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# Who's Hungry 2024

## About the report

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In partnership, Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank have released *Who's Hungry 2024* — an annual profile of poverty and food insecurity in the City of Toronto.

**In the last year, Toronto food banks served a record-breaking 3.49 million client visits – almost 1 million more than the year prior, and a 273% increase since pre-pandemic. More than one in ten Torontonians are making use of food banks to make ends meet.**

Despite a median increase in work hours and household income among clients, the crushing costs of housing, food, and other basic needs, paired with insufficient income supports and wages, are pushing far too many households into poverty. Food banks are under extreme stress as more and more people are turning to emergency food services for the first time.

*Who's Hungry 2024* reveals the harsh realities that are trapping hundreds of thousands of people in unprecedented poverty and hunger across the city. Food is a human right, yet governments are failing to ensure every person can live a dignified life where their basic needs are met. The report contains recommendations for each level of government, as well as actions the public can take to help eliminate hunger in our communities.

## Key findings

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### There is a poverty crisis in Toronto

- In the past year, there have been **3.49 million visits to Toronto food banks** — nearly 1 million more visits than the year prior. This is the highest annual increase ever reported and represents a 273% increase since pre-pandemic.
- **More than 1 in 10 Torontonians rely on food banks**, a 36% increase in unique clients compared to last year.

- **154,748** new individuals started using food bank services for the first time this past year — a **222%** increase compared to just two years ago and over four times pre-pandemic levels.
- **80%** of food bank clients are renters. Unhoused clients have increased by **420%** and clients from emergency shelters have increased by **90%** compared to last year.
- Of the **1 in 4** food bank clients (25%) who have a disability, 52% rely on social assistance as their primary source of income, leaving them at least \$1,000 below the poverty line each month.
- **4 in 5** new food bank clients (82%) are newcomers (in Canada less than five years).
- **Nearly 1 in 4** clients (23%) are children or youth and 19-44 is the fastest-growing age group.
- **Over 1 in 4** food bank clients (29%) recently went a whole day without eating and **half** (50%) missed a meal to pay for something else.

### **Incomes are not keeping pace with the rising cost of living, pushing households deeper into poverty.**

- **Over half of clients** (57%) said cost of living was their main reason for visiting a food bank.
- After paying rent and utilities, food bank clients have a median of just **\$7.78** left per person, per day to pay for all other necessities.
- Food bank clients have a median monthly income of **\$1,265** — this is just over half of Toronto's Official Poverty Line (\$2,397) for a single person.
- **Nearly 3 in 10** clients (29%) rely on social assistance as their primary source of income.
- **Nearly 9 in 10** clients (87%) live in unaffordable housing, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities. **3 in 4** clients (73%) spend over half of their income on housing, putting them at high risk of homelessness, and **1 in 5** clients (20%) spend 100% or more of their income on housing, leaving no money for other necessities.

### **Higher education or a job does not protect against food insecurity in an inflationary environment.**

- **Nearly 1 in 3** (31%) food bank clients are students and **59%** of clients have completed post-secondary education.
- **Over half** (51%) of new food bank clients have at least one member of their household who is employed.
- Both the median hourly wage (**\$18**) and median weekly hours worked (**35**) have increased since last year, by \$2 and five hours respectively. However, the costs of other necessities like rent (now at a median of **\$1,200** for clients, a \$50 increase since last year) and food have also increased.

# Call to action

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With food bank usage at record-breaking levels in Toronto, we need to raise our voices and take action to tackle poverty and food insecurity. Food is a human right, yet more than one in ten Torontonians are forced to rely on food banks because they cannot afford the food they need.

**Food insecurity is a public policy issue requiring public policy solutions. These are our calls to action:**

## **Members of Parliament:**

- Strengthen the Canada Disability Benefit payment amount, eligibility criteria, and regulations to **bring people with disabilities above the poverty line** and ensure that everyone who needs the Benefit can access it without claw backs.

## **Members of Provincial Parliament:**

- As part of Ontario's plan to build 1.5 million homes by 2031, ensure that at least one-quarter are **permanently affordable or supportive homes**, with a minimum of 50,000 units in Toronto. Use a consistent definition of affordability where rent is no more than 30% of a renter's income.

## **City Councillors:**

- Urgently **launch Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan and updated Food Charter** with concrete actions, indicators, and funding to prevent food insecurity and promote resiliency among Toronto's community food programs.

## **Readers of this report:**

- **Raise awareness** by sharing this report with your friends, family, and networks. Mobilize your community to advocate for change or get involved with your local food bank. Most importantly, call on your Member of Parliament, Member of Provincial Parliament, and City Councillor to urgently adopt the recommendations in this report.

To review the full report and recommendations, visit [dailybread.ca/whoshungry](https://dailybread.ca/whoshungry).