

THE 4TH ANNUAL HUNGER REPORT

A Demographic Overview of the
Good Food Centre's Members
from July 2017 to June 2018



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The Good Food Centre is one of the Equity Service Centres of the Ryerson Students' Union which include: RyeACCESS, RyePRIDE, the Centre for Women and Trans People, the Racialised Students Collective, the Trans Collective, and the Sexual Assault Survivor Support Line.

For more info, visit ryegfc.ca or rsuequity.ca

INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity is a pressing health issue in Canada and post-secondary students are one of the populations most vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity. Research on food insecurity among the post-secondary student population has increased in Canada in recent years, with the first large scale survey of food insecurity on five university campuses occurring in 2016. In this survey, it was found that nearly 2 in 5 students at Ryerson reported experiencing some form of food insecurity throughout the school year, with 8% experiencing severe food insecurity. (Silverthorn, 2016). While there are still many gaps in the research, it is known that student food insecurity is rooted in a complex system with a variety of causes, and as such, the solutions to food insecurity are not known. Since food security intersects with a variety of social issues, a combination of advocacy and interventions to address food insecurity are needed to address the issue.

1.1 The Good Food Centre

The Good Food Centre (GFC) is one of six Equity Service Centres run by the Ryerson Students' Union (RSU) that aims to address food insecurity within the Ryerson community by improving equitable access to sufficient, sustainable, and appropriate food for members through affordable means (Ryerson Students' Union, 2016). The main service provided by the GFC is a community food bank that allows members to collect three day's worth of food supplies per week, including fresh produce and non-perishable items, at no cost and with no questions asked. The GFC also offers the Good Food Box program coordinated by FoodShare Toronto, which provides a box of fruits and/or vegetables at reduced prices each week to members. Other services organized by the GFC are community kitchens, cooking workshops, and advocacy events.





1.2 The Hunger Report

The Hunger Report is published by the GFC and Ryerson Students' Union (RSU) and discusses the Ryerson University campus food bank usage. The purpose of this report is to describe the demographics into which GFC's members belong, then compare and contrast the characteristics of GFC members with Ryerson University's general student population. Using this data, the report identifies student populations that are likely more vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity and explores the reasons why these student populations may be more at risk. This report also provides recommendations for change at the university and government levels, with the goal of improving long-term student food security. The GFC recognizes the complexity of student food insecurity and that in order to mitigate the issue, large structural changes must occur.

1.3 Food Security

What exactly does it mean to be food secure? While food security has several meanings, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines it as "when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary patterns and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996). To conceptualize it further, food security can be broken down into "5 A's" that are the pillars of food security, and these are foundational to the GFC's operations:

The Five A's of Food Security

- **Availability**
Sufficient food for all people at all times
- **Accessibility**
Physical and economic access to food for all at all times
- **Acceptability**
Access to culturally acceptable food, which is produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights
- **Agency**
The policies and processes that enable the achievement of food security
- **Adequacy**
Access to food that is nutritious and safe, and produced in environmentally sustainable ways

(The Centre for Studies in Food Security, n.d.)

1.4 Student Food Insecurity

Food security is an ideal which is met when each of the above 5 pillars of food security are achieved. Conversely, food insecurity is “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so” (Davis & Tarasuk, 1994). Existing research indicates that post-secondary students are disproportionately at risk for food insecurity compared to the general Canadian population.

Measured rates of food insecurity range from 28.6-39% among Canadian post-secondary students, which is nearly 3 times as high as experienced by the general Canadian population (Entz, Slater, & Desmarais, 2017; Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer, Maximova, & Willows, 2016; Silverthorn, 2016; Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2016). In a survey conducted at Ryerson University, 38.9% of students were found to experience moderate food insecurity and 8% experienced severe food insecurity-which involves reporting behaviours of reducing the size of meals, skipping meals or not eating for an entire day (Silverthorn, 2016).

While research into post-secondary student food insecurity has emerged in the last several years in Canada, many questions still exist about factors relating to the high levels of food insecurity experienced by post-secondary students. However, there appear to be a few key driving forces to student food insecurity including rising tuition and costs of being a student, inadequate financial supports and the normalization of student food insecurity.

Rising tuition fees are perhaps the most obvious barrier to food security and have been reported by students as a barrier to food security in multiple studies (Hanbazaza, 2016; Maynard, 2016; Silverthorn, 2016). Decades ago, universities relied on government funding to cover the majority of their operating costs, however as funding has decreased, this financial burden has been shifted to students through tuition fees (Lorico, 2017; Silverthorn, 2016). Indeed, tuition fees have increased at rates outpacing inflation (CFS-O, 2015). Post-secondary education is underfunded particularly in Ontario, where tuition fees are higher than anywhere else in Canada (CFS-O, 2015). At Ryerson, undergraduate fees for domestic students range from \$7,639-\$12, 241 for two academic terms (Office of the Registrar,

28.6 to 39%

of Canadian post-secondary students experience food insecurity, nearly 3x as high as experienced by the general Canadian population

38.9%

of Ryerson students experienced moderate food insecurity

8%

of Ryerson students experienced severe food insecurity, reporting reducing the size of meals, skipping meals or not eating for an entire day

\$7,639 - \$12,241

Domestic fees for undergraduate Ryerson students for two academic terms

\$25,926 - \$29,219

International fees for undergraduate Ryerson students for two academic terms

+ \$1,100 - \$9,900

Estimate for books and supplies per year for each Ryerson student

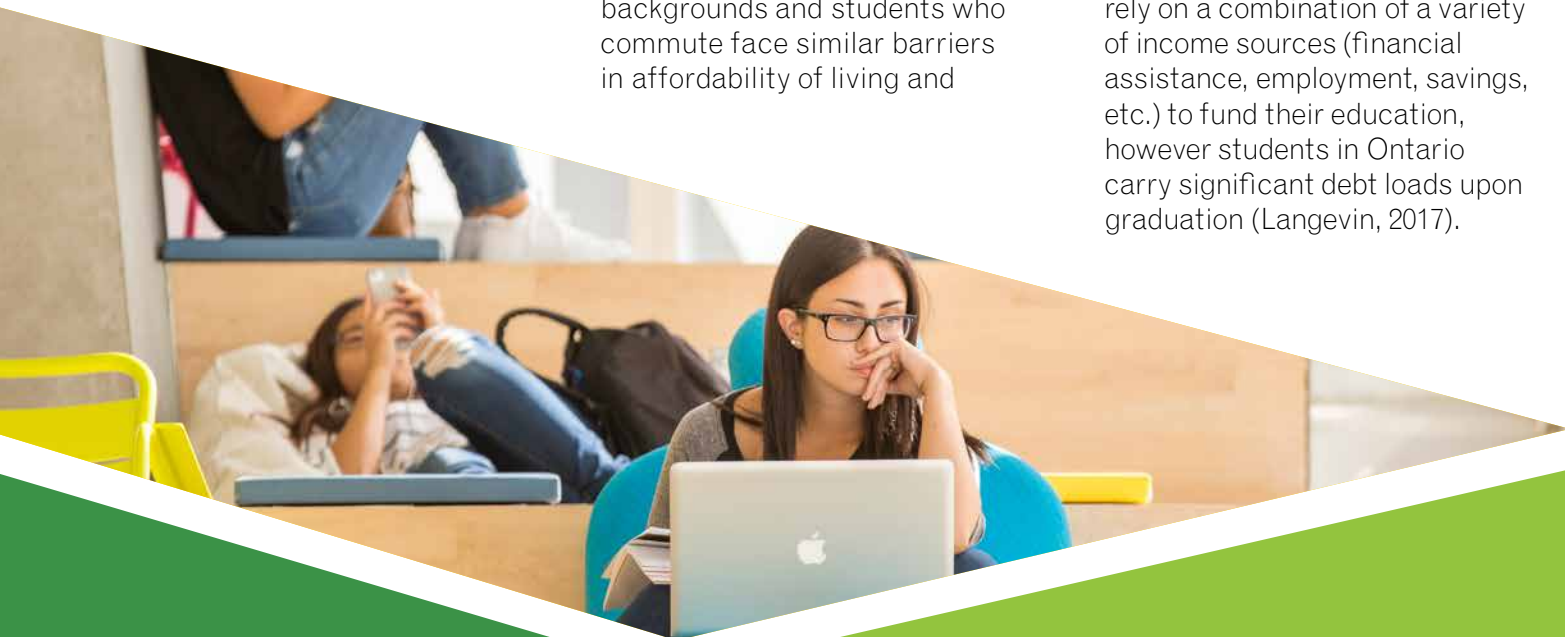
2018). For International students, undergraduate fees range from \$25,926-\$29,219 (Office of the Registrar, 2018).

In addition to high tuition fees, the costs of books and technology (laptops, i-clickers, etc.) add to the price of pursuing a degree or diploma. Ryerson estimates that students will need to spend \$1,100-\$9,900 on books and supplies per year, depending on their program (Office of the Registrar, 2018).

Additionally, students who live alone or with roommates must cope with the high costs of living in Toronto including high rent, a lack of affordable housing and high transportation costs. Ryerson students who live alone, without their parents or extended family, were found to be the most at risk for food insecurity in the 2016 study at Ryerson (Silverthorn, 2016). Students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and students who commute face similar barriers in affordability of living and

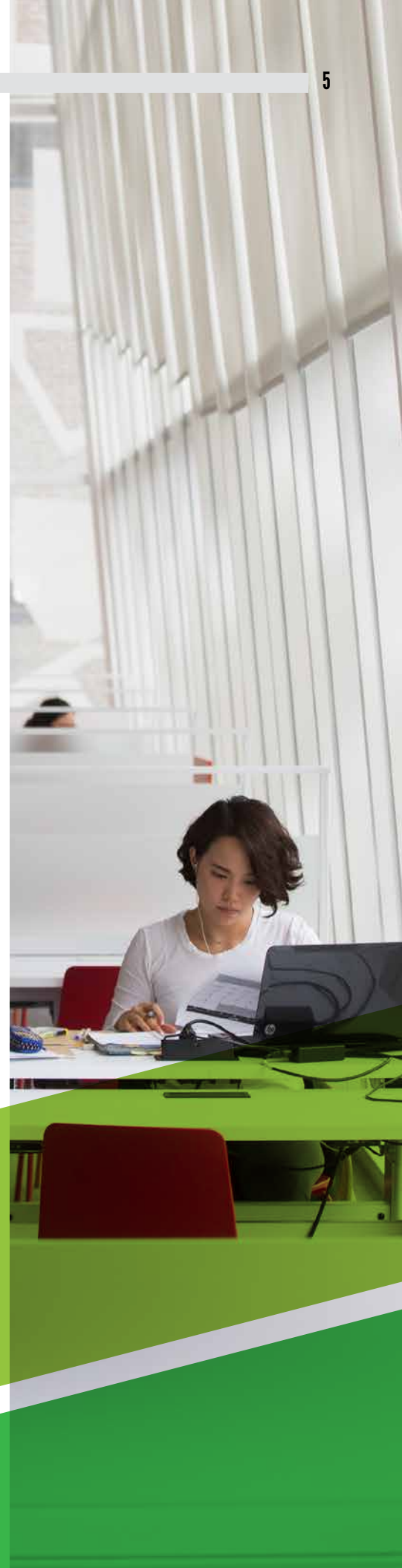
transportation costs. Ultimately the increasing costs associated with being a student results in income inadequacy and compromising food behaviours. Quality of food, quantity of food and eating frequency may be compromised to pay for larger expenses like tuition and rent, resulting in food insecurity (Farabakhsh et al., 2017).

Financial assistance is available to students in the form of grants and loans from the university, outside institutions or most commonly accessed- the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). However financial assistance is often inadequate in meeting the costs of being a student, as described above, and students who rely on government loan programs tend to be more at risk for food insecurity (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017; Farabakhsh et al., 2017; Meldrum & Willows, 2006; Morris, 2014; Silverthorn, 2016). Many students rely on a combination of a variety of income sources (financial assistance, employment, savings, etc.) to fund their education, however students in Ontario carry significant debt loads upon graduation (Langevin, 2017).



While post-secondary education has traditionally been associated with power and privilege, the number of jobs that require post-secondary education has increased and people from a variety of backgrounds are attending university to improve their quality of life and social mobility (CFS-O, 2015). However, post-secondary education does not occur in a vacuum and social inequities which exist in society are propagated throughout student life. Students from racialized and Indigenous groups are consistently found to be more at risk of food insecurity (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017; Gaines, Robb, Knol & Sickler, 2014; Maroto et al., 2015; Mirabatur, Peterson, Rathz, Matlen & Kasper, 2016; Morris, 2014; Payne-Sturges, Tjaden, Caldeira, Vincent & Arria, 2017). Mature students and students with dependents, particularly single-parents, are at a greater risk of experiencing food insecurity (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017; Maroto et al., 2015; Miles, McBeath, Brockett, & Sorenson, 2017; Morris, 2014).

Student food insecurity is commonly normalized by society, as well as students themselves, resulting in a lack of awareness about the topic. There is a “starving student” stereotype that pervades conversations about the issue, whereby common understanding of student food insecurity is that it is a normal feature of student life and a necessary ‘rite of passage’ (Maynard, 2016). However, food insecurity has many negative implications for student health, wellness and academics that should never be considered “normal”. Food insecurity has been correlated with multiple negative implications in the student population, including: reporting fair/poor mental and physical health, reduced intake of fruits and vegetables, increased incidence of anxiety and depression, suicidal thoughts, a negatively impacted social life, as well as reduced concentration and academic performance, and a lower GPA (Bruening et al., 2016; Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab, Broton, & Eisenberg, 2015; Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer, Maximova, & Willows, 2016; Maroto et al., 2015; Silverthorn, 2016).



KEY FINDINGS

33.3%

**of GFC members are
Mature students**

age 30+, compared to being 6% of Ryerson's undergraduate population (University Planning Office, 2018)

73%

**of GFC members are
people of colour**

with Indigenous, African, East Asian, South Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Arab and Middle Eastern backgrounds

23.4%

**of GFC members
have one or more
dependents**

27.9%

**of GFC members are
International students**

while only representing 1.9% of Ryerson's undergraduate population and 10.1% of the graduate population (University Planning Office, 2018)

18.1%

**of GFC members are
Master's students**

compared to representing 4.9% of the student population, (University Planning Office, 2018)

20%

**of GFC members are
PhD students**

compared to representing 1.1% of the student population, (University Planning Office, 2018)

34.2%

**of GFC members are students from the
Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science**

whereas this faculty is only 14% of Ryerson's overall population (University Planning Office, 2018)

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

3.1 Methods & Limitations

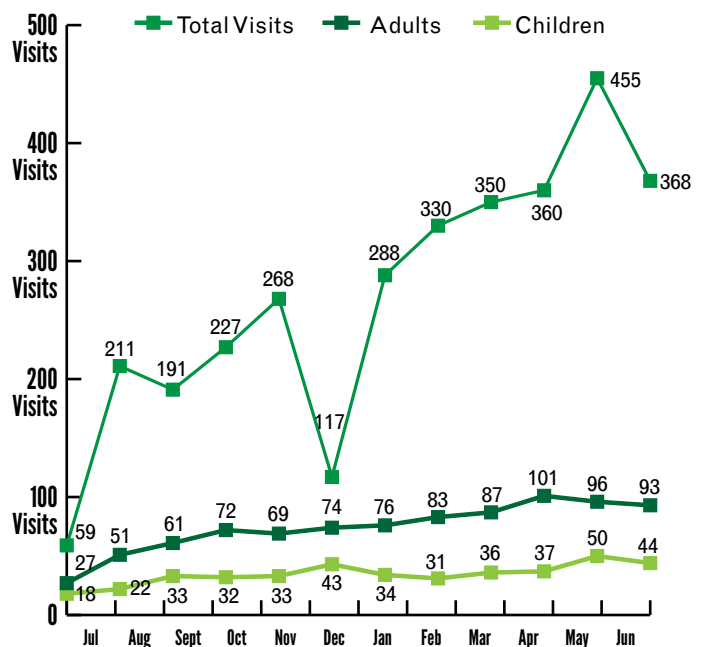
Data regarding the number of GFC members and number of visits to the GFC throughout the year, were collected through the foodbank software, link2feed. Every member of the GFC is inputted into the link2feed system during a mandatory intake process, which occurs before their first food bank visit. Each visit is recorded into link2feed and reports are produced electronically. For the purpose of this study, usage data from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018 were extracted from link2feed. Data was also collected from an optional demographic survey administered to GFC members at the time of intake. 107 members completed the survey between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018. The survey has 15 questions relating to demographics and other questions, thought to be related to student food security, based on previous research.

Since this data represents a convenience sample, results of this study cannot be extrapolated to the Ryerson student population as a whole. Additionally, this data is limited in its ability to represent all Ryerson students experiencing food insecurity, as many people experiencing food insecurity do not access food banks (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015). This data only represents individuals in the Ryerson University community that register as members at the GFC. Moreover, due to limited funding and staffing capacities, the study remains informal, therefore, lacking rigorous and standardized research processes and protocols.

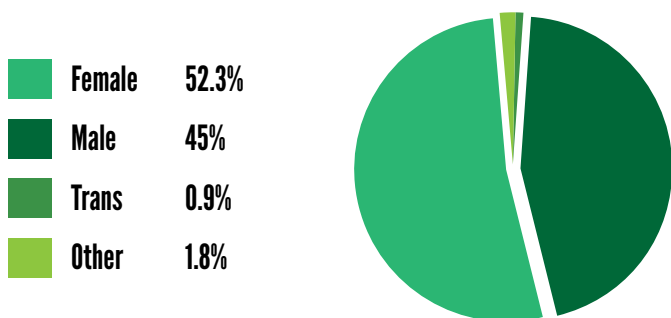
3.2 Results & Discussion

3.2.0 Usage & Membership

Between July 2017 and June 2018, the Good Food Centre had 3224 visits, serving 282 members. From month to month, the number of members using the service varies, and the graph of monthly usage shows some interesting patterns. Since exams tend to finish midway through December for Winter Break, the number of monthly visits to the GFC is lower in that month. Typically the services are less utilized in summer months, as seen in July 2017, since less students are on campus taking classes. A steady rise in food bank usage began in January, shortly after the Feed Students, Support Survivors Campaign, which likely raised awareness of the services on campus. The month of May saw the highest usage rate of the year, with 455 food bank visits, which is unusually high considering it was a summer month. The usage rates of the services are connected to various factors including: variety of school schedules, outreach of services, unexpected delays in receiving financial assistance, other income related shocks and opening hours of services.



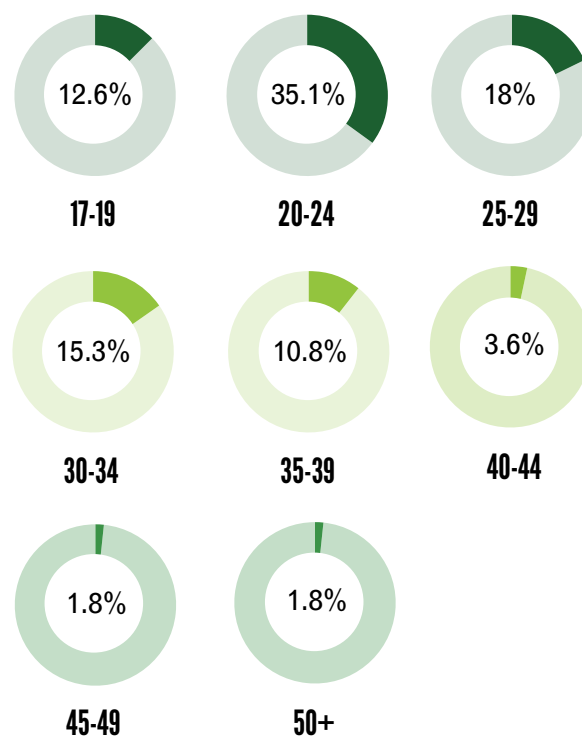
3.2.1 Gender



From the survey, 52.3% of Good Food Centre (GFC) members were female. Males consisted of 45% of the intake population. Trans folks were 0.90%, and those that chose “other” on the survey were 1.8% of the intake population. This is similar to the demographics of Ryerson University undergraduate students enrolled in 2016/2017, where females represented 55% and males represented 45% of the population (Ryerson University Planning Office, 2018). Females tend to be overrepresented in post-secondary settings, so this may explain the greater proportion of female GFC users.

Hanbazaza (2016) also found that a greater proportion of the post-secondary students using the campus food bank were female. In the food security literature of the post-secondary population, females have been found to be at a greater risk for experiencing food insecurity, with single mothers at a particular risk compared to single fathers (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017; Hanbazaza, 2016). Gendered differences in socioeconomic status may explain the overrepresentation of females among GFC users, while also considering that more females attend post-secondary (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017).

3.2.2 Age



The largest age grouping represented at the GFC are 20-24, who represent 35.1% of food bank members. This is similar to the overall Ryerson University, where 52% of undergraduate students were 20-24 in 2016/2017 (Ryerson University Planning Office, 2018). A significant finding is that mature students aged 30+ represent 6% of Ryerson University's undergraduate population, however make up 33.3% of the intake population at the GFC (Ryerson University Planning Office, 2018). Students aged 17 to 19 are underrepresented at the GFC being 12.6% of the intake population, compared to 35% of Ryerson University's undergraduate population (Ryerson University Planning Office, 2018).

It is possible that post-secondary students aged 17 to 19 may still be financially dependent and/or living with their parents/guardians, which can provide a protective factor. Mature students, aged 25+ have been found to be at greater risk for experiencing food insecurity compared to younger students (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017). The GFC services are utilized more by people over 20 years in age, who may be more likely to be financially independent, paying for tuition, and living independently in Toronto.

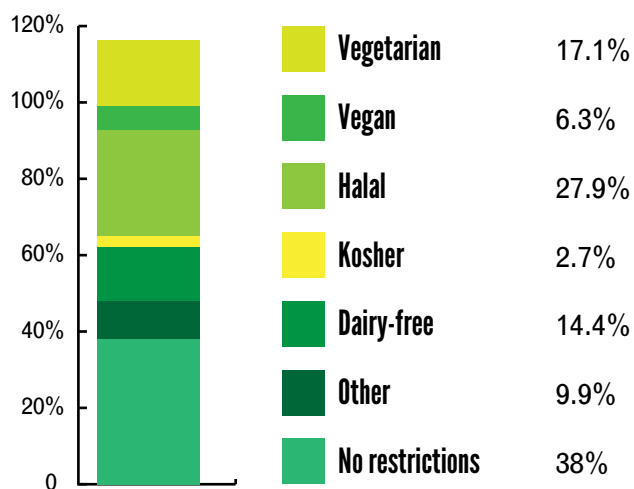


3.2.3 Ethnic Background

Aboriginal	5.4%
African	19.8%
East Asian	13.5%
South Asian	22.5%
European/white	17.1%
Hispanic/Latino	3.6%
Arab	2.7%
Middle Eastern	4.5%
Other	1.8%
No response	8.1%

Many ethnic backgrounds are represented in the GFC membership, which very much reflects the diversity of Ryerson University's student population. While 17.1% of GFC are European/white, 73% of members are people of colour, with Aboriginal, African, East Asian, South Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Arab and Middle Eastern backgrounds. Data on racial backgrounds are not available for the entire Ryerson student body, however it is likely that people of colour are overrepresented as GFC members. Racialized and Indigenous communities have been found to be at a significantly risk for experiencing student food insecurity (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017; Gaines, Robb, Knol & Sickler, 2014; Maroto et al., 2015; Mirabitur, Peterson, Rathz, Matlen, & Kasper, 2016; Morris, 2014; Payne-Sturges, Tjaden, Caldeira, Vincent & Arria, 2017; Silverthorn, 2016). Socioeconomic disadvantages and discrimination experienced by racialized populations are contributors to food insecurity and likely explain the overrepresentation of these groups among GFC users.

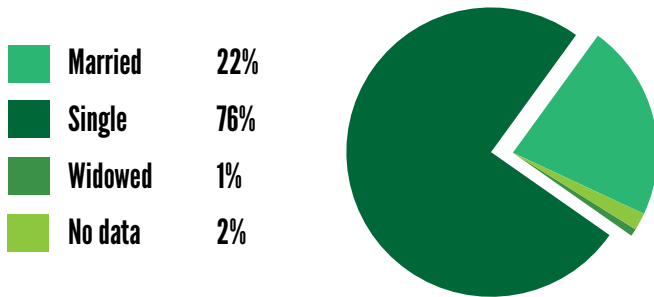
3.2.4 Dietary Restrictions



From the survey, 62% of respondents reported some form of dietary constraints, whereas 38% had no reported dietary constraints. The most common dietary choices were 21.9% of members choosing halal, 17.1% vegetarian, and 14.4% were dairy-free. Often, dietary restrictions can make it more difficult to afford food to meet one's needs, which may explain the large portion of GFC members who have dietary restrictions.

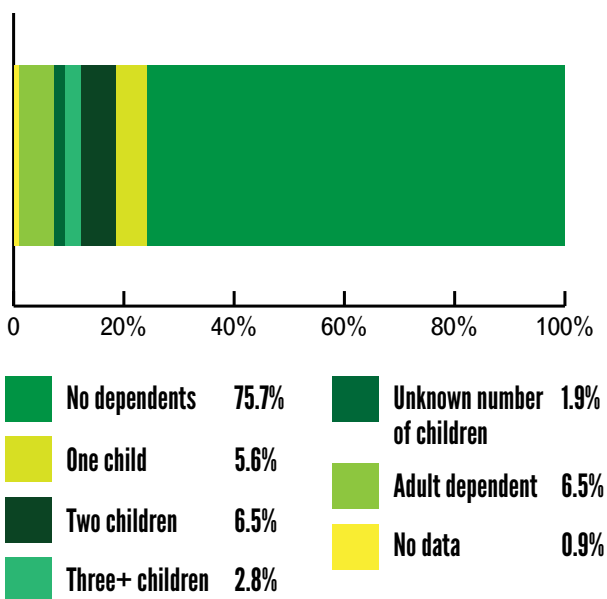


3.2.5 Marital Status



76% of the GFC members were single, and 22% were married. The high rate of single respondents may be expected since the 65.7% of GFC population are under 30 years old. It is worth noting that 7.4% of the single respondents have at least one dependent. Single parents, especially single mothers, are known to be at a significant risk for experiencing food insecurity, especially while pursuing post-secondary education (Entz, Slater & Desmarais, 2017; Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer, Maximova & Willows, 2016). Moreover, of the single respondents without dependents, 70.4% reported living alone or in a shared accommodation off campus. For these GFC members, the cost of rent and tuition may carry a disproportionate amount of financial burden in their pursuit of higher education.

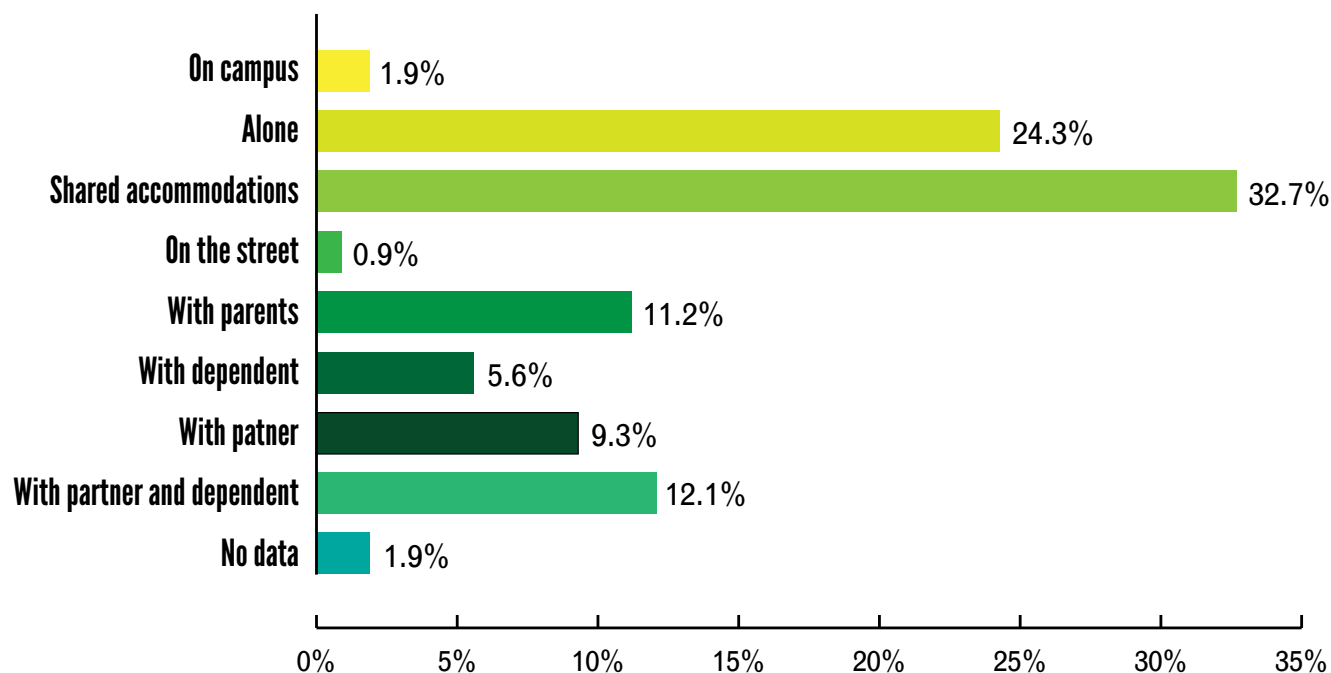
3.2.6 Parental Status



The survey found that 75.7% of respondents had no dependents at the time of their intake, while 23.4% of respondents had one or more dependent. Of the respondents with children, 33.3% reported having one child, 38.9% reported having two children, 16.7% had three or more children, and 11% did not respond. Another Canadian report on food insecurity in post secondary institutions from the University of Alberta reported a similar percentage, 17.3%, of food bank users with children (Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer, Maximova & Willows, 2016). A number of respondents indicated caring for adult dependents, making up 6.5% of all respondents. Students who are caring for dependents may be at a particular risk for experiencing food insecurity because parents tend to protect their children from food deprivation before themselves and the financial pressures of being a post-secondary student may be heightened when caring for multiple people (Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer, Maximova & Willows, 2016).



3.2.7 Household Type



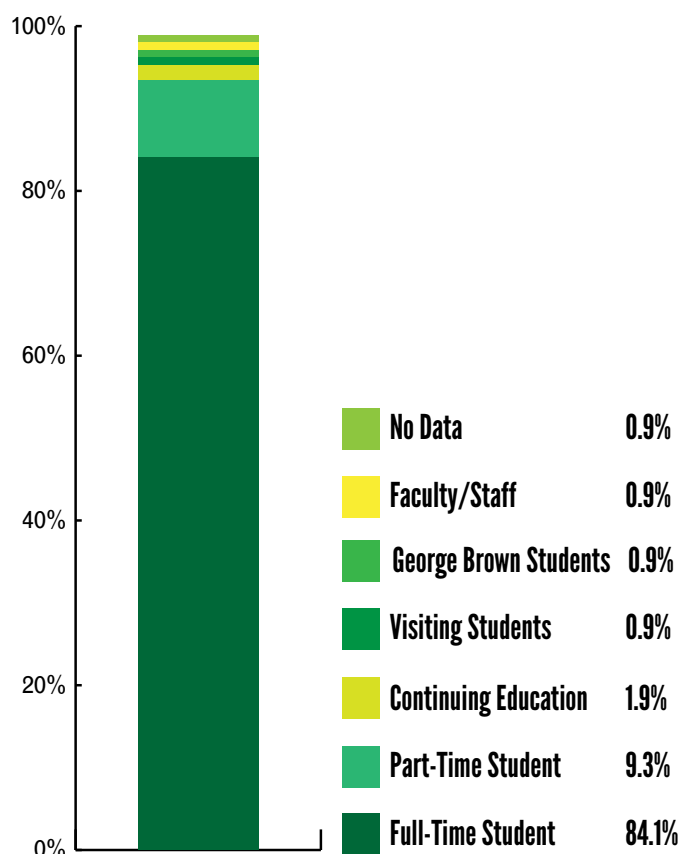
Students who live in shared accommodations make up 32.7% of all respondents, while those living alone account for 24.3%. 11.2% of respondents live at home with their parents. The percentages of respondents living with dependent(s), living with a partner, or living with a partner and one or more dependents are 5.6%, 9.3%, and 12.1% respectively.

Past research found that students who live off campus are more vulnerable to food insecurity (Silverthorn, 2016). The same study found that single parents living with their children or living alone had the highest risk of experiencing food insecurity, while respondents who lived with their parents

were least likely to face food insecurity. Compared to figures from the GFC data, a similar study on food insecurity from the University of Alberta reported a much higher percentage of respondents who lived alone at 67.6% (Hanbazaza, 2016). The relatively lower rate of respondents who live alone might reflect the high cost of housing in the City of Toronto, pushing students to find ways to share the cost with others or to live at home.



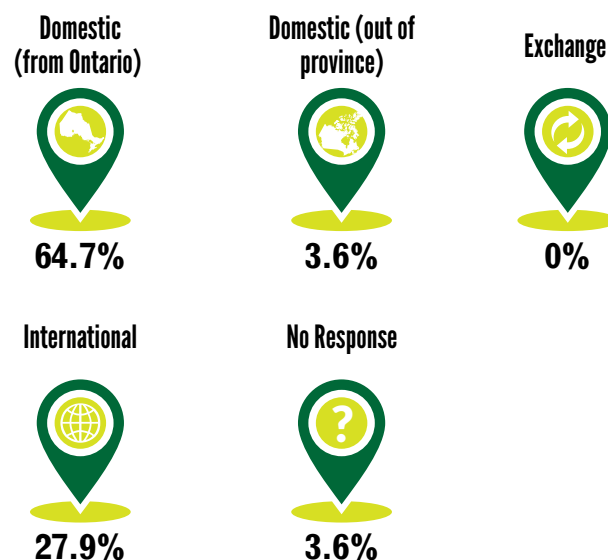
3.2.8 Community Member Type



The largest group of respondents by role on campus are full-time students, who make up 84.1% of those represented in the survey, while 9.3% of respondents are part-time students. Continuing education students, visiting students, and George Brown College-Ryerson collaborative program students account for 1.9%, 0.9%, and 0.9% of respondents respectively. Faculty members and visiting scholars make up 1.9% of the respondents.

Compared with the percentage of full-time students for all undergraduate programs, excluding continuing education (99.4%), full-time students are underrepresented in the GFC population. The overrepresentation of part-time students in the GFC might suggest that a larger percentage of respondents are working while attending school, in order to pay for tuition and living costs and taking part-time course loads.

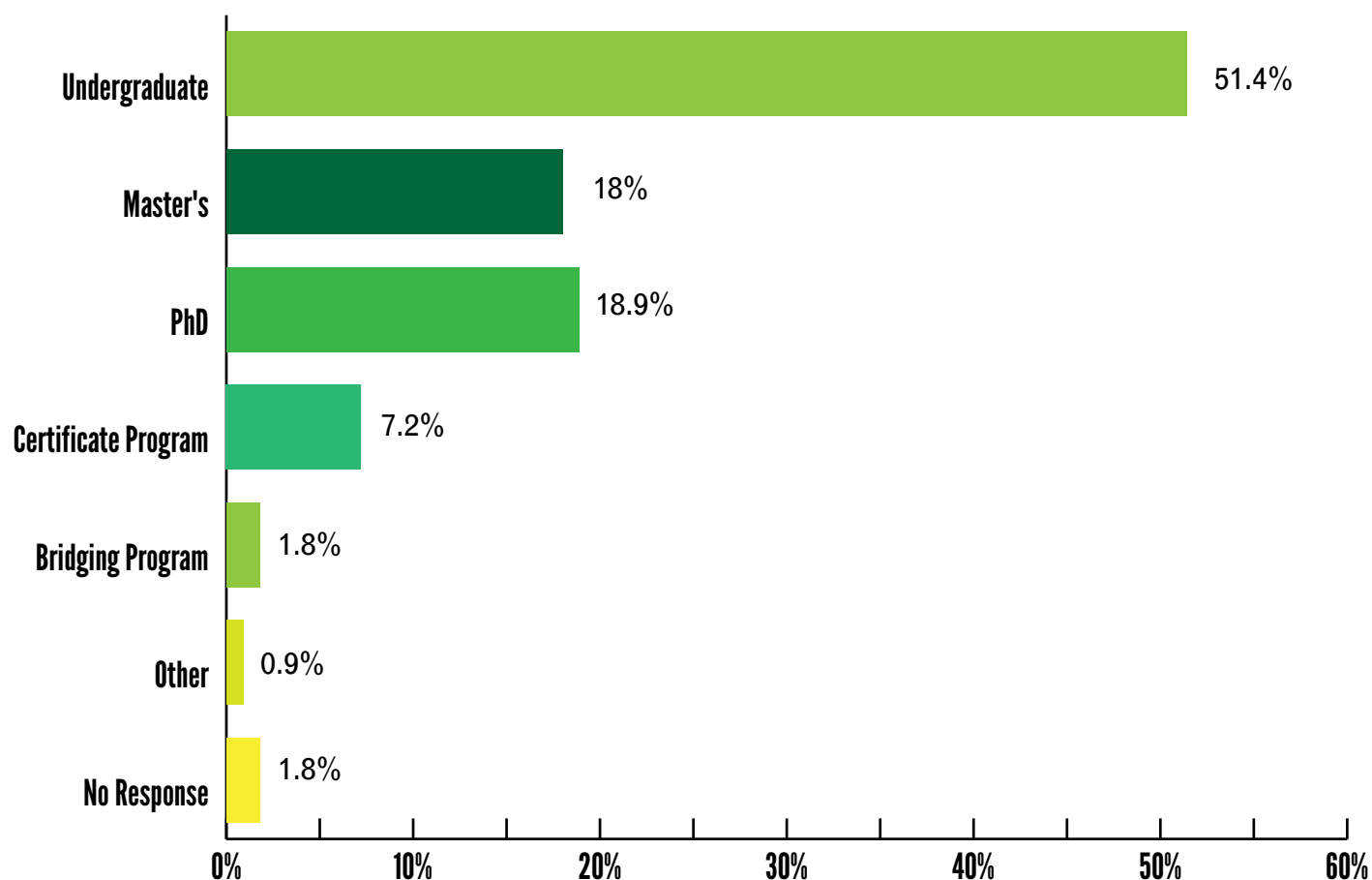
3.2.9 Geographic Source



Students coming from Ontario are relatively underrepresented, making up 96.8% of the undergraduate population and 89.9% of graduate students at Ryerson, but only 64.7% of GFC users (University Planning Office, 2018). Out-of province domestic students make up 3.6% of GFC members and a similar, 1.3% of the overall undergraduate population, with no graduate statistics available (University Planning Office, 2018). International students make up 27.9% of GFC members, while only representing 1.9% of Ryerson's undergraduate population and 10.1% of the graduate population (University Planning Office, 2018).

The overrepresentation of International students among GFC members has been documented at multiple other campus food banks across the country and may be explained by a few factors which put International students at risk for food insecurity compared to domestic students (Entz, Slater, & Desmarais, 2017; Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer & Willows, 2016). Tuition fees for International undergraduate students are nearly triple domestic fees and International student graduate fees are double the tuition costs of domestic graduate students (CFS-O, 2017). High tuition fees, less employment opportunities, less nearby familial supports and lack of access to culturally appropriate foods may ultimately lead to greater financial precarity and food insecurity for International students.

3.2.10 Level of Study

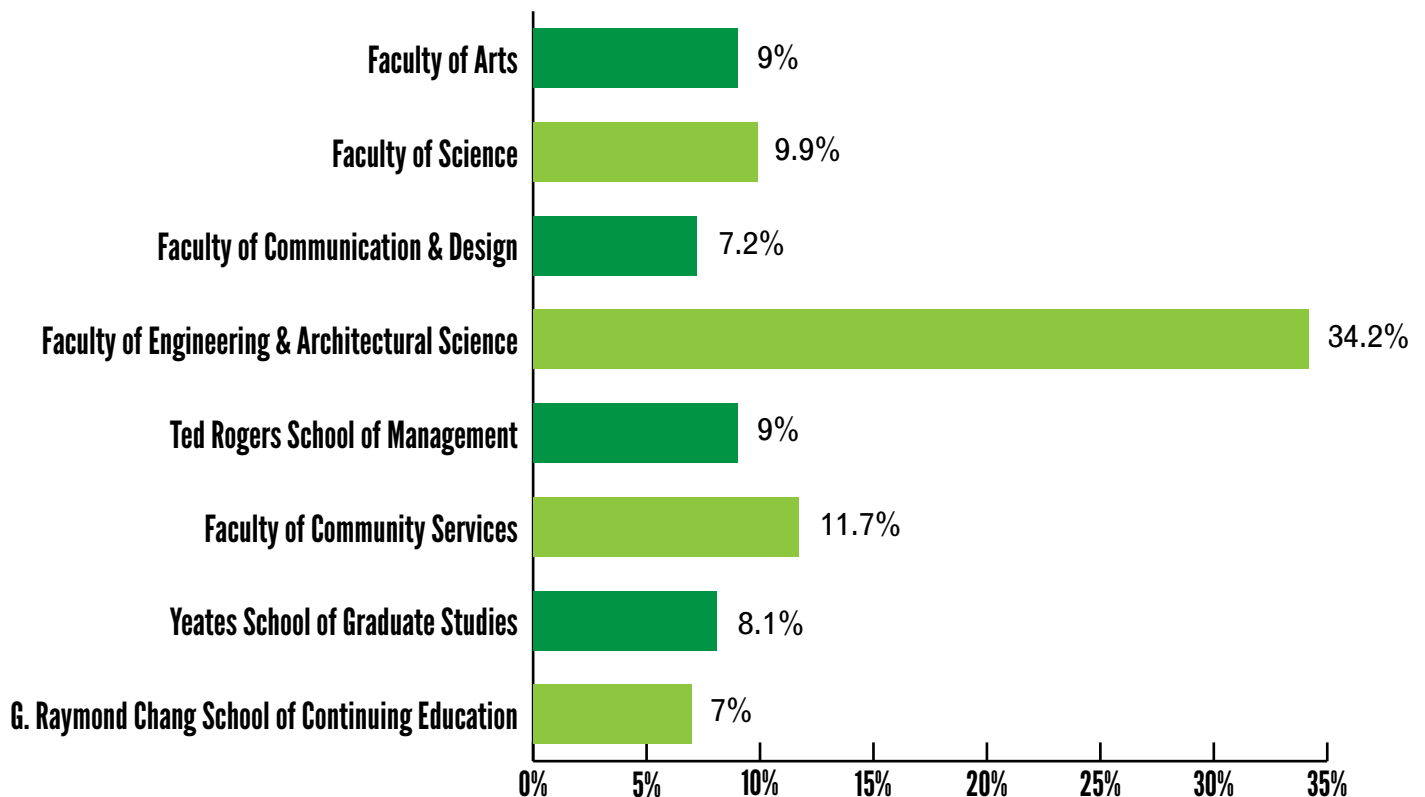


While undergraduate students represent just over half of the GFC's membership, they comprise 79% of students within the entire Ryerson student body (University Planning Office, 2018). Master's and PhD students are overrepresented in the GFC membership, with 4.9% of the student population being Master's students, compared to 18% of GFC members and 18.9% of the Ryerson student population being PhD students whereas they represent 20% of GFC members (University Planning Office, 2018). Additionally, continuing education (certificate program) students represent 15% of the student body and only 7.2% of the GFC's members (University Planning Office, 2018).

These findings are in line with existing literature which indicates that mature students and graduate students are more susceptible to food insecurity, which may explain their overrepresentation among the GFC (Entz, Slater, & Desmarais, 2017; Hanbazaza, Ball, Farmer & Willows, 2016; Silverthorn, 2016). Graduate students are also more likely to have existing student debt or have dependents, which results in greater financial insecurity and potential of food insecurity. Continuing education students may be underrepresented as GFC users since many of these students complete their education offsite and are not nearby to access services.



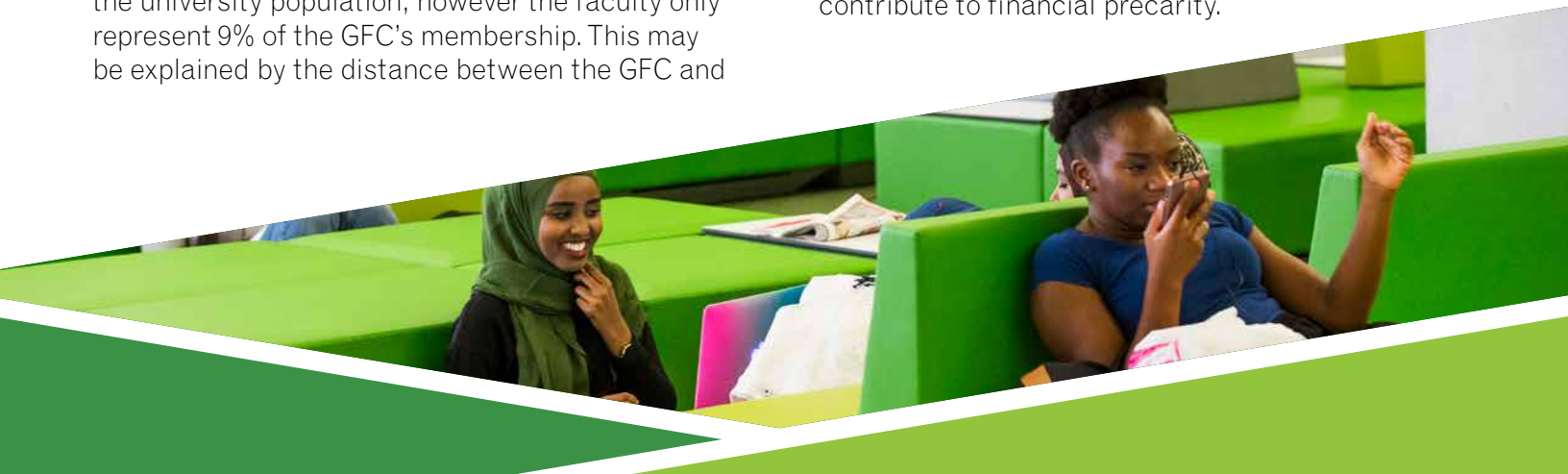
3.2.11 Faculty



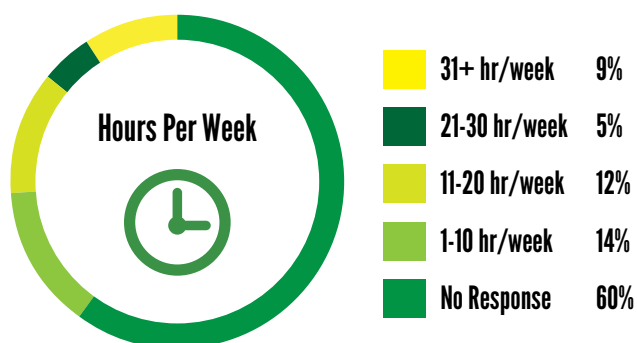
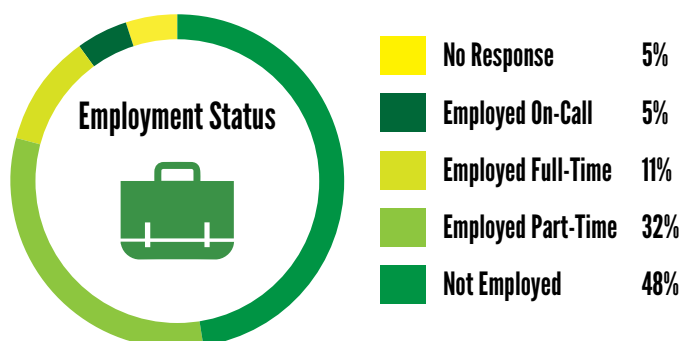
There is a significant difference between the GFC intake population and Ryerson University undergraduate population, when comparing proportions of faculty represented ($\chi^2 = 68.71, p < 0.05$). The highest amounts of GFC intake members come from the Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science, representing 34.2% of the population, whereas this faculty is only 14% of Ryerson's overall population (Ryerson University Planning Office, 2018). The Faculty of Community Services is the second largest representation, making up 11.71% of GFC members. The Ted Rogers School of Management is the largest faculty at Ryerson, representing 31% of the university population, however the faculty only represent 9% of the GFC's membership. This may be explained by the distance between the GFC and

the Ted Rogers building, or the lack of awareness of the services among this group of students (Ryerson University Planning Office, 2018).

The tuition range for the Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science is approximately \$10,881 - \$12,241 CAD per year as a Canadian citizen or Permanent Resident (Ryerson University Fees, 2018). Compared to the \$9,613 average tuition fee, these high tuition fees could suggest greater need for the GFC services from students in this faculty (Ryerson University Fees, 2018). Students in this faculty also commonly take heavier course loads, leaving less time for employment, which may contribute to financial precarity.



3.2.12 Employment Status



48% of GFC members were not employed, likely since many members are full-time students, leaving limited time for employment. Students who are in programs with above average course loads, including engineering and architecture students who make up 36% of GFC users, may have especially limited time for employment to supplement their income. Additionally, a large proportion of Ryerson students commute long distances to school, with the average one way commute of a Ryerson student being 46 minutes and 33% of students are spending more than 2 hours commuting to and from school (StudentMoveTO, 2016). Employment opportunities are also limited for International students studying at Ryerson, which make up 27.9% of the GFC members. The often conflicting time pressures and financial pressures of being a student mean that employment while being a student can have both benefits and drawbacks. Many users of the GFC also worked part-time or full-time, with varying number of hours worked per week, including a significant number of students (9%) who are working more than 31 hours per week and upwards of 50. Often, the employment that is available to students at the post-secondary level may be low skill, low-wage and/or precarious employment (CFS-O, 2017).



LIMITATIONS OF CAMPUS FOOD BANKS

The GFC is limited by many of the same factors that impact most food banks in Canada (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015; Bazerghi et al., 2016). Due to a limited food supply, only about three days worth of food can be provided to each GFC member per week, which is inadequate for many. Space and storage facilities are limited in the GFC, which is a barrier to supplying more food for GFC members. Access to the service for students who have diverse schedules, or may not attend campus every day of the week, may be limited due to hours of operation. Much of the service is run by student volunteers, so volunteer commitment and availability partially determine hours of operation, which may affect the number of visits members can make. Funding for the service is always an issue, and better funding has the potential to improve both food availability and hours of operation. Finally, the GFC strives to provide a diversity of the food, which meets the needs of its members and allows for a dignified and culturally appropriate access to food. The GFC recognizes that various populations may have different cultural and/or traditional dietary requirements or preferences. The GFC aims to offer kosher, halal, gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian and vegan options, however there are barriers in sourcing enough of these options because the GFC is limited to donations and what can be afforded from suppliers.

The GFC understands the limitations to a campus food bank as a response to student food insecurity. Emergency food assistance is the most common response to food insecurity in Canada, however fails to address the systemic causes of food insecurity and in fact, only 25% of Canadians experiencing food insecurity access food banks (Tarasuk, Dachner & Loopstra, 2014). The GFC's food bank provides essential food assistance to students, but recognizes that their services must go beyond the food bank in order to address the root causes of post-secondary student food insecurity.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Student food insecurity is rooted in a complex system which involves the campus, municipal, provincial and federal government levels as well as important factors such as employment, tuition fees, housing, and cost of living. The GFC advocates for a political environment which supports food security and would like to make the following recommendations to the Ryerson Students' Union, Ryerson University and the municipal, provincial and federal governments in order to foster student food security.


5.1 Recommendation to RSU:

The high turnover rate each year has negatively impacted the consistency of services offered by the Good Food Centre. With the advent of a new levy, the Good Food Centre should be reestablished on campus as a distinct organization serving the entire student community. A self governing model would ensure that service is prioritized consistently year-to-year.

5.2 Recommendation to Ryerson University: Form a multi-stakeholder student food security committee

Student food insecurity emerges in many systems and departments within the Ryerson University campus, including student financial aid, student life and mentoring, food services, student residence and housing, student health and wellness programming, the campus food bank, as well as various equity service centres. This is unsurprising since student food insecurity is a highly complex social issue, connected to many trends and issues which impact student life. Given the complexity of the issue, an important response to begin to effectively address student food insecurity is to engage a variety of stakeholders, representing different aspects of the campus system, to determine points of opportunity across the university. Too often, addressing student food insecurity lies solely in the agency of student-run initiatives, like the GFC's food bank, which is limited in its ability to address the root causes of student food insecurity and often faces barriers to its operations.





There have been a few examples of universities who have institutionalized food security using multi-stakeholder committees. At Lakehead University, stakeholders from across the campus have formed the Lakehead Food Security Committee, which engages a diversity of perspectives to expand the scope of initiatives to address student food security. The committee is comprised of a variety of stakeholders including folks from food services, conference services, the faculties of health science & sociology, the department of Indigenous affairs, International Student Services, Alumni and external engagement, student health and counselling, the Lakehead Students' Union, student life & affairs, the office of financial aid, and the campus food bank. At the University of California, Santa Barbara, there is a multi-stakeholder Food Security Taskforce, which oversees campus efforts to reduce food insecurity and manages multiple coordinated programs which intersect with food insecurity. Within the taskforce, there are representatives from across the campus working to carry out initiatives, as well as one full-time staff person. Both of these universities have shown great leadership in working towards student food security, recognizing the pressing concern it is, and using collective points of leverage across the campus to make change.

Given student food insecurity is rooted in many areas within the campus system, we recommend that Ryerson University strike a multi-stakeholder committee to address the issue of student food insecurity. This committee would allow for collaboration from a diversity of perspectives at the university, including students, faculty, staff and administration. The benefit in this approach lies in its ability to address student food insecurity from a diversity of perspectives and to streamline resources and impact.

5.3 Recommendation to Government: Make Public Transit more accessible and affordable

Ryerson University has a large commuter student population, for a variety of reasons, and this poses a potential barrier to the food security of students. Compared to other universities, Ryerson is fairly close to home for students from the GTHA. However, due to the high cost of housing in Toronto and the lack of residence spaces within the university, many students commute long distances to attend class every day. The average one-way commute of a Ryerson student is 46 minutes, with 33% of students spending 2 or more hours commuting to or from school (StudentMoveTO, 2016). These large spans of time spent commuting can contribute to increased time pressures experienced by students and may negatively impact their food security due to the relationship between lack of time, students' lack of skills or capacity to prepare meals, and purchasing (more expensive, less healthy) food near campus. Commuting may contribute financial precarity of students since time pressures leave less time for employment and the increasing costs of public transportation. For students using the TTC, metropasses are \$116.75/month, and the additional costs of local transit (GO, Viva, MiWay, etc.) outside of the city, can be even more unaffordable. In April 2018, the Ryerson Board of Governors approved the creation of the TTC's U-Pass framework, which implements a \$280/semester (\$70/month) tuition fee which will cover a metropass for every student. Whether or not the framework will be accepted, will be determined by a referendum vote by Ryerson students in the Fall. While advocacy efforts have been made to reduce the costs of transportation for students-the cause for even more affordable and accessible public transportation is essential for the 600,000 Toronto-based university students who travel daily across a region of 8, 296.8 sq km. We recommend that the government allot more funding to public transit agencies within the GTHA to improve accessibility and affordability of services. The costs of commuting deepens the financial burdens of post-secondary students and in turn, influences students' food security.



5.4 Recommendation to Government: Commitment to Progressive Tuition Policies

The cost of tuition has risen at alarming rates for students during the past two decades, making higher education unaffordable to many without financial assistance. According to the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), university tuitions in Ontario increased by 572% of the adjusted cost after accounting for inflation, while the province's colleges raised tuition by 318% of adjusted cost accounting for inflation (2015). The cost of tuition in Ontario is also the highest among Canadian provinces and territories, amounting to \$7,868 per year in 2015-2016 (Brown, 2016). For students who come from families with low-income economic background, government administered student loans, scholarships and bursaries provide the main, and some time the only, option for their source of funding. The province of Ontario has recently revamped its Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) by increasing the amount of grant offered to students with financial needs effectively covering the average tuition costs for students who come from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less. As of 2018, it has also lowered the expected contribution from applicant's parents and spouse, which will expand eligibility for the program among student from middle income families. While these are welcomed changes for attaining food security on campuses, the GFC continues to experience high levels of use by its members which suggest enduring financial hardship among students.

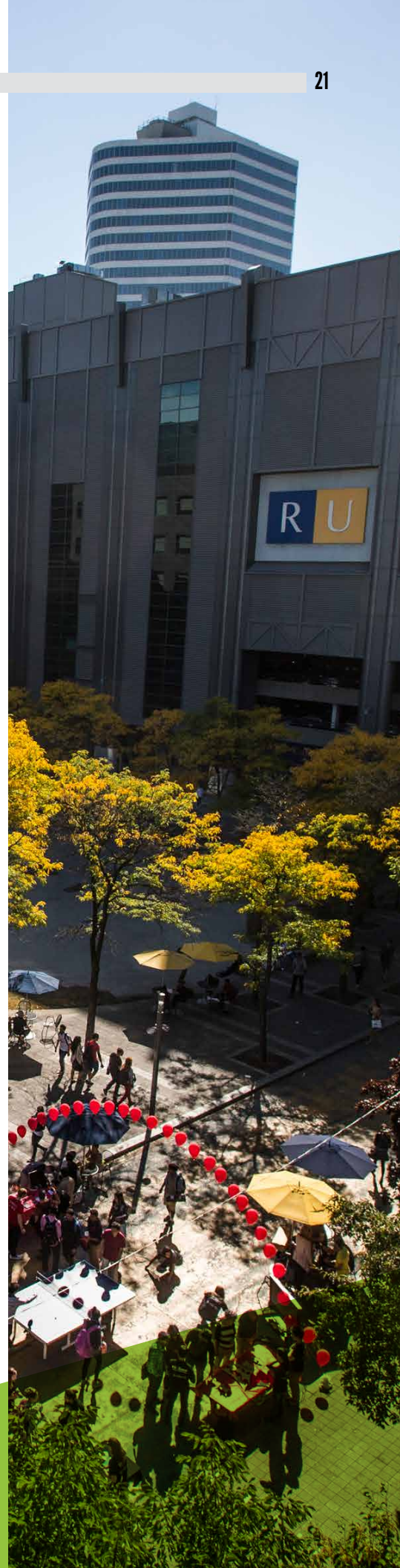
Despite the expansion OSAP funding for students demonstrating financial needs, tuition continue to increase at rates of up to 3% for undergraduate programs and up to 5% for professional and graduate programs (Chiose, 2016). Under the current OSAP structure, graduate level students are more exposed to the impacts of tuition increases because of there is a limit to the number of weeks a person may receive OSAP support in his or her lifetime equivalent to about 6.5 years. This means that if someone changed major midway during their undergraduate studies, this person would likely need to find other funding sources for graduate studies. Moreover, scholarships for graduate student are largely merit based, favouring those with relatively less financial stress. Indeed, this present study found that graduate students were well over represented among GFC users. A remedy that would reach the most financially stressed graduate students might be to freeze the swelling tuition costs for graduate programs. However, the situation is complicated by the fact that the revenue losses universities incur as a result of a tuition freeze is usually reimbursed by the province to compensate for program funding shortages (Graney, 2017). This has been the case for Alberta which has



implemented a tuition freeze since 2015 and renewed the commitment for 2018-2019 academic year. For Ontario, which had just undergone major restructuring of its financial assistance program for students, a partial tuition freeze targeted at graduate programs could be a strategic approach to close some of the persistent gaps in the OSAP program.

International students are also over represented among GFC users, deserving of attention from policy makers. Not merely a source of revenue for post secondary institution, international students contribute to the diversity found on campuses and form lasting bonds with the community in which they are integrated. Nevertheless, much of the resource shortage experienced by post-secondary institutions as a result of government funding cutbacks has led to unchecked increases in tuition fees for international students (Aitchison, 2018). A challenge for many international students is the uncertainty of the cost of tuition from one year to the next due to the unregulated nature of their tuition fees (Aitchison, 2018). Although many universities have set aside emergency loans and bursaries for international students, potential tuition shocks put students with limited support from abroad in a perpetual state of financial stress. A possible response to this issue, the University of Waterloo has imposed its own cap for tuition increases for international students after the first year of study. In addition to adopting similar tuition increase caps in other post secondary institutions, all university and colleges should consider creating emergency loans for international students if one does not already exist.

Financial strains experienced by post-secondary institutions have led to rapid tuition hikes in Ontario and in other Canadian provinces. The recent expansion of financial assistance from OSAP will give access to post-secondary education to more Ontario residents, especially those from low-income and middle-income families entering undergraduate studies. However, tackling the deeper issues of campus food security will demand more action from the government to freeze tuition hikes and increase grants for graduate students who often have more financial obligations. Universities and colleges should also consider imposing limits to tuition increases where none exist to allow international students to plan for education costs, and all post-secondary institutions should establish emergency loans for those international students who require temporary aid.



5.5 Recommendation to Government: Make Affordable Housing a Priority

The need for more affordable student housing exists as part of a wider affordable housing shortage in the City of Toronto. For most post-secondary students living off campus, the City's rental housing stock provide the bulk of accommodations away from home. Yet rental housing vacancy rate have been very low. According to the October 2017 data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), vacancy rates for private purpose-built rental units in GTA was at 1.1%. The figure is the lowest it has been in 16 years, according to CMHC, largely due to the surge in real estate prices that has push people out of home ownership (2017). The highly saturated rental market has allowed property managers to increase rent at rates higher than the provincial guideline of 1.5% (CMHC, 2017). In Toronto, the average market rent for a bachelor apartment in early 2018 was \$1,019, a 5.9% increase from 2017 (Toronto, 2018). Faced with less housing options and higher rent costs, many post-secondary students who are also paying for tuition are put under severe financial strain, as it is suggested by growing use of the GFC by its members discussed in this report.

One front in the challenge of eliminating food insecurity on campus at its root is to keep rental housing affordable for students. Ontario's rent increase guideline acts as the rent control mechanism for the province. However, landlords can apply to increase rent beyond the guideline rate by demonstrating costs from maintaining or upgrading the property. Moreover, there are no restrictions for rent increases once a rental unit becomes vacant. Since students and young graduates tend to move a number of times in their academic and early careers to be near work term placements and internships, they are fully exposed to the turbulences experienced in the rental housing market while trying to start their lives. In addition to rent control, the government should increase the amount of funding dedicated to paying for housing costs in the calculation of student grants in order to make the living expenses associated with higher education more manageable. The GFC also calls for the creation of more affordable housing units by making the inclusion of affordable units a mandatory part of new condominium development proposals in the City of Toronto.



CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this Hunger Report contribute to the existing literature on student food security, in identifying certain groups of students who seem to be at risk for experiencing food insecurity, including Indigenous and racialized students, single parents, International students, students in the Faculty of Architecture and Engineering, mature students and graduate students. When designing interventions aimed at improving student food security, folks need to consider the specific barriers to food security these students face.

The Good Food Centre provides essential emergency food access for students at Ryerson who are experiencing food insecurity and continues to advocate for the issues that are at the root of the problem. We make our recommendations to the university, students' union and levels of government in hopes of addressing the root causes of student food insecurity. We recognize that this issue is highly complex and that while students are at the heart of this issue, there needs to be more diversity in the roles of the stakeholders involved in developing the solutions. Currently, the only responses to student food security are student funded and student-driven. Progressive policies which increase financial assets of students are needed at the level of government and collaboration is needed at the university level to identify where opportunity and points of leverage exist to begin to tackle student food insecurity. Addressing student food insecurity at Ryerson will show a campus commitment to student health, well being and academic success.



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