

HungerCount 2026 Survey

The primary purpose of the annual HungerCount survey is to provide a national and provincial snapshot of food bank and meal program use in Canada. The HungerCount provides a solid foundation from which the food bank network can advocate municipal, provincial and federal governments for policies that will reduce the need for food banks. It is also a valuable tool for demonstrating to current and prospective donors that the need for their support continues.

Thank you for participating in the 2026 HungerCount survey.

This year's HungerCount survey is a bit different. If you would like to complete the survey through the online link, go here:

<https://www.foodbanksCanada.ca/HungerCount-Survey.aspx>

Food Banks Canada has added a few questions into the survey for 2026. These questions will help to inform policy recommendations and aid food banks in better supporting vulnerable people in their communities.

The HungerCount survey we have created for 2026 still focuses on core questions regarding food bank use.

As you answer the questions in this year's survey, please keep the following in mind:

1. We have changed some of the questions slightly this year. Carefully read the questions, as well as the instructions, and contact your provincial association or Food Banks Canada if you are unclear about anything.
2. Count hamper/grocery (food bank) and meal/snack programs separately and keep them separate. **Never combine numbers from hamper/grocery and meal programs – report them in different sections of the survey as noted.**
NOTE: A food bank hamper/grocery program provides multiple days' worth of food for people to take home
A meal or snack program provides for people to eat food on-site
3. As in every other HungerCount survey, we are asking you to provide information for the month of March only.

Let's get started!

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete this questionnaire by APRIL 24, 2026 and return to your HungerCount Provincial Coordinator (see contact information below). **And please keep a copy for your records!** We may have follow-up questions for you, and it helps to have a copy at hand.

Many food banks help to protect their clients' privacy by asking HungerCount questions in a private area rather than, for example, while clients are waiting in line to pick up food. Most importantly, **clients are not required to answer detailed HungerCount survey questions. It is their choice whether or not to participate.**

For additional help answering the questions, you can use the **HungerCount 2026 Worksheet** to keep track of the people you help in March. The worksheet, as well as electronic copies of this survey, is available at <https://www.foodbankscanada.ca/HungerCount-Survey.aspx>

As we noted above, this year's HungerCount survey is a bit different.

We would like to introduce you to 'Abigail' and 'Jon,' two fictional food bank users. **We know that some of the questions in the HungerCount survey can be confusing,** and we are going to use Abigail and Jon as examples to help explain some of the questions.

'Jon' is single and has no kids; he gets by on disability benefits. He accessed his local food bank four times in March.

'Abigail' is also single, and she has two children; she makes a living keeping the books for several small businesses. She is also attending college. She used her town's food bank twice in March.

Abigail and Jon will appear in different sections of the survey – we hope they will be helpful!

SECTION A

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INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

A1/ Please tell us about your organization:

Organization name:

Street Address:

Mailing address:

Phone # :

City/Town:

Email :

Select Province:

Postal Code:

Survey contact person:

A2/ Does your organization operate a food bank hamper/grocery program that provides multiple days' worth of food for people to take home?

Select Yes or No

A2a/ How often can clients access the hamper/grocery program in a month? Please include any annual restrictions that may apply (e.g. 3 times a month for a total of 7 times a year)

A3/ Does your organization operate a meal or snack program, where people eat food on-site or are given prepared meals or snacks as take-away?

Select Yes or No

A4/ Do you distribute food to other organizations?

Is all the food you procure distributed through your own organization and its location(s) or does your food bank provide food to other organizations (e.g. agencies, schools, daycares, etc.)

Select Yes or No

A5/ If yes, to how many organizations do you distribute food (please attach a list separately or below)?

Total number of organizations supported (if known):

→ List of Organizations:

SECTION B

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INFORMATION ON INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FOOD BANK HAMPER/GROCERY PROGRAMS

*Only complete this section if your organization operates a **food bank hamper/grocery program** – in other words, a program that provides multiple days’ worth of food for people to take home.

*We understand that it may not be possible to collect all of this information about all of your clients. **The most important thing to count is the number of clients assisted by your organization and affiliated agencies in March 2026, which includes the individuals who walk through your doors as well as their household or family members.**

Please provide information for the month of March only.

If you **only** operate a meal or snack program, please go directly to SECTION D.

Note: In this section, **only** report on numbers related to your food bank hamper/grocery program (i.e. providing multiple days’ worth of food to take home). **Do not** report on meal or snack program numbers in this section.

SURVEY NOTE

Some people will have used your food bank hamper program only once in March. Other people may have used your food bank hamper program more than once during the month.

The following questions ask about the number of “unique individuals” who used your food bank hamper program in March (Question 1 and 2), and the number of visits those individuals made to the program (Question 3).

We will use Abigail and Jon as examples to help explain each question.

B1a/ UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY YOUR FOOD BANK HAMPER/GROCERY PROGRAM

IN THE MONTH OF MARCH 2026 ONLY, how many unique individuals received a food hamper/groceries (i.e. multiple days’ worth of food) from your organization?

Here is how we would count Jon and Abigail (who we introduced above):

Jon used the food bank four times in March. For Question 1, we would count Jon just once – he is one “unique individual.”

Abigail used the food bank twice in March. For this question, we would count Abigail and her two children just once each – making up 3 “unique individuals.”

[** For additional examples, please see Appendix page 19.]

For this question, **PLEASE COUNT EACH PERSON ONLY ONCE**, regardless of the number of times they received food in March. Include the people who came to your organization for your food bank program (i.e. received multiple days’ worth of food to take home), and all the people in their families at home.

Please provide as much information as you are able in the following categories:

CHILDREN				
0-2 years of age:	3-5 years of age:	6-11 years of age:	12-17 years of age:	Total Children:
ADULTS				
18-30 years of age:	31-44 years of age:	45-64 years of age:	65+ years of age:	Total Adults:
AGE UNDISCLOSED				
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS (adults + children + undisclosed)				

B1b/ How many of the unique individuals served by your food bank in the month of March 2026 were new clients – clients using your food bank for the first time?

B1c/ The preceding question asked about total unique individuals served by your food bank in the month of March. Can you estimate the number of unique individuals served by your food bank hamper/grocery program last year from January 2025 to December 2025?

Please state the total number of people for the whole year or select don't know.

Don't know

B2/ Of the total number *separate adults*, how many were:

Provide figures for SEPARATE ADULTS (age 18+) ONLY. Numbers may overlap. For example, Abigail is in college so would count as '1' for "women," and '1' for "post-secondary students."

a. Women	
b. Post-Secondary Students	
c. New-immigrants or refugees (in Canada less than 10 years)	
d. First Nations, Inuit or Métis	
e. Visible Minorities: <i>Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.</i>	
f. Persons with Disability	

B3/ VISITS TO YOUR FOOD BANK HAMPER PROGRAM

Here is how we would count Jon and Abigail:

Jon used the food bank four times in March. For this question, we would count Jon four times – making up 4 visits.

Abigail and her two children used the food bank twice in March. For this question, we would count Abigail and each of her kids twice – making up 6 visits.

[** For additional examples, please see page 19.]

IN THE MONTH OF MARCH 2026 ONLY, how many visits were made to your organization’s food bank hamper program?

For this question, count each person once for each time they received food in March. Include the people who came to your organization for food, and all the people in their families at home.

Please provide as much information as you are able in the following categories:

Children (under 18 years old):	
Adults (18 years or older):	
Age undisclosed:	
Total	

Does your organization also offer a separate walk-in/drop-in program that distributes perishable or fresh food?

This question is applicable to food banks that facilitate more access to specific perishable food items such as fruits, vegetables and bread through larger scale food recovery initiatives. Due to the necessity of quickly distributing a high volume of these perishable food items, more frequent “visits” are necessary. These programs typically consist of specific food items only, may operate outside standard hamper room or food bank hours, may not have the same intake requirements. They also may be located in a different area or room of the food bank (if unsure, write in the “notes” section below)

Select Yes or No

If yes, can you estimate the number of visits to this drop-in program in March?

Please state the total number of visits or select don't know

Don't know

Notes:

SECTION C

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HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION FOR HOUSEHOLDS SERVED BY FOOD BANK HAMPER/GROCERY PROGRAMS

* Only complete this section if your organization operates a food bank hamper/grocery program, providing multiple days' worth of food for people to take home.

Please provide information for the month of March only.

Note: In this section, **only** report on numbers related to your food bank hamper/grocery program (i.e. providing multiple days' worth of food to take home). **Do not** report on meal or snack program numbers in this section.

If you only operate a meal or snack program, please go directly to SECTION D.

SURVEY NOTE

Some households will have used your food bank hamper program only once in March. Other households may have used your food bank hamper program more than once during the month.

For the following questions, we are interested in the number of "unique households" who used your food bank hamper program. In other words, **please count each household only once, regardless of the number of times they received food in March.**

C1/ How many of the households assisted by your food bank hamper program in March 2026 were in each of the following categories?

Here is how we would count Abigail and Jon for this question:

Abigail and her kids are a ‘single parent/ guardian family.’ Even though Abigail used the food bank twice in March, for this question we would count Abigail’s household just once.

Since Jon lives on his own, he is recorded as a single person. While Jon used the food bank four times in March, for this question, we would count Jon just once.

[** For additional examples – **including multi-generational households** and **multiple singles** sharing a living space – please see Appendix page 19.]

Single-parent / guardian with children under 18	
Two-parent / guardian with children under 18	
Couple with no children	
Single people	
Other	
Don’t know	
TOTAL	

C2/ How many of the households assisted by your food bank hamper program reported that their PRIMARY SOURCE of income was from the following sources? If there are multiple sources of income for a household, ask for the highest income source for that household.

Here is how we would count Abigail and Jon for this question:

Abigail earns most of her income as a bookkeeper, which fits under “employment.” Even though Abigail used the food bank twice in March, for this question we would count her household just once.

Jon receives most of his income from the provincial disability support program, which fits under “disability related benefits.” Even though Jon used the food bank four times in March, for this question we would count him only once.

[** For explanation of disability related benefits please see Appendix page 20.]

Employment	
Employment Insurance	
Social assistance (welfare)	
Provincial disability benefits	
Other disability benefits (non-provincial)	
Pension Income	
Student loans/scholarships	
Canada Child Benefit	
No Income	
Other Income	
Don't know	
TOTAL	

C3/ How do the households assisted by your food bank hamper program report their housing situation ?

Here is how we would count Abigail and Jon for this question:

Abigail and her children live in a subsidised apartment. It would fit under social rental housing. Even though Abigail used the food bank twice in March, for this question we would count her household just once.

Jon lives alone in a trailer that he rents. It would fit under private rental housing. Even though Jon used the food bank four times in March, for this question we would count him only once.

[** For additional examples, please see Appendix page 20.]

Home they own	
Private rental housing	
Rooming House	
Social rental housing (public)	
Band owned housing	
Emergency shelter	
Group home/ youth shelter	
Unhoused	
With friends or family	
Other	
Don't know	
TOTAL	

C4/ What is the primary reason for the household needing to visit the food bank? (The answer to this question is useful for public policy discussions). Please pick one.

Low hourly wage/Not enough work hours	
Delayed wages	
Unemployed/ recently lost job	
Social assistance/benefits too low	
Cost of housing (rent, mortgage)	
Cost of utilities (hydro, heat, gas, water)	
Cost of food	
Relocation (immigration/moving)	
Unexpected expense	
Sickness/ medical expense	
Debt	
Natural disaster (fire/flood)	
Separation of family	
Other (specify):	
Undisclosed	
TOTAL	

SECTION D

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MEALS AND SNACKS

In this section, we are asking you to count the number of meals and snacks served by your organization.

* Please provide information on the number of meals and snacks served – NOT the number of people who were served.

SURVEY NOTE

Meals and snacks are prepared on-site. Please note this section **does not** relate to the food you give out through your food bank grocery/hamper program.

What is a meal?

A meal could be a soup and sandwich, chicken and potatoes with dessert, beef stew and coffee – usually served during normal meal times.

What is a snack?

A snack could be a coffee and a muffin during off-hours at a soup kitchen, or a granola bar and box of juice provided to kids at an after-school program. These usually happen outside of normal meal times but are often provided during breakfast time as well.

D1/ How many meals and/or snacks were served in March 2026 by your organization?

Here is how Abigail and Jon might fit into this question:

While Abigail has never used a meal program, Jon sometimes attends the six o'clock meal at the soup kitchen near his trailer. In March, Jon had dinner at the soup kitchen eight times – for a total of eight meals.

Meals

Snacks

D2/ Are you also reporting the number of meals and/or snacks served by other organizations in your region?

For instance, if your food bank provides meals or snacks that are served by school programs or by other organizations and are not counted in the number provided in the previous question.

Select Yes or No

D3/ How many meals and/or snacks were served in March 2025 by the other organizations?

Meals

Snacks

Please provide information for each organization you are reporting for, using the following table.

Organization Name	Number of Meals	Number of Snacks

SECTION E

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POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Throughout the year, Food Banks Canada uses information gleaned from HungerCount to influence government policy affecting hunger in Canada.

Information from the following poll will help us choose our areas of policy focus in the coming year.

E1/ Please rank each of the following recommended government policy changes in terms of their importance in reducing hunger in your community. Give a ranking number to each statement.

***5 = Extremely Important; 4 = Very important; 3 = Moderately important;
2 = Of little importance; 1 = Not at all important***

Improve access to Employment Insurance	
Increase access to affordable child care	
Raise provincial minimum wage levels	
Expand supports for new immigrants	
Increase the stock of affordable housing	
Increase addictions services and supports	
Implement Guaranteed Annual Income/Basic Income	
Raise pension levels for seniors	
Increase social assistance benefit levels	
Expand job training options for adults	
Increase levels of provincial disability income supports	
Increase mental health supports	
Increase supports for low income people living alone	
Increase supports for post-secondary students	

E2/ Is your organization involved in any initiatives that seek to influence government policy in your community? (examples of such initiatives include hosting/attending town halls; meeting with politicians or policymakers; participating in/lending support to anti-poverty campaigns, etc.)
*This question is **optional** and responses will not be attributed to individual food banks.*

Select Yes or No

E2a/ If yes, would you be able to briefly state the kind of activities your food bank was involved in? *Responses to this question will help Food Banks Canada understand the range of local advocacy initiatives and provide more effective support in the future.*

E3/ Would you be interested in expanding your role / organization's role in advocacy?

Select Yes or No

E4/ Would you like to receive more frequent contact from FBC about advocacy and government policy?

Select Yes or No

SECTION F

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CAPACITY AND TRENDS

F1/ In the past twelve months, did your organization(s):

	Yes	No
a) Not serve people because of lack of food (turn people away, close early, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Serve each household less frequently to accommodate more households	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Reduce each distributed hamper/basket to serve more households	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Buy more food (increased versus prior year due to insufficient food donations)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

F2/ If you stated yes to a, b, or c, you are turning clients away, serving them less frequently, or with less food, select the most relevant/immediate reasons why (check all that apply):

- Lack of food donations
- Lack of budget to purchase food items
- Lack of employees or volunteers to coordinate food distribution
- Logistical constraints such as lack of space on premises or equipment
- Other

F3/ If there has been an increase in usage at your location this year, what do you think have been the main reasons for that increase? (i.e. changes to government benefits, layoffs, housing and food costs, etc)

Feel free to share any other information or comments.

Food Banks Canada HungerCount Data Use Policy

Food Banks Canada uses information from the HungerCount survey to provide government, academia, the media, the general public, current and prospective donors, and other audiences with information about food bank and other food program use in Canada.

Food Banks Canada reserves the right to use and disseminate national-, provincial-, regional-, and, when appropriate, community-level information provided in the HungerCount at its discretion. Food Banks Canada will not, however, release information respecting an individual organization to media, government, or the general public, without first consulting with that organization.

APPENDIX

Examples – How to record different types of households

This page presents four fictional households and demonstrates how they would be reported.

Household 1 – Multi-generational family

Liz is 43, and Danny is 47. They are living together, and have a daughter named Maya, who is 14. Six months ago, Danny's mom Harriet, who is 84, moved in with them.

Liz works part-time for a before- and after-school child care provider. Danny is currently unemployed and has no income. They are having trouble making ends meet, and they visited their local food bank two times in March.

Question B1/number of people:	4 people
Question B2/number of visits:	8 visits
Question C1/household type:	Two-parent/guardian family
Question C2/income source:	Employment

Household 2 – Couple without children

Kathleen is 52, and Roger is 50. They rent a two-bedroom apartment together, and they sub-lease one of their bedrooms for some extra income. Kathleen and Roger operate a small antique business. They access the local food bank from time to time, including once in March.

Question B1/number of people:	2 people
Question B2/number of visits:	2 visits
Question C1/household type:	Couple/Adults without children
Question C2/income source:	Employment

Household 3 – Single person

Ahmed is 34, and he recently arrived in Canada from Syria. Ahmed is taking ESL classes and receives social assistance. He is subletting a room from Kathleen and Roger (Household 2, above). As part of their living arrangement, they keep their food separate. After being referred to the food bank by Roger, Ahmed received food three times in March. **NOTE: Multiple singles sharing living space should be classified as multiple single households. If your system can't do that, then they would be "other".**

Question B1/number of people:	1 person
Question B2/number of visits:	3 visits
Question C1/household type:	Single person
Question C2/income source:	Social assistance

Question C2: Income Source – Disability Related Benefits

Disability benefits are determined at the **provincial level**. Some provinces have specific disability benefit programs (like BC, AB, SK and ON), while others have one social assistance program with additional supports to people with disabilities, including higher benefits for those with severe and/or permanent disabilities.

Where disability support is a separate program from social assistance (welfare), please classify income source as disability-related support. Where disability support is included within the provincial social assistance program, and the person can state they receive disability benefits on top of their social assistance, then classify it as disability supports. If the person states social assistance, with no reference to disability related support, then classify as social assistance.

Question C3 Housing Type

In a home they own: the household owns their home, or currently has a mortgage or payment plan to buy the home in which they are currently living. Can include mobile homes.

In private rental housing: the household is paying market rent in a privately-owned house/ apartment building, motel, mobile home etc.

Please return the completed survey to your provincial association, or email to

sofia@foodbankscanada.ca

You can also mail the survey to:

Food Banks Canada

77 City Centre Dr., Suite 501

Mississauga, ON, L5B 1M5