



# Who's Hungry 2021

From Crisis to Resilience:  
A City's Call to Action

## About Who's Hungry 2021

Each year, *Who's Hungry* captures and amplifies the voices of food bank clients to identify trends in food insecurity and poverty in Toronto.

While we were unable to conduct our annual survey in-person this year due to COVID-19, *Who's Hungry 2021* features data and stories from our online and phone-based data collection.

This year's report also includes a special follow-up to Daily Bread Food Bank's *Hunger Lives Here: Risks and Challenges Faced by Food Bank Clients during COVID-19* report that was released in July 2020.



**1,347** online and phone surveys



**17** in-depth phone interviews



**164** follow up surveys with last year's *Hunger Lives Here* participants

## What can you do?

**Stay informed about poverty and food insecurity:** Read the *Who's Hungry* report to learn about the extent of hunger in Toronto and the driving forces behind it.

**Make your voice heard:** Government must take action to tackle poverty and food insecurity. Connect with your elective representatives to make sure they know that you want to see poverty and food insecurity eliminated in your community.

**Donate:** With your help, we can provide immediate food relief and other resources to relieve hunger.

**Volunteer:** Contact your local food bank to find out how you can get involved. If you would like to help conduct surveys for next year's *Who's Hungry*, please contact [research@dailybread.ca](mailto:research@dailybread.ca).



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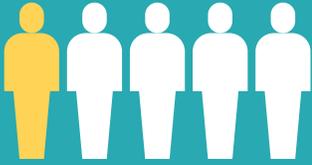


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See findings inside



# Accessing a food bank is often a last resort for people experiencing food insecurity.



**1 in 5**

food bank clients reported coming to a food bank because they had lost their job in the past year.



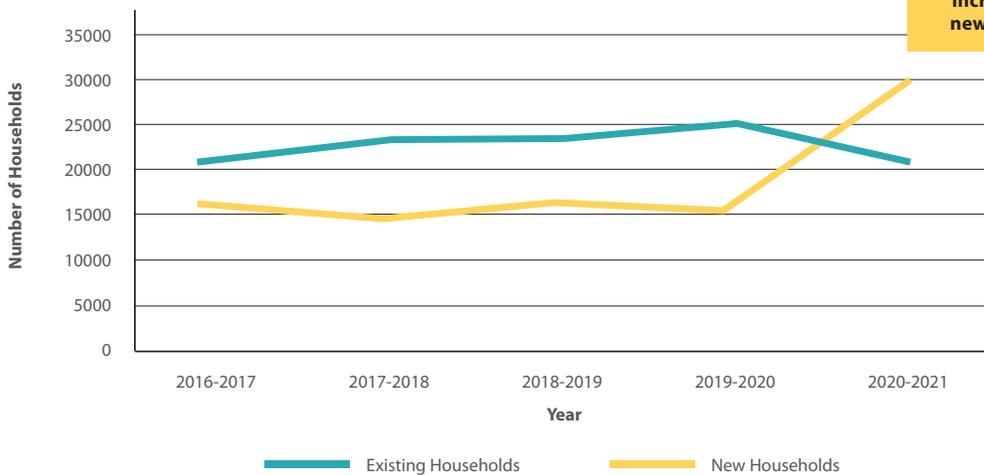
**2 in 5**

food bank clients reported coming to a food bank because their income was too low.

*I can't pay for my food, I can't pay for my transport. I mean, I have to be very, very careful what I spend ... I don't spend anything ... I don't have a TTC card ... I don't go to supermarket at all. Everything comes from the food bank. Still, I have difficulty, even the day-to-day expenses, unfortunately. – Food bank client*

## For the first time, new clients accessing Toronto food banks outnumbered existing clients.

NEW VS. EXISTING HOUSEHOLDS ACCESSING FOOD BANKS



**▲ 61%**  
increase in  
new clients

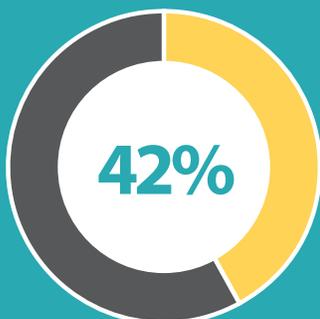
Clients who have come to food banks for a year or more reported more severe food insecurity.

**New Clients**  
44% did not eat for a whole day almost every month

**Existing Clients**  
58% did not eat for a whole day almost every month

## Food bank clients face significant challenges affording basic necessities, like food.

### Insufficient Income Supports



rely on social assistance as their primary income, but social assistance rates fall well below the poverty line.

### Precarious Employment

**20%** report their employment will not last more than a year.

**49%** have no employer-provided benefits such as dental, drug, or paid sick days.

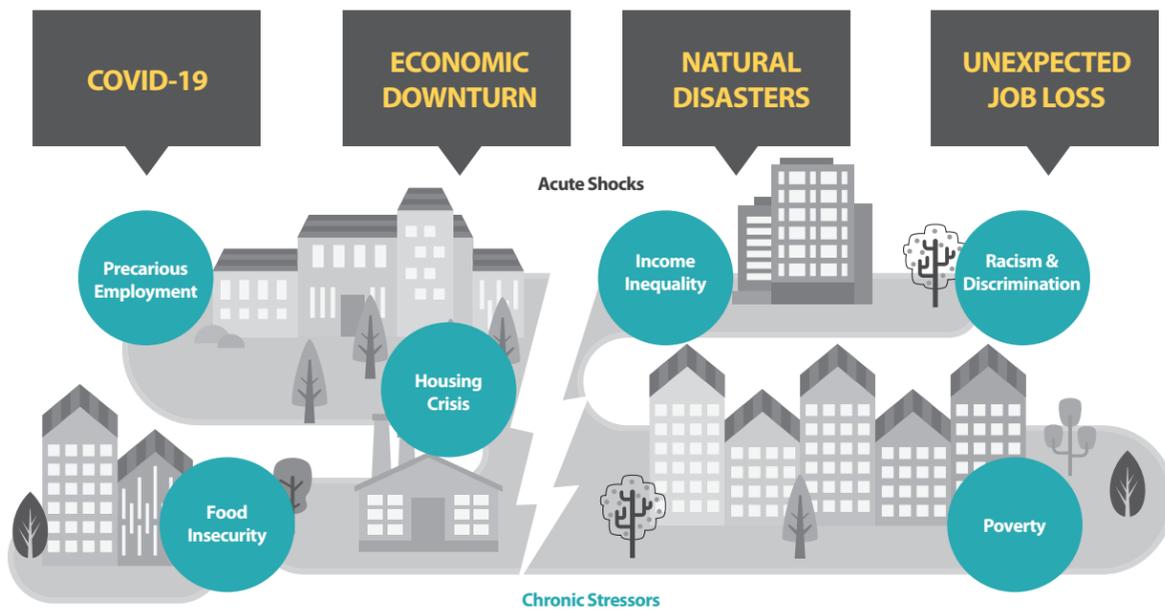
### Lack of Affordable Housing

**65%** live in private market rentals (i.e. do not live in subsidized housing).

Of these respondents, **80%** are at high risk of homelessness.

# To build greater resiliency, we need to create communities where people are not just coping to survive, but where every person can thrive.

The deep inequalities and chronic stressors that communities were facing prior to COVID-19 created an unstable foundation that compromised the ability of communities to adapt to the acute shock of the pandemic.



## Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty.

The poverty line for Toronto is **\$2,060** per month for a single individual

Among Food Bank Clients:



## 10 Actions for Building Resiliency:

### Respond to urgent community needs created by COVID-19.

1. Support renters who have accrued rental arrears during the pandemic.
2. Continue to protect the financial security of low-income households hardest hit by the pandemic.
3. Put equity at the center of the ongoing pandemic response and recovery.

### Build greater resiliency through decent work, affordable housing, and a strong safety net.

4. Address growing precarious employment.
5. Update Canada's Employment Insurance to reflect the modern realities of work.
6. Make affordable childcare a reality in Ontario.
7. Rapidly expand access to deeply affordable housing.
8. Raise social assistance rates to eliminate deep poverty.
9. Ensure low-income households have digital access.
10. Make poverty reduction and food insecurity a top policy priority.

# 1,449,780

visits to Toronto food banks in a single year, the **highest number of visits ever recorded.**

**47%** increase compared to prior year

**51%** of food bank clients missed a meal to pay for something else.

**31%** of adults reported going hungry at least once a week.

**16%** of children went hungry at least once a week.

*It's a cycle that I can't get in good housing, so I can't get better myself. And I can't afford food and I cannot afford to pay my bills. It's just a growing cycle. – Food bank client*

*My daughter, who is supporting me, doesn't have a good job or highly paid job, just temporary part time. It's hard when you don't have a job that's secure and pays enough. – Food bank client*



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