



Food Insecurity  
**SNAPSHOT**

**2023**

*FarmboxRx*



## Introduction

In March of 2023, the extended federal aid for SNAP benefits ended, leaving millions of Americans to figure out how to secure nutritious food for themselves and their families.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. government extended its Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp program, to Americans who were not typically eligible. However, in March 2023, the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) ended.

To respond to this gap in food access, FarmboxRx launched Feed by FarmboxRx, an open call for anyone using SNAP and at risk of food insecurity in the states where the expanded public health emergency program was ending to apply for a no cost FarmboxRx subscription of monthly deliveries of fresh fruits, vegetables, and pantry-ready staples.

Following an awareness campaign that resulted in widespread national and regional coverage of the application, more than 2,000 people applied to receive FarmboxRx fresh produce deliveries from the Feed by FarmboxRx program.

The vast majority (95+%) of these applicants confirming they are currently on SNAP. This report takes a closer look at the socioeconomic, health, and demographic factors impacting those who face food insecurity in the U.S. today.





More than

**95%**

of Feed applicants in need  
of FarmboxRx produce deliveries  
*already* receive SNAP benefits.



# Rising Food Insecurity

## Behind the Numbers

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), a household faces food insecurity when one or more members lack access to enough food for an active, healthy life.

The USDA has found that over 12% of U.S. households are food insecure – equating to **nearly 17 million households**.

Those who live in food insecure households rely on programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to combat food insecurity, and to put healthy foods on the table.

SNAP has been around since the 1960s, when it was referred to as the food stamp program. Today, American households who qualify for SNAP must have a gross monthly income at or below 130% of the federal poverty level. Households with people over the age of 60, or people with disabilities, meet different income criteria. In addition, households receiving other types of aid, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), may automatically be eligible for SNAP.

The most recent U.S. Census Bureau data on the number of people receiving SNAP is from three years ago (2020). That year:

- 23.6 million (63%) were adults
- 13.8 million (36%) were children

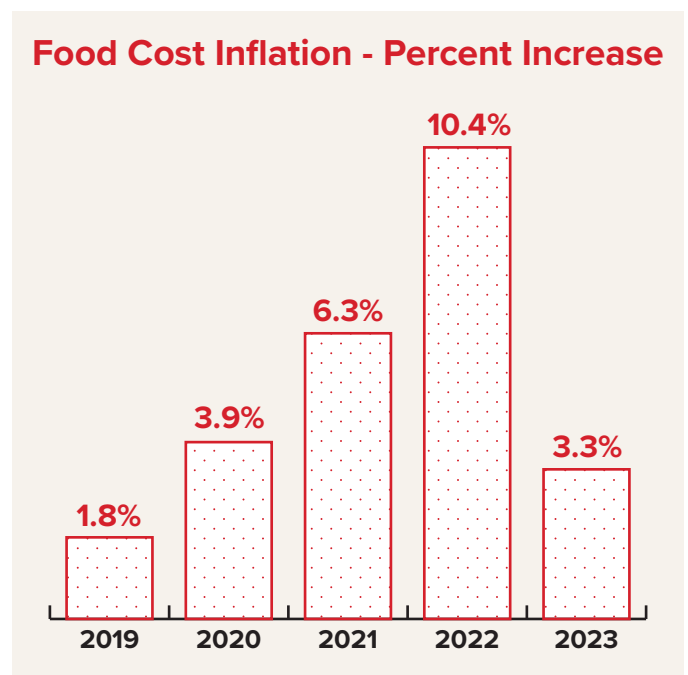
Unfortunately, the number of people reliant on SNAP to fight food insecurity has grown in 2023.

Once the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) ended in March 2023, so did extended federal aid on SNAP benefits, thus reducing financial support in grocery purchases by \$95-250 a person. Additionally, inflation drove up the cost of food by 11% – the biggest annual increase since the 1980s.

These factors, coupled with a continued high cost of living, have contributed to the rise in food insecurity amongst families and individuals.

The prevalence of food insecurity impacts all ethnicities, genders, and geographic locations, including:

- 36.7% of households with incomes below the Federal poverty line
- Substantially higher than the national average for single-parent households, and for Black and Hispanic households
- More common in both large cities & rural areas than in suburban areas



U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics





“

I need *Feed by FarmboxRx* because the food stamps I do get do not last all month. Everything continues to go up in price. I can't afford a whole lot. I'm a single mother of three kids and I'm the only income source.”

# Top 4 Contributors to Food Insecurity

Among the 2,000+ applications for “Feed by FarmboxRx,” there were clear and consistent trends impacting Americans’ access to food. According to our data, the top four reasons why Americans are struggling to put healthy foods on their table include:

## Disability and Disease

Someone in the home is on disability or has a chronic medical condition (such as diabetes or cancer) that limits their ability to work and generate enough income, and also contributes to specific dietary needs for healthier but often more expensive whole foods.

## Fixed Income, including Social Security

Someone in the home is on social security, receiving a fixed income that does not appropriately cover their expenses and food.

## Age

Someone in the home is over the age of 65 and is either not working, unable to work, and therefore their income does not cover their expenses and food.

## Single Parent

The household is a single-parent household with one source of income that is unable to cover the family’s expenses and food.



## Survey Methodology

For this survey, FarmboxRx asked all applicants for their name, mailing address, SNAP status, household size, and for an open-ended description of why they were in need of FarmboxRx food deliveries. The FarmboxRx team analyzed the data for recurring socioeconomic and health factors cited, including disability, social security, age, and whether the applicant was in a single vs. two-parent household.

A common refrain from all applicants, regardless of socioeconomic status, age, or whether they were a single parent household, was that SNAP is not enough to cover the food that person or family require in a given month, and that they would typically run out of food before the end of each month.

As one single person household stated,

“My SNAP benefit runs out quickly. I have several health issues that require me to eat healthy food, such as fruits and vegetables and yogurt. These are very expensive and if I don’t have the right foods, I get sick and then I don’t eat. I have diabetes as well. Please consider me for this program.”

“

Stories of single parent households feeding multiple people on limited income were also a common theme of the applications. Many single parents described that they could not afford healthy foods, could not feed their children three times a day, and were unable to stretch the assistance they did receive. As one mother described,

“I need Feed by FarmboxRx because the food stamps I do get do not last all month. Everything continues to go up in price. I can’t afford a whole lot. I’m a single mother of three kids and I’m the only income source.”



## Top 4 Contributors to Food Insecurity, Continued

Other applicants in need of food shared that they did not qualify for SNAP but still very much needed food assistance. For example, another single person household said,



“I make \$10 too much to qualify for SNAP. I did qualify until I got my cost of living increase this year; before that I received \$280 in SNAP benefits. Now I have none. I was given no notice and simply cut off. I live alone, have no car, and the closest grocery store is miles away. Most of the time I eat what I can buy from the Dollar Store because it’s a 2-mile walk. I have one sister nearby who is on disability after an accident, so I cannot ask her for a ride. It’s become nearly impossible for me to eat healthy.”

“

Another single parent described the confluence of factors that make getting healthy food on the table hard, not just the money to pay for food, stating,



“As a single parent who is also a full-time student with a job that doesn’t pay much, I don’t have enough money and don’t always have the time and resources to cook healthy meals. FarmboxRx food deliveries could provide my family with fresh, nutritious food that help us stay on track with our health goals. Plus, having these deliveries can take the stress out of meal planning and grocery shopping, allowing me to focus on other important aspects of life.”





“

I implore anyone who has the power to influence policy and programs, reduce the cost of healthy foods, or make more food available to the food insecure, to take this data seriously and consider their role in improving food access for the more than 40 million Americans who face hunger each year.”



# Using Food-as-Medicine to Provide Food Security

## FarmboxRx Founder & CEO, Ashley Tyrner

As a single parent who started FarmboxRx after my own struggles to buy food while living off food stamps, I am well acquainted with the stark realities of food insecurity – and the prevalence of food deserts – in America.

Unfortunately, government assistance is not enough for most people living at or below the poverty line when it comes to finding and affording healthy, nutritious food. SNAP benefits do not take into account a person or their family's transportation limitations, unique dietary needs, and other life or health constraints.

These limitations prevent millions from getting – and accessing – healthy foods that inspire self-efficacy amongst affected individuals who want to be healthier.

Years ago, I had the pleasure of working directly with Sam Kass – former President Barack Obama's Senior Policy Advisor for Nutrition Policy and Executive Director for former First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign. He enlightened me that food insecurity and food deserts are not a localized problem. Millions of Americans face similar problems and are craving solutions to better access healthy food.

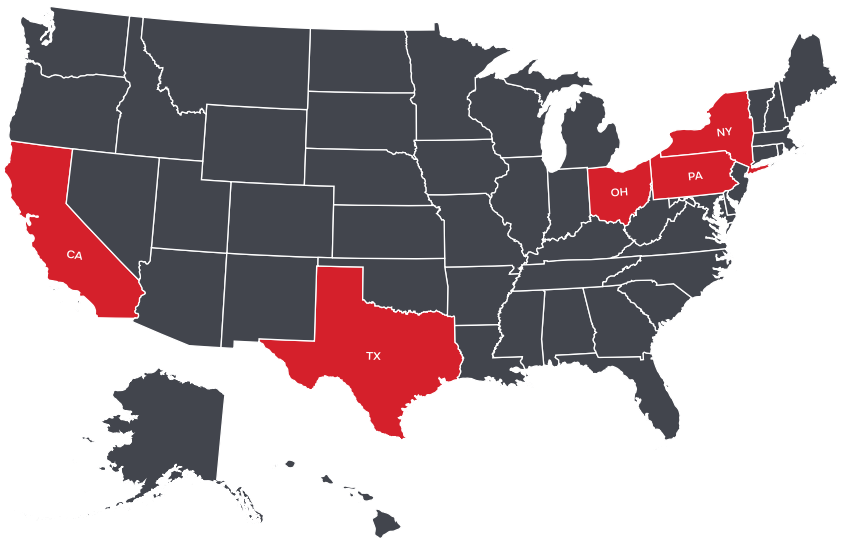
Today I attend many healthcare industry conferences and continue to highlight the excitement among the health, medical and research communities about growing demand of Food-as-Medicine. Diet is a tool to achieve optimal health and prevent and reverse diseases like diabetes, Alzheimer's and even, potentially, cancer. But if we can't get people the food they need, what does that mean for their health? I fear we will only see more disease and disability, mental anguish, stress and trauma, if we do not meet the very basic needs of all Americans and their families by ensuring everyone has access to three nutritious meals a day.

Further, providing covered services like food deliveries that bring food direct to people's doors could address the transportation and time challenges that many families – especially single parent households – must overcome to get healthy meals on their tables each day.

I implore anyone who has the power to influence policy and programs, reduce the cost of healthy foods, or make more food available to the food insecure, to take this data seriously and consider their role in improving food access for the more than 40 million Americans who face hunger each year.



## Top 5 Food Insecure States





# Top 5 States Affected by Food Insecurity

In addition to clear trends and themes surrounding why American households are food insecure, and despite some government assistance, there were also clear trends among cities and states that seemed to be disproportionately affected.

A key component of the FarmboxRx survey methodology was soliciting submissions from states that had SNAP benefits cut during 2023.

According to our data, the top five states with the highest food insecurity were:

- New York
- Pennsylvania
- California
- Texas
- Ohio

Key cities within these states that came up time and again among applicants included the Bronx (NY); Cleveland (OH); San Diego (CA); and Houston (TX).

# Summary

Food insecurity is a multidimensional issue – and it’s not always as simple as having access to food.

This report is just a glimpse of the broad, systemic problems that millions of Americans affected by food insecurity face every day. Fixing the root causes and complexities of food insecurity is not something that can or will happen overnight.

To keep pace with the continually evolving factors that contribute to food insecurity, it’s imperative that healthcare leaders, policymakers, and community leaders listen closely to the needs of the populations they serve, identify what is working and what is not working, and come together to develop innovative solutions that address the challenges food insecure Americans face.

If you would like to learn more about Feed by FarmboxRx, or food insecurity in America, please contact:



[info@farmboxrx.com](mailto:info@farmboxrx.com)



[FarmboxRx.com](https://FarmboxRx.com)

# FarmboxRx

Food is medicine, it also happens to be the best method for engaging our communities in health education. We break down the barriers to health equity through nutrition and health literacy, by providing fresh fruits & vegetables, and health literacy materials anywhere in the US.

Everyone should have access to high-quality, nutritious foods as a part of their care plan, regardless of socioeconomic disadvantages. Our authentic, meaningful, and scalable nutrition and education solutions create long-lasting health improvement outcomes, combat food insecurity, and inspire a healthier tomorrow.

## The Impact of Our Work

FarmboxRx is dedicated to changing the way Managed Care Organizations engage their members to improve quality health outcomes, promote participation in preventative care, and educate on chronic condition management.

