



A Gap in Brotherly Love: Philadelphia's Hunger Crisis

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Greater Philadelphia Hunger Report, 2017

Key Findings:

- Although hunger decreased in most of the United States over the last six years due to an improving economy, the number of people who couldn't afford enough food increased in both the city and metropolitan area of Philadelphia during that time period, according to federal data analyzed by Hunger Free America.
- In the 2014-2016 time period, 301,781 residents of Philadelphia, 19.3 percent (one in five) of the total population, lived in households that were characterized by the federal government as "food insecure," meaning they were unable to always afford sufficient food. In contrast, 238,447, or 15.4 percent, of Philadelphians were food insecure in 2011-2013. In contrast, over that same six year period (2011-2016), according to USDA, the percentage of Americans living in food insecure households dropped from 14.6 percent to 13.0 percent.
- However, Philadelphia is similar to the nation in one respect: the percentage of people food insecure in 2014-2016 was higher in both the country and in the city than it was in 2004-2006, before the recession of 2008. 15.4 percent of city residents were food insecure in 2004-2006, a decade ago; a decade later, the rate was 1.7 percentage points higher nationwide and 3.9 percentage points higher in Philadelphia.
- In the broader Philadelphia metropolitan area (which includes suburban counties in PA, MD, NJ, and DE, as well as the City of Philadelphia), the number of people struggling against hunger increased from 608,005 to 730,886, and now afflicts 12.1 percent (one in eight) of the area's residents.
- In the 2014-2016 time period, 205,997 children, 15.4 percent (one in six) of the Philadelphia area's children, and 78,804 people age 60 and older, 6.2 percent of the region's seniors, suffered from food insecurity. Nearly one in ten working adults in the region struggled against hunger.

Food Insecurity in the Philadelphia Area

Year		2004-2006*	2011-2013	2014-2016
Philadelphia County, PA	Average Number of Food Insecure	220,387	238,447	301,781
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure	15.4%	15.4%	19.3%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Kids		85,913	59,754
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Kids		24.9%	17.3%
Year		2004-2006*	2011-2013	2014-2016
Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area**	Average Number of Food Insecure	608,005	693,730	730,886
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure	10.5%	11.5%	12.1%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Kids	*	209,318	205,997
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Kids	*	15.3%	15.4%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Employed Adults	192,037	229,626	257,710
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Employed Adults	7.3%	8.3%	8.6%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Seniors (60+)	45,993	74,007	78,804
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Seniors (60+)	4.6%	6.3%	6.2%

*USDA's calculation of food insecurity among children changed in 2005, making comparisons in the figures at this level unreliable.

**The Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Burlington County, NJ, Camden County, NJ, Gloucester County, NJ, Bucks County, PA, Chester County, PA, Delaware County, PA, Montgomery County, PA, Philadelphia County, PA, New Castle County, DE, Cecil County, MD, and Salem County, NJ

A Statement from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg

“People in Philadelphia and the metro region are incredibly generous personally, but the city and the region, as a whole, are failing in fundamental ways. When one in five Philadelphians can’t afford enough food -- especially at a time when the situation is at least marginally improving nationwide – it is clear that the local and regional economy and social services systems are responsible for huge gaps in brotherly love.

Some may take false comfort thinking this is only a problem for the city, but this new data shows it’s a crisis impacting every suburban county in the region too. This data provides just the latest evidence of why it would be both hard-hearted and economically self-defeating for Congress to now further cut federal food benefits.

Philadelphia leads the nation in cheesesteaks – it should also lead the nation in ending hunger.”

Methodology:

Food insecurity data comes from the December Food Security Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). Data was collected using the US Census Bureau's DataFerrett tool and analyzed by Hunger Free America staff.

For this analysis, rates are calculated as three year averages so as to ensure a more accurate estimate given the relatively small sample size. For our analysis, "Working" individuals are classified as those who are "Employed, at work" according to the CPS Labor Force data (specifically, the PEMLR variable), and "seniors" are classified as those who are over the age of 60 in the Demographics data (specifically, in the PRTAGE variable). Person-level supplement weights were applied to the data, which is different than the household-level weights USDA reports annually.

For all non-child counts, the variable HRFS12M1 was used, which is what USDA uses to analyze household food insecurity. For children, HRFS12MC was used. Food insecurity figures reported are a combined figure of "low" and "very low" food security.

Population estimates were compared to the 1-year estimates of the American Community Survey to confirm population data for sub-groups.