

# Complexity of Poverty and Hunger- A Holistic Approach beyond the Food Pantry



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# Territory acknowledgement

We recognize and respect that today we are meeting on the traditional territories of the Anishinabewaki, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk speaking) and Omàmìwininiwag (Algonquin speaking) nations.

I come from Victoria BC, where I gratefully work on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen speaking people of the Songhees and Esquimalt nations and live on the traditional territory of the W\_SÁNEĆ nations.

# Overview

- Food Bank Canada
- Food Insecurity
- Complexity of Hunger & Social Determinants Of Health
- Levels of influence; what is effective and what is not?
- Group activity
- Person to person service increases accessibility to resources.
- The next level of influence: availability of resources.
- Impact of Systemic Racism on Health and Hunger.
- Highest level of influence: Income Equality= Equal access to resources.



Vision: “A Canada where no one goes hungry”

- For years, food banks across the country have known that their services can only do so much.
- While they do everything possible to help their community during difficult times; They advocate to address the root causes of food insecurity and food bank use: poverty and low incomes.

# POLICY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendation 1



New supports for  
renters living with low  
incomes

Recommendation 2



Modernize and expand  
supports for low wage  
and unemployed  
workers

Recommendation 3



A path forward where  
no Canadian is left  
behind (progress  
towards a minimum  
income floor)

Recommendation 4



Increase supports for  
low-income single  
adults

Recommendation 5



Enhance measures to  
reduce northern food  
insecurity





# Mandate of Food Banks Canada

*“To provide national leadership to relieve hunger today and prevent hunger tomorrow in collaboration with the food bank network in Canada<sup>1</sup>.”*

# Food bank use at unacceptably high levels

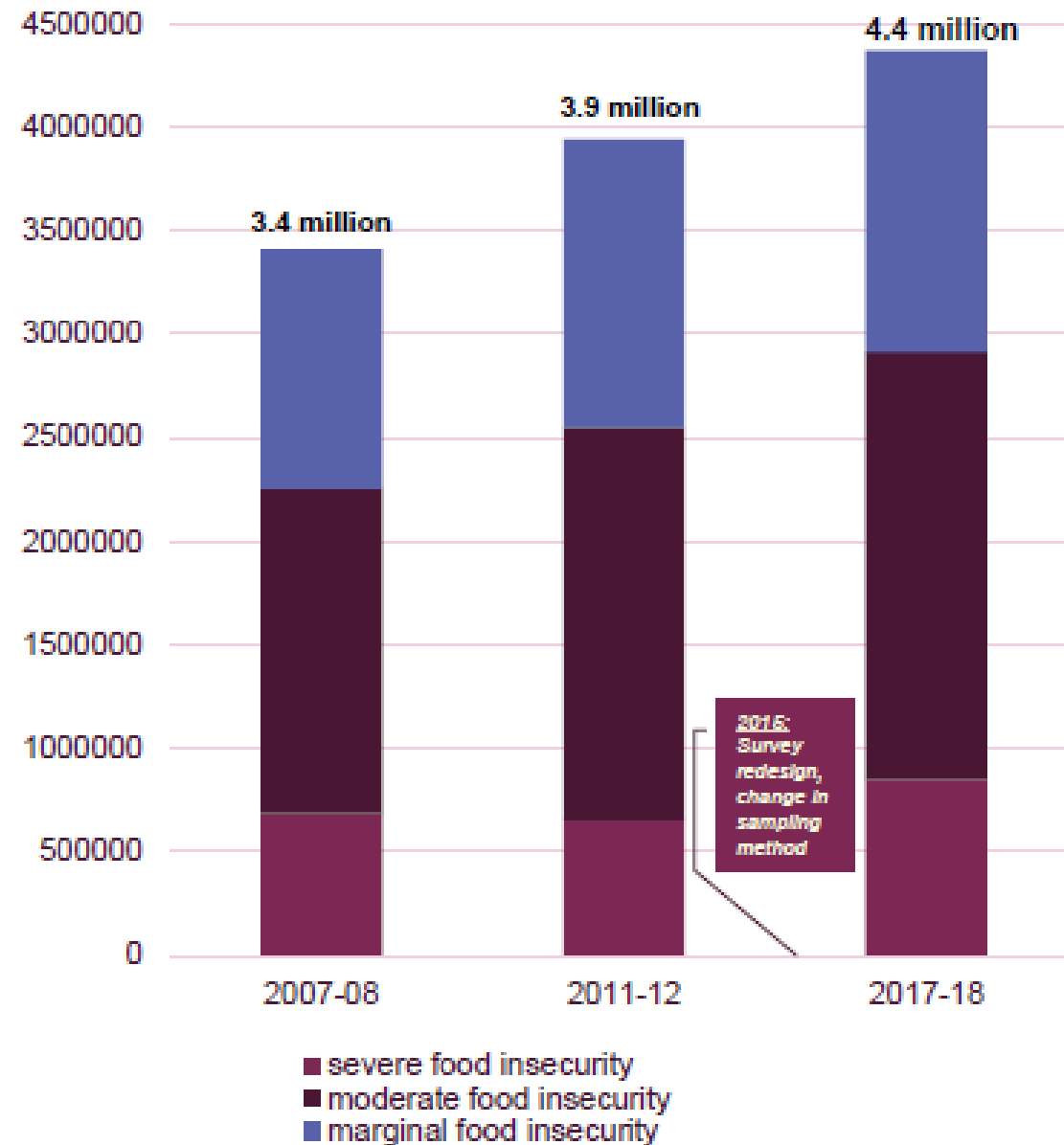
*While food banks are finding new and innovative ways to provide healthy, nutritious food and a wide variety of services to support those they serve, only long-term policy solutions can **address the root causes of hunger in Canada<sup>2</sup>**.*



Photo by [Matt Collamer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**Number of  
Canadians living  
in food-insecure  
households,  
results from the  
Canadian  
Community  
Health Survey**

Data Source: Statistics Canada, CCHS,  
2007-08, 2011-12 and 2017-18.





# What are the root causes of Hunger

- In Canada, income determines the quality of other social determinants of health such as **food security**, **housing**, and other **basic prerequisites of health**.
- To understand the root causes of Hunger, we need to look at the **Social Determinants of Health**.

# Social determinants of health (SDOH) <sup>4</sup>:

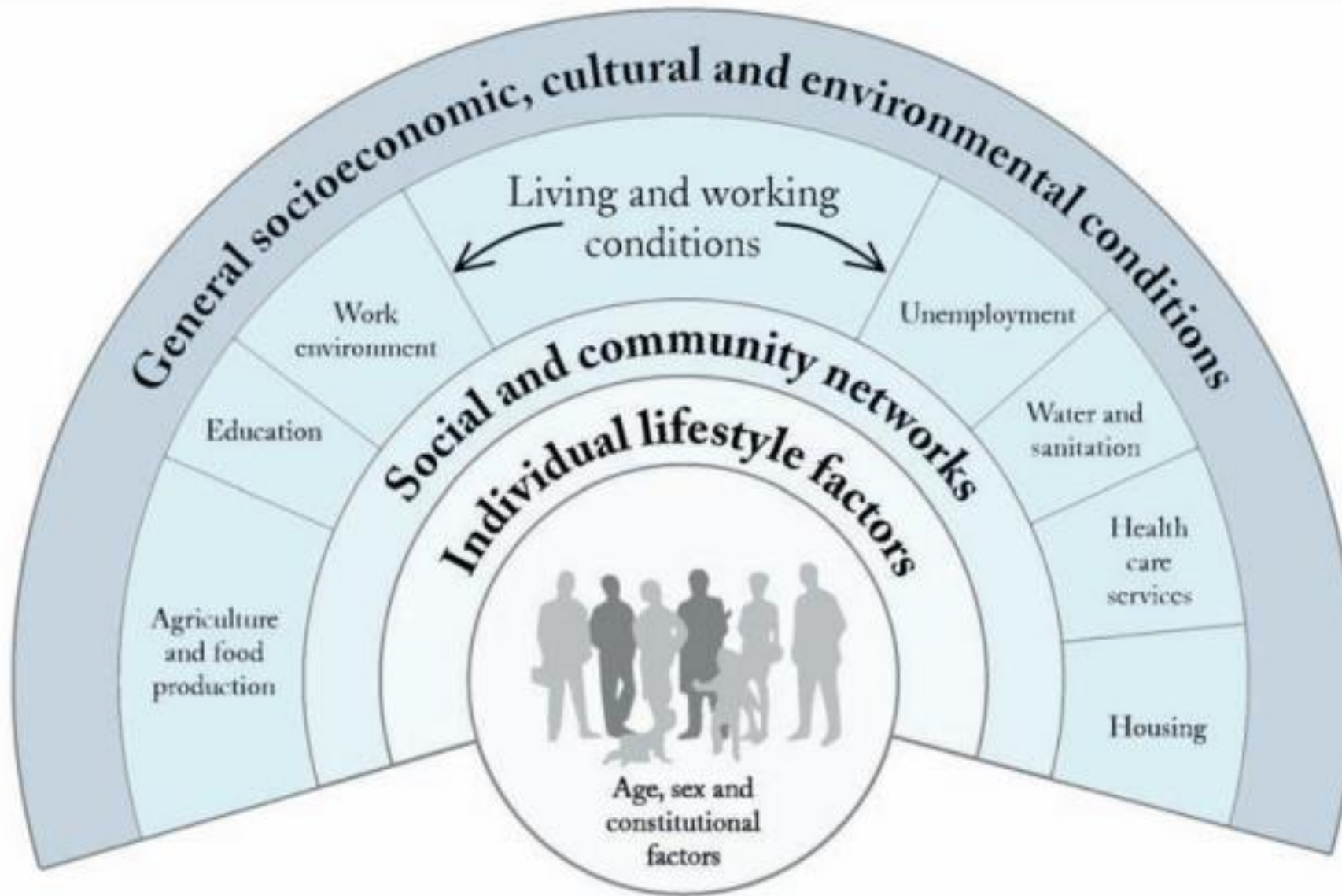


# Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

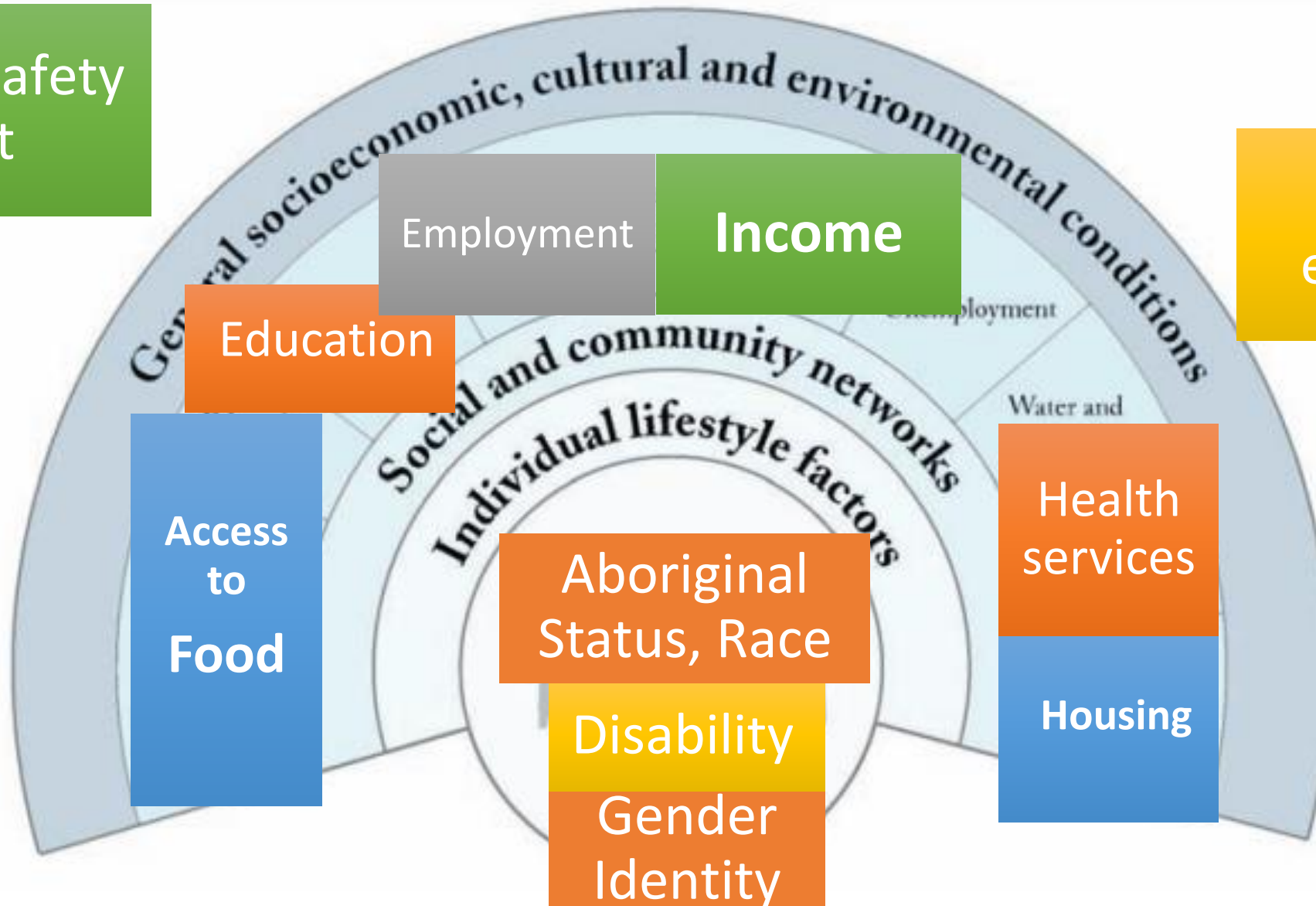


- SDOH's are about the **quantity and quality of a variety of resources that a society makes available to its members<sup>5</sup>**.
- Each of these SDOH have strong effects upon the health of Canadians.
- SDOH effects are stronger than the ones associated with **behaviours** such as diet physical activity, and even tobacco and excessive alcohol use.

# Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts



Social safety  
net



Social  
exclusion



A group of grey paper cutouts of people holding hands in a circle, with the text "Person to Person" overlaid in the center.

# Person to Person



# Hunger to connect

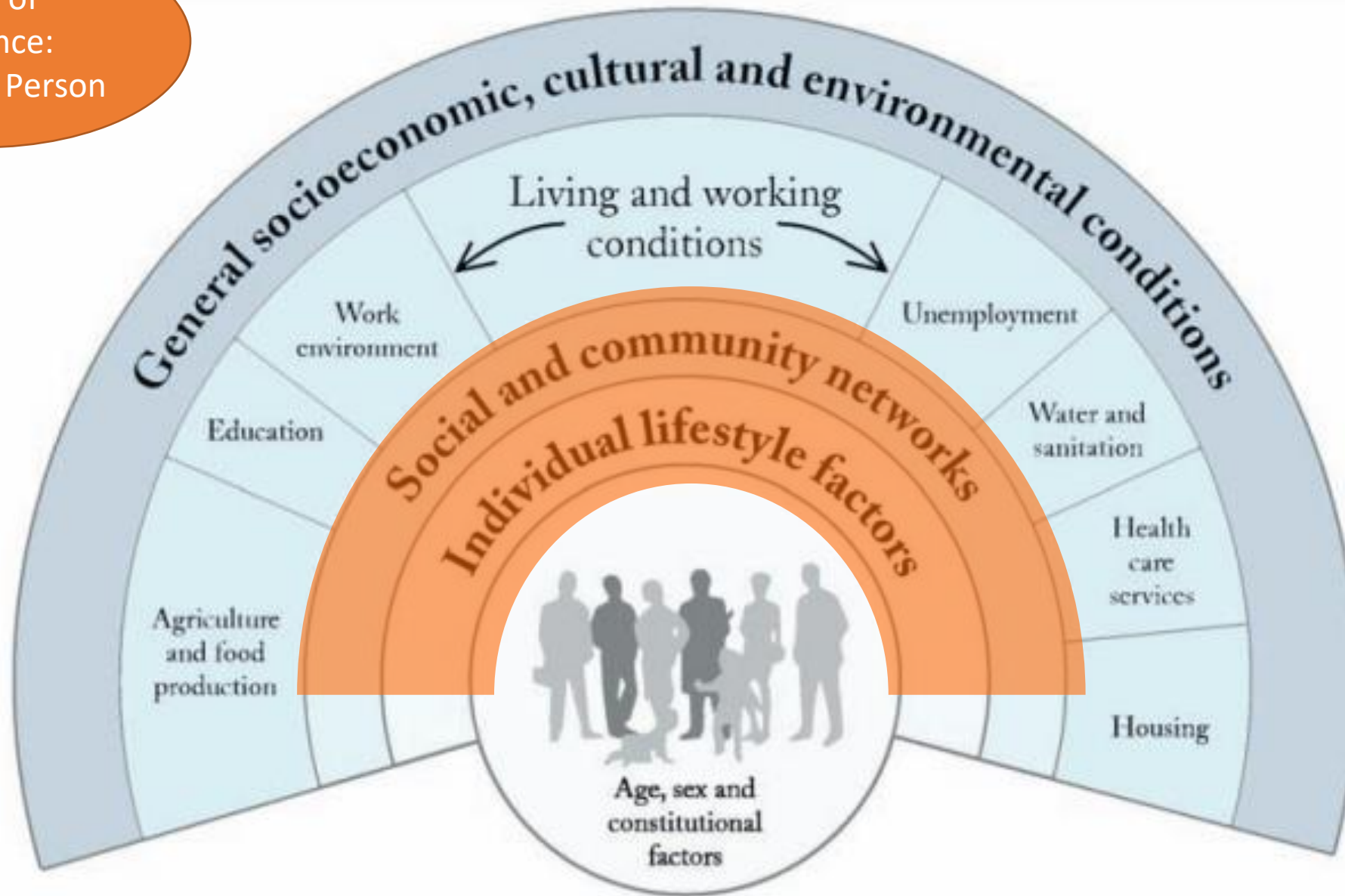
Hunger to connect with others socially through our daily interactions with each other and the people we serve.

***“An effective way to reduce stress and improve health is by improving the living conditions people experience<sup>7</sup>”***

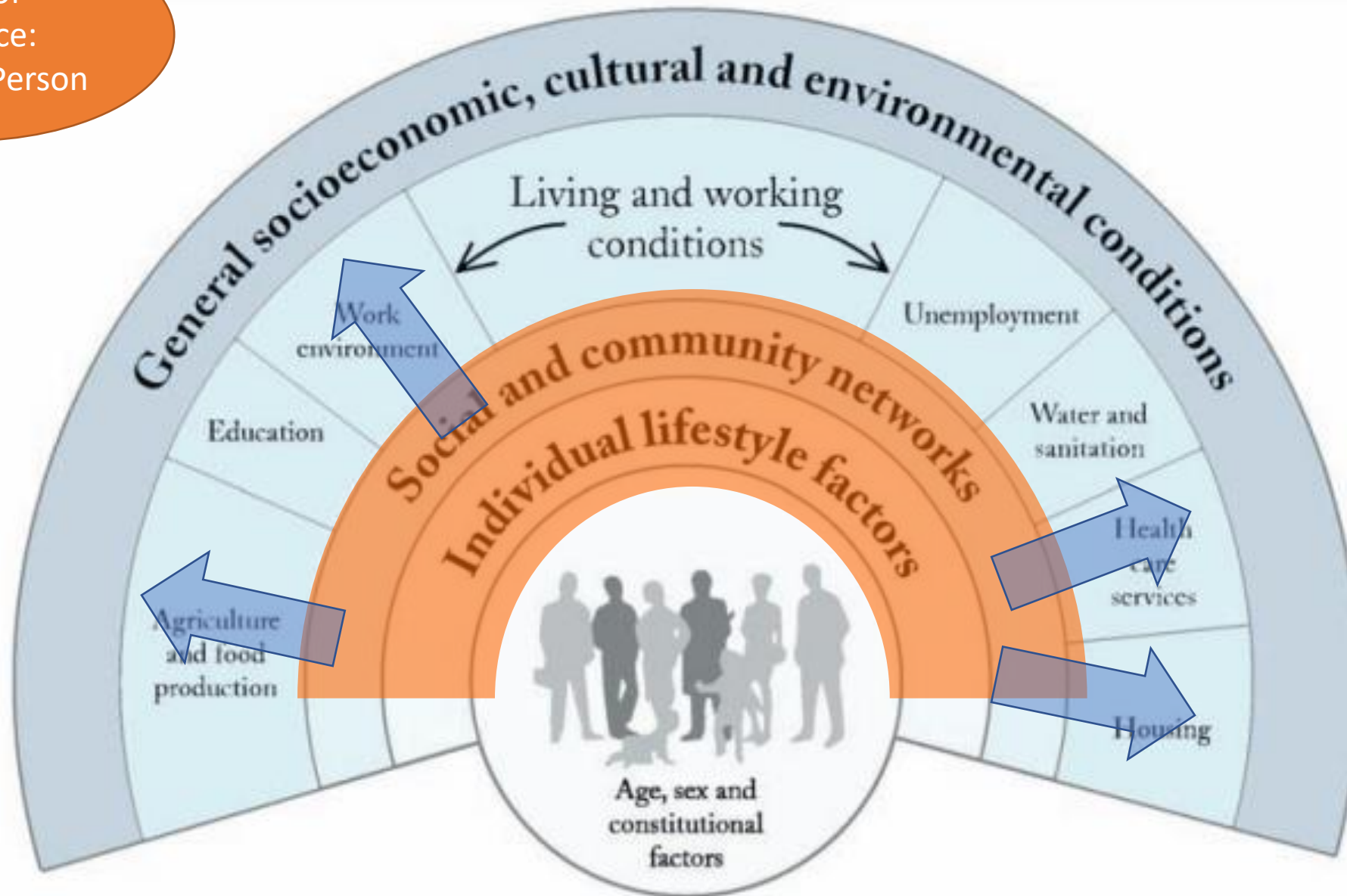




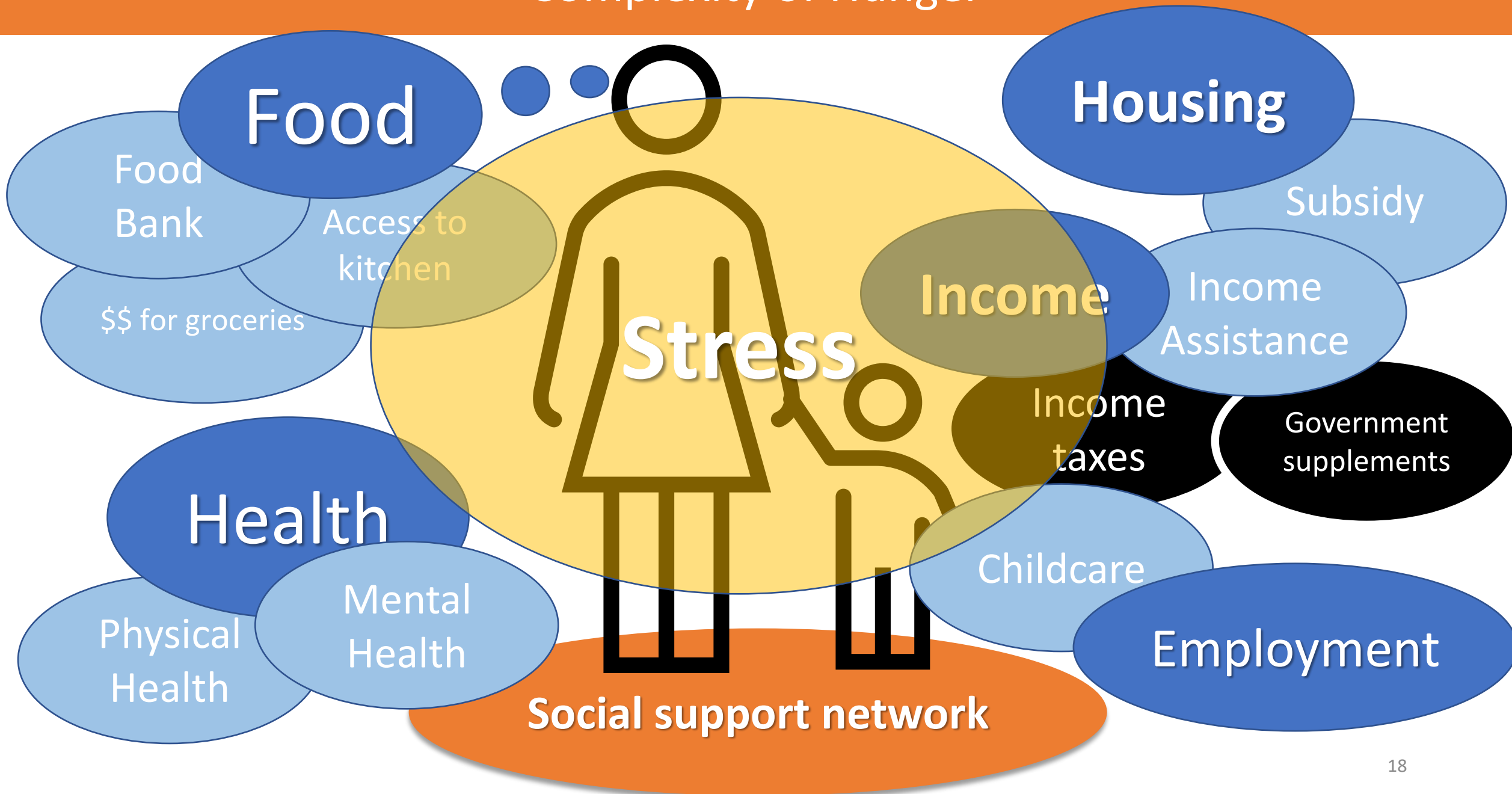
Level of  
influence:  
Person to Person



Level of  
influence:  
Person to Person



# Complexity of Hunger



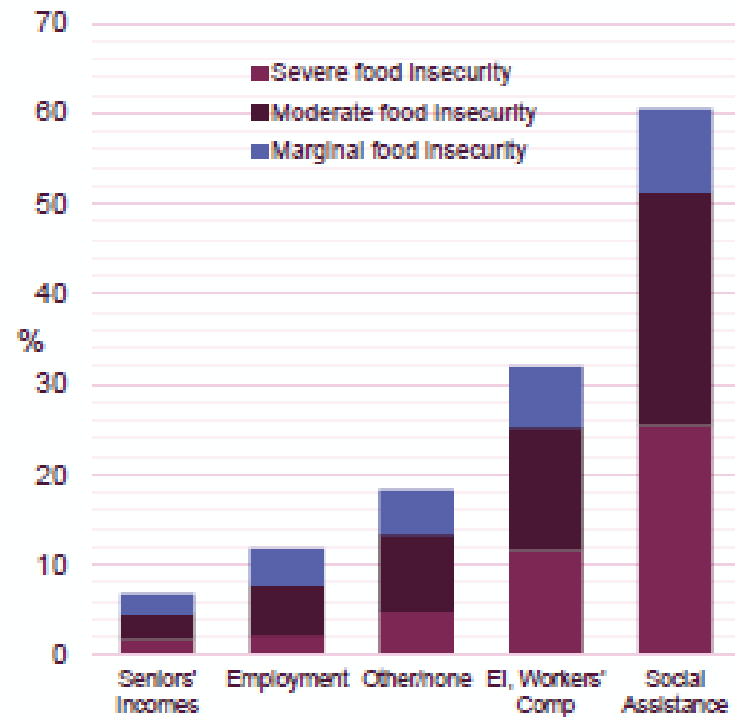




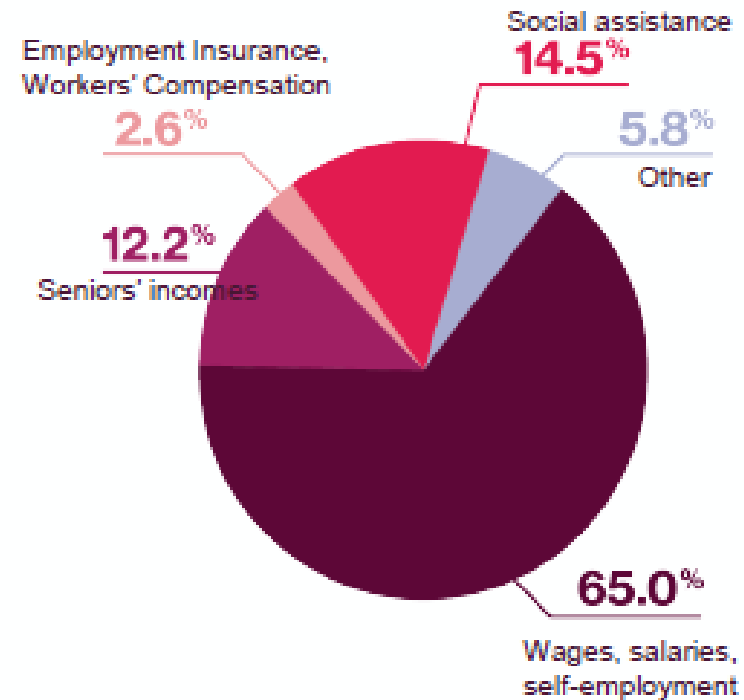
# Hunger (Food)

- Food Banks play an important role but are often a last resort.
- All people who are food insecure seek to address food insecurity through financial support first.

Prevalence of household food insecurity by main source of household income:



Distribution of food-insecure households by main source of income:

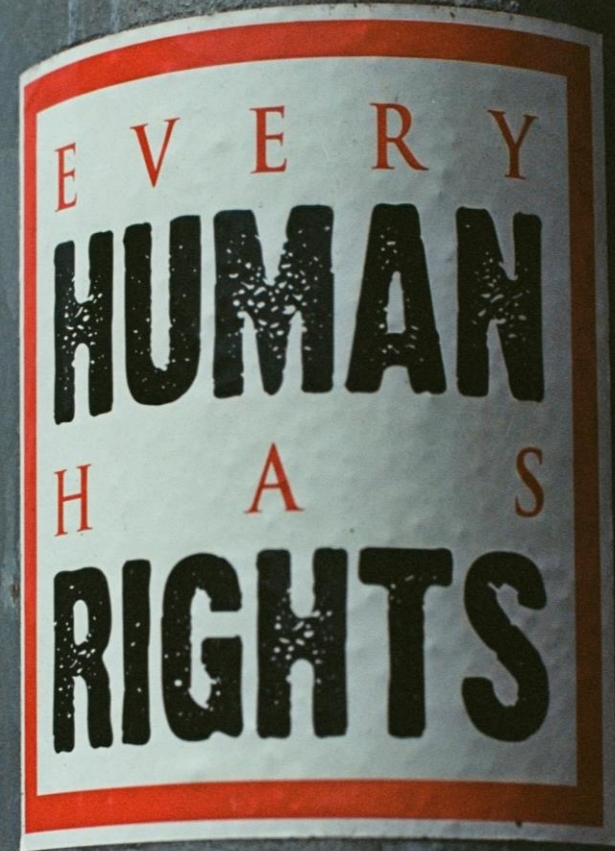


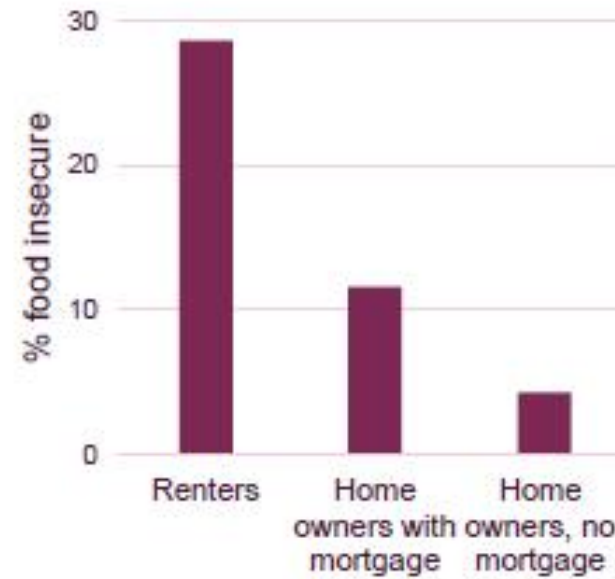
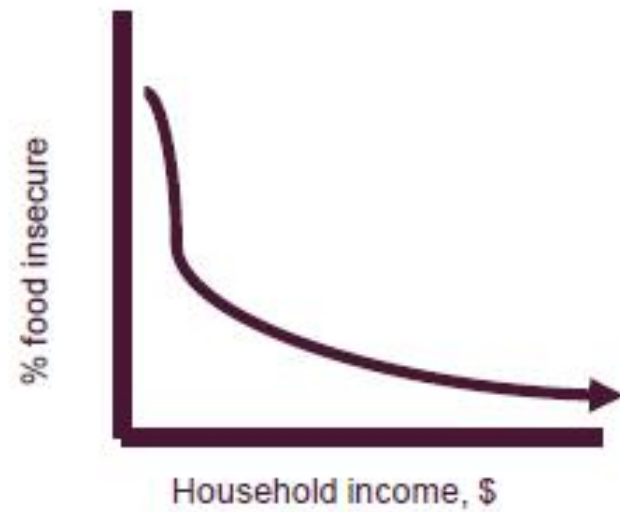
Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2017-18.  
(Tarasuk & Mitchell, Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. PROOF).



# Hunger for Security

The two largest  
factors contributing  
to food security are  
income and housing







## In Canada Food Security is associated with multiple negative health outcomes<sup>8</sup>

### Children

- Poorer development and learning
- Poorer mental health
- Impaired disease management
- Increased likelihood of developing asthma, depression, other chronic conditions.
- Increase health care utilization

### Adults

- Poorer mental health
- Increased probability of infectious and non-infectious diseases, chronic pain, and injuries.
- Poorer disease management
- Increased health care utilization
- Higher mortality rates.

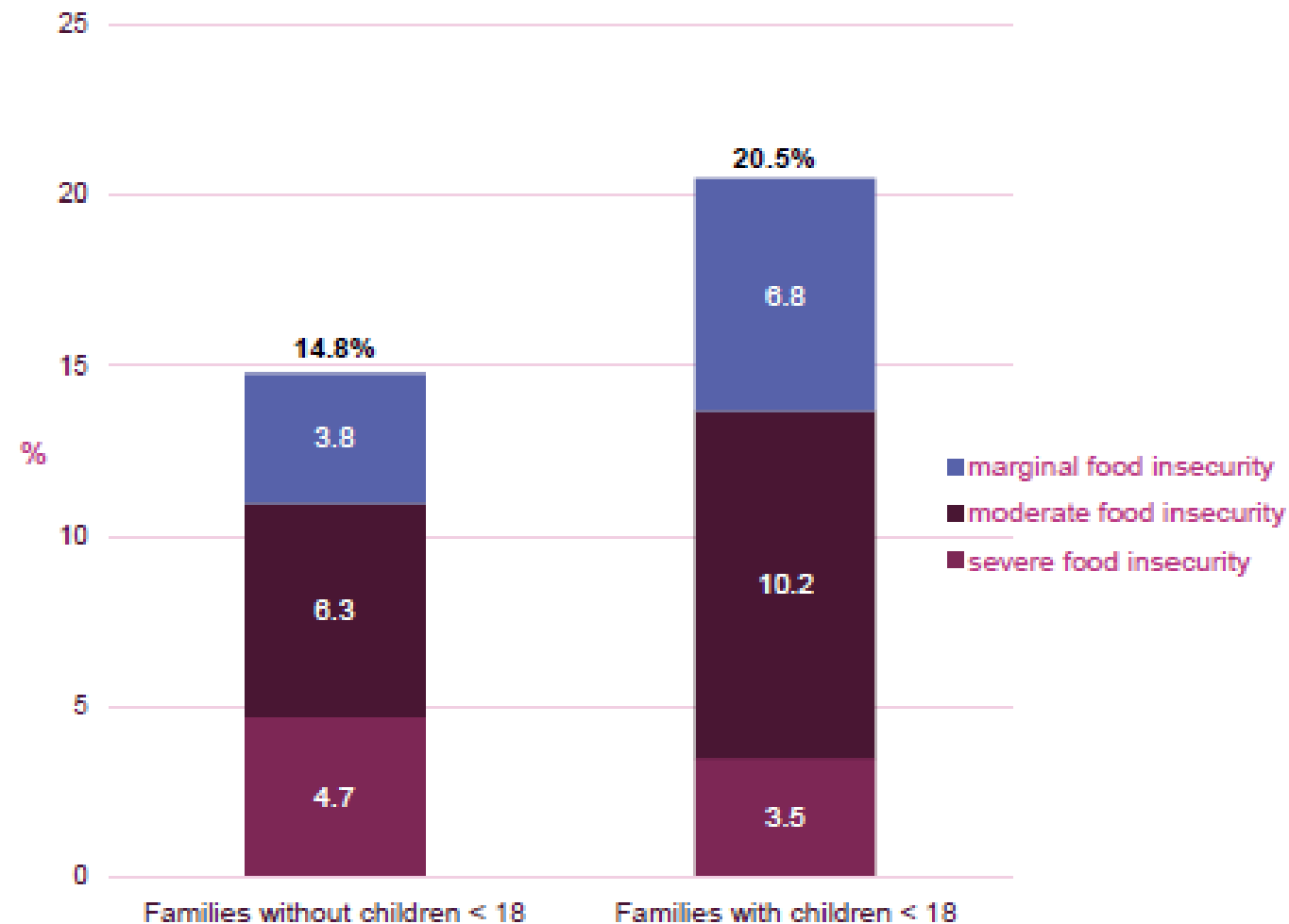




# Malnutrition

- Food insecurity produces stress and uncertainty that have health-threatening effects.
- Malnutrition during childhood has long-term effects on a child's physiological and psychological development.

## Prevalence of household food insecurity among economic families with and without children <18, CIS 2018.



Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey 2018. Custom tabulations.



# A closer look at stress

The lower the  
socioeconomic position,  
the worse the health.

People who suffer from  
adverse social and material  
living conditions  
experience high levels of  
physiological and  
psychological stress.

# STRESS from coping with:



- Low income
- Poor quality housing
- Food insecurity
- Insecure employment
- Discrimination based on Aboriginal status, disability, gender, or race.
- The lack of supportive relationships
- Social isolation
- Mistrust of others



# Psychological:

At the psychological level, stressful and poor living conditions can cause continuing feelings of shame, insecurity and worthlessness.

Taking drugs – either prescribed or illegal – relieves only the symptoms of stress!



Photo by [Christian Erfurt](#) on [Unsplash](#)



# Physical:

- Chronic stress strains the physical body
- Makes people more vulnerable to many serious illnesses such as cardiovascular and immune system diseases, and adult-onset diabetes.



## Fact:

Healthy living programs aimed at underprivileged citizens are not very efficient in terms of improving health and the quality of life.

Individually-oriented physical activity and healthy eating programs do not address the social determinants of health that are the underlying causes of many serious mental health illnesses.





# Group activity

# Goals

Support network for individuals through home visits:

- Informed navigation by listening/ needs assessment
- Navigating to resources that match the identified needs
- Increasing the ability of the person **to access resources**





# Discussion



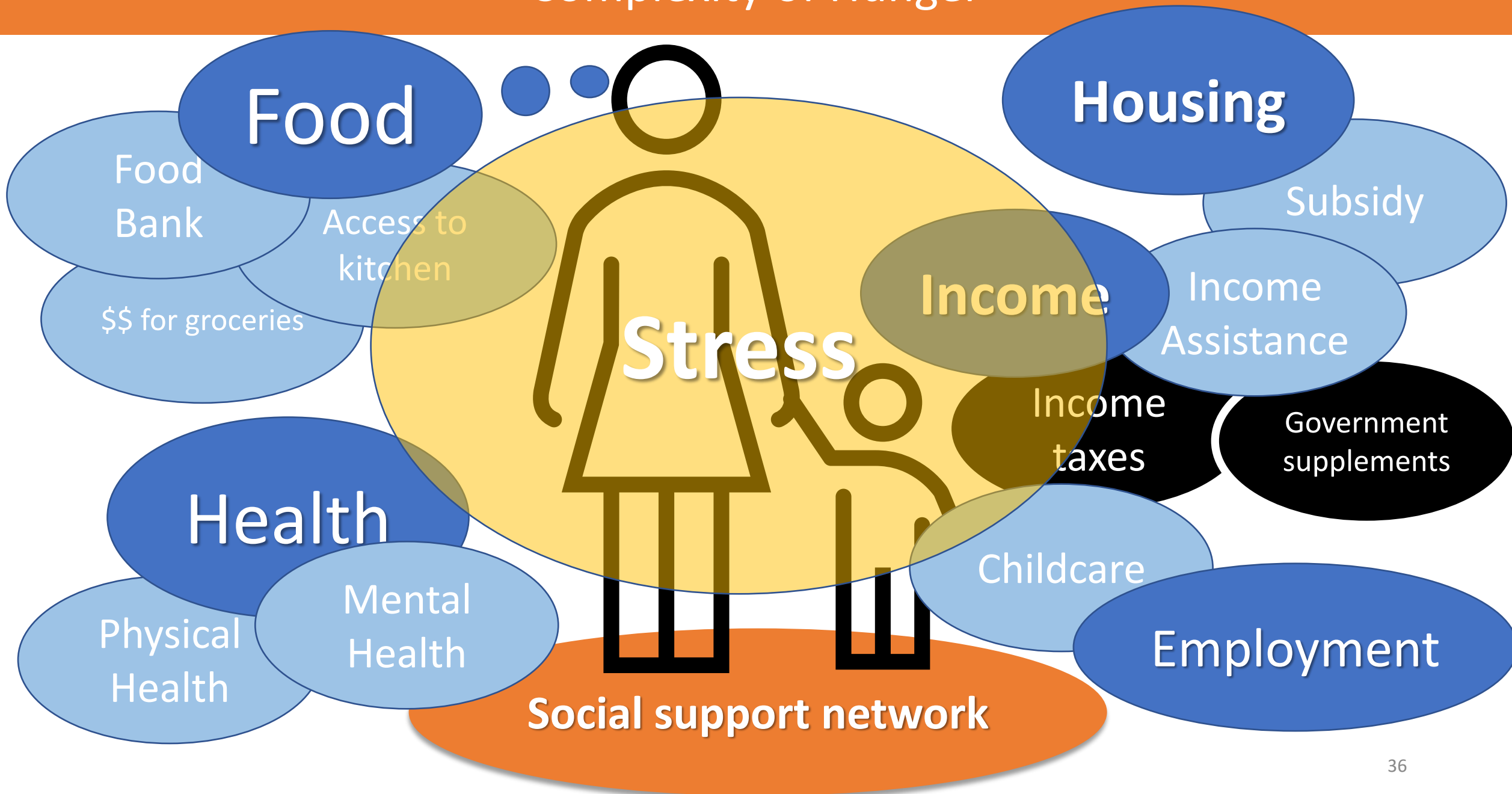
# Intended learning outcomes:

- Person to person support is effective because we can support in **lowering the barriers** to community resources.
- Impact is dependent on resources accessible to the person.
- However, the effectiveness of person-to-person support is also dependent on the resources that are available within the community= the next level of influence.

# Person to person = Support Network

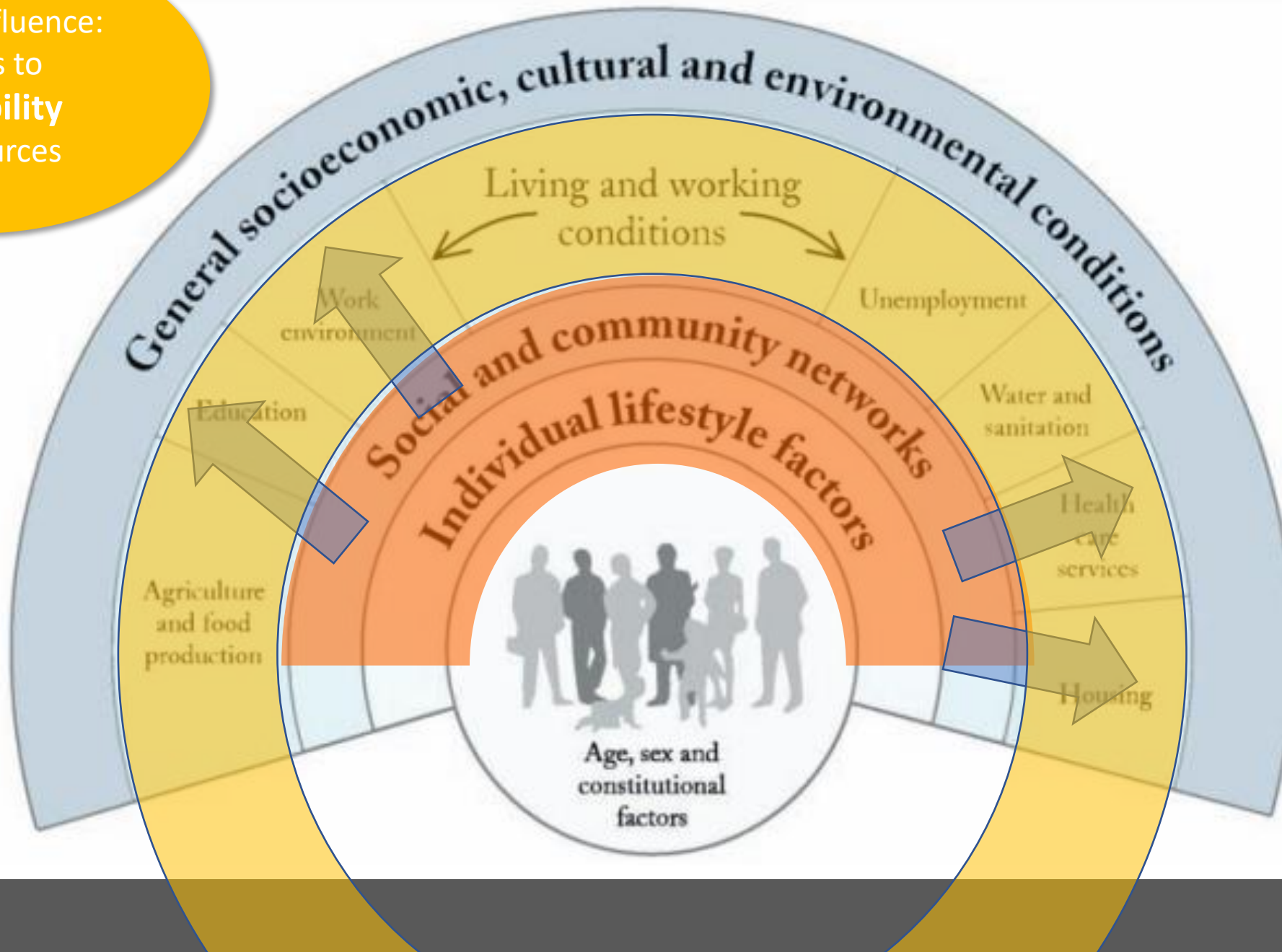
- The focus must be on **the source of problems** rather than dealing with symptoms<sup>9</sup>.
- Therefore, an effective way to reduce stress and improve health is by **improving the living conditions** people experience [footnote].
- Yet: The impact is dependent on resources available to the person, **and** the ability for the person to access those resources.

# Complexity of Hunger





Level of influence:  
Speaks to  
**availability**  
of resources





# Person to Person

- Social Support Network =home visits, family and friends (Orange layer)
- Goal: increasing the ability of the person **to access resources**
- Highly dependent on **availability and accessibility** of community resources.
- Availability of resources (Yellow layer)

# Community resources

- Build a guide to resources specific to your community member's needs?
- May identify gaps → room for advocacy.







## Social Concern Office – Victoria BC

- A social concern is any issue, problem, or conflict that is a high priority for a society to solve or prevent.
- The Social Concern Office provides Emergency Assistance ;Food Pantry, vouchers for clothing/household items, and rent/other financial assistance.
- Navigator Program referring to local community resources.







## Beyond the Food Pantry: Gateway for our clients to access resources

- Food Pantry clients may be one-time visitors for emergency use.
- They may be repeat clients, who are supplementing their income.
- We can **build relationships** with our clients so we can become informed navigators.



# Fictional Case Study

- Emily visits the Food Pantry.
- We learn that Emily is being evicted from her home.
- She broke up from her boyfriend, and she is a single mom now.
- She recently lost her job, because of all the stress.



# Financial Assistance

- Homelessness Prevention funding may avoid eviction
- She has not filed her taxes.
- Income tax to access:
  - Childcare Tax Benefit
  - Subsidy for housing
  - EI or IA
- Subsidized housing unit if low income
- May receive government crisis funding





# Support to increase income: Employment

- Childcare
- Work BC for Employment/Education/Training/Resume building
- Access to work clothing and household items



# Financial Literacy

- Budgeting
- Credit counseling
- Access to food (Food Banks, Community Gardens, Food Programs)
- Access to no interest loans



# Support Network

- Referral for Home Visit
- Peer support groups
- Healthy relationship workshops





Level of  
influence:  
Advocacy Federal



# Systemic Racism - root cause of poverty

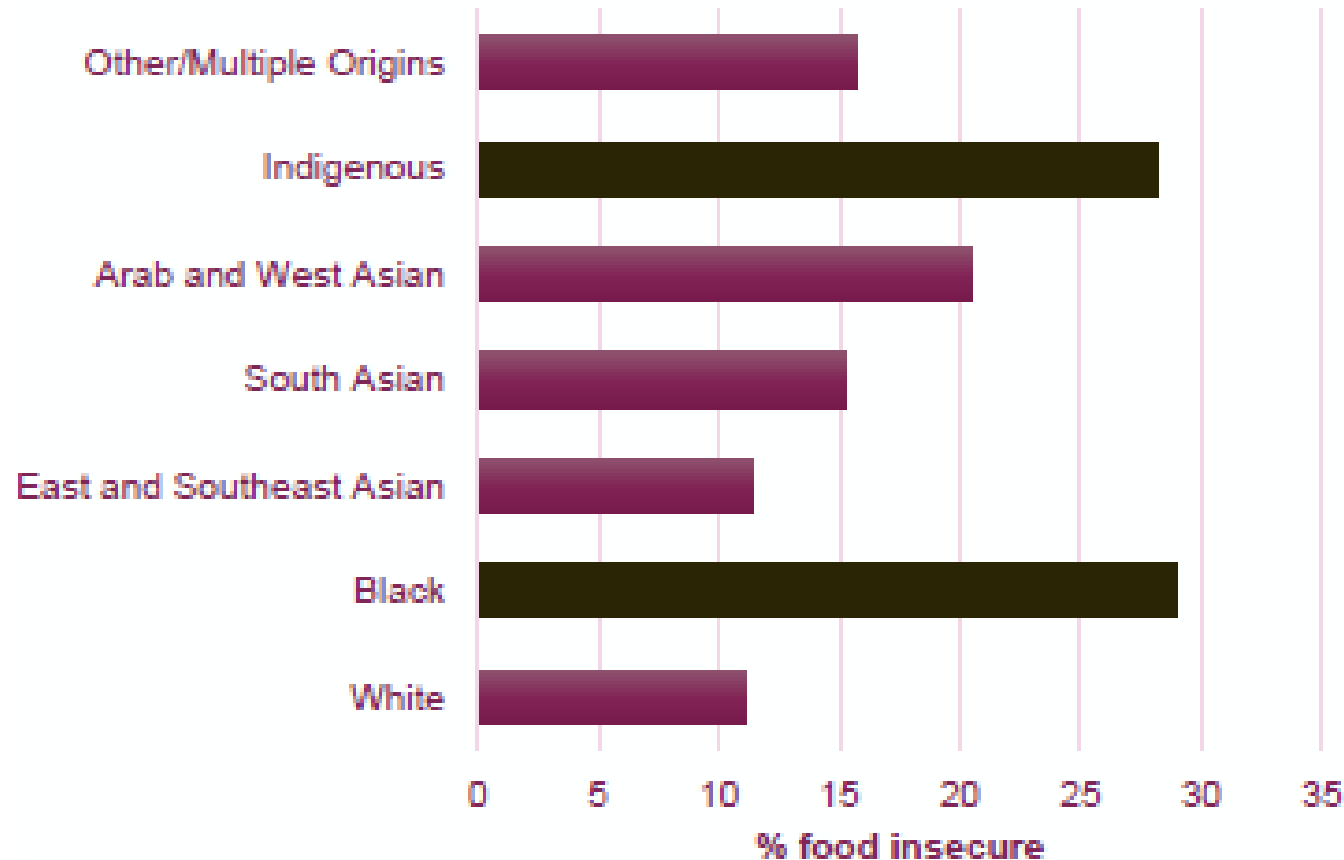
- Discrimination based on Aboriginal status, disability, gender, gender identity, religion, or race.
- The Indigenous languages have words that express poverty describing this state of being, which relates to access to an adequate livelihood<sup>10</sup>.
- Non-racialized Victorians don't see any racism around them, while racialized people experience racism on a regular basis in our community.



Photo by [James Eades](#) on [Unsplash](#)



## Prevalence of household food insecurity



**Black and Indigenous** respondents are more likely to be food insecure than **white** respondents, even after adjustment for socio-demographic characteristics.

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (OCHS), 2017-18.

# Poverty within the context of colonization<sup>11</sup>.

- The process of colonization restricted access to land.
- Residential Schools and child welfare apprehensions
- Chronic racism perpetuates false beliefs of social and cultural inferiority among Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC).
- All limiting employment opportunities and wealth accumulation.



Photo by [Arthur Edelmanns](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Newcomers & Refugees

- 22 % of the population reported they were or had ever been a landed immigrant or permanent resident in Canada, 11% of all immigrants are refugees<sup>12</sup>.
- Systemic Racism
- Risk for isolation
- Language barrier – barrier to accessing employment

# Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations

- “There’s no magic formula to building strong communities. It’s about being committed for the long haul to create genuine, trusting, deep relationships throughout the community and building a collective vision for the community we wish to see<sup>13</sup>.”
- What can we do: Educate yourself about racism so you can be an ally.







## Conclusion

- Community support networks are extremely important:
- Person to person support (home visits)
- Supporting people to access community resources.
- Advocate for increasing availability of resources, specifically affordable housing and income equality.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a key, with autumn leaves scattered around. The image is dimmed to serve as a background for text.

# Solving Poverty

There is an emerging consensus that income inequality is a key health policy issue that needs to be addressed by governments and policymakers.

Photo by [Fa Barboza](#) on [Unsplash](#)