



THE STATE OF RACE & HUNGER IN LOUISIANA

Louisiana's diverse communities of color have had an immense impact on the food, music, art, and unique culture our state is renowned for. However, the harsh reality is that communities of color also disproportionately experience food insecurity at higher rates than white communities around the country and in our state. In a typical year, a person of color is more likely to experience poverty, lose their job, and face difficulties keeping food on the table; now, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, these disparities have only gotten worse. Food insecurity and poverty have detrimental impacts on an individual's health and well-being, often leading to higher rates of chronic disease and poorer health outcomes. While food insecurity affects all communities, for communities of color, generations of systemic racism and oppression have created significant barriers to accessing nutritious, affordable, foods throughout the state. In order to ensure everyone in Louisiana has equitable access to food and the opportunity for a healthier life, it is essential to consider and address the particular challenges faced by communities of color to achieving food security.

THE SITUATION

Louisiana has faced some of the highest rates of poverty and hunger for decades but communities of color are especially vulnerable to these effects. Latino households, on average, are 1.3x more likely to experience food insecurity than white households, while Black and Asian households are nearly 2x as likely to experience food insecurity as white households.

32.5%

of **Black households** in the state experience food insecurity.

23.9%

of **Latino households** in the state experience food insecurity.

30.6%

of **Asian households** in the state experience food insecurity.

compared to

17.8%

of **White households** that experience food insecurity in the state.

INDIVIDUALS WHO PARTICIPATE IN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS, SUCH AS SNAP, WERE LESS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT. ENSURING RACIAL EQUITY WITHIN THESE PROGRAMS IS ESSENTIAL TO SERVING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR.

OUR RESPONSE

The five major Louisiana food banks provide millions of meals to Louisianans in need through a network of over 900 community- and faith-based partners. As these unprecedented levels of food insecurity persist in our communities so does the need for assistance. In 2019, the five food banks provided approximately 58.5 million meals. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, Louisiana food banks grew to provide more than 95.8 million meals.



POLICY SOLUTIONS

The emergency food system and anti-hunger advocates across the country have been working for years to alleviate food insecurity. However, advocacy and charitable food alone are not enough to serve this overwhelming need for assistance. Systemic racism contributes greatly to food insecurity among communities of color. Federal programs such as SNAP, WIC, and TEFAP, are proven to be the most effective methods in combating food insecurity for millions.

STATE ACTIONS

- Utilize Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility flexibilities to raise the gross income limit for SNAP applicants to 185% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- Raise the state-level income eligibility to participate in TEFAP to 200% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- Establish a permanent Louisiana Hunger Task Force within the state legislature with representation from legislators, state agencies, the Governor's office, and community partners.

FEDERAL ACTIONS

- Extend the temporary 15% increase to SNAP benefits for the full duration of the economic downturn.
- Increase the minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30 for all SNAP households.
- Allocate additional funding for TEFAP food purchase and storage/distribution for the duration of the economic downturn.
- Waive TEFAP program requirements to collect client names, addresses, and verify income eligibility for clients receiving USDA Foods through TEFAP for the duration of the public health crisis.