

# Hunger is a Political Choice

How Benefit Cuts Led to a  
Hunger Surge in America



National Hunger Survey Report, 2023

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# Executive Summary

## Key Findings:

- The number of Americans who didn't have enough to eat over two one-week periods increased by 40.8 percent between September/October 2021 and September/October 2023, according to new data from the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey. Hunger Free America attributes that surge to the expiration of the expanded Child Tax Credits and universal school meals, coupled with the impact of inflation.

### Other findings of the study:

- Nationally, 11.9% of Americans were found to live in food insecure households over an entire year between 2020 and 2022. According to USDA data, the states with the highest rates of food insecure individuals from 2020-2022 were Texas (19.0%), Arkansas (16.3%), Louisiana (16.1%), Mississippi (15.4%), Oklahoma (15.3%), and South Carolina (15.3%).
- 15.8% of children in the U.S. lived in food insecure households in the 2020-2022 time period. The states with the highest rates of food insecure children were Delaware (21.4%), Nebraska (21.0%), Texas (20.7%), Georgia (20.0%), Kentucky (19.7%), and Louisiana (19.7%).
- Nationally, 9.1% of employed adults in the U.S. lived in food insecure households during the three-year time period. The states with the highest rates of food insecurity among employed adults were Arkansas (13.7%), Texas (13.4%), Louisiana (12.5%), South Carolina (12.5%), and Oklahoma (12.4%).
- In the U.S., 7.6% of older Americans, defined as people 60 years and older, lived in food insecure households. Louisiana had the highest rate of food insecurity among older Americans at 13.9%, followed by Mississippi (12.7%), District of Columbia (12.6%), West Virginia (11.0%), and Oklahoma (10.4%).
- Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas were consistently on the lists of the top ten states with the highest rates of food insecurity for individuals overall, children, employed adults, and older Americans.
- The states with the lowest rates of food insecurity were New Hampshire (6.1%), Minnesota (7.3%), Vermont (7.7%), Colorado (8.4%), and North Dakota (8.6%).

## I. A Message from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg

Many people say, “hunger isn’t political.”

These days, unfortunately, that’s the opposite of true.

In fact, the *only* reason we have mass food insecurity in a nation as wealthy and as agriculturally abundant as the United States is the failure our economic system and social safety net – which is ultimately a failure of our political system.

During the height of the pandemic, the U.S. economy essentially shut down, almost overnight. School meals programs, which before the pandemic served 29 million lunches and 15 million school breakfasts, shuttered. Senior meals programs and some feeding charities, including those distributing government commodities, closed their doors. U.S. food hardship soared.

The top reason we avoided mass starvation – and began to bring U.S. hunger rates down – was that the majorities in Congress, and later the Biden Administration, dramatically expanded the cash and food safety net for tens of millions of struggling Americans, cutting child poverty in half. SNAP – formerly called the Food Stamps Program – was greatly expanded, as was the WIC program for pregnant women and children under five. Schools were given the flexibility to serve meals (to be eaten at school or taken home) to children in families of all incomes. The Pandemic EBT program was created to place food credits on electronic shopping cards for parents of children in closed public schools.

Hunger plummeted once the government took those steps. I know it’s shocking to hear this, but the U.S. political system ***worked***. At least briefly.

Congressional conservatives then forced the end of the extra cash payments to low- and middle-income families with children, and child poverty immediately doubled.

**Doubling child poverty was a public policy choice, and ultimately, a political choice.**

Congressional conservatives also forced an end to the increased SNAP and school meals benefits.

As this report documents in mind-numbing detail, U.S. hunger again soared. The number of Americans who lived in food insecure households, unable to afford an adequate supply of food, increased by 30 percent – from 34 million to 44 million - between 2021 and 2022. The number of Americans struggling against hunger exceeded

the total combined populations of Texas and Illinois.

The number of children living in food insecure homes jumped by 45 percent, from 9 million in 2021 to 13 million in 2022. One in five U.S. children lived in households that struggled against hunger.

Since 2022, the situation has gone from bad to worse. The number of Americans who didn't have enough to eat over a one-week period increased by 36 percent between September/October 2022 and September/October 2023.

**Increased hunger was also a public policy choice, and ultimately, a political choice.**

To make matters even worse, government policies and procedures create barriers for participation in existing nutrition programs, which is why, as this report documents, nearly half the children who receive school lunches do not receive school breakfasts; nearly half the pregnant women, infants, and children eligible for WIC do not receive it; and nearly a quarter of those eligible for SNAP (including many low-income working families) do not obtain it.

For all those reasons, hunger is now soaring in both red and blue states – and throughout urban, suburban, and rural America. We should all be ashamed.

Just as no one should be surprised if drought increases when water is taken away, no one should be shocked that when the government takes away food, as well as money to buy food, hunger rises.

The U.S. minimum wage has been stuck at a meager \$7.25 per hour – a poverty wage – for a shocking 14 years. Given that the gaps between wages and costs of living are still so great that tens of millions of Americans can't afford enough food, this mass deprivation amid an overall recovery is one key reason why the U.S. public still tells pollsters they have a negative view of the U.S. economy. This new data should be a wake-up call for the need to raise the minimum wage and restore food and cash aid.

Beyond that, officials at the national, state, and local levels need to take bold, concrete actions to raise wages, make quality housing and childcare more affordable, and strengthen – not cut – the food safety net, while making it easier to access programs. The ongoing push by key Congressional conservatives to further slash these programs is both morally appalling and economically counter-productive.

Just as “thoughts and prayers” alone won't end America's plague of gun violence, charity alone won't solve the nation's hunger epidemic. That's why we implore everyone reading this report to join with Hunger Free America to build the grassroots movement

necessary to force our political leaders to raise wages and provide a strong safety net, so we can finally end U.S. hunger and ensure that all Americans have access to adequate, healthy food.

Please join us **today**, because ending hunger will lift us all.

Sincerely,



Joel Berg  
CEO, Hunger Free America

## II. Methodology

Data from this report was gathered from the USDA's Food Security Supplement to the December 2022 Current Population Survey (CPS). In total, 31,948 households completed the Food Security Supplement in 2022, which is nationally representative after applying the Food Security Supplement weights.

All analyses used the 12 Month Food Security Summary variable, HRFS12M1, which is the same variable used by the USDA to analyze overall household food insecurity. Data on employed adults was obtained by layering those classified as "employed" in the PREXPLF demographic variable. Calculations for food insecure older Americans used the PRTAGE variable, restricted to those 60+ years old. The analysis on food insecurity among children used the PRTAGE variable as well, restricted to those 17 years and younger.

Numbers were calculated as three-year averages to increase statistical accuracy due to the relatively small sample size in some states. In order to obtain food insecurity data at the individual level as opposed to the household level, person-level weighting was used in this analysis. One should note that in general, data on the proportion of people is more accurate than the data on the total number of people who are food insecure due to sample size.

It is important to note that the statistics on food insecurity from the USDA should be interpreted as "individuals living in food insecure households" as opposed to "food insecure individuals." This is because the food security survey measures food security status at the household level. Because household members experience food insecurity

differently, with some members being more affected than others, this distinction is necessary.

For the Household Pulse Survey, Hunger Free America's analysis identifies responses of "often not enough to eat" and "sometimes not enough to eat" as food insufficient (or "not enough to eat"), and "enough of the kinds of food (I/we) wanted to eat" as food sufficient. In order to compare the irregular weekly pulse survey dates with months, weekly food insufficiency figures were averaged out in accordance with the month they most closely aligned.

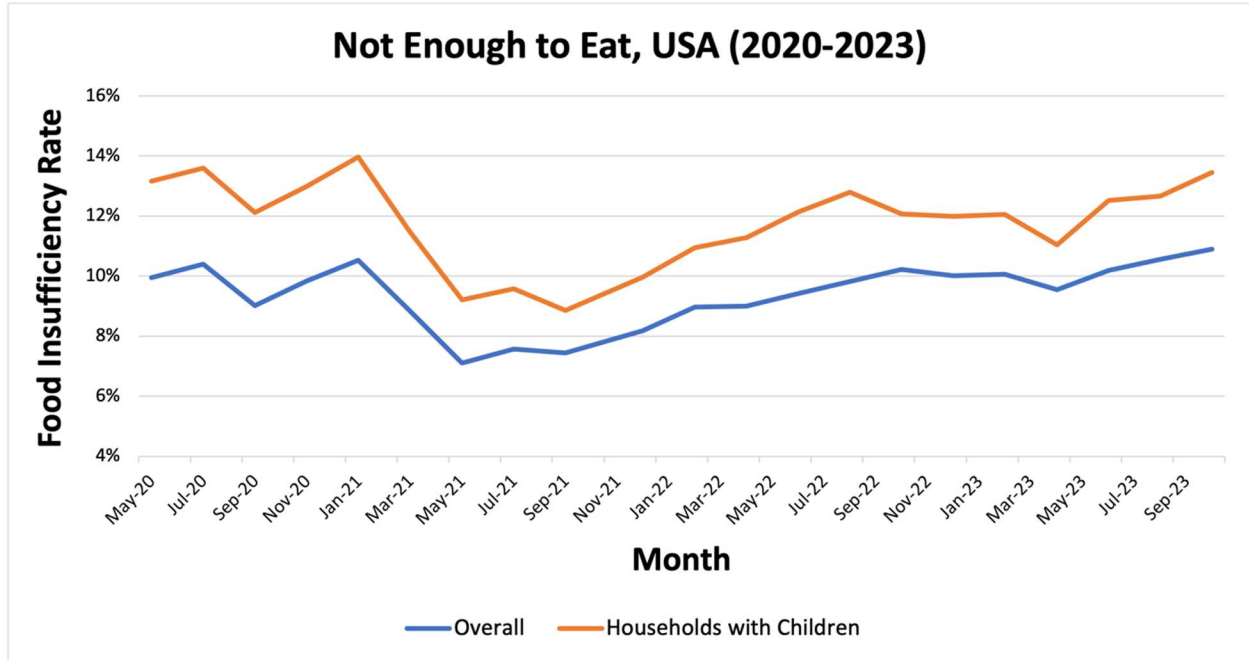
### **III. Census Household Pulse Survey**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the US Census Bureau launched the Household Pulse Survey (HPS) to collect timely data on household experiences during the pandemic. The HPS measures food sufficiency, which is not directly comparable to the USDA's food security measurement due to different methodologies, response rates, and time periods covered. This section of the report utilizes the HPS's food sufficiency measure to analyze more current data, while future sections of the report will utilize the USDA's food security measurement.

The number of Americans who didn't have enough to eat over two one-week periods increased by 40.8 percent between September/October 2021 and September/October 2023 (Table 1). Hunger Free America attributes that surge to the expiration of the expanded Child Tax Credits and universal school meals, coupled with the impact of inflation. Nearly one-in-seven (13.5%) households with children reported not having enough to eat in October 2023, which was higher than the national average of 10.9% (Figure 1). The percentage of individuals without enough to eat is now higher than April 2020 levels, when the Household Pulse Survey began, and the US was still in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Figure 1 – Not Enough to Eat, U.S. Nationwide**



**Table 1 - Number of People Without Enough to Eat, September - October 2021 vs September - October 2023\***

State	September - October 2021	September - October 2023	Percent Change in People Without Enough to Eat
U.S.	19,741,081	27,793,627	+40.8%
Alabama	338,192	488,075	+44.3%
Alaska	48,598	63,087	+29.8%
Arizona	441,213	677,771	+53.6%
Arkansas	194,093	239,255	+23.3%
California	2,487,057	3,165,467	+27.3%
Colorado	266,471	429,918	+61.3%
Connecticut	174,250	328,078	+88.3%
Delaware	69,964	88,130	+26.0%
District of Columbia	40,233	39,274	-2.4%
Florida	1,608,466	2,024,740	+25.9%
Georgia	858,654	1,193,548	+39.0%
Hawaii	82,419	116,049	+40.8%



Idaho	89,235	146,013	+63.6%
Illinois	553,087	1,107,758	+100.3%
Indiana	387,879	528,666	+36.3%
Iowa	172,201	229,940	+33.5%
Kansas	176,793	242,707	+37.3%
Kentucky	298,741	403,297	+35.0%
Louisiana	434,246	499,619	+15.1%
Maine	60,728	113,350	+86.7%
Maryland	306,877	458,385	+49.4%
Massachusetts	363,433	535,920	+47.5%
Michigan	533,223	893,950	+67.7%
Minnesota	161,775	311,531	+92.6%
Mississippi	233,241	269,816	+15.7%
Missouri	386,883	517,069	+33.7%
Montana	54,129	99,245	+83.3%
Nebraska	87,328	153,343	+75.6%
Nevada	137,447	356,306	+159.2%
New Hampshire	64,788	83,489	+28.9%
New Jersey	427,493	634,364	+48.4%
New Mexico	128,675	209,218	+62.6%
New York	1,224,223	1,395,794	+14.0%
North Carolina	696,100	866,009	+24.4%
North Dakota	35,420	47,588	+34.4%
Ohio	611,339	980,665	+60.4%
Oklahoma	350,153	392,128	+12.0%
Oregon	250,881	289,710	+15.5%
Pennsylvania	653,512	1,021,341	+56.3%
Rhode Island	69,581	89,068	+28.0%
South Carolina	319,022	469,320	+47.1%
South Dakota	41,087	63,078	+53.5%
Tennessee	432,202	602,223	+39.3%
Texas	2,173,823	2,777,183	+27.8%
Utah	148,823	235,624	+58.3%
Vermont	21,407	43,674	+104.0%
Virginia	344,884	677,225	+96.4%
Washington	378,651	548,134	+44.8%
West Virginia	99,864	176,835	+77.1%
Wisconsin	198,195	420,554	+112.2%
Wyoming	24,107	50,110	+107.9%

*\*Lack of sampling results in low counts and errors for data in less populated states, meaning the standard errors may be large in those states.*

## IV. Overall Food Insecurity

Nationally, 11.9% of Americans were found to live in food insecure households between 2020 and 2022 (Table 2). According to USDA data, the states with the highest rates of food insecure individuals from 2020-2022 were Texas (19.0%), Arkansas (16.3%), Louisiana (16.1%), Mississippi (15.4%), Oklahoma (15.3%), and South Carolina (15.3%). Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas were consistently on the lists of the top ten states with the highest rates of food insecurity for individuals overall, children, employed adults, and older Americans.

The states with the lowest rates of food insecurity were New Hampshire (6.1%), Minnesota (7.3%), Vermont (7.7%), Colorado (8.4%), and North Dakota (8.6%).

**Table 2** – Number and Percent of Food Insecure Individuals by State, 2020-2022

State	Number of Food Insecure Individuals	Percentage of Food Insecure Individuals
U.S.	38,760,518	11.9%
Alabama	625,667	12.8%
Alaska	74,810	10.7%
Arizona	834,192	11.3%
Arkansas	486,152	16.3%
California	4,449,538	11.5%
Colorado	484,302	8.4%
Connecticut	328,213	9.4%
Delaware	135,449	13.7%
District of Columbia	80,505	11.9%
Florida	2,467,632	11.4%
Georgia	1,406,552	13.2%
Hawaii	137,379	10.2%
Idaho	217,127	11.6%
Illinois	1,360,926	11.0%
Indiana	742,917	11.1%
Iowa	307,002	9.8%
Kansas	279,509	9.8%
Kentucky	625,118	14.2%
Louisiana	727,642	16.1%
Maine	134,005	9.9%
Maryland	627,787	10.5%

Massachusetts	621,256	9.1%
Michigan	1,238,118	12.6%
Minnesota	411,952	7.3%
Mississippi	445,477	15.4%
Missouri	801,744	13.2%
Montana	115,171	10.6%
Nebraska	269,295	14.0%
Nevada	380,203	12.1%
New Hampshire	82,739	6.1%
New Jersey	801,209	9.0%
New Mexico	263,427	12.8%
New York	2,236,059	11.7%
North Carolina	1,216,114	11.6%
North Dakota	64,229	8.6%
Ohio	1,417,103	12.3%
Oklahoma	600,511	15.3%
Oregon	466,958	11.1%
Pennsylvania	1,252,144	9.9%
Rhode Island	100,098	9.5%
South Carolina	792,281	15.3%
South Dakota	96,374	10.9%
Tennessee	831,546	12.1%
Texas	5,560,760	19.0%
Utah	391,045	11.8%
Vermont	48,126	7.7%
Virginia	773,921	9.2%
Washington	696,632	9.1%
West Virginia	243,247	14.0%
Wisconsin	606,332	10.5%
Wyoming	67,474	11.8%

## V. Food Insecurity Among Children

Hunger Free America found that 15.8% of children in the U.S. lived in food insecure households in the 2020-2022 time period (Table 3). The states with the highest rates of food insecure children were Delaware (21.4%), Nebraska (21.0%), Texas (20.7%), Georgia (20.0%), Kentucky (19.7%), and Louisiana (19.7%).

The states with the lowest rates of food insecurity among children were Vermont (8.4%), Connecticut (8.5%), Minnesota (8.6%), New Hampshire (8.9%), and Colorado (9.6%).

**Table 3 - Number and Percent of Food Insecure Children by State, 2020-2022**

<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Children Living in Food Insecure Households</b>	<b>Percentage of Children Living in Food Insecure Household</b>
U.S.	11,492,515	15.8%
Alabama	189,871	17.3%
Alaska	24,580	13.9%
Arizona	280,410	16.8%
Arkansas	132,721	19.4%
California	1,325,451	15.3%
Colorado	117,553	9.6%
Connecticut	58,175	8.5%
Delaware	43,847	21.4%
District of Columbia	22,157	17.7%
Florida	653,645	15.0%
Georgia	499,230	20.0%
Hawaii	44,217	14.7%
Idaho	70,285	15.5%
Illinois	376,194	13.7%
Indiana	213,681	13.8%
Iowa	108,230	15.2%
Kansas	93,252	13.2%
Kentucky	194,161	19.7%
Louisiana	211,259	19.7%
Maine	32,354	13.7%
Maryland	190,341	14.2%
Massachusetts	159,366	11.6%
Michigan	393,121	18.3%
Minnesota	111,301	8.6%

Mississippi	123,789	18.0%
Missouri	258,131	18.5%
Montana	31,577	13.6%
Nebraska	100,499	21.0%
Nevada	102,227	14.5%
New Hampshire	22,222	8.9%
New Jersey	229,099	11.5%
New Mexico	71,663	15.4%
New York	579,658	14.5%
North Carolina	373,925	16.4%
North Dakota	27,769	15.6%
Ohio	452,884	17.9%
Oklahoma	180,181	18.8%
Oregon	121,499	14.1%
Pennsylvania	355,178	13.4%
Rhode Island	27,899	13.5%
South Carolina	216,725	19.1%
South Dakota	39,653	17.9%
Tennessee	233,706	15.2%
Texas	1,546,699	20.7%
Utah	137,506	14.7%
Vermont	9,216	8.4%
Virginia	218,840	11.7%
Washington	225,583	13.6%
West Virginia	58,453	16.4%
Wisconsin	180,136	14.6%
Wyoming	22,401	16.8%

## VI. Food Insecurity Among Employed Adults

Nationally, 9.1% of employed adults in the U.S. lived in food insecure households during the three-year time period (Table 4). The states with the highest rates of food insecurity among employed adults were Arkansas (13.7%), Texas (13.4%), Louisiana (12.5%), South Carolina (12.5%), and Oklahoma (12.4%).

The least food insecure states among employed adults were New Hampshire (4.7%), Minnesota (5.2%), Vermont (5.5%), North Dakota (5.9%), and Colorado (6.2%).

**Table 4** – Number and Percent of Food Insecure Employed Adults by State, 2020-2022

State	Number of Employed Adults Living in Food Insecure Households	Percentage of Employed Adults Living in Food Insecure Households
U.S.	14,186,228	9.1%
Alabama	192,921	9.0%
Alaska	25,292	7.4%
Arizona	301,172	8.7%
Arkansas	189,494	13.7%
California	1,589,299	8.8%
Colorado	188,672	6.2%
Connecticut	141,114	7.6%
Delaware	50,928	11.6%
District of Columbia	24,691	6.7%
Florida	866,939	8.7%
Georgia	472,666	9.6%
Hawaii	50,017	8.3%
Idaho	90,239	10.0%
Illinois	501,177	8.2%
Indiana	263,677	7.9%
Iowa	107,625	6.6%
Kansas	118,089	7.9%
Kentucky	172,858	8.7%
Louisiana	246,137	12.5%
Maine	49,654	7.9%
Maryland	255,088	8.3%
Massachusetts	230,012	6.6%
Michigan	417,925	9.0%
Minnesota	156,097	5.2%
Mississippi	132,432	11.3%

Missouri	302,070	10.1%
Montana	47,875	9.0%
Nebraska	116,039	11.6%
Nevada	154,583	10.8%
New Hampshire	34,211	4.7%
New Jersey	312,719	7.2%
New Mexico	83,150	9.4%
New York	798,696	9.0%
North Carolina	426,022	8.6%
North Dakota	23,387	5.9%
Ohio	547,946	9.8%
Oklahoma	223,946	12.4%
Oregon	182,836	8.9%
Pennsylvania	488,322	8.2%
Rhode Island	36,810	6.9%
South Carolina	279,382	12.5%
South Dakota	35,472	7.6%
Tennessee	309,047	9.4%
Texas	1,848,388	13.4%
Utah	166,107	10.1%
Vermont	17,266	5.5%
Virginia	303,247	7.4%
Washington	274,051	7.2%
West Virginia	63,074	8.7%
Wisconsin	252,214	8.3%
Wyoming	25,183	8.9%

## VII. Food Insecurity Among Older Americans

In the U.S., 7.6% of older Americans, defined as people 60 years and older, lived in food insecure households (Table 5). Louisiana had the highest rate of food insecurity among older Americans at 13.9%, followed by Mississippi (12.7%), District of Columbia (12.6%), West Virginia (11.0%), and Oklahoma (10.4%).

The states with the lowest rates of food insecurity among seniors were North Dakota (2.6%), New Hampshire (3.4%), Minnesota (3.6%), South Dakota (3.8%), and Washington (4.0%).



**Table 5 – Number and Percent of Food Insecure Older Americans by State, 2020-2022**

<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Older Americans Living in Food Insecure Households</b>	<b>Percentage of Older Americans Living in Food Insecure Households</b>
U.S.	5,870,239	7.6%
Alabama	109,485	9.2%
Alaska	11,112	7.4%
Arizona	144,858	8.4%
Arkansas	68,355	9.3%
California	642,976	7.6%
Colorado	95,110	6.9%
Connecticut	57,663	6.4%
Delaware	18,745	6.2%
District of Columbia	15,769	12.6%
Florida	595,277	9.6%
Georgia	189,863	8.6%
Hawaii	16,839	4.4%
Idaho	27,460	6.3%
Illinois	224,119	7.9%
Indiana	110,308	7.3%
Iowa	43,165	6.0%
Kansas	36,422	5.4%
Kentucky	90,570	8.1%
Louisiana	149,676	13.9%
Maine	18,500	4.3%
Maryland	91,714	6.6%
Massachusetts	116,168	6.7%
Michigan	166,012	6.5%
Minnesota	46,173	3.6%

Mississippi	88,453	12.7%
Missouri	101,810	7.3%
Montana	14,927	4.9%
Nebraska	21,556	4.9%
Nevada	50,969	6.8%
New Hampshire	13,508	3.4%
New Jersey	151,729	7.1%
New Mexico	34,299	6.6%
New York	369,402	7.8%
North Carolina	193,061	7.3%
North Dakota	4,493	2.6%
Ohio	175,996	5.8%
Oklahoma	91,298	10.4%
Oregon	69,258	6.6%
Pennsylvania	195,358	5.8%
Rhode Island	13,456	5.0%
South Carolina	140,563	10.1%
South Dakota	7,798	3.8%
Tennessee	127,740	7.8%
Texas	513,506	9.4%
Utah	32,811	6.1%
Vermont	10,922	5.7%
Virginia	140,005	7.0%
Washington	70,006	4.0%
West Virginia	57,703	11.0%
Wisconsin	88,828	6.3%
Wyoming	11,762	7.9%

## VIII. Federal Nutrition Assistance Program Participation

Hunger Free America compiled the most recent nonparticipation rates for SNAP, WIC, and school breakfast programs by state. Nationally, 18% of individuals eligible for SNAP were not receiving SNAP in 2018 (Table 6). WIC had the highest rate of nonparticipation, with 49% of eligible individuals not receiving WIC in 2021. School breakfast had a similar nonparticipation rate, with 48% of children who receive school lunch not receiving school breakfast during the 2021-2022 school year.

**Table 6** – SNAP, WIC, and School Breakfast Nonparticipation Rates by State

State	Overall % eligible for SNAP Not Receiving, 2018	Working poor % eligible for SNAP Not Receiving, 2018	Older Americans % eligible for SNAP Not Receiving, 2018	% Eligible for WIC but Not Receiving, 2021	% Receiving school lunch but not school breakfast, 2021-2022
<b>U.S.</b>	18	26	58	49	48
<b>Alabama</b>	22	23	62	50	41
<b>Alaska</b>	14	21	60	49	49
<b>Arizona</b>	23	30	66	48	52
<b>Arkansas</b>	34	37	76	65	35
<b>California</b>	30	41	68	34	50
<b>Colorado</b>	20	34	56	54	53
<b>Connecticut</b>	8	21	36	54	53
<b>Delaware</b>	0	1	51	52	42
<b>District of</b>	16	61	51	41	18
<b>Florida</b>	16	25	33	51	53
<b>Georgia</b>	16	30	61	60	42
<b>Guam</b>	15	26	38		
<b>Hawaii</b>	27	29	64	44	70
<b>Idaho</b>	27	29	64	56	56
<b>Illinois</b>	0	8	37	64	55
<b>Indiana</b>	25	22	64	39	58
<b>Iowa</b>	12	14	60	45	61
<b>Kansas</b>	30	35	64	54	54
<b>Kentucky</b>	33	24	68	41	35
<b>Louisiana</b>	26	27	59	63	42
<b>Maine</b>	20	22	40	45	41
<b>Maryland</b>	11	31	47	45	45
<b>Massachusetts</b>	3	31	29	39	58
<b>Michigan</b>	11	14	50	41	46

<b>Minnesota</b>	24	25	57	39	52
<b>Mississippi</b>	29	34	69	53	39
<b>Missouri</b>	15	25	58	61	41
<b>Montana</b>	21	29	57	57	43
<b>Nebraska</b>	20	25	63	42	63
<b>Nevada</b>	9	16	50	52	44
<b>New</b>	20	31	57	46	53
<b>New Jersey</b>	19	28	37	50	52
<b>New Mexico</b>	2	11	47	65	30
<b>New York</b>	13	26	27	47	45
<b>North Carolina</b>	31	34	66	38	42
<b>North Dakota</b>	36	38	67	47	56
<b>Ohio</b>	15	15	50	61	47
<b>Oklahoma</b>	14	23	62	48	44
<b>Oregon</b>	0	10	33	39	48
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	2	6	39	59	53
<b>Rhode Island</b>	7	20	22	46	50
<b>South Carolina</b>	22	30	59	59	40
<b>South Dakota</b>	21	22	60	46	60
<b>Tennessee</b>	8	21	58	59	40
<b>Texas</b>	25	28	67	50	47
<b>Utah</b>	21	28	72	63	68
<b>Vermont</b>	7	23	35	28	36
<b>Virginia</b>	27	39	62	51	43
<b>Washington</b>	0	15	36	51	58
<b>West Virginia</b>	11	21	58	49	18
<b>Wisconsin</b>	7	15	48	48	48
<b>Wyoming</b>	44	43	78	56	50

SNAP participation rates were calculated using USDA data: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap>

WIC participation rates were calculated using USDA data:  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/apps/FinalOnlineGraphics/graphic5.html>

School breakfast participation rates were calculated by using the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) data: <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-meals-2023.pdf>

## IX. Federal Policy Recommendations

- Immediately fully fund the WIC program for pregnant women, infants, and children under five, including maintaining increased allotments for fruit and vegetable purchases.
- Enact the provisions of the HOPE Act of 2021 (H.R.2336/S.1181) – sponsored by Senator Gillibrand and Reps. McGovern, Pingree, Morelle, and Espaillat – to authorize \$35 million for pilot projects at the state, county, city, and tribal levels to a) Leverage client-facing technology to better coordinate access to multiple government anti-poverty, health care, nutrition, housing, tax, and work support benefits, and; b) Provide extra resources and technical assistance to enable low-income people to voluntarily work with local nonprofit groups and government agencies to develop assets (by buying a first home, starting a small business, saving money to pay for college, etc.) to achieve long-term self-advancement benchmarks.
- Pass a Farm Bill that restores higher allotments in SNAP (formerly called food stamps); restores pandemic-era improvements in SNAP access for college students; enables SNAP recipients to purchase hot food at stores; ensure universal eligibility for the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program; makes it easier for active duty military families to obtain SNAP; increases the amount of -- and improves the nutritional quality of -- food distributed through charities; increases programs that help low-income Americans shop at farmers markets; and provides seed funds and technical assistance to community-based food enterprises that produce and sell healthy foods.
- Re-fund the expanded Child Tax Credits for struggling families.
- Fully fund the AmeriCorps national service program, including the AmeriCorps VISTA program. Increase living allowances for AmeriCorps national service participants. Right now, many AmeriCorps members earn less than the meager federal minimum wage, which greatly hampers recruitment, making it difficult for the non-wealthy to serve.
- Raise the national minimum wage by indexing it to median family income in each state.

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