

# Food Insecurity and Hunger

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## Key Findings:

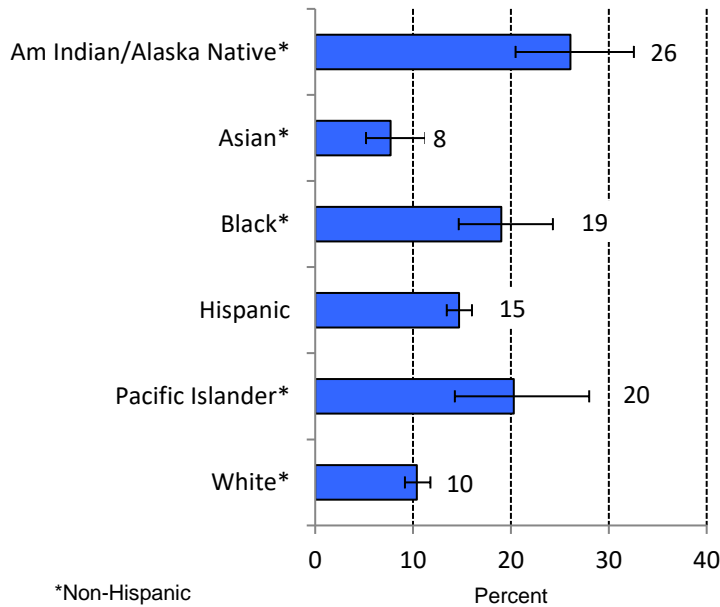
- For 2014-2016 about 12 percent of Washington residents were food insecure and 5 percent had very low food security (formerly called food insecure with hunger) compared to 13 percent and 5 percent for the U.S.<sup>1,a</sup>
- Based on 2011 survey data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), among Washington women ages 18-44, about 16 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 31 percent reported this happened almost every month. (Data not shown)<sup>2</sup>
- In the 2016 Washington Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), about 11 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, 12 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and 16 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. These figures are similar to the 2014 HYS results.<sup>3,b</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.

- Among 10<sup>th</sup> graders, Black, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island students were more likely than White students to report that their family skipped meals or reduced meal size in the past year due to lack of money. There were no differences by sex.<sup>3,b,c,d</sup>
- In state fiscal year 2015, about 582,000 people participated in Washington's Basic Food Program each month. The proportion of the state's population that received Basic Food declined from 15.8% in fiscal year 2014 to 15.0% in fiscal year 2015. About 37 percent of those receiving Basic Food were children.<sup>4</sup>
- Health effects of hunger and food insecurity in children are associated with more psychosocial problems; more frequent colds, ear infections, anemia, asthma, and headaches; impaired cognitive functions; and poorer academic achievement.<sup>5,6</sup>
- The Healthy People 2020 objective is to reduce food insecurity to 6 percent among US households. Washington has not yet met this objective.<sup>7</sup>

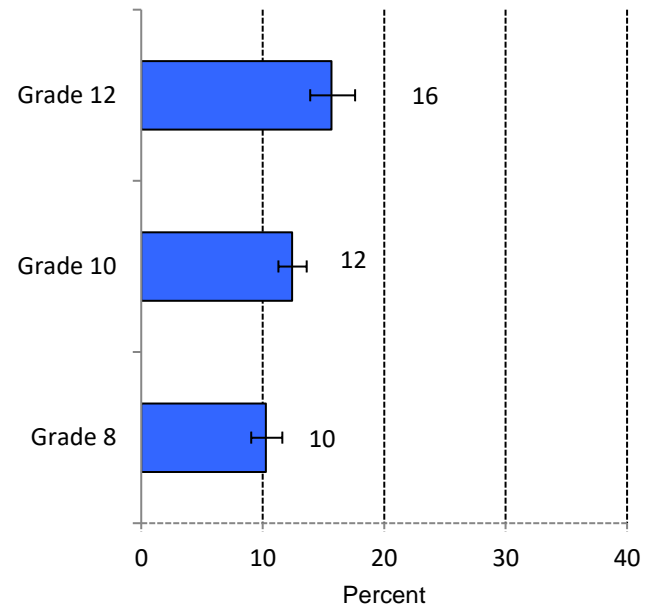
## Race and Ethnicity <sup>3,b</sup>

**Family Reduced or Skipped Meals in Last Year Because Not Enough Money to Buy Food, By Race, Grade 10, WA HYS 2016**



## Grade <sup>3,b</sup>

**Family Reduced or Skipped Meals in Last Year Because Not Enough Money to Buy Food By Grade, WA HYS 2016**



### Data Sources

1. Coleman-Jensen A., Nord, M., Andrews M., and Carlson S. Table: Prevalence of household-level food insecurity and very low food security by State, average 2014-2016. In *Household Food Insecurity in the United States in 2014-2016*. ERR-141, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Retrieved January 2018, from [www.ers.usda.gov/media/9463/mapdata2016.xls](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/9463/mapdata2016.xls)
2. *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)*, 2011 [Data file]. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Health.
3. Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (2016). Washington State Department of Health, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Social and Health Services, Liquor and Control Board, Looking Glass Analytics, Inc. Website: <http://www.askhys.net/Home/About>
4. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Basic Food Program ESA Briefing Book, State Fiscal Year 2015. Retrieved January 2018, from [https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ESA/briefing-manual/2015esa\\_briefing\\_book\\_full.pdf](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ESA/briefing-manual/2015esa_briefing_book_full.pdf)
5. Jyoti, D.F., Frongillo, E.A. & Jones, S.J. (2005). Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills. *Journal of Nutrition*, 135, 2831-2839.
6. Cook, J.T. & Frank D.A. (2008). Food Security, Poverty, and Human Development in the United States. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1136, 193-209.
7. Healthy People 2020, US Department of Health and Human Services, Accessed online at: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>

### 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." Retrieved January 2018, [www.ers.usda.gov/media/9463/mapdata2016.xls](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/9463/mapdata2016.xls)
- b. Based on question: "How often in the past 12 months did you or your family have to cut meal size or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food? [Almost every month; Some months but not every month; Only 1-2 months; Did not have to skip or cut the size of meals.]"
- c. Significance from the Healthy Youth Survey is based on chi-square testing with significance level at  $p < 0.05$ .
- d. Hispanic is treated as a separate racial category. American Indian/Alaska native, Asian, Black, NHOPI and White are all non-Hispanic.

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