



~~HUNGER~~ FREE AMERICA

Philadelphia Falling
Behind in Freedom to Eat

Greater Philadelphia Hunger Report, 2018

Key Findings:

- Although hunger decreased in most of the United States over the last six years due to reduced unemployment and slightly increased wages, the number of people who couldn't afford enough food increased in the City of Philadelphia – and stayed very high in the Philadelphia Metropolitan area – during that time period, according to federal data analyzed by Hunger Free America.
- In the 2015-2017 time period, 302,685 residents of Philadelphia, or 18.3 percent (one in five) of the city's total population, lived in households that were characterized by the federal government as "food insecure," meaning they were unable to always afford sufficient food. In contrast, 248,046, or 16.7 percent, of Philadelphians were food insecure in 2012-2014. Based on this data, the number of people struggling against hunger in Philadelphia increased by 22 percent over the last six years.
- 239,627 adults in the Philadelphia metropolitan region were working from 2015-2017 but were still food insecure.
- In the broader Philadelphia metropolitan area (which includes suburban counties in PA, MD, NJ, and DE, as well as the City of Philadelphia), the number of people struggling against hunger stayed statistically flat, at a very high plateau, with 11.3 percent (680,550 people) of the region's residents suffering from food insecurity in 2015-2017, compared to 11.6 percent (680,563 people) in 2012-2014.
- Food insecurity statewide in Pennsylvania increased by 7 percent, but food insecurity in neighboring New Jersey dropped by 26 percent and in Delaware dropped by 8 percent. In 2017, the state minimum wage per hour was \$7.25 in Pennsylvania, \$8.25 in Delaware, and \$8.44 in New Jersey.
- In order to end hunger, the food purchasing power of food-insecure families would need to be increased by \$158 million in Philadelphia and \$355 million in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, according to USDA data analyzed by Hunger Free America.
- Philadelphia's food insecurity problem is similar to the nation in one respect: the percentage of people who were food insecure in 2015-2017 was higher in both the country and in the city than it was in 2005-2007, before the recession of 2008. Twelve percent of city residents were food insecure in 2005-2007 — 53

percent higher than in 2015-2017. Nationwide, food insecurity was 12 percent higher than a decade ago.

- In the Philadelphia metropolitan area in 2015-2017, fully 215,179 children and 76,206 adults 60 or older lived in food insecure homes. Food insecurity rates track very closely to poverty rates. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Philadelphia's poverty rate in 2017 — 25.7 percent — was the highest among the nation's 10 largest cities. About 400,000 city residents — including more than a third of the city's children — lived below the federal poverty line, which was \$19,337 in annual income for a family of three. Almost half of all impoverished Philadelphia residents live in deep poverty, meaning they have income that is 50 percent below the federal poverty line.

Methodology:

The data for this report was gathered from the USDA's Food Security Supplement to the December 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS). In total, 37,389 households completed the Food Security Supplement, which is nationally representative after applying the Food Security Supplement weights. Data was analyzed by Hunger Free America staff using the U.S. Census Bureau's DataFerret tool.

To collect information on Philadelphia County, PA, the Selectable Geographies variable was used to restrict the data to only that county. Information on the Metropolitan Area was collected using Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metropolitan Statistical Area FIPS code. All analyses used the 12 Month Food Security Summary variable, HRFS12M1, which is the same variable used by the USDA to analyze overall household food insecurity. Data on employed adults was obtained by layering those classified as "employed" in the PREXPLF demographic variable. Calculations for food insecure seniors used the PRTAGE variable, restricted to those 60+ years old. The analysis on food insecurity among children used the PRTAGE variable as well, restricted to those 17 years and younger.

Rates were calculated as three year averages to increase statistical accuracy due to the relatively small sample size at the county and metropolitan area levels. In order to obtain food insecurity data at the individual level as opposed to the household level, person-level weighting was used in this analysis. Food insecurity figures represent those classified by the USDA as having "low" and "very low" food security.

The cost of ending hunger in each of the areas was estimated using the overall number of food insecure individuals previously obtained from the Food Security Supplement. The number of food insecure individuals was then multiplied by the difference in median weekly food spending per person between food-secure households and food-insecure households, as reported by the USDA. This number was then multiplied by the amount of weeks in a year, producing the final cost estimation.

Food Insecurity in the Philadelphia Area

Despite national hunger rates continuing to decline in 2017, the city of Philadelphia experienced significant increases in both the number and proportion of food insecure individuals (Table 1). The number of food insecure individuals in Philadelphia alone (302,685) was found to exceed the entire population of Pittsburgh, a city of 302,407 people.

In the broader Philadelphia metropolitan area, hunger rates stayed statistically flat over the past six years, with the percentage of food insecure people reaching 11.3 percent of the population between 2015-2017. The overall number of food insecure individuals in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, 680,550, is comparable to the combined population of Pennsylvania's next five most populous cities (Pittsburgh, Allentown, Erie, Reading, and Scranton) — 687,087 people. Food insecurity among children reached a low of 215,179, down from 222,278 in 2012-2014. For employed adults, food insecurity continued its slight upward trend, reaching 8.1 percent in the 2015-2017 time period. Seniors experienced a relatively similar rate of hunger; however, the number of food insecure seniors increased by nearly 30 percent from 2012-2014 to 2015-2017.

Table 1 - Food Insecurity in Philadelphia County and the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area

Year		2015-2017	2012-2014	2005-2007
Philadelphia County, PA	Average Number of Food Insecure People	302,685	248,046	162,267
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure People	18.3%	16.7%	12.0%
Year		2015-2017	2012-2014	2005-2007
Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area*	Average Number of Food Insecure People	680,550	680,563	511,768
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure People	11.3%	11.6%	10.2%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Children	215,179	222,278	172,163
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Children	16.3%	17.3%	14.5%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Employed Adults	239,627	209,583	157,359
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Employed Adults	8.1%	7.5%	6.4%
	Average Number of Food Insecure Seniors (60+)	76,206	58,973	47,778
	Average Percentage of Food Insecure Seniors (60+)	5.2%	4.9%	5.0%

* The Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Burlington County, NJ, Camden County, NJ, Gloucester County, NJ, Salem County, NJ, Bucks County, PA, Chester County, PA, Delaware County, PA, Montgomery County, PA, Philadelphia County, PA, New Castle County, DE, and Cecil County, MD.

Although food insecurity is more prevalent in the city of Philadelphia (Figure 1), hunger is an issue facing large numbers in the Philadelphia metropolitan area as well (Figure 2). It is important to note that efforts to reduce hunger must include the greater metropolitan area in order to make a significant difference in reducing food insecurity in Philadelphia.

Figure 1



Figure 2



The cost of ending hunger in Philadelphia County is estimated to be about \$158 million based on weekly food spending differences between food secure and food insecure households (Table 2). Ending hunger in the metropolitan area would cost more than double, totaling about \$355 million.

Table 2 - Cost of Ending Hunger in Philadelphia

	Number of Food Insecure (2015-2017 Average)	Cost of Ending Hunger
Philadelphia County	302,685	\$157,819,959
Philadelphia Metropolitan Area	680,550	\$354,838,770

A Statement from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg

“While Philadelphia originally led the nation in freedom, it is heartbreaking that it now trails the nation in fighting local hunger. A city and region with so many residents unable to afford a full supply of food isn’t truly free.

The cost of ending hunger isn’t nearly as high as the cost of accepting mass hunger, since hunger makes it more difficult for children to learn, workers to work, and older Americans to stay independent. Given the nation’s epidemic of the working hungry and recent cutbacks in safety net programs, it’s clear that there is no way that even the most generous charities can pay for the \$355 million tab of erasing hunger in the region.

That’s why our solutions must go way beyond charity, and federal, state, and local elected officials should focus on creating jobs, raising wages, and ensuring an adequate safety net. In particular, Congress should use the pending Farm Bill to increase funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, and certainly reject conservative proposals to slash it.”