Massachusetts

A Hunger and Poverty Snapshot

Between 2019-2021:

- Food insecurity in Massachusetts averaged 8.40%.\(^1\)
- Massachusetts’s food insecurity rate was 19% lower than the national average of 10.4%.\(^2\)
- The poverty rate in Massachusetts in 2021 (using the Supplemental Poverty Measure) was 8.0%, which was 0.2 percentage points higher than the nation overall (7.8%).\(^3\)
- Massachusetts’s poverty rate is higher than the national average in large part because of the high cost of housing. Four in 10 low-income people in Massachusetts are homeless or pay over half their income for rent.\(^4\)
- SNAP, alone, lifted 125,000 people above the poverty line in Massachusetts, including 45,000 children, per year between 2013 and 2017, on average.\(^5\)

Nutrition and Health

Diabetes and other diet-related health costs in Massachusetts were estimated to be $7.6 billion\(^6\) in 2017.

8.8% of the adult population in Massachusetts has been diagnosed with diabetes in 2020.\(^7\) This includes:

- 18.2% of seniors.
- 13.9% of Hispanic adults.
- 17.5% of adults with incomes of less than $25,000.

Every year an estimated 42,210\(^8\) adults in Massachusetts are diagnosed with diabetes.

Only 13.4% of adults in the state are meeting recommended fruit intake and 10.5% recommended vegetable intake.\(^9\)

Why Bread for the World is Focused on the Farm Bill

The Farm bill is scheduled to be reauthorized in 2023. No legislation has more impact than a farm bill on the US food system and the nation’s ability to provide healthy food at affordable prices to everyone.

Bread for the World’s farm bill priorities include a focus on nutrition, equity, and sustainability. We believe Massachusetts has a lot to gain from a farm bill legislated with these priorities in mind.
Bread for the World supports strengthening SNAP in Massachusetts.

Not only is SNAP the flagship food security and nutrition program, it is indispensable to better health outcomes and economic prosperity.

In 2021, 13% of Massachusetts residents were helped by SNAP,¹⁰

- Roughly 246,700 workers in Massachusetts live in households that participated in SNAP in 2021,¹¹
- SNAP helps 1 in 14 workers in Massachusetts put food on the table.¹²
- 53% of SNAP participants were in families with children, and 51% in families with members who are older adults or are disabled.¹³
- 95% of all SNAP-eligible people in Massachusetts participate in the program.¹⁴

Bread for the World supports farm policies that promote a more equitable food system in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts population is 70% white. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture, 95% of farmers and ranchers (producers) in Massachusetts are white and occupy 98% of all farmland.¹⁵

- Black producers represent 1% and occupy <1% of farmland.
- Hispanic producers represent <2% and occupy 2% of farmland.
- Asian producers represent <1% and occupy <1% of farmland.
- Indigenous producers represent <1% and occupy <1% of farmland.

Bread for the World is committed to eradicating food insecurity by building a more sustainable food system in Massachusetts.

Reducing unnecessary food waste is one way to build a more sustainable food system.

In 2019, 1.42 million tons of surplus food in Massachusetts went to waste instead of reaching those who needed it, an amount equal to:

- 2.25 billion meals unsold or uneaten.¹⁷
- $9.39 billion in lost sales.¹⁸
- Annual CO₂ emissions produced by 1,230,329 gasoline-powered cars.¹⁹,²⁰

Footnotes

² Bread for the World, based on USDA reporting. See Note 1.
³ https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.pdf
⁴ https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/federal-_rental_assistance_fact-sheets#MA
⁷ https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Diabetes/state/MA
⁹ https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7101a1.htm?s_cid=mm7101a1_w#T1_down
¹¹ https://www.cbpp.org/research/snap-helps-low-wage-workers-in-every-state#Massachusetts
¹² https://www.cbpp.org/research/snap-helps-low-wage-workers-in-every-state#Massachusetts
¹⁴ https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap
¹⁵ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Census_by_State/Massachusetts/
²⁰ https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator