



From Experience:
Community Voices for Saskatchewan's Poverty Reduction Plan

A Community Consultation by Poverty Costs

May, 2015

Executive Summary

Poverty Costs is a collaborative seeking to advance the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in Saskatchewan. In April 2015, a consultation was conducted with people who have lived experience of poverty. The goal of the consultation was to facilitate an opportunity for those with lived experience of poverty, to share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas about what should be done to reduce poverty in Saskatchewan. The results will be offered to the Saskatchewan Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction (AGPR), who will be creating recommendations for the strategy.

The report was designed around six components from Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute's components for comprehensive poverty reduction strategies², and the elements of the Market Basket Measure of low income¹. The six categories selected were: basic necessities, housing, food, income, supporting children, and training and education. These categories were selected because they are elements known to be important to poverty reduction based on Torjman's work and many relate to the social determinants of health, which are known to be indicators of a healthy society.

Key Findings

Barriers

Frequent barriers to moving out of poverty that were identified in all categories by respondents included:

- rising costs of living without adequate, indexed income or income support
- lack of transportation options and accessibility
- high housing costs and lack of appropriate housing options
- limited education and support to access further education
- lack of access to secure, well-paying jobs
- lack of supports for parents, including daycare

Supports

The primary supports identified in all categories by respondents as helping them to "make ends meet" included:

- employment income
- government income support
- family

Responses about what could help people move out of poverty, and prevent others in Saskatchewan from moving into poverty were most often related to systems-level change. The most frequently identified changes called for by respondents were:

- access to safe and affordable housing
- employment opportunities
- supports for training and education
- improved supports for childcare
- universal guaranteed income
- minimum wage and social assistance indexed to the costs of living

Respondents identified barriers, supports needed, and solutions in each of the six categories of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that were explored in the consultation, demonstrating that poverty has complex and diverse causes and solutions. While families often cited family and community-level supports as important, they predominantly identified the need for systems-level changes in order to move out of poverty. The results strongly support comprehensive and system-levels change to reduce poverty in our province.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Keisha Sharp and Hilary Gough for the Poverty Costs team with support from Strong Roots Consulting. We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the organizations across the province that supported this community consultation. We would also like to thank the participants themselves: their voices and expertise are critical to the development of a truly impactful poverty reduction strategy.



The campaign team includes dedicated members from the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition who provide First Voice representation at our table, the Saskatoon Health Region, Upstream: Institute for a Healthy Society, and Unite Digital Marketing Cooperative.



This report should be cited as:

Poverty Costs. 2015. From Experience: Community Voices for Saskatchewan's Poverty Reduction Plan; A Community Consultation by Poverty Costs.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Poverty Costs Background Information.....	5
“Nothing About Us Without Us”	6
Poverty Costs Community Consultations.....	6
Barriers and Supports.....	6
Opportunities for Change.....	13
Conclusion.....	15
Appendix A: Methodology.....	16
Appendix B: Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategies.....	17
Appendix C: Demographics.....	18
Appendix D: Data Analysis Framework.....	20
Appendix E: Complete Survey Tool.....	21
Appendix F: Discussion Group Framework.....	25
Appendix G: The Market Basket Measure.....	27
References.....	28

Poverty Costs Background Information

This report has been developed as part of the Poverty Costs campaign, which is designed to raise awareness about the costs of poverty in Saskatchewan and encourage the implementation of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for the province.

Building on previous reports and campaigns developed by Poverty Free Saskatchewan and other groups in the province, the Poverty Costs campaign developed a communications and mobilization strategy to draw attention to the need for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for our province. A report, outlining the costs of poverty in Saskatchewan and evidence-based comprehensive poverty reduction strategies was developed for the public and the provincial government¹.

In October, 2014, the Government of Saskatchewan announced their commitment to a provincial poverty reduction strategy. In December, an eleven member Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction (AGPR) was appointed. The group was tasked with providing recommendations to the Government of Saskatchewan to inform the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

This report is a summary and analysis of the results of a community consultation carried out by the Poverty Costs team to provide individuals who are experiencing, or who have experienced poverty the chance to have their voices heard. This project was designed to provide the AGPR with the voices, experiences, and ideas of those affected by poverty themselves and is independent from the AGPR's work.

In March of 2015, a Poverty Costs community consultation kit was sent to organizations across the province who work with individuals who have a lived experience of poverty. For the full methodology, please see appendix A. Full demographic information regarding those who either took part in the discussion group sessions or completed a survey is available in appendix B, while a description of the coding process can be found in appendix C. For the complete survey tool, please see appendix D, and for the group discussion framework, see appendix E.

For a full background on the Poverty Costs campaign and resources outlining the costs of poverty in Saskatchewan including the previously cited report, please visit www.povertycosts.ca/resources.

“Nothing About Us Without Us”

Staying true to our commitment to include those with a lived experience of poverty, known as First Voice, the Poverty Costs community consultation project provides insight into some of the daily challenges that living in poverty places on individuals, families, and communities. What stood out were the compelling stories shared during group discussions and in response to open-ended survey questions. Comments and stories shared by respondents exemplify the underlying factors that contribute to poverty, and highlight just how complex poverty really is.

The appetite for the opportunity to take part in this consultation, especially from rural, northern and a variety of other organizations was incredible. We heard loudly and clearly that the consultation process was very important to community organizations and individuals who are living in poverty across the province. Supporting organizations are invited to utilize this to inform their services and programs where appropriate.

“Ask why they feel they aren’t able to meet basic needs. Then help them...Reduce the stigma of accessing those resources. Help people gain independence and work towards getting off of social assistance.”

Poverty Costs Community Consultations

Barriers and Supports

Six categories of barriers and supports were explored through this community consultation. These were derived from components for comprehensive poverty reduction strategies identified by Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute², and the elements of the Market Basket Measure of low income¹.

The barriers and supports highlighted below represent the most frequently communicated answers from completed surveys and discussion questions.

1. Basic Necessities of Living

When referring to ‘basics’, or ‘trouble making ends meet’, a list of the elements that make up the ‘Market Basket’ in the Market Basket Measure (MBM) were provided. These are: food, housing, transportation, clothing, and communication (a phone). A full explanation of the MBM is available in Appendix G.

Barriers

“There’s too much month at the end of my money.”

Significant barriers to covering the cost of monthly basic necessities raised by respondents across the province included:

- rising costs of living

...the consultation process was very important to community organizations and individuals who are living in poverty across the province.

- social assistance rates that are lower than costs of living
- strict restrictions to earnings for those on social assistance
- minimum wage earnings not covering costs of living

Unique barriers raised by respondents with health issues (including disabilities) included:

- high expenses related to health(care) needs
- challenges related to accessibility of basic or health services including specific transportation requirements

“The prices of everything. They make it impossible for the poor to live nowadays. We are people too. We don’t have the luxury of being born into rich families.”

Later categories further explore some of the expenses encompassed in the basic costs of living. The issue of affordability is inextricably linked to income barriers and supports, also explored below.

“I hear all the time about sick time abuse, but for me a ten minute appointment in the city requires an entire day off work. I get the same amount of sick time as a person who lives in Saskatoon or Regina.”

Of the costs of living expenses raised, each of the basic necessities listed in the market basket measure - housing, transportation, clothing, communication (phone), and food were cited by respondents as being costly expenses. Housing was reported as the largest expense of respondents’ budgets, leaving little to cover remaining expenses. In addition, transportation options limited many rural respondents’ ability to access some of their monthly basic necessities as outlined below. However, the burden of transportation as an expense was listed as frequently in rural as urban areas.

Supports

The top three supports for meeting basic necessities identified by respondents were:

- income
- government income support
- family

2. Housing

Housing was included as one of the main categories explored in this consultation as it is a major cost and basic necessity in the lives of individuals and families. Poverty Free Saskatchewan listed housing affordability and access at the top of its list of six factors that should be addressed by poverty reduction efforts for Saskatchewan³. The questions on housing barriers and supports addressed the issue of access to both safe and affordable housing.

Barriers

“There is no such thing as “affordable” housing for low income people.”

“There is no such thing as “affordable” housing for low income people.”

Several people reported that there are not enough safe and affordable housing options in their communities. This was especially true in rural communities. Many individuals reported that their current landlords are not ensuring their rental properties are well-kept and often make it challenging for individuals, especially those on social assistance, to rent from them.

"I'd like to see lowered rent or caps on rent so people can afford adequate housing, and regulatory boards that landlords are answerable to so housing needs can be addressed."

"Landlord avoids and doesn't take actions to address health and safety issues til too late, and costs tenant in health and other expenses."

"High rent, and welfare pays so little to cover it. Rent here is \$750 for a one bedroom apartment. I get \$760 to cover everything."

Lastly, respondents with diverse family compositions cited that safe and affordable housing was not sufficiently available and affordable. Single individuals reported that affordable housing on a single income was challenging, if not impossible. On the other end, individuals with multiple children or additional family members living with them reported that it was incredibly challenging to find adequate and affordable housing for their family.

"It seems to me that suburban areas don't agree to support large First Nations families to rent decent homes."

Supports

As with basic necessities, family and government income supports were the most common responses listed as supports for accessing safe and affordable housing. Family was least emphasized by people living in Saskatoon or Regina in regards to housing, and most emphasized by those living on reserve or in small cities.

3. Income

Secure, well-paying jobs that include benefits, along with eliminating workplace discrimination and racism are key to ensuring all people have a good income and increased self-worth and social inclusion⁴. In addition, income is the number one social determinant of health and is intricately linked to all areas of poverty.

Barriers

"Minimum wage is abhorrent. "Minimum" is not the same as "necessary", and that is the essential problem."

The question posed, 'What makes it hard to earn a good income?', was deliberately left open to better capture the reality of each respondent's source(s)

"Minimum wage is abhorrent. "Minimum" is not the same as "necessary", and that is the essential problem."

of income.

There were a range of responses that stood out when participants were asked about barriers to earning a good income. Frequently listed barriers included:

- skill and education levels
- job availability
- insufficient wages

Responses that were more specific to geographic areas or particular demographics included:

- job availability in rural and northern communities
- transportation and availability of childcare as a barrier to education and earning an income in rural communities
- systemic racism from employers
- costs of caring for others, having a health issue, or a disability
- inability to access employment due to having a health issue or a disability

Single parents noted that relying on a single income made it extremely hard to earn enough to make ends meet. Many responses alluded to a lack of flexibility in employment situations. Single parents, students, and those over the age of 55 specifically noted this.

“Cost and accessibility of education, also that no attendance allowances are in place to allow for the fact that I am also parenting. If my child is sick she cannot go to daycare. My adult family members all work the same daytime hours as I work. I got kicked out of my college program because my child landed in intensive care in another community while I was traveling home with her from her appointment in Saskatoon... I was told by my instructor that I should leave my daughter in intensive care to travel 160 km each way from the hospital to be in class. I was told that “I needed to pick my priorities” so I did. My daughter is always my priority.”

“My age is 58 and now they (EI & SA) would now like me to go back to school and choose another career after 35 years looking/working with children and take out a student loan, at my age. I also have some medical issues that make it difficult to take any job.”

Supports

Again, family and government income support were most commonly reported supports for helping respondents earn a good income.

“Higher social assistance rates that are responsive to a higher costs of living are a necessity.”

4. Supporting Children

Supporting healthy child development begins well before a child is born. Ensuring that families are supported and have options for programming, services and education opportunities for their children are essential to reducing

child and family poverty⁴.

Barriers

“Daycare cost. You pay someone to watch your children to try and get ahead, but it just sets you back...that money could have went to another basic necessity but to work you need childcare...Quality childcare - sometimes you need to leave your kids with people who don't provide good care.”

“We live in small town rural Saskatchewan where some services are not available to us.”

Key barriers highlighted by respondents to supporting children's needs included:

- cost of basic necessities for children
- being a single parent
- availability of appropriate and affordable transportation for accessing basic necessities, services, and employment

Other supports related directly to caring for children, such as childcare, were frequently brought up as a barrier in later questioning, especially related to respondents' ability to access training and education.

“Sometimes I need a break but there is no money to afford evening child care and afford to go out. To somehow reduce my anxiety about leaving my daughter with someone when she has life-threatening allergies. Mental health services available outside my work hours would help.”

Supports

Participants reported that family and government income supports provided the most support for caring for their children's needs. Participants living on reserve and rural communities stood out as listing family frequently as a support for providing for their children.

5. Food

Food was included as a main category within this consultation as it is a component of the MBM. The questions on foods were designed to touch on both access and affordability of nutritious and appropriate foods.

Barriers

“Food is the biggest bill besides housing.”

The majority of respondents commented that the costs of healthy foods are too high. Other issues that were commonly raised included:

- a lack of space to prepare and/or grow food
- lack of availability and high cost of healthy food

“You pay someone to watch your children to try and get ahead, but it just sets you back...”

suitable for dietary needs or restrictions

Lack of access to and high cost of food in rural communities stood out as a significant barrier.

Respondents living in rural communities consistently reported that access to nutritious foods was limited and that in some communities, there were almost no nutritious food options at all. This was reported by rural respondents at twice the rate that it was by urban (major or small/medium cities) respondents. Rural respondents also reported that transportation was a barrier to accessing healthy foods. In some areas of the province, in particular northern communities, distant food supplies may mean travelling several hours to access nutritious foods. Coupled with the high costs of food, it is clear that accessing nutritious food is a major challenge.

...distant food supplies may mean travelling several hours to access nutritious foods.

"The cost of goods and availability in small towns in Saskatchewan."

"There is no grocery store in my town."

"I have diabetes, celiac disease, high blood pressure, one kidney, I.B.S. I am getting sick as I cannot afford to eat gluten free and Social Services gave me \$5.00 extra per month. Stress of all of this is really affecting my life, and health."

"The higher your income is, the more nutritious food you can provide for yourself."

Supports

Family and government income were frequently reported as supportive in covering the costs of nutritious foods. Family was reported as a support more frequently in on-reserve populations than by respondents in other areas. Other sources of support commonly reported were community programming or services, and friends or community. Responses suggest that communities are taking a leadership role with regards to food insecurity and that community food programming is viewed as helpful by program users.

6. Training or Education

Ensuring we address barriers to accessing training and education is crucial in supporting individuals to move out of poverty, or prevent them from falling into poverty by giving them the tools they need to succeed⁴.

Barriers

"One needs enough income and support from their family, government services and employment."

Barriers to accessing and affording training reported by many respondents included:

- lack of childcare

- educational programs not being flexible to parents and the needs of their children
- high cost of education and reluctance to accumulate debt

Many rural respondents reported that transportation and access to postsecondary opportunities were major barriers to accessing training and education in their communities.

"Lack of funding, daycare, and transportation."

"Lack of availability of evening and weekend daycare."

"Low income, I'm not able to afford training/education. If I'm in training, then I have no income to pay everyday bills."

Supports

Family, community programming or services, and friends or community stood out as the most reported supports to help respondents attain further training or education. Individuals who self-reported as living with a disability or caring for someone living with a disability reported below-average support from all sources, except for community programs and services.

7. General Barriers

"It seems that employers and government policy does not consider unexpected expenses such as medical and vehicle costs in considering payroll in general."

Several respondents highlighted that unexpected expenses or changes to personal circumstance can be barriers. Medical or emergency expenses were unexpected expenses that were frequently cited as strains on already tight budgets. Health status or injury was often identified as a factor in employability and income stability. Unpredictability was highlighted with regard to employment income such as in the case of seasonal, contract, or casual employment, and also in relation to changes or lack of clarity in social assistance rules and rates. Overall, unexpected expenses and events often set individuals and families back, making it hard to make ends meet and gain the stability and confidence required to invest in getting ahead.

8. Variation

Some variation was noted across different demographics. Additionally, some demographic groups were not represented in significant numbers, therefore, needs specific to these groups did not stand out as significant in overall analysis. These are reported here.

Some of the discussion group participants had been previously incarcerated. This group noted that it is crucial to have community supports to help transition back to work. Respondents identified that supports should focus on life skills and mental health. Community programs to help with access to food, transportation,

"If I'm in training, then I have no income to pay everyday bills."

Overall, unexpected expenses and events often set individuals and families back, making it hard to make ends meet and gain the stability and confidence required to invest in getting ahead.

thrift stores, and employers willing to overlook criminal records are also important.

With the exception of respondents over the age of 55, family supports and government income support stood out as the most self-reported answer in regard to what supports people to make ends meet. Women were twice as likely as men to report government income as a support, and women identified more supports than men did overall.

Less than 30% of respondents from Saskatoon and Regina listed family as a support in covering the costs of basic necessities, while more than 50% of those living in small cities listed family as a supporting factor. Three quarters of single parent respondents selected government income supports as a support for basic expenditures - nearly one and a half times the rate of the overall sample.

Single parents selected government income supports as a supporting factor at a higher rate in nearly all categories than the overall survey respondents, especially when asked about providing for children and having enough money to afford basics.

The emphasized importance of family support alongside government support suggests that changes in policy should keep in mind that community and family-level changes and efforts are imperative to supporting individuals who are affected by poverty.

“...we need to leave supports in place long enough to encourage success.”

Opportunities for Change

“I believe that we need to leave supports in place long enough to encourage success. If you make a few extra dollars you should be able to use supports until thoroughly established.”

The most reported answers by respondents were related to systems-level change.

These included:

- improvements to affordable and accessible housing
- improved employment opportunities
- supports for training and education
- supports for childcare to make it easier to access employment and training opportunities
- raising minimum wage
- a guaranteed annual income
- indexing social assistance to the costs of living
- altering regulations in social assistance that prevent the achievement of higher earnings,
- improvements to tax incentive eligibility, and additional support for raising children

“Provide adequate and affordable housing; provide assistance in childcare and its cost so that all parents can work.”

“Minimum income that funds people in a socially accepted way.”

“A guaranteed income above the poverty line.”

“Increase minimum wage supplement education costs; have more daycare available without fees being high.”

Respondents identified that universal programming would improve the lives of many people living in or near poverty in our province. Of particular note were mentions of a basic income program to ensure that no person falls below the poverty line and a raise to the minimum wage so that everyone can afford to live and benefit from all that Saskatchewan has to offer.

“Currently, it seems that those who are working poor are disadvantaged over those who are supported by social services. People who are working have childcare costs, and their rent, if they can get social housing, goes up every time they get a wage increase. Also, please fix the child care subsidy program, and increase available spaces. The income threshold where families cannot get full subsidy is too low. My daughter pays more than one third of her after tax income in childcare fees. If her child is sick, she loses a day of work but this does not reduce her childcare costs.”

Several respondents commented on the importance of listening to what is needed by those affected while respecting cultural identity, practices, and beliefs. Rural respondents voiced the importance of acknowledging the differences between rural and urban communities.

“Need to recognize the difference between rural and urban and the different needs that we have. Nothing is the same as there are a lack of services available.”

Ranking of Supportive Solutions

When asked to rank a list of solutions to help bring individuals out of poverty, those that were more universal in nature, such as a guaranteed income, safe and accessible affordable housing, affordable childcare and other early years supports, and support for job/career training were ranked much higher than more targeted solutions such as better access to community programming or supports or higher assistance rates for those who are unable to work.

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Conclusion

The comments and stories shared are a compelling reminder that the experiences of those living in, or who have lived in, poverty must be included in our strategies to reduce poverty in Saskatchewan. The respondents' experiences are diverse, and without their insight, individuals and families with complex needs will continue to fall through the cracks.

We heard loudly and clearly that comprehensive and system-levels change are needed to reduce poverty in our province. Participants frequently called for a minimum wage that keeps up with the costs of living, a guaranteed income for all, better access to affordable and safe housing, and increased supports for childcare to help parents to succeed in work or education. They often highlighted the barriers faced in accessing suitable supports, in particular that rigid social assistance rules make it hard to access support adequate for their needs, and hard to move off of social assistance in a supported, sustainable way. At the same time, we learned that for many, family and community often provide essential supports and are key to reducing poverty. The feedback heard in this consultation, while not comprehensive, was varied and reinforces the often-cited complexity of the issue. It is the result of a variety of interconnected issues, requiring interconnected, comprehensive solutions that respond to the diverse needs of Saskatchewan people.

Comprehensive solutions, such as those listed above, have been shown to reduce poverty in other Canadian provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, and Ontario. The Government of Saskatchewan is well poised to take significant steps toward ensuring that all people in our province have the opportunity to thrive. Together, we can make a better plan that will benefit us all.

We heard loudly and clearly that comprehensive and system-levels change are needed to reduce poverty in our province.

Appendix A: Methodology

The team developed an individual survey and a group discussion framework. Both the survey and discussion question framework were designed to ask the same questions with some adaptations made to convey plain-language messages for diverse groups. Non-profit organizations around the province, with a focus on those who work primarily with people living in poverty, were invited to engage participants by whichever method best suited their organizational capacity and their clients' abilities. Efforts were made to capture Saskatchewan's diversity by reaching out to organizations working in rural and northern communities, as well as those providing services to First Nations, Métis, previously or currently incarcerated, and newcomer populations.

The survey questions were designed around six areas from Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute's components for a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, or the Market Basket Measure of low income². For the purposes of this consultation, we selected basic necessities, housing, nutritious foods, earning an income, supporting children, and training and education. Survey and discussion questions were then based around premises of "what makes it hard for you", "what supports you", and "what can the province do to create better living conditions" related to those six components. Please see appendix B for Torjman's full list of components of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Three types of questioning were used to generate feedback in the categories being explored:

1. "What Makes it Hard" Questions

This section of questions asked participants about what types of barriers make it hard to make ends meet. Open ended questions were used to invite participants to reflect on barriers to each of the following: affording basic necessities, accessing safe and affordable housing, earning a good income, providing supports for children, accessing nutritious foods, and taking part in further training or education. The barriers mentioned below represent the most significant answers from completed surveys and discussion questions.

2. "What Supports You" Questions

This section of questions focused on asking participants what types of supports are currently helping them to achieve basic necessities, accessing safe and affordable housing, earning a good income, accessing nutritious foods, providing supports for children, and taking part in further training or education. Checkboxes with the following options were provided as possible supports for each question: family, income, government income support, community programs/services, friends/community, other (with the opportunity to list answers), and not applicable.

3. "What Should be Done" Questions

Two open-ended questions were asked to learn what could be done in the province of Saskatchewan to help those who are currently struggling to make ends meet and to prevent others from falling into poverty. In addition, a three sets of supportive solutions were provided and participants were asked to rank these in order of helpfulness.

Appendix B: Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategies

Poverty has multiple causes, and requires multiple solutions. In short, poverty is complex. But poverty is not so complex that we should simply throw up our hands; instead, concerted action, focusing on both prevention and alleviation, gets results. Over the past ten years, all provinces in Canada except Saskatchewan and British Columbia have developed comprehensive poverty reduction strategies, and Canada's earliest adopters have already begun to report progress. Comprehensive poverty reduction strategies are strategies that do not shy away from the complexity of poverty. Rather, they are designed to meet this complexity head-on. Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute has detailed 10 areas in which a robust poverty reduction strategy can produce results².

1. Affordable housing
2. Early childhood development
3. Education and literacy
4. Training
5. Income supplement
6. Income replacement
7. Disability income
8. Assets
9. Social infrastructure
10. Place-based interventions

There is no single way of covering each of these areas. It is up to every province and municipality to come up with the best solutions based on their strengths and the challenges they face; Saskatchewan has the opportunity to build on the lessons learned from each provincial strategy. Poverty reduction in Saskatchewan require coordinated efforts and commitment from community organizations, individuals, business, and all levels of government¹.

Appendix C: Demographics

Among those 138 people who completed an individual survey, 65% were female and 24% were male. 46% were between the ages of 19 and 35, 28% were between the ages of 36 and 54, and 22% were aged 55 and over. 54% of respondents self identified as First Nations, 15% self identified as Métis, 20% self identified as either living with a disability or caring for someone who is living with a disability, 18% were single parents, 3% self identified as a new Canadian, and 12% self identified as 'other'. Of those who identified as other, some specified 'senior', some 'parolee', and others provided no further explanation.

The province was divided into three sections representing the north, central, and south regions of the province with 31%, 55%, and 9% of respondents falling into those areas respectively. Eleven percent of respondents reported residing in a town, 6% in a rural municipality, 15% on a reserve, 31% in a small or medium city, and 41% reported living in either Saskatoon or Regina.

Lastly, 79% of participants reported, when asked, that they had struggled to make ends meet at some point in the past year and 9% preferred not to answer this question. Most of the 19% of respondents who answered 'no' to this question completed the remainder of the survey, and provided insight relevant to a lived experience of poverty. It's likely that many had experience living in or near poverty in a previous life period, or were not comfortable answering 'yes' to this question. Given the low proportion of respondents who selected 'no', and the content of many of their responses, their survey answers were compiled with and reported alongside those who did self-report recent experience of poverty.

Region	# of Responses	% of Respondents
North	43	31%
Central	76	55%
South	13	9%
No response		5%

Community	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Town	15	11%
Rural Municipality	8	6%
Reserve	21	15%
Saskatoon / Regina	56	41%
Small/Medium City	43	31%
No response		1%

Identity	# of Responses	% of Respondents
First Nations	75	54%
Metis	21	15%
Newcomer	4	3%
Disability (living with/caring for)	27	20%
Single parent	25	18%
Other	16	12%
Prefer not to answer	2	1%
No response		7%

Gender	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Female	90	65%
Male	33	24%
Other	1	1%
No response		12%

Age	# of Responses	% of Respondents
19-35	64	46%
35-54	39	28%
55+	30	22%
No Response		4%

Self-Reported Poverty	# of Responses	% of Respondents
Yes	98	71%
No	26	19%
Prefer not to answer	13	9%
No response		2%

Discussion groups varied in both size and demographics, and were held in both rural and urban centres across the province. Both males and females participated, and the age range was 18-72. Participants included First Nations, Metis, and Caucasian individuals. At least one discussion group consisted of individuals who had previously been incarcerated. Ten discussion groups submitted notes included in this analysis.

Appendix D: Data Analysis Framework

The open-ended data were analyzed by a Poverty Costs team member together with an independent consultant on contract with Poverty Costs. Based on an initial review of the responses, the researchers created a framework for categorizing the data that examined both individual experiences and systemic supports and barriers. Open-ended responses were coded and analyzed based on the following frameworks:

Barriers

For each question related to barriers (“What makes it hard to ...”), individual responses were coded by whether their comments referred to individual-level difficulties, specific expenses or costs, or systemic barriers. The latter category was further categorized in terms of both the system itself and the specific type of barrier. For example, a comment on “Lack of affordable housing” would be coded as “housing” under System, and “supply” and “rates” under Systemic Barriers. Each response could have multiple codes applied.

Suggestions

For questions related to what would help people currently living in poverty or prevent individuals from falling into poverty, comments were coded within the categories of services/programs and systems. Similar to the coding of questions related to barriers, systems responses were categorized based on the system itself and the specific systemic change suggested.

Appendix E: Complete Survey Tool

The survey tool below was made available both in a printable and digitally fillable format. No web-based format was made available as this was not deemed to be a priority in accessing the target respondents.

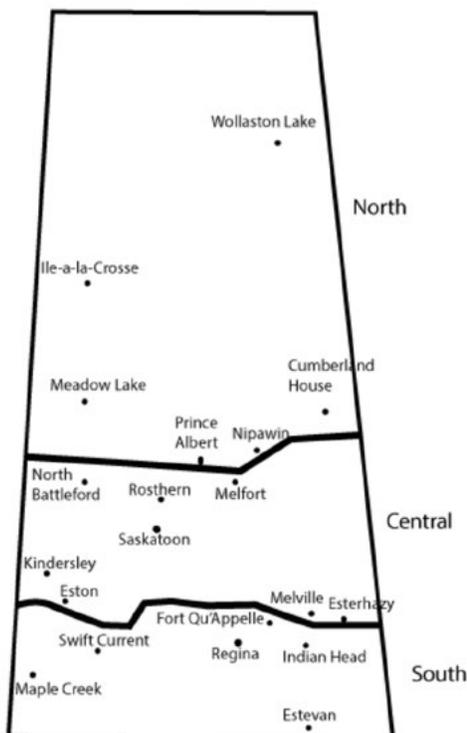
Thank you for agreeing to engage your community on the topic of poverty and poverty reduction strategies in Saskatchewan. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with questions or to ask for additional support.

The survey is intended to collect the views and ideas of those with lived experience of poverty. Please use it as appropriate with those you serve in your community. You're welcome to assist participants in filling out the questions by helping to capture their ideas and experiences. If it's appropriate, you may also hand out the survey for participants to fill in themselves.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to poverty reduction in Saskatchewan. Poverty Costs is a group of people and organizations raising awareness about poverty in Saskatchewan and engaging the community to ask for a poverty reduction strategy from the government. This survey is an opportunity for you to have your voice heard. Thank you in advance for sharing your ideas.

The answers you provide below will be shared with a committee of people who are providing advice to the government about how to reduce poverty in Saskatchewan. Poverty Costs will share your comments with the committee and also interpret a summary of all responses for the committee. Please answer as many of the questions as you can. We thank you for your time.

You are not required to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with or prefer not to answer. Your answers are anonymous. No identifying information will be used.



What area of the province do you live in? (select one of the areas from the map)

North
Central
South

What best describes the community you live in?

Town/Village/Resort Village
Rural Municipality (RM)
Reserve
Saskatoon or Regina
Medium/Small city

Do you identify as any of the following? (please check all that apply)

First Nations

Métis

Newcomer to Canada

Person living with a disability or caring for someone with a disability

Single Parent

Other _____

Prefer not to answer

What gender do you identify as?

What is your age?

19-34

35-54

55+

Within the last year, have you had difficulty meeting basic needs (e.g. food, housing, transportation, clothing, phone)?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

What makes it hard to have enough money to pay for basic costs like food, housing, transportation, clothing, and communication costs (phone, internet) each month?

What supports you to have enough money to pay for basics? (please check all that apply)

Family

Employment Income

Government Income Support

Community Programs/Services

Friends/Community

Other _____

What makes it hard to find and afford good housing?

What supports you to find and afford good housing? (please check all that apply)

Family

Employment Income

Government Income Support

Community Programs/Services

Friends/Community

Other _____

Not Applicable

What makes it hard to earn a good income?

What supports you to earn a good income? (please check all that apply)

Family

Employment Income

Government Income Support

Community Programs/Services

Friends/Community

Other _____

Not Applicable

What, besides income, makes it hard to provide everything your children need?

What supports you to provide what your children need? (please check all that apply)

Family

Employment Income

Government Income Support

Community Programs/Services

Friends/Community

Other _____

Not Applicable

What makes it hard to always have good (nutritious, appropriate, enough) food to eat?

What supports you to always have good food to eat? (please check all that apply)

Family

Employment Income

Government Income Support

Community Programs/Services

Friends/Community

Other _____

What makes it hard to get training or education?

What supports you to get training or education? (please check all that apply)

Family

Employment Income

Government Income Support

Community Programs/Services

Friends/Community

Other _____

Not Applicable

Is there anything else that you haven't already included that makes it hard to make ends meet?

What should be done in the province of Saskatchewan to help people who are struggling to meet their basic needs?

What should be done in the province of Saskatchewan to make sure that people don't end up struggling to meet their basic needs?

Which of these would help to make sure that everyone can meet their basic needs? Please rank them based on their impact.

Rank these from 1-5 (1= most helpful, 5 = least helpful)

Support for people to find and afford good housing
More affordable childcare and other support for young children
Supports for families/individuals to save money each month
Supports for families/individuals to own a home
More safe community spaces and activities (e.g. libraries, schools, community centers, parks) that are free/cheap to access

Rank these from 1-3 (1= most helpful; 3 = least helpful)

Support for youth and young adults to finish high school
Support for job training
Support in finding good jobs

Rank these from 1-5 (1= most helpful; 5 = least helpful)

Higher hourly wages
An income top-up for those who work but don't make enough
Higher assistance rates for people unable to work or find work
A guaranteed income above the poverty line (a minimum amount that everyone makes each month)
Greater support for workers who fall ill or are supporting others with illness or disability (benefits/sick leave)

Appendix F: Discussion Group Framework

Facilitation Information:

Thank you for agreeing to engage your community in a conversation about poverty and poverty reduction strategies in Saskatchewan. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with questions or to ask for additional support.

Facilitated discussions should take place in a welcoming, supportive and safe environment and don't need to be overly formal. We strongly recommend these discussions take place in existing community groups (i.e. a learning community, a support/discussion group, etc.); however, if you're interested in facilitating an open or invited community discussion, please connect with us for additional resources and support. In order to encourage meaningful discussion, we recommend initiating discussions in a small group format, with 1 - 12 participants.

In the discussion questions listed below (beginning on page 2), you'll notice we've provided information about who Poverty Costs is, the purpose of engaging community in a discussion, what will be done with the information gathered, and a section about informed consent. Please be sure to review these sections with participants. In addition, we've provided a list of probes for each question that may help to engage participants and spark ideas.

We will accept hand-written or typed notes. Please don't feel as though you need to capture every comment made at the discussion. We are looking for key themes, ideas, recommendations and concerns. Lastly, we aren't looking for any identifying information other than the box listed below.

While taking notes, we ask that you observe the following:

For note-taker to complete

Is the group predominantly:

- First Nations / Metis
- Newcomer to Canada
- Living with a Disability
- Single Parent
- Other (is there another identity by which most of the group identifies)

Introduction:

Poverty Costs is a group of people and organizations raising awareness about poverty in Saskatchewan and engaging the community to ask for a poverty reduction strategy from the government. The Government of Saskatchewan has appointed an Advisory Committee who is putting together some recommendations. They want to hear from everyday people about what should be included in a plan. This is an opportunity to have your voice heard.

Informed Consent:

We will be recording your answers - no names will be mentioned. All of the conversations will be summarized and shared with the advisory group and the public anonymously. This summary will be posted on the Poverty Costs website and a copy will be sent to us here (facilitating organization will receive a copy).

Introductions:

Have people introduce themselves by first name (please thank participants for agreeing to take part).

Questions:

1. We know that many people are struggling to make ends meet. Can you tell us about some of the challenges?

Probes:

- Cost of / Access to basics (food, clothing, transportation, phone, housing)
- Earning enough income (jobs, social assistance, etc.)
- Training / Education
- Childcare
- Wellness / Health
- Social situation (lack of supports)

2. What are some of the things that help out?

Probes:

- Family
- Friends / Community
- Employment Income / Government Income Support
- Community Programs / Services

3. What are three changes that the province should make that would make the biggest difference in reducing or ending poverty?

Probes:

- Redirect conversation to provincial jurisdiction when possible (i.e. health, education, social services, etc.)

Appendix G: The Market Basket Measure

The MBM is a newer but popular measure of poverty in Canada. The measure defines a family as poor if they cannot afford a basic basket of goods and services needed to ensure sustenance and also a basic level of social participation. The items that go into this basket—things like food, clothing, shelter and transportation—are decided by a group of expert representatives from each of the Canadian provinces. The cost of the basket of goods is then calculated for each of 42 economic regions spanning the nation. The MBM is appealing for two main reasons: first, it is easy to interpret—people that cannot afford every item in the basket are poor; and second, it does a good job of taking into account regional differences in costs of living throughout Canada, especially differences between major cities and between urban and rural areas¹.

References

1. Plante, Charles and Keisha Sharp. 2014. Poverty Costs Saskatchewan: A New Approach to Prosperity for All. Saskatoon: Poverty Costs.
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3. Poverty Free Saskatchewan. 2011. Strategies to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatchewan. Regina, SK.
4. - 2012. Communities Respond – Summary Report: PFS Consultations 2011-2012. Regina, SK