



Poverty and Hunger Fact Sheet

May 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 2015, 43.1 million people (13.5%) live in poverty.
- 24.4 million (12.4%) of people ages 18-64 live in poverty.
- 14.5 million (19.7% percent) children under the age of 18 live in poverty.
- 4.2 million (8.8%) seniors 65 and older live in poverty.
- The overall poverty rate according to the Supplemental Poverty Measure is 14.3 percent, significantly higher than the comparable official poverty rate of 13.7%.²
- Under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, there are 43.5 million people living in poverty, 2.1 million more than are represented by the comparable official poverty measure (43.1 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 2015, 42.2 million Americans live in food-insecure households, including 29.1 million adults and 13.1 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 57% of food-insecure individuals reside in households that earn more than 100% of the poverty line, and 60% of people living in poor households are in fact food secure.¹³
- An estimated 26% 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.
- 13 percent of households (15.8 million households) are estimated to be food insecure.
- 5 percent of households (6.3 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 (30%) or single men (22%), Black non-Hispanic households (22%) and Hispanic households (19%).
- As of 2014, 5.4 million seniors (over age 60), or 9% 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.

- Twelve states exhibited statistically significantly higher household food-insecurity rates than the U.S. national average 2013-2015 (13.7%)⁸

1. Mississippi (20.8%)
2. Arkansas (19.2%)
3. Louisiana (18.4%)
4. Alabama (17.6%)
5. Kentucky (17.6%)
6. Ohio (16.1%)
7. Oregon (16.1%)
8. North Carolina (15.9%)
9. Maine (15.8%)
10. Oklahoma (15.5%)
11. Texas (15.4%)
12. Tennessee (15.1%)

CHARITABLE AND FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- In 2015, 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 breakfasts.¹²



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APPENDIX

- 1) Proctor, B.D., J.L. Semega, & M.A. Kollar. (2016). *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*. U.S. Census Bureau.
- 2) Renwick, T. & L. Fox (2016). *The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015*. U.S. Census Bureau.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.
- 5) Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M. P., Gregory, C., & Singh, A. (2016). [Household Food Security in the United States in 2015](#). USDA ERS.
- 6) Ziliak, J.P. & Gundersen, C. Crumbaugh, A. (2016.) *The State of Senior Hunger in America 2014: An Annual Report, Supplement*. National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH).
- 7) Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Satoh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. *Map the Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2017.
- 8) Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.
- 13) Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. *Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2015*, AP-072, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2016.