



PRESS RELEASE

05/14/2025

For Immediate Release

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FEEDING AMERICA STUDY SHOWS THAT CHILD FOOD INSECURITY AFFECTS EVERY COUNTY IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH RATES AS HIGH AS 50%

Urbana, IL (May 14, 2025) – Child food insecurity affects every county in the United States, with rates reaching almost 50% in some areas, according to Feeding America’s annual [Map the Meal Gap](#) study. At the local level, *Map the Meal Gap* finds that 1 in 6—more than 39,000—children are experiencing hunger. Eastern Illinois Foodbank (EIF) is part of the Feeding America nationwide network of more than 200 food banks, 22 statewide food bank associations and 60,000 agency partners, food pantries and meal programs.

Map the Meal Gap, now in its 15th year, is the only study that provides local-level estimates of food insecurity and food costs for every county and congressional district. The study builds upon USDA’s most recent report of national and state data, which showed 47 million people, including 14 million children, experienced food insecurity in 2023, the highest rate in more than a decade. *Map the Meal Gap* emphasizes the need for the public to join the movement to end hunger.

“The insights from this year’s study will help us address challenges shared with us by people facing hunger and identify opportunities to support the communities we serve and call home,” said EIF President & CEO Kelly Daly. “This is a powerful tool that empowers us to make informed decisions to effectively alleviate hunger at a time of historic need, and help ensure that all of our neighbors, including children, have access to the nutritious food they need to thrive.”

At the local level, *Map the Meal Gap* finds that within EIF’s 21-county service area, more than 143,000 people—13.3 percent of the population—live in food-insecure households. Of those people, nearly 40,000 are children.

Food insecurity rates rose in every county in EIF’s service area; from low to high, these rates were as follows: Piatt (9.9%), Woodford (10.3%), Douglas (11.5%), McLean (11.7%), Cumberland (11.8%), Moultrie (11.8%), Tazewell (11.8%), Jasper (12%), Clark (12.1%), DeWitt (12.4%), Livingston (12.6%), Crawford (13.1%), Champaign (13.9%), Ford (13.9%), Edgar (14.3%), Iroquois (14.5%), Peoria (14.5%), Mason (14.6%), Vermilion (15.5%), Clay (15.8%), and Coles (16.5%).

Other key findings include:

- Food insecurity impacts communities in every county, parish and congressional district in the U.S. Food insecurity is experienced by people from all backgrounds and demographics, but disparities exist.
- Estimated food insecurity levels vary across the country, influenced by income-related factors, like unemployment, poverty, high cost of living; community- and health-related factors; and systemic barriers to opportunity that have created disparities in food insecurity.
- Nationwide, nearly 9 out of 10 high food insecurity counties are rural, indicating regional disparities.



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- Nationally, more than 2 out of 5 people facing hunger may not qualify for SNAP benefits due to income limits. In eastern Illinois, more than 44% of people facing hunger may not qualify for SNAP and 29% of children facing hunger may not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
- The national food budget shortfall, which reflects the extra money that people who are food insecure report needing to cover their food needs, is \$32 billion. This translates to \$22.37 a week per person, on average. Residents of Woodford County feel this firsthand, with an estimated food budget shortfall of \$26.16.
- Individuals who were food secure in 2023 reported spending an average of \$3.58 per meal. Meal costs vary significantly by county throughout the nation, ranging from \$2.60 to \$6.09, showcasing the diverse economic challenges faced by communities. In McLean County, the average cost per meal is \$3.66, and in Woodford County, the average cost per meal is \$4.19, which reflects the growing need we see at Eastern Illinois Foodbank.

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 Eastern Illinois Foodbank and how you can help alleviate hunger, visit eifoodbank.org.

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About Eastern Illinois Foodbank

Eastern Illinois Foodbank (EIF) works to alleviate hunger in eastern Illinois as the primary food source to a network of 160 food pantries, agencies, and other programs throughout our 21-county service area. Through these agencies, the Foodbank provides meals to more than 1 million people each year. Since 1983, EIF has led the fight against hunger and strengthened communities by providing food access, emergency relief, education, and advocacy to families in east-central Illinois. EIF is a member of Feeding America, Feeding Illinois, the United Way of Coles County, and the United Way of Champaign County. For more information, visit eifoodbank.org.

About Feeding America

Feeding America is committed to an America where no one is hungry. We support tens of millions of people who experience food insecurity to get the food and resources they say they need to thrive as part of a nationwide network of food banks, statewide food bank associations, food pantries and meal programs.



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We also invest in innovative solutions to increase equitable access to nutritious food, advocate for legislation that improves food security and work to address factors that impact food security, such as health, cost of living and employment. We partner with people experiencing food insecurity, policymakers, organizations, and supporters, united with them in a movement to end hunger. Visit feedingamerica.org to learn more.