

Demographic trends in poverty for Surrey residents

Objective

In an effort to understand poverty through an equity lens, SFU's REACH-Cities team created data visualizations that present how poverty rates across different demographic groups in Surrey, with a specific emphasis on racialized poverty trends across generations.

Approach

In consultation with the City of Surrey, we used the Market Basket Measure (MBM) poverty measure and drew on data from the 2021 Canada Census of Population available through the Community Data Program, Canadian Income Survey (released in April 2024) which provides low-income statistics from tax filer data up to 2023 (tax year 2022) and Market Basket Measure component thresholds up to 2024 (tax year 2023). Additionally, we requested custom cross-tabulated data from Statistics Canada from the 2021 Canada Census of Population to analyze the prevalence of racialized poverty across generations.

We analyzed poverty trends both broadly for the City of Surrey, and within its individual communities. Summary measures for communities were estimated using areal-interpolation of census tracts weighted by the census block population with boundaries adjusted to the area within 30m of residential buildings. We aggregated demographic categories where needed to avoid small cell sizes.

Results

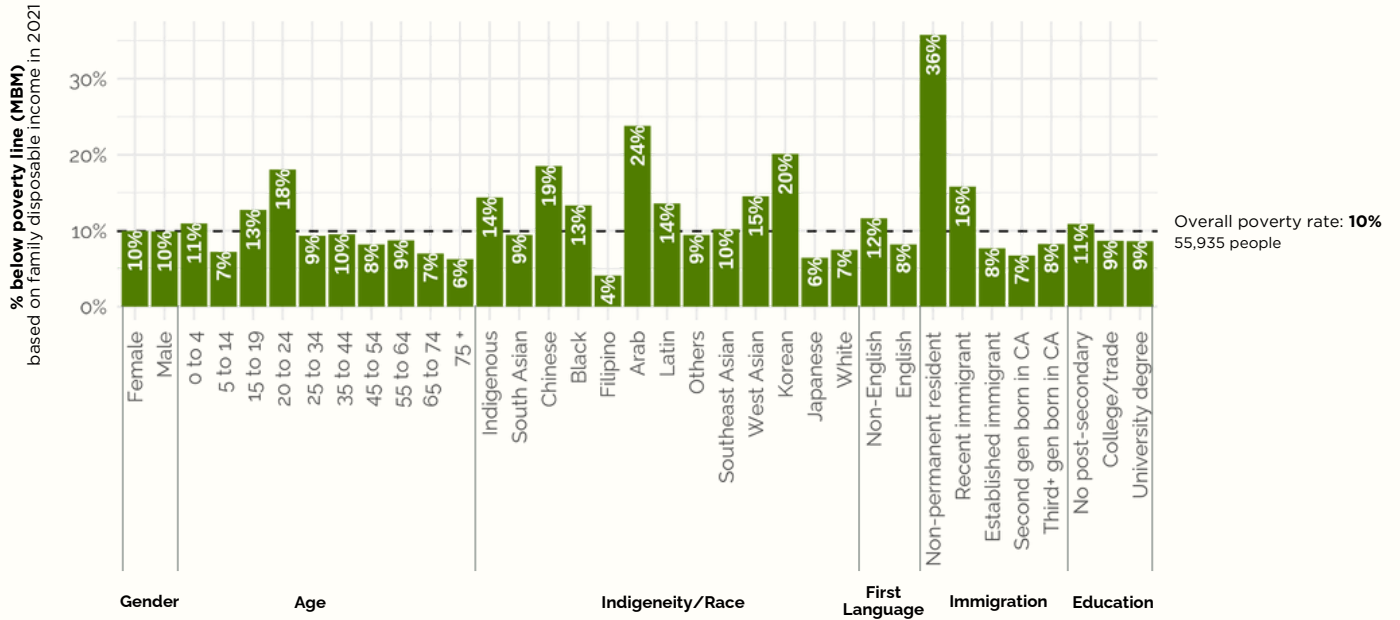
The 2021 Census data indicate a decline in poverty rates in Surrey compared to 2016. This downward trend has been consistent since 2016, with a notable decrease in 2021. Some of these patterns may be attributed to temporary government assistance during COVID-19, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) program. However, since 2021, there has been an increase in poverty rates across all demographics, particularly among children (under 18) and older adults.

In Surrey, poverty disproportionately impacts certain demographics more than others.

Poverty Rate by Specific Demographic Groups

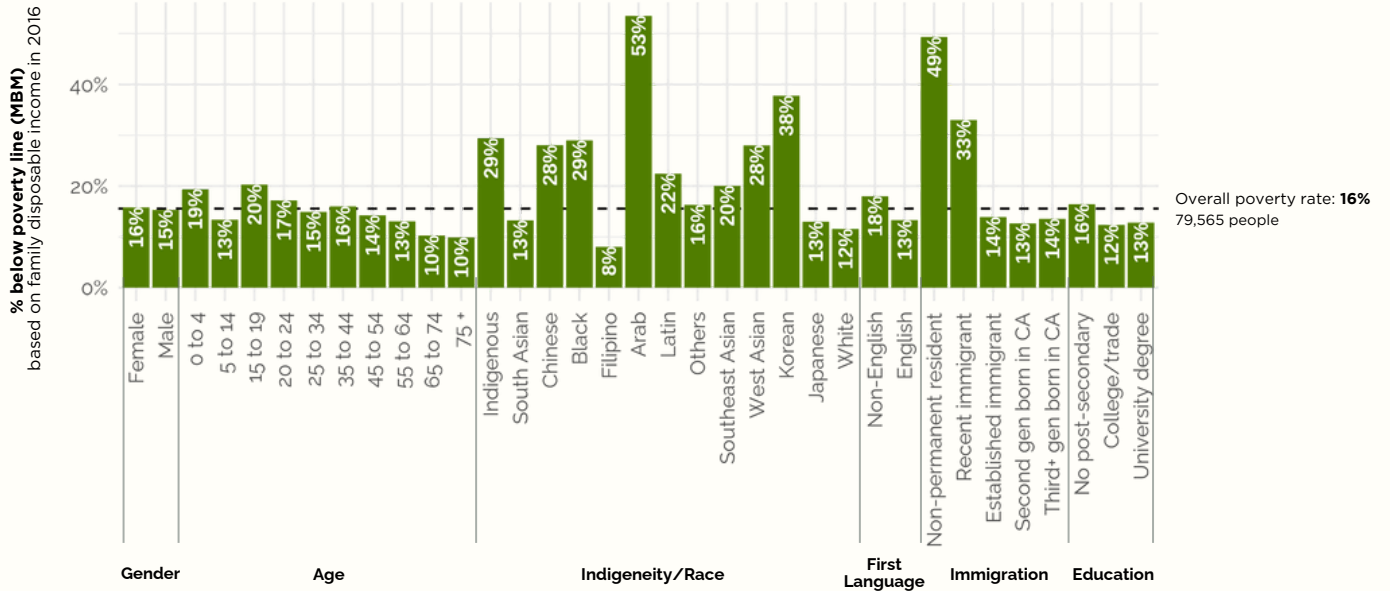
■ Rate for specific groups within City of Surrey - - - Overall rate in City of Surrey

2021



2016

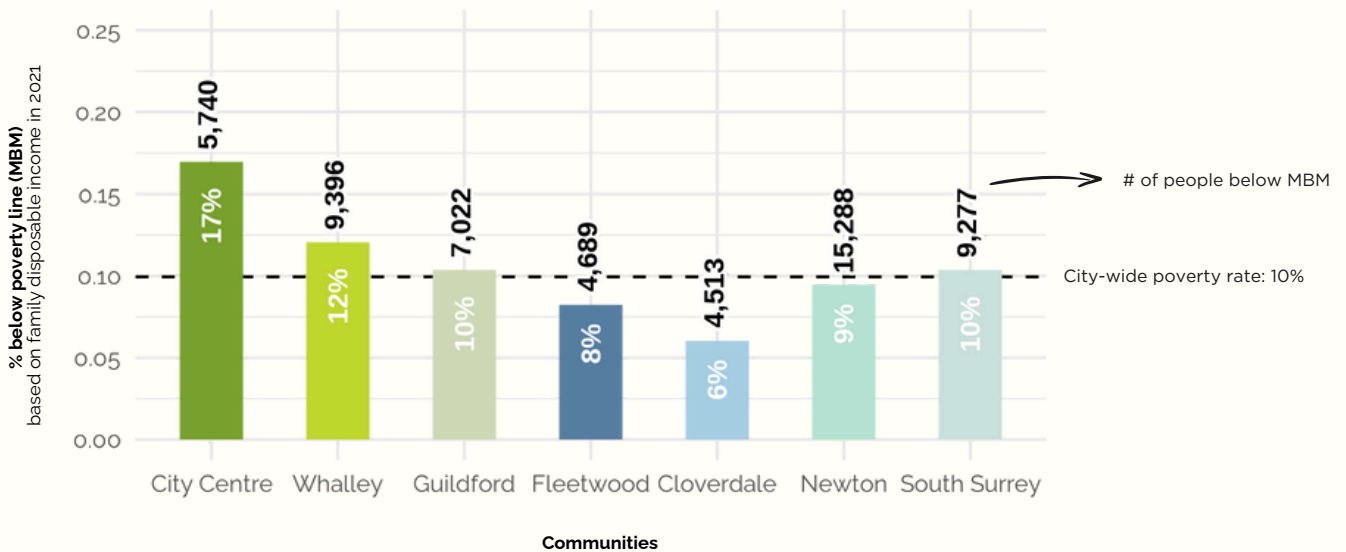
From 2016 to 2021, **23,630** fewer people were living below the poverty line in Surrey. However, despite this progress, many of the same demographic groups continue to experience higher poverty rates.



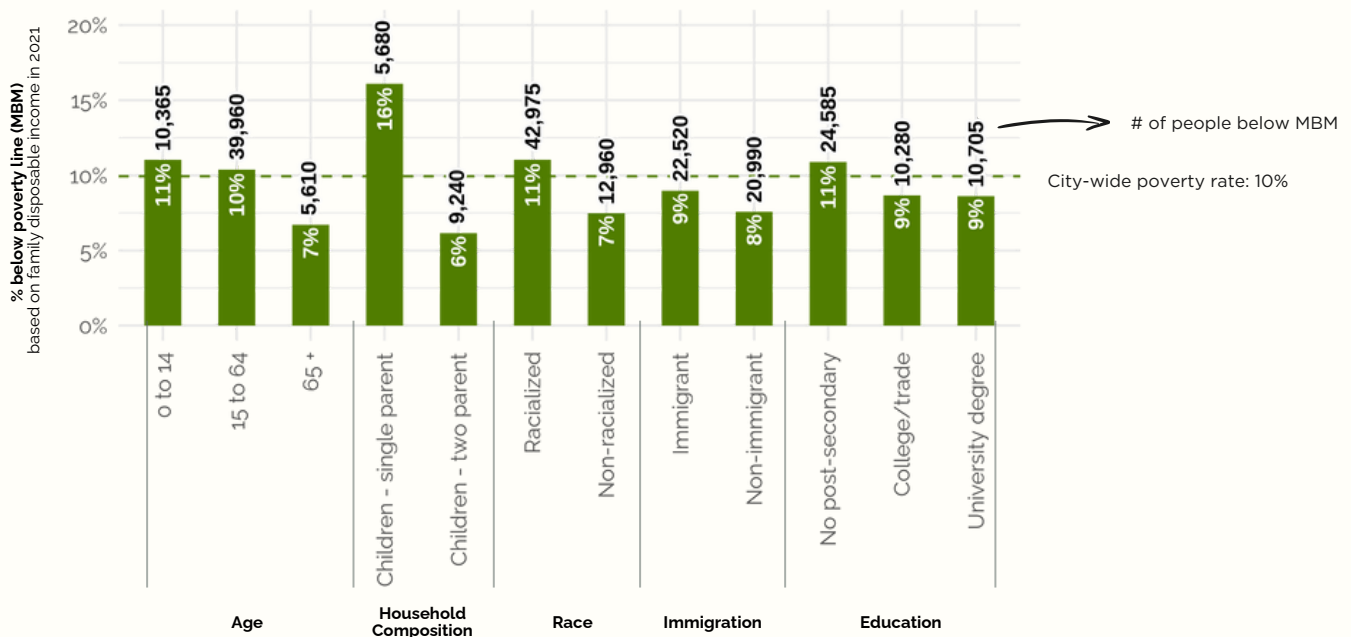
When considering poverty rates across communities, City Centre and Whalley stand out with the highest percentages, at 17% and 12% respectively, sitting higher than the city-wide rate of 10%. In contrast, Cloverdale has the lowest rate at 6%.

Estimates for Surrey's communities using area weighted means of census tracts.

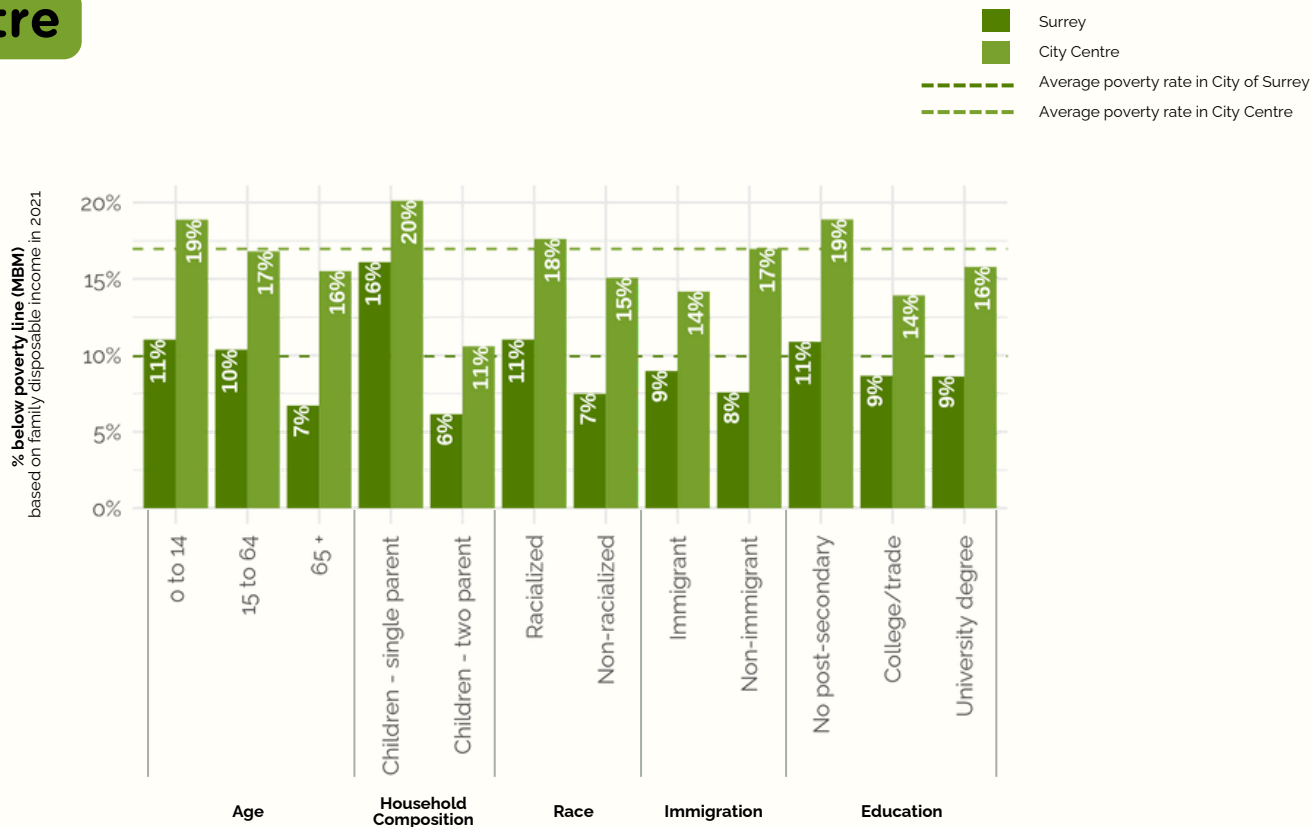
Overall Poverty Rate by Surrey Communities, 2021



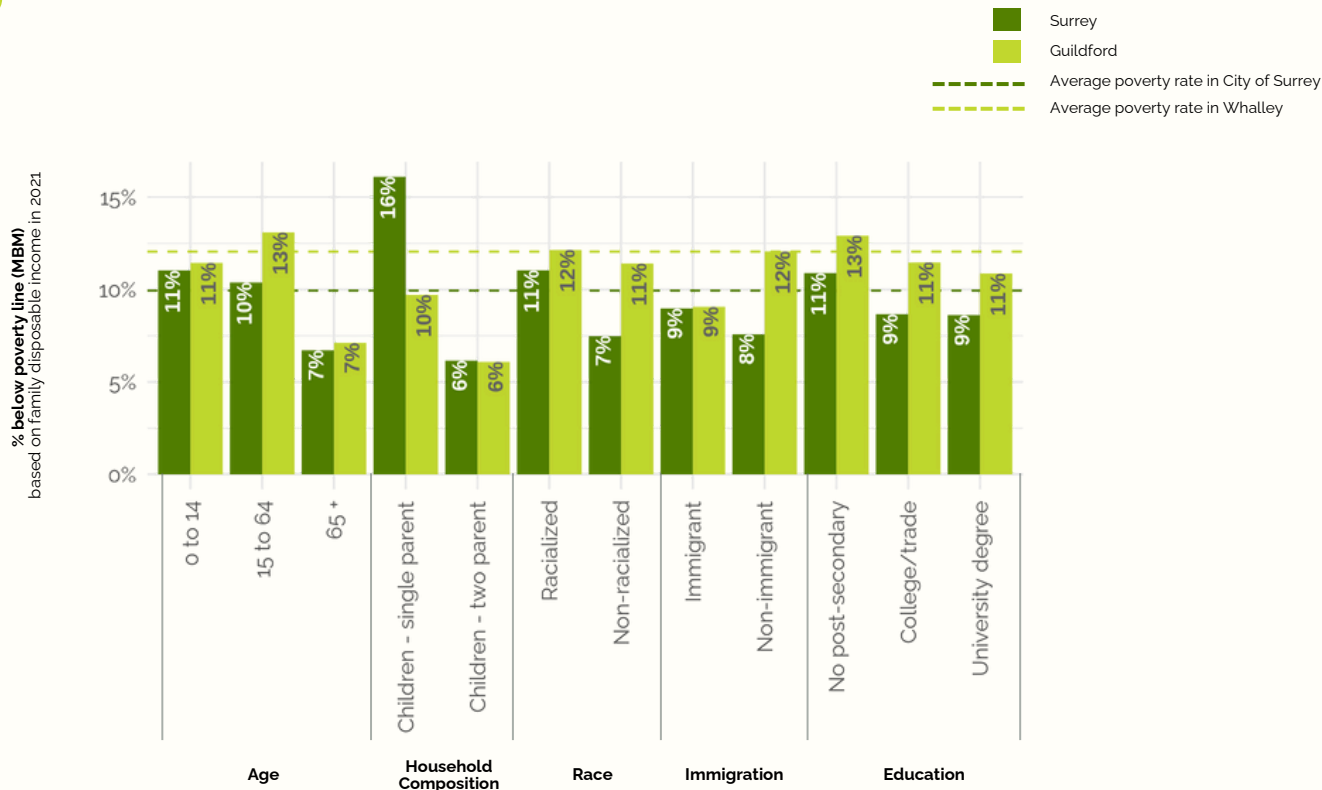
City of Surrey



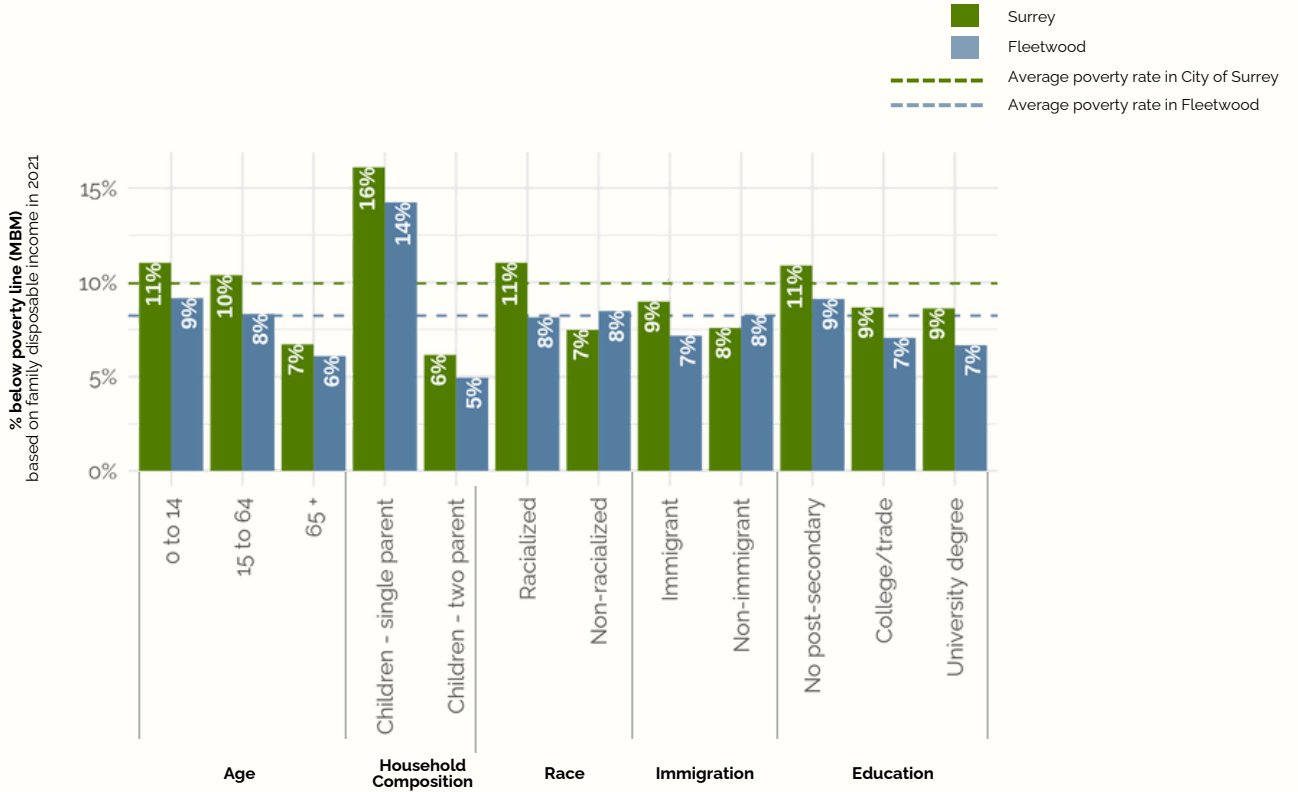
City Centre



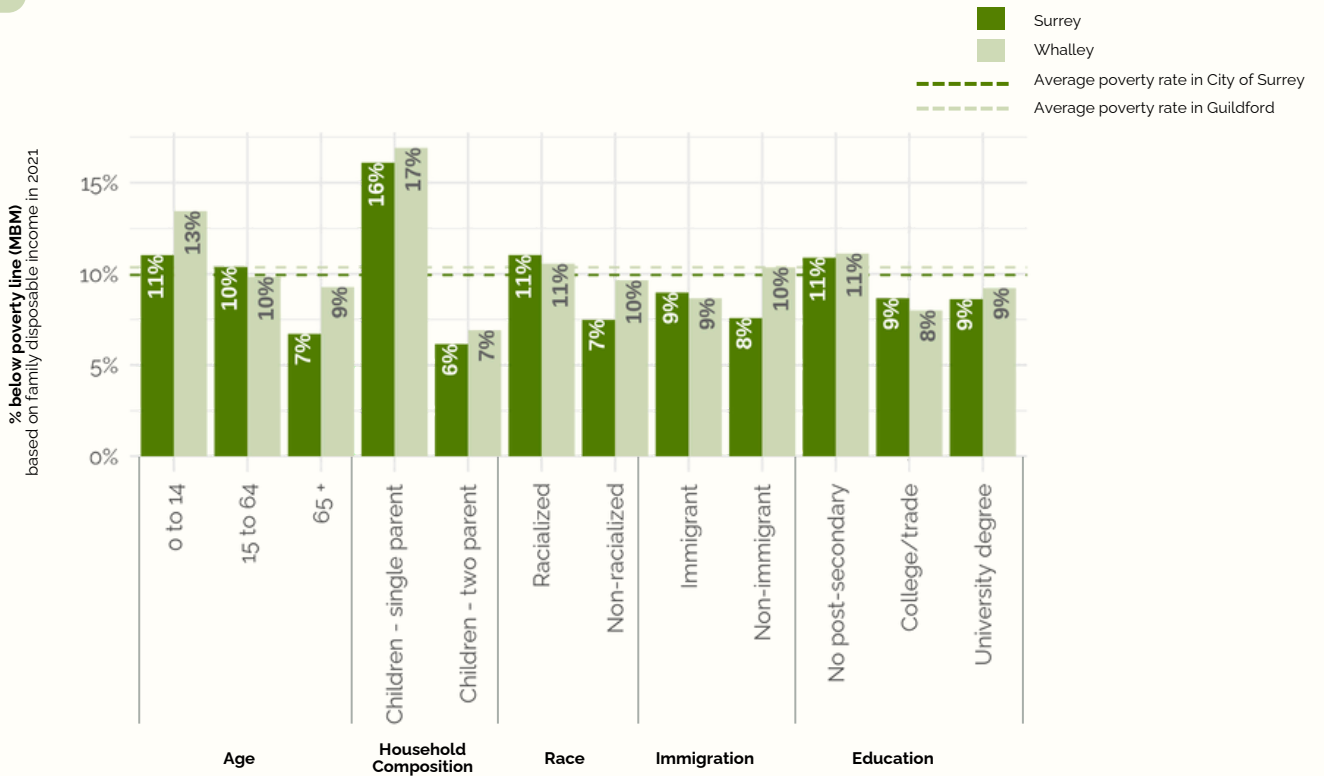
Whalley



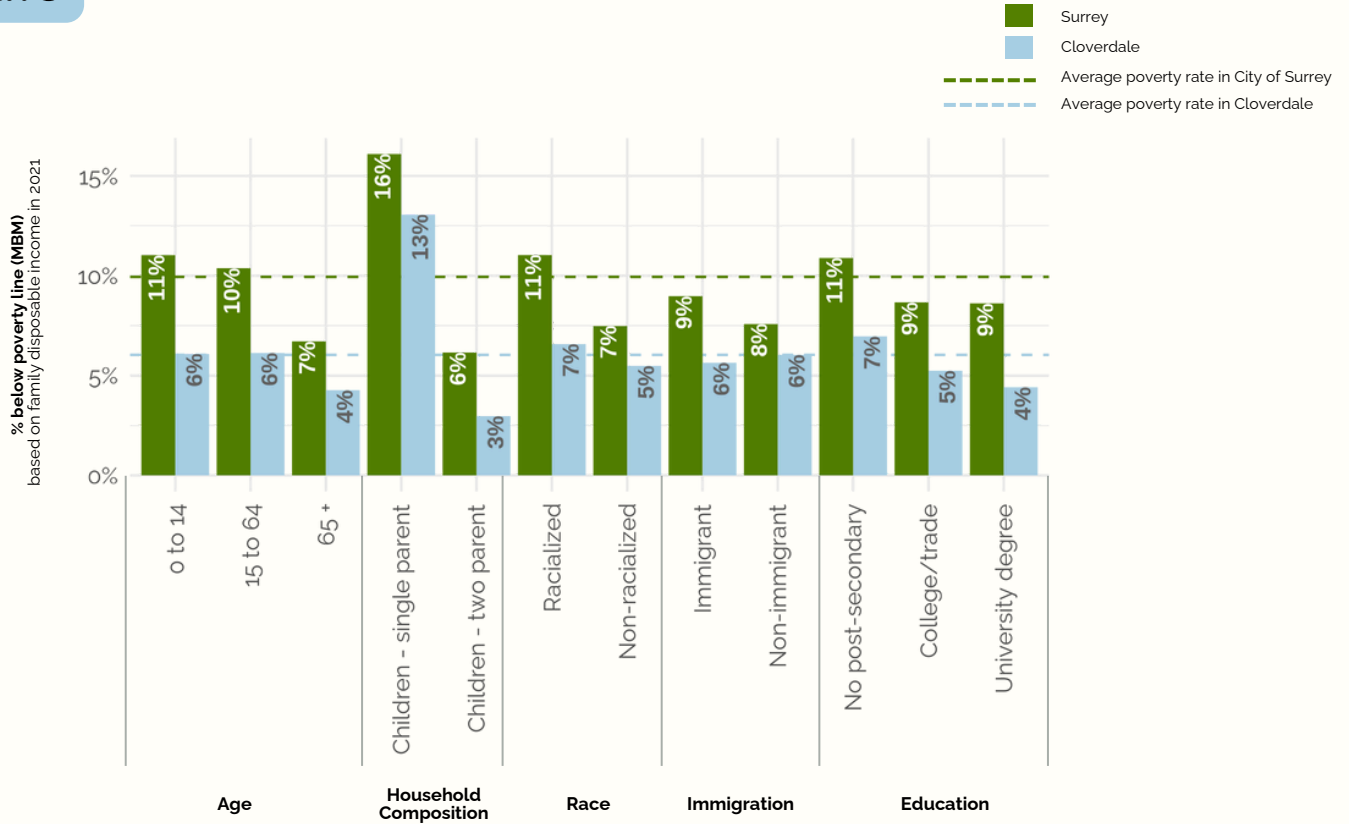
Fleetwood



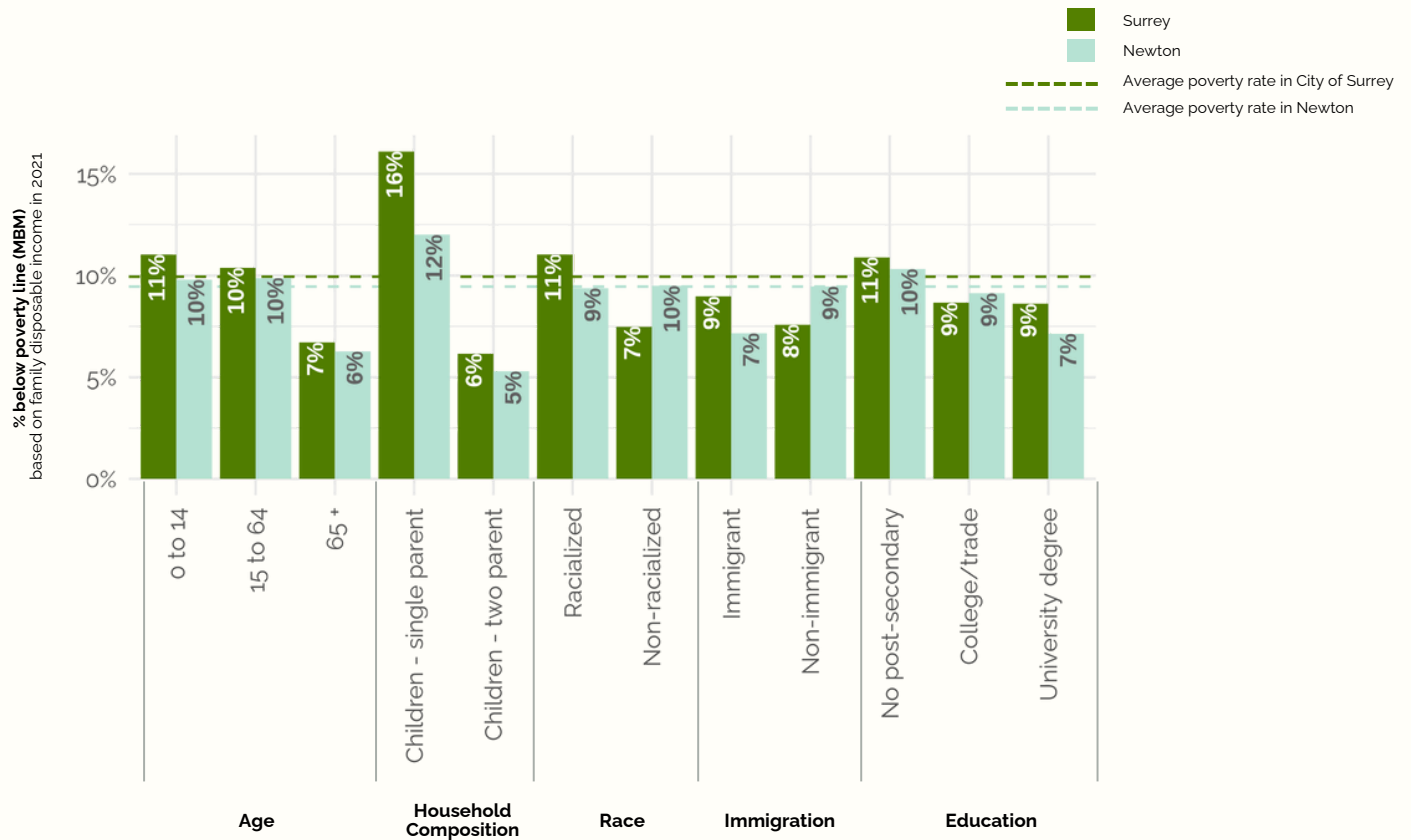
Guildford



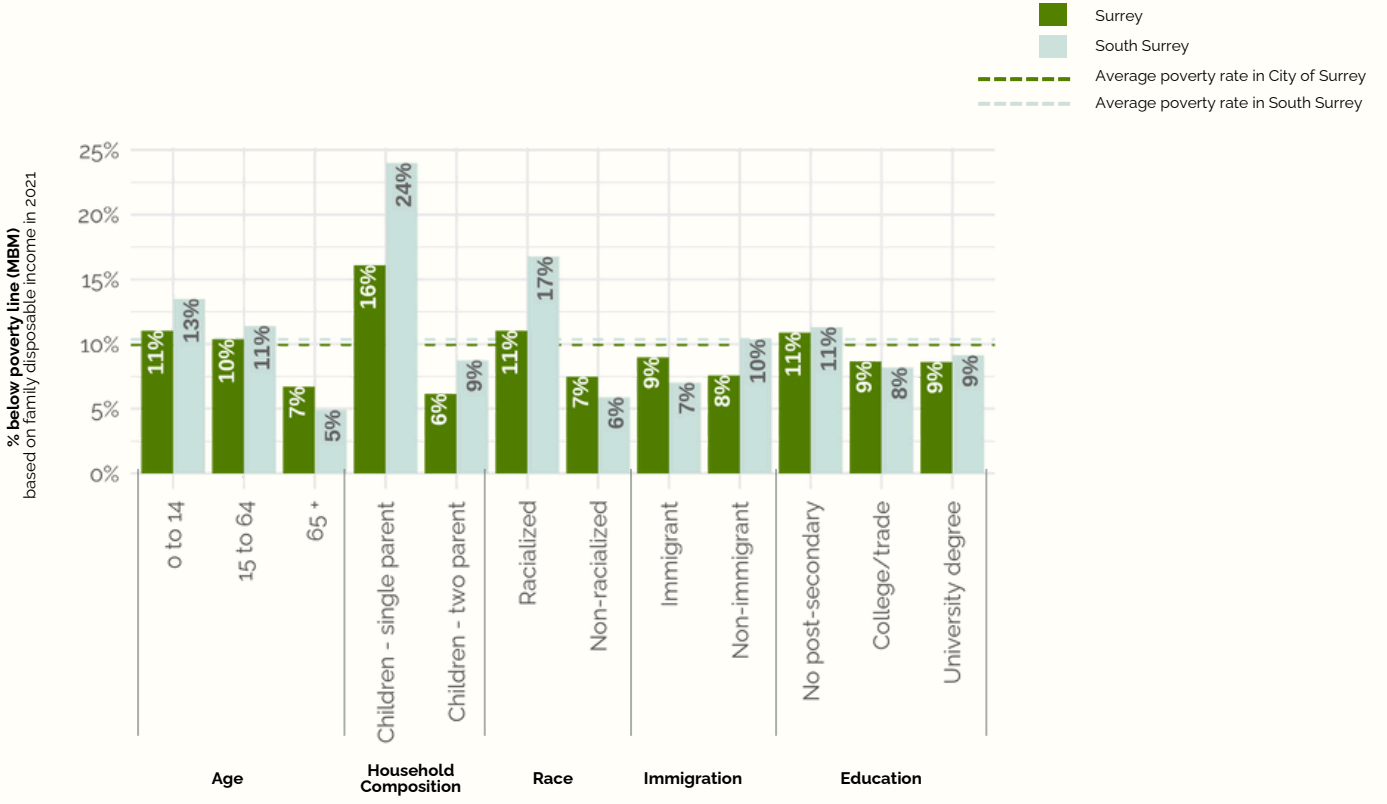
Cloverdale



Newton



South Surrey



Over generations, some racialized groups are able to uplift themselves from poverty, whereas others experience a worsening economic situation.

Racialized poverty (%) in Surrey across immigration status (2021 MBM data)

| | Indigenous (all generations) | Arab | Black | Chinese | Filipino | Japanese | Korean | Latin American | Others | South Asian | Southeast Asian | West Asian | White | |
|---|------------------------------|------|-------|---------|----------|----------|--------|----------------|--------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------|----|
| First generation: Non-permanent residents | | 30% | 34% | 50% | 26% | 32% | 64% | 35% | 30% | 35% | 34% | 32% | 31% | |
| First generation: New immigrants | | 38% | 19% | 28% | 7% | 21% | 21% | 13% | 22% | 12% | 14% | 21% | 10% | |
| First generation: Established immigrants | | 14% | 16% | 9% | 17% | 3% | 5% | 14% | 10% | 7% | 5% | 9% | 13% | 7% |
| Second generation: Born in Canada | | 19% | 11% | 13% | 4% | 3% | 17% | 13% | 9% | 5% | 8% | 11% | 7% | |
| Third generation or more: Born in Canada | | | 17% | 9% | 5% | 3% | 0% | 20% | 8% | 5% | 14% | | 8% | |

Data source: Statistic Canada, 2021 Census of Population, custom tabulation for SFU REACH-Cities

Racialized poverty (#) in Surrey across immigration status (2021 MBM data)

| | Indigenous (all generations) | Arab | Black | Chinese | Filipino | Japanese | Korean | Latin American | Others | South Asian | Southeast Asian | West Asian | White | |
|---|------------------------------|------|-------|---------|----------|----------|--------|----------------|--------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------|------|
| First generation: Non-permanent residents | | 45 | 230 | 840 | 170 | 35 | 645 | 300 | 115 | 9550 | 170 | 60 | 255 | |
| First generation: New immigrants | | 850 | 410 | 1375 | 270 | 30 | 220 | 95 | 130 | 2465 | 110 | 160 | 195 | |
| First generation: Established immigrants | | 1750 | 550 | 480 | 5110 | 735 | 30 | 830 | 500 | 420 | 4745 | 760 | 375 | 1665 |
| Second generation: Born in Canada | | 290 | 405 | 1305 | 375 | 30 | 300 | 260 | 530 | 3025 | 405 | 145 | 2730 | |
| Third generation or more: Born in Canada | | 0 | 150 | 115 | 35 | 30 | 0 | 20 | 95 | 235 | 40 | 0 | 7935 | |

Data source: Statistic Canada, 2021 Census of Population, custom tabulation for SFU REACH-Cities

Immigration status terms (Statistics Canada definitions)

First generation: Non-permanent resident - A person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status (asylum claimants). Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included, unless these family members are already Canadian citizens, landed immigrants or permanent residents.

First generation: Recent immigrant - A person who obtained landed immigrant or permanent resident status up to five years prior to a given census year. In the 2021 Census, this period is January 1, 2016, to May 11, 2021.

First generation: Established immigrant - A person who immigrated before 2016.

Second generation born in Canada - A person who was born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada. For the most part, these are the children of immigrants.

Third+ generation born in Canada - A person who was born in Canada with both parents born in Canada.

*Indigenous populations are also included in these charts. We recognize that Surrey is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Katzie, Kwantlen and Semiahmoo First Nations.

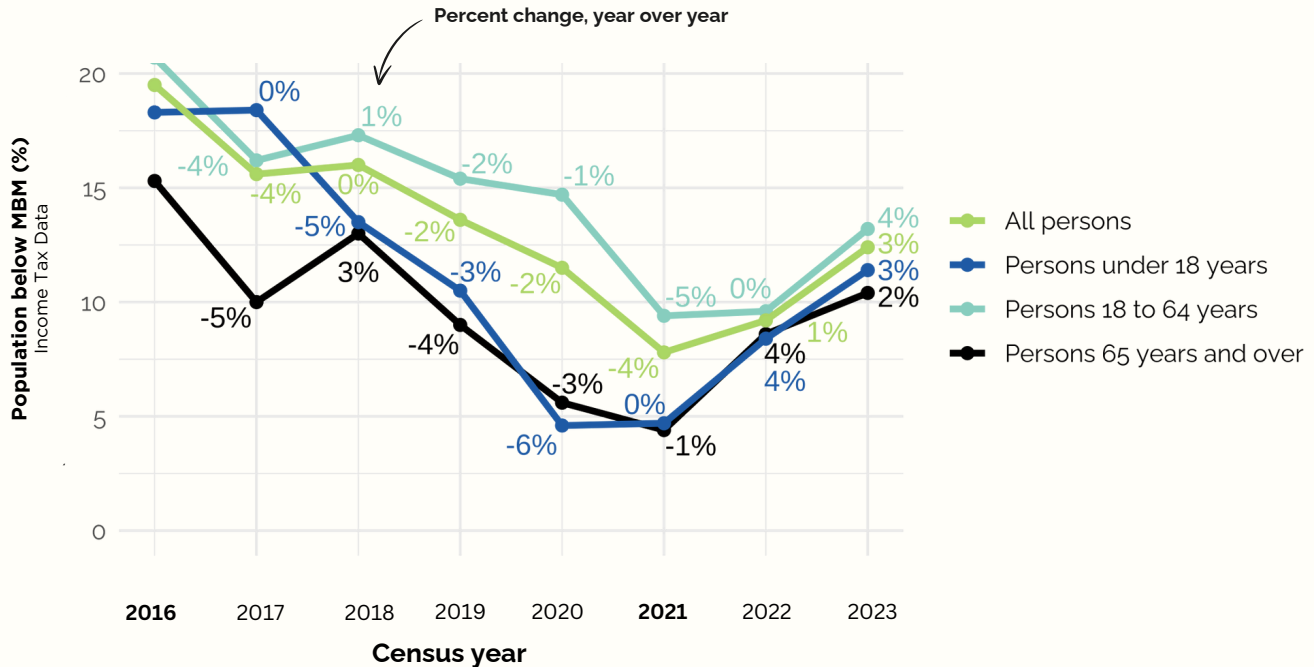
We acknowledge that Indigenous people have inhabited and stewarded these lands long before this place was even called 'Surrey'.

We include them in these charts to include all communities that make up Surrey.

Recent poverty trends in Canada

While poverty rates showed a consistent decline from 2016 to 2021 in the Census data, the most recent data from the Canadian Income Survey indicates a shift in this trend, particularly since 2021.

Metro Vancouver: Poverty Rate, change from 2016 to 2023



Both income and expenses impact poverty rates. The expenses measured by MBM have been rising (e.g., inflation) - especially since the 2021 Census.

- The Consumer Price Index components in the MBM are transportation, shelter, food, clothing, and other
- Shelter is the largest component of the MBM, and rose 7 percentage points from 2022 to 2023.
- Food and transportation rose more than 9 percentage points from 2022 to 2023.

Metro Vancouver: Market Basket Measure components, change from 2016 to 2024

