

Facts about Hunger

- 1 in 7 homes in the US were food insecure last year.
- Hunger in America exists for over 50 million people. That is 1 in 6 of the U.S. population – including more than 1 in 5 children.
- Hunger in America is not specific to a city, state, or region but rather affects people all over the country.
- 1 in 4 American's participate in government-run Food Assistance programs, such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).
- **People are not hungry because of a shortage of food. There is an abundance of food.**
- **People are not hungry because of a lack of government and private charity programs. Over \$95 billion have been spent in one year assisting those who are food insecure. There will never be enough money to solve the problem.**

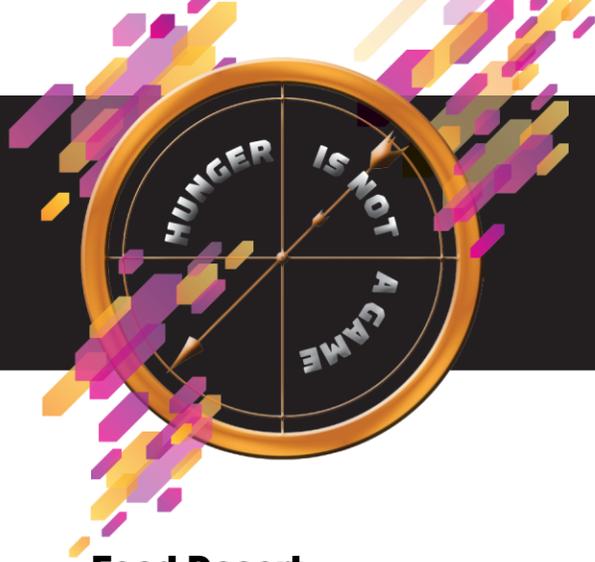
Definitions (provided by USDA)

Food Security: No, or very limited, lack of food access due to financial stability.

Food Insecurity: A regular lack of access to food, due to financial instability.

How does Hunger relate to food security?

- Food insecurity—the condition assessed in the food security survey and represented in USDA food security reports—is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.
- Hunger is an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.



Food Desert

Food deserts are areas of the country lacking in fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods. These are usually found in impoverished areas and are largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers.



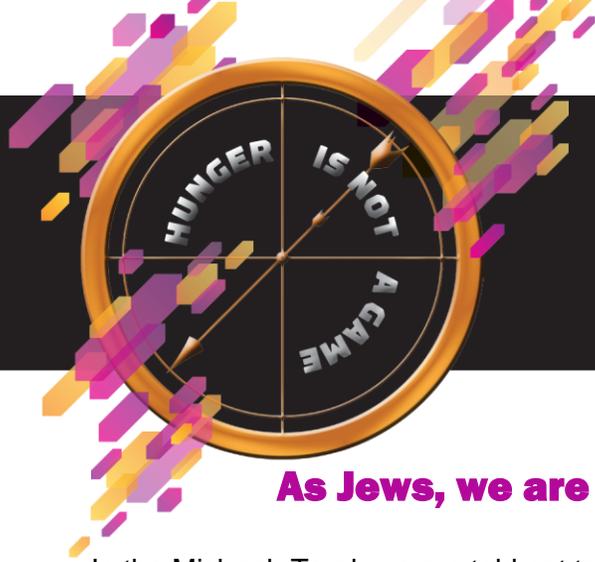
Impact of Hunger

Physical and Mental Health

Adults with food insecurity have scored lower on mental and physical health tests, have an increased risk of developing diabetes, chronic illnesses, hypertension and other cardiac risks. Adults may also experience delays in development of their social skills, as well as increased anxiety.

Child Development

Children exposed to food insecurity may be affected in all facets of development, from stunted growth to developmental delays and learning difficulties. There is greater significance if a fetus is exposed to food insecurity through the mother. Children may have greater instances of anemia and asthma, they may be hospitalized more, they may have more oral health problems, and their poorer physical quality of life may hold them back from fully engaging physically and socially with their peers. They may also be prone to increased fighting, anxiety, aggression, mood swings, bullying, or hyperactivity.



As Jews, we are commanded to help others.

In the Mishnah Torah we are told not to question those who present themselves as hungry. We give from the corners of our harvest so they do not have to travel far for food. We have clear areas designated so there is no confusion and they can readily find sustenance. Maimonides reminds us that in order to honor God we must be upright and healthy.

פִּתְחֵי אֶת־יָדְךָ וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל־חַי רִצּוֹן

Poteach et yadecha, umatzbiyah lechol chai ratzon

Open up your hands and sustain all living things.

Tehillim 145:16 (Psalms, written by King David,
recited in *Ashrei*)

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corner of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean thy vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD, your G-d.
Leviticus 19:9-10

Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover them, and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearward.
Isaiah 58: 7-8

A small bit of bread may be life to the poor; one who deprives them of it sheds blood. - Ben Sira

When a person eats and drinks [as part of celebrating a holiday], they are obligated to feed "the stranger, the orphan, and the widow". - Deuteronomy 16:11

To open eyes when others close them
To hear when others do not wish to listen
To look when others turn away
To seek to understand when others give up
To rouse oneself when others accept
To continue the struggle even when one is not
the strongest
To cry out when others keep silent-
To be a Jew
It is that,

It is first of all that
And further
To live when others are dead
And to remember when others have forgotten.
- Emmanuel Eydoux, 1913-1992, an award-
winning French, Jewish poet. His work often
related to Jewish identity and Israel.
*Translated from the French by Jonathan
Magonet.*



What Can We Do To Help?

Raise awareness! Educate our chapters, friends, families, and communities.
Prompt schools to provide healthy food options in schools, shelters, food banks, etc.
Support [Mazon's](#) work and see if they have already partnered with a synagogue near you.
[US Food Waste Challenge](#)
Support Share Our Strength's [No Kid Hungry](#) campaign.

Think it's easy to feed a family of four on a SNAP budget?
Check out Mazon's [A Nutritious Meal](#) Activity and see how challenging it really is.

Myths About Hunger

One of the best ways to gain clarity and awareness around issues like hunger is to put forward all the generalizations you feel to be true, and then disprove them.
What are your assumptions about hunger?
Check out Mazon's [8 Myths About Hunger](#).

Hunger Resources and Websites

[US Department of Agriculture](#)
[Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#)
[Share Our Strength](#)
[Feeding America](#)
[Definitions of Food Security and Insecurity](#)

Questions for discussion:

1. Most of us don't have fields to sow, or harvests to reap. What can you do to honor the commandment to give of the corners of your land?
2. Why do you think we are commanded to give to the hungry without asking any questions first?
3. For whom are we responsible?
4. Why is it significant that we are commanded to leave any fallen harvest for the needy? How does this relate to your life?
5. What are three things your school can do to help those who are hungry in your community?
6. The quote from Tehillim doesn't just instruct us to sustain all living things, but first states that we must open our hands. What is the significance of the first half of this statement?
7. When you read that the hunger problems in the world are not based on a shortage of food, but rather that there is an abundance of food, what do you feel? Why?
8. Hunger is an issue in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Israel, and every country in the