



Who's Hungry

A Profile of
Hunger in Toronto

2018



A person wearing a dark, hooded jacket is sitting on a concrete ledge in a city street. The background is heavily blurred, showing motion and city lights. A teal circular graphic with a yellow border is overlaid on the lower left, containing a quote.

**"I go to the
supermarket less
often, but when
I cannot afford
it, I go to the
food bank."**

~ Survey Respondent



WHO'S HUNGRY

2018 Profile of Hunger in Toronto

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MESSAGE FROM NEIL HETHERINGTON, CEO, DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK, AND RYAN NOBLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTH YORK HARVEST FOOD BANK

No one in our community should go hungry. That is the vision that drives us, our partners, and our supporters.

Our food banks and the 200+ frontline agencies we work with see the reality of hunger in Toronto. In the last year, we saw more than 914,000 client visits. This number is down slightly from last year, but the truth is it's 115,000 more visits than a decade before. The long-term trend is still headed in the wrong direction.

For the past ten years, we have benchmarked the state of hunger against pre-recession levels in 2008. The effects of the financial crisis were felt deeply in our community and that was reflected in a spike in client visits. It has made sense to measure our progress in addressing hunger alongside the broader economic recovery.

We hoped to see hunger and poverty go down in the recovery from the recession. They've gone up by 14%.

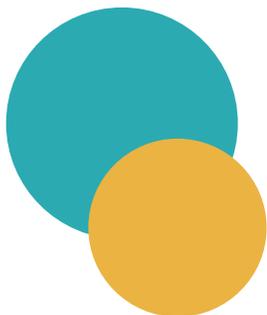
In Toronto, we have seen nearly a decade of prosperity since the recovery from the global financial crisis. That prosperity has brought improved opportunity, wealth, and well-being to many people, and has helped to support the safety net that buffers against poverty for those of us facing hard times.

But too many in our community have only experienced this prosperity as higher rents, soaring costs of childcare, increased energy costs and other cost-of-living pressures which make it a struggle to stay afloat. For them, it has been getting harder, not easier to access food. This is unacceptable. Access to food is a basic human right.

This report doesn't just look at our progress. It also looks ahead to where we need to be. When we release *Who's Hungry 2028*, we need to see a different picture. The end of hunger in our community has to be within reach. We need to see a time when no one goes hungry.

If we are going to get there, it will depend on choices that we make today. At Daily Bread and North York Harvest, we are working with our member agencies on new ways to ensure people facing hunger have access to quality food. We are each responding to the changing geography of hunger in Toronto by designating 20 underserved neighbourhoods and committing to increase the amount of food serving these areas by 20%.

Our work is made possible by over 10,000 volunteers each year, with even more at the member agencies serving residents across our city. Ending hunger will require a continued commitment from individuals, communities and government to support our neighbours.



To end hunger we need to fix social assistance

Public policy shapes the lives of our clients in many different ways. But it is starkly clear from our research is that social assistance isn't working as well as it needs to.

Just over two-thirds of the food bank clients we surveyed rely on provincial social assistance as their primary source of income. This means we're failing at a fundamental level. At a minimum, the safety net we build for people facing hard times should be strong enough to keep people from going hungry. For many it is not.

It's time to ask what we expect out of our social safety net.

This year's Who's Hungry Report is being released during a time of considerable uncertainty about the future of social assistance in Ontario. The new provincial government chose to roll back a number of changes put forward by the previous government, and announced their own internal 100 day review of social assistance, promising to reform it to help more people break the cycle of poverty.

A commitment to improve the social assistance system is welcome. As Minister Macleod has said, the system is far from perfect.¹ And where public policy decisions have left major holes in the safety net, our member agencies step in to prevent hunger.

That's why Daily Bread and North York Harvest has been committed to working with clients, member agencies, researchers and governments to find ways to improve social assistance. We have come to the table with data and ideas, chaired advisory bodies, and asked our clients what they need to overcome hunger in their lives. And we are ready to work with governments at all levels that want to improve public policy to better serve our communities.

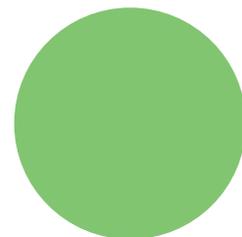
First steps in the wrong direction

Our research has shown that the most significant reason that people receiving social assistance depend on food banks is the amount of assistance they receive is simply inadequate.

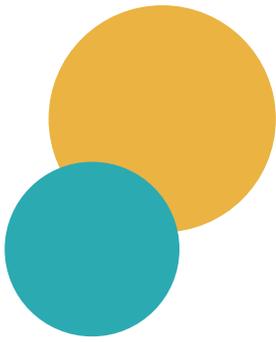
That's why we were disappointed to see that the new provincial government decided to scale back the planned annual increase from one that barely kept pace with inflation (3%) to one that will trail inflation (1.5%). Our research shows that clients already don't have enough left after paying rent to meet their basic needs. This will leave them further behind.

The government also pressed pause on some long overdue changes that would make it easier for people to build stability in their lives and in the labour force. These include letting people keep more of what they earn at work every month to support a transition from social assistance to work, and waiting three years, rather than three months, of living together before treating people as a family unit for social assistance calculations.

This report comes on the eve of the provincial government's promised plan for social assistance reform, expected on November 8, 2018. We believe the government can chart a new path on social assistance, starting now. This year's Who's Hungry report offers context on the experience of hunger faced by social assistance recipients and other residents of our city facing poverty. And the report also maps out what social assistance reform will need to accomplish if we are to finally turn the corner on hunger in our region.



¹ Lisa Macleod. "Reforming Ontario's Broken Social Assistance System." August 1, 2018. Toronto Sun. <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/guest-column-reforming-ontarios-broken-social-assistance-system>



Hunger is not just about social assistance

The gaps in the social assistance system have a huge impact on the lives of people facing hunger in Toronto, but they are just one element of a public policy mix needed to end hunger in Toronto.

In the last year, we have seen some promising changes that can make a real difference in the lives of our clients. For example:

- The federal government introduced the Canada Workers Benefit, which expands and replaces the Working Income Tax Benefit. This program provides support to people who are working but have low incomes. This program aims to prevent people from being penalized for earning more through work by losing other support from the safety net. The new benefit provides more support and makes it easier to claim.
- The new National Housing Strategy brought commitments from the federal government, provinces and territories to investing in affordable housing and preserving our existing social housing supply. Housing costs are one of the main pressures on the lives of our clients.
- New employment standards legislation in the province provided new protections and a boost to the minimum wage, which together strive to help people in precarious employment get more secure incomes.

These are important steps, but to end hunger we will need deeper and more sustained efforts. We need to create more quality and affordable childcare options, so that single parents can afford to go back to work. We need to create far more affordable housing supply so that people can have decent places to live with enough left over after rent for their other needs. And we need employment supports and training that help people succeed in getting good work.

The time to change course is now

The growth of hunger in our community is disheartening, but we have committed to the people of Toronto that we will not give up. We have come too far, and we need to go farther. We are ready to work with governments, agencies, volunteers, and the people we serve to design and deliver lasting solutions to hunger.

With the majority of our clients relying on social assistance, the 100-day review process announced by the provincial government is an opportunity to choose a course. Social assistance reforms in 1995 brought cuts and new rules, setting in motion a hunger crisis that continues today. This year we have a chance to make a different choice, one that sets us on the path to end hunger.

The Who's Hungry research shows us the effects that food insecurity has on people's lives. But it also shows us what must be done to solve it. Together with our communities, and our governments, we can choose to change our story, so that ten years from now we can say that the end of hunger in our city is within reach.



Ryan Noble
Executive Director
North York Harvest Food Bank



Neil Hetherington
CEO
Daily Bread Food Bank



ABOUT THIS REPORT

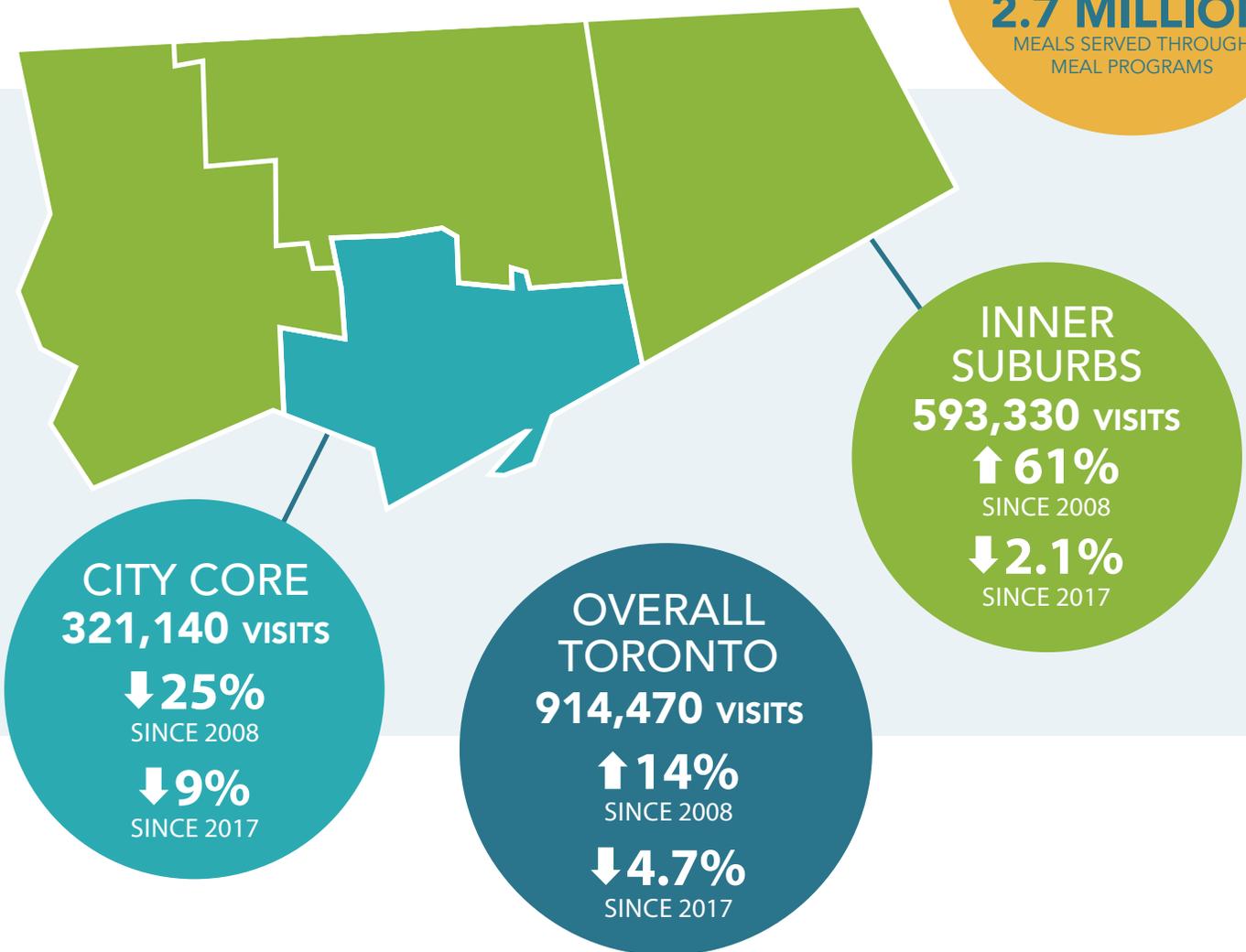
Since 2005, the Who's Hungry report has provided an annual update on the state of food security in our city. The report is a commitment to share what we see and what our clients experience with our community, other service providers, and policymakers. By continuing this research every year, we are able to understand how hunger has grown and changed in Toronto.

We invest in research that brings together data and the lived experience of our clients across the city to better understand the realities and causes of hunger. We make this research a priority as part of our commitment to not only provide food and immediate assistance but also help reduce the poverty that causes hunger.

The report draws on both quantitative and qualitative research. Data on food bank use comes from Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks' member agencies. We also surveyed food bank clients at 34 locations across the city from late February to mid-April 2018 to learn more about their experiences.

This report is their story, and the story of many others experiencing hunger across our city.

2018 TOTAL CLIENT VISITS IN TORONTO



OVERVIEW OF FOOD BANK USE IN TORONTO

From April 2017 to March 2018, there were a total of 914,470 client visits to Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank member agencies. This is a decrease of nearly 5% since last year.²

There are a number of factors that can drive year-to-year increases or decreases in client visits. As our researchers highlighted earlier this year in a research snapshot, unemployment rates in Toronto in March 2018 were on the decrease, and many families were beginning to feel the effects of the new Canada Child Benefit.³

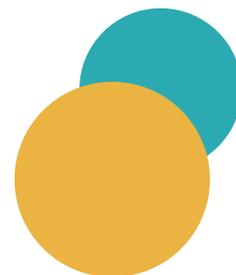
This is good news, but it's not enough. And even these numbers don't reflect the full breadth of need. The current demand for food support still far outstrips the capacity of many food banks. In last year's report, we shared that three-quarters of our food banks had to ration food because they were at risk of running out, and one-in-five had to turn people away because there was no more food left.⁴ And many people face barriers to using foodbanks, including access to affordable transportation, limited mobility or the stigma of asking for help.

Looking at the long-term trend, the news isn't actually good at all. Food bank visits in Toronto remain 14% higher than they were in 2008, and more than double what they were in 1995.

Before the recession that began in 2008, we had never seen a year with more than 800,000 visits to food banks in Toronto. Since then, we have never seen a year with fewer than 870,000 visits.

This report provides a picture of who is experiencing this increase in hunger – where they live, their backgrounds, and how that hunger affects their lives.

Before the recession, we never saw more than 800,000 visits in a year. Since then, we have never seen a year with fewer than 870,000.



FOOD BANK VISITS IN TORONTO 1995 to 2018



² Total client visits for 2017 have been revised from Who's Hungry 2017 based on a reporting method change from some member agencies. See the methodology section at the back of this report for details

³ Daily Bread Food Bank. "Making Progress, Building Hope". May 2018 <https://www.dailybread.ca/about/blog-posts/>

⁴ Daily Bread Food Bank. "Who's Hungry 2017". <https://www.dailybread.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Whos-Hungry-2017-Report.pdf>

WHERE ARE PEOPLE HUNGRY?

THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHY OF HUNGER IN TORONTO

Along with an increase in demand, food banks have faced the challenge of responding to a changing geography of hunger, finding ways to provide services in communities where need is surging.

The downtown core has seen a 25% decrease in food bank visits during the last decade, although need remains high in some pockets. The inner suburbs have seen a 61% increase over the same period, even after a slight decrease in the last year.

This shift in need to areas in Etobicoke, Scarborough and North York is consistent with a broader trend documented by University of Toronto researcher Dr. David Hulchanski; a city increasingly divided by income. Toronto has gone from a city of mostly middle-income neighbourhoods to a polarized one with low-income neighbourhoods concentrated in the inner suburbs.⁵ Alongside this segregation by income, the increasing number of low-income neighbourhoods in the outer ring of the city have disproportionate concentrations of newcomers and visible minorities.

Living in lower-income neighbourhoods often means residents experience greater barriers and fewer opportunities. This can mean poor public transit, low employment opportunities, under-resourced, over-subscribed services and schools, and can be made more challenging by language barriers or newcomer status. Toronto Public Health recognized this in their 2018 Toronto Food Strategy Report, saying that resiliency in food security must account for the inequities faced by people in vulnerable low-income neighbourhoods.⁶



⁵ J. David Hulchanski and Richard Maaranen. "Neighbourhood Socio-Economic Polarization & Segregation in Toronto" Presentation Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership, September 2018. <http://neighbourhoodchange.ca/documents/2018/09/hulchanski-2018-toronto-segregation-presentation.pdf>

⁶ Toronto Public Health. "Toronto Food Strategy, 2018 Report." p. 6: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2018/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-118079.pdf>

These factors – overall rise in hunger, concentration of hunger in the low-income neighbourhoods, and polarization of income by neighbourhoods, the combined impacts of inequities – create real challenges for the food banks which are trying to meet the needs of communities. And those challenges are compounded by other realities:

- **Demand is moving to areas with fewer food banks.** The most recent census data shows that the greatest concentrations of people living with low income, as well as highest percentages, are in the northern and outer reaches of the city. Those areas have fewer food banks, making it harder to respond to the growth in demand.
- **The geography of the inner suburbs makes it harder to reach people.** Existing food banks in the outer areas of the city are further apart and often poorly-served by transit. Many clients can't afford the transportation needed to reach the food banks.
- **It is challenging to find space to run food programs.** Some food programs that are run by faith-based groups have subsidized rental costs. Others, such as those located in larger community centres or public housing units, use pay-for-use spaces. This is especially an issue in north and east Scarborough which has less faith-based infrastructure meaning many food programs have to use unfavourable locations. It's not just food banks that struggle to find or maintain space to operate in these areas. Other kinds of food-related programming that can be essential tools of community development such as urban farming or community kitchens, also face difficulties finding space to run programs.

What's clear is that Toronto's social geography has changed. Hunger lives in new places, and in new numbers, but our services haven't been able to keep pace with these new pressures.

"My rent is \$1,136. My income is \$1,050. I essentially buy nothing."

~ Survey Respondent

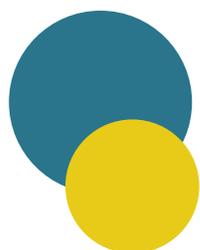
"(I go to the food bank because) I used the money for rent and have nothing left."

~ Survey Respondent



WHICH PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY?

Profile of Hunger in Toronto



		2008	2018	Change from 2017
Age Groups				
18 and under*		31%	28%	-1%
19 to 44		40%	36%	-1%
45 to 64		25%	29%	+1%
65 and up		3%	8%	+1%
Gender				
Female		46%	50%	-4%
Male		54%	48%	+3%
Transgender		0%	1%	--
Immigration Status				
Canadian Citizen/ First Nations		74%	73%	-1%
Landed Immigrant/ Permanent Resident		15%	16%	-1%
Refugee Claimant		5%	8%	+3%
Temporary Status		4%	2%	-1%
Other		1%	1%	--
Country of Birth				
Born outside of Canada		48%	54%	-2%
Length of time in Canada	(Less than a year)	16%	13%	--
	(1 to 4 years)	24%	17%	+4%
	(5 to 9 years)	14%	11%	-3%
	(10 years or more)	46%	59%	-2%

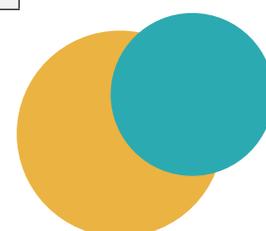
*Age of recipients refers to survey respondents and other members of their households. All other categories refer to survey respondents themselves. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.



Profile of Hunger in Toronto

	2008	2018	Change from 2017
Indigenous			
Identify as Indigenous	7%	9%	+2%
Household Composition			
Single	53%	41%	-4%
Single parent	16%	15%	--
Couple without children	8%	15%	+7%
Couple with children	15%	10%	-1%
Extended family without children	6%	13%	--
Extended family with children	3%	7%	-2%
Education			
Grade school or less	6%	7%	+1%
Some high school	24%	16%	-2%
Graduated high school	25%	21%	+2%
Some college or university	20%	18%	-1%
Trade certificate/ professional accreditation	-%	4%	+1%
College diploma	21%**	13%	-4%
Bachelor's degree		15%	+3%
Master's degree or higher	4%	6%	--
Disability			
Identify as having a disability	48%	62%	--

** Categories were combined in 2008



By conducting research every year with people who come to food banks, we are able to get a picture of who is hungry in our city and what is going on in their lives. While there are limits to what we can learn – we can't learn for example about the people experiencing hunger who don't come to a food bank – it has proven to be a valuable source of insights into food insecurity, and poverty more generally, in our city.

In the past ten years, we have seen a number of changes in the demographics of people accessing food banks. In this year's report we shed light on what has changed and what has not. By understanding who is experiencing hunger and why, we are better positioned to respond to and prevent the food insecurity in their lives.

Newcomers

Compared to a decade ago, people accessing food banks in Toronto are more likely to be born outside of Canada but less likely to be recent newcomers, meaning having been in Canada for fewer than four years.

In many ways, this story reflects overall changes in immigration. As the share of Toronto's population that is born outside of Canada continues to grow (46% for the Toronto region in the most recent census), so does the share of food bank clients (54% of survey respondents).⁷ At the same time, Toronto now receives a smaller share of new arrivals than it did the past, explaining in part the longer-range decline in the share of food bank clients who are newcomers.⁸

Against the background of these trends we have seen troubling signs of increased hunger among newcomers in recent years. In particular, food banks are responding to recently-arrived refugees who find that government assistance is not enough to get by. Since last year we have seen a 4% increase among the share of food bank clients that have been in Canada between one and four years. This change in the last year runs counter to the longer-term downward trend in visits by recent newcomers.

These recent newcomers are more likely than other food bank clients to get most of their income from work. But income from work isn't enough - these clients report that they are spending most of their limited income on rent.

Working-age adults

We continue to see an increase in food bank use among people aged 45 and up. In 2008, this group represented 28% of food bank clients we surveyed. By this year, they had reached 37%.

Nearly four in five of our clients in that group are between 45 and 64. A majority were born in Canada, and most of those who were not are established residents who have lived here for 10 years or more. The majority indicated they have a disability, are single-person households and receive a form of social assistance as their main source of income. Single working-age adults experience the highest rates of poverty in Canada, in part because they are not captured by anti-poverty programs geared towards families with children (like the Canada Child Benefit) or seniors (like the Guaranteed Income Supplement).

Recent newcomers are more likely than other food bank clients to get most of their income from work – but their earnings aren't enough



⁷ Statistics Canada. "Immigration and ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census." October 25, 2017. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.htm>

⁸ City of Toronto. "Backgrounder: 2016 Census: Housing, Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity, Aboriginal peoples". October 26, 2017. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/9282-2016-Census-Backgrounder-Immigration-Ethnicity-Housing-Aboriginal.docx>

Seniors

The share of client aged 65 and up has increased from 3% to 8% in the past ten years. The majority of these clients are single-person households and report that their government pensions (e.g., Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security) are falling behind the rising costs of living.

People with disabilities

Overall, 62% of food bank clients report having a disability or serious illness in 2018, versus 48% in 2008. Many clients have physical disabilities as well as mental health challenges. The majority receive the disability component of provincial social assistance (Ontario Disability Support Program) and yet are struggling with the rising costs of shelter and food as that income continues to fall far behind inflation.

Education levels

The number of people accessing food banks who have higher levels of education continues to increase. In 2008, 25% of respondents had completed post-secondary education. In 2018 that number is 34%. This reflects a more educated population, both among newcomers and people educated in Canada. For newcomers in particular, food bank use despite having higher education may be caused by barriers to recognition of foreign credentials.

Single parents

Fifteen percent of respondents are single parents, and the overwhelming majority of those are women, most of whom are full-time caregivers. Single-parent families experience poverty at nearly three times the rate of the Canadian average.⁹ They also experience the highest rates of food insecurity in Canada.¹⁰ Single parents in past surveys repeatedly mentioned lack of affordable childcare as a barrier to employment. This is borne out in national data: the gap in employment rate between single mothers and mothers in couples is substantial when their kids are youngest and the childcare crunch is felt the most, and the gap closes as kids get older.¹¹

Single parents are also more likely to report extreme levels of stress. Some single parents emphasized the difficulty and stresses involved in managing housing costs while also contending with other costs of raising a child in Toronto.

Indigenous people

Nine per cent of survey respondents identified themselves as Indigenous, a percentage that has remained relatively constant over time. This reflects disproportionate poverty among Indigenous people in the city, who represent around 0.5% of the population. A study that examined data from the Who's Hungry survey over a period of 10 years found that survey respondents who identified as Indigenous were significantly more likely to require food banks for longer periods than non-Indigenous respondents, irrespective of other variables such as income, education or disability.¹²

62%
of food bank
clients report
having a disability
or serious illness
in 2018, up from
48% in 2008



⁹ Hannah Aldridge and Noah Zon. "Why is Lone-parent poverty so high and what can we do about it?" Maytree. August 2018. <https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Policy-Brief-Lone-Parent-Poverty.pdf>

¹⁰ Statistics Canada - Household food insecurity by living arrangement and food insecurity status.

¹¹ Aldridge and Zon, 2018.

¹² Sweeny and Sarkar, 2018, "An Economic Analysis of Food Bank Use in Toronto, Canada", unpublished thesis.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE HUNGRY?

FOOD INSECURITY IN TORONTO

The survey tells us how food insecurity affects the lives of our clients. When they can't afford food, they pay a price with their health and well-being.

People who are food insecure buy less food. They buy cheaper foods. And they ration their meal portions to ensure that they can feed themselves and especially their children.

Sometimes there is no way to ration and no recourse. Roughly 40% of adult Who's Hungry survey respondents reported having gone an entire day without eating the past 12 months because there wasn't enough money for food. From this group, 44% said that a no-food day happens almost every month.

When asked, "During the past 3 months, how often were you personally hungry because you could not afford to buy enough food?" 19% of survey respondents said they went hungry at least one day a week.

When asked the same question about their children, 9% also went hungry at least one day a week. Children who go hungry have a harder time keeping up with school¹³ and have poorer health for the long-term.¹⁴ In past surveys, clients have mentioned skipping a meal themselves to ensure that their children never went without.

People are going hungry because they don't have enough money to meet all their basic needs. When asked, "In the last 3 months, have you had to miss a meal in order to be able to pay for something else?" 58% of survey respondents said yes, for reasons that included paying for medical and dental expenses, hygiene products, utilities, debts/loans, pets, children and school.

The top three reasons respondents missed a meal were to pay for rent, phone bills and transportation. Approximately 30% of those surveyed didn't eat in order to pay for rent, 20% in order to pay their phone bill and 17% to pay for transportation.



TOP THREE REASONS WHY RESPONDENTS SKIPPED MEALS



Rent
29%

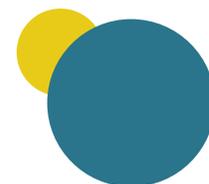


Phone
20%



Transportation
17%

According to PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research, a University of Toronto research program created to investigate household food insecurity,¹⁵ going without food makes people vulnerable to chronic health issues and can exacerbate existing ailments. PROOF also reports that food insecure households are likely not to purchase necessary medication because there isn't enough money. Because of these health impacts, food insecurity raises costs for the public health care system.¹⁶ As a long-term prospect, failing to address food insecurity costs far more than creating food security.



¹³ R.E. Kleinman et. al. "Diet, breakfast and academic performance in children." National Institutes of Health. 2002. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3275817/>

¹⁴ Sharon Kirkpatrick et. al. "Child Hunger and Long-term Adverse Consequences for Health." *Archive of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine* 2010;164(8):754-762. August 2010. doi:10.1001/archpediatrics.2010.117

¹⁵ PROOF Toronto. "The Impact of Food Insecurity on Health." <http://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/health-impact-factsheet.pdf>

¹⁶ Valerie Tarasiuk et. al. "Association between household food insecurity and annual healthcare costs." *CMAJ* August 10, 2015 *cmaj*.150234; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.150234>

HOW OFTEN WERE YOU HUNGRY IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS?

At least a couple of days per week	17%
At least one day a week	19%
At least one day a month	17%
Rarely	21%
Never	26%

HOW OFTEN WERE YOUR CHILDREN HUNGRY IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS?

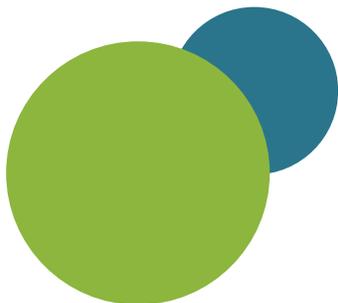
At least a couple of days a week	9%
At least one day a week	9%
At least one day a month	12%
Rarely	19%
Never	48%

DID YOU EVER NOT EAT FOR A DAY?

Yes	41%
No	59%

IF YES, HOW OFTEN?

Almost every month	44%
Some months but not every month	40%
Only 1 or 2 months	16%



"Transportation costs make it harder to go get groceries."
 ~ Survey Respondent

"I shop for food less now, so I can pay for my hydro, phone, hygiene products, etc."
 ~ Survey Respondent



HOW VULNERABLE TORONTONIANS COPE WHEN THERE ISN'T ENOUGH LEFT FOR FOOD

Participants in the Who's Hungry research do not have enough money to cover their basic needs, and so they have developed strategies to get by. Respondents found ways to stretch their dollar by shopping at discounted grocery stores and travelling further distances – at times on foot – in order to access cheaper foods. When that wasn't enough, they sometimes had to ration their foods or go hungry so that their children had enough to eat.

Food bank clients that spoke with our researchers spend considerable time and energy making limited budgets go as far as possible. They budget and look for sales; they price match and use coupons; they buy in bulk and ration food in order to make their supply last. They use food banks to supplement their grocery purchases, getting their essentials from food banks and buy their perishables from the store.

All of these strategies are especially hard for the increasing share of food bank clients who live in areas poorly served by transit, and especially for those with mobility issues. Access to transportation was one of the top three challenges reported by survey participants. While some have access to a car or bike, for many clients the only realistic option is travelling on foot.

When discount shopping does not go far enough, many survey respondents reported taking on debt to afford food – whether borrowing from friends and family, credit cards, or payday lenders. For those who had some limited assets, they reported cashing in RRSPs and pawning their possessions to pay for food. Some offered services, such as cutting grass for their neighbours, in order to make a few dollars, while others collect cans and bottles. In extreme cases, some reported panhandling and engaging in high-risk activities to support their families.

When all options have been exhausted, participants in the survey shared that they gave up shopping for food altogether. They relied exclusively on the services of food banks and meal programs to feed themselves and their families.

FINANCIAL COPING MECHANISM	
Borrow from friends or family	46%
Use credit card	29%
Sell property	21%
Payday lender	14%
Use line of credit	8%
Loan from bank or credit union	-
Cash in RRSP or other financial assets	5%
None of the above	28%
Other	5%



"When I go walking for food I have to walk about half an hour and take a cart. I have arthritis."

~ Survey Respondent



"I am a full-time student & a full-time mom (single mom). Right now I am sitting at the food bank and thinking if I will be able to get my food on time because I have to go pick up my daughter from school. I am also thinking if my TTC token will go to waste today. What I am trying to say is food is the first priority. But after paying the rent and the food, it is difficult to pay for TTC tokens let alone any other stuff that me and my daughter would like to spend money on."

WHY ARE PEOPLE HUNGRY?

People experiencing hunger in Toronto face pressure in two directions. Low incomes that don't provide enough to get by, and cost-of-living pressures that eat up an increasing share of those incomes.

INCOME AND RENT



We expect our social safety net to provide, at a minimum, for basic needs like food. Our research shows that the safety net is failing. Over the last 10 years, as our number of food bank clients has grown, that growth has largely come from people who are part of income support programs that are, in theory, intended to meet their basic needs.

The majority of clients accessing food banks in Toronto receive one of two provincial social assistance programs as their main source of income. Sixty-eight per cent of those surveyed rely on either Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). While this overall share has been fairly stable, we have seen a shift from more clients relying on OW to a greater number who rely on ODSP.

The levels of income for both of these income support programs have fallen far behind inflation, due in large part to the rates being frozen from 1995 until 2003, after cuts of over 20% to Ontario Works in 1995. The current rate for a single person receiving OW is up to \$733 per month, and for a single person receiving ODSP it is up to \$1,169 per month.

As the share of seniors among food bank clients has gone up, the share of food bank clients living on government pensions has tripled. In 2018, one in eight food bank clients we surveyed relied on Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security or the Guaranteed Income Supplement as their main source of income.

Main source of household income	2008	2018
Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)	24%	39%
Ontario Works (OW)	52%	29%
Employment	12%	13%
Pension (includes Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement)	4%	12%
Child Tax Benefits	2%	3%
Other	6%	4%
No income	1%	1%



EMPLOYMENT INCOME AND THE MINIMUM WAGE

\$14.00

MEDIAN HOURLY
WAGE

28

MEDIAN HOURS
OF WORK
PER WEEK

Hourly Wage Categories for Those Receiving Income from Employment

Less than \$14 per hour	15%
\$14 per hour (minimum wage as of March 2018)	39%
More than \$14 per hour	46%

Does Employment Provide Benefits?

Dental	4%
Drug	4%
Both	17%
Neither	74%

74% of respondents with a job did not have any benefits

While most people accessing food banks are not able to work or not able to find work, 13% of our clients surveyed have employment as their main source of income and yet still find themselves facing food insecurity.

Earlier this year, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act 2018, came into effect in Ontario, making large changes to employment law. The law included an increase of the minimum wage to \$14 an hour, and a requirement that casual, part-time and seasonal employees receive the same rate of pay to those in full-time employment. The new provincial government has since cancelled a planned increase to \$15 an hour scheduled for January 1, 2019, and indicated intentions to walk back other reforms.

As in previous years, the data from the Who's Hungry survey demonstrate that even though an increased wage helps people with low incomes, people often face low and inconsistent hours that simply don't add up to enough to get by.

When the survey was conducted in early 2018, 39% reported earning the new minimum wage, while 46% were earning more than the minimum wage. However, insecure employment for many meant that on average they were only working 28 hours a week, and only one in four had any dental or drug benefits through their job.

Researchers at the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario project have found that employment insecurity affects some groups in our community far more than others. Gender, race, and levels of education influence whether people benefit from the increased prosperity we have seen in our region or are left behind.¹⁷

¹⁷ PEPSO. "Getting Left Behind: Who Gained and Who Didn't in an Improving Labour Market." 2018. https://pepso.ca/documents/pepso-glb-final-lores_2018-06-18_r4-for-website.pdf

Housing costs driving hunger

For most survey respondents, after the cost of keeping a roof over their head they had little left to afford food.

Food bank clients, on average, pay 68% of their income on rent and utilities, with rent being the most commonly cited reason for skipping meals. A large majority (66%) live in private market units, with the burden of housing costs being especially high for recent newcomers, seniors and those with disabilities.

For those receiving social assistance as their main source of income, the shelter component of their allowance doesn't come close to meeting market rent, and these households often have to pay for their shelter with the portion of their allowance that is allotted to basic needs. For instance, single-person households receiving OW can't afford to rent an apartment on their total income of just over \$733 a month, much less rely solely on the \$390 shelter allowance that they are allotted. Respondents in previous surveys often reported having to move into single-room basements or communal living quarters like rooming houses in order to maintain shelter.

Could a housing benefit help households who struggle with housing costs?

The federal government recently announced the creation, together with provincial/territorial governments, of the Canada Housing Benefit, a new program to provide support directly to households for their housing costs, which will be implemented in 2020.

The housing benefit is expected give eligible households an average of approximately \$200 per month to help with housing costs. While design options for the benefit are still being negotiated with provinces and territories, the new benefit should help address affordable housing by giving tenants direct assistance to deal with high housing costs.

In this year's Who's Hungry survey, respondents were asked how \$200 given for housing costs would assist their households.

Respondents who answered the question about the Canada Housing Benefit frequently replied that support of this amount would help decrease the burden of housing costs. With the extra money, they told us that they could buy more and better food, and better manage hydro bills, transportation costs and clothing. Answers to this question help to highlight the pressure that high housing costs place across people's lives and demonstrate the potential for these types of benefits to improve the standard of living for people in poverty.

Because of the relationship we have seen between housing costs and food insecurity in our city, we have advocated for portable housing benefits for over a decade, working with others in the community to propose solutions that could improve people's lives and reduce hunger.¹⁸ A portable housing benefit would not be a silver bullet in addressing the affordable housing crisis in the city. But by helping to address the demand side of affordable housing through an increase in income, it is an important complement to an affordable housing strategy that includes increasing the supply and quality of affordable units.



**"I will
have enough
money for food and
transportation that
gives me mobility to
look for a job."**

*~ Survey Respondent,
on what a housing benefit
would mean to them*

¹⁸ Daily Bread Food Bank. "Portable Housing Benefits." <https://www.dailybread.ca/research-and-advocacy/advocacy/portable-housing-benefit/>

IN THIS YEAR'S WHO'S HUNGRY SURVEY, RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED HOW \$200 GIVEN FOR HOUSING COSTS WOULD ASSIST THEIR HOUSEHOLDS.

"It would help a great deal with all monthly costs and take a great deal of stress off of my monthly budget."

~ Survey Respondent

"It would free up time from not having to rely on social services and the time it takes to access them. Being self reliant; build confidence; having choice in life."

~ Survey Respondent

"It would mean I'd have some money at the end of the month. I usually run out about the middle of the month."

~ Survey Respondent

"It would make a big difference; rent takes over 75% of my money."

~ Survey Respondent

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This year can be a turning point on the path to ending hunger, if we make the right public policy choices. That is why Daily Bread and North York Harvest continues to invest in research and engaging on the public policy issues that can make a difference for the communities we serve.

The research behind the Who's Hungry report, and especially listening to the voices of people experiencing hunger, gives us the starting point. Now we need to act.

Social Assistance Reform

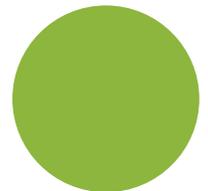
In the weeks following this report, the provincial government is expected to outline its plan to reform social assistance. The Who's Hungry research shows that the current system of social assistance is failing to meet the basic test of keeping people from hunger.

We were disappointed with the first steps that the Minister announced in kicking off the review, scaling back increases to rates and pausing changes that would make the system easier to navigate. But we are hopeful this report will provide the evidence for the Ministry to reflect on the real costs of social cut backs.

The Minister also laid out some important goals for what she wanted to see fixed: creating conditions where fewer people need social assistance for long stretches of time because they are able to move out of poverty; reducing unnecessary paperwork that takes up time that people don't have; supporting people with disabilities to fully participate in their communities.

These are vital goals that deserve and have our full commitment. A social assistance system that works is important to Daily Bread and North York Harvest because it's important to our clients. Here's what we will need to see from social assistance reform going forward in order to make progress towards ending hunger.

- **Adequate benefits:** The greatest challenge our clients face is not having enough left after housing and other basic expenses to buy food for their families. Neither Ontario Works nor the Ontario Disability Support Program provide enough to live on in this city. Given the number of people relying on social assistance who face hunger, reforms must ensure that those benefits are enough to live on, otherwise hunger will continue in our city.
- **Financial security:** Social assistance rules, especially for Ontario Works, force people to liquidate their assets before qualifying for social assistance. Our research shows what happens when people are not able to maintain any savings to buffer against job loss or unexpected costs. Taking on debt, especially high interest payday loans and credit card debt, traps people in a cycle of poverty.
- **Reduced red tape for residents:** The new provincial government has made red tape reduction a priority. This is an essential goal for social assistance recipients, who experience an enormous amount of paperwork and reporting. Given that food bank clients already report spending considerable time to avoid going hungry by discount shopping and traveling (sometimes on foot) to food banks, the burden of having to navigate benefit systems is a particularly heavy one. The red tape they face from government programs takes up time they cannot spare.
- **Addressing housing costs:** The Who's Hungry research shows that the combination of low income and high rents is a recipe for hunger. Today's social assistance system does not account for the difference between rent in Toronto and Timmins. We have long advocated for portable housing benefits that could build on the existing safety net to help people with low incomes afford housing that meets their needs.



Policies that help people move out of poverty

While social assistance reform would help improve food security for many in our community, it is not the only response. The results of the Who's Hungry research point to a wider range of areas where policy change could make a real difference in people's lives.

Employment supports and training help people find and keep work, while employment standards make sure that work pays. Quality childcare and homecare help people ensure their loved ones are well-taken care of so they can work or take care of other needs in their lives. Affordable housing addresses the largest cost people face each month. While none of these policies provide food, they all contribute to ending hunger.

Poverty Reduction Strategies that Prioritize Food Security

In August 2018, the federal government released Canada's first-ever national poverty reduction strategy, setting a goal of cutting poverty by 50% by 2030. The provincial government's poverty reduction strategy is due for renewal in 2019, and the City of Toronto has begun consultations on its next plan. We have an opportunity with the beginning of new strategies at each level of government to prioritize food security, ensure that we are tracking our progress, and commit to the changes we need to see through our goal to end hunger.

- The City of Toronto's TO Prosperity plan makes food access a clear priority with two dedicated indicators. While much more needs to be done to achieve the goals they have set out, political commitments and measurement matter. The next Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy should build on these commitments with new investments and policies to move the yardstick.
- The provincial government's poverty reduction strategy has 11 indicators, but none that directly captures food security. According to legislation passed in 2009, the province is due for a renewal of the poverty reduction strategy, a chance for the new government to set their own commitments to reducing poverty in the province. This is an opportunity to make a real commitment to ending hunger in a whole-of-government strategy, and to begin to ensure that public policy decisions across government are consistent with that goal.
- The federal government's new poverty reduction strategy makes food security a standalone indicator of success, committing to regular measurement and reporting on food security. As an organization ourselves that collects data about the effects of food insecurity and living on low income, we are heartened by this commitment, and the accompanying investment in addressing "key gaps in poverty measurement in Canada."¹⁹ The cost of food is also built into Canada's new measurement of poverty – the Market Basket Measure – which takes into account whether a household can afford nutritious food.

Community response

Poverty reduction strategies matter because they represent visions of the communities we want, and commitments to do what it takes to get there. Daily Bread, North York Harvest and the community agencies, people, private and public groups and local farms we work with are committed to responding to the needs that exist today helping build the public policy solutions we need to end hunger in our city.

The responses we have in place to hunger today depend on a commitment from our community. We see that commitment from our volunteers, donors and other supporters day-in and day-out. In addition to public policy change, our success in ending hunger will be made possible by the continued involvement of our communities, rolling up their sleeves in so many ways. We are grateful to work with them towards a future for our city where no one is hungry.

¹⁹ Government of Canada. "Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy." 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html#h2.12>



METHODOLOGY

We are always looking for ways to improve the Who's Hungry report. If you have questions about hunger in Toronto that you would like to see addressed in future reports, or ideas on how we could make this research better, we would like to hear from you. Please get in touch at research@dailybread.ca

Reporting Food Bank Use

The 2018 Who's Hungry survey reports the number of visits (versus the number of individuals) in participating neighbourhood food banks in Toronto. The total numbers reported on pages 8 and 9 are for Daily Bread Food Bank member agencies and North York Harvest Food Bank agencies only. We have revised the number of visits we reported for 2017 in last year's report to address a discrepancy between automated systems and manual reporting as one of our larger agencies transitioned to a new system. Additionally, these total numbers do not include meal programs or non-Daily Bread affiliated organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army.

Collecting the Data

Daily Bread Food Bank's annual survey took place from late February 2018 until mid-April 2018, at various food banks across the city of Toronto. Trained volunteers conducted a 44-question survey in an open-style interview with food bank clients. They asked a series of open-ended and closed-ended questions, but also offered clients the option to fill the surveys out themselves.

Volunteers travelled to the various participating food banks to conduct the surveys. They invited food bank clients to participate in the survey either while waiting in line to collect their food hamper or just after. In total, 34 food banks participated in the survey this year and 84 trained volunteers conducted the one-on-one interviews. Volunteers were trained in ways to approach clients to address the issue of random sampling. Any concerns with randomness were mitigated by the sample size, ensuring that the survey was largely representative of all households using food banks.

For ethical purposes, food bank clients were informed that the participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time or that they could skip any questions within the survey. Additionally, volunteers were instructed to emphasize that the interview was confidential, and clients could not be identified by any of their responses.

Analyzing the Data

The target number of surveys was established based on the estimated number of total households coming to food banks across Toronto. In total, 1,412 surveys were conducted for this study, and 1,329 of them were sufficiently complete and used for analysis.

Preparation and analysis of the data occurred in three stages: data "cleaning", data entry and data analysis. First, the data was "cleaned", which involved going through each survey and ensuring the survey was sufficiently complete for analysis. Incomplete surveys were discarded and were not considered for further use. The survey cleaning also ensured the data was sufficiently clear for the data entry process. Results and analysis were generated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences v23 (SPSS) software.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This annual initiative would not be possible without the contributions in time, experience and expertise of many individuals.

Who's Hungry 2018 was co-authored by Sarah Kiriliuk, Haiat Iman, and Noah Zon and Adrienne Lipsey from Springboard Policy with input and guidance from Daily Bread CEO Neil Hetherington, North York Harvest Executive Director Ryan Noble and the members of the Daily Bread Public Affairs Committee: Christine Yip, Aisha Ansari, Karen Hsiung, Ben Wise and Sarah Diebel.

We would like to thank the more than 1,400 food bank clients who have taken the time to share their personal stories with our volunteers. Through their accounts, we are able to gain insights into their lived experiences with hunger, painting a picture of reality in Toronto and helping us to move towards a solution.

Next, we would like to express our deepest appreciation for all the volunteers who have helped us by conducting the surveys. Their support was vital in ensuring the successful completion of this project.

For close to three decades the Who's Hungry report has been an important barometer for the City of Toronto. It speaks clearly to the trends that concern all citizens, particularly the trends that effect those experiencing poverty. This important document has been shaped for the last several years under the leadership of Daily Bread's former Director of Research and Communications Richard Matern. The Board of Directors and Staff of Daily Bread want to acknowledge and thank Richard for the work, insight, and policy shifts that have happened because of his thoughtful contributions.

We would like to thank June Larkin and Stanley Doyle-Wood from the Equity Studies program at the University of Toronto, who have included volunteering for the Who's Hungry survey as part of a structured component of their curriculum.

We also would like to thank the participants in our survey committee who lend their expertise every year and help shape the structure of the survey: John Stapleton (former Daily Bread Food Bank board member) the founder of Open Policy Ontario; Andy Mitchell from Thinking Cap Consulting; Harvey Low from the Social Policy Analysis and Research Unit at the City of Toronto.

Finally, thank you to the following food banks for their support of the Who's Hungry report and for their participation in the annual survey of food bank clients:

Agincourt Community Services Association (ACSA)

Allan Gardens Food Bank

Bathurst-Finch Community Food Bank

Calvary Baptist Church

Christ Church St-James Food Pantry

Bluffs Food Bank

Community Share Food Bank

Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre Food Bank

Flemingdon Park Food Bank

Fort York Food Bank

Glen Rhodes United Church Food Bank

Haven on the Queensway

Lansing United Church

Lawrence Heights Community Food Bank

Parkdale Community Food Bank

The Lighthouse Centre

Malvern Healthy Community Cupboard

New Toronto Street Food Bank

Oasis Dufferin Community Centre

O'Connor Community Food Bank (Friends of Jesus Christ)

Oriole Food Space

Our Saviour Lutheran Church Food Bank

Richview Food Bank

Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities (SCHC)

Scarborough Food Bank

Scott Mission

Society for the Living

St. Ninian's Food Bank

The Stop Community Food Centre

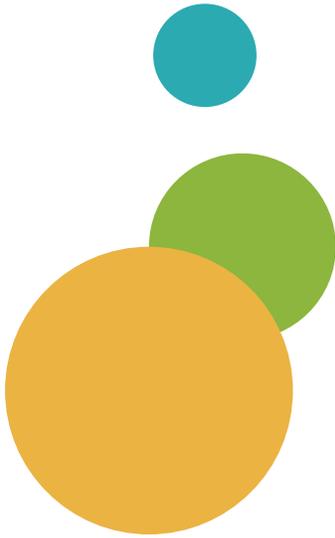
Thistletown Community Services Unit

Thornccliffe Food Bank

Toronto People with AIDS Foundation

Weston Area Emergency Support

Yonge Street Mission



This report is co-presented by Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest.

www.dailybread.ca/whoshungry



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