

African Nova Scotian Prosperity and Well-being Index

Modeled after the Halifax Index, we are developing the first ever African Nova Scotian Prosperity and Well-being Index. It will help us define the economic realities we currently face and to identify priority areas to close the gap between the African Nova Scotian community and the rest of the province. In today's world, data is the basis for all decision making. The Index will provide us with an objective measurement and the research-based insights needed to show the impacts of government legislation and policies on our communities.

For those of us with the lived experiences of being of African descent in Nova Scotia, we are acutely aware of how it influences and impacts our day-to-day lives. The issue comes when we try to translate that experience using anecdotes or analogies. Although accurate, they leave room for interpretation and are difficult to track progress against. The ANS Index will provide an objective baseline to track and compare consistent metrics year over year.

For this year's Index, we worked on building the process and identifying existing information and gaps in data and research. We began by outlining the information needed to tell a holistic story about the community, one that reviews social as well as economic determinants of well-being and looks at our community through a person-centered lens. The inaugural Index report is based on secondary data and pre-existing reports. It will pave the way for a future Index based on primary research with the community. Presented annually to the ANS community, partners, policy makers, and funders, the Index will inform evidence-based interventions and inclusive policy decisions. It will be an invaluable tool as we engage and collaborate with public and private sector partners on the Road to Prosperity.

Index Key Findings

This is a short summary of the ANS Index findings. We will present a more detailed review at the Summit with the full Index being made available on the website in the coming weeks.

Population

When trying to analyze the outcomes for the ANS community, we must be clear about whom we are talking about. As we based this initial Index on publicly available data, we had to build a proxy for the historic community as there is no identifier for African Nova Scotian specifically. Most datasets include data based on Visible Minority Status, e.g. how many people self identify as being Black. So where possible, we cross referenced the Black community with their Generational Status, i.e. whether they are non, first, second, or third generation Canadians. While imperfect, we worked under the assumption that if someone is Black and at least a third-generation Canadian, we can say they are part of the ANS community. We made sure that throughout this document the distinction is clear when the stats are talking about the "Black" community versus when they are talking about the "ANS" community.

What we found in reviewing the data was that in 2016 there were 21,915 Black Nova Scotians, 17,325 of which were third-generation Canadians, or what we use as a proxy for the ANS community. These communities are growing rapidly and are outpacing both the growth of other minority groups and non-minorities in the province. This growth is not seen evenly throughout each demographic age group, the most noticeable deviation from that trend is the age group 25 to 54. Due to this trend, we have seen that in general the ANS community is skewing older over time. The share of the population that are 55+ has increased from 24% in 2006 to 33% in 2016.

Home Ownership

There are two key considerations when discussing home ownership in any community. The first is the importance of home ownership to the overall economic outcomes of an individual. We know that home ownership is one of the most important factors in whether an individual can pass down intergenerational wealth. We also see that rising home prices are becoming a barrier to younger generations of all backgrounds who are trying to enter the housing market. Given the gap between the financial outcomes of those of African descent and the larger population, we know that this is having a disproportionate impact on our community.

Unfortunately, when reviewing the proportion of those determined to be in a “core housing need”, we can see this is only a fraction of the issue as identified within the Index. A household is in “core housing need” when it falls below certain defined benchmarks of either adequacy, affordability, or suitability. The Black community experiences core housing need at more than double the rate of the white population, and higher than other minority groups. This is true in Canada, Atlantic Canada, and Nova Scotia. As we implement our strategic plan, affordable housing and land ownership are two indicators we hope to see improve year over year.

Labour Force & Income

Reviewing the labour force characteristics of the ANS community, we can see the impacts of systemic barriers in the stark outcomes between the ANS community and the population at large. Black people across the country face higher unemployment rates than whites, often at twice the rate. Average Black incomes are lower than non-minority incomes with substantial difference in comparable individual incomes, ranging between \$10k-\$20k per year.

This discrepancy is also visible across different income levels. For example, 34% of the Black community is defined as being in low-income, using the Low Income Measure (LIM), compared to 17% of the non-minority population. Also 43% of Black individuals make less than \$20,000 a year in income, compared to 31% of the non-minority Nova Scotians. Black Nova Scotians earned, on average, between 14% and 27% less than their white counterparts. This gap was lowest among those with less than a high-school education (14% lower) and those with a college degree (15% lower). The gap was highest among those with some university education (27% lower) and those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (24% lower).

