



Harvest Voices

2021

Real-World Impact of
Food Insecurity
& Poverty in Manitoba

Acknowledgements



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Executive Summary

Harvest is dedicated to nourishing our communities and our sense of community so that no Manitoban goes hungry. We operate the largest community food network in the province to alleviate hunger, promote access to nutritious foods, and support healthier living for those living in poverty in Manitoba.

Our network includes 325 food banks and agencies in Winnipeg, rural, northern and First Nations communities across Manitoba. In 2020-21, we collected and distributed 11 million pounds of food with which we fed nearly 80,000 people per month, 46% of whom are children.

Thousands of Manitobans make this happen every year. Community food drives (20%) and retail partnerships (80%) donate food. Almost 200,000 volunteer hours (donated time) sort and pack it into Harvest Hampers for distribution.

Given that Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate of any province in Canada, we also support several daycare and school programs, as well as provide weekend food for hungry kids through Harvest meal and snack programs. Since the pandemic began, we have extended our school program to provide daily food kits to children in the summer months at 5 urban schools and in 3 northern communities.

During the last quarter of 2020, we decided to survey adult Manitobans who rely on food assistance from member food banks within our network ("Food Bank Clients / Respondents"). Our goal was to listen to their experiences about the challenges they face living with food insecurity and poverty in Manitoba, and what they would need to become economically self-sufficient.

The following report is the result of these efforts. It's a snapshot of real-world impact of food insecurity and poverty in Manitoba along with several individual experiences. We hope the information increases your understanding and inspires you to join us as we work toward a healthier future for all Manitobans where no one goes hungry.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, eyes closed, gently holding a newborn baby wrapped in a light-colored cloth. The background is a blurred wooden surface. A semi-transparent green overlay covers the entire image.

Respondent **Demographic** **Profile**



Most Food Bank Clients are Women

Respondents were predominantly female (67.5%), single (56.5%), with no children (67.59%), and an average of 49.5 years of age. We believe they were overrepresented as Food Bank Clients due to having more part-time, low-paying jobs as compared to their male counterparts, and because they were often the sole or primary provider/caregiver for their children.

As schools and daycares closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, women were often forced to stay home and care for their children. 16% identified childcare as a barrier to employment.

Community supports can be difficult to navigate, and female respondents disclosed that they found themselves financially and emotionally spent trying to access support and services for lower-income individuals.



80% of Food Bank Clients Live Below Canada's Official Poverty Line

Most respondents indicated they had an annual income of less than \$20,000 a year, which is well below the official poverty line in Canada (see table on page 8).

Only thirteen percent (13.23%) were employed (7.63% full time), with the income of the remaining respondents coming from various government programs.

Sixty percent (59.7%) indicated that illness and disability limited their mobility and mental health, preventing them from working. Age and childcare were additional barriers to employment.

Most indicated a high school education as their highest level of achievement (57.08%).

Eighty-two percent (82.05%) rent their living accommodations.



More Than **One Third** of Food Bank Clients are Indigenous

48% of respondents reported white or European descent as their ethnicity, and 36% identified as Indigenous. The number of respondents that identified as Indigenous is significant, considering that they make up only 18% of Manitoba's population and only 12% of Winnipeg's population.¹ However, this is in line with a Winnipeg survey conducted in 2011, which found that 33% of Indigenous households are food insecure compared to non-Indigenous households.²

Respondents Identified Ethnicity (%)	
White (European descent)	47.61
Indigenous (First Nation, Metis, Inuk/Inuit)	36.27
Southeast Asian (Taiwanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian)	3.27
Black (African, Afro-Caribbean, African Canadian Decent)	3.02
Latino (Latin American, Hispanic descent)	2.27
South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean)	1.26
Middle Eastern (Arab)	1.23
West Asian (Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Turkish, Kurdish)	1.01
East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese)	0.76
Other	3.53
Prefer not to answer	2.02

100% of Food Bank Clients are Food Insecure

People who are food insecure do not have consistent access to safe and nutritious food. Most Food Bank Clients reported receiving food from Harvest for an average of 1-5 years. ★





Experiences with **Food Insecurity**

In 2018, 14% of households / 182,000 Manitobans were food insecure,³ meaning they did not have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food.⁴

Food insecurity can be experienced at two levels and contribute to different experiences.⁵ Household food insecurity can be described as not having enough income to afford an adequate amount of food. Individual food insecurity is a physiological experience related to food consumption like regular feelings of hunger.⁶

Hunger

- 41% said ‘they sometimes did not have enough to eat.
- 27% said that a couple days a week, they felt hungry because they could not afford food.
- 47% of respondents said that they had to miss a meal to be pay for something else.

Experience with hunger because they cannot afford food (%)	
A couple times a week	27
Rarely	23
One day a week	21
On day a month	16
Never	14

“I find myself buying fewer fresh products and go for the ramen noodles because it will fill you up and easy for kids to make for snacks and a lot cheaper.”

Less Nutrition

Harvest Food Bank Clients employed several strategies to get enough food to eat including looking for deals and discounts, purchasing essentials only, or purchasing lower quality, less nutritional foods⁷ to make ends meet.

Nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables and milk products tend to be more expensive, making it difficult to adopt them into healthy eating behaviours.





Desperation, Turning to Food Banks

Many of Harvest Food Bank Clients spoke about being in dire financial circumstances, only registering to receive food assistance when they had exhausted all other resources. Those who could, borrowed money from family and friends, maxed out credit cards, and even sold property to pay their bills.



Some respondents spoke of having to adopt extreme measures to acquire food. They spoke of the desperation and shame they felt before finding the courage to access a food bank.

"I haven't had a piece of beef in 2 years other than hamburger and there have been times where I have had to steal to have some meat. I was so ashamed of myself for having to do that."



Impacts on Children

Food insecurity impacts a child's learning, behavior, development, and academic performance.^{8, 9, 10} Studies have shown that food insecurity can be associated with poorer math scores, grade repetition, absenteeism, tardiness, and anxiety.¹¹ It can also be associated with a decline in social skills, weight gain and poorer reading performance.^{12, 13, 14}

Parents who are experiencing food insecurity are more likely to have high levels of stress and mental health problems that may influence their attentiveness and support for their children, especially in their academic endeavors.¹⁵ Often, mothers who do not have enough money to make ends meet deprive themselves of food to leave more for their children. ★



Experiences with **Poverty** **Income &** **Employment**



Most respondents indicated they had an annual income of less than \$20,000 a year, which is well below the official poverty line in Canada.

Only 13% of respondents were employed. The primary source of income for Harvest Food Bank Clients comes from Manitoba Employment Income Assistance (EIA) and Disability Programs. This is followed by Canada Pension Plans and OAS, and other government programs.

Manitoba's EIA & The Poverty Line

EIA, also known as Social Assistance or Welfare, provides financial support to individuals that have exhausted all other means. Research shows that amounts provided are well below what is required to have a modest standard of living in Manitoba.¹⁶ Between 2018-2019, there were 73,500 Manitobans collecting EIA.¹⁷

The Official Poverty Line in Canada is calculated using the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM calculates the costs of a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living. The basket includes such items as healthy food, appropriate shelter and maintenance, clothing and transportation, as well as other goods and services that permit engagement in the community.¹⁸

Manitoba's EIA program rates have not increased in over 30 years. A comparison of Manitoba EIA Income and the amount income required to cover basic needs¹⁹ demonstrates a short fall of \$10,000 - \$15,000 a year depending on family status (see below).

"I have to worry about paying for medication, so food bank helps some."



Respondents reported Income level in the past year (% *Rounded)

Less than 10,000	41.73
10,000-20,000	40.2
20,000-30,000	11.7
30,000-40,000	3.31
40,000-50,000	2.54
50,000+	0.51
	99.99*

**Comparison of EIA and Canada's Poverty line,
measured by Market Basket Measure (MBM)
Income after tax.²⁰**

EIA & MBM	Single Person Employable	Single Person Disability	Single Parent, One Child	Couple, Two Children
EIA Income - Manitoba	\$9,639	\$12,650	\$22,347	\$30,586
MBM Threshold (Winnipeg)	\$22,527	\$22,527	\$31,858	\$45,054
Variance	-\$12,888	-\$9,877	-\$9,512	-\$14,468
EIA Income % of MBM	43%	56%	70%	68%

** Canada's Poverty Line is established by the local Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM, is based upon the cost of a basket of items (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, transportation) that an individual or family would be able to afford on a modest standard of living.*



Manitoba EIA & Families

The average EIA for a family of four is \$2,548.83 / month. Food Bank Clients reported their average monthly expenses excluding food were \$1,470.43. This included rent, utilities, cable/internet, phone and childcare. The average cost of food for that same family is \$889.91 a month in Manitoba,²¹ which leaves less than \$100 / month for any other items that might be needed during the month including supplies, household repairs or recreation.

Manitoba EIA, Illness & Disability

Individuals managing chronic conditions are often required to pay out-of-pocket for medications, transportation, dietary requirements, or other services.²² Those who are not working or working part-time do not always have sufficient benefits to cover the costs of these items and services.²³ These additional financial demands require individuals and families to seek out more resources and ways to maintain afloat, like going to a food bank.²⁴



Ian's Voice

Workplace injury left him unable to work

Ian suffered a workplace injury which left him unable to work. His primary source of income is EIA Disability as well as a partial Canada Pension benefit now that he is 60 years of age.

Because Ian also has several health challenges, he receives a top-up payment to support them. This includes dietary assistance and reimbursement for emergency cell phone assistance. His total monthly net income is \$1,315.01.

Ian's expenses include rent for a room in a shared house, plus his share of utilities, cable and internet, and cellphone equal \$1,200 on average, leaving \$115 a month for food and other expenses.

Harvest provides Ian with food assistance every month to help make ends meet, and he tries to purchase less costly food and at times borrows money from family to pay the rent.

Ian's Total Monthly Net Income	
Income Sources	
CPP	\$120.54
EIA for:	
• Basic Needs	\$331.40
• Rent Assist	\$632.00
• Coin Laundry	\$12.00
• Disability Assistance	\$105.00
• Diet Assistance	\$81.63
• Emergency Phone Assist	\$32.44
Total	\$1,315.01

Ian's Expenses

(Average / month excluding Food):

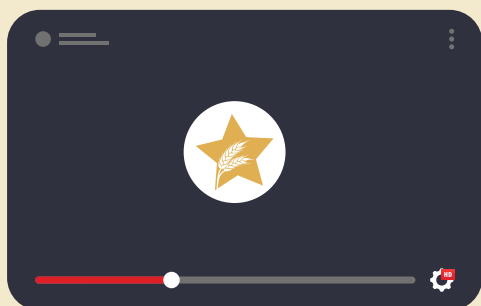
\$1,200.00

Amount Left for Food:

\$115.01

Click on the video to watch Ian's story. Or visit:

[HarvestManitoba.ca/stories](https://harvestmanitoba.ca/stories)



Manitoba Minimum Wage

The minimum annual salary in Manitoba for an individual working 40 hours a week at \$11.90 hour is \$22,372 / year,²⁵ which is slightly below Canada's Poverty Line.

16% of Food Bank Clients are currently working but are still accessing a food bank. In the survey, respondents disclosed that their professions were in fields such as healthcare, retail, and administrative jobs. However, research shows that low-income workers are more likely to have fewer stable jobs, unpredictable work hours, fewer benefits, and greater health problems.²⁶ The strain from low-income employment not only creates material deprivation but also erodes self-confidence, creates a sense of isolation and marginalization.²⁷

Brenda's Voice

Working, divorced single mom

Brenda is a recently single mother with two children aged 2 and 6. Brenda and her husband divorced this past year and agreed that Brenda would have full custody of the children as he has relocated to another province for work.

Brenda works a full-time administrative job in a small office close to home. Her youngest child is in full-time daycare and her oldest goes before and after school. Brenda does not receive a childcare subsidy due to their combined family income. To decrease her monthly expenses, Brenda sold her car and now relies on public transportation and biking to get around.

Brenda was recently diagnosed with depression and is being treated with medication, and she is no longer able to make ends meet. Brenda's monthly net income is \$2,088 before expenses.



Brenda now receives food from a Harvest Food Bank, and she says she often goes with out to ensure that her children have what they need. She is doing everything that she can to continue to uphold a 'normal' environment for her children but finds it difficult with her sole income.

Inadequate Income & Food Bank Use

Current Manitoba EIA rates and low minimum wage coupled with high rent costs and an increase in food prices²⁸ have led to increased food bank use over time.²⁹ In fact, Manitoba Government employees and social workers frequently refer low-income Manitobans and clients on government programs to Harvest food banks and agencies so they can spend less on food and divert funds received to non-food related expenses like medication.

84% of Harvest Food Bank Clients stated they were unemployed and those who have full or part-time employment feel forced to supplement their income with food banks because their income simply is not enough.

Food support from Harvest can help to stretch budgets, but it cannot fill the gap left by inadequate income. ★

Respondent Average Monthly Household Expenses	
Rent	\$733.19
Hydro	\$118.07
Water	\$110.47
Cell phone/phone bill	\$92.11
TV/internet	\$103.69
Childcare	\$312.90
Pet	\$57.18

Total Cost family with 1 child: **\$1,527.61**

Total Cost without children: **\$1,214.71**

Total with no pet/no children: **\$1,157.53**

Joey-Jayne's Voice



Working 40 years, widowed and can't make ends meet.

Joey-Jayne's life changed when her husband suddenly passed away. Although Joey-Jayne had worked in a garment factory for 40 years in Winnipeg, she and her late husband did not have any additional pension or Registered Retirement Savings (RRSP) to fall back on. Joey-Jayne receives income from CPP, Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

After paying rent and bills Joey-Jayne has very little income left for food or even enough to have coffee with friends. Joey-Jayne is constantly having to make difficult budgeting decisions that

impact her daily life. She has canceled her cell phone, internet and only drives her car sparingly. Joey-Jayne has a landline and TV to stay connected and talk with friends but still feels isolated, resulting in her feeling depressed. In addition to her regular expenses, she is unable to go to the dentist and struggles to maintain her beloved cat.

Harvest food hampers provides food support, but Joey-Jayne still needs to supplement what she receives because she is pre-diabetic and has restrictions to her diet.

Joey-Jayne's annual net income is \$21,399.60 before expenses.

Barriers to Employment

Employment is one mechanism for alleviating poverty. It provides income and has several additional benefits. It creates daily structure and routine. It also aids in establishing social support, friendships, a positive self-image, and confidence.

Conversely, not having the right tools to succeed can be a challenge and the fear of stigma and rejection by prospective employers may undermine confidence and result in a poorer showing on job interviews. Over time, people who have been unemployed for a lengthy period may view themselves as unemployable and stop seeking work altogether.³⁰

Respondent declaration of whether disability /health condition limits their ability to perform daily activities (%)

Yes	83
No	17
Total	100

What prevents you from working?	
Illness/disability	59.7
Age	21.8
Looking after children	16.4
Other	15
Family/caregiver responsibility	14.3
Lose EIA benefits	10.9
Lack of transportation	10.9
No job in field	9.2
No CDN qualification	4.4
Attending school	3.1
Total	165.7*

Respondent Declaration re Disability / Health condition (%)	
Yes	72
No	28
Total	100

Top 3: Disability, Childcare, Age

Harvest Food Bank Clients who were not employed were asked about what prevented them from working. 59% of respondents cited illness or disability, 30.7% cited child or family caregiver responsibilities, and 21.8% cited age.

“I am 63 years old. I drove big trucks & semis for 30 years but ‘stroked out’ and had my driver’s license pulled and lost everything.”

Nature of Disability / Health Condition (% *Rounded)	
Physical disability	71.1
Mental illness/health problem	41.9
Hearing/visual	21.7
Learning disability	6.1
Other	9.7
	150.5*

* Multiple Selections Enabled

They also mentioned that the transition to the workforce was challenging. Several people who chose “Other” indicated that they already lacked funds for food and essentials and returning to work would mean additional job-related costs for proper clothing, footwear, bus passes and so on, which they would not be able to cover prior to a pay cheque.

For those on Manitoba EIA, increased costs combined with costly return to work policies served as a disincentive to employment. The EIA claw back is 70% of earnings over \$200.

“I am applying but I don’t get any responses. I need something that would work for my kid’s schedules. So daytime work and every other weekend off.”

How does your disability or health condition limit your ability to perform daily activities? (Top Answers Listed)

Limited or no mobility/sight/hearing

Mental illness

Chronic pain/fatigue

Co-existing illness/conditions

Other

Stigmatizing Views

Adults with disabilities are less likely to benefit from full-time, lasting employment due to labour market discrimination.³¹ Thinking beyond the traditional systems and looking at industries that can be flexible and inclusive are solutions to breaking down barriers for persons with disabilities seeking employment.

Stigmatizing views such as racism and fear of mental health issues can also make it difficult for some low-income people to enter the competitive workforce.³²

Jennifer's Voice

Diagnosis to employment

Shortly after completing her degree in psychology at the University of Manitoba, Jennifer was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Due to her condition and trying to navigate the effects of her medications, Jennifer was unable to work.

Jennifer started to receive EIA and was able to participate in a training program. During her program, Jennifer was able to learn new skills related to administrative work. Like many accessing social assistance, after paying for rent and utilities, Jennifer had very little disposable income to afford food. Her EIA worker referred her to Harvest.

Jennifer registered to receive food assistance and volunteered in the reception area. Through her volunteering, Jennifer was able to regain confidence and find employment. She continues to rely on Harvest for food because her income does not cover all her expenses, especially medication.

Jennifer's monthly net income is \$1,714.20 before expenses.





Income & Education



Education is essential for personal and professional development. It can lead to meaningful employment, economic self-sufficiency, and provide a path out of poverty. Education is especially empowering to women resulting in mothers having more choices when making decisions regarding their families.

Despite that, almost 60% of Food Bank Clients indicated high school education was their highest level of achievement.

Barriers

The rising cost of living expenses and lack of stable resources are barriers to people finishing and or continuing their educational journey.

Acquiring a diploma or degree does not ensure a life without food insecurity. In fact, several studies have shown that large numbers of university students experience hunger and food insecurity.³³ As a result most post-secondary institutions in Manitoba have food banks on site.

Students with disabilities, certain minorities, recent immigrants and those with lower socioeconomic status continue to be underrepresented in post-secondary institutions.³⁴ There needs to be more equitable opportunities for individuals to be able to access higher education. Individuals in university or college are met with competing financial obligations (i.e., tuition, housing, textbook, computers, food, bills, etc.) that disproportionately affects lower income families.³⁵

Those who return to education also find that coping with additional tuition costs, course loads and other adjustments that accompany academic life can increase stress. And the inability to meet basic needs like food and housing impacts learning and their ability to achieve academic success.³⁶

Education Level Completed	
Some High School	29.55
Graduated High School	27.53
Some College/University	13.89
College Diploma	12.63
BA/MA/PhD	6.06
Trade Certificate/ Professional Accreditation	5.56
Elementary/Grade School or Less	4.8
Total	100.02*

Because of financial, emotional, and academic demands on individuals in higher education institutions, they were at least three times more likely to experience food insecurity than the general population.³⁷

Efforts that better prepare and support students who seek higher education and efforts to engage marginalized students can eliminate some of the added barriers that affect academic performance in low-income students.

Ensuring that educational institutions understand and value the lived experience of students and respecting their vulnerabilities will increase their opportunities for success. ★



Income

Income, Health & Lifestyle

Poor Nutrition

Living in poverty affects an individual's overall health.³⁸ Individuals with a lower income are less likely to have access to nutritious food in the quantity that is needed to lead a healthy and active life. They tend to buy less expensive, lower-quality foods with a high caloric value because they have no other choice.³⁹ Lack of transportation also makes it difficult to obtain food beyond the corner store, rather than being able to go to full-service grocery store that is several blocks from their home.⁴⁰

Children in low-income families may become overweight and obese because of the consumption of junk food and poor eating habits.⁴¹ They are more likely to be born with low birth weights, and to experience disability and poor physical and mental health.⁴²

The deterioration of mobility and fine motor skills that comes with old age or physical health conditions makes it difficult to prepare food, purchase food and travel to obtain food.⁴³ Older seniors may also be widowed and therefore are living alone.⁴⁴ They may not have the desire or the income to prepare healthy meals and revert to eating cheaper, processed foods.⁴⁵

Lower income is a strong predictor of coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and an overall decline in health status.^{46, 47} Also, the struggle to cope with low-income and food insecurity increases an individual's stress level, which also has an impact on their health, especially increased depression.⁴⁸

Chronic Health Problems

Most Harvest Food Bank Clients indicated that they had at least one chronic health problem or disability – 71% physical disability, 42% mental health issues, 22% hearing/ visual issues, 6% learning disability and 10% other. They spoke about anxiety, depression, chronic pain, mobility issues and some indicated that they are living with more than one condition.

83% believed that their disability or health condition limited their ability to perform daily activities. Research also shows that food insecure people are at an increased risk of mental illness and this risk is exacerbated in high stress and socially isolated environments.⁴⁹



“I would go to the dentist, but I don’t have the money to pay upfront. You can’t go to the dentist if you don’t have insurance.”

Dental Care

55% of Harvest Food Bank Clients stated that they had not seen a dentist in the past year. Some remarked on the cost, the lack of coverage through benefit plans, and the inability to pay out-of-pocket for appointments.

“I would go to the dentist, but I don’t have the money to pay upfront. You can’t go to the dentist if you don’t have insurance.”

For those who do have income to spare or who have some dental coverage, children often came first. 72% of Harvest Food Bank Clients stated that their children had seen a dentist in the past year.

Good oral health contributes to physical, mental, and social well-being. It enables individuals to speak, eat and socialize without discomfort and embarrassment.⁵⁰ Having access to a dentist is a luxury for many but a necessity to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Recreation & Lifestyle

There is a relationship between income and quality of life. Those with limited financial resources often prioritize necessities like food, clothing, shelter, and transportation over recreational activities.⁵¹ This prioritization can have a negative impact on their physical, social and emotional well-being.⁵²

When respondents were asked if they had any income leftover at the end of the month to participate in recreational activities, 88% of Harvest Food Bank Clients said no. They tried to find recreational activities that are free or inexpensive.

When trying to access programs for those with low income, they can feel judged when asked to provide proof of their income to be eligible.⁵³ These feelings of stigmatization, lack of awareness regarding programs, financial constraints, lack of transportation all contribute to low-income individuals and families not participating in recreational activities.⁵⁴

“I try to find activities that are free or don’t cost a lot. I try to exercise at home and sometimes I buy packets of seeds to plant at home. It isn’t much, but it’s something to do.”

Transportation

Transportation is essential for getting around from not only a social perspective but also from a health perspective. 60% of Harvest Food Bank Clients identified bussing and walking as their predominant means of transportation. They did not use a bus pass (82%) or bus tickets (53%), but instead used cash when available or walked.

The lack of transportation options makes it harder for low-income Manitobans to access recreation facilities or parks that are not in walking distance or that requires them to take multiple busses.⁵⁵

Low-income individuals and families often reside in low-income neighbourhoods that can be at times unsafe.⁵⁶ This limits their ability to feel comfortable going outside to exercise, socialize and for children to go outside and play in the neighbourhood or at a nearby park.⁵⁷

Manitobans on EIA are required to meet with case workers, attend employment training and if they require additional resources, need to travel to get to the location. Many of these supports require people to go to several places and one adult bus ticket costs \$2.70 a ride.⁵⁸

They also need to attend doctors' appointments on a frequent basis, and may also rely on walkers, scooters and wheelchairs that make it difficult to use the public transportation system.

Public transportation can be expensive, unreliable, and time-consuming.⁵⁹ Poor public transportation can limit access to recreation programs, visiting friends and family, attending appointments (like EIA or doctors' appointments), dropping children off at daycare, etc., resulting in feelings of social isolation and exclusion.⁶⁰

Most Beneficial Programs	%
Recreational programs	34.4
Affordable housing	33.1
Social programs	28.4
Medical services	25.3
Employment programs	22.2
Growing food	21.7
Education and training	20.4
Advocacy	19.6
Counselling	19.6
Food education and preparation	17.3
School food programs	10.6
Childcare	8.3

Beneficial Programs

When asked what programs would be beneficial to them, Harvest Food Bank Clients mentioned recreation, affordable housing, and social programs.

Supportive networks help individuals cope with the negative effects of social stressors that are associated with living in poverty.⁶¹ Social networks can help balance the risks associated with poverty and help individuals and families cope with personal crises, unemployment, financial crises, childcare, housing and transportation.⁶²

Before COVID-19, survey respondents mentioned how going to food banks, waiting in line and getting coffee before picking up their hamper was a source of social connection and produced a sense of belonging in the community. That no longer exists, and individuals feel, like they cannot talk to the volunteers or other individuals collecting their hampers and that they feel more isolated. ★

Concluding Statement

Food Bank Use is Increasing in Manitoba

In 1985, Harvest was created to divert unsaleable but safe food from landfills to people in need. It was intended to provide temporary support, but more than 35 years later 80,000 people, in more than 325 communities across Manitoba, still rely on Harvest for food assistance, and 46% of them are children.

When COVID struck Manitoba in March of 2020, the demand for food assistance increased by more than 30%. The number of Food Bank Clients decreased when government programs like the Canadian Emergency Recovery Benefit (CERB) and other income supports were provided. However, with income support programs and levels decreasing, and many businesses slow to recover, Harvest has seen a consistent increase of approximately 3-5% new Food Bank Clients each month.

Harvest does not anticipate food bank use will decrease in the near term, as most Food Bank Clients have been receiving food for as long as 5 years, and many even longer. Food banks have become a permanent fixture in our communities, with a consistent increase in food bank use since the 2008 recession. That year, we served 40,464 Manitobans, increasing 59% in the next four years, and another 23% over the next 7 years to serve 78,311 in 2019.

Like the recession in 2008, Harvest anticipates the COVID-19 pandemic will create a significant economic decline that will affect people's incomes, consumer spending, and levels of employment. An economic crisis like COVID-19 fuels the need for supports like food banks, and as history has shown it often does not fully recover.

If we truly want to achieve a healthier future where no Manitoban goes hungry, it is essential that interventions and strategies be implemented with a primary focus on improving economic and social structures.

We all have a role to play in helping Manitobans build a sustainable and healthy province. We believe that by working together, we can create a stronger future for all, where no one goes hungry.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Methodology & Data

We surveyed adult Manitobans who registered to receive food support from one of the food banks within the Harvest Community Food Network.

The survey consisted of sixty-seven questions collecting information on demographics, education, income, health and wellness, and food insecurity. Food Bank Clients were invited to participate in the survey by phone, flyers inserted into their Harvest hampers, promotional posters at member Food Banks, and social media posts.

The survey was conducted over a 6-week period during the months of October and November 2020 by print, online and over the phone by trained volunteers. In total, 981 calls were made to Harvest Food Bank Clients. A total of 403 surveys conducted resulting in 386 that were sufficiently completed and included in the analysis.

Results and analysis were generated using an online tool called Survey Sparrow. The data was cleaned to remove any invalid responses. Final analysis was completed by Harvest Manitoba in consultation with Statistics Canada and our community partners. Our findings are reflected in this report. Any percentages referenced in this report that do not add up to 100% are due to rounding if not otherwise specified. ★

Figure 1. Respondents Identified ethnicity (%)

White (European descent)	47.61
Indigenous (First Nation, Metis, Inuk/Inuit)	36.27
Southeast Asian (Taiwanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian)	3.27
Black (African, Afro-Caribbean, African Canadian Decent)	3.02
Latino (Latin American, Hispanic descent)	2.27
South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean)	1.26
Middle Eastern (Arab)	1.23
West Asian (Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Turkish, Kurdish)	1.01
East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese)	0.76
Other	3.53
Prefer not to answer	2.02

Figure 2. Response on having enough food to eat (%)

Sometimes do not have enough to eat	41
You have enough to eat, but not always the kinds of food you want to eat	36
Often do not have enough to eat	11
Always have enough to eat	11

Figure 3. Experience with hunger because they cannot afford food (%)

A couple times a week	27
Rarely	23
One day a week	21
On day a month	16
Never	14

Figure 4. Primary source of household income (% *Rounded)

Employment and Income Assistance (EIA)	34.35
EIA Disability	14.79
Canada Pension Plan	13.49
Employment	13.23
Other	6.1
Old Age Security	5.34
Canadian Child Benefit	4.83
Employment Insurance	4.83
No Income	3.05
	100.01*

Figure 5. Respondents reported income level in the past year (% *Rounded)

Less than 10,000	41.73
10,000-20,000	40.2
20,000-30,000	11.7
30,000-40,000	3.31
40,000-50,000	2.54
50,000+	0.51
	99.99*

Figure 6. Comparison of Manitoba EIA with MBM after tax income.

EIA & MBM	Single Person Employable	Single Person Disability	Single Parent, One Child	Couple, Two Children
EIA Income - Manitoba	\$9,639	\$12,650	\$22,347	\$30,586
MBM Threshold (Winnipeg)	\$22,527	\$22,527	\$31,858	\$45,054
Variance	-\$12,888	-\$9,877	-\$9,512	-\$14,468
EIA Income % of MBM	43%	56%	70%	68%

* Canada's Poverty Line is established by the local Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM, is based upon the cost of a basket of items (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, transportation) that an individual or family would be able to afford on a modest standard of living.

**Figure 7. Ian's total monthly net income
EIA & Disability 2020**

CPP	\$120.54
EIA for:	
• Basic Needs	\$331.40
• Rent Assist	\$632.00
• Coin Laundry	\$12.00
• Disability Assistance	\$105.00
• Diet Assistance	\$81.63
• Emergency Phone Assist	\$32.44
Total	\$1,315.01

**Figure 8. Respondent average monthly
household expenses**

Rent	\$733.19
Hydro	\$118.07
Water	\$110.47
Cell phone/phone bill	\$92.11
TV/internet	\$103.69
Childcare	\$312.9
Pet	\$57.18
Total Cost family with 1 child:	\$1527.61
Total Cost without children:	\$1214.71
Total with no pet/no children:	\$1157.53

**Figure 9. Respondent methods for
securing income to cover expenses (%)**

Borrow from friends or family	48.6
Nothing	29.7
sell property	19.8
Use a credit card	17.8
Use a pay day lender	9.8
Other	11.1
	136.8*

** Multiple Selections Enabled*

**Figure 10. Response to current
employment status (%)**

No	84
Yes	16
Total	100

**Figure 11. Respondent's reasons
for not working (%)**

Illness/disability	59.7
Age	21.8
Looking after children	16.4
Other	15
Family/caregiver responsibility	14.3
Lose EIA benefits	10.9
Lack of transportation	10.9
No job in field	9.2

**Figure 12. Level of education
completed (% *Rounded)**

Some Highschool	29.55
Graduated Highschool	27.53
Some College/University	13.89
College Diploma	12.63
BA/MA/PhD	6.06
Trade Certificate/ Professional Accreditation	5.56
Elementary/Grade School or Less	4.8
	100.02*

** Multiple Selections Enabled*

**Figure 13. Respondent declaration
re disability / health condition (%)**

No	72
Yes	28
Total	100

**Figure 14. Nature of disability /
health condition (% *Rounded)**

Physical disability	71.1
Mental illness/health problem	41.9
Hearing/visual	21.7
Learning disability	6.1
Other	9.7
	150.5*

** Multiple Selections Enabled*

Figure 15. Respondent declaration of whether disability /health condition limits their ability to perform daily activities (%)

No	83
Yes	17
Total	100

Figure 16. How does your disability or health condition limit your ability to perform daily activities? (Top Answers Listed)

Limited or no mobility/sight/hearing
Mental illness
Chronic pain/fatigue
Co-existing illness/conditions
Other

Figure 17. Have you been to a dental appointment in the last year? (%)

No	55
Yes	45
Total	100

Figure 18. Have your children been to a dental appointment in the past year? (%)

No	28
Yes	72
Total	100

Figure 19. What programs would be most beneficial to you? (%)

Recreational programs	34.4
Affordable housing	33.1
Social programs	28.4
Medical services	25.3
Employment programs	22.2
Growing food	21.7
Education and training	20.4
Advocacy	19.6
Counselling	19.6
Food education and preparation	17.3
Other	17
School food programs	10.6
Childcare	8.3
	277.9*

Figure 20. Chosen forms of transportation utilized most often (% *Rounded)

Bus	59.7
Walk	53.7
Borrow a car	18.1
Take own car	17.1
Cab	7.8
Bike	6.7
Go with someone who has a car	3.6
Handi-Transit	2.6
Bus/cab combo	2.3
Other	2.1
	173.7*

Figure 21. Harvest clients by fiscal year

2019	78,311	64% increase since 2008
2018	69,264	
2017	63,765	
2016	61,914	
2015	63,791	
2014	61,691	
2013	60,229	
2012	63,482	53% increase since 2008
2011	55,575	
2010	57,966	
2009	47,925	
2008	40,464	2008 Great Recession

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