

HUNGERCOUNT 2012



A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON HUNGER
AND FOOD BANK USE IN CANADA, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE



Food Banks
Canada



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a can of carrots. The person is wearing a dark blue jacket. The background is blurred, showing other people and food items, suggesting a food bank or community center. The text is overlaid on the top left of the image.

882,188 people turned to food banks in March 2012. Why?

More than three decades after the founding of Canada's first food bank, hundreds of thousands of people need help putting food on their tables every month. We must ask ourselves why this is so. What are the factors that maintain this unacceptable problem? What actions will cut it down to size? *HungerCount 2012* offers clear, hard data on food bank use, digs beyond the numbers to explore the root causes of hunger in our country, and provides recommendations to bring about real change.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need for Canada's charitable food assistance programs grew in 2012, and they are now assisting more people than ever. In March of this year, 882,188 people received food from a food bank in Canada. This is an increase of 2.4% over 2011, and is 31% higher than in 2008, before the recession began.

WHO TURNS TO FOOD BANKS?

Over the past four years, the need for food banks has expanded broadly. Even those who we might least expect to visit a food bank, including working people, two-parent families, seniors, and homeowners, are experiencing a higher risk of needing help than in the past.

There are several distinct groups that experience particularly high levels of need. Children and youth, though only 21% of the population, make up 38% of those helped by food banks. People on social assistance, single parent families, and those who identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit are all at higher risk of needing help.

ROOT CAUSES

It is not easy to answer the question of why, more than three decades since the founding of Canada's first food bank, people continue to need their help – the causes are incredibly diverse. While the recession has clearly played a large role in recent years, the fact that more than 700,000 people were helped each month in the years before the recession shows that the problem runs much deeper.

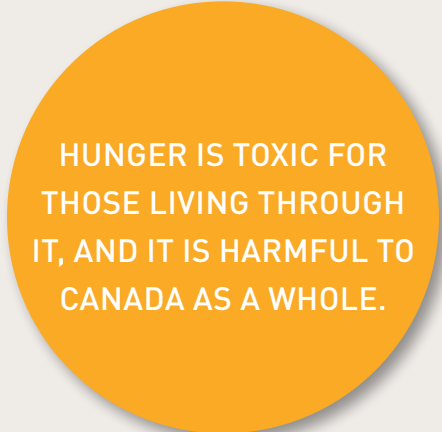
The key factor at the root of the need

for food banks is low income, whether in the short or long term. People asking for help are working in low-paying jobs, receiving meagre social assistance benefits, managing on inadequate pensions. They face rising costs related to food, housing, and energy. In the current economy, they are worried that things are not going to get better.

These issues have a deep impact. Hunger is toxic for those living through it, and it is harmful to Canada as a whole. It reduces the economic contributions of individuals, and increases costs related to health care and social services. To address it, we need to be smarter about helping people become more self-sufficient, and we need to be more supportive of those who need help over the longer term. To these ends, *HungerCount* offers five key recommendations.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS


- Increase federal investment in affordable housing, so that people are not forced to choose between paying rent or buying food.
- Establish a Northern Food Security Innovation Fund, comprehensive territorial school breakfast programs,



HUNGER IS TOXIC FOR THOSE LIVING THROUGH IT, AND IT IS HARMFUL TO CANADA AS A WHOLE.

and new community infrastructure, to help address the incredibly high levels of household food insecurity in the territories.

- Improve the Guaranteed Income Supplement so that no senior falls below the poverty line.
- At the provincial government level, make significant changes to social assistance, so that the program helps people to live with dignity and get back on their feet.
- Increase the value, and broaden eligibility for the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB), and increase investment in education and training for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed people in Canada who are not able to access Employment Insurance benefits.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands packing food items into a large cardboard box. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. In the upper left, their hands are holding several red cans. In the lower right, their hand is reaching into the box, which is filled with various food items including a yellow can, a blue carton, and a green can. The background is slightly blurred, showing a white wall and some festive lights.

The key factor at the root of the need for food banks is low income, whether in the short or long term.

HOW FOOD BANK USE IS CHANGING

Food bank use has increased in 2012

In the month of March this year, 882,188 people received food from a food bank in Canada. During the same period, 3,912,239 meals were prepared and served by soup kitchens, shelters, school breakfast initiatives, and other programs.

- The use of food banks grew by 2.4% in 2012, compared to 2011. It is now 31% higher than in 2008, before the start of the 2008-2009 recession.

- The use of meal programs is 23% higher than the level reported in 2011, and 27% higher than in 2008.¹

To put these figures in context:

- Each month, Canadian food banks provide about five days' worth of food to a population equal to the province of New Brunswick, the city of Ottawa, or the city of Edmonton.
- 4 million meals is equivalent to offering three full portions to

everyone in the city of Shawinigan, Quebec each day for an entire month. Over the course of 2012, Canadian meal programs will prepare and serve nearly 50 million meals.

Canada's charitable food assistance programs grew in 2012, and are now assisting more people than they ever have.

For information on food bank use in Canada, the provinces and territories, please see **Table 1**.²

TABLE 1: FOOD BANK USE IN CANADA, BY PROVINCE

Province/Territory	Total Assisted, March 2012	Percent Children, March 2012	Total Assisted, March 2011	Total Assisted, March 2008	Change, 2011-2012	% Change, 2011-2012	Change, 2008-2012	% Change, 2008-2012
British Columbia	96,150	29.5%	90,193	78,101	5,957	6.6%	18,049	23.1%
Alberta	53,512	44.1%	58,735	33,580	-5,223	-8.9%	19,932	59.4%
Saskatchewan	24,621	47.5%	25,432	17,751	-811	-3.2%	6,870	38.7%
Manitoba	63,482	47.6%	55,575	40,464	7,907	14.2%	23,018	56.9%
Ontario	412,998	38.6%	400,360	314,258	12,638	3.2%	98,740	31.4%
Quebec	155,574	37.2%	156,279	127,536	-705	-0.5%	28,038	22.0%
New Brunswick	19,524	32.0%	18,539	15,638	985	5.3%	3,886	24.8%
Nova Scotia	23,561	32.6%	22,505	16,915	1,056	4.7%	6,646	39.3%
Prince Edward Island	3,406	34.1%	3,095	2,892	311	10.0%	514	17.8%
Newfoundland & Labrador	27,044	38.8%	28,642	27,260	-1,598	-5.6%	-216	-0.8%
Territories	2,316	38.5%	2,420	1,340	-104	-4.3%	976	72.8%
Canada	882,188	38.4%	861,775	675,735	20,413	2.4%	206,453	30.6%

There have been huge changes in food bank use at the community level

To understand the use of food banks and other charitable food programs in Canada, it is important to realize that the individuals and families assisted by them are constantly changing.

During the *HungerCount* survey period in March 2012, nearly 93,000 people asked for help from a food bank for the very first time. Though it is a common belief that the same individuals and families utilize food banks month after month and year after year, in fact for most it is an emergency resource used for a short period of time. When a person using a food bank gets back on a firm economic standing, their place in line is taken by another person who needs help putting food on their table.

Similarly, the need for food banks and meal programs can change significantly from year to year in a given community. The slight increase in food bank use nationally hides the fact that about half of food banks reported an increase in use, and the other half reported a decrease or no change. To delve a bit deeper:

- 22% of food banks reported an *increase* of 25% or greater between 2011 and 2012.
- Another 19% of food banks reported a *decrease* of 25% or greater since 2011.

These findings suggest that the economic health of communities can change drastically in a short period of time. Whereas in 2009 and 2010 a large majority of food banks experienced increases in the number of people they assisted (not surprising, considering the effects of the recession), the past few years have seen an even split between communities where things are getting better, and those where the situation seems to have deteriorated.

At a macro, national level, food bank use is clearly correlated with the unemployment rate; the number of people receiving food has increased and decreased with the overall economic health of the country for a number of years (see Figure 1, page 9). There are many causes at the root of this seemingly

THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF COMMUNITIES CAN CHANGE DRASTICALLY IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.

simple equation, including demographic change, the shrinking of some economic sectors and the growth of others, and policy changes at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. While these causes can be abstract and elusive when looked at nationally, they reveal themselves more clearly at the community level.

For insight into these causes, and for a deeper understanding of why the need for food banks changes over time, **please see the three community profiles found in this section of the report.**

Definitions

Charitable food programs in Canada generally fall into one of two categories:

- **Food banks** provide about a week's worth of food for individuals and families to take home and prepare.
- **Meal and snack programs**, which include soup kitchens and school breakfast programs, serve prepared meals for people to sit down and eat.

Both of these categories, related yet separate from each other, must be understood for a true sense of the scope of charitable food provision in Canada. About 40% of food programs also offer additional services, such as community kitchens, nutrition education, advocacy for clients, and employment training.

A CLOSER LOOK: IQALUIT AND ARCTIC BAY, NUNAVUT

Recent demonstrations across Nunavut have brought Canadians' attention to the high cost of food in the territory.³

Residents here spend an average of \$14,815 per year on food, or 25% of their total expenditures; this is compared to an average of \$7,262, or 11% of total expenditures in Canada overall.⁴ Many of us have seen the pictures of \$12 milk, \$29 cheese spread, and peppers for \$17 per kilogram.

"A person shouldn't have to stand in a grocery store and think, 'should I buy bread or milk this week with my \$10' because they can't afford both," says Jen Hayward of the Niqinik Nuatsivik Nunavut Food Bank.

In Iqaluit, the price of food – and the high cost of living in general – has had a decisive effect on the number of people coming to the food bank. One of the few long-standing food banks in the territories, it has seen an 18% increase in use over the past year.

In most Nunavut communities, it is difficult to sustain this service because the need is high, yet the donor base is small. All the same, people are facing the reality that *something* has to be done. Communities like Arctic Bay, on Baffin Island, are trying to adapt the charitable food model to suit the circumstances of the North. In this



Photo: Clare Kimes, Arctic Bay, Nunavut

small community of 800 people, a school breakfast program serves more than 200 children per day.

"Food insecurity has become much more severe of late, because of the high cost of food, and also because of the population boom in the last 10 years. With the breakfast program, a large number of children are starting school, putting additional strain on an already stressed initiative," says Michael Rowan, Finance Officer in the hamlet.

Similar programs are underway in communities like Cambridge Bay, Igloolik, Paulatuk, Cape Dorset, and Pangnirtung. Each of these hamlets is struggling with a major issue – will the charitable food model work in the far North, or can the problem only be addressed through larger, government-driven initiatives? See Section 2, Recommendations, for more on this issue.

\$14,815

Average spent per year
on food in Nunavut

\$7,262

Average spent per year
on food in Canada overall



Some groups are at higher risk of needing a food bank to make ends meet

Over the past four years, the level of food bank use has changed drastically. At the national, provincial, regional, and community levels, 2009 was a turning point. After decreasing for four straight years beginning in 2005, food bank use shot up by nearly 20% in response to the recession that hit Canada in late 2008.

Hidden within this sudden and severe change is a surprising fact: the demographic makeup of those assisted by food banks has actually been quite stable in the recent past. In terms of age, gender, family type, source of income, and housing situation, little has changed over the course of the recession/post-recession. The influence of the recession on food bank use has been widespread, with few exceptions.

The need for food banks is distributed broadly through the population, often unexpectedly so. For example:

- 49% of households assisted are **families with children**; nearly half of these are two-parent families.
- 12% of households receiving food are currently **working**; an additional 5% are in receipt of Employment Insurance.
- 7% of those helped live primarily on income from a **pension** (rising to 9% in small towns and rural areas).
- 8% of households assisted are **homeowners** (increasing to 16% at small town and rural food banks).

While the need for food banks is demographically diverse, there are distinct groups that demonstrate very high levels of need year after year:

- While **children and youth** represent 21% of the Canadian population, 38% of those helped by food banks are in this age group.
- Though households receiving **social assistance** account for less than 10% of the overall population, they make up 52% of those receiving food from food banks.⁵
- 25% of households assisted by food banks are **single-parent families**, though they account for only 16% of Canadian households.⁶
- **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people** account for 4% of the Canadian population, yet make up 11% of individuals utilizing food banks.⁷

THE DISPROPORTIONATE USE OF FOOD BANKS BY CHILDREN AND YOUTH IS PARTICULARLY TROUBLING.

These facts, relatively unchanged over a number of years, make it very clear that particular groups face prolonged and stubborn economic disadvantage. If you are on welfare, a female single parent, or Aboriginal, you face an increased risk of needing to turn to a food bank for the most basic elements of life. While females leading single-parent families and Aboriginal people have made significant economic gains over the past decade, there is obviously still a large gap to be covered. The disproportionate use of food banks by children and youth is particularly troubling.

A CLOSER LOOK: OLIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Since 1991, the number of manufacturing jobs in Canada has dropped by nearly 400,000, even as Canada's population has increased. Manufacturing currently accounts for 10% of Canadian jobs, whereas in 1991 it made up 16%.

Across the country, scores of manufacturing plants have closed or consolidated. Although these shutdowns have put thousands of Canadians out of work, few have been covered widely in the media. The closing of a major vehicle plant in Oliver, British Columbia in 2010, resulting in significant job losses, was one of these under-reported closures.

Though the plant closed in 2010, the effects are still being felt in the region, says Jim Ouellette at the Oliver Food Bank. It is only now, as severance, Employment Insurance benefits, and savings are running low, that the realities of the closure are becoming apparent. This small food bank helped 100 more people in March 2012 versus 2011 – a 41% increase following a number of years of relatively steady use.

"People are proud," says Ouellette. "They only come to the food bank when they really have nowhere else to turn. There are other job opportunities in the orchards and in the wine industry, but they're more seasonal, and they can be



very demanding physically. They don't pay nearly as well as the plant used to."

The median age in Oliver is 56 years, versus 40 for Canada overall. Many of the town's older unemployed residents are in a difficult spot, dealing with job loss close to retirement age. With limited economic opportunities in the region, they are faced with the prospect of taking lower-paying jobs, accessing training with the hope of transitioning into something better, or leaving the area, and the rich social networks they have built over a lifetime, to find work.

"Something like this has an effect on the whole community," says Ouellette. "A lot of folks will come out of this okay, but there are a lot of others who are facing some really tough choices at a late stage in life."

For our recommendations related to the changing job market in Canada, please see Section 2.

7%

increase in food bank use
in British Columbia in 2012

41%

increase in Oliver,
British Columbia



Food banks are struggling to meet increased need

Food banks across the country benefit from wide support in their communities: Food Banks Canada research suggests that more than half of Canadians donate food or cash to a food bank every year.⁸ Before the 2008-2009 recession, this support enabled food banks to provide food (typically 3 to 7 days' worth, once per month) to virtually all those who asked for help and, where applicable, met certain income-related eligibility requirements.

By March 2009, when food bank use had spiked by 18% compared to 12 months earlier, it had become much more difficult for food banks to keep up with demand. Over the course of 12 months between

April 2008 and March 2009:

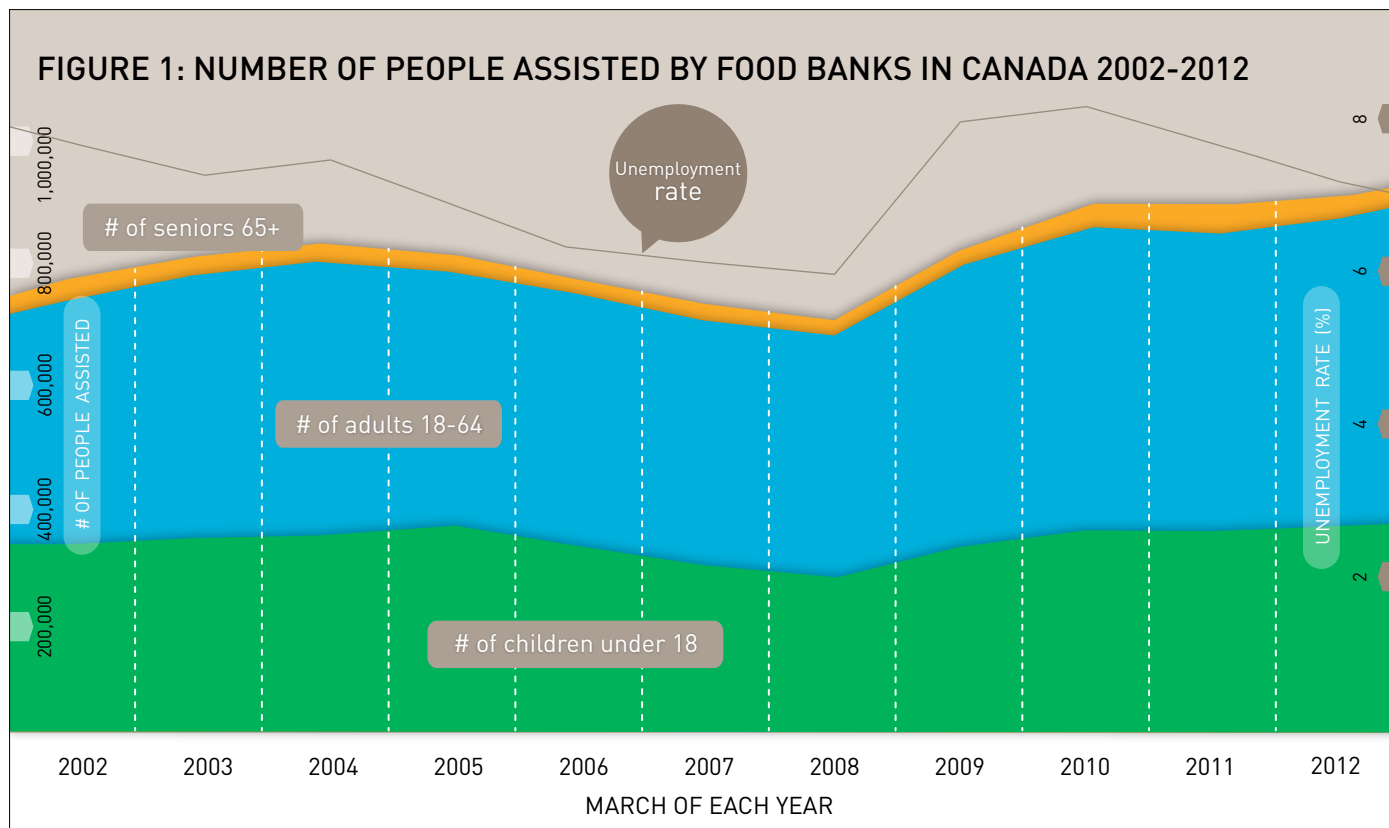
- More than 1 in 3 food banks had been forced to **cut back the amount of food** they provided to each household, because they didn't have enough.
- More than half (55%) of food banks were **buying more food than usual** to keep up with demand.
- 3% **closed early or did not open** because they had insufficient food during distribution periods.
- 13% of food banks had **run out of food** at some point during the year.

This year, though the recession is officially long past, food banks are finding it even more difficult than they

14% OF FOOD BANKS RAN OUT OF FOOD IN THE PAST YEAR.

did mid-recession to respond to the need for their services:

- 55% of food banks have had to **cut back the amount of food** provided to each household.



MONTHLY, CANADIAN
FOOD BANKS PROVIDE
ABOUT FIVE DAYS'
WORTH OF FOOD TO A
POPULATION EQUAL TO
THE PROVINCE OF NEW
BRUNSWICK.

- Nearly 60% continue to **buy more food than usual** to meet the need.
- 8% have been forced to **close early or not open** because of a lack of food.
- 14% **ran out of food** at some point in the past year.⁹

Food banks play an essential, limited role in addressing household food insecurity

Canada's food banks have been built on a philosophy of generosity to those in need, and thrift in everything else. Forty percent of food banks are completely volunteer-run; another 17% have only one paid employee. While a number of food banks have grown into large, professional organizations to meet increasing demand, hundreds of small organizations across the country operate with annual budgets in the low thousands. Many are located in improvised, donated spaces such as church basements, storefronts, or community centre storage rooms. The philosophy of thrift, and the resource scarcity underlying it, tends to limit the scope of what food banks can provide.

Many food bank volunteers and staff, and many Canadians, have become

resigned to a permanent charitable food network in Canada. However, the three-decade existence of food banks, juxtaposed with the continuing problem of household food insecurity, shows that neither food banks nor other community-based approaches are able to adequately address this stubborn problem. Food banks tend to be intensely local, and a central irony is that the communities in greatest need are also those least able to support food assistance. As well, food banks, like most things in Canada, are largely clustered along the country's southern border. Though food insecurity tends to increase as one travels north,¹⁰ the ability of food banks to address it does not. Finally, and crucially, not everyone who is food insecure is able or willing to access a food bank.¹¹

With these facts in mind, the next section offers recommendations on how to reduce hunger, household food insecurity, and the need for food banks in Canada. It looks at the root causes behind the need for food banks, and puts forward pragmatic, realistic ideas for change in five key areas: affordable housing, social investment in Northern Canada, pensions, social assistance, and job quality.

A CLOSER LOOK: INNISFAIL, ALBERTA

In the immediate fallout of the 2008-2009 recession, food bank use in Alberta skyrocketed by an astonishing 61%. By March 2010, the number of people assisted by food banks in the province had increased by an additional 11%. This was, by far, the largest recession-caused provincial increase in the country.

The Innisfail and Area Food Bank, located just south of Red Deer, has experienced this roller coaster firsthand. In March 2009, the food bank helped 50% more people than it did a year before; a year later this jumped by an additional 22%. As the economy improved in later 2010 and early 2011, the number of people coming through the doors for help started to come down. This year, though food bank use is still unacceptably high, things are somewhat more manageable for the food bank.

Nearby food banks in Olds and Red Deer have seen similarly drastic changes since 2008. Even more than elsewhere in Canada, sudden economic changes in Alberta (where the unemployment rate more than doubled from 3.4% in March 2008 to 7.6% in March 2010) appear to have had huge effects on food bank use.

"For a few years, the job boom in Alberta disappeared," says Pat Graham of the Mountain View Food



Photo: David Spence, Red Deer, Alberta

Bank Society in Olds. "Now that people have gone back to work in the oil fields, we're seeing fewer families come into the food bank."

Though the situation is improving, food bank use in Alberta remains 59% higher than levels seen before the recession. There is hope that a recent, and welcome, policy change will help bring this down further.

"In April, the Alberta Government increased payments [by \$400 per month] for AISH – Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped. This will almost certainly have a positive effect," says Marjorie Jackson from the food bank in Innisfail. This change, implemented early in Premier Alison Redford's first term, is a huge boost for people with disabilities. Across the province, food banks believe this will lead to a significant decrease in the number of people with disabilities needing their help.

77%
increase in use in Alberta,
2008-2010

86%
change in Innisfail, Alberta



Our recommendations will help build self-sufficiency among those who need help in the short-term, and offer dignified supports for those who need assistance over longer periods.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

NO ONE WANTS TO USE A FOOD BANK. PEOPLE IN CANADA ARE FORCED TO ASK FOR HELP WHEN THEY HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN, AND WHEN THEY FACE THE WORST IMAGINABLE CIRCUMSTANCE: NOT EVEN HAVING ENOUGH TO EAT.

A lack of income, whether in the short, medium, or long term, is the key factor that leads Canadians to ask for this most basic form of assistance. The circumstances that cause low income are incredibly diverse, and no single policy change will be able to address all of them. We can, however, focus on a small group of policy areas that influence economic vulnerability, and that have a strong ability to shorten, alleviate, and prevent stretches of poverty in Canadians' lives.

Reducing household food insecurity, and the poverty that underlies it, is a win-win situation. It is a win for people facing low income, and for Canada as a whole. One does not need to look far to

find many libraries' worth of evidence that poverty is a key negative influence on health. Reducing low income leads to better health, which leads to higher levels of economic participation and lower costs related to health care and social services.

Our recommendations envision an improved support system for Canadians facing tough times, who are unable to fully participate in the economy, or who are no longer in the workforce and do not have enough to sustain them. They are meant to build self-sufficiency among those who need help in the short-term, and to offer adequate, dignified supports for those who need assistance over longer periods.

A LACK OF INCOME IS THE KEY FACTOR THAT LEADS CANADIANS TO ASK FOR THIS MOST BASIC FORM OF ASSISTANCE.

RECOMMENDATIONS



1 INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As almost anyone who has moved to a major Canadian city in the past few years can tell you, it isn't cheap to move where the jobs are. For people with low incomes, and for people utilizing food banks, the rental housing market is of particular concern. There are simply not enough rental housing units to keep up with demand, which puts upward pressure on the cost of housing.

There are three major federal supports for affordable housing in Canada:

1. Federal Social Housing Operating Agreements, in place since the 1960s and 1970s;
2. The Federal/Provincial/Territorial Framework for Affordable Housing, announced in 2011;
3. The Homeless Partnering Strategy, in place since 2007.

Federal Social Housing Operating Agreements across the country are beginning to expire, which means affordable housing providers are losing an important source of funding that has supported more affordable rents for tens of thousands of Canadians. Without a new source of funding, many providers will be forced to increase geared-to-income rents, decrease the number of affordable units, or simply switch to a market rental model.

While the second and third programs noted above contribute to the affordability of housing, they are short term and limited in scope. Recent research from the Wellesley Institute and the Conference Board of Canada shows decisively that increased affordability, accessibility, and quality of housing have major positive health and social outcomes. Nevertheless, one quarter of Canadians spend more than 30% of their income on housing, a widely accepted threshold of affordability.

To address these pressing issues, we strongly recommend that the federal government continue funding for social housing providers after operating agreements end, so that they can continue to offer affordable rents and undertake needed repairs.

We also recommend that the federal government renew and expand the Affordable Housing Framework and Homelessness Partnering Strategy, in advance of the anticipated termination date of March 31, 2014.



2 INCREASE SOCIAL INVESTMENT IN NORTHERN CANADA

Food bank use is a valuable social indicator in southern Canada. While it takes several years for national data on poverty and household food insecurity to be analysed and released to the public, information on food bank use can be collected and shared quickly, offering a snapshot of our social and economic health.

In northern Canada, the level of food bank use reported in *HungerCount* is not a reliable indicator of the need for emergency food, since there are so few food banks. In the territories and northern regions of the provinces, this is not a function of a lack of need; it is the consequence of a simple lack of resources. The two most important sources of support for food banks (a sufficient donor base, and a quantity of surplus food from grocery retailers and distributors) are missing in the North, as the small population base simply does not provide for them.

A lack of access to food banks is just one factor that has made food insecurity in the North, and particularly in the Arctic, a dire public health emergency. Over time, northern residents have come to rely more and more on foods shipped from the South, and a number of recent media reports have made clear the incredibly high cost of even the most simple diet. In short, people in the North are not getting enough to eat, nor are they eating, on the whole, enough nutritious, healthy food.

It is clear that a new model for household food security in the North is necessary. Although there is much innovation and experimentation at the community level, a new model requires investment, which is sorely lacking in many northern communities. In hamlets like Inuvik, Arctic Bay, Cambridge Bay, Paulatuk, Pangnirtung, and others, individuals are attempting to operate food banks, so desperate is the situation. While the federal government program Nutrition North Canada is a necessary piece of the puzzle, it is not enough.

We recommend:

1. **The creation of a federal Northern Food Security Innovation Fund, to help jumpstart and sustain community-based, community-led food initiatives across the North;**
2. **The establishment and adequate funding of comprehensive school breakfast programs across the territories;**
3. **Significant investment in community-building infrastructure in northern communities, including the construction or rehabilitation of community-identified resources like community centres and community freezers.**



3 ENSURE ADEQUATE PENSIONS FOR OUR MOST VULNERABLE SENIORS

Since 2011, when the federal government introduced increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) of up to \$600 per year for single seniors and \$840 per year for couples, there has been little activity with respect to poverty among those over age 65. As this year's *HungerCount* findings show, people living primarily on income from pensions continue to make up a small but significant part of the population utilizing food banks in Canada.

Even with the recent increases to the GIS, it remains the case that seniors who live alone are much more likely than couples to have incomes below the after-tax low income cut-off (LICO-AT), Canada's unofficial poverty line. For single seniors living in most urban areas, maximum Old Age Security/ Guaranteed Income Supplement benefits (a little under \$15,000 per year) remain below the LICO-AT.

To increase fairness for single seniors living alone, and to ensure that no one over the age of 65 lives in poverty or needs a food bank, we recommend that the Guaranteed Income Supplement be increased so that it never drops below the after-tax low income cut-off.



4 INVEST IN SUPPORTIVE, QUALITY SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Half of the households assisted by food banks receive the majority of their income from provincial social assistance programs. This link between welfare and food bank use is not surprising: provincial welfare benefits have been far below poverty levels for many years, with single people receiving as little as \$3,773 per year (\$314 per month in New Brunswick) and, at most, \$9,593 per year (\$799 per month in Newfoundland and Labrador).¹²

While it is true that welfare recipients often have access to non-cash benefits such as dental and prescription drug coverage, it is nevertheless the case that it is very difficult to be on social assistance, afford basic non-food necessities (housing, clothing, transportation, etc.) and also eat well.¹³

Welfare programs are structured this way under the belief that too much help will create dependency and prevent recipients from, as they say, "pulling themselves up by their bootstraps." Care is taken to ensure that cash and housing benefits are always lower than the lowest-paid work.

In the past few years, a few provinces have worked to move beyond the old system. Newfoundland and Labrador has increased social assistance benefits as part of its poverty reduction strategy, and has actually seen a decline in beneficiaries (notwithstanding a slight, temporary increase during the 2008-2009 recession).¹⁴ The Government of Ontario is nearing the end of its re-analysis of that province's welfare program. These are positive signs, though much more needs to be done.

People living on social assistance need their provincial governments to have the courage to admit that welfare, in its current form, does more harm than good. While it is politically difficult to improve the system given the common stereotypes about those on welfare, it is the right thing to do.

We recommend that all provincial and territorial governments begin or continue to work with social assistance beneficiaries and other stakeholders to design an income support system that helps our most vulnerable citizens become self-sufficient.



5 ACT TO ADDRESS THE DECLINE IN WELL-PAYING JOBS

There is no shortage of low-paid jobs in Canada. While we are traditionally known for our natural resources, agricultural products, and manufacturing, these well-paying sectors account for a declining number of Canadian jobs. Though high-paying sectors like health care and applied sciences are growing, so is the low-wage service sector.

In 2010, 3.5 million Canadians worked in the service sector, and reported median earnings of \$16,600 for the year (or about half what was earned in manufacturing).¹⁵ It is not so much the job sector that is important; what is important is the fact that 18% of employed Canadians earn less than \$17,000 per year.¹⁶

Income is closely connected to a range of health outcomes, and it follows that the health of the millions of people working in low-wage jobs will improve as they are able to improve their skills and find better-paying jobs.

Canada's low-paid job problem is not inevitable. Many other jurisdictions manage to do better – Canada "has one of the highest proportions of low-paid workers among similarly industrialized countries."¹⁷ However, thanks to continued weakness in the manufacturing sector, the ongoing effects of the 2008-2009 recession, and a well-established policy approach to labour in Canada, it will take serious and focused action to change this well-entrenched reality.

Recent changes to Employment Insurance and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and the repeal of the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act, are signs that the federal government is moving to increase the size of the active labour force and decrease the cost of labour in Canada. While this may make development in resource extraction and manufacturing (for example) more affordable, it is also likely to have a negative effect on earnings across the board. Action is therefore necessary to counteract these negative effects.

We recommend that the federal government:

1. Continue to increase the value of the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB);
2. Widen eligibility for the WITB to include all households with earned incomes below the after-tax low income cut-off;
3. Increase investment in education and training for the more than 700,000 unemployed Canadians who are not able to access Employment Insurance benefits.¹⁸

GET
THE
APP

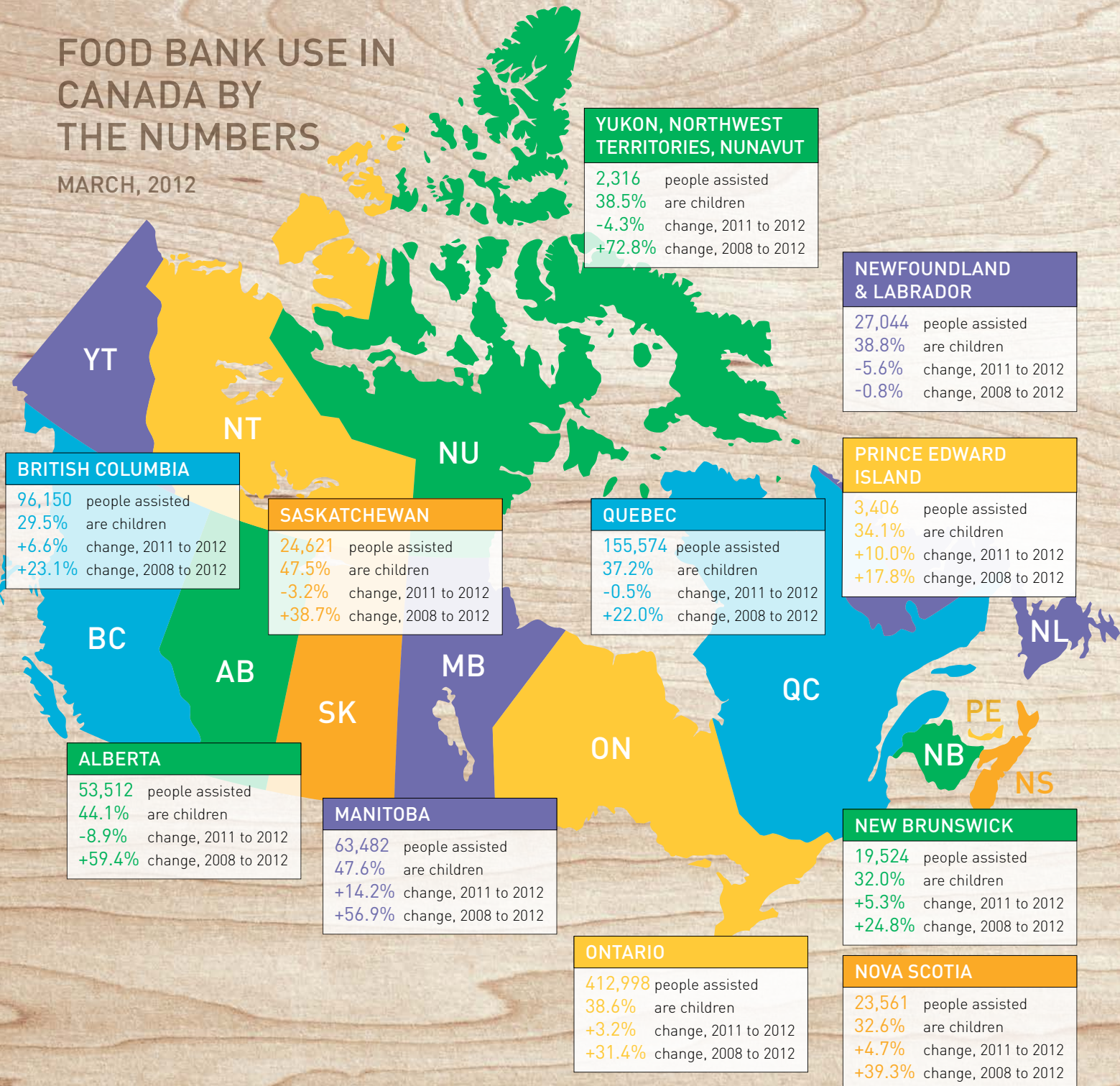
NEW THIS YEAR! Get quick access on your iPhone or iPad to data from the *HungerCount* survey. The *HungerCount* app puts data on food bank use at your fingertips. Search national, provincial, and regional statistics, or search by year. Download it for free at the App Store.



DETAILED NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL FINDINGS

FOOD BANK USE IN CANADA BY THE NUMBERS

MARCH, 2012

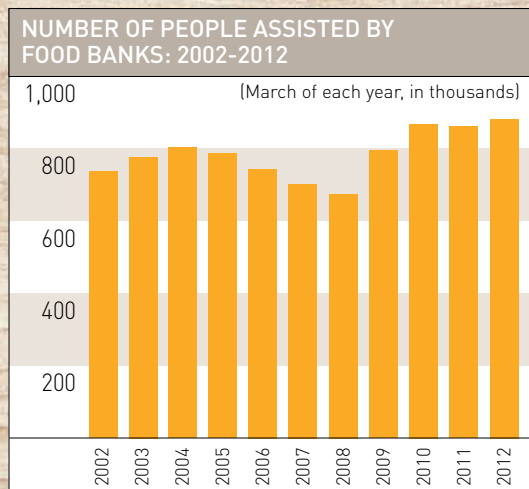


CANADA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	882,188	861,775	867,948	794,738	675,735	737,665
% Change, 2002-2012	19.6%					
% Change, 2008-2012	30.6%					
% Change, 2011-2012	2.4%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	47.9%	48.8%	70.7%	78.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	38.4%	37.9%	37.8%	37.2%	37.1%	40.8%
Households assisted by food banks	368,619	354,265	369,818	347,043	304,394	-
% Households assisted for the first time	10.5%	10.9%	9.2%	-	-	-
% National population assisted	2.54%	2.48%	2.56%	2.37%	2.04%	2.37%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	48.4	48.2
% Post-secondary students	3.0	1.6
% Age 65+ ¹⁹	4.1	5.3
% Aboriginal persons	11.3	25.2
% Immigrants or refugees	11.1	1.72

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	25.3	22.2
% Two-parent families	23.3	21.2
% Couples with no children	11.4	13.9
% Single people	40.0	42.7
Number of food banks reporting	1,121	427



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	11.7	10.2
% Employment Insurance	4.9	5.3
% Social assistance	51.9	55.9
% Disability-related income support	13.9	12.9
% Pension	6.8	8.5
% Student loans/scholarships	2.1	0.6
% No income	4.6	3.4
% Other	4.1	3.3
Number of food banks reporting	983	359

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	7.7	15.9
% Rental market tenants	63.6	58.9
% Social housing tenants	21.8	13.9
% Band-owned housing	1.7	5.5
% Shelter or group home	1.5	1.2
% Living on the street	0.5	0.5
% Living with family or friends	3.3	4.1
Number of food banks reporting	975	370

882,188
people helped by
food banks
in March

+30.6%
change
since 2008

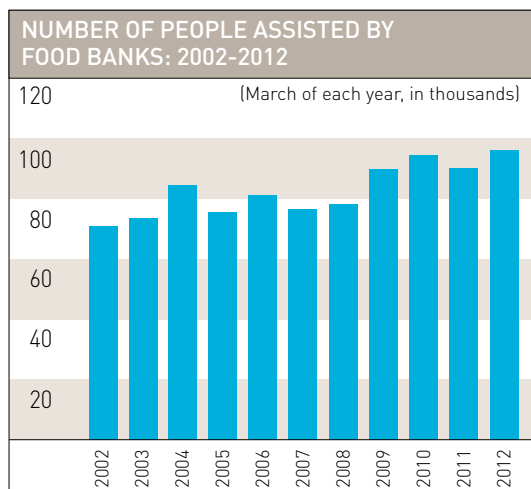
38.4%
are children

BRITISH COLUMBIA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	96,150	90,193	94,359	89,866	78,101	70,844
% Change, 2002-2012	35.7%					
% Change, 2008-2012	23.1%					
% Change, 2011-2012	6.6%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	44.4%	52.9%	60.2%	80.8%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	29.5%	31.9%	29.7%	31.4%	31.2%	33.9%
Households assisted by food banks	43,282	42,465	45,196	44,206	35,005	28,436
% Households assisted for the first time	6.9%	6.9%	6.5%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.09%	1.98%	2.10%	2.03%	1.77%	1.73%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	51.6	51.9
% Post-secondary students	1.7	1.7
% Age 65+	4.6	5.9
% Aboriginal persons	25.7	31.7
% Immigrants or refugees	3.2	1.7

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.9	19.3
% Two-parent families	17.0	15.6
% Couples with no children	10.6	11.6
% Single people	50.4	53.4
Number of food banks reporting	54	32



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	11.4	12.0
% Employment Insurance	4.3	3.7
% Social assistance	41.5	44.1
% Disability-related income support	26.7	22.7
% Pension	8.0	9.2
% Student loans/scholarships	1.0	0.4
% No income	4.2	4.6
% Other	2.8	3.4
Number of food banks reporting	46	25

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	7.8	14.2
% Rental market tenants	75.6	67.2
% Social housing tenants	7.9	3.3
% Band-owned housing	3.8	9.3
% Shelter or group home	0.6	1.3
% Living on the street	1.1	1.4
% Living with family or friends	3.3	3.3
Number of food banks reporting	41	25

96,150
people helped by
food banks
in March

+23.1%
change
since 2008

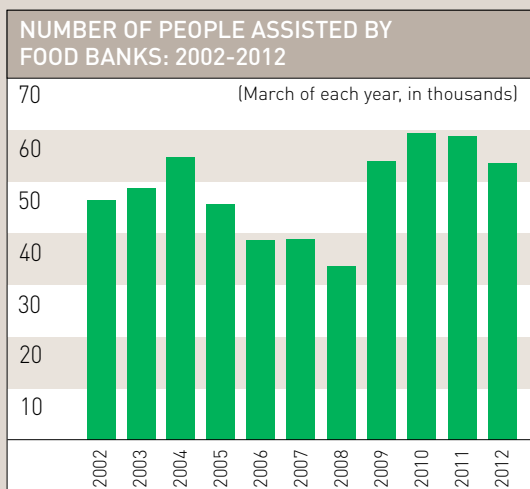
29.5%
are children

ALBERTA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	53,512	58,735	59,311	53,976	33,580	46,306
% Change, 2002-2012	15.6%					
% Change, 2008-2012	59.4%					
% Change, 2011-2012	-8.9%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	40.8%	35.6%	72.5%	78.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	44.1%	43.7%	43.1%	43.1%	42.0%	41.0%
Households assisted by food banks	21,309	21,556	20,078	20,815	12,031	15,913
% Households assisted for the first time	11.0%	17.7%	10.0%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.40%	1.57%	1.60%	1.40%	0.96%	1.49%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	55.5	55.4
% Post-secondary students	2.4	1.1
% Age 65+	3.0	6.7
% Aboriginal persons	46.2	65.3
% Immigrants or refugees	7.3	3.9

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	35.1	34.1
% Two-parent families	22.8	27.1
% Couples with no children	9.5	12.0
% Single people	32.7	26.7
Number of food banks reporting	61	42



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	23.8	14.9
% Employment Insurance	3.8	6.1
% Social assistance	33.7	32.9
% Disability-related income support	15.0	15.6
% Pension	5.5	15.5
% Student loans/scholarships	2.9	0.5
% No income	9.4	7.6
% Other	5.8	6.8
Number of food banks reporting	51	34

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	6.4	9.2
% Rental market tenants	65.0	46.8
% Social housing tenants	15.2	3.9
% Band-owned housing	6.4	25.6
% Shelter or group home	1.3	1.0
% Living on the street	1.1	0.7
% Living with family or friends	5.2	12.8
Number of food banks reporting	49	33

53,512
people helped by
food banks
in March

+59.4%
change
since 2008

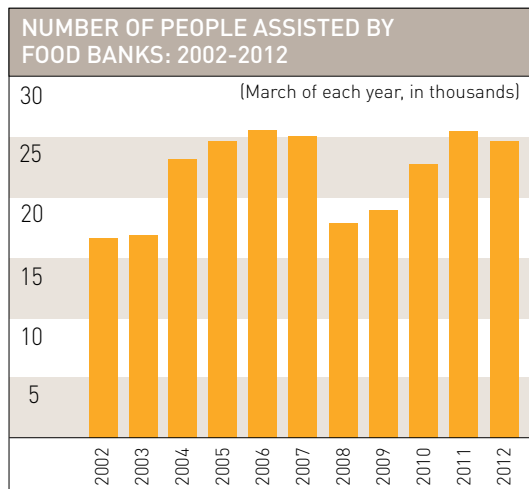
44.1%
are children

SASKATCHEWAN

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	24,621	25,433	22,662	18,875	17,751	16,581
% Change, 2002-2012	48.5%					
% Change, 2008-2012	38.7%					
% Change, 2011-2012	-3.2%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	23.5%	52.0%	52.0%	78.0%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	47.5%	46.3%	44.1%	44.4%	45.6%	47.3%
Households assisted by food banks	10,180	7,734	8,355	7,063	5,819	6,533
% Households assisted for the first time	5.8%	8.6%	7.8%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.30%	2.42%	2.18%	1.80%	1.73%	1.66%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	46.9	52.8
% Post-secondary students	1.2	0.6
% Age 65+	2.8	5.1
% Aboriginal persons	57.2	62.6
% Immigrants or refugees	8.4	0.5

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	24.8	27.6
% Two-parent families	22.2	22.4
% Couples with no children	10.0	11.7
% Single people	43.0	38.3
Number of food banks reporting	17	12



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	12.2	11.3
% Employment Insurance	3.5	5.3
% Social assistance	58.1	63.6
% Disability-related income support	5.9	3.5
% Pension	5.6	6.5
% Student loans/scholarships	2.9	0.8
% No income	5.9	3.8
% Other	5.8	5.3
Number of food banks reporting	16	11

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	4.9	10.9
% Rental market tenants	69.7	42.0
% Social housing tenants	14.1	17.4
% Band-owned housing	2.5	20.3
% Shelter or group home	0.9	0.2
% Living on the street	0.3	1.4
% Living with family or friends	7.7	7.7
Number of food banks reporting	16	12

24,621
people helped by
food banks
in March

+38.7%
change
since 2008

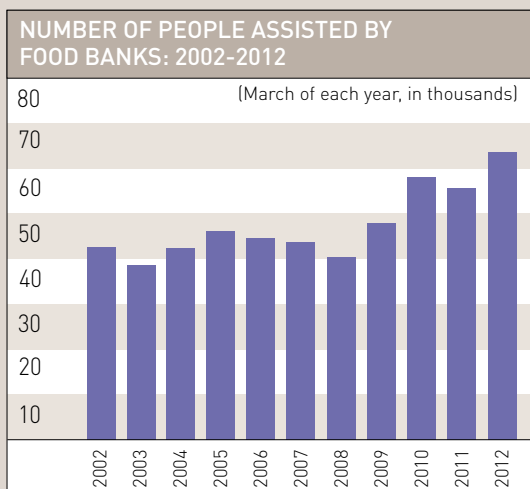
47.5%
are children

MANITOBA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	63,482	55,575	57,966	47,925	40,464	42,459
% Change, 2002-2012	49.5%					
% Change, 2008-2012	56.9%					
% Change, 2011-2012	14.2%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	59.1%	42.4%	73.0%	66.0%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	47.6%	50.4%	50.5%	48.7%	45.7%	46.2%
Households assisted by food banks	21,261	18,620	-	-	-	-
% Households assisted for the first time	13.3%	12.4%	12.5%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	5.05%	4.47%	4.72%	3.89%	3.30%	3.68%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	52.8	52.3
% Post-secondary students	0.7	1.8
% Age 65+	2.9	6.5
% Aboriginal persons	n/a	46.5
% Immigrants or refugees	4.0	4.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	22.7	25.6
% Two-parent families	26.0	26.4
% Couples with no children	16.6	13.6
% Single people	34.6	34.3
Number of food banks reporting	33	28



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	13.4	11.5
% Employment Insurance	4.2	5.2
% Social assistance	49.9	57.6
% Disability-related income support	4.6	10.9
% Pension	9.3	8.0
% Student loans/scholarships	2.2	0.2
% No income	10.6	3.4
% Other	5.7	3.3
Number of food banks reporting	22	18

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	15.5	21.5
% Rental market tenants	38.7	30.9
% Social housing tenants	22.6	19.0
% Band-owned housing	14.5	18.6
% Shelter or group home	0.3	0.3
% Living on the street	0.5	0.6
% Living with family or friends	7.9	9.1
Number of food banks reporting	21	18

63,482
people helped by
food banks
in March

+56.9%
change
since 2008

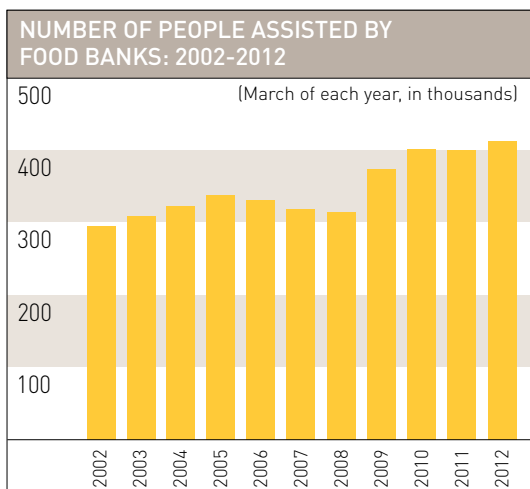
47.6%
are children

ONTARIO

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	412,998	400,360	402,056	374,230	314,258	295,228
% Change, 2002-2012	39.9%					
% Change, 2008-2012	31.4%					
% Change, 2011-2012	3.2%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	48.1%	46.4%	73.6%	76.2%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	38.6%	37.0%	37.1%	37.6%	37.6%	41.2%
Households assisted by food banks	174,618	160,275	160,402	148,660	137,491	117,985
% Households assisted for the first time	9.8%	10.0%	6.9%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	3.07%	2.97%	3.06%	2.90%	2.40%	2.46%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	44.6	42.0
% Post-secondary students	3.1	1.2
% Age 65+	3.8	3.9
% Aboriginal persons	6.2	17.1
% Immigrants or refugees	11.1	0.4

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	28.1	21.4
% Two-parent families	21.8	23.8
% Couples with no children	11.0	15.1
% Single people	39.2	39.7
Number of food banks reporting	218	76



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	10.1	10.8
% Employment Insurance	4.2	4.3
% Social assistance	42.8	39.3
% Disability-related income support	28.6	33.6
% Pension	6.0	7.0
% Student loans/scholarships	1.4	0.2
% No income	2.6	2.3
% Other	4.4	2.4
Number of food banks reporting	181	61

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	5.8	12.1
% Rental market tenants	64.5	67.3
% Social housing tenants	23.7	15.2
% Band-owned housing	0.7	2.4
% Shelter or group home	1.6	0.2
% Living on the street	0.4	0.4
% Living with family or friends	3.3	2.3
Number of food banks reporting	200	74

412,998
people helped by
food banks
in March

+31.4%
change
since 2008

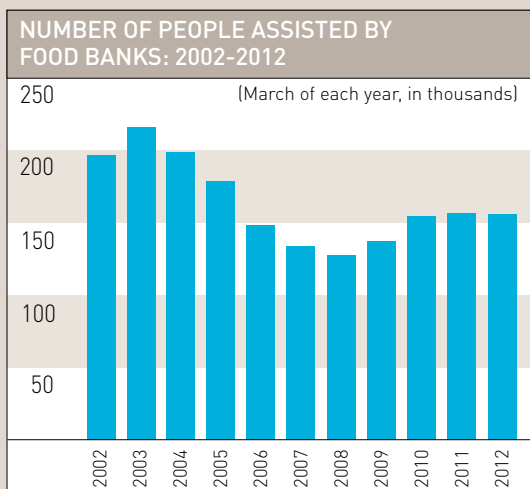
38.6%
are children

QUEBEC

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	155,574	156,279	154,364	137,464	127,536	196,462
% Change, 2002-2012	-20.8%					
% Change, 2008-2012	22.0%					
% Change, 2011-2012	-0.5%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	47.1%	51.9%	-	-	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	37.2%	36.0%	37.9%	33.9%	37.1%	41.5%
Households assisted by food banks	70,510	74,350	-	-	-	-
% Households assisted for the first time	14.6%	15.6%	-	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.94%	1.97%	1.96%	1.77%	1.97%	2.65%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	48.9	47.7
% Post-secondary students	5.3	3.3
% Age 65+	5.0	6.6
% Aboriginal persons	1.0	3.9
% Immigrants or refugees	18.9	3

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.7	20.2
% Two-parent families	26.7	19.7
% Couples with no children	11.5	13.8
% Single people	40.1	46.3
Number of food banks reporting	597	149



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	9.9	9.0
% Employment Insurance	5.0	5.0
% Social assistance	63.6	66.9
% Disability-related income support	3.0	4.2
% Pension	6.9	8.2
% Student loans/scholarships	3.5	1.0
% No income	4.1	2.3
% Other	3.9	3.4
Number of food banks reporting	556	142

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	7.1	15.7
% Rental market tenants	66.8	59.6
% Social housing tenants	20.1	17.9
% Band-owned housing	0.7	0.9
% Shelter or group home	2.2	2.6
% Living on the street	0.6	0.3
% Living with family or friends	2.5	3.0
Number of food banks reporting	529	137

155,574
people helped by
food banks
in March

+22%
change
since 2008

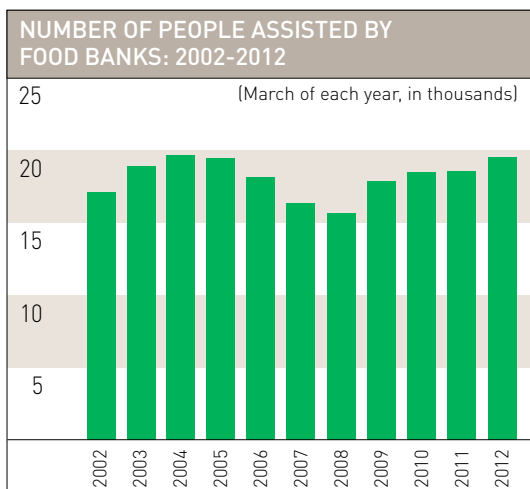
37.2%
are children

NEW BRUNSWICK

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	19,524	18,539	18,517	17,889	15,638	17,122
% Change, 2002-2012	14.0%					
% Change, 2008-2012	24.8%					
% Change, 2011-2012	5.3%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	51.9%	54.2%	66.0%	70.6%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	32.0%	34.4%	34.3%	33.8%	33.2%	34.1%
Households assisted by food banks	8,975	8,160	8,440	7,710	7,060	7,209
% Households assisted for the first time	9.0%	7.7%	9.4%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.58%	2.46%	2.46%	2.39%	2.09%	2.29%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	46.9	50.1
% Post-secondary students	3.8	0.9
% Age 65+	3.4	3.9
% Aboriginal persons	4.9	4.5
% Immigrants or refugees	1.7	0.7

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	22.8	22.4
% Two-parent families	18.9	18.5
% Couples with no children	11.8	14.8
% Single people	46.5	44.3
Number of food banks reporting	43	30



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	10.4	7.6
% Employment Insurance	6.2	7.1
% Social assistance	65.9	68.6
% Disability-related income support	4.6	5.2
% Pension	6.4	5.7
% Student loans/scholarships	0.5	0.2
% No income	4.0	4.0
% Other	2.1	1.7
Number of food banks reporting	32	24

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	16.5	23.8
% Rental market tenants	59.1	52.0
% Social housing tenants	17.4	14.5
% Band-owned housing	3.2	4.1
% Shelter or group home	0.1	0.0
% Living on the street	0.1	0.0
% Living with family or friends	3.6	5.6
Number of food banks reporting	31	22

19,524
people helped by
food banks
in March

+24.8%
change
since 2008

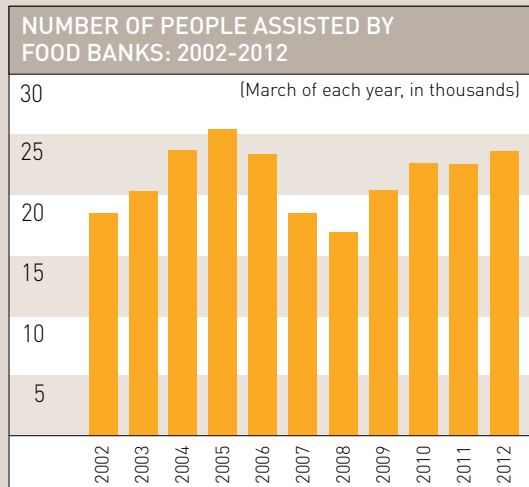
32.0%
are children

NOVA SCOTIA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	23,561	22,505	22,573	20,344	16,915	18,436
% Change, 2002-2012	27.8%					
% Change, 2008-2012	39.3%					
% Change, 2011-2012	4.7%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	55.6%	41.5%	68.1%	57.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	32.6%	31.5%	33.0%	34.1%	35.0%	41.3%
Households assisted by food banks	10,626	10,814	10,840	9,605	7,926	8,667
% Households assisted for the first time	5.1%	6.9%	7.3%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.49%	2.39%	2.40%	2.17%	1.81%	1.97%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	46.8	48.0
% Post-secondary students	1.8	0.8
% Age 65+	7.1	3.6
% Aboriginal persons	3.9	3.1
% Immigrants or refugees	3.8	0.2

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.6	19.9
% Two-parent families	20.8	21.2
% Couples with no children	13.3	15.5
% Single people	44.2	43.4
Number of food banks reporting	65	33



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	13.0	8.6
% Employment Insurance	4.5	5.2
% Social assistance	57.5	62.3
% Disability-related income support	10.2	8.5
% Pension	8.8	8.2
% Student loans/scholarships	0.6	0.2
% No income	3.1	3.1
% Other	2.3	3.8
Number of food banks reporting	51	23

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	15.4	21.1
% Rental market tenants	66.9	60.1
% Social housing tenants	11.9	12.2
% Band-owned housing	2.1	3.6
% Shelter or group home	1.0	0.8
% Living on the street	0.2	0.1
% Living with family or friends	2.5	2.2
Number of food banks reporting	59	27

23,561
people helped by
food banks
in March

+39.3%
change
since 2008

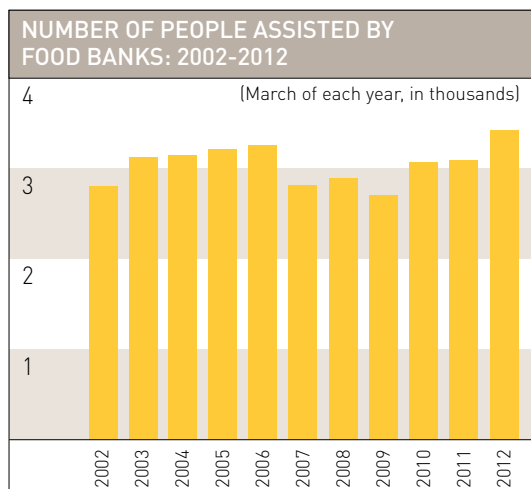
32.6%
are children

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	3,406	3,095	3,068	2,706	2,892	2,800
% Change, 2002-2012	21.6%					
% Change, 2008-2012	17.8%					
% Change, 2011-2012	10.0%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%	50.0%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	34.1%	35.3%	35.5%	35.8%	35.4%	38.8%
Households assisted by food banks	1,413	1,231	1,198	1,083	1,155	1,044
% Households assisted for the first time	4.9%	7.0%	6.9%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.33%	2.16%	2.17%	1.93%	1.95%	2.04%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	53.4	45.7
% Post-secondary students	0.7	0.0
% Age 65+	5.1	3.4
% Aboriginal persons	3.8	0.0
% Immigrants or refugees	9.3	0.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	22.3	22.0
% Two-parent families	24.1	29.5
% Couples with no children	15.2	12.1
% Single people	38.3	36.4
Number of food banks reporting	6	3



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	20.8	29.4
% Employment Insurance	18.8	15.7
% Social assistance	42.6	36.8
% Disability-related income support	7.1	7.0
% Pension	7.1	8.0
% Student loans/scholarships	0.8	0.0
% No income	1.6	1.0
% Other	1.3	2.0
Number of food banks reporting	5	3

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	17.5	28.5
% Rental market tenants	64.3	56.0
% Social housing tenants	12.1	13.1
% Band-owned housing	2.9	0.0
% Shelter or group home	0.8	0.0
% Living on the street	0.0	0.0
% Living with family or friends	2.5	2.3
Number of food banks reporting	5	3

3,406
people helped by
food banks
in March

+17.8%
change
since 2008

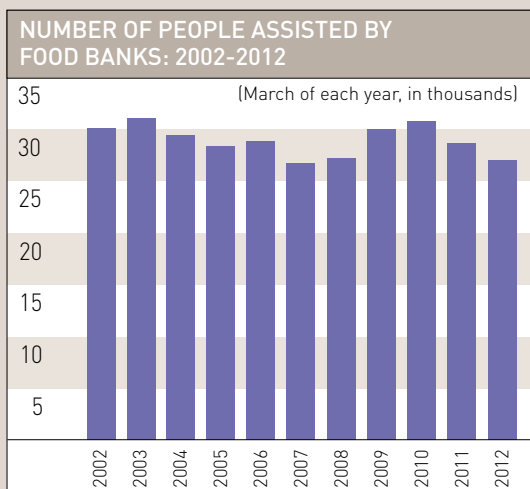
34.1%
are children

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2002
Individuals assisted by food banks, March	27,044	28,642	30,800	30,014	27,260	30,166
% Change, 2002-2012	-10.3%					
% Change, 2008-2012	-0.8%					
% Change, 2011-2012	-5.6%					
% Food banks reporting an increase	51.9%	40.7%	67.9%	70.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	38.8%	37.3%	37.3%	37.4%	38.4%	39.7%
Households assisted by food banks	8,950	9,090	9,003	9,235	8,037	10,964
% Households assisted for the first time	4.7%	4.8%	5.4%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	5.29%	5.63%	6.03%	5.90%	5.36%	5.78%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	59.4	44.6
% Post-secondary students	2.0	1.5
% Age 65+	3.5	3.3
% Aboriginal persons	0.3	5.2
% Immigrants or refugees	0.9	0.1

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	35.7	28.2
% Two-parent families	26.0	24.0
% Couples with no children	11.7	15.2
% Single people	26.5	32.6
Number of food banks reporting	28	21



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	8.4	4.9
% Employment Insurance	13.0	7.1
% Social assistance	71.7	69.9
% Disability-related income support	0.4	3.2
% Pension	5.8	8.4
% Student loans/scholarships	0.1	0.9
% No income	0.4	3.5
% Other	0.2	2.1
Number of food banks reporting	24	17

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	12.1	19.6
% Rental market tenants	19.7	54.7
% Social housing tenants	67.9	23.3
% Band-owned housing	0.0	0.0
% Shelter or group home	0.0	0.1
% Living on the street	0.0	0.3
% Living with family or friends	0.2	2.2
Number of food banks reporting	25	18

27,044
people helped by
food banks
in March

-0.8%
change
since 2008

38.8%
are children

REFERENCES

- 1 The change in meals is due to increases in meal programs reporting in both 2011 and 2012, as well as an increase in the number of programs reporting in 2012. For programs that reported in both 2011 and 2012, there was an increase of 10.3% in the number of meals served.
- 2 Table 1 contains several corrections of information from the *HungerCount 2011* report: (1) the number of people assisted by food banks in Quebec during the month of March 2011 is higher than the figure published in *HungerCount 2011*; (2) the number of people assisted by food banks in Saskatchewan in March 2011 is higher than the figure published in *HungerCount 2011*; (3) the number of people assisted by food banks in Ontario in March 2011 is higher than the figure published in *HungerCount 2011*; (4) due to the aforementioned changes, the number of people assisted by food banks in Canada in 2011 is higher than previously published.
- 3 For more information, see www.feedingmyfamily.org.
- 4 Statistics Canada (2010). *Spending patterns in Canada, Table 4-1 (Canada) and Table 4-14 (Nunavut): Average expenditure per household, Canada, provinces and territories, recent years*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 5 Based on author's calculations. Not all provinces make details re: welfare caseloads available to the public. The national average is likely significantly less than 10% of all Canadian households.
- 6 Statistics Canada (d/u). *2006 Census: Family portrait: Continuity and change in Canadian families and households in 2006*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 7 Statistics Canada (2009). *2006 Census: Aboriginal peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 8 National polls contracted by Food Banks Canada and performed by HarrisDecima. 2012 poll n=1001 respondents, margin of error = +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. 2011 poll n=1002 respondents, margin of error = +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20.
- 9 In 2010, a change in *HungerCount* survey methodology increased the breadth and depth of information from Quebec food banks and meal programs. Figures re: food shortages for 2009 do not include information from Quebec. Figures re: food shortages for 2012 include information from Quebec, with the exception of information re: food banks that ran out of food. The trends stated in this section hold if information from Quebec is removed from the analysis.
- 10 Health Canada (2012). *Household food insecurity in select provinces and the territories in 2009-10*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 11 See, for example, S. Kirkpatrick & V. Tarasuk (2009). Food insecurity and participation in community food programs among low-income Toronto families. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 100(2), 135-139.
- 12 National Council of Welfare (2010). *Welfare incomes 2009*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 13 See *HungerCount 2011*, page 12 for an illustration of the trade-offs faced by people receiving social assistance benefits.
- 14 Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2012). *Income support cases and recipients, 1992-2012*. Available: www.stats.gov.nl.ca/Statistics/social/PDF/Income_Support.pdf.
- 15 Statistics Canada (2012). *Income in Canada 2010, Table 202-0106*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 16 Author's calculations based on Statistics Canada Table 202-0106.
- 17 S. LaRochelle-Côté & C. Dionne (2009). International differences in low-paid work. *Perspectives on Labour and Income, June 2009*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
- 18 Statistics Canada (2011). *Employment Insurance Coverage Survey, Table 1: Coverage and eligibility of the unemployed for Employment Insurance benefits, 2010*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- 19 Whereas in past reports post-secondary students and seniors were presented as a percentage of adults receiving food from food banks, in 2012 they are presented as a percentage of *all people* receiving food. Figures for post-secondary students and seniors printed in *HungerCount 2012* are therefore not comparable to those in previous reports.

METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of the annual *HungerCount* survey is to provide a national and provincial snapshot of food bank use in Canada. This is accomplished by counting the number of individuals who receive groceries from food banks and their affiliated agencies during the month of March, and by counting the number of meals and snacks prepared and served by a variety of organizations. Information is collected on the number of unique individuals that receive food from food banks, the total number of visits to food banks, and total meals and snacks prepared and served by meal programs. March has been chosen as the study period because it is an unexceptional month, without predictable high or low use patterns. Since March is used consistently, we are able to make relevant comparisons in use patterns over time.

The survey also records information on several characteristics of those assisted by food banks, including age category, gender, student status, citizenship status, and Aboriginal identity at the individual level, and primary source of income, household composition, and housing type at the household level. As well, the survey measures

volunteer and paid staff hours worked at participating organizations, and coping strategies used when participating organizations risk running out of food.

Surveys were sent to all known Canadian food banks and meal programs in February 2012. When necessary, *HungerCount* Provincial Coordinators contacted food banks prior to the submission deadline to ensure a high response rate and to clarify survey questions. Completed surveys were returned to Provincial Coordinators, who checked responses for accuracy and completeness before forwarding paper or electronic copies to Food Banks Canada.

Throughout the summer, Food Banks Canada staff and volunteers worked with *HungerCount* Provincial Coordinators to collect outstanding surveys and resolve any inconsistencies in responses. Survey data were entered into a database, checked for accuracy, and analyzed by Food Banks Canada staff. In cases where surveys were not completed by operating food banks, conservative estimates were produced in consultation with Provincial Coordinators, using 2011 figures as a guide.

TABLE 2: HUNGERCOUNT SURVEY PARTICIPATION, 2012

Province/Territory	No. of Known Food Programs	No. of Participating Food Programs	% of Food Programs Participating	No. of Food Programs w/ Estimated Information	No. of Agencies Included	Total organizations included, <i>HungerCount 2012</i>
British Columbia	93	84	90%	9	369	462
Alberta	107	86	80%	21	350	457
Saskatchewan	32	21	66%	11	211	243
Manitoba	51	51	100%	0	504	555
Ontario	423	390	92%	33	1069	1492
Quebec	939	939	100%	0	0	939
New Brunswick	58	57	98%	1	38	96
Nova Scotia	173	168	97%	5	25	198
Prince Edward Island	6	6	100%	0	5	11
Newfoundland & Labrador	39	33	85%	6	60	99
Territories	6	5	83%	1	0	6
Canada	1,927	1,840	95%	87	2,631	4,558

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Food Banks Canada thanks the hundreds of thousands of people accessing food programs, and the thousands of staff and volunteers who, every year, contribute information to the *HungerCount* report. Without their efforts and participation this research would not be possible.

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