

**EDMONTON'S  
LIVING WAGE  
REPORT**

**2024**

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# About the ESPC



The Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC), founded in 1940, is a charitable, non-partisan organization focused on addressing low-income and poverty issues in the community. ESPC conducts research, raises public awareness, and advocates for effective social policies and programs, encouraging public participation and understanding of social challenges affecting Edmontonians. For more information, check our [website](#) to access our recently published [2024 Profile of Poverty in Edmonton](#), the Social Wellbeing Tracking Tool, and other publications exploring poverty, food security, inclusion, and housing issues.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 Land, a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous Peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose diverse histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our community.

# About the ALWN



The ESPC is a founding member of the Alberta Living Wage Network (ALWN) and Edmonton's living wage is calculated in partnership with them. With the help of this network, local living wages are calculated for communities across the province. This support ensures the communities use the same standardized methodology, with small adjustments based on local circumstances, allowing individuals to see how the cost of living differs across Alberta. If you would like your community to be part of this growing network, please reach out to us or directly to the Alberta Living Wage Network.

Employers can also sign up to be recognized as a Living Wage Employer. Living wage employers become part of a network committed to their supporting their communities, improving employee retention, and contributing to a more positive workplace culture. Please check out their [website](#) for more details about this growing group.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A living wage is rooted in the belief that individuals and families should not just survive, but live with dignity and participate in their community. Differing from the minimum wage, a living wage carefully considers common expenses people pay to live and the wage necessary to cover these expenses for themselves and/or their families and to reach basic financial security.

It is a calculation of the hourly rate at which a household can meet a modest standard of living, once government transfers have been added to the household's income and deductions have been subtracted.

**In 2024, the living wage is \$20.85, a decrease of \$1.40 from the previous year.**

While inflation has increased significantly over the past year, expenses for the living wage reference families have gone down. The largest decreases this year were seen in clothing and footwear, due to changes in shopping patterns, and childcare, due to the gradual implementation of \$10/day childcare. At the same time, the reference living wage families saw an increase in government benefits they are eligible for. These trends worked together to lower the living wage.

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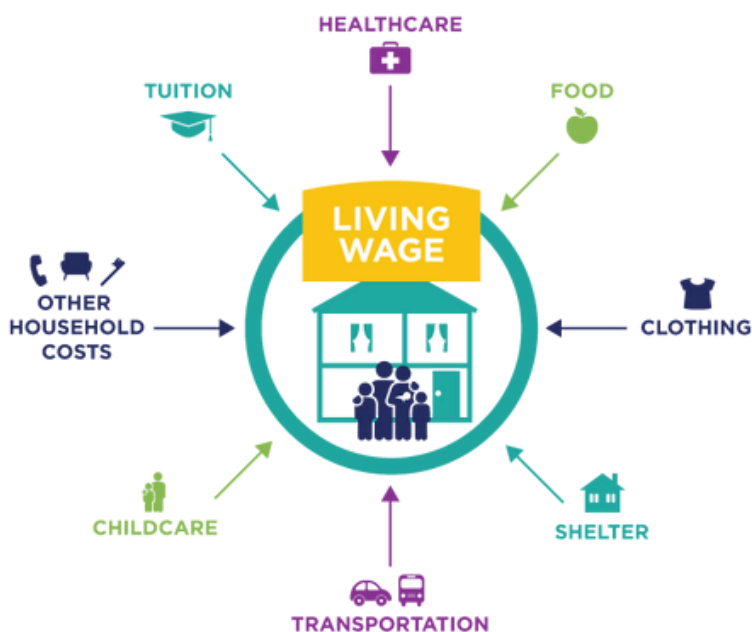
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# WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

A living wage is rooted in the belief that individuals and families should not just survive, but live with dignity and participate in their community. A living wage is defined as the hourly wage that an income earner must make to provide for themselves, their families, and to reach basic financial security.

While traditional poverty measures such as the Market Basket Measure (MBM) detail the amount a family needs to meet their most basic of needs, the living wage allows for a higher standard of living and accounts for the income a family would need to participate in the community. It includes childcare for those who need it, allowance for one adult to attend school, extended health and dental plans, and a minor emergency contingency fund. However, it does not include items that would allow families to “get ahead,” such as putting away savings or paying down debt.

A living wage is not the same as the minimum wage. The minimum wage is the wage mandated by the provincial government that employers must pay all workers. Currently in Alberta, the minimum wage is \$15.00 per hour, and \$13.00 per hour for workers under the age of 18. The minimum wage is typically lower than the living wage [1].



\*This graphic is courtesy of ALWN.

# WHY DO LIVING WAGES MATTER?

In a time of rising inflation, Edmontonians are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. In 2023, over a quarter (27.4%) of Albertans were living in food insecure homes, meaning they have inadequate or insecure access to food, in terms of quality or quantity, due to financial constraints. Children are even more vulnerable; 30.3% children were living in food insecure homes [2]. In 2022, 12.1% of Edmontonians were living in core housing need, meaning their housing was either unaffordable (30% or more of one's household income goes to housing), inadequate (in need of major repairs), unsuitable (not enough rooms for the size of family), or any combination of the three [3]. Also in 2022, 7.3% of Albertans were living in energy poverty, meaning they spent more than 10% of their household income on home energy needs [4].

Making low wages has serious impacts on a person's well-being and sense of dignity. First of all, people making low wages may struggle to afford their basic needs, and are forced to make tough decisions about what bills to pay each month. These experiences are extremely stressful and have negative effects on one's mental health. Second, people making low wages have limited opportunities to get involved in their communities and participate in fun activities with loved ones. Interviews done in 2022 by the ALWN found that, when someone struggles to meet their basic needs, they may not have the disposable income to participate in recreation and hobbies. Some have to work multiple jobs, leaving little time to socialize with loved ones. Parents may face the added stress of not being able to afford putting their kids in extracurricular activities or buying them birthday and holiday presents [5]. People deserve to participate in the activities that bring them joy.

# MAJOR FACTORS IMPACTING THE 2024 WAGE

## EXPENSES HAVE DECREASED

While inflation is rising significantly, expenses for the living wage family have actually decreased slightly. The biggest change was in clothing and footwear, which decreased by 35% for both the family of four and single parent, and 25% for the single adult. Clothing and footwear are sourced from the Survey of Household Spending (SHS), which details the average families are spending on various household items. The most recent data is from 2021 [19]. Coming out of the pandemic, families may have less disposable income for clothing, and are thus spending less, deflating this number.

Childcare costs are also going down – but only for the family of four. The gradual implementation of the \$10/day childcare policy has been successful in lowering childcare costs for families with young children. The affordability grant, given directly to childcare providers, resulted in upfront childcare costs for the reference 3-year-old to decrease by 15.9%. Upfront childcare costs for the 7-year-old, alternatively, have increased slightly. After taking the Alberta Childcare Subsidy into account, childcare costs for the family of four (who have a 3- and 7-year-old) have decreased by 21.4% whereas costs for the single parent (who only has a 7-year-old) have increased 3.6% [13-18].

**Among all reference families, housing, food, and other household cost have all decreased slightly, whereas transportation, healthcare, and tuition have all increased.**

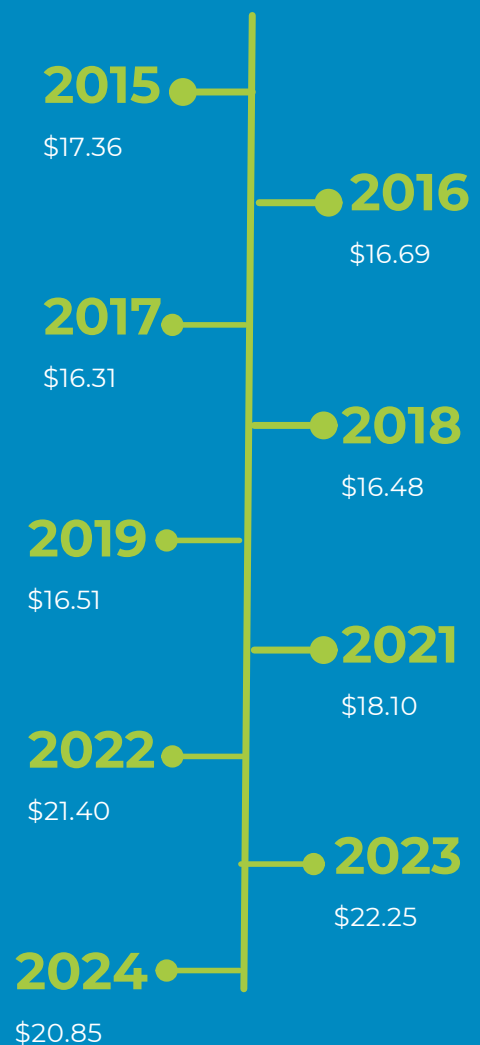


# BENEFITS HAVE INCREASED

In 2023, the Governments of Alberta and Canada instated temporary measures to help Canadians with rising inflation – this included a Canadian grocery rebate, Alberta affordability payments, and Alberta energy affordability payments. These measures were not renewed in 2024, so one might assume families would have lower benefit payments. However, **in 2024 benefits are higher for the family of four and single parent (but not for the single adult)**. This is likely because, since costs are slightly lower, families need a lower income to meet those costs, which in turn means they are eligible for higher benefits. In addition, benefits like the Canada Child Benefit are indexed to inflation, so families will receive higher payments compared to the previous year.

**\$20.85**  
2024 EDMONTON LIVING WAGE

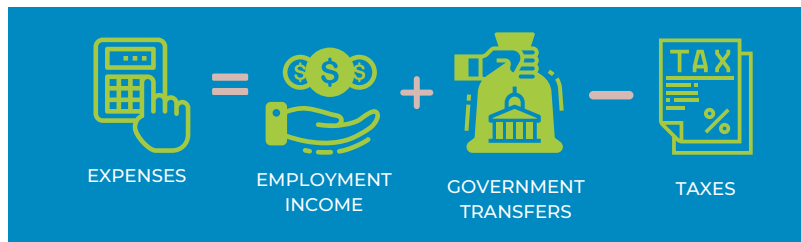
TABLE 1.  
LIVING WAGES OVER TIME



\*Please note, due to methodological changes, living wages for 2022 onwards are not directly comparable to previous years living wages.

# METHODOLOGY

*The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a household can meet a modest standard of living, once government transfers have been added to the household's income and deductions have been subtracted [6].*



**The living wage is calculated based on the needs of three different family types:**

- **A family of four, with both parents working full time, one 7-year-old who attends before and after school care and full-time summer care, and one 3-year-old who attends full-time child care.**
- **A lone parent, working full time, with one 7-year-old child who attends before and after school care and full-time summer care.**
- **A single adult working full time.**

The living wage is the weighted average of these three family types, based on their representation in the population (see table 5). This method will ensure that the living wage reflects the needs of a variety of living situations.

*Shelter* assumes a 3-bedroom rental for the family of four, a 2-bedroom for the lone parent family, and a 1-bedroom for the single individual. This data is collected from Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Housing Market Information Portal [7]. Numbers were based on the year 2023 and adjusted to 2024 using Statistics Canada's Consumer Price Index. Utilities are based on the Utilities Consumer Advocate's cost comparison tool [8] and tenant insurance is based off estimates from Square One insurance [9].

*Food costs* are based on Health Canada's 2019 National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) adapted by Alberta Health Services for Alberta communities. Costs were collected directly from local grocery stores in fall 2024. These costs represent a basic, healthy diet, that meets nutrition recommendations and reflect food habits and food purchasing patterns of the population. The amount of each food item required for each family member is determined by the age and sex of the individuals [10].

*Transportation* assumes the family of four has one car and one transit pass, the lone parent has one car, and the single adult averages the cost of a car and a transit pass. The cost of owning a car is calculated using the Canadian Automobile Association's Car Costs Calculator [11], and is based off the average of a lower-cost 8-year-old car, hatchback, truck, and SUV. All family types receive a U-pass with their college tuition, and the costs for an Arc card (bus pass) for the remainder of the year is taken from the City of Edmonton [12].

*Childcare* assumes the family of four has a 7-year-old who is in before and after school care and full-time summer care, and a 3-year old in full time child care; and the lone parent has a 7-year old who is in before and after school care and full-time summer care. The cost of childcare is taken directly from child-care providers in Edmonton [13-17]. The expenses are after the Affordability Grant is taken into account [18].

*Clothing and footwear* is based on Statistics Canada's Survey of Household spending, using costs from the third income quintile. SHS data was adjusted to 2024 using Statistics Canada's Consumer Price Index for Clothing & Footwear [19].

*Health care* is based on Alberta Blue Cross's Blue Choice Plan B, which includes extended health benefits, dental coverage, and prescription coverage [20]. This category also includes the cheapest life insurance

estimates [21] and the cheapest critical illness insurance available. [22]

*Tuition* is based on the assumption that one adult in each family type is taking one course per semester, for a total of two courses. Costs are based on the average of Athabasca University, [23] MacEwan University, [24] Concordia University of Edmonton, [25] and NorQuest College, [26] assuming a degree in social work where applicable.

*Other household items* is based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure multiplier for other expenses, which is 75.4% of the cost of food and clothing. [27] Also included is the cheapest mobile service that provides unlimited talk and text and 6GB of data on a 4G network from Public Mobile. [28]

*Contingency* is based on 2 weeks of pay using the Living Wage rate.

*Government benefits* include all federal and provincial benefits each family type is eligible for. Many of these benefits families automatically receive when they file their taxes, others must be applied for. It is assumed that the families will apply for all benefits they are eligible for.

# APPENDIX

The following tables summarize the living wage calculation for each reference family. Please note that, within the Government Benefits section, \$0 indicates the Individual or family does not meet eligibility criteria, whereas n/a indicates the benefit does not exist in the given year.

Table 2. family of four living wage calculation summary

FAMILY OF 4		
EXPENSES	2023	2024
Food	\$15,400	\$ 15,106
Clothing and footwear	\$3,714	\$2,406
Shelter	\$22,105	\$22,071
Transportation	\$5,964	\$6,026
Child care	\$16,008	\$14,849
Health Care	\$3,586	\$3,883
Tuition	\$2,023	\$2,114
Other household costs	\$14,006	\$13,337
Contingency	\$2,987	\$2,664
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$85,793</b>	<b>\$82,456</b>

## Family of 4 (continued)

EXPENSES	2023	2024
<b>TAX DEDUCTIONS</b>		
Child care deduction	\$10,098	\$7,941
<b>TAXES OWED</b>		
Federal Income Tax	\$3,530	\$2,593
Alberta provincial income tax	\$1,426	\$780
CPP Contribution	\$4,134	\$3,704
EI contribution	\$1,247	\$1,150
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,337</b>	<b>\$8,227</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT BENEFITS</b>		
GST Credit	\$0	\$188
Grocery Rebate	\$0	n/a
Canada Child Benefit	\$9,458	\$11,007
Canada Dental Benefit	\$1,300	n/a
Canada Dental Care Plan	n/a	\$1,300
Canada Carbon rebate	\$1,544	\$1,800

## Family of 4 (continued)

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	\$0	\$222
Alberta Child Care Subsidy	\$5,910	\$6,908
Alberta Energy Affordability	\$200	n/a
Alberta Affordability Payments	\$1,200	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,612</b>	<b>\$21,425</b>
<b>LIVING WAGE</b>		
Hourly Living Wage	\$21.01	\$19.03
Annual income (35 hours*52 weeks* 2 earners)	\$76,476.40	\$69,269.20

Table 3: Lone parent living wage calculation summary .

<b>LONE PARENT</b>		
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Food	\$7,874	\$7,726
Clothing and footwear	\$1,857	\$1,203
Shelter	\$20,175	\$20,236
Transportation	\$5,564	\$5,626
Child care	\$8,017	\$8,128
Health Care	\$1,939	\$2,100
Tuition	\$2,023	\$2,114
Other household costs	\$7,134	\$6,799
Contingency	\$2,054	\$1,979
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$56,637</b>	<b>\$55,911</b>
<b>TAX DEDUCTIONS</b>		
Childcare deduction	\$3,069	\$3,180



## Lone parent (continued)

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>TAXES OWED</b>		
Federal Income Tax	\$4,153	\$3,709
Alberta provincial income tax	\$2,305	\$1,998
CPP Contribution	\$2,967	\$2,854
EI contribution	\$870	\$854
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,295</b>	<b>\$9,415</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT BENEFITS</b>		
GST Credit	\$269	\$500
Grocery Rebate	\$52	n/a
Canada Child Benefit	\$5,194	\$5,746
Canada Dental Benefit	\$650	n/a
Canada Dental Care Plan	n/a	\$754
Canada Carbon rebate	\$1,158	\$1,350
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	\$489	\$569
Alberta Child Care Subsidy	\$4,948	\$4,948

## Lone parent (continued)

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Alberta Energy Affordability	\$200	n/a
Alberta Affordability Payments	\$600	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$13,560</b>	<b>\$13,867</b>
<b>LIVING WAGE</b>		
Hourly Living Wage	\$29.33	\$28.28
Annual income (35 hours*52 weeks)	\$53,380.60	\$51,469.60

Table 4: single adult living wage calculation summary

<b>SINGLE ADULT</b>		
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Food	\$4,763	\$4,660
Clothing and footwear	\$856	\$646
Shelter	\$17,042	\$16,692
Transportation	\$2,982	\$3,013
Child care	0	0
Health Care	\$1,410	\$1,527
Tuition	\$2,023	\$2,114
Other household costs	\$4,402	\$4,164
Contingency	\$1,560	\$1,521
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,038</b>	<b>\$34,337</b>
<b>TAX DEDUCTIONS</b>		
Childcare deduction	\$0	\$0

## Single Adult (continued)

EXPENSES	2023	2024
<b>TAXES OWED</b>		
Federal Income Tax	\$2,869	\$2,582
Alberta provincial income tax	\$1,449	\$1,247
CPP Contribution	\$2,204	\$2,145
EI contribution	\$661	\$657
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,183</b>	<b>\$6,631</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT BENEFITS</b>		
GST Credit	\$496	\$519
Grocery Rebate	\$216	n/a
Canada Child Benefit	\$0	\$0
Canada Dental Benefit	\$0	n/a
Canada Dental Care Plan	n/a	\$0
Canada Carbon rebate	\$772	\$900
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	\$0	\$0
Alberta Child Care Subsidy	\$0	\$0

## Single Adult (continued)

EXPENSES	2023	2024
Alberta Energy Affordability	\$200	n/a
Alberta Affordability Payments	\$0	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,684</b>	<b>\$1,419</b>
<b>LIVING WAGE</b>		
Hourly Living Wage	\$22.27	\$21.73
Annual income (35 hours*52 weeks)	\$40,531.40	\$39,548.60

Table 5: weights

FAMILY TYPES	PROPORTION OF WORKING ADULTS
2-parent households	0.5648
1 parent households	0.0958
Living alone	0.3394
<b>WEIGHTED LIVING WAGE</b>	<b>\$20.85</b>

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