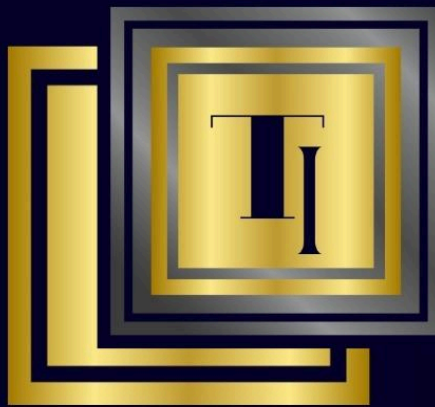


MAY, 2025

# TETELESTAI

INTERNATIONAL

INAUGURAL  
REPORT



**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY:  
LEVERAGING CITIZEN DATA TO  
ENHANCE PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Olufunlola A. Arowolo, Ph.D.



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INAUGURAL REPORT

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CONTENTS

**ABOUT US..... 5**

    Our Mission.....5

    Our Team.....5

    Our Partners.....5

**ISSUE IDENTIFICATION..... 5**

    1. Food Insecurity.....5

    2. Access to Books.....8

    3. Low-Income Moms.....9

    4. Clothing Assistance..... 11

**OUR SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SERVICE..... 13**

**INITIATIVES..... 13**

    1. Food..... 13

    2. Education..... 13

    3. Neonatal Kits..... 13

    4. Clothes..... 14



## ABOUT US

### Our Mission

Tetelestai International is a philanthropic organization tasked with a mission to support vitality by delivering life-saving resources, in partnership with our community stakeholders. Tetelestai International's operational objectives are structured to yield transformational impact, based the following four-fold approach to community service: i) food assistance for low-income individuals, ii) new clothes for the homeless, iii) neonatal kits for new (and veteran) moms, iv) support for educational initiatives. We are purpose-driven to serve the under-resourced. Our vision is to continue to expand our operations, both locally and internationally. Tetelestai International is a registered 501(c)(3) that relies on selfless volunteers; generous donors; and partnerships with angel investors to fulfill its organizational mandate.

### Our Team

Our team is made up of dedicated professionals whose industry backgrounds range from government, to private sector, and non-profit fields. We are passionate about providing vital support to undergird the social wellbeing of the communities we serve.

### Our Partners

We work to partner with individual donors, a variety of organizations, and businesses in our community to provide philanthropic services to the members of the local communities we serve.

## ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

### 1. Food Insecurity

The U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture (2023) conceptualizes food security as access to sufficient amounts of food at all times, to maintain health. In contrast, food insecurity reflects the status of households without access to food for one or more members.<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, approximately 86.5% of U.S. households were reported as food secure, with the remaining 13.5% (roughly 18 million citizens) experiencing food insecurity—a million more individuals than in the year preceding (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

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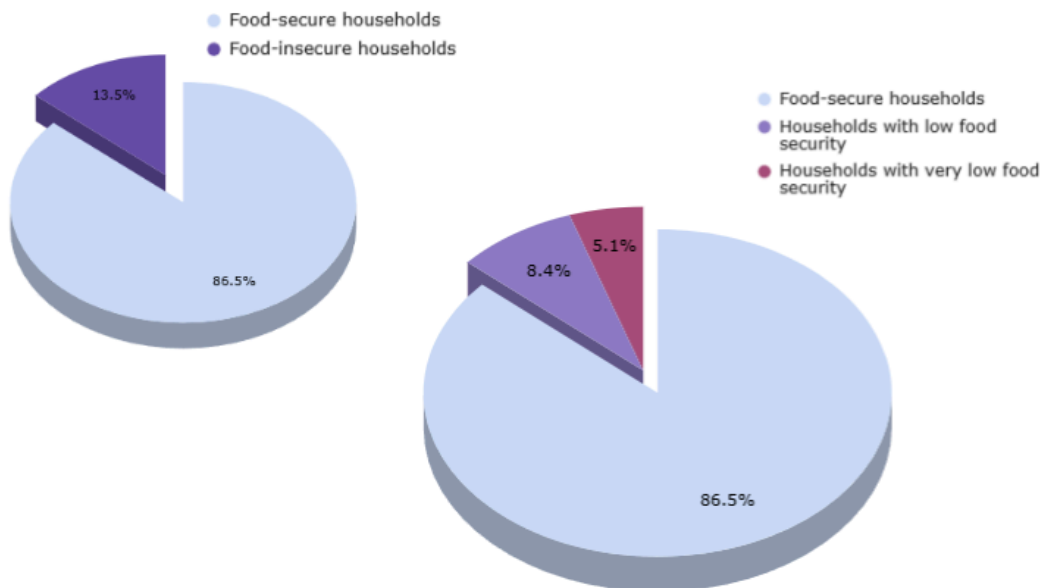
<sup>1</sup> Rabbitt, M.P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L.J., & Burke, M.P. (2024). Household Food Security in the United States in 2023 (Report No. ERR-337). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

[https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/\\_laserfiche/publications/109896/ERR-337.pdf?v=27751](https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/109896/ERR-337.pdf?v=27751)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 1.



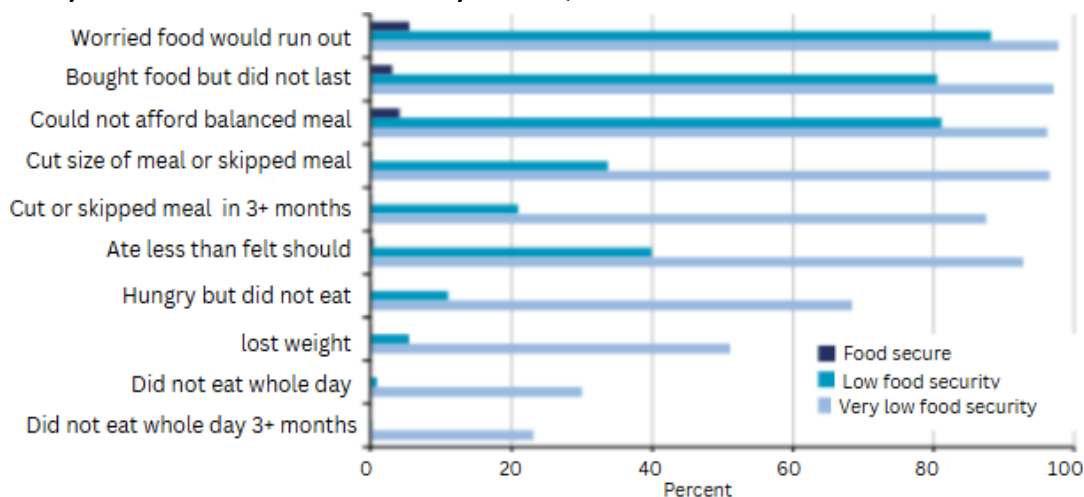
**Figure 1. Food Security Status in U.S. Households, 2023**



Data: USDA, Economic Research Service, as cited in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (2023). Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement Data.

Of the 18 million households identified as experiencing food insecurity, 11.2 million reported low food security, while 6.8 million households fell in the *very low* security bracket (meaning either reduced food intake or skipped meals on a regular basis, during the report-year).<sup>3</sup> Households in the *very low* security bracket reported a variety of conditions, with an estimated 98% expressing worry that their food supply would run out before they have access to enough money to replenish their supplies (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Food Security Conditions Based on Food Security Brackets, 2023**



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, as cited in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (2023). Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement Data.

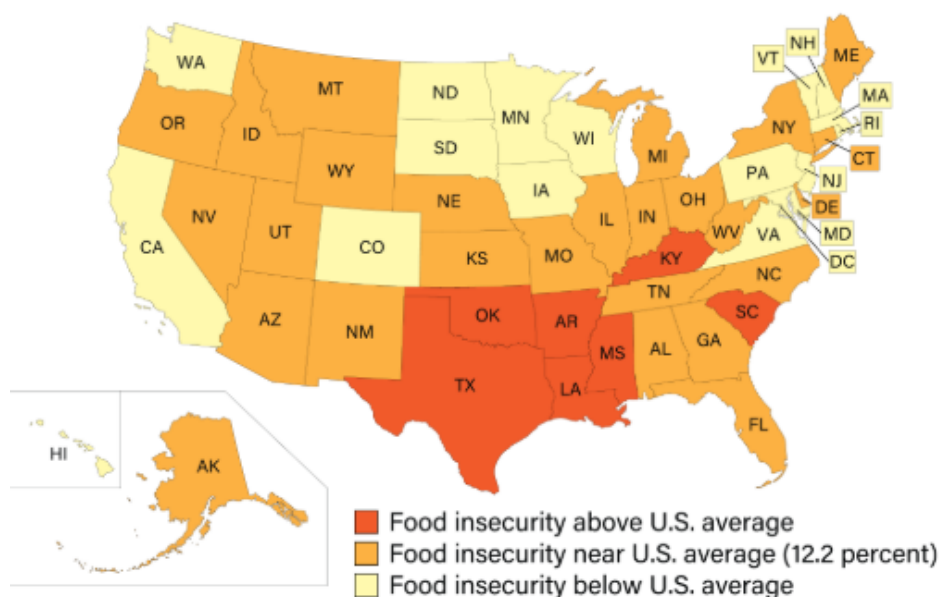
<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 1.

For the third year in a row, since 2020, food insecurity continues to rise in the United States, with an excess of 47 million American citizens identified as both living in food insecure households and lacking consistent access to nutritious food.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) catered to approximately 41.1 million citizens every month; and overall, charitable food assistance programs saw participation from an estimated 49 million Americans.<sup>5</sup>

As the rise in food insecure households shows no sign of slowing down, inflation is likely to contribute to the uptick. Texas is not exempt. As a matter of fact, when considering baseline measures for State-level access to food, Texas ranks among the top-10 most food insecure states, as visualized in Figure 3.<sup>6</sup> Accounting for margins of error in their analyses, the USDA reports that, over the three-year period, from 2021 through 2023, food insecurity was higher than the national average (of 12.2%)—with statistical significance—in seven states: Arkansas (10.4%), Kentucky (14.5%), Louisiana (16.2%), Mississippi (16.2%), Oklahoma (15.4%), South Carolina (14.4%), and Texas (16.9%).

In addition, the prevalence of *very low* food security exceeded the national average of 4.7% in six states: Arkansas (5.3%), Kentucky (6.5%), Louisiana (6.1%), Mississippi (6.1%), South Carolina (7.0%), and Texas (6.4%).

**Figure 3. Visualization of the Pervasiveness of Food Insecurity in the United States, 2021-23**



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service. Data obtained from the national and State-level statistical registry on food insecurity [Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS)]; the U.S. Department of Commerce; and the Bureau of the Census, 2021, 2022, and 2023. Source Note: States categorized as close to the U.S. average in food insecurity percentages have pervasiveness rates that are not statistically different from the U.S. mean.

<sup>4</sup> World Hunger Education Service (2024). Fact Sheet and Discussion Guide: Hunger and Poverty in America. <https://www.worldhunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Hunger-and-Poverty-in-America-2024.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 1.

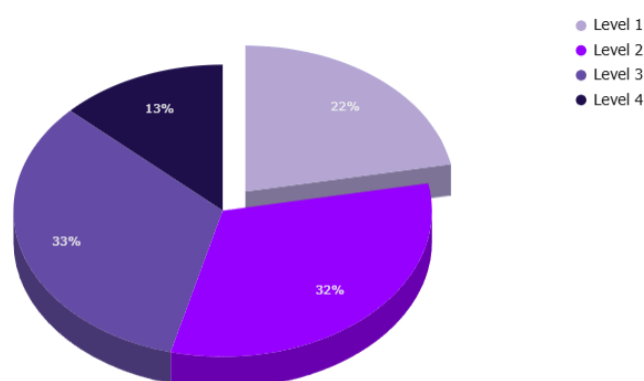
## 2. Access to Books

According to a study on adult literacy in America, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, working-age adults with reading, writing, mathematical, and other workplace competencies have become increasingly difficult to recruit—this issue is said to be contributing to a human capital deficit that both affects U.S. competitiveness and creates an obstacle preventing citizens from accessing gainful employment opportunities.<sup>7</sup> According to the National Literacy Institute, in 2024:

- 21% of adults in the US were assessed as illiterate;
- 54% of US adults were identified as having a literacy below a 6th-grade level (20% were found to be below 5th-grade level);
- Low levels of literacy costs the US up to 2.2 trillion per year.<sup>8</sup>

According to a survey of adult literacy, numeracy, and problem solving skills conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics—in collaboration with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)—the U.S. ranks 16th, when compared to the other 33 OECD nations assessed in the study.<sup>9 10</sup> The study classifies literacy along five levels of proficiency, with Level 1 ranked as the lowest, and Level 5 ranked as the highest. For the United States, more than 1 in 5 adults rank at Level 1 or below in literacy proficiency. Adults ranking at Level 1 or below were found to have difficulty processing print materials, with basic or limited vocabulary - i.e., functionally illiterate. Further, over one-half of U.S. adults do not possess proficient literacy skills<sup>11</sup> (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. U.S. Adult Proficiency Skills**



Data: APM Research Lab, via Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's [OECD] (2023). Survey of adult skills (PIAAC).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, in consultation with the National Economic Council (2012). The Competitiveness and Innovative Capacity of the United States. <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/migrated/reports/thecompetitivenessandinnovativecapacityoftheunitedstates.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> National Literacy Institute (2024). Literacy Statistics 2024- 2025 (Where We Are Now). <https://www.thenationalliteracyinstitute.com/2024-2025literacy-statistics>

<sup>9</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's [OECD] (2023). Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/piaac.html>.

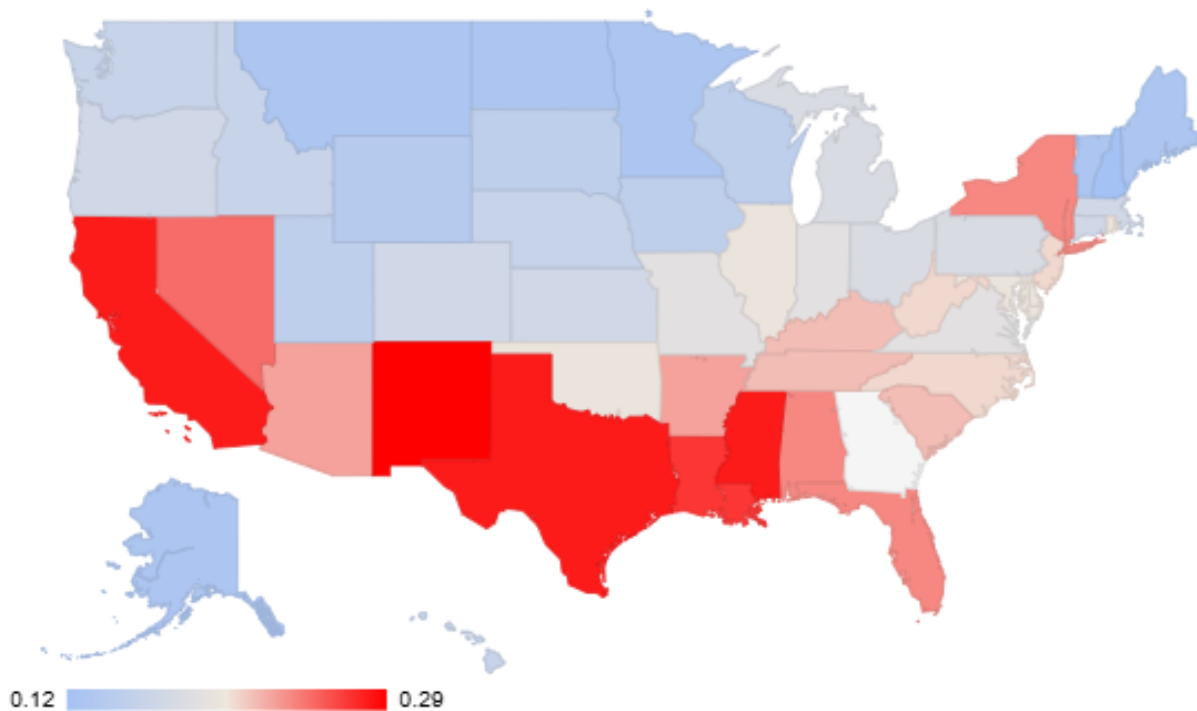
<sup>10</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2019). Fast Fact: Adult Literacy. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=69>

<sup>11</sup> Schmidt, E. (2022). Reading the Numbers: 130 Million American Adults Have Low Literacy Skills, but Funding Differs Drastically by State. APM Research Lab. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/10x-adult-literacy>



Furthermore, a high concentration of the very lowest adult literacy performance scores mostly originate from southern states (see Figure 5). The 10 counties identified as having the highest percentage of their populations at or below Level 1 literacy are located in Texas.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 5. States with Citizens at or Below Level 1 Literacy**



Data: APM Research Lab, via Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's [OECD] (2023). Survey of adult skills (PIAAC).

### 3. Low-Income Moms

For over six decades, single parenthood has been a leading public policy issue in the United States.<sup>13</sup> According to the Center for American Progress, in 2022, single mothers working full-time earned a median annual income of \$40,000.<sup>14</sup> In Texas, the total required income for a single parent with one child to live relatively comfortably is \$48,708 (before taxes).<sup>15</sup> Single mothers, who simultaneously take on the role of both breadwinner and caregiver<sup>16</sup> often grapple with economic insecurity as they lack the additional cushion of financial support accessible to traditional households with two working parents.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Lu, Y. C., Walker, R., Richard, P., & Younis, M. (2019). Inequalities in Poverty and Income between Single Mothers and Fathers. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(1), 135. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17010135>

<sup>14</sup> Salas-Betsch, I. (2024). The Economic Status of Single Mothers. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-economic-status-of-single-mothers/>

<sup>15</sup> Martin, E. (2019). How Much a Single Parent Needs to Earn to Get By in Every US State. CNBC <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/06/14/how-much-a-single-parent-needs-to-earn-to-get-by-in-every-us-state.html>

<sup>16</sup> Glynn, S. J. (2019). Breadwinning Mothers Continue To Be the U.S. Norm. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/breadwinning-mothers-continue-u-s-norm/>

In terms of providing financial assistance for single-parent households, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and their neighboring southern states provide the least support and financial security for single parents (see Figure 6)<sup>17</sup>.

**Figure 6. Ranking State Support for Single Mothers**

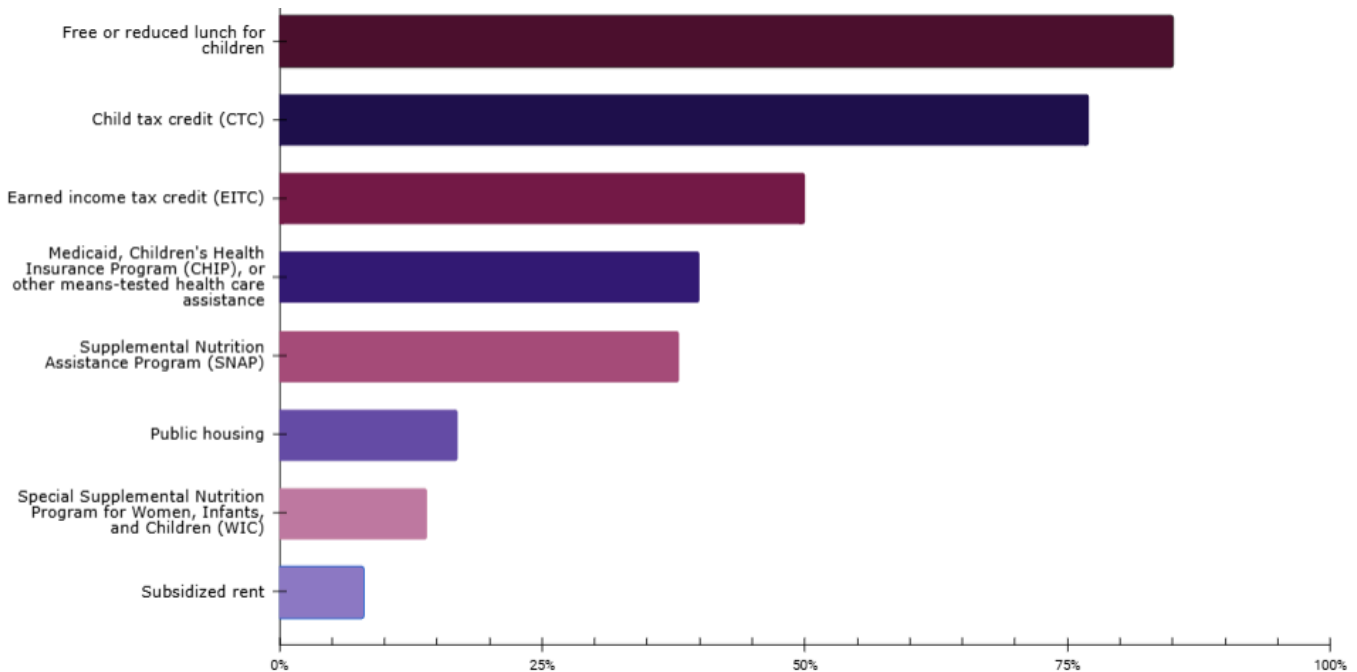


Source: PR Newswire (2017) [see footnote 15].

Although several southern states rank poorly in terms of support provided for single mothers, a sizable amount of government subsidies are made available to single mothers (see Figure 7).

<sup>17</sup> PR Newswire (2017). These States are the Best for Single Parents to Raise Children.  
<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/these-states-are-the-best-for-single-parents-to-raise-children-300510519.html>

**Figure 7. Percentage of Single Mothers Receiving a Variety of Government Subsidies, 2022**



Data: Flood, S. et al. (2023). Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey Data for Social, Economic, and Health Research: Version 11.0 (dataset): Annual Social and Economic Supplements. University of Minnesota.

<https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V11.0>.

Nevertheless, despite the variety of available government subsidized social safety nets, single mothers continue to need access to programs that augment the much-needed support they may currently be entitled to receive. When considering earning potential, in Texas, a woman with a bachelor's degree is likely to earn \$27,000 less than a man with the same; and, without a degree, the poverty rate for single mothers is 80%.<sup>18</sup> Although anti-poverty initiatives—e.g., SNAP, refundable tax credits—have been useful in mitigating financial strain, providing single moms with access to newborn essentials, for example, can further contribute to current social safety nets, in terms of alleviating financial constraints.

#### **4. Clothing Assistance**

In 2023, the National Alliance to End Homelessness reported a 12.1% increase in homelessness from the previous year—653,104 U.S. citizens experienced homelessness at least once in January of 2023.<sup>19</sup> Equivalently, this translates to approximately 1 in 5,000 citizens who experienced homelessness in 2023, according to a newly issued report by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).<sup>20</sup>

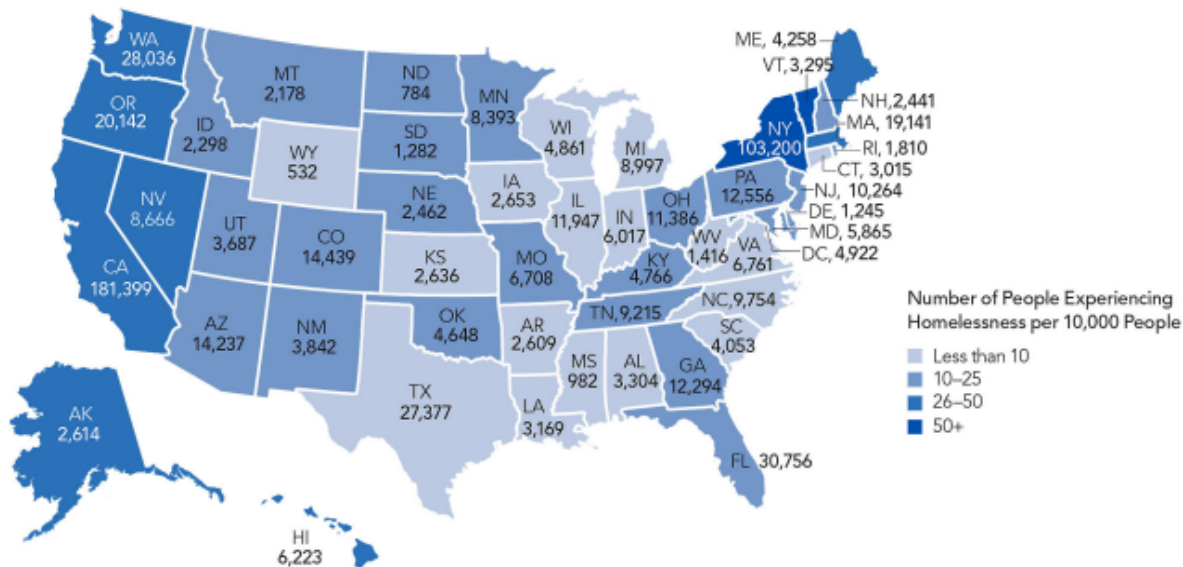
<sup>18</sup> Buckner International (2025). Buckner Family Pathways®. <https://www.buckner.org/family-pathways/>

<sup>19</sup> Soucy, D., Janes, M., & Hall, A. (2024). State of Homelessness: 2024 Edition. National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/state-of-homelessness/>

<sup>20</sup> De Sousa, T., Andrichik, A., Prestera, E., Rush, K., Tano, C., Wheeler, M., & Abt Associates (2023). The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Office of Community Planning and Development <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Of the 653,104 Americans identified as homeless, 256,610 individuals were without shelter. Further, as a result of declining targeted assistance, homelessness among the veteran population has also seen an increase from 7% (in 2022) to 12% (in 2023).

**Figure 8. States Estimates of Homelessness, 2023**



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) [see footnote 18].

Although Florida and Texas contributed significant numbers to the national homelessness count, both states reported rates of homelessness lower than the national average of 18 people per 10,000: Whilst Florida reported 14 for every 10,000, Texas reported 9 for every 10,000.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, HUD reports that, on a single night in January 2023, 186,084 individuals experiencing homelessness were part of a family with at least one adult and one child, which constitutes around 29% of the total homeless population.<sup>22</sup> Homeless individuals forgo basic necessities daily—after the need for shelter and food, clothes are highly prioritized, especially during changing seasons, when adequate clothing is required to shield against hypothermia and other cold-related illnesses. Socks are highly requested, but often overlooked items: Living on the streets can lead to harmful foot-related issues.<sup>23</sup> Fungal infections, Trench foot, and skin wounds are some of the most common foot ailments prevalent among homeless populations.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, other health issues can develop from lack of clean clothes, including skin infections.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Cox, H. (2019). Socks Are a Critical Component of Our Health. Boston University, School of Public Health. <https://www.bu.edu/sph/news/articles/2019/harold-cox-day-sock-drive/>

<sup>24</sup> Bellini, I, & Dillon, K. (2022). Clean Socks Are a Simple Way to Reach Patients Experiencing Homelessness. Health City: Health Equity News from Boston Medical Center. <https://healthcity.bmc.org/clean-socks-are-simple-way-reach-patients-experiencing-homelessness/>

## OUR SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

At Tetelestai International, our vision is to mobilize the power of community to connect under-resourced citizens with vital resources needed to achieve optimal well-being. We take a holistic approach to philanthropy, by providing practical, tangible solutions to meet immediate, pressing needs. We endeavor to ensure that low-income citizens can access vital resources. Through our program initiatives, we work to ensure that citizens in under-served, under-resourced communities have access to food, clothing, books, and neonatal kits.

### INITIATIVES

#### 1. Food

*Empowering lives, one meal at a time.*

Our food initiative serves to ensure that low-income citizens, who are unable to access the crucial resources they need to achieve optimal health and nutritional well-being, receive vital food support. One empowered, food-energized life can create ripple effects that can empower communities. Our food initiative centers on fostering a sense of community by prioritizing food bank support, setting up food drives, and scheduling grocery drop-offs. At Tetelestai International, we believe in the power of community: Through collaborative food delivery efforts, transformative change is realizable for those who lack access to vital resources. We are committed to positively impacting the lives of underserved, under-resourced citizens.

#### 2. Education

*Empowering minds, one book at a time.*

Our education initiative is structured to increase access to educational books, which would otherwise be inaccessible to low-income citizens, due to cost restrictions. We aim to provide educational materials and resources to support existing literacy directives in our communities. One empowered mind can spearhead innovation that energizes and positively impacts a community, the nation, and the world. Our strategic long-term goal is to partner with Title I public schools to organize book fairs that allow children to access books ranging in genre - from the creative arts to mathematical sciences. In addition to donating books to adult literacy centers, we are also working towards providing books to children in foster care. The impact a book can have on the curious mind is indeterminable. We are positioned to provide support for educational initiatives in the local communities we serve.

#### 3. Neonatal Kits

*Supporting Moms, one neonatal kit at a time.*

We work to provide low-income moms with neonatal kits, which will include baby bottles, formula, diapers, onesies, and bath-time essentials. Moms caring for newborns deserve all the support available to them. Our goal is to ensure that moms, who need assistance with newborn essentials, are not denied access, based on their financial status.



#### 4. Clothes

*Providing comfort, one blanket at a time.*

Our clothes drives will support the work of existing charity organizations by collecting and donating new clothing items, which would otherwise be inaccessible to low-income citizens due to cost restrictions. We are also working towards hand-delivering clothing items—including blankets, sweaters, t-shirts, and socks—branded with Tetelestai International's logo to homeless shelters and foster homes. We are positioned to provide new clothes to the homeless, with the conscious goal of addressing the need for the most requested clothing items: socks. In addition, we work to strengthen partnerships with local clothes charities.



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