



RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK

IMPACT REPORT

THE HUNGER CRISIS IN RI

Summer/Fall 2021



The Food Bank delivers healthy food to member agencies in high-need communities like the Salvation Army Food Pantry in Newport.



VIEW OUR MEMBER AGENCIES

Click on the QR code for a full list of food pantries and meal sites. Or visit rifoodbank.org/findfood.

As Pandemic Enters New Phase, Food Insecurity Remains High

Rhode Islanders continue to recover from the COVID-19 crisis but many individuals and families still do not have enough money to pay their bills and put food on the table.

During the pandemic, federal assistance in the form of stimulus payments, expanded SNAP benefits, increased unemployment insurance and additional aid to families with school-aged children provided significant relief.

These programs end in September, creating a gap for those most in need while intensifying systemic issues, particularly the high level of food insecurity among minority populations.

Even as people get back to work, they may be earning less and have accrued debt that needs to be paid off.

As we face these challenges together, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank will continue the critical work of providing nutritious food to neighbors in need through our network of 159 member agencies.

Lack of Childcare Leaves Families Scrambling

Throughout the pandemic, Maria has been receiving food assistance from the pantry at Saint Edward's Church in Providence.

"I wasn't able to work," Maria told us, "And I didn't feel safe working while my kids were at home."

Both of her children – Carlos, 10 and Gloria, 8 – were learning remotely most of the year, so it was difficult for her to maintain a job.

"My kids have been in and out of school so they are not eating there like they used to. This place helps us get what we need."

Her children were no longer receiving free school meals so Maria needed to provide food for them every day. And since she was unable to work in order to care for them and help them with their studies, feeding her family became even more challenging.

"I couldn't work, so money is hard. We can get what we need here and it's good food that everyone eats."



Guests visit pantries to pick up the healthy food they need.

Food Distribution Facts



15.1 million
pounds
of food distributed
July 2020 – June 2021



2.5 million
pounds
of fresh produce
distributed

Food Bank Prepares for Increased Need This Fall

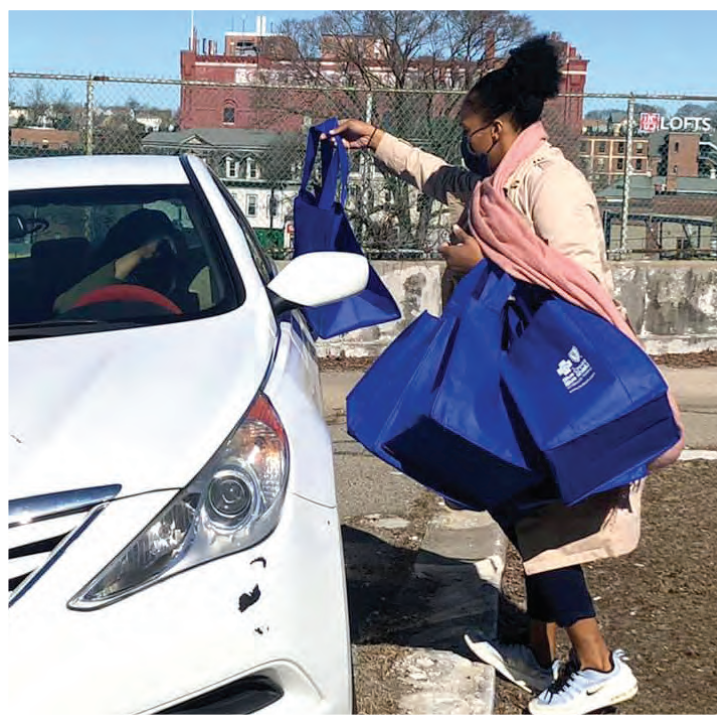
Over the course of the COVID crisis, federal assistance programs provided a lifeline to Americans in need. Stimulus checks, expanded SNAP benefits, pandemic EBT for families with children and increased unemployment payments made a huge difference for struggling families.

This summer, low-income households in Rhode Island received an additional \$40 million in federal food aid. Beneficiaries funneled this money back into the local economy by purchasing food at corner markets and grocery stores.

Our member agencies reported fewer guests seeking food assistance over the spring and summer, as families spent the funds they received to purchase food and were less in need of supplies from our pantries.

As of September, extra federal benefits will end, leaving many without any additional support. We could see another spike in the number of people seeking assistance at food pantries and meal sites this fall. Advocates are pressing our leaders to extend these programs but there is no sign that they will continue as of the writing of this report.

The Food Bank and its member agencies are prepared to respond to the demand if it grows as we head into the fall and winter months.



As federal benefits related to COVID relief wind down, many people will be left to rely on food pantries like Federal Hill House in Providence for assistance.

Veterans on Fixed Income Struggle to Afford Food

Daniel is a 60-year old veteran living in Providence. He recently had hip surgery and relies on disability benefits to cover his bills and expenses.

"I don't have a lot of money. Right now, I'm running out of food during the end of the month and this place has saved me."

He noted that food prices increased during the COVID pandemic, so he has relied on the pantry at Saint Edward's Church even more, as his fixed income doesn't stretch as far as it used to.

"I'm very grateful for this place being here and I see that people come from all around Providence to get food."

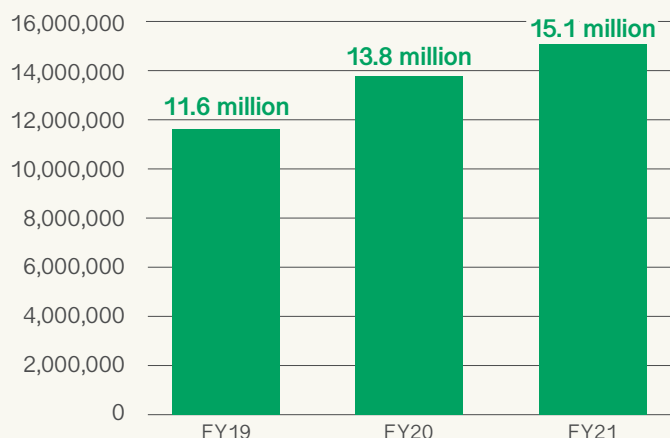
He appreciates that he lives in a neighborhood that has a food pantry within walking distance, especially since his mobility is limited after his surgery.

"They give you things that you can use every day like butter, milk, chicken; things you can really cook with and make a meal with. They have saved me many times when I've run out of food."

Daniel is a veteran who lives on a fixed income and visits his local pantry to help with the cost of food.

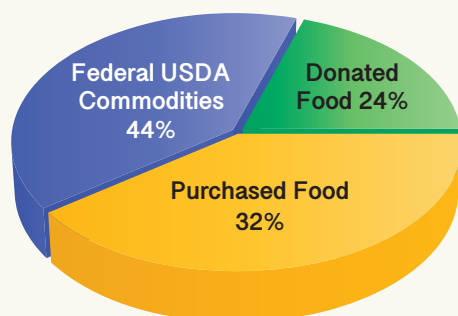


Food Distribution in Pounds



During the pandemic, the Food Bank distributed record levels of food.

2021 Sources of Food



The Food Bank increased the amount of product it purchased due to a reduction in food donations and it increased the amount received from government food programs.

Food Distribution Increased to Serve More People in Need

Throughout the pandemic, we saw an increase in guests seeking food assistance at our member agencies (see chart on page 4). The highest level was in November 2020 with 76,484 people visiting food pantries.

Recently, we saw the number of people in need drop as employment rates increased and federal assistance programs continued to provide additional aid.

This fall, however, many of those benefits will end, and we expect the number of people impacted by food insecurity to rise again.

The Food Bank distributed 15.1 million pounds of food from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. That's 1.3 million pounds more than in the previous year, an increase of 9%.

At the same time, the amount of product donated from the food industry decreased as supermarkets did not have excess food to give away.

As a result, the Food Bank purchased 32% of its food. We were able to keep up this level of food purchasing thanks to the steadfast support of so many generous Rhode Islanders.

A New Plan to Address Hunger

The Food Bank staff and Board of Directors have put together a three-year strategic plan to support the needs of Rhode Islanders facing hunger as the pandemic enters a new phase.

Guiding Principles:

- Apply an equity lens to all aspects of our work.
- Center the voice of the people being served.
- Focus on innovative solutions.
- Be responsive to the changing needs in the community.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Protect the most vulnerable from hunger.
2. Enable food insecure families to achieve their nutrition and health goals.
3. Secure a sustainable future for the Food Bank.

The new plan was informed by the recent increased demand for food seen throughout the state and the heightened awareness of racial and ethnic disparities in the communities we serve.

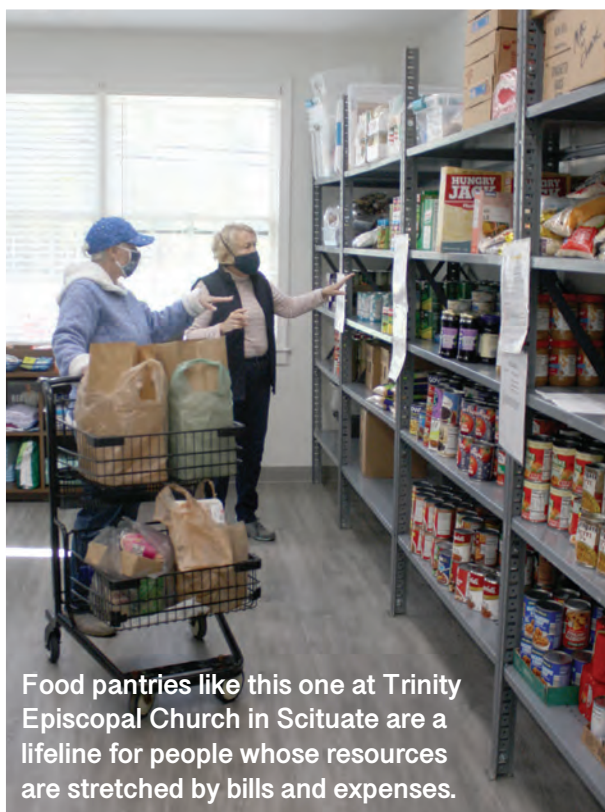


Fresh produce at the New Life Food Pantry in Wakefield keeps guests healthy, part of our strategic plan to help families achieve their nutrition and health goals.



VIEW OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Click on the QR code to view the complete Strategic Plan. Or visit rfoodbank.org/strategicplan.



Food pantries like this one at Trinity Episcopal Church in Scituate are a lifeline for people whose resources are stretched by bills and expenses.

Pantry Provides Lifeline for Elderly Couple

With most of their fixed income used for rent and paying their bills, Cheryl and her husband have little money left over to buy food.

As Cheryl explained, “My husband had triple bypass surgery, and then I got breast cancer. The medical bills made us go through all of our savings.”

They regularly visit the Trinity Episcopal Church Food Pantry in rural Scituate so that they have enough food to eat.

“We’ve gone through all of our savings. You pay the most urgent bills first, then utilities and then there is very little left for food. We often have to choose between rent and food.”

They rely on the assistance they receive at the pantry for a supply of healthy, nutritious food from staples like rice and pasta to fresh produce and meats.

“Coming here takes a burden off. Any little bit here and there makes a big difference to us.”



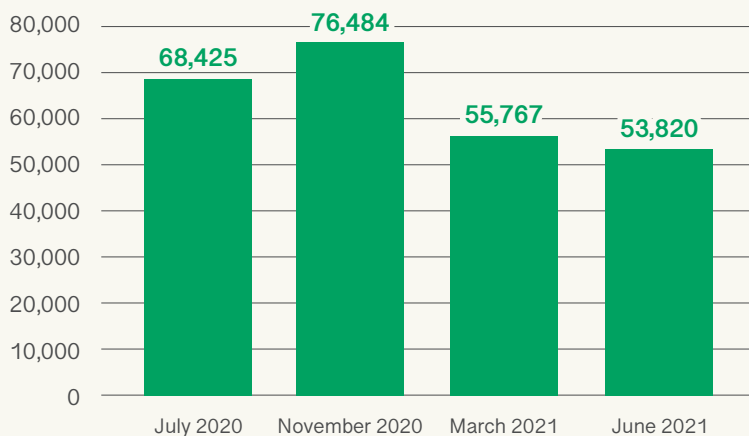
The Food Bank and its member agencies are grateful for the donors and volunteers who help ensure that no one in Rhode Island goes hungry.

Rhode Islanders Show Their Kindness & Caring

Since the very beginning of the pandemic, Rhode Islanders have reached out to support the work of the Food Bank and its member agencies.

The challenges of addressing hunger are not over. Together, we have demonstrated that we can have a huge impact. We appreciate your continued commitment to our work.

Number of People Served Each Month



Extra federal benefits issued in 2021 reduced demand at pantries but as this funding ends, more Rhode Islanders may be in need again.

