

# Food Insecurity and Hunger

*Publicly funded services to address Food Insecurity and Hunger are described in Nutrition Services*

## Key Findings:

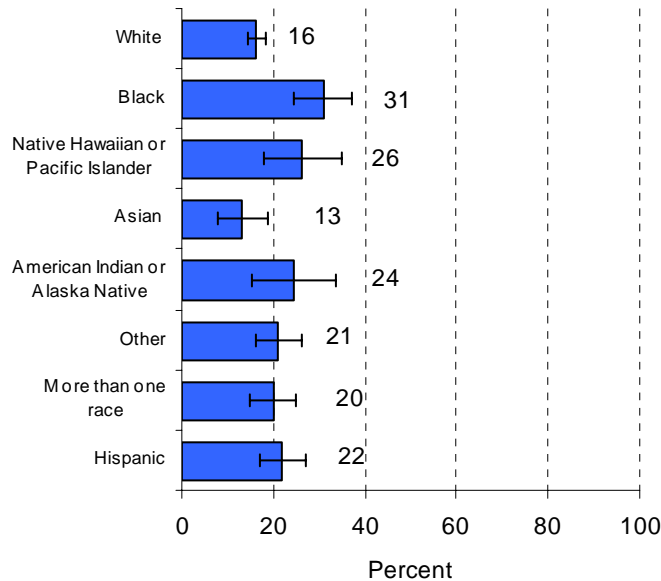
- For 2004-2006, about 10 percent of Washington residents were food insecure and 4 percent had very low food security (formerly called food insecure with hunger)<sup>2</sup> compared to 11 percent and 4 percent for the U.S.<sup>1,a</sup>
- Based on 2007 survey data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), among Washington women ages 18-44, about 12 percent reported that in the 12 months before the survey their household cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money to buy food. Of those women, about 25 percent reported this happened almost every month. (Data not shown)<sup>2</sup>
- In the 2006 Washington Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), about 15 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, 22 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and 21 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported that their family had reduced or skipped meals in the last 12 months because there was not enough money to buy food. This represents an increase from 2004 when 15 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 17 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported they had reduced or skipped meals.<sup>3</sup>

**Definition:** Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way. Hunger is the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food, and the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

- Based on 2004-2006 Washington data on 10<sup>th</sup> graders from the HYS, Black and Pacific Islander youth had the highest percent reporting that their family had skipped or reduced meals in the past year due to lack of money than other races.<sup>3,c</sup>
- In state fiscal year 2007, an average of 547,596 persons participated each month in Washington's Basic Food Program, representing about 8 percent of the state's population. About 42 percent were children. The median age of adults participating was 39 years and the median age of children was 7 years.<sup>4,b</sup>
- In state fiscal year 2008, about 1.24 million Washington residents (about 18 percent of the population) received emergency food services from 320 local food banks and 32 tribal voucher programs, about a 4 percent increase from 2007.<sup>5</sup>
- Health effects of hunger and food insecurity in children are associated with having more psychosocial problems, frequent colds, ear infections, anemia, asthma, frequent headaches and impaired cognitive functions and poorer academic achievement.<sup>6,7</sup>
- The Healthy People 2010 objective is to increase food security among US households to at least 94 percent of all households. Washington has not yet met this objective.<sup>8</sup>

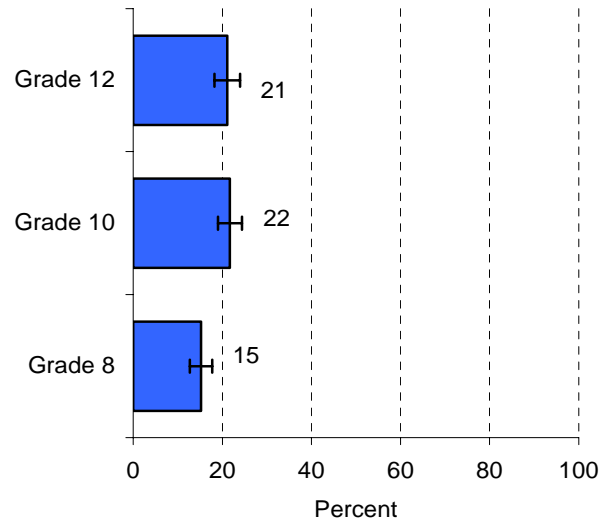
## Race and Ethnicity<sup>3</sup>

**Family Reduced or Skipped Meals in Last Year Because Not Enough Money to Buy Food  
Grade 10, WA, HYS 2004-2006**



## Grade<sup>3</sup>

**Family Reduced or Skipped Meals in Last Year Because Not Enough Money to Buy Food  
By Grade  
WA, HYS 2006**



*\*In the Healthy Youth Survey, Hispanic ethnicity is asked in the same question as race. Students are asked to choose one or more races, including Hispanic ethnicity, as appropriate.*

### Data Sources

1. Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2006. Website: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err49/err49appd.pdf>. Accessed -7/08.
2. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Washington State Department of Health, 2007
3. Washington State Healthy Youth Survey 2004 and 2006: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services, and Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development and RMC Research Corporation.
4. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. ESA Briefing Book, State Fiscal Year 2007. Website accessed august 2008: [http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/esa/briefbook/2007basic\\_food\\_assistance.pdf](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/esa/briefbook/2007basic_food_assistance.pdf)
5. Department of Community Trade and Economic Development. Emergency Food Assistance Statistics. Accessed at: <http://cted.wa.gov/site/271/default.aspx>
6. Diana F. Jyoti, Edward A. Frongillo<sup>4</sup> and Sonya J. Jones. Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills American Society for Nutrition J. Nutrition. 135:2831-2839, December 2005
7. Center on Hunger and Poverty: Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University The Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children Evidence from Recent Scientific Studies. June 2002. Website: <http://www.centeronhunger.org/pdf/ConsequencesofHunger.pdf>. Accessed July 2008
8. Department of Health and Human Services (US). Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Washington, D.C: US Government Printing Office; November 2000.

### Endnotes

- a. Very low food security: In these food-insecure households, normal eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake was reduced at times during the year because they had insufficient money or other resources for food. In previous reports, these households were described as "food insecure with hunger." <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/trends.htm>. Accessed 06/08
- b. Basic Food Program helps low income clients by supplementing their income with Basic Food benefits such as food stamps. More information available at: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ESA/2007briefingbook.htm>. Accessed 06/08.
- c. Significance from the Healthy Youth Survey is based on chi-square testing with significance at  $p < 0.05$ .