

UNDER FORUM

2020 Report





CONTENTS

- 4** Overall Food Insecurity Rates
- 6** Introduction
- 6** “The Rockefeller Ethic”
- 7** Framing the Issue
- 8** Becoming Informed
- 8** Being Thoughtfully Concerned
- 10** Participating in the Search for Solutions
- 11** Selected Resources for Additional Information
- 12** Presenters
- 12** Participants

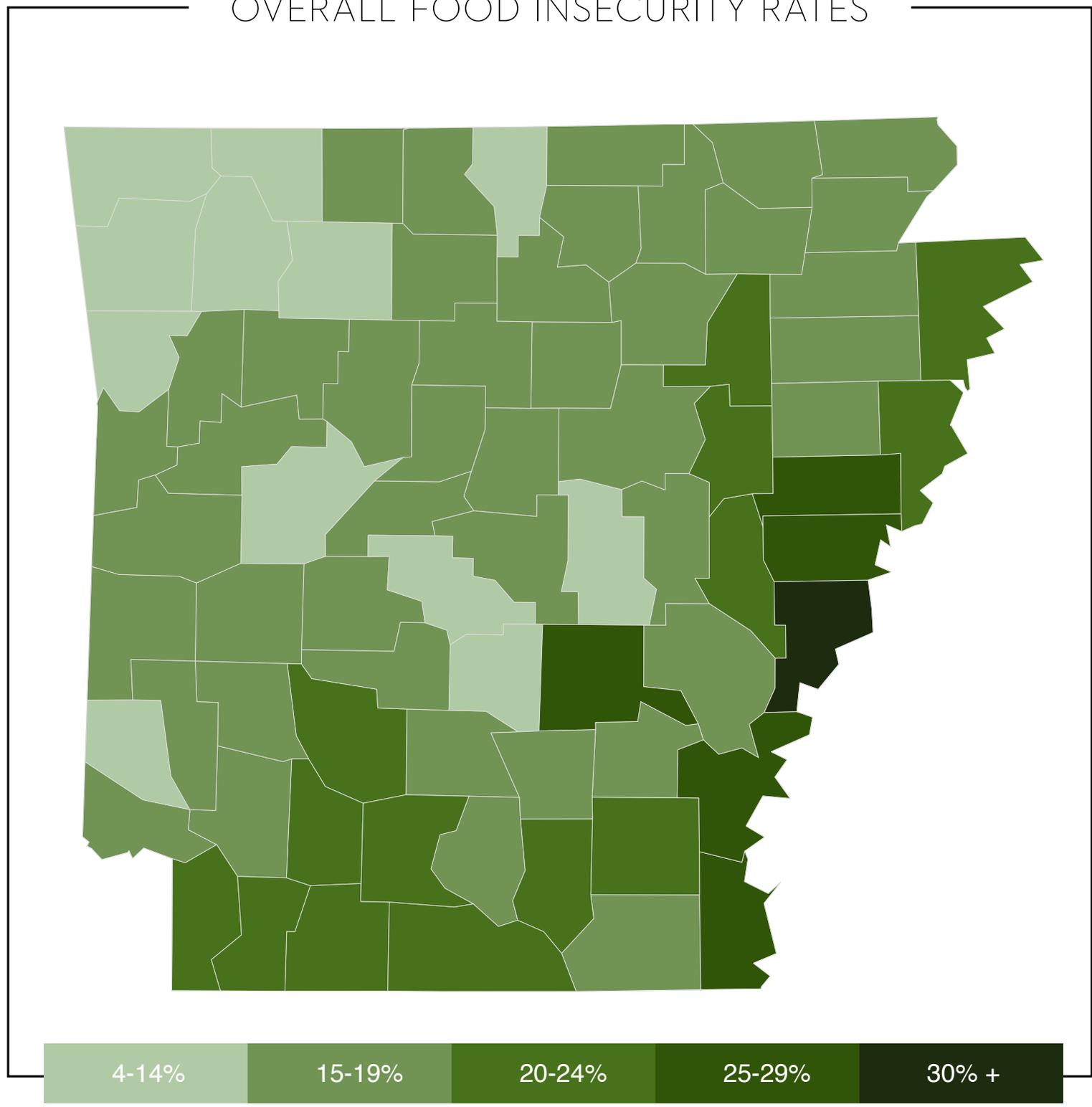
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**Every citizen
has a duty to
be informed, to
be thoughtfully
concerned, and
to participate
in the search
for solutions.**

Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller

”

OVERALL FOOD INSECURITY RATES



**Map found at [Feeding America](#)*

“

I think that the program offers the opportunity to really connect to people across different sectors, backgrounds, and professional levels of success in their individual fields. It gives you the opportunity to engage in dialogue from a holistic perspective, and the diversity of the professionals that make up this group allows for robust conversation around the topic.

*Syard Evans, Under 40 participant
and CEO of the Arkansas Support Network*

”

INTRODUCTION

Governor Rockefeller had a long history of bringing groups together on his historic cattle ranch. That legacy lives on every time a group like the **Under 40 Forum** gathers to express diverse opinions, engage in respectful dialogue, and practice collaborative problem solving. The Governor believed that by employing this “Rockefeller Ethic” we can create transformational change on an individual level, in our communities, and in the world at large.

Five core values informed Winthrop Rockefeller’s leadership: responsibility, relationships, respect, resolve, and reform. Today, those values are at the foundation of Winthrop Rockefeller Institute programs like the Under 40 Forum, where the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service and the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute hosted the fifth Under 40 Forum on February 20-21, 2020. The program brought together 24 up and coming leaders identified by *Arkansas Business* and the *Northwest Arkansas Business Journal*, who gathered on Petit Jean Mountain to learn about poverty and how to address hunger as a symptom of poverty.

Hunger is a national issue disproportionately affecting people throughout Arkansas. Because of their commitment to Arkansas, the forum participants worked together to develop a better understanding of the issues surrounding hunger, share their experiences, and generate solutions that they could begin implementing in their communities.

The first of the Gov. Rockefeller’s core values was responsibility. He believed that each of us has a responsibility to improve the world around us and in honor of him, we encourage each of you, after reading this report, to begin working in your own communities to fight poverty and hunger.



“THE ROCKEFELLER ETHIC”

**Collaborative Problem Solving +
Respectful Dialogue + Diversity of Opinion =
Transformational Change**

FRAMING THE ISSUE

The World Social Summit suggested that poverty was not just an economic issue, but also an ethical, social, and political issue that impacts people from every country. Here in Arkansas, 17.2% of residents live in poverty, ranking us as the 8th highest in the United States. Although there are many symptoms of poverty, for the purposes of this convening, the participants focused on the symptom of hunger.

Nationally, 15 million households experience food insecurity. This means that 15.7% of households have had occasions in the past 12 months when they did not have enough money to buy food that they or their family needed. Unfortunately, Arkansas ranks 5th in the nation with 19.5% of our families responding that they have experienced food hardship. This means that nearly 1 in 5 families here in Arkansas have experienced hunger in the past year. Additionally, households with children are even more likely to have experienced hunger (23.2%). ([Frac, How Hungry is America, August 2018](#))

The Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides support to 45 million Americans annually with 66% of their benefits going to households with children. In spite of this, 25% of households with children rely exclusively on charities to meet food needs. Further compounding the situation is that many of the people being served by SNAP or hunger-related charities report buying the cheapest food instead of the healthier food in order to provide enough to eat.

Additional reading at [Feeding America](#).



BECOMING INFORMED

Even before he was elected to serve as Governor of Arkansas, Winthrop Rockefeller had a long history of surrounding himself with experts on issues that mattered to him. Today, the Institute brings subject matter experts into our convenings to help participants become more informed on the issues we are discussing.

Monieca West, Federal Program Manager, Arkansas Department of Education led a *Bridges out of Poverty Workshop* to help participants understand what daily life is like for the nearly 500,000 Arkansans who live in poverty (talkpoverty.org).

Ronald Dedman, President of AT&T Arkansas shared the story of his organization, his leadership, and their efforts to focus on and combat hunger in Arkansas.

James Hopper, Director of Programs, Winthrop Rockefeller Institute led a panel discussion designed to help participants learn more about the work already being done in Arkansas and to help them begin considering how they and their organizations can get involved in solving this issue.

Kathy Webb, Executive Director, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance challenged the participants to consider supporting public policy efforts to help address hunger on a broad scale and emphasized the importance of volunteering with local organizations to get involved in the fight.

Emily English, D.Ph., Research Director Access to Healthy Foods Research Group at Arkansas Children's Research Institute & UAMS shared some of the hunger focused research she is leading and the practical impact research is having throughout Arkansas. She encouraged participants to learn and teach others about the importance and benefits of healthy food.

Nate Coulter, Executive Director, Central Arkansas Library System served as an example of a leader at a non-hunger focused organization that has become a leading partner organization in the fight against hunger. He encouraged participants to find and form partnerships that help both groups further their collective missions.



BEING THOUGHTFULLY CONCERNED

As network partners with the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI), the Clinton School and the Institute opted to bring a NIFI-style deliberation to the Under 40 Forum to deepen participants' understanding of hunger and food systems. NIFI produces study guides on a variety of issues, encouraging deliberation around policy options based on unbiased facts and research. Farrah Beck & Samantha Black, Master of Public Service Candidates at the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, led participants in a deliberation using the NIFI [Land of Plenty Issue Guide](#), which examined the food supply and food assistance programs from a national perspective.

Jessica Guarino, LL.M. candidate at the University of Arkansas School of Law Agriculture and Food Law program, provided an Arkansas-specific discussion guide to aid participant deliberation on the benefits and trade-offs of various approaches to fighting hunger in Arkansas.

**Learning about
poverty**

1

**Discuss hunger
in Arkansas**

2

**Engage in dialogue
about potential
hunger solutions
in Arkansas**

3

**Take time for
networking,
relaxation, and
further discussion**

4

**Hear how AT&T
Arkansas is
combating hunger
throughout
our state**

5

**Panel discussion
from leaders in
the fight against
hunger in Arkansas**

6

**Identify in
small groups
how they can
impact hunger**

7

**Commit to
fighting hunger
as individuals
& leaders.**

8

PARTICIPATING IN THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS

We engage our resources and Winthrop Rockefeller's values to convene purposeful gatherings on his historic cattle ranch. We do this work by employing the "Rockefeller Ethic" which represents the belief that diversity of opinion, engaging in respectful dialogue, and practicing collaborative problem solving combine to create transformational change. The productive energy of our mountaintop location coupled with the highest levels of hospitality ensure all who come here are able to do their best work.

After spending two half-days in a thoughtful examination of the issues and deliberating possible solutions, Under 40 leaders identified several areas they thought should be of high priority in the fight against hunger.

- ➔ Access to food for students
- ➔ Improved collaboration
- ➔ Social responsibility

Additionally, forum participants considered how they might take individual action to address hunger in their own communities. Some commitments included engaging policy makers and advocating for policies designed to address hunger, volunteering with hunger relief organizations, donating money, and spending more time learning about the issues from people who experience hunger and poverty.

- ➔ **Access to food for students:** Acknowledging the link between hunger and poor educational performance, Under 40 leaders wondered whether free meals as a benefit for all school students, regardless of income, might be a possible solution. Additionally, Under 40 leaders expressed concern about growing food insecurity rates on college campuses and thought it would be helpful to create and/or support food pantries on college campuses.
- ➔ **Improved collaboration:** Under 40 leaders learned about a number of programs and resources designed to address hunger in Arkansas, and wondered how those organizations share information about services and resources. Suggestions for strengthening collaboration included engaging existing service recipients to learn if their needs are being met and empowering those recipients by acting on their recommendations for improved service and resource delivery. One group also suggested leveraging technology to better connect service recipients with information about help that is available, including using texting services at schools and creating an app for service recipients and advocates to use in locating programs or connecting with other organizations to collaborate.
- ➔ **Social responsibility:** Some Under 40 Leaders present at the Forum thought businesses should consider the impact of wages in their organizations and be committed to fair wages that allow employees to live above the poverty level. Other suggestions included supporting "Pay as you can" restaurants in communities that offer businesses and individuals the chance to make nutritious meals available to anyone regardless of their ability to pay.

SELECTED RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- ☑ [Winrock International Agriculture Programs](#)
- ☑ [National Issues Forum Land of Plenty Guide](#)
- ☑ [Bridges out of Poverty](#)
- ☑ [Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance](#)
- ☑ [Arkansas Children's Access to Healthy Foods](#)
- ☑ [Central Arkansas Library System - Be Mighty Program](#)
- ☑ [Arkansas Food Bank Map](#)
- ☑ [Apply for Arkansas's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#)
- ☑ [Feeding America's quick facts about Hunger in Arkansas](#)
- ☑ [Find a Little Free Pantry Near You](#)
- ☑ [Rise Against Hunger Multimedia Kit](#)
- ☑ [USDA National School Lunch Program](#)
- ☑ [Healthy Food Playbook](#)
- ☑ [Food Research and Action Center](#)



PRESENTERS

Nate Coulter

Executive Director

Central Arkansas Library System

Emily English

Assistant Professor

UAMS Department of
Pediatrics, Access to Healthy
Foods Research Group, AR
Children's Research Institute

Kathy Webb

Executive Director

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

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Arkansas Department of Education,
Division of Higher Education

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Jordyn Williams

Program Associate |
Winrock International

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**We continue
Winthrop
Rockefeller’s
collaborative
approach
to creating
transformational
change.**

The Winthrop Rockefeller Institute Mission

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