

# An Overview of Hunger in Missouri

A Paper Developed by:  
Missouri Food Bank Association  
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## **Executive Summary**

Hunger is a real and growing concern in the state of Missouri. This paper reveals that very low food security in Missouri has risen at a faster rate of growth than for any other state in the nation. Although hunger itself is an unseen problem, the associated effects are far-reaching. Hunger in Missouri adversely impacts every person in the state, because food is the fuel with which strong schools, strong workplaces, and strong communities are built.

The Missouri Food Bank Association is a coalition of the six Feeding America Food Banks in Missouri. These food banks are the organizations that are working to strengthen Missouri by feeding the hungry and providing assistance in ways that go beyond emergency sustenance.

Supporting the food banks in Missouri through the sharing of food, funds, and time, is the most direct way to address the problem of hunger in the state.

## Missouri's Agricultural Heritage

Missouri's history is rich with stories of men and women working the land to provide food for their families. The State Capitol building in Jefferson City is crowned by Ceres, the ancient Roman goddess of agriculture and grain to symbolize Missouri's agricultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> Even today, Missouri is one of the top ten agricultural producing states in the country.<sup>2</sup> How then can a state so plentiful in arable land and farming knowledge have residents who are uncertain of whether or not they will have enough food to meet their basic needs?



### Food Security:

- **High Food Security**  
No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.
- **Marginal Food Security**  
One or two reported indications-- typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.

### Food Insecurity:

- **Low Food Security**  
Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake
- **Very Low Food Security**  
Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

The question of how hunger can exist when there is an abundance of food is one that is being asked on a national and even global level. This paper focuses on food insecurity in the state of Missouri, its strongest predictors, and what Missouri's Food Banks are doing to address the problem.

### **Food Insecurity in Missouri**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS), in its most recent report on the nation's household Food Security, revealed an estimated 14.5 percent of American households were food insecure at least some time during 2012. This means these households did not have access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle for all members of the household at all times.

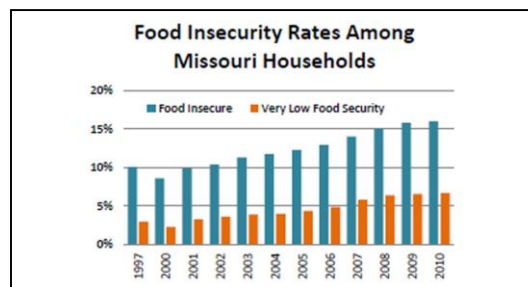
Missouri is one of ten states identified in this study as having "statistically significant" higher food insecurity rates than the national

<sup>1</sup> Missouri History [Web log post]. Retrieved June 7, 2014, from <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/history/capitol.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Farm Income and Wealth Statistics [Web log post]. Retrieved May 30, 2014, from [http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-income-and-wealth-statistics/us-and-state-level-farm-income-and-wealth-statistics-\(includes-the-us-farm-income-forecast-for-2014\).aspx](http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-income-and-wealth-statistics/us-and-state-level-farm-income-and-wealth-statistics-(includes-the-us-farm-income-forecast-for-2014).aspx)

US average from 2010-2012. With a food insecurity rate of 16.7 percent, Missouri is ranked **seventh** in the nation for food insecurity. In the most severe category of food insecurity, “very low food security,” Missouri is ranked **second** in the nation.

During the time period of 2000-2010, Missouri had the **single greatest increase** in the percent of population who is food insecure.<sup>3</sup>



## Predictors of Food Insecurity

It is difficult to pinpoint the definitive root cause of food insecurity. However, there are certain household attributes that can predict the likelihood that a family or individual will experience limited access to adequate food. Those predictors include:

<b>Poverty<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Single Parenthood<sup>5</sup></b>
<b>Unemployment<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Lack of Home Ownership<sup>7</sup></b>
<b>Low Minimum Wage<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>Lack of Savings<sup>9</sup></b>
<b>Low Education<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>Poor Health Status<sup>11</sup></b>

<sup>3</sup> Coleman-Jensen, A., Nord, M., & Singh, A. (2013). Household Food Security in the United States in 2012. USDA ERS

<sup>4</sup> Nord, M., Andrews, M., and Carlson, S. (2004). “Household Food Security in the United States, 2003.” Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report No. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Nord, M., Andrews, M., and Carlson, S. (2004). “Household Food Security in the United States, 2003.” Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report No. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Daponte, B.O. and Stephens, M. (2004). “The Relationship Between Food Assistance, the Value of Food Acquired, and Household Food Supply.” Joint Center for Poverty Research Working Paper 351. Chicago, ILL: The Center.

<sup>7</sup> Rose, D., Gundersen, G., and Oliveira, V. (1998). “Socio-Economic Determinants of Food Insecurity in the United States: Evidence from the SIPP and CSFII Datasets.” Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Technical Bulletin No. 1869.

<sup>8</sup> Nord, M. and Brent, C.P. (2002). “Food Insecurity in Higher Income Households”. Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, E-FAN No. 02016.

<sup>9</sup> Olson, C. M., Rauschenbach, B.S., Frongillo, E.A., and Kendall, A. (1997). “Factors Contributing to Food Insecurity in a Rural Upstate New York County.” *Family Economics and Nutrition Review* 10: 2–17.

<sup>10</sup> Daponte, B.O. and Stephens, M. (2004). “The Relationship Between Food Assistance, the Value of Food Acquired, and Household Food Supply.” Joint Center for Poverty Research Working Paper 351. Chicago, ILL: The Center.

<sup>11</sup> Tarasuk, V. (2001). “Household Food Insecurity with Hunger Is Associated with Women’s Food Intakes, Health, and Household Circumstances.” *The Journal of Nutrition*, 131(10): 2670–2676.

## Impact of Food Insecurity

Feeding America's "Map the Meal Gap" tool estimates there are 1,031,030 Missourians who are currently food insecure.<sup>12</sup> That number is approximately **17% of Missouri's population**. The burden of hunger reaches beyond the food insecure households, however. Hunger impacts everyone.

In 2011, the Center for American Progress estimated that hunger cost the United States approximately \$167.5 billion.<sup>13</sup> This number was derived by combining the annual cost of lost economic productivity, increased expenses of public education due to poor education outcomes, and the cost of charity to keep families fed. The cost of hunger for the state of Missouri was estimated at \$3.6 billion.

## Feeding the Hungry

Feeding America is the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity. There are 202 food banks across the nation providing food insecure families with the fuel to survive. The national network feeds more than 37 million Americans each year, including 14 million children and 3 million seniors.

In Missouri, there are six Feeding America food banks: Second Harvest Community Food Bank in St. Joseph, MO.; The Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri in Columbia, MO.; St. Louis Area Foodbank in St. Louis, MO.; Southeast Missouri Food Bank in Sikeston, MO.; Ozarks Food Harvest in Springfield, MO.; and Harvesters Community Food Network in Kansas City, MO.



These food banks operate as distribution hubs which provide food to front line agencies like food pantries and soup kitchens. Together, the food banks serve all 114 Missouri counties and the city of St. Louis. In 2013, Missouri Food banks distributed 117,007,189 pounds of food.

<sup>12</sup> Map the Meal Gap [Web log post]. Retrieved June 17, 2014, from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Shepard, D.S., Setren, E., & Cooper, D. (2011) Hunger in America: Suffering We All Pay For. The Center for American Progress.

## Strengthening the State

The six Missouri food banks have moved beyond their historical role of providing emergency food. The evolving mission of the food banks now includes programs and initiatives that address the root causes of hunger. Food banks are taking active roles in advocacy efforts for food insecure populations; they are educating low income families about nutrition and healthy choices; and they are connecting food insecure households to the government assistance that is available but sometimes inaccessible to them.

Individuals and businesses who choose to support the work of the food banks in Missouri understand that the overall strength of the state depends on giving the weakest members of our society the fuel they need to survive and thrive. When the weak become stronger, the entire state benefits.

Supporting the Missouri food banks by giving food, funds or time is the most direct way to address the problem of hunger in the state of Missouri.



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For more information on hunger or supporting your local food bank, visit  
[www.FeedingMissouri.org](http://www.FeedingMissouri.org)