



Facts on Childhood Hunger

Annual, national-level statistics

Top-line Facts:

- 16.2 million kids in America struggle with hunger. (Source: USDA *Household Food Security in the United States*)
- 10.5 million kids eligible for free or reduced-price school breakfast do not get it. (Source: Food Research and Action Center, School Breakfast Scorecard)
- More than 20 million kids get a free or reduced-price school lunch on an average school day. (Source: Food Research and Action Center, School Breakfast Scorecard)
- Six out of 7 eligible kids do not get free summer meals. (Source: Food Research and Action Center, "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report")
- In 2010, 40.3 million people in over 18.6 million households across America got help through SNAP (food stamps); about half of those households (8.9 million) were households with children. (Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Services)
- 15.7 million children (21.6%) in America live in poverty. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports).
19,967,133 - 9,433,285

WHY CHILDHOOD HUNGER IS IMPORTANT

Health

- Children who struggle with hunger are sick more often, recover more slowly, and are more likely to be hospitalized.
- They are more likely to experience headaches, stomachaches, colds, ear infections and fatigue.
- Children who face hunger are more susceptible to obesity and its harmful health consequences as children and as adults.

Cognition and Academics

- Undernourished children 0-3 years of age cannot learn as much, as fast or as well.
- Lack of enough nutritious food impairs a child's ability to concentrate and perform well in school.

Emotional and Social Well-Being

- Children who regularly do not get enough nutritious food to eat have significantly higher levels of behavioral, emotional and academic problems and be more aggressive and anxious.
- Teens who regularly do not get enough to eat are more likely to be suspended from school and have difficulty getting along with other kids.



THE FACTS

FOOD SECURITY

All data refer to the year 2010. They are collected in 2010, and reported in September 2011.

48.8 million Americans—including 16.2 million children—lack the means to get enough nutritious food on a regular basis. They live in food- insecure households and as a result, they struggle with hunger at some time during the year.

Food-insecure families

- **Food insecurity**—the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food—exists in 17.2 million households in America, 3.9 million of them with children.
- Rates of food insecurity are substantially higher than the national average among households with incomes near or below the Federal poverty line, among households with children headed by single parents (35.1% of children living in a single-mom household are food-insecure), and among Black and Hispanic households.
- Food insecurity is most common in large cities but still exists in rural areas suburbs and other outlying areas around large cities.
 - 25 % of children living in large cities are food insecure
- The typical (median) food-secure household spends 27 percent more for food than the typical food-insecure household of the same size and composition.
- 57% of food-insecure households report that in the previous month they had participated in one or more of the three largest Federal food and nutrition assistance programs: SNAP (food stamps), School Lunch and WIC.

The full USDA report, *Household Food Security in the United States, 2010*, including state food insecurity data, is available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/err125/>

Children struggling with hunger (i.e. children living in food-insecure households)

- More than 16 million children (nearly one in five children in America) struggle with hunger. They live in families that lack the means to regularly put enough nutritious food on the table for everyone to live healthy, active lives. They are considered “food-insecure.”

POVERTY and UNEMPLOYMENT

Poverty and unemployment are the root causes of hunger.

- \$22,350 in annual income is the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children (2011).
- 46.2 million Americans—15.1 percent—live in poverty (2010). This is the largest number of people living in poverty since estimates were first published (1956) and the highest poverty rate since 1994.
- 15.7 million children in America(2010) live in poverty, Over 200,000 more than the year before.



- The unemployment rate is now back above the 9 percent mark (9.1% in September 2011), making it extremely difficult to keep America's children adequately fed.

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Child nutrition programs make a positive difference. They were developed to help needy families get the nutritious food they need. *Rising participation is a sign that more families are using these programs as they were intended—they are a sign of good solutions at work. The goal is to make sure that every family that needs these programs and is eligible for them is using them.*

- 1 in 4 Americans used at least one of the 15 USDA food and nutrition assistance programs sometime during 2009.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly “food stamps”). USDA FY10 (October 2009-September 2010)

- 40.3 million Americans used SNAP on average per month during 2010.
 - 4.8 million more than in an average month of 2009, a 20.3 percent increase
- Almost half of these are children: 18.5 million American children received SNAP benefits on average each month of 2010.
- The average monthly SNAP benefit in 2010 was \$282.31 per household, or \$1.48 per meal.
- Nearly half (49.2 percent) of American children will receive SNAP benefits at some point in their lives, reports a study in the *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, November 2009.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): USDA FY10 (October 31, 2009-September 30, 2010)

- Nearly 9.2 million American women and children under the age of 5 received WIC benefits on average per month of calendar year 2010, up 5 percent over fiscal year 2009.
- Over 7 million infants and children under 5 received WIC benefits per month in 2010.

National School Lunch Program:

USDA FY10 (October 31, 2009-September 30, 2010)

- On an average school day in 2010, 31.6 million kids ate a federally funded school lunch.
 - On an average school day in 2010, 20.5 million American children ate a free or reduced-price school lunch—1.2 million more than in 2009.

National School Breakfast Program

- 9.4 million kids get free or reduced-price school breakfast on an average school day, more than ever before...but 10.5 million eligible kids go without.
 - Another way to put it that less than 50% (47.2%) of kids who get free or low-priced school lunches get a school breakfast.

Summer Meal Programs

- Two federal programs—National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program—provide summer meals to kids in low-income families.



- Generally, children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch are also eligible for free summer meals.
- On an average weekday in July (the peak month for these programs), 2.8 million children received a free meal through summer meal programs —90,000 **fewer** kids than in July 2008.
 - 73,000 fewer kids participated in the Summer Meals programs in July 2009 than in July 2008, a 2.5 percent drop.
 - Only 1 in 7 kids who ate a free or reduced-price school lunch during the school year also participated in summer meal programs.
 - These declines reflect the impact of the recession. Budget cuts in many states forced school districts to eliminate or reduce their summer programs, leaving kids who relied on school lunch during the school year without during the summer.

Emergency Food Assistance

Food pantries and soup kitchens are intended to provide food assistance in emergency situations, rather than meet longer-term needs. That's why they are often the most immediately accessible and easily understood resources for families struggling to put food on the table. The application process is simpler than it is for federal assistance programs, the requirements are often less strict, and families can start receiving benefits more quickly.

- 27 million individuals—including 14 million children--received food from Feeding America food pantries in 2010
 - This represents 10 million households.
- Food-insecure households are 15 times as likely as food-secure households to get food from a food pantry, and 19 times as likely to have eaten a meal at an emergency kitchen.
- 76.5 percent of food-insecure households did not use a food pantry at all during the year; 27% said there wasn't a pantry in their community and 15% said they didn't know whether one was available.