

The 6th Annual Massachusetts Food Access Report

Hunger on the Rise

Demand Outpaces Response

In Massachusetts, the rate of food insecurity has more than doubled since 2019, driven by rising costs, ongoing economic instability, and changes to federal policy.

Even as participation in food and nutrition assistance programs reached record levels among those with food insecurity, many households report it is not enough—they must often stack multiple programs and make impossible trade-offs between food, housing, and healthcare.

The widening gap between need and the availability of support services reflects structural underinvestment in the systems meant to prevent hunger.

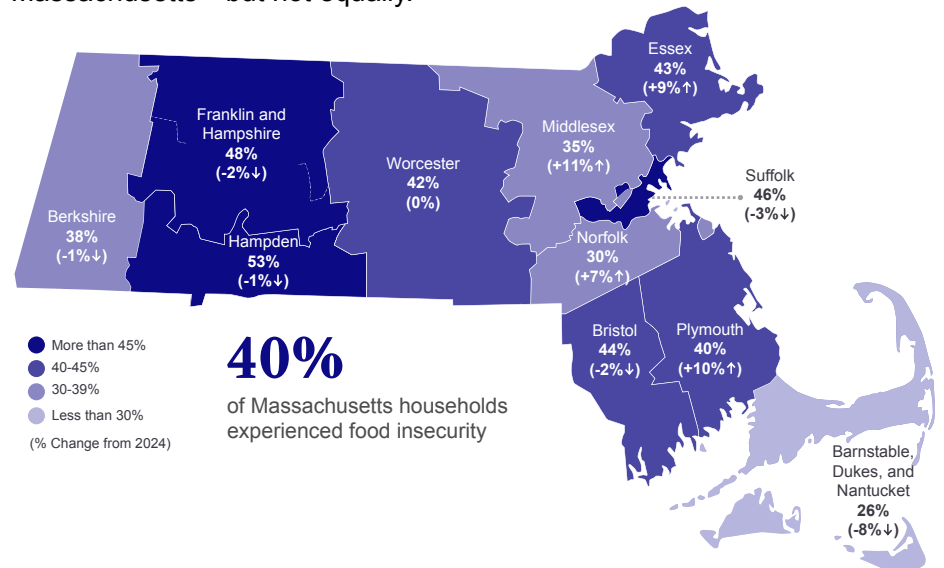
“

Food isn't a luxury; it is a necessity. No one should be struggling to feed themselves or their children. No one should have to choose between essentials like bills, gas, and medicine and putting food on the table.”

LGBTQ+ PARENT, WORCESTER COUNTY

The State of Food Insecurity

The number of Massachusetts households experiencing food insecurity has increased substantially, rising from 19% in 2019 to 40% in 2025. During the same period, rates of very low food security (the most severe form of food insecurity with hunger) have more than quadrupled, growing from 6% in 2019 to 25% in 2025. These trends have hit communities throughout Massachusetts—but not equally.



Facts About Households Facing Food Insecurity

In 2025, our data shows:



92% of SNAP participants say the benefits helped their household



75% of families receiving SNAP still need additional food support



56% of households rely on community food programs, such as food pantries, mobile markets, or community meals



32% of households using MassHealth received nutrition services such as home-delivered meals, food boxes, or gift cards, improving health and lowering costs



80% of households with children used free school and/or summer meal programs



86% of households using WIC felt benefits helped

Summary and Recommendations

With hunger on the rise and federal policy shifts compounding pressure on households and service systems, the state must respond with urgency.

We call for immediate increases in funding for the programs below and sustained structural reforms to build a food security system capable of meeting escalating needs, while managing the existing crisis.



Urgently Strengthen Government Food and Nutrition Programs

- Increase the state's investment in the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) funding to \$58 million to meet rising levels of food insecurity.
- Increase state funding for the Department of Transitional Assistance by \$30 million to support an accessible, efficient, and cost-effective Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



Advance Food Security Through Healthcare and Research

- Strengthen health system-based food insecurity screenings and referral pathways by investing in coordinated navigation services that help people access and enroll in nutrition and health support programs.
- Expand Food is Medicine/Food as Health initiatives to prevent and treat diet-related illnesses.



Expand Access to Affordable, Locally Produced Foods

- Invest in local food systems to increase the availability and affordability of nutritious, Massachusetts-grown foods across the Commonwealth, including through MEFAP, Food Security Infrastructure Grants (FSIG), and the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP).



Invest in Community Infrastructure, Social Connection, and Participatory Design

- Advance policies and investments that strengthen community networks and food security through a dignified, community-centered safety net.



Address the Root Causes of Food Insecurity

- Advance sustained, systems-level reforms through state and federal policy action designed to dismantle the structural inequities producing food insecurity.

