

UNDERSTANDING FOOD INSECURITY

What is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity means not having consistent access to enough nutritious food for a healthy, active life. Families experiencing food insecurity often **skip meals, rely on less nutritious foods, or run out of groceries** before the next paycheck or assistance.

Hunger Myths vs. Facts

Myth: Hunger only affects people who are unemployed.

Fact: Millions of people who work full-time still struggle to afford enough food.

Myth: Food insecurity is only a problem in cities.

Fact: Hunger affects rural, suburban, and urban communities alike.

Myth: Kids always have enough to eat at school.

Fact: Many children rely on school meals, and may go hungry when school is closed for summer or holidays.

How Hunger Affects Children and Families

Food insecurity can impact:

Children's growth and development - leading to poor nutrition and delayed physical or cognitive growth.

School performance - children who are hungry may struggle with concentration, learning, and behavior.

Family stress - parents may skip meals to feed their children, creating long-term health challenges.

Overall health - limited access to healthy foods can increase the risk of chronic illnesses.

Common Causes of Food Insecurity -

- Low income or job instability
- High cost of housing and healthcare
- Lack of access to grocery stores or transportation
- Unexpected emergencies or disasters
- Limited nutrition education and resources

Worldwide Food Insecurity Key Statistics -

- Over 34 million Americans experience food insecurity.
- About 1 in 6 children in the U.S. struggles with hunger.
- Nearly 40% of food-insecure households include at least one working adult.
- Hunger can affect academic performance, physical health, and emotional well-being.

- **Global hunger:** Over 828 million people worldwide experience hunger. (FAO, 2023)
- **Child hunger:** Nearly 149 million children under age 5 suffer from stunted growth due to malnutrition.
- **Food insecurity prevalence:** About one in ten people globally do not have enough food to eat regularly.
- **Women & girls:** Women are disproportionately affected, making up the majority of adults living in food-insecure households in many countries.
- **Conflict & crisis:** Armed conflicts and climate-related disasters push over 60 million people into acute food insecurity each year.
- **COVID-19 impact:** The pandemic increased global food insecurity, adding over 100 million people at risk of hunger between 2019–2022.
- **Food waste vs hunger:** About 1/3 of all food produced globally is wasted, yet millions remain food-insecure.
- **Children & education:** Hungry children are more likely to miss school or perform poorly, impacting lifelong opportunities.
- **Economic burden:** Food insecurity costs countries in lost productivity, healthcare, and social services, with billions of dollars annually.

Why This Matters:

Understanding food insecurity is the first step to making a difference in your community. Through initiatives like DRIVE Out Hunger, delegates can raise awareness, collect food, and provide essential resources to families in need, showing how small acts of service create a big impact.