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Food insecurity and poverty in Canada

Key findings from the 2023 Canadian Income Survey

May 12, 2025

Summary

On May 1, 2025, Statistics Canada released [new data from the Canadian Income Survey \(CIS\)](#) showing troubling surges in food insecurity and poverty across Canada. According to the data, in 2024, nearly **10 million people struggled to afford enough food—a new record and a 15% increase** over last year's record high. The data also showed that, in 2023, about **4 million people in Canada were living in poverty, a 5% rise** from 2022.

These trends are driven by soaring food and living costs, slow income growth, and reduced government support. Vulnerable groups—especially Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities, single parents, and people with disabilities—continue to face the harshest impacts.

The time for the federal government to exercise sound leadership in addressing poverty and food insecurity is long overdue. Now more than ever, we need lasting solutions, not temporary fixes. **We need policies that increase peoples' incomes,** solutions that have been proven to significantly reduce food insecurity.

Key definitions

- **Food insecurity:** Lack of secure access to enough food due to financial constraints. Classified as:
 - *Marginal:* Worrying about running out of food
 - *Moderate:* Compromising on food quality or quantity
 - *Severe:* Skipping meals or going hungry
- **Poverty:** Living below Canada's official poverty line, based on the [Market Basket Measure](#), which reflects the cost of a basic standard of living.



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Food insecurity in 2024: 1 in 4 now affected

Food insecurity increased significantly in 2024, affecting 25.5% of Canada's population. It rose in every province except Manitoba and Prince Edward Island. The highest rates were in Alberta (30.9%) and Saskatchewan (30.6%). Quebec remained the lowest at 19.8% but experienced a notable increase.

Breakdowns are below, with rises (↑) and steeper rises (↑↑) indicated.

The crisis nationwide

- **Nearly 10 million (25.5%) people**—a quarter of the population—experienced food insecurity in 2024, up from 8.7 million (22.9%) in 2023. (↑)
 - **Severe food insecurity** affected 2.6 million (6.7%), up from 2.3 million (6%). (↑)
 - **Moderate food insecurity** affected 4.8 million (12.4%), up from 4.1 million (10.9%). (↑)
 - **Marginal food insecurity** affected 2.5 million (6.4%), up from 2.3 million (6%). (↑)

Atlantic Canada

- **Overall:** 29.2%, up from 27.2%. (↑)
- **Newfoundland & Labrador:** 30.1%, up from 26%. (↑↑)
- **New Brunswick:** 29.5%, up from 25.6%. (↑↑)
- **Nova Scotia:** 29.3%, up from 28.9%. (↑)
- **Prince Edward Island:** 24.6%, down from 28.6%.

Quebec

- 19.8%, up from 15.7%. (↑↑)

Ontario

- 26.4%, up from 24.5%. (↑)

Prairie provinces

- **Overall:** 29.9%, up from 27.4%. (↑)
- **Alberta:** 30.9%, up from 27.4%. (↑↑)
- **Saskatchewan:** 30.6%, up from 28%. (↑)
- **Manitoba:** 25.6%, down from 26.8%.

British Columbia









- 24.4%, up from 21.8%. (↑)

















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Vulnerable family types

- **Single-parent households** faced the highest food insecurity (47.8%, up from 43.4% ), with **female-led,¹ single-parent households** reaching 52.1%, up from 46%. 
- **Couples with children** also saw a significant jump: 28.6%, up from 24.7%. 
- **Unattached adults** (31.7%, up from 30.5% ) and **seniors living alone** (14.3%, up from 13.4% ) were also heavily affected.

Demographics at highest risk

- **Indigenous peoples (off-reserve):** 39.9%, up from 36.8%. 
- **Racialized people:** 32.2% overall, up from 27.3% , with higher rates among:
 - Black people: 46.7%, up from 40.4%. 
 - Latin American people: 37.4%, up from 31.1%. 
 - Filipino people: 37.2%, up from 27%. 
- **Children:** 2.5 million (32.9%), up from 2.1 million (28.4%). 
- **Newcomers (immigrated in the last 5 years):** 34.6%, up from 26.9%. 





Poverty in 2023: 1 in 10 are living below the line

Poverty increased in Canada in 2023, affecting 10.2% of the population. All provinces except Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia registered increases in poverty levels. Quebec had the lowest poverty rate (7.4%) and Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan the highest (12.9% each).


Nationwide

- **Roughly 4 million (10.2%) of the population**—that's 1 in 10 people—lived in poverty in 2023, up from 3.8 million (9.9%) in 2022.

Atlantic Canada

- **Overall:** 12.1%, up from 11.5%. 
- **Nova Scotia:** 12.9%, down from 13.1%.
- **Newfoundland & Labrador:** 11.5%, up from 9.8%. 
- **Prince Edward Island:** 11.3%, up from 9.8%. 
- **New Brunswick:** 11.6%, up from 10.9%. 

Quebec

- Lowest poverty rate in the country: 7.4%, up from 6.6%. 

¹ The CIS survey described participants' sex as either male or female, and so did not capture the experiences of gender-diverse people. Though limited, other data shows that transgender and non-binary people disproportionately experience food insecurity and poverty.



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Ontario

- 11.1%, up from 10.9%.

Prairie provinces

- **Overall:** 9.9%, down from 10.3%.
- **Saskatchewan:** 12.9%, up from 11.1%.
- **Manitoba:** 10.9%, down from 11.5%.
- **Alberta:** 8.9%, down from 9.7%.

British Columbia

- 11.3%, down from 11.6%.

Who's most affected by poverty?

Family and living arrangements

- **Children in female-led, single-parent families:** 29.3%, up from 26.9%.
- **Children in two-parent families:** 7.5%, up from 6.8%.
- **People living alone:** 25.7%, down from 26%.
 - Working-age adults living alone: 31.4%, up from 31%.
 - Seniors living alone: 11.5%, down from 13.8%.

Demographic groups

- **Indigenous people living off-reserve:** 17.5%, up from 17.2%.
- **Racialized communities:** 14% overall, up from 13% , with the highest rates among:
 - Chinese people: 16.4%, up from 15.6%.
 - Arab people: 15.7%, down from 18.7%.
 - Black people: 15.5%, up from 13.9%.
- **People with disabilities:** 12%. This is 1.8 points above the national rate, and a paltry 0.3 percentage points decrease from the 2022 rate.
- **Newcomers (immigrated in the last 5 years):** 17.8%, up from 16.4%.
- **Children under 18:** 10.7%, up from 9.9%.
- **Working-age adults (18–64):** 11.6%, up from 11.1%.
- **Seniors (65+):** 5%, down from 6%.

What's driving the crisis?

The increase in poverty and food insecurity is linked to:

- **Rising** costs of food, housing, and essential services
- **Stagnant wages** and modest after-tax income growth
- **Declines in government income supports** and tax benefits in 2023–2024.



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What's needed

These numbers point to a growing need for:

1. **Robust income supports** and strengthened public benefits.
2. **Targeted programs** for high-risk groups (single parents, racialized communities, newcomers, seniors living alone).
3. **Community-based food programs** that are responsive and inclusive.
4. **Affordable housing and living wages** to help reduce financial strain.

Conclusion

The rise in food insecurity and poverty reflects worsening economic pressures on Canadian households. While no region or group is untouched, the burden falls disproportionately on single-parent families and equity-deserving communities.

These findings call for urgent and coordinated action across all levels of government and civil society to ensure basic human rights to food, housing, and economic security are upheld.