

WHO'S HUNGRY 2023

About

In partnership, Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank have released *Who's Hungry 2023* – an annual profile of food insecurity and poverty in Toronto.

One in ten people in Toronto are now relying on food banks, twice as many as the year prior.

Skyrocketing housing costs, food inflation, stagnating wages, and insufficient income supports are pushing more and more households into poverty. Food banks are at their breaking point. Food is a human right, yet governments are failing to ensure every person living in Canada can live a life of dignity.

Who's Hungry 2023 is a call to action from a city in crisis. The report contains recommendations for each level of government, as well as actions the public can take to eliminate hunger in our communities.

Key Findings

There is a food insecurity crisis in Toronto.

- In the past year, there have been 2.53 million food bank visits in Toronto, a 51% increase year-over-year, and the highest annual increase ever reported. If usage rates continue, we will exceed 3 million visits by the end of the year.
- 1 in 10 people in Toronto are now relying on food banks, twice as many as the year prior.
- Over 120,000 new individuals started using food bank services for the first time this past year – a 154% increase compared to the previous year. Of new clients, more than half (52%) have someone in their household that is employed.
- Nearly 1 in 3 (31%) food bank clients went a whole day without eating and more than half (55%) of food bank clients missed a meal to pay for something else.

Incomes are not keeping pace with the rising cost of living, pushing households deeper into poverty.

- After paying rent and utilities, food bank clients have only \$6.67 left per person, per day to afford all other necessities, compared to \$8.01 last year. If the average food bank client were to take two trips on the TTC, they would have only \$0.07 left per day for food.
- Food bank clients have a median monthly income of \$1,131, less than half of the Official Poverty Line for Toronto (\$2,302 for a single person).
- Of the 35% of food bank clients who have a disability, 43% rely on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) where a single individual receives \$1,308 per month (approximately \$1,000 below the poverty line).
- Concerningly, 18% of food bank clients with disabilities have not been able to access ODSP and are forced to rely on Ontario Works, which provides only \$733 for a single individual, approximately one-third of the poverty line.
- 89% of food bank clients live in unaffordable housing, which is defined as spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Close to one quarter (23%) spend 100% of their income on housing, leaving no money for other necessities, putting them at high risk of homelessness.

Having higher education or a job does not protect against food insecurity in an inflationary environment.

- 59% of food bank clients have completed post-secondary education.
- 47% of food bank clients have at least one member of their household who is employed (7% increase compared to last year).
- Of those reporting employment, nearly 3 in 4 (71%) had no medical, dental, retirement benefits or paid sick days through their employer.
- The median hourly wage (\$16) and median weekly hours worked (30) among food bank clients has remained the same for past three years despite inflation rising by 11% during this time period.

Call to Action

Food is a human right, yet one in ten Torontonians are forced to rely on food banks because they cannot afford the food they need. **Food insecurity is a public policy issue requiring public policy solutions.**

Who's Hungry 2023 is a call to action from a city in crisis. The report provides key actions that various stakeholders can take to eliminate food insecurity in Toronto.

We call on all readers of this report to:

- Think about what tools and resources you can put towards raising awareness and advocating for change. Contact your Member of Parliament, Member of Provincial Parliament, and City Councillor to urge them to adopt the recommendations in this report.

We call upon Members of Parliament to:

- Rapidly design and implement an adequate and accessible Canada Disability Benefit so that eligible recipients begin receiving the benefit by 2025.

We call upon Members of Provincial Parliament to:

- As part of the Government of Ontario's plan to build 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years, ensure that 300,000 units are permanently affordable and supportive homes, with a minimum of 50,000 units in Toronto.

We call upon City Councillors to:

- Ensure Toronto's forthcoming Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan and Food Charter provide concrete actions, with funding attached, to prevent food insecurity and promote resiliency among Toronto's community food programs.

To review the full report and recommendations, visit dailybread.ca/whoshungry.