

# Ontario is Hungry: A Comprehensive Report on Food Insecurity in Ontario

Drawing on annual reports from Food Banks Canada, Ontario has seen a 50% increase in food bank visits since 2018. Our report investigates how macroeconomic and policy changes in Ontario have contributed to this rise.



**2.2%**

increase in the number of employed people accessing food banks, despite record low levels of unemployment



**91%**

of food banks offer programs that go beyond providing immediate relief to hunger



**323,931**

food bank visits recorded in Ontario for 2018

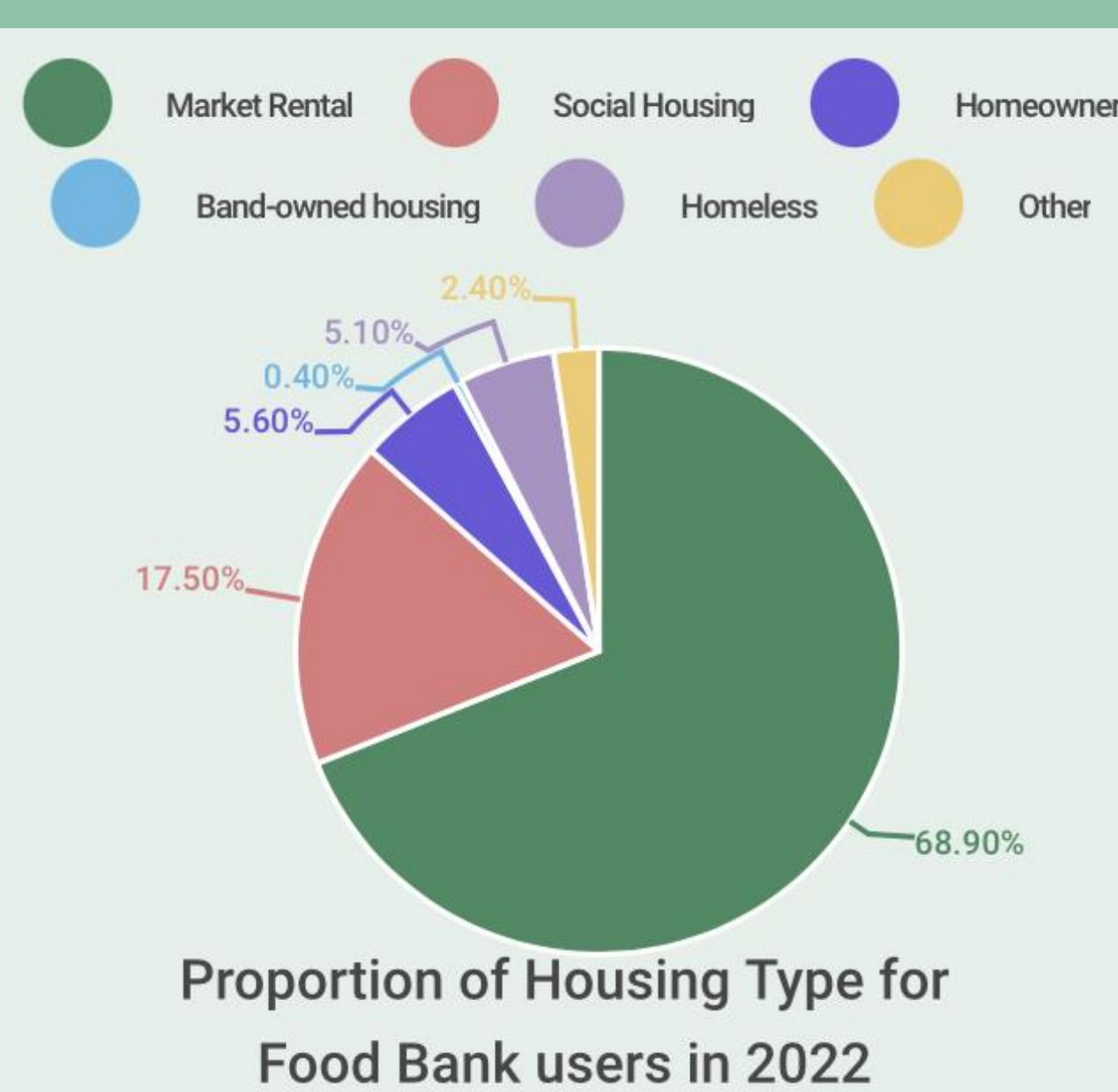


**486,299**

food bank visits recorded in Ontario for 2022

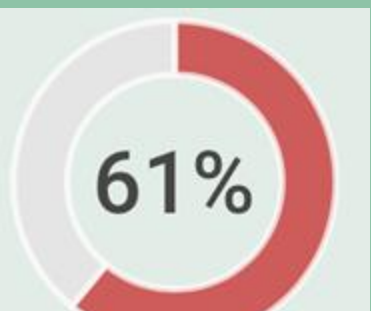
## Recent inflation and a rise in housing costs have coincided with increased food bank visits

Consumer Price Index (CPI) of food in Ontario has risen by 35.3 points since 2018

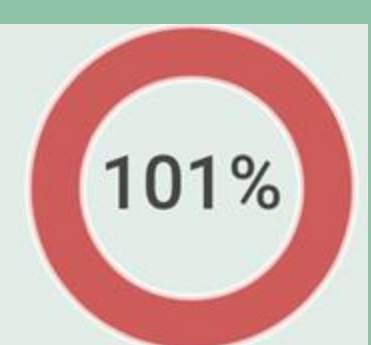


In Toronto, the price of a bachelor apartment increased by 18% from \$1081 in 2018 to \$1306 in 2022.

An individual earning the minimum amount required to purchase necessities in Toronto (\$25,572/year) would spend 61% of their income on rent



A disabled unattached individual receives a maximum of \$15,499 annually in welfare, of which 101% would be paid towards rent



**\$1.6 billion**

repair backlog reported by Toronto Community Housing Corp.

Bill 23 and the National Housing Strategy may increase housing supply, but support for social housing is desperately needed



### Bill 47 - Make Ontario Open for Business Act

Changes to Ontario labour policies in 2018 were cited by food banks as a contributor to the rise in job precarity and employed persons using food banks. No observable trends were identified from the relevant data. More long-term research is required, along with creating a quantifiable definition of job precarity.



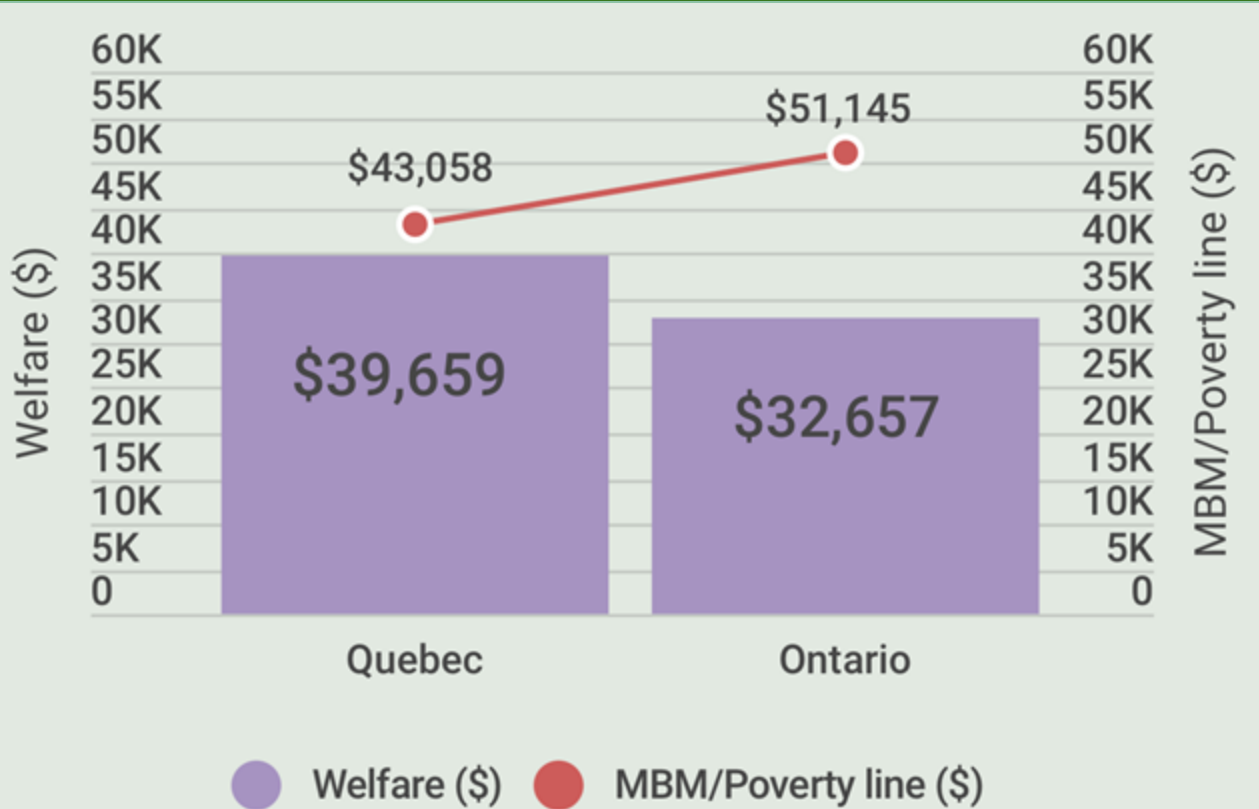
### COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic induced severe and acute changes to macroeconomic and policy changes, including income support and sudden loss of employment. Many food banks were unable to capture detailed data in 2020 due to changes in programming and staffing. It is widely supported that temporary income supports and community initiatives during this time helped those who would otherwise rely on food banks.

## How can Ontario use social welfare policies to address food insecurity?

### Quebec consistently reports the lowest rates of severe food insecurity in Canada

Couples with children receive greater benefits in Quebec



**\$6,805**

Gap between total welfare for a disabled individual in Quebec and MBM (poverty line)



**\$10,123**

Gap between total welfare for a disabled individual in Ontario and MBM (poverty line)

### Ontario has one of the highest proportions of food bank users on disability at roughly 30%

Canada Disability Benefit - Currently under Senate review, benefits may be indexed for inflation

Accessible Canada Act (2019) - Disabled community must be involved in decision-making processes



Mixed use commercial zoning laws would allow residents to access food within a walking distance of their homes, decreasing barriers to food access

### Our Recommendations

- Rework the Ontario Child Benefit to allow for more substantial welfare targeted at low-income families
- Increase investments into Ontario's community and social housing projects
- Review the potential impacts of mixed commercial zoning by-laws on rates of food insecurity
- Implementation of the Canada Disability Benefit Act, with continued funding towards the Ontario Disability Support Program
- Conduct an ongoing review of Quebec's Basic Income Program, its impact on provincial food insecurity, and whether the Ontario provincial government should implement a similar program
- Review the potential impacts of a rental assistance program in Ontario

