

FACTS ON HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES

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In 2016, U.S. poverty and food insecurity rates continued to decline, while both median household income and health insurance coverage increased. However, far too many of our neighbors continue to struggle to buy nutritious food and secure steady jobs with livable wages.

- More than 41 million Americans, including 13 million children, lived in households that struggled to put food on the table in 2016.¹ African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans were approximately twice as likely as the overall population to live at risk of hunger.²
- More than 40 million Americans lived below the poverty line in 2016; 1 in 3 were children.³
- U.S. poverty rates fell or remained unchanged for every demographic group. However, African-American and Latino communities still have disproportionately higher rates of poverty than the general population.⁴
- For African-Americans, the poverty rate fell to 22 percent in 2016 from 24.1 percent in 2015, and for Latinos, the poverty rate fell to 19.4 percent in 2016 from 21.4 percent in 2015. The poverty rate among female-headed households fell from 26.6 percent in 2016 from 28.2 percent in 2015.⁵
- 12.3 percent of U.S. households were food insecure in 2016, declining further from a peak of 14.9 percent in 2011.⁶
- SNAP moved an estimated 3.6 million people out of poverty in 2016.⁷
- About two-thirds of SNAP recipients are children, elderly, or disabled.⁸
- In 2016, more than 7.6 million low-income women and young children retrieved nutritious food and nutrition education through the WIC program.⁹
- The earned income tax credit and the refundable portion of the child tax credit moved 8.2 million people out of poverty in 2016, including 4.8 million children.¹⁰
- The percentage of U.S. residents with health insurance rose to 91.2 percent in 2016. However, the uninsured rate for the most poorest Americans is still 13.7 percent.¹¹
- In 2016, states that expanded Medicaid had an average uninsured rate of 6.5 percent, while states that did not expand Medicaid fared much worse with an average uninsured rate of 11.7 percent.¹²

Endnotes

¹ Household Food Security in the United States in 2016. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err-237.pdf>

² Ibid, page 12.

³ Income and Poverty in the United State: 2016, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/P60-259.pdf>

⁴ Ibid, page 12.

⁵ Ibid, page 16.

⁶ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basicsintroduction-to-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

⁷ The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2016. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.pdf>

<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.pdf>

⁸ USDA, Women, Infant, and Children Program Participation and Costs. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/wisummary.pdf>

⁹ The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2016. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.pdf>

¹⁰ Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the United States in 2016. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-260.pdf>

¹¹ Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the United States in 2016. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-260.pdf>

¹² Ibid.

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FACTS ON INTERNATIONAL HUNGER AND POVERTY

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- Worldwide, extreme poverty rates have been cut by more than half since 1990, even while factoring in population growth. While this is a remarkable achievement, 1 in 5 people in developing regions (767 million) still live on less than \$1.90.¹
- Since 1990, global hunger has decreased by nearly half.² But, after more than a decade of declining, the number of undernourished people increased to 815 million in 2016, up from 777 million the year before.³
- Forty-five percent of all preventable child deaths are linked to malnutrition;⁴ this means 2.5 million child deaths are related to malnutrition every year.⁵
- 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.⁶
- One in four of the world's children are affected by stunting—155 million children.⁷ Stunting causes lifelong health problems and reduces both the number of years of education people complete⁸ and their lifetime earnings.⁹ In some countries, stunting rates are more than 40 percent.¹⁰
- Undernutrition is also dangerous before and during pregnancy. At least 20 percent of all maternal mortality is caused by iron deficiency anemia and stunting.¹¹
- 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 \$166.¹²
- By 2030, two-thirds of the world's poorest people will be living in fragile states—those countries most affected by conflict, climate change, and/or weak institutions.¹³ Children living in fragile states are at higher risk of malnutrition.¹⁴
- 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. Some key federal hunger-related programs are Feed the Future (strengthening food security), Food for Peace (emergency and recovery 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).

Endnotes

¹ World Bank. 2016. Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0958-3.

² [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.

³ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2017. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building resilience for peace and food security. Rome, FAO.

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

⁵ http://www.who.int/gho/child_health/mortality/mortality_under_five_text/en/

⁶ Bread for the World Institute, Hunger Report 2017: *Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities*, www.hungerreport.org, p. 10.

⁷ <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates2016/en/>

⁸ World Health Assembly Global Nutrition Targets 2025, Stunting Policy Brief. http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/globaltargets_stunting_policybrief.pdf

⁹ http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Food_for_Thought_UK.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates2016/en/>

¹¹ <http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/ida/en/>

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

¹³ OECD (2015). States of Fragility 2015: Meeting the Post-2015 Ambitions.

¹⁴ IFPRI (2016). Global Nutrition Report 2016: From Promise to Impact: Ending Malnutrition by 2030.

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