Ending Hunger in Maine

Maine is the 12th hungriest state in the country.

Hunger and Poverty Snapshot

- One in 7 households struggles to put food on the table.\(^1\)
- 246,883 people live in subcounties with poverty rates of 20 percent or more.\(^\text{iv}\)
- 4,264 veterans live below the poverty line.\(^\text{iii}\)

We Can End Hunger by 2030

The United States has made significant progress against hunger and poverty over the past 50 years. But too many people, including people in Maine, are being left behind.

Ending hunger and poor nutrition in Maine and in the United States calls for comprehensive strategies that promote racial, gender, and class equity and take into account the many differences in personal, family, and community circumstances. Even more important, it requires the political will to turn these ideas into legislation. The United States should:

- **Create jobs that pay.** Millions of workers are paid so little that they cannot feed their families. The best, most lasting way to end hunger is to ensure that people have access to jobs that pay\(^\text{viii}\) enough to support their families. The United States can move in the right direction by making essential improvements through legislation and policies. Some examples of these changes are raising the minimum wage, strengthening the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, and expanding access to the supports that workers need in order to do their jobs, such as paid sick and parental leave and affordable child care. The federal budget should reflect reducing income inequality as a top priority in addition to expanding the economy.

- **Invest in people.** To be successful, people must have access to the tools they need. Government plays an important role in ensuring that everyone has their basic needs met and benefits from equitable opportunities. All people, regardless of race, gender, class, or other factors, should have access to nutritious food, health care, education, and housing to empower families and individuals to overcome hunger and become financially stable. Targeted investments should be made in communities with the highest hunger rates, including communities of color, communities of concentrated poverty, and communities with many people who are returning from incarceration and/or immigrants.\(^\text{ix}\)

- **Strengthen the safety net.** Most people need some help at some point in their lives and everyone should have access to help in hard times. The United States should strengthen national nutrition programs such as school meals, summer meals, SNAP, and WIC. It should maintain other social programs such as Medicaid. Essential social programs should be a consistent national priority and they should be provided in an equitable manner.

Ending hunger in America is feasible. What we need is the political will to do so. Go to bread.org/elections for Bread’s full 2020 election platform.

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\(^\text{iii}\) 4,264 veterans live below the poverty line.
\(^\text{viii}\) Jobs that pay
\(^\text{iv}\) One in 5 children and one in 8 women live in poverty.
\(^\text{iii}\) People of color in Maine are 4 times more likely than whites to live with hunger and poverty.
• **Remove obstacles to earning a decent living.** Discriminatory practices should be ended and the playing field should be leveled for communities at higher risk of hunger by providing targeted support. These include people of color, women, and children, particularly women and children of color. Laws against racial, gender, and other forms of discrimination should be enforced, and a racial, gender, and class equity lens should be applied to all nutrition, anti-hunger, and anti-poverty programs and policies. The needs of communities living in concentrated poverty and/or persistent poverty, in urban, rural, metropolitan, and tribal contexts should be a priority.

Immigration is a hunger issue on both sides of the border. Reform should address the push factors that force people to migrate from their home countries and, for those already here, prioritize family unity, human dignity, work opportunities, and responsible pathways to U.S. citizenship. Reforms that enable undocumented people to earn a living and equitably participate in national life should also be enacted.

Reforms should be enacted that enable people returning from incarceration, also known as returning citizens, to earn a living and participate equitably in society. Mass incarceration perpetuates hunger and poverty. Sentence and reentry reform should promote racial and gender equity and remove obstacles for individuals to attain good jobs, safe and affordable housing, and access to programs such as SNAP as needed.

The map shows the levels of poverty by county. Counties with rates of 20 percent of poverty or more (shaded in red below) are considered areas of concentrated poverty. In those areas, hunger rates are higher, and problems, including poor housing conditions and fewer job opportunities, increase these rates.

### Poverty Rates for General Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population in Poverty (%)</th>
<th>Poverty Rates for General Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.0-11.9</td>
<td>12.0-16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.0-16.9</td>
<td>17.0-19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.0-19.9</td>
<td>20.0-29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0-29.9</td>
<td>30.0-33.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Poverty Rates by Race

The state poverty rate is **12 percent**, however, people of color are more likely to experience poverty in Maine and across the nation.

**Maine Poverty Rates:**

- **Whites:** 12%
- **Latinos:** 19%
- **African Americans:** 42%
- **Indigenous:** 33%
- **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:** 31%

To learn more about racial inequities and how to reverse them to end hunger, go to [bread.org/racialequity](http://bread.org/racialequity).

### Endnotes

2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community 5-Year data. Table S1701.
3. The poverty line for an individual in 2019 was $12,490. U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year data. Table B21003.
5. The map was developed by the Housing Assistance Council, www.ruralhome.org, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov.