



**Canadians visited
food banks 1.1 million
times in March 2018.**

What number of visits will make
us finally take action?



HungerCount 2018



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Food Banks Canada provides national leadership to relieve hunger today and prevent hunger tomorrow in collaboration with the food bank network in Canada. We do this by maximizing the collective impact of the network, strengthening the local capacity of food banks, and advocating to reduce the need for food banks.

OVERALL FINDINGS

35.2% OF THOSE RELYING ON FOOD BANKS NATIONALLY ARE CHILDREN, WHEN THEY ONLY REPRESENT 20.0%* OF THE POPULATION.

How many children using food banks in Canada is okay with you?

POVERTY IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF FOOD BANK USE.

The driving factor behind food bank use is poverty. Economic disruptions, low incomes, and government policies that don't provide adequate support are what keep the number of food bank users persistently and unacceptably high. Food banks from coast to coast to coast are there when people must choose between shelter, clothing, and feeding their family. While it is essential that people in need have access to food today, changes in government policy to support people out of poverty are what will truly drive down the number of people turning to food banks across Canada.

Each March, Food Banks Canada surveys thousands of food banks across Canada to provide a snapshot of current food bank use. The HungerCount report establishes an up to date understanding of hunger in Canada in order to support advocacy for change. This report provides an overview of these findings as well as policy recommendations to reduce the need for food banks.

For HungerCount 2018, Food Banks Canada has updated its methodology and is reporting visits, not individuals, as the core metric to better demonstrate food bank use and the need for food banks across Canada. This is a new baseline number for 2018 and should not be compared to previous HungerCount reports as these numbers aren't comparable.

WHO DO FOOD BANKS SUPPORT?

There is a wide array of people helped by food banks, including children, seniors, single parents, working adults and people living with disabilities.

Children are over-represented in food bank use compared to the overall population. Single-parent households are also over-represented in food bank use compared to their share of the population. Single person households represent an alarming 45.1% of the households accessing food bank support. 59.0% of those who receive support from food banks indicate that social assistance or disability-related supports as their primary source of income.

59.0%
of households accessing
food banks list social
assistance or disability-
related supports as
primary source of
income.

For HungerCount 2018, Food Banks Canada has updated its methodology and is reporting visits, not individuals, as the core metric to better demonstrate food bank use and the need for food banks across Canada. This is a new baseline number for 2018 and should not be compared to previous HungerCount reports as these numbers aren't comparable.

HOW FOOD BANKS HELP?

Every day, food banks work with their communities to acquire the food required to support those in need through donations and purchases. Some food banks—"hubs"—distribute food to community agencies like food pantries, shelters, and after school programs that rely on food to deliver their support. Other food banks serve people directly with a selection of food to help people stretch their dollars... and some food banks do both. Throughout this report, you will find stories from food banks that demonstrate how they respond to the ongoing need for their services.

Further to the day-to-day essential support provided, the food bank network across Canada—including provincial associations, food banks, and Food Banks Canada—advocates for policy change that will reduce the need for food banks. Our vision is a Canada where no one goes hungry.

*Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016

THE DATA: A NATIONAL OVERVIEW



35.2% ARE CHILDREN

The percentage of children using food banks is 35.2% while representing only 20.0%* of the population



45.1% ARE SINGLE ADULT HOUSEHOLDS

Single adult households[†] represent 45.1% of households accessing food banks, while representing only 28.2%* of the population



59.0% ARE ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS



HOUSEHOLD INCOME SOURCES OF THOSE ACCESSING FOOD BANKS ARE:

- 1 in 6 are currently or recently employed
- 59.0% on social assistance or disability-related income
- 1 in 9 receive pension income
- 6.0% report no income



19.1% ARE SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

The percentage of single adults with children using food banks is 19.1% while representing only 10.1%* of the population



6.3% ARE SENIORS

Seniors represent 6.3% of food bank users, while representing 16.9%* of the population



5,669,921

This is the number of total meals and snacks served in March 2018.

*Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016.

[†]Single people households may be under represented because some food banks classify multiple singles sharing an address as 1 household

THE DATA: CANADA BY THE NUMBERS

Canada



1,096,935

Total number of visits in Canada in March 2018.
Food bank use continues to be unacceptably high.



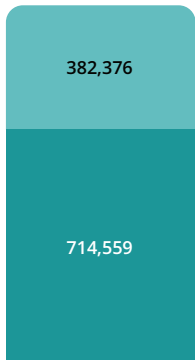
TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

5,669,921
All

316,756
Rural

TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS

Total: 1,096,935



All of Canada

Rural

Food Banks Reporting

All of Canada: 1,830
Rural Canada: 634



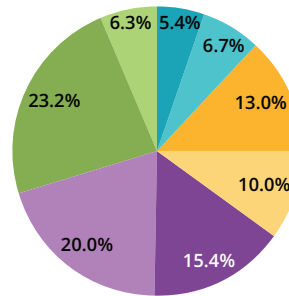
CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

35.2%
All

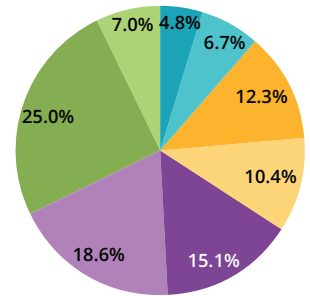
34.2%
Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP

All of Canada



Rural Canada



Food Banks Reporting

All of Canada: 1,489 Rural Canada: 634



HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance:

42%
All

42.9%
Rural

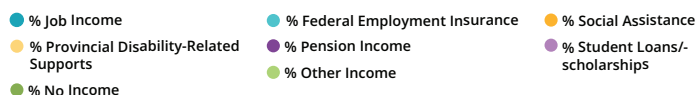
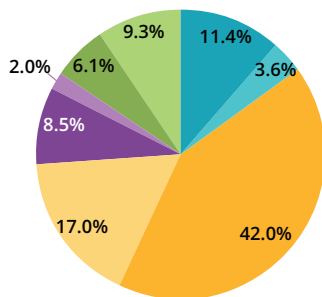
Disability-related supports:

17.0%
All

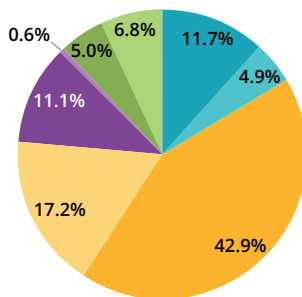
17.2%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE

All of Canada

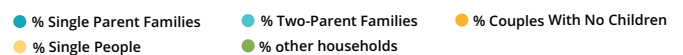
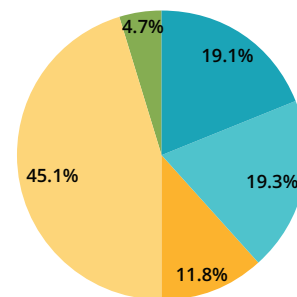


Rural Canada

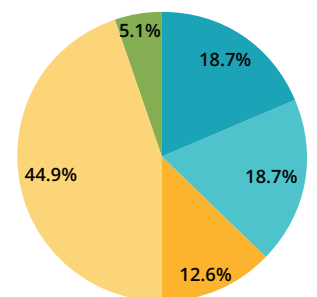


HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

All of Canada



Rural Canada



Food Banks Reporting

All of Canada: 1,530 Rural Canada: 530

THE DATA: BRITISH COLUMBIA BY THE NUMBERS



126,732

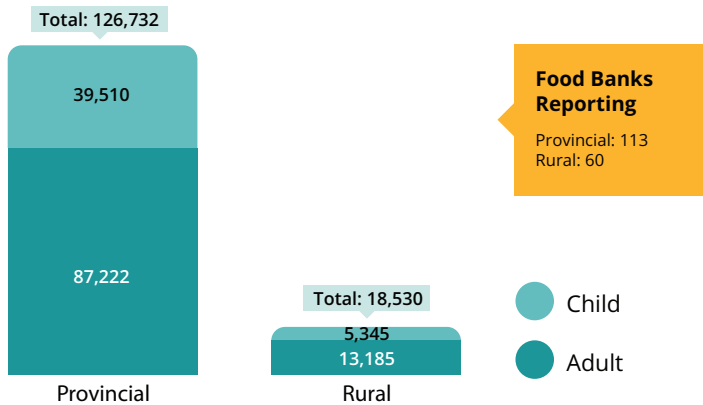
Total number of visits in British Columbia in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

396,472 **18,202**
All Rural

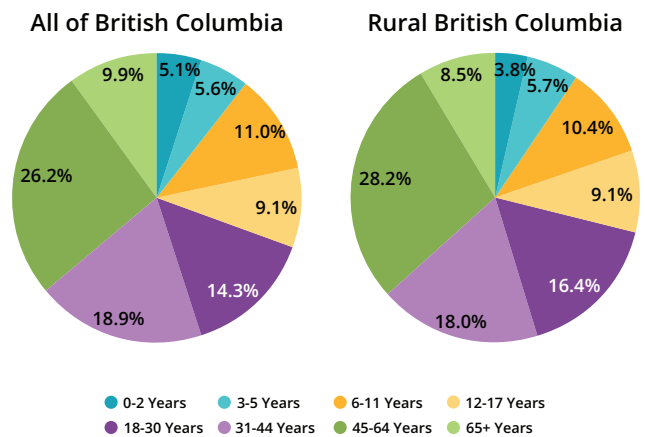
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

30.8% **28.9%**
All Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of British Columbia: 86 Rural: 55

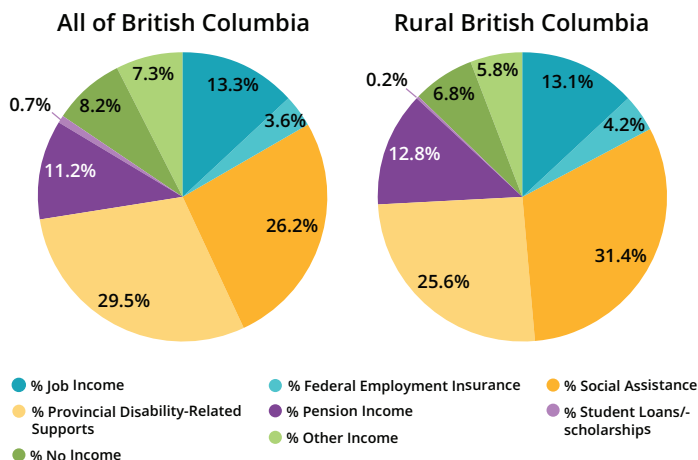


HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: **26.2%** **31.4%**
All Rural

Disability-related supports: **29.5%** **25.6%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



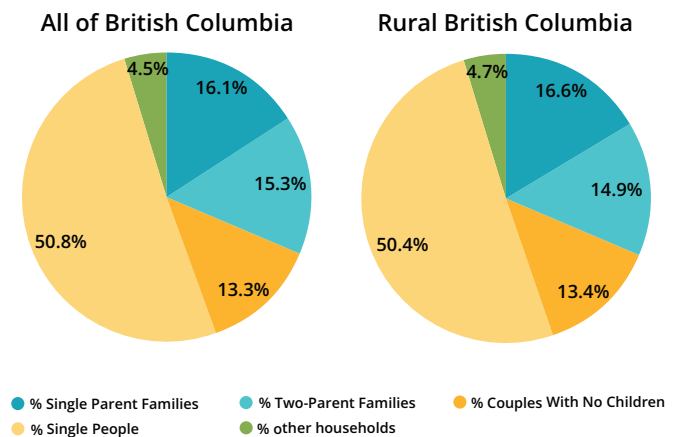
Food Banks Reporting All of British Columbia: 90 Rural: 52



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

50.8% **50.4%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of British Columbia: 93 Rural: 53

THE DATA: ALBERTA BY THE NUMBERS



97,497

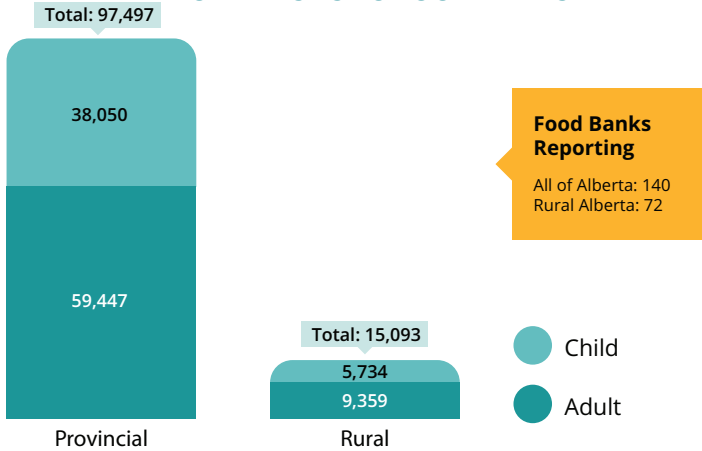
Total number of visits in Alberta in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

746,050 **3,996**
All Rural

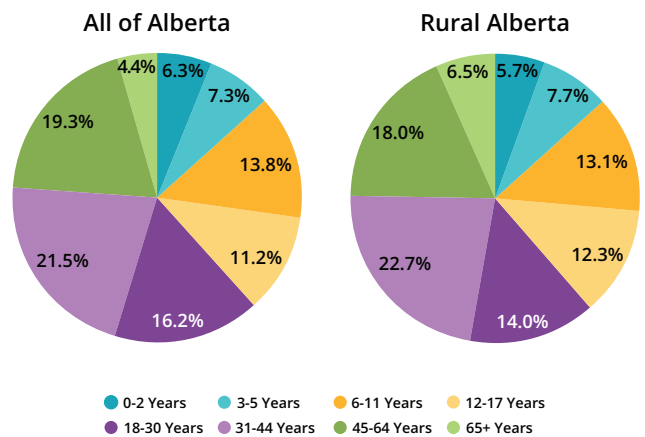
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

38.5% **38.8%**
All Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of Alberta: 98 Rural Alberta: 56

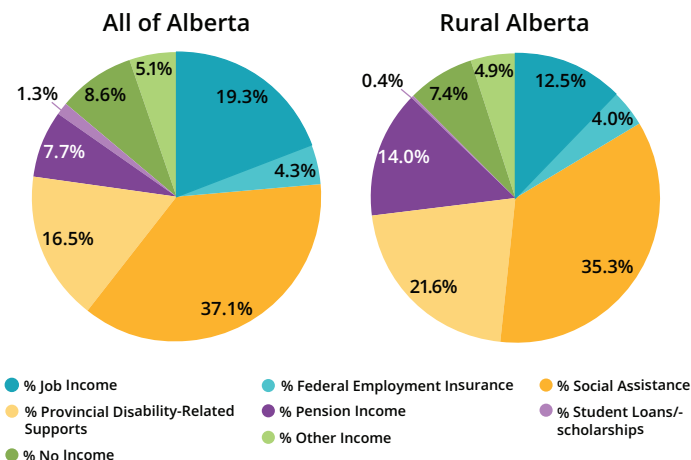


HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: **37.1%** **35.3%**
All Rural

Disability-related supports: **16.5%** **21.6%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



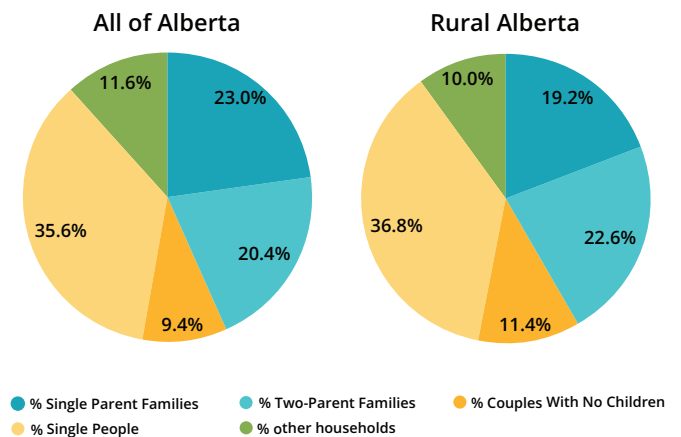
Food Banks Reporting All of Alberta: 78 Rural Alberta: 47



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

35.6% **36.8%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of Alberta: 98 Rural Alberta: 57

THE DATA: SASKATCHEWAN BY THE NUMBERS

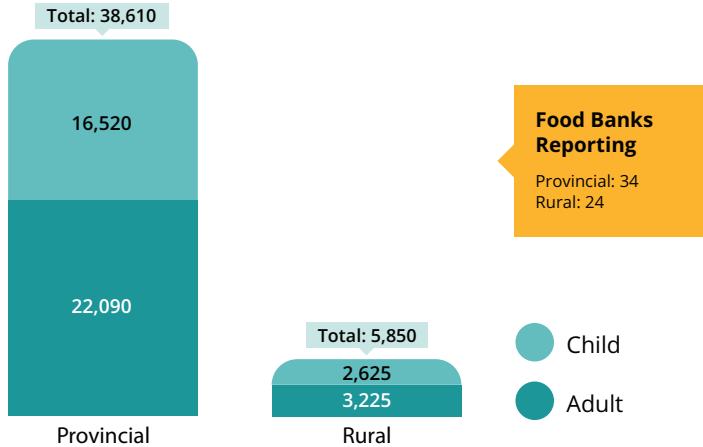


TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

12,454
All

3,125
Rural

TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS

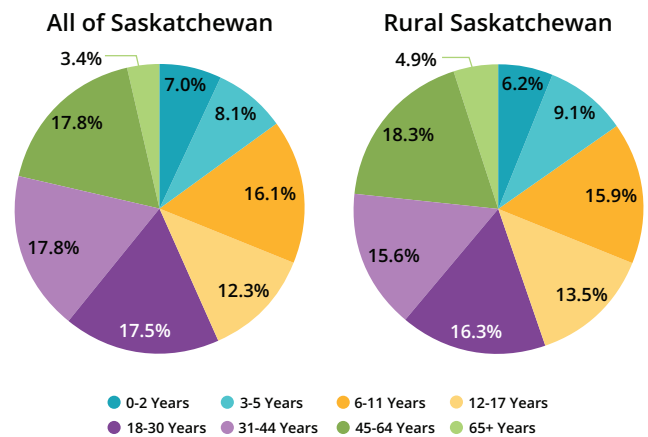


CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

43.5%
All

44.8%
Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of Saskatchewan: 31 Rural: 21



HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance:

52.2%
All

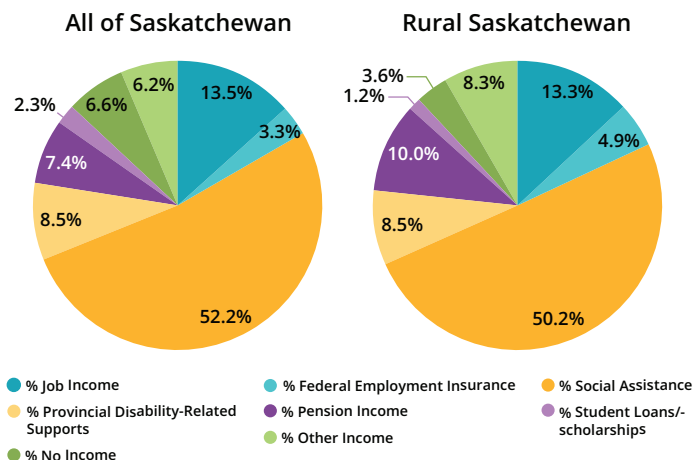
50.2%
Rural

Disability-related supports:

8.5%
All

8.5%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



Food Banks Reporting All of Saskatchewan: 30 Rural: 20

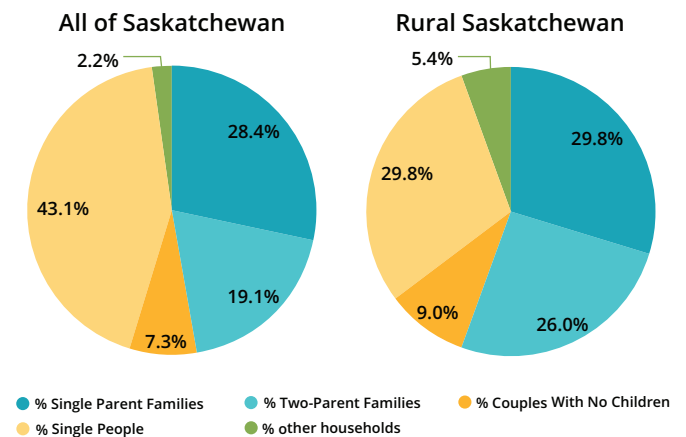


SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

43.1%
All

29.8%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of Saskatchewan: 33 Rural: 23

THE DATA: MANITOBA BY THE NUMBERS



68,920

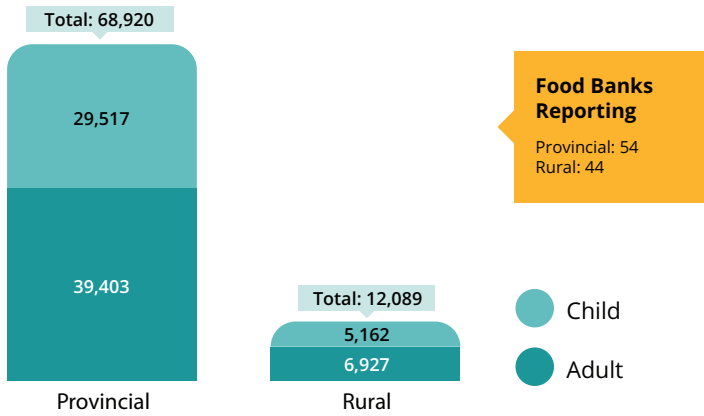
Total number of visits in Manitoba in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

366,146 **3,846**
All Rural

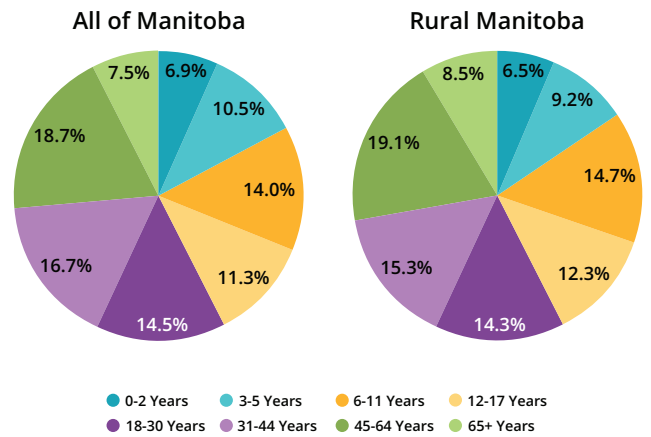
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

42.6% **42.7%**
All Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of Manitoba: 37 Rural: 29

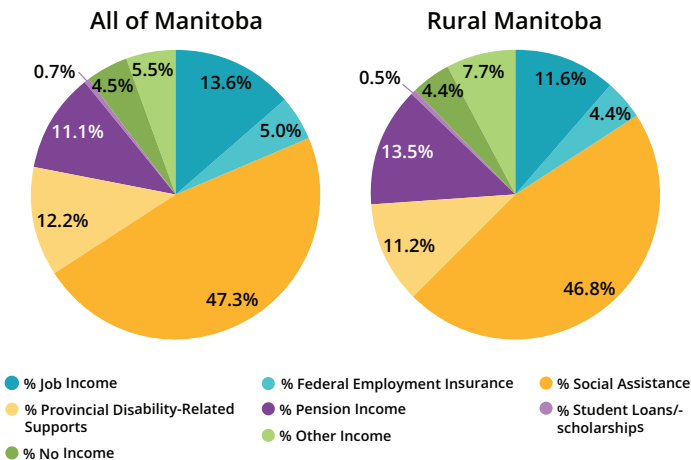


HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: **47.3%** **46.8%**
All Rural

Disability-related supports: **12.2%** **11.2%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



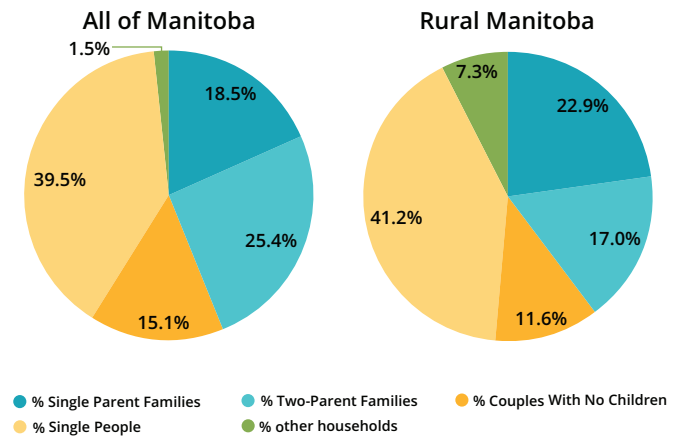
Food Banks Reporting All of Manitoba: 35 Rural: 29



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

39.5% **41.2%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of Manitoba: 47 Rural: 38

THE DATA: ONTARIO BY THE NUMBERS



ONTARIO
ASSOCIATION OF
FOOD BANKS

323,931

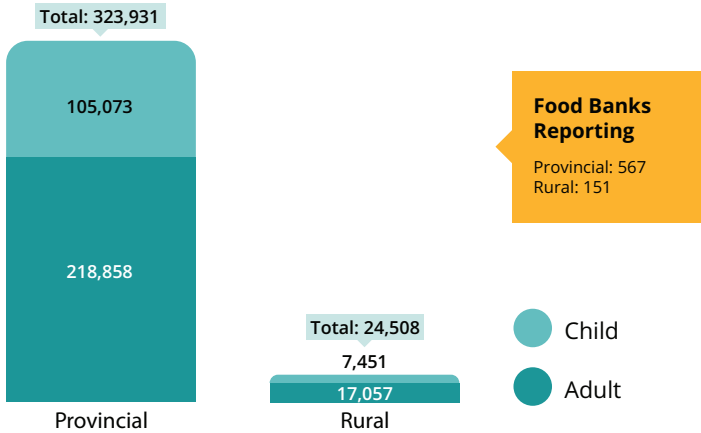
Total number of visits in Ontario in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

1,633,547 **5,800**
All Rural

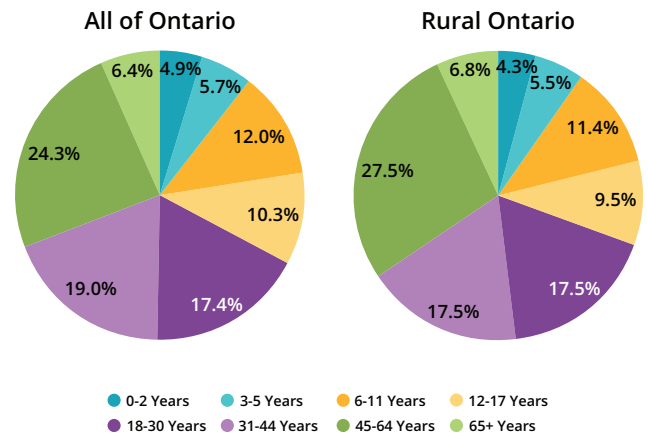
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

32.8% **30.7%**
All Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of Ontario: 464 Rural: 96

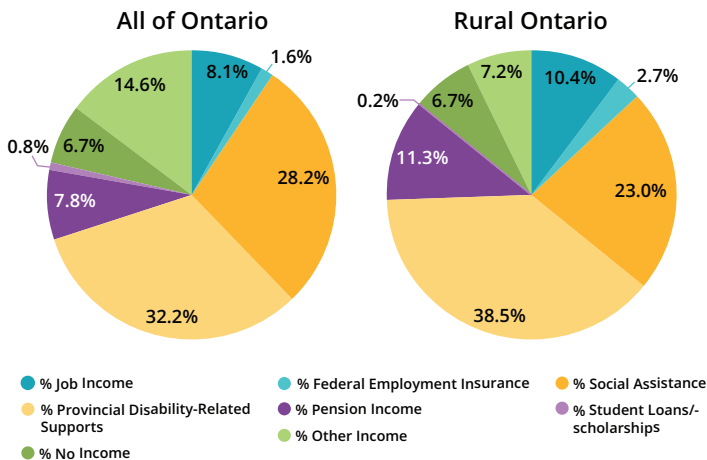


HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: **28.2%** **23.0%**
All Rural

Disability-related supports: **32.2%** **38.5%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



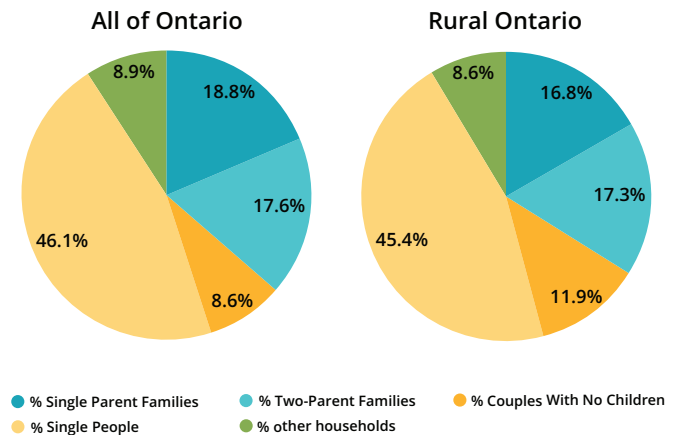
Food Banks Reporting All of Ontario: 426 Rural: 102



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

46.1% **45.4%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of Ontario: 419 Rural: 104

THE DATA: QUEBEC BY THE NUMBERS



356,970

Total number of visits in Quebec in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.

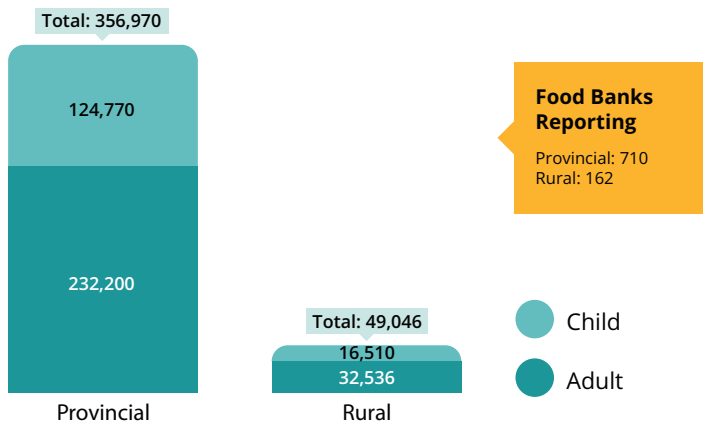


TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

1,604,117
All

203,930
Rural

TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS

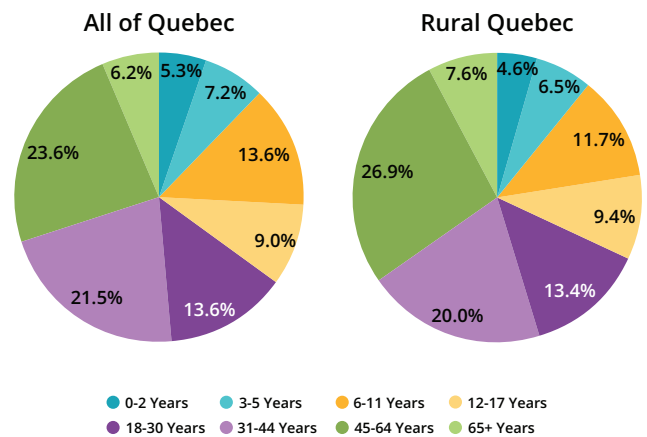


CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

35.1%
All

32.2%
Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance:

55.1%
All

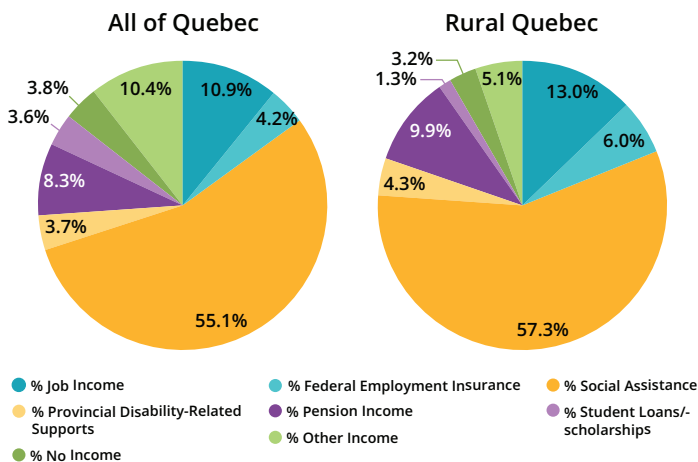
57.3%
Rural

Disability-related supports:

3.7%
All

4.3%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE

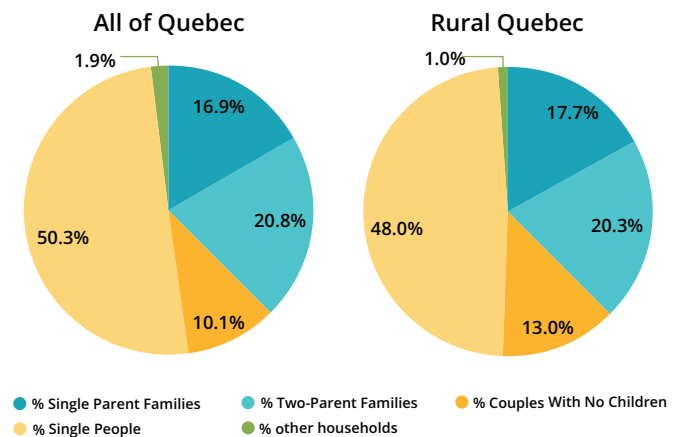


SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

50.3%
All

48.0%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



THE DATA: NEW BRUNSWICK BY THE NUMBERS



20,627

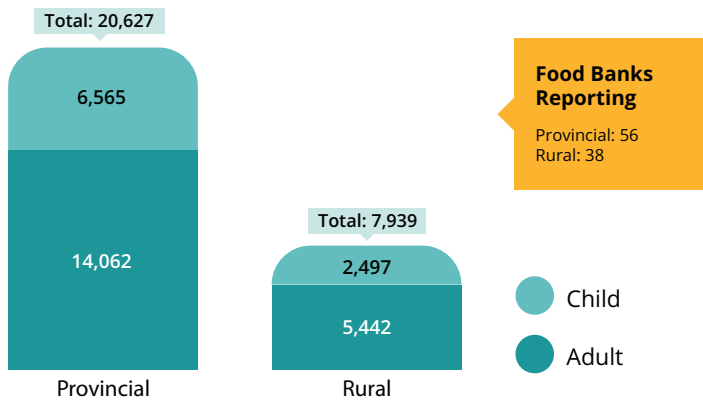
Total number of visits in New Brunswick in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

82,860 All
55,320 Rural

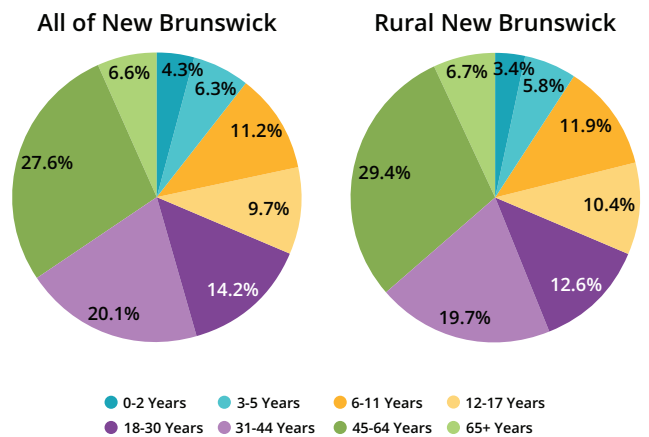
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

31.5% All
31.6% Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



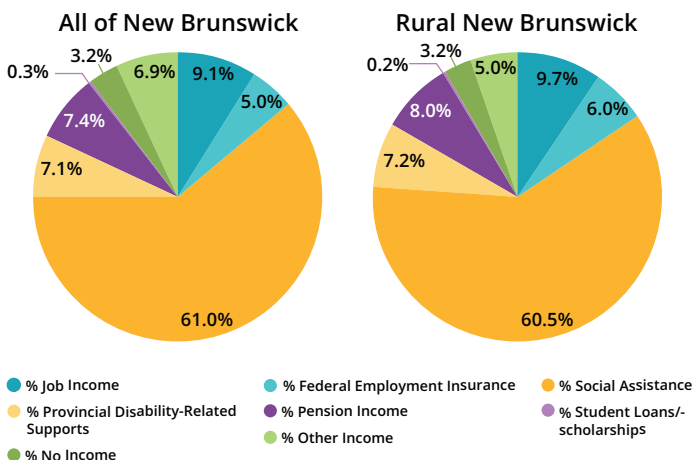
Food Banks Reporting All of New Brunswick: 43 Rural: 34



HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: **61.0%** All **60.5%** Rural
Disability-related supports: **7.1%** All **7.2%** Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



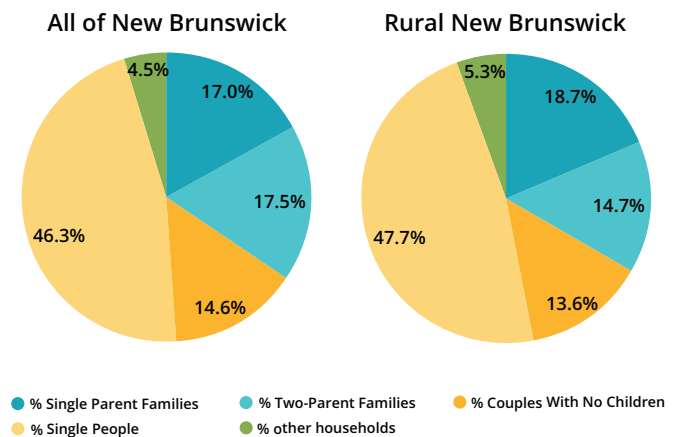
Food Banks Reporting All of New Brunswick: 45 Rural: 33



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

46.3% All
47.7% Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of New Brunswick: 50 Rural: 36

THE DATA: PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND BY THE NUMBERS



3,152

Total number of visits in Prince Edward Island in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.

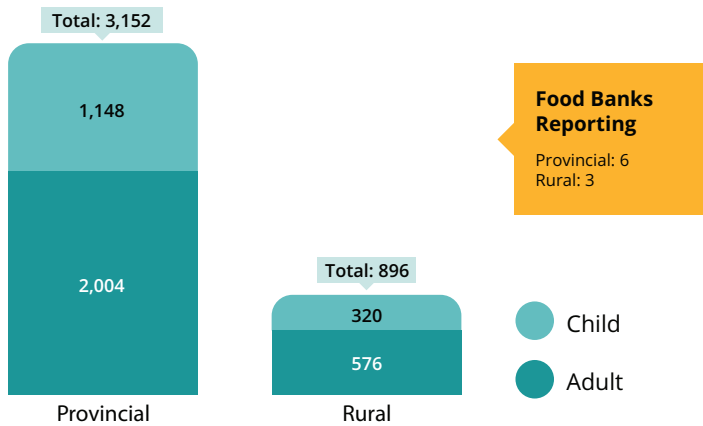


TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

4,122
All

- Rural

TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

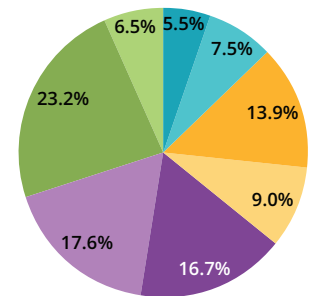
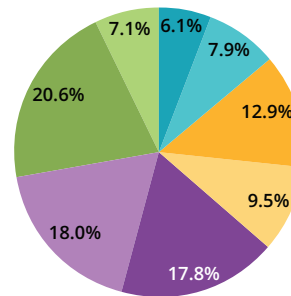
36.5%
All

35.9%
Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP

All of Prince Edward Island

Rural Prince Edward Island



0-2 Years 3-5 Years 6-11 Years 12-17 Years
18-30 Years 31-44 Years 45-64 Years 65+ Years

Food Banks Reporting All of Prince Edward Island: 6 Rural: 3



HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance:

38.9%
All

30.6%
Rural

Disability-related supports:

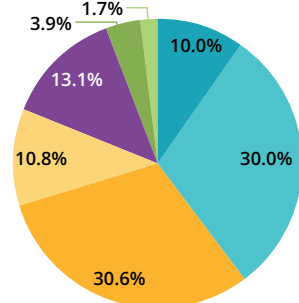
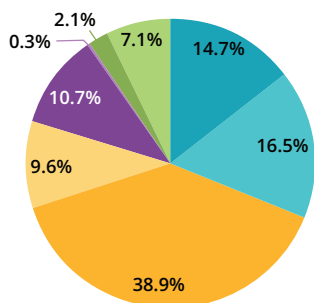
9.6%
All

10.8%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE

All of Prince Edward Island

Rural Prince Edward Island



Job Income Federal Employment Insurance Social Assistance
Provincial Disability-Related Supports Pension Income Student Loans/scholarships
Other Income No Income

Food Banks Reporting All of Prince Edward Island: 6 Rural: 3



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

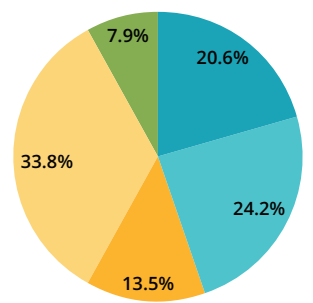
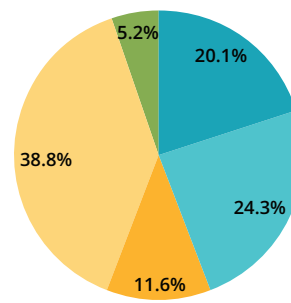
38.8%
All

33.8%
Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

All of Prince Edward Island

Rural Prince Edward Island



Single Parent Families Two-Parent Families Couples With No Children
Single People Other households

Food Banks Reporting All of Prince Edward Island: 6 Rural: 3

THE DATA: NOVA SCOTIA BY THE NUMBERS



25,773

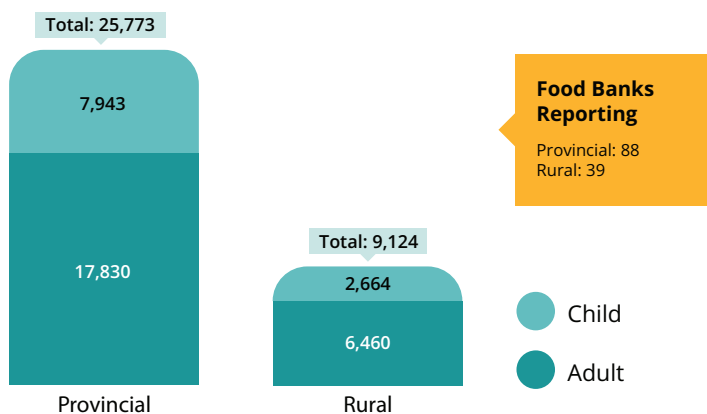
Total number of visits in Nova Scotia in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

77,115 **12,677**
All Rural

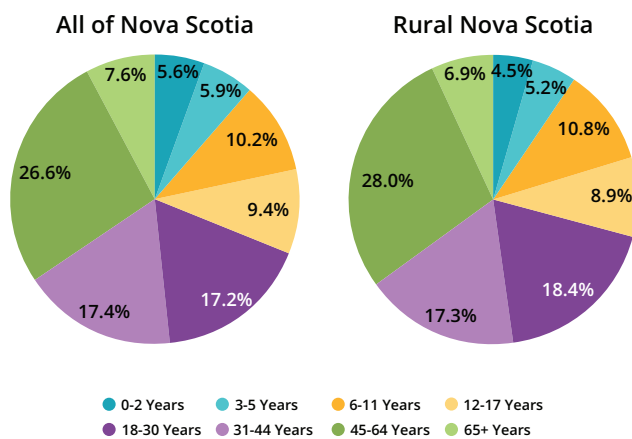
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

31.2% **29.4%**
All Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of Nova Scotia: 80 Rural: 35

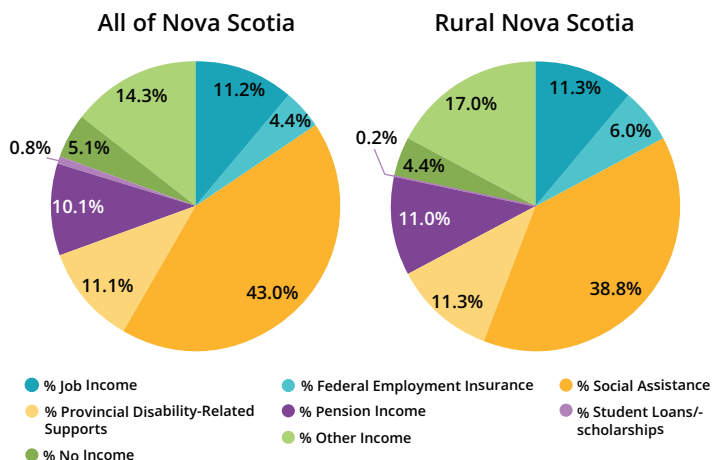


HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: **43.0%** **38.8%**
All Rural

Disability-related supports: **11.1%** **11.3%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



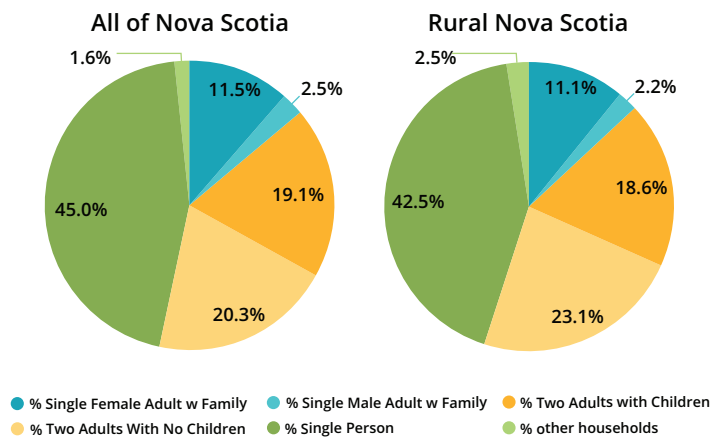
Food Banks Reporting All of Nova Scotia: 78 Rural: 33



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

45.0% **42.5%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of Nova Scotia: 78 Rural: 33

THE DATA: NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR BY THE NUMBERS



28,063

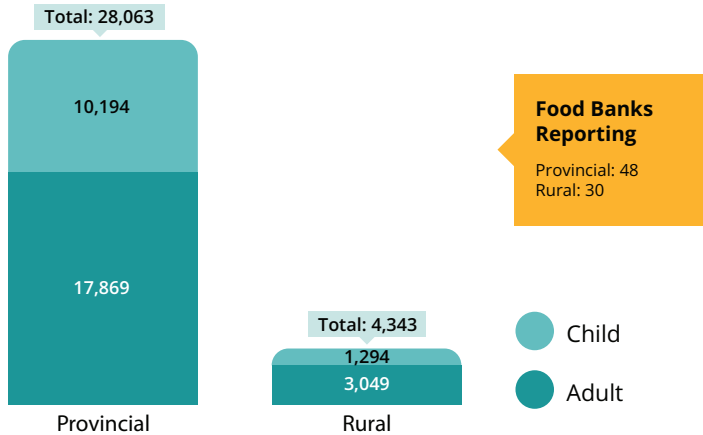
Total number of visits in Newfoundland & Labrador in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

734,939 **134**
All Rural

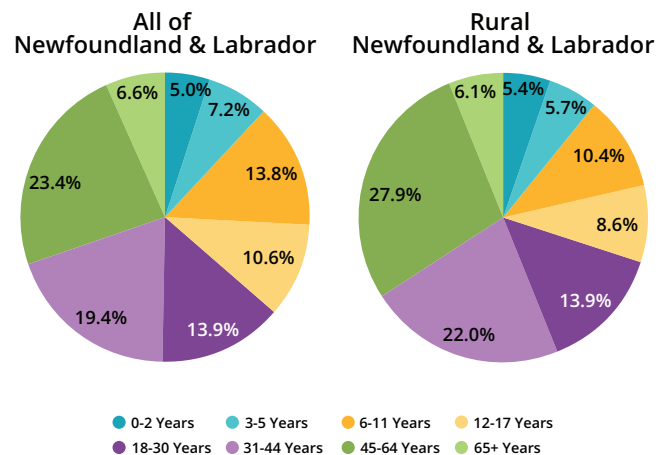
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

36.6% **30.0%**
All Rural

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



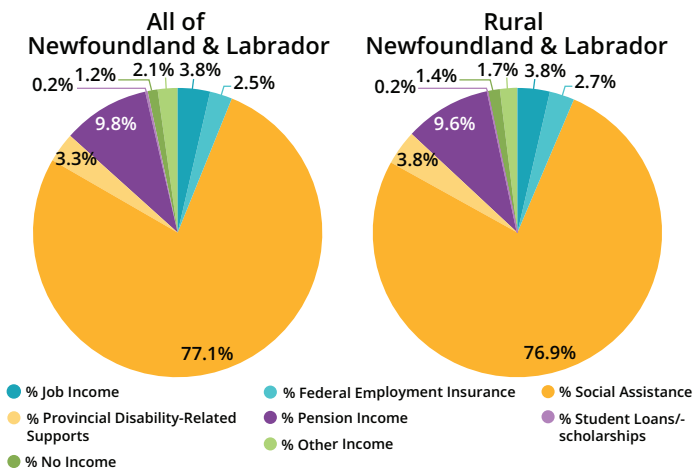
Food Banks Reporting All of Newfoundland & Labrador: 36 Rural: 22



HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance: Disability-related supports:
77.1% **76.9%** **3.3%** **3.8%**
All Rural All Rural

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



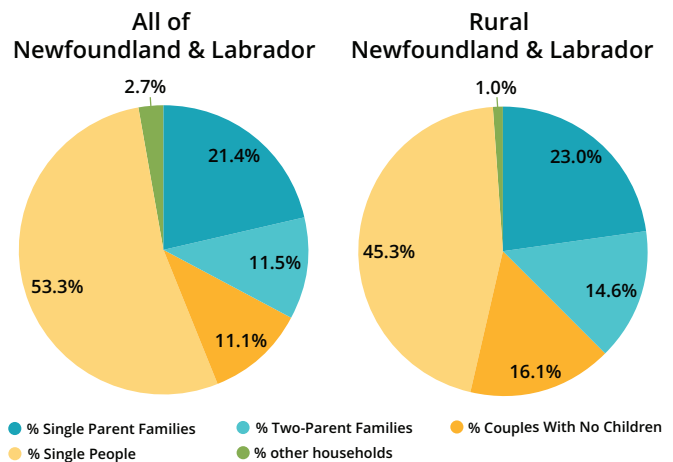
Food Banks Reporting All of Newfoundland & Labrador: 31 Rural: 19



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

53.3% **45.3%**
All Rural

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of Newfoundland & Labrador : 38 Rural: 24

THE DATA: NORTHERN TERRITORIES BY THE NUMBERS

6,660

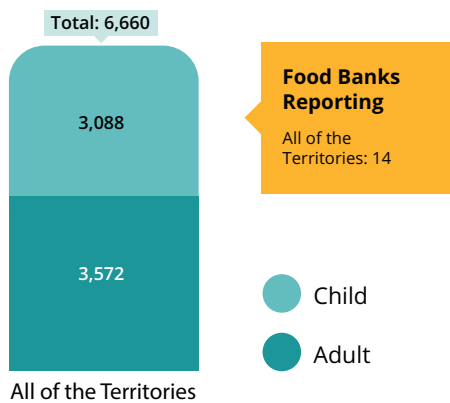
Total number of visits in the Territories (**Nunavut, North West Territories, Yukon**) in March 2018.
This number is unacceptably high.



TOTAL MEALS AND SNACKS

12,099
All

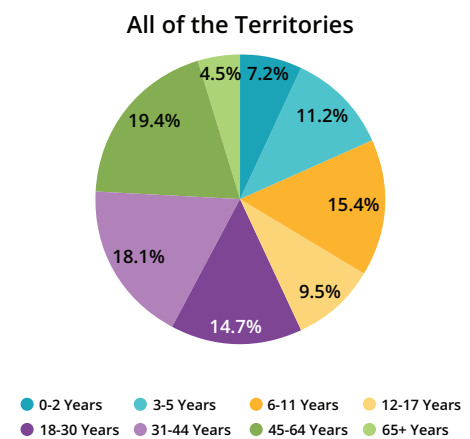
TOTAL VISITS TO FOOD BANKS



CHILDREN AS % OF TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS.

43.3%
All

AGE CATEGORIES SERVED AS % OF TOTAL, BY AGE GROUP



Food Banks Reporting All of the Territories: 8

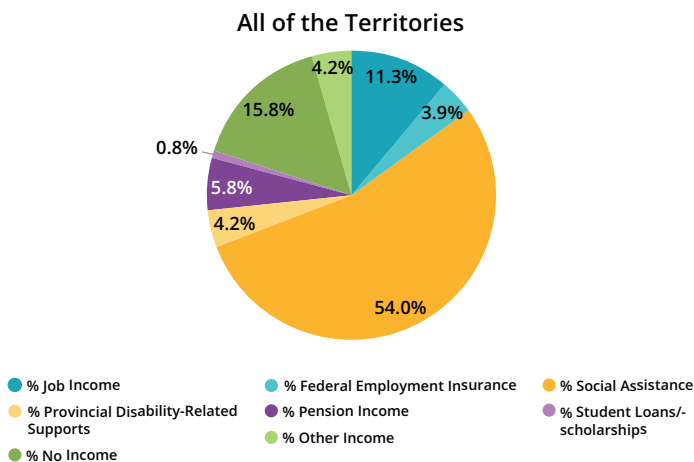


HOUSEHOLDS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR PROVINCIAL DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORTS AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

Social Assistance:
54.0%
All

Disability-related supports:
4.2%
All

HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



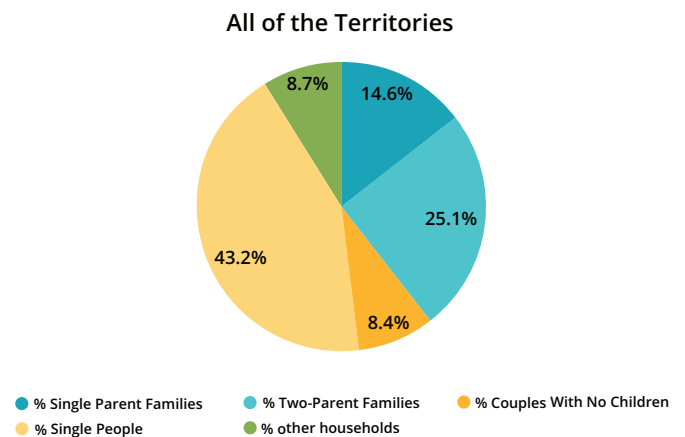
Food Banks Reporting All of the Territories: 7



SINGLE PEOPLE AS % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANKS

43.2%
All

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Food Banks Reporting All of the Territories: 9



CHILDREN

35.2% OF THOSE RELYING ON FOOD BANKS NATIONALLY ARE CHILDREN, WHEN THEY ONLY REPRESENT 20.0%* OF THE POPULATION.

How many children using food banks in Canada is okay with you?

CHILDREN AND HUNGER:

These numbers are unacceptable and need to change.

More needs to be done to support families with children who are struggling with poverty and high costs of living. That is why Food Banks Canada is recommending the creation of standardized, affordable early learning and childcare across Canada as well as federal leadership towards a basic income for all Canadians.



19.1%
of food bank users live in single-parent households but
they only represent 10.1%* of Canadian households.



SINGLES

SINGLE ADULT HOUSEHOLDS REPRESENT 45.1% OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT ACCESS FOOD BANKS BUT ONLY REPRESENT 28.2%* OF CANADIAN HOUSEHOLDS.

Single adults are being left behind.

SINGLE ADULTS:

Food Banks Canada has been sounding the alarm about the lack of support for single adults in Canada for a number of years, including in our Nowhere to Turn report (available at foodbanksCanada.ca).

One in every three single adults lives in poverty in Canada, which is a staggering number. Policies that have focused on their marginalized demographic are few and far between, as governments continue to ignore this segment of the population. That is why Food Banks Canada is recommending increased supports targeted to single adults living with low incomes as well as federal leadership towards a basic income for all.



59.0%
of households accessing food banks rely on social
assistance and disability-related supports as their
primary source of income

THE NORTH

NORTHERN FOOD INSECURITY

Canadians living in northern and remote communities face highly elevated and in some cases extreme levels of food insecurity.

CHALLENGES IN THE NORTH:

There are significant challenges for food banks in the North, not the least of which is access to logistics and transportation to bring in a steady supply of food. The lack of consistent community food supports makes the need for policy change all the more critical and urgent.

More needs to be done to address the high levels of food insecurity in Northern Canada, which is why Food Banks Canada continues to recommend more focus and attention by governments on this issue. Further, each policy recommendation made in this report, if implemented nationally, would support a reduced need for the services of food banks in the North.



46.8%
of households in Nunavut are food insecure*.



In March 2018 there were over **6,600** visits to food banks in the territories

*Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey, 2014.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As is demonstrated in this report, food bank use remains at historical levels. While food banks are doing everything that they can to help those in need, they are not able to address the root causes of why people need their support.

This is because the root cause of food bank use is, and always has been, related to poverty and low income – and these root causes can be most directly addressed through government policies.

Over the last year, the federal government has taken important steps towards reducing poverty and the need for food banks in Canada.

The federal government's long-awaited release of Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy was welcomed by Food Banks Canada as a sign that the federal government is serious in its intent to significantly reduce poverty over the next decade. The strategy lays a good foundation upon which to build with the creation of a new official poverty line and sets out clear targets and measurements to monitor poverty reduction over the coming years.

These are positive and important steps, but it is clear that much more still needs to be done if we are to reach the intended goals of significantly reducing poverty, and food bank use, in Canada.

Good intentions and well laid out strategies alone will not be enough to meet Food Banks Canada's vision of a Canada where no one goes hungry.

To that end, implementing the following policy recommendations are essential if the federal government wants to meet the targets set forth in its poverty reduction strategy and ultimately reduce the need for food banks.



RECOMMENDATION 1: FEDERAL LEADERSHIP TOWARDS A BASIC INCOME FOR ALL CANADIANS

For decades, consecutive federal governments have shrugged off the idea of moving forward on a Basic Income because it is considered a provincial matter. The fact that the Ontario government initiated a Basic Income pilot project in 2016 seemed to reinforce this notion that progress on this front could be achieved without the federal government's leadership or support.

Unfortunately, recent developments have shown just how fragile such a stance can be. With the new Ontario government's immediate cancellation of the Ontario Basic Income pilot projects that were in progress in 2018, crucial data and analyses will never be compiled. A significant opportunity to make progress towards the creation of a Basic Income for all Canadians was squandered with little explanation.

The fact that a new provincial government could so easily discard such an important pilot project is alarming. The Ontario pilot project would have provided valuable data for the development of a Basic Income across all provinces and territories in Canada, not only for Ontario.

Given the importance of the data and potential analysis that has been lost, and the fragility of counting on individual provinces to lead the way on this important issue, the federal government has a responsibility to show leadership in forging a new path forward for Canada's most vulnerable citizens, because it is clear that the current approach is broken.

Under our current system of social assistance, one must be virtually penniless before being able to apply for support.ⁱ Once approved for the program, the average yearly welfare income for a single person in 2017 was only slightly over \$8,500, more than \$10,000 below the poverty line.ⁱⁱ And, if one tries to work their way out of welfare, their benefits (cash and non-cash) are clawed back with punitive rates that disincentivize work.

This is a system that has not evolved since the 1990s and one that keeps people mired in a cycle of poverty that is extremely difficult to escape – as is demonstrated by the fact that 60% of those currently helped by food banks are either on social assistance or disability-related supports.

Waiting on the provinces themselves to forge a new path forward towards a Basic Income is no longer an option, as we have seen most recently in Ontario. We are asking that the federal government show leadership on this front and work directly with all provinces and territories to help us move towards a Basic Income for all in Canada.

We recommend:

- To fund and develop, in coordination with the provinces and territories, multiple Basic Income pilot projects of various types across the country in every province and territory to help minimize the risk of fluctuating provincial governments shutting projects down.
- To accumulate and analyze the data from these pilot projects over multiple years to determine the type of Basic Income that is best suited for Canada.

In the short-term to immediately boost the incomes of those living in poverty:

- To allow all low-income households to have access to the non-cash benefits that are currently only available to those on social assistance (such as child care subsidies, affordable housing supplements, drug and dental insurance).
- To convert all federal non-refundable tax credits into refundable tax credits, where appropriate. These include (but are not limited to) the Disability Tax Credit, credits for family caregivers, and the credit for public transit users.



RECOMMENDATION 2: SUPPORT THE CREATION OF STANDARDIZED, AFFORDABLE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Year over year, one of the most shocking statistics to emerge from our HungerCount report is just how deeply children are affected by low incomes and poverty in a country as rich as ours.

In 2018, and over the last decade, children have made up just over 20 percent of the country's general population – yet they represent more than 35 percent of those seeking help from a food bank. This means that hundreds of thousands of children rely on food banks each month in Canada. These numbers are not only staggering – they are unacceptable.

Childcare has become so expensive across Canada that many families with moderate to low incomes are struggling. In Toronto in 2018, the average childcare costs per child was well above \$21,000 per year.ⁱⁱⁱ

The federal government has made some significant investments in supporting families with the Canada Child Benefit, yet it is clear that more needs to be done to truly reduce the need for food banks for so many children.

In order to make a substantial impact for families living with low incomes, an increased and sustained federal investment in early learning and child care is essential. The links between social and economic policy in this area are clear: every \$1 invested in early learning and care will boost the economy in the long run by \$2.40.^{iv}

Early learning and childcare, like affordable housing, is an investment in the well-being of Canadians that has real benefits for the country as a whole. Funding and supporting the creation of affordable early learning and childcare has multiple benefits - it supports parents to enter or remain in the workforce and increase their incomes, or to upgrade their education and skills; and it decreases school drop-out rates among children and youth and improves post-secondary educational participation.^v

While wide availability of affordable childcare is particularly beneficial for parents facing financial hardships, it is a boon to parents at all income levels. This is especially true for single-parent households who are consistently over-represented in food banks across the country.


In an era when the majority of parents work, with a rapidly changing labour market and a shrinking labour force, it is simply good economics to invest in early learning and childcare.^{vi}

We recommend that the federal government commit to the following to finally reduce the number of children needing food banks in Canada:

We recommend:

To develop a National Strategy on Early Learning and Childcare with tangible targets and goals.

- The strategy should include a significant increase in federal investment towards the goals set out in the strategy and directly fund and lead the development of accessible, affordable and publicly-funded quality childcare in every province and territory in Canada.
- A central focus of federal investment should be on building the necessary infrastructure needed to physically create more childcare spaces.
- The strategy should outline affordability benchmarks that each province must respect to qualify for federal support and funding to effectively create national standards of quality and affordability for early learning and childcare in every part of the country.



RECOMMENDATION 3: INCREASED SUPPORTS FOR SINGLE ADULTS LIVING WITH LOW INCOMES

One of the most striking trends in the food bank network is the growth of single unattached individuals walking through our doors across the country and asking for help. The percent of single people using food banks has doubled since 2001, having grown from 30% of households helps to 45% in 2018.

Looking at the staggering economic statistics for this group, it doesn't take long to figure out why the food bank network has seen this jump. Depending on which measure one looks at, between 9% and 13% of Canadians can be defined as having low incomes. Using the Market Basket Measure (which the government has declared will become the new official poverty measure), the figure is just over 1 in 10. If we look only at unattached (i.e. single) working-age people, the figure jumps to 33%: one in every three single adults lives in poverty.^{vii}

This group alone represents a low income population of 1.3 million people. This group lives in deep poverty, with average incomes that are 50% below the poverty line. This means these individuals are often struggling to survive on about \$10,000 per year.

Given these statistics, it is hardly surprising that close to one in five single adults experience food insecurity and that so many need help from a food bank to make ends meet.^{viii}

This is a population that, from a government program perspective, has few places to turn and seems to have been largely forgotten by federal and provincial governments. For decades, governments have focused policies on specific subsets of the populations such as families and seniors, yet have routinely overlooked working-age single adults as a group that requires targeted action.

A large number are receiving social assistance but can't climb out of poverty due to the grossly inadequate supports and strict conditions that come with these programs. Overall, government supports for this group of vulnerable people have declined by half since the mid 1990's.^{ix}

The federal government has recently increased their supports for low income Canadians who are working with the expansion of the Canada Workers Benefit. Food Banks Canada had called on the government to enact these changes and we applaud this step in the right direction - but more help is required for this segment of the population that has been ignored for far too long.

We recommend that the federal government implement the following steps to better support low-income single adults:

- To create a new program to support ill and unemployed Canadians whose temporary Employment Insurance (EI) or disability benefits are about to run out. This new program would close a major gap in our social safety net that leaves many people with no choice but to enter a cycle of poverty perpetuated by our broken social assistance systems across the country.
- To make single, low-income adults a priority consideration in all future poverty reduction policy measures to ensure that this vulnerable population is no longer left behind.
- To implement our Basic Income recommendation (see Basic Income in this report) to address the high levels of poverty amongst singles with no attachment to the labour force.

RECOMMENDATION 4: REDUCE NORTHERN FOOD INSECURITY

Northern food insecurity remains a significant concern for Food Banks Canada.

Food Banks Canada has worked tirelessly over the last few years to suggest ways to improve the Nutrition North program and northern food insecurity in general, and we are encouraged to see the recent announcements by the government to bolster and improve the Nutrition North program. These changes should reduce the cost of food in many northern communities and is a step in the right direction.

However, these improvements to Nutrition North alone will not be enough to reduce levels of food insecurity, which are as high as 46.8% in Nunavut.^x These changes must be combined with further policy initiatives by the federal government (such as those recommended in this report) to increase the incomes of those living in the North if we are to truly succeed in reducing the unacceptably high level of food insecurity in northern communities.

Food Banks Canada will be monitoring the new changes to Nutrition North over the coming year and will continue to work with the federal government on this important issue.



i Caledon Institute [2015]. Welfare in Canada 2014. Ottawa : Caledon Institute.

ii A. Tweddle and H. Aldridge [2017]. Welfare in Canada 2017. Toronto: Maytree.

iii Campaign 2000 [2018]. Bold Ambitions for Child and Family Poverty Eradication – 2018 Report Cards on Child and Family Poverty. Toronto: Campaign 2000.

iv Centre for Spatial Economics [2010]. Early learning and care impact analysis. Toronto: Centre for Spatial Economics.

v Ibid.

vi Food Banks Canada [2011]. Nowhere to Turn, Toronto: Food Banks Canada.

vii Food Banks Canada [2016]. Nowhere to Turn, Toronto : Food Banks Canada.

viii V. Tarasuk, A. Mitchell & N. Dachner [2014]. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2014. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF).

ix B. Murphy, X. Zhang & C. Dionne [2012]. Low income in Canada: A multi-line and multi-index perspective. Statistics Canada.

x V. Tarasuk, A. Mitchell & N. Dachner [2014]. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2014. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF).



METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The annual HungerCount is Food Banks Canada's signature report documenting food bank use in Canada. It is a cross-sectional, census survey of most food bank agencies, organizations and programs, within and outside of the Food Banks Canada network. The HungerCount provides a point in time snapshot of food bank use in Canada.

Food Banks Canada is always looking for ways to improve the HungerCount report. If you have questions about the report, or ideas on how we could make this research better, we would like to hear from you. Please get in touch at info@foodbankscanada.ca and reference HungerCount.

METHODOLOGY

FOOD BANK UNIVERSE

Within the food bank network there are 10 provincial organizations; 638 provincial affiliates; 4,300 affiliate agencies; 4 direct affiliates in the 3 territories. There are also 250 known independent food banks outside the network. We achieve a 97% return rate on surveys sent to the network, and a 64% return rate on the surveys sent to the independent food banks.

DATA COLLECTION

The HungerCount survey is sent out to food banks in February of each year, and the data is collected for the month of March. The data continues to be collected for the month of March as the study period is an unexceptional month, without predictable high or low use patterns. Since March is used consistently, we are able to track usage patterns across time periods.

To maximize data integrity, and minimize interpretation errors, the survey includes examples of how the data is to be collected and categorized. Definitions of the categories are also included.

The survey is administered in four different ways. (1) through an online program called Link2Feed that is used by the food bank network of the Ontario Association of Food Banks, Feed Nova Scotia and approximately 20 food banks in other provinces. (2) emailed directly to food banks and meal programs through the provincial organizations in BC, AB, SK, MB, QC, NB, PE, NL and are not on the Link2Feed program. (3) via paper survey sent directly to food banks and meal programs that have limited technology and require physical surveys. (4) phone interviews were necessary in 8 cases. These are primarily non-affiliated food banks, or food banks in remote, northern locations.

A NOTE ON VISITS

In the HungerCount 2018, Food Banks Canada is reporting on the number of visits to food banks in the month of March to provide a better representation of the need for food banks across Canada. Each food bank determines the number of times people in their community can access the services of their food bank, driven by their mission, community need, and available resources. In some cases, people can visit a food bank multiple times per month while in other cases people are able to visit fewer than once per month.

METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ANALYZING THE DATA

Survey data are entered into a database, cleaned to ensure a robust analysis including filtering of results to include only food bank and meal programs, and verified any outliers to ensure responses did not inappropriately alter the overall results.

We recognize that error exists in any data collection process. Food Banks Canada undertakes extensive follow up with food bank outliers (those who deviate +/-25% in any given year). The analysis performed by Food Banks Canada staff used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To arrive at the overall usage number, primary data is received directly from organizations. We cumulate total visits from all responding valid surveys and calculate household results using only surveys with complete data in those categories.

In cases where surveys were not completed by operating food banks, conservative estimates are produced by verifying that a food program still exists and using regional data to apply a percent increase or decrease to previously reported numbers. Outliers are removed from the regional data to ensure trends aren't over-reported.

FOOD PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN HUNGERCOUNT 2018 SURVEY

Prov	# of Affiliates	# of Organizations Participating (incl Affiliates, some agencies and independents)	Food Bank Only	Meal Only	Both	# Agencies incl. in Affiliate Surveys	Total Org. Represented
BC	100	118	65	5	48	690	808
AB	90	186	93	46	47	595	781
SK	29	34	30	-	4	125	159
MB	14	56	47	2	7	427	483
ON	129	698	467	131	100	624	1,322
QC	32	1,070	292	360	418	-	1,070
NB	59	61	41	5	15	77	138
NS	127	127	79	39	9	60	187
PEI	6	6	3	-	3	5	11
NL	48	48	42	-	6	44	92
YK	1	2	-	-	2	-	2
NT	2	9	5	-	2	2	11
NU	1	16	4	2	1	7	23
Totals	638	2,431	1,168	590	662	2,656	5,087



METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

METHODOLOGY REVIEW

In the fall of 2018, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) did a review of the HungerCount methodology and made several recommendations for the coming years. Overall, SRDC has found that HungerCount is a survey program providing rich data concerning vulnerable, and typically under-represented populations. HungerCount provides a robust snapshot in any given year of food bank utilization, as well as key demographics of the populations who use food banks across Canada. Several quality control checks are in place to minimize measurement and response errors in data collection phases.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Food Banks Canada thanks the hundreds of thousands of people accessing food programs, and the thousands of staff and volunteers who, every year, contribute information to the HungerCount report. Without their efforts and participation this research would not be possible.

HungerCount 2018 Provincial Coordinators:

Laura Lansink, Food Banks BC (British Columbia)
Alison Jones, Food Banks BC (British Columbia)
Stephanie Walsh-Rigby, Food Banks Alberta (Alberta)
Alison Richards, Food Banks Alberta (Alberta)
Laurie O'Connor, Saskatoon Food Bank (Saskatchewan)
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Amanda Colella-King, Ontario Association of Food Banks (Ontario)
Gaël Chantrel, Les Banques alimentaires du Québec (Québec)
Laurie Stewart, New Brunswick Association of Food Banks (New Brunswick)
Chiedza Sadomba, FEED NOVA SCOTIA (Nova Scotia)
Mike MacDonald, Upper Room Food Bank (Prince Edward Island)
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HUNGERCOUNT WAS PREPARED BY

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A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS

Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold
St. Catharines, Ontario

When you spend 90% of your income on housing, it's hard to put food on the table.

Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing should be a basic human right. Yet maintaining shelter is a growing and often invisible concern faced by many people in our community. Without access to adequate resources and support, it can become increasingly difficult to navigate the complex and inflated housing market to find solutions. Inadequate housing is a catalyst for hunger and poverty that food banks are working to reverse.

Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold has been supporting its community with meals for one hundred years. They have seen the need for affordable and stable housing of those they serve increase and have stepped up to respond. Since 2005, through its Housing Help Centre program, Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold provides individuals and families that are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless with housing options and support within their community.

The program offers assistance with the completion of rental applications, preventive measures against evictions and helps settle landlord disputes. It also offers referrals, lessons in active money management, and assistance with utilities. Through a collaborative approach, the program connects those at risk of homelessness with community and social services, access to emergency shelters, temporary, and even permanent housing.

Food banks often provide more than food support – they can help break the cycle of poverty, one home at a time.

READY TO HELP WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

Ashcroft Food Bank
Ashcroft, BC

When wildfires swept through the community of Ashcroft, British Columbia in July 2018, the town was cut off for days. There was no way in or out, and power was down. Yoriko Susanj, Executive Director, and the team at Ashcroft Food Bank knew they needed to help and even though there were only three people in their office, they rallied the community, and neighbourhood food banks. When all was said and done, 920 households and 1,620 adults and children were assisted through the ordeal.

It was a complex situation. With power down, debit and credit machines were useless, and people didn't have enough cash on hand to purchase the necessities they needed like food, diapers, and cleaning supplies. Stores that did remain open used generators but still lost a great deal of food.

By the time one road was finally opened, Yoriko organized a transport truck in collaboration with Save-On-Foods, and working with the village office, opened a distribution centre in the community hall. 80 volunteers helped unload the much-needed supplies and within an hour they were being distributed. Yoriko also arranged to have a second truck deliver food two days later.

But they didn't stop there. Seniors and others who could not travel to the centre received deliveries by a group of volunteers coordinated by the food bank.

Now that the town is back on its feet, the food bank continues to provide food, but also emotional support to the people of Ashcroft.

STORIES



THE COMPLEX AND SEVERE CHALLENGES IN THE NORTH

Niqinik Nuatsivik Nunavut Food Bank
Iqaluit, Nunavut

There are no roads to Nunavut. The only way anything can get into the communities in this territory is by plane or by sea (and then only in late August into early Sept). This fact drives the price of everything in Iqaluit up, including food.

The cost of living in Nunavut is the key contributor to the fact that nearly 50% of households experience food insecurity. The food bank in Iqaluit tries to do what it can to help people living in food insecure households with basic food support and connections to other community resources. "The challenge for the food bank is how to get food when it is so expensive to transport it into the community" said Bruce McRae, Co-chair of the Board of Directors.

This past summer the food bank reached out to see if Food Banks Canada could help. Staff worked with a wholesaler to purchase the food at reduced cost. It was then moved to Montreal harbour, loaded in a sea container and shipped north to Iqaluit. Bruce said, "This was the first time we worked together to get food, and it worked really well for the food bank." This food will need to last throughout the year, as another shipment of food won't be possible until the ice melts next summer.

There are many challenges to running a food bank in the far north, and accessing food is top of the list. The volunteers who run the Niqinik Nuatsivik food bank work hard to offer a variety of food to support all those who come in to get help each month.

STORIES

A photograph showing three people from the chest up, wearing white aprons over their casual clothing. They are in a kitchen setting, focused on a task. One person on the left is holding a white bowl, and another on the right is holding a glass measuring cup. The background is bright and slightly out of focus.

INNOVATION & FOOD BANKS

Interfaith Food Bank Society of Lethbridge
Lethbridge, Alberta

The Interfaith Food Bank Society of Lethbridge knew it needed to innovate to accommodate the growing demand for food bank use in its community. They launched several education programs within the food bank to support those in need.

“With these fresh ideas,” says Danielle McIntyre, Executive Director, “the food bank was able to empower those we serve while strengthening our entire community.”

The Interfaith Chinook Country Kitchen is a program that teaches participants how to cook healthy meals on a limited budget. The focus is to develop wholesome relationships with food while maximizing participant resources to put more nutritious meals on the table.

SHOP SMART is a complimentary two-hour workshop that teaches participants how to reduce the stress of visiting the grocery store. People are taught how to stretch their budget to make procuring food more affordable. All of these skills are taught to support nutritious meal planning.

The Collective Kitchen initiative teaches participants how to plan a menu, create a grocery list, and prepare 5-7 days of meals as a group. The food bank provides some ingredients, and participants share the cost of the rest. By cooking collectively, they are taught to expand on the skills they've learned through the SHOP SMART program. The result? New healthy eating habits are formed.

The Community Garden program allows participants to grow and tend to a garden as a group. They provide the care, and the garden provides fresh and nutritious food. Participants walk away with new knowledge about how to cultivate and grow a garden and a stronger sense of community.

The Project Protein is a program designed to help food bank clients source meat sustainably from local partners. Through partnerships with producers, farmers, ranchers, and feedlot operators, animal products are sourced, prepared, and distributed to families in need.

Like the Interfaith Food Bank Society of Lethbridge, food banks across Canada work with those they serve and their local communities to find innovative ways of addressing the stubborn problem of hunger in Canada.

STORIES



TAX CLINICS

The Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Food banks across Canada do critical work to feed their neighbours in need every day. Many also connect people with the tools, resources, and education needed to address the root causes of food insecurity.

The Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre is a prime example of a food bank that delivers a robust breadth of services. One of its most notable programs is a tax centre for those in need. For over twenty years, this food bank has helped low-income earners gain access to income tax services that would otherwise be out of reach.

Through its income tax centre, the food bank helps release funds to people who may not have known they were eligible to receive them. Benefits and eligibilities such as the Canada Child Benefit, Saskatchewan Low Income Tax Credit, and provincial social services are discovered through the use of the income tax centre. Many clients weren't accessing these funds, and didn't realize they were eligible. By increasing access to income tax services, the food bank provides a long-term solution to make a bigger impact in the lives of its clients.

Last year, the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program made an exceptional impact. The program helped over 7,000 people file over 4,800 tax returns, putting \$19.2 million back into hands of low-income individuals in Saskatoon, and into the local economy! The program operates thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of over 50 volunteers who care about making a difference in their community.

STORIES



A LIFELINE AND A CHANCE TO MOVE FORWARD

The Hunger Stop – Lanark County Food Bank
Carleton Place, Ontario

The Hunger Stop – Lanark County Food Bank is a lifeline when it is needed most. “Those in the community who come to us,” says Karin Nakamura, Manager, “have exhausted most of their resources.” They see the food bank as a last resort and they may even feel ashamed or anxious about getting help. When they speak to staff or volunteers, they are often surprised to learn The Hunger Stop offers more than food. Those in need leave The Hunger Stop with a sense of support, understanding, and resources, all without judgement. The Hunger Stop helps to improve circumstances to allow their community to rise to a better situation, where the services of the food bank are no longer necessary.

There are many circumstances that could result in the need for a food bank. A job loss could exhaust savings, accumulate debt, or force someone to sell their assets to feed their family. Illness can create an unexpected situation, causing worry about where the next meal will come from. There should never be stigma around food bank use. It’s another hurdle that creates unnecessary shame and anxiety about asking for a helping hand.

The Hunger Stop’s approach is always dignified. Like food banks from coast to coast to coast, they treat people with respect and understanding while helping them to regain their capacity to move forward. If people need to join a community assistance program, The Hunger Stop will connect them, if people need training and tools to get back on their feet, they’ll find a way provide it.

Food banks help our communities get back on their feet when they need it the most.



ABOUT FOOD BANKS CANADA



OUR VISION IS A CANADA WHERE NO ONE GOES HUNGRY

Food Banks Canada provides national leadership to relieve hunger today and prevent hunger tomorrow in collaboration with the food bank network in Canada.

Food Banks Canada is a national charitable organization dedicated to helping Canadians living with food insecurity. We support a network of Provincial Associations, affiliate food banks, and food agencies that work at the community level to relieve hunger. Our work is focused on maximizing collective impact, strengthening local capacity, and reducing the need for food banks.

OUR MANDATE

Food Banks Canada provides national leadership to relieve hunger today and prevent hunger tomorrow in collaboration with the food bank network in Canada. We do this by maximizing the collective impact of the network, strengthening the local capacity of food banks, and advocating to reduce the need for food banks.