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16.2 Percent of Households in Ohio Struggle to Afford Enough Food

Food hardship data released today shows Ohio, major MSAs lagging behind

Columbus, Ohio, August 1, 2018 – Despite an improving economy, 16.2 percent of households in Ohio reported that they struggled to buy enough food for themselves and their families during 2016–2017, according to a new report released by the [Food Research & Action Center](#) (FRAC, a national anti-hunger advocacy group).

How Hungry is America? provides data on food hardship – the inability to afford enough food—nationally, for every state, the District of Columbia, and 108 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) across the country. The report is based on 337,690 interviews in 2016–2017.

Nationally, the report found that after several years of decline, the food hardship rate for all households increased from 15.1 percent in 2016 to 15.7 percent in 2017. The food hardship rate for households with children is 1.3 times higher than for households without children.

The report found:

- Ohio ranked 18th in the nation for food hardship (1 being the worst), with 1 in 6 households reporting they had trouble putting food on the table.
- The food hardship rate in Ohio is considerably higher in households with children than households without children, 19.5 percent compared to 14.6 percent, respectively.
- However, the Youngstown-Warren-Boardman MSA had the second highest rate of food hardship in the nation at 22 percent of all households and a rate of 34.8 percent for households with children.
- Ohio’s MSAs food hardship rates in 2016–2017 among 108 MSAs are as follows:

| Ohio Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) | Food Hardship Rate for Households With Children | Food Hardship Rate for Households Without Children | Overall Rate of Food Hardship | National Rank Food Hardship out of 108 MSAs |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Akron | 19.1 percent | 15.6 percent | 16.6 percent | 35 th |
| Cincinnati | 14.5 percent | 12.8 percent | 13.4 percent | 78 th |
| Cleveland-Elyria | 20.2 percent | 13.7 percent | 15.6 percent | 46 th |
| Columbus | 17.9 percent | 15.6 percent | 16.5 percent | 36 th |
| Dayton | 20.7 percent | 13.9 percent | 16 percent | 42 nd |
| Toledo | 18.5 percent | 13.7 percent | 15.2 percent | 53 rd |
| Youngstown-Warren-Boardman | 34.8 percent | 16.6 percent | 22 percent | 2 nd |

“Food hardship affects people in every community in Ohio, although it often goes unseen by those not looking for it,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “Hunger can hide behind doors of nice houses with mortgages in default, or the heat turned off, or all of the income going to housing costs, leaving little or no money for food. Sometimes it hides behind the stoic faces of parents who skip meals to protect their children from hunger.”

“Recent policy changes including the expansion of Medicaid, seem to have had some positive impacts on food security and food hardship rates in households without children in Ohio,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “As we continue to climb out of the Great Recession, we cannot afford setbacks from harmful proposals at the federal level that would cut, severely restrict or eliminate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for some of our most vulnerable citizens.”

“We urge Members of Congress to focus on protecting and strengthening the SNAP program, enacting policies that maintain a strong safety net and improve government income support programs for low-income families, persons with disabilities, seniors and veterans said Hamler-Fugitt”

About the Report

How Hungry is America? focuses on data for the nation for 2017 and for every state and the District of Columbia, and 108 MSAs for 2016–2017. The data were gathered as part of the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index project, which has been interviewing hundreds of households daily since January 2008. The [Food Research & Action Center](#) (FRAC) analyzed responses to the question: “Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?” A “yes” answer to this question is considered to signal that the household experienced food hardship. FRAC uses the phrase “food hardship” to avoid confusion with the annual Census Bureau/U.S. Department of Agriculture survey and analysis that produces “food insecurity” numbers, but the concepts are comparable.

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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 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2017, 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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