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Dallas County Health and Human Services

# Food Insecurity in the Dallas County

Current Status and Efforts



**DCHHS**  
Dallas County Health and Human Services  
Healthy People Healthy Communities  
Health and Social Equity







# Dallas County Health and Human Services

- Dallas County is the second-largest county in Texas
- Home to more than 2.6 million people
- Encompasses over 30 municipalities
- DCHHS has jurisdiction over public health in the county
- DCHHS is a nationally accredited Public Health Department

## Mission of DCHHS

The mission of DCHHS is to optimize and protect the health and well-being of all Dallas County residents and support the achievement of better health outcomes for all



### Food Insecurity:

- The inability to afford nutritionally adequate and safe foods
- Limited or uncertain access to adequate food

### Food Access:

- Limited access to supermarkets, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food makes it difficult for some people to maintain a healthy diet. Measures of food access typically consider factors like distance to food stores, family income, transportation, and neighborhood resources.

### Unhealthy or Poor Diet:

- A diet lacking in essential nutrients

### Food Desert:

- An area with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly fresh produce

### Food Environment Index:

- An index ranging from 0 (worst) to 10 (best) that equally weighs two indicators of the food environment: limited access to healthy foods and food insecurity.

# Definitions





# Food Insecurity & Health

- Food insecurity is a social determinant of health.
- Food insecurity is associated with poor health outcomes.
- Food insecurity is associated with chronic and acute health problems and health care needs in children.
- Food-insecure adults are at a higher risk of developing several chronic conditions, including coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer.

## A Conceptual Framework: Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease



Adapted: Seligman HK, Schillinger D. N Engl J Med. 2010;363:6-9.



# Causes of Food Insecurity

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Most food insecurity problems are related to social determinants of health (SDOH).



**LOW INCOME OR  
UNEMPLOYMENT**



**LACK OF ACCESS**

(LOCATION AND/OR AFFORDABILITY TO  
HEALTHY FOODS)

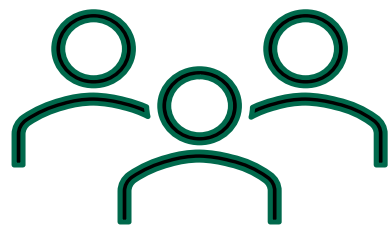


**LACK OF AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING**



# Food Insecurity in the US

NATIONAL  
DATA



**47 million people  
in the United  
States are food  
insecure**



**14 million  
children in the  
United States are  
food insecure**



**>50 million  
people turned to  
food programs in  
2023**



**100% of U.S.  
counties have  
food insecurity**

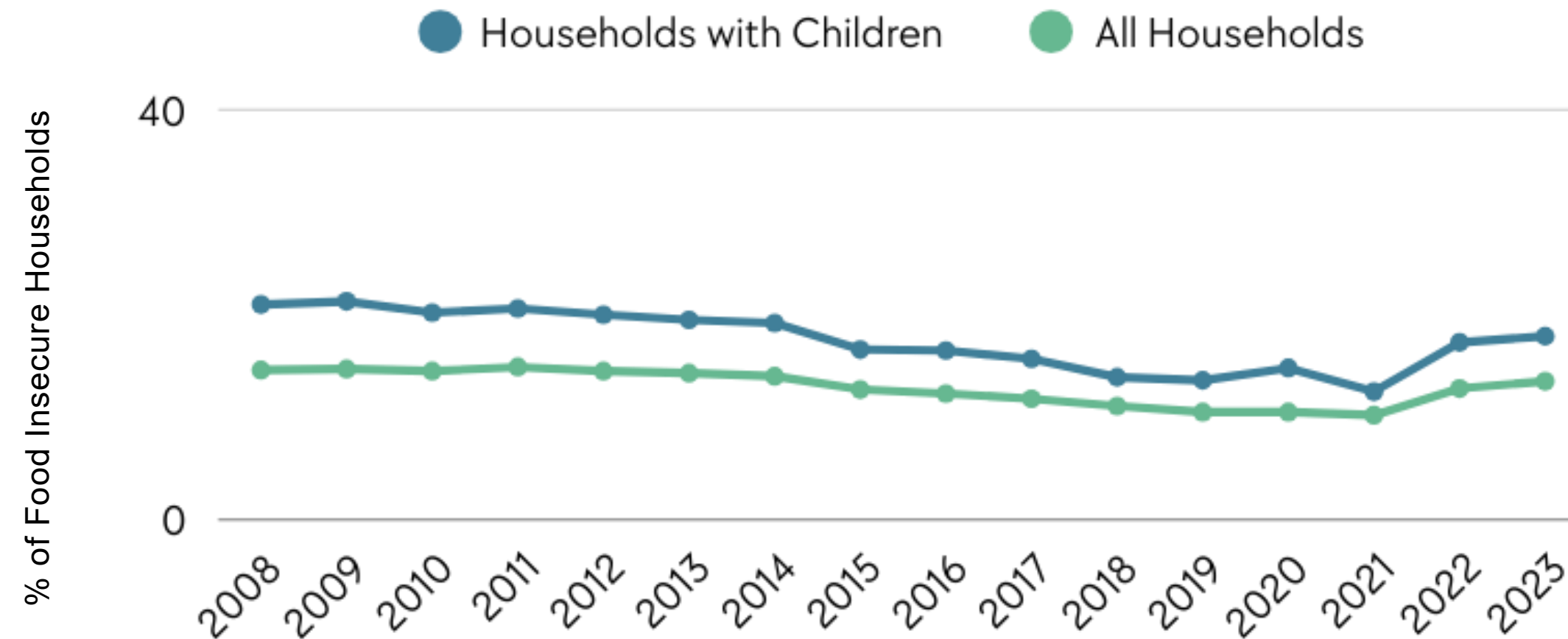


Data Source: Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>

# Food Insecurity Trend

2008 - 2023

NATIONAL  
DATA



Data Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements, Feeding America Map the Meal Gap

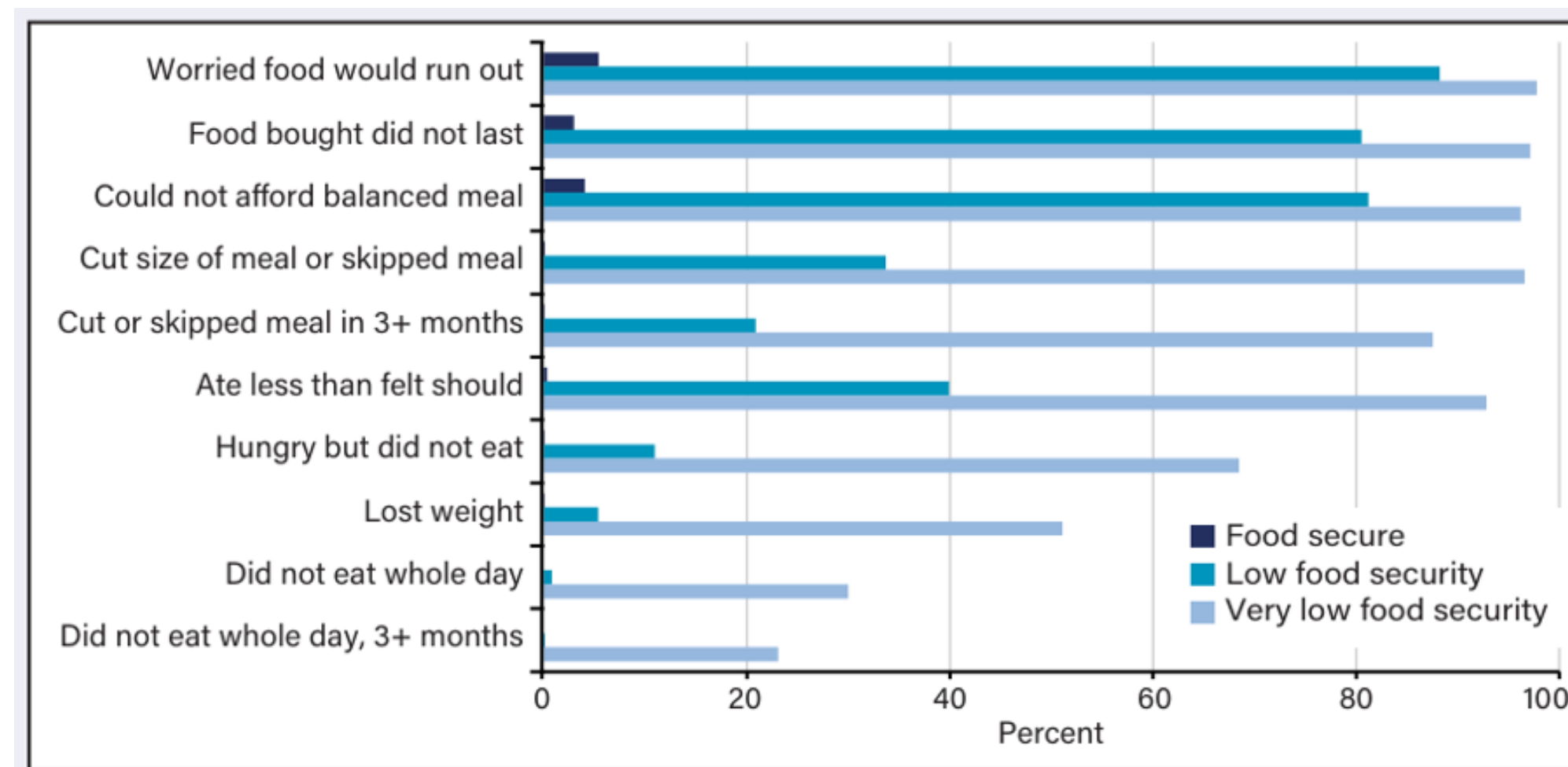


# Indicators of Food Insecurity

2023

NATIONAL  
DATA

Percentage of U.S. households reporting each indicator of food insecurity, by food security status, 2023



Data Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 20223  
Current Population Survey Food Security Supplemental Data

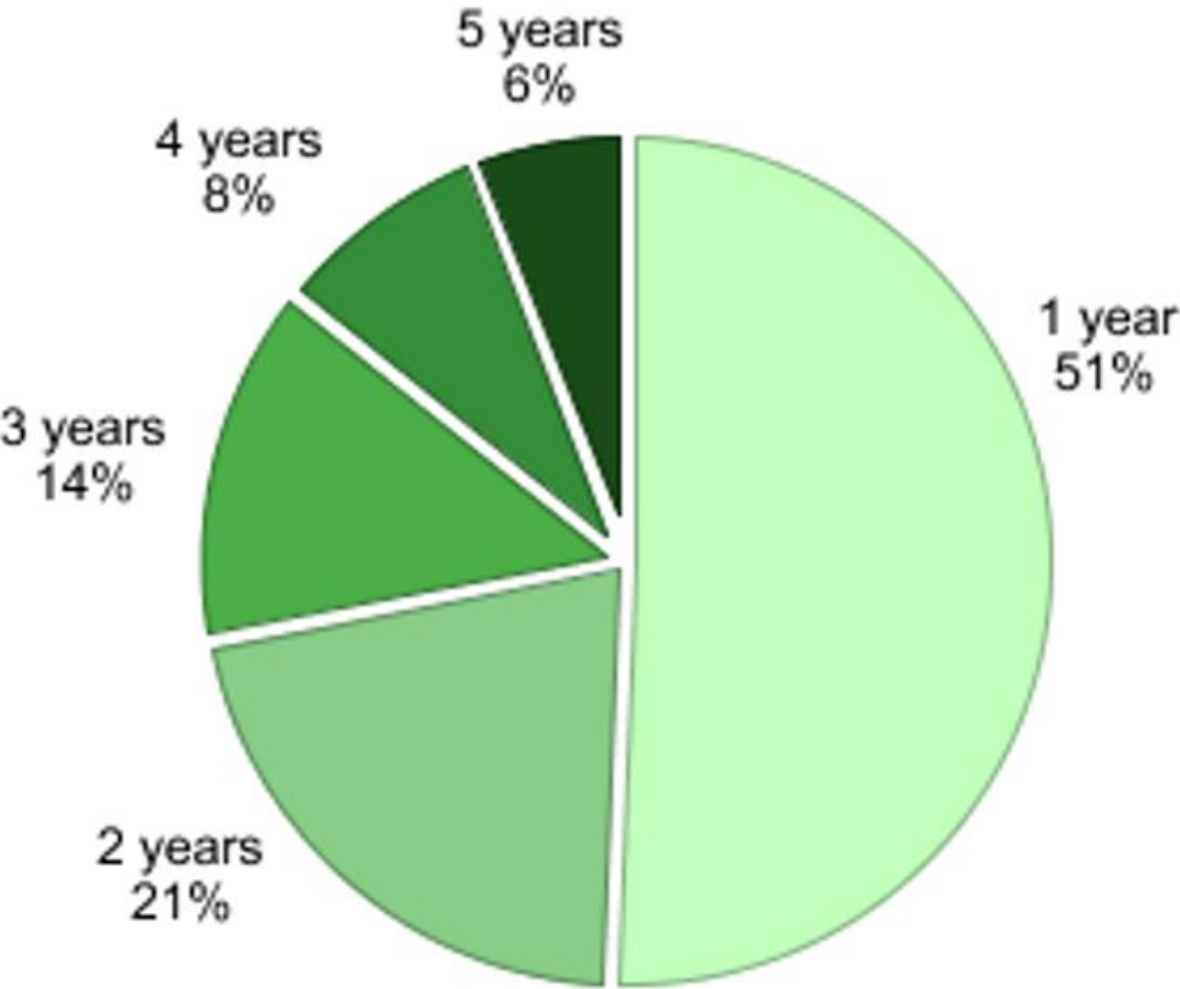




# Frequency of Food Insecurity During a 5-year Period

NATIONAL  
DATA

Household that were food insecure at least once during a 5-year period, by number of years of food insecurity



Data Source: USDA, Economic Research Service Summary of findings from a study by Park E. Wilde et al. published in the Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition.

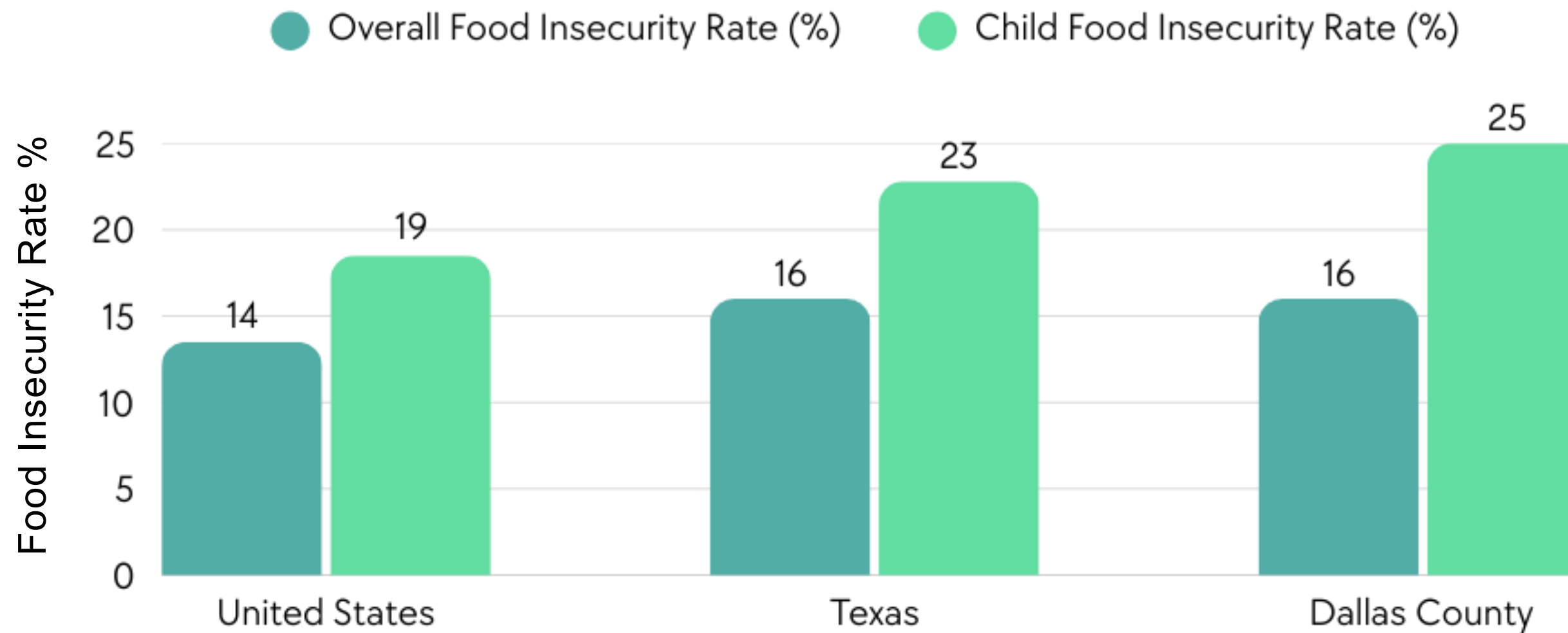


# Food Insecurity

2022

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION  
WHO LACK ADEQUATE ACCESS  
TO FOOD

NATIONAL, STATE &  
LOCAL DATA



Source: Feeding America Map the Meal Gap

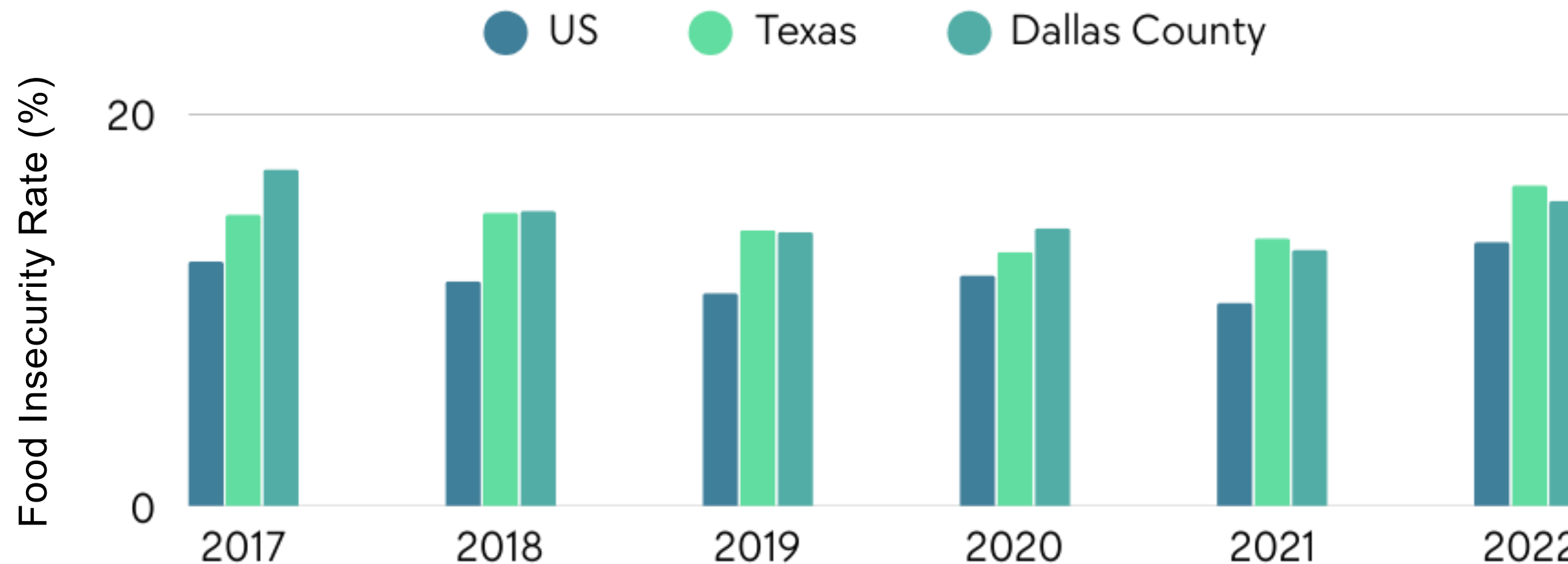




# Food Insecurity by Year

2019-2022

NATIONAL STATE &  
LOCAL DATA



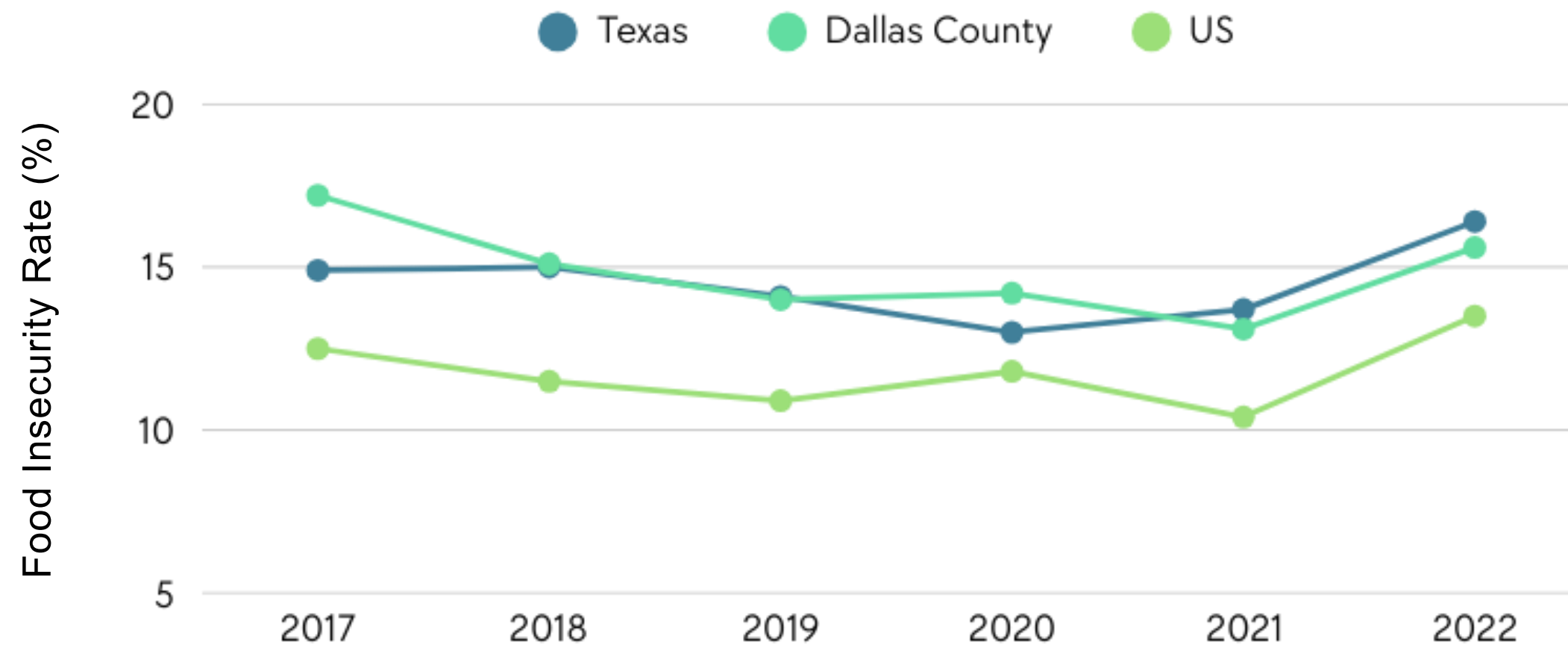
Data Source: Feeding America Map the Meal Gap



# Food Insecurity Trends

2019-2022

NATIONAL, STATE &  
LOCAL DATA



Data Source: Feeding America Map the Meal Gap



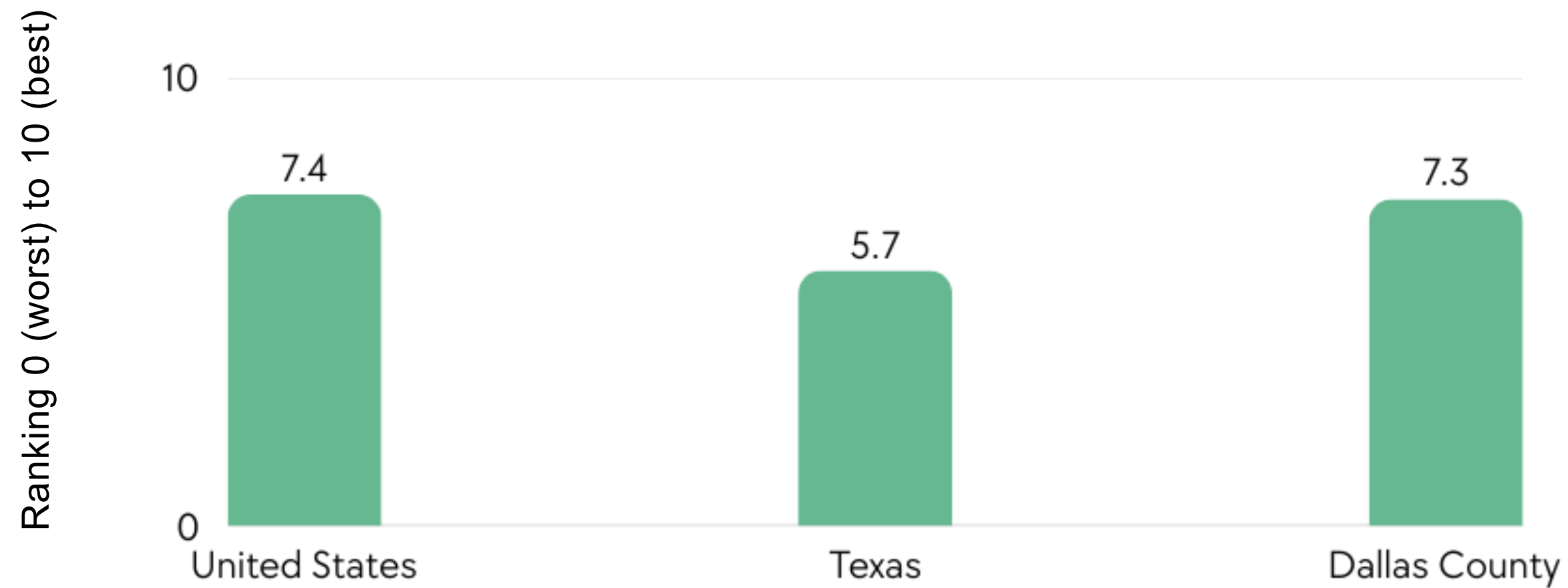


# Food Environment Index

2019 & 2022

INDEX OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENT INCLUDING ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS AND FOOD INSECURITY

LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEVEL DATA



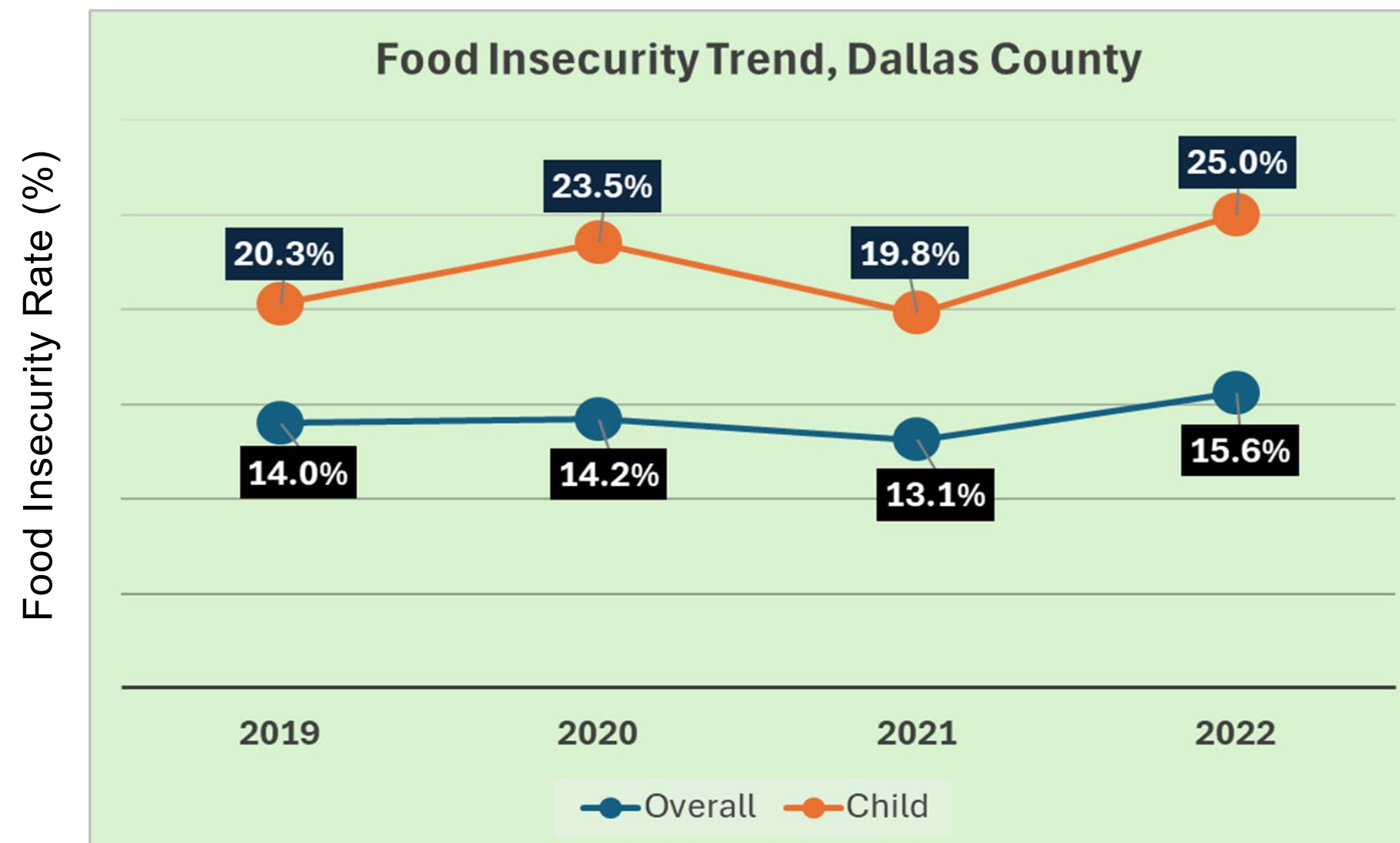
Data Source: Community Health Rankings and Roadmaps (USDA Food Environment Atlas; Map the Meal Gap from Feeding America)



# Food Insecurity Trend Dallas County

2019-2022

LOCAL DATA



Data Source: Feeding America





# Food Insecurity

2024

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DATA  
& COMPARISONS

LOCAL, STATE, AND  
NATIONAL LEVEL DATA

## National

1 in 4  
Black Individuals  
Experience Food Insecurity



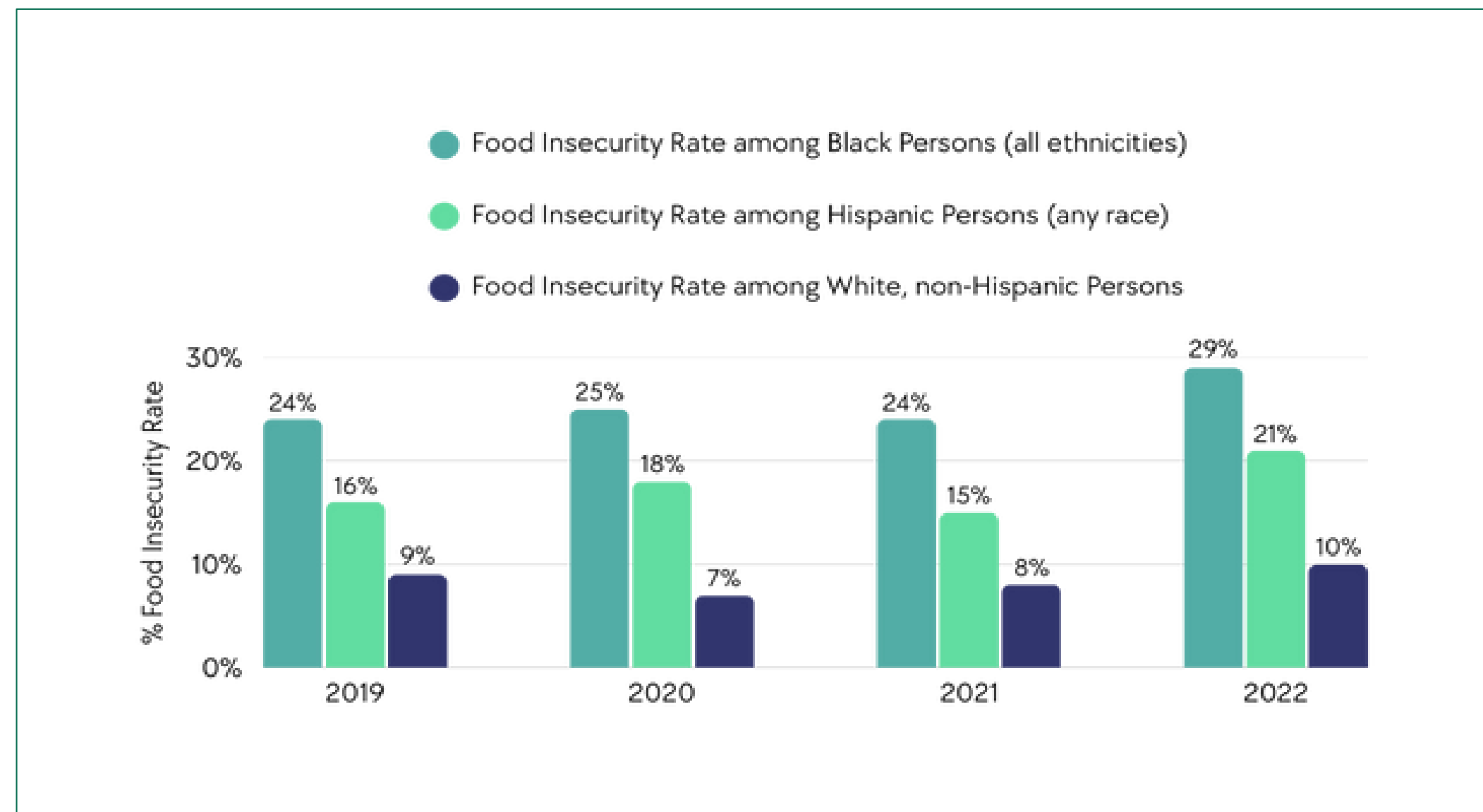
1 in 5  
Latino Individuals  
Experience Food  
Insecurity



1 in 10  
White Individuals  
Experience Food  
Insecurity



## Dallas County



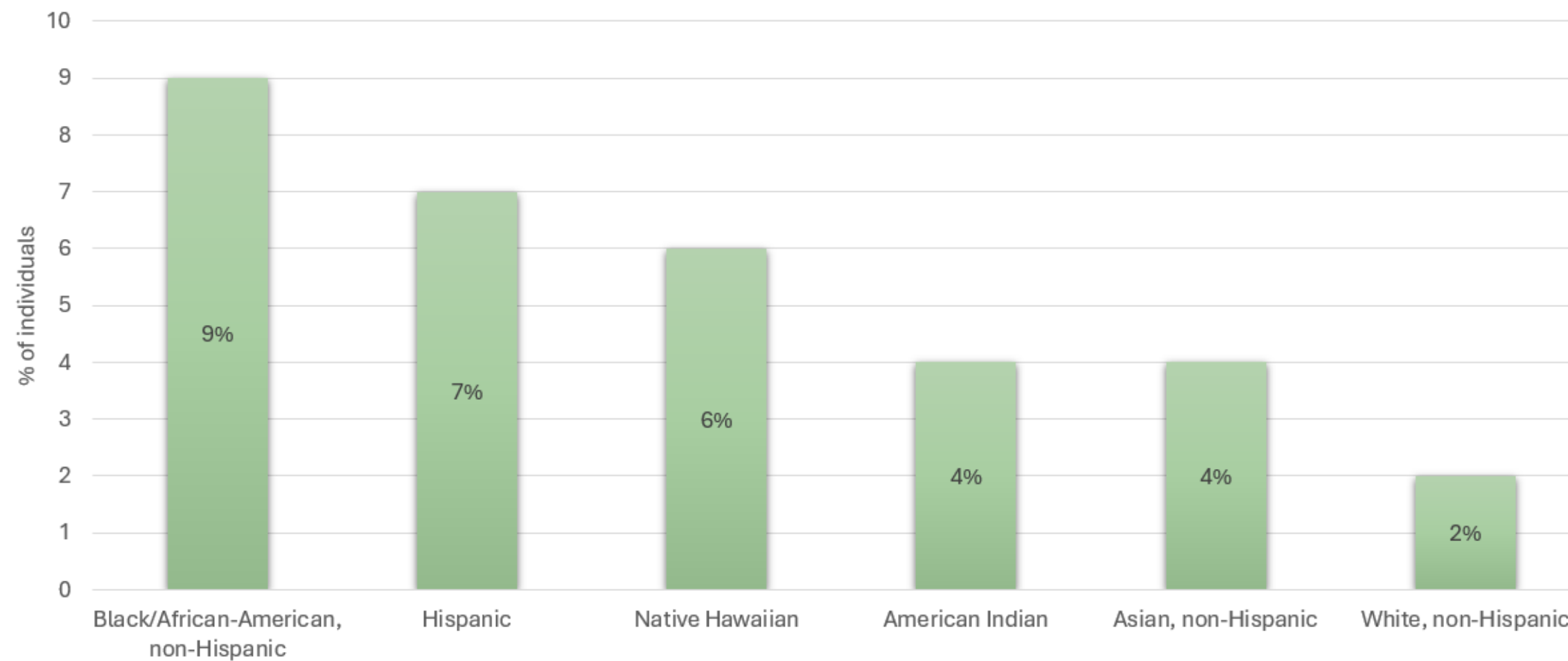
Data Source: USDA Economic Research Service

# Food Access

2022

LOCAL DATA

Percent of DCHHS Contact V2 Survey Respondents that Stated They Did Not Have Access to Food  
by Race, Dallas County, June 2020-2022



Data Source: CHNA 2022 DCHHS Contact Tracing V2 Survey



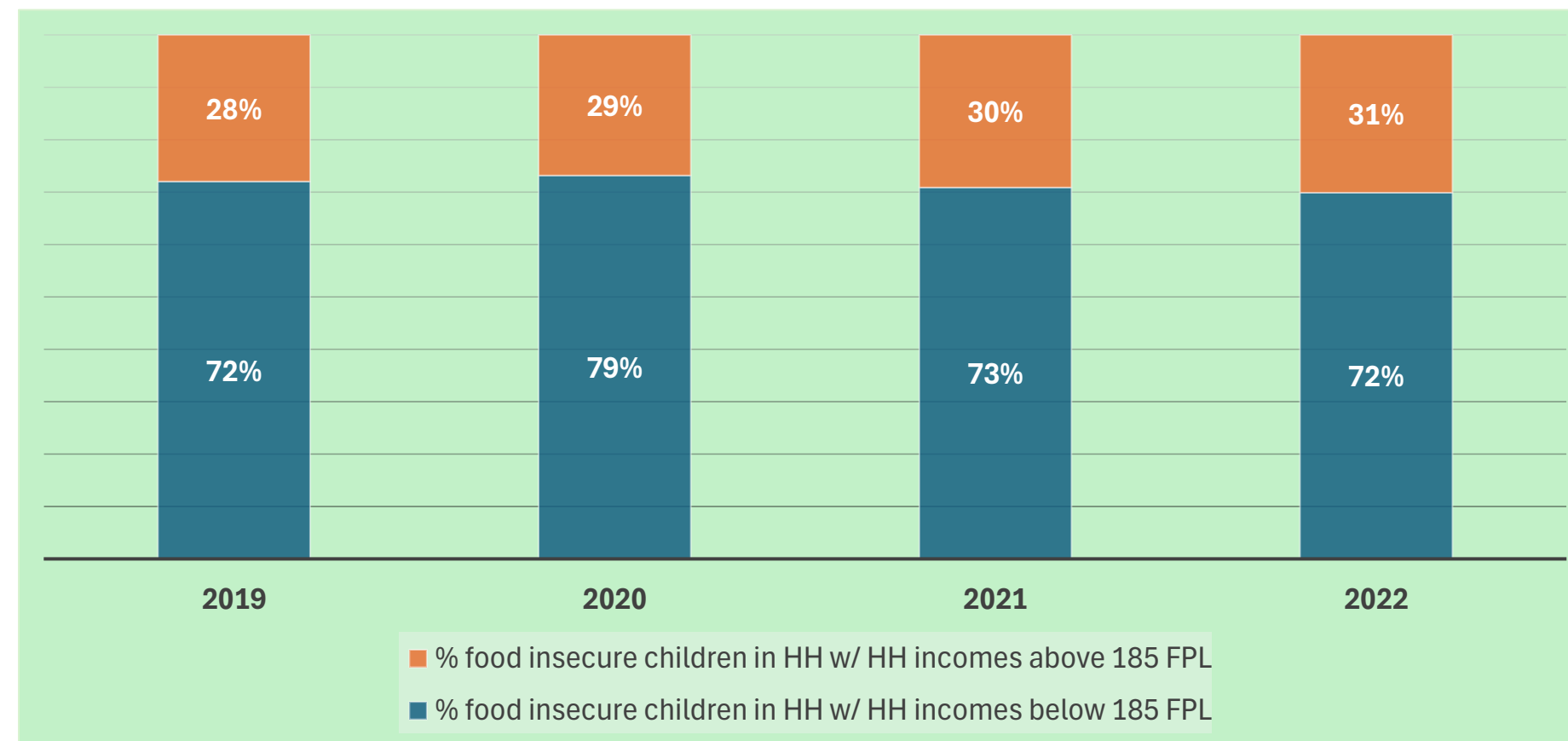


# Impact of Income on Food Security

2019-2022

LOCAL DATA

Impact of Income on Food Security, Dallas County, 2019-2022



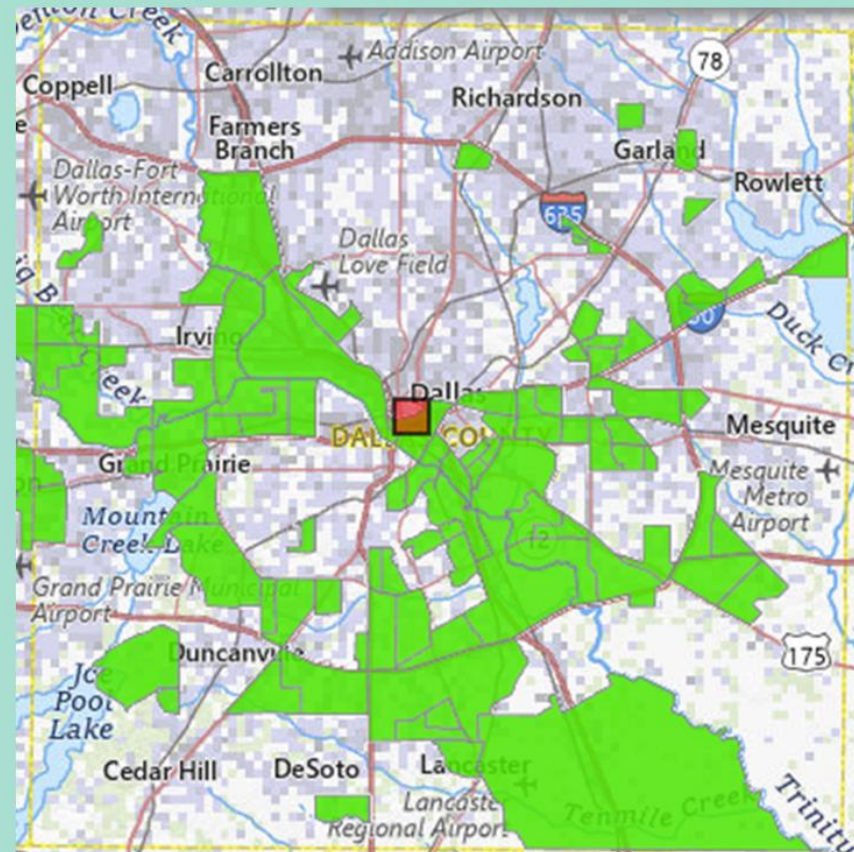
Data Source: Feeding America



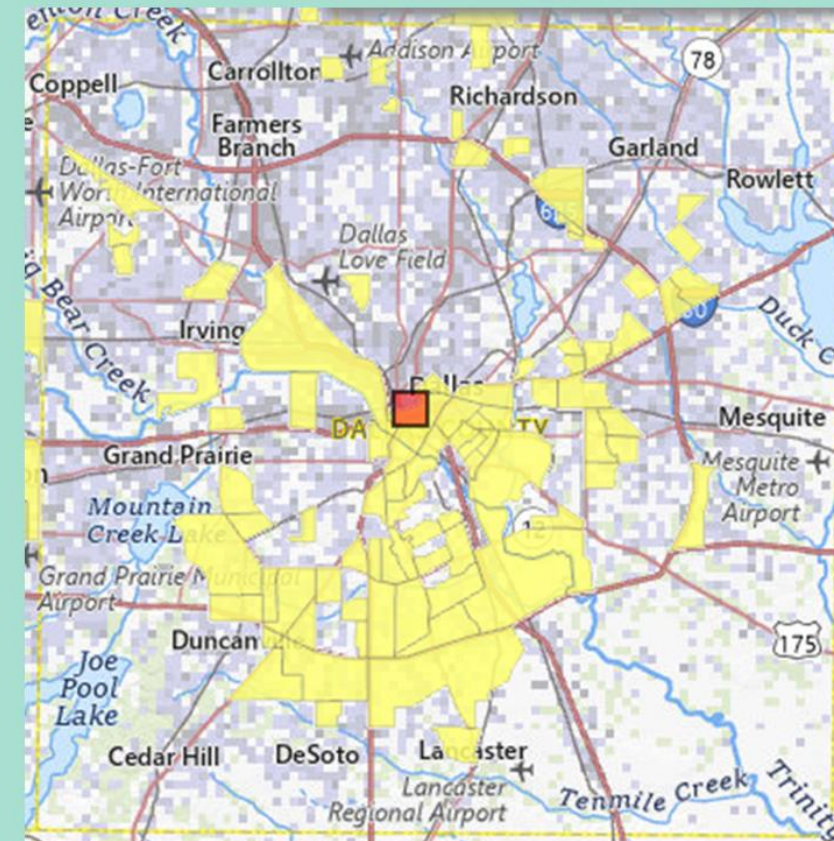
# Food Deserts in Dallas County

2019

LOCAL DATA



Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is more than 1 Mile..



Low-income census tract where more than 100 housing units do not have a vehicle and are more than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket...

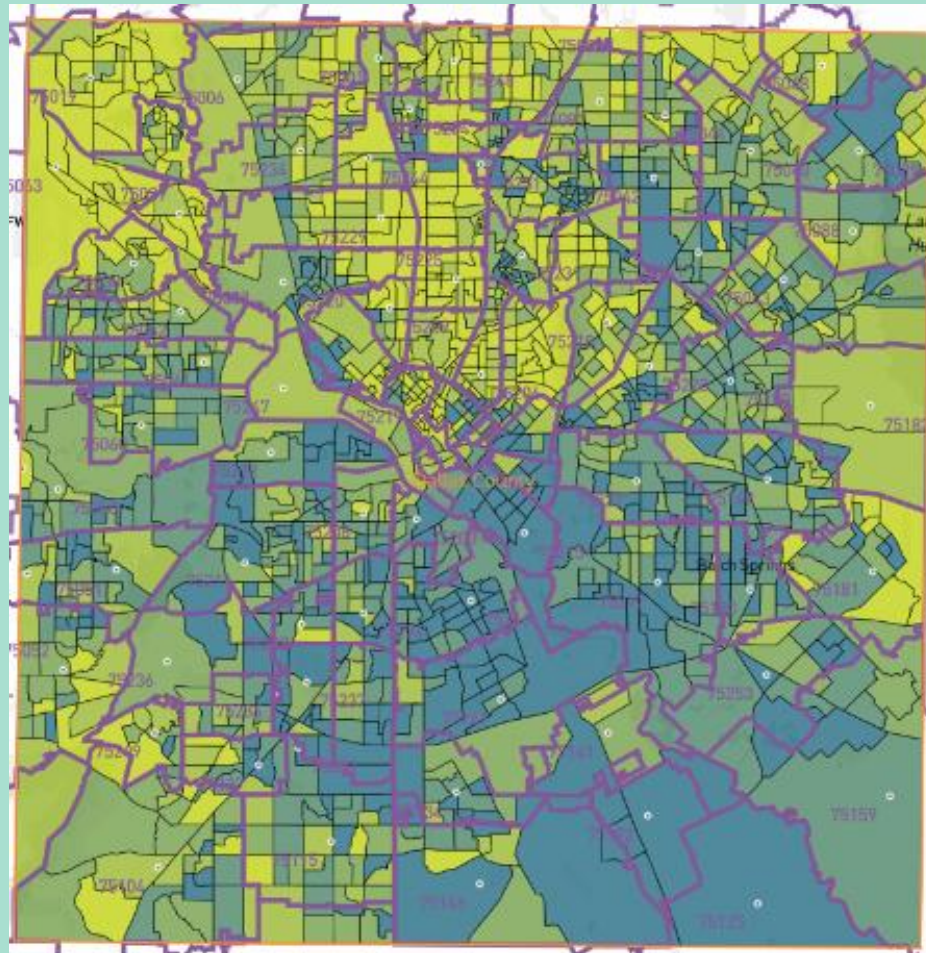


Source: USDA, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas>

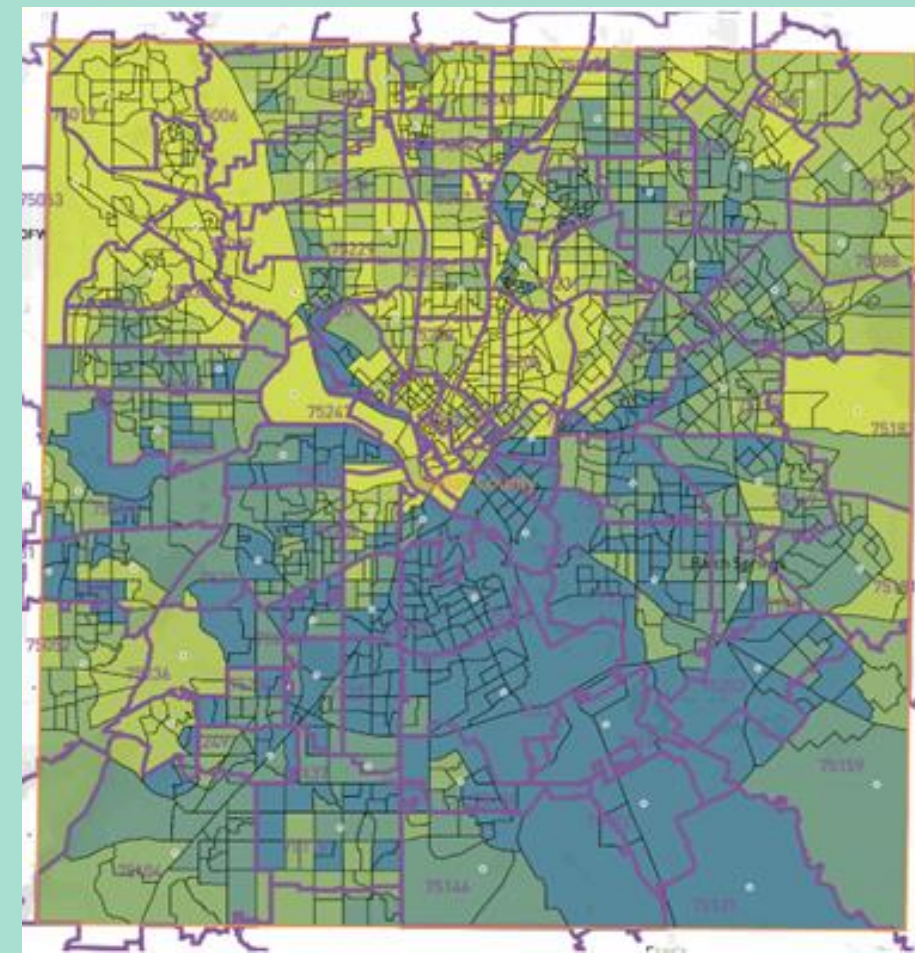


# Overlap between Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease Vulnerabilities in Dallas County

## Food Insecurity



## Chronic Disease Burden



### Vulnerability Level



Source: PCCI, Community Vulnerability Compass, <https://eds.pccinnovation.org/>

# Healthy People 2030 Objectives

NWS-01

Reduce household food  
insecurity and hunger



NWS-02

Eliminate very low food  
security in children



NWS-06

Increase fruit  
consumption by people  
aged 2 years and over



NWS-07

Increase vegetable  
consumption by people  
aged 2 years and older



**Low food security:** “Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.”

**Very low food security:** “Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.”

[Food Insecurity - Healthy People 2030 | odphp.health.gov](https://odphp.health.gov/food-insecurity)





# DCHHS Efforts & Program Impact

- ❖ To reduce food insecurity
- ❖ To meet objectives of Healthy People 2030



**DCHHS**  
Dallas County Health and Human Services

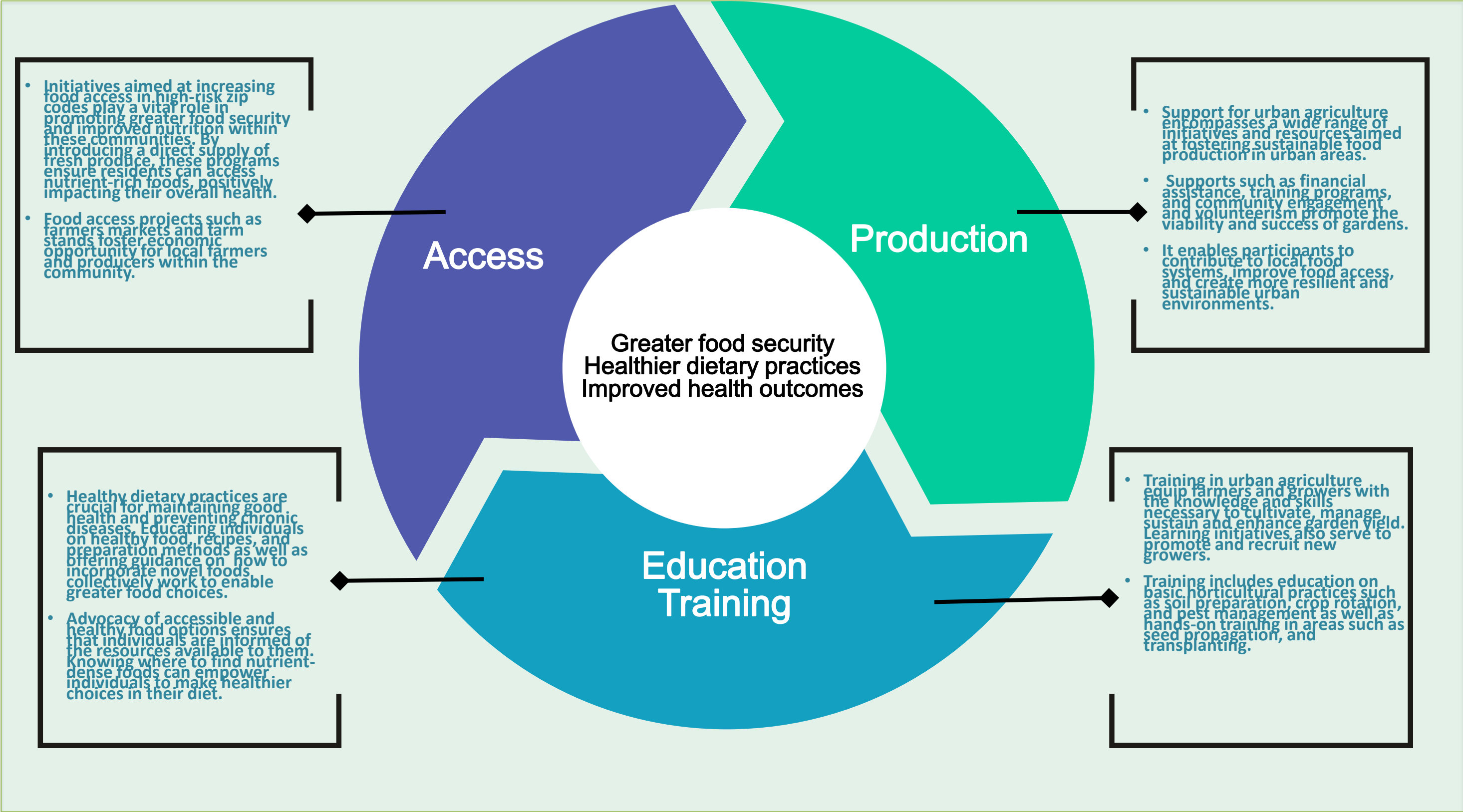
Healthy People Healthy Communities  
Health and Social Equity





# DCHHS Strategic Approach

Improving Food Security and Building Healthier Communities by *Advancing Local Food Production, Access, and Knowledge*



# DCHHS Efforts

- DCHHS' strategy to promote healthy food access and consumption has three components described as the AAA-strategy (Availability-Access-Awareness)

## Availability

Increase availability of healthy food by increasing local production of fruits and vegetables.

- Community garden grant program
- Urban mini-orchards project
- Farm to School program
- Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Support Pilot Program (UAISP)

## Access

Improve physical access and affordability of healthy food especially for low-income communities

- Farmers Market Project
- Wellness on Wheels Mobile Market
- SNAP Enrollment and Promotion

## Awareness

- A. Train new and establish gardeners and growers in effective urban agriculture operations
- B. Provide food and nutrition education to the public

- Edible gardening training & Master gardener sponsorship
- Growers Education and Workforce Development (GEWD)
- Nutrition Education





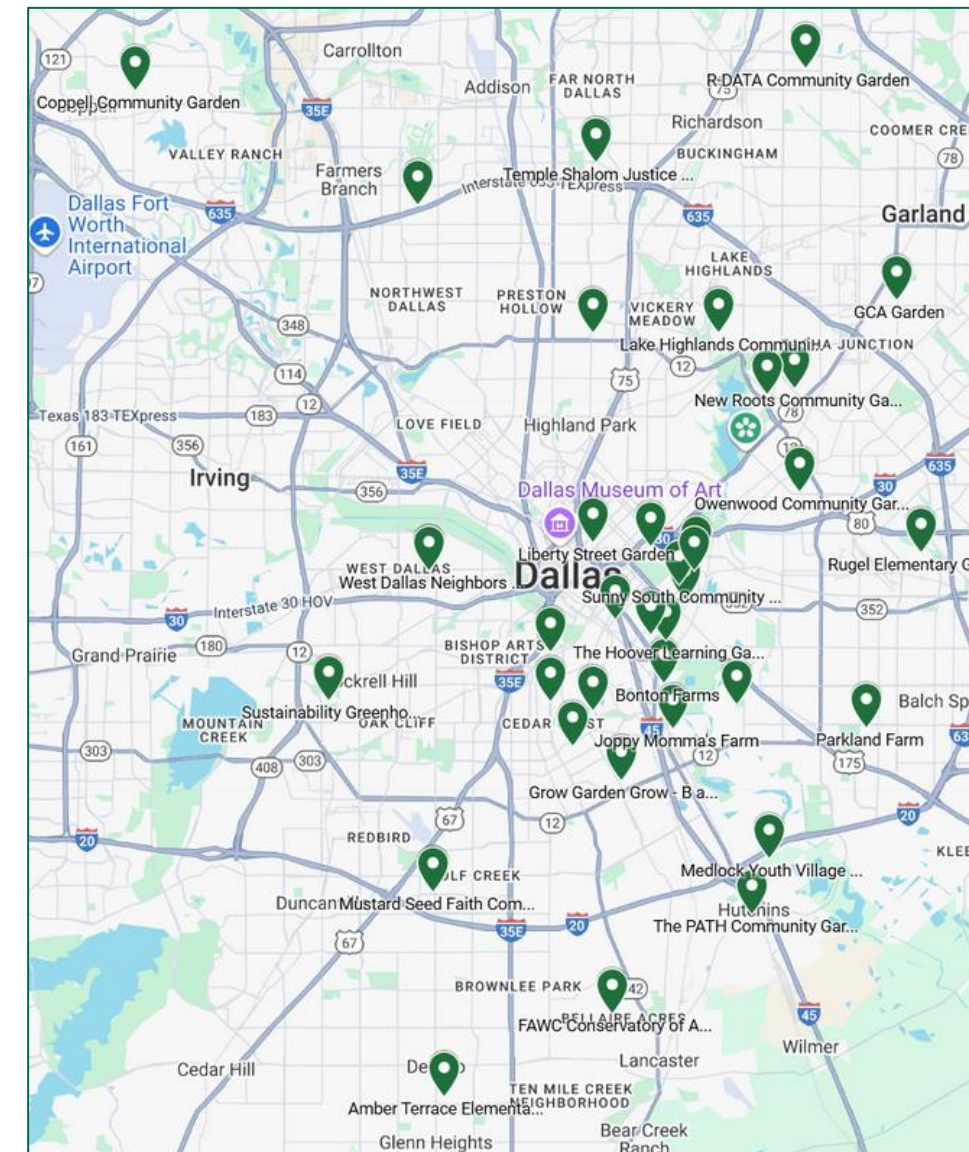
# DCHHS Community Garden Grant

01.

Provide financial and technical assistance to established and new gardens in target zip codes. Connects community gardens to local resources such as Master gardener volunteers. To date, in 4 rounds, the program made available more than \$150,000 dollars. DCHHS also helped 1 local garden to become USDA designated “People’s Garden” receiving 75k in funding through DCHHS.

02.

More than 38 existing and new community gardens were supported to-date. Accordingly, production at each of these gardens increased from 30% – 100%. More than 34 gardens were provided access to master gardener volunteer resources through DCHHS collaboration with Texas A&M AgriLife



Grant supported community gardens

People's Garden Dedication Ceremony



People's Garden





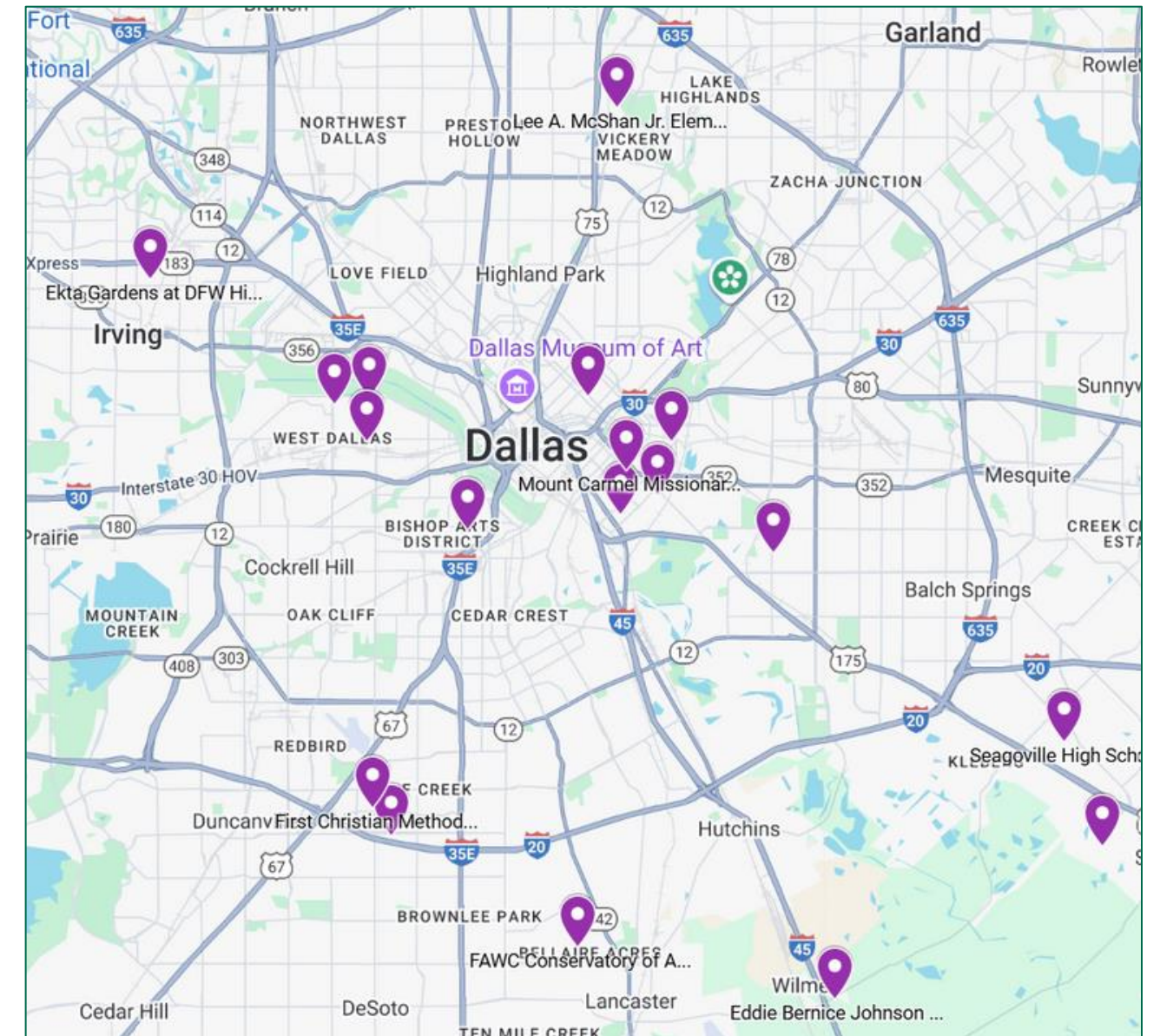
# DCHHS Urban Mini-Orchards Project

# 01.

**A collaborative project with Grow Garden Grow, a local non-profit. The project aims to identify suitable sites for establishing mini-orchards by planting fruits trees and bushes that stive in North Texas climate.**

# 02.

**To date, the project has established mini-orchards at 18 sites and has planted more than 139 various fruit trees and more than 34 blackberry brambles**



## Established mini-orchards





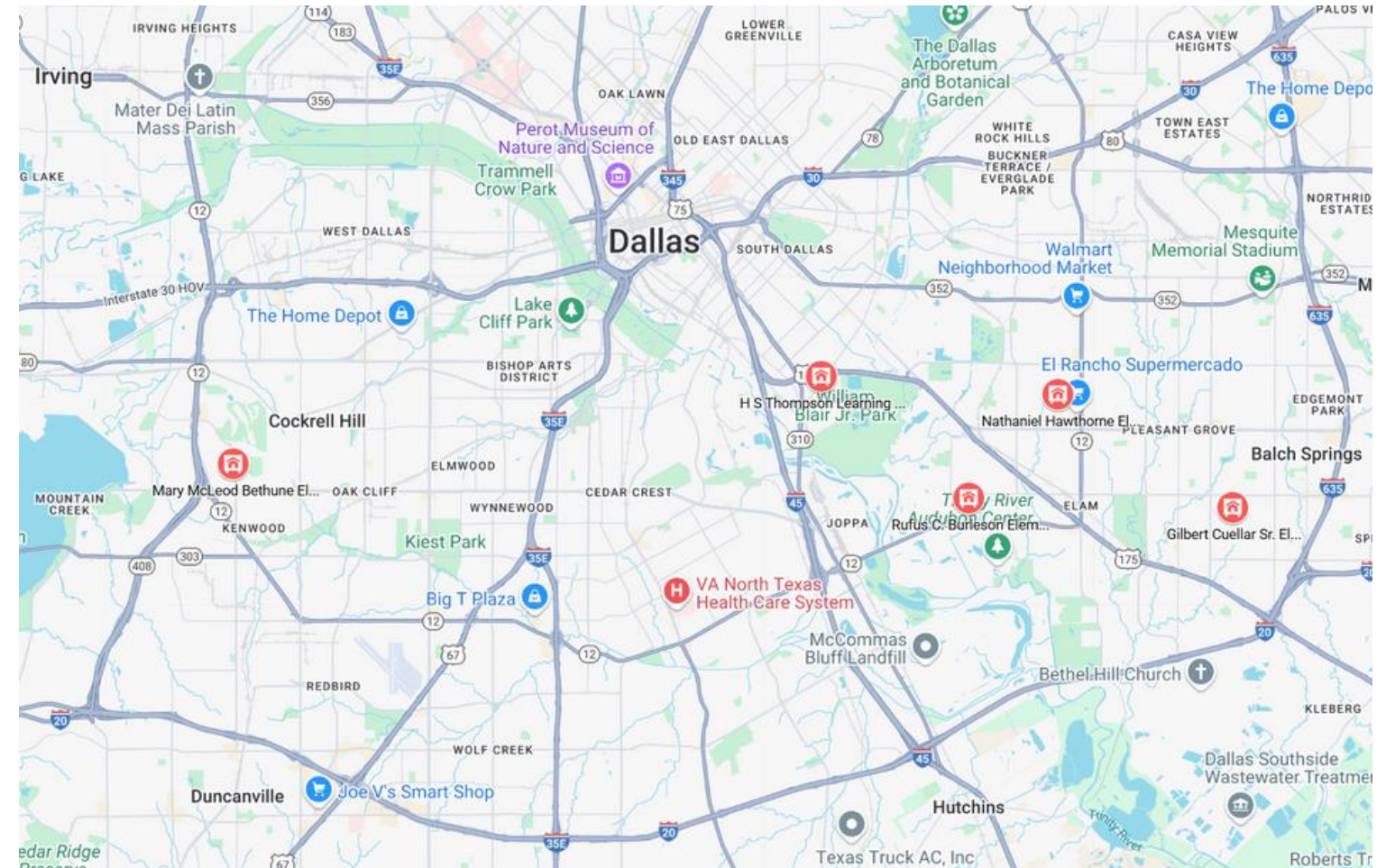
# DCHHS Farm to School Program

01.

This is a program established using a USDA grant. It aims to establish or improve school gardens located in low-income communities. The project also aims to help each school incorporate gardening and nutrition education in their lesson plans.

02

The program started in July 2024. So far, the program has identified five schools for implementation of the program. These are: Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary, Rufus C. Burleson Elementary School, Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary, Gilbert Cuellar Sr. Elementary School, and H S Thompson Learning Center



DCHHS Farm to School Project  
Schools





# DCHHS–City of Dallas UAISP

01.

This is a collaborative project funded by the City of Dallas to support urban agriculture infrastructure there by improving local food production capacity. The project has made available \$99,600 dollars for the first round with a possibility of another round in 2025

02.

The selection of grant recipients has been completed. Accordingly, 14 local growers and urban agriculture operators will be receiving fundings for their infrastructure improvement projects.







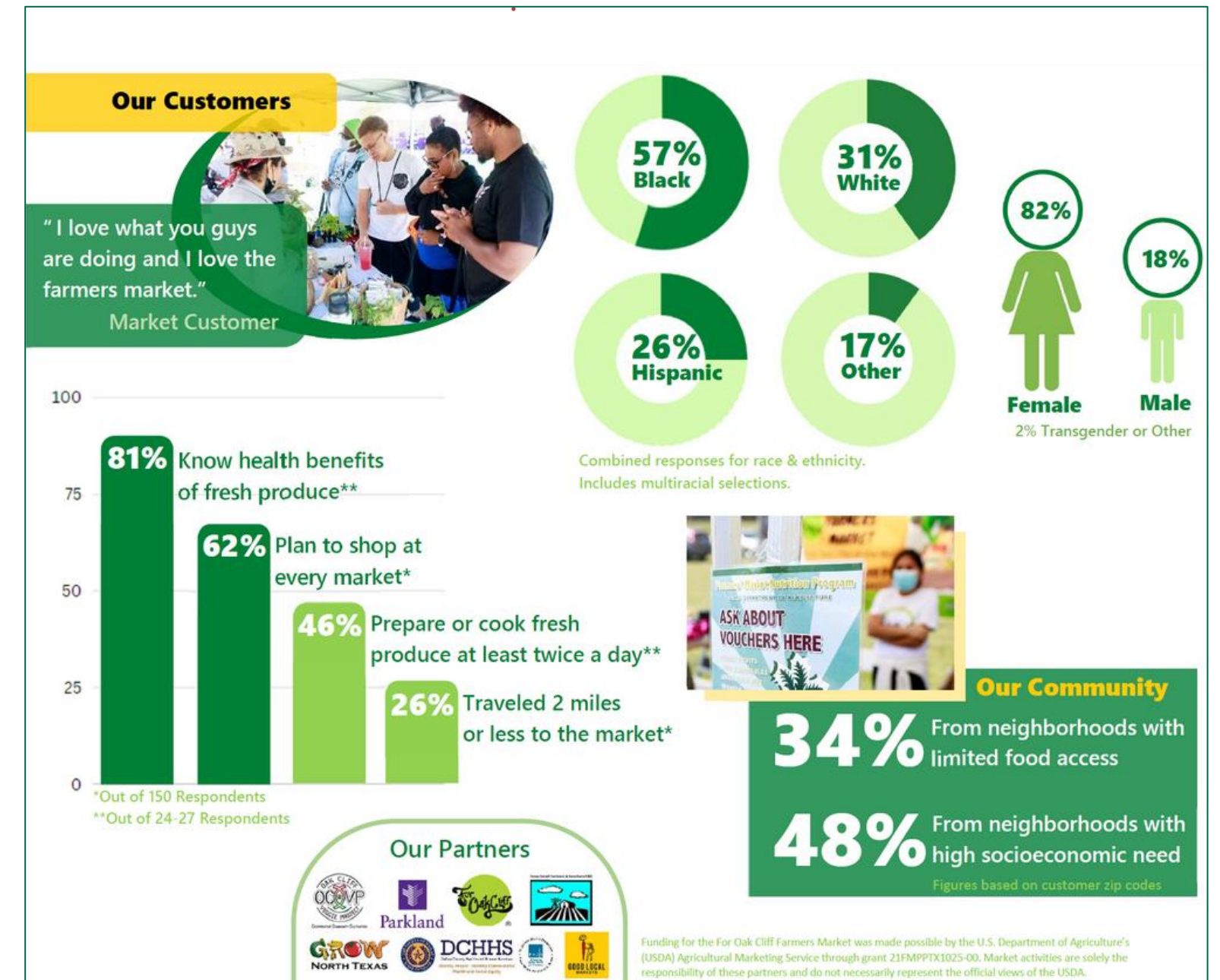
# DCHHS Farmers Market Project

01.

The program aims to establish farmers market (and farm stands) in underserved areas of the County to improve access to affordable healthy food. Accordingly, through a USDA grant, DCHHS was able to establish the For Oak Cliff Farmers Market at 07 E. Ledbetter Dr. Dallas, TX 75216.

02.

As of 2024, a grand total of 4,780 customers attended the market, an average of 154 customers per market over the 31 market days offered. A total of 22 vendors participated. In addition, DCHHS partner Parkland provided over 1,100 free health screenings, including glucose, blood pressure, breast health, and STI screenings, as well as referrals for financial and social services.



For Oak Cliff Farmers Market Survey

# DCHHS Wellness on Wheels Program

01.

The program aims to establish a mobile market that offers fresh produce at affordable price to underserved communities. It also supports local gardens and growers by sourcing the produce locally. The program has been working with at least 5 local growers.

02.

Since its launch in October 2024, the DCHHS mobile market has offered a variety of locally sourced seasonal produce items through the program, making available over 500 pounds of produce to 93 Dallas County residents.



DCHHS Wellness on Wheels Mobile Market





# SNAP Enrollment & Promotion

01.

DCHHS provides SNAP eligibility check up and enrollment services. In addition, DCHHS is planning to implement Double up Food Bucks program through its Wellness on Wheels program.

02.

DCHHS, through its Welfare division, enrolls on average about 400 eligible residents to the SNAP program annually.



Food demo & SNAP Enrollment by DCHHS staff at the For Oak Cliff Farmers Market



# Edible Gardening Training Program

01.

This is a collaborative program with Texas A&M AgriLife Dallas County Extension Office. It aims to educate residents of Dallas County in essentials of urban gardening. Topics covered through a series of classes and hands on training include Soil & irrigation, Veggie 101, Fruits 101, IPM, and Harvesting and Marketing.

02.

Since the program started in 2022, DCHHS has trained more than a 100 residents. In addition, DCHHS, in collaboration with AgriLife, provided scholarships to 5 residents from underserved communities to become Master Gardeners.



DCHHS Edible Gardening Training

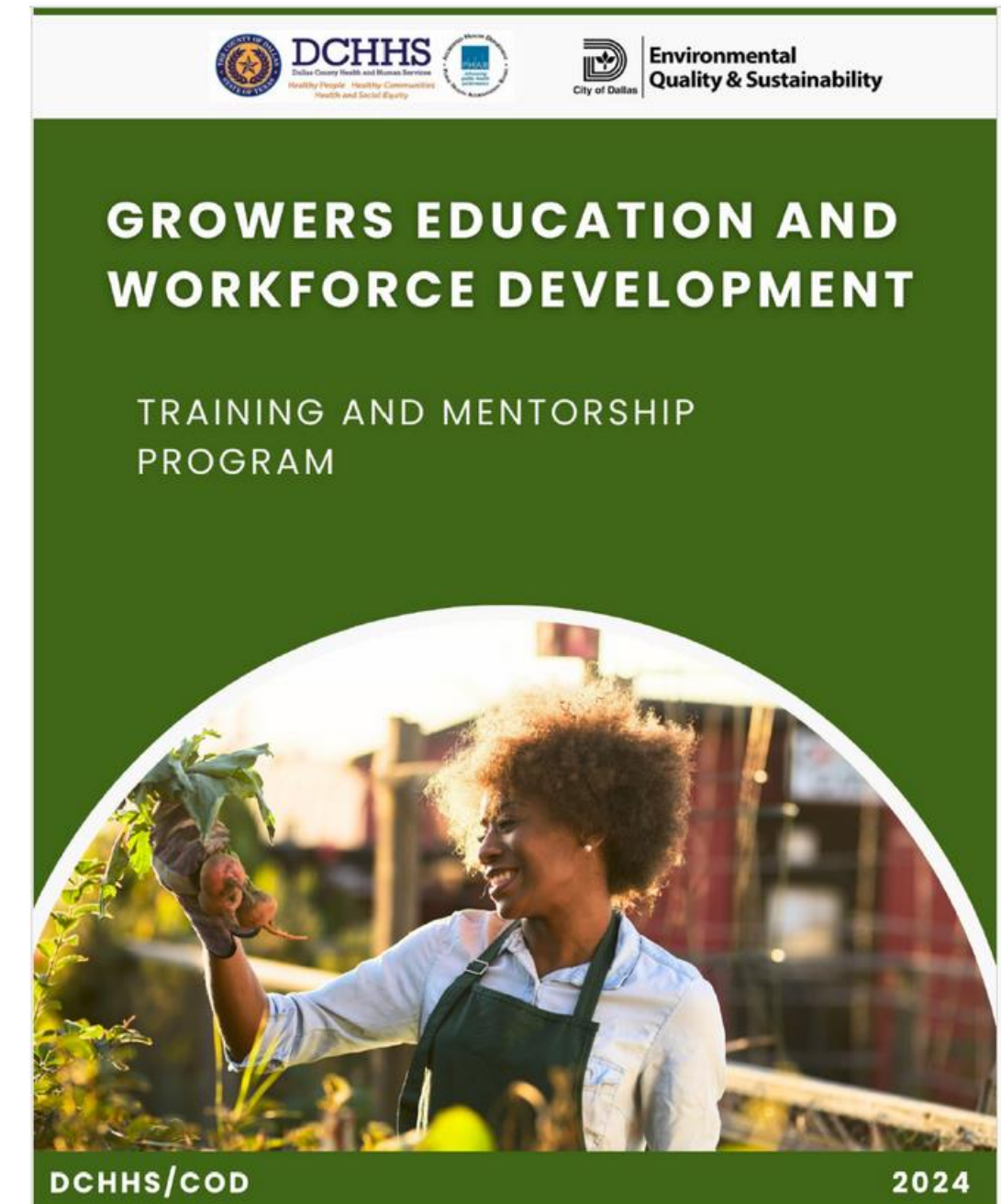
# DCHHS GEWD Program

01.

GEWD is a collaborative program with the City of Dallas. The program aims to bolster the urban agriculture workforce in the Dallas area by providing hands-on training in various aspects, including efficient gardening techniques, food safety protocols, agribusiness models, conservation of natural resources, and understanding consumer food markets.

02.

The program grant in the amount of \$49,800 was provided by the City of Dallas. The DCHHS has currently completed 5 local urban Agriculture Operation sites to serve as an internship location for at least 12 residents to receive a 12-week hands on training.





# Food & Nutrition Education

01.

DCHHS has implemented more than 11 evidence-based SNAP-ED programs including: ① Eat Smart, Live Strong ② Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables ③ Cooking Matters at Home ④ Cooking Matters at the Store ⑤ Healthy For Life ⑥ Heart Smarts ⑦ 10 Tips for Adults ⑧ Coordinated Approaches to Child Health (CATCH) Go for Health ⑨ Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes ⑩ Do Well, Be Well with Hypertension ⑪ Cooking Well With Diabetes

02.

The DCHHS Food and Nutrition Program provided more than 474 nutrition classes since 2021. More than 9,400 residents participated in this classes. To date, the DCHHS Chronic Disease Division has distributed 4,307 Simply Delicious healthy& affordable recipe cookbooks. The division also conducted more than 100 cooking demonstrations in 2024 and 2025.



Nutrition classes & Cooking demo



# Program Delivery and Impacts Summary

## EFFORTS



- Increase Availability/Production:
  - Community garden grant program
  - Urban mini-orchards project
  - Farm to School program
  - Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Support Pilot Program (UAISP)
  - People's Garden Initiative
- Increase Access:
  - Farmers Market Project
  - Farm Stands
  - Wellness on Wheels Mobile Market
  - SNAP Enrollment and Promotion
- Education and Training
  - Nutrition Classes
  - Cooking Demonstrations
  - Nutrition Counseling
  - Nutrition Outreach Events
  - Menu Modification Program and Toolkit
  - Healthy recipe cookbook
  - Growers Education and Workforce Development Program



## IMPACTS

- 41 Gardens assisted with over 150k in funding provided
- 18 Mini-orchards, 139 fruit trees, 34 blackberry brambles
- 5 School garden to be established or improved
- 14 Growers/Gardens will improve infrastructure, \$99,800k in grants
- 1 Farmers Market and 1 Mobile Market established
- More than 400 SNAP enrollments
- SNAP Double up Food Bucks program to be established
- 474 Nutrition classes conducted
- 9,400 program participants
- >100 cooking demonstrations (2024-2025)
- Menu revisions for 4 Early Childhood Centers
- Menu modification Toolkit developed 18 distributed
- 4,307 Healthy recipe cookbooks distributed
- >100 residents training in gardening
- 5 Master Gardeners



# Thank you very much!

(214) 819-2000

<https://www.dallascounty.org/departments/dchhs/>

