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Ohio Hunger Factors Index Reveals Why Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Ohio Continues to be Severe Despite Recent Economic Improvements

COLUMBUS – Three key economic variables were identified by Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap analyses and economist Howard Fleeter as being linked to food insecurity. Those variables, including median household income and the rate of poverty and unemployment, are analyzed in the annual [Hunger Factors Index](#) released today by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks.

“We are seeing food insecurity rates and participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program remain high in Ohio, in spite of overall economic improvement in the state,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “Many of the more than 3.8 million Ohioans living in households with incomes below the self-sufficiency level are struggling to afford food on their own, and the Hunger Factors Index reveals some of the reasons that many of those households are being left behind.”



Ohio Hunger Factors Index
Economic Indicators Influencing Hunger, 2007-2013

	2000	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Hunger Factors Index †	7.06	8.96	9.64	12.98	13.77	14.00	13.45	13.02
Median Income*	\$47,854	\$46,597	\$46,214	\$43,873	\$42,875	\$42,170	\$42,290	\$42,794
% Poverty	11.1%	13.1%	13.4%	15.2%	15.8%	16.4%	16.3%	16.0%
% Unemployment	4.0%	5.6%	6.6%	10.2%	10.0%	8.7%	7.4%	7.4%

Prepared by Howard Fleeter, 2014. † Index combining Ohio’s economic indicators (median income, poverty, and unemployment). An index value of zero would represent no poverty, no unemployment, and an Ohio median income equal to that of the 2007 national average. * Median income is adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2007 dollars. Data from 2000 is included to provide a benchmark for the state of Ohio’s economy prior to the recession of 2001.

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks, in conjunction with Feeding America, prepares a study of Hunger in Ohio every four years. The Ohio Hunger Factors Index specifically provides a way to evaluate how the underlying factors that influence hunger and food insecurity have changed on an annual basis. The lower the index value, the better the economic conditions, while the higher the index, the worse the conditions have become since the Great Recession.

In 2013, Ohio’s Hunger Factors Index value was 13.02. Comparatively, the index value in 2007, prior to the recession, was 8.96. The 2013 value, which remains much higher than pre-recession levels, indicates that the needs of those individuals who suffer from the effects of food insecurity and hunger continue to be severe despite recent economic improvements.

“More than 2 million people relied on our hunger relief network for food last year,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “That’s the reality. Two million people had no choice but to wait in our pantry lines to keep food on their tables. Household incomes are stagnant for workers earning low wages, and that means food is sacrificed when the rent or mortgage is due, utility bills climb and medical costs stack up.”

[View the full 2007-2013 Hunger Factors Index](#) to learn more and read the complete analysis.

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 2014, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 186 million pounds of food and grocery items. The association also serves as the home of The Ohio Benefit Bank and operates the state’s largest navigator program for the Affordable Care Act. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

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