

A HIGH NUMBER OF INUIT FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE

SCIENCE BRIEF



RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Access to a sustainable supply of healthy country food is of paramount concern. Enhancing hunter support and community freezer programs, formalizing the support for country food sharing networks, and finding ways to increase the availability of country foods circulating in communities via commercial sale and distribution are recommended.*
- *Healthy store-bought foods need to be available and affordable.*
- *Initiatives such as ice monitoring, trail marking and access to survival equipment (such as spot tracking devices) must be encouraged.*
- *Search and rescue capacity at local and regional levels must continue to be improved and supported.*
- *Traditional and land skills knowledge transfer between generations must be encouraged.*

The transition away from the consumption of high amounts of country foods towards a more western diet as well as the rise in chronic diseases in the two regions is also associated with the status of food security. Food security exists when “all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1999). Food security is influenced by food availability, accessibility and food quality. Depending on the way food security is classified, the rate ranges between 25% and 72% in Nunavik while in Nunatsiavut, 46% of households with children are reported to be food insecure, with about 16% reporting severe food insecurity. High food costs, availability of country foods, employment, low household income, the decrease in consumption of country foods, lifestyle choices and the lack of nutritious food options are factors affecting these high levels of food insecurity. People who are food insecure are at an increased risk of being overweight and having chronic health conditions, mental health challenges and a lower learning capacity.

Policy and program mechanisms for alleviating food insecurity in the two regions require greater attention as this public health problem grows. Enhancing hunter support or community freezer programs, formalizing the support for country food sharing networks, finding ways to increase the availability of country foods circulating in communities via commercial sale and distribution, and reorienting market food subsidies all show promise in addressing this issue. Promoting health and nutrition education in communities is also crucial for addressing this issue.

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