

The Impact of the Coronavirus on Local Food Insecurity in 2020 & 2021



Updated analysis of how **local food insecurity** levels may have changed in 2020 and 2021 because of COVID-19



Introduction

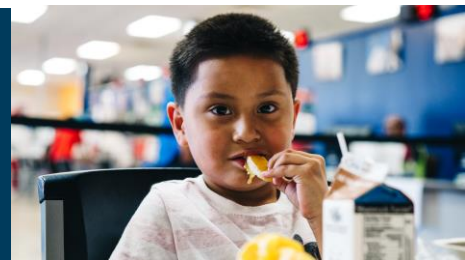
In early 2020, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) began to spread across the United States, and one of the results was an economic recession that ended years of declining rates of food insecurity – the lack of access to sufficient food because of limited financial resources. In 2019 – before the start of the pandemic – more than 35 million people, including nearly 11 million children, were food insecure. As presented in an earlier brief, Feeding America projects that 45 million people, including 15 million children, may have experienced food insecurity in 2020, and 42 million people, including 13 million children, may experience food insecurity in 2021.

In this brief, we provide information about food insecurity at the local level leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2019) and projected changes in food insecurity levels for 2020 and 2021. Like with previous releases of our projections, we include information about food insecurity among the overall population and among children for states, counties, and congressional districts. For the first time, we are also including projections of very low food security – a more severe range of food insecurity that involves reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns.

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BACKGROUND & METHODS



On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the spread of COVID-19 a global pandemic. In the days and weeks that followed, cities and states across the U.S. issued stay-at-home mandates and ordered the closure of non-essential businesses in an effort to curb transmission of the virus.

The result of the COVID-19 pandemic was the first economic recession in the United States since the Great Recession of 2007. Within weeks, tens of millions of people lost jobs or saw declines in hours worked. For the week ending March 28, 2020, the number of initial claims for unemployment insurance was nearly 7 million, a record high. The official unemployment rate for April rose to 14.7%, reflecting the largest monthly increase and the highest rate since 1948 when such data was first collected. Before the start of the pandemic, the national overall food insecurity rate had reached its lowest point since it began to be measured in the 1990s, but those improvements were being upended by the pandemic.

BACKGROUND & METHODS CONTINUED



For ten years, Feeding America has produced local-level estimates of food insecurity through the *Map the Meal Gap* (MMG) study. The same model that is used to estimate local food insecurity can also predict food insecurity using projected changes to variables in the model. We have used projected changes to unemployment¹ and poverty², two variables that have a statistically significant and substantial effect on food insecurity estimates and are likely to be most directly affected by COVID-19.³ Feeding America first released food insecurity projections for 2020 in the spring of 2020, and then released updated projections in October 2020 as it became evident that economic conditions would be more positive than experts originally predicted. As of March 2021, we are releasing newly updated 2020 projections along with initial projections for calendar year 2021.

Table 1 displays the latest assumptions we are using for unemployment and poverty at the national level for 2020 and 2021 (historical rates for 2019 are shown for comparison purposes).

Table 1. National-level Assumptions Used to Project Food Insecurity for 2020 and 2021

INDICATORS/ASSUMPTIONS	Projections		Actuals
	2021	2020	2019
Annual Unemployment Rate	6.7%	9.2%	3.7%
Annual Poverty Rate	12.0%	11.1%	10.5%
Annual Child Poverty Rate	16.0%	14.8%	14.4%

If these assumptions hold true:

- In 2020, approximately 45 million people (13.9%), including 15 million children (19.9%), may have experienced food insecurity in 2020. This includes 17 million people (5.1%) and 4 million children (5.7%) who may have experienced very low food security.
- In 2021, 42 million people (12.9%), including 13 million children (17.9%), may experience food insecurity. This includes 15 million people (4.6%) and 4 million children (5.1%) who may experience very low food security.

To project food insecurity at the local level, we leveraged actual unemployment⁴ data as reported through the BLS, and we used the same adjustment for poverty⁵ used at the national level across all geographies.

FINDINGS OVERVIEW



Across geographies, the following trends generally hold:

- Places that had relatively higher rates of food insecurity and very low food security before COVID-19 will continue to have relatively higher rates in 2020 and 2021.
- Places that had relatively higher numbers of people experiencing food insecurity and very low food security before COVID-19 (higher population areas) will continue to have relatively higher numbers in 2020 and 2021.
- Places that had relatively lower rates of food insecurity and very low food security before COVID-19 will see larger relative increases in 2020 and 2021 (though they will generally still have relatively lower rates).
- Significant racial disparities in food insecurity which existed before COVID-19 remain in the wake of the pandemic.

In the following sections we highlight notable findings by geography for the overall population and for children. A summary of the highest projected food insecurity rates and changes are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. Areas with the highest projected food insecurity rates, numbers and changes, 2021

Highest Projected:	State		County		Congressional District	
	Overall	Children	Overall	Children	Overall	Children
Rate (2021)	Mississippi (18.7%)	Louisiana (26.0%)	Presidio County, TX (29.2%)	Zavala County, TX (46.5%)	New York's 15th District (24.8%)	New York's 15th District (38.3%)
Total number of people (2021)	Texas (4.8 million)	Texas (1.7 million)	Los Angeles County, CA (1.5 million)	Los Angeles County, CA (465,060)	New York's 15th District (183,250)	New York's 15th District (77,520)
Percent increase (2019 rate vs. 2021 rate)	New Jersey (+36%)	New Jersey (+55%)	Williams County, ND (+113%)	Morris County, NJ (+139%)	New Jersey's 11th District (+66%)	New Jersey's 11th District (+169%)
Increase in number of people (2019 vs. 2021)	California (+760,070)	Texas (+295,550)	Los Angeles County, CA (+373,270)	Los Angeles County, CA (+143,360)	Nevada's 3rd District (+36,970)	Texas' 22nd District (+15,170)

FINDINGS OVERVIEW

CONTINUED



Very low food security

For the first time, Feeding America has produced local-level projections of very low food security, a more severe range of food insecurity that involves reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns. The visual to the right depicts the four levels of food security.

A summary of the highest projected very low food security rates, numbers and changes are summarized below in Table 3.

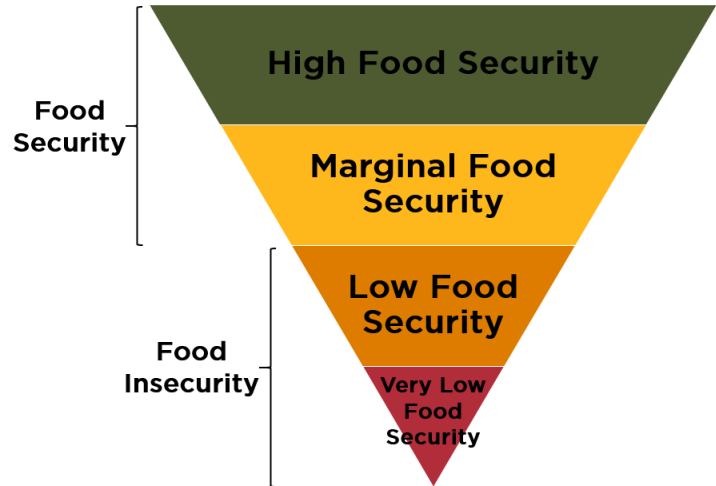


Table 3. Areas with the highest projected very low food security rates, numbers and changes, 2021

Highest Projected:	State		County		Congressional District	
	Overall	Children	Overall	Children	Overall	Children
Rate (2021)	Arkansas (7.1%)	Oklahoma (8.4%)	Presidio County, TX (12.2%)	Menominee County, WI (14.9%)	Texas' 34th District (8.5%)	Oklahoma's 2nd District (11.2%)
Total number of people (2021)	Texas (1.8 million)	Texas (479,660)	Los Angeles County, CA (520,200)	Los Angeles County, CA (116,810)	Texas' 15th District (63,510)	Texas' 15th District (19,460)
Percent increase (2019 rate vs. 2021 rate)	New Jersey (+45%)	New Jersey (+69%)	Williams County, ND (+213%)	Manassas Park city, VA (+1000%) ⁶	New York's 9th District (+84%)	California's 38th District (+135%)
Increase in number of people (2019 vs. 2021)	California (+345,620)	Texas (+102,670)	Los Angeles County, CA (+175,180)	Los Angeles County, CA (+49,050)	Nevada's 3rd District (+17,430)	Texas' 22nd District (+5,210)

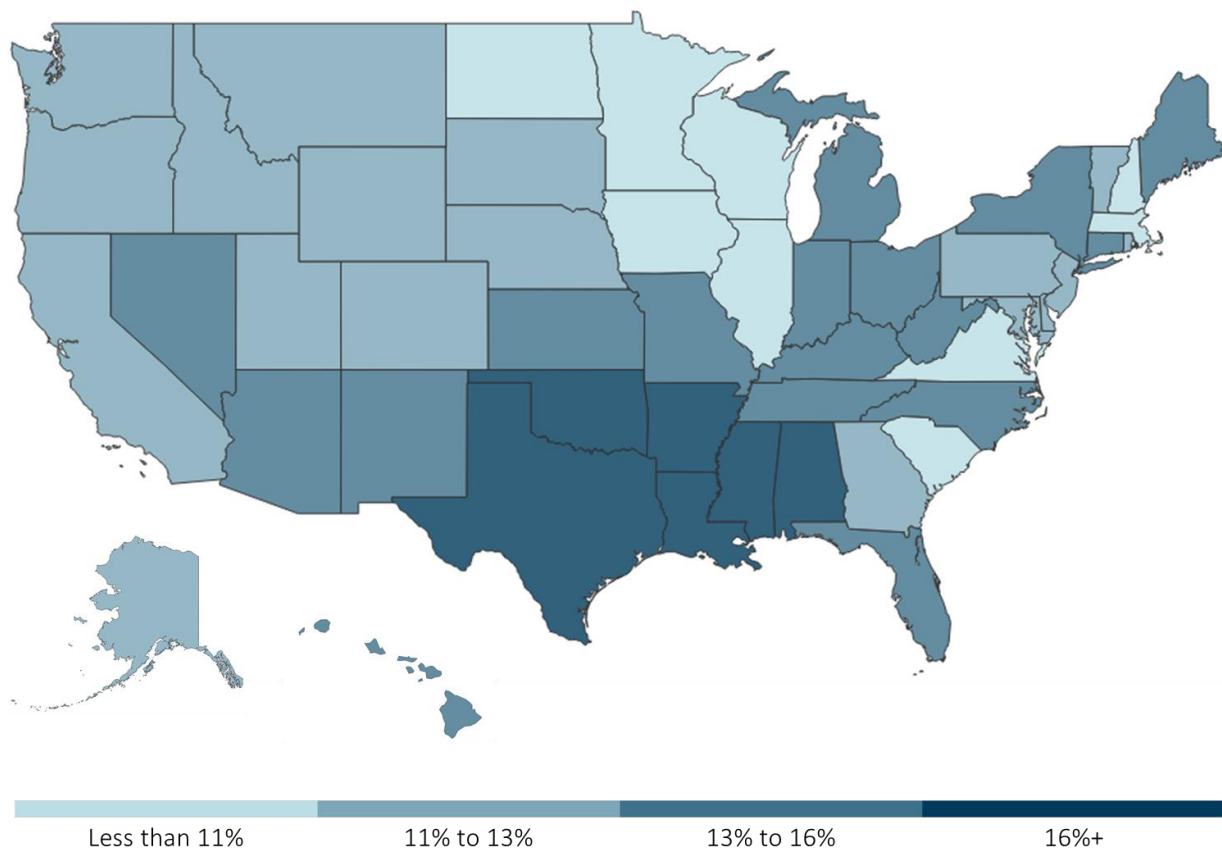
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Overall population - Food Insecurity

At the state level, the projected rate of food insecurity among the overall population for 2021 is the lowest for North Dakota (8.1%) and highest for Mississippi (18.7%). North Dakota also had the lowest food insecurity rate in 2019 (6.7%). In line with their status as the two most populous states, California would see the largest increase in the number of people experiencing food insecurity (+760,070) and Texas would see the largest total number of people experiencing food insecurity (4.8 million). **Figure 1** shows projected food insecurity rates for the overall population by state for 2021.

Figure 1. Projected rates of food insecurity among the overall population in 2021 by state





Overall population – Food Insecurity, continued

The states with the highest projected food insecurity rates for 2021 are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. States with the highest projected overall food insecurity rates in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Mississippi	18.7%	20.1% (1)	18.5% (1)
2	Arkansas	17.6%	18.3% (2)	16.6% (2)
3	Louisiana	17.3%	18.0% (3)	15.5% (4)
4	Texas	16.5%	16.6% (7)	14.1% (8)
5	Alabama	16.1%	17.5% (4)	14.7% (3)
5	Oklahoma	16.1%	16.7% (6)	16.1% (5)
7	New Mexico	15.4%	16.6% (7)	14.2% (7)
8	Nevada	15.2%	17.1% (5)	12.1% (18)
9	Hawaii	15.1%	16.2% (11)	11.5% (27)
9	Kentucky	15.1%	16.3% (10)	14.4% (6)

Table 5 lists the five states with the highest projected number of people living in food-insecure households in 2021.

Table 5. Top 5 states with the highest projected number of people living in food-insecure households in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Texas	4,774,520	4,811,740 (2)	4,092,850 (1)
2	California	4,772,030	5,372,380 (1)	4,011,960 (2)
3	Florida	2,848,740	3,090,380 (3)	2,567,300 (3)
4	New York	2,570,830	2,823,510 (4)	2,090,550 (4)
5	Ohio	1,645,300	1,874,200 (5)	1,547,110 (5)

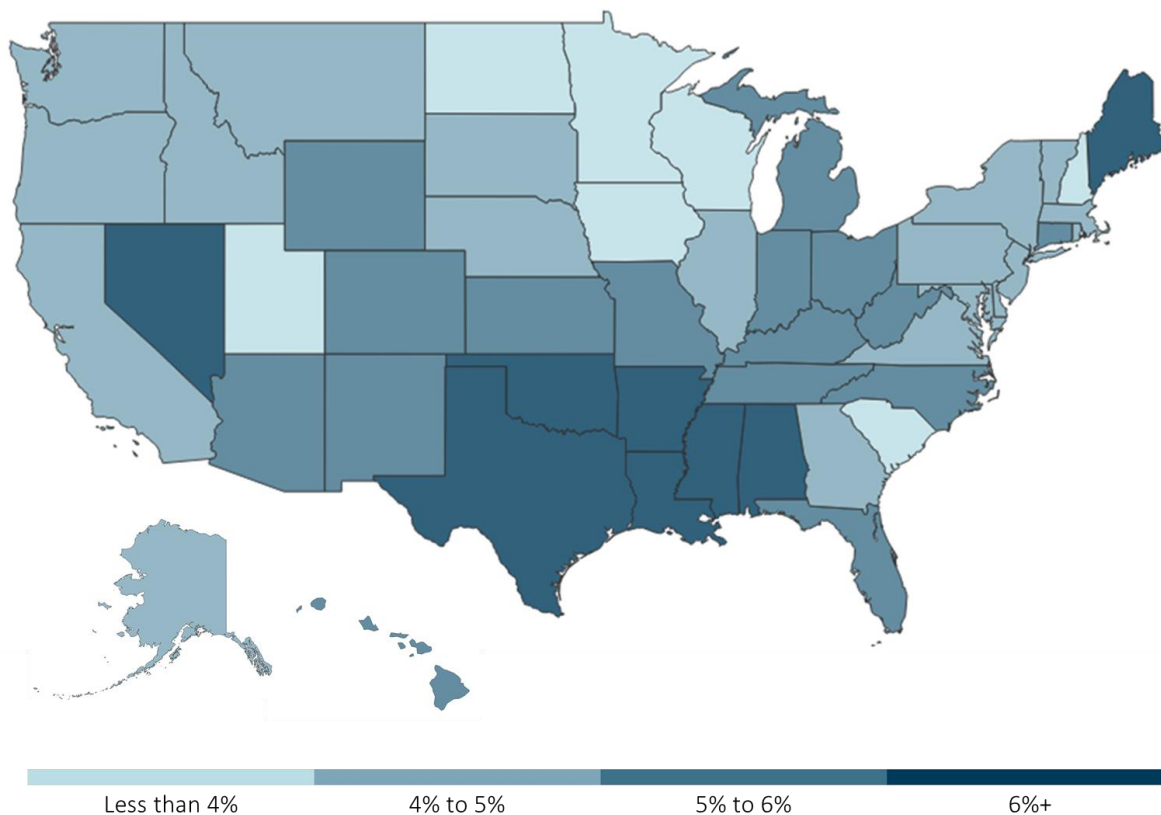


Overall population – Very Low Food Security

Very low food security (VLFS) is the more severe level of food insecurity (see page 5 for more on the definition). At the state level, the rankings for very low food security among the overall population for 2021 is very similar to that of food insecurity rankings in many ways. North Dakota has the lowest rate of VLFS (2.9%) and Arkansas has the highest rate (7.1%). California and Texas had the greatest increase to the number of people experiencing very low food security (+345,620) and the largest total number of people experiencing very low food security (1,827,780), respectively.

Figure 2 shows projected very low food security rates for the overall population by state for 2021.

Figure 2. Projected rates of very low food security among the overall population in 2021 by state





Overall population – Very Low Food Security, continued

The states with the highest projected very low food security rates for 2021 are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. States with the highest projected very low food security rates in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Arkansas	7.1%	7.5% (1)	6.6% (1)
2	Louisiana	7.0%	7.4% (2)	6.2% (4)
3	Oklahoma	6.7%	7% (6)	6.1% (5)
4	Mississippi	6.6%	7.2% (3)	6.5% (2)
5	Alabama	6.4%	7.1% (5)	6.5% (2)
6	Texas	6.3%	6.4% (13)	5.2% (12)
6	Maine	6.3%	6.9% (7)	5.9% (6)
8	Nevada	6.2%	7.2% (3)	4.8% (19)
9	Hawaii	6.0%	6.6% (10)	4.3% (29)
10	Arizona	5.9%	6.1% (17)	5.1% (15)
10	Connecticut	5.9%	5.9% (19)	5.1% (15)
10	Kentucky	5.9%	6.5% (11)	5.6% (7)

Table 7 lists the states with the highest projected number of people living in very low food secure households in 2021.

Table 7. Top 5 states with the highest projected number of people living in very low food secure households in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

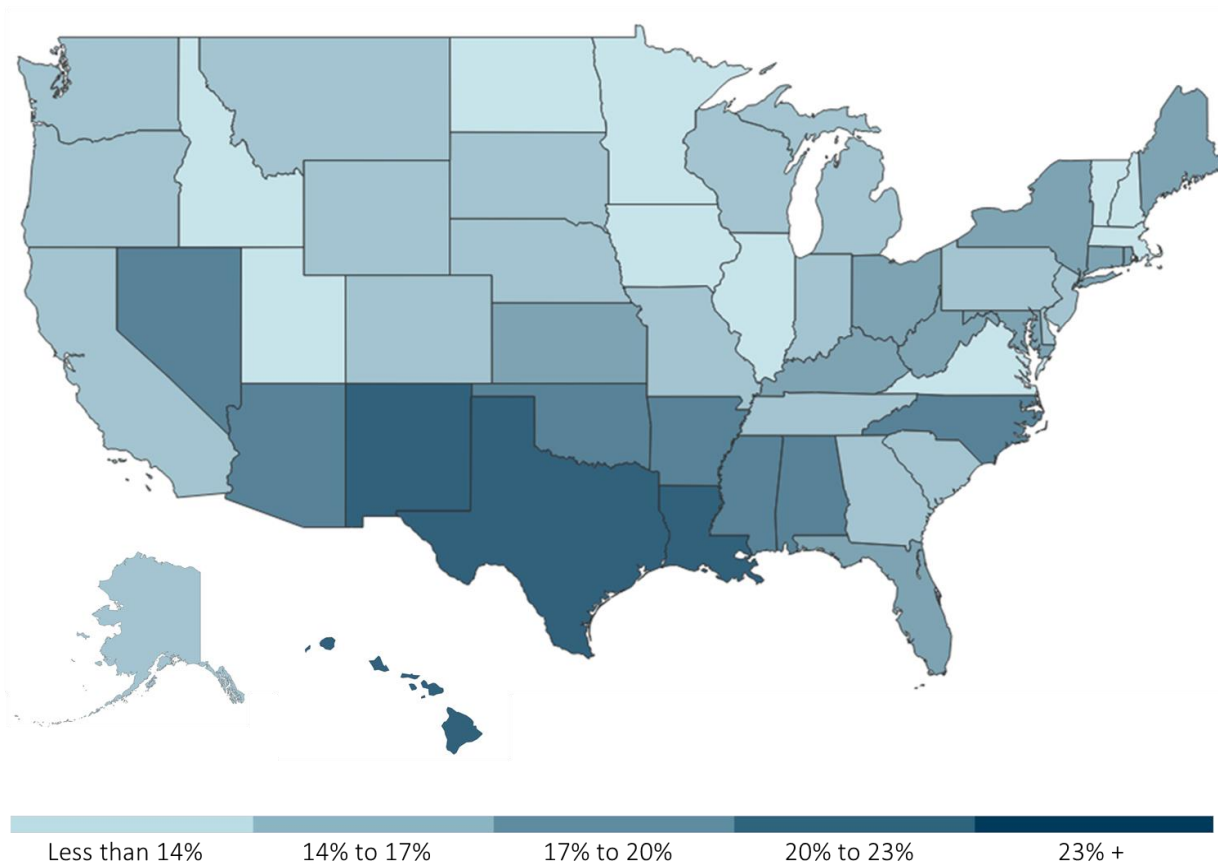
Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Texas	1,827,780	1,855,990 (2)	1,514,020 (1)
2	California	1,755,010	2,059,990 (1)	1,409,330 (2)
3	Florida	1,147,370	1,272,050 (3)	1,023,340 (3)
4	New York	935,260	1,064,610 (4)	713,600 (4)
5	Ohio	680,240	795,340 (5)	639,410 (5)



Children – Food Insecurity

Among children, the projected food insecurity rates for 2021 range from 11.5% (North Dakota) to 26% (Louisiana). Texas would see both the largest absolute increase in the number of children living in food-insecure households (+295,550) as well as the largest total number of children living in food-insecure households (1.7 million). Figure 3 shows projected child food insecurity rates by state.

Figure 3. Projected rates of child food insecurity in 2021 by state





Children – Food Insecurity, continued

The states with the highest projected child food insecurity rates for 2021 are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. States with the highest projected child food insecurity rates in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Louisiana	26.0%	27.4% (1)	23.0% (1)
2	Hawaii	24.6%	27.0% (2)	18.3% (9)
3	New Mexico	23.7%	26.2% (4)	22.0% (3)
4	Texas	23.6%	24.0% (7)	19.6% (7)
5	Nevada	23.0%	26.7% (3)	17.7% (12)
6	Arkansas	22.9%	24.4% (6)	21.4% (4)
7	Oklahoma	22.5%	23.8% (8)	20.4% (6)
8	Mississippi	22.2%	24.9% (5)	22.2% (2)
9	Alabama	20.4%	23.3% (9)	20.8% (5)
9	Arizona	20.4%	21.2% (16)	17.6% (14)

Table 9 lists the five states with the greatest number of food insecure children in 2021.

Table 9. Top 5 states with the highest projected number of food insecure children in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Texas	1,747,500	1,778,270 (1)	1,451,920 (1)
2	California	1,490,330	1,761,440 (2)	1,217,000 (2)
3	Florida	809,480	906,470 (4)	722,300 (3)
4	New York	803,560	908,280 (3)	634,570 (4)
5	Ohio	475,350	573,810 (5)	446,610 (5)

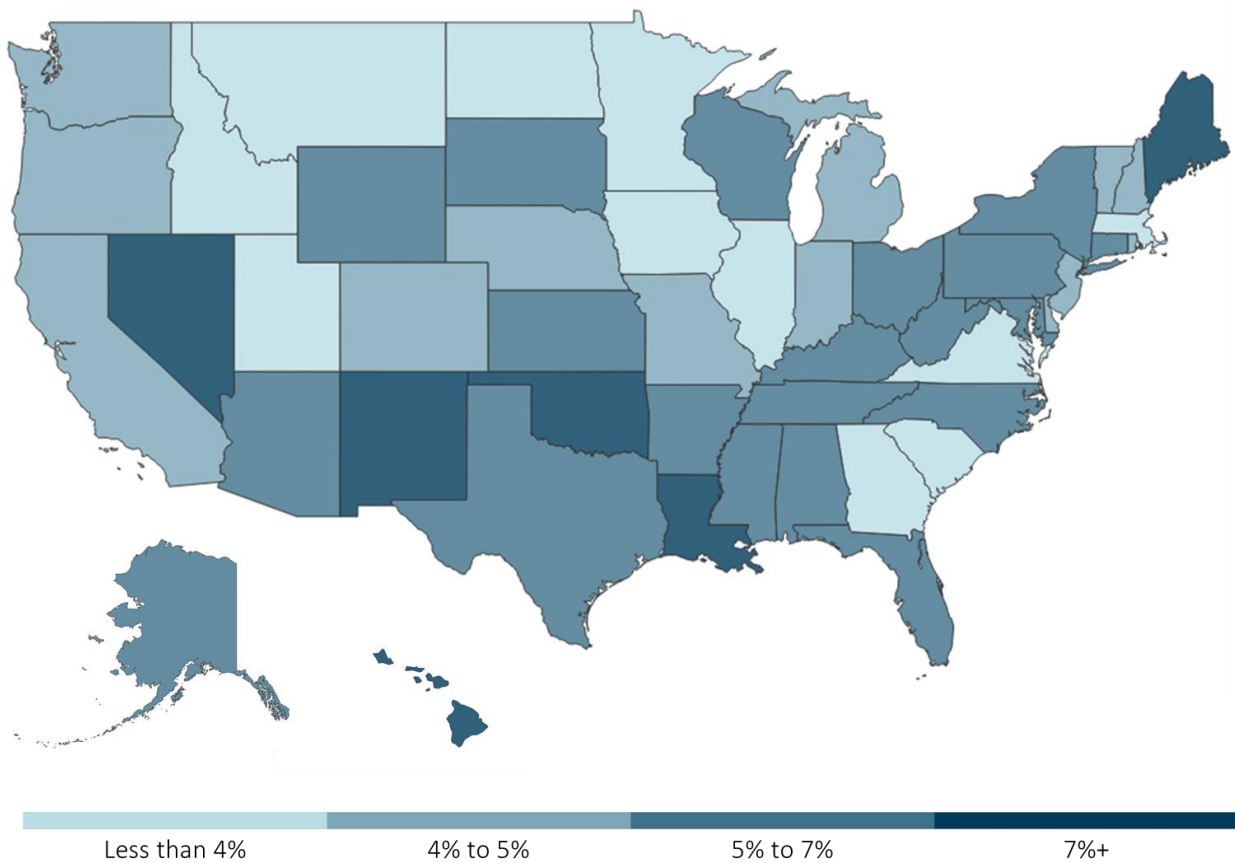


Children – Very Low Food Security

For states with very low child food security, South Carolina has the lowest rate of VLFS (2.3%) and Oklahoma has the highest rate (8.4%). Similarly to overall child food insecurity rates, Texas had the greatest increase to the number of children experiencing very low food security (102,670) and the total number of people experiencing very low food security (479,660).

Figure 4 shows projected very low food security rates for children by state for 2021.

Figure 4. Projected rates of very low food security among children in 2021 by state





Children – Very Low Food Security, continued

The states with the highest projected very low food security rates for children in 2021 are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. States with the highest projected rates of children in very low food security in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Oklahoma	8.4%	8.8% (2)	7.6% (1)
2	Nevada	8.1%	9.3% (1)	6.3% (5)
2	Hawaii	8.1%	8.8% (2)	5.9% (8)
4	Louisiana	7.8%	8.2% (5)	6.7% (3)
5	Maine	7.7%	8.4% (4)	7.1% (2)
6	New Mexico	7.2%	7.9% (6)	6.5% (4)
7	Arkansas	6.6%	7.0% (7)	6.0% (6)
8	Texas	6.5%	6.6% (14)	5.1% (18)
9	Arizona	6.4%	6.6% (14)	5.4% (14)
9	Maryland	6.4%	6.6% (14)	5.5% (12)

Table 11 lists the five states with the greatest number of children in very low food security in 2021.

Table 11. Top 5 states with the highest projected number of children in very low food security in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Texas	479,660	486,950 (1)	377,030 (1)
2	California	387,170	474,050 (2)	291,120 (2)
3	Florida	266,970	297,650 (3)	235,560 (3)
4	New York	246,220	279,550 (4)	187,660 (4)
5	Ohio	148,590	180,430 (5)	137,610 (5)

STATES

CONTINUED



Table 12. Projected rates of food insecurity (FI) and very low food security (VLFS) for the overall population and children in 2021 by state

State	Overall		Children	
	FI	VLFS	FI	VLFS
AK	12.7%	5.0%	17%	5%
AL	16.1%	6.4%	20%	6%
AR	17.6%	7.1%	23%	7%
AZ	14.4%	5.9%	20%	6%
CA	12.1%	4.4%	17%	4%
CO	11.6%	5.1%	15%	4%
CT	13.7%	5.9%	18%	6%
DC	11.0%	3.9%	17%	5%
DE	12.3%	4.2%	17%	5%
FL	13.3%	5.3%	19%	6%
GA	12.8%	4.7%	16%	4%
HI	15.1%	6.0%	25%	8%
IA	9.8%	3.8%	13%	3%
ID	11.3%	4.3%	13%	3%
IL	10.9%	4.1%	14%	4%
IN	13.3%	5.3%	17%	5%
KS	13.1%	5.2%	19%	6%
KY	15.1%	5.9%	19%	6%
LA	17.3%	7.0%	26%	8%
MA	9.9%	4.1%	12%	4%
MD	12.2%	5.0%	17%	6%
ME	13.5%	6.3%	20%	8%
MI	14.2%	5.8%	16%	5%
MN	8.6%	3.3%	13%	4%
MO	13.8%	5.7%	15%	5%
MS	18.7%	6.6%	22%	6%

State	Overall		Children	
	FI	VLFS	FI	VLFS
MT	11.1%	4.6%	17%	4%
NC	14.8%	5.5%	20%	5%
ND	8.1%	2.9%	12%	3%
NE	11.8%	4.6%	15%	5%
NH	9.7%	3.9%	12%	4%
NJ	11.7%	4.7%	15%	5%
NM	15.4%	5.7%	24%	7%
NV	15.2%	6.2%	23%	8%
NY	13.2%	4.8%	20%	6%
OH	14.1%	5.8%	19%	6%
OK	16.1%	6.7%	23%	8%
OR	12.3%	4.7%	15%	4%
PA	12.0%	4.7%	17%	5%
RI	11.4%	4.4%	17%	5%
SC	11.0%	3.4%	14%	2%
SD	11.1%	4.3%	16%	6%
TN	14.0%	5.7%	17%	6%
TX	16.5%	6.3%	24%	7%
UT	12.0%	4.0%	13%	3%
VA	10.1%	4.1%	12%	4%
VT	11.2%	4.5%	14%	4%
WA	11.4%	4.4%	16%	5%
WI	10.4%	3.8%	16%	6%
WV	14.0%	5.3%	19%	5%
WY	12.9%	5.1%	16%	5%

COUNTIES



Overall population – Food Insecurity

Among all counties, the projected rate of food insecurity among the overall population for 2021 ranges from a low of 3.7% to a high of 29.2%.



The counties that are projected to have the highest food insecurity rates in 2021 are listed in Table 13.

Table 13. Counties with the highest projected overall food insecurity rates in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Presidio County, TX	29.2%	29.4% (2)	24.2% (17)
2	Oglala Lakota County, SD	29.1%	29.3% (3)	27.7% (3)
3	Issaquena County, MS	27.9%	28.7% (5)	29.4% (1)
4	Harlan County, KY	27.5%	29.1% (4)	26.6% (5)
4	Holmes County, MS	27.5%	29.6% (1)	26.2% (6)
4	Todd County, SD	27.5%	28.6% (6)	27.5% (4)
7	Leslie County, KY	26.9%	28.3% (8)	25.9% (7)
8	Magoffin County, KY	26.7%	28.3% (8)	24.8% (10)
8	Zavala County, TX	26.7%	25.5% (30)	21.5% (56)
10	Wilkinson County, MS	26.5%	26.3% (19)	24.0% (18)



Overall population - Food Insecurity, continued

The counties that are projected to have the highest projected number of people living in food-insecure households in 2021 are listed in Table 14.

Table 14. Counties with the highest projected number of people living in food-insecure households in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County (Major City)	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Los Angeles County, CA (Los Angeles)	1,453,170	1,628,200 (1)	1,079,900 (1)
2	Harris County, TX (Houston)	790,750	800,080 (2)	644,710 (2)
3	Cook County, IL (Chicago)	613,360	712,750 (3)	481,720 (4)
4	Maricopa County, AZ (Phoenix)	603,050	613,540 (4)	506,640 (3)
5	Kings County, NY (Brooklyn)	467,210	483,310 (5)	348,920 (6)

Overall population - Very low food security

Among all counties, the projected rate of very low food security among the overall population for 2021 ranges from a low of 1.7% to a high of 12.2%.





Overall population – Very low food security, cont.

The counties that are projected to have the highest very low food security rates in 2021 are listed in Table 15.

Table 15. Counties with the highest projected very low food security (VLFS) rate in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Presidio County, TX	12.2%	12.3% (3)	9.9% (13)
2	Zavala County, TX	11.9%	11.4% (8)	9.5% (22)
3	Starr County, TX	11.8%	11.6% (7)	9.3% (28)
4	Magoffin County, KY	11.6%	12.4% (1)	10.7% (4)
4	Leslie County, KY	11.6%	12.4% (1)	11.2% (2)
6	Harlan County, KY	11.5%	12.3% (3)	11.1% (3)
7	Oglala Lakota County, SD	11.0%	11.1% (10)	10.4% (6)
7	Zapata County, TX	11.0%	10.4% (26)	8.4% (75)
7	Breathitt County, KY	11.0%	11.9% (5)	10.7% (5)
7	Brooks County, TX	11.0%	10.7% (19)	9.0% (32)

The counties that are projected to have the highest projected number of people living in very low food secure households in 2021 are listed in Table 16.

Table 16. Counties with the highest projected number of people living in very low food secure households in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County (Major City)	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Los Angeles County, CA (Los Angeles)	520,200	608,620 (1)	345,020 (1)
2	Harris County, TX (Houston)	285,650	291,800 (2)	217,520 (2)
3	Maricopa County, AZ (Phoenix)	237,360	243,960 (4)	193,120 (3)
4	Cook County, IL (Chicago)	212,300	262,320 (3)	151,470 (4)
5	Dallas County, TX (Dallas)	149,980	153,020 (8)	117,550 (5)

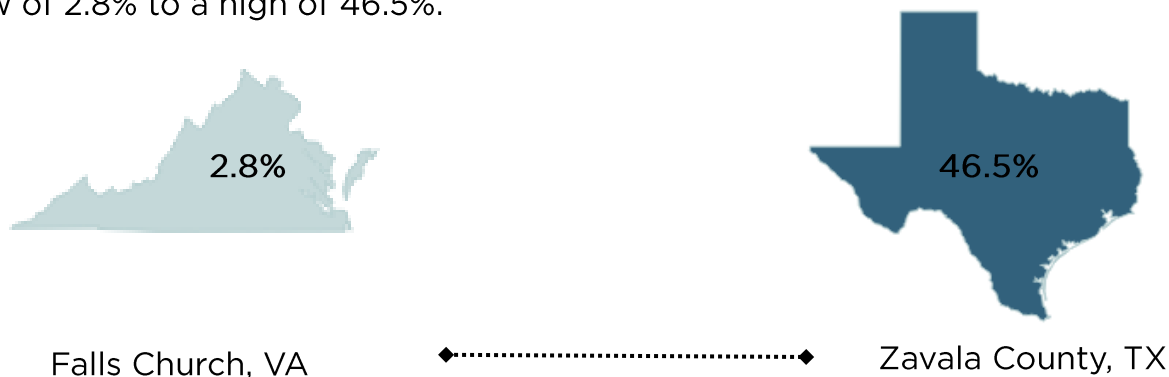
COUNTIES

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Children – Food Insecurity

Among all counties, the projected rate of child food insecurity for 2021 ranges from a low of 2.8% to a high of 46.5%.



The counties that are projected to have the highest child food insecurity rates in 2021 are listed in Table 17.

Table 17. Counties with the highest projected child food insecurity (FI) in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Zavala County, TX	46.5%	44.5% (3)	37.3% (10)
2	East Carroll Parish, LA	45.9%	47.1% (1)	43.9% (1)
3	Claiborne County, MS	44.0%	47.0% (2)	42.2% (3)
4	Presidio County, TX	43.7%	44.1% (6)	34.7% (20)
5	Wilkinson County, MS	42.5%	42.4% (12)	38.2% (8)
46	Jefferson County, MS	42.3%	44.4% (4)	40.8% (4)
7	Phillips County, AR	42.1%	43.8% (7)	38.6% (6)
8	Humphreys County, MS	40.9%	43.5% (8)	38.5% (7)
9	Starr County, TX	40.8%	40.3% (18)	31.6% (62)
10	Brooks County, TX	40.7%	39.7% (20)	33.3% (33)



Children - Food Insecurity, continued

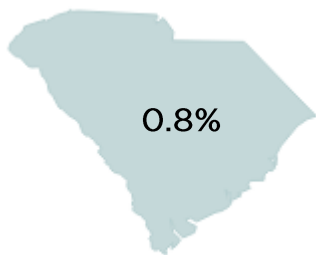
The counties that are projected to have the highest projected number of children living in food-insecure households in 2021 are listed in Table 18.

Table 18. Counties with the highest projected number of children living in food-insecure households in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

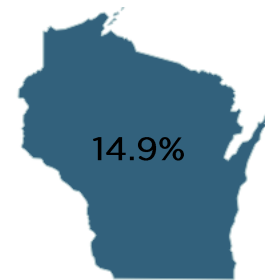
Ranking	County (Major City)	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Los Angeles County, CA (Los Angeles)	465,060	541,030 (1)	321,690 (1)
2	Harris County, TX (Houston)	318,230	325,260 (2)	250,600 (2)
3	Cook County, IL (Chicago)	209,120	232,550 (3)	140,400 (4)
4	Maricopa County, AZ (Phoenix)	189,510	215,830 (4)	170,210 (3)
5	Dallas County, TX (Dallas)	171,240	174,700 (5)	139,800 (5)

Children - Very low food security

Among all counties, the projected rate of very low food security among the child population for 2021 ranges from a low of 0.8% to a high of 14.9%.



Richland County, SC



Menominee County, WI



Children- Very low food security, cont.

The counties that are projected to have the highest very low food security rates among children in 2021 are listed in Table 19.

Table 19. Counties with the highest projected very low food insecurity among children in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Menominee County, WI	14.9%	16.6% (1)	13.8% (2)
2	Zavala County, TX	14.6%	13.9% (11)	11.4% (34)
2	Sabine County, TX	14.6%	14.5% (4)	12.5% (12)
4	Oglala Lakota County, SD	14.4%	14.5% (3)	13.6% (5)
4	Apache County, AZ	14.4%	14.7% (2)	13.3% (7)
6	Presidio County, TX	13.8%	13.9% (13)	10.8% (54)
7	Todd County, SD	13.7%	14.4% (6)	13.8% (2)
8	Culberson County, TX	13.6%	13.6% (16)	12.1% (15)
9	McKinley County, NM	13.4%	13.9% (10)	12.5% (12)
9	Jackson County, SD	13.4%	13.7% (15)	13.6% (5)

The counties that are projected to have the highest projected number of children living in very low food secure households in 2021 are listed in Table 20.

Table 20. Counties with the highest projected number of children living in very low food secure households in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	County (Major City)	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Los Angeles County, CA (Los Angeles)	116,810	141,260 (1)	67,750 (1)
2	Harris County, TX (Houston)	80,450	82,290 (2)	57,200 (2)
3	Maricopa County, AZ (Phoenix)	65,090	66,900 (3)	51,530 (3)
4	Kings County, NY (Brooklyn)	46,970	49,410 (5)	30,600 (5)
5	Clark County, NV (Las Vegas)	44,460	51,010 (4)	30,730 (4)

FOOD INSECURITY AND RACE

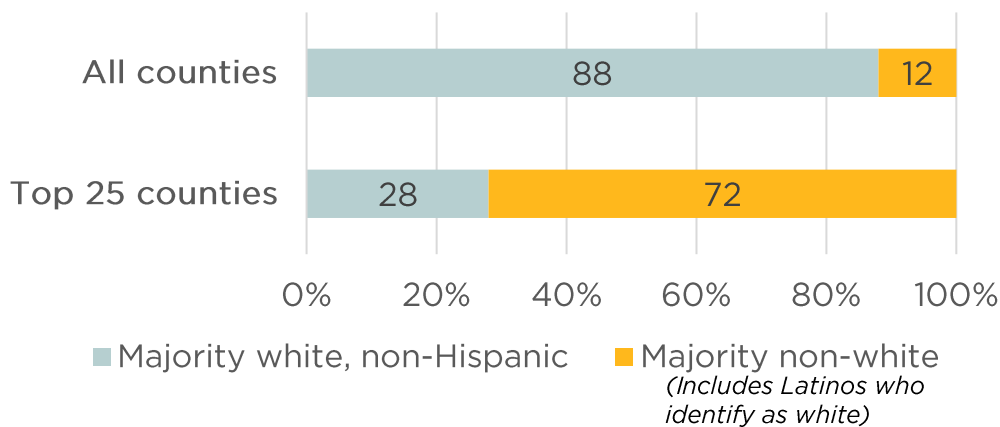


Racial disparities in food insecurity which existed before COVID-19 remain in the wake of the pandemic. In 2019, 1 in 12 white, non-Hispanic individuals (8.1%) were food insecure, compared to 1 in 6 Latino individuals (15.8%), 1 in 5 Black, non-Hispanic individuals (19.3%), and 1 in 4 Native American individuals (23.5%).⁷ While food insecurity among Asians is low overall, many sub-groups are more vulnerable, especially recent immigrants from certain Asian countries. Food insecurity is experienced in greater proportion by these racial and ethnic groups stemming from structural racism and discrimination. These racial disparities are also apparent in the underlying factors that contribute to food insecurity.⁸

While the underlying data were not available to project food insecurity by race below the national level, Feeding America was able to project how food insecurity levels may differ for Black individuals and white individuals at the national level. In 2021, 21.3% (1 in 5) Black individuals may experience food insecurity as compared to 11.1% (1 in 9) white individuals.⁹

At the county level, these disparities are observable by examining how food insecurity rates differ by counties with higher proportions of Black, Latino, or Native American populations. For example, as shown in Figure 5, counties with a population that is majority Black, Latino, or Native American make up 18 of 25 counties (72%) with the highest projected food insecurity rates for 2021, yet only 12% of all U.S. counties have a majority non-white population. A list of these 25 counties is shown in Table 21 on the following page.

Figure 5. Percent of all counties and counties with the 25 highest projected food insecurity rates in 2021, by demographic majority



FOOD INSECURITY AND RACE



Table 21. Counties with the highest projected overall food insecurity rates in 2021, by demographic majority

	County	2021 Rate	Demographic Majority ¹⁰		County	2021 Rate	Demographic Majority ¹⁰
1	Presidio County, TX	29.2%	Latino (84%)	14	Humphreys County, MS	26.2%	Black (76%)
2	Oglala Lakota County, SD	29.1%	Native (90%)	15	East Carroll Parish, LA	26.0%	Black (70%)
3	Issaquena County, MS	27.9%	Black (62%)	16	Breathitt County, KY	25.9%	white (97%)
4	Todd County, SD	27.5%	Native (87%)	17	Jefferson County, MS	25.9%	Black (79%)
5	Harlan County, KY	27.5%	white (95%)	18	Apache County, AZ	25.6%	Native (73%)
6	Holmes County, MS	27.5%	Black (84%)	19	Clay County, KY	25.5%	white (93%)
7	Leslie County, KY	26.9%	white (98%)	20	Bell County, KY	25.2%	white (94%)
8	Magoffin County, KY	26.7%	white (99%)	21	Letcher County, KY	25.2%	white (98%)
9	Zavala County, TX	26.7%	Latino (94%)	22	Washington County, MS	25.2%	Black (73%)
10	Wilkinson County, MS	26.5%	Black (71%)	23	Mellette County, SD	25.0%	Native (55%)
11	Kusilvak Census Area, AK	26.3%	Native (92%)	24	Zapata County, TX	24.9%	Latino (94%)
12	Starr County, TX	26.3%	Latino (99%)	25	Claiborne County, MS	24.9%	Black (87%)
13	Brooks County, TX	26.2%	Latino (93%)				

Majority Latino (Hispanic), Black non-Hispanic, or Native American non-Hispanic Majority white, non-Hispanic

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS



Overall population – Food Insecurity

The congressional districts that are projected to have the highest overall food insecurity rates in 2021 are listed in Table 22.

Table 22. Congressional districts with the highest projected overall food insecurity (FI) in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	District	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	New York's 15 th District	24.8%	25.0% (1)	21.5% (1)
2	Mississippi's 2 nd District	20.6%	21.9% (2)	21.1% (2)
3	Michigan's 13 th District	20.5%	21.8% (3)	18.6% (7)
4	Kentucky's 5 th District	20.4%	21.7% (4)	20.2% (4)
5	Texas' 34 th District	20.1%	19.9% (11)	16.2% (30)

Overall population – Very Low Food Security

The congressional districts that are projected to have the highest very low food security rates in 2021 are listed in Table 23.

Table 23. Congressional districts with the highest projected very low food security (VLFS) in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	District	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Texas 34 th District	8.5%	8.5% (3)	6.7% (15)
2	Kentucky's 5 th District	8.4%	9.0% (1)	8.3% (1)
2	Oklahoma's 2 nd District	8.4%	8.6% (2)	7.8% (2)
4	New York's 15 th District	8.2%	8.4% (5)	6.7% (15)
5	Texas' 15 th District	7.9%	7.9% (14)	6.4% (30)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

CONTINUED



Children – Food Insecurity

The congressional districts that are projected to have the highest child food insecurity rates in 2021 are listed in Table 24.

Table 24. Congressional districts with the highest projected child food insecurity (FI) in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	District	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	New York's 15 th District	38.3%	39.0% (1)	32.7% (1)
2	Louisiana's 2 nd District	31.0%	32.1% (6)	28.6% (6)
3	Michigan's 13 th District	30.7%	33.2% (2)	27.5% (7)
4	Texas 34 th District	30.0%	30.0% (13%)	23.2% (33)
5	Mississippi's 2 nd District	29.6%	32.2% (5)	30.9% (2)

Children – Very Low Food Security

The congressional districts that are projected to have the highest very low food security rates among children in 2021 are listed in Table 25.

Table 25. Congressional districts with the highest projected very low food security (VLFS) among children in 2021 (compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)

Ranking	District	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Oklahoma's 2 nd District	11.2%	11.5% (1)	10.5% (1)
2	Nevada's 1 st District	9.4%	10.6% (2)	7.3% (20)
3	Kentucky's 5 th District	9.3%	10.1% (3)	9.3% (2)
4	New York's 15 th District	9.2%	9.4% (9)	7.2% (22)
5	Florida's 11 th District	9.0%	9.8% (5)	8.6% (4)

LOOKING AHEAD

It is good news that overall, food insecurity in 2020 may have been lower than originally anticipated, and that food insecurity in 2021 looks likely to improve relative to 2020 in most places. Without the response from federal and local governments and the generosity of the private sector – individuals, corporations, foundations and communities – more people would have faced hardship in the past year. Thanks to that generosity, the charitable food sector, including the 200 Feeding America member food banks, were able to rise to the occasion to provide food and benefits assistance to tens of millions of people, many for the first time. During 2020, the Feeding America network distributed 6.1 billion meals (7.5 billion pounds of food), a 44% increase over the previous year, because of the food bankers, volunteers, and partner agencies that stood on the front line to ensure their neighbors had the food they needed.

However, the pandemic is not yet over, and the future remains tenuous for people who have experienced uncertain access to enough food for their families. It is likely that it will take time for food insecurity levels to recover, especially in communities of color. After the Great Recession, it took nearly ten years, until 2018, for food insecurity to pre-recession levels, and even then, 37 million people were still at risk of hunger. While it may be likely that economic conditions will improve more quickly for some this time around, it will take continued support and public-private partnership across the government, the private sector, and the charitable food system to achieve our vision of an America where no one is hungry.



Additional Information:

- [How Feeding America is Responding to COVID-19](#)
- [Feeding America's Hub for Advocacy Resources during COVID-19](#)
- [Feeding America Research about Food Insecurity During COVID-19](#)

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NOTES AND REFERENCES



¹ Our revised 2020 projections are based on an effective annual unemployment rate of 9.2% for 2020. This rate reflects actual [seasonally adjusted monthly civilian unemployment data](#) from the Current Population Survey (CPS) for the period January 2020 to December 2020 (8.1%) as well as an annualized COVID-19 misclassification error (1.1 percentage points) based on [monthly reports from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#). For 2021, we assume a national annual unemployment rate of 6.7%, which is consistent with average unemployment during the last quarter of 2020 and reflects the actual rate for November 2020, the most recent month for which we have county data at the time of this update.

² Our revised 2020 and new 2021 food insecurity projections reflect changes in [national annual poverty estimates](#) based on the Monthly CPS. An annual poverty rate of 11.1% reflects what the official poverty rate would be for all individuals in 2020 if the actual poverty rate of 2019 (10.5%) increased by the same percent as projected poverty did between December 2019 and December 2020. We assume that national poverty will increase from a projected rate of 11.1% in 2020 to 12.0% in 2021. This is because, at the time of this analysis, annual poverty rates from the Monthly CPS had risen sharply in the last six months of 2020. To the extent that trend does not continue in 2021 (e.g., as a result of passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021), our poverty projections may overstate actual rates.

³ Although MMG accounts for several economic and demographic variables, our food insecurity projections have been based on projected changes to unemployment and poverty. This is because these two variables have a statistically significant effect on food insecurity estimates and are likely to be most directly affected by COVID-19. Other variables in the model are held constant using 2019 data.

⁴ To calculate the effective 2020 annual unemployment rate at the local level for our revised 2020 projections, we used average actual monthly unemployment rates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) from January 2020 to November 2020 (local data for December 2020 were not available at the time of this analysis but the national average for that month was identical to the previous month). We then added 1.1 percentage points to each rate to reflect the annualized national average Covid-19 misclassification error for 2020 consistent with the monthly errors reported by the BLS. To calculate the projected annual unemployment rate for every county in 2021, we used actual monthly BLS data from November 2020 since these were the most recent local data available at the time of this update and because we conservatively assumed that annual unemployment would remain the same in 2021.

⁵ To estimate local annual poverty in 2020, and because the U.S. Census Bureau does not report official poverty on a monthly basis even at the national level, we assume all local rates in 2020 will increase by 0.6 percentage points to reflect the difference between the national annual poverty rate of 10.5% in 2019 and our projected rate of 11.1% in 2020. We make a similar assumption for 2021 whereby we assume all local rates in 2021 will increase by 1.5 percentage points to reflect the difference between the national annual poverty of 10.5% in 2019 and our projected rate of 12.0% in 2021.

⁶ In this county, very low food security among children increased from effectively 0% to 0.1%.

NOTES AND REFERENCES



⁷ With the exception of Native Americans, all estimates are according [to Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2019](#). *Native American* includes American Indian or Alaska Native. Due to smaller sample sizes these rates reflect five-year averages using the CPS (2015-2019) while other rates reflect 2019 data only.

⁸ Odoms-Young, A., & Bruce, M. A. (2018). Examining the Impact of Structural Racism on Food Insecurity: Implications for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities. *Family & community health*, 41 Suppl 2 Suppl, Food Insecurity and Obesity (Suppl 2 FOOD INSECURITY AND OBESITY), S3-S6. <https://doi.org/10.1097/FCH.000000000000183>

⁹ Feeding America's food insecurity projections by race for Black and white individuals include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic individuals. The disparities between these populations would be greater if white non-Hispanic and Latino (Hispanic) could be presented as separate categories.

¹⁰ Demographic majority data are five-year averages (2015-2019) from the American Community Survey.