

# SNAP BENEFITS DELAY IMPACT REPORT

PREPARED BY

**Passaic County  
Department of Human Services**



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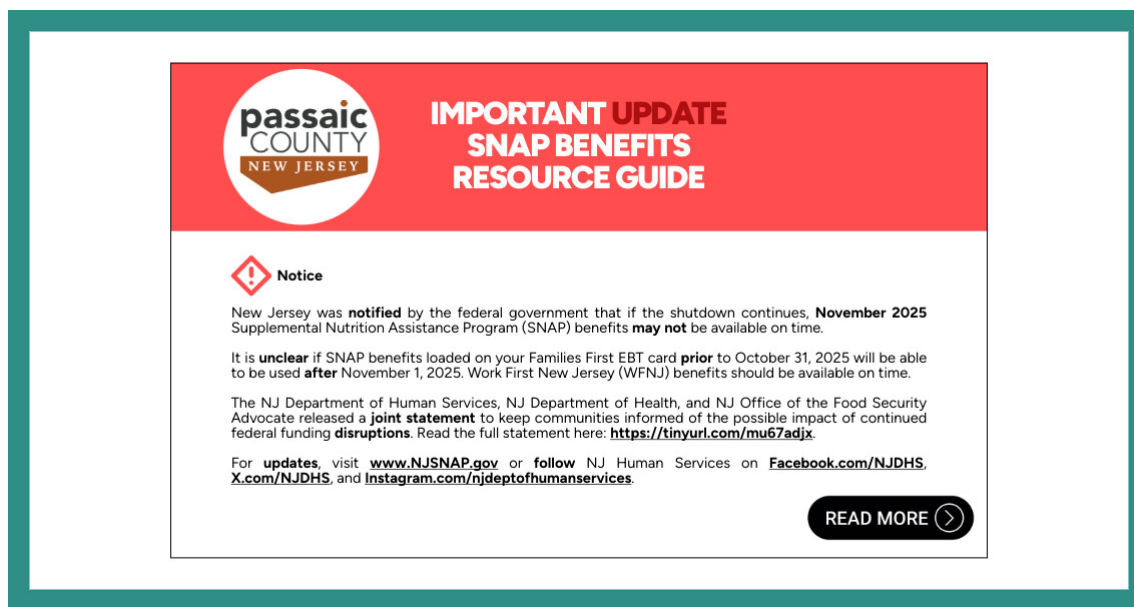
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On **October 17, 2025**, the state of New Jersey was notified by the federal government that SNAP benefits may be delayed if the federal government does not reopen before **October 31, 2025**. In Passaic County, **77,691** residents<sup>1</sup> rely on SNAP benefits who would be impacted by any delay or suspension of benefits. In response to this alert, the PCDHS team began to prepare a response and coordinated with members of the EFPC.



The response consisted of two phases. In the first phase, the PCDHS team created the **SNAP Benefits Freeze Information Resource Guide**. The information resource guide consisted of information communicated by the State of New Jersey about the potential SNAP benefits delay, important reminders for continuing the SNAP recertification process, important contact information for county resources, and information for how neighbors could donate to local food providers across the county.

The second phase of response began on **October 31, 2025**, when Governor Phillip Murphy signed **Executive Order No. 402**, declaring a state of emergency due to the imminent suspension of federal SNAP benefits. In response to the state of emergency, funds were made available to enter various emergency food distribution contracts by the Passaic County Administrator, pursuant to **Resolution 25-1176**.

<sup>1</sup> State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services. (2025). Current Program Statistics, September 2025. Division of Family Development. Retrieved from [https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/news/reports/pdf/cps/2025/CPS\\_September2025.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/news/reports/pdf/cps/2025/CPS_September2025.pdf)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report, and the emergency response efforts that were deployed during the SNAP benefits delay, were made possible through the exceptional support and work carried out by Matthew P. Jordan, Esq., the Passaic County Administrator and the Passaic County Board of Commissioners.

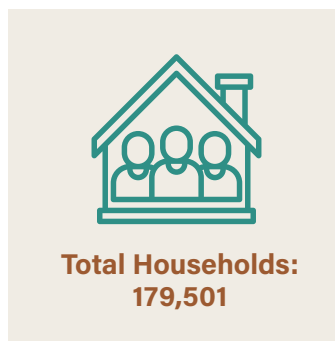
We also wish to acknowledge that the emergency response efforts detailed in this report would not have been possible without the contributions and expertise of the Passaic County Sherriff's Office, Buildings and Grounds Department, the Board of Social Services, and our Emergency Food Provider Coalition members: Catholic Charities, Center for Food Action, Center for Family Resources, CUMAC, New Hope, St. Peter's Haven, and Wanaque Feeds the Hungry.

Special thanks to the Passaic County residents who dedicated their time and effort to respond to our SNAP Benefits Delay Impact Survey and provide insight into their lived experience during the emergency. Finally, thanks to the Community Food Bank of NJ for distributing additional resources and collaborating with the county on the survey.

# COUNTY PROFILE

The SNAP Benefits delay impacted **over 20%** of households in Passaic County. Recipients of SNAP benefits **reside** within **all 16 municipalities** in the county that is comprised of many economic and cultural demographic variables. These variables impact **food security** in the county and **informed** how the emergency response was implemented.

Passaic County has an overall population size of **524,118** and a total of **179,501** households.<sup>2</sup> According to U.S. Census data,<sup>3</sup> the predominate languages spoken at home in Passaic County are English (**45.9%**) and Spanish (**39.6%**). Other languages include: Other Indo-European languages, **8.2%**; Asian and Pacific Islander languages, **2.4%**; and Other languages, **3.9%**.<sup>4</sup>



Passaic County has the **3<sup>rd</sup>** largest number of households in the state receiving SNAP benefits, according to the September 2025 NJ CPS Report: **77,691** residents, comprised of **33,579** adults and **44,112** children.<sup>5</sup> As of **October 31, 2025**, there were a total of **39,442** households that received SNAP benefits. Recipients of SNAP benefits reside within every municipality in Passaic County.

<sup>2,3,4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *Passaic County, New Jersey, Profile*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from [https://data.census.gov/profile/Passaic\\_County,\\_New\\_Jersey?g=050XX00US34031](https://data.census.gov/profile/Passaic_County,_New_Jersey?g=050XX00US34031)

<sup>5</sup> State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services. (2025). Current Program Statistics, September 2025. Division of Family Development. Retrieved from [https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/news/reports/pdf/cps/2025/CPS\\_September2025.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/news/reports/pdf/cps/2025/CPS_September2025.pdf)

# COUNTY PROFILE

The New Jersey Food Insecurity Index measures the level of intensity of food insecurity throughout the state to identify and map where food access challenges are located. The **Food Insecurity Index** was developed to strategically allocate resources to support needs of areas that are most impacted by food insecurity. The scores are calculated and mapped at the census tract block level, which allows for a hyper-local measurement of food insecurity. This allows for a more granular analysis by neighborhoods, as opposed to a broader measurement at the municipal or county level within the state.

The Food Insecurity Index is constructed by **(11)** variables from data available from the American Community Survey and census tract level variables from CDC Places. The **(11)** variables are scored and grouped thematically as follows: Measures of need, Measures of ability to get to food resources, and Measures of individual/household demographics related to the ability to get to and learn about food resources.<sup>6</sup> **Table 1** indicates the type of thematic measurement and the specific variables used to calculate a score.

**Table 1**  
*Variables to calculate food insecurity score*

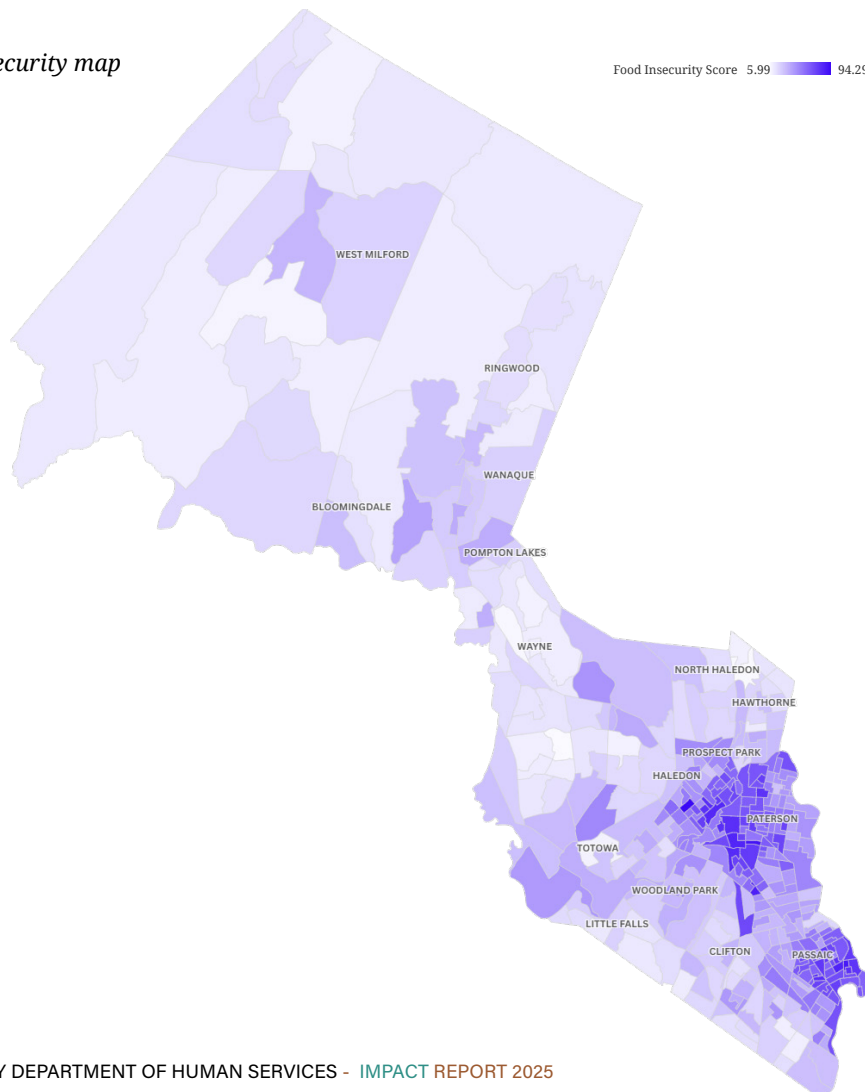
Measures of need	Measures of ability to get to food resources	Measures of individual/household demographics related to the ability to get to and learn about food resources
% individuals at or below poverty level	% of block group area with no access to bus transportation (adjusted by % with no access to vehicle)	% individuals with limited English proficiency
% households (HHs) using SNAP benefits	% households (HHS) with no vehicle access	% households (HHs) with member 65+ living alone
% housing cost burdened households (HHs)		% individuals with disability
% individuals without insurance		% single parent households (HHs)
% individuals on Medicaid		

<sup>6</sup> For additional information on the methods for selecting variables and assigning weights for calculating food insecurity scores, see <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/834bef4af760415c95cbdd930af62ce0/page/Methodology>.

# COUNTY PROFILE

The **average** food insecurity score for New Jersey is **28.559** and the average food insecurity score for Passaic County is **39.21**. Passaic County has census block segments that are **above** the **statewide average** Food Insecurity Index Scores in **13** out of **16** municipalities: Bloomingdale, Clifton, Haledon, Hawthorne, Passaic, Paterson, Pompton Lakes, Prospect Park, Totowa, Wanaque, Wayne, West Milford, and Woodland Park. **Figure 1** is a map of the food insecurity scores for Passaic County. The **darker** shades of purple indicate a **higher** food insecurity score.

**Figure 1**  
*Passaic County food insecurity map*



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The PCDHS team coordinated with the Sheriff's Office, County Administrator, Buildings and Grounds Department, and (7) EFPC member pantries to prepare for emergency food distribution events for SNAP/EBT benefits recipients: Catholic Charities in Paterson, CFA in Mahwah, CFFR in Ringwood, CUMAC in Paterson, New Hope in Prospect Park, St. Peter's Haven in Clifton, and Wanaque Feeds the Hungry in Wanaque. The **coordination included:** determining the shelf-stable contents and estimated cost of an emergency food bag (containing peanut butter, jelly, rice, canned beans, canned soups, and cans of tuna); ordering and packing the emergency bags;



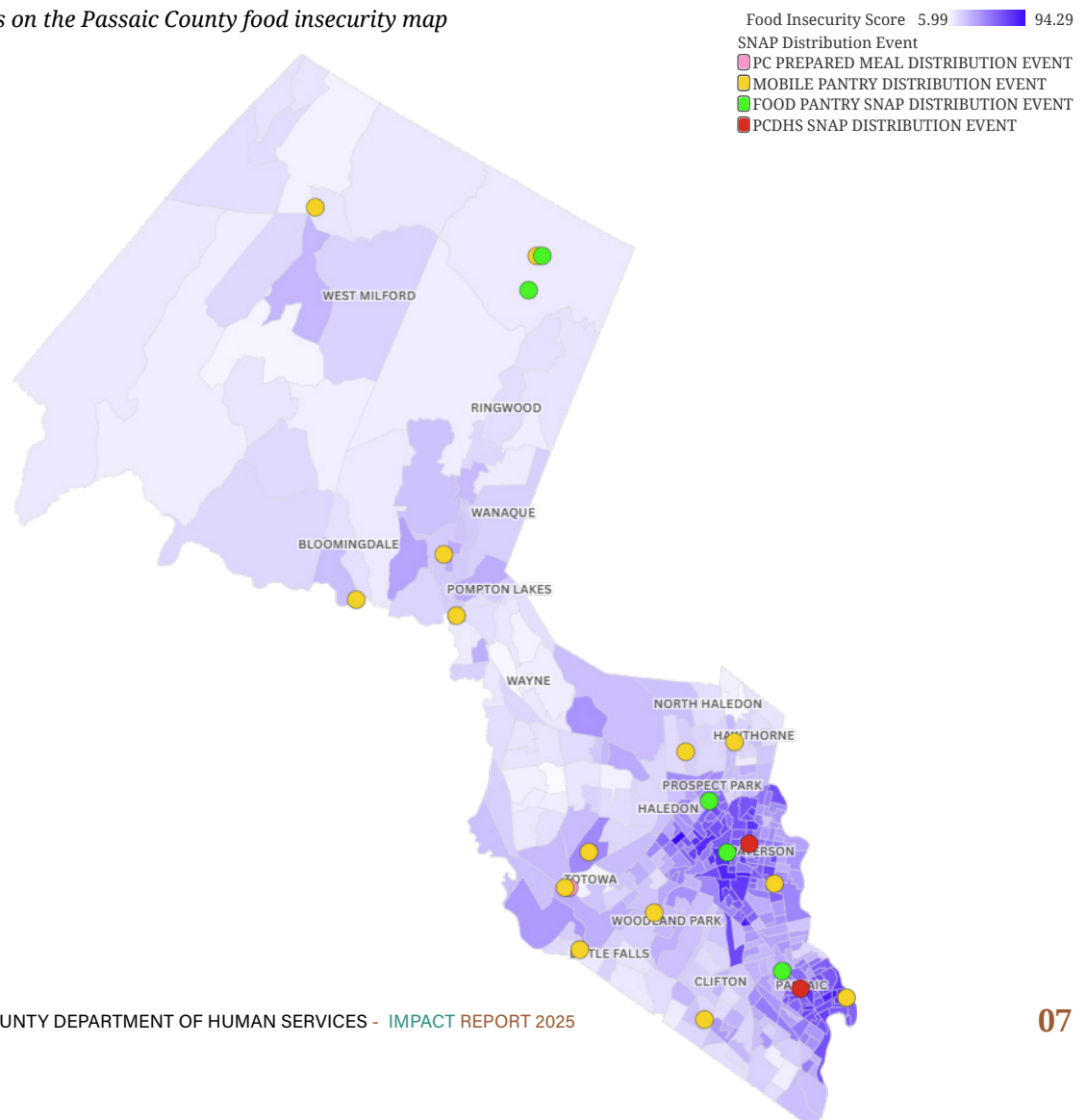
scheduling emergency food distribution events specific for SNAP recipients; and scheduling volunteer staff for the events. After finalizing the plan and issuing emergency funding award letters, (5) pantries accepted the funds (CFA, CFFR, CUMAC, New Hope, and St. Peter's Haven) and scheduled SNAP recipient food distribution dates starting the week of November 3, 2025.

Between **November 3** and **November 12, 2025**, PCDHS, CUMAC, CFA, CFFR, New Hope, St. Peter's Haven, and the Mobile Pantry (operated by CUMAC) executed **(25) emergency food distribution events** for

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

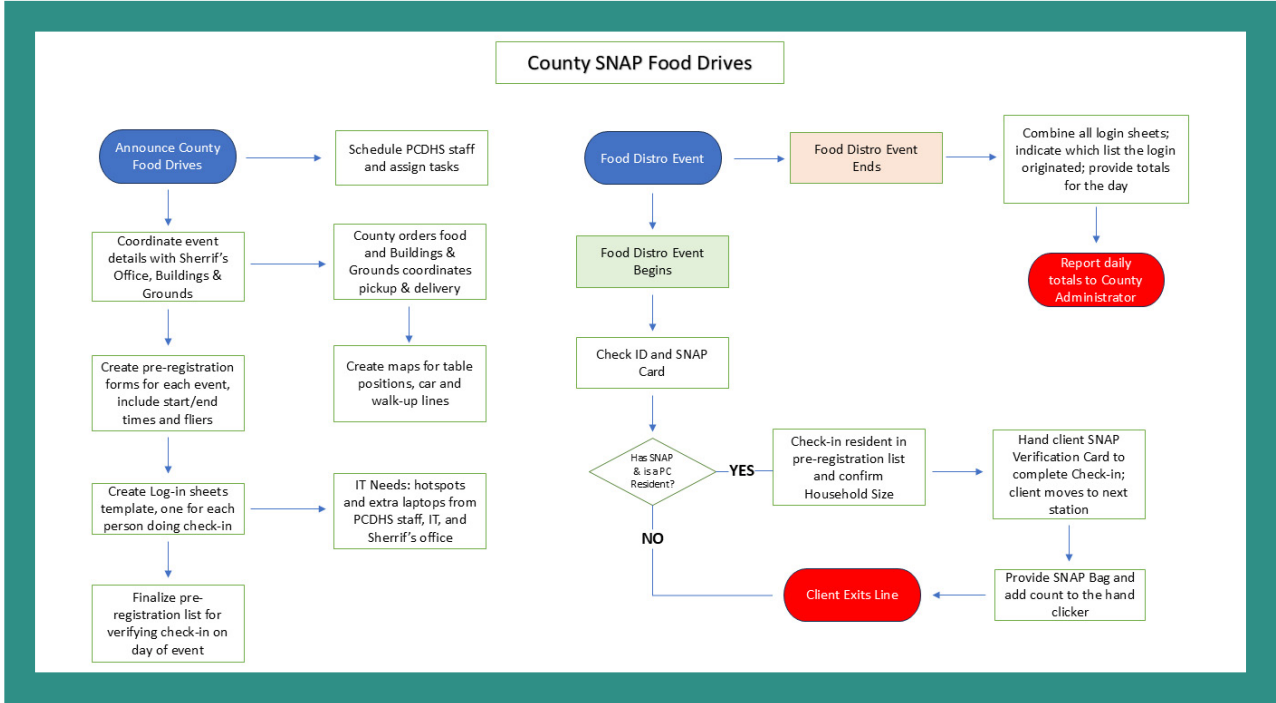
SNAP recipients, and over **8,100** SNAP recipients were served. On **November 18, 2025**, the EFPC also coordinated with the Community Food Bank of NJ (CFBNJ). An additional **(500)** boxes of emergency food were provided by the CFBNJ to distribute to EFPC members to distribute to SNAP recipients. **Figure 2** shows the locations of the SNAP distribution sites on the Passaic County **food insecurity map**. On the following pages, **Figures 3 – 4** show the county and pantry event workflows; **Figure 5** shows the county event planning maps; and **Figure 6** lists the SNAP distribution event locations and dates.

**Figure 2**  
*SNAP distribution sites on the Passaic County food insecurity map*

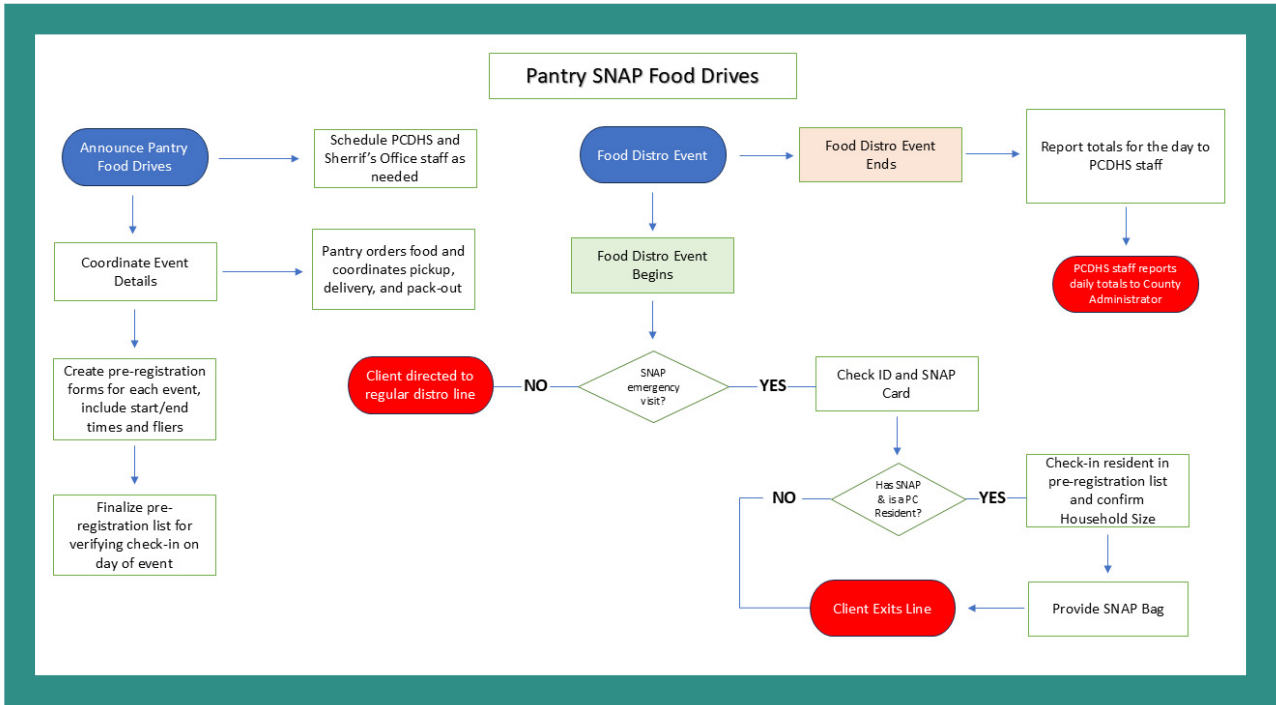


# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Figure 3**  
County workflow for SNAP food distribution events

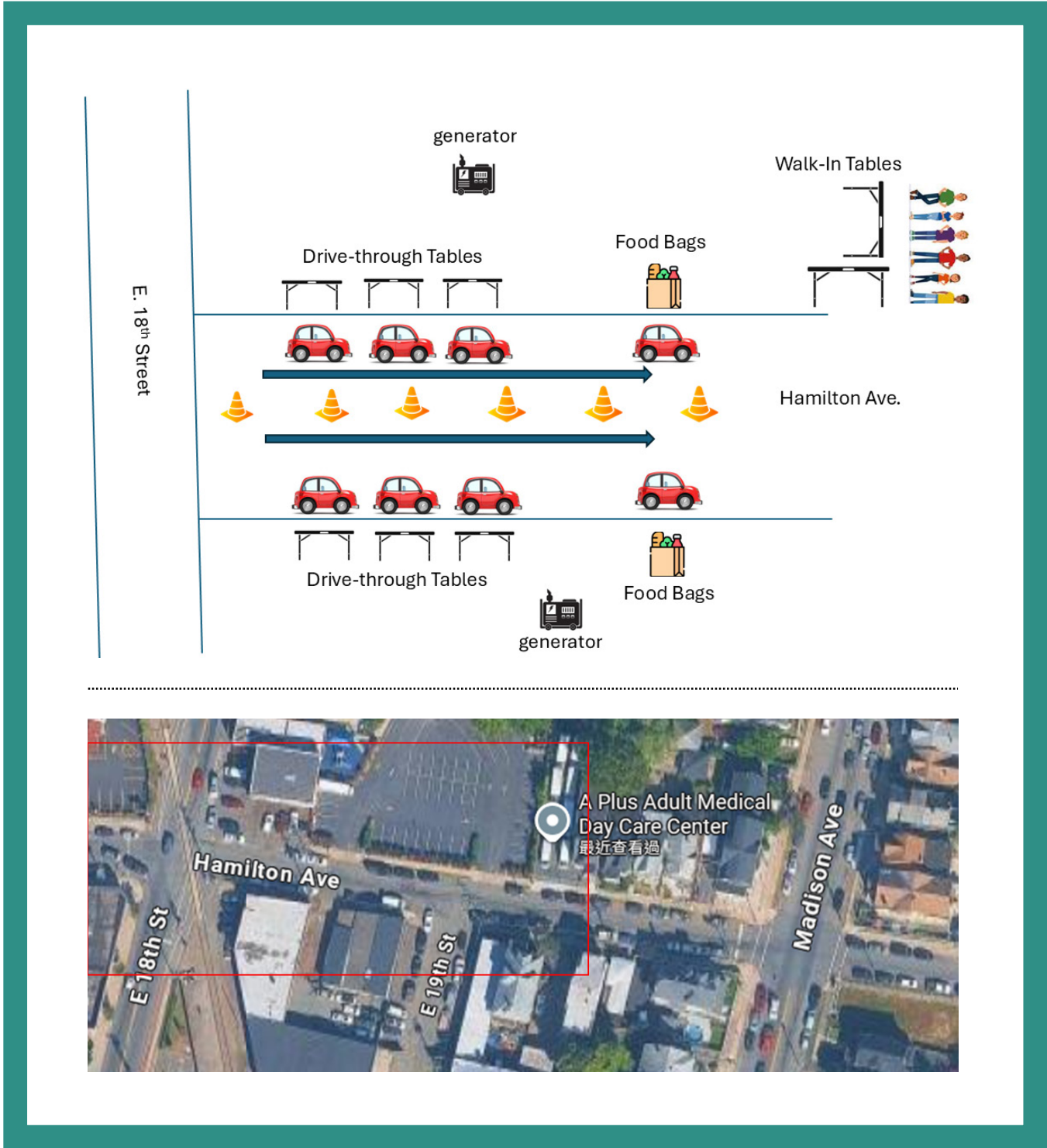


**Figure 4**  
County and food pantry workflow for SNAP food distribution events



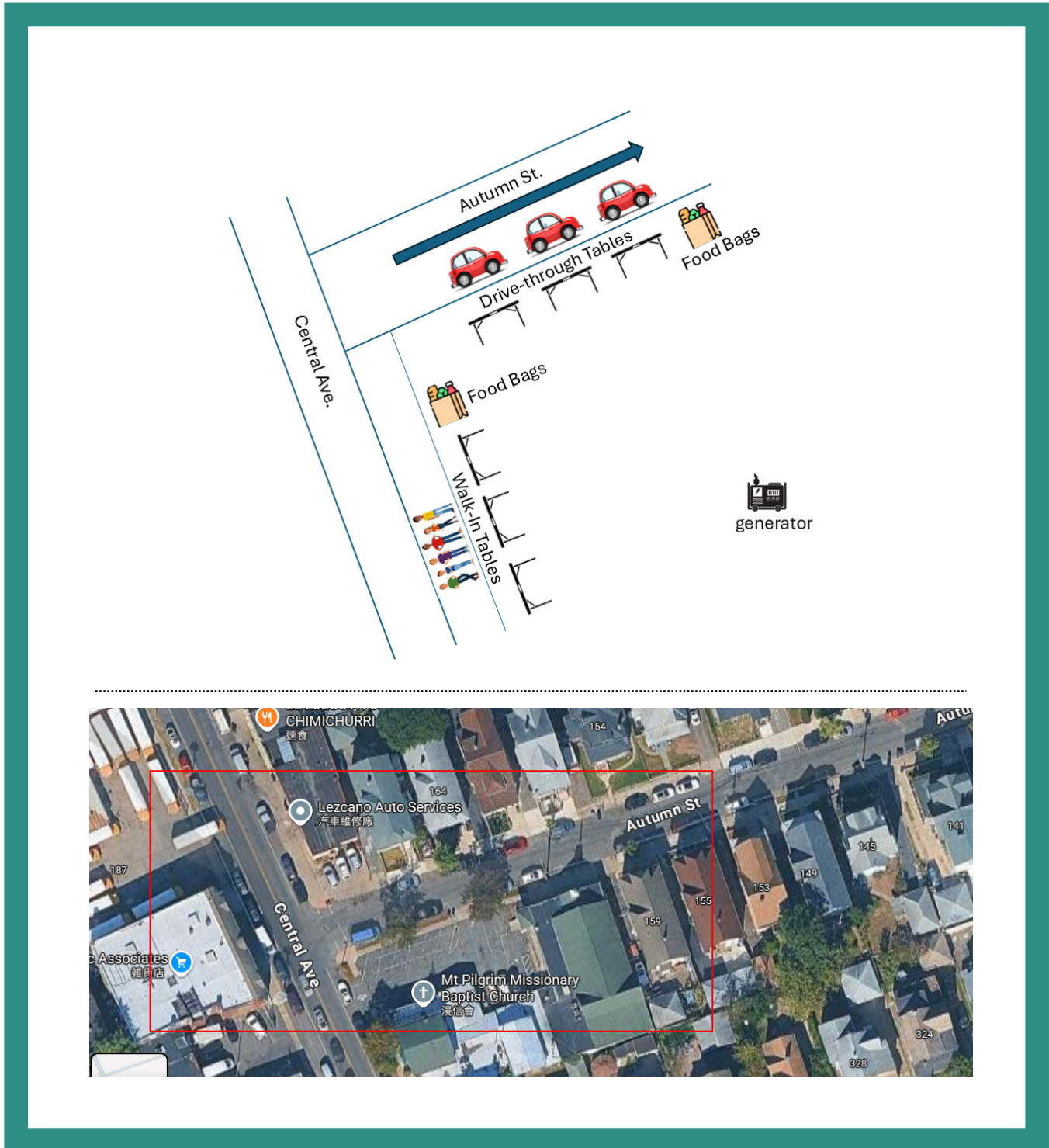
# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Figure 5**  
County SNAP food distribution event planning map at Calvary Baptist Community Center in Paterson, NJ



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Figure 6**  
County SNAP food distribution event planning map at Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in Passaic, NJ



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Figure 7**  
SNAP distribution sites and event dates



# MEASURING IMPACT

After the Emergency Food Distribution events, a **digital survey** was issued to residents who registered for any of the events, in partnership with the **CFBNJ**, in order to understand the **impact** of the SNAP Benefits delay for residents. The SNAP Benefits Delay Impact survey consisted of **(5)** questions and was issued in **both** English and Spanish. The survey asked the following questions:

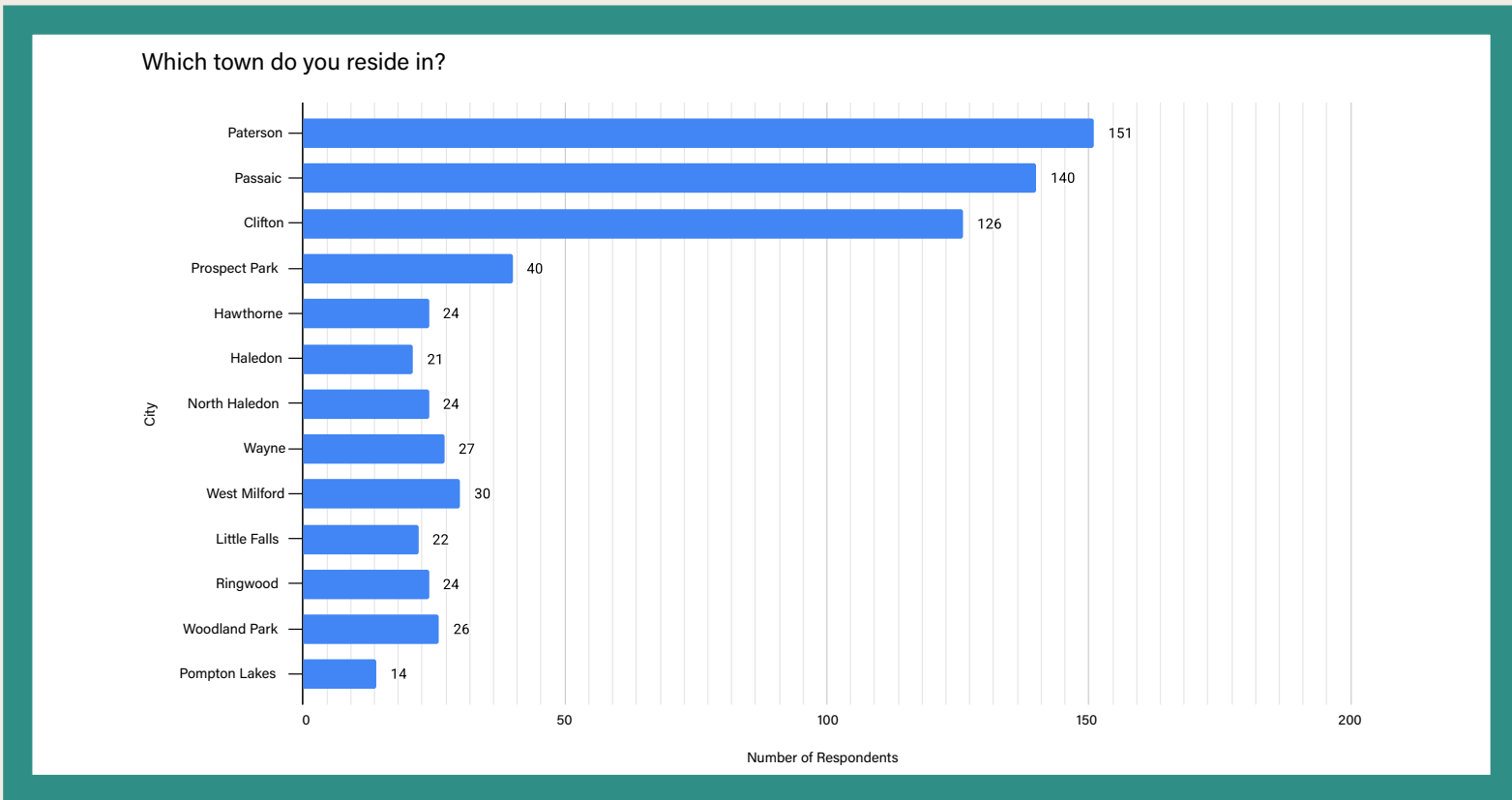
- 1 Did you or anyone in your home skip a meal or eat less because your SNAP benefits were late or smaller this month?
- 2 Have the SNAP benefit delays made it harder to pay for other things like rent, electricity, gas, or bus fare?
- 3 How hard has it been to feed your household this month?
- 4 Where were you getting information about SNAP benefits during the government shutdown?
- 5 Which town do you reside in?

The survey was emailed to over **2,400** residents. A total of **(302)** residents responded to the survey, where **(191)** survey responses were recorded for the English version, and **(111)** survey responses were recorded for the Spanish version.

# GEOGRAPHIC IMPACT

The SNAP benefits delay impacted residents across the entire county. Respondents reported they resided in **13** out of the **16** municipalities in Passaic County, see **Figure 8**.

**Figure 8**  
*Residence by municipality of respondents*

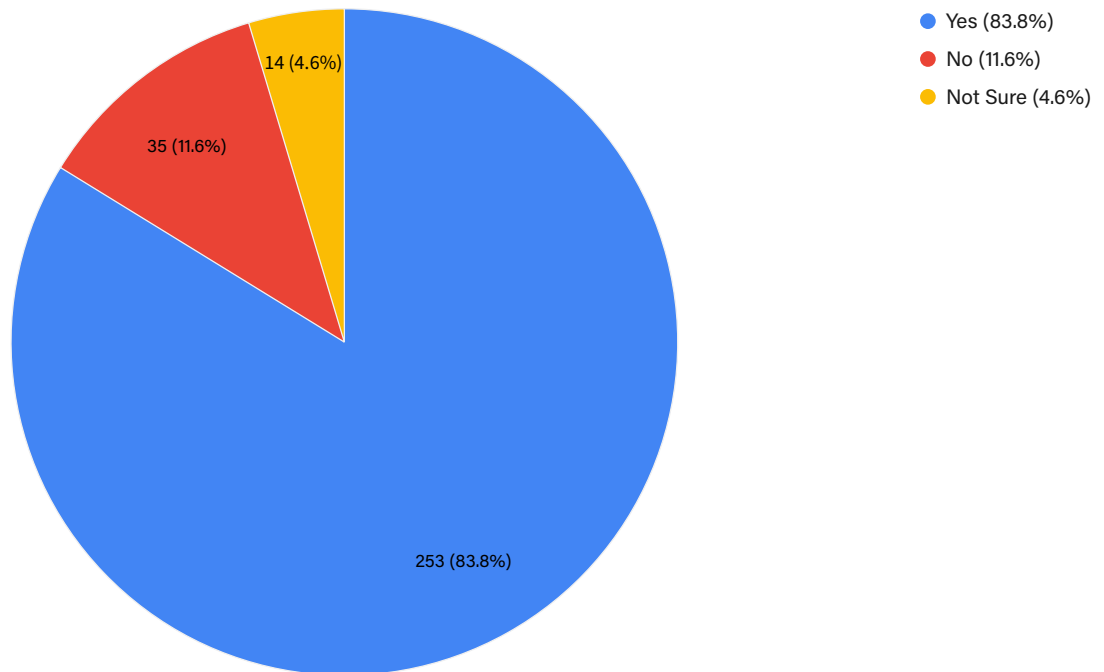


# REVEALING FOOD INSECURITY

The impact of SNAP benefits delay revealed high levels of food insecurity, where **83.8%** of respondents reported that they had to skip a meal or eat less because of the delayed SNAP benefits, see **Figure 9**.

**Figure 9**  
*Skipped meal because of SNAP benefits delay*

Did you or anyone in your home skip a meal or eat less because your SNAP benefits were late or smaller this month?

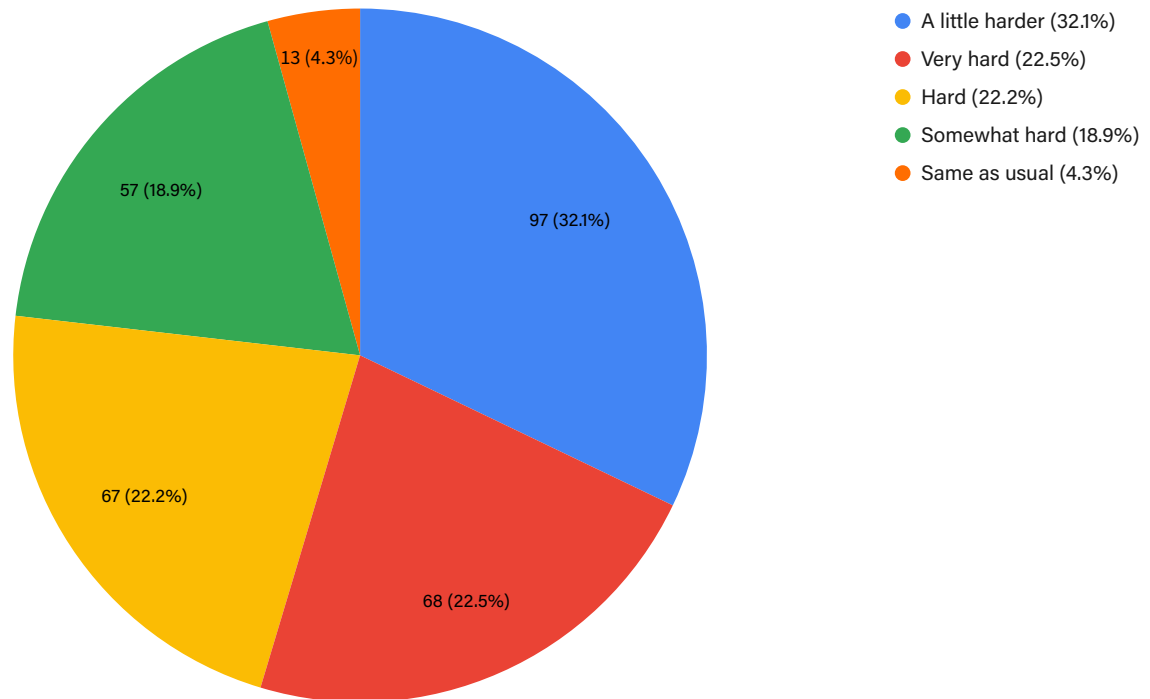


# REVEALING FOOD INSECURITY

Respondents also reported that it was more difficult to feed their family overall during the last month as a consequence of the SNAP benefits delay, where the most frequent responses indicated that feeling the household was “a little harder” to manage for the month (see **Figure 10**).

**Figure 10**  
*Level of difficulty to feed the household for the month*

How hard has it been to feed your household this month?

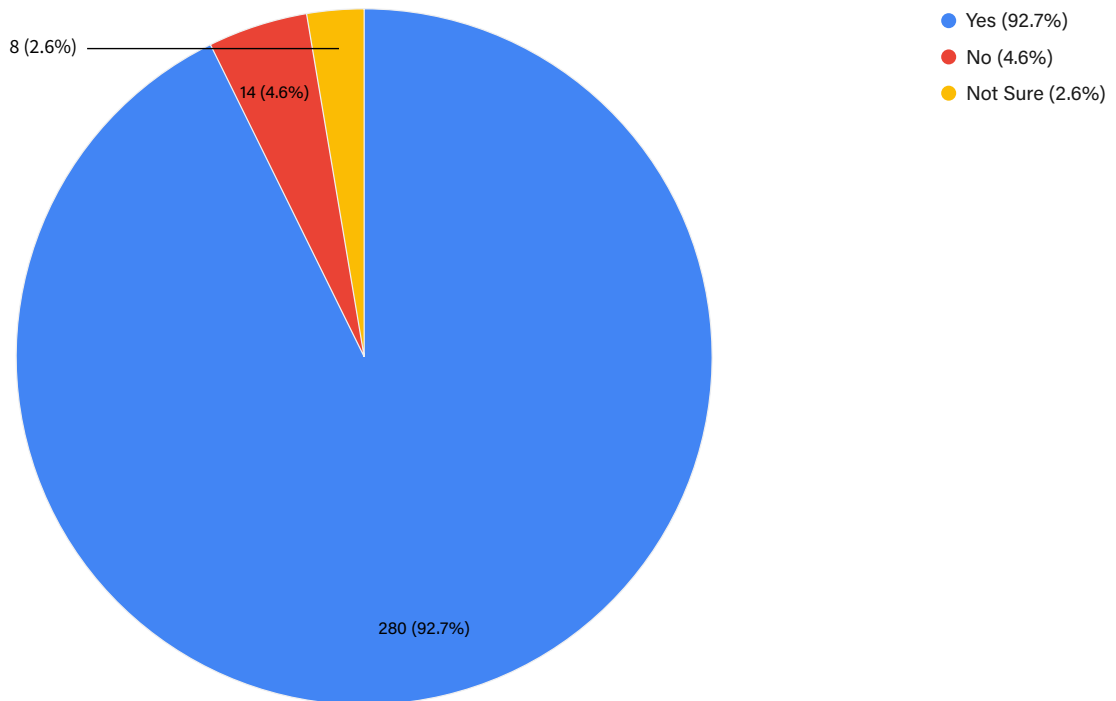


# DECISION- MAKING IMPACT

The SNAP Benefits delay directly impacted how individuals and/or households had to make financial decisions for basic necessities and transportation. **Figure 11** shows that over **92%** of respondents reported that it was more difficult to pay for rent, utilities, and transportation.

**Figure 11**  
*Difficulty paying for basic necessities and transportation*

Have the SNAP benefit delays made it harder to pay for other things like rent, electricity, gas, or bus fare?

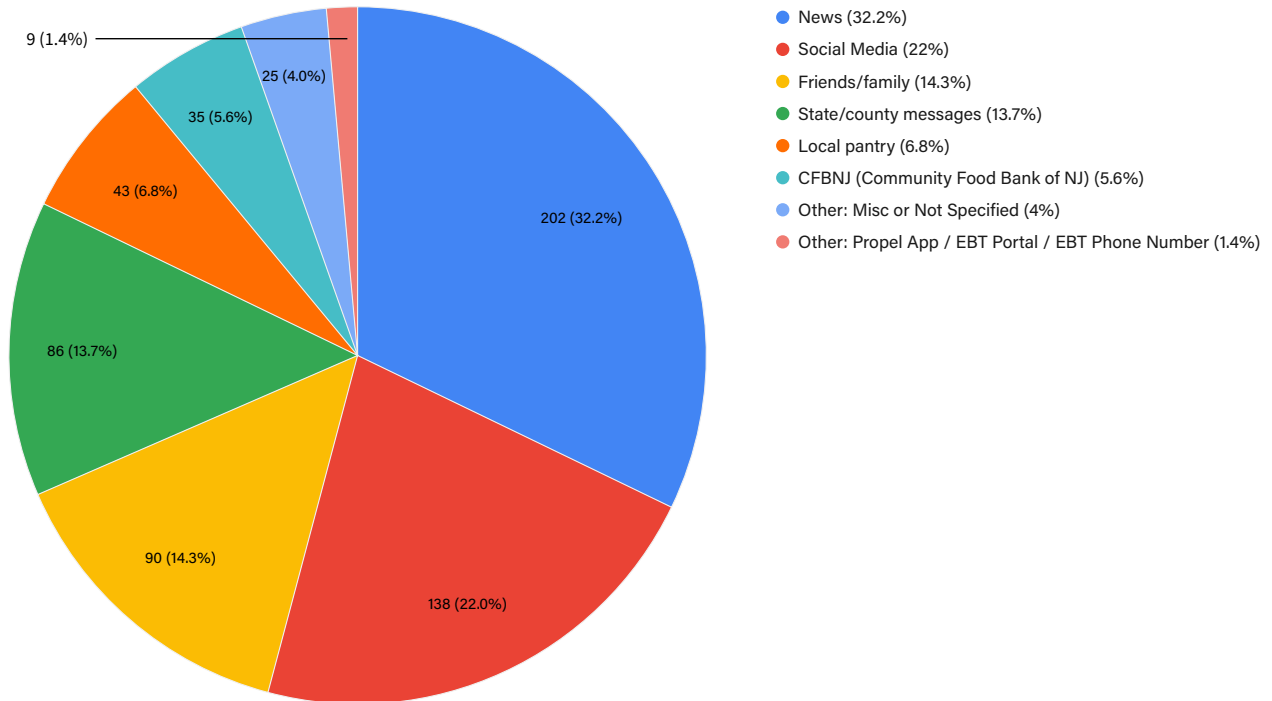


# INFORMATION SOURCES

Respondents indicated a range of sources of information about the SNAP Benefits Delay including the news, social media, friends and family, state or county messages, local pantries, and other sources directly connected to EBT profiles (see **Figure 12**).

**Figure 12**  
*Information sources*

Where were you getting information about SNAP benefits during the government shutdown?



# LESSONS LEARNED

## **An emergency food distribution response plan is needed.**

The SNAP benefits delay was unprecedented and revealed the need for creating a collaborative Emergency Food Distribution Response Plan with EFPC members. Every EFPC partner pantry responded quickly and were ready to collaborate for coordinating efforts. Creating an Emergency Food Distribution Response Plan for the county would aid in ensuring an organized response to a food emergency/crisis. This can be modeled after a combination of disaster crisis response and Code Blue Alerts where key partners, volunteer staff, resources, standard guidelines and protocol, and communication tools are designed and identified in advance, and an MOU is created for designated food distribution sites for implementation to disseminate supplies for basic necessities across the county if/when another emergency arises.

## **Improving data collection and data sharing.**

The process for collecting and sharing data was not preplanned. Establishing a uniform format for reporting data to the county and the state for responding to an emergency is necessary. The process also revealed the need for more data before an emergency to better understand need throughout the county. For example, there is not enough information about the free school meals program. Many schools were closed during this emergency and it was difficult to know if event times and locations were compatible with the schedules of families, or if the type of distribution was sufficient

for supplementing missed meals for children who were not in school while the SNAP benefits were suspended. It would also be beneficial to quantify other interactions beyond the count of bags distributed and family size to capture the full scope of impact. For example, were pantries seeing an increase of client visits, calls, or receiving first-time clients to their site? How can the increased interactions be quantified to present that information with the county and the state?

## **Improving food access for an emergency.**

The emergency food distribution events were all scheduled at locations where transportation was required. The mobile pantry was deployed to municipalities to fill gaps in regional distribution across the county, but if individuals have mobility issues or are home-bound, there was not a solution for serving those residents.

## **Language barriers.**

All major communication documents, event registration forms, fliers, and press releases were all issued in English only. During the county-run distribution events, the largest number of Spanish-speaking residents attended the distribution event in Passaic. Staff members were present to translate, but it revealed the necessity to issue all communications in both English and Spanish, at a minimum. Designing templates for many of these files in advance as part of an Emergency Food Distribution Response Plan would allow for creating bilingual documents, quickly.

# LESSONS LEARNED

## **Food distribution event preregistration and queuing process.**

The SNAP benefits delay presented unique challenges for organizing the food distribution event. Unlike other types of disasters that would require an emergency response where all residents within the county, city, or a specific neighborhood are impacted (i.e., flooding, Hurricane Sandy, COVID-19) this impacted a specific sub-population of the county. The food distribution event would only serve Passaic County residents who are SNAP benefits recipients. Each food distribution event had an event announcement with a preregistration link and required residents

to show a photo ID with proof of address and proof of receiving SNAP benefits. The county run food distribution events had very large turnouts (over 1,200 residents were served each day for the events on 11/3 and 11/5) and there were bottle-neck issues due to the check-in process. The check-in process was manual. (6) different computer stations were operated by PCDHS staff as the first stop in the line; IDs and SNAP Cards were checked and then the resident needed to be verified in the preregistration list. If the resident did not preregister, they were manually added to validate counts. To simplify the check-in process, a free online ticketing system, such as Eventbrite would aid in expediting the check-in process.

# NEXT STEPS

## **Conduct a Final Debriefing**

Conduct a final debriefing with all county-level responders and the EFPC to discuss the outcomes and challenges of the SNAP benefits delay emergency food distribution response.

## **Formalize an Emergency Response Plan**

Formalize emergency response plan and best practices, incorporating the strategies and lessons learned from the SNAP benefits delay emergency food distribution response.

## **Create Emergency Response MOU**

Create and Emergency Response MOU with select partners of the EFPC.