

Social Analysis

Food Insecurity

EDTE 5600: Advanced
Studies of Children and
Adolescents

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Description of the Issue

“Food **security** exists when all people, at all times, have physical, ‘social’ and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”

(World Food Summit-WFS, 1996)



Food insecurity - limited access to nutritious and safe foods due to financial hardships

It can lead to:

- Physical health issues
- School performance & behaviors
- Issues with social interactions

...and more



Facts about Food Insecurity in the United States

Household Hunger in 2023

47 million Americans lived in households that experienced hunger or lacked access to an affordable, nutritious diet.

Children

18% of households with children could not afford to buy enough food for their families.



Income

33% of food-insecure households had incomes at or above 185% of the federal poverty level, making it difficult to qualify for assistance programs.



Household Composition

While 18% of households with children experienced hunger, food insecurity is even higher in single mother households (35%) and in single father households (23%).



Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs

58% of households participated in one or more of the three largest federal nutrition assistance programs: SNAP, WIC and the national school lunch program.



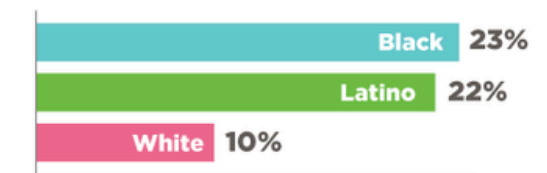
Geography

16% of households in urban areas and 15% of households in rural areas experienced hunger, compared to 12% of households in suburban areas. Hunger was the highest in the South (15%), followed by the West and Midwest (13%) and the Northeast (12%).



Race and Ethnicity

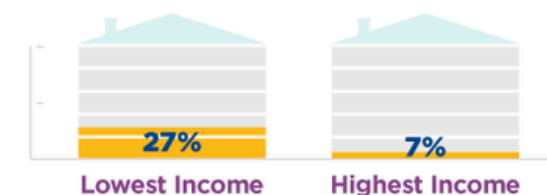
Hunger affects different groups of Americans disproportionately:



23% of Black households and 22% of Latino households were affected by hunger compared to 10% of white households.

Food Spending

Households with the lowest incomes spent 27% of their income on food, compared to highest-income households, which spent about 7%.



Skipping Meals

29% of households where children skipped meals at least once during the year reported it happening almost every month.



Impact on Learning and Development

Major Impacts:

Domino Effect

- Academic Performance
- Social Skills
- Behavior/Motivation



Four Theories:

1.) Erikson's Psychosocial Theory Stages

- **Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt:** Ages 1-3 years old develop more sense of self-control and are independent in their choice. Food insecurity limits that choice and therefore feel shame or doubt.

2.) Humanistic Theory

- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** Basic biological needs must be met before other levels can be achieved

3.) Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Learning

- The learner's ability to construct knowledge is dependent on intrinsic factors, which include a person's health

4.) Operant Conditioning:

- The negative consequence, food insecurity, leads to undesirable behaviors.



Evidence of Research



1 in 5 American kids don't have enough food and don't know where their next meal will come from

“Food insecurity and insufficiency are associated with adverse health and developmental outcomes in U.S. children. Among 6- to 12-year-old children, food insufficiency was associated with poorer mathematics scores, grade repetition, absenteeism, tardiness, visits to a psychologist, anxiety, aggression, psychosocial dysfunction, and difficulty getting along with other children. Among 15- to 16-year-old adolescents, food insufficiency was associated with depressive disorders and suicide symptoms after controlling for income and other factors.” -Journal of Nutrition

2005 study shows that Kindergarten students who come from a food-insecure household predicted impaired academic performance in **reading and mathematics** for girls and boys, a greater decline in **social skills** for boys, and greater **weight and BMI** gains for girls.



Practitioner Perspectives



- Hunger can't be measured, but food insecurity can be.
- Pre-pandemic survey:
 - 60% of students come to school hungry.
 - Teachers observed:
 - 80% witness negative impact on concentration
 - 76% observed lack of academic performance.
 - 62% witnessed behavior issues increase
 - 47% noticed an increase of illness in students
- “Food insecurity affects concentration, memory, mood, and motor skills, all of which a child needs to be able to be successful in school.”



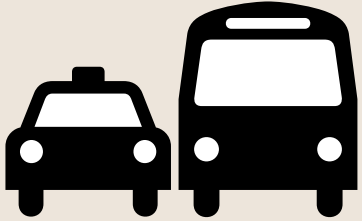




- Food insecurity affects physical health
 - “...among children under the age of 4 years, those who were food insecure were more likely to have fair or poor health at nearly every age during this critical period.”
- Pediatricians screen for food insecurity:
 - Home Plate and Complete Eats



Critical Analysis

Why is food insecurity happening?

- **Income-related factors** 
- **High cost of living** 
- **Community factors** 
- **Health-related factors** 
- **Systematic barriers to opportunity** 

Potential Implications for Practice



Free and reduce School Lunches:

- Free lunches for all students

Partner with a Food Bank

- Amesville Elementary partners with Children's Hunger Alliance for a food bag program
- Amesville also has a food pantry with Southeast Ohio Food Bank

Summer Food Program:

- Summer without school lunches is tough for families.
- Robertson County School Nutrition Department:
 - Gave out 1,100 bags filled with one week of breakfast and lunches.



Resources

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