

Texas ranks No. 2 nationally in food-insecure population

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WASHINGTON—More than 4.65 million Texans last year—including nearly 1.9 million children—had limited or uncertain access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle, [a study by Feeding America](#) revealed.

Texas ranks No. 2 nationally—behind California—in total number of food-insecure individuals and No. 7 in child food-insecurity rates, according to the annual Map the Meal Gap study.



“While we are pleased to see the steady decline in the amount of food insecurity in Texas, we know that one person experiencing hunger is too many—much less over 4.6 million being food-insecure,” said Jeremy Everett, director of the Texas Hunger Initiative. Map the Meal Gap analyzes statistics collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, ConAgra Foods Foundation and Nielsen provided support for the research. Findings, including an interactive map, are [posted here](#).

A food-insecure family lacks consistent access to enough food for all

household members to enjoy an active and healthy life. In food-insecure homes, families often cut back on groceries to pay for lodging, utilities or medicine.

Nationally, about 49 million people—one in six Americans—experience food insecurity. That number includes 16 million children.

Texas has an overall food-insecurity rate of 17.6 percent, compared to the national average, 15.8 percent.

The latest data show some gradual improvement. Feeding America reported 4.77 million food-insecure Texans last year and 4.81 million the previous year.

“While we are pleased to see the steady decline in the amount of food insecurity in Texas, we know that one person experiencing hunger is too many—much less over 4.6 million being food-insecure,” said Jeremy Everett, director of the [Texas Hunger Initiative](#), a project within the Baylor University School of Social Work, launched in partnership with Texas Baptists’ Christian Life Commission.

Everett attributes the slow but steady decline in food insecurity to two causes.



Click the image to see food insecurity rates in the U.S. “First, due to economic growth, more people are finding their way back into the workforce. Second, collaboration

between anti-hunger/anti-poverty organizations is at an all-time high, strengthening our collective response to the problem.”

Three Texas counties—Harris, Dallas and Tarrant—rank among the top 10 nationally in terms of the greatest number of food-insecure individuals. Harris County—the Houston area—ranks No. 4, with 753,640 people, an 18 percent food-insecurity rate. Dallas County ranked No. 6, with 472,170, a 19.6 percent food-insecurity rate. Tarrant County—the Fort Worth/Arlington area—ranked No. 10, with 341,210, an 18.5 percent food-insecurity rate.

While the total number of food-insecure individuals has declined somewhat, the number of children in food-insecure households remains relatively steady at 1,899,310, compared to 1,909,470 last year.

“This study demonstrates that low-income Texans are still fighting to benefit from our economic miracle,” said Celia Cole, chief executive officer at [Feeding Texas](#), formerly the Texas Food Bank Network. “Hunger continues to strike hard-working families in every county in Texas. We are all affected, and therefore, we all bear the responsibility to solve this problem.”

One-fourth of the counties in the United States with 100,000 or more food-insecure children are in Texas. Four Texas counties have 100,000 or more children who live in food-insecure homes—305,480 children in Harris County, 179,020 children in Dallas County, 130,880 in Tarrant County and 120,470 children in Bexar County, the San Antonio area.

Texas has a 27.4 percent overall child food-insecurity rate, compared to the 21.4 percent national child food-insecurity rate. The child food-insecurity rate exceeds the national average in all but six Texas counties. More than 50 Texas counties have a child food-insecurity rate of 30 percent or greater.

In 13 Texas counties, one-third or more of the children live in food-insecure households. They are Brooks, 34.9 percent; Cameron, 34.1 percent; Coleman, 34.9 percent; Hidalgo, 33.9 percent; Hudspeth, 34.9 percent; Kenedy, 35.9 percent; Kinney, 33.4 percent; Maverick, 33.3 percent; Sabine, 37.7 percent; San Augustine, 35 percent; Starr, 37.9 percent; Willacy, 36 percent; and Zavala, 36.9 percent.

“More of our Texas neighbors are struggling today than we expect. These numbers represent the actual human struggle suffered by many,” said Ferrell Foster, director of ethics and justice with the [Christian Life Commission](#).

“I’m thankful Texas Baptists are working to meet these needs in their local communities and are planning to give for the statewide effort through their [Mother’s Day Hunger Offering](#). We can make a difference.”