



Food Banks  
Canada



# HUNGERCOUNT

A comprehensive report on hunger and food bank use in Canada, and recommendations for change

2011

# About Food Banks Canada

Food Banks Canada is the national charitable organization representing and supporting the food bank community across Canada. Our Members and their respective agencies serve approximately 85% of people accessing food banks and food programs nationwide. Our mission is to help food banks meet the short-term need for food, and to find long-term solutions to hunger. Please visit [www.foodbankscanada.ca](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca) for more information.

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To obtain more information from the *HungerCount* survey, including multi-year tables and data not included in this report, please visit [www.foodbankscanada.ca/HungerCount](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/HungerCount).

A photograph of a person from the waist down, wearing a light green long-sleeved top with a white lace cuff and blue jeans with a tear at the knee. They are holding a bright green plastic shopping basket. The background is a blurred grocery store aisle with other people and shelves.

# 851,014

851,014 people received food from a food bank in March 2011. This is essentially unchanged from 2010, and remains 26% above levels experienced before the 2008-2009 recession. It shows that the economic recovery is in jeopardy, and far too many people continue to struggle to make ends meet. We provide a snapshot of the problem, identify why Canada still needs food banks, and offer recommendations for reducing the need.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**In March 2011, 851,014 people were assisted by food banks in Canada. Food bank use is 26% higher than in 2008, and this fact sends a clear message: the effects of the recession are still being felt across the country. As a result, a near record number of people are unable to afford enough food for themselves and their families.**

Fifteen months after the end of the 2008-09 recession, food bank use was essentially unchanged from the same period in 2010. Almost half of food banks actually reported an increase in the number of people they assisted in March 2011, compared to the year before.

During the *HungerCount* survey period, 4,188 organizations participated in collecting information. Their records show that 93,085 people made the difficult decision to ask for help from a food bank for the first time. Requests for help came, in every province and territory, from a wide range of Canadians: people with jobs, on social assistance, and on pensions; single people and families with children;

renters, homeowners, and the homeless; those whose families have lived here for generations, and new Canadians.

Food Banks Canada, in partnership with provincial associations, food banks, soup kitchens, and other food programs, has collected data on the need for charitable food assistance annually since 1997. This wealth of information allows us to see that food bank use increases and decreases with the health of the economy – for example, the number of people helped by food banks decreased steadily during the economic boom of the mid-2000s, only to shoot up during the recession, and stay elevated in the current year.

The *HungerCount* survey also shows that while food bank use moves with the economy, there appears to be a stubborn limit to how low the need for assistance can fall. Food banks have been helping more than 700,000 separate individuals each month for the better part of a decade, through good economic times and bad – a fact of life that the majority of Canadians find unacceptable.

This report provides a snapshot of the problem, and offers constructive recommendations that will improve the economic health of people assisted by food banks and drastically reduce the need for food assistance.

## Key national findings

### LEVELS OF FOOD BANK USE

- 851,014 separate individuals received food from a food bank in March 2011; while this is down 2% from 2010, it remains 26% higher than in 2008 and is the second highest level of use on record.
- 93,085 people, or 11% of the total, received help from a food bank for the first time during the survey period.

- In rural areas, 114,122 individuals – or 13% of the national total – received food from food banks; 10% of them were being helped for the first time.
- Food banks assisted 2.5% of the Canadian population in March 2011, compared to 2.6% in 2010 and 2.0% in 2008.
- Food bank use in 2011 was 20% higher than in 2001.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED

- 38% of those receiving food were children and youth under age 18.
- 47% were women and girls.
- 4.4% were seniors over age 65, rising to 5.7% in rural areas.
- 10% self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit.
- 11% were immigrants or refugees – increasing to 18.5% in large cities.
- 4% were postsecondary students.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS HELPED BY FOOD BANKS

The 851,014 individuals who received food in March 2011 were members of 349,842 households:

- 40% of these households were composed of single people living alone.
- 24% were single-parent families with children.
- 23% were dual-parent families with children.
- 12% were couples without children.

Household income came from a variety of sources:

- 52% reported social assistance as their primary source of income.
- 18% have earnings from current or recent employment.
- 13% receive disability-related income supports.
- 7% live primarily on pension benefits.
- 5% reported having no source of income.
- 2% reported student loans and scholarships as their major source of income.

## HOUSING AND FOOD BANK USE

- The majority of those helped by food banks are renters – 66% pay market rent and 22% live in subsidized housing.
- Nationally, 7% are homeowners – in rural areas, this figure rises to 15%.
- 6% are homeless, i.e., living in an emergency shelter, group home, on the street, or temporarily with family or friends.
- 2% live in band-owned housing, increasing to 5% in rural areas.

## Recommendations

Low income, whether in the short or long term, is at the root of the persistent need for charitable food assistance in Canada. Food banks began operating in the early 1980s, near the beginning of a long period of economic transformation that saw major sectors of the Canadian economy – manufacturing, forestry, farming, fishing, mining – recede as sources of jobs and income. Public supports for those in economic difficulty have been scaled back, with both social assistance and Employment Insurance becoming more difficult to get, and providing less to those who are eligible. It has become harder to find and keep a good job, and nearly impossible to afford even basic food, clothing, and adequate shelter, if one is receiving government assistance for any length of time. It is an unfortunate reality that food banks have grown, by necessity, to fill the gap.

Our recommendations focus on the need for governments to provide adequate assistance to individuals and families during times of need, and on how we can better support people to become resilient citizens. They include:

- Increasing federal and provincial support for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing, and the creation or expansion of housing subsidies.
- Working with social assistance beneficiaries and other stakeholders to design an income support system of last resort that helps our most vulnerable citizens become self-sufficient.
- Ensuring that Canada's most vulnerable seniors are not left to live in poverty.
- Improving Employment Insurance to better recognize and support Canadians in non-standard forms of employment, as well as older workers facing permanent layoff from long-tenure positions.
- Prioritizing, at the federal government level, the need to drastically improve the labour market outcomes of disadvantaged workers.
- Investing in a system of high-quality, affordable, accessible early learning and child care.



RESULTS:

# 1 FOOD BANK USE REMAINS AT RECESSIONARY LEVELS

Food bank use is currently 26% higher than it was prior to the onset of the recession, and is nearly unchanged from 2010 – the year that saw the highest level of food bank use on record. In March 2011, 851,014 people received food from a food bank in Canada. This section explores the situation of the people behind that number.

## 1.1 Food bank use before and after the recession

851,014 separate individuals were assisted by a food bank in Canada in March 2011. This figure is 2% lower than 2010 levels – essentially unchanged – and remains 26% higher than in March 2008. It is also the second highest level of food bank use on record.

In March 2011, during the *HungerCount* survey period:

- 93,085 people, or 10.9% of those who received food, turned to a food bank for the first time;
- 114,122 people (13% of the total) were assisted by food banks in rural areas;<sup>1</sup>

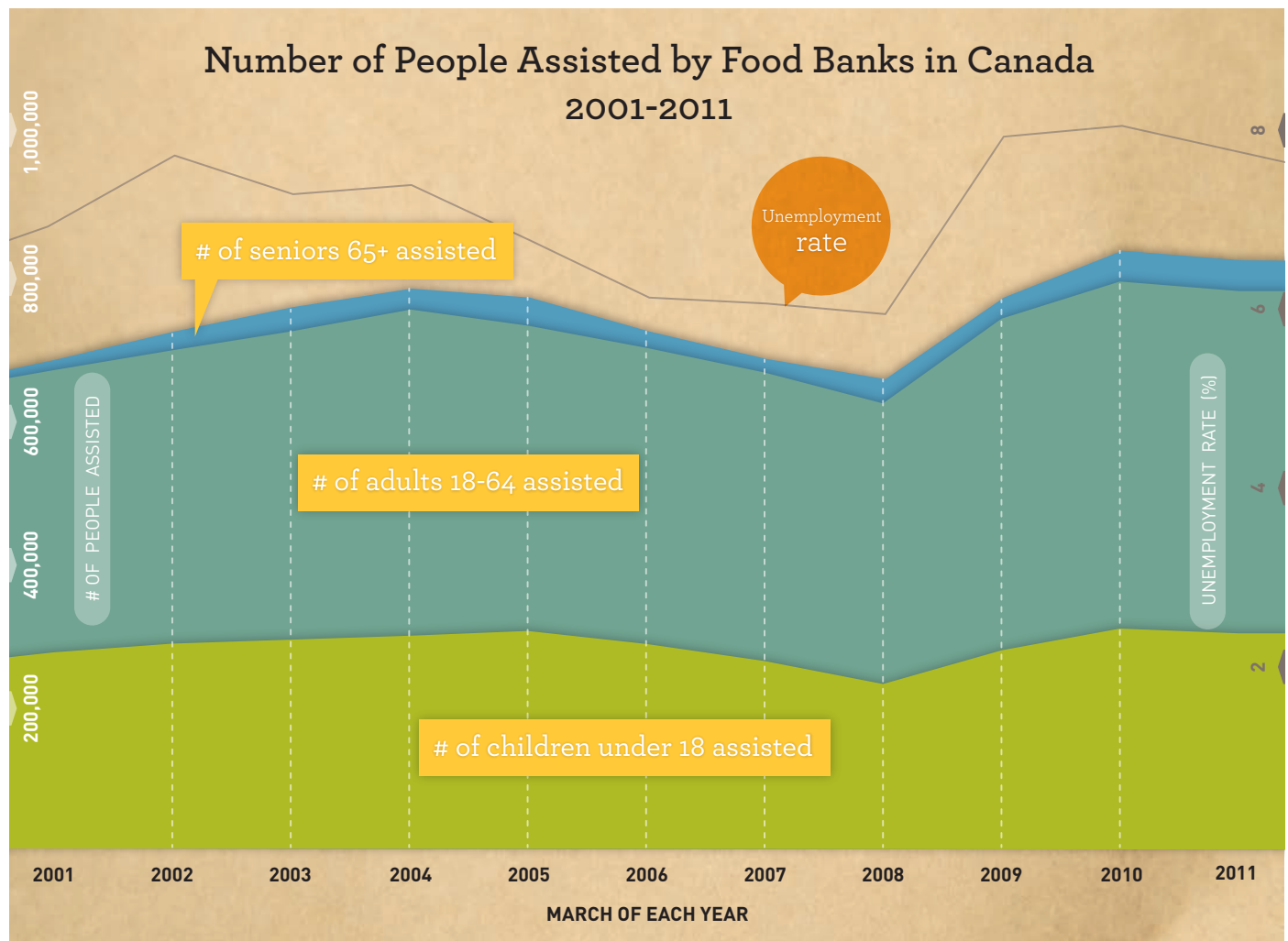
- 49% of food banks reported an increase in the number of people helped compared to 2010;
- 77% of food banks reported that food bank use in 2011 was higher than in 2008.

The infographic below denotes the number of individuals assisted by food banks in the month of March, from 2001 to 2011. It also shows unemployment levels for each year. This graph demonstrates that the need for food banks changes in near lockstep with the overall health of the economy: after several years of decline

during the period of economic growth and decreasing unemployment in the mid-2000s, food bank use shot up as a result of the recession, and has remained elevated in subsequent years.

Canadian food banks provided help to 2.5% of the Canadian population in March, compared to 2.3% in 2001, 2.0% in 2008, and 2.6% in 2010.<sup>2</sup>

(For more information on levels of food bank use, including data back to 1997, visit [www.foodbanksCanada.ca/HungerCount](http://www.foodbanksCanada.ca/HungerCount).)



## 1.2 Age, family type, Aboriginal identity

Food banks provide assistance to a wide range of individuals and families. The following provides a summary of some of the key characteristics of those helped in March 2011.

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH

As has been the case for many years, more than a third (38%) of people receiving assistance from food banks in Canada are children and youth under age 18. The number of children and youth assisted varies across the country, with British

Colombia and Nova Scotia serving the lowest proportion of young people – who nevertheless account for nearly a third of the total – and Manitoba (50%) serving the highest.

### SENIORS

At the other end of the spectrum, 4.4% of those assisted in March 2011 were over age 65. This figure increases slightly to 5.7% in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> Because the *HungerCount* survey does not, for the most part, collect information from subsidized meal

delivery services targeted to seniors, it is likely that the need for assistance among this population is higher than these figures suggest.

**Table 1** presents the total number of individuals assisted by food banks in each province for 2008, 2010, and 2011, as well as the percentage of those assisted in March 2011 who were under 18 years of age. (For more detailed information at the provincial level, please see section 3, *Detailed Provincial Findings*.)

Province/Territory	Total Assisted, March 2011	Percent Children, March 2011	Total Assisted, March 2010	Total Assisted, March 2008	% Change, 2010-2011	% Change, 2008-2011
British Columbia	90,193	31.7%	94,359	78,101	-4.4%	15.5%
Alberta	58,735	43.7%	59,311	33,580	-1.0%	74.9%
Saskatchewan	20,665	43.0%	22,662	17,751	-8.8%	16.4%
Manitoba	55,575	50.4%	57,966	40,464	-4.1%	37.3%
Ontario	395,106	37.5%	402,056	314,258	-1.7%	25.7%
Quebec	155,539	36.5%	154,364	127,536	0.8%	22.0%
New Brunswick	18,539	34.4%	18,517	15,638	0.1%	18.6%
Nova Scotia	22,505	31.5%	22,573	16,915	-0.3%	33.0%
Prince Edward Island	3,095	35.3%	3,068	2,892	0.9%	7.0%
Newfoundland & Labrador	28,642	37.3%	30,800	27,260	-7.0%	5.1%
Territories	2,420	35.6%	2,272	1,340	6.5%	80.6%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>851,014</b>	<b>37.9%</b>	<b>867,948</b>	<b>675,735</b>	<b>-2.0%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>



### A SNAPSHOT OF PEOPLE HELPED BY FOOD BANKS

Of the 851,014 individuals assisted by food banks in March 2011:

- 38% were under age 18;
- 47% were women;
- 4.4% were senior citizens age 65 and over;
- 10% self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in Canada overall;
- 24% of those helped self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in the four western provinces;
- 11.4% were recent immigrants or refugees in Canada overall;
- 18.5% were immigrants or refugees in cities with populations of at least 300,000.



## TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS

Of the 349,842 households who turned to food banks for help in March 2011, almost half were families with children, and these were almost evenly split between dual-parent and single parent families. Among households without children, more than three quarters of those assisted were single people, with the remaining 23% made up of couples without children.<sup>4</sup>

The household composition of those helped in rural areas is fairly consistent with overall national figures, with a slightly higher percentage of couples without children in rural Canada.<sup>5</sup>

## FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT PEOPLE

One in ten of those utilizing food bank services identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. There is considerable variation across the country, with a larger proportion of those accessing food banks

Province/Territory	Total Assisted	Percent Identifying as Aboriginal
British Columbia	90,193	14.7%
Alberta	58,735	18.5%
Saskatchewan	20,665	62.4%
Manitoba	55,575	n/a
Ontario	395,106	5.9%
Quebec	155,539	1.5%
New Brunswick	18,539	2.1%
Nova Scotia	22,505	3.0%
Prince Edward Island	3,095	2.7%
Newfoundland & Labrador	28,642	0.1%
Territories	2,420	72.0%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>851,014</b>	<b>9.7%</b>

identifying as Aboriginal in Western Canada. In Saskatchewan, the majority of people helped by food banks identify as Aboriginal, accounting for 62% of the provincial total in March 2011.<sup>6</sup>

In rural areas, one in six (16.4%) of those helped identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Again, rural food banks in

the four western provinces see higher-than-average proportions of Aboriginal people coming through their doors – ranging from 27% of the total in British Columbia to 64% in Saskatchewan.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2** provides detailed information on Aboriginal people assisted by food banks in each province.

## FOOD BANK USE IN THE TERRITORIES

There are a number of food banks located in Canada's three northern Territories. Some of these – for example, in Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Hay River, Iqaluit, and Rankin Inlet – have been operating for a number of years. In other regions, the food bank concept is newer and concerned community members are increasingly acquiring and sharing what food they can, when they can, with their neighbours in need.

Food banks north of the 60th parallel tend to serve predominantly Aboriginal populations; many do not have permanent space to store food, utilizing community and recreation centres as hubs when they have product to share.

With no food manufacturers and few retail outlets in the north, in-kind donations can be scarce, and these food banks tend to buy a significant amount of the food they distribute.

Territorial food banks that participated in *HungerCount* assisted 7% more people in 2011 compared to 2010: 2,420 people turned to these food banks for help in March 2011. Unfortunately, although *HungerCount* includes the largest food banks in the territories, it does not incorporate information from all food banks and likely underestimates the magnitude of charitable food assistance provided in these jurisdictions.

## Soup Kitchens and Other Meal Programs

Across Canada, a variety of organizations provide meals and snacks to diverse populations on a regular basis. For adults, soup kitchens, shelters, drop-in programs, and other venues provide regular hot meals. For children, schools and before- and after-school programs – often in partnership with NGOs including food banks – provide breakfast, lunch, and snack programs that are often targeted to low-income kids, though increasingly these are available to all young people enrolled in a particular school or extracurricular program.

In March 2011, 3,177,525 prepared meals were served by organizations across the country – down by 8% compared to 2010, but still 2.8% higher than in 2008.

## 1.3 Income

Nearly one in five of the households who turned to food banks for assistance in March 2011 reported that current or recent employment was their primary source of income – 12% were working, and 6% were receiving Employment Insurance (EI). Since the period just prior to the recession, the percentage of assisted households with jobs has decreased (from a high of 14.5% in 2008) in approximately the same proportion as the percentage of those on EI has risen (from a low of 4.8% in 2008).

More broadly, the primary sources of income of those helped have remained quite consistent over the past few years:

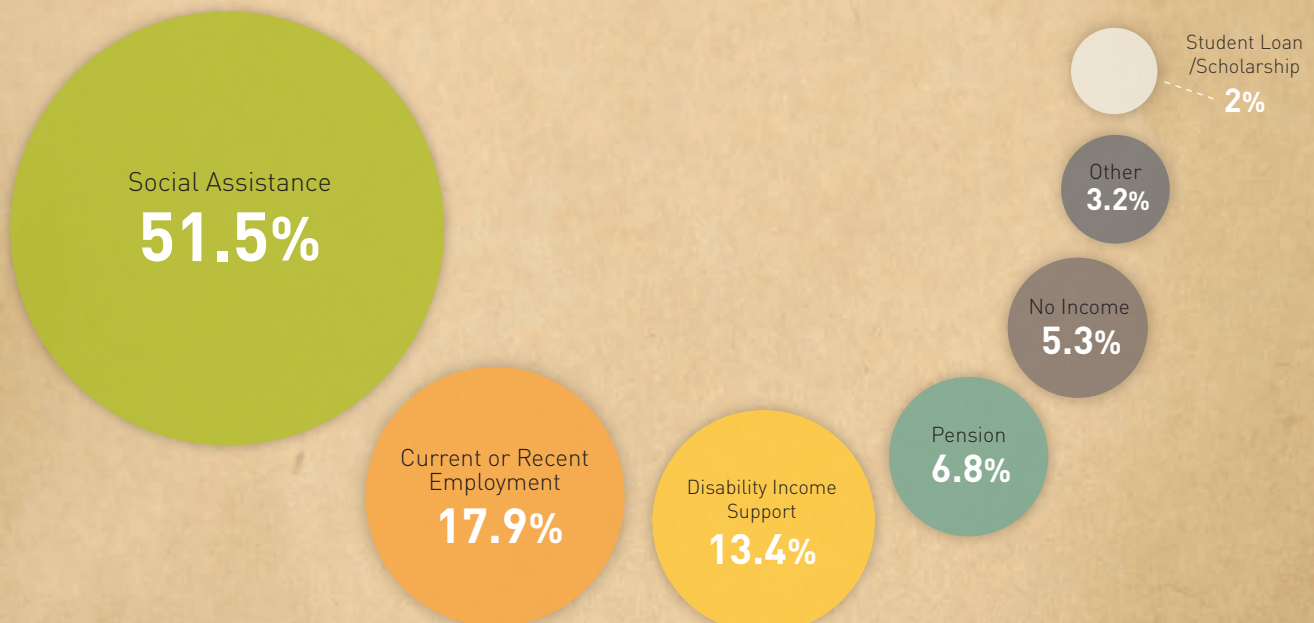
- Slightly more than half of households served by food banks report living on social assistance;

- 13% rely on disability-related income supports;
- 7% receive the majority of their income from pensions.<sup>8</sup>

In rural areas, households assisted by food banks are more likely to be receiving pension benefits; otherwise, sources of income in rural Canada are remarkably similar to overall national figures. A slightly higher percentage (56%) rely on social assistance, while a slightly lower proportion are in receipt of Employment Insurance.<sup>9</sup>

The infographic below provides a breakdown of the primary income sources of households helped by food banks in March 2011.

### Primary Source of Income of Households Assisted by Food Banks



## 1.4 Housing

The majority of households receiving assistance from food banks are tenants. Sixty-three percent live in market rental accommodations, and another 22% live in subsidized rental housing. Nationally, 2% live in band-owned housing, with higher numbers in provinces with larger First Nations populations (e.g., 9% in Manitoba, 6% in Alberta, and 4% in Saskatchewan).

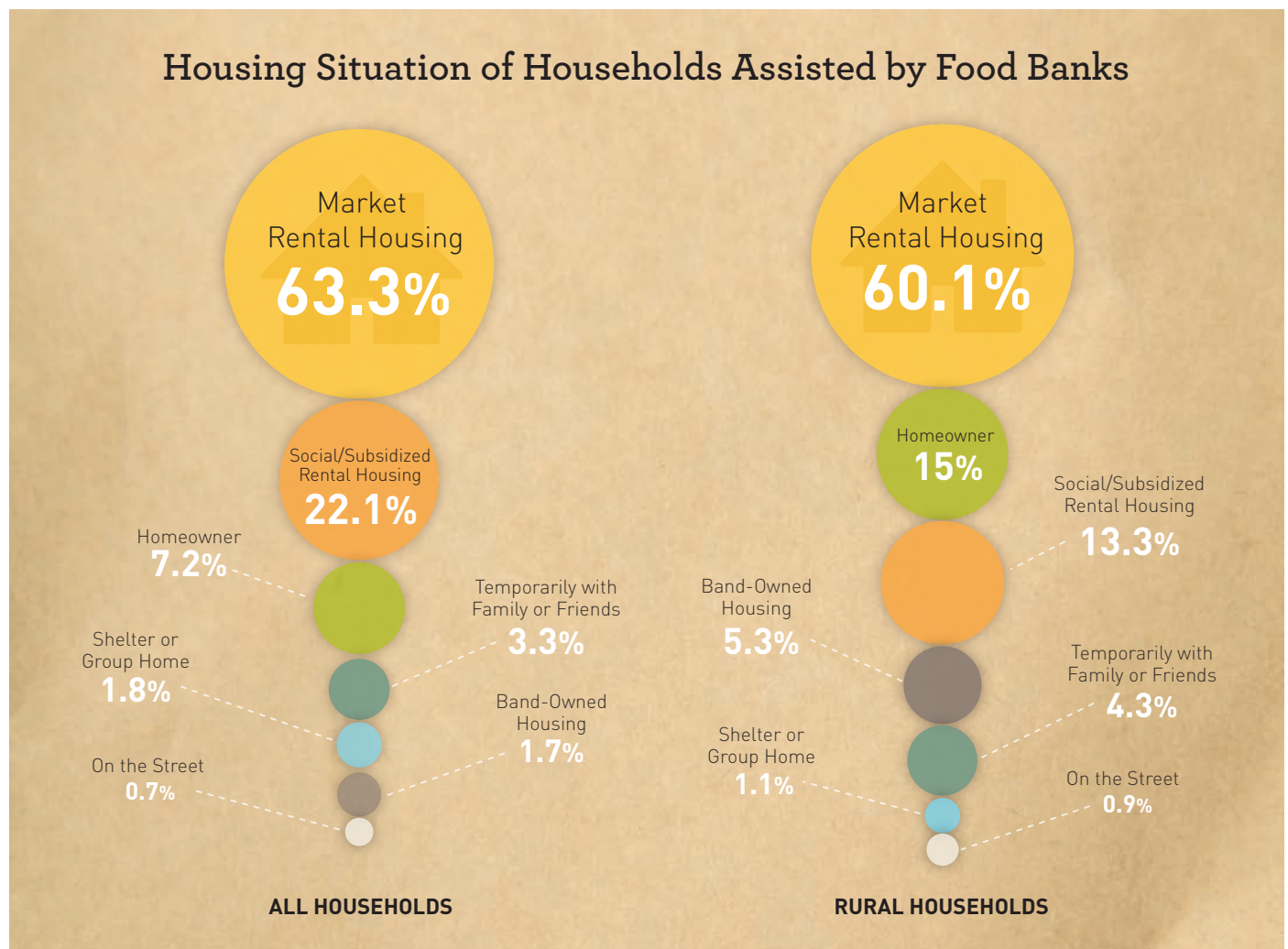
Nearly 6% of households helped by food banks are homeless, whether living temporarily with family or friends, in a youth shelter or group home, at an

emergency shelter, or on the street. On the other side of the coin, a surprising 7% report owning their homes, rising to 13% in Atlantic Canada.<sup>10</sup>

The housing situation of those assisted is subtly different in rural areas of the country. As with national figures, the majority (60%) live in market rental housing. Homeowners are the second largest group at 15% of the total – double the overall national rate, and again with higher numbers in Atlantic Canada (19%).

A smaller proportion of those helped in rural areas live in subsidized rental housing (13%), while more live in band-owned housing (5% compared to 2% nationally). The proportion of homeless clients is nearly identical in rural areas, though people are more likely to report living temporarily with family or friends.<sup>11</sup>

The infographic below provides information nationally, and for rural areas, on the housing arrangements of households assisted by food banks in March 2011.





# 2

DISCUSSION AND POLICY:

## REDUCING THE NEED FOR FOOD BANKS IN CANADA

**It is a very unsettled time in the world, and in Canada.** While the economic situation is not as dire as during the depths of the recession, there is a rising tide of uncertainty felt by millions of people around the globe. This has been caused by a number of factors, including the debt crises in the United States and Europe, persistent high unemployment around the world, and the struggle in high-income countries to adapt effectively to the decline of major sectors of the economy, particularly large-scale manufacturing.



**We see global economic uncertainty play out every day in the lives of Canadians helped by food banks.** It

is clear in regions where food bank use has increased, as shown by the following quotes from several staff and volunteers at food banks:

“A lot of our new clients (I see on average three to four new clients per day) are hired only on a part time basis. I am seeing many clients who once lived here and decided to work in Alberta during the boom times returning home since there is no longer any work for them there. We also have a large population of seniors in our town and they are finding it hard to make it from one cheque to the next with the price of food so high.”<sup>12</sup>

“Two mills in the area have recently shut down, resulting in massive layoffs. This was the main source of income in town.”<sup>13</sup>

It is also reflected in areas where the need for assistance from food banks has decreased:

“The lumber and oilfield industry was hit hard in our region in 2009 and some people had to move on to look for work.”<sup>14</sup>

In many parts of the country, food bank use is down because the economy has improved. The fact that fewer people have needed help from food banks over

the past year is extraordinarily positive. This decline was not unexpected, as **food bank use has consistently shown a clear correlation with the overall health of the economy.** If the economic situation improves further, we can expect the need for food banks to level off or continue downward, as more Canadians re-enter the workforce and find better-paying employment.

At the same time, despite the small decrease in food bank use since last year, **there are structural economic factors that appear to prevent a truly significant reduction in the need for food banks.** Through good economic times and bad, food banks have been helping more than 700,000 separate individuals every month for the better part of the past decade. This is a striking sign that there are serious long-term economic and social problems in Canada for which we simply do not have adequate solutions.

As further proof of these problems, in 2009 more than 3 million Canadians lived in families with incomes below Canada’s unofficial poverty line, the after-tax low income cut off (LICO-AT).<sup>15</sup> In 2008, nearly 2 million Canadians worried where their next meal would come from, ate food that did not meet their dietary or cultural preferences, or skipped entire meals because of financial hardship.<sup>16</sup> These indicators of poverty and vulnerability have almost certainly been worsened by the recession.

Persistent levels of poverty, food insecurity, and food bank use suggests that our social policy fundamentals

need to be significantly improved. Over the next few years, it is crucial that social policy be a priority at the federal and provincial levels of government – something that we cannot take for granted. **As governments cut the size of the public workforce, emphasize low taxes, and restrict new spending, social policy – and vulnerable Canadians most affected by it – is at risk of neglect.**

A strong case can be made for investing scarce resources in policies that support vulnerable Canadians. There is, first and foremost, the moral argument: in a country as prosperous as Canada, it is unacceptable that so many are unable to afford the most basic needs. Second, there is a growing body of research that shows how much poverty costs us as a nation,<sup>17</sup> and that shows the broad negative effects of growing inequality.<sup>18</sup> Finally, with an aging population and its consequences (including rising health care costs<sup>19</sup> and a slowdown in the growth rate of the labour force<sup>20</sup>), it simply makes sense to prioritize the full participation of as many Canadians as possible in our economy.

Our recommendations build on these arguments, and propose seven areas of focus for federal and provincial governments. Strong efforts in these areas will decrease the number of people in need of help from food banks, and will provide a basis for more Canadians to live active, healthy, productive lives.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## 1 Invest in Affordable Housing

Year after year, staff and volunteers at Canada's food banks say that investment in affordable housing is the most effective way to reduce the need for charitable food assistance. Quite simply, a large proportion of those they assist spend the majority of their income on housing, and reduce the amount of money spent on food to compensate.<sup>21</sup>

Recent research from the Wellesley Institute and the Conference Board of Canada makes a convincing case that improved affordability of housing leads to increased individual health and productivity, and to decreased costs related to health care and social programs. Nevertheless, one quarter of Canadians spend more than 30% of their income on housing, the widely-accepted threshold of affordability.<sup>22,23</sup> At the municipal level, the waiting list for affordable housing is a fact of life in Canada – those deemed eligible for subsidized rental rates can wait years before being granted access to an affordable housing unit.<sup>24</sup>

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**Thanks to recent recession-related government stimulus programs, the construction of housing in Canada has been relatively strong. As we transition out of stimulus mode, we strongly recommend that federal and provincial governments maintain or increase levels of support for affordable housing, including the construction of new affordable housing units, the rehabilitation of existing units, and the creation or expansion of rent subsidies.**

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## 2 Improve Social Assistance

Provincial social assistance programs are characterized by extremely low benefit levels, complicated bureaucracy, and barriers to both entry and exit. Individuals and families are required to liquidate their assets to become eligible for assistance, and while on the program live at income levels far below what is needed for an active and healthy life.

Consider, for example, a single parent with a young child receiving social assistance in the city of Regina. This family:

- receives \$17,806 in annual income, including provincial social assistance, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the GST credit, and provincial tax credits<sup>25</sup> (i.e., \$16,777 less than the median income for single parent families in Canada,<sup>26</sup> and \$1,154 below the LICO-AT);
- must have less than \$3,000 in liquid assets to be eligible for social assistance;<sup>27</sup>
- is allowed to earn a maximum of \$1,500 per year from work without benefits being reduced;<sup>28</sup>
- lives in a city where average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$10,764 per year;<sup>29</sup>
- would need to pay \$4,146 annually for an adequate amount of healthy, nutritious food;<sup>30</sup>
- would have \$3,013 per year – or just \$251 dollars per month – left over after housing and food to apply to *all* other expenses, including transportation, clothing, school supplies, telephone, sports and clubs, etc.

This example, by no means unusual, shows the extraordinary depth of poverty experienced by Canadians on welfare. Individuals and families on social assistance are forced to live from day to day, constantly worrying about how they are going to survive.

In the past few years, several provinces have marginally increased social assistance benefits, and have increased some asset exemptions (e.g., allowing slightly higher maximum cash assets, Registered Education Savings Plans, and the ownership of a modest vehicle and primary residence). These changes make it more likely that people will get back into the labour force and off social assistance. However, there is still much more to be done to change the system so that it supports Canadians to become more self-sufficient.

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**We recommend that all provincial and territorial governments begin or continue to work with social assistance beneficiaries and other stakeholders to design an income support system that helps our most vulnerable citizens become self-sufficient.**

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### 3 Protect Canada's Most Vulnerable Seniors

We welcomed the 2011 federal budget announcement of increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This \$300 million investment acknowledges that, though great progress has been made in addressing poverty among seniors, too many still cannot afford even basic needs.<sup>31</sup>

In our recent policy paper, *Fairness for Canadian Seniors – A Reality Check on Pensions*, we noted that single seniors are much more likely than couples to have incomes below the after-tax low income cut off (LICO-AT), Canada's unofficial poverty line. This continues to be the case despite the above-mentioned changes to the GIS. For single seniors living in urban areas with populations above 30,000, the maximum OAS/GIS benefits remain below the LICO-AT. We suggest that this problem stems from the fact that maximum OAS and GIS benefits for single seniors do not fully take account of the costs of a single person living by themselves, relative to a couple in a similar situation.

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**Currently, maximum OAS/GIS payments to single seniors sit at 64% of those for couples. We recommend that the federal government undertake research to examine whether this is an appropriate level, and to determine what level of payment relativity would result in approximately equal purchasing power for seniors living alone and in couples.**

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### 4 Update Employment Insurance

Over the past decade, the nature of work in Canada has changed radically. Blue-collar jobs accessible to people with low levels of education have steadily disappeared, replaced to a large degree by service sector jobs that are more likely to be part-time, temporary, low-paid, and with few non-wage benefits.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, our system of unemployment insurance exacerbated the effects of these changes: in the mid-1990s, changes to Employment Insurance (EI) made it more difficult for many Canadians to be eligible for the program, income replacement rates were

cut, and the maximum length of benefit periods was reduced.<sup>33</sup> These changes in EI and the labour market both worked to decrease work-related stability for Canadians.

There is increasing agreement that Employment Insurance has not kept pace with the realities of work in Canada.<sup>34</sup> For example, older workers who have paid into EI for decades and have recently been laid off are in many ways treated the same as new entrants to the labour market. Further, though non-standard forms of work have grown, EI is designed as if the majority of Canadians have permanent, full-time jobs. The result, particularly post-recession, is that people unable to find work after their EI benefits run out have no choice but to resort to social assistance.

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**We recommend that the federal government consider changes to EI that will better recognize and support Canadians in non-standard forms of employment, as well as older workers facing permanent layoff from long-tenure positions. These changes may include better support for self-employed, contract, and temporary workers,<sup>35</sup> and some form of wage insurance.<sup>36</sup>**

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## 5 Support Disadvantaged Workers

From a global perspective, Canada's labour market is relatively healthy and has held up well in response to recent shocks. It offers benefits that are diffused widely across society: numerous opportunities for diverse types of employment, predictable tax revenues, and a resilient economy. However, the negative aspects of the labour market, including a large number of low-paying jobs, low investment in employee retention and development, high rates of turnover, and high likelihood of layoffs during downturns, are borne disproportionately by a minority of Canadians who are being left behind.<sup>37</sup>

Canada's labour market has changed so rapidly that many have not been able to successfully make the transition from old forms of work (i.e., full-time permanent, often unskilled or low-skilled) to new types (i.e., often contractual or temporary, and requiring high levels of skill and comfort with technology). Governments across the country have put in place two major types of measures to address this problem:

- support for displaced workers, including the EI Work-Sharing Program, and extension of EI benefits for unemployed individuals engaged in educational upgrading;
- support for the creation of jobs, including the Hiring Credit for Small Business, and a reduction in federal business tax rates.

Innovations in support for *displaced workers* (individuals with long-term attachment to the labour force who have recently lost their jobs) do not necessarily translate to improving outcomes for *disadvantaged workers* (individuals without a strong attachment to the labour force). Evaluations tend to show that existing approaches in adult education and training, for example, have limited effectiveness for disadvantaged workers.<sup>38</sup>

In a similar vein, recent federal job creation measures tend to be agnostic about the types of jobs that are created: they support the maintenance or creation of full-time/well-paying jobs, part-time/low-paying jobs, and everything in between. If a significant number of the jobs created in Canada over the next few years are part-time, temporary, and low-wage with few non-statutory benefits, Canadians with lower levels of education and experience will continue to face a labour market where their only option is a low-paying job.



To address these issues, we recommend that the federal government:

- Conduct a thorough evaluation of federally funded labour market development programs, including the Working Income Tax Benefit, the Hiring Credit for Small Business, and active labour market programs operated by private contractors. Do these programs lead to improved labour market participation and income levels for disadvantaged workers?
- Fund research and/or demonstration projects focused on the creation of well-paying jobs that are open to those at risk of poor labour market outcomes. Focus on the program and legislative changes necessary for federal government engagement with non-profit and for-profit social enterprises (i.e., organizations that combine market-optimization with social/philanthropic goals).
- Institute and lead a federal/provincial/territorial/First Nations working group to examine and address the inefficiencies, overlaps, and lack of coordination among the various funders and providers of active labour market programming in Canada.<sup>39</sup>



## 6 Invest in Early Learning and Child Care

The links between social and economic policy in this area are clear: every \$1 invested in early learning and care will boost the economy in the long run by \$2.40. Early learning and care, like affordable housing, is an investment in the well-being of Canadians that has real benefits for the nation as a whole. Affordable, high-quality, accessible, publicly funded early learning and care has multiple benefits: it supports parents to enter or remain in the workforce and increase their income, or to upgrade their education and skills; and it decreases school drop-out rates among children and youth and improves post-secondary educational participation.<sup>40</sup>

While wide availability of affordable child care is particularly beneficial for parents who have low attachment to the labour force, and who may be working in low-paying, part-time, and/or temporary jobs, it is a boon to parents at all income levels. In an era when the majority of parents work, with a rapidly changing labour market and a shrinking labour force, it is simply good economics to invest in early learning and child care.

Apart from cash transfers to provincial governments and families, the current federal government has decisively removed itself from involvement in early learning and care. It is therefore the responsibility of provincial governments to work with Canadian municipalities and other stakeholders to design and implement innovative early learning and care programming and funding models. Without concerted efforts to achieve these ends, parents will continue to spend precious time and resources cobbling together a combination of family-based, before- and after-school, publicly funded, and private arrangements. Many parents will choose to stay out of the labour force because care for their children is unaffordable.

**We recommend that provincial and municipal governments increase investment in a system of high-quality, affordable, accessible early learning and child care.**



## 7 Maintain a Strong Canada Social Transfer

The Canada Social Transfer (CST) is a federal cash transfer to provincial governments that is meant to support post-secondary education, social assistance, social services, early childhood development, early learning, and child care. Providing a total of \$11.5 billion to the provinces in 2011-12, it is a major funding base for social programs.<sup>41</sup>

During the 2011 federal election campaign, the Conservative Party promised to increase the annual value of the Canada Health Transfer by 6% annually until 2016, but made no specific mention of the future of the Canada Social Transfer after the current agreement expires in 2014.

The evolution of the Canada Assistance Plan into the Canada Health and Social Transfer in the early-to-mid 1990s, which included significant reductions in transfer payments, was a major factor in cuts to benefit levels and restrictions on eligibility to social assistance programs in many provinces. These changes created significant hardship for hundreds of thousands of Canadians, particularly single parents, people with low levels of education, and people with difficult-to-diagnose or intermittent chronic health problems.<sup>42</sup>

Any reductions in the CST would negatively affect programs supporting the health and well-being of Canadians, and would be counterproductive in the broader effort to reign in ever-expanding health care expenditures. Continued investment in the CST is an investment in the health of Canadians.

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**We recommend that the federal government commit to maintaining the current annual increase of 3% to the Canada Social Transfer to provincial governments.**

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## There *are* solutions – if we have the will

### **The need for food banks in Canada will not decrease significantly without a change in the status quo.**

The policy environment at the provincial/territorial and federal levels has undoubtedly seen progress in the past few years: poverty reduction strategies in various jurisdictions; the introduction of the Working Income Tax Benefit; a focus on economic development, education, and training, with particular efforts in regions with large First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations; and ongoing support for affordable housing, including supportive housing for seniors and people with disabilities. While this progress is important, it is nevertheless the product of relatively small-scale policy changes, and for the most part has not had a transformative impact on the difficulties that lead Canadians to ask for help from food banks.

With a federal election just completed, seven provincial/territorial elections set for 2011, and two more in 2012, we are faced with a period of potential political stability that could set the stage for significant policy change. If governments have the desire and will, the recommendations made above, as well as those currently proposed by other stakeholders, could be implemented on a wide scale.

We have the opportunity to create real change in the lives of vulnerable Canadians, and to help those currently being left behind to become healthy, productive, full members of society. To turn away from this challenge will be a wasted opportunity.



# 3

## DETAILED PROVINCIAL FINDINGS

Between 2008 and 2010, changes in food bank use were remarkably similar across jurisdictions. From 2008 to 2009, all but one province experienced a marked increase in the need for food assistance, and every jurisdiction saw an increase from 2009 to 2010. This year, the picture is slightly different.

# FOOD BANK USE IN CANADA BY THE NUMBERS

MARCH, 2011

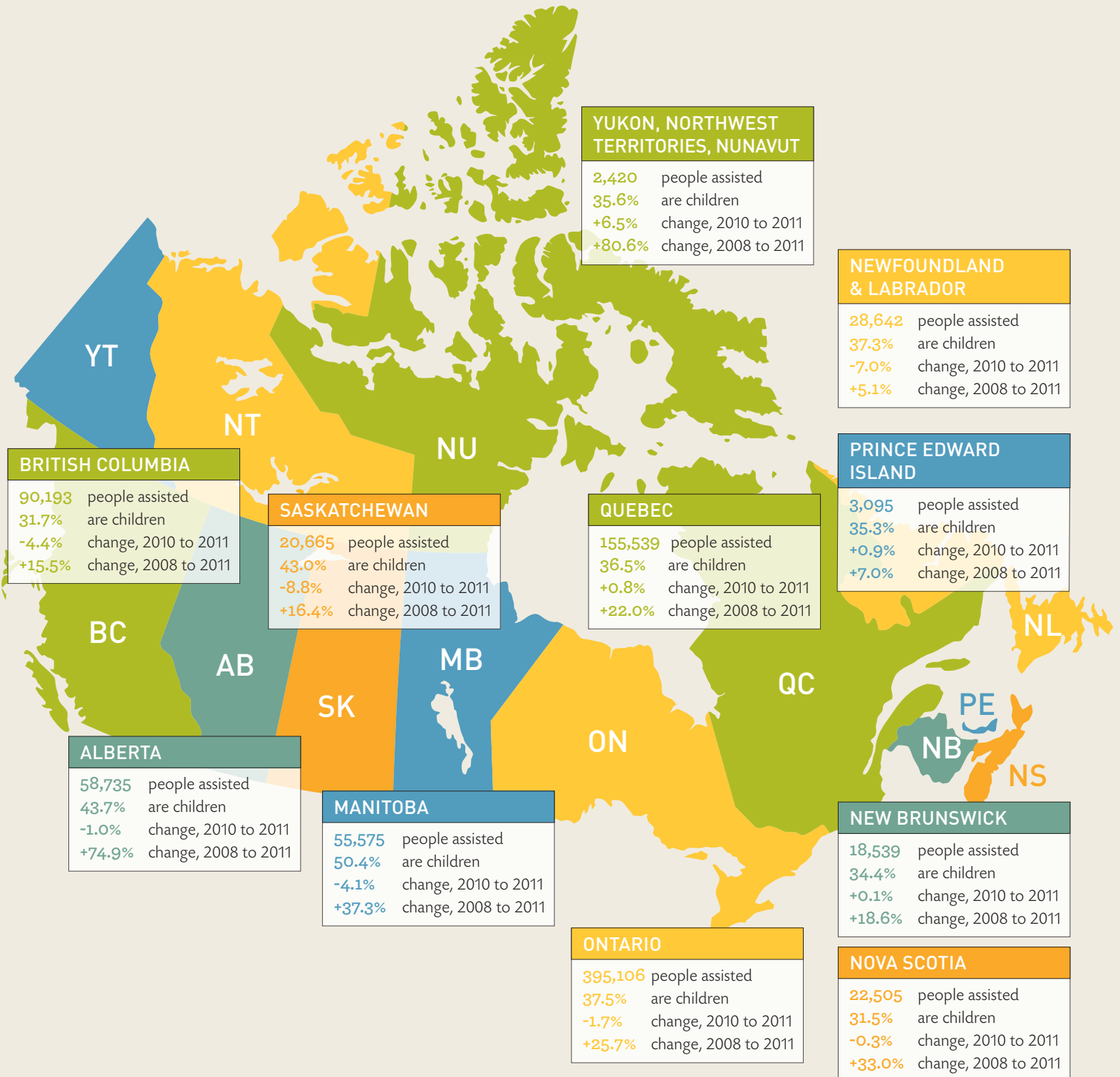


Changes in food bank usage levels for 2011 hover within a narrow band: from an increase of 1% in Quebec, to a decrease of 9% in Saskatchewan (where 52% of food banks nevertheless saw an increase). Food bank use in all but one province remains higher than levels seen in 2008 and 2009.

When looking at who is helped by food banks, there is considerable variation in Canada's different regions. In Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island, for example, working households make up nearly a third (29%) of those assisted, compared to the national average of 18%. Food banks in provinces west of Ontario provide food and other assistance to a much higher proportion of Aboriginal people, with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples accounting for a quarter of individuals helped. Thanks to their large urban populations, Ontario and Quebec assist an elevated percentage of immigrants and refugees, accounting for approximately 86% of new Canadians helped across the country.

This information is essential – to truly understand why people need food banks and how this need can be reduced, one must engage with the problem at the national, regional, provincial, and community levels. To this end, **a number of Food Banks Canada Member provincial associations have authored provincial reports that offer greater detail and context than can be included in this national report. These reports can be accessed at [www.foodbanksCanada.ca/HungerCount](http://www.foodbanksCanada.ca/HungerCount).**

Additionally, the following section provides a wealth of provincial data, so that readers can more fully understand who is being assisted by food banks in different parts of the country.

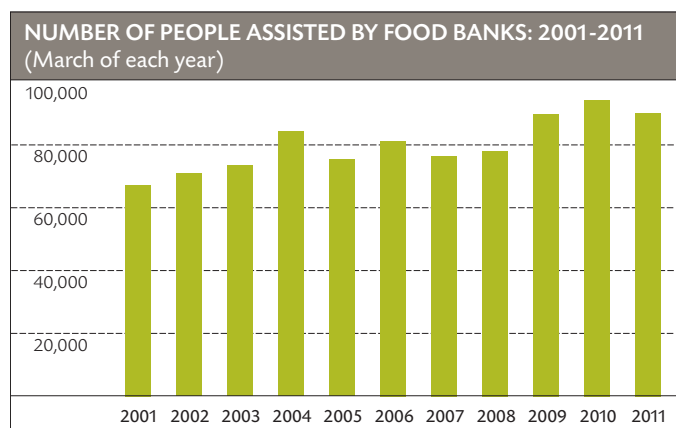


# BRITISH COLUMBIA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	90,193	94,359	89,866	78,101	67,237
% Change, 2001-2011	34.1%				
% Change, 2008-2011	15.5%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-4.4%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	53.0%	60.2%	80.8%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	31.8%	29.7%	31.4%	31.2%	35.3%
Households assisted by food banks	42,465	45,196	44,206	35,005	23,664
% Households assisted for the first time	6.9%	6.5%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.98%	2.10%	2.03%	1.77%	1.66%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	45.1	47.0
% Post-secondary students	1.6	1.5
% Adults who are 65+	7.2	12.8
% Aboriginal persons	14.7	26.8
% Immigrants or refugees	3.4	0.3

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.8	20.2
% Two-parent families	19.6	16.0
% Couples with no children	12.6	13.0
% Single people	46.0	50.8
Number of food banks reporting	57	31



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	11.3	12.2
% Employment Insurance	5.1	4.4
% Social assistance	43.1	51.0
% Disability-related income support	24.5	15.2
% Pension	7.2	8.1
% Student loans/scholarships	0.8	0.5
% No income	4.9	5.7
% Other	3.1	3.0
Number of food banks reporting	54	30

90,193

Individuals assisted by food banks in March

15.5%  
change since 2008

31.8%  
under the age of 18

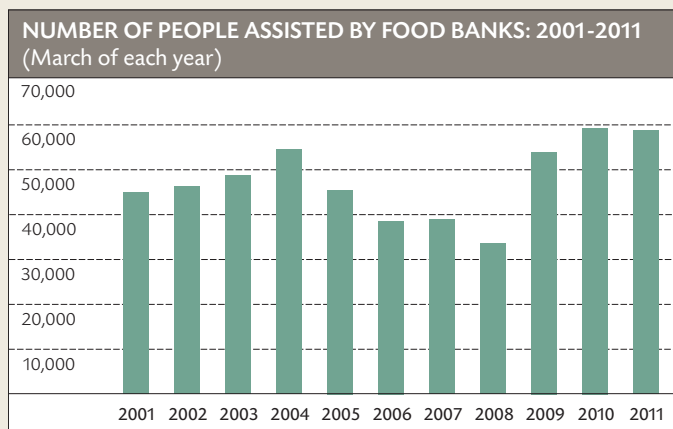
HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	5.2	7.6
Rental market tenants	76.1	64.0
Social housing tenants	10.8	6.9
Band-owned housing	2.7	9.9
Shelter or group home	0.6	0.6
Living on the street	1.6	4.6
Living with family or friends	2.9	6.3
Number of food banks reporting	49	29

# ALBERTA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	58,735	59,311	53,976	33,580	44,868
% Change, 2001-2011	30.9%				
% Change, 2008-2011	74.9%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-1.0%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	35.6%	72.5%	78.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	43.7%	43.1%	43.1%	42.0%	42.0%
Households assisted by food banks	21,556	19,798	20,815	12,031	16,412
% Households assisted for the first time	17.7%	10.0%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.57%	1.60%	1.40%	0.96%	1.48%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	52.8	48.1
% Post-secondary students	4.8	0.6
% Adults who are 65+	5.7	7.8
% Aboriginal persons	18.5	46.5
% Immigrants or refugees	12.8	1.1

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	28.5	35.6
% Two-parent families	24.0	26.0
% Couples with no children	11.2	13.4
% Single people	36.2	25.0
Number of food banks reporting	44	31



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	27.3	27.5
% Employment Insurance	5.8	4.8
% Social assistance	32.9	28.7
% Disability-related income support	12.2	9.9
% Pension	6.2	12.6
% Student loans/scholarships	2.2	0.8
% No income	9.8	14.4
% Other	3.6	1.3
Number of food banks reporting	32	21

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	7.2	12.3
Rental market tenants	66.3	38.4
Social housing tenants	14.7	10.5
Band-owned housing	6.1	22.3
Shelter or group home	0.5	0.4
Living on the street	0.3	0.1
Living with family or friends	4.8	16.0
Number of food banks reporting	36	26



Individuals assisted by food banks in March

**74.9%**  
change since 2008

**43.7%**  
under the age of 18

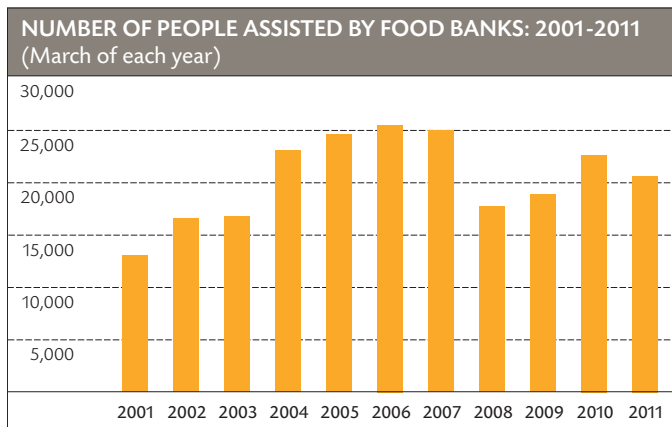


# SASKATCHEWAN

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	20,665	22,662	18,875	17,751	13,065
% Change, 2001-2011	58.2%				
% Change, 2008-2011	16.4%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-8.8%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	52.0%	52.0%	78.0%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	43.0%	44.1%	44.4%	45.6%	47.9%
Households assisted by food banks	7,740	8,355	7,063	5,819	4,971
% Households assisted for the first time	8.6%	7.8%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.96%	2.18%	1.80%	1.73%	1.30%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	48.8	51.9
% Post-secondary students	2.6	1.3
% Adults who are 65+	7.3	5.7
% Aboriginal persons	62.4	63.7
% Immigrants or refugees	8.0	0.7

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	24.2	35.4
% Two-parent families	21.1	23.0
% Couples with no children	9.6	10.4
% Single people	45.1	31.3
Number of food banks reporting	20	15



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	14.7	8.2
% Employment Insurance	3.8	4.2
% Social assistance	57.6	66.8
% Disability-related income support	4.1	4.7
% Pension	6.3	6.1
% Student loans/scholarships	3.0	2.8
% No income	6.2	4.7
% Other	4.4	2.6
Number of food banks reporting	20	14



Individuals assisted by food banks in March

**16.4%**  
change since 2008

**43.0%**  
under the age of 18



HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	6.0	11.0
Rental market tenants	68.4	46.1
Social housing tenants	9.7	13.7
Band-owned housing	3.6	22.1
Shelter or group home	0.8	0.8
Living on the street	0.4	1.6
Living with family or friends	11.1	4.6
Number of food banks reporting	18	15

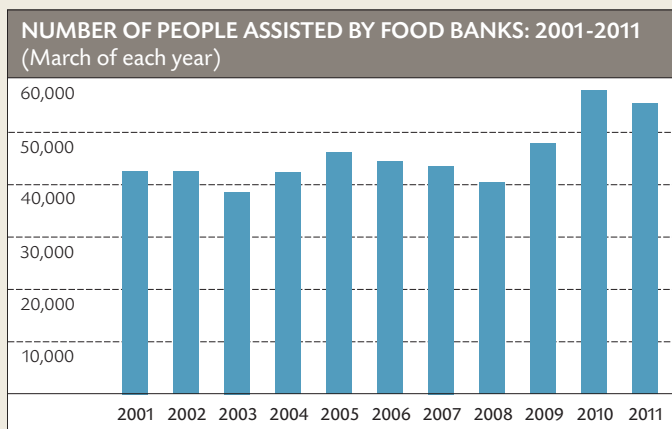


# MANITOBA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	55,575	57,966	47,925	40,234	42,625
% Change, 2001-2011	30.4%				
% Change, 2008-2011	37.3%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-4.1%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	42.4%	73.0%	66.0%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	50.4%	50.5%	48.7%	45.7%	46.6%
Households assisted by food banks	18,620	-	-	-	-
% Households assisted for the first time	3.3%	-	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	4.47%	4.72%	3.89%	3.30%	3.67%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	59.3	59.7
% Post-secondary students	3.2	3.3
% Adults who are 65+	13.0	13.1
% Aboriginal persons	n/a	36.5
% Immigrants or refugees	3.8	3.9

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	24.1	33.1
% Two-parent families	27.8	23.6
% Couples with no children	12.8	11.3
% Single people	35.3	31.9
Number of food banks reporting	28	25



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	12.4	11.6
% Employment Insurance	5.4	4.9
% Social assistance	48.5	60.1
% Disability-related income support	4.4	11.3
% Pension	10.2	8.6
% Student loans/scholarships	2.6	0.0
% No income	10.3	2.9
% Other	6.1	0.6
Number of food banks reporting	19	16

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	11.9	14.9
Rental market tenants	56.4	41.1
Social housing tenants	13.4	18.0
Band-owned housing	8.8	14.5
Shelter or group home	2.5	3.6
Living on the street	0.6	0.9
Living with family or friends	6.6	7.1
Number of food banks reporting	18	15



55,575  
Individuals assisted by food banks in March



37.3%  
change since 2008

50.4%

under the age of 18

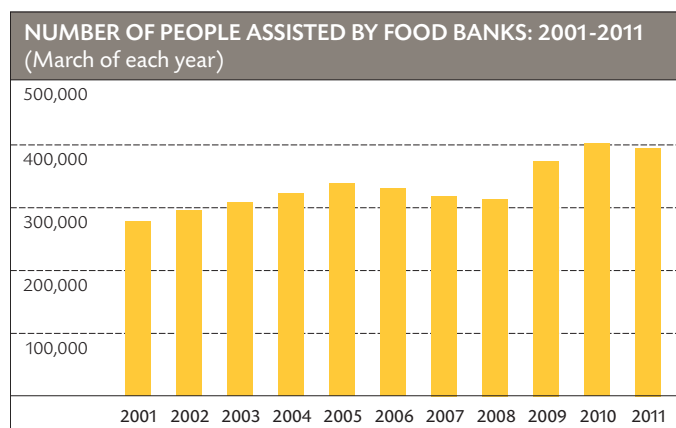


# ONTARIO

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	395,106	402,056	374,230	314,258	278,543
% Change, 2001-2011	41.8%				
% Change, 2008-2011	25.7%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-1.7%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	42.3%	73.6%	76.2%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	37.5%	37.1%	37.6%	37.6%	41.2%
Households assisted by food banks	157,973	160,402	148,660	137,491	115,930
% Households assisted for the first time	10.0%	10.4%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.97%	3.06%	2.90%	2.40%	2.37%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	48.0	47.2
% Post-secondary students	3.5	3.5
% Adults who are 65+	5.1	7.3
% Aboriginal persons	5.9	8.5
% Immigrants or refugees	11.9	1.1

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	28.4	26.2
% Two-parent families	22.0	25.6
% Couples with no children	11.0	13.3
% Single people	38.6	34.9
Number of food banks reporting	191	68



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	10.5	12.1
% Employment Insurance	5.0	4.0
% Social assistance	44.5	41.1
% Disability-related income support	27.5	29.4
% Pension	4.9	7.7
% Student loans/scholarships	1.0	0.4
% No income	4.1	2.3
% Other	2.6	3.0
Number of food banks reporting	155	53



Individuals assisted by food banks in March

395,106

**25.7%**  
change since 2008

**37.5%**

under the age of 18



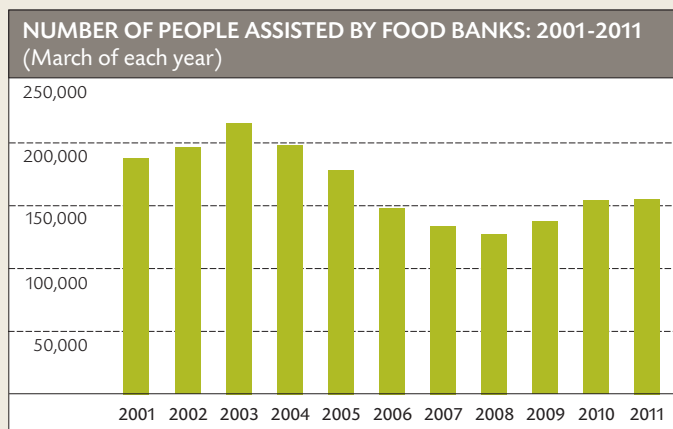
HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	6.5	13.1
Rental market tenants	62.7	65.3
Social housing tenants	24.6	15.9
Band-owned housing	1.1	3.3
Shelter or group home	1.7	0.1
Living on the street	0.4	0.0
Living with family or friends	3.1	2.2
Number of food banks reporting	159	55

# QUEBEC

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	155,539	154,364	137,464	127,536	187,877
% Change, 2001-2011	-17.2%				
% Change, 2008-2011	22.0%				
% Change, 2010-2011	0.8%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	51.9%	-	-	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	36.5%	37.9%	33.9%	37.1%	43.8%
Households assisted by food banks	69,057	-	-	-	-
% Households assisted for the first time	15.6%	-	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	1.96%	1.96%	1.77%	1.97%	2.55%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	40.9	39.5
% Post-secondary students	4.4	n/a
% Adults who are 65+	11.3	8.7
% Aboriginal persons	1.5	n/a
% Immigrants or refugees	23.1	n/a

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	22.2	21.2
% Two-parent families	25.7	22.2
% Couples with no children	12.2	15.1
% Single people	39.9	41.5
Number of food banks reporting	500	125



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	9.4	10.5
% Employment Insurance	6.7	5.2
% Social assistance	60.7	64.6
% Disability-related income support	4.5	5.3
% Pension	7.1	7.2
% Student loans/scholarships	3.4	0.8
% No income	4.9	3.1
% Other	3.2	3.3
Number of food banks reporting	472	118

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	6.0	18.3
Rental market tenants	65.5	64.2
Social housing tenants	20.3	12.8
Band-owned housing	0.7	0.7
Shelter or group home	3.7	2.5
Living on the street	0.8	0.0
Living with family or friends	2.9	1.4
Number of food banks reporting	418	109



Individuals assisted by food banks in March

**22.0%**  
change since 2008

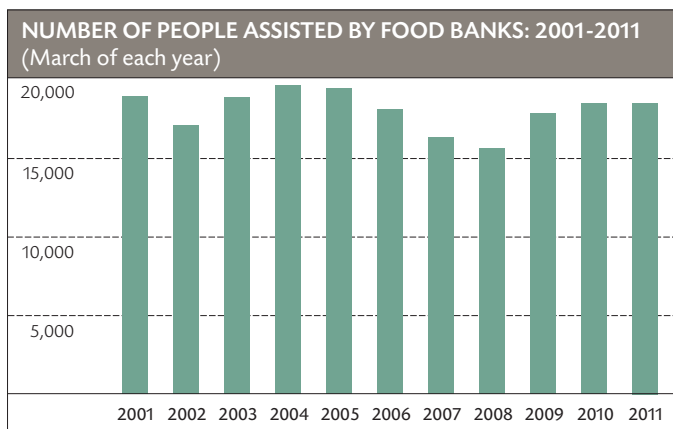
**36.5%**  
under the age of 18

# NEW BRUNSWICK

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	18,539	18,517	17,889	15,638	18,712
% Change, 2001-2011	-0.9%				
% Change, 2008-2011	18.6%				
% Change, 2010-2011	0.1%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	54.2%	66.0%	70.6%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	34.4%	34.3%	33.8%	33.2%	35.5%
Households assisted by food banks	8,167	8,440	7,710	7,060	7,830
% Households assisted for the first time	7.7%	9.4%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.46%	2.46%	2.39%	2.09%	2.50%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	49.7	49.1
% Post-secondary students	1.3	1.0
% Adults who are 65+	6.0	7.2
% Aboriginal persons	2.1	1.9
% Immigrants or refugees	1.5	0.5

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.8	21.0
% Two-parent families	19.3	20.9
% Couples with no children	15.3	15.8
% Single people	43.6	42.4
Number of food banks reporting	36	25



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	10.0	8.4
% Employment Insurance	6.4	6.3
% Social assistance	65.6	67.1
% Disability-related income support	5.9	6.3
% Pension	6.1	6.7
% Student loans/scholarships	0.8	0.3
% No income	3.0	2.9
% Other	2.2	2.0
Number of food banks reporting	35	25

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	17.8	26.9
Rental market tenants	61.1	57.6
Social housing tenants	16.7	10.7
Band-owned housing	1.4	1.3
Shelter or group home	0.2	0.1
Living on the street	0.1	0.1
Living with family or friends	2.6	3.2
Number of food banks reporting	27	21



18,539  
Individuals assisted by food banks in March

**18.6%**  
change since 2008

**34.4%**  
under the age of 18

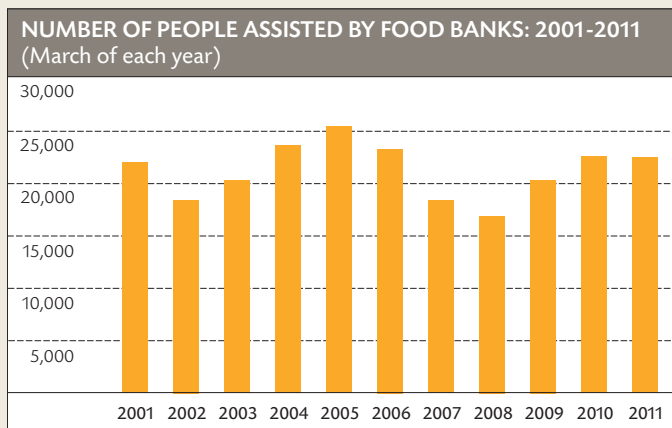


# NOVA SCOTIA

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	22,505	22,573	20,344	16,915	21,897
% Change, 2001-2011	2.8%				
% Change, 2008-2011	33.0%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-0.3%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	41.5%	68.1%	57.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	31.5%	33.0%	34.1%	35.0%	41.6%
Households assisted by food banks	10,814	10,840	9,605	7,926	8,647
% Households assisted for the first time	6.9%	7.3%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.39%	2.40%	2.17%	1.81%	2.35%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	49.8	50.7
% Post-secondary students	2.9	1.6
% Adults who are 65+	7.0	8.8
% Aboriginal persons	3.0	3.5
% Immigrants or refugees	3.1	0.1

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	22.9	23.3
% Two-parent families	18.6	18.4
% Couples with no children	13.3	15.1
% Single people	45.2	43.2
Number of food banks reporting	75	39




PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	9.9	8.8
% Employment Insurance	6.4	7.5
% Social assistance	59.4	58.0
% Disability-related income support	10.0	9.2
% Pension	8.8	9.5
% Student loans/scholarships	0.5	0.5
% No income	3.4	4.0
% Other	1.7	2.6
Number of food banks reporting	61	31

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	11.6	14.9
Rental market tenants	64.0	65.6
Social housing tenants	19.5	13.9
Band-owned housing	0.9	1.9
Shelter or group home	0.8	0.7
Living on the street	0.2	0.2
Living with family or friends	3.0	2.8
Number of food banks reporting	55	27



22,505  
Individuals assisted by food banks in March

 **33.0%**  
change since 2008

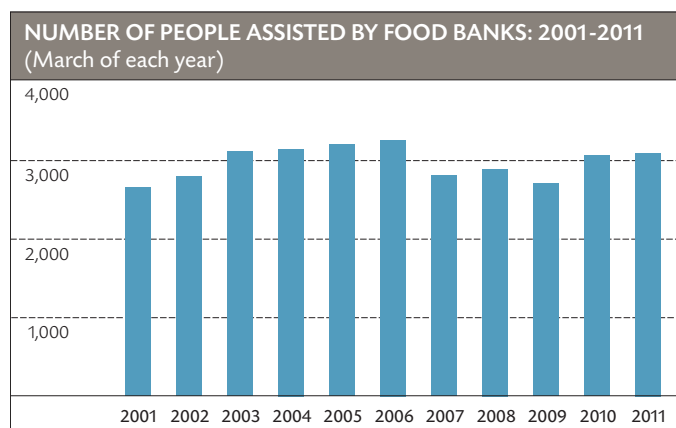
**31.5%**  
under the age of 18 

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

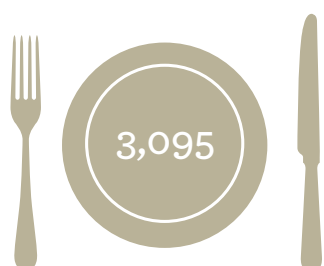
KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	3,095	3,068	2,706	2,892	2,657
% Change, 2001-2011	16.5%				
% Change, 2008-2011	7.0%				
% Change, 2010-2011	0.9%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	66.7%	100.0%	50.0%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	35.3%	35.5%	35.8%	35.4%	37.4%
Households assisted by food banks	1,231	1,238	1,083	1,155	873
% Households assisted for the first time	7.0%	7.3%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	2.16%	2.17%	1.93%	1.95%	1.95%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	53.5	56.9
% Post-secondary students	0.6	0.9
% Adults who are 65+	4.9	3.9
% Aboriginal persons	2.7	0.2
% Immigrants or refugees	5.6	0.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	21.3	25.5
% Two-parent families	27.3	29.3
% Couples with no children	16.8	12.0
% Single people	34.6	33.2
Number of food banks reporting	5	2



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	19.6	16.8
% Employment Insurance	21.8	25.0
% Social assistance	39.3	40.9
% Disability-related income support	5.0	9.2
% Pension	10.8	6.3
% Student loans/scholarships	0.2	0.0
% No income	2.4	1.0
% Other	0.9	1.0
Number of food banks reporting	4	2



Individuals assisted by food banks in March

**7.0%**  
change since 2008

**35.3%**  
under the age of 18

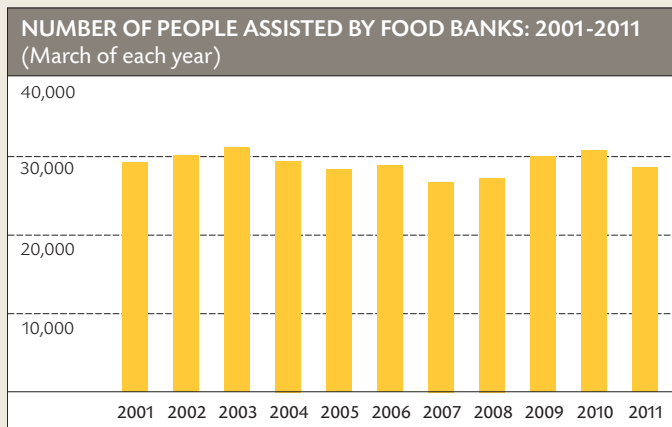
HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	16.6	25.1
Rental market tenants	59.0	39.8
Social housing tenants	19.5	25.5
Band-owned housing	0.8	0.4
Shelter or group home	0.8	2.3
Living on the street	0.4	0.0
Living with family or friends	3.0	6.9
Number of food banks reporting	5	3

# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

KEY HUNGERCOUNT FINDINGS	2011	2010	2009	2008	2001
Individuals assisted by food banks	28,642	30,800	30,014	27,260	29,231
% Change, 2001-2011	-2.0%				
% Change, 2008-2011	5.1%				
% Change, 2010-2011	-7.0%				
% Food banks reporting an increase	40.7%	67.9%	70.4%	-	-
% Assisted who are under 18 years of age	37.3%	37.3%	37.4%	38.4%	37.5%
Households assisted by food banks	9,090	9,003	9,235	8,037	-
% Households assisted for the first time	4.8%	5.4%	-	-	-
% Provincial population assisted	5.63%	6.03%	5.90%	5.36%	5.56%

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	All	Rural
% Women	55.5	48.2
% Post-secondary students	1.2	1.4
% Adults who are 65+	5.2	6.6
% Aboriginal persons	0.1	1.3
% Immigrants or refugees	0.7	0.0

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	35.0	25.4
% Two-parent families	26.5	29.6
% Couples with no children	12.2	18.3
% Single people	26.4	26.7
Number of food banks reporting	25	20



PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% Job income	8.4	4.2
% Employment Insurance	13.2	8.1
% Social assistance	71.7	74.2
% Disability-related income support	0.4	3.2
% Pension	6.1	7.8
% Student loans/scholarships	0.1	0.5
% No income	0.1	0.8
% Other	0.1	1.1
Number of food banks reporting	19	16

HOUSING TYPE	All	Rural
Homeowners	11.8	16.3
Rental market tenants	20.9	49.3
Social housing tenants	66.8	30.6
Band-owned housing	0.0	0.0
Shelter or group home	0.0	0.0
Living on the street	0.0	0.3
Living with family or friends	0.5	3.5
Number of food banks reporting	23	18



Individuals assisted by food banks in March

**5.1%**  
change since 2008

**37.3%**  
under the age of 18



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- 4 Based on surveys from 978 food banks and food programs.
- 5 Based on surveys from 379 food banks and food programs.
- 6 Based on surveys from 640 food banks and food programs.
- 7 Based on surveys from 296 food banks and food programs.
- 8 Based on surveys from 868 food banks and food programs.
- 9 Based on surveys from 325 food banks and food programs.
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# METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of the annual *HungerCount* survey is to provide a national and provincial snapshot of food bank use in Canada. This is accomplished by counting the number of individuals who receive groceries from food banks and their affiliated agencies during the month of March. Information is collected on the number of unique individuals that receive food, as well as on the total number of visits to food banks and affiliated agencies. March has been chosen as the study period because it is an unexceptional month, without predictable high or low use patterns. Since March is used consistently, we are able to make relevant comparisons in use patterns over time.

The survey also records information on several characteristics of those assisted by food banks, including age category, gender, student status, citizenship status, and Aboriginal identity at the individual level, and primary source of income, household composition, and housing type at the household level. As well, the survey measures volunteer and paid staff hours worked at participating organizations, number of prepared meals and snacks served, and coping strategies

used when food banks risk running out of food.

Surveys were sent to all known Canadian food banks in February 2011. When necessary, *HungerCount* Provincial Coordinators contacted food banks prior to the submission deadline to ensure a high response rate and to clarify survey questions. Completed surveys were returned to Provincial Coordinators, who checked responses for accuracy and completeness before forwarding copies to Food Banks Canada.

Throughout the summer, Food Banks Canada staff and volunteers worked with *HungerCount* Provincial Coordinators to collect outstanding surveys and resolve any inconsistencies in responses. Survey data were entered into a database, checked for accuracy, and analyzed by Food Banks Canada staff. In cases where surveys were not completed by operating food banks, conservative estimates were produced in consultation with Provincial Coordinators, using 2010 figures as a guide.

**TABLE 3: HUNGERCOUNT SURVEY PARTICIPATION, 2011**

Province/Territory	No. of Known Food Banks	No. of Participating Food Banks	% of Food Banks Participating	No. of Agencies Included
British Columbia	91	91	100%	365
Alberta	103	70	68%	300
Saskatchewan	28	25	89%	210
Manitoba	50	42	84%	339
Ontario	368	331	90%	1139
Quebec	1041	910	87%	0
New Brunswick	59	56	95%	42
Nova Scotia	157	153	97%	5
Prince Edward Island	6	6	100%	8
Newfoundland & Labrador	33	33	100%	57
Territories	7	6	86%	0
<b>Canada</b>	<b>1,943</b>	<b>1,723</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>2,465</b>

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Food Banks Canada thanks the hundreds of thousands of people accessing food bank services, and the thousands of food bank staff and volunteers who, every year, contribute information to the *HungerCount* report. Without their efforts and participation this research would not be possible.

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