

No Progress Against Hunger: 2008¹

Food insecurity and hunger in the United States: ²

Households:

- 14.6 percent of households in the United States were food insecure, meaning they were often unsure of how they would provide for their next meal.
- The number of food insecure households increased from 13 million in 2007 to 17.1 million in 2008.
- 5.7 percent of households experienced hunger, also known as very low food security. The number of food insecure households with hunger increased from 4.7 million in 2007 to 6.7 million in 2008.

Individuals:

- 49.1 million people lived in food insecure households, an increase of 12.9 million from 2007 to 2008.
- 17.3 million people lived in households that experience hunger, an increase of 5.3 million from 2007 to 2008.
- 16.7 million children lived in food insecure families, an increase of 4.2 million from 2007 to 2008.

Child hunger increased significantly in 2008: ³

- Nearly one in four children was at-risk of hunger—16.7 million, or 22.5 percent of children, were food insecure.
- The number of children experiencing hunger, or very low food security, topped one million for the first time since data has been collected.
- The number of very low food secure children increased from 691,000 in 2007 to 1.1 million in 2008, an increase of 56 percent.

Food insecurity and hunger are more prevalent in households with children: ⁴

- Households with children were almost twice as likely to experience food insecurity: 21 percent of households with children were food insecure, compared to 11.3 percent of households with no children.
- 37.2 percent of households made up of single mothers and their children were food insecure.
- Families headed by single mothers were over two and one-half times as likely to experience hunger as married-couple families (37.2 percent compared to 14.3 percent).

Food insecurity remains substantially higher among African-American and Hispanic households: ⁵

- African American and Hispanic households were roughly two and one-half times as likely to be food-insecure as White households.
- 25.7 percent of African American and 26.9 percent of Hispanic households were food insecure, compared to 10.7 percent of White households.
- Food insecurity among African American households grew by 17.7 percent, or 557,000 households, from 2007 to 2008.
- Food insecurity among Hispanic households grew by 35.3 percent, or 947,000 households, from 2007 to 2008.

A note about how we measure hunger:

USDA measures food security annually and releases data from the previous year each November. Food security is measured on the household level.

Food insecure households are those in which the household has multiple indications of food access problems impacting at least one but not necessarily all members of the household. Food insecure households are broken into two subcategories:

- **Low food security** is defined as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods, or not knowing how you will provide for your next meal.
- **Very low food security**, or food insecurity with hunger, is defined as disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake, such as cutting portion sizes or skipping meals entirely.

In 2006, USDA changed the labels it uses for food insecure households. Households and individuals that were previously “food insecure” and “food insecure with hunger” were renamed “low food secure” and “very low food secure” respectively. No changes were made to the Food Security Survey Questionnaire or methodology, so data is comparable with past years.

Bread for the World continues to refer to “very low food secure” households as “food insecure with hunger.”

For more information on Household Food Security:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR83/ERR83b.pdf>

To read the full report:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR83/ERR83.pdf>

¹ All data compiled from *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008* (USDA, Economic Research Service, November 2009).

² Table 1A

³ Table 1B

⁴ Table 2

⁵ Table 2