

# FOOD AFFORDABILITY

*in Renfrew County and District, 2023*



Some people are unable to consistently access food due to financial constraints, resulting in a condition known as **food insecurity**. When incomes are low, people may have to choose between paying for food or paying for other basic necessities, like housing and utilities. **This is a significant public health problem.**

Each year, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) monitors local food affordability and food insecurity rates in Renfrew County and District (RCD).



**1 in 6 households**  
are food insecure in Renfrew County  
and District<sup>1</sup>



**1 in 4 children**  
are food insecure in  
Ontario<sup>2</sup>

## Monitoring Food Affordability

RCDHU used the **Ontario Nutritious Food Basket** (ONFB) tool to monitor food affordability across RCD. In May 2023, staff went to nine local grocery stores and collected prices for the same 61 food items. Food costs were then combined with housing rental rates and compared to various income situations to determine the local affordability of food.

The ONFB is a list of food items that make up a hypothetical grocery basket based on Canada's Food Guide. It is intended to model what a family might buy while following nutritional guidelines.



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

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Housing rental rates were calculated using the 2021 Canadian Rental Housing Index (CRHI), adjusting for inflation. RCDHU conducted additional research to assess how well this data represents the current rental market in RCD. Findings suggest that the CRHI rental prices may be as much as **70% below** prices for new rentals in the current market. RCDHU recommends caution when evaluating the following income scenarios.

## Identifying Food Insecurity in RCD

As seen below, local income scenarios show the difficulties low-income households experience when paying for housing and food. After paying for food and rent, the **remaining monthly income** is available for necessities like utilities (like heating and electricity), childcare, medical and dental bills, phone and internet services, transportation costs, clothing, pets, etc.

### What's Left each month for...

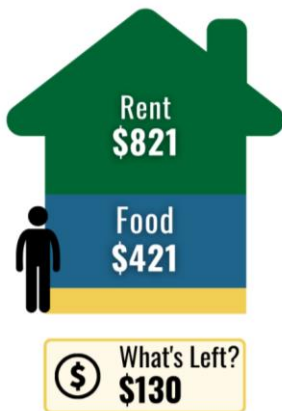


**Results indicate that families with lower incomes struggle to afford food.** This is due not only to high food prices, but also to incomes that are **too low** to cover basic necessities.

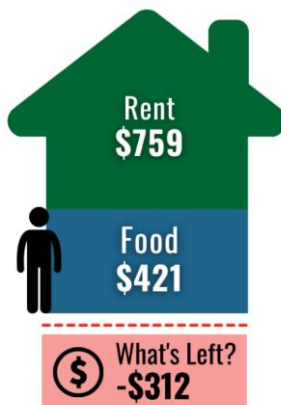
## Income Scenarios in Renfrew County and District

Note: Food and rental costing methodologies were changed in 2023. As a result, the data described in this report should not be compared to previous reports.

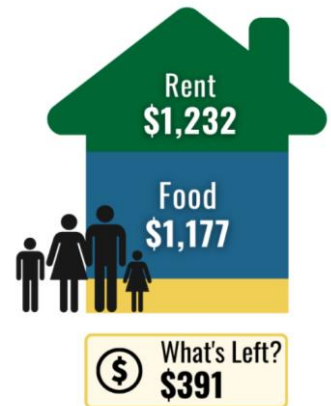
**One Person, ODSP\***  
**Monthly income: \$1,372**



**One Person, Ontario Works**  
**Monthly income: \$868**



**Family of Four, Ontario Works**  
**Monthly income: \$2800**



\* Ontario Disability Support Program



*Income scenarios in RCD*

|  | Monthly Income <sup>a</sup> | Estimated Monthly Rent <sup>b</sup> | Monthly Cost of Food | What's Left    |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Households with Children</b>  |                             |                                     |                      |                |
| Family of Four, Ontario works  | \$2,800                     | \$1,232                             | \$1,177              | <b>\$391</b>   |
| Family of Four, One Full-Time Minimum Wage Earner                      | \$4,166                     | \$1,232                             | \$1,177              | <b>\$1,757</b> |
| Family of Four, Median Income (after tax, in Ontario)                  | \$9,290                     | \$1,232                             | \$1,177              | <b>\$6,881</b> |
| Single Parent Household with 2 Children, Ontario Works                 | \$2,566                     | \$1,132                             | \$868                | <b>\$566</b>   |
| Single Parent Household with 2 Children, Full-Time Minimum Wage Earner | \$4,308                     | \$1,132                             | \$719                | <b>\$2,457</b> |
| <b>Households without Children</b>                                     |                             |                                     |                      |                |
| One Person Household, Ontario Works                                    | \$868                       | \$759 <sup>c</sup>                  | \$421                | <b>-\$312</b>  |
| One Person Household, Ontario Disability Support Program               | \$1,372                     | \$821                               | \$421                | <b>\$130</b>   |
| One Person Household, Old Age Security/ Guaranteed Income Supplement   | \$1,996                     | \$821                               | \$306                | <b>\$869</b>   |
| Married Couple, Ontario Disability Support Program                     | \$2,437                     | \$821                               | \$702                | <b>\$914</b>   |
| Single Pregnant Person Household, Ontario Disability Support Program   | \$1,412                     | \$821                               | \$401                | <b>\$190</b>   |

<sup>a</sup> Includes benefits and credits

<sup>b</sup> May or may not include utilities

<sup>c</sup> This scenario uses rental rates for a bachelor apartment



Note: The ONFB tool used to calculate the monthly cost of food assumes that people have the time, skills, and equipment to make meals from scratch. Also, the Canada Food Guide and ONFB may not cover the dietary needs of all religious and cultural groups. They do not include traditional Indigenous foods and food acquisition practices. Additionally, the ONFB excludes certain items like pre-packaged foods, baby foods, special dietary products (like gluten-free), or cleaning and personal hygiene products. RCDHU recognizes these significant limitations to the ONFB.



## Food Insecurity is a Public Health Concern

The widespread nature of food insecurity is a serious public health concern.

**In RCD, nearly 1 in 6 (17%) households are food insecure.**<sup>1</sup>

This includes those who are marginally, moderately, and severely food insecure. **In Ontario, 1 in 4 children** (24.6%) live in food-insecure households, affecting nearly 700,000 children.<sup>2</sup>



Food insecurity has **long-lasting health impacts** for children and adults. Read more at: [Food Insecurity](#).



### Food insecurity can affect anyone:

**Being employed, receiving wages, or having a salary does not guarantee protection from food insecurity.** More than half (**60.2%**) of food-insecure households in Canada indicated wages, salaries, or self-employment as their main source of income.<sup>2</sup>

Besides income, individuals may experience a **disproportionately high rate of food insecurity** if they: <sup>2-4</sup>

- live in rental housing
- are a single female parent
- are a member of a racialized group
- identify as Indigenous

Individuals receiving **social assistance** are at higher risk of experiencing food insecurity. In Canada, **69.9%** of households receiving social assistance report experiencing food insecurity.<sup>2</sup>

## Food insecurity is a result of poverty.

POVERTY

To solve the problem, we need to **take action against poverty** and implement income-based solutions.

You too can take a stance against food insecurity and advocate for change. Find out how you can take action by visiting: [Food Insecurity](#).

**We all deserve to have our basic needs met and live with dignity.**



## References

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Household food insecurity estimates from the Canadian Income Survey: Ontario 2019-2022. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2023.
2. Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2022. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). 2023. Available from: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Household-Food-Insecurity-in-Canada-2022-PROOF.pdf>
3. PROOF. Who are most at risk of household food insecurity [Internet]? Toronto, ON: University of Toronto; 2023 [cited 2023 Nov 23]. Available from: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/who-are-most-at-risk-of-household-food-insecurity/>
4. Ontario Dietitians in Public Health. Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity. 2020. Available from: <https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1>

