

Food Insecurity in Canada



What causes food insecurity?

Financial constraints. When income is too low or unsteady, there is not enough money left to pay for sufficient healthy food after paying for housing, utilities, transportation and health expenses.

How serious is food insecurity?

- One in eight households experience food insecurity – that's over 4 million adults and children.
- The highest rates of food insecurity are in the Territories, especially in Nunavut (45%).
- Households are more likely to experience food insecurity if they:
 - receive their income from minimum wages, part time jobs, workers compensation, employment insurance or social assistance
 - are First Nation, Métis or Inuit
 - have children (especially with a lone mother)
 - are homeless
 - are new immigrants
 - have chronic health problems.

Food insecurity and health issues go together

- Living with food insecurity doubles the risk of poorer health and health care costs.
- Rates of chronic disease, depression and suicidal thoughts are higher among children and adults living in food insecure households.

All Canadians pay the price of health and social problems related to food insecurity.

The solution to food insecurity: enough money to buy food

Canada needs a comprehensive, integrated strategy to reduce food insecurity, ensuring sufficient incomes and benefits, so that all Canadian households can pay for basic needs, including food.

Elements of a national strategy to address food insecurity should include:

- Government policies and programs that tackle the problems of material deprivation. For example, food insecurity rates have dropped:
 - among citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador whose income was from social assistance or low paying jobs, following improved financial interventions,
 - when Canadian seniors turn 65 and receive Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement,
 - as more affordable housing options are available.
- Addressing the unique challenges of food insecurity among Aboriginal peoples, especially in northern/remote communities. Nunavut has by far the highest rate of food insecurity in Canada – a solution is urgently needed.
- A commitment to regular monitoring of food insecurity rates in all provinces and territories.

Household food insecurity is much more than a food problem

While emergency food initiatives in communities may provide some food relief, food insecurity is reduced by addressing the underlying problems of poverty or material deprivation.