

Child Hunger Facts

The problem of childhood hunger is not simply a moral issue. Scientific evidence suggests that hungry children are less likely to become productive citizens.



A child who is unequipped to learn because of hunger and poverty is more likely to be poor as an adult. As such, the existence of childhood hunger in the United States threatens future American prosperity.

Facts

- Nearly 14 million children are estimated to be served by Feeding America, over 3 million of which are ages 5 and under. **i**
- According to the USDA, an estimated 16.7 million children lived in food insecure (low food security and very low food security) households in 2008. **ii**
- 8 states plus the District of Columbia have 20% or more of children under 18 living in food insecure households; the states of Texas (22.1%) and Mississippi (21.5%) have the highest rates of children in households without consistent access to food. **iii**
- The top five states with the highest rate of food insecure children under 18 are Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arizona, South Carolina and the District of Columbia. **iii**
- The top five states with the lowest rate of food insecure children under 18 are North Dakota, Virginia, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Hawaii. **iii**
- The top six states with the highest rate of food insecure children under 5 are Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, and New Mexico
- The top five states with the lowest rate of food insecure children under 5 are Massachusetts, New Jersey, Hawaii, New York, and New Hampshire
- Proper nutrition is vital to the growth and development of children, particularly for low-income children. 62% of all client households with children under the age of 18 participated in a school lunch program, but only 14% participated in a summer feeding program that provides free food when school is out. **i**
- 54% of client households with children under the age of 3 participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). **i**
- 32% of pantries, 42% of kitchens, and 18% of shelters in the Feeding America network reported “many more children in the summer” being served by their programs. **i**
- Emergency food assistance plays a vital role in the lives of low-income families. In 2002, more than half of the non-elderly families that accessed a food pantry at least once during the year had children under the age of 18. **iv**
- 14 million or approximately 19% of children in the U.S. live in poverty. The rate of poverty for children under 18 remains higher than those aged 18 to 64 and for those aged 65 and over. **v**
- Research indicates that even mild undernutrition experienced by young children during critical periods of growth impacts the behavior of children, their school performance, and their overall cognitive development. **vi**
- In fiscal year 2008, 49 % of all SNAP participants were children. **vii**
- During the 2008 federal fiscal year, 18.5 million low-income children received free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program. Unfortunately, just 2.1 million of these same income-eligible children participated in the Summer Food Service Program that same year. **viii**

i Rhoda Cohen, J. Mabli, F., Potter, Z., Zhao. Hunger in America 2010. Feeding America. February 2010.

ii Nord, Mark, M. Andrews, S. Carlson. United States Department of Agriculture/Economic Research Service, Household Food Security in the United States, 2008.

iii Cook, John. Feeding America. Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005-2007.

iv Zedlewski, Sheila, S. Nelson. Snapshots of America’s Families. November 2003.

v DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, B.D. Proctor, C.H. Lee. U.S. Census Bureau, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2008. September 2009.

vi The Links Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development of Children, 1998, Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy.

vii Wolkwitz, Kari. USDA, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2008, September 2009.

viii USDA, FNS. National School Lunch Program: Participation and Lunches Served. Data as of September 2009



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