



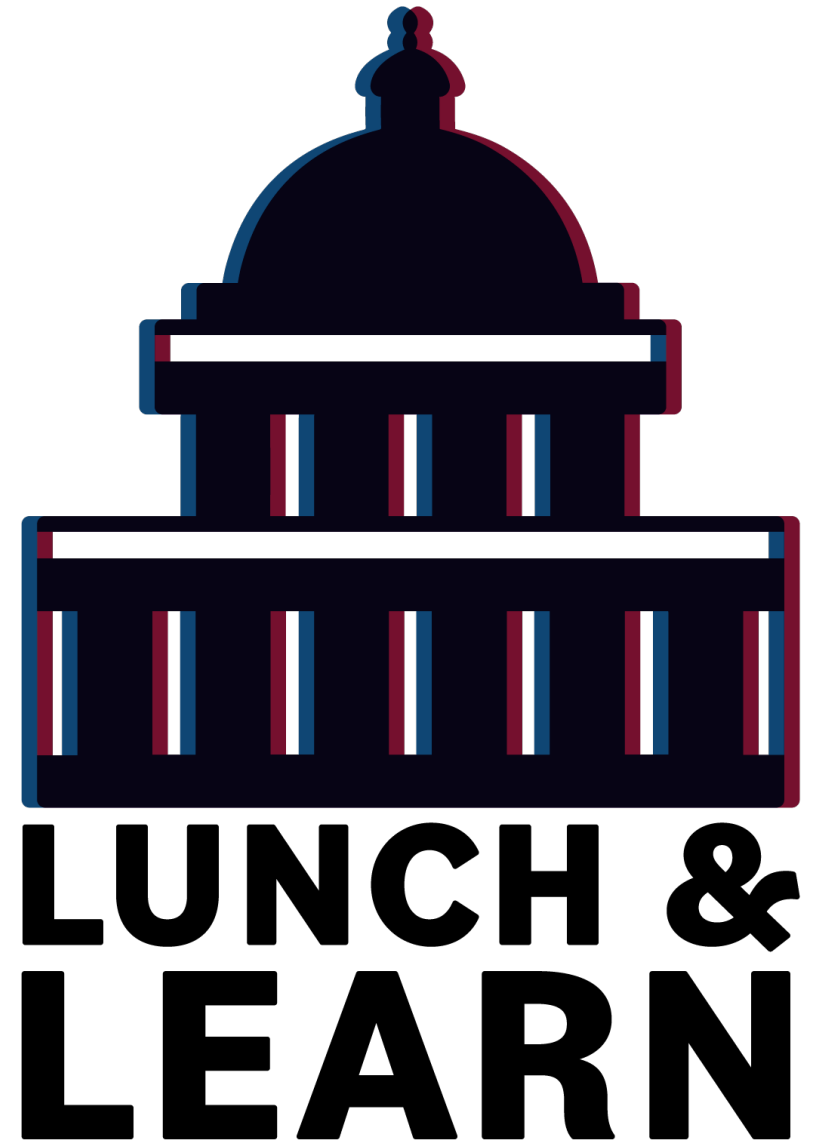
Texas Research-to-Policy  
— Collaboration Project —



# Policy Implication of Food Insecurity and Food Access in Texas

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Associate Director  
Michael & Susan Dell Center For Healthy Living  
UTHealth School of Public Health Austin Campus



The terms *food insecurity* and *hunger* can be used interchangeably.

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- True
- False





# *FALSE*: food security is an economic condition

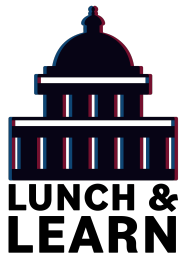
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**Hunger** is a physical condition.

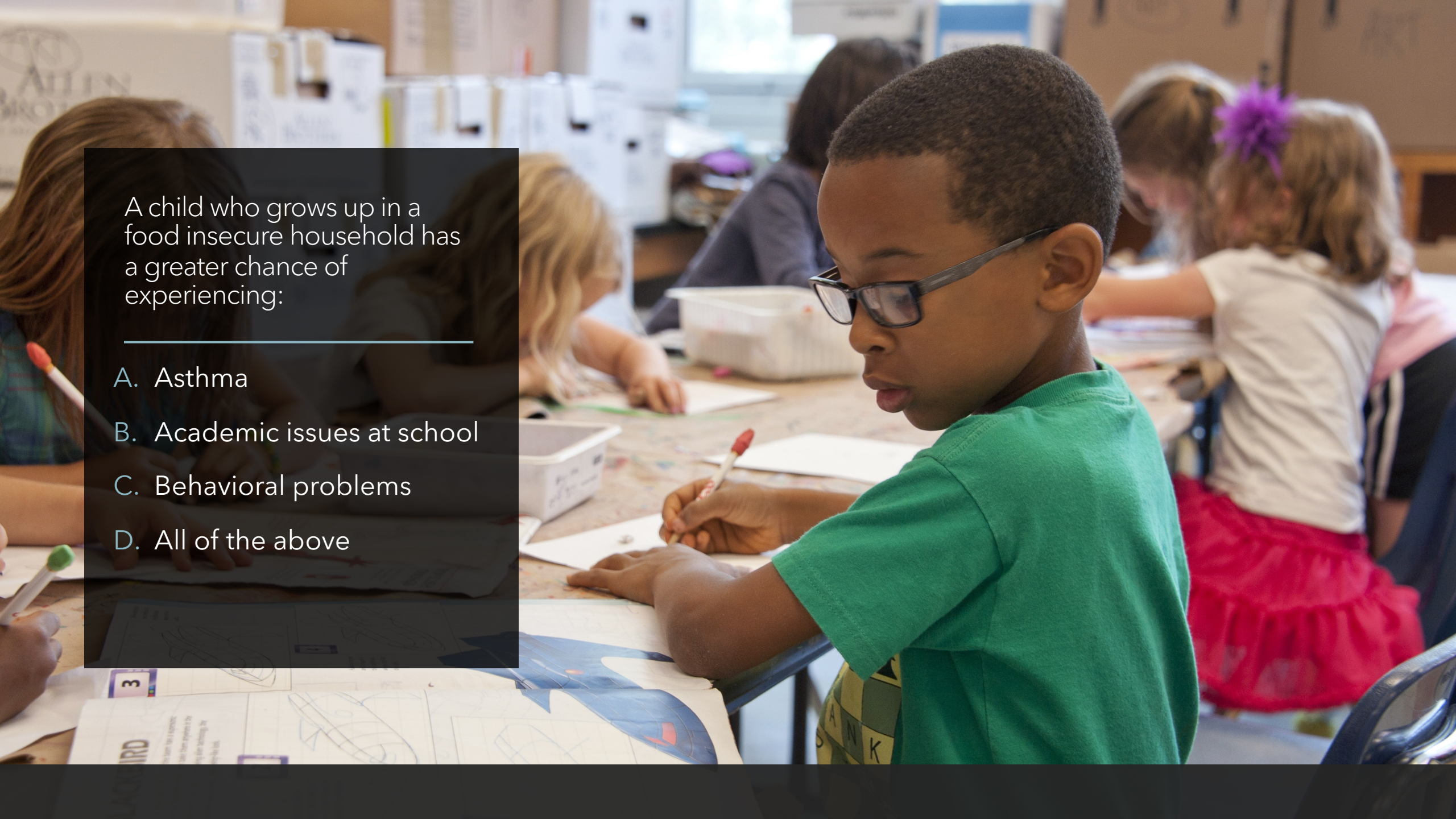
**Food Insecurity** is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. (USDA definition)



Source: Adapted from the USDA Economic Research Service.







A child who grows up in a food insecure household has a greater chance of experiencing:

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- A. Asthma
- B. Academic issues at school
- C. Behavioral problems
- D. All of the above



# Consequences of Food Insecurity

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## CHILDREN

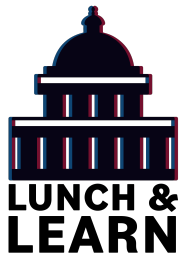
Behavioral and social-emotional problems  
Poor educational performance/outcomes  
Developmental risk  
Iron deficiency anemia  
Less physical activity  
Lower health status  
Lower quality of life

## ADULTS

Mental health problems /  
Depression  
Asthma/COPD  
Cancer  
Diabetes/Kidney Disease  
Pregnancy complications  
Hypertension

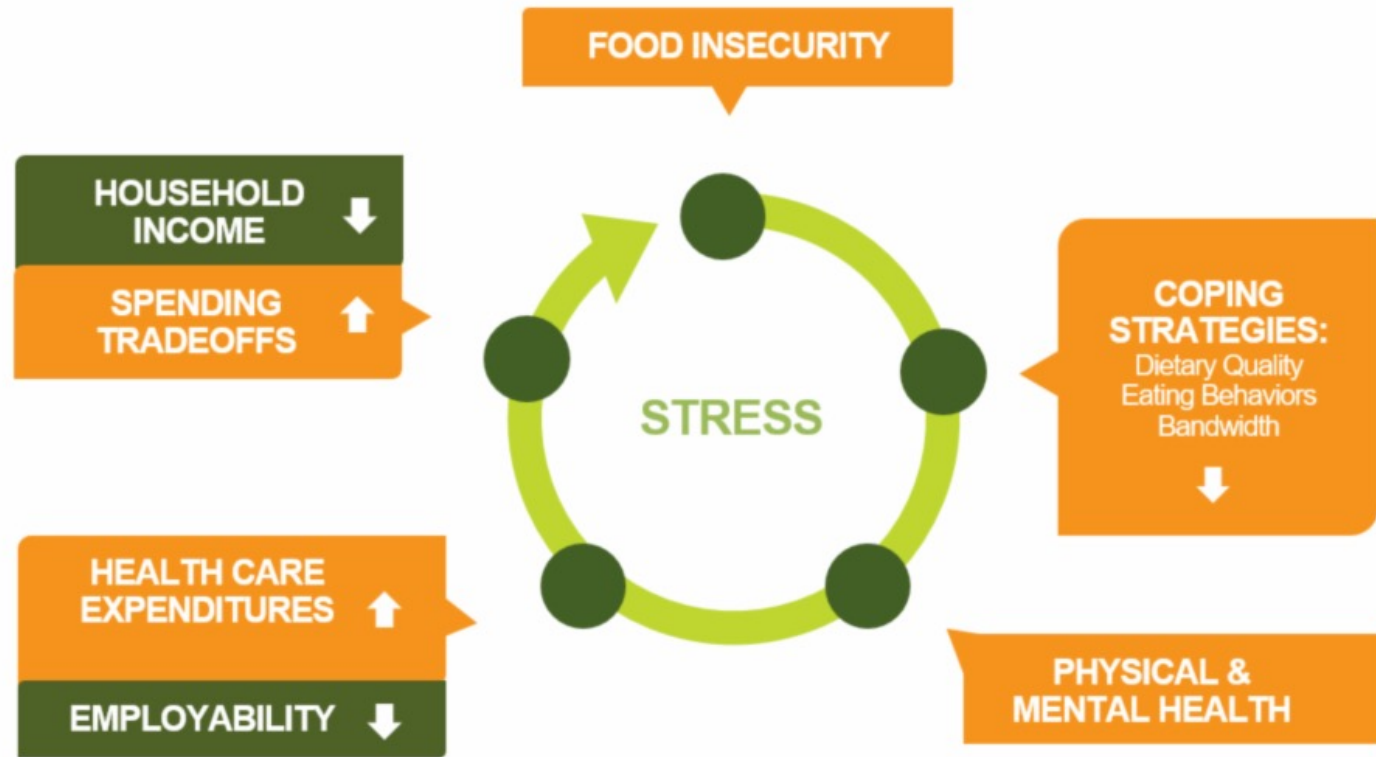
Lower cognitive functions  
Nutrient deficiencies  
Obesity  
Osteoporosis  
Hyperlipidemia & Hypertension  
Poor sleep

Food Research & Action Center. The Impact of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Poor Nutrition on Health and Well Being. Washington DC. 2017






# Does Food Insecurity Impact Health?



Adapted from Seligman and Schillinger,  
New England Journal of Medicine, 2010.

## Consequences of Food Insecurity





Food insecurity only impacts certain groups, like people experiencing homelessness or people who are unemployed.

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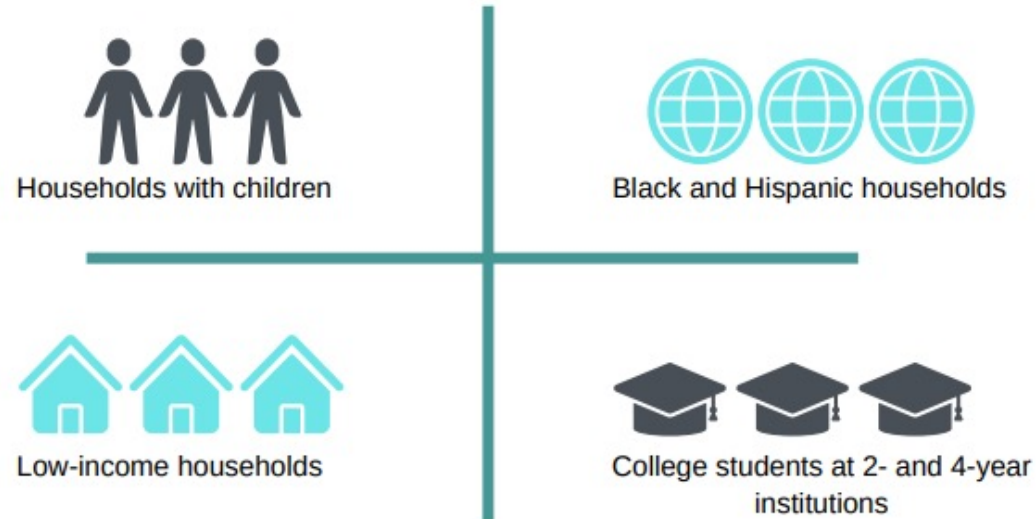
- True
- False



# FALSE: Food insecurity does not discriminate

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**Food insecurity disproportionately affects\*:**

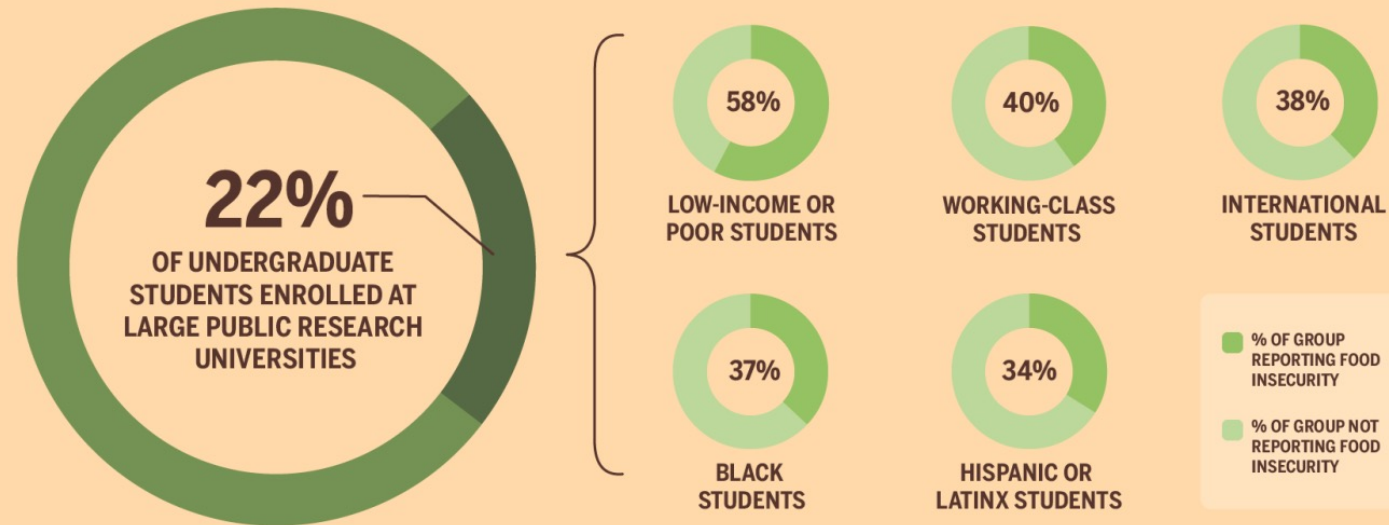


Although food insecurity does impact certain groups of people at a higher rate, food insecurity can affect anyone.



# FOOD INSECURITY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PERCENTAGES REPORTING FOOD INSECURITY DURING THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:



JOSEPH CASEY | STAFF

SOURCE: REPORT FROM THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM, "UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS' FOOD INSECURITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

## College students and food insecurity



Food insecurity can be solved by just providing food to people.

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- True
- False





# *FALSE:* Food insecurity involves multiple factors, which require different solutions

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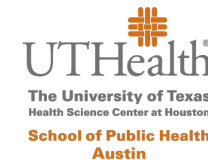
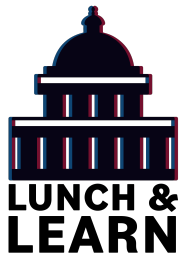
Food Insecurity is a complex, economic issue

- Although related to poverty, not a perfect correlation

Low-income households are affected by many overlapping issues

- Low wages
- Housing costs
- Medical costs
- Social isolation
- Economic/social disadvantage

Solutions need to be multi-faceted







Where does Texas rank in terms of food insecurity among other states in the US?

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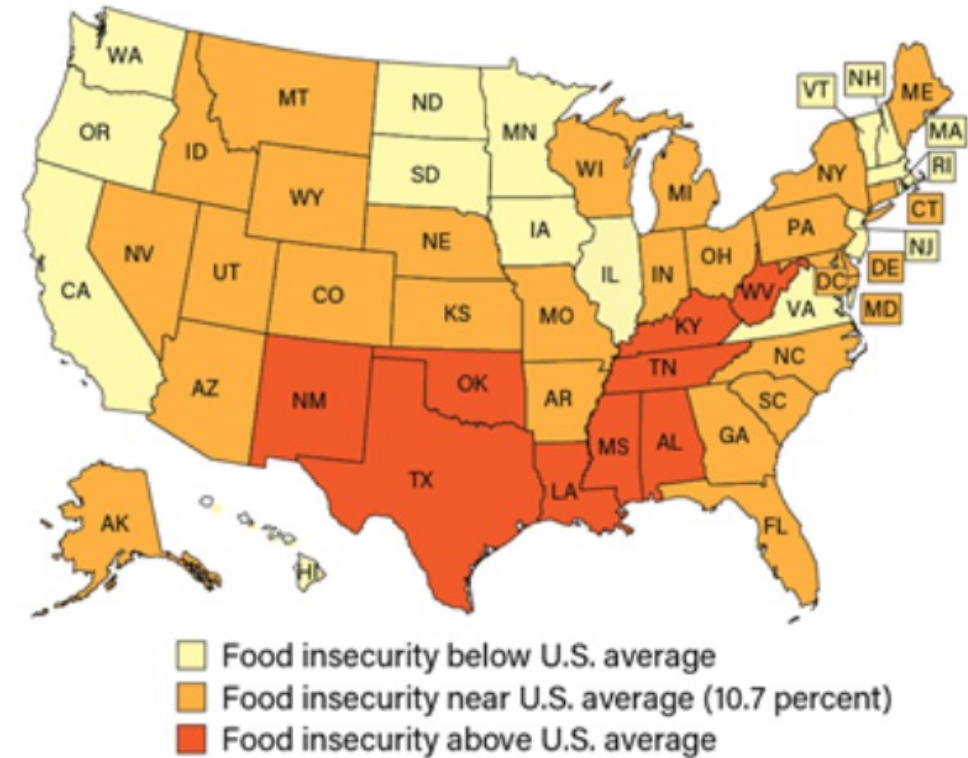
- A. Lower than national average
- B. About average
- C. Higher than national average



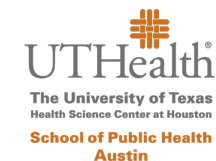
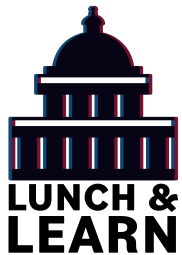
# Food Insecurity in Texas

Texas is 1 of 9 states with prevalence of food insecurity higher than national average.

Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2018–20



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the December 2018, 2019, and 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements, U.S. Census Bureau.



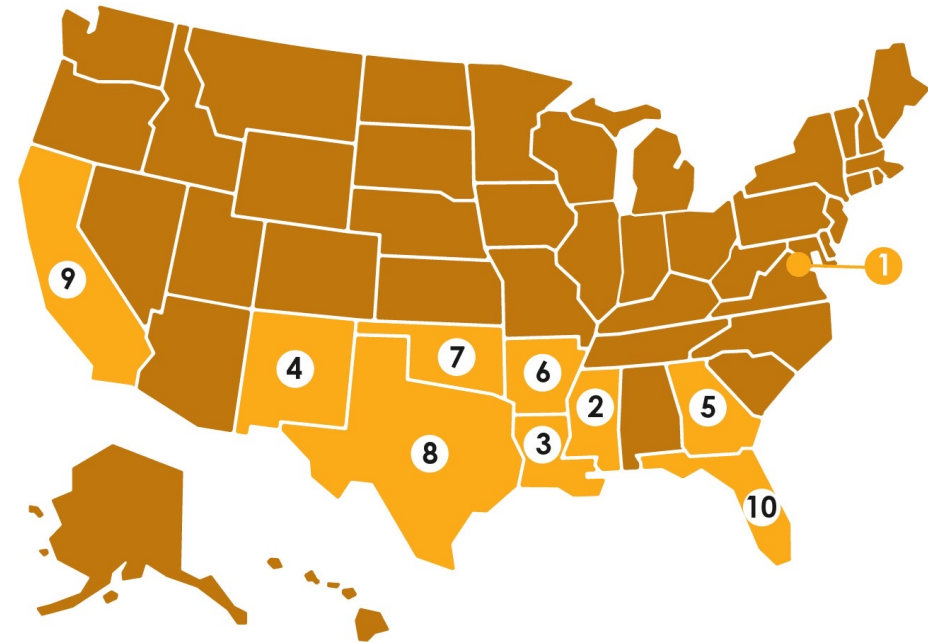
# Food Insecurity among Children in Texas

1	D.C.	92.4
2	Mississippi	73.7
3	Louisiana	63.6
4	New Mexico	62.6
5	Georgia	62.4
6	Arkansas	62.3
7	Oklahoma	60.9
8	Texas	58.8
9	California	58.7
10	Florida	58.4

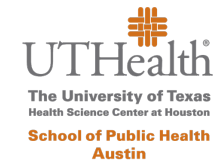


## THE 10 STATES WITH THE MOST FOOD INSECURE CHILDREN

BASED ON PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH



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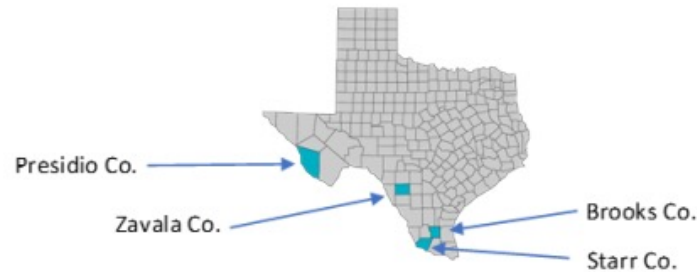




# TX Counties Rank High in Child Food Insecurity

**Two Texas counties are projected to have some of the highest food insecure populations in the nation in 2021: (2)**

**Presidio County is projected to be ranked #1  
Zavala County is projected to be ranked #2**



TX RPC Data Brief: Food Access in  
Texas and Texas Legislative Districts

**Zavala County is projected to have the highest child food insecurity in the country in 2021 due to COVID-19. Other Texas counties ranking in the top 10 in the country include Predisidio (#4), Starr (#9), and Brooks (#10). (2)**



# Food Insecurity in Texas

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- Statewide, 26.1% of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade families were insecure (2019-2020) according to the Texas SPAN data

Community type	% Food insecure
Major urban	29.3%
Urban	25.4%
Rural	23.4%

Ethnic group	% Food insecure
Black/African-American	39.5%
Hispanic	30.9%
White/other	15.9%

Food insecurity was estimated based on the percentage of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade parents who answered either “sometimes true” or “often true” to at least one of the following statements pertaining to the prior 12 months:

- We were worried food would run out before we got money to buy more
- The food we bought didn’t last, and we didn’t have money to buy more





# Food Insecurity and Food Access Data During COVID-19

45 million people, including 15 million children, potentially have experienced food insecurity during 2020

Food insecurity prevalence in Texas more than doubled from 2019 to November 2020 (14% → 27.9%)

- Food insecurity is worse in:
  - Households with Children
  - Black/Latino Households

Food access was limited due to store closures, lines at food banks, individual-level factors (age, pre-existing conditions, issues with transportation), other factors, etc.



# The SNAP Program


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## ***SNAP (or formerly Food Stamps program)***

- SNAP is a federal program that provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of low-income families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency
- The federal government provides 100% of SNAP funding. Each state determines the eligibility requirements for its residents
- SNAP has been shown to reduce poverty and food insecurity. This reduction has improved health and economic outcomes, especially for children who receive SNAP
- 3.4 million Texans (1.6 million households) use SNAP - 1 in 9 Texans.
- It is estimated that 71% of Texas households that are eligible for SNAP are NOT enrolled in SNAP





A photograph of a McDonald's meal on a wooden surface. In the foreground, a white and red Big Mac box is open. Behind it, a red and yellow McDonald's cup is filled with golden-brown french fries. To the left, a purple and white wrapper for a Bacon McFlurry is visible. A semi-transparent dark grey box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

How much money  
does SNAP provide to  
individuals on average?

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- A. \$6.35 per meal
- B. \$4.67 per meal
- C. \$2.00 per meal



# Recommendations

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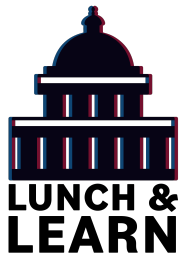
## Decrease barriers to enrolling in SNAP

- Eliminate or modernize the Vehicle Asset test for SNAP and TANF

## Allow college students access to SNAP

## Support expanded access to school meals

- Provide additional technical assistance or training for eligible districts and schools to enroll in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program
  - Support lowering eligibility threshold of 40% to 25% (would provide meals to an additional 9 million children)
- Continue Universal Free School Meals in Texas



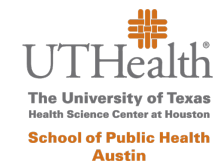


# Recommendations

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Provide funding or sustainability efforts for initiatives that have proven to be effective in decreasing food insecurity:

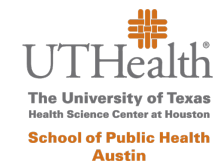
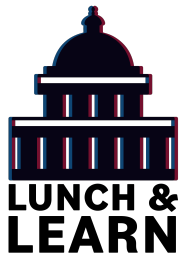
- Produce prescription programs
- Programs that increase geographic access to healthy foods
  - Austin's Fresh for Less initiative
- Programs that provide financial incentives for people to purchases healthy foods
  - Double Up Food Bucks program



# How can we help you?

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The Texas RPC project offers data-driven tools and resources for health policy, using state and legislative district-level information.





# Special Thanks to:

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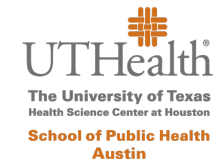
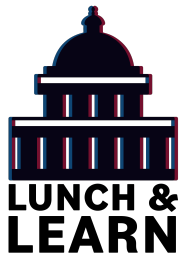
Representative Armando Walle

Michael & Susan Dell  
Foundation

Texas Food Policy Board

## TX RPC Members:

- Dr. Shreela Sharma
- Dr. Nalini Ranjit
- Dr. Katie Janda
- Dell Health Scholar  
Shelby Flores-Thorpe



# The TX RPC Team:

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Alexandra van den Berg, PhD, MPH - Co-investigator

Tiffni Menendez, MPH - Project Director

Melissa Campos-Hernandez, MPH - Research Coordinator II

Amelia Roebuck, MPH - Dell Health Scholar

Shelby Flores-Thorpe, MEd, CHES® - Dell Health Scholar

Brittany Buchanan, MPH - Dell Health Scholar

Liv George - Communications Specialist





# TX RPC Resources

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## **TX RPC Resources**

[Go.uth.edu/RPCResources](https://go.uth.edu/RPCResources)

## **TX RPC Newsletter Archive**

[Go.uth.edu/RPCResources](https://go.uth.edu/RPCResources)

## **Texas Child Health Status Reports**

[Go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth](https://go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth)

## **Michael & Susan Dell Center Webinars**

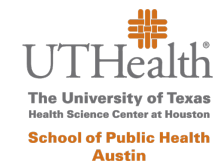
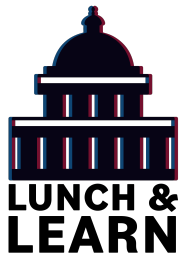
[Go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth](https://go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth)



## **Texas Legislative Bill Tracker**

[Go.uth.edu/LegTracker](https://go.uth.edu/LegTracker)

***Scan to view our Legislative Initiatives:***



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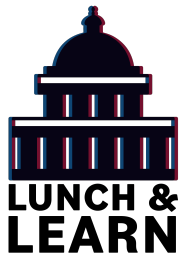
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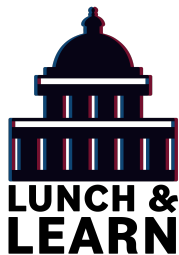
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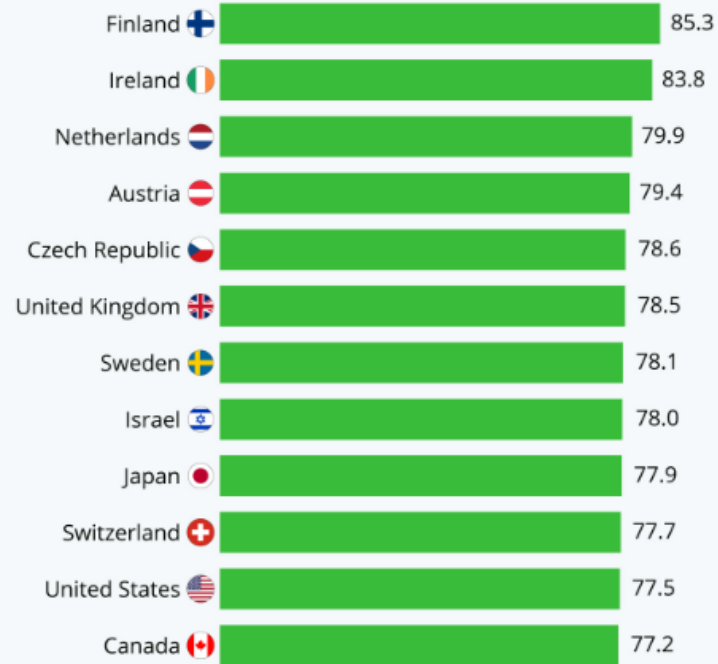
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## The World's Top Countries For Food Security

Index scores for the affordability, availability, natural resources, safety and quality of food in 2020\*



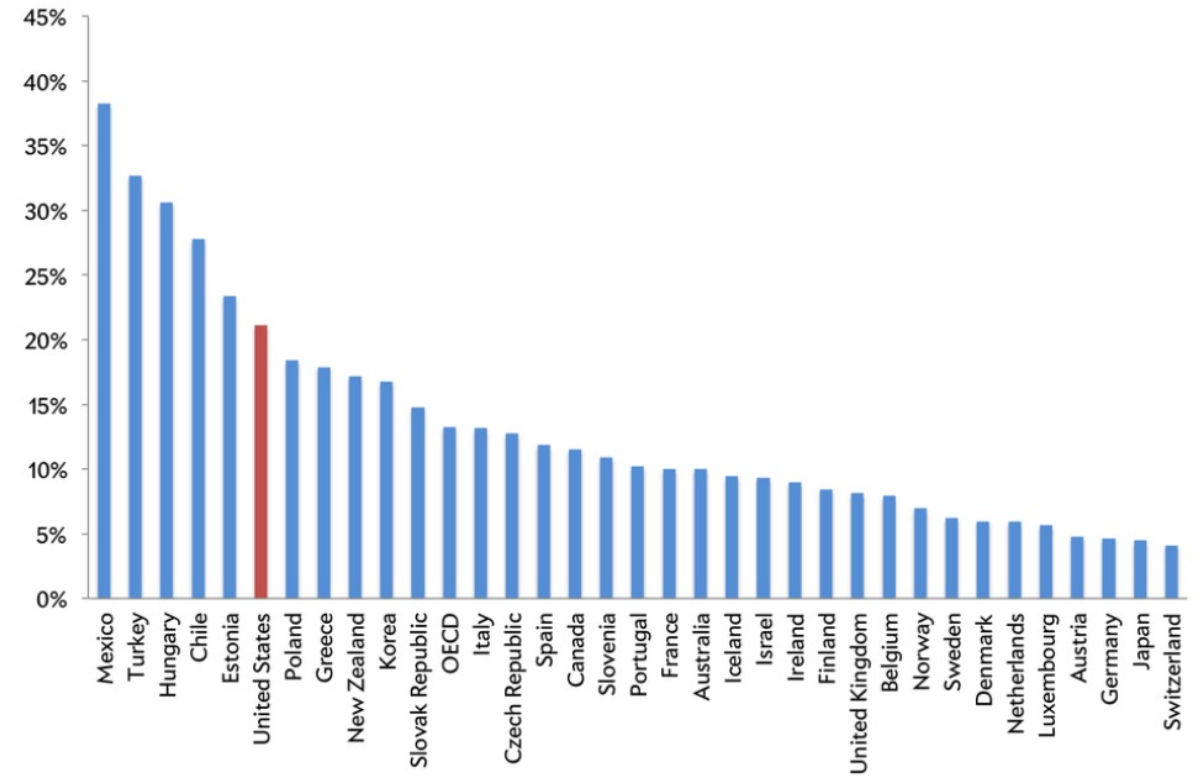
\* Index based on 59 unique indicators across 113 countries (100 = most secure).  
Source: Economist Intelligence Unit



statista

## Who Can't Afford Food?

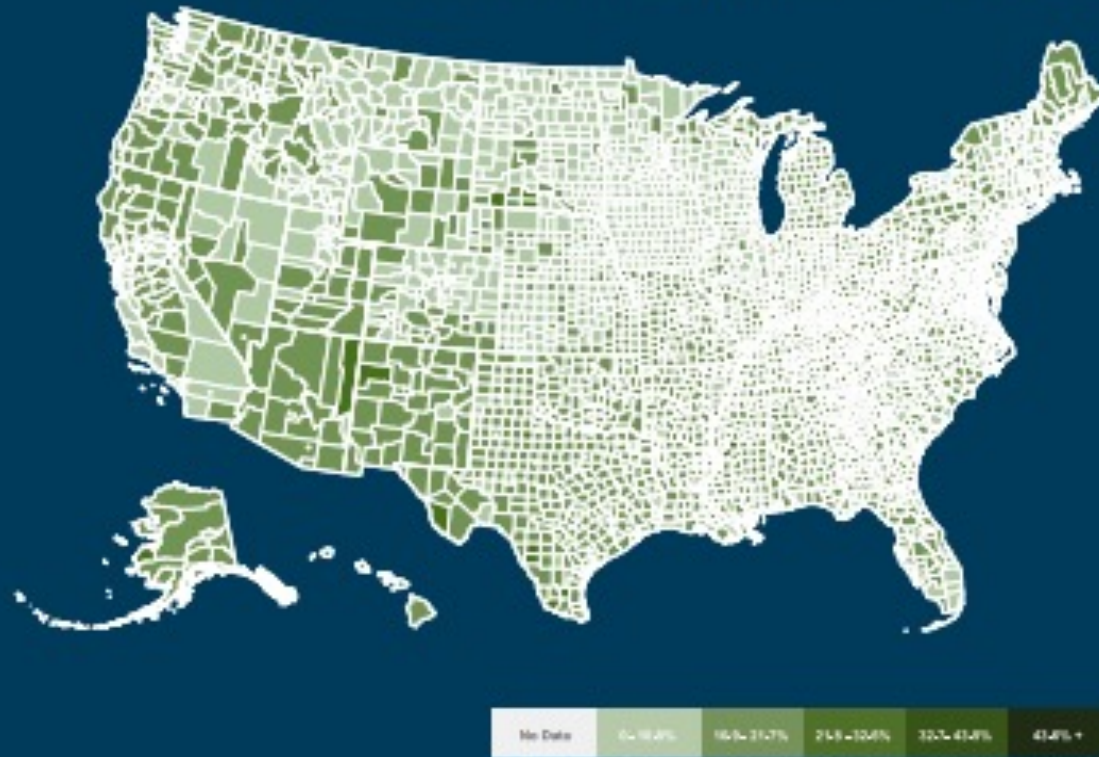
Share of "yes" responses to the question "Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?" Source: Gallup World Poll results reported by OECD. Data from 2011-2012. Swiss responses from 2009.



# Food Insecurity in Texas



Figure 2. Map of county-level food insecurity among the overall population in 2020



To access the interactive map and additional information about data availability and suppression, visit [map.feedingamerica.org](https://map.feedingamerica.org).

Food Insecurity in the US

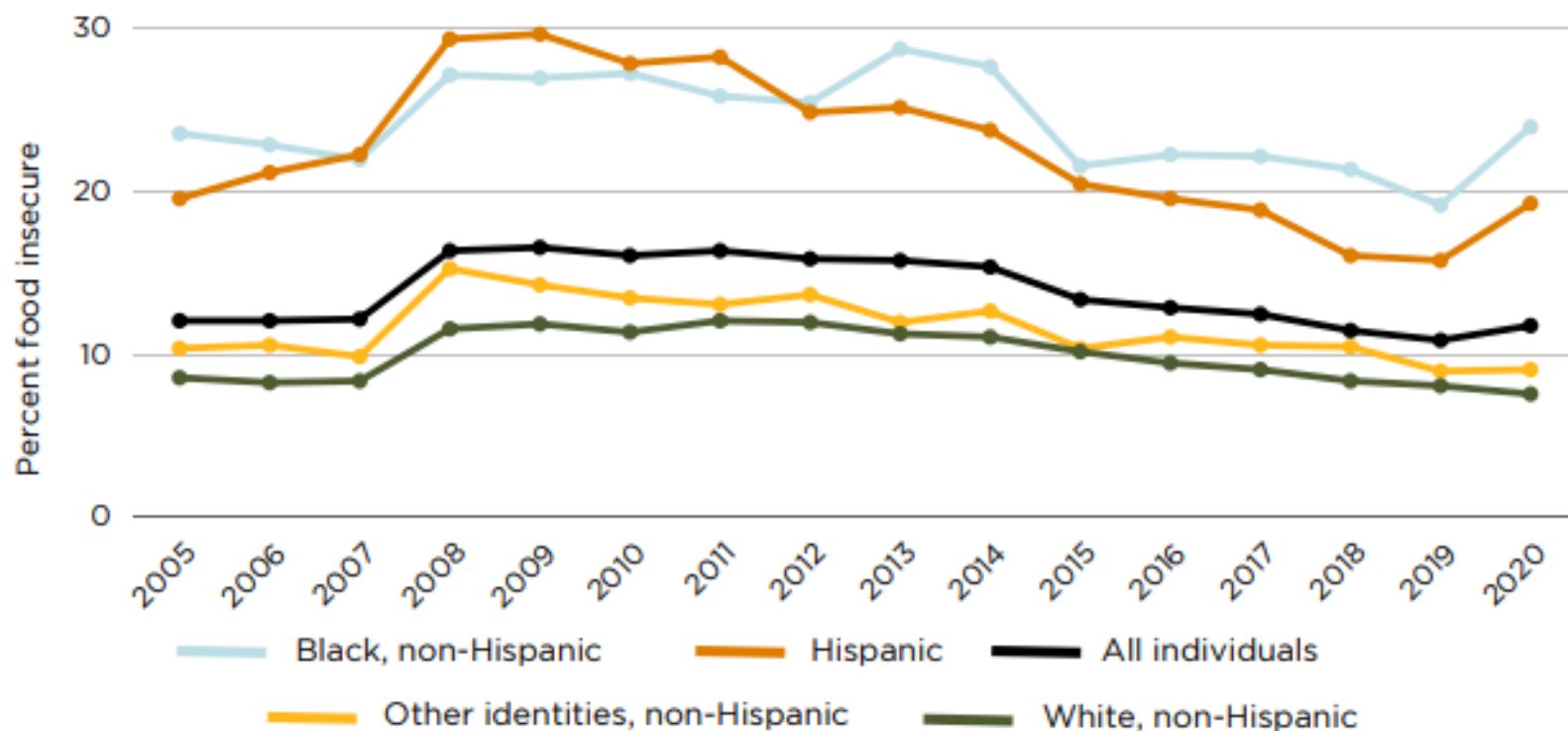
Figure 3. Map of county-level food insecurity among the child population in 2020



To access the interactive map and additional information about data availability and suppression, visit [map.feedingamerica.org](https://map.feedingamerica.org).

Food Insecurity among children in the US

**Figure 1. Food Insecurity Among Individuals by Race/Ethnicity, 2005-2020**



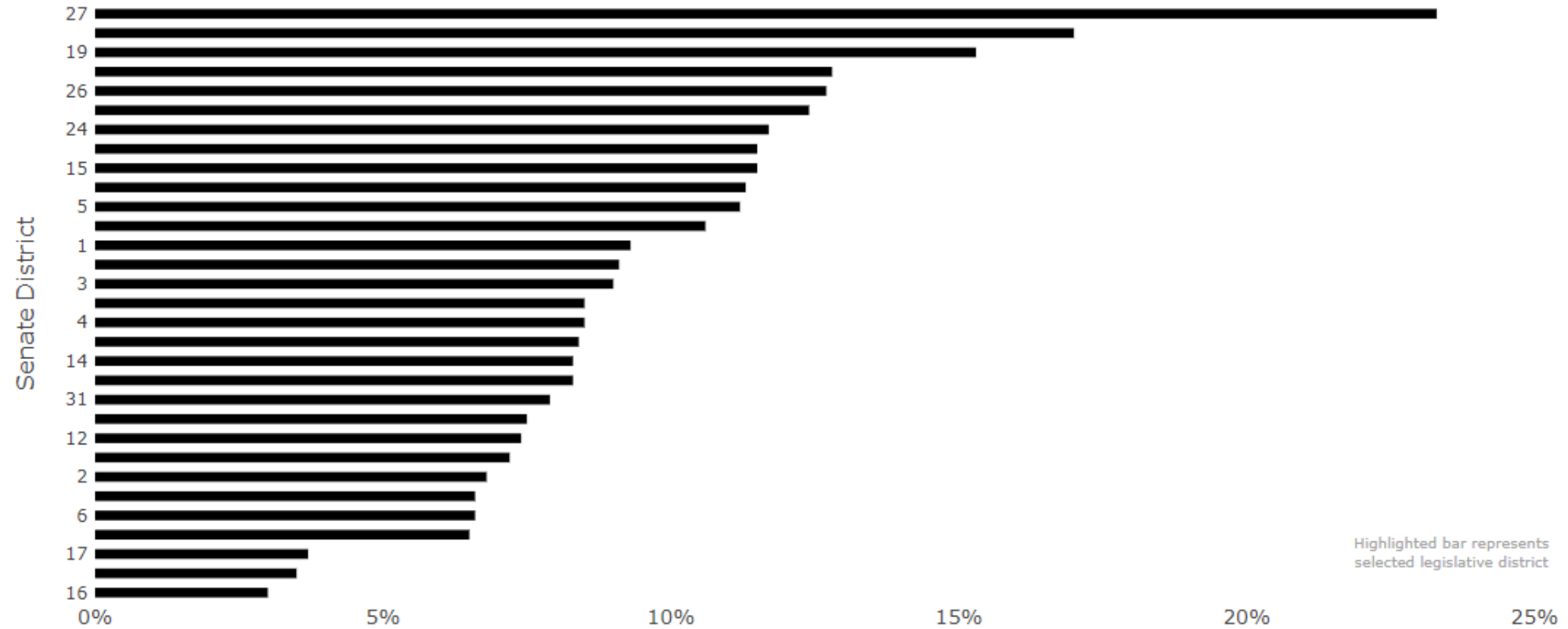
Source: USDA Economic Research Service

Note: the category of "Other identities, non-Hispanic" includes individuals who identify as Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or multiple races (non-Hispanic).

# Trends of Food Insecurity in the US



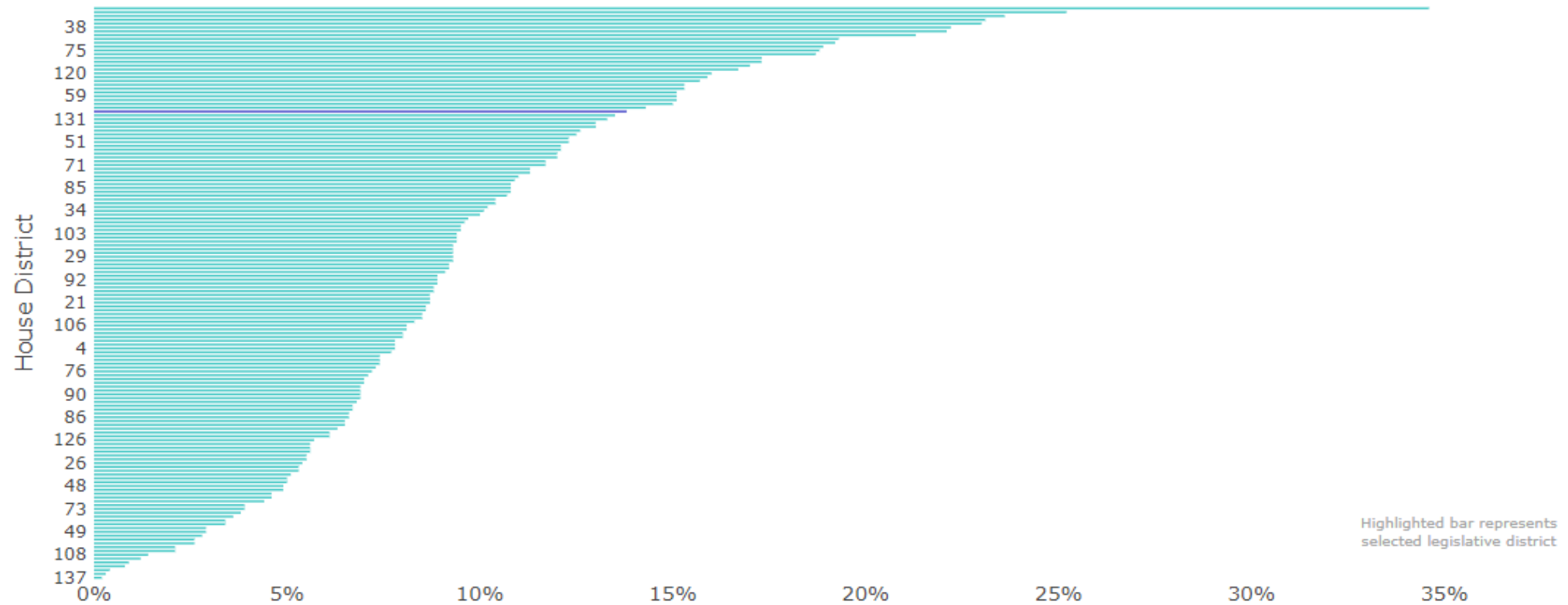
Figure 2: Percentage of All Individuals with Low-Income and Low-Access to Grocery Stores



Data Brief: Food Access in Texas and Texas Legislative Districts

# Access to healthy food by Senate District

Figure 2: Percentage of All Individuals with Low-Income and Low-Access to Grocery Stores



Data Brief: Food Access in Texas and Texas Legislative Districts

# Access to healthy food by Senate District