RESEARCH BRIEF

FOOD INSECURITY & DISTRIBUTION

In Silicon Valley Amid the Pandemic

SEPTEMBER 2020
This report was created by the Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies in partnership with Second Harvest of Silicon Valley and Silicon Valley Food Recovery, an initiative of Joint Venture.

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Dear Friends:

Food insecurity is nothing new, even here in Silicon Valley. Because of our high costs, a growing share of our households were struggling to make ends meet even before the pandemic set in. While the range of food insecurity estimates was wide and highly varied, somewhere between one and three out of every ten people lacked access, at times, to adequate food.

Then the pandemic hit. Our region’s unemployment soared to rates higher than even the dot.com crash or the recession in 2009. At the same time, students who typically received free or reduced-price school meals were now distance-learning from home. That meant lunch and breakfast needed to be distributed differently – and quickly.

This research brief is intended to provide a high-level understanding of how the region’s residents were faring pre-pandemic, the shift in employment and subsequent impacts on food needs, and the rapid rise of emergency food distribution efforts. The many ways in which our community responded—informally, and also through philanthropy and organized action—are too complex and plentiful to treat systematically in a brief report such as this. However, Joint Venture, through our Food Recovery Initiative and Food Recovery Council, represents one part of the response alongside many other agencies and nonprofits working to fill the need.

We hope this report will inform the community and equip decision makers for action.

Yours,

Russell Hancock
President & Chief Executive Officer
Joint Venture Silicon Valley, Institute for Regional Studies
KEY FINDINGS

- Silicon Valley’s residents were already struggling to meet their basic needs, pre-pandemic; the struggle disproportionately affected some segments of the population.

- The rise in unemployment as a result of the pandemic was unprecedented, and also disproportionately affected those who were already struggling.

- At the same time as the unemployment rate rose dramatically, food prices increased as well. As both of these factors are closely tied to food insecurity, the share of Silicon Valley residents in need of food assistance rose substantially beginning in March.

- The system of food assistance provided in the United States overall, statewide, and in Silicon Valley includes a mix of government programs (e.g., SNAP/CalFresh, School Meals, Senior Nutrition) and additional sources such as food banks, as well as a large number of food providers, funding providers, and food distribution partners.

- Several pandemic-related emergency food assistance programs emerged in the spring, including The Great Plates Delivered Program (for older Californians), household allotments and online purchasing flexibilities for SNAP/CalFresh recipients, as well as a variety of U.S. Department of Agriculture waivers allowing for school meals to be provided to families, regardless of prior enrollment or eligibility, and for those meals to be provided in quantities at once and to-go.

- Silicon Valley’s regional response to the sudden and dramatic increase in food needs was swift, included a large number of regional partners, and a significant amount of philanthropic dollars, people-hours, and coordination; the collective effort also included numerous online tools for information sharing, resources, and mapping distribution locations.
Nearly \( \frac{1}{3} \) of all Silicon Valley households struggled to afford a low-cost food plan prior to the pandemic.

Nearly \( \frac{1}{3} \) of all Silicon Valley households did not earn enough money in 2018 to meet their basic needs without public or private/informal assistance.

More than 57% of all Silicon Valley households with a Hispanic or Latino householder lived below Self-Sufficiency in 2018 (nearly 80,000 households).

Eight out of ten with a householder who had not graduated high school lived below Self-Sufficiency.
Self-Sufficiency varied significantly by race and ethnicity, educational attainment level, gender, family type, and citizenship status. *Wealth and income inequality were significant and rising.*

### Regional Distribution of Wealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Households</th>
<th>% Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Affluent &lt;$100,000</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluent $100,000 - $1 million</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Net Worth &gt;$1 million</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$10 million</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies; Phoenix Global Wealth Monitor  
**Note:** Silicon Valley includes Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

The top 13% of Silicon Valley households held an estimated 75% of all the wealth in 2018; the top 0.6% held an estimated 10%.

**More than half (53%) of all households combined held a mere 2% of the region’s wealth as measured by investable assets.**
6% to 29% Pre-Pandemic
The estimates of pre-pandemic food insecurity in Silicon Valley vary widely by source.

Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties Households
A study conducted at Northwestern University estimated household food insecurity rates for late 2018 using state-level estimates and county-level unemployment rates.

Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties Population
Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap for 2018 estimated county-level food insecurity rates using a state-level relationship to poverty, unemployment, and other indicators.

In 2018, 29% of Silicon Valley residents had incomes below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Share of the Population Living Below 300% of the Federal Poverty Limit
Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Santa Clara County</th>
<th>San Mateo County</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In contrast to more stringent government program eligibility limits, some regional resources are available to families with higher incomes that are struggling and need occasional help. For example, Second Harvest serves those up to 275% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Estimates of Food Insecurity Pre-Pandemic
Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Santa Clara County</th>
<th>San Mateo County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University (Dec. 2018, % of households)</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap (2018, % of population)</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies (2017 estimated range, % of population)</td>
<td>7.8% - 29.3%</td>
<td>6.1% - 23.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diane Schanzenbach, Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research (prepared for California Association of Food Banks); Feeding America (Map the Meal Gap, 2018); Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies

17.4%
average rate for Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties

The Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies created a 2017 range of food insecurity estimates for the two counties using the actual number of meals provided by assistance programs that year (216.7 million) and dividing it by two estimates of the number of meals per person per week receiving assistance.1
Pre-pandemic, food assistance in Silicon Valley typically amounted to around 210 – 233 million meals per year, serving an estimated 720,000 – 800,000 people.²

Less food assistance was distributed in 2017 than during the prior year by nearly all governmental providers.³ However, the decline was not necessarily indicative of less need; the share of meals provided by Second Harvest and other sources increased with the rise in need beyond government programs.

Increased pre-pandemic food needs from non-governmental sources were influenced by:

• The rising cost of living.
• People switching from other assistance programs for a variety of reasons, including stigma and fear of using government programs due to Public Charge.⁴
• Food needs from people who do not qualify for federal nutrition programs (which are mostly only available to those below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level), or only need occasional help.
• A greater need by a smaller number of individuals (who can only receive a limited amount from other programs).

In FY 2019, Second Harvest provided the equivalent of 58 million meals to meet the increase in need (up 6.5% year-over-year).
RISE IN NEED DURING THE PANDEMIC

“Each week we are blessed to connect with individuals and families from so many backgrounds and locations around the greater Bay Area. From homeless individuals, domestic violence victims, seniors, refugees, to people recently laid off because of the pandemic, everyone is welcome at our weekly food distribution centers.”

- Ewell Sterner, Founder and CEO, Hunger at Home

A line of cars waiting to pick up food from one of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley’s distribution sites, located at Sunnyvale Community Services.

Source: Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Requests for food assistance, CalFresh applications, and food distribution by Second Harvest increased rapidly.

Call volume to Second Harvest’s Food Connection Hotline rose by nearly **1000%**.

### Percent Change in Food Needs Since February, 2020

*Santa Clara & San Mateo County*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Avg. March - June % Increase vs. February</th>
<th>Peak Month % Increase vs. February</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call Volume - Food Connection Hotline</td>
<td>+614%</td>
<td>+989% (April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CalFresh Applications</td>
<td>+101%</td>
<td>+182% (April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lbs. / Meals Served by Second Harvest</td>
<td>+54%</td>
<td>+85% (June)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Second Harvest Silicon Valley; CalFresh Data Dashboard  
**Note:** Calls to Food Connection Hotline include the number of people that Second Harvest referred to a food distribution program site (places where Second Harvest provides food, as well as School/Summer Meal site), and sometimes to a special-purpose distribution (e.g., diapers or baby food) or other non-food assistance programs.

Regional food needs rose significantly, peaking in April for CalFresh applications and in June for food served by Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.
Regional unemployment reached an unprecedented 11.6% in April.

Even in July – four months after the start of the crisis in the U.S. – one in eleven Silicon Valley workers was unemployed.

Food insecurity is highly affected by the unemployment rate, as well as other factors such as inflation and rising food costs.

With so many people out of work during the pandemic, even more struggled to make ends meet. this translates to higher levels of food insecurity.

Sources: Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; California Employment Development Department
Those who were disproportionately living below the Self-Sufficiency Standard were hit hardest by pandemic-related job losses.

South San Francisco emergency drive-thru pick-up site (May 2020).

Source: Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

U.S. unemployment rates in April 2020 hit 21% for those without a high school diploma.
By the end of July, at least one in nine Silicon Valley residents had insufficient food, and an estimated 20% of the population was accessing services.\(^6\)

Four months into the U.S. pandemic crisis, an estimated 11% of Silicon Valley adults and 9% of children “sometimes” or “often” had too little to eat.

**FOOD INSUFFICIENCY:**
Sometimes or often not having enough food, or preferred types of food.\(^8\)

**FOOD INSECURITY:**
Lack of access, at times, to food or food that is nutritionally-adequate.\(^9\)
Statewide food insufficiency in July was highest for Hispanic (21%) and non-Hispanic Black (18%) individuals with a large majority of survey respondents (>70%) citing “couldn’t afford to buy more food” as the reason.

Eighty-five percent “sometimes” and 15% “often” had too little to eat. Of the individuals in households that received free food, only nine to 16% had received food during any given week between May and July.

More than half of food recipients accessed it through school or other programs for children, with the next largest source being food pantries/banks (27%).
Food insecurity rose by as much as 11 percentage points; rates were much higher for households with children.

**FOOD INSECURITY:**

A statewide analysis conducted at Northwestern University estimated food insecurity rates from food insufficiency, and found that 31% of California households with a Hispanic or Latino, or Black respondent were food insecure in late July.⁹

These rates are 1.7 times higher than for households with a White respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of Food Insecurity</th>
<th>Pre-COVID (Dec. 2018)</th>
<th>COVID (April 23 – May 19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Mateo County</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara County</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diane Schanzenbach, Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research (prepared for California Association of Food Banks)

Silicon Valley food insecurity rose by as much as 11 percentage points is early spring, 2020, compared to December 2018.
Drive-thru food pick-up at College of San Mateo

Mountain View Senior Center Brown Bag curbside pick-up

Photos courtesy of Silicon Valley Community Foundation (2020) at Second Harvest partner sites
Meanwhile, the price of food was rising...

At a time when more community members are struggling to afford basic necessities, national indicators of food prices showed increases for even the lowest-cost food plans.

Between February and June, the cost of “food at home” for Bay Area residents rose 8.7%, with the greatest increase in Meats, Poultry, Fish, and Eggs (+19%).

...urban counties with high meal costs are also home to large numbers of people who are food insecure.”
(Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2020)
While home delivery of fresh groceries using SNAP online purchasing is available to about 84% of participants statewide, many remain unreached across the state.

Almost all Silicon Valley SNAP participants have access to online Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) grocery purchasing and delivery; however, they can only shop at two major online EBT-accepting retailers.

The estimated share of SNAP participants with access to home delivery of fresh groceries is 100% in Santa Clara County and 96% in San Mateo County.
HOW DOES FOOD ASSISTANCE GET TO THE PEOPLE?

**Food Sources**
- **Rescued Food**
  - example: Farm to Family (California Association of Food Banks)
  - From sources including: Grocery Stores, Distributors, Wholesalers, Restaurants, Caterers...
- **Purchased Food**
  - Through donations, government funding, charities
  - Feeding America
    - Sourced food distributed by member food banks

**Public Nutrition**
- **Federal**
  - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
  - Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)
- **State**
  - Food boxes, in collaboration with California Association of Food Banks
- **Groceries**
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), CalFresh
  - Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
    - Federal funding
- **Senior Nutrition**
  - Meals on Wheels
    - Public-private funding

**COVID-19 Programs**
- Prepared Meals:
  - Great Plates Delivered
    - Federal, state, and local funding
  - Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT)
    - Federal funding
- Groceries:
  - Food boxes, in collaboration with California Association of Food Banks

**Regional Response & Distribution Efforts**
- Distribution Agencies
  - The region’s distribution network includes more than 300 groups distributing groceries and prepared meals. These groups include social service and faith-based pantries, and nonprofits serving vulnerable populations. The majority of food distributed by these partners comes from Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, provided at no cost.

**Second Harvest of Silicon Valley**
- Direct Food Distribution

**COVID-19 Programs**
- Prepared Meals:
  - School & Summer Meals
    - Federal funding
  - Both Food & Direct Cash Assistance
The region responded to increased food needs through philanthropy and volunteerism.

“In such uncertain times, it is uplifting to witness the philanthropic and business sectors coming together to take powerful action.”

- Nicole Taylor, CEO
  Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Portions of the 19 Major Regional Response Funds

For example:

• Approximately 12% ($582,000) of the $4.9 million San Mateo County Strong Fund granted through July went to regional food needs.

• As a direct result of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation COVID-19 Regional Response Fund – which granted nearly $16 million in the first couple months of the pandemic alone – food assistance was provided to approximately 456,000 individuals.

“Although Second Harvest raised nearly twice the funds needed to cover costs, we doubled our expenses to feed more people. Based on this current level of need, funding will have to remain elevated in order to maintain this level of service for the long-term.”

- Cat Cvengros, Vice President of Development and Marketing, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Harvest donation examples

13,450 pounds of fresh & dried apricots
  combined from Packard Foundation Orchards and Village Harvest

Volunteer hours

45,000

This represents a significant amount of donated produce feeding thousands of people; yet, Second Harvest has required an average of more than 200x this amount for each month of the pandemic.

456,000
individuals

Provided with food assistance through the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund

$4.9
million
San Mateo County Strong Fund

Represents nearly $70,000 of produce in retail value (savings) for recipients.

Sources: Village Harvest; The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Sources: Silicon Valley Community Foundation; County of San Mateo
Examples of **EXISTING PROGRAMS** that expanded, changed modalities, or remained steady during the pandemic:

### Government

#### Emergency Allotment for CalFresh
The California Department of Social Services was approved by the USDA for emergency SNAP (CalFresh) household allotments in late March, 2020. The amount, which varied by household size and existing CalFresh benefit amount, was intended to address additional food needs during the coronavirus pandemic. These benefits are granted on a month-by-month basis, and have been approved through September. Source: California Association of Food Banks; USDA Food and Nutrition Services.

#### Meals on Wheels Increased Capacity
Meals on Wheels is designed to meet the nutritional needs of seniors, funded through a public-private partnership. It is a national organization that has been serving community members locally for decades. Monthly meal distribution – which traditionally included dropping off at households or congregate housing – was 228% higher in July compared to pre-pandemic. Source: The Health Trust; Sourcewise; (via City of San José Emergency Operations Center)

### Nonprofit

#### Grocery Pick-Up Changed to a Drive-Thru Model
While pre-pandemic food distribution often mimicked shopping in a grocery store, with clients selecting the items they needed, the pandemic necessitated contactless distribution. In response, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley – as well as their partner organizations and others – worked to establish more than 130 grocery pick-up locations within the region. In addition to newly created sites, existing sites run by Second Harvest partners (e.g., Cathedral of Faith, Sacred Heart, City Team, St. Joseph’s Center, Daly City Partnership, Samaritan House, West Valley Community Services, and Sunnyvale Community Services) quickly implemented drive-thru distributions to handle the increased need safely. New sites were also established at locations such as School of Arts & Culture in Mexican Heritage Plaza, Mission College, and Serramonte Shopping Center – many of which serve 1,000 people or more. Source: Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.

Even the food distributors that did not implement drive-thru models needed to change to a contactless system. Nearly all grocery distribution is now handled through boxes, picked up by the client. Creating these boxes has been a challenge for nonprofits, as it is both time consuming to pack, and can be resource-intensive as well.

#### To-Go Model Implemented at Traditional Meal Distribution Sites
In response to the COVID-19 crisis, those community service organizations hosting traditional, sit-down meals had to quickly pivot to new modalities. To-go meals became the norm for many schools, churches, and social service agency day programs, with the number of meals distributed increasing from anywhere between 40 and 100% in most cases. Nonprofits like Hunger at Home expanded their program rescuing food to go to other nonprofits – adding to-go meals including vegan and gluten-free options, as well as grocery boxes with the help of chefs at home during the shelter-in-place orders.

#### Walk-In Grocery Pick-Up Changed to a Boxed Model
Even the food distributors that did not implement drive-thru models needed to change to a contactless system. Nearly all grocery distribution is now handled through boxes, picked up by the client. Creating these boxes has been a challenge for nonprofits, as it is both time consuming to pack, and can be resource-intensive as well.

### Food Recovery

#### Grocery Rescue
Second Harvest and their partners work with wholesalers such as Amazon Fresh, UNFI, and local grocery stores. They rescue food that would otherwise go to waste and get it out quickly to their partners, averaging nearly 1.5 million pounds per month during the last six months.

#### The Silicon Valley Food Recovery Council Coordination Around Regional Need
The Silicon Valley Food Recovery Council is comprised of the ten organizations collecting excess prepared food in the region. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Council revised their practices, and since the pandemic hit, to rise to the challenge presented by distributing food during a global pandemic.

#### An Established Farm Surplus Program Expanded
The California Association of Food Banks established their Farm to Family program in 2005. In a typical pre-pandemic year, the program recovered approximately 170 million pounds of excess food from California farms and provided it to food banks for distribution. Between January and June, 2020, the program distributed nearly eleven percent more than during a pre-pandemic (typical) year.
Examples of **NEW PROGRAMS** providing pandemic food assistance include:

### Food Recovery

**New Farm Surplus Programs**

As restaurants and large venues shuttered, farms struggled to find buyers for their products. Other new organizations joined to help stem the waste and feed those in need. As an example, The Farmlink Project—an organization started by Stanford and other college students working on hunger and jobs-related issues during the pandemic—has delivered more than seven million pounds of surplus food to nonprofits across the country.  

*Source: The Farmlink Project*

### Nonprofit

**Second Harvest Home Delivery for Groceries**

Second Harvest has also expanded their programs to include home delivery of groceries for those who are homebound due to physical or mental disability, or COVID-19 restrictions, and have no one who can pick up food for them. The program now makes twice-monthly grocery deliveries to more than 5,000 households who cannot leave their homes to get food.  

*Source: Santa Clara County Public Health; Image (right): Hunger at Home*

### Government

**Great Plates Delivered Program**

Great Plates Delivered is the statewide emergency feeding program intended to ensure that older Californians who meet the eligibility requirements are connected to local restaurants, ensuring they get prepared meals delivered to their homes while they are under the stay-at-home order. The program is approved month-to-month, and both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties have elected to participate.  

*Source: State of California (covid19.ca.gov)*

**Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT)**

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the P-EBT program provided additional flexibility to states to allow families who would have typically received Free- and Reduced-Price Meals to receive an EBT card with up to $365 per child that could be used at most grocery stores, farmer’s markets, or online (Amazon, Walmart) to replace those school meals. This program has not been renewed for the 2020-2021 school year, but was included in the Continuing Resolution passed by the House of Representatives on September 22.  

*Source: California Department of Social Services*

**Project Roomkey**

Project Roomkey is a statewide program that leverages federal dollars to bring unsheltered individuals and families into safe housing, including congregate housing as well as utilizing hotel and motel rooms. These individuals receive meals provided by local agency partners.  

*Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Chefs to End Hunger*

**San José Ship Kits**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, this new nonprofit has distributed over 15,000 SHIP (Shelter In Place) kits to families in need in Santa Clara County. Kits include food, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, games for kids and hand soap. This new player has also helped to facilitate fresh produce distribution to partner nonprofits.  

*Images from Second Harvest of Silicon Valley*
Food assistance rose sharply to meet the need.

The number of CalFresh participants rose by 25% in just four months (+25,894 people), with monthly applications peaking at nearly 12,000 in April alone – a 181% year-over-year increase.

In addition to Second Harvest, increases have occurred at many food distribution sites throughout the region: Martha's Kitchen in San José has increased distribution to its 60 partner locations by 100% since March, and Nuestra Casa, a nonprofit serving the East Palo Alto community, has increased distribution by 65 to 75%.

The number of CalFresh participants rose by 25% in just four months (+25,894 people), with monthly applications peaking at nearly 12,000 in April alone – a 181% year-over-year increase.

With kids offsite in the spring due to shelter-in-place orders, the average weekly school meals served by Santa Clara County public schools declined by 13% below the 2018-19 school year average.

Second Harvest food distribution was significantly higher in 2020 compared to 2019, with the peak year-over-year increase in June (+103%).

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2020 participation data for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program is not expected to be released until April, 2021. For reference, in 2018 there was an average of 27,500 monthly WIC participants in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. Historically, WIC enrollment since the 1990s has been directly proportional to the unemployment rate.\(^{14}\)

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### Average Weekly School Meals Served

**Santa Clara County Public Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>Pandemic: April 10 - June 11, 2020</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons</strong></td>
<td>571,858</td>
<td>496,478</td>
<td>-13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** City of San José Emergency Operations Center, Food Distribution Dashboard: COVID-19 Response (accessed September 16, 2020); California Department of Education; Second Harvest of Silicon Valley; Ed-Data (www.ed-data.org)

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### Pounds of Food Distributed by Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

2019

2020

**Sources:** Second Harvest Silicon Valley
The school meals data is complicated. Meals distributed do not necessarily reflect community needs; they reflect a variety of other factors.

Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Programs provided to-go options once schools closed; in many cases, assistance was extended to all families in need.

The amount of food distributed at Santa Clara County school sites peaked in May, at slightly more than 600,000 meals during the week of May 22.

Meals on Wheels deliveries increased rapidly between February and May, when the statewide emergency Senior Nutrition program (Great Plates Delivered) began.

The number of meals delivered through both programs increased by more than 350% since pre-pandemic.

Great Plates and Meals on Wheels together served nearly one million meals to seniors (and some younger, homebound individuals) in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties between March and July, 2020.
New and expanded online resources were created to direct the community to food distribution sites.

Many of the region’s public agencies are working to connect residents to food resources, such as this City of San José map showing locations of Senior Sites, Youth School Sites, Community Free Meals Sites, and Food Banks/Partners within Santa Clara County.

Second Harvest provides resources online to help students and families access Free- and Reduced-Price School and Summer Meals, including a map of food pick-up locations throughout the region, plus a variety of other community resources.

The CA Meals for Kids mobile app was launched by the California Department of Education in mid-March with Afterschool and Summer Meal locations, and updated to add temporary meal sites for the Emergency Meal Program.

A volunteer-led effort at Stanford University created BayAreaCommunity.org, a site that gathers data from a variety of public sources to provide locations and schedules for food assistance, legal assistance, and medical help during the pandemic.

Source: Second Harvest of Silicon Valley (www.shfb.org/get-food)

Free Groceries

Sources: unBox (www.unboxproject.org), Bay Area Community (www.BayAreaCommunity.org, accessed 9/3/2020; hundreds of additional free meal/grocery locations are scheduled to be added to the map in late September/early October)
While many pre-pandemic food sources have held steady, supply chain disruptions and the emergence of new programs led to changes in the proportions coming from each source.

“As store shelves emptied in March and April, we faced numerous order cancellations and delayed deliveries. Fortunately the produce supply remained strong here in California, and we were able to move quickly to diversify sources and secure critical food items, food boxes, and sanitation supplies. We bought a lot more eggs, milk, protein, and shelf-stable items to meet the surge in demand. Even now, in September, we continue to see shortages in some shelf-stable items like canned fruits and vegetables.”

- Stan Edde, Chief Operating Officer
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

The doubling in the share of Second Harvest food from government sources between February and June reflects a temporary sourcing shift from California Association of Food Banks-donated bulk produce to federally funded pre-boxed produced (Coronavirus Food Assistance Program).

The share of Second Harvest food from purchases increased dramatically during the pandemic, from 18% in February to a peak of 46% in May. The organization is now purchasing around four times as much food as it did pre-pandemic.

4x pounds of food purchased by Second Harvest compared to pre-pandemic

[Graph showing the share of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley food, by source]

Source: Second Harvest Silicon Valley
Note: Donated Bulk Produce comes from the California Association of Food Banks and Others; Government Sources include U.S. Department of Agriculture Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, and the State of California; Other Donated includes Feeding America, Food Drives, and Food Banks; Rescued food is from grocery stores, distributors, wholesalers, restaurants, and caterers.
The food system, community needs, and methods of food distribution and assistance are extremely complex during normal times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become an even more complex landscape, with effects that are both far-reaching and long-lasting – especially for those community members who have been disproportionately impacted.

While this report provides a snapshot in time of food insecurity and distribution amid the pandemic, food access is a persistent issue, and there will be a continued need for examination of food insecurity and availability.

A June Food, Agriculture, and Health Access Initiative referral from Santa Clara County Board Supervisors Cindy Chavez and Joe Simitian committed to do just that, and in coordination with the City of San José, the County is currently planning the next steps and future of disaster-related food programs as well as focusing funding and attention on a longer-term, food system-wide work plan. Along those same lines, San Mateo County worked hard to make access easier across all their websites, and have dedicated important funding towards disaster-related food availability. As the landscape evolves, with changing community needs and policies, and the emergence of new players, this will be a topic to keep at the forefront.

Second Harvest of Silicon Valley and their numerous partners are preparing to serve an elevated need for the long-term. Joint Venture Silicon Valley, through our Food Recovery Initiative, will continue to focus attention on these pressing issues, including projects to increase the capacity of community organizations to recover excess food from new sources and best utilize available resources to feed our neighbors.

The Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies – through its continuous monitoring of regional economic and community health indicators – will be tracking food insecurity as it evolves through the pandemic and into recovery, and bringing the pertinent data to the community for both discussion and action.

There will be more to track moving forward...
Estimate based on the Feeding America findings (2018) of an average 5.6 meals per person per week (www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/2017-map-the-meal-gap-full.pdf) and 21 meals per person per week (3 meals per day, 7 days per week).

Estimate based on the Feeding America findings (2018) of an average 5.6 meals per person per week (www.feedingamerica.org). Meals provided include Senior Nutrition, Summer Meals, Free and Reduced-Price School Meals, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (CalFresh in California, formerly Food Stamps), and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children).

Estimate based on the Feeding America findings (2018) of an average 5.6 meals per person per week (www.feedingamerica.org).


The share accessing services was estimated by Second Harvest of Silicon Valley based on the number of people being served each month during the pandemic (more than 500,000) and the region’s population.

Data is from the California Weekly Pulse website, created and maintained by the Stanford Data Lab (https://datalab.stanford.edu) – a project of the Stanford Institute for Computational & Mathematical Engineering, Directed by Professor Bill Behrman. The data included here was derived from the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey (HPS) and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) from July 2020. Because HPS does not provide data at the county level, a model is used to estimate county-level food insufficiency using the food insufficiency rate of California and the county unemployment rates. The state-level food insufficiency data is updated more frequently than the county unemployment rates, and each month’s unemployment data comes out later than the food insufficiency data. If unemployment data is not yet available for a month, the model uses the latest month for which data is available.

Food Insufficiency is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS) as “sometimes or often don’t have enough food,” or “don’t have the types of food they want” anytime over the previous year. Definition obtained from Schanzenbach, D. W., & A. Pitts. (2020). Food insecurity in the Census Household Pulse Survey Tables. Institute for Policy Research Rapid Research Report. www.ipr.northwestern.edu/documents/reports/ipr-rapid-research-reports-pulse-hh-data-1-june-2020.pdf


The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is called CalFresh in California, formerly Food Stamps.


List of Santa Clara County Nutrition Programs for late March through early April, 2020, from the City of San José website. www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=55672
RESEARCH RESOURCES

Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research
www.ipr.northwestern.edu/our-work/rapid-research-reports/index.html

Stanford Data Lab
https://datalab.stanford.edu

unBox
www.unboxproject.org

Feeding America
www.feedingamerica.org

USDA Food & Nutrition
www.fns.usda.gov

CA Dept. of Education
www.cde.ca.gov

CalFresh Data Dashboard
www.cdss.ca.gov

Bay Area Community
www.BayAreaCommunity.org

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Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies
Housed within Joint Venture Silicon Valley, the Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies provides non-partisan research and analysis on a host of issues facing Silicon Valley’s economy and society. The Institute also serves as a forum to identify problems and their underlying facts, and promote dialogue about their solutions.

Joint Venture Silicon Valley
Established in 1993, Joint Venture provides analysis and action on issues affecting the Silicon Valley economy and quality of life. The organization brings together established and emerging leaders—from business, government, academia, labor and the broader community—to spotlight issues, launch projects and work toward innovative solutions. For more information, visit www.jointventure.org.

Silicon Valley Food Recovery Initiative
Joint Venture’s Food Recovery initiative is actively engaged in solutions for the efficient delivery of nutritious prepared food directly to those who need it most. This includes work with Santa Clara County to expand food recovery capacity, as well as the Silicon Valley Food Recovery Council. Expanded in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food Recovery Council is matching food donors with food recovery council members in order to get food to our neighbors in need during this unprecedented event. The initiative is also helping to find funding, develop standardized safe food protocols, facilitate coordination and resource sharing amongst our food recovery members.

Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
Founded in 1974, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is one of the largest food banks in the nation and a trusted nonprofit leader in ending local hunger. The organization distributes nutritious groceries through a network of more than 300 partners at drive-thru and walk-up sites across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Due to the prohibitively expensive cost of living in Silicon Valley and the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger is at an all-time high. Second Harvest is now serving 500,000 people on average every month, which is twice as many people as they reached pre-pandemic. Second Harvest also connects people to federal nutrition programs and other food resources, and advocates for anti-hunger policies on the local, state and national levels. To learn more about how Second Harvest is responding to the incredible amount of need in Silicon Valley, visit shfb.org.