

# HUNGER IN LANE COUNTY

## PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST

*“Without food assistance my child’s plate would be empty.”*

Too many Lane County families struggle to put food on the table. Nearly one in four (24%) children in Lane County live in food-insecure households — and for those children, hunger has lasting consequences.

Teachers are often the first to see how hunger effects their students. Three out of four teachers in the United States say their students are coming to school hungry. When children are hungry they can’t learn.

Research shows that hungry children suffer in a variety of ways. Hungry kids struggle socially and behaviorally. They are more likely to miss school and receive poorer grades. Children who are hungry are twice as likely to repeat a grade in elementary school. Children from food-insecure families are more likely to drop out of high school before graduation.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps feed millions of children at risk of hunger. Nearly half of all food stamp recipients are children. In fact, nearly half

of all children in the United States will receive SNAP benefits at some point in their childhoods (USDA 2018).

Twenty percent of food-insecure families are not eligible for government assistance due to household income, employment or some other reason (USDA 2018).

African-American and Latino children experience hunger at twice the rate of white children. More than one in four African-American households are food insecure, compared to one in 10 white households. For Latino families, food insecurity affects one in five households (USDA 2018).



**23%** of Lane County children live in poverty, and **24%** of children live in food-insecure households (Children First for Oregon 2018).



**13%** of survey respondents cut the size of their children’s meals or skip meals because there is not enough money for food (HFS 2018).



**52%** of all school-age children in Lane County qualify for free meals through the National School Lunch Program (USDA 2018).



## MORE SENIORS EXPERIENCING HUNGER

*“I am a disabled widow. Thank God for Meals on Wheels.”*

The number of senior households in Oregon increased dramatically between 2010 and 2016 — by 25%. The number of senior households with incomes below the ALICE threshold grew at an even faster rate of 36%. By 2016, 44% of senior households

in Oregon had incomes below the ALICE threshold (ALICE 2016 report). Between 2007 and 2013, the number of seniors experiencing hunger increased by 56% (Meals on Wheels America 2017).

As baby boomers age, the number of seniors experiencing hunger is expected to increase along with the challenge of ensuring they have access to nutritious food. Hunger poses unique challenges for older adults. Seniors face medical and mobility challenges that put them at a greater risk of hunger. Many older adults must choose between buying food and paying for medication, while others struggle to prepare foods as they once did.



**32%** of survey respondents live in households with someone 51 to 65. **25%** live in households with someone 65 or older (HFS 2018).



**43%** of survey respondents list social security or SSDI as a source of income (HFS 2018).



**59%** of recipients are working, retired or have a disability that prevents them from working (HFS 2018).



## ACCESS FOR ALL

*“Apreciamos la ayuda que nuestra familia recibe de la despensa. Es una gran bendición. ¡Gracias!”*

*“We appreciate the help our family receives from the pantry. It is such a blessing. Thank you.”*

The Latino community and other communities of color face multiple barriers when it comes to accessing food — including transportation, language barriers, the political climate and the fear of being denied services based on skin color, accent or other cultural identifiers. When faced with the choice between keeping their families safe or seeking food assistance, many choose to keep their families safe and make do with what they can.

Latinos living on limited incomes are less likely to receive help from federal nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), putting them at greater risk for food insecurity. Latinos are also at greater risk of developing diet-related illnesses, making healthy food options even more important (Feeding America 2018).

In Oregon, **31%** of Latinos, **29%** of African Americans and **32%** of Native Americans are food insecure (Oregon Hunger Task Force 2018).

**20%** of Lane County identify as non-white. 28,525 Latinos live in Lane County (Census 2016).

FOOD for Lane County served 7,499 Latinos in fiscal year 2017-2018. **9%** of survey respondents speak a language other than English (HFS 2018).



## OUR PARTNERS



# HUNGER IN LANE COUNTY

*Real stories about real people facing hunger*



## FINDING SOLUTIONS TO HUNGER

We’ve included data here from several sources, including the Hunger Factors Survey conducted in March 2018, Lane County’s 2016 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) report, Feeding America, USDA, OSU, Children First for Oregon, Oregon Center for Public Policy and Oregon Hunger Task Force.

The Hunger Factors Survey, conducted every other year in cooperation with Oregon Food Bank, asks food box recipients about a variety of topics.

We received 898 responses to our 2018 survey. This information informs and shapes our efforts to alleviate hunger in Lane County. Survey results help us better serve the people who turn to us for help. FOOD for Lane County partners with emergency food pantries to provide food to 80,000 people. We help many more through a variety of food assistance, education and job training programs.

## TOO MANY STILL STRUGGLE

*“You can’t think when all you do think about is being hungry.”*

In Lane County, forty-four percent of households do not earn enough to cover their basic needs. This is according to Lane County’s 2016 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Report. Thirty-seven percent of Lane County residents qualify for an emergency food box (Census 2016). One in seven Oregonians and one in five children in Oregon are food insecure (USDA 2017).

The economy is improving, but too many people in Lane County struggle to feed themselves and their families. The rate of hunger in Oregon is going down. Oregon now ranks 12th in the country, according to the USDA. But hunger remains persistently high throughout the state. Lane County has the second highest rate of hunger in Oregon after Coos, Jackson and Union counties, which are tied for first.

Hunger doesn’t discriminate. All types of households struggle, but some are more vulnerable than others — especially seniors and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes, children and single mothers.



**77%** of Hunger Factors Survey (HFS) respondents say that the food they buy doesn’t last, and there is not enough money to buy more (HFS 2018).



**81%** of respondents worry that food will run out before they have money to buy more (HFS 2018).



When asked what would make food assistance less necessary, **30%** of survey respondents say employment, **23%** say health care and benefits and **11%** say lower housing costs and living expenses (HFS 2018).



LOCAL FAMILIES STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET

“My family is so grateful for all your help. We wouldn’t make it through the month without it.”

The 2017 County Data Book by Children First for Oregon found three troubling trends in Oregon — low rates of early education enrollment, a shortage of mental health services and persistent food insecurity. In 2013-2015, 16% of couples with children and 44% of single mothers in Oregon experienced food insecurity — 10% more than the national average.

“These trends combined with high housing costs, high child care costs and a lack of living wage jobs mean that too few children are getting the chance they deserve to grow up healthy, safe, economically secure and educated” (Children First for Oregon 2017).

ONE LESS WORRY

“Thank you for helping our family. Without it, I don’t know what we would do.”

Access to food provides relief large and small to families and individuals struggling to put food on the table. When asked how a food box helped, survey respondents offered a list of reasons — from freeing up funds for other essentials such as medication and rent to helping them make healthier food choices.

For families already struggling to pay rent, the high cost of child care leads directly to food insecurity. The cost of child care in Oregon has spiked since the 1990s — 121% for a toddler, more than twice the rate of inflation (Children First for Oregon 2017). In Lane County, the cost of child care is higher than the average rent (ALICE Report 2016).

Women — and especially single mothers — are at greater risk of hunger than other segments of the population. In Oregon, 48% of single mothers experience food insecurity. Single moms are the most likely to experience food insecurity among other household types, and more women live alone. Households headed by women are the most vulnerable to food insecurity (USDA 2018).



49% of survey respondents live in households with children under the age of 18 (HFS 2018).



42% of survey respondents say they are unable to work due to the high cost of child care (HFS 2018).



39% of adult survey respondents and 47% of children are uninsured (HFS 2018).



23% of survey respondents say that healthcare and benefits would make food assistance less necessary (HFS 2018).



63% of respondents say that when they add food they get from a pantry to their food supply they are able to meet their household’s food needs for the month (HFS 2018).



59% of respondents say access to a food pantry allows them to prepare and eat healthier meals (HFS 2018).



Because they have access to emergency food, 33% of respondents are able to pay rent or mortgage. 37% are able to pay utility bills. 15% are able to get the medicine they need (HFS 2018).



24% of respondents have more energy for work and family, and 12% are able to focus on a job search (HFS 2018).

SNAP HELPS THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE

“Our family would be in dire need without this program.”

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is Oregon’s most powerful weapon in the battle against food insecurity. Almost 90% of SNAP participants live in households with a child, a senior or someone who is disabled. Among households with children that sign up for the program, SNAP reduces food insecurity by as much as 31% percent (Feeding America 2018).

SNAP benefits average about \$1.35 per person per meal. SNAP helps the local economy — every dollar spent on SNAP in Oregon generates about \$1.9 billion dollars’ worth of economic activity (Oregon Center for Public Policy 2018).

SNAP works. Between 2009 and 2012, SNAP kept 119,000 Oregonians — including 54,000 children — out of poverty (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2018).

SNAP provides temporary help. Unless the economy is weak and jobs are scarce, adults without dependents can receive assistance for only three months in a three-year period, unless they are working at least 20 hours per week or are in a job training program.

The average household is on the program about a year (Feeding America 2018). Most SNAP recipients who can work do. Oregon received close to \$5 million from SNAP in 2016 for employment and training to support programs that help beneficiaries gain skills and work experience to increase their ability to move toward self- sufficiency (Feeding America 2018).



SNAP benefits 1 in 6 Oregonians and more than 60,000 people in Lane County, including more than 24,000 children (Children First for Oregon 2018).



In Oregon, more than 57% of SNAP participants are in families with children. More than 28% are seniors or disabled and more than 47% are working families (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2018).



SNAP helps, but it is only part of the solution. 78% of survey respondents say their SNAP benefits last 3 weeks or less (HFS 2018).



YOU CAN HELP

Numbers can’t tell the whole story, but they do help illustrate the scope of hunger in Lane County. At FOOD for Lane County we know that everyone comes to this problem of hunger in a different way. We have developed unique programs exactly for that reason — to meet people where they are, whether they are homebound, unhoused, working, retired, disabled, families with children or single adults. If you would like to learn more or find out how you can help, contact us today.



FOOD FOR LANE COUNTY

770 Bailey Hill Road  
Eugene, OR 97402  
(541) 343-2822  
info@foodforlanecounty.org  
www.foodforlanecounty.org

VISION

To eliminate hunger in Lane County

MISSION

To alleviate hunger by creating access to food. We accomplish our mission by soliciting, collecting, rescuing, growing, preparing and packaging food for distribution through a county-wide network of social service agencies and programs, and through public awareness, education and community advocacy.

VALUES

Compassion, Inclusion, Collaboration

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WHEN A PAYCHECK ISN'T ENOUGH

“The food we receive helps me afford gas to get to work. Thank you.”

The economy is improving, but not for everyone. Food insecurity remains a challenge where economic recovery is slow and uneven. Many people in Lane County continue to struggle because of low wages, reduced work hours, depleted savings and increased living costs.

In Oregon, the cost of the family budget increased 34% from 2010 to 2016 — much higher than the 9% national rate of inflation. Unemployment in Oregon is down, but 58% of all jobs pay less than \$20 per hour, and 60% of those pay less than \$15 per hour (2018 ALICE Report).

Many households work hard, sometimes at two or three jobs, but still cannot afford to make ends meet. Forty-four percent of Lane County households do not make enough to cover their basic needs. Thousands more are one unexpected expense away from losing their home or not being able to pay for heat, food or medical bills.

The household survival budget reflects the bare minimum cost to live and work in the modern economy. The budget includes only the cost of basic necessities — housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, a smartphone and taxes. It includes no savings and no payment of student or medical debt (2018 ALICE Report).



40% of survey respondents say that their monthly income dropped in the past two years (HFS 2018).



27% of respondents say that their household’s gross monthly income is \$1,000 or less (HFS 2018).



Survey respondents say they owe money to the following: medical (35%), credit cards (33%), family or friends (23%), student loans (22%) and overdue utility bills (17%) (HFS 2018).

NOT ENOUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING

“Thank you so much. You saved my life.”

Many working families spend half or more of their income on housing. The average Lane County household spends more than 60% of its income on housing and transportation (Oregon Housing Alliance 2018).

Without access to affordable housing, many families have to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table. Families living in affordable housing spend \$151 more on food per month than families with extreme housing cost burdens (Oregon Housing Alliance 2018).

Home ownership is out of reach for many. For every 100 families in Lane County with extremely low incomes, there are only 15 affordable housing units available. The hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment at HUD’s Fair Market Rent is \$17.10. Lane County’s mean rent wage is \$12.27 (Oregon Housing Alliance 2018).

Every community in Oregon being impacted by the housing crisis. When housing costs are too high, families must do without other basic needs. Housing competes with child care as the most costly household expense.

Renters in Oregon are three times more likely to be food insecure. In Lane County, one out of three renters spend more than 50% of their income on rent (Oregon Housing Alliance 2018).



In the past two years, 23% of respondents moved to find housing they could afford (HFS 2018).



54% of respondents rent, 26% own and 14% are unhoused (HFS 2018).



During the 2016-2017 school year, 2,373 children in Lane County were homeless (Oregon Housing Alliance 2018).