



Love INC  
Love In the Name of Christ

# HUNGER IN AMERICA

Love In the Name of Christ ■ [www.loveinc.org](http://www.loveinc.org)

*The hungry in America are a surprising cross-section of our population. They live in cities, suburbs, and rural areas; they represent every race, age group, and family situation. They are working parents whose income is eaten up by high housing costs and who regularly skip meals so that their children can have something to eat. They are senior citizens on fixed incomes who must choose between buying needed medications or buying groceries. They are children in poverty whose only consistent source of food is through the free school lunch program, which ceases over the summer. For all people of every age, reoccurring and involuntary lack of food can lead to malnutrition, which in turn can lead to harmful effects on learning, development, productivity, physical and physiological health, and family life.<sup>1</sup> Food is the most basic element necessary to living an active, healthy life, but every year, millions of Americans must go without it.*

## Consider these facts:

- Americans experiencing hunger are defined as being “food insecure”—meaning they live in households which are uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of all their members because of lack of resources.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2008, over 49 million Americans lived in households with low food security, representing over 14 percent of all households in the U.S. Of those people, over 17 million lived in households with very low food security.<sup>3</sup>
- The rate of suburban households with food insecurity is 12.7 percent; rural households, 14.2 percent; and urban households, 17.7 percent.<sup>4</sup>
- According to a survey of 25 U.S. cities, in 2008, persons in families comprised the largest group of people requesting emergency food assistance (59 percent), followed by employed persons (41 percent), the elderly (15 percent), and homeless persons (11 percent).<sup>5</sup>
- In the same survey, community leaders identified the leading causes of hunger as poverty (83 percent), unemployment (74 percent), and high housing costs (57 percent).<sup>6</sup>
- Due to program bureaucracy, only 65 percent of eligible people actually receive food stamp benefits.<sup>7</sup>
- Households with children have nearly twice the rate of food insecurity (21 percent) as those without children (11.3 percent).<sup>8</sup>
- In 2008, nearly 17 million children experienced food insecurity in the United States.<sup>9</sup>
- Over 17 million U.S. children receive free or reduced-price school lunches, over 8 million receive free or reduced-priced school breakfasts, but not even 2 million of these children receive food assistance during the summer months.<sup>10</sup>
- Children at risk of hunger are more likely to suffer health problems, such as weaker immune systems, impeded growth and development, fatigue, infections, and illnesses resulting in hospitalization.<sup>11</sup>
- Hunger impedes children’s ability to learn. Hungry children are more likely to have impaired cognitive functioning, earn lower test scores, repeat a grade, and experience absences and tardiness.<sup>12</sup>
- Nutritional deficiencies can also have especially harmful effects on seniors’ health, including diminished immune response, impairment in physical function, reduced activity levels, premature institutionalization, and higher risks of coronary heart disease.<sup>13</sup>

### About Love In the Name of Christ

For more than 30 years, Love INC has been mobilizing the Church to transform lives and communities In the Name of Christ. Love INC has over 140 affiliates in 30 states, representing a network of more than 9,000 churches, 6,000 community-based organizations, and 300,000 volunteers meeting more than one million needs each year.

To find out how you can make a difference in the lives of people in need, visit [www.loveinc.org](http://www.loveinc.org).

# Hunger in America: A Fact Sheet

## Reference

- 1 Food Research and Action Center, "Hunger and Food Insecurity in the United States," [http://www.frac.org/html/hunger\\_in\\_the\\_us/hunger\\_index.html](http://www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/hunger_index.html) (July 30, 2009)
- 2 United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Food Security in the United States: Key Statistics and Graphics," [http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats\\_graphs.htm#how\\_many](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats_graphs.htm#how_many) (November 17, 2009).
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 The United States Conference of Mayors, *Hunger and Homelessness Survey, A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, A 25-City Survey*, December 2008, pg. 10, [http://usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport\\_121208.pdf](http://usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport_121208.pdf) (July 20, 2009).
- 6 Ibid, pg. 11.
- 7 Food Research and Action Center, *The Effects of Hunger and Food Insecurity in America*, p. 6, July 23, 2008, <http://agriculture.house.gov/testimony/110/h80723a/Weill.pdf> (July 30, 2009).
- 8 United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Food Security in the United States: Key Statistics and Graphics," [http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats\\_graphs.htm#how\\_many](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats_graphs.htm#how_many) (November 17, 2009).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children: 2008*, December 23, 2008, p. 73, <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-of-americas-children-2008-report-nutrition.pdf> (July 30, 2009).
- 11 Share Our Strength, "Facts On Childhood Hunger," [http://www.strength.org/childhood\\_hunger/hunger\\_facts/](http://www.strength.org/childhood_hunger/hunger_facts/) (July 29, 2009).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ziliak, James P., Craig Gunderson, and Margaret Haist, *The Causes, Consequences, and Future of Senior Hunger in America*, March 2008, p. 31, <http://www.ukcpr.org/Publications/SeniorHungerStudy.pdf> (July 29, 2009).