

# HUNGERCOUNT 2014

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

Food Banks  
Canada



## Why do we need food banks in a country as rich as Canada?

Study looks behind the data

Even though we often read about it in the news, it may come as a shock to Canadians that hundreds of thousands of people each month need help from a food bank just to make ends meet. It is surprising that a country that seems to be doing so well has so many people who are not. The *HungerCount 2014* report examines this disparity and puts forward ideas to change Canada for the better.





# 841,191 CANADIANS

turn to food banks every month

In a country as wealthy as Canada, close to a million people need food banks just to make ends meet each month. Why have we not seen any significant change to this situation after so many years, and after so much has been written about hunger? *HungerCount 2014* uncovers the hard data on food bank use, tells the story behind the numbers, and digs deep to explore the root causes of hunger in our country. It then provides our recommendations to bring about real and lasting change.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2014, 841,191 people received food from a food bank in Canada. Food bank use increased by 1% compared to the same period in 2013. It is dismaying that the number of people utilizing this service remains 25% higher than in 2008. This means that each and every month, 170,000 more people walk through the door of a food bank than was the case before the economic downturn.

## WHO IS BEING HELPED?

Food banks come to the aid of a wide segment of the population, including:

**Children and families.** More than one-third of those helped by food banks are children. Nearly half of households helped are families with children, and close to half of these are two-parent families.

**Single people.** Forty-three percent of households receiving food are composed of single unattached individuals – essentially, people who live alone, without a spouse or children. This group has grown from 30% of households assisted in 2001 to almost half in 2014, increasing from 80,000 to 157,000 households every month.

**Workers.** One in every six households helped by food banks have income from current or recent employment.

For a more complete picture, turn to Results, page 5, or National & Provincial Findings, page 22.

## WHY DO WE NEED FOOD BANKS IN A COUNTRY AS RICH AS CANADA?

Without poverty, food banks would not need to exist. Whether because of a sudden illness, the loss of a job, family breakup, or other unexpected circumstance, every year hundreds of thousands of Canadians face a major loss of income and are unable to get the help they need to offset it.

Once one has fallen on hard times, it can be very difficult to climb back up. This is true for any person in Canada, and particularly for people managing long-term physical or mental health issues, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, immigrants, and refugees. The systems we have put in place to ensure individuals and families do not fall into destitution often fail to do the job, with people struggling without the necessities of life for too long. (See our case study, page 13.)

This year's *HungerCount* takes a deep look at the "why" of food banks (see Analysis, page 9), and the picture is not a positive one. Though the causes of food bank use are well known – the massive loss of well-paying blue collar jobs, too many people without the skills for

today's labour market, inadequate social programs for people facing hard times – we have largely not taken the steps necessary to address these problems head-on.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

*HungerCount 2014* offers five areas for action (explored in greater depth starting on page 17) that we believe will significantly reduce the need for food banks in Canada. They are:

- 1 Invest in affordable housing at the federal level.
- 2 Address the extremely high levels of food insecurity in Canada's North.
- 3 Replace the stigmatizing and ineffective social assistance bureaucracy at the provincial level with a basic income administered through the tax system.
- 4 Provide more effective support to low income families with children by replacing the current alphabet soup of federal child benefits (CCTB, UCCB, etc.) with a strengthened Child Well-Being Benefit.
- 5 Help Canadians with low levels of literacy to upgrade their skills for the jobs of today.




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**More than one-third of those helped by food banks are children. Nearly half of households helped are families with children, and close to half of these are two-parent families.**

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While the level of food bank use clearly evolves in response to larger economic factors like unemployment, the number of people receiving food assistance in Canada has not dropped below 700,000 per month for the better part of the past 15 years.

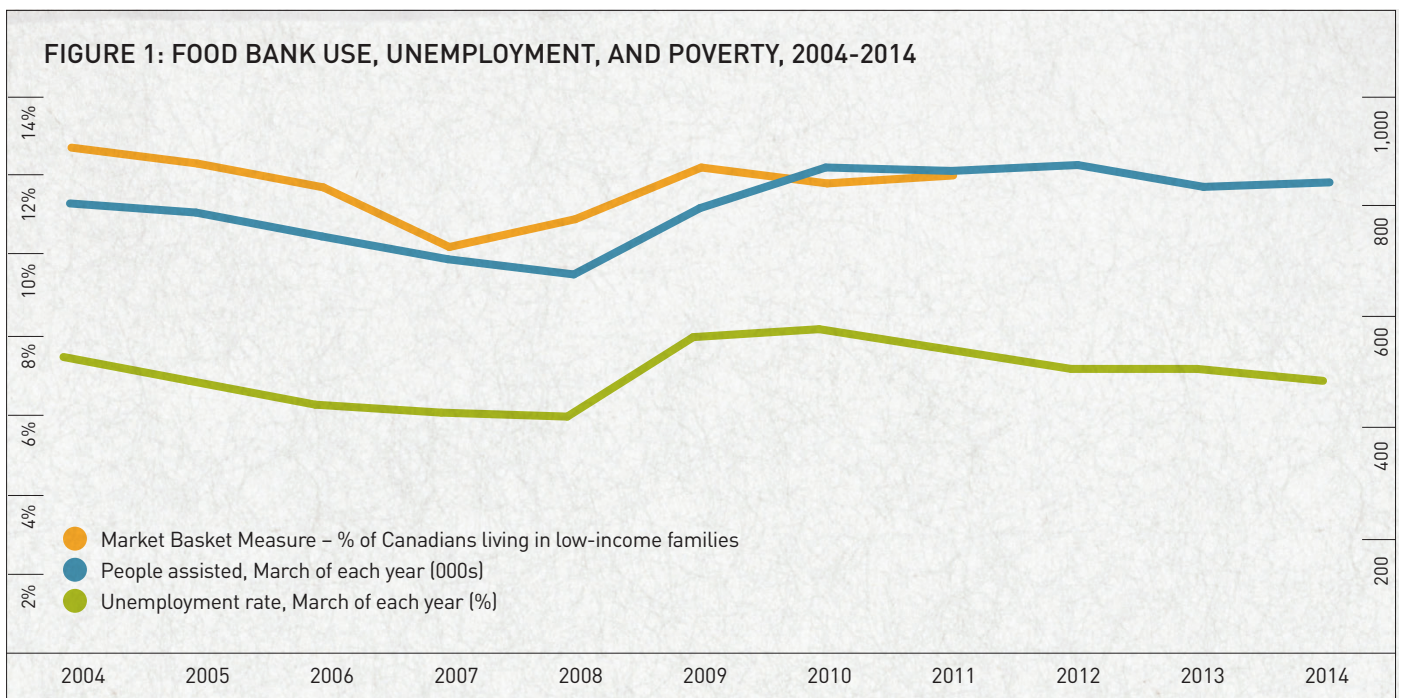
# RESULTS

This year's *HungerCount* survey results show some disturbing trends, with food bank use increasing slightly but steadily across most of Canada.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the number of people utilizing this service remains 25% higher than in 2008, just prior to the last major recession. Some of the key findings about food bank use from this year's study include:

- In March 2014, **841,191** people received food from a food bank in Canada.
- Food bank use increased by **1%** compared to the same period in 2013.
- **Thirty-seven percent** of those helped by food banks are children.
- Food bank use increased in **six of 10** provinces this year. If access to food banks in the Maritimes had not been restricted due to severe storms and consequent power outages and transportation difficulties in late March,<sup>2</sup> we believe that usage would have increased in at least eight of 10 provinces.

Though we are now five years past the 2008-09 recession, food bank statistics – and the people behind them – continue to be shaped by its influence. After reaching its lowest point in many years in 2008, food bank use shot up by 20% in 2009, and by another 10% the year after. It reached its highest recorded point in 2012, and continues to hover at very high levels.

Over and above the 841,191 people helped by food banks in March 2014, soup kitchens, shelters, school breakfast initiatives, and other programs also



# 841,191

people received food from  
a food bank in March

# 310,461

of those receiving food  
were children

# 87,533

people asked for help from a  
food bank for the first time in March

served 4,308,140 meals and snacks to a broad population of Canadians.

## FIRST-TIME VISITS AND YEAR-LONG STATISTICS

In March, 87,533 people asked for help from a food bank for the first time – more than one out of every 10 who received food. By the time March 2015 rolls around, this group of people will have used a food bank eight times on average. Some will ask for help only once; some will request assistance five times, or seven, or 12. Many will have gotten back on their feet and won't be seen at the

food bank again – and other new entrants needing food assistance will take their place.

The 841,191 people who were helped in March made 1,181,521 visits to food banks that month (i.e., a portion of those helped made multiple visits). Given that March is an average month for food bank use, Canadians will make more than 14 million visits to food banks over the course of 2014.

We estimate that food banks will provide food to 1.8 million unique individuals in Canada this year.

## INCOME AND FOOD BANK USE

As Figure 1 shows, recent changes in food bank use have closely followed the national unemployment rate<sup>3</sup> – which suggests that as food insecure people find work, they are less likely to access food banks. At the same time, 12% of those helped by food banks are working, and an additional 5% are receiving Employment Insurance – showing that a job does not always lead one away from the food bank.

While the level of food bank use clearly evolves in response to larger economic

TABLE 1: FOOD BANK USE IN CANADA, BY PROVINCE

Province/Territory	Total Assisted, March 2014	Percent Children, March 2014	Total Assisted, March 2013	Total Assisted, March 2008	Change, 2008-2014	% Change, 2008-2014	Change, 2013-2014	% Change, 2013-2014
British Columbia	97,369	30.8%	94,002	78,101	19,268	24.7%	3,367	3.6%
Alberta	49,766	42.9%	48,653	33,580	16,186	48.2%	1,113	2.3%
Saskatchewan	26,820	45.8%	22,465	17,751	9,069	51.1%	4,355	19.4%
Manitoba	61,691	44.3%	60,229	40,464	21,227	52.5%	1,462	2.4%
Ontario	374,698	35.0%	375,814	314,258	60,440	19.2%	-1,116	-0.3%
Quebec	156,895	37.3%	156,750	127,536	29,359	23.0%	145	0.1%
New Brunswick	19,590	33.9%	19,989	15,638	3,952	25.3%	-399	-2.0%
Nova Scotia	19,664	29.2%	21,760	16,915	2,749	16.3%	-2,096	-9.6%
Prince Edward Island	3,432	38.0%	3,502	2,892	540	18.7%	-70	-2.0%
Newfoundland & Labrador	26,617	37.7%	26,412	27,260	-643	-2.4%	205	0.8%
Territories	4,649	47.0%	3,522	1,340	3,309	246.9%	1,127	32.0%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>841,191</b>	<b>36.9%</b>	<b>833,098</b>	<b>675,735</b>	<b>165,456</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	<b>8,093</b>	<b>1.0%</b>



# 110,754

people received food from rural food banks in March

# 14,178,252

visits will be made to Canadian food banks in 2014

# 4,308,140

meals and snacks were served by soup kitchens, shelters, school breakfast initiatives, and other programs

factors like unemployment, the number of people receiving food assistance in Canada has not dropped below 700,000 per month for the better part of the past 15 years. A quick glance at the primary sources of income of a large portion of those walking through the doors suggests a clear reason for this:

- 48% of households accessing food receive provincial social assistance (welfare).
- 18% of households helped live primarily on provincial disability-related social assistance benefits.
- 7% of those helped report that a pension is their main source of income.<sup>4</sup>

There is an obvious connection between government-controlled income supports – particularly social assistance – and food bank use. Later sections of the report will address this connection in more detail.

## WHO IS BEING HELPED: A SNAPSHOT

The households that ask food banks for assistance are almost evenly divided between those that have children and those that do not:

- 45% are families with children; nearly half of these are two-parent families.
- 55% are households without children; the grand majority of these are single unattached individuals, which

have grown from 29% of households helped in 2001, to 43% of the total in 2014 (see page 9 for more detail on this phenomenon).<sup>5</sup>

The majority of those receiving food live in rental housing:

- 64% pay market rent.
- 20% live in social or otherwise subsidized rental housing.
- 7% own their home.
- 4% are virtually homeless, i.e. living temporarily with family or friends.<sup>6</sup>

One in seven individuals receiving food self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (up from 11% in 2012 to 14% in 2014).<sup>7</sup> Twelve percent of those helped are immigrants or refugees – rising to 20% in cities with populations greater than 100,000.<sup>8</sup>

## SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS


Food banks located in towns with populations of less than 10,000 provided food to 110,754 individuals in March 2014 – 13% of the national total. This is 1.6% higher than the number helped one year earlier.

As with food bank use in Canada as a whole, 37% of those assisted in small towns and rural areas are children. However, the population utilizing food banks outside Canada's larger cities differs in several important ways:

- Those accessing food are older:
  - 5.4% are seniors (compared to 4.3% overall).<sup>9</sup>
  - 9.2% report that their primary income is from a pension (7% overall).<sup>10</sup>
  - 14% are couples without children living in the home (12% overall).<sup>11</sup>
- They are much more likely to self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (26% compared to 14% overall).
- They are more likely to own their home (17% compared to 7% overall).<sup>12</sup>
- They are less likely to be living in subsidized/social housing (12% compared to 20% overall).<sup>13</sup>

More than 600 rural food banks, in every province and territory, participated in the *HungerCount* study. This fact alone attests to the incredibly broad reality of household food insecurity in Canada.

For more in-depth information on the people helped by food banks, please see Table 1 to the left, and the national and provincial data tables beginning on page 22.



Economic change has created a reality where undereducated single Canadians must either upgrade their skills or be left behind. This is easier said than done, particularly for individuals managing long-term physical and mental health problems.

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# ANALYSIS

Numbers are integral to the *HungerCount* survey, which is the only comprehensive study of food bank use in Canada. Just as important as collecting data is making connections between facts. This kind of analysis helps us understand the stories that the numbers tell, which can then lead us towards identifying the changes that will reduce the need for food banks.

## FOOD BANKS AND SINGLE CANADIANS

Single adults who live alone, without a spouse or children, have been gradually increasing as a share of Canadian households. Since 2001, this type of living arrangement has grown from 26% to 28% of the population.<sup>14</sup>

This household type has also grown as a proportion of households helped by food banks – from 29% in 2001 to 43% in 2014. Whereas food bank use is currently 19% higher than it was in 2001, food bank use among single person households has effectively doubled – from 80,000 households per month in 2001 to 158,000 in 2014.

### Social assistance benefits have not increased with the cost of living for about 20 years

The overall growth of single person households in Canada cannot fully explain the explosive growth of food

bank use among this population – other factors are clearly involved. Given that 50% of households helped by food banks live primarily on social assistance benefits, and that these benefits have largely *not* increased with the cost of living for about 20 years, the state of social assistance would seem to account for a large piece of the explanation.<sup>15</sup>

John Stapleton, a noted Canadian expert in this area, has explored the links between being single and living in poverty, with particular attention to single people on welfare. His research highlights some important facts:

- If welfare incomes had increased with inflation over the past 20 years, single people on social assistance in Ontario (as one representative example) would be provided with \$944 per month to live on. Instead, welfare incomes for singles currently stand at a little more than \$600 per month, or \$7,200 per year – nearly \$10,000 *below* the Market Basket Measure of low income in a mid-sized city.<sup>16</sup>
- Over the past 15 years, social programs for *lone parents* have had significant

success, and have helped many people find their way out of poverty. In contrast, during the same period social policy has succeeded in forcing *single people* into extreme poverty. In particular, single people on welfare “receive basic incomes that are close to destitution levels – much less than in other developed countries.”<sup>17</sup>

The extremely low benefit levels provided by provincial welfare programs sit in an uneasy relationship with a job market that has been, to say the least, unkind to people with low levels of education – particularly for Canadian males. There is a notable connection between being male, undereducated, unemployed and receiving welfare.<sup>18,19</sup> The key shift has been the drastic loss over the past two decades of blue-collar jobs that were accessible to this population.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, single Canadians who are employed yet still have low incomes do not have access to the types of government programs made available to families with children. While families can count on the Canada Child Tax

Benefit, the Universal Child Care Benefit, and several child-related tax credits, unattached employed individuals have access to very few government supports, with the notable exception of the valuable but small Working Income Tax Benefit.

In short, economic change has created a reality where undereducated single Canadians must either upgrade their skills or be left behind. This is easier said than done, particularly for individuals managing long-term

physical and mental health problems. The current state of federal, provincial, and municipal policy is simply not up to the task of effectively assisting this population.

## FOOD BANK USE AND FOOD INSECURITY

“Income-related household food insecurity” describes a situation where an individual or family worries that they won’t be able to afford enough food, eats suboptimal food because they can’t afford better, or skips meals because they are unable to purchase enough.

Household food insecurity and food bank use are unique concepts, and not everyone who is food insecure will access a food bank.<sup>21</sup> However, they are clearly linked.

Each year, 1.8 million Canadians receive food from food banks. In 2012, nearly four million Canadians lived in food insecure households, of which approximately 800,000 lived in households that were severely food insecure.<sup>22</sup> This simple comparison shows that food banks do not provide assistance to all those who are food insecure. The limited research assessing the reasons for this gap suggests that three overlapping factors are involved:

**1** Some people who are food insecure make the choice to not use a food bank. Reasons for this include a belief that circumstances are not bad enough to warrant asking for help, the stigma associated with food bank use, and the feeling that the food that would be received would not meet personal needs and preferences.

**2** Some people who are food insecure face barriers to access. These barriers may be related to distance or lack of transportation, food bank policies (e.g., hours of service, intake procedures), or lack of information about the existence of food banks, where they are located, how they work, and hours of service.<sup>23</sup>

**3** Households that experience moderate levels of food insecurity are less likely to access food banks. On the other side of the coin, individuals and families who are forced to skip meals or eat less than they think they should – i.e. those in more desperate circumstances – are more likely to ask for help.<sup>24</sup>

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### 62% of food insecure households earn the majority of their income from employment

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One of the most notable distinctions between people who are food insecure and those accessing food banks concerns source of income: while 62% of food insecure households earn the majority of their income from employment,<sup>25</sup> this is true of about 20%

of those helped by food banks. The key factor here is almost certainly the extremely low levels of income provided by social assistance (also known as “welfare”), which forces households into severe levels of food insecurity: 70% of households that receive social assistance are food insecure, and 30% of these are severely food insecure. Among households whose main source of income is employment, only 1.5% are severely food insecure.<sup>26</sup>

There are two takeaways from these facts. First, it is a mistake to think that food banks or other charitable food programs are able to adequately address household food insecurity over the long term. There are simply too many food insecure people who do not use them, even though they might benefit from the help. Second, the very low levels of income provided by provincial social assistance programs take away people’s choice of whether or not to access a food bank, making it nearly impossible to avoid it.

## WHY DO WE NEED FOOD BANKS IN A COUNTRY AS RICH AS CANADA?

Canada currently ranks 11th out of 186 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index.<sup>27</sup> In the first three months of 2014, two trillion dollars' worth of goods and services were produced in the country.<sup>28</sup> How, in the midst of such wealth, do so many people need to access food banks just to have enough to eat?

The following section attempts to provide an answer to this question in two parts:

- **Part 1** offers information on just how little income several million Canadians live on, forcing them to make extremely difficult choices – choices like, do I pay the rent or buy food? Do I cancel my phone service or go to the food bank?

- **Part 2** takes an anecdotal approach, looking at two years in the life of an individual accessing a food bank, in order to describe the twists and turns that lead a person to this situation.



**At any point in time, there is a sizeable population of Canadians with extremely low levels of income – far too low to afford even the most elemental needs of adequate shelter, nutrition, transportation, and communication. The following examples, building on information from the *HungerCount* study, show just how little some of our neighbours have to work with.**

**Nearly one-fifth of households helped by food banks are working or are receiving Employment Insurance (EI) and have worked recently.**

- Canada has a booming low-wage economy, thanks in part to a confounding, ongoing loss of well-paying blue collar jobs. For example, the well-paying manufacturing sector accounted for less than 10% of Canadian jobs in March 2014, compared to 14% in 2004 – a loss of 400,000 jobs during a time of steady population growth. Meanwhile, lower-wage retail, accommodation, and food service jobs continue to grow at

a rate equal to or greater than the population, consistently accounting for one in every five jobs in the country.<sup>29</sup>

- For Canadians who find themselves unemployed, EI provides a maximum income of \$514 per week before taxes, for a maximum of 45 weeks. The benefit is lower for those who earn less than \$49,000 per year; for example, a person with a gross income of \$35,000 receives only \$370 per week.<sup>30</sup>

**Half of the households accessing food banks report that welfare is their primary source of income.**

- Depending on their province of residence, the annual welfare income for a single person considered “employable” is drastically low – ranging from \$6,801 to \$10,813 per year.<sup>31</sup> Even in the most generous province (i.e. Newfoundland & Labrador), this level of income is 40% below the lowest poverty line.<sup>32</sup>

**One in five households helped by food banks rely on disability-related benefits as their main source of income; in the majority**

**of cases this income is provided through provincial benefits linked to a long-term disability or health issue.**

- Depending on their province of residence, the annual disability-related income for a single person ranges from \$8,838 to \$13,772.<sup>33</sup> The most generous provincial disability benefit for an individual is still more than 10% below the lowest poverty line. In the worst case (New Brunswick), it is nearly 50% below the poverty line.

**A small but significant percentage (7%) of those helped live primarily on income from a pension.**

- Seniors who live alone have a highly elevated risk of living in poverty, with nearly 15% of this population reporting incomes below the poverty line.<sup>34</sup>
- A single person who depends on a public pension as their only source of income receives a meagre \$15,800 per year through Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.<sup>35</sup>

The chart on pages 14-15 provides a graphic representation of the income disparities that help to explain the presence of household food insecurity in the midst of prosperity.



**Low income is just one part of the equation that leads to food insecurity and the need for food banks. Just as important are the systems, led and managed by our federal, provincial, and municipal governments, that exist to ensure Canadians do not fall into destitution. These overlapping yet under-coordinated and sometimes conflicting systems are failing too many.**

One in every eight Canadians lives in a family without enough money to afford the goods and services that most take for granted.<sup>36</sup> While it is true that hundreds of thousands of Canadians climb out of poverty, it is also the case that hundreds of thousands fall under the poverty line each and every year. While public policy and government programs help many out of low income, the system is far from optimal.

Modern social policy for working-age adults in Canada begins with the assumption that the more government

gives, the more people will take.<sup>37</sup> Because of this over-generalized and pessimistic assumption, benefits provided by government programs like social assistance, Employment Insurance, and Old Age Security are set at extremely low levels to discourage use as much as possible.

Individuals who find themselves in a situation of severe food insecurity are at the beginning of a long and difficult path. They may already have been forced to move themselves and their families to cheaper, lower quality housing. They may

have been forced to sell or pawn some of their possessions. They are eating lower quality food and skipping meals because they can't afford enough.

### NO WAY UP: JOHANNA'S STORY

Here is a hypothetical – but realistic – example illustrating the difficulties faced by someone in this situation. Let's say "Johanna" is a woman in her late 20s who had to quit her job for health reasons last year, and has been surviving on social assistance for 12 months or so. She has used her local food bank for eight of those months. With social assistance and various federal and provincial tax credits, she will have access to about \$8,000 in net income over the course of 12 months<sup>38</sup> – an amount of money that is basically impossible to live on without considerable sacrifice.

Let's say her health improves, and Johanna finds a part-time job while on social assistance. Her provincial government will deduct about 75% of her work income from her social assistance benefits. Suppose she earns \$500 per month after taxes, for a total of \$6,000 in annual employment income. Her net income will increase from \$8,000 to only \$9,500 – which is still nearly \$6,000 below the poverty line. If Johanna is accessing multiple social programs (such as subsidized housing or child care), which reduce support as her income increases, she could actually

reach the end of each month with less money than she had before she started working.<sup>39</sup>

If after a few months Johanna is able to find a job that pays \$14 per hour for 30 hours per week (which is a realistic reflection of the lower end of today's job market)<sup>40</sup> she will be earning \$420 per week, or \$21,840 for the year. At this point she will be earning too much to receive welfare benefits. She will have access to more than twice the amount of income she received while on welfare; however she will also lose certain non-cash benefits and therefore see her expenses grow. Two of the largest of these are subsidized housing and prescription drug and dental benefits.

If Johanna has a long-term mental health issue that is managed with medication, the loss of prescription drug benefits will have a significant impact. With respect to housing, Johanna will face paying \$600 to \$800 (at least 33% of her income)<sup>41</sup> for a decent bachelor apartment or \$400 to \$600 (at least 22% of her income) for a small, substandard room with few amenities.

Let's go a bit further and say that after a year, Johanna loses her job through no fault of her own, and applies for Employment Insurance. The highest weekly benefit she will receive is \$231. Realistically, she can expect to receive a payment for 28 to 38 weeks, for a maximum possible total of \$8,778 over

a period of about nine months. In other words, slightly better than a welfare-level income, but without any of the non-income benefits of welfare, which Johanna would not be able access while she is eligible for Employment Insurance.

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**While this is a worst-case scenario, these are the stories that food banks hear every day. It is the worst-case scenario that leads people to the door of their local food bank.**

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The drawbacks inherent in the supports that exist for vulnerable people are written into the histories of tens of thousands of non-profit and charitable organizations – food banks, homeless shelters, children's aid societies, mental health organizations, hospital emergency rooms, and many others. For the most part, these organizations reach individuals after the worst has happened, after they have lost so much.

The next section offers recommendations on how we can reach the people helped by these organizations, *before* the worst has happened.

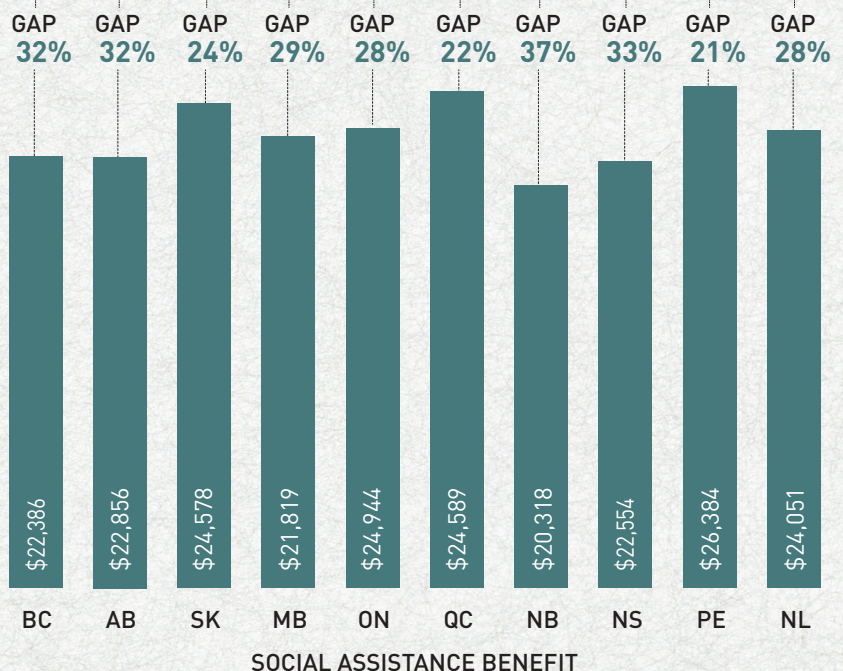
# THE INCOME GAP

With hundreds of thousands of well-paying blue-collar jobs lost over the past two decades, too many Canadians are stuck in part-time, temporary, low-paying jobs. Those who can't work are forced to depend on meagre government benefits.

Canadians go to food banks when their basic expenses outgrow income – when they run out of breathing room. This infographic examines how incomes from various sources stack up against the Market Basket Measure of low income. It illustrates how much breathing room Canadians in various situations are living with, and how close they are to needing help from the food bank.

## BASIC STANDARD OF LIVING<sup>42</sup>

48% of households that visit food banks are on social assistance. This graphic compares the gap between the social assistance benefit provided in each province to a couple with two children and what it costs to achieve a modest, basic standard of living. Far from having *breathing room*, these families are *under water*.







**\$17,813** per year  
 MARKET BASKET MEASURE  
 (COST OF A BASIC STANDARD OF LIVING FOR A SINGLE ADULT)

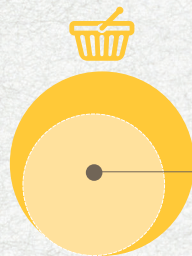
## How do incomes measure up?<sup>43</sup>



**-\$9,838**  
 Under water



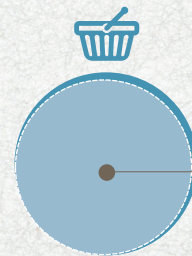
**SOCIAL ASSISTANCE  
 BENEFITS**  
 \$7,975 per year



**-\$7,102**  
 Under water



**DISABILITY  
 BENEFITS**  
 \$10,711 per year



**-\$1,875**  
 Under water



**PENSION BENEFITS  
 (OAS & GIS)**  
 \$15,938 per year



**\$335**  
 Breathing room



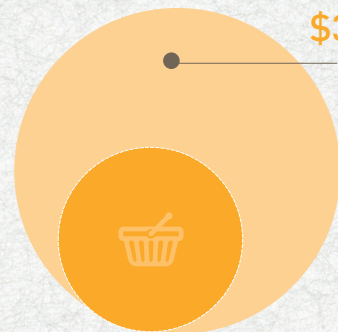
**MINIMUM WAGE  
 EMPLOYMENT**  
 \$18,148 per year



**\$2,987**  
 Breathing room



**EMPLOYMENT  
 INSURANCE  
 BENEFITS**  
 \$20,800 per year



**\$36,612**  
 Breathing room



**MANUFACTURING  
 EMPLOYMENT**  
 \$54,425 per year

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- 
- 1 More affordable housing
  - 2 Help for the North
  - 3 Revolutionize welfare
  - 4 Investment in child well-being
  - 5 Better training

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## 1 MAINTAIN FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Food banks across the country report year after year that the high cost of housing is one of the key factors that drive the need for their services.

More than four million Canadian households live in rental housing; almost half of them pay more than 30% of their income on rent (a widely-accepted benchmark of unaffordability).<sup>44</sup>

- Only 10% of new housing developed over the past 15 years has been purpose-built to rent, despite the fact that nearly one-third of households are renters.<sup>45</sup>
- The demand for rental housing is far outpacing supply, with vacancy levels below 3% in major centres such as Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Victoria.<sup>46</sup>

To add to this growing crisis, the federal social housing operating agreements that have been in place since the 1960s and 1970s are beginning to expire, and there is nothing planned to replace them.

- Federal funding for housing through these agreements is scheduled to decrease, from \$1.6 billion a year in 2014, to \$1.2 billion in 2020, to \$604 million in 2025, and so on until 2040, at which point the annual federal investment will decline to zero.
- The agreements provide support for 544,000 households, a significant number of which are forecast to lose their homes if nothing is found to replace federal support.<sup>47</sup>

While provincial–territorial and municipal governments are increasing their investments in affordable housing, they do not have the fiscal capacity to maintain current social housing levels, much less increase the number of available units.<sup>48</sup>



### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Create a federal Social Housing Operating Fund, in agreement with the provinces and territories, that would be made available to social housing providers to cover costs related to capital repairs, maintenance, and retrofits.
- ▶ Implement targeted federal tax reforms to support the development of rental housing to increase the number of units and make housing more affordable. Options include allowing the rollover of capital gains that are re-invested in new, purpose-built rental housing, or a social housing tax credit for the creation of subsidized rental units.
- ▶ Undertake an assessment of the forward-thinking, government-led “Housing First” approach to determine the consequences this federal policy change may have on affordable housing. We recommend that the federal government convene key stakeholders between all levels of government, as well as local charities, social workers, and civil society groups to identify, discuss, and remedy any unintended negative consequences of the Housing First approach introduced by the federal government in 2013.



## 2 TAKE STRONG ACTION TO REDUCE FOOD INSECURITY IN THE NORTH

Households in Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut experience extremely high levels of food insecurity, ranging from 17% of households in Yukon, to 45% of households in Nunavut. The territories also experience the highest rates of severe food insecurity, where adults and/or children go completely without food for a meal, or for a day.<sup>49</sup>

The three territorial governments have each introduced poverty reduction and/or food security strategies. These plans are open and honest about the challenges facing the territories:

“Seven in ten Inuit preschoolers in Nunavut live in food insecure households. Access to healthy and affordable food has been a challenge for Nunavummiut for many years, and this issue has emerged as a major political and public concern.”<sup>50</sup>

“Across the [Northwest Territories], there is a widening gap between those who are prospering and those who are struggling. Poverty disproportionately affects vulnerable members of society, including single-parent families, people with low education levels, elders, people with disabilities, and those with addictions or mental health issues. Children in poverty are especially vulnerable when their basic needs are not met.”<sup>51</sup>

“Food insecurity and material deprivation indicators... [show] large disparities among Yukon populations. Low income households and people who receive social assistance are most likely to experience difficulties buying the things they need.”<sup>52</sup>

Each territorial strategy sets out areas for action that are specific and relevant to these unique and different jurisdictions. There are, however, several additional practical actions that can be taken at the territorial and federal levels to decrease poverty and household food insecurity in the territories.

### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Create a federal Northern Food Security Fund, which would provide resources to jumpstart and support community-developed, community-led food initiatives across the North.
- ▶ Enshrine poverty reduction and food security strategies within territorial legislation, to help ensure that these remain priorities for future administrations.
- ▶ Allow parents in receipt of social assistance to keep the National Child Benefit Supplement, rather than having it clawed back from their welfare benefits. This simple action would add up to \$2,241 per child each year for some of the most vulnerable families in the territories.<sup>53</sup>
- ▶ Replace the current territorial welfare bureaucracy with a basic income administered through the tax system (see recommendation 3 for more detail).

### 3 REVOLUTIONIZE PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL WELFARE SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE

It has been clear for many years that welfare is a broken system. Individuals and families must be at the brink of destitution to qualify for the program, and it can be very difficult to climb out of poverty once you are in the system. Benefit levels are unreasonably low, the administrative bureaucracy is nearly impossible to navigate, and stigmatization of those in need is widespread. The system seems nearly beyond repair.

The time has come for the provinces and territories to seriously consider dismantling what has become an understaffed and stressed bureaucratic system that assesses the needs of applicants on a case-by-case, month-by-month basis. There exist several viable models for a *basic income*, administered through the tax system, that would eliminate the bureaucracy, the intrusiveness, and the stigma associated with welfare. Our recommendations include this significant, forward-thinking plan, as well as several other common-sense actions.



#### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Dismantle existing welfare bureaucracies and create a basic income system, administered through the tax system. Ensure that the basic income has a logical relationship to the level of earnings offered through work, and that it is indexed to inflation.
- ▶ Remove non-cash benefits from welfare, and make these benefits available to all low income households, regardless of their eligibility or participation in other government programs. Such benefits include, but are not limited to, child care subsidies, affordable housing supplements, and drug and dental insurance.
- ▶ Release clear and detailed information on the number of people receiving social assistance, entry and exit from the program, length of time in receipt of benefits, household characteristics of program participants, and program expenditures.



## 4 REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF CHILD POVERTY AND ADDRESS POVERTY'S HARMFUL EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Nearly one million Canadian children live in families with below poverty-level incomes.<sup>54</sup> Several decades of research has shown that childhood poverty, particularly in the early years (i.e. prenatal to age 5), has a profound effect on the physical, mental, and economic outcomes of those who experience it once they reach adulthood. Further, the lower the family income, and the longer poverty persists, the more severe is the effect on adult outcomes.<sup>55</sup>

For the most part, low income in Canada is transitory, with hundreds of thousands of people moving above and below the poverty line each year. However, low income is long-lasting for a significant minority of Canadians, including children. Between 2002 and 2007, more than 20% of Canadian children experienced at least one year of low income; nearly 6% lived in families with incomes below the poverty line for four or more years in this period.<sup>56</sup>

While low income is not the only factor that shapes child health and achievement,<sup>57</sup> it can have a profound influence on a child's environment.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, every recommendation in this report has a bearing on child health and well-being – children do better when their families do better. Appropriate housing, improved benefits for parents on welfare, and more effective adult education programs will all contribute to a better environment in which to raise a child. There are also several child-specific policy changes governments can make that will improve child outcomes, each of which have the added benefit of supporting parents of young children to enter and remain in the labour force.

### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Support the most vulnerable families with young children by rationalizing the current alphabet soup of federal child benefits – including the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and the Children's Fitness Tax Credit – into a new Child Well-Being Benefit.
- ▶ Invest in predictable, stable funding at the federal and provincial levels for professional, affordable, flexible, regulated child care, to contribute to child development and enable parents to enter and remain in the labour force.
- ▶ Help vulnerable parents with young children as soon as they need it, at the federal and provincial levels. This has implications for prenatal and postnatal care, early childhood development, child welfare agencies, and child care programs. The current systems that work to support families with young children are underfunded and disjointed, with quality and access varying widely between regions.

## 5 ENSURE CANADIANS HAVE THE SKILLS TO ATTAIN WELL-PAYING JOBS

There has been a lot of talk about the “skills mismatch” in Canada, a “misalignment between the skills of the unemployed and those required by employers.”<sup>59</sup> The idea of “misalignment” suggests that Canadians have skills, just not the ones needed to fill the jobs that are available – the “too many English majors, not enough welders” problem.

This important discussion needs to be broadened to include the fact that 49% of Canadians between the ages of 16 and 65 do not have the literacy capacity necessary to effectively learn new job skills.<sup>60</sup> Nearly half of Canadians operate at Level 1 or Level 2 literacy:

- At **Level 1**, an individual has very poor literacy skills; they may be unable to read instructions well enough to be able to give the correct amount of medicine to a child (17% of Canadian adults are at Level 1 or lower).
- At **Level 2**, people are able to develop everyday coping skills, however it will be difficult to understand and master the complex tasks and concepts required in the modern workforce (32% of Canadian adults are at Level 2).<sup>61</sup>

There is a need for immediate action on adult basic education, which is something of a threatened species in Canada. Recent evaluations of training programs supported through federal–provincial funding agreements have offered lukewarm findings;<sup>62</sup> these findings may have contributed to a range of related federal government actions, including the reallocation of \$300 million from training for people ineligible for Employment Insurance to the new Canada Job Grant.

The federal government has vowed to “transform skills training in Canada through the introduction of the Canada Job Grant,” in consultation with employers and employer groups.<sup>63</sup> While this may help employers fill the need for particular skills, it is unlikely to address very low basic skill levels among the unemployed and underemployed – employers are unlikely to take the risk of investing in very low-skilled individuals.<sup>64</sup>

People with low literacy levels are more likely to be out of work and have low incomes;<sup>65</sup> this means that they are less able to pay for educational upgrading. If this sizable group is to play a larger role in the modern economy, there is no choice but for governments to invest. The literature around adult basic education makes clear the need for specialized interventions, intensive program evaluation and a willingness to experiment and change.



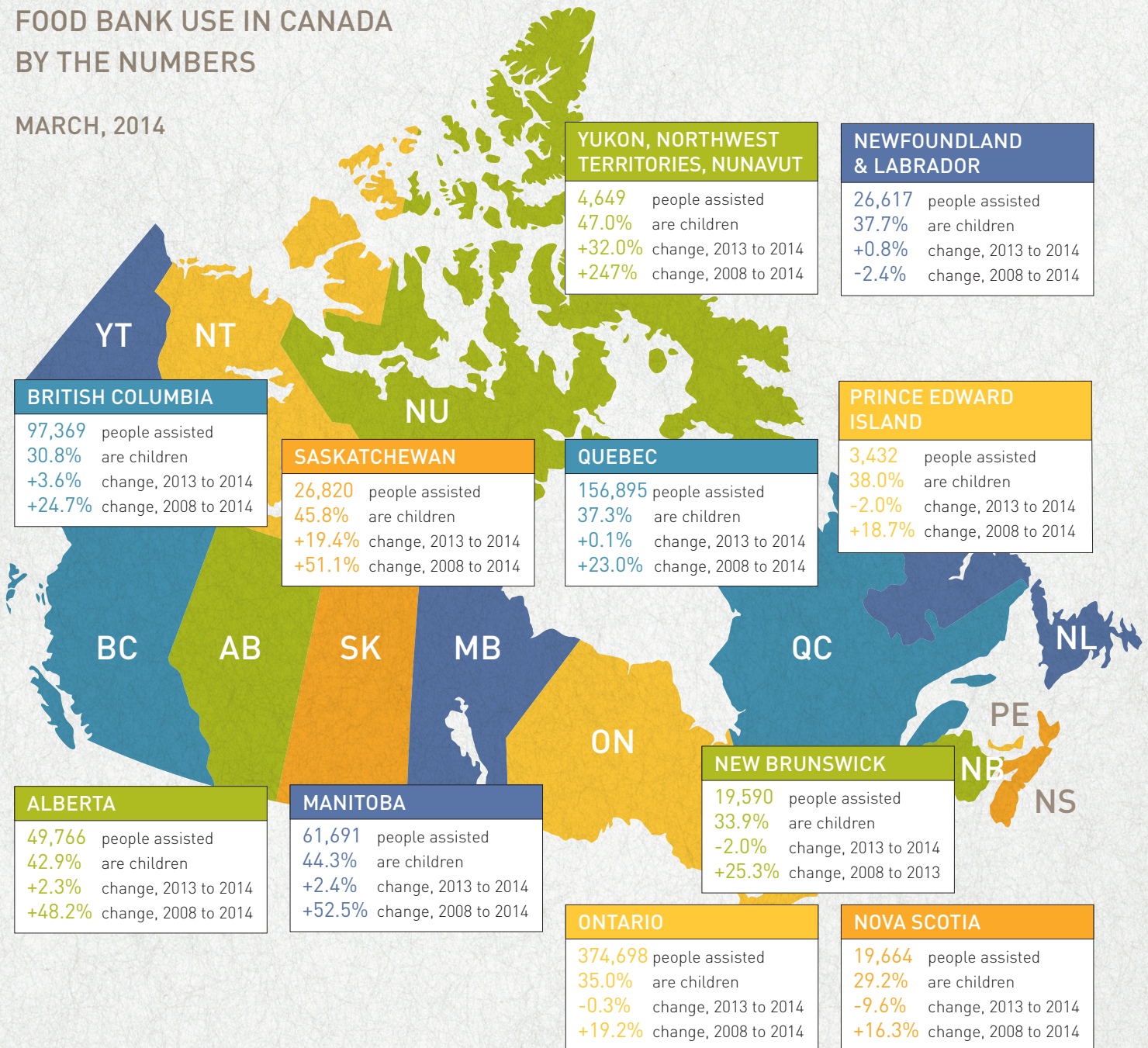
### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Expand eligibility for education and training programs offered through Employment Insurance Part II benefits to include all unemployed Canadians, rather than only those eligible for EI.
- ▶ Create a federal framework for adult basic education that emphasizes the need for individualized training programs that prepare Canadians for the specific labour needs of regional labour markets.
- ▶ Eliminate barriers at the provincial level that prevent social assistance recipients from accessing education and training.<sup>66</sup> Increase connections between provincial welfare bureaucracies and adult education and training providers.

# DETAILED NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL FINDINGS

## FOOD BANK USE IN CANADA BY THE NUMBERS

MARCH, 2014





# CANADA

**841,191**  
people helped by  
food banks  
in March

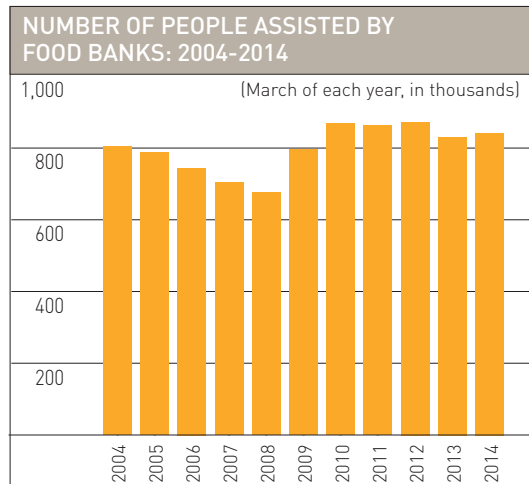
**+24.5%**  
change  
since 2008

**36.9%**  
are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	841,191	833,098	872,379	861,775	867,948	794,738	675,735
% Change, 2008-2014	24.5%						
% Change, 2013-2014	1.0%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	53.5%	49.3%	47.9%	48.8%	70.7%	78.4%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	36.9%	36.4%	38.4%	37.9%	37.8%	37.2%	37.1%
Households assisted by food banks	363,728	346,626	368,619	354,265	369,818	347,043	304,394
% Households assisted for the first time	10.4%	9.4%	10.5%	10.9%	9.2%	-	-
% National population assisted	2.38%	2.38%	2.54%	2.48%	2.56%	2.37%	2.04%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	48.1	48.5
% Post-secondary students	3.2	1.7
% Age 65+	4.3	5.4
% Aboriginal persons	13.6	25.9
% Immigrants or refugees	12.3	2.3

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	23.4	21.2
% Two-parent families	21.6	21.9
% Couples with no children	11.7	13.8
% Single people	43.3	43.1
Number of food banks reporting	1,374	469



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	11.7	11.3
% Employment Insurance	4.4	6.2
% Social assistance	47.8	49.1
% Disability-related income support	17.5	15.1
% Pension	7.0	9.2
% Student loans/scholarships	1.8	1.1
% No income	5.4	3.7
% Other	4.5	4.2
Number of food banks reporting	1,217	404

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	7.3	16.5
% Rental market tenants	64.1	56.3
% Social housing tenants	20.3	12.1
% Band-owned housing	2.0	8.5
% Shelter or group home	1.2	0.7
% Living on the street	0.9	0.6
% Living with family or friends	4.2	5.3
Number of food banks reporting	1,207	416

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

**97,369**

people helped by  
food banks  
in March

**+24.7%**

change  
since 2008

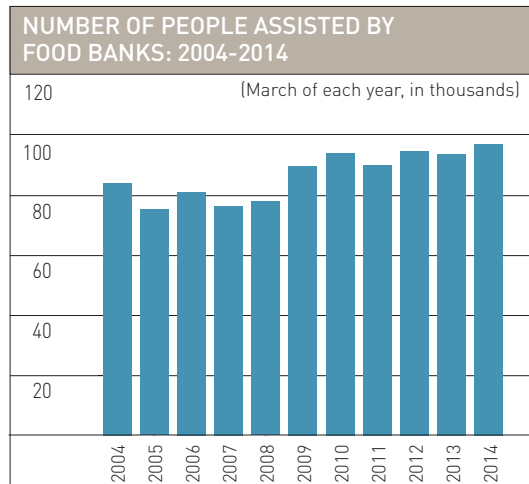
**30.8%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	97,369	94,002	94,966	90,193	94,359	89,866	78,101
% Change, 2008-2014	24.7%						
% Change, 2013-2014	3.6%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	51.6%	45.8%	44.4%	52.9%	60.2%	80.8%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	30.8%	29.5%	29.5%	31.9%	29.7%	31.4%	31.2%
Households assisted by food banks	45,440	44,750	43,282	42,465	45,196	44,206	35,005
% Households assisted for the first time	7.1%	6.6%	6.9%	6.9%	6.5%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.11%	2.03%	2.07%	1.98%	2.10%	2.03%	1.77%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	47.2	48.0
% Post-secondary students	1.8	2.3
% Age 65+	5.1	6.6
% Aboriginal persons	26.9	36.6
% Immigrants or refugees	n/a	0.4

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	20.1	19.0
% Two-parent families	16.0	17.6
% Couples with no children	11.9	13.9
% Single people	52.0	49.5
Number of food banks reporting	79	49



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	11.5	9.8
% Employment Insurance	3.8	5.1
% Social assistance	35.4	42.7
% Disability-related income support	30.3	23.2
% Pension	7.6	9.3
% Student loans/scholarships	0.5	0.4
% No income	7.2	5.3
% Other	3.7	4.1
Number of food banks reporting	71	42

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	6.4	11.7
% Rental market tenants	76.4	63.3
% Social housing tenants	7.7	6.2
% Band-owned housing	4.5	11.2
% Shelter or group home	0.9	0.7
% Living on the street	1.1	1.0
% Living with family or friends	3.1	5.9
Number of food banks reporting	63	43

# ALBERTA

**49,766**

people helped by food banks in March

**+48.2%**

change since 2008

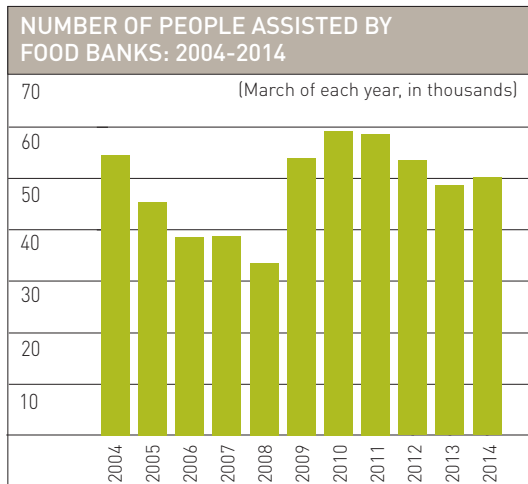
**42.9%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	49,766	48,653	53,512	58,735	59,311	53,976	33,580
% Change, 2008-2014	48.2%						
% Change, 2013-2014	2.3%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	48.7%	38.9%	40.8%	35.6%	72.5%	78.4%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	42.9%	44.1%	44.1%	43.7%	43.1%	43.1%	42.0%
Households assisted by food banks	19,441	19,374	21,309	21,556	20,078	20,815	12,031
% Households assisted for the first time	9.7%	11.6%	11.0%	17.7%	10.0%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.22%	1.24%	1.40%	1.57%	1.60%	1.40%	0.96%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	56.2	53.9
% Post-secondary students	3.1	1.9
% Age 65+	4.3	5.2
% Aboriginal persons	42.2	59.2
% Immigrants or refugees	6.6	2.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	36.5	29.7
% Two-parent families	25.1	26.3
% Couples with no children	8.6	9.8
% Single people	29.8	34.2
Number of food banks reporting	60	40



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	21.9	19.7
% Employment Insurance	6.5	7.9
% Social assistance	32.2	28.2
% Disability-related income support	15.5	16.9
% Pension	6.6	13.1
% Student loans/scholarships	2.1	1.2
% No income	9.1	7.2
% Other	6.6	5.8
Number of food banks reporting	55	41

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	7.8	12.8
% Rental market tenants	69.9	38.9
% Social housing tenants	9.4	4.1
% Band-owned housing	5.9	22.7
% Shelter or group home	1.2	1.4
% Living on the street	0.5	1.5
% Living with family or friends	5.3	18.5
Number of food banks reporting	51	34

# SASKATCHEWAN

**26,820**

people helped by  
food banks  
in March

**+51.1%**

change  
since 2008

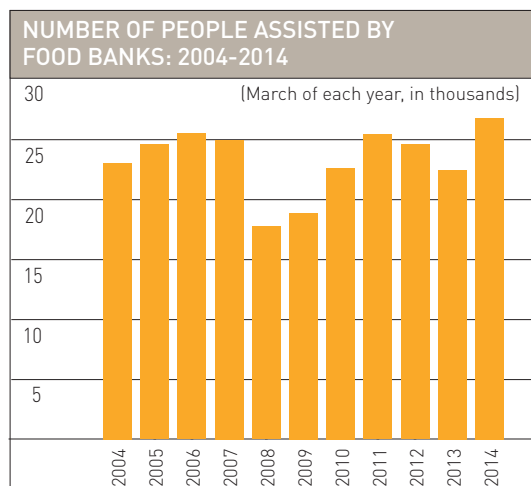
**45.8%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	26,820	22,465	24,621	25,432	22,662	18,875	17,751
% Change, 2008-2014	51.1%						
% Change, 2013-2014	19.4%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	63.6%	48.1%	17.6%	52.0%	52.0%	78.0%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	45.8%	43.8%	47.5%	46.3%	44.1%	44.4%	45.6%
Households assisted by food banks	10,701	9,043	10,180	7,734	8,355	7,063	5,819
% Households assisted for the first time	3.9%	4.7%	5.8%	8.6%	7.8%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.40%	2.06%	2.30%	2.42%	2.18%	1.80%	1.73%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	54.1	50.2
% Post-secondary students	2.7	1.2
% Age 65+	2.7	4.9
% Aboriginal persons	64.1	67.2
% Immigrants or refugees	3.0	0.6

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	27.5	29.5
% Two-parent families	21.9	30.9
% Couples with no children	10.3	7.1
% Single people	40.4	32.6
Number of food banks reporting	32	22



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	14.8	9.4
% Employment Insurance	2.9	3.6
% Social assistance	52.7	59.8
% Disability-related income support	5.7	5.2
% Pension	6.2	11.6
% Student loans/scholarships	3.2	0.5
% No income	7.8	6.3
% Other	6.7	3.6
Number of food banks reporting	30	21

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	6.8	12.1
% Rental market tenants	61.0	31.0
% Social housing tenants	19.3	17.5
% Band-owned housing	6.6	33.8
% Shelter or group home	0.7	0.0
% Living on the street	0.3	0.7
% Living with family or friends	5.2	4.8
Number of food banks reporting	31	23

# MANITOBA

**61,691**

people helped by food banks in March

**+52.5%**

change since 2008

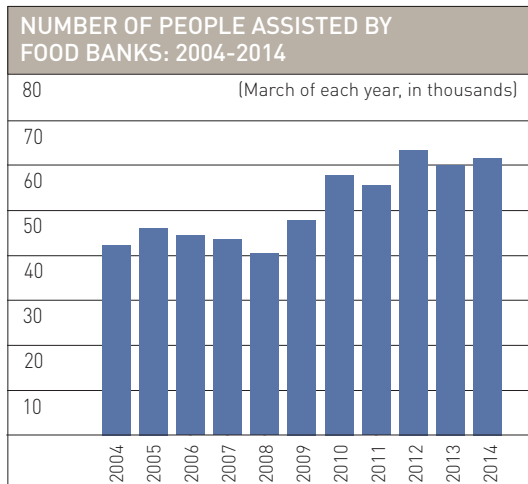
**44.3%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	61,691	60,229	63,482	55,575	57,966	47,925	40,464
% Change, 2008-2014	52.5%						
% Change, 2013-2014	2.4%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	51.1%	60.0%	59.1%	42.4%	73.0%	66.0%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	44.3%	44.7%	47.6%	50.4%	50.5%	48.7%	45.7%
Households assisted by food banks	23,790	23,074	21,261	18,620	-	-	-
% Households assisted for the first time	10.1%	17.8%	13.3%	12.4%	12.5%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	4.85%	4.72%	5.05%	4.47%	4.72%	3.89%	3.30%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	50.5	50.9
% Post-secondary students	1.4	2.0
% Age 65+	3.6	6.1
% Aboriginal persons	n/a	56.5
% Immigrants or refugees	n/a	4.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.1	23.9
% Two-parent families	27.1	28.6
% Couples with no children	14.6	12.7
% Single people	37.2	34.9
Number of food banks reporting	41	31



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	16.4	15.9
% Employment Insurance	4.0	4.4
% Social assistance	51.5	55.1
% Disability-related income support	11.3	6.6
% Pension	10.6	12.5
% Student loans/scholarships	0.4	0.2
% No income	3.0	2.2
% Other	2.9	3.0
Number of food banks reporting	30	23

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	12.9	14.6
% Rental market tenants	32.1	21.2
% Social housing tenants	18.4	12.3
% Band-owned housing	31.4	46.8
% Shelter or group home	0.4	0.2
% Living on the street	0.6	0.7
% Living with family or friends	4.1	4.3
Number of food banks reporting	29	22

# ONTARIO

**374,698**

people helped by  
food banks  
in March

**+19.2%**

change  
since 2008

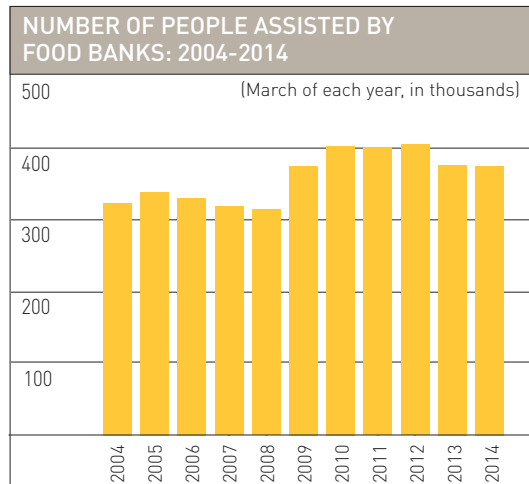
**35.0%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	374,698	375,814	404,373	400,360	402,056	374,230	314,258
% Change, 2008-2014	19.2%						
% Change, 2013-2014	-0.3%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	54.2%	47.2%	48.1%	46.4%	73.6%	76.2%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	35.0%	35.0%	38.7%	37.0%	37.1%	37.6%	37.6%
Households assisted by food banks	175,954	162,568	174,618	160,275	160,402	148,660	137,491
% Households assisted for the first time	9.8%	8.7%	9.8%	10.0%	6.9%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.76%	2.77%	3.01%	2.97%	3.06%	2.90%	2.40%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	45.3	44.9
% Post-secondary students	3.4	1.4
% Age 65+	4.0	5.2
% Aboriginal persons	6.3	15.6
% Immigrants or refugees	9.6	5.8

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	23.8	20.4
% Two-parent families	18.9	22.4
% Couples with no children	11.2	15.1
% Single people	46.1	42.1
Number of food banks reporting	377	78



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	9.3	9.4
% Employment Insurance	2.6	3.4
% Social assistance	40.3	32.0
% Disability-related income support	29.4	38.4
% Pension	6.8	8.6
% Student loans/scholarships	1.0	0.5
% No income	5.4	3.3
% Other	5.1	4.5
Number of food banks reporting	324	69

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	5.7	15.9
% Rental market tenants	64.0	63.4
% Social housing tenants	22.3	14.3
% Band-owned housing	0.4	1.9
% Shelter or group home	1.0	0.6
% Living on the street	0.8	0.3
% Living with family or friends	5.7	3.7
Number of food banks reporting	350	79

# QUEBEC

## 156,895

people helped by  
food banks  
in March

## +23.0%

change  
since 2008

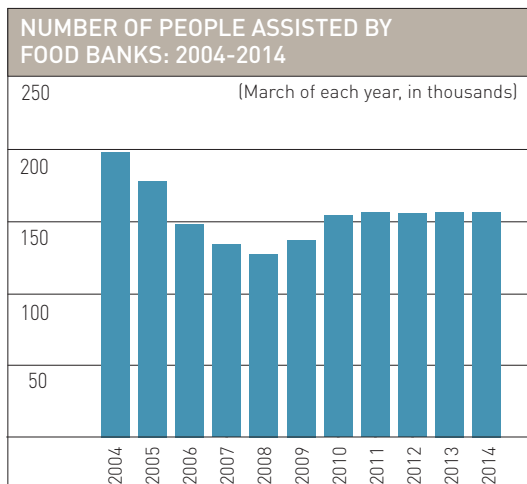
## 37.3%

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	156,895	156,750	155,574	156,279	154,364	137,464	127,536
% Change, 2008-2014	23.0%						
% Change, 2013-2014	0.1%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	56.0%	50.0%	47.1%	51.9%	-	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	37.3%	37.1%	37.2%	36.0%	37.9%	33.9%	37.1%
Households assisted by food banks	68,138	67,544	70,510	69,385	-	-	-
% Households assisted for the first time	15.5%	12.6%	14.6%	15.6%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.92%	1.95%	1.94%	1.97%	1.96%	1.77%	1.97%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	47.4	48.3
% Post-secondary students	4.6	2.1
% Age 65+	5.1	5.9
% Aboriginal persons	1.2	2.5
% Immigrants or refugees	23.0	3.2

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.6	20.1
% Two-parent families	24.9	21.3
% Couples with no children	11.4	13.3
% Single people	42.1	45.3
Number of food banks reporting	633	151



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	10.8	11.7
% Employment Insurance	5.6	8.3
% Social assistance	61.5	57.8
% Disability-related income support	3.4	4.4
% Pension	7.0	9.1
% Student loans/scholarships	3.3	2.5
% No income	4.7	2.9
% Other	3.6	3.2
Number of food banks reporting	615	148

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	7.0	17.9
% Rental market tenants	68.4	62.7
% Social housing tenants	17.8	11.9
% Band-owned housing	0.5	2.4
% Shelter or group home	2.0	1.0
% Living on the street	1.4	0.2
% Living with family or friends	2.8	4.0
Number of food banks reporting	589	145

# NEW BRUNSWICK

**19,590**

people helped by  
food banks  
in March

**+25.3%**

change  
since 2008

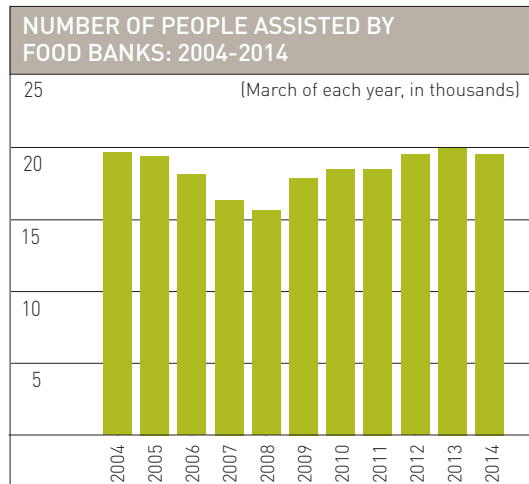
**33.9%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	19,590	19,989	19,524	18,539	18,517	17,889	15,638
% Change, 2008-2014	25.3%						
% Change, 2013-2014	-2.0%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	54.0%	59.6%	51.9%	54.2%	66.0%	70.6%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	33.9%	33.2%	32.0%	34.4%	34.3%	33.8%	33.2%
Households assisted by food banks	9,076	9,376	8,975	8,160	8,440	7,710	7,060
% Households assisted for the first time	5.8%	7.4%	9.0%	7.7%	9.4%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.59%	2.64%	2.58%	2.46%	2.46%	2.39%	2.09%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	49.1	48.4
% Post-secondary students	1.0	1.2
% Age 65+	3.5	3.6
% Aboriginal persons	3.4	3.2
% Immigrants or refugees	2.8	0.9

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	23.0	21.8
% Two-parent families	19.0	21.2
% Couples with no children	12.4	13.9
% Single people	45.6	43.1
Number of food banks reporting	39	26



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	9.6	9.0
% Employment Insurance	5.5	6.9
% Social assistance	63.2	62.8
% Disability-related income support	5.9	5.3
% Pension	6.0	6.2
% Student loans/scholarships	0.7	0.4
% No income	3.7	2.3
% Other	5.5	6.9
Number of food banks reporting	35	25

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	20.4	24.7
% Rental market tenants	57.2	53.0
% Social housing tenants	14.4	12.5
% Band-owned housing	3.0	3.0
% Shelter or group home	0.1	0.0
% Living on the street	1.1	1.5
% Living with family or friends	3.8	5.2
Number of food banks reporting	32	27



# NOVA SCOTIA

**19,664**

people helped by food banks in March

**+16.3%**

change since 2008

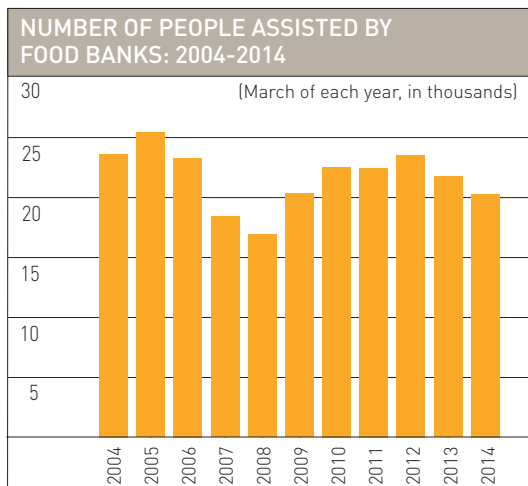
**29.2%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	19,664	21,760	23,561	22,505	22,573	20,344	16,915
% Change, 2008-2014	16.3%						
% Change, 2013-2014	-9.6%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	32.5%	37.0%	55.6%	41.5%	68.1%	57.4%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	29.2%	32.0%	32.6%	31.5%	33.0%	34.1%	35.0%
Households assisted by food banks	9,405	9,789	10,626	10,814	10,840	9,605	7,926
% Households assisted for the first time	9.6%	5.6%	5.1%	6.9%	7.3%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.09%	2.30%	2.49%	2.39%	2.40%	2.17%	1.81%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	45.6	44.7
% Post-secondary students	0.8	0.8
% Age 65+	4.8	5.1
% Aboriginal persons	2.7	2.7
% Immigrants or refugees	0.7	0.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	16.6	17.1
% Two-parent families	18.2	19.5
% Couples with no children	18.5	19.9
% Single people	46.7	43.6
Number of food banks reporting	72	42



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	13.5	7.8
% Employment Insurance	5.1	3.8
% Social assistance	44.2	59.2
% Disability-related income support	17.9	10.7
% Pension	11.0	10.3
% Student loans/scholarships	0.7	0.3
% No income	4.1	3.2
% Other	3.4	4.9
Number of food banks reporting	22	14

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	18.3	19.9
% Rental market tenants	67.8	61.5
% Social housing tenants	9.6	13.8
% Band-owned housing	2.5	1.5
% Shelter or group home	0.5	1.3
% Living on the street	0.0	0.0
% Living with family or friends	1.2	2.1
Number of food banks reporting	26	16

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

**3,432**

people helped by  
food banks  
in March

**+18.7%**

change  
since 2008

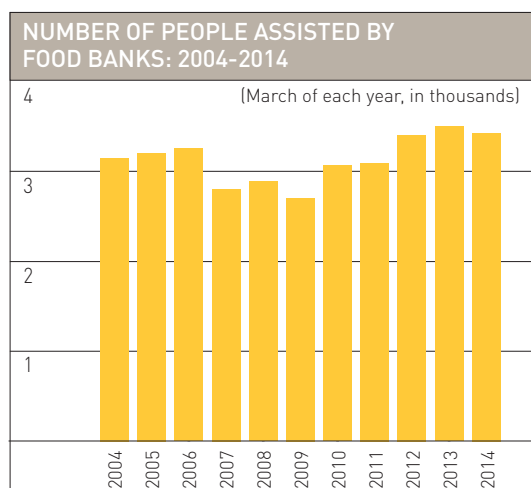
**38.0%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	3,432	3,502	3,406	3,095	3,068	2,706	2,892
% Change, 2008-2014	18.7%						
% Change, 2013-2014	-2.0%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	40.0%	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%	50.0%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	38.0%	35.8%	34.1%	35.3%	35.5%	35.8%	35.4%
Households assisted by food banks	1,249	1,278	1,413	1,231	1,198	1,083	1,155
% Households assisted for the first time	3.3%	3.4%	4.9%	7.0%	6.9%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.36%	2.40%	2.33%	2.16%	2.17%	1.93%	1.95%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	51.0	46.0
% Post-secondary students	0.4	0.2
% Age 65+	4.5	4.3
% Aboriginal persons	2.8	0.3
% Immigrants or refugees	3.0	0.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	22.4	21.4
% Two-parent families	25.8	31.3
% Couples with no children	12.7	8.5
% Single people	39.1	38.8
Number of food banks reporting	5	2



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	19.9	21.3
% Employment Insurance	17.3	24.8
% Social assistance	36.4	24.8
% Disability-related income support	8.9	13.4
% Pension	10.8	9.9
% Student loans/scholarships	0.4	0.0
% No income	2.3	2.5
% Other	3.9	3.5
Number of food banks reporting	5	2

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	13.5	31.2
% Rental market tenants	69.7	44.6
% Social housing tenants	11.3	22.3
% Band-owned housing	2.3	0.0
% Shelter or group home	0.4	0.0
% Living on the street	0.0	0.0
% Living with family or friends	2.8	2.0
Number of food banks reporting	5	2

# NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

**26,617**

people helped by food banks in March

**-2.4%**

change since 2008

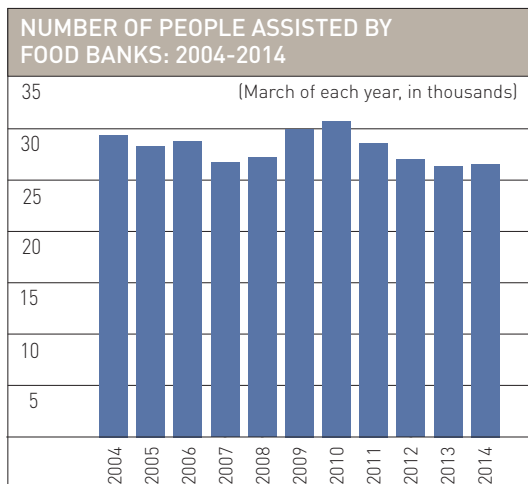
**37.7%**

are children

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Individuals assisted by food banks	26,617	26,412	27,044	28,642	30,800	30,014	27,260
% Change, 2008-2014	-2.4%						
% Change, 2013-2014	0.8%						
% Food banks reporting an increase	60.6%	37.9%	51.9%	40.7%	67.9%	70.4%	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	37.7%	37.9%	38.8%	37.3%	37.3%	37.4%	38.4%
Households assisted by food banks	8,977	8,923	8,950	9,090	9,003	9,235	8,037
% Households assisted for the first time	4.5%	4.4%	4.7%	4.8%	5.4%	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	5.05%	5.14%	5.29%	5.63%	6.03%	5.90%	5.36%

DEMOGRAPHICS	All	Rural
% Women	57.8	48.8
% Post-secondary students	1.6	1.2
% Age 65+	3.9	5.8
% Aboriginal persons	9.7	16.7
% Immigrants or refugees	0.0	0.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	35.5	26.0
% Two-parent families	24.8	18.5
% Couples with no children	10.7	13.2
% Single people	29.0	42.3
Number of food banks reporting	25	18



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	9.2	5.0
% Employment Insurance	12.5	5.5
% Social assistance	71.4	77.4
% Disability-related income support	0.5	2.6
% Pension	5.8	5.2
% Student loans/scholarships	0.1	1.1
% No income	0.2	2.0
% Other	0.3	1.0
Number of food banks reporting	22	17

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
% Homeowners	12.1	19.2
% Rental market tenants	22.7	60.6
% Social housing tenants	64.5	17.6
% Band-owned housing	0.0	0.1
% Shelter or group home	0.0	0.0
% Living on the street	0.1	0.1
% Living with family or friends	0.6	2.4
Number of food banks reporting	22	16

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For a popular example, see N. Reynolds (2012). The unseemly nature of the welfare state. *Globe and Mail*, June 12, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/the-unseemly-nature-of-the-welfare-state/article4253907/>.
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# METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of the annual *HungerCount* survey is to provide a national and provincial snapshot of food bank and meal program 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 the total number of 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, Aboriginal identity, immigration/refugee status, and student status at the individual level, and primary source of income, household composition, and housing type at the household level. As well, the survey collects information on various operational aspects relevant to food banks and meal programs.

Surveys were sent to all known Canadian food banks and meal programs in February 2014. When necessary, *HungerCount* Provincial Coordinators contacted organizations 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 2013 figures as a guide.

**TABLE 2: HUNGERCOUNT SURVEY PARTICIPATION, 2014**

Province/Territory	Number of Known Food Programs	Number of Participating Food Programs	% of Food Programs Participating	Number of Food Programs with Estimated Information	Number of Agencies Included	Total Organizations Included
British Columbia	93	93	100%	0	328	421
Alberta	113	79	70%	30	413	526
Saskatchewan	36	36	100%	0	63	99
Manitoba	54	54	100%	0	320	374
Ontario	503	426	85%	51	1,270	1,773
Quebec	994	946	95%	0	0	994
New Brunswick	61	59	97%	0	25	86
Nova Scotia	169	149	88%	20	25	194
Prince Edward Island	6	5	83%	1	7	13
Newfoundland & Labrador	37	35	95%	0	64	101
Territories	12	11	92%	1	0	12
<b>Canada</b>	<b>2,078</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2,515</b>	<b>4,593</b>

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