



Food Policy Council
October 1, 2025
5 - 6 pm

Land Acknowledgment

Washington DC and its surrounding areas sit on the ancestral land of the Nacotchtank and Piscataway peoples. We want to recognize those indigenous peoples and their communities, along with others across the country, and to lend our voice to theirs to uplift their past, present, and future communities.



October Agenda

DC FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

- Intro & Icebreaker (5 mins)
- CAFB's 2025 Hunger Report (20 mins)
- Community Kitchen Initiative (12 mins)
- Agency Updates (20 mins)
 - DOEE's Sustainable DC Data Dashboard
 - DC Health Farmers Market Grants
 - DLCP Food Business License Update
 - OP's Comprehensive Plan update
 - Nourish DC Grant Opening
- Upcoming WG Meetings (3 mins)



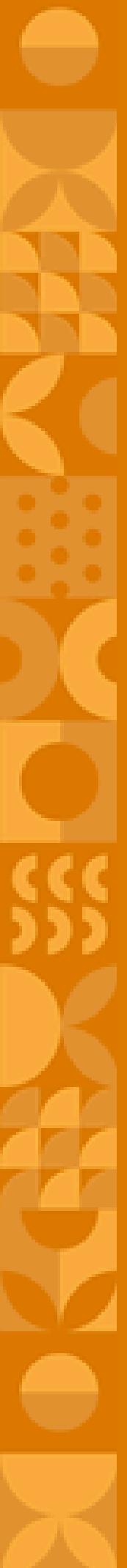
Icebreaker

Name, Pronouns

Organization

**Favorite Squash &
Way to Eat It**

2025 Hunger Report Briefing



Hunger Report Overview

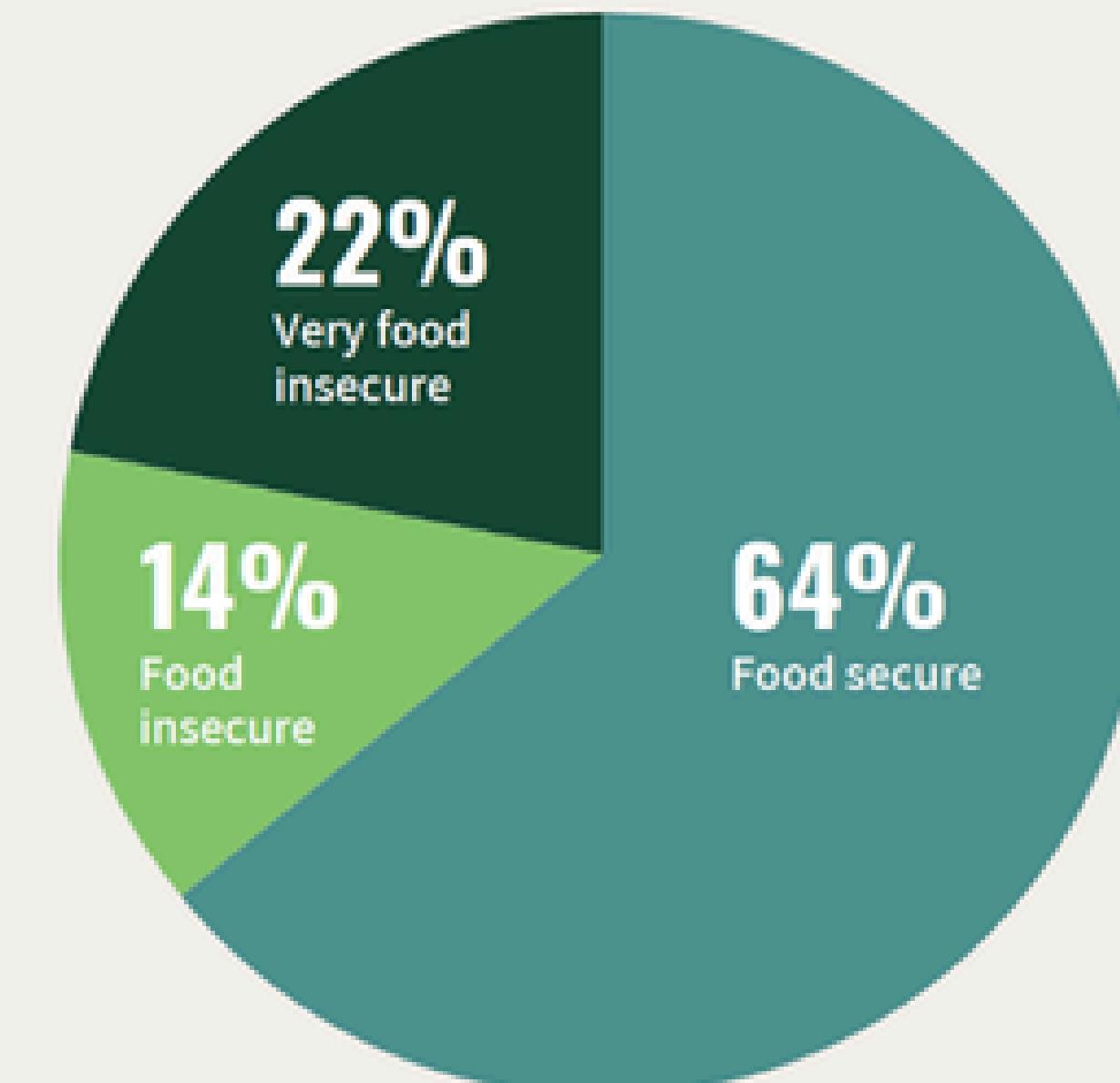
- CAFB has published a Hunger Report **every year since 2020**
- These reports offer **unique insights on the landscape of food insecurity** and underlying household economics in our region
- We conduct **general population surveys** ($n = 4,000$ on average) with trusted research partner **NORC** at the University of Chicago
- The Hunger Report is referenced by a **range of stakeholders**, including media, policymakers, regional economic development stakeholders, academia, and other nonprofits
- We **engage directly with clients** in the research, narrative-building, and story-telling of the report



Key Finding #1: Food insecurity remains elevated across Greater Washington

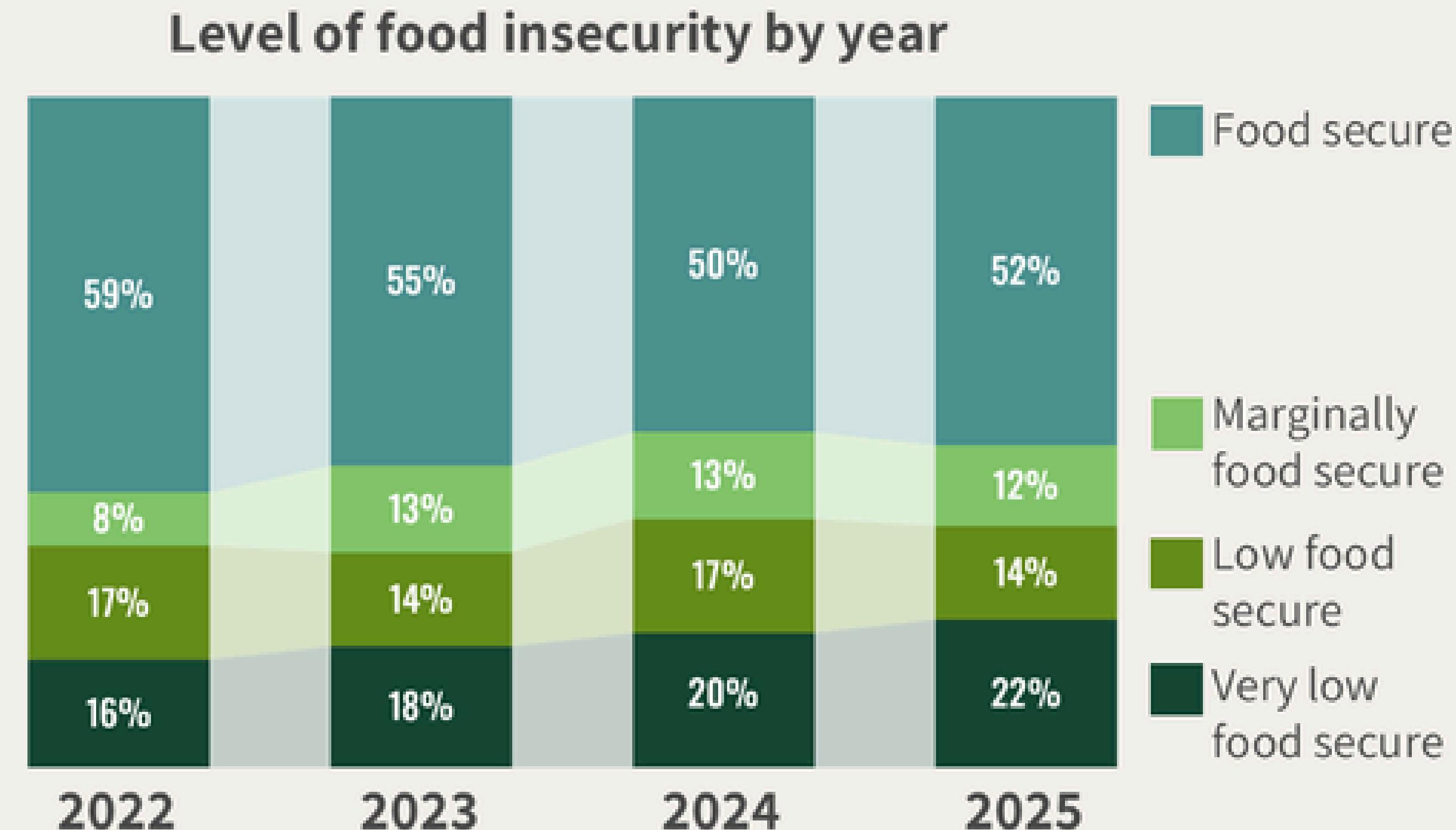
- As of June 2025, when the survey was fielded, **36% of households in the DMV experienced food insecurity** — nearly unchanged from 37% in 2024, but up from 32% in 2023
- **High rates have persisted across all geographies, races, and income groups**, following a sharp rise in 2024

Prevalence of food insecurity in the DMV



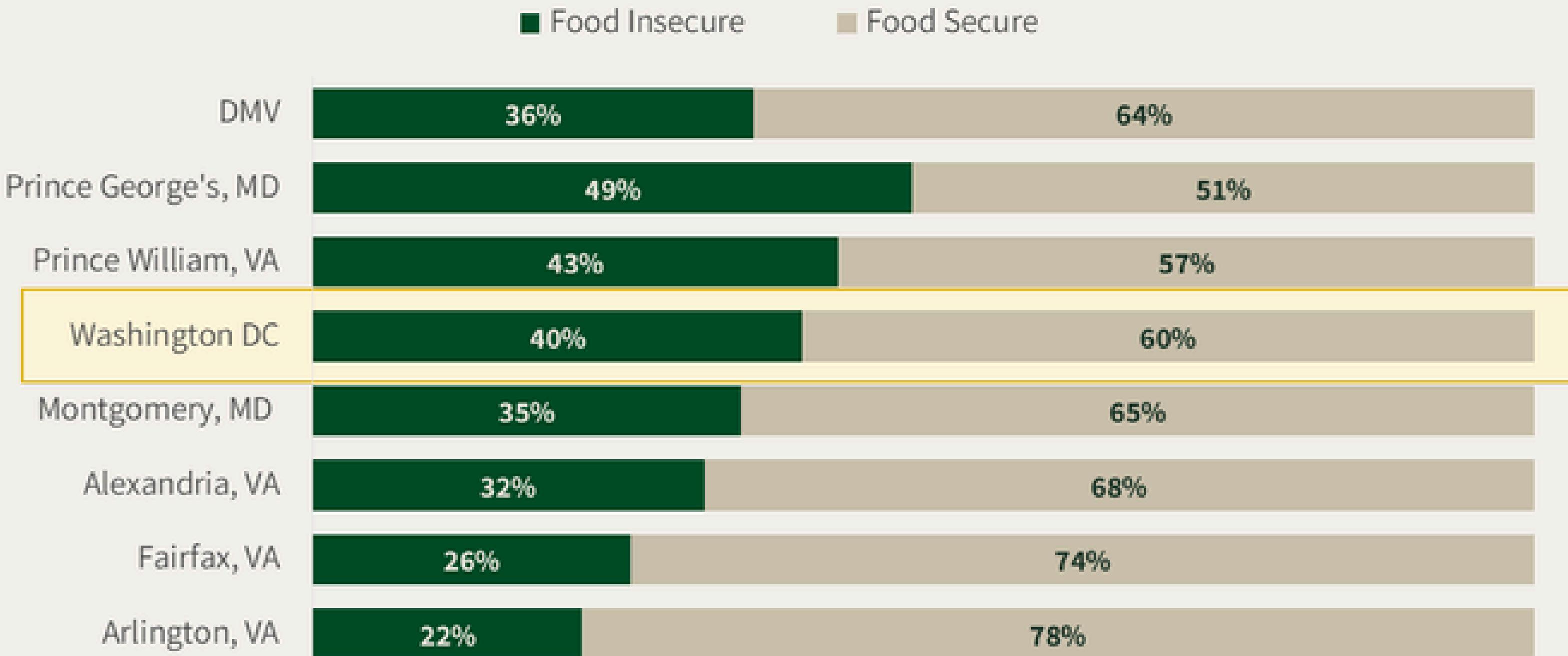
Key Finding #2: Very low food security, the most severe status, now affects over 800,000 people in the DMV

- **Very low food security** is the most severe form of food insecurity, where people face disrupted eating and reduced food intake
- This category grew from **16% to 22% in 4 years**
- **Over 800,000 people** are now in this category, up about 75,000 each year



Key Finding #3: At the county level, food insecurity varies from 22% to 49%

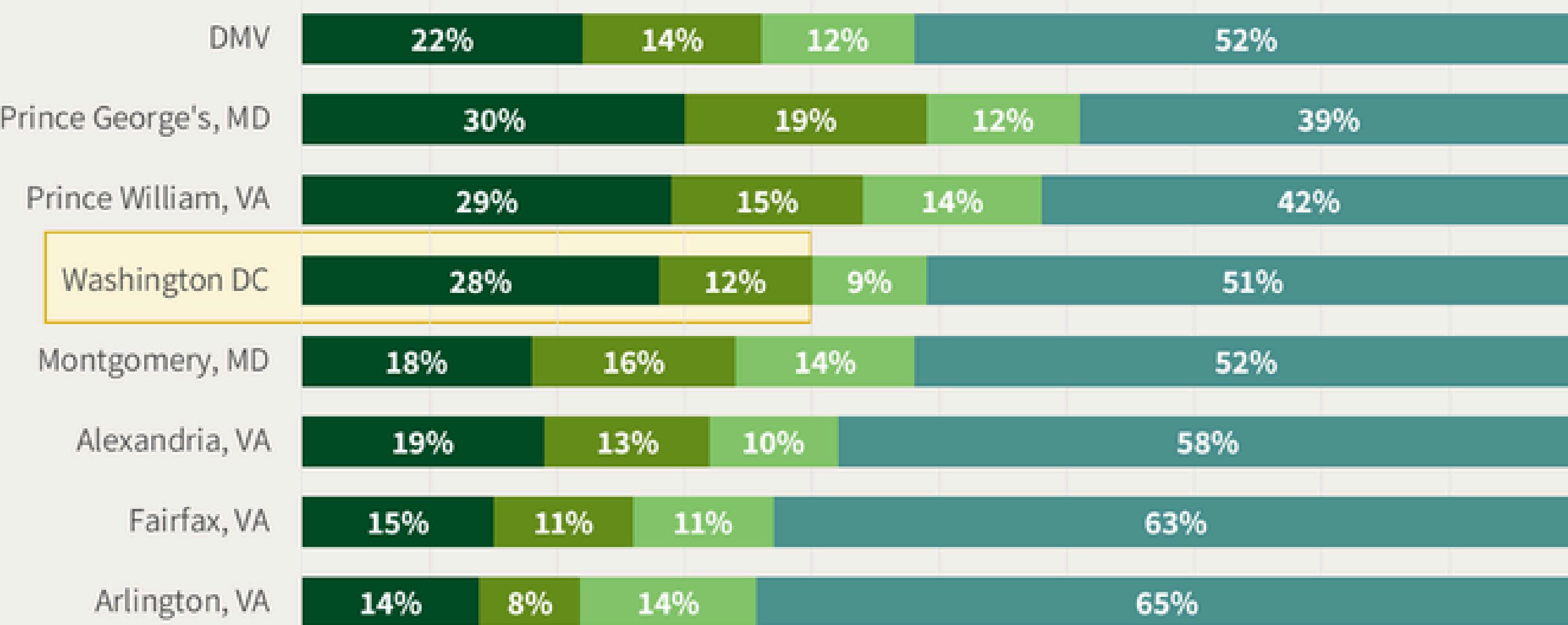
Prevalence of food insecurity in the DMV



Key Finding #4: Food insecurity in DC is more severe than in other jurisdictions

Food security severity by county, 2025

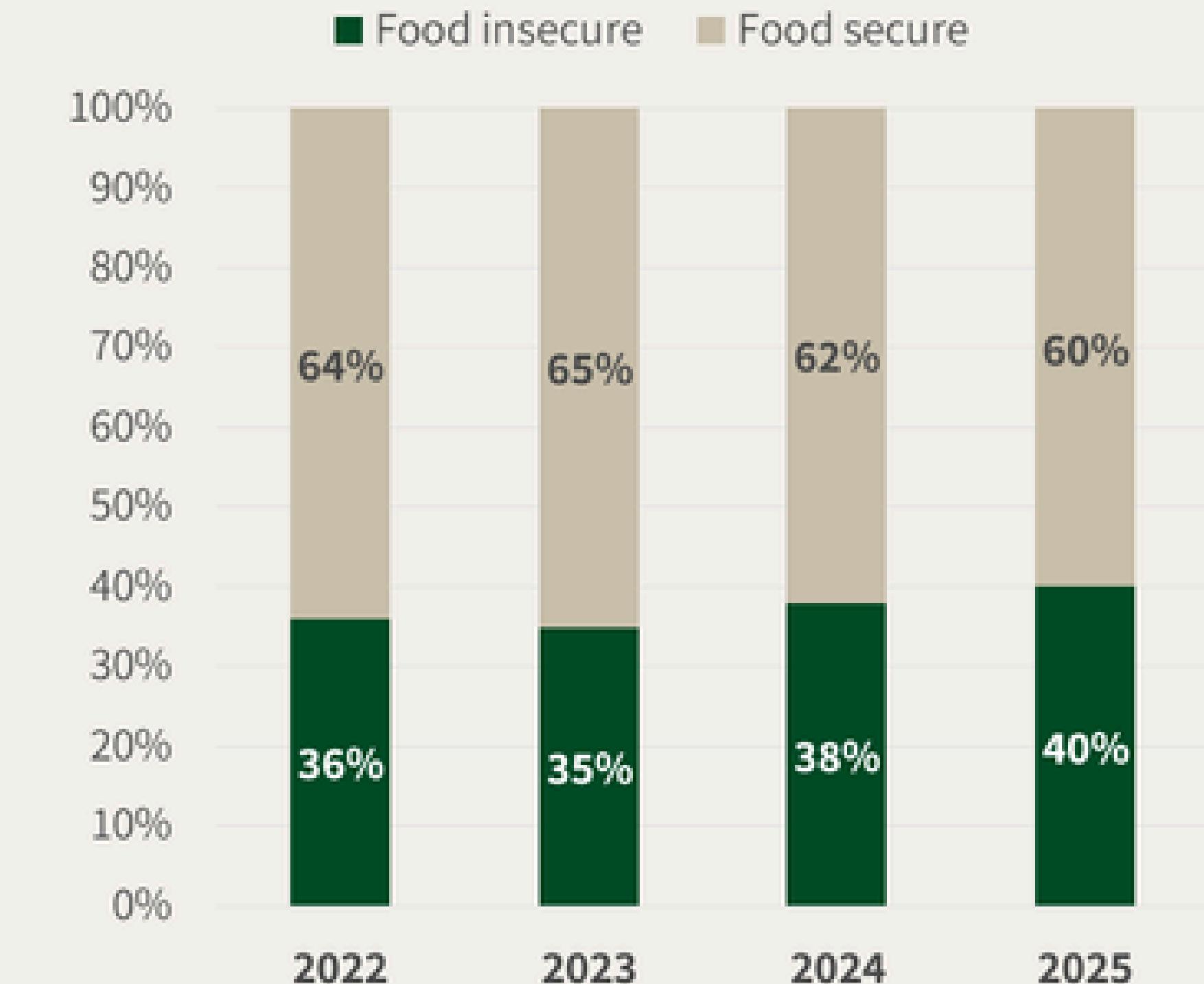
■ Very low food security ■ Low food security ■ Marginal food security ■ High food security



Key Finding #5: In DC, food insecurity has been slowly rising since 2023

- Food insecurity has risen from **35% to 40%** in Washington DC between 2023 and 2025
- The margin of error is 5.4 percentage points

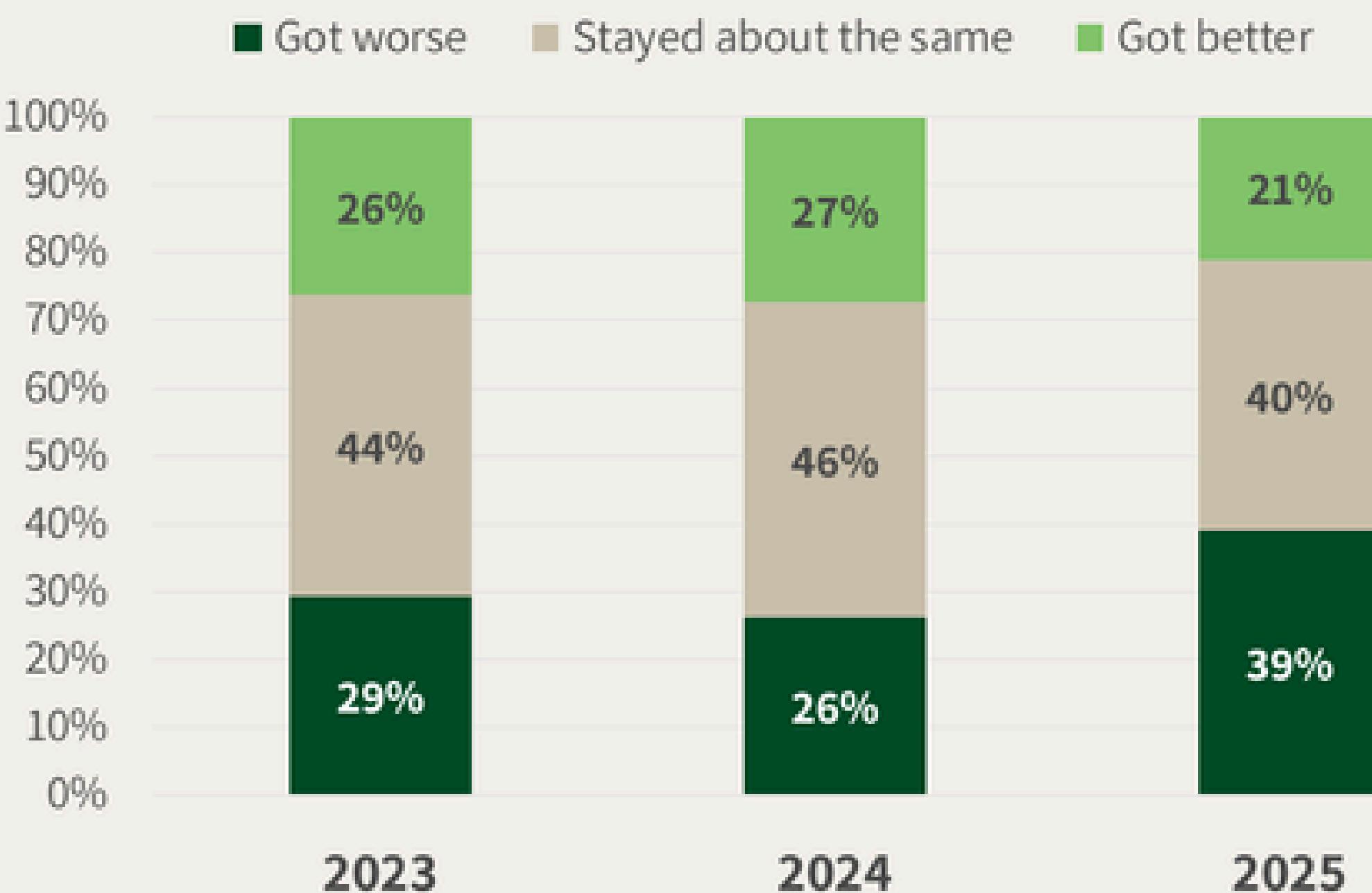
Food insecurity in DC, 2022-2025



Key Finding #6: In DC, an increasing share of residents are saying their finances are getting worse

- The 2025 survey found that **39%** of adults **reported their finances are worsening** compared to last year.
- This is **up from 26%** the year prior
- **Only 21%** of adults reported improvement.

Change in DC households' financial situation in past 12 months

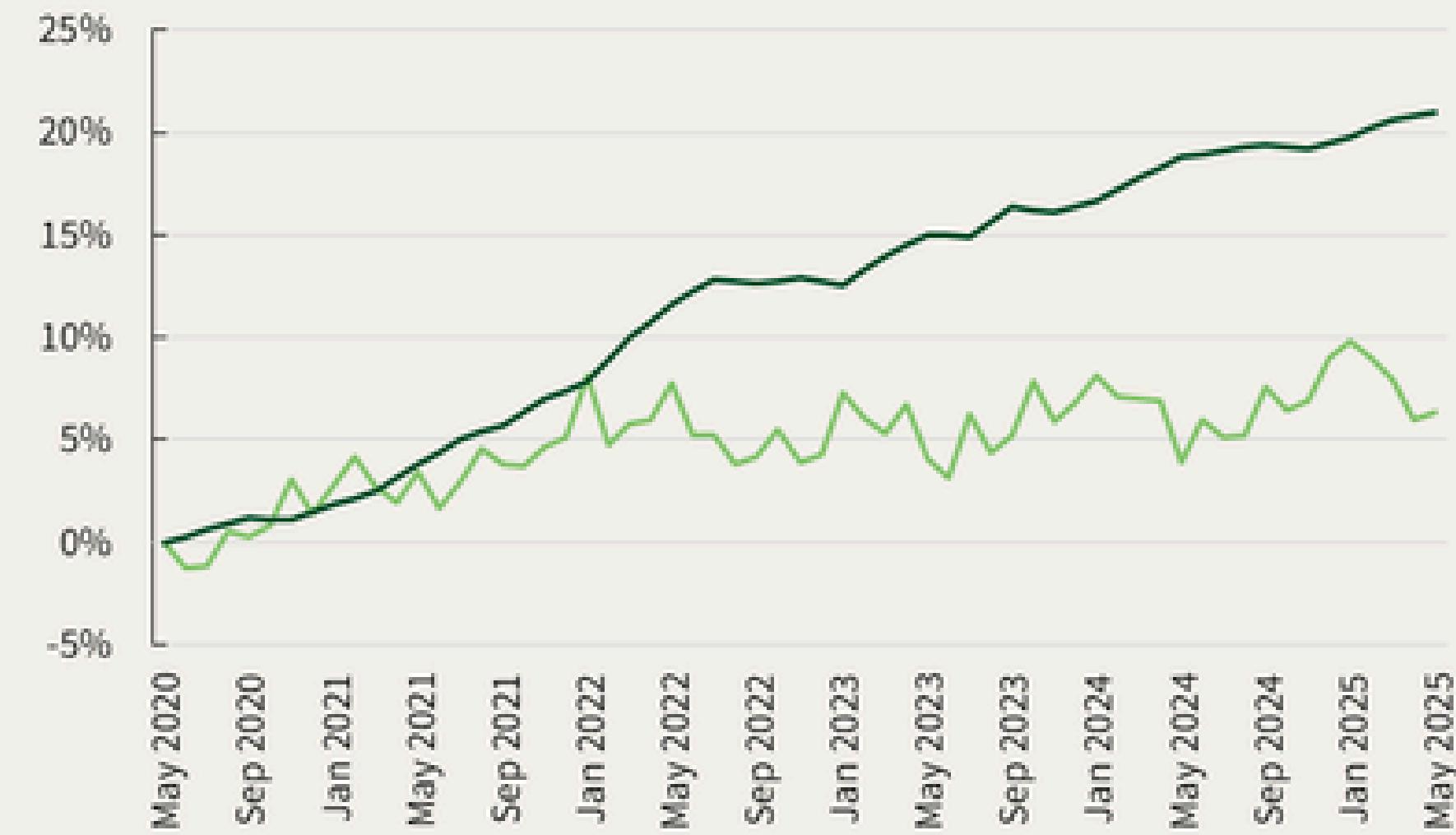


Key Finding #7: In the DMV, wage growth is lagging inflation over time

- Food insecurity has stayed high **despite strong GDP and low unemployment**
- Since May 2020, the cumulative growth in regional CPI is **21%**, compared to just **6%** in cumulative wage growth
- **Real wages in the DMV have fallen** faster than the national average

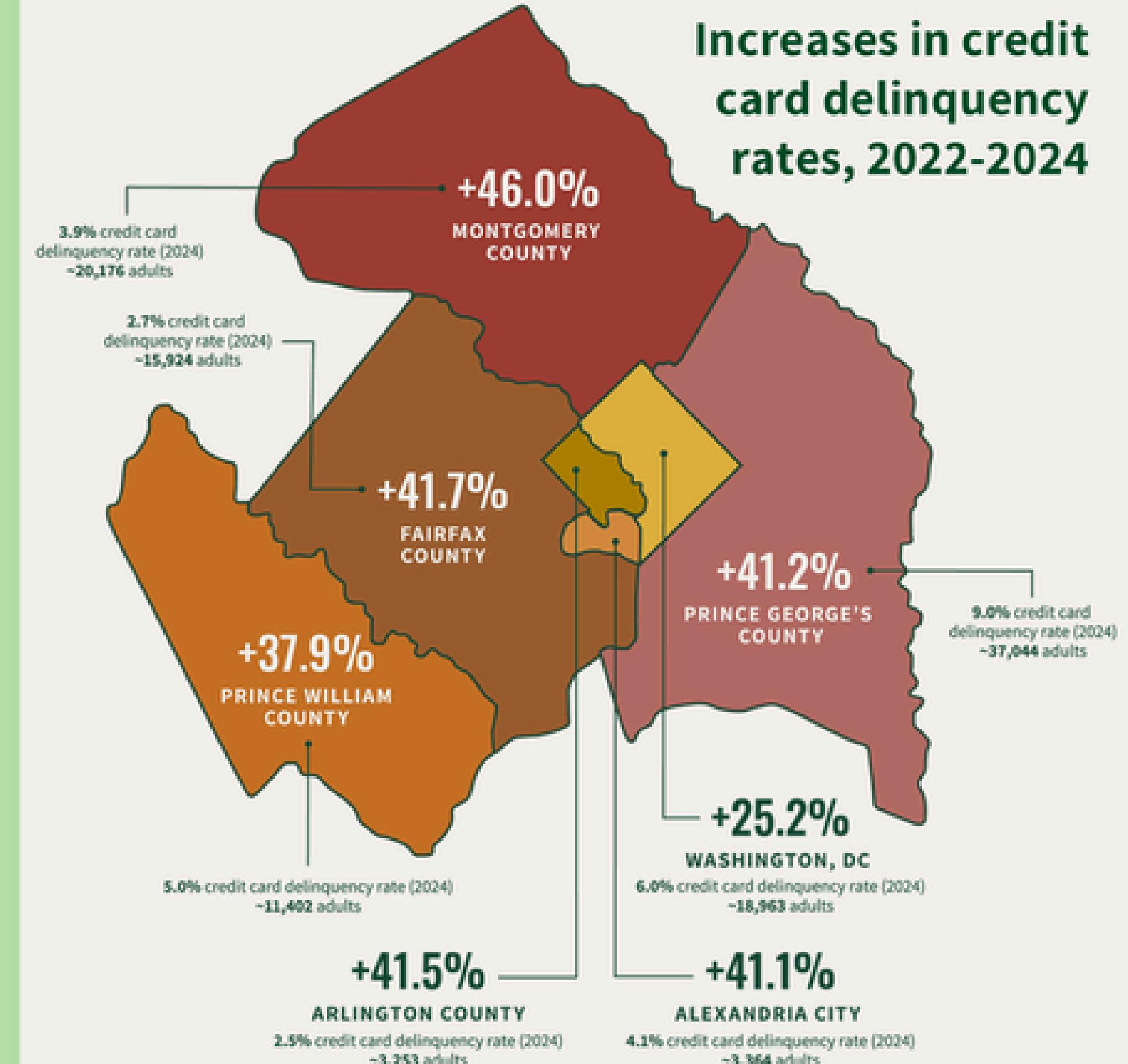
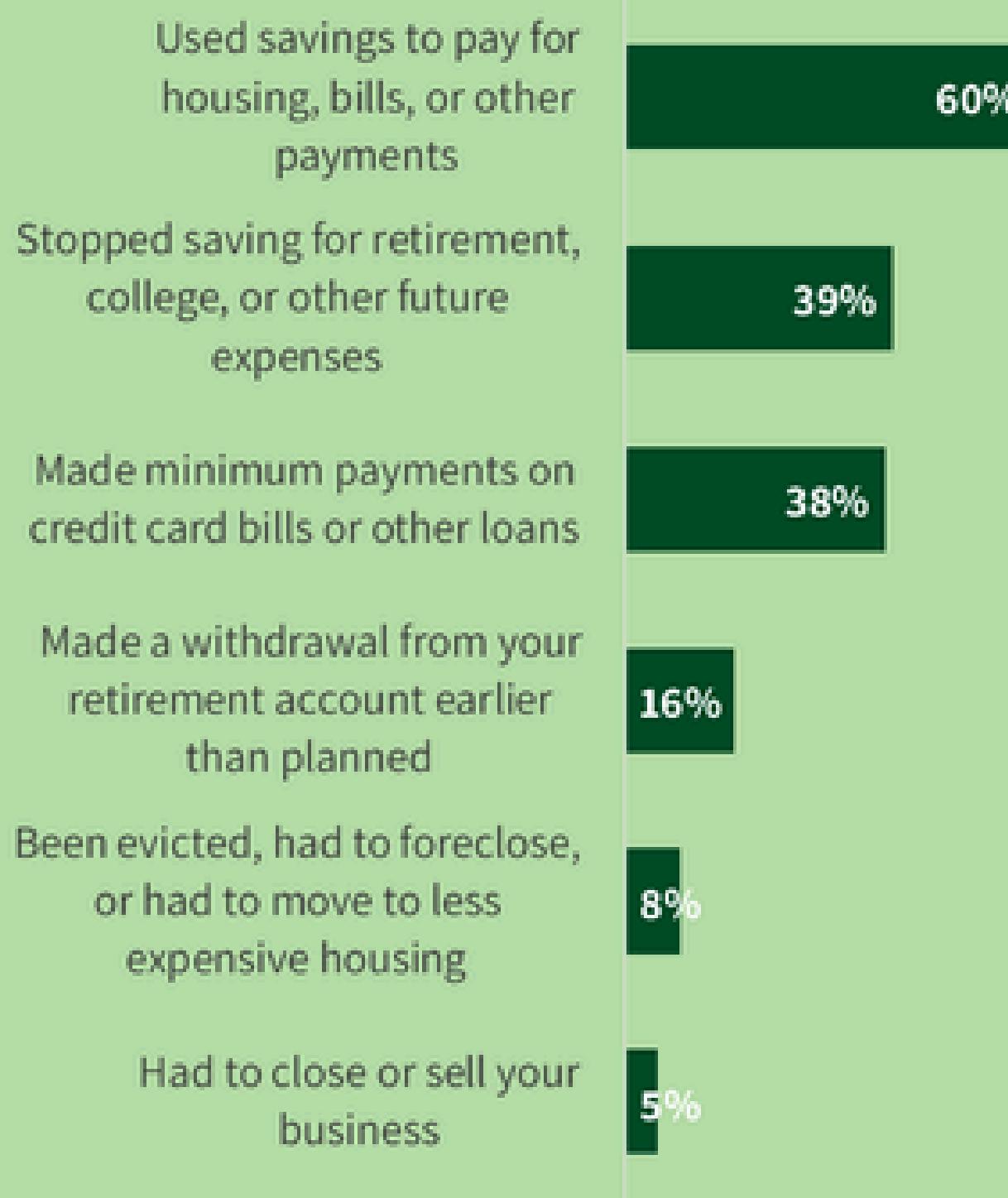
Cumulative inflation and wage growth in the DMV

— Cumulative wage growth — Cumulative inflation



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Key Finding #9: DC residents are using a range of financial coping mechanisms in response

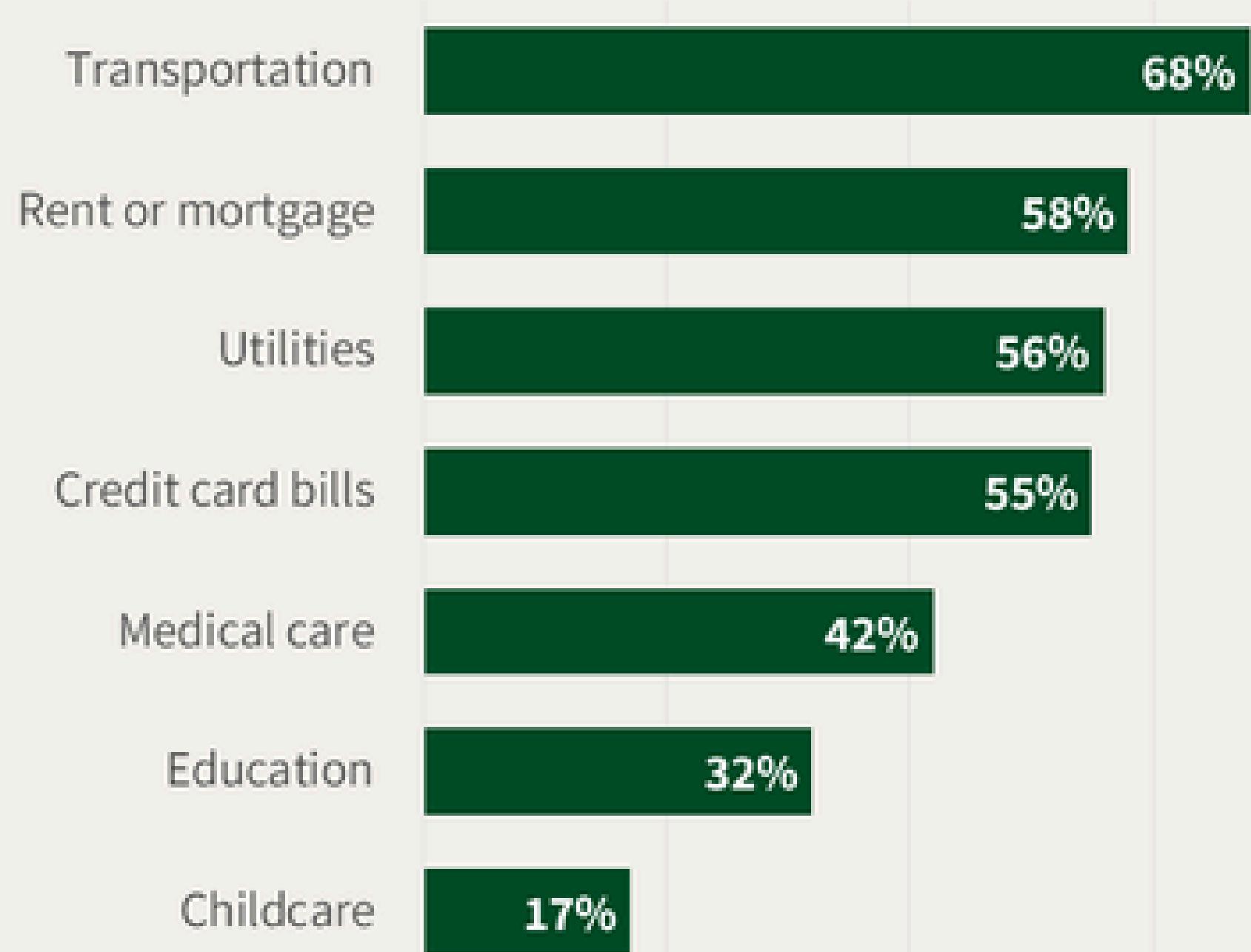


Increases in credit
card delinquency
rates, 2022-2024

Key Finding #10: Food insecure residents in DC are facing impossible tradeoffs between food and other necessities

- Food insecure households in DC are experiencing **forced tradeoffs between food and other essential expenses** like transportation and housing.
- These tradeoffs can have **harmful long-term impacts**, such as diminished ability to build wealth, poorer health, lower income potential, and loss of housing.

Forced tradeoffs between food and other expenses

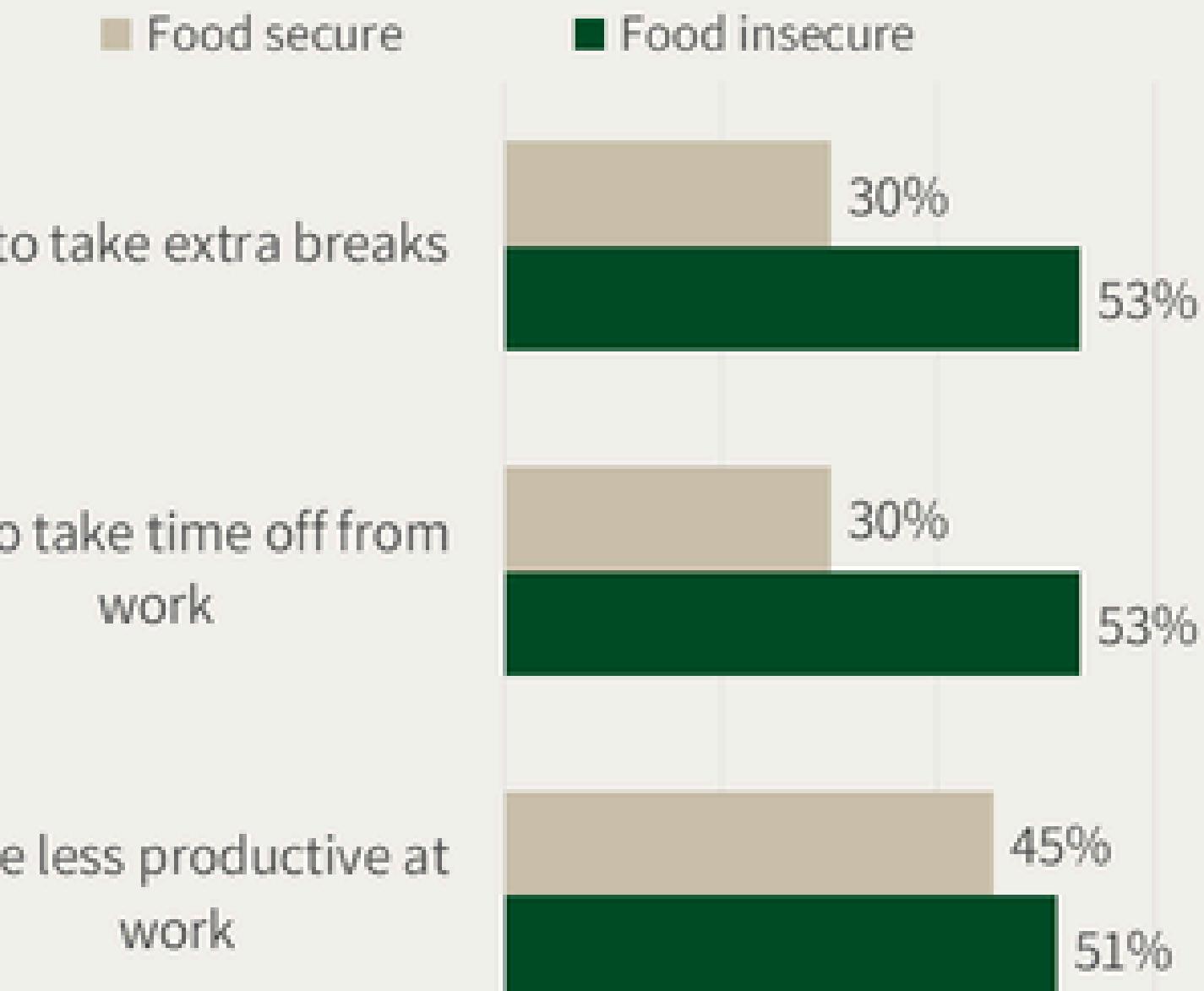


Key Finding #11:

Food insecurity coupled with chronic health conditions has measurable impacts on workforce productivity

- Food insecure adults in DC report a range of chronic diseases (see Appendix)
- Food insecure adults in the county are **more likely to experience impacts to their productivity** from a chronic disease than food secure adults
- If individuals are sidelined by illness and financial instability, **the availability and productivity of the region's potential workforce** stands to be reduced.

Impacts of food insecurity on workforce productivity



Key Finding #12: These challenges are being exacerbated by cuts to SNAP and Medicaid

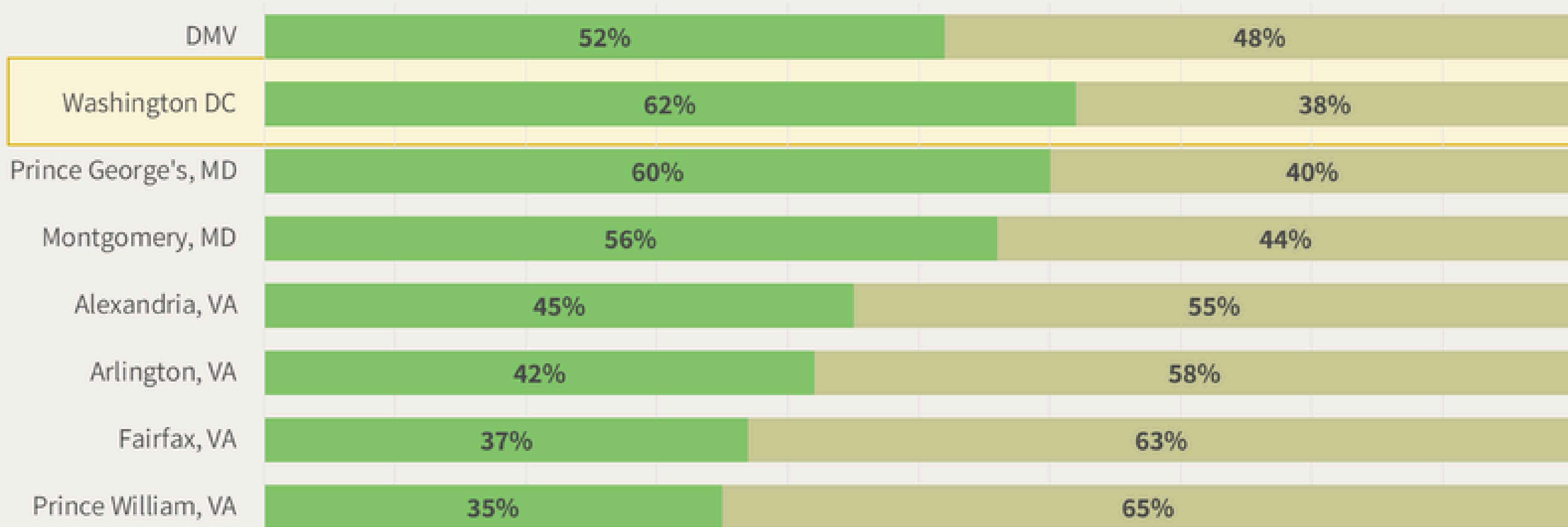
- New federal legislation will **reduce SNAP benefits by an average of \$187 per month for 50,000 families** in the DMV
Source: Urban Institute - See Appendix for additional detail
- At the same time, **116,000 people** in the region are expected to **lose Medicaid coverage**
Source: Center on Budget & Policy Priorities
- These cuts **threaten both food access and health care**, leaving households with fewer resources to meet basic needs
- Families who **rely on both programs** (over 100,000 people) face especially severe risks



Key Finding #13: Food insecure households are going without support from the charitable food system

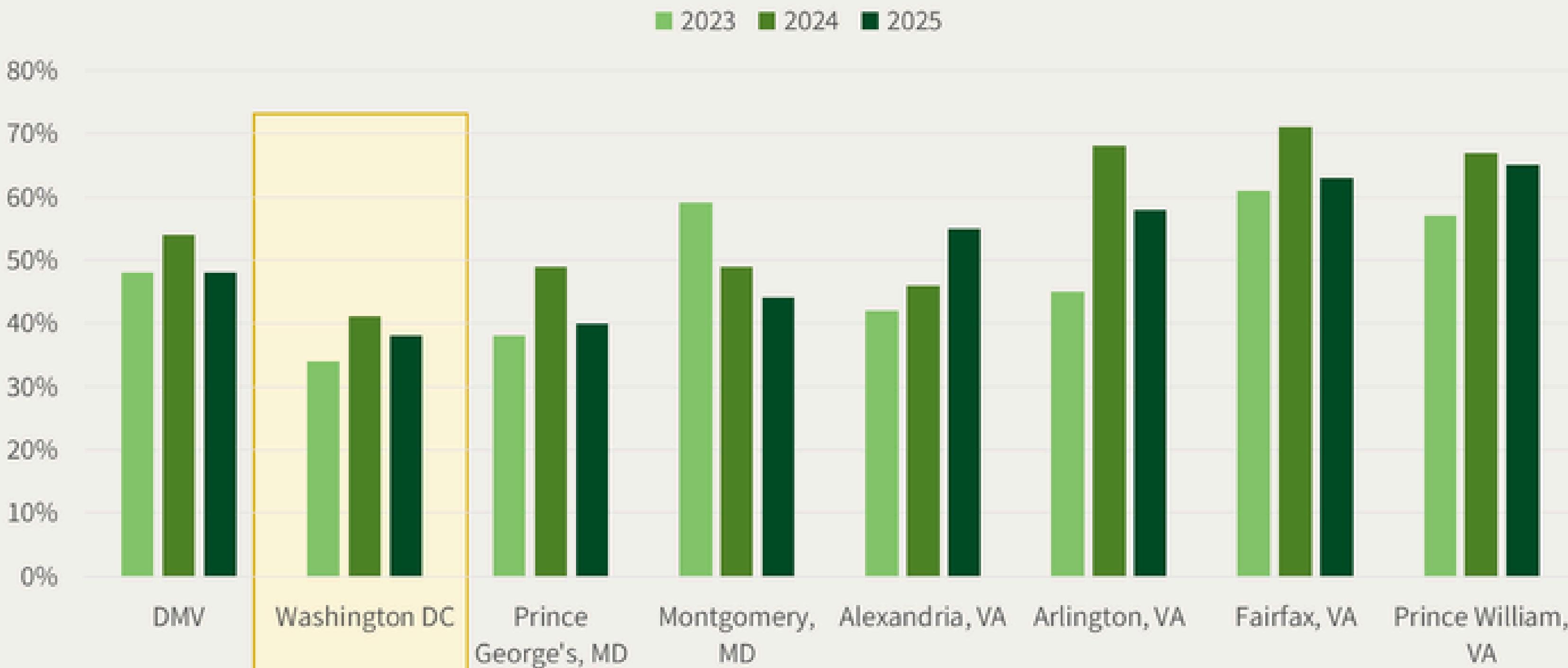
Share of food insecure people who have received charitable food in the last 12 months

■ Reached ■ Unreached



Key Finding #14: Most counties saw an increase in reach from 2024-2025

Percent of food insecure people who are unreached, 2023-2025



Recap of 2024 Finding: Barriers to accessing charitable food relate to awareness, convenience, and stigma



CAFB's Recommendations: Coordinated action across every sector is needed



Protect families from SNAP cuts



Upskill food insecure individuals



Advance Food Is Medicine



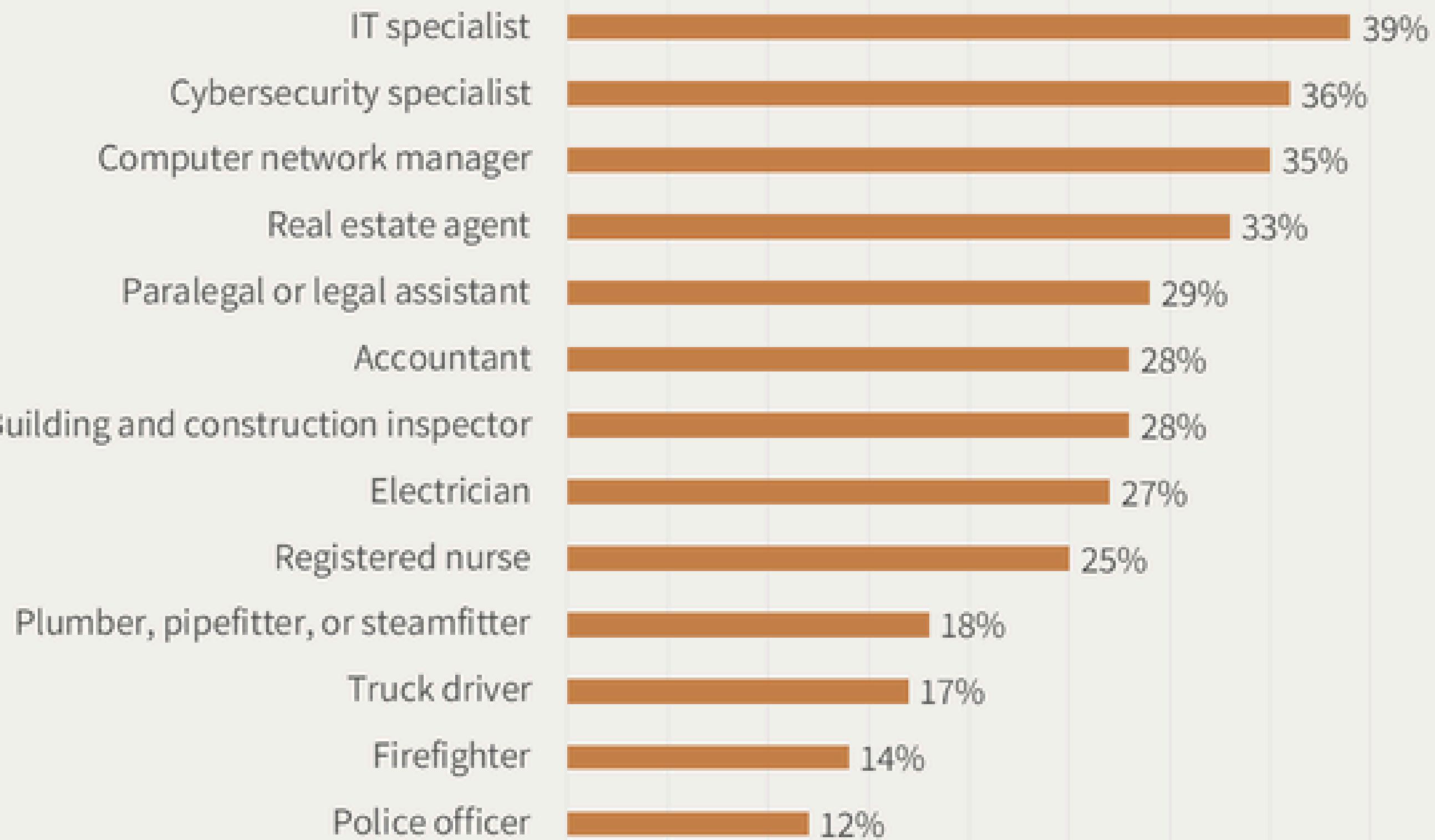
CAFB Recommendation #1: Mitigate the worst impacts of SNAP cuts

- State governments play a critical role in mitigating the worst effects of the recent federal SNAP changes.
- Maintaining and protecting **school meal programs** ensures that children in high-need areas continue receiving nutritious meals even if households lose SNAP benefits and Community Eligibility Provisions (through which many schools currently participate) are threatened.
- **Partnering with regional nonprofits** can help residents navigate SNAP eligibility, fulfill work requirements, and **maintain access to benefits** despite increased administrative complexity.

CAFB Recommendation #2: Upskill and re-skill food insecure individuals

Food insecure workers want pathways to living-wage careers that are in-demand in the DMV...

Interest in switching careers among food insecure individuals

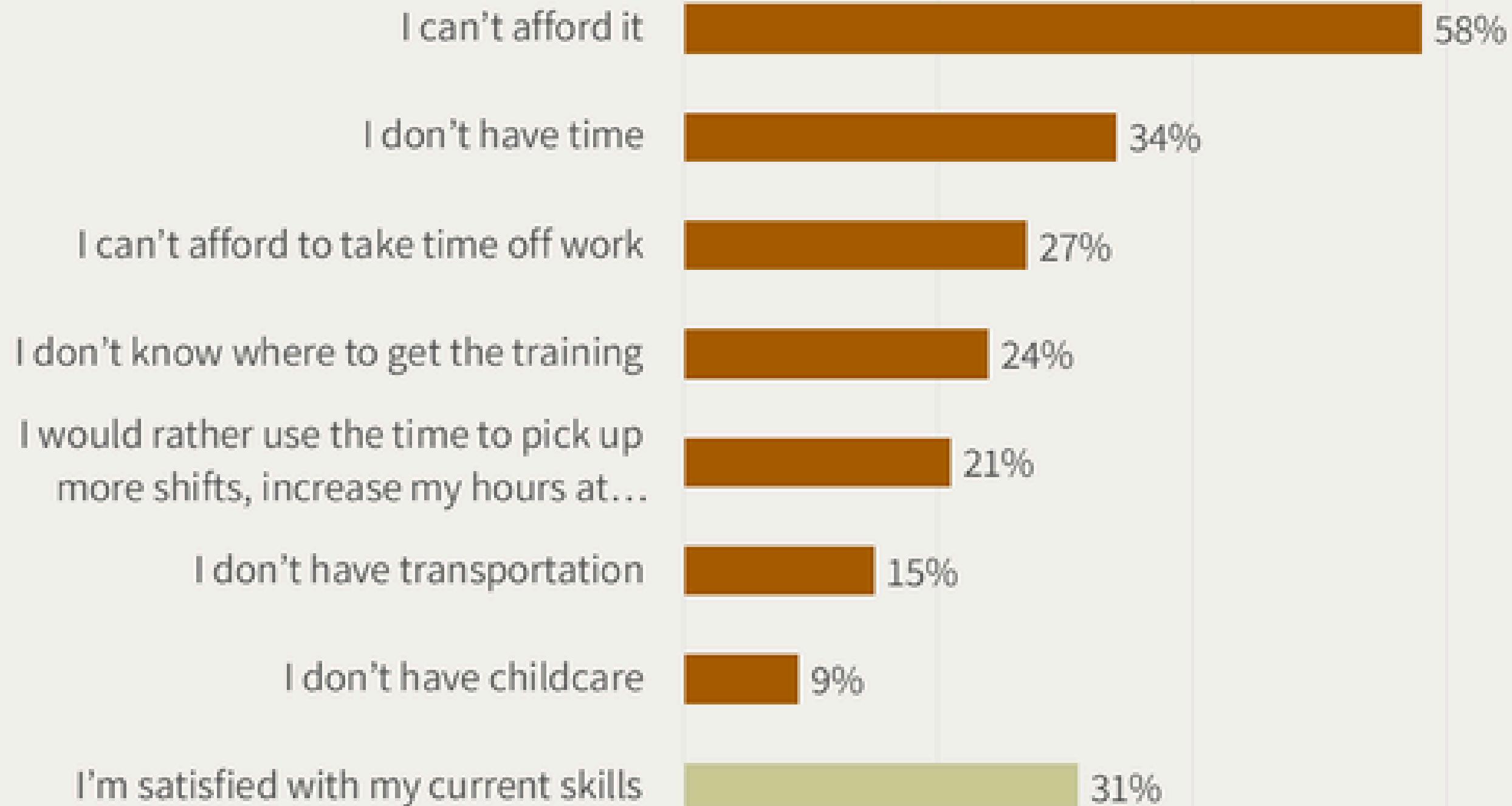


CAFB Recommendation #2: Upskill and re-skill food insecure individuals

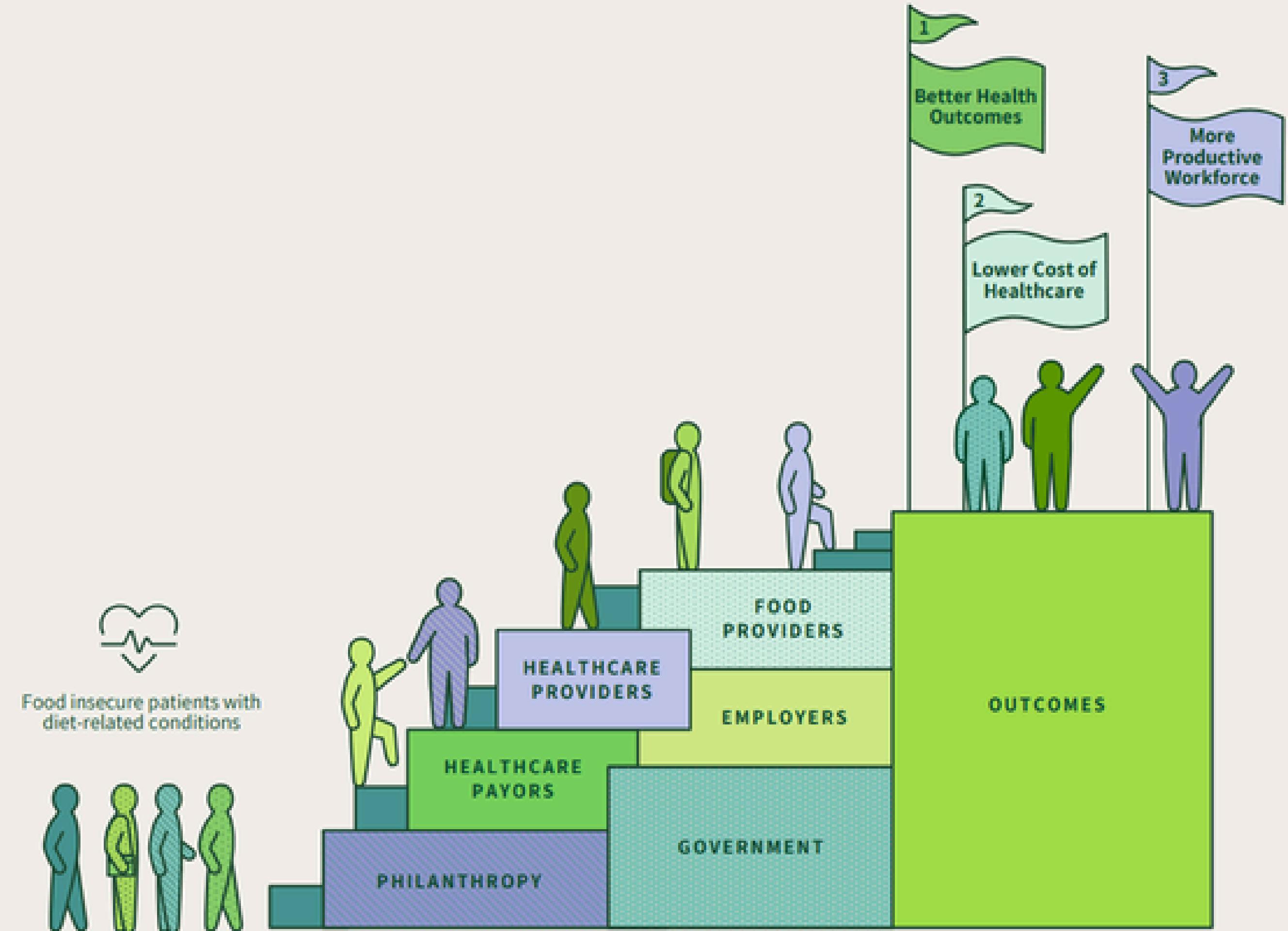
... but they face numerous barriers related to financial resilience.

Partnerships with employers and community groups can bridge barriers to skill-building

Barriers to engaging in skill development



CAFB
Recommendation #3:
Take a
system-level
approach to
“Food is
Medicine” to
ensure a
healthy,
productive
workforce.

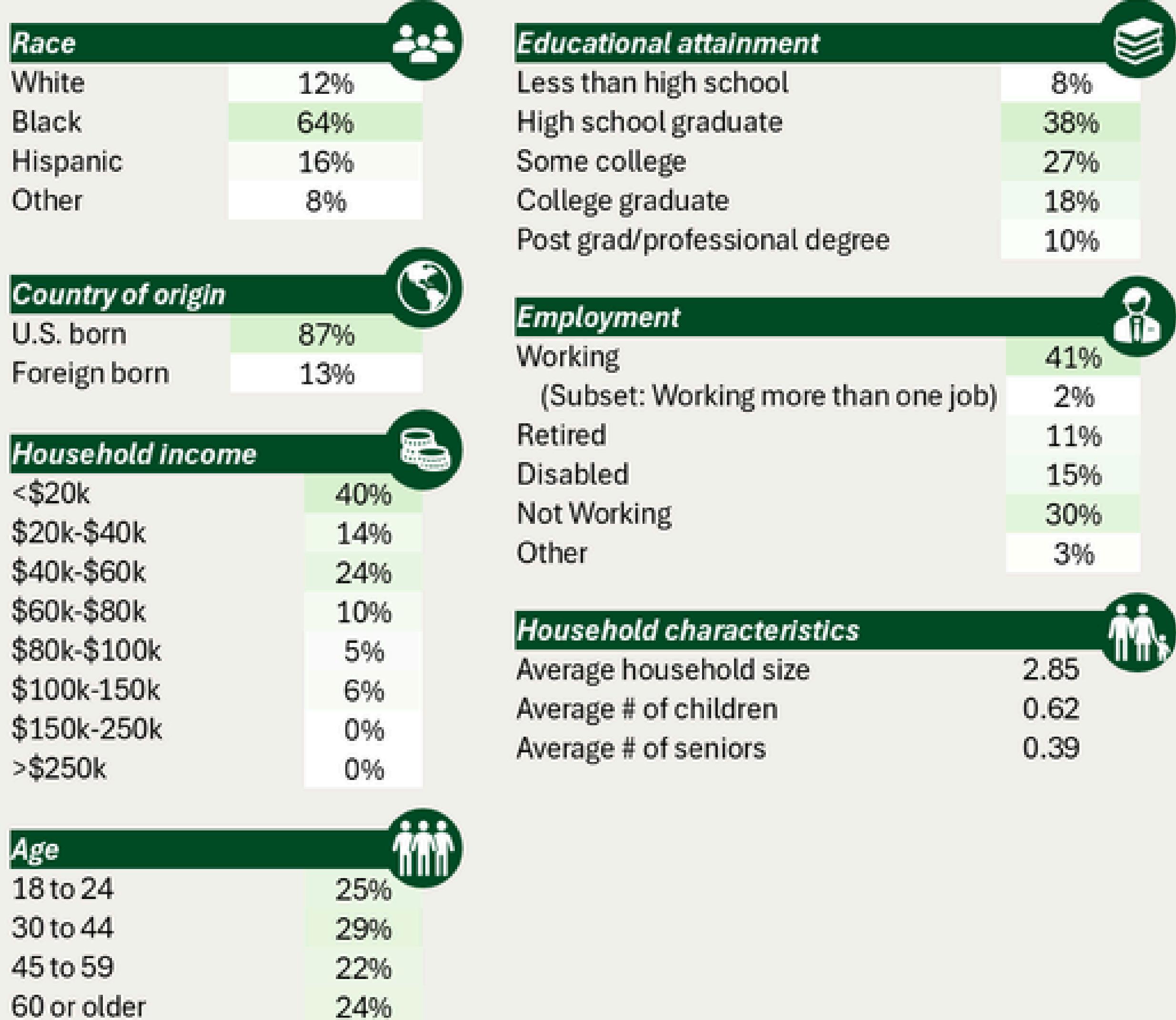


2025 Hunger Report

Q&A



Appendix A: Demographics of food insecure population in Washington DC



Appendix B: Health and benefits of food insecure population in Washington DC

<i>Chronic disease (self-reported)</i>			<i>Last doctor visit</i>	
Mental health illness	34%		<6 months ago	53%
High blood pressure or hypertension	33%		6-12 months ago	26%
Diabetes	22%		1-2 years ago	12%
Overweight or obesity	21%		>2 years ago	6%
Respiratory disease	15%		Never	2%
Arthritis	14%			
Heart disease or heart attack	7%			
Stroke	3%			
<i>Government benefits enrollment</i>			<i>Health insurance status</i>	
SNAP	41%		Insured	83%
Medicaid	17%		Uninsured	16%
TANF	15%			
Social Security Retirement	11%			
Medicare	11%			
Supplemental Security Income	9%			
Social Security Disability Insurance	7%			
Earned Income Tax Credit	5%			
Free or reduced-price school meals	5%			
WIC	2%			
Child Tax Credit	1%			
Veterans Benefits	1%			

Appendix C: Localized impacts of SNAP cuts

(Limited to those losing >\$25)	All Families		Families with Children		Working Families	
	# losing benefits	Average loss	# losing benefits	Average loss	# losing benefits	Average loss
DMV	50,000	\$187	26,000	\$107	33,000	\$153
DC	18,000	\$231	5,000	\$118	10,000	\$215
Maryland*	21,000	\$164	13,000	\$101	15,000	\$131
Virginia**	11,000	\$154	8,000	\$111	8,000	\$120

*Includes Montgomery County and Prince George's County

**Includes Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William Counties and Alexandria City

Source: Urban Institute analysis conducted for Capital Area Food Bank. Authors' estimates produced using the Urban Institute's ATTIS model (Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security) applied to combined 2022 and 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), reweighted to reflect 2023 population and income characteristics. ACS data were obtained from IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

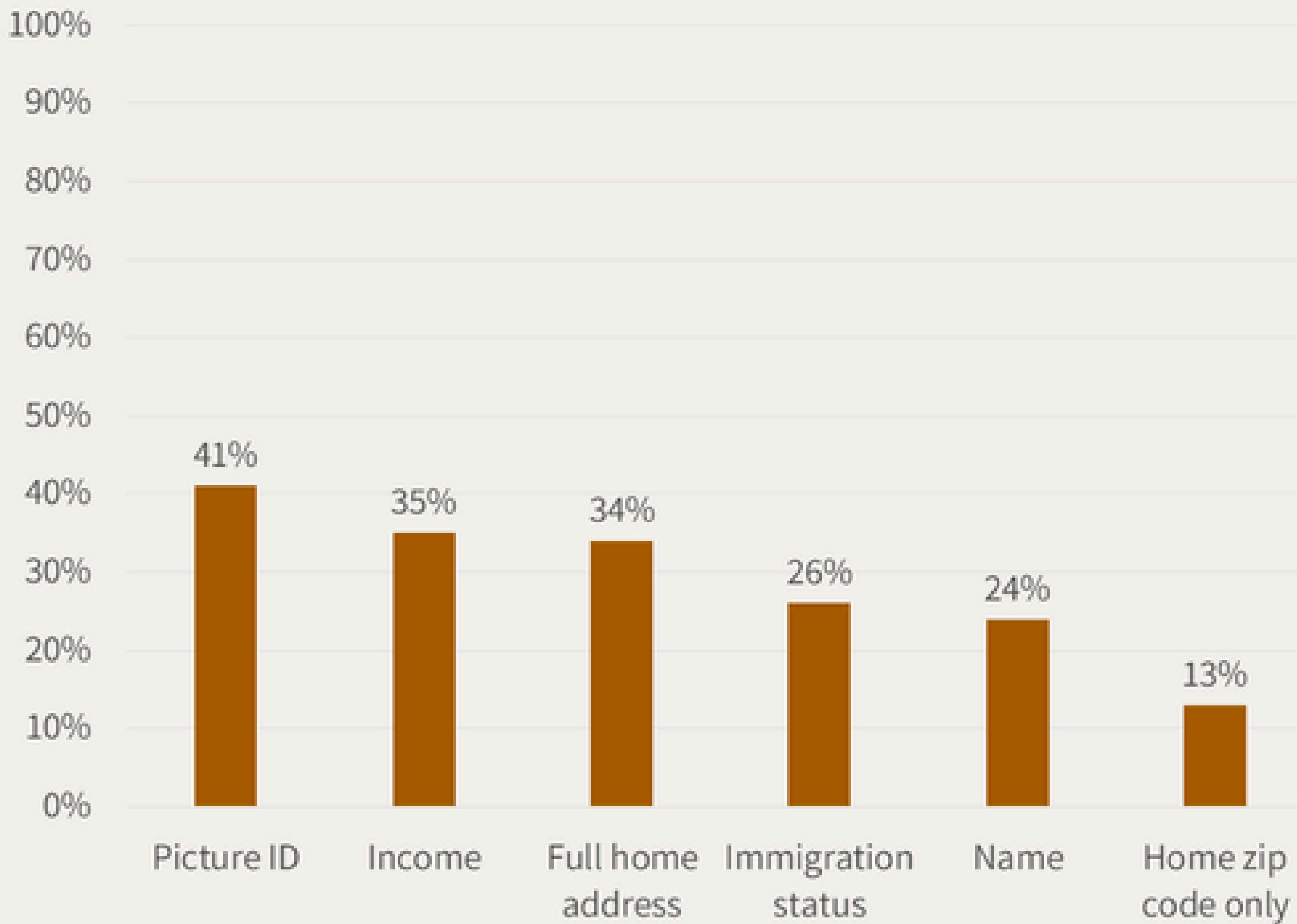
Notes: Families refers to the SNAP assistance units. The assistance unit may consist of one or more people. Families with children have at least one member under age 18.

Working families include at least one person with annual earnings.

Appendix D: Insights on sharing personal information at food distributions

Discomfort sharing personal information at food distributions

(Sum of "Not very comfortable" and "Not at all comfortable" sharing...)





Martha's Table & LEDC's Community Kitchen Program



Community Kitchen Program

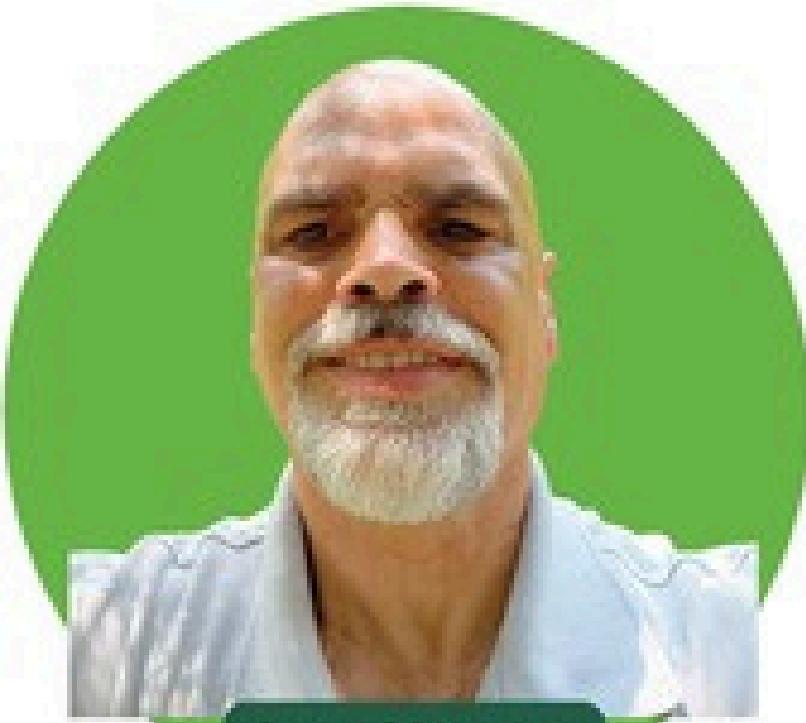
A collaboration between LEDC & Martha's Table

OUR TEAM

PRESENTING TODAY



Bria Hodge
Director of Small Business
Development



Jose Vargas
Small Business & Capital Access
Specialist

Content

01

02

03

04

05

06

About LEDC

Small Business Development

Food Venture Initiative

Community Kitchen History

Community Kitchen Launch

Community Kitchen Impact

About LEDC

History

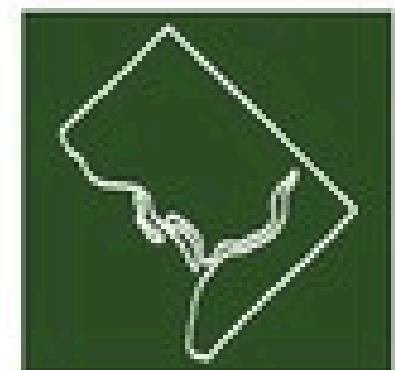
LEDC is a private nonprofit established on July 3, 1991 in Washington, DC. For over 20 years, LEDC has been a US Treasury certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and a HUD-Certified Housing Counseling Agency.

Mission

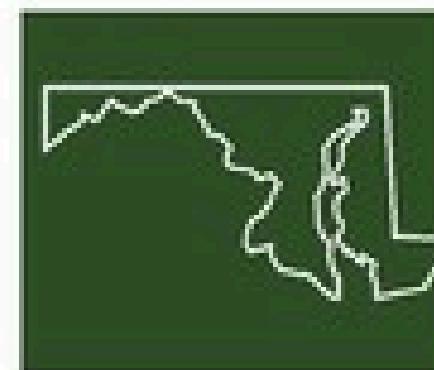
LEDC's mission is to drive economic growth in our region by equipping individuals with the skills and resources to achieve financial prosperity through homeownership and thriving businesses.

Locations

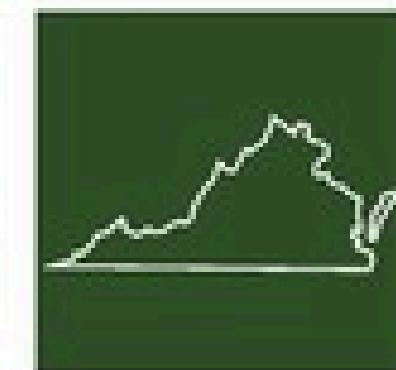
Washington, DC
Columbia Heights



Maryland
White Oak+Baltimore



Virginia
Arlington



LEDC services summary slide

Small Business Development



LEDC provides comprehensive business technical assistance (TA) and training aimed at empowering low-to-moderate income residents.

This includes workshops, one-on-one counseling, and multi-session cohort-based training covering business planning, incorporation, licensing, accounting, financial management, marketing, and technology integration. We also offer financial capability counseling to ensure loan readiness by separating personal and business finances and managing credit effectively.

Tenant Services



LEDC's Tenant Services & Eviction Prevention Program aims to prevent displacement by providing comprehensive case management and connecting tenants with resources such as legal assistance and rental assistance for eligible clients.

Small Business Lending



LEDC offers a range of loans tailored to small businesses, including consumer loans for building credit, microenterprise loans, and small business loans.

These loans are priced below market rates and designed to support businesses at various stages of growth, with loan amounts ranging from \$500 to \$250,000.

Direct Community Investments



The Direct Community Investments Department (DCI) of LEDC is contracted by both government agencies and private donors to swiftly disburse financial aid to families in need and small enterprises. Our services extend from responding to global emergencies, like the COVID-19 pandemic, to administering local government childcare grants.

DCI is committed to designing efficient application processes, delivering personalized services that are culturally and linguistically tailored, developing custom software to streamline application processing, and ensuring the prompt disbursement of funds to those awarded grants.

Housing Counseling



LEDC's HUD-approved Housing Counseling Program serves individuals and families with group education and individual counseling services.

Our comprehensive program covers financial capability, pre-purchase, post-purchase, and foreclosure prevention, equipping individuals and families with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful homeownership.

Financial Empowerment



LEDC's Financial Empowerment Department offers comprehensive financial education workshops and one-on-one financial services.

The program aims to empower individuals to achieve financial independence and overcome financial trauma through strategies focused on asset building, liability reduction, homeownership, business ownership, and generational wealth accumulation.

Small Business Technical Assistance

1:1 Business Coaching

Entrepreneurs and business owners receive personalized guidance through individual sessions with a dedicated small business coach. Our tailored approach helps clients navigate challenges, set strategic goals, and build a strong foundation for long-term business success.

Cohort Programs

Structured 4- to 20-week programs designed to meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs and business owners based on their industry, business stage, or goals. Cohorts foster a strong sense of community, create lasting peer networks, and offer targeted, practical learning experiences.

Workshops & Webinars

Single-day group learning sessions covering a wide range of topics including personal and business finance, bookkeeping, taxes, grant readiness, government contracting, entrepreneurial mindset, mental health, and more. Workshops offer accessible, actionable knowledge for every stage of the business journey.



LEDC Food Ventures Initiative



- The Food Venture Initiative aims to foster the growth and development for Latino, immigrant, women, and local food entrepreneurs in DC, MD, VA
 - Food Business Incubator:
 - 8-week hybrid, launches businesses in 90 days
 - Food Business Accelerator:
 - 12-week hybrid for businesses earning \$3,500+/month
 - Up to 24 advanced workshops for scaling & revenue growth
 - Bilingual programming + wrap-around coaching
 - Focus on food deserts and equitable access to kitchens & markets



LEDC Food Venture Initiative



- Individualized coaching helped entrepreneurs plan their business, register with DLCP, IRS, & Office of Tax & Revenue
- Funded through Nourish DC and DC DHCD
- Partnership with Martha's Table
- 2,407 food businesses supported since 2016
- 1,019 woman-led food businesses served
- 65 businesses served directly through FVI since 2022 (over half women-led)
- Success in Wards 7 & 8 → 41% of DC cohort from food desert communities





Community Kitchen at Martha's Table

History of the Program

- This program grew out of our efforts to recruit partners for LEDC's Kitchen Matching project in 2022.
- Post pandemic, Jose Vargas visited with Martha's Table Community Outreach Specialist and toured The Commons facility in Southeast DC.
- Martha's Table had a beautiful commercial kitchen, which was underutilized due to pandemic era restrictions.



Yessica Guerra Ramos- Los Quesos LLC

History of the Program

- Jose proposed a Kitchen Matching project for the graduates of LEDC's Food Venture Initiative.
- This proposal aligned with MT's aspirations for the commercial kitchen. MT secured funding to upgrade the kitchen and have it inspected as a Shared Commercial Kitchen.
- The partnership was established and we launched what was renamed the Community Kitchen.



Ndidi Agu - Shuga x Ice

Community Kitchen Launch

- As part of FVI Cohort #1, Four fully licensed, insured, and certified Caterers used the Community Kitchen at no cost.
- They began cooking and selling for Martha's Table events, Farmers Markets (UDC, Eastern Market), and special events (church events, weddings, bar mitzvahs, Quinceañeras, cookouts).



Chef Gigi - Side Dish Queen

Community Kitchen Launch

- The first four entrepreneurs: Los Quesos LLC, Wolf Moon Catering LLC, Mamma Tees Kitchen LLC, Side Dish Queen LLC
- They successfully transitioned from the Community Kitchen with 2 Food Trucks, a brick-and-mortar restaurant, and a full-scale meal prep / catering business that spans from DC to Baltimore. Wolf Moon Catering received a loan from LEDC's CDFI for his food truck.
- They all also received \$2,500 mini grant from Martha's Table to help finance the transition to independent revenue generating businesses.
- All entrepreneurs still receive LEDC Small Business Development technical assistance such as marketing, sales and pricing to help them continue to grow.

Community Kitchen Cohort #2

- Cohort 2 in 2024 added four more fully insured, certified and licensed Caterer's because of access to this free Community Kitchen.
- Two of these new entrepreneurs chose to seek full time employment, and two are still active in the Community Kitchen.
- LEDC's labor intensive Small Business Development technical assistance moved these entrepreneurs through the 12 Steps required to have a planned, registered, insured, DC Health Certified, licensed Catering business.

Hi,
I'm Chef Aria

Indyl's Desserts & Catering LLC.

Instagram: @Chefariabrown
Email: Indyl1@yahoo.com

About me

Chef Aria's passion for cooking in the hospitality industry in various roles over the last 30 years. Lead her to an opportunity as an entrepreneur to start up Indyl's Desserts & Catering LLC, when the pandemic occurred. She's a native of Washington D.C. and grew up in the neighborhood, Georgetown. A descendant, her passion of cooking passed from her while cooking in the kitchen with her grandmother, Maria, Evangelista Margot Fortuna. Maria was always cooking for the neighborhood and sharing her recipes. Our small business is focused to creating custom desserts and menu options for our customers in D.C. area. Thank you for all of the business and support we've received thus far.

Desserts

Southern Salads

Cakes

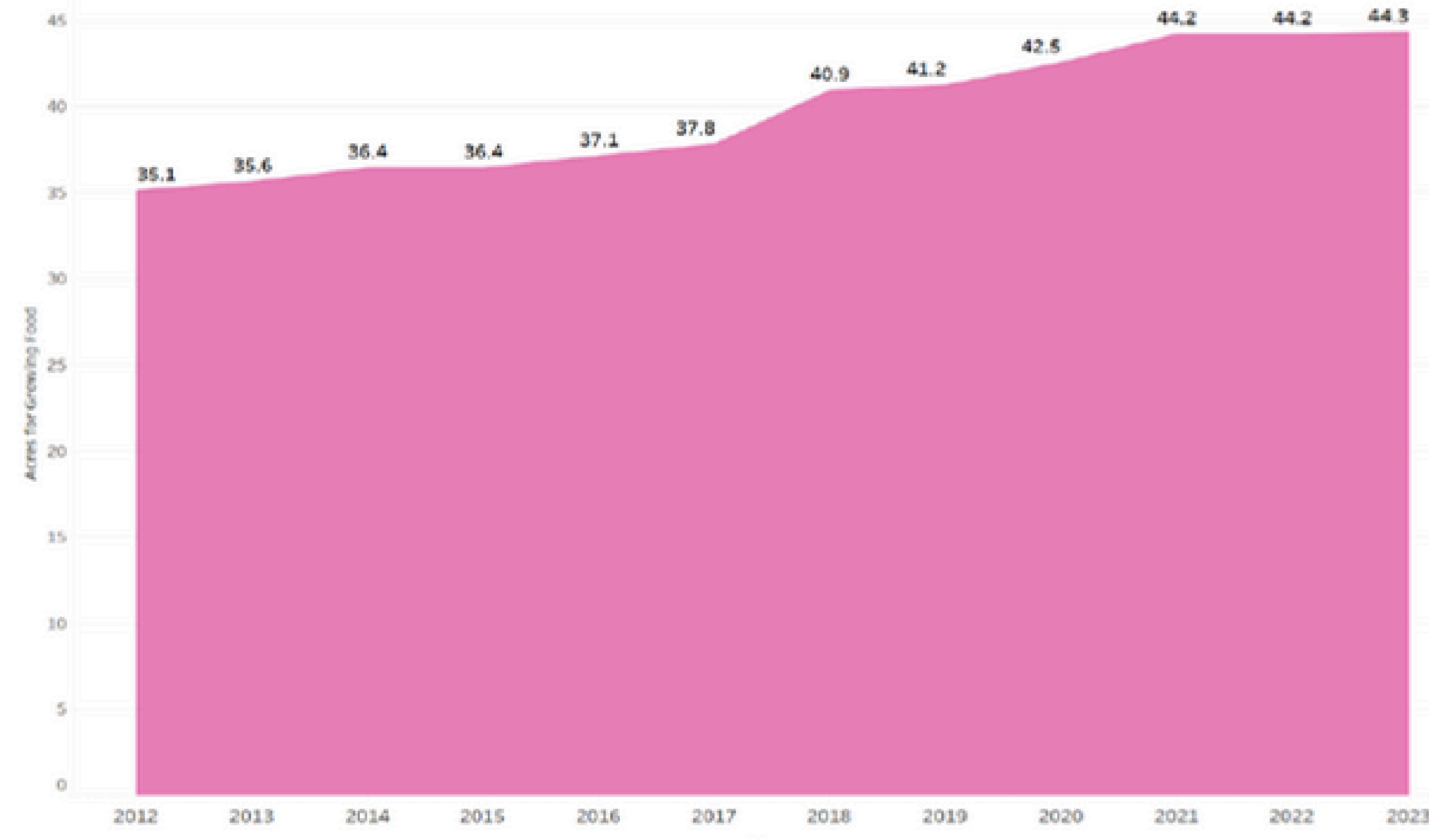


CREATING A SUSTAINABLE DC



Sustainable DC Data Dashboard

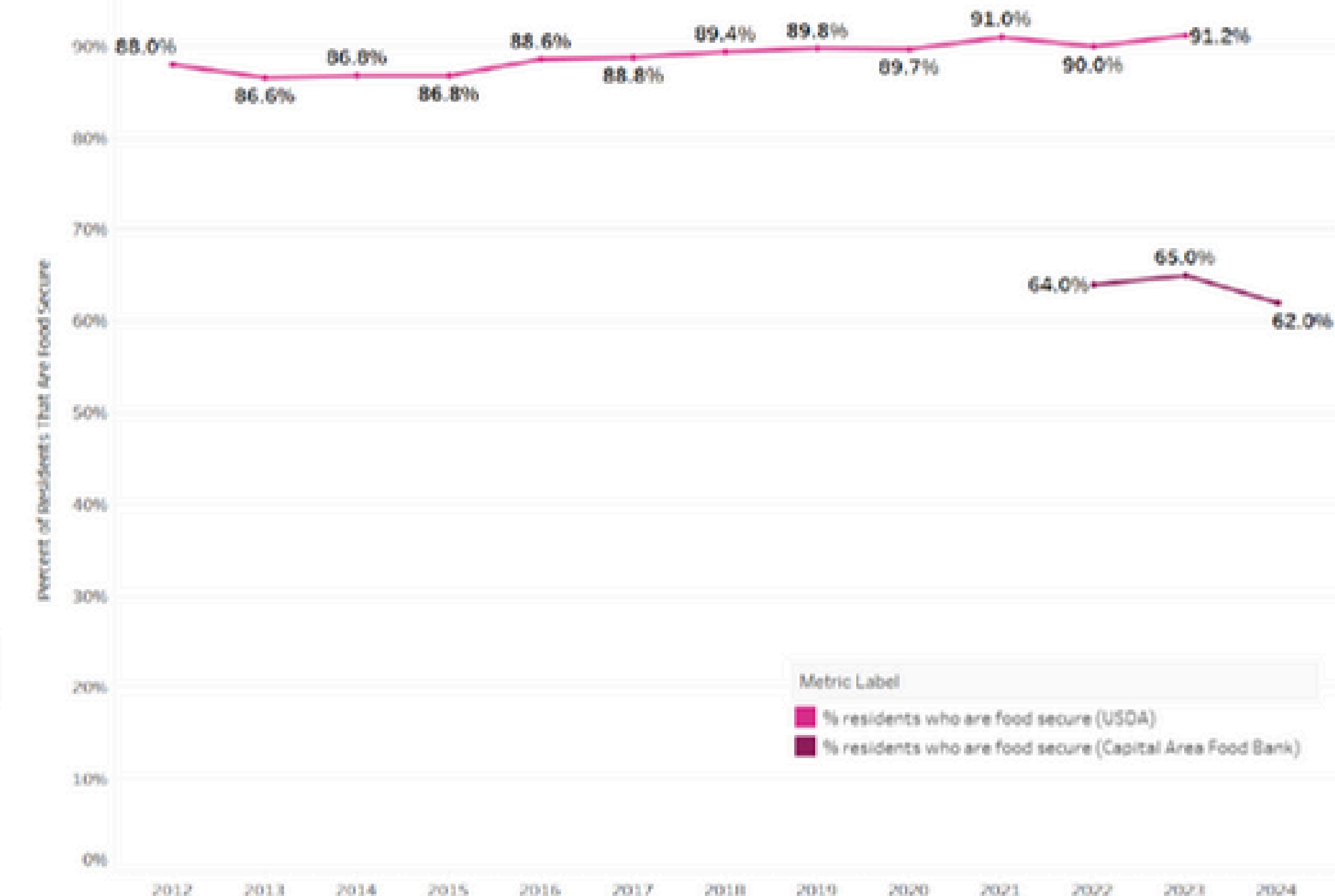
Data Point: Acres under cultivation for growing food



Target: By 2032, put 20 additional acres, including public right of way and rooftops, under cultivation for growing food. (Sustainable DC 2.0 Plan)

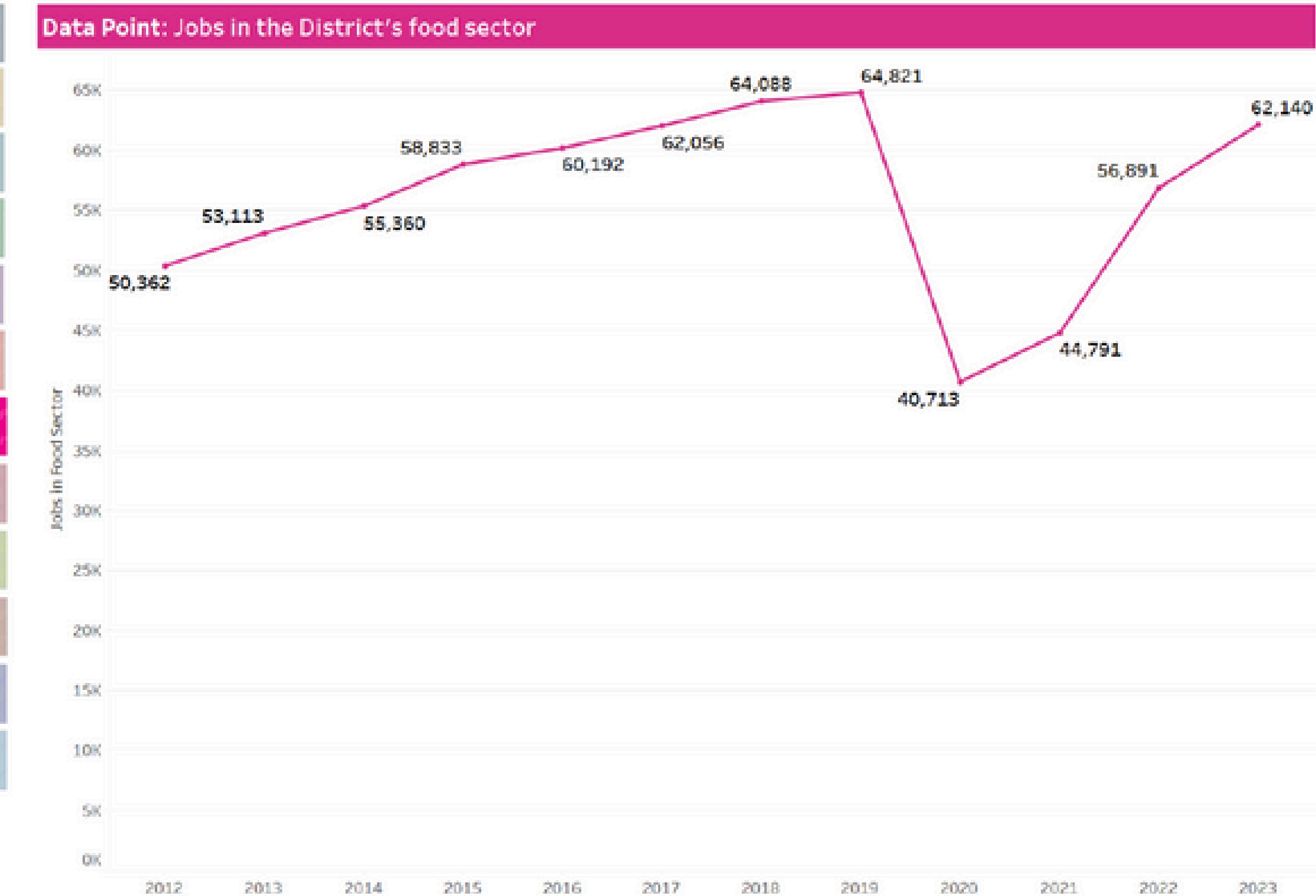
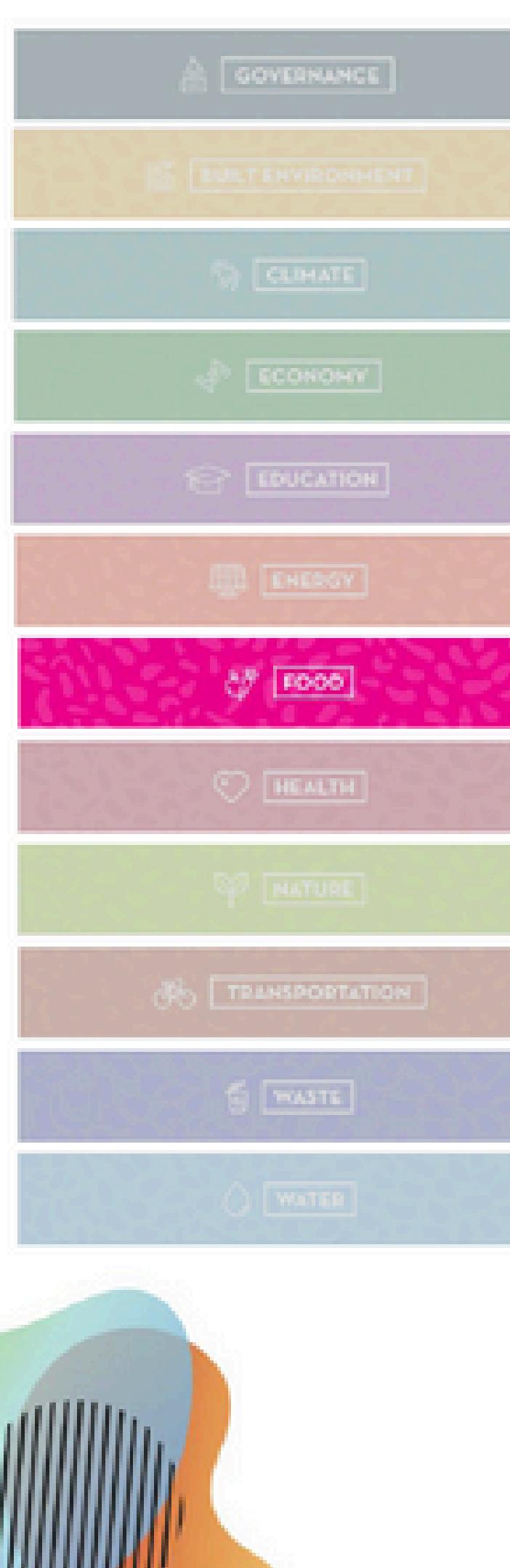
Source: Department of Energy and Environment ([Link](#))

Data Point: Percent of residents that are food secure



Note: The discrepancy between the two sources is likely due to the fact that the nationally collected data does not account for the high cost of living in metropolitan areas such as the District. By excluding many households above 185% of the Federal Poverty Line from its full food insecurity survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture may not capture residents experiencing food insecurity above this threshold.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture ([Link](#))
& Capital Area Food Bank ([Link](#))



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([Link](#))





Updates on Farmers Market Support & New Grant Program

FARMERS MARKET SUPPORT AMENDMENT ACT

Farmers and Retail Market Support (FARMS) Grant Program

The Farmers and Retail Market Support (FARMS) Grant Program will support capacity building and expand access to, and awareness of, farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets, collectively referred to as farm retail outlets (FROs), in areas of the District with limited food access, with particular emphasis on fruit and vegetable producers.

Key Details:

- **NOFA Release Date:** Friday, September 26
 - [Available here.](#)
- **RFA Release Date:** Friday, October 10
 - Pre-Application Conference on 10/10. [Sign up here.](#)
- **Application Deadline:** Wednesday, November 12 @ 3:00 PM
- **Award Amount:** \$25,000 - \$50,000
- **Anticipated # of Awards:** Up to 10

Interested in reviewing applications? Email farmersmarket@dc.gov!

Farm Retail Outlet Visibility and Access (FROVA) Expansion Initiative

The Farm Retail Outlet Visibility and Access (FROVA) Expansion Initiative aims to increase the visibility and accessibility of FROs across the District, with particular emphasis on low food access areas.

Key Details:

- Create a brand toolkit.
- Design and implement a **citywide advertising campaign** across multiple media platforms to raise awareness of FROs.
- Engage community partners by **producing and distributing physical marketing materials** for FROs.
- **Evaluate** the implementation and impact of FROVA.

A professional chef is cooking shrimp in a stainless steel pan on a gas stove. The stove has a visible flame. In the background, there are more stainless steel pots and pans, suggesting a commercial kitchen environment.

Updates for Food Business Licensing from BEST Act

When passed in 2023, most BEST Act requirements
were set to go into effect on October 1, 2025

Updates for Food Business Licensing from BEST Act

Major changes to licensing for Food Businesses

- The fees for all food business types besides food vendors are now the same
 - 6 month license is \$49
 - 2 year license is \$99
 - 4 year license is \$198
- Bakeries, Food Products, Grocery Stores, and Marine Food Product (wholesale) have the same requirements
 - Corporate registration, if applicable
 - Certificate of Occupancy
 - DC Health Inspection
 - Clean Hands Certificate
- Caterers, Candy Manufacturers, Delicatessens, Ice Cream Manufacturers, Restaurants, and Marine Food Products (Retail) have those **plus** the DC Health Food Manager's Certificate
- Food Vending Machines and Mobile Delicatessens have separate requirements

Updates for Food Business Licensing

Class A vending licenses and Cottage Food Licenses remain separate processes:

Micro-Enterprise Home Kitchen Class A Vending License: is only applicable in set District vending zones and requires both a MEHK License from DC Health and a vending license from DLCP

Cottage food license: is still at DC Health and requires businesses to sell directly sell certain food products from their residential kitchens and to sell them to consumers, including through direct, retail (except restaurants and grocery stores), and online sales.

Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs Working Group

Food Business Licensing Updates

Monday, October 20th, from 1 - 2 pm

DLCP staff will share updates to food business licensing following the implementation of the BEST Act and DC Health will share the Micro Enterprise Home Kitchen process for food vendors.

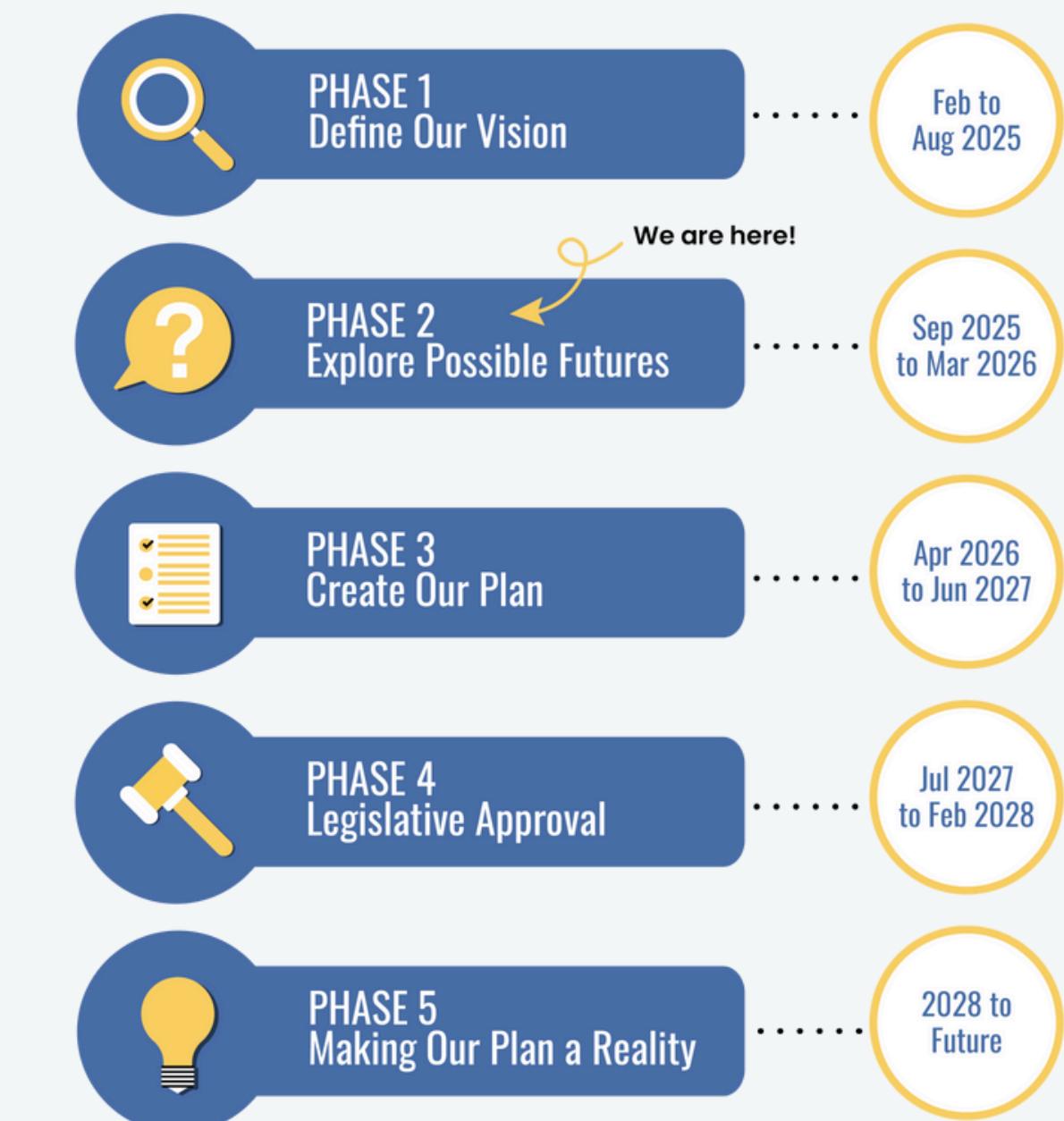
These lower license prices and streamlined licensing fulfills a long-term goal of the Food Policy Council to make it easier and clearer for food businesses to start!

Register at <https://bit.ly/DCFoodBiz2025>

DC 2050: Possible Futures



- CBO Grant Public Engagement Grant Open Until Oct 22
- Build Your Community
- DC 2050 Town Hall - Oct 25





Grants Open Now: Close Nov 2

Nourish DC

\$450,000 in grants are available:
preference for businesses that are locally owned,
increase access to healthy food, create quality
jobs, and that are located in neighborhoods
lacking access to grocery stores.



Nourish DC

Eligible Types of Food Businesses Include:

- Grocery stores
- Food incubators
- Corner stores
- Cooperative businesses
- Farmers markets
- Food delivery businesses
- Urban farms
- Food processors
- Food hubs
- Restaurants, and
- Caterers.



Nourish DC

Informational Webinars

October 9, 2025, 10-11 AM EST

October 14, 2025, 5-6 PM EST

October 28, 2025, 12-1 PM EST

In-Person Office Hours

October 8, 2025, 2-5 PM EST

MLK Jr. Memorial Library, 901 G St NW, Washington, DC 20001

October 23, 2025, 2-5 PM EST

Mt. Pleasant Library, 3160 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20010

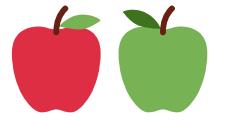
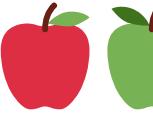
October 29, 2025, 11 AM-5 PM EST

MLK Jr. Memorial Library, 901 G St NW, Washington, DC 20001

Reducing Wasted Food: Back to School Session

Thursday, October 2nd, from 5-6pm

Virtual DC Food Policy Council Reducing Wasted Food Working Group meeting!

You can register for our meeting on Teams here. This meeting will be a  special Back to School session  featuring a lightning round of short talks from partners working to reduce wasted food in the DC school system! We will hear from school staff about food recovery and donations from DC schools, community food pantries, and more!

<https://bit.ly/Back2School-ReducingWastedFood>





OCTOBER 1ST-31ST