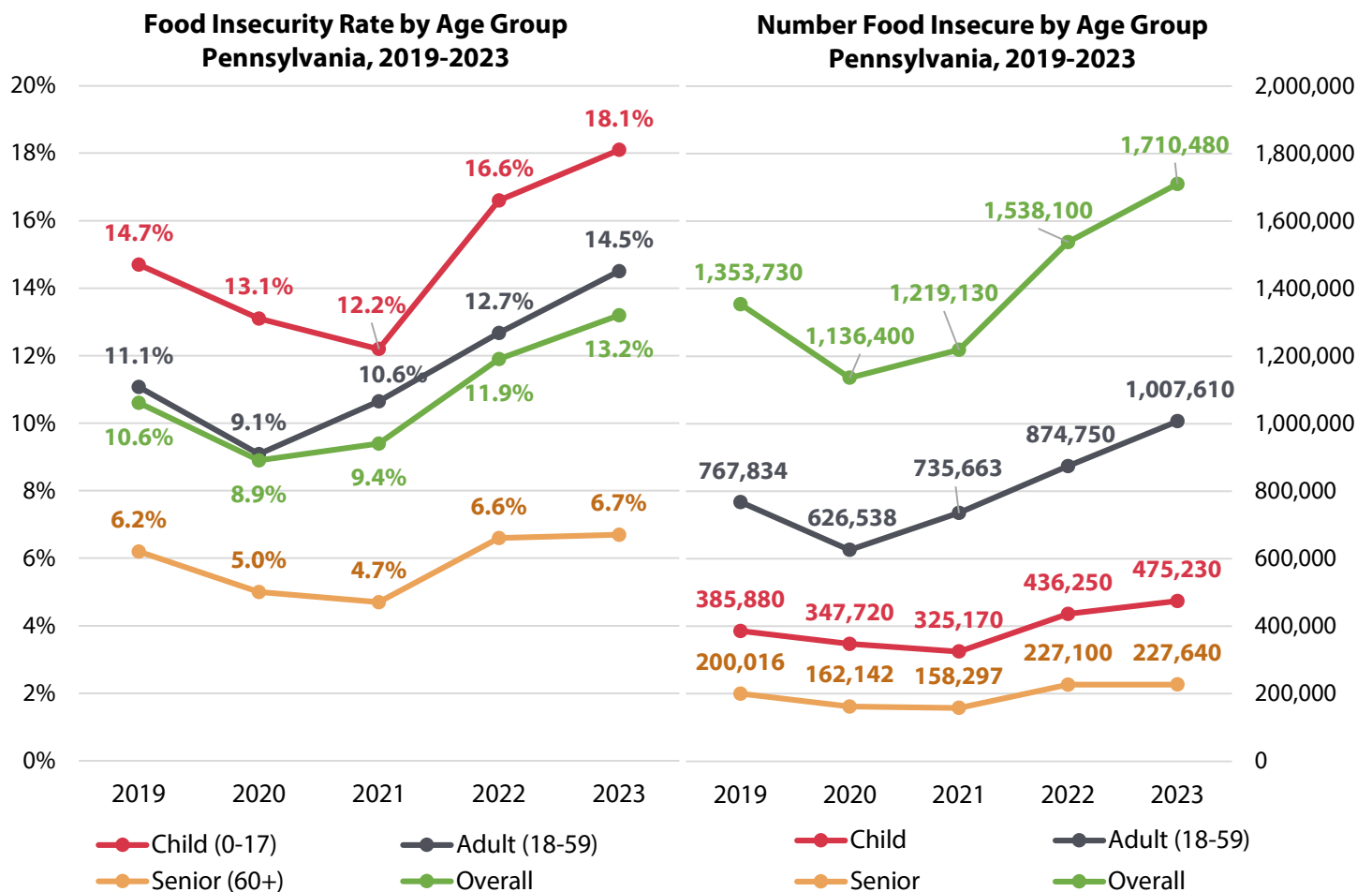


Today, May 14, 2025, Feeding America released updated Map the Meal Gap localized food insecurity estimates for the United States using 2023 data. In this policy blog, CPFB Impact and Policy Research takes a look at the data for Pennsylvania, with focus on the uneven impact food insecurity has based on age and place.

## Food Insecurity Statewide by Age

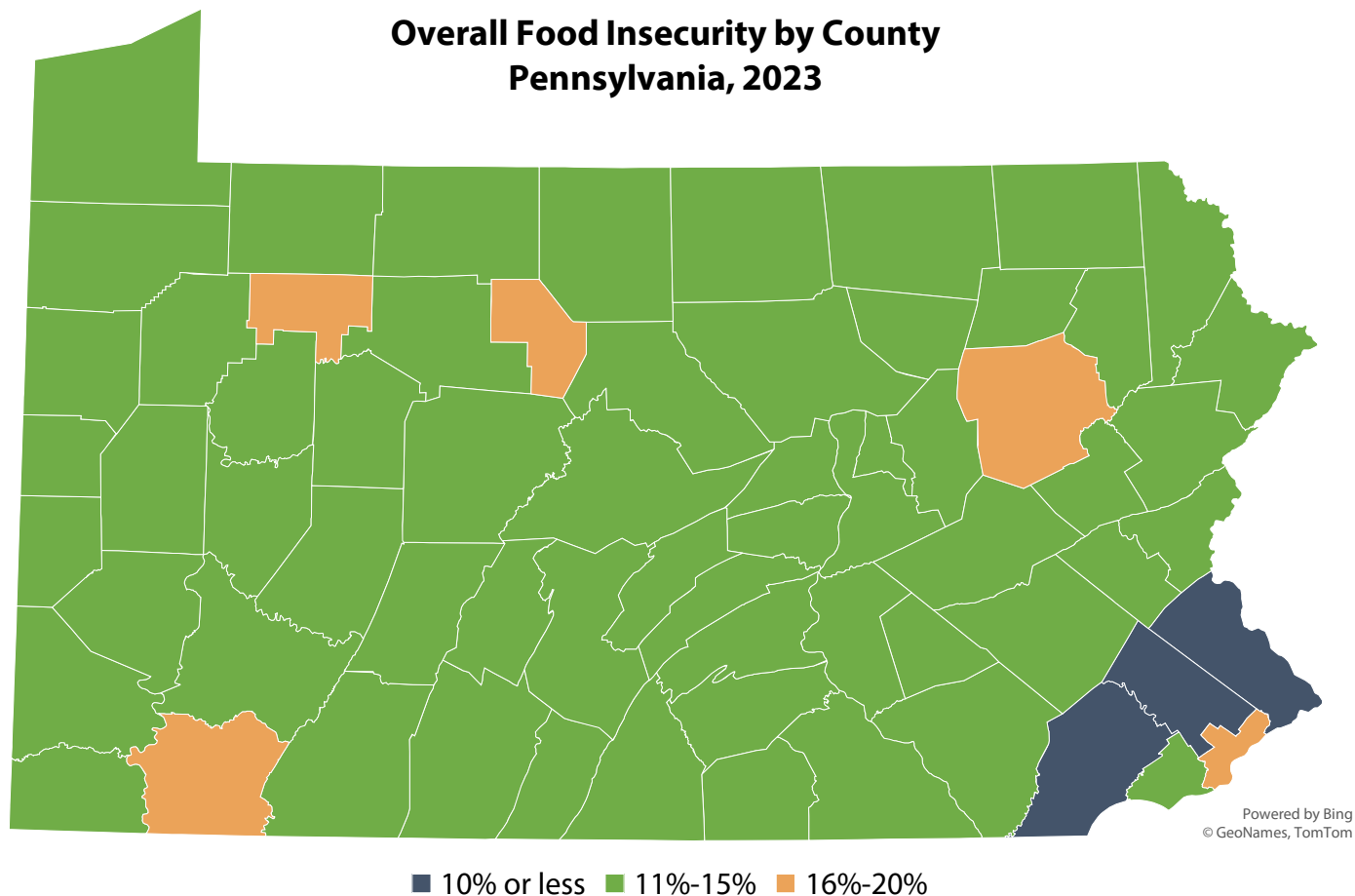
The overall food insecurity rate in Pennsylvania rose more than a percentage point, or about 11%, from 11.9% in 2022 to 13.2% in 2023. This increase is a continuation of the trend seen in the last several years, though at a slower rate of change than seen between 2021 and 2022. Overall, there were about 1.7 million food insecure residents of the Commonwealth, including about 475,000 children and 227,000 seniors. Of these, about 170,000 were newly food insecure in 2023, including about 39,000 children.



Food insecurity continued to have a highly disproportionate impact on Pennsylvania's children in 2023, even though the percent increase in child food insecurity was slightly smaller than the overall rise at 9.0%. With food insecurity rates of 18.1%, children and youth under the age of eighteen were about 25% more likely to be unsure where their next meal would come from than were adults, who had a 14.5% food insecurity rate. Meanwhile, seniors over the age of 60 were much less likely than adults or children to experience food insecurity, with a food insecurity rate of just 6.7%. The fact that seniors were about half as likely to be food insecure as the overall population demonstrates the power of federal programs like Social Security have in preventing older Pennsylvanians from experiencing hardship.

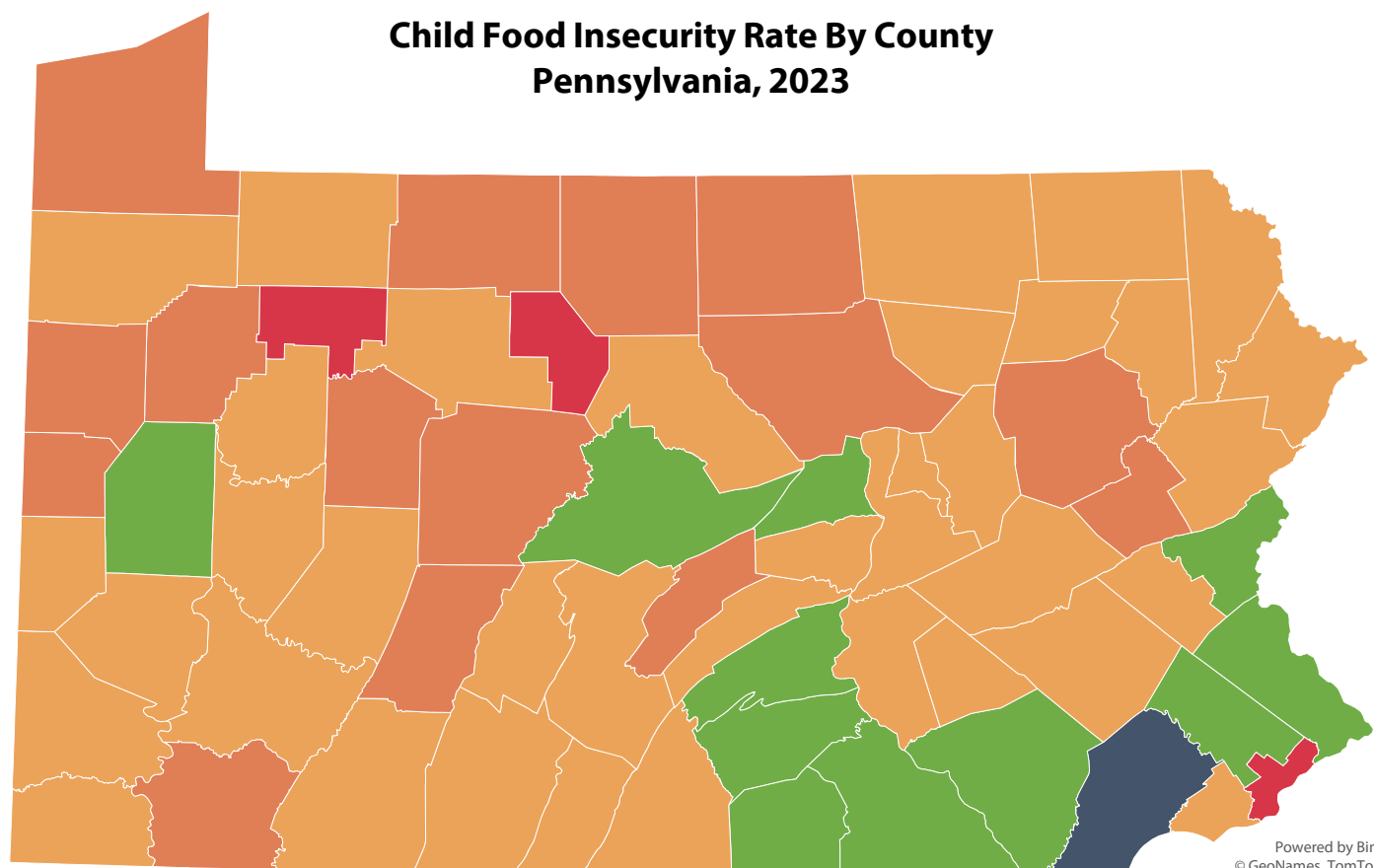
The overall increase in food insecurity in Pennsylvania between 2022 and 2023 is the result of a complex web of factors; however, two key issues are especially likely contributors: the end of pandemic-related programs and grocery inflation. The most relevant wind-down of a pandemic related program to the food insecurity landscape in 2023 is SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs), which expired at the end of February 2023. When EAs were in place, SNAP-participant households received the maximum benefit amount for their household size, while under ordinary circumstances SNAP benefit amounts vary depending on a household's income. After the EA program ended, average benefits per person per month in Pennsylvania dropped \$77, or 29%. Many households likely made up for this shortfall by turning to the charitable food network, especially since the cost of food at home (groceries) increased 12% nationwide between January 2022 and December 2023, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Food Insecurity by County and Age



As of 2023, there were notable differences in the food insecurity rate by county in Pennsylvania. The lowest overall food insecurity rates were found in three of the Philadelphia collar counties; Chester, Montgomery, and Bucks counties all had food insecurity rates below 10%, with Chester coming in the lowest at 9.2%. Philadelphia itself had the second-highest food insecurity rate in the Commonwealth at 17.6%, behind only Cameron County's 17.9% rate. Other counties with food insecurity rates falling between 16% and 20% included Fayette, Forest, and Luzerne, while the rest of the state fell between 11% and 15%, roughly in line with the 13.2% statewide average.

## Child Food Insecurity Rate By County Pennsylvania, 2023



■ 10% or less ■ 11%-15% ■ 16%-20% ■ 21-25% ■ 25% or more

In 2023, there was significantly more variance in the child food insecurity rate by county in Pennsylvania than in the overall food insecurity rate, ranging from a low of 8.7% in Chester County to a high of 30.5% in Philadelphia County. In Philadelphia, nearly a third of children were unsure where their next meal would come from. Across much of the rest of the state, one in four or five children experienced food insecurity, in line with the statewide average of 18.1%. Lower rates (between 10% and 15%) could be found in the Philadelphia suburbs, the lower Susquehanna Valley, the State College area, and Butler County north of Pittsburgh. In every county except Chester, children were more likely to be food insecure than adults; the degree to which this was true varied, ranging from 4.4% in Centre to 117.4% in Philadelphia.