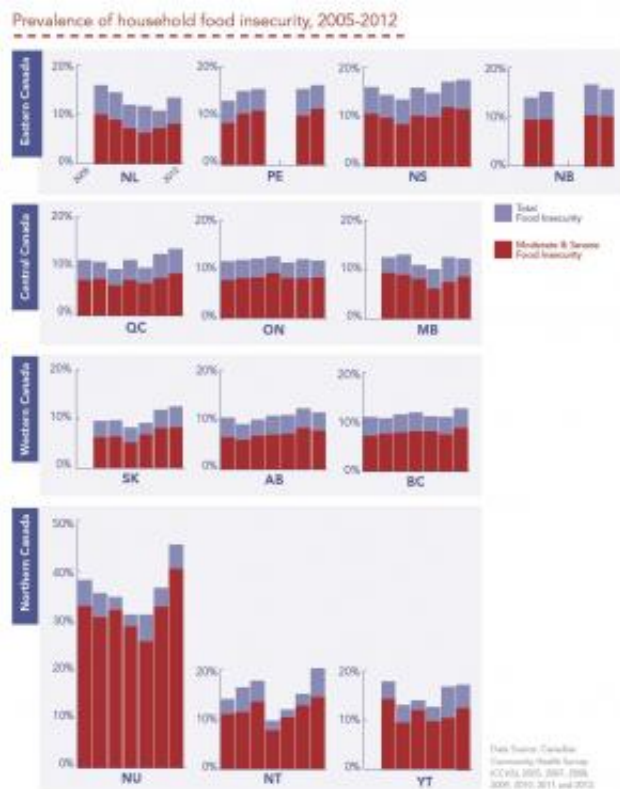


Report says millions of Canadians still struggle to afford food

February 6 2014



This image shows the prevalence of household food insecurity, 2005-2012.
Credit: PROOF

Four million Canadians, including 1.15 million children, are living in households where it is sometimes a struggle to put food on the table, according to researchers at the University of Toronto.

Nearly one in eight [households](#) is impacted by food insecurity, which is defined as inadequate access to food because of financial constraints. At its mildest level, food insecurity means worrying about feeding yourself and your family before your next paycheque. As the problem gets worse, people can't afford to have balanced meals. Then they begin to skip meals, cut [portion sizes](#) and eventually go days without eating, all because they can't afford the food they need. Those impacted often face physical and emotional hardships which compromise their health.

The study was led by U of T's Valerie Tarasuk and her team at PROOF, a [research project](#) that identifies effective policy interventions to address household food insecurity. Building on a report they released last year, the team analyzed municipal data for the first time. Halifax had the highest incidence of food insecurity, with one in five households affected, followed by Moncton, Guelph and Barrie.

The report continues to chart some disturbing trends across the country. Food insecurity has persisted or grown in every province and territory since 2005; 2012 rates in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories were the highest since Health Canada began monitoring the problem.

The team also discovered that 28 per cent of black and Aboriginal households reported some form of food insecurity—more than double the national average.

"Food insecurity takes a very real toll on people's physical and mental health. Four million Canadians are now affected and the number keeps growing. We need to act now to address this problem," says Tarasuk, a Nutritional Sciences Professor at the Faculty of Medicine.

Some key points from the report include:

- There are 600,000 more Canadians affected by food insecurity now than in 2007-2008
- 62.2 per cent of food insecure homes are working households
- 70 per cent of households on social assistance are food insecure, with 29 per cent experiencing severe deprivation
- 45 per cent of households in Nunavut reported some level of [food insecurity](#)

More information: [nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoro ...
n_Canada-2012ENG.pdf](#)

Provided by University of Toronto

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