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New report shows dramatic spike in food insecurity in the Rochester/Finger Lakes region

Data from Foodlink's 10-county network of food pantries also showing high demand for emergency food this year

ROCHESTER – [New data released by Feeding America](#) today reveals the sharpest increase in food insecurity since the Great Recession.

In Foodlink's 10-county service area, the rate climbed from 9.3% in 2021 to 12% in 2022 – the latest year of available data for the "Map the Meal Gap" study, which provides local-level estimates of food insecurity and food costs for every county in the nation. The one-year spike resulted in an additional 33,580 people experiencing food insecurity in our region (an increase from 118,240 to 151,820). Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as a household's lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Each of Foodlink's 10 counties saw significant increases. Allegany County has the highest rate at 14.3% (6,770 people), while Wyoming County saw the largest single-year increase (3.6 percentage points). In the City of Rochester, the new data show that the 14605-zip code – the Upper Falls and Marketview Heights neighborhoods – owns the third-highest food-insecurity rate in the state (29.8%).

"We have seen our distribution increase from a steady flow from 45 families each week, to a steady flow of 100 families, including seniors arriving and waiting in line each week for the distribution of food and home goods supplies," said LaVada Howard of Straight from the Heart Community Outreach, which runs a food pantry on Hudson Avenue in the 14605 zip code.

The increase is attributed to two main factors: the sudden rise in food inflation from 2021 to 2022, paired with the expiration of several COVID-era federal assistance programs (e.g. Child Tax Credits, Free School Meals, increased SNAP). For more recent data, Foodlink analyzed the monthly reports collected from its 200+ members, which include food pantries and meal programs throughout the region. For January through March of 2024, visits to pantries and meal programs increased 35% compared to the same time period in 2023.

"The data released in this report is unfortunately no surprise to Foodlink and our partner food banks across the nation," said Julia Tedesco, Foodlink's President & CEO. "While the numbers are eye-opening, the response from our network has been a success story of our collective efforts to serve more of our neighbors in recent years despite the substantial challenges of food costs."

Other findings within Foodlink's 10-county service area include:

- Black and Hispanic residents are far more likely to be food insecure. In our region, 8% of white residents are food insecure, compared to 27% of Black residents and 28% of Hispanic residents.
- Approximately 34% of people facing hunger do not qualify for SNAP benefits due to income thresholds.
- The childhood food-insecurity rate jumped from 12.5% to 17% from 2021 to 2022.

"In Ontario County, 11 to 13 percent of our population is food insecure. At the Partnership for Ontario County, we see this need up close," said Karen Guidarelli, whose organization is based in Canandaigua. "Our monthly food pantry has seen a 10 percent increase in need. Seniors have shared that they are struggling to find food so they can afford their medications. Families are skipping meals to make budgets stretch. Thanks to Foodlink's support we've been able to provide fresh, local produce and we are able to distribute foods that support improved health initiatives in Ontario County."

Foodlink also thanked legislators for increasing funding in the recently passed state budget to support the emergency food system, but urged that more advocacy is needed, and the community's support is vital at this critical time.

To read the latest Map the Meal gap report, visit [Map.FeedingAmerica.org](https://www.mapthefoodgap.org/).

To donate or volunteer to Foodlink, visit [FoodlinkNY.org](https://www.foodlinkny.org/).

"In the short time that the Rochester Hope North Clinton Food Pantry has been open, we have come to see firsthand what food insecurity looks like in Rochester," said Dawn Burdick. "It is in the face of a single mother that doesn't know how she'll be able to find enough food for her children while they are home during the weekend. It is seniors lining up in the cold and snow to use the food pantry three hours before the doors open. It is in people on edge as the end of the month approaches and their SNAP benefits have been exhausted. In our area of the world that is so rich in resources, it is disheartening to see the increased number of people faced with food insecurity."

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About Foodlink

Foodlink is a Rochester-based nonprofit and public health organization dedicated to ending hunger and building healthier communities by addressing both the symptoms and root causes of food insecurity. We serve as the hub of the emergency food system across a 10-county service area while administering many programs and initiatives that support and invest in our communities.

We provide food assistance through the safe storage and distribution of emergency food to our network of food bank members and community partners. We build healthier communities through innovative programs that create new access points to nutritious foods and empower people to make healthy choices. We drive change through bold career empowerment initiatives and advocacy for a more just, equitable food system.

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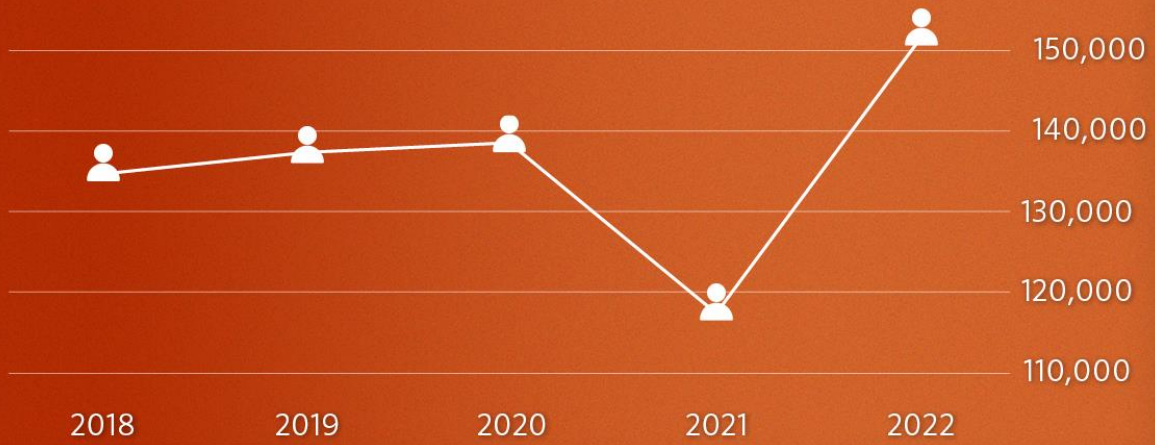
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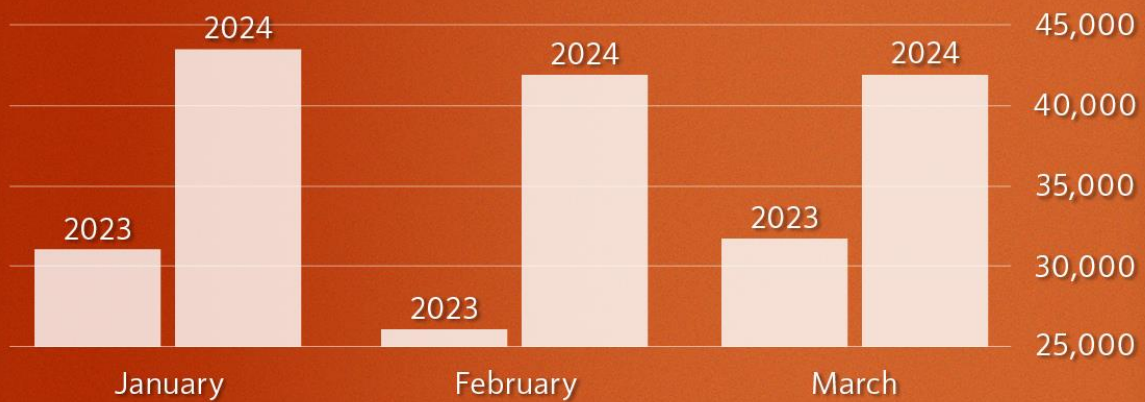
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Increase in food-insecure people in the Finger Lakes region



Increase in children served by Foodlink's network



Foodlink serves 10 counties in the Rochester and Finger Lakes region of New York. The following chart shows a county-by-county breakdown of data from **2022**, according to **Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap** report.

County	Total Population	F.I. Rate (overall)	F.I. people	F.I. Rate (child)	F.I. children
Allegany	47,222	14.3%	6,770	18.3%	1,690
Seneca	33,651	13.1%	4,400	16.5%	1,120
Orleans	40,148	12.6%	5,060	17.5%	1,340
Yates	24,713	12.2%	3,020	15.7%	850
Monroe	756,406	12.1%	91,270	18.6%	28,790
Genesee	58,204	11.9%	6,910	12.9%	1,530
Wyoming	40,338	11.5%	4,630	14.3%	1,140
Wayne	91,324	11.4%	10,400	13.8%	2,660
Livingston	61,980	11.1%	6,900	13.5%	1,490
Ontario	112,288	11.1%	8,920	12.9%	2,830
TOTAL	1,266,274	12.0%	151,820	17.0%	43,440

FOOD INSECURITY (F.I.) RATES & NUMBERS IN RECENT YEARS

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
FI rate	12.4%	12.4%	11.5%	10.9%	11.0%	11.1%	9.3%	12.0%
FI people	156,530	147,420	145,760	136,610	138,340	139,010	118,240	151,820

Foodlink is based in Rochester, which is home to 2 of the 10 most food-insecure zip codes in the state (min. 5,000+ residents), according to 2022 data from [Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap report](#).

Rank	Zip code	Metro Area	F.I. Rate (overall)
1	10454	Bronx / NYC	30.2%
2	13202	Syracuse	30.1%
3	14605	Rochester	29.8%
4	14201	Buffalo	28.2%
5	12206	Albany	27.6%
6	10460	Bronx / NYC	27.1%
7	10456	Bronx / NYC	27.0%
8	10452	Bronx / NYC	26.5%
9	10453	Bronx / NYC	26.4%
10	14608	Rochester	25.8%