



# The Affordability of Healthy Eating in BC



BC Centre for Disease Control  
Provincial Health Services Authority

**\$1,263**

The **average monthly cost** of a nutritious diet for a family of four in BC in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

**732,000**  
or **15%**

British Columbians can't afford a basic nutritious diet.<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 7**

Households in BC experience household food insecurity.\*<sup>2</sup>



**1 in 6**

Children in BC live in households that experience household food insecurity.\*<sup>2</sup>



*\*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.<sup>3</sup>








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.
- 2 Source: Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). 2022.
- 3 Source: Tarasuk V, Cheng J, de Oliveira C, Dachner N, Gundersen C, Kurdyak P. Association between household food insecurity and annual healthcare costs. *Can Med Assoc J*. 2015 Aug. 10;187(14):E429-E436.



## The impact of food costs on household budgets

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

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%.**<sup>5</sup>

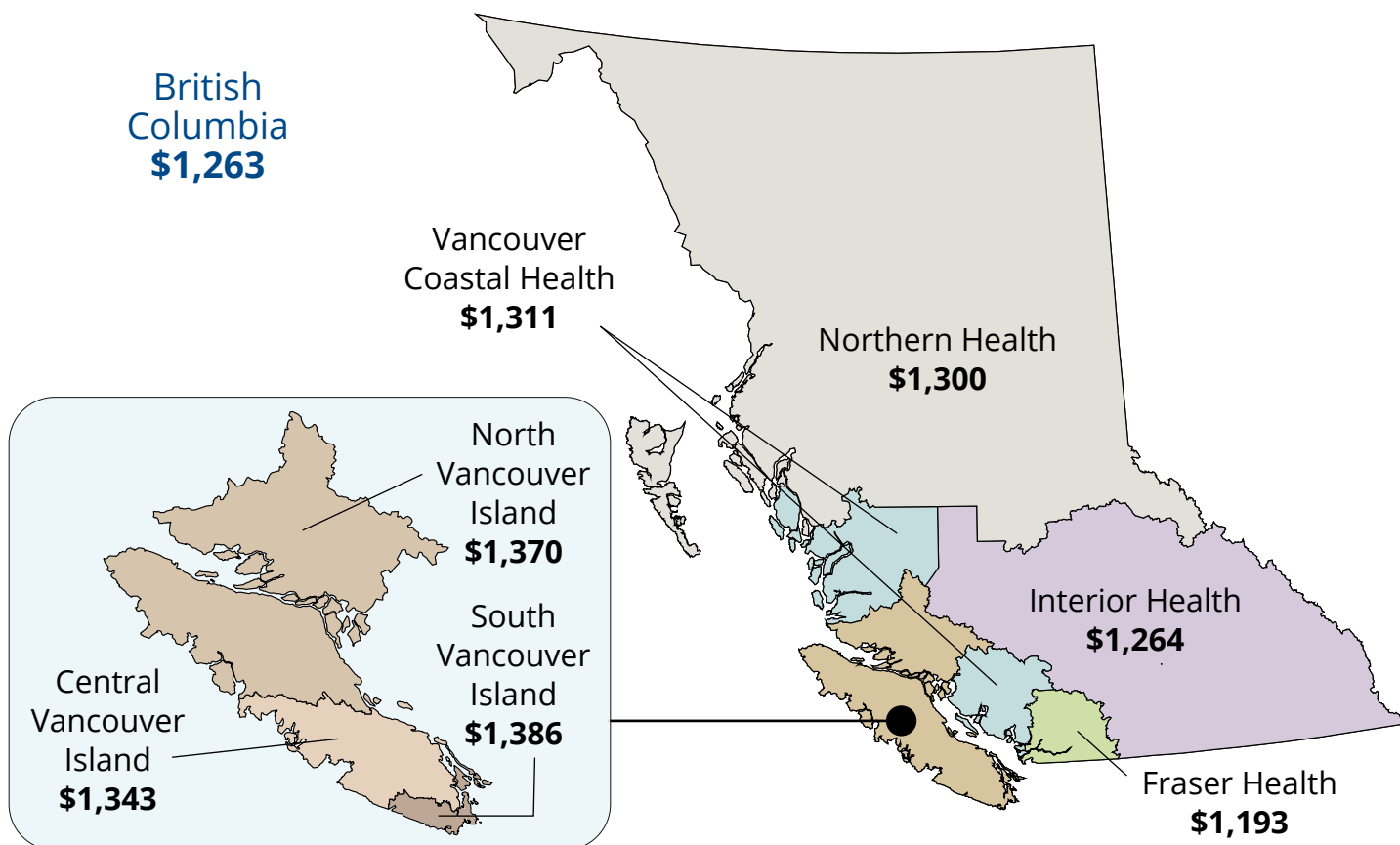
4 Disposable income refers to income remaining after deduction of taxes and other mandatory charges. Information on data sources used for these calculations can be found in the food costing report.

5 Source: McIntyre L, Dutton D, Kwok C, et al. Reduction of food insecurity in low-income Canadian seniors as a likely impact of a Guaranteed Annual Income. *Canadian Public Policy*. 2016;42(3):274-86.



## Average monthly cost of healthy eating for a family of four in Island Health

Island Health **\$1,366**



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](#).