

Poverty in canada

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



Introduction

Although Canada is considered as a materially affluent country with impressive performance in industrial and economic growth since past 50 years, it has been unable to forsake poverty as a social problem. In fact as the Canada's social security net has weakened and income inequalities widened, the issue of poverty has worsened in the Canadian society (Shewell, 1998, 45;).

Presently 14 % population of Canada is living under conditions of poverty (Reutter et al., 2006, 1). Various researches and studies in issues of poverty in Canada have shown that poverty is the result of social exclusion and marginalization factors that deprive certain individuals from benefits of mainstreams institutions and mechanism thereby increasing inequality in the society whereby these individuals are no longer able to participate meaningfully in the social process (Williamson and Reutter, 1999, 1).

Canada's economic reconstruction due to globalization and free trade affected its industrial structure and resulted in hundred of thousands of jobs loss that adversely affected the social composition in Canada. The new postindustrial economy that replaced the earlier system failed to create adequate number of opportunities. The jobs in the new system are either highly specialized or low paid that does not compensate the losses of the previous system. With the simultaneous decline the social welfare system in Canada, lack of government support to family allowance programs and doubtful ability of pension plan to support ageing population, the issue of disproportionate income distribution and poverty has emerged as serious matter of concern both from individual and social point of view (Barlow and Campbell, 1995).

<https://assignbuster.com/poverty-in-canada/>

This paper discusses the impact of poverty on individual and society. This paper evaluates effect of poverty on youths, single parents, aboriginals and immigrants in Canada. It will also examine the role played by poverty in creating a system of alienation and denial where people are forced to live a life of deprivation. Scope and effect of poverty

Effect of poverty on individuals

The traditional attitude in Canada towards poverty has been dismissive. People often associated poverty with laziness and more corruption and accepted its deservingness for those affected by it (Shewell, 1998, 51, Reutter et al., 2006, 1). However, the facts show that poverty cannot be generalized or dismissed as a wayward incident in the Canadian society. Rather, it is a disturbing phenomenon that adversely affects many vulnerable sections of the society. According to Shewell (1998, 58), children under age group of 18, single parent mothers, socially excluded persons, and immigrants faces highest rates of poverty in Canada with the rates of poverty being especially high in urban centers.

Poverty profoundly affects the capacity of individuals to survive and negotiate with general conditions of life in a positive and constructive way thus rendering them highly vulnerable from the social perspective. From the broader point of view poverty is the cause of falling health standards, increased rates of illness, heightened percentage of crimes and drug abuse among youths, rising homelessness and loss of ability to participate in the social process. The individual and group effects of poverty are mentioned in the following sections

Youths: Poverty has long term and damaging effect on youths rendering them homeless and pushing them in vicious cycle of bad health, crime, drug abuse and sex crimes, destitution, mental illness and highersuiciderates (Kidd and Davidson, 2006, 44). Youths, especially in urban areas, in the age group from 12-24, are most vulnerable, mostly living in temporary shelters, without any fixed source of income thereby being forced to settle for irregular ways of earning and living. The uncertainty and unhealthy life conditions results in extremely high mortality rate among urban poor youths (Kidd and Davidson, 2006, 45).

One of the most dangerous fallout of poverty and lack of government support structure for youths is increasing youth crime. Increasing income inequality and social divide force poverty stricken youths to submit to illegal activities, mugging, and narcotics trade. Poverty thus creates most compelling conditions that lead youths in crime and corruption. Poverty also create conditions where youths are unable to utilize their capabilities, lack access to education, health facilities and social support structure due to the stigma that is associated with poverty (ibid).

Single parent: Single parent face greatest risk of poverty and the consequent effects are often disastrous for their life (Shewell. 1998, 58). The rate of poverty for single non working parent was 73 % in Canada in mid nineties, much higher than other developed countries like UK, US and Australia (Curtis and Pennock, 7). Poverty poses enormous health risk for health of both mother and child, where inadequate income forces them to abandon health services and insurance plans while creating conditions of perpetual stress and deprivation.

Aboriginals: The aboriginal and native population of Canada lacks the same social benefits and economic advantages that other sections of the country enjoy. Rates of unemployment and poverty are generally very high in the native population that result from absence of government supportive policy, cultural disparity, absence of social development conditions such as education, health facilities, equal employment opportunities all of them causing lack of self-determination and independence among them, creating the conditions of poverty and resource denial (Kendall, 2001, 43).

Immigrants: Immigrants in Canada have traditionally shown high rates of poverty, the exact indices of which vary from region to region. As the most of immigrants in Canada are from third world countries, they face cultural and social problems in assimilating with the Canadian system. Further, as pointed out by Halli and Kazemipur (1997, 12), most of the immigrants arrived in Canada in the 1970s when the government's social support structure was breaking down, and economic opportunities had started to shrink. Due to lack of any outside support and additional sources of income, immigrants became especially vulnerable to hardship and poverty.

The adverse circumstances forced these individuals into ghettos where a culture of poverty was born, alienating these individuals from conditions of healthy and sensitized conditions of living (ibid). In general, poverty reduces the ability of individuals to implement themselves constructively in their personal as well as social life. It leads to the breakup of the family system, causes relational disintegration, and absence of consonance between individual conditions and society's economic progress.

Social Effect of Poverty

<https://assignbuster.com/poverty-in-canada/>

Poverty has far-reaching effects that influence not only individuals but also the whole society and economy in the longer analysis. On the one hand, the society loses its significant number of population who could have been otherwise included in the mainstream economic, educational and health institutions but who are left on periphery in damaging clutches of poverty that reduces their functional capacity to participate in society. On the other side, poverty puts enormous strain on resources where the government is required to support poor with various welfare programs and financial concessions (Shewell, 61). Along with instituting rehabilitation measures for socially excluded people, drug addicts and homeless people.

Poverty weakens the family structure, which is the basis of social stability (Cheal, 1996, 55). Consequently, it creates a culture of economic hardship, deprivation and emotional stress that enervates society to function as an integrated whole. Dissatisfaction, inequality, isolation, conflict, discrimination, marginalization, exclusion and rejection are some of the vices of poverty that threaten Canadian society. The greatest danger associated with poverty is that it has the tendency to self-perpetuate and expand its domination and is feared that if left unchecked it can cause significant socio-economic damage to Canada by creating rift within social order.

Conclusion

Poverty is a stigma and a bane that needs conscious effort by government, civil society and individuals to combat and obliterate. As stated by Tanner (2003, 125), education, employment and avoidance of untimely pregnancy are three of the surest measures to break the cycle of poverty and create conditions of equitable living conditions. As unemployment is one of the chief

factors causing poverty, it's the responsibility of government to introduce policies that increase employment opportunities.

However, it's also the responsibility of civil society and individuals to take conscious effort in defeating poverty by understanding that poor are more in need of psychological support and acceptance than financial grant. This can be achieved by encouraging them to participate, creating conditions for their collaboration in social building process. It should also be ensured that political, economical and social institutions are oriented in specific ways to provide poor with opportunities to return back to mainstream society, integrate with it and cooperate with others to create a system free of poverty.

Reference

Barlow, M. and Campbell, B. (1995) *Straight Through the Heart: How the Liberals Abandoned the Just Society*, Toronto: Harper Collins

Curtis, L. J and Pennock. 2006. M. Social Assistance, Lone Parents and Health: What Do We Know, Where Do We go. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Ottawa. Vol. 97.

Cheal, D. 1996. *New Poverty: Families in Postmodern Society*: Praeger Publishers. Westport, CT.

Halli, S. S, and Kazemipur, A. 1997. Plight of Immigrants: The Spatial Concentration of Poverty in Canada *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*. Volume: 20. Issue: 1-2. Page Number: 11-28

Kendall, J. 2001. Circles of Disadvantage: Aboriginal Poverty and Underdevelopment in Canada. *American Review of Canadian Studies*.

Kidd, S. A, 2006. Davidson, L. 2006. Youth Homelessness: A Call for Partnerships between Research and Policy. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. Ottawa: Vol. 97, Iss. 6, p. 445-447 (3 pp.)

Love R. Makwarimba E. McMurray S. Raphael D. Reutter L. I. Stewart M. J, Veenstra G. 2006. ' Public Attributions for Poverty in Canada'. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. Volume: 43. Issue: 1

Mitchell, A. and R. Shillington. 2002. Poverty, Inequality, and Social Inclusion. Working Paper Series: Perspectives on Social Inclusion. Toronto: The Laidlaw Foundation

Shewell, H. 1988. Poverty: A Persistent Global Reality. (edit) John Dixon, David Macarov. Routledge. London.

Tanner, M. D. 2003. The Poverty of Welfare: Helping Others in Civil Society. Washington, DC.

Williamson, D. and L. Reutter. 1999. " Defining and measuring poverty: Implications for the health of Canadians." *Health Promotion International*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 355-64.