

FIGHTING HUNGER IN EDMONTON

EDMONTON'S
FOODBANK



2023
BEYOND
FOOD
REVISITED

CLIENT SURVEY





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INTRODUCTION

Edmonton's Food Bank has done similar surveys and reports over the years. We ask questions like *why do you come to the Food Bank?* In addition to coming to the Food Bank, *how do you deal with food security in your home? What services are you using?* These questions are all meant for us to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of the people we are serving. This summer, we interviewed 497 hamper recipients and this is their story.

As with all reports, there are limitations to the survey and research. Food security is complex. Like its closest cousin, Income Security, it requires thoughtful conversations, an in-depth understanding, and the opportunity to look at diverse opinions.

This report will provide you with insight into the people we serve. It is also a call to action from our community and, in particular, community leaders. Edmonton's Food Bank challenges the notion that food on its own will reduce poverty and solve food insecurity. There is a moral dimension to hunger and we must all be committed to enhancing the health and well-being of others - especially those in our community who are most vulnerable.

Thank you for reading this report and for being part of the conversation.

Sincerely,



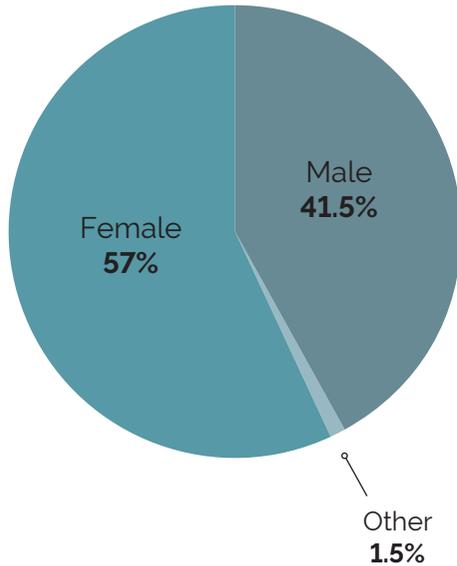
Marjorie Bencz, CM
Executive Director
Edmonton's Food Bank

OUR VALUES

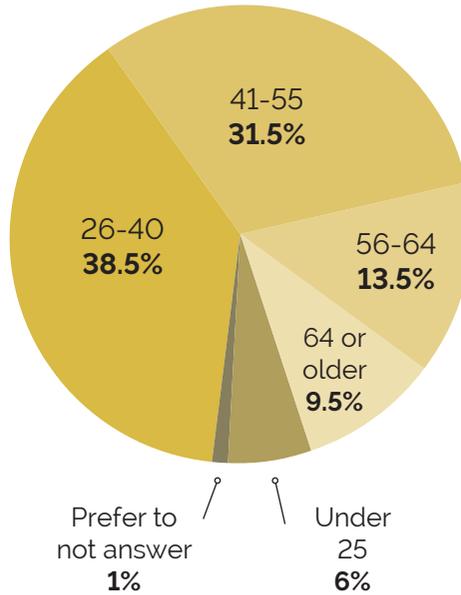


WHO WE TALKED TO

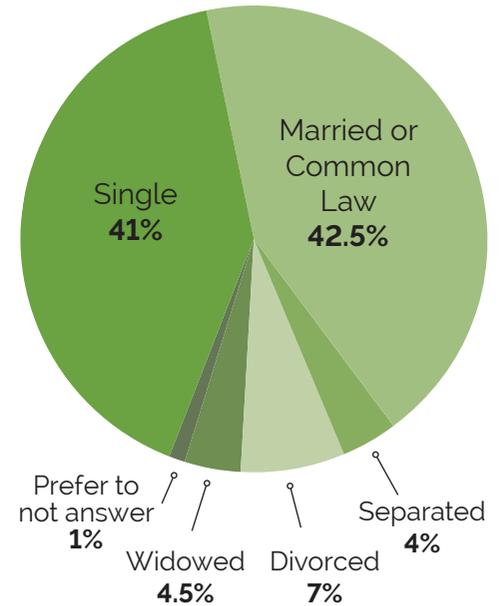
GENDER



AGE



MARITAL STATUS



56.9% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS IDENTIFY AS FEMALE

The two largest age categories were 26-40 (38.4%) and 41-55 (31.7%), this statistic is relatively consistent with the 2018 survey, when 33% of the sample was 26-40 and 33.6% was 41-55 years old.

23.2% of the 2023 sample is 56 or older.

In 2021, 26.9% of the sample were 56 or older.

All survey number results contained in this document were rounded to the nearest 0.5% for ease of reading.

A full data set can be obtained by contacting Marjorie Bencz at info@edmontonsfoodbank.com.

54.5% OF RESPONDENTS LIVED IN A HOME WITH CHILDREN

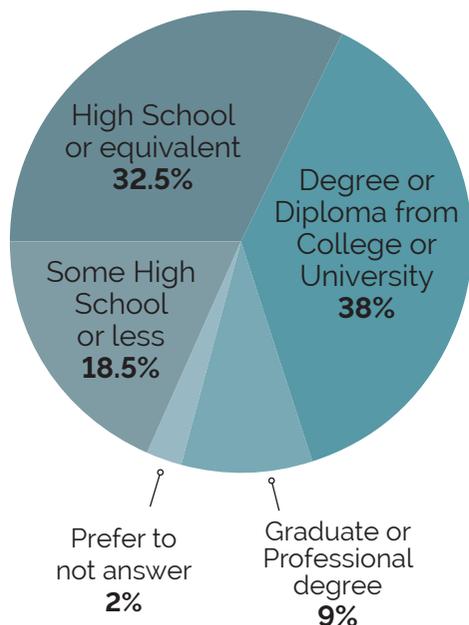
Among these respondents:

- 30.9% lived in a home with 1 child
- 27% lived in a home with two children
- 9% lived in a home with 3 children

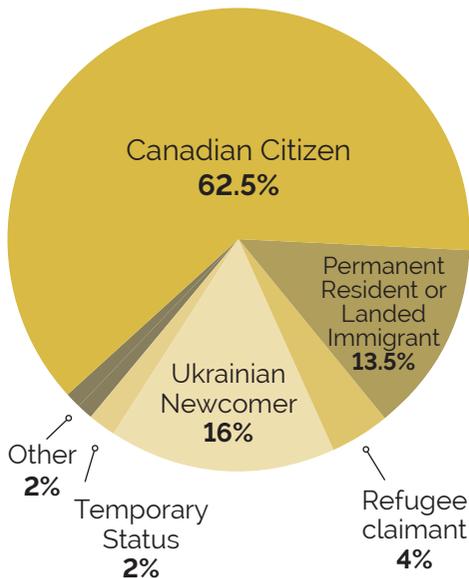
An almost equal number of respondents were either single (41.3%) or married or common-law (42.5%).

On the more extreme end, 17 respondents (6.3% of those with kids) lived in a home with 5-6 children and one respondent lived in a home with 11 children.

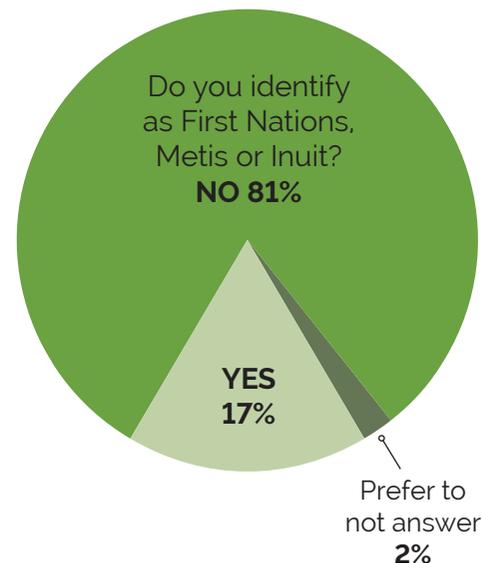
EDUCATION



CITIZENSHIP



IDENTITY



SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE EDUCATED

37.8% of the sample had a degree or diploma from college or university. The next highest category was high school or equivalent, which made up 32.7% of the sample.

The majority of survey respondents are **Canadian Citizens, at 62.7%**. Permanent Residents make up 13.4% of respondents.

The proportion of respondents who are Canadian Citizens is going down. 80% of the sample in 2021 were Canadian Citizens, and in 2018 that number was 90%.

In 2023, the influx of Ukrainian Newcomers fleeing the war may have skewed this data. They made up 16% of the sample.

17% of the sample identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit, continuing a trend noticed last year that **fewer Indigenous people are in the sample**.

In 2018, 37% of the sample was Indigenous and in 2021 that number dropped to 25.5%. This number has dropped even further in 2023. This is a noticeable difference.

NOTE: In some cases, Indigenous people are less likely to identify themselves as Indigenous because of labels or a history of government tracking.



HELPING HANDS

"Four years ago, I was an international student and my husband was a foreign worker. At that time, we did not have enough money for food.

We lived on watered down ground pork and rice with curry powder for flavour. We stretched our meals out even after I knew that it had gone

bad. I cried while eating it - it tasted bad, but I was hungry.

I saw the Food Bank for the first time on a brochure pinned to a board. The volunteer welcomed us without judgment. They provided us with various foods over several months.

We used to discuss how we'd give back and now

we are volunteering at the Food Bank to help others. Without the Food Bank's support, we might not have survived. We now have jobs and received permanent resident cards. They gave us energy to study, get a job, and the boost we needed. Thank you."

-Food Bank client

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

MORE SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE EMPLOYED

Previously, employment rates had been trending downwards. In 2018, 22% of the sample was working at the time of the survey, in 2021 that number dropped to 17%. Now in 2023, 27% of the sample are employed.

For those who are working, the most common types of employment were part-time/casual/seasonal (only one job) at 40.7% and full time (only one job) at 45.9%.

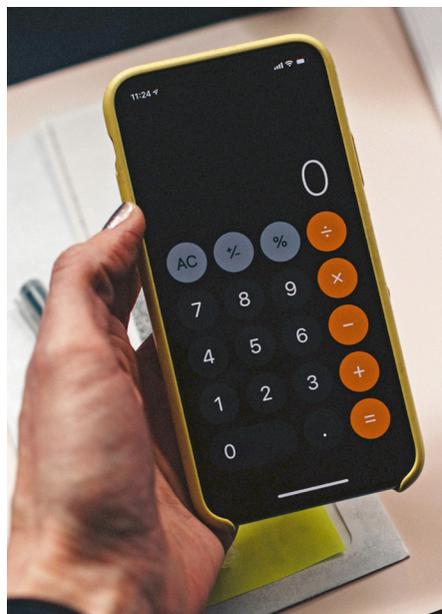
THOSE WHO WERE EMPLOYED TENDED TO NOT HAVE ANY BENEFITS

Only 34.4% of working respondents had health benefits and only 15.2% had paid sick days.

The most common barrier to employment was a health condition or disability (39.1%), followed by lack of position requirements (18.6%), and then personal family responsibilities (16.8%).

14% of the others (or 3.7% of the total sample) responded that caregiving responsibilities were a barrier to work.

In addition to caregiving responsibilities, other employment barriers included: transportation, past employment trouble, life crises, childcare costs, criminal record, difficulty completing applications, and being a newcomer.



SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO WORK HAVE LOW WAGES

Please note that there is overlap between the following categories, as some respondents reported more than one source of income.

For those who reported their wage hourly (n=163):

The average reported was \$19.

24% make minimum wage and 74% make less than a living wage (\$21.50)*.

OF THOSE WHO REPORTED AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF INCOME

29.2% reported receiving Alberta Works in 2023 and 18.7% received AISH. In 2021, 33.6% received Alberta works and 15.2% received AISH.

Child benefits were a large source of support as 25.2% received the federal benefit and 17.7% received the provincial benefit.

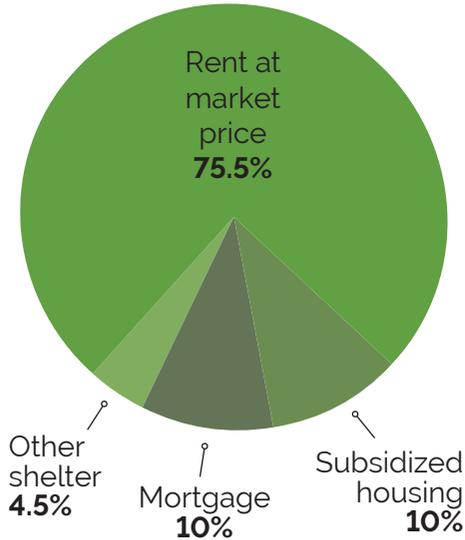
A large portion of participants had accessed seniors benefits. 11.5% received CPP, 6.5% received OAS, and 1.3% received the GIS.

74.3% of respondents filed a tax return last year.

*The living wage in 2022 is \$21.40 but we have rounded to \$21.50 for ease of analysis.

HOUSEHOLD AND PERSONAL EXPENSES

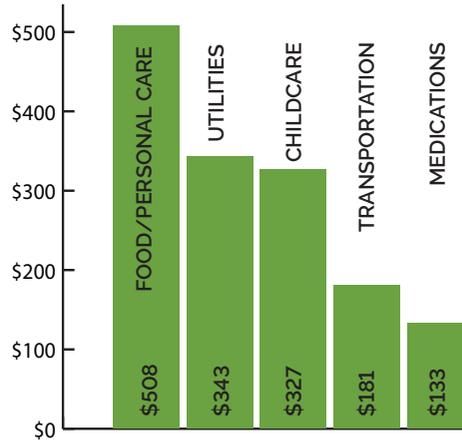
THE MAJORITY OF THE SAMPLE RENT THEIR HOMES AT MARKET PRICE



The majority of the sample rent their homes at market price – 75.5%. 10.3% are in subsidized housing and 9.9% have mortgages.

86% OF RESPONDENTS DO NOT HAVE ANY SAVINGS

HIGHEST MONTHLY EXPENSES



Respondents are overall spending more on their basic needs than in 2021.

Respondents paid an average of \$343/month on utilities. This is much higher than in 2021, when respondents paid an average on \$266 on utilities.

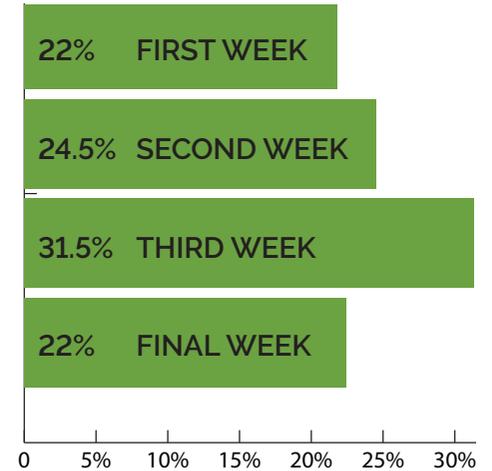
\$508 on food and personal care vs. \$440 in 2021.

\$181 on transportation (\$223 in 2021)

Only 35% of the sample spent money on medication – these respondents spent an average of \$133/month (\$113 in 2021).

Only 12% of the sample spent money on childcare – these respondents paid an average of \$327/month. This is down from an average of \$381 in 2021.

RUNNING OUT OF MONEY



For 77.6% of the participants their income did not last them through the month.

92% OF RESPONDENTS DO NOT HAVE RETIREMENT SAVINGS

WHEN MONEY RUNS LOW

Respondents engaged in a number of strategies to pay the bills. 55% of respondents borrowed money from friends or family in order to pay the bills, 49.3% used a credit card, and 24.8% had to sell property.

More people are using credit cards to make ends meet; in 2021, 36% used a credit card and in 2018, 29% did.

Prevalence of selling property (26% in 2021) and borrowing from friends (55% in 2021) is virtually the same when comparing 2023 to 2021.

Other coping strategies included: pawning possessions (4), borrow from the community (1), church (1), gift cards (2), accessing emergency funds from school (1), and declaring bankruptcy (1).

Three respondents say they just go without or don't pay their bills.

86% of respondents do not have any savings. 92% do not have retirement savings.

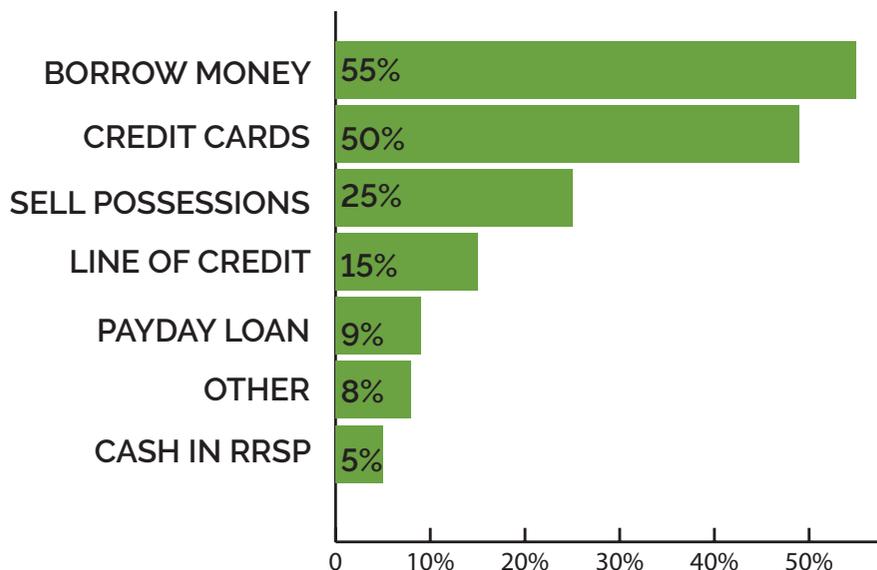


When respondents are running low on money, the top three things they are most likely to cut back on are:

- 1) Rent or mortgage
- 2) Food
- 3) Clothing

These results at first glance seem counterintuitive, rents/mortgages are one of an individual's and family's most essential costs and often cannot be cut back on without consequences (fines, risk of eviction, etc.). However, notes in the margins of the study revealed that many respondents *only* spend their money on rent and food so those are the only things they can cut back on.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN RUNNING SHORT ON MONEY?



SACRIFICE

Pat is a single mother of three and has been struggling to afford food. While her children had been eating, she was not. With the increased cost of living, she can't afford everything. While setting her up with a food hamper, our team shared additional tools and resources to support her.

"Thank you. You are here when I need you the most. You are a relief in a stressful life. Thank you over and over."

-Food Bank client

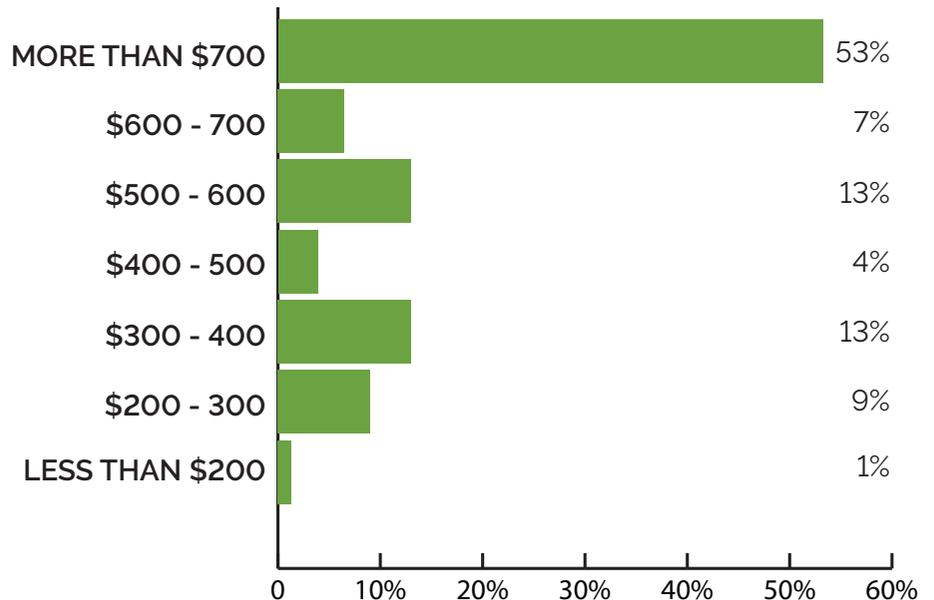


SIGNIFICANT INCOME BOOST NEEDED

Families need a significant boost in income to no longer rely on the Food Bank. 53% said they would need more than \$700 each month to no longer have to rely on the Food Bank.

The second most common options were \$500-600 (13%) and \$300-400 (13%).

HOW MUCH MORE MONEY WOULD YOUR FAMILY NEED TO NOT RELY ON THE FOOD BANK?



NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

When asked about their experiences with having enough food, 40.2% of respondents said they always had enough food to eat, but not always the kinds they want. 31.3% sometimes did not have enough food to eat.

Almost one in five often did not have enough food to eat.

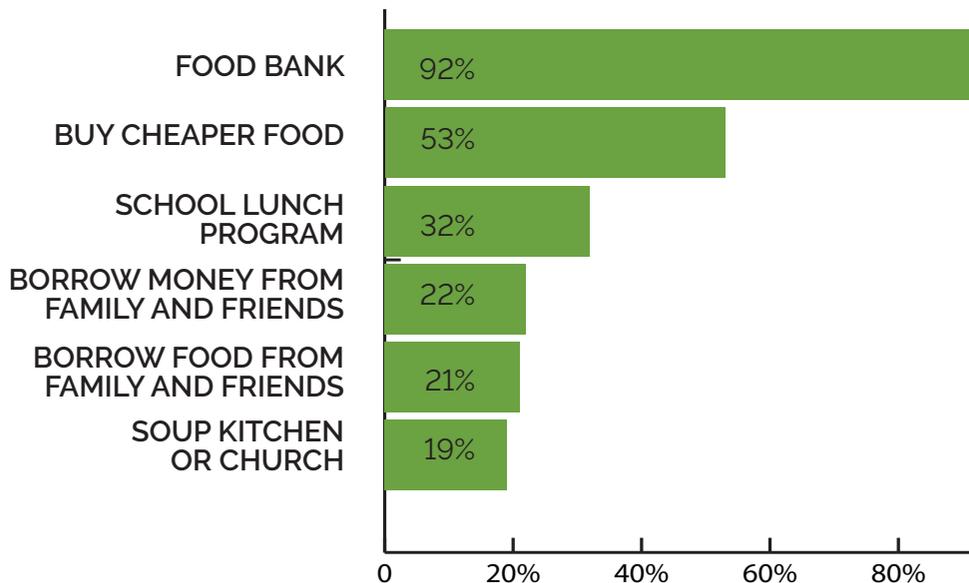
When asked what they do when they're running out of food, the most common answer was to get food from the Food Bank (91.5%).

The second most common was to buy less expensive food (53.3%).

Many respondents rely on support from others, whether that be getting food from family or friends (20.5%), borrowing money from family or friends (21.8%), or getting meals from a soup kitchen or religious centre (18.5%).

Less than a third (31.7%) of those with children said their children received snacks or meals from their schools.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN RUNNING SHORT ON FOOD?



PAST DONORS NEEDING HELP

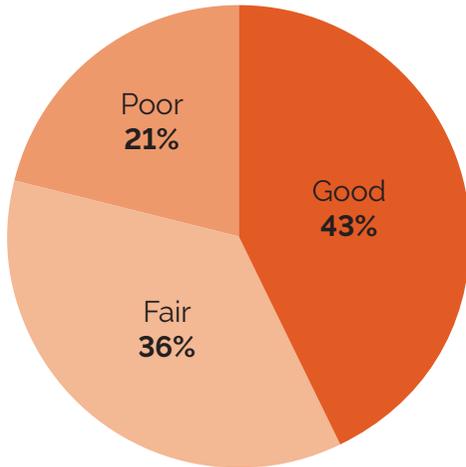
Fara called in desperate need of help for her and her family. Fara and her husband have full-time jobs and are making decent money. With the cost of everything increasing, they are struggling to feed themselves and their children (3 biological children and 4 adopted). Additionally, their mortgage has gone up and they are maxing out credit cards.

"It is ironic that we used to be donors to the Food Bank. We were making it before all of this. I am so grateful that the Food Bank is available to all. Thank you."

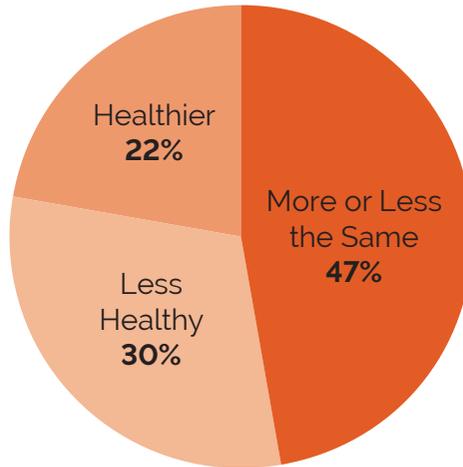
-Food Bank client



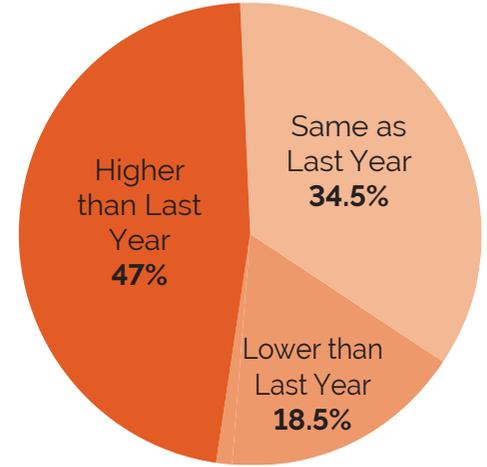
RESPONDENTS' PHYSICAL HEALTH



PHYSICAL HEALTH COMPARED TO THIS TIME LAST YEAR



STRESS LEVEL COMPARED TO THIS TIME LAST YEAR



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Survey respondents see themselves as fairly healthy, with 43.2% seeing their health as “good” and 36.3% seeing their health as “fair”. This is a slight change from 2021, when 39% rated their health as good and 40% as fair.

Respondents saw their family’s overall health as slightly healthier than their own with 50.1% said their family’s overall health was “good” and 35.7% said it was “fair”.

Almost half the sample (47.3%) said their health is more or less the same than it was this time last year and 30.3% say they are less healthy this year.

Survey respondents are reporting experiencing more stress as 47% say they are more stressed than this time last year and 34.5% said they are just as stressed.

OVER 1/3 OF RESPONDENTS DO NOT HAVE A FAMILY DOCTOR

CAUSES OF STRESS

By far, the number one cause of stress for the sample was lack of income with 57% of participants directly mentioning income or financial stability as a cause of stress.

The other most common causes of stress were family concerns, suitable employment (i.e. finding it, or lack thereof), and health.

Almost 10% of the participants articulated in addition to income issues, rising costs and/or inflation is a major concern.

Other notable causes of stress were lack of food, lack of or low governmental support payments, relocation (i.e. moving cities or countries), life events (i.e. loss of a loved one, divorce, etc.), mental health, the cost of raising children (and childcare), and the need to be caretaker for others (i.e. partners or family members experiencing illness, single moms, parents of special needs children etc.).



Top Causes of Stress	
Income/financial instability/bills	57%
Family	20%
Suitable employment (finding it or lack thereof)	19%
Health	17%
Inflation/cost of living	9%

FIXED INCOMES STRETCHED

“Thank you for everything you have done for me. Without your support, I could not make it until my next E.I. cheque – 75% of the money goes to my rent and power bills. This leaves me with about \$175 for food and everything else for the rest of the month. I can’t afford most basics. Thank you for your help and time.”

-Food Bank client

FACTORS TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Almost half of respondents stated that better income and financial stability would improve their health and wellbeing. Almost a quarter of respondents would improve their wellbeing through employment or better employment. Many respondents were employed, but their income was insufficient: some were overqualified and underemployed, while others have variable hours or a lack of work. Others were working several jobs and many hours and wished for a better job or for a job with benefits and/or paid time off.

9% of respondents stated that better governmental support, easier access to financial aid, and increased benefit payments would improve their health and wellbeing.

Other significant responses included decreased cost of living, family reunification, better transportation, social connections, training/education, improving English, and physical activity all play a positive role in stress reduction.

Factors to Improve Health and Wellbeing

Income/financial stability	46%
Employment (better job/more suitable job)	24%
Health (health care & medications access)	10%
Increased Gov't support and less barriers	9%
Improved living situation	5%



COMMUNITY SERVICES



There is a lack of knowledge about city-run services people can access. 23.6% of respondents were not aware of the leisure access pass and 16.7% are not aware of the low-income bus pass.

Usage of these services is fairly low, 35.4% of respondents make use of the leisure access pass and 32.3% use the low-income bus pass.

One quarter (25.6%) of respondents said they receive services from another community agency in Edmonton.

Respondents accessed a wide range of community services – 49 different community organizations were listed.

The most common services accessed were help getting Income Support (34.9%), English language help (29.6%), and help completing income taxes (19.1%).

Respondents indicated a lot of interest in the Food Bank's Beyond Food Program. The services that garnered the most interest were: Job search tips (30%), safety tickets (29%), and English upgrading (28.7%).

54.3% of respondents said they use public transit to get to an appointment outside of their neighbourhood.

WORKING TOGETHER

Beatrice is hearing impaired and recently used Canada Video Relay Service to request a food hamper. An interpreter translated Beatrice's words to a Food Bank team member.

When Beatrice learned she would be receiving a festive hamper, including a ham, the interpreter said, "Beatrice is laughing and crying, and keeps saying 'woo hoo' over and over."

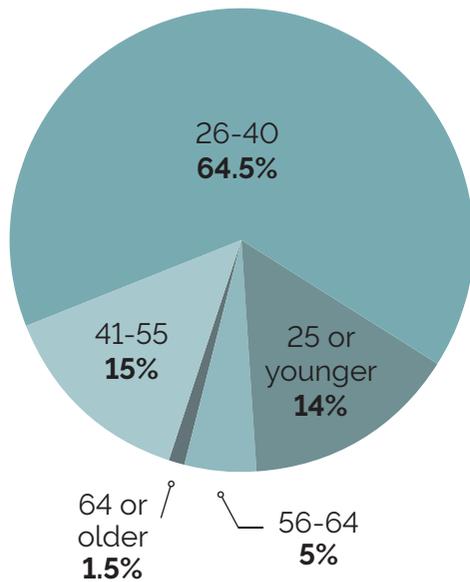
Edmonton's Food Bank is here for all our community members and is grateful for services like Canada Video Relay that help break down communication barriers.

A SPOTLIGHT ON UKRAINIAN NEWCOMERS

Edmonton has become home to many Ukrainians fleeing the war. In fact, 16% (79 people) of our survey respondents identified as Ukrainian Newcomers, the second largest category after Canadian Citizens. As such, we decided to take a closer look at Ukrainian Newcomers in order to highlight their experiences and identify any unique needs they may have.

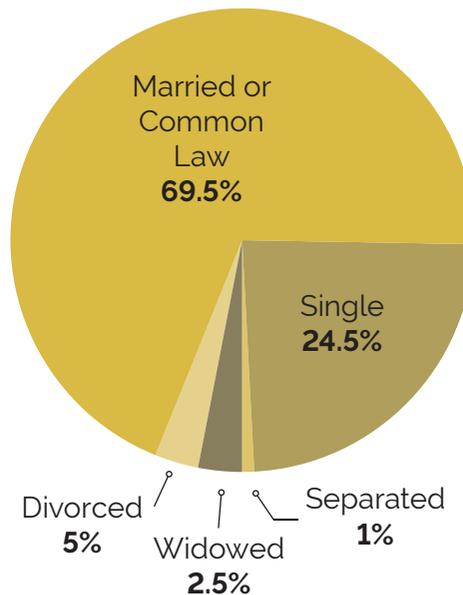


AGE



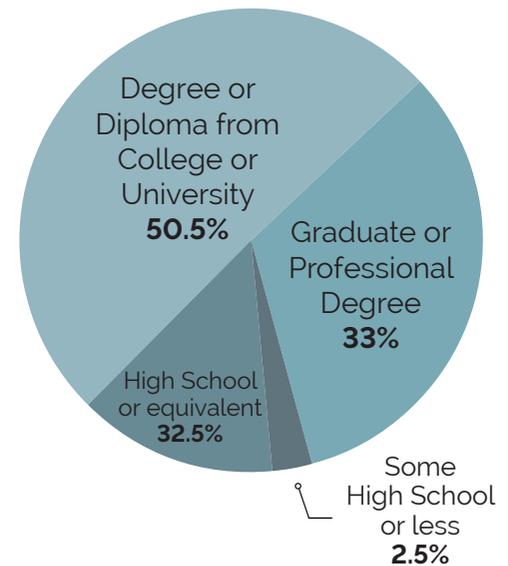
The Ukrainian subgroup is younger than the overall sample: 64.6% of Ukrainian respondents were aged 26-40 (compared to 38.4% in the overall sample).

MARRIED



The Ukrainian subgroup is more likely to be married: (69.6%) than the overall sample (42.5%).

EDUCATED



The Ukrainian subgroup is highly educated: 50.6% have a degree or diploma from a College or University, and 32.9% have a graduate or professional degree.



EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

The Ukrainian subgroup is more likely to be employed (45.6%) than the overall sample (27%) and the majority of those employed are employed full time in only one job (66.7%).

However, these jobs lack benefits. 58.3% had no paid sick days or benefits.

The most common barrier Ukrainian Newcomers experienced was a lack of employers requirements (50%). The second most common was personal family responsibilities (16.7%).

Ukrainian Newcomers had very little usage of government benefits. Support from family and friends was the most commonly reported form of alternative income – 31.8%.

HOUSEHOLD AND PERSONAL EXPENSES

93.7% of the Ukrainian newcomer sample are renting at market price.

Compared to the general sample, Ukrainian newcomers spent:

- less money on utilities
\$299 vs. \$343
- significantly more on food
\$798 vs. \$508
- more on transportation
\$209 vs. \$181
- Less on childcare
\$278 vs. \$327

72.2% reported that their income did not usually last through the month. However, **their income lasted longer than the general population.** 53.7% of the Ukrainian Newcomers said their income lasted until the last week of the month.

The Ukrainian Newcomer sample is most likely to use a credit card (67.2%) to pay the bills.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Ukrainian Newcomer sample reported being very healthy.

55.7% said their health was more or less the same as last year.

However, they are doing worse in terms of mental health, **45.6% said their stress is higher than it was this time last year.**

In terms of what would improve the overall health and wellbeing for them and their families, Ukrainian Newcomers stated improving English skills, finding a job, earning more money, family reunification, and knowing family back in the Ukraine are safe.

Most of the Ukrainian newcomer subgroup did not have a family doctor (67.1%).

NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

34.2% of the Ukrainian Newcomer subgroup said they always had enough food to eat and 49.4% said they had enough food, but not always the kinds of food they want.

When they are running short on food, **94.9% said that they get meals from the Food Bank**, 68.4% buy less expensive food, and 29.1% buy food on credit.

58.4% of respondents say their children do not receive meals or snacks from the school they attend.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Ukrainian Newcomers showed a lot of interest in the Food Bank's Beyond Food Program.

81% indicated interest in English upgrading, 55.6% in job search tips, and 46% in assistance with tax returns.

UKRAINIAN STORY

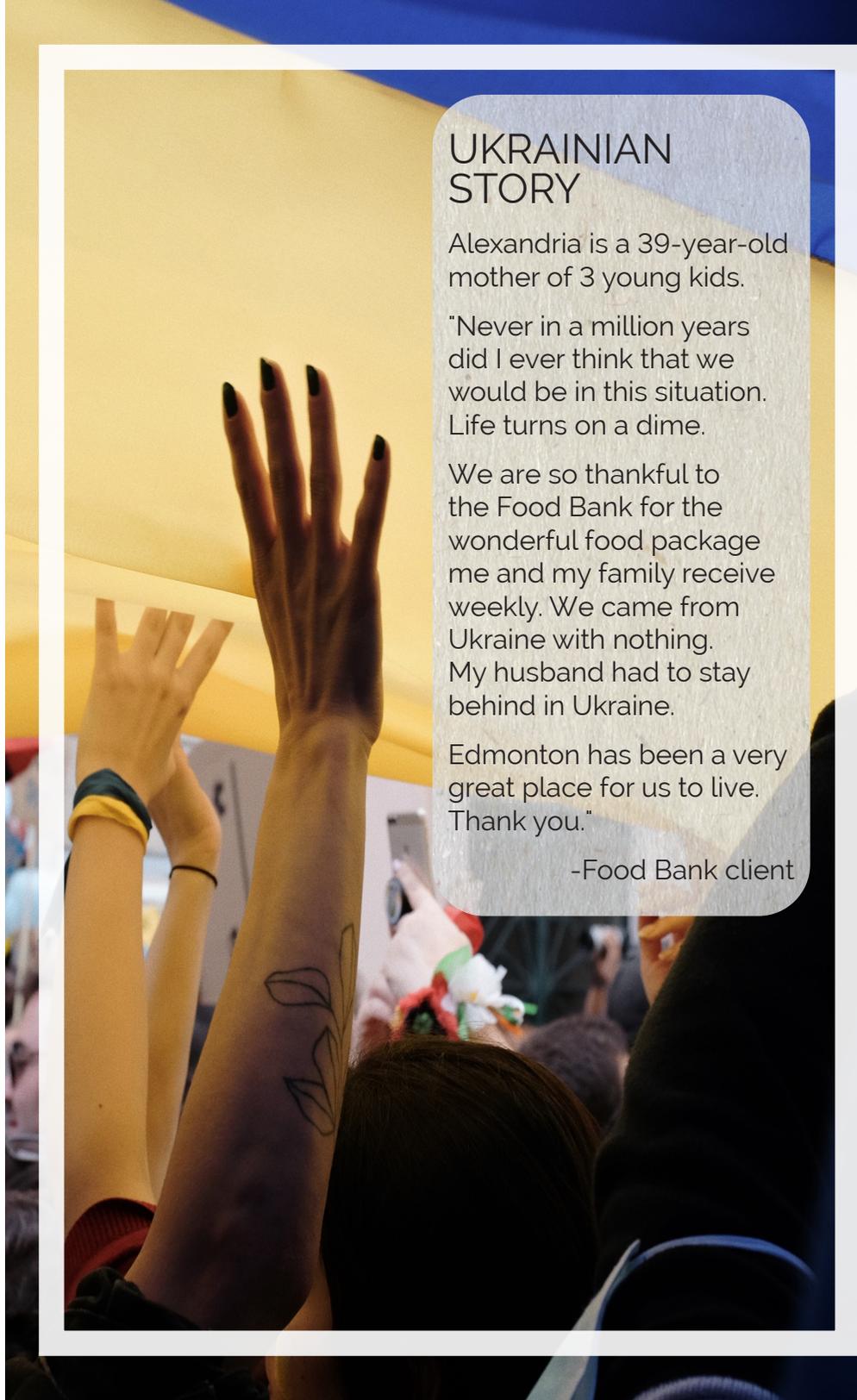
Alexandria is a 39-year-old mother of 3 young kids.

"Never in a million years did I ever think that we would be in this situation. Life turns on a dime.

We are so thankful to the Food Bank for the wonderful food package me and my family receive weekly. We came from Ukraine with nothing. My husband had to stay behind in Ukraine.

Edmonton has been a very great place for us to live. Thank you."

-Food Bank client



A FEW WORDS OF APPRECIATION

A survey is an essential tool we use to gauge the effectiveness of our services. It is a means to gain feedback and make improvements, but it also gives a voice to those we serve.

Completing 497 surveys is not an easy task. We would like to share some details about how this took place and to thank those that made it happen.

Thank you to the following individuals who helped with the 2023 Client Survey:

Barb Koetze
Brittany Coxe
Charles Alegrio
Jamie Post
Janet Ying
Jo-Ann Dewald
Madeline Kayfish
Noah Underwood
Sunflower Paul
Susan Abdulaziz
Suzanne Delos Santos
Teresa Rossmann
Tracey Gilchrist

Thank you to the Edmonton Social Planning Council for their assistance with our survey.

In addition to the interviews completed at Edmonton's Food Bank, interviewers also visited the following depots:

Anawim Place Food Bank
ANNEX Depot
Blue Quill Mobile Depot
Castledowns Salvation Army
Chappelle Mobile Depot
Hope City Church
Maranatha Christian Reformed Church
McClure United Church
Robertson-Wesley United Church
St. John the Evangelist Parish
St. Luke's Anglican Church
The Mustard Seed
West Meadows Baptist Church

The following agencies completed surveys with their clients on our behalf:

Alberta Immigrant Women & Children Centre (AIWCC)
C5 North East Hub
Islamic Family and Social Services Association (IFSSA)

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to the survey participants who shared their stories with us.

THANK YOU!

ABOUT EDMONTON'S FOOD BANK

Edmonton's Food Bank was established as the Edmonton Gleaners Association in 1981 to address hunger in Edmonton. While some individuals and families do access services directly from the Food Bank, the organization is a central warehouse and referral centre for a network of over 300 agencies, schools, soup kitchens, shelters, and other community organizations offering food services to people in need. Food services are offered in meal, snack, and hamper form depending on the target group, need, and resources of the agency or church.

In addition to working with the community to address immediate food needs, Edmonton's Food Bank has made a commitment towards long-term solutions to the causes of hunger.

When possible, Edmonton's Food Bank works with other organizations to assist people with other options to reduce the need for the Food Bank. In addition to assisting individuals with their food insecurity, the Food Bank does public education and advocacy concerning the societal causes of hunger and poverty.

While still maintaining its original mandate of gleaning food on behalf of soup kitchens and shelters, Edmonton's Food Bank has responded to new and emerging needs. The Food Bank remains confident that the continuing goodwill of the community will allow it to successfully face and overcome future challenges collaboratively with new, creative approaches and programs.

MISSION STATEMENT

"To be stewards in the collection of surplus and donated food for the effective distribution, free of charge, to people in need in our community while seeking solutions to the causes of hunger."

For more information, please visit our website: edmontonsfoodbank.com

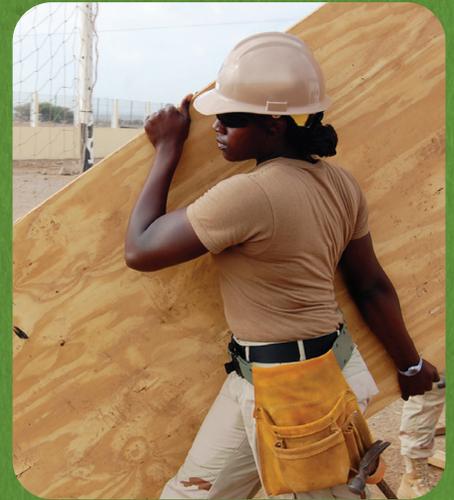
If you have any comments about this report, please let us know: info@edmontonsfoodbank.com



BEYOND FOOD!

Need help finding a job, accessing community resources, or in need of a safety ticket? We can help!

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY!



- ✓ **Employment Coaching**
Resumes, job search skills, and interview practice
- ✓ **Information and referrals**
Assistance with application processing
- ✓ **Financial empowerment workshops and coaching**
Tax service referrals

- ✓ **One-on-one support**
Newcomer settlement, affordable housing, landlord-tenant questions, mental health and addictions, family violence support, etc.
- ✓ **And more...**

A program that goes
BEYOND FOOD



Beyond Food is a community partnership initiated by Edmonton's Food Bank that brings together the strengths of several community agencies to offer a range of services that help Edmontonians improve their situation.

Beyond Food opened its doors in 2017 at Edmonton's Food Bank Annex building at 11434-120 Street. Available services include resume preparation, job interview practice, job search assistance, and securing safety tickets.

The partners have included Bissell Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association, Accès Emploi, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, The Learning Centre, Habitat for Humanity, Edmonton Public Library, the Salvation Army, and Catholic Social Services.

In addition to employment readiness services, Beyond Food offers English and math upgrading, budgeting advice, personal counselling, and information about affordable housing.

Since its opening, more than 3,340 community members have used the free service. Anyone needing help is

encouraged to call 780.425.2133 to make an appointment.

"There is more work for us to do to connect with city employers and expand our staffing resources, but we have had a good start and look forward to addressing the unmet needs of the people we serve."



Marjorie Bencz, CM
Executive Director,
Edmonton's Food Bank

Book your appointment today:
780.425.2133 ext. 228

Monday to Friday
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Edmonton's Food Bank
Annex Building
11434 – 120 Street

Email:
beyondfood@edmontonsfoodbank.com



SPECIAL THANKS TO SYDNEY SHELOFF, CASSANDRA SPERLING
AND THE EDMONTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL
FOR MAKING THIS REPORT A REALITY
edmontonsocialplanning.ca

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Providing food to our neighbours in need is a good thing, but it will not solve hunger in the long term. We ask that you share this report and our contact information with others. We encourage you to write and talk to decision-makers about changes to income-support programs and about how housing can become more affordable in our community. Poverty and hunger are complex issues that require proactive, comprehensive action.

In the meantime, people need to eat. Please consider a contribution of time, food, and/or money to Edmonton's Food Bank. Your support is appreciated!



Warehouse
11508 - 120 Street
Edmonton, AB T5G 2Y2

Niso - Pantry & Food Depot
11448 - 120 Street
Edmonton, AB T5G 2Y2

Annex
11434 - 120 Street
Edmonton, AB T5G 2Y2

Edmonton's Food Bank @yegfoodbank edmontonsfoodbank.com

Phone: 780.425.2133 Fax: 780.426.1590