

# Economic Stability: Food Insecurity

Henry County, Ohio



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## What is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity is the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2005).

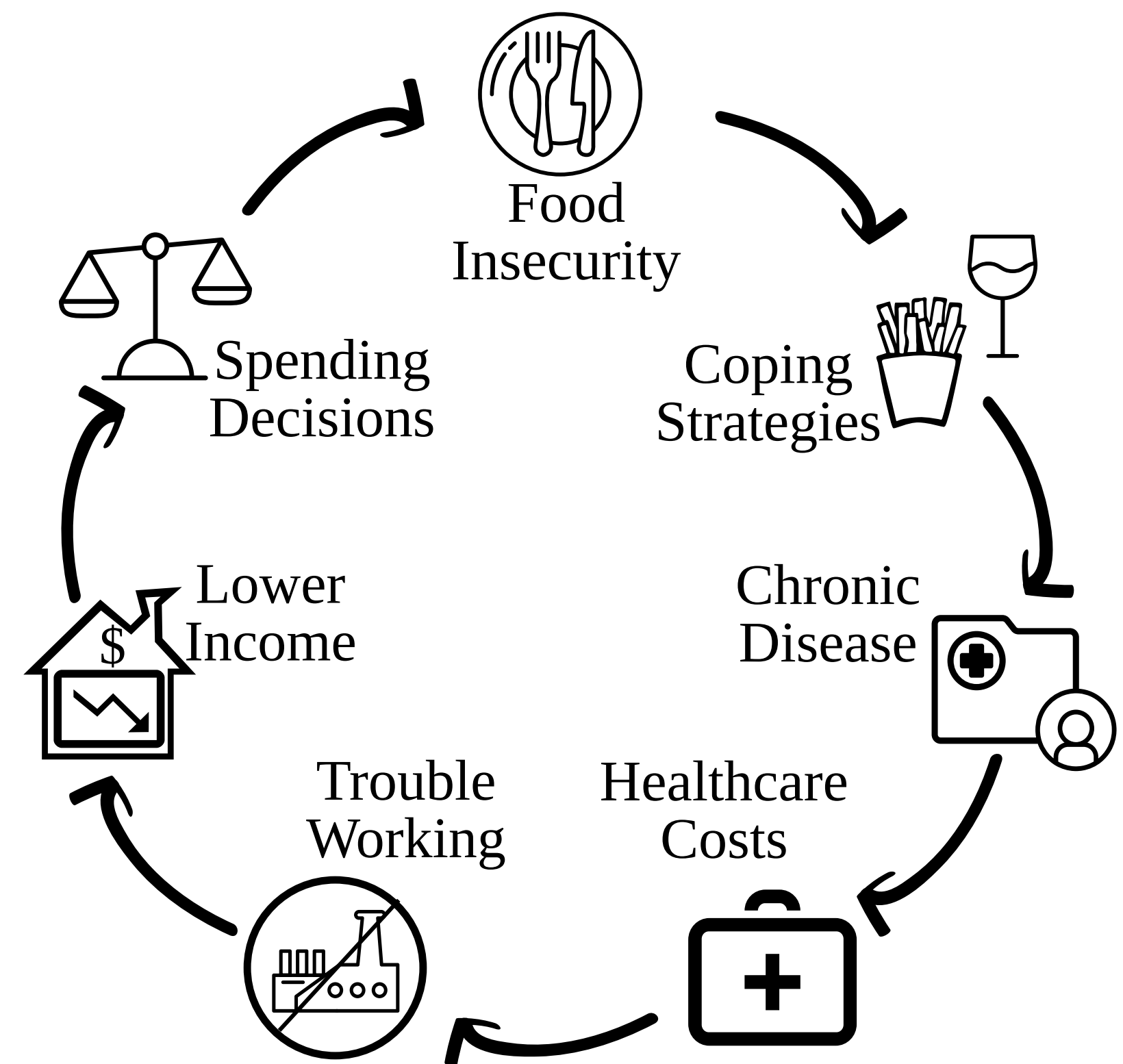
## Why Food Insecurity Matters

Simply put, food insecure individuals are less healthy than their food-secure counterparts (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015). As a result, annual healthcare costs for food-insecure individuals are higher than food-secure individuals (Tarasuk, Cheng, de Oliveira, Dachner, Gundersen, & Kurdyak, 2015). Further, the expenditures associated with food insecurity vary markedly depending on the state and county you live in (Berkowitz, Basu, Gundersen, Seligman, 2019).

- Currently, it is estimated there are 28.3 million food-insecure adults in the U.S.
- In Ohio, the excess total health care cost associated with food insecurity per food-insecure adult is \$1,848.

## The Cycle of Food Insecurity and Health

In Feeding America's publication "Health, Disability and Food Insecurity" the authors illustrate the cycle of food insecurity. This visualization highlights the detrimental effects of food insecurity on health outcomes. More specifically, it shows how it operates via unhealthy coping mechanisms, increases in chronic disease, increased healthcare expenditures, difficulty in finding work or increased risk of disability, lower household income, all of which perpetuate more food insecurity.



## Food Insecurity Measures

In the Health Factor 4: Economic Stability section of the Henry County Ohio Comprehensive CHA report we presented four indicators associated with food insecurity: Food Stamps/SNAP Benefits, Free/Reduced Lunches, WIC Eligibility Threshold, & Map the Meal Gap. This brief provides an update of those data as well as findings from the Henry County Pulse Survey on the effects of COVID-19 on food insecurity.

**\* Food Security → Better Health Outcomes**

### Henry County Pulse Survey

The Henry County Pulse Survey was designed to measure the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on employment status, food security, housing security, education disruptions, childcare, dimensions of physical and mental well-being, access to health care. The goal of collecting and analyzing data from this survey is to aid local agencies identify coronavirus (COVID-19) related issues in the Henry County. The survey was implemented by the Henry County Health Department and the Henry County Health Partners and administered on-line via Survey Monkey. Request for completion was made via social media and among those the Henry County Health Partners serve. This survey is NOT representative of the entire county. Instead, it represents a convenience sample of 675 county residents between the ages of 18 and 87.

### Links

- [Henry County Health Department](#)
- [Henry County Ohio Community Health Assessments](#)
- [Health Factor 4: Economic Stability](#)



## SNAP Benefits in Henry County

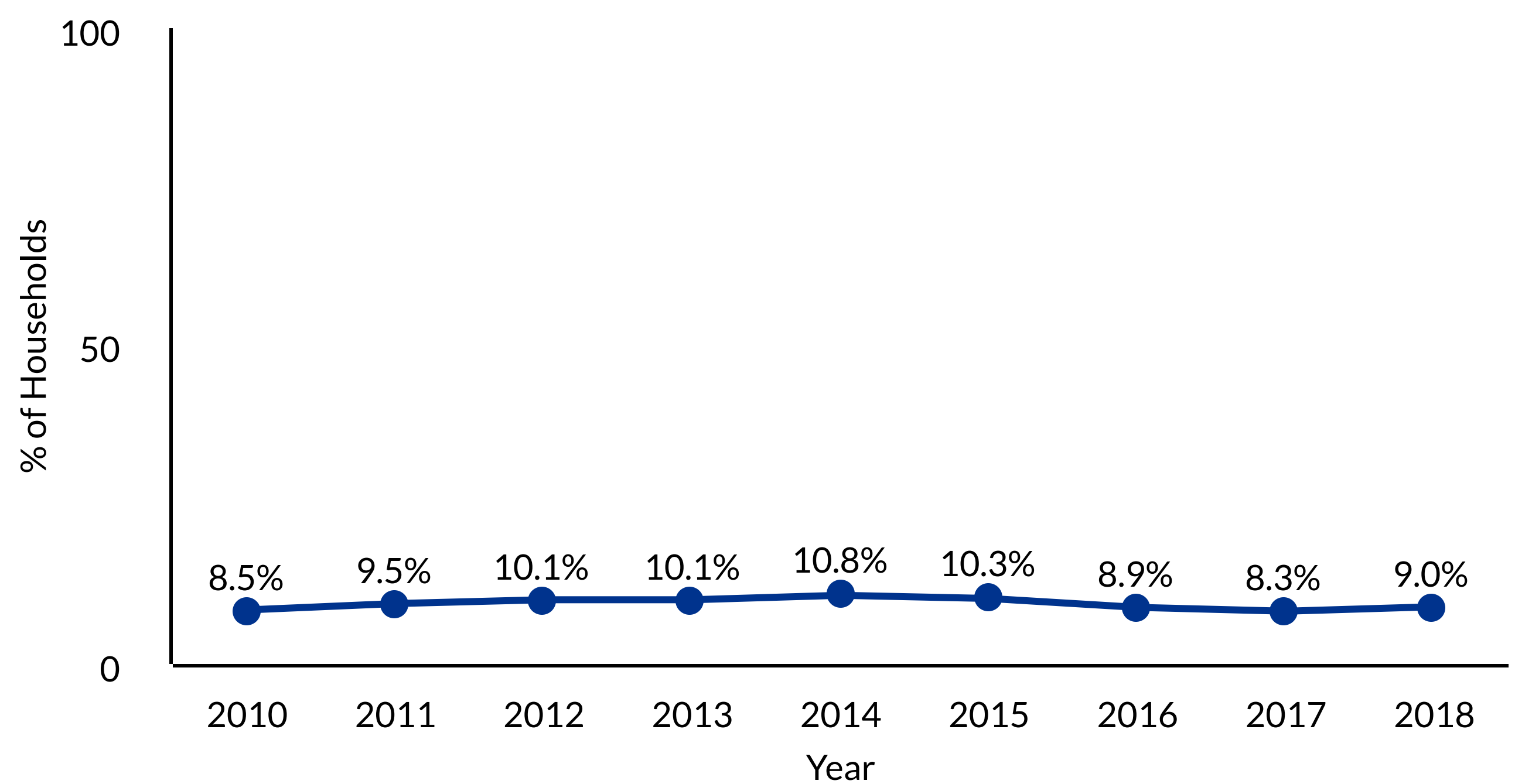
Generally, everyone who lives together and purchases food and prepares meals together is grouped together as one SNAP household.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of Henry County households receiving SNAP benefits from 2010-2018.

- Since 2010, the largest share of Henry County households receiving benefits was in 2014 at 10.8%.
- Since 2014 this share dropped to an eight-year-low of 8.3% in 2017.
- In a reversal, the share in 2018 represents an increase with 9% of Henry County Households having received SNAP benefits.

**\* 9% of Henry County Households received SNAP benefits in 2018.**

**Figure 1** Percentage of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits for Henry County, Ohio, 2010-2018

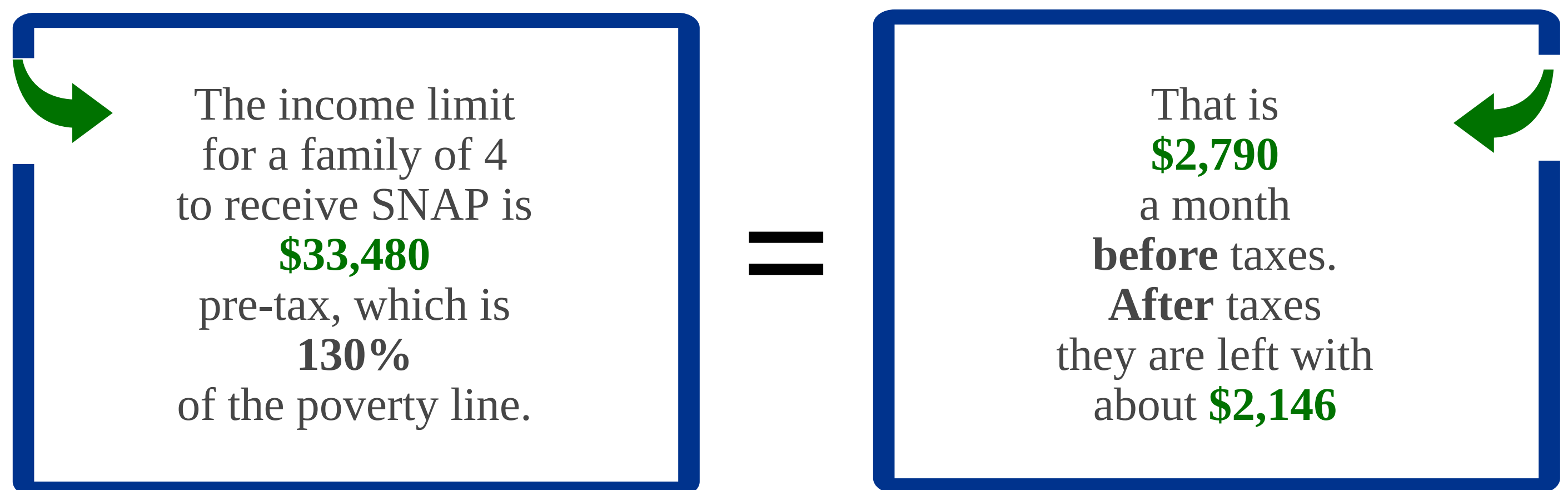


Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010, 2007-2011, 2008-2012, 2009-2013, 2010-2014, 2011-2015, 2012-2016, 2013-2017, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2201

## Household Budget at the SNAP Qualifying-Level in Henry County

The following illustration breaks down the average household costs for a family of 4 **before** food costs are considered.

The costs include: housing + child care + transportation + health care + other necessities. We see a family of 4 living at 130% of the poverty line in Henry county is already **\$2,254** short every month **before** the costs of food are factored in.

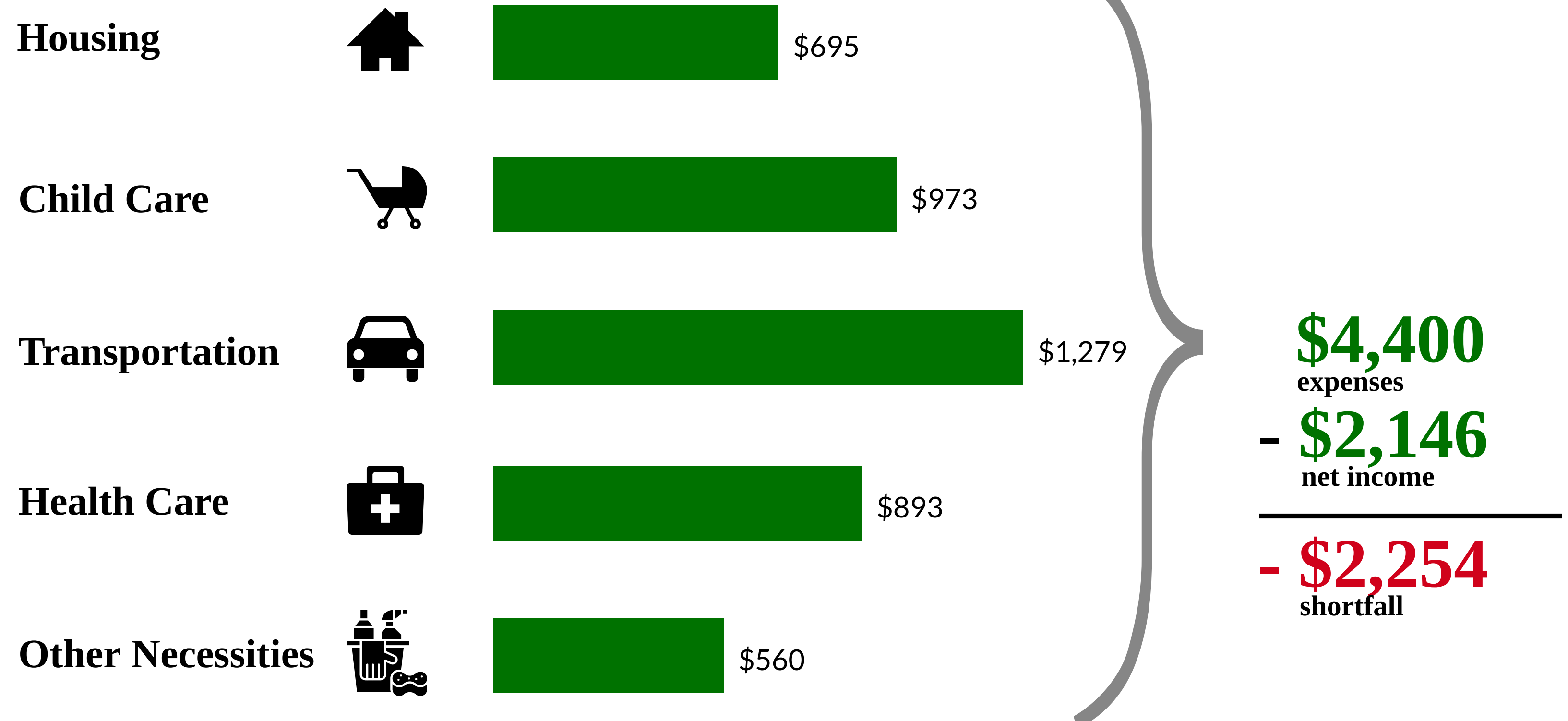


The information comes from a data tool developed by Feeding America. The data tool can be found here:

[https://public.tableau.com/profile/feeding.america.research#!/vizhome/BudgetDashboard\\_v8AA2\\_0/BudgetDashboardInfographic](https://public.tableau.com/profile/feeding.america.research#!/vizhome/BudgetDashboard_v8AA2_0/BudgetDashboardInfographic)

Instructions on how to use their tool can be found here:

[https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/SNAP%20HH%20Budget%20VizUpdated\\_0.pdf](https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/SNAP%20HH%20Budget%20VizUpdated_0.pdf)



Housing estimate is the fair market rent (shelter rent plus utilities) at the 40th percentile for a two-bedroom apartment. Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of data from Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Child care estimate is the costs of family-based care for a one 4-year-old and one 8-year-old. Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of data from Child Care Aware of America (CCAA).

Transportation estimate is a combination of the costs of auto ownership, auto use, and transit use. Source Economic Policy Institute analysis of data from the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT).

Health Care estimate is based on insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs, and assumes families purchase the lowest cost bronze plans on the health insurance exchange established under the Affordable Care Act. Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of data from the Kaiser Family Foundation and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Other Necessities estimate is based on cost of apparel, personal care, household supplies, reading materials, and school supplies based on data reported for households in the second (from the bottom) fifth of households in the household income distribution. Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)/

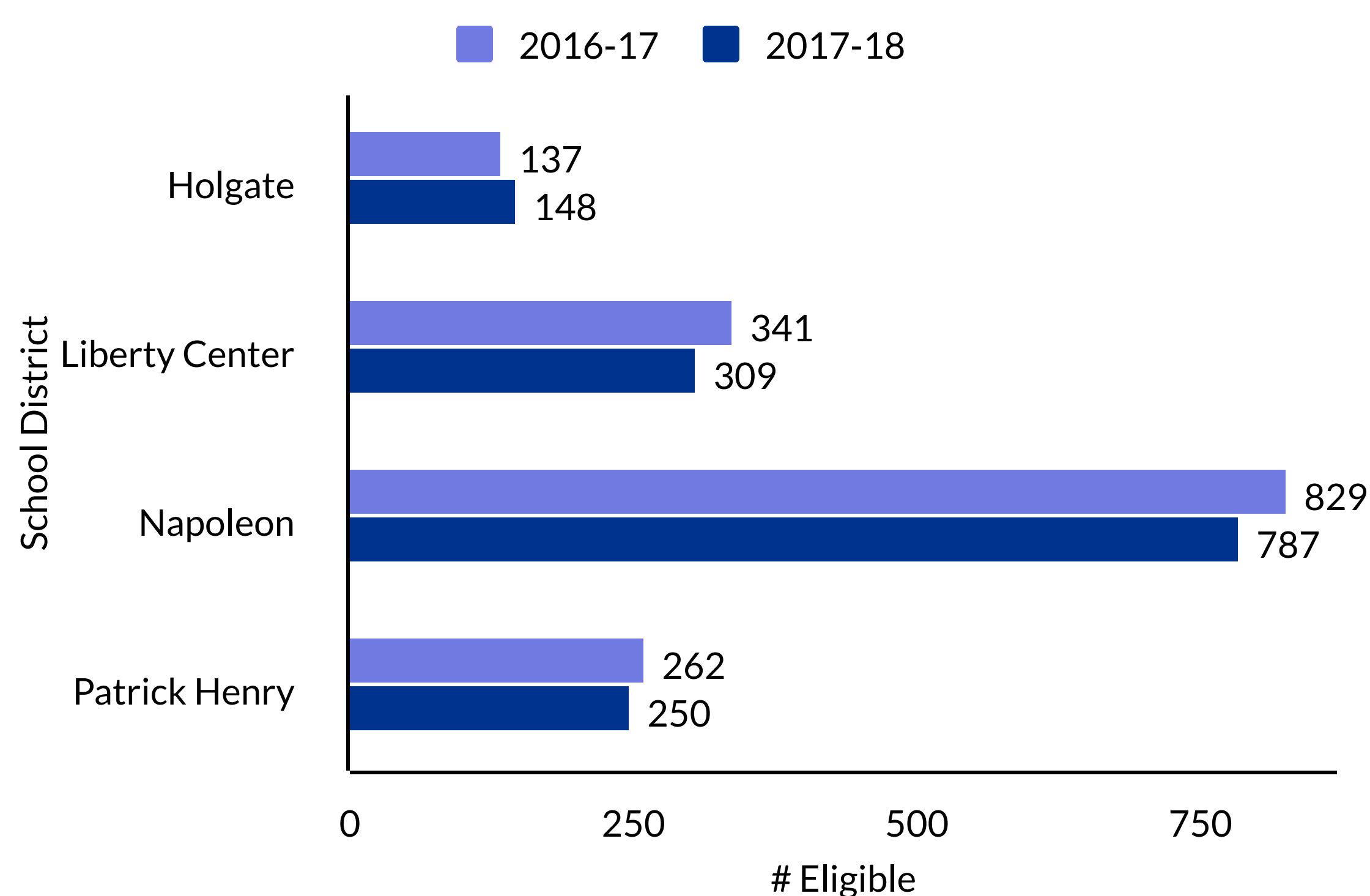


## Free and Reduced Lunches

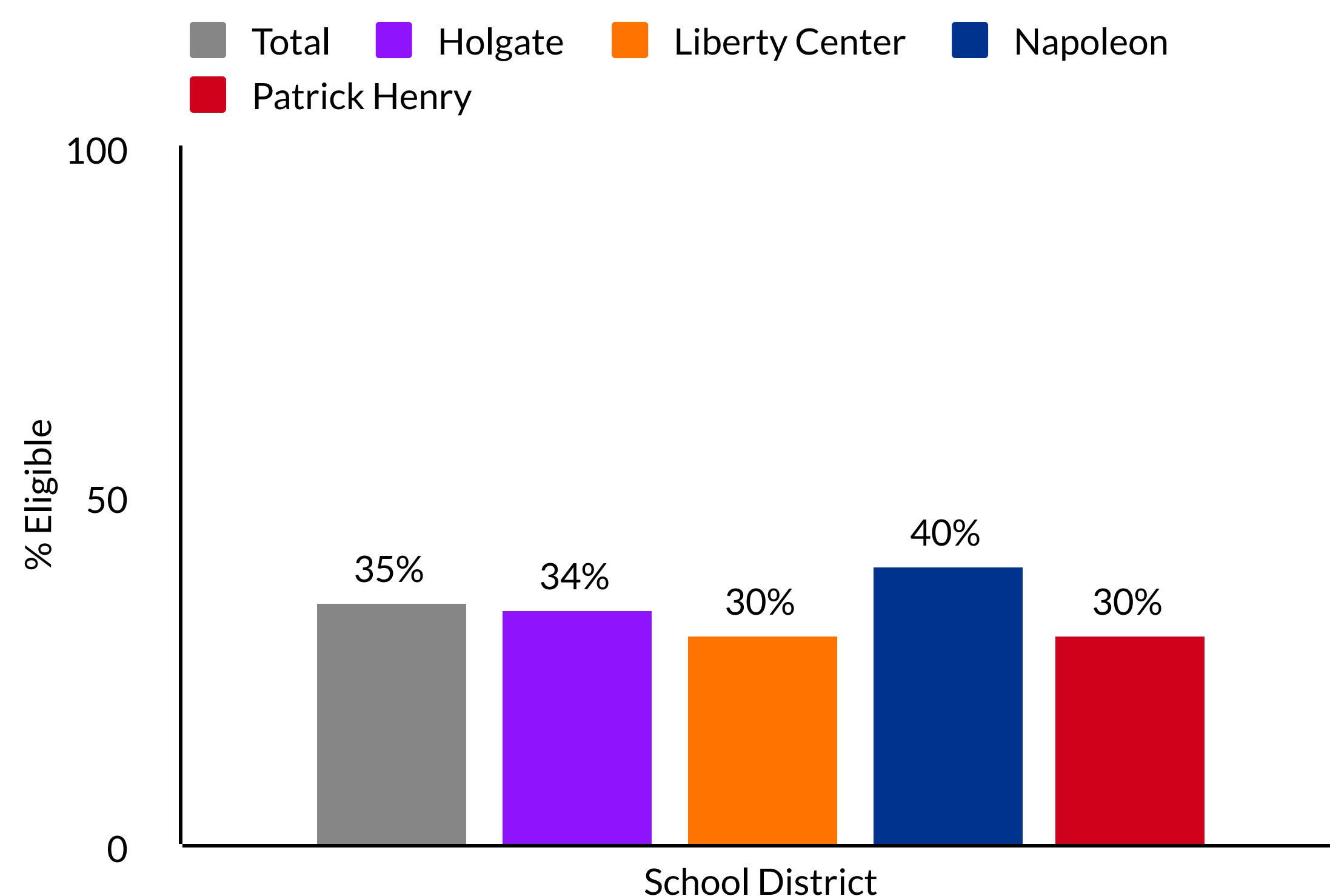
Children in families who have an annual income 130% of the poverty threshold are eligible for free lunches. Families at 185% of the poverty threshold are eligible for reduced lunches.

- 35% of those enrolled in Henry County public schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches, representing 1,494 students.

**Figure 2** Number of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunches by Henry County Public School District, 2016-17 & 2017-18



**Figure 3** Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunches by Henry County Public School District, 2017-18



**Data Source:** Enrollment data come from the Ohio Department of Education Enrollment Data, for the years 2016-17 and 2017-18, <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Frequently-Requested-Data/Enrollment-Data>. Free & Reduced Lunch Eligibility data come from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2017-18 v.1a; <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pubschuniv.asp>

**\* 35% of those enrolled in Henry County public schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches**

## Food Insecurity

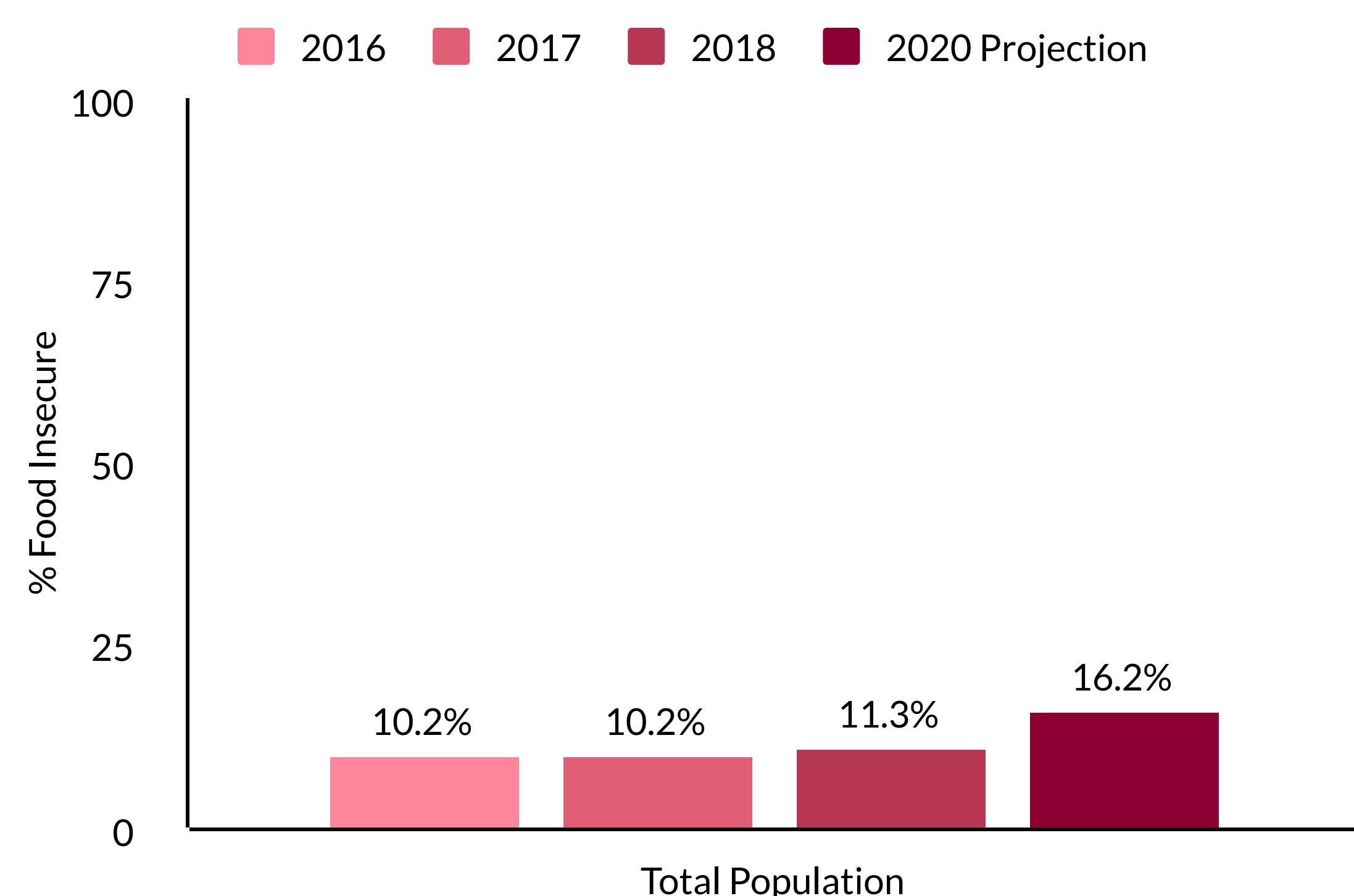
While understanding the scope of poverty as well as the percentage of children and households receiving income-based food support (e.g. free/reduced lunches, food stamps/SNAP) is important it does not paint the entire picture of food insecurity in our communities. Many individuals face food insecurity, but are not identified using the above measures. With the arrival of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a crisis of multiple dimensions has emerged throughout the world. While food insecurity rates had been at their lowest since before the Great Recession the pandemic has/will likely erode all of the progress that had been made.

Many households are faced with decisions between paying for basic needs (e.g. housing, medical bills) and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods. Recognizing this, Feeding America has quantified food insecurity in America and published the Map the Meal Gap project since 2011. With the pandemic they have expanded their analyses to provide local area estimates of the possible impact of the coronavirus on food insecurity.

### Total Population of Henry County

- In 2019, there was an estimated 11.3% of residents who experienced food insecurity. This is a slight increase compared to 10.2% in 2016 and 2017.
- Rates of food insecurity are higher among children. Whereas the rate for the total population in 2018 was 11.3%, among children it was 17.4%
- It is projected that 16.2% -- representing an additional 5% of our population -- will experience food insecurity due to the impact of the coronavirus. Rates among children can be expected to be even higher.

**Figure 4** Estimated Percentage of Food Insecure Henry County Residents



**Data Source:** Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, M. Kato, A. Crumbaugh & M. Strayer. Map the Meal Gap 2020. Feeding America, 2020. This research is generously supported by The Howard G. Buffett Foundation and Nielsen. <https://www.feedingamericaaction.org/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-food-insecurity/> <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/coronavirus-hunger-research>



## Pulse of the County

In the Henry County Pulse Survey, residents were asked questions aimed at estimating food insecurity prior to and after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

| *Getting enough food can also be a problem for some people. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household before the coronavirus pandemic? Select only one answer.*

| *Since the coronavirus pandemic, which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household? Select only one answer.*

Available responses for both questions were as follows:

- *Enough of the kinds of food (I/we) wanted to eat*
- *Enough, but not always the kinds of food (I/we) wanted to eat*
- *Sometimes not enough to eat*
- *Often not enough to eat*

### Why?

We followed up with our residents, and asked them why they were unable to get enough to eat. Residents could select more than one answer.

- 13% said they couldn't afford to buy more food.
- Nearly one quarter were afraid to go or didn't want to go out to buy food.
- Overwhelmingly, the most often reason selected was that the stores did not have the food they wanted.

**\* 13% of Henry County Residents surveyed reported they were unable to afford to buy more food following the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.**

### References:

Berkowitz, S. A., Basu, S., Gundersen, C., & Seligman, H. K. (2019). State-level and county-level estimates of health care costs associated with food insecurity. *Prev Chronic Dis*, 16. doi <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd16.180549>

Gundersen, C. & Ziliak, J. P. (2015). Food insecurity and health outcomes. *Health Aff (Millwood)*, 34(11), 1830–9.

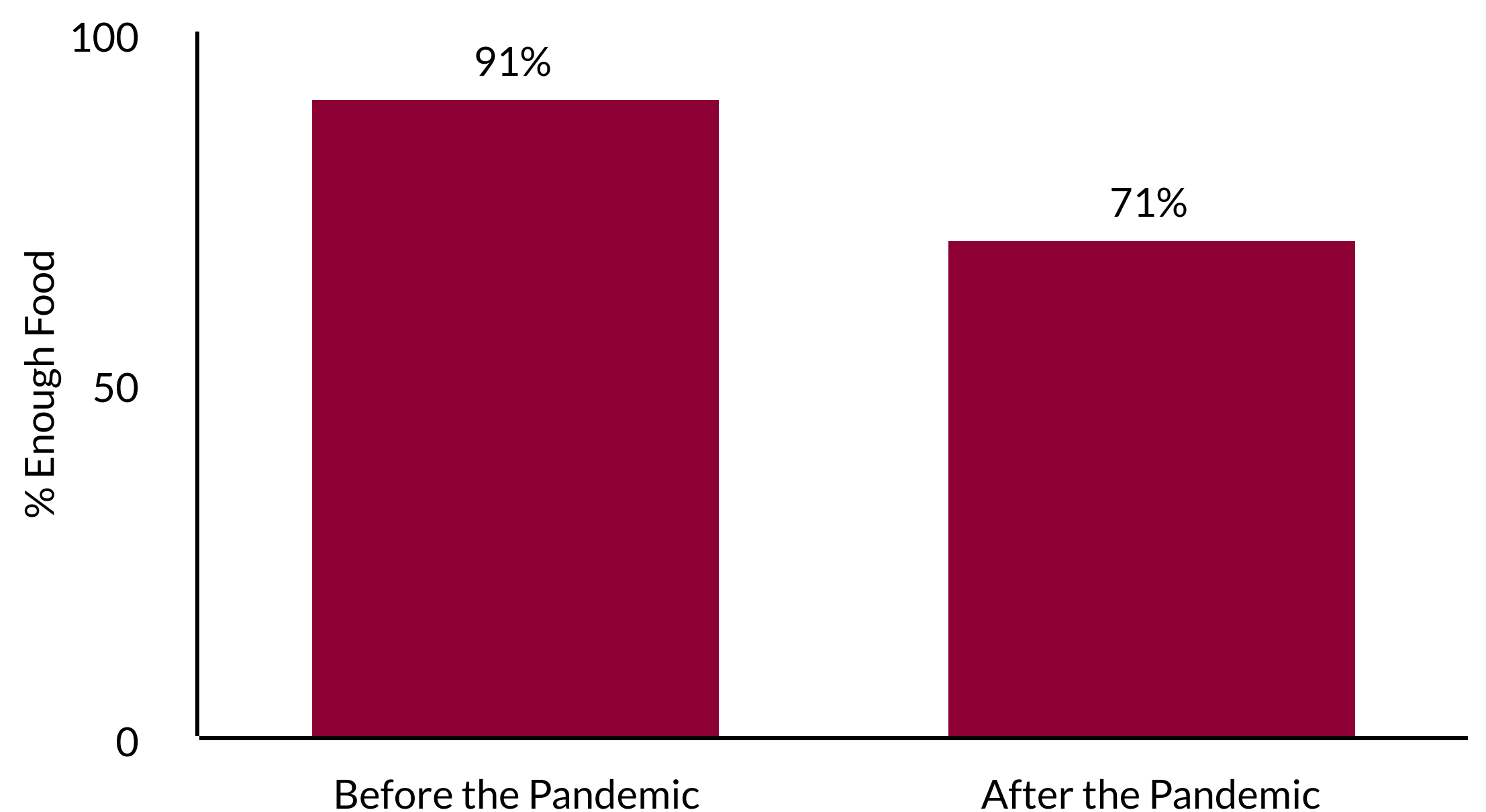
Nord, M., Andrews, M., & Carlson, S. (2005). Household food security in the United States, 2005. Washington: USDA Economic Research Service, Report No.: ERR-29. Available from: [https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45655/29206\\_err29\\_002.pdf?v=41334](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45655/29206_err29_002.pdf?v=41334) [PDF – 880 KB]

Tarasuk, V., Cheng, J., de Oliveira, C., Dachner, N., Gundersen, C., & Kurdyak, P. (2015). Association between household food insecurity and annual health care costs. *CMAJ*, 187(14), E429–36.

According to the Henry County Pulse Survey, the coronavirus pandemic had a significant effect on the percentage of residents who reported they had eaten enough of the food they wanted to eat.

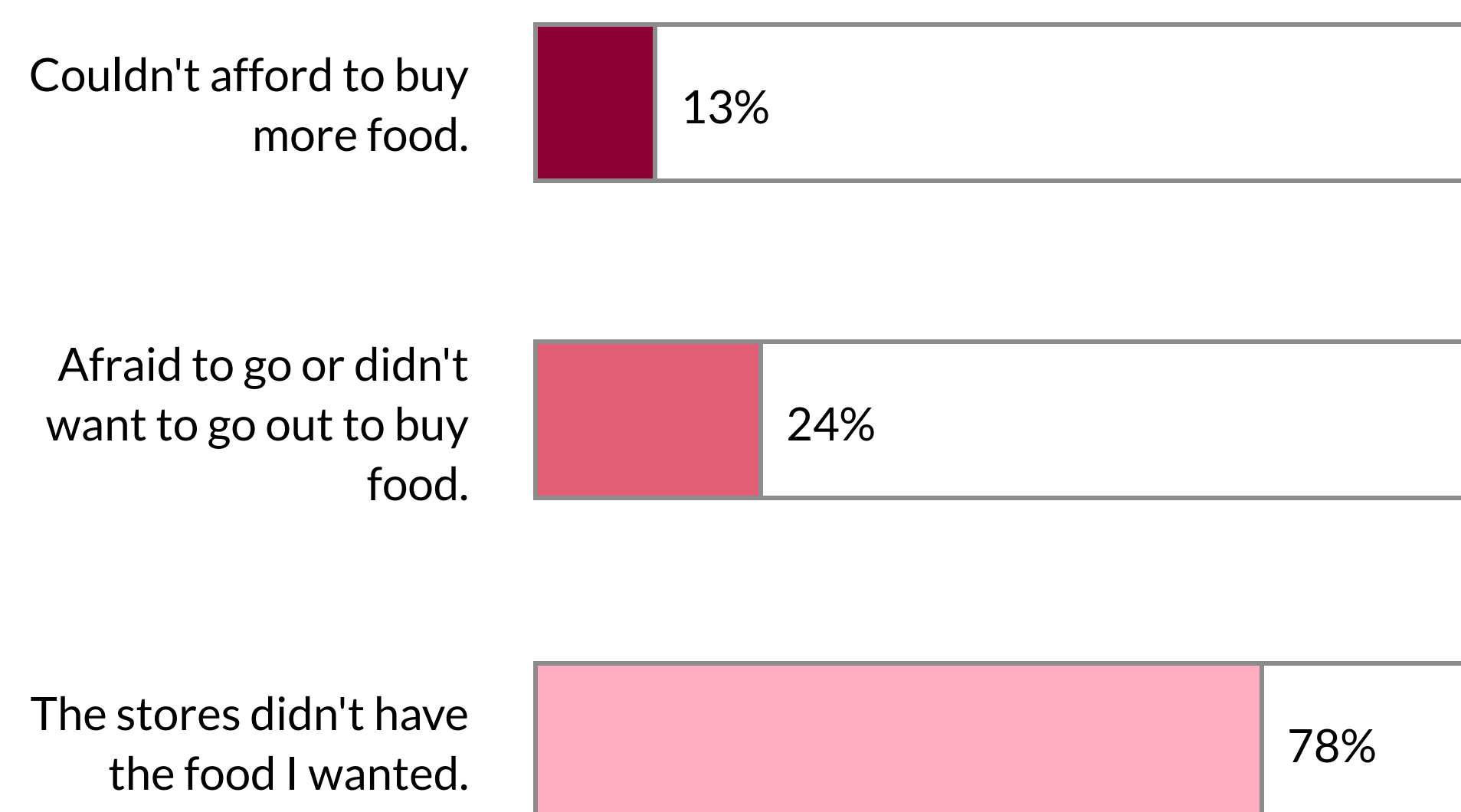
- Prior to the pandemic, 9 in 10 residents reported they had enough of the kinds of food they wanted to eat.
- In contrast, following the onstart of the pandemic, this drops to 7 in 10 residents.

**Figure 5** Percentage of Henry County Residents Reporting They Have Eaten Enough of the Food They Wanted to Eat Both Before and After the Onset of the Pandemic



Data Source: Henry County Pulse Survey, April 2020

**Figure 6** Henry County Residents Report of Why they did not have enough of the food they wanted to eat.



Data Source: Henry County Pulse Survey, April 2020