

The Real Cost of Eating Well

in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties 2018

Food is a basic human right.

Everyone has the right to access enough safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food in a way that is socially acceptable and dignified. This is known as food security.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT?

Household food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints.

THE ROOT CAUSE OF
FOOD INSECURITY IS
POVERTY

Household food insecurity is well recognized as a public health issue. It is defined as inadequate access to food due to financial constraints. Dietitians from Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) measure the cost of healthy food using the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) tool. The cost of food and rent in the region is then compared to different types of household income. As you will see from the following pages, families and individuals living in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties and receiving minimum wage or social assistance are struggling to afford a nutritious diet. HPEPH publishes this report to help advocate for income-based solutions to food insecurity and increase awareness of how poverty affects people living in Hastings and Prince Edward counties.

The Nutritious Food Basket is designed to monitor food affordability.
The data collected can help organizations to:

Influence policy decisions, especially as they relate to poverty reduction



Identify community needs as part of a larger assessment



Advocate for increased affordability and access to nutritious foods



HOW DO WE MEASURE THE COST OF HEALTHY FOOD?

Understanding the Nutritious Food Basket

Every May, dietitians from Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) calculate the price of the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB). The NFB is a standardized tool used by Ontario Public Health Units to measure the cost of a basic healthy diet according to Canada's Food Guide. Eight grocery stores within different geographical regions of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties (HPEC) are surveyed to reflect rural and urban food prices and availability.

The Nutritious Food Basket design assumes:

- Most people have the necessary time, food skills, and equipment to be able to prepare most meals from scratch.
- Foods are purchased based on lowest available price, not need, preference or availability.
- People have access to quality grocery stores.

The following costs are not included in the NFB:

- Highly processed convenience and snack foods with little or no nutritional value
- Foods for religious or ethical diets.
- Foods for special diets that address specific diseases or allergies
- Infant formula and baby food
- Foods consumed outside the home
- Personal hygiene items (i.e. toothpaste and soap)
- Household cleaning supplies

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF FOOD INSECURITY IN HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES?

	Marginal	Moderate	Severe
	Worrying about running out of food and/or limit food selection due to lack of money for food	Compromising quantity or quality of food consumed	Reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to lack of food, at most extreme may go day(s) without food
Ontario	3.2%	5.9%	2.8%
HPEC	Not available	Combined 10.0%** (6.8-14.4)	

Table 1: Household food insecurity levels, 2013 - 2014 Canadian Community Health Survey.

** Use with caution (See note about Food Insecurity at end of report)

NUTRITIOUS FOOD BASKET SCENARIOS

HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES, 2018

These scenarios illustrate that after paying for shelter and food, minimum wage earners and households on fixed incomes have very little, if any, money left over to cover other essential monthly expenses.







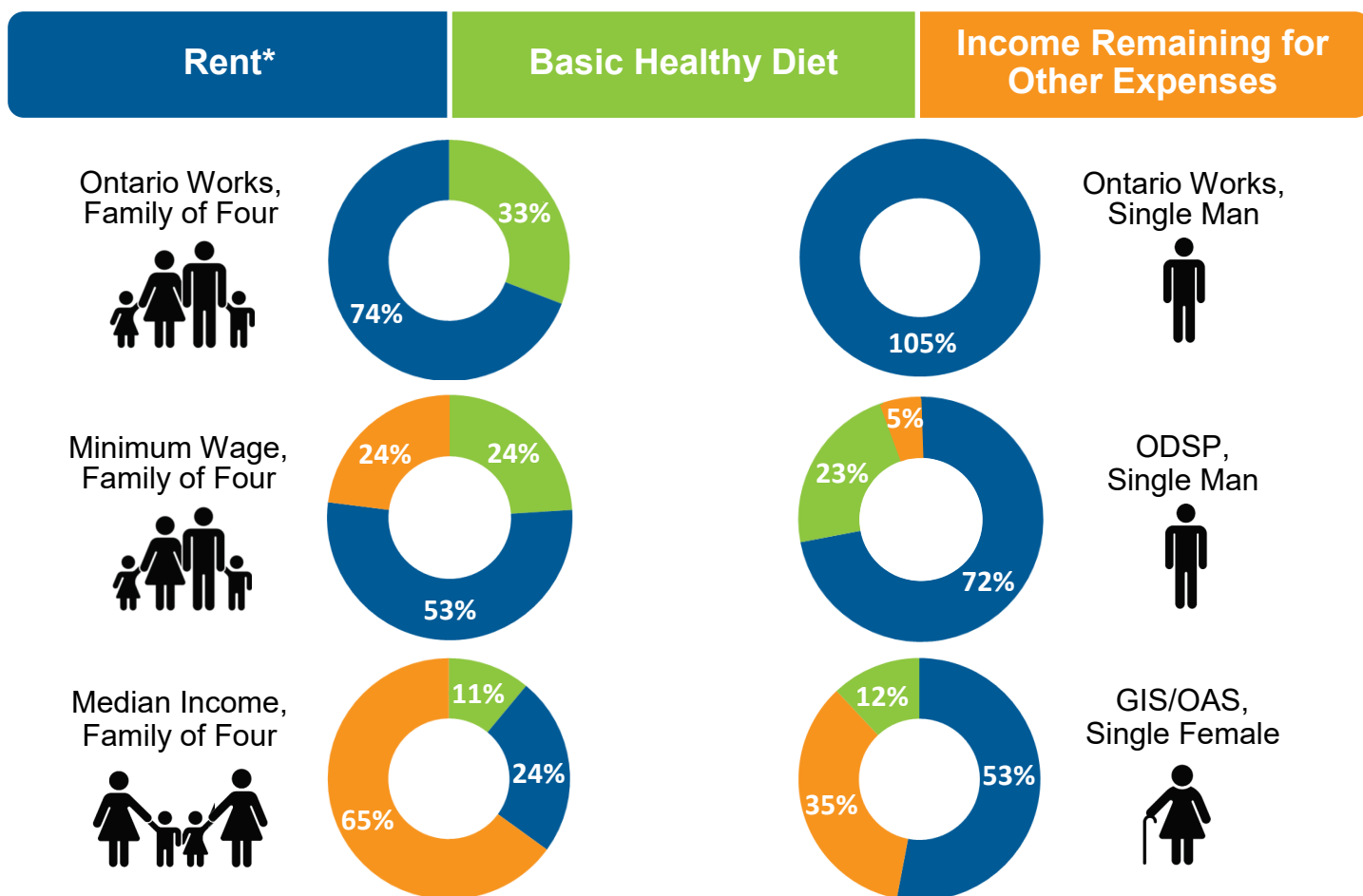
Households	Income (including benefits & credits, after tax)	Rent (may or may not include utilities)	Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	Remaining income for other expenses
Scenario 1: Family of 4, Ontario Works 	\$2,582	\$1,900	\$855.30	-\$173.30
Scenario 2: Family of 4, Minimum wage (One minimum wage earner) 	\$3,603	\$1,900	\$855.30	\$847.70
Scenario 3: Family of 4, Median income 	\$7,871	\$1,900	\$819.11	\$5,151.89
Scenario 4: Single male, Ontario Works 	\$810	\$850	\$287.86	-\$327.86
Scenario 5: Single male, Ontario Disability Support Program 	\$1,251	\$900	\$287.86	\$63.14
Scenario 6: Single female, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement 	\$1,694	\$900	\$208.57	\$585.43

Table 2: Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios for Hastings and Prince Edward Counties.

PERCENT OF INCOME

HOUSEHOLDS IN HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES, 2018



*Affordable housing is defined as housing costs being 30% or less of your total household income before tax.

**Graphs may equal more than 100% to signify expenses that exceed income.



CLOSER LOOK AT THE 2018 NUMBERS

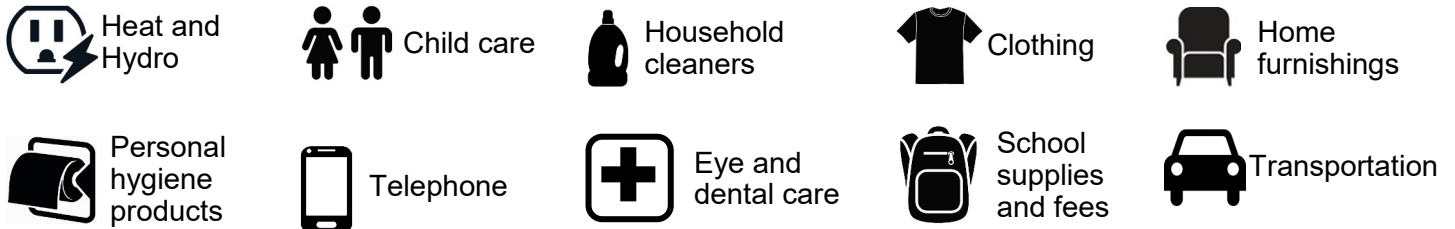
INCOME AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES

As of January 1, 2018, minimum wage increased from \$11.40/hour to \$14.00/hour. In 2018, the cost of rent in HPEC has also increased. For example, a 3 bedroom rental is priced at \$1,900/month and in 2017 it was \$1,400 – this is an increase of \$500/month. Federally, Canada's National Housing Strategy is in the midst of a 10 year plan with a goal to provide more accessible and affordable housing. Provincially, in late 2018, specific types of new rental units have been exempted from existing rent policy allowing for less stringent guidelines on increasing the cost of rental units.

Compared to 2008, the cost of healthy eating in Hastings and Prince Edward counties has risen by 43.8% and rent has increased by 67.8%. Increases to incomes have not kept up with these numbers. Additionally, Ontario's food prices increased by 2.7% in 2018 - higher than any other province in Canada.

WHY CAN'T PEOPLE AFFORD HEALTHY FOOD?

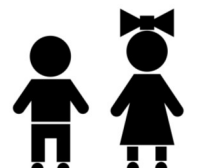
Food can be seen as an elastic expense. This means, when people have more money they are able to spend it on food but when income is limited, their main priority is paying fixed expenses such as housing and utilities. For people with fixed or limited incomes, saving money for the short-term or long-term is difficult. Food insecurity is likely to occur when an individual's savings and access to credit are exhausted.



If you had \$516.75 left to survive on at the end of the month, which of these items would you spend it on?

WHO CAN'T AFFORD HEALTHY FOOD IN CANADA?

- People whose major source of income is social assistance (e.g. Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program) are at a greatly increased risk of being food insecure. In contrast, when a food-insecure individual turns 65 years of age in Canada, their risk of being food insecure is reduced by half due to access to Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). This suggests that social assistance rates are not enough to meet the basic needs of daily living.
- Individuals who have jobs experience food insecurity. Over 60% of food insecure households rely on wages and/or salaries as a source of income. This suggests that factors within our economy, such as minimum wage rates and a reliance on precarious work are impacting whether or not individuals and families can afford healthy food.
- Individuals who rent their homes are more likely to be food insecure. Two-thirds of renters comprise food insecure households in Canada.
- Households that have children under 18 and a single mother are more likely to be food insecure. Children living in severe food insecurity are at a greater risk of developing depression and suicidal ideation in adolescence. Adults in food insecure homes will often deprive themselves of food to ensure their children have something to eat.



WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF FOOD INSECURITY IN HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES?

THE BOTTOM LINE

The cost of food, housing, and basic needs continues to rise and the incomes of people earning social assistance or minimum wage are not keeping up. This means families and individuals have to make daily sacrifices that have a negative impact on their health. In the long term, sustainable solutions, such as affordable housing supports, adequate social assistance, and minimum wage rates are what will ensure families have access to affordable, nutritious food all year round.

Everyone should have access to nutritious, safe, adequate, and culturally acceptable food.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Learn more about food insecurity.
Visit www.proof.utoronto.ca



Start conversations. Share stories about how unaffordable housing, temporary work and inadequate social assistance rates have affected you or the clients with whom you work.



Work together. Partner with other organizations to share advocacy initiatives you're currently undertaking and discuss ways to collaborate.

A NOTE ABOUT FOOD INSECURITY DATA

Interpret Local Statistics with Caution

The only measurement of household food insecurity in Canada is the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). The CCHS results (called cycles) are released every two years. Information is collected by each province and then combined to report on Canadian health-related trends. Food insecurity is a mandatory measurement every other cycle, which means provinces only have to measure food insecurity every four years. For cycles in between the mandatory collection of food insecurity data, provinces can decide to collect food insecurity data as an option. The province of Ontario declined to complete food insecurity measurement for the last CCHS cycle (2015-2016), which means updated data will not be available until the 2017-2018 cycle (released in 2019). Because of this, the most current data available is from 2013-2014.

When food security data is collected across the province, only a small number of households are sampled in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties (HPEC). This small sample size results in a large confidence interval and can make data unreliable if used by itself (i.e. before combining it with data from across the province). For example, in 2013-2014 the number of HPEC households that were food insecure* was 10.0%** , but with a confidence interval of 6.8-14.4%. This confidence interval means the true estimate of food insecure households could range from 6.8% to 14.4%. Therefore we cannot report the exact level of food insecurity in our region and can only estimate that 10.0%** of households are food insecure. Because of the wide confidence interval, local food insecurity statistics for HPEC cannot be considered statistically different from Ontario rates and cannot be separated into levels of severity.

Regional Rankings

If food insecurity levels for different health unit regions in Ontario have confidence levels that overlap, it means there is no statistical difference in food insecurity levels between those health unit regions. Therefore, any reports that rank food insecurity levels of health unit regions must be interpreted with caution.

Understanding Statistical Information

For a better understanding of statistical concepts and limitations of available data to report food insecurity trends, please see Toronto Public Health's Survey Data Interpretation Guide (www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/93c0-tph-survey-data-interpretation-guide-aoda.pdf).

* Combined moderate and severe food insecurity

** Use with caution due to wide confidence intervals

Resources

Food Access Guide for Hastings and Prince Edward Counties - www.foodaccess.ca

Information on free and low cost food and meal programs in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties including emergency food services, food box programs, and community gardens.

PROOF, Research to Identify Policy Options to Reduce Food Insecurity - <http://proof.utoronto.ca/>

For more information on food insecurity in Ontario, including household characteristics, relationships between household income and source and food insecurity levels.

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health – Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity
<http://bit.ly/2Ft3l3l>

Dietitians of Canada – Position Statement on Household Food Insecurity –
www.dietitians.ca/Dietitians-Views/Food-Security/Household-Food-Insecurity.aspx

Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward – www.povertyroundtablehpe.ca

Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy –
www.ontario.ca/home-and-community/realizing-our-potential-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019

Ontario Food Security Strategy - www.ontario.ca/page/food-security-consultation

Food Secure Canada – www.foodsecurecanada.org

Alliance of organizations working together to advance food security and food sovereignty through three goals: zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems.

Food Banks Canada – www.foodbankscanada.ca

Annual HungerCount report presents results from more than 4,000 food banks and food programs in every province and territory.

Ontario Association of Food Banks - www.oafb.ca

Annual Hunger Report provides statistics gathered by the Ontario food bank network and Food Bank's Canada annual HungerCount survey, and analyses food insecurity trends and recommendations for change.

For more details about the Nutritious Food Basket, email foodsecurity@hpeph.ca.

Sources: Please contact Hastings Prince Edward Public Health for a detailed list of references.

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