



# Who's Hungry

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PROFILE OF HUNGER IN  
THE TORONTO REGION



Daily Bread  
Food Bank



NORTH YORK  
HARVEST  
FOOD BANK



Fighting Hunger...Feeding Hope





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# FOREWORD



**Neil Hetherington**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Daily Bread Food Bank



**Ryan Noble,**  
Executive Director,  
North York Harvest  
Food Bank



**Meghan Nicholls,**  
Executive Director,  
The Mississauga Food Bank

Food is enshrined in the International Declaration of Human Rights. Yet despite having signed on to this international agreement, over four million Canadians are food insecure.<sup>1</sup>

This year, there were over one million visits to food banks in the Toronto region alone. This represents a 4% increase compared to last year. These staggering numbers tell us that the **Right to Food** is not being realized in our communities. This is particularly true for low-income neighbourhoods and for people who are racialized, Indigenous, or living with a disability.

Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest Food Bank, The Mississauga Food Bank, and the 250+ frontline agencies we work with see the realities of hunger each day. As poverty continues to soar and the hunger crisis worsens, our government bodies must do more to meet their legal obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food. We cannot stand still as thousands of families and individuals across the city skip meals to feed their children or pay their rent.

Hunger is a symptom of poverty. It a public policy issue that cannot be outsourced to charity. As the number of food bank visits continue to rise, food banks struggle to meet the ever-growing demand. Realizing the right to food does not mean that the government is required to provide food directly to each citizen. Rather, it means that our federal, provincial, and municipal governments are responsible for creating an environment in which people have the physical and economic means and agency to access adequate food.

We recognize that realizing the right to food for all will take time. Our food banks are committed to meeting the immediate and ongoing needs of our communities by providing food relief while we advocate for long-term, systemic solutions to end poverty and food insecurity. To achieve our hunger-free vision, we need our governments to commit to realizing the right to food by:

- Strengthening social assistance
- Supporting low-income households by expanding tax benefits and creating pathways out of poverty
- Investing in affordable housing and tenant protections
- Enhancing access to affordable childcare
- Committing to ensuring access to affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate food in each and every community
- Adopting a human rights-based approach to decision making to ensure policies promote equity

Our food banks will continue to collaborate with government, other not-for-profit organizations, and our partners in the private sector to achieve this vision. Our work is made possible by the generous support and contributions of our donors and the 17,000 volunteers across our agencies who believe that no one should miss a meal.

We hope that you will join us and food organizations across Canada in advocating for the right to food.

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

Who's Hungry captures and amplifies the voices of clients who have visited food banks. It tells the story of thousands of people living in a prosperous region, yet struggling to put food on the table.

This year, the report focuses on the right to food. We begin by describing the history of the right to food, followed by an analysis of trends in food bank use and poverty in the Toronto region based on data from food bank member agencies and our annual survey of 1,400 food bank clients. We conclude with recommendations for how we can achieve the right to food for all.

As food banks evolve, we have new opportunities to collect data to help us better quantify and understand poverty and food insecurity. This year the scope of our report has expanded in two important ways.

First, The Mississauga Food Bank has joined us as a partner in the annual survey of food bank clients. We are thrilled that we now have survey data about the experience of food security spanning across Mississauga and the City of Toronto.

Second, this year's report takes an important step forward in using big data to help us better understand the clients we serve. In 2014, Feed Ontario (formerly the Ontario Association of Food Banks) rolled out Link2Feed, a provincial client intake database that securely and confidentially captures client visits, demographic details, and even food preferences. This year's report begins to harness the power of this big data set to help us better understand the demographics and patterns of the individuals accessing food banks in the Toronto region.

The challenge with expanding the scope of this report is that it makes it more difficult to make comparisons to previous reports. However, the benefits of being able to tell a bigger, more nuanced story that will serve as the baseline for future years makes this change not only worthwhile, but necessary.

## What is big data?

Big data can be defined by the "Three Vs":

**Volume** – high volumes of data

**Velocity** – received at a fast rate

**Variety** – multiple types of data available

## How can big data help fight food insecurity?

To tackle a complex problem you need to understand it.

Big data helps us understand the scope and magnitude of the problem.

It can also help measure trends over time to see if policy interventions are having an impact.

# IS CANADA ACHIEVING THE RIGHT TO FOOD?

The **Right to Food** means “the right to feed oneself in dignity.”<sup>3</sup> This does not mean governments have an obligation to provide food directly to each citizen. Rather, the right to food is about creating an environment in which people have the physical and economic means and agency to access adequate food.<sup>4,5</sup>

## ■ Availability

Sufficient quantities of food are available to all people

## ■ Accessibility

Food is physically accessible and affordable

## ■ Adequacy

Food is nutritious and safe

## ■ Acceptability

Food is culturally appropriate and meets dietary needs

## ■ Agency

People are able to make choices about foods they obtain, grow and consume

**“It doesn’t matter who you are, where you’re from, or your nationality, culture, age, or creed. Food is a universal language and a basic necessity for everyone”**

**Janelle Simpson**, Executive Director, Emmanuel Life Management Center - Victoria Park and Sheppard Food Bank

## CANADA’S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS TO REALIZE THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Canada has committed to the progressive realization of the right to food by signing on to a number of international legal frameworks that require the government to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to food.<sup>6</sup>

**International Declaration of Human Rights**

**1948**

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food.” (Article 25)

“Right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.” (Article 11)

**1976**

**International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**

## Respect

Make sure the government's own actions do not threaten people's access to food.

## Protect

Prevent other governments, companies, and individuals from threatening people's access to food.

## Fulfill

Take actions to ensure people can get food, by making enough money to buy it or by growing it. If people cannot get enough food through these means, then the government has a responsibility to provide it.

## THE RIGHT TO FOOD IS UNFULFILLED

Despite these legal commitments, over four million Canadians are food insecure.<sup>1</sup> Food bank visits continue to rise across the country. **The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food visited Canada in 2012 and found that Canada is not currently meeting its international commitments with respect to the right to food.**<sup>7</sup>

Canada has not enshrined the right to food into the Canadian Constitution or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We are not unique in this regard; despite 164 countries ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, only 30 countries have incorporated the right to food into their constitutions.<sup>8</sup> Canada has also not yet adopted any domestic policies or legislation that explicitly reference the right to food.

**"The right to food means people have the ability to lead healthier lives, with less stress and anxiety, to share meals with friends and family and to always be able to pack a good lunch for their kids. It should be an affront to us all that this basic right isn't afforded to all."**

**Nick Saul, CEO, Community Food Centres Canada**

**Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**1991**

States shall take appropriate measures "[t]o combat disease and malnutrition ... through the provision of adequate nutritious foods" (Article 24.2)

"[P]ersons with disabilities [have a right] to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food." (Article 28)

**2010**

**Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**2015**

"By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round." (Article 2.1)

## POSITIVE STEPS FORWARD

Within the previous year, the federal government has issued three landmark policy frameworks: Canada's first poverty reduction strategy, food policy, and national housing strategy. While the poverty reduction strategy and food policy both acknowledge the important role of food as a basic need, neither document explicitly acknowledges that food is a human right or that Canada has a legal obligation to fulfill this right. In contrast, the national housing strategy explicitly states that "housing rights are human rights" and that Canada is committed to the progressive realization of the right of each Canadian to access adequate housing. This firm commitment is a model that the government can follow for the realization of the right to food.



### Poverty Reduction Strategy 2018

"Lifting Canadians out of poverty by ensuring basic needs—such as safe and affordable housing, healthy food, and health care are met."



### Food Policy for Canada 2019

Vision: "All people in Canada are able to access a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food."



### National Housing Strategy 2019

"Improved housing affordability and safety through a human rights-based approach to housing."

"The right to food re-centres the food system around people and requires that our voices and participation be key in policy-making. It empowers us to demand from our governments both short- and long-term solutions that move beyond charity to address the root causes of food insecurity today, while building sustainable food systems that will feed us into the future."

Nadia Lambek, Human Rights Lawyer

# HOW HOUSEHOLDS COPE WITH FOOD INSECURITY

Our annual survey captures the stories of food insecure households in the Toronto region. These households are unable to access the food they need due to an inability to afford life's basic necessities. The coping strategies they select depend on the level of their food insecurity, which can range from marginal, to moderate, to severe.<sup>1</sup>



Experiencing any level of food insecurity can have long lasting impacts on mental, physical, and social well-being.<sup>1</sup> In childhood, food insecurity can hinder physical and cognitive development and can be further associated with poor academic performance,<sup>1</sup> which can continue into a cycle of poverty well into adulthood. For adults, food insecurity is associated with higher susceptibility to chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease and it can make it difficult to manage pre-existing health conditions because of the inability to afford necessary foods and medications.<sup>1</sup>

## FOOD INSECURITY AMONG FOOD BANK CLIENTS

As of 2014, when the most recent Canadian Community Health Survey measuring food insecurity across all provinces was conducted, 12.6% of households in the Toronto census metropolitan area experienced some form of food insecurity.<sup>10</sup> The rate of food insecurity in the Toronto region was higher than that of the national average for Canada.

PERCENT OF POPULATION LIVING WITH FOOD INSECURITY IN 2014 <sup>9</sup>			
	Canada	Ontario	Toronto
<b>Marginal</b>	3.7 %	2.8 %	-
<b>Moderate</b>	5.5 %	5.9 %	-
<b>Severe</b>	2.7 %	3.2 %	-
<b>Total %</b>	11.9 %	11.9 %	<b>12.6 %</b>

“You can’t eat what’s healthy. Canada Health promotes health, but we can’t afford it.”

-Survey respondent

## How Often Respondents Were Hungry in Past Three Months



## How Often Respondents’ Children Were Hungry in Past Three Months



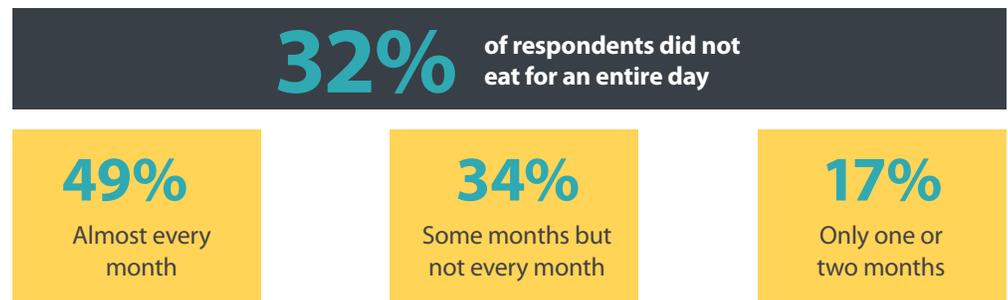
Nationally in 2014, 2.3% of adults in Canada experienced hunger because they could not afford to eat.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, this rate was much higher among our survey respondents, where 29% reported experiencing hunger at least once per week because they could not afford to buy enough food. Similarly, while only 0.9% of Canadians reported not eating for a whole day due to lack of money,<sup>10</sup> 32% of our respondents reported having this experience, with close to half of them not eating for an entire day almost every single month. These clients are likely experiencing severe food insecurity, where they are reducing their food intake and suffering the consequences to their health and well-being.

“[I need] food for my three kids. Me, I can go without. But my kids, I need to make sure they are good and that’s why I use the food banks.”

-Survey respondent

Among children, 0.2% of Canadian households reported that their child went hungry because they could not afford to buy them food.<sup>10</sup> Of our survey respondents, 15% reported that their children experienced hunger at least one day a week. These numbers suggest that children may be less likely to experience severe forms of food insecurity than adults, potentially due to some of the coping strategies their parents adopt, such as skipping meals themselves to ensure that their children have enough to eat. However, given the detrimental impact of hunger on child development, any form of food insecurity among children is unacceptable.

## Frequency of Not Eating for a Whole Day



## COPING WITH FOOD INSECURITY

“We limit the amount we purchase and substitute for cheaper options. We also use food banks more often.”

-Survey respondent

In the past year, food costs have increased by 4% across Canada<sup>11</sup> and 7.5% in Toronto.<sup>12</sup> The rising cost of food compounds the stress felt by households already struggling to manage their day-to-day expenses. For those surveyed, 87% reported that they changed the way they shopped for food and their consumption habits overall because of the increase in food prices. Respondents reported the following: shopping at discounted grocery stores, couponing, only purchasing sale items, reducing the quantity of foods purchased, substituting preferred foods for items that are affordable but of lesser quality, and increasing the use of food banks.

Other strategies included skipping meals in order to have enough to pay for other necessities. Approximately 52% of respondents revealed that they had missed a meal in order to pay a bill. The top three necessities they chose over food were rent, phone bill, and transportation.

### TOP THREE REASONS WHY RESPONDENTS SKIPPED MEALS



RENT  
**31%**



PHONE  
**20%**



TRANSPORTATION  
**18%**

### FINANCIAL COPING MECHANISMS

<b>Borrow from friends or family</b>	37 %
<b>Use credit card</b>	31 %
<b>Sell property</b>	13 %
<b>Payday lender</b>	12 %
<b>Use line of credit</b>	10 %
<b>Cash in RRSP or other financial assets</b>	5 %

**53%**

of respondents who took out a loan from a payday lender were unable to pay back the loan without returning for an additional loan

For many of respondents, debt was the only way to survive, with 31% of respondents using a credit card, 12% using a payday lender, and 10% using a line of credit to pay their bills. This is a troubling trend; high interest rates make it difficult for low-income households to pay off their debts, fuelling the cycle of poverty and, in turn, perpetuating food insecurity.

When coping strategies are not sufficient to make ends meet, people in the Toronto region can turn to a food bank to help fulfil their basic needs.

# FOOD BANK TRENDS IN THE TORONTO REGION

Food bank visits are a barometer for understanding whether or not the right to food is being met. While some people access food banks for emergency, short-term relief when faced with unexpected circumstances, such as job loss, food banks are increasingly providing food on an ongoing basis to households who are consistently struggling to make ends meet. When a household is chronically struggling to purchase food, their right to food is not being met.

There are currently 145 food banks and pantries operated by the more than 250 member agencies of Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest Food Bank, and The Mississauga Food Bank. These member agencies represent a wide spectrum of organizations, from large multi-service agencies, to community health centres, to faith-based groups. These food banks provide food, information, and referrals across the Toronto region, where there is a population of close to 3.5 million people.<sup>13,14</sup>

Food bank visits fluctuate annually and seasonally based on local demand. It is difficult to pinpoint a singular reason for these fluctuations, as food bank use is influenced by local and even international policies and events such as changes in food prices, inflation, the cost of living, and unemployment rates.

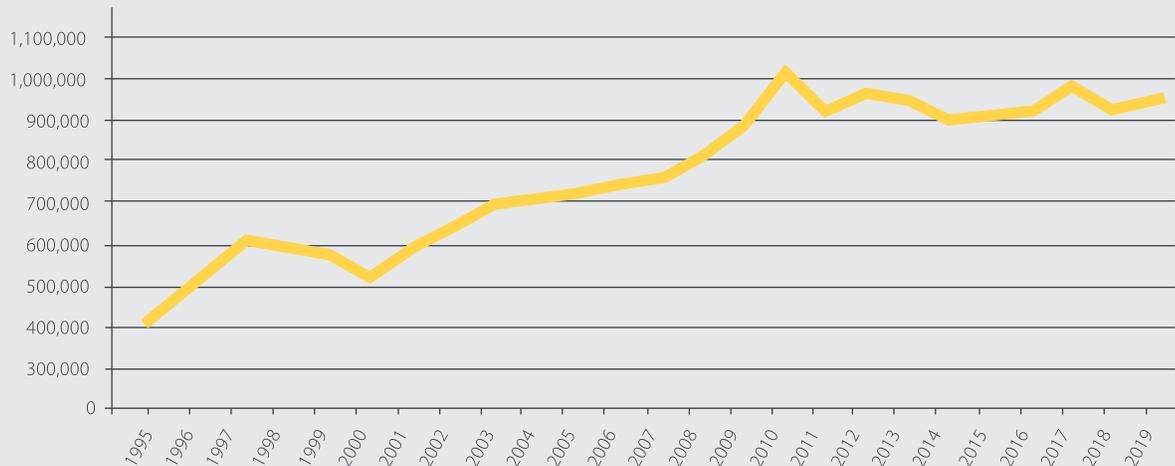
Despite these fluctuations year to year, the trend is clear: food bank visits continue to rise in the Toronto region. This year, we saw over one million visits to food banks in Toronto and Mississauga. This represents a 4% increase compared to the previous year. The growth in food bank visits cannot be explained by new programs being added, since only one new food bank was opened in the Toronto region during this time, representing a 0.5% change. Similarly, the number of operating hours of the food banks stayed constant during this time period. The 4% increase in visits is an indicator of the growing depths of food insecurity in the Toronto region.



<sup>a</sup>At Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest Food Bank and The Mississauga Food Bank member agencies between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019.

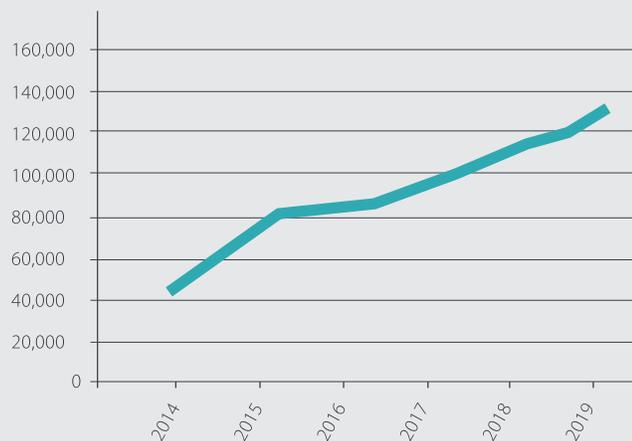
## Food Bank Visits in Toronto

936,807 in 2019



## Food Bank Visits in Mississauga<sup>b</sup>

133,524 in 2019



**“The right to food means being able to devote energy to growth, rather than simply survival. It means the security of knowing where your next meal is coming from, rather than wondering if you are going to be cold and hungry that night. It means choice, rather than being forced to eat whatever you can find. Finally, it means dignity: the dignity of knowing that your body and mind deserve to be cared for and nourished.”**

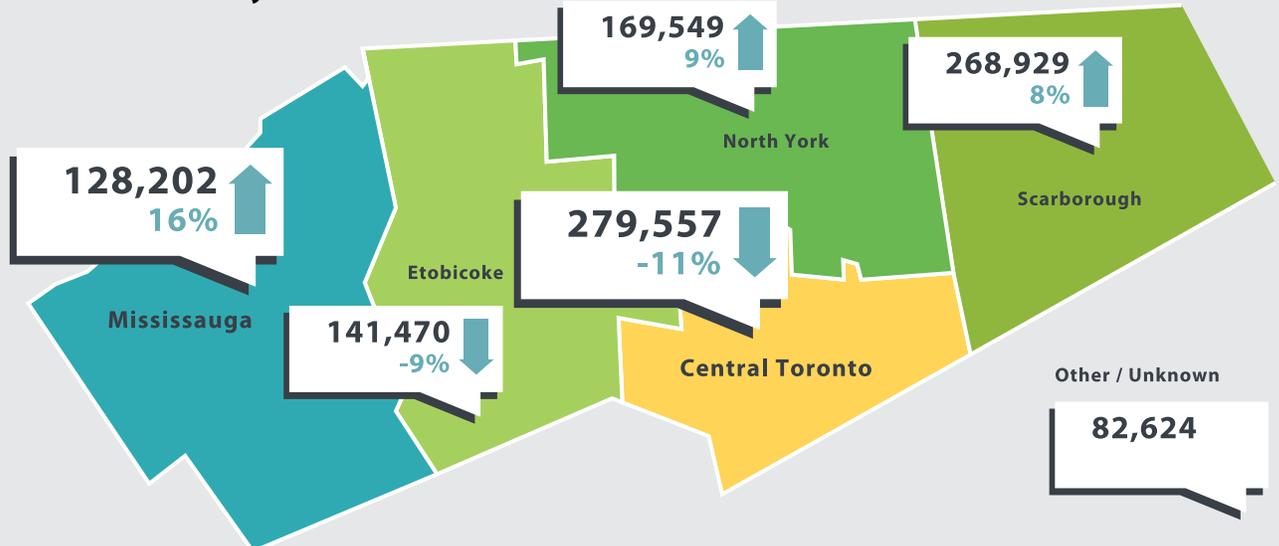
**Matt Escott**, Co-leader of Light Patrol, a program that reaches out to youth experiencing homelessness

<sup>b</sup> In 2014, The Mississauga Food Bank switched to a new data collection system to capture the number of visits. As a result, data from previous years was excluded to ensure consistency in measurement and reporting.

## Food Bank Use is Geographically Concentrated

The Toronto region is increasingly divided along lines of income and geography. Like metropolitan areas across the U.S. and Canada, low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto have been pushed out of the core towards the inner and outer suburbs.<sup>15,16</sup> We see this trend acutely when looking at the number of food bank visits by clients' postal codes. In the previous year, there has been a 16% increase in visits from Mississauga residents, a 9% increase in visits from North York residents, and an 8% increase in visits from Scarborough residents. In addition to a concentration of low-income households, the inner suburbs tend to be more geographically dispersed with fewer direct public transit routes, limited grocery store options, and limited access to social service agencies. Although there has been an 11% decrease in food bank visits among clients who live in central Toronto, this area still has the highest concentration of visits.

### 2019 Food Bank Visits by Area<sup>c</sup>

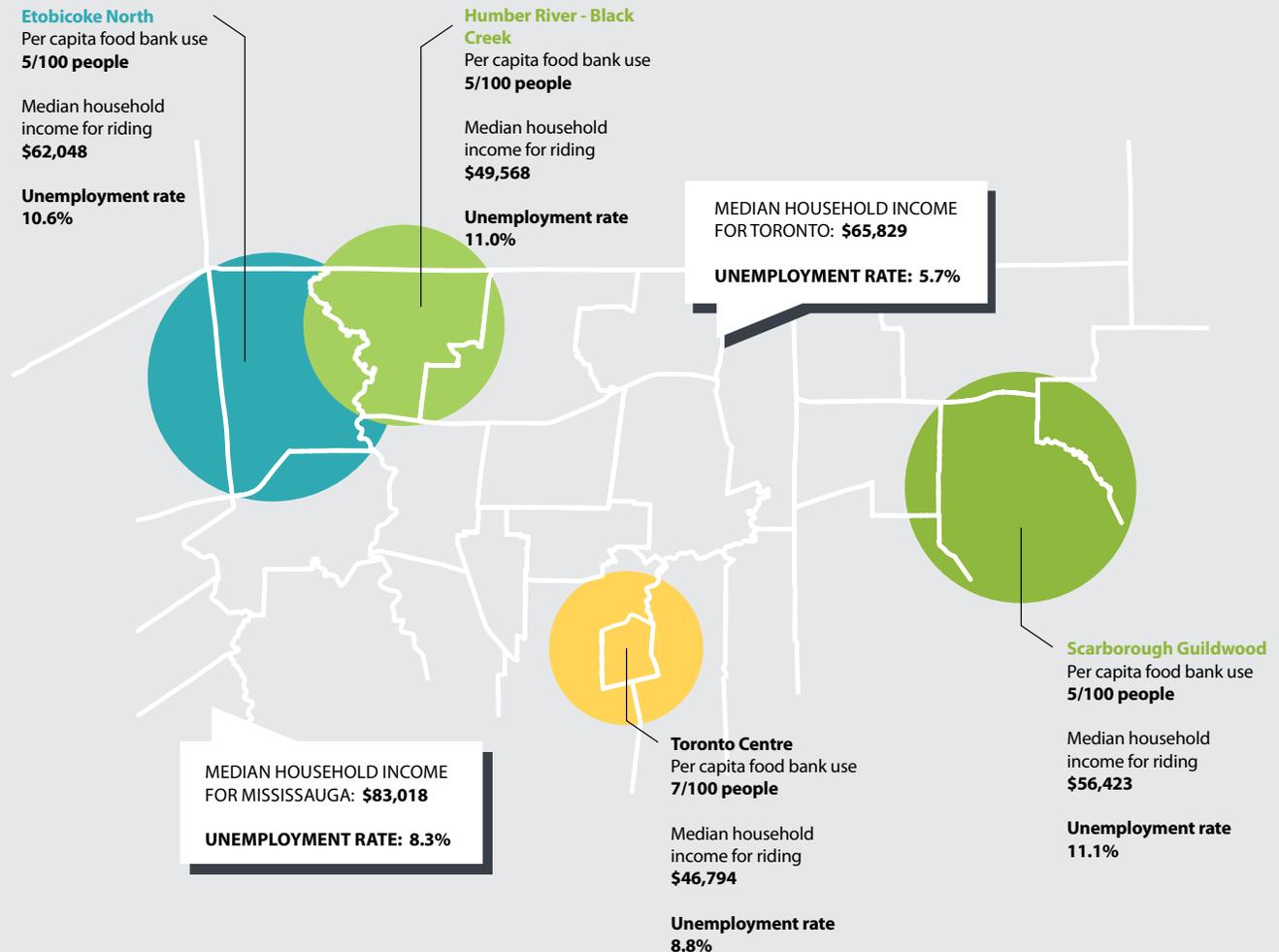


While overall, food bank visits by Etobicoke residents have decreased compared to last year, when we look at food bank visits by provincial electoral ridings, we see that Etobicoke North has the second highest per capita food bank use in the Toronto region.

The four ridings with the highest per capita food bank use, Toronto Centre, Etobicoke North, Scarborough Guildwood, and Humber River-Black Creek, also top the list in Toronto for highest child poverty rates.<sup>17</sup> The three ridings in the inner suburbs, Etobicoke North, Scarborough Guildwood, and Humber River-Black Creek, have the highest rates of unemployment, longest subsidized housing waiting lists, and greatest number of children waiting for a childcare fee subsidy in the city.<sup>17</sup> This is no coincidence. **Food bank use is an indicator of poverty.**

<sup>c</sup> Based on Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest Food Bank, and The Mississauga Food Bank visits between April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019. Percent change reflects comparison to April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2019. In previous Who's Hungry reports, food bank visits were analyzed based on agency postal code. This year's report uses Link2Feed data to analyze visits according to client postal codes to provide a more accurate assessment of geographic need by region because clients may access services outside of their neighbourhood. As a result, the map is not comparable to the 2018 Who's Hungry report.

## Per Capita Food Bank Use by Riding<sup>d</sup>

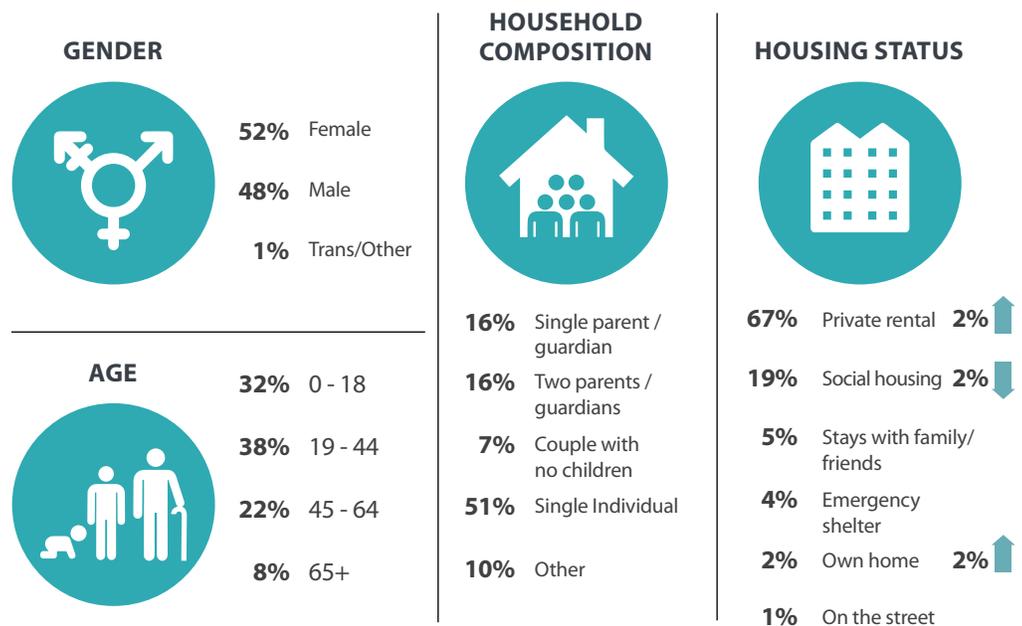


## Food Bank Use Is Unequally Distributed

Looking at the demographic breakdown of food bank clients can provide insight into those whose right to food is not being met. Through the Link2Feed database, food banks collect demographic information for each individual that accesses services in order to better understand our clientele and target programming.

<sup>d</sup> Based on Feed Ontario's Hunger Map released July 2019 retrieved from <http://map.feedontario.ca>. Food bank use based on Link2Feed data for the 2018 calendar year. Median household incomes for Toronto and Mississauga ridings from 2016 Statistics Canada census. Unemployment rate by riding from 2016 census. Unemployment rate for Mississauga based on 2018 data from the Region of Peel. Unemployment rate for Toronto based on July 2019 data from Statistics Canada.

## Demographics of Food Bank Use in the Toronto Region<sup>e</sup>



The demographic breakdown by gender, age, and household composition has remained steady since last year. The greatest proportion of food bank clients are working-age adults between 19 and 44 and single individuals. This is reflective of a broader trend across Canada. In 2018, Food Banks Canada reported that the lack of programs and supports tailored to single adults has caused this population to fall through the cracks and, as a result, single households represent 45% of people accessing food banks nationally, while only representing 28.2% of the total population.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of housing status, we have seen a 2% increase in clients living in emergency shelters and a 2% increase in clients living in private rental units compared to last year. This has been accompanied by a 2% decrease in clients who are living in social housing. This may be due to the increasing cost of rent and the limited supply of social housing in the Toronto region, which will be discussed later in this report.

## INEQUITIES IN FOOD INSECURITY

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the income inequality capital of Canada.<sup>19</sup> Opportunities to live a good life are increasingly constrained for residents in the GTA based on factors outside of the individual's control, such as race and immigration status. These rising inequalities are paired with a host of negative social and economic outcomes, such as lower levels of educational performance, incarceration, obesity, mental illness, addictions, and financial distress.<sup>19</sup> These same patterns play out in food bank access where the most marginalized populations in the Toronto region are disproportionately represented among food bank clients.

<sup>e</sup> Based on client food bank visits between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019, tracked in Link2Feed. Demographics are compared to clients who visited food banks between April 1, 2017, and March 31, 2018.



## Race

This year’s survey asked respondents to identify their race based on Statistics Canada categories in order to measure whether racialized communities were disproportionately represented among food bank clients. As of the 2016 Census, 51% of Toronto’s census metropolitan area was a “visible minority,”<sup>20</sup> which Statistics Canada defines as “persons other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.”<sup>21</sup> Among our food bank survey respondents, the proportion of visible minorities was comparable at 54%. However, when we look at specific population groups, we see an overrepresentation of Black, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Indigenous people among our survey respondents compared to the total population.

Black and Indigenous households are particularly prone to food insecurity in Canada; according to the 2014 Canadian Community Health Survey, 29% of households where the respondent was Black and 26% of households where the respondent was Indigenous were food insecure.<sup>10</sup> Close to 25% of our survey respondents identified as Black, compared to only 8% of the people in Toronto’s census metropolitan area.<sup>20</sup> While only 1% of people in Toronto identified as Indigenous,<sup>20</sup> in our sample, we saw 5% of respondents.

SELF-IDENTIFIED RACE	Percent of survey respondents	Percent of Toronto Census Metropolitan Area <sup>f</sup>
<b>White</b> (European descent)	38%	53%
<b>Black</b> (African, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian)	24%	8%
<b>Middle Eastern</b> (Arab, Persian, West Asian descent)	11%	4%
<b>South Asian</b> (South Asian descent, Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)	9%	17%
<b>Latin</b> (Latin American, Hispanic descent)	7%	2%
<b>East Asian</b> (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, etc.)	3%	12%
<b>Indigenous</b> (First Nations, Métis, Inuk/Inuit)	5%	1%
<b>Southeast Asian</b> (Taiwanese descent, Filipino etc.)	3%	6%

The overrepresentation of racialized people using food banks use points to a larger trend in the distribution of wealth in the Toronto region. The GTA’s neighbourhoods are increasingly segregated by race, with racialized individuals making up 57% of low-income neighbourhoods and only 17% of high-income neighbourhoods.<sup>22</sup> One in four racialized people in Toronto and the region of Peel live in the bottom income quintile.<sup>19</sup>

While we see an overrepresentation of certain racialized communities in the Toronto region accessing food banks, it is important to note that various cultures may have community-based resources and systems to support individuals with specific needs, which may reduce their use of food banks.

<sup>f</sup> Data from the 2016 Census for the Toronto Metropolitan Area rounded to nearest percentage point. The census data was grouped in the following way in the table. “Middle Eastern” combines Arab and West Asian census categories. “Latino” includes Latin American census category. “East Asian” combines Chinese, Korean, and Japanese census categories. “Indigenous” reports Aboriginal identity census category. “Southeast Asian” combines southeast Asian and Filipino census categories.



## Immigration Status

While the majority of our annual survey respondents were Canadian citizens, 62% of all respondents were born outside of Canada. Nationally, recent immigrants face a higher prevalence of food insecurity (15.2%) compared to immigrants who arrived in Canada more than five years ago (12%) and people who are born in Canada (11.8%).<sup>10</sup> However, among our sample of food bank clients, we see a high proportion of immigrants who arrived in Canada more than 10 years ago (58%).

### LENGTH OF TIME IN CANADA FOR THOSE BORN OUTSIDE OF CANADA

<b>Less than 1 year</b>	2 %
<b>1-4 years</b>	34 %
<b>5-9 years</b>	7 %
<b>10+ years</b>	58 %

Historically, immigrant wages have tended to increase with the number of years spent in Canada,<sup>23</sup> yet wages among immigrants remain lower on-average than the Canadian-born population.<sup>19</sup> In the Toronto region, we are increasingly seeing a stagnation of income among longstanding immigrants<sup>19</sup> and, as a result, we see an overrepresentation of people born outside of Canada accessing food banks, even after living here for more than a decade. Further, immigrant families may become more aware of food bank services the longer they live in the Toronto region.

### CITIZENSHIP STATUS

<b>Canadian citizen, First Nations, Métis, Inuit</b>	67 %
<b>Landed Immigrant/Permanent Resident</b>	17 %
<b>Refugee Claimant</b>	11 %
<b>Temporary Status (student, visitor, worker)</b>	3 %
<b>Other</b>	1 %

## Disability

People with disabilities are three times more likely to experience food insecurity than people without disabilities.<sup>24</sup> While only 22% of Canadians report having one or more disabilities,<sup>25</sup> among our survey respondents, 57% reported living with a disability that is continuous and expected to last one year or longer. Of these respondents, 77% indicated that their disability made it challenging for them to perform daily activities. Respondents reported a broad range of disabilities, from chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes, heart conditions), to physical impairments (e.g., amputation, blindness), to autoimmune disorders (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis, Lyme

disease). Mental illnesses and emotional disorders were also reported by a large proportion of respondents, including anxiety, bipolar disorder, dementia, and autism. The limitations posed by respondents' disabilities can interfere with the ability to find and maintain employment. Living in poverty and being unable to access appropriate foods can exacerbate medical conditions, leading to a continuous cycle of poor health and reduced economic mobility.

**Education**

In the past, education was seen as a pathway out of poverty. As jobs become increasingly precarious, the protective effect of education has begun to erode.<sup>26</sup> Among our survey respondents, 40% had completed post-secondary education. Residents of Toronto and Mississauga are struggling with food insecurity regardless of their education levels.

<b>HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED</b>	
<b>Grade school or less</b>	5 %
<b>Some high school</b>	13 %
<b>Graduated high school</b>	19 %
<b>Some college or university</b>	20 %
<b>Trade certificate/Professional accreditation</b>	4 %
<b>College diploma</b>	16%
<b>Bachelor degree</b>	17%
<b>Master's degree or PhD</b>	7%

**Not All People Experiencing Food Insecurity Access Food Banks**

Only a minority of the 12.6% of households struggling with food insecurity in Toronto have used a food bank.<sup>27</sup> According to research by Rachel Loopstra and Valerie Tarasuk, two leading experts in food insecurity, there are a number of reasons why someone would experience hunger but not use a food bank, including barriers to access, lack of information, feeling like their need is not sufficient compared to others, being concerned a food bank would not meet their dietary needs, and concerns around identity and stigma.<sup>27</sup> Of our survey respondents, 34% reported knowing someone who experienced hunger but did not use a food bank. When asked why, respondents reported that stigma, denial about the severity of their circumstances, and lack of knowledge were the most common reasons for not making use of food banks.

Food banks in the Toronto region are actively working to address these barriers by adopting a rights-based approach to food provision. This is a model that prioritizes client voices in service planning, promotes client choice in food, and ensures that clients experience dignity and respect when accessing programs. By offering referrals services at client intake, food banks support clients in navigating the daily struggles that result from living in poverty. Whether it is providing referrals to legal clinics to help fight unlawful eviction, sharing information about local community programs, or helping navigate the social assistance process, intake workers work to support clients with their needs beyond food provision.

A person with long hair, wearing a white jacket and dark pants, is walking away from the camera on a paved surface. They are carrying a white plastic shopping bag with a logo that includes the word "NO". The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a parking lot or a street with a white van. The entire image has a teal/cyan color cast.

**“We know that business as usual simply won’t cut it — the four million Canadians navigating food insecurity deserve better, especially in a country as rich as Canada. Food insecurity is not only about costly produce and proximity to a grocery store.**

**For people of colour, new immigrants and people with disabilities, the barriers multiply. Things like anti-black racism, ableism, white supremacy and transphobia all shape who gets to eat, who gets to work and even who gets to participate in the solution finding. We need to be bold in tackling these issues head-on and advocate together for solutions to bring an end to poverty and food insecurity.”**

**Paul Taylor, Executive Director,  
FoodShare Toronto**

# POVERTY IS AT THE CORE OF FOOD INSECURITY

When a person is deprived of the resources, means, choices, and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard and participate fully in society, they are living in a state of poverty.<sup>28</sup> Despite being a prosperous nation, as of 2015, one in every eight people in Canada was living in poverty.<sup>28</sup>

To reduce poverty, we need to measure it to track our progress. We applaud the federal government for introducing Canada's first official poverty line in 2018 and setting targets to reduce poverty to 20% below 2015 rates by 2020, and by 50% by 2030 through the Poverty Reduction Act.<sup>28</sup>

**In Toronto, a family of two adults and two children is considered living below the poverty line if they have an income of \$41,362 or less.<sup>28</sup> Of the families that participated in our survey, 98% fell below this poverty line.**

## Canada's First Official Poverty Line

Canada's official poverty line is based on the market basket measure. This measure assesses the basket of goods and services individuals and families would need to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living. The basket includes healthy food, appropriate shelter and home maintenance, clothing, transportation and goods and services that promote engagement in the community. The basket is calculated for 50 different regions across Canada.

# \$806

Median monthly income of respondents<sup>9</sup>

The median annual household income of our survey respondents (\$9,672) is but a fraction of the median income for Toronto and Mississauga (\$70,336).<sup>13,14</sup> While 16% of respondents listed part-time or full-time employment as the primary source of household income, the majority of respondents (79%) reported receiving government benefits, including social assistance, pension, and employment insurance (E.I.) as their primary income source.

### MAIN SOURCE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

<b>Ontario Works (OW)</b>	30%
<b>Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)</b>	29%
<b>Employment</b>	16%
<b>Pensions (Includes CPP, OAS and GIS)</b>	15%
<b>Child Tax Benefits</b>	3%
<b>Employment Insurance (EI)</b>	2%
<b>Other</b>	2%
<b>No income</b>	3%

<sup>9</sup>This is "adjusted" median household income, based on the OECD equivalence scale, a method which takes into account the varying sizes of all households and adjusts the dollar value accordingly. This method divides a household's income by the square root of the size of the household. The "unadjusted" amount of income for respondents is \$1,200. The adjusted level of household income is lower because of the high numbers of survey respondents who were single-person households.

## GETTING BY ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ontario's social assistance programs provide benefits to individuals and families with low or no income, or who have experienced long-term barriers to employment. Social assistance is a cornerstone of our society. It is designed to provide a safety net to ensure that all people have a basic standard of living and support people to get back on their feet when experiencing unexpected or ongoing challenges.

In Ontario, the two major social assistance programs are the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW). Close to 60% of the respondents to our annual survey received one of these two provincial social assistance programs as their main source of income.

The social assistance rates provided through OW and ODSP have not kept pace with the cost of living or inflation. Considering the average rent, utilities, and transportation costs in the Toronto region, it is no wonder that 36% of all households on OW and 39% of all households on ODSP in Toronto have accessed a food bank to meet their most basic of human needs.

Approximately

**36%**

of households on OW<sup>29</sup> and

**39%**

of households on ODSP<sup>30</sup> accessed a food bank in 2019

"Although I am on social assistance, that money goes to rent. Child tax helps pay for everything else and I am only left to live off \$500 a month for goods and household supplies to keep me going for the month.

So the food bank became a necessity."

-Survey respondent

### Social Assistance Rates Compared to Living Expenses in the Toronto Region<sup>31</sup>

**60%** of respondents receive social assistance as their main source of income

	ONTARIO WORKS (OW)	ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (ODSP)
Monthly income for single person household	\$733.00 <sup>32</sup>	\$1,169.00 <sup>33</sup>
<b>MONTHLY EXPENSES</b>		
Rent – average bachelor apartment in Toronto <sup>34</sup>	\$1,089.00	
Bills and utilities – electricity, phone, internet <sup>35</sup>	\$179.08	
Transportation – monthly cost of annual transit pass <sup>36</sup>	\$138.40	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,406.48</b>	
<b>INCOME LEFT FOR FOOD, CLOTHING, TOILETRIES AND ALL OTHER EXPENSES</b>	<b>-\$673.48</b>	<b>-\$237.48</b>

## Recent changes to OW and ODSP

In 2018, the provincial government cancelled the Basic Income Pilot Project which provided a steady income to over 4,000 participants to evaluate whether this model could reshape how social assistance is delivered. Cancelling the pilot eliminated the possibility of measuring and understanding the impact of this approach.

Instead, the government embarked on a social assistance review and announced a number of reforms to OW and ODSP. There are a few potentially positive changes, including a focus on providing enhanced employment services and training, a commitment to providing wrap-around supports, and a simplified rate structure.<sup>37</sup> However, there were a number of deeply concerning reforms announced.

- The scheduled 3% increase to social assistance rates was cut to 1.5%.
- A proposal was made to change the ODSP eligibility criteria to use a more restrictive definition of disability that excludes those with episodic conditions.
- The transitional child benefit that provides \$230 per child for families that are ineligible or awaiting the Ontario Child Benefit and Canada Child Benefit was cancelled.
- The percentage of social assistance benefits clawed back when a recipient has part-time employment earnings was increased from 50% to 75%.

Food banks across Ontario advocated against these changes, and in October 2019, the government announced that they would not be moving forward with eliminating the transitional child benefit or the proposed changes to employment earning claw backs.

At this time, the government announced that they would be focusing on a broader plan to improve social assistance and employment supports. We applaud the government for cancelling these changes, and we will look for further opportunities to collaborate with the government to strengthen social assistance service delivery.

**“In a culture and society as rich as ours, it is totally unacceptable that even one person cannot afford to eat, much less the 500 or so people we serve each week.”**

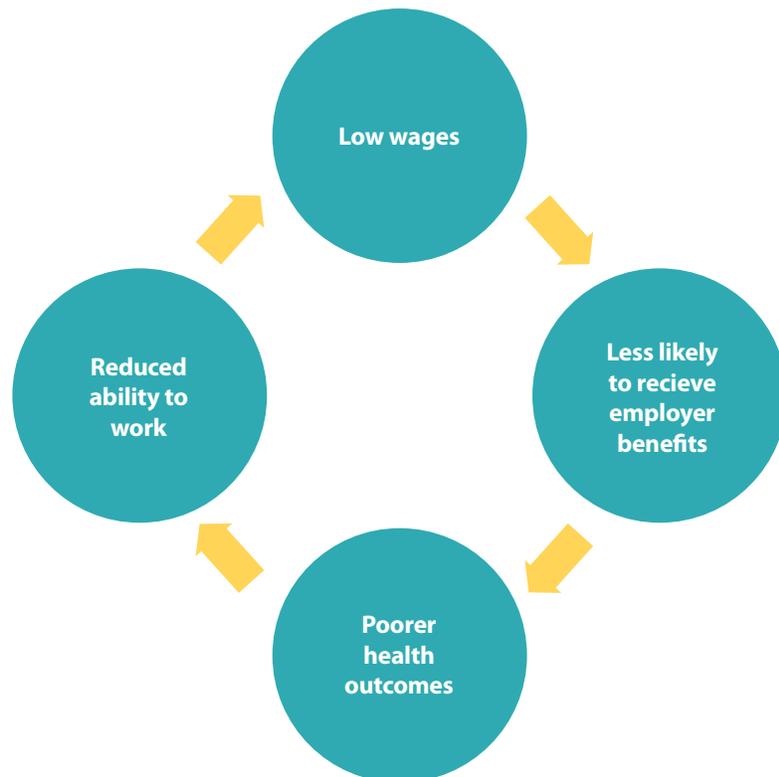
**Clarisse Tatro**, Food Bank Coordinator, Glen Rhodes United Church Food Bank

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Twenty-two percent of Canadians can be considered precariously employed, which is defined by having no steady income, no pension, no benefits, and no sick pay.<sup>38</sup> Precarious work is on the rise in the Toronto region and across Canada as permanent, full-time jobs with benefits become harder to find.<sup>39</sup> Precarious work can make it especially challenging to budget for life's basic needs as well as any unexpected expenses that might emerge, such as being evicted and needing to pay first and last month's rent at a new apartment.

Despite being an economic hub, residents of the Toronto region struggle to find and maintain well paying, secure employment with employer benefits. From 2011 to 2017, permanent employment grew by 10.4% in the GTA while temporary employment grew 18.8%.<sup>40</sup> The percentage of the Toronto region's population who can be considered as working poor continues to grow, giving Toronto the unfortunate distinction of being the country's working poor capital.<sup>41</sup>

People earning low wages are less likely to have employer-provided health benefit coverage than those with higher salaries. Less than 20% of people earning less than \$10,000 received employer benefits compared to more than 90% of people earning over \$100,000.<sup>42</sup> This means that low-wage earners are more likely to have to pay out of pocket for medical expenses. When there is not enough money to pay for rent, food, and transportation, some may put off or forgo necessary medical expenses, which can negatively impact health outcomes, inhibit their ability to work, and ultimately make it more difficult to escape the cycle of poverty.



“Even with a college degree, it is becoming hard to find a job. Minimum wage is difficult to live on, even when there are two incomes.”

-Survey respondent

# 1 in 5

respondents to our annual survey reported that their household had at least one individual who was employed. The majority of these individuals reported earning low wages, lacking full-time hours, and not receiving employer benefits.

**\$15**  
Median hourly wage

**30**  
Median hours of work per week

**86%**  
Percent of survey respondents spending more than 30% of income on housing

## Percent of respondents receiving employer-provided benefits

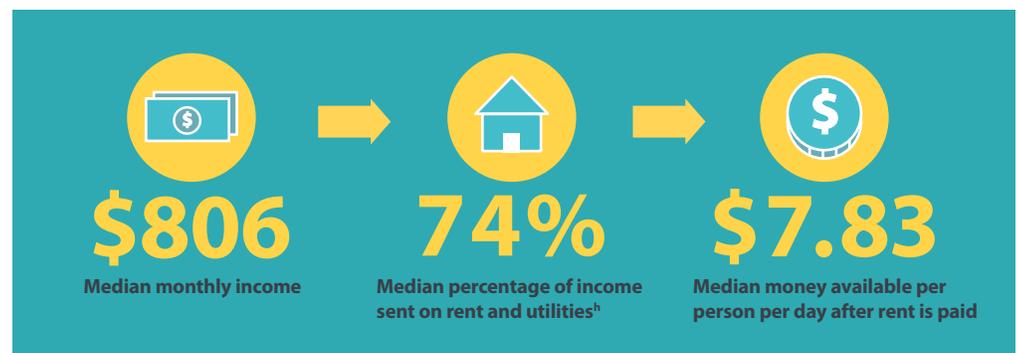


## Two Steps Backwards on Worker Rights

Given the challenges low-income earners face in trying to make ends meet in the Toronto region, we were deeply dismayed when Bill 47 was passed in October 2018. This bill repealed former legislation that was put in place to support low-income workers, eliminated the scheduled minimum wage increase, and removed the two paid personal emergency days entitled to all workers. Given the rise of temporary and part-time labour, we were particularly concerned to see the repeal of provisions that required employers to pay employees equal wages for the same work, regardless of whether they were casual, temporary, or part-time. On top of these detrimental changes, Bill 47 also significantly reduced fines for employers who committed offences under Ontario's labour laws.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Housing is considered affordable when a household spends less than 30% of their income on adequate shelter<sup>43</sup>**



Lack of affordable housing is a driver of both poverty and food insecurity in the Toronto region. When a household spends more than 30% of its income on housing and housing-related costs, such as utilities, there is a housing affordability problem.<sup>44</sup> Of the survey respondents, 86% reported spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

<sup>h</sup>Excludes those in subsidized housing

“Cost of living in the GTA is way too high. There is a need for access to more affordable housing so people can eat according to the Canada Food Guide.”

-Survey respondent

“House rent is so expensive in Toronto and we always need to pay more than the income we get.”

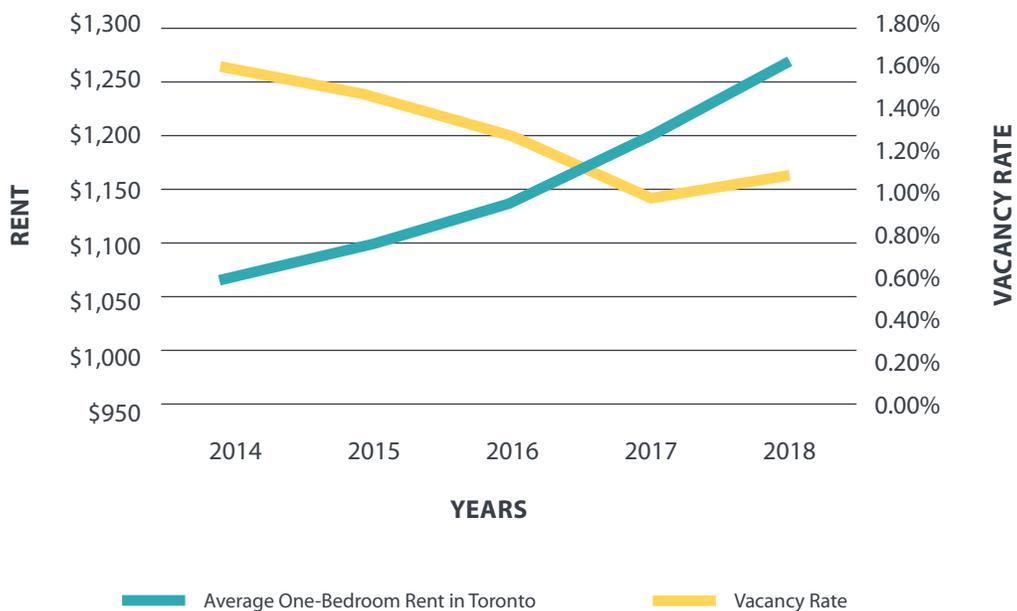
-Survey respondent

The vast majority of food bank clients (67%) are private-market renters. Since last year, the median monthly income of our respondents has not increased, yet we have seen a sharp increase in the percentage of income spent on rent and utilities for survey respondents living in private rentals, growing from 68% last year to 74% this year. Rents are continuing to outpace income in Toronto and Mississauga, leaving our respondents only \$7.83 per person per day to afford life’s other necessities.

### A Housing Affordability Crisis

The Toronto region is facing a housing affordability crisis. A city can be considered to have a healthy rental market when the vacancy rate is between 3% and 5%.<sup>45</sup> In Toronto, the vacancy rate is at 1.1%<sup>46</sup> and Mississauga is at 0.9%.<sup>47</sup> This extremely low vacancy rate can be explained by a number of factors, including population growth, home ownership becoming less attainable for middle-income earners, and a limited supply of rental units that has not kept pace with demand. As the rental vacancy rate declines, the average cost of rent continues to increase.

**AVERAGE ONE-BEDROOM RENT AND VACANCY RATE IN TORONTO**





Appropriate housing supply remains an ongoing challenge in Toronto and Mississauga. Purpose-built rental unit development has declined in favour of condo development. Ninety-three percent of Toronto’s purpose-built apartment rentals were constructed prior to 1980.<sup>48</sup> Between 2006 and 2016, the number of households renting in Toronto grew by 78,980, while only 1,466 primary rental units were added to the housing supply.<sup>48</sup> During the same period of 2006 to 2016, the number of condominiums being rented grew by 59,486.<sup>48</sup>

While condos have added rental supply, they have not led to enhanced rental affordability. In 2018, the provincial government revoked rent control limitations put in place to protect tenants in rental units that were built after 1991. This means that condos and any newly built rental units are not subject to any regulations that would limit the amount that rent can increase year over year. Additionally, tenants living in condos are at a higher risk for being evicted when the owner or the owner’s immediate family wishes to occupy the unit.

As a result of demographic shifts and housing policy, renting an apartment at market rate has become increasingly difficult for low-income earners. To meet the affordability threshold of spending no more than 30% of income on housing, residents in Toronto would need to earn \$27.74 per hour, working 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year to afford the average one-bedroom apartment in Toronto.<sup>49</sup> That is 85% higher than the hourly wage earned by the majority of respondents to our annual survey.

#### AVERAGE RENTAL PRICES (OCTOBER 2018)<sup>50</sup>

	Bachelor	One-bedroom	Two-bedroom
<b>Toronto</b>	\$1,089	\$1,270	\$1,492
<b>Mississauga</b>	\$922	\$1,233	\$1,399

#### HOURLY WAGE NEEDED TO AFFORD RENT IN TORONTO<sup>49</sup>

One-bedroom apartment	Two-bedroom apartment
\$27.74	\$33.70

While recently there have been efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in Toronto through partnerships with private developers to build on publicly-owned lands, these affordable housing units do not base their definition of affordability on the household’s income. Rather, the City of Toronto defines affordable housing as at, or below, average city-wide market rent.<sup>51</sup> For food bank clients and many low-income individuals in the Toronto region, paying market rate, or even slightly below, is simply unaffordable.

# 67%

Percent of food bank clients in Toronto and Mississauga living in a private rental apartments

With average rent prices outpacing income growth for low-income earners, social housing remains a crucial avenue to access affordable, secure housing. There are 79,240 people in Toronto<sup>52</sup> and 9,815 people in Mississauga<sup>52</sup> living in subsidized housing. However, the development of new social housing units, where rent is set at 30% of the household's income (referred to as rent geared to income) has plummeted since 1996,<sup>48</sup> leaving 102,049 people on the waiting list for social housing units in Toronto.<sup>53</sup> As of 2015, the average wait time for single individuals in Toronto without children was 7.7 years, and 9.3 years for a family with children.<sup>54</sup> In Mississauga, the wait time was 3 - 10 years for single people and 5.5 - 9 years for families looking for a one- to two-bedroom apartment, and 7 - 12 years for families seeking three to five bedrooms.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, demand for co-operative housing cannot currently be met through the existing supply.

For those who require supportive housing, which is subsidized housing where there are additional on-site supports provided, such as counselling, the situation is equally dire. According to the Toronto Mental Health and Addictions Supportive Housing Network, there are currently 5,000 spaces in their supportive housing network, but there are 14,000 who need these supports and are unable to access them.<sup>56</sup>

As a result of challenges accessing affordable housing, renters in the Toronto area are acutely vulnerable to precarious housing and homelessness, which further perpetuates a cycle of poverty and an inability to afford food.

## Housing Policy Updates

One of the most promising elements of the national housing strategy released in 2019 is the Canada Housing Benefit, which provides funding directly to individuals and families living in subsidized or private market rentals but struggling to make ends meet.<sup>57</sup> The federal government is in the process of negotiating the implementation of this benefit with provinces and it is expected to be rolled out in 2020.

Some of the federal investments under the national housing strategy require cost-matching from provincial governments and, in 2019, the government of Ontario re-affirmed its commitment to matching these funds. As a result, Ontario will receive \$4.2 billion of funding for the housing sector over nine years to repair and expand social housing and implement the housing benefit.<sup>37</sup>

At the municipal level, the City of Toronto is currently in the process of developing a ten-year housing action plan. Mississauga released a new housing strategy in 2017, with a focus on middle-income households (who earn between \$55,000 and \$100,000 a year).<sup>58</sup> While the strategy lays out important steps to make housing more affordable to middle-income earners, we continue to monitor and work closely with the municipal government to ensure that low-income earners have access to affordable, safe, and secure housing.



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO REALIZE THE RIGHT TO FOOD

“Food is not just about survival, although we do need nutritious food to survive. Food has meaning. It is at the root of culture and community. When you don’t have good food, it impacts your health. If you can’t find a job, how will you eat? And if you can’t eat, how will you find a job or get an education? Food is a basic need and every human has this right.”

Members of the Daily Bread  
and North York Harvest Community  
Action Coalition

Food is a human right, like medical care or housing. All people in Canada deserve to feed themselves and their families with dignity. Canada has a legal obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food, yet we have not achieved this right for all Canadians. But momentum is building. More and more, Canadians are gaining an awareness of the interconnectedness of poverty and food insecurity and demanding change.

## **We can realize the right to food and the time is now.**

To achieve the right to food, we need coordinated action across federal, provincial, and municipal governments to take action under three areas: adopting a rights-based approach to decision making, improving income security, and enhancing access to food.

# PILLARS TO ACHIEVING THE RIGHT TO FOOD

## RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING

Ensuring all policy decisions are analyzed to understand the intended and unintended consequences for population groups who face historic and ongoing inequities inclusive of race, disability, immigration status, and economic status.

## INCOME SECURITY

Ensuring people have the economic means to achieve a basic standard of living.

## FOOD ACCESS

Ensuring people have access to nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, affordable food.

## To achieve the Right to Food in the Toronto region, we put forward the following recommendations.

### 1. Adopt a rights-based approach to decision making to ensure that policies help to advance the right to food and promote equity

- 1.1 The federal government should formally recognize the right to food as it has done for the right to housing.
- 1.2 The federal, provincial, and municipal governments have already adopted gender-based analysis in certain areas of policy making. This approach should be expanded to use a full equity assessment to understand the intended and unintended consequences of policies for populations that experience historic and ongoing inequities on the basis of race, disability, immigration status, and economic status.

### 2. Strengthen social assistance

- 2.1 The provincial government should raise social assistance rates to reflect the actual cost of living.
- 2.2 The provincial government should pass Bill 60, which would establish an arm's-length advisory body comprised of experts in social policy, economics, and people with lived experience, to develop evidence-informed social assistance rates based on the cost of living.
- 2.3 The provincial government should adopt a user-centred design approach to restructure social assistance delivery and enact mandatory training and quality standards for service delivery agents to ensure the same level of quality service across the province.<sup>59</sup>
- 2.4 The provincial government should consult with social assistance recipients on the proposed changes to how employment services will be delivered to ensure that employment supports meet their needs and are easy to navigate.
- 2.5 The provincial government should protect the Ontario Disability Support Program by retaining the current eligibility criteria to ensure that all people with chronic or episodic disabilities affecting their ability to work have access to an adequate standard of living, while also providing meaningful educational opportunities to enhance community participation.

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING

INCOME SECURITY

**3. Support low-income households by expanding tax benefits and creating pathways out of poverty**

- 3.1 Wherever possible, provincial benefits should be available to all low-income households, rather than just those on social assistance. Drug and dental benefits should be de-linked from social assistance and be made available to all low-income households who do not have coverage.
- 3.2 To increase the uptake of tax benefits for low-income households, the federal government should continue to expand and promote tax clinics in partnership with local community organizations.
- 3.3 The federal and provincial governments should support low-income households in breaking the cycle of poverty by strengthening employment standards and enforcement, increasing tax benefits, and raising the minimum wage above the poverty line.

**4. Invest in affordable housing and tenant protections**

- 4.1 The municipal government should redefine “affordable housing” in line with human rights principles and work with the provincial and federal governments to promote the development of truly affordable rental housing by implementing an inclusionary zoning policy with the objective of reaching affordability levels beyond 80% Average Market Rent wherever possible.
- 4.2 The number of social housing and supportive housing units must be expanded in the Toronto region to meet the growing demand for deeply affordable housing where rent is geared to income.
- 4.3 As the federal and provincial government negotiate the terms of the Canada Housing Benefit, the provincial government should engage low-income individuals to ensure that the implementation of this benefit meets the needs of the targeted population.
- 4.4 The municipal government should strengthen tenant protection services, including promoting and expanding rent bank programs and access to legal services.
- 4.5 The provincial government should protect tenants by reinstating rent control on new rental units built after November 2018 and expanding rent control to include vacancy control.

**5. Enhance access to affordable childcare**

- 5.1 The federal government should develop a national childcare strategy to set national affordability targets for all provinces and establish mandatory reporting.
- 5.2 In 2017, the city of Toronto provided childcare subsidies to just over 26,000 families, with a waitlist of 17,000 people.<sup>60</sup> The provincial government should cancel their cuts to childcare funding for municipalities and in coordination with all levels of government, commit to developing and funding a fee structure that better meets the needs of families and also ensures that childcare organizations have appropriate funding to deliver quality services.
- 5.3 When developing strategies to increase the number of daycare spaces, local community demographics and needs must be taken into consideration to ensure no communities, especially low-income neighbourhoods, are childcare deserts.<sup>61</sup>

**6. Ensure access to affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate food in each community in the Toronto region**

- 6.1 Local food policy councils should be funded and engaged by municipal governments to ensure that local residents have a meaningful voice in identifying gaps in access to food and participation in the planning process.
- 6.2 Funding should be enhanced for community groups to build and operate food spaces and programming targeted at people who struggle with accessing food, including seniors, people with mental health challenges, and people with disabilities.
- 6.3 The municipal governments, Metrolinx, and the province should take coordinated steps to strengthen our public transit system to provide affordable and direct transportation options for low-income communities to improve access to food and other services.
- 6.4 Funding should be made available to support Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives throughout the Toronto region.
- 6.5 When considering policies and approaches to strengthen our food systems, meaningful engagement must be prioritized with communities who face historic and ongoing oppression to promote food justice and reconciliation.

# REALIZING THE RIGHT TO FOOD IS WITHIN OUR REACH

The right to food is not only a legal obligation, but a moral one. We share in the federal government's vision that all people in Canada should be able to access a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food. We are committed to meeting the Toronto region's immediate and ongoing need for fresh and shelf-stable food. However, as visits to food banks continue to rise, food banks struggle to meet the ever-growing demand. Charities cannot solve hunger alone. We need government action to ensure that all people in the Toronto region have the physical and economic means and agency to access adequate food.

The **Right to Food** movement is growing, and we hope you will join us and other organizations across the Toronto region as we push for the end of poverty and food insecurity in our city.

# DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Primary data was collected from the two sources described below. Please note that percentages throughout the report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

## Link2Feed Data

Food banks across Ontario use a database called Link2Feed to capture client intake data and track visits. Data from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019, was pulled from Link2Feed to understand food bank use and demographic features of clients among Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest Food Bank, and The Mississauga Food Bank member agency food banks. Meal programs were excluded from the analysis because these programs only track number of meals provided, not unique client demographics.

## Annual Survey

The annual survey took place from late-February to mid-May in 2019 at 51 food banks across Toronto and Mississauga. Food banks and food programs unaffiliated with Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest Food Bank and The Mississauga Food Bank were not included. Seventy trained volunteers conducted a 44- question survey that contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Respondents also had the option of filling out the survey themselves.

Volunteers invited food bank clients to participate in the survey either while waiting in line to collect their food or just after. The reality surrounding food banks made random selection of participants difficult. However, volunteers were trained in ways to approach clients to minimize bias in the sample.

Food bank clients were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time. Volunteers also stressed that the survey was confidential, anonymous, and that refusing to participate in the survey had no bearing on them getting food at the food bank at the time or in the future.

In total, 1,403 surveys were collected and 1,326 of them were sufficiently complete and included in analysis. Surveys deemed incomplete were discarded. The data was cleaned to remove any invalid responses. Results and analysis were generated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences v23 (SPSS) software.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2019 Who's Hungry report was made possible thanks to the contributions in time, experience, and expertise of hundreds of individuals. We would first like to thank the more than 1,400 food bank clients who shared their personal stories with us.

Next, we would like to express our gratitude to the 70 volunteers who conducted surveys. We also would like to thank June Larkin, Stanley Doyle-Wood, and Safia Gahayr from the Equities Studies program at the University of Toronto, who have included volunteering for the Who's Hungry survey as part of their curriculum.

The report was co-authored by Talia Bronstein and Haiat Iman with the input and guidance of the survey committee members: John Stapleton from Open Policy Ontario; Andy Mitchell from Thinking Cap Consulting; Harvey Low from the Social Policy Analysis and Research Unit at the City of Toronto; Ryan Noble, Sarah Watson, and Chiara Padovani from North York Harvest Food Bank; Meghan Nicholls, Zeeshan Sumrani, and Nabeela Irfan from The Mississauga Food Bank; and Neil Hetherington and Charles Jergl from the Daily Bread Food Bank.

We are grateful for the support and direction provided by Daily Bread's Public Affairs Committee: Christine Yip, Aisha Ansari, Sarah Diebel, Karen Hsiung, Laura Nelson-Hamilton, and Ben Wise. Special thanks to Jeff Wong for his SPSS support, Reena Reddy for her contributions and leadership in advancing the right to food, Eva Molina for communications support, and Catherine Leek at Green Onion Publishing for copy editing.

Lastly, a big thank you to the food banks that participated in this year's Who's Hungry initiative.

### Daily Bread Food Bank Participating Agencies

- Agincourt Community Services Association (South)
- Agincourt Community Services Association
- Allan Gardens
- Calvary Baptist Church
- Christ Church St. James Food Pantry
- Churches by the Bluffs
- Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre
- Flemingdon Community Food Bank
- Food Pantry at Morningside
- Fort York Food Bank
- Glen Rhodes United
- Grant AME
- Haven on the Queensway
- Islington United Church Mabelle Food Program
- Malvern Food Bank
- Mount Olive S.D.A. Church
- New Toronto Street Food Bank
- Oasis Dufferin Community Centre
- O'Connor Community
- Parkdale Community Food Bank
- Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities
- Scott Mission
- St. Ninian's Anglican
- The Lighthouse
- The Stop Community Food Centre
- Thorncliffe Food Bank
- Toronto People with AIDS Foundation
- Toronto West S.D.A. Church
- Victoria Park Shepherd Food Bank
- Westway Christian Church
- Yonge Street Mission

### North York Harvest Food Bank Participating Agencies

- Lawrence Heights Community Food Space
- Finch-Bathurst Community Food Space
- Thistletown Food Bank
- Society for the Living Food Bank
- Syme Woolner Neighbourhood and Family Centre
- Falstaff Food Bank
- Room to Grow Food Bank
- York Memorial Food Bank
- Community Share Food Bank
- Oriole Food Space
- Lansing Food Bank
- Weston Area Emergency Support (WAES)

### The Mississauga Food Bank Participating Agencies

- Seva Food Bank (Wolfedale)
- St. Mary's Food Bank (Dundas)
- The Compass
- Salvation Army (Erin Mills)
- Eden Food for Change
- Seva Food Bank (Malton)
- St. Mary's Food Bank (Coopers)
- St. Mary's Food Bank (Streetsville)

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