

# The Cost of Healthy Eating in Saskatchewan 2018

Saskatchewan Food Costing Task Group



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# Introduction

The affordability and availability of food has the potential to influence food choices and impact health. The purpose of this document is to present the 2018 data on the cost of healthy eating in Saskatchewan.

This report can be used by decision makers and organizations to:

- allocate funds for nutrition programs, food grants and food allowances;
- inform decisions regarding health, nutrition and social policy development and implementation;
- support further assessment and monitoring of regional barriers and cost differences affecting healthy food access; and,
- promote access to nutritious, safe, and personally acceptable foods.

## Food Costing in Saskatchewan 2018

The cost of food is collected every three years in randomly selected grocery stores throughout Saskatchewan. The 2018 food costing was completed in 105 grocery stores during the month of June (1). These stores were in urban, rural and northern locations, and included stores in First Nation communities.

Saskatchewan uses Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket and the province of Ontario's food costing guidance document to collect food cost data (2, 3). The National Nutritious Food Basket includes 67 basic healthy foods commonly eaten by Canadians and meets the recommendations from Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (4). The Basket includes foods such as fresh and frozen vegetables and fruit, cheese, milk, bread, meat, beans and lentils. The food included in the basket is minimally processed and typically widely available. It is assumed that people have basic cooking skills and a location to cook and store food.



Individual and family circumstances fluctuate due to the influence of one or more of the following factors which may impact actual food costs:

- adequate time, energy, skills and equipment to prepare healthy meals;
- recommended nutrition therapy to help manage acute or chronic health conditions;
- increased metabolic demands due to illness or physical activity;
- cultural preferences and or religious diet considerations;
- food allergies or sensitivities;
- cleaning or personal care items that are often included on a family's grocery bill;
- regular and easy access to full-service grocery stores; and,
- travel costs to a grocery store.

Limitations may have impacted the food costing data collection and analysis. Food costing collects a "snapshot" of the cost of food at a specific time, therefore price differences since June 2018 will not be reflected. There were several data collectors, due to geography, and as such, there is an increased potential for error. The number of rural stores surveyed decreased from the 2015 data collection cycle. Some food items were not available in some stores which may have impacted food cost calculations for some geographical locations.

# Weekly Food Costs Around the Province

Residents of Northern Saskatchewan have the highest food costs in the province, averaging \$316.81 per week for a family of four compared to \$227.47 per week in the southern part of the province. A family of four living in a large city pays the least for a nutritious food basket at \$213.08.



A Reference Family of Four includes a 31-50 year old man, a 31-50 year old woman, a 14-18 year old boy and a 4-8 year old girl.

**Far North**  
\$421.64



**North West**  
\$321.63

**North East**  
\$308.67



**Northern Town**  
\$261.36

• La Ronge



**Small City**  
\$217.65 • Prince Albert

• Saskatoon



**Town**  
\$241.14

**Large City**  
\$213.08



• Regina

**Rural**  
\$253.65



Northern communities are over 100km north of Prince Albert. Categories are classified by geographic location and ease of access to communities.

**Far North:** Low access communities with air travel as the main form of transportation. Some communities have limited seasonal roads.

**North West:** Moderately accessible communities with gravel or paved roads and air access.

**North East:** Moderate and low access communities with gravel or seasonal roads or air travel as the main forms of transportation.

**Northern Town:** Highly accessible communities with paved roads, access to nearby towns and cities and air access.

Southern communities are classified by population size.

**Large City:** >100,000 people

**Small City:** 5,000 - 99,999 people

**Town:** 500 - 4,999 people

**Rural:** <500 people

**Table 1: Average weekly and monthly cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket for a family of four, Saskatchewan, 2018.**

Northern Saskatchewan	Cost per Week	Cost per Month
Far North	\$421.64	\$1,825.68
North East	\$308.67	\$1,336.56
North West	\$321.63	\$1,392.66
Northern Town	\$261.36	\$1,131.71
Southern Saskatchewan		
Rural	\$253.65	\$1,098.33
Town	\$241.14	\$1,044.12
Small City	\$217.65	\$942.43
Large City	\$213.08	\$922.65

## How Do Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Impact Food Costs?

Pregnancy and breastfeeding are times when a woman’s nutritional needs increase as her infant grows. Because the woman requires more nutrients and therefore more food, there is an increase in food costs. The cost of infant formula is significantly higher than the extra food needed for a breastfeeding mother.

Depending on the type of infant formula used, the cost ranges from \$1,440.00 to \$3,431.00 per year\*. It costs \$1,500.00 per year for liquid concentrated formula and \$1,440.00 for powdered formula. Ready to feed formula is considerably more expensive at \$3,431.00 per year. These prices do not include additional costs associated with formula feeding such as the cost for bottles, nipples and water. A breastfeeding mother, aged 19-30 years requires only an extra \$454.92 per year for food costs, which is less than the price of infant formula.

*\*Infant formula costs were collected in 74 of the 105 randomly selected grocery stores.*

**Table 2: Average weekly and monthly costs of the National Nutritious Food Basket for pregnant and breastfeeding women, Saskatchewan, 2018.**

Pregnancy	Cost per Week	Cost per Month
18 years or younger	\$63.26	\$273.91
19 to 30 years	\$64.03	\$277.25
31 to 50 years	\$62.50	\$271.63
Breastfeeding		
18 years or younger	\$65.71	\$284.54
19 to 30 years	\$67.86	\$293.83
31 to 50 years	\$66.33	\$287.20

# Applying the Results: Possible Ways to Use this Report

## Community needs assessments and program monitoring

The Saskatchewan food costing data can be incorporated into community assessments that will provide local data for the cost of nutritious food within a specified region. Local food cost data may help stakeholders and decision makers identify priorities or opportunities for action to improve the livelihood of community residents and populations at risk for poor health outcomes. Additionally, food costing data is routinely used by programs and services across the province to monitor food costs and make important funding adjustments. Saskatchewan food costing information has been used to:

- examine northern food allowances by the Ministry of Social Services;
- provide guidance to personal care homes about budgeting for healthy menus from the Ministry of Health, Community Care Branch;
- create a community resource factor, used by Saskatchewan Breakfast for Learning, for allocating grants to schools from rural and northern communities;
- inform the work of health professionals, as they work with partners to assess community needs and improve access to healthy foods by providing consultation and support to community kitchens, good food boxes (i.e. bulk purchasing programs), community gardens and new food security initiatives;
- plan and budget for nutrition programs in schools throughout Saskatchewan;
- calculate food allowances in a housing facility following a fire;
- inform grant funding applications; and,
- create tools such as *The Cost of Meals and Snacks for Children in Saskatchewan* and the *Saskatchewan Therapeutic Diet Costing Tool*.



## Living wage calculations

A living wage is an hourly rate of pay that would enable a household to earn enough income to cover basic costs without reliance on government assistance (5). The Canadian Living Wage Framework outlines a method to calculate a living wage for a specific community anywhere in Canada. The framework defines basic living needs and emphasizes the use of local data whenever possible to reflect the most precise cost of necessities such as food, clothing, housing, utilities, and transportation. The Saskatchewan food costing data currently provides the most accurate and consistent estimates of the cost of healthy eating in the province. Living Wage Canada maintains a current list of all living wage initiatives in Saskatchewan and a list of Saskatchewan communities that have calculated living wages can be found [on their website](#).



## The analysis of affordability of healthy eating

The Saskatchewan food cost data produces a population measure of food cost that can help analyze the affordability of healthy eating across the continuum of household income levels in Saskatchewan. Affordability is especially relevant to those households that have insufficient financial means to purchase adequate amounts of healthy food. Regular examination of the relationship between food costs and household income can help provide timely insight into the impact of social policy or economic changes on the financial barriers many households face when trying to eat healthy. Recently British Columbia released data on the affordability of healthy eating in BC (6). Along with the average monthly costs of a healthy diet, the report presented the percentage of household income needed for families on social assistance, earning a minimum wage or earning a median wage to eat a basic healthy diet. The report outlines income based solutions for food affordability. The Saskatchewan 2018 food costing data could be used to analyze the affordability of food in our province.

# Conclusion

Many Saskatchewan families are impacted by the affordability and accessibility of healthy food. The ongoing analysis of food prices is an important population health activity that helps monitor the cost of nutritious foods. The Saskatchewan food costing process produces the most accurate and comprehensive set of data to establish a conservative estimate for the cost of healthy eating across the province. The Saskatchewan food costing results provide stakeholders from a variety of sectors the ability to assess the impact of food costs on health and social programming and policy decisions.

## References

1. Saskatchewan Food Costing Task Group. Saskatchewan Food Costing Data Collection: Surveyor Instructions 2018.
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6. Government of British Columbia. Food costing in BC 2017: assessing the affordability of healthy eating. Retrieved from <https://bcfoodsecuritygateway.ca/resources/the-affordability-of-healthy-eating-in-bc/>

# Appendix

## Calculating Monthly Food Costs for Various Groups

Use the Food Costing Worksheet to calculate the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket for different family sizes or groups.

Food Costing Worksheet			
	Age (years)	Sex	Cost per week (\$) based on where you live Refer to <a href="#">Table 1</a> on the following page.
<b>Step 1</b> Write down the age and sex of all the people you are feeding. Then write down the cost per week based on where you live.			
<b>Step 2</b> Add the costs.	Subtotal = _____		
<b>Step 3</b> Multiply your subtotal by an adjustment factor.	It costs slightly more per person to feed a small group of people and less to feed a large group. 1 person – multiply by 1.15 2 people – multiply by 1.10 3 people – multiply by 1.05 4 people – multiply by 1 (no change) 5 people – multiply by 0.95 6+ people – multiply by 0.90	_____ X _____ Subtotal     Adjustment Factor = _____ <b>Total Weekly Food Cost</b>	
<b>Step 4</b> Multiply your total weekly food cost by 4.33 to show cost per month.			_____ X 4.33 Total Weekly Food Cost = _____ <b>Total Monthly Food Cost</b>

**Table 1: Average weekly cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket, by age, sex, and location, Saskatchewan, 2018.**

	Saskatchewan	North	South
<b>Males Age (years)</b>			
2-3	\$32.56	\$43.25	\$29.93
4-8	\$41.93	\$55.16	\$38.59
9-13	\$55.24	\$72.03	\$50.92
14-18	\$78.06	\$100.16	\$72.34
19-30	\$75.88	\$97.02	\$70.42
31-50	\$68.67	\$87.88	\$63.72
51-70	\$66.16	\$84.80	\$61.32
over 70	\$65.61	\$84.06	\$60.83
<b>Females Age (years)</b>			
2-3	\$31.91	\$42.52	\$29.31
4-8	\$40.63	\$53.69	\$37.36
9-13	\$47.54	\$62.16	\$43.81
14-18	\$56.82	\$73.84	\$52.44
19-30	\$59.10	\$75.98	\$54.81
31-50	\$58.31	\$75.07	\$54.05
51-70	\$51.48	\$66.86	\$47.57
over 70	\$50.54	\$65.48	\$46.72
<b>Pregnancy Age (years)</b>			
18 and younger	\$63.26	\$81.72	\$58.48
19-30	\$64.03	\$82.54	\$59.26
31-50	\$62.50	\$80.51	\$57.86
<b>Breastfeeding Age (years)</b>			
18 and younger	\$65.71	\$85.11	\$60.69
19-30	\$67.86	\$87.15	\$62.89
31-50	\$66.33	\$85.12	\$61.49

**Table 2: Average monthly cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket, by age, sex, and location, Saskatchewan, 2018.**

	Saskatchewan	North	South
<b>Males Age (years)</b>			
2-3	\$140.97	\$187.29	\$129.58
4-8	\$181.55	\$238.82	\$167.11
9-13	\$239.18	\$311.90	\$220.50
14-18	\$338.01	\$433.69	\$313.23
19-30	\$328.57	\$420.11	\$304.93
31-50	\$297.36	\$380.54	\$275.89
51-70	\$286.46	\$367.19	\$265.53
over 70	\$284.08	\$364.00	\$263.38
<b>Females Age (years)</b>			
2-3	\$138.15	\$184.12	\$126.92
4-8	\$175.92	\$232.48	\$161.77
9-13	\$205.86	\$269.15	\$189.71
14-18	\$246.02	\$319.72	\$227.05
19-30	\$255.92	\$328.98	\$237.31
31-50	\$252.50	\$325.07	\$234.04
51-70	\$222.92	\$289.52	\$205.98
over 70	\$218.86	\$283.52	\$202.30
<b>Pregnancy Age (years)</b>			
18 and younger	\$273.91	\$353.86	\$253.21
19-30	\$277.25	\$357.42	\$256.58
31-50	\$270.63	\$348.61	\$250.53
<b>Breastfeeding Age (years)</b>			
18 and younger	\$284.54	\$368.54	\$262.78
19-30	\$293.83	\$377.36	\$272.30
31-50	\$287.20	\$368.55	\$266.25

