Designing household profiles to examine the affordability of healthy food

Nutrition Services | Population & Public Health | Alberta Health Services

Project Background

- Most jurisdictions in Canada use household profiles to examine the relationship between food costs, income and other basic household expenses.
- These profiles help position the affordability of healthy eating within the everyday experience of populations who are at higher risk for household food insecurity.
- In Canada, there is no defined process on how to design profiles that truly represent households at higher risk for food insecurity in a specific region.

Why Create Household Profiles?

- To illustrate the complex dynamics between a household's composition, income, healthy food costs and other essential life expenses.
- To explore whether representative household profiles are able to afford adequate amounts of healthy food within their current income level.

Project Description

- Nutrition Services developed a process that applies demographic, health and socioeconomic data to design a reasonable number of profiles that accurately reflect those households at higher risk for food insecurity in Alberta.
- Nutrition Services then used these profiles to assess whether at-risk households could afford to follow a basic, healthy diet once they had paid for their other essential living expenses.

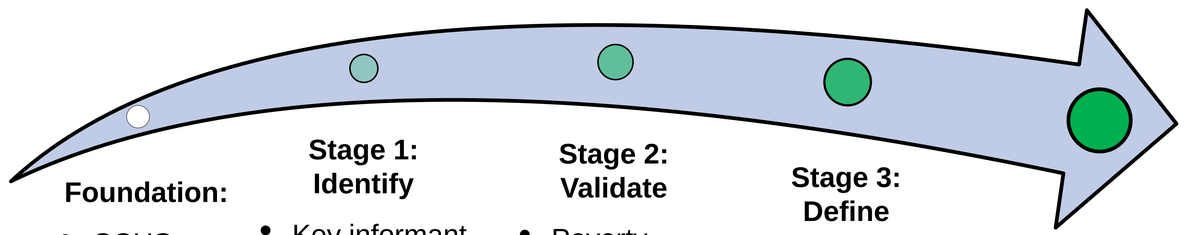
How Were the Household Profiles Designed?

The design of the household profiles progressed through three key stages:

Stage 1: Identify households at highest risk for food insecurity through primary data.

Stage 2: Validate whether these households aligned with secondary data sources.

Stage 3: Define household composition and income source through statistical data.



Foundation:
- CCHS Data
- HFSSM Data

Stage 1: Identify
- Key informant interviews
- Literature review
- Cost of eating reports

Stage 2: Validate
- Poverty reports
- Living wage reports
- Food bank usage data

Stage 3: Define
- National statistics
- Provincial statistics

Final Household Profiles

Which Household Profiles Represent Alberta?

Father 31-50 years old **Mother** 31-50 years old	**Lone Mother** 25-30 years old	**Single Woman** 25-29 years old	**Single Man** 25-29 years old	**Senior Woman** 67 years old
Male child 9-13 years old **Female child** 4-8 years old	**Child of either sex** 4-8 years old			
Single Income	**Income Support**	**Minimum Wage**	**Minimum Wage**	**Canada Pension Plan + Old Age Security**

Why Establish a Design Process?

- To form an objective, consistent and reproducible approach based on current data and research.
- To characterize the households at higher risk for food insecurity in a specific jurisdiction or region.
- To define the age, sex and number of individuals in each profile in order to calculate household food costs.
- To determine the most appropriate income sources for each profile in order to estimate household income.
- To ensure that an analysis of the affordability of healthy food reflects the reality of those households at higher risk for food insecurity within a defined region.
- To identify household profiles whose risk for food insecurity is reduced by current social policy.
- To offer other jurisdictions a reference point if they wish to create their own process to design representative profiles for their region.

References

Alberta Health Services. (2016). *Process for the selection of household profiles.* Available from: **www.albertahealthservices.ca**

Alberta Health Services. (2016). *The affordability of healthy eating in Alberta*. Available from: **www.albertahealthservices.ca**

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