

2021- 2022

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



PREPARED BY
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IN COLLABORATION WITH
Second Harvest

INTRODUCTION

For the past 40 years, Second Harvest Food Bank has been serving thousands across Lorain, Erie, Huron, and Crawford County. Second Harvest strives to gather and provide resources to hunger-relief agencies serving individuals and families in Crawford, Erie, Huron, and Lorain counties.

To effectively combat food insecurity, we must provide the resources, but more importantly evaluate what these resources should be. In hopes of understanding the community's current needs and challenges, we regularly conduct landscape assessments. Findings from the landscape assessment will inform future service decisions and strategies in 2023.

The primary focus of this landscape assessment is to identify social determinants that play a major role in the barriers impoverished communities face. Furthermore, this report highlights at-risk, often overlooked minorities

such as African American, Hispanic, Immigrant, Single Families, and Older American groups. Focusing on these communities is critical to fully addressing food insecurity.

It is our mission to eliminate the root causes of hunger in our region through a strong and viable network of nonprofit member agencies. Gathering and analyzing data from each county will further Second Harvest's understanding of how to effectively address barriers and expand our scope with our partners and community.

Through a combination of census data, internal organization data, and stories, we have diverse, robust information to highlight critical insights and recommendations for Second Harvest and our partners across the region. With this knowledge, we can continue to work towards a healthy, hunger-free community.

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TRENDS

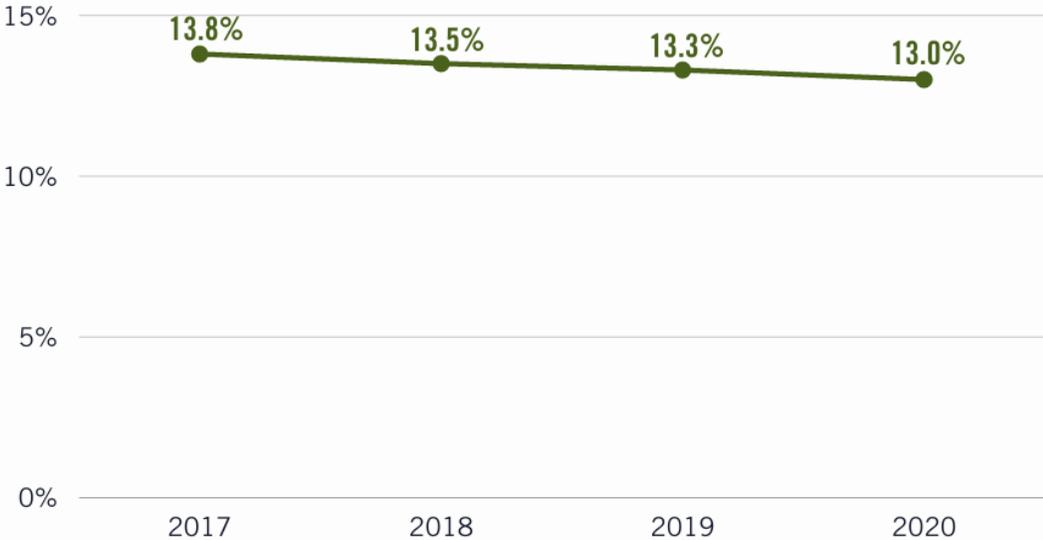
To kickstart the report, we are diving into the overarching trends of 2022 in Lorain, Huron, Erie, and Crawford County. This will paint a big picture of what is going on in our community, before we dive into more specific aspects of the landscape we serve in.

TRENDS

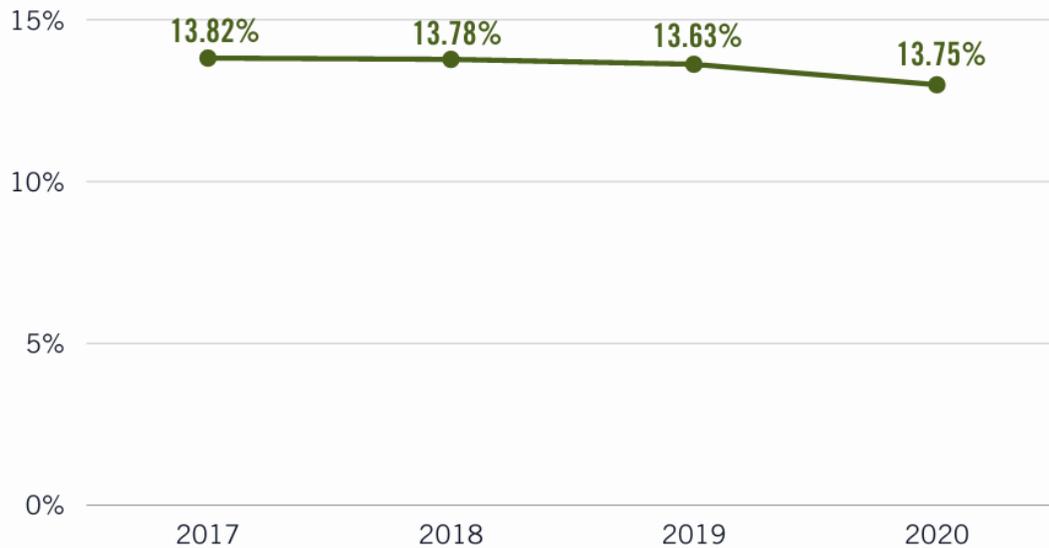
With the COVID-19 pandemic, the average number of people Second Harvest served instantly doubled every week. Distribution rates drastically increased during 2020 and then declined in 2021, due to changes in Federal resources and the aftermath of the pandemic. Despite this decline, post-pandemic, the number of people and food distributed remains higher than before the pandemic. The pandemic has impacted and changed the size and nature of the community we serve.

Despite efforts from Second Harvest and partners across NCO, poverty rates are still high with the onset of the pandemic. With a very minimal decrease in poverty levels and projected increases in 2022 due to the pandemic, poverty and hunger is still a very prevalent problem in our community.

POVERTY LEVELS ACROSS NCO 2017-2020

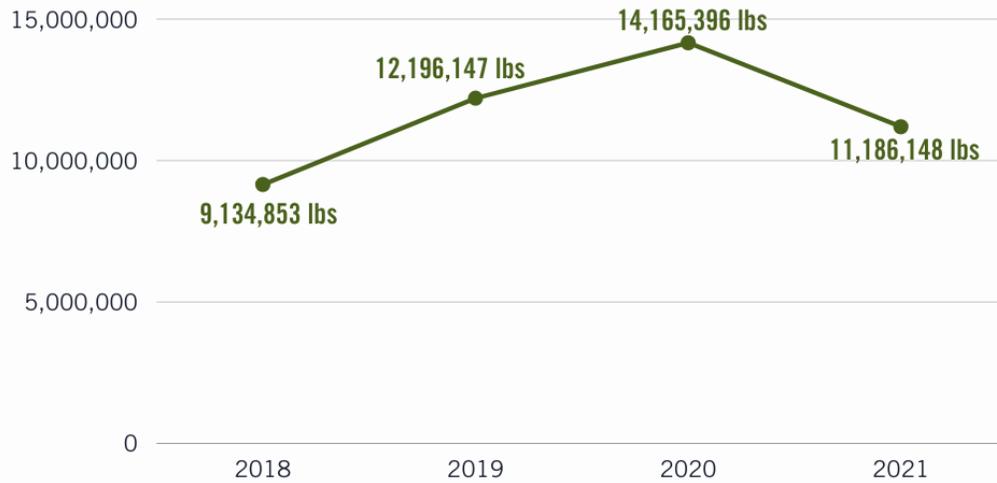


FOOD INSECURITY ACROSS NCO 2017-2020

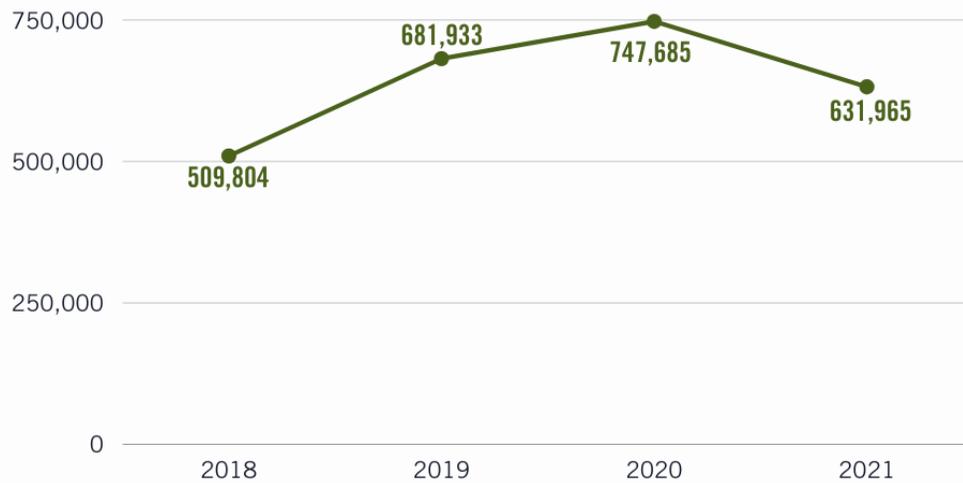


Food insecurity rates mirror poverty levels but remain almost stagnant. With no significant decrease in food insecurity, there are clearly individuals and barriers Second Harvest is not addressing. Although poverty and food insecurity rates seem static with no concerning increase, there is more than meets the eye. There are many other external factors that attribute to this trend. For instance, Pandemic Stimulus Checks, the Advance Child Tax Credit, SNAP allotment, and more are extra services that were created during 2020 that helped many. However, these forms of assistance are ending this year and it will show in the data this upcoming year.

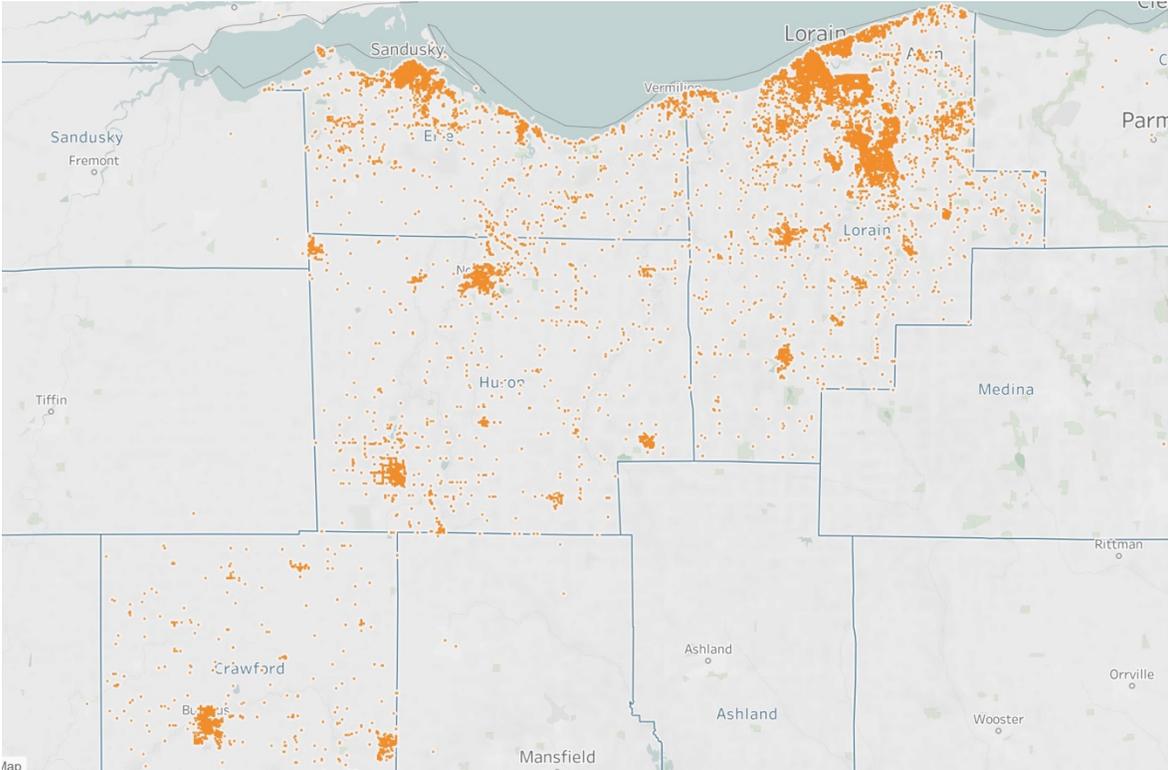
Distribution Rates Across NCO 2018-2021



PEOPLE SERVED ACROSS NCO 2018-2021



Looking at the fiscal year of 2021-2022¹, distribution rates have declined, yet the number of people served has overall increased with a small decline in 2021. Both trends share the same conclusion: post-pandemic, people are still suffering and more have fallen into food insecurity. Second Harvest has more community members to serve than ever compared to society before the pandemic. With federal assistance ending as well, there is more responsibility put on us and our network of partners.

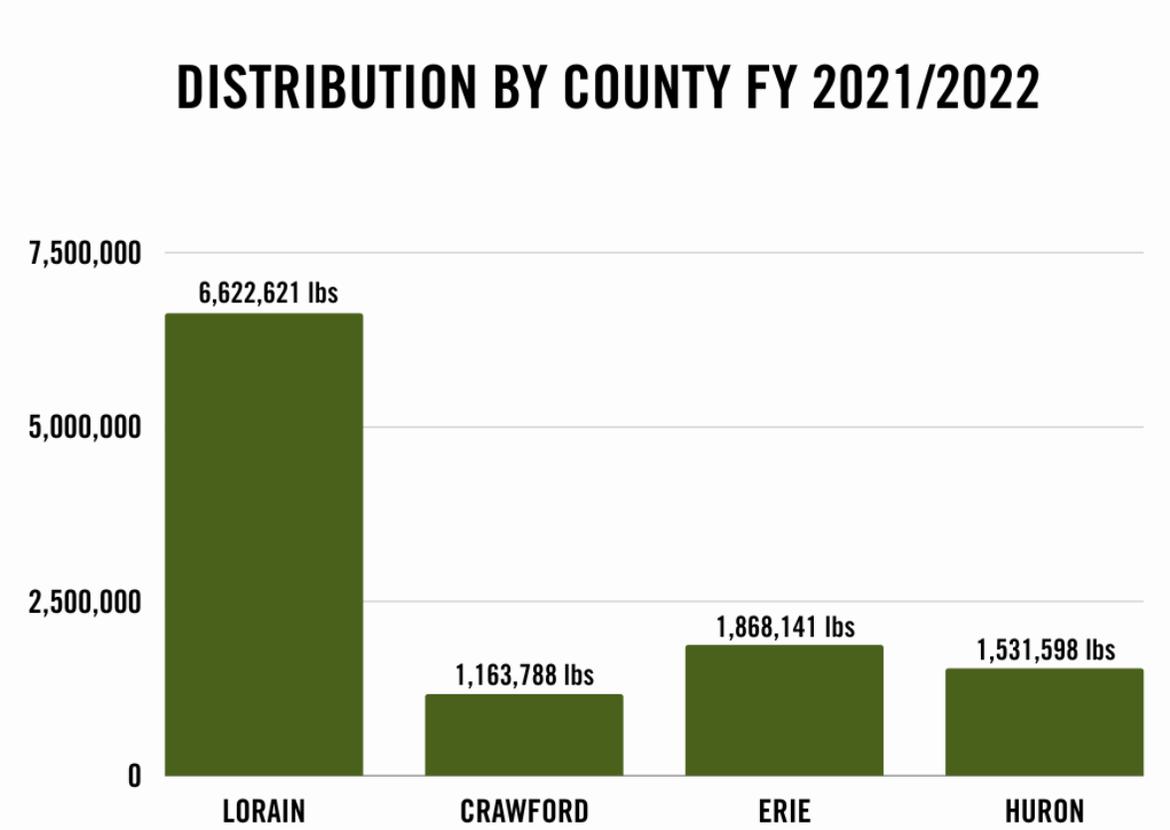


Note: Community members who have received food assistance from Second Harvest through a partner charity, school pantry, or mobile pantry distribution. March 2022, Visual by Brittney Hopkins.

In 2021, Sandusky and Lorain were the primary regions where Second Harvest served community members. This is corroborated by our food distribution rates as well, with Lorain being the county we distributed to the most. When layered on the map against individuals in poverty, Second Harvest’s services are addressing the

¹ Data was gathered from June 30th of the previous year and June 30th of the following year for a “fiscal year.”

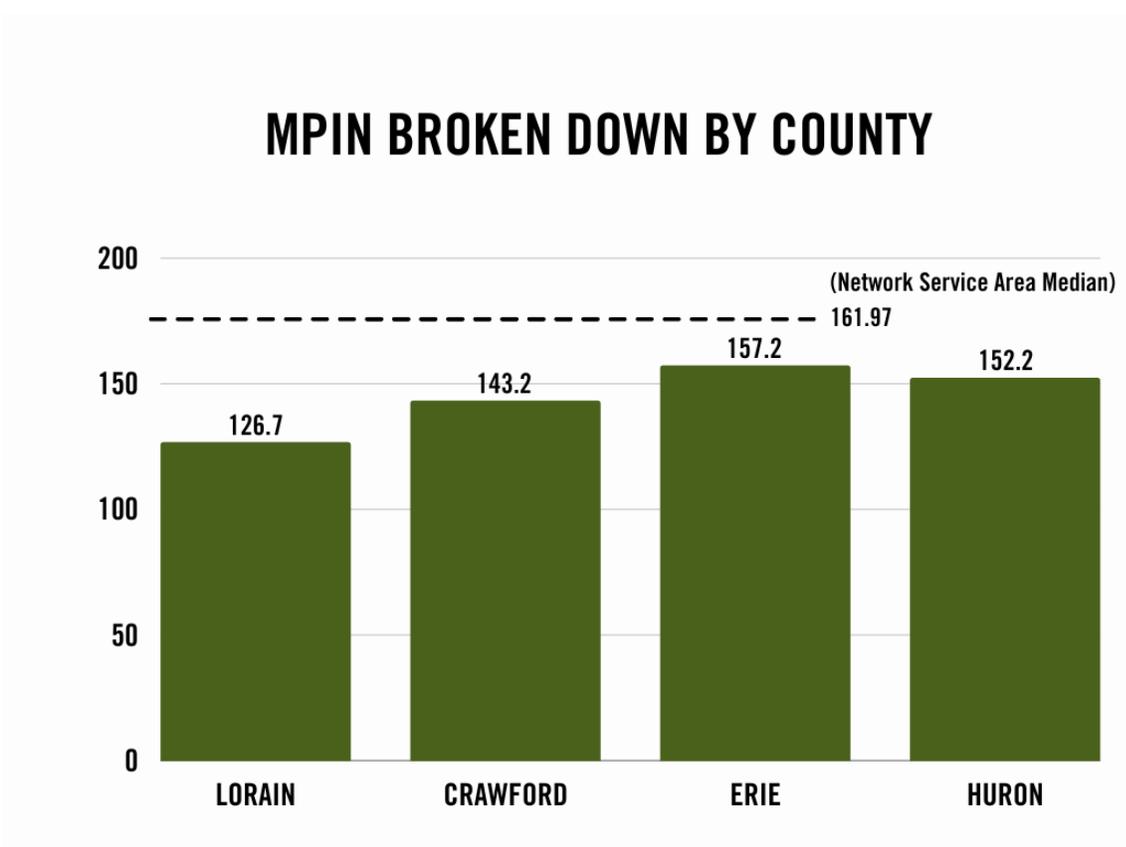
low-income populations well, but missing groups in Crawford and Huron County specifically.



Taking data from the poundage of food distributed per county, we can better analyze how effectively Second Harvest is serving each county. Since 2015, Feeding America has switched from PPIP to Meal per Person in Need (MPIN), because it is more accurate and comprehensive by considering SNAP and removing water and non-food distributed items from the calculation.² In the quarters of 2022, Second Harvest’s MPIN numbers fluctuated from 136.1 to 139 across all four counties, with Lorain standing out as the county with the consistently lowest MPIN. Feeding America’s established Network Service Area

² https://feedingamerica.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/RD_nadc/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7Bd51dafb0-0483-43a5-8a2c-87586e0c5dd5%7D&action=view&wdAccPdf=0&wdparaid=21DCC02A

Median is 161.97, showing that Second Harvest and its network has room for improvement in the individuals we reach and the food we provide.



These different trends form a comprehensive picture and points to the urgency in understanding all the new and old nuances of the community we serve. We will have to step up and serve a bigger community in the coming years, so taking time to thoroughly research and understand the areas we serve is more important than ever. By diving deeper into our community’s landscape and barriers, we can fully prepare for the people we serve.

HEALTHCARE



HEALTHCARE

Studies have found that food insecurity has a direct relationship with healthcare expenses, where the two exacerbate each other's costs. A 2019 study by the CDC found that "adults experiencing food insecurity had annual healthcare expenditures \$1,834 higher than food-secure adults," showing a direct, symbiotic relationship between food insecurity and healthcare access.³ The intersection between healthcare and food inequality is an important connection to study and address in the fight against hunger.

In Ohio, the excess total healthcare costs associated with food insecurity was \$1,848 per food-insecure person. However, the entire healthcare system and state shoulders the burden because of how excessive these costs are. According to the study, the excess total healthcare costs⁴ associated with food insecurity was \$193 per person overall. Across all fifty states, costs for the entire state range from \$78 to \$243, putting Ohio in the upper range.⁵

Broken down by county, Lorain and Huron stood out with higher healthcare costs than others. When taking account of the number of food insecure individuals per county and the costs they incur, each county incurs additional costs ranging from \$13,856,306 to \$55,703,718.

³https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2019/18_0549.htm#:~:text=Model%20estimates%20indicated%20that%20food,53

⁴ As Feeding America clarifies, "Healthcare costs" in this study include payments made by private insurers, Medicaid, Medicare, and other sources for clinic visits, emergency department visits, inpatient hospitalizations, prescription medications, and durable medical equipment. They are costs incurred, not necessarily what is paid out of-pocket.

⁵

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/feeding.america.research/viz/TheHealthcareCostsofFoodInsecurity/HealthcareCosts>



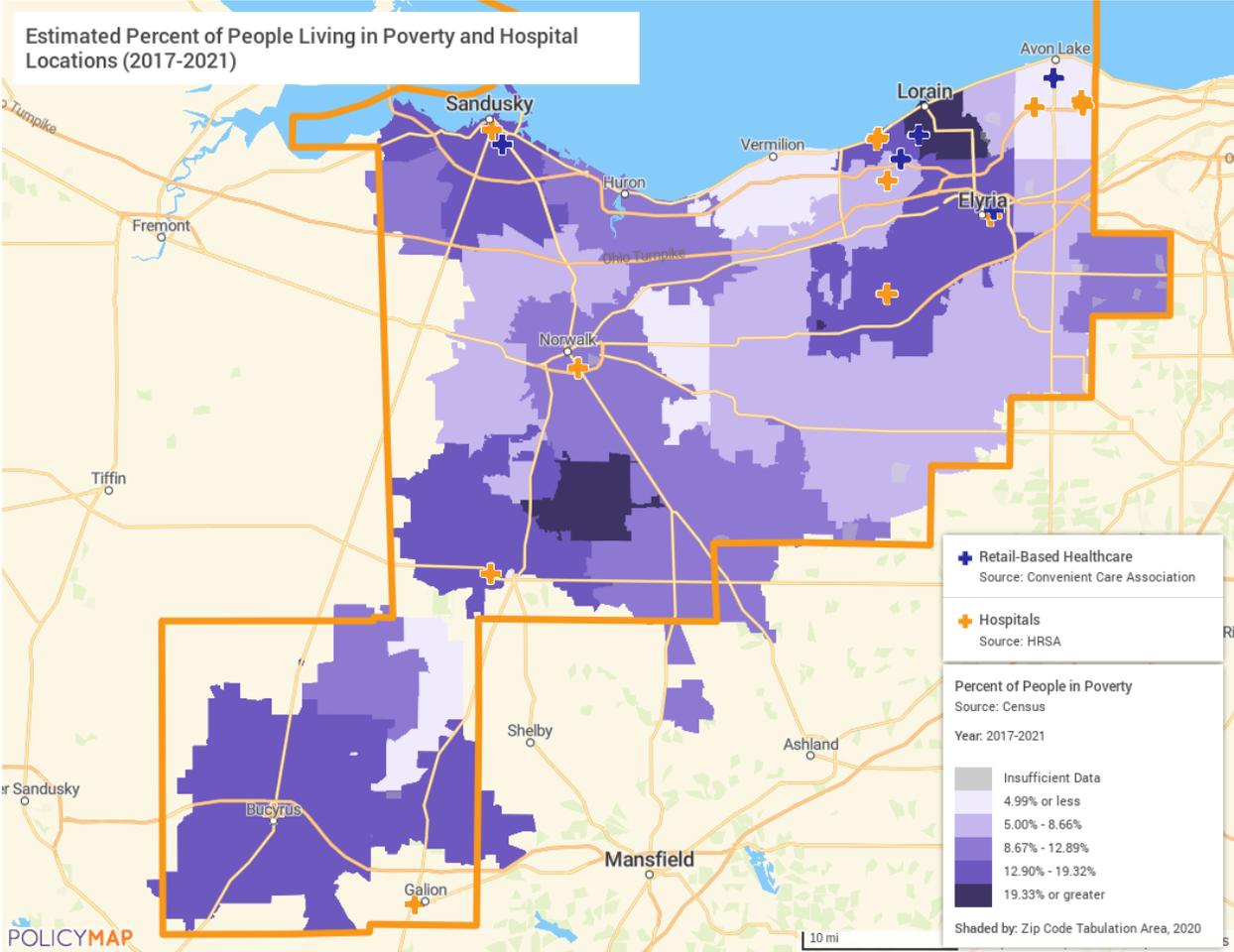
Taking the data and focusing in on the food insecure population in each county, all four counties have similar rates, averaging out to extra costs of \$1,902 per food insecure adult. Food insecurity creates additional burdens in many realms of basic needs that must be addressed.



More than increased assistance with healthcare, access to affordable health services of *high quality* is a key determinant for a healthy, food-secure community. On average, 6.3% of individuals in Lorain, Crawford, Erie, and Huron do not have

any health insurance. In comparison, the state of Ohio only has 5.0% of those without health insurance. Our service area is more at risk when it comes to accessing affordable health services and having comprehensive coverage.

Furthermore, there are geographical barriers that limits access to healthcare services even more. Across all four counties, there are only twelve hospitals total. Out of those twelve, only two-thirds (66%) accept Medicare. With 2,447 square miles across North Central Ohio, that means there is on average one hospital every 203 miles. The quantity and location of these hospitals create many healthcare deserts that put many in our community at risk.



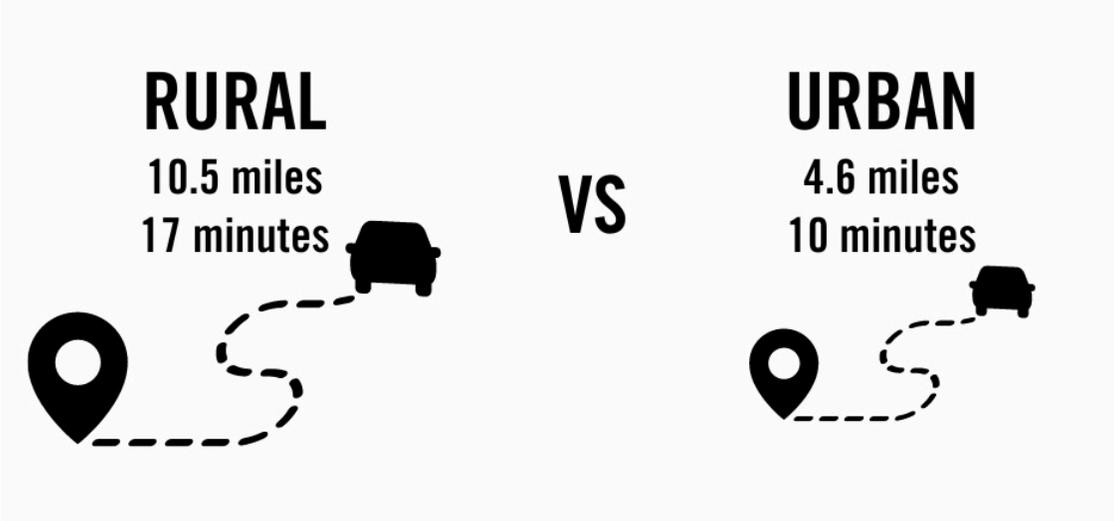
Note: There are sometimes multiple hospitals within one symbol due to overlap.

More than the quantity of care, it is important to note the nature of the healthcare resources available. Over the four counties, there are 12 comprehensive hospitals and 4 retail-based healthcare locations. These retail-based providers are pharmacies like Walgreens or CVS, with limited services for terminal illnesses or emergencies. Comprehensive hospitals are facilities that meet certain size, services, and capacity standards and do not include urgent care or community hospitals.

GENERAL HOSPITALS	RETAIL HEALTHCARE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PROVIDES GENERAL ACUTE CARE & EMERGENCY SERVICES• INPATIENT MEDICAL AND SURGICAL CARE FOR ACUTE ILLNESS, INJURY, OR OBSTRETICS• MEETS CERTAIN SIZE AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DOESN'T PROVIDE EMERGENCY SERVICES. CAN GET VACCINES, KNOWN FOR LOW COST AND CONVENIENCE• LIMITED HOURS• DOES NOT MEET CERTAIN SIZE AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENT

Most of these twelve comprehensive, large hospitals are concentrated in Lorain County, showing just how insufficient health services are across the entire service region. The area we serve faces great geographical and systematic barriers to healthy living that indirectly exacerbates hunger and poverty. Outside of Lorain and other notable cities, most of the region is rural. This creates unique obstacles. Rural Americans live an average 10.5 miles from the nearest hospital, compared with 5.6 miles for people in suburban areas and 4.4 for those in urban areas. Taking local traffic patterns into account, that works out to a travel time of 17

minutes for people who live in rural communities, 12 minutes for those in suburban areas and 10 minutes for those in urban areas.⁶



In addition to the commute disparity, communities in rural areas are less likely to have the public transportation infrastructure necessary to make up for the lack of healthcare resources nearby. Understanding the gaps and barriers that come with our communities' current health and available resources will help us better support those fighting poverty and hunger. Evidently, our community experiences even more pressures from living in healthcare deserts and a rural region. Addressing healthcare is essential to achieving food security for our region in the long term.

⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/12/how-far-americans-live-from-the-closest-hospital-differs-by-community-type/>

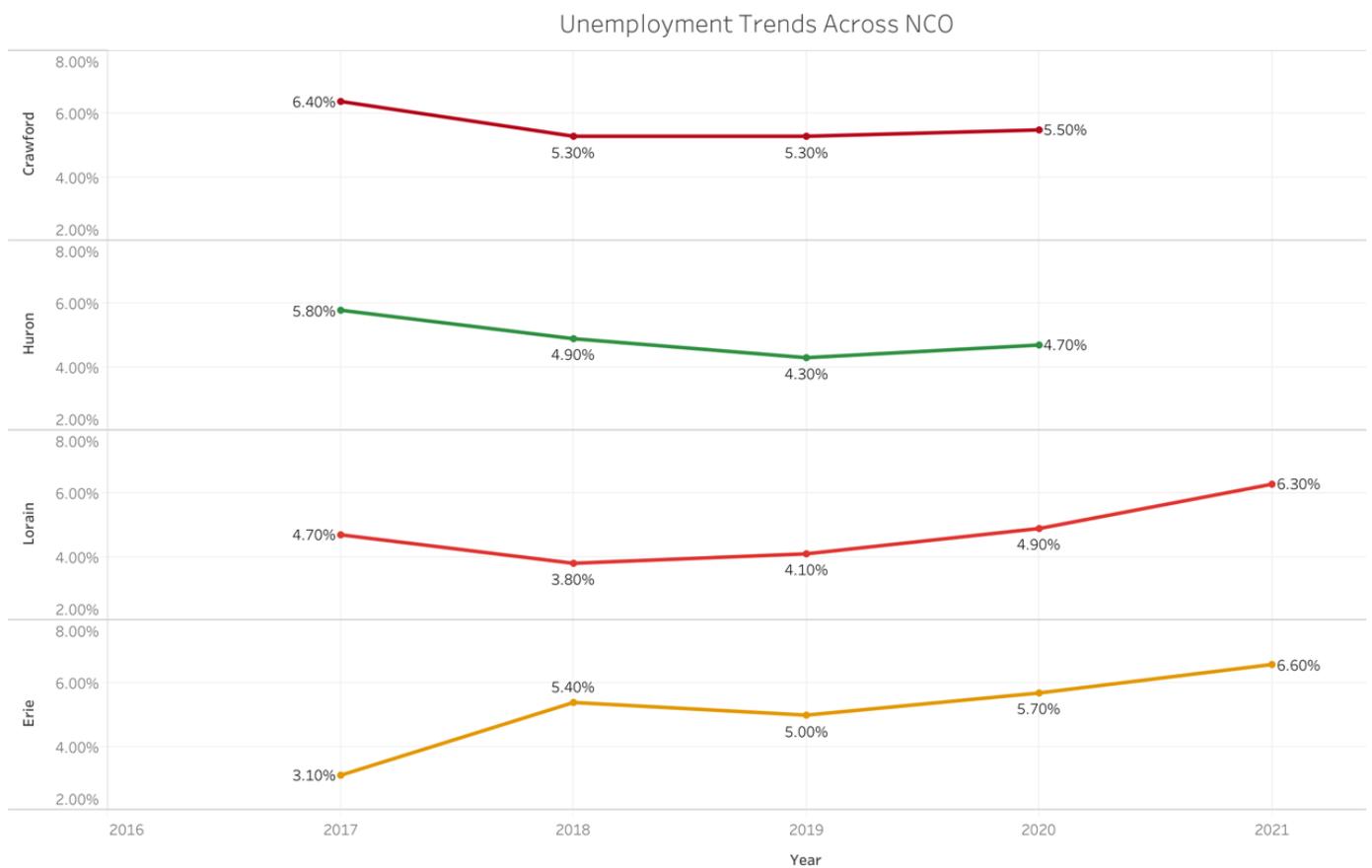


UNEMPLOYMENT



UNEMPLOYMENT

Although the pandemic is considered officially “over”, communities are still reeling and recovering from the aftermath—and jobs are the number one indicator of the lasting effects. In America alone, unemployment rates rose to 13.7% at the peak of the pandemic. Across all 4 counties, unemployment increased by 0.50% on average, with Lorain County experiencing the most drastic increase in unemployment.



Even as unemployment rates are starting to teeter, the average rate remains essentially the same. This is still an alarming trend to see, with previously mentioned forms of pandemic federal assistance ending. Additionally, there are unaddressed barriers to employment, independent of the pandemic. In the ‘Where

are the Workers?” study based in Northeast Ohio, they found that “access to training and education is a significant barrier for a large part of the workforce.”⁷ Specifically, 481,559 people felt they didn’t have the necessary training or education for their job, while 1,167,469 individuals were unaware of job-related trainings or educational programs in the area.

As a result, food-insecure households will be constantly making tradeoffs due to related pressures such as unemployment. In the wake of COVID-19 in 2020, a National Institute of Health study found that of those who lost their jobs, 31% reported food insecurity, while 33% reported “eating less due to financial constraints.”⁸ When people’s jobs suffer, so does their food security, and this is not going to improve without targeted assistance. The post-pandemic unemployed is a new demographic vulnerable to hunger that we must account for and respond to.

⁷ *Where Are the Workers? is a multi-part analysis of Northeast Ohio’s changing talent landscape led by the Fund for Our Economic Future, ConxusNEO, PolicyBridge, the Summit and Medina Workforce Area Council of Governments, and Team NEO. <https://wherearetheworkers.com/>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7402065/>



EDUCATION



EDUCATION

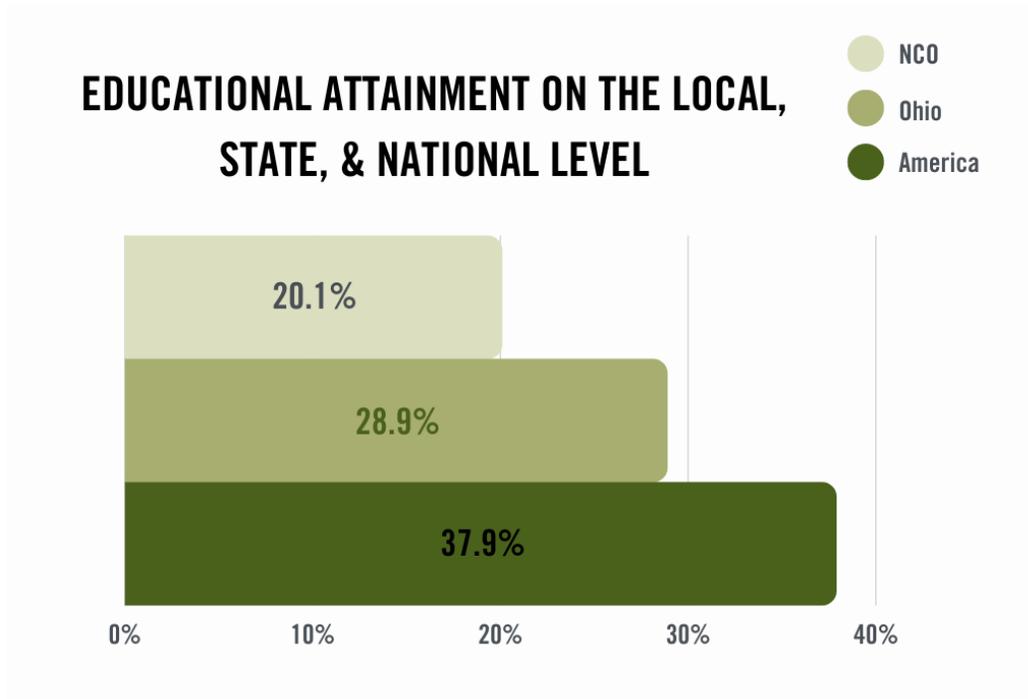
Beneath the stagnant unemployment levels is an alarmingly low level of education in Ohio. Access to higher education often dictates the type of area, job, and class one ends up in. The unemployment trends and cries we hear from our community partially stems from the current state of our community's educational attainment. According to data from the Census Bureau, on average, only 20.1% of those 25+ in Erie, Lorain, Crawford, and Huron county obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. Notably, Huron County is significantly lower with 14.1% of its population having a bachelor's degree or higher.⁹

Ohio as a state has a greater group of those with a bachelor's degree (28.9%), while America has an even higher rate (37.9%).¹⁰ The educational level of Erie, Lorain, Huron, and Crawford County is comparably lower to the rest of Ohio and America (See Figure Below). There is a clear barrier to economic mobility and food security when education suffers. The implications of low education rates are great.

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<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/loraincountyohio,eriecountyohio,crawfordcountyohio,huroncountyohio/AGE135221>

¹⁰ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/04/12/10-facts-about-todays-college-graduates/>



First, inadequate education leads to lower income, which inevitably leads to a decrease in food security and health. According to the Bureau of Labor, annual median earnings for bachelor’s degree holders are \$36,000 or 84% higher than those whose highest degree is a high school diploma. This problem is exacerbated as the gap between college graduates and those with less education is increasing.¹¹

84% or \$36,000 more than the median earnings of someone with a high school diploma, when having a bachelor's degree.

¹¹ <https://www.bls.gov/charts/usual-weekly-earnings/usual-weekly-earnings-by-quartiles-and-selected-deciles-by-education.htm>

With lower education comes fewer job opportunities, leading to low income and poverty. In 2020, 28.6% of low-income households were food insecure, compared to the national average of 0.5%. Education is a significant risk factor that connects to food insecurity.¹² Additionally, many low-income jobs are physically taxing and entail demanding inflexible hours. Therefore, those without higher education are even more susceptible to food insecurity. Addressing this at the root starts by bolstering educational attainment.



Improving access to education is proven to alleviate poverty and food insecurity. Studies suggest quality education leads to higher-income jobs with more benefits and fewer safety risks. In 2019, almost 21.6% of Medicaid-enrolled, working-age adults and 27.3% of the uninsured held less than a high school degree in Ohio.¹³ Lower education is correlated with lower-income jobs, which in turn only offer Medicaid or no insurance. Having insurance, let alone comprehensive insurance, plays a big role in people’s resources and health. More than ensuring that there

¹² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>
¹³ https://grc.osu.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/OMAS_SDOH_2019.pdf

are enough people employed, we must ask ourselves: What kinds of jobs are we offering, and can people live on them?

Higher education¹⁴ is also correlated with greater health literacy. Defined by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), health literacy is “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.” Studies show that those in poverty and low-income jobs have lower health literacy.



More specifically, uninsured and publicly insured (e.g., Medicaid) individuals are more at risk of having low health literacy. Lower health literacy often leads to more hospital visits, greater hospital expenses, and a higher incidence of diseases that are easily preventable.¹⁵ Ultimately, it leads to a higher mortality rate that has disproportionate, devastating consequences.¹⁶ The implications of this lack of education are significant. Without investing in our educational system more, jobs, food security, and health cannot be tackled effectively.

¹⁴ Higher education, meaning those with an associates degree or higher

¹⁵ <https://wayback.archive-it.org/5774/20220414160933/https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/health-literacy#27>

¹⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6225398/#ref2>

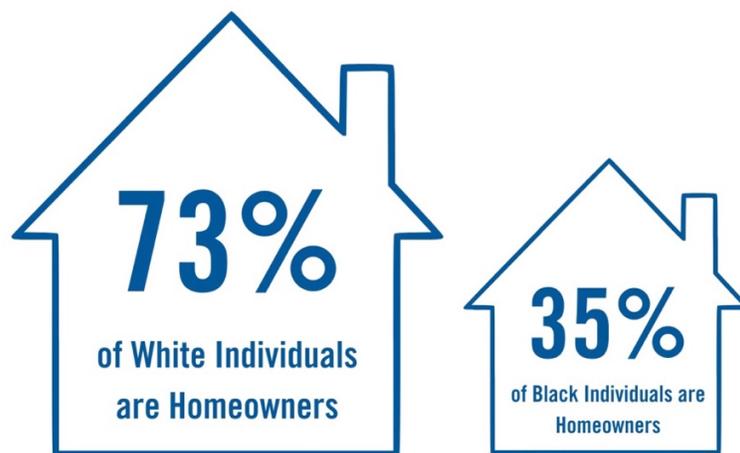


HOUSING



HOUSING

Owning a home is a key way to accumulate wealth and move out of poverty. However, the housing sector is where many minorities and people in poverty face the most systematic barriers. In Ohio, homeownership rates have been declining steadily since the 1990s. In contrast, White homeownership is at an all-time high at 73.1%, while Black homeownership has never been lower at 35.0% -- less than half the rate of White individuals.¹⁷

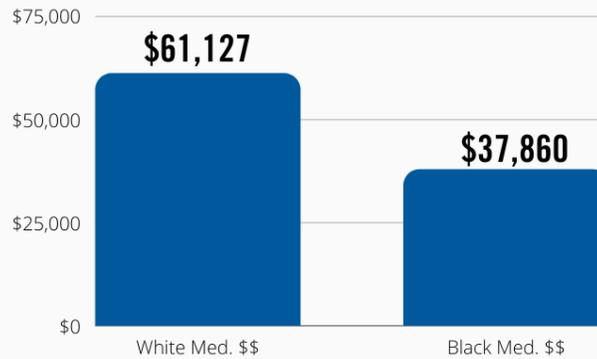


Although Ohio's homeownership level is above the national average, there are still a great number of individuals, especially in the Black community, who do not own homes and face more economic pressures as a result. Major factors that contribute to this trend are income disparities and the overall poverty gap. As of 2021, the White median household income was \$61,127 - nearly double the amount of Black median household income (\$37,860).¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/housing-finance-policy-center/projects/forecasting-state-and-national-trends-household-formation-and-homeownership/ohio>

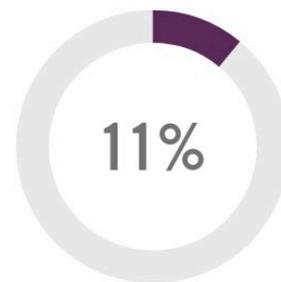
¹⁸ Source: American Community Survey (ACS) One-Year Estimates, Tables B19013A & B19013B

White vs. Black Median Household Income

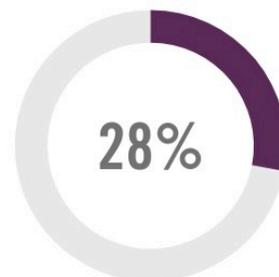


In addition, approximately 28% of the Black population is considered below the poverty level, while only 11% of the White population are below the poverty level. This persistent poverty gap contributes to Blacks' inability to buy a home and achieve economic stability. Overall, White generational wealth and the historical discrimination Blacks face fuel these disproportionate gaps we see today. Observing these disparities, it is critical to give additional assistance to the Black community, looking beyond the general housing trends.

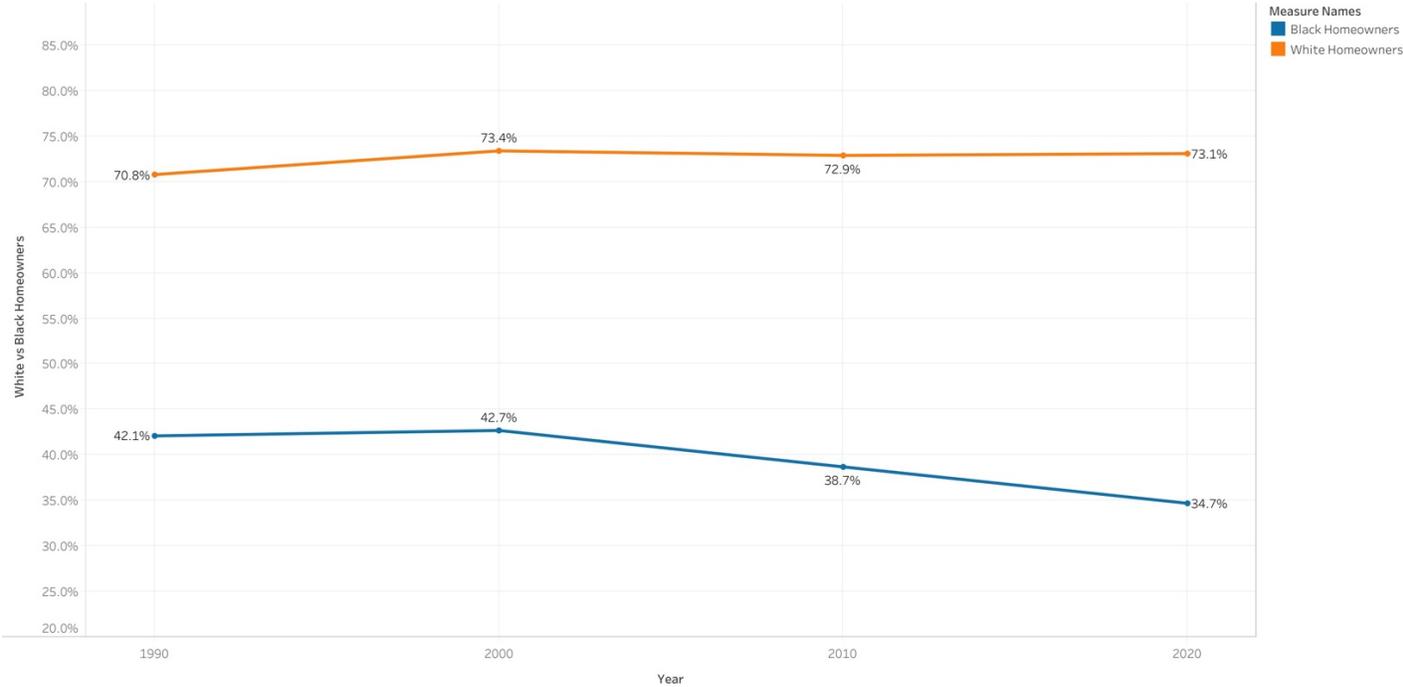
Percent of Whites Below Poverty Level



Percent of Blacks Below Poverty Level



More than having access to affordable housing, the type of housing matters as well. Being a homeowner versus a renter has drastically different implications. Oftentimes, it is the difference between those with wealth versus those stuck in poverty oftentimes. Housing is a fixed cost, so when housing becomes a financial burden, individuals are forced to cut costs elsewhere—and food tends to be the first to go.



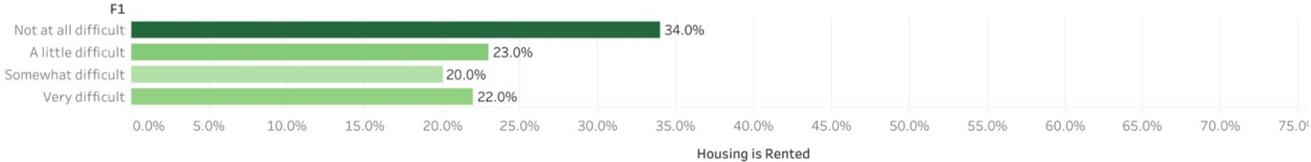
Studies reveal a direct relationship between food insecurity and renting. Families experiencing food insecurity had 62% higher odds of also facing housing instability. Renting versus owning a home is often associated with greater housing instability. When individuals experience housing instability, they also have 40% increased odds of facing food insecurity.¹⁹ Furthermore, with COVID-19 and inflation, there has been an 18% increase in the average rent, outpacing inflation significantly.²⁰ These new, modern burdens that come with being a renter in

¹⁹ Lee, Che Young; Zhao, Xue; Reesor-Oyer, Layton; Cepni, Aliye. Bidirectional Relationship Between Food Insecurity and Housing Instability. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. 121: 84-91, 2021.

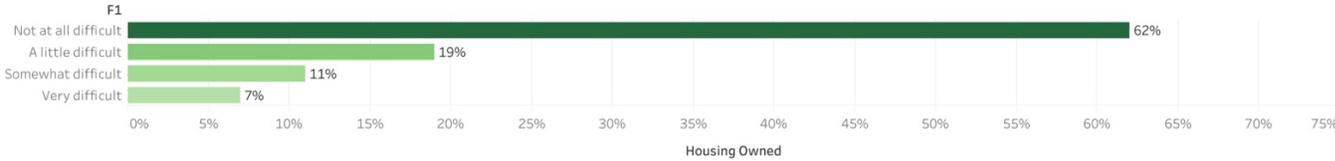
²⁰ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?g=G6ea>

America in 2022 make this demographic even more vulnerable. With 57% of African Americans on average being renters, people of color are even more at risk.

Percent of Renters Who Had Difficulty Paying Household Expenses During Past 7 days by Tenure



Percent of Households Who Had Difficulty Paying Household Expenses During Past 7 Days by Tenure



In addition to general housing assistance we can invest in, the renting community is an at-risk population that demands more attention and catered assistance. By creating more nuanced services that emphasize people of color and renters, the housing barrier can be adequately addressed.

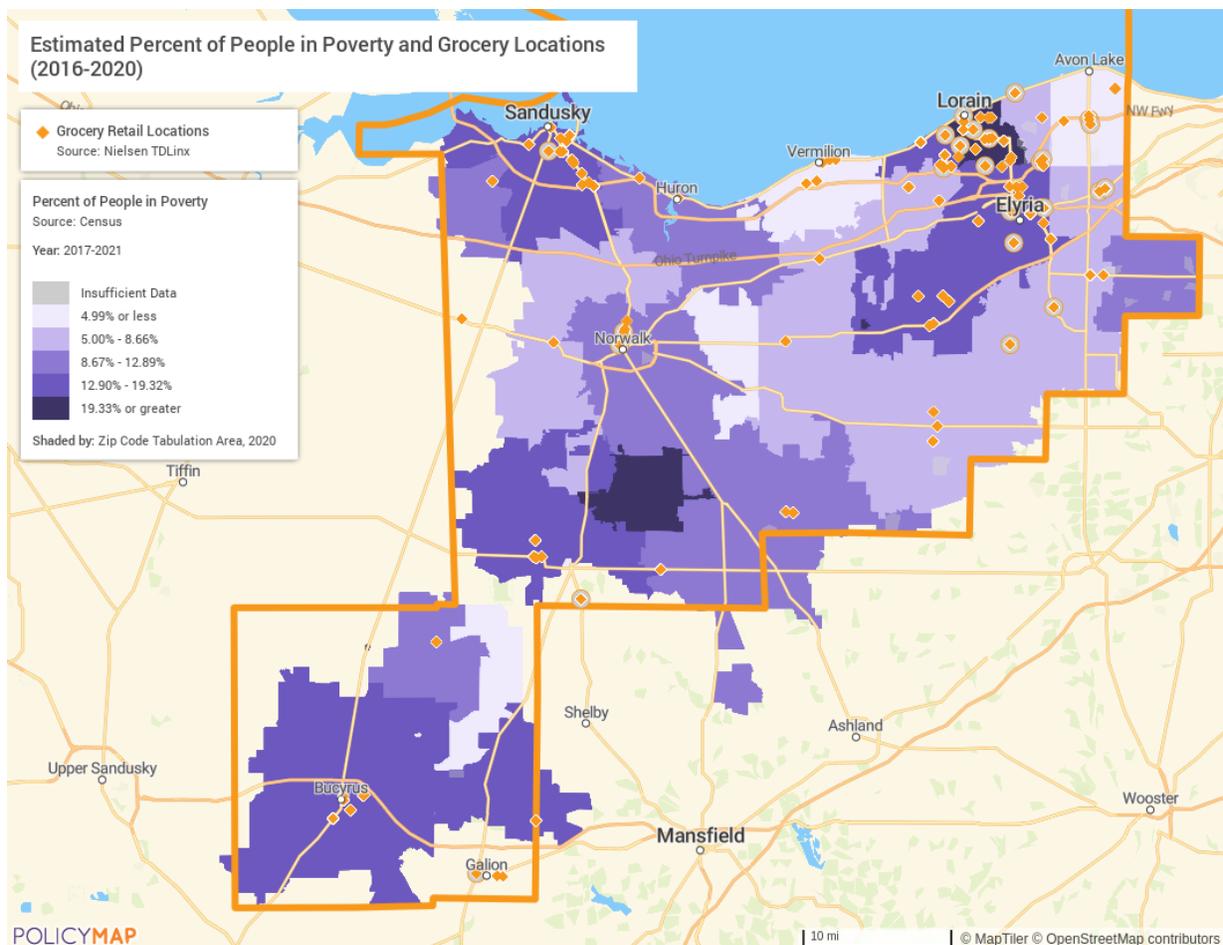


GROCERY ACCESS

Audano's
Produce

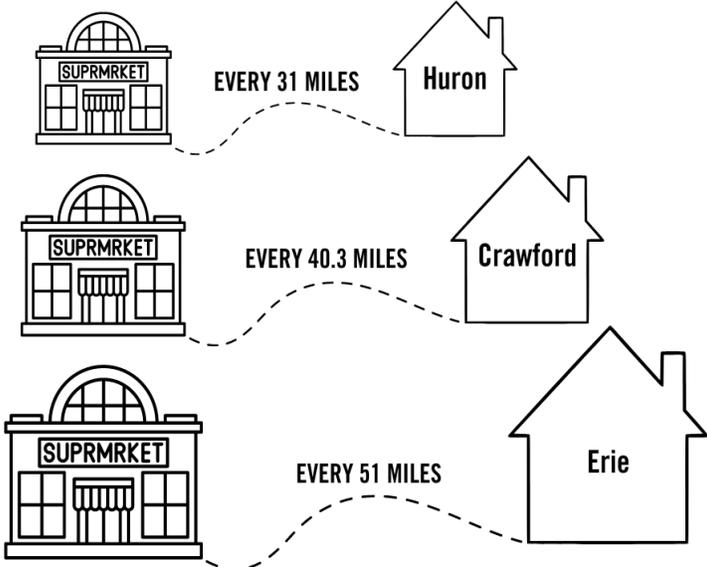
GROCERY ACCESS

Grocery stores are a key social determinant in overall health and security. As of 2019, Ohio was the state with the greatest increase in people living in low-income census tracts with low access to food stores.²¹ Grocery Access is a very prevalent problem in the service area we are in. Specifically, Erie, Huron, and Crawford County lack enough grocery stores to provide for their communities. As a result, there are many food deserts that exacerbate poverty and hunger in the region.



²¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/charts-of-note/?topicId=6c72b00d-5e4b-41da-b26a-17a3a6a15e21>

In total, there are only 10 grocers in Crawford County, 16 grocers in Huron County, and 24 grocers in Erie County. This means on average, there is a grocery store approximately every 40.3 miles for Crawford County, every 31 miles for Huron, and every 51 miles for Erie. This is an especially far distance, making grocery stores inaccessible for many.



CRAWFORD

10

**GROCERY
LOCATIONS**

ERIE

24

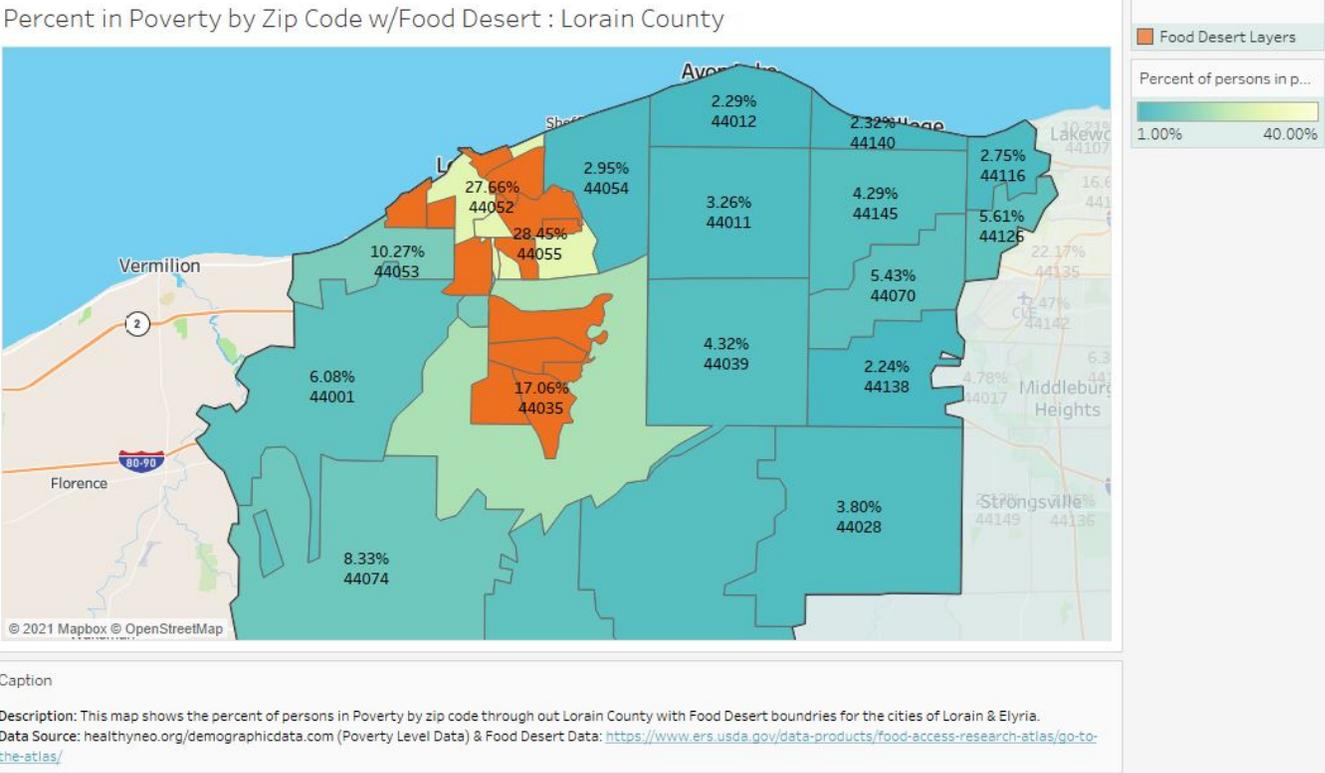
**GROCERY
LOCATIONS**

HURON

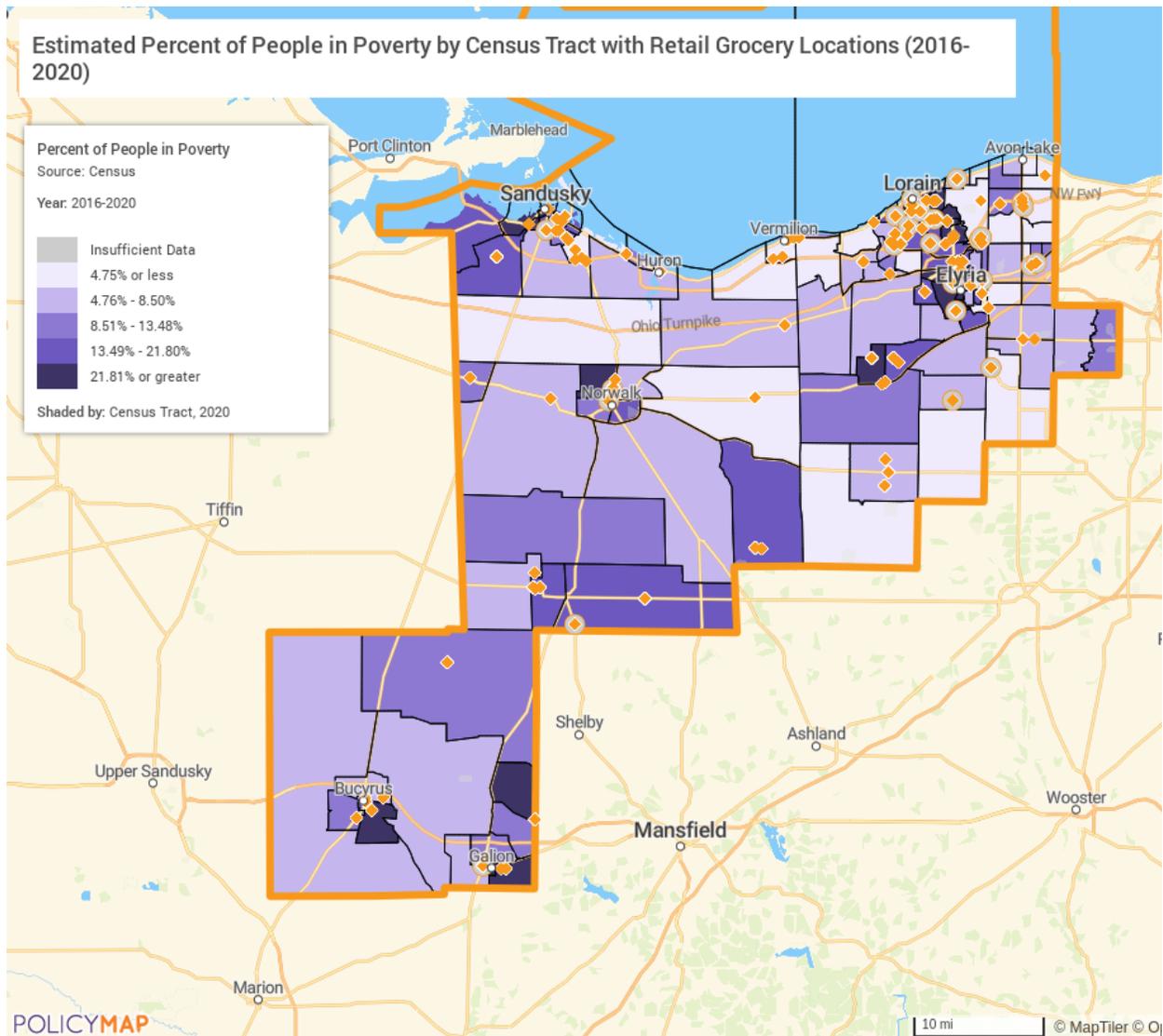
16

**GROCERY
LOCATIONS**

When we even just take a deep dive into Lorain County, Poverty Levels are highly correlated with Food Deserts, which are perpetuated by lack of grocery access.



According to the USDA, Tracts were identified as food deserts if, in addition to meeting low-income criteria, at least 500 people or 33 percent of the tract population lived further than 1 mile from a supermarket in urban areas, or further than 10 miles in rural areas. Off first glance, it is clear there are many tracts in especially Huron and Crawford that are food deserts due to the distance of grocers. More than the lacking number of stores, they are disproportionately spread out in a manner that actively creates many of the food deserts we see. This is a key aspect of the community’s landscape that we must keep in mind for future projects and services.



When individuals do not have access to grocery stores, they look to food sources that lack fresh, healthy foods. Not only is there an absence of healthy intake, but there is an encouraged excess of unhealthy foods that perpetuate diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and obesity.



FEEDING[®]
AMERICA
West Michigan Food Bank
Formerly Second Harvest Gleaners
Food Bank of West Michigan, Inc.
FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org
616.784.3250

TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation plays a huge role in the prevalence of physical barriers to basic needs. Lorain, Huron, Erie, and Crawford County are more rural regions that lack public transportation. The pandemic decreased ridership significantly when many were out of jobs. However, low-income families and individuals rely on/need public transportation more than ever. According to an Ohio Infrastructure Report, Ohio spends approximately \$6 per person on public transit, compared to a national statewide average of almost \$60 per capita. Transportation is underfunded and neglected, which has many implications.

This underfunding of our public transportation infrastructure limits its accessibility and scope. An analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland found that only one-third of the jobs in the region could be reached by public transit in 90 minutes or less. Moreover, many of the top employment centers were inaccessible due to a lack of public transportation. There is an established, inverse relationship between public transit and poverty levels.²²



More analysis of Cleveland’s region revealed that property values of places with no previous transit increased by 3.5% within a decade of receiving some access to public transit. Employment also rose by 3% in those same areas. Most importantly, poverty levels declined 12.9% within a decade of receiving access to public

²² <https://www.sciotoanalysis.com/news/2019/9/10/higher-poverty-rates-mean-less-car-ownership-but-many-poor-still-own-cars-in-ohio>

transit.²³ The presence of transportation systems clearly benefit and assist people in poverty.



Public transportation is especially important for those with lower income because it makes maintaining and acquiring jobs easier. Because of the pandemic, people working low wage jobs were forced to find work further out compared to individuals with moderate to high-income jobs. Furthermore, those below the poverty line disproportionately tend to be the ones also without cars. This means that people below the poverty line tend to be the main users of public transit. The lack of public transit perpetuates poverty by creating another physical barrier. In addition to employment, low levels of public transit drive the food deserts in Ohio. Currently, RTA metro lines only run through major cities like Cleveland. Ironically, public transit is most needed in rural, poorer areas. With no public transit across most of the NCO region, food deserts mainly thrive because there is no means of transportation for the impoverished who need it most.

A lack of transportation threatens food security for a big portion of our community. More than just food security however, transportation is pivotal to access to all the sections mentioned prior. Whether it is healthcare, grocery stores and other food sources, jobs, housing mobility, or even quality education, transportation is fundamental to the access to all of these. Really understanding and accounting for the transportation barrier is critical to better assisting our community.

²³ <https://www.news5cleveland.com/homepage-showcase/csu-study-public-transit-access-leads-to-higher-employment-lower-poverty>

SNAP ACCESS



SNAP ACCESS

SNAP is a lifeline for many of those fighting poverty and food insecurity. With the pandemic, many have become eligible for SNAP, yet participation rates stay relatively low in accordance with eligibility. In 2020, 55,025 households were eligible for SNAP across Erie, Huron, Lorain, and Crawford County, while only 22,703 households enrolled and actively participated in the program. More specifically, 16.7% of individuals are essentially eligible for SNAP at 125% or less of the poverty level.²⁴ Overall, surveys show that 52% say they want to be enrolled but need assistance going through the process. These numbers point to some kind of barrier or gap that we are overlooking in the status quo.

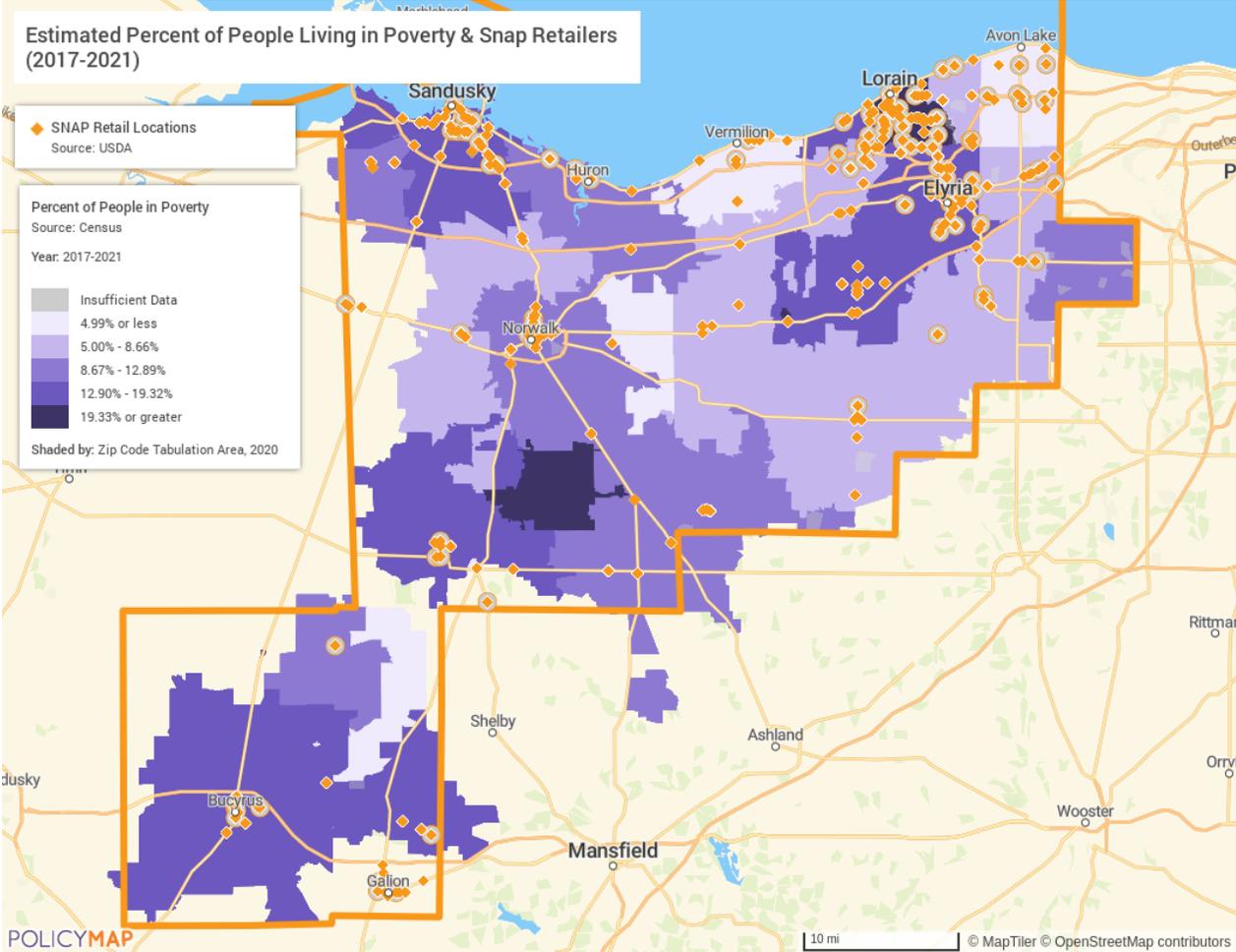


Broken down by county, Lorain especially has a huge population eligible for SNAP, yet falls under the similar trend of our entire service area with lower participation rates. With such a disparity between eligibility and participation, there are evidently factors at play with this observed lack of participation.

²⁴

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=lorain+ohio+poverty&g=0500000US39033,39043,39077&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1703>

Barriers to SNAP participation are predominantly geographical and social. Geographically, SNAP Retailers are not where people need them most nor alleviating food deserts. Many of the areas we serve are rural regions that lack a SNAP grocery retailer within an approximately 10-mile radius. This is most prevalent in Huron, Crawford, and even parts of Lorain County. With such a physical distance, many are either discouraged from accessing these SNAP locations or even physically cannot access SNAP retailers.



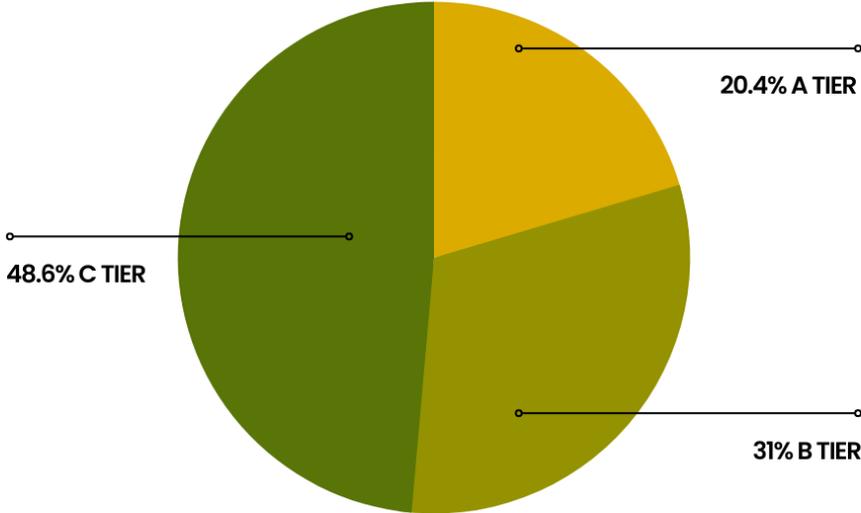
More than the geographical, physical obstacles, SNAP Access is significantly diminished by the **quality** of SNAP Retailers. In the fight for food security, nutritious, culturally inclusive foods are integral to cultivating healthy communities.

To assess the quality of SNAP Retailers, we categorized each location based on the following criteria:

- The quantity and quality of perishable, fresh foods
- Culturally diverse foods
- Quantity of food selection overall

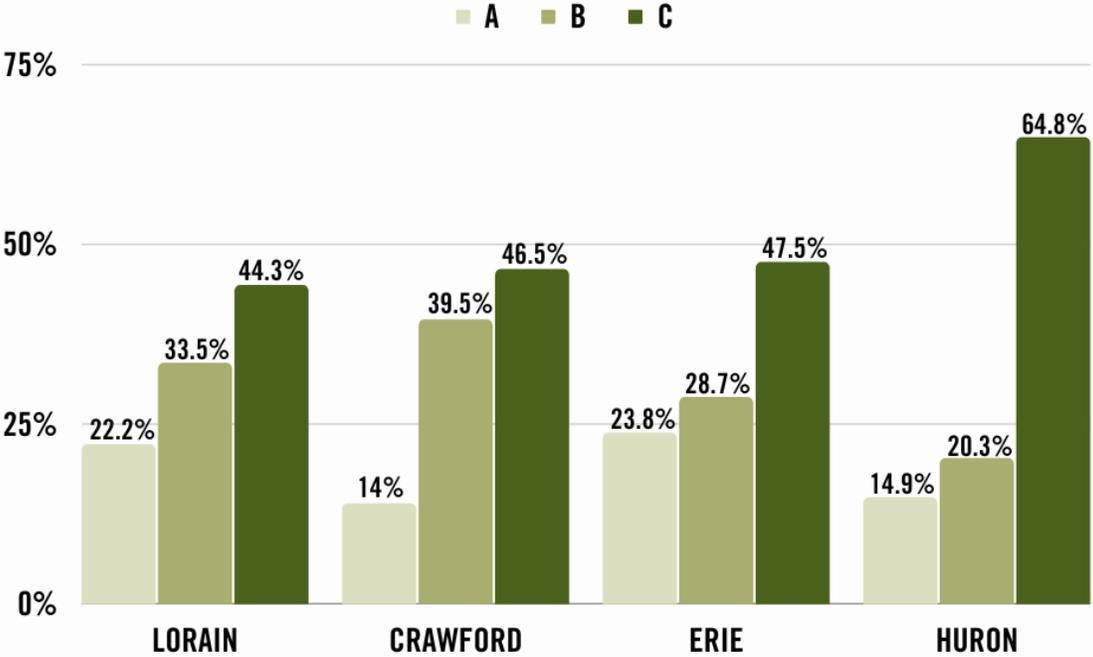
Category A, or High-Quality Retailers, are stores that have all three in some shape or form, such as a Meijer's or Aldi's. Category B, or Average-Quality Retailers, entail grocers that have affordable, sufficient foods, but not necessarily sufficient healthy, quality, or wide selections of food. Pharmacies, local grocers, small stores, or specialized stores such as bakeries or delis tend to fall in this category. Category C, or Low-Quality Retailers, tend to be gas station stores or mini marts that lack one or more of the above criteria.

SNAP RETAILERS ACROSS NCO



Across the four counties, less than a quarter of SNAP Retailers were categorized as A Tier. More than just food itself, our communities need nutritious foods. The unhealthy, processed foods from stores in the B and C not only lack sufficient nutrition, but also exacerbate the diseases and effects of poverty such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. The type of food assistance these communities have is an overlooked crisis that plays a major role in lower SNAP participation and the detrimental impacts of food insecurity.

SNAP RETAILERS BROKEN DOWN ACROSS COUNTIES



When broken down on a county level, Huron has an alarming rate of lower-quality SNAP retailers and the other three average out to around 46%. None of these counties break a 25% threshold for the number of comprehensive, high-quality stores in the area. All four counties, but especially Huron, are prime targets when it comes to providing quality food assistance through SNAP and other means.

ROUGH FOOD RESCUE
SAN DIEGO

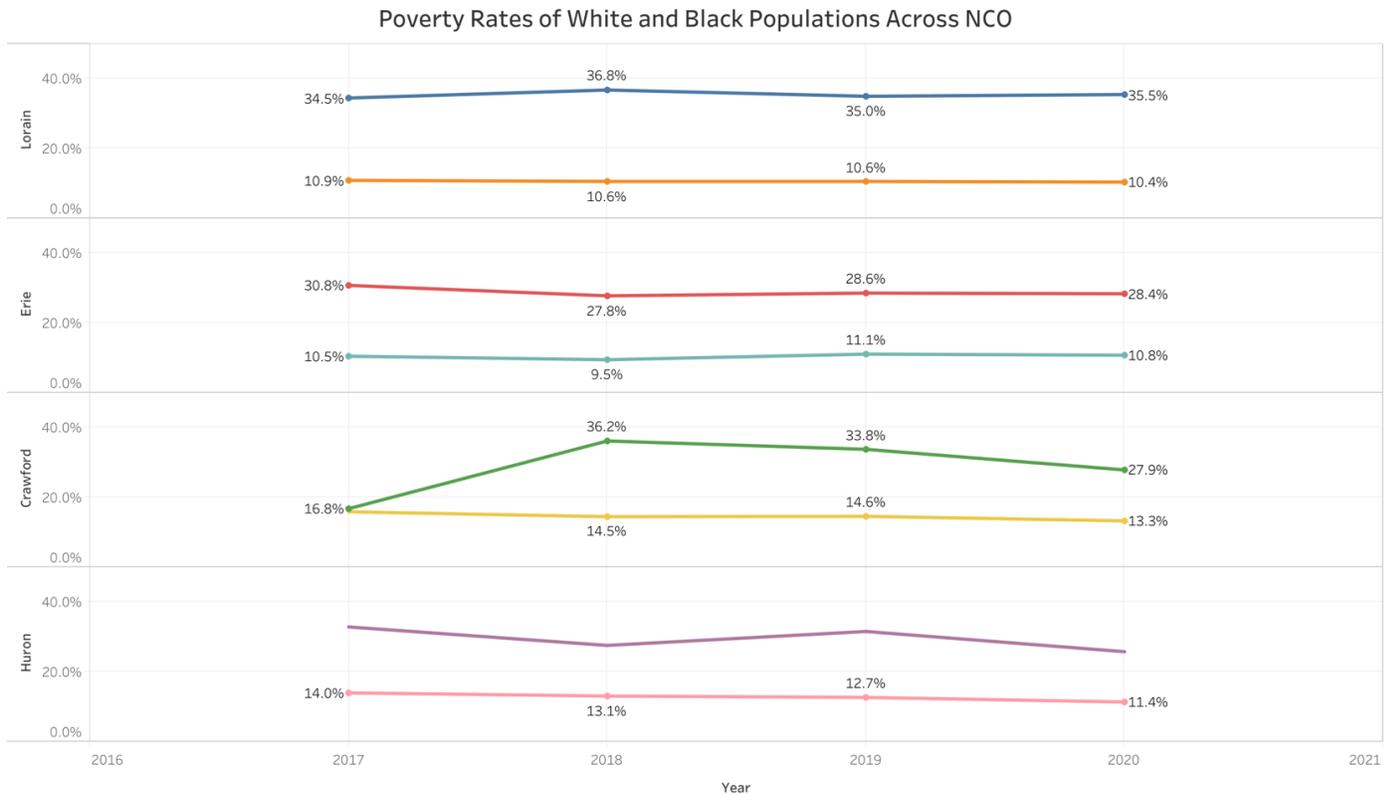
RACE & ETHNICITY



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race is an underlying determinant that drives the other social determinants that has a great impact on individuals and the community as a whole. It is integral that we take the time to assess the racial makeup of the community to overcome racial barriers and respond to each demographic’s corresponding needs.

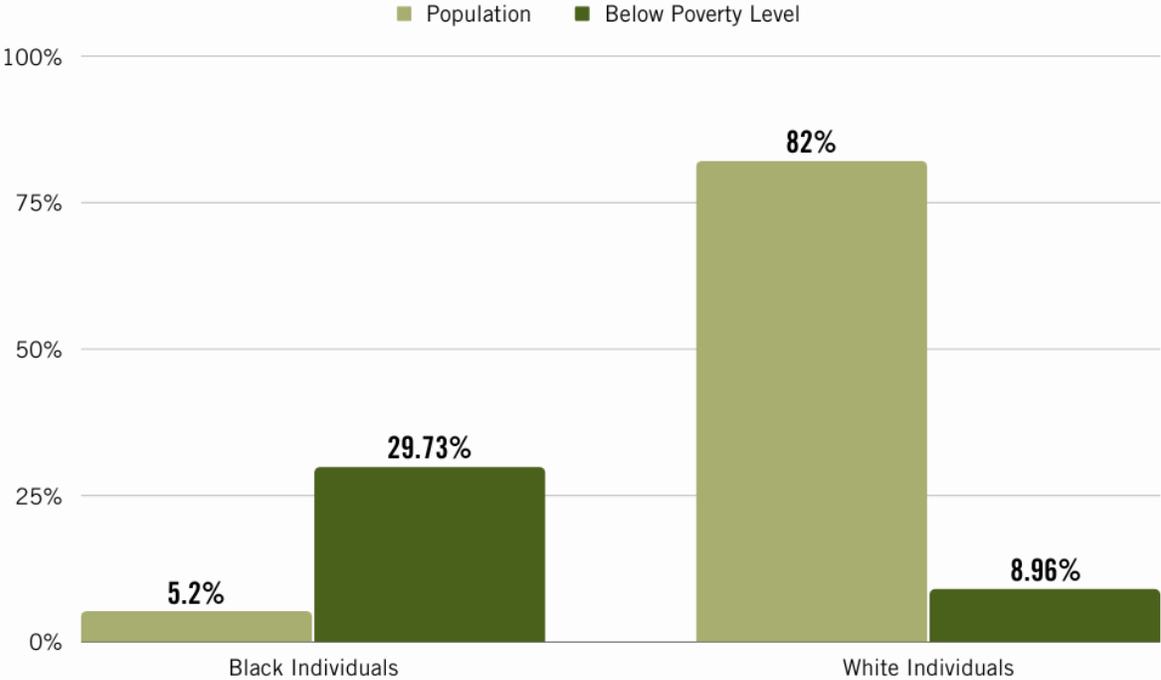
According to the 2019 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, Ohio’s African American population has increased by 23% since 2000. The Black community is growing and a significant population to keep in mind. Over the past four years, poverty rates for the Black communities in each county have fluctuated distinctly. In each county overall, however, poverty for black individuals has not improved in the long term.



The disproportionate rates of poverty in the Black community become even more clear in relation to the rest of the population. As of 2021, 27.5% of the Black population is considered below the poverty level, while only 10.6% of the White population is below the poverty level. There is a consistent percentage gap that puts Blacks at more risk, especially post-pandemic.

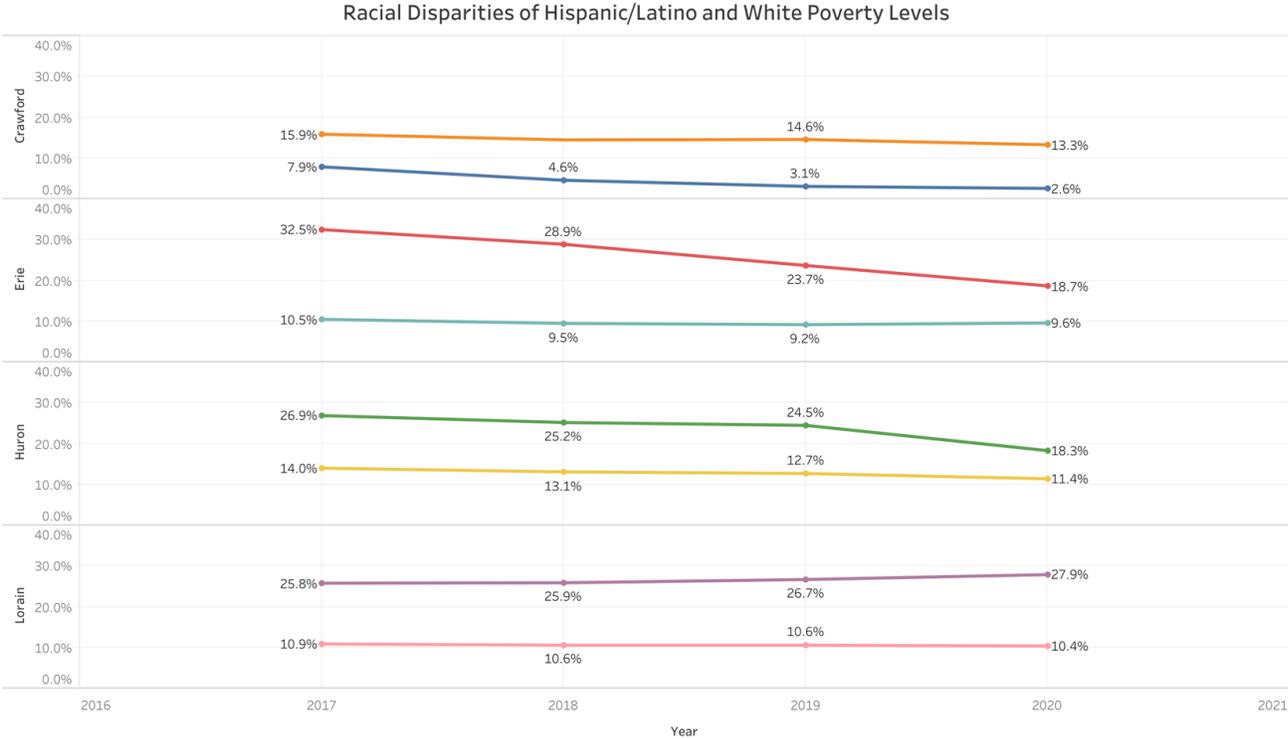
Even though Blacks only make up 5.2% of the population across Erie, Huron, Crawford, and Lorain County, about 29.73% of Blacks are below the poverty level. Meanwhile, the white population comprises 82% of these four counties, yet only 8.96% of them are below the poverty level. With 12.73% being the average poverty rate across Erie, Huron, Lorain, and Crawford, there is an alarming 17 percentage point difference between the poverty level of African American individuals and our entire service area.

RACIAL POVERTY DISPARITIES IN NCO



The U.S.' average poverty rate is already high at 11.6%²⁵ while 21.8% of African Americans are in poverty, leaving a 10.2% percentage point gap on a national scale.²⁶ Even nationwide, the percentage point difference is smaller. In our service area, Black individuals are even more at risk and more needs to be done to reach them.

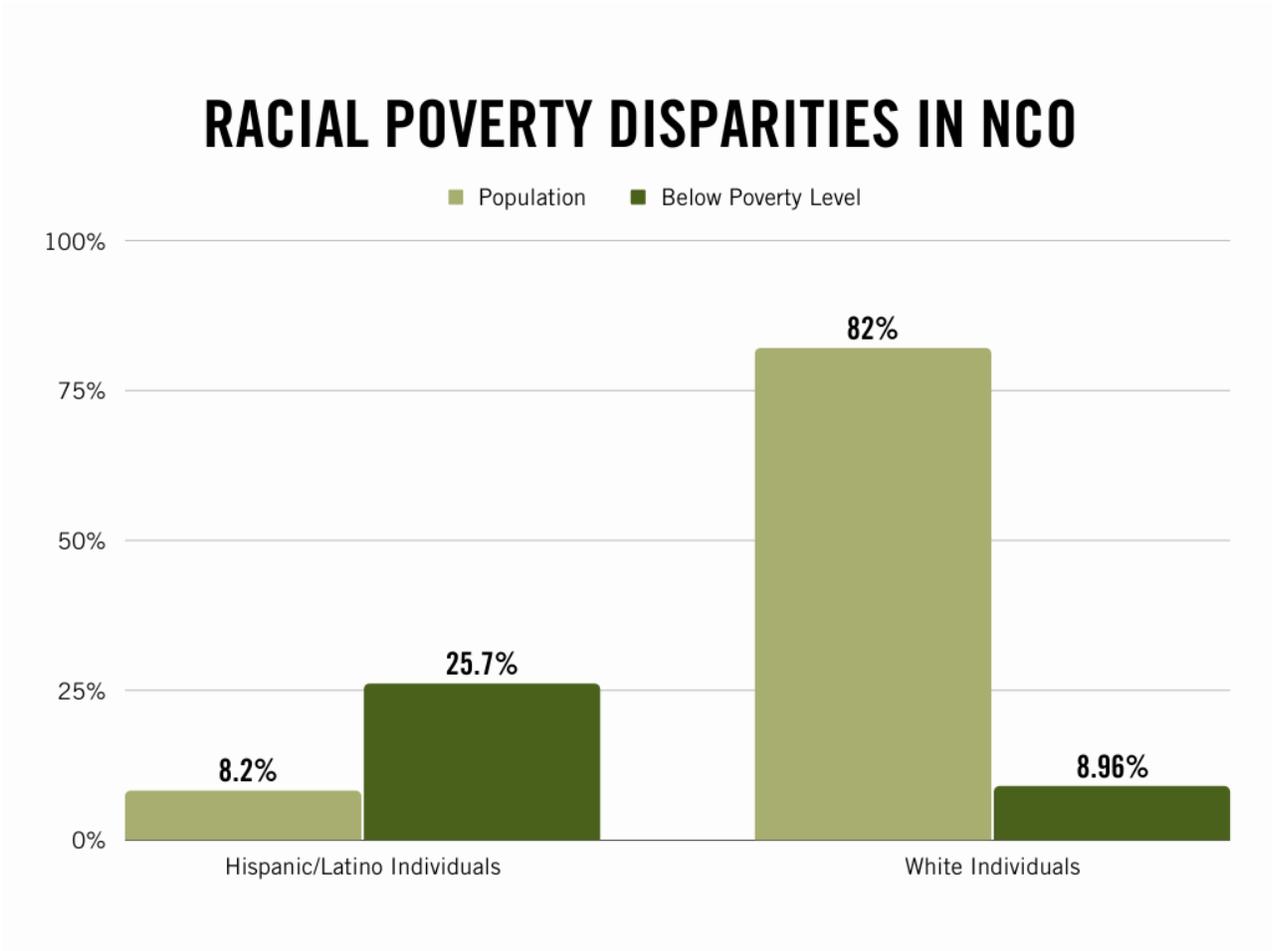
The Hispanic/Latino community is another group disproportionately impacted by poverty and food insecurity as well. Although in some counties the poverty rates have decreased or become stagnant, this doesn't necessarily mean Hispanic/Latino individuals are in the clear. With Hispanic/Latinos making up significantly less of the population across all four counties, there is still a disproportionate amount of Hispanic and Latinos below the poverty level.



²⁵ <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.html#:~:text=Highlights-Official%20Poverty%20Measure,37.9%20million%20people%20in%20poverty>.

²⁶ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+race+america&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S1701>

The disproportionate poverty rates are even more clear when directly compared to the White population throughout Huron, Erie, Lorain, and Crawford County. The Hispanic and Latino community is the other prominent demographic to keep in mind and understand more for future service.



Note: Data from <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+lorain+race&g=0500000US39033,39043,39077&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701> in 2020.

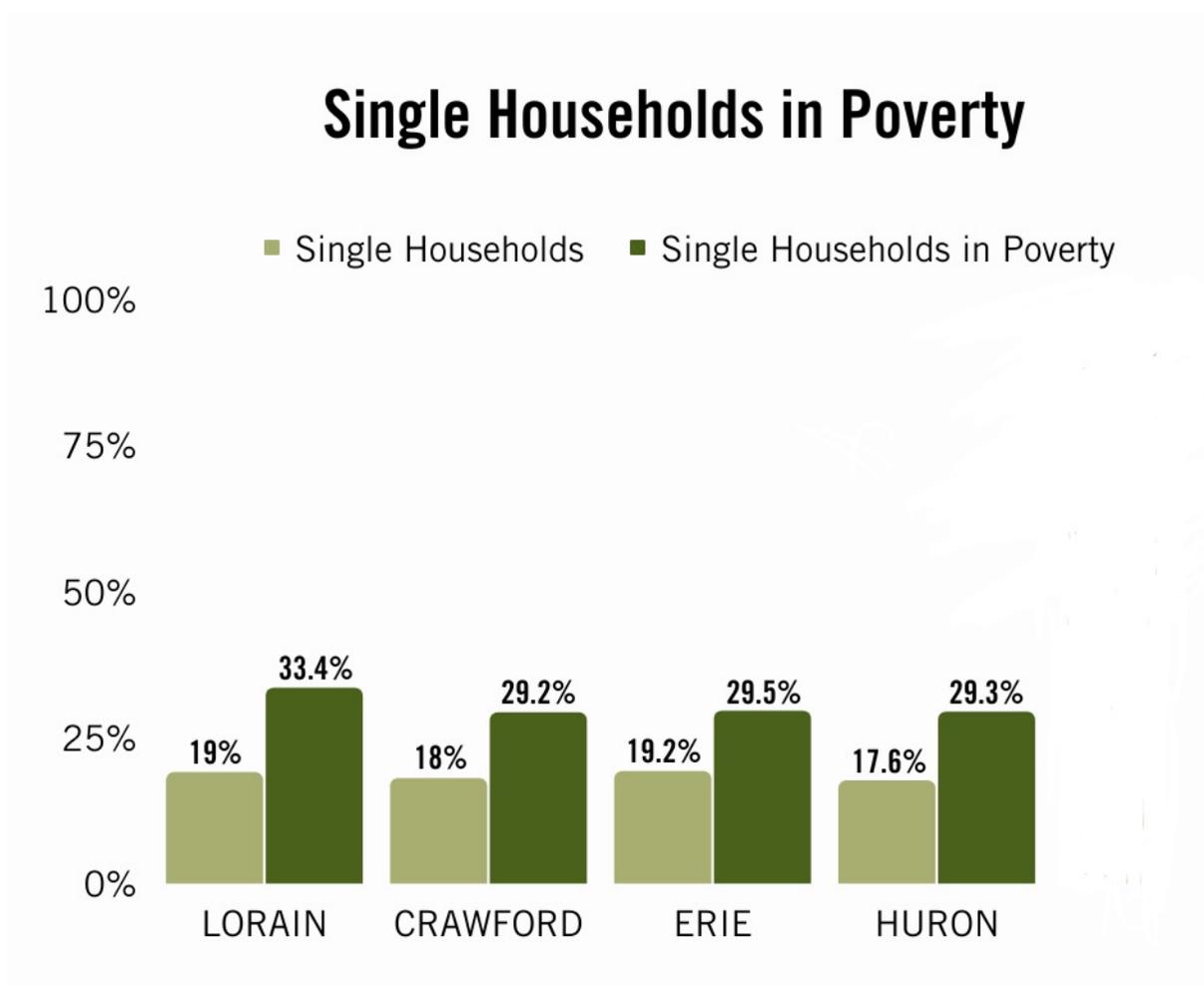


FAMILY MAKEUP



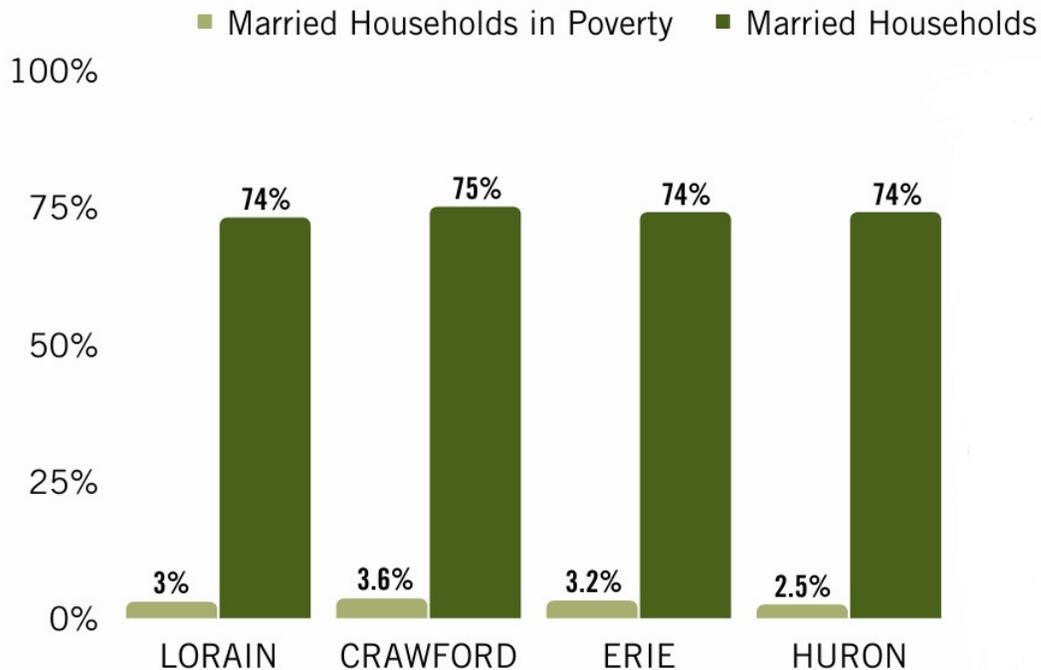
FAMILY MAKEUP

Research shows that there is an established correlation between single-parent households and poverty and food insecurity. In 2021, 34% of those with a single-parent family type were below the poverty line in Ohio, compared to 5% for married couples.²⁷



²⁷ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/55-families-with-related-children-that-are-below-poverty-by-family-type?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-53/true/2048/994,1297,4240/346>

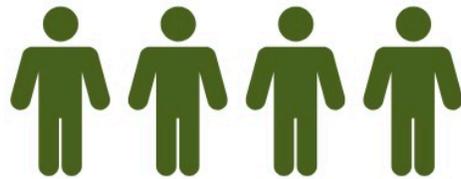
Married Households in Poverty



Note: Census Data only differentiates between households with married couple families and single households led by a **female** householder, with no spouse present. Data on single parents (male or female) is not provided.²⁸

Specifically in the counties we serve, all four show disproportionate rates of single-parent household poverty as of 2020. Single families in poverty in Lorain and Erie County generate the most alarming differences, at almost four times as much as married households in poverty. Single-parent households are clearly more at risk and make up a big portion of the community we strive to serve.

Single Households in Poverty



Married Households in Poverty



Single-parent households have always been more vulnerable to food insecurity, but we are seeing these numbers because COVID-19 increased their vulnerability. After enduring a pandemic, these families are more than ever at risk of food insecurity and poverty. Many of the jobs single parents work were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Furthermore, essential childcare services were shut down throughout the pandemic. Although this is not the case anymore, single parents are still recovering from the side effects and trying to compensate. More than ever, single parents and their children need our assistance. Single-parent families inevitably contribute to the high child poverty rates we see today, so supporting these families is essential to fighting child poverty and poverty overall.²⁹

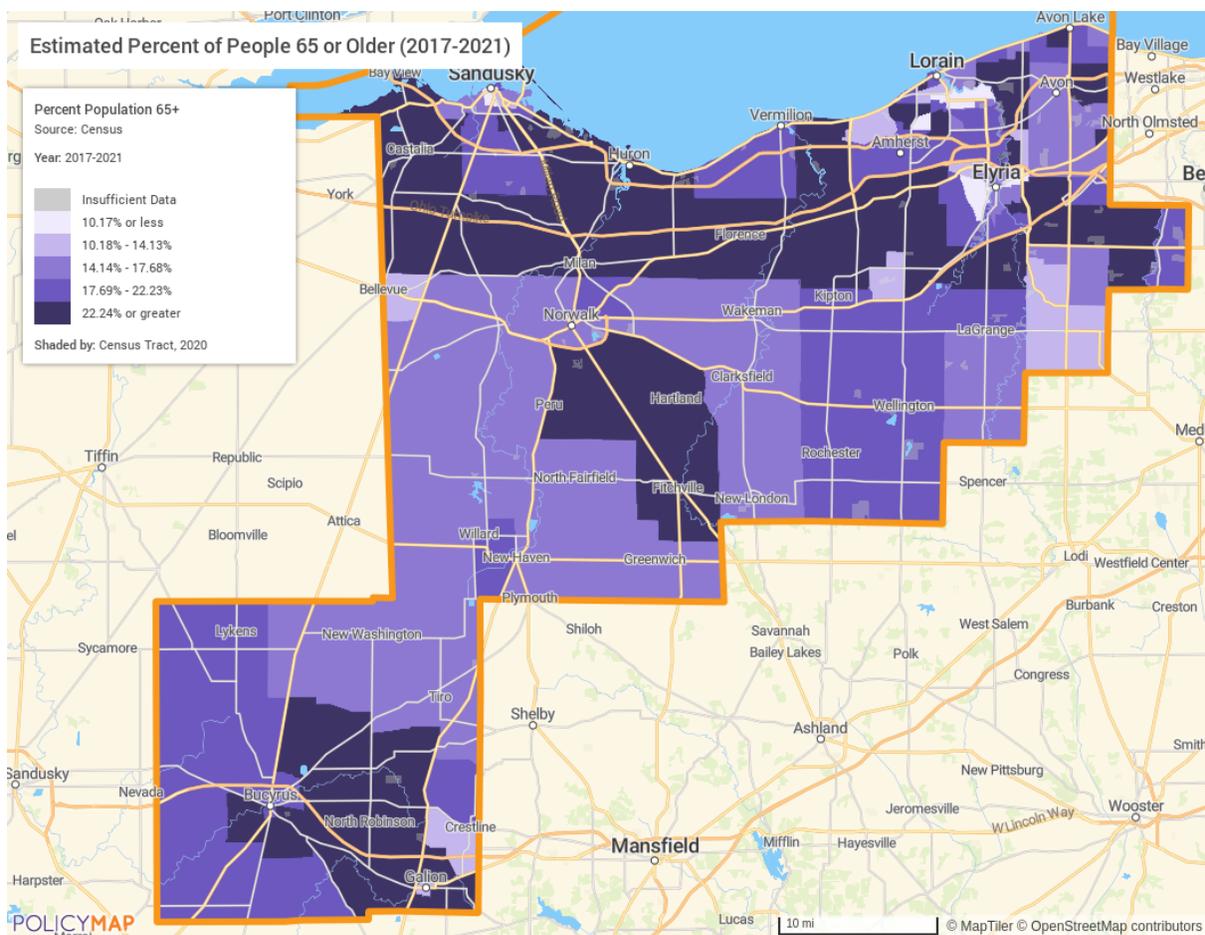
²⁹ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/release/tables?rid=412&cid=360653#snid=360700>



**OLDER
AMERICANS**

OLDER AMERICANS

Older American adults are a distinct population that has unique needs and obstacles to face regarding food security. However, they have been hit hard even more with the isolation and vulnerability that came with the onset of COVID-19.³⁰ With temporary pandemic SNAP assistance ending in 2023, the older community will face new pressures. Hunger for older Americans is a very real, unsolved issue that the pandemic has exacerbated.

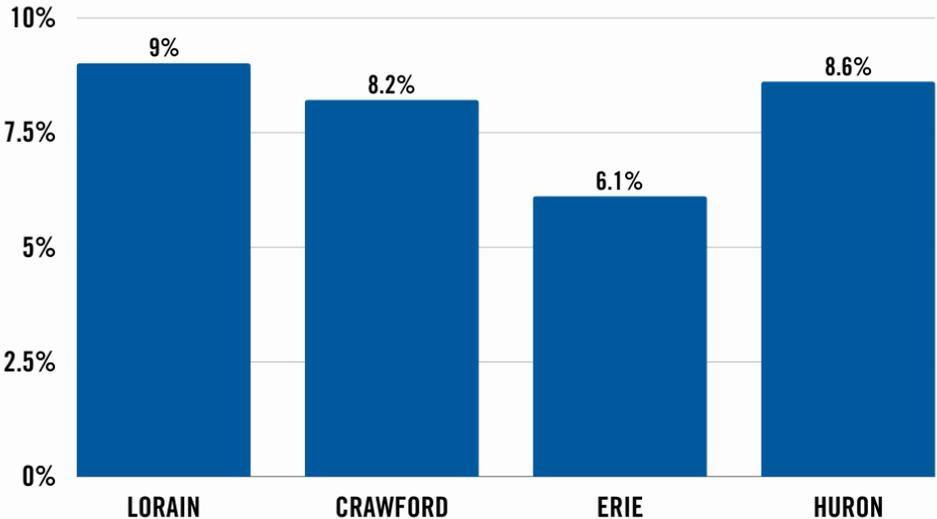


With adults 60 years old and above comprising 27.23% of the population in our service area, over a quarter of the community are older adults. In the state of Ohio, about 23.5% of individuals 60 and above are considered living below the poverty

³⁰ <https://www.communitysolutions.com/not-so-golden-years-listening-to-ohios-hungry-older-adults/>

level.³¹ Broken down in the Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor metro area specifically, seniors' food insecurity rates reached 8.1%, while reaching 10% for older adults. A big portion of the community across the four counties we serve is comprised of older Americans who are an isolated population due to the rural area. With no extensive public transit infrastructure in place and greater distances to commute or access anything, older adults are especially vulnerable.

OLDER ADULTS IN POVERTY IN 2020

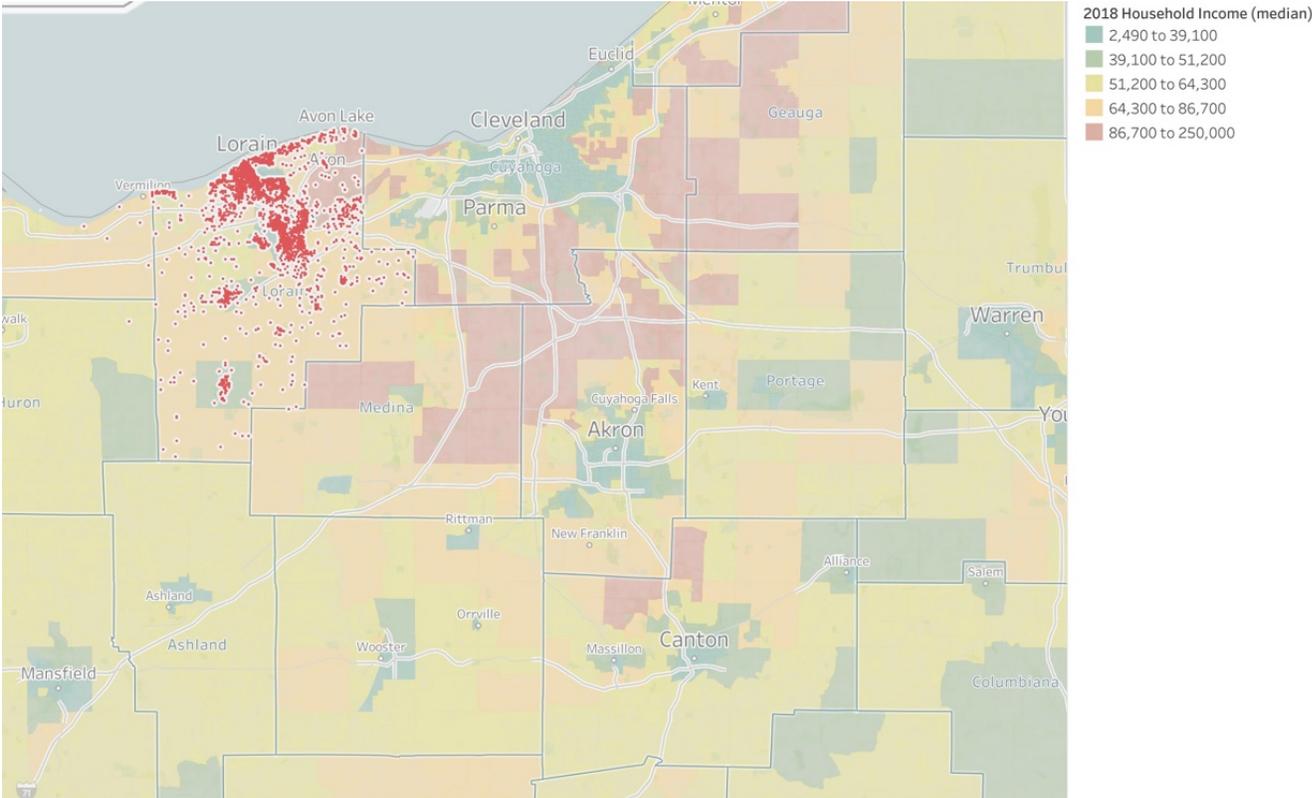


Data from the Census Bureau found that on average, 8.1% of older Americans were below the poverty level in Second Harvest's service area.³² This is why we started our CSFP Senior Box Program. In October and December alone, 3,144 older adults were served across Erie, Huron, Lorain, and Crawford County. As we

³¹ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+crwaford+ohio&g=0500000US39043,39077,39093&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701>

³² <https://data.census.gov/table?q=crawford+county+ohio+poverty+&g=0500000US39043,39077,39093&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701>

eventually expand this program, there is an ever-present need in other regions within the area we serve. Second Harvest has primarily focused on the Lorain region, with hopes of expanding in the future. It is encouraging to see the service areas correlate with the older individuals in poverty that need this assistance.



Note: Seniors Served by Census Tracts - Lorain County, Calendar Year 2021. This map shows seniors 60 years & up served in network of SHFB of NCO, Lorain County within the census tracts they live in overlaid with 2018 household income data. Data Source: PantryTrak.com & <https://www.census.gov>; Map Prepared By: Brittney Hopkins, SHFB of NCO, February 2022.

More specifically, in the metro area overlapping the area we serve (Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor Metro Area), Feeding America found that there were 517,165 seniors³³ and 272,811 older adults.³⁴ This distinction is important to note; within the older community, studying and differentiating between the subset groups of

³³ Feeding America defines seniors as those 60 and above, while older adults are those 50-59 years old.
³⁴ Gundersen, C., Ziliak J., Strayer M., & Hake M. (May 2021). *The State of Senior Hunger in America 2020: An Annual Report*; and *Hunger Among Adults Aged 50-59 in America 2020: An Annual Report* [Data file]. Available from Feeding America: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research>

older Americans is important to account for. The barriers for those who are 50-70 versus those who are 80 and above vary widely.

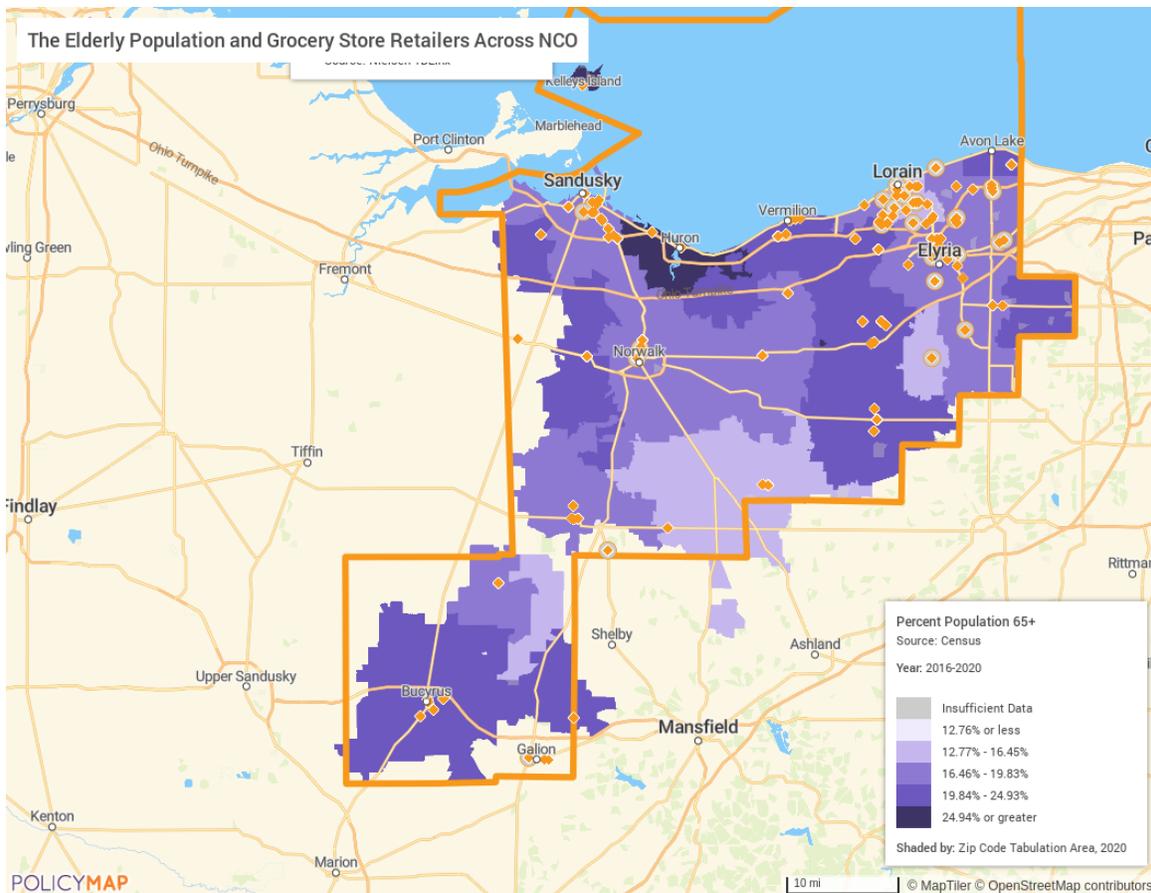


For seniors, the difficulties they face are far greater and diverse. Surveys show that the oldest beneficiaries in traditional Medicare, people ages 85 and older, spent more than twice as much out of pocket as beneficiaries between the ages of 65 and 74 (\$10,307 versus \$5,021). These differences are primarily due to their tendency to have higher spending on long-term care facility services and care.³⁵ Within the older American community, there are those more at risk than others which demands more nuanced, different care.

For the older population as a whole, there are still daunting challenges. As previously pointed out, grocery stores are spread thin throughout all four counties, generating food deserts that hit the older population the hardest. In specifically dense population areas for older adults, there are very few grocery stores within a 10-mile radius. Food deserts are often challenging for anybody, but older adults face additional barriers. Statistically, older adults are unable to get food as much because of increased difficulties walking and having lower annual incomes.³⁶

³⁵ <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/how-much-do-medicare-beneficiaries-spend-out-of-pocket-on-health-care/>

³⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6227553/>



Beyond the physical barriers, the older population overall is on a fixed income which puts more stress on them as a result. Fixed income refers to older adults who have retired and rely on fixed payments like pensions, social security, or retirement savings.³⁷ This means there is less flexibility for them to budget and adjust, and thus adequate food is usually the first to go when cutting costs. With inflation at an all-time high and the aftermath of the pandemic, older Americans have insufficient funds and are falling into even more food insecurity.

In addition to the limitations that come with fixed income, the older community struggles with accessing the programs that fuel the fixed income they have. For SNAP, the main source of assistance for these older adults, many attest they don't

³⁷ <https://ncoa.org/article/what-does-living-on-a-fixed-income-mean>

take advantage of it due to inability to apply, barriers with technology, and physical inability to apply in person.³⁸

More than older adults' vulnerability to disease, there is more concern with what it entails. With a higher incidence of disease, they have more costs to account for. Costs function as a unique, burdensome barrier. Whether it be emergency hospital visits, prescriptions, or equipment for any disability, these fees accrue and cut into the older population's ability to afford food. This combined with their fixed income creates immense stress and burden for them, requiring more support from Second Harvest and partners.

³⁸ <https://www.ncoa.org/article/lifting-barriers-to-snap-real-stories-from-older-adults>



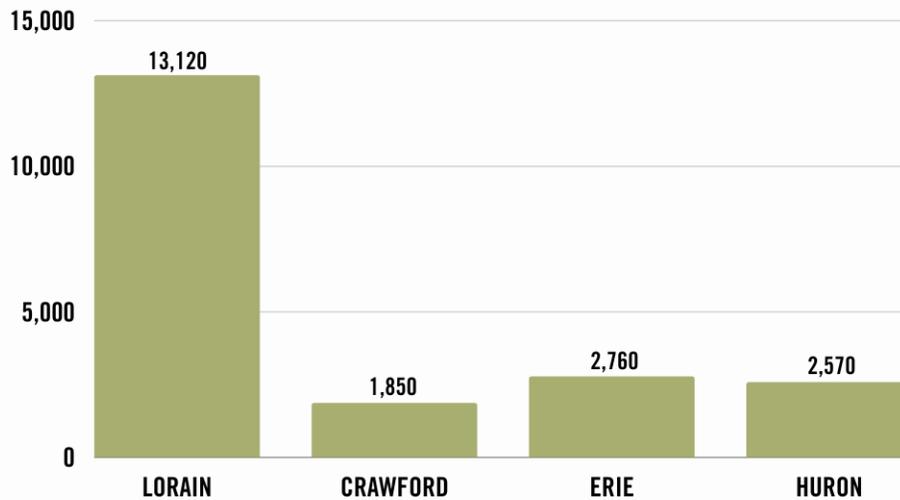
CHILDREN



CHILDREN

2020 estimates from the Census Bureau indicate that Ohio is faring off worse than America when it comes to child food insecurity. At its peak in 2020, the percentage of U.S. households with children that were food insecure was at 14.8%.³⁹ For the four counties we serve, child food insecurity levels are even higher at a rate approximately 19% in 2020.⁴⁰ Notably, Lorain and Crawford County have higher child food insecurity rates at 19.3% and 20.4% respectively.

FOOD INSECURE CHILDREN IN 2019 OR 2020



Note: 2019 is the most up to date data for Erie and Huron County due to Feeding America's change in methodology and collection.⁴¹

³⁹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2022/february/food-insecurity-for-households-with-children-rose-in-2020-disrupting-decade-long-decline/#:~:text=The%20percent%20of%20U.S.%20households,a%20decade%2Dlong%20downward%20trend>.

⁴⁰ Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2022). Map the Meal Gap 2022: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2020. Feeding America.

⁴¹ Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2022). Map the Meal Gap 2022: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2020. Feeding America.

The trend for children in poverty is not much better. In 2020, essentially 19% of children across the four counties we serve were living in poverty.⁴² Meanwhile, findings from the Census Bureau found that 16% of children lived in poverty for America overall.⁴³ In the communities we are serving, children are especially more vulnerable, even more so than the rest of the nation.

Living in poverty as a child has countless implications that intersect with the greater overall problem of poverty we see today. Children who grew up in poverty are at higher risk of developing obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and premature mortality in adulthood.⁴⁴

On top of health implications, childhood poverty fuels the cycle of poverty that keeps the same individuals stuck below the poverty level. With an unstable living environment and inadequate food, children in poverty are more likely to struggle in school. Data shows they are more likely to either repeat a grade or not pursue higher education like a bachelor's degree.⁴⁵

⁴²

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=lorain+ohio+poverty&g=0500000US39033,39043,39077&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S170>

⁴³

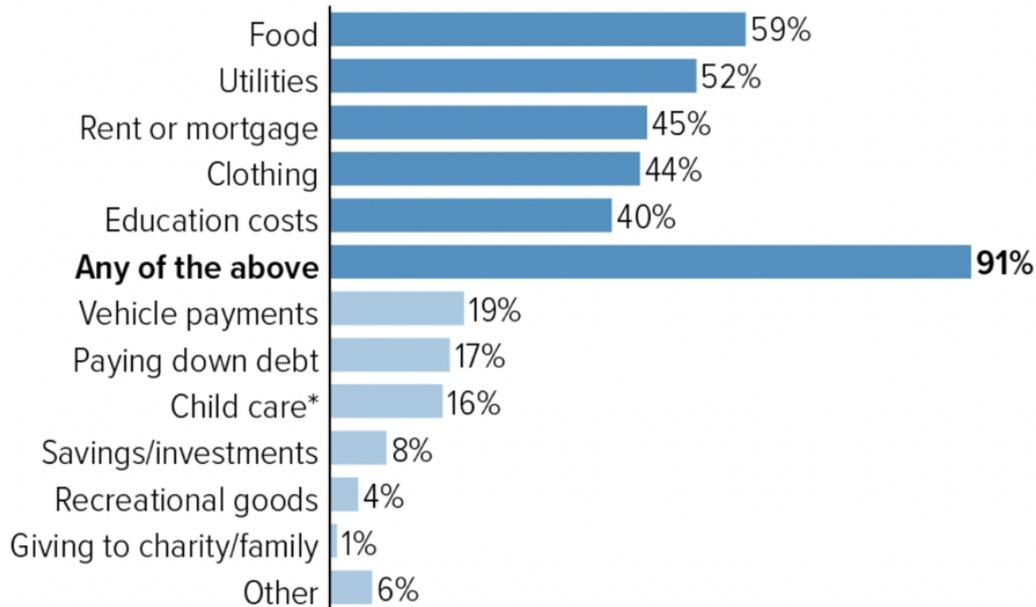
<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/income-poverty-health-insurance-coverage.html>

⁴⁴ <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/ChildPoverty/state/OH>

⁴⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2528798/>

Families With Low Incomes Spend Expanded Child Tax Credit on Most Basic Needs, Education

Percent of households with incomes below \$35,000 who spent their credit payments on:



Note: Education costs include schoolbooks/supplies, tuition, tutoring services, after-school programs, and transportation for school. Household income is in 2020. Figures are for households who reported receiving a Child Tax Credit payment in the last 30 days in data collected July 21-September 27, 2021. Source: CBPP Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey public use files for survey weeks 34-38.

To make matters worse, Child Tax Credit payments are not being renewed in 2023. As seen in the figure below, Child Tax Credits are a critical source of assistance for families fighting poverty and food insecurity. However, it primarily provides a lot of financial stability for children's educational resources and access. With federal forms of assistance like these being rescinded, children are going to need our help more than ever.



MINORITY COMMUNITIES



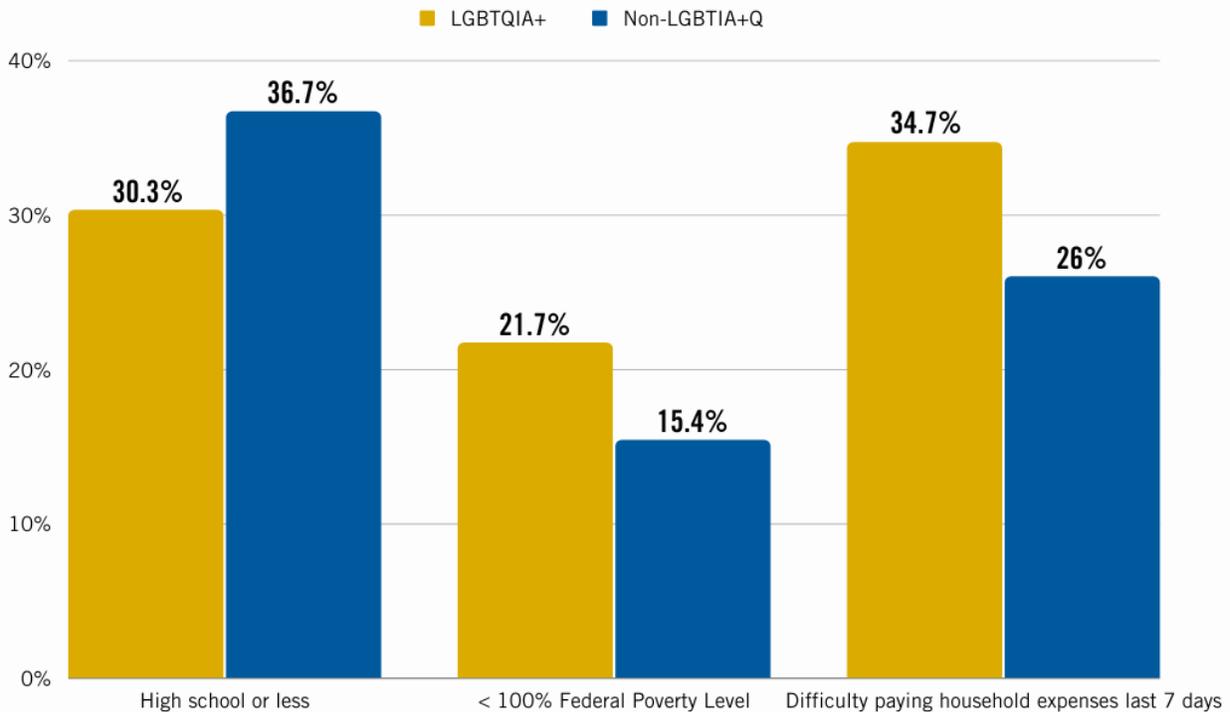
MINORITY COMMUNITIES

A huge barrier to effective assistance and reaching more in need is a lack of knowledge. Information and data on groups such as immigrants and the LGBTQIA+ community are not currently available from the Census Bureau or many current studies. There are many unique barriers that the immigrant and LGBTQIA+ community face, which makes it especially hard to reach and help them. Even within the communities, there are different subgroups with different needs. Currently, these two communities are falling through the cracks and a major gap in our efforts.

Studies consistently find that the LGBTQIA+ community is more vulnerable to food insecurity and poverty for various reasons. Despite “slightly higher levels of educational attainment among LGBT people” compared to non-LGBT people, “unemployment in the workforce, poverty, and difficulty paying for household expenses” were more common among LGBT than non-LGBT people. 21.7% of LGBT adults reported an income below the federal poverty level, and 34.7% of them also reported difficulty paying for household expenses, including but not limited to “food, rent or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, student loans, and so on” in the last week.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Food-Insufficiency-Apr-2022.pdf>

LGBTQIA+ DISPARITIES

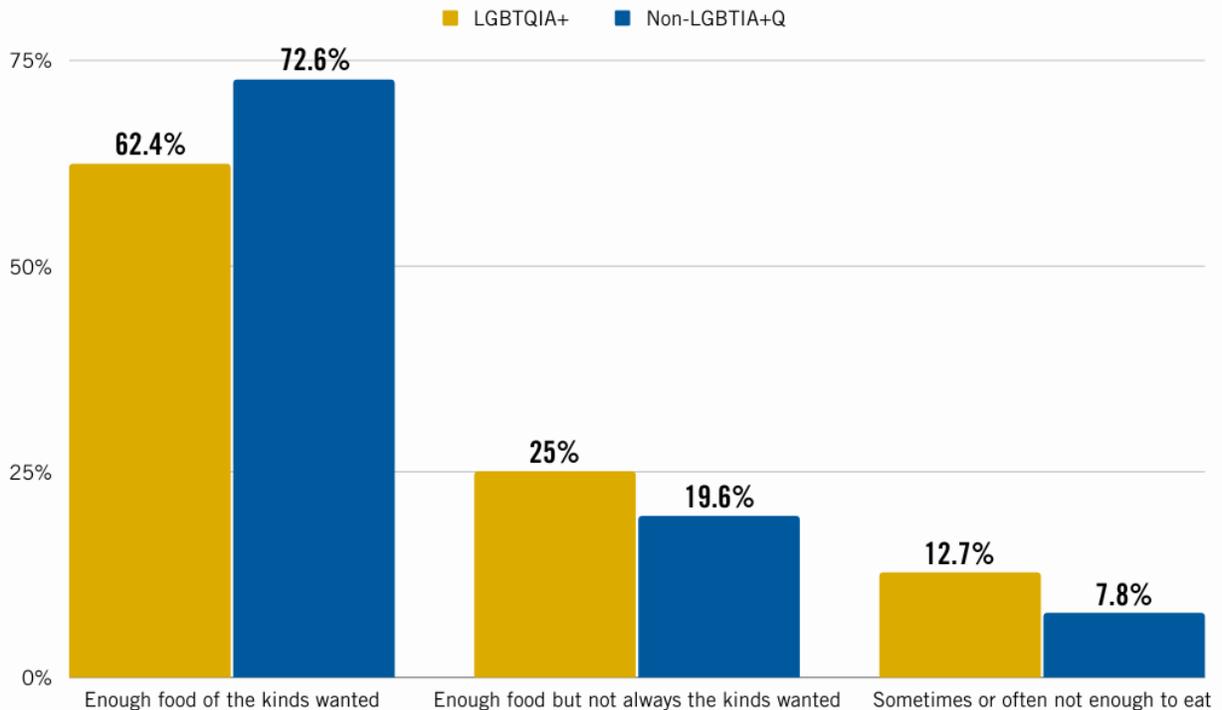


Source: "FOOD INSUFFICIENCY AMONG LGBT ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC" by UCLA Williams Institute, April 2022.

With food insecurity in particular, 12.7% of LGBT people reported "sometimes or often not having enough to eat" compared to 7.8% of non-LGBT peers.⁴⁷ Although more than a third of income-eligible LGBTQIA+ individuals are enrolled in SNAP, a huge majority remain unenrolled and still struggling with food security. This disparity occurs for various reasons—ranging from added difficulty in finding employment to fear of stigma with the food distribution providers.

⁴⁷ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Food-Insufficiency-Apr-2022.pdf>

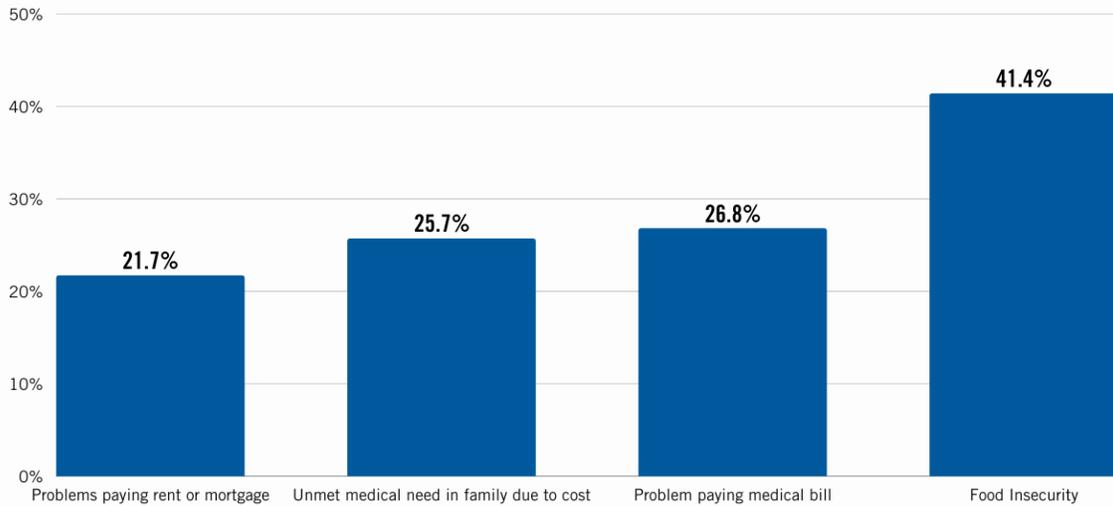
LGBTQIA+ FOOD INSECURITY DISPARITIES



Source: "FOOD INSUFFICIENCY AMONG LGBT ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC" by UCLA Williams Institute, April 2022.

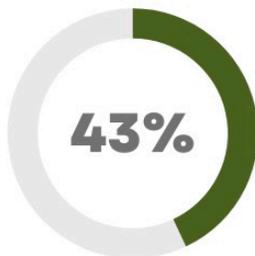
The immigrant community is not only more susceptible to food insecurity but faces more barriers to food assistance as well. A nationwide survey found that approximately 43% of those in low-income immigrant families reported being worried about paying for basic needs in the next month, including having enough to eat. Because immigrant households face greater burdens in healthcare, employment, housing, and more, food security is the first to go.

ADULTS IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES WHO REPORTED MATERIAL HARDSHIP



Despite many of them bearing these economic burdens, 27.5% of low-income immigrant families reported they or a family member avoided noncash benefits or other help with basic needs in 2020 because of immigration-related reasons. Amidst immigrant families with at least one nonpermanent resident (NPR), approximately 44% of them avoided noncash benefits or other help with basic needs because of immigration-related concerns.

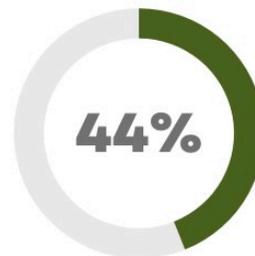
**LOW-INCOME
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES
WORRIED ABOUT PAYING
FOR BASIC NEEDS**



**LOW-INCOME
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES
AVOIDED NONCASH
BENEFITS**



**LOW-INCOME
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES
W/ NPR AVOIDED
NONCASH BENEFITS**



With food assistance specifically, 1 in 7 adults in eligible immigrant families (13.6%) said that they did not enroll in nutrition programs like SNAP because of “green card or other immigration concerns.”⁴⁸ Immigrant families avoid safety net programs due to stigma and fear, which is a unique barrier not yet properly addressed in the status quo.

⁴⁸ <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/adults-low-income-immigrant-families-were-deeply-affected-covid-19-crisis-yet-avoided-safety-net-programs-2020>



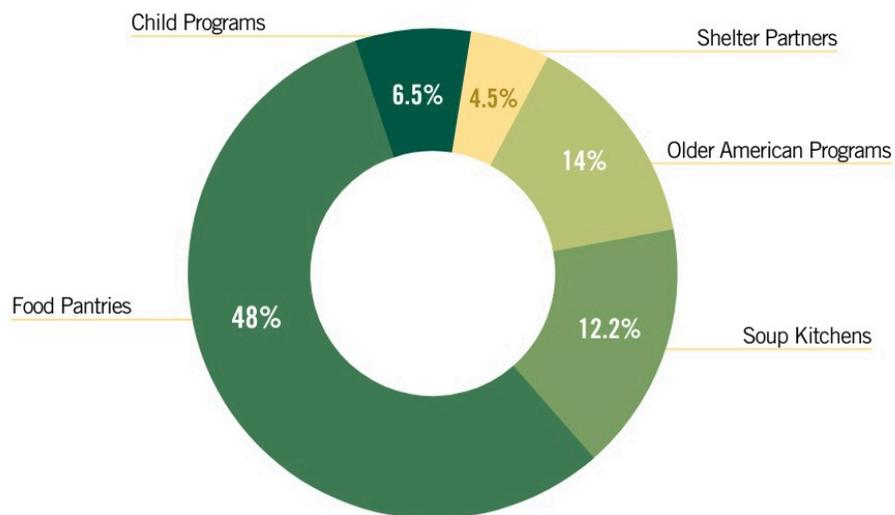
PARTNERS

PARTNERS

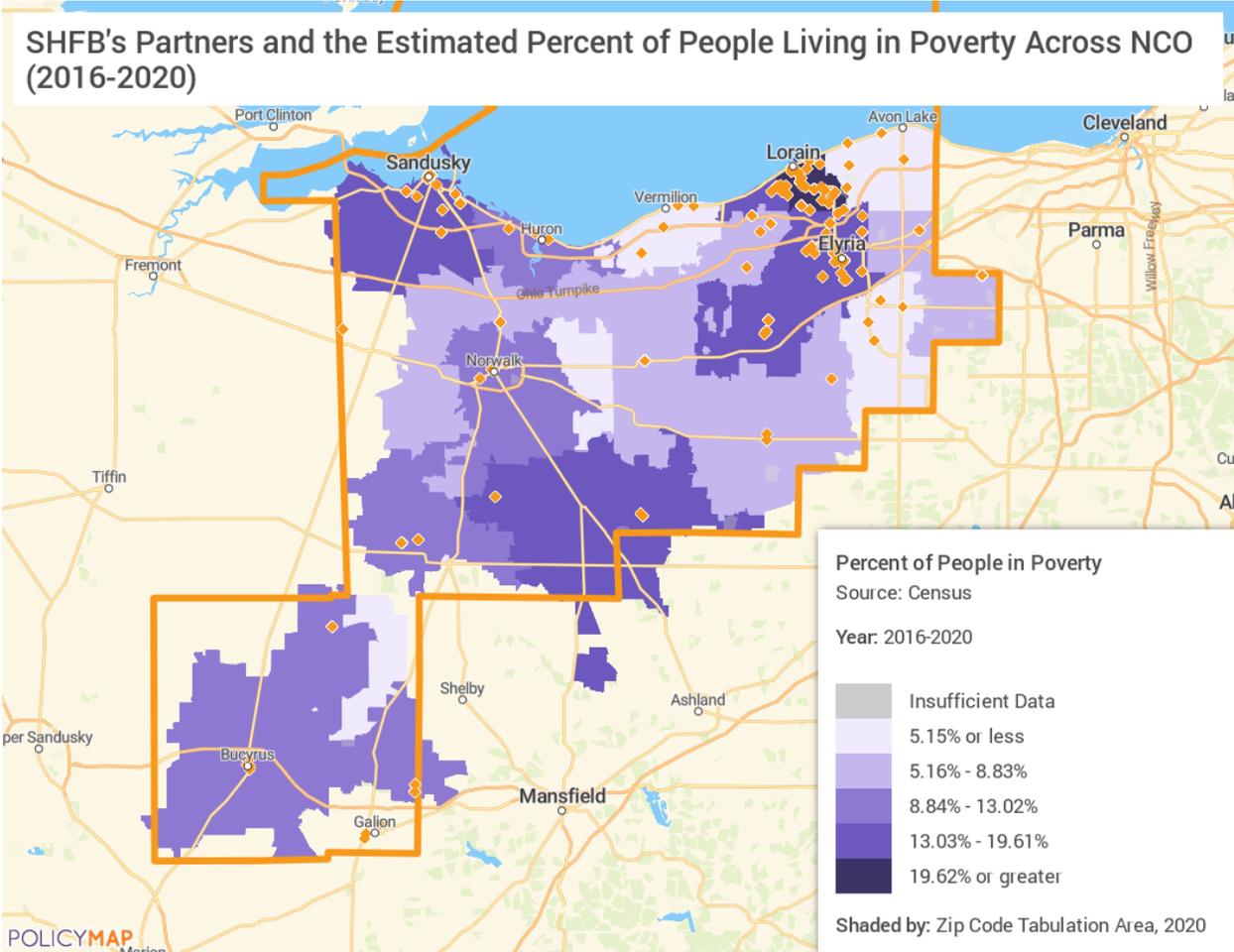
With new data on the landscape and social determinants, research on Second Harvest current partners is quite informative. The types of service partners we have and their locations indicate our networks' weaker areas and where to focus our future efforts. It is important to have a diverse, well-rounded pool of partners to build network that is effective and impactful. Moreover, with limited funds and capacity, focusing on and maximizing a limited list of partners will increase our efficiency and impact.

As of 2022, Second Harvest has 165 partners. Broken down, 82 of our partners are food pantries, while 48% of our partners overall are focused on food distribution. Meanwhile, 6.5% (11) of our partners focus on child programs like the Backpack program. When it comes to older American-focused organizations, 14% (24) of our Partners are CSFP. 4.5% are Shelter Partners, 12.2% are soup kitchen organizations, and the rest are categorized as other (e.g., job services).

Types of Partners

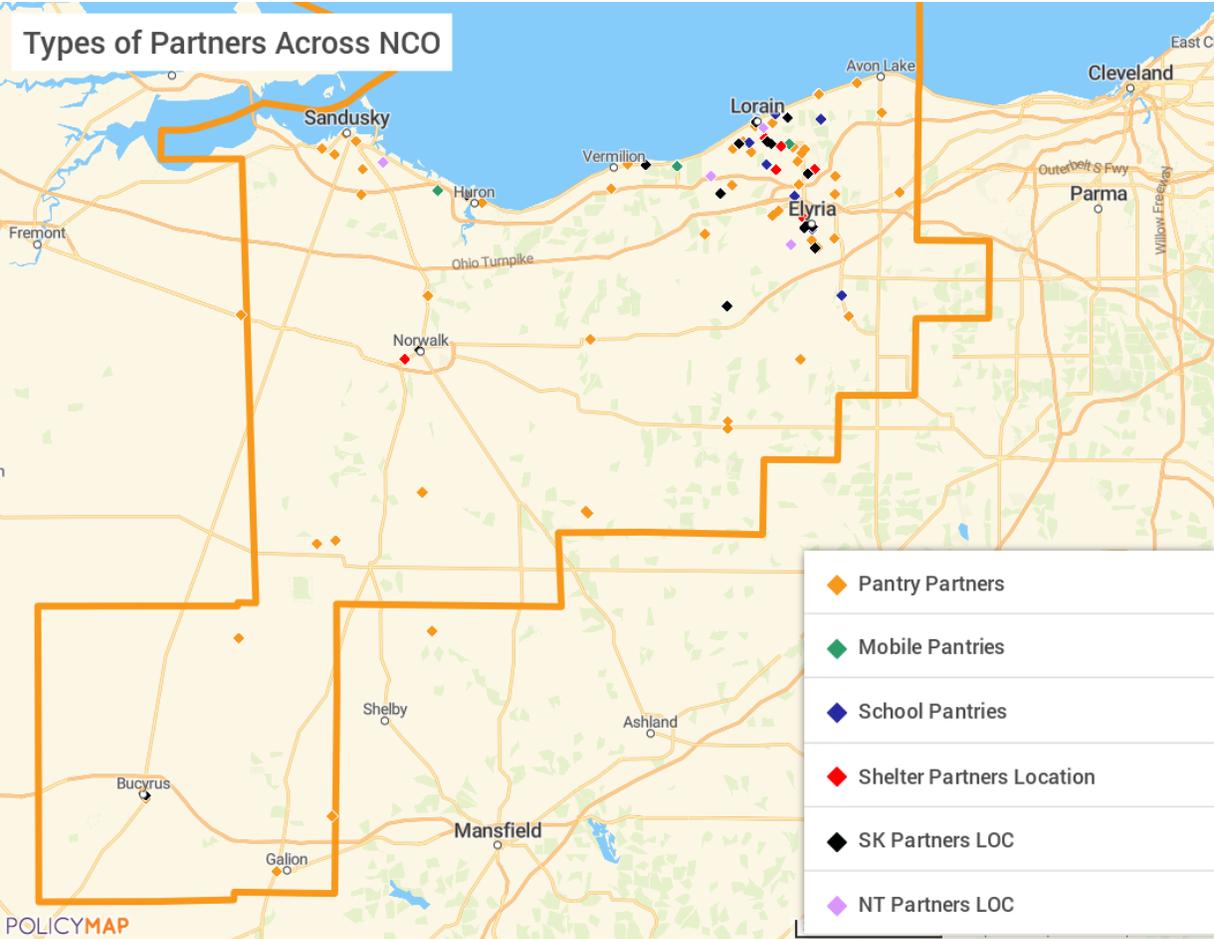


In addition to the type of partners, other factors to keep in mind is geographical location and scope. Currently, there are service gaps and apartheid areas prominently in Erie, Huron, and Crawford County. Second Harvest is limited in its resources and staff, but this is where partners can come in. Investing in new and old partners in these regions will strengthen our coalition across the four counties we serve.



As important as geographical scope spread of our partners is, looking into the concentration of partners based on their service type is crucial as well. Food insecurity is an issue that goes beyond food and nutrition. Housing, employment, welfare, family resources, and more are all social determinants that directly dictate food security for communities. As seen in the map below, within Lorain County,

there is a great diversity of partners. However, when we go towards Huron, Erie, and Crawford County, there is little variance in partner types. It is predominantly pantry partners, when these rural regions especially have other needs. Seeing this data can push for future investment in not only more partners in the area, but different types of partners that provide other basic needs.



Although there is a solid foundation with numerous types of partners, Second Harvest would be able to have more impact with more diverse partners in the healthcare, housing, and job and family services sectors. With our limited capacity, there is strength and beauty in having a network of partners to fill in gaps and expand our scope in the fight against hunger. Continuing to evaluate, improve, and invest in our network is key to maximizing our impact and scope.

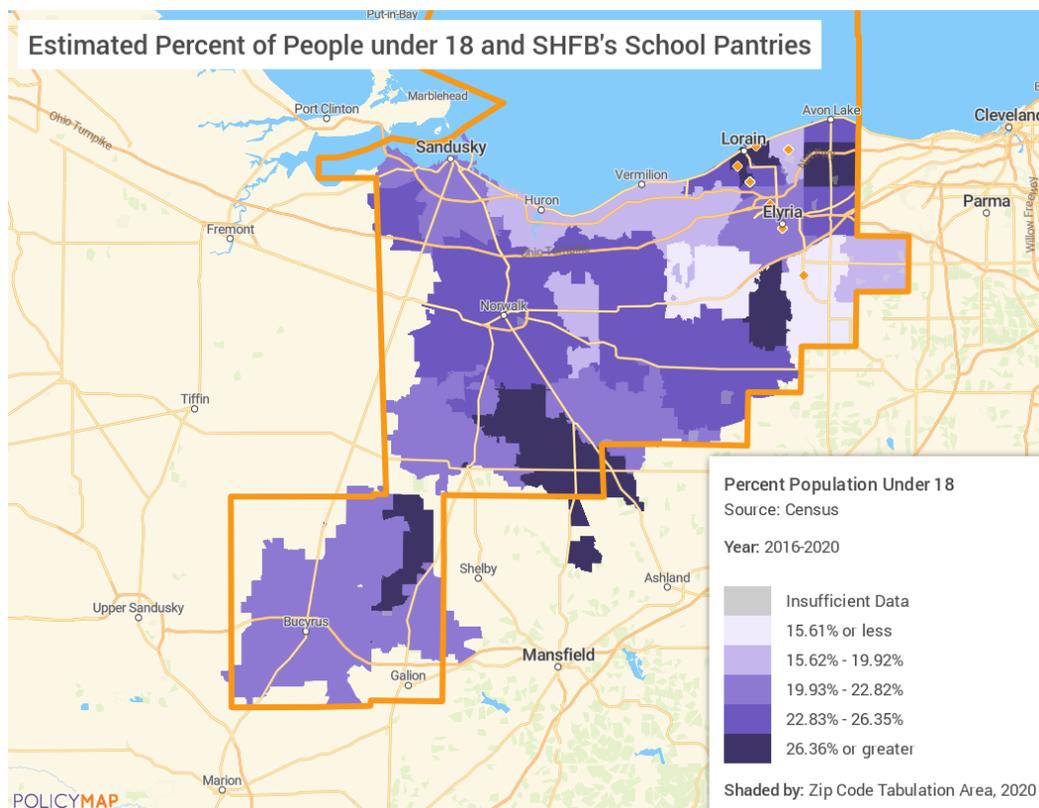
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, there are many actionable recommendations for Second Harvest and partners. They are categorized by Programmatic, Research centered, and Coalition based recommendations. With a myriad of proposals, Second Harvest can comprehensively improve internally and maximize impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGAMMATIC

Assess and move Child Hunger Programs accordingly – Based on the density and geographical location of the child population, we must assess our specific programs for children like School Pantries and evaluate whether we should keep or move their locations.



Currently, our school pantry programs are concentrated in Lorain County, with none in Erie, Huron, or Crawford County. Notably, Erie and Huron specifically have a higher population density of children, with 15,131 and 14,019 kids respectively.⁴⁹ These are unaddressed communities that Second Harvest should

consider expanding geographically to, informing the partners we invest in more in the future.

Reform our approach to Child Assistance – More than programs such as school pantries that specifically focus on children, investing in partners and resources for families overall will have better long-term impact. Research shows that a parent’s mental health plays a huge role in a children’s long-term resilience and capabilities. However, with low-income jobs, unstable housing, and more, parents are often overwhelmed and face obstacles in cultivating a healthy environment for their kid. Prioritizing parents’ stability will subsequently support children and improve child hunger in the long run.

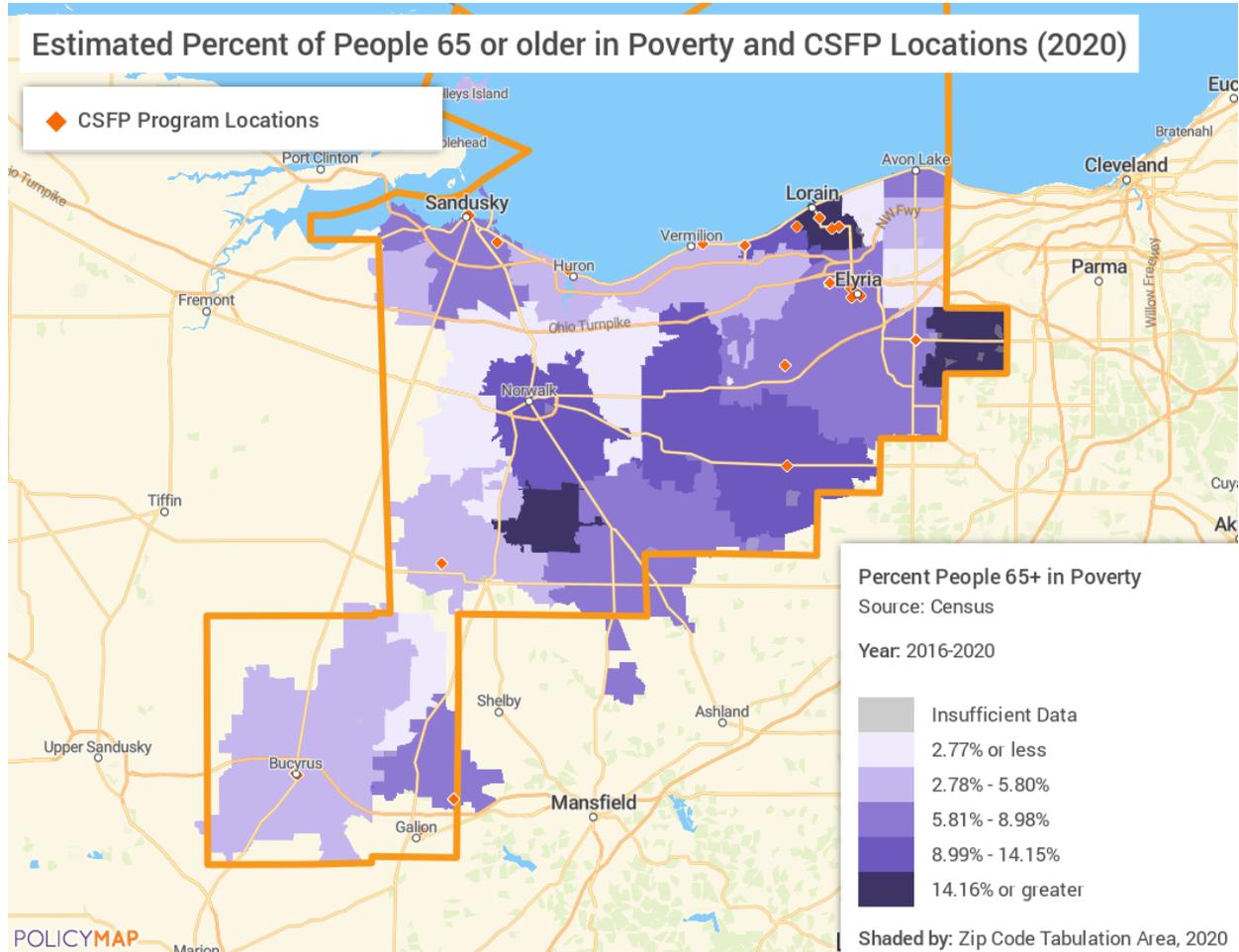
In Ohio, educational attainment is especially low, with only 34.5% of householders of families having a bachelor’s degree or more.⁵⁰ Investing in partnerships and resources for job services and education will give parents more economic mobility and support they need. One study that surveyed over 5,000 families found that hardship significantly decreased with the distribution of Economic Impact Payments in early 2021. Consequently, this decline was “followed by reduced emotional distress in parents/caregivers and their children in subsequent weeks.”⁵¹ In addition to educational resources and long-term assistance, short term financial assistance is just as impactful as well. When there is financial, comprehensive support, parents are less pressured and have more capacity to uplift their kids to a hunger-free, healthy future.

Expand Senior Boxes Program – Understanding older Americans are at more risk, we must analyze the data and evaluate which areas to prioritize with the current deserts and population in mind. Expanding Senior Boxes Program should be a

⁵⁰ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=families+poverty+ohio&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S1702>

⁵¹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/helping-families-meet-basic-needs-enables-parents-to-promote>

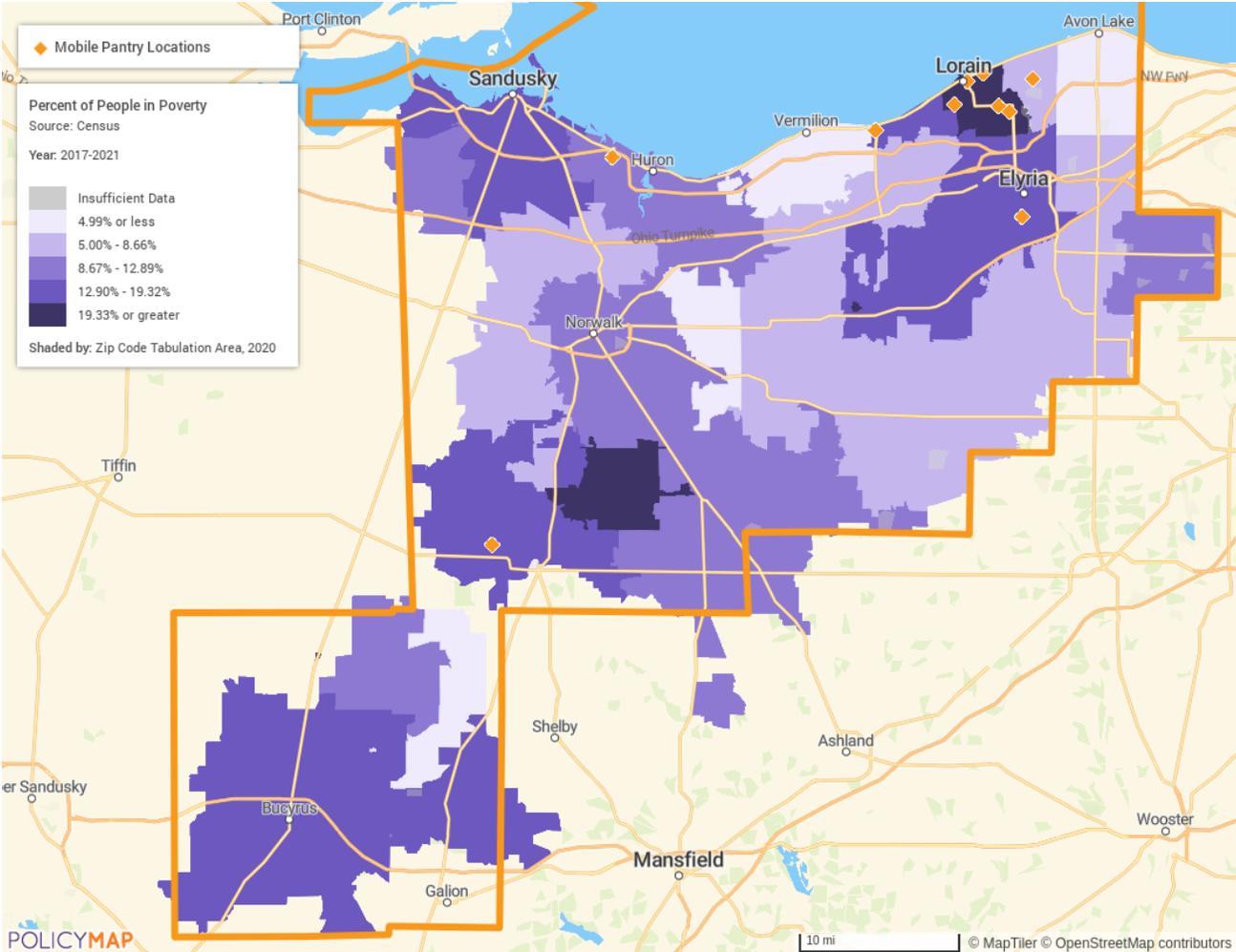
high priority for 2023 and beyond, with a continuous, upward trend of the older population.



Currently, Second Harvest's CSFP locations are heavily concentrated in Lorain County, with a few throughout the other counties. As the CSFP program continues to expand, Crawford County and Erie County are the pressing communities to address. Specifically, the Huron and Bucyrus area have more concentrated populations that make them ideal, potential strategic areas to target. These two regions are further away from Cleveland and cities that have more transportation and grocery stores. The geographical landscape and population demographic highlight an increasing need for our CSFP services.

Instead of just focusing on pushing Second Harvest’s capacity with CSFP, Second Harvest should consider investing in training more partners to be involved with CSFP. By first gauging interest in a survey and then developing a future training model, CSFP can expand in scope and impact within the network of partners. Not only would this bolster CSFP’s long-term effects but increase the geographical reach to target regions like Huron, Norwalk, and Bucyrus.

Assess mobile pantries – With transportation barriers and low-income jobs requiring demanding hours, the accessibility and capacity of mobile pantries should be continually assessed. The time, location, and frequency should all be analyzed based on the data of the community we serve.



Second Harvest's mobile pantries are strategically centered in heavily populated areas with people in poverty, but there are clear accessibility barriers for those in Crawford and Huron County. For future possible locations, somewhere in Huron County is an ideal, central site. This would be closer for those in Huron and Crawford, in a denser, populated region.

Hours and availability are limited for Second Harvest with mobile pantries occurring once a month. But, investing in a wide array of partners with comprehensive hours and services on other weeks can address the barrier of those in low-income jobs. Through information from the Partner Capacity Survey, Second Harvest can strategically support partners with different hours and capacities, to hopefully make food assistance more accessible and comprehensive for our community.

Become more visible advocates for policy – Second Harvest has a great foundation in clear, internal stances when it comes to policies for long term food security. As an organization, a like-minded culture is integral for this. All levels of the workforce must be trained to understand and be advocates themselves for policy shifts that will invariably help those we are serving. For instance, on topics like the Child Tax Credit or living wages, workers should participate in the organizational stance and support Second Harvest's efforts.

To enable others to engage in policy advocacy, having more information sessions on current policy changes, organizationally transforming the culture, and being more public by participating in opinion articles in local newspapers and events are all means to shift organizationally in this way.

RESEARCH CENTERED

Gather more nuanced, comprehensive data on our service area's older adult population – To better address the various needs of the older adult community as a whole, gathering more data based on different age groups is integral. Currently, the Census Bureau does not gather data on anything more than those beyond 60 and above, which overlooks many older Americans' particular needs. Gathering more quantitative and qualitative data on those 50-60, 60-79, and 80 and above will improve our services and inform us on what *all* older adults need.

Conduct a Program Capacity Assessment with Partners – To boost cohesiveness and efficiency as an increasing network of partners, gathering feedback from partners is integral. A partnership is a two-way street, and both agencies need to be on the same page to maximize their effectiveness. This assessment is most informative through surveys sent out to all partners.

Important information to seek in the survey are partners' mission, capacity, needs, and current involvement in the network of partners. The survey will provide qualitative and quantitative data that can inform how Second Harvest taps into and supports our partners.

Conduct a more thorough inspection of Partners firsthand- In addition to the partner capacity assessment Second Harvest will conduct, gathering more firsthand, qualitative data will provide more information on our partners. Using Feeding America's program assessment toolkit, Second Harvest can gain survey data and insight from employees working at partner organizations.⁵²

Another tool used by many food banks is a Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Toolkit, which is an observational survey that does an environmental scan of

⁵² [Program Capacity Assessment.docx](#)

partners. Conducting this e-scan with our major partners will inform us of their strengths and the ways we can best work with each other.⁵³ Taking time to see our partner's environment, resources, quality of food offered, and more is all qualitative information that cannot be accessed easily. Overall, it will foster better relations and bolster the cohesiveness of Second Harvest's network of partners.⁵⁴

Invest in data collection and interpretation - Studies show that the primary obstacle to effective partnership with other food banks and external agents (e.g. Hospitals) is data collaboration.⁵⁵ Most food banks are not well versed in data collection and interpretation, or let alone have the staff and capacity to manage it. However, data is integral to garnering financial and social support.

Moreover, having established resources and infrastructure for data makes it easier to collaborate with partners, acquire more diverse partners (outside of the food bank sector), and improve communication overall. Whether it is allocating a role for data collection or looking to a third-party data collector, Second Harvest should evaluate how to strengthen data collection and coordination amongst partners as well.

A potential initiative to investigate as well is overhauling trainings for volunteers and partners in data collection through PantryTrak and other data sources. In an ESRC IAA-funded knowledge exchange project amongst a network of food banks in the UK, training volunteers on mobile devices on a system like PantryTrak significantly improved the coalition's data collection.⁵⁶ Expanding what information is required to note on PantryTrak will provide invaluable, localized data on the communities we serve. Overall, doing more consistent trainings and having a

⁵³ https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2088/2018/09/HFPAT_FINAL.pdf

⁵⁴ https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2088/2018/09/Instructions_FINAL.pdf

⁵⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8572069/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/understanding-hunger-strengthening-data-collection-on-foodbank-use-and-intervention-in-the-uk>

structural change in our network can address the current barriers we face with data. This information can hopefully fill in the gaps that this report has found and improve collaboration amongst organizations in the network.

Emphasize research and feedback on minority communities – Researching more by analyzing best practices will help inform future care and approaches. For many food banks, they have created a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Council to represent these communities symbolically and practically.⁵⁷ Internally, considering having explicit mottos and/or logos can also visually inform and invite these individuals in.

Additionally, more research must be done on migrant communities specifically. Within the immigrant community, there is a key distinction between the immigrant versus migrant population. Although data from the Census Bureau and the state does not give specific numbers on the migrant population, they are still a very relevant community to look into and reach. Migrant individuals have a very different lived experience of poverty, with different barriers with the political climate and attitudes they face. They have different needs and burdens overall, that require a tailored approach.

Lastly, to directly reach these communities, partnering with numerous organizations that represent these communities will supplement more insight. More than tapping into the information they can provide, giving them a voice and spot at the table will improve our services and better welcome those in the LGBTQIA+ community. Bolstering visual representation is important and effective. In our service region, there are numerous prospective partners beyond those highlighted/spotlighted in the Appendix. Investing in a relationship with them will

⁵⁷ <https://www.greaterclevelandfoodbank.org/files/assets/deicouncilreport2022final1.pdf>

enrich our ability to reach all of our community and connect with the community more.

LGBTQ+ LORAIN COUNTY

- As a nonprofit organization, LGBTQ+ Lorain County collaborates with community partners to facilitate access to local and regional services and engage the community at large to support LGBTQ+ individuals and allies in Lorain County.

EL CENTRO

- Latino nonprofit organization that strives to enhance socio-economic status of Greater Lorain County through social, educational, cultural, and community development
- Commitment to quality bilingual/bi-cultural services

LORAIN COUNTY URBAN LEAGUE

- Organization that strives to empower and connect African Americans and all disadvantaged individuals in our communities to opportunities since 1978.

COALITION BASED

Tap into urban farms in strategic areas – Urban farms are a sustainable, long-term solution that could alleviate a lot of the burdens hungry, low-income individuals bear. With agriculture being one of, if not top industry in Ohio, this approach is especially suitable. These farms would address transportation, accessibility, and food desert concerns which are major obstacles we are currently dealing with.

Studies have demonstrated Urban Agriculture can often produce equal, or sometimes higher yields of fruit and vegetable crops per square meter than on rural farms in other developing countries. Specifically, systems covered in the study produced twice the average yield of rural organic farms.⁵⁸ More than the quantity of food it provides, however, the quality of produce it generates makes urban farms worthwhile. When urban farms are strategically placed in food deserts, individuals have easy access to nutritious, fresh foods.

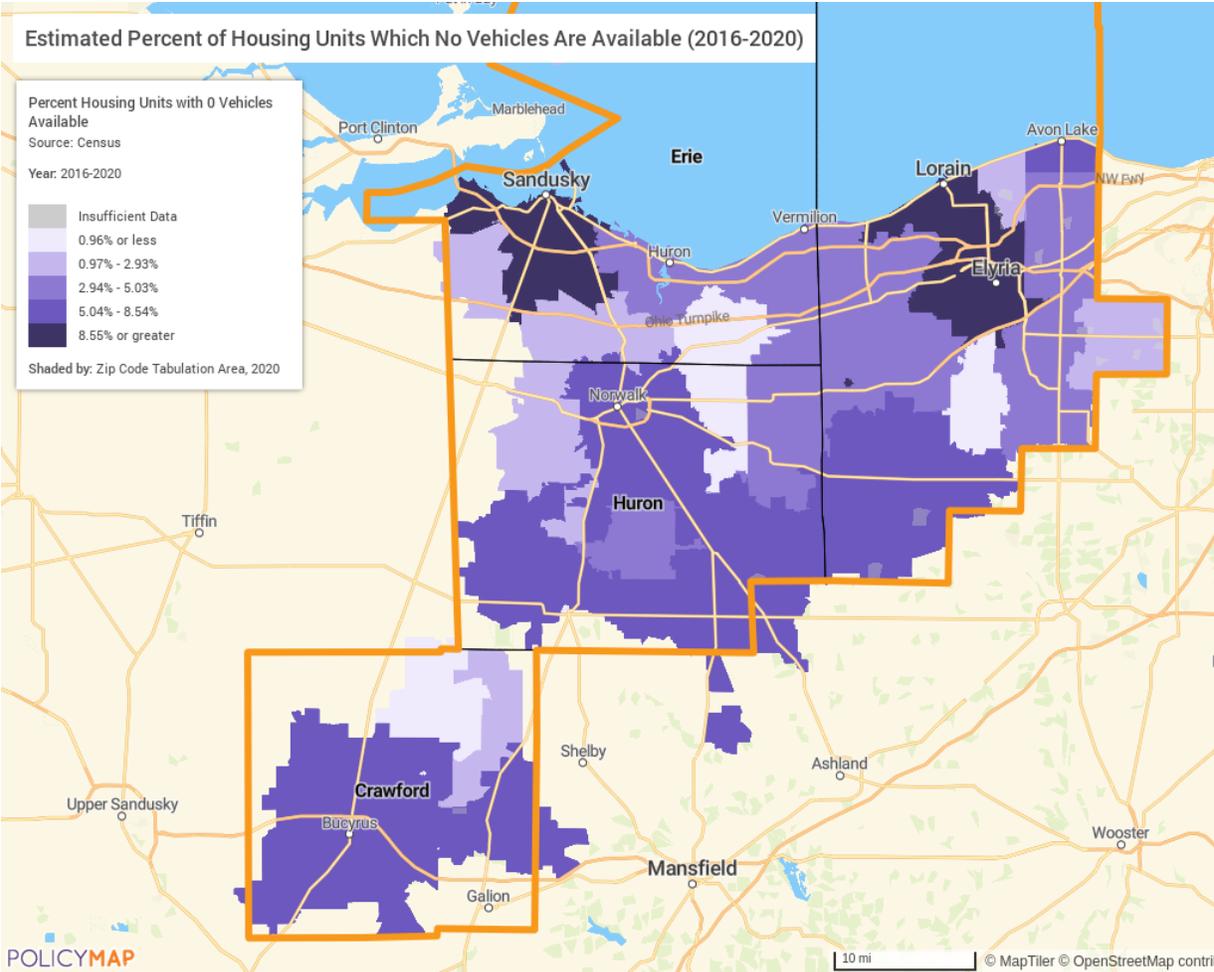
Urban farms are not only sources of food, but also promote food sovereignty, or the ability of communities to determine the quantity and quality of the food that they consume by controlling how their food is produced and distributed. Urban Agriculture is a community-centered initiative that will give locals more mobility and a say in the type of food they receive. Additionally, there are positive social effects such as community bonding, increased community activism, and less stigmatization with urban farms. Economically, they are proven to generate jobs, provide skills training, and had substantial savings on food for participants and farmers themselves.⁵⁹

Second Harvest currently invests in urban farms like Solidarity Farms and should continue to do so. Additionally, Second Harvest should invest in future partners

⁵⁸ <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1809707115>

⁵⁹ <https://ucanr.edu/sites/CEprogramevaluation/files/215003.pdf>

that either are actively involved in or have great insight in urban farming. If partnering and scoping out future locations to implement urban gardens, there are a few important factors to prioritize. First and foremost, putting it in communities in food deserts and/or living in poverty is key. Secondly, putting it in a location where there is a concentrated population/community will maximize the benefits of the community and its scope.



For instance, based on the rates of individuals with no access to vehicles in more concentrated communities, Sandusky, Elyria, and Lorain are all ideal regions to invest in. Looking into potential partners to invest in within those areas can alleviate the burdens that come with these apartheid areas.

Establish a community hub space across all service counties – Integrating a hub model into our community would provide a physical, accessible network of resources for people to access. More than establishing the model itself, the hub can serve as a way to develop new partnerships and strengthen current ones. With more collaboration and communication, food banks can work more effectively with other actors such as healthcare providers, job services, and the housing sector. As we enhance our services to be more comprehensive and sufficient, a hub model is a way to do so in a tangible, experiential way.

With the upcoming Sandusky Hub, taking time to invest in the community relationally and informationally is key. Whether it be conducting more surveys, having more focus groups, or a community engagement plan, these are key to maximizing the efficiency of the hub. Furthermore, conducting a partner assessment of the area would be beneficial. The organizations we partner with for the hub will dictate a big part of its impact. Focusing on community-based partners and partners that offer other essential services beyond food assistance will enhance the hub.

Establish ongoing feedback loops for community members – Information and communication are key when trying to address a multi-faceted problem such as hunger. Continuing to conduct landscape assessments each year will help, but having a mechanism for community members to give feedback to Second Harvest will enrich future landscape assessments and our work in general. However, there can be high costs and burdens on both community members and organizations with certain methods such as focus groups, community participatory research, or large-scale surveys. Client feedback loops are an emerging, long-term alternative approach with hopes of being low cost and low burden.

Client feedback loops establish 1 to 3 organizational concerns/priorities and then can collaborate intentionally with the community in three phases. Firstly, in a

listening phase, community members would give large-scale, low-burden client feedback through short questionnaires. These questionnaires can be done on paper or electronically, facilitated by a third-party data collector. Next, member agency leaders, community members, and/or agency staff/volunteers participate in small-scale discussions to elaborate on feedback from the listening phase. Here, substantive solutions are brainstormed and suggested. With all this information, Second Harvest would finally act by addressing client feedback and being transparent with clients on how their input was used. These three phases merge the strengths of “large-scale feedback models” and “smaller, local-based participatory models” to have widespread representation, lower client burden, and in-depth input from the community.”⁶⁰

Previous practices of this model found that client feedback loops drastically impacted organizational culture, improved skills in gathering and interpreting client feedback, and boosted relations with the community. Participating food banks agreed that some, if not a lot of change came out of this process.⁶¹ Feedback loops are a very suitable tool for Second Harvest, as its experimentation was centered in Akron, Ohio, and generated success in both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, gathering feedback demands great capacity, but feedback loops can be done with volunteers and is long-term and continuous in nature. With Second Harvest’s current resources and community, implementing feedback loops are viable.

Evaluate and establish a plan for our partner network – Based on data from the Partner Capacity Survey and research done in this report, Second Harvest should take action. Whether this be investing in new partners, focusing more on particular current ones, or strategically investing our own services based on our other partners, taking the information to internally improve is crucial.

⁶⁰ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98371/pathways_for_community_voices_1.pdf

⁶¹ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98371/pathways_for_community_voices_1.pdf

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

LGBTQIA+ Organizations	About
Firelands Counseling Recovery Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Part of the Firelands Regional Medical Center •10 offices across 7 counties including Lorain, Erie, Huron, & Sandusky •Experienced counselors
Family Planning Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A reproductive healthcare organization providing Lorain County residents with variety of services (e.g. STI screening/treatment, health exams, etc.)
Whole Woman Gynecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •They are a welcoming practice for members of the LGBT community and are happy to care for all people in all stages of gender of affirmation.
Lorain Community College (LCC) Pride Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Student-run organization that does fundraising, holds meetings to discuss outings and special community events to encourage individual diversity and connects LGBTQ students with support and resources.
(T) Margie's Hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An agency based in Akron that serves transgender individuals
(T) Plum Creek Associates, Inc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provides counseling for mental health issues to LGBTQ people. •Is known for aiding in gender transitioning, including recommendations for hormones and surgery
The Nord Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Have counselors experienced with helping LGBTQIA+ individuals

<p>Plexus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce for Northeast Ohio •They have a directory of LGBTQ-friendly businesses, educational programming for businesses to increase their inclusivity, and advocates for workplace equality
<p>GLSEN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LGBT education programs for staff of schools and businesses, helps start and support Gay-Straight Alliance groups (GSA's) in schools.
<p>LGBT Center of Cleveland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A one-stop hub, it provides a welcoming and visible safe space, health and wellness services, government and media outreach, social events, etc. •Resource that provides referrals to other services

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT TOOL KIT



Prepared by Taylor Unoki, Emerson Hunger Fellow
In Collaboration with Second Harvest

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INTRODUCTION

Landscape assessments are an established, effective tool for an organization's internal evaluation of its programs and performance. By gathering quantitative and qualitative data on the community's demographic, geographical resources, regional landscape, and community needs, an organization can see the gaps and address what needs more attention.

However, there is not much research or resources on how to comprehensively conduct a landscape assessment. It is not a small endeavor—it requires great preparation and capacity. Going through the process of conducting a landscape assessment reveals gaps and limitations in the status quo. With this toolkit, other organizations and programs can avoid running into barriers or limitations due to lack of oversight/foresight.

USING THIS TOOLKIT

This Landscape Assessment toolkit was created to help other organizations and food banks in an innovative project heavily rooted in data, a field largely undeveloped in the food bank world. By analyzing intrinsic experience, case studies, and best practices, this toolkit aims to comprehensively guide readers.

The toolkit goes in sequential order starting at the preparation phase and ending with follow up and future steps. Within each phase, there are actionable steps integral to succeeding. Each step of the way is founded on three fundamental, core principles: racially equitable, community-oriented, and data-informed action.

PREPARATION

Before conducting a landscape assessment, preparing is arguably the most important part of the entire process for two reasons. First, it is a big project that takes up a lot of time and capacity. Second, a lot of the resources it requires takes numerous months. Specifically, collecting qualitative data takes a lot of time and coordination among different groups. Being prepared to address both challenges is integral to the success and maximizing the assessment's impact. Going through these next three steps will ensure you are ready to get started.

ASSESSING CAPACITY

Before diving into the project, you should ensure your organization is ready. Many other organizations emphasize the importance of capacity across the entire organization, not just one individual or the leading team. There are many ways to evaluate readiness:

- 1. Evaluate current programs/projects** – Has your organization just started a new project or multiple projects? Is your organization in a busy season? Is there an upcoming big project? The landscape assessment will suffer and run into many logistical issues if there are many competing priorities. Making sure the team and/or individuals who are in charge do not have other responsibilities for the project's duration is important for it to be finished.
- 2. Decide and allocate responsibilities to the relevant parties** – Who is the lead on this project? Which departments will be involved in this process? Landscape assessments require internal coordination and often involve more than just one team. Deciding and communicating these responsibilities will set the project up for success. If there is not a clear person or team that can take on the project, you will know that you need to hire more individuals.

See below for the roles/responsibilities commonly needed and examples on how food banks approached it.

- 3. Check current data capacity** – Before starting, you should check how much data you have access to and what (if any) data infrastructure/resources you have in place. Evaluating your organization’s current data capabilities will inform numerous things—whether you need to hire additional help, what kind of new data you gather for the project, if you need to take additional steps to set up data-gathering resources, and even what the primary mission of the project is. Moreover, finding all the data you already have is key so you can organize it accordingly. Conducting a landscape assessment means you will be handling a lot of data, so organizing what you already have will prepare you better.

DETERMINING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

More than capacity, it is arguably important to make sure you define the mission of this project. A landscape assessment can be quite vast. With no direction or specific mission, the project can become too unrealistically big and lose impact. There are different approaches that can help consolidate the project’s mission:

- 1. Reference your organization’s mission/vision statement** – Looking at your organization’s mission statement will help inform what your assessment’s vision is as well. Landscape assessments are meant to align with your organizational vision and practically find ways to improve and make achieving your mission more possible. With your overarching mission in mind, the landscape assessment should focus its research on areas very relevant to it.
- 2. Look at your organization’s strategic plan** – In addition to your organization’s mission/vision statement, your strategic plan will also further sharpen the landscape assessment’s focus. First and foremost, checking if

your strategic plan has changed recently is important. The strategic plan also lays out a clear timeline of upcoming projects and directions your organization is headed. Seamlessly incorporating the landscape assessment into the plan will make the project more beneficial for your organization and make it go more smoothly.

3. Convening and deciding what the mission is from an early stage – Directly meeting sooner, rather than later helps catalyze the start of the project. To maximize the meeting's impact, inviting all relevant departments and individuals is key. Deciding the mission and guiding principles together will make communication and collaboration cohesive. Landscape assessments are most effective when the organization's culture as a whole is like-minded and all in.

4. If relevant, communicating the vision early on to partners – If your project will involve data or general collaboration with partners, then conveying your values and vision to them from the start will help them be on the same page. Furthermore, having a distinct vision to articulate will incentivize partners in your network to actively participate, or even know what additional resources they can offer beyond what you are asking for.

With all these steps, your organization should be easily able to decide on which values and vision are relevant for you. For additional inspiration/help, see examples of specific guiding visions/principles of other food banks' landscape assessments below:

GETTING STARTED

After fully preparing, your organization is ready to get started. However, there are initial, actionable steps that are important before fully diving in. Before getting into it, make sure you did the following:

- 1. Outline concrete outcomes** – After establishing a clear vision and guiding principles, the outcomes will naturally follow. Outlining outcomes is important to ensure the vision can be achieved in a practical, tangible way. Outcomes are a good form of standards and measure regarding the success and scope of your landscape assessment. Any unmet outcomes or new outcomes that arise over time can inform future landscape assessments and services from your organization.
- 2. Make a substantial work plan/timeline** – Now that you have created your goals/outcomes, you should follow them up with a work plan and timeline. Having a work plan will be a resource that consolidates your guiding principles and outcomes in a comprehensible way. Making a timeline acts as accountability and creates checkpoints for your outcomes, hopefully keeping the momentum throughout the entire duration of the project.
- 3. Communicate the above to relevant partners** – Lastly, you should send the outcomes, work plan, and timeline to your partners. This will help them be aware of relevant deadlines and see the big picture, so they know how to prepare and be ready to collaborate. Oftentimes, many food banks attest that they will be waiting on data or action from partners due to a lack of communication. Sending all of the above to them gets rid of a very common, difficult obstacle.

COLLECTING DATA

The heart of this project is gathering, analyzing, and articulating the data.

Gathering data is probably the most time-consuming, but pivotal step. It is integral to collect both quantitative and qualitative data—and specifically qualitative data is what is often takes up the most time.

Quantitative data’s strength lies in its ability to display the trends, results, and gaps that currently exist in a community. It can paint a big picture and represent the community as a whole. Because of its strength, it is a succinct, informative way to prove and represent findings. There are many ways to approach and apply quantitative data, and many food banks have great examples.

Food Bank	Data Approaches
Food Bank of the Rockies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Researching over 100 academic articles •Surveys from 100 partners
Atlanta Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Census Tract Data •Oasis Insights, their organizational data tool
HACAP Food Reservoir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Feeding America Client Survey •Social Triage & Response Assessment
Second Harvest of NCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Census Data •Pantrytrak (internal data interface) •Local Data from Lorain Health County Dept

In addition to a wide array of sources of quantitative data, there are diverse ways to calculate and measure quantitative data as well. On a national, state, and sometimes county level, quantitative data is plentiful with census data and large-scale research. However, for more local, individualized needs, quantitative data is not widespread. This tends to become a big challenge for organizations when trying to complete the landscape assessment. There are many common tools/resources to help get a head start and gather localized quantitative data.

However, without qualitative data, quantitative data’s impact/meaning is incomplete. First and foremost, qualitative data steps in to explain the *why* behind

the trends, gaps, and overall findings. More importantly, it requires taking the time to directly hear from community members and participating agencies, keeping the quantitative data community-centered and authentic. The two are both necessary and complementary to each other, as many food banks have also found.

Food Bank	Data Approaches	Pre-established Conditions
Food Bank of the Rockies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Learned from other food banks •Interviews with 12 community organizations •Conducted 7 focus groups 	
Northwest Arkansas Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conducted multiple rounds of surveys at partner pantry distributions 	
HACAP Food Reservoir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Collaborating with/Interviewing local ethnic markets •Assessments with immigrant/refugee families 	
Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Invests heavily in one partner: The Immigrant Welcome Center •Interviewed volunteers/employees at The Immigrant Welcome Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Focused primarily on improving their internal resources like customer service, demographics of community, barriers, etc.
The Idaho Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Worked with community liasons •Held focus groups with community members 	
Blue Ride Area Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tap into established partner engagement managers •Conversing/surveying with 50 community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Not looking for more ways to expand; Trying to be community centered and support other community partners
Second Harvest Food Bank of NCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Surveyed Partners 	

Houston Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Self survey through QR codes at distributions •Hour long phone interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Already had great quantitative data on trends in the area
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The number one challenge with landscape assessments is having enough time and resources to execute this two-pronged approach. However, intrinsic experience and feedback from other food banks emphasize the necessity of having both. With this emphasis in mind, follow these steps to set yourself up best:

- 1. Choose the standard/criteria when measuring data** – Refer to the chart or whatever potential criteria your organization may have developed. Deciding on the calculations and measures you are utilizing will inform how and what you do when collecting data.
- 2. Evaluate questions/methods extensively** – In any survey, focus group, or means of gathering data, the questions are critical to determining what information you can get. There are two key elements to questions—that they be objective and measurable, and racially equitable/empowering. With too much focus on objectivity, the nuances and important details will be overlooked. See below for tools and suggestions on how to craft the most impactful, informative questions.

Meetings to craft questions?

Likert scale and other resources to suggest how to best cultivate questions
- 3. Create a timeline for survey/chosen data collecting method** – Like the preparation phase, you should not rush the phase of gathering data. You should create a timeline with plenty of margin, allowing for plenty of time for targeted users to respond, so you can extract the most information. After researching and interviewing food banks, there were various responses depending on the data collecting mechanism.

- **Survey** – one month for preparation, one month for responses
- **Focus groups** – one month for preparation, almost 3 months for execution
- **Quantitative Research** – 2 weeks to gather sufficient information and data.
 - o Other organizations note needing up to a month if drawing from collaborative data with partners or other organizations

Beyond pacing, constructing a timeline is also beneficial for having a deadline for survey recipients and yourself.

- 4. Administer the survey/chosen method** – Although launching your data collection resource seems to be the simplest step, there are still important details to note. First, choosing whether to do it through a virtual platform or on paper is pivotal. Many organizations recommend doing it virtually, as surveys on paper creates more manual labor when cleaning and analyzing the data.

Throughout this phase, it is important to send reminders periodically and be actively available to answer questions or requests. As Feeding America states, a food bank in Portland even had “office hours” to provide assistance for partners and users. This will ensure that you not only get enough responses, but the most accurate, relevant information as well.

- 5. Collect data** – As you collect data, it is important to do so promptly, consistently, and in an organized manner. Listed below are common strategies and resources to assist in the process.

Make a key that deciphers the concise, code that you should use when titling and archiving data you are collecting.

On large scale projects, having a key to refer to makes it easier for data collaboration with other partners and sharing the files with other members of your organization.

Resources for Collecting Data:

- Excel
- Box
- Tableau
- arcGIS
- Yammer for Insight and more recommendations
- Feeding America's HungerNet
- PolicyMap
- Investigate potentially hiring a consultant

6. Record data collection methodology – Recording your methodology and how it went throughout the entire process will prove useful later when you write the actual landscape assessment report. In addition, it will prove as a form of accountability and show integrity with your data.

ANALYZING DATA

1. Cleaning the data – Cleaning the data is key before starting any form of analysis or incorporating it in any way. After researching other organization's tips, be sure to do the following:

- Import data into Excel or CSV for a most user-friendly, accessible data-base.
- Making the data as compact and concise as possible ensures it is easy to analyze and input into other platforms when the time comes. Delete any unnecessary rows or columns that will not pertain to your project or visualization. Consider separating the data into different spreadsheets to keep the data organized, focused, and clean.
- Look at these resources from Feeding America for further tips on cleaning and organizing data:

- <https://conjointly.com/kb/data-preparation/>
- <http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/evaluation-guide/analyze/enter-organize-clean-data/>

2. Analyzing the data – A key tip in analyzing the data is drawing connections and doing intersectional analysis. Fighting food insecurity is not just on one, but rather multiple fronts. A landscape assessment by nature adopts this principle, by gathering data on all kinds of, non-food-related aspects of the community. Seeing the overlap in basic needs and thinking beyond each category will help in analyzing the data, and ultimately in making new revelations or recommendations.

For instance, in the data visualization above, research on transportation access was connected to established data on food deserts and areas of low-income. This enriched the analysis of the data available and expanded the conclusions that came out of the report. Collaborating with other partners who offer other basic needs, potentially having a consultant advise you in the data analysis, or implementing this approach yourself will set your analysis up for success.

VISUALIZING THE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Now that you have all the information and content prepared, displaying the landscape assessment is one of the final steps. There are multiple options when it comes to visualizing the project. Different factors may shape which approach is best for you.

1. **A written report** – This is often the most common way of producing the final project. Landscape assessments as published reports can help in easily informing future internal initiatives, grant applications, advocacy, and even build donor confidence. Organizations who have either of the following as a

relevant priority or who have yet to conduct a landscape assessment tend to opt for writing a report.

2. **A presentation** – If your organization is using the landscape assessment for mostly internal uses or even just within your network, organizing the results into a succinct, informative presentation is also effective. Oftentimes, organizations who already conduct landscape assessments regularly or did one of smaller, focused scale for internal purposes make it in a presentation format.
3. **Data visualizations on your organization’s website** – Sometimes, landscape assessments do not need to become a huge undertaking and are useful for brief updates on the organization’s website, or rather than writing a whole report, pieces of data and visuals can be incorporated in other organizational projects. Organizations who have limited capacity or other projects at the forefront tended to do this.

For the visual aspect of the landscape assessment, it can be hard to know where to begin. See the list below for helpful resources in user-friendly tools for data visualization.

- **LINE/BAR GRAPHS:**
 - o Tableau
 - o Excel
- **BASIC VISUALIZATIONS AND GRAPHIC DESIGN:**
 - o Canva
- **MAP VISUALS:**
 - o PolicyMap
 - o ARCGIS

FOLLOW UP AND LAST STEPS

After finalizing the Landscape Assessment, these last steps are very important for maximizing the impact of the project. The concluding part of this project includes 2 phases: following up with partners and measuring impact.

First, most organizations find it very helpful to share the findings and project with partners, stakeholders, and even community members in relevant situations. This can disseminate information to make those in our network on the same page and enrich the efforts of other organizations as well. Sharing it with community members builds confidence and relationship as well, with visible effort on your end in understanding the community.

Lastly, measuring impact of the project is informative and highly recommended. It is difficult to gauge the project's impact quantitatively, but there are concrete ways to still observe and evaluate the success of the project. Monitoring service numbers, sending follow up surveys to partners and community members, and seeing how many of the recommendations are implemented are all informative measures. Most importantly, following up with surveys or a form of feedback to community members is key. Evaluating how effective the landscape assessment was for your organization's services will inform future endeavors and how you can better serve your community.