

The State of Hunger in Ohio in  
**2022**



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Before COVID-19, our food pantry network served **more than 1.6 million** different people\*, or nearly 1 in 7 Ohioans. On average, **each person visited our pantry network 5.8 times during the year.**



Some food pantry visitors came only once or twice during the year, when an unexpected crisis occurred. This might have happened when a car broke down or a parent lost wages at work to stay at home with a sick child.



Others came once every two or three months, sometimes more often in the summer for families with children missing out on school meals, or more often in the winter when utility bills are high. A chronic medical condition or diet-related disease may mean a family or individual needed more help. A job loss may have hurt a family's budget for a longer stretch of time.

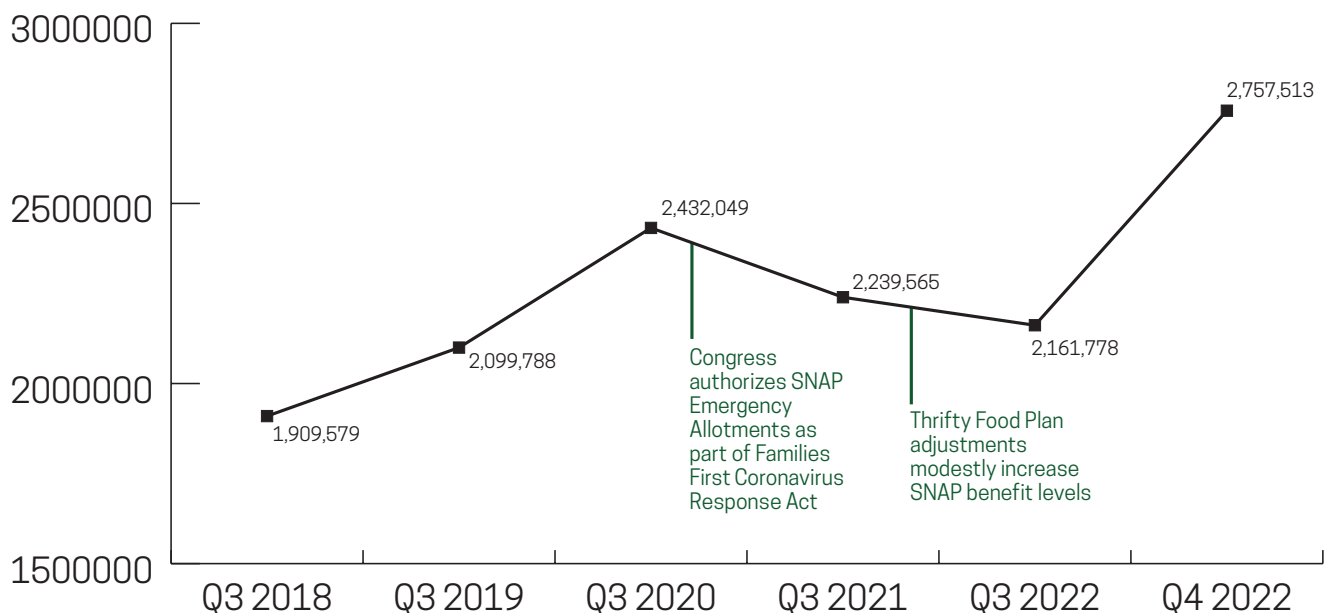


Still other food pantry visitors relied regularly on our help. These often included older adults and people living with disabilities, surviving on fixed incomes that don't stretch far enough. It also included families with young children and Ohioans struggling with homelessness or with barriers to employment.

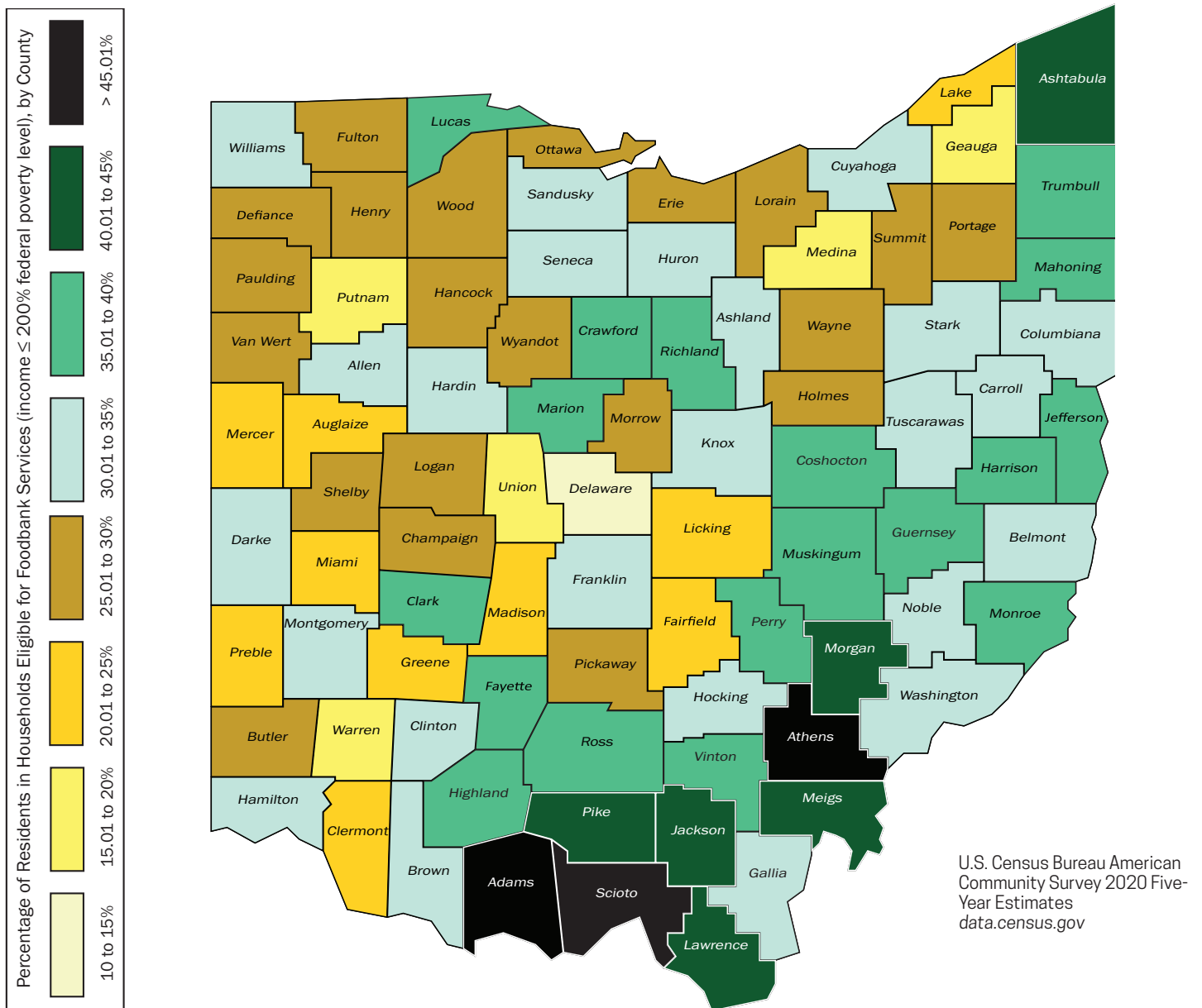
We also served more than **15 million additional meals** each year through hot meal sites and shelters.

\*Analysis of FreshTrak (formerly PantryTrak) data for unduplicated individuals served in 2019 by all participating food pantries and duplicated individuals served as reported by remaining food pantries

In 2021, despite targeted relief measures, our food pantries were serving **322,000 households** every month, a **12.4 percent increase over 2019**. Now, 2.5 years since the start of the pandemic, we served **2,757,513 people** from April to June 2022, even as 1.5 million Ohioans continue to receive SNAP Emergency Allotments under the public health emergency.



# More than **3 in 10** Ohioans had incomes low enough to qualify for help from our foodbank network before COVID-19



Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks respond to food insecurity in emergency situations, like when an illness or job loss occurs. But more often, we respond to recurring or ongoing shortfalls in the food budgets of hundreds of thousands of Ohio families. Feeding America’s most recent *Map the Meal Gap* study found that about half of Ohioans who experience food insecurity live in households with incomes too high to qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This includes many older adults living on fixed incomes and working families struggling to pay for other basic expenses like health care, housing, and transportation. They have only our hunger relief network to turn to for help when money runs out to buy food.

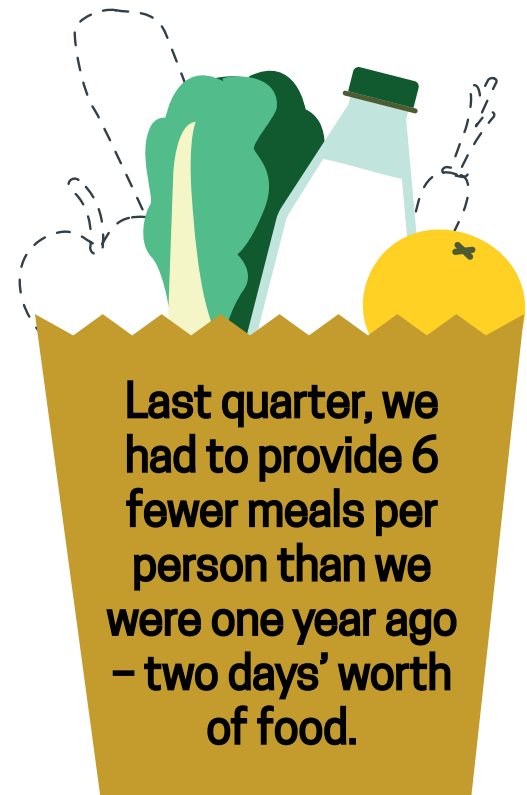
Recently released data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates found that 3,405,291 Ohioans – or 30 percent of the state’s population – lived in households with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level in 2019, before the pandemic and the economic fallout that continues to pile up in its wake. These families live paycheck-to-paycheck, working hard for wages that don’t always leave enough for food after the bills are paid. The share of families in this situation has only grown since March 2020.

Meanwhile, the roughly half of all food insecure Ohioans who do qualify for SNAP will lose an average of \$82 per person, per month, when SNAP Emergency Allotments end – an immediate loss of \$120 million per month in food purchasing dollars, which will leave more Ohioans turning to our member food pantries for help.

To meet community need, we rely on several sources of food. Despite continuing to serve more people than pre-pandemic, our foodbanks have experienced a **64 percent decline in USDA foods** since 2021 and had **more than 275 cancelled loads of food** in the past 6 months. Donated foods from retailers & manufacturers are also declining.

Foodbanks also raise funds to purchase food. But because of a variety of factors, **it currently costs an average of \$1.04 per pound** to purchase food, **up from \$0.42 per pound** a year ago.

Our state-funded food purchase programs are great equalizers, providing food to every community in Ohio. But the same dollars can't go nearly as far during **record food and fuel costs** and supply chain pressure.



Factors contributing to a compounding and unsustainable crisis:

### **Drastic increases in food & fuel costs**

Diesel fuel is up as much as 75% in one year. Food prices are up sharply, especially in the cost of meats and eggs. Prices are projected to continue to rise<sup>1</sup>.

### **Shortages & supply chain disruptions**

From increased labor costs to shortages or sharp price increases in fertilizer, feed, and more, some economists are warning of the risk of recession<sup>2</sup>.

### **Climate change and global conflicts**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is already having significant impact on crops and fertilizer. Prolonged drought, flooding, heatwaves, and more will continue to impact food supply<sup>3</sup>.

### **Inflation and price gouging**

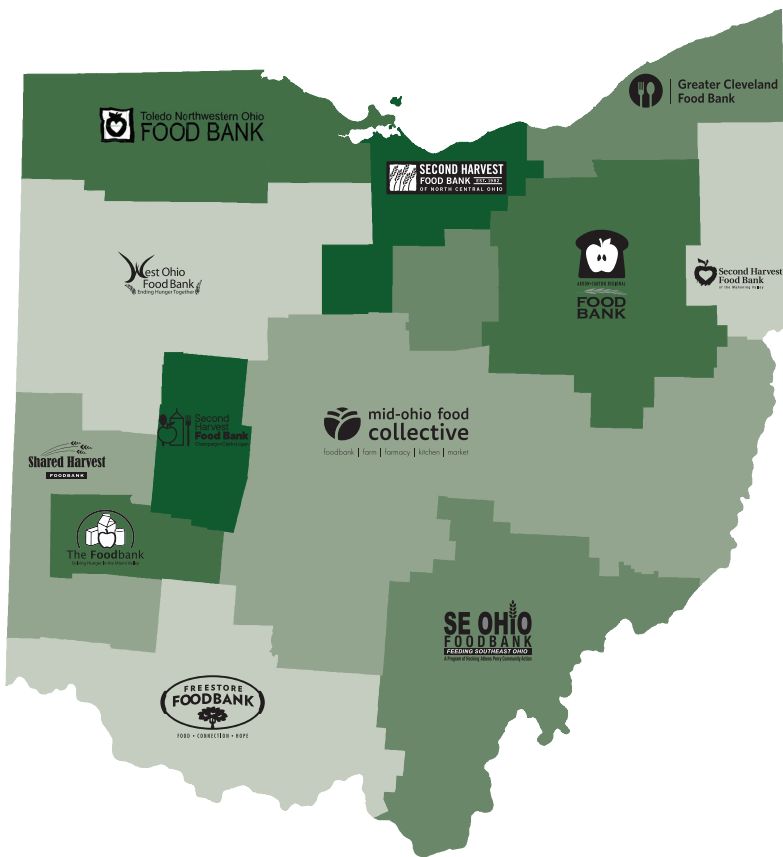
Inflation is at a forty-year high and household living expenses are up sharply. At the same time, some industries and bad actors are reporting record profits during a period of historically high prices<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>USDA ERS Food Price Outlook for 2022.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. may be barreling toward recession in next year, more experts say, Washington Post, May 19, 2022.

<sup>3</sup>The Ukraine Food Price Crisis is Just a Preview of What Could Happen as Climate Change Worsens, TIME, April 29, 2022.

<sup>4</sup>House approves bill to combat gasoling 'price gouging', PBS News Hour, May 19, 2022.



We represent **12 regional** Feeding America foodbanks. Foodbanks serve regional territories to provide proximity to their warehouses for local hunger relief providers while leveraging broader fundraising and purchasing power. Still, each foodbank region, like each area of Ohio, **faces unique challenges** during the current environment.



**Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank** – Serving 8 Counties in Northeast Ohio

- Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) of the Ohioans they have served YTD in FY2022 have been first-time foodbank visitors.
- Food purchase prices are up 10-15%, as well as increased costs for shipping and freight. In addition, delayed delivery timelines and strained supply mean they need to purchase product from different, further away vendors. For example, they were just offered 56 700-pound bins of watermelons from Texas for \$3,416. Freight cost on that load is \$7,922.97. Before the pandemic, the cost to transport a similar load was between \$2,000-\$2,500. Fuel costs to operate their trucking fleet are up 32% in the first two months of 2022 compared to 2021.



**The Foodbank, Inc.** – Serving 3 Counties in Southwest Ohio

- Their USDA commodities are down 62% from last year, meaning 3.8 million fewer meals from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in their region.
- To make up for declines in USDA commodities, they have continued to raise funds to purchase foods, but those funds aren't stretching nearly as far. Their cost per pound for purchased foods is up 102%, at \$1.07 per pound.
- The Foodbank, Inc. is 2/3 of the way into a property expansion and update that will offer wrap-around services to clients, while increasing cold storage for perishable foods grown in their garden and sourced through traditional food streams.



**Freestore Foodbank** – Serving 8 Counties in Southwest Ohio

- Compared to last year, they have received close to 6 million fewer pounds from USDA commodities, representing a 40% decline.
- Like their sister foodbanks, they are struggling with increased transportation costs in addition to less donated foods as retailers and manufacturers are squeezed by shortages, supply chain pressure, and tight margins.
- They are starting to see local agencies and program partners end their hunger relief efforts and are evaluating how to fill the gaps they leave.



### **Greater Cleveland Food Bank** – Serving 6 Counties in Northeast Ohio

- In the past several months, 46 loads of much-needed USDA foods have been canceled, totaling 1.58 million pounds. USDA foods are down by 40%.
- Due to sharp increases in diesel costs, their fleet costs alone will be at least \$140,000 over budget this year.
- Their community has supported them generously, but they are spending more than they can fundraise to keep enough food moving in and out. In 2021, they purchased more than twice the amount of food that they did in 2019. With costs per pound significantly up since then, they know this approach is not sustainable.

### **Mid-Ohio Food Collective** – Serving 20 Counties in Central and Eastern Ohio

- Transportation and freight costs are up 20 to 25% and prices for purchasing commodities are up 15 to 20%, meaning two of the primary cost drivers are significantly higher.
- At the same time, federal commodities from USDA have dropped 45% and they have had 39 loads of USDA foods canceled in 2022.
- In late February 2022, service visits surpassed 2020 levels and remained higher through March and April than the same period in 2020. In fact, they had 6,484 more service visits - a 2.5% increase compared to the initial spike of the pandemic.

### **SE Ohio Foodbank and Kitchen** – Serving 10 Counties in Southeast Ohio

- The foodbank has been forced to downsize its staff in order to meet costs and maintain core operations. Without major new support, they will need to significantly reduce direct distributions (mobile markets) and limit delivery options. Plans that were in place to open a large choice-style pantry, operated by the foodbank, have been placed on hold indefinitely due to resource constraints.
- Their overall pounds of food, including food sourced from federal and state funds, donations, and private purchases, are down by more than a third. With inadequate staffing, storage, and transportation resources, and without major donors and corporations in their footprint, they will be hard-pressed to serve their poverty-stricken region without an infusion of capital and commodities.

### **Second Harvest Food Bank of Clark Champaign and Logan Counties** – Serving 3 Counties in Central Ohio

- Their warehouse is beyond repair, with sinking floors and shifting walls. They cannot use 30% of their space or racking and do not have adequate storage for dry, frozen, or refrigerated items. Most recently, due to the foundation shifting, their freezer wall split at the seam, causing a 2" wide crack on an exterior wall. They are creating a transition plan until they can secure the funds for a much needed new building.
- Meanwhile, USDA foods are down 56%, donated foods are down 34%, and the foodbank has had to start rationing food. Their home delivery program serves 500 households per week and has a waitlist of more than 100 families.

### **Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley** – Serving 3 Counties in Northeast Ohio

- Their agency partners have begun reporting increases in demand for help, and they have served nearly 5,500 new households in the past six months.
- Like their sister foodbanks, they have seen a sharp decline in USDA commodities, down 50% since last year.
- They have spent the last 18 months working to expand the capacity of their partner agencies in the event of another spike in need. However, the declining resources have forced them to limit the amount of food their agencies can access to ensure that there is enough food to go around.





### **Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio** – Serving 4 Counties in Northern Ohio

- Compared to last year, their USDA foods are down nearly 55%, and down 20% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Donated foods have rapidly declined in spring 2022 while the cost of procuring purchased foods is up more than 10%.
- They have also had 24 loads of USDA product canceled this year and have largely been unable to secure any donated product through Feeding America for the same reasons that local donations are rapidly declining. They have been waiting for some staple items for over six weeks due to extended lead times from suppliers who have products/input supplies stuck in port, making it challenging to plan.



### **Shared Harvest Foodbank** – Serving 5 Counties in Southwest Ohio

- They have seen a 48% decline in USDA commodities, and the overall variety of the product they are able to procure includes fewer fruits, vegetables, and protein items. Traditionally, they have operated their child nutrition programs with donated product, but due to major dropoffs in donated foods, they have had to purchase more products for these childhood hunger relief interventions, and at significantly higher rates.
- The foodbank continues to struggle with inconsistent volunteer support, and are slowly rebuilding their volunteer base due to corporations suspending volunteer programs and people reluctant to volunteer due to fear of COVID exposure.



### **Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank** – Serving 8 Counties in Northwest Ohio

- Like their peers across the state, the foodbank has seen major declines in sources of food, including a nearly 50% decline in donated foods year over year.
- They are struggling with steep increases in fuel and freight as they work to procure donated or low-cost purchased foods, ship them into their warehouse, and distribute them throughout a wide and primarily rural and exurban service territory.



### **West Ohio Food Bank** – Serving 11 Counties in Western Ohio

- This rural foodbank relies on TEFAP commodities to provide to their partner agencies each month. As loads continue to be canceled, they have to use limited funds to purchase additional products needed. Often, when they attempt to purchase bulk product, the price is exponentially high or the product is in low supply and they are forced to wait for extended periods of time. Items that used to be available for a lower cost (i.e. turkey sausage, eggs) are now much pricier.
- They have already had to ration food, cancel some pre-scheduled distributions because of low food supply, and cut back on protein in favor of shelf-stable items.

We cannot afford to fail the **hundreds of thousands of Ohio families** that are counting on us to keep them from going hungry. We need immediate, short-term support and long-term investments to stabilize our supply of food, strengthen our community-based infrastructure, and keep our doors open and our trucks moving. Visit [ohiofoodbanks.org/ARPA](https://ohiofoodbanks.org/ARPA) for more information.

# Ohio Association of Foodbanks

*Ohio's largest charitable  
response to hunger*



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