



**United Way
of Greater Toronto**

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New United Way Report

Poverty by Postal Code Documents

Changing Toronto Neighbourhoods

TORONTO – Poverty in Toronto neighbourhoods has dramatically intensified, particularly in the inner suburbs, says a new report issued by United Way of Greater Toronto.

Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty is a comprehensive analysis of new Statistics Canada census data from 1981 to 2001 conducted as part of United Way's ongoing research into social issues, and to help determine organizational priorities. The report details the dramatic increase in the number of 'poor' Toronto neighbourhoods, and the increased concentration of 'poor' families in higher poverty neighbourhoods. In 1981, higher neighbourhood poverty was primarily concentrated in the old City of Toronto. Today, it has spread widely across Toronto's inner suburbs, particularly in the former cities of North York and Scarborough.

"The increase in poor neighbourhoods is alarming," says Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto. "We know that the consequences of living in a poor neighbourhood are significant – and long-term – for children and youth, for newcomers to our country, for the entire community. Poor neighbourhoods can spiral into further poverty, increased crime, and abandonment by both residents and businesses. And shockingly, Toronto is losing ground faster than almost all other urban centres in Canada."

Poverty by Postal Code, prepared with assistance from the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), will enable United Way to develop responses and action to urgent social issues. In 2002, *A Decade of Decline* provided hard evidence of growing poverty and income disparity that accompanied robust economic growth, especially outside the downtown core. Three months later, United Way launched its *Strong Neighbourhoods, Healthy City* strategy to address the lack of services in several of Toronto's most underserved communities through new funding and innovative partnerships.

"Neighbourhood decline is not inevitable, and investments in communities do make an enormous difference," says Lankin. "That is the lesson to be learned from successful neighbourhood revitalization efforts in the United States and Britain."

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Key findings:

- The number of ‘poor’ families in Toronto increased by almost 69% between 1981 and 2001, compared to just a 15% increase in the number of families overall.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the number of higher poverty neighbourhoods in Toronto. In 1981, there were 30 such neighbourhoods; 20 years later, there were 120.
- Toronto alone is facing the challenge of increasing numbers of higher poverty neighbourhoods. In 2001, the rest of the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area* had only one higher poverty neighbourhood compared to the City of Toronto’s 120.
- This increase has been especially acute in the inner suburbs – the former municipalities of Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, York and East York – where the combined total of higher poverty neighbourhoods rose from 15 in 1981 to 92 in 2001.
- The concentration of family poverty is increasing, with 43.2% of ‘poor’ families living in higher poverty neighbourhoods compared with 17.8% in 1981.
- Since 1981, there has been a 484% increase in the ‘poor’ immigrant family population living in higher poverty neighbourhoods, from 19,700 in 1981 to 115,100 in 2001. Immigrant families accounted for two-thirds of the total family population living in higher poverty neighbourhoods.

“Strong, healthy neighbourhoods are the building blocks of sustainable, competitive cities,” says Lankin. We must take action to successfully turn the tide of neighbourhood decline with a comprehensive, integrated approach from all sectors – business, government, labour and community – and create a strong, vibrant city.”

United Way will help address this growing issue through its three new priority areas – assisting youth, helping newcomers achieve their potential and building strong neighbourhoods – through funding, partnerships and solutions. It will work with other partners to develop long-term, multi-pronged solutions for stronger neighbourhoods, including investments for new social infrastructure in high needs neighbourhoods.

To download the report and maps depicting the changes, visit www.unitedwaytoronto.com.

*The Toronto Census Metropolitan Area include the City of Toronto plus 23 surrounding municipalities.

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