

Overview and Context

This survey ran September 22-27 on the UASU Perks platform, reaching 1,120 points of contact. 62% of respondents stated that they could speak to either the cost of food for one adult, or the cost of food "for a household that's something like two adults and one child," i.e. the two cases found in the University's [budgeting tool](#). We used redundant self-selection methods to ensure that the only people answering the following questions are the people who can speak directly to these questions now.

Food insecurity is a pervasive, persistent problem among UAlberta undergraduate students.¹ [In a September 20 update](#), the Campus Food Bank stated: "Anecdotally, international students are telling us that the University's own budgeting tool does not reflect the rapidly rising price of groceries, for example, and they have arrived to be underprepared for the cost of buying food here."

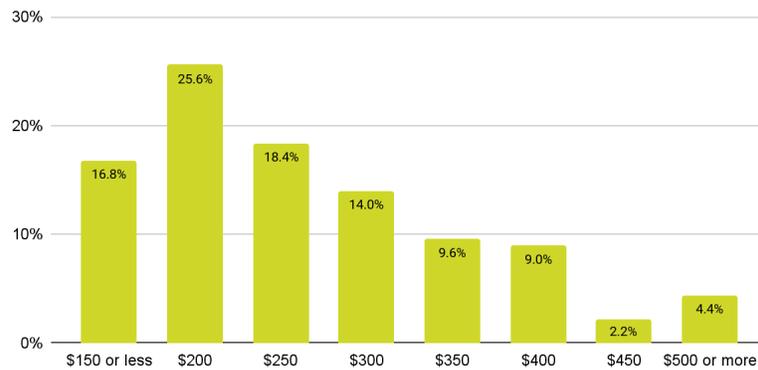
The intent of our September 2022 Perks survey is to quantify the CFB's recent statement and urge the University to update the budgeting tool's cost-of-food estimates. The budgeting tool currently states that the monthly cost of food is \$200-\$300 for a single adult and \$550-\$650 for a household of two adults and one child. These numbers have remained unchanged since the [first time](#) the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine archived the page (November 2020).

The budgeting tool's current cost of food estimates do not align with this survey's results. We recommend the following estimates as a realistic reflection of the cost of food in Fall 2022.

- Single adult: \$300-\$350 (up from \$200-\$300). The new estimate would cover 75-84% of relevant respondents.
- Two adults and one child: \$650-\$750 (up from \$550-\$650). The new estimate would cover 75-85% of relevant respondents.

¹ [In a November 2019 survey of 3900+ students](#), we used the HFSSM survey module and found high rates of food insecurity (19% moderate and 12% high/severe, by Health Canada standards). Since then, the pandemic and half a year of record inflation have impacted the cost of living. We intend to re-run the HFSSM at the end of Fall 2022.

"Right now, what's the cost of food for one adult for a month?" (n1=500)



The current estimates in the University's budgeting tool (\$200-\$300) would cover 42-75% of relevant respondents. (The proportions look virtually identical for first-year students.) At minimum, the lower bound of \$200 is unrealistic and likely setting up many students for difficult circumstances. An estimate of \$300-\$350 would capture 75-84% of respondents.

In terms of food insecurity concerns, we also note that one-sixth of single-adult respondents are living on a grocery budget of \$150 or less.

"Right now, what's the cost of food for a small household (two adults and one child, for example) for a month?" (n2=170)



The current estimates in the University's budgeting tool (\$550-\$650) would cover 52-75% of relevant respondents. At minimum, the lower bound of \$550 is unrealistic and likely setting up many students for difficult circumstances. An estimate of \$650-\$750 would cover 75-85% of relevant respondents.

As with the previous question, one-sixth of small-household respondents are living on the minimum option, in this case \$400 or less.