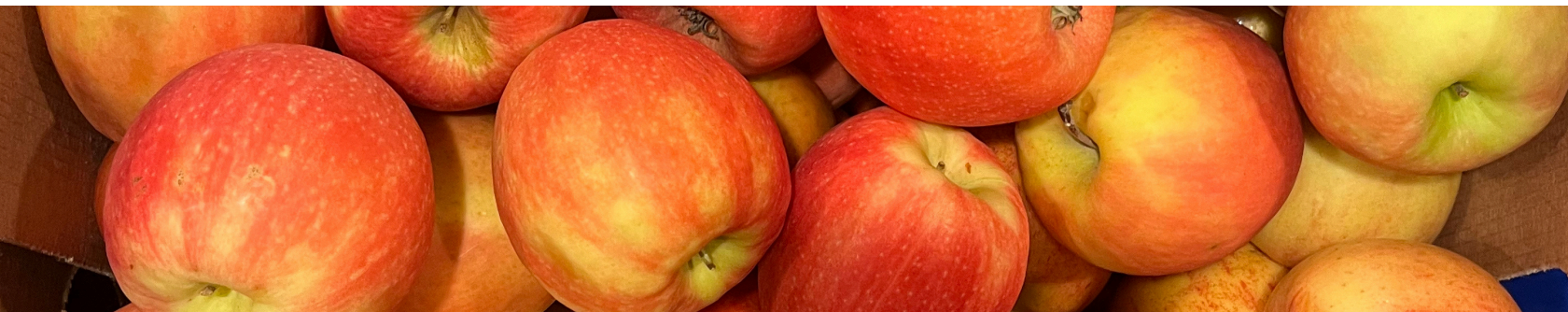




Hunger in Ohio 2024

A Data-Driven Profile on Ohioans Facing Hunger





ABOUT THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks (OAF) represents Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and their 3,600 local hunger relief partners and programs serving people in need in all of Ohio's 88 counties. As Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, OAF and its statewide network of foodbanks provided emergency access to take-home groceries 14.66 million times in calendar year 2023, a 34 percent increase compared to 2022 (10.94 million visits) and a 56 percent increase over 2019 (9.36 million visits). The OAF network also provided a record 14.64 million hot meals at shelters and other meal sites in 2023.

ABOUT HUNGER IN OHIO 2024

Hunger in Ohio 2024 provides a comprehensive demographic profile of people seeking food assistance through the OAF hunger relief network. The data collected help guide the development of programs, policies, and solutions that improve food security for individuals and their households and inform public awareness and policy development for addressing hunger in Ohio. The first Ohio Hunger Study was conceived and implemented in spring 2023 to document the point-in-time experience of food insecure Ohioans in the wake of the end of pandemic-era SNAP Emergency Allotments and in the midst of historic inflation. It was modeled from the past success of the national quadrennial hunger study last conducted in 2014 by Feeding America with research vendor Westat and the Urban Institute. Hunger in Ohio 2024 is representative of the experiences and challenges facing foodbank clients statewide.

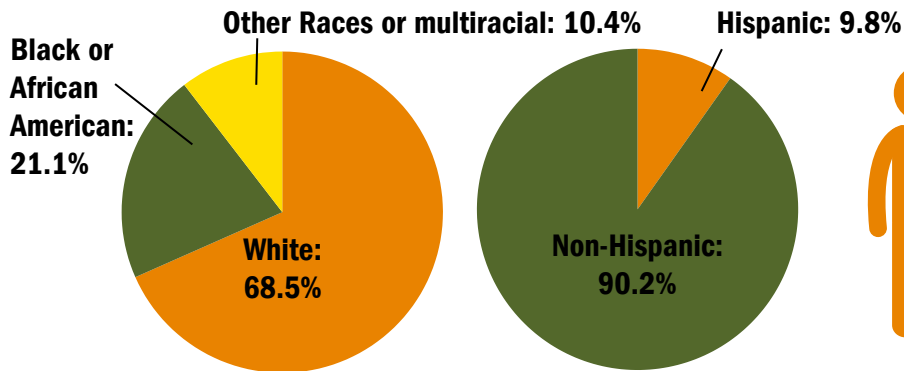
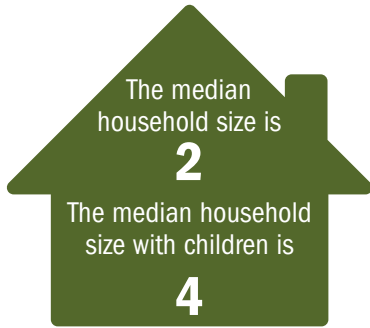
METHODOLOGY FOR HUNGER IN OHIO 2024

Rich data from a widely distributed survey comprise the basis for the Hunger in Ohio 2024 results. All data were collected through electronic surveys completed by food pantry visitors from April 15 to May 12, 2024. This survey was implemented in partnership with staff and volunteers at each of Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks who helped to distribute flyers with unique QR codes that securely connected food pantry visitors with a confidential online survey built through Qualtrics. In total, 2,301 unique, verified respondents from about 30 percent of all Ohio zip code-areas answered questions about themselves, their households, the circumstances that led them to seek help from the emergency hunger relief network, and their experience. Wherever possible, the survey utilized validated questions from research entities such as the USDA Economic Research Service compiled from the Feeding America Client Survey. Consulting researcher Anirudh Ruhil, Ph.D., associate dean at Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service, conducted unweighted analysis of the data collected, which was used to produce this report. Special thanks to Eliza Richardson, Polly Leland, and Zach Reat, M.P.A. for their leadership on this project.

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THE PEOPLE SERVED BY THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS NETWORK

Hunger in Ohio 2024 reveals that Ohioans seeking help from charitable hunger relief providers represent a diversity of households facing a wide array of obstacles to food security. The survey respondents were:



Households in Ohio seeking help from charitable hunger relief providers face a wide array of obstacles to food security due to factors including economic instability, health issues, and systemic inequities. Research has shown that households with children, elderly members, or individuals with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity due to higher living expenses, limited income opportunities, and greater healthcare costs. Additionally, minority populations often experience higher rates of food insecurity due to disparities in employment, education, and access to resources.

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



People seeking help from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks' network subsist on lower incomes, with a majority reporting that they live below the poverty line. Nearly all households (96.3%) have annual household incomes lower than Ohio's overall median household income of \$66,950, most households (75.8%) have annual household incomes of less than \$25,000, and a majority (57.5%) have incomes of less than \$15,000. More than 1 in 10 (13.2%) reported that they had no income in the last 12 months.

3 IN 4 HOUSEHOLDS HAVE ANNUAL INCOMES OF LESS THAN \$25,000



The federal poverty guidelines are used to determine income eligibility for food assistance programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) as well as the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and state-funded food purchasing programs. Fifty-seven (57.4) percent of Ohio Association of Foodbanks' neighbor households reported not currently receiving SNAP benefits. Of those receiving SNAP benefits, nearly all (93.4 percent) reported that their SNAP benefits are exhausted in the first three weeks of the month or less,

64.3% EXHAUST SNAP BENEFITS IN 2 WEEKS and a third (33.1 percent) reported their benefits last just one week or less.

Employment status is a critical factor affecting many households' income and, thus, access to food. Forty-three percent of neighbor households reported that at least one household member was working in the week they were surveyed, and 50.8 percent said that at least one household member had been employed at some point in the past 12 months.

About half (49.2 percent) of neighbor households have no member currently employed. For those without current employment, they reported multiple reasons for not working, and some reported more than one reason.

MORE THAN HALF (58%) SAID THEY WERE NOT WORKING BECAUSE THEY ARE ILL OR DISABLED AND UNABLE TO WORK.

43.8 percent said they are retired; one in ten (10.3 percent) said they are taking care of their home or family; six percent are going to school; and a small share (4.8 percent) are looking for work or had been laid off.

HEALTH, WELLBEING, AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

The prevalence of chronic illnesses and disabilities is a significant concern, affecting a substantial portion of the population and impacting daily life and overall well-being. Many individuals facing these health challenges often encounter difficulties in obtaining adequate health insurance, further complicating their access to necessary medical care and treatments. *Hunger in Ohio 2024* illustrates the connections between food insecurity and physical and mental health and wellbeing.

THREE OUT OF FIVE (59.3%) OF FOOD PANTRY VISITORS REPORT THAT AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD HAS A CHRONIC CONDITION, INCLUDING 42.9% WITH A DIET-RELATED CONDITION.

LASTING IMPACTS: HOUSEHOLD HEALTH STATUS



34.4%
HAVE AT LEAST
ONE MEMBER
WHO IS
DISABLED



24.4%
HAVE AT LEAST
ONE MEMBER
WITH DIABETES



34.6%
HAVE AT LEAST
ONE MEMBER
WITH HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE/
HYPERTENSION



12.3%
HAVE AT LEAST
ONE MEMBER
WITH HEART
DISEASE/
STROKE



23.9%
HAVE AT LEAST
ONE MEMBER THAT
STRUGGLES WITH
MENTAL HEALTH
OR MENTAL
ILLNESS

THE REALITY: MAKING TOUGH CHOICES



MORE THAN ONE IN TEN (10.2%) OF FOOD PANTRY VISITORS REPORT THAT THEY ARE UNINSURED, A ROUGHLY 50% HIGHER UNINSURED RATE THAN OHIO'S OVERALL POPULATION.

Accessing nourishing food is an important factor for many neighbors seeking food assistance from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks network. Forty-two percent said that one of the most important things to them about their food pantry experience was having foods that support good health.

MORE THAN HALF (57.8%) OF FOOD PANTRY VISITORS REPORTED THAT THEY WERE FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN AFFORDING FOOD OR AFFORDING MEDICINE OR MEDICAL CARE, INCLUDING 25.6% THAT REPORTED DOING SO EVERY MONTH OR ALMOST EVERY MONTH OVER THE LAST YEAR.



SKIPPING MEALS

Researchers and health care practitioners have documented the negative impacts that skipping meals can have on physical and mental health. Unfortunately, *Hunger in Ohio 2024* finds that skipping meals is a commonly utilized coping mechanism for neighbors seeking help from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks network.



NEARLY TWO-THIRDS (65.2%) OF OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS' NEIGHBOR HOUSEHOLDS REPORTED THAT THE ADULTS IN THEIR HOUSEHOLDS SKIPPED MEALS IN THE PAST YEAR BECAUSE THEY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOOD, **INCLUDING MORE THAN A THIRD (34.9%) THAT REPORTED DOING SO EVERY MONTH OR ALMOST EVERY MONTH OVER THE PAST YEAR.**

Consistent access to regular, nutritious meals is vital for maintaining overall health and well-being. Skipping meals can have serious consequences, including reduced energy, impaired focus, and a weakened immune system. Over time, these effects can contribute to chronic health problems such as malnutrition, weight imbalances, and an increased risk of conditions. Of these households, 38% had children who need consistent and stable access to food for their growth and development.

TRADEOFFS AND COPING STRATEGIES

AT SOME POINT IN THE PAST YEAR:



65.2%

CHOSE BETWEEN AFFORDING FOOD **OR** AFFORDING UTILITIES



49.5%

CHOSE BETWEEN AFFORDING FOOD **OR** AFFORDING RENT **OR** MORTGAGE



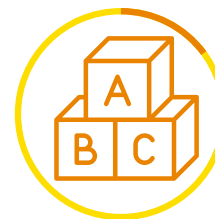
72.5%

CHOSE BETWEEN AFFORDING FOOD **OR** AFFORDING TRANSPORTATION **OR** GAS FOR THEIR CAR



23.3%

CHOSE BETWEEN AFFORDING FOOD **OR** AFFORDING EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES



14.9%

CHOSE BETWEEN AFFORDING FOOD **OR** AFFORDING CHILD CARE

Food is essential not just for survival but for overall well-being, providing the energy and nutrients needed for the body to function properly. Adequate food intake enhances concentration and productivity and is linked to better mental health. However, food insecurity compromises health and quality of life, leading to malnutrition, chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease, and increased stress and anxiety. Addressing food insecurity is crucial for fostering a healthy, productive, and resilient community.

EXPERIENCE WITH CHARITABLE FOOD ACCESS

Hunger in Ohio 2024 sought feedback about the value of charitable food access to Ohioans seeking help from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks network. Some of the most common ways in which neighbors report that free meal/grocery sites have provided value to them include:

- 67.3%** VALUE THAT FOODBANKS HELP THEM HAVE MORE FOOD TO EAT
- 49.9%** VALUE THAT FOODBANKS HELP THEM EAT HEALTHIER FOODS
- 49.2%** VALUE THAT FOODBANKS ALLOW THEM TO SPEND MONEY ON NECESSITIES OTHER THAN FOOD
- 37.6%** VALUE THAT HELP FROM FOODBANKS DECREASES THEIR LEVEL OF STRESS
- 16.5%** VALUE THAT FOODBANKS HELP THEM TO MANAGE THEIR HEALTH CONDITIONS



The study also found that neighbors cited a variety of ways that their experience accessing food from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks network contributed importance to them. Some of the most frequently cited attributes that neighbors find of most value include: Friendly, kind and welcoming staff and volunteers (78.3 percent); Available food that looks fresh and appealing (52.2 percent); Feeling of safety (45.6 percent); Having foods that support good health (42.2 percent); Variety and types of food available (38.5 percent); Food they know how to cook and want to eat (38.3 percent); and Locations that are close to home and easily accessible (34.5 percent).

78.6% FOUND VALUE IN FRIENDLY, KIND, AND WELCOMING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

FUTURE NEED FOR HELP WITH FOOD

On average, Ohio Association of Foodbanks neighbor households

REPORT THAT THEY VISITED AN EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY OR OTHER CHARITABLE HUNGER RELIEF PROGRAM ABOUT 5 TIMES IN THE PAST YEAR.

Older adult households and households with chronic conditions visited more frequently on average.

When asked about how often they expect to need to seek help with food from charitable hunger relief programs in the next 12 months,

ALMOST ALL (89.6%) SAID THEY WOULD NEED HELP AS OFTEN OR MORE OFTEN THAN IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS,

including a third (33.7) percent that said they would need help more often. Just 10.4 percent said they would need help less often in the next 12 months.




OHIO

**ASSOCIATION OF
 FOODBANKS**

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