

# RACE & FOOD INSECURITY

## FACT SHEET



**1 IN 7 CANADIANS**

**EXPERIENCE SOME DEGREE OF FOOD INSECURITY AT HOME DURING COVID-19**

In 2017-18, this figure was 1 in 8.

SOURCE: STATS CANADA

**69% OF FILIPINOS  
65% OF SOUTH ASIAN  
64% OF BLACK CANADIANS**  
HAVE EXPERIENCED UNEMPLOYMENT OR A REDUCTION IN INCOME DUE TO COVID-19



...compared to just 53% of the general population.

SOURCE: TD COVID-19 IMPACT POLL



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE 3-5X  
MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY  
THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION.  
ALMOST 1 IN 2 ARE FOOD INSECURE.**

SOURCE: FNFNES, 2019

**44% OF ARABS  
42.9% OF FILIPINOS  
42% OF WEST ASIANS**  
REPORTED STRUGGLING MEETING ESSENTIAL NEEDS DUE TO COVID-19



...compared to just 23% of white Canadians.

SOURCE: STATS CANADA



**FOOD INSECURITY  
IS EXPECTED TO DOUBLE**  
FROM THE EXISTING 4.4 MILLION PEOPLE WITH DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS ON RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

SOURCE: FOOD SECURE CANADA, 2020

**SOCI 410C Infographic Written Justification**

**FoodStash:**

**How race and COVID-19 intersect to exacerbate food insecurity  
for families and individuals in Canada.**

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## **Introduction**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, 1 in 7 Canadians are reported to have experienced some degree of food insecurity at home (Statistics Canada, 2020). Before COVID-19, this figure was set to 1 in 8 - equalling 4.4 million people and over 1.2 million children living in households that were food insecure (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Household food insecurity is a growing issue across the country that is often less visibly apparent or spoken about, with various negative stigmas surrounding the topic. Food insecurity affects people from all walks of life, regardless of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation. The extent to which certain groups are impacted by food insecurity, however, vary, and existing literature suggests disparities among different racial groups, with Black people disproportionately experiencing a greater rate of food insecurity than their White counterparts - being 3.5 times more likely (Roberts, 2020). This paper aims to discuss the issue of food insecurity in Canada, and how race and COVID-19 intersect to exacerbate food insecurity among individuals in Vancouver and across the country. We will first provide context on our reasons behind selecting this social issue, as well as the organization we have chosen to partner with. We will then examine the social, economic, and political trends in Canada that enabled the development of this issue, followed by a brief analysis on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted food insecurity among households of differing racialized groups and our recommendation on how to best approach this issue.

## **Organizational Context**

FoodStash, a Canadian non-profit food rescue organization, is a prominent community resource dedicated to improving food security among families and reducing food waste and its impact on the environment. We decided to select this organization and social issue as we shared similar sentiments aligning with their vision to reduce the impact of food waste on the environment, and thought the organization stood out as using a different approach to addressing food insecurity in communities in contrast to traditional food banks. One of our friends founded a similar organization at McGill University called “MealCare”, which similarly aims to divert food waste on university campuses across Canada by redistributing surplus food to homeless shelters and soup kitchens. Food insecurity is a social issue that affects many regardless of age or background, and we were determined to research more information regarding how this social issue may affect different racial groups of people in Canada. With the current pandemic ongoing today, we aim to explore how food insecurity among BIPOC may be exacerbated both directly and indirectly as a result of COVID-19.

With regards to how the organization plans to address the growing issue of food insecurity in Canada, Food Stash works with various local businesses to recover surplus perishable food that is then redistributed to local nonprofits and charities to be used for meal programs and community kitchens. The organization also runs a Rescued Food Box program and Pedal to Plate program, both of which deliver healthy food boxes on a weekly basis to food insecure households around Vancouver. The infographic we have developed is likely meant to be used in

the Food Stash blog as well as for social media channels, as more data on how COVID-19 disproportionately affects BIPOC come to light in the media. We designed this infographic with the general public as the audience in mind, and have reflected this using relatable examples and quantifiable data to best convey our information. We have supplemented our data with eye-catching graphics which are aligned with the organization's colour palette and are on-brand with Food Stash design guidelines.

## **Historical Context**

While hunger and lack of food are not normally associated with Canada where people generally have a high standard of living compared to the Global North, food insecurity has increasingly become a predominant issue of Canadian society. Household food insecurity refers to “the inadequate or insecure access to sufficient food because of financial constraints” (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2018). Household food insecurity has several main social determinants of which the location in Canada is one of them. Food insecurity in Nunavut reached 57 percent in 2017-2018 (Stats Canada, 2017-18) due to numerous factors such as high costs of food, low incomes, loss of traditional knowledge, and large family sizes (Nunavut Food Security Coalition). Food insecurity is also closely tied to other socio-economic disadvantages. It is more prevalent among low-income families, single-parent families, house renters, and Indigenous or Black people (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). 60.4 percent of households who rely on social assistance as their main source of income is affected by food insecurity (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Risk factors of household food insecurity are greatly tied to household resources including the amount and stability of the income and access to savings and assets (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2018).

Macroeconomic conditions such as heating cost inflation, increases in the rate of unemployment, and shelter costs in Canada also affects the prevalence of food insecurity. (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2018) Indigenous and Black people represent the populations with the highest rate of food insecurity at 28.2 percent and 28.9 percent respectively compared with 11.1 percent of Whites (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020).

Public policies could play a role in altering the prevalence of food insecurity. When low-income adults become eligible for an old-age pension, the risk of food insecurity drops by more than 50 percent attributing to the predictability and stability of income (McIntyre et al., 2016). After the implementation of poverty reduction policies in Newfoundland and Labrador, the food insecurity prevalence among recipients dropped from 60 percent in 2007 to 34 percent in 2012 (Loopstra, Dachner, & Tarasuk, 2015). The Universal Child Care Benefit introduced in 2006 resulted in a 25 percent decrease in household food insecurity of the family recipients especially among lower-income and single-parent families (Ionescu-Ittu et al., 2015). These three examples show the importance of public policies in food insecurity and how public policies hold potential to the reduction of food insecurity in Canada.

## **Analysis and Data Synthesis**

Initially, we were tasked to investigate how race and COVID-19 intersected to exacerbate food insecurity in Vancouver. However, the lack of race-based data collection in Vancouver and

British Columbia as a whole prompted us to expand our scope and research for its application throughout the region of Canada.

Prior to the pandemic, it was revealed that 1 in 8 (12.7%) Canadians were already experiencing food security back in 2017/18 (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). This ratio has since been increased to 1 in 7 (14.6%) during the pandemic - and according to Statistics Canada, experts in food security suggest that the increase of Canadians living as food insecure are linked to the financial impacts the pandemic has brought with decreases in work hours, and increases in job unemployment (Statistics Canada, 2020). Another article highlighted that visible minority groups' inability to buffer the income losses COVID-19 has brought, as they often lack job security and receive lower wages (Block et al., 2019; Lightman & Gingrich, 2018). Moreover, visible minorities had already disproportionately experienced high rates of poverty prior to the pandemic - Korean, Arab, Black and Chinese-Canadians's poverty rate ranged from 20% to 32%, while the White population experienced a poverty rate of 9.6% (Hou et al., 2020). A recent COVID-19 impact poll revealed that communities of BIPOC were the most affected in terms of financial status, job security and reduced income. Specifically, 69% of Filipinos, 65% of South Asians, and 64% of Black Canadians have experienced unemployment or a reduction in come due to COVID-19, compared to just 53% of the general population (TD News, 2020). Furthermore, Statistics Canada found that Canadians who were absent from work due to the pandemic, were 3 times as likely to face food insecurity at 28.4%, as opposed to who had job security at 10.7% (Statistics Canada, 2020). A 2018 concluded study that aimed to investigate nutrition, food security and food safety in Canada with First nations - it was found that Indigenous communities were 3 to 5



times more likely to face food insecurity issues, at a higher rate compared to the general population, with every 1 in 2 Indigenous individuals experiencing food insecurity (University of Ottawa et al., 2018).

In regards to the overall economic impact of COVID-19 among visible minority groups, the top 3 self reported groups' ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs were Arabs (44%), Filipinos (42.9%), and West Asians (42%) - compared to 23.2% of the White population (Hou et al., 2020). It is clear that through the financial hardship the pandemic has brought about, has not only targeted marginalized communities who already experience disproportionately higher rates of poverty, but also their ability to combat food security. Differences in communities' experience with financial and job security as a result of the pandemic have directly impacted their ability to put food on the table.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact among communities of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in Canada - as they are more prone to experience financial insecurity, lower wages, and increased unemployment rates. Statistics in Canada have shown that alongside previous employment disparities amongst these communities and the general population, by impacting minority groups the hardest financially, COVID-19 has exacerbated food insecurity issues through race. While our infographic does not specifically address the intersectionality of race and the pandemic's effect on food insecurity in Vancouver, we were instead able to apply our research throughout Canada as a whole. According to a report from

Food Secure Canada, food insecurity is predicted to double before the end of 2020 (Food Secure Canada, 2020). While this infographic primarily aims to target the issue of food insecurity during times of COVID-19, addressing other complications and disparities amongst minority communities will be key.

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