

Employment Insurance reduces the impact of unemployment on food security

Tim Li, Valerie Tarasuk. "Employment Insurance reduces the impact of unemployment on food security."
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Context

Food insecurity, uncertain or inadequate access to food due to financial constraints, is a function of income adequacy and stability. To determine the impact of job loss on food insecurity, researchers compared households with similar sociodemographic characteristics but that differed in terms of whether the workers were continuously employed throughout the year. To determine the impact of Employment Insurance (EI), they compared households with workers who received EI and similar households with workers who did not receive EI. The findings contribute to a growing body of research showing that public programs reduce the risk of food insecurity when they improve households' financial circumstances.

Key finding(s) from the research

A household's risk of food insecurity increases when someone in the household loses their job, but the impact is not as great if they receive EI.

Population(s) studied: 28,650 households with adult workers 18–64 years old in the 10 provinces

Research dataset(s) used: Canadian Income Survey 2018–2019

Policy implications for this research

This study demonstrates that in Canada, EI plays an important role in mitigating household food insecurity that is triggered by involuntary job loss. But only half of households with unemployed workers in this study received EI. As part of the ongoing EI modernization process, the federal government should consider the potential impact on food insecurity as part of its decision-making. Policy options to increase the generosity and accessibility of EI, like lowering the required hours threshold and raising the standard benefit rate, would help EI better insulate households from food insecurity due to job loss.

Policy area(s) this research can inform: Government; Income, pensions, spending and wealth; Labour

Read the full article

Men, F., & Tarasuk, V. (2023). Employment Insurance may mitigate impact of unemployment on food security: Analysis on a propensity-score matched sample from the Canadian Income Survey. *Preventive Medicine*, 169, 107475. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2023.107475>.