

# FOOD INSECURITY AMONG POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS IN CANADA

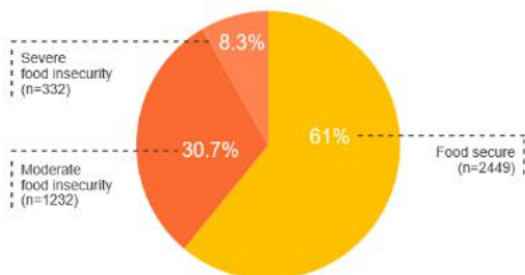
Food insecurity exists when an individual or household lacks physical and/or economic access to adequate and appropriate food. The experience of food insecurity varies and can include anxiety about running out of food or money for food, reducing the quantity or quality of food purchased to stretch food dollars, and more extreme measures such as skipping meals and not eating for prolonged periods.

Food insecurity impacts many populations in Canada, yet relatively little is known about food insecurity among post-secondary students. Presented here are the findings from Meal Exchange's first large-scale attempt at assessing the prevalence of this issue among students in Canada.

Nearly two in five students surveyed experienced some form of food insecurity



30.7% of students experienced moderate food insecurity while another 8.3% experienced severe food insecurity



Certain demographic groups experienced exceptionally high rates of food insecurity, including:

Indigenous students (56.4%)

Racialized students (41.9%)

Off-campus students living alone (54.4%) or with roommates (47.9%)

Loan recipients, including students who primarily funded their education through bank loans (55%) and government loans/grants (54.7%)

Food-insecure students reported on several barriers to food security, including:

Food costs (52.7%)

Tuition fees (51.2%)

Housing costs (47.5%)

Inadequate income supports (37.7%)



In Canada, the cost of food continues to increase quicker than the general inflation rate.



The average cost of tuition for an undergraduate degree in 1993/94 was \$3,192 compared to \$6,191 in 2015/16.



Like food, the cost of comparable two-bedroom apartments continues to increase faster than inflation.

Policy recommendations for combating food insecurity among post-secondary students in Canada:

- 1 Implement a periodic national food and housing security survey for university and college students
- 2 Analyze and assess the inclusion of post-secondary students in a guaranteed annual income
- 3 Commit to truth and reconciliation initiatives to reduce barriers to education for Indigenous peoples
- 4 Develop local programs and policies aimed at providing affordable housing to students

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# WHO DOES POST-SECONDARY STUDENT FOOD INSECURITY IMPACT?

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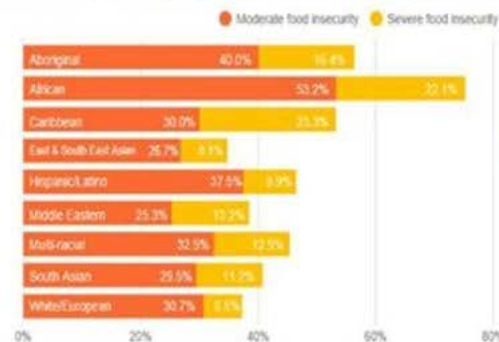


In early 2016, Meal Exchange surveyed over 4,000 students on five university campuses across the country to better understand students' experiences with food security. These campuses included Brock University, Dalhousie University, Lakehead University, Ryerson University, and the University of Calgary.

**39%** of students surveyed experienced some form of food insecurity.

Certain sub-populations of students are significantly impacted by food insecurity.

## Food insecurity by ethnic/racial background



When examining race and ethnicity, students from Aboriginal/indigenous (56%), African (75%), and Caribbean (53%) backgrounds experienced the highest rates of food insecurity, particularly severe food insecurity. These findings mirror national statistics that indicate that Black and Aboriginal households experience the highest rates of food insecurity.

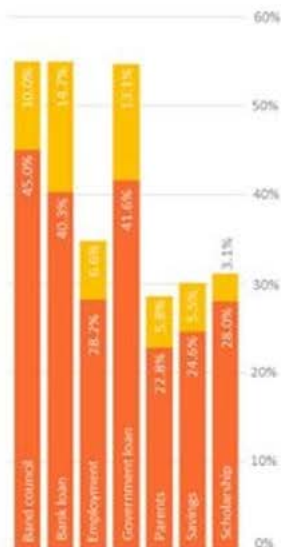
When analyzed together, 41.9% of racialized respondents experienced food insecurity.

## Food insecurity by primary source of income for education-related expenses

Food insecurity was felt particularly hard by students who primarily funded their education through band council funding (55%), bank loans (55%) and government student loans/grants (54%). Students who reported their parents as their primary source of income were the least food insecure, suggesting that post-secondary education is particularly unaffordable for those supporting themselves through school.

## Food insecurity by living arrangement

Students who lived off campus also experienced high levels of food insecurity, including students who lived alone (54%), lived with roommates (48%), or who were single parents living with their children (71%). These findings shed light on the impacts of the rising cost of living for post-secondary students in Canada.



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