PROOF: Research to identify policy interventions to reduce food insecurity in Canada

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Sensitivity of food insecurity to policy interventions that improve household finances

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Prevalence of household food insecurity, Canadian Community Health Survey 2011:
Household food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador

No data on household food insecurity

Prevalence (%)

2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012


- 15.7%
- 10.6%

No data on household food insecurity
Household food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador

Prevalence (%)

No data on household food insecurity

(Loopstra, Dachner & Tarasuk, Canadian Public Policy, September, 2015)
Household food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador

(Loopstra, Dachner & Tarasuk, Canadian Public Policy, September, 2015)
Household food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador

(Loopstra, Dachner & Tarasuk, *Canadian Public Policy*, September, 2015)
Prevalence of food insecurity among households in Newfoundland and Labrador reporting any income from social assistance.

NL’s Poverty Reduction Actions included:
• ↑ income support rates
• indexed rates to inflation
• ↑ earning exemptions
• ↑ health benefits
• ↑ low-income tax threshold
• ↑ affordable housing
• ↑ liquid asset limits

(Loopstra, Dachner & Tarasuk, *Canadian Public Policy*, September, 2015)
Household food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador

![Graph showing prevalence of household food insecurity from 2003 to 2012. The graph indicates a significant drop from 15.7% in 2007 to 10.6% in 2011. A note states, “44% of drop is accounted for by reduction in food insecurity among social assistance recipients.”]

No data on household food insecurity

- 2003: 3.0%
- 2004: No data
- 2005: No data
- 2006: 4.4%
- 2007: 15.7%
- 2008: 10.6%
- 2009: 10.6%
- 2010: 10.6%
- 2011: 10.6%
- 2012: 13.2%
Prevalence of food insecurity among households whose main source of income was social assistance, by province/territory, 2011-12

Note: PEI and Northwest Territories have been omitted because of the small size of the samples there.
Conclusion:

• Both the prevalence and severity of food insecurity are reduced by policy interventions that improve the financial circumstances of vulnerable households.

Further support:

• modest reduction in food insecurity among social assistance recipients in BC following one-time increase in rates (Li, Dachner & Tarasuk, Prev Med 2016).
Knowledge Translation

... laying the foundation for policy intervention
Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2012.

Household food insecurity, Canada 2012

- 87.4% Food secure
- 4.1% Marginal food insecurity
- 6% Moderate food insecurity
- 2.6% Severe food insecurity

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2012.
What is food insecurity?

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, food security exists when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” This definition was adopted by Canada at the World Food Summit, but the measurement and monitoring of food insecurity in the country focuses on a household’s experience of food insecurity, or the inadequate or insecure access to adequate food due to financial constraints. The experience of food insecurity can range from concerns about running out of food before there is more money to buy more, to the inability to afford a balanced diet, to going hungry, missing meals, and in extreme cases, not eating for a whole day because of a lack of food and money for food.

Food insecurity is a serious public health problem because individuals’ health and well-being are tightly linked to their household food security. Recent research in Canada has shown that the experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult food security scale:</th>
<th>All Households</th>
<th>Households with children &lt; 18</th>
<th>Households without children &lt; 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worried food would run out</td>
<td>975.7 8.9%</td>
<td>370.6 11.5%</td>
<td>605.1 7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No food, and no money for more</td>
<td>753 6.9%</td>
<td>264.4 8.2%</td>
<td>488.6 6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not afford balanced meals</td>
<td>834 7.6%</td>
<td>259.5 8.1%</td>
<td>574.5 7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults cut or skipped meals (Y/N)</td>
<td>417.8 3.8%</td>
<td>138.3 4.3%</td>
<td>279.5 3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults cut or skipped meals (frequency)</td>
<td>312.6 2.9%</td>
<td>97.3 3.0%</td>
<td>215.3 2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ate less than felt should</td>
<td>468.1 4.3%</td>
<td>153.6 4.8%</td>
<td>314.5 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was hungry but could not afford to eat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost weight, no money to buy food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not afford for a whole day (Y/N)</td>
<td>97.5 0.9%</td>
<td>27.8 0.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults did not eat whole day (frequency)</td>
<td>73.9 0.7%</td>
<td>21.6 0.7%</td>
<td>52.3 0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child food security scale:

| Relied on a few kinds of low cost foods to feed children | 258.9 2.4% | 258.9 8.1% | n/a n/a |
| Couldn’t afford to feed children a balanced meal | | | |
| Children were not taken to a doctor because of cost | | | |
| Children were not taken to a dentist because of cost | | | |
| Children were not taken to a doctor because of illness | | | |
| Children were not taken to a dentist because of illness | | | |
Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2012.

1.7 million
Canadian households
experienced food insecurity

This amounts to nearly
one in eight households

4 million
individuals, including
1.15 million children

1,800
MARGINAL FOOD INSECURITY
Worry about running out of food and/or limit food selection because of lack of money for food.

1,600
MODERATE FOOD INSECURITY
Compromise in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food.

1,400
SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY
Miss meals, reduce food intake and at the most extreme go day(s) without food.

Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2012.

Proportion of children who lived in food insecure households

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2012

Household food insecurity affected 1 in 6 children in Canada
Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2012.

- 62.2% (1,000,600) Wages, salaries or self-employment
- 16.1% (258,800) Social Assistance
- 12.3% (198,100) Senior's income, including dividends & interest
- 6.4% (103,200) Other or none
- 3% (48,000) Employment insurance or workers compensation

Food insecure households’ main source of income

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2012.
Proportion of households reliant on social assistance who were food insecure

Data Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2013 and 2014. Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, British Columbia and Yukon Territory did not participate in the food security module of the 2013 and 2014 CCHS.

* Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories excluded due to small sample size.

Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2014.
Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2014.
FOOD INSECURITY IS A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM THAT AFFECTS OVER 4 MILLION CANADIANS.

Food insecurity – the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints – is a serious public health problem in Canada. It negatively impacts physical, mental, and social health, and costs our healthcare system considerably.

Statistics Canada began monitoring food insecurity in 2006 through the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). The most recent national measure was taken in 2012, with over 4 million Canadians affected by food insecurity.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY IN CANADA, 2012

Hover over a province or territory to learn more.

Nunavut:
- Household prevalence of food insecurity: 45.2%
- Number of food insecure households: 3,200
- Proportion of children who lived in food insecure households: 62.2%

Released August 31, 2016
About the report

NEW FACT SHEETS
raising awareness, redefining the problem?

July 2013 – Oct 2016: 353 media references to PROOF’s work
Impacts?

Linking the problem to policy

e.g., Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology report on Childhood Obesity; Senate Open Caucus on the new Health Accord Nov 30\textsuperscript{th} meeting; Community Foundations of Canada (Vital Signs), Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, etc...

Advocacy for basic income to address food insecurity

e.g., Food Secure Canada, Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health, Dietitians of Canada

Policy change?

• PEI’s 2014 decision to raise social assistance rate
• A stated goal for Ontario’s basic income pilot project (Segal, 2016).