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Texas Tops Nation in Hunger Crisis, North Texas Food Bank Serves Fourth-Largest Area According to New Feeding America Study

Nearly 5 million people face hunger in Texas, and an estimated 777,690 people in the North Texas Food Bank service area – more than one-third are children.

DALLAS, TX, May 15, 2024 - At its annual Mayor Day event, the [North Texas Food Bank](#) (NTFB) unveiled the latest insights from [Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap](#) study, revealing Texas' stark reality: it now leads the nation in food insecurity, surpassing California. Texas grapples with a food insecurity rate of 16.4%, equating to nearly 5 million individuals facing hunger, a significant increase from 2021. Alarming, over one-third of those affected are children.

Moreover, the study highlights the ongoing challenges within NTFB's 13-county service area, ranking it as the nation's fourth-largest area of food insecurity. Approximately 777,690 individuals, or 1 in 7 people, confront food insecurity within NTFB's service area, with children bearing a disproportionate burden. The rate of child food insecurity surged to 20.8%, reflecting a distressing rise from the previous year.

"While Texas boasts of being bigger in many aspects, leading the nation in food insecurity is not a badge of honor we can proudly wear," said Trisha Cunningham, President and CEO of the North Texas Food Bank. "In the heart of North Texas, where the number of people facing hunger is greater than the populations of cities like Seattle or San Francisco, the statistic that strikes hardest is nearly 40% of those in need are children, and that is just unacceptable. Yet, amid these struggles, the North Texas Food Bank is committed to closing the hunger gap in North Texas through the dedication of generous supporters and steadfast partnerships."

Map the Meal Gap is the only study providing local-level estimates of food insecurity and costs for every county and congressional district. The study builds upon the USDA's latest national and state data report, which showed a sharp increase in food insecurity in 2022 amid historically high food prices and the expiration of many pandemic-era programs. *Map the Meal Gap* emphasizes the urgent call to take action.

Key findings of *Map the Meal Gap* include:

- Texas has a food insecurity rate of 16.4% or 1 in 6, with nearly 5 million people facing hunger, up from 13.7% in 2021.
- Texas has 1,697,870 children facing hunger with a food insecurity rate of 22.8% or 1 in 4, up from 18% in 2021.
- NTFB's 13-county service area continues to have the fourth-highest number of people facing hunger in the nation, with a food insecurity rate of 14.2%, up from 11.9% in 2021.
- An estimated 777,690, or 1 in 7 people, face food insecurity in NTFB's service area.
- NTFB has a child food insecurity rate of 20.8%, with 286,860 children, or 1 in 5, up from 15.8% in 2021.
- There continue to be disparities in who faces hunger. In the NTFB service area:
 - 1 in 4 (28%) Black persons are food insecure, up from 1 in 5 (22%) in 2021.
 - 1 in 5 (20%) Hispanic persons, up from 1 in 7 (14%) in 2021.
 - 1 in 11 (9%) White, non-Hispanic persons, up from 1 in 14 (7%) in 2021.
- The estimated annual meal gap for NTFB's service area is more than 146 million, compared with nearly 113 million in 2021.
- In NTFB's service area, 51% of those facing hunger have a family income under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) threshold.
- *Map the Meal Gap* data estimates the cost per meal for those living in NTFB's service area is \$3.83, up from \$3.37 in 2021.
- Dallas County has 52% of NTFB's food-insecure population, followed by Collin County, which has 17%; Denton County, which has 15%; and the remaining 10 counties, which have 16%.

Food Insecurity by County in North Texas Food Bank's Service Area

County	2021 Food Insecurity Rate	2022 Food Insecurity Rate	2021 # of Food Insecure	2022 # of Food Insecure	2021 Child Food Insecurity Rate	2022 Child Food Insecurity Rate	2021 # of Children Food Insecure	2022 # of Children Food Insecure
Collin	10.1%	12.1%	105,320	130,740	10.2%	14.7%	27,330	40,060
Dallas	13.1%	15.6%	340,260	406,340	19.8%	25.0%	134,560	166,590
Delta	15.1%	16.1%	790	850	19.6%	24.2%	250	290
Denton*	10.2%	12.5%	90,550	114,180	10.9%	15.7%	23,620	34,320
Ellis	10.4%	13.1%	19,580	25,540	14.0%	19.4%	7,060	9,970
Fannin	13.8%	16.1%	4,880	5,790	15.9%	21.5%	1,200	1,640
Grayson	13.7%	15.7%	18,350	21,570	17.3%	22.7%	5,570	7,390
Hopkins	13.6%	16.4%	4,970	6,050	16.5%	22.8%	1,500	2,050
Hunt	14.2%	16.2%	14,060	16,470	18.0%	23.1%	4,290	5,580
Kaufman	10.8%	13.3%	15,190	19,920	14.6%	19.7%	5,750	8,310
Lamar	16.4%	18.1%	8,180	9,070	22.6%	28.4%	2,710	3,400
Navarro	14.4%	17.9%	7,450	9,440	18.7%	25.4%	2,570	3,430
Rockwall	8.3%	10.6%	8,760	11,730	9.0%	13.0%	2,560	3,830

*Denton County service is shared with Tarrant Area Food Bank – each responsible for 50%

NTFB's current strategic plan addresses this elevated need by providing Food for Today and Hope for Tomorrow. In FY22, NTFB provided access to nearly 137 million nutritious meals, and an additional 144 million meals in FY23 by maximizing food distribution through members of its feeding network. Through partnerships with over 500 food pantries and organizations, NTFB endeavors to meet the diverse needs of individuals across its service area. Together with its redistribution partners, Crossroads Community Services in South Dallas and Sharing Life in Mesquite, NTFB provides daily access to about 400,000 meals.

With 90 percent of the food being distributed through this feeding network, NTFB believes investing in its feeding partners will ultimately transform the lives of its neighbors. Thanks to donors' generosity, the NTFB awarded more than \$6 million in grants to nearly 70 partner agencies last year. These grants helped community organizations in NTFB's feeding network to add or repair refrigeration, expand their food pantries, purchase trucks for the transportation of food, and establish or expand wraparound services such as vocational and financial literacy classes.

Understanding where neighbors facing hunger live is critical so that NTFB can work to ensure they have access to food. The food bank uses the Feeding America data and the Hunger Action Map, a comprehensive report developed in partnership with Bain Consulting, to look at regional demographic information and work with its Partner Network to distribute food in zip codes with high unmet needs. For example, in Dallas County, 18% of the people facing hunger reside in 10 South and Southern Dallas zip codes. Last year, NTFB provided approximately 20 million meals to residents living in those 10 zip codes through 160 feeding programs and partners like Crossroads Community Services, serving as a distribution hub and nearly \$1 million in grants that directly impacted feeding partners serving those communities.

NTFB's Hope for Tomorrow strategy focuses on building more connected, self-sufficient, food-secure communities by addressing the underlying factors that lead to food insecurity. NTFB is adding food in places where neighbors are already utilizing healthcare or other services and supporting partners as they provide financial empowerment, workforce development, and other resources. The food bank is also continuing to build its Nutrition Services to empower neighbors to make healthy choices.

NTFB's Social Service Assistance team also helps low-income families apply for programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In Texas, SNAP, formerly known as "food stamps," is a crucial resource for 3.7 million low-income Texans who rely on it to help feed their families. One out of every nine Texans receives SNAP benefits. Still, only seven out of 10 eligible Texans are enrolled in SNAP, one of the country's lowest participation rates.

Policy and advocacy play pivotal roles in addressing the multifaceted issue of food insecurity. As 44% of the meals that NTFB provided access to last year were tied to government programs, advocating for policies that seek to close the hunger gap at the federal, state, and local levels is critical to providing sustainable solutions to food insecurity. Through well-crafted policies, governments can implement structural changes that bolster food security by ensuring equitable access to the nutritious food and resources needed to thrive.

Cunningham concluded, "Empowered by the unwavering support of our community, the North Texas Food Bank stands as a beacon in the fight against hunger. With every donation of food, funds, and time, we fortify our mission and extend our reach. Together, with our dedicated partners and volunteers, we form a lifeline of compassion, delivering hope and sustenance to those in need. In unity, we nourish not just bodies, but spirits, overcoming barriers to food security one meal at a time."

To learn how food insecurity impacts your community, visit [FeedingAmerica.org/MaptheMealGap](https://www.feedingamerica.org/MaptheMealGap). For more information about the North Texas Food Bank and how to help end hunger in North Texas, visit www.ntfb.org.

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About the North Texas Food Bank:

The North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) is a top-ranked non-profit hunger relief organization that sources, packages, and distributes food through a network of about 500 Partner Agencies and organizations across 13 North Texas counties. The organization also provides food to children, seniors and families through various direct-delivery programs, including mobile pantries.

In its last fiscal year, the NTFB provided access to more than 144 million nutritious meals or nearly 400,000 meals daily, a 5% percent increase over the prior year. The North Texas Food Bank is designated a 4-Star Exceptional organization by Charity Navigator based on its governance, integrity and financial stability, and is ranked 89th on *Forbes* 2023 Top 100 Charities in America. NTFB is a Partner Food Bank of Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger-relief organization. For more information, www.ntfb.org.

About Feeding America

Feeding America® is the largest hunger relief organization in the United States. As a network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations, and over 60,000 agency partners, including food pantries and meal programs, we helped provide 5.2 billion meals to tens of millions of people in need last year. Feeding America also supports programs that prevent food waste and improve food security among the people we serve; brings attention to the social and systemic barriers that contribute to food insecurity in our nation; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Visit www.FeedingAmerica.org, find us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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Additional Quotes:

The findings from the Feeding America Map the Meal Gap study are both sobering and reflective of the challenges many of our neighbors face every day. As we look at the data for the areas Sharing Life serves, we see a clear picture of food insecurity not just in Dallas County, but also in Rockwall and Kaufman Counties. These are our communities, where our friends and neighbors struggle to put food on the table every single day.

Inflation and reduced government programs have only exacerbated this issue. Last month alone, our Food Pantry saw 621 new households that had not received services from us before.

Despite these challenges, we're dedicated to finding innovative solutions to meet our neighbors' needs. One such solution is the Sharing Life ePantry program. It enables clients to view our inventory in real-time and select the foods they need. Once orders are placed, clients can opt for delivery via our partnership with DoorDash or pick up their groceries at Sharing Life during a designated time, where we then load the items into their cars.

As we move forward, it's imperative that people are aware of food insecurity in our region, but organizations like The North Texas Food Bank, Crossroads Community Services, and Sharing Life Community Outreach are doing all we can to help. Every child who goes to bed hungry, every family struggling to make ends meet – they are our neighbors, and they deserve better.

Teresa Jackson
CEO of Sharing Life Community Outreach

"No one should worry about where their next meal is coming from or whether they will be able to feed their family," **said Congressman Colin Allred (TX-32)**. "The North Texas Food Bank is a shining example of what happens when we all come together to help our neighbors in need. But sadly, over 777,000 people are facing hunger in North Texas, and we must ensure that the North Texas Food Bank can meet those needs. I am a strong supporter of our federal food assistance programs and will continue to work with Republicans and Democrats to support them. Let's keep working to lower costs and ensure our economy is lifting up every Texan."

Congressman Colin Allred (TX-32)

Food insecurity is like a thief constantly robbing families and their children of a chance to thrive.

Food insecurity is often hidden, not always visible in lines of cars around the corner or a parking lot overflowing with cars. It's a silent struggle that still exists.

The majority of those we serve at Crossroads are employed. Our families struggle to balance all of their basic living expenses, which are 3% higher in Dallas than the national average and 11% higher than the Texas average, according to Unbiased, Inc., and keep food on their tables.

Out-of-school time is fast approaching. Now that Texas has turned down federal funding for summer meals, Crossroads and other food distribution partners expect to serve even more families than usual. Please consider supporting local food agencies with your time and treasure. All families and their children deserve to enjoy time away from school without worrying about how they'll eat today, tomorrow, or next month.

Taylor Hall
Chief of Staff for Crossroads Community Services