



Rural Hunger Fact Sheet

May 2017

Rates of food insecurity among rural households are generally higher than urban households. 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.

According to USDA data, challenges facing rural areas differ from metro/urban areas in several significant ways. Read below to learn more about these ways and other rural hunger and poverty facts.

CHALLENGES FACING RURAL AREAS COMPARED TO URBAN¹

- Employment is more concentrated in low-wage industries;
- Unemployment and *underemployment* 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 networks²; and
- Offers companies less access to activities that foster administration, research and development.

RURAL FOOD INSECURITY¹

- Fifteen percent of households (2.8 million) located in rural (nonmetropolitan) areas are food insecure.³
- Rural (nonmetro) counties make up 63% of all 3,142 U.S. counties, but account for 67% of counties with higher-than-average food-insecurity rates, and 76% of counties with food-insecurity rates that rank in the top 10% of all U.S. counties.⁴





Rural Hunger Fact Sheet

RURAL FOOD INSECURITY CONT.

- Counties with higher rates of child food insecurity tend to be even more disproportionately rural; 70% of counties with higher-than-average child food-insecurity rates are nonmetro, as are 86% of counties whose child food-insecurity rates fall into the top 10%.⁵

RURAL POVERTY

- 7.4 million Americans (16.7%) living in rural areas live in poverty.⁶
- Compared to all regions, the South continues to have the highest poverty rate among people in families living in rural areas (25% versus 21%).⁷
- Among people in families with a single female head of household living in rural areas, 47% live in poverty, as compared to 35% in the suburbs.⁸

NUTRITION AND OBESITY

Latinos are at greater risk of obesity and diabetes than their white, non-Hispanic peers. Diabetes and other chronic health conditions can further complicate the issue of food insecurity.

- Hispanics are at greater risk of obesity than other racial and ethnic groups. In 2015, Hispanic Americans were 1.1 times more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic whites (32% versus 29%).¹⁴
- Prevalence of diagnosed diabetes is higher for Hispanics overall (8.7%) than for whites (5.8%). Hispanic males are not only at greater risk of diabetes than white males (9.1% versus 6.3%), but also Hispanic females (8.4%) and white females (5.3%).¹⁵



Appendix

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2016). *Rural America At A Glance: 2016 Edition*. (Economic Information Bulletin 162). Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/80894/eib-162.pdf?v=42684>
2. USDA. Economic Research Service. Robert Gibbs, L. Kusmin. Low-Skill Employment and the Changing Economy of Rural America. ERR-10. October 2005.
3. Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M., Gregory, C., & Singh, A. (2016). [*Household Food Security in the United States in 2015. Table 2*](#). USDA ERS.
4. Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. *Map the Meal Gap 2017: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2015*. Feeding America, 2016.
5. Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. *Map the Meal Gap 2016: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2014*. Feeding America, 2015.
6. Ibid
7. Proctor, B.D., Semega, J.L., & Kollar, M.A. (2016). [*Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*](#). U.S. Census Bureau.
8. U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey. 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. [*POV43: Region, Division and Type of Residence—Poverty Status for People in Families With Related Children Under 18 by Family Structure: 2015*](#). Below 100% of Poverty—All Races.
9. Current Population Survey, 2015.