

SCHOOL MEAL/FEEDING PROGRAM(S)

Most recently completed school year:
September 2018 – June 2019

- Provincial/territorial/regional programs

Note: Canada does not have a national or harmonized school food program. The data used to construct this country report are based on 17 provincial/territorial/regional programs.

Lead Agency: 1–3 Ministries within each province/territory, such as the Ministries of Education, Health, or Social Services

NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND STANDARDS

- ☐ National school feeding policy
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Food safety
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Private sector involvement

Line item in the national budget... ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ NR

BUDGET

Canadian provincial and territorial governments collectively provided over USD 70 million (\$93 million Canadian dollars) for school meal programs.

A majority of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and rely heavily on NGO staff and volunteers to implement their school food programs.

INFRASTRUCTURE

All schools have electricity, piped water, clean water, and flush toilets, while only some schools have kitchens and dedicated eating spaces/cafeterias. Food may be prepared on-site (in school kitchens) or off-site in centralized kitchens or private facilities (caterers). Some whole foods are purchased directly from farmers and wholesalers while other foods are purchased in processed form.

MEALS/SNACKS/MODALITY

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Breakfast | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Snacks |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lunch | <input type="checkbox"/> Take-home rations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner | <input type="checkbox"/> Conditional cash transfer |
-
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grains/cereals | <input type="checkbox"/> Fish |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Roots, tubers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Green, leafy vegetables |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legumes and nuts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other vegetables |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dairy products | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fruits |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eggs | <input type="checkbox"/> Oil |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meat | <input type="checkbox"/> Salt |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poultry | <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar |

Prohibited food items: No soft drinks (sodas)

FOOD SOURCES

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Purchased (domestic) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-kind (domestic) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Purchased (foreign) | <input type="checkbox"/> In-kind (foreign) |

COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Handwashing with soap | <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing testing/treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Height measurement | <input type="checkbox"/> Dental cleaning/testing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weight measurement | <input type="checkbox"/> Menstrual hygiene |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deworming treatment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drinking water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eye testing/eyeglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Water purification |

COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- | | |
|--|--|
| EDUCATION | OTHER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nutrition | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School gardens |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical education |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food and agriculture | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reproductive health | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hygiene | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HIV prevention | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> = mandatory | |

The checked and highlighted items are reported as required, though they may not be uniformly implemented.



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Canada



SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

CHILDREN RECEIVING FOOD, 2018–19

School level	Total #	# Enrolled	# Receiving Food
Primary school	2,371,409	2,407,006	—
Secondary school	2,325,725	2,654,199	—
Total	4,697,134	5,061,205	1,018,323

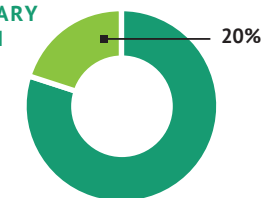
Population and school enrollment numbers are drawn from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS).

Ruetz & McKenna (2021) was the first comprehensive survey of school food programs in Canada. Of the ~15,500 JK–12 schools in Canada, a minimum of 5,371 schools offered 6,408 free school food programs funded entirely or in part by the provinces and territories. This figure equates to a lower bound estimate of 35% of Canadian schools offering one or more programs.

COVERAGE: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Total number primary and secondary school-age children: 5,061,205

Receiving school food:
■ 1,018,323



- Food was also provided to some students in
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-schools | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Primary Schools |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secondary Schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational/trade schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> University/higher education | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

NUTRITION

School feeding program(s) include/involve the following:

- ☒ **Fortified foods**
- ☐ Bio-fortified foods
- ☐ Micronutrient supplements
- ☒ **Nutritionists involved**
- ☐ Special training for cooks/caterers in nutrition
- ☒ **Objective to meet nutritional goals**
- ☒ **Objective to meet educational goals**
- ☒ **Objective to provide a social safety net**
- ☐ Objective to reduce obesity

Food items fortified: Programs provide foods fortified for the Canadian population, such as flour.

Micronutrients added to fortified foods: Folic acid (among others)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All jurisdictions provide nutrition-based policies or guidelines for programs.

SPECIAL NOTES

This country report is constructed from data collected by Ruetz & McKenna (2021). Full reference: Ruetz, A. T., & McKenna, M. L. (2021). Characteristics of Canadian school food programs funded by provinces and territories. *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des études Sur l'alimentation*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v8i3.483>

Some programs provided partial data, and a few jurisdictions did not provide any data. Within the jurisdictions for which data are available, a minimum of 1,018,323 students (about 20%) participate in school meal programs. Complementary education activities vary widely; program demand often exceeds supply; and program monitoring is inconsistent.

AGRICULTURE, EMPLOYMENT, AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Jobs created by school feeding programs

- NR Cooks and food preparers
- NR Transporters
- NR Off-site processors
- NR Food packagers and handlers
- NR Monitoring
- NR Food service management
- NR Safety and quality inspectors
- NR Other

Farmers were involved with the school feeding program(s)...

- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NR

Other private sector (for profit) actors were involved...

- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NR

There was a focus on creating jobs or leadership or income-generating opportunities for...

- ☐ Women ☐ Youth
☐ Other groups

There was community engagement (by parents or others) in the school feeding program(s)

- ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NR

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

While some school food programs have dedicated staff or pay a modest honorarium for coordinators, a majority of programs are exclusively or heavily volunteer-driven. For example, there are approximately 56,000 volunteers in Ontario. The NGO *Farm to Cafeteria Canada* and other organizations provide funding to support farm-to-school activities, such as salad bar programs.

CONTACTS: CANADA

A lead government department has not been determined. Drs. Amberley T. Ruetz and Mary L. McKenna provided data for this country report based on their 2018/19 school food program survey of Canadian provinces and territories, the results of which are published in *Canadian Food Studies* (Ruetz & McKenna, 2021). Corresponding author: Amberley.Ruetz@usask.ca

SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

Successes: 2019 was the first year the federal government committed to creating a national school food program, although no funds were attached. Provinces and territories have continued to increase their funding support to programs. In 2018/19, they collectively provided over \$93 million (Canadian dollars) of funding. A national NGO, the *Coalition for Healthy School Food*, continues to advocate for a healthy, universal school food program for Canada.

Challenges: Canada is one of the only industrialized member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the only member of the Group of Seven (G7) nations that does not have a national school food program. In 2017, UNICEF ranked Canada 37 out of 41 wealthy nations for children's access to nutritious food. Funding continues to be a challenge as government contributions equate to an average of \$0.48 per student per school day. Monitoring is also a challenge due to lack of (or inconsistent) data and the low priority given to school food within the education system.

STUDIES CONDUCTED

1. Ruetz, A. T., & McKenna, M. L. (2021). Characteristics of Canadian school food programs funded by provinces and territories. *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des études Sur l'alimentation*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v8i3.483>
2. Colley, P., Myer, B., Seabrook, J., & Gilliland, J. (2019). The impact of Canadian school food programs on children's nutrition and health: A systematic review. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 80(2), 79–86. <https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdp-2018-037>
3. Hernandez, K., Engler-Stringer, R., Kirk, S., & Wittman, H. (2018). The case for a Canadian national school food program. *Canadian Food Studies*, 5(3), 208–229. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v5i3.260>
4. Godin, K., Kirkpatrick, S., Stapleton, J., Hanning, R., & Leatherdale, S. (2017). Examining guidelines for school-based breakfast programs in Canada: A systematic review of the grey literature. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 78(2), 92–100. <https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdp-2016-037>

RESEARCH NEEDED

Research is needed to guide the potential introduction of a national school food program in Canada.