



Northern Tier Community Hunger Mapping Final Report

**Identifying Localized
Food Access Gaps and
Increasing Understanding
of Intersecting Issues for
the Charitable Food System**

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■ Introduction

As of 2023, almost 40,000 people in the Northern Tier were unsure where their next meal would come from.



According to Feeding America's most recent localized food insecurity estimates, one in seven residents (14.4%) of the six-county region comprised of Bradford, Clinton, Lycoming, Potter, Sullivan, and Tioga counties experienced food insecurity. As of 2023, almost 40,000 people in the Northern Tier, including more than 11,000 children and youth under the age of 18, were unsure where their next meal would come from. Food insecurity is not evenly distributed across the region; although it burdens residents of every county, municipality, and neighborhood within the Northern Tier, the exact weight of that burden varies based on demographic characteristics, geography, and many other economic and social factors.

This Community Hunger Mapping Report aims to shine a light on the dispersion, experience, and causes of food insecurity throughout the Northern Tier region via the use of community-engaged research methods. Importantly, the perspectives of food insecure neighbors were collected through surveys conducted on-site at food pantries as well as at other community resource locations. Throughout the

project, the research team sought to depict the food insecurity landscape, the charitable food system's response to it, and the experiences of food pantry visitors with the detail, nuance, and compassion they deserve.

The views of the pantry staff and volunteers who serve our neighbors in need every day were included via listening sessions and surveys, and researchers visited pantries that did not host surveys to collect additional observational data about the charitable food system in the Northern Tier. Beyond this, quantitative analysis of a variety of data sets available from sources including but not limited to the United States Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's own agency records, provide important perspective and context to the qualitative data. Used together, these mixed methods allow the final report to paint a vibrant picture of the Northern Tier's charitable food system.

This final report strives to do more than simply provide information about food insecurity throughout the Northern Tier; it also seeks to make change for the neighbors who experience it. In the short term, goals include meaningful and lasting improvements in the experiences of food insecure neighbors, while in the long term, the end goal is to make substantive progress toward the elimination of hunger altogether. To meet this end, this report contains a number of specific, actionable recommendations for food pantries, human services organizations, government, health systems, and other stakeholders that, if collectively and collaboratively implemented, can help us build a north central Pennsylvania where no one goes hungry.

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



What is the extent of food insecurity in the Northern Tier, and where in the region is it concentrated?



Who in the Northern Tier 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?



How accessible is charitable and retail food throughout the Northern Tier, and how does access vary in different areas of the county? How does access vary, if at all, by demographics?



What barriers do neighbors face in accessing charitable food services? Where do food distribution and access gaps exist in the Northern Tier? What is the neighbor experience at food pantries like?



What are utilization rates of key government nutrition-related assistance programs, and how do they vary across the region? What is the charitable food system's role in this space?



What other issues impact food insecurity in the Northern Tier? What can the charitable food system and other relevant stakeholders do to better address the root causes of food insecurity?

Executive Summary ■

Working to End Hunger in Northern Tier

This report examines the food security situation and corresponding charitable food system response in six counties in north central Pennsylvania; in descending order by population, they are Lycoming, Bradford, Clinton, Tioga, Potter, and Sullivan. Throughout the report, these counties will be referred to collectively as the “Northern Tier,” as they cover much of the north of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank’s service area.

As of 2023, nearly 40,000 people experience food insecurity in the Northern Tier. This equates to an average food security rate of 14.4% across the region, meaning that more than one in seven people face food insecurity across the region.

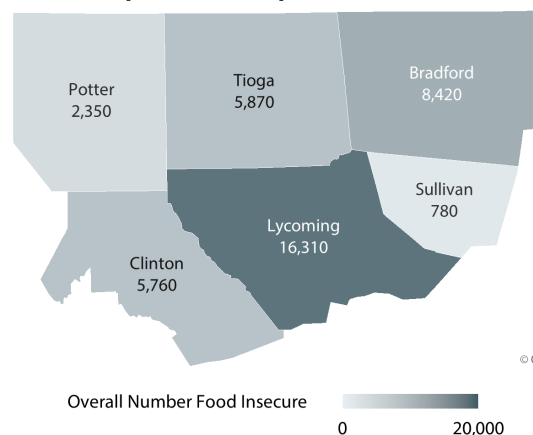
Food insecurity rates broadly fall in the same range for each county in the region, though there is some variance. Clinton County has the highest overall food insecurity rate at 15.3% while Sullivan has the lowest at 13.3% with the other four counties hovering between 14.0% and 14.4%.

Although food insecurity rates are similar across counties, there are significant differences in the number of food insecure individuals in each county, which is reflective of the population differences between them.

■ *Lycoming County, the most populous county overall, has 41% of the region’s food insecure population, while Bradford has 21%, and Clinton and Tioga have around 15% each.*

Potter and Sullivan counties have 6% and 2% of the region’s food insecure population respectively.

**Overall Number Food Insecure by Northern Tier County
(Map the Meal Gap 2023 Estimates)**



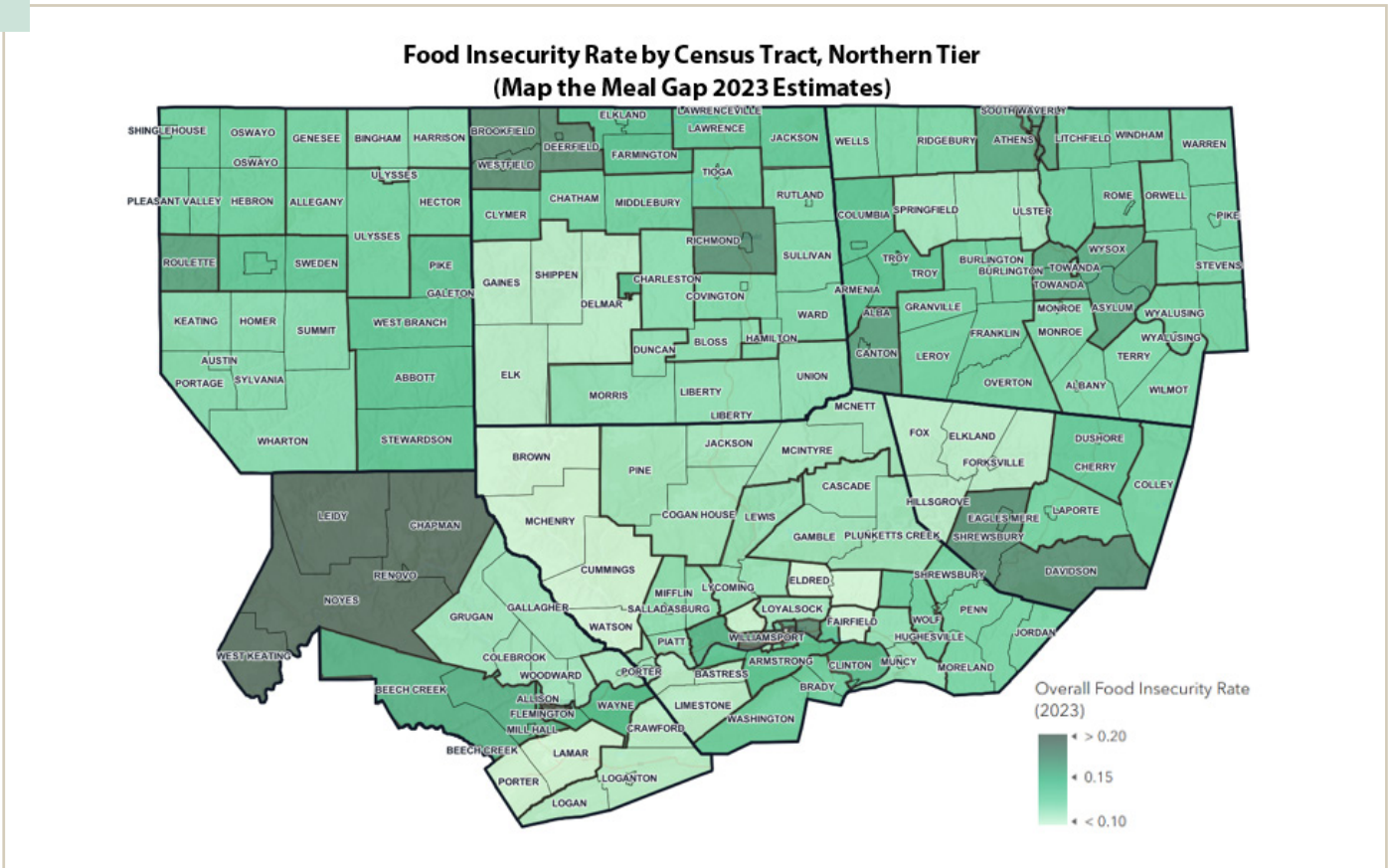
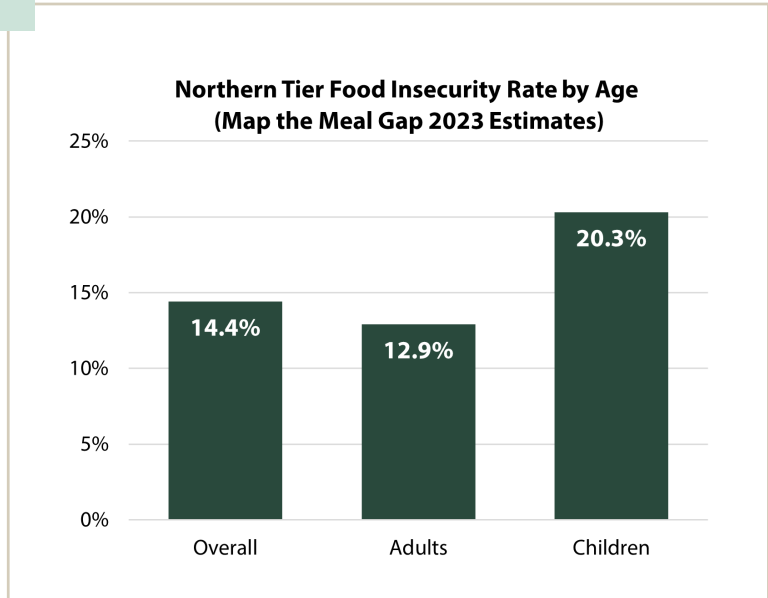
Beyond this, there are significant differences in food insecurity rates by age group, as children are far more likely to experience food insecurity than adults in every county across the region. Northern Tier children and youth had a 20.3% food insecurity rate as of 2023 compared to 12.9% for adults, making children 57% more likely to face food insecurity than adults.

Furthermore, food insecurity has risen by 32% since 2021 for all age groups across the Northern Tier counties; the increase has been especially pronounced among children, for whom food insecurity has increased by 56% in the same timeframe.

At the sub-county (census tract) level, as shown in the map below, high food insecurity rates across the region tend to be found either in urban centers or highly rural areas.

The census tract with the single highest food insecurity rate in the region, 30.9%, lies in Williamsport, the region's largest urban center. Two more census tracts in Williamsport had food insecurity rates above 20%, while the only other census tracts in the region with food insecurity rates above 20% were in Clinton County.

The geographically largest of these census tracts covers the entire northwest of the county and is centered on the borough of Renovo. One in five residents of this census tract (22.3%) had uncertain or limited access to food in 2023. The other two are located in Lock Haven.

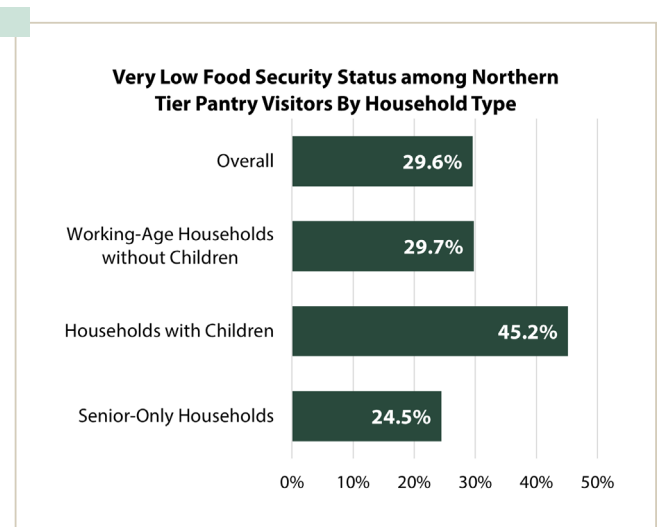


Hunger in the Northern Tier

The Feeding America data at the county and census tract level shows overall food insecurity rates for the population of the Northern Tier. USDA defines food insecurity as being two distinct levels, low and very low food security. Very low food security is the most severe form of food insecurity and the closest measure of hunger.

Among the population of people who visit food pantries in the Northern Tier, one in three (30%) of pantry visitors (n=406) in the Northern Tier counties report experiencing very low food security based on their responses to the six-question short-form USDA food security module. This means that three in ten pantry visitors go hungry on a regular basis, even though they are accessing charitable food assistance.

Households with children are by far the most likely to experience very low food security, with rates of 45%. These rates are 50% higher than the overall rate (30%) and almost double that of senior-only households (25%).



- *"I have to pay all the bills first, and what's left goes to food...it's not much."*



This report examines three distinct and overlapping approaches that food security stakeholders and other community organizations, policymakers, and community members can leverage to reduce hunger as measured by very low food security rates among the Northern Tier's residents and pantry visitors. The three approaches are listed below; each is discussed in turn throughout the report:

- 1 Approach 1:
Strengthening and increasing the accessibility of the charitable food system
- 2 Approach 2:
Encouraging robust participation in key government nutrition programs
- 3 Approach 3:
Addressing upstream and intersecting issues that cause food insecurity

- *Behind every statistic is a neighbor with a story—when we understand the landscape of hunger, we can begin to reshape it.*

Approach 1: Strengthening and Increasing Accessibility of the Charitable Food System

The charitable food system in the Northern Tier region significantly reduces experiences of hunger. More specifically, rates of very low food security are 36% lower among households with incomes below 150% of the federal poverty level who visit charitable food providers an average of more than once per month in the last year compared to those that visited food pantries less than once per month.

Importantly, the impact of the charitable food network is the greatest for households with children, the most vulnerable households in the region. Very low food security rates are 17 percentage points lower for households with children who visit pantries more frequently, while senior households see a much smaller drop of two percentage points.

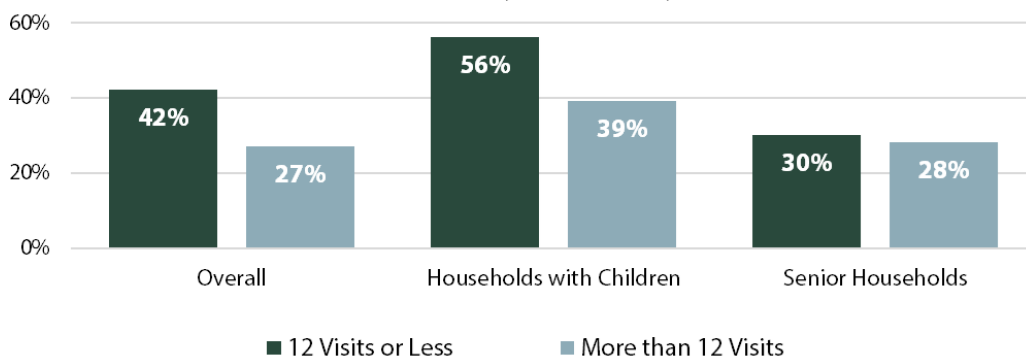
Unfortunately, households with children are far less likely than senior households to visit food pantries often; just 24% of households with children averaged more than one pantry visit per month in the last year, compared to 40% of senior households.

This difference is likely due in part to pantry opening hours, which are often only open during daytime hours and are therefore less accessible to working-age households with children.

Additionally, there is often greater stigma in utilizing services for working-age households than for senior households, even though working-age households are more likely to face food insecurity. Therefore, measures that expand access to households with children could have an outsized positive impact in reducing hunger in the region. These measures could include reducing service territory restrictions and increasing hours of operation, among other solutions.

Several attributes of the Northern Tier’s charitable food network are critical strengths that contribute to its hunger-fighting impact. Most people report receiving food they “often” or “always” like when they visit food pantries in the region. Pantry coordinators work hard to tailor the services they provide to their neighbors, often stepping up in a variety of ways when few other services are available. Importantly, intake processes are generally very low barrier and efficient, meaning that people can usually access the help they need with minimal red tape. Relatedly, reported experiences of judgment are low among pantry visitors at just 4.2%, which is among the lowest of any Community Hunger Mapping project yet completed.

Very Low Food Security by Pantry Visit Frequency for Northern Tier Pantry Visitors* by Household Type



*Over a one-year period for households with incomes below 150% FPL

OPPORTUNITIES TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT FURTHER

The strengths of the Northern Tier’s charitable food system provide a foundation for further improvements in food access across the region. There are three primary ways stakeholders can work to further maximize the positive impact of Northern Tier charitable food providers, including:

- Increasing consistent geographic access to charitable food distributions;
- Increasing access to charitable food services on weekends and evenings; and
- Increasing investments in charitable food network capacity and food provision.

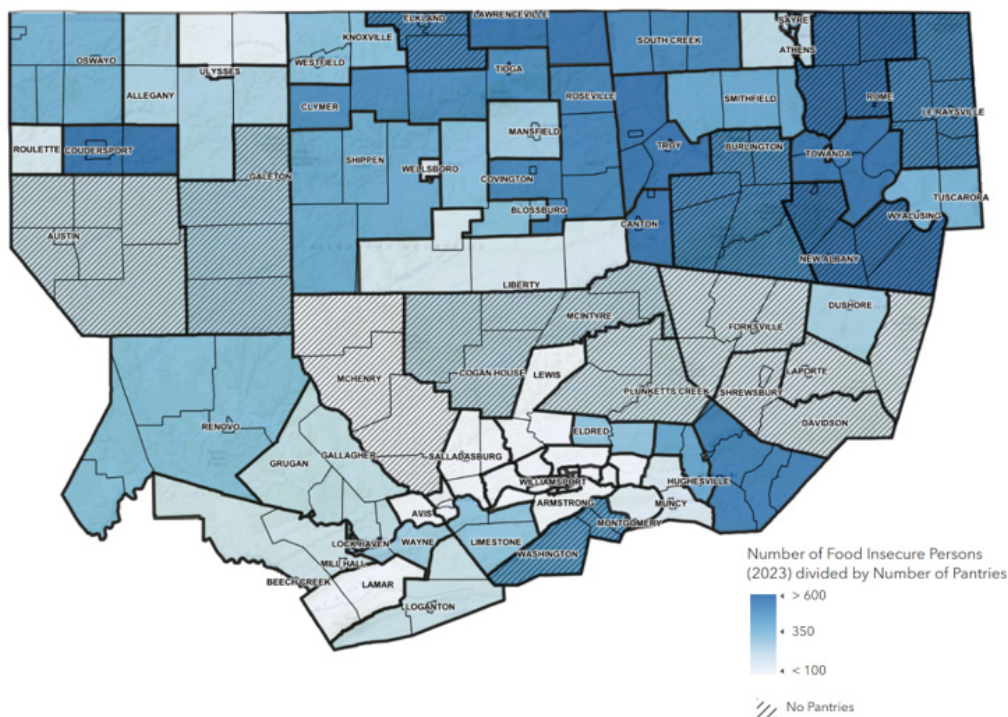
APPROACH 1.1: INCREASE CONSISTENT GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS TO FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS.

The Northern Tier region’s geography is vast, covering an area slightly larger than the state of Connecticut. To account for varying population distributions across the region, this report combined the number of food insecure individuals in an area with the access to charitable food providers to create a measure of the number of food insecure individuals per pantry, as shown in the map below.

Based on this metric, there is a need for increased pantry access in much of Bradford County as well as in the Washington Township/Montgomery area of southern Lycoming County.

In Bradford County, the most immediately impactful solution is to open more distributions outside of the Sayre and Athens area, with focus on the eastern and southern portions of the county. Other potential areas to prioritize for expanding food pantry access include the Hughesville area of eastern Lycoming County and northern Tioga County near Elkland.

Number of Food Insecure Individuals per Pantry within a 15-Minute Drive Time by Census Tract, Northern Tier

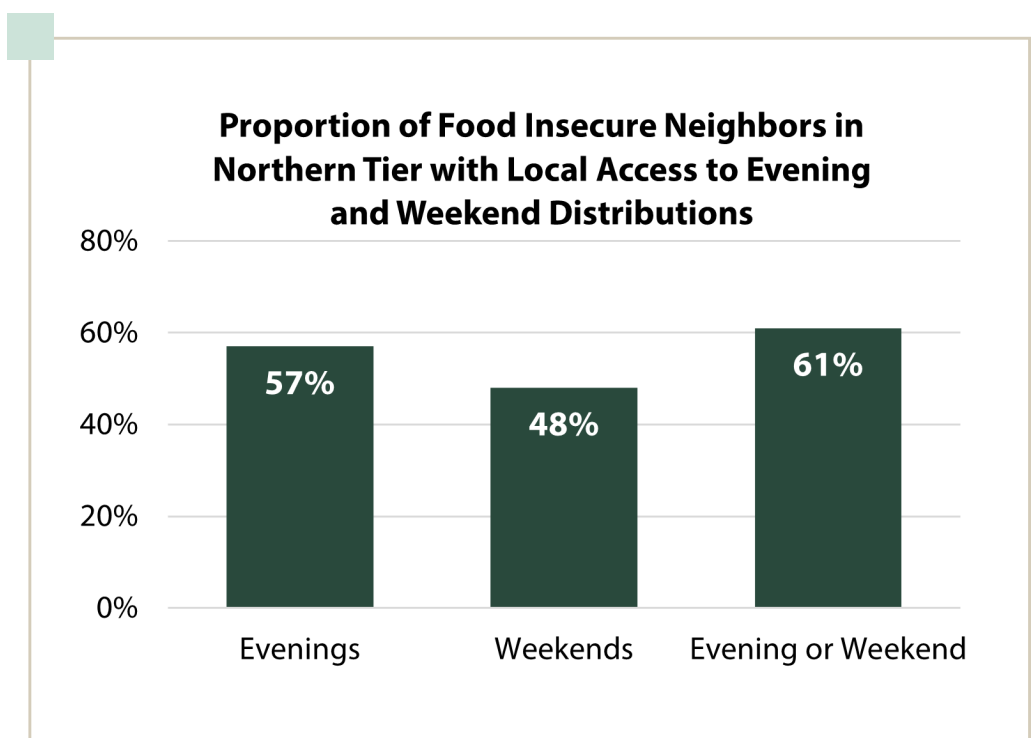


Overall, 68% of food insecure individuals in the Northern Tier region have access to at least two charitable food providers within a 15-minute drive time, which is more limited access than found in other Community Hunger Mapping reports. Remedying these gaps is important because access to two charitable food visits per month has substantial positive impacts on reducing very low food security. Importantly, geographic access can be limited by pantry policies, like highly restrictive service territories, which are not reflected in the map and analysis above, so it is important for pantries to address these policies as well.

APPROACH 1.2: INCREASE OFF-HOURS ACCESS, INCLUDING EVENING AND WEEKEND DISTRIBUTIONS.

Two in five food insecure individuals in the Northern Tier lack access to a charitable food provider that has weekend or evening hours within a 15-minute drive of their census tract's center of population, even though close to nine in ten (88%) have access to a pantry in a 15-minute drive. Of all the communities in the Northern Tier, only Mansfield, Williamsport, and Sayre have access to both evening and weekend distributions; Lock Haven has evening access only. Almost all the rest of the region only has access to daytime, work-week distributions.

Weekend and evening distributions are critical because working-age households who visit pantries, especially those with children, are both the most likely to report working full-time and the most likely to experience very low food security. This means that strategically expanding service hours could help reach the most vulnerable households who currently are unable to consistently access charitable food providers due to time constraints and conflicts that prevent them from visiting during regular business hours.



APPROACH 1.3: INCREASING INVESTMENTS IN CHARITABLE FOOD PROVISION.

■ *Charitable food providers in the Northern Tier are highly effective at reducing hunger in their communities, offering services tailored to their locales.*

In many cases, these providers are the lowest-barrier social service in their area, and sometimes are the only one available, making pantries a critical means of connecting visitors to other resources available elsewhere. Many pantries in the Northern Tier reported that they had sufficient volunteer help, a key strength, but two-thirds of pantries (64%) reported that funding was the greatest challenge they were facing in providing food to their community.

Funding for charitable food providers has been mixed in recent years, with a significant divergence in state and federal policies and investment.

At the state level, a 15% increase in the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) and an 18% increase in the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) was recently included in the FY26 budget. Pantries rely on these programs as a source of funding and food, and the increases will help, although there is still less funding now per person served compared to 20 years ago.¹

At the federal level, recent disinvestments have caused distributions from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the federal government's largest direct support to the charitable food network, to drop by half in 2025. Due to other program cuts included in the July 2025 budget reconciliation bill, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill, need will continue to increase, as an estimated 7% of the SNAP participant population in Pennsylvania will lose access to benefits due to increased administrative barriers such as expanded work requirements. Collective advocacy for robust state and federal support as well as strong community-level investments in food security work will be critical to ensuring that Northern Tier food pantries have enough resources to serve everyone who comes to their doors for help.



Approach 2: Encouraging Robust Participation in Key Government Nutrition Programs

Government nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, school meal programs, and summer meal programs all provide critical support to Northern Tier residents facing food insecurity. All counties across the Northern Tier region have room to improve participation in SNAP and WIC, as no county is ranked in the top 20 in the state in participation in either program. Northern Tier counties do have above-average participation rates in school lunch and breakfast, but there is room to increase access for children to summer meals.

APPROACH 2.1: INCREASE SNAP AND WIC PARTICIPATION THROUGH OUTREACH EFFORTS

Despite recent program cuts, efforts to increase participation in SNAP and WIC remain among the biggest opportunities to increase available resources to food insecure individuals in the region. All six counties in the region have room to increase participation in both important government nutrition programs.

Lycoming County is the strongest performer in SNAP and WIC in the region, although it is still ranked a middling 25th and 22nd in the state in participation in these programs, respectively. Participation for Tioga and Potter follow Lycoming, while Clinton, Bradford and Sullivan fall in the bottom 20 of all 67 counties in participation in the state.

County	WIC Participation Rate	Statewide WIC Rank	SNAP Participation Rate	Statewide SNAP Rank
Lycoming	69.3%	22	78.5%	25
Tioga	68.8%	23	71.9%	38
Potter	67.1%	31	67.4%	44
Clinton	56.8%	50	63.5%	53
Bradford	54.5%	55	63.4%	55
Sullivan	43.7%	64	58.8%	60

■ *Stakeholders across a variety of different sectors should work together to increase SNAP and WIC participation; federal programs like SNAP, which provides nine meals for each one the charitable food system shares, are key tools to prevent individuals and families from facing food insecurity.*

Geographically based access efforts, including tabling or outreach events at community organizations like pantries, libraries, and other community gathering locations should focus on the ZIP Codes that have the highest SNAP and WIC participation gaps and lowest SNAP and WIC participation rates in the region, as outlined in further detail in the body of this report.

Pantries are well-targeted locations for SNAP outreach in the Northern Tier because they are low-barrier service points and there are low SNAP participation rates among visitors, although WIC participation is solid among pantry visitors.

SNAP outreach efforts will be even more important going forward as a means of maintaining current participation rates, as the program changes included in the July 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill raised the administrative burden to apply and retain eligibility for SNAP benefits, and the November 2025 outage may have decreased trust in the program. The extent of the struggle to maintain participation at current levels is evidenced by a recent 4.7% drop in SNAP participation in the region since January 2025. Participation dropped more expeditiously with the news of SNAP cuts in summer 2025 in the budget reconciliation bill discussion.

APPROACH 2.2: BUILD UPON SUCCESS IN SCHOOL MEALS EXPAND ACCESS TO SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS

Northern Tier schools do an exceptional job of ensuring children have access to breakfast and lunch at school, outperforming schools in the rest of the state by 15% for breakfast and 17% for lunch as of October 2024. This strong performance is due to most schools utilizing the Community Eligibility Provision to offer both breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students and their having done so for several years, creating a stable support on which families can rely.

Northern Tier schools are more likely than their peers across the state to use alternative breakfast service models, which helps increase participation further.

However, there remains opportunity to increase access to meals for children during the summer, with just 27 publicly funded SUN meal sites unevenly spread across the region. There is a major opportunity for sites to use the rural non-congregate provision, which allows sites to offer grab-and-go meals in areas where daily visits would create travel burden in the absence of school bus service.

Approach 3: Addressing Upstream and Intersecting Issues that Cause Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is caused by and associated with a variety of upstream and intersecting factors. Among Northern Tier region pantry visitors, the most important challenges include a high rate of chronic health conditions, low incomes, challenges around housing affordability, and transportation. Households with children face many of these intersecting and upstream issues.

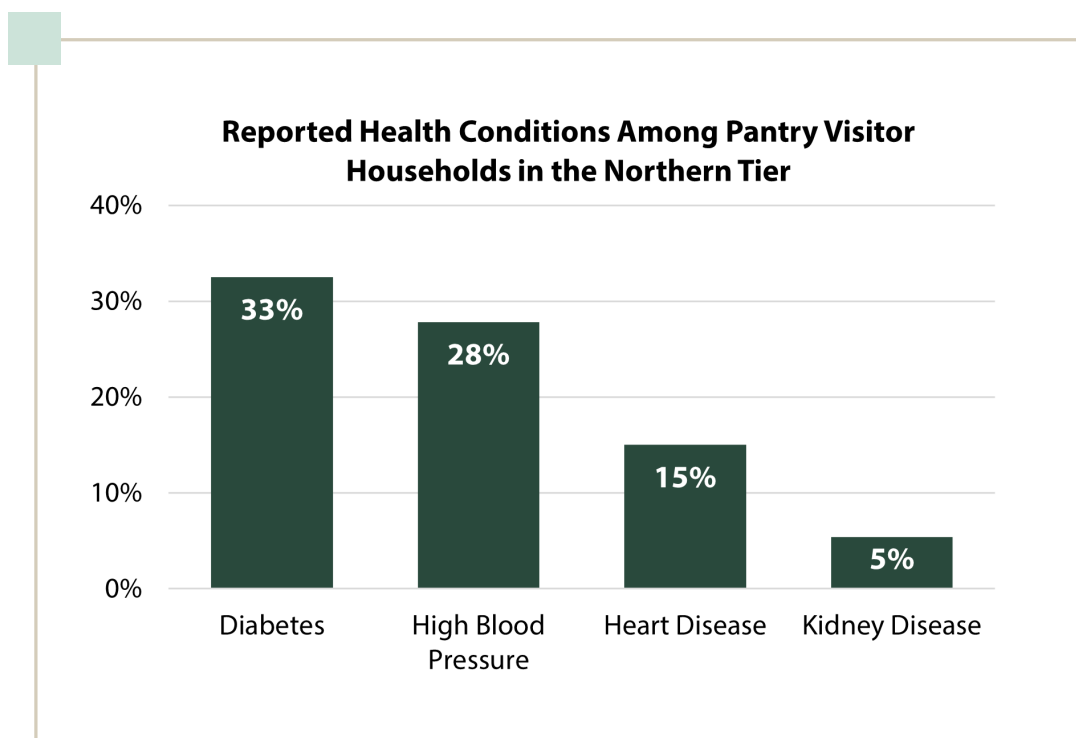
More than half (53%) of pantry visitor households in the Northern Tier had at least one member with a diet-related chronic health condition, including 33% with diabetes, 28% with high blood pressure, 15% with heart disease, and 5% with kidney disease. These chronic health conditions may make it more difficult to work, increase medical costs and economic strain, and make it more difficult to utilize all foods available at pantry distributions.

Given these results, the charitable food system should work to source items that are lower in sugar, sodium, and saturated and trans fats that can allow visitors to meet their dietary needs.

These efforts are crucial because highly nutritious, fresh foods are often the items that food insecure neighbors find most difficult to purchase since they are usually more expensive than highly processed options. Pantries can support neighbors with specific dietary needs by offering choice models that allow visitors to select the foods that work for them. Pantries can also participate in the Healthy Pantry Initiative and offer nutrition education that can help pantry visitors choose and know how to use healthy items with which they may not be familiar.

Unemployment is not a significant contributor to the need for charitable food assistance in the Northern Tier, but income is an important predictor of food security status.

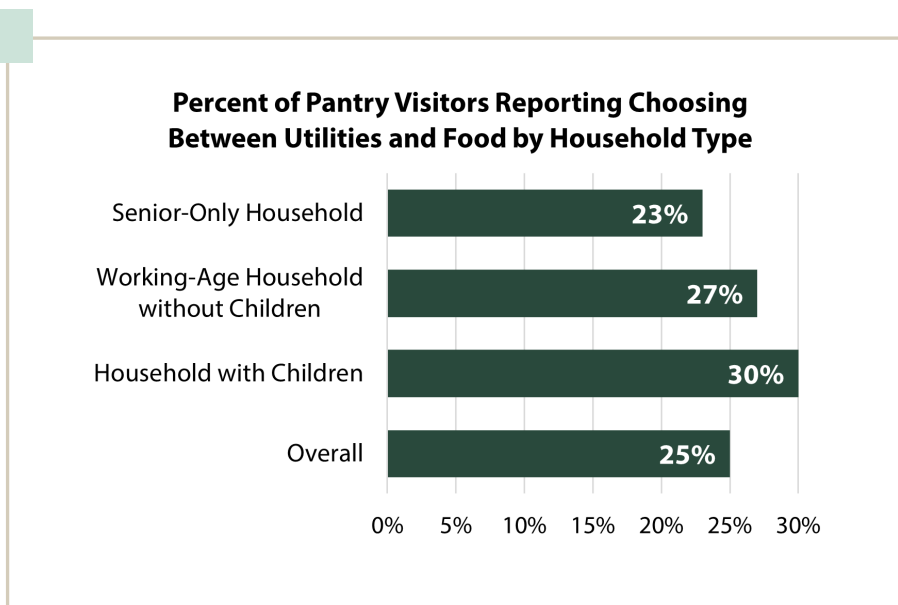
Nine in ten pantry visitors in the region stated that their primary sources of household income were Social Security or a pension (52%), Disability or SSI (20%), or full-time work (14%).



The plurality of households with children work full time (31%), but they are also the most likely to face very low food security (52%) due to the unpredictability and insufficiency of low-wage work. Two in five (42%) pantry visitors with incomes below the poverty level experience very low food security, compared to one in four (25%) households with incomes above the poverty level.

A quarter of pantry visitors reported having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities in the last year – the number one reported economic tradeoff with food in the Northern Tier.

High heating and cooling expenses point to the critical importance of programs like LIHEAP that can help people afford utilities. Struggles with utilities span all household types, but households with children are the most likely to have been forced to make this choice in the last year, at 30%.



Transportation is the second most commonly reported economic tradeoff with food, having been mentioned by 20% of pantry visitors.

While 75% of pantry visitors report access to their own car, the remaining 25% rely on rides, public transit, or biking/walking, which can be particularly difficult in rural areas.

■ Utilizing Partnerships and the Unique Position of the Charitable Food System to Address Food Insecurity

An issue with the magnitude of food insecurity requires collective action from all stakeholders in the Northern Tier, including food pantries, food banks, other nonprofit organizations, the public, businesses, and health systems, as well as elected officials and government representing and serving the region. Every person, organization and sector has a unique contribution to make and role to play in reducing hunger.

For the charitable food system, this means further leveraging its position as a low-barrier social service provider and amplifying its impact in reducing hunger by advocating and working with policymakers to inform policies that increase access.

Other stakeholders across the region can take important steps to make a difference; several key efforts to support our neighbors in need include investing in charitable food providers, connecting people to programs for which they are eligible, and working together to address upstream and intersecting issues through advocacy for program and policy change. Though this work is challenging, the Northern Tier has many strengths across and throughout its six counties that will help it make meaningful progress toward alleviating food insecurity in the short term and hopefully ending hunger in the future.

At A Glance ■

County By County

BRADFORD COUNTY

Neighbor Perspectives: "I am very appreciative for the folks who take time to care for individuals who are having a rough go of things" - Bradford County neighbor

Bradford County Food Insecurity:

Bradford County has a food insecurity rate of 14.0%, which is slightly below the 14.4% average food insecurity rate for the 6-county region, although this is higher than the overall average rate for Pennsylvania (13.2% in 2023, the most recent numbers available). This represents 8,420 individual Bradford County residents, 2,530 of whom are children under the age of 18.

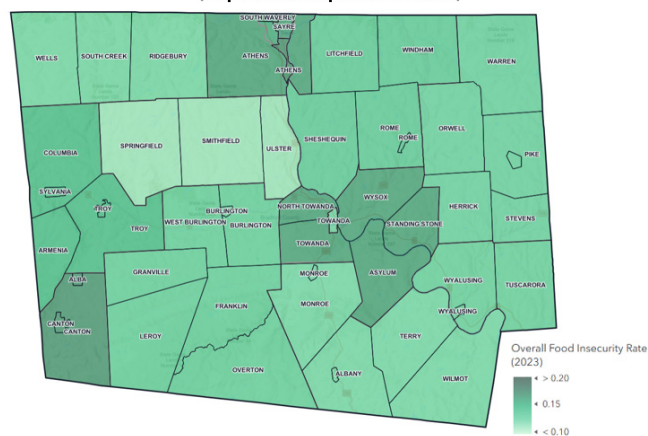
Bradford County and SNAP:

Bradford County is ranked 55th out of 67 counties for SNAP participation; of potentially eligible households, only 63.4% are enrolled in the program. ZIP Code 18840 has the largest SNAP participation gaps in the region with more than 1,050 likely eligible but not participating individuals and 171 likely eligible but not participating families. Forty-two percent (42%) of food pantry visitors surveyed in Bradford County reported receiving SNAP.

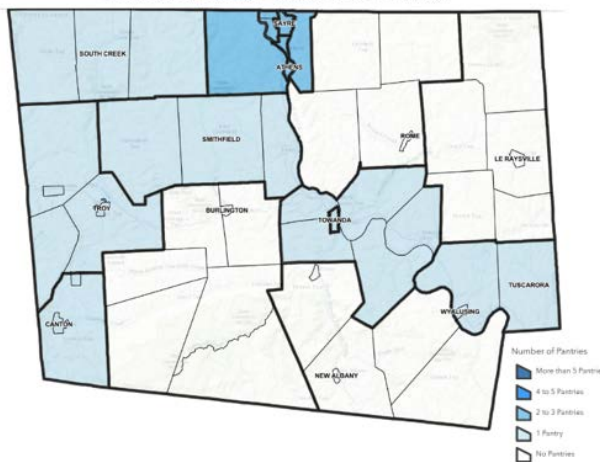
Main Findings and Recommendations for Bradford County:

1. Geographic access to food pantries should be prioritized, especially in the eastern and southern parts of the county to ensure that neighbors seeking food assistance can access a pantry within a 15-minute drive time.
2. Sayre is one of the few areas in the Northern Tier with evening and weekend food pantry distributions. Expanding hours of operation in other parts of the county would ensure that working-age households can access food distributions.

Food Insecurity Rate by Census Tract, Bradford County (Map the Meal Gap 2023 Estimates)



Pantries within a 15-Minute Drive Time by Census Tract, Bradford County



LYCOMING COUNTY

Neighbor Perspective: “I’m just blessed that everybody can help out in this time of need. It’s such a blessing when I have custody of my grandkids” – Lycoming County neighbor who reported she was being evicted.

Case manager who brings her client to the pantry. They are both eligible for food services. “I was embarrassed about it but they have been nice” – Lycoming County neighbor

Lycoming County Food Insecurity Overview:

Lycoming County has a food insecurity rate of 14.4%, which is equal to the average food insecurity rate for the 6-county region, although this is slightly higher than the overall average rate for Pennsylvania (13.2% in 2023, the most recent numbers available). This represents 16,310 individual Lycoming County residents, 4,840 of whom are children under the age of 18. Two in five (41%) food insecure individuals across the Northern Tier reside in Lycoming County.

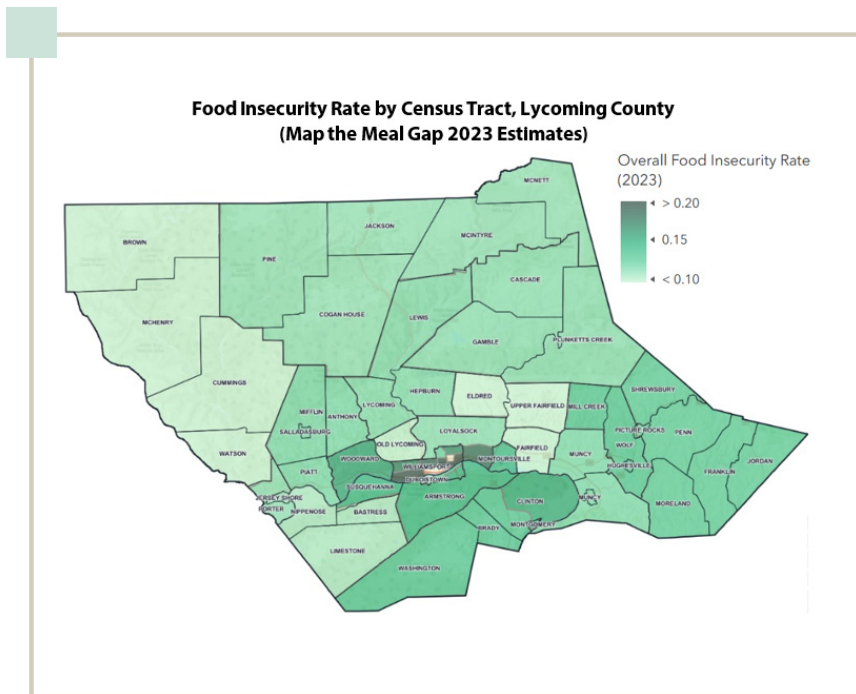
The census tract with the single highest food insecurity rate in the region is in Williamsport. This tract, which had a 30.9% food insecurity rate, is bounded by West Third Street, Hepburn Street, Rural Avenue, and 3rd Avenue and contains UPMC Williamsport. This tract was the only one in the region with a food insecurity rate above 30%; just under one in three residents of this census tract experienced food insecurity as of 2023.

Lycoming County and SNAP:

Lycoming County is ranked 25th out of 67 counties for SNAP participation; of potentially eligible households, 78.5% are enrolled in the program. ZIP Codes 17810, 17737, and 17752 have high priority SNAP participation gaps, which represent areas where likely-eligible households could be reached with assistance to access this benefit. Fifty-five percent of Lycoming County pantry visitors reported SNAP participation in neighbor surveys.

Main Findings and Recommendations for Lycoming County:

1. Washington Township/ Montgomery and the Hughesville area are areas of higher need for charitable food services, with a higher concentration of people experiencing food insecurity and no easily accessible food pantries.
2. Lycoming County, especially Williamsport, can meaningfully address food insecurity by ensuring that neighbors have access to at least two food pantry distributions per month, which may mean adjusting current intake practices to end visit restrictions or service territories that limit how frequently a household can access charitable food.

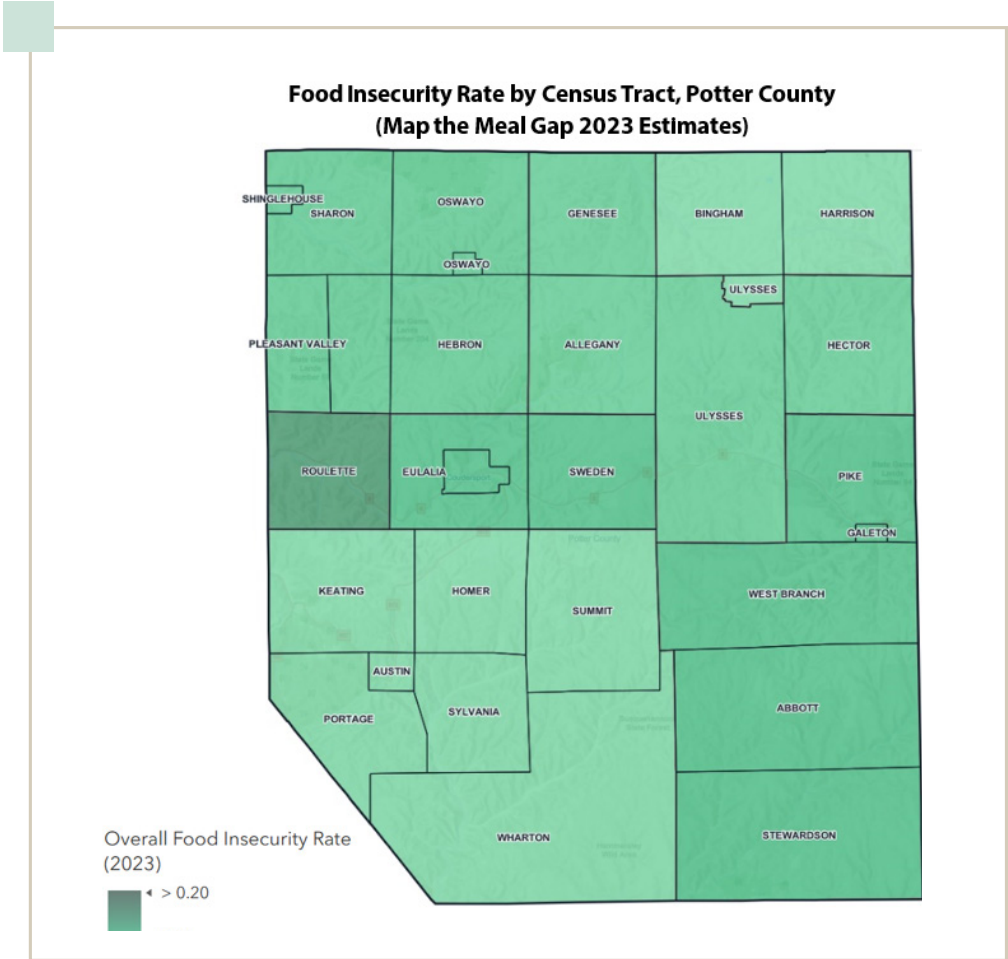


POTTER COUNTY

Neighbor Perspective:
 “These people are so nice and so helpful. They really are great” – Potter County food pantry visitor

Potter County Food Insecurity Overview:

Potter County has a food insecurity rate of 14.4%, which equals the average food insecurity rate for the 6-county region, although this is slightly higher than the overall average rate for Pennsylvania (13.2% in 2023, the most recent numbers available). This represents 2,350 individual Potter County residents, 680 of whom are children under the age of 18.



Potter County and SNAP:

Potter County is ranked 44th out of 67 counties for SNAP participation; of potentially eligible households, 67.4% are enrolled in the program. ZIP code analysis for potential improvements to SNAP enrollment did not reveal any geographic area where outreach efforts should be concentrated. In Potter County, 42% pantry visitors reported SNAP participation in neighbor surveys.

Main Findings and Recommendations for Potter County:

1. The extremely rural nature of this area creates challenges to meaningfully address food insecurity, especially for people who live outside of populated areas. Rather than adding more food pantry providers, financial and volunteer support for existing programs and community outreach could aid neighbors seeking food assistance.

SULLIVAN COUNTY

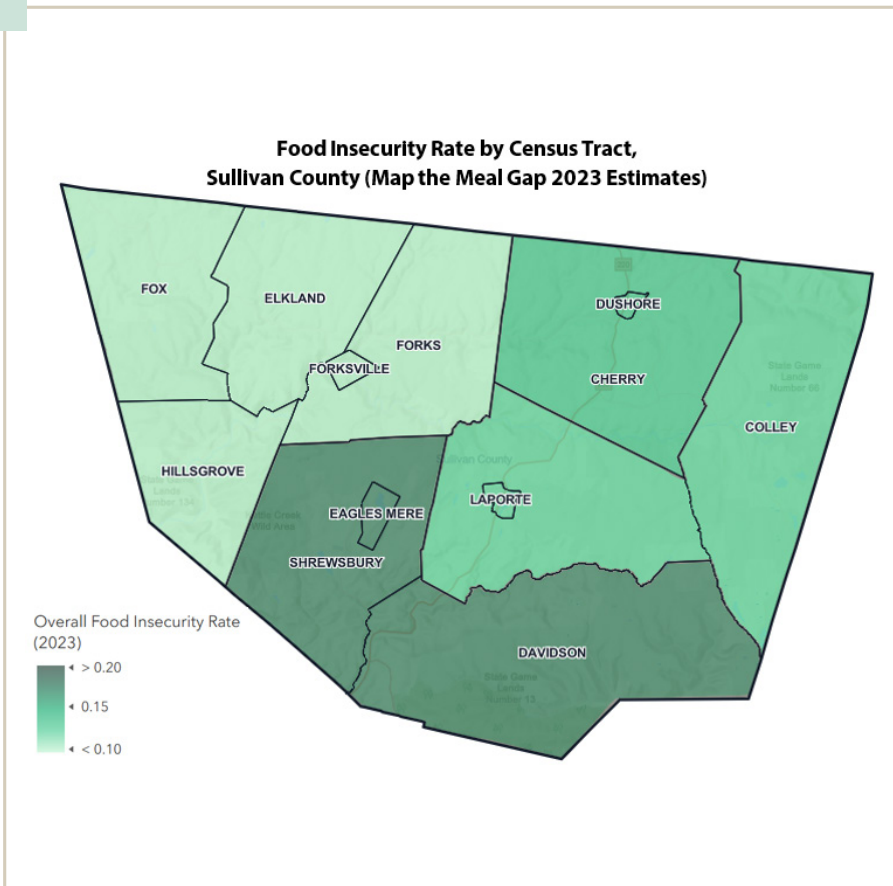
Neighbor Perspective: "This is a good food pantry"- neighbor from Sullivan County who reported his house burned down

Sullivan County and SNAP:

Sullivan County is ranked 60th out of 67 counties for SNAP participation; of potentially eligible households, only 58.8% are enrolled in the program, a total of 558 individuals for the county. ZIP Code 17814, which partially includes Davidson Township has the largest SNAP participation gaps in the region with more than 250 likely eligible but not participating individuals and 50 or more likely eligible but not participating families. 42% of food pantry visitors surveyed in Sullivan County reported receiving SNAP.

Main Findings and Recommendations for Sullivan County:

1. Sullivan County has a small population and is ranked poorly in both SNAP and WIC participation; thoughtful and targeted community outreach programs could close this gap to ensure eligible neighbors are receiving the government benefits they are eligible for to for meeting their household food needs.
2. Sullivan County does not have any SUN Meal sites to support access to meals for children during the summer. Exploring the rural non-congregate provision for this program would allow sites to offer "grab and go" meals rather than following the traditional congregate model, which requires daily visits.

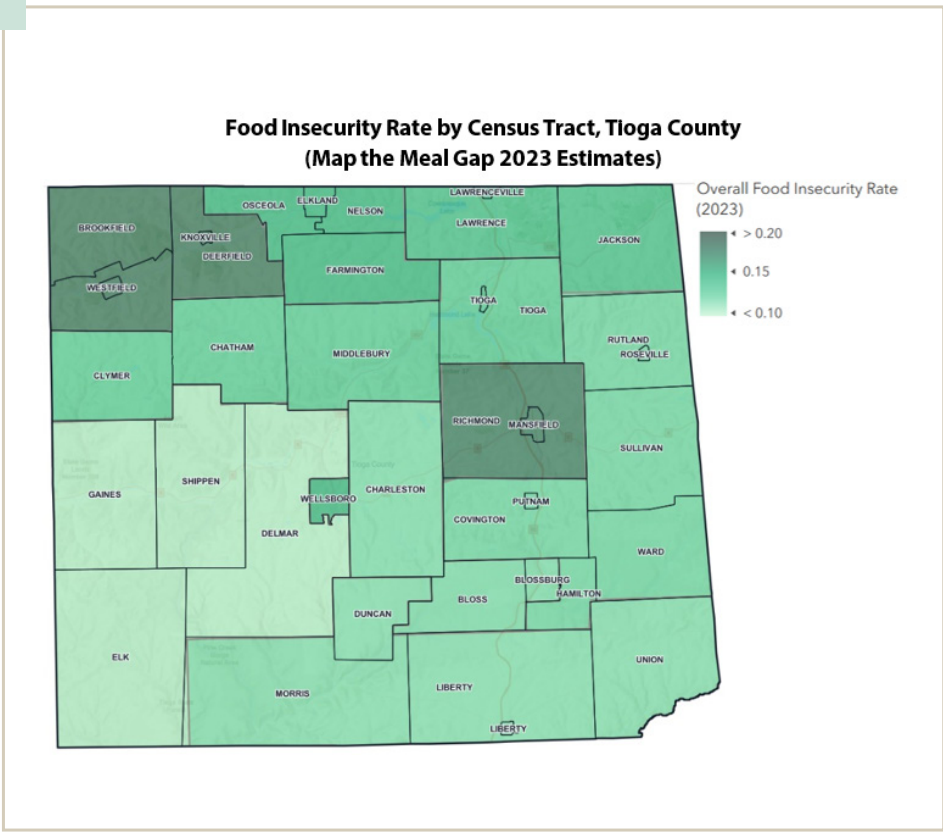


TIOGA COUNTY

Neighbor Perspective:
“Thankful that it’s here for us” - Tioga County pantry visitor

Tioga County Food Insecurity Overview:

Tioga County has a food insecurity rate of 14.3%, which is similar to the 14.4% the average food insecurity rate for the 6-county region, although this is slightly higher than the overall average rate for Pennsylvania (13.2% in 2023, the most recent numbers available). This represents 5,870 individual Tioga County residents, 1,700 of whom are children under the age of 18.



Tioga County and SNAP:

Tioga County is ranked 38th out of 67 counties for SNAP participation; of potentially eligible households, 71.9% are enrolled in the program. ZIP Codes 16929, 16946, and 16933 have the largest SNAP participation gap in the county with more than 500 likely eligible but not participating individuals and 100 likely eligible but not participating families. Forty-two percent of Tioga County pantry visitors reported SNAP participation in neighbor surveys.

Main Findings and Recommendations for Tioga County:

1. Northern Tioga School District offers a robust array of SUN Meal sites for school-aged children during the summer months and can serve as an example of effective use of rural non-congregate meal programs for other school districts interested in this program.
2. The northern part of the county has a concentration of people experiencing food insecurity without sufficient food pantry access to meet those needs. Outside of Mansfield, there is no weekend or evening access to food pantries, which often means working-age households are not able to visit a food distribution. Flexibility with the hours of operation or the number of visits per household could help serve these households further.

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 the Northern Tier, as well as the input of community leaders and food pantry providers. Data and quotes included in this report are de-identified to the greatest extent possible to maintain the privacy of participants. Each method of data collection is described in turn below.



Data

from multiple
state and national
organizations

Secondary Analysis

This report's secondary analysis draws upon data from a variety of different sources, including the American Community Survey 2018-2022 and 2019-2023 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 2025 data with 2023 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.



406
surveys were completed
across 14 different
locations



09
pantry sites were
visited and observed

Neighbor Surveys

In Fall 2025, CPFEB researchers conducted surveys at 14 geographically and demographically representative food pantries across the Northern Tier. A total of 406 surveys were completed across the 14 different pantry locations. Food pantry visitors were provided various options for survey completion: take the survey at the pantry on a CPFEB-provided device, have the survey read to them by a CPFEB 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.

Non-Participant Observation at Food Pantries

To include as many agency partners as possible in the Community Hunger Mapping process, CPFEB researchers visited 9 pantries that were not survey sites to observe pantry operation during food distribution/pantry hours. These observations helped CPFEB researchers bring a broader understanding of pantry practices and the neighbor experience of accessing charitable food to this report.



24

participants from 13
locations completed
surveys

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 24 total participants from 13 locations across the Northern Tier.



06

partner agencies
participated in
listening sessions



31

pantries completed online
and phone interviews

Partner Listening Sessions

CPFEB agency partners from the Northern Tier were invited to attend a listening session to discuss strengths and challenges at the pantry level. The discussion allowed for partners to identify and learn from each other's experiences and perspectives as pantry leaders within the community. Discussion topics included pantry and community strengths, sourcing and logistics, and challenges related to distribution. The CPFEB research team held one virtual listening session. A total of 16 individuals participated in the listening sessions, representing 12 different agencies.

Partner Surveys

The CPFEB Policy Research team distributed pantry surveys to agency partners who operate pantries that do not limit participation by age or military status across the Northern Tier. 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 31 pantries completed surveys via mail, email, and online. CPFEB researchers worked to include relevant information on access components like hours of operation for non-respondents using other relevant data sources.

Thanks and Recognition

Every neighbor who shared their thoughts with us, whether that was through the Feeding America Client Survey 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 the Northern Tier counties, 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 other CPFEB staff who assisted with surveys and non-participant observations, including Tracy Haas-Ungard, Pam Hicks, Kelsey Cantor, Cydne Shull, Emily Camerer, Jeremy Pearson, and Maddy Singer. Thank you for sharing your valuable time to help us engage with our neighbors!



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