

## Food Security

### Household Food Insecurity

More than 11.5 per cent of people in Winnipeg experience Household Food Insecurity (HFI) — meaning they don't have a stable source of food because of economic barriers.<sup>1</sup> This is a serious social equity issue with significant impacts on public health. While income is the most reliable indicator of HFI, other financial assets and liabilities can have significant impacts on financial access to food, suggesting that HFI is more precisely a measure of poverty or overall material deprivation.<sup>2</sup>

Although there are no available data for HFI in Winnipeg and very few publically-available for Manitoba, national trends indicate that:

- households that identify as Indigenous or black are more than twice as likely as the average household to experience HFI;
- recent immigrant households experience higher levels of HFI than the average Canadian household, although rates of HFI among immigrants in Canada more than five years are comparable to the general population;
- more than two thirds of households reliant on social assistance are food insecure, but the majority food insecure households rely primarily on employment income;
- two thirds of food insecure households are renters;
- one in 6 children lives in a food insecure household, nearly half of food insecure households are single people without children.<sup>3</sup>

Very few interventions have been effective at systemically addressing HFI. Policies and programs that redistribute wealth can have drastic impacts on rates of HFI. For example, Canada's Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement have been shown to reduce rates of

HFI by as much as half,<sup>4</sup> and adjustments to social assistance programs in Newfoundland and Labrador resulted in drastic declines in HFI in that province.<sup>5</sup>

HFI is monitored through Statistics Canada's Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). The HFSSM was only mandatory for provinces and territories in 2007–2008 and 2011–2012. In other years, Manitoba opted not to participate, resulting in a lack of reliable data. This is surprising, given that Manitobans ranked food security — including inter-governmental approaches to addressing HFI — as the second most important area where efforts should be directed to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion, after housing.<sup>6</sup>

The City of Winnipeg should:

- Work with the Province of Manitoba to ensure annual participation in the HFSSM<sup>7</sup>
- Work with the Province of Manitoba towards compatible provincial and municipal poverty reduction strategies with target increases in income equity and reductions in HFI for the Winnipeg Health Region.

### Urban Food Systems and Winnipeg Food Council

On February 22, Winnipeg City Council approved the formation of the Winnipeg Food Council (WFC), as recommended in the 2010 and 2014 Alternative Municipal Budgets.<sup>8</sup> The Winnipeg Food Council will advise the Mayor and Council on issues that affect the City of Winnipeg food system and encourage multisector coordination.

### Built Environment, Availability and Physical Access

Nearly 10 per cent of people in Winnipeg live in a food desert, or low-income area equal to or greater than 500 metres from the nearest full-service grocery store.<sup>9</sup> A recent assessment conducted by Wiebe and Distasio (2016) suggest that over 120,000 people in Winnipeg live in “severely unsupportive food environments” — areas



Rebecca Black, Food Matters Manitoba

where sufficiently nutritious food is unavailable, or the food that is available is not affordable for local residents.<sup>10</sup> More than two-thirds of these areas are in the inner-city, where 62 per cent of the dissemination blocks are characterized as areas with high social deprivation.<sup>11</sup> Food swamps — with high concentrations of low-quality foods — are far more common in low-income neighbourhoods. Newcomers and Indigenous peoples (especially those migrating from Northern and remote communities) often face additional geographic and social barriers in accessing culturally appropriate or preferred foods, which are less commonly available and often sparsely distributed.

As a result, many of the residents in low-income neighbourhoods must rely on public transportation, where and when available, to access preferred food choices. Limitations on the amount of groceries one can carry onto a Winnipeg Transit / Handi-Transit bus, coupled

with the lack of reliable service, has forced many low-income people in Winnipeg to use taxis to grocery shop. This added cost, along with recent increases in Winnipeg Transit fares, has cut into the already stretched grocery budgets of low-income people in Winnipeg. The AMB recommendation to implement a Low Income Bus pass (in our Transit section) would help ameliorate this problem.

#### Local Food Economies

Manitoba's Agribusiness sector (including production and manufacturing/value added) produced \$10 billion in revenue in 2016. The food manufacturing sector alone produced \$4.1 billion in revenue, and employs 10,300 people in Manitoba, including 5,900 people in Winnipeg. Winnipeg's 184 food and beverage manufacturers make up a significant proportion of the 218 Manitoba businesses in that sector.<sup>12</sup> City of Win-

nipeg procurement policies that favour locally produced and manufactured foods could have a broad impact on local livelihoods, economies and the environment, ensuring even greater success, stability, and employment in this sector. See our Training, Employment and Procurement chapter for more.

**Community Gardens  
(Community Garden Plan)**

Winnipeg is home to 234 allotment garden plots managed by the city, as well as 27 community garden sites on city property, but managed by local community organizations. These community gardens are more than simply spaces for growing food and flowers. Community gardens provide an important source of greenspace in the urban environment, as well as promote social connectedness,<sup>13</sup> learning about the local environment,<sup>14</sup> neighbourhood advocacy and civic engagement.<sup>15</sup> However, the City of Winnipeg lacks a comprehensive community garden plan that includes regular assessment of community gardens and their locations, a formal application process for groups seeking to set up new community garden space, secure leases for community gardeners, and resource support for garden start-ups, soil and seeds, tools, and access to water. Our chapter on Green Spaces has more details.

The City of Winnipeg should mandate and fund the Winnipeg Food Council to do the following:

**Built Environment, Availability and Physical Access**

- Coordinate a review of zoning-bylaws and tax structures, with recommendations to incentivize the equitable distribution of sufficient, safe, and culturally-appropriate food throughout the city.
- Coordinate an evaluation of bus routes, bus design, and service design to ensure people can access and transport a reasonable

amount of food in a reasonable amount of time using reliable Winnipeg Transit or Handi-Transit services (see Transit section).

- Coordinate a Winnipeg Food Assessment, including food assessments for each ward, to identify additional and location-specific assets, opportunities, and barriers to equitable food distribution and availability

**Local Food Economies**

- Provide advice to the City of Winnipeg on the designation and preservation of agricultural land and related land uses within city limits
- Provide the City of Winnipeg with recommendations for City of Winnipeg local food procurement policies.
- Develop resources and materials for sourcing local foods or supporting local food business.

**Community Gardens  
(Community Garden Plan)**

- Compile a complete assessment and map of current community gardens, indicating available community gardening space and contact information.
- Establish a formal application process for groups seeking to set up new community garden space, and provide formal, secure leases to community gardeners
- Provide resource support, through the use of small grants for community garden start-ups, provision of soil and seeds, and access to City of Winnipeg water at no cost.

*New Expenditures:*

- WFC Coordination: \$60,000
- WFC Operating budget: \$75,000
- WFC start-up Cost: \$100,000

Total New Expenditure: **\$235,000**

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- 1 [http://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Household\\_Food\\_Insecurity\\_in\\_Canada-2012\\_ENG.pdf](http://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Household_Food_Insecurity_in_Canada-2012_ENG.pdf). HFI can be marginal (worrying about running out of food and/or limited food selection), moderate (compromising the quality and/or quantity of food) or severe (reducing food intake, including going days without food)
  - 2 For example, a study conducted at the University of Manitoba revealed that 35.3% of students surveyed experienced moderate or severe HFI (<http://canadianfoodstudies.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cfs/article/view/204>)
  - 3 <http://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Household-Food-Insecurity-in-Canada-2014.pdf>
  - 4 <http://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/cpp.2015-069?journalCode=cpp>
  - 5 <http://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/cpp.2014-080>
  - 6 [https://www.gov.mb.ca/allaboard/pubs/all\\_aboard\\_food\\_security.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/allaboard/pubs/all_aboard_food_security.pdf)
  - 7 <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview/household-food-security-survey-module-hfssm-health-nutrition-surveys-health-canada.html>
  - 8 *20/20: A Clear Vision for Winnipeg: 2010 Alternative Municipal Budget*. Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives Mb. Available at: [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2010/09/AMB2010\\_2020\\_A\\_clear\\_vision.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2010/09/AMB2010_2020_A_clear_vision.pdf). And: *Taking Back the City: Alternative Municipal Budget Winnipeg, 2014*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Mb. Available at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2014/04/Alt%20Municipal%20Budget%20web.pdf>
  - 9 <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/health-promotion-chronic-disease-prevention-canada-research-policy-practice/vol-37-no-10-2017/ar-05-eng.pdf>
  - 10 Wiebe, K and Distasio, J. (2016). *Confronting the Illusion: Developing a Method to Identify Food Mirages and Food Deserts in Winnipeg*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg. Retrieved from: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/ius/docs/reports/2016-06-22-food-security-in-brief.pdf>
  - 11 The social deprivation characteristics considered in this study were low-income, lone-parent, unemployed, non-drivers, low-education, Indigenous, or recent immigrants.
  - 12 <https://www.economicdevelopmentwinnipeg.com/key-industries/agribusiness>
  - 13 Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004; Armstrong 2000; Hanna and Oh 2000
  - 14 Hale et al. 2011; Okvat and Zautra 2011; Andersson, Barthel, and Ahrné 2007
  - 15 Glover, Shinew, and Parry 2005; Krasny and Tidball 2009b; Hancock 2001; Okvat and Zautra 2011