



HUNGER FACTS FROM FEEDING AMERICA

In many ways, America is the land of plenty. But for 1 in 6 Americans, hunger is a reality. Many people believe that the problems associated with hunger are confined to small pockets of society, certain areas of the country, or certain neighborhoods, but the reality is much different.

Right now, millions of Americans are struggling with hunger. These are often hard-working adults, children and seniors who simply cannot make ends meet and are forced to go without food for several meals, or even days.

Hunger & Poverty Statistics

Although related, food insecurity and poverty are not the same. Unemployment rather than poverty is a stronger predictor of food insecurity.

Poverty

- In 2009, 43.6 million people (14.3 percent) were in poverty.
- In 2009, 8.8 million (11.1% percent) families were in poverty.
- In 2009, 24.7 million (12.9 percent) of people ages 18-64 were in poverty.
- In 2009, 15.5 million (20.7 percent) children under the age of 18 were in poverty.
- In 2009, 3.4 million (8.9 percent) seniors 65 and older were in poverty.

Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security

- In 2010, 48.8 million Americans lived in food insecure households, 32.6 million adults and 16.2 million children.
- In 2010, 14.5 percent of households (17.2 million households) were food insecure.
- In 2010, 5.4 percent of households (6.4 million households) experienced very low food security.
- In 2010, households with children reported food insecurity at a significantly higher rate than those without children, 20.2 percent compared to 11.7 percent.
- In 2010, households that had higher rates of food insecurity than the national average included households with children (20.2 percent), especially households with children headed by single women (35.1 percent) or single men (25.4

percent), Black non-Hispanic households (25.1 percent) and Hispanic households (26.2 percent).

- In 2009, 8.0 percent of seniors living alone (925,000 households) were food insecure.
- Food insecurity exists in every county in America, ranging from a low of 5 percent in Steele County, ND to a high of 38 percent in Wilcox County, AL

Use of Emergency Food Assistance and Federal Food Assistance Programs

- In 2010, 4.8 percent of all U.S. households (5.6 million households) accessed emergency food from a food pantry one or more times.
- In 2010, 59.2 percent of food-insecure households participated in at least one of the three major Federal food assistance programs –Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamp Program), The National School Lunch Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.
- Feeding America provides emergency food assistance to an estimated 37 million low-income people annually, a 46 percent increase from 25 million since *Hunger in America 2010*
- Among members of Feeding America, 74 percent of pantries, 65 percent of kitchens, and 54 percent of shelters reported that there had been an increase since 2006 in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites.

Child Hunger Facts

The problem of childhood hunger is not simply a moral issue. Child hunger hampers a young person's ability to learn and becomes more likely to suffer from poverty as an adult. Scientific evidence suggests that hungry children are less likely to become productive citizens.

- Nearly 14 million children are estimated to be served by Feeding America, over 3 million of which are ages 5 and under.
- According to the USDA, over 16 million children lived in food insecure (low food security and very low food security) households in 2010.
- 20% or more of the child population in 40 states and D.C. lived in food insecure households in 2009. The District of Columbia (32.3%) and Oregon (29.2%) had the highest rates of children in households without consistent access to food.
- In 2009, the top five states with the highest rate of food insecure children under 18 are the District of Columbia, Oregon, Arizona, Arkansas, & Texas.
- In 2009, the top five states with the lowest rate of food insecure children under 18 are North Dakota, New Hampshire, Virginia, Maryland, & Massachusetts.
- Proper nutrition is vital to the growth and development of children. 62 percent of client households with children under the age of 18 reported participating in the National School Lunch Program, but only 14 percent reported having a child participate in a summer feeding program that provides free food when school is out.
- 54 percent of client households with children under the age of 3 participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- 32 percent of pantries, 42 percent of kitchens, and 18 percent of shelters in the Feeding America network reported "many more children in the summer" being served by their programs.

- In 2010, 16.4 million or approximately 22 percent of children in the U.S. lived in poverty.
- Research indicates that hungry children have do more poorly in school and have lower academic achievement because they are not well prepared for school and cannot concentrate.
- In fiscal year 2009, 48 percent of all SNAP participants were children
- During the 2010 federal fiscal year, 20.6 million low-income children received free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program. Unfortunately, just 2.3 million of these same income-eligible children participated in the Summer Food Service Program that same year.

Hunger in the Suburbs

The hidden nature of hunger and poverty makes us less aware of its prevalence in the suburbs, but hunger does exist in the suburbs and it is growing.

The growth in poverty and hunger in the suburbs is caused by the lure of job growth, the revitalization of central cities making city life too expensive for many poor people, and the creation of cheaper housing in "inner ring" suburbs, as middle class people move further out.

- In 2010, the prevalence of household food insecurity in suburban areas was 12.6 percent (6.2 million households), and the prevalence of very low food security was 4.6 percent (2.3 million households).
- Feeding America estimates that 48 percent of all clients served reside in rural/suburban areas.
- Suburban poverty appears to have distinct regional patterns. Fourteen of the fifteen suburbs with the highest poverty rates in 2000 were located in the Southern or Western regions of the country.
- The poverty rate for people living in suburban areas was 16.6 percent (7.9 million people) in 2009.

Rural Hunger

Rates of food insecurity, the statistical measurement of hunger or near hunger, among rural households is generally lower than urban households, but slightly higher than the national average. The irony is that many of these food-insecure households are in the very rural and farm communities whose productivity feeds the world and provides low-cost wholesome food for American consumers.

- Challenges facing rural areas differ from metro/urban areas in several significant ways.
- Employment is more concentrated in low-wage industries
- Unemployment and *under*employment are greater
- Education levels are lower

- Work-support services, such as flexible and affordable child care and public transportation, are less available
- The rural marketplace offers less access to communication and transportation networks and
- Offers companies less access to activities that foster administration, research and development.
- The fact that so many people need to turn to a food bank or church pantry just to eat in the very same communities where the food is raised is a sad reminder of how much more needs to be done.
- 14.7% of rural households are food insecure, an estimated 3 million households.
- Compared to all regions, the South continues to have the highest poverty rate (under 100 percent of poverty) among people in families with related children under 18 years living in rural areas (24.5 percent) and living in cities and suburbs (19.7 percent).
- Among all people in female-headed families with related children under 18 years, 50.7 percent were poor in rural areas compared to 35 percent in the suburbs.

Senior Hunger

As a nation, we have a special responsibility to vulnerable populations such as the elderly. Older Americans have built the economy and national infrastructure from which we now benefit. It is morally reprehensible that the people that built this country should suffer hunger in a land of plenty, which they helped to create. Food insecurity among this vulnerable population is especially troublesome because they have unique nutritional needs and may require special diets for medical conditions. Additionally, older Americans have a continuum of need based on their mobility and ability to prepare meals. As a result, different nutrition interventions are required to reach seniors throughout this continuum of need. In February 2010, Feeding America released its fifth and most comprehensive study of hunger in the U.S.: Hunger in America 2010.

Here are some key findings from the study regarding the elderly in our country:

- Nearly 3 million elderly persons are served by Feeding America each year. 18.6 percent of client households have at least one member who is age 65 or over, and 52 percent of these households are food insecure - an estimated 1.2 million households.
- Among all clients served by Feeding America, 8 percent were seniors age 65 or over while 14.2 percent of adult clients interviewed at emergency feeding programs were 65 or older.
- Among all client households with at least one senior, 10.5 percent use senior brown bag programs, 16.5 percent attend senior nutrition sites (such as senior centers that serve lunch) and 6.6 percent receive home-delivered meals or meals-on-wheels.
- 30 percent of client households with seniors indicated that they have had to choose between food and medical care and 35 percent had to choose between food and paying for heat/utilities.

- In 2010, 7.9 percent of households with seniors (2.3 million households) were food insecure. 8.9 percent of the elderly live below the poverty line, 3.4 million older Americans.
- In 2010, 9.0 percent of the elderly lived below the poverty line, 3.5 million older Americans.
- The number of food insecure seniors is projected to increase by 50% when the youngest of the Baby Boom Generation reaches age 60 in 2025.
- Senior are more likely to be food insecure if they.
 - Live in a southern state
 - Are younger
 - Live with a grandchild
 - Are African American
 - Are Hispanic
- Elderly households are much less likely to receive help through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) than non-elderly households, even when expected benefits are roughly the same.
- Seniors require greater consideration towards their health and medical needs that can become compromised when there is not enough food to eat. A study which examined the health and nutritional status of seniors found that food insecure seniors had significantly lower intakes of vital nutrients in their diets when compared to their food secure counterparts. In addition, food insecure seniors were 2.33 times more likely to report fair/poor health status and had higher nutritional risk.
- For seniors, protecting oneself from food insecurity and hunger is more difficult than for the general population. For example, a study that focused on the experience of food insecurity among the elderly population found that food insecure seniors sometimes had enough money to purchase food but did not have the resources to access or prepare food due to lack of transportation, functional limitations, or health problems.

Working Poor

One of the most common misconceptions is the assumption that if someone is hungry, that means they do not have a job and are living on the streets. What most people don't understand is that anyone can experience hunger. It is a silent epidemic that affects 49 million Americans.

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2010, 21 million people lived in working-poor families. This translates into nearly 9.6 percent of all American families living below 100 percent of poverty have at least one family member working. In fact, 36 percent of client households served by the Feeding America network have one or more adults working.

- Female-headed households were more than twice as likely to be among the working poor as male-headed households in 2008.

- Among families with at least one member working at least half a year, families with children were 4 times more likely than families without children to live in poverty in 2008.
- According to a survey on hunger and homelessness conducted by the United States Conference of Mayors, 88.5% of cities participating in the survey cited unemployment as one of three major causes of hunger in their city.
- Thirty-nine percent of all adults served by Feeding America have completed high school or equivalent degree with no further education beyond high school.
- 34 percent of all households served by Feeding America have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- Sixty-five percent of working families that received SNAP were single-parent families.