



# Food Affordability in Niagara

Results of the 2023 Nutritious  
Food Basket Survey

Presented by  
Niagara Region Public Health

# Land Acknowledgement

Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land is steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous peoples, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.



# Before we get started

- Please go to **www.menti.com** and enter in the code **3668 8970**
- We will use Menti to interact with you throughout the presentation
- Please post any questions you may have throughout the presentation into the chat



# Agenda

- Food Affordability in Niagara- Results of the 2023 Nutritious Food Basket
  - What is the cost of nutritious eating in Niagara?
- Income Scenarios
  - Is income adequate in covering the cost of living?
- Food Insecurity- Myth vs. Fact
- Food Insecurity in Niagara
- Populations affected by food insecurity
- Solutions to Food Insecurity
- Q&A



# Nutritious Food Basket Survey

# The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Survey

- The NFB survey is used to collect the cost of nutritious food and monitor food affordability at the local level.
- The results of the NFB are used to shed light on the relationship between poverty and food insecurity and support advocacy efforts for food insecurity solutions.



*Image source: Bing*

# NFB Collection


- The NFB was conducted in May of 2023 in a sample of large chain grocery stores across the Niagara region.
- 61 food items are included in the survey that align with Canada's Food Guide and the eating patterns of Canadians. Food items fall into four categories:
  - Vegetables and fruit;
  - Whole grains;
  - Protein foods; and
  - Fats and oils
- The NFB provides a minimum cost of nutritious eating for different age and sex groups, and household types.

## Sources:

Government of Canada. (2020). National nutritious food basket. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/>

Health Canada. (2020). 2019 National nutritious food basket reference guide.

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2018). Monitoring food Affordability Reference Document.



**What is the cost  
of nutritious  
eating in  
Niagara?**



<b>Household Unit Type</b>	<b>Weekly cost of NFB</b>	<b>Monthly cost of NFB</b>
<b>Family of Four</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 adults (male and female) ages 31-50</li> <li>• 2 children (male age 14, female age 8)</li> </ul>	<b>\$279</b>	<b>\$1212</b>
<b>Single Parent Household</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 adult (female) aged 31-50</li> <li>• 2 children (male age 14, female age 8)</li> </ul>	<b>\$186</b>	<b>\$848</b>
<b>Married Couple</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 adults (male and female) ages 31-50</li> </ul>	<b>\$144</b>	<b>\$689</b>
<b>One Person Household</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male aged 31-50</li> </ul>	<b>\$79</b>	<b>\$414</b>
<b>One Person Household (Senior)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female over age 70</li> </ul>	<b>\$57</b>	<b>\$299</b>



**Is income adequate  
in covering the cost  
of living in Niagara?**

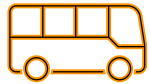
# Income Scenarios

- **Monthly income-** Includes income from employment and/or social assistance in addition to other eligible government benefits (e.g., Canada Child Benefit, Ontario Child Benefit, HST/GST Credit, Trillium Benefit etc.)
- **Average monthly rent-** Rental rates are provided by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and reflect the average rent paid for occupied units in Niagara and do not reflect the current asking price of vacant units
- **Monthly cost of nutritious eating-** NFB results
- **Remaining funds-** Money left over for all other necessities
- Total income does not reflect recent increases to the Canada Child Benefit or the one-time doubling of the HST/GST credit in the form of the Grocery Rebate for 2023.

<b>Income Scenario</b>	<b>Monthly income</b>	<b>Average monthly rent (% of income required for rent)</b>	<b>Cost of nutritious eating (% of income required for food)</b>	<b>Remaining Funds</b>
<b>Family of Four, Ontario Works</b>	\$2873	\$1366 (48%)	\$1212 (42%)	<b>\$295</b>
<b>Family of Four, Full-time minimum wage earner</b>	\$4218	\$1366 (32%)	\$1212 (29%)	<b>\$1640</b>
<b>Family of Four, Median after tax income</b>	\$9329	\$1366 (15%)	\$1212 (13%)	<b>\$6751</b>
<b>Single Parent Household, with two children, Ontario Works</b>	\$2636	\$1258 (48%)	\$848 (32%)	<b>\$530</b>
<b>Married Couple, Ontario Disability Support Program</b>	\$1792	\$1070 (60%)	\$689 (38%)	<b>\$33</b>
<b>One Person Household, Ontario Works</b>	\$851	\$833 (98%)	\$414 (49%)	<b>\$-396</b>
<b>One Person Household, Ontario Disability Support Program</b>	\$1387	\$1070 (77%)	\$414 (30%)	<b>\$-97</b>
<b>One Person Household, Old age Security/Guaranteed Income</b>	\$2035	\$1070 (53%)	\$299 (15%)	<b>\$666</b>

# Remaining funds for other necessities

- For many income scenarios there is little, if any, funds remaining for other necessities including:



Transportation



Childcare



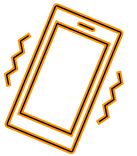
Utilities



Clothing




Medication



Cellphone



# Food Insecurity



# Food Insecurity Myth vs. Fact

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# Food Insecurity Defined

- Food insecurity is defined as ‘inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints’ (PROOF, 2023)
  - Marginal food insecurity: worrying about running out of food and/or having access to a limited selection of food due to financial constraints
  - Moderate food insecurity: compromise in the quality or quantity of food due to financial constraints
  - Severe food insecurity: not eating enough food and in extreme cases going days without food due to financial constraints



# Who is most affected by food insecurity?

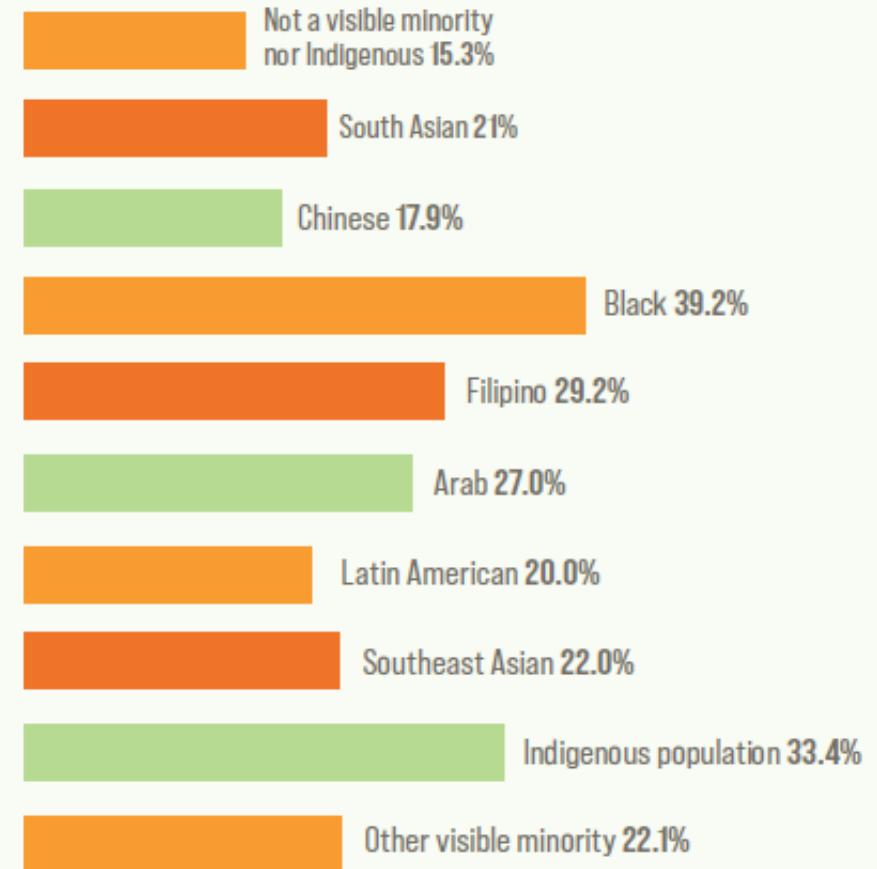
- Racialized populations
- People who rent their home
- Households with children
- Individuals receiving social assistance and low-income households



# Food insecurity and racial/cultural identity

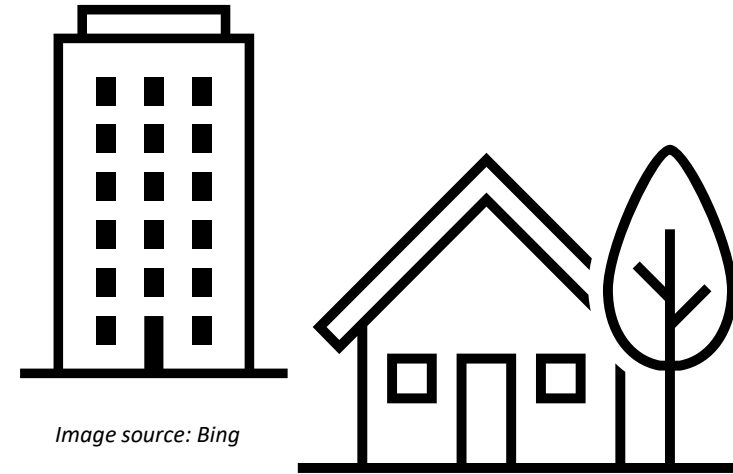
- In 2022, the highest percentage of people living in food insecure households in Canada are Black people (39.2%) and Indigenous Peoples (33.4%)

The percentage of people living in food insecure households by racial/cultural identity & Indigenous status (provinces only) is as follows:



# Food insecurity and homeownership

- In 2021,
  - 25.9% of renter households in Canada were food insecure
  - 13.9% of homeowners with a mortgage in Canada were food insecure
  - 7.2% of mortgage-free homeowners in Canada were food insecure



# Food insecurity and households with children

- In 2021, 1.4 million children under the age of 18 in Canada lived in a food insecure household (either marginally, moderately, or severely food insecure)
- Households with a lone female parent are more likely to be food insecure

# Food insecurity and income

- Not having enough money impacts the ability of individuals and families to purchase nutritious food, this is especially true for individuals that rely on social assistance
- In 2021, 63.1% of households in Canada who reported social assistance as their main source of income were food insecure



***'As household income declines, the risk of food insecurity increases'***

*- PROOF*



# Food insecurity and income

- Majority (51.9%) of food insecure households in Canada report wages, salaries, and self-employment as their main source of income (2021)
- Current wages and having a job is not enough to protect households from food insecurity.
  - Individuals employed in low-wage, short-term or precarious jobs, racialized workers, and those working multiple jobs and providing for multiple people are more likely to be food insecure

# Food Insecurity in Niagara



- In 2019, 18.3% of Niagara children and youth live in food insecure households
- From 2019 to 2021:
  - 4.7% of Niagara households are marginally food insecure
  - 7.9% of Niagara households are moderately food insecure
  - 4.4% of Niagara households are severely food insecure

Sources:

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Household food insecurity estimates from the Canadian Income Survey: Ontario 2022. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2023

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). (2023). Food insecurity among children using the Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth. 2nd ed. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario.

# Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

- In 2022, 26.2% of Niagara residents 18 years or older report that the COVID-19 pandemic made it harder to pay for enough food to feed themselves and members of their household
- 31.7% of Niagara residents 18 years or older report that the COVID-19 pandemic made it harder to pay for the quality or variety of food they wanted



Image source: Bing



# Food insecurity is a public health issue

Food Insecurity is associated with:



Chronic disease and conditions



Poor mental health



Infectious disease



Poor oral health



Injury


Leading to premature death and higher healthcare costs.

***‘Negative implications for health are greatest for those living in severely food insecure households’***

- PROOF

# Solutions to food insecurity

- Addressing food insecurity requires solutions that improve the financial circumstances of individuals and families, evidence-based solutions include:
  - a. Provision of social assistance programs that are adequate in helping to cover the cost of living and necessities
  - b. Provision of a basic income guarantee
  - c. Increasing minimum wage to a living wage
  - d. Reducing income taxes for low-income households



***“Everything costs more. I used to be able to save a little from month to month, not anymore. People on a fixed income haven’t seen a decent increase ever, surely not a “living wage”. It’s hard to make ends meet. Now I can’t save for my final expenses. That worries me.”***

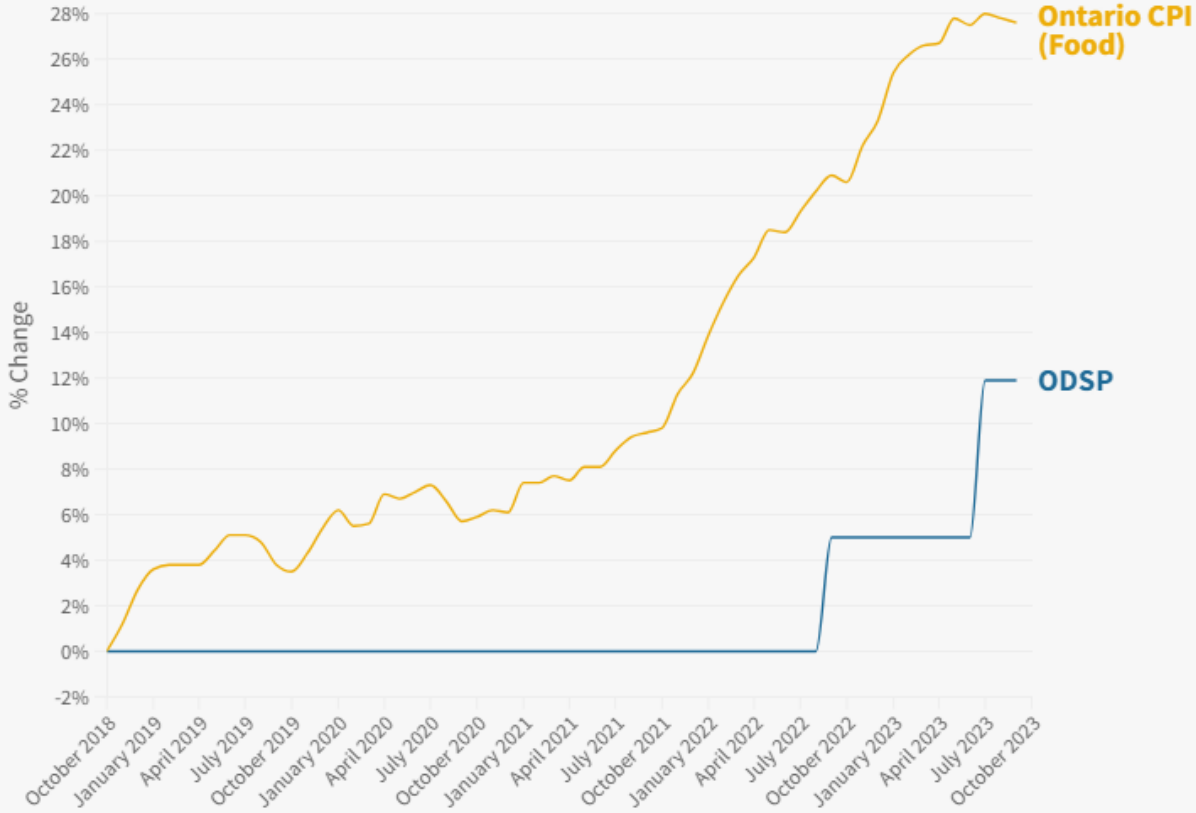
*-Anonymous Niagara Resident*

***“Notice less food in the house. Spend the same.”***

*-Anonymous Niagara Resident*

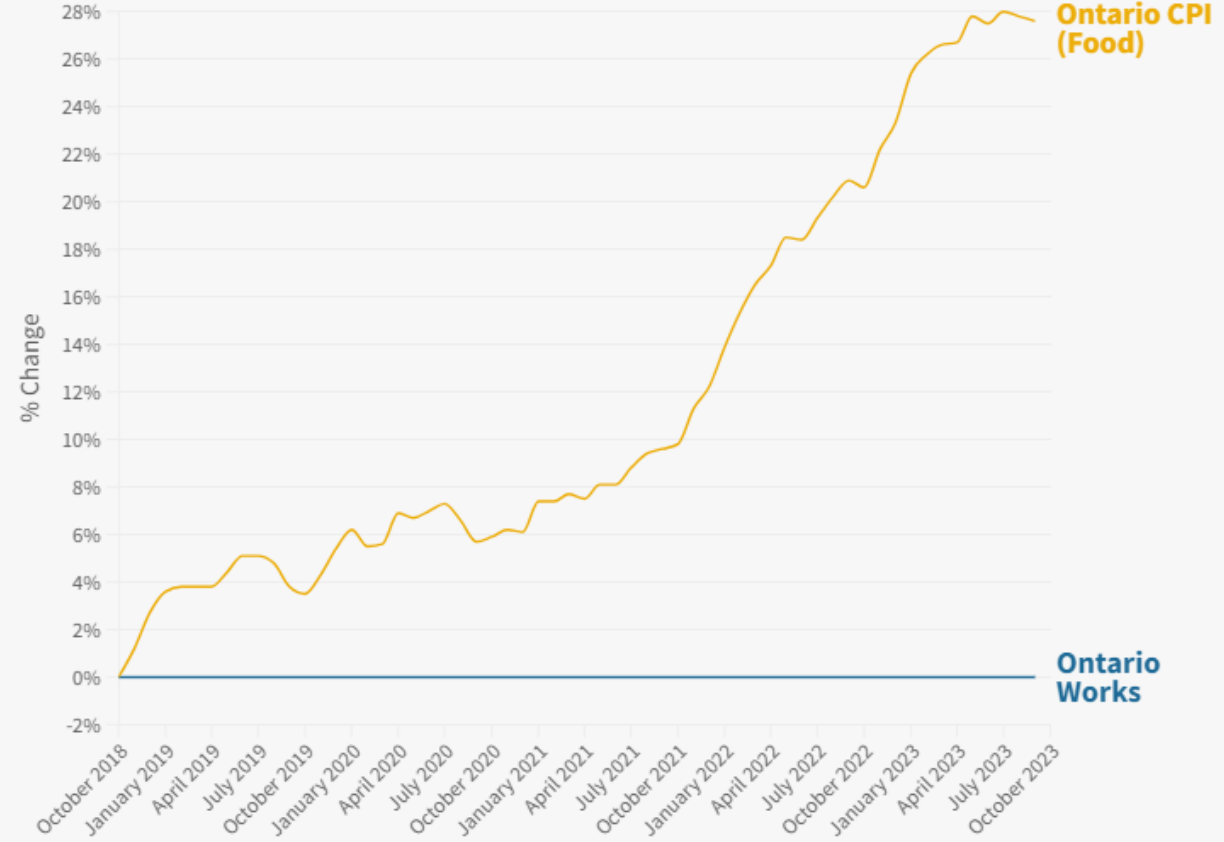


### Changes in Price of Food vs ODSP Payment, 5 Years



Source: Consumer price index (CPI) for food in Ontario: Statistics Canada. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payment: Ontario Government, Income Security Advocacy Centre. The current ODSP amount for a single person with no dependent is \$1308 per month, an increase of 11.9% since October 2018.

### Changes in Price of Food vs Ontario Works Payment, 5 Years



Source: Consumer price index (CPI) for food in Ontario: Statistics Canada. Ontario Works payment: Ontario Government, Income Security Advocacy Centre. Since October 2018, the OW amount for a single person with no dependent has remained \$733 per month (0% change).

# Solutions to food insecurity: Living Wage

- “A living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in their community” (Ontario Living Wage Network)
- In Niagara, the 2023 living wage is \$20.35 (an increase of 2.8% from 2022)

## *One Person Household, Living Wage*

Income: \$2691

Cost of rent: \$1070

Cost of food: \$414

Funds remaining: **\$1207**


## *One Person Household, Minimum wage*

Income: \$2140

Cost of rent: \$1070

Cost of food: \$414

Funds remaining: **\$656**



# Taking Action on Food Insecurity

Final **Menti** question

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Food Affordability in Niagara:  
Nutritious Food Basket Survey 2023  
Report and Infographic will be available  
at [www.niagararegion.ca/health](http://www.niagararegion.ca/health)

Learn more about food insecurity from  
PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research  
at <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/>

Join the Niagara Food Security  
Network





# Thank-you Q&A

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Myth vs. Fact Sources:

PROOF <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/food-procurement-food-skills-food-insecurity/>

PROOF <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/the-spending-patterns-of-food-insecure-households/>

PROOF <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/food-insecurity-a-problem-of-inadequate-income-not-solved-by-food/>

[PROOF . Who are most at risk of household food insecurity? - PROOF \(utoronto.ca\)](#)