

# 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.