

2024 Annual Survey Supplement — Interview Clothes

May 20, 2025

*Prepared for VPOF Nathan Thiessen by
Department of Research and Advocacy*



Overview

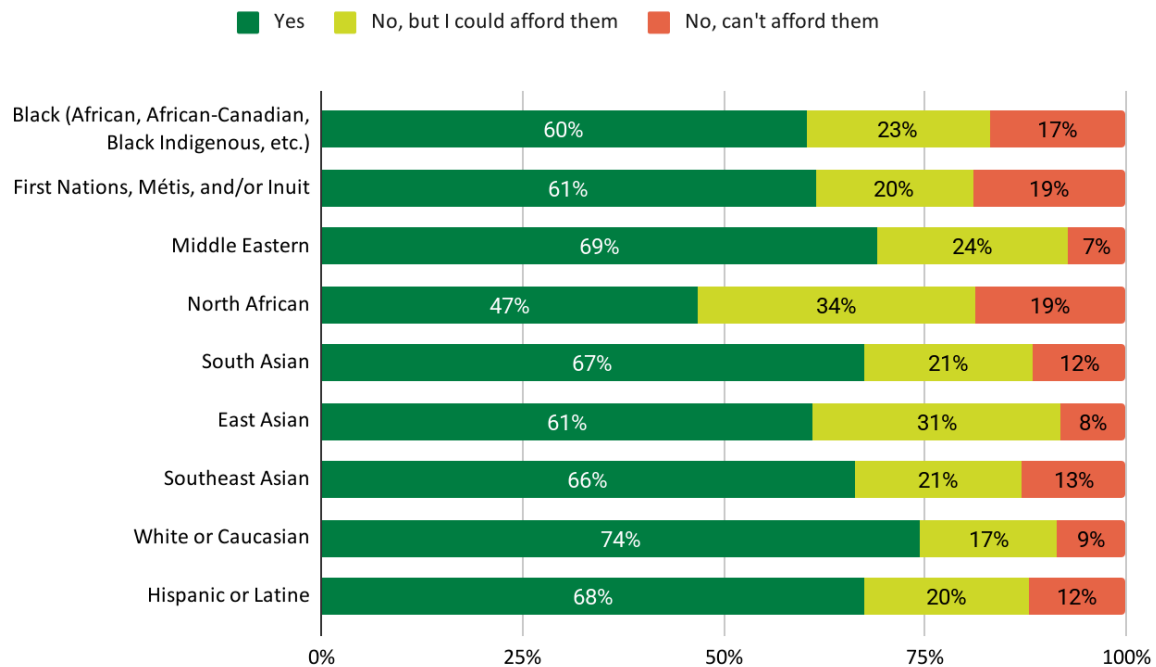
This report revisits a question in the [2024 Annual Survey](#): "Do you have appropriate clothes to wear for special occasions, like a job interview, wedding, or funeral?" This question was adopted from [Measuring Poverty with a Material Deprivation Index \(MDI\): An Updated Index for Canada](#), released by Food Banks Canada and its partners in 2024. The 2024 Annual Survey report found major variation by gender and faculty. Our follow-up project was to revisit this question across the other captured demographics.

- We noted major variation by race or ethnicity. 19% of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit respondents, 19% of North African respondents, and 17% of Black respondents said they could not afford appropriate clothing; the sample average was 11%.
- International students were twice as likely as domestic students (18% versus 9%) to say they could not afford appropriate clothing.
- Disabled students were almost twice as likely as non-disabled students (17% versus 10%) to say they could not afford appropriate clothing.
- Students who identified as neurodivergent were almost twice as likely as neurotypical students (15% versus 8%) to say they could not afford appropriate clothing.
- Students with recent (past two years) experience of housing and employment instability were far more likely than other respondents (17-30% versus 4%) to say they could not afford appropriate clothing. Respondents who could not afford it were three times more likely than respondents who owned it to have faced unstable housing situations (like couch-surfing, living in a vehicle, or sleeping rough); over twice as likely to have had other unhealthy or unsafe housing situations (e.g. with an abusive partner, family member, or roommate); almost twice as likely to have been unable to find work; and almost twice as likely to have been underemployed.
- 34% of students who skipped meals more than twice a week due to the cost of food could not afford appropriate clothing. Conversely, 45% of respondents who could not afford appropriate clothing were skipping meals at least once a week due to the cost of food.
- 30% of respondents who had visited a food bank in the past year could not afford appropriate clothing, compared to 9% of respondents who had not.

By Race or Ethnicity

Do you have appropriate clothes to wear for special occasions, like a job interview, wedding, or funeral?

UASU 2024 Annual Survey, n=2,930



By International Status

- 27% of international respondents answered 'no, but I could afford them,' compared to 20% of domestic respondents.
- 18% of international respondents answered 'no, can't afford them,' compared to 9% of domestic respondents.

By Disability

- 14% of disabled respondents answered 'no, but I could afford them,' compared to 21% of non-disabled respondents.
- 17% of disabled respondents answered 'no, can't afford them,' compared to 10% of non-disabled respondents.

By Self-Identified Neurodivergence

- 19% of neurodivergent respondents answered 'no, but I could afford them,' compared to 21% of neurotypical respondents.
- 15% of neurodivergent respondents answered 'no, can't afford them,' compared to 8% of neurotypical respondents.

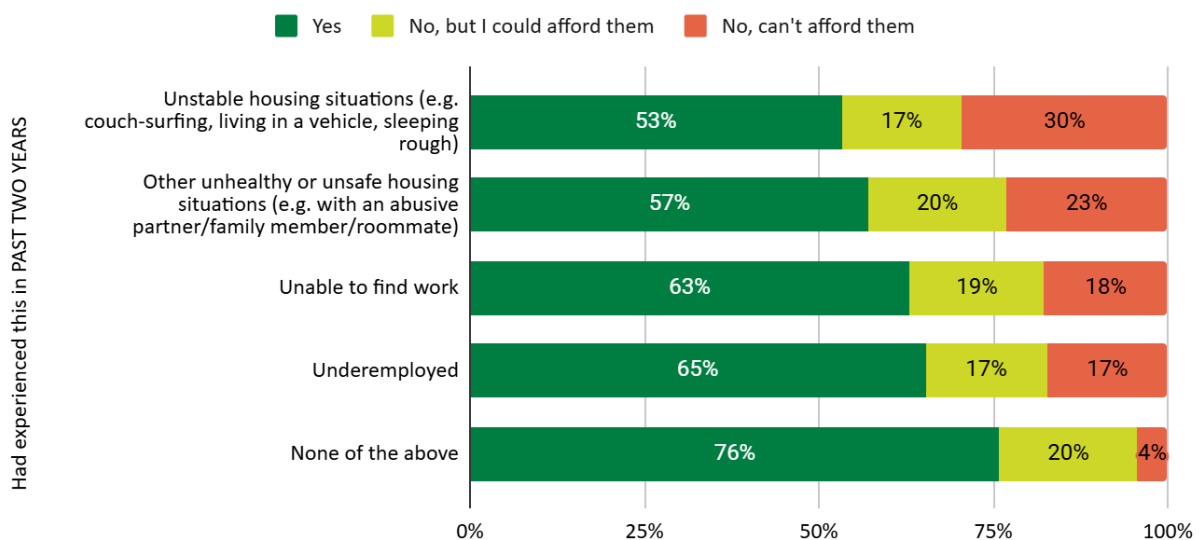
Intersection with Housing and Employment Instability

There was a very strong association between this question and recent experience (past two years) of housing and employment instability.

The following chart shows that respondents who had these experiences frequently could not afford appropriate clothing.

Do you have appropriate clothes to wear for special occasions, like a job interview, wedding, or funeral?

UASU 2024 Annual Survey, n=2,930



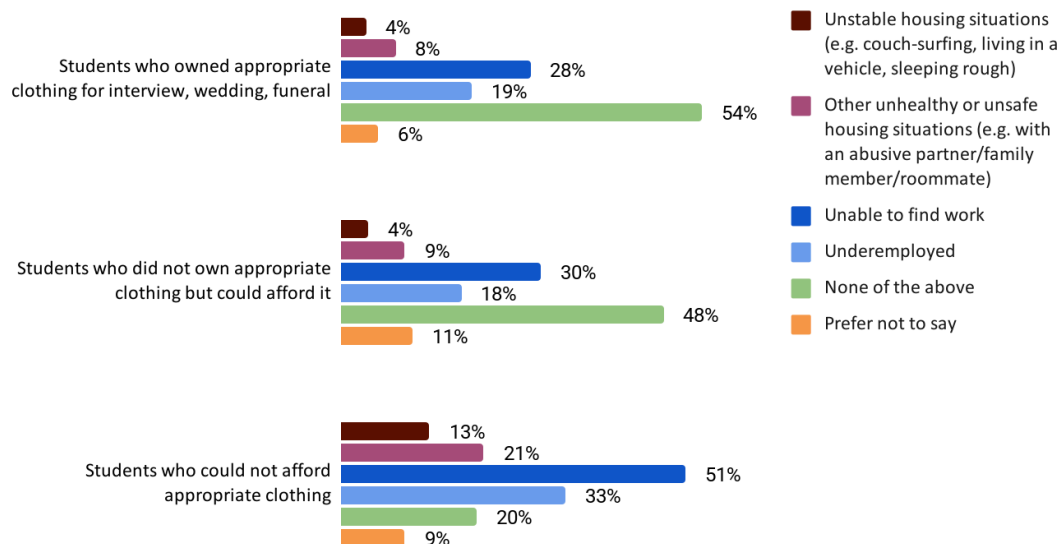
The reverse — how many students who can't afford appropriate clothing have had these experiences — is an equally bleak picture.

- The experiences of students who owned appropriate clothing and could afford it were virtually identical.
- Comparing the students who owned appropriate clothing and those who could not afford it, those who could not afford it were three times more likely to have had unstable housing situations like couch-surfing, living in a vehicle, or sleeping rough, over twice as likely to have had other unhealthy or unsafe housing

situations (e.g. with an abusive partner, family member, or roommate), almost twice as likely to have been unable to find work, almost twice as likely to have been underemployed, and less than half as likely to say they had experienced none of these.

Have you found yourself in any of these circumstances in the past two years?
Choose all that apply.

UASU 2024 Annual Survey, n=2,930

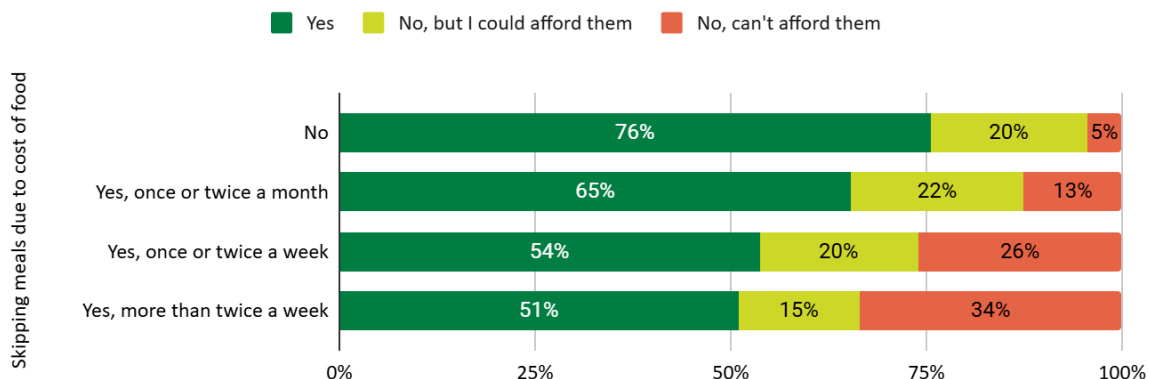


Intersection with Food Insecurity

There was a very strong correlation with food insecurity. 34% of students who skipped meals more than twice a week due to the cost of food, and 26% of those who skipped once or twice a week, could not afford appropriate clothing.

Do you have appropriate clothes to wear for special occasions, like a job interview, wedding, or funeral?

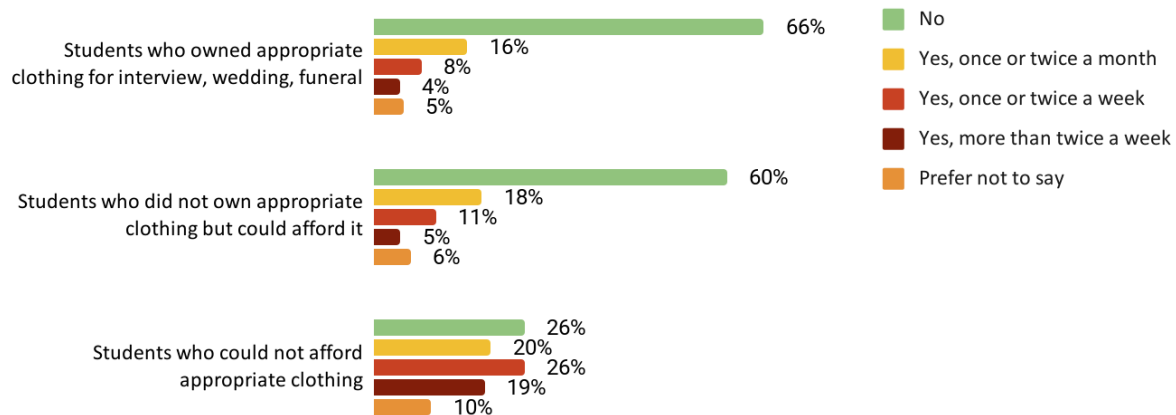
UASU 2024 Annual Survey, n=2,930



Conversely, 45% of respondents who could not afford appropriate clothing were skipping meals at least once a week due to the cost of food.

Do you skip meals due to the cost of food? Choose the closest answer.

UASU 2024 Annual Survey, n=2,930



Intersection with Food Bank Usage

Comparing respondents who had visited a food bank in the past year with those who had not:

- 16% of food bank clients answered 'no, but I could afford them,' compared to 20% of non-clients.
- 30% of food bank clients answered 'no, can't afford them,' compared to 9% of non-clients.