

2023-2024

Snapshot



Taking action on food insecurity

Food insecurity is a growing crisis in Canada – increasing 26% from 2022 to 2023 – and is increasingly impacting the middle class. Research shows that 8 in 10 food insecure households live above the poverty line and over 60% of people who struggle to feed their families are in the workforce.

The vast majority of Canadians want our country to do more to address the urgent social issues of poverty and hunger. In the wake of these unprecedented rates of food insecurity there is also reason for optimism, with growing awareness and action by governments to strengthen our social safety net.

The Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security (the “Centre”) is increasingly focusing our efforts to reduce food insecurity, highlighted by the following initiatives:

- Deepening our understanding of who and why people are food insecure to surface potential policies and programs that could make the most difference for them. Our “urban archetypes” project, which has involved detailed interviews with over 50 people and input from a range of other stakeholders, will yield rich insights to accelerate our impact.
- Working with targeted provinces to test and scale policy and program interventions. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we are partnering with the provincial government to jointly invest \$1.8 million over three years to provide a food subsidy for low-income families with children through 16 Family Resource Centres. This initiative is part of a broader effort to reduce poverty and food insecurity and to improve health outcomes.

- Building capacity and scale in the emerging Food is Medicine movement in Canada. Food “prescriptions” which increase access to fruits and vegetables for low-income people living with chronic diet-related disease are a proven intervention to improve health outcomes. They can be filled through a variety of models including a produce box delivery, a community market or a restricted reloadable card used at retailers. Our goal is to establish a scalable food prescribing program that is integrated into mainstream health care, with the potential to improve health, reduce costs and increase food security.

The Centre was established by Maple Leaf Foods to advocate and invest in solutions to reduce food insecurity in Canada by 50% by 2030. The Centre and Maple Leaf bring an important private sector perspective and resources to address a social issue that for too long has unfairly depended on the charitable sector. With growing partnerships, political awareness and will, we are seeing progress. A stronger social safety net that enables all Canadians to access the basics in life – food, housing, health care and education – will benefit our economy, our society, and our identity as a caring, equitable and inclusive country.

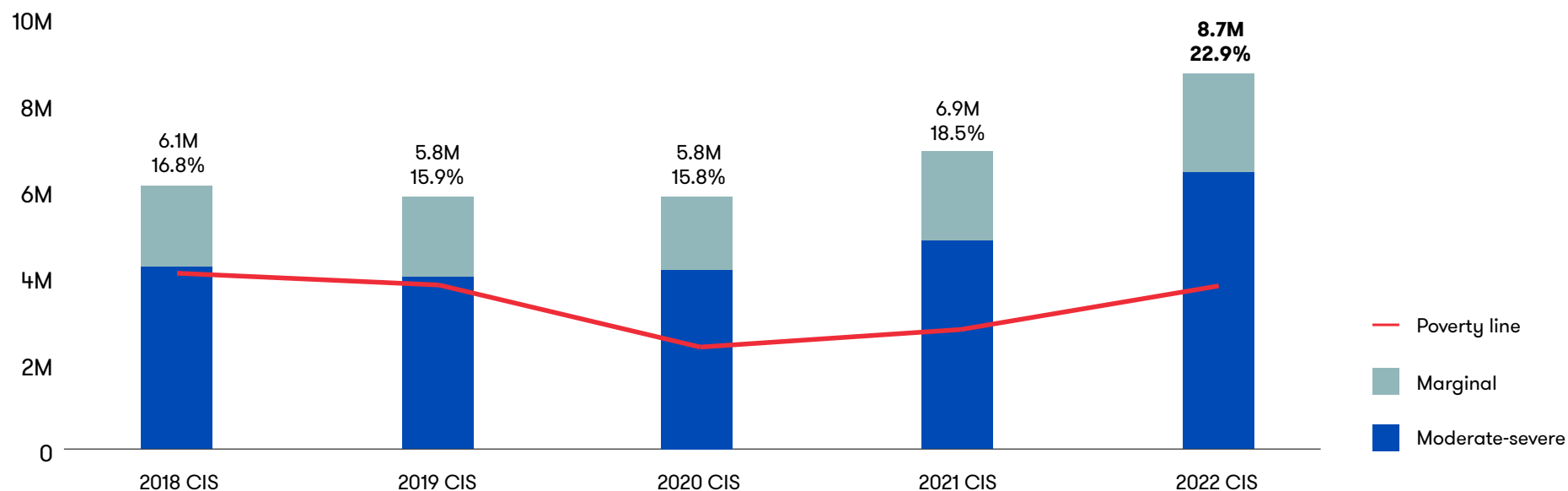
Lynda Kuhn
 Chair, Maple Leaf
 Centre for Food
 Security

Sarah Stern
 Executive Director,
 Maple Leaf Centre
 for Food Security



Almost 9 million people, including one in four children, are food insecure

Number of people with food insecurity (marginal, moderate-severe) in the [Canadian Income Survey \(CIS\)](#)



Food insecurity disproportionately impacts Black and Indigenous people, single female-led households, and people living with a disability

40%

of individuals living in food insecure households are **Black**

37%

of individuals living in food insecure households are **Indigenous**

46%

of single female-led households are food insecure

50%

of people who are food insecure also live with a **disability**

Our Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change is a strategy on a page. It describes our goal, what we believe needs to be true to get there, and how we work and collaborate. It includes a set of hypotheses that we test through our project investments, research and evaluations, and our work on bigger systems change.

Over 6 million Canadians live with moderate to severe food insecurity and are unable to access the food they need to support a healthy life.

Our goal is to work collaboratively to reduce food insecurity in Canada by 50%.

This will happen if...

Poverty is reduced by 50%.

Prevalence of food insecurity above the poverty line is decreased.

Scale community food programs are delivered with dignity and inclusivity and connect clients with wrap-around supports.

People living in Canada have ready physical access to sufficient healthy food and supports that overcome barriers to food security.

Food insecurity among Indigenous and Black peoples is at or below the national level.

Levers of Change



Shift Systems

Increase public engagement and influence policy, programs and investment to advance sustainable change.



Scale Impact

Support projects that reduce barriers to food security and enable more people to access food with dignity and urgency.



Build Capacity

Invest in knowledge sharing to increase cross-sectoral action and collaborative impact.

Collaboration

With our partners, we collaborate across sectors to address barriers to food security.

Public Sector

Private Sector

Civil Society

We're making investments that strengthen food access, food sovereignty and the intersection of health and food security

A look at some of our initiatives

The Centre funds organizations across the country that are designing and scaling programs to reduce barriers to food security, including:

- Food prescribing projects that improve health and food security while bringing researchers and practitioners together to build a body of knowledge.
- Community-based food subsidy programs that enable easier financial and physical access to food.
- Full-time traditional hunter and harvester programs to improve access to country foods in Canada's North.
- Job training programs that bridge the financial gap between social assistance and employment income.
- Wrap-around services integrated within food bank and community health settings to connect people and families with supports that alleviate food insecurity.
- Indigenous-led collaboratives that build food sovereignty in remote communities through food-related projects and knowledge sharing.
- Tax filing and benefits assistance that enables people who are food insecure to fully access their benefit entitlements.

Improving food access in Newfoundland and Labrador

The Centre seeks to deepen our relationships and impact in provinces that prioritize strengthening their social safety net, including reducing poverty and food insecurity and improving health outcomes. We are partnering with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to improve the ability of low-income families with children to afford food. Families with children are one of the fastest growing groups of food insecure households in Canada.

Sixteen Family Resource Centres throughout the province will distribute grocery gift cards through non-profit food programs starting in 2024. This initiative is part of a broader effort by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reduce poverty and improve health in the province.



Sarah Stern at the announcement for new investments to reduce food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty through collaboratives

Collaborative models that pool funder resources, uplift community ideas and respect Indigenous self-determination are one way the Centre is supporting food sovereignty and food security among First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Since 2017, we have helped the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative to grow its impact. The Collaborative now enables 32 northern communities to create projects that support food security, well-being, economic development and cultural reclamation. In 2020, we helped launch Gaagige Zaagibigaa, which distributes grants to households living in northern Ontario communities to access food from the land. As of 2023, we are supporting the development of an Indigenous collaborative model in Saskatchewan.



The Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative staff team at Diamond Willow, Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

Employment readiness in Winnipeg

Many provincial social assistance programs trap people in a cycle of food insecurity and poverty by clawing back earned income, making it difficult to transition into paid work. Starting in 2022, we invested in the relaunch of Harvest Manitoba's employment readiness program, which assists food bank clients in Winnipeg to gain targeted skills in warehousing and logistics while receiving paid stipends, transportation subsidies, connections to peers, wrap-around supports and job placements. So far, the Warehouse Training program has resulted in 78% of trainees finding employment in their field, while long-term benefits including job retention and income are being evaluated.



Trainees in the Harvest Manitoba Warehouse Training program.

Advocating for a strong social safety net that enables all Canadians to access food

Implementing a National School Food Program

Hunger has a profound impact on a child's ability to learn, socially thrive and succeed in life, yet 2.1 million Canadian children live in food insecure households. We joined others in calling on the federal government to implement a school food program with national scope that builds on existing provincial and municipal programs across the country on a cost-shared basis. The 2024 Federal Budget included a \$1 billion commitment over five years to reach an additional 400,000 children through school food programs across the country. This financial commitment builds on decades of work by tireless advocates in the food security sector, who have persevered in their work to see a healthy meal offered in every school. We look forward to working with school food experts and the provincial, territorial and federal governments to see these programs expanded.

Setting a target to reduce food insecurity

Given the economic, health, racial and social dimensions of food insecurity, lasting change will only be possible with a whole-of-government approach and a clear mandate to address the structural barriers to food security. In partnership with Food Banks Canada, Community Food Centres Canada and other partners,

we have been advocating that governments set a 50% reduction in food insecurity by 2030 goal that would include the eradication of severe food insecurity and alleviating the disproportionate impact on Black and Indigenous peoples. In December 2023 we launched a call for action and had 60 organizations sign a public letter published in the Globe and Mail and Hill Times.

Advocating for a fully funded Canada Disability Benefit

Immediate action is needed to help lift people with disabilities out of deep poverty. People with disabilities are especially vulnerable to food insecurity due to the added cost of living and presence of physical barriers – over 41% of people with incomes below the poverty line have a disability and 50% of people over the age of 15 experiencing food insecurity have a disability. Funding to support the implementation of the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) is a first step towards long-awaited relief for people living with disabilities, but the budgeted amount is short of what is needed to lift people out of deep poverty. We will continue to advocate for governments to provide adequate supports for people with disabilities, enabling them to meet their basic needs and live their lives with dignity.



Advancing knowledge of food insecurity

Food insecurity is impacting people who live above the poverty line

While economic security is critical to food security, reductions in poverty have not resulted in reduced food insecurity. To better understand this, the Centre funded Statistics Canada to undertake new analyses using the 2021 Canadian Income Survey, which found:

- 78% of people who struggle with food insecurity have incomes above the poverty line.
- Immigrants experience higher rates of food insecurity than those who are Canadian born, even after 10 years of living in Canada.
- Renters are more likely to be food insecure than homeowners.



Canadians believe now is the time to address poverty, racism and inequality

For the fifth consecutive year, in 2024 we commissioned a national survey to poll Canadians on their opinions related to economic, environmental and social issues including food insecurity and ways to address it. This research found that:

77%

of people are familiar with food insecurity, and more than 3 in 10 people say they know someone in this position

62%

of people say now is the time to address social issues like poverty, racism or inequality

81%

of people say that federal and provincial governments should do more to help people struggling with poverty and hunger in Canada

Our 2023/24 partners

We are proud to be partnering with organizations across Canada that are supporting people experiencing food insecurity to overcome barriers. Through our Feed Opportunity Fund, our partners receive financial support to conduct research, test ideas and scale projects to address barriers to food security for people and communities.

\$12.9 million
committed since our launch
in 2016



A big thank you to our supporters for helping make this work possible

Donated \$25,000 or more in 2023:



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