The Affordability of Healthy Eating in BC

The average monthly cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four in BC in 2022.¹

$1,263

732,000 or 15%

British Columbians can’t afford a basic nutritious diet.²

1 in 7
Households in BC experience household food insecurity.²

1 in 6
Children in BC live in households that experience household food insecurity.²

*Inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.

Household food insecurity is a serious public health issue that stems from systemic inequities.

Household food insecurity affects people’s physical, social and mental health, and overall wellbeing.

Compared to food secure households, health care costs are up to 76% higher for food insecure households.³

The root cause of household food insecurity isn’t the price of food — it’s lack of income.

1 Numbers don’t capture other costs related to food such as transportation or accessing traditional foods, which can be significant for remote and Indigenous communities.
The impact of food costs on household budgets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income and Costs</th>
<th>Family of four, income assistance</th>
<th>Family of four, minimum wage</th>
<th>Single parent with one child, income assistance</th>
<th>Single young male adult, disability assistance</th>
<th>Single female senior, income assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disposable income(^4)</td>
<td>$3,232</td>
<td>$5,251</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>$1,421</td>
<td>$1,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of housing</td>
<td>$1,657</td>
<td>$1,657</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$1,150</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% income required for housing</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of food</td>
<td>$1,263</td>
<td>$1,263</td>
<td>$661</td>
<td>$481</td>
<td>$327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% income required for food</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s left after housing and food</td>
<td>$311.89</td>
<td>$2,330.69</td>
<td>-$111.82</td>
<td>-$210.73</td>
<td>$248.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After paying for housing and food, little to no money remains for other necessities.

Many economic, social, environmental and geographic factors impact food insecurity, but income is the strongest predictor.

Research shows that household food insecurity can’t be fixed through food-based initiatives or charitable efforts like food banks - it needs income-based solutions.

For example, once low income adults reach the age of 65 and become eligible for seniors’ pension programs (a form of guaranteed basic income) their risk of being food insecure drops by 50%.^5^

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\(^4\) Disposable income refers to income remaining after deduction of taxes and other mandatory charges. Information on data sources used for these calculations can be found in the food costing report.

The Affordability of Healthy Eating in BC

Average monthly cost of healthy eating for a family of four in BC

British Columbia $1,263

Northern Health $1,300
Island Health $1,366
Interior Health $1,264
Vancouver Coastal Health $1,311
Fraser Health $1,193

Individuals, communities and governments all have a role to play in making BC food secure.

FACE the facts on food insecurity

Frame household food insecurity as an income-based problem that needs income-based solutions.
Assess the affordability of healthy eating in your community using BC’s latest data on the cost of food.
Connect and collaborate with others who are working on food security, poverty reduction, affordable housing and other related issues.
Engage in policy action to ensure everyone in BC has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe.

For more information, see the Food Costing in BC 2022 report.