

## FOOD INSECURITY 101



### What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is defined as inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. It happens when people do not have access to the fresh, affordable, and nutritious food needed to support growth, development, and a healthy life. This is unique to every individual – everyone has different needs, wants, and relationships with food.

Levels of food insecurity can range anywhere from worrying about running out of food, compromising on food quality or quantity, or even to skipping meals when they don't have a way to pay for them. Since grocery bills are often the first place people start making sacrifices when they are facing financial difficulties, food insecurity rates are exceptionally worrying. They tell us about more than just the household food landscape; typically, by the time someone comes forward and admits they are unable to afford the food they need, they have already compromised spending on their other necessities, including prescription medication, or housing.

Food insecurity has a deep, negative impact on the community, and can affect health, economic potential and academic futures, and overall quality of life.

People aren't food insecure because they don't have enough food. People are food insecure for a number of reasons, including precarious work, low wages, systemic racism and oppression, a lack of affordable housing, and inadequate income assistance levels to name a few. Members of racialized communities, those with disabilities, and those surviving on income assistance are some of the groups disproportionately affected by food insecurity.

Food insecurity cannot be solved by charities like Feed Nova Scotia, community food programs, or food waste diversion. Becoming a better grocery shopper, or attending financial literacy classes won't fix food insecurity. The only solutions to food insecurity are economic interventions that increase a household's income.

### How does food insecurity affect us?

- 23% of Canadian households experience some level of food insecurity
  - o That's almost 10 million people
- Nova Scotians experience the highest rate of food insecurity across the provinces, capping off at 28.9% of the population.
- 1 in 3 Canadian children live in a food insecure household
- Black and Indigenous households experience food insecurity at a much higher rate than their white counterparts (40% and 37%, respectively).

### 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.