

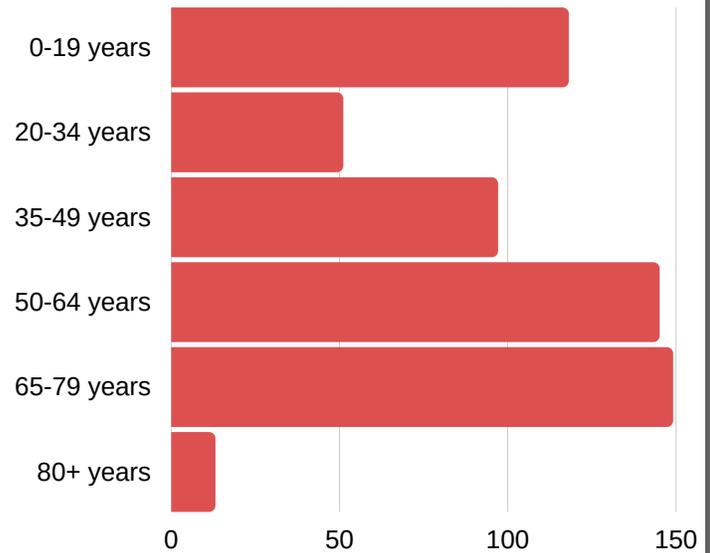


FOOD SECURITY & HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITY

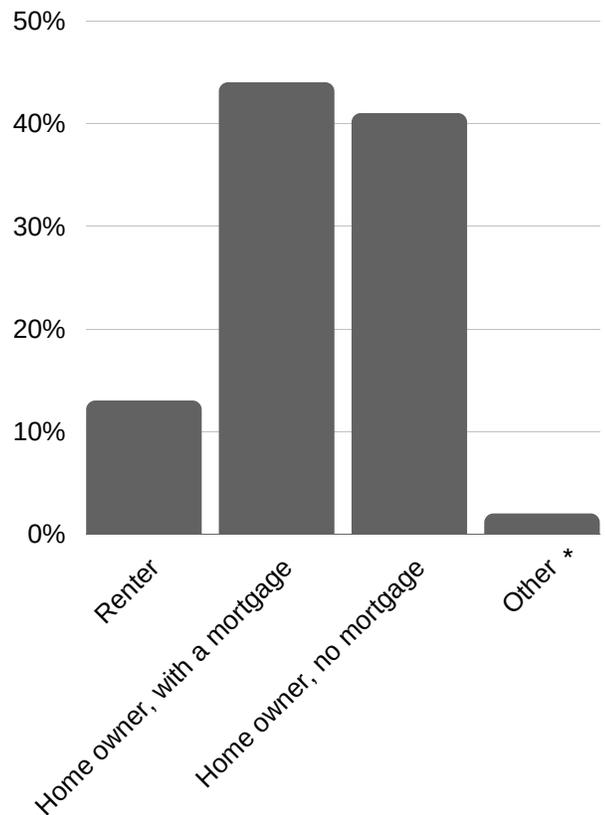
As residents of the Cowichan region braced for Fall and Winter months during a pandemic, those who responded to the survey voiced concerns about food access and how they were able to spend their time, as the restrictions evolved and fluctuated. It is likely that this led to feelings of uncertainty, as was expressed by many survey responses.

While food shortages and "panic-buying" were seen as significant concerns during the first wave, those issues seemed to subside. Instead, notably, the cost of food and other goods saw a dramatic rise, putting additional strain on those already struggling to provide for their households. With case counts climbing and additional restrictions imposed through the cold winter months, many of us also found ourselves spending more time indoors, forcing us to find new ways to occupy our time.

Ages Represented in the Households of Survey Respondants



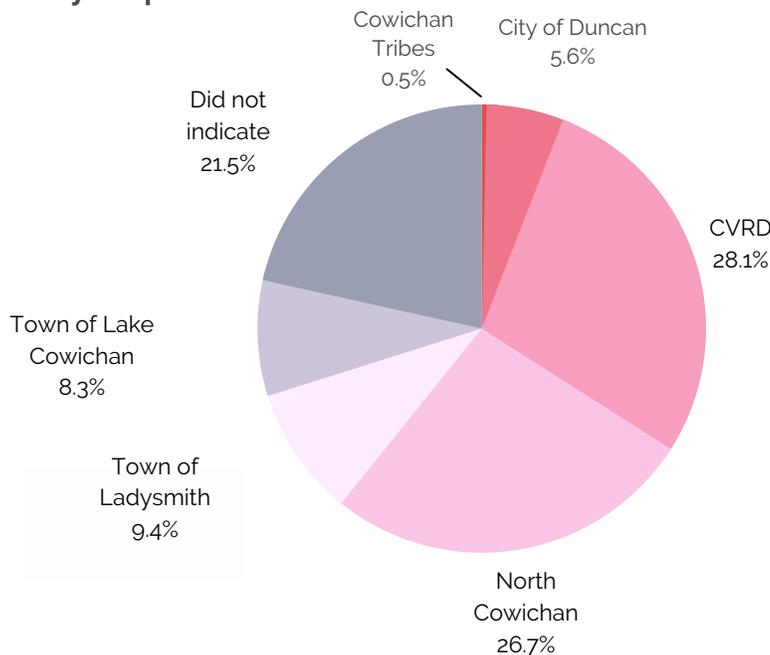
Housing Situation:



*Other: work for board, living in a car/rent free/ subsidized/temporary housing, small cabin/off grid

288 ...total number of respondents for Winter Survey #1

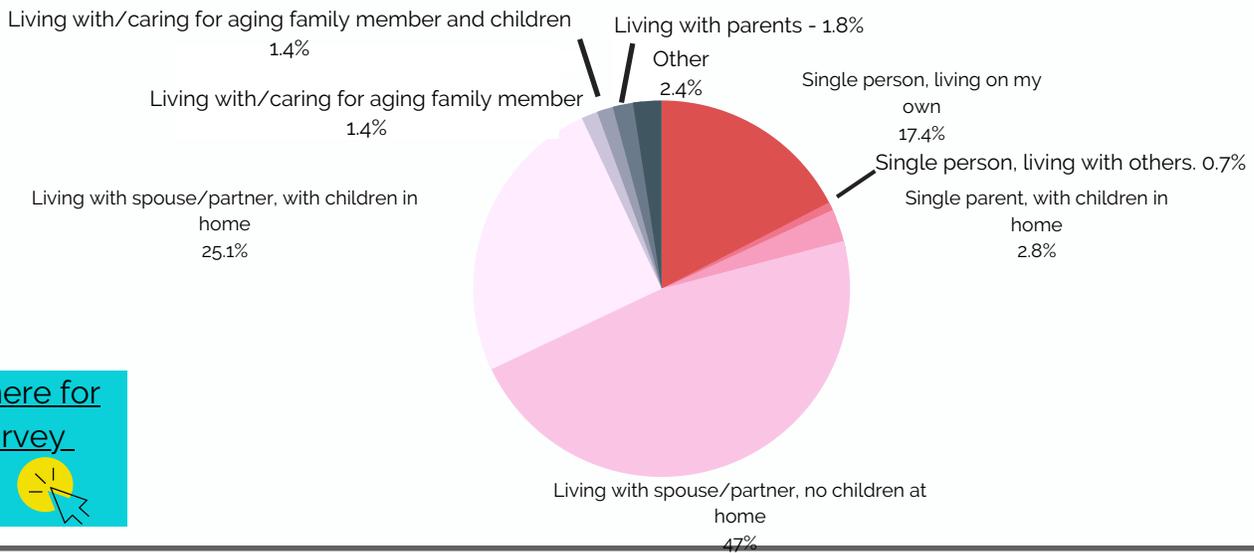
Household Locations of Survey Respondents:





FOOD SECURITY & HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITY

Household Makeup of Survey Respondents:



[Click here for raw survey data](#)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FOOD ACCESS TASK FORCE

The Cowichan Green Community (CGC) has continued to lead the Emergency Food Access Task Force in response to food access concerns due to COVID-19. Many of the emergency service providers listed on the [COVID-19 Food Resource List](#) are represented on this 'virtual' task force. Here are some recent highlights to show the work that is being done to address some very significant needs in our region:

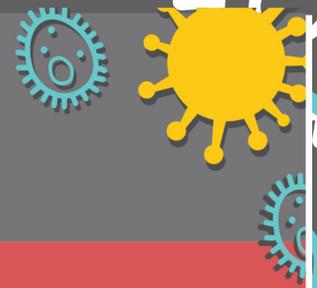
- Meals on the Ground:** Delivering an average of 60 meals per day at Duncan United Church, plus additional meals to St. Julien Street shelter site.
- Cowichan Valley Basket Society:** Providing meals to three shelter sites on Saturdays; reporting an increase in access to food hampers at their Garden Street headquarters in Duncan.
- Cowichan Green Community:** Continuing Duncan Farmer's Market coupon program. authorized to provide \$21 per week in credits for up to 90 participants; increasing capacity for food recovery program for redistribution to service providers and Cow-Op.
- Ladysmith Resource Centre Association:** Continuing to provide food bank services; plan on increasing capacity soon at new building with greater kitchen and garden space.
- Cowichan Lake Community Services:** Free Food Market on the porch every Friday.

See what other emergency services and resources are available throughout the region [here](#).

FOOD INSECURITY

Defined as as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources.

Findings from a May 2021 publication by Canadian Public Policy entitled Food Insecurity amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Food Charity, Government Assistance and Employment show that only 7.4% of food-insecure households made use of food charity in past 30 days. "It calls into question the federal government's decisions to allocate an unprecedented \$250 million to charitable food assistance programs in 2020 in the name of addressing food insecurity during the pandemic and an additional \$140 million as part of the 2021 Federal Budget. These policy decisions further entrench food charity as Canada's main response to this serious public health problem despite there being no evidence that food charity can move households out of food insecurity."



FOOD SECURITY & HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITY

Through the fall and winter months, transportation shifted in the following ways:

- Travelling long distances (>50km trips) ↓ 64%
- Commuting to work ↓ 21%
- Vehicle costs (fuel, maintenance) ↓ 49%

Learning new skills: While gardening, baking, musical instruments and home improvement projects continue to be popular pastimes through the pandemic, many people are now turning toward some more niche interests; as well as things to enjoy inside the house during colder months:
 Painting and other artistic pursuits · Meditation · Stained Glass
 Strength training · Gold Panning · Horse riding and care
 Sewing/textile arts · Pyrography · Online learning
 Bushcraft/survival skills · Fermenting/canning/food preserving

Rising Costs As remarked upon dozens of times through the responses to our survey, people have noticed significant increases to the costs of their total bill during a typical grocery shopping trip. Indeed, Canada's Food Price Report 2021 forecasts that families can expect to spend an additional 3% to 5% on food, which will amount to an average of \$700 more per year for a typical family. Some reasons for these increases are tied to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and include the increased cost of production due to safety precautions and PPE, loss of manufacturing capacity, increased demand and potential shortages of some ingredients and supplies, as well as the fluctuating Canadian dollar.

*Source: CANADA'S FOOD PRICE REPORT 11TH EDITION 2021

Rising costs have also been noted for lumber and other wood products, where prices have more than doubled in the past year. This has been attributed to a combination of increased demand driven by an increase in home renovation projects, and reduced production capacity (including mill shutdowns) while the pandemic pressed on. *Source: CBC News

29%

of survey respondents increased the food they produced for themselves.

↓ **DOWN** from 45% in previous survey.

11%

of respondents produced more food to feed the community.

↓ **DOWN** from 15% in previous survey.



79%

of respondents decreased connecting with friends/family

↑ **UP** from 68% in previous survey.

21%

of respondents indicated that their household has become more self-sufficient through the fall and winter months.

↓ **DOWN** from 34% in previous survey.

How have the following activities been affected in your household through the Fall and Winter months during COVID-19?

	INCREASED	DECREASED	NO CHANGE	N/A
Eating fast food:	9.63%	43.7%	30.37%	16.3%
Eating take-out:	25.28%	43.77%	24.15%	6.79%
Cooking at home:	61.36%	4.17%	34.47%	0%
Baking:	47.39%	4.48%	45.15%	2.99%
Eating meat:	4.17%	17.8%	71.59%	6.44%
Purchasing locally grown food at farm stands:	22.64%	18.11%	50.94%	8.3%
Purchasing locally grown food online:	10.82%	4.1%	33.21%	51.87%
Purchasing locally grown food at farm markets:	13.58%	22.26%	44.15%	20.0%
Consuming Alcohol:	25.66%	17.74%	36.98%	19.62%
Our weekly food budget has:	55.22%	13.06%	31.34%	0.37%

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"Finding seeds and seedlings was harder in Phase 1 as it seems everyone started a home garden. So I was restricted in what I could find and had to start with seeds rather than seedlings."

"The cost of groceries has increased significantly. We are baking more and preparing big batches of food more often."

"We have become hermits, especially with both in our household not medically able to wear a mask. Too many restrictions on seeing my grandchildren, for the first couple of months I cried most of the time, I wanted to see my grandchildren so badly, but the tears and misunderstanding of my little ones had them thinking I no longer loved them. With medical reasons to not wear a mask on both sides of the family made it even worse. Thankfully, I can watch them now."

"Cost of food has increased, therefore, eat one meal a day, sometimes every other day. Household activities have almost come to a halt, live alone, don't know anyone, family does not live here, friends do not live here, cost of art/craft/hobby supplies have gone up or hard to find, cost of shipping, thrift store keeps closing which is understandable, very lonely staying home by yourself days in and days out, no one can come visit and spend the night, supposed stay in your community, it's boring."

"Goods prices went up quite a lot. I lost my income and I am shopping for all the same items, but the cost increased. I would love to learn how to grow my own food, but the property I am on is quite forested."

"Not as anxious about food availability."

"I'm much more relaxed; having time and using it for small projects and enjoyments. Better rest and sleep."

"Some of the change is simply due to weather. There is a switch to indoor activities."

Regarding food and household activities, during Phase 3 of COVID-19, what have been your biggest concerns?

"Shopping for food is a very tense experience and everyone is impatient, sullen, distracted and treats their fellow person like an enemy."

"After reading the spring snapshots, I feel a little guilty - we've been spared the pandemic's worst effects and are managing to make some positive lifestyle changes."

"We are enjoying the increased access to local farmers food supply through online shopping and delivery. Going to the market regularly was not an option with two little kids and not a lot of space to roam."

"We've been more mindful about having emergency food here; in case of a power outage, we don't want to crowd into a grocery store. We've been making sure to waste less and eat what we have before buying more. We've become more involved in producing and cooking food for others, from delivering groceries to folks with compromised immune systems, to preparing and delivering food for those who can't drive to the grocery store."

We miss going to restaurants. We've tried takeout but there is too much non-compostable or recyclable garbage so they've just lost our business."

Questions for the future...

- What lessons from this time can we carry forward with regard to food supply and the availability of other goods?
- How can we continue to support local farms and food sources, post-pandemic?
- How can we put any new skills we've learned toward fostering a better, more resilient community in the future?