



2021

BEYOND FOOD
REVISITED



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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Edmonton's Food Bank had an in-depth conversation with over 400 hamper program recipients. We asked questions about their current situation and what would be needed to improve the quality of their lives. Between 2015 and 2018, the economy declined and many people lost their jobs. With the assistance of the Edmonton Social Planning Council, our organization conducted a second survey in 2018 and compiled a report which we shared with our community.

Based on our experience, changes happening in our community, and in the lives of the people we were serving, we felt it would be beneficial to repeat the survey in 2020 rather than waiting until 2021. But COVID changed many things including our timelines as an organization.

So during the summer of 2021, we completed our most recent survey. Our interviews took place at the main Food Bank and at 12 food depots across Edmonton. Most questions were similar to the ones asked three years ago. With the help of Edmonton Social Planning Council, we collated and analyzed the results.

It is our goal to share this report broadly with decision-makers, the public, and partner organizations.

As we continue to work through the pandemic, it is important for us to walk shoulder-to-shoulder with low-income Edmontonians and remain resilient to the changes around us.

Keep well. Keep safe.

Sincerely,



Marjorie Bencz, CM
Executive Director
Edmonton's Food Bank

VALUES



BY THE NUMBERS FOR 2021

Between January 1 and December 31, Edmonton's Food Bank...

purchased three freezers for community food depots to hand out frozen donations including meat, vegetables, and specialty items.

delivered 2,352 food hampers through our home delivery service with Drive Happiness.

provided food hampers to about 59,000 different individuals.

distributed hampers to over 28,000 people in August - the highest in our history.

brought in over 6 million kilograms of fresh, gleaned, purchased and donated food.

purchased over \$2 million worth of food for our agency partners and our hamper recipients.

welcomed 35 new partner agencies expanding our network to include the Veteran's Association Food Bank, the Boyle Street Community Services HELP Team, and the Buffalo Keeper Nehiyaw Centre.

benefited from 90,000 hours from our dedicated volunteer team.



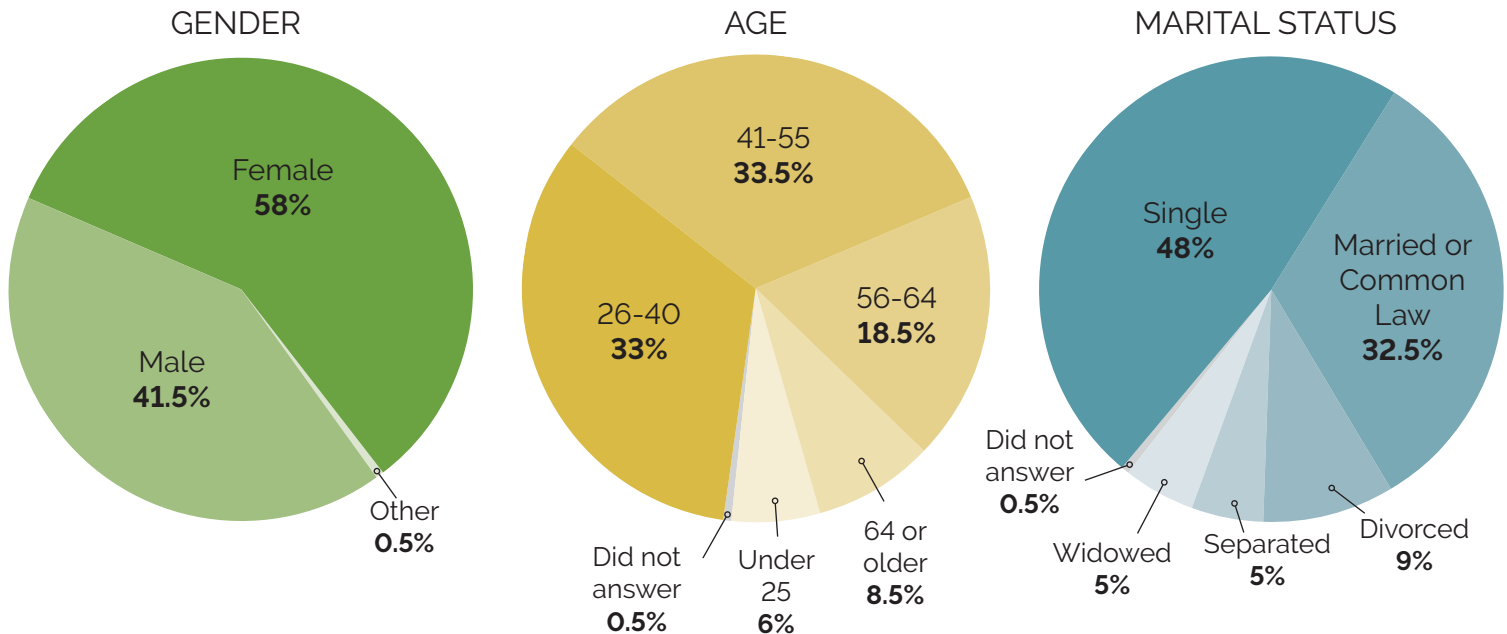
WHO WE TALKED TO

OVERVIEW

Similar to 2018, six out of ten respondents were female. Also consistent with the 2018 data, almost half of this sample were single and a third were married or common law.

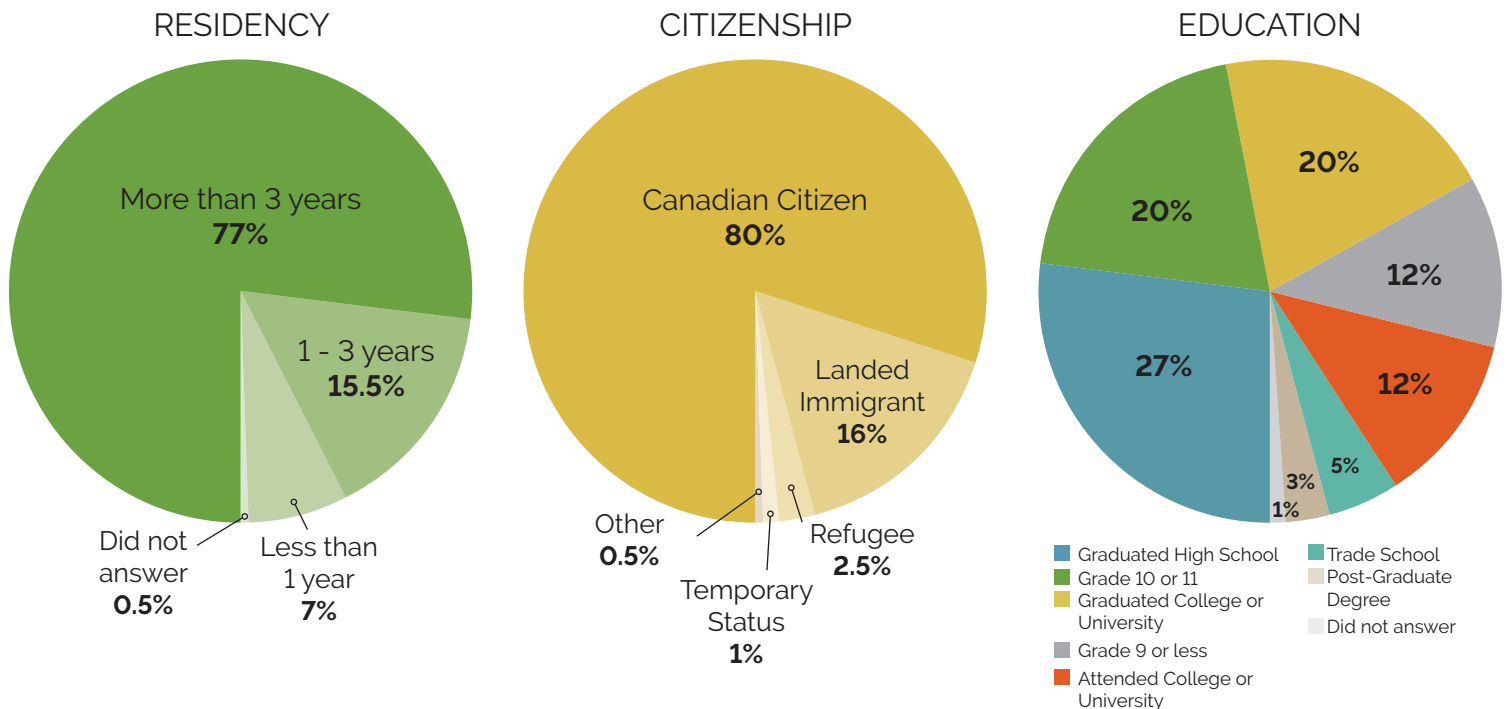
The largest age groups were those in the 26-40 range and 41-55 range. Clients over the age of 55 constituted 27%* of the sample. This is not directly comparable to the 2018 and 2015 samples because those earlier surveys allocated age categories differently with an "over 50" category that did not exist in this year's survey. However, in 2015, 23% of respondents were 50 years of age or older, and in 2018 this group was 30% of the sample. This is comparable, (albeit not directly) to this year's numbers.

*All survey number results contained in this document were rounded to the nearest .5% for ease of reading.
A full data set can be obtained by contacting Jamie Post at jamie@edmontonsfoodbank.com.



The proportion of respondents who have lived in Edmonton for more than three years was 77%, slightly higher than the 2018 sample. While the proportion of Canadian citizens was lower in this sample, (80%) compared to 2018, (nearly 90%) the remaining majority were permanent residents (16%).

Similar to 2018 and 2015, 40.5% of respondents had either attended or graduated from some type of post-secondary schooling, including trade school, college, or university. The proportion of those who graduated from high school was 27% which is only slightly lower than 2018 (30%).





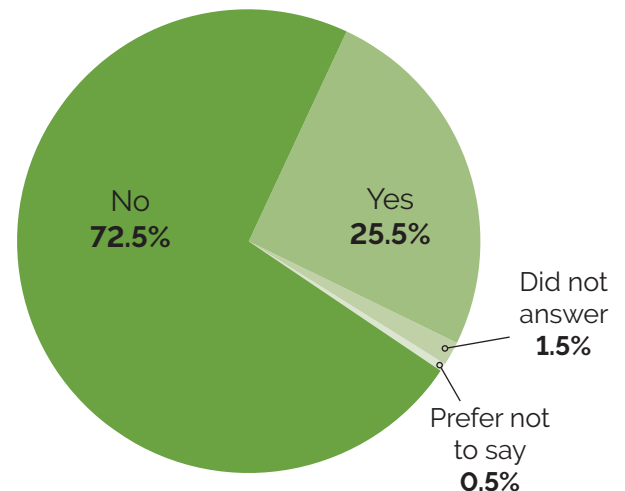
WHO WE TALKED TO

One of the most noticeable differences between the 2018 and 2021 surveys was that fewer interviewees identified as being Indigenous. Only 25.5% of this year's sample are Indigenous - a much lower proportion compared to 2018 (37%) and 2015 (34%).

There are a few opinions on this outcome:

- In some cases, Indigenous people are less likely to identify themselves as Indigenous because of labels or a history of government tracking.
- Some Indigenous families have returned to home communities so they can be closer to family during the pandemic.
- During the pandemic, the Federal Government has been allocating funds to Indigenous Governments and organizations for disbursement. These funds have assisted Indigenous individuals and families.

ARE YOU INDIGENOUS?



LIVING ON LOW INCOME

RISING UNEMPLOYMENT

Slightly more respondents were not working at the time of the survey (83%) compared to 2018, when 78% of respondents had not been employed within three months prior to the survey. In the 2015 survey, this proportion was 71%.

As in 2018, 60% of respondents who are currently employed worked either a part-time, casual or seasonal basis, including those who work full-time holding down one or more part-time jobs.

Nearly a third of respondents lost work due to COVID-19, and four out of ten are currently looking for work.

LESS CLIENTS ON ALBERTA WORKS

Only a third of respondents (33.5%) receive income from Alberta Works, much less than the 46.5% in 2018, but closer to the 2015 proportion which was 36%. Similarly, only 15% of this year's sample is receiving AISH, compared to 18.5% in 2018 but closer to the 2015 proportion of 13%.

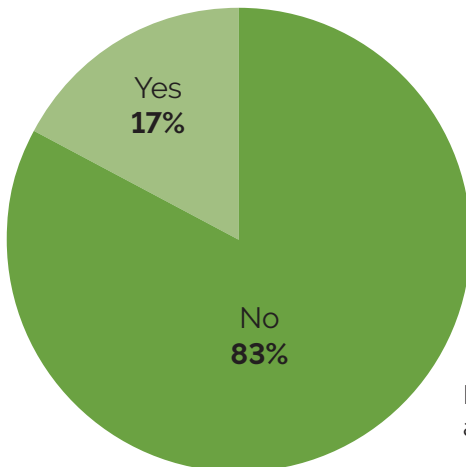
While 45% of respondents reported no change in their recent monthly household income, 43.5% reported a decrease. Interestingly, 11% reported an increase.

JOB LOSSES DURING THE PANDEMIC

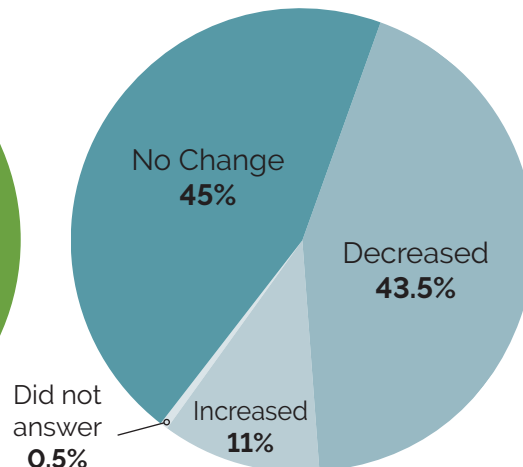
Among those who experienced a decrease in income, one-third had lost their jobs (27%) and one-quarter experienced a reduction in income from the government (24%).

Half of the sample was working prior to COVID-19, with one-third (28%) having worked full-time. The majority of respondents (70%) have not been working since March 2020.

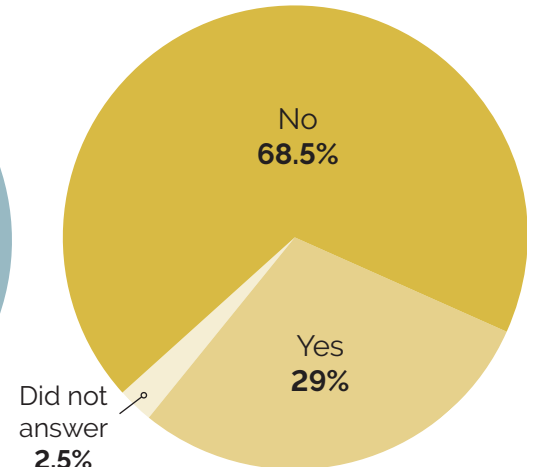
EMPLOYED IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS



HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGES



HAVE YOU LOST WORK DUE TO COVID-19?

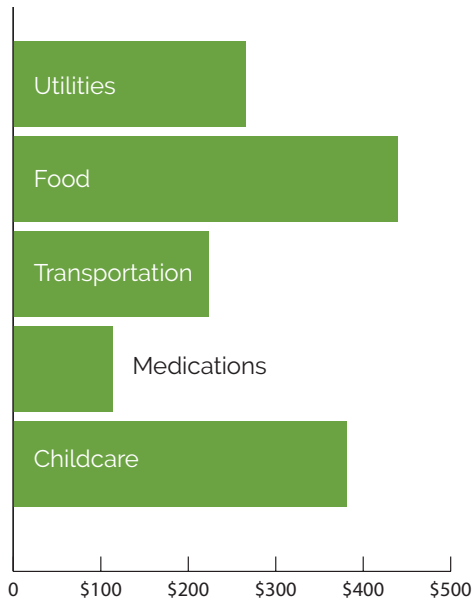


WHICH BILLS SHOULD I PAY

HIGHEST MONTHLY EXPENSES

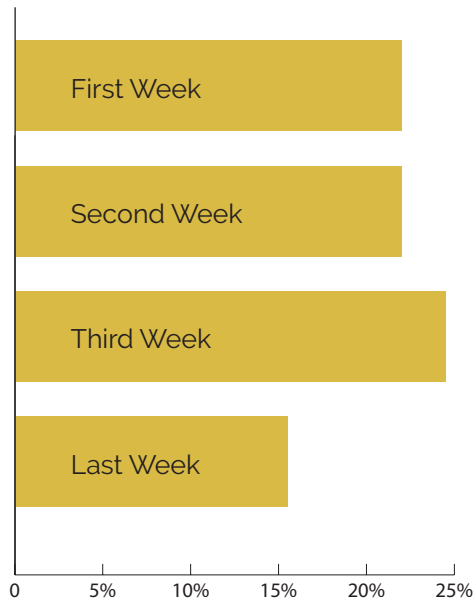
The highest monthly expense after the cost of housing was the cost of childcare (\$381.60), followed by utilities (\$265.70).

Those in subsidized housing saved nearly \$300 per month on rent compared to those renting privately, and saved \$600 per month compared to those paying off a mortgage.



NOT RUNNING OUT OF MONEY AS QUICKLY

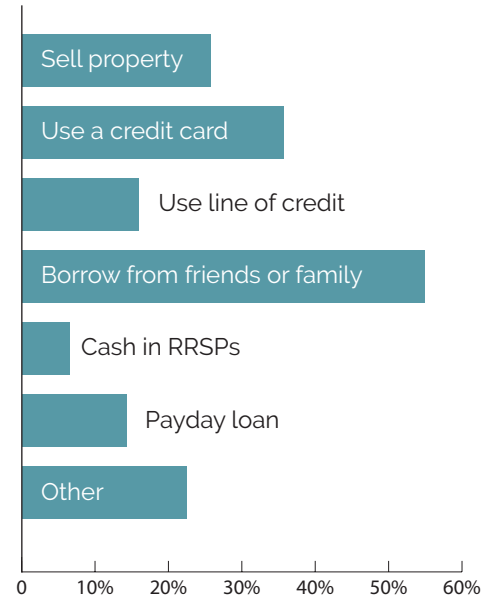
Compared to 2018 when 62% of the sample ran out of money by the second week, only 43.5% of this year's sample ran out by the second week (slightly lower than the 2015 number of 47%). By the third week of the month, 68% of this sample ran out of money, compared to 87% in 2018 and much closer to the 70% in 2015.



HOW DO YOU MAKE ENDS MEET?

In this sample, less respondents are selling their property to make ends meet (26%) compared to 2018 (34.5%) but similar to 2015 (27%).

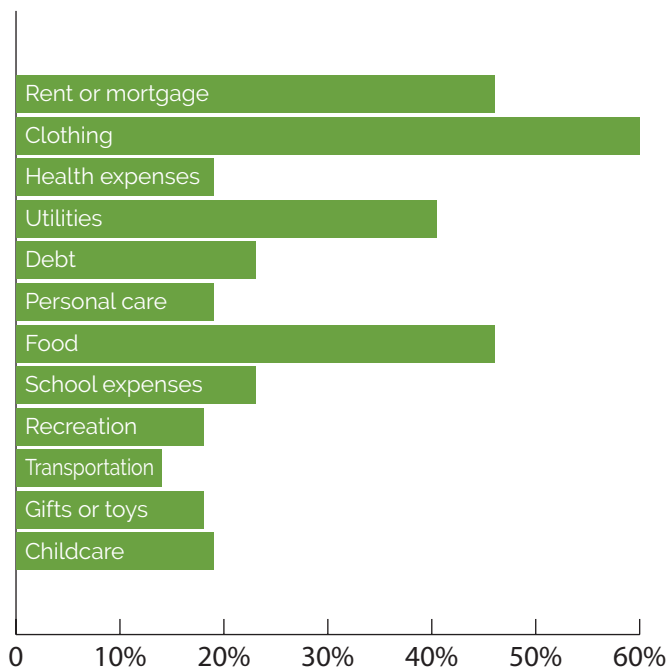
More are using credit cards (36%) compared to 2018 (29%) and 2015 (20%), and less are borrowing from friends or family (55%) compared to 2018 (68%) and 2015 (60%).



CUTTING BACK ON ESSENTIALS

In 2018, only 8.5% of the sample said they would cut back on paying rent or mortgage to manage their expenses. In contrast, this year 46% said they would cut back on rent or mortgage first if they are running low on money.

This sample was similar to 2018 with 60% saying they would cut back on clothing purchases, 40.5% on paying utilities, and 46% on buying food. In 2018, people were more likely to cut back on food, utility bills, and clothing.



JACK

Jack is newly divorced and recently found an apartment he could afford after couch surfing for a while.

Jack explained that he "runs out of groceries before he runs out of month". He is on disability pension and gets paid once a month which has proven challenging to manage and adapt.

Jack receives food from Edmonton's Food Bank as the disability funds do not cover everything and he is very grateful for the help.

"I am so glad you guys are here. Thank you so much!"

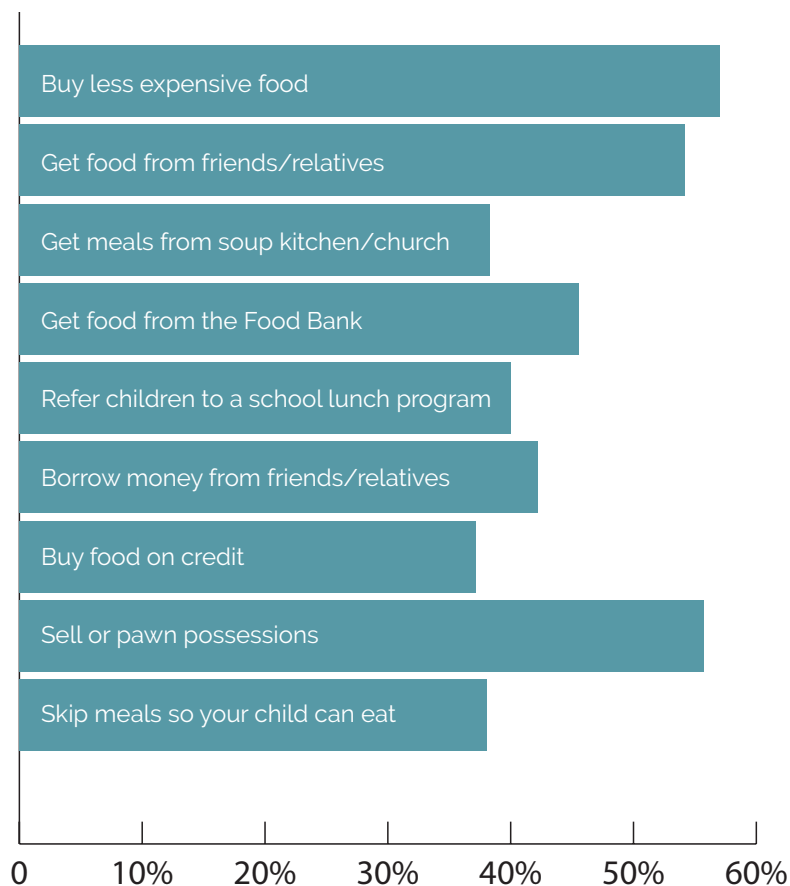
DONNA

Donna just moved into her own apartment. As a young adult of 24 trying to make it on her own, after living expenses, she has no money left for food. Donna appreciates the help she is getting from Edmonton's Food Bank as she navigates life and its complexities. Donna feels as though she'd have nothing to eat and now knows that help is available.

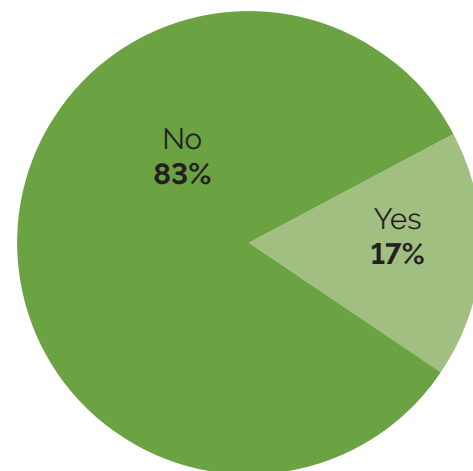
WHEN FOOD RUNS LOW

Half of the sample did not respond to the question about children missing meals during the past year, likely because of the stigma and sensitivity of acknowledging this experience. Of those who responded, 83% reported their children did not miss a meal in the past year, which is similar to 2018.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN RUNNING SHORT ON FOOD?



HAVE ANY CHILDREN IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD MISSED A MEAL?





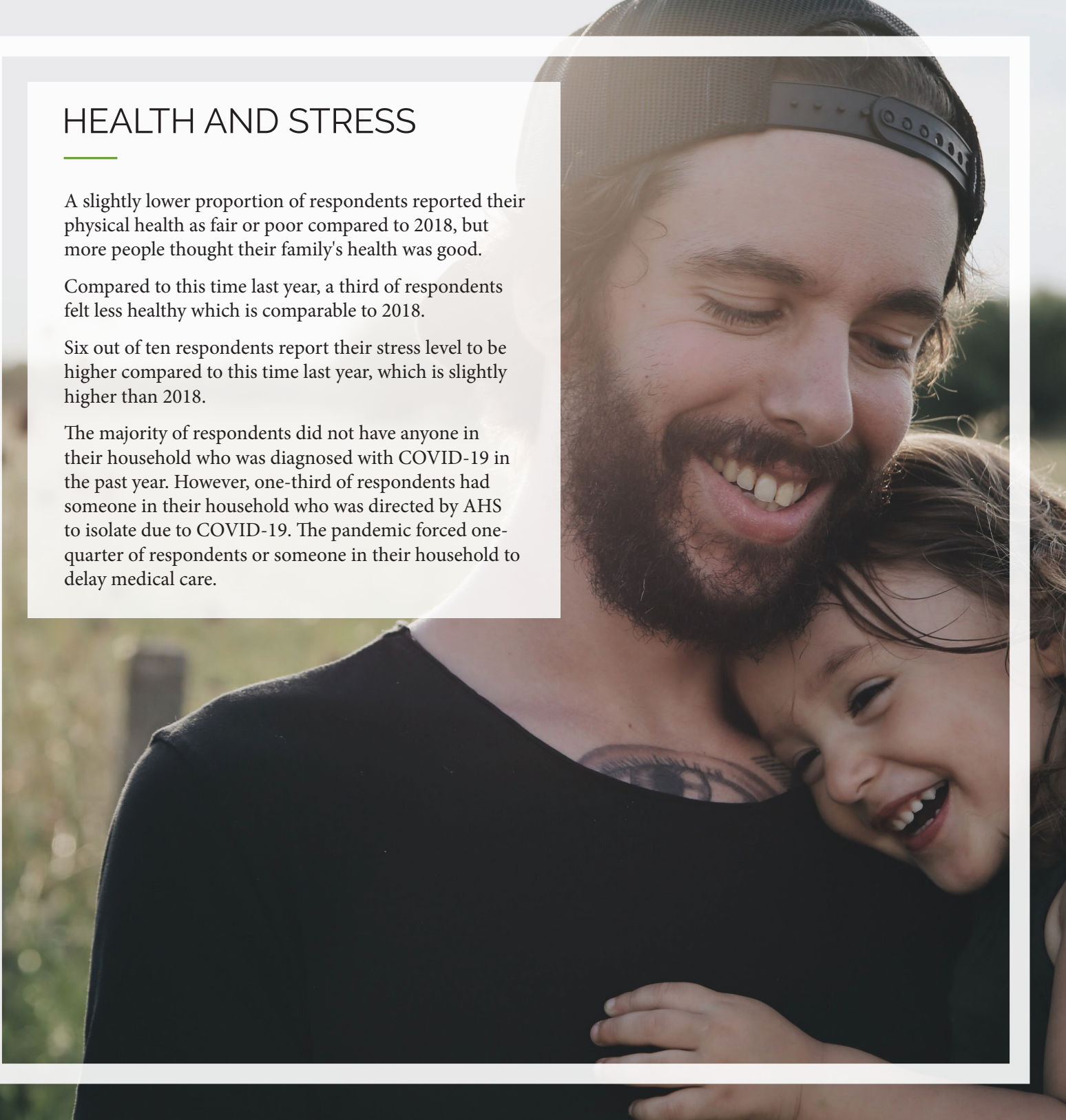
HEALTH AND STRESS

A slightly lower proportion of respondents reported their physical health as fair or poor compared to 2018, but more people thought their family's health was good.

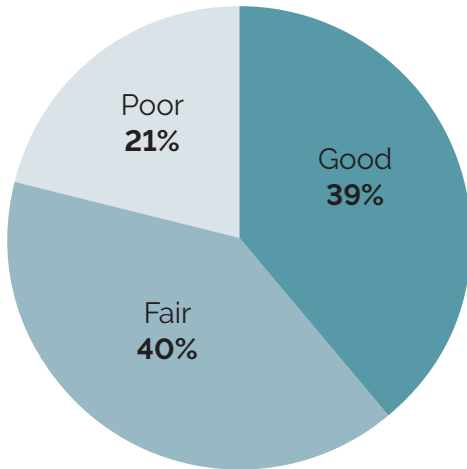
Compared to this time last year, a third of respondents felt less healthy which is comparable to 2018.

Six out of ten respondents report their stress level to be higher compared to this time last year, which is slightly higher than 2018.

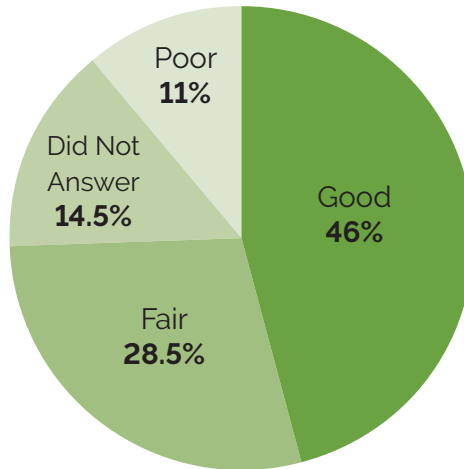
The majority of respondents did not have anyone in their household who was diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past year. However, one-third of respondents had someone in their household who was directed by AHS to isolate due to COVID-19. The pandemic forced one-quarter of respondents or someone in their household to delay medical care.



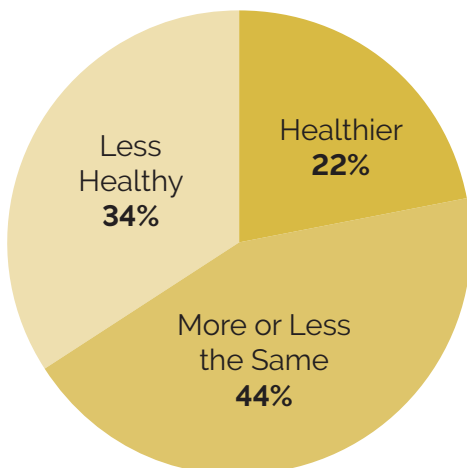
RESPONDENT'S
PHYSICAL HEALTH



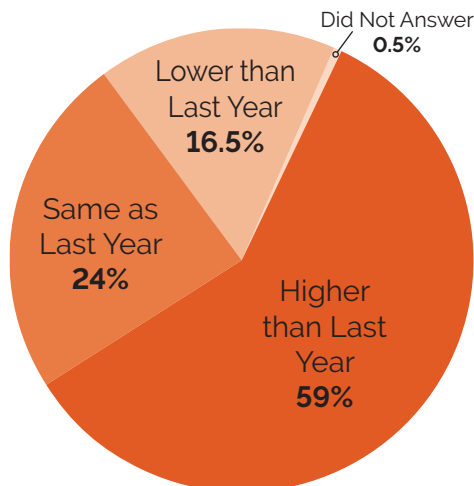
FAMILY
PHYSICAL HEALTH



PHYSICAL HEALTH
COMPARED TO THIS
TIME LAST YEAR



STRESS LEVEL
COMPARED TO THIS
TIME LAST YEAR



SHELLY

Shelly is a 51 year old, single parent of an adult autistic son. Life is a struggle for her as she's working for minimum wage, but she is a hard worker and has needed the Food Bank's help to make ends meet at times.

Shelly was laid off due to COVID and continues to persevere regardless of her circumstances.

She is grateful for the extra food she receives from Edmonton's Food Bank and loves the variety of what she receives in her hamper. Shelly says, "The food is always so fresh!"

MOVING FORWARD: MAKING PEOPLE MORE FOOD SECURE

Governments and society have to seriously address the problems that force people into poverty: inadequate welfare benefits, lack of disability supports, family breakdown and domestic violence, chronic unemployment, lack of subsidized daycare and rent, unreasonable and unsafe housing, addictions, and much, much more.

After 40 years of experience, we believe that the active gleaning and utilization of salvageable food is a good thing. As our society looks at recycling and efficient use of what it produces, Edmonton's Food Bank has been a leader in what is now a larger societal trend.

As with the case with most food banks, Edmonton's Food Bank challenges the notion that donated food on its own will reduce poverty. There is a moral dimension to hunger and we must all be committed to enhancing the health and well-being of others. After all, food on its own is not a realistic substitute for policies that will help vulnerable Canadians enter the work force, or access to adequate income support, and affordable housing that enables low-income people to live with dignity.



MOVING FORWARD: MAKING PEOPLE MORE FOOD SECURE

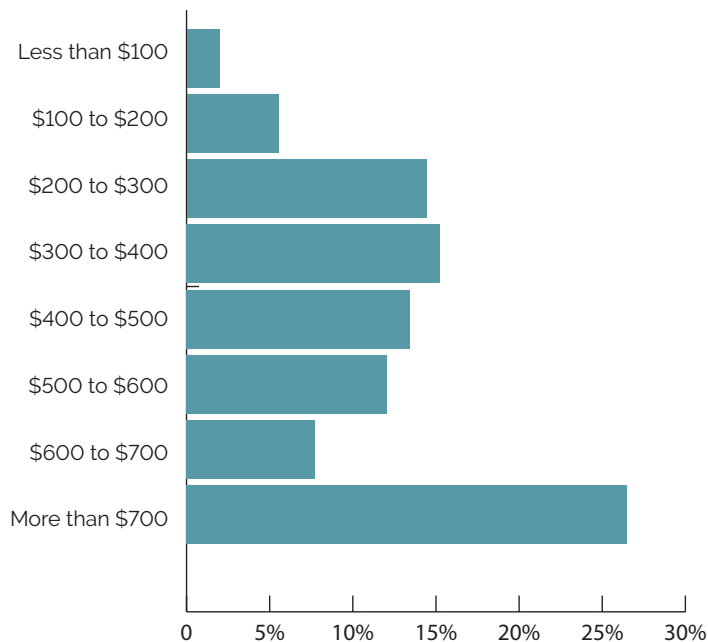
As we work with others to improve the lives of others, there are some "low hanging fruit" we can work on:

Share this report with decision-makers and other leaders: Collectively, we need to do more in the areas of income support to ensure the people that need and relying on income support are getting the resources they need to live with dignity.

An even more modest increase in income would help: Most respondents would need between \$200 and \$600 more per month so they wouldn't have to depend on the Food Bank. The proportion who would need less than \$500 to not need the Food Bank is 50.5% in this sample, which is lower than 2018 (58%) but higher than 2015 (43%).

Another key area of crisis for low-income people is lack of affordable, safe housing. This is a major theme that runs through many conversations and research.

HOW MUCH MORE MONEY PER MONTH WOULD YOUR HOUSEHOLD NEED TO NOT DEPEND ON THE FOOD BANK?



DUSTIN

Dustin is 58 years old and unfortunately, had a stroke which resulted in a stay at the Glenrose Hospital. He was released and back home for about a month until his wife said he was too hard to look after and moved out.

Dustin has lingering complications because of his stroke - he only has the use of one arm and cannot walk well.

Dustin is struggling financially and needs food help. Edmonton's Food Bank is able to provide food support and ensures that Dustin's food hamper is delivered by Drive Happiness directly to his home.

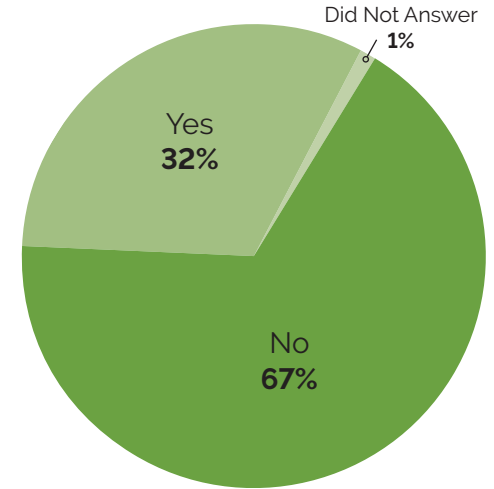
MOVING FORWARD: MAKING PEOPLE MORE FOOD SECURE

More connected to other supports: This year, 67% of respondents said they are not receiving services from other agencies, which is lower than 2018 (75%) but closer to 2015 (70%). Of those who accessed support from other services, a large portion sought help with completing income taxes (10.5%) and applying for government support (10%).

Better connection with City of Edmonton services: The majority of respondents either did not have a free Leisure Pass (44.5%) or were not aware of it (29%). Similarly, only 3 out of 10 (30%) made use of the low-income bus pass for themselves or their family.

Consistently strong interest in other services provided by the Food Bank and Program Partners

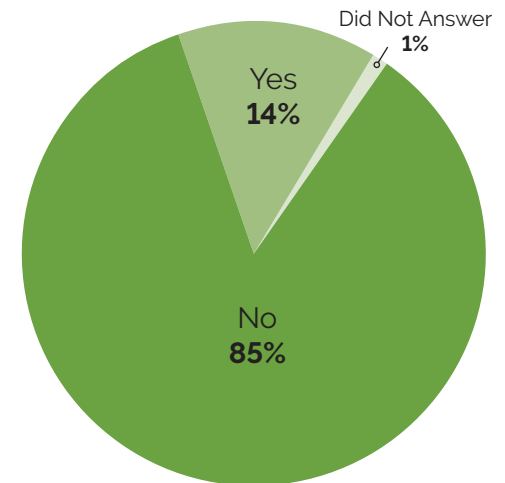
ARE YOU RECEIVING SERVICES FROM ANOTHER COMMUNITY AGENCY IN EDMONTON?



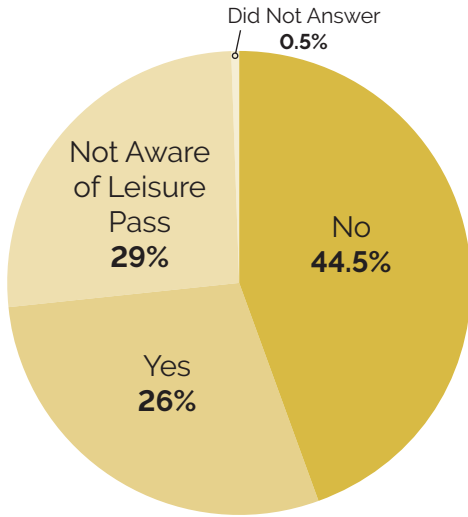
THE FOOD BANK OFFERS OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES. WHICH ONES WOULD INTEREST YOU?



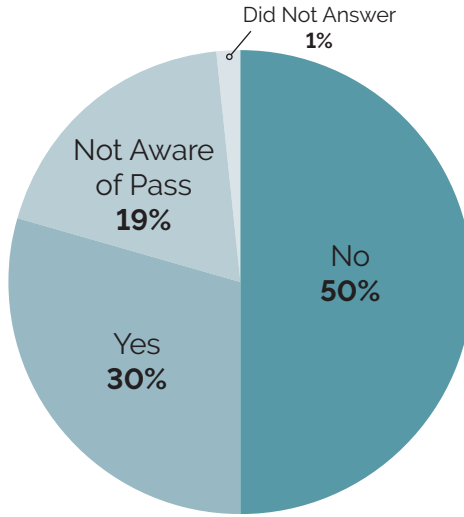
DO YOU HAVE ANY SAVINGS?



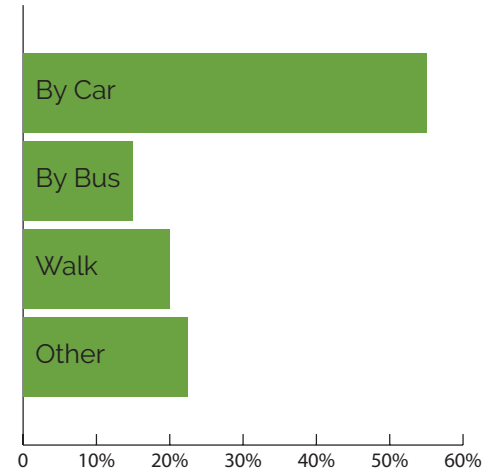
DO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY MAKE USE OF THE CITY'S FREE LEISURE PASS?



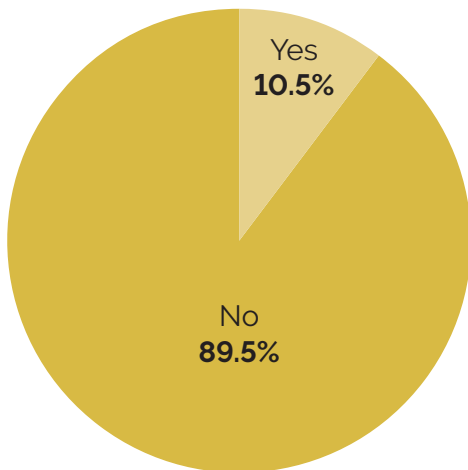
DO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY MAKE USE OF THE LOW-INCOME BUS PASS?



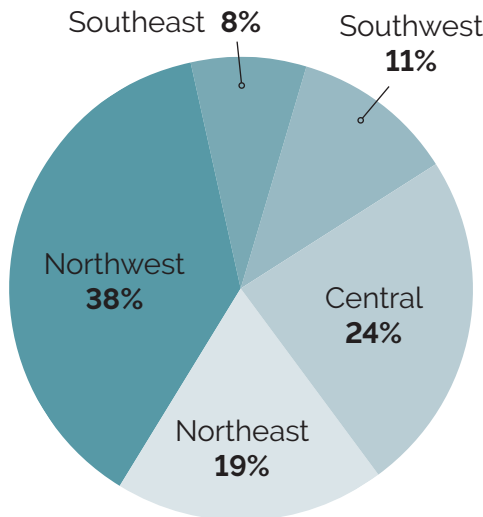
HOW DO YOU GET TO THE FOOD BANK OR A FOOD DEPOT TO GET A HAMPER?



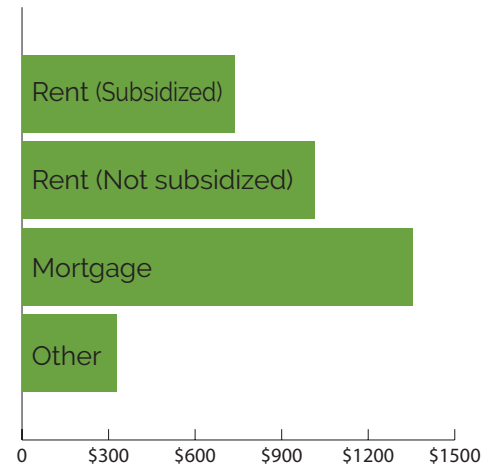
DO YOU HAVE ANY RETIREMENT SAVINGS?



WHAT AREA OF EDMONTON DO YOU LIVE IN?



HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY LAST MONTH FOR HOUSING?



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 over 500 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 2021 Client Survey:

Kathy Godlewski
Don Lore
Bailey Irion (Norquest student)
Daniel Sale
Barb Koetze
Teresa Rossmann
Brittany Coxe
Jo-Ann Dewald
Jennifer Lee
Julia Self
Fea Gelveson
Tracey Gilchrist
Mark Doram
Jamie Post

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

Mustard Seed
West Meadows Baptist Church
Canon Ridge Salvation Army
McClure United Church
Marantha Christian Reformed Church
St. Luke's Anglican Church
St. Matthias Anglican Church
Salvation Army Castledowns
Anawim

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

C5 Northeast Hub
Markazul Iman for Tomorrow's Shade Association
Islamic Family and Social Services Association

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

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

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, and churches 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. This

activity takes two forms. 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 a job, help with English, math, or GED prep?

WE CAN HELP YOU!



Call us today! All services are free by appointment:

- ✓ Resumes
- ✓ Job search
- ✓ Job interview practice
- ✓ Safety tickets
First Aid, Food Safety,
Forklift and more
- ✓ GED prep
- ✓ Math and English tutoring
- ✓ One-on-one support
Counseling, family violence support,
recreation, links to landlords,
newcomer settlements, 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 and the City of Edmonton 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, City of Edmonton, Acces 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 300 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.



By Appointment Only: 780.425.2133

Monday to Friday
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Edmonton's Food Bank, Annex Building
11434 – 120 Street



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS AT EDMONTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL FOR THEIR EXPERTISE IN 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
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Edmonton, AB T5G 2Y2

Annex
11434 - 120 Street
Edmonton, AB T5G 2Y2

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PO Box 62061
Edmonton, AB T5M 4B5

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