

## Facts on Hunger and Poverty in the United States

For the first time since the start of the Great Recession in 2007, U.S. poverty and food insecurity rates declined in 2015 (latest data available), while both median household income and health insurance coverage increased. However, far too many of our neighbors continue to struggle to buy nutritious food, pay for decent housing, and secure steady jobs with livable wages.

- More than 42 million Americans, including 1 in 6 children, lived in households that struggled to put food on the table in 2015.<sup>1</sup> African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans were approximately twice as likely as the overall population to live at risk of hunger.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 43 million Americans lived below the poverty line (\$24,250 for a family of 4) in 2015; 1 in 5 were children.<sup>3</sup>
- The poverty rate among female-headed households is 30.3 percent—more than twice the national rate (12.7 percent). Poverty is even higher among African American (35.7 percent) and Latino (37.1 percent) female-headed households.<sup>4</sup>
- Twice as many people lived in areas of concentrated poverty (poverty rates of 40 percent or more) in 2015 as in 2000.<sup>5</sup>
- Among people living in poverty, Latinos are more than three times as likely to be living in communities of concentrated poverty as whites. African Americans are almost five times as likely.<sup>6</sup>
- SNAP reached 45 million low-income Americans<sup>7</sup> and moved an estimated 4.6 million adults and 2.1 million children out of poverty in 2014.<sup>8</sup>
- About two-thirds of SNAP recipients are children, elderly, or disabled.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2015, more than 8.2 million low-income women and young children received nutritious food and nutrition education through the WIC program.<sup>10</sup>
- The earned income tax credit and the refundable portion of the child tax credit moved 9.2 million people out of poverty in 2015, including 4.8 million children.<sup>11</sup>
- The percentage of U.S. residents with health insurance rose to 90.9 percent in 2015. The largest number were covered by employment-based insurance (55.7 percent), followed by Medicaid (19.6 percent) and Medicare (16.3 percent).<sup>12</sup>

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Household Food Security in the United States in 2015. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/err215/err-215.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 13.

<sup>3</sup> Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015, U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Table B-1.

<sup>5</sup> Bread for the World Institute, *Hunger Report 2017: Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities*, page 102. <http://www.hungerreport.org>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, page 103.

<sup>7</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Policy

Basics: Introduction to SNAP. <http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-introduction-to-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

<sup>8</sup> Long-Term Benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP\\_report\\_final\\_nonembargo.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP_report_final_nonembargo.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-introduction-to-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

<sup>10</sup> USDA, Women, Infant, and Children Program Participation and Costs. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/wisummary.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the United States in 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/09/13/income-poverty-and-health-insurance-united-states-2015>

<sup>12</sup> Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the United States in 2015. <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-158.html>

## Facts on International Hunger and Poverty

- Worldwide, 767 million people live in extreme poverty. This is less than half of the 1.9 billion people who were extremely poor in 1990,<sup>1</sup> even when factoring in population growth.
- Since 1990, global hunger has decreased by nearly half.<sup>2</sup> But 795 million<sup>3</sup> people around the world remain chronically undernourished.
- Forty-five percent of all preventable child deaths are linked to malnutrition.<sup>4</sup> Every year, hunger kills 3.1 million children younger than age 5.<sup>5</sup>
- The most dangerous time to be malnourished is the 1,000-day period between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday. Those who survive such early childhood malnutrition are very likely to suffer from stunting, which causes irreversible damage to their physical and cognitive development.<sup>6</sup>
- One in four of the world's children are affected by stunting—156 million children.<sup>7</sup> Stunting causes lifelong health problems and reduces both the number of years of education people complete<sup>8</sup> and their lifetime earnings.<sup>9</sup> In some countries, stunting rates are more than 40 percent.<sup>10</sup>
- Undernutrition is also dangerous before and during pregnancy. About 20 percent of all maternal mortality is caused by iron deficiency anemia and stunting.<sup>11</sup>
- Nutrition programs for pregnant women and young children are highly cost effective. Every dollar invested in nutrition for children under age 2 during their first 1,000 days saves \$16 on average—and can save as much as \$166.<sup>12</sup>
- In the past, most people in extreme poverty lived in low-income countries. Today, most people in extreme poverty live in middle-income countries. By 2030, most people living in extreme poverty will live in fragile states—those countries most affected by conflict, climate change, and/or weak institutions.<sup>13</sup>
- The U.S. government has been a leader in providing humanitarian relief for people in emergency situations and development assistance for the longer term.
- U.S. foreign assistance saves millions of lives every year.<sup>14</sup> Some key federal hunger-related programs are Feed the Future (strengthening food security), Food for Peace (emergency food assistance), the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education (school meals), PEPFAR (prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS), and the Millennium Challenge Account (poverty reduction).<sup>15</sup>

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/10/02/tackling-inequality-vital-to-end-extreme-poverty-by-2030>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015\\_MDG\\_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2015, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4646e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs178/en/>

<sup>5</sup> Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), <http://www.gainhealth.org/about/>

<sup>6</sup> Bread for the World Institute, *Hunger Report 2017: Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities*, [www.hungerreport.org](http://www.hungerreport.org), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates2015/en/>

<sup>8</sup> World Health Assembly Global Nutrition

Targets 2025, Stunting Policy Brief. [http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/globaltargets\\_stunting\\_policybrief.pdf](http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/globaltargets_stunting_policybrief.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Food\\_for\\_Thought\\_UK.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Food_for_Thought_UK.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.mchip.net/node/28>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/news/childhood-nutrition-most-critical-and-economically-sound-intervention-finds>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/2014-01-27%20\(Discussion%20Paper%20on%20XP%20&%20Fragility\)%20FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/2014-01-27%20(Discussion%20Paper%20on%20XP%20&%20Fragility)%20FINAL%20(1).pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs378/en](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs378/en)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/>, <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-democracy-conflict-and-humanitarian-assistance/office-food>, <https://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/mcgovern-dole-food-education-program>, <http://www.pepfar.gov/>, <https://www.mcc.gov/>