

Food Security in Edmonton

What is Food Security?

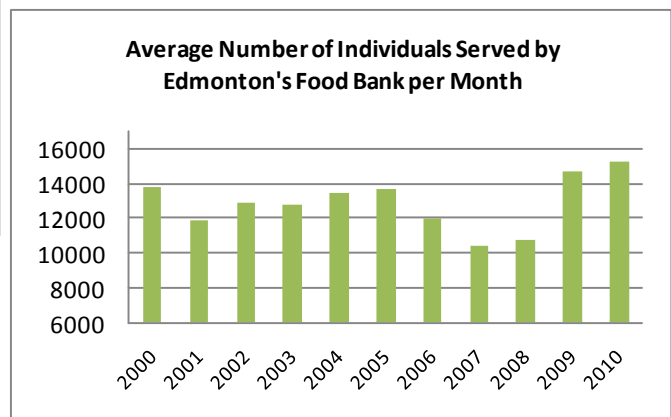
Food Security has been described as existing, “when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” The group Growing Food Security in Alberta adds that food security means equity and choice at every point. Access to adequate supplies of nutritious food provides optimal health and educational outcomes.

Sources: Food and Agriculture Organization. *World Food Summit*. 1996; Growing Food Security Alberta. *What is Food Security?* Retrieved from: <http://www.foodsecurityalberta.ca/Home/WhatisFoodSecurity/tabid/61/Default.aspx>.

Food Bank Use in Edmonton

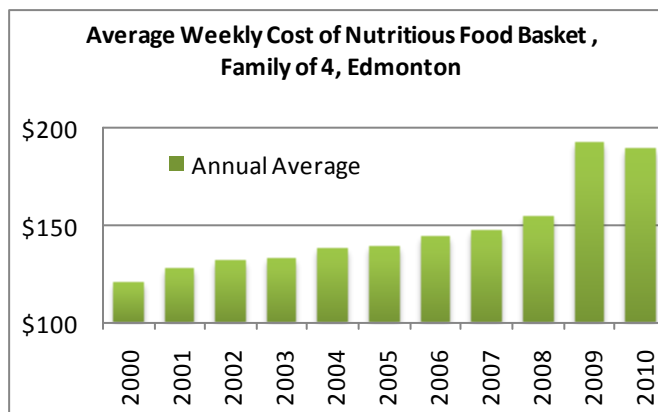
As the Food Bank provides free, nutritious food to individuals and families suffering from economic hardship, Food Bank use indicates the affordability of food. Graph A demonstrates an increasing trend in Food Bank use in Edmonton, which suggests that food has become increasingly unaffordable to some Edmontonians. Food Bank use has risen 4.3%, from an average of 14,660 individuals receiving food bank hampers per month in 2009 to an average of 15,295 individuals per month for the months of January to June in 2010. It is important to note that Food Bank use generally underestimates the extent of hunger, as some individuals do not access the Food Bank. It provides raw foods which require preparation, so people without kitchen supplies must turn to shelters and other services to obtain meals.

Graph A



Sources: Edmonton's Food Bank. Data Received from Edmonton's Food Bank.

Graph B



Source: Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development. *2010 Edmonton Average Weekly Nutritious Food Basket Prices*. <http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/Sdepartment/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd12963>

The Edmonton Nutritious Food Basket

Developed by Provincial Community Nutritionists and Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, the Edmonton Nutritious Food Basket is based on the nutrition requirements of Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket. Costs are broken down according to gender and age groups. Convenience and packaged foods are not included. Costing does not factor in the additional costs of special diets or coffee, tea, baking supplies or condiments. Graph B demonstrates steady increases in the cost of nutritious food for a family of four (consisting of a man and woman of 31-50 years, a girl of 4-8 years, and boy of 9-13 years) in Edmonton. The rise in cost in 2009 resulted from changes to the National Food Basket.



Support Available to Increase Food Security—AISH & Alberta Works

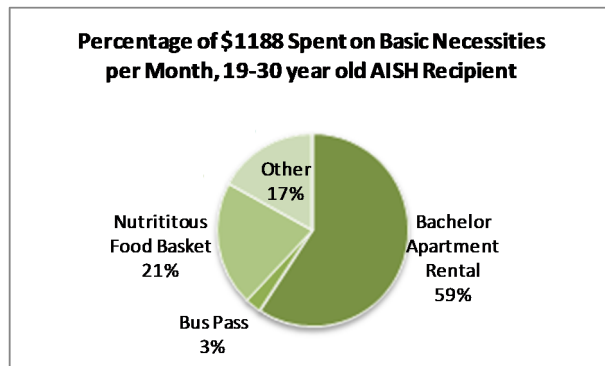
AISH recipients receive \$1,188 per month for food, housing, and other basic necessities. AISH recipients with special diet requirements are eligible for diet subsidies, ranging from \$20 per month for a high protein diet to \$110 per month for an individual suffering from renal failure. In an emergency situation, AISH recipients can also apply for food costs to be covered, up to \$20 per day per adult and \$10 per day for a child.

Alberta Works provides a core benefit of \$143 per month for food for a household of one adult, \$137 per month per adult for a household of two adults, and \$83 per month for a child. As with AISH, Alberta Works provides funding for special diets ranging from \$20 to \$110 per month. The Alberta Works Emergency Allowance provides \$22 per month for an adult and \$14 per month for a child in an emergency situation.

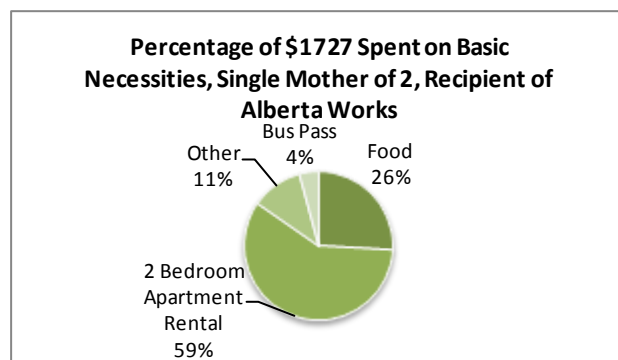
Sources: Alberta Employment and Immigration, *Alberta Works—Financial Benefits Summary*, <http://www.employment.alberta.ca/documents/AWonline/emp0433.pdf>; Alberta Seniors & Community Supports, *AISH Facts*, <http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/aish/tipsheets/AISHFacts.pdf>.

Does Available Support Provide Food Security?

Graph C

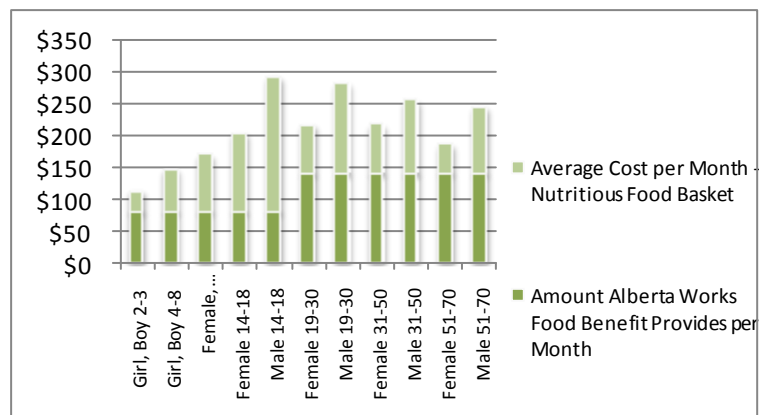


Graph D



Graph C indicates the percentage of AISH recipients' income which may go to basic housing, subsidized transportation, and nutrition. It does not include utilities, savings, clothing, hygiene products, or costs related to entertainment. As the graph shows, basic housing can use 59% of AISH recipients' income, leaving little for savings, food, and transportation.

Graph E



Graph D shows the dire economic situation faced by single mothers on Alberta Works in Edmonton. After paying for housing, food, and transportation, a single mother aged 19-30 with two children, a boy aged 2-3 and a girl aged 4-8, on Alberta Works and receiving the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the National Child Benefit, and the Universal Child Care Benefit, has 11% of her income left over each month to pay for other essentials such as utilities, clothing, and hygiene products.

Graph E demonstrates the inadequacy of Alberta Works Food Benefit. The amount provided to recipients of Alberta Works does not allow them to secure nutritious food according to Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket. Recipients must sacrifice quality or quantity, or seek additional meals through other social supports. Considering that nutrition is related to health and educational outcomes, investing in providing adequate nutrition to all members of society has important social and economic benefits. We can do better.

Note: Rental prices are based on average market housing rates. Source: Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, *Rental Market Report, Edmonton CMA*, Fall 2009.