

## Food Costing in BC 2022: Assessing the affordability of healthy eating Context for Indigenous Partners

### Overview

Food Costing is a collaborative project led by the BC Centre for Disease Control in partnership with the regional health authorities and Ministry of Health. The project involves collecting food price data from grocery stores across the province in order to assess the amount of money required for individuals and families to eat a nutritious diet. The tool used in collecting food price data is Health Canada's [National Nutritious Food Basket \(NNFB\)](#), which includes 61 food items (vegetables and fruits, protein foods, grains, and oils and fats). The food items are minimally processed, require preparation and are consistent with Canada's Food Guide (see appendix 1 for complete list).

Rising food costs are impacting many communities, especially Indigenous communities who face additional food security challenges as a result of colonization and its impacts on the social determinants of health.

The food costing data and report aim to inform population and public health planning, monitoring and to inform policy. Typically, data is collected and a report put out every two years; however, due to the pandemic, 2022 was the first year for data collection since 2017.

The report and infographic will be released by the BCCDC and will be accompanied by a news release and social media.

### Key Findings

The average cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four for one month in BC is \$1,263. The monthly average costs reported by regional health authorities are as follows:

- Fraser Health: \$1,193
- Interior Health: \$1,264
- Northern Health: \$1,300
- Vancouver Coastal Health: \$1,311
- Island Health: \$1,366

Analysis of five different household compositions and income scenarios included in the report illustrate the challenges of affording a nutritious diet for people and households who live on low incomes, especially for those who live on income and disability assistance (see Table on page 3).

### Limitations

There are limitations that make the findings less applicable to remote and Indigenous communities in the province. Food costing only captures costs in full-service grocery stores, those that carry all of the 61 items in the NNFB. This means the data largely excludes rural, remote and Indigenous communities where there are a limited number of full-service grocery stores.

The NNFB does not consider cultural or other food preferences, and likely does not reflect how many Indigenous people or communities actually eat or would like to eat as the process does not currently include Indigenous engagement or data.

The food costing methodology also does not adequately capture the true cost or affordability of healthy eating for Indigenous people or communities. It does not take into account costs of accessing market food, like transportation, or the cost of accessing traditional or non-market food sources. Indigenous people and communities obtain food in various ways, through market, traditional and other non-market based food systems. They may shop at small grocery stores or markets, hunt, gather, or fish on Indigenous territories, or share and trade food with family, community and across Nations – costs and experiences with accessing food in these ways are not captured in the food costing report.

### What's next?

Food costing and this report focus on household food insecurity and inadequate income as its root cause. There are a number of economic, social, environmental and geographic factors that are not captured in the food costing report, including historical and ongoing trauma, racism and policies which continue to perpetuate food insecurity for Indigenous communities.

### Stories Project

A project is currently underway, led by the BCCDC with the regional health authorities, FNHA and Ministry of Health, to better understand remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities' experiences related to food cost, access, availability and affordability, as well the impacts of climate change on food. Stories from eight communities across BC will be shared in summer 2023.

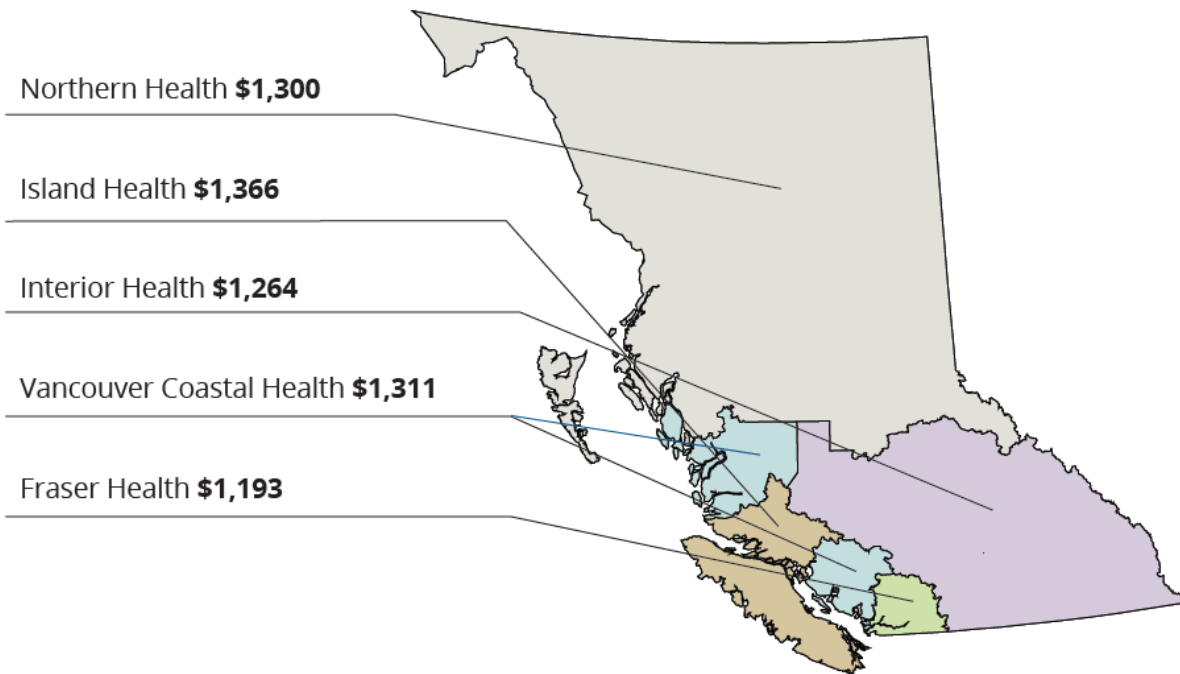
This report and the stories project will inform policy, practice and programs. Greater understanding of the experiences within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, will support identification of equity-based approaches to help everyone in BC access food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe. This project will also inform how we engage and centre Indigenous perspectives/voices in future food costing work.

### For more information






The [report](#) and [infographic](#) are available on the [BCCDC Food Security website](#).

## Average monthly cost of healthy eating for a family of four in BC

**British Columbia \$1,263**



## The impact of food costs on household budgets

Monthly Income and Costs	 Family of four, income assistance	 Family of four, minimum wage	 Single parent with one child, income assistance	 Single young male adult, disability assistance	 Single female senior, income assistance
Disposable income <sup>4</sup>	\$3,232	\$5,251	\$2,050	\$1,421	\$1,875
Cost of housing	\$1,657	\$1,657	\$1,500	\$1,150	\$1,300
% income required for housing	51%	32%	73%	81%	69%
Cost of food	\$1,263	\$1,263	\$661	\$481	\$327
% income required for food	39%	24%	32%	34%	17%
<b>What's left after housing and food</b>	<b>\$311.89</b>	<b>\$2,330.69</b>	<b>-\$111.82</b>	<b>-\$210.73</b>	<b>\$248.20</b>