

FSF RESEARCH · ISSUE 02 · SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS

Unmasking Food Insecurity in Canada: The Black Community Gap

Canada's food crisis is not evenly distributed. This briefing examines who bears the sharpest burden, why existing systems are structurally insufficient, and what a coordinated infrastructure response looks like. For reporters covering food, poverty, and racial equity — the data is here.

FOOD SECURITY FUND · FOODSECURITYFUND.CA · PUBLISHED MARCH 2026

KEY NUMBERS

46.7%

Black Canadians in food-insecure households — the highest rate of any group tracked (Statistics Canada, 2024)

2×

More likely to be food-insecure than white households — even after controlling for income and education (PROOF)

10M

Canadians in food-insecure households in 2024 — an all-time

THE CONTEXT

Canada Is Facing Record Food Insecurity. Black Communities Are at the Epicentre.

In 2024, 25.5% of people in the ten Canadian provinces — approximately 10 million people — lived in a food-insecure household. This is the third consecutive increase and the highest recorded level in nearly twenty years of national monitoring. The third of children in food-insecure households, 2.5 million in total, represents a generational emergency.

But headline averages obscure a sharper truth: food insecurity is not equally distributed. The highest rate of any group tracked by Statistics Canada belongs to Black Canadians, at 46.7%. Indigenous Peoples living off-reserve follow at 39.9%. Lone female-parent families exceed 52%. These are not marginal outliers — they are systematic patterns that persist across years, across policies, and across regions.

For journalists covering this story: the national average is a floor, not a ceiling. The communities most affected are those with the least access to the resources, platforms, and philanthropy needed to address it.

"Even when other sociodemographic characteristics were kept the same, Black households are still twice as likely to be food insecure as white households. Just being Black is enough to increase the risk."

PROOF FOOD INSECURITY POLICY RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

COMPARING THE GAPS

Food Insecurity Rate vs. Access to Resources: A Structural Mismatch

To understand why Black-focused food organizations consistently operate in crisis mode, it helps to see the gap between the scale of need and the scale of institutional support. The organizations closest to the communities most affected are often the least resourced.

THE NEED	THE RESOURCE GAP
46.7% of Black Canadians face food insecurity	Black-led food orgs represent a small fraction of overall charitable food funding
Black children face nearly twice the food insecurity rate of white children	School nutrition and childhood programs are rarely designed with Black families as the primary focus
Black-serving food organizations run critical front-line programs	These organizations lack cold storage, logistics capacity, and operational infrastructure
4.1 million food bank visits in Toronto alone (March 2024–April 2025)	Daily Bread's operational costs rose from \$1.5M to \$29M annually — a nearly 20× increase since 2020
155,000 new food bank clients in Toronto in one year — 50%+ employed full-time	Traditional charitable models weren't built for working families in poverty — they were built for emergency shortfalls

This mismatch is the structural problem. The food banking system is being asked to perform functions it was never designed to sustain at this scale. At the same time, the community organizations best positioned to serve high-need Black communities are operating on infrastructure designed for much smaller demand.

WHY THE SYSTEM FAILS HERE

The Problem Is Not Food. The Problem Is Infrastructure.

A common misconception in public discourse about food insecurity is that it is primarily a supply problem — that if we could collect enough food donations, the crisis would ease. The data tells a more complicated story.

Canada does not have a food shortage. It has a distribution and access problem layered on a poverty problem layered on a racial inequality problem. The organizations that are closest to communities in need — particularly Black-led, Black-serving organizations — consistently identify the same structural gaps: storage infrastructure, distribution and logistics support, and operational capacity to sustain programs.

When a community food organization cannot afford refrigerated storage, fresh produce spoils. When it lacks transportation logistics, food collected cannot reach the families who need it. When it runs on volunteer labour and short-term project funding, programs collapse during the moments of highest need. These are not organizational failures. They are infrastructure gaps.

"The issue is not effort. The issue is an overwhelmed infrastructure."

FOOD SECURITY FUND – FSF DINER PRESENTATION, APRIL 2026

This is why charitable giving to food banks — as critical as it is — does not close the gap on its own. The organizations doing the direct work need the systems behind them: professionalized storage, coordinated distribution, and operational stability that allows them to focus on feeding people rather than managing logistical crises.

THE FSF FRAMEWORK

A Four-Pillar Approach: What Infrastructure Investment Looks Like

The Food Security Fund (FSF) was established to close the infrastructure gap. Its model is deliberately distinct from traditional grant-making: FSF funds capacity, not individual organizations, and does not provide unrestricted charitable grants. Instead, it builds the coordinated systems that allow community organizations to do their work at scale.

01

FOOD ACCESS

Coordinated supply systems ensuring consistent, dignified access to nutritious food — not episodic emergency relief. Aligned with Canada Food Policy and SDG #2: Zero Hunger.

02

EDUCATION

Nutritional literacy and food skills programming embedded in communities, particularly for families and children experiencing food insecurity as a systemic condition rather than a temporary crisis.

03

SUSTAINABILITY

Infrastructure designed for the long term — not dependent on annual campaign cycles. A system that will outlive any single funder, government initiative, or media moment.

04

PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT

Building pathways from food insecurity into food sector employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership — connecting people to the food system as contributors, not just recipients.

The four-pillar model is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #2 (Zero Hunger) and Canada's Food Policy objectives. It is not a program built in isolation — it is designed as a contribution to a national and global framework for equitable food access.

THE MECHANISM

How FSF Works: Funding Capacity, Not Organizations

The operational model of the Food Security Fund is worth understanding precisely, because it differs from how most charitable food funding works.



FSF raises capital for coordinated systems — not individual charity accounts. Funds are directed toward building shared logistics, storage, and distribution infrastructure rather than dispersed to individual organizations.



Community organizations participate as implementation partners — not grant recipients. They engage in coordinated activities designed around their expertise: feeding people. They do not receive unrestricted funds.



Qualified third-party service providers are contracted at fair market value to execute logistics — storage, transport, food preparation. This brings professional-grade infrastructure to community-scale programs.



The model begins with 4–5 trusted organizations to co-develop and test on-the-ground solutions. Phase 1 is about proving the model and adapting it. Phase 2 scales what works.



The result is a strengthened ecosystem: families gain dignified access to food; organizations gain scaled impact with reduced burnout; communities gain long-term resilience.

This approach draws on precedent from other sectors. The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation in Toronto built a globally recognized fundraising and research ecosystem — not through individual donations to individual labs, but through coordinated capital, infrastructure, and cross-sector partnership. FSF applies the same institutional logic to the food security sector, with an explicit focus on Black communities.

THE DATA PICTURE

Where We Are in 2025: A Snapshot for Reporters

For journalists working on food insecurity stories, the following data points represent the current state of the crisis in Canada and Toronto specifically.


INDICATOR	DATA POINT (2024-25)
Black Canadians in food-insecure households	46.7% — highest of any tracked group (Statistics Canada, 2024)
All Canadians in food-insecure households (ten provinces)	25.5% — 10 million people ; third consecutive record high


Children in food-insecure households nationally	2.5 million (33% of children under 18) — record high
Food bank visits, Toronto, March 2024–April 2025	4.1 million — 340% increase since 2019 (Daily Bread / North York Harvest)
Ontario food bank visits, April 2024–March 2025	8.7 million — 13% increase year over year (Feed Ontario, 2025)
New Toronto food bank clients in one year who are employed full-time	50%+ of 155,000 new individual clients (Daily Bread, 2025)
Median daily budget after rent for food and all other essentials	\$7.78 per person (Daily Bread, 2025)
Lone female-parent family food insecurity rate	52%+ (Statistics Canada, 2024)


THE PATH FORWARD


What Funders and Partners Can Do: The Opportunity by Role

The Food Security Fund is currently in its founding phase — seeking seed capital, founding partners, and cross-sector relationships to build out Phase 1 infrastructure. There are four concrete ways to engage:

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-  **Fund the Work:** Seed funding and founding partnerships (\$250K–\$500K Phase 1 target). Donors, the corporate partners, and giving groups can contribute to the foundational capital that builds the team and the system.

 -  **Tell the Story:** Media, ambassadors, and storytellers who help shift the public narrative from charitable emergency to systemic infrastructure investment.

 -  **Build the System:** Logistics providers, cold storage operators, and supply chain partners who want to contribute operational capacity to a community-driven model.

 -  **Activate Community:** Volunteers, connectors, and ecosystem builders who want to link organizations, funders, and service providers across the food security landscape.

PHASE 1 · BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

\$250K – \$500K

This capital builds the team, the logistics systems, and the first 4–5 pilot partnerships with trusted community organizations. It is not a campaign. It is the

beginning of a permanent infrastructure — one designed to outlast any single initiative, funder, or political moment. The goal is to ensure children have consistent access to food, organizations have operational stability, and communities can thrive in the face of uncertainty.

The builders are in the room. Let's start the conversation.

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