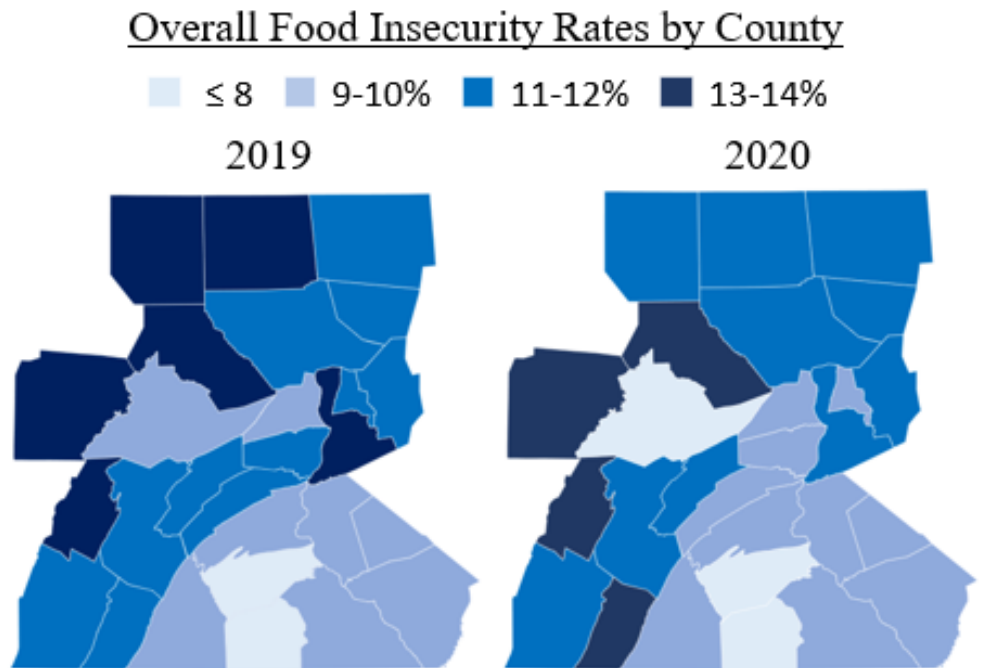


This report examines 2020 food insecurity rates in the 27 counties served by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank (CPFEB) and how these rates have changed since 2019 using newly released Feeding America data. This report is best seen as a backwards-looking report at food insecurity in the CPFEB’s service territory in 2020; the data and conclusions written below are *not* reflective of the current food insecurity situation as of July 2022.

**Food insecurity in Central Pennsylvania Food Bank counties dropped slightly overall in 2020, due to the strong governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- The fall in food insecurity and poverty in 2020 demonstrates the ability of the United States to lower food insecurity rates through strong public policy and programmatic responses. This indicates that public policy is critical to make significant strides toward the Feeding America network goal of a 5% food insecurity rate.
- Unfortunately, because of the volatile and unpredictable economic situation in last two years, 2020 rates were likely lower than current 2022 food insecurity rates.
- The CPFEB and its partner agencies have seen a large rise in demand for charitable food assistance amid high inflation and the expiration of most pandemic supports, like the expanded Child Tax Credit. This increase is likely a leading indicator that there has been a recent rise in food insecurity.



**Food insecurity rates across the CPFEB’s service territory dropped from 10.0% in 2019 to 9.8% in 2020. The number of food insecure people correspondingly dropped by 6,440 in 2020, from 304,560 to 298,120.**

- Rural counties in the north and western parts of the CPFEB’s service territory continue to have the highest food insecurity rates. However, they also saw the largest decrease in food insecurity rates in 2020, from 12.1% to 11.7%, compared to a drop in urban counties from 9.5% to 9.3%.
- Juniata, Perry, Sullivan, Centre, and Potter counties each saw food insecurity drop by over 10%. While Dauphin and Fulton counties were the only counties to experience an increase in food insecurity.
- The decrease in food insecurity rates in CPFEB counties were driven by a drop in adult food insecurity numbers. There were 7,770 fewer food insecure adults in 2020 than 2019.

## Food Insecurity Rates and Numbers in CPFB Counties

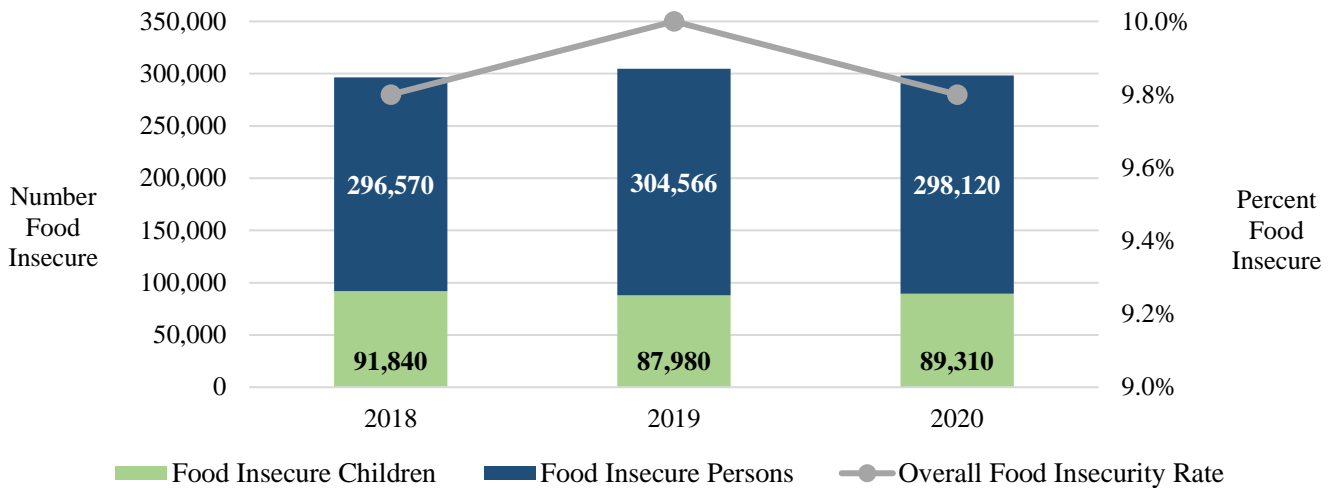
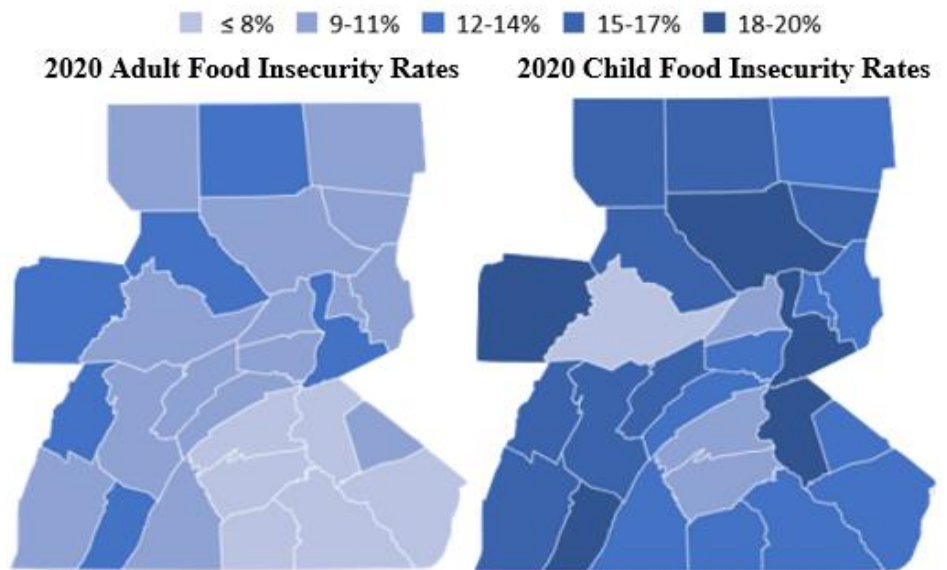


Figure 1. Food insecurity rates and the number of food insecure children/persons between 2018 and 2020 for counties served by the Central PA Food Bank. Data is from the Feeding America Map the Meal Gap model.

**The number of food insecure children rose slightly in 2020, from 87,980 to 89,310. The child food insecurity rate rose from 13.6% to 13.9% and was 60% higher than the 8.7% rate among adults. The below maps show the disparities in food insecurity at the county level.**

- The differential adult and child outcomes in 2020 were again a result of policy decisions. The expanded Child Tax Credit, which specifically targets households with children, was not put in place until the second half of 2021.
- The three highest child food insecurity rates were found in Clearfield, Dauphin, and Lycoming counties, which saw rates of 18.9%, 18.8%, and 18.0%, respectively. That equates to almost 1 in 5 children facing food insecurity in those counties.



**Food insecurity rates of Black and Hispanic individuals were triple that of white, non-Hispanic individuals.**

- Among Black and Hispanic individuals in the CPFB counties in 2020, the food insecurity rates were 22% and 21%, respectively, while among white, non-Hispanic individuals the rate was 7%.
- Black and Hispanic individuals make up only 11.4% of the total population but are disparately impacted by food insecurity. Together, Black and Hispanic individuals account for nearly 25% of food insecure people.

- Only 11 of the 27 CPFV counties had sufficient data to determine food insecurity rates for Black individuals. Adams County had the lowest rate of food insecurity among Black individuals at 16% while Lycoming County had the highest at 34%, which are nearly 3 and 4 times higher than white households.
- There are 19 counties for which Hispanic food insecurity rates could be calculated. In 2020, Huntingdon County had the lowest rate of food insecurity among Hispanic individuals at 15% while Union had the highest at 33% which were nearly 2 and 5 times more than their white counterparts, respectively.

### 2020 Food Insecurity Rates by Race/Ethnicity

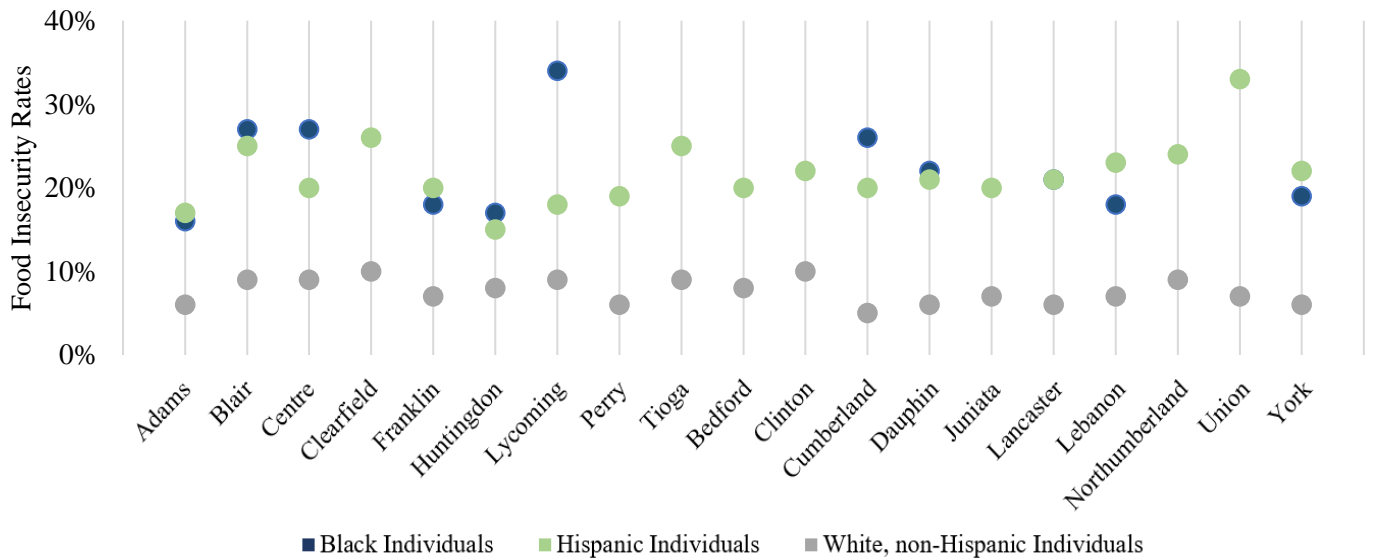


Figure 2. The chart displays the food insecurity rates among Black, Hispanic, and White, non-Hispanic individuals in Central Pennsylvania Food Bank Counties that have data available. Data used in this chart is from the 2022 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap model.

### Over half of food insecure people have incomes at or below 160% of the federal poverty line (FPL,) meaning that they are likely eligible for SNAP in Pennsylvania.

- However, 45% of food insecure individuals do not qualify for SNAP. This demonstrates the continued importance of the charitable food system for filling the significant remaining gaps in food assistance.
- Over 25,000 food insecure people likely do not qualify for SNAP but now qualify for TEFAP and SFPP.
- More than 100,000 additional food insecure people do not qualify for government food assistance at all. The extent of food insecurity among people with incomes above 185% FPL indicates the importance of addressing the benefits cliff and expanding eligibility rules for programs, such as school meal programs.

### Food Insecure Population Share by Income Threshold

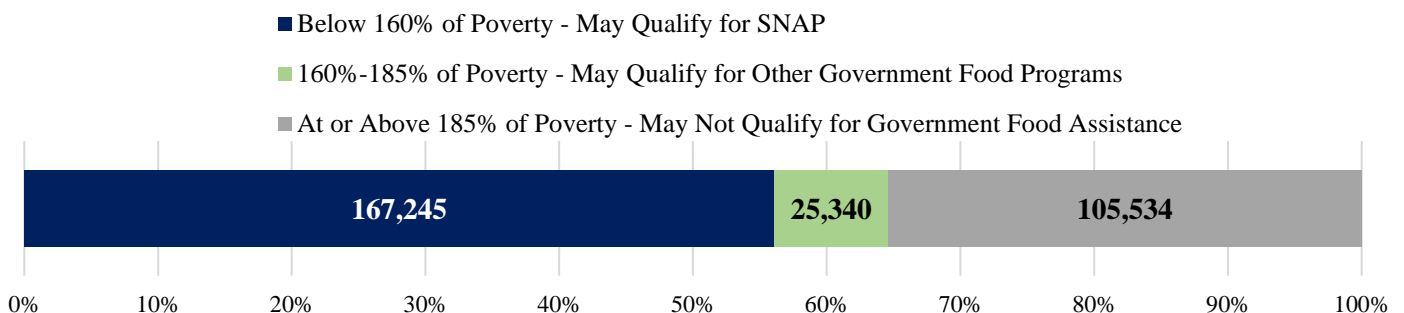


Figure 3. The chart shows the percent and number of food insecure people by income thresholds in all of the Central PA Food Bank service territory. Data used for this chart is from the 2022 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap model.

**Methods and Data:** This report is an analysis of the change in the food insecurity situation between calendar year 2019-2020 using the 2022 Feeding America *Map the Meal Gap* model, which estimates food insecurity based on its relationship to multiple demographic and socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, median income, homeownership rates, and disability status. The current data reveals that food insecurity in the United States, in Pennsylvania, and in the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank’s service territory in 2020 was not as severe as initially predicted, due to the governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> The assistance from the government through the CARES Act and other similar legislation improved the food security rate compared to pre-pandemic levels in some areas.

**Important Note on State-Level Food Insecurity Rates:**

The headline state food insecurity rate dropped significantly from 10.6% to 8.9%. However, the aggregated county-level estimates result in a Pennsylvania 2020 food insecurity rate of 10.7%, a slight increase from 2019.

- This large discrepancy is due to unavailability of 2020 unemployment data for congressional districts (due to complications from the COVID-19 data) which form the basis of the typical statewide estimate. As a result, Feeding America reverted to using 2016-2020 5-year unemployment averages for congressional districts, which are then aggregated to the statewide data<sup>2</sup>.
- However, 2020 unemployment data was available for each county in Pennsylvania. This means that the aggregated county-level estimate of a 10.7% food insecurity rate for the state of Pennsylvania in 2020 is a more consistent and reliable estimate than the 8.9% statewide headline rate.

***Therefore, while a quick comparison of food insecurity rates in the CPFEB service territory (9.8%) compared to Pennsylvania (8.9%) seems to indicate that the CPFEB service territory now has higher food insecurity rates than the state, that is very misleading. The comparable state food insecurity rate is 10.7%.***

In fact, rather than losing ground relative to the state of Pennsylvania, food insecurity rates in the CPFEB service territory did just the opposite. The CPFEB service territory was the only Food Bank service territory in Pennsylvania to see a slight drop in food insecurity rates.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Impact of the Coronavirus on National Food Insecurity in 2020 & 2021. Feeding America. March 2021.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2022 Technical Brief.](#)