

ENERGY POVERTY 101

What is energy poverty?

Energy poverty occurs when households do not have access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy sources needed for day-to-day life. There is no set standard on what constitutes energy poverty, but the Canadian Government considers households to be living in energy poverty when 10% or more of the household's income is spent on energy needs such as heating, cooling, or lighting their homes, while organizations like the Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners have a threshold of 6%. Regardless, energy poverty occurs when people cannot afford or access adequate energy and may be forced to make a choice between paying the energy bill or purchasing other basic necessities like food.

Indigenous, rural, and remote communities face higher energy costs than the rest of Canada. The same goes for those living in the Atlantic provinces, due to factors such as a reliance on electricity and oil, lower median incomes, plus the number of residents living in rural areas.

While low-income homes are disproportionally affected by energy poverty, it's not just a low-income issue. Homes cannot be lifted out of energy poverty if they cannot afford to make the changes necessary to improve energy efficiency in their homes.

Energy poverty can exacerbate chronic diseases, negatively affect mental health, and is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

How does energy poverty affect Nova Scotians?

- 43% of Nova Scotians experience some level of energy poverty.
 - o Nearly 75% of those in energy poor households cut spending on necessities like food or medication to pay for power.
- Energy poverty twice as prevalent for Atlantic Canadians compared to the rest of the country.
 - o Households in Atlantic Canada not only spend a greater amount of money on their home energy needs, but also a greater percentage of their income.
- One-in-four Atlantic Canadian households are spending 10% or more of their income on energy costs.

ABOUT FEED NOVA SCOTIA

Feed Nova Scotia is one of 10 provincial food associations in Canada, representing 139 member organizations across the province. Since 1984, Feed Nova Scotia has been focused on providing high quality, nutritious food to the member organizations, while focusing on creating change at the systemic level. This includes collaboration through grants and community partnerships that focus on food distribution efficiency, community farming education, and advocacy projects.