

# Household Food Insecurity in Canada in 2021



PROOF

FOOD INSECURITY  
POLICY RESEARCH

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# Canadian Income Survey (CIS)

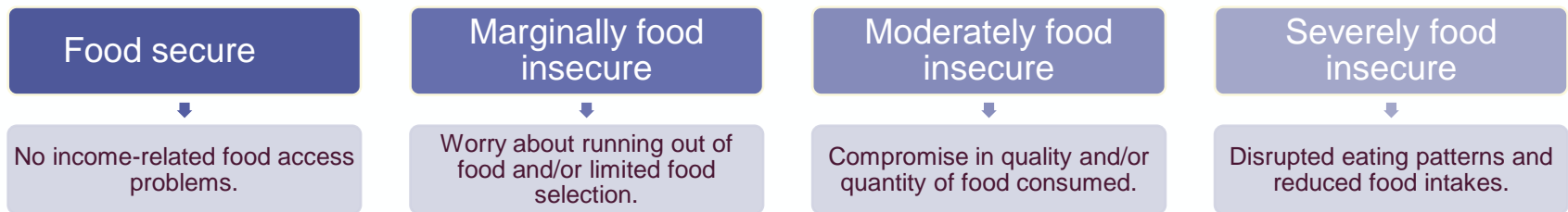
- Annual, nationally representative sample of 56000 households.
  - excludes people living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces, people in prisons or care facilities, and people in extremely remote areas with very low population density (altogether < 2% of the population).
  - Household Food Security Survey Module added in 2019 as part of monitoring poverty in Canada.
    - Percentage of individuals living in moderately/severely food-insecure households tracked on [Canada's Official Poverty Dashboard of Indicators](#)
- This survey is yielding higher rates of food insecurity than comparable years of the Canadian Community Health Survey.
  - Response rates are substantially higher for CIS (e.g., 77.4% for CIS 2018 vs 65.5% for CCHS 2017-18).
  - See [Caron & Plunkett Latimer \(2022\)](#) for a full analysis of the differences between these two surveys.

# Household Food Security Survey Module

18 questions, differentiating adults' and children's experiences over last 12 months:

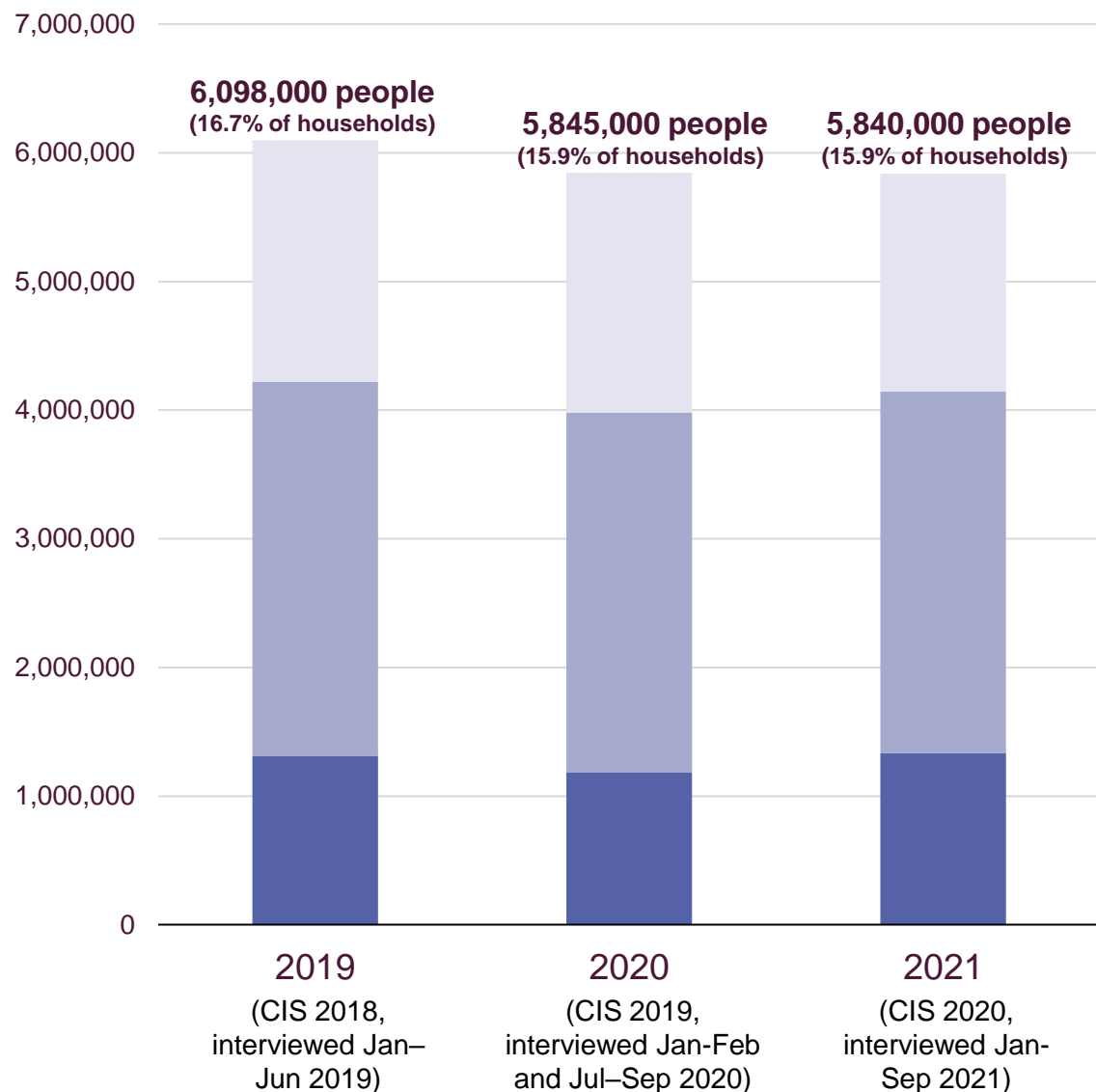
- Worry about not having enough food
- Reliance on low-cost foods
- Not able to afford balanced meals
- Adults/children skip meals
- Adults/children cut size of meals
- Adults/children not having enough to eat
- Adult lost weight
- Adults/children not eating for whole day

“because  
there wasn't  
enough  
money to buy  
food?”

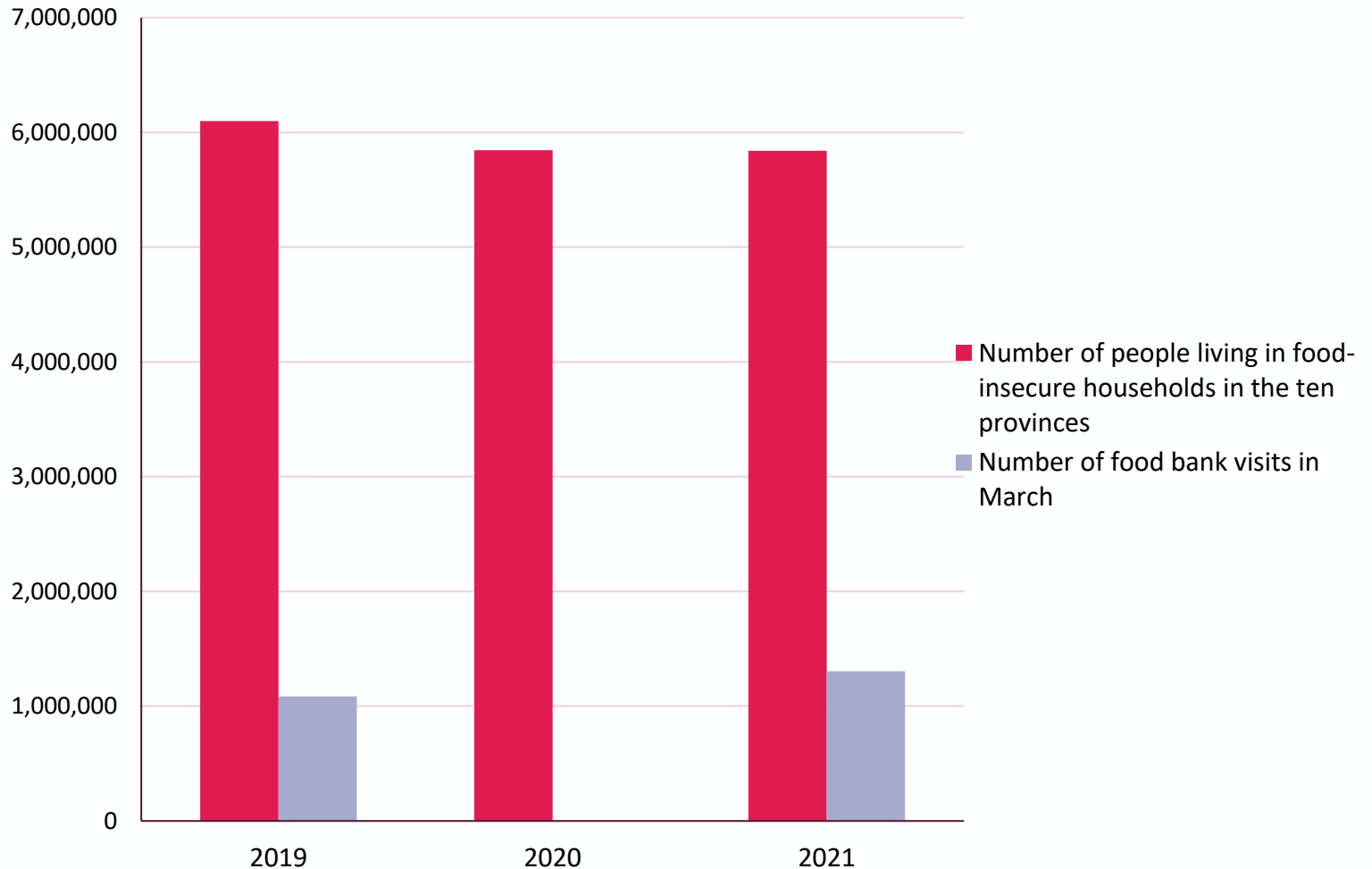


## Number of Canadians living in food-insecure households in the 10 provinces, results from the Canadian Income Survey

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Table 13-10-0834-01: Food insecurity by economic family type. 2022. Available from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310083401>

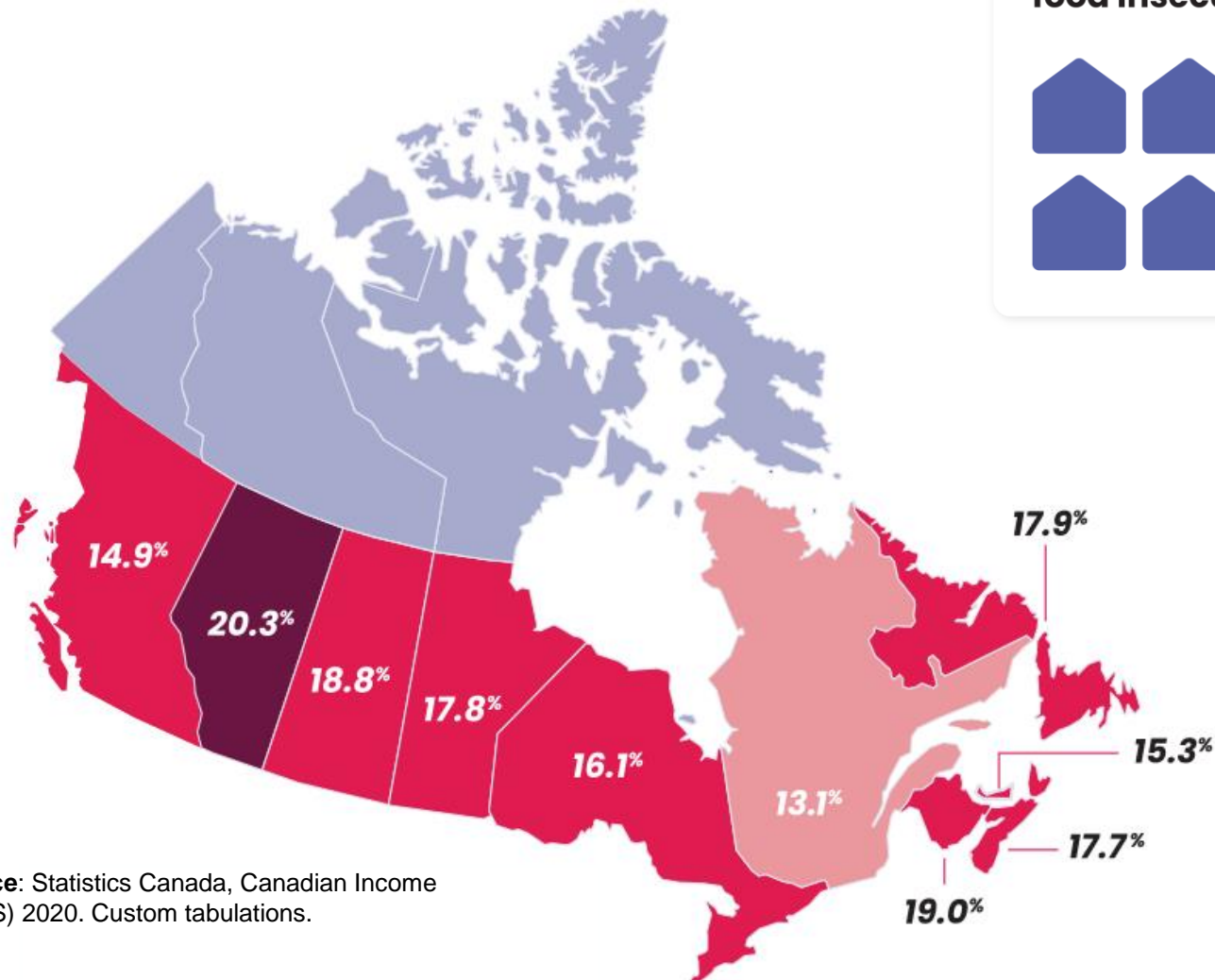


## Food Insecurity vs Food Bank Use in Canada



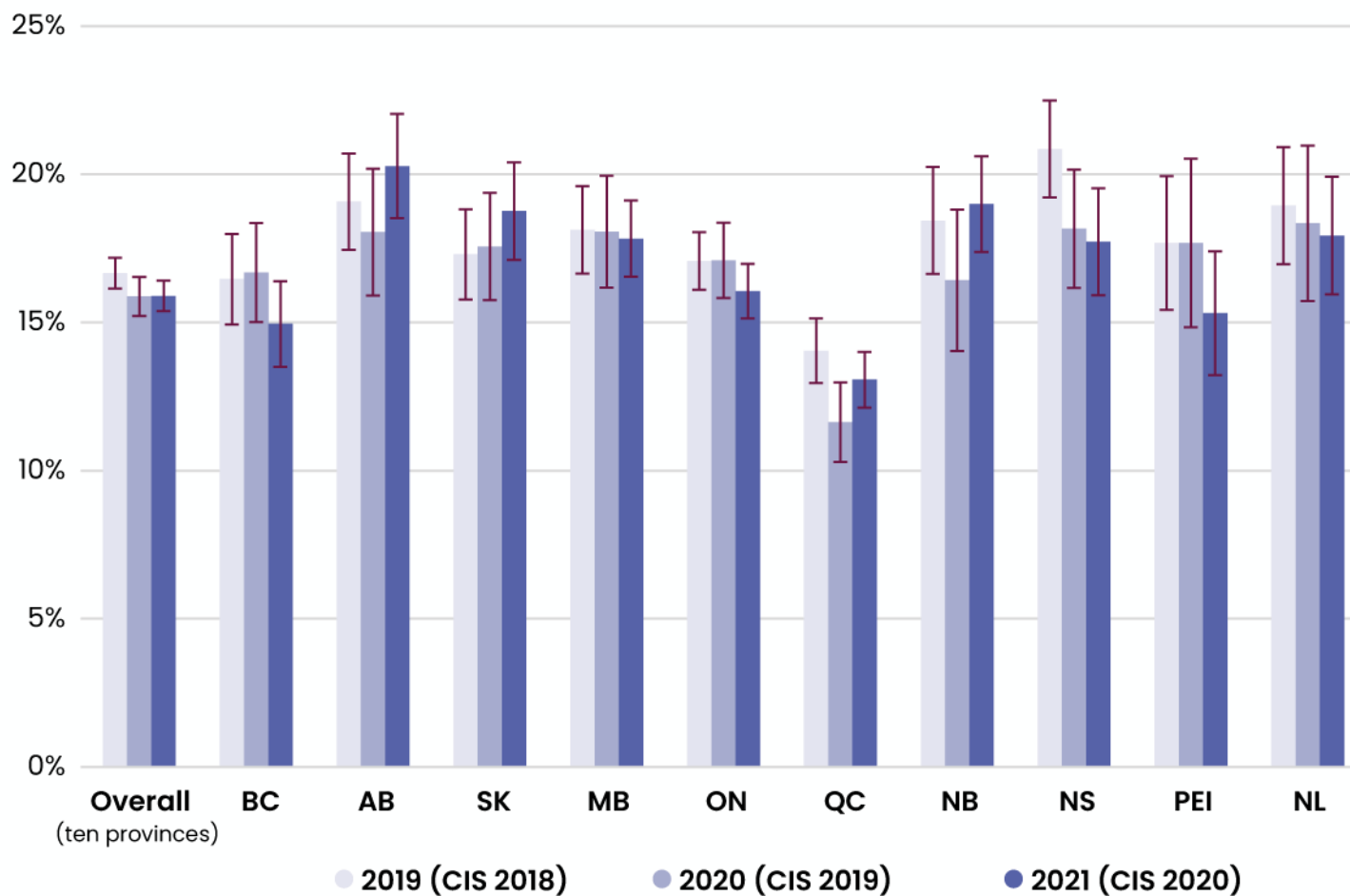
**Data source:** Statistics on food insecurity estimated from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2018, 2019, and 2020, collected in 2019, 2018, and 2021 respectively. Statistics on food bank usage represent the number of visits made to food banks in March of 2019 and 2021 reported by Food Banks Canada in its 2019 and 2021 HungerCount report. There was no count of food bank visits in March of 2020 due to pandemic-related disruptions.

# Prevalence of household food insecurity in the ten provinces, 2021



**Data Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020. Custom tabulations.

## Prevalence of household food insecurity by province, 2019-2021



Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2018, 2019, 2020.

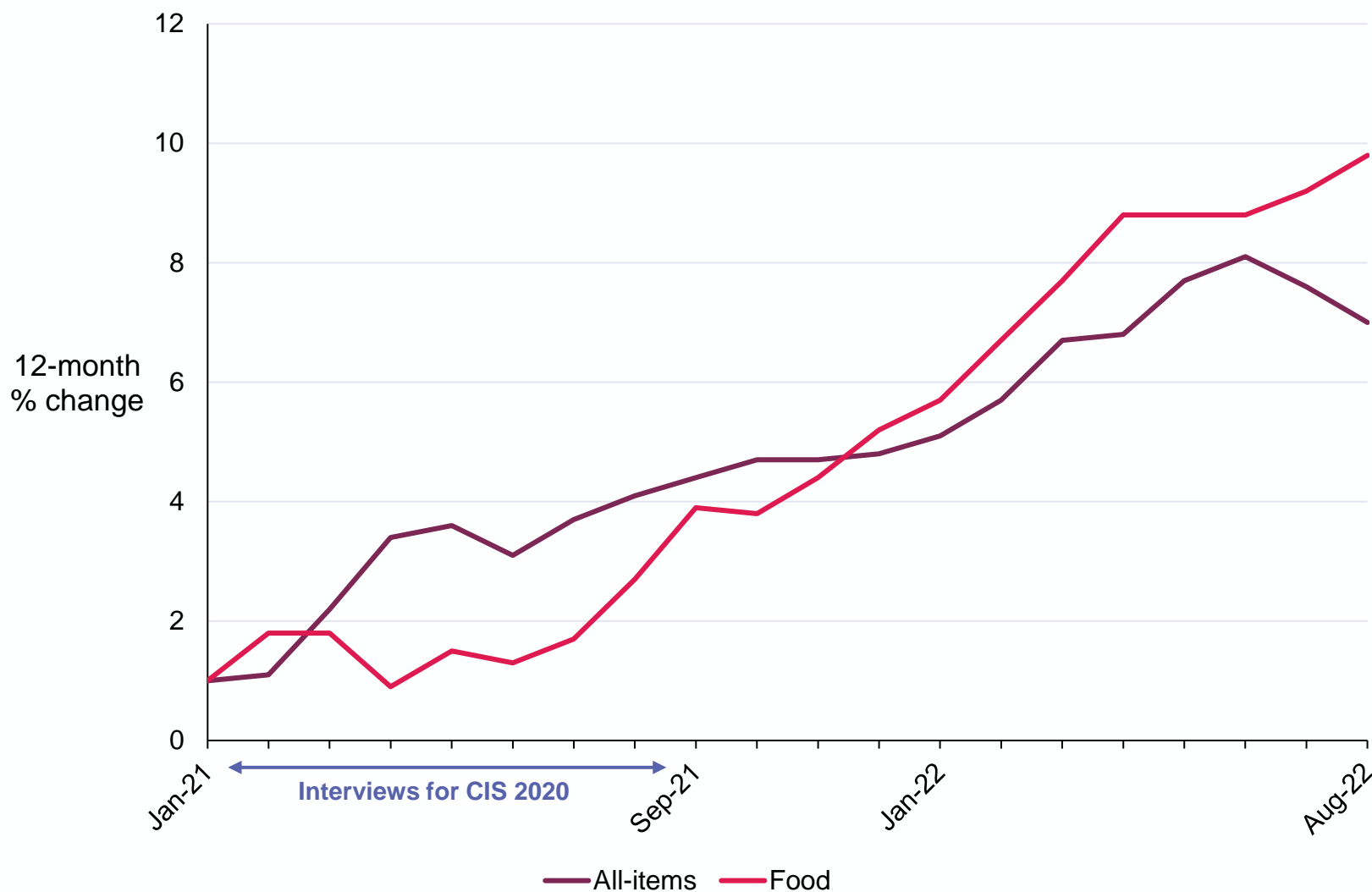
## Percentage of individuals living in moderately or severely food-insecure households in the territories, 2020

	Moderate food insecurity	Severe food insecurity	Moderate + severe
<b>Nunavut</b>	22.8%	23.3%	46.1%
<b>Northwest Territories</b>	15.4%	7.7%	23.1%
<b>Yukon</b>	10.3%	5.0%	15.3%

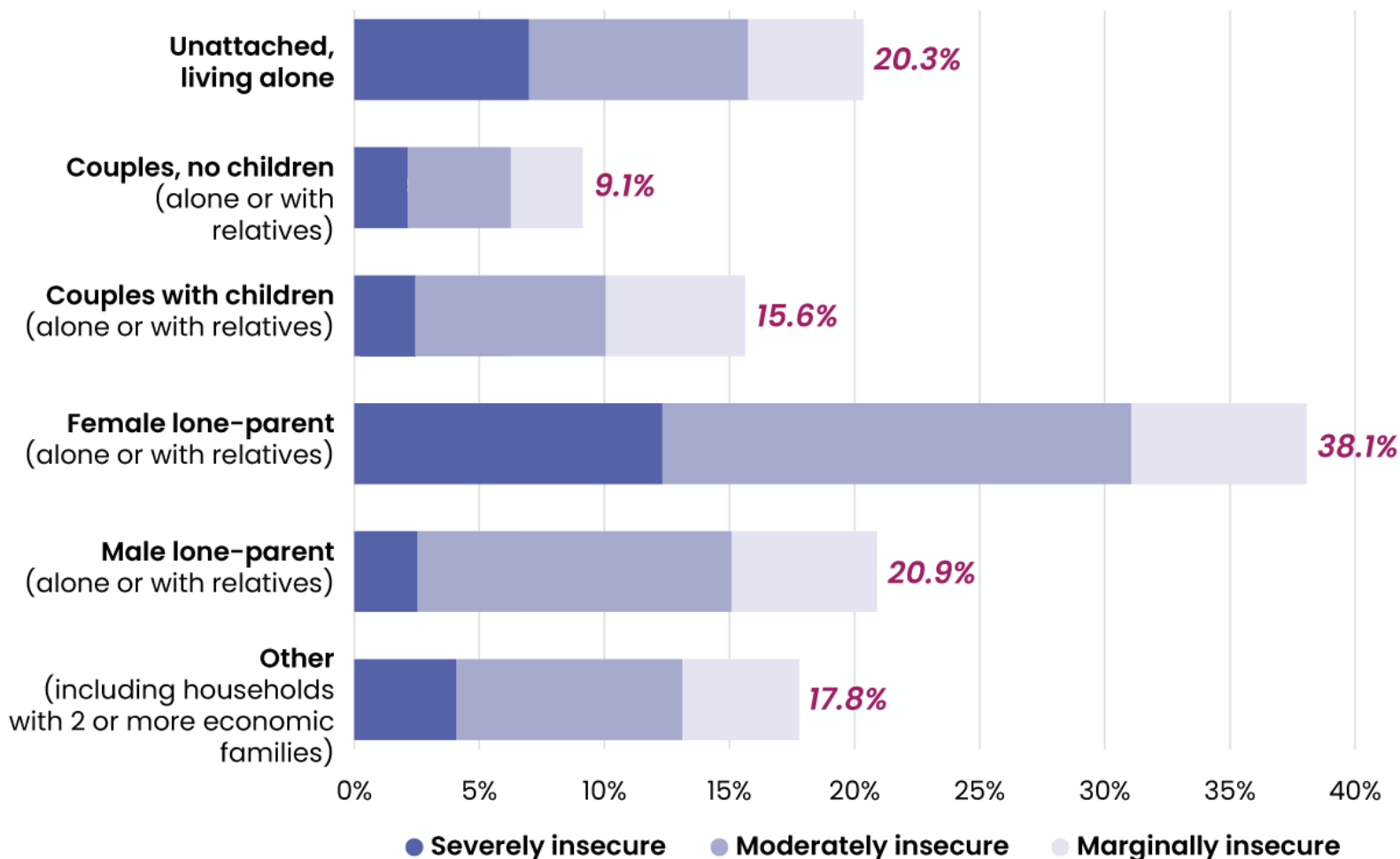
Data Source: Statistics Canada, CIS 2019. Adapted from [Caron & Plunkett-Latimer, 2022](#).



# Consumer Price Index

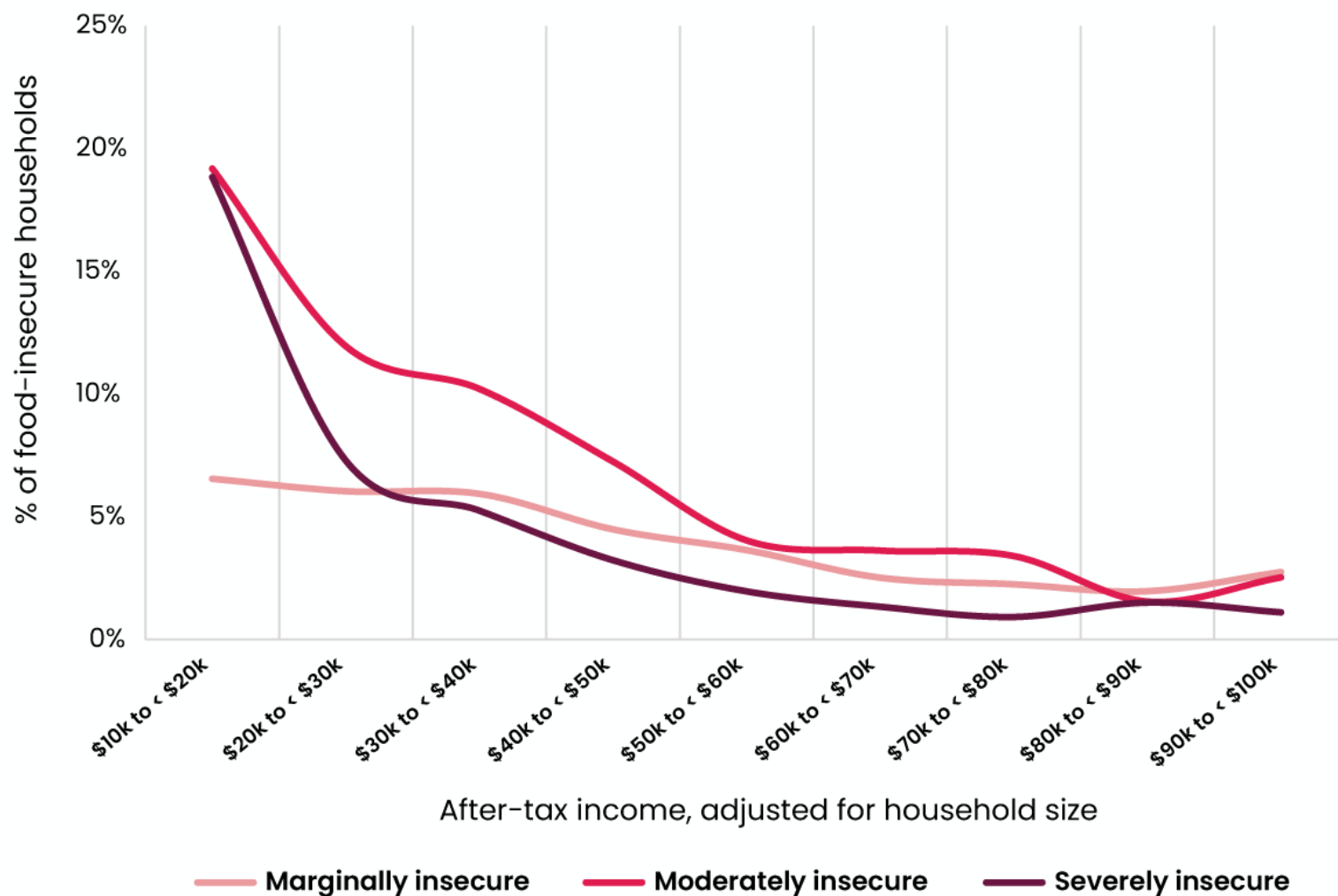


# Household food insecurity by household type, 2021



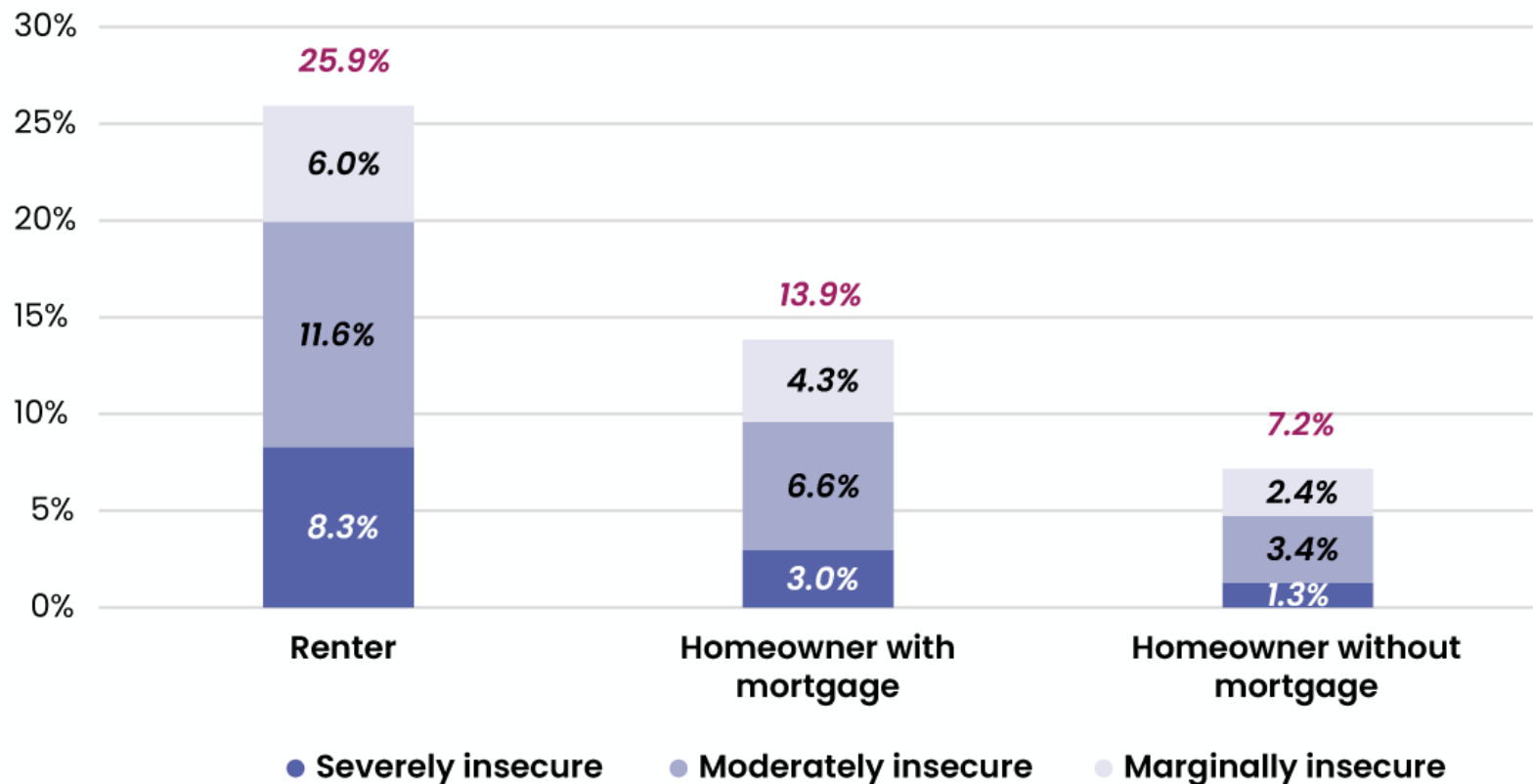
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.

# Food insecurity by household income



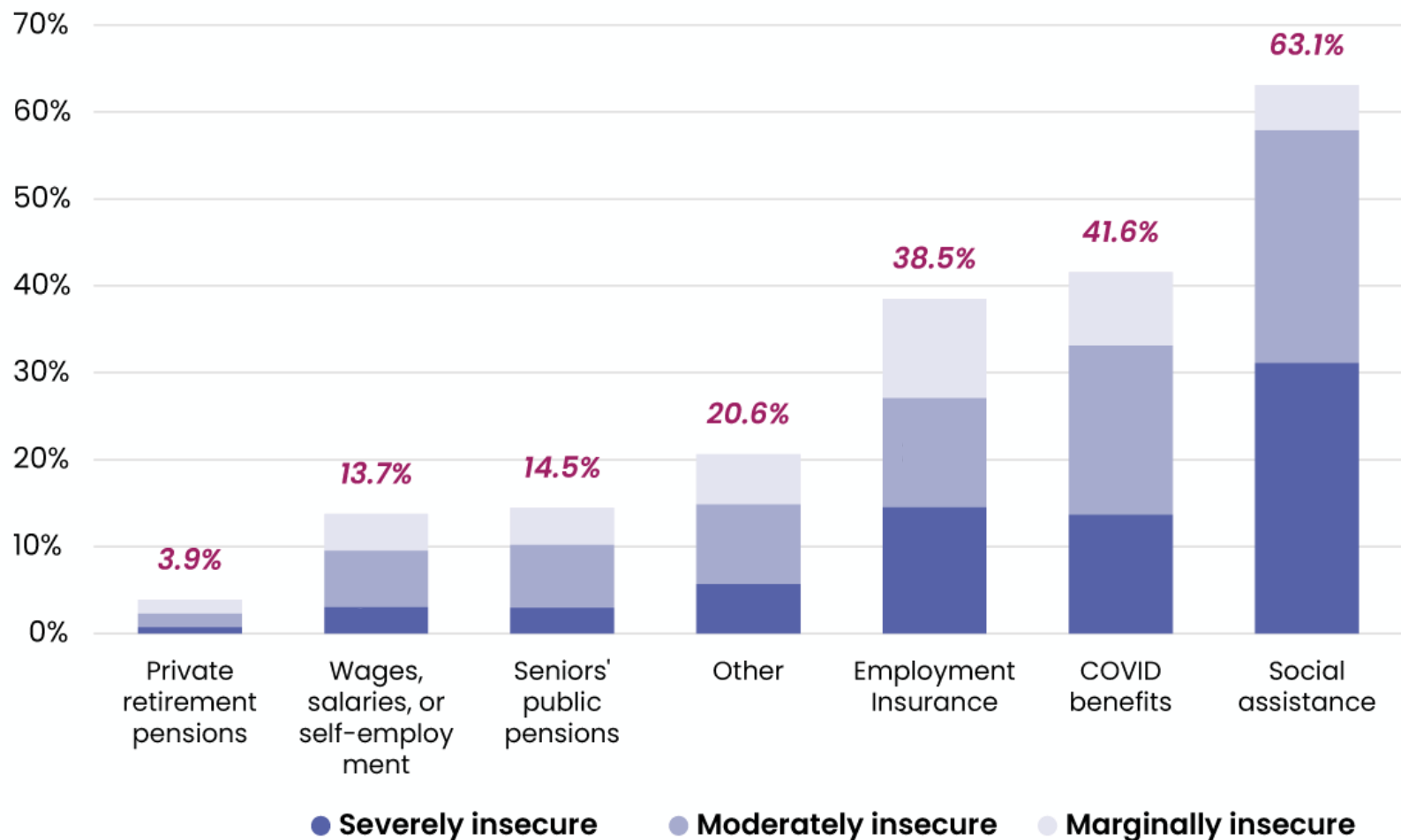
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.

# Household food insecurity by homeownership, 2021



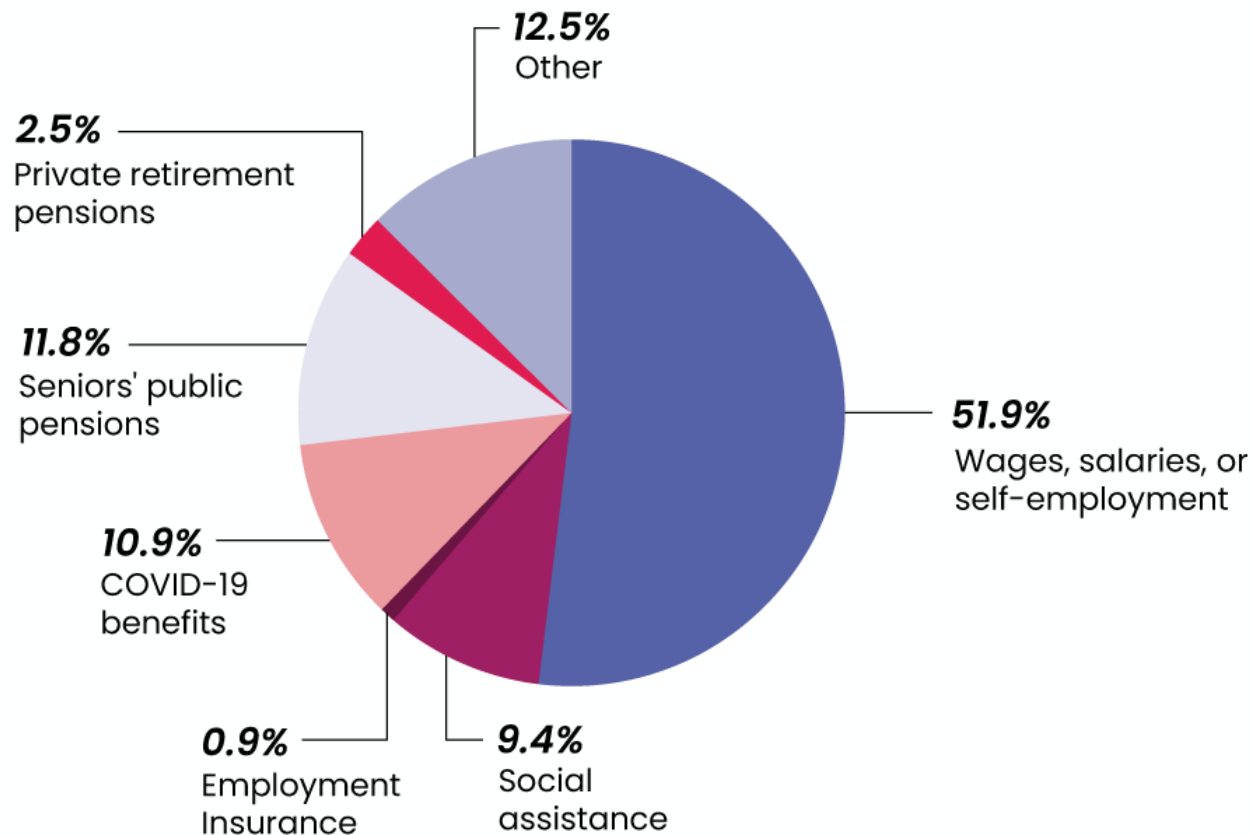
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.

# Food insecurity by main source of household income, 2021

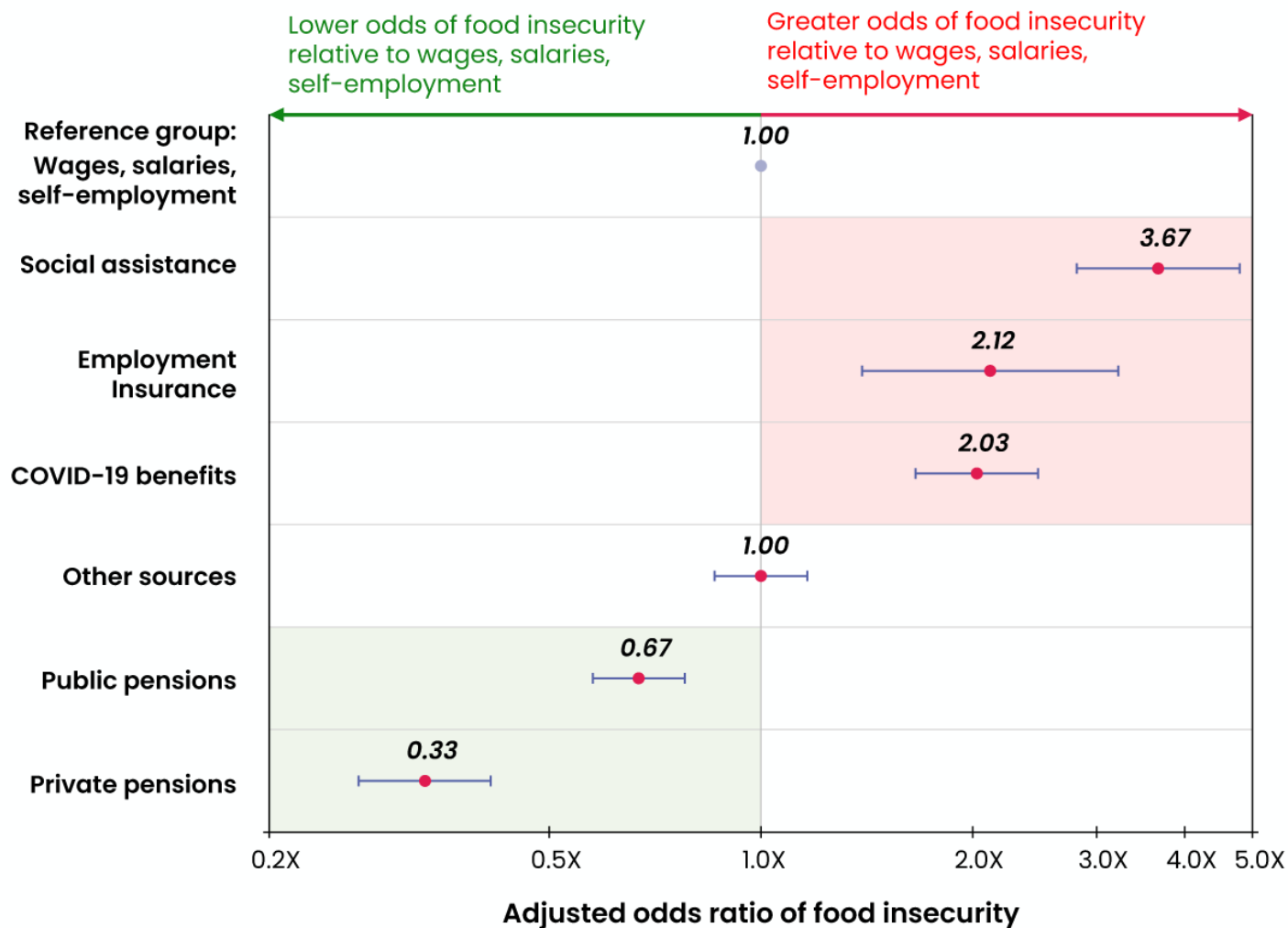


Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.

# Distribution of food-insecure households by main source of income, 2021

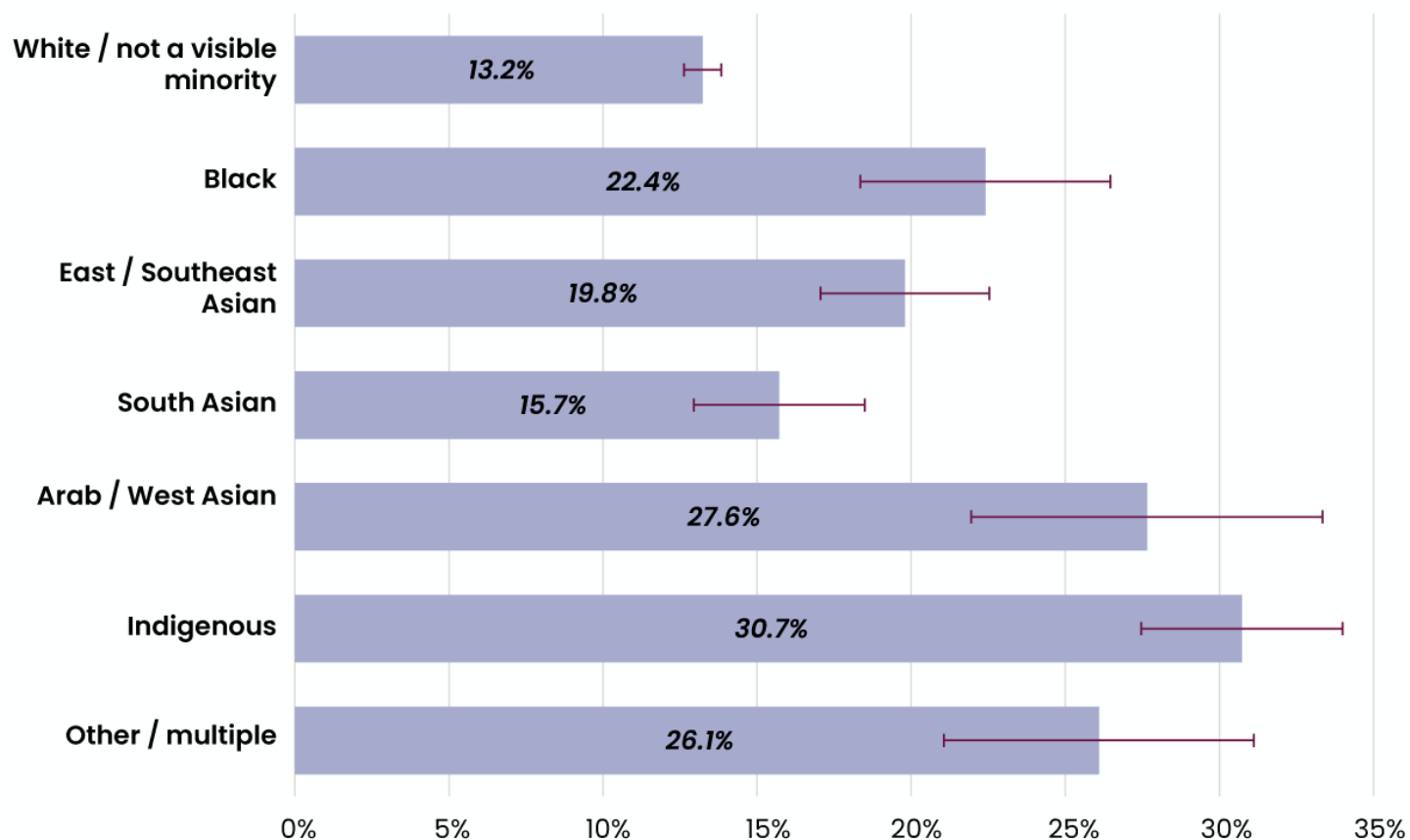


Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.



Odds ratios adjusted for socio-demographic characteristics (province of residence, household type, highest level of education, racial/cultural identity and Indigenous status of main income earner, and presence of immigrant in household) and economic characteristics of the household (homeownership and income).

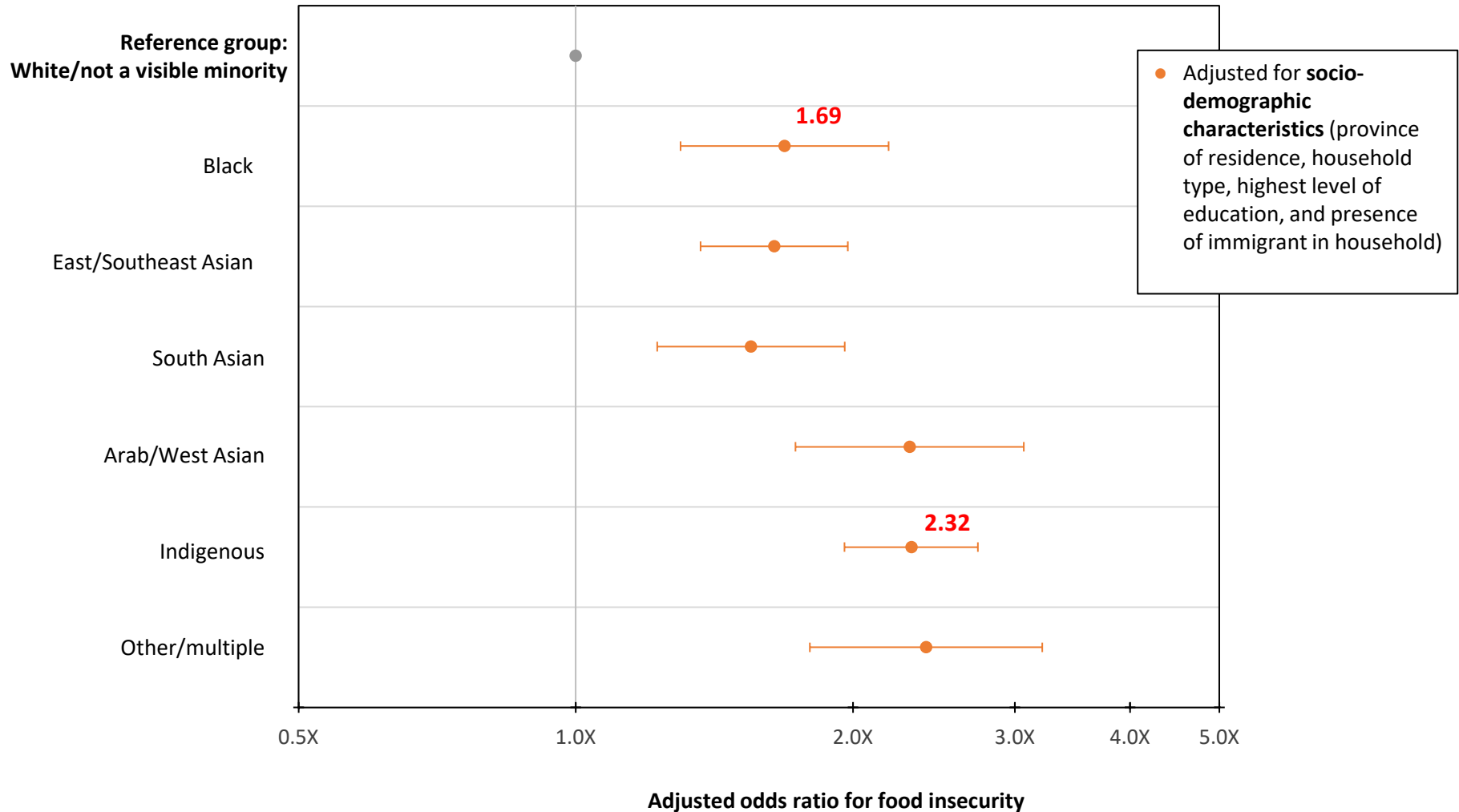
## Percentage of individuals living in food-insecure households by racial/cultural identity & Indigenous status, 2021



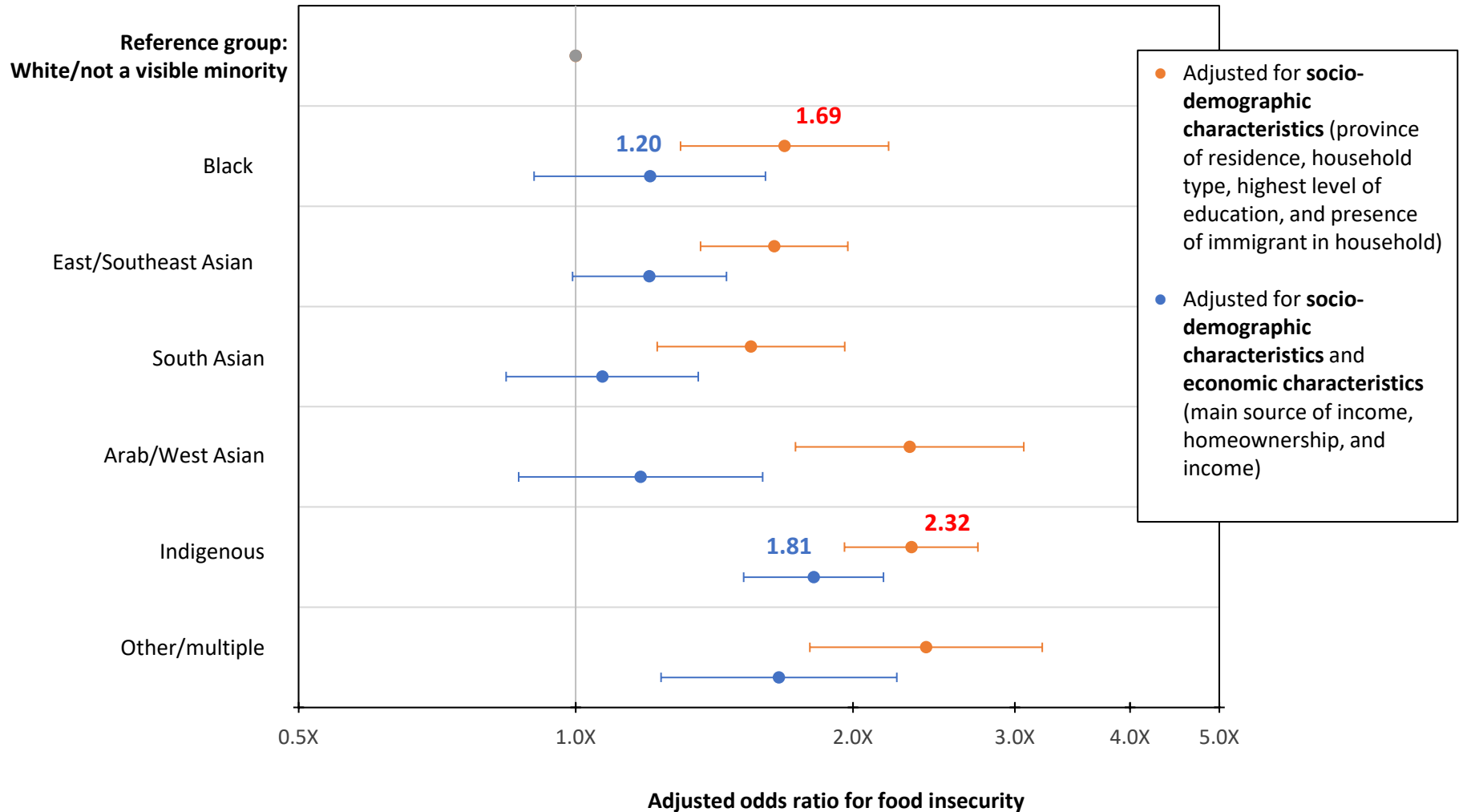
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.



## Adjusted odds ratio of food insecurity in relation to racial/cultural identity and Indigenous status of main income earner



# Adjusted odds ratio of food insecurity in relation to racial/cultural identity and Indigenous status of main income earner



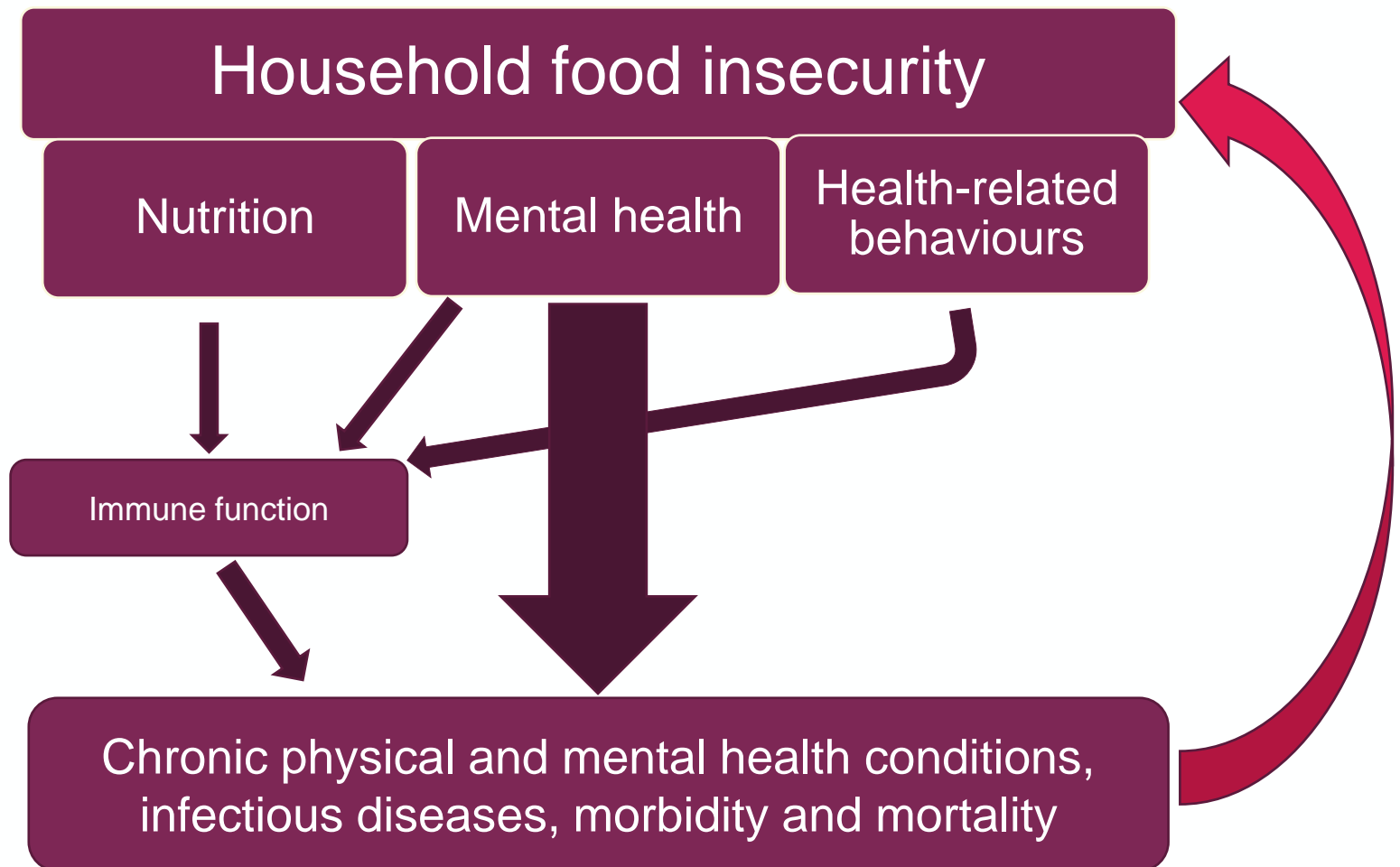
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020.

# Household food insecurity indicates pervasive material deprivation.

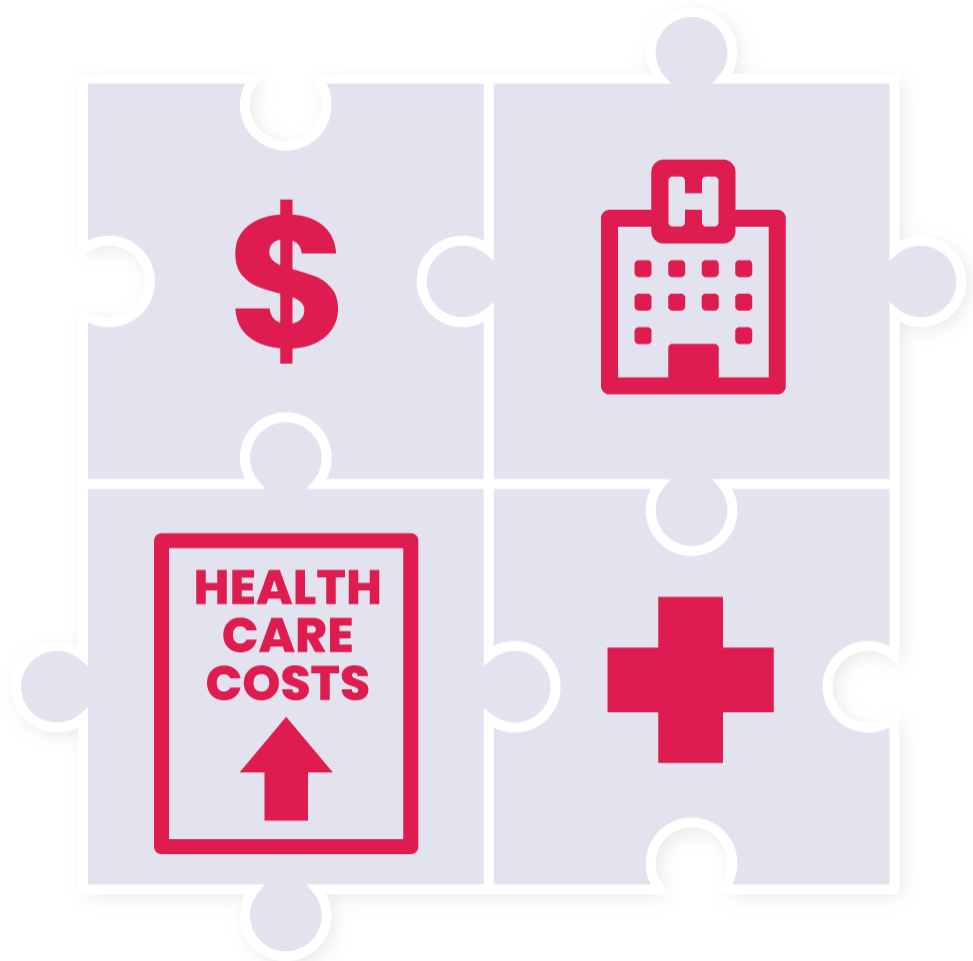
Compared to households that are food secure, food-insecure households are more likely to

- have poorer quality dietary intakes;
- be behind in payments for phone, internet, utilities, and rent;
- live in overcrowded conditions and in housing in need of major repairs; and
- not fill prescriptions and not taking medications as prescribed because of the cost.

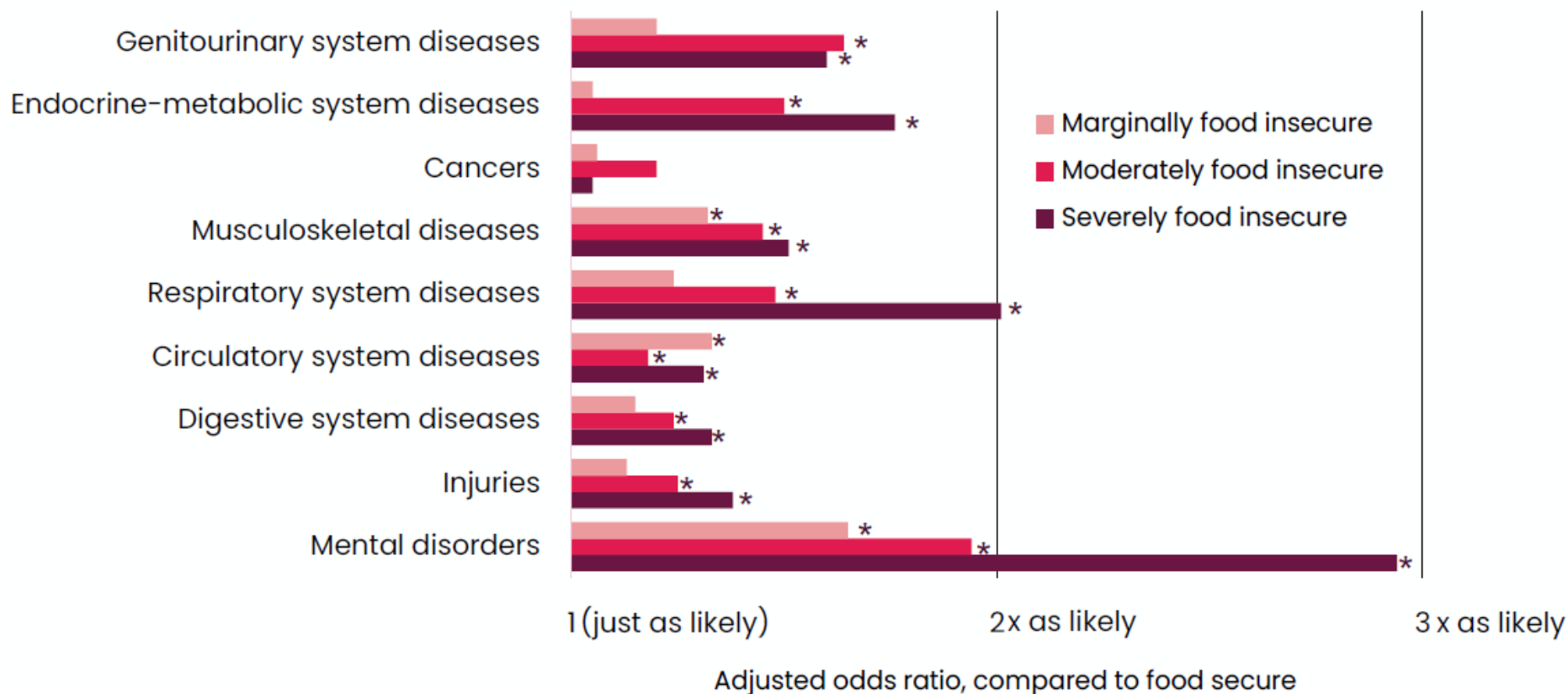
(Deaton et al, Can J Agr Econ 2020; Fafard St-Germain & Tarasuk, Int J Equity Health 2020; Hosseini et al, Nutrients 2019; Hutchinson & Tarasuk, Public Health Nutr 2021; Loopstra & Tarasuk, J Hunger Environ Nutr 2013; Men et al, CMAJ Open, 2019; Smith et al, Nutrients 2021; Tugault-Lafleur & Black, Public Health Nutr 2019; Vatanparast et al, Nutrients 2020)



**Because of its toxic effects on health, household food insecurity places a substantial burden on our health care system and expenditure.**



## Differences in the likelihood of hospital admission among Canadian adults by household food insecurity status:

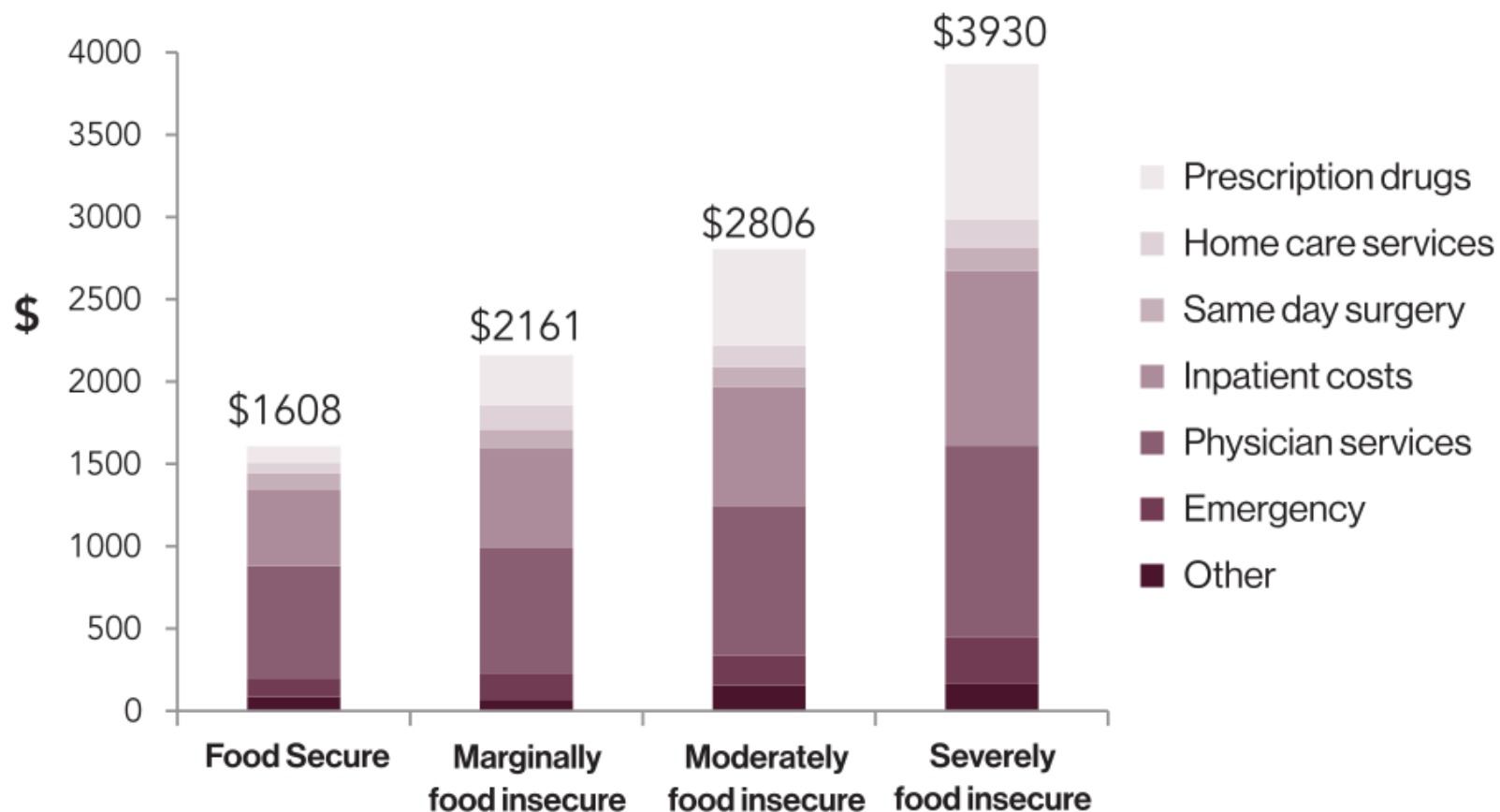


Adjusted for respondent age, sex, ethnicity, immigrant status, smoker status, alcohol consumption history and acute care admission in year prior to interview; household sociodemographic characteristics; province/territory; survey cycle.

**\* statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .**

(Adapted from Men et al, Health Affairs 2020, 39(8):1377-1385.)

## Average health care costs incurred over 12 months by Ontario adults (18-64 years of age), by household food insecurity status



(Adapted from Tarasuk et al, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 2015)

**Federal and provincial funding of food charities is higher than it has ever been, with the goal of ‘preventing people from going hungry’.**



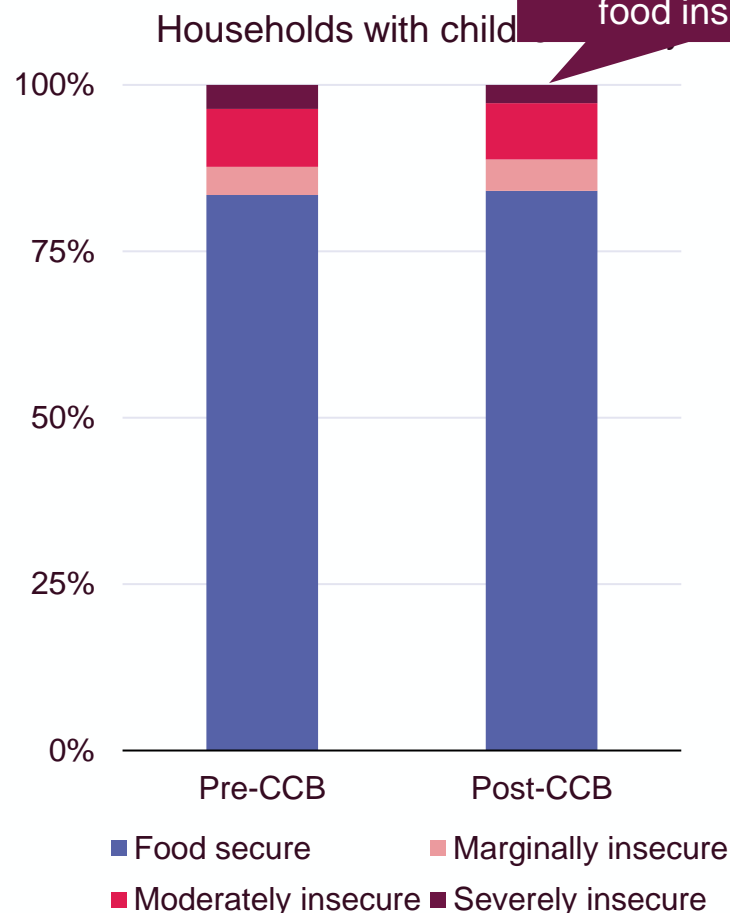


**Food insecurity  
is sensitive to  
interventions  
that improve  
low-income  
households'  
incomes.**

- Improvements to **social assistance benefits**:
  - ◆ Newfoundland and Labrador's Poverty Reduction Actions. (Loopstra et al, Can Public Pol 2015)
  - ◆ Modest one-time increase in British Columbia (Li et al, Prev Med 2016)
- Introduction of or improvements to **child benefits**:
  - ◆ Canada Child Benefit (Brown & Tarasuk, Prev Med 2019)
  - ◆ Ontario Child Benefit (Tarasuk et al, Can Public Pol 2019)
  - ◆ Universal Child Care Benefit (Ionescu-Iltu et al, Prev Med 2015)
  - ◆ National Child Benefit and provincial benefit programs (Milligan & Stabile, Am Econ J 2011)
- Higher provincial **minimum wage**, higher **welfare incomes**, and lower **income tax rates** for the lowest income bracket. (Men et al, Prev Med 2021)
- Receipt of **Old-Age Security + Guaranteed Income Supplement** (Emery et al, SPP Research Papers, 2013; McIntyre et al, Can Public Pol 2016)

# Canada Child Benefit

- Introduced in **July 2016**, replacing Child Tax Benefit + Universal Child Care Benefit, providing average of \$2300/year more per family.
- Maximum benefit in 2022 for families with incomes under \$32,797:
  - \$6,997 per year per child under 6
  - \$5,903 per year per child 6-17
- Graduated phase-out as income rises, but almost all families qualify for some benefit.



Inverse probability of treatment weighted estimates, adjusted for household composition, immigration status, Aboriginal or Black identity, income source, education, home ownership, province, urban/rural residence. (Brown & Tarasuk, Prev Med 2019)

# How could the Canada Child Benefit better protect families from food insecurity?

In 2021 **1 in 5**  
children

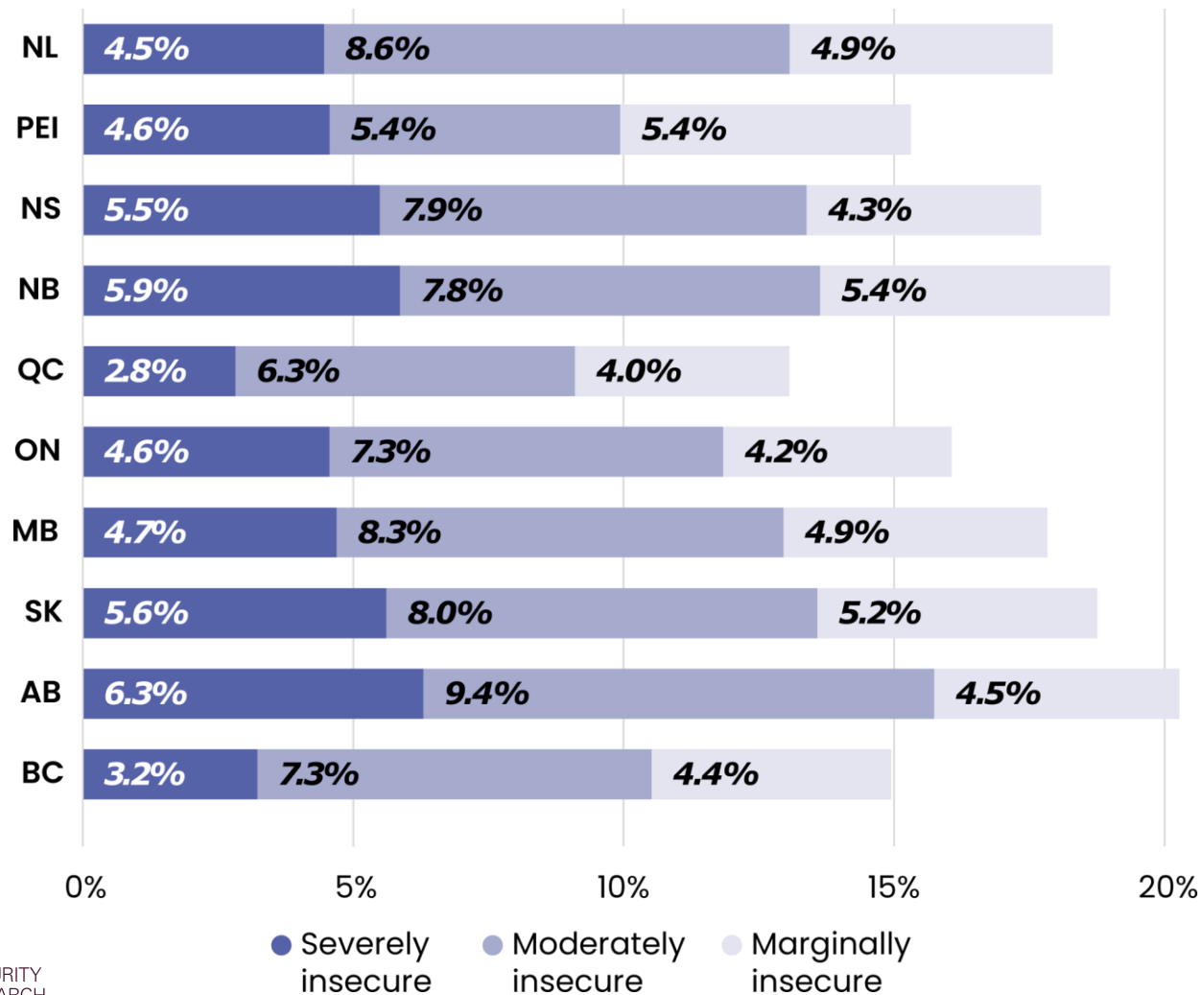


**lived in food-insecure households**

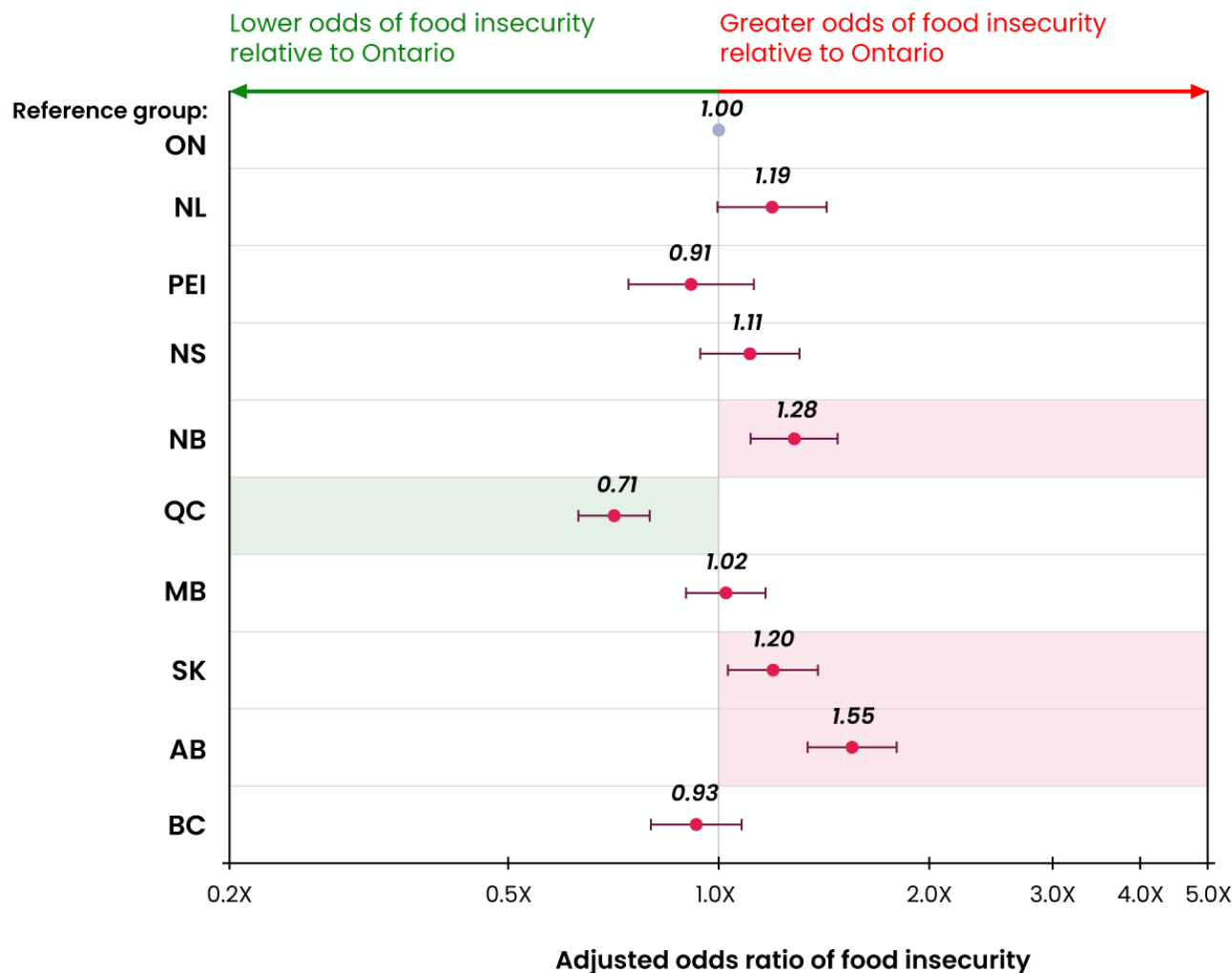
- ✓ Adjust benefit amounts to reflect regional differences in costs of living.
  - ✓ Families in regions with much higher costs (e.g., Nunavut) need higher benefit amounts.
- ✓ Stop reducing the benefit for children over 6 years of age.
  - ✓ The extra \$1000 given for children under 6 lowers the probability of food insecurity. (Men et al, manuscript under review)
- ✓ Increase the amount of the benefit for families with incomes under \$32,797.

# Role of provincial policy?

## Prevalence of household food insecurity by province, 2021



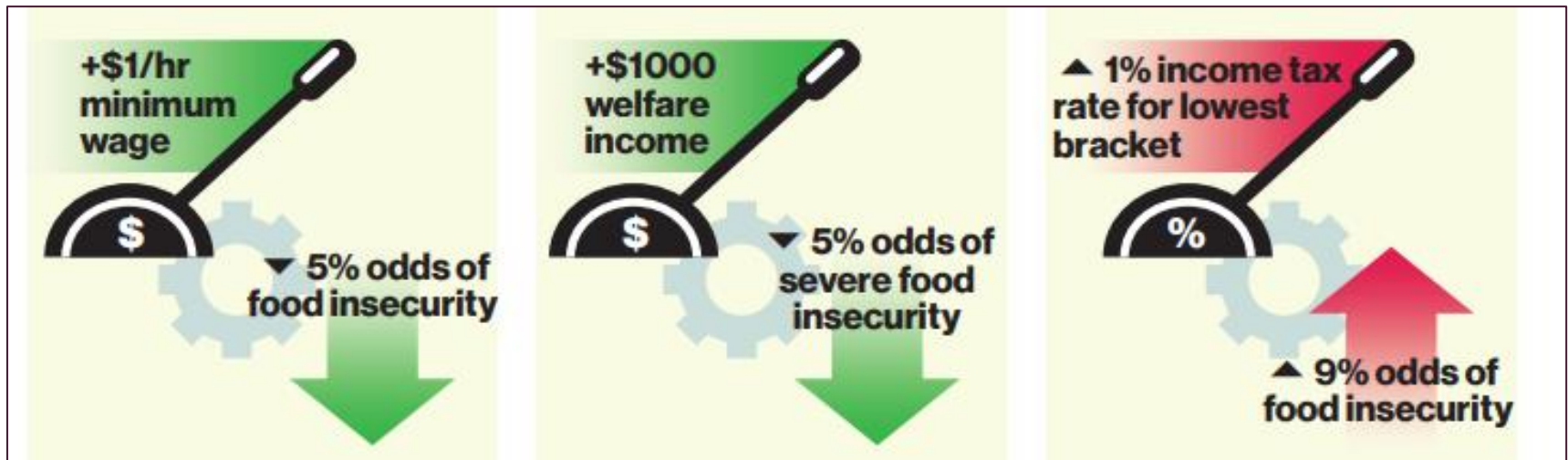
# Adjusted odds ratios of food insecurity in relation to province of residence



Odds ratios adjusted for socio-demographic characteristics (household type, highest level of education, racial/cultural identity and Indigenous status of main income earner, and presence of immigrant in household) and economic characteristics of the household (main source of income, homeownership, and income).

# Role of provincial policy?

- Results of analysis of data from CCHS 2005-2018 for 123,300 families with children under 18 years, living in the 10 provinces, with incomes below the national median. (Men et al, *Preventive Medicine* 2021)



# Potential to address household food insecurity through food subsidies?

## Nutrition North Canada

A federal food retail subsidy program implemented in 2011 to make perishable nutritious foods and select non-food items more affordable and accessible in remote and isolated northern communities\*

(For analyses of the effect of NNC on food costs see: Auditor General of Canada 2021; Galloway, 2017; Naylor et al, 2021)

Prevalence of household food insecurity prevalence in 10 Nunavut communities receiving Nutrition North:



After adjusting for differences in the survey samples over time, the **rate of food insecurity increased by 13.2 percentage points following implementation of Nutrition North.**

\*Difference-in-differences analysis of effect of NNC across broader array of northern communities drawing on data from CCHS 2007-2016 yielded similar findings (B Watson et al, paper presented at IARIW 2022).

# Potential to address household food insecurity through publicly-funded food programs?

→ Modelling impact of adopting US-style programs using data from CCHS 2009-10, assuming programs would have a similarly positive effect in Canada to that observed in the US.

## Best-case scenarios:

### **National School Lunch Program:**

- Among families with children 6–17 y and income < 185% of Low-Income Cut-Off, moderate/severe food insecurity would fall from **24.0% to 21.4%**.

### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ('food stamps'):**

- Among households with children and income < 130% of Low-Income Cut-Off, moderate/severe food insecurity would fall from **32.9% to 27.5%**.



Reducing household food insecurity requires the commitment of public revenue and resources to ensure that **income supports for low-income, working-aged Canadians and their families** are **adequate, secure, and responsive to changing costs of living**, irrespective of their income source.

A basic income

Improvements to child benefits, minimum wages, social assistance benefits, unemployment insurance, low-income tax thresholds, supplement for working-aged adults, low-income worker benefits ...



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