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IN SPITE OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY, FOOD INSECURITY IN OHIO REMAINS HIGH
1 in 7 Ohioans – including 1 in 5 kids – still struggle to meet basic needs

COLUMBUS – Rates of food insecurity have slowly improved as the decade-long economic recovery has continued. Unfortunately, according to Feeding America’s newly released *Map the Meal Gap 2019*, Ohio’s food insecurity rate of 14.5 percent is much higher than the national rate (12.5 percent) and the Midwestern average (11.4 percent).

Food insecurity is higher among households with children. About 1 in 5 children in Ohio (19.6 percent) live in families that can’t always afford enough food on their own. In several rural counties (Monroe, Meigs, Adams, Vinton, Scioto and Guernsey), that rate is 1 in 4 or higher.

“From Appalachian Ohio to the metro areas, Ohioans face steep challenges in making their incomes stretch to cover all of their expenses,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “Food is the one part of their budget they can cut out if they have to when the other bills come due and they have to put gas in the car to get to work. But all of us suffer when our neighbors and friends are eating cheaper, less nutritious food or even skipping meals to get by.”

On average, food insecure Ohioans report that they fall short about \$15.50 per person, each week when it comes to their food budgets. For a family of three, that adds up quickly to about \$200 per month. The *Map the Meal Gap* estimates an average meal in Ohio costs \$2.76. So, for a family of three to afford three modest meals a day for each person in their household, they need about \$750 a month to purchase groceries. For too many families, affording enough food on their own is out of reach.

“A family of three with two full-time working parents earning \$9 an hour each make too much money to qualify for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program),” said Hamler-Fugitt. “Yet, after paying for housing costs, transportation, medical costs and child care, they have little to nothing left to purchase food. These families are turning to our hunger relief network, not as an emergency, but as a recurring lifeline.”

About half of all food insecure Ohioans live in households that earn too much to qualify for help from SNAP. For those 829,000 people, food pantries and soup kitchens are the only safety net they have.

“Food insecurity is a complicated issue that will take big-picture, forward thinking to solve,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “As foodbanks, we can’t give low-wage workers a raise or bring down housing costs or increase access to affordable healthcare or public transportation. We’re counting on policymakers to continue focusing on those long-term solutions to household stability. But we can do our part to make sure that every person in Ohio has access to three wholesome meals each day.”

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is seeking increased funding in the 2020-21 state biennial budget to support a *Comprehensive Approach to Hunger Relief*. The association’s modest request of \$30 million per year represents less than 4 percent of the statewide meal gap of \$797 million. For more information, visit <http://ohiofoodbanks.org/news/budget.php>. To view the Map the Meal Gap report, visit map.feedingamerica.org.

Top 10 Ohio Counties for Highest Overall Food Insecurity

Name of County	Rate of Food Insecurity
Athens County	19.3%
Cuyahoga County	18.4%

Lucas County	17.5%
Scioto County	17.4%
Hamilton County	17.2%
Adams County	17.2%
Montgomery County	17.0%
Meigs County	16.5%
Franklin County	16.5%
Mahoning County	16.4%

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About the Ohio Association of Foodbanks

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,500 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2018, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 216 million pounds of food and grocery items. The association has also served as the home of The Ohio Benefit Bank since 2006. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

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