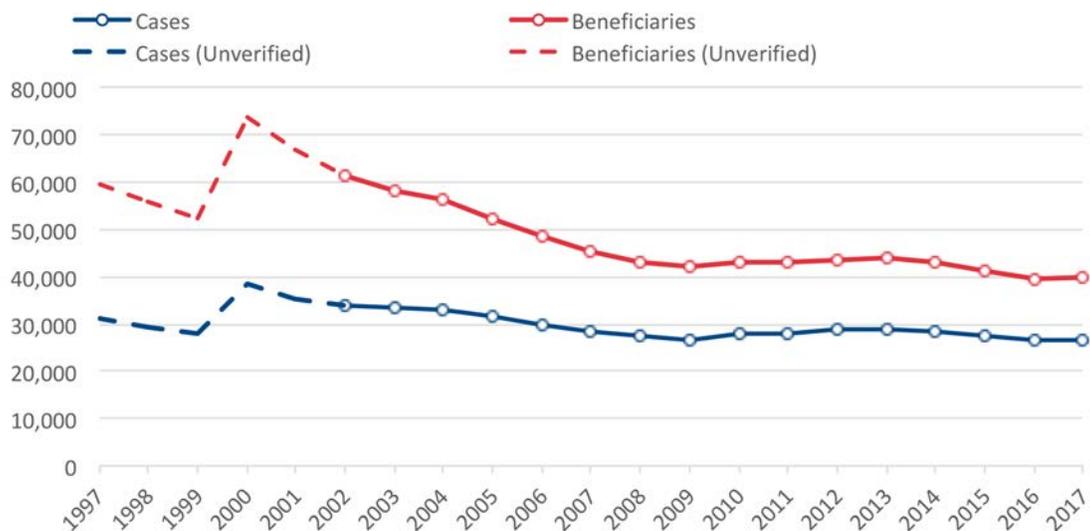
In Nova Scotia, social assistance is called Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), which replaced the Family Benefits Program and Municipal Social Assistance in 2001.

ESIA provides financial assistance and employment supports to help people maximize their self-sufficiency by increasing their employability and independence. Basic assistance through ESIA consists of a personal allowance and a shelter allowance. The personal allowance covers the cost of food, clothing, and miscellaneous essentials for adults in the family. The shelter allowance is intended to cover rent/mortgage, fuel and utilities costs, up to an allowed maximum. This maximum is adjusted to reflect family size and the type of accommodation.

How many people claim social assistance?

There were 26,600 cases (families and single adults) in Nova Scotia's Employment Support and Income Assistance program in March 2017, and 37,700 beneficiaries (individual claimants, their partners, and dependent children). These numbers fell rapidly during the mid-2000s but have remained stable for most of the last decade.

The data for 1997 to 2001 cannot be validated as they may include municipal assistance in addition to provincial family benefits. During this period, it was common for family benefits clients to access special needs benefits from their local municipal social assistance offices.



Year	Employment Support and Income Assistance	
	Cases	Beneficiaries
1997	31,000	59,400
1998	29,300	56,000
1999	28,000	52,400
2000	38,300	73,700
2001	35,300	66,800
2002	33,800	61,500
2003	33,300	58,300
2004	33,000	56,300
2005	31,500	52,300
2006	29,800	48,600
2007	28,500	45,400
2008	27,500	43,200
2009	26,800	42,300
2010	28,000	43,200
2011	28,200	43,100
2012	28,700	43,700
2013	28,700	43,800
2014	28,500	43,100
2015	27,500	41,300
2016	26,700	39,600
2017	26,550	39,700

Data notes

- The data reflects the number of cases and beneficiaries on March 31 of each year, except for 2007, when the data reflects the numbers in January
- Figures for 1997 to 2001 may include municipal assistance caseload and beneficiary figures in addition to provincial family benefits. During this period, it was common for family benefits clients to



access special needs benefits from their local municipal social assistance offices. As a result, caseload figures for these years cannot be validated

- The numbers do not include First Nations living on reserves