

The Cost of Healthy Eating in Saskatchewan 2022



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Introduction



The affordability and availability of food can influence food choices and the health of populations. This report presents the most recent data on the cost of basic healthy eating in Saskatchewan.

Decision makers can use this report in a number of ways to:

- Allocate funds for nutrition programs, food grants and food allowances
- Inform decisions regarding health, nutrition and social policy development and implementation
- Support further assessment and monitoring of regional barriers and cost differences affecting healthy food access
- Promote access to nutritious, safe, and personally acceptable foods

Food Costing in Saskatchewan 2022

The Cost of Healthy Eating in Saskatchewan report is typically completed every three years, although the last report was released in 2018.

Food cost data was collected in June 2022 from 101 randomly selected grocery stores throughout Saskatchewan. Stores were in urban, rural and northern locations, as well as Indigenous communities. Food items were costed using a survey tool called the National Nutritious Food Basket. The tool includes food items, as well as quantities for various age and sex groups (2).

Items in the food basket are minimally processed and typically widely available, such as fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, cheese, milk, rice, meat, beans, and lentils.



The National Nutritious Food Basket includes approximately 60 food items.

Food costing provides a ‘snapshot’ of the cost of food at a specific time. Changes in food costs since June 2022 are not reflected in this report. Due to updates in the National Nutritious Food Basket, this report and the costs illustrated throughout cannot be directly compared to the 2018 report.

Due to the geographical spread of the province, there were several data collectors, which increases the potential of human error. Data from one store was identified as an outlier and was removed. Lastly, not all food items were available in all stores across the province. In these cases, the average price for that food item across the province was used, which may impact the accuracy of reported food costs for some locations.

There are many factors that impact food costs that are not accounted for in this report.

Some include:

- Regular and easy access to full-service grocery stores
- Travel costs to a grocery store;
- Special foods used to manage health conditions
- Cultural, religious or personal food practices
- Time, energy, skills, space and equipment to store and prepare food

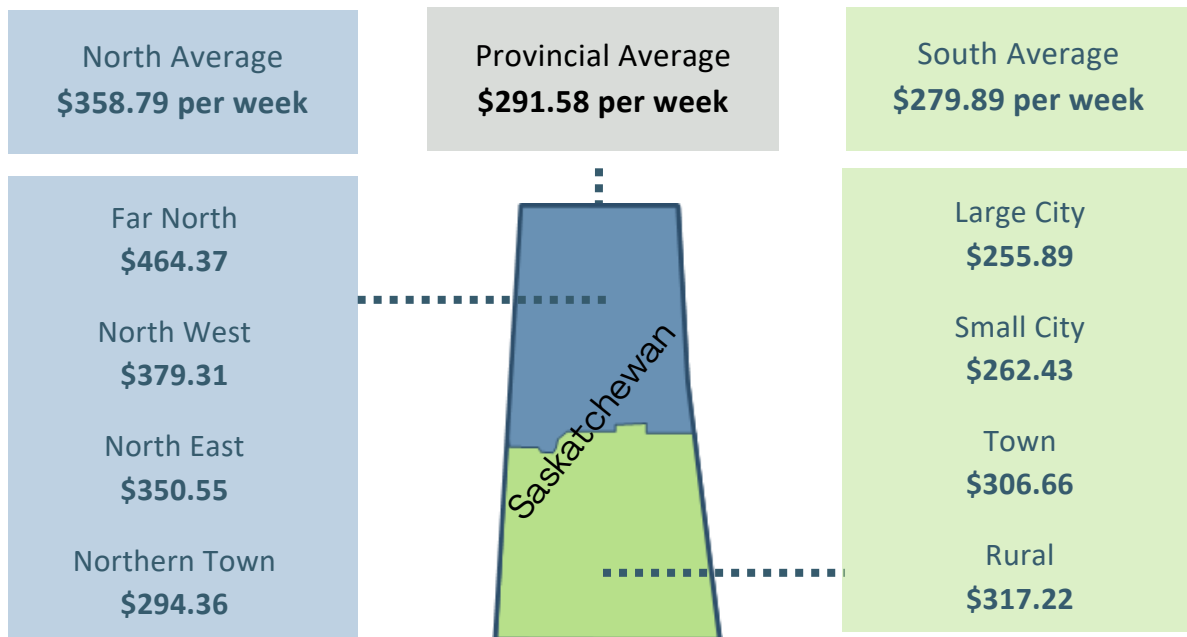


While only grocery stores were surveyed, it is important to note that grocery stores may not be the only source of food, especially where other methods such as gardening, hunting, fishing, ranching, and gathering are practiced.

Food Costs and Where You Live

The cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket varies throughout Saskatchewan. The provincial average for a family of four is \$291.58 per week. Residents of Northern Saskatchewan have the highest cost in the province. The average cost in the North is \$358.79 per week compared to \$279.89 per week in the Southern part of the province.

Figure 1. Average costs of the National Nutritious Food Basket for a reference family of four which includes a 31-50 year old man, a 31-50 year old woman, a 4-8 year old girl and a 14-18 year old boy.



Northern communities are over 100km north of Prince Albert and are classified by geographic location and ease of access.

Far North: Low access with air travel as the main form of transportation. Some communities have limited seasonal roads.

North West: Moderately accessible; majority gravel roads and air access.

North East: Moderate and low access; gravel or seasonal roads or air travel as the main forms of transportation.

Northern Town: Highly accessible; paved roads, access to nearby towns and cities and air access.

Southern communities are classified by population size

Large City: >100,000 people

Small City: 5,000 - 99,000 people

Town: 500 - 4,999 people

Rural: <500 people



Table 1. Average weekly and monthly costs of the National Nutritious Food Basket for the reference family of four, Saskatchewan, 2022.

Northern Saskatchewan	Cost per Week	Cost per Month
Far North	\$464.37	\$2,010.73
North East	\$350.55	\$1,517.87
North West	\$379.31	\$1,642.43
Northern Town	\$294.36	\$1,274.59
Southern Saskatchewan		
Rural	\$317.22	\$1,373.55
Town	\$306.66	\$1,327.83
Small City	\$262.43	\$1,136.34
Large City	\$255.89	\$1,107.99

Availability

A variety of healthy foods may not be consistently available in grocery stores in some communities in Saskatchewan. When these foods are not available, individuals may go without or choose less nutritious foods, which can have negative impacts on health and quality of life.

A majority of foods from the basket were less available in the North* compared to the South. On average, only half of the food basket items were available in the North, notably protein rich foods and dark green or orange produce were least available.

*North is defined as over 100km north of Prince Albert.

How Does Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Impact Food Costs?

Nutritional needs increase during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The increase in nutrient requirements during this time results in higher food costs.

Table 2. Average weekly and monthly costs of the National Nutritious Food Basket during pregnancy and breastfeeding , Saskatchewan, 2022.

Pregnancy	Cost Per Week	Cost Per Month
18 years or younger	\$82.79	\$358.47
19 to 30 years	\$79.73	\$345.23
31 to 50 years	\$77.74	\$336.30
Breastfeeding		
18 years or younger	\$82.59	\$357.60
19 to 30 years	\$79.02	\$342.14
31 to 50 years	\$77.74	\$336.60

Breastfeeding individuals, aged 19-30 years require an extra \$540.00 per year for food costs, which is less than the price of infant formula. Infant formula costs range from \$1,642.00 to \$3,567.00 per year*. Liquid concentrated formula costs \$1,689.00 per year, while powdered formula costs \$1,642.00 per year. Ready-to-feed formula is considerably more expensive at \$3,567.00 per year. These prices do not include additional costs such as bottles, nipples and water.

*Infant formula was available in only 69 of the 101 grocery stores surveyed.



Affordability

More than one in five or 57,000 Saskatchewan children and youth under the age of 18 lived in food insecure households in 2021 (1). Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraint (1).

If there is not enough money to cover basic necessities, people are often forced to compromise by limiting food, living in substandard housing, delaying utility payments or giving up other services to make ends meet (3). Adults may reduce food intake or skip meals to prioritize feeding children in the household (1).



Some individuals who live on minimum wage or low wage jobs, disability, or income assistance do not have enough money to pay for basic needs in Saskatchewan.

Table 3 compares estimated household income and expenses such as housing and food costs for people in different situations. The costs listed only include basic necessities, which removes personal choice and preference from the individual. For example, the housing costs used are based on average apartment rentals without consideration for individual preference in location, quality, size, or type of housing.

In 2021, Saskatchewan had one of the highest rates of food insecurity of the Canadian provinces (1).

Table 3. Scenarios comparing estimated household monthly income to approximate expenses in Saskatchewan.*

	One Person Household, Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) ¹	One Person Household, Saskatchewan Income Supplement (SIS) ²	Single Parent with 2 Children, Full Time Minimum Wage Earner	Single Person Household, Full Time Minimum Wage Earner	Family of 4 with 2 Children and 2 Full Time Minimum Wage Earners
Total Monthly Income³	\$1369.88	\$956.73	\$2589.37	\$1488.20	\$3462.74
Total Monthly Rent and Utilities⁴	\$1140.93	\$926.93	\$1474.25	\$1140.93	\$1482.57
Total Monthly Food Cost⁵	\$359.46	\$359.46	\$903.06	\$359.46	\$1262.52
Money Remaining for all Other Expenses such as: Transportation, Child Care, Telephone, Internet, Medications, Clothing, Toiletries, Debt, Sports and Recreation	\$ -130.51	\$ -329.66	\$ 212.06	\$ -12.19	\$ 717.65
Percentage of income Required for Rent	68%	75%	48%	62%	36%
Percentage of income Required for Food	26%	38%	35%	24%	26%

* Calculations use Saskatchewan Family and Social Supports, Minimum Wage, tax rates and Government of Canada income benefits as of June 2022 when the food costing data was collected.

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4. Saskatchewan Food Costing Task Group (2023). Food Affordability Scenarios Assumptions Calculations and References. Available on request.

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Table 3 illustrates that in many situations there is simply not enough money to cover the basic costs of living. When the majority of income is spent on housing and food, very little money, if any, is left to cover other necessities.

It is considered a financial risk to spend more than 30% of your income on rent (4). Table 3 shows that some people receiving social assistance are required to use 75% of their income for rent, leaving only 25% for all other costs of living such as food, medication, transportation, child care, telephone, and internet. In all of these scenarios, individuals spend more than 30% of their income on rent, which means there will be financial compromises for other basic needs.



Conclusion

Many individuals and families in Saskatchewan are impacted by the affordability and accessibility of healthy food. The ongoing analysis of food prices is an important population health activity that helps monitor the cost of nutritious foods. The Saskatchewan food costing process produces the most accurate and comprehensive set of data to establish a conservative estimate for the cost of basic healthy eating across the province. The Saskatchewan food costing results provide individuals or groups from a variety of sectors the ability to assess the impact of food costs on health and social programming, as well as policy decisions.



**Everyone
deserves the
right to
adequate,
healthy, safe,
affordable and
culturally
appropriate food.**

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3. St-Germain AAF, Tarasuk V. Prioritization of the essentials in the spending patterns of Canadian households experiencing food insecurity. *Public Health Nutrition* [Internet]. 2018 Aug [cited 2023 Jan];21(11):2065–78. Available from: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/prioritization-of-the-essentials-in-the-spending-patterns-of-canadian-households-experiencing-food-insecurity/64779603D298DAF755D6A3FC14A800F1>
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Appendix

Calculating Monthly Food Costs for Various Groups

Use the Food Costing Worksheet to calculate the cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket for different family sizes or groups.

Food Costing Worksheet			
	Age (years)	Sex	Cost per week (\$) based on where you live Refer to Table 1 on the following page.
STEP 1 Write down the age and sex of all the people you are feeding. Then write down the cost per week based on where you live.			
STEP 2 Add the costs.	Subtotal = _____		
STEP 3 Multiply your subtotal by an adjustment factor.	It costs slightly more per person to feed a small group of people and less to feed a large group. 1 person – multiply by 1.15 2 people – multiply by 1.10 3 people – multiply by 1.05 4 people – multiply by 1 (no change) 5 people – multiply by 0.95 6+ people – multiply by 0.90	_____ X _____ Subtotal Adjustment Factor = _____ Total Weekly Food Cost	
STEP 4 Multiply your total weekly food cost by 4.33 to show cost per month.	_____ X 4.33 = _____ Total Weekly Food Cost Total Monthly Food Cost		

Table 1. Average Weekly Costs of the National Nutritious Food Basket by Age, Sex, and Geography, Saskatchewan, 2022

	Saskatchewan	North	South
Males Age (years)			
2-3	\$45.23	\$55.97	\$43.36
4-8	\$55.25	\$68.08	\$53.00
9-13	\$72.25	\$89.33	\$69.26
14-18	\$86.09	\$105.74	\$82.64
19-30	\$88.77	\$108.39	\$85.38
31-50	\$83.02	\$101.56	\$79.82
51-70	\$75.76	\$93.49	\$72.69
over 70	\$77.79	\$96.03	\$74.57
Females Age (years)			
2-3	\$45.23	\$55.97	\$43.36
4-8	\$54.84	\$67.59	\$52.59
9-13	\$71.09	\$87.98	\$68.15
14-18	\$71.09	\$87.98	\$68.15
19-30	\$68.62	\$84.94	\$65.81
31-50	\$67.64	\$83.90	\$64.84
51-70	\$69.73	\$86.31	\$66.84
over 70	\$67.12	\$83.25	\$64.32
Pregnancy Age (years)			
18 and younger	\$82.79	\$101.58	\$79.49
19-30	\$79.73	\$97.93	\$76.58
31-50	\$77.74	\$95.41	\$74.67
Breastfeeding Age (years)			
18 and younger	\$82.59	\$101.34	\$79.30
19-30	\$79.02	\$96.98	\$75.90
31-50	\$77.74	\$95.41	\$74.67