



Hunger Study 2026 Release Webinar

Wednesday, September 30



**Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing
Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks
and 3,600 member agencies**

WELCOME

Before we begin

Three quick notes for today's webinar.

01 RECORDING & SLIDES

We'll send both to all registrants.

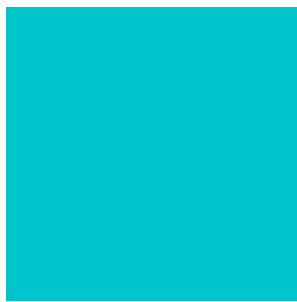
02 NO VIDEO & AUDIO

Cameras and audio are disabled for attendees.

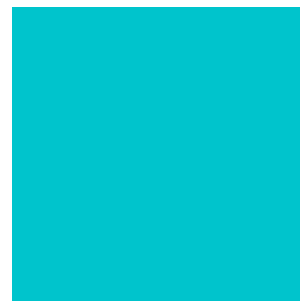
03 QUESTIONS IN Q&A

Please use the Q&A box.

Attendees will learn:



Key findings from the study



Human stories behind the
data



This project's value



How to utilize the data in
your daily work

Who We Are

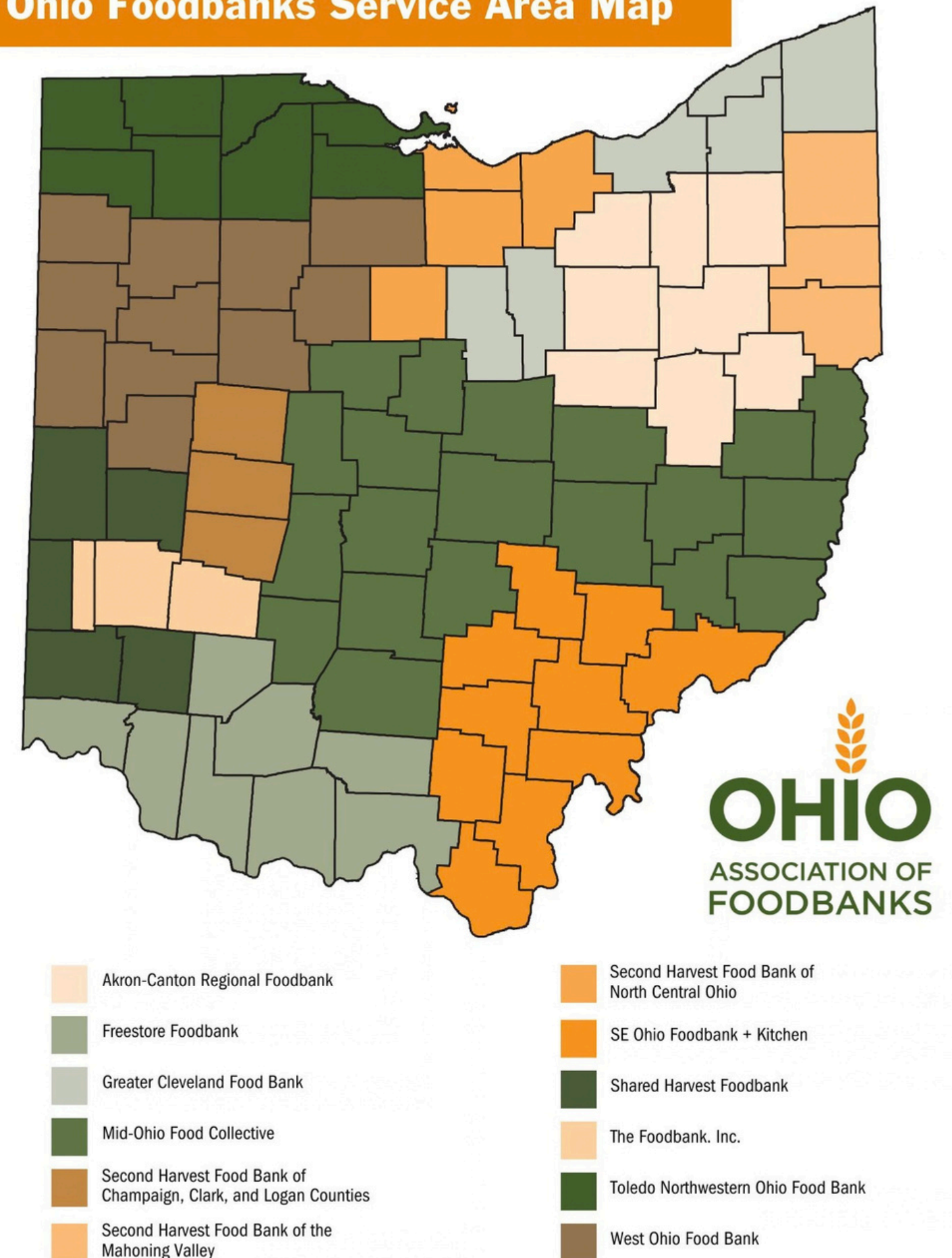
The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger. Our mission is to partner with Ohio's Feeding America foodbanks to source and distribute food to Ohioans and to support policies and programs addressing food insecurity.



The Ohio Association of Foodbanks network includes:

- 12 multi-county Feeding America foodbanks that serve as hubs
- About 3,600 partner agencies, including faith-based food pantries, soup kitchens, backpack programs, and more.
- Hundreds of thousands of volunteers and donors supporting our mission.
- Millions of Ohioans in all 88 counties turning to our network for help in times of crisis.

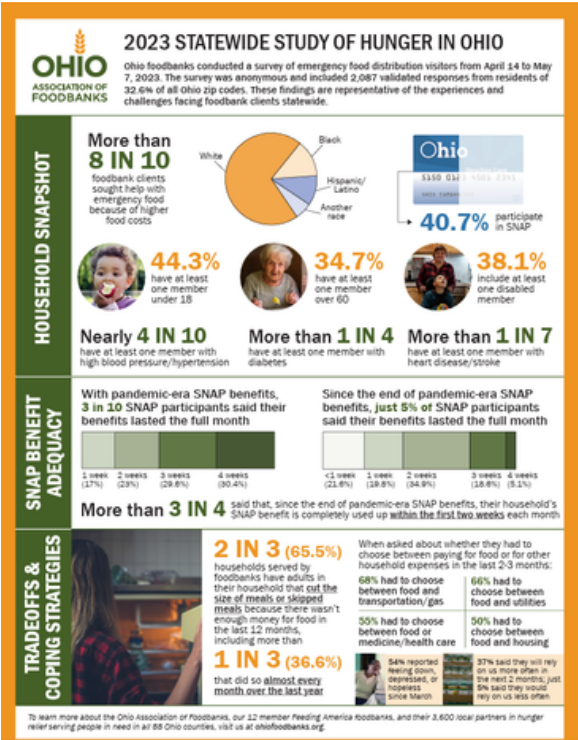
Ohio Foodbanks Service Area Map



History of the Hunger Study

First Hunger Study conducted, 2,087 validated responses collected.

Spring 2023

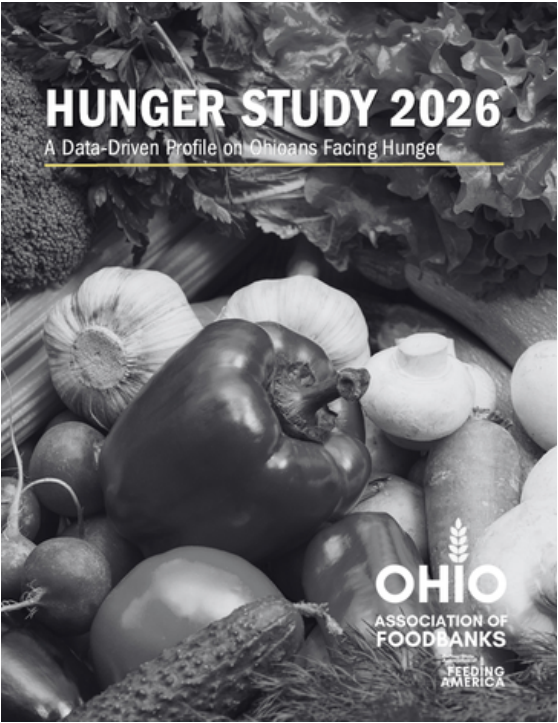


Spring 2024

2nd Hunger Study conducted, 2,301 validated responses collected.

This year's Hunger Study conducted, 2,644 validated responses collected.

Spring 2026



Why we listen: understanding hunger beyond the numbers

01

COUNT & EXPLORE

See how many families are experiencing food insecurity.

02

UNDERSTAND WHY

Track why neighbors' circumstances change over time.

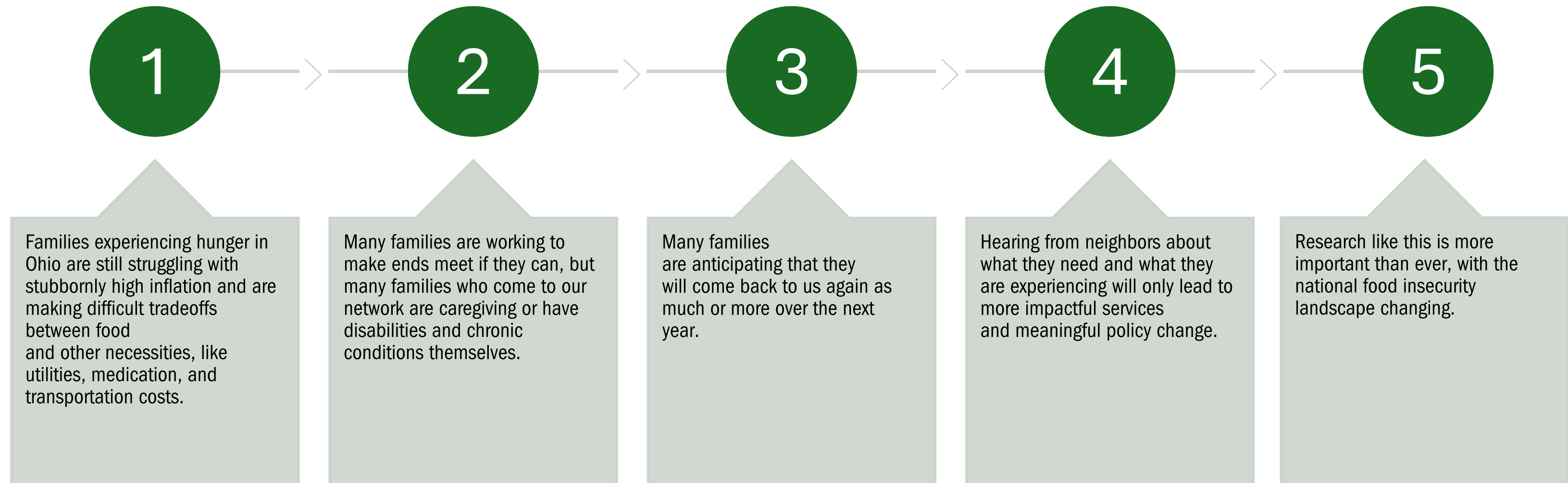
03

ACT

Shape more effective, responsive ways to serve them.

Context turns measurement into better service.

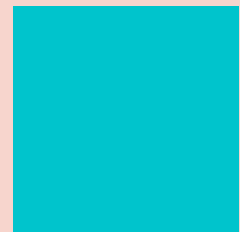
Takeaways from this project



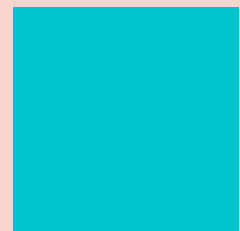
Take Action



Take time to review the report and spread the word about the study and the circumstances that hungry Ohioans are experiencing.



Volunteer at and donate to your local foodbank and food pantry.

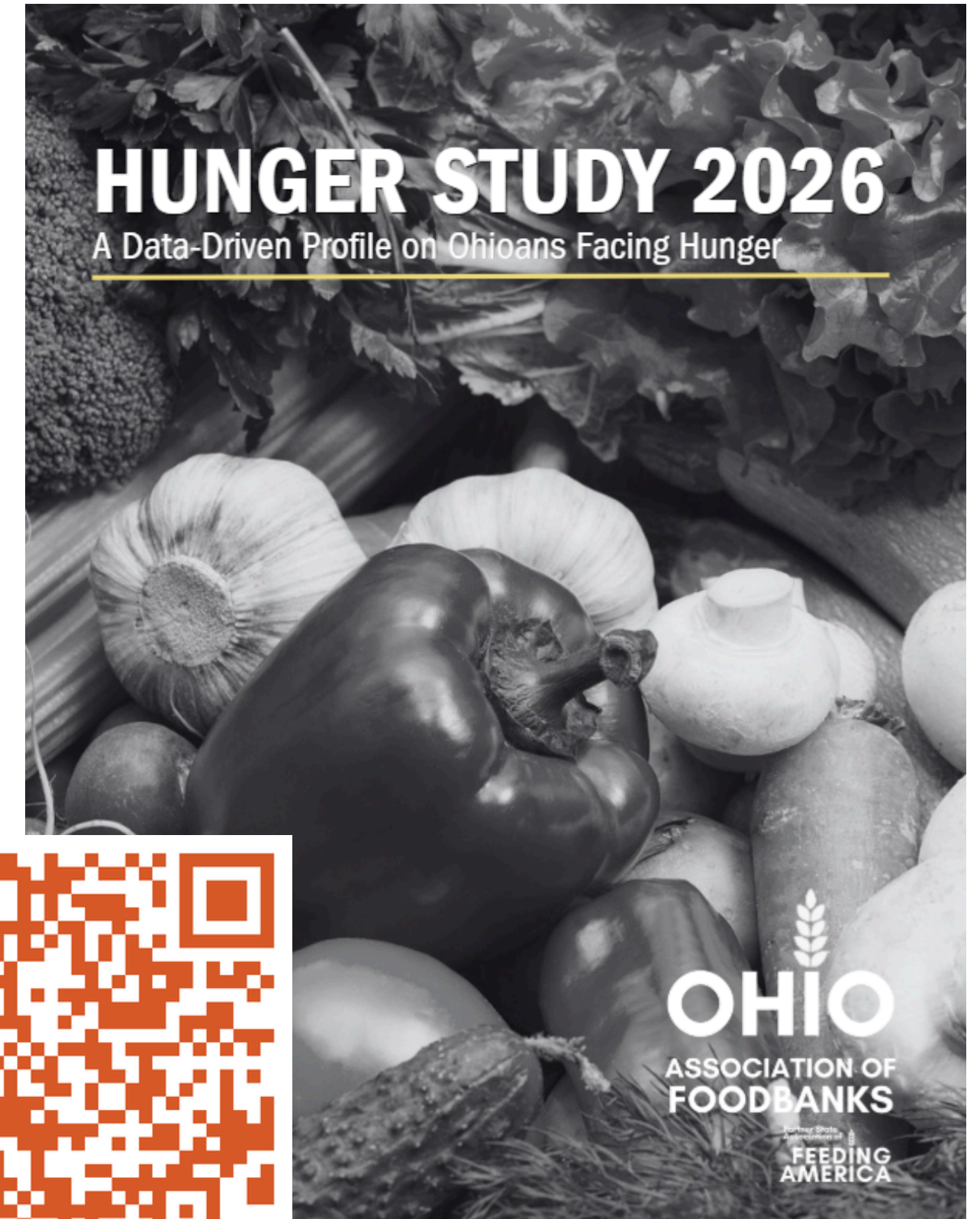


Sign up for updates on OAF's initiative to bring representative food security data to the Ohio Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey.



Learn more about the report!

- The report is live on our website! Visit our Hunger Study landing page to find the following:
 - The full 2026 report,
 - Reports from previous years,
 - Additional data you can use, like our county fact sheets and Map the Meal Gap data,
 - Social media graphics and talking points,
 - And more!



What this study adds

The experience of people
using the charitable food network

2,644

verified survey responses

National surveys put these experiences
in a broader economic context.



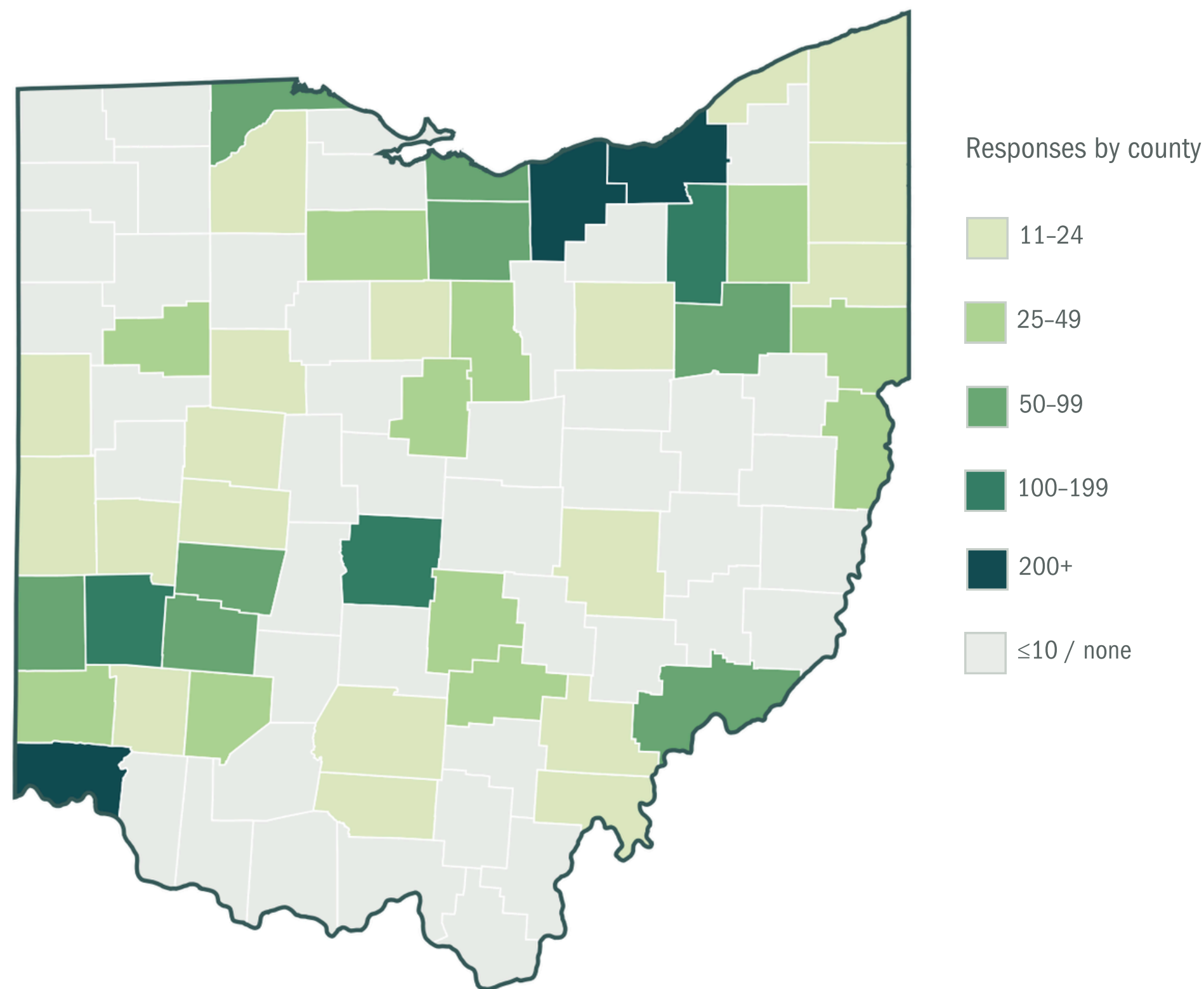
A broad cross-section of pantry visitors

12

foodbanks helped
distribute the survey

77 of 88

counties represented



Work and low income coexist

50%

had an employed household member
in the past year

54%

reported annual income
below \$20,000

29%

took on another job or income source
to make ends meet



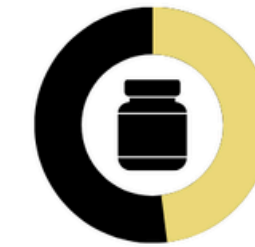
Food competes with essential expenses

63%

chose between transportation
and food in the past year

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Wages are growing and inflation is persistent.



48% of households
chose between affording
medicine or affording food



45% of households
chose between affording rent
or mortgage or affording food

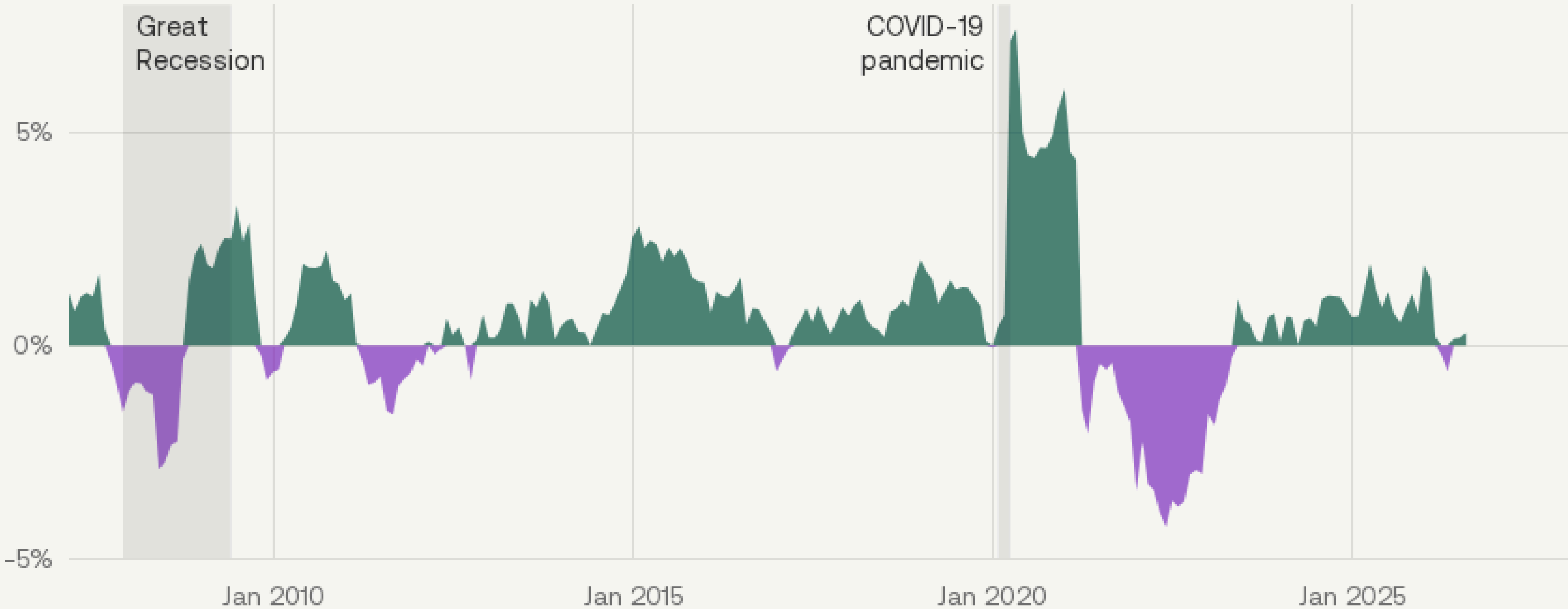


57% of households
chose between affording
utilities or affording food

Between Aug 2025 to Aug 2026, average weekly wages grew faster than inflation.

Difference in year-over-year change of average weekly earnings and CPI, Mar 2007 - August 2026

● Wage growth outpacing inflation ● Inflation outpacing wage growth



Benefits and sudden bills leave gaps

AMONG SNAP RECIPIENTS

78%

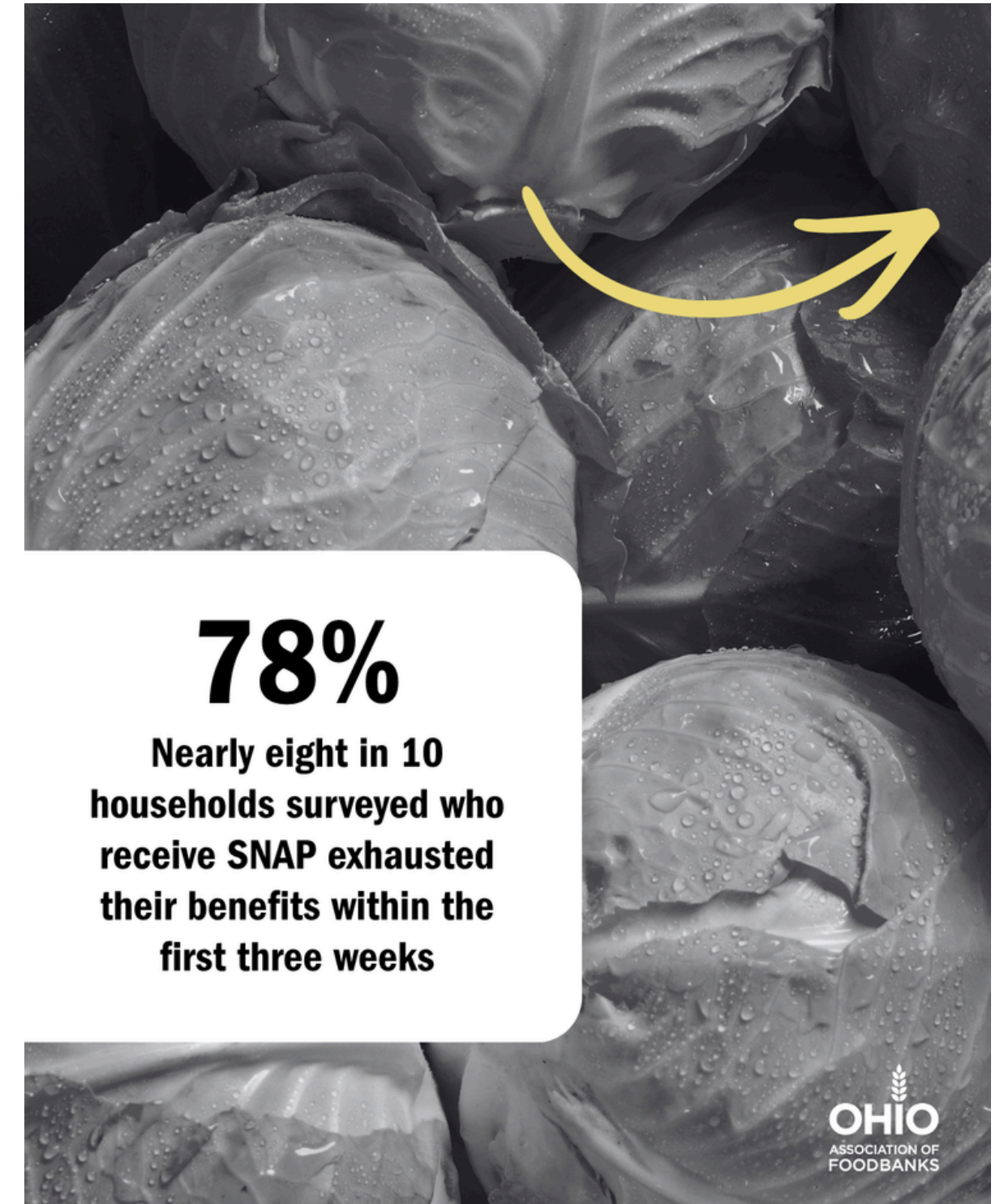
used up benefits within
the first three weeks

45%

of surveyed households
received SNAP

NATIONAL CONTEXT

59% experienced a major unexpected expense in 2025.



78%

Nearly eight in 10
households surveyed who
receive SNAP exhausted
their benefits within the
first three weeks

Health affects both costs and earnings

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT EMPLOYMENT

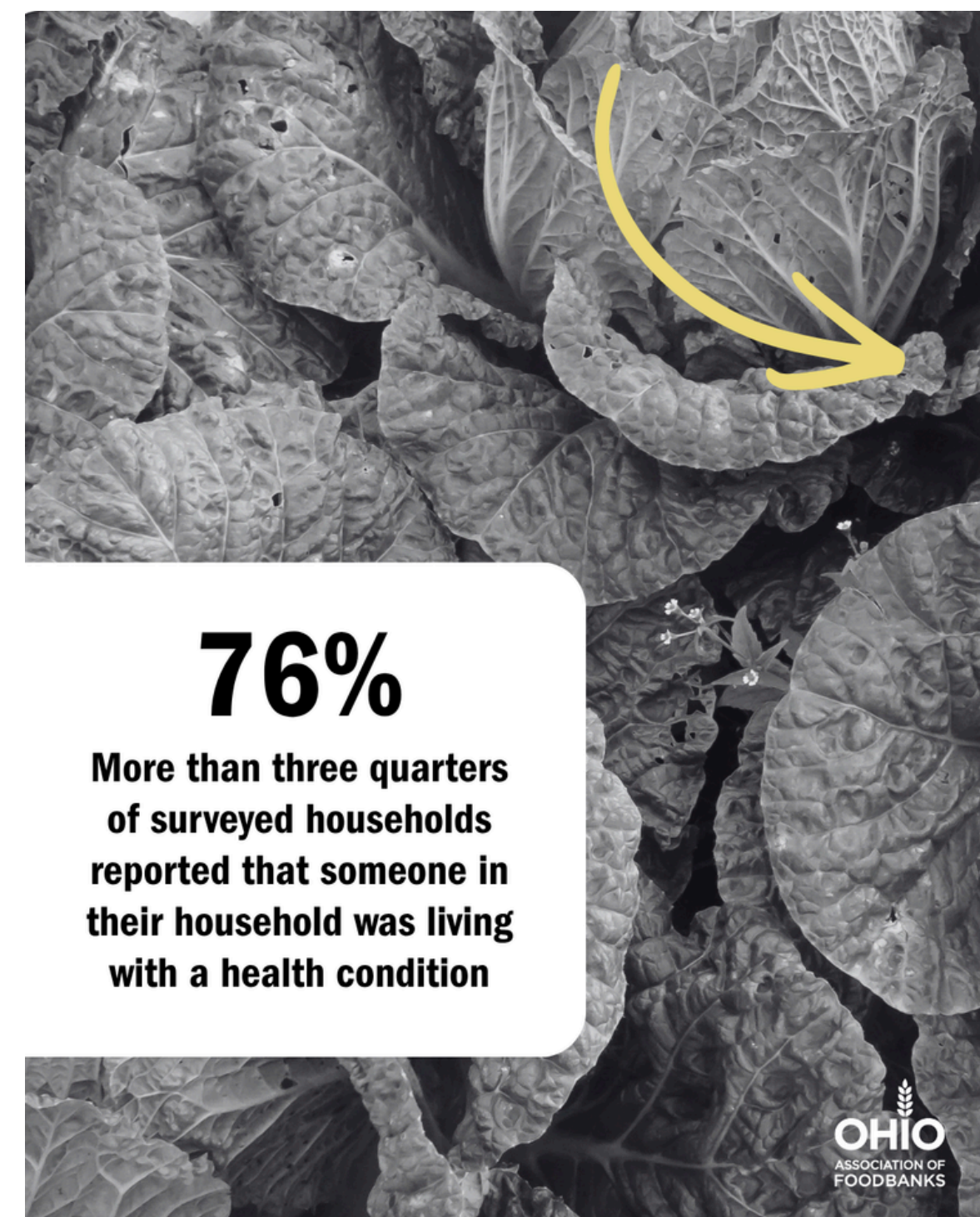
48%

cited illness or disability
as a reason

NATIONAL CONTEXT

15% vs 6%

Food insufficiency among adults
with and without a disability



76%

More than three quarters
of surveyed households
reported that someone in
their household was living
with a health condition

Most expect to need food assistance again

84%

expect to use free food
as often or more often
in the next year

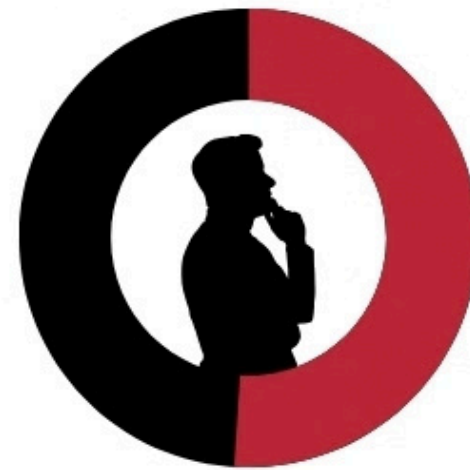
40% more often + 44% about the same



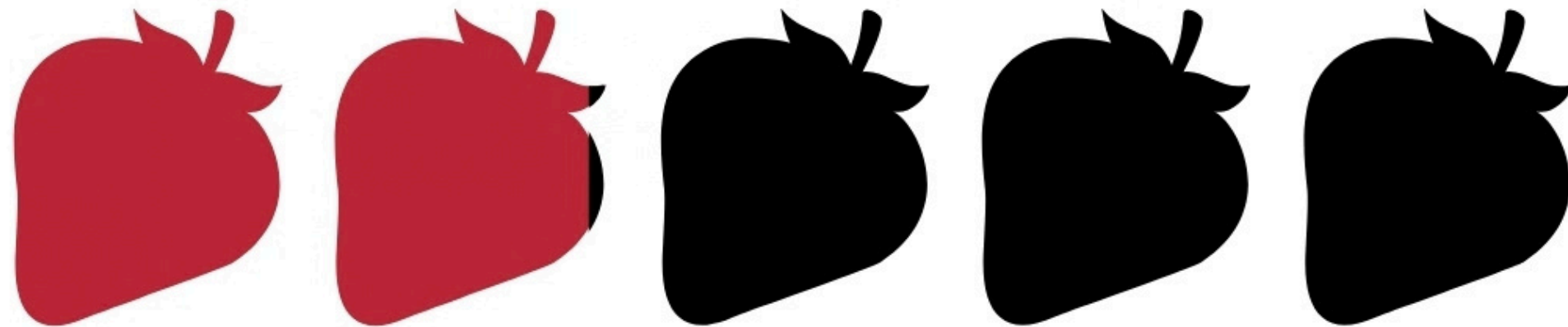
Our network brings value



57% of households reported that having more food to eat was an important value of receiving food assistance



51% of households reported that their decreased stress levels was an important value of receiving food assistance



About two in five households (39%) said that receiving food assistance helped them eat healthier foods.

What changed in this study

9 in-depth interviews bring data to life

- Align closely with other state and nationally representative surveys





SECOND HARVEST
FOOD BANK EST. 1982
OF NORTH CENTRAL OHIO

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

FEEDING
AMERICA

OHIO
ASSOCIATION OF
FOODBANKS

HARVEST
FOR HUNGER

growing
hope

Julie Chase-Morefield

President & CEO



Value of the Hunger Study

- Data-driven approach
- Clear picture of local hunger
- Elevating the voices of neighbors
- Identifying root causes

HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY

In Spring 2024, we participated in a statewide study facilitated by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks to provide a comprehensive demographic profile of people seeking food assistance. The information provided here is a look at our neighbors in Crawford, Erie, Huron and Lorain counties.

2 OUT OF 3 PEOPLE WE SERVE HAVE HAD TO SKIP MEALS

At some point in the last year:



SERVING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

- 24% of people we serve are a race other than White
- 19% of people we serve are Hispanic (9% higher than Ohio average)

SNAP BENEFITS & OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

SNAP is the largest anti-hunger program in the United States.

HALF OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS WE SERVE MAKE LESS THAN \$20,000 PER YEAR.

- 39% of people we serve receive SNAP benefits
- 54% of SNAP recipients report that their benefits last less than 2 weeks
- 88% of SNAP recipients report that their benefits last less than 3 weeks



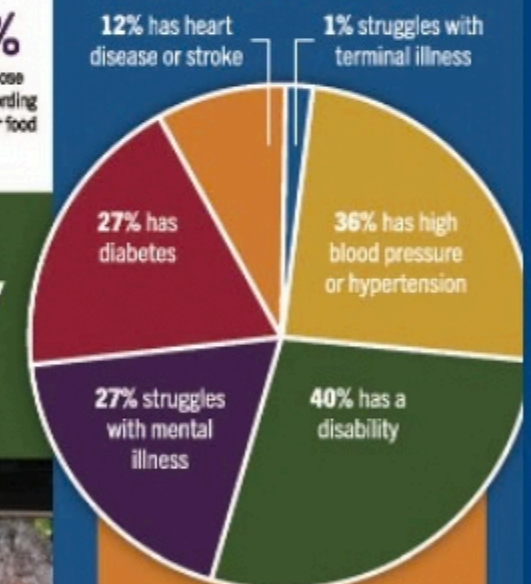
63% OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE ARE WORKING

The main reasons people are not working are illness or disability, retirement, or family caregiving.



80% report having at least one child, senior citizen, or person with a disability in their home.

65% OF HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY HEALTH ISSUES



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HUNGER IN OHIO



Leveraging Data in Awareness & Community Impact

- Connecting neighbor stories
- Strengthening advocacy
- Driving outreach & action
- Reducing misconceptions

Organizational Impact

- Informing our strategic plan
- Guiding program development (Food is Medicine, SNAP Outreach)
- Enhancing grant proposals and fundraising

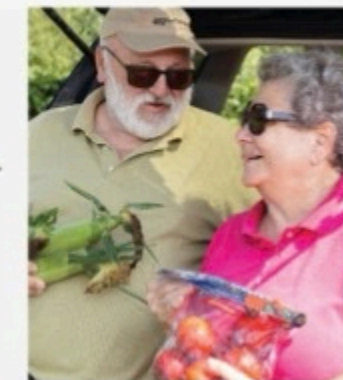


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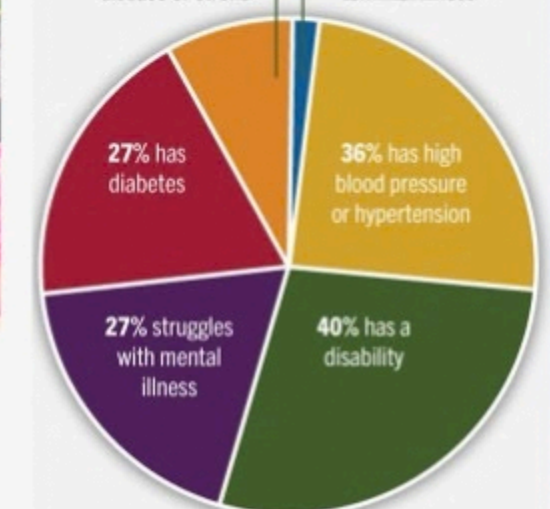
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65% OF HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY HEALTH ISSUES

12% has heart disease or stroke
1% struggles with terminal illness



Adam Jasso

Direct Distribution Coordinator



Aliyah Matthews

Partner Engagement Coordinator



SECOND HARVEST
FOOD BANK EST. 1982
OF NORTH CENTRAL OHIO



Survey Planning & Administration

- **Partner-led approach:** Worked with our Partner Network for the first time to collect surveys, helping make the process feel more like a conversation with neighbors.
- **Strategic participation:** Set realistic survey goals based on statistical relevance, geography, and partner service frequency.
- **Broad community reach:** 11 partner sites + 6 mobile/school pantry sites participated, reaching neighbors where they already access food.
- **Partner engagement:** Nearly every partner invited participated, and some are already planning to use report findings to support grant applications.



Survey Planning & Administration

- **Ongoing support:** Hosted a partner Zoom, provided printed materials, and shared weekly progress updates.
- **Direct neighbor connection:** Surveying at our own distributions allowed staff to listen, answer questions, and hear directly from neighbors.
- **Lessons for the future:** Coordinating across multiple sites required additional communication, but created a strong foundation for future collaborative surveying.

Creating a Safe Environment for Neighbor Participation

- **Prepared partners:** Trained partners on the survey's purpose and how to introduce it clearly.
- **Trusted relationships:** Partner staff helped create a familiar, welcoming environment for neighbors.
- **On-site support:** Second Harvest staff were available to answer questions and assist with participation.
- **Language access:** Bilingual staff and translation services helped remove language barriers.
- **Respectful participation:** Neighbors were given the space to respond honestly and share their experiences in their own words.



Common Themes

- **Survey experience:** Neighbors appreciated receiving electronic gift cards as recognition for the time they shared with us.
- **Trust matters:** Strong partner relationships helped neighbors feel comfortable sharing openly.
- **Neighbors want to be heard:** Participants were eager to share their experiences and help shape our work.
- **Access matters:** Language support and multiple ways to participate helped us reach more neighbors.



The people behind the numbers

9 Ohioans interviewed about experiencing food insecurity

HOW WE LISTENED

01 MIXED FORMAT

A mix of in-person and virtual interviews

02 CONVERSATIONAL

Set questions guided an open conversation

03 CONSENT FIRST

Participants agreed to photos and recordings



What numbers can't capture

We wanted to include long form interviews to understand more about the circumstances causing families to come to us.

LONG FORM INTERVIEWS

WE ASKED QUESTIONS LIKE:

- 01 *"Can you share more about why you went to a food pantry or foodbank in April or May?"*
- 02 *"What are some of the consistent barriers for you to access the healthy food you need?"*
- 03 *"What would you do or what have you done if you are ever met with an unexpected expense?"*

Common themes during the interviews

01 BUDGET PRESSURE

Necessities are increasingly unaffordable, leaving people hyperaware of, and stressed about, their budgets.

02 CAREGIVING & HEALTH

Those not working were often caring for others or managing chronic conditions themselves.

03 FRESH, WHOLE FOODS

Whenever possible, people prioritized fresh, whole foods and appreciated local pantries that provided them.



They are trying to cobble together multiple streams of income

“Our bills added all up is more than what my husband’s making. And what I’m doing with gas prices, its just not coming together. I try to [earn income as a ride share driver] when I can. We’ve pretty much sold a lot of our stuff. So yeah, just doing what we can. I had used up all of my credit limit, and now I’m in debt recovery. It [food insecurity] can happen to anybody. I mean things were going great between both of us working, but life happens and here we are. We’re just trying to make ends meet by whatever means necessary.”

- Ashley, Ashland County, family of 6

Some have incomes too high to qualify for SNAP, but are still struggling

“I have used a credit card to buy groceries in the past, as well as visiting the food pantries. And then applying for assistance, but nine times out of ten, I'm told I don't qualify.”

- Joe, Mercer County



Some are on SNAP but are still struggling to make ends meet

“Once I received my disability, even after paying all my bills and everything else, there’s not a lot left for food. I do get food stamps, but my food stamps went down to \$24 last year and that doesn’t get me much because I have to eat gluten-free for my diet which is more expensive.”

- Joanne, Allen County



But costs have been squeezing all of their household budgets

“So, this year, for the first time, I not only got HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program), but I got emergency HEAP for the first time this year, because my electric bill [was] the highest electric bill that I had ever had. I've lived here for eight and a half years. The highest electric bill I'd ever had was \$139 until this year. And from December, January, February, my electric bill was over \$720.”

- Carol, Sandusky County



They are making difficult decisions

“I have [skipped meals] so much that my kids have noticed... my [oldest] daughter sees it, and she will be like ‘oh well, Ma, is it enough for you? Are you going to eat?’ and that just eats me up so badly. Kids should not have to worry about this.”

- Charmaine, Cuyahoga County



Some come to us during an emergency...

“I have used [the pantry] when I was pregnant and staying at home, and then more recently within the last couple years, we use it kind-of as a Band-aid occasionally when something inevitably goes wrong, like the roof blowing off in a storm... Most recently, this one was because with the transition coming up and then we had some household things happen and medical bills hit, and with [the kids] being off for summer, our bills were so tight, it was less than paycheck to paycheck. I was going to drown if we didn't stick ourselves out a little bit.”

- Karissa, Perry County, family of 7



Some come to us more often

“I felt kind of funny when I first started but it doesn’t bother me now, because it’s helping me. In a way, at least in this economy nowadays, every little bit helps... You can be up on the top of the hill today and at the bottom tomorrow... [the pantry] has come in mighty handy lots of times.”

- Glen, Erie County



They may be caregiving for family after a destabilizing event

“Food insecurity and hunger can happen to anyone. You could be gainfully employed. You could be what you think is happily married. And yet your support system ends in a moment... I was not embarrassed in any way whatsoever to have SNAP. And I have been told, ‘well you should have prepared.’ How do you prepare to have a child who is disabled? And not have an income after that point because one person becomes their caregiver because the sort of caregiving that you need is so expensive, it’s out of reach. You can become disabled very quickly. Your spouse could become disabled and then the state now assumes that you’re their caregiver. So, food insecurity can happen to anyone at any time and not knowing how to utilize whatever resources there are around is really detrimental.”



- Elizabeth, Montgomery County, family of 8

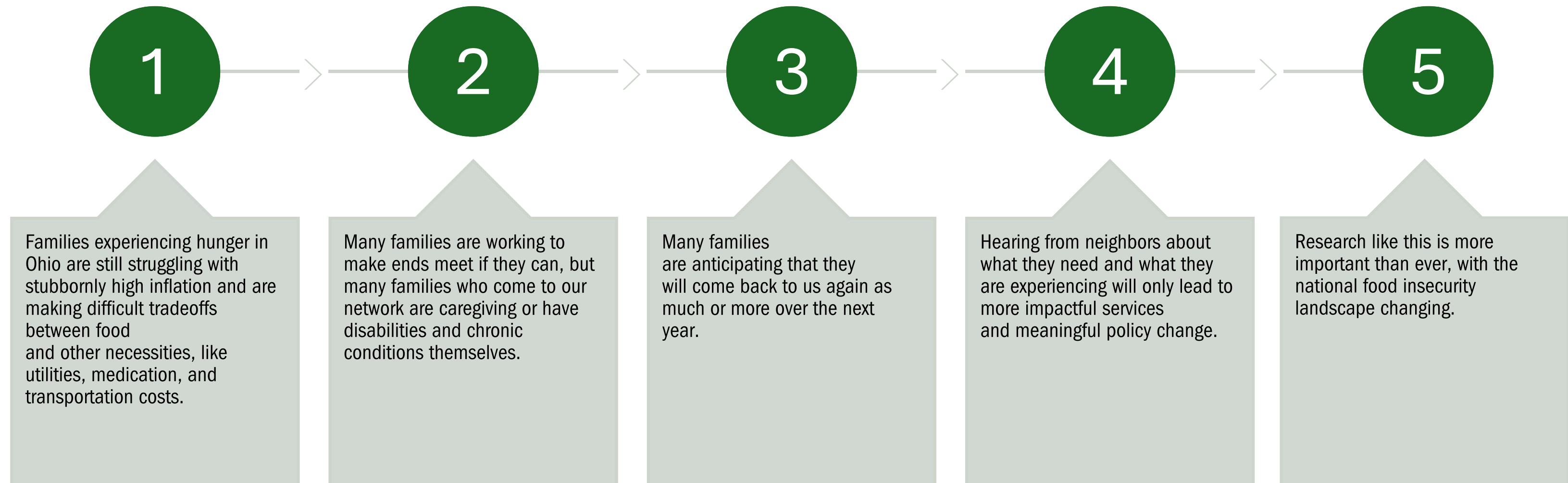
Many appreciated the offerings at their local foodbank or pantry

“Going to the pantry makes [meeting their family’s dietary needs] easier because there’s a large amount of fresh fruits, fresh vegetables that I can always choose from... The foodbank is very much a one-stop shop for me, because I’ll go there for the food... I do like that the foodbank houses other resources; I’ve been able to work on my resume there... it’s a lifesaver.”

- Kiairus, Cuyahoga County



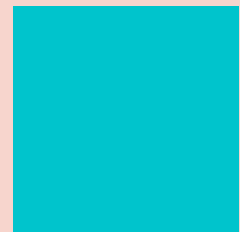
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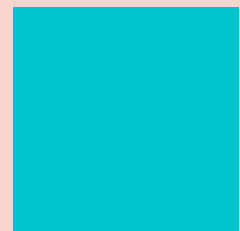
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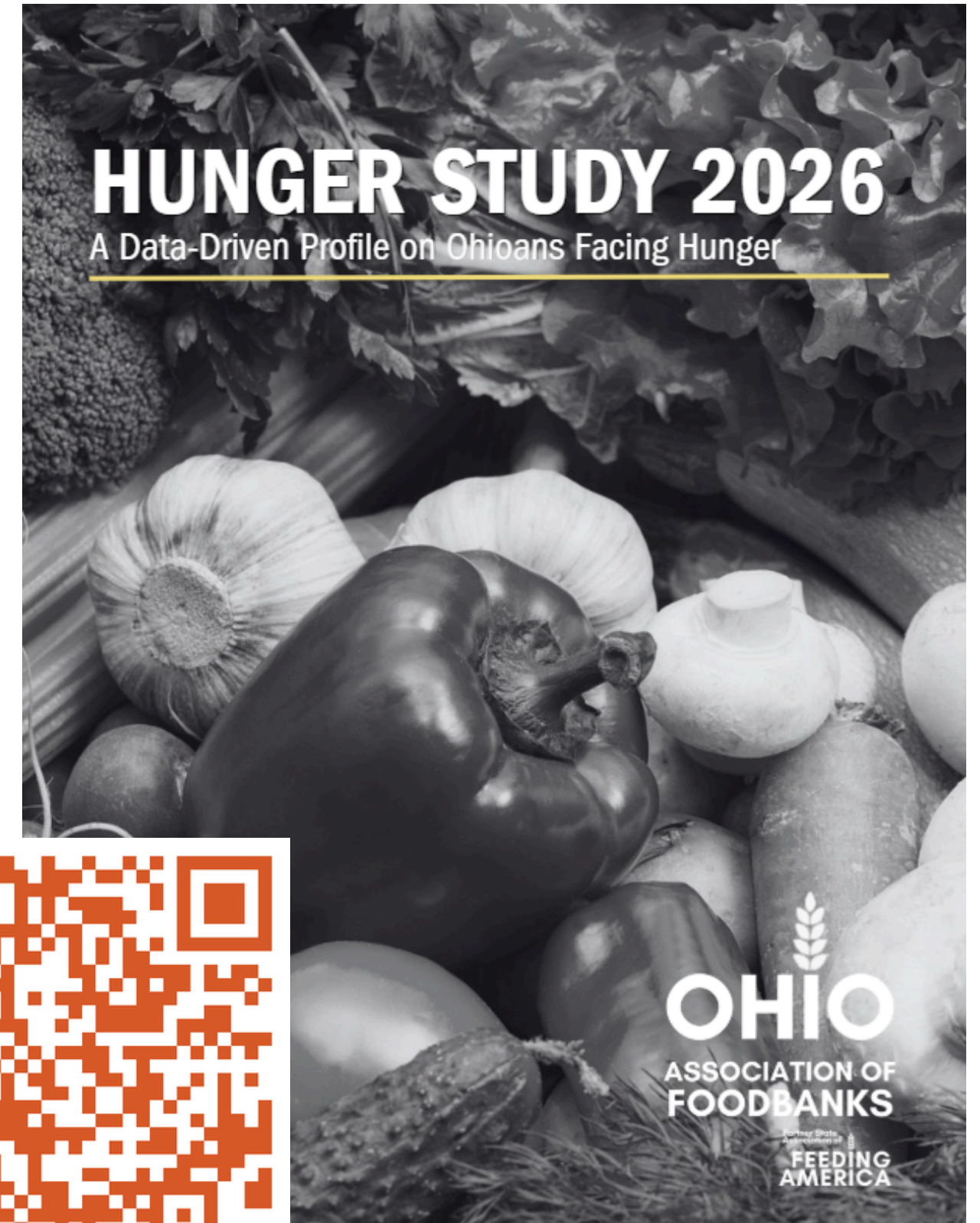


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OHIO
ASSOCIATION OF
FOODBANKS

Questions?

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