CAPITAL AREA FOOD BANK

2026 HUNGER REPORT









MWCOG BOARD

Hunger Report Overview



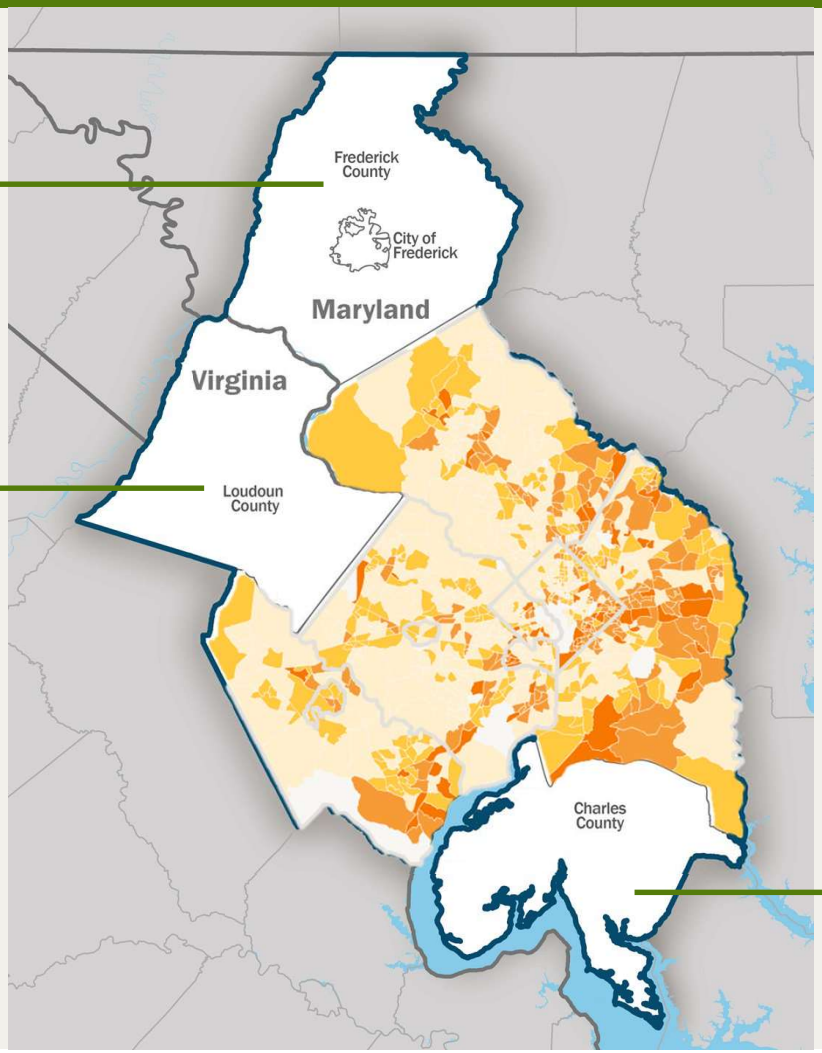
- 2026 marks the **seventh annual Hunger Report**
- For the last five years, CAFB has worked with trusted research partner NORC at the University of Chicago to conduct **general population surveys of the DMV**
- Based on insights from nearly **4,000 households**, CAFB delivers key findings on not just food security, but the forces shaping our regional economy and the trajectory of affordability in the DMV

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MWCOG's & CAFB's Service Areas

MARYLAND FOOD BANK

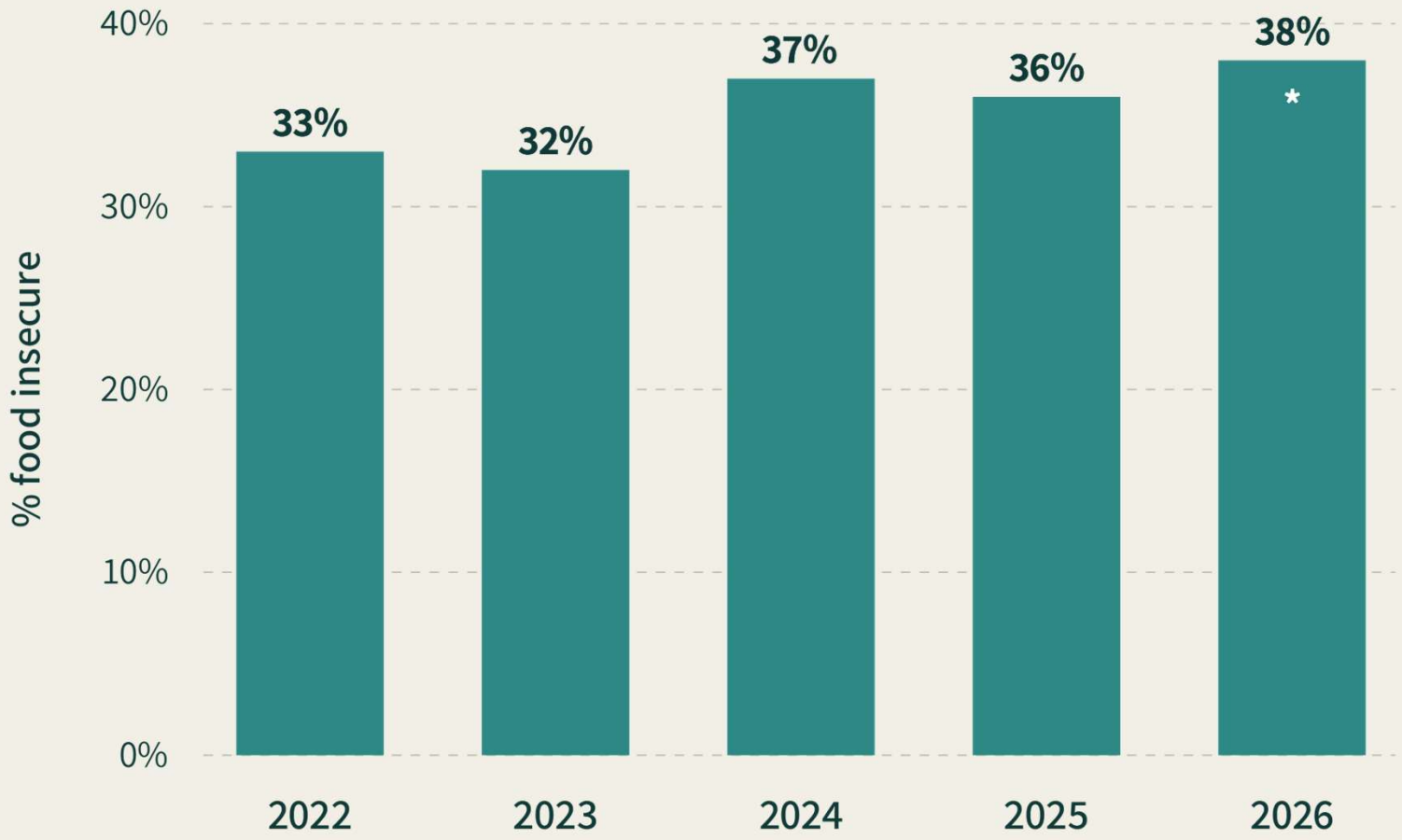
Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK
Everyone should have enough to eat.



MARYLAND FOOD BANK

Key Finding #1

Food insecurity in the DMV is at its highest rate in 5 years

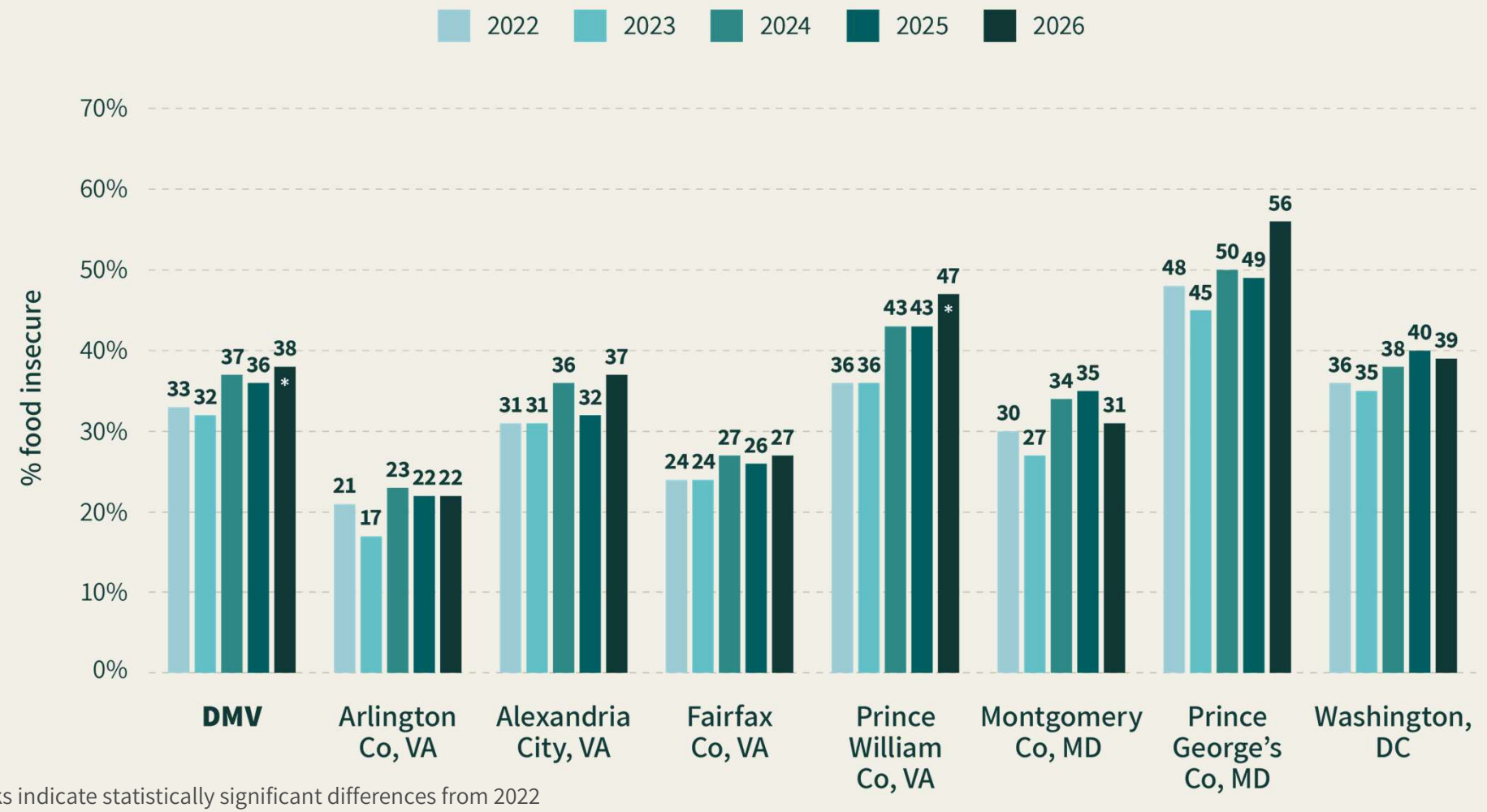


*Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences from 2022

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Key Finding #2

Rates of food insecurity remain extremely elevated across the region



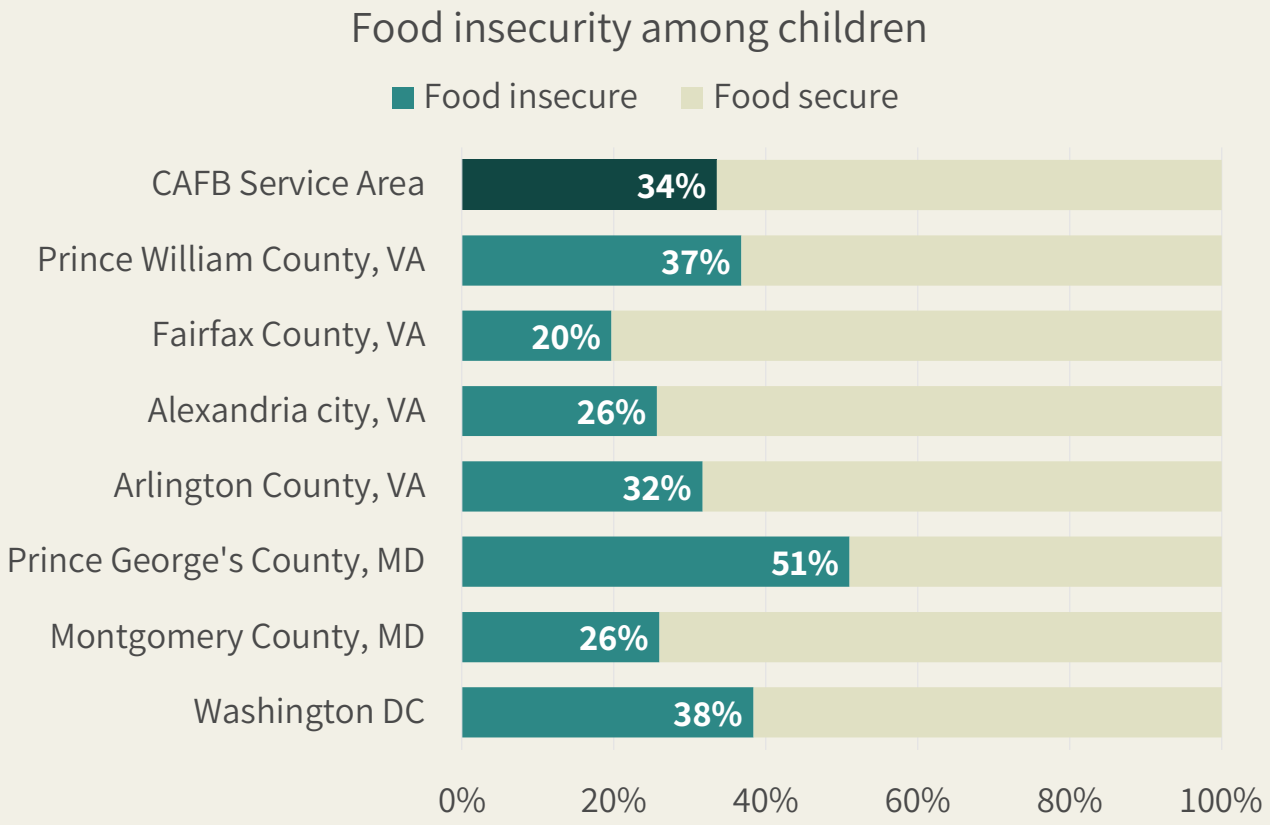
*Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences from 2022

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Key Finding #3

34% of children across the DMV are living in food insecure households

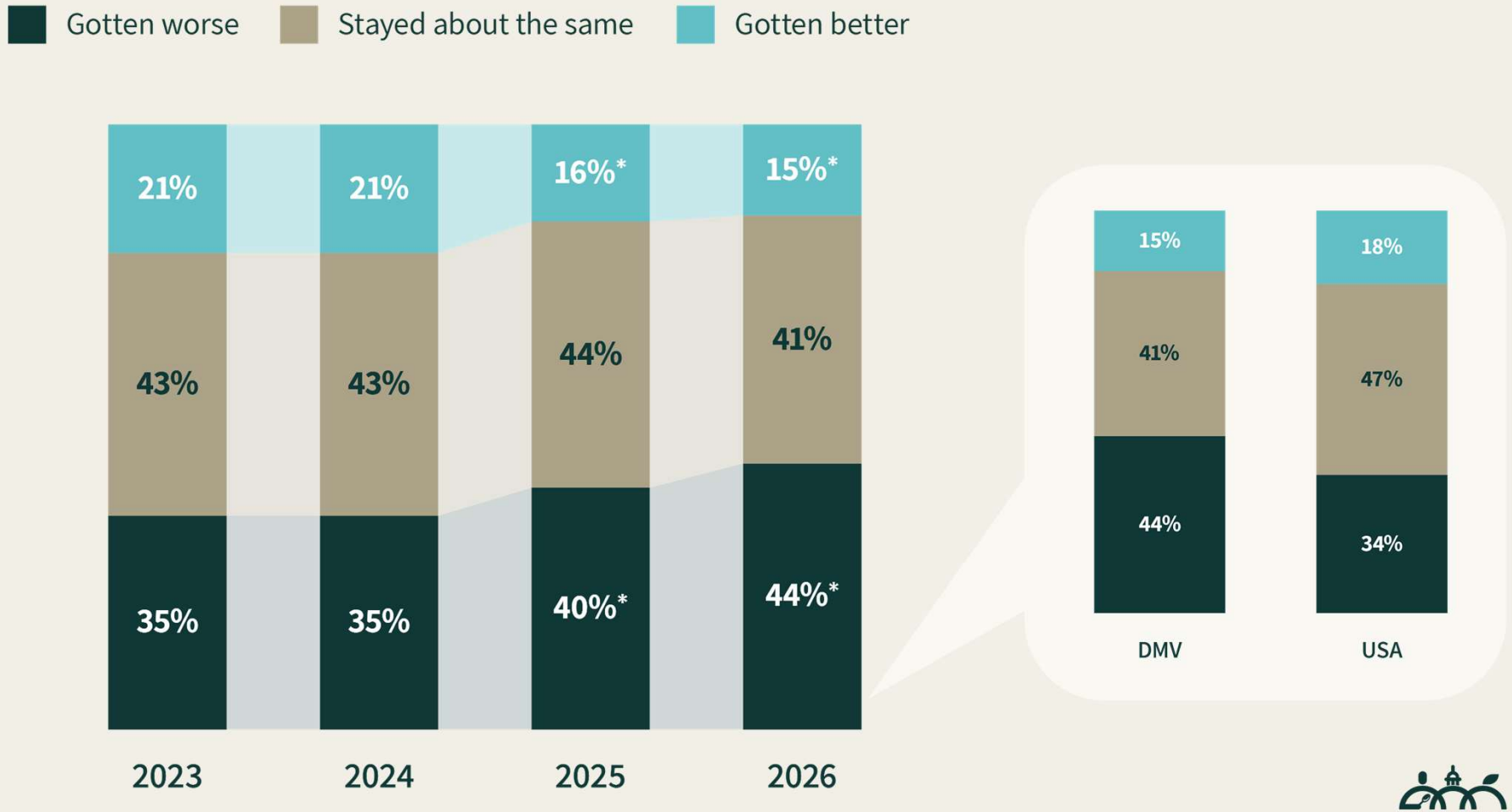
- Food insecurity disproportionately impacts households with children
- The child food security rate is typically lower than the adult rate, as **parents and caregivers will sacrifice their own intake** to ensure children are receiving sufficient food
- Food security is especially important for children because their nutrition affects not only their current health, but also their **future health and well-being**



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Key Finding #4

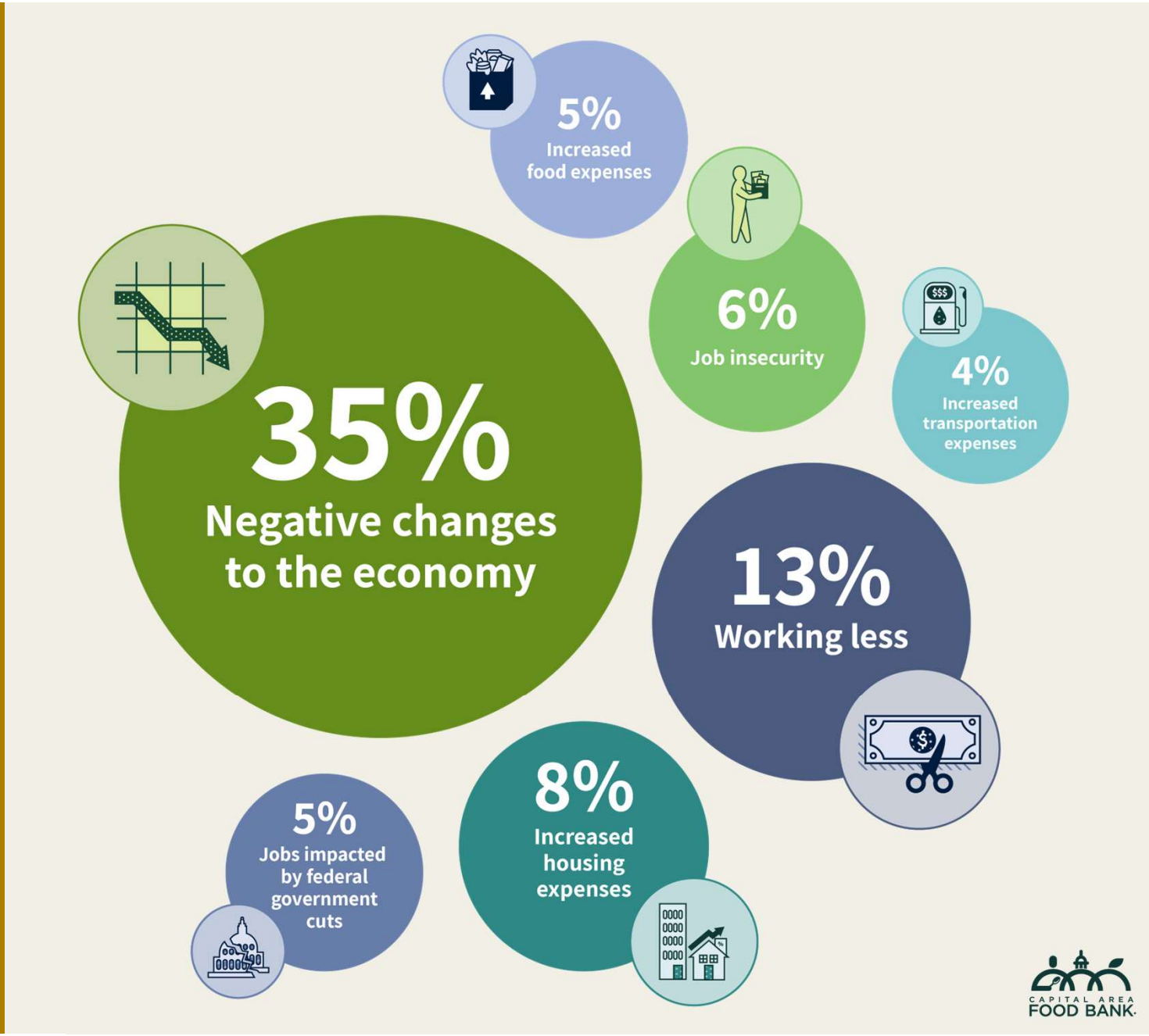
A growing share of DMV households report their finances are worsening year over year



*Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences from 2022

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Reasons for household financial decline relate primarily to the economy

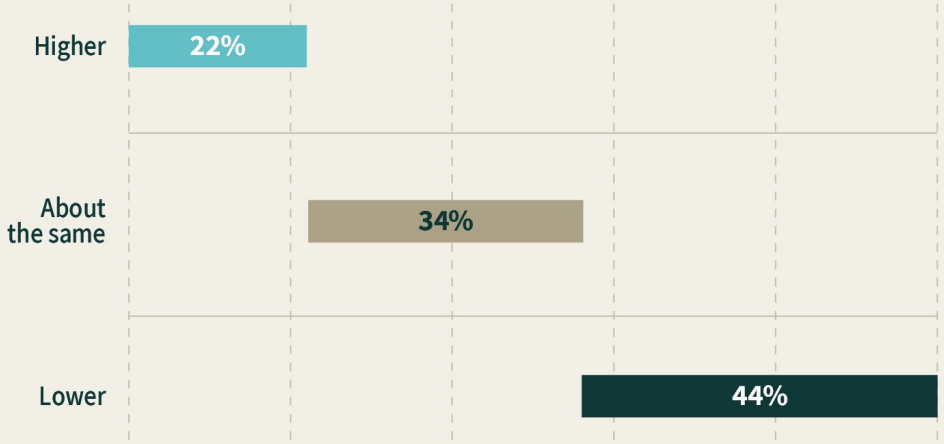


Key Finding #5

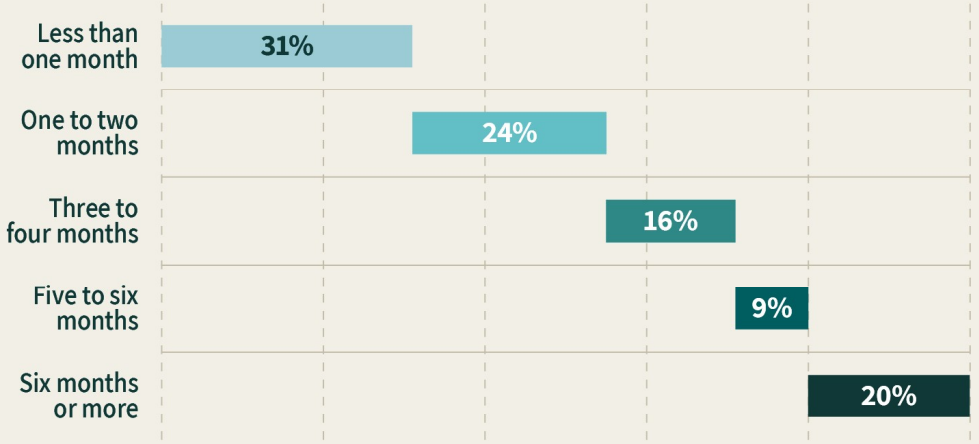
Employment in the DMV was a major driver of economic hardship in the last year

- The DMV lost **104,000 jobs** in 2025, leading all U.S. metro areas
- Among federal employees who were laid off, fired, or quit, **35% are still unemployed**
- 20% of those who did find jobs reported that it took **over six months** to find work
- Almost half (44%) are **getting paid less than before**

New salary compared to former salary



Duration of unemployment before finding a job



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Key Finding #6

Growth in the cost of living in the DMV continues to outpace growth in earnings

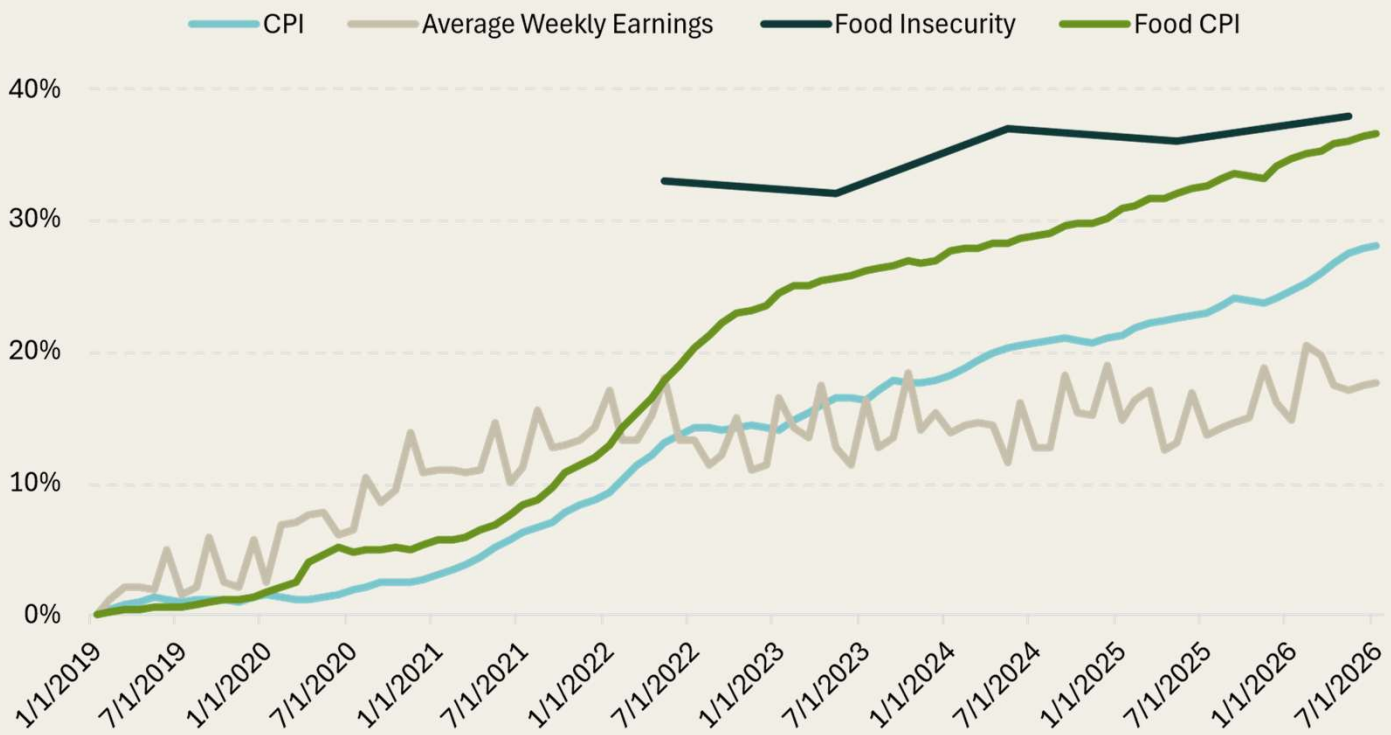
- Compared to the year before the pandemic, average weekly earnings have increased **18%**
- The Consumer Price Index, however, has increased **28%** over the same timeframe
- This leads to **lower purchasing power for families** and correlates with the upward trend in food insecurity



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The increase in the cost of food outpaces average consumer goods

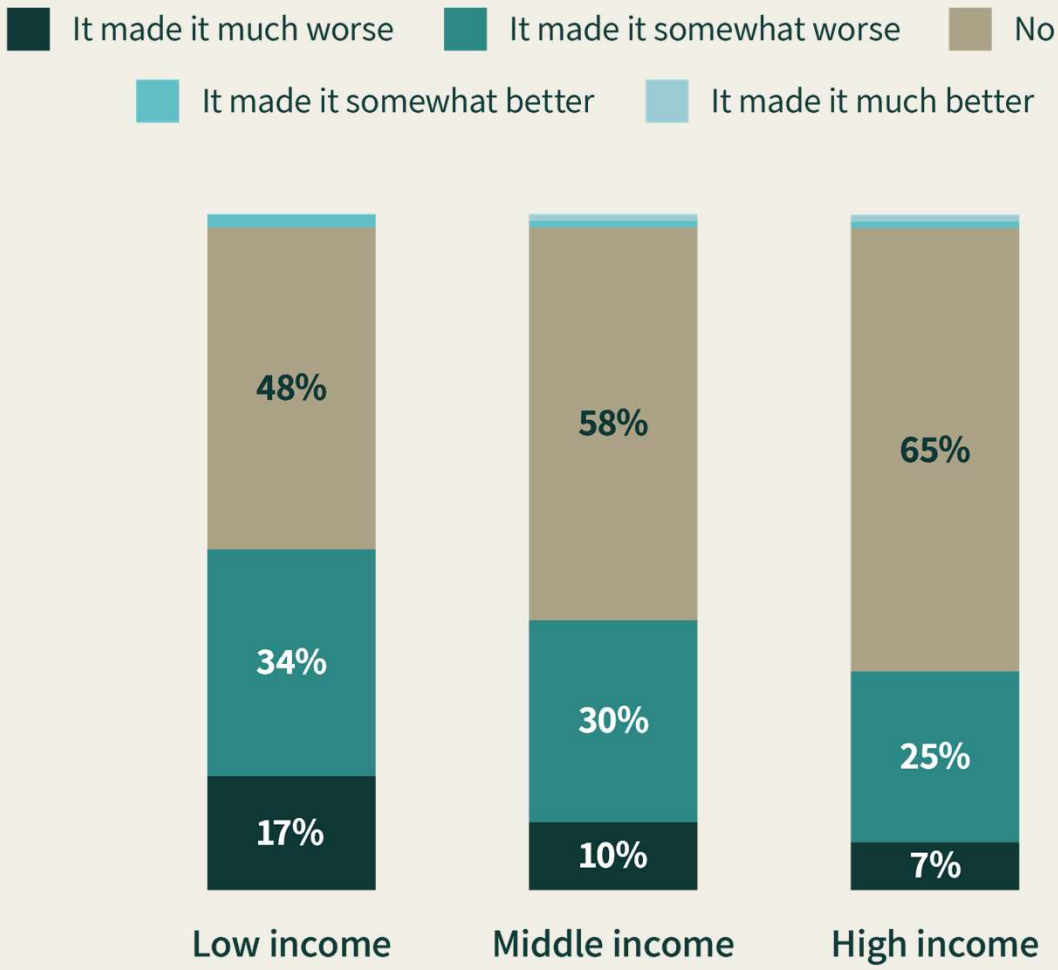
- The Consumer Price Index for Food has increased **37%** compared to the year before the pandemic



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Key Finding #7

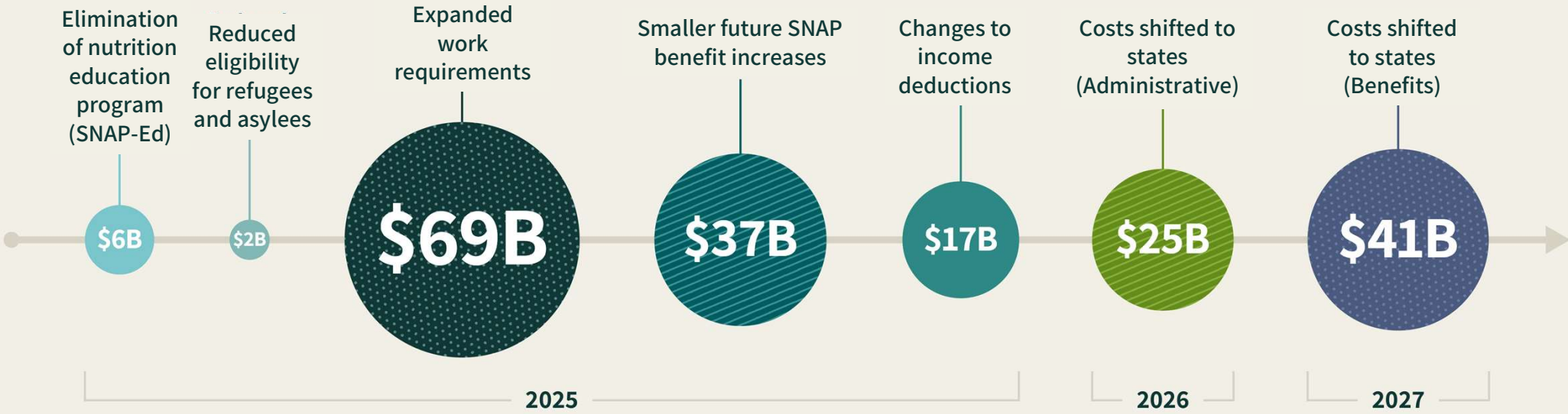
The 2025 federal government shutdown had a significant financial impact on DMV residents



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Key Finding #8

H.R. 1 cut $187B out of SNAP over the next 10 years

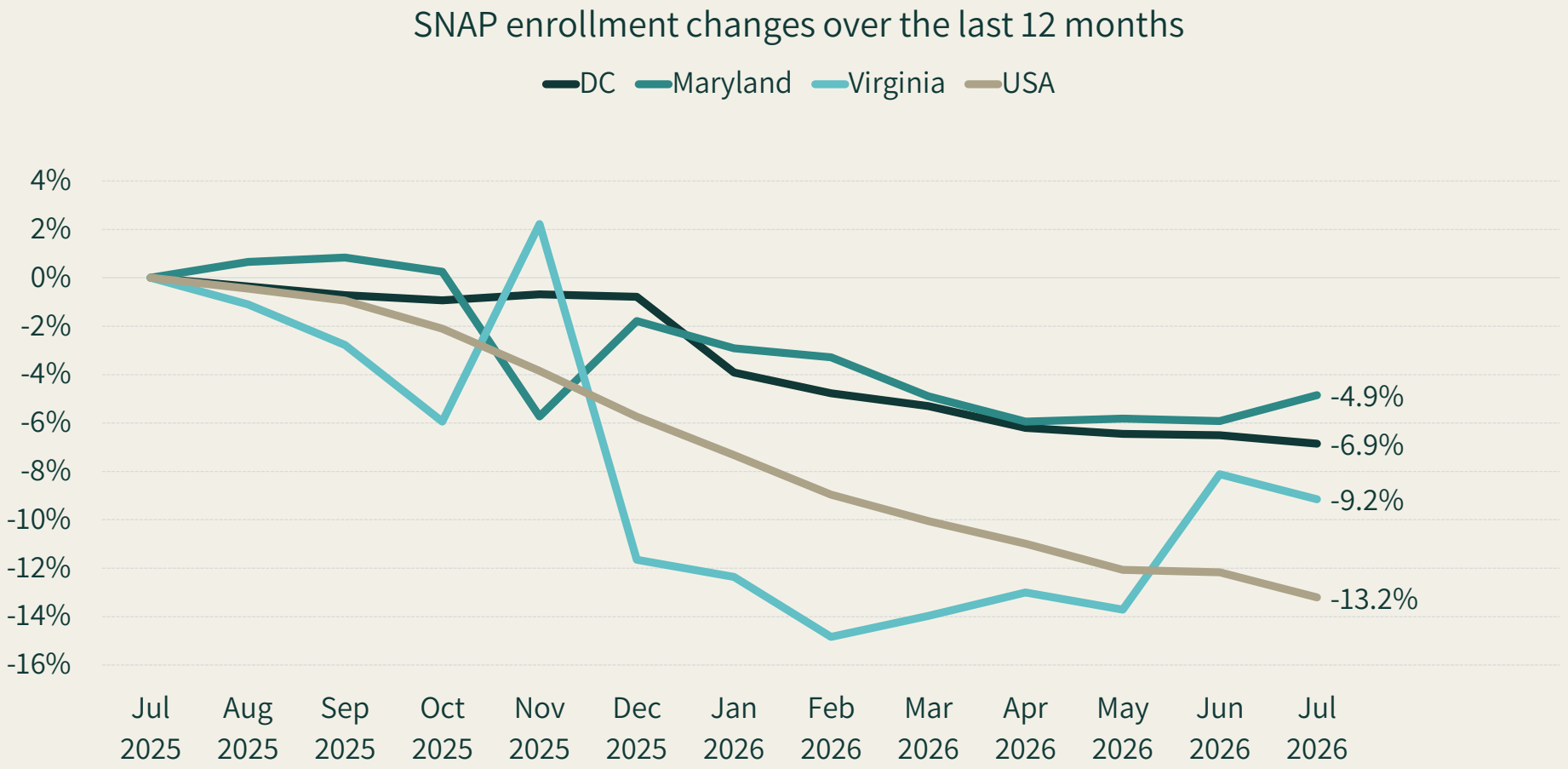


80% of SNAP recipients in the U.S. have health insurance through Medicaid or CHIP

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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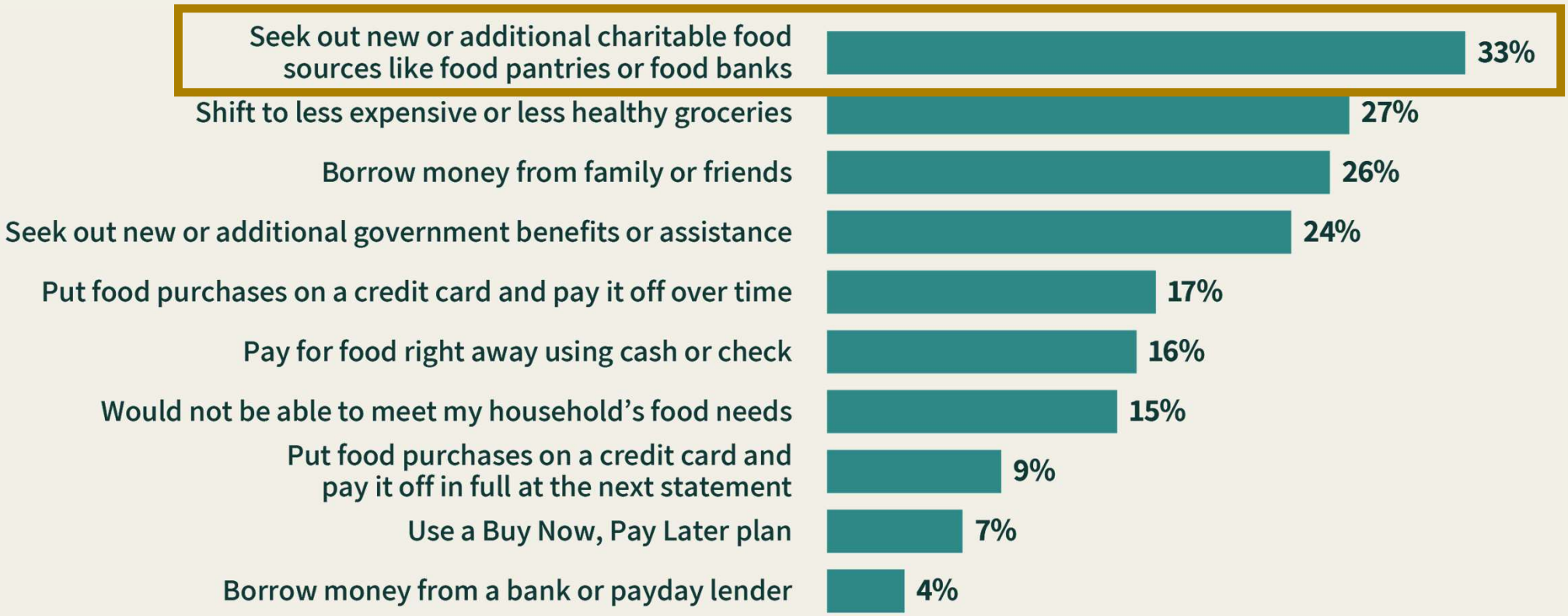
SNAP enrollment has declined 13.2% across the U.S. since the signing of OBBBA



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Key Finding #9

The charitable food system will be the first line of defense to SNAP cuts

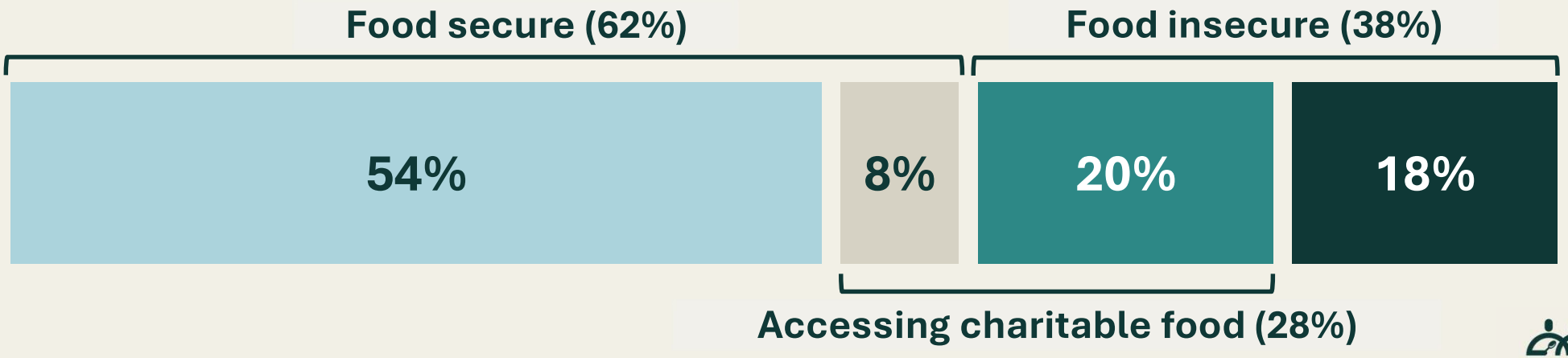


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Key Finding #10

Charitable food is buffering many families from experiencing food insecurity

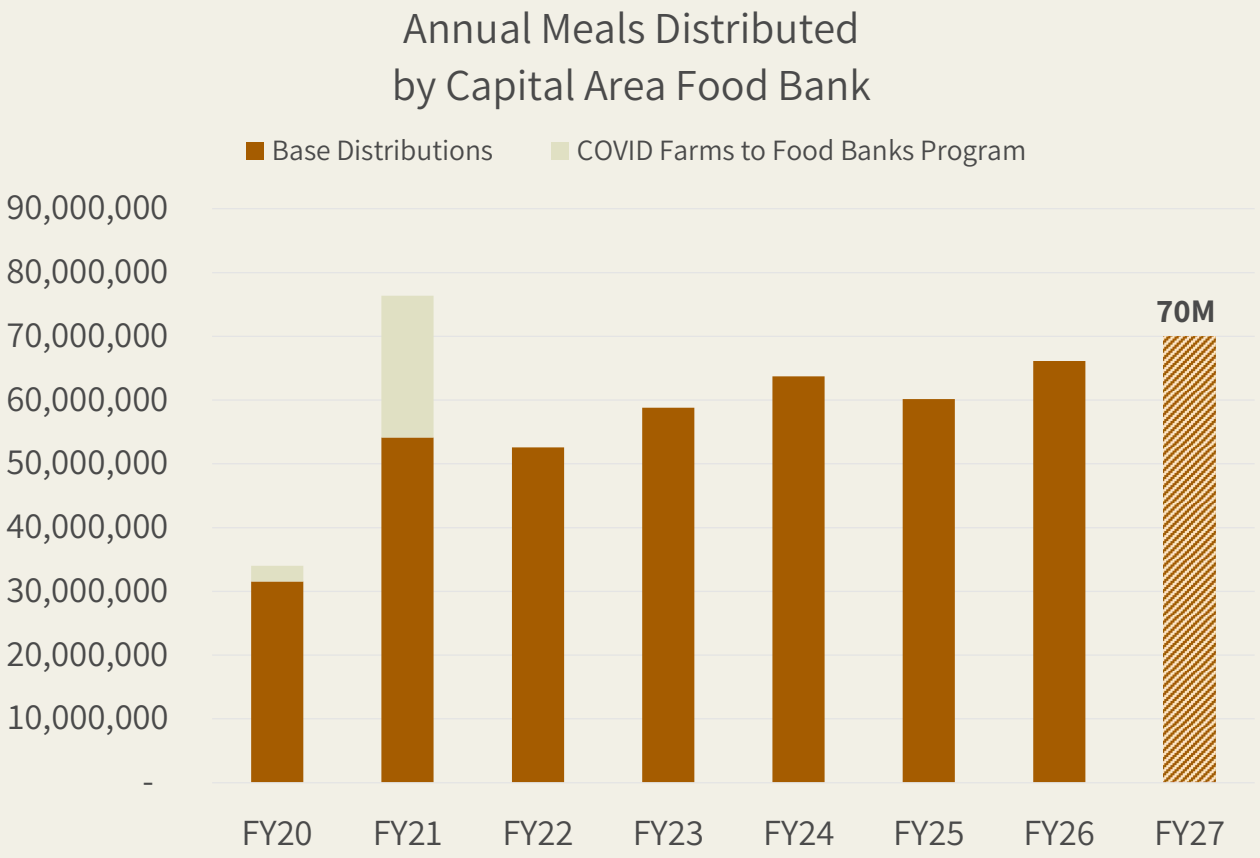
- **28%** of DMV residents access charitable food
- **8%** of DMV residents are accessing charitable food and food secure – meaning the food they receive at pantries is **essential to their food security**
- Survey respondents estimate the food they receive at food pantries **offsets an average of $206/month** in grocery costs
- There is also still a critical unmet need: **Almost half of food insecure people are not accessing charitable food at all**



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CAFB's Planned Response

Increasing distribution to 70M meals in FY27



- As food insecurity continues to rise in the DMV, CAFB is scaling up its response
- CAFB will distribute **70,000,000** meals to food insecure families in the DMV in FY27

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CAFB's Planned Response

Aggressive expansion with Title I schools

- CAFB is planning an aggressive expansion of its **Family Markets** program, scaling **from 112 to 167** schools in low-income communities in the DMV this year
- The average Family Market serves **300 children** with **25-30 lbs of nutritious groceries** each month
- We serve children and youth of all ages, from **early childhood centers to high schools**
- Our expansion plans are proportional to food insecurity rates and existing supports:
  - **20** in Prince George's County
  - **15** in Prince William County
  - **10** in Fairfax County
  - **10** in Washington DC



CAFB's Planned Response

Investing in Food Is Medicine

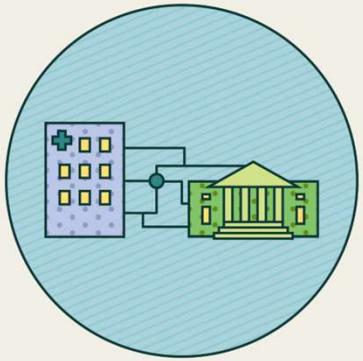
- Access to nutritious food is an **essential prerequisite** to community health
- Since 2021, CAFB has served over **5,500 patients** in partnership with Children's National Hospital, Unity Health Care, University of Maryland Medical System, and Inova Care Clinics
- Preliminary results from studies show **measurable impacts** on clinical outcomes among patients with **diabetes, hypertension, and other diet-related disease**

PATH TO SCALING FOOD IS MEDICINE PROGRAMS



1

Develop sustainable funding pathways for FIM interventions



2

Strengthen the linkages between healthcare providers, payers, and CBOs



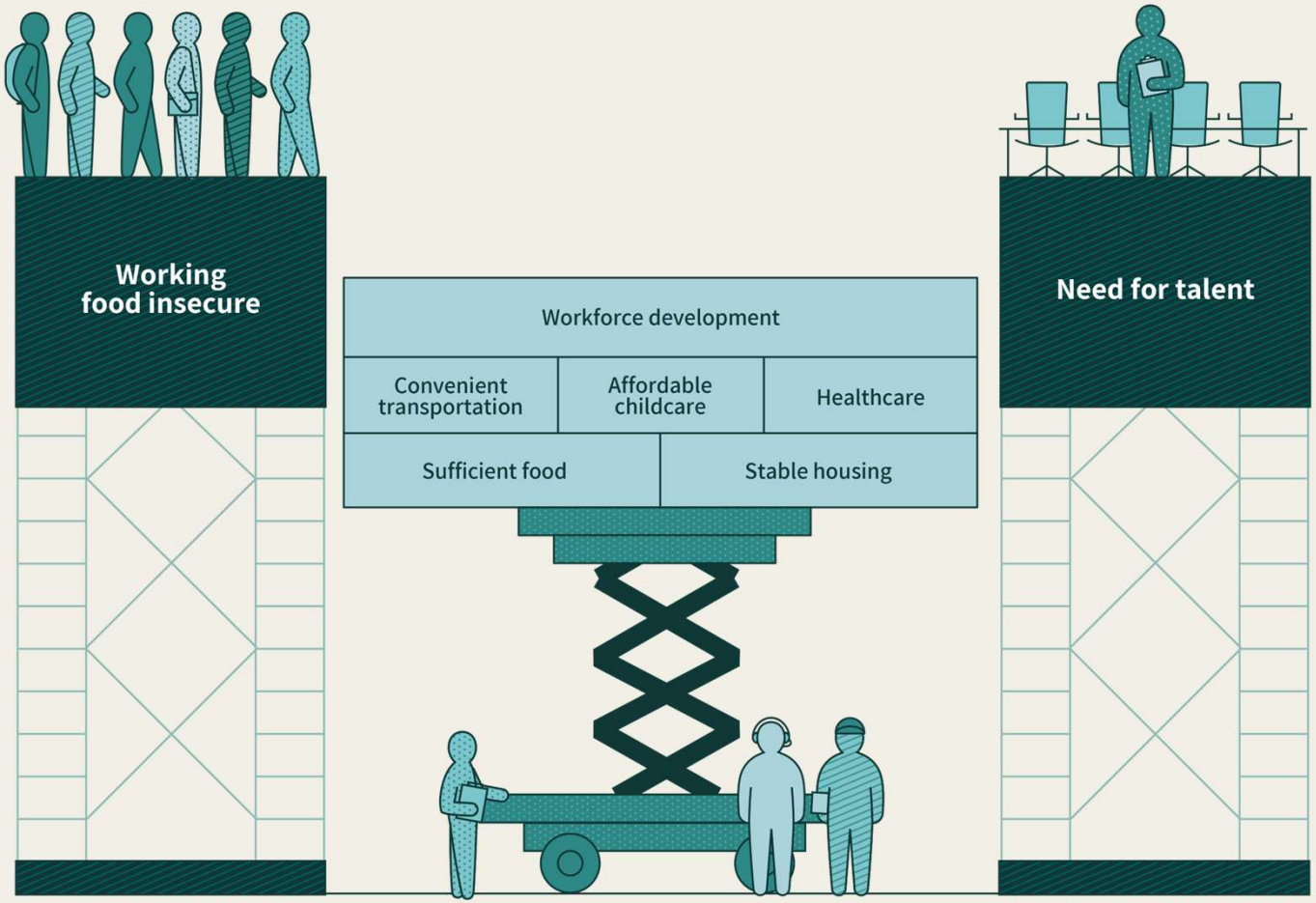
3

Invest in the infrastructure needed to deliver and evaluate FIM at scale

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CAFB's Planned Response

Investing in upward economic mobility



- Basic needs are an **essential prerequisite** to upward economic mobility
- CAFB is partnering with **every college and university in the DMV** to address food insecurity among adult learners
- By addressing food insecurity, we are increasing students' **GPAs, retention rates, and course success rates**

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How local government can support

Mitigate the impacts of H.R. 1

Collect and share



Collect and share **county and sub-county data on SNAP customers** impacted by H.R. 1 to support localized response

Inform and train



Inform and train **frontline health workers** about their role in helping SNAP customers get legitimate exemptions from work requirements

Communicate



Help social service agencies **communicate policy changes** in plain, customer-friendly language and appropriate literacy levels

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How local government can support

Support children's food security

Enact school meals



Enact **universal school meals** in your jurisdiction

Expand CEP



Encourage school boards to expand **Community Eligibility Provision** and include **school meal debt** in budget and planning

Expand summer meals



Increase **outreach and marketing** for SUN Bucks and summer feeding programs for so children can get healthy meals when schools are closed

Support schools



Work with charitable food providers to **support food distributions at schools**

- Help prioritize neighborhoods
- Coordinate CBOs
- Organize volunteers
- Provide space and cold storage for food

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How local government can support

Include food assistance in requests to state legislatures

Fund SNAP



Call for full funding and staffing needed to implement additional SNAP program requirements and support SNAP customers keep their benefits

- **MD and DC** have fully funded the **administrative cost shift**

Feed children



Urge state legislatures to adopt:

- **Universal school meal** policies
- Funding for **local school district meal debt**
- Support for **food distributions at schools**

Support food banks



Increase state funding for food pantries and food banks

- E.g., food, cold storage, transportation costs, wrap-around services, etc.
- **MD** budgets include funding for food banks
- **Fairfax, Arlington, and Montgomery Counties** provided protected funding for charitable food assistance in county budgets

Direct farm aid



Direct farm aid that supports food assistance, including SNAP matching programs

- **Virginia Food for Virginia Families** package included funding farmers market and local procurement support
- **Maryland FARM**

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Appendix: Methodology

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB). Staff from NORC and CAFB collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Interviews were conducted with adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metropolitan Area (this area includes the following counties: Montgomery Co, MD, Prince George's Co, MD, Fairfax Co, VA, Prince William Co, VA, Arlington Co, VA, Alexandria, VA, and Washington DC). Interviews were conducted 5/4-5/16/2026.

Data for the probability-based sample are collected using a multi-mode address based (or ABS) approach that allows residents to complete the interview via web or with an NORC telephone interviewer. The sampling frame is based on an extract of the U.S. Postal Service delivery-sequence file (DSF). The DSF provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. Addresses are stratified by geographic area and predicted response propensity quintile within geographic area. Addresses that were sampled for the 2025 CAFB Survey were removed from the sampling frame prior to sampling. Addresses were sampled from each stratum in inverse proportion to the average predicted response propensity for that stratum. Within each geographic area, addresses in the lowest response propensity quintile were sampled at twice the rate of addresses in the other quintiles. Most sampled households were mailed a postcard inviting them to complete the survey either online using a unique PIN or via telephone by calling a toll-free number. Postcards were addressed to: [CITY] HOUSEHOLD. There was no within household selection for households with multiple adults. Thirty-one percent of the postcard sample received a non-response follow-up text message reminder during the second week of data collection to boost response in households that did not respond to the postcard. Additionally, 72,082 sample lines received a text message invitation rather than a postcard.

The interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents were offered a monetary incentive (either $10 or $15) for completing the survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 43 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them or for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the data were cleaned, a nonresponse adjustment and raking process were used to adjust for the sample design, differential survey nonresponse and noncoverage of the sampling frame along demographic and geographic dimensions. Raking variables included age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, number of adults in the household, and geographic area. Population control totals for the raking variables were obtained from the 2024 Population Estimates reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, along with population estimates obtained from the 2020-2024 American Community Survey. The weighted data reflect the population of adults age 18 and over in the D.C. Metropolitan Area.

The overall margin of sampling error (MOE), including the design effect, among all adults age 18 and over for the overall D.C. Metropolitan Area and for each county are listed to the right.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey. For more information, email info@norc.org.

Area	n	Design effect	MOE (+/- percentage points)
Overall	3,804	2.8	2.6
Montgomery Co, MD	537	2.3	6.5
Prince George's Co, MD	512	2.0	6.1
Fairfax Co, VA	532	2.3	6.5
Prince William Co, VA	579	2.2	6.0
Arlington Co, VA	558	2.2	6.2
Alexandria, VA	537	2.2	6.3
Washington DC	549	1.8	5.6

Appendix: Source Notes

Finding	Notes	Source(s)
Food insecurity in the DMV is at its highest rate in 5 years	Question: USDA eighteen-item screener for food insecurity (2023-2026) and USDA six-item screener (2022)	Capital Area Food Bank Surveys conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults, May 19-June 1, 2025 with 3,712 adults, May 28-July 31, 2024 with 3,819 adults, May 1-15, 2023 with 5,261 adults, and February 4-March 2, 2022 with 3,769 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
Rates of food insecurity remain extremely elevated across the region	Question: USDA eighteen-item screener for food insecurity (2023-2026) and USDA six-item screener (2022)	Capital Area Food Bank Surveys conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults, May 19-June 1, 2025 with 3,712 adults, May 28-July 31, 2024 with 3,819 adults, May 1-15, 2023 with 5,261 adults, and February 4-March 2, 2022 with 3,769 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
34% of children across the DMV are living in food insecure households	Question: USDA eighteen-item screener for food insecurity	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
A growing share of DMV households report their finances are worsening year over year	Question: In the last 12 months, since May of last year, has your household's financial situation gotten better, worse, or stayed the same?	Capital Area Food Bank Surveys conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults, May 19-June 1, 2025 with 3,712 adults, May 28-July 31, 2024 with 3,819 adults, and May 1-15, 2023 with 5,261 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
DMV residents report worsening finances at higher rates than the rest of the country	Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding Question: In the last 12 months, since May of last year, has your household's financial situation gotten better, worse, or stayed the same?	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area; and Capital Area Food Bank General Population Survey conducted June 11-15, 2026 with 1,390 adults age 18 and older nationwide using NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel

Appendix: Source Notes (cont.)

Finding	Notes	Source(s)
Reasons for household financial decline relate primarily to the economy	Base: Households who reported their financial situation has gotten worse in the past year (n=1,499) Question: What is the main reason why your household's financial situation has gotten worse in the last 12 months, since May of last year? (Open-ended)	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
Growth in the cost of living in the DMV continues to outpace growth in earnings	N/A	Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Average Weekly Earnings of All Employees: Total Private in Washington DC MSA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Historical Tables for Washington DC MSA; CAFB-NORC Study, 2022-2026
The 2025 federal government shutdown had a significant financial impact on DMV residents	Question: What impact, if any, did the government shutdown in the fall of 2025 have on your household's financial situation?	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
The 2025 federal government shutdown had a significant financial impact on DMV residents	Question: What impact, if any, did the government shutdown in the fall of 2025 have on your household's financial situation?	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
H.R. 1 cut $187B out of SNAP over the next 10 years	Note: CBO estimates also include a $9B positive adjustment for overlapping effects among multiple SNAP provisions, resulting in a net spending reduction of $187B over 10 years	Congressional Budget office published estimates
SNAP enrollment has declined 13% in the last year	Data from October – November 2025 are irregular due to the federal government shutdown	U.S. Department of Agriculture, SNAP Data Tables

Appendix: Source Notes (cont.)

Finding	Notes	Source(s)
The charitable food system will be the first line of defense to SNAP cuts	Base: Individuals receiving SNAP (n=462) Question: If your current SNAP benefits were cut in half, what would you do to meet the rest of your household's monthly food needs?	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area
Charitable food is buffering many families from experiencing food insecurity	Questions: USDA eighteen-item screener for food insecurity; In the last 12 months, since May of last year, have you or has anyone in your household gotten free groceries from a food pantry, food bank, church, or other place that helps with free food?	Capital Area Food Bank Survey conducted May 4-16, 2026 with 3,804 adults age 18 and older in the D.C. Metro Area