

Greener Village

community food centre

686 Riverside Dr
Fredericton, NB
E3A 8C2, Canada

tel 506.459.7461
greenvillage.org

BACKGROUNDER: Food Security in New Brunswick

Published: July 6, 2015

Over four million Canadians are estimated to be food insecure right now. An estimated 200,000 Canadians are losing weight because they cannot afford to buy food.ⁱ While food insecurity is most prevalent in Canada's North, the Maritimes are not far behind.

Food security is defined as having consistent physical and economic access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food to meet the dietary needs and preferences for a healthy active life. The following statistics do not include data on homeless, military, prisoners, or persons living on a First Nations reserve.

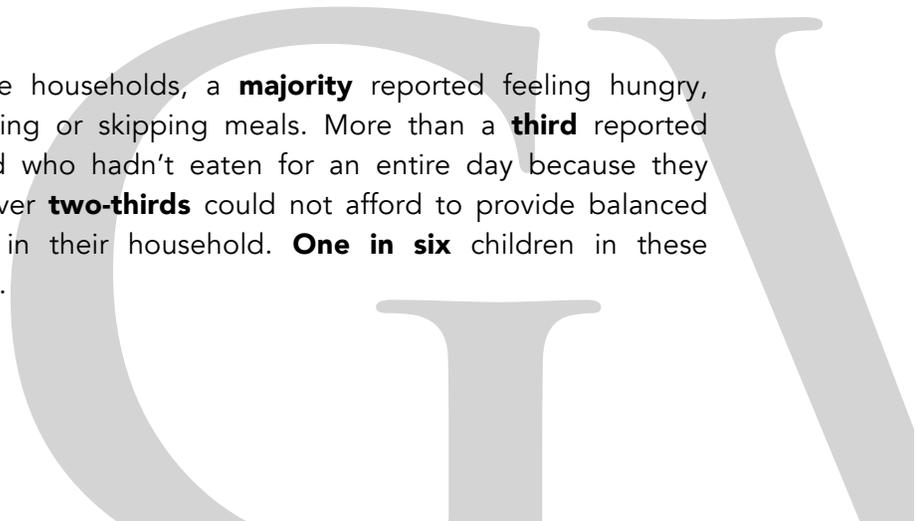
The Households

In 2012, the *Canadian Community Health Survey*ⁱⁱ indicated that **15.6%** of households in New Brunswick were food insecure, **2.6%** higher than the national average. These figures reveal that there are **47,000** food insecure households in New Brunswick.

Of these households, **18%** are considered to be severely insecure, **46%** are considered moderately insecure and **36%** are defined as having experienced marginal food insecurity. The survey classifies **2.8%** (nat. avg. 2.6%) of *all* New Brunswick households as severely insecure, **7.2%** (6%) as moderate, and **5.6%** (4.1%) as marginal.

It further indicated that **19.6%** of children in New Brunswick live in a food insecure household, and that single female parents represent **34.3%** of all insecure households. Where social assistance was the primary source of income, **66.7%** of households were insecure. Other types of NB households with high food insecurity are low-income senior women and minimum wage workers.

Within severely insecure households, a **majority** reported feeling hungry, losing weight, and cutting or skipping meals. More than a **third** reported adults in the household who hadn't eaten for an entire day because they couldn't afford food. Over **two-thirds** could not afford to provide balanced meals to the children in their household. **One in six** children in these households were hungry.



Canadian food security has only been monitored since 2005, and inconsistently since then. The existing data indicates that household food insecurity in New Brunswick has been trending upward since data has been recorded (2007-**13.8%**; 2008-**15.1%**; 2011-**16.5%**; 2012-**15.6%**).ⁱⁱⁱ Those considered moderate or severely insecure also increased over the measurement period (2007- **9.5%**; 2008 – **9.6%**; 2011-**10.4%**; 2012-**10%**).^{iv}

Moncton saw an increase from **15.8%** to **17.8%** between 2007-2012, while Saint John increased from **10.2%** to **14.4%**^v (it should be noted both increases were within the margin of error).

The Food

Meanwhile, the price of food in New Brunswick, as indicated by the percentage change in the consumer price index, has increased by **7.7%** from 2010-2014, (nat. avg. **10.1%**).^{vi} However this index generalizes across a basket of goods. Over 2010-2014, the cost of meat in New Brunswick increased by **25%** (nat. avg. 22.3%), dairy and eggs increased by **6.1%** (4.1%), fruit increased by **8.1%** (12.3%) and bakery and cereal products increased by **16.9%** (9.1%). These combined categories increased by **13.2%** (11.7%)^{vii}.

A food costing survey^{viii} conducted by the New Brunswick Front for Social Justice reported that for a New Brunswick single mother with a 9-year-old boy, the cost of groceries sufficient to provide for a nutritious diet rose by **68.7%** from 2006-2010. In the city of Saint John, this same report revealed the cost of purchasing the National Nutritious Food Basket rose by **20.8%** from 2006-2010.

While food price increases vary somewhat across time and region, most are far beyond the single **8.7%** increase to the **\$537^{ix}** given to a single transitional recipient of social assistance over the past ten years. While the dollar figure remains the same on each cheque, its buying power is being reduced each year.

The Jobs

New Brunswick has a much higher unemployment rate at **9.9%** in April 2015 compared to the national rate 6.8%.^x Troublingly, New Brunswick also has a lower employment rate of **57%** compared to national rate of 61.3%. Those who do work in New Brunswick (over 15 years old) earn on average **\$21.45^{xi}** per hour, **\$3.62 less** than the national average of \$25.07.^{xii}

These data suggest that in New Brunswick fewer people work, for less money, and are facing price increases in the healthy dietary staples beyond those affecting their fellow Canadians.

The Effect

Food is an essential requirement for the growth and maintenance of a healthy human body. Research indicates a relationship between food insecurity and higher rates of chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.^{xiii} Once acquired, management of these conditions can be further compromised by lack of access to a necessary diet.

While hunger and food insecurity represent a serious and mounting health problem, recent research also established that experienced child hunger can create an enduring propensity for depression and suicidal ideation amongst adolescents and young adults.^{xivxv}

The Sketch

While there are other parts of Canada more stricken by food insecurity, the data are clear that a troubling amount of households in New Brunswick do not have access to the nutrition required to lead healthy lives.

Data collection on this issue is currently weak but slowly improving; however, the knowledge gaps suggest that the reality is worse than the statistics. From the data currently available, a bleak picture emerges for New Brunswick, with far-reaching consequences for the health and social welfare of our communities.

Greener Village is a not-for-profit community food centre in Fredericton, New Brunswick that seeks to promote food security through its inclusive programs and services. Visit www.greenvillage.org to learn more.

Press Contact

Elizabeth Crawford Thurber
Greener Village
elizabeth@greenvillage.org
506-459-7461

ⁱTarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2014). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2012. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (.ROOF). Page 6.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2013001/article/11889-eng.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ See Tarasuk, *supra* note i, at 26-27.

^{iv} See *Id.*

^v See Tarasuk, *supra* note i, at 28.

^{vi} Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table 326-0021 and Catalogue nos. 62-001-X and 62-010-X.

^{vii} See *Id.*

^{viii} New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice. Impact of Food Price Increases on Low-income New Brunswickers: Report of a Survey on the Cost of Food in New Brunswick in July and August 2010. October 2010.

^{ix} Family Income Security Act 2011, Social Assistance Rate Schedule A. Retrieved from <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/sd-ds/pdf/SocialAssistance/ScheduleA-AnnexeA.pdf>

^x Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table 282-0087 and Catalogue no. 71-001-XIE.

^{xi} Statistics Canada, CANSIM tables 282-0069 and 282-0073.

^{xii} See *Id.*

^{xiii} Kirkpatrick S, et al. Child hunger and long-term adverse consequences for health. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescents Medicine* 2010; 164: 754-762.

^{xiv} McIntyre L, et al. Depression and suicide ideation in late adolescence and early adulthood are an outcome of child hunger. *Journal of Affective Disorders* 2012, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2012.11.029>

^{xv} See Kirkpatrick, *supra* note xiii.