



# Food Banks BC

## Hunger Report 2024

# Contents

## 03 Foreword

---

04 Land Acknowledgement

04 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Statement

## 06 Introduction

---

## 06 Methodology

---

08 What to do with this information

## 08 Understanding Food Insecurity

---

## 09 Hunger in British Columbia

---

09 BC in the National Context

09 Who is Using BC Food Banks

## 13 Implications of Food Insecurity

---

13 Health Impacts & Healthcare Costs

15 Lifestyle & Employment Impacts

## 15 The Role of Food Banks

---

15 History of Food Banks

16 Food Banks Today

17 Sustainability

18 Adaptation

## 19 Key Drivers of Food Insecurity in British Columbia

---

19 Economic Drivers

28 Social Drivers

32 Environmental Drivers

## 33 Policy Recommendations

---

34 Increase Income

34 Increase food infrastructure and support food programs

35 Support Indigenous food sovereignty

36 Increase Equity and Inclusion

## 37 Conclusion

---

## 37 Acknowledgements

---

38 Endnotes





## Foreword

In 1982, when BC's first food bank started providing support during a particularly challenging economic period, approximately 250 people were accessing services.

Fast forward 43 years, and over 1,000 hunger relief programs and charities throughout the province provide critical support to hundreds of thousands of British Columbians every month. What sprouted as short-term supplementary support has become embedded in society. With the deepening of entrenched poverty, the charitable food sector has shifted from temporary to essential, and there is very little to suggest that this situation will improve any time soon.

The inaugural Food Banks BC Hunger Report comes at a critical time in our province. Record-breaking demand for hunger relief services and a charitable food system buckling under the strain has driven the need for urgent and critical action to tackle both the immediate need to support people facing hunger and the root causes of food insecurity, i.e. poverty.

As BC's association of food banks, Food Banks BC is in a unique position to speak to the situation that food banks and the users of food banks face from a provincial perspective. It is our responsibility to undertake this work. We cannot be asking the question, 'How do we get more support to food banks in BC?' without asking, 'What is happening that has created a hunger crisis in BC, and what do we need to do to reverse this?'

This report echoes and builds upon the excellent research and analysis of Food Banks Canada's annual 'Hunger Count Report' and other similar studies that have looked at the steps we may take towards a future where food banks are a thing of the past. This report also gives voice to the many, many committed individuals who work tirelessly to support members of their community who face hunger.

It is often said that those who work in food banking work in the business of providing hope. It is my hope that this report will help inform, engage, and activate as we continue to collectively work toward a hunger-free British Columbia.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Huang-Taylor'.

**Dan Huang-Taylor,**  
**Executive Director of Food Banks BC**

## Land Acknowledgement

Food Banks BC is grateful and honoured to have its headquarters based on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Salish Peoples, including the ḡíćəy' (Katzie), ḡʷɑ:ḡłən' (Kwantlen), and Semiahma (Semiahmoo) Land-based Nations.

As an organization that supports a network of agencies throughout the province of British Columbia, Food Banks BC recognizes that our work takes place on the lands of many diverse Indigenous Peoples who have deep relationships with this land and have cared for it since time immemorial.

We acknowledge that many of us that are engaged in food banking are uninvited settlers. We acknowledge the historical impacts of colonization on Indigenous Peoples and the ongoing intersection of food insecurity with the legacy of colonialism.

We are committed to decolonizing our work, dismantling systems of oppression, and learning from Indigenous people. With humility, we are working on being active partners in the path toward reconciliation.



## Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Statement

This report would not have been possible without the personal information that BC food bank clients provide when accessing programming.

While all are welcome to access food banks, Food Banks BC would like to acknowledge that the people providing their personal information are often the most vulnerable to systemic inequities. We are talking about a section of the population that is really struggling, and we took care to discuss the collected data with sensitivity and careful language.

Member food banks collect, store, and share client information with utmost care, and it is the responsibility of Food Banks BC to share this data in a transparent manner that not only highlights the precarity of the people's lives that it represents, but also addresses the systemic inequities that allow poverty and oppression to perpetuate. We thank clients for trusting their food banks with this information.

This report will help readers to recognize the systemic barriers that exist, develop an understanding of those barriers and their consequences, and build an understanding of how all people must play a role in addressing the barriers.

The systemic inequities that this report refers to include the attitudes, policies, practices, systems, traditions, and values of society that continually block or threaten certain groups to develop and exercise their capabilities and support their wellbeing. These inequities are structural in nature because they are social processes that are a result of individual, society and institutional practices and policies. An example of these social beliefs is demonstrated in the stigma that is associated with accessing a food bank. People often believe that the populations that require a food bank are "just not trying hard enough" to support themselves. These same aspects of society enable privileged people to dominate and enjoy a wide range of opportunities.



**One of the biggest things I notice about non-food bank users is the way they view/talk about us — as though the only people who use the food bank are selfish losers who frivolously wasted their money, are too lazy to get jobs, don't/won't/can't budget, and don't know how to cook or otherwise prepare food. I cannot express how wildly inaccurate this is.**

— Mayne Island Food Bank

Systemic inequities are both historical and ongoing; and are built on racism, colonialism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia beliefs and actions. Inequities create barriers to accessing political participation and socio-economic opportunities (employment, housing, food, education, healthcare, childcare), and lead to invisibility in society and in provincial data, including poverty statistics. The HungerCount provides a unique look at some of those that are missing from other data sets, and clearly demonstrates the systemic and structural inequities that underlie our province and country. Unfortunately, some groups remain invisible, or missing from, the data, particularly those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and Indigenous People living on-reserve and in remote communities.

Poverty and food insecurity disproportionately affect historically underserved populations including Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC, or as referenced in research, racialized communities), women, children and youth in care, people who are experiencing houselessness, people with disabilities, people who have immigrated to Canada (also referenced in research as newcomers), Refugees and/or asylum seekers, as well as people who are involved in the criminal justice system, living in institutions (such as long-term care homes), and living in rural and/or remote areas. A person's different social and political identities can combine and overlap to create different and increased levels of discrimination; referred to as intersectionality. Considering intersectionalities helps us to understand the complex systems, barriers, and power structures that impede equity, diversity and inclusion.

While the HungerCount and food bank client data are not new, Food Banks BC has endeavoured to produce this report to draw attention to the lack of equity at play in British Columbia, which is the result of long-standing oppressive and unsupportive policies that impact our province's most vulnerable citizens. Food Banks BC believes that food is a fundamental right and physiological need for every human being. Our vision is for a hunger free province, but until we face the truth that our government and society sustain harm on marginalized communities through programs, policies, and cultural norms, we cannot begin to shift our work to better support equity-deserving groups. If we focus on and attend to the barriers that marginalized communities are up against, we can move away from poverty and food insecurity being a personal problem. Our goal in this report is to address the issues that lead to food insecurity and by doing so, decrease the number of people experiencing food insecurity. We hope that this report helps us to collectively do just that.





# Introduction

Hunger is a public health emergency in Canada. In British Columbia the rates of food insecurity have almost doubled since 2019.

While anyone going hungry in a country so rich in resources is unacceptable, a number of events have played a major role in influencing Canada's food security landscape, taking a bad situation to a crisis level. The Covid-19 pandemic caused major disruptions to our economic and food systems. Economic inflation continues to rise, increasing the cost of living, and pushing more households into poverty.

Food banks are a last resort for many households that are struggling to make ends meet. Canadian food banking is currently facing an unprecedented surge in demand, and BC food banks are struggling to keep up with this unsustainable situation. The number of households accessing food banks has risen by 14% over 2023, and the number of visits those households made to food banks has also risen, by 15%.

**From January to June of this year, over 41,300 British Columbians visited a food bank for the first time.** Looking back over the last 5 years, food bank visits in BC have increased by 81% since 2019, prior

to the pandemic. These numbers tell us that more people are living in poverty, and that poverty has deepened for many.



**Food insecurity is a crisis in Canada. More people than ever before are accessing emergency food services. We cannot normalize hunger. People are reporting using food banks as their primary source of weekly groceries and making these food items last longer than the intended two days per week.**

— White Rock/South Surrey Food Bank

This report shares the data on who is using BC food banks and explains the implications of food insecurity and the importance of addressing this public health issue. The role that food banks play in addressing food insecurity is explored, along with research on the key drivers of poverty and food insecurity in BC. This information is used to propose policy recommendations for provincial and municipal governments that seek to address the root causes of food insecurity in BC.

## Methodology

The findings in this report are supported by data available from research on food insecurity in BC and across Canada, using the following instruments:

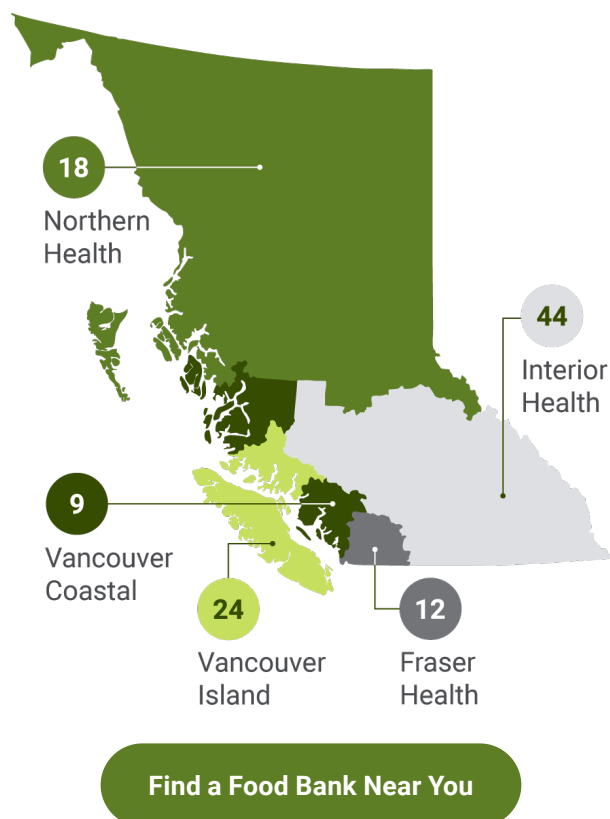
### Food Banks Canada HungerCount

Food Banks Canada annual cross-sectional census survey, the HungerCount, collects client data from the national network of food banks over the month of March, providing a point-in-time snapshot of food bank use across the country. In 2024, 129 hunger relief agencies participated in the HungerCount, 107 of which were members of Food Banks BC, and the remainder were un-affiliated programs.

The data contained in the 2024 HungerCount has been presented provincially and broken down by Regional Health Authority. The Regional Health Authority delineations, referred to as “regions” in this report, were used to highlight differences in the profile of clients and their reasons for accessing food banks, and are not related to health data or services in those regions. For reference, the estimates of the provincial population living in each region in 2024<sup>1</sup> are:

Regional Health Authority	Population	Percentage of the Provincial Population
Fraser	2,194,325	39%
Interior	899,949	16%
Northern	303,366	5%
Vancouver Coastal	1,354,081	24%
Vancouver Island	930,352	16%

## Food Banks by Region in BC



The HungerCount did not take place in 2020, due to the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is a gap in the year-to-year analysis presented in some of the data sets found in this report. More insights into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on BC’s food security landscape can be found in reports such as BCCDC’s [Examining the Societal Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The HungerCount does not capture how much food that is supplied to partner agencies that may be providing hunger relief through meal programs, such as school breakfast programs, and these types of programs do not participate in the HungerCount themselves.

Please note that the HungerCount provides a *First Nation, Inuit and Metis* category for personal identity in their survey. For the purposes of this report, we have substituted the word “Indigenous” to represent these three groups when appropriate.

## Food Bank Survey

In June and July of 2024, Food Banks BC conducted a survey of their members. The results of this survey were used to understand and illustrate how BC food banks are managing the demand for their service over the last year.

## About The Author

Melissa's passions are all things food related. With an honours degree in Biochemistry from the University of Guelph and a diploma in Natural Nutrition, she has worked in developing community food security in the Revelstoke area for over 15 years. Motivated by a knowing that food can be a powerful agent in addressing both climate change and social discord, Melissa works to build socially just and resilient local food systems within British Columbia through a variety of projects, studies, and collaborations. When she isn't busy tackling community food security issues you can find her in the garden, on the trails, or teaching her kids the wonders of the world.

**Melissa Hemphill,**  
Food Security Specialist

## What to do with this information

The information in this report can be unsettling. To imagine so many people and families forced to desperate measures in order to meet basic needs, and that more and more people are needing to do so, can invoke feelings of helplessness and frustration. Please take care when reading this report and talking about the issues contained within. But just as humans created this situation through our economic policies and social systems, humans can also dial the needle back on hunger through specific actions:

**Share** — pass this report on to friends, family, colleagues, agencies, organizations, and foundations. The more people that are aware of the issue, as well as the background information and possible solutions, the more ability we collectively have to shift the situation.

**Donate** — think of your fellow community members and their dependence on food banks for their wellbeing the next time you have a little extra to give. Donate newly purchased (not the expired pickles at the back of the cupboard) or freshly grown food to your local food bank or soup kitchen. Consider including food banks in your will and your annual giving. Most food banks are charities and can issue tax receipts for your donations. [Farmers can receive a tax credit for donating products to BC food banks.](#)

**Advocate** — use your voice and the information in this report to raise awareness of the issue of growing hunger in our province. Contact your Member of Parliament (federal), Member of the Legislative Assembly (provincial), Regional District Directors (regional), and City Councillors (municipal) and urge them to adopt the recommendations in this report and anything else they can do to decrease hunger in our province and communities.

## Understanding Food Insecurity

Food security means that everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe; everyone has the agency to participate in, and influence food systems; and that food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and honour Indigenous food sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

Food security can exist in a household, community, provincial or national context. When food security is absent in a household, the household can be considered food insecure.

Food insecurity exists when factors outside an individual's control negatively impact their access to enough foods that promote wellbeing. Economic, social, environmental, and geographical factors influence this access. Food insecurity is most acutely felt by those who experience the negative impacts of structural inequities, such as discrimination and on-going colonial practices.<sup>2</sup>

Levels of household food insecurity:

- ▶ **Marginal food insecurity:** Worry about running out of food and/or limited food selection due to a lack of money for food.
- ▶ **Moderate food insecurity:** Compromise in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food.
- ▶ **Severe food insecurity:** Miss meals, reduce food intake, and at the most extreme, go day(s) without food.<sup>3</sup>



# Hunger in British Columbia

## BC in the National Context

To understand the extent and impact of food insecurity for British Columbia, it is helpful to look at the rates of food insecurity and poverty in relation to the rest of the country.

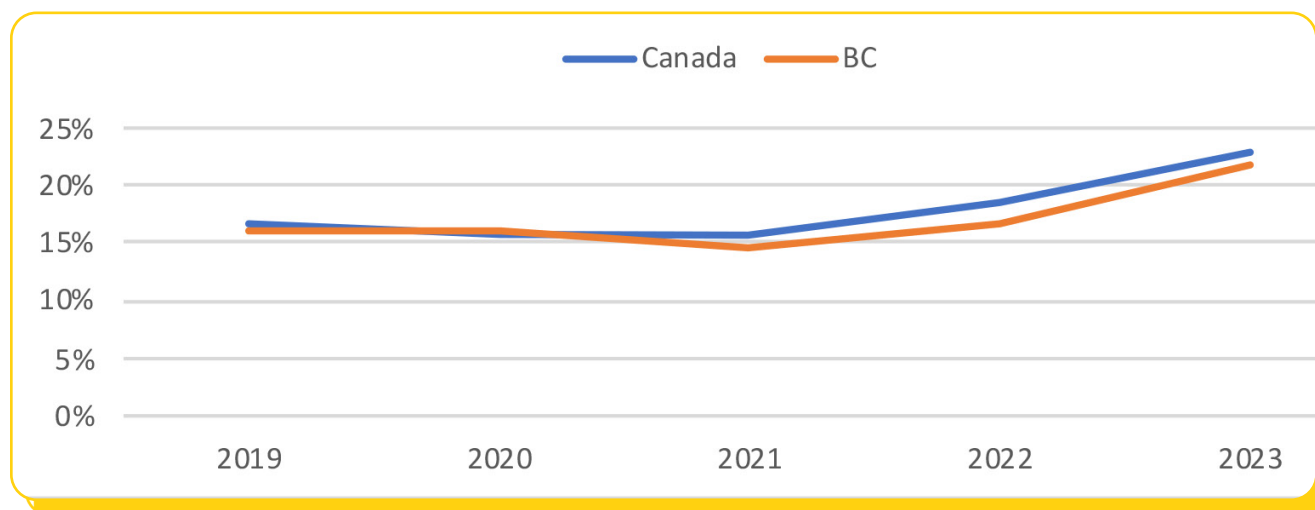
For an in-depth look at poverty and food insecurity data across the country, including provincial breakdowns, please see [Food Banks Canada's Poverty Report Card and HungerCount](#).

Globally, nearly 30% of the world is food insecure and 42% are unable to afford a healthy diet.<sup>4</sup> British Columbia's food insecurity rate reached 21.8% in 2023.<sup>5</sup> Is it ok that BC's rates are nearing the global level? Or, can we do better as a province to ensure we all have access to the food we need?

Over 100,000 British Columbians currently use food banks on a monthly basis, and data from food banks helps us to understand who is most at risk of food insecurity in BC.



**Figure 1: Rates of food insecurity by population for Canada and British Columbia in 2019 to 2023.**



Source: Statistics Canada.<sup>6</sup>

## Who is Using BC Food Banks

Food banks collect information about their clients to better understand who is accessing their services. This data allows food banks and the food banking system to learn more about usage trends. While a person's identity and socio-economic situation does not predetermine food insecurity, as there are many

factors at play, the data of food bank users in BC demonstrates an overrepresentation of vulnerable groups, and highlights where our economic and social systems are failing.

As reported in May 2021 by the Public Health Association of BC, there are approximately 500

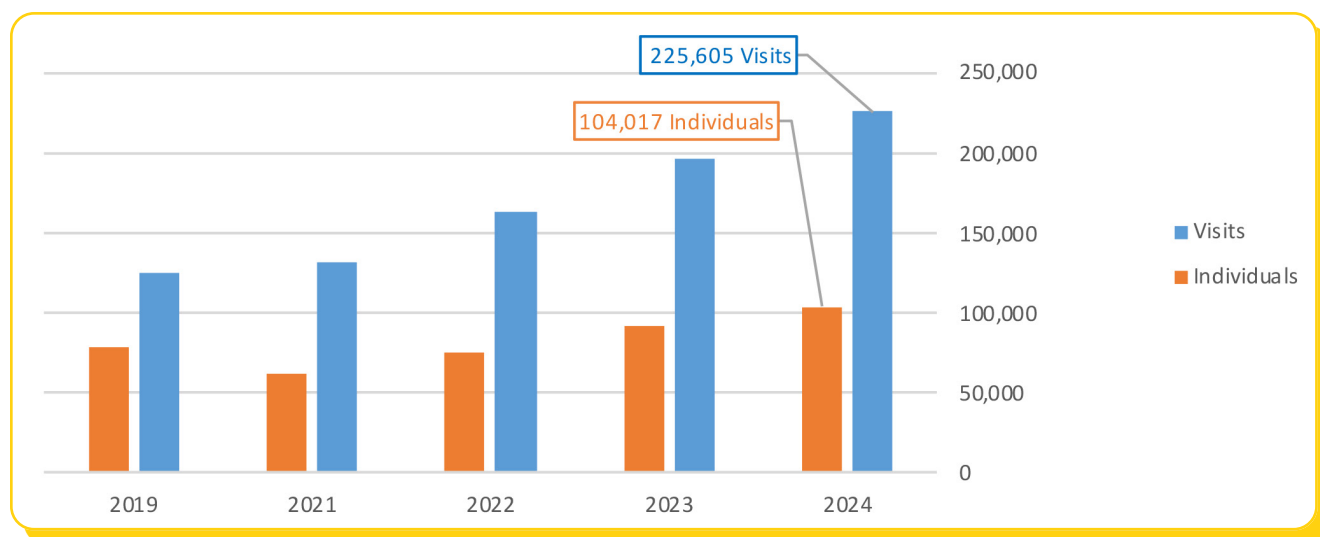
organizations offering a variety of food access programs across the province.<sup>7</sup> Since this report was completed, there has been considerable growth in the number of charitable food agencies and programs operating in BC. The Food Banks BC membership comprises 107 food banks. This membership supports over 1,000 hunger relief programs.

Food banks across BC are seeing an unprecedented number of visits. Prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, food banks were experiencing

a gradual downward trend in client numbers. Since 2019, the number of individuals accessing food banks has risen by 32%. Furthermore, the number of visits households made has risen dramatically with an 81% increase from 2019 to 2024.

The data on food bank usage in BC shows a clear increase in the number of households facing food insecurity over the last three years. The data also reveals that those households are visiting food banks more often, which may indicate a deepening in household's needs for charitable support.

**Figure 2: The number of individuals served and the number of visits made at BC Food Banks during the months of March from 2019 to 2024, excluding 2020. Some Food Banks serve households once a month, while other food banks serve households multiple times each month.**



Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.

In March of 2024, reporting food banks across BC served 104,017 individuals through 225,605 visits. Though food bank users represent less than 2% of the population of BC, research shows that only **1 in 5 food insecure households** tend to use food banks.<sup>8</sup>

Provincial numbers collected by Food Banks BC shows that member food banks continue to experience rising demand throughout 2024, and our member survey indicates that this demand is not sustainable. Food Banks BC data shows that the 107 member food banks served a total of **1,106,679 visits in the first half of 2024**, and that **41,300 individuals have gone to a member food bank for the first time** (new clients) between January and June of this year.



**If this were a business, it would implode because it's growing too fast.**

— Salvation Army Food Bank, Penticton

Each food bank is working in unique situations within their communities and thus experience this surge in demand in different ways. A third of the food banks surveyed reported that operations are fairly steady with consistent donations, client numbers, staffing and volunteers; while over 60% of BC food banks report massive shifts that are drowning their ability to serve their community. Some services are seeing a large influx of newcomers, while others are serving more seniors than before. Our regional breakdown helps to illuminate trends happening within each of the five regions of the province.

**Table 1: The number of individuals served and the number of visits to FBBC member food banks in March 2024 for all of BC and organized by the region that the food banks are located in.**

	All of BC	Fraser Region	Interior Region	Northern Region	Vancouver Coastal Region	Vancouver Island Region
Individuals Served	97,708	24,640	24,605	6,844	22,900	18,719
Visits	217,512	51,729	35,760	12,333	85,763	31,927

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.



We have had to divide the clients into two separate days depending on their last name. We were overwhelmed and they were cranky when 100+ people showed up in one day and people had to wait two hours to be served.

— Hope Food Resource Centre

Of those who are accessing BC Food Banks, there is a fairly consistent proportion of children, adults and seniors over time, with an approximate client breakdown of 30% children, 60% adults and 10% seniors (aged 65+).

There are small variances in the age breakdown of food bank clients when looked at regionally, but when compared with the overall population proportion of the age groups in each region, stark trends arise.

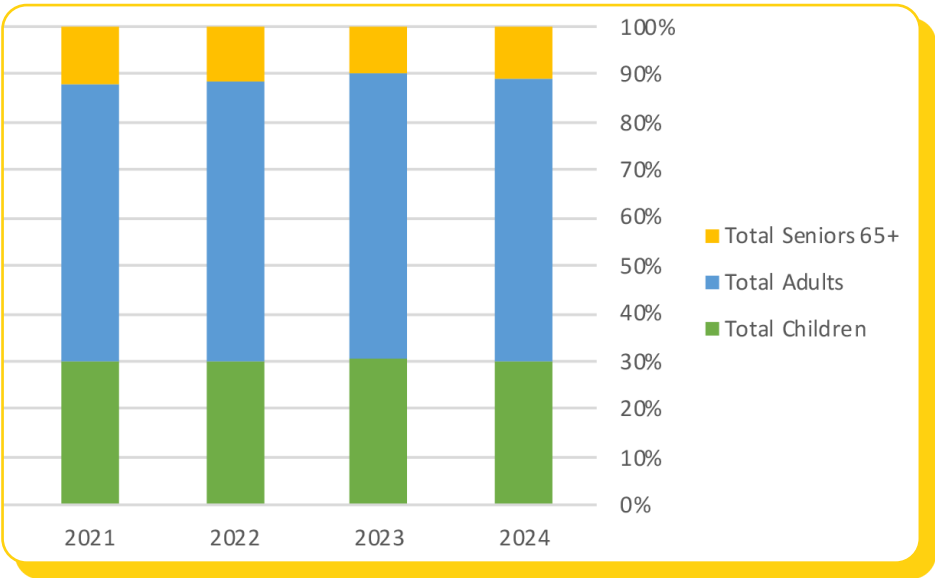
Across most regions, the proportion of food bank users that are **Children is double the proportion of children in the general population of the regions.**

Both the Northern and Vancouver Island regions have a higher representation of *Adult* food bank users than in the total population of adults of those regions. The Vancouver Coastal region is seeing an almost equivalent proportion of food bank clients that are *Seniors 65+* than the senior population of the region, whereas in the other regions the representation of *Seniors 65+* food bank users is less than half of the senior population in those regions.

The household composition of food bank clients demonstrates that around half of food bank households are *Single People*, but that the proportion of *Two-Parent* and *Single-Parent Families* accessing food banks increased in 2024.

The regions are similar in their distribution of food bank client household composition, with the Fraser Region food banks serving more *Two-Parent Families* and fewer *Single People*, proportionally.

**Figure 3: Proportional age breakdown of BC food bank clients from 2019 to 2024, excluding 2020.**



Source: Food Banks Canada HungerCount.

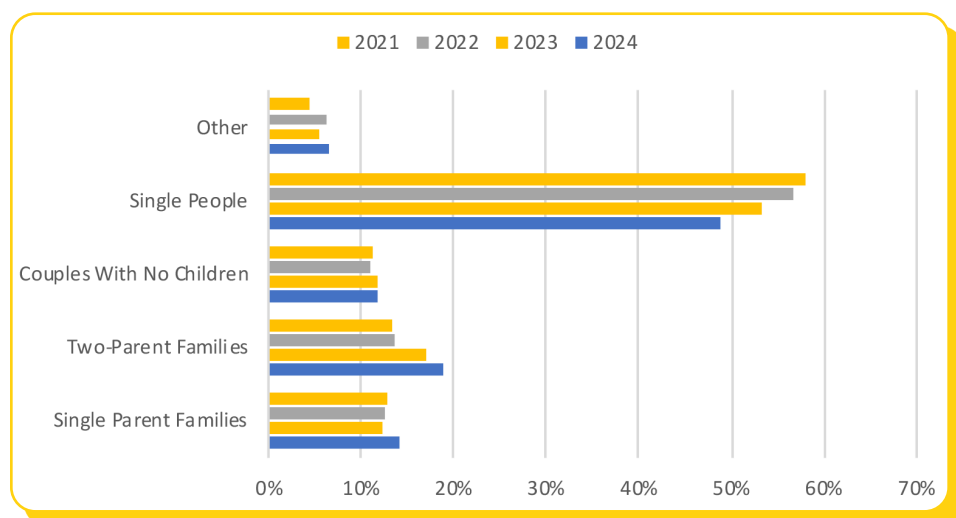


**Table 2: The proportional age breakdown of BC food bank clients in March 2024, compared with the proportional age breakdown of the total regional population, organized by the region where the food bank is located.**

	Fraser Region		Interior Region		Northern Region		Vancouver Coastal Region		Vancouver Island Region	
	Clients	Region Pop.	Clients	Region Pop.	Clients	Region Pop.	Clients	Region Pop.	Clients	Region Pop.
<b>Children</b>	34%	18%	29%	16%	28%	20%	29%	14%	27%	15%
<b>Adults</b>	56%	65%	62%	59%	64%	62%	55%	68%	63%	59%
<b>Seniors 65+</b>	10%	17%	9%	25%	8%	17%	16%	18%	10%	26%

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount and BC Stats.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 4: Composition of BC food bank client households from 2019 to 2024, excluding 2020.**



Source: Food Banks Canada HungerCount.

**Table 3: Composition of FBBC member food bank client households in March 2024 for all of BC and organized by the region that the food banks are located in.**

	All of BC	Fraser Region	Interior Region	Northern Region	Vancouver Coastal Region	Vancouver Island Region
<b>Single Parent Families</b>	14%	15%	15%	16%	9%	12%
<b>Two-Parent Families</b>	19%	30%	15%	13%	13%	16%
<b>Couples With No Children</b>	12%	13%	12%	10%	12%	12%
<b>Single People</b>	49%	37%	51%	52%	56%	54%
<b>Other</b>	6%	5%	7%	8%	11%	5%

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.

# Implications of Food Insecurity

## Food access is foundational and interconnected to wellbeing.

Food insecurity impacts not only the individual and household experiencing this form of deprivation, but also their community, province and country. Individual and population health are determined by a myriad of factors including income, employment, childhood experiences, physical environments,

social supports, healthy behaviours, access to health services, biology and genetic endowment, gender, culture and race.<sup>9</sup> These are referred to collectively as the social determinants of health, all of which intersect with food access or a lack thereof. Taking a deeper look at the health and social ramifications of food insecurity helps to illustrate why addressing hunger is so critical for the future of our province.



## Health Impacts & Healthcare Costs

Food insecurity, poverty and health are inextricably linked. A demonstration of this is that "people living in poverty were disproportionately represented among the people who died from COVID-19 and experienced significant excess mortality."<sup>10</sup> Research shows that Canadians with higher incomes are often healthier than those with lower incomes.<sup>9</sup>

Those who live with food insecurity are less likely to get the nutrition required to maintain their health, as the probability of inadequate micronutrient intake rises in cases of adult Canadians experiencing severe food insecurity.<sup>11</sup>

The University of Toronto's PROOF Lab research reports negative health issues and poorer health outcomes for food insecure adults and children, further impacting the entire population due to increased strain on our healthcare system. For example, the healthcare costs incurred by a severely food-insecure adult in Ontario were more than double that of a food secure adult.<sup>12</sup> Efforts to mitigate food insecurity could lessen child healthcare needs, as well as associated costs to our healthcare systems.<sup>13</sup>

## Innovation in Action

### Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program

In an effort to increase the quantity and quality of healthy foods available to lower-income families, pregnant people and seniors, the BC Association of Farmers Markets administers the Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program. In place since 2015, this program provides community agencies with coupons to distribute to food insecure clients to be traded in for healthy fruits, vegetables, nuts, eggs, dairy, herbs, vegetable & fruit plants, meat, fish, and honey from over 1200 local vendors at participating farmers markets across the province.

Households enrolled in the program receive \$27 in coupons weekly for up to 16 weeks, allowing them to participate in their local food economy in a dignified and inclusive way. Approximately one quarter of the 32,451 participants enrolled in the program in 2023 were Indigenous, and over half of the participating households have children.

Participants report eating a wider variety of vegetables and fruits, using more vegetables and fruits in recipes, feeling healthier, eating less processed foods, feeling connected to other people in their community, increased confidence buying healthy foods and making healthy meals, and that they cook at home more often.

Funding for the program comes primarily from the BC Ministry of Health, with a \$3.86 million investment in 2024, and over \$300,000 in additional contributions from regional and local bodies. The program is constantly evolving, expanding to new markets, agencies, and households each year. Because it is a redemption style program (farmers market managers collect coupons from vendors, submit the coupons to BCAFM for reimbursement, then disperse the funds directly to recipient farm vendors), there is a great level of nimbleness to the program, allowing for creativity in times of local climate crisis or to respond to unique needs of rural, remote or Indigenous communities.

### Fresh Food Prescriptions

Fresh Food Prescriptions (FFRx) is an academic-community partnership program being piloted by the SEED in Guelph, Ontario, with research support



from the Universities of Guelph, Victoria and Waterloo. In this program, healthcare practitioners identify and recruit food insecure patients living with a diagnosed cardio-metabolic condition and/or a micronutrient deficiency. The program participants receive weekly food vouchers that are redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables at five participating locations around the community that offer sliding-scale pricing. Program participants also receive a supportive information package about the pilot program and other supports available at the Guelph Community Health Centre.

“The FFRx project showed that prescribing fresh fruit and vegetables for food insecure patients with a diet-related illness has the potential to address food security and promote beneficial dietary changes and social connectivity. While this program may not offer a long-term solution to food security or nutritional health issues, it offers healthcare providers a useful tool to reduce barriers to healthy eating by improving the availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability, and accommodation of healthy foods.”<sup>14</sup>

More investigation into the effectiveness of a Fresh Food Prescription program is necessary and underway. The researchers suggest that “targeted food prescriptions should be evaluated for cost effectiveness, acceptability, and impacts against existing community food provision models (e.g., food banks) to determine their relative benefits as models for community food assistance.”



The health impacts of food insecurity go beyond physical challenges associated with poor quality diets. Food insecurity is associated with an increased likelihood of every mental health problem examined in Canadian youth.<sup>15</sup> Children and adolescents living in a food-insecure household have greater need for support for mental or substance use disorders than those living in households without food insecurity, and food insecurity is a more powerful predictor of pain and prescription opioids use than income.<sup>16, 17</sup>

## Lifestyle & Employment Impacts

Poverty and food insecurity can severely restrict a person's ability to participate in social life and to achieve gainful employment, creating a vicious cycle of poor physical, mental and social health. There is an intertwining of loneliness, poor health, and food access challenges, with intensifying health consequences in later life.<sup>18</sup>

Without adequate income and access to education and health care, people can't afford the food, activities and living conditions that are comparable to their community standards of living, contributing to experiences of loneliness and

isolation. Social exclusion results in a lack of social networks that ordinarily help us to mitigate poverty through sharing resources, childcare assistance, transportation, job help, and material and emotional support. Without these resources there can be a lack of control over important decisions, leading to feelings of alienation or inferiority, which can impact people's sense of dignity and security, and hopefulness for a better life. Scarcity becomes the theme of one's life and a lens through which every decision is made.



**It's about the we, not the I. If my neighbour is well, I am well.**

— Islands Wellness Society Food Bank

To address the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, food insecurity interventions should address nutrition *and* give holistic consideration to the multiple ways food insecurity harms health — not only via lower quality diets, but through worse mental health and impairing the ability to participate in social life.<sup>19</sup>

## The Role of Food Banks

**Canada has a two-tiered food system: those that can afford to shop at grocery stores, and those that can't.**

Those that can't afford to shop at grocers must relinquish choice and control while they rely on charitable food programs to meet the most basic of human needs: nourishment. Modern Canadian social constructs (or perceptions) typically position food insecurity and/or poverty as an individual problem, a personal failing, rather than as a systemic issue that we are all at risk of, to some degree.

## History of Food Banks

Food Banks have been in Canada since the 1980's, originally intended as a temporary measure to meet emergency food needs. In the last forty years they have become a permanent and essential component of our society and food system. There is much criticism of food banks as a band-aid measure, not solving food insecurity for individuals or society. Food insecurity is not a problem that food banks created, but rather a failure of the social safety net created by federal and provincial policies.



**Our team is very focused on ensuring everyone has access to food and are intentional to be inclusive of the diverse food needs of our community. We are united around this goal and enjoy each other's unique perspectives.**

— Archway Services Food Bank

And while it is true that food banks don't solve food insecurity, this does not detract from the fact that food banks are an amazing expression of the compassion of Canadians. Tens of thousands of employees and volunteers work hard to ensure there are nutritious foods for clients, day after day after day. And that work has become substantially more difficult in the last four years as the client demand and price of goods has increased, while food and monetary donations decrease. It has become incredibly difficult for food banks and other charitable food programs to adjust to the growing challenge of supporting more food insecure households.



**Food Banks are full of some of the hardest working, caring, creative, innovative, compassionate people who are oftentimes being worked into the ground with no relief in sight. Food Banks need support.**

— Mustard Seed Food Bank

## Food Banks Today

The number of households using food banks was moderately consistent before 2019, serving mostly those on fixed incomes that were below the poverty line. Since 2023, we have seen an increasing number of food bank clients who are working full-time jobs, yet turning to food banks to supplement their household food requirements. This shift towards serving more “working poor” individuals reflects how wages have not kept up with the cost of life's essentials in BC. This has created an entirely new and growing bracket of clients for food banks to support, in addition to the significant numbers they were already assisting. Food banks are serving not only those entrenched in poverty, but those who have always managed to get by until now. Many

British Columbians are being priced out of the grocery store, and while some turn to neighbours and friends in times of need, many have no other choice except using a food bank.



**We are operating with the same amount of funding than in the past, but we have had a 300% client increase in the last year**

— Mayne Island Food Bank



## Acknowledging Stigma, Addressing Equity

Charitable food programs, including food banks, are taking a hard look at their place in their community and their food system. There is a growing movement to employ equitable practices to decrease the stigma of accessing these programs, and to ensure that they are not further harming their clients with unnecessary questions and proof of deservedness. Food Banks BC has created an [Equity Toolkit](#) to help food banks operate in an inclusive and accepting manner, promoting a move away from prejudicial and exclusive practices. This shift in attitude and practices opens the door to new clients, those that previously did not feel welcome or felt that the program was not appropriate for them to access.

An example of equity considerations that have evolved in food bank practices is the discontinuation of means testing at most food

banks across BC. Historically, it was a common practice to require food bank clients to show proof of their income to qualify for food access, proving their need for the service. Food banks have learned that means testing is a myopic view of an individual or household's circumstances, and is likely to cause harm to clients and further stigmatize food bank use. Additionally, food banks have come to realise that there is a huge administrative cost to prevent bad actors, or "abuse" of the service. Building relationships with clients, explaining the intention of the service, and allowing people to experience the food bank and self-regulate their use has become a widely used modern approach. Operational constraints often limit client access to once a month per household, and food banks know that "no one is getting rich off a week's worth of food", and thus abuse of the system occurs at an extremely low rate.

Food banks and other charitable food programs very rarely act alone. Commonly food programs are attached to other social services, as access to food can be a gateway to receiving support for housing, mental and physical health, legal issues and employment or training. It can also work the other way, with folks accessing social supports and then feeling welcome enough to also access food programming. Food can provide an opportunity to connect with support workers and programs, to increase belonging in community, and meet one's wellness needs. Food programs are also a place where people connect and "friendships are forged here that wouldn't happen elsewhere" (Autumn Services Society for Seniors Support). These services directly address the social isolation that comes alongside poverty and food insecurity.

## Sustainability

Charitable food programs, including food banks, are an example of BC's dependency on the non-profit sector to deliver essential services, bridging gaps in the public support system.

**"Non-profit organizations are critical resources in communities throughout BC and provide essential supports to people experiencing, or at risk of, poverty including health supports, housing, and food security. Every day, people in BC access non-profit programs and services to meet their needs." — 2024 BC Poverty Reduction Strategy**



**The demand on our staff and volunteers has continued to increase while donations have not. We see up to 35 new clients almost daily. People who have never been in the position to access a food bank before in their life. People with strong employment, people with homes. The increase in new clients has been shocking.**

— Mustard Seed Food Bank

The non-profit sector is operating in extremely difficult times, with feelings of being overwhelmed, stretched, underfunded, challenged, uncertain, and concerned.<sup>20</sup> Not only is the demand for services growing, but non-profits are incurring significantly higher operational expenses, while for the 11th year running, the number of Canadians making charitable donations has *declined*.<sup>21</sup> 92% of BC food banks had to increase their food purchasing in the last year to compensate for insufficient food donations.<sup>22</sup> This perfect storm puts immense pressure on non-profits to reduce programming, diversify funding sources, or close their doors. Some food banks are needing to increase staffing in order to meet the growing client demand, increase wages to retain staff, and pay more for shipping in order to save money on bulk orders.



**While the community is historically very generous, donations are down; many donors are now clients or families that are saving for themselves.**

— Salvation Army Food Bank, Penticton

A recent study of four rural food banks in BC's Southern Interior, in partnership with Food Banks BC, showed that rural food banks serve significantly larger geography and a larger portion of their community compared with urban food banks. Adding to the task of serving so many neighbours, rural food banks have lower monetary donations, fewer food recovery options and amounts, less access to bulk purchasing and recovery options, and often provide a broader base of services with less core funding.<sup>23</sup>





People depend on food banks for their livelihood and wellbeing, which is a ton of pressure on staff that are precariously employed themselves.

— Mayne Island Food Bank



Food Recovery has become a linchpin in our ability to provide food to clients. However, it is by nature very unpredictable, so consistency is hard to provide to clients. Additionally, rapid growth in demand makes it hard to keep up with. We are serving less food to more people.

— Community Connections (Revelstoke) Food Bank

## Adaptation

Limited infrastructure (especially storage), staffing and volunteer capacity strains what each food bank can do — and all are dependent on available funding. To meet the growing client numbers, the rising cost of food, and the decline in donations, many food banks must find new ways to keep their doors open and continue to serve clients. In the last twelve months, 30% of BC food banks ran out of food before demand was met, and 70% of food banks had to give people less food.<sup>21</sup> In order to maintain services, many food banks have had to decrease how often they distribute food and/or how much food each client receives.

**“Our food bank is in a position now that we have to try new things.” — Mayne Island Food Bank**

While food recovery programs have become the norm for most food banks, they come with their own set of challenges as they require staffing to pick-up and sort donations, a vehicle large enough to do pick-ups, and a lot of cold storage to keep perishable foods safe for distribution.

Many food banks are exploring cost-recovery or low-cost food provision, with either a shopping experience or a pre-packed hamper of staples. The hope is that these innovations can meet the needs of those that have been priced out of the grocery store but have some money to spend on food, decreasing the overall demand on the charitable food programs.

**“Many of our food bank clients can buy some food, but they are being priced out of the grocery stores and there is no middle option” — Mayne Island Food Bank**

Food banks innovate and collaborate to explore new ways to tackle these challenges as a community and not as competitors. Food Banks BC helps to bring together innovators to learn from each other as few food banks have the capacity to invent and trial their own program without support and guidance.



If we were unable to receive support from Food Banks BC we would not be able to provide services to our community.

— Alberni Valley Ministries Food Bank

Food banks strive to provide nutritious and culturally appropriate foods to best support their clients. The community of Abbotsford continues to welcome many newcomers to Canada each month. Since the Syrian crisis, Archway Community Services Food Bank has been increasing the availability of diverse foods to increase choice and accessibility. Now they offer culturally preferred foods that are familiar for the South Asian, Ukrainian and halal diets.

Currently there are over 1,600 individuals accessing the culturally preferred foods each month. Archway also recognized that being able to access a food bank outside of someone's local community can be important to avoid stigma, and so the development of food bank satellites was crucial in creating safe spaces within Abbotsford.



“Over the past year, our food bank has faced challenges due to a decrease in both food and monetary donations. However, we continue our commitment to help and support our community. While the reduction in resources has impacted our operations, we have strived to maintain the quality and breadth of our services. We have implemented innovative strategies to stretch our resources further, ensuring that we continue to provide essential support to those in need.”

— Salvation Army Food Bank, Penticton

While innovation, creativity, compassion and hard work are at the core of charitable food programs, they have their limits. By understanding what creates food insecurity and its disproportionate representation amongst vulnerable people, we can then explore ways to decrease its prevalence through programs and policies, addressing the public health impacts that poverty creates for us all.

## Key Drivers of Food Insecurity in British Columbia

**Food insecurity is a complex issue that can be tied to a number of causes and intersections.**

The HungerCount data reveals that people are struggling with the cost of food and housing, and that for many, employment income is not enough to meet the cost of living.

The increasing rates of food insecurity in BC can be attributed to the following recent shifts:

- ▶ Sharp rise in inflation
- ▶ Rapid interest rate hikes
- ▶ The lack of available housing supply, particularly affordable housing
- ▶ The loss of income supports like the CERB and other one-time affordability measures

- ▶ Significant and rapid population growth without the social infrastructure ready to absorb such an influx
- ▶ A slowdown in economic activity and a rising unemployment rate have reduced the pressure to offer higher wages and continue the progress made toward a more inclusive labour market<sup>5</sup>

A deep dive into the economic, social and environmental drivers of food insecurity in BC provide clues about policy and program interventions that can address this growing crisis.

### Economic Drivers

Being able to choose the foods one eats and being secure in knowing one will continue to be able to do so with dignity requires an adequate income. In today's economy in BC, a household's income

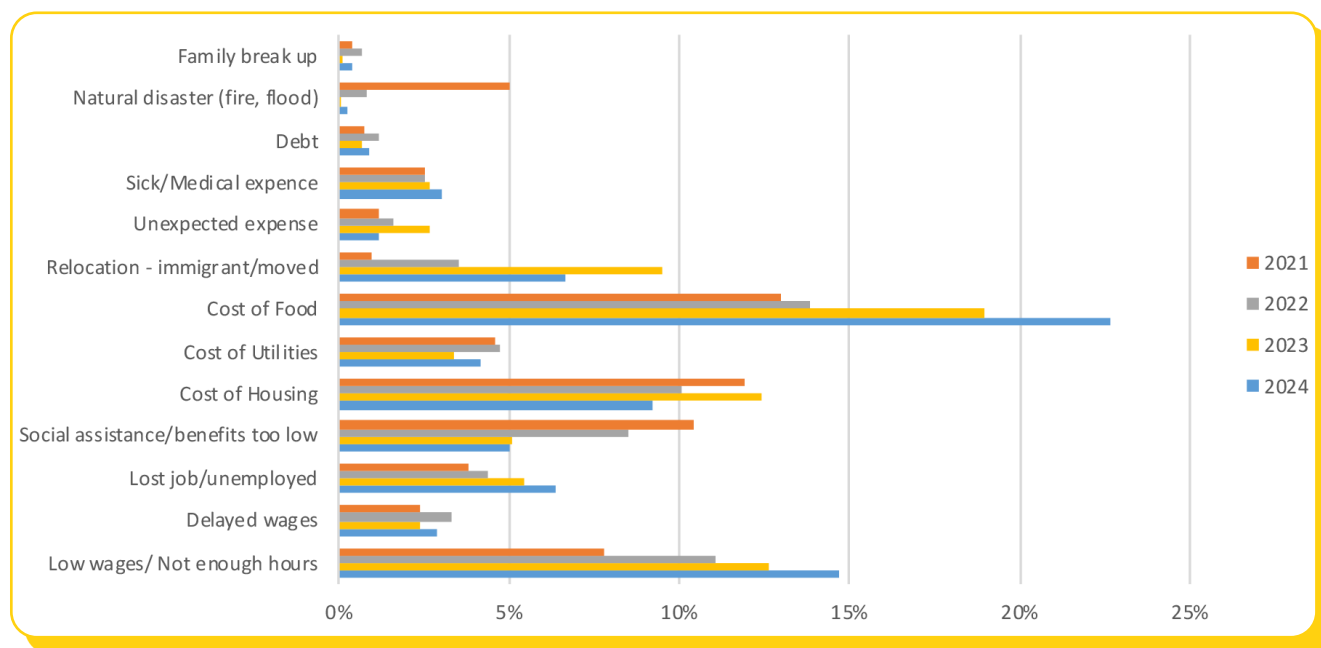
needs to stretch across a variety of essential expenses, many of which have changed (increased) dramatically in the last few years.

The Covid-19 pandemic massively interrupted our economy, with major impacts on food security.<sup>24</sup> While British Columbians were still recovering, the food access and food security landscape was drastically altered due to events both domestic and international. Catastrophic climate events, such as devastating fires, that destroyed the entire community of Lytton, and the atmospheric river,

both in 2021, coupled with the invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, disrupted access to foods and created massive ramifications on the global economy leading to a crippling inflationary period.

The HungerCount shows that increases in the cost of living are affecting food bank visits. **In 2024, Low Wages/Not Enough Hours, Cost of Food, Cost of Housing, and Relocation** are the top reasons why people are turning to BC food banks to meet their household's needs.

**Figure 5: The primary reason for accessing a BC food bank from 2021–2024.**



Source: Food Banks Canada HungerCount.

**Table 4: The top 7 primary reasons why households accessed FBBC member food banks in March 2024 and the proportion of clients that chose that reason, for all of BC and organized by the region that the food banks are located in.**

Reason for accessing food bank	All of BC	Fraser Region	Interior Region	Northern Region	Vancouver Coastal Region	Vancouver Island Region
Low wages/Not enough hours	15%	4%	5%	9%	32%	6%
Delayed wages	3%	13%	5%	1%	0%	0%
Lost job/unemployed	6%	9%	3%	6%	10%	3%
Social assistance/benefits too low	5%	16%	8%	7%	1%	3%
Cost of Housing	9%	14%	9%	6%	0%	24%
Cost of Food	23%	9%	33%	17%	4%	33%
Relocation – immigrant/moved	7%	4%	2%	1%	15%	2%

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.



## Inflation

Inflation affects everyone, but the high degree of inflation over the last two years has put new pressure on the middle class, and “people who are working full-time are struggling to make ends meet”.<sup>10</sup> This group of people may have a variety of tactics to manage the situation, such as cutting back on luxuries or savings, buying in bulk, or taking on a side job. When these tactics are unavailable to a household, they may slide closer and closer to food insecurity and poverty.

An indicator of this pressure is the number of new households that food banks have been receiving. From January through June 2024, Food Banks BC member food banks report that over 41,300 new

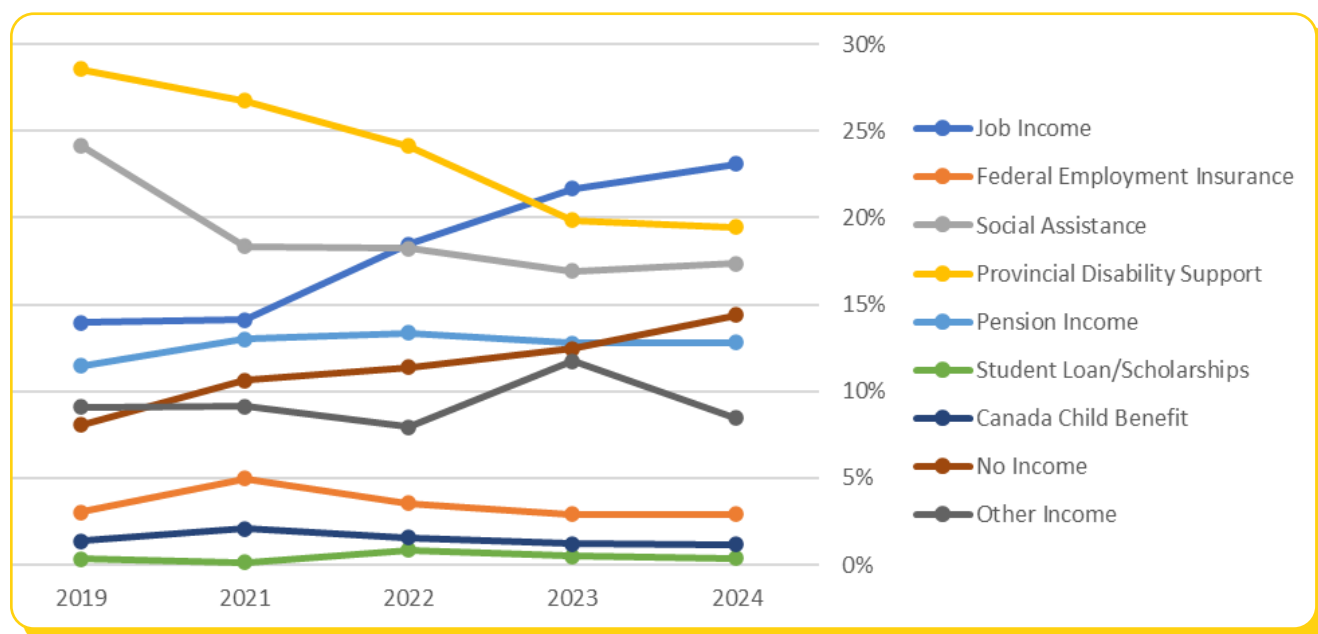
individuals have accessed a food bank for the first time. This number does not include those that accessed non-affiliate hunger-relief programs.



**Since Covid ended, inflation has been the main driver, increasing visits by 40%. We used to have mostly clients who were living on fixed incomes, but now we are seeing more homeowners and people who got out of poverty that have slid back into it.**

— Salvation Army Food Bank, Penticton

**Figure 6: BC food bank client's primary household income sources from 2019 to 2024, excluding 2020.**



Source: Food Banks Canada HungerCount.



**Younger generations are living in different math and older generations struggle to understand that.**

— Mayne Island Food Bank

Additionally, 100% of Food Banks BC's member survey respondents indicated cost-of-living increases as a main driver of food bank client demand, alongside housing insecurity (90%) and job loss/underemployment (50%). These growing inflationary pressures not only drive more people to seek social supports such as food banks, but they

also affect how much individuals and businesses have to donate. Alongside the increasing food bank user numbers there is a decrease in the amount of food and monetary donations food banks are receiving. A third of the survey respondents reported a decline in monetary donations, and 45% reported a decline in food donations in the past year. When you consider that 84% of respondents depend on food donations and 100% of respondents depend on monetary donations, this decrease represents a huge challenge for food banks in their efforts to meet increasing demands.

## Income



**While poverty is not *only* about income, it is *always* about income.**

— National Advisory Council on Poverty engagement participant<sup>10</sup>

Income is the main underlying factor in household food insecurity, or the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.<sup>25</sup> But, food insecurity stems from the interplay of various factors, including the stability of income, assets and debt, access to family and social supports, and the cost of living. Every \$1,000 increase in income is associated with 2% lower odds of marginal food insecurity, 4% lower odds of moderate food insecurity, and 5% lower odds of severe food insecurity.<sup>26</sup>

Not all food insecure households are below the “poverty line” or Market Basket Measure, Canada’s official measure of poverty. The majority (8 out of 10) of food insecure families have a household

income above the poverty line, illustrating that income alone cannot explain food insecurity.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Food Banks Canada has proposed that a Material Deprivation Index is a complementary way of measuring poverty to the Market Basket Measure.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of how poverty is measured, more and more households working full time and owning their home are facing food insecurity and turning to food banks for support.

**Households with Job Income increased significantly after 2021, indicating that more working households are struggling to make ends meet.** In October 2024, Statistics Canada reported that Canada has reached the biggest income inequality gap since recording began in 1999.<sup>29</sup> There has been a steady decline in the proportion of clients depending on *Provincial Disability Support* since 2019, and a significant decrease in the proportion of clients depending on *Social Assistance* from 2019 to 2021. Both the provincial disability support and the social assistance rates saw increases in April 2019, May 2021, and October 2021, with no further increases since.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 5: Income sources of FBBC member food bank client households in March 2024 for all of BC and organized by the region that the food banks are located in.**

	All of BC	Fraser Region	Interior Region	Northern Region	Vancouver Coastal Region	Vancouver Island Region
<b>Job Income</b>	<b>23%</b>	17%	25%	14%	37%	24%
<b>Federal Employment Insurance</b>	<b>3%</b>	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%
<b>Social Assistance</b>	<b>17%</b>	25%	16%	23%	11%	14%
<b>Provincial Disability Support</b>	<b>19%</b>	17%	24%	21%	9%	24%
<b>Pension Income</b>	<b>13%</b>	12%	12%	12%	18%	12%
<b>Student Loans/scholarships</b>	<b>0%</b>	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Canada Child Benefit</b>	<b>1%</b>	0%	1%	3%	0%	1%
<b>No Income</b>	<b>14%</b>	16%	11%	15%	15%	14%
<b>Other Income</b>	<b>8%</b>	9%	7%	9%	6%	9%

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.

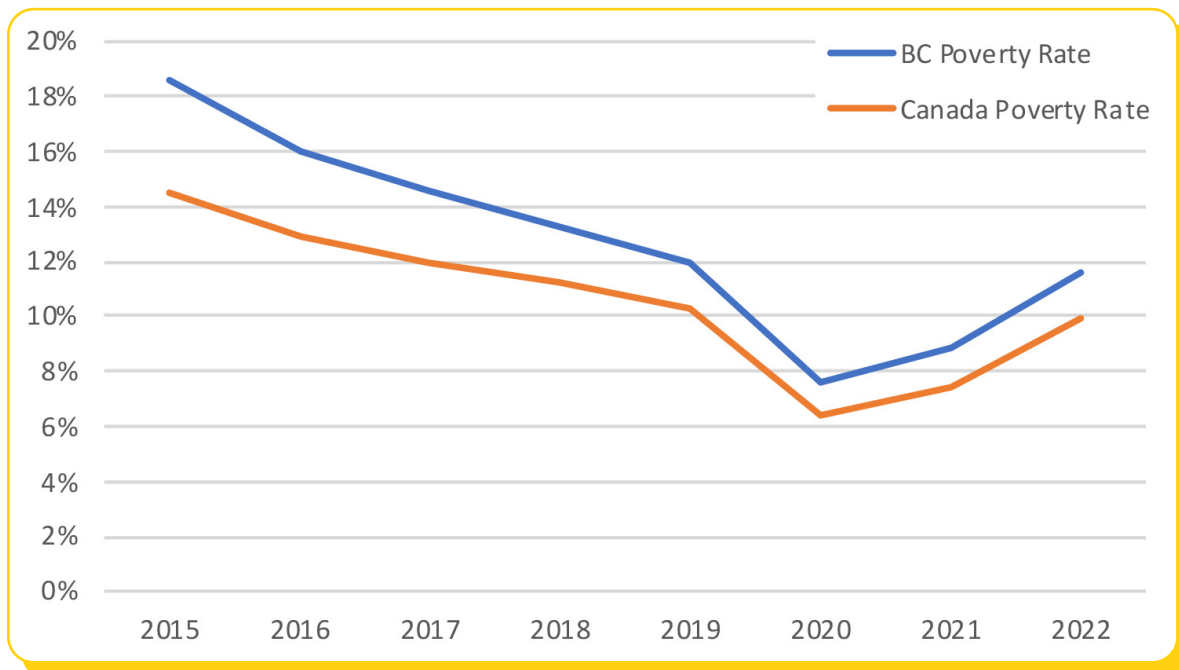


**There is an old narrative that food bank users need to work harder and take on more roommates. This isn't accurate. Most clients are working or can't work and are receiving social benefits that aren't meeting their needs.**

— Mayne Island Food Bank

The Canadian Income Survey provides the most comprehensive national data on poverty and food security, with the most recent data available for 2022. The national poverty rate had been falling since 2015, then saw a sharper decrease in 2020 due to the introduction of emergency COVID-19 income, but for the first time since the introduction of [Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), 2021 saw an increased number of people in poverty, and an even higher rise in 2022.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 7: Poverty rates in Canada and BC as measured through the Market Basket Measure from 2015 to 2022. Note that there is a 2-year lag in this measure of poverty as it depends on census data.**



Source: Statistics Canada.<sup>31</sup>

Temporary pandemic response measures played an outsized role in rapidly declining poverty rates, illustrating that direct income benefits can have a dramatic impact on poverty, especially when they are easier to access through simple applications and swift payments.<sup>10</sup>

Living Wage BC believes that “no matter what community they live in, families should be able to afford a decent life. There are jobs that need to be done in every community, and therefore people need homes, services, and a good quality of life in every community.” Allowing for adjustments that reflect the living costs in different BC communities, Living Wage BC calculates the hourly amount that each of two working parents with two young children must earn to meet their basic expenses (including rent, childcare, food and transportation) once government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies are taken

into account. It does not include debt repayment or savings for future plans.



**People's circumstances are endless. Your paycheck doesn't determine your needs.**

— Islands Wellness Society Food Bank

In 2023, the lowest living hourly wage was calculated to be \$20.64 in Dawson Creek, and the highest was \$26.51 in Clayoquot Sound.<sup>32</sup> BC's minimum wage was stagnant until 2017, and though it has been recently raised to \$17.40/hour, it is still far below the lowest BC living wage. As a result, 1 in 3 workers in BC don't earn a living wage, and the majority of these workers are women and racialized

workers.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, average total incomes are higher and continue to grow more rapidly in highly urban census divisions compared with rural census divisions in Canada.<sup>34</sup>

## Cost of Food

The annual HungerCount asks food bank clients their main reason for attending a charitable food program. Since the question was first asked in the survey in 2021, **the top reason for accessing a BC food bank (excluding the Other category) has been the Cost of Food** – and the percentage of BC respondents who cited the *Cost of Food* as the main reason has significantly increased, from 13% in 2021 to 23% in 2024 (Figure 5).

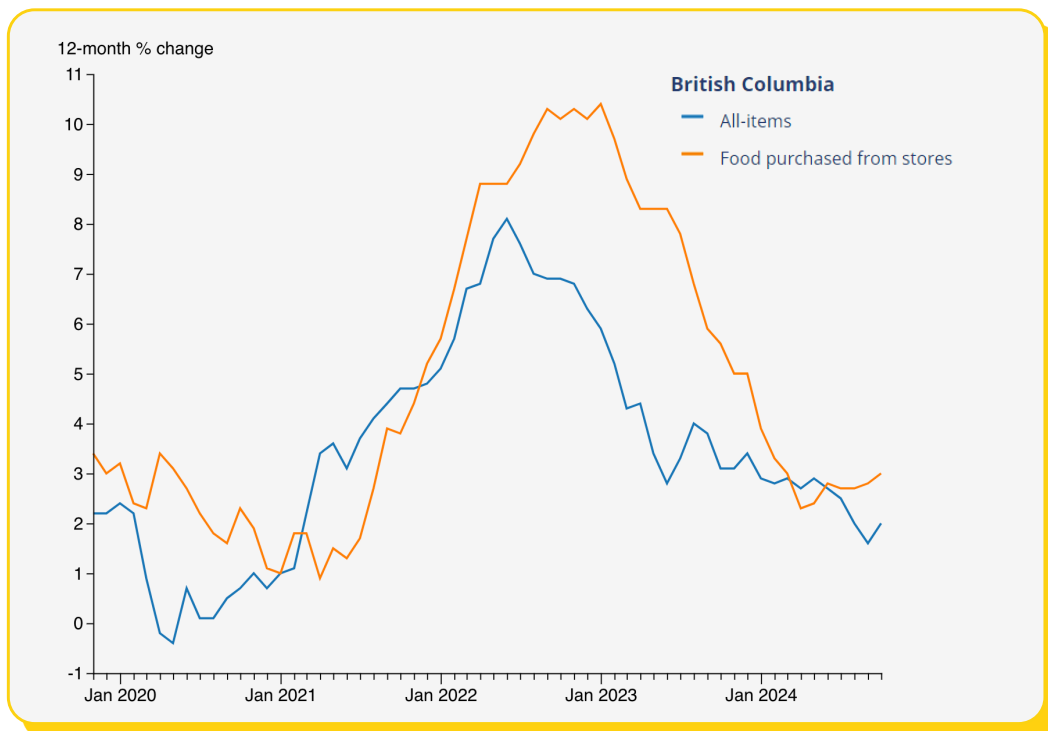


## Impact on Citizens

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) tracks the change in prices experienced by consumers in Canada by comparing the cost of a fixed basket of goods and services over time, estimating inflation and increases in the cost of living. The inflation of food retail prices hit a high of 11.9% in January of 2023. From July 2019 to July 2024, BC food prices have **increased by 24.5%**.<sup>35</sup>

When compared, the level of household food insecurity generally tracked with the changes in the CPI, providing further evidence that food insecurity is a marker of household financial circumstances, reflecting sensitivity to rising costs of food and other basic needs, such as shelter and transportation.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 8: The Canadian Consumer Price Index of All-Items and Food purchased from stores, from November 2019 to October 2024 for British Columbia.**



Source: Statistics Canada Consumer Price Index Data Visualization Tool.<sup>37</sup>



On average, a family of four spent \$15,595.40 on food in 2023.<sup>38</sup> This was lower than predicted, and the decline in monthly food retail sales data indicates that Canadians reduced their expenditures on groceries, either by reducing the quantity or quality of food they bought or by substituting less expensive alternatives.<sup>10</sup> Growing food at home, minimizing food waste, using price-matching apps, or choosing alternatives to brand name products are some of the ways that Canadians are minimizing their grocery spend.

While the rate of inflation has declined from its peak in June 2022 and is moderating at around 2%, retail food prices continue to rise. [The Canada Food Price Report](#) predicts an increase of 2.5–4.5% in food prices in 2024, resulting in an additional expenditure of \$701.79, with a total spend of \$16,297.20 on food, for a reference family of four.<sup>10</sup>

High food prices impose a particular burden on low- and middle-income households. Low-income households spend a much larger share of their total income on food than higher-income families: the lowest-income quintile of households spends 17.4% of total spending on food, versus just 8.6% for the highest-income quintile.<sup>39</sup> Households living below the poverty line may need to spend on average 40% of their income on food.<sup>40</sup>

Those with special diets experience even greater challenges with procuring their particular food needs within a budget. For example, gluten free foods have seen a huge jump in prices recently. According to Celiac Canada, gluten-free products that used to cost 150% more, now cost 200-500% more than food with gluten.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout BC, food prices vary and are strongly influenced by transportation costs. The [BC Centre for Disease Control's Food Costing in BC](#) reports break down food pricing by health authority, showing in the 2022 report that Northern, Vancouver Coastal, and Island Health Regions have above provincial average food prices, while the Interior and Fraser Health Regions are at or below provincial average food prices.<sup>42</sup>



**Cream cheese was \$5.50, and now it's \$9.99**

— Islands Wellness Society Food Bank

## Impact on Food Banks

This increase in food prices not only hits middle- and low-income households, it also makes it increasingly difficult for food banks to procure the food they need to feed an ever-increasing number of households. Food Banks Canada provides a valuation of food donations to help food banks understand the value of food that is donated, which is usually measured by weight. This number is a representation of the cost of a large variety of foods across the country, and changes in the valuation are indicative of large value trends. In January 2018, the national aggregate food value was \$2.60/pound or \$5.70/kg; in 2023 the value was raised to \$3.52/pound or \$7.76/kg, an increase of 35%.<sup>43,44</sup>



**The costs to purchase have increased by about 42% on average for 2024, which is impacting our budget. We attribute this to a combination of higher costs to purchase goods as well as an average 37.5% increase in clients using our services in the first 2 quarters of 2024.**

— Columbia Valley Food Bank

The Food Banks BC member survey conducted in the spring of 2024 indicated that 62% of responding food banks are finding it more difficult to procure food, while no food bank is finding it easier than last year. Additionally, 84% of responding food banks listed the higher cost of food as the main barrier to procuring food, while infrastructure and supply limitations were also listed as significant factors.



**Prices are increasing. Grocery stores and providers are not willing to discount. Our budget has not increased. The number of people requiring food has increased and continues to increase but our source of food and budget for procuring food has remained the same.**

— Autumn Services Society for Senior Support

Data from 2023 represents the fourth consecutive year of higher profits in food retailing, more than doubling pre-pandemic profit norms.<sup>45</sup> In an effort to quell this trend, the federal government's Bill C-56, the *Affordable Housing and Groceries Act*, received Royal Assent in December 2023, aiming to incentivize construction of rental housing and "enhance competition and help stabilize prices for Canadians, particularly in the grocery sector".<sup>46</sup> Additionally, a Code of Conduct for the grocery sector is under development.



**We're working to protect people from rising food costs now and over the long term.**

— 2024 BC Poverty Reduction Strategy

## Precarious Employment

Over 23% of households accessing BC food banks listed **Job Income** as their main income source, **the highest income category** in the 2024 *HungerCount*, surpassing both *Provincial Disability Support* and *Social Assistance* as primary income sources for food bank clients (Figure 6). Working does not provide enough income for many households to meet their expenses and they must lean on food banks to feed themselves. This is especially true for BIPOC populations, who face additional barriers to employment.

People from racialized groups accessing Canadian food banks are nearly twice as likely to have employment income as their main source of income compared to all households.<sup>50</sup> Racialized groups comprise a larger proportion of the working poor than non-racialized groups. For example, "the proportion of working poor among Black Canadians is 2.2 times higher than among white Canadians."<sup>47</sup>

BIPOC populations experience greater levels of unemployment and underemployment, with disproportionately high representation in lower-paying sectors such as hospitality and retail, and generally, they receive 10% lower hourly wages than their non-racialized counterparts.<sup>48</sup> BIPOC workers may experience additional barriers to employment including language skills, devalued foreign credentials and perceived fit, limiting many to part-time, contract and temporary jobs with limited job security and benefits.

Employment may be precarious due to job insecurity, underemployment or low wages, resulting in economic instability and food insecurity. There are a variety of barriers to securing employment, including health status or disability, dependent care, age, education, experience, holding proper work permits, and even the fear of losing government income supports due to clawbacks. Childcare costs and availability have been identified as a barrier to employment in many BC communities, with childcare costs decreasing only 6% over 2019–2023 in BC, compared to a 12% decrease in the rest of the country.<sup>5,52</sup>

Seasonal work is another area of precarity, yet is quite common across BC's resort municipalities. Poor weather and decreased tourism can result in decreased hours, delayed start or early dismissal. Food banks in resort municipalities regularly see surges in client demand during the shoulder tourism seasons as many working in the tourism sector are not receiving enough work or income to make ends meet.



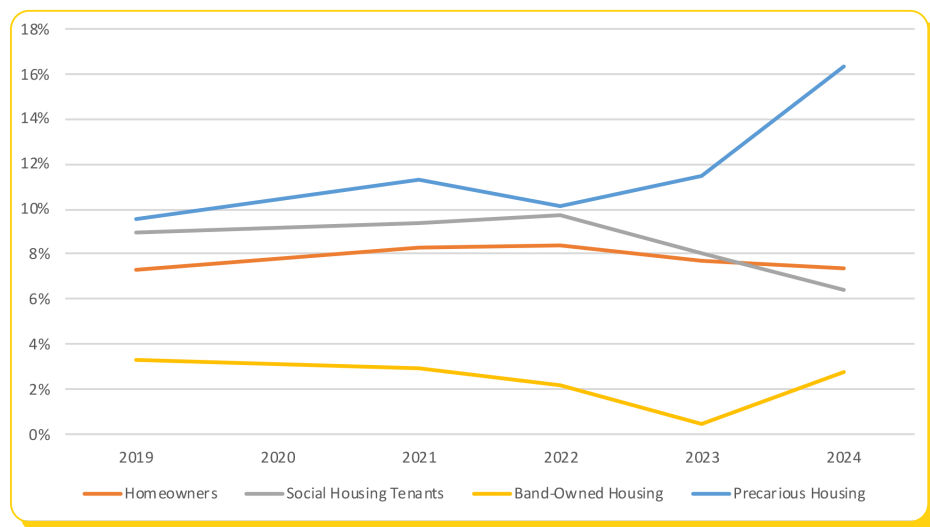
**Most clients are gig workers or service industry workers; some work more than full-time. If you work on-island, you can't afford to live here.**

— Mayne Island Food Bank

## Housing

The ongoing national housing crisis brings more people into poverty and food insecurity and exacerbates existing inequities. The *Cost of Housing* as a reason for accessing food banks has increased from 3% in 2019 to 9% in 2024 (Figure 5). Most food bank households (hovering around 70% from 2016 to 2024) live in rental market housing, and around 8% of food bank users own their homes. While 24% of BC renters are food insecure, less than 8% of home owners are food insecure.<sup>49</sup>

**Figure 9: Housing Type of BC food bank clients by proportion of households, from 2019 to 2024, excluding 2020, and excluding Rental Market Tenants.**



Source: Food Banks Canada HungerCount.

The housing type of food bank users maintained fairly constant proportions over time, with the exception of Precarious Housing, which has risen from 10% in 2019 to 16% in 2024. Food bank operators shared that they are seeing more clients living in non-traditional housing such as vehicles,

campers, and even outbuildings (garages, sheds, etc.), which often means a lack of personal storage and an inability to store and cook food. Many food banks provide alternative options to clients that are precariously housed, such as smaller, more frequent hampers and pull-tab canned meals.

**Table 6: Housing type of FBBC member food bank clients by proportion of households in March 2024 for all of BC and organized by the region that the food banks are located in.**

	All of BC	Fraser Region	Interior Region	Northern Region	Vancouver Coastal Region	Vancouver Island Region
<b>Homeowners</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	3.9%	8.6%	10.6%	7.2%	9.7%
<b>Rental Market Tenants</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	87.0%	64.7%	68.9%	53.0%	71.4%
<b>Room Housing</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
<b>Social Housing Tenants</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	4.5%	4.2%	8.6%	8.1%	6.5%
<b>Band-Owned Housing</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	0.1%	9.6%	0.9%	0.0%	1.3%
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	0.6%	1.7%	2.5%	1.4%	1.4%
<b>Youth Shelter</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Living on the Street</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
<b>Living with Family or Friends</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	2.0%	3.9%	4.9%	1.7%	5.4%
<b>Other housing</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	1.6%	6.7%	2.7%	28.5%	3.1%

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.

Housing is considered unaffordable when the cost is greater than 30% of the household income. In BC, 46.6% of people are living in unaffordable housing, with renters twice as likely to be so than homeowners.<sup>5,50</sup> The cost of housing is outpacing income for many British Columbians. The situation is worse for recent renters (occupancy less than one year). Newcomers, BIPOC populations, people experiencing poverty, and people ages 25-29 are most likely to be recent renters, and therefore the most likely to live in unaffordable housing. A recent poll found that 36% of newcomers polled in BC are considering leaving the province because of high housing costs.<sup>51</sup> Constantly moving due to finances and unsuitability can lead to mental strain, stigmatization, and desperate arrangements that are vulnerable to corruption. Though the provincial government has a housing strategy, many people in core housing need or experiencing houselessness are not reached by subsidies and are unable to access affordable housing.



**Those that struggle with housing, often struggle with work.**

— Whistler Food Bank

Canada's and BC's housing is largely market-driven, with few social housing options. An unregulated housing market is unlikely to provide low-income housing options. Though interest rates have begun to decline in the latter half of 2024, the housing situation is not expected to get better quickly. New housing construction is expected to decline in 2024 due to a lagging effect of the high interest rates that Canada has had for the last few years, and housing prices are expected to reach new highs by 2026.<sup>52</sup>

The impacts of housing on poverty and food insecurity are both obvious and subtle. In addition to rising monthly housing costs, gentrification pushes people away from critical services. 46% of food bank users could be homeless if they had to pay for the food they receive at food banks.<sup>53</sup>



**The majority of our food bank clients work in service or labour jobs, or gigs. Many of them live in substandard or extremely small spaces (trailers, vans, boats that aren't meant to be lived on, motorhomes, partially converted attics/garages, tiny homes, basements).**

— Mayne Island Food Bank

## Disability & Social Assistance

Social welfare supports, like income assistance, and disability assistance, entrench users below the poverty line. Eligibility for these supports requires the user to limit their income to approximately \$800/month after the \$1,000-\$1,300 monthly payment. Any income earned beyond the limit is deducted from the users monthly assistance forcing an income that remains below the poverty line. Some call this “legislated poverty”. Though the proportion of food bank clients reporting **Provincial Disability Assistance or Social Assistance** as primary income sources in the HungerCount **has decreased in recent years**, these clients still constitute the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest group of food bank users, respectively (Figure 6). Though the proportion of people in BC under 65 years old receiving social assistance or disability assistance is 5.2%, they represent 37% of food bank clients.<sup>54</sup> Remembering that not all people living in food insecurity access food banks, it has been reported that 50% of people experiencing food insecurity in Canada have a disability, and 58% of people whose main source of household income is from social assistance are food insecure.<sup>51,55</sup> (Figure 6)

While the cost of living with a disability averages 30% above the average income, Canadians without disabilities have 40-70% (increases with age) higher incomes than those without a disability.<sup>5,56</sup> As a result, 20% of people with a disability are living in poverty in Canada.<sup>57</sup>

## Social Drivers

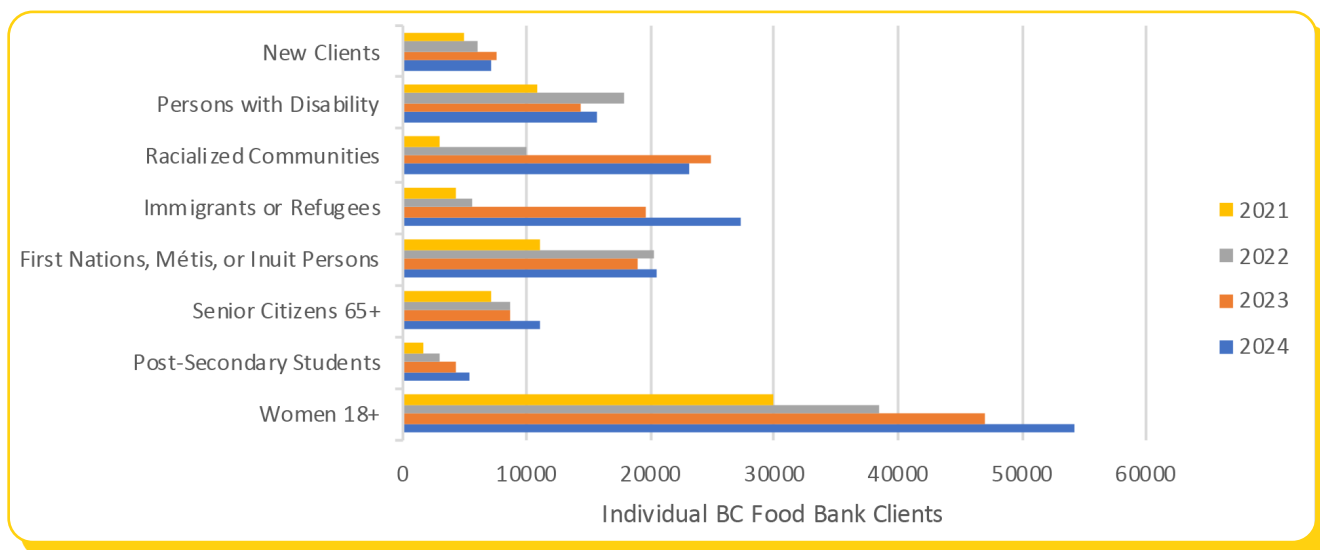
In order to effectively address food insecurity, we must improve access to all social supports for the populations experiencing systemic barriers.



According to the National Advisory Council on Poverty, the groups that experience the most difficulty accessing social welfare supports (in alphabetical order) are:

- ▶ 2-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (2SLGBTQIA+) people
- ▶ Black and other racialized communities
- ▶ children and youth in care
- ▶ First Nations, Inuit and Métis People
- ▶ people who are experiencing houselessness
- ▶ people who are involved in the criminal justice system
- ▶ people who are living in institutions (such as long-term care homes)
- ▶ people who are living in rural and/or remote areas
- ▶ people who have immigrated to Canada
- ▶ people with disabilities
- ▶ Refugees and/or asylum seekers
- ▶ women

**Figure 10: Self-selected identity of individuals served at BC Food Banks during the months of March from 2021 to 2024.**



Source: Food Banks Canada HungerCount.

“Marginalized people disproportionately experience food insecurity and poverty due to social, economic, geographic and structural inequities that are upheld by racist and colonial policies, practices and norms that have restricted access to opportunity and upward mobility.”<sup>51</sup> This disproportional representation is reflected in the HungerCount data, yet the survey is limited in the depth of information available. Additional data shows that amongst those at highest risk of food insecurity were single mothers, Indigenous families, newcomers, individuals with disabilities, and Black families.<sup>27,58</sup>

During the HungerCount survey, individual food bank clients can choose which labels they identify with, and may choose more than one as the categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, a 45-year-old Black woman with a disability would be counted three times in this question under the categories of *Women 18+*, *Racialized Communities*, and *Persons with a Disability*. Using the absolute

numbers rather than the proportion of clients shows the growth of certain identities over time.

There has been a significant increase in the number of food bank clients that identify as *Women 18+*, *Immigrants or Refugees*, and *Racialized Communities* over the last four years, with people identifying as *Women 18+* making up half of food bank clients overall.

Almost all racialized groups in Canada experience a persistence of poverty into the third generation or more, demonstrating the systemic nature of racism in our country.<sup>59</sup> For example, “even when other sociodemographic characteristics were kept the same, [it has been] found that Black households are still twice as likely to be food insecure as white households; just being Black is enough to increase the risk of food insecurity”.<sup>60</sup> Though not represented in the HungerCount survey, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and adults are particularly vulnerable to poverty, houselessness and food

insecurity.<sup>61</sup> Vulnerabilities increase along with level of intersectionality; a Black, queer woman with a disability will face more barriers to social supports than a White woman in the same situation.

**Table 7: Self-selected identity of individual FBBC member food bank clients in March 2024 for all of BC and organized by the region that the food banks are located in.**

	All of BC	Fraser Region	Interior Region	Northern Region	Vancouver Coastal Region	Vancouver Island Region
<b>Women 18+</b>	<b>52%</b>	54%	51%	53%	51%	50%
<b>Post-Secondary Students</b>	<b>5%</b>	3%	7%	5%	7%	5%
<b>Senior Citizens 65+</b>	<b>11%</b>	10%	9%	8%	16%	10%
<b>First Nations, Métis, or Inuit Persons</b>	<b>20%</b>	12%	19%	47%	13%	28%
<b>Immigrants or Refugees</b>	<b>26%</b>	32%	21%	9%	39%	15%
<b>Racialized Communities</b>	<b>22%</b>	14%	21%	7%	47%	19%
<b>Persons with Disability</b>	<b>15%</b>	10%	19%	21%	11%	19%
<b>New Clients</b>	<b>6%</b>	6%	6%	6%	5%	7%

Source: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount.

It is also illustrative to compare representation at food banks with overall representation of groups within the province. This analysis clearly demonstrates the disproportionate representation of Indigenous people that are living in food

insecurity in BC, and aligns with other studies showing that food insecurity drops at age 65 when OAS, GIS, CPP and personal pensions come into effect.<sup>62</sup>

**Table 8: Comparing the proportion of identities represented at BC food banks in March 2024 vs. the provincial proportion of those identities.**

	Provincial Rate	Food Bank Rate
<b>Women 18+<sup>63</sup></b>	51%	52%
<b>Post-Secondary Students<sup>64</sup></b>	3%	5%
<b>Senior Citizens 65+<sup>73</sup></b>	20%	11%
<b>First Nations, Métis, or Inuit Persons<sup>65</sup></b>	6%	20%
<b>Immigrants or Refugees<sup>77</sup></b>	25%	26%
<b>Visible Minorities<sup>77</sup></b>	30%	22%
<b>Persons with Disability<sup>66</sup></b>	29%	15%

Sources: Food Banks Canada 2024 HungerCount and cited references.

## Food Insecurity and Immigration

Interviews and surveys from food banks across the province revealed an increase in the number of newcomers accessing their services. International immigration is driving population growth in BC, with a record-setting 3.3% net growth rate in the last twelve months with 179,821 new people, made up of 192,683 international migrants and a loss of 12,862 interprovincial migrants and natural population change.<sup>67</sup> Permanent Residents increased by 42,428, while Non-Permanent Residents increased with a net inflow of 137,393, with Asylum Seekers increasing by 62% and Work Permit Holders increasing by 51% over last year.<sup>68</sup> It is projected that 1.5 million new residents will be invited by the Canadian government by 2025.<sup>69</sup>



**If immigration isn't slowing or coming with different expectations around expenses, and food banks are called on to help those people, then food banks need the resources to serve them as there are few other social services available to help.**

— Whistler Food Bank

While increasing diversity and supporting economic growth are important aspects of Canada's future, consideration must be given to the experience of newcomers to our country and province. Immigrants experience poverty at a higher rate than Canadian-born people, with as many as 70% of recent newcomers (that have arrived in Canada within the last 10 years) experiencing food insecurity.<sup>70</sup> Recent newcomers are more likely to be renting, potentially paying higher monthly shelter costs than homeowners, and are more likely to be working poor: managing unstable jobs, unpredictable work hours, and fewer benefits such as drug and dental insurance.<sup>71</sup>



**The number of new immigrants makes up 25-30% of clients versus about 10-15% a year ago.**

— Terrace Church's Foodbank

## Food Insecurity and Indigenous Communities

While Indigenous people account for just under 6% of the population of BC, they are disproportionately represented as 20% of BC food bank clients in 2024.<sup>31</sup> The rate of food insecurity for Indigenous people depends greatly on the individual group and their location, but research shows that around 33% of off-reserve Indigenous Peoples and 54% of on-reserve Indigenous Peoples (up to 70% of some Inuit groups) are living with food insecurity.<sup>72</sup>

A report published by the Métis Nation of BC, the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer states that “as a result of deliberate settler colonial practices and policies, systemic racism and manufactured poverty have created and continue to sustain substantial inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada. These inequities are reflected in disparities in social, structural, and economic determinants of health and wellness, such as literacy, education, employment, income, housing, social status, access to culturally safe health services, safe drinking water, and food security”.<sup>73</sup>

Prior to colonization, Indigenous Nations were food sovereign and upheld complex agrarian systems, but the Indian Act disabled their productivity and competitiveness. Today Indigenous people are experiencing a decrease in the consumption of traditional foods due to a decline in their quality, safety and accessibility due to industrialization, environmental decline, government policies and cultural change.<sup>74</sup> As a result of systemic exclusion from their food sources, there is significantly more food insecurity among Indigenous communities than among non-Indigenous communities.<sup>74</sup>

“For the Métis, food is a vital link to community, culture, identity, ancestors, and values (e.g., sharing, cooperation, reciprocity). Food is considered medicine, and it is connected to ceremony, the economy, language, and the ways knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. Food also brings families and communities together”.<sup>73</sup>

Food sovereignty is a path towards food security for Indigenous Peoples. It can be described as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems”.<sup>75</sup> The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty explains that Indigenous food sovereignty is a specific policy approach to addressing the underlying issues

impacting Indigenous Peoples and their ability to respond to their own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods.<sup>76</sup> They further explain that they rely on four key principles to guide the Indigenous food sovereignty movement:

1. Sacred or divine right to food and upholding a sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide food.
2. Continued participation in cultural harvesting strategies at all of the individual, family, community and regional levels.
3. Self-determination through the ability to respond to their own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods; the ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food they hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat; and freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution and consumption in industrialized economies.
4. Policy that reconciles Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies and mainstream economic activities.

Though the formal study of what is required to rebuild Indigenous food sovereignty in a colonized BC is relatively new, Indigenous communities demonstrate their strength and resilience for overcoming food insecurity through innovative community-driven projects and by supporting one another in more personal ways.<sup>77</sup>



## Environmental Drivers

The food security of communities and households is directly tied to the strength and resiliency of local and global food systems, which are being disrupted at increasing frequency by climate change. British Columbia is dealing with rising temperatures, wildfires, extreme flooding and changing conditions for marine life and other ecosystems, threatening the food security of people and communities, especially those in poverty and/or living in rural and remote communities.<sup>78</sup> Food security depends on the availability of food, which is impacted by changing wildlife migration patterns and population sizes, shifting growing seasons, and transportation that is vulnerable to delays or disruptions in the supply chain due to extreme weather events.<sup>79,80</sup>

Climate events impact food banks immediately through supply issues and in the long-term through an increase in clients that have been displaced or lost jobs. Yet climate issues are hard to predict and therefore hard to plan and budget for. People living in poverty and food insecurity are most likely to experience the negative impacts of climate change, yet have fewer resources to contribute to resilience or recovery.<sup>10</sup> Disasters are very stressful and traumatic and can compound the mental and resource strain experienced by those living in poverty. The threat of disasters builds uncertainty, fear and isolation. Climate change presents a very big threat to charitable food programs and their recipients.



**Five years ago, this was easy; we knew what our food sources were. Now the future is unknown.**

— Salvation Army Food Bank, Penticton

Over the last few years, BC food banks have been involved in a host of climate-related crises, either through evacuation and interruption to services, or through a call to respond and support neighbouring communities. Food banks often, but not always, have infrastructure that can be useful in disaster response measures, but they may require additional funds to mount an adequate response. Planning for future crises requires good relationships, good communication, planning and training. Food bank operators have expressed a shared desire to be proactive, not reactive, and to be included in emergency planning processes and plans.



# Policy Recommendations

While the provincial government's Poverty Reduction Strategy outlines the need to reduce poverty in BC, food bank usage statistics are just one of the indicators that poverty and food insecurity are on the rise in this province.

The provincial government has recently enacted some policies that address food insecurity, such as providing funding for school food programs, food hubs, food banks, and Indigenous food sovereignty, but more action is required. Politicians need to think beyond their 4-year term and enact long-term solutions that best support our most vulnerable citizens to meet their basic needs through an adequate social support system and providing opportunities to rise out of poverty.



**"Poverty would be experienced at similar levels across society if it were a matter of falling on hard times or lacking basic resources. Poverty disproportionately affects vulnerable groups and communities because of underlying and systemically embedded social inequities. Addressing poverty requires addressing systemic inequities and revising the social norms, processes, policy decisions, and legislations that created and perpetuate the problem."**

— Food Banks Canada<sup>68</sup>

The [2024 BC Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) includes the following food security statements:

- ▶ We're working to protect people from rising food costs now and over the long term.
- ▶ We're taking action by:
  - Providing more children and youth with access to healthy meals and snacks at school through the Feeding Futures program, including the largest investment in school food programs in the province's

history with approximately 90% of schools in the province now offering a school food program

- Providing unprecedented financial support to food banks and other hunger relief agencies to help meet rising demand throughout BC among families and people
  - Enhancing equitable participation of Indigenous people in the agriculture and food sector and supporting their economic development objectives through the Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food
  - Developing, expanding, and strengthening Indigenous food systems in partnership with New Relationship Trust through the Indigenous Food Security and Sovereignty Grant program and other funding programs
- ▶ BC is making historic investments to strengthen food banks, food distribution and food access by:
- Working with Food Banks BC to address urgent food security needs throughout B.C., including meeting unprecedented food bank demand and addressing food access challenges faced by northern communities and people affected by emergency events, such as wildfires and floods
  - Expanding United Way BC's Regional Community Food Hub network by adding more food hubs throughout BC, including in Northern BC and Southern Vancouver Island
  - Supporting communities with critical infrastructure (e.g., cold food storage, kitchen improvements and transportation)
  - Creating a provincial advisory body for government on food security

When the National Advisory Council on Poverty asked how poverty should be reduced, the top priorities for Canadians as a whole included reducing the cost of food, strengthening health care, reducing taxes on households with low incomes, and reducing the cost of utilities. Among racialized people, the priorities were similar, but they also noted a need for upskilling and training opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

### Food Banks Canada's 2024 Poverty Report Card

gave British Columbia a D+ grade, with over 45% of British Columbians reporting that they feel worse off than last year.<sup>5</sup> The current cost of living crisis requires both short-term relief measures to alleviate inflation-related struggles, and long-term strategies to decrease the demand for social supports by improving housing, economic opportunity, and healthcare. Citizens need the provincial government to help people meet their basic needs as the free market is not accountable to citizens.

Addressing food insecurity is two-pronged: increasing access to food and reducing poverty overall. Healthy food access policies and racial justice go hand in hand.<sup>77</sup> Food Banks BC, in alignment with recommendations offered by Food Banks Canada and the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, and utilizing recent food insecurity research, recommends the following areas and opportunities to address food insecurity through policy.



## Increase Income

Because food is often the most negotiable household expense, and inadequate income is a primary driver of food insecurity, increasing economic security and providing universal basic services will decrease rates of food insecurity in the province. In addition to investments in housing, transportation, healthcare, education and skills training, and childcare, the provincial government could impact household food insecurity through the following actions:

- ▶ Provide a **grocery benefit** to relieve the sharp increase in food prices for low-income households.
- ▶ Enact a plan to raise the level of Social and Disability Assistance quickly and index them to inflation.
- ▶ Reduce, then eliminate, clawbacks on social supports to ensure that households can meet their basic needs and find opportunities to elevate their financial wellbeing.
- ▶ Utilize recent research around the material deprivation index as a complementary poverty indicator to the Market Basket Measure.
- ▶ Create incentives for businesses to pay employees a Living Wage, while enacting a plan to raise minimum wage to the average provincial Living Wage.
- ▶ Increase worker protections to ensure better employment for vulnerable groups.
- ▶ Ensure immigration status does not impact access to social services.
- ▶ Include rural, remote and Indigenous communities in provincial food costing studies.

## Increase food infrastructure and support food programs

The non-profit sector carries the heavy burden of supporting British Columbians that fall through the cracks of our social safety net. These organizations are struggling to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, meet the surge in demand for support, and maintain their operations under inflationary pressures. The current demand on the non-profit sector is unsustainable, yet if it crumbles, citizens will be left with nowhere to turn for help. While the long-term goal is to eliminate hunger in BC, in order to sustain the critical supports that non-profit organizations offer in the alleviation of hunger in the short- and medium-term, we offer the following recommendations:

- ▶ Provide emergency funding to food banks to purchase adequate amounts of healthy and fresh foods to meet their rising client demands.
- ▶ Increase funding to the Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program to allow more participants to access fresh foods from their local food economy, especially newcomers.

- ▶ Explore the use of Fresh Food Prescription programs (and connect with a grocery benefit) to support access to healthy foods for food insecure households.
- ▶ Support regional connectivity between food security agencies to increase effectiveness, resource sharing, and support of resilient local food systems.
- ▶ Continue to support schools to feed students through universal meal and grocery programs.
- ▶ Provide capacity and infrastructure funding to non-profits to ensure sustainability, supporting organizations in each community to develop their own place-based programs or adapt existing programs to address local conditions.
- ▶ Create a funding program for food security agencies to prepare emergency response plans to support their own and neighbouring communities through climate events.
- ▶ Financially support non-profit organizations to engage in justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization training to ensure they can offer non-prejudicial programming and be a source of dismantling systemic oppression.



## Support Indigenous food sovereignty

Colonization is at the root of Indigenous poverty. Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty is critical to rebuilding the health and economic wellbeing of Indigenous people, especially in a province of mostly unceded land. Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty benefits everyone by improving environmental, social, and economic outcomes, as well as fulfilling the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and other provincial and federal government commitments.<sup>76</sup> While education is growing our understanding of the history of the settlement of the province and the displacement and oppressive treatment of Indigenous people, reconciliation requires a new way of doing things – new programs, policies and relationships.

Indigenous leadership and organization around the issue of food sovereignty is growing, and many opportunities have been proposed to support Indigenous food sovereignty such as:

- ▶ Formally recognize in government policy that traditional foods enhance physical, spiritual, mental and cultural health and wellness, and are the outcome of the distinct and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Land.<sup>79</sup>
- ▶ Protect water quality, fish populations, biodiversity, and access to hunting and gathering.
- ▶ Improve and fund data collection of food insecurity rates and challenges with access, affordability and availability of food within Indigenous communities to best understand effective strategies to improve food security.
- ▶ Support and fund the creation of an Indigenous Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- ▶ Continue the Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food, and look for other ways to include Indigenous voices in agriculture, poverty reduction, and environmental bodies to ensure their traditions, ideas and land stewardship practices are guiding future government decisions.
- ▶ Set targets and define actions to return valuable land back to Indigenous communities.



- ▶ Provide ongoing education for all ages and all citizens on the systems, practices, and impacts of colonization to build support for reconciliation and actions that empower Indigenous communities.
- ▶ Increase funding for Indigenous food initiatives and ensure they are easily-accessible, equitable and managed without prejudice.
- ▶ Centre Indigenous context and lived experience in addressing research gaps in order to meet the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call 19, which calls on the Government of Canada "in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities."

## Increase Equity and Inclusion

Through decolonizing our practices and policies, upholding the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities, building racial justice and accountability, and working towards gender equality, British Columbia will ensure that its social support systems no longer leave out our most vulnerable citizens. To do this we must:

- ▶ Prioritize equity over equality by ensuring access to relevant and safe supports.
- ▶ Support social cohesion through careful messaging, meaningful programs and engaged organizations to promote acceptance, inclusion and celebration of all cultures.
- ▶ Ensure that newcomers are set up for success in British Columbia and that they do not have to rely on non-profit agencies to meet their basic needs. In relation to food, this can be addressed at the municipal level by:
  - Including language in official community plans to recognize the needs of newcomers, guiding local governments to collect data and conduct research on newcomers' lives and wellbeing in order to create a welcoming environment.
  - Working collaboratively with service providers to gain insight into the lived experience of newcomers and incorporating that information into planning processes that foster inclusion.
- Enhancing cultural food spaces to better meet ethnic food needs of diverse groups of people.
- Creating appropriate opportunities for newcomers to participate in our local food systems through programs, activities and financial incentives.
- Learning and understanding newcomers' stories and situations to help combat racism and misconceptions by being conscious and respectful of different cultural practices.<sup>79</sup>





# Conclusion

The HungerCount data presented in this report depicts the alarming increase in food insecurity in BC, with a record-setting number of visits by an ever-increasing number of households that are accessing food banks in 2024.

Food banks are experiencing a significant increase in the number of single-parent and two-parent families and households with employment income, with the increased costs of food and housing driving people to food banks. The HungerCount shows a disproportionate number of Indigenous clients at food banks, and the supplemental research cited in this report highlights the vulnerability of

newcomers, BIPOC, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people to poverty and food insecurity.

The HungerCount data, poverty research, and collaboration with Food Banks Canada and the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition provided a list of policy recommendations for provincial and municipal government in the areas of income, food infrastructure, Indigenous food sovereignty, and equity and inclusion, which begin to address the systemic and structural inequities that are driving food insecurity in BC.

It will require bold policy commitments from all levels of government, willing, action-orientated participation from the private sector, and a resilient, well-resourced social services sector to move us toward a hunger-free British Columbia. Collectively, we can work toward a future where food banks are a thing of the past.

# Acknowledgements

Food Banks BC would like to acknowledge that this report would not have been possible without the help of the following experts in food insecurity, social justice and poverty reduction.

Your work is crucial to making BC a better place to live, and we wish you resiliency and tenacity in your continued efforts.

**Jayne Jones** and **Sarah Breen**, Selkirk College, State of the Basin

**Robyn Peel**, Community Economic Development Coordinator, Community Futures East Kootenay

**Richard Matern**, Food Banks Canada Director of Research

**Ashley Quan**, Feed Ontario Senior Manager, Research & Government Relations

**Sofia Seer**, Food Banks Canada Research Officer

**Rowan Burdge**, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition Provincial Director

**Jordan Bultitude**, Gordon Neighbourhood House Food Justice and Poverty Reduction Policy Analyst

**Emma Faulkner**, Prince George Native Friendship Centre

**Dr. Annie Booth**, University of Northern BC

**Dr. Theresa Healy**, University of Northern BC

**Erin MacLachlan**, MacLachlan Social Work

**Ivan and Anna** — Whistler Community Services Food Bank

**Lindsay** — Mayne Island Food Bank

**Elaine** — Autumn Services Society for Senior Support

**Alan and Paul** — Salvation Army Food Bank — Penticton

**Haley** — Islands Wellness Society Food Bank

**Rebecca** — Archway Community Services Food Bank

## Endnotes

- 1 BC Stats. Population Estimates & Projections for British Columbia. <https://bcstats.shinyapps.io/popApp/>
- 2 BC Centre for Disease Control (2022). Defining food security and food insecurity: Vancouver, B.C.: BC Centre for Disease Control, Population Public Health. [http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/FoodSecurity\\_FoodInsecurity\\_Definitions\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/FoodSecurity_FoodInsecurity_Definitions_FINAL.pdf)
- 3 PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. How many Canadians are affected by household food insecurity. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/how-many-canadians-are-affected-by-household-food-insecurity>
- 4 IPES-Food (2024). Food from somewhere: building food security and resilience through territorial markets. <https://ipes-food.org/report-summary/food-from-somewhere>
- 5 Food Banks Canada (2024). Poverty Report Card. <https://foodbankscanada.ca/poverty-report-card>
- 6 Statistics Canada. Table: 13-10-0834-01 Food insecurity by economic family type. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310083401&pick-Members%5B0%5D=1.13&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2018&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2022&referencePeriods=20180101%2C20220101>
- 7 Public Health Association of BC (2021). Food Access Across British Columbia, Victoria, BC. <https://phabc.org/final-report-food-access-in-bc-released>
- 8 Tarasuk, V., Fafard St-Germain, AA. & Loopstra, R. The Relationship Between Food Banks and Food Insecurity: Insights from Canada. *Voluntas* 31, 841–852 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-019-00092-w>
- 9 Health Canada. Social determinants of health and health inequalities. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>
- 10 Employment and Social Development Canada (Oct 2023). Blueprint for Transformation: the 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual.html>
- 11 Hutchinson, J.M. & Tarasuk, V. Prevalence of micronutrient inadequacy differs by severity of food insecurity among adults living in Canada in 2015. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* 49(8), 1025-1034 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1139/apnm-2023-0614>
- 12 PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. What are the implications of food insecurity for health and health-care. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/>
- 13 Clemens, K.K., Le, B., Anderson, K.K. et al. The association between household food insecurity and healthcare costs among Canadian children. *Can J Public Health* 115, 89–98 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-023-00812-2>
- 14 Heasley, C., Clayton, B., Muileboom, J. et al. “I was eating more fruits and veggies than I have in years”: a mixed methods evaluation of a fresh food prescription intervention. *Arch Public Health*, 79, 135 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-021-00657-6>
- 15 Men, F., Elgar, F.J., Tarasuk, V. Food insecurity is associated with mental health problems among Canadian youth. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 75:741-748 (2021). <https://jech.bmj.com/content/75/8/741>
- 16 Anderson, K.K., Clemens, K.K. et al. Household food insecurity and health service use for mental and substance use disorders among children and adolescents in Ontario, Canada. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 195 (28), E948-E955 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.230332>
- 17 Men, F., Fischer, B., Urquia, M. L., & Tarasuk, V. Food insecurity, chronic pain, and use of prescription opioids. *SSM-Population Health*, 14, 100768 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100768>
- 18 Gonyea, J.G., O'Donnell, A.E., Curley, A., Trieu, V. Food insecurity and loneliness amongst older urban subsidised housing residents: The importance of social connectedness. *Health Soc Care Community*, 30(6), e5959-e5967 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.14027>
- 19 Park, S., Berkowitz, S.A. Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Quality of Life Among Food-Insecure Adults; *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 67 (1), 120-123 (2024). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38331116/>
- 20 Vantage Point (2024). 2024 State of BC's Non-Profit Sector: Under Pressure. <https://thevantagepoint.ca/sector-reports>
- 21 Canada Helps (2024). The Giving Report 2024: From Disconnection to Collective Action. <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/the-giving-report/thank-you>
- 22 Food Banks Canada (2024). HungerCount 2024. <https://fbcblobstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpress/2024/10/hungercount-2024-en.pdf>
- 23 Land to Table Network Society (2024). Rural Food Banks Study: A Collaborative Approach Across Four Rural Food Banks to Address Unprecedented Demand. <https://landtotablenetwork.com/rural-food-banks-study>
- 24 Office of the Provincial Health Officer & BC Centre for Disease Control (2024). Examining the Societal Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Food Insecurity. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/reports-publications/annual-reports/societal-consequences-ch-5.pdf>

- 25 Tarasuk, V. Household Food Insecurity in Canada. *Topics in Clinical Nutrition*, 20(4), 299-312 (2005). <https://journals.lww.com/topicsinclinicalnutrition/toc/2005/10000>
- 26 Tarasuk, V., Fafard St-Germain, AA. & Mitchell, A. Geographic and socio-demographic predictors of household food insecurity in Canada, 2011–12. *BMC Public Health* 19, 12 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6344-2>
- 27 Statistics Canada, The Daily. Study: Food insecurity among Canadian families, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231114/dq231114a-eng.htm>
- 28 Mendelson, M., Notten, G., Matern, R., & Seer, S. (2024). Poverty in Canada: Through a Deprivation Lens. Food Banks Canada. [https://fbcblobstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpress/2024/06/FBC\\_2024PovertyInCanada\\_ENG\\_v6.pdf](https://fbcblobstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpress/2024/06/FBC_2024PovertyInCanada_ENG_v6.pdf)
- 29 Statistics Canada (2024). Distributions of household economic accounts for income, consumption, saving and wealth of Canadian households, second quarter 2024. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241010/dq241010a-eng.htm>
- 30 BC Employment & Assistance Policy & Procedure Manual (2024). Archived Rate Tables. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables>
- 31 Statistics Canada. Table: 11-10-0135-01 Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110013501&pick-Members%5B0%5D=1.13&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2015&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2022&referencePeriods=20150101%2C20220101>
- 32 Living Wage BC. Living Wages in BC and Canada. Retrieved 8 Oct 2024, from [https://www.livingwagebc.ca/living\\_wage\\_rates](https://www.livingwagebc.ca/living_wage_rates)
- 33 Burdge, R., French, A., Sioufi, V. (2024). People in poverty need a road map to real solutions: The new Poverty Reduction Strategy does not provide that. Retrieved Oct 8 2024, from: [https://www.livingwagebc.ca/people\\_in\\_poverty\\_need\\_a\\_road\\_map\\_to\\_real\\_solutions\\_the\\_new\\_poverty\\_reduction\\_strategy\\_does\\_not\\_provide\\_that](https://www.livingwagebc.ca/people_in_poverty_need_a_road_map_to_real_solutions_the_new_poverty_reduction_strategy_does_not_provide_that)
- 34 Breau, S., Saillant, R. Regional income disparities in Canada: exploring the geographical dimensions of an old debate. *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 3(1), 463-481 (2016). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21681376.2016.1244774>
- 35 Statistics Canada. Table: 18-10-0004-01 Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1810000401&pick-Members%5B0%5D=1.26&cubeTimeFrame.startMonth=07&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2019&cubeTimeFrame.endMonth=07&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2024&referencePeriods=20190701%2C20240701>
- 36 Statistics Canada. Levels of food insecurity increased in 2022 after being relatively stable from 2017 to 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241016/dq241016b-eng.htm>
- 37 Statistics Canada. Price trends: 1914 to today. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/2018016/cpilg-ipcgl-eng.htm>
- 38 Charlebois, S. et al. Canada's Food Price Report 2024. [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/sites/agri-food/EN\\_CANADA%27S%20FOOD%20PRICE%20REPORT%202024.pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/sites/agri-food/EN_CANADA%27S%20FOOD%20PRICE%20REPORT%202024.pdf)
- 39 J.Documentary Shines Light on Excessive Food Prices in Canada. Centre for Future Work (2024). Retrieved 8 Oct 2024, from: <https://centreforfuturework.ca/2024/04/04/documentary-shines-light-on-excessive-food-prices-in-canada/>
- 40 Quest Non-Profit Grocery Markets (2024). Cost of Groceries Report 2024. Retrieved Oct 8 2024, from: <https://www.questoutreach.org/blog/cost-of-groceries-report-2024/>
- 41 MacIvor, A. (Jul 17 2024). Think your grocery bill is high? Try eating gluten-free Cost of gluten-free food is 200 to 500 per cent higher than food with gluten, according to Celiac Canada. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/think-your-grocery-bill-is-high-try-eating-gluten-free-1.7264195#:~:text=According%20to%20Celiac%20Canada%2C%20gluten,pandemic%20widened%20the%20price%20gap>
- 42 BC Centre for Disease Control. (2023). Food Costing in BC 2022: Assessing the affordability of healthy eating. Vancouver, B.C.: BC Centre for Disease Control, Population and Public Health Program. [http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/Food\\_Costing\\_in\\_BC\\_2022\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/Food_Costing_in_BC_2022_Report_FINAL.pdf)
- 43 Food Banks Canada (2018). Food Valuation: Understanding the value of donated food. [https://foodmesh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Food-Valuation\\_EN.pdf](https://foodmesh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Food-Valuation_EN.pdf)
- 44 Food Banks Canada (2023). Food Valuation Methodology & Calculation Summary 2023. <https://foodmesh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2023F-BC-Food-Valuation-SummaryFEN.pdf>
- 45 Stanford, J. (2024). Canadian Corporate Profits Remain Elevated Despite Economic Slowdown. Centre For Future Work. Retrieved Oct 8 2024, from: <https://centreforfuturework.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Resilience-of-Profits-Canada-end-2023.pdf>

- 46 Department of Finance Canada (2023). Affordable Housing and Groceries Act receives Royal Assent to build more rental homes and help stabilize grocery prices. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2023/12/affordable-housing-and-groceries-act-receives-royal-assent-to-build-more-rental-homes-and-help-stabilize-grocery-prices.html>
- 47 Public Health Agency of Canada. (2018). Key health inequalities in Canada: A national portrait. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/science-research-data/inequalities-working-poor-canadians-infographic.html>
- 48 Ng, W., Khan, S. & Stanford, J. (2024). The Importance Of Unions In Reducing Racial Inequality: New Data and Best Practices. Centre for Future Work. <https://centre-fortuturework.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Union-Advantage-for-Racialized-Workers.pdf>
- 49 BC Centre for Disease Control. (2023). Priority Health Equity Indicators for British Columbia: Household Food Insecurity Update Report. Vancouver, B.C.: BC Centre for Disease Control, Population Public Health. [http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/2023-10-18\\_HouseholdFoodInsecurityReport.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/2023-10-18_HouseholdFoodInsecurityReport.pdf)
- 50 Statistics Canada (2023). A tale of two renters: Housing affordability among recent and existing renters in Canada. Government of Canada. [https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021016/98-200-X2021016-eng.cfm?utm\\_source=mstatcan&utm\\_medium=eml&utm\\_campaign=statcan-statcan-mstatcan](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021016/98-200-X2021016-eng.cfm?utm_source=mstatcan&utm_medium=eml&utm_campaign=statcan-statcan-mstatcan)
- 51 Angus Reid Institute (2024). Canadian Dream? High housing costs has two-in-five recent immigrants saying they may leave their province (or Canada). from: <https://angusreid.org/canada-interprovincial-migration-housing-crisis-immigration/>
- 52 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2024). Housing Market Outlook: Spring 2024. [https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/market-reports/housing-market-outlook/2024/housing-market-outlook-spring-2024-en.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*a2s435\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*MTc3N-DUwNDA5My4xNzI2OTUzNzIx\\*\\_ga\\*MjQ1MTQ3MTIzLjE3MjY5NTM3MjQ.\\*gaCY7T7RT5C4\\*MTcyNjk1Mzcy-My4xLjAuMTcyNjk1MzcyNS41OC4wLjA](https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/market-reports/housing-market-outlook/2024/housing-market-outlook-spring-2024-en.pdf?_gl=1*a2s435*_gcl_au*MTc3N-DUwNDA5My4xNzI2OTUzNzIx*_ga*MjQ1MTQ3MTIzLjE3MjY5NTM3MjQ.*gaCY7T7RT5C4*MTcyNjk1Mzcy-My4xLjAuMTcyNjk1MzcyNS41OC4wLjA)
- 53 Mitchell, D. (May 8 2023). Food Share study reveals half of users could suffer homelessness without food bank. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9213608/mcmaster-hamilton-food-share-study-homeless-without-food-banks/>
- 54 Maytree (2024). The Social Assistance Summaries: British Columbia. <https://maytree.com/changing-systems/data-measuring/social-assistance-summaries/british-columbia/#how-many-people-claim-social-assistance>
- 55 Feed Opportunity: Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security (2022). 50% of Canadians who struggle with food insecurity have a disability; we must act. News & Media blog. Retrieved Oct 8 2024, from: <https://www.feedopportunity.com/blog/50-of-canadians-who-struggle-with-food-insecurity-have-a-disability-we-must-act/>
- 56 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018). Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/10/UN-flagship-report-on-disability-and-development.pdf>
- 57 Statistics Canada. Table: 13-10-0379-01After-tax total income for persons with and without disabilities aged 25 years and over, by severity, by age group and gender. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1310037901>
- 58 Tarasuk, V., & Mitchell, A. (2020). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resources/proof-annual-reports/>
- 59 Statistics Canada: Economic and Social Reports (2023). Poverty among racialized groups across generations. Government of Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/36-28-0001/2023008/article/00002-eng.pdf?st=RhS1QVID>
- 60 Dhunna, S., & Tarasuk, V. Black-white racial disparities in household food insecurity from 2005 to 2014, Canada. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 112(5), 888–902 (2021). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.17269/s41997-021-00539-y>
- 61 Food Banks Canada. EDI – Racial Inequality in Canada. Retrieved Oct 8 2024, from: <https://foodbankscanada.ca/poverty-report-card/edi-racial-inequality-in-canada/>
- 62 McIntyre, L., Dutton, D., Kwok, C., et al. Reduction of food insecurity in low-income Canadian seniors as a likely impact of a Guaranteed Annual Income. Journal of Canadian Public Policy, 42(3), 274-86 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2015-069>
- 63 Statistics Canada. Table: 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1, by age and gender. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501>
- 64 British Columbia Data Catalogue. Full-Time Equivalent Enrolments at B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions. <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/full-time-equivalent-enrolments-at-b-c-public-post-secondary-institutions>
- 65 Statistics Canada. Special Interest Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Profile of interest: Ethnic or cultural origin, British Columbia. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/sip/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Poild=2&Tld=0&FocusId=1&Ageld=1&Dguid=2021A000259#sipTable>



- 66 Statistics Canada. Table: 13-10-0374-01 Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and gender. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310037401>
- 67 Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0121-01 Estimates of the number of non-permanent residents by type, quarterly. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/quarterly\\_population\\_highlights.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/quarterly_population_highlights.pdf)
- 68 BC Stats. Quarterly Population Highlights (Issue: #24-01). Government of British Columbia. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/quarterly\\_population\\_highlights.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/quarterly_population_highlights.pdf)
- 69 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Notice – Supplementary Information for the 2024-2026 Immigration Levels Plan (November 1, 2023). Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2024-2026.html>
- 70 Polasub, W., Burkholder, E., Clark, E., & Gaisenk, A. Local food system safety net: A review of the food access environment for marginalized newcomers to Canada in Metro Vancouver. Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, KPU & Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (2023). <https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Institute%20for%20Sustainable%20Food%20Systems/Local%20food%20system%20safety%20net%20and%20newcomers.pdf>
- 71 Food Banks Canada (2023). Poverty Report Card. <https://foodbankscanada.ca/poverty-report-card/>
- 72 Redding, M. Indigenous Food Insecurity in Canada. The Borgen Project (2021). <https://borgenproject.org/indigenous-food-insecurity-in-canada/>
- 73 Métis Nation British Columbia, Office of the Provincial Health Officer & BC Centre for Disease Control. Examining the Societal Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Métis Food (In)security and Food as Medicine (Mar 2024). <https://www.mnbc.ca/foodas-medicinereport?fbclid=IwAR3dLA-UQz-NM2ealjNSH9Y-vKgXxiGmHF0SI3m7rg9O81n6P0AAKuSpHDFI>
- 74 Chan, L., Batal, M., Sadik, T., et al. First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study: Final Report for Eight Assembly of First Nations Regions. Assembly of First Nations, University of Ottawa, Université de Montréal (2019). [https://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/FNFNES\\_Supplemental\\_Data\\_Report\\_2022-02-25.pdf](https://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/FNFNES_Supplemental_Data_Report_2022-02-25.pdf)
- 75 Healthy Food Policy Project (2022). Towards Equitable And Just Food Systems: Exploring Food Justice, Food Sovereignty, and Ending Food Apartheid Policy & Practice. Retrieved Oct 9 2024, from: <https://healthy-foodpolicyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Towards-Equitable-and-Just-Food-Systems.pdf>
- 76 Indigenous Food System Network. Indigenous Food Sovereignty. <https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/food-sovereignty>
- 77 BC Centre for Disease Control (2024). Food Costs and Climate Change Impact Stories From Remote Communities in BC: A Special Addendum Report to the Food Costing in BC 2022 Report. Vancouver, B.C.: BC Centre for Disease Control, Population Public Health. [http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/Food\\_Costs\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Impact\\_Stories\\_Report\\_Final\\_June\\_2024.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/Food_Costs_and_Climate_Change_Impact_Stories_Report_Final_June_2024.pdf)
- 78 Poirer, B., & Tait Neufeld, H. "We need to live off the land": An exploration and conceptualization of community-based Indigenous food sovereignty experiences and practices. Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20(5), 4627 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054627>
- 79 Wale, J. D. (2022). Climate Resilience: Building Transformative Climate Resilience in Indigenous Communities. University of British Columbia. <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0416163>
- 80 James, K. Climate change impacts on Canada's food supply cold chain. National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (2023). <https://nccceh.ca/sites/default/files/Climate%20change%20impacts%20on%20Canada%27s%20food%20supply%20cold%20chain%202023.02.14%20FINAL.pdf>



**Relieving hunger today and  
preventing hunger tomorrow  
for all British Columbians.**



**Accredited**  
**IMAGINE CANADA**



Tel: 604.498.1798 • Fax: 604.498.1795 • [info@foodbanksbc.com](mailto:info@foodbanksbc.com)  
302 – 12761 16th Ave. Surrey, BC V4A 1N2 [FoodBanksBC.com](http://FoodBanksBC.com)

**Donate**