

Poverty Reduction Strategy

2023 Annual Report

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Minister's message

Our government is working to lift people out of poverty and set them on a path to meaningful careers and financial independence. We are providing training opportunities to workers to fill jobs in critical, growing sectors, and investing in programs that will connect individuals and communities to economic opportunity.

Despite Ontario's significant population growth in 2023, and the establishment of thousands of new businesses in our province, many Ontarians continued to face economic challenges. High rates of inflation, rising interest rates and global uncertainty have particularly impacted people with low incomes.

In response to these challenges, our government continues to make life more affordable and create more employment opportunities.

We know that the best way to lift people up and set them on a path of economic independence is through good, well-paying jobs. That's why our government is investing in innovative programs and initiatives to help people find in-demand jobs in their communities.

We continue to invest in the Skills Development Fund. The 2023 Budget invested \$224 million in projects to help build and upgrade training facilities for emerging and in-demand jobs in critical sectors of Ontario's economy and sectors experiencing labour market challenges.

The Better Jobs Ontario program continues to provide skills training and financial support to help people re-enter the workforce quickly and find well-paying and meaningful careers.

Our government also expanded the Investing in Women's Futures program, which provides wrap-around supports and skills training to women experiencing social and economic barriers to independence and financial security.

We are also preparing Ontario's young people to start their careers in the jobs of the future. Our government expanded its skilled trades career fairs



for students in grades 7 to 12, giving more students the opportunity to hear about career opportunities in the skilled trades directly from local employers. New courses will equip students with skills in coding and emerging technology. We also supported virtual learning for students in kindergarten to Grade 12 in remote Indigenous communities, providing experiences in STEM, arts, language and career journeys not available locally.

In April, we launched the Ready, Set, Go program. This is a \$170-million investment over three years that will help set youth up for success as they leave the child welfare system. The program will help them gain the skills and supports needed to pursue postsecondary education, skilled trades training and job opportunities.

Recognizing that many people face personal barriers to employment, we are improving supports for Ontario Works recipients by building capacity for intensive case management. Our focus is helping people find well-paying jobs and continue to work. We are continuing to integrate social assistance employment services into Employment Ontario to make it easier for people to access the supports and

services they need to secure long-term employment.

We also recognize the importance of helping people with disabilities on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) get the support they need when they need it. This includes employment supports for those who are able to work.

In July, we increased payments by 6.5% for the ODSP and the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program, in line with inflation. This latest increase was in addition to the 5% increase we made in September 2022, bringing the total increase to almost 12% in less than 12 months. These payments continue to be tied to inflation, helping recipients better keep pace with the cost of living.

To help Ontarians keep up with rising costs, we raised the general minimum wage to \$16.55 per hour, making it one of the highest minimum wages in the country.

This past year we also made significant investments to keep costs down for people, including providing funding for housing supports, helping low-income Ontarians find affordable housing and launching a new overnight electricity

price plan to reduce energy costs for low-income households.

While the measures implemented this past year are making a difference in the lives of people across our province, we know that there is more work to do to improve economic opportunity for all.

None of this important work would be possible without the support of Indigenous partners, community

organizations and all levels of government. Together, we are building a better Ontario that lifts people up and leaves no one behind.



Michael Parsa
Minister of Children, Community and
Social Services

Introduction

Through our provincial strategy, **Building a Strong Foundation for Success: Reducing Poverty in Ontario (2020–2025)**, we continue to make progress towards building an Ontario where everyone can participate more fully in their communities, achieve greater independence, and, wherever possible, long-term employment success to support themselves and their families. Through our ongoing collaboration with community groups, Indigenous communities, the private sector and other levels of government, Ontario has continued to build pathways to jobs and financial stability for people at risk of and experiencing poverty.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy highlights the importance of meaningful employment and financial stability, setting a five-year target to increase the number of individuals moving from social assistance into employment in each year. In 2023, over 28,000 households left social assistance as a result of employment, maintaining the gradual upward trend observed since 2021 as Ontario continues to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023, the Ontario government continued to take action to achieve the

goals of the province's Poverty Reduction Strategy in the context of heightened economic and geopolitical uncertainties, inflationary pressures, interest rate increases and a slowing global economy. To combat the rising cost of living and ongoing challenges for people at risk of and experiencing poverty, the province has expanded training opportunities that connect people to in-demand jobs and invested in programs and systems to help individuals succeed, while keeping costs down and making life more affordable for all Ontarians.

2023 context in Ontario

Ontario has taken significant steps in 2023 to help people move into meaningful employment, connect individuals to the services they need and make life more affordable. Initiatives such as Better Jobs Ontario and the Skills Development Fund will continue to improve employment opportunities for individuals and help Ontario employers meet their labour market needs. The province is also investing in and transforming programs that provide extra supports to priority populations to help them succeed, including through the launch of the Ready, Set, Go program to better support youth exiting the child welfare system. In addition to Ontario's legislated annual minimum wage increase in October 2023, major investments will also make everyday costs more affordable through the construction of new homes, creation of new affordable child care spaces and increased income eligibility thresholds and program offerings for energy efficiency programs to help lower bills. Through these initiatives and others outlined in this report, the province continues to keep costs down for all Ontarians and prioritize long-term employment success for individuals and families.

Progress on Poverty Reduction Strategy pillars

The government is making progress on the four pillars outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy while supporting policies and programs that help achieve better outcomes for youth, women, Black and other racialized communities and Indigenous peoples.

Pillar one: encouraging job creation and connecting people to employment

The government is supporting the creation of new jobs and connecting people to meaningful employment within in-demand sectors, meeting the needs of local job markets. These initiatives will remove employment barriers for Ontarians and provide targeted supports for priority groups while enhancing employment and skilled trades opportunities.

Integrated Employment Services

Ontario has continued to transform employment services to be more efficient and streamlined, which is improving outcomes for all job seekers.

The new integrated approach to employment services leverages a locally responsive, outcome-based model that meets diverse client needs, helps more people find and keep quality jobs and decreases reliance on social assistance. Implementation of the new model began in 2021 and will continue over five years.

In 2023, Ontario expanded the model to nine new regions to help more people who can work find better jobs. The final three catchment areas of Toronto, Northwestern Ontario and Northeastern Ontario are expected to implement the new model in 2024, with integrated delivery beginning in 2025, resulting in province-wide streamlined and outcomes-oriented employment services.

¹ The following employment and training programs mentioned in this report are supported through labour market transfer agreements between the Government of Canada and the Government of

The province is continuously improving the new model to ensure it is achieving intended outcomes, including effectively supporting the needs of social assistance clients across the province.

Enhancing skills for better employment outcomes

The province is helping Ontarians get the training, skills and credentials they need to find well-paying careers.

Better Jobs Ontario¹ provided training opportunities and supports for over 3,000 Ontarians in 2023. This program helps unemployed individuals who have been laid off or individuals from low-income households with challenges attaching to the labour market. Better Jobs Ontario covers up to \$28,000 for tuition and other costs of short-duration training programs to allow job seekers to develop the skills to re-join the workforce quickly. Participants can also receive up to \$500 per week in financial support for basic living expenses.

Ontario: Better Jobs Ontario, Employment Services Transformation, Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services, Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program, and Skills Development Fund Training Stream

In 2023, Ontario invested an additional \$160 million in training through the **Skills Development Fund Training Stream** to help more than 100,000 workers get free training to meet the needs of employers hiring in their communities. This funding prioritized innovative training solutions that can help Ontarians find meaningful employment in critical industries such as the skilled trades, health care, auto manufacturing, construction, information technology and hospitality. Through the Skills Development Fund, Ontario is investing over \$860 million to support over half a million people land better jobs with bigger paycheques.

In October 2023, Ontario announced a \$7.3 million investment through the Skills Development Fund to support 1,700 people across Northern Ontario prepare for careers in critical sectors, including mining, logging, construction, healthcare, and tourism.

In May 2023, Ontario announced \$4.7 million to support full-time jobs in the automotive manufacturing sector, including the emerging electric vehicle field.

In August 2023, Ontario announced \$3.6 million to help over 2,200 women and young people prepare for careers in the construction trades.

In June 2023, the province launched the **Skills Development Fund Capital Stream**, investing \$224 million to build new training centres or upgrade existing facilities. This will further support innovative training projects focused on building and modernizing the infrastructure Ontario needs to train workers to fill in-demand jobs.

Preparing Ontarians to work in the skilled trades

Ontario continues to make investments to help people move into well-paying and in-demand careers in the skilled trades.

In December 2023, the government announced investments of over \$62.9 million in 2022–23 in two of the province's foundational skilled trades programs to benefit more than 18,000 young people. This includes new funding for:

- The **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program**, a specialized high school program that provides students the opportunity to gain experience in the skilled trades while earning credits towards their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
- The **Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program** to launch roughly 100 pre-apprenticeship training projects around the province. This program gives young people first-hand experience in the trades and get the training they need to be job-ready at no cost to them. Training projects focus on areas experiencing a skills shortage or in high demand. They seek to empower workers and job seekers who are typically underrepresented in the skilled trades.

The province also funded targeted training projects to respond to local needs and critical sectors, including:

\$2.7 million to train 65 electrical workers in eastern Ontario

\$2.5 million to support four training projects for 385 at-risk jobseekers and 2,300 students in London

\$2.6 million to help newcomers prepare for careers in manufacturing, finance, administration, communications, and the arts, in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton

\$2.9 million to help 250 youth in the Niagara region train for careers in manufacturing, technology, hospitality and other critical sectors

These projects will help people get stable, better paying jobs to support themselves and their families.

Employment supports for priority groups

Historically marginalized groups face additional barriers to entering the workforce and finding meaningful employment. Targeted supports can help people from diverse backgrounds achieve their full potential and secure stable jobs while building Ontario's economy.

Ontario continues to support Black Ontarians by making it easier to develop in-demand skills and employment opportunities through the **Black Youth Action Plan**. Since 2020–21, Ontario has allotted

\$91 million through the Black Youth Action Plan over four years. This includes \$31 million in 2023 alone to sustain and expand the existing program. This investment also supports the new Black Youth Action Plan economic empowerment program, implemented in 2022, which helps Black youth launch and advance their careers while helping Black business leaders advance Black-led solutions to address challenges in the economy.

Starting in 2023, Ontario is investing an additional \$15 million over three years in the **Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs (RAISE) program** to help over 1,200 Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs start or grow their business. The program is designed to remove economic barriers by providing funding, training and culturally relevant services to entrepreneurs. Successful applicants receive a \$10,000 grant to facilitate innovation and growth, as well as training and coaching for sustainable economic development. The pilot program supported more than 400 Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs from 2021 to 2023. Over the next three years,

more than 1,400 entrepreneurs are expected to be supported through the program.

In 2023, Ontario continued to help more women receive the training and employment supports needed to find and maintain stable jobs. In 2022–23, as part of a \$6.9 million investment over three years, the province enhanced programs and services at existing **Investing in Women's Futures** service delivery locations and expanded to 10 new sites. This brings the total number of service delivery locations to 33, providing greater access for more women across Ontario to a range of services and employment supports that aim to increase well-being, build skills and secure employment.

In 2022–23, the **Investing in Women's Futures** program served more than 6,900 women, provided more than 2,400 women with employment counselling or peer support and helped more than 1,300 women across the province secure employment, start their own businesses or pursue further training and/or education.

In December 2023, the Ontario government launched a call for applications to invest \$5.5 million in the **Women's Economic Security Program** to expand and increase training opportunities for low-income women. The funding will help equip women with the skills, knowledge and experience to find a job or start a business and increase their financial security in high-demand sectors. This program provides employment, pre-employment, pre-apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training to low-income women.

In December 2023, legislation prohibiting regulated professions from requiring Canadian work experience in licensing came into effect

Supporting employment in the health care sector

Through **Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care**, Ontario is expanding the province's health care workforce and helping people get the training they need to fill in-demand jobs. This includes a wide range of investments to provide

opportunities across the sector, ranging from personal support workers, nurses and paramedics to medical laboratory technologists and doctors. For example:

- Ontario is investing more than \$300 million over three years beginning in 2023 to help thousands of people **launch careers as personal support workers** in long-term care homes and in the home and community care sector. The funding provides new incentives of up to \$25,400 to students and recent graduates of personal support worker education programs.

Ontario is investing nearly \$11 million over three years to expand Living Classrooms, a program that helps students train to become PSWs on-site in local long-term care homes. The program will double the number of living classrooms to 40.

- Since January 2022, more than 4,000 internationally educated nurses have been enrolled through the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program and over 3,200 of them are already fully registered, helping

them find work and apply their skills in Ontario.

The province is also investing in programs to upskill existing health care workers so that they can get higher skilled jobs.

- Ontario is investing \$16.5 million over three years, beginning in 2023, to train up to 600 new personal support workers through the **Learn and Earn Accelerated Program for Personal Support Workers in Long-Term Care**, which

accelerates the training of existing long-term care staff to become personal support workers.

The province has invested over \$62 million in the **Bridging Educational Grant in Nursing** initiative since its launch in 2021–22 to provide tuition and wraparound supports that help personal support workers become registered practical nurses and help registered practical nurses become registered nurses.

Pillar two: connecting people with the right supports and services

Ontario is funding more initiatives to ensure all individuals and families can be connected to the supports and services they need at the right time. These initiatives will improve long-term outcomes for Ontarians, including priority populations, by helping more individuals receive the help they need and, when possible, enter and stay on the path towards financial stability through subsidized training opportunities and stable employment.

Social Assistance

Ontario continues to build a more responsive, efficient and person-centred social assistance system that meets clients' needs and gets people back to work.

The province and municipal partners are making progress with changes to the system that will benefit residents of Ontario. For example, work is already underway to streamline the intake process for Ontario Works applications. Once fully implemented, this initiative will reduce administrative burden, leaving more time for caseworkers

to support clients in their employment and financial independence journey.

Improving housing stability

The province has been funding several initiatives to make life more affordable for Ontarians by investing in housing supports, stabilizing the housing sector and helping people with low incomes find affordable housing. Initiatives that advance this objective include:

- \$96.8 million in fiscal year 2022–23 through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)

to provide direct, income-tested portable housing benefits for eligible households. A further \$148.6 million in federal–provincial funding has been made available under COHB in 2023–24, which will continue providing benefits to eligible households. Ontario also invested an additional \$42 million in standalone provincial funding over and above its cost matching requirements to provide urgent assistance to approximately 4,000 asylum seekers and other at-risk populations.

- \$202 million annually in additional funding to support Ontario's homelessness prevention programs. This includes a 40% increase in annual funding for the **Homelessness Prevention Program** to a total of \$654 million per year. Additional investments help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness find the right housing services and other supports, moving them towards financial independence.

Supports and services for victims and survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking

Ontario is improving the safety of women and children by supporting programs to prevent gender-based violence and human trafficking. Investments will help women and children feel safe and promote financial independence and economic security, which will help people rebuild their lives.

In December 2023, the Ontario government announced the first of four-years of targeted funding to address gender-based violence in the province. The Ontario government announced an additional investment of \$18.7 million in 2023–24 to help prevent and address violence against women and girls. This funding builds on the province's existing investments of \$1.4 billion over the next four years to end gender-based violence and address the root causes, while also supporting the healing and longer-term needs of survivors, their children and families.

In 2023, Ontario continued to support survivors of gender-based violence

with additional investments of up to \$6.5 million – including \$3.6 million for rural and remote communities – to support women and children who have experienced violence and are survivors of human trafficking to access the supports and services they need to stay safe and rebuild their lives. This funding will also help children and youth get the early intervention supports they need to heal from harmful effects of experiencing and witnessing violence.

Ontario has started community engagement on the creation of a Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) Unit prototype in Kenora District in 2024 to protect children and youth being or at risk of being sex trafficked. Ontario's first Two CARE Units are currently being prototyped in the City of Toronto and Durham Region. In 2023, the two CARE Units in Toronto and Durham supported more than 200 children and youth.

Improving long-term outcomes for youth currently in and leaving the child welfare system

Ontario is improving supports for youth currently in and leaving the child welfare system, enhancing access to education and stable employment opportunities. On April 1, 2023, the new youth leaving care policy and **Ready, Set, Go program** were launched, investing \$170 million over three years to connect eligible youth in the child welfare system with the services and supports they need to succeed.

This program will help youth currently in and transitioning out of care achieve financial independence through life skills development, supports to pursue post secondary education, skilled trades training and employment opportunities. Monthly financial support for youth ages 18–22 in care will also increase to provide better quality of life and safer housing opportunities so youth can focus on their studies or working.

Improving access to identity documents

The Ontario government has permanently eliminated the \$35 fee for birth certificates for approximately 40,000 vulnerable Ontarians. The Birth Certificate Fee Waiver Program will ensure not-for-profit partner organizations can assist Ontarians who may be experiencing homelessness or other severe financial hardships to obtain a birth certificate free of charge. An Ontario birth certificate is a foundational identity document, but individuals who are experiencing homelessness may face major impediments obtaining or replacing a lost copy. Through this program, the government is removing barriers to accessing essential public services such as housing, health care, food and social assistance that may require a birth certificate as proof of identity.

Supporting student learning and development with nutritious meals

In 2023, Ontario invested an additional \$6.1 million in the **Student Nutrition Program** and the

First Nations Student Nutrition Program

which provide more than 600,000 school-aged children and youth with healthy meals and snacks daily throughout the school year to ensure they are well-nourished and ready to learn. The investment brings the total provincial funding for 2023 to over \$38 million and helps the program continue to deliver almost 90 million nutritious meals and snacks to students each year.

Improving health outcomes for Ontarians

Ontario continues to invest in initiatives to enhance the province's health care system for all Ontarians, including those experiencing or at risk of poverty. These investments will increase people's access to quality care in their local communities and help people live full lives and continue to succeed.

Building on the historic investment of \$3.8 billion over 10 years for mental health and addiction services as part of the **Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System Strategy**, Ontario is investing an additional \$425 million over three years, starting in 2023-24,

including a 5% increase in base funding for community mental health and addictions service providers. This investment will support a broad range of mental health and addictions services available across Ontario, making it more convenient for people to access services when needed.

To ensure more Ontarians get the care they need at home and in their communities, Ontario approved four new **Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)** in 2023–24. Ontario now has a total of 58 OHTs, including 11 in Northern Ontario, and has achieved its goal of full provincial coverage, ensuring every person in Ontario has the support of an OHT. OHTs deliver care in all communities and are working to improve transactions between health care providers and ensure that a patient's medical record follows them wherever they go for care.

On October 4, 2023, Ontario announced an investment of more than \$128 million over three years, starting April 1, 2024, to support all OHTs to better coordinate people's care. An initial group of 12 OHTs, three of which are in Northern Ontario, have been chosen to accelerate their maturity, including the delivery home

care in their local communities starting in 2025.

High Priority Communities Strategy

The High Priority Communities Strategy was initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and was designed to close gaps in health outcomes for communities that were falling further behind.

The strategy invested \$25 million in 2022–23 to support community partners and lead agencies, including local health and social service providers, in high priority communities.

High Priority Communities Strategy partners are now collaborating with Ontario Health Teams and are focused on goals based on community need, including increasing access to barrier-free cancer and chronic disease preventative screening, access to mental health and addictions support and access to primary care.

Pillar three: making life more affordable and building financial resiliency

All Ontarians, including working Ontarians, are impacted by rising costs. The province is investing in initiatives that keep costs down and make life more affordable for individuals of all ages, including those who are experiencing or at risk of poverty.

Improvements to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program (ACSD)

The province continues to make significant investments that bring relief to the rising costs of living for people with disabilities who receive social assistance. In July 2023, rates for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program (ACSD) increased by 6.5% to match annual inflation rates, bringing the total increase to almost 12% since September 2022. Going forward, rates will continue

to be tied to inflation. In addition, as of February 2023, people with disabilities can now earn up to \$1,000 a month (up from \$200 a month) through employment without any impacts to their ODSP monthly payments.

Increasing minimum wage

As of October 1, 2023, the general minimum wage in Ontario increased from \$15.50 to \$16.55 per hour, helping more than 900,000 workers across the province earn more take-home pay for themselves and their families.

This 6.8% increase means up to \$2,200 more in workers' pockets every year and brings Ontario to one

of the highest minimum wages in the country.

Ontario's minimum wage rates are governed by the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (ESA) and increases are tied to the Consumer Price Index. Since 2020, under the ESA, minimum wage increases come into effect on October 1 of each year, and rate increases must be published on or before April 1 of the same year.

Expansion of affordable child care spaces

Ontario and Canada have signed a \$13.2 billion agreement that will lower fees for families and deliver an average of \$10 a day child care for eligible children under age six by the end of 2025–26.

Through the agreement, the province is making progress in creating 86,000 new, high-quality, affordable child care spaces by the end of 2026.

Since December 31, 2022, parent fees for child care programs enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning & Child

Care system have been reduced to an average of 50% of 2020 fees, saving families an average of \$6,000 to \$10,000 per child annually.

In November 2023, Ontario launched a multipronged Child Care Workforce Strategy to recruit and retain qualified staff, including increased wages for registered early childhood educators, to support the growing child care system and increase access to child care for families.

Cap on rent increases

The Ontario government is continuing to strengthen protections for tenants by holding the rent increase guideline for 2024 at 2.5%, well below the average inflation rate of 5.9%. The rent increase guideline is the maximum amount a landlord can increase rent during the year for most tenants without the approval of the Landlord and Tenant Board². This will help protect tenants

² New buildings and additions to existing buildings that are occupied for the first time for residential purposes after

November 15, 2018, are exempt from the guideline.

from rising interest rates that would result in higher rent.

Tax credits for workers and families

Ontario's suite of tax credit and benefits for workers and families in 2022–23 included:

- **Low-Income Workers Tax Credit** (known as the Low-income Individuals and Families (LIFT) Tax Credit): A non-refundable tax credit of up to \$875 that can be used to reduce or eliminate individuals' Ontario personal income tax.
- **Ontario Child Care Tax Credit** (known as Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses (CARE) Tax Credit): A tax credit that provides families flexibility to choose the child care options that work best for them. Eligible families can claim up to 75% of eligible expenses for services such as child care centres, homes, and camps.
- The **Ontario Trillium Benefit**: This combines the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Northern

Ontario Energy Credit and the Ontario Sales Tax Credit to help low- to moderate-income Ontario residents pay for energy costs, sales and property tax.

- **Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit**: A tax-free payment to help low- to moderate-income Ontario residents with the cost of sales tax on energy and with property taxes. The maximum benefit is \$1,121 for non-seniors and \$1,277 for seniors.³
- **Northern Ontario Energy Credit**: A tax-free payment to help low- to moderate-income Northern Ontario residents with the higher home energy costs in Northern Ontario. Single individuals with no children can receive a maximum of \$162 and families (including single parents) up to \$249.
- **Ontario Sales Tax Credit**: A tax-free payment to help low- to moderate-income Ontarians with the sales tax they pay. The maximum benefit is \$334⁴ per adult and per child under 19 years of age in a family.

³ Note: these are 2022–23 figures. Updated figures for 2023–24 are available online.

⁴ Note: these are 2022–23 figures. Updated figures for 2023–24 are available online.

To further support workers and families, the Financial Empowerment Champion pilot project provides low-income Ontarians in six communities with assistance accessing financial counselling services, applying for income benefits and filing their taxes across Ontario. In 2023, it is expected that approximately 22,000 low-income Ontarians, including social assistance clients, received help accessing the benefits and tax credits they are eligible for.

Cutting the gas and fuel tax rates

On July 1, 2022, Ontario lowered the gasoline tax rate by 5.7 cents per litre and the fuel tax rate by 5.3 cents per litre. The Ontario government extended these rate cuts so that the rate on gasoline and fuel (diesel) will remain at 9 cents per litre until June 30, 2024.

This will save households \$260 on average over two years since 2022.

Financial support for low-income seniors

For 12 months starting January 2023, Ontario temporarily doubled the **Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS)** payment for all recipients. This provided about 200,000 of the province's lowest income seniors with additional support by increasing the maximum payment to \$166 per month for single seniors and \$332 per month for couples, an increase of almost \$1,000 per person in 2023. The program will be expanded in July 2024, providing more seniors with the financial help they need. Approximately 100,000 more seniors will be eligible for the program, a 50% increase in recipients. At the same time, the GAINS benefit will be adjusted annually to inflation.

In addition, there are a number of tax credits and benefits targeted at reducing the cost of living for seniors, including the **Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant**, the **Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit** and the **Ontario Seniors Public Transit Tax Credit**.

Financial support for low-income Veterans

Ontario continues to support Veterans and their families through the **Soldiers' Aid Commission**.

The Soldiers' Aid Commission can provide up to \$2,000 in funding for eligible items, such as securing and maintaining housing, and employment-related supports to remove barriers to employment or improve employability.

In fall 2023, the ministry worked with the Soldiers' Aid Commission to increase awareness of benefits available through the commission for eligible Veterans and their immediate family members. This campaign included sending digital and physical postcards promoting the Soldiers' Aid Commission to all social assistance recipient households in Ontario. In addition, a new Veteran webpage, **[Ontario.ca/veterans](https://ontario.ca/veterans)** was established. Extensive outreach was done across the province including visits to Royal Canadian Legion branches across Ontario to promote awareness and understanding of the program.

Energy cost savings

In January 2023, Ontario increased the income eligibility thresholds for the Save on Energy's Energy Affordability Program (EAP), which is coordinated with the Enbridge Home Winterproofing program, allowing more families to benefit from free energy efficiency measures. In December 2023 the EAP launched a free cold climate heat pump offer to help qualifying electrically heated homes lower their energy costs.

Ontario increased the income eligibility thresholds for the **Ontario Electricity Support Program** to assist more low-income electricity customers who may be spending a disproportionate share of their income on electricity costs. The thresholds for the program were raised by up to 35% to provide thousands of additional families access to the program's on-bill credits and help make electricity more affordable.

Through these changes the province is providing immediate bill relief to electricity consumers in Ontario and ensuring support is available to low-income households when they need it.

The updated income thresholds came into effect on March 1, 2024.

Pillar four: accelerating action and driving progress

The government is collaborating with communities and sector partners to support economic recovery and give all Ontarians a chance to succeed by improving service connectivity and accessibility. A connected Ontario will help more individuals access the training and education they need to enter new jobs.

Broadband

Ontario has finalized agreements totalling more than \$2.4 billion for nearly 200 high-speed internet and cellular projects that will bring access to more than 500,000 homes and businesses across the province. The government is investing \$4 billion to ensure every community across the province has access to high-speed internet by the end of 2025. Multiple broadband programs and initiatives are being used to meet this goal, including:

- An innovative competitive bidding process, now complete, that quickly and cost-effectively identified service providers for

unserved and underserved areas in Ontario

- Investing more than \$63 million in the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology project
- Investing \$71 million in the Eastern Ontario Regional Network to improve access to cellular service
- Improving connectivity in Northern Ontario, including \$12.1 million to bring improved internet access through seven projects in Northern Ontario
- Laptop and Loaner Program that provides laptop and internet access to marginalized learners.

Achieving Indigenous prosperity and well-being

The Ontario government continues to work with Indigenous communities and organizations to implement initiatives to address inequities and systemic barriers that put Indigenous peoples at greater risk of poverty. Initiatives currently underway that are increasing Indigenous access to training and education opportunities, expanding safe and affordable housing, addressing gender-based violence and increasing energy affordability.

The government has announced multiple investments to improve access to training and education opportunities for Indigenous communities. One example is a \$1.5 million investment in three training programs that attract young workers in northwestern Ontario to the skilled trades, including an expansion to Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services providing state-of-the-art training to job seekers in Matawa First Nations communities.

An investment of \$250,000 was also made through the Building Indigenous Women's Leadership Program to support initiatives developed by Indigenous women to provide training and mentorship opportunities for Indigenous women to fully participate in leadership roles in their communities. In addition, Ontario continues to support access to training through \$7 million in annual funding for the **Indigenous Economic Development Fund**.

Ontario is investing \$34.8 million over four years (2021–22 to 2024–25) to increase enrolment in nursing and personal support worker programs at six Indigenous Institutes. The funding will provide culturally responsive education and training pathways for learners to prepare for careers as registered nurses, registered

practical nurses or personal support workers (PSWs). The investment is helping participating Indigenous Institutes to expand existing programs or create new ones to support the training of approximately 340 practical nurses, 60 registered nurses and 400 PSWs over the four-year timeframe.

In addition to training opportunities, the government is improving access to education by investing \$18.2 million annually in the Indigenous Student Success Fund to colleges and universities to support the provision of programs and services for Indigenous learners. It provides a stable source of funding within the institutions for vital Indigenous student supports and Indigenous services offices. Programs and services funded include Indigenous counsellors, postsecondary education experience camps, Elders-in-residence, academic supports, transition programs, partnership development and student and community outreach activities.

Access to safe and affordable housing is crucial for individuals experiencing and at risk of poverty. Of the province's \$202 million in additional annual investments under the provincial homelessness prevention program, \$11.5 million is being invested in the **Indigenous Supportive Housing Program**, bringing total annual funding under the program to \$41.5 million. This program provides Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate, long-term housing solutions and support services to Indigenous people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

An example of a project funded through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program is the Junot Avenue Indigenous Youth Transition House Project. This initiative will create 58 transitional housing units for youth in a new three-storey building in Thunder Bay to be managed by the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre and the Métis Nation of Ontario. Participants will be supported with 24-hour youth workers and full-time case managers. Services will include enhancement of community and relationship building, life skills development, employment and education.

Ontario continues to work with First Nations delivery partners on delivery of Social Assistance programs. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients who reside in Mamaweswen, The North Shore Tribal Council and M'Chigeeng First Nation

communities now have their ODSP cases administered by their First Nation. First Nations delivery partners issue income support payments, conduct case management activities, provide eligible benefits and connection to community supports and services, and supports access to employment services. First Nations delivery of ODSP in these communities will expand the availability of culturally appropriate, community-based social assistance supports for ODSP clients within their home First Nations communities. It will also support more seamless connections with other community-based supports, such as housing and wellness supports.

Ontario continues to support efforts made to address gender-based violence in Indigenous Communities. This includes investing \$2.3 million in the **Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin** (an Ojibway phrase translating to “I Am a Kind Man”) program, a community action initiative to address violence in Indigenous communities and foster overall community wellness. The program engages Indigenous men and youth to end violence against Indigenous women and girls by increasing men's understanding of traditional roles and responsibilities in ending violence, promoting resiliency and resolving trauma.

In addition to the Energy Affordability Program and broader savings on energy electricity conservation and demand management programs, Ontario is helping Indigenous communities keep more money in their pockets. The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) offers customized electricity efficiency programs to on-reserve First Nations communities. The IESO continues to operate the Remote First Nations Program in the remote First Nations communities that have been or will soon be connected to the IESO-controlled electricity grid. Additionally, in summer 2022, the IESO launched the First Nations Community Building Retrofit Program, which provides up to \$100,000 per community to support energy efficiency projects in Band-owned facilities.

Ontario is continuing its work in collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations to implement Indigenous-led initiatives that provide individuals experiencing or at risk of poverty a stable foundation for success and enhanced access to training and education opportunities.

Measuring success

The 2020–2025 Poverty Reduction Strategy contains a suite of indicators to measure the province's progress on poverty reduction and identify areas for improvement. The following section provides the latest available information for each indicator and a brief description on what has changed since the previous year's report (see Appendix for full indicator definitions and sources).

The indicators draw data from different sources. As a result, the availability of data varies across the indicators, and the indicators have different baseline years and timeframes for when updates can be released. All updates are based on the most recent data available.

The province is making progress on the strategy's target and most indicators. In 2023, more than 28,000 social assistance cases exited to employment, continuing the upward trend since 2021 as Ontario continues to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

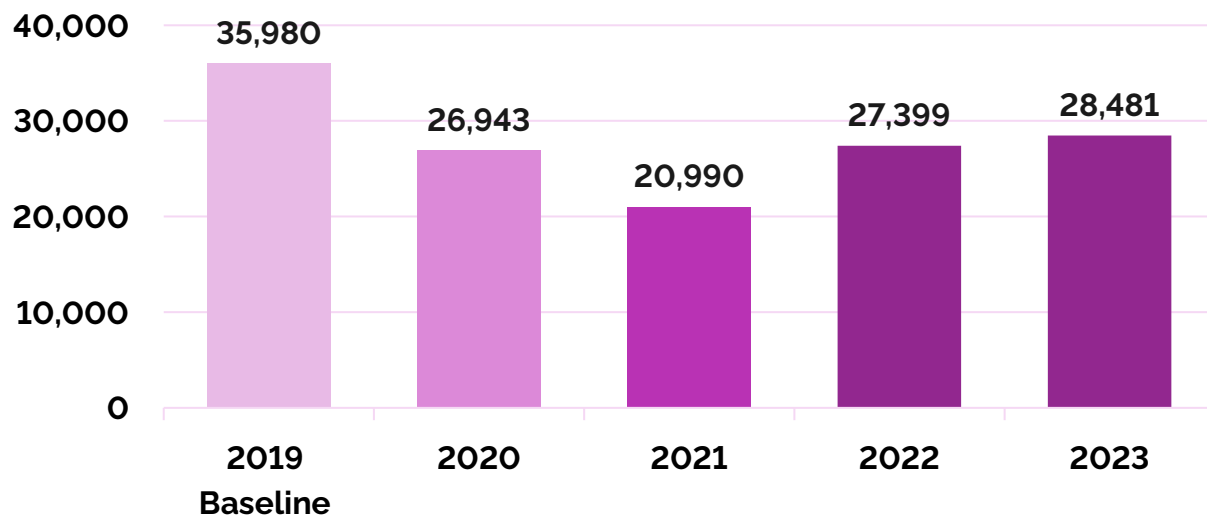
Among the 17 indicators tracked by the strategy, most indicators either improved or remained stable when compared to the previous year or the baseline. For example, the percentage of ODSP cases reporting employment earnings increased since last year.

Some indicators worsened, particularly for priority groups. For example, previous improvements in poverty rates started diminishing in 2021, the latest year that data is available. The increase in poverty rates was predominantly due to a decrease in COVID-19 benefits and reduced government transfers. It also underscores the disproportional impact of economic challenges on certain groups.

Target

The strategy aims to get more social assistance recipients into meaningful employment and achieving financial stability. The strategy's target is to provide the right supports and services with the goal of increasing the number of social assistance recipients moving to employment each year from 36,000 in 2019 to 60,000 by 2024. In 2023, the province continued making progress toward the target compared to the previous two years; however, it remains below the baseline.

Indicator: Exits to employment from social assistance⁵



Status: Improved from the previous year, but still below the baseline

In 2023, the number of social assistance cases that exited to employment increased to 28,481 from 27,399 in 2022. The province will continue to integrate social

⁵ The previously reported numbers for the years from 2019 to 2022 have been updated based on the latest data. The baseline (2019) annual exits to employment increased slightly from 35,977 to 35,980. The 2020, 2021 and 2022 annual exits to employment increased slightly from 26,940 to 26,943, from 20,985 to 20,990 and from 27,266 to 27,399, respectively.

assistance employment services into Employment Ontario to make it easier for people to gain the skills and training they need to secure employment.

Employment, skills and training indicators

The following indicators measure the employment rate, how many jobs were created, the extent to which people on social assistance are becoming employed (while remaining eligible for social assistance) and training results.

Ontario witnessed resilient economic activity with robust employment growth in the early months of 2023. However, economic activity moderated, and employment growth slowed in the second half of the year.

During the year, 183,200 jobs were created, a significant decrease from the numbers recorded in 2022 and 2021, but similar to the number of jobs created in 2019 prior to the pandemic. In 2023, the employment rate indicator remained relatively stable for the general population and Indigenous individuals living off-reserve, but it showed a decrease for youth when compared to 2022.

Among programs supporting low-income clients and job seekers, there were mixed results in the indicators in 2023 compared to the previous year. There was positive change in the number of Employment Ontario skills or work experience interventions completed, but the outcomes for clients completing Integrated Employment Services were weaker than the previous year. Among social assistance clients, the share reporting employment earnings increased among ODSP cases but decreased among Ontario Works cases.

Indicator: Employment rate for priority groups,
15 to 64 years old⁶

	2019 Baseline	2020	2021	2022	2023
General population	73.4%	68.8%	72.0%	74.5%	74.7%
Youth (aged 15–24)	55.2%	45.8%	51.1%	55.3%	54.3%
Women	70.0%	65.3%	68.8%	71.3%	71.5%
Indigenous persons off-reserve	62.7%	60.0%	63.5%	67.8%	67.6%

Status: In 2023, the employment rate was stable for the general population, women and Indigenous persons living off-reserve and decreased for youth from the previous year. The employment rate improved for most groups compared to the baseline.

The overall employment rate saw an increase of 0.2 percentage points from 2022 to 2023. Among the priority groups, the employment rate for women also showed a slight increase by 0.2 percentage points. However, Indigenous people living off-reserve witnessed a decrease of 0.2 percentage points in their employment rate, and youth experienced a decline of one percentage point in employment rate compared to the previous year.

In comparison to the baseline year, most groups continued to see higher employment rates, except for youth, whose employment rate was 0.9 percentage points lower than in 2019.

⁶ The 2019 baseline figures for the employment rate and full-time and part-time jobs indicators have been updated from those provided in the 2020–2025 Poverty Reduction Strategy to reflect revised data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS).

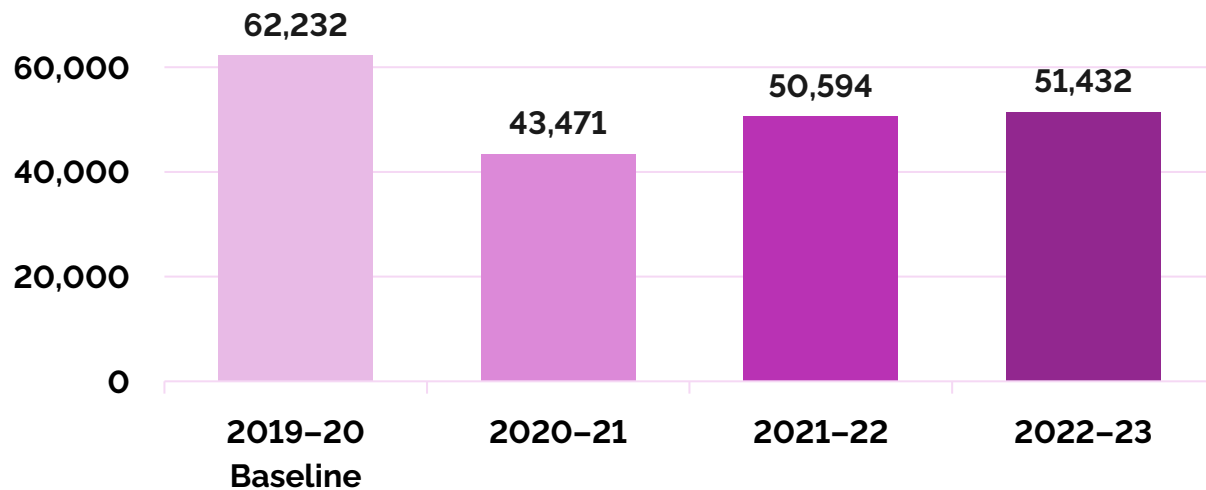
Indicator: Annual full-time and part-time jobs created, aged 15 and over

	2019 Baseline	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total number of net jobs created	183,300	-403,300	367,400	338,300	183,200
Number of net full-time jobs created	158,900	-241,300	287,900	283,500	169,800
Number of net part-time jobs created	24,400	-162,000	79,500	54,800	13,400
Number of net full-time and part-time jobs created — Females	90,300	-219,000	193,200	169,800	78,700
Number of net full-time and part-time jobs created — Indigenous persons off-reserve	5,700	-6,500	16,300	17,600	9,900

Status: Total net jobs created declined from the previous year, but remained similar compared to the baseline

Ontario witnessed a robust economic recovery through 2021 that extended to 2022 and early 2023 with substantial employment growth. In 2023, a total of 183,200 net new jobs were created, with a predominant share (169,800, about 93%) being full-time jobs, as opposed to part-time jobs (13,400, 7%). Females accounted for 43% of the overall net new job gains, reflecting a decrease of 7.2 percentage points from the 50.2% observed in 2022. Employment among Indigenous persons living off-reserve increased compared to the baseline, recording net new job gains of 9,900 in 2023.

Indicator: Completion of skills or work-experience-related Employment Ontario (EO) interventions⁷

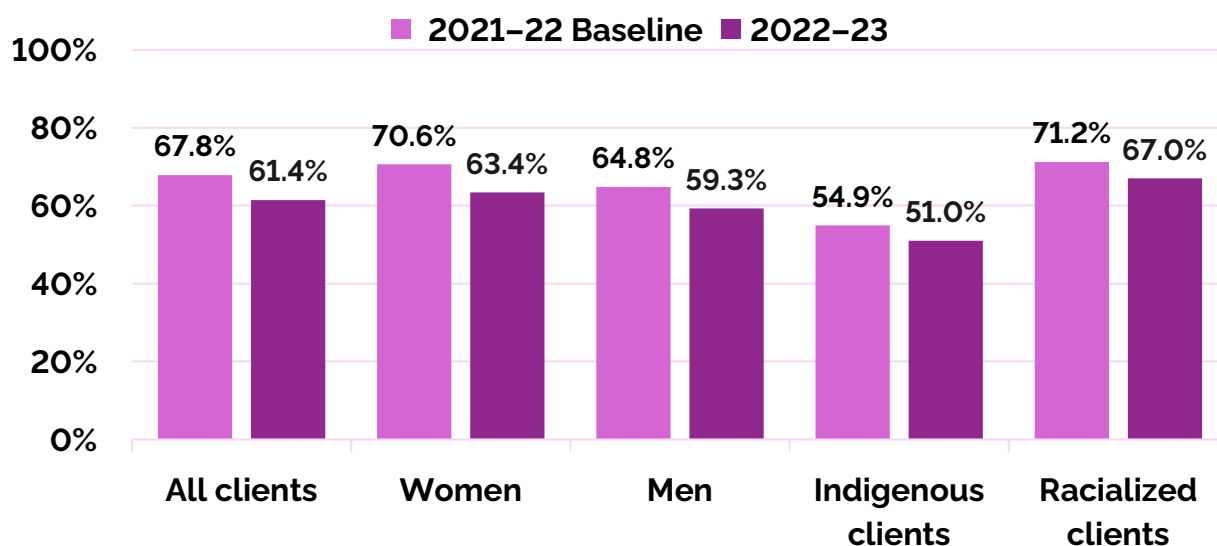


Status: Moderately improved from the previous year, but not yet returned to the baseline level

Through Employment Ontario, the province helps workers and job seekers get training, skills and experience to meet their goals. In the two previous years (2020-21 and 2021-22), the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent public health measures resulted in a substantial decrease in client intake and exit activity for Employment Ontario programs across the province. In 2022-23, there were 51,432 Employment Ontario completions of skills or work-experience-related interventions, which represents 838 more interventions over the previous year, a promising increase in activity levels.

⁷ Clients can access a variety of skills training interventions through Employment Ontario (EO). These could include interventions such as literacy and basic skills training directly delivered by EO providers or the ability to access financial support to pay for training offered by training delivery providers such as colleges or private career colleges. Employment Ontario can also support clients in gaining valuable work experience through job placements and matches. Financial supports are available for clients and employers to provide any additional assistance required to help clients be job-ready or provide workplace supports.

Indicator: Employed or enrolled into further education after participating in Integrated Employment Services



Status: Decreased from the baseline for all clients and all groups

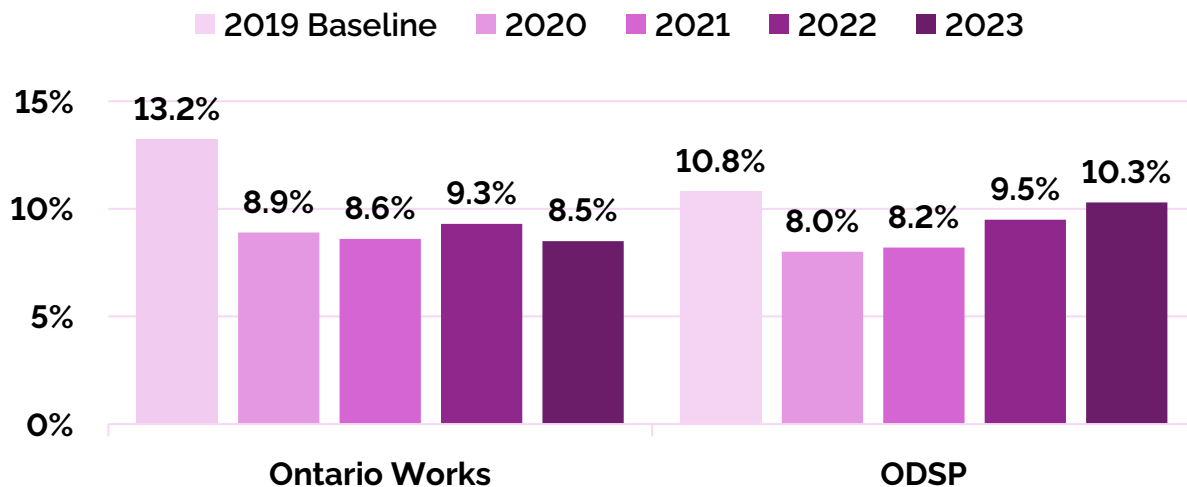
This indicator measures the percentage of Integrated Employment Services clients in areas covered by Employment Services Transformation⁸ who identify as employed or enrolled in education or training at the three-month follow-up checkpoint after completion of pre-employment services.

In 2022-23, this indicator declined for all clients and priority groups from the previous year. Specifically, the percentage of Integrated Employment Services clients identified as employed or enrolled into further education after participating in

⁸ The province is undertaking Employment Services Transformation using a phased implementation approach. In 2021-22, Integrated Employment Services was delivered in the prototype catchment areas of Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula, Muskoka-Kawartha and Peel. In 2022, Halton, Kingston-Pembroke, Stratford-Bruce Peninsula and York (Phase 1) catchment areas adopted the new model. In 2023, Kingston-Pembroke (phase 1) and Durham, Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie, London, Ottawa and Windsor-Sarnia (Phase 2) catchment areas adopted the new model. IES service delivery statistics for phase 1 and phase 2 catchment areas will contribute to the PRS Indicator in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

the program decreased by about six percentage points, declining from 67.8% in 2021–22 to 61.4% in 2022–23. The rates for women, Indigenous and racialized clients decreased by about seven percentage points, four percentage points and four percentage points, respectively. It is important to note that, despite a decrease in the percentage of all clients who identified as employed or enrolled in education or training at the three-month follow-up checkpoint, the absolute numbers of such clients and the total clients both saw a substantial increase from 2021–22 to 2022–23. Results will be tracked over time as the Integrated Employment Services delivery model matures.

Indicator: Percentage of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) cases with employment earnings



Status: Increased for ODSP recipients but decreased for Ontario Works recipients compared to the previous year. Both programs remained below the baseline.

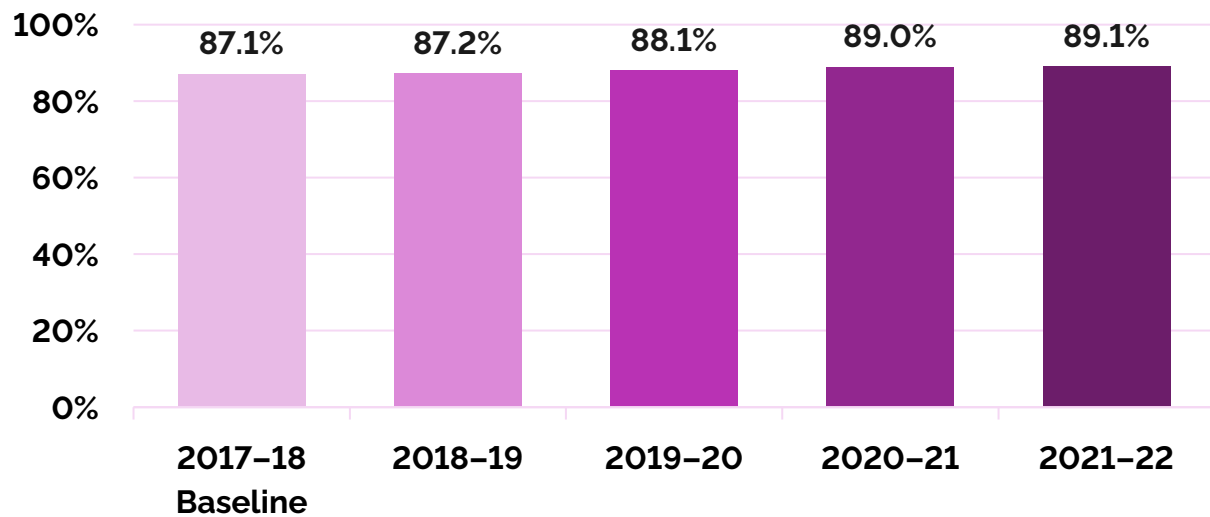
In 2023, the percentage of ODSP cases reporting employment earnings increased to 10.3% from 9.5% in 2022. However, the rate for Ontario Works cases decreased to 8.5% from 9.3% in 2022.

Education indicators

The following indicators measure progress on high school graduation rates and credit accumulation that will keep students on track to graduate with their peers, as well as post-secondary graduation rates (universities and colleges).

All four education indicators improved or remained stable from the previous year. Compared to pre-pandemic baseline data, graduation rates are stable or slightly improved for high school and post-secondary, as are credit accumulation rates for high school students, except for Grade 9 students who saw slightly lower credit accumulation rates compared to the 2018-19 baseline.

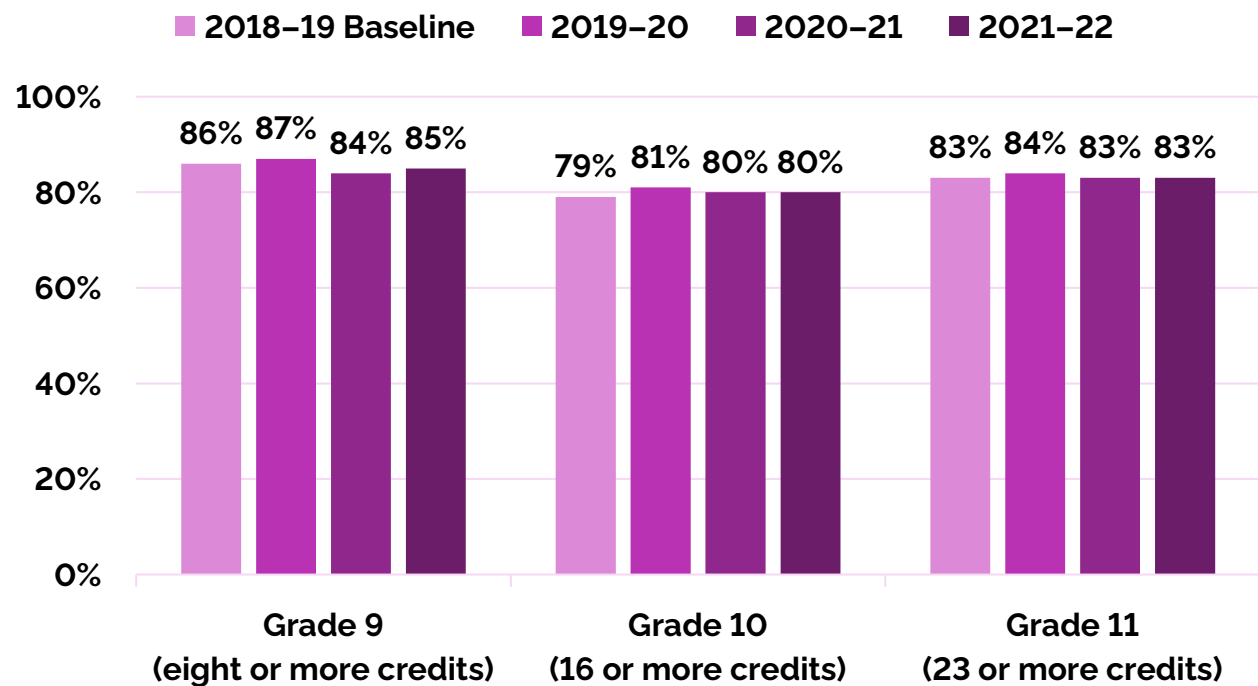
Indicator: Graduation rate (high school)



Status: In 2021-22, essentially unchanged from the previous year, but improved compared to the baseline

With 89.1% of students graduating within five years of starting Grade 9, Ontario's high school graduation rate remained consistent in 2021-22 compared to the previous school year (89.0%).

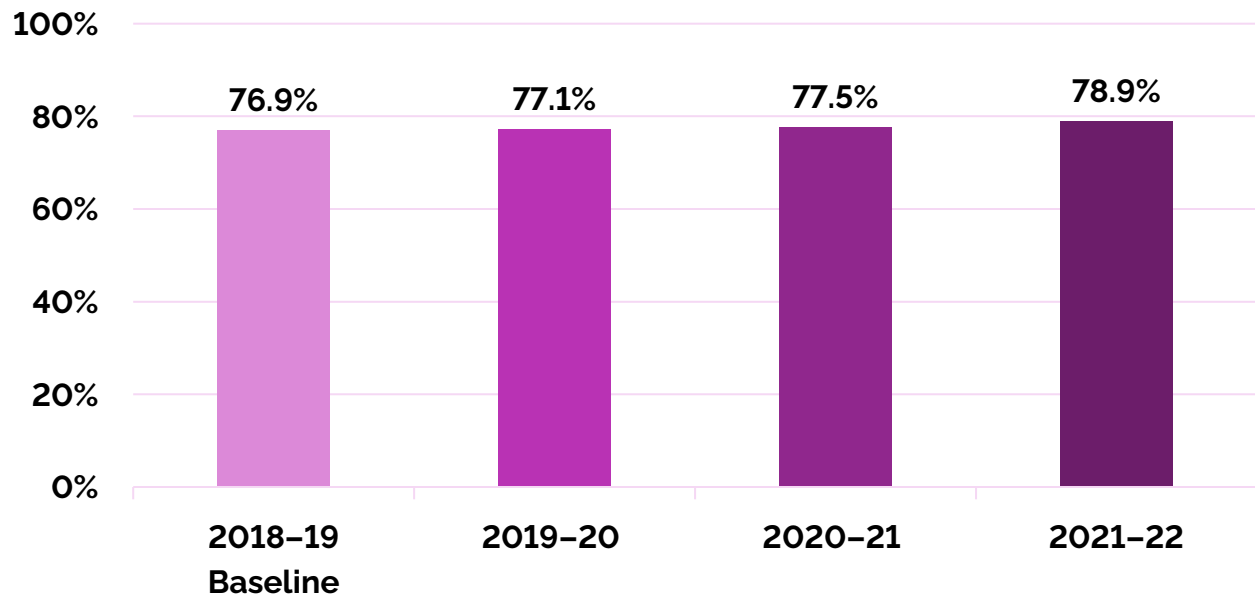
Indicator: Percentage of students accumulating credits that will keep them on track to graduate with their peers



Status: In 2021-22, stable overall from the previous year and compared to the baseline

In the 2021-22 school year, the percentage of Grade 9 students on track to graduate increased slightly by one percentage point compared to the previous school year. Additionally, the percentages of Grade 10 and Grade 11 students on track to graduate remained stable during the same period.

Indicator: Graduation rate (universities)⁹



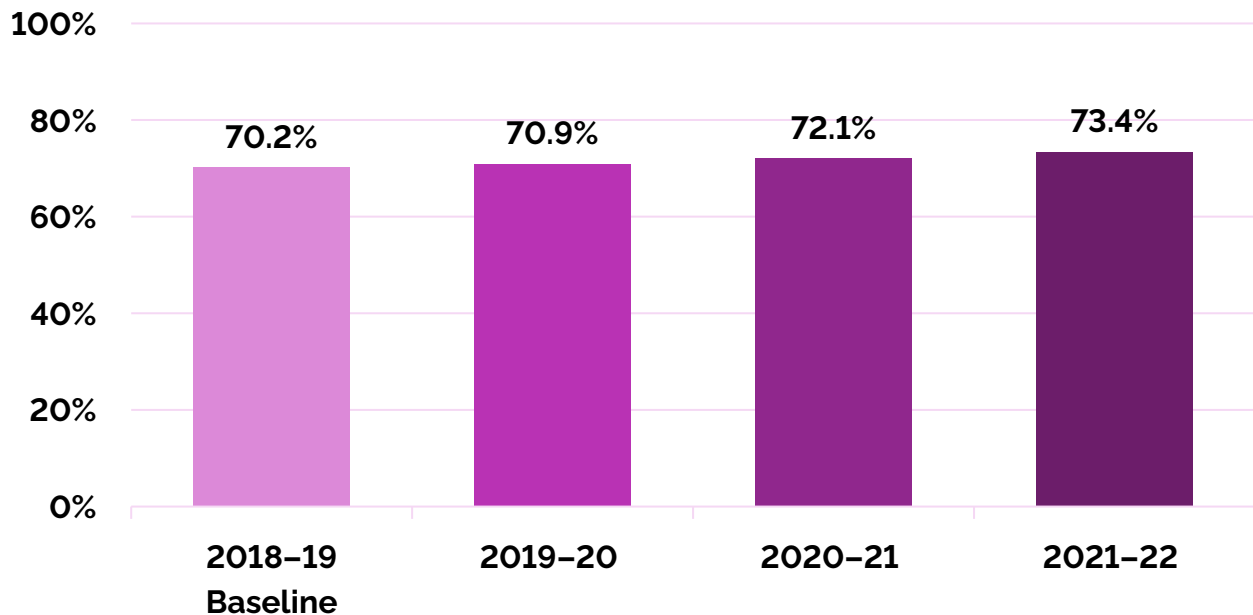
Status: Improved from the previous year and further improved from the baseline

The 2021-22 graduation rate for universities was 78.9%, which was 1.4 percentage points higher than the graduation rate for the 2020-21 reporting period and 2.0 percentage points higher than that of the baseline.

⁹ The 2019-20 graduation rate for universities is based on students who started an undergraduate degree in 2012 and who graduated from 2013 to 2019. The 2021-22 graduation rate for universities is based on students who started an undergraduate degree in 2014 and who graduated from 2015 to 2021.

This graduation rate includes domestic and international students. The graduation rate currently cannot be broken down into rates specific for youth, women, Black and other racialized groups and Indigenous persons off-reserve.

Indicator: Graduation rate (colleges)¹⁰



Status: Improved from the previous year and further improved from the baseline

The graduation rate for colleges for the 2021-22 reporting period was 73.4%, which was 1.3 percentage points higher than the graduation rate for the 2020-21 reporting period and 3.2 percentage points higher than that of the baseline.

¹⁰ The 2019-20 graduation rate for colleges is based on students who started one-year programs in 2017-18, two-year programs in 2015-16, three-year programs in 2013-14 and four-year programs in 2012-13 and who had graduated by 2018-19. The 2021-22 graduation rate for colleges is based on students who started one-year programs in 2019 to 2020, two-year programs in 2017 to 2018, three-year programs in 2015 to 2016 and four-year programs in 2014 to 2015, and who had graduated by 2020 to 2021. This graduation rate includes international students and students enrolled in public college-private partnership programs. The graduation rate currently cannot be broken down into rates specific for youth, women, Black and other racialized groups and Indigenous persons off-reserve.

Moving toward increased financial independence indicators

The following indicators measure the province's progress in supporting individuals and families in poverty to move towards financial independence. These indicators include the time it takes people to become employed or exit social assistance once they have started receiving social assistance, the rate of return within one year of exit among those who exited Ontario Works and the share of the total Ontario population on social assistance. In addition, they look at whether low-income households can access community housing programs and the share of Ontario households in core housing need.

Overall, the percentage of the Ontario population receiving social assistance remained relatively stable from 2022 to 2023. The current level is an improvement from the baseline year.

Among those who began receiving Ontario Works or ODSP in 2022, the time it took to become employed or exit social assistance remained stable for the overall group and improved for all ODSP cases, including all priority groups of ODSP cases, as well as youth cases on Ontario Works. Among those who had left Ontario Works between October 2022 and December 2022, the percentage of cases that returned within one year was relatively stable for the overall group compared to the previous year. For housing, the province increased the number and share of low-income households that were assisted by community housing programs in 2022–23 compared to the previous year and the baseline.

Indicator: Time to become employed or exit social assistance¹¹

	2018 Baseline	2019	2020	2021	2022
All cases					
Both programs	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months
Ontario Works	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months
ODSP	9 months	9 months	9 months	9 months	8 months
Cases where the primary applicant is a youth (aged 15–24)					
Both programs	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months
Ontario Works	7 months	7 months	7 months	8 months	7 months
ODSP	10 months	10 months	10 months	10 months	9 months
Cases where the primary applicant is female					
Both programs	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months
Ontario Works	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months	8 months
ODSP	9 months	9 months	9 months	9 months	8 months

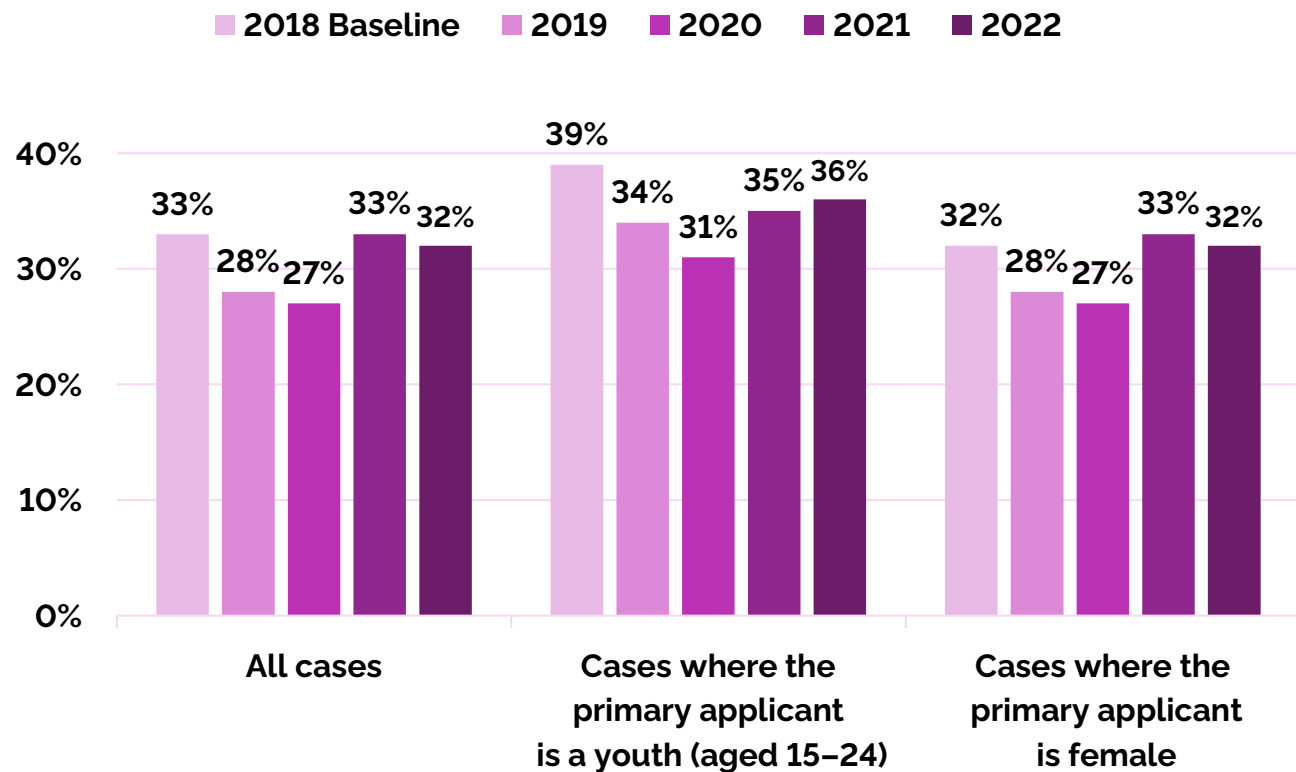
Status: Improved for all cases on ODSP compared to the previous year and the baseline. No changes for all cases on Ontario Works, but Ontario Works cases

¹¹ This indicator is based on tracking a cohort of cases that started receiving social assistance within the calendar year (including those who were returning to social assistance within the calendar year after having exited social assistance before). Cases that neither had earnings nor exited within their first 12 months received a value of 12 months. Reasons for exiting social assistance other than employment include failure to provide verification, voluntary withdrawal and income report not received.

where the primary applicant is a youth were improved compared to the previous year and returned to the baseline.

This indicator measures the average number of months it takes for cases starting a new period on social assistance to either report employment earnings or exit social assistance. The 2022 data covers those who started receiving social assistance at any point in 2022 and were tracked for 12 months after they began receiving social assistance. Noteworthy improvements included a reduction in the time new ODSP cases in 2022 required to report earnings or exit ODSP. These improvements were also seen among subgroups of female primary applicants and youth primary applicants.

Indicator: Percentage of cases exiting Ontario Works that return within one year¹²



Status: In 2022, relatively stable compared to the previous year. Improvement was observed for cases where the primary applicant is a youth compared to the baseline

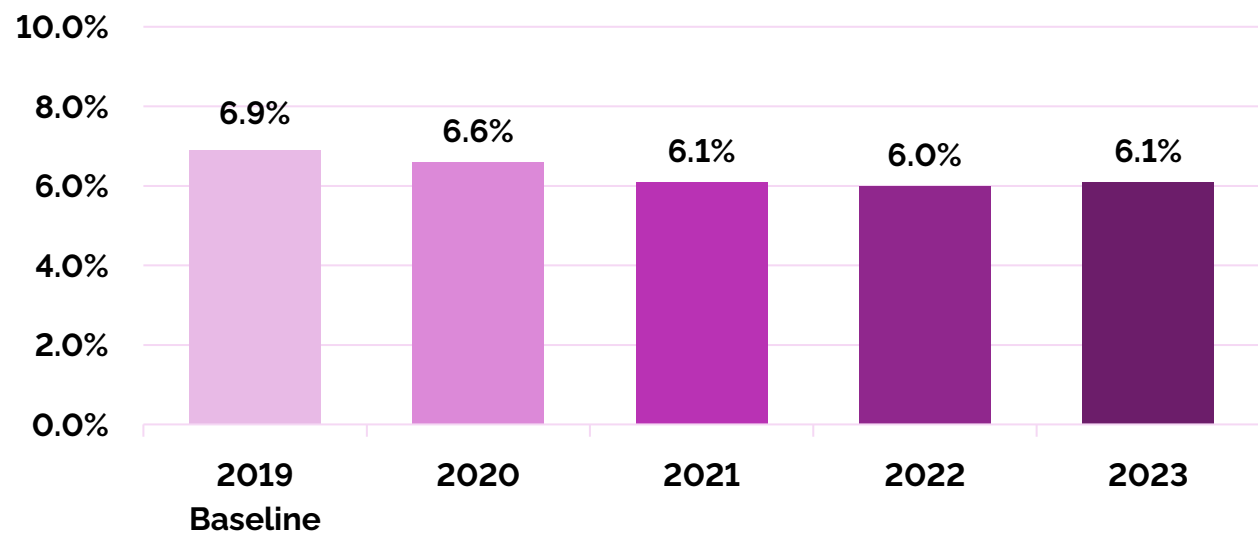
This measure looks at the percentage of cases exiting Ontario Works that return within one year. Notable improvements were previously observed for the 2019 and 2020 cohorts, who could have had access to pandemic benefits to prevent returns

¹² The indicator is based on tracking a cohort of cases that exited Ontario Works during the last quarter of the reporting calendar year. The baseline and 2019 figures for this indicator have been updated to reflect a refinement to the methodology, which now counts cases that returned to Ontario Works “within the year (or 12 months) immediately following the month they left Ontario Works,” rather than “within the calendar year after they left Ontario Works,” as was previously reported.

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in the year following their exit. Since the end of these benefits, we have seen a return to baseline in the last two years.

Indicator: Share of the population on social assistance¹³

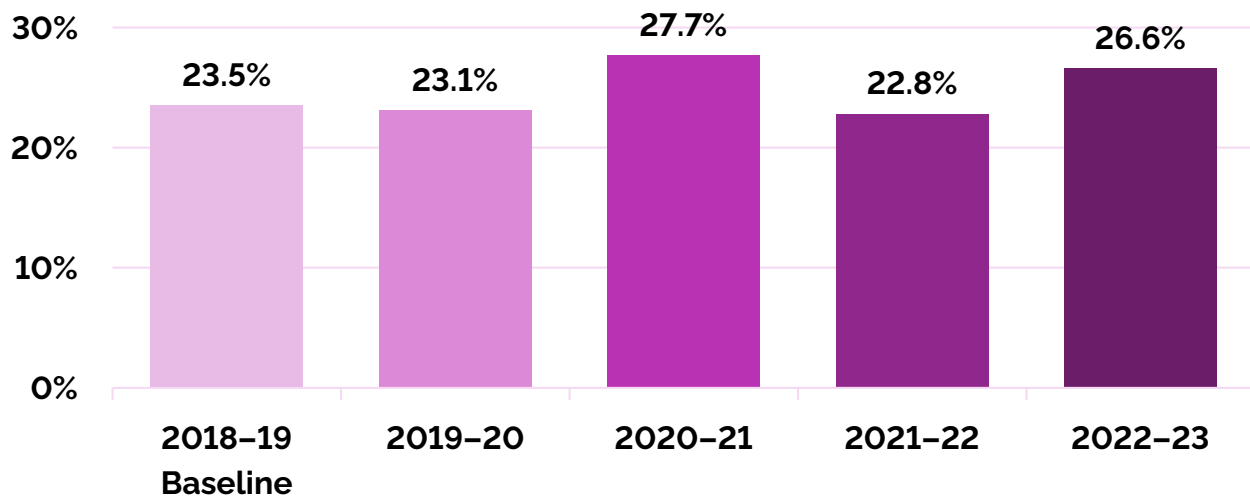


Status: Relatively stable compared to the previous year and improved compared to the baseline

In 2023, the share of the population on social assistance was 6.1%.

¹³ The share of the population on social assistance for previous years has been revised from figures provided in the 2022 Annual Report, reflecting updated annual population estimates from Statistics Canada. The share of the population on social assistance has been adjusted from 6.7% to 6.6% for 2020 and from 6.1% to 6.0% for 2022.

Indicator: Percentage of low-income households assisted in community housing programs¹⁴



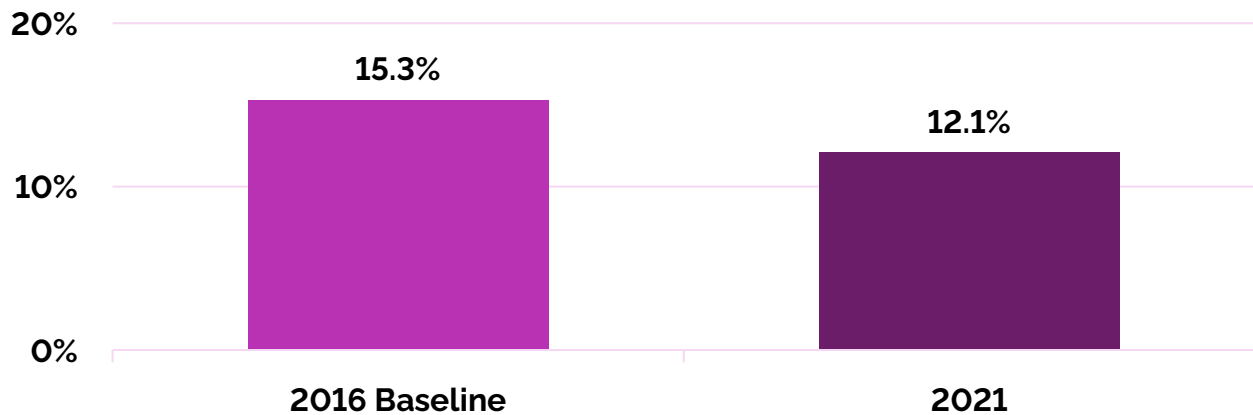
Status: Improved, above the baseline

The proportion of Ontario low-income households assisted by community housing programs increased by over three percentage points between 2018-19 and 2022-23 (from 23.5% to 26.6%). After falling from 2020-21 to 2021-22, it increased by nearly four percentage points in 2022-23.

This is largely due to a significant increase in the number of households assisted in community housing programs, which increased by 18.7% year-over-year.

¹⁴ Since the release of the 2022 PRS Annual Report, the result for 2021-22 was adjusted based on updated data. This table reflects the adjusted value for 2021-22 (previously reported as 27.6% that used a projected low-income measure (LIM) estimate that has since been updated).

Indicator: Percentage of households in core housing need¹⁵

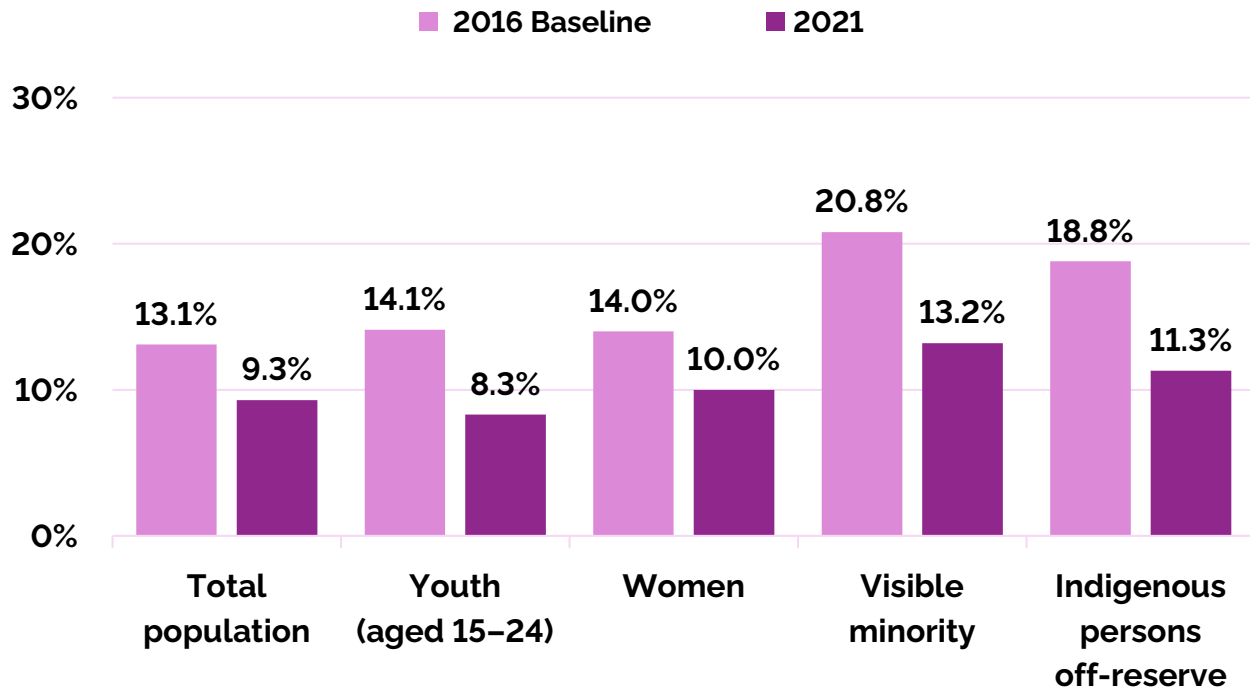


Status: In 2021, improved compared to the baseline

This indicator measures households living in housing that is inadequate, unaffordable or unsuitable and who need to spend 30% or more of their income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable. The proportion of Ontario households living in core housing need decreased by over three percentage points between 2016 (15.3%) and 2021 (12.1%). New data that captures core housing need in our current context will not be available until the 2026 census.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada has indicated that 2021 Core Housing Need results should be interpreted with caution, as the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic when many Canadian families were receiving temporary income supports that do not necessarily reflect long-term changes in affordability.

Indicator: Core housing need by population



Status: As of 2021, improved compared to the baseline for all groups

This indicator measures core housing need by the percentage of all persons (rather than household units) in core housing need. The proportion of people living in core housing need decreased by nearly four percentage points among all Ontarians between 2016 (13.1%) and 2021 (9.3%). Between 2016 and 2021, decreases in housing need were mirrored among specific populations, decreasing from 14.1% to 8.3% among youth, from 14.0% to 10.0% among women, from 20.8% to 13.2% among visible minorities and from 18.8% to 11.3% among Indigenous persons living off-reserve. The decrease in core housing need across the population could be largely attributed to the temporary COVID-related federal benefits.

Poverty indicators

The two indicators in this section measure the province's progress in reducing the number of people with low incomes with a focus on the priority populations of youth (aged 15–24), women, Indigenous persons off-reserve and visible minorities.

In 2021, the poverty and deep poverty rates increased for the general population and most priority groups, except for youth, when compared to the previous year. This increase was anticipated, given the reduction in COVID-19 benefits and government transfers that had contributed to lowering poverty rates in 2020. While pandemic relief programs continued in 2021, government transfers to households decreased overall. At this time, the impact of the changes to federal COVID-19 benefits on 2022 poverty rates is unknown, but it is anticipated that we may see a continued increase once 2022 data is available.

In 2021, the poverty rate for youth decreased slightly by 0.1 percentage points, and the deep poverty rate for youth remained stable compared to 2020. Overall poverty and deep poverty rates continue to be lower than the 2018 baseline year, except for Indigenous off-reserve populations, which saw their poverty rate and deep poverty rates grow to 16.3% and 8.0%, respectively, more than twice as high as corresponding rates for the general Ontario population.

Indicator: Poverty rate based on market basket measure (MBM)¹⁶

	2018 Baseline	2019	2020	2021
General population (all ages)	11.6%	10.9%	6.8%	7.7%
Youth (aged 15–24)	15.0%	12.0%	9.2%	9.1%
Women (all ages)	11.4%	11.7%	6.7%	7.8%
Indigenous persons off-reserve (aged 16 and over)	14.4%	15.5%	13.8%	16.3%
Visible minority (all ages)	NA	NA	8.5%	10.0%

Status: As of 2021, increased from the previous year for most groups, but improved from the baseline for most groups

The overall poverty rate for the general population in Ontario increased by 0.9 percentage points, rising from 6.8% in 2020 to 7.7% in 2021. However, Ontario's overall poverty rate remained below pre-pandemic levels. The poverty rates among priority populations increased, except for youth, who recorded a slightly lower poverty rate in 2021 (9.1%) compared to 2020 (9.2%). The poverty rates for women, Indigenous persons living off-reserve and visible minorities increased by 1.1 percentage points, 2.5 percentage points and 1.5 percentage points, respectively, from 2020 to 2021.

¹⁶ The poverty rate measures the percentage of people in low income, based on the market basket measure (MBM), which establishes income poverty thresholds based on the cost of a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living. The basket includes items such as healthy food, clothing, appropriate shelter, transportation and other necessities. Individuals and families with disposable income less than the applicable threshold based on family size and region of residence are considered to be in poverty.

Indicator: Deep poverty rate (MBM)

	2018 Baseline	2019	2020	2021
General population (all ages)	5.7%	5.0%	3.2%	3.8%
Youth (aged 15–24)	9.7%	5.7%	5.6%	5.6%
Women (all ages)	5.3%	5.3%	3.0%	3.5%
Indigenous persons off-reserve (aged 16 and over)	7.0%	6.3%	7.0%	8.0%
Visible minority (all ages)	NA	NA	4.4%	4.5%

Status: As of 2021, deteriorated from the previous year for the general population but improved from the baseline for most groups

The deep poverty rate refers to the percentage of individuals with disposable family incomes below 75% of the MBM threshold for their family size and region. Between 2020 and 2021, the proportion of individuals experiencing deep poverty increased by 0.6 percentage points for the general population. The increase in the deep poverty rate can be attributed largely to the decrease in COVID-19 benefits and reduced government transfers, a trend which may continue once 2022 data becomes available. The increase in the deep poverty rate primarily occurred among women, with a 0.5 percentage point increase, and Indigenous persons off-reserve with an increase of one percentage point. Updated data on poverty rates and deep poverty rates for 2022 will be available in 2024.¹⁷

¹⁷ Poverty rates based on MBM are estimated using annual results from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS). 2022 CIS results will be released in early 2024.

Moving forward

The government will continue to work with all levels of government and non-profit and private sector partners to help people experiencing poverty get the skills and supports they need to move towards stable employment and financial independence.

The province continues to make progress on key priorities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Programs such as Better Jobs Ontario and the Skills Development Fund provided opportunities for jobseekers to find employment in key sectors of Ontario's economy.

Acknowledging that the cost of living has increased, Ontario has invested in making basic costs more affordable through the building of new homes and the creation of new, affordable child care spaces. The province is also supporting people living in poverty to be able to better afford everyday costs by making it easier for people on social assistance to access employment supports and by increasing ODSP and the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program by 6.5%, bringing the total increase to almost 12% since 2022. The government is also supporting low-wage workers by increasing the minimum wage to \$16.55 per hour, among the highest in the country.

The government will continue to support people who are most vulnerable to economic disruption, work to provide predictability for household budgets and invest in public services to help all people thrive in Ontario.

Appendix: Target and indicator definitions

Strategy target: Get more social assistance recipients into meaningful employment and financial stability. The government will provide the right supports and services with the goal of increasing the number of social assistance recipients moving to employment each year from 36,000 in 2019 to 60,000 by 2024.

Indicator	Definition	Source
Exits to employment from social assistance	Number of cases that exited Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to employment at least once within the calendar year.	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Poverty rate / Market Basket Measure (MBM)	The poverty rate reports the percentage of individuals in low income, based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM threshold is the disposable income required for a family to purchase a specific basket of goods and services defined as the minimum needed to meet a basic standard of living (2018-base). A family is low-income when its disposable income is below the poverty threshold defined for its family size and region. Note: Statistics Canada is undertaking its Third Comprehensive Review of the MBM,	Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey

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	which will result in the creation of a 2023 base, expected to be available in 2025 for the release of the 2023 Canadian Income Survey results.	
Deep poverty rate (MBM)	Percentage of individuals with disposable family incomes below 75% of the MBM threshold.	Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey
Employment rate for priority groups (youth, women, Indigenous peoples)	Percentage of individuals from priority groups, aged 15 to 64, who are employed. This indicator can be broken down by gender, age and Indigenous identity. While Black and racialized persons are a priority group for this strategy, data is not currently available.	Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey
Annual full-time and part-time jobs created, aged 15 and over	Total number of net new jobs created. Number of net new full-time jobs created. Number of net new part-time jobs created. (These figures represent the change in employment, relative to the previous year, for individuals who are aged 15 years and above. Since a small percentage of employed persons have multiple jobs, there might be a slight difference between the change in employment and net new jobs created.)	Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

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Completion of skills or work-experience-related Employment Ontario (EO) interventions	Number of completed skills or work-experience-related interventions by EO program participants; Apprenticeship program is not included in the measure.	Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
Employed or enrolled into further education after participating in Integrated Employment Services	Percentage of Integrated Employment Services clients in areas covered by Employment Services Transformation who identify as employed or in education or training during three-month follow-up after exit from program.	Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
Percentage of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) cases with employment earnings	Percentage of Ontario Works and ODSP cases reporting employment earnings (while remaining eligible for social assistance) on average monthly.	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Graduation rate (high school)	Percentage of students who receive an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) within five years of starting Grade 9.	Ministry of Education
Percentage of students accumulating credits that will keep them on track to graduate with	Grade 9: Percentage of students who accumulated eight or more credits after one year of secondary school out of the total number of students who completed one year of secondary school.	Ministry of Education

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their peers (high school)	Grade 10: Percentage of students who accumulated 16 or more credits after two years of secondary school out of the total number of students who completed two years of secondary school. Grade 11: Percentage of students who accumulated 23 or more credits after three years of secondary school out of the total number of students who completed three years of secondary school.	
Graduation rate (universities)	Proportion of all new, full-time, year one undergraduate university students of bachelors (first-entry) or first professional (second-entry) degree programs who began their study in a given fall term and graduated from the same institution within seven years.	Ministry of Colleges and Universities
Graduation Rate (colleges)	Percentage of full-time students who entered a program of instruction in a particular enrolment reporting period and graduated within a specific period (200% of program completion timeframe for diploma and certificate programs and 175% for degrees).	Ministry of Colleges and Universities
Time to become employed or exit social assistance	Average time between entering Ontario Works and ODSP and leaving or becoming employed (while remaining eligible for assistance), within the first year on assistance.	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

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	This indicator is based on tracking a cohort of cases that started receiving social assistance within the calendar year (including those that were returning to social assistance within the calendar year, after having exited social assistance before). Cases that neither had earnings nor exited within their first 12 months received a value of 12 months. Reasons for exiting social assistance other than employment include failure to provide verification, voluntary withdrawal and income report not received.	
Percentage of cases exiting Ontario Works that return within one year	Percentage of cases that exited Ontario Works that returned within one year.	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Share of the population on social assistance	Percentage of the population receiving social assistance.	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Percentage of low-income households assisted in community housing programs	Number of households assisted across community housing programs, as a proportion of all Ontario households below the low-income measure (LIM) threshold.	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Core housing need	Households in core housing need measures the percentage of households living in housing that is inadequate, unaffordable or	Statistics Canada, Census

	unsuitable and who would need to spend 30% or more of total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable. • Inadequate: in need of major repair • Unaffordable: costs 30% or more of household's total before-tax income • Unsuitable: does not have enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household according to National Occupancy Standard requirements Core housing need by population reports the percentage of persons in core housing need.	
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