

An Update on Food Insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador

Objective

To determine the extent of food insecurity and food bank usage in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) compared to other Canadian provinces and to look at the cost of healthy eating in NL.

Practice Points

1. Food insecurity is a measure of material deprivation and is most prevalent among households with inadequate, insecure incomes and limited, if any, financial assets, or access to credit. Household food insecurity is a serious population health problem in Canada (CA) and is strongly associated with numerous adverse health outcomes.
2. In CA, food insecurity is measured through the Household Food Security Survey Module of the Canadian Income Survey. Households are classified into 1 of 4 categories: food secure, marginally food insecure, moderately food insecure and severely food insecure.
3. The HungerCount is Food Banks Canada’s annual report documenting food bank use across CA. It is a cross-sectional, census-type survey of most food bank agencies, organizations and programs, within and outside of the Food Banks Canada network.
4. The Newfoundland and Labrador Nutritious Food Basket (NLNFB) is a tool used to monitor the cost of healthy eating in NL. It is based on the National Nutritious Food basket developed by Health Canada. The NLNFB consists of 61 foods from the 2019 Canada’s Food Guide. The prices of specific amounts of these foods, combined with the nutrient needs of individuals and families determines the cost of the basket.

2. Data on food bank usage was obtained from the HungerCount reports created by Food Banks Canada. Food bank visits and age distribution of users were compared between provinces and NL specific characteristics of food bank clients was reported.
3. Data on the NLNFB was obtained from the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency 2021 to 2024.

Results

Canadian Income Survey – Household Food Insecurity

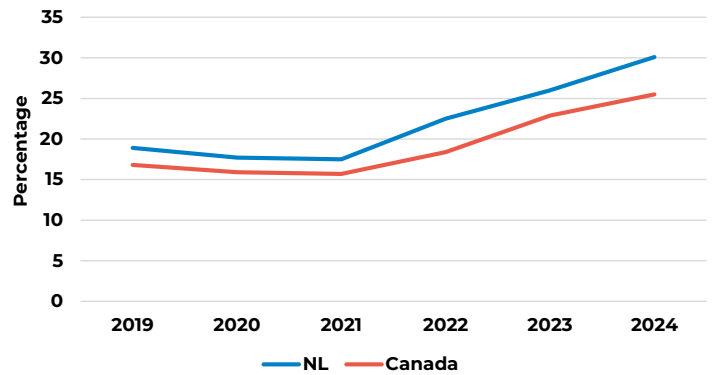


Figure 1. Percentage of People Living in Food-Insecure Households in NL and CA, 2019–2024

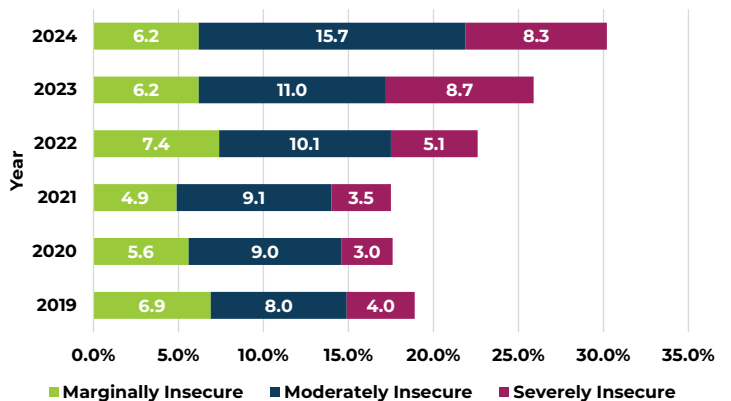


Figure 2. Percentage of People Living in Food-Insecure Households in NL by Severity, 2019–2024

Methods

1. Data on household food insecurity was obtained from Statistics Canada and compared over time in NL and CA and between provinces over time (2019 to 2024).

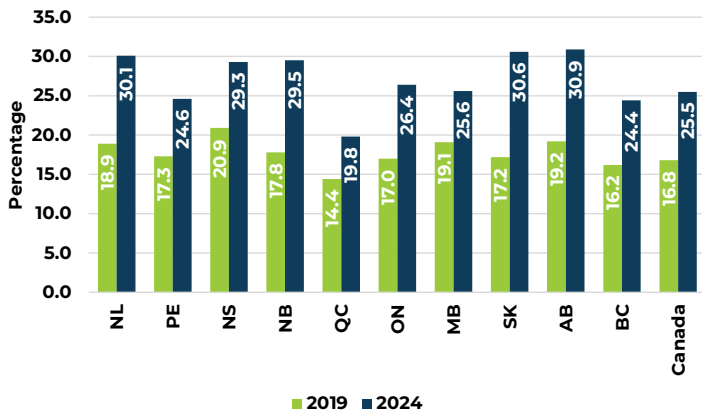


Figure 3. Percentage of People Living in Food-Insecure Households by Province, 2019–2024

- Overall, from 2019 to 2024, household food insecurity has increased in NL and across CA. During this time, food insecurity has consistently been higher in NL compared to CA.
- From 2019 to 2024, the rate of food insecurity increased by 59.3% in NL (51.8% for CA).
- While the proportion of people living in households experiencing marginal food insecurity has decreased from 2019 to 2024 in NL, those living in households experiencing moderate and severe food insecurity have doubled.
- In 2024, NL ranked eighth for household food insecurity when compared to the other provinces (1=best and 10=worst).

Food Banks Canada Report: HungerCount 2025

According to survey respondents, the top three reasons people accessed a food bank in Mar 2025 were:

1. Cost of food
2. Cost of housing
3. Low wages/delayed wages.

Table 1. Food Bank Visits and Age Distribution of Users by Province, Mar 2025

Region	Total Visits, Mar 2025	Total Visits (Children), Mar 2025	% Change in Total Visits (2024-25)	% Change in Total Visits (2019-25)	Age Category Served as % of Total		
					<18 Years	18-64 Years	65+ Years
NL	15,422	4,700	8.3	44.1	30.1	63.4	6.5
PE	5,350	1,757	-1.6	80.8	32.9	61.5	5.6
NS	43,421	14,023	10.3	69.4	33.2	60.1	6.7
NB	32,343	10,781	0.5	45.3	33.3	60.9	5.8
QC	746,411	260,419	3.5	116.2	34.6	57.5	7.9
ON	763,756	228,689	3.7	124.9	31.5	59.7	8.8
MB	64,975	25,047	17.1	-	33.0	49.6	17.4
SK	55,310	20,906	4.6	48.6	37.8	57.2	5.0
AB	210,541	75,968	21.8	134.4	36.2	59.1	4.7
BC	223,340	68,053	-1.0	79.1	30.6	58.1	11.3
Canada	2,165,766	711,770	5.2	99.4	33.1	58.6	8.3

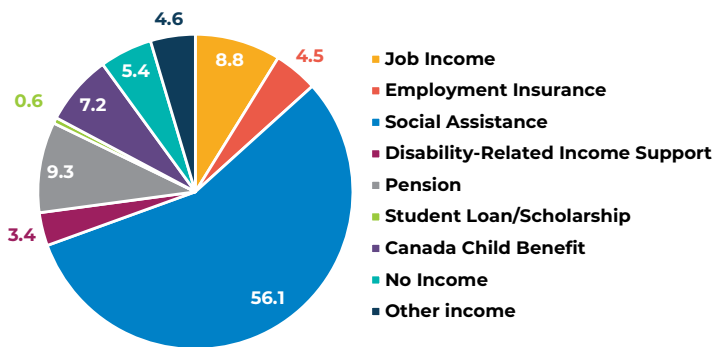


Figure 4. NL Food Bank User Statistics: Primary Source of Income, Mar 2025

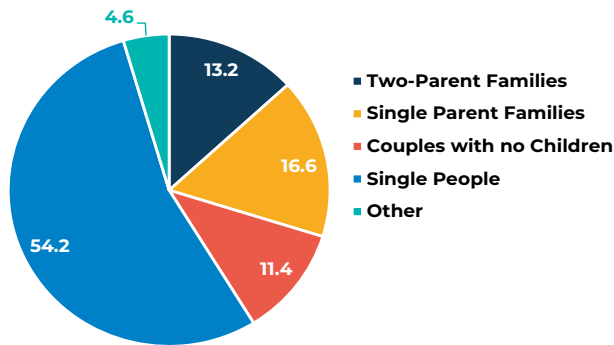


Figure 5. NL Food Bank User Statistics: Household Type, Mar 2025

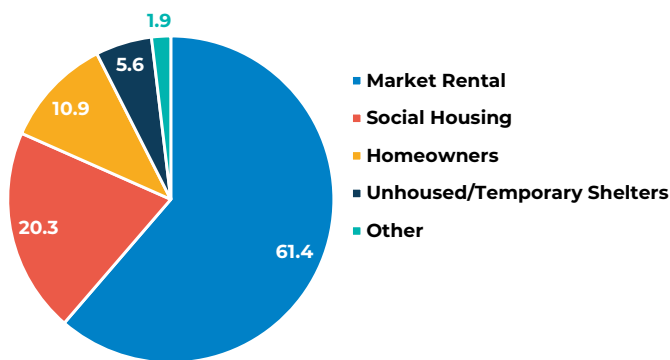


Figure 6. NL Food Bank User Statistics: Housing Type, Mar 2025

- NL had an 8% increase in food bank usage from 2024 to 2025. Overall, from 2019 to 2025, usage has increased by 44% in NL. While NL has had the lowest percentage change in total visits from 2019 to 2025, they had the fourth highest percentage change over the last year (2024 to 2025).
- One third of food bank clients in NL and across CA are children.
- Single-person households account for more than 50% of food bank clients in NL (the highest rate amongst Canadian provinces).
- Over 55% of food bank clients in NL were receiving social assistance (the highest rate amongst the Canadian provinces) and close to 20% were either employed or receiving a pension.
- Renters and social housing tenants make up more than 80% of food bank clients in NL.

NL Nutritious Food Basket

Table 2. Cost of Nutritious Food Basket per Week in NL by Region, 2021–2024

Region	2021	2022	2023	2024
Eastern	\$261	\$292	\$317	\$321
Eastern Urban	\$244	\$274	\$301	\$308
Eastern Rural	\$302	\$340	\$359	\$356
Central	\$288	\$324	\$344	\$342
Central Urban	\$246	\$282	\$307	\$308
Central Rural	\$306	\$342	\$361	\$357
Western	\$305	\$335	\$363	\$367
Western Urban	\$298	\$327	\$352	\$347
Western Rural	\$311	\$342	\$374	\$387
Labrador-Grenfell	\$314	\$361	\$386	\$394
Labrador (North Coast)	\$394	\$467	\$509	\$491
Labrador (South Coast)	\$363	\$413	\$427	\$437
Labrador (Central West)	\$289	\$324	\$359	\$369
Northern Peninsula Portion of Labrador-Grenfell Health	\$325	\$385	\$388	\$400
Province	\$275	\$309	\$333	\$336

Table 2 Notes:

1. The 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 (NLNFB) consists of 61 foods from the 2019 Canada's Food Guide. The prices of specific amounts of these foods, combined with the nutrient needs of individuals and families determines the cost of the basket.
2. For nutritional purposes, a family of four consists of a man and a woman (31-50 years), a boy (14-18 years) and a girl (4-8 years).
3. The urban population refers to Statistics Canada defined census metropolitan and census agglomeration areas and communities with a population of 5,000 and over. All other areas are defined as rural.
4. A change to one item in the basket, store selection and regional definition of North Coast and South Coast Labrador has resulted in adjustments to the 2021 estimates. These changes ensure consistency when comparing 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

- Food costs have consistently been highest in the Labrador-Grenfell region (with the highest being on the North Coast of Labrador) of the province.
- From 2021 to 2024, the cost of a nutritious food basket has increased by 22% in NL.
 - ◇ 23% in Eastern
 - ◇ 19% in Central
 - ◇ 20% in Western
 - ◇ 25% in Labrador-Grenfell

Conclusions

1. The continued increase in the cost of living has left many households financially overburdened, with insufficient income remaining for food and basic needs. This has led to an almost 60% increase in the rate of food insecurity in NL since 2019 and an approximately 45% increase in food bank visits during this time.
2. In 2024, approximately 1 in 3 people in NL were living in food-insecure households, with the large majority of them living in moderate to severe food-insecure households.
3. The cost of a nutritious food basket in NL has risen by more than 20% in a 4-year period due to the continued rise in food prices.