

Food Insecurity

An analysis of food insecurity and its impact in your community.



Everybody deserves equal access to nutrient dense food. Yet, many families lack proper fuel and peace of mind of knowing where their next meal will come from. Food insecurity has one of the most extensive impacts on the health of individuals. This report is designed to help identify local food insecurity issues in your community. Understanding food insecurity is integral to addressing it.

Many factors influence food security. Food insecurity over time can lead to adverse health outcomes, including chronic disease.

Call To Action: *Recent events have affected unemployment rates, income reductions, food shortages, and rising inflation. These changes exacerbate the existing food insecurity crisis. Supporting policy action and creating innovative solutions remains high priority.*



1 in 8 Americans are estimated to be food insecure, according to the USDA Economic Research Service.

This report explores food insecurity helping answer 6 questions:

- 1. How big of a problem is low food access in my community?**
- 2. Who struggles most with accessing healthy food?**
- 3. How does food insecurity impact community outcomes?**
- 4. Where might food assistance programs expand to help more people in the community?**
- 5. What can we do to improve food security in our community?**

How big of a problem is low food access in my community?

118,402
Total Population
Carroll County, GA

64.5%
People with Low Access to Healthy Food
Carroll County, GA

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021; USDA ERS 2019

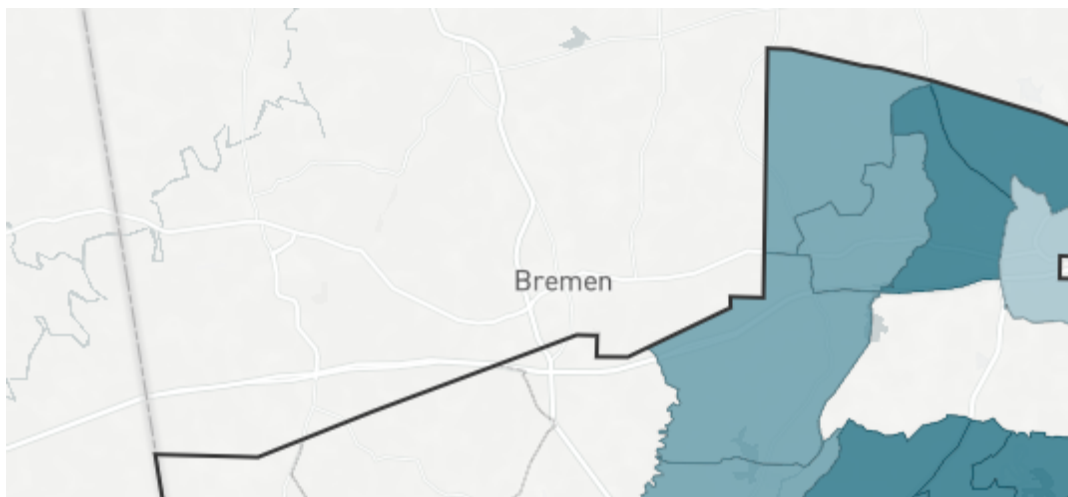
Food insecurity comprises four pillars: accessibility, availability, utilization, and stability. This section will focus on accessibility. Food accessibility is framed around the popular term "food desert". Food deserts are areas in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious foods. Neighborhood conditions affect physical access to food. For example, low-income neighborhood residents may have limited access to full-service grocery stores. Convenience stores and small independent stores are more common in food deserts. These local stores often have higher prices, lower quality, and less variety.

Use the left (◀) and right (▶) arrows to navigate to more data below.



Low Access to Healthy Food - Census Tracts





Who struggles most with accessing healthy food?

The risk for household food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available. Unfortunately, many factors shape this risk. Some of these factors include:

- Income
- Employment
- Race & Ethnicity
- Disability

Use the left (◀) and right (▶) arrows to navigate to more data below.

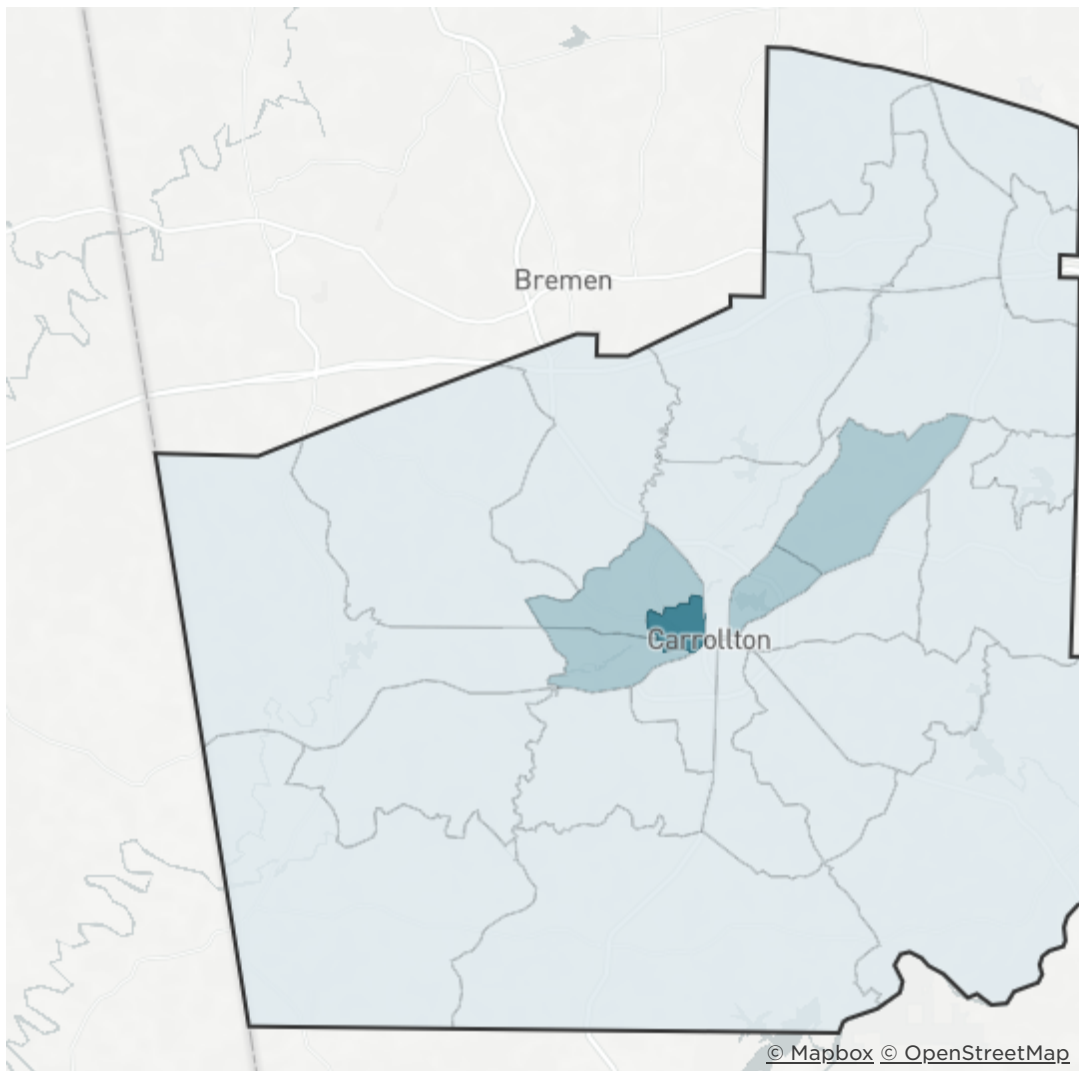


Income







A large body of research documents that the primary cause of food insecurity is low income and poverty. In 2016, **31.6% of low-income households were food insecure**, compared to the national average of 12.3%.

Low Income People with Low Access to Healthy Food by Census Tract



 Carroll County, GA

Low Income People with Low Access to Healthy Food

-  26% - <42%
-  42% - <57%
-  57% - <73%
-  73% - 88%

How does food insecurity impact community outcomes?

Poor nutrition through time can put individuals at risk of serious health outcomes. Common conditions within food deserts include Coronary heart disease and diabetes (the first and seventh leading cause of death in the US. Long-term diet and consumption patterns are determinants of health outcomes.

Use the left (◀) and right (▶) arrows to navigate to more data below.

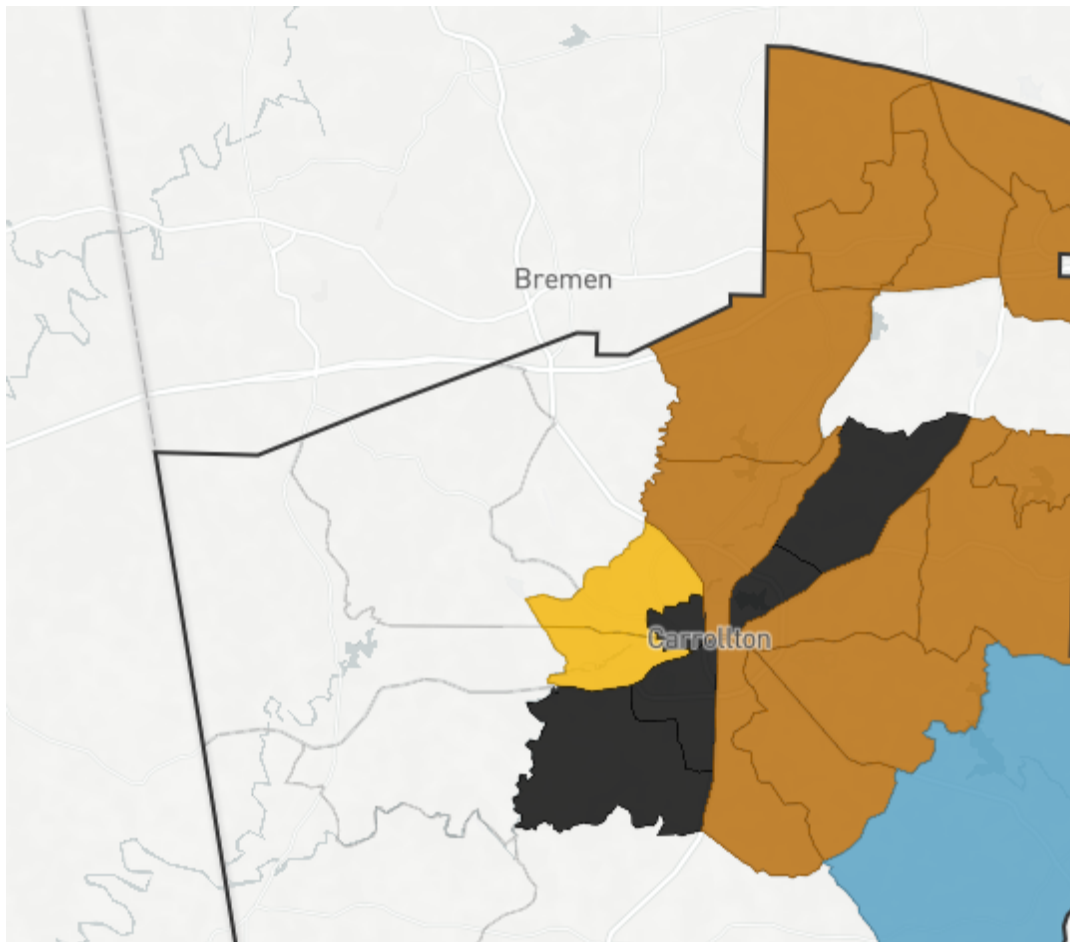


High Blood Pressure



The map below overlays low access to healthy food (yellow) and adults with high blood pressure (blue). Areas in black are key places to note. They represent areas in our community that experience the lowest access to healthy food and the highest rates of adults with high blood pressure.

Overlapping People with Low Access to Healthy Food and Adults with High Blood Pressure



Where might food assistance programs expand to help more people in the community?

Food assistance programs help relieve the impact of food insecurity for many households, particularly those with children. Government nutrition programs that exist today range from breakfast and lunch assistance for schoolchildren to nutrition programs for women, children, and infants. The largest program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also

known as food stamps. The central goal of SNAP is to alleviate hunger and malnutrition by increasing resources for the purchase of food for a nutritious diet.

Optimal nutrition starting in the first 1,000 days of life (from pregnancy to age 2) is crucial to support childhood development and adult health in the long term. The complementary action of enrollment in multiple federal child nutrition programs - SNAP; the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) - has been shown to reduce food insecurity and meet the nutritional needs of children for growth, development, and overall health. In addition, participation in federal nutrition programs has been found to reduce childhood obesity and boost learning and development. ²⁴

Use the left (◀) and right (▶) arrows to navigate to more data below.

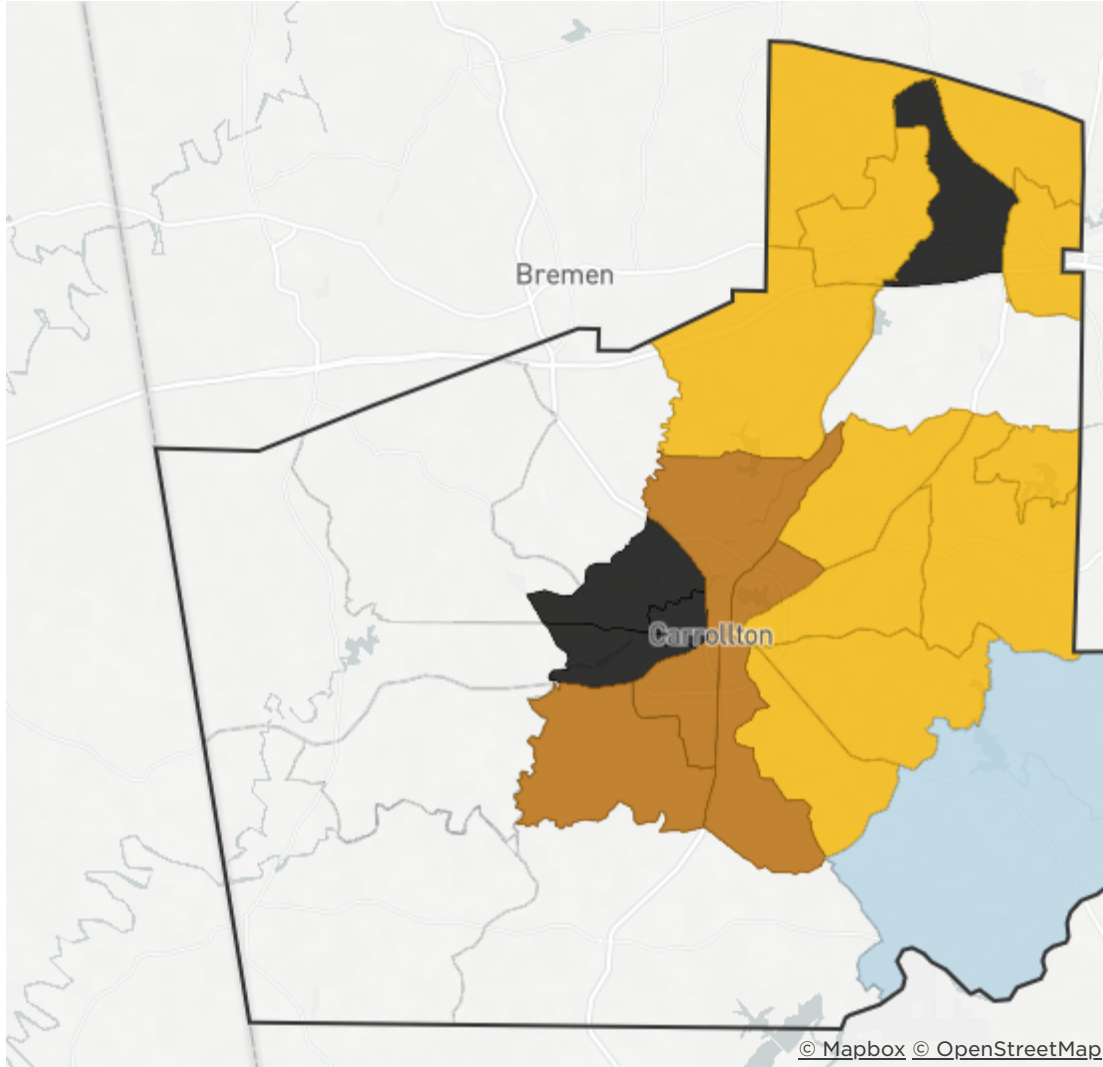
55.6%

**Households Below Poverty That Do Not Receive
SNAP/Food Stamps**
Carroll County, GA

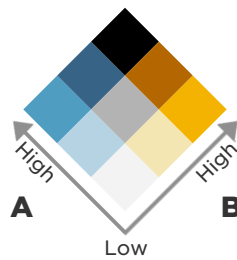
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021

The map below overlays low access to healthy food (yellow) and households below poverty that are not receiving food stamps (blue). Areas in black are key places to note. They represent areas in our community that experience the lowest access to healthy food and the highest rates of households below poverty that are not receiving food stamps.

Overlapping Households Below Poverty Not Receiving SNAP/Food Stamps and People with Low Access to Healthy Food



 Carroll County, GA



 **A** Households Below Poverty and Not Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP

 **B** People with Low Access to Healthy Food

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021; USDA ERS 2019

What can we do to improve food security in our community?



Policy Action and Beyond²

Families and communities with lower incomes and are under/unemployed may not have adequate money to afford healthful foods. Brining higher quality food sources into these communities requires more than just new facility placement and purchase options. Food consumption data shows that healthier eating and a healthier lifestyle are not necessarily an immediate benefit of eliminating food deserts. Low supply of healthy foods in a given community can lead to a reduced demand for healthy foods, as poor dietary habits are created over time within that environment. Lower demand for healthy food, however, means less incentive for suppliers of healthier options to move into that community. As this consumer behavior becomes normalized, it creates a circular problem, and requires policy changes and education to move the community beyond poor nutrition. Re-

learning or re-developing long-term healthy eating habits among children, parents, and in schools, is needed for better nutrition to be normalized and accepted.

Besides improved education and access to healthier foods, product price changes (including subsidies) may need to occur at the store level to improve healthy food selection. These changes in pricing can help encourage healthier lifestyle choices including healthy food consumption changes on a personal and community basis. Increased taxes on sugary drinks can help reduce consumption, while at the same time the provision of healthier replacement options must occur. Modifying food stamp programs to make fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable may also help make significant changes to food purchasing.

Examples of Food Insecurity Policies and Legislation

- Expand SNAP²
- Expand Child Tax Credit (CTC)
- Subsidize public transportation fare
- Expand charitable food assistance services
- Streamline processes to connect residents to public benefits
- Zoning changes to:
 - *allow farmers' markets in areas known to be food deserts*
 - *allow mobile healthy food vending (i.e., vegetables and fruit)*
- Educate local governments concerning the needs for equitable access to healthy food
- Advocate public transportation improvements to enhance access to full-service grocery stores
- Provide nutrition literacy family education and resources to all members of food desert communities to help make healthier food purchasing choices in retail setting

- Advocate for changes in land use zoning to allow for community and school gardens
- Change regulations and laws concerning healthy corner stores programs
- Support minimum distance laws and regulations for fast-food outlets and convenience stores from schools and venues where children spend their time



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