



HUNGER LIVES HERE

Risks and Challenges Faced by Food Bank Clients During COVID-19

**WE ARE COMMITTED
TO INCREASING FOOD
DISTRIBUTION TO
THOSE WHO NEED IT.
AT THE SAME TIME,
WE ARE ADVOCATING
FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE
TO REDUCE POVERTY
AND END HUNGER IN
OUR CITY.**



10.9

MILLION LBS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED



170

FOOD PROGRAMS



126

MEMBER AGENCIES



How food
banks
adapted
to the
pandemic

About this report



This report looks at the other side of the front line at the people who had to continue accessing front-line community services to meet their most basic needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

221 phone surveys with
food bank clients



Analysis of food bank client
intake data

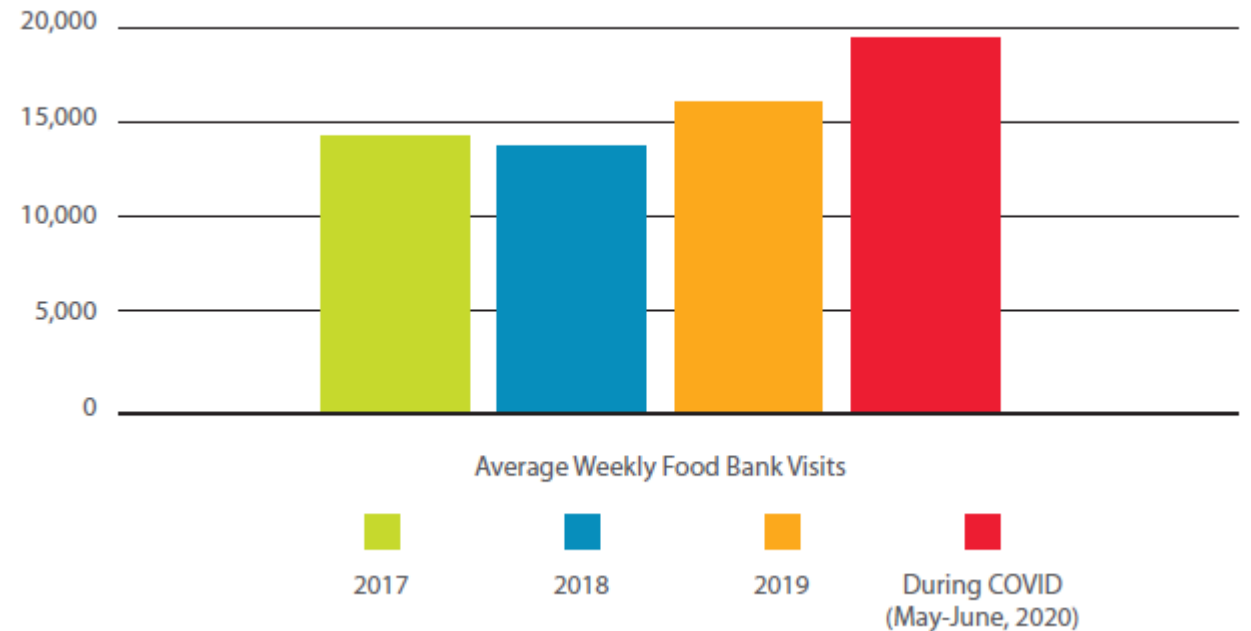
Acknowledgements

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- Co-authors: Peter Ochs, Catherine Hu, Tyler Schnare, Talia Bronstein
- Interviewers: Judy Anderson, Harry Kearney, Sara Mison
- Research advisory committee: Hannah Aldridge, Neil Hetherington, Charles Jergl, Scott Leon, Harvey Low, Andy Mitchell, Laura Nelson-Hamilton, Stephanie Procyk, John Stapleton, Christine Yip
- Input and guidance: Valerie Tarasuk

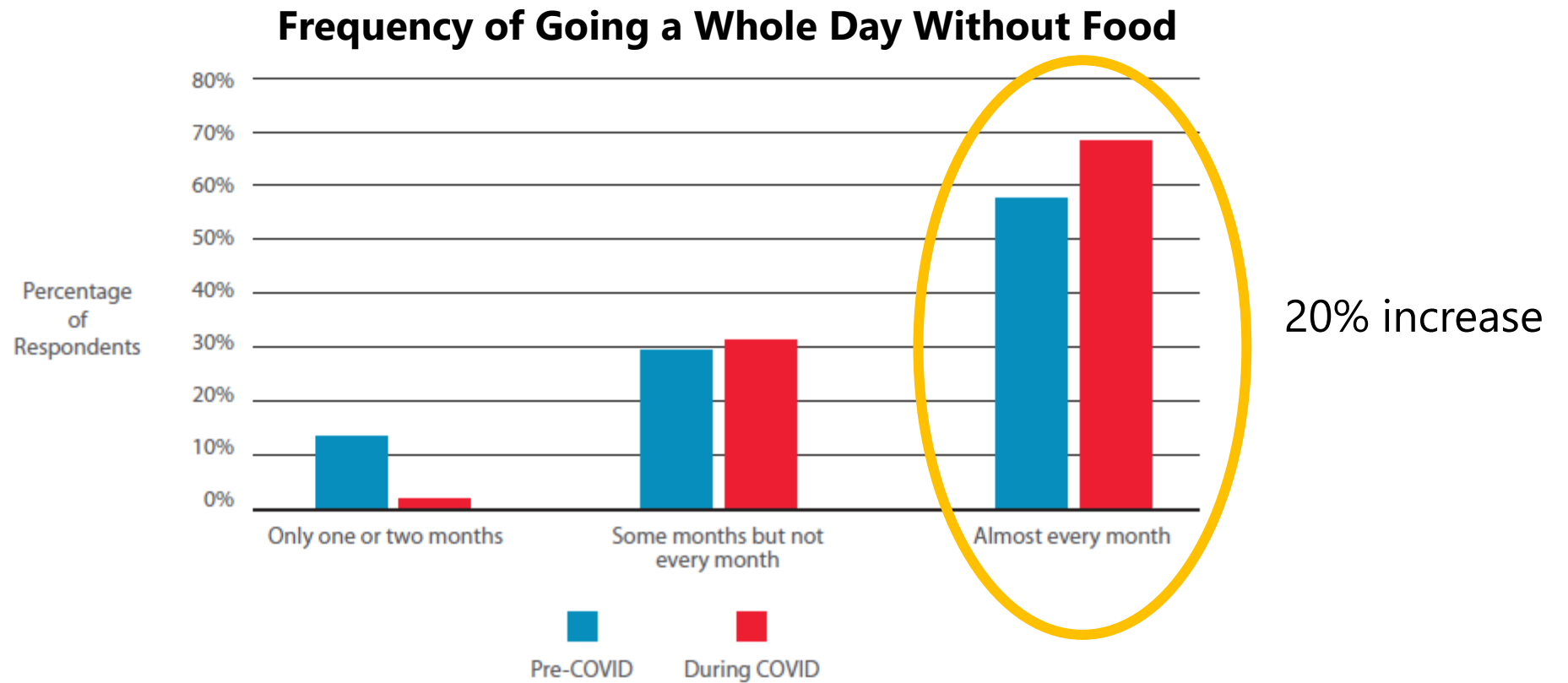
Food bank use has increased due to COVID-19

- 200% increase in new clients
- 76% of new clients surveyed began accessing food bank because of COVID-19, primarily because of job loss or a reduction in hours

Average Weekly Visits to Daily Bread Member Food Banks

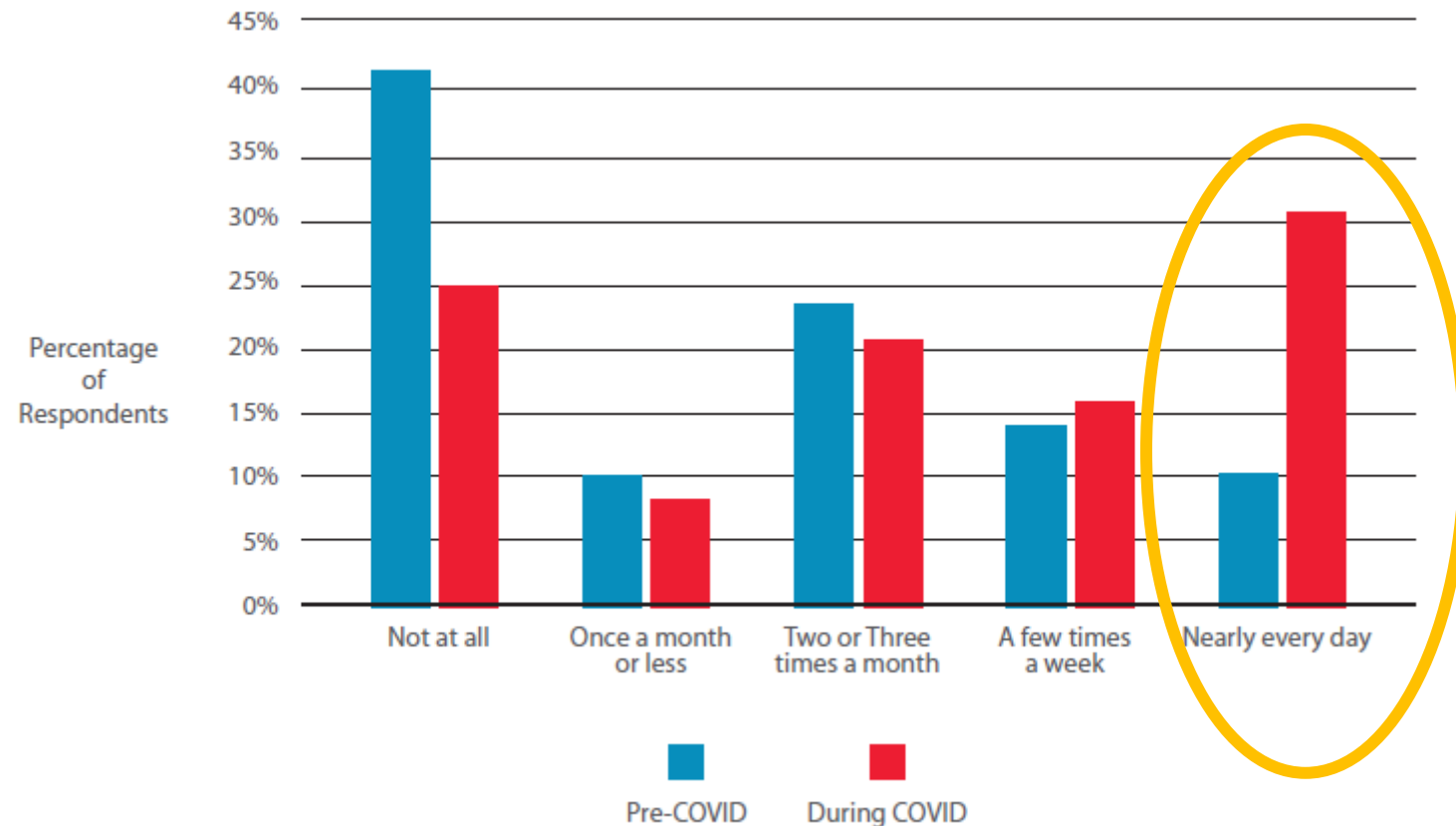


Severity of Food Insecurity has Increased



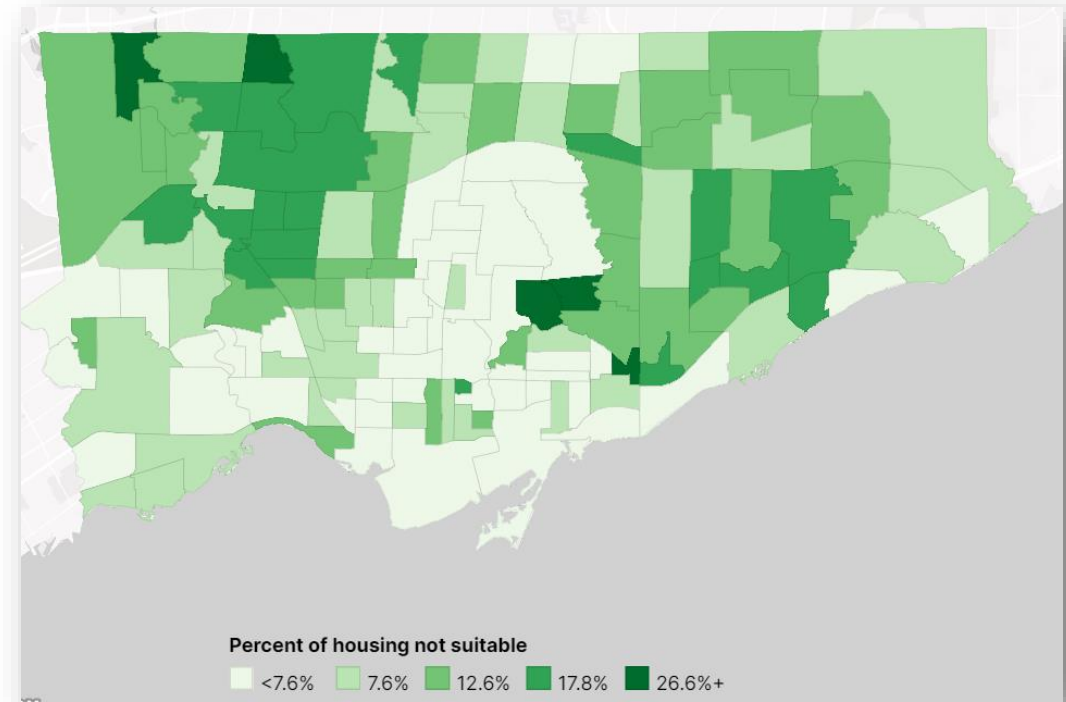
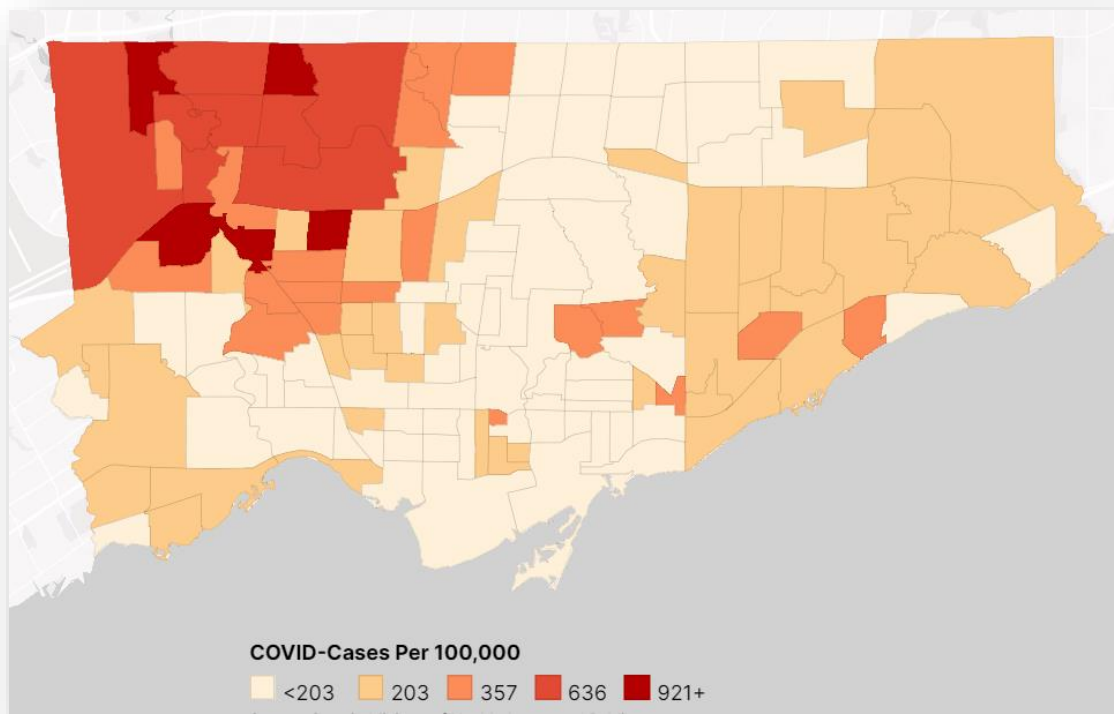
Severity of Food Insecurity has Increased

Frequency of Moderate or Severe Stress About Being Able to Access Enough Food

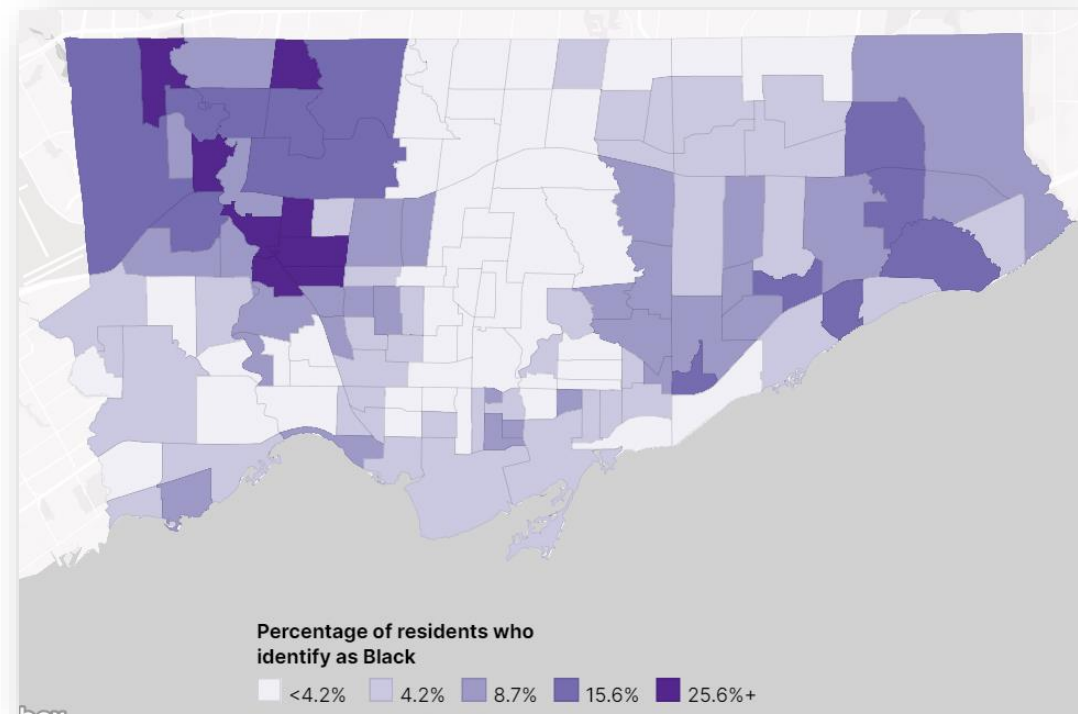
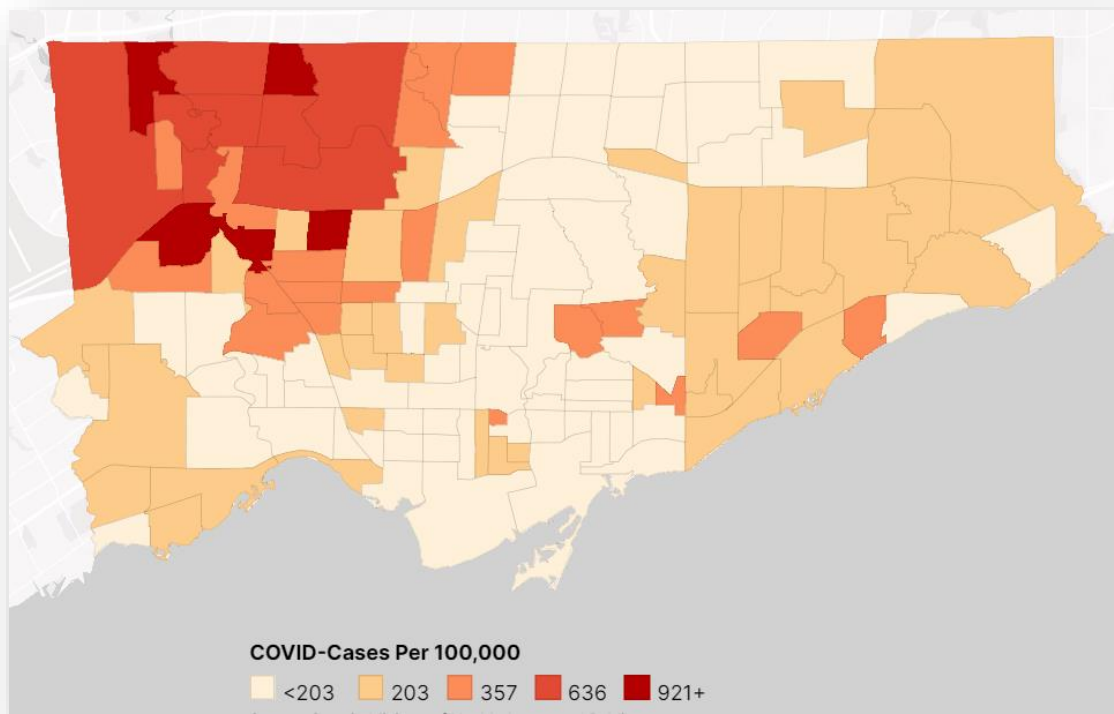


3 times higher

Food bank clients at greater risk for exposure to COVID-19

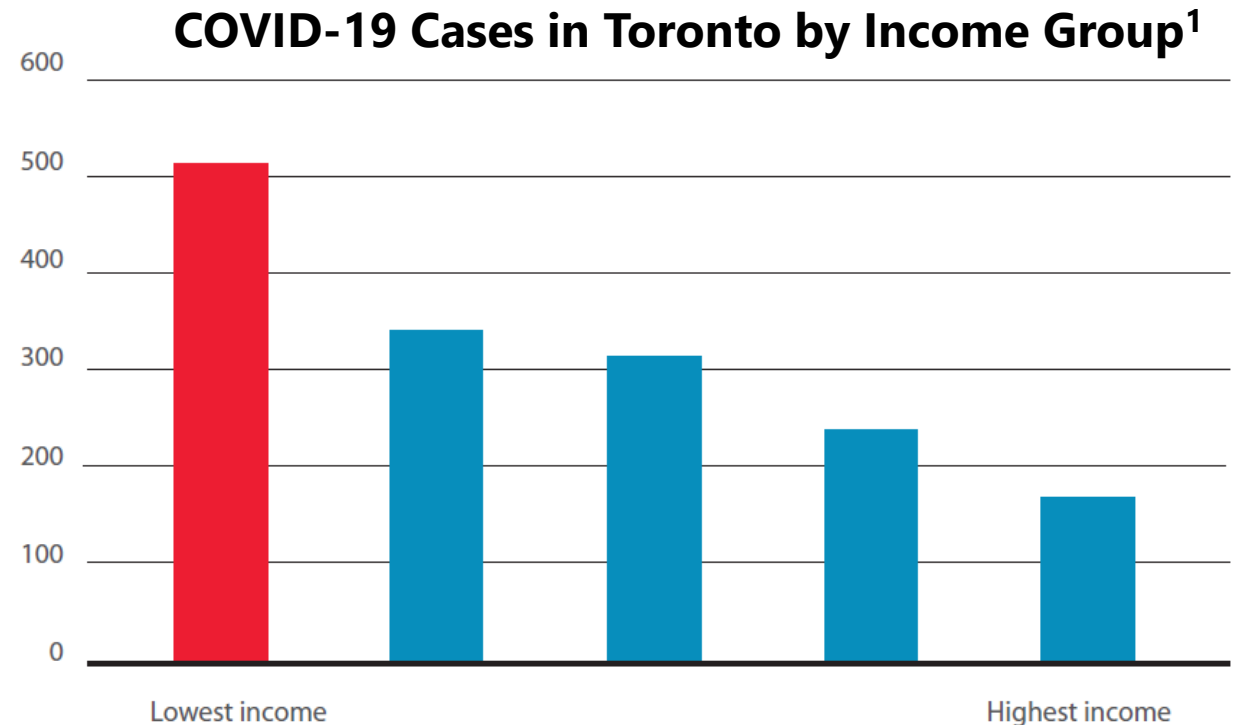


Food bank clients at greater risk for exposure to COVID-19



Food bank clients at greater risk for exposure to COVID-19

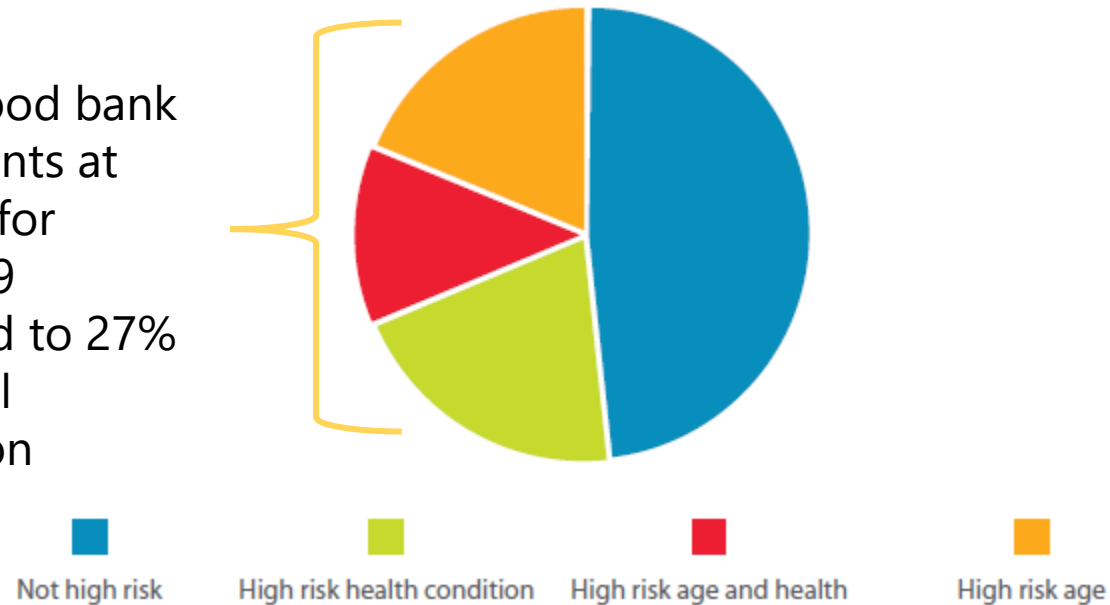
- 59% of food bank respondents in occupations facing the highest rates of COVID-19 cases (sales and service, trades and transport, and manufacturing and utilities)
- Only 5% had dental and drug benefits, further increasing the health risks associated with COVID-19



Food bank clients higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19

Breakdown of respondents by risk level for severe illness from COVID-19

51% of food bank respondents at high risk for COVID-19 compared to 27% in general population



Physical & mental health challenges during the pandemic

"They've been shut down. For example, I'm supposed to go to counselling every week. That's been shut down. That's nonexistent. I'm supposed to go to my doctor's. That's been shut down. That's been cancelled. I'm supposed to go to testing. That's been cancelled. It's screwed my life up and put my health at risk."

"I am so tired of being poor. Everything is too much."

"For my dad it's really hard for him to accept. His mental health issues require routine. He can't do his community garden anymore... He can no longer participate in the programs from his [community] group. All community engagement is cancelled."

Emergency policy responses and reach

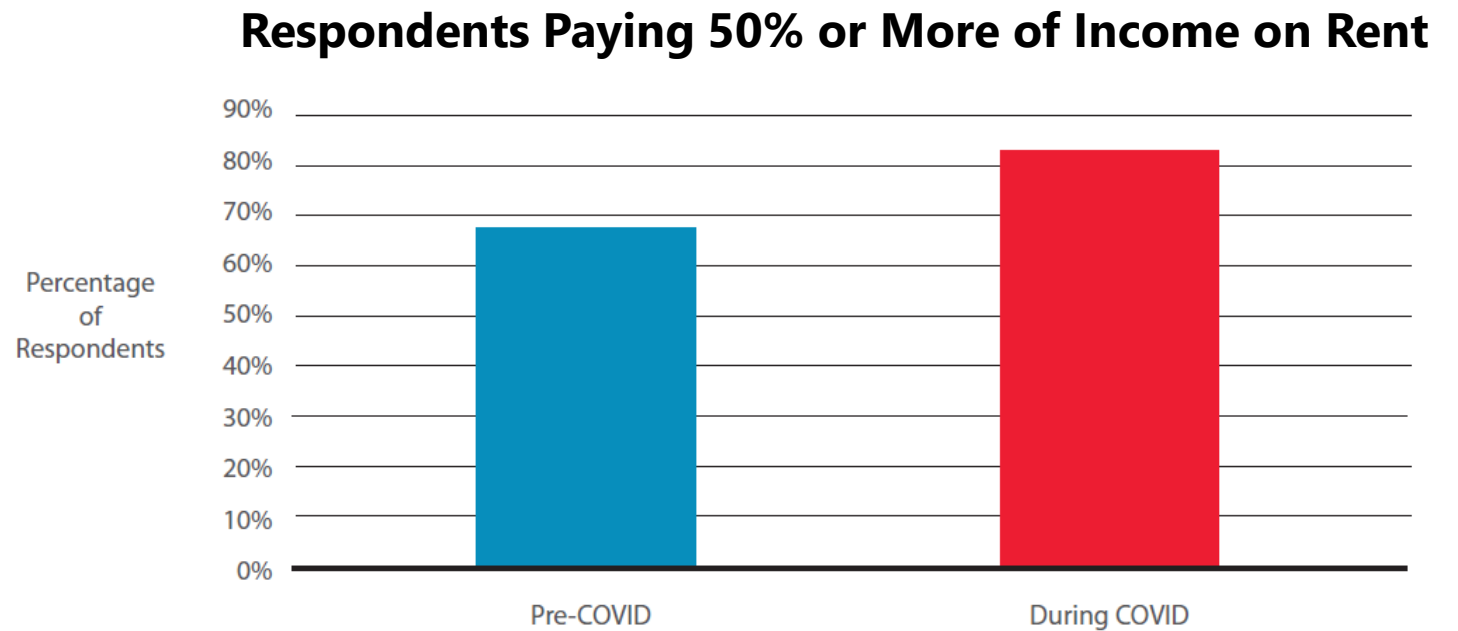
“No Canadian should have to choose between protecting their health, putting food on the table, paying for their medication or caring for a family member.”



- CERB
- Canada Child Benefit
- GST credit
- Old Age Security
- Guaranteed Income Supplement
- Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS)
- Social assistance emergency benefits
- One-time payment to families with children in Ontario

Emergency policy responses and reach

- 28% of households that experienced job loss received CERB
- One third of social assistance recipients unable to access emergency benefits
- 34% of respondents unable to pay rent four to six months from the time of the survey



Building a New Normal



1

Prioritize and Enhance Income Supports



2

Protect and Build Affordable Housing



3

Improve and Expand Health Benefits

Considering **Hunger Lives Here** in relation to population research on food insecurity in Canada



FOOD INSECURITY
POLICY RESEARCH

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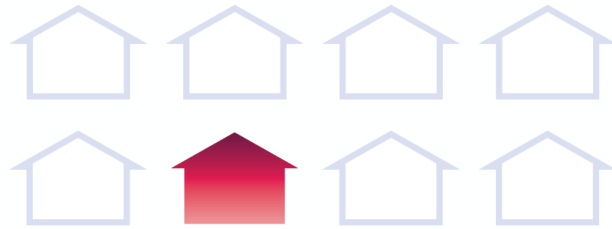
This presentation draws heavily on the work of Andy Mitchell, Fei Men, Andree-Anne Fafard St-Germain, Erika Brown, Lynn McIntyre, Herb Emery, Sarah Anne Charlebois, and Steph Vasko.

For emerging research and resources, please visit our website: **proof.utoronto.ca**

1.8 million
CANADIAN
HOUSEHOLDS

12.7% of households,
one in eight, are food-insecure

Ontario: 13.3%
Toronto: 13.6%



3.0%

Households
in Canada are
severely
food insecure

Missing meals, reducing food intake and at the most extreme, going whole day(s) without food due to a lack of money for food.

5.7%

Households
in Canada are
moderately
food insecure

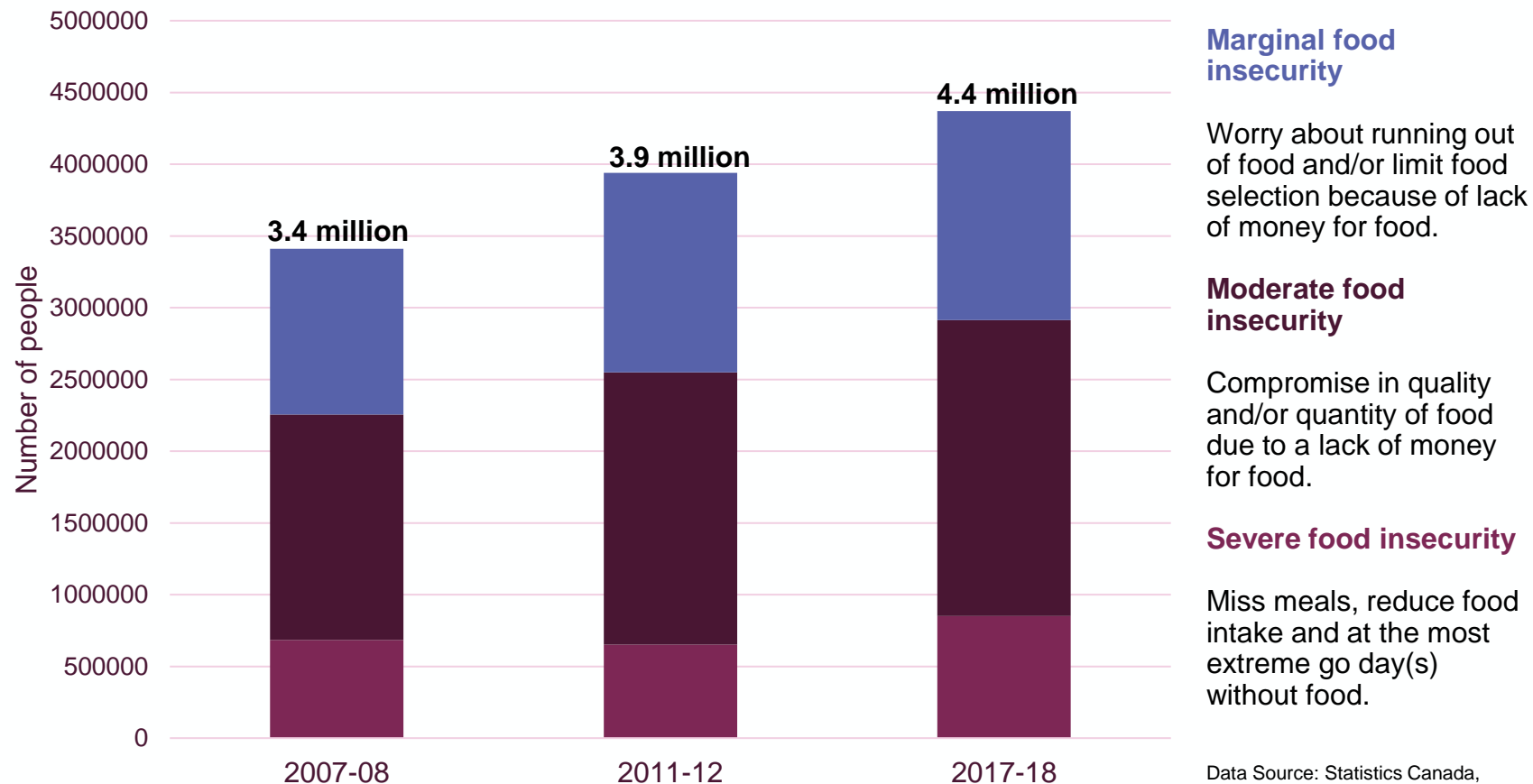
Compromise in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food.

4.0%

Households
in Canada are
marginally food
insecure

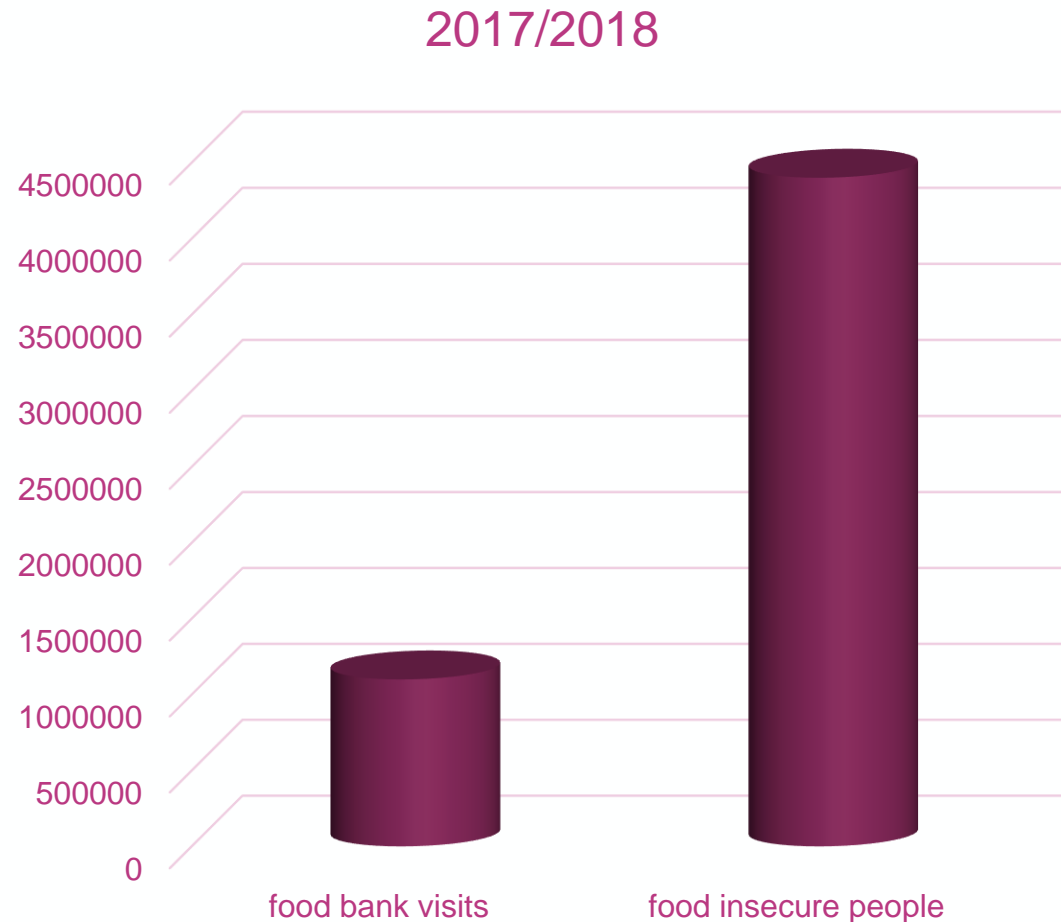
Worry about running out of food and/or limit food selection because of lack of money for food.

The number of Canadians living in food-insecure households in 2017-18 was higher than anything observed in previous years.



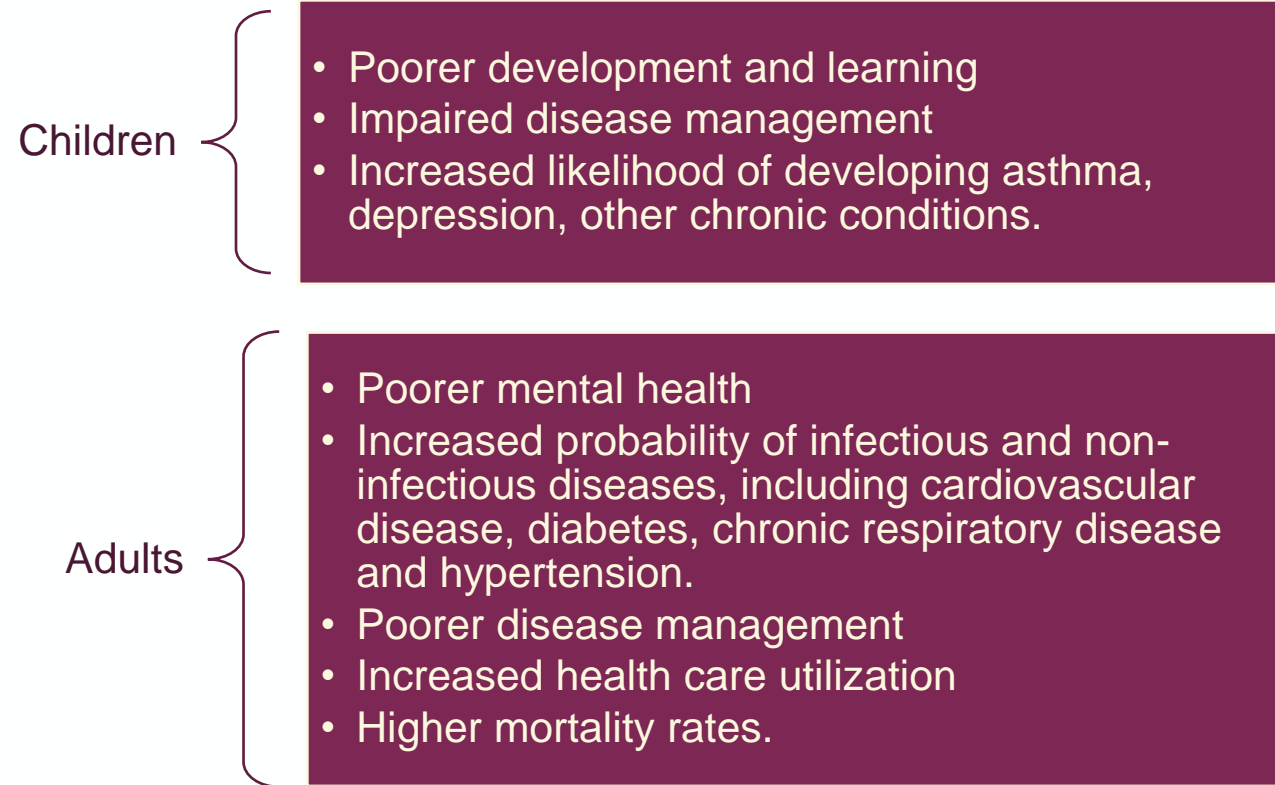
Data Source: Statistics Canada, CCHS, 2007-08, 2011-12 and 2017-18.

Pre-COVID relationship between food bank use and food insecurity in Canada:



Using a food bank = a strategy of last resort, most common among people faced with severe food insecurity.

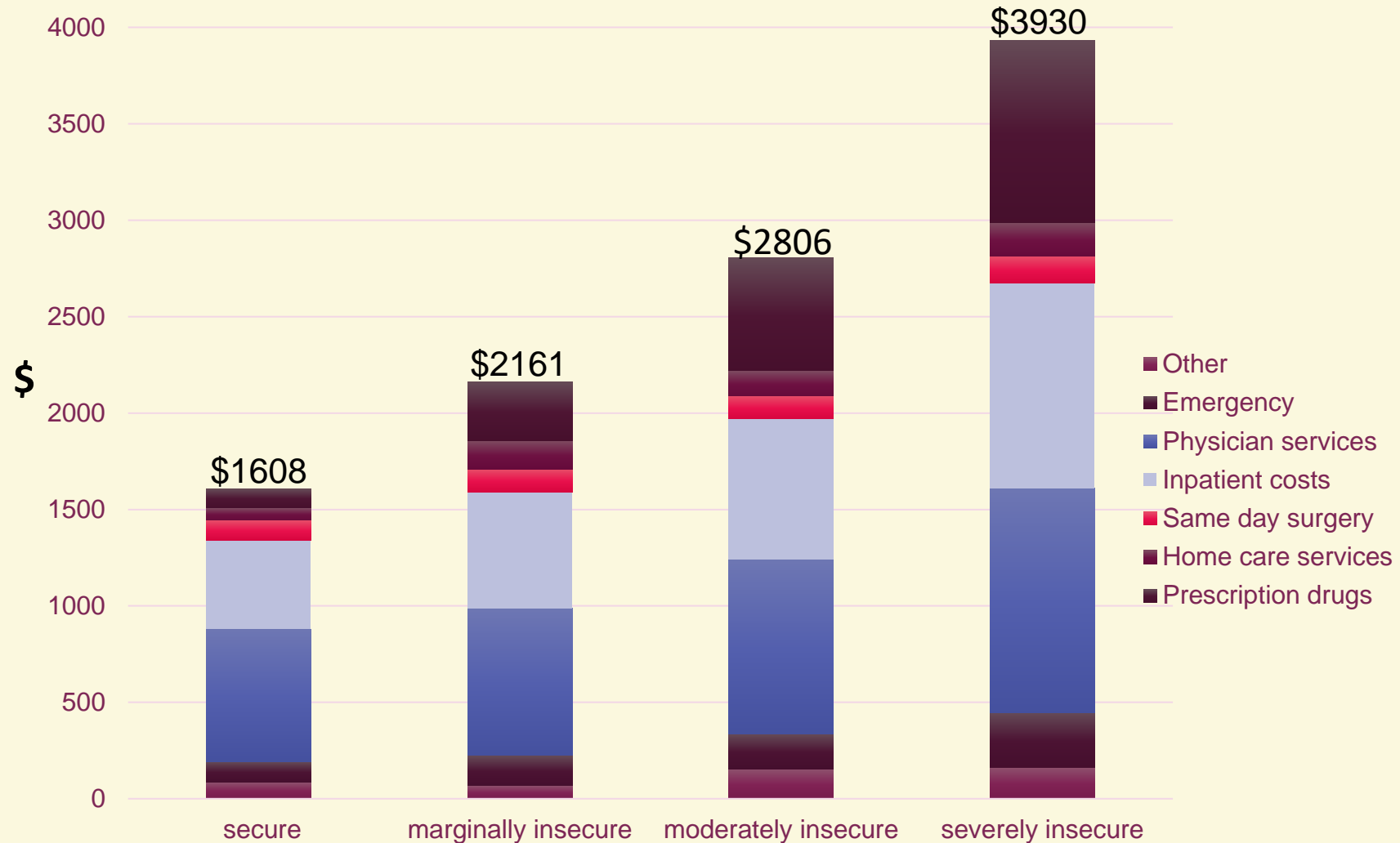
The health implications of food insecurity in Canada:



(Aibibula et al. *AIDS Care*. 2016. Anema et al, *AIDS Care* 2011. Anema et al, *PLoS One*. 2013; Fitzpatrick et al, *Am J Prev Med* 2015; Gucciardi et al, *Diabetes Care* 2009; Gundersen et al, *PloS One* 2018; Jessiman-Perreault & McIntyre, *SSM Pop Health* 2017; Kirk et al, *Public Health Nutr* 2014; Kirkpatrick et al., *Arch Pediatric Adol Med* 2010; Marjerrison et al, *J Pediatrics*, 2011;158:607-11; Martin et al, *Public Health* 2016; McIntyre et al., *J Affective Disorders* 2013, McIntyre et al. *J Social Psych Psych Epid*, 2017; Melchior et al, *PloS One* 2012; Men et al, *Can Med Assoc J* 2020; Men et al, *Health Affairs* 2020; Tait et al, *PloS One* 2018; Tarasuk, Mitchell, McLaren & McIntyre, *J Nutr*, 2013; Tarasuk et al, *Can J Med Assoc* 2015; Tarasuk et al, *Can J Psychiat* 2018)

Before COVID-19

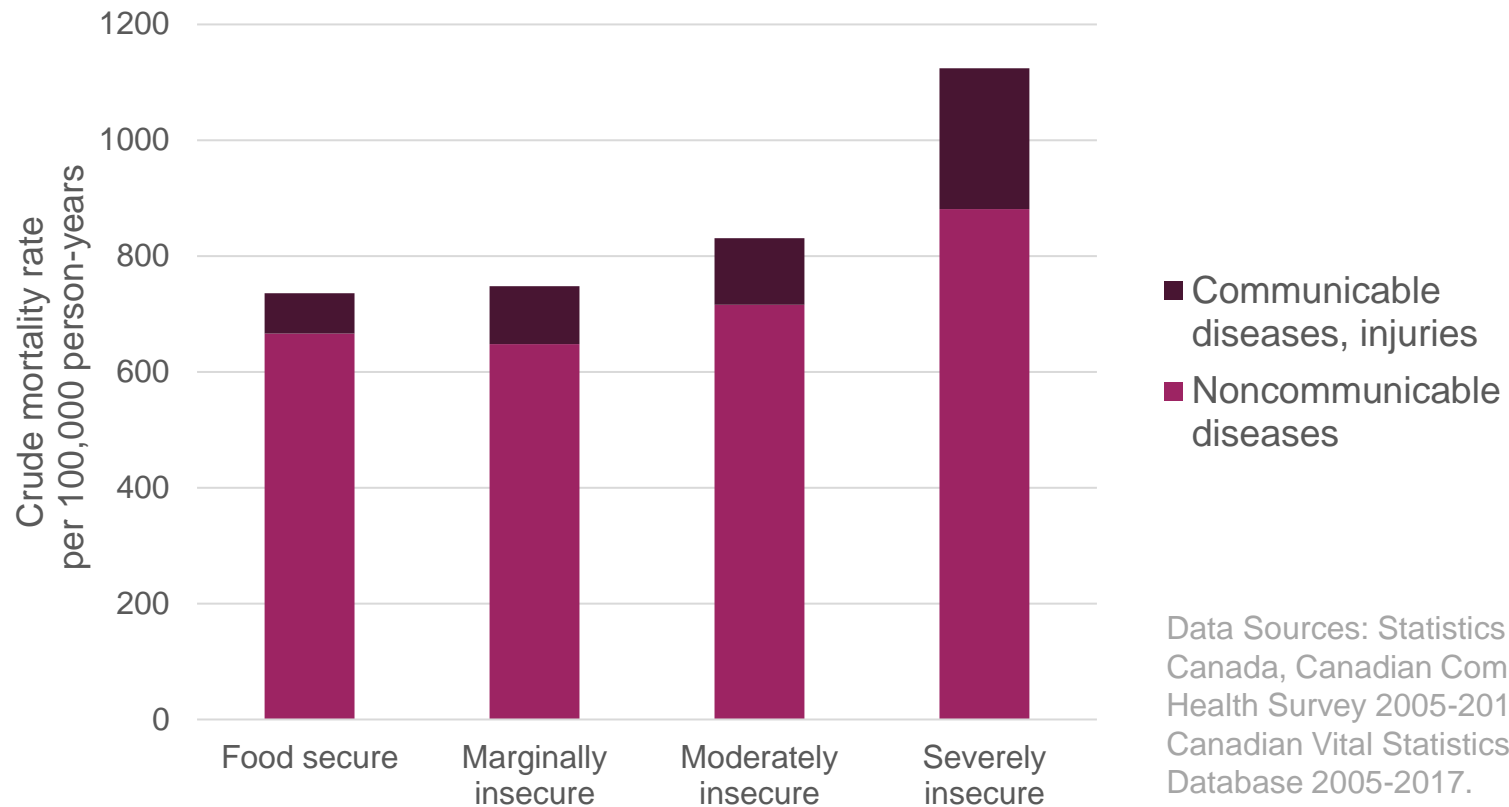
Average health care costs per person incurred over 12 months for Ontario adults (18-64 years of age), by household food insecurity status:



(Tarasuk et al, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 2015. For analysis of food insecurity in relation to acute care hospitalization and same day surgeries nationally, see Men et al, *Health Affairs* 2020.)

Before COVID-19

Crude mortality rate by primary cause of death, by food insecurity status



(Adapted from Men et al, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 2020.)



e.g., 59% of Ontario households reliant on social assistance were food insecure in 2017-18.

e.g., Renters have 2-3 times higher risk of food insecurity compared to home-owners.

STATCAN COVID-19: DATA TO INSIGHTS FOR A BETTER CANADA



Food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, May 2020

- Online panel survey of 4600 people from the 10 provinces.
- May 4-10, 2020
- 6 questions asked about experiences of food insecurity over past 30 days/

Release date: June 24, 2020



Statistics
Canada

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Canada

Canada

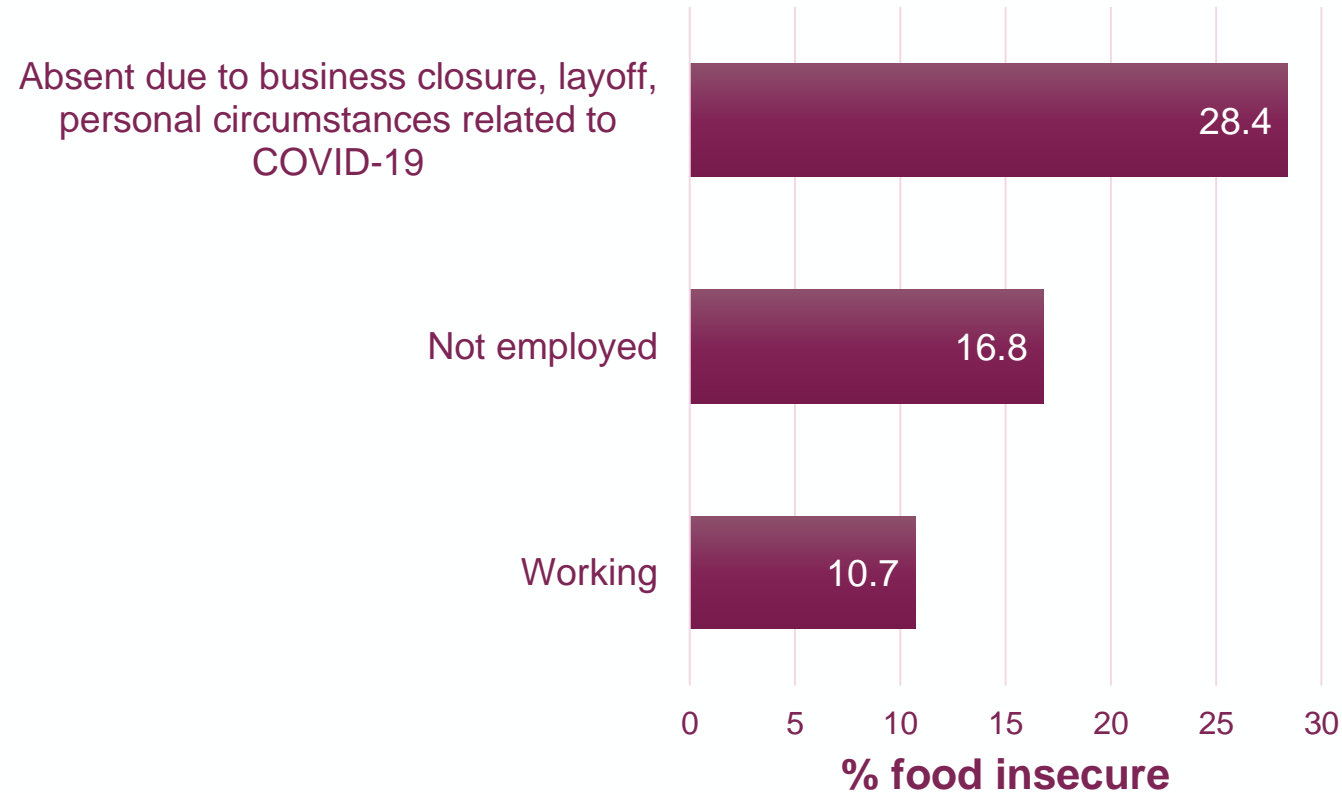
Percentage of Canadians reporting food insecurity experience in last 30 days, by presence of children

	Children in household	No children in household
Food didn't last and no money to get more	11.7	7.3
Couldn't afford balanced meals	13.0	8.8
Adults skipped or cut size of meals	11.7 ^E	8.1 ^E
Adults skipped or cut size of meals, 3 days or more	3.5 ^E	2.6 ^E
Personally ate less because not enough money	3.2 ^E	2.2 ^E
Personally was hungry but didn't eat because couldn't afford food	9.1 ^E	4.6 ^E
Any affirmative	19.2%	12.2%

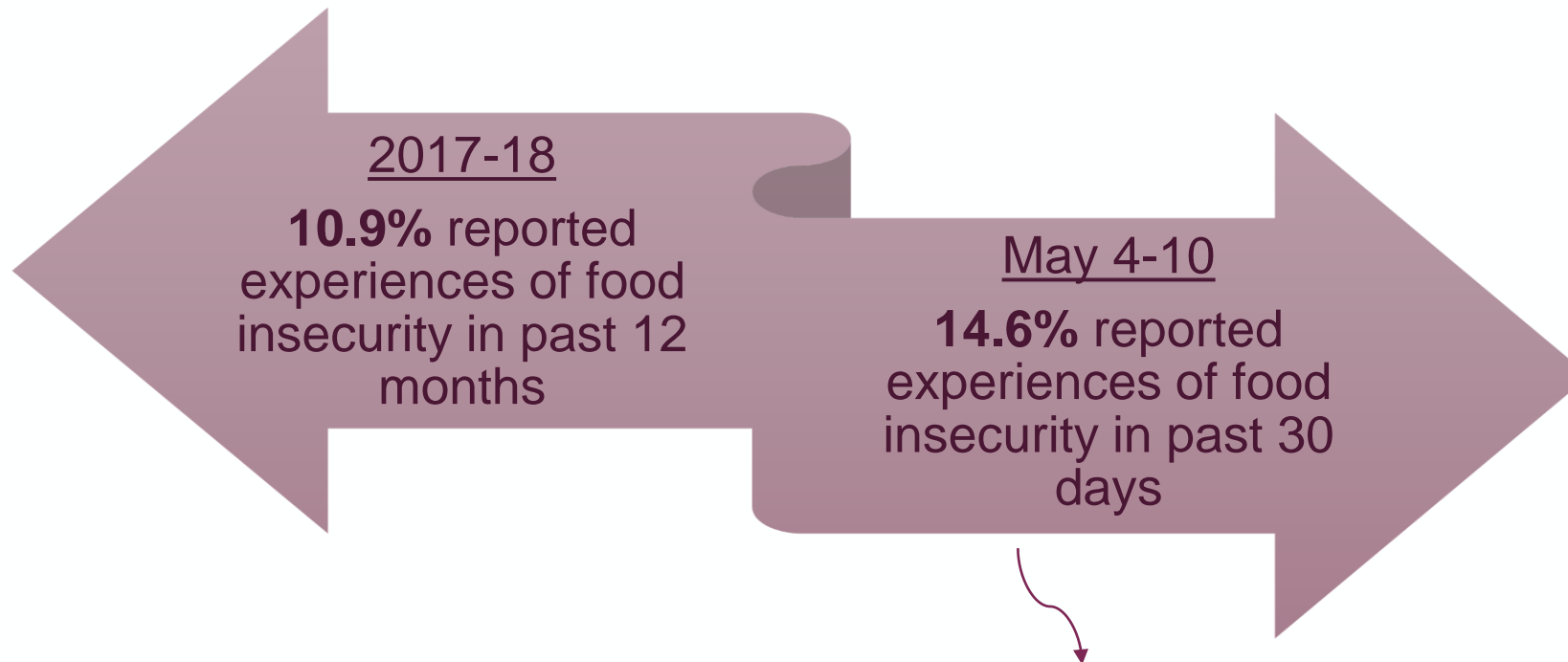
^E use with caution, CV 16.6-33.3%.

(Statistics Canada, Jun 24, 2020.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00039-eng.htm>)

Food insecurity by respondent's employment status during prior week (Apr 26 – May 2):



(Statistics Canada, Jun 24, 2020.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00039-eng.htm>)

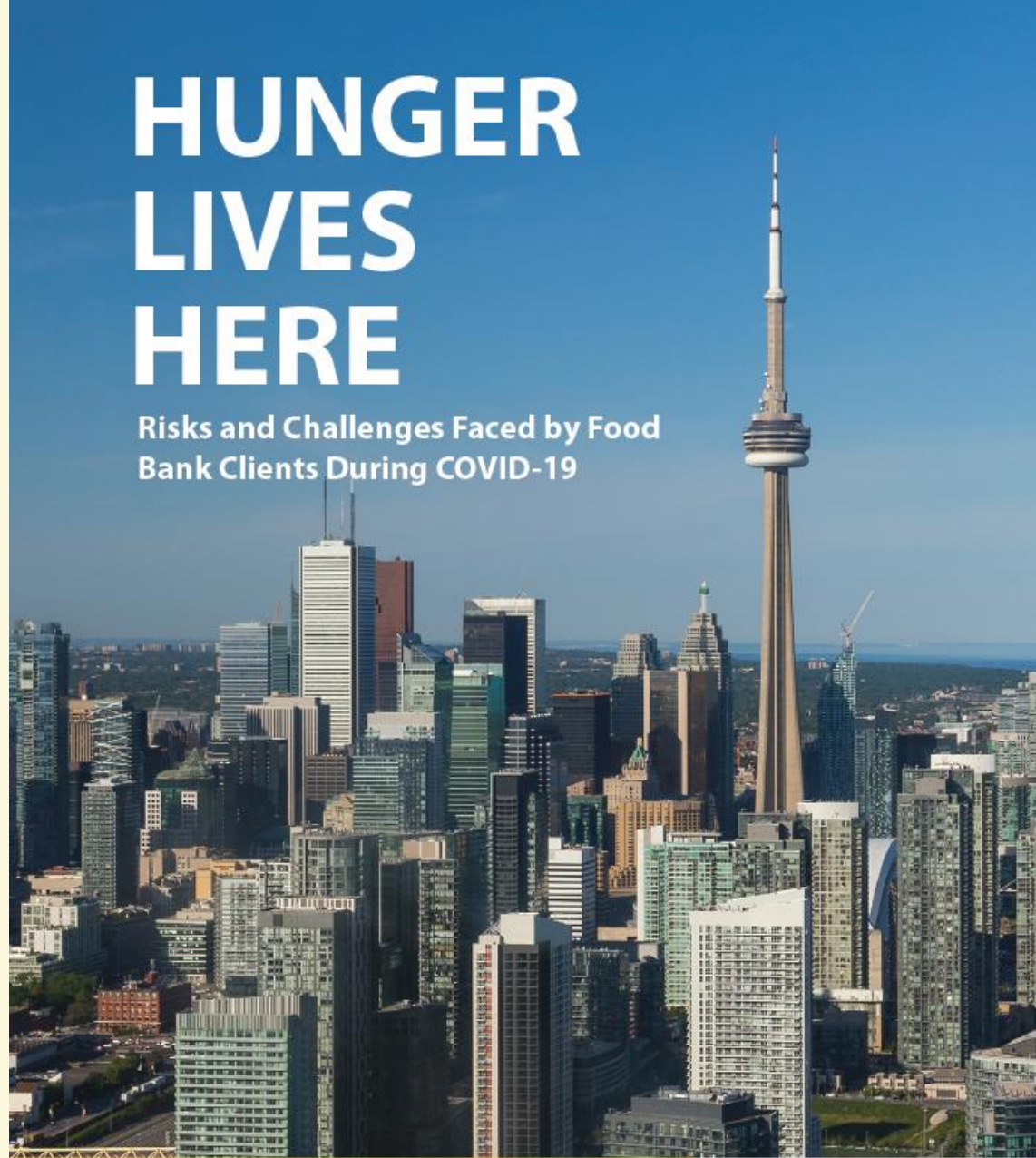


An underestimate because the survey sample is biased towards more affluent households (e.g., underrepresenting renters).

How do the findings in Hunger Lives Here extend our understanding of food insecurity now?

HUNGER LIVES HERE

Risks and Challenges Faced by Food Bank Clients During COVID-19



1. People are falling through the gaps in our hastily-constructed COVID safety net.

- Lost work but not receiving CERB.
- Receiving CERB, but still not able to make ends meet.
- On social assistance, but not receiving the province's top-up intended to cover extra expenses now.
- Very low income, but not benefiting from top-ups tied to income tax filing (e.g., GST credit increase)

2. People seeking food assistance now are extremely vulnerable + their needs go beyond food.

- Serious levels of food deprivation.
- Rent arrears and risk of eviction.
- Limited access to health benefits
- Chronic mental and physical health problems that can only be getting worse.
- Heightened risk of COVID-19 infection.

What has
been
shown to
reduce
food
insecurity
in Canada?

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Policy interventions that increase the financial resources of low-income households:

- Old-Age Security + Guaranteed Income Supplement – Emery et al, SPP Research Papers, 2013; McIntyre et al, Canadian Public Policy 2016
- Canada Child Benefit - Brown & Tarasuk, Preventive Medicine 2019
- Ontario Child Benefit – Tarasuk et al, Canadian Public Policy 2019
- Universal Child Care Benefit - Ionescu-Iltu et al, Preventive Medicine 2015
- NL Poverty Reduction Strategy – Loopstra et al, Canadian Public Policy 2015