

# Household food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, February 16, 2022

During the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in fall 2020, about 1 in 10 Canadians (9.6%) said they experienced food insecurity in their household because of financial constraints. This proportion was lower than the approximately one in eight Canadians (12.6%) who reported food insecurity in the pre-pandemic period of 2017/2018. Household food insecurity is a well-established determinant of health and is tightly linked with financial hardship.

The study "[Household food insecurity in Canada early in the COVID-19 pandemic](#)," released today in *Health Reports*, presents data on levels of household food insecurity in the 10 provinces from the September to December 2020 cycle of the Canadian Community Health Survey. In this survey, household food security status within the previous 12 months was measured using a scale that has been routinely used to monitor levels of household food insecurity in Canada. This provided the ability to draw comparisons with pre-pandemic levels.

Both before and during the pandemic, certain population groups were more vulnerable to food insecurity in their household. They included people with lower levels of education, those who rent their dwelling, those in lone-parent-led households and those in households reliant on social assistance as their primary source of income. Compared with the pre-pandemic period of 2017/2018, levels of household food insecurity were either unchanged or slightly lower in fall 2020 among groups vulnerable to food insecurity.

It is important to note that this study examined levels of household food insecurity in fall 2020, six to nine months into the pandemic—a period when a range of pandemic-related government financial relief benefits were in place, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. The following year, in 2021, many of the pandemic-related benefits were phased out. At the same time, Canadians experienced a notable rise in the cost of living compared with previous years, including rising food prices. Because household food insecurity is tightly linked with material hardship, it will therefore be important to closely monitor its levels using data from 2021 and throughout the years of recovery ahead.

## Note to readers

*This study is based on data from the September to December 2020 and 2017/2018 cycles of the Canadian Community Health Survey. The target population was individuals aged 12 years or older living in the 10 Canadian provinces. Income-related household food security status was measured using the 18-item Household Food Security Survey Module. Household food insecurity in the previous 12 months was defined as marginal, moderate or severe.*



**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3226](#).**

The article "[Household food insecurity in Canada early in the COVID-19 pandemic](#)" is now available in the February 2022 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 33, No. 2 ([82-003-X](#)).

This issue of *Health Reports* also contains the article "[A pan-Canadian dataset of neighbourhood retail food environment measures using Statistics Canada's Business Register](#)."

To enquire about the article "Household food insecurity in Canada early in the COVID-19 pandemic," contact Didier Garriguet ([didier.garriguet@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:didier.garriguet@statcan.gc.ca)), Health Analysis Division.

To enquire about the article "A pan-Canadian dataset of neighbourhood retail food environment measures using Statistics Canada's Business Register," contact Rachel Colley ([rachel.colley@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:rachel.colley@statcan.gc.ca)), Health Analysis Division.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).