

# Nearly 20 percent of Americans don't have enough to eat

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More than 18 percent of U.S. adults do not know whether they will have enough to eat from day to day, and the numbers are worse for Hispanics, Blacks, people with obesity, and women, a new report shows.

"The percentage of adults with [food insecurity](#)—the lack of access to

adequate food—more than doubled between 1999 and 2016," said Candice Myers, Ph.D., assistant professor at Pennington Biomedical Research Center and lead author of the article published in *JAMA Network Open*. "The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly worsened the situation. The country may face long-term economic and [health consequences](#) unless we solve this [public health crisis](#)."

The study looked at national trends in food insecurity among U.S. adults from 1999 to 2016 using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. The study found that food insecurity rates jumped to:

- 35 percent among Hispanic adults, from 19.5 percent
- 1 percent among Blacks, from 12.4 percent.
- 6 percent among people with obesity, from 10.4 percent.
- 2 percent among women, from 8.7 percent.

Dr. Myers said the study further solidifies the link between food insecurity and unhealthy body weight.

Food insecurity has a range of health consequences, all of them negative, she said. Obesity is key among them.

"Food insecurity and obesity are not mutually exclusive," Dr. Myers said. "Rather, these [health issues](#) are linked in such a way that a solution will require public policy that addresses both at the same time."

Pennington Biomedical Executive Director John Kirwan, Ph.D., said the intersection of food insecurity and chronic disease highlights the impact of the research center's work.

"Our research has set the stage to not only continue our current efforts to explore these issues, but also develop new and innovative projects that

delve into understanding their impact on the health of the citizens of our community, state and the entire country," Dr. Kirwan said.

To find out more about how to help, go to:

- [Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank](#)
- [Feeding Louisiana](#)
- [Feeding America](#)

**More information:** Candice A. Myers et al, Trends in Adiposity and Food Insecurity Among US Adults, *JAMA Network Open* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.12767](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.12767)

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