



# HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY IN CANADA

2017  
2018

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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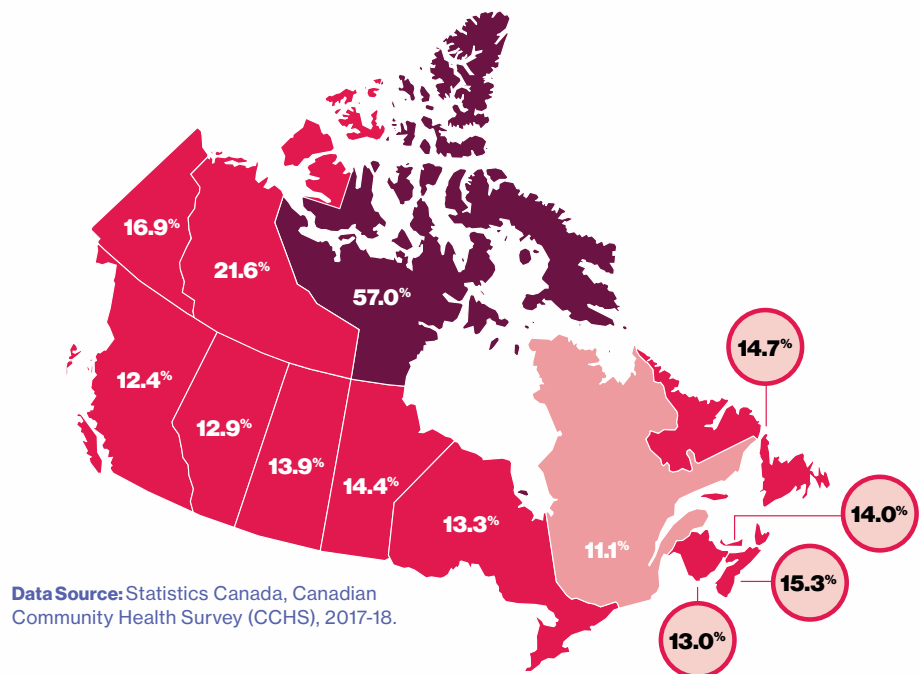
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## Executive Summary

Household food insecurity refers to the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints. Food insecurity takes a serious toll on individuals' health and well-being, and it places a significant burden on our health care system. Although there has been rigorous measurement and monitoring of household food insecurity in Canada since 2005, there is little indication that this problem is getting better. Drawing on data for 103,500 households from Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey conducted in 2017 and 2018, we found that 12.7% of households experienced some level of food insecurity in the previous 12 months. There were 4.4 million people, including more than 1.2 million children under the age of 18, living in food-insecure households in 2017-18. This is higher than any prior national estimate.

Food insecurity is much more prevalent in Nunavut than any other part of Canada. In 2017-18, 57.0% of households in Nunavut reported some level of food insecurity and almost half of these households were severely food insecure. The prevalence of food insecurity was also high in Northwest Territories, at 21.6%. The lowest prevalence of household food insecurity was 11.1% in Quebec. Quebec was the only place in Canada where the prevalence of food insecurity fell significantly between 2015-16 and 2017-18.

### Household Food Insecurity *BY PROVINCE & TERRITORY*



Among the 35 census metropolitan areas examined, food insecurity was most prevalent in St John's, affecting more than 1 in 6 households in this city. The lowest rate of food insecurity was in Quebec City, where 1 in 12 households was food-insecure.

Food insecurity is more prevalent among households with children. In 2017-18, 17.3% of children under 18, or more than 1 in 6, lived in households that experienced food insecurity. Nunavut and the Northwest Territories had the highest prevalence of children living in food-insecure households at 79% and 30% respectively, but rates were also high in many provinces. About 1 in 5 children in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick lived in households reporting some food insecurity.

Food insecurity is closely related to other markers of social and economic disadvantage. It is most prevalent among households with low incomes, lone-parent families, those who rent rather than own their housing, and those who identify as Indigenous or Black. In 2017-18, 65% of food-insecure households were reliant on employment incomes. Among those outside the workforce, food insecurity affected 60% of households reliant on social assistance, 32% of those reliant on Employment Insurance or Workers' Compensation, and 7% of households reliant on pensions and retirement incomes.

Most food-insecure households are in the workforce.

**65%** reported their main source of income as wages or salaries from employment.

The persistently high prevalence of household food insecurity across Canada highlights the need for more effective, evidence-based policy responses by the federal government to address the social and economic circumstances that give rise to this problem. The differences in food insecurity rates across the provinces and territories also point to the important roles that provincial and territorial governments can play in protecting their populations from food insecurity.



**Data Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2017-18.