Hunger in Kentucky Is on the Rise: New Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Numbers

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Lexington, Kentucky - The latest numbers from Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap study based on 2022 data have been released, and they paint a harrowing picture of food insecurity in Kentucky. God’s Pantry Food Bank, a partner food bank of Feeding America, is deeply concerned by these sobering statistics, which show that hunger in our state is only worsening.

According to the new data, nearly 265,000 people in Central and Eastern Kentucky are experiencing hunger, representing a 20 percent increase from last year’s data release. This includes the 1 in 4 children who are not being nourished.

These numbers represent real people who are going to bed unfed every night. They represent children who are malnourished and seniors who cannot live a healthy life due to lack of nourishment.

Since 2011, Feeding America has been producing estimates of local food insecurity and food costs to better understand the challenges faced by people and places experiencing hunger. The data provides annual food insecurity estimates for the overall population and children in every county, congressional district, and state, as well as for every service area within the nationwide network of food banks.

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"Unfortunately, these sobering numbers align with what we have seen and heard from our neighbors and partner agencies throughout our service area," said Michael Halligan, CEO of God’s Pantry Food Bank. "Having seen this growing trend over the past year, we have expanded our services, including our mobile pantry, school pantries, health care boxes, and more. We are also expanding to a new facility that will help us better serve those
experiencing hunger. But we cannot solve this issue alone; we must work together to reduce hunger in Central and Eastern Kentucky."

The new statistics highlight the prevalence of food insecurity across populations and places, emphasizing the urgent need for action. God’s Pantry Food Bank believes that it is imperative to address disparities in food insecurity by race and ethnicity, as well as place.

Food insecurity, defined by the USDA as the lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life, is associated with numerous adverse social and health outcomes. Key drivers of food insecurity include unemployment, poverty, and income shocks, which prevent adequate access to food. God’s Pantry Food Bank emphasizes the importance of participation in food assistance programs and broader societal-level improvements in economic stability to reduce food insecurity.

"Map the Meal Gap shows that food insecurity exists in every zip code, county, and congressional district in the U.S., including right here in Kentucky," added Halligan. "We urge our community to access local food insecurity data through the interactive map, learn about the methodology, and support the food banks that serve our community."

The Map the Meal Gap study is supported by Conagra Brands Foundation and NielsenIQ/NIQ. Additional key takeaways from the report can be found on the Map the Meal Gap website, along with an interactive map that details food insecurity by geography, income, race, and ethnicity.

**Methodology:**

Map the Meal Gap uses publicly available data from the USDA ERS, U.S. Census Bureau, and Bureau of Labor Statistics to estimate local food insecurity at the county, congressional district, and state levels. The study also estimates local meal costs and food budget shortfalls using food price data from NIQ based on the USDA Thrifty Food Plan, and grocery sales tax data for every county and state in the country.

For more information about food insecurity in Kentucky and how you can help, visit our website.

**About God’s Pantry Food Bank:**

In Central and Eastern Kentucky, 1 in 6 people are unsure where they will get their next meal. God’s Pantry Food Bank serves 50 counties in Central and Eastern Kentucky in partnership with more than 500 food pantries and meal programs. Our vision: A nourished life for every Kentuckian. Our mission: Reducing hunger by working together to feed Kentucky communities. Visit [www.godspantry.org](http://www.godspantry.org) to learn more

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