

Lancaster County Community Hunger Mapping

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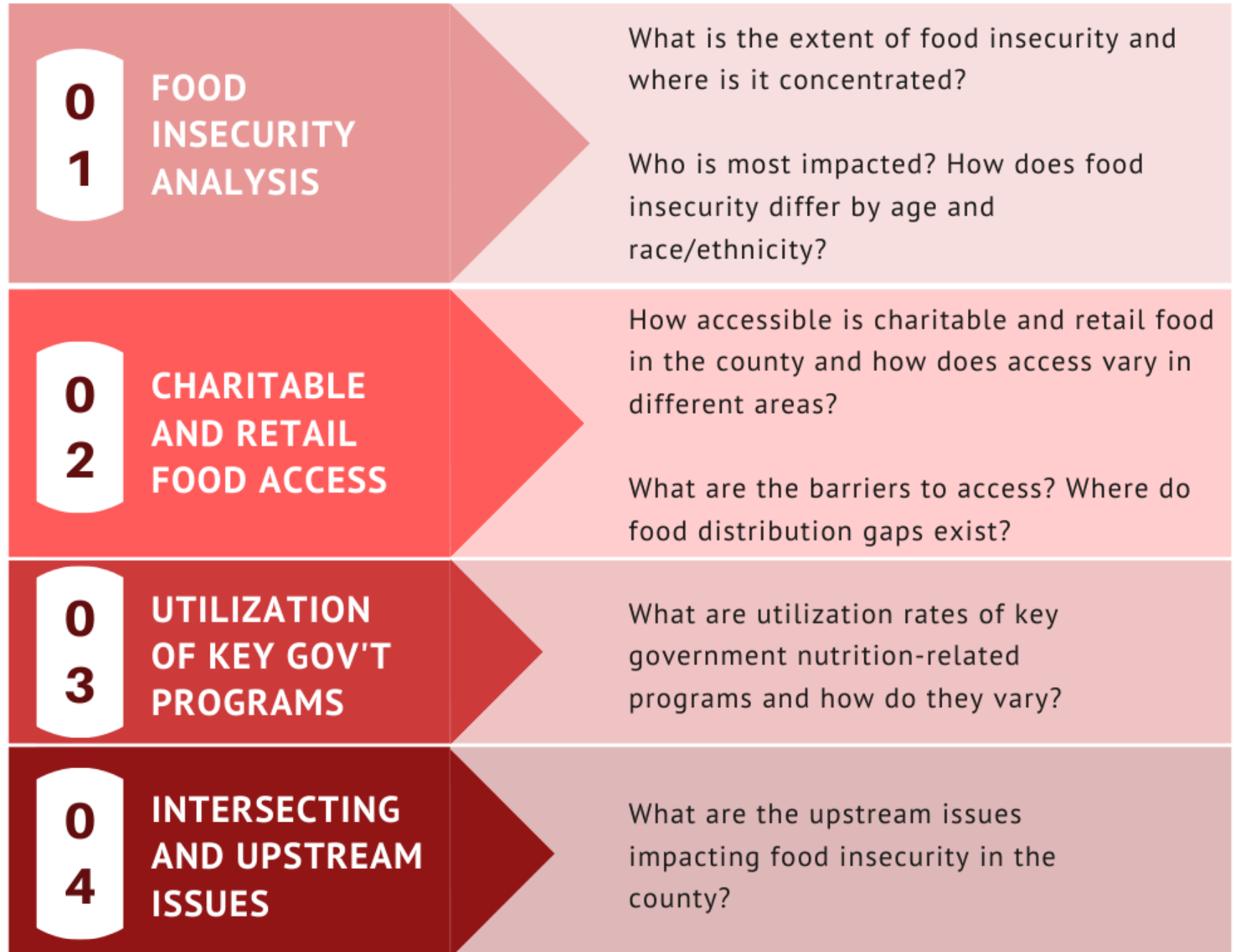


Agenda

- Food Security Analysis
- Charitable Food Access
- Utilization of Key Government Programs
- Intersecting and Upstream Issues

Community Hunger Mapping Report: Lancaster County

Central PA Food Bank



Data Collection Process



**740 Household-Level
Surveys across 12 Pantries**



**4 Food Pantry Listening
Sessions with 29 Agencies**



**4 Neighbor Focus Groups
with 34 People**



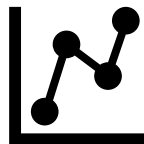
**39 Food Pantry Coordinator
Surveys**



**13 Extended One-on-one
Neighbor Interviews**



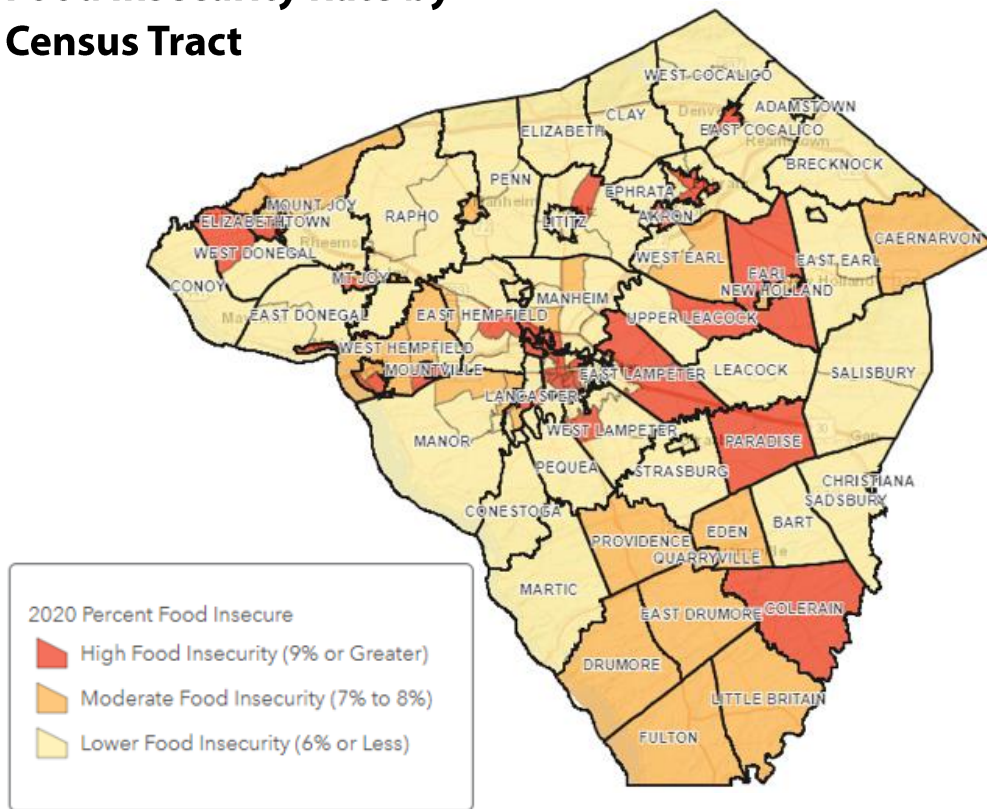
**18 Pantries with Census Tract
Level Anonymized Data Sharing**



**Secondary Data Collection and Interim Report
Analyzing Quantitative Data from many sources**

Food Insecurity in Lancaster County

Food Insecurity Rate by Census Tract



Food Insecurity varies by Age, Race, and Place

- Nearly 50,000 Lancastrians are food insecure (8.7%)
- Areas of High Food Insecurity are concentrated along the Route 30, 222, and 283 corridors as well as in Lancaster City
- Children are the most likely to experience food insecurity – parents are the most likely to go hungry
- Food insecurity among Black and Hispanic individuals is 3.5 times white individuals in Lancaster County (21% compared to 6%)

Food Insecurity Definitions

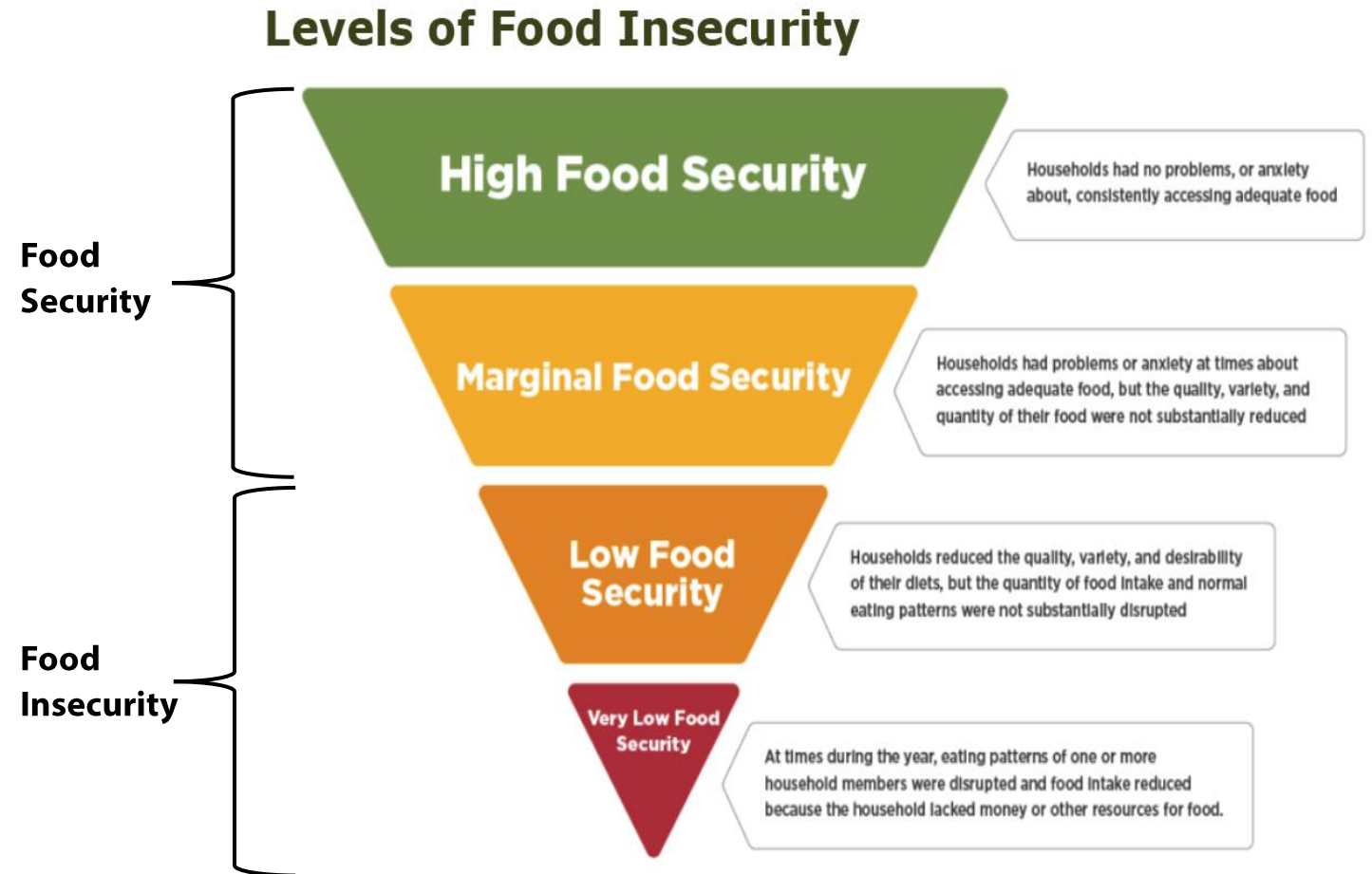
Food Security means access by all household members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Food security includes:

- The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

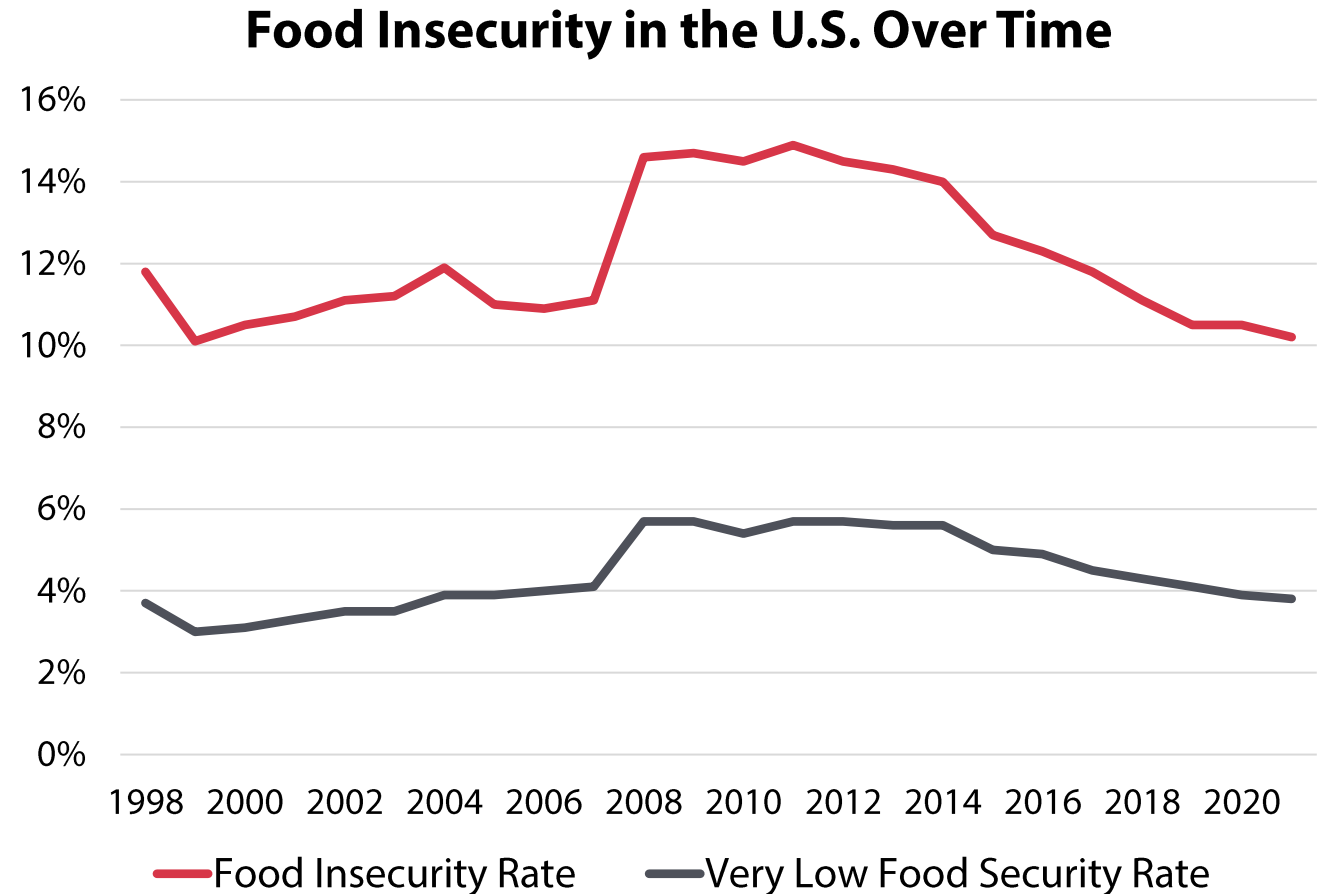
Food Insecurity is made up of Low and Very Low Food Security

- Very low food security puts people most at risk of hunger.



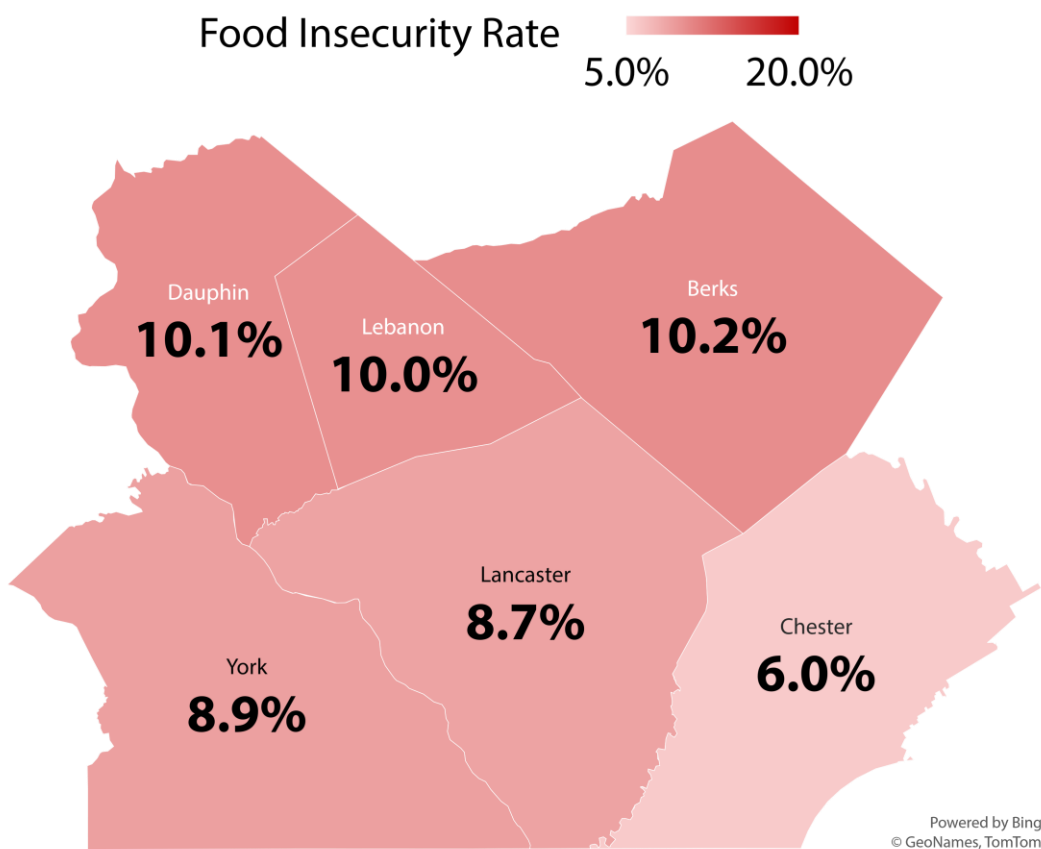
National Levels of Food Insecurity

- **The national food insecurity rate was 10.5% in 2020 among all households**
 - Food insecurity rates rose sharply during the Great Recession and gradually fell thereafter, but have stagnated over 25 years
 - Economic conditions have a major impact on food insecurity
 - However, food insecurity rates have never dipped below 10.0% in 25 years, even in the best economic conditions

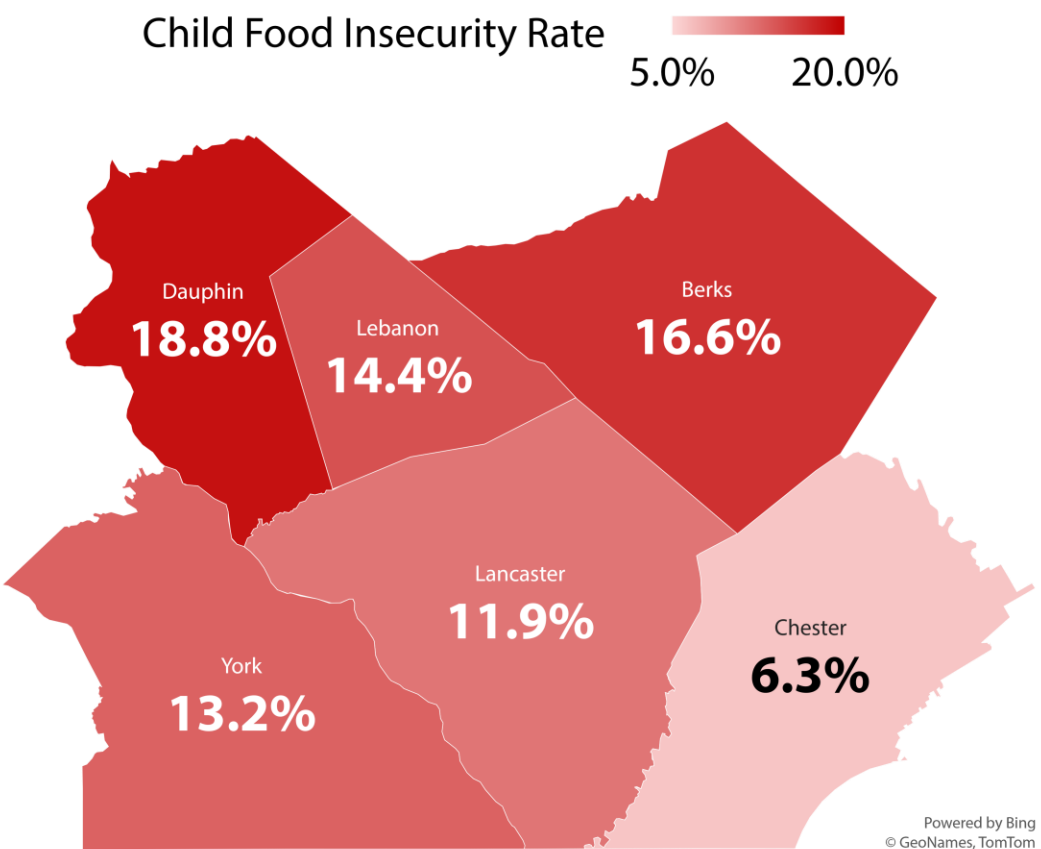


Food Insecurity by County in South Central PA

Overall Food Insecurity Rates by County



Child Food Insecurity Rates by County



Child Food Insecurity

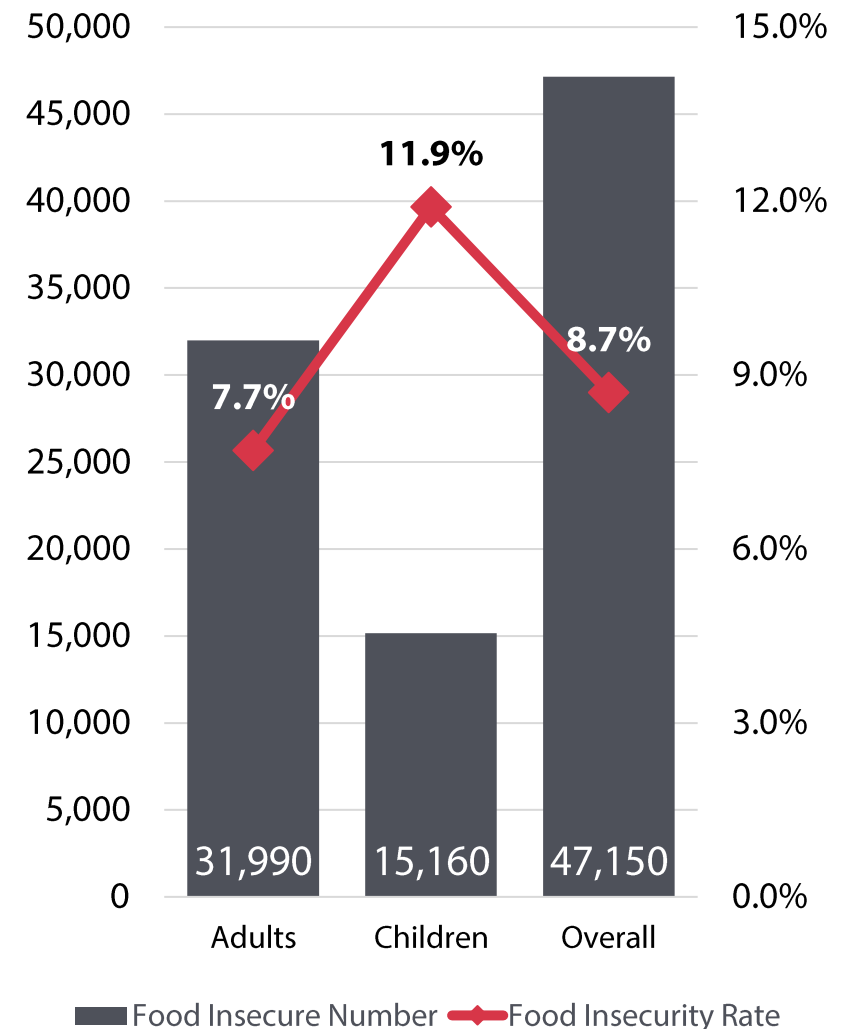
Finding:

- Children are 55% more likely to be food insecure than adults, with a food insecurity rate of 11.9% in 2020 compared to 7.7% for adults.
- Nearly one in eight of Lancaster's children faces food insecurity.

Recommendation:

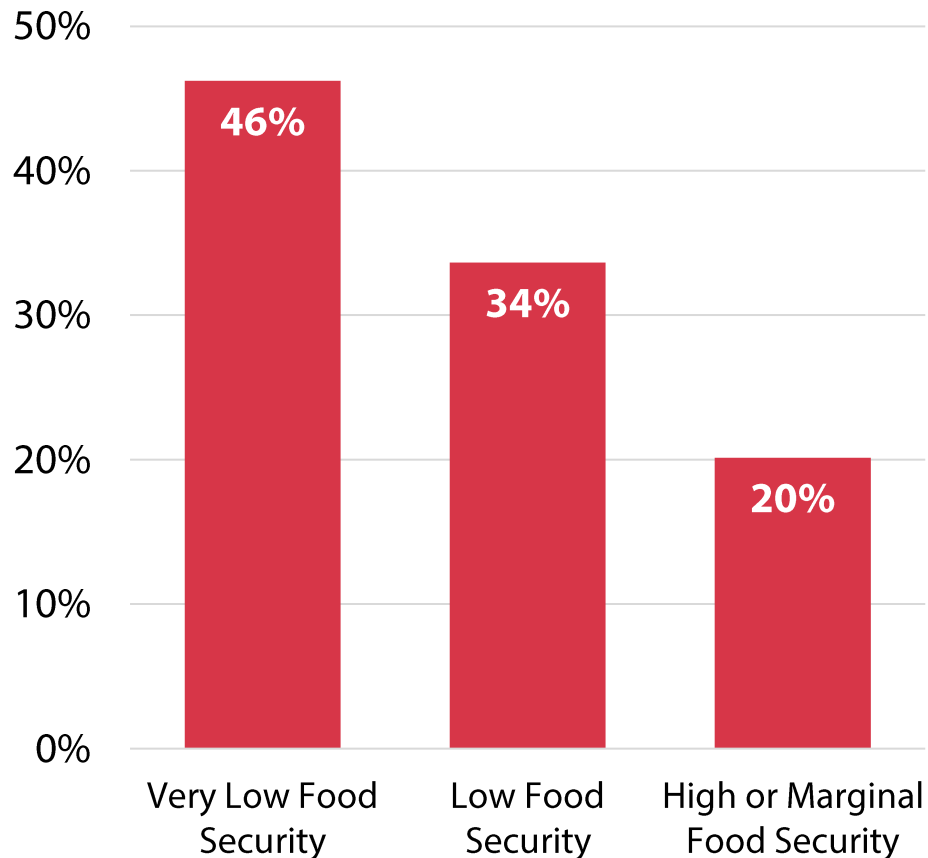
- Support and expand programs targeted specifically at children & families, such as:
 - Federally funded meal programs, both inside and outside of schools
 - Child and family grocery programs and families with children at traditional pantries

Food Insecurity by Age



Main Findings: Food Insecurity

Household Food Security Status for Food Pantry Visitors

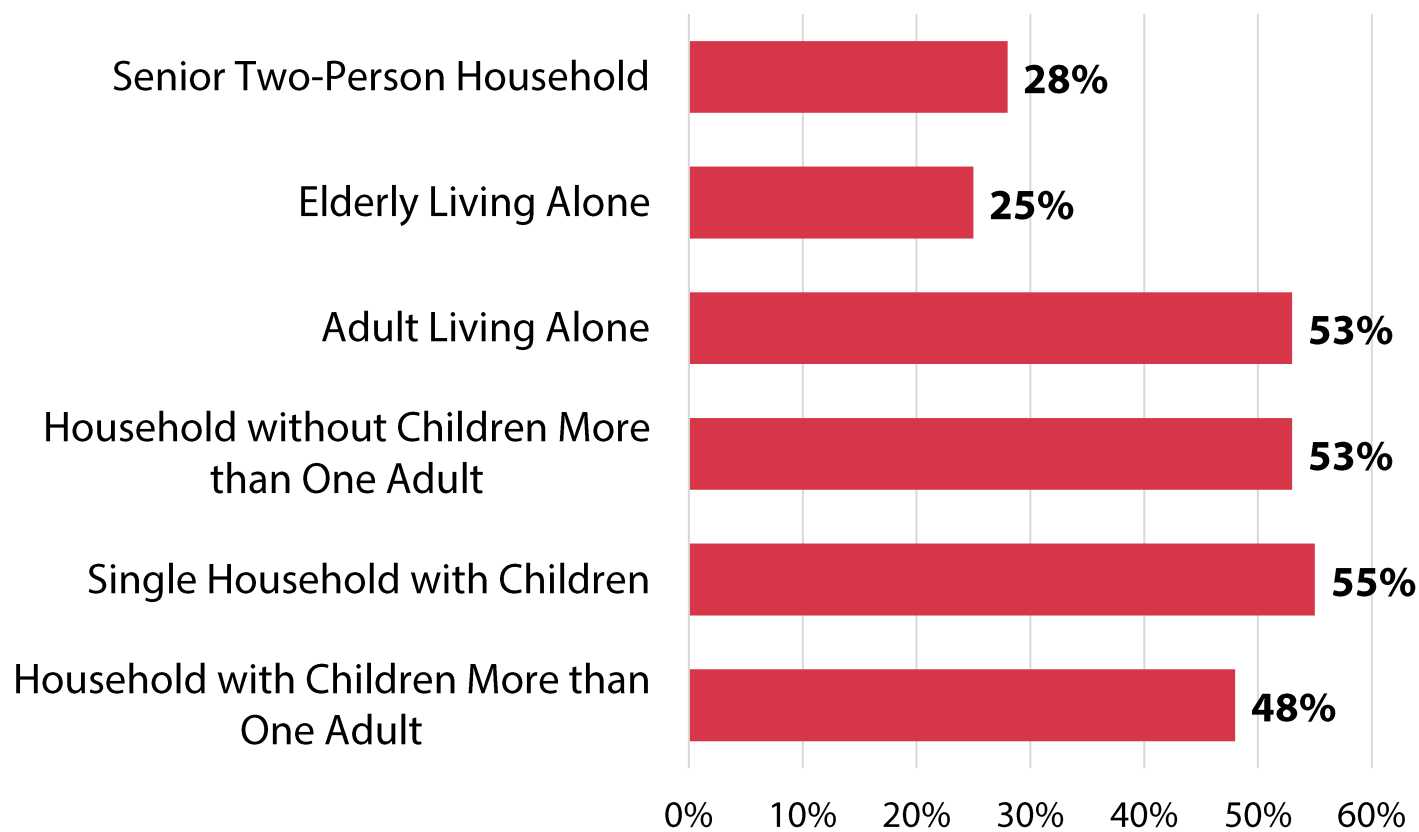


Very Low Food Security is a Critical Metric

- Very low food security (VLFS) rates are high at pantries – nearly 50%.
 - VLFS is especially acute for households with children and among adults living alone.
 - 23% of respondents reported skipping meals or going hungry every month.
- Reducing VLFS (a validated measure of hunger) should be the charitable food network's main measure of success.
 - Providers should institute policies and programs that will make and measure progress toward this goal.

Food Insecurity by Household Type

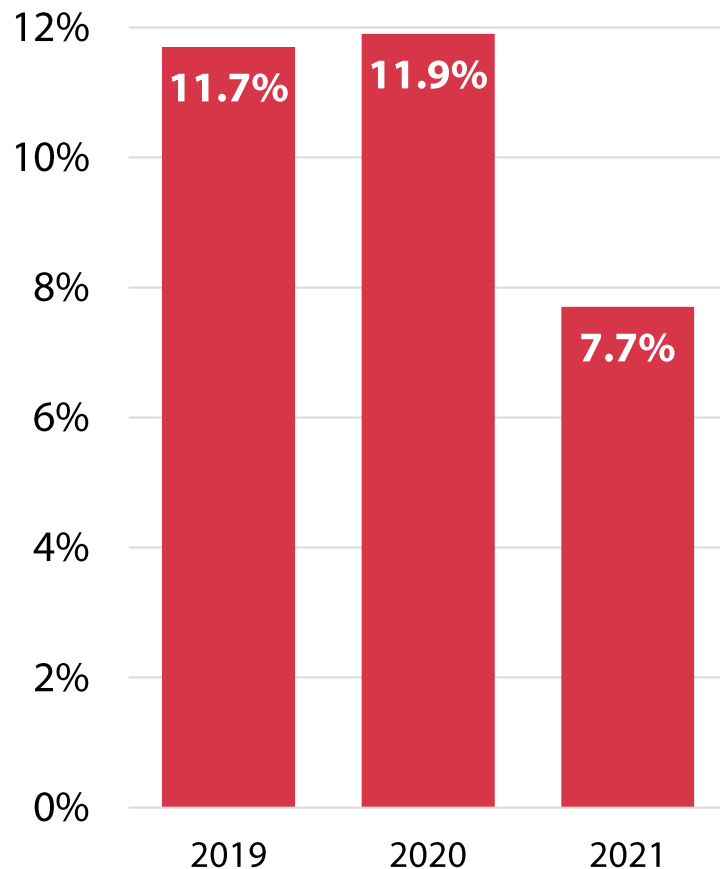
Incidence of Very Low Food Security by Household Type Among Food Pantry Visitors



- Working-age households have the highest rates of very low food security among households who visit food pantries
- Seniors are less likely to be very food insecure than other groups because they have more consistent, albeit low, incomes and existing nonprofit and government programs targeted towards them.
- These findings are in-line with national estimates by the USDA

The Impact of Strategic Investments

**Child Food Insecurity
Rate, 2019 - 2021**



Finding:

- The expanded child tax credit (CTC) reduced food insecurity dramatically in 2021, particularly among children.
- Food insecurity among children in Lancaster County dropped 35% from 2020 to 2021.
- Unfortunately, the expanded CTC expired in January 2022, and the current food insecurity situation has regressed to levels like 2020.

Recommendation:

- Low-barrier programs like the expanded CTC have the greatest impact on food insecurity.
- The charitable food network should advocate for similar policies that prioritize agency and dignity.
- Pantries should implement programs and policies that share these principles.

Main Findings: Charitable Food Access



Lower Access Barriers and Increase Collaboration

- Pantries should strive to be the lowest-barrier social service access point. Opportunities to address a variety of access barriers include, but are not limited to:
 - Hours of operation, documentation requirements, and service territories
 - Geographic access, income requirements, and visits per month
 - Foods offered, treatment of pantry visitors, language and culture, and pantry model

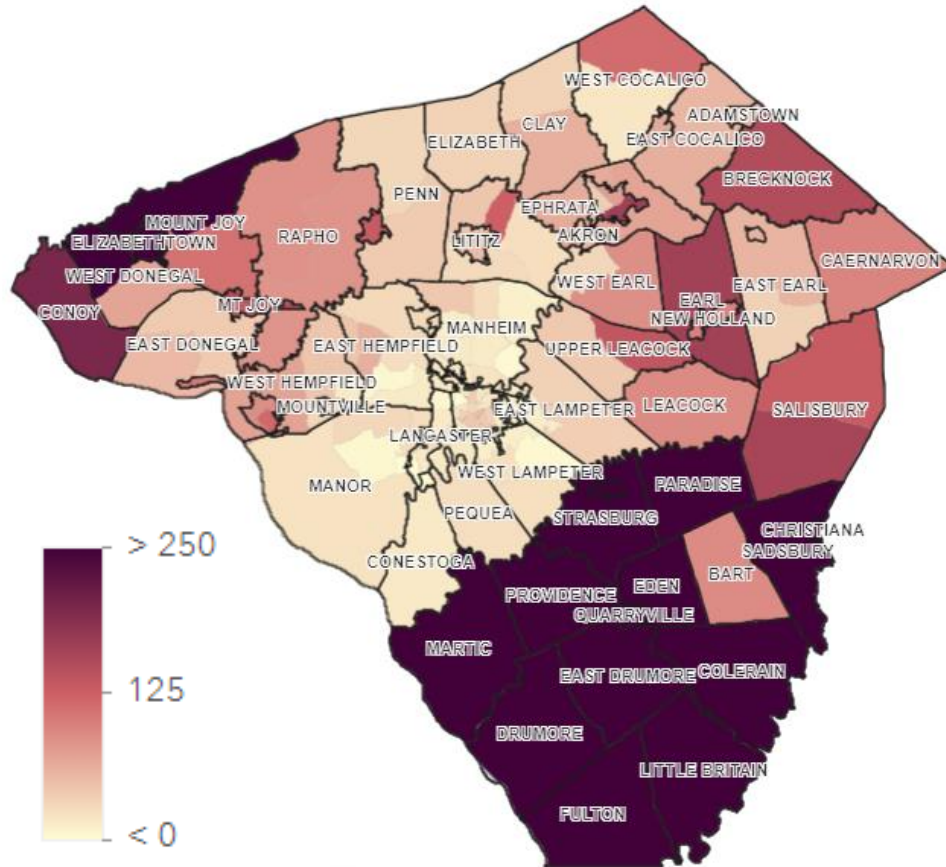
Main Findings: Charitable Food Access



Lower Access Barriers and Increase Collaboration

- The charitable food system is decentralized and localized
- There are significant opportunities for increased collaboration led by HFLC across the charitable food system, such as:
 - Developing guidance for pantry sourcing strategies
 - Strategically investing in underserved areas
 - Sharing information on available pantries, including with current pantry visitors
 - Facilitating regular regional and county-wide gatherings of food pantries

Geographic Access Gaps



Number of Food Insecure Individuals Per Pantry within 15 Minute Drive by Census Tract

Finding:

- Southern and Southeastern Lancaster County have very limited geographic access to charitable food providers.
- Mount Joy has sufficient geographic access, but service territory requirements mean they are underserved.

Recommendation:

- The charitable food system should evaluate possible new partnerships and make capacity investments in existing pantries located in or near underserved areas.
- The network should also reduce or eliminate service territory restrictions in key areas to increase access quickly.

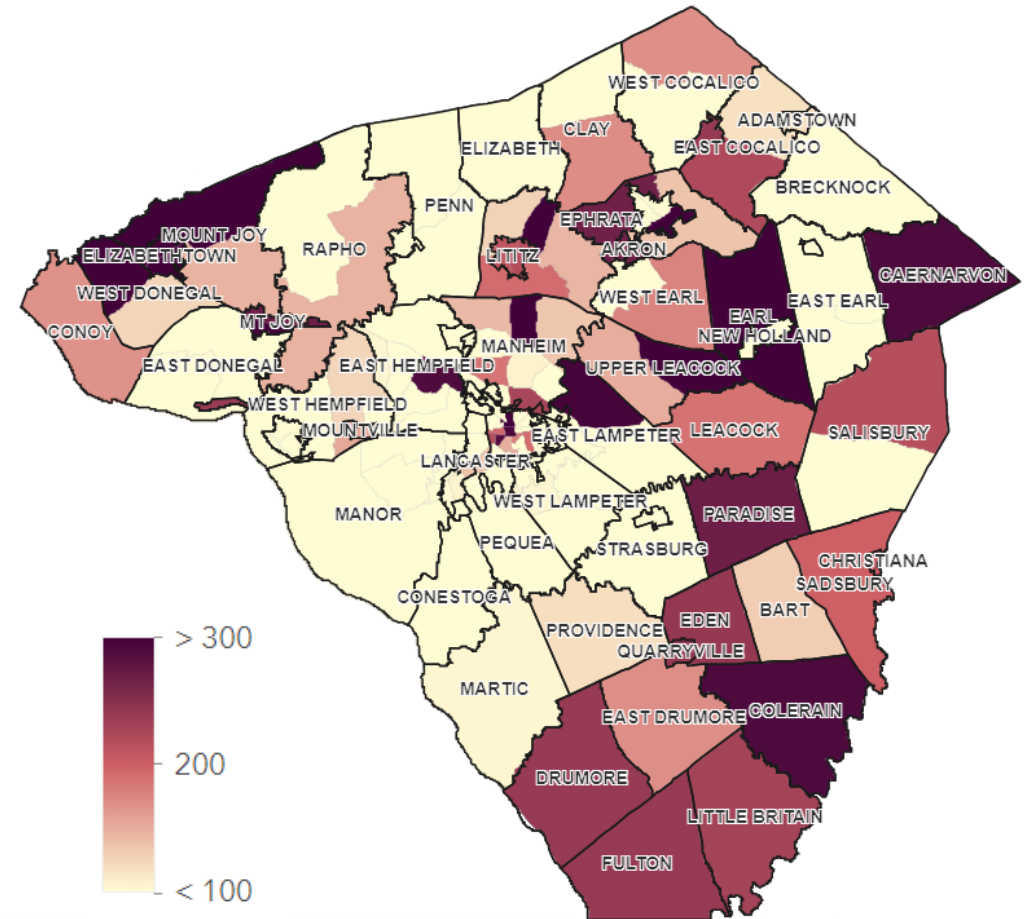
Food Pantry Access Gaps by Census Tract

Finding:

- Pantry utilization gaps show where food insecure individuals are underserved
- Data from 18 of the largest pantries (86% of pantries with electronic tracking)
- Many food insecure individuals in Southern Lancaster, Elizabethtown/Mt. Joy, & other areas may be underserved.

Recommendation:

- HFLC and key partners should explore options to increase access to charitable food in the areas of the county identified as having gaps with high confidence.



Number of food insecure individuals not accessing a pantry by census tract

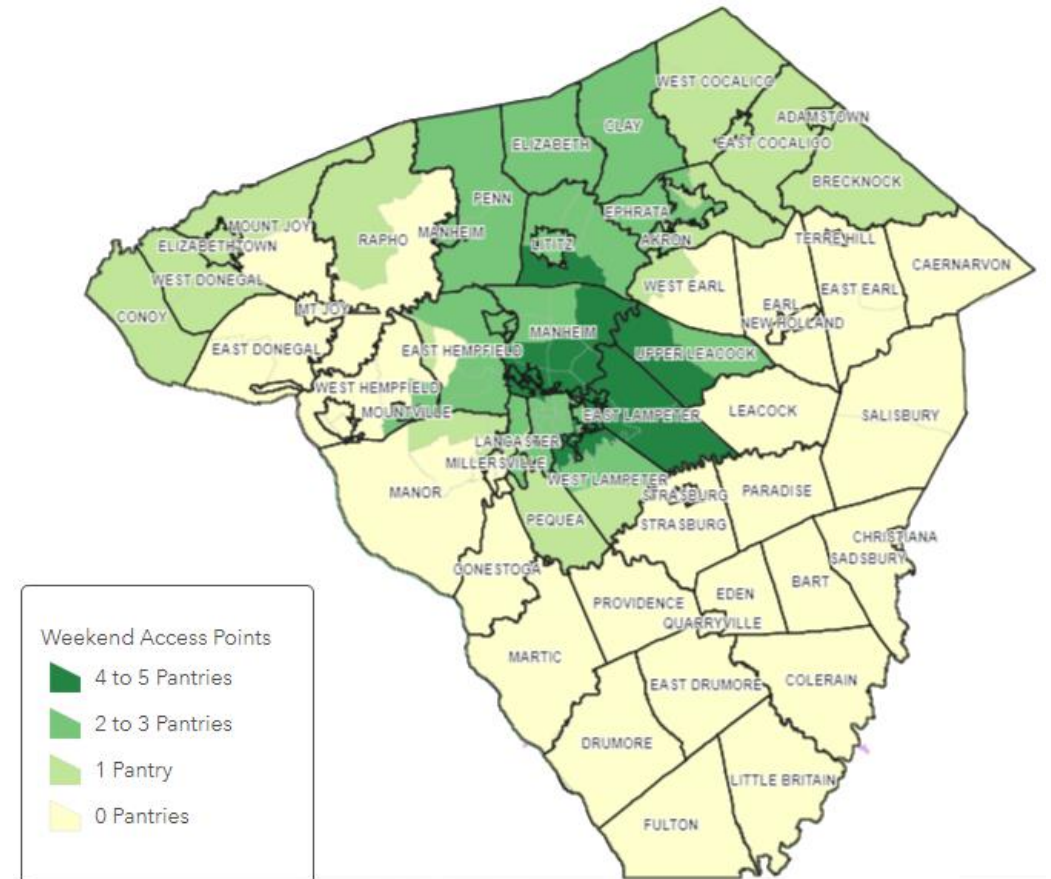
Hours of Operation

Finding:

- 1 in 3 (31%) food insecure individuals does not have access to weekend distributions.
- 1 in 4 (23%) does not have access to evening distributions.

Recommendation:

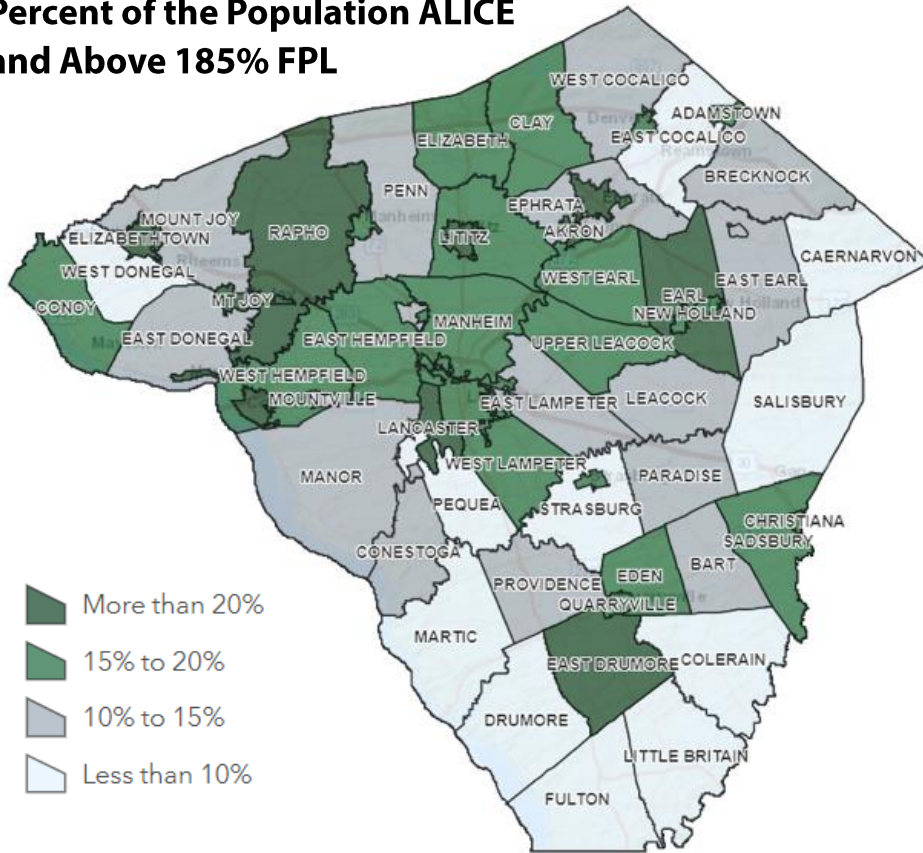
- HFLC and key partners should coordinate to ensure everyone in the county has access to weekend and/or evening food distributions.
- Eliminating service territories would lower the percentage of people who lack access to weekend and evening distributions by 20% to 25%



Number of pantries with weekend hours within a 15-minute drive time by census tract

ALICE Households in the Charitable Food System

Percent of the Population ALICE
and Above 185% FPL



Finding:

- **Food pantries have inconsistent policies around households who are over income.**
 - About 30% of pantries either turn these households away or will only serve them once.
- More than 25,000 ALICE households who earn more than 185% FPL live in Lancaster County.

Recommendation:

- **Pantries should have uniform policies to serve people over 185% FPL with privately funded food.**
- There should be no wrong door for any household seeking charitable food.

Pantry Worker/Neighbor Interactions

Finding:

- **Each interaction a neighbor has with a pantry staff member or volunteer matters.**
- Much of the reported stigma and negative experiences associated with visiting a food pantry comes from negative interactions with pantry volunteers.
- Neighbors often anticipate poor treatment when accessing services.
- Black pantry visitors report feeling judged at more than twice the rate of white or Hispanic visitors (10% vs. 4% and 3%, respectively)

Recommendation:

- **Pantry workers should be trained in culturally sensitive and trauma-informed care practices so that they are equipped to treat all visitors with respect and dignity.**
- Pantry coordinators should regularly assess volunteer suitability for neighbor-facing roles.
- HFLC should develop and promote trainings for partner agencies for volunteers and support developing accountability policies.

“

“I know a lot are volunteers and I appreciate it. [But] some people feel bad enough walking through this line– you don’t have to be rude. If you ask a question, sometimes you don’t even get answers.”

*– focus group participant, Eastern
Lancaster County*

”

Intake and Visit Requirements

Finding:

- **Many pantries require additional documentation beyond a self-declaration of need.**
 - 65% of pantries require photo ID.
 - 47% require proof of residency, such as a utility bill.
 - A few pantries require attendance at classes or meetings with social workers.
- Many pantries, especially in suburban areas outside of Lancaster City, limit visits to once per month.

Recommendation:

- **Food pantries should strive to be the lowest barrier social service organizations.**
- Additional documentation requirements at intake should always be optional.
- Classes, when offered, should always be optional.
- Visit frequency restrictions should be loosened when pantries have capacity. HFLC should work to increase capacity in key areas.

Pantry Capacity Disparities

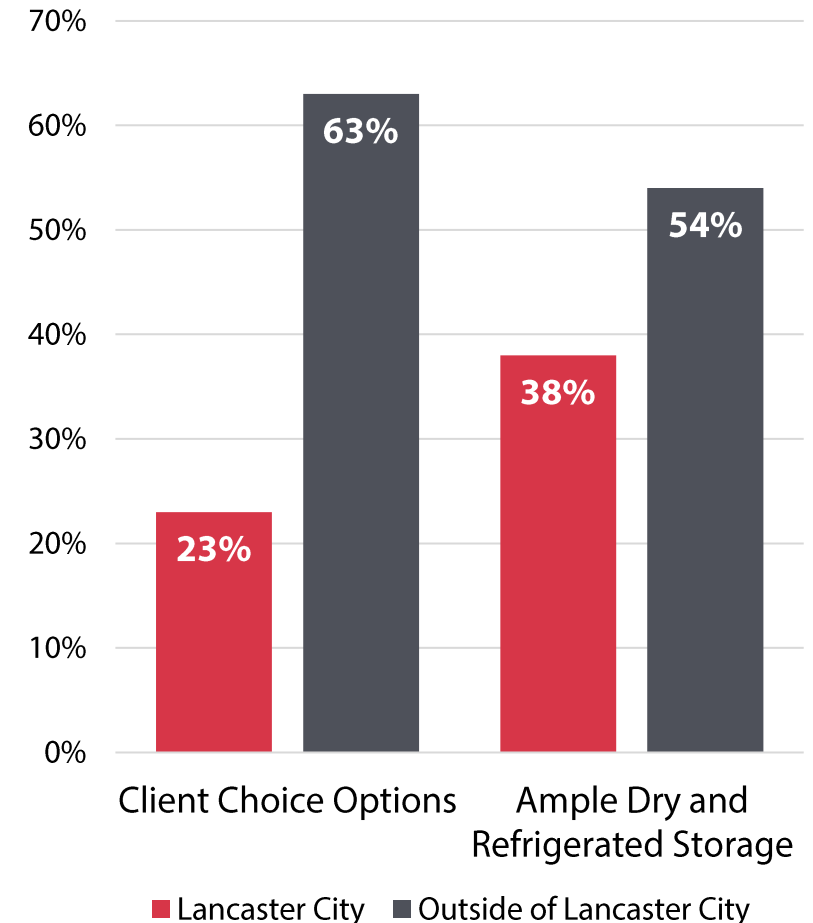
Finding:

- Pantries in Lancaster City report lower storage capacity than those located in suburban or rural parts of the county.
- This is particularly true of pantries in majority or plurality Hispanic areas.
- These pantries are also less likely to use a client choice distribution model than pantries outside the city.

Recommendation:

- The charitable food network should invest in under-resourced pantries so that there is equity in service across the county.
- A specific focus on reducing the inequities faced by historically marginalized communities is critically important.

Pantry Capacity Characteristics



Main Findings: Utilization of Government Programs



Pantries are community assets; neighbors trust them more than the government.

- Pantries can use this trust to reduce stigma and promote participation in underutilized government programs, especially SNAP – just 50% of pantry visitors receive SNAP.
- WIC participation and participation in child nutrition programs is also low across Lancaster County.
- HFLC can assist pantries in promoting greater uptake of key government programs like SNAP, WIC, and the child nutrition programs.

Pantries are Trusted Community Assets

Finding:

- **Neighbors trust food pantries in Lancaster County more than government programs.**
- Neighbors report that government programs are hard to navigate, difficult to trust, and have high barriers to access.
- Trust also uniquely positions pantries to promote government programs and help neighbors navigate the social safety net.

Recommendation:

- **Pantries should promote SNAP, WIC, and other government programs, such as free/reduced lunch and LIHEAP.**
 - Promotion can be as simple as talking about these programs in a positive light and otherwise working to reduce stigma.
 - Pantries with more capacity could help people sign up for and stay enrolled in social safety net programs.
 - HFLC should support this process.

SNAP Participation

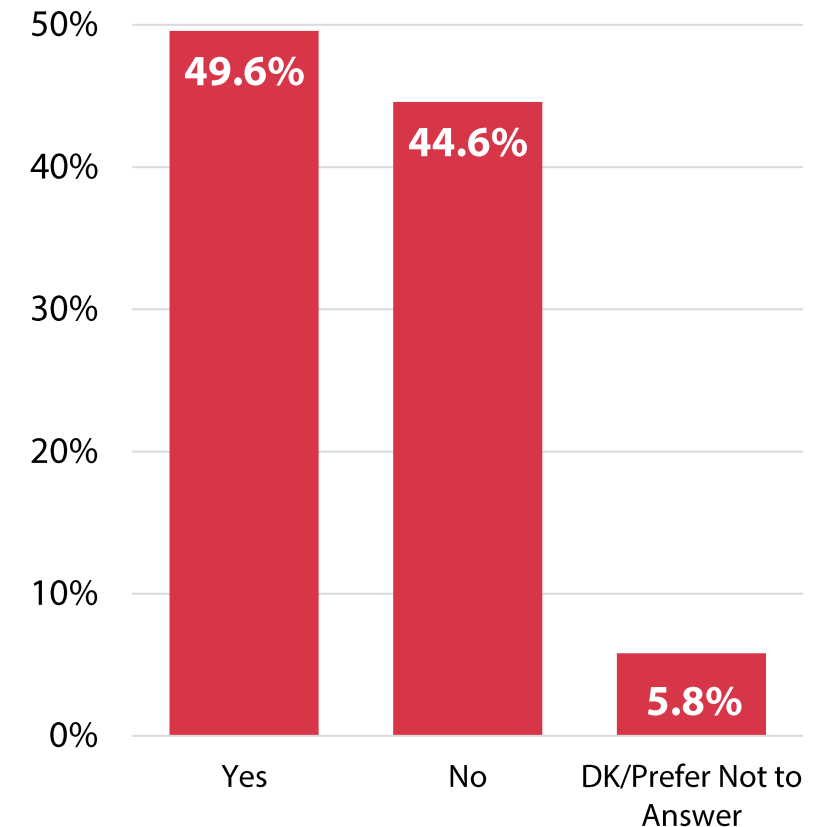
Finding:

- SNAP participation rates are at 50% or below at most survey pantries
- Lancaster County is ranked 43rd in the state in SNAP participation
- About 20% of survey respondents have never applied for SNAP
- Annual benefits in Lancaster County are over \$110 million

Recommendation:

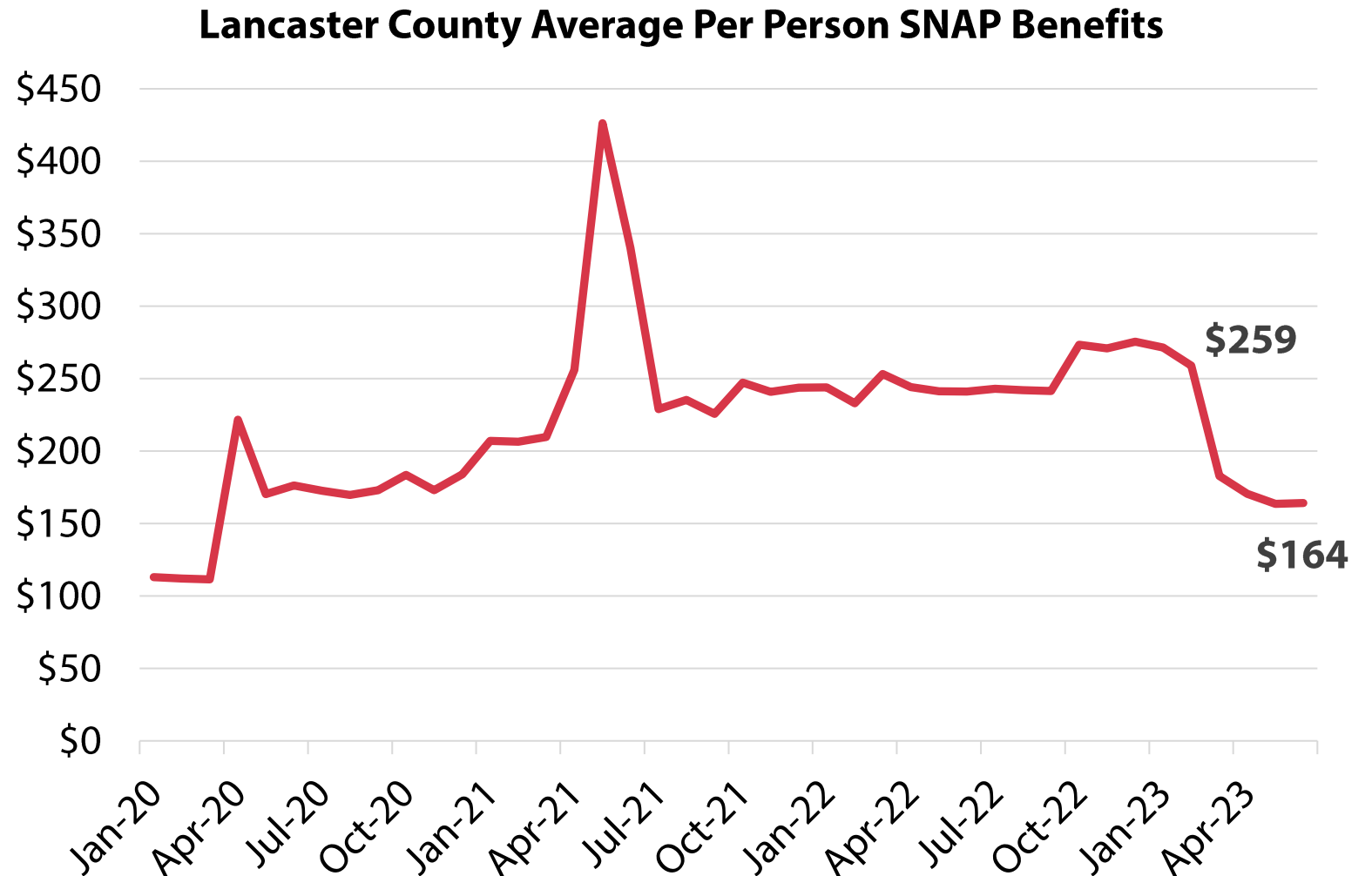
- Pantries have an opportunity to increase SNAP participation significantly.
- Over 85% of food pantry visitors are likely eligible for SNAP
- SNAP provides 9x the meals of the charitable food system

SNAP Participation among Food Pantry Visitors



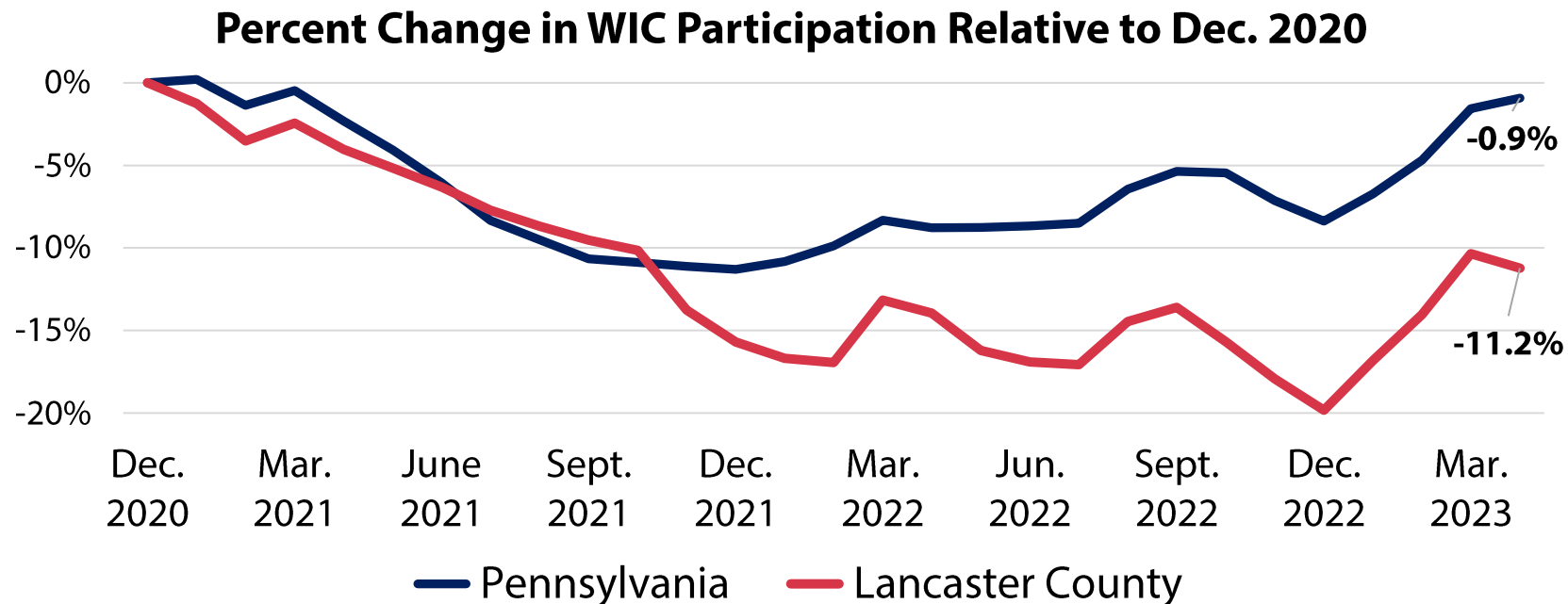
End of the SNAP Emergency Allotments

- Average per person SNAP benefits dropped \$95 (37%) from Feb. 2023 to June 2023
- This is a more than \$5 million per month loss in Lancaster County
- Charitable food demand increased over 15% in just one month after the end of SNAP EAs



WIC Participation in Lancaster County

- WIC participation is low in the county and among pantry visitors (35%).
- Lancaster lost the second most WIC participants of any county since 2020.
- Neighbors report that WIC is very hard to use and is often not worth the hassle for the benefit they receive.



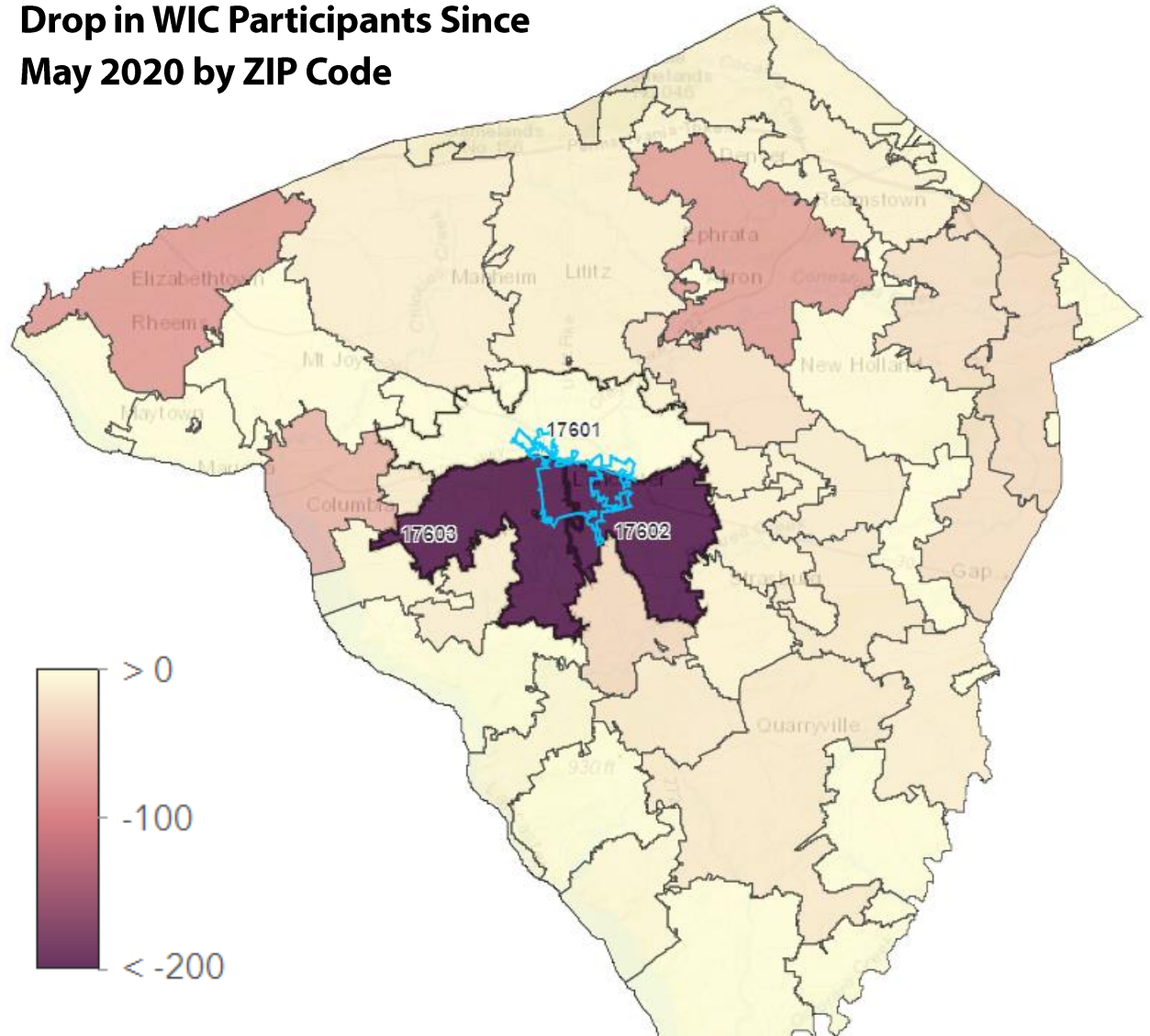
Recommendation:

- Pantries should increase awareness of WIC.
- State-level advocacy to improve the program is critically important.
 - Pennsylvania is one of just nine states that requires in-person office visits to receive benefits.

WIC Participation in Lancaster County

- The drop in WIC participation is not evenly spread across Lancaster County
- ZIP Codes 17603 and 17602 have had the 2nd and 6th largest drops in Pennsylvania
- WIC participation has dropped by 438 people in 17603 (25%) and by 285 people in 17602 (20%)

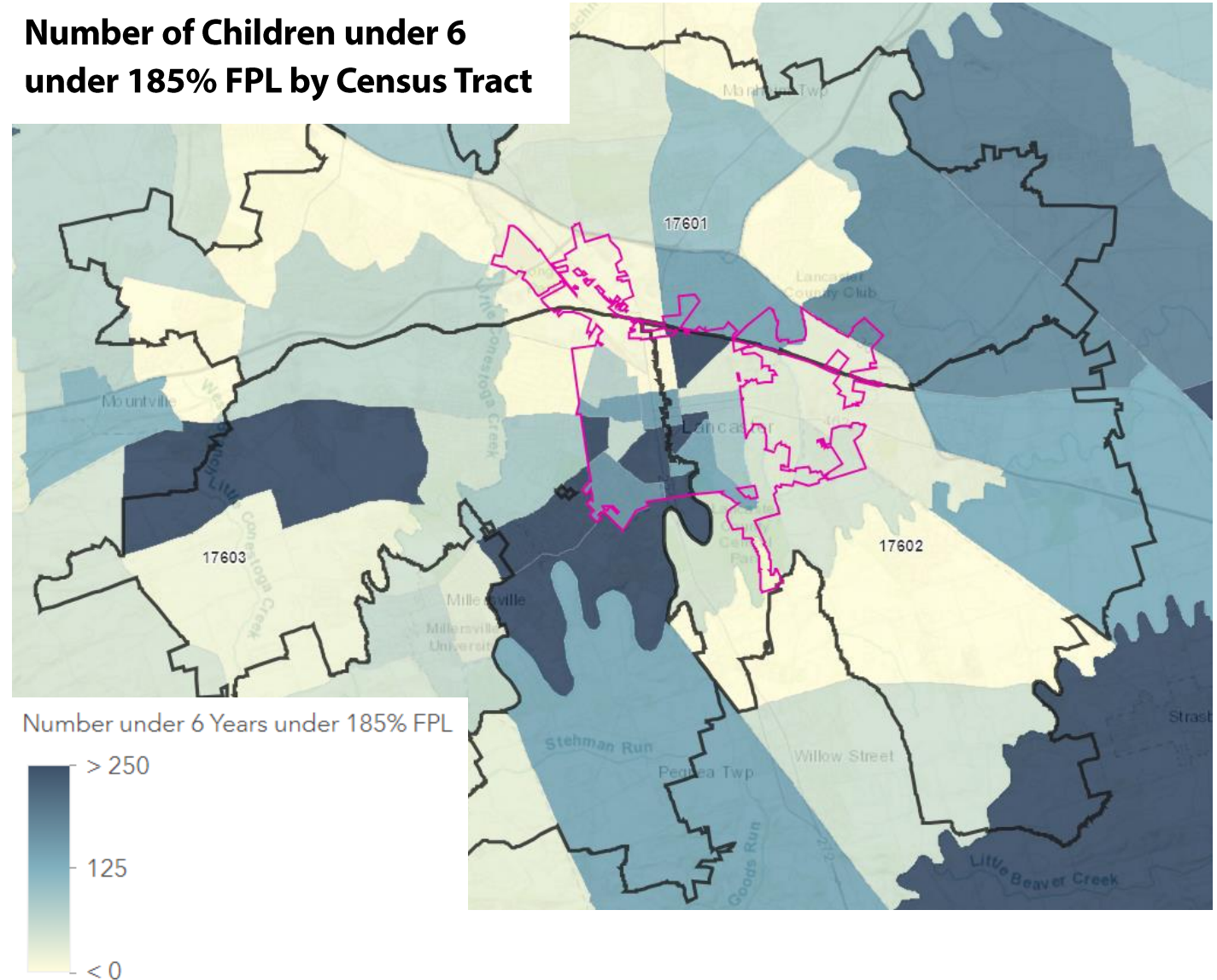
Drop in WIC Participants Since May 2020 by ZIP Code



WIC Participation in Lancaster County

- Analysis at the census tract level helps narrow focus from ZIP Code level Findings
- Southwest Lancaster City, Lancaster Township, and Northeast Manor Township have the most WIC eligible children in ZIP 17603
- Northwest Lancaster City and the Church Street neighborhood have the most WIC eligible children in ZIP 17602

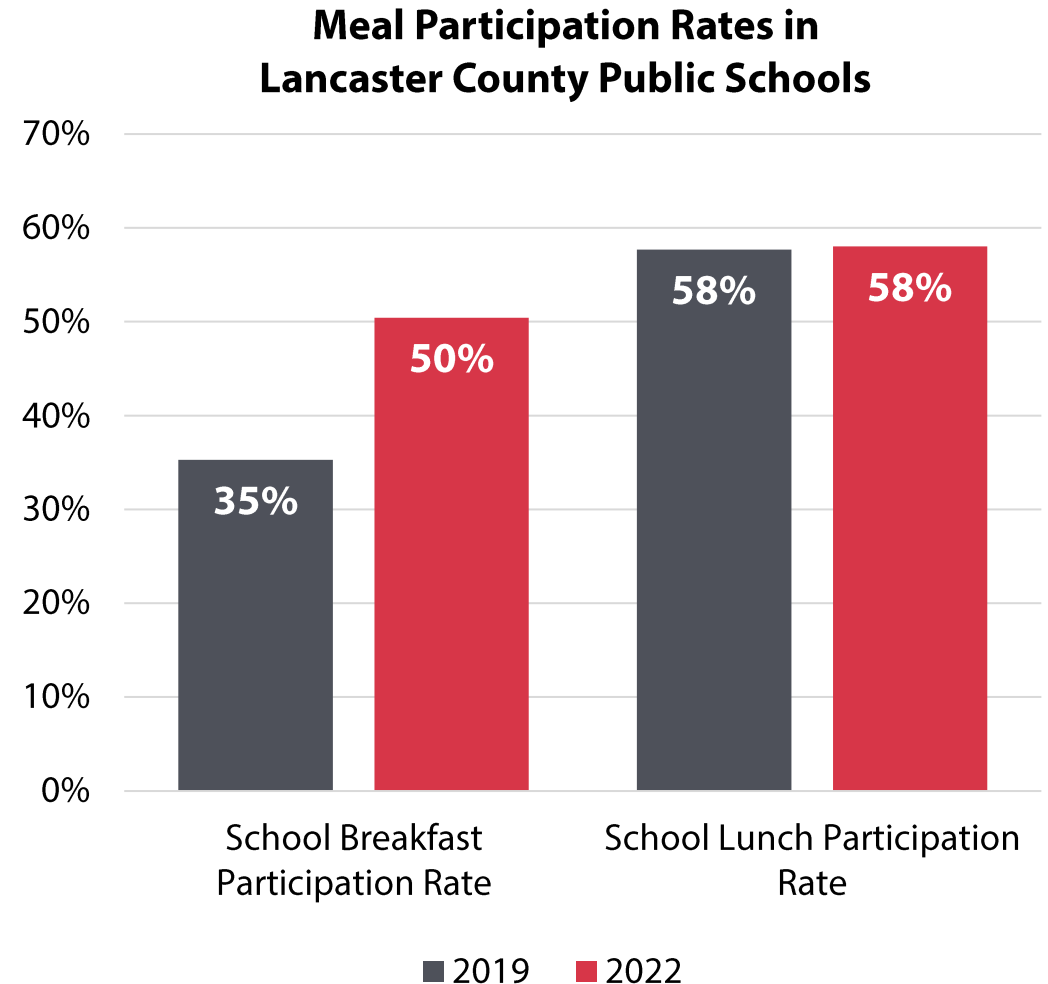
Number of Children under 6 under 185% FPL by Census Tract



School Breakfast and Lunch Participation

Programs ensure school aged kids have access to healthy, nutritious foods

- School breakfast and lunch programs provide meals to students at a free or reduced rate based on family income
- PA moved to provide universal free breakfast to all school aged children, and increase access to free lunch for students whose families are below 185% of the poverty line
- This helped increase breakfast participation by 40% from 2019 to 2022



Intersecting and Upstream Issues

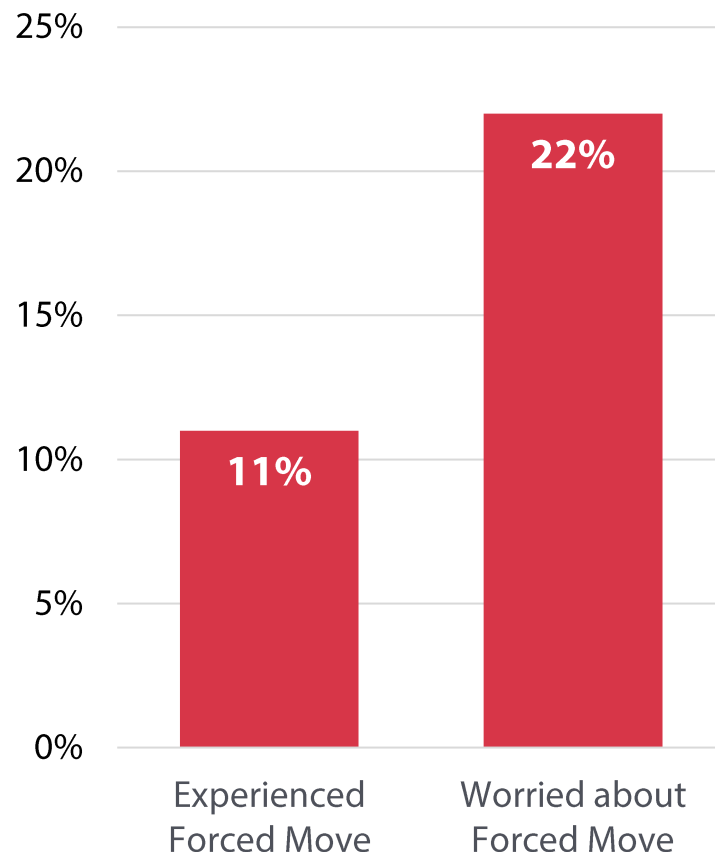


The upstream issues faced by neighbors who visit food pantries are systemic.

- Upstream issues include but are not limited to historic marginalization, housing burden, financial exclusion, and low pay.
- HFLC should begin to address these systemic issues through strategic partnerships and investments in underserved communities.

Eviction and Housing Insecurity

Forced Moves Among Pantry Visitors



Finding:

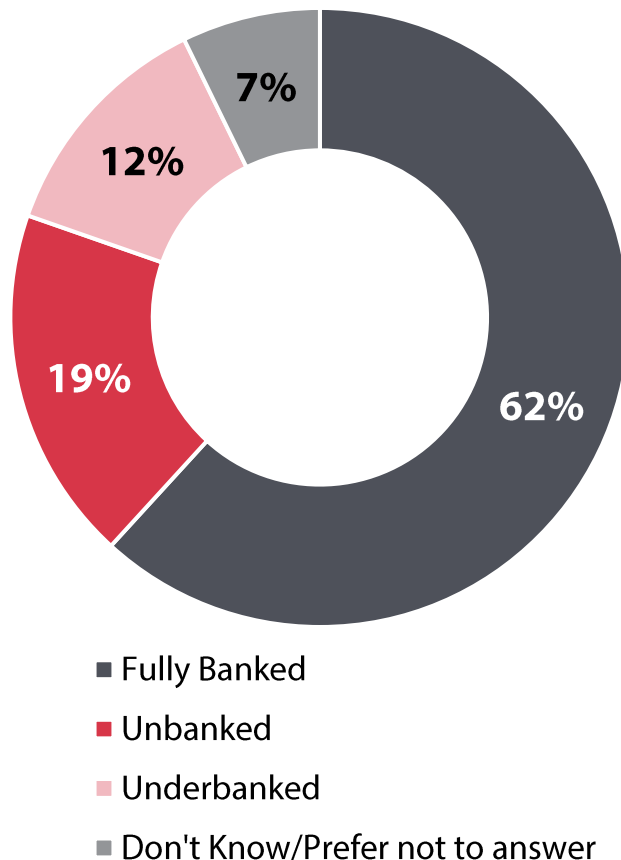
- Housing insecurity and eviction rates are high among pantry visitors.
 - Eviction rates were lower than average in 2022 due to COVID-19 related interventions.
- The biggest economic tradeoffs reported were choosing between food and rent/mortgage or utilities (over 40% of respondents).

Recommendations:

- Pantries should be aware of the issues facing unstably or marginally housed people.
- HFLC and interested pantries should consider developing eviction prevention interventions for pantry participants.
 - Eviction has major implications for long term food security, especially for children.

Financial Access and Inclusion

Bank Access for Pantry Visitors



Finding:

- Access to banking is limited among pantry participants.
- Lack of banking access is most common among the lowest income households and among Black and Hispanic households.
- Nationally, households report the biggest barriers to the mainstream financial system are lack of trust, high/unpredictable fees, and minimum balances.

Recommendations:

- HFLC should engage with local financial institutions and gauge interest in initiatives like Bank On that can connect unbanked populations to mainstream financial services.
- Financial inclusion literature points to the importance of trusted local partners in reaching unbanked individuals and to the importance of “bankable” moments.

Employment and Income

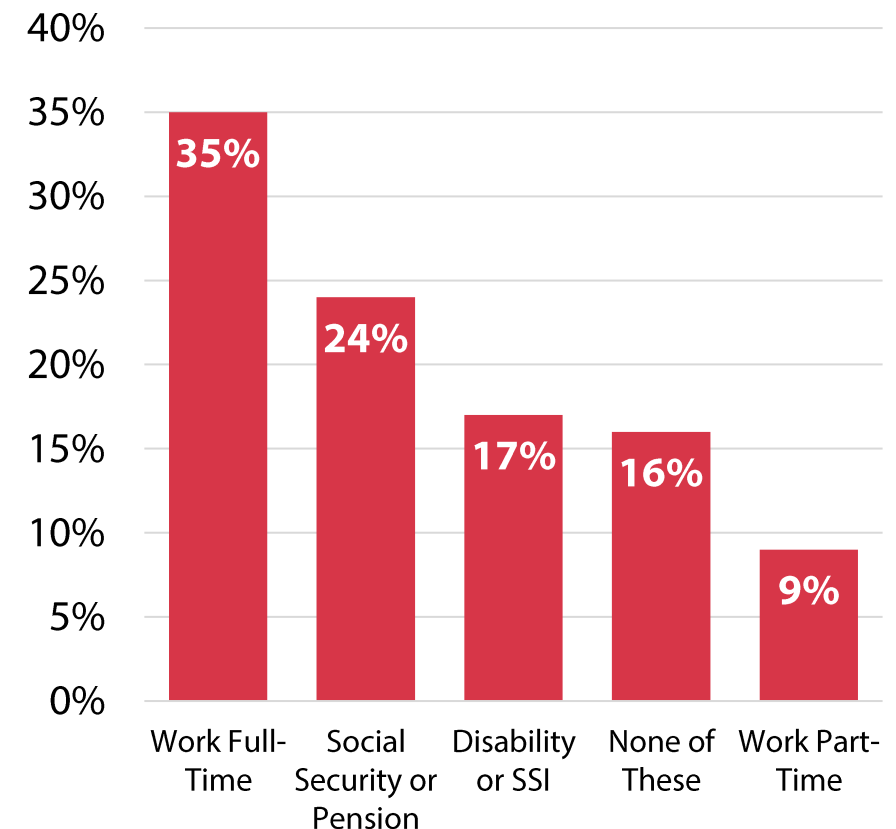
Finding:

- Less than 30% of pantry visitors are unemployed or underemployed.
- The top reasons cited for not working in the last year are:
 - Caring for family (21%)
 - Ill/disabled (18%)
 - Could not find work (16%)
- More than 70% of pantry visitors are working full time, on Social Security, or receiving SSI or SSD.

Recommendations:

- Workforce development resources offered by the state are widely available to refer to interested individuals.
- Agencies should use employment data to dispel myths and stereotypes about pantry visitors.
- The charitable food network should advocate against work requirements for SNAP and other safety net programs.

Main Source of Household Income



Full Time Employment and Income

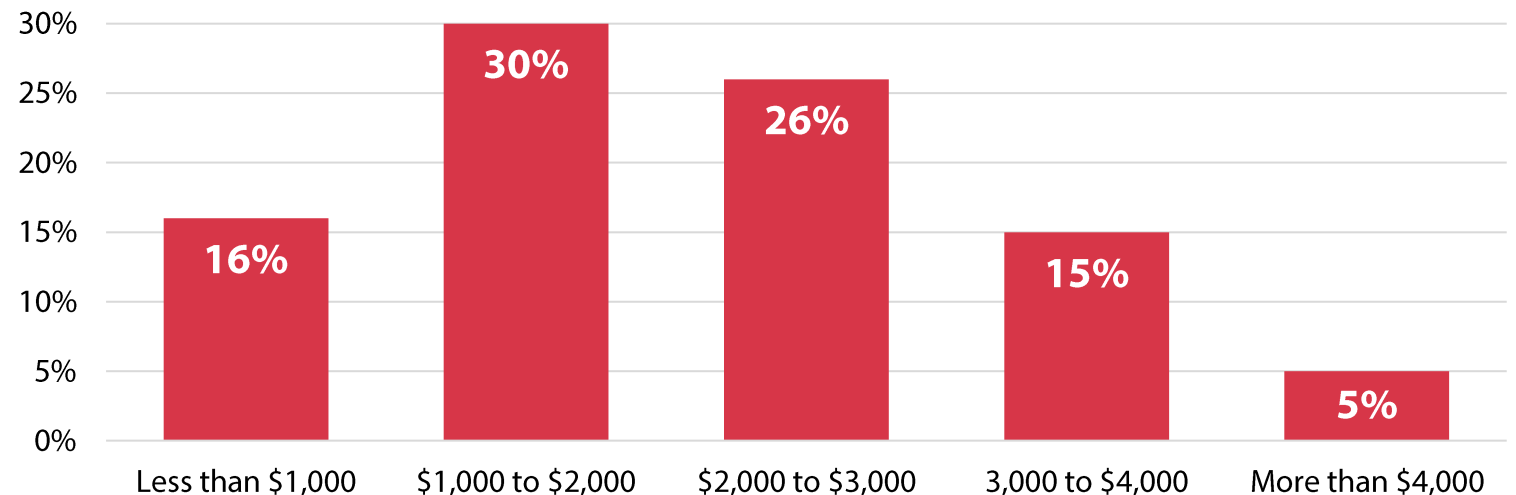
Finding:

- Income is the strongest determinant of food insecurity status.
- 49% of working-age, non-disabled, non-retired individuals work full time.
- 46% of people who work full time and who report no weeks not working earn less than \$24,000 in a year (about \$11.50 per hour).

Recommendations:

- Low wages are a systemic issue – more than 22% of households in Lancaster County earn less than 185% FPL.
- Low and minimum wage issues impact people who visit pantries. HFLC should advocate for family-sustaining wages.

Percent of Full Time Workers by Monthly Income

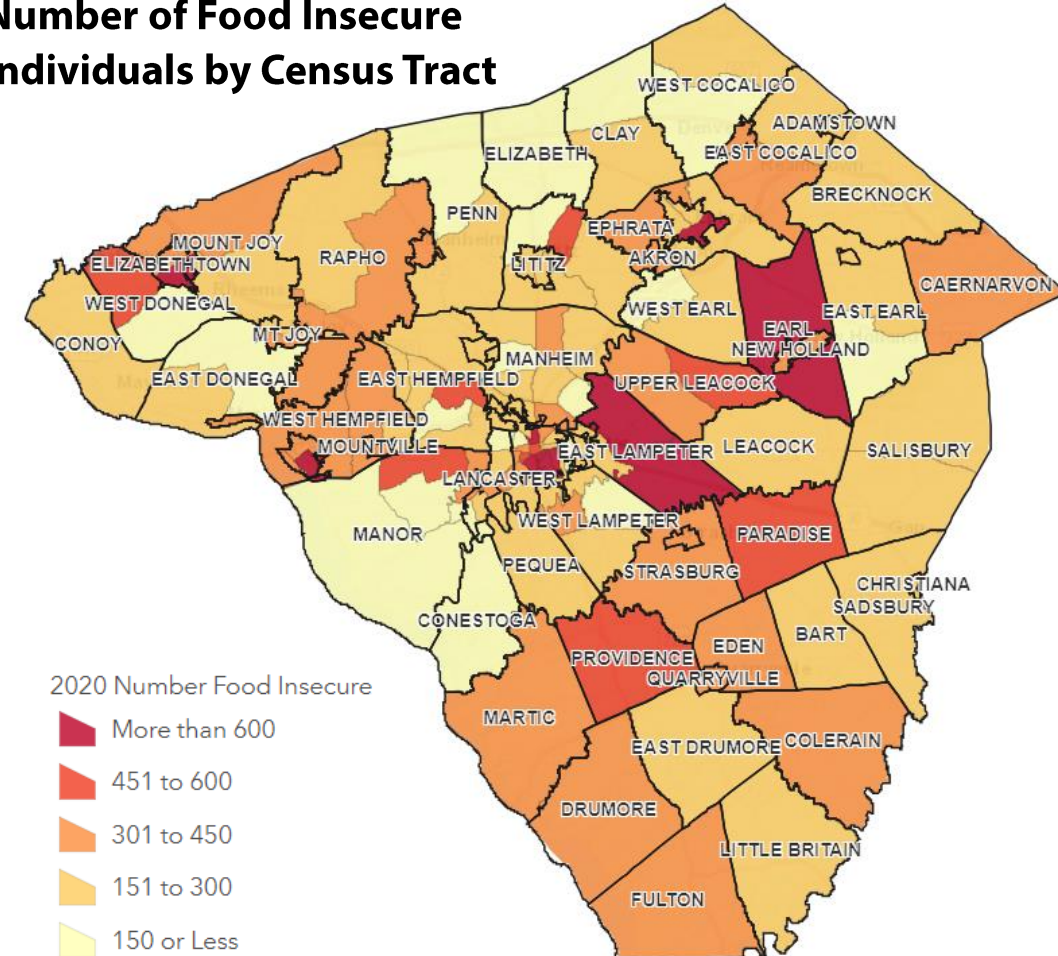


Implementation and Next Steps

Report and recommendations serve as a roadmap to reduce food insecurity

- Supporting Hunger-Free Lancaster County in strategic planning and as the key implementing body
- Collaboration with charitable food system partners and investing in other strategic programmatic partnerships
- Discussion of policy and regulatory implications with state and federal policymakers
- Increased community engagement on food insecurity issues
- Annual refreshes of key data to track progress over time, including continual refinement of service gaps and trends

Number of Food Insecure Individuals by Census Tract



Questions?





Thank you!

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