

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS

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New Data Shows Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Ohio Remains High, Federal Nutrition Programs Remain Vital *New Polling Data Shows Continued Public Support for SNAP*

COLUMBUS – New data [released today by the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service](#) indicated the continued prevalence of food insecurity in Ohio and across the nation. Nationally, 14.9 percent of American households were food insecure at least some time during the year, meaning that food intake was reduced and eating patterns were disrupted because the household lacked money and other resources for food. In Ohio, 15.5 percent of households were food insecure, including 6.4 percent who experienced very low food security.

The data came as no surprise to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger.

"From April 1 to June 30 this year, Ohioans made 2,122,023 visits to food pantries to secure the basic necessity of food for themselves and their families," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the association. "Our emergency food assistance network is there as a last-resort for Ohioans when all of their other resources have been exhausted, and yet we continue to see record high demand. Sadly, food insecurity is a reality for nearly one in six households in our state."

In 1996-98, less than one in ten households—9.7 percent—experienced low food security, and just 3.5 percent experienced very low food security. Since then, low food security in Ohio has increased by 59.8 percent, and very low food security has climbed by an alarming 88.6 percent.

Key points from the *Household Food Security in the United States in 2011* report:

- Ohio's low food security rate of 15.5 percent is above the national average of 14.7 percent and ranks the state 11th in the nation.
- Ohio's very low food security rate of 6.4 percent is above the national average of 5.6 percent and ranks the state 8th in the nation.
- Nationally, 57 percent of all food insecure households participated in one or more of the three largest federal nutrition programs (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program) during the month prior to the survey.
- Nationally, the typical food-secure household spent 24 percent more for food than the typical food-insecure household of the same size and composition, *including* food purchased with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly called food stamps).

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) released [new polling data](#) today that demonstrates an overwhelming majority who oppose cuts to SNAP. When asked "this year, Congress will consider cutting billions of dollars from the food stamp program in an effort to reduce federal spending. Do you favor cutting food assistance to low-income families and seniors, or do you think that is the wrong way to reduce government spending," 75 percent say it is the wrong way to reduce spending.

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Support for the SNAP program specifically and opposition to SNAP cuts are high among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

“Today’s food insecurity data and polling data show that proposals for SNAP cuts are a ‘two-fer’ of wrong thinking—a bad policy idea and a very unpopular idea. Americans oppose cuts to SNAP, and they believe the government should—and must—do more to address hunger,” said FRAC president Jim Weill.

In June 2012, 1,790,592 Ohioans—or 15.51 percent of the state’s population—relied on SNAP benefits to supplement their food purchasing resources, receiving an average monthly benefit of \$137. Yet many of those households still struggled to secure adequate amounts of food.

“Our network of Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks and more than 3,300 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other hunger-relief agencies cannot respond to the severity of this continued crisis alone,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “Federal nutrition programs like SNAP are vital to nearly one in six people in our state. Without SNAP benefits, our charitable network would crumble under the demand for basic help and many Ohio households would go hungry. It is unacceptable that so many in Congress want to cut SNAP and harm the most vulnerable among us—seniors, working families and children. We urge Congress to reject these cuts and preserve the strong structure of SNAP.”

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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 2012, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 164 million pounds of food and grocery items. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#), and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

About the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS)

The ERS mission is to inform and enhance public and private decision making on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural development. The ERS is a primary source of economic information and research in the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](http://www.usda.gov). Visit ERS online at www.ers.usda.gov.

About the Food Research and Action Center

FRAC is the leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to end hunger and undernutrition in the United States. Visit FRAC online at www.frac.org.

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