

# Interconnected factors increase household food insecurity in Brazil, study finds

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Food insecurity is four times higher in Brazilian households headed by single women of color than those headed by married white men, according to research published in the open access journal *PLOS Global*

*Public Health.* Gender inequities, skin color and children in the home increase the risk of food insecurity and the authors argue that policy makers need to consider intersectionality in programs to reduce it.

In 2021 there were 2.37 billion people suffering from food insecurity, with prevalence higher among women than men. The [gender gap](#) has increased in recent years, especially in the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Brazil, work to address food insecurity in the early 2000s led to improvements until 2013, but since 2016 the trend has reversed.

Lissandra Amorim Santos of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rafael Perez-Escamilla of Yale University School of Public Health, and colleagues, were interested in whether factors other than gender increase food insecurity. Using data from 2004–18 from three Brazilian national surveys that include population health information, they analyzed the relationship between food insecurity and gender, race/[skin color](#), marital status of the head of the household, and the presence of children under five.

Households with children under five headed by single women of color were three times more likely to report food insecurity compared with those headed by married [white men](#) in 2004 and 2013, but four times more likely in 2018.

In 2018, compared to households headed by married white men, those headed by married white women had a 1.35 higher probability; by single [white women](#) a 1.85 higher probability; and by men of color two times as likely to suffer food insecurity. Compared to those without children under five, households with young children had a higher probability of reporting [food insecurity](#) for most profiles.

The authors conclude that only policies centered on gender equality,

antiracism and attention to families with [young children](#) can reduce poverty and improve the current picture. The National Food and Nutrition Security Council was reestablished in Brazil by the newly elected government in early 2023, and these findings call for reestablishment of other relevant ministries, including the ministries of Women and of Racial Equity, as well as increased funding to programs to fight hunger.

The authors add, "The joint consideration of gender, race/skin color, marital status of the household head, as well as the presence of children in households follows a stepwise trend increasing FI risk."

**More information:** Santos LA et al, Gender, skin color, and household composition explain inequities in household food insecurity in Brazil. *PLOS Global Public Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pgph.0002324](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002324), [journals.plos.org/globalpublic... journal.pgph.0002324](https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article/doi/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002324)

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