Red Meat / Beef Consumption in Canada - Backgrounder

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Red meat consumption data is used in communications with health professionals, influencers and in submissions to government on food and nutrition policy. Per capita consumption is a key performance measure used by the red meat industry to evaluate effectiveness of programs and consumer demand. The purpose of this backgrounder is to summarize the different types of data and provide recommendations on what to use in various contexts.

MEAT CONSUMPTION DATA SOURCES

Statistics Canada has two data sources for quantifying Canadians' meat consumption:

1. **Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – Nutrition Data**
2. **Food Availability Data** (formerly Disappearance Data)

A concern with the CCHS-Nutrition surveys is their datedness. Consumption patterns have changed since the last survey was conducted a decade ago and including a 2015 reference in resources can make the asset appear dated. Nonetheless, despite these shortcomings, CCHS-Nutrition remains the database used by Health Canada and nutrition researchers and, consequently, by Canada Beef in communications about red meat consumption with these audiences.

1. **Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – Nutrition Data**[1]

   The CCHS-Nutrition surveys used 24-hour dietary recalls to estimate Canadians' usual intake of nutrients from foods, food groups, and eating patterns. CCHS-Nutrition data is used by Health Canada in developing food and nutrition policies, for example, the development of Canada's Food Guide and front-of-pack nutrition labelling, and by academics for publishing research on the quality of the Canadian diet.

   To date, the survey has been conducted twice: in 2004 and 2015. The surveys included a nationally representative sample of Canadians 1+ years of age from all provinces (excluding the territories), with sample sizes of 33,924 (2004) and 20,080 (2015). The data has been categorized by age, gender, province, and by foods.

   The government published data from these surveys, the following being one example.

Percentage of energy intake from carbohydrates, fat and protein by age group, Canada excluding the territories, **2004** and **2015**

	2004	**2015**
Carbohydrates, ages 1 to 18	54.6	53.4
Fat, ages 1 to 18	30.6	30.9
Protein, ages 1 to 18	14.6	15.6
Carbohydrates, ages 19 and older	49.1	47.7
Fat, ages 19 and older	31.3	32.2
Protein, ages 19 and older	16.5	17.0

Reference –

2004 & 2015 data: Statistics Canada. 2004 and 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.
2015 data only: Statistics Canada. 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.
2004 data only: Statistics Canada. 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.

In 2017 the Canadian Meat Council requested customized analysis of the 2004 and 2015 CCHS-Nutrition survey data to quantify how much red meat (fresh and processed) Canadians consumed, on average.

Red Meat Consumed per Day - 2004 and 2015 CCHS

(mean gram weight by Canadians ages 1 year or older)

	2004			2015		
	Both sexes	Males	Females	Both sexes	Males	Females
Fresh red meat	53.5	68.6	38.6	41.1	52.3	30.3
Processed red meat	21.9	27.9	16.1	19.9	26.5	13.5
TOTAL	**75.4**	96.5	54.7	**61.0**	78.8	43.8

Definitions -

Fresh red meat beef, veal, pork and lamb, including ground meat and burgers.
Processed red meat included salted beef, bacon (but not turkey or chicken bacon), ham, sausages (not turkey or meatless), and luncheon meats (not considered poultry).

Reference –

2004 & 2015 data: Statistics Canada. 2017. Customized analysis of 2004 and 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.
2015 data only: Statistics Canada. 2017. Customized analysis of 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.
2004 data only: Statistics Canada. 2017. Customized analysis of 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.

The following year, 2018, the Canadian Meat Council requested further analysis of the contribution of fresh red meat to calories, total fat, saturated fat, and protein intakes of Canadians. This information has been shared with Canada Beef and has been used in industry nutrition communications.

Additional Analysis of **2015** CCHS-Nutrition Data for Canada

Contribution of fresh red meat to select nutrients		
Canadian Population (both sexes)	**1+ Years**	**Adults 19+ Years**
Fresh red meat intake (mean g/day)	41.1	44.0
Calories (% of total)	4.90	5.21
Protein (% of total)	12.94	13.72
Total fat (% of total)	7.17	7.59
Saturated fat (% of total)	8.56	9.16

Reference - Statistics Canada. 2018. Customized analysis of 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.

In 2024, Canada Beef requested additional analysis of the 2015 CCHS-Nutrition survey data on protein intakes of adult Canadians. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for adults is 0.8 grams of good quality protein per kilogram body weight per day.[2] Almost a third of Canadians 65+ (32.5%) ate less protein than the current RDA recommendation, the minimum daily goal.

Based on existing evidence, protein experts consider the current RDA too low. They suggest that adults aim for more ideal targets ranging from at least 1.0, to 1.2, to 1.5 g of protein/kg body weight to support optimal health.[3,4,5 6,7] The chart below shows the percentage of Canadian adults with protein intakes below the RDA and each of those suggested target thresholds.

Additional Analysis of **2015** CCHS-Nutrition Data for Adult Protein Intake

Percentage of adults in Canada below the RDA and additional protein thresholds g/kg/day

	RDA	Additional thresholds		
	0.8	**1.0**	**1.2**	**1.5**
Adults, 19-64	18.4%	40.8%	63.5%	86.3%
Adults, 65+	32.5%	62.3%	83.9%	96.9%
Males, 19-64	14.0%	33.3%	55.2%	80.5%
Females, 19-64	23.3%	49.3%	72.6%	92.1%
Males, 65+	25.5%	59.6%	84.5%	97.7%
Females, 65+	36.7%	64.3%	83.9%	96.6%

Reference - Statistics Canada. 2024. Customized analysis of 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.

2. Food Availability Data[8] (formerly Disappearance Data)
Food availability tables represent the total food available for human consumption from the Canadian food supply chain. It does not, however, equate to total food consumed in Canada. Rather, food availability tables can be used as a general indicator or proxy for consumption – i.e., if availability of a certain food is growing over time, we can deduce that the demand/consumption of this product is also growing.

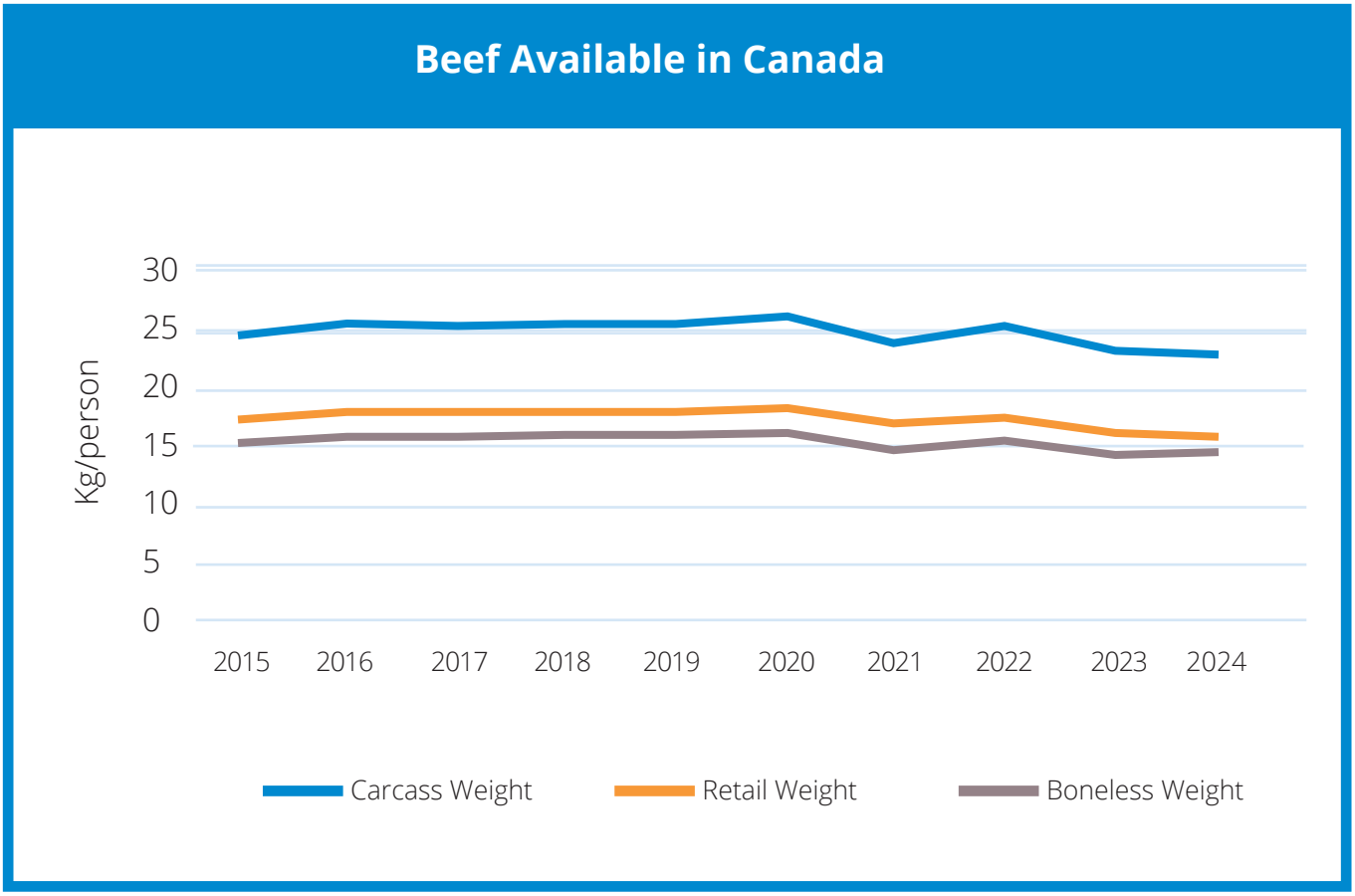
Meat availability data is estimated by calculation:[9]

Total supply (inventory of meat at the beginning of the year + production + imports)
– outputs (exports, waste, and inventory of meat at the end of the year)
= net supply
÷ Canadian population (as of July 1st of the reference year)
= Carcass weight of meat available per person (in that given year)

In addition to carcass weight, the food available per person is presented as:

a) Retail weight –The most commonly used per capita consumption number reported for red meat is in retail weight. It is calculated on the portion of the carcass that is available for consumption after removing the skin and trimmed fat. The conversion factor prepared by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (Animal Industry Division - Market Information Section) for carcass to retail weight is 73%.[10]
b) Boneless weight – Calculated on the portion of the retail weight after removing bone. Canfax provides Statistics Canada annually the conversion factor from retail to boneless weight.

The following chart shows the different permutations of the data.



Source: Statistics Canada[8] and Canfax
Note: Statistics Canada moved to publishing food availability data every other year beginning with 2025 (for 2024). To fill this gap in reporting, Canfax developed a model to estimate per capita consumption which was reviewed by Statistics Canada to ensure proper methodology.

Comparing Meat Consumption Data Sources

The following table shows how the numbers compare using food availability and CCHS survey data. The year 2015 was chosen; the last year a CCHS survey was conducted.

Comparing Food Availability & 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey - Nutrition Data

Data Description	Average daily grams per person (calculated for backgrounder)		Notes
Beef carcass weight (24.42 kg/person/year)	67		• Doesn't reflect consumption since the inedible portions of the carcass and hide are included
Beef retail weight (17.29 kg/person/year)	47		• Raw weight and bones are included such as a standing rib roast or T-bone steak
Beef boneless weight equivalent (15.43 kg/person/year)	42		• Raw weight with bones excluded
CCHS, fresh red meat	41.1	30.3 females 52.3 males	• Cooked weight • Includes fresh beef, veal, pork and lamb
CCHS, processed red meat	19.9	13.3 females 26.5 males	• Cooked weight • Includes processed beef, veal, pork and lamb
CCHS, total red meat	61.0	40.8 females 78.8 males	• Cooked weight • Includes fresh and processed beef, veal, pork and lamb

References

1 Statistics Canada. Canadian Community Health Survey - Nutrition (CCHS). https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=201486
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6 Deutz NE et al. Protein intake and exercise for optimal muscle function with aging: recommendations from the ESPEN Expert Group. Clin Nutr 2014;33(6):929-936.
7 Alberta Health Services, Nutrition Services. 2019. Nutrition Guideline Seniors Health Overview (65 Years and Older).
8 Statistics Canada. Food available in Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210005401
9 Statistics Canada. Food supply and disposition. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/statistical-programs/document/3475_D1_V7
10 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Red meat sector conversion factors. https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/sector/animal-industry/red-meat-and-livestock-market-information/slaughter-and-carcass-weights/conversion-factors#details-panel2