



FOOD INSECURITY REACHES EVERY COMMUNITY IN GEORGIA, WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES FACING THE HIGHEST RATE

July 28, 2026 – New data from Feeding America’s *Map the Meal Gap* study helps us understand the challenges families faced in 2024 as more than 8 out of 10 counties with the highest estimated rates of food insecurity nationally are rural—including in the 29 metro Atlanta and North Georgia counties served by the Atlanta Community Food Bank, which sees high food insecurity in Heard, Floyd and Polk counties. In Georgia, 1 in 6 people, including 1 in 5 children, experienced food insecurity in 2024.

The study also revealed that approximately 64% of people experiencing food insecurity in Georgia had incomes too high to qualify for federal nutrition assistance, leaving them without a vital bridge to maintain stability.

As food prices have remained stubbornly high and federal supports have declined, the estimates from *Map the Meal Gap* call for us all to harness our collective power to ensure everyone can access the food they need to thrive.

“More of our neighbors are having to make difficult choices to make ends meet and are struggling to put food on their tables. In our service area, nearly 14% of our neighbors are food insecure,” said Kyle Waide, President and CEO of the Atlanta Community Food Bank. “The *Map the Meal Gap* numbers help us understand the scale of this crisis as we work with lawmakers, donors, suppliers and our partners to ensure that Georgia residents have access to healthy, nutritious food.”

Although USDA has stopped collecting food security data, Feeding America will continue to estimate local food insecurity and meal costs. Moving forward, Feeding America is collaborating as a nationwide network of food banks, food pantries, state-wide associations, and regional co-ops—in partnership with diverse partners—to explore alternative data sources from which to estimate local food insecurity in 2027 and beyond.

The study’s findings show a powerful view of how food insecurity has shaped America. Behind the numbers are the quiet, difficult choices neighbors told us they faced in the *2024 Elevating Voices: Insights Report*, as the high costs of housing and basic necessities made it difficult to access the nutritious food their families needed. In the Atlanta Community Food Bank’s 29-county service area, over 900,000 people, including over 293,000 children, experienced food insecurity in 2024.

Other key findings of *Map the Meal Gap* include:

Food Insecurity by Geography and Demographics:



- 100% of counties and congressional districts are home to people experiencing food insecurity. In the Food Bank's service area, food insecurity among all individuals ranges from a low of 10.2% in Henry County to a high of 20.9 % in Heard County.
- Nationwide, 84% of counties with the highest food insecurity are in the South. This is true in Georgia, which sees counties with high levels of food and security, including Haralson, Hall, Spalding, and Union, right here in the Food Bank's service area.
- Food insecurity also varies for different age groups. Among children, 1 in 5 in Georgia are food insecure, and among seniors, that rate is 1 in 9.
- In the 29 counties the Food Bank serves, the number of children facing food insecurity rose to 19.2% from 16.5% in 2023.
- Food insecurity is experienced by people from all backgrounds and demographics, but disparities exist. Most people experiencing food insecurity nationally are white, non-Hispanic. Individuals who are Black or Latino often face disproportionately higher rates. In Georgia, available data by race/ethnicity shows that 11% of white individuals, 27% of Black individuals, and 19% of Latino individuals experienced food insecurity in 2024.

Food security and income:

- Nationally, half of all people experiencing food insecurity may not qualify for SNAP benefits due to income limits. Here, in the 29 counties the Food Bank serves, more than 68% of people facing hunger may not qualify for SNAP (up from 61% in 2023) and 40% (up from 32% in 2023) of children facing hunger may not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Food spending and prices:

- Individuals who were food secure in 2024 reported spending an average of \$3.70 per meal. Meal costs vary significantly by county throughout the nation, ranging from \$2.56 to \$6.28, showcasing the diverse economic challenges faced by communities. In Fulton County, the average cost per meal is \$4.68, which reflects the growing need we see at the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

The *Map the Meal Gap* study is supported by [Conagra Brands Foundation](#), [Enterprise Mobility Foundation](#), and [NielsenIQ/NIQ](#). Additional key takeaways from the report can be found on the [Map the Meal Gap website](#) along with an interactive map that details food insecurity by geography, income, race, and ethnicity.

Methodology:

Map the Meal Gap uses publicly available data from USDA Economic Research Service, U.S. Census Bureau, and Bureau of Labor Statistics to estimate local food insecurity at the county, congressional district, and state levels. The study also estimates local meal costs and food budget shortfalls using food price data from NIQ, based on USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, and grocery sales tax data for every county and state in the country.



To learn how food insecurity impacts your community, visit FeedingAmerica.org/MaptheMealGap. For more information about the Atlanta Community Food Bank, and how to help end hunger in metro Atlanta and North Georgia, visit acfb.org.

#

About the Atlanta Community Food Bank

The Atlanta Community Food Bank works to end hunger with the food, people, and big ideas needed to ensure our neighbors have the nourishment to lead healthy and productive lives. Far too many people in our own community experience hunger every day. Through more than 700 community-based, nonprofit partners in 29 counties, we help thousands of families, children, and seniors get healthy food every year. Our goal is that all hungry people across metro Atlanta and north Georgia will have access to the nutritious meals they need when they need them. It takes the power of our whole community to make that possible. In 2023, the Atlanta Community Food Bank distributed its one billionth meal. Join us at ACFB.org

About Feeding America

Rooted in the voices of neighbors facing hunger, Feeding America unites the country ensuring everyone has access to food and a thriving future. We support tens of millions of people as part of a nationwide network of 250+ food banks, 20+ statewide food bank associations, 10+ regional co-ops and 60,000+ agency partners, food pantries and meal programs. Powered by leaders and volunteers embedded in local communities, we are one of the nation's most effective food distribution systems driving immediate impact today—and a catalyst for long-term change through advocating for legislation that improves food security and work to address its factors. We partner with people experiencing food insecurity, policymakers, organizations and supporters united with the unwavering commitment to provide nourishing food and work to end hunger at its roots so everyone can live fuller, healthier lives. Visit FeedingAmerica.org to learn more.

Contact

media@acfb.org