

MLA JULIE GREEN – YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE – IN THE MEDIA

Almost 10,000 NWT residents 'struggle to make ends meet'

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Thousands of NWT residents still face a daily battle to afford food, clothing, somewhere to live, and transportation, new data published by the territory's statistics bureau shows.

More than 9,300 people in 3,000 households "reported they had difficulties making ends meet," the NWT Bureau of Statistics said last week, [publishing data](#) from surveys carried out last year.

Though large-scale poverty in the territory is an ongoing issue, MLAs in the NWT's legislature characterized the study's findings as "pretty bleak."

"We as a legislature need to start addressing these issues, and better sooner rather than later," said Steve Norn, the MLA for Tu Nedhé-Willideh.

"The findings are shocking," said Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green. "Fully one in five NWT households reported that they had trouble paying for their most basic needs.

"Broken down by age, 2,271 children under 15 years of age are living in or near poverty. This is another shocking number, larger than most communities' populations."

Almost one in four NWT households reported asking friends or relatives for financial help. Ten percent relied on charities to get by.

Residents in Tłıchq communities said they were particularly hard-hit.

In Behchokò, three out of five households said they worried about having enough money for food – the highest figure reported anywhere in the NWT. In Yellowknife, fewer than one in five households reported the same issue.

More than 2,000 households across the NWT said a family member "had experienced significant financial difficulties in the previous 12 months due to increases in rent or mortgage payments." Again, Behchokò had the highest rate.

Behchokò has one of the highest waitlists for subsidized housing, the survey reported, behind only the smaller communities of the Sahtu.

'Bring The Price is Right to Tulita'

"There are no simple solutions to reducing the cost of living for our people," said Norn in the legislature earlier this week. "This is a multi-faceted issue that will need discipline and political will to properly address and overcome.

"I would love to see a show like The Price is Right come up here and really highlight how much our food costs. I would like to see The Price is Right go up to Tulita and say, 'Oh my God, it cannot be \$40 for a watermelon,' just to drive home the point that a lot of us are trying to make.

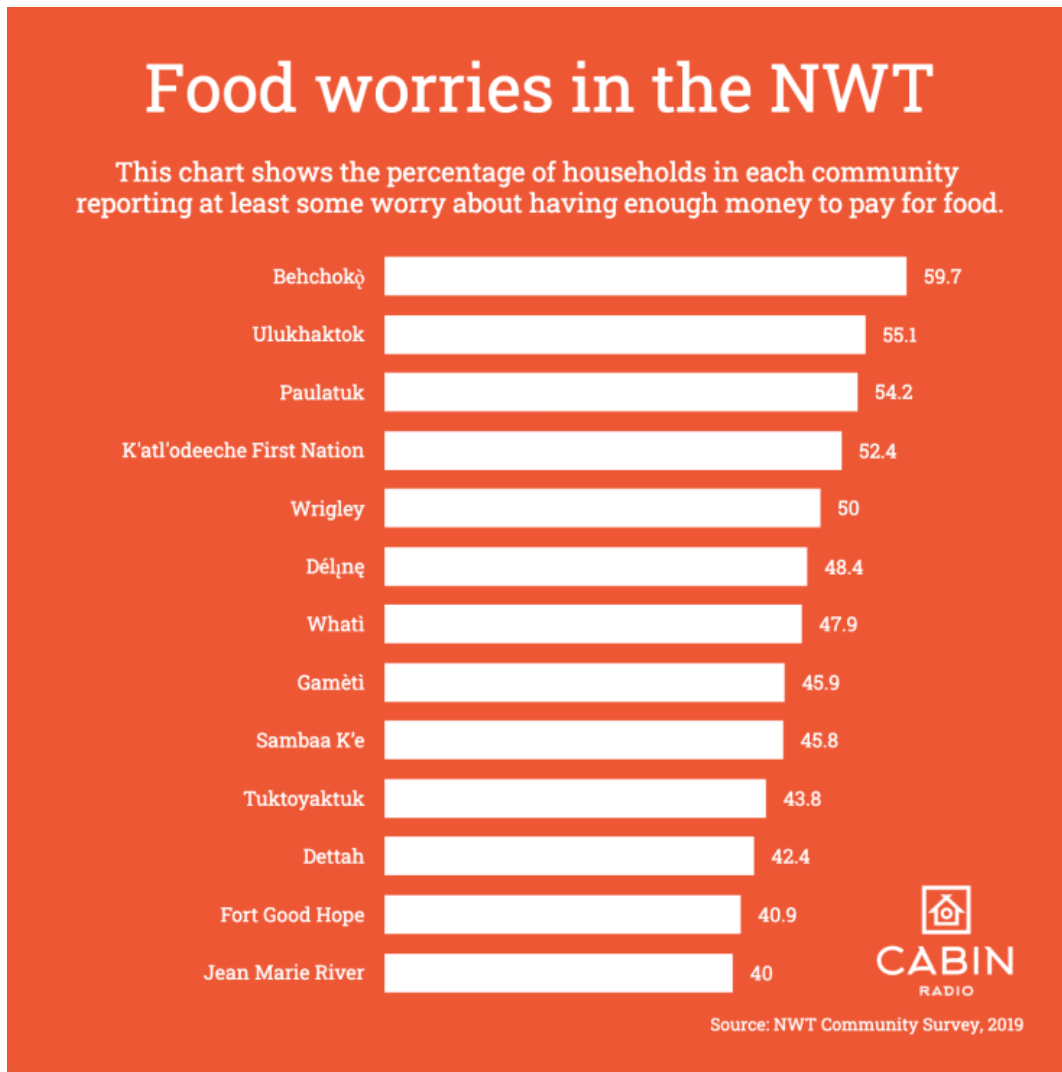
"It's just too much to make ends meet for a lot of our residents."

Questioning the NWT government's spending priorities, Green said: "The bottom line is this: a significant number of households, including children, are going hungry at least some of the time, and finding affordable housing and preventing homelessness are chronic problems.

"We just started [reviewing a budget](#) that promises the better part of \$2 billion in spending. My question is: how can we spend this much money more effectively to meet the needs of residents?

"Whether it's jobs, housing, food, or increased tax benefits, we need to develop a plan now to lift low-income families into the middle class. We need to make sure that we are not allowing our most vulnerable to continue to fall through the cracks and be left behind."

The data: Food insecurity



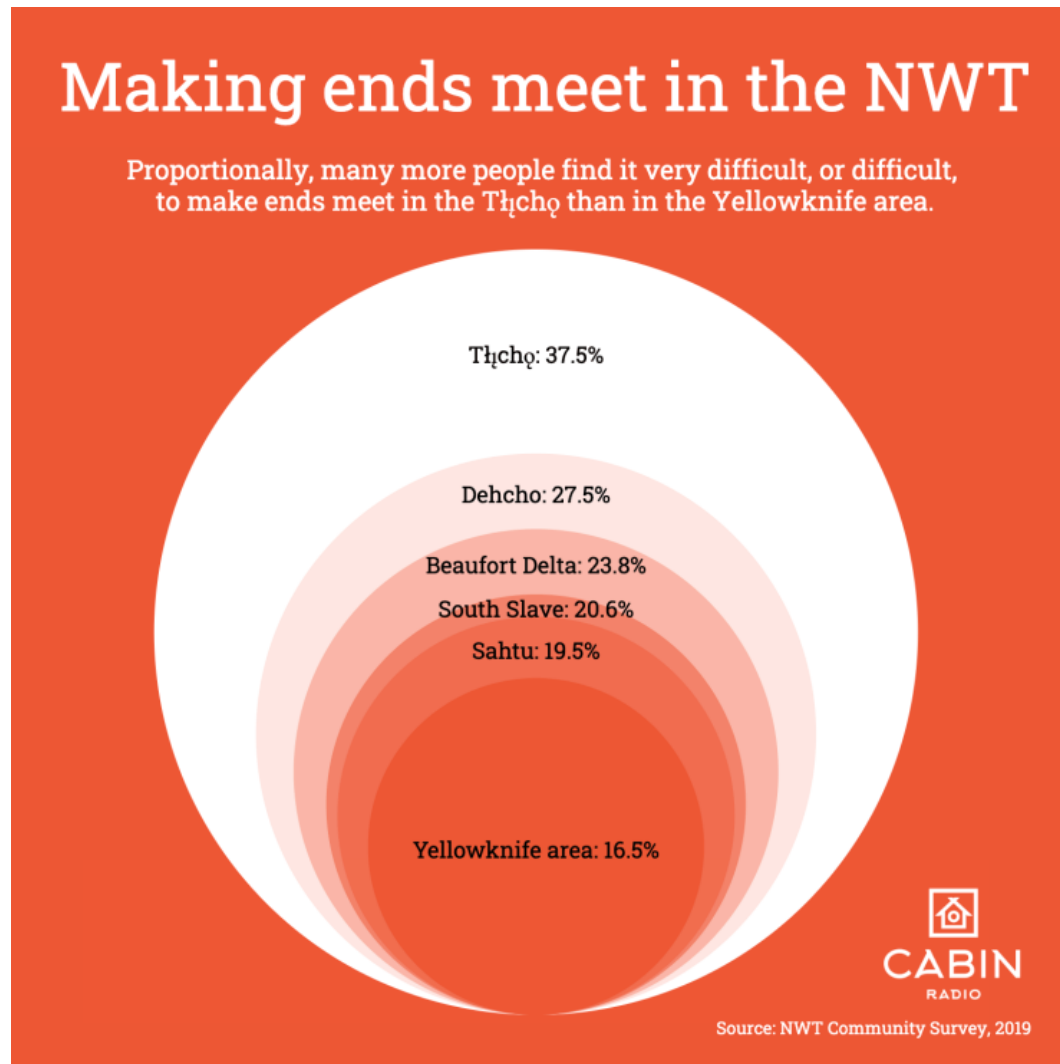
The Tłıchq̓ is the only NWT region where more than half of households reported worrying at some point about not having enough money to pay for food. One in 10 Tłıchq̓ households said they did so often.

In Yellowknife, only four percent of households said money for food was often a worry – the second-lowest figure in the NWT, behind Norman Wells (1.8 percent).

That worry is more pronounced in the NWT's larger households. Forty percent of households with six or more people in them reported concern about being able to afford food. (That said, even 23.6 percent of single-person households had the same fear.)

Download the spreadsheet: [2019 NWT Community Survey – Food Security](#)

The data: Making ends meet



Not surprisingly, people on the lowest incomes have the hardest time affording things in the NWT.

There are 3,443 households in the territory (out of a total of 14,760) that reported a total household income of \$50,000 or less in 2019.

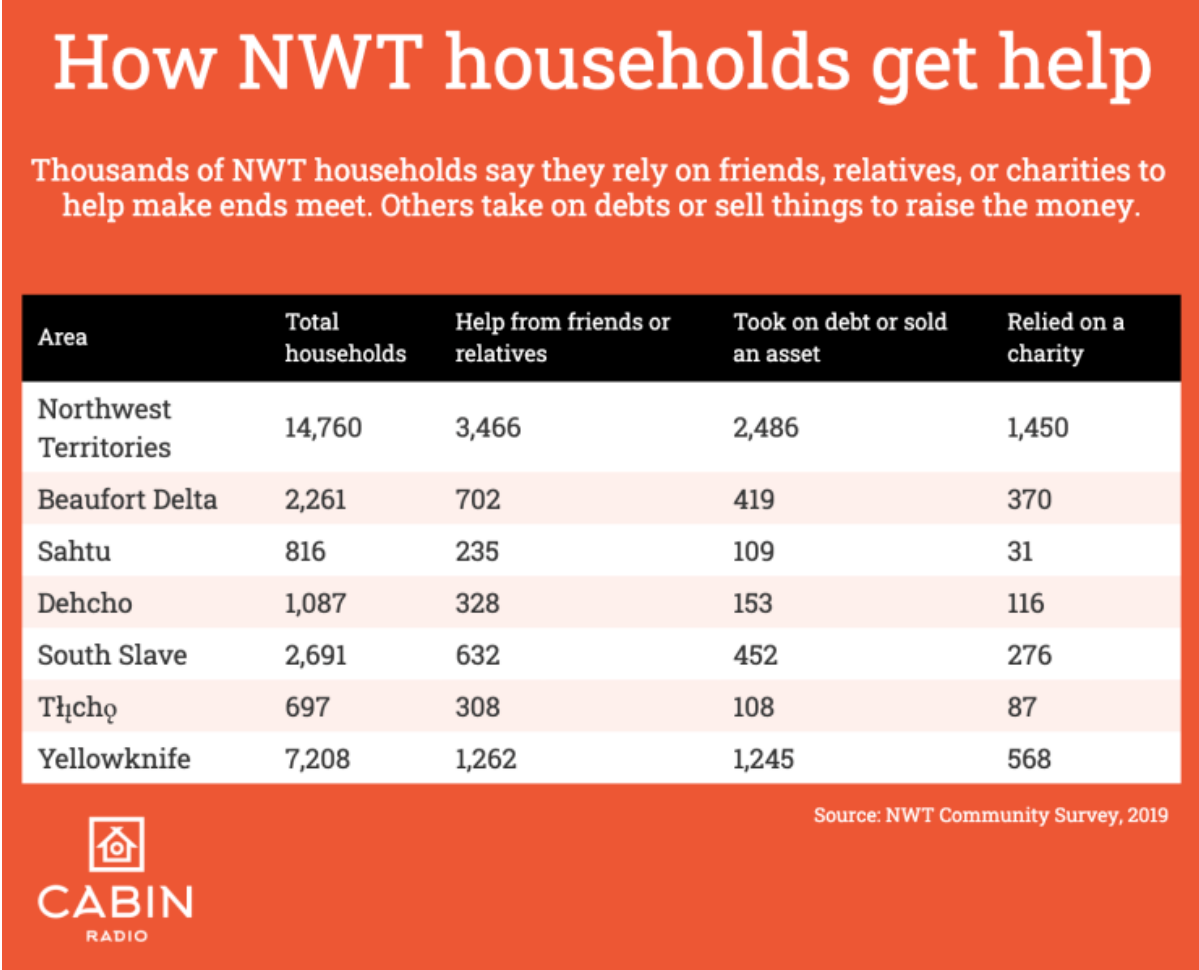
Of those households, 1,206 say they're finding it difficult or very difficult to make ends meet. (By contrast, 1,015 of these low-income households said they found it either easy or very easy to make ends meet.)

There are 4,627 households in the NWT that bring in \$150,000 or more each year. In 2019, even 93 of those reported finding it very difficult to make ends meet. (2,782 found it easy or very easy.)

Again, the Tłıchǫ reported more difficulty than other areas of the NWT. Households in smaller Tłıchǫ communities were at least twice as likely to report having great difficulty making ends meet as anywhere else in the territory.

Download the spreadsheet: [2019 NWT Community Survey – General Financial Security](#)

The data: Getting help with money



Nearly 3,500 households surveyed in 2019 reported needing to rely on friends or relatives for money to meet day-to-day expenses.

Almost 600 households reported having to do so often.

In Yellowknife, 230 households said occupants had often had to either take on debt or sell things to raise enough money. The city had 569 households reporting reliance on charities for financial support in 2019.

Among other communities, at least half of the households in Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, and Jean Marie River reported using friends or relatives for financial help. In Ulukhaktok, 42 percent reported relying on a charity – significantly higher than the figure for any other NWT community.

Download the spreadsheet: [2019 NWT Community Survey – Handling of Day-to-Day Expenses](#)

In full: [2019 NWT Community Survey data](#)