

Policies that reduce hunger – What would decrease the need for food banks in Canada?

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Through its annual *HungerCount* survey, Food Banks Canada asks food banks, soup kitchens and other food assistance programs to rate the five government policy changes they think would make the most difference in alleviating hunger in their communities. They are asked to choose (where a rating of 1 = most important, a rating of 2 = second most important, etc.) from a group of 16 possible policy priorities.

In 2008, 2009 and 2010, participating organizations consistently rated investment in affordable housing, increases to social assistance benefit levels, and increases to the provincial minimum wage as the three policy changes that would make the most difference in alleviating hunger. Full results are provided in the table below.

Which five of the following government policy changes do you think would make the most difference in alleviating hunger in your community?	Rank - 2010	Rank - 2009	Rank - 2008
Increase the stock of affordable housing	1	1	1
Increase social assistance benefit levels	2	2	2
Raise provincial minimum wage levels	3	3	3
Raise pension levels for seniors	4	4	5
Improve access to Employment Insurance	5	5	8
Increase levels of provincial disability income supports	6	7	4
Expand job training options for adults	7	6	6
Increase mental health supports	8	8	--
Increase addictions services and supports	9	10	--
Increase federal tax benefits for individuals and families	10	11	9
Lower personal income tax rates	11	12	10
Increase access to affordable child care	12	9	7
Lower or freeze tuition rates for post-secondary education	13	13	11
Expand supports for new immigrants	14	14	12
Lower business income tax rates	15	15	14
Pay down government debt	16	16	13
Number of organizations responding	944 ¹	656	611

¹ Food banks and other food assistance programs in Quebec participated in this poll for the first time in 2010.