



Poverty and Hunger Fact Sheet

September 2017

Poverty and hunger in America often go hand in hand, but they are not the same. Poverty is not the ultimate determinant of food insecurity – rather, it’s one of many associated factors. Research shows that unemployment, lower household assets and certain demographic characteristics can also be key predictors of food insecurity among people living in the U.S. Read on for national hunger and poverty facts and statistics, or visit [Map the Meal Gap](#) for state-specific information.

POVERTY STATISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES¹

- As of 2016, 40.6 million people (12.7%) live in poverty.
- 22.8 million (11.6%) of people ages 18-64 live in poverty.
- 13.3 million (18% percent) children under the age of 18 live in poverty.
- 4.6 million (9.3%) seniors 65 and older live in poverty.
- The overall poverty rate according to the Supplemental Poverty Measure is 13.9 percent, significantly higher than the comparable official poverty rate of 12.7%.²
- Under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, there are 44.6 million people living in poverty, 3.9 million more than are represented by the comparable official poverty measure (40.7 million).³





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POVERTY AMONG PEOPLE FEEDING AMERICA SERVES⁴

- Based on annual income, 72% of all of the households Feeding America serves live at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty line.
- The median annual household income of people Feeding America serves is \$9,175.
- More than half of households Feeding America serves (54%) report at least one employed person at some point in the past year.

FOOD INSECURITY IN THE U.S.⁵

- As of 2016, 41.2 million Americans live in food-insecure households, including 28.3 million adults and 12.9 million children.
- The majority of people who are food insecure do not live in poverty, and the majority of people who live in poverty are not food insecure. An estimated 58% of food-insecure individuals reside in households that earn more than 100% of the poverty line, and 61% of people living in poor households are in fact food secure.¹³
- An estimated 27% of individuals who are considered food insecure live in households that earn incomes above 185% of the poverty line, making them likely ineligible for most federal nutrition assistance programs.
- 12 percent of households (15.6 million households) are estimated to be food insecure.
- 5 percent of households (6.1 million households) experience very low food security.
- Households with children report food insecurity at a significantly higher rate than those without children, 17% compared to 11%.
- Households that have higher rates of food insecurity than the national average include households with children (17%), especially households with children headed by single women (32%) or single men (22%), Black non-Hispanic households (23%) and Hispanic households (19%).
- As of 2015, 5.4 million seniors (over age 60), or 8% of all seniors, are estimated to be food insecure.⁶
- Food insecurity exists in every county in America, ranging from a low of 3% in Grant County, KS to a high of 38% in Jefferson County, MS.⁷



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FOOD INSECURITY IN THE U.S. CONT.

- Fifteen states exhibited statistically significantly higher household food-insecurity rates than the U.S. national average 2014-2016 (13.0%)⁸
 1. Mississippi (18.7%)
 2. Louisiana (18.3%)
 3. Alabama (18.1%)
 4. New Mexico (17.6%)
 5. Arkansas (17.5%)
 6. Kentucky (17.3%)
 7. Maine (16.4%)
 8. Indiana (15.2%)
 9. Oklahoma (15.2%)
 10. North Carolina (15.1%)
 11. West Virginia (14.9%)
 12. Ohio (14.8%)
 13. Arizona (14.6%)
 14. Oregon (14.6%)
 15. Texas (14.3%)

CHARITABLE AND FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- In 2016, 59% of food-insecure households participated in at least one of the three major [federal food assistance programs](#)—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-formerly Food Stamp Program), The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) -- in the prior month.⁹
- Feeding America provides food assistance to an estimated 46.5 million people annually, including 12 million children and 7 million seniors. Among all Feeding America serves, 55% report receiving SNAP benefits.¹⁰ Nearly one-quarter (24%) of households Feeding America serves with children under the age of 18 report receiving benefits through WIC.¹¹
- Nearly all households Feeding America serves with school-aged children (94%) receive free or reduced-price school lunch through the National School Lunch Program, whereas less than half of the same population (46%) participate in the School Breakfast Program's free or reduced-price breakfasts¹²



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- 6) Ziliak, J.P. & Gundersen, C. (2017) *The State of Senior Hunger in America 2015: An Annual Report, Supplement*. Feeding America and The National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH).
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- 9) Ibid.
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- 11) Ibid.
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