

BROWN BAGGING FOR  
CALGARY'S KIDS



# MOVING FROM FOR-TO-WITH

Report Back 2024



BROWN BAGGING FOR  
**Calgary's Kids**

# Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the amazing funders that supported the  
Moving from For-to-With program.



---

None of this would be possible without the generous support of funders,  
partners, community and of course, families.

---



# Moving from For-to-With (FTW) Learnings

The Moving from For-to-With (FTW) Program was a pilot project carried out by Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids (BB4CK) between October 2022-October 2023. FTW was an proxy income-based and participatory program that distributed monthly grocery cards to families experiencing food insecurity in Calgary. Monthly grocery cards were provided to 50 participating families at a rate of \$150 per/school-aged child, for up to three children per family. The program emphasized dignity-based approaches to collaborate "with" families to address their food needs (in contrast to designing and providing the program "for" them, which is a more traditional model). This approach valued and identified its participants as experts in their own lives and acknowledged that they have a thorough understanding of the solutions that will enhance their own lives. Monthly surveys were distributed to families to quantitatively measure food insecurity, perceived stress, family well-being, spending, and their feelings and experiences of dignity when accessing food assistance supports in Calgary including FTW. These learnings were enhanced by qualitative data derived from focus groups and community conversations where in-depth perspectives were gathered from families.

## FTW Program Outputs

**50**

participating families  
impacted

**113**

participating children  
impacted

**35**

post-program surveys  
completed

**1380**

grocery cards  
distributed

**630**

monthly surveys  
reviewed and analyzed



# FTW Program Outcomes

## 1. The FTW Program decrease food insecurity for all participants

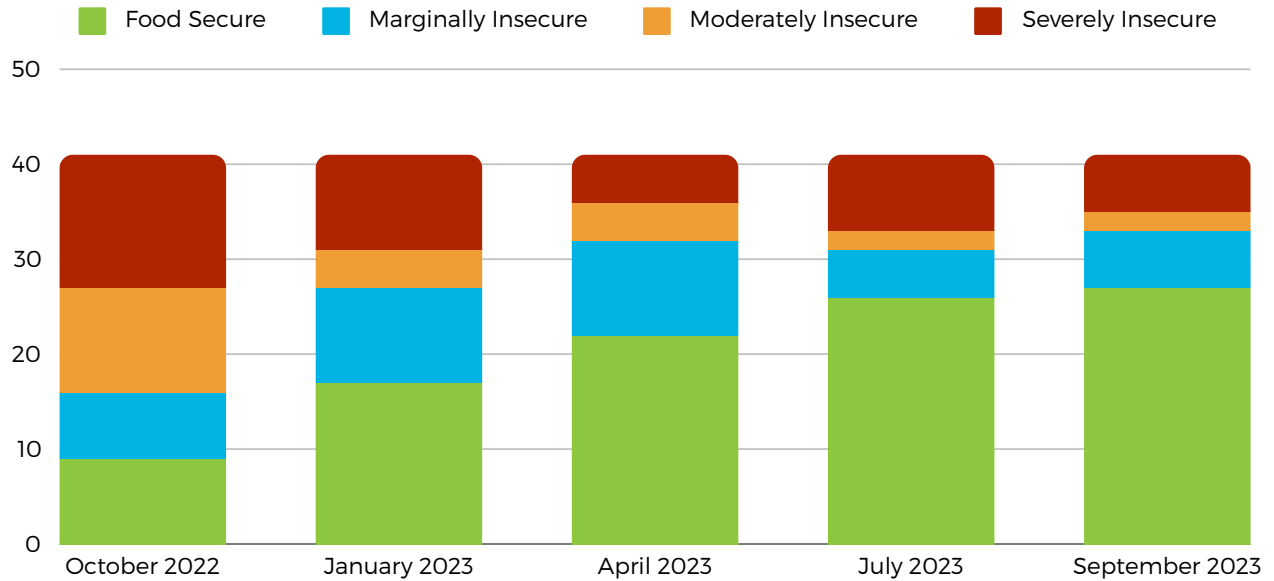
Food insecurity was measured using a modified version of the 18-item Household Food Security Survey Model (HFSSM). This survey is a validated metric used in nationwide surveys, including the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), to determine the severity of food insecurity. The survey covers 18 questions that assess adult and child food insecurity by asking respondents about anxiety and behaviors associated with having limited access to food. In the FTW pilot program, a truncated 11-item survey was used to minimize survey fatigue in families, given that they were responding monthly. Accordingly, seven questions were about adult food insecurity, and four were dedicated to children. An overall household score was calculated based on the 11 questions. Responses were coded to either suggest affirmation and non-affirmation to each question. Responses to each survey question were added together, and families were categorized as being either food secure, or marginally, moderately, or severely

food insecure based on their score range. The ranges follow adjustments of the original 18 question scale to compensate for the reduced number of questions.

### The FTW program decreased food insecurity for kids.

- At the beginning of the program, 22% of children were considered food secure. By the end of the pilot 66% of kids were considered food secure.
- There was a 19.5 percentage point decrease in kids experiencing severe food insecurity (shifting to moderate or marginal, or to food secure) from the start to end of pilot program.
- There was a 21.9 percentage point decrease in kids experiencing moderate food insecurity (shifting to marginal or (food secure) from the start to end of pilot program.





Categorization of food insecurity status of children enrolled in FTW families

\*Figures based on sample of 41 families representing children in household

#### Families reflected on the following points:

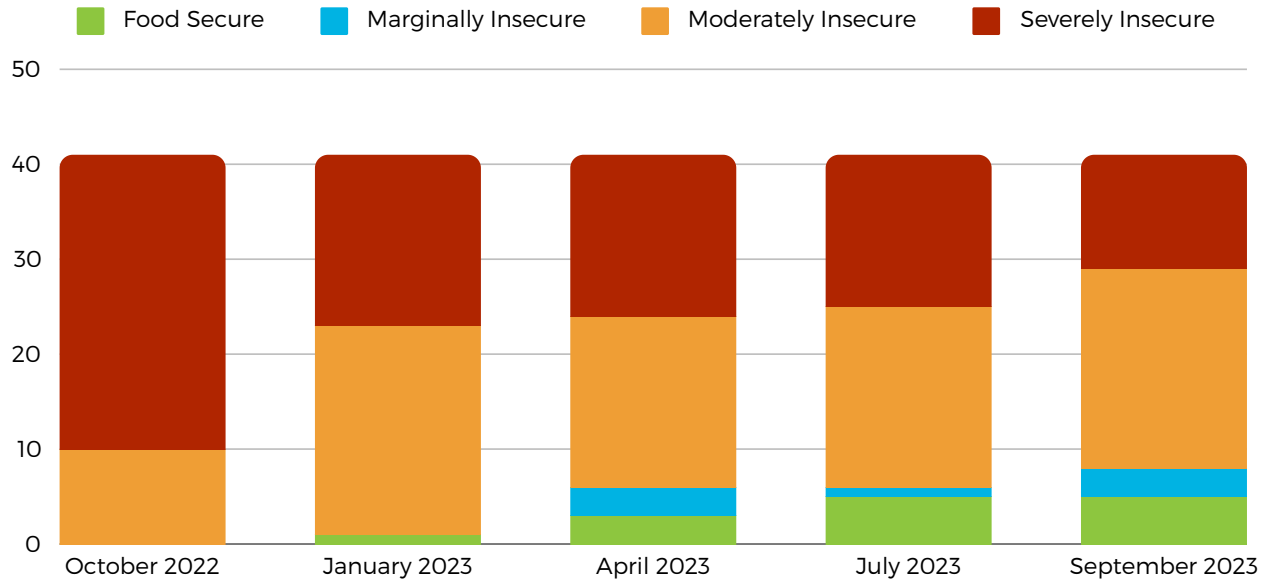
*"My kids don't go to school tired they can sit now and concentrate on listening to the teacher when we didn't have them it wasn't a very good situation."*

- FTW Parent Participant

## The FTW program decreased food insecurity for adults.

- At the beginning of the program, 0% of adults were considered food secure. By the end of the pilot 12.2% of adults were considered food secure
- 36.6 percentage point decrease in adults experiencing severe FI (shifting to moderate or marginal, or to food secure) from the start to end of pilot program
- 17.1 percentage point increase in adults experiencing moderate food insecurity (shifting to marginal or food secure) from the start to end of pilot program





Categorization of food insecurity status of adults enrolled in FTW program (n=41).

From family surveys, we saw a significant difference between adult and child food insecurity levels. This indicates that adults are shielding their children from their food insecurity experience, which is why on average children are 1-2 levels of food insecurity behind their parents, except in severe cases. Adults in food-insecure households will often sacrifice their own nutritional needs so that children are fed first. From these findings, we can conclude that the benefits of grocery cards on food security will disproportionately impact children.

## 2. Grocery cards improved family access to and consumption of appropriate foods.

- **Grocery cards provided more food choices**
- **Grocery cards provided more food variety**
- **Grocery cards provided more appropriate food (reflecting dietary and cultural preferences)**





By the end of the pilot program, 83% of families said they were more able to buy foods based on their family's needs as the result of the grocery cards. Families expressed that they had an increased ability to consider healthy and nutritious options, explore new food options and purchase food to create meals that their family would enjoy.

**Families reflected on the following points during and after the program:**

*"Buying with grocery cards is same as buying with cash. It really makes my children happy. The freedom to choose on their own really makes a difference."*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"I can buy more fruits and chicken and cereal for my kids"*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"[It] gave kids more rounded and nutritional lunches "*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"Stress free, I was able to purchase the exact foods that my kids will eat, and we finally had enough nutritious, filling items and were able to get fresh fruits and veggies that we barely could ever get before!"*

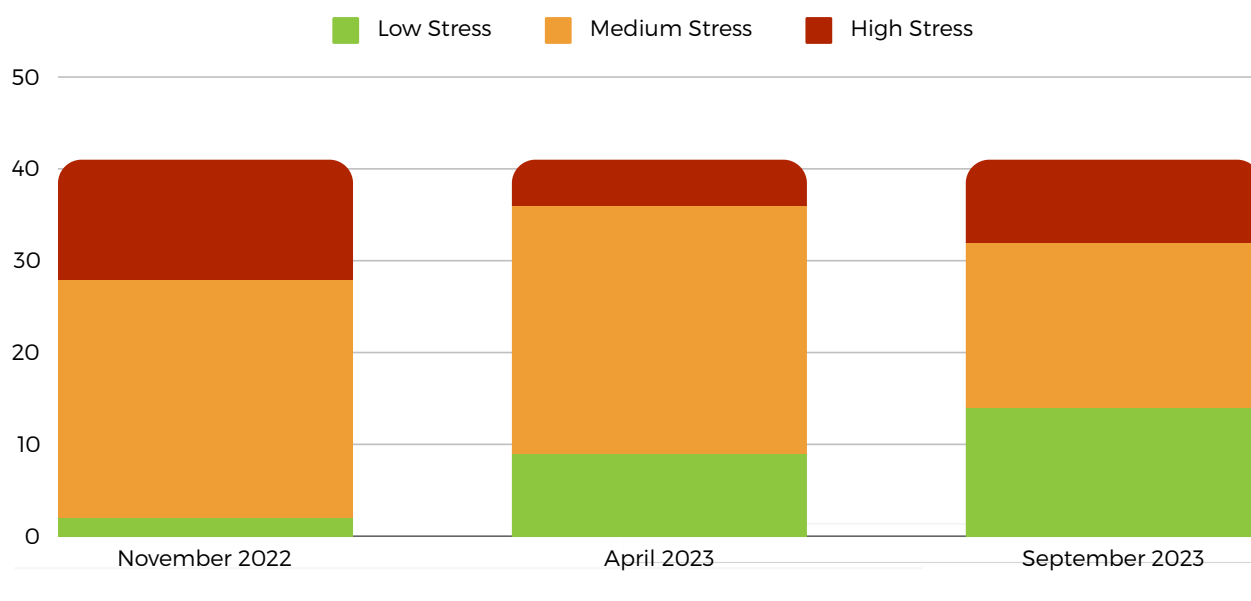
- FTW Parent Participant



### 3. The FTW program significantly reduced adult stress

Perceived stress in this evaluation was measured using a modified version of the original 14-item Perceived Stress Score (PSS) derived in 1983. This is a common tool used to measure life stress during the previous month with questions asking how an individual feels about managing stress in their lives in relation to their certain actions or feelings. Scores ranging from 0-4 are associated with each response and the total represents an individual's perceived stress for that given time. This evaluation used a modified 7-question version using a similar scaling mechanism. The ranges of scores were used to categorize families as either displaying low, medium, or high stress.

- 21% of families experienced a reduction of stress and worry around immediate food access throughout the program
- 32 percentage point increase in the proportion of families with low stress over the FTW program between the beginning and end of the program
- 100% of adults said the cards impacted their family's level of stress throughout the program



Categorization of perceived stress scores of adults enrolled in FTW program





**Families reflected on the following points during and after the program:**

*"Definitely a huge help to me and my children securing our food knowing that a grocery card is coming to alleviate our food insecurity and providing us with enough to carry us through the next month. Just the knowing that there is a grocery card lessens the stress of worry what to buy, and how to make the food in hand last the next month..."*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"Definitely, more choices for kids, but for me the biggest thing is the ability to plan and know I can count on those cards coming, and not just for once but for a full year. Great relief on stress..."*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"I make sure that financial stresses aren't shared with my son, but I am sure that he can sense the relief I feel knowing we have the grocery cards to use."*

- FTW Parent Participant

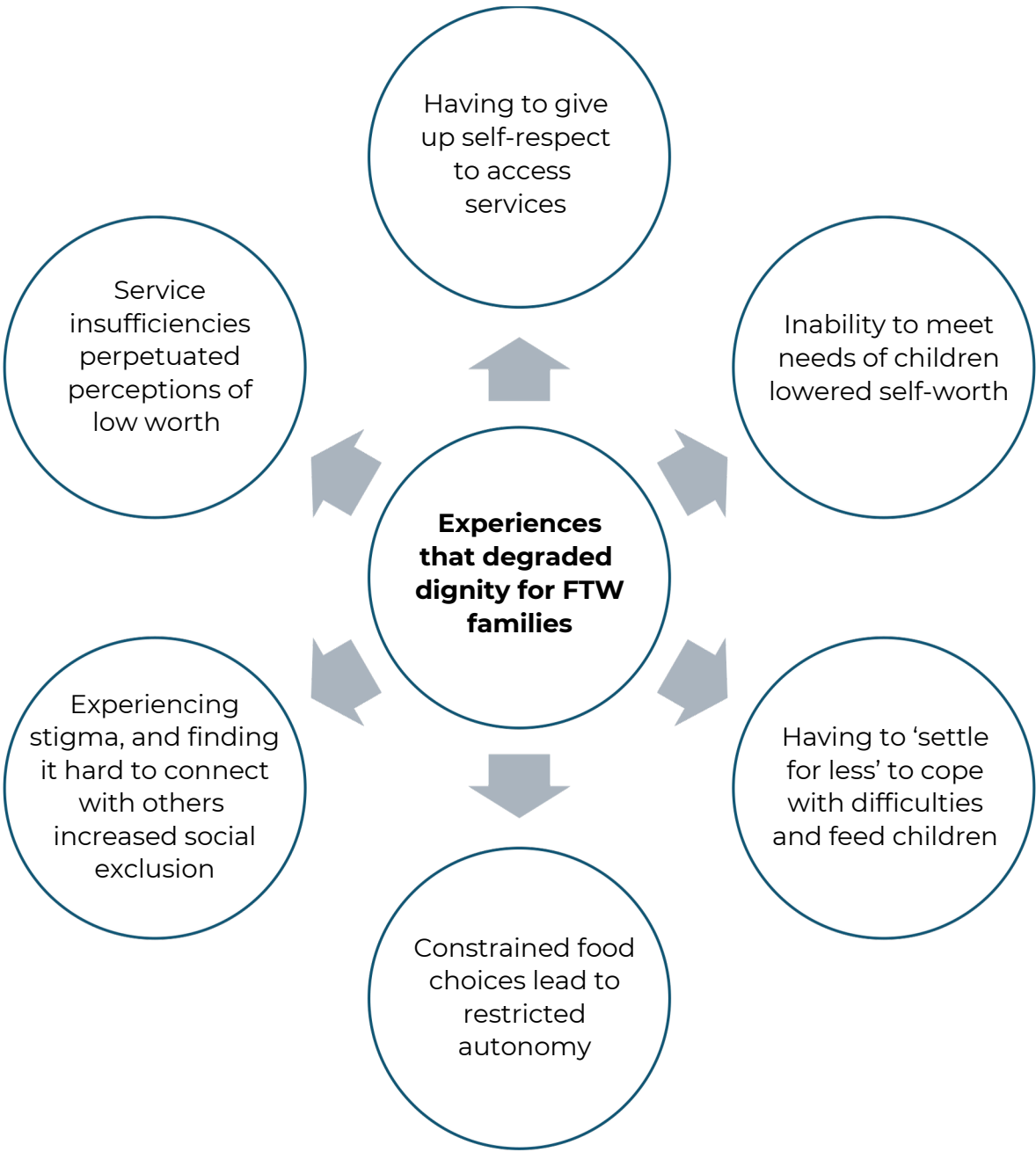


## 4. Grocery cards preserved participants' feelings of dignity

FTW families reported they had several experiences with food assistance programs that degraded their feelings of dignity. This looked like constrained choice, the inability to meet the needs of their children, having to make sacrifices to cope with difficulties and accessing services, service insufficiencies and stigma. The dignity of the FTW program was promoted through a variety of experiences related to food insecurity and access to food services during the program. These included having a sense of accomplishment when being able to take care of family needs, having the ability to exercise power and make decisions, and feeling like a part of the community. The findings from UCalgary qualitative research illustrate the various experiences of food insecurity and access to food support programs related to the degradation and preservation of dignity for FTW families.



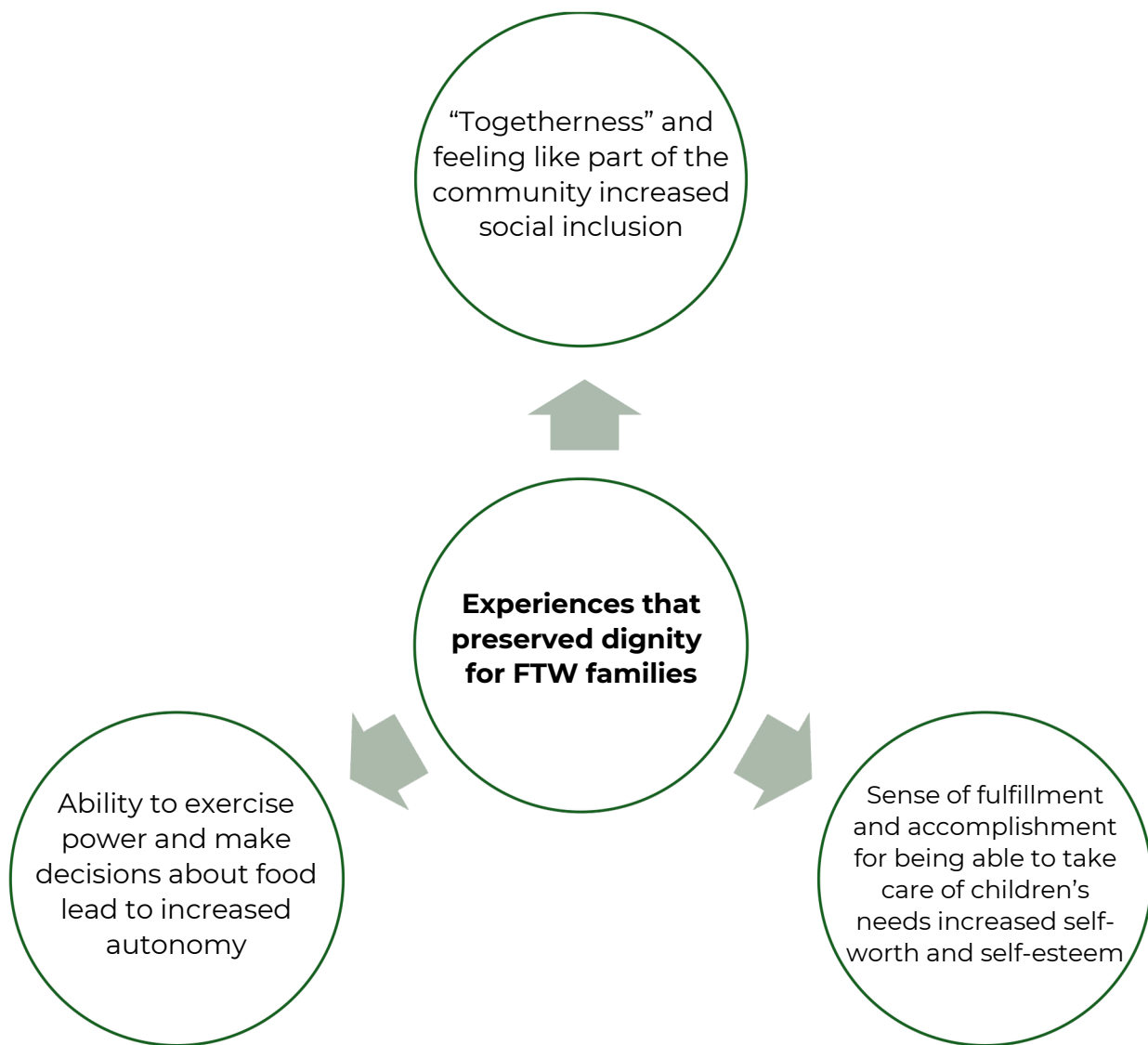
A total of nine themes were identified from all the feedback received from families throughout the FTW pilot program, with six themes relating to experiences that degraded dignity for FTW families and three themes relating to experiences which preserved dignity.



**Figure 1. Experiences that degraded dignity for FTW families**







**Figure 2. Experiences that preserved dignity for FTW families**

Families mentioned the increased power to decide where to spend their money and having more room in their budget to get non-food essentials as the result of the grocery cards.

- **100% of families said that grocery cards offered them independence**
- **97% of FTW participants thought the grocery card program was appropriate to respect dignity**



## 5. FTW participatory design preserved participants' feeling of dignity

Participants shared that the FTW program reduced feelings of shame. They appreciated being listened to, feeling heard, being followed up with, sharing experiences, a judgement-free environment, and problem-solving staff.

- 94% of FTW participants felt their voice was valued by BB4CK
- 97% of FTW participants felt their voices were valued during FTW Community Conversations
- 89% of families believed other services in Calgary should include their voice in program design

We learned that the ability to exercise power and make decisions about food lead to increased autonomy.

- With increased autonomy, families could choose and purchase food items based on what their families enjoyed eating.
- Families expressed that there was an increased ability to consider healthy and nutritious options, explore new food options and to purchase food to create meals that their family will actually enjoy.
- Families mentioned the increased power to decide where to spend their money and having more room in their budget to get non-food essentials.

## Post-Program Survey Results

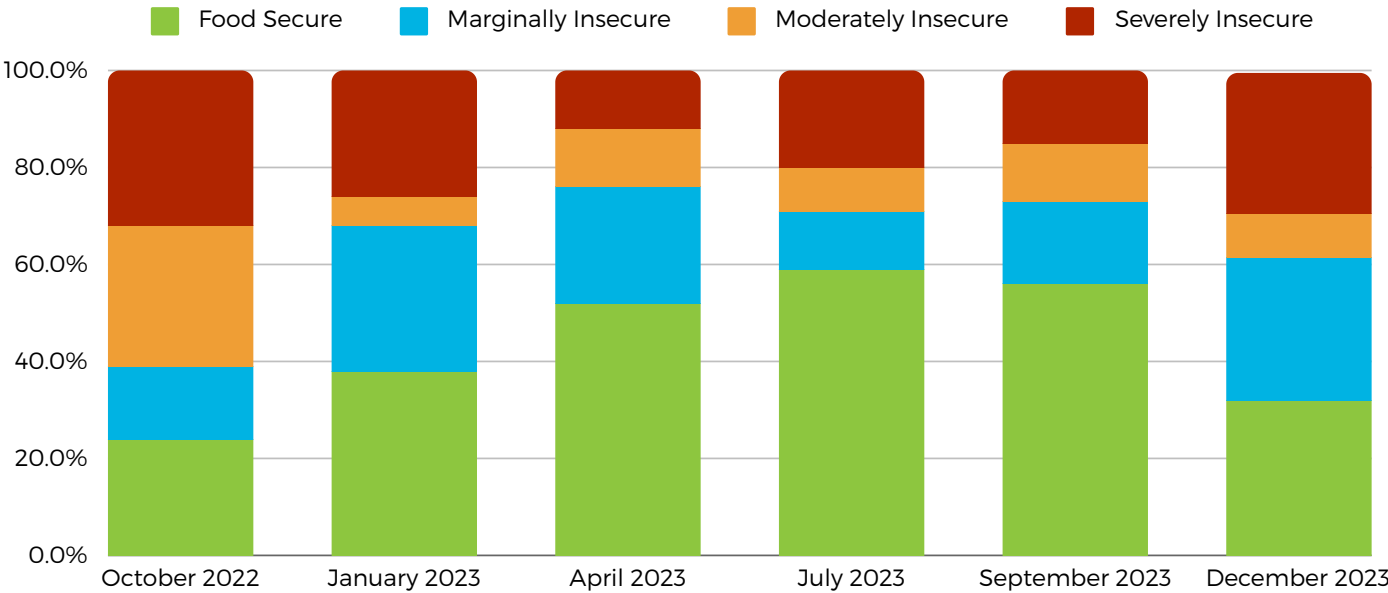
The pilot program ended October 2023 after 12 months of grocery card distribution and many community conversations. We reached out to families in December 2023 to better understand their perspectives once the program concluded. 35 families out of the 51 that participated in the FTW pilot program completed the follow-up survey. The learnings from this follow-up were meant to inform the complete learnings of the impact of the program.





Post-program, children’s food insecurity scores increased by 69% relative to September 2023. Between the end of the FTW program and December 2023 there was a:

- **14 percentage point increase in the proportion of children experiencing severe food insecurity**
- **18 percentage point increase in the proportion of children experiencing marginal food insecurity**
- **24 percentage point reduction in the proportion of children experiencing food security**

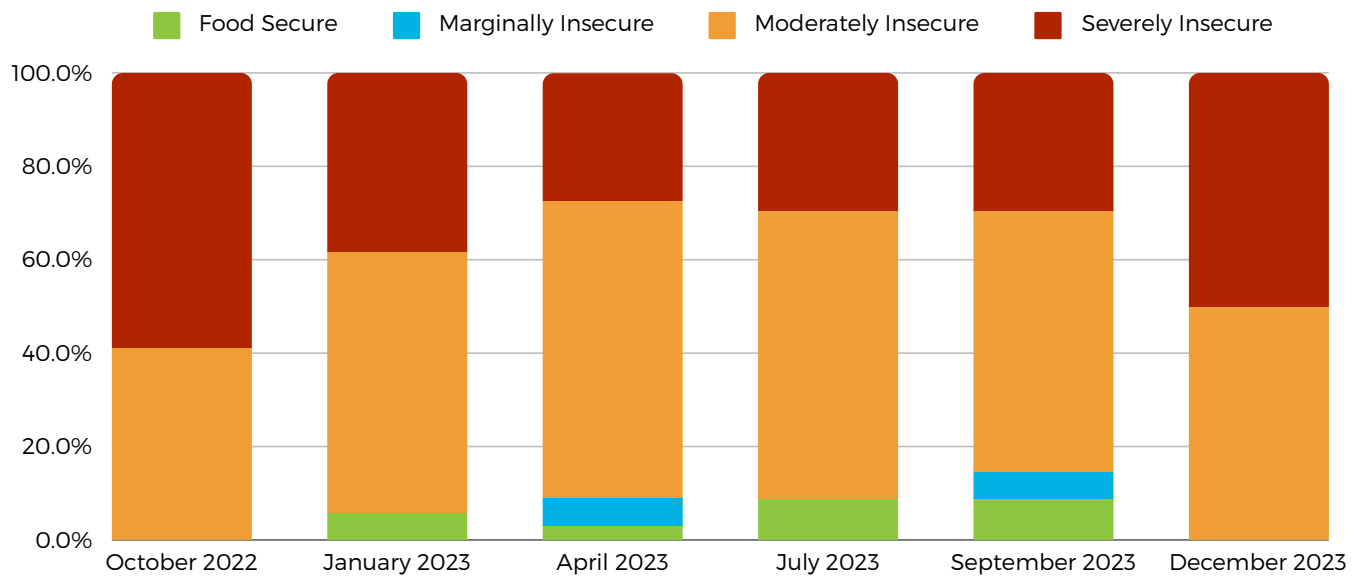


Categorization of children with food insecurity during and after the FTW program (n=34)

Post-program, adults’ food insecurity scores increased by 32% relative to September 2023. Between the end of the FTW program and December 2023 there was a:

- **21 percentage point increase in the proportion of adults experiencing severe food insecurity**
- **6 percentage point reduction in the proportion of adults experiencing moderate food insecurity**
- **9 percentage point reduction in the proportion of adults experiencing food security**

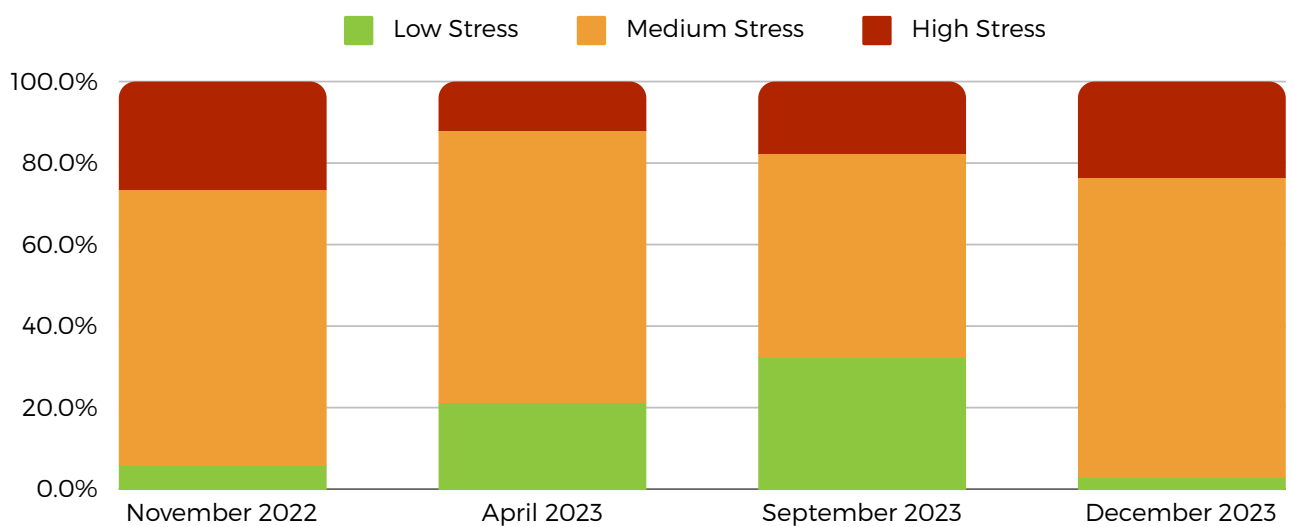




Categorization of adults with food insecurity during and after the FTW program (n=34)

There was a significant increase in the mean perceived stress score between September 2023 and December 2023.

- Average stress scores in December 2023 were 24% greater compared to September 2023.
- These scores indicate a 29 percentage point reduction in adults with low stress.
- There were no differences in average perceived scores between November 2022 and December 2023.



Perceived stress categorizations for adults during and after the FTW program (n=34)



Overall, the removal of the grocery cards negatively contributed to overall food insecurity and stress among children, adults, and households.

When families looked back on their experiences during FTW, they reflected on the following points:

*"It is more difficult to afford to feed family on my own without other resources. Other resources have less choice, etc. Kids on autism spectrum often require "safe" foods which are not available by request through other programs..."*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"...Had to adjust my shopping, go where deals were. Which is a bit of challenge, as my body gets sore. When needed, I try to access smaller food supports. I feel after we stopped receiving, like short term (a month or two of grocery supports, with half amount would have helped transition) ...Felt heard amongst our community members during the online meetings and felt good knowing others same place. So now it feels like a loss of support/community."*

- FTW Parent Participant

*"I miss the conversations and connection with other families. I know how hard it is to feed your family and I loved hearing how resilient other families were and how much love there is in wanting to give the best to their kids."*

- FTW Parent Participant



# Conclusion

The FTW program achieved its intended outcomes of improving food insecurity in families, decreasing stress, emphasizing dignity, and promoting social inclusion. The participatory approach taken to designing and implementing the program fostered an inclusive environment where families could share their experiences and contribute to program development.

As Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids looks into developing a new grocery card support program, we will ensure that these impactful learnings from the Moving from For-to-With pilot will be incorporated.



## Contact Us!



BROWN BAGGING FOR  
**Calgary's Kids**

**Phone :**

(403) 264-7979

**Email:**

[info@bb4ck.org](mailto:info@bb4ck.org)

**Address:**

909 11 Ave SW #110, Calgary,  
AB T2R 1L8





BROWN BAGGING FOR  
**Calgary's Kids**