

Quick Facts About Hunger in America

What is "food insecurity?"

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as **a lack of access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.**

Who is food insecure in America?

41.2 million Americans struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table.

- That's 12.9 million children and 9.8 million seniors
- 12.3% of all American households - that's more than 1 in 8
- More food insecure Americans than the entire population of Canada (36.3 million)

What resources are available for food insecure people?

They rely on help, primarily from two sources:

Government Programs

The USDA has 15 distinct food and nutrition assistance programs to combat domestic hunger.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most widely used of these programs and has over 42 million participants.



Private Charity

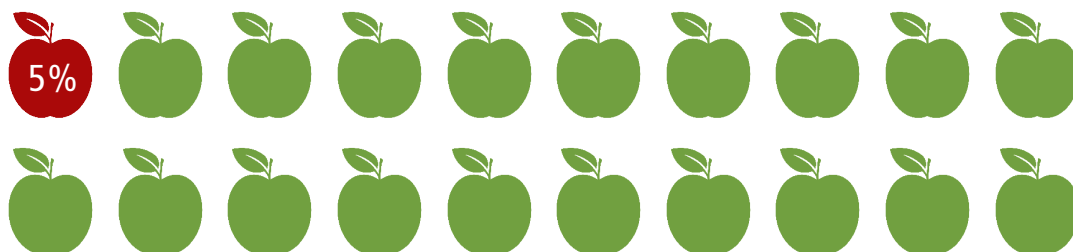
Charitable organizations were not conceived to feed entire communities, but to help alleviate what was thought to be a temporary or emergency situation. While these organizations play a vital role in addressing hunger, they struggle to keep up with the need.



Why isn't private charity the answer?

The charitable response could never fill the gap if government programs continue to erode. The overwhelming majority of food assistance in this country comes from federal programs.

Only about 5% is provided by the charitable sector.





Protect and Strengthen SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's most important anti-hunger program and the cornerstone of the federal nutrition safety net. SNAP works as a powerful and effective response to the widespread problem of food insecurity in the United States, providing vital assistance for food purchases and lifting millions of people out of poverty.

There are too many people in this country struggling with hunger – more than 41 million individuals, including 12.9 million children and 9.8 million seniors. This crisis would be significantly greater without SNAP and the other important federal nutrition programs. As the first line of defense against hunger, SNAP responds efficiently to need during times of economic hardship. The program has a proven track record to help reduce hunger and poverty, improve health, contribute to educational performance and work productivity, support local economies, promote work, and strengthen our communities.

SNAP helps people struggling with food insecurity from diverse backgrounds, including seniors, children, working families, individuals with disabilities, people in cities and rural communities, veterans, and currently serving military families. For many who face unexpected difficulties, SNAP provides targeted and temporary assistance to help them get back on their feet.

SNAP benefits are modest – on average providing only about \$1.40 per person per meal. For many households, SNAP benefits run out before the end of the month and family members must turn to food banks for emergency assistance to put food on the table. The SNAP benefit should be increased to correlate to the USDA Low Cost Food Plan to better enable the purchase of adequate and nutritious food.

SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs are a critical component of the Farm Bill. To ensure passage of a strong Farm Bill that benefits all Americans, Congress should keep the nutrition title as part of the Farm Bill, protect and strengthen the SNAP program, and support funding to fully meet the level of need.

The life-saving assistance from SNAP exemplifies our collective responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us and must be safeguarded. SNAP should be protected against block grants or other structural changes that would undermine its effectiveness and fully funded to ensure that no one in our country goes hungry.

Members of Congress should reject any budget or legislative proposal that includes harmful cuts to SNAP and other programs that help struggling families afford the basics and make ends meet.