



2019

Nutritious Food Basket

The price of eating well in Ottawa





Definitions

Food security is:

“When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”¹

Food insecurity exists when one or more members of a household:

1. Cannot afford balanced meals.
2. Go hungry by eating less or skipping meals, sometimes not eating for an entire day.
3. Do not have access to the variety or quantity of food that they need due to lack of money.²



Food insecurity is a serious public health issue

Children in food insecure households are more likely to:



develop depression³



develop asthma later in life⁴



have issues with hyperactivity and inattention⁵

Adults in food insecure households are more likely to:



report poorer mental and physical health, and higher anxiety and stress⁶



suffer from oral health problems⁷ and chronic conditions such as diabetes⁸

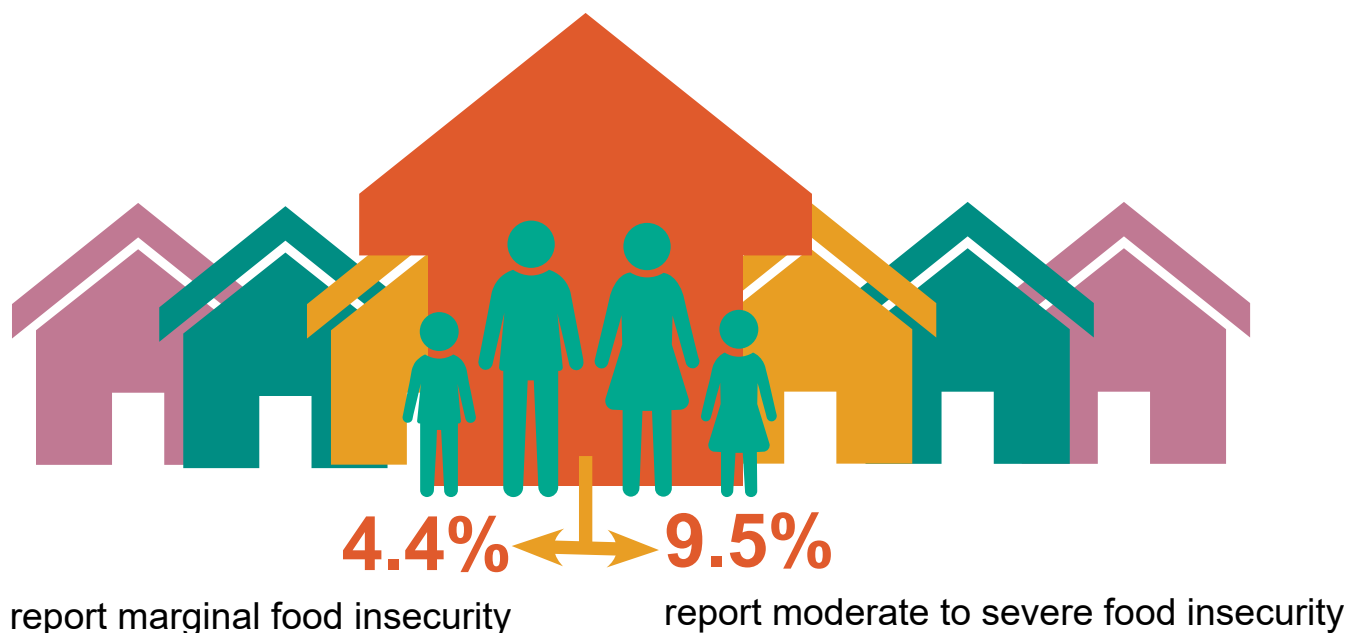
Food insecurity also makes managing chronic disease through diet more challenging, leading to higher healthcare costs.⁹

Food insecurity statistics

Food insecurity is often measured on a household level, not an individual level. It ranges in severity from being concerned or anxious that food will run out before household members have money to buy more (marginal food insecurity), to compromising either quantity or quality needed for a balanced diet (moderate food insecurity), to going hungry, and/or going a whole day without eating (severe food insecurity).¹⁰ Ottawa Public Health reports food insecurity in Ottawa using Health Canada's Household Food Security Survey Module.¹¹

Food insecurity in Ottawa

1 in 7 (13.9%) households in Ottawa report being marginally to severely food insecure.¹¹



Who is at Highest Risk?

Low-income individuals:



30.9% of households living below the low-income cut off in Ottawa report being moderately to severely food insecure...

...compared to 5.4% of those above the low-income cut off.¹¹



Note: The survey methodology has been subject to changes. The 2017 data should not be compared to historical data.



Marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity in Canada

Canadian data for food insecurity including marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity highlights a number of vulnerable populations.



Indigenous households:

25.7% (1 in 4) of off-reserve Indigenous households reported being marginally to severely food insecure, compared to 12% of all households in Canada.¹⁰



Children:

1 in 6 children in Canada live in households that report being marginally to severely food insecure. Households with children are at a higher risk of being food insecure than those without (15.6% vs 10.4%).¹⁰



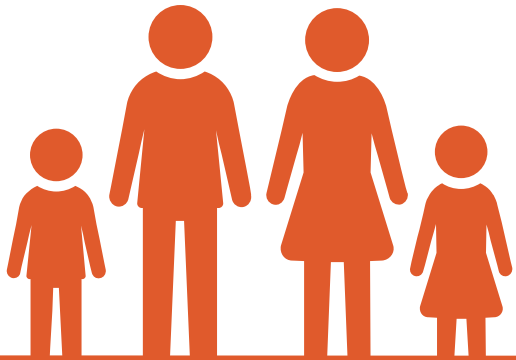
Single mother households:

Canadian single mother families who have children under 18 years of age are more likely to experience food insecurity than any other type of household - at 33.5%.¹⁰


Note: These statistics are based on the 2014 Household Food Security Module Survey data.

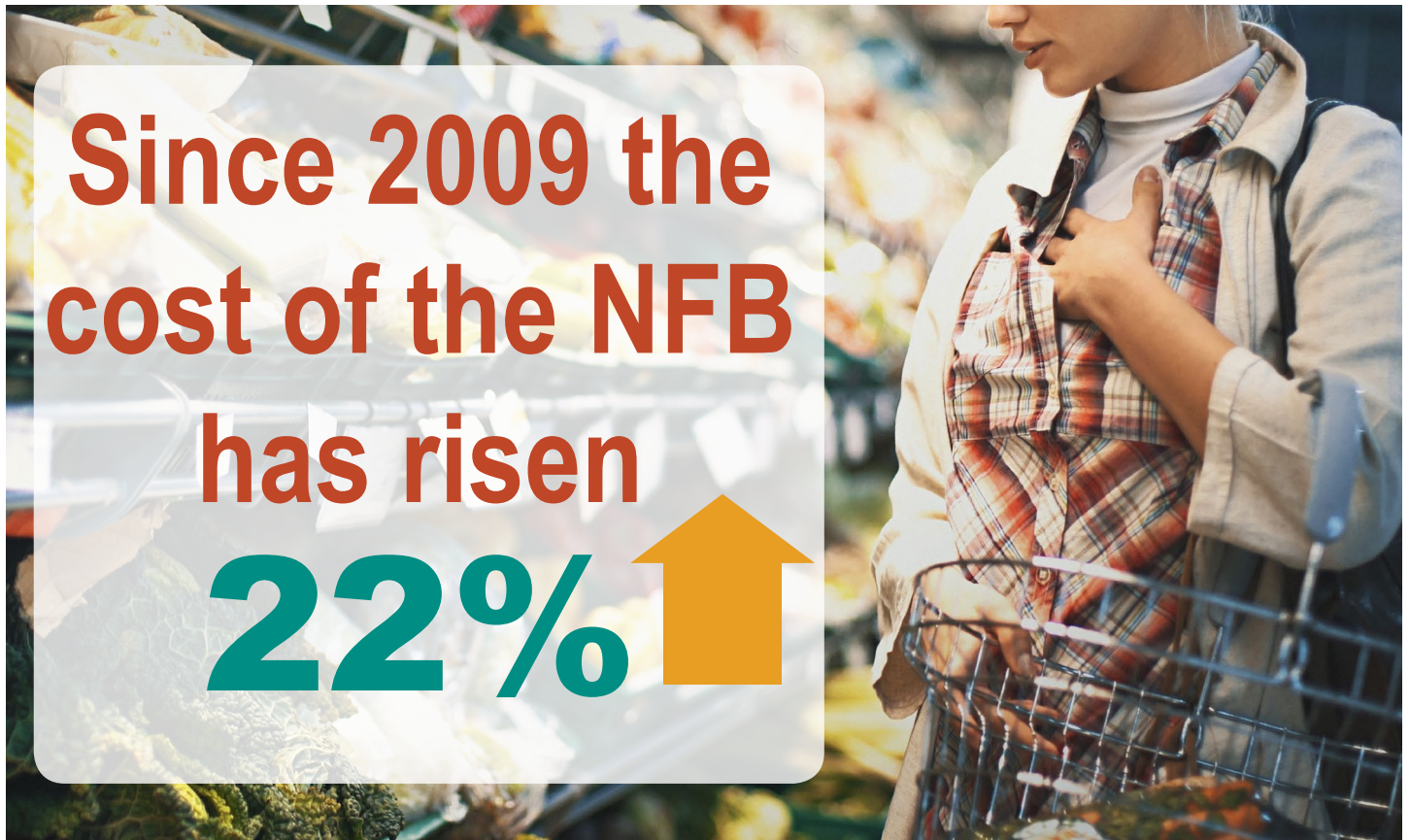
The Nutritious Food Basket

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) survey measures the cost of basic healthy eating. Every year in May, Ottawa Public Health costs 67 food items in 10 grocery stores. These foods represent nutrition recommendations and average purchasing patterns. Results from the survey are used to monitor both the affordability and accessibility of food in our city by relating the cost of the food basket to individual and family incomes.



Monthly cost to feed a family of four in Ottawa

**Since 2009 the
cost of the NFB
has risen
22%** 



What is included in the NFB?

The 67 items surveyed in the NFB fall under these categories:

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives
- Oils and Fats

Note that the pictures below are a sample and do not include all 67 items costed in the NFB.



What is not included in the NFB?

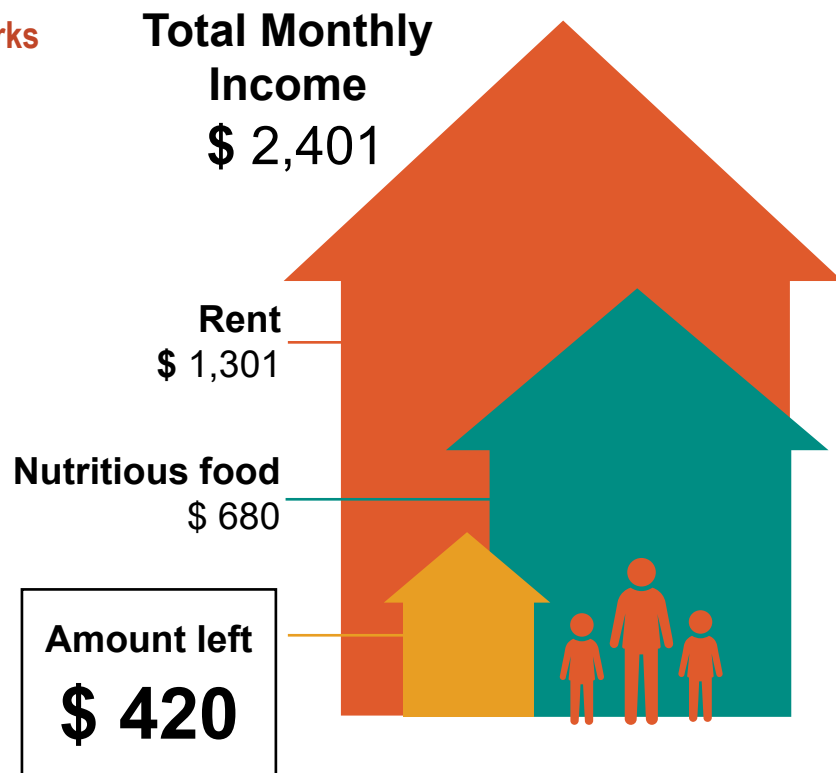
1. Essential items for personal care (such as shampoo, toothpaste, women's hygiene products, and other toiletries)
2. Processed, convenience foods
3. Eating outside of the home (such as buying food at work and eating out at restaurants)
4. Infant foods
5. Foods needed for special diets (such as allergen free foods)¹²

NFB case studies

Single mother with two children on Ontario Works

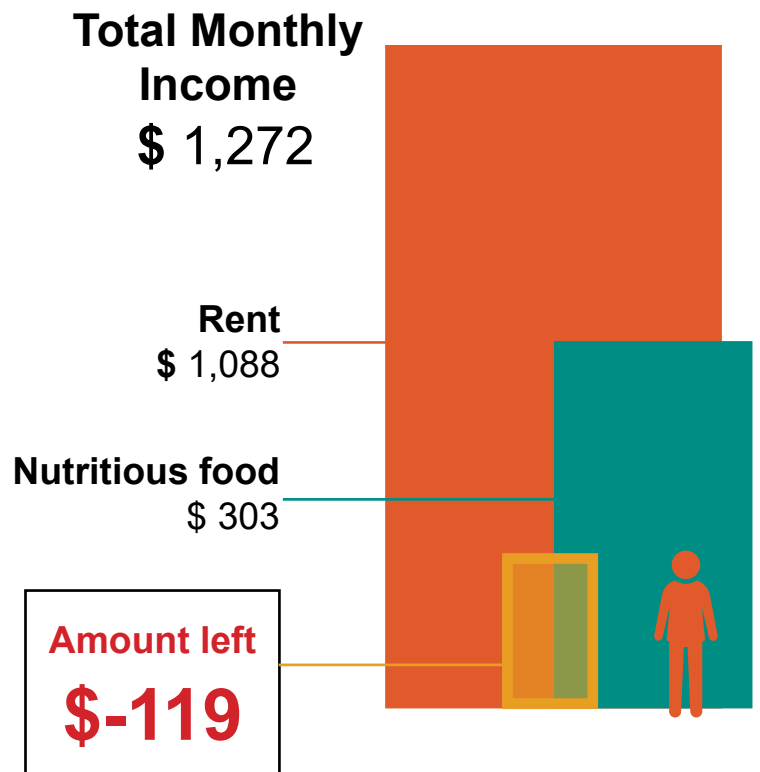
Janelle has been relying on Ontario Works as the main source of income for herself and her two young children for the past year after being laid off and unable to find full-time work. If Janelle were to purchase nutritious food for her family and pay rent in her two-bedroom apartment, she would be left with just \$420 to cover expenses such as heat and hydro, bus passes, prescription medications, and clothing for her two children.

Janelle has to visit food banks in order to make ends meet each month and her mental health is impacted because of her high level of stress.










Single male on Ontario Disability Support Program

Amir has recently started relying on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) after an accident left him physically unable to work. It doesn't take long for Amir to realize that he cannot afford to eat the same amount of nutritious food as he could before his accident when he had income from a career in sales. Doing so would leave him with a negative balance in his bank account. The money Amir receives from ODSP must be prioritized for things like heating his home and transportation to and from his physiotherapy appointments. He is unsure how he will be able to maintain his health in the long-term.

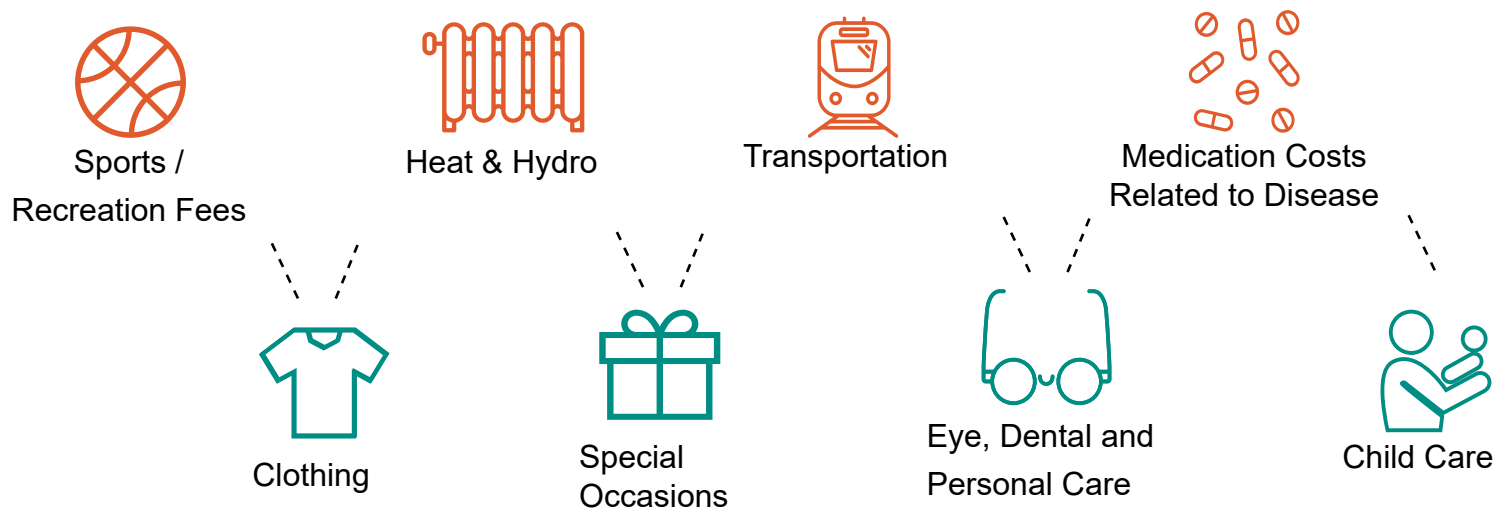


NFB scenarios

The table below highlights how eating healthy may be impacted by different incomes and family scenarios. Rent and the cost of a nutritious diet are subtracted from monthly incomes, showing the amount of money left over for other basic expenses at the end of the month. Families on fixed or low incomes often need to compromise healthy eating to pay for fixed expenses such as rent, hydro, heat, transportation, etc.

	Monthly Income	Rent	Cost of a Nutritious Diet	What's Left?
 Ontario Works (Family of four)	\$2,623	\$1,584	\$901	\$138
 Ontario Works (Single mother age 35, boy age 14, girl age 8)	\$2,401	\$1,301	\$680	\$420
 Ontario Works (Single man age 35)	\$825	\$881	\$303	-\$359
 Ontario Disability Support Program (Single man age 35)	\$1,272	\$1,088	\$303	-\$119
 Old Age Security/ Guaranteed Income Supplement (Single woman age 71)	\$1,727	\$1,088	\$219	\$419
 Minimum Wage (Family of four, one minimum wage earner)	\$3,633	\$1,584	\$901	\$1,148
 Average Income (Family of four)	\$7,983	\$1,584	\$901	\$5,498

Remaining monthly income after rent represents the money available for food and basic expenses, such as:





Poverty is the root cause of food insecurity

Emergency food provision in Canada is not a new concept and includes a variety of programs like food banks and meal programs. These programs were created to be short-term solutions to food insecurity.

Income based strategies

Collective efforts to implement long-term, income-based strategies that address poverty, the root cause of food insecurity, are needed to help solve this issue.

Examples:



A Basic Income Guarantee



Increases in social assistance rates



Strengthen employment standards to reduce unstable employment & improve working conditions.

For more information, see The Ontario Dietitians in Public Health's (formerly The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health) position paper on income based strategies and the "No Money for Food is... Cent\$less" campaign to address food insecurity.



Call to action



Learn more about the causes of food insecurity and its effect on health



Support for income based strategies that address poverty and will ensure secure and healthy food for all



Share this information with peers, colleagues, partner agencies, and your local members of parliament.

Additional Information

1. Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (formerly The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health) (2019). No Money for Food Is...Cent\$less. <https://www.odph.ca/centsless>
2. Tarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2016). [Household food insecurity in Canada 2014](#), PROOF: Food Insecurity Policy Research.
3. Dietitians of Canada (2016). [Executive Summary Addressing Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Position Statement and Recommendations from Dietitians of Canada](#).
4. Association of Local Public Health Agencies, Ontario Public Health Association (2015). [Basic Income Guarantee: Background](#).
5. Tarasuk, V. (2017). [Implications of a Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity](#). PROOF: Food Security Policy Research.



Resources

If you are experiencing food insecurity here are some resources that can help you and your family:



Food Link directory

The FoodLink directory is a comprehensive listing of food and nutrition programs and services in Ottawa that aim to increase access to healthy food. It includes food access programs like the Good Food Box, meal delivery services, food banks, community kitchens and more! It is now available as an interactive, online map. Click on the following link to access this resource:

goodfoodottawa.ca/foodlink



Ottawa Public Health – Mental Health Resources

If you are concerned about your mental health, speak to your health care provider or check out the Mental Health and Substance Use Resources List using the following link:

ottawapublichealth.ca/mentalhealthresources

References

1. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (1996), Rome Declaration on World Food Security, World Food Summit Plan of Action, paragraph 1, Rome: November 1996. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>
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6. Muldoon, K. A., Duff, P. K., Fielden, S., & Anema, A. (2013). Food insufficiency is associated with psychiatric morbidity in a nationally representative study of mental illness among food insecure Canadians. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 48(5), 795-803.
7. Muirhead, V., Quiñonez, C., Figueiredo, R., & Locker, D. (2009). Oral health disparities and food insecurity in working poor Canadians. *Community dentistry and oral epidemiology*, 37(4), 294-304.
8. Galesloot, S., McIntyre, L., Fenton, T., & Tyminski, S. (2012). Food Insecurity in Canadian Adults: Receiving Diabetes Care. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 73(3), e261-e266.
9. Tarasuk, V., Cheng, J., de Oliveira, C., Dachner, N., Gundersen, C., & Kurdyak, P. (2015). Association between household food insecurity and annual health care costs. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 187(14), E429-E436.
10. Tarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2016). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2014. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://proof.utoronto.ca>
11. Ottawa Public Health. Food Security Status of Ottawa Households 2017. (2019) Ottawa.
12. Ministry of Health Promotion (2010). Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document. pg. 7-8. Toronto.