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Hunger Increased in Philadelphia City and Region, Bucking National Trends, According to Federal Data

One in Five Philadelphians Struggles Against Hunger

National, Local Leaders Call on Congress to Reject More Cuts in Food Programs

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 a new report by [Hunger Free America](#), a nationwide advocacy and direct service organization.

The report, based on federal data analyzed by Hunger Free America, found that, 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. Furthermore, 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 later, the rate was 1.7 percentage points higher nationwide and 3.9 percentage points higher in Philadelphia.

The study also found that, 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 of the area's children, 15.4 percent (one in six), and 78,804 people age 60 and older, 6.2 percent of the regions seniors, suffered from food insecurity. Nearly one in ten working adults in the region struggled against hunger. The report, released in a press conference attended by national and local leaders at a ShopRite Supermarket in North Philadelphia, is entitled *Gaps in Brotherly Love: Philadelphia's Hunger Crisis* and is available here: <http://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/media-research/research>

Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, said: "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.”

President Trump, in his fiscal year 2018 budget proposal, advocated for \$192 billion in cuts to the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which was formerly called the Food Stamp Program. Additionally, House Republicans have proposed making it more difficult and costly for urban school districts to provide free breakfasts and lunches to children from low-income families.

Jeffrey Brown, President and CEO of Brown's Super Stores, who hosted the event, said “Unfortunately, I have seen more of my customers struggle to pay for their family's basic food needs. Additionally, the proposed federal tax reform to eliminate New Market Tax Credits, often utilized to end Food Deserts, will further strain progress in underprivileged communities.”

“It is outrageous that the President and Congress would even consider cutting food and nutrition programs for families that are struggling. While they cook up new ways to give tax breaks to the wealthy, they're making working people go hungry,” said State Senator Vincent Hughes. “What happened to common sense? What happened to compassion? This is bad business, bad economic policy and it's flat out just immoral!”

Brian Lang, Director of the National Campaign for Healthy Food Access, The Food Trust, said, “No one in America should go hungry and no one with a job should need to be on SNAP. This new data shows we need to do much more to fight poverty and hunger. Cutting SNAP, like this Administration has proposed, at a time when so many families are struggling, would increase hunger, cripple our economy, worsen health disparities and exacerbate rising healthcare costs.”

Commented Pam Lawler, Founder, Philabundance “While hunger is a problem in the US, impacting 1 in 8 Americans, it is a crisis in our area impacting one in five people, meaning that 20% of our neighbors don't know where their next meal is coming from. Or if they'll have one at all.”

Food insecurity rates track very closely to poverty rates. According to the US Census Bureau, Philadelphia continues to have one of the highest big city poverty rates in the nation, with more than one quarter of all residents living below the meager federal poverty line in 2016 (\$20,090 annually for a family of three).

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

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