

Study: Food insecurity among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat, 2012

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More than half (52%) of Inuit adults aged 25 and older who lived in Inuit Nunangat in 2012—the Inuit homeland in Canada—reported that they had experienced food insecurity in the previous 12 months. This compared with 14% of Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat.

Food insecurity refers to situations where, for example, the food purchased does not last and there is not enough money to buy more, balanced meals are unaffordable, or household members cut the size of their meals or skip meals because there is not enough money for food.

Inuit Nunangat includes the communities in the four Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut (northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories.

In Nunavut and in Nunavik, approximately 55% of Inuit adults reported that they had experienced food insecurity in the previous 12 months. This compared with 42% in Nunatsiavut and 33% in the Inuvialuit region.

These results come from a new study, "[Food insecurity among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat](#)," based on data from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

Some Inuit adults are more likely than others to experience food insecurity

Among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat, women had a significantly higher probability of living in a food insecure household (56%) than men (47%), even after accounting for factors such as living arrangements, educational and labour force status, income, family ties and geography.

Lone parents (56%) and couples with children (52%) were also more likely to live in a food insecure household than couples without children (35%).

The findings also highlight the importance of social and economic conditions. Unemployed Inuit adults had a 77% chance of living in a food insecure household, compared with 43% for those who were employed, and 58% for those who were not in the labour force.

Among Inuit adults who lived in a crowded dwelling (more than one person per room), the probability of living in a food insecure household was 56%, compared with 48% for those who did not live in a crowded dwelling.

However, those who had stronger extended family ties had a lower probability of living in a food insecure household (46%), compared with those with weaker family ties (66%).

Inuit adults experiencing food insecurity have lower levels of self-rated health

In 2012, 46% of Inuit adults living in food insecure households had at least one chronic health condition (such as asthma, arthritis, high blood pressure or diabetes), compared with 40% for those in food secure households.

In addition, 7 in 10 Inuit adults in food insecure households described their overall health as being "good," "fair" or "poor" rather than "excellent" or "very good," compared with 57% for those who did not experience food insecurity.

Similarly, 59% of Inuit adults in food insecure households had lower levels of mental health ("good," "fair" or "poor" instead of "excellent" or "very good"), compared with 44% for those in food secure households.

The differences in health outcomes between food secure and food insecure Inuit remained significant even after accounting for age, sex, crowding, education, labour force status and household income differences.



Note to readers

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) is a national survey on the social and economic conditions of Aboriginal Peoples (that is, First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit) aged six years and older. The 2012 APS was the fourth cycle of the survey and focused on issues related to education, employment and health.

The level of food security in the household was derived from the questions in the food security module of the APS. The sum of affirmative responses to the six questions in the module determined the category to which a respondent was classified in terms of household food insecurity. For the purposes of this study, food insecure households were those who answered positively to at least two of the six questions in the module.

The household food security questions used in the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey originate from the US Household Food Security Module Six-Item Short Form. The Six-Item Short Form and the associated Six-Item Food Security Scale were developed by researchers at the National Center for Health Statistics in the United States.

This article used multivariate techniques to examine the factors related to food insecurity among Inuit aged 25 and older living in Inuit Nunangat. In addition, this paper examined the association between food insecurity and health outcomes such as self-reported health, including mental health, and chronic conditions. Readers should note that the results shown are associations between variables, and should not be interpreted as cause and effect relationships.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3250](#).

The article "[Food insecurity among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

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