

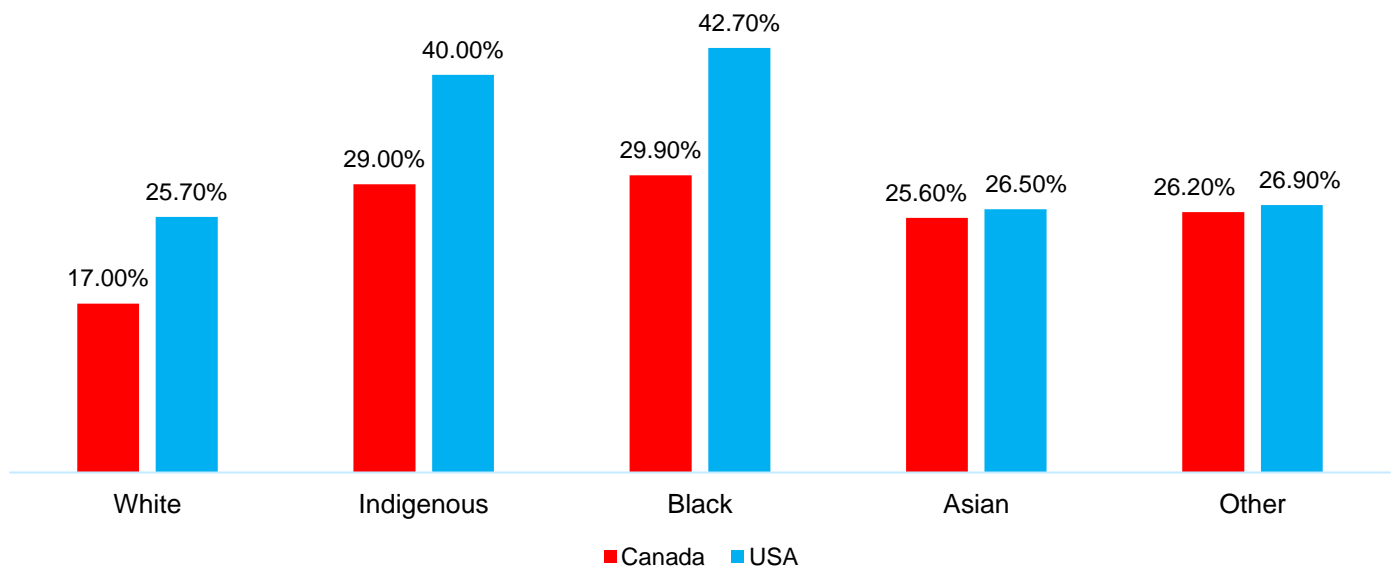


August 2021

FOOD INSECURITY DURING THE PANDEMIC IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Food insecurity, a problem plaguing both countries, heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic (Schanzenbach & Pitts, 2020). In Canada, 19.2% (N-1119) and in the United States, 26.8% (N-1893) of respondents reported having difficulty purchasing food during the pandemic. However, the likelihood of facing food insecurity varied by several factors. This fact sheet looks at food insecurity based on ethnicity, region, gender, marital status, age, education and immigration status.

Food Insecurity Due to COVID-19, Canada & The USA, 2021



ETHNICITY

Food insecurity varied widely by ethnicity in both countries. White respondents were the least likely to report issues with food security (17.0% & 25.7%, respectively), although there is an 8.7% difference between Canada and the United States.

Black respondents, meanwhile, were the most likely to report food insecurity concerns. Studies have shown that Black adults in the USA are significantly more likely to face food insecurity than White people (Dabone, C. et al., 2021; Perry et al, 2021). This is due to various socioeconomic factors caused by anti-Black racism that permeates across the United States.

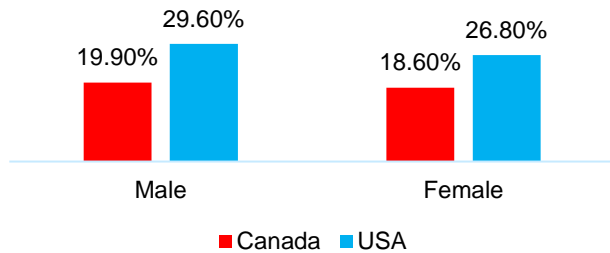
Indigenous respondents were 11% more likely to report food security issues in the US compared to Canada (29% vs. 40%).

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Provincially, those living in the Prairies (Saskatchewan and Manitoba) were twice as likely to report food insecurity than those living in the Maritimes (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island). These rates (28.8% and 14.7%, respectively) represent the difference across provinces. Food Matters (2020) reported that 14.4% of Manitobans are food insecure. However, this figure was before COVID reached the province.

In the United States, rates also varied based on location. Those most affected by food insecurity were in the West South Central region. This region includes Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. 36.6% of respondents said they had issues with food insecurity vs. 26.1% of respondents in the Mountain region (including Az, Co, Id, Mt, Nv, Nm, Ut, and Wy). The USDA (2019) reported that those living in the South had a higher food insecurity rate (11.2%) than those in other locations. This has only increased since the pandemic.

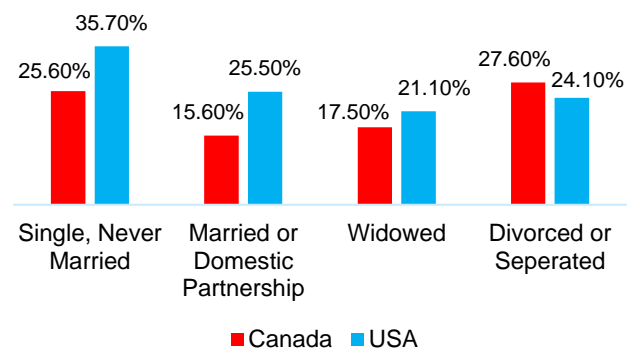
GENDER, MARITAL STATUS AND AGE



Men in both countries were more likely to report food insecurity. When you look at gender and ethnicity, Indigenous women in Canada were almost 10% more likely than Indigenous men to report food insecurity (32.5%, 25%). By contrast, 38.1% of Black men in Canada reported food insecurity versus 22.9% of Black women. The same is true for Asian men (30.7%) compared to Asian women (20.3%). White men and women both reported 17%. In the United States, men of all ethnicities except for Asian Americans reported higher levels of food insecurity than women.

Age is also an essential factor in food insecurity levels. Those under 45 years old were significantly more likely to have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. Again, in Canada, we do not see as much difference compared to what is seen in the United States. This could be for several reasons, including that those in the younger age brackets are more likely to have small children at home and are more likely to work in the hospitality industry.

As research has shown, those working in the hospitality industry were most likely to be affected by the shutdowns in both countries, and fewer benefits were available in the United States. Most Canadians had access to Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), while part-time employees and gig workers were less able to access financial government assistance during the 2020 lockdowns. Statistics Canada (2021) reported that 66.6% of workers in hotels and food services and 62.7% of those employed in arts, entertainment and recreation claimed the CERB benefit.

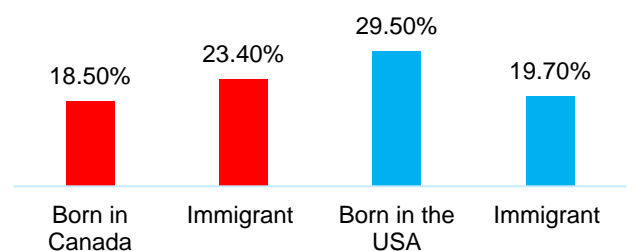


Interestingly, like other protective factors in Canada, marital status seemed to mitigate food insecurity for those who were married in Canada but did not do the same in the United States. Those who reported being divorced or single were slightly less likely to report food insecurity than those who reported being married. By contrast, being married in Canada made those respondents significantly less likely to report food issues (15.6% vs 27.6%). This could be again related to the federal aid provided by the Canadian government. If both respondents were unemployed due to COVID-19, they could each have applied for the \$2,000 per month CERB benefit, directly resulting in less food insecurity.

Further, the rates between married and widowed people in Canada were lower than those in the United States. Moreover, being widowed in the United States reduced food security issues compared to being married.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

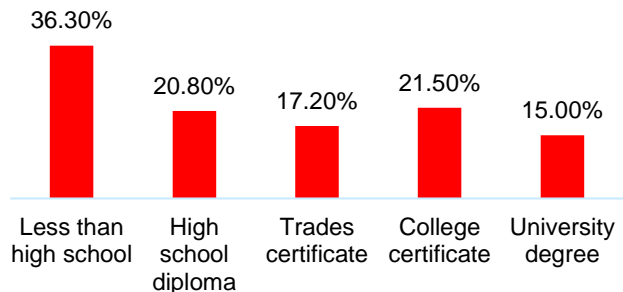
Food Insecurity by Immigration Status, 2021



Food security also varied based on immigrant status with a 5% difference between those born in Canada and immigrants living in Canada (18.5% v. 23.4%). In addition, immigrants are more likely to work in hospitality and health care (Block and Dhunna, 2020), increasing their likeliness of being laid off or becoming ill during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, those born in the United States were more likely to report food insecurity concerns than immigrants living in the United States.

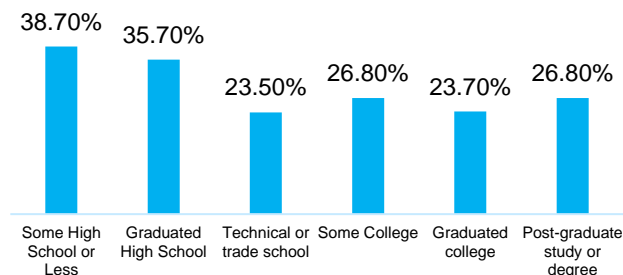
EDUCATION

Food Insecurity by Education, Canada, 2021



In terms of education, those who did not graduate high school in either country were most at risk for food insecurity (36.3% in Canada, 38.7% in the US). While having a university degree (Bachelors or higher) protected Canadian respondents, it was less protective in the United States. However, have a trades diploma reduced food insecurity in both countries. This could be because those with trades diplomas were less likely to be laid off during the pandemic. In the United States, having any post-secondary education reduced food insecurity, while in Canada, having a college degree (versus a trades diploma or university degree) was less likely to protect respondents.

Food Insecurity by Education, USA, 2021



Respondents in Canada and the United States who had less than a high school degree were significantly more likely to report being currently unemployed than other respondents (28.4%, 29.7%). However, those with higher education in both countries were more likely to work from home during the pandemic. In the United States, 37.2% of those who graduated college and 47.8% of those with post-graduate experience reported working from home all the time during COVID-19. In Canada, 41.5% of those with a university degree reported working from home all the time. Working from home would have also significantly reduced the chances of being diagnosed with COVID-19 as they were not required to be in a public-facing or essential worker role.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The researchers: A cross-national team of over 30 researchers led by Dr. Lori Wilkinson, Dr. Kiera Ladner and Dr. Jack Jedwab, received funding from CIHR for this study *COVID-19's differential impact on the mental and emotional health of Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers: A socioeconomic analysis of Canada, US and Mexico*.

The study: The team has been collecting data in Canada since March 9 and the United States since March 27, 2020. Ongoing survey waves now include Mexico. Our goal is to measure and follow the changes in attitudes, behaviours, health, and socioeconomic outcomes among persons living in all three countries using a mixed methodology of surveys and unstructured interviews.

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