

Hunger and Poverty in the United States

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- In 2003, 11.2 percent of US households were considered food insecure, which is defined as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” 16.6 percent of households with children were food insecure. 18.2 percent of children were considered to be food insecure.

–USDA 2003, *Measuring Food Insecurity and Hunger*

- About 35.1 million Americans—including nearly one in four American children—do not have access to sufficient food. Of these, 22.7 million are adults (10.4 percent of all adults) and 12.4 million are children (16.9 percent of all children).

–US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2006: “Household Food Security in the United States”

- In the US, 3.3 percent of children under the age of five are stunted for their age and 1.1 percent of children under five are underweight, while 7 percent of children under the age of five are overweight for their age.

–World Health Organization, 2002

- The prevalence of males who are 15 years and older who are obese is 31.1 percent. The prevalence of females who are 15 years and older who are obese is 33.2 percent.

–World Health Organization, 2004

- 25 million Americans—including 9 million children and 3 million seniors—are provided with emergency food assistance by food banks:

1. Seventy percent of client households served are food insecure, meaning they do not know where they will find their next meal. Of these households, 33 percent are experiencing hunger, meaning they are completely without a source of food.
2. Of the 25 million Americans, 66 percent are living below the federal poverty line and 12 percent are homeless. More than 40 percent have to choose between paying for utilities or heating fuel and food. Some 35 percent have to choose between paying for rent or a mortgage and food. Nearly 32 percent report having to choose between paying for medical bills and food.
3. Thirty-five percent of US food bank clients are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits. Among the households with school-age children, 62 percent participate in the federal school lunch program and 51 percent participate in the school breakfast program.
4. Nearly 74 percent of pantries, 65 percent of soup kitchens, and 43 percent of emergency shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious organizations. More than 66 percent of food pantries and 40 percent of soup

kitchens rely entirely on volunteers and have no paid staff.

–*America's Second Harvest*

- The US Food Stamp Program has an average monthly participation of 25,641,656.

–*Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), 2005*

- In 2005, the Census Bureau showed that the number of uninsured Americans was at a record high of 46.6 million, with 15.9 percent of Americans lacking health coverage. The number of uninsured children rose from 7.9 million in 2004 to 8.3 million in 2005.

–*Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2006*

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