

DAUPHIN COUNTY COMMUNITY HUNGER MAPPING:

*IDENTIFYING LOCALIZED FOOD ACCESS GAPS AND
INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF INTERSECTING ISSUES
FOR THE CHARITABLE FOOD SYSTEM*



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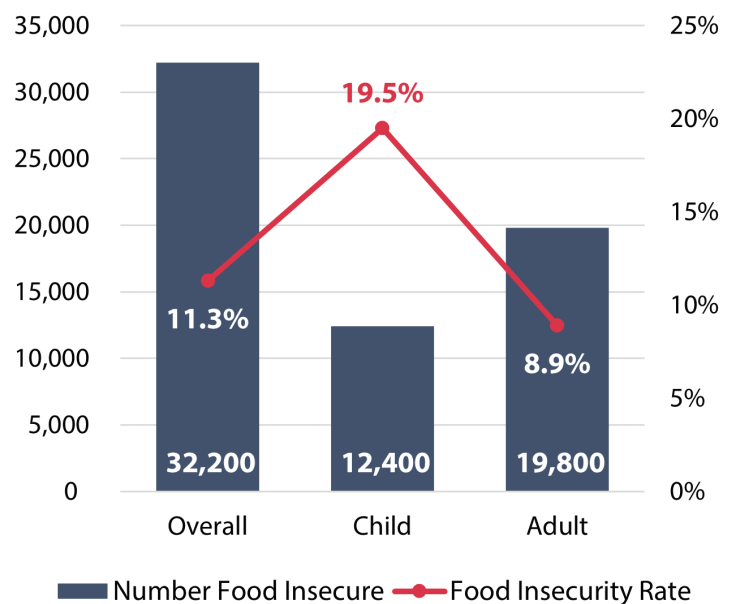
INTRODUCTION

More than 32,000 residents of Dauphin County face food insecurity, as of Feeding America's most recent Map the Meal Gap estimates. Of these food insecure residents, two in five are children, and one in three lives within Harrisburg city limits. The burden of not knowing from where the next meal will come weighs upon every neighborhood and municipality across the county; however, this burden is unevenly spread across the county and its citizens depending on demographics, geography, and a host of other factors.

"Most of the people here are kind and sweet. Some of them know our personal situation and always ask. They've helped us with our bills."

– Pantry Visitor

Dauphin County Food Insecurity Rate and Number Food Insecure by Age (MMG 2022)



This Community Hunger Mapping report seeks to more deeply understand the dispersion, experience, and root causes of food insecurity across and within Dauphin County in a detailed, nuanced, and compassionate manner. To depict the landscape of food insecurity and the charitable food network's response to it, this report centers the thoughts of neighbors experiencing food insecurity as gathered through surveys conducted at food pantries and other community resources throughout the county as well as one-on-one interviews. As part of a unique analysis designed for this report, several interviews were conducted on site at soup kitchens to better understand the experiences of unhoused individuals who interact with the charitable food system.

The views of charitable food providers are also included via surveys and listening sessions, and for the first time in a Community Hunger Mapping project, Central Pennsylvania Food Bank (CPFNB) researchers visited every pantry in the county to collect observational data about their physical and emotional environments. Quantitative analyses of public and privately available data also appear throughout this report to provide crucial perspective. This comprehensive, mixed-methods approach to the project makes it the most vibrant, complete portrait of a local charitable food network to date.



Considering the scale and complexity of food insecurity within Dauphin County, those who wish to address and alleviate it must gain deep insight into its reality, but insight is not enough to create change on its own. This report makes specific, actionable recommendations to improve the experiences of food insecure neighbors in the short term and to end hunger in the longer term.

Implementing the recommendations in this report and creating change will require intentional, sustained, collaborative work by a wide variety of stakeholders within Dauphin County, including food bank and pantry leaders, municipal, county, and state governments, anti-poverty social service organizations, healthcare providers, concerned citizens, and many more. Throughout this collective effort, the charitable food network supporting Dauphin County's most vulnerable citizens will build on its existing strengths while addressing inequities and seeking the continuous improvement needed to build a future where no one goes hungry.

The main research questions that this report seeks to address are as follows:

1. What is the extent of food insecurity in Dauphin County, and where in the region is it concentrated?
2. Who in Dauphin County is most impacted by food insecurity? How do food insecurity rates and the main drivers of food insecurity differ by age, race and ethnicity, or other factors?
3. How accessible is charitable and retail food throughout Dauphin County and how does access vary in different areas of the region? How does access vary, if at all, by demographics?
4. What barriers do neighbors face in accessing charitable food services? Where do food distribution and access gaps exist in Dauphin County? What is the neighbor experience at food pantries like?
5. What are utilization rates of key government nutrition-related assistance programs and how do they vary across the county? What is the charitable food system's role in this space?
6. What other issues impact food insecurity in Dauphin County? What can the charitable food system and other relevant stakeholders do to better address the root causes of food insecurity?



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Food Insecurity Landscape in Dauphin County

About one in nine residents of Dauphin County (32,200 individuals) faces food insecurity. In alignment with trends seen nationally, food insecurity has increased around 30% in Dauphin County since 2022 and has likely risen further since, meaning that the scope of the challenge the charitable food network faces is growing.

Food insecurity impacts every single municipality across Dauphin County; therefore, an effective response to the food insecurity situation requires concerted and sustained action from stakeholders across the entire county. There are, however, significant differences in food insecurity by age, race and ethnicity, and place across the county; so, to make the most impact, action must be tailored to the needs of each locale and demographic.

Food insecurity rates are highly disparate by race in Dauphin County. Hispanic and Black households are two and a half to three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic households to face food insecurity, with 24% and 27% rates respectively, compared to just 9% among non-Hispanic white households.

Child food insecurity is particularly severe in Dauphin County. A staggering one in five of the county's children experiences food insecurity, meaning that more than 12,000 children are uncertain from where their next meal will come. Children make up nearly 40% of the food insecure population and are 120% more likely than adults to experience food insecurity in Dauphin County. This percentage is a colossal differential and the second highest difference in child and adult food insecurity of any county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The data shows the incredible importance of ensuring children and households with children have sufficient access to the resources they need to thrive.

Major differences in food insecurity by location exist across Dauphin County, although areas classified as having High Food Insecurity (food insecurity rates between 12% and 15%) exist in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Areas of Severe Food Insecurity (food insecurity rates of 15% or more) are concentrated in Harrisburg, southern Middletown, northern Derry Township, and the census tract covering Wiconisco and Williams Townships, along with Lykens and Williamstown boroughs, as shown in the map at right.

Harrisburg has the most severe food insecurity situation of any municipality in Dauphin County by a wide margin. The city of Harrisburg is home to less than a fifth (17%) of the total population of Dauphin County but nearly a third (30%) of the food insecure population. As shown in the map below, nine of the fourteen census tracts in Harrisburg fall into the Severe Food Insecurity typology, and six have food insecurity rates of 20% or more. No other municipality in the county has even one census tract with rates that high.

Harrisburg also has outliers, even above the 20% threshold; the census tract covering South Harrisburg, the neighborhood that lies below Interstate 83, has a food insecurity rate of 37%, meaning that two in five residents have uncertain access to food. This is by far the highest food insecurity rate of any tract in all central Pennsylvania, as it is above the tract with the next highest rate by more than ten percentage points. More than 2,000 food insecure individuals call South Harrisburg home.

The depth and severity of food insecurity in Harrisburg was also reflected in the primary data collection process. Countywide, 41% of food pantry visitors experience very low food security, the most severe form of food insecurity. Very low food security corresponds with a regular reduction in the quantity of food people eat due to a lack of money with which to purchase more food. Pantry visitors in the city had by far the highest rates of very low food insecurity in the county at 52% compared to 35% in suburban and rural areas. Again, South Harrisburg is an outlier, even in an area of severe food insecurity; visitors to the pantry in South Harrisburg had the highest very low food security rates of any surveyed pantry at 66%.

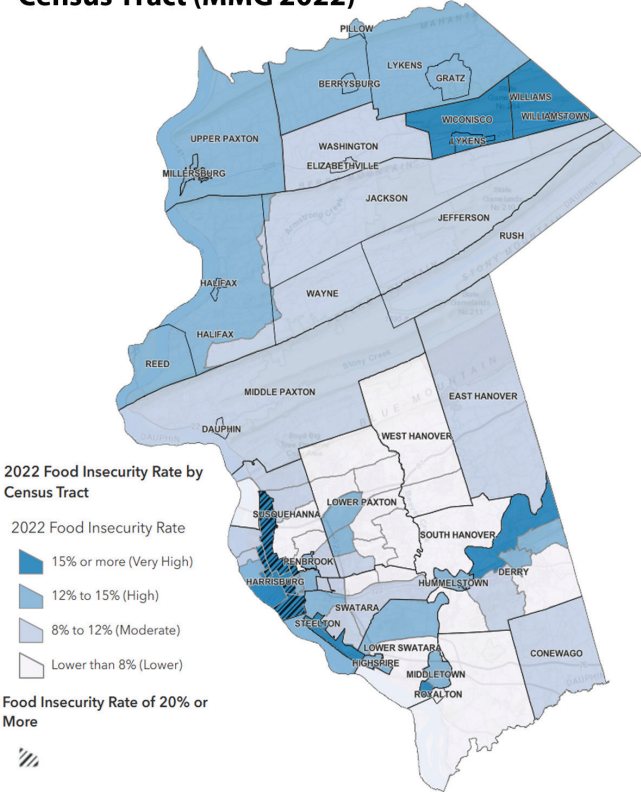
Additionally, there were disparities in the experiences and severity of food insecurity by household type across Dauphin County. Pantry visitor households with children and working-age households without children have the highest rates of very low food security, at 43% and 50% respectively compared to 30% for senior households.

Addressing Very Low Food Security in Dauphin County

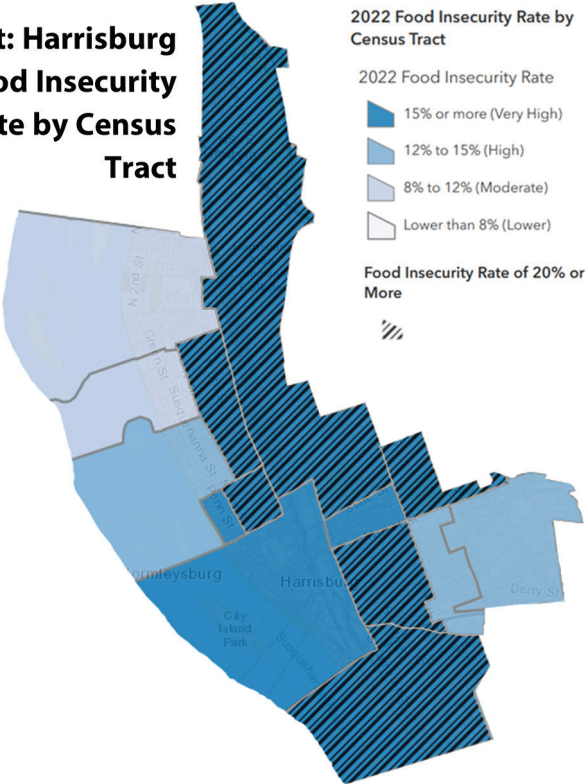
Very low food security is the best measure for the actual experience of hunger, so reducing very low food security represents a north star for the charitable food system, governmental stakeholders, and other community members and institutions to work towards in the long run. This report outlines three different pathways through which stakeholders across a variety of different sectors can work to reduce very low food security among Dauphin County residents. These pathways are:

- 1) Strengthening the charitable food system, as it is the lowest barrier social service provider and the final line of defense against hunger. The charitable food system in Dauphin County significantly reduces very low food security for Dauphin County pantry visitors, with each successive visit resulting in fewer experiences of hunger.
- 2) Increasing participation in well-targeted and underutilized government programs, especially those targeted towards children and households with children. WIC participation reduces experiences of very low food security among pantry visitors.

Dauphin County Food Insecurity Rate by Census Tract (MMG 2022)



Inset: Harrisburg Food Insecurity Rate by Census Tract



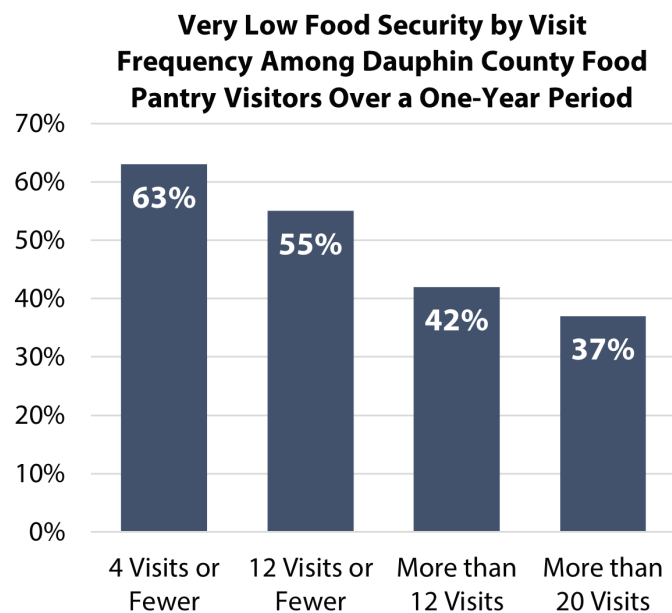
- Addressing key upstream and intersecting issues using the respective comparative advantages of a variety of stakeholders across the county. Income, disability status, chronic health conditions, and financial access are strongly associated with lower very low food insecurity rates.

Pathway 1: Strengthening the Charitable Food System

Key Finding 1: Reducing Very Low Food Security

The charitable food system in Dauphin County reduces very low food security through each visit neighbors make to pantries, with a greater difference made among those who visit more. Very low food security drops from 63% among pantry visitors who visit once every three months or less (4 times or fewer in the last year), to just 37% among pantry visitors who visit around 2 times per month or more on average (20 times or more in the last year).

This finding represents the most important strength of the charitable food system because it shows that despite all the challenges facing the charitable food system in Dauphin County, pantry providers reduce hunger meaningfully among pantry visitors.



Other major strengths of the Dauphin County charitable food system include excellent geographic access to pantries across most of the county, robust pantry opening hours including “off-hours” distributions in the evenings and weekends accessible to most county residents, and strong access to choice pantries across much of the county. While there is always room for improvement on these and other best practices, Dauphin County starts from a position of strength in many major access dimensions.



There are, however, several large opportunities for growth in key areas of access to the charitable food system that can magnify the impact of charitable food providers in reducing very low food security further. These opportunities include addressing less tangible elements of the pantry environment, like the neighbor experience and consistency in pantry adherence to compliance guidelines, as well as more concrete adjustments such as diversifying and improving food offerings and investing in pantry capacity.

Key Finding 2: Neighbor Treatment

Staff and volunteers are critical to the operation of the charitable food system, and interactions between staff/volunteers and pantry visitor neighbors are largely positive. Neighbors often report staff and volunteers going above and beyond to help them in difficult situations and how positive interactions with staff and volunteers make the pantry experience better.

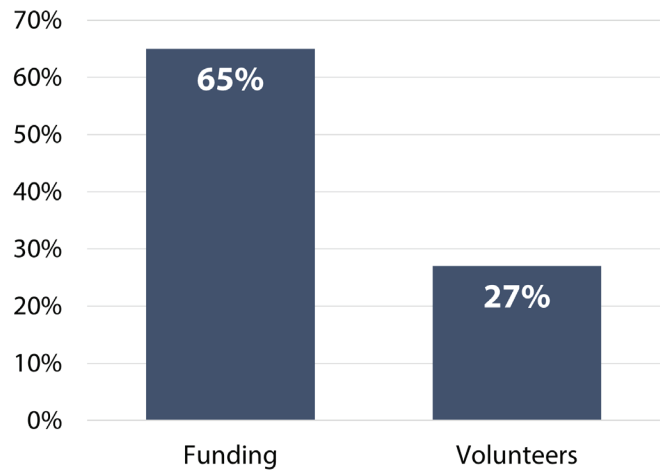
Unfortunately, there are also many negative interactions reported by neighbors at pantries; these unpleasant experiences can make people less willing to seek help. Feelings of judgment at pantries in Dauphin County averaged 7%, which is higher than in other counties where surveys have been completed. Neighbor treatment issues and conflict were severe at times in some Dauphin County pantry locations. These instances of poor treatment, stigma, and judgment likely stem at least in part, or are intensified by, a disconnect in the meaning and role of the food pantry to pantry workers and pantry visitors. Pantry staff and volunteers often view their work as simply a kind deed for their community, while pantry visitors frequently substantially rely on pantries as a main source of the food they need to feed their families.

The significance of interactions between pantry workers and pantry visitors, and the room for them to improve, indicates the importance of ensuring everyone at food pantries is treated with dignity and respect. Strategies to help pantries provide a high level of service include requiring pantry workers to attend trauma-informed care training and taking care to place volunteers and staff in roles in which they can succeed. Pantries should also work to reduce potential pain points that may arise from complicated intake practices and be worsened by inconsistent or inaccurate adherence to compliance standards.

Key Finding 3: Compliance Practices

Many pantries have a wide variety of restrictions for neighbors that go beyond allowable practices from the USDA and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, including strict documentation requirements for neighbors such as presenting photo IDs (required by 52% of pantries) or proof of residence like utility bills (required by 44% of pantries) at the point of service. Other non-compliant restrictions include refusing service to those who reside outside of a service territory and preventing caretakers from bringing children into the pantry.

Most Pressing Needs for Dauphin County Pantry Providers - Percent Reporting



Pantries across the county must ensure their practices are consistent with food bank and government program compliance standards not only because they are required to do so, but also because doing so increases the ability of charitable food providers to reduce very low food security. There are no requirements to receive government-supported pantry services other than a completed self-declaration of need form. All other document requirements must be optional. Additionally, children must be allowed to accompany their caretakers into pantries. This is of particular importance in Dauphin County as households with children are disproportionately likely to face food insecurity and make up around half of all pantry visitors.

Key Finding 4: Language Accessibility

Language barriers can be a significant hurdle for pantry visitors across the county. Because Dauphin County is incredibly diverse, more than 10 distinct languages are spoken among pantry visitors; Spanish is the most common besides English. Language barriers can magnify small misunderstandings about rules or pantry operations into larger conflicts and may cause pantry visitors to miss out on services they want or need.

It is important that all neighbors be set up to have an easily navigable pantry experience, regardless of their preferred language. Ways to increase accessibility could include posting signs in multiple languages and/or with easily understandable symbols, using interpretation services when possible, and offering intake forms in multiple languages. Pantries report Spanish-speaking volunteers as a major need, and multilingual, culturally competent pantry workers can make huge a positive difference to the neighbor experience.

Key Finding 5: Pantry Capacity

Food pantries across Dauphin County report struggling with insufficient resources, in terms of both funds and volunteers to serve neighbors. Nearly two thirds of pantries reported funding as their biggest issue, and neighbors noted that their pantries work hard to provide high-quality services despite facing many constraints. One neighbor shared, “The only thing I ask is that... If they can receive more things to be able to help us with, then they would have more to give us.” Pantries do all they can with limited capacity and funds, but they need more support; increasing pantries’ access to support will take concerted effort from all the county’s stakeholders. State and federal programs, such as the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), have not kept up with increased demand for food pantries, further stressing strained food pantry budgets.

The second biggest capacity constraint for pantries is a lack of volunteers. Volunteers are a critical piece of the charitable food system, but many pantries report not having enough to operate fully, let alone expand hours or availability. Volunteering is one of the most important ways community members can participate in the charitable food network, but volunteers and pantries finding each other is a challenge. The creation of a centralized volunteer portal could potentially provide a low-friction way for interested members of the public and pantries in search of volunteers to match with one another.

Additionally, Dauphin County is the only county in the region without a Food Policy Council, and this gap represents a significant opportunity to increase collaboration and support for increasing food access across the county. Pantries expressed appreciation for the chance to listen to and learn from each other during the hunger mapping research process and excitement about future opportunities to continue doing so, but other stakeholders are key constituents for food access as well.

Pathway 2: Increasing Participation in Well-Targeted Government Programs

Government programs, such as WIC, school meal programs, SUN Meals (summer meal programs), and SNAP, all provide substantial support to neighbors facing food insecurity. Dauphin County overall has very strong participation in government programs, especially for SNAP, in which it has the second highest participation rate in Pennsylvania. Given the high rates of food insecurity among the county's households with children, the best-targeted opportunities to increase food access through key government programs lies in WIC, school meals, and summer meals.

Key Finding 1:

WIC outreach is a critical tool that can be used to support the populations most likely to face very low food security in the parts of Dauphin County with the most severe food insecurity rates. WIC reduces very low food security by more than 20% among likely-eligible pantry visitor households, but less than a third (32%) participate in WIC, with participation rates among Hispanic households especially low at 24%.

The ZIP Codes with the largest participation gaps are all in Harrisburg and its suburbs (17104, 17109, and 17103), with 17104 alone having nearly 40% of the county's total participation gap. There are major opportunities for increased outreach collaboration between the WIC office and pantries, including with WIC mobile clinics, which are a proven way to increase access to and uptake of the program.

Key Finding 2:

Dauphin County schools have strong participation in meal programs, but there are more than 20 schools, most of which are middle or high schools, that have breakfast participation rates at or below 25%, despite it being universally free to all students. Research shows that alternative breakfast models are effective ways to increase breakfast uptake, but they are underutilized at these schools.

Key Finding 3:

Food insecure children are especially vulnerable in the summertime, when school is closed and school meals are not available. SUN Meal programs exist to fill this gap, but access to sites is limited in parts of Dauphin County. Areas of opportunity include placing traditional congregate meal sites Steelton-Highspire School District and parts of Lower Dauphin School District and offering rural non-congregate services in much of Northern Dauphin.

Pathway 3: Addressing Key Upstream and Intersecting Issues

The most important upstream and intersecting issues identified by Dauphin County food pantry visitors included limited income and low wages, housing insecurity, chronic health conditions, financial access, and transportation. Each of the factors is examined in-depth in the report.

Key Finding 1:

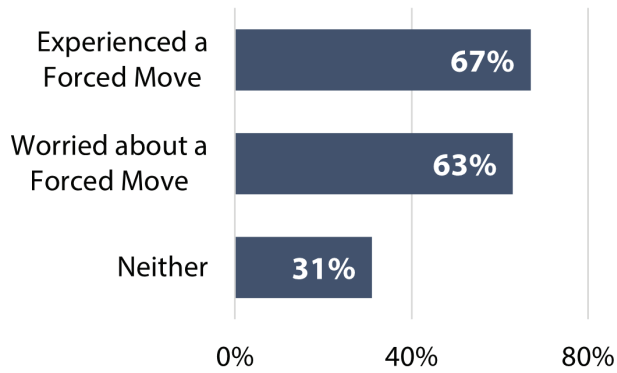
Income is the most important determinant of food security status nationally and among pantry visitors in Dauphin County, with the primary issues being low wages, irregular work, and the inadequacy of benefits rather than unemployment. Most pantry visitors who can work, do work, but over half of all full-time workers report earning less than the poverty level for their household size. For most workers, a poverty-level threshold works out to wages of \$11.50 an hour or less. Disability is one of the biggest risk factors for food insecurity, both for households receiving Disability or SSI and for those who report disability as the main barrier to work but do not receive benefits.

Key Finding 2:

Housing and housing-related expenses like utilities are the number one tradeoff with food reported by pantry visitors. Forced moves are also a major issue that disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic households, especially those living in the city of Harrisburg.



Very Low Food Security by Forced Move Status Among Dauphin County Pantry Visitors



Around a third (31%) of pantry visitors in Harrisburg are worried about a forced move and 14% have experienced one. These are the highest rates of forced moves found in any county where Community Hunger Mapping has been completed. Forced moves have a strong association with very low food security status, as two thirds of households who have experienced are worried about a forced move also experience very low food security.

Key Finding 3:

Housing precarity, defined as living situations that are doubled-up, sleeping rough, or in a shelter, is one of the most direct determinants of very low food security status, with households in precarious housing situations facing very low food security rates of 57% compared to 41% overall. Unhoused households in Harrisburg report that food is accessible to them via a number of providers across the city and that these providers treat them with dignity and respect, but they still assume a variety of risks when accessing these resources. Housing is critically important to making measurable progress to reducing very low food security among these households.

Key Finding 4:

Vehicle access is one of the most common barriers to both pantry access and employment cited by pantry visitors in Dauphin County, with more than half of pantry visitors in Harrisburg reporting a primary means of transportation other than a car, and many reporting difficulty accessing employment opportunities as a result.

Key Finding 5:

Half of all food pantry visitor households have at least one individual facing a chronic health condition, with 45% of pantry visitor households managing high blood pressure or diabetes. The charitable food system should continue to strengthen its partnerships with health providers across Dauphin County, as food insecurity and health have intersecting and additive interactions.

Addressing the Pathways through Stakeholder Partnerships and Unique Roles

This report demonstrates that each stakeholder across the county, regardless of sector, has an important role to play in working to reduce hunger, especially given the enormous scope and depth of food insecurity in Dauphin County and its myriad, multifaceted causes. Stakeholders each have unique relationships and positionalities within the county that bring with them a variety of comparative advantages to address the different issue areas illuminated in this report.

Neighbors view the charitable food system as one of the lowest barrier social service providers, and pantries are often the first places people turn to when they need help. Pantries should lean into this status and make every effort to be trusted institutions within their communities. Along with food banks and other stakeholders in the charitable food system, pantries are positioned to play a unique, leading role in pursuing each of these three pathways to reduce food insecurity and eventually end hunger.

More information about each of the three pathways can be found in Section 2 (strengthening charitable food services), Section 3 (increasing utilization of government programs), and Section 4 (addressing key upstream and intersecting issues) of this report, while Section 1 provides an overview of the food insecurity landscape within Dauphin County.





METHODS

This final report is the outcome of an intensive, mixed-methods research endeavor, focused on rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The report emphasizes the voices and experiences of neighbors who visit food pantries in Dauphin County, as well as the input of community leaders and food pantry providers. Data and quotes included in this report are deidentified to the greatest extent possible to maintain the privacy of participants. Each method of data collection is described in turn below.

SECONDARY ANALYSIS

This report's secondary analysis draws upon data from a variety of different sources, including the American Community Survey 2018-2022 5-Year Estimates, USDA retailer and food desert data, SNAP participation data from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, WIC participation data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, child congregate meal program site and participation data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and USDA, and Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2024 data with 2022 food insecurity estimates. A detailed explanation of the SNAP priority outreach methodology, ArcGIS network analyses for drive and walk times, and methodology used to identify target schools for child nutrition outreach is provided in a technical appendix, available upon request.

NEIGHBOR SURVEYS

In Spring 2024, CPFBR researchers conducted surveys at twelve geographically and demographically representative food pantries across Dauphin County. A total of 756 surveys were completed across the twelve different pantry locations. Food pantry visitors were provided various options for survey completion: take the survey at the pantry on a CPFBR-provided device, have the survey read to them by a CPFBR researcher, or scan a QR code on a postcard that enabled them to complete the survey on their own device at their convenience. Surveys were available in both English and Spanish and designed to take 10 minutes on average. \$10 gift cards for a variety of local grocery stores were provided to each participant. Survey results were cleaned for potential duplicate or erroneous entries, and the sample size needed to achieve a 90% confidence interval and 10% margin of error was achieved and exceeded at all pantry locations.

NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AT FOOD PANTRIES

To include as many agency partners as possible in the Community Hunger Mapping process, CPFBR researchers visited 37 pantries that were not survey sites to observe pantry operation during food distribution/pantry hours. These observations helped CPFBR researchers bring a broader understanding of pantry practices and the neighbor experience of accessing charitable food to this report.

NEIGHBOR INTERVIEWS

Interview subjects were randomly selected from a pool of individuals who participated in pantry visitor surveys. All individuals surveyed were given the option to provide a phone number for follow-up contact in the form of a 15- to 20-minute phone or Zoom interview in English or Spanish. CPFB researchers developed a flexible interview guide and conducted all nine interviews. The interviews asked about visiting a food pantry from the perspective of pantry users. The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed pantry visitors to speak about the most relevant or pressing matters related to their own experiences.

SOUP KITCHEN AND PANTRY UTILIZATION AMONG HOMELESS NEIGHBORS IN HARRISBURG

In collaboration with Dr. Jennifer Frank and Dr. Mary Glazier of Millersville University, CPFB completed an evaluation of food access in the city of Harrisburg from the perspective of unsheltered neighbors and the service providers working to meet this community need. Researchers conducted 15 in-person interviews of individuals accessing the soup kitchen during the noon meal at Downtown Daily Bread and three interviews of formal and grassroots organizations who fund, coordinate, or serve food to the community in Harrisburg. Transcripts were coded using Nvivo software and processed for overall themes.

NON-FOOD PANTRY NEIGHBOR SURVEYS

Non-food pantry surveys were conducted at various community locations to determine why some potentially food insecure individuals do not currently visit a food pantry. The surveys were anonymous and included four questions, including two food security screening questions. Individuals were asked if they attend a food pantry; those who responded 'No' or 'I used to' were asked to explain their answers, both from a list of potential options and a free response blank. The non-food pantry survey results reflect responses from 50 total participants from 3 locations across Dauphin County.

PARTNER LISTENING SESSIONS

CPFB agency partners from Dauphin County were invited to attend a listening session to discuss strengths and challenges at the pantry level. The discussion-style session allowed for partners to identify and learn from each other's experiences and perspectives as pantry leaders within the community. Discussion topics include pantry and community strengths, sourcing and logistics, and challenges related to distribution. The CPFB research team held one in-person listening session at the Annual Dauphin County State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) meeting in Harrisburg in June 2024, and one virtual listening session. A total of 37 individuals participated in the listening sessions, representing 29 different agencies.

PARTNER SURVEYS

The CPFB Policy Research team distributed pantry surveys to agency partners who operate pantries that do not limit participation by age or military status across Dauphin County. The surveys asked questions regarding distribution type and frequency, operating hours, policies for food pantry visitors, other services offered, and pantry capacity. A total of 43 pantries completed surveys via mail, email, and online. Best efforts were made to include the relevant information for non-respondents.

SERVICE INSIGHTS DATA

To develop the census tract level food pantry access gap map, this report utilized electronic neighbor intake and pantry service data from the 18 pantries in Dauphin County that use Service Insights on MealConnect, a software platform developed by Feeding America. Information about the methodology used in the gap analysis is provided in abbreviated form in the report and in detail in the technical appendix.



756 Neighbor Surveys
at 12 pantry locations



37 Non-participant Observations at
Food Pantries



9 One-on-one Neighbor Interviews



Specialized Research with Vulnerable
Populations



50 Non-food Pantry Surveys
at 3 locations across the county



37 Partner Listening Session Participants
via one in-person and one virtual session



18 Pantries Sharing Anonymous Service
Data



43 Partner Surveys



CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This Community Hunger Mapping report is the conclusion of an eighteen-month intensive project that sought to improve understanding of the Dauphin County charitable food network and neighbor experience within it through a robust mixed-methods report, including analyzing publicly available data, incorporating external research, engaging with pantry managers and other system stakeholders, and most importantly, listening to and learning from the neighbors who visit food pantries.

The effort put into this report always centered the neighbors who visit Dauphin County's food pantries, with emphasis on accurately and compassionately depicting the reality of their lives and the often difficult circumstances they face. The report also focuses on creating an informative, actionable resource that can be used to make the charitable food system more equitable and responsive to neighbor needs while it strives to end hunger within the county. The analysis throughout the report contains several novel primary data collection efforts and analyses, including the results of observational visits to each pantry in the county and findings from interviews at soup kitchens with neighbors experiencing homelessness, that help it reach these two goals.

Though this document is the culmination of a lengthy Community Hunger Mapping Report process, it by no means signifies that the work has concluded. In fact, the work has just begun. To take the research and insights contained here off the page and into the world where it can make a concrete impact, dedicated implementation of its recommendations and evaluation of progress must be conducted. Only through application can there be a hope of research creating real change for Dauphin County's food insecure residents.

This project was undertaken in collaboration with key community leaders, including Dauphin County Commissioners and Dauphin County Human Services, as well as representatives from local health systems, food pantries, and other anti-poverty and social service agencies. Extending the collaborative spirit with which this report was written into the future through the creation of a Dauphin County Food Policy Council; including these stakeholders and many more will be a critical aspect of effective implementation. Only together will we be able to intentionally carry out the recommendations in this report, sustainably assess their effects, and make meaningful progress toward a Dauphin County where no one must worry about where their next meal will come from.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Dauphin County Commissioners for their generous funding of this project. We are incredibly grateful for your partnership and for your investment in the charitable food system that serves so many of your constituents and our neighbors.

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank team dedicates this Report in memory of Timothy “Tim” Whelan, Executive Director of our organization from 1988 to 1999. Tim led our Food Bank through extraordinary times, including the initial construction of our present Harrisburg Healthy Food Hub. He was dedicated to our neighbors facing hunger and to servant-leadership rooted in deep evidence-based work. In 2023, Tim passed away and his loving wife Barbara made a generous gift in his honor to support our Hunger Mapping efforts. Tim would have cherished this work and put it into action.

Many thanks to the Dauphin County Community Hunger Mapping Consultative Group, whose members included Andrea Murray and Ashley Visco of Penn State Health, Pastor Bob Conrad of Grace House Ministries, Corrie Lingenfelter of Downtown Daily Bread, Deirdre Lenker of Harrisburg Area Food Pantry, Jennifer Wintermeyer of Tri-County Community Action Programs, Jenny Gallagher Blom and Samantha Maurer of the Salvation Army – Harrisburg, Lori Shienvold of Hanna’s Pantry, Monica Powell of Hillside Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Randie Yeager of Dauphin County Human Services, Stefani McAuliffe of United Way of the Capital Region, and Suzy Blough of Northern Dauphin Food Pantry. Your time and expertise were invaluable; they ensured that this report could accurately reflect the vibrancy of the community and the charitable food network.

Every neighbor who shared their thoughts with us, whether that was through the Feeding America Client Survey, phone interviews, or the non-pantry location surveys, provided priceless insight into the reality of their lives and the true experience of food insecurity. Of all the words in this document, the most valuable are those of our neighbors. Endless thanks to all who took time out of their days to speak with us.

Many thanks to the food pantry coordinators and volunteers of Dauphin County, without whom the charitable food network would not serve anyone. Similarly, without their flexibility around surveys so we could meet our neighbors, their willingness to let us conduct non-participant observations so we could understand the pantry network holistically, their feedback via the pantry surveys and listening sessions, and most importantly their dedication to the individuals and families they serve, this project would not have been complete.

Special thanks to CPFEB staff and volunteers outside the Impact & Policy Research team who assisted with surveys and non-participant observations, including Maria D’Isabella, Nellie Stinson, Tara Davis, Ainslie Davi, Jenna Hollinger, Katie Kerr, Erika Siracusa, and Dave Lloyd. Thank you for sharing your valuable time and for your willingness to brave inclement weather to help us engage with our neighbors!

Additional thanks to Natalia Uro-DeLeon, former intern and part-time Impact & Policy Research staffer, for her wrangling of calendars to schedule NPO visits, compassionate connection with our Spanish-speaking neighbors, and overall energy and passion for our work.

Special thanks to Drs. Jennifer Frank and Mary Glazier of Millersville University for their academic and professional investment in better understanding how the charitable food network serves our most vulnerable citizens facing precarious housing situations and food insecurity.