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# Muslim Women Navigating Barriers to Food Support Services in the GTA

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# Social Science Research Brief

## Muslim Women Navigating Barriers to Food Support Services in the GTA

### What is this research about?

There is little existing research on how people from diverse backgrounds access food support. This research aimed to provide valuable information to help improve the accessibility of food support by discovering and understanding the challenges faced by Muslim women and families living in Ontario.

The research question was:

**How do Muslim Women navigate barriers with personal interactions and broader issues, when accessing food support services in Ontario?**

### What did the researcher do?

A survey of 20 closed and open-ended questions was created, including a consent form using an online anonymous survey with Microsoft Forms. Canva was used to create the recruitment poster. Respondents were 5 Muslim women who experienced low income or difficulty meeting basic needs. They were recruited through organizations that worked with this population, and various platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom, and LinkedIn. The data was analyzed and presented using tables and graphs. Ethical considerations included voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymous data collection, and protecting the data on secure servers.

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### What you need to know...

Overall, there is a need for more data to identify the needs of various groups of different backgrounds living within Ontario, to help discover their needs, and issues in accessing food support. This data can then be used to help lower food insecurity within Ontario, help improve food support services, and inform policies on a broader level across Canada.

### What did the researchers find?

The data reveals information about a specific group of people which can highlight various needs of people of different backgrounds when it comes to accessing food support.

The answers to open-ended questions revealed a need for more access closer to the neighborhoods, with a need for financial assistance or budgeting. All 5 participants mentioned that not all food was affordable or within budget, and it affected their food choices due to high costs, and low income. Lastly, there was a need for alternative food strategies as all participants' proposed food access can be less visible, but more commonly accessible. Participants also mentioned the feelings around getting food support which affected their ability to access these resources. Key findings included financial constraints and a need to adopt alternative strategies to secure sufficient food. Similar research on Canadian food bank operations found that barriers with access to food security included economic and social conditions, financial costs, budgeting, and accessibility. (BMC Public Health, 2014)

***“Every grocery store should have designated food banks they can give to at the end of EVERY DAY to ensure there is no food waste and work to remove the stigma of “food banks”***  
***- Survey participant.***



# Social Science Research Brief

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## How can you use this research?

This data may be used as a valuable resource for those seeking to create more inclusive practices, and a supportive environment for all in the provision of food support services. It can be used to enhance existing services and create policy improvements

- Grocery stores can provide a space for foods they may otherwise throw away and offer these foods at a much lower cost instead so those in need or on a tight budget, can purchase items at a lower cost. This would help address cultural or personal stigma in registering and physically going to a food bank.
- Food banks can provide a registration form or educational pamphlets at grocery stores, where it is more accessible and comfortable for all to access.
- The government can also approve programs for grocery stores to sign onto digital application programs, where they can post their food items at a lower cost, versus disposing of it.

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## About the Researchers

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## References

Tarasuk, V., Dachner, N., Hamelin, A.-M., Ostry, A., Williams, P., Bosckei, E., Poland, B., & Raine, K. (2014). A survey of food bank operations in five Canadian cities. *BMC Public Health*, 14(1), 1234–1234. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-1234>.

## Keywords

Ontario Food support, Food insecurity, Food bank access, Muslim families in Ontario

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## Student Research Projects in the Honours Bachelor of Social and Community Development

Sheridan's Honours Bachelor of Social and Community Development is a degree completion program at Sheridan College that includes five research courses that introduce students to the community engaged research process in the social services sector, from initial literature review to knowledge mobilization.

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