

# Urban Food Insecurity and Scarborough's Racialized Youth



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## Introduction

- In 2022, 18.4% of Canadians were food insecure, a significant rise from the value reported in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022).
- The pressing issue of food insecurity is increasing in Canada and is disproportionately impacting racialized Canadians, specifically people who are visible minorities (Tarasuk et., al, 2022).
- Scarborough, a racialized food desert, is facing exorbitant levels of food insecurity and this effect is seen in the increased usage of and dependency on food banks (Hasan, 2023).
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the current rising inflation of food costs are two key factors in exacerbating the issue of food insecurity.
- However, researchers have not looked at this critical issue examining these two factors from the perspective of racialized youth in Scarborough.

## Research Question

This research study sought to answer the following question:

**How does the socio-economic stress of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with rising inflation of food costs impact the food security of racialized youth aged 18-24 in Scarborough?**

## Objective

- Address the literature gap that exists on Urban Food Insecurity and Scarborough's Racialized Youth.
- Increase awareness about urban food insecurity and engage in dialogue with stakeholders about the impacts of the pandemic, rising inflation of food costs and other systemic factors that have been exacerbated in recent years in relation to food insecurity.

## Research Methodology

### Research Period and Methodology:

- The study was conducted over six weeks from June 6th to July 19th, 2023.
- Survey research methodology was employed.
- 100 racialized youth from Scarborough (n=100) participated in this study.**

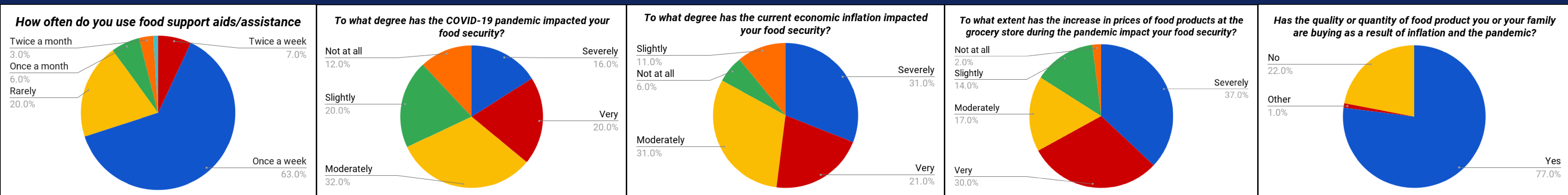
### Survey Development:

- The survey was formed through a literature review on food insecurity, urban food systems and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic while integrating insights from consultations with community organizations in Scarborough.
- The survey was developed through Google Forms and was divided into two portions:
  - Social Identifiers (6 questions) - to understand the demographics of participants and those reliant on food banks.
  - Relative Variable Identifiers (6 questions) - to examine food banks, COVID-19 pandemic and rising food costs.

### Participant Recruitment and Survey Distribution:

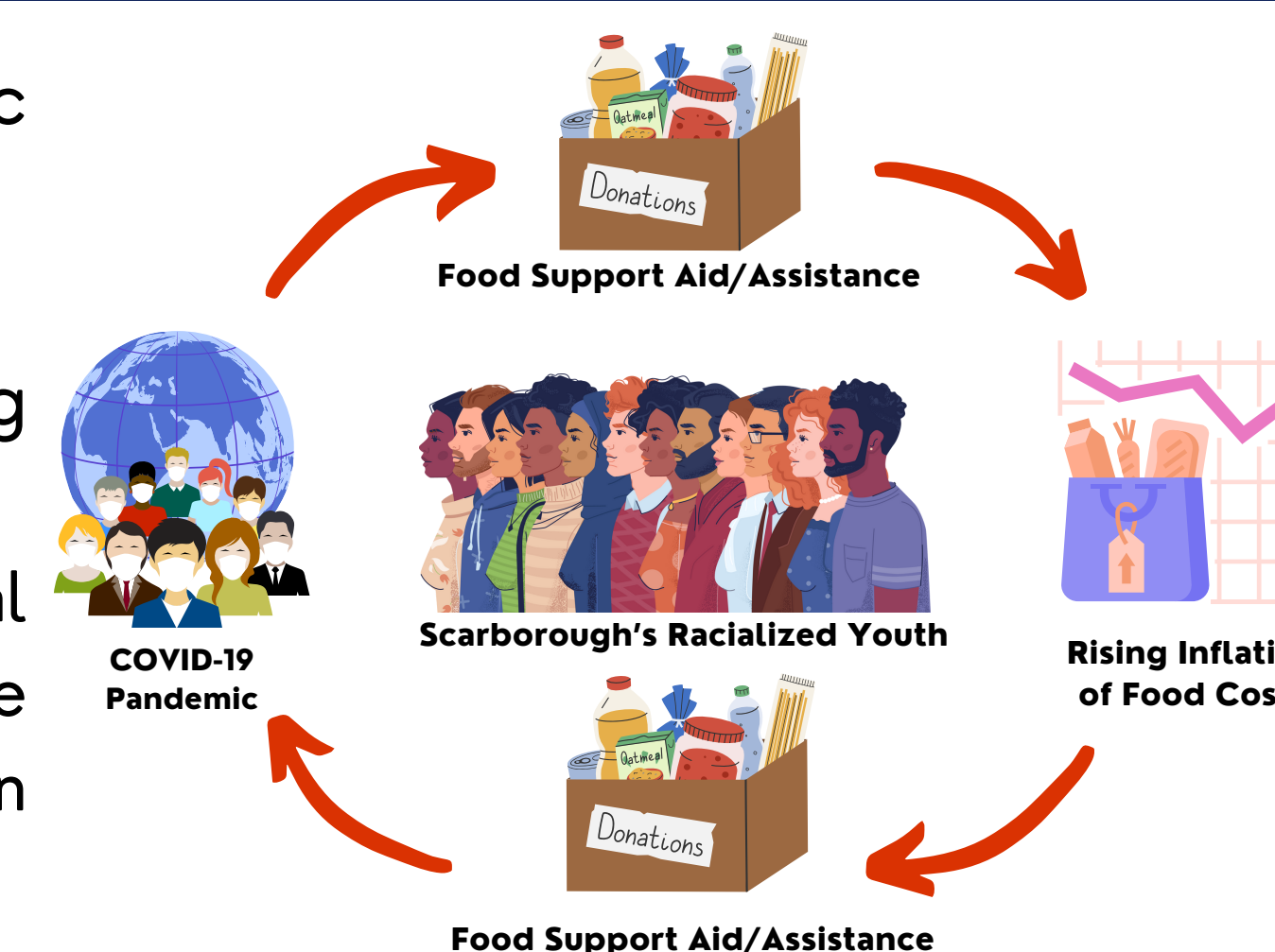
- Participants recruited through collaborating with Feed Scarborough and the Scarborough Campus Union's Food Centre.
- Over two weeks, the PI visited four food banks in Scarborough to recruit participants and distribute the survey.
- Surveys were primarily accessed via QR codes and devices provided by the PI.
- Participants were rewarded with a \$10 Walmart gift card as an honorarium for their participation.

## Results



## Key Findings

- The increased usage of and dependence on food support aids/assistance like food banks is a direct product of the socio-economic stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation of food costs as there is a:
  - Significant impact to the food security of the participants from the initial increase of food prices during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Consequential change in the quality and quantity of food products purchased by youth and their family as a result of the rising economic inflation.
- This increasing usage of and dependence on food support aids/assistance like food banks due to the growing socio-economic stress reveal the lack of sustainable and accessible food infrastructures for racialized youth in Scarborough to ensure their food security. This vicious cycle will continue to exacerbate food insecurity if there is no viable and reliable solution to mitigate this issue and its profound impact on Scarborough's racialized youth.



## Conclusion & Future Research

- Through this research study, it is evident that the socio-economic stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising inflation of food costs has a critical impact on the food security of racialized youth aged 18-24 in Scarborough by forcing them to access and depend on food support aids/assistance.
- To further investigate this multi-faceted and dire issue, it is imperative to further examine factors, such as, income security and housing and its relation to food insecurity and Scarborough's racialized youth.
- This research study is a first step to catalyze policy dialogues on effective measures to mitigate and prevent food insecurity for Scarborough's racialized youth.



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