

Food Insecurity in NL

Objective

To determine the extent of food insecurity in NL compared to other Canadian provinces.

Practice Points

1. Household food insecurity refers to the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints. It denotes pervasive material deprivation. It is most prevalent in single-parent families, renters and among individuals who identify as Indigenous or black.
2. In Ontario, compared with total annual health/drug costs in food-secure households, these adjusted annual costs were 23% higher in households with marginal food insecurity, 49% higher in those with moderate food insecurity, and 121% higher in those with severe food insecurity (Tarasuk et al., CMAJ, 2015). Whether this is cause or effect is uncertain.
3. In 2017–18, in Canada, 12.7% of households experienced some level of food insecurity in the previous 12 months.
4. In NL, reductions in food insecurity among social assistance recipients from 2007–12 correlate with the increase in social assistance benefits that accompanied the 2006 poverty reduction strategy.
5. Food costs in NL have risen 11.4% from 2012–17. The weekly cost of a nutritious food basket in 2017 for a family of four was \$261 in Eastern Newfoundland, \$263 in Central Newfoundland, \$275 in Western Newfoundland, \$258 in Grenfell, \$256 in Central West Labrador, \$308 in South Coast Labrador and \$402 in North Coast Labrador. Comparable cost in Montreal in 2018 was \$232.

Data

Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey conducted in 2017–18 in 103,500 households reported by Tarasuk V. Miller A. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

Results

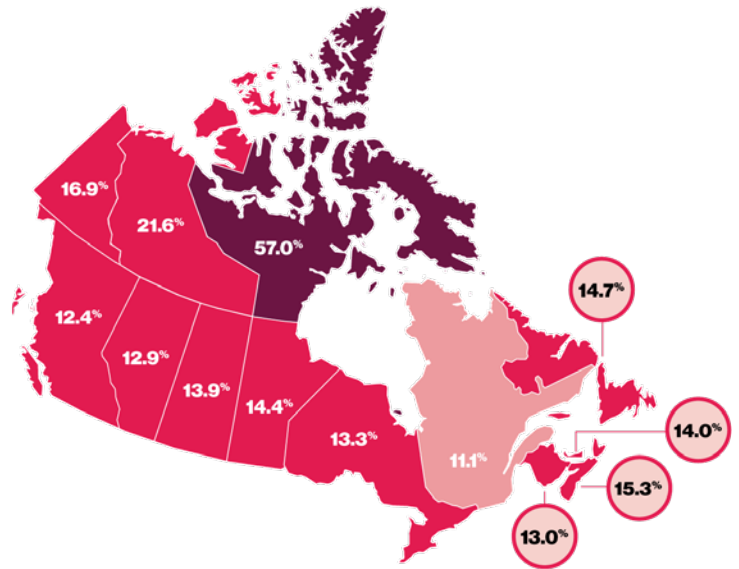


Figure 1. Household Food Insecurity by Province and Territory (taken from: PROOF – Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (utoronto.ca))

- The rate of food insecurity in NL was 14.7%, which ranked 9th out of the ten provinces. This comprised 3.3% of households with severe, 6.8% with moderate, and 4.7% with marginal food insecurity.
- The number of people living in food-insecure households in NL was 67,100.

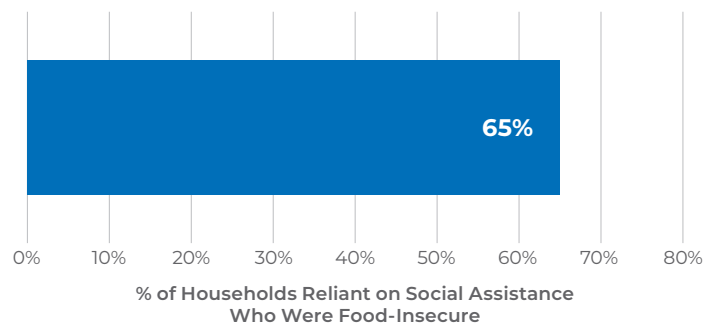


Figure 2A. Proportion of Households Reliant on Social Assistance Who Were Food-insecure in NL

- Social assistance recipients are at highest risk of food insecurity, but they comprise a minority of food-insecure households (15% in Canada).
- There were 32,632 individuals receiving income assistance in NL in 2019.

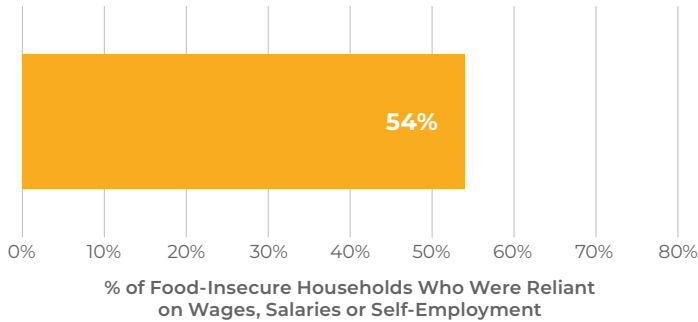


Figure 2B. Proportion of Food-Insecure Households Who Were Reliant on Wages, Salaries or Self-Employment in NL

- In Canada, the prevalence of food insecurity among households reliant on wages and salaries is low, but they make up the majority of food-insecure households. In NL, this proportion of food-insecure households who were reliant on wages, salaries or self-employment was 54%, the lowest in Canada.

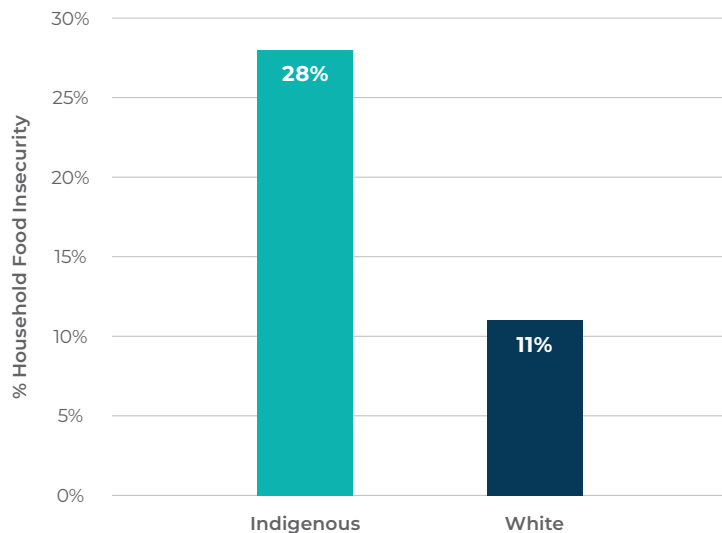


Figure 3. Prevalence of Household Food Insecurity in Indigenous People in Canada

- The prevalence of household food insecurity is substantially higher in Indigenous people than in white people.

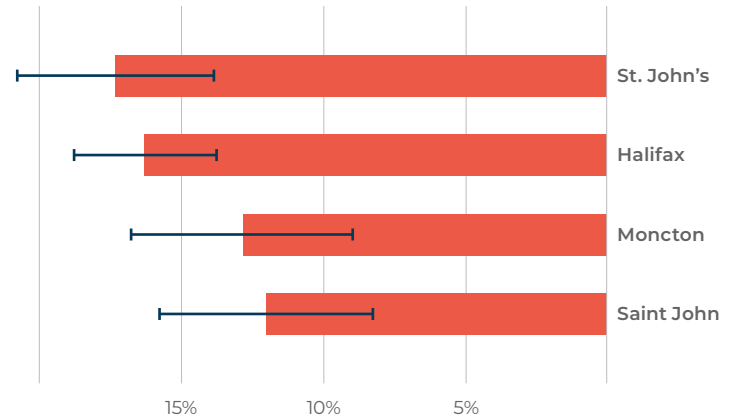


Figure 4. Prevalence of Household Food Insecurity in St. John's Compared to Maritime Cities in 2017-18

- Compared to 34 other major urban areas, St. John's had the highest prevalence of food insecurity in Canada (17.3%) (Data source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Health Survey (CCHS), 2017-18 and 2015-16).

Conclusions

- The prevalence of food insecurity in NL is the second highest among the Canadian provinces, and St. John's is the highest among Canadian major urban areas.
- In NL, two of every three households reliant on social assistance are food-insecure.