



The Stereotype of “Starving Students”
and the Reality of
Rising Food Insecurity on
College Campuses

HCA Webinar

Introductions

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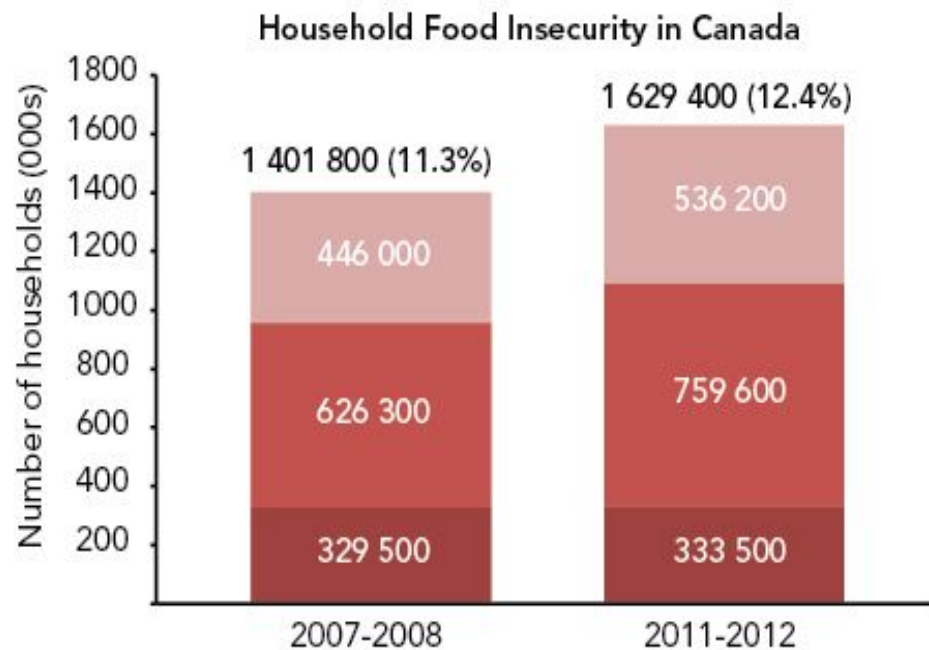
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What is Food Security?

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

FAO. 2002. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001. Rome.

Food Insecurity in Canada



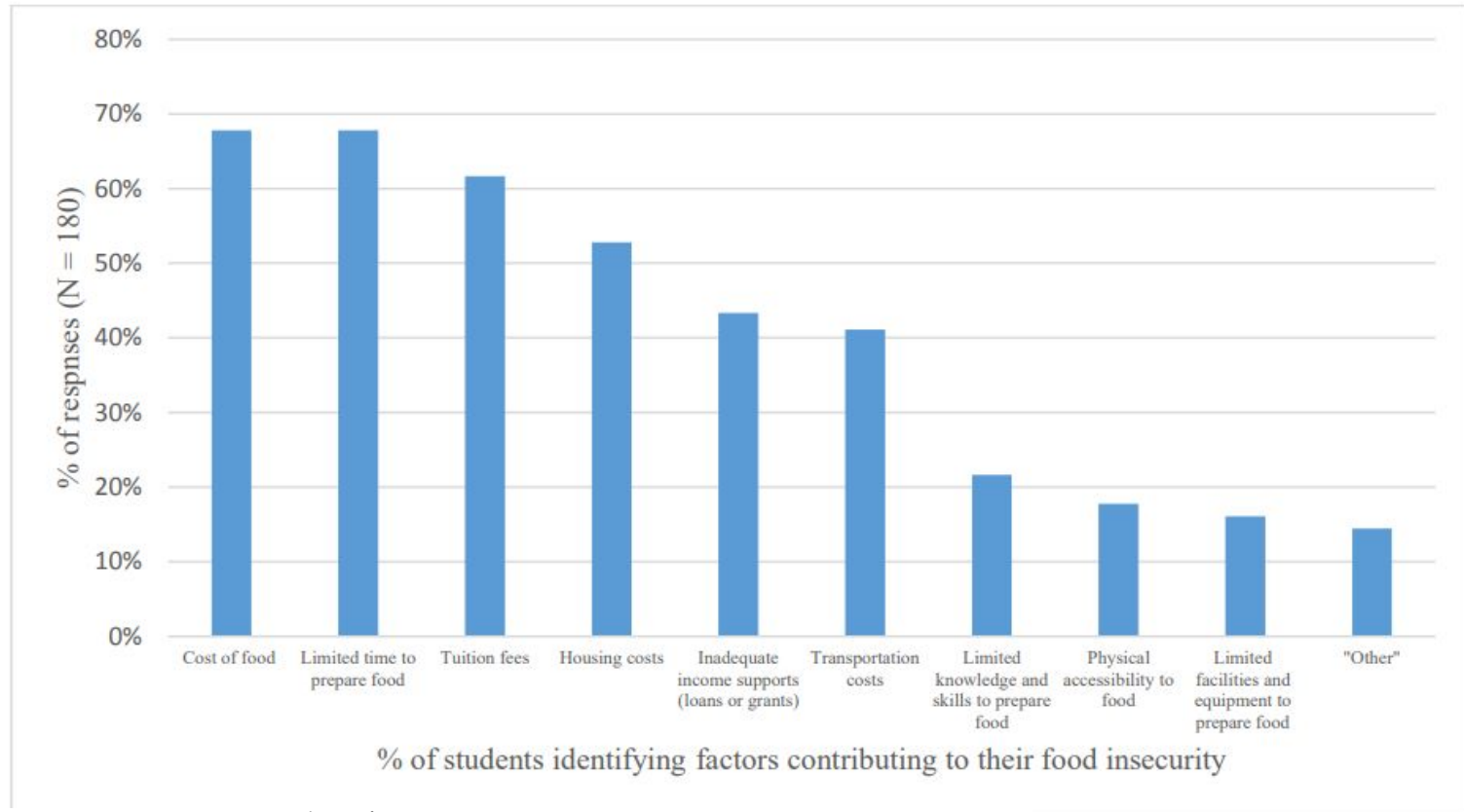
Data source: Statistics
Canada, Canadian
Community Health Survey
(CCHS) 2007-2008, 2011-2012

- Marginal food insecurity
- Moderate food insecurity
- Severe food insecurity

Food Insecurity on Canadian Campuses

- 39% of students moderately or severely food insecure across 5 Canadian campuses (including U of C)
Silverthorn, D. (2016). Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Retrieved from: <http://mealexchange.com>
- 35% of students moderately or severely food insecure at University of Manitoba
Entz, Slater, & Desmarais (2017). Student food insecurity at the University of Manitoba. Canadian Food Studies, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 139–159 DOI: 10.15353/cfs-rcea.v4i1.204
- 40% of students experience some degree of food insecure at University of Saskatchewan
Caitlin Olauson, Rachel Engler-Stringer, Hassan Vatanparast & Rita Hanoski (2018) Student food insecurity: Examining barriers to higher education at the University of Saskatchewan, Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, 13:1, 19–27, DOI: 10.1080/19320248.2017.1393365

Figure 1: Contributors to food insecurity



Entz, Slater, & Desmarais (2017). *Student food insecurity at the University of Manitoba.*

Canadian Food Studies, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 139–159 DOI: [10.15353/cfs-rcea.v4i1.204](https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v4i1.204)

At Increased Risk of Food Insecurity

- International students have 2 times the increased risk compared to domestic students
- Graduate students have 1.2 times the increased risk
- Students who parent have 1.7 times the increased risk

*Based on Odds Ratio (OR) where greater than 1 indicates an increased association with being food insecure.

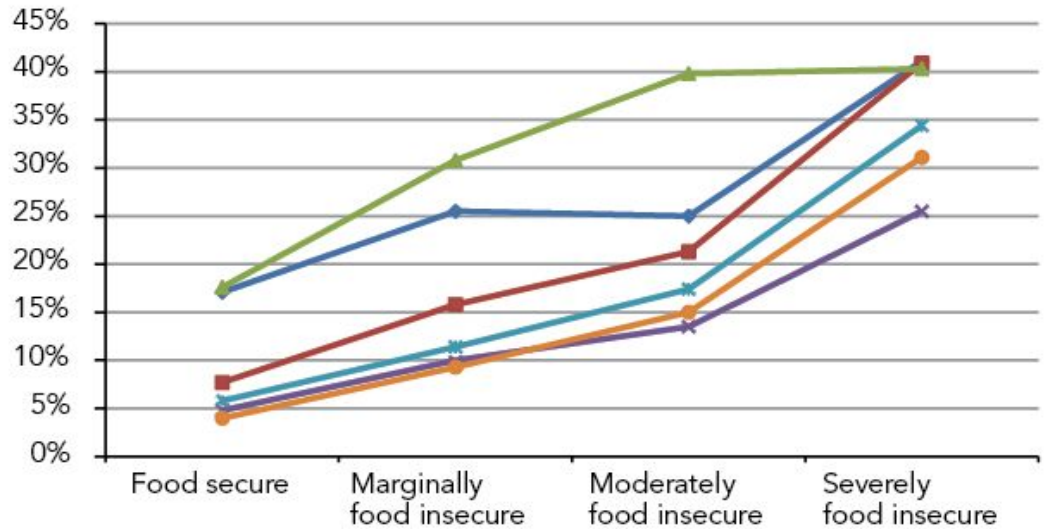
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Tuition in Alberta has increased by more than triple since 1990

- Rising Educational Costs
 - Tuition, textbooks, supplies and additional fees
- Living Expenses
 - Rent and food
- Roughly \$8,000 a year to study at U of A (Tuition and books)

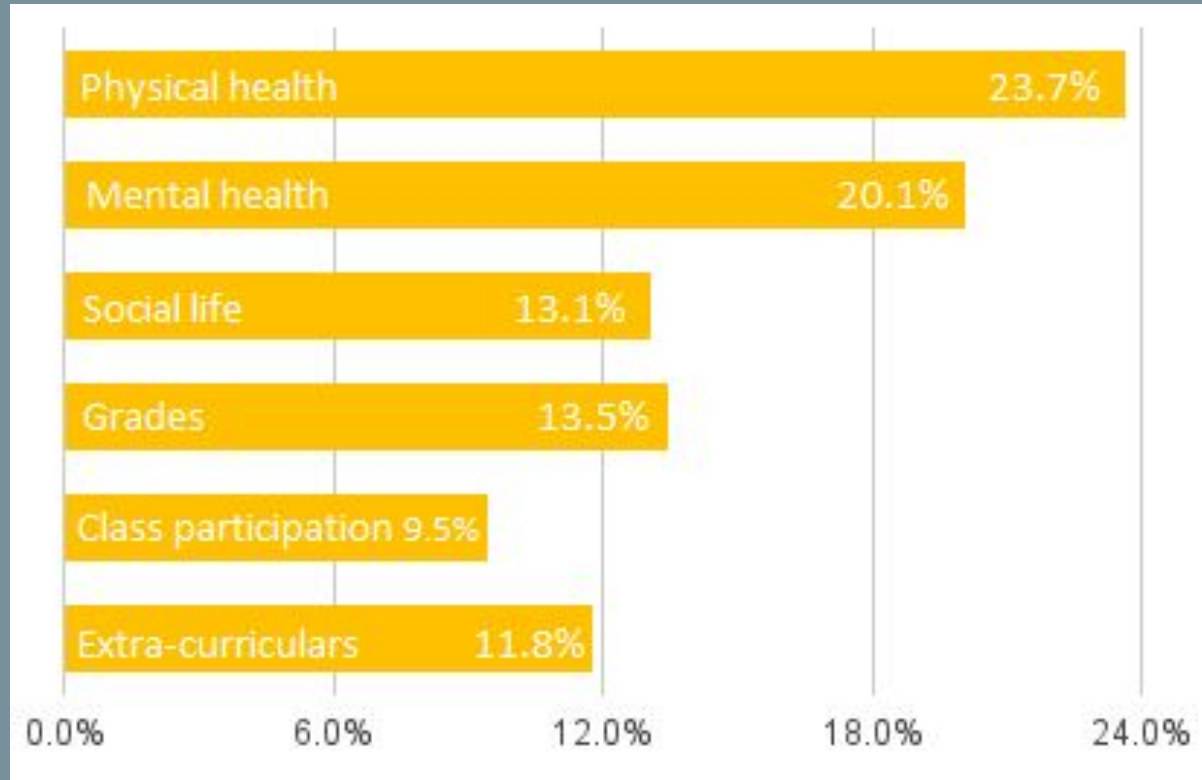
Food Insecurity in Canada

Adverse mental health outcomes reported by Canadian adults (18-64 years of age), by household food insecurity status²



Data Source:
Statistics Canada,
Canadian Community
Health Survey (CCHS),
2005-2012

Food Insecurity on Canadian Campuses



Silverthorn, D. (2016). *Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses*. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Retrieved from: <http://mealexchange.com>

The currency rate has dropped back home so my family is no longer able to help when my savings are running low.

I am taking care of my grandkids while back in school. My program funding has been delayed, so the food bank helps me feed my family.

I am in school full-time and my spouse takes care of our three kids. My part-time income from my program doesn't cover our living costs, so we rely on the Child Tax Benefit and occasional food hampers to cover gaps.

The first thing that goes through [my mind] when I have financial troubles, it's always just like, 'Well, I can eat less.' Because you know everything else you need...you need textbooks. But food, you know, you can eat a little less, you won't die.*

My student loans were delayed, and I have bills such as rent and tuition that have to be paid on time. Paying for food too is tough right now, so using the food bank is helping me afford it.

I am new to Alberta and I have difficulty finding low cost food options that fit my dietary restrictions. I am not used to the food options here yet.

So What Now?

How can we work together to combat student food insecurity?

Three Strategies We Can Pursue

- Work to combat the stigma around food insecurity.
- Collaborative institutional approaches.
- Cross institutional approaches.

Combating the Stigma of Student Food Insecurity

- Students are often assumed to be:
 - 18-24 year olds
 - Supported by parents or family
 - Certain amount of privilege
 - International students are wealthy
- Stereotype of how students should live (ex Eating instant noodles and Kraft Dinner)
 - “Starving student” - adversity is just part of the experience of being a student

Collaborative Institutional Approaches

- Benefits of working together
 - Better wrap around care for student.
 - CFB informs student support.
 - Working together to address issues of stigma and shame.
 - Additional resource for student services to draw on.



Cross Institutional Approaches

- Same issue across all post-secondaries
- Elevate the conversation in the province
- Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS)
 - Opportunity to collect and compare data

Thank You!

Any questions?

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References

- Entz, Slater, & Desmarais (2017). Student food insecurity at the University of Manitoba. *Canadian Food Studies*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 139–159 DOI: 10.15353/cfs-rcea.v4i1.204
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- The University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus. [UBC Wellbeing]. (2021, March 10). What Do We Know? The State of Food Insecurity Research and Dialogue Building [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkd6tph91J4>
- Silverthorn, D. (2016). *Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses*. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Retrieved from: <http://mealexchange.com>