

# Food Insecurity Fact Sheets by Food First NL

## One: Introduction to Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a term used to describe the struggle to afford food. Poverty is the root cause of food insecurity — the less money a person has the more likely they are to experience food insecurity.

### There Are Different Kinds of Food Insecurity

Marginal: Worrying that food will run out before having enough money to buy more

Moderate: Not being able to afford healthy food, often buying less food or lower quality food to make ends meet

Severe: Running out of food, skipping meals, or going for days without eating.

### Food Insecurity Causes Many Health Issues

People who experience food insecurity are more likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. The stress, stigma, and social isolation they face also leads to high rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide.

### Children Feel the Impacts of Food Insecurity Throughout Their Lives

It affects their learning and behaviour and limits their opportunities to engage with their friends and community.

Food insecurity affects over 4.4 million people in Canada, including 1.2 million children.

### Food Insecurity Doesn't Affect Everyone Equally

People face discrimination based on where they live, their gender, race and ethnicity, Indigeneity, ability, physical and mental health, and age. These kinds of discrimination create barriers that make the struggle to afford food even more difficult and exhausting.

Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest food insecurity rates in Canada. At least 14.7% of households struggle to put food on the table.

## Two: Myths About Food Insecurity

### Myth 1. Food insecurity isn't a problem here.

Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest food insecurity rates in Canada. At least 14.7% of households struggle to put food on the table. In March 2019, food banks across Newfoundland and Labrador received roughly 10,700 visits.

### Myth 2. Food insecurity only affects people receiving social assistance.

65% of people who experience food insecurity in Canada are employed. People who work in low-wage or part-time jobs often can't afford the food they need.

### Myth 3. People who experience food insecurity just need better budgeting and food skills

According to a recent Canadian report, people who experienced food insecurity are very skilled. They shop on a budget, make grocery lists, plan meals, and cook. In fact, they are four times more likely to use a budget when grocery shopping than people who don't experience food insecurity.

### Myth 4. Food banks are solving the problem.

Food banks provide short-term relief from hunger, but they don't address the root cause of food insecurity, which is poverty. Solving food insecurity means ending poverty.

### Myth 5. The answer to food insecurity is more food.

Food insecurity isn't a food problem. It's an income problem. There's plenty of food available in Canada, but far too many people can't afford to buy it. The real answer to food insecurity is ending poverty — by raising wages and social assistance rates, removing barriers to education and employment, and making housing and child care affordable.

## Three: How To Talk About Food Insecurity

How we talk about a problem affects the way we understand it and the actions we take to address it. Language is important!

### How **Not** To Talk About Food Insecurity

Terms like “the hungry,” “the needy,” and “the poor,” are stigmatizing. They reduce people to their circumstances and often play into harmful stereotypes.

They also imply that the answer to food insecurity is charity — “feeding the hungry.” **Unfortunately, that’s not the case.** Charities like food banks provide short-term relief from hunger, but they don’t address the root cause of food insecurity, which is poverty.

### Food Insecurity and Putting People First

Using the term **food insecurity** lets us focus on poverty and how to end it — by raising wages and social assistance rates, removing barriers to education and employment, and making housing and child care affordable.

Talking about people who experience food insecurity puts people first, before their circumstances. It recognizes every person’s right to dignity.