

## National Issue Summary

# Food Security in Canada

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United Way Centraide Canada (UWCC) has developed National Issue Summaries on key issue areas of national concern that are central to our network's mission. They summarize available data and research to provide an overview of the issue and how the United Way Centraides (UWCs) are investing in community supports and solutions.

### What food security means

Food security occurs when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

### Who experiences food security challenges

- Anyone can experience food insecurity, including those who are unemployed, on social assistance and income supports, children and seniors, people who rent, lone-parent families and single adults.
- Some people are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including Indigenous peoples, Black and racialized people, immigrant and newcomer families, those living in remote and Northern communities, low-income households, those experiencing homelessness, people experiencing mental health challenges, and people with disabilities.
- Food security is an experience unique to each person that may be influenced by various social, economic, political and cultural factors.

### The facts about the food security crisis in Canada

- Nearly 9 million people in Canada lived in food insecure households in 2022, representing over 1 in 5 people (23%).<sup>1</sup> Approximately 1 in 4 people (23%) reported eating less than they should because there wasn't enough money for food in 2022.<sup>2</sup>
- Food insecurity is directly linked to income. Poverty and affordability of food contribute significantly to food insecurity, as does systemic discrimination, high food costs relative to income, accessibility of food, and colonial policies.
- Soaring inflation and living costs have reduced purchasing power. Between January 2020 and June 2024, the cumulative inflation was 18%, while the price of food increased by 24%.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. 2024. [Table 13-10-0834-01](#).

<sup>2</sup> Food Banks Canada. 2022. [New Food Banks Canada Research Shows 7 Million Canadians Report Going Hungry](#).

<sup>3</sup> Finlayson, J. 2024. [Canadians Weary After Years of Brutal Inflation](#).

## Addressing the food security crisis is urgent

- Food insecurity is increasing. In 2018, 16.8% of the population (6.1M people) were food insecure. Food insecurity rose 42% in four years, to 22.9% (8.7M people) in 2022.<sup>4</sup>
- Demand for food banks is rising. Food Banks Canada reports that the number of monthly food bank visits has almost doubled in the last five years, from 1.08M monthly visits in 2019 to 2.06M in 2024.<sup>5</sup>
- Food insecurity is a serious public health concern linked to higher risk of chronic health conditions, infectious diseases, poor oral health, and injury.<sup>6,7</sup>

## What everyone needs to know about food insecurity

- No one should go hungry in Canada. Access to adequate food and being free from hunger is a fundamental human right that the Government of Canada is obligated to uphold.
- Food banks are an emergency resource, not a solution to food insecurity. Studies have shown that relying solely on food charity, food-based programs, and food skills does not address the financial hardships that contribute to food insecurity.<sup>8</sup>
- Adequate income is key to solving food insecurity in Canada. Addressing poverty is crucial so that no one must make a choice between critical expenses like housing, medication and food.

### UWCs are building communities where no one needs to go hungry

Across Canada, UWCs are addressing food insecurity, focusing on four areas:

- **Investing** in solutions to food insecurity such as community food programs, emergency food access, community gardens and food program navigation.
- **Building capacity** by implementing food secure and distribution initiatives, food education, community food markets and food infrastructure improvements.
- **Leading collaborative efforts** that address gaps and respond to emerging trends to address the food security crisis, including food hubs, knowledge-sharing, community networks and partnerships with private sector stakeholders.
- **Driving system change** by advocating for policy change, consulting on local, provincial, and national tables, and raising public awareness about issues related to food security.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. 2025. [Table 13-10-0834-01](#).

<sup>5</sup> Sklarski, C. 2024. [Monthly Food Bank Use in Canada Soars to Record 2 million](#).

<sup>6</sup> Uppal, S. 2023. [Food Insecurity Among Canadian Families](#).

<sup>7</sup> PROOF. n.d. [What Are the Implications of Food Insecurity for Health and Health Care?](#)

<sup>8</sup> PROOF. n.d. [What Can Be Done to Reduce Food Insecurity in Canada?](#)