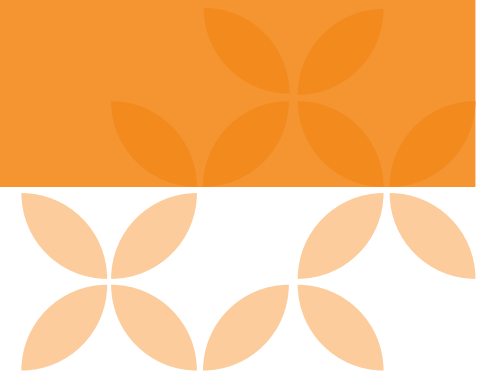




2024

Elevating Voices: Insights Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



BACKGROUND: UNITING TO END FOOD INSECURITY

We have the resources and growing determination to end hunger in America.

Despite some signs of an improving economy, high costs for food and other essentials like rent have intensified food insecurity for many families. Feeding America's latest [*Map the Meal Gap study*](#) shows the extra money people need to buy enough food is at its highest point in 20 years. Meanwhile, Feeding America network food banks continue to see sustained demand for food support.

We all come from different backgrounds, but many of us share a common vision: an America without food insecurity. Our nation knows what it takes to end food insecurity for good, including embracing community-based solutions, collaborating across sectors and listening to people experiencing hunger—the true experts—to help identify the best pathways forward.

The experiences and expertise of our neighbors in Feeding America's 2024 [*Elevating Voices: Insights Report*](#) affirm that *now* is the time to drive meaningful change by advocating for policies and programs that will ensure everyone has access to the food they need to thrive. Let's not lose our chance to come together and end food insecurity once and for all.

FINDINGS: HIGH COSTS, HIGH FOOD INSECURITY, HIGH TIME FOR ACTION

The *Elevating Voices: Insights Report* is an annual Feeding America publication that provides a nationally representative snapshot of the experiences, concerns and policy views of people facing hunger in the U.S. Neighbors—defined as people who have received charitable food assistance and/or experienced food insecurity in the past two years—shared the following insights.

NEIGHBORS' LIVES CONTINUE TO BE CHALLENGING, ESPECIALLY AS GROCERIES AND OTHER ESSENTIALS REMAIN COSTLY,

similar to previous years. The majority of neighbors cite steep food costs as the No. 1 factor behind food insecurity.

NEIGHBORS ARE COPING WITH THE SHOCK OF ELEVATED PRICES BY USING DIVERSE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES, INCLUDING FOOD BANKS, TO SOURCE FOOD.

Neighbors are building patchwork support systems, including saving and budgeting, helping each other, visiting food banks and participating in federal food assistance programs.

MANY COMMON THEMES EMERGE, BUT EXPERIENCES OF HUNGER VARY WIDELY FROM NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR.

Some neighbors report using federal food assistance programs while some face fewer trade-offs between buying food and meeting other basic needs.

EVEN WHILE WORKING THROUGH ONGOING TOUGH TIMES TODAY, MANY NEIGHBORS REMAIN OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE.

Many neighbors can see their financial outlooks improving, and a majority want to build a strong economic foundation for future generations.

NEIGHBORS AGREE ENDING FOOD INSECURITY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY FOR CONGRESS, DESPITE POLICYMAKERS' POLITICAL DIVIDES.

Neighbors call for policies and programs to promote food security with more funding, access and choice, and fewer cuts, barriers and restrictions.

NEIGHBORS ARE ADAMANT THAT ENDING FOOD INSECURITY REQUIRES ALL OF US.

Neighbors agree we are stronger together when it comes to ending food insecurity.

DETAILED FINDINGS

In addition, neighbors reported several key areas of focus, which the report uses to categorize findings:

✦ PRIORITIZING DIGNITY

Neighbors look to the charitable food system and federal food assistance programs to cope with high grocery costs. They value these resources and advocate for federal program enhancements that expand eligibility, remove red tape and maintain beneficiary dignity and choice.

- **84%** of neighbors say anti-hunger policies should support people's dignity and choices in what they feed their families.
- **83%** of neighbors oppose more red tape and paperwork to federal assistance programs.
- **92%** of neighbors value the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and **65%** of neighbors want increased SNAP funding.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

Neighbors agree that financial insecurity fuels food insecurity, especially amid elevated food prices. Neighbors urge lawmakers to ensure economic stability and mobility.

- **61%** say saving money to pass it on to family members is their top desire to achieve the life they want.
- Top issues driving food insecurity per neighbors: rising food costs (**81%**), high inflation (**77%**), having a low income or no income (**66%**), and the high cost of rent or buying a home (**63%**).
- **78%** of neighbors have made trade-offs to afford food, including sacrificing buying essentials like clothing and shoes (**58%**), not paying bills (**48%**) and skipping medical appointments (**32%**).

IMPROVING HEALTH

Neighbors agree that access to healthy, culturally preferred food improves health. However, their food choices are informed by larger economic forces, and they are worried about the resulting community-level mental and physical health impacts.

- **91%** of neighbors agree that “food is medicine” and having regular access to healthy foods improves overall well-being.
- **71%** of neighbors say they want to eat healthier but can’t afford to right now.
- **79%** of neighbors are concerned about the physical health impacts of food insecurity, and **82%** are concerned about the mental health impacts.

INCREASING ACCESS

We all need nutritious food to thrive, yet accessing food remains a significant challenge that’s made worse by geographic and racial disparities. Neighbors advocate for policies that ensure everyone has access to enough to eat.

- **88%** of neighbors agree policies that restrict affordable food access are wrong.
- **90%** of neighbors say it is important to make it easier for children, seniors and adults to qualify for and enroll in food assistance programs.
- **87%** of neighbors say it is important to direct more resources to food banks to serve more people.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS: BOLD STEPS TOWARD A BOLD VISION

Ending food insecurity can unite people across the nation, and it is something we all can agree on.

To ensure no one faces challenges with putting food on the table, our nation must take bold steps toward a bold vision informed by people facing hunger.

A NATION WHERE NEIGHBORS CAN CHOOSE THE FOOD THEY NEED AND PREFER:

We should all have the freedom to choose the foods that meet our personal and cultural preferences and dietary needs without restrictive policies. After all, individuals and families are the experts on what foods best meet their unique needs.

A NATION WHERE FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS KEEP UP WITH CHANGING ECONOMIC REALITIES:

Neighbors know federal food assistance programs like SNAP

are essential resources that provide a helping hand when households need it most. These invaluable programs must evolve to keep up with changing economic circumstances.

A NATION WHERE FOOD INSECURITY IS TACKLED AT THE ROOT:

People face food insecurity because the system is out of balance. People can work hard and still not have enough to make ends meet. Ending food insecurity must involve changing the systems, policies and practices that hold people back.

By shifting the structures that perpetuate food insecurity; working with leaders in business, government and nonprofit organizations; and investing in our communities, we can ensure everyone can access the food and resources we all need to thrive.

A NATION WHERE WE SUPPORT LEADERS WHO CARE ABOUT FOOD INSECURITY:

Creating a hunger-free nation requires supporting and electing leaders committed to food security. Lawmakers who care about investing in food assistance policies and programs must be at decision-making tables led by neighbors.

METHODOLOGY

In collaboration with the nonpartisan research firm PerryUdem, Feeding America designed and deployed an 18-minute national survey of adults who reported their household received charitable food assistance and/or experienced food insecurity within the past two years.

The survey, offered in English and Spanish, was conducted using NORC's nationally representative online panel and was fielded from March 20 to April 9, 2024. In all, 1,495 adults participated in the survey.



Elevating Voices



ELEVATING VOICES PLATFORM OVERVIEW

Elevating Voices is Feeding America's platform for consistently engaging with and amplifying the experiences and expertise of people with lived experience of food insecurity to advance new understandings and narratives of food insecurity driven by the people closest to the issue.

To read the full 2024 *Elevating Voices: Insights Report*, please visit FeedingAmerica.org/ElevatingVoices.

ABOUT FEEDING AMERICA

Feeding America® is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States. As part of a network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations, and over 60,000 agency partners, food pantries and meal programs, we helped provide 5.3 billion meals to tens of millions of people in need last year.

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