

Social Assistance Summaries

Northwest Territories

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.



Northwest Territories' social assistance program

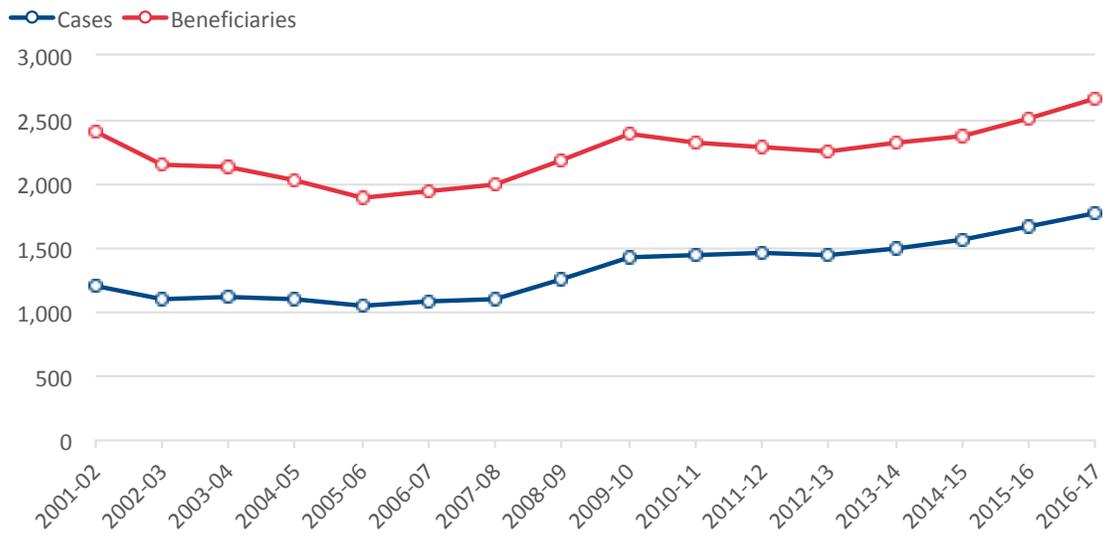
Social assistance is the income program of last resort. It is intended for those who have exhausted all other means of financial support. Every province and territory has its own social assistance program(s) and no two are the same.

In the Northwest Territories, the Income Assistance Program provides financial assistance to residents to help meet basic living needs, such as food, shelter, and utilities. In combination with developmental opportunities, it aims to help recipients become self-reliant as individual capacity allows, to participate fully in community life, and to share in the opportunities available to them.

Alongside financial assistance for basic living needs, recipients may also qualify for enhanced benefits depending on their circumstances (such as clothing, educational assistance, child care, furniture, incidentals, and allowances for seniors and persons with a disability).

How many people claim social assistance?

On average, there were 1,770 cases (families and single adults) in the Northwest Territories' Income Assistance Program in 2017/18, and 2,660 beneficiaries (individual claimants, their partners, and dependent children). Both of these figures are 6 per cent higher than the year before and mark the fourth consecutive year-on-year increase.



Year	Income Assistance	
	Cases	Beneficiaries
2001-02	1,204	2,411
2002-03	1,105	2,142
2003-04	1,118	2,125
2004-05	1,093	2,022
2005-06	1,042	1,888
2006-07	1,079	1,948
2007-08	1,102	1,997
2008-09	1,255	2,188
2009-10	1,432	2,388
2010-11	1,443	2,323
2011-12	1,462	2,279
2012-13	1,453	2,249
2013-14	1,497	2,316
2014-15	1,565	2,371
2015-16	1,673	2,513
2016-17	1,776	2,659

Data notes

- The data reflects the average number of cases and beneficiaries over the fiscal year (April 1 to March 31)
- Fiscal year averages prior to 2001 are not available due to changes in the gathering and reporting of case and beneficiary data
- These income assistance numbers only represent clients served by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment of the Government of Northwest Territories. First Nations on reserve are included in these data

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