

2023

# VitalSigns<sup>®</sup>

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

EDMONTON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



## A look at **Food Security** in Edmonton

From 2013 to where we are today.



VitalTopics



## This year marks the 10th anniversary of Vital Signs, an annual assessment of community life.

For 2023, Edmonton Community Foundation and Edmonton Social Planning Council look back at the first topic of Vital Signs — Food Security — and where we are today.

### What is Vital Signs?

Edmonton Vital Signs is an annual check-up initiative conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how the community is doing. We focus on individual issues, via the Vital Topics, that are timely and important to Edmonton. These topics are also presented here — the full issue of Vital Signs 2023.

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# Vital Topics

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## Overview

**Food security** is when everyone has physical, social and economic access to safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy lifestyle. *FAO. 2002. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001. Rome.*

**Food sovereignty** is the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It transforms the idea of food as a commodity to food as a public good. *People's Food Policy Project, 2011.*

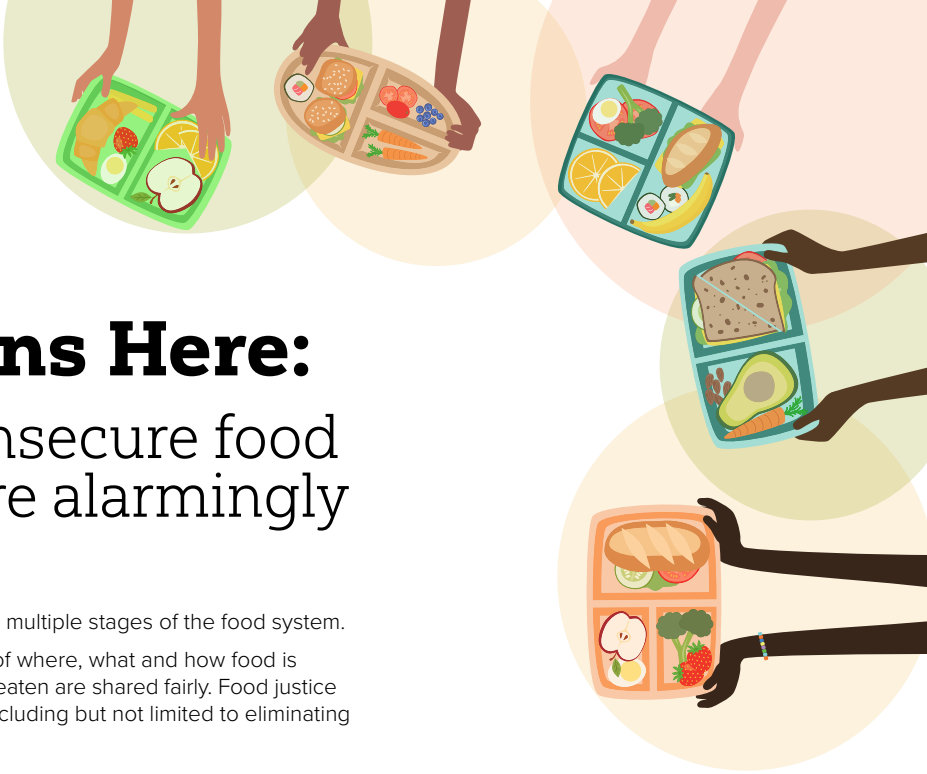
**Dignified food access** means “providing quality food choices, in a respectful way, in welcoming places.” *Roots to Harvest (2021). Dignified food access: A framework for action and handbook for organizations.*

### The seven pillars of food sovereignty:

- Focus on food for people
- Localize food systems
- Build knowledge and skills
- Recognize that food is sacred
- Value food providers
- Control locally
- Work with nature

*People's Food Policy project (2011). Resetting the table: A people's food policy for Canada. Food Secure Canada.*

**A note on language:** This document uses the language and terms as reported in the original sources, and as such, may not reflect the language and terms people identify with and use in their daily lives.



# Hunger Happens Here:

Lack of choice and insecure food and water sources are alarmingly close to home.

**Food justice** is about recognizing how power operates at multiple stages of the food system.

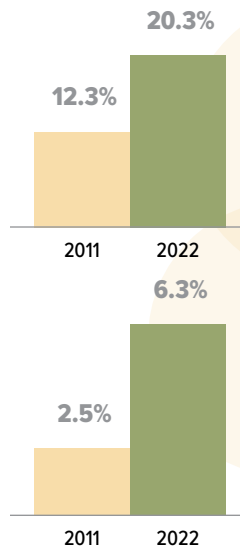
“Food justice seeks to ensure that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed and eaten are shared fairly. Food justice represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.” *Food Secure Canada (n.d.) Food Justice.*

## Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is when a household has inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.

**Moderate** food insecurity describes when a household **must compromise on the quality and/or quantity of its food due to a lack of money.**

**Severe** food insecurity describes when a **household misses meals, reduces food intake and may even go days without food.**



### On the rise

In 2011, **12.3%** of Albertans experienced food insecurity. In 2022, that number jumped to **20.3%**.

### More than 2 times

In 2011, **2.5%** of Albertans were **severely** food insecure. In 2022, that number jumped to **6.3%**.

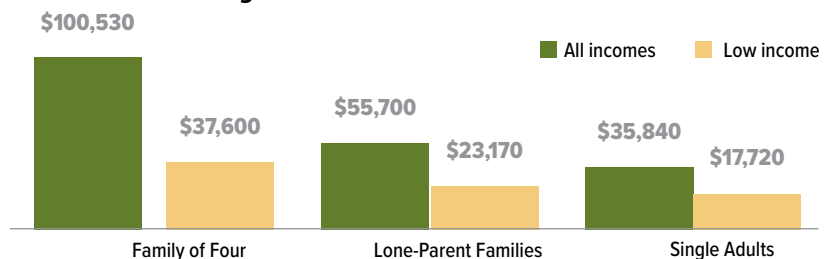
*PROOF (2022) How many Canadians are affected by household food Insecurity?*

## Income is Not Keeping Up with Increasing Food Prices

Working Canadians experience **food insecurity at high rates.**

In 2021, while only **13.7%** of working Canadians experienced food insecurity, they make up **51.9%** of the population of food-insecure households. *PROOF (2022) How many Canadians are affected by household food Insecurity?*

### Average incomes in Edmonton in 2020 were:



*Statistics Canada. (2022). Census families by family type and family composition including before and after-tax median income of the family (Table 11-10-0017-15). Statistics Canada. (2022). After-tax low-income status of census families based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family composition (Table 11-10-0020-01).*



## Some are More Likely to Experience Food Insecurity than Others

**21.7%**

of children (people under the age of 18) lived in food insecure households in Alberta in 2021, compared to

**17.9%**

in 2011.

*PROOF (2022) How many Canadians are affected by household food insecurity?*

**15.9%**

of female lone parents experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2017-18, compared to

**8.5%**

of couples with children.

**11.9%**

of females living alone and

**12.7%**

of males living alone experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2017-18.

*Statistics Canada (2020) Household Food Security by living arrangement.*

**28.9%**

of Black households live with food insecurity compared to

**11.1%**

of white households (2017-18).

*PROOF (2021) When it comes to tackling food insecurity, tackling anti-Black racism is an important part of the puzzle.*

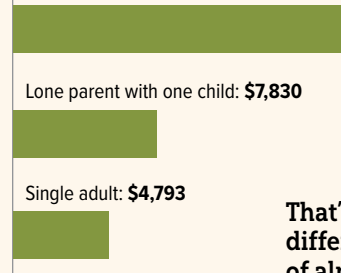
**30.7%**

of Indigenous households in Canada experienced food insecurity.

*Food Banks Canada (2022) Hungercount 2022.*

In 2013, healthy food for a year cost **\$10,920** for a family of four.

In 2022, healthy food for a year cost:  
Family of four: **\$15,306**

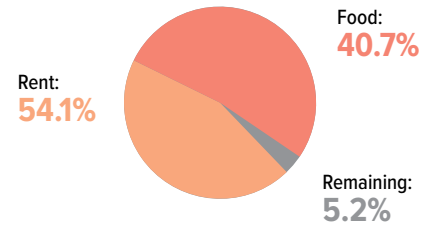


*Sheloff, S. (2022) Living Wage. Edmonton Social Planning Council.*

**That's a difference of almost \$5,000**

## Budget for a family of four living in low income:

Healthy food accounts for almost **41%** of a low-income families' budget and rent accounts for **54%** — leaving very little (a mere **5%**) for all other expenses.



*Budget item as % of income for a low income family of four.*



## Food Isn't the Only Thing Families Need to Worry About

- The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Edmonton in 2022 was **\$1,304**. *Canadian Mortgage and Housing Council (2023). Rental Market Report.*
- Full time child care for a toddler was **\$7,380**, and before and after school care was **\$5,600**. *Sheloff, S. (2022) Living Wage. Edmonton Social Planning Council.*

### Minimum wage is not enough:

- A single person working minimum wage, 35 hours a week, would make approximately \$23,000 after tax annually.
- A healthy food basket would take up **20%** of their income, which is double what financial experts advise. Groceries should only be **10-15%** of a household's budget.

*Quickbooks (n.d.). Alini, E. (2017). How much of your budget should you spend on groceries? Global News.*

## Income Supports are Not Sufficient

A couple with two children can receive **\$1,674 per month** but a single adult only receives **\$790** from the Alberta Government as part of income support programming.

A healthy food basket would eat up **50.6%** of a single adult's income.

*Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2020). Income support, financial benefits summary. Government of Alberta.*



Food insecurity is more common for those who rely on government assistance.

- **63.1%** of social assistance recipients in Canada experienced food insecurity in 2021. **31.1%** of social assistance recipients in Canada experienced severe food insecurity in the same year. They make up **9.4%** of the food-insecure population. *PROOF (2022) How many Canadians are affected by household food Insecurity?*
- There are serious gaps in the social safety net. In 2023, Alberta enacted the Affordability Action Plan to help Albertans who were struggling with rising costs of inflation. The plan gave **\$600** to parents, seniors and people on income assistance to help with daily living costs.
- These payments were not available for working single adults, despite the fact that they face high rates of poverty and food insecurity. *Government of Alberta (2023). Affordability Action Plan.*



## Food Costs Continue to Rise

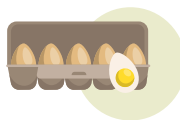
Over the course of 2022, food costs rose by **10.8% in Alberta** and **10.3% in Canada** overall.

**In 2023, costs are expected to rise an additional 5% to 7%.**

*Dalhousie (2023) Canada's Food Price Report.*

As of February 2023, the costs were:

**\$4.81** A dozen eggs      **\$2.87** A litre of milk      **\$5.68** A kilo of apples



## Food Bank Use

The number of individuals who are served each month at Edmonton's Food Bank has increased drastically in the last decade.

2013: 12,677

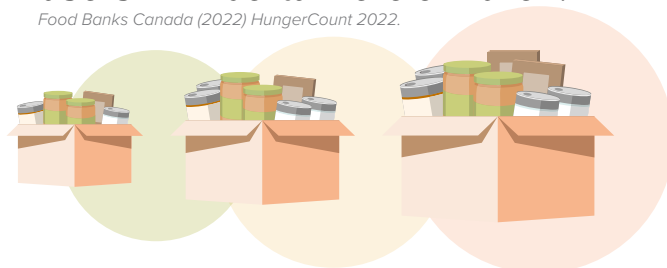
2022: 30,770 — RECORD HIGH

The Food Bank distributed over **5.9 million kilograms of food** in 2022, compared to **3.2 million kilograms of food** in 2012.

*Edmonton Food Bank (2023). Edmonton's food bank update.*

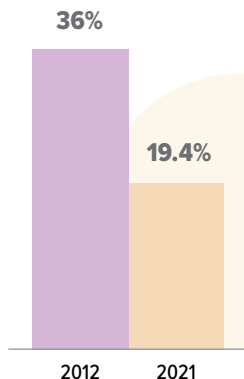
In 2022, **37.1%** of food bank users in Alberta were children.

*Food Banks Canada (2022) HungerCount 2022.*



## Fruit and Veggie Consumption is Declining

Edmontonians  
Albertans



**36% of Edmontonians** in 2012 consumed the recommended **five servings of fruit and veggies per day.**

*Vital Signs 2013 Report.*

**19.4% of Albertans** in 2021 reported eating **five servings of fruit and veggies per day.**

*Statistics Canada (2022). Health characteristics, annual estimates (Table 13-10-0096-01) [data set].*

## Food Insecurity Impacts Families' Health

- Adults and youth experiencing food insecurity face a greater prevalence of the inadequate intake of essential vitamins, such as vitamin A, folate, calcium, magnesium and zinc.
- Individuals experiencing food insecurity report higher levels of: poor or fair self-rated health, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and food allergies.
- Individuals experiencing food insecurity also have a harder time managing chronic diseases. For example, those with diabetes have a harder time managing blood sugar and keeping up with a diabetic diet.

*Provincial Health Services Authority (2016). Priority health equity indicators for British Columbia: Household food insecurity indicator report.*



# Growing Locally

## Farmers' Markets

In the Vital Signs 2013 report, we found there were **12 farmers' markets** within the City of Edmonton and **13 farmers' markets** in the surrounding communities, part of Edmonton's Metro area.

In 2023, there are **31 unique farmers' market** locations in Edmonton and the surrounding area (which include four public markets in Edmonton).

*City of Edmonton [n.d.]. Edmonton Farmers' Markets.*  
*Alberta Farmers' Market Association [n.d.]. Edmonton & Surrounding Area.*  
*Alberta Agriculture [n.d.]. 2023 Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets.*



## Impacts of Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets are a hub for resources. They grow the local economy, foster community bonding, can increase fruit and vegetable consumption, provide fresh produce in food deserts and some become tourist destinations.

Farmers' markets are an important way for marginalized business owners to sell their goods and level the playing field with major corporate entities which dominate the food industry.

*Lee, R. (2021). Rooting Our Communities in Farmers' Markets. Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness.*

A project out of Montreal gave participants prepaid debit cards to use at community markets and found participants noted a **17% reduction in severe food insecurity**.

Fruit and vegetable consumptions **increased from 82% to 92%**. Other benefits include increased community connections between people in need and the organizations that support them.

*Yu, A. (2022). The Idea: How food stamp programs at local markets can improve access to fresh produce.*

## Community Gardens, Urban Farms and Equity

In the Vital Signs 2013 report, we found that there were over **80 community gardens** within metro Edmonton.

In 2023, there are at least **73 community gardens** on public land.

*City of Edmonton [n.d.]. Community Gardens.*

Another **83 "pop-up" or temporary gardens** were developed between 2020 and 2023 as part of a city project. In 2023, another **30 pop-up gardens** will be allocated.

*City of Edmonton [n.d.]. Pop-up Community Gardens.*

**Urban farming** refers to the practice of growing food in a city or other heavily populated areas, where the food is grown to sell.

*Adam Sayner (n.d.). Urban farming ultimate guide and examples. GroCycle.*

Several organizations in Edmonton offer opportunities for marginalized groups to get involved in community gardens and farms.

- **Wáposo-Wáti Park and Community Garden** is a partnership between Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA), City of Edmonton and Alberta Retina Consultants. They work with Correctional Services Canada to give healing lodge clients a chance to help in the garden.

It is an opportunity for people to give back to the community, learn about food sovereignty, beautify the city and get in touch with the earth.

*Lamb, A. (2022). Edmonton's Waposo-Wati Park and Community Garden is a hopping urban green space.*

- **Lady Flower Gardens**, profiled in the Vital Signs 2013 report, gives vulnerable Edmontonians a chance to get involved in gardening and donates half its produce to Edmonton's Food Bank. Clients from Mustard Seed, Boyle Street, Recovery Acres and Alberta Health Services, routinely work in the garden – planting, weeding and harvesting.

*Lamb, A. and R. Bremness (2022). A decade of growth and transformation at Edmonton's Lady Flower Gardens.*

- Community gardens are not a long-term solution to food insecurity; however, they do increase food literacy, act as sites of community connectivity and cohesion, benefit physical and mental health and increase neighbourhood property values.

*Music, J and L. Mullins, S. Charlebois, C. Large, and K. Mayhew. (2022) Seeds and the city: a review of municipal home food gardening programs in Canada in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 9, 273 (2022).*



# Farms Surrounding Edmonton

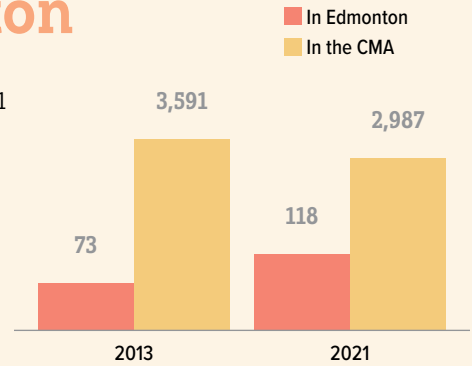
The Vital Signs 2013 report listed 73 farms within the city of Edmonton and 3,591 farms in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan area (CMA).

In 2021, there were 118 farms in Edmonton's city limits and 2,987 farms in the Edmonton CMA.

*(Edmonton City): Government of Alberta (2023). Edmonton – Number of Farms.  
(Edmonton CMA): Government of Alberta (2023). Edmonton CMA - Number of Farms.*

**Of the 118 farms** in Edmonton, a large proportion are oilseed and grain farming (48), with some greenhouse and nursery farming (13) and beef cattle ranching (21).

*Statistics Canada (2023). Census of Agriculture: Community Profiles.*



## The total area of farmland in Alberta dropped from 20.3 million hectares in 2016 to about 19.9 million hectares in 2021.

*Frew, N. (2022). Fewer farmers in Alberta in 2021, but number of women increasing: StatsCan.*

The number of farms that are 1,120 acres or larger have increased between 2016 and 2012, however, the number of smaller-sized farms seems to be decreasing.

*(Edmonton City): Government of Alberta (2023). Edmonton – Number of Farms.  
(Edmonton CMA): Government of Alberta (2023). Edmonton CMA - Number of Farms.*

Changes in farmland is partly due to annexation – the process by which one municipality takes over the land of another. In 2019, for example, Edmonton annexed approximately 20,000 acres of land from Leduc County.

*Thompson, J. (2020). 'I wish the county took the land back': Tax trouble for annexed Edmontonians. CTV News Edmonton.*



## Demographics in Farming

Census numbers show there were

**57,200 farmers**  
in Alberta in 2021,  
**19,000 fewer**  
than in 2001.

The number of female farmers has grown in the past 20 years. In 2001, females were **28%** of all Alberta farmers.

Now, about **32%** of farmers are women.

*Frew, N. (2022). Fewer farmers in Alberta in 2021, but number of women increasing: StatsCan.*

# Food Sustainability

## Waste Services

The Waste Reduction Roadmap, approved in May 2021, aims to reduce the quantity of waste generated per person in Edmonton by **20%** over 25 years.

- Residential waste collection was transitioned from two-stream (garbage and recycling) to three-stream collection (food scraps).
- The intention of this initiative is to divert **90%** of residential waste from landfill. *City of Edmonton. Waste Services: 2021/2022 Annual service plan.*
- After food scraps carts were rolled out in 2021, landfills received about **30%** less trash that year.
- The City is now phasing in food scraps carts in apartments and condominiums. This will take place between Fall 2023 and 2027.

*Lachacz, A. (2023). Edmonton apartments and condos to have separate food scraps collection. CTV News Edmonton.*

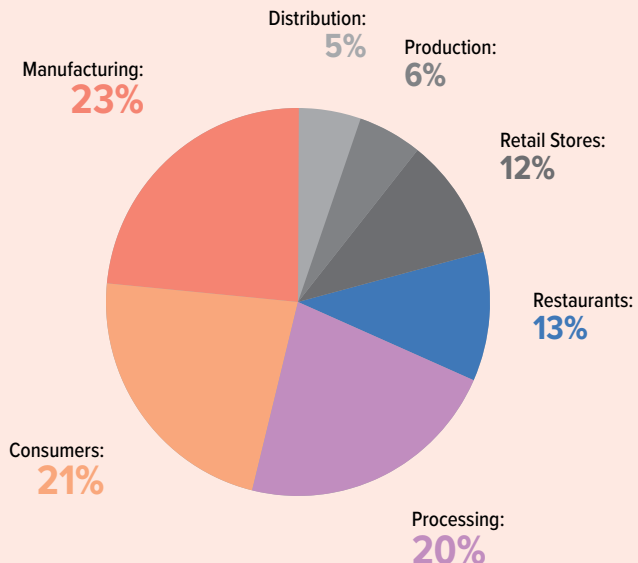
## Food Waste

In Canada, an astonishing **58%** of food produced is lost each year — **35.5 million tonnes of food**. **32% of this is avoidable food waste** — food that could have been eaten before it was thrown away.

The average Canadian household spends **\$1,766 on food that is wasted each year.**

*Waste Reduction Week Canada (2019). Food waste in Canada: The facts.*

## Responsibility of Food Waste



*Zero Waste (n.d.) Food waste: the issue.*

## What About the Water?

In the 2013 Vital Signs report, we reported Edmontonians used **144 litres/capita/day** in 2009.

In 2019, the residential average per capita water use in Edmonton was **176 litres/capita/day**.

Newer neighbourhoods tend to have less water use due to more modern, water-efficient fixtures and smaller lot sizes.

*EPCOR (2022). Edmonton's changing water use.*

## Our Water is at Risk

Run-off from glaciers provides a lot of the water that Albertans rely on. The North Saskatchewan River, for example, is fed by glacier run-off. Climate change is melting these glaciers and putting our water sources at risk.

The loss of glacial water sources will cause shortages for Rocky Mountain House, Lake Louise, Hinton and the Bighorn Dam. This will affect more than **1 million people out of 4.4 million living in Alberta** — that's almost a **quarter of Alberta's population**.

The Rocky Mountains could lose **90%** of glacier volume by the year 2100.

*Rieger, S. (2020). Melting glaciers will bring instability to more than 1 million Albertans' water supply. CBC News Calgary.*

## Not Everyone has Access to Water

The water supplied to many First Nations reserves is contaminated, hard to access or at risk due to faulty treatment systems.

Contaminated water directly risks Indigenous peoples' ways of life — Indigenous women are seen as the keepers and protectors of water. Contaminated water makes it hard for Indigenous peoples to engage in ceremonies, customary fishing and hunting practices and teaching children and sharing traditional knowledge.

*Human Rights Watch (2016). Make it safe: Canada's obligation to end the First Nations water crisis.*

- Kehewin Cree Nation, had a Boil Water Advisory (BWA) in place from April 2012 until September 2020 — for **8 years, all 1,000 residents did not have access to clean drinking water.**
- Kapawe'no First Nation had a BWA from September 2010 until April 2018.

No long-term advisories are currently in effect in Alberta. However, there are several short-term boil water advisories in place.

*Government of Canada (2022). Map of long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserves. Government of Canada (2022). Short-term drinking water advisories.*

# Food Security in Our Time

## Farming

At its core, farming is how we all get food. When money is prioritized over feeding communities, inequities in food access grow.

### Big business in the farming sector

Farmland is increasingly being purchased by investors — which shifts ownership and access to land and its resources from local communities to financial capital and corporate interests, and pushes up farmland market values.

Many farmers' ability to retire rests on them selling their land — which continues to increase the cost of farm land and makes it even harder for future generations to afford land. *Aske, K. (2022). Finance in the Fields: Investors, Lenders, Farmers, and the Future of Farmland in Alberta. Parkland institute.*

Canadian farm debt has doubled since 2000, now standing at \$129 billion.

Did you know **90%** of Canada's canola and **75%** of its wheat is exported?

*Aske, K. (2022). Finance in the Fields: Investors, Lenders, Farmers, and the Future of Farmland in Alberta. Parkland institute.*

Increasingly, farmers are working on farmland that they **rent rather than own**.

- This forces farmers to think in the **short term** as their position is precarious — and restricts the ability to engage in long-term projects that are essential to making farming sustainable.
- Family farmers must buy fertilizers, chemicals, machinery, fuel and technology, and pay rent and interest to large corporations, which eats at their profits.

**Agribusiness corporations have captured 95% of all farm revenues, leaving just 5% for the farmers.**

Roughly **40% of Canadian farmers are expected to retire** within the next 10 years, and **66% of farmers do not have a succession plan.**

*RBC (2023). Farmers wanted: The labour renewal Canada needs to build the Next Green Revolution.*



### Farmland – and power – is concentrated in the hands of a few

- Farms **over 5,000 acres** only account for **6%** of the total farms in Alberta, but control **40%** of the province's over **50 million acres** of farmland. *Aske, K. (2022). Finance in the Fields: Investors, Lenders, Farmers, and the Future of Farmland in Alberta. Parkland institute.*
- **Alberta** has the **highest farm operating revenues of all provinces** in Canada at **\$22.2 billion**. This accounts for a **quarter (25.5%)** of all farm revenue in Canada.
- However, revenue is not spread evenly. Farms with at least **\$2 million** in revenue make up **4%** of the total number of farms in Alberta, but account for **61.7%** of total farm revenues in Alberta. *St. Pierre, M., & McComb, M. (2022). Alberta has the highest farm operating revenues in Canada. Statistics Canada.*



## Ranchers also struggle

- The average return for a **200-cow herd** is just under **\$18,000**.
- Rising costs of feed supplies and fuel are forcing ranchers to downsize herds.

## Community gardens and newcomers

Many newcomers come from farming backgrounds, and community gardens allow them to get back to their roots and rekindle a missing part of their lives.

**Community gardens** foster connections between newcomers and Indigenous peoples — they can learn who was living here and how they lived on the land, developing respect for Indigenous cultures.

*Ghonaïm, H. (2020). 'Land of Dreams': a space for newcomers to grow crops and respect Indigenous roots. CBC News Calgary.*

## Youth and farming

Young people face many barriers getting started in farming — high costs of equipment and land, lack of training and support, isolation and a lack of mental health supports in rural areas. But young farmers have the potential to innovate farming because they can:

- Bring fresh perspectives.
- Share environmental and social justice values.
- Explore more niche agricultural products.
- Work collectively, building community.

*Young Agrarians (n.d.) How to support new farmers in Alberta.*



## Role of immigrants in Alberta's farming economy

Immigrants can bring innovation to Alberta's farming practices.

Jianyi Dong introduced passive solar greenhouses to his farm in Alberta, a practice commonly used in northern China, which has allowed him to extend his growing season.

Through site visits and YouTube videos, he hopes to teach others how to use these practices.

*Government of Canada (2022). Introducing new farming techniques to Western Canada [video].*

In 2021, **777,000** labourers arrived in Canada, **39%** of whom were employed in the **agricultural, manufacturing, construction and food processing** sectors.



Migrant workers have a limited understanding of their rights in Canada — many had either not received any information about their rights, or the information provided was only in English.

**Many migrant workers experience exploitation on Canadian farms:**

- They are frustrated by policies that make it difficult to get permanent residency. Many are not aware of the different pathways that are available to them, and the ones who are aware are disappointed in how few opportunities they had.
- Workers believe that their wages are low in comparison to their skill level and the demands of the job.
- Inadequate safety training.
- Many workers experience discrimination from their bosses, especially if they have limited English proficiency.
- Many workers are discriminated against, but don't speak up because of a lack of knowledge or awareness about their rights, fears of deportation, lack of awareness of available community supports and economic desperation.

*Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking & RCJ Refugee Center (2023). It happens here: Labour exploitation among migrant workers during the pandemic.*

# Food Entrepreneurship

**“Farm to table” describes a movement where restaurants and cafés source their ingredients from nearby growers.**

Restaurant owners work closely with local farmers to source fresh and seasonal produce, and in turn, farmers are able to support local businesses.

However, farm to table is often seen as a luxury, and meals can be expensive.

*Farm Folk City Folk (2021). Benefits of Supporting Farm-to-Table.*



## Immigrant food businesses

- Missing foods from home has inspired many immigrants to create their own businesses — such as grocery stores and restaurants — to bring those tastes to Edmonton
- These businesses also facilitate the sharing of foods between cultures. *Matt S. (March 2007). Hunger for Home: Homesickness in a Global Consumer Society.*

## Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a way for consumers to connect with and support local farmers and local economies, creating a stronger relationship with food producers.

Similar to a subscription box, CSAs involve consumers buying a share of products grown at a local farm, which are then delivered on a regular basis. Consumers can get fresh seasonal vegetables, eggs and meat.

For smaller farms, CSAs give farmers guaranteed customers and a more predictable income, which allows them to target what they grow to meet community needs and reduce food waste of unsold produce.

*Alberta Open Farm Days (n.d.). Purchasing from a CSA in Alberta. Riverbend CSA (n.d.). What is a CSA?*

# Food Programming in Edmonton

## Food programming in schools

Students with a universal breakfast program experienced fewer discipline problems, improved behaviour, better attendance and learning and improved psychosocial well-being. *Maimann, K. (2019). United Conservative government confirms funding for Alberta school nutrition program.*

### The limitations to school nutrition programs are:

- School food programs provide meals to children during school hours and cannot be accessed during evenings, weekends or school breaks.
- The pandemic has brought to light how vulnerable these programs are. School closures meant that many students lost access to these programs. Interim programs were put in place to feed local children (such as Heroes Against Hunger, an initiative started by Sobeys Belmont and supported by C5, and programs created by school boards). *Huncar, A. (2020). Edmontonians launch efforts to help students cut off from school food programs during pandemic.*
- Breakfast Clubs of Canada has a waitlist of **150 schools** in Alberta. *Johnson, L. (2022). Soaring costs could jeopardize school nutrition programs: Breakfast Club of Canada.*
- While it is important to fulfil students' immediate hunger needs and support their health, this type of food programming would not solve food insecurity. **We need to address root causes – families not having enough money to afford food.** *PROOF University of Toronto (2022). Open Letter: Stop headlining the pan-Canadian school food policy as a way to reduce food insecurity among children.*

**School nutrition programs provided more than 96,000 students with meals between 2017 and 2020.**





## Other food programming in Edmonton

There are a wide variety of food program models available to Edmontonians. These may share shelf-stable goods, fresh produce, fresh breads and/or meat and proteins.

It is important that food programs operate from a place of dignified food access, which means “providing quality food choices, in a respectful way, in welcoming places.” There is no shame in asking for food. *Roots to Harvest (2021). Dignified food access: A framework for action and handbook for organizations. Roots to Harvest: Thunder Bay, Ontario.*

### Food hamper programs:

- Collect food from donations or bulk buying and then distribute it to clients through pre-packaged hampers of food.
- **Examples:** Edmonton’s Food Bank, CANAVUA Food Hamper Program, Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative Grocery Run and Campus Food Banks.

### Market model:

- Collect donated food and hygiene essentials, and allow clients to shop these items for free or at subsidized costs.
- **Examples:** C5 Community Market, Food4Good Market.

### Hot meal programs:

- Deliver hot meals directly to where people are – organizations may ‘patrol’ neighbourhoods or locations with known needs, and hand out meals, set up food trucks or deliver meals directly to clients’ homes.
- **Examples:** Nekem, Bearclan, CANAVUA Community Food Truck, WeCAN Food Basket.



### Low cost food boxes and markets:

- These programs allow individuals and families to purchase boxes of fresh food in a market for 30-50% below retail value.
- **Examples:** Food4Good boxes, Riverbend Good Box Food Program, WeCAN Food Basket.

### Faith-based programming:

- Many faith centres in Edmonton provide groceries, hot meals and free bread.

**Note:** This is not a list of all services available. Edmonton’s food programs are rapidly changing, and as such, some programs listed here may no longer be active at the time of report publication and new programs may have been created.

# Indigenous People and Food Sovereignty

Due to colonization, Indigenous people have been disconnected from the traditional foods of their ancestors. The shift from a traditional diet to government-supplied commodities and processed foods has led to the increase in chronic diseases like diabetes.

**A return to traditional food knowledge is key to restoring physical health and ensuring the survival of a cultural lifeway.**

The food sovereignty movement shifts people away from corporate food systems toward locally grown, locally distributed and culturally appropriate foods. It emphasizes the nourishment provided by traditional foods hunted and gathered locally, honoured and shared in traditional ways.

*Walker, R.A. (2023). How Indigenous nations are rebuilding food systems.*

**Food sovereignty for Indigenous People places relationships and responsibility at the heart of the movement.** It is about the responsibility to plant and animal relatives, respect for mother earth and a relationship with self and community. It is also a reconnection to land-based food and political systems and specifically includes fishing, hunting and gathering.

*Milgroom, J. and S. Senogles (2022). Harvesting is an act of indigenous food sovereignty.*



**Growing some of what you eat is one way to create meaningful connections with the earth and ourselves.**

There has been an over-reliance on processed foods with limited nutritional value. With that, there is a loss of connection with food and the land as “convenience” foods became more commonplace. *Brooks, C. and H. Moore (2020). An Indigenous perspective: “Food is medicine, medicine is food.”*

# Food and Ethnocultural Communities

**One in five households of recent immigrants to Canada experience food insecurity.**

*Community University Partnership (2017) CUP impacts 2017.*



**Food isn't the only thing families need to buy.**

A survey of newcomers accessing services in Edmonton found that **62% pay 50% or more of their income on their rent or mortgage.** This leaves very little money for food.

**Food insecurity is a challenge in ethnocultural communities.**

**60%** of survey participants experienced severe food insecurity, saying they often (**24%** of total respondents) or sometimes (**36%** of respondents) cut the size of their meals or skipped meals because there is not enough money for food. *Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (2021). The housing stories of newcomers in Edmonton: A snapshot of the lived experience 2020.*



**Food insecurity impacts newcomer's ability to engage in culture.**

- Many immigrants are unfamiliar with the canned goods typically given by food banks, and do not know how to prepare or eat them.
- Groups such as the Umoja Centre and Multicultural Health Brokers have programs to provide newcomers with culturally relevant goods – but don't always have the resources to meet the need. *Dubey, R. (2023). Lentils, halal meat: Alberta food banks address demand for cultural groceries. CTV News Edmonton.*
- A study interviewing Somali women in Edmonton found these women often had sufficient quantity of food, but not quality. They were forced to rely on grains and didn't have sufficient fruits or veggies.
- They did not have enough money to afford foods that represented their cultural identity. *Quintanilha, M., Mayan, M. J., Jarman, M., & Bell, R. C. (2018). Prevalence and experiences of food insecurity among immigrant women connected to perinatal programs at a community-based organization in Edmonton, Canada. International Journal of Migration, Health, and Social Care 15(2). P 121-132. DOI: 10.1108/IJMHS-09-2018-0064*
- A lack of income means people cannot buy the food they want — that they like and enjoy eating. This has impacts on people's sense of happiness, self-worth, and respect.
- For many immigrant families, food is often a part of celebrations, and brings communities together as they prepare, share and enjoy it together. It can be isolating when people do not have food to share.

- Food is seen as a way of sharing cultural values, traditions, memories and helps children to develop cultural self-esteem. It is a way of preserving culture and heritage in a new country and sharing intergenerational wisdom.
- Growing, cooking, eating and sharing cultural foods can support well-being in the face of stress and isolation. *The Persimmon Project (2021). Newcomers engaged in food dignity: Edmonton 2020-21.*

## Community Member Testimonies

**"In Canada, we are not hungry, but we do not eat with dignity. I mean we do not have the ability to buy the food we want. Our income defines what we eat."**

**"I worry also the individualistic culture of our children. Food brings together families to share happiness and grievances. I would like that we teach our children the culture and spiritual values of food."**

**"Food is considered to be from God. Food has spirit — has value — has dignity. Is a blessing.... Food is material — also spiritual. Food dignity is connected to God. Food carries spirit of others — those who grew the food."**

**"[To my cultural community food] means connection. Being able to grow food brings the community together, because it's not an individual practice, you're providing for the nation, and you're providing for your members. Being able to provide food for my nation helps me reconnect because I feel like I'm giving back."**

# The Impact of the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many organizations to quickly adapt their services to meet the needs of their communities by expanding operations and changing how they do things. Collaboration between organizations allowed them to fill service gaps and approach problems in unique ways. Funders stepped up to ensure these groups had the money they need. New organizations and mutual aid groups were also created to reach more people. These are just a few examples of food support during COVID:

- Groups such as Islamic Family and Social Services Association (IFSSA), Free Footie and YEG Community Response to COVID-19 stepped up to address the food gap by delivering hampers to people's doors. *Huncar, Andrea. CBC News (2020). Refugees, new Canadians struggling to feed children during pandemic, advocates say.*
- Canadian Volunteers United in Action (CANAVUA) began providing meals to Edmontonians in fall 2020 with the use of a food truck in an effort to improve food security. Twice per week, volunteers provide meals to walk-ups and make deliveries, reaching **300 to 350 people per day**, primarily serving Afro-Canadian, Indigenous and newcomer communities in Edmonton. The food comes from donations and the menu changes weekly. *Jeffrey, A. (2020). 'The spirit of Canada': Non-profit food truck serving free meals to hundreds in Edmonton.*
- Fresh Routes ran a mobile grocery store in Calgary and Edmonton, providing affordable fresh food to communities who face barriers (physical or financial) to accessing these products. They filled in the gap when Boyle Street Education Centre closed and students couldn't get a reliable meal by delivering food straight to student's homes. Fresh Routes also adapted their service to deliver fresh food to people who couldn't access food as they normally would

have, such as immunocompromised or people who didn't feel safe using public transit during COVID. The partnership also allowed students to volunteer at the store, learn about healthy foods and how to prepare them, and learn about budgeting and resource management. The Fresh Routes mobile grocery store in Edmonton has since closed.

*CBC News (2020). Partnership between Edmonton high school and non-profit tackles food security during pandemic.*

- Edmonton Community Coordination of Food Resources Committee (ECCFRC) was created in the wake of COVID. It provides direction and leadership to ensure low-income and vulnerable Edmontonians can access food when and where they need it through coordinated community efforts. The committee works to find efficiencies to best deliver services, share information and resources to facilitate providing services, maximize donations, grant funding and agency resources, and explores and addresses issues underlying food insecurity.

**For a lot of these emergency measures, funding was not sustained in the long term. Food insecurity continues to be a persistent challenge in Edmonton – and organizations do not have the capacity to help everyone who needs support.**



## How the food system affects us locally

The food system is huge and complicated, but it deeply affects our access to food. Canada is over reliant on transporting goods across long distances.

- More than half of Canada's food imports come from the United States. We tend to import more during the winter.
- **Extreme weather, labour shortages and the pandemic have all disrupted supply chains, making it hard for food to get here.**
- Locally, the closure of processing plants — such as Alberta's beef processing plants — have contributed to disrupted supply chains. *Hui, A., Robertston, S.K., and E. Atkins (2022). How Canada's fragile food supply chain is being disrupted. Von Massow, M. and A. Weersink (2020). Why we aren't running out of food during the coronavirus pandemic.*

- Supply chain disruptions often lead to fewer options in grocery stores. *Hui, A., Robertston, S.K., and E. Atkins (2022). How Canada's fragile food supply chain is being disrupted.*
- Canada's largest grocery stores (including Lowlaws, Sobeys) control **70%** of the market.
- Suppliers say Canadian supermarkets have fewer products and higher prices compared to stores in the United States because consolidation allows our grocery chains to charge sky-high listing fees and fines, which push out small producers. *Alsharif, G. (2023). 'Supply chain bullying': Inside the food fight between Canada's grocery giants and their suppliers.*
- All this means higher prices and fewer choices for all Edmontonians at the grocery store.

**Climate change has created the conditions for extreme weather events which threaten our food systems.**

- Summer is wildfire season in Alberta, which has forced farmers to abandon their farms at a moments notice, putting their farms and livelihoods — and our food — at risk.
- Farmers face difficulty evacuating their livestock during emergency evacuations. *Global News (2023). 'We lost our entire farm': Alberta wildfire victims brace for more extreme weather [video].*

# Food Security: 10 Years Later

## The Future of Food in Edmonton

### Food Security is Rooted in Income Security

CERB (Canada Emergency Response Benefit) provided a lesson for how we can transform our income security net. **People need a stable and sufficient income to meet their basic needs.**

CERB had a positive impact on recipients' financial situation, but it also helped in other ways. **67%** said it helped them deal with the stress of the pandemic.

CERB played a key role in easing the transition back to the labour force, allowing recipients to think about the career they wanted and look for the right job rather than just the first that came along, allowing Canadians to get better jobs.

The financial assistance CERB offered allowed recipients to pay for their basic needs and avoid taking on excessive debt at a time of great financial uncertainty. **85% of respondents reported they used CERB to buy groceries and household goods.**

*Scott, K. and T. Hennessy (2023). CERB: More than just an income program.*

Studies on basic income have similar findings: Research on a basic income pilot in Ontario revealed positive impacts on physical health, mental health and well-being for the recipients. *Ferdosi, M., T. McDowell, W. Lewchuk, and S. Ross (2022). On how Ontario trialed basic income.*

#### Basic income can happen here:

MPs Leah Gazan and Kim Pate created Bill C-223: An act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income. Basic income would work alongside already existing social and health supports. *Gazan, L. and K. Pate (2022). From despair to hope: It's time for a guaranteed livable basic income.*

**The best system is where everyone can buy their own food on their own terms.**

With basic income:

**46%**  
reported better living accommodations

**69%**  
went without food less often

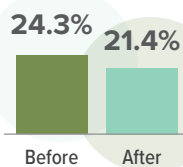
**86%**  
ate better

**85%**  
could afford more essential household items

### Benefits Reduce Food Insecurity

#### Child Benefits

Among families with children under the age of six, the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit reduced their probability of experiencing food insecurity.



Among low-income families, the rate of severe food insecurity dropped by **1/3**, following the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit.

*Oldfield, J. (2019). Canada Child Benefit has led to Major Reduction in Severe Food Insecurity, Study Suggests.*

For lone parent families, there was a **6 percentage point** lower probability of food insecurity.

*PROOF (2023). A more generous Canada Child Benefit for low-income families would reduce their probability of food insecurity.*

#### Seniors Benefits

Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement are key drivers in substantially decreasing food insecurity among the poorest seniors in Canada.

When low-income adults turn 65 and become eligible for this funding, their rate of food insecurity drops **15 percentage points**. *PROOF (2016). Food Insecurity in Poor Canadian Seniors is Greatly Reduced When Guaranteed Annual Income Kicks In.*

However, these benefit programs are still not enough. **Recipients still face challenges keeping up with the cost of living, worrying about rent increases and rising costs of food.** *Aaby, M. (2022). With day-to-day costs rising, these retirees are facing tough choices.*

#### Single Adults are Left Behind by Current Income Measures

More than **1 in 5 single adults (22%)** live below the poverty line. These single adults make up to **38%** of all food-insecure households in the country.

Many single adults rely on low-wage, part-time, temporary employment opportunities that lack benefits and stability. There are very few social support programs available to single adults *Amanat, H. (2023). 1 in 5 single adults in Canada live in poverty, many of whom are food insecure: report.*

## Current Measures Don't Cut It

In 2023, the Federal Government introduced a "grocery rebate" to help Canadians with rising food costs.

- Eligible families received \$153 per adult; \$81 per child.
- Single persons received \$81.
- While helpful, these rebates were not enough to contend with the rising cost of living.

*Ballintic, V. (2023). Why the government's grocery rebate may not do enough to help struggling Canadians.*

Research has shown that when individuals and families receive cash transfers, they use that money to improve the health and wellbeing of themselves and their families.

### Families use money from income transfers to buy food.

*Aizenman, N. (2019). Researchers Find a Remarkable Ripple Effect When You Give Cash to Poor Families. Orkin, K. (2020). The evidence behind putting money directly in the pockets of the poor.*

# Farming to Feed People

## Profiting Off Crisis

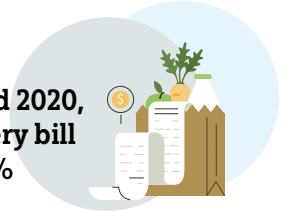
When food systems become concentrated in the hands of corporations, these systems focus on efficiency and profit maximization, rather than feeding people.

A few large conglomerate corporations have most of the power in the food supply chain:

- Cargill and JBS Foods slaughter **95%** of Canadian cattle.
- Weston Bakeries and Canada Bread account for **80%** of the bread market.
- Loblaws, Sobeys, Metro, Walmart and Costco all hold roughly **80%** of grocery market sales.

*Stephens, P. (2022). Food giants reap enormous profits during times of crisis. Phys. Org.*

**Between 2000 and 2020, the average grocery bill has increased 70%**



**Companies making record breaking profits are being accused of "greedflation" and profiting off a food affordability crisis.**

"Food and agribusiness billionaires reportedly raised their collective wealth by 42 percent in the past two years, all while global food prices soared by 33.6 percent in 2021."

## Alternative Farming Practices are Rising

### Urban Farming

The pandemic shed new light on the cracks in the food system and supply chain issues. This increased desire for local and sustainable food.

#### Examples include:

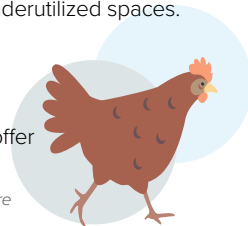
- Using underutilized spaces (rooftops, empty lots and abandoned spaces) to grow food.
- Rooftop and greenhouse gardening in urban settings.
- Vertical gardening.

*Stall-Paquet, C. (2021). Fresh from the city: The rise of urban farming. Canadian Geographic.*

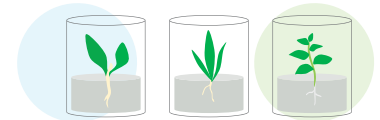
Fresh: the City of Edmonton's Food and Urban Agricultural Strategy, is a local response to the increased demand for urban agriculture:

- Bees, chickens, public edible fruit tree database
- Zoning bylaws to ease process of gardening on unused plots
- Guidelines and a streamlined permitting process for boulevard gardening to encourage citizens to garden in underutilized spaces.
- Urban farms
- Funding and support for community gardens
- Partnering with Sustainable Food Edmonton to offer growing and education programming.

*City of Edmonton. Fresh: Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy.*



### Innovation



Technological and innovative solutions are on the horizon, such as lab grown meat (cellular farming), vertical gardening, bio packaging and robots to assist with farm labour. *Fontecha, M. (2023, March 16). Sustainable Food Systems for Canada: Supply Chains and innovation. Arrell Food Institute*

## Indigenous Ways Forward

An Indigenous Food Lab is opening in the United States to create a skill building place where people can come, eat, work and learn. **The lab will pass on knowledge and work towards food sovereignty.**

Communities can move towards providing for itself, working with nature, and having autonomy over the local food systems.

Self-determination and autonomy over food is incredibly important for Indigenous people to continue to carry on their traditions and preserve cultural identity. Food is medicine *Tennant, Z. (2020). Chef calls Indigenous Food Lab 'a necessity for our future'. CBC.*

**Indigenous people living in urban centres are often displaced from their home territories and are seeking opportunities to reconnect with culture and identity through land and food.**

Employing self-determined processes to grow, harvest and share food among the Indigenous community provide pathways towards Indigenous Food Sovereignty.

*Miltenburg, E., H.T. Neufeld, and K. Anderson (2023). Relationality, Responsibility and Reciprocity: Cultivating Indigenous Food Sovereignty within Urban Environments (2022). Nutrients.*



Ultimately, systemic change is necessary to re-imagine the food system.

No one "solution", innovative technology, or approach will ensure an inclusive, sustainable food system, but a range of policy changes, approaches, solutions, and grassroots efforts can shift the system in a positive direction.

## Inspiration for Community-based Initiatives

### Pay What You Can:

PWYW (Pay what you want/can) restaurants offer the dignity of being included; food is connective, social and cultural.

It can be a challenge to find the balance of paying and non-paying customers: it is important to create a dignifying safe place that is welcome to both types of customers.

*Judkis, M. (2017). 'There's a dignity to this place': Inside the world of pay-what-you-can restaurants. Washington Post.*



### Eating Insects:

Approximately **2 billion people already eat insects** as part of their regular food diet. Both sustainable and nutritious, insects are a protein and mineral-dense food source. *Goodwin, R. (2021). If we want to save the planet, the future of food is insects. The Guardian.*

### Flash Foods:

An app platform that connects consumers to grocers selling discounted, nearly at best before date food. It increases access to affordable food and reduces food waste. *Flash Food (n.d.).*



### Treaty Land Sharing Network (TLSN):

Based in Saskatchewan, the TLSN aims to connect property owners with Indigenous partners for growing opportunities.

The goal is to acknowledge and respect treaty rights of Indigenous peoples to access and steward the land, plants and animals. There is some interest in piloting the project in Alberta as well, with Beaver Hills Biosphere.

*Treaty Land Sharing Network. About us.*

## Inspiration for Policy

Australia committed to reducing food waste by 50% by 2030, and Norway has also signed an agreement to halve food waste.

France has:

- Mandated recycling of organic waste for any private sector business who produces over 10 tonnes of organic waste per year.
- Banned grocery stores from throwing out unsold food.

Grocery stores in France now donate goods before they reach the expiry or best before dates or face penalties.

*Sanu, M. (2019, August 23). 7 inspiring government food waste campaigns food service can learn from. Winnow Solutions.*



### Profile of Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan

The Black Food Sovereignty Plan seeks to use a community and public health informed approach to address the issue of chronic Black food insecurity by dismantling systemic socioeconomic barriers, while increasing access, opportunity and Black community ownership over their local food systems.

**With sustainable support from the city, the plan will support the development of Black-led food insecurity initiatives, support and fund Black-led and -serving food organizations and food sovereignty community infrastructure, and leverage new and existing City strategies to advance systems change to realize Black food sovereignty.**

**The plan has 5 areas of recommendations:**

1. Sustainable funding and community capacity building
2. Access to growing space
3. Accessible infrastructure
4. Black food hubs, procurement and cultural markets
5. Culturally rooted community health and nutrition programs

*City of Toronto (2021). Toronto Black Food Sovereignty Plan.*



**A circular economy** is based on the idea that wastes are resources that aren't being used well (yet), and **food waste can be better utilized** or navigated in ways that **decrease hunger, increase affordability** of food and **increase the environmental sustainability** of the food system.

Three policy suggestions to create a more circular food system are to:

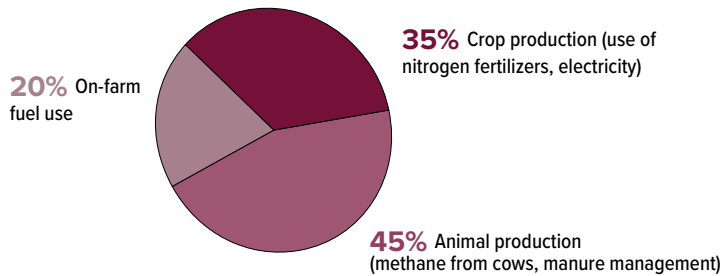
1. Implement a landfill ban for organics.
2. Build infrastructure to support food rescue organizations and circular food practices.
3. Obtain more information and create data systems to track food waste. This will improve distribution to avoid food waste in the first place, and target and fund innovation for the high waste areas in the system.

*Anthony, L., & Messer, D. (2023, February 7). The circular opportunity to fix food waste. Policy Options.*

# Future Risks

## Agriculture Uses a Lot of Carbon

Agriculture in Canada creates about **8-12%** of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions.



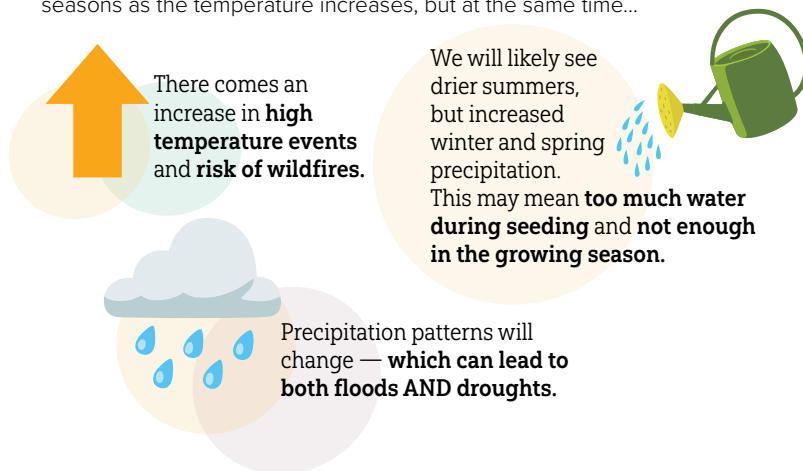
Laforge, J., Corkal, V., & Cosby, A. (2021). *Farming the Future: Agriculture and climate change on the Canadian Prairies*. International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Climate Atlas of Canada (n.d.). *Agriculture and Climate Change*.

## Climate Change and Agriculture

Agriculture is highly dependent on the weather. Climate effects everything – from the planting, maturing, and harvesting of crops, to the spread of disease and pests, to storage and transportation.

Climate models are showing that Canada will have longer growing seasons as the temperature increases, but at the same time...



The agricultural sector has begun to look at inventive ways to reduce emissions and pursue land-use practices that can help mitigate climate change. Examples include:

- Different crop cultivation, rotation strategies, and seeding dates
- Using strategies that till the soil less
- Transitioning to lower-carbon fuel sources,
- Improving fertilizers and fertilizer application approaches
- Using gas-capture systems for livestock and manure
- Using drought- and heat-tolerant varieties of crops.

**These strategies boost resilience of farms and have better environmental outcomes.**

Laforge, J., Corkal, V., & Cosby, A. (2021). *Farming the Future: Agriculture and climate change on the Canadian Prairies*. International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Climate Atlas of Canada* (n.d.). *Agriculture and Climate Change*.



## Agriculture and Environmental Policy

**Farmers cannot do this work on their own, they need support from the government.**

Agricultural policy in Canada is shared between the federal government and the provinces, which poses challenges to ensuring comprehensive climate compatible policies and programs.

- Prairie governments have not targeted the agricultural sector for emissions reductions.
- While programs to incentivize more sustainable and resilient practices exist, they are limited in scope and accessibility.
- There is a lack of comprehensive planning or a strategy on agriculture and climate change.

Laforge, J., Corkal, V., & Cosby, A. (2021). *Farming the Future: Agriculture and climate change on the Canadian Prairies*. International Institute for Sustainable Development.

## Climate Change and Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Rising temperatures threaten First Nation's ability to engage in traditional hunting practices, which in turn threatens their rights to food, health and culture. It also makes it more difficult to spend time on the land and pass down traditional knowledge.

- Indigenous peoples are among the lowest contributors to greenhouse emissions in Canada, yet they are among the **most exposed to climate change impacts**.
- Climate change has affected the migration patterns of caribou and geese, where fewer animals are coming into First Nations territories.
- The ability to hunt is affected as ice and permafrost becomes unstable throughout the winter, and water levels in rivers change, making traditional routes unsafe.
- Northern communities will face more difficulties getting enough food to meet their dietary needs and must rely on expensive and less nutritious food brought in from the south.
- As winter roads become less reliable to drive on, more food will have to be flown which will make it even more expensive.

Human Rights Watch (2020). "My Fear is Losing Everything" *The Climate Crisis and First Nations' Right to Food in Canada*.

# Reducing Emissions

## Problems with Net Zero Goals

- Net-zero emissions are achieved by balancing the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with the removal of CO2 from the atmosphere.
- Net zero plans often rely on the risky promise of future carbon removal – which may not work out as planned.
- Putting lots of resources into risky carbon removal strategies means less resources are being put into emissions reduction. McLaren, D. (2019). *The problem with net-zero emissions targets*. CarbonBrief.
- Climate experts have argued that, even if countries hit net zero by 2050, there is only a 50% chance of holding global temperatures at the goals of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- There needs to be a shift toward net-negative emission (removing more carbon versus adding).

Seekings, C (2021). Net zero by 2050 'too little too late', scientists warn. Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.



## Carbon Budget

Edmonton released its first 'carbon budget' in November 2022, which allocates how much carbon the city can use over a period of time.

Edmonton aims to be greenhouse emissions neutral by 2050. However, the city will not reach this target. By 2050, it is predicted to still have emissions of 12.95 million tonnes annually. This is only 4 million tonnes less than the city was emitting in 2021.

Carbon budgets should be used as a decision-making tool – yet a number of climate mitigation projects are left unfunded.

Cook, S. (2022). Edmonton has its 1st carbon budget. It's expecting to blow it. CBC News Edmonton.



## Inflation is Unpredictable

Food prices in Canada were predicted to **increase by 5-7% in 2022**, when in reality they increased by **10.3% as of September 2022**.

In 2023, costs are expected to rise another 5-7%, but how accurate is this prediction? Dalhousie (2023) *Canada's Food Price Report*

After disruptions caused by the pandemic, extreme weather events, and the war in Ukraine, supply chains are going back to "normal" which should "put the breaks" on rising food costs.

Economic experts predict global food prices will remain 25% higher than they were during the pre-pandemic decade. Heaven, P. (2023). *Posthaste: Why high food prices could be here to stay for Canadians*. Financial Post.

# Strengthening Local Pathways

## Agenda 2030: Edmonton Food Security Report found that:



Vaughois, R. and J. Kinsella [2022]. *Agenda 2030: Edmonton Food Security Report*.

# Living in Edmonton 2023



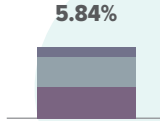
Living in Edmonton provides a broad look at our community, representing demographic, social and economic information that defines how Edmontonians are doing from an economic and social perspective. This information is a representation of Edmonton as a whole, and is not disaggregated.

## Demographics & Life in Edmonton

People living in the City of Edmonton, 2021.

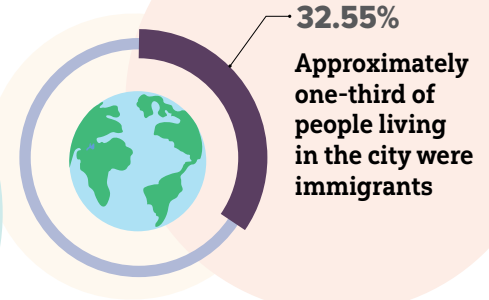
### 5.84% identified as Indigenous

- 2.79% First Nations
- 2.77% Métis
- 0.08% Inuit



### 42.77% identified as a visible minority

- 11.54% South Asian
- 7.58% Black
- 7.08% Filipino
- 6.00% Chinese
- 3.06% Arab
- 1.95% Latin American
- 1.93% Southeast Asian
- 0.81% Korean
- 0.77% West Asian
- 0.22% Japanese



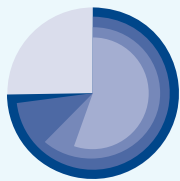
These numbers show that not all visible minorities are immigrants. Likewise, not all immigrants are visible minorities.

Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile: Edmonton City.

According to residents, **quality of life is decreasing** in the city.

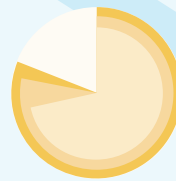
#### Feelings of safety

- 2020 **73%**
- 2021 **71%**
- 2022 **61%**
- 2023 **54%**



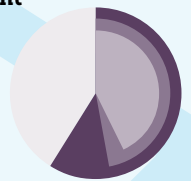
#### Adequate opportunities for sports and/or recreation

- 2020 **81%**
- 2021 & 2022 **78%**
- 2023 **70%**



#### Quality of life described "very good" or "excellent"

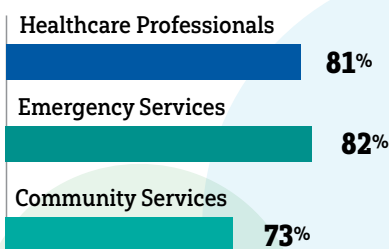
- 2020 **59%**
- 2021 **46%**
- 2022 & 2023 **43%**



Leger (2023). Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.

## Trust in Institutions

In 2023, the percent of Edmontonians who agree they can trust:



In 2023, **29%** of Edmontonians reported that they trusted the government, a decline since 2018, when **45%** of Edmontonians said they trusted the government.

Those born outside Canada are more likely to trust the government (**45%**) than those born in Canada (**24%**).

Leger (2023). Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.

## Population (2022)

**1,087,172** people living in Edmonton.

**1,516,719** people living in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan area.

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01. Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries. Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0142-01. Population estimates, July 1, by census subdivision, 2016 boundaries.



## Inclusion in Edmonton

Edmontonians are less likely to agree that certain groups face discrimination.

- In 2023, **69%** of Edmontonians agreed that Indigenous people in Edmonton often face discrimination (76% in 2021).
- **61%** agreed visible minorities in Edmonton often face discrimination (72% in 2021).
- **56%** agreed refugees in Edmonton often face discrimination (66% in 2021).
- **44%** agreed women in Edmonton often face discrimination (53% in 2021).

12% of Edmontonians most of the time or always feel uncomfortable or out of place because of their religion, ethnicity, skin colour, culture, race, language, accent, gender or sexual orientation. *Leger (2023). Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.*

## Opioid Poisoning

In Edmonton...

- **579 people died** from opioid poisoning in 2022. That is roughly one and a half (1.59) people per day.
- An average of 467 unique people accessed community supervised consumption sites each month, for a total of 40,733 visits.
- Ambulances responded to **753 overdose calls in July**, compared to 306 responses during the same period last year. *CBC News (July 2023). 'People are dropping dead on the streets,' says Edmonton doctor as overdose responses spike.*
- Ambulance responses have increased by **146%**, year over year.

### Opioids in First Nations Communities

In early July, the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations declared a state of emergency regarding the ongoing opioid crisis and its disproportionate effect on Indigenous Peoples. *Meilleur, D. & Mertz, E. (July 2023). 'Our people will die': Opioid crisis prompts state of emergency in Treaty 6 First Nations. Global News.*

The rate of opioid poisoning deaths is **7 times higher** for First Nations people compared to non-First Nations people.

First Nations women have an **average life expectancy 18 years younger** than non-First Nations women.

First Nations men have an **average life expectancy 13 years younger** than non-First Nations men. *Paradis, D. (July, 2023). First Nations life expectancy plummets in Alberta due to opioid deaths. APTN National News.*

**72.3%** of drug poisoning deaths in Alberta were male.

*Government of Alberta (2023). Alberta substance use surveillance system.*

### Did you know?

In 2023, the Queer and Trans Health Collective was given an exemption from Federal drug laws to open Edmonton's first drug testing service, allowing people who use drugs to get more information on what is in the drugs they are using and learn how to use safer.

*CTV News Edmonton. Edmonton queer and trans clinic given green light to offer free, confidential drug testing for all.*

## Food Security

- Those from minority groups are more likely to report that it is significantly harder to afford groceries (28%) than those who are not from minority groups (15%).
- 15% of Edmontonians have had to compromise on the *quality* of food they purchase, 17% have had to compromise on the *amount* of food they purchase, and 30% have had to compromise on *both*.
- 23% of BIPOC Edmontonians report difficulty accessing foods from their culture.
- 21% of Edmontonians attempted to access food-related services in 2023. Of those, 29% were unable to access services due to long waitlists.

**63%** of Edmontonians believe it has been **harder to afford groceries in the past 12 months.**

- 53% of Edmontonians grow their own food.
  - 59% do so for fun/it's a hobby.
  - 24% grow their own food because it's cheaper than buying food at a grocery store.
- The most commonly reported barriers to accessing cultural foods were: cost (38%), locations are too hard to get to (15%) and foods not being available in Edmonton (11%).

*Leger (2023). Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.*





# 211 Use



In Edmonton, in 2022, 53,239 needs were identified to 211 through calls, texts and online chat.

The most common needs identified were:

## 12,528

Basic needs, including housing/shelter (6,061), food (2,660) and material goods (1,808)

## 9,282

Organizational/community/international services

## 7,562

Mental health and substance use disorder services

211 was unable to meet 2,190 needs. The most common reasons for not being able to meet a need were:

- No program was found to meet their need (576)
- There was a waitlist (344)
- Client ineligible for services (314)
- Agency resources depleted (140)

211 Alberta [2023]. 211 Data.

# Library Use

In 2022, **58,505** new memberships were created.

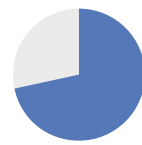
**10.9 million** items borrowed.

And almost 3.5 million in-person visits – a **96% increase** since 2021.

Edmonton Public Library (2022). *The heart of our city: 2022 annual report.*

# Transportation

Cars are by far the most common form of transportation in Edmonton.



**73%** use a car as their main source of transportation (passenger or driver)



**19%** use the bus or LRT as their main source of transportation



Some groups are more likely to use the bus or LRT:

## 33%

BIPOC Edmontonians

## 27%

Born outside Canada

## 30%

Youth aged 18-34

**75%** of Edmontonians say it is easy to get around Edmonton by car, whereas only **26%** say it is easy to get around by the bus and LRT.

Leger (2023). *Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.*

## Edmonton Transit Service

As of January 2023, Edmonton bus ridership reached 100% of 2019 pre-pandemic levels. Ridership averaged approximately 1.2 million rides per week. Mertz, E. (2023). *Bus ridership on Edmonton Transit returns to pre-pandemic levels: city.*

LRT ridership is about 60 to 70% of pre-pandemic levels. Chan, K. (2023). *Edmonton bus transit ridership recovers to 100% of pre-pandemic normal levels.*

# Charitable Giving & Community

## Rates of Volunteering and Charitable Giving are on the Decline.

In 2023, **57%** of Edmontonians said they hadn't volunteered in the past 12 months.

Of those who do volunteer, the three most popular sectors are:

- Specific event or fundraising (**28%**)
- Education/school (**22%**)
- Local community (**22%**)

In 2023, **56%** of Edmontonians donated money to a charity or non-profit organizations in the past 12 months. In 2022, that rate was **62%**.

Leger (2023). *Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.*



## Community Involvement

- 63% of Edmontonians agreed there are opportunities for them to get involved in their community.
- Only 42% of Edmontonians felt welcome and socially included in their community.

Leger (2023). *Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.*

## Canadian charities are experiencing higher demand for services, but a lower capacity to meet that demand.

- Over a fifth of Canadians (22%) are expected to rely on charities for basic needs (compared to 14% in Jan 2022).
- 40.3% of Canadian charities have experienced a lasting increase in demand since the pandemic.
- 57.3% of Canadian charities cannot meet current levels of demand.
- Close to 60% of charities have the same number of paid staff working with heightened service demands, and 15% have decreased staff since the pandemic started.

Canada Helps (2023). *The giving report: 2023.*

# Low Income Statistics

In Edmonton, in 2021, the poverty rate was **13.7%**.

- In 2019, the poverty rate was 12.9%. In 2020, largely due to the introduction of CERB and other pandemic benefits, the poverty rate had dropped to 10.8%. Now that pandemic benefits have been phased out, Edmonton is seeing higher poverty rates than before the pandemic.
- The child poverty rate (persons aged 0-17) was **15.9%**

Poverty rates vary by family type:

<b>6.9%</b> couple families	<b>34.8%</b> lone parents	<b>28.8%</b> single adults
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Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition.

## Employment

In 2022:

- The unemployment rate was **5.9%**. This is a large drop from 2021, when it was **8.7%**.
- The unemployment rate is almost the same between men (6.0%) and women (5.7%)
- Youth aged 15-24 have a higher unemployment rate (10.2%) compared to those aged 25-54 (4.9%) and those aged 55+ (6.2%). Statistics Canada. (2023). Labour force characteristics, annual (Table 14-10-0385-01)
- Only 49% of Edmontonians believe there are adequate job opportunities in Edmonton in 2023. Leger (2023). Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians

## Housing Prices

As of July 2023, the average cost of a...



single family detached was  
**\$503,542**



semi-detached was  
**\$378,902**



townhomes was  
**\$264,128**

WOWA (July 2023). Edmonton Housing Market Report.

### Renting in Edmonton

In 2022, the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment was **\$1,304**.

The vacancy rate was **4.3%**.

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2023). Rental market report: 2023 edition.

### Social Assistance Usage

In 2022:

- An average of **22,444** households received Alberta Works each month.
- An average of **25,783** households received AISH each month.

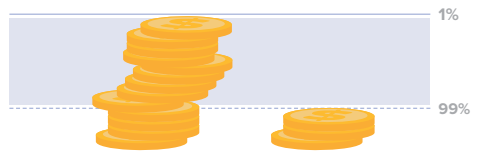
Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2023). Income support caseload [Data set]. Government of Alberta. Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2023). Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) caseload [Data set]. Government of Alberta.

### Income Inequality

In 2020:

- The median after-tax income for the **top 1%** of tax filers in Edmonton was **\$241,100**
- Whereas the median after-tax income for the other **99%** of the population was **\$40,600**.

Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0056-01 High income tax filers in Canada, specific geographic area thresholds.



### Affordability

**Only 51% of Edmontonians always have enough money to pay their expenses.**

**26%** of those from minority groups report that their earnings are insufficient to cover their needs, compared to 13% of those who are not considered minorities.

Edmontonians are finding it harder to find affordable housing.

In 2021, **36%** of Edmontonians believed it was easy to find affordable housing in Edmonton. In 2023, this rate has dropped to **27%**.

Leger (2023). Edmonton vital signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians.

## Homelessness

An average of

# 2,969

people experienced homelessness each month between January and July 2023 in Edmonton.

# 51.7%

of those experiencing homelessness identify as Indigenous; an average of

# 1,695

people  
*Homeward Trust.*

**In 2022, 156 people died due to homelessness.**

*Boothby, L. (2023). Edmonton memorial honours 156 deaths from homelessness in 2022. Edmonton Journal.*

More people slept unsheltered (697) than in emergency shelters (591).

*Homeward Trust (n.d.) Edmonton By Name List [data set]. Accessed Aug 1 2023.*

## Opinions about Poverty

Of Edmontonians...

- **79%** believe poverty is about more than money.
- **33%** believe that most people living in poverty do not take advantage of the various programs available to support them.
- **29%** believe most people living in poverty do not put in enough effort to make their conditions better.

*Leger (2023). Edmonton Vital Signs: 2023 Survey of Edmontonians*

More people are recognizing that poverty is a significant problem in Edmonton.

**73% believed this in 2023, compared to 66% in 2021.**

## Wage



### Living Wage

A living wage is rooted in the belief that individuals and families should not just survive, but **live with dignity and participate in their community**. A living wage is defined as the hourly wage that a primary income earner must make to provide for themselves, their families, and reach basic financial security.

In 2022, **the living wage was \$21.40.**

*Sheloff, S. (2022). Edmonton's living wage report: 2022. Edmonton Social Planning Council*

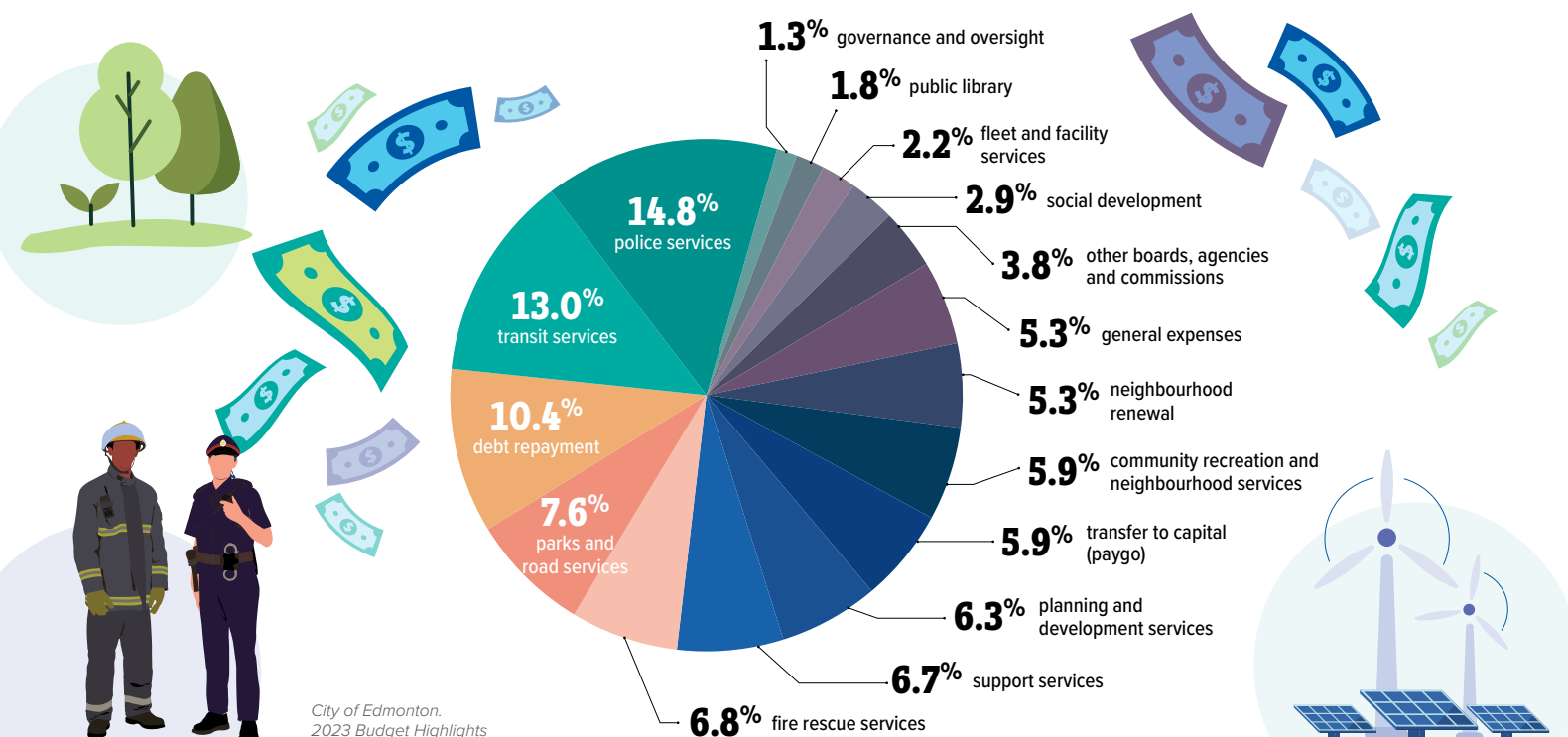
### Rental Wage

A rental wage is the hourly wage required to afford rent while working a 40-hour work week and spending no more than 30% of one's income on housing.

- In Edmonton, the rental wage is **\$20.89 for a one-bedroom apartment** while the rental wage is **\$25.61 for a two-bedroom apartment**.
- For a minimum wage worker (\$15/hour) to be able to afford a two-bedroom unit in Edmonton, they would have to work **89 hours/month**.

*Macdonald, D. and R. Tranjan (2023). Can't afford the rent: Rental wages in Canada. 2022.*

## Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?



*City of Edmonton. 2023 Budget Highlights*

## How To Use This Report:

# START CONVERSATIONS. TAKE ACTION.

If you or your organization is moved or motivated by what you read, use this report as a starting point for positive action.

- **PASS IT ON.**

Share the report with your friends, colleagues, employees, students, neighbours, library, community center or an elected/public official at any level.

- **FIND OUT MORE.**

Learn about the many organizations working to improve our community and how you can get involved, too.

- **CONTACT US.**

We know about the issues of our community and the organizations working to improve them. If you would like to make a difference, we can help and guide you.

# Start Conversations. Take Action.

## Edmonton Community Foundation

9910-103 Street,  
Edmonton, AB, T5K 2V7  
E: [info@ecfoundation.org](mailto:info@ecfoundation.org)

780-426-0015  
[ecfoundation.org](http://ecfoundation.org)

## Edmonton Social Planning Council

Suite 206, 10050 - 112th Street NW (Compass Place)  
Edmonton, AB, T5K 2J1  
E: [info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca)

780-423-2031  
[edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca)

