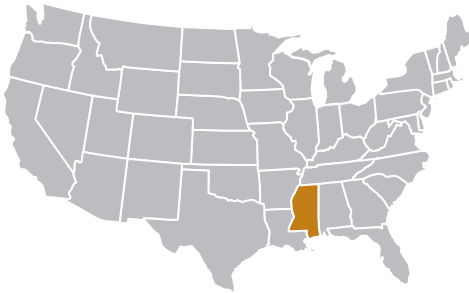


## Issue Brief

## FOOD SECURITY IN MISSISSIPPI



In 2007, 192,000 Mississippi households (15.9% of all Mississippi households) had experienced food insecurity at some time during the previous year.

### What is food security?

**Food security** refers to having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Americans living with **food insecurity** are uncertain of having enough food for all household members because of insufficient money or other resources for food. According to definitions established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, **very low food security** is a form of food insecurity in which access to food is severely limited. **Hunger**, a description of physical discomfort from not eating, can be experienced episodically but can also result from severe or protracted food insecurity. Hunger in this sense is not directly assessed in national-level surveys.

### How many people in Mississippi are affected?

As of 2007—the most current year for which data are available:

- Very low food security affected 7.5% of Mississippi households at some time during the previous year.
- Altogether, 477,000 people in Mississippi were in households that experienced food insecurity in the previous year.
- The risk of a Mississippi household experiencing food insecurity in the previous *month* was 8.7%.
- The prevalence of very low food security is increasing (see *side 2*).

### WHAT IS SOCIETAL DISTRESS?

Societal distress describes living conditions that do not satisfy basic human needs, such as food, shelter, health, income, and education.

Visit [www.humanneeds.vcu.edu](http://www.humanneeds.vcu.edu) for more details.

How many Americans lived in households that had difficulty putting enough food on the table in 2007?



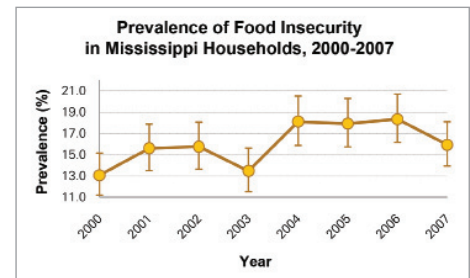
36.2 million Americans—almost equivalent to the population of California.

**THE PROJECT ON SOCIETAL DISTRESS** is an initiative of the Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Human Needs, which examines the prevalence of societal distress in five domains—food security, housing, health, education, and income—and makes the information available to the public and policymakers. This research effort focuses on presenting accurate data on the number of Americans affected by these conditions and not examining the causes or proposing solutions. The Project on Societal Distress is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

In 2007, one out of five children in Mississippi (21.4%) lived in households with food insecurity.

## What are the trends?

Between 2000 and 2006, the number of Mississippi households with food insecurity increased from approximately 145,000 to 207,000. The number declined to 192,000 between 2006 and 2007; data for 2008 and later are not yet available.



## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Food insecurity disrupts the well-being, productivity, and economic stability of individuals and families. Among children, food insecurity affects growth and development, physical health, behavior, and performance at school.

## Who is affected?

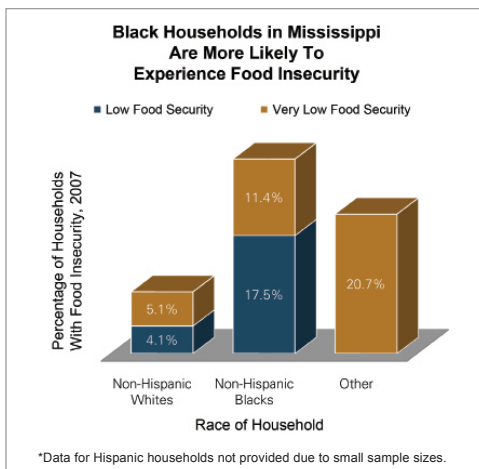
**Children:** In 2007, 73,200 (10.1%) children in Mississippi experienced food insecurity at some time in the previous year (or lived with another child who did).

**Minorities:** In 2007, food insecurity was experienced by 9.1% of non-Hispanic white households in Mississippi but by 28.8% of non-Hispanic black households.

**The Poor:** In 2007, among Mississippi households with an income less than the Federal poverty threshold, about one out of three (33.5%) experienced food insecurity.

**Households With Less Education:** Whereas food insecurity existed in 28.7% of Mississippi households in which no one had completed high school or its equivalent, food insecurity affected only 5.4% of households in which a member had obtained a college degree or higher.

**Single-Parent Households:** In 2007, among Mississippi households with children, the risk of food insecurity was lower for families with married couples (11.9%) than for homes with a male head of household but no spouse (21.1%) or a female head of household and no spouse (34.5%).



## SOURCES AND METHODS

The statistics reported here were obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's most recent report on food security: *Household Food Security in the United States, 2007*. The data underwent statistical analysis by the research staff of the Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Human Needs. Due to small sample sizes in survey populations within Michigan, some values reported here have a large margin of error. The margin of error is reported in detail at [www.humanneeds.vcu.edu](http://www.humanneeds.vcu.edu) where further details about analytic methods are available.

**THE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY CENTER ON HUMAN NEEDS** ([www.humanneeds.vcu.edu](http://www.humanneeds.vcu.edu)) was chartered in 2007 to provide the public and policymakers with information about the prevalence of societal distress in the United States. Its mission is to document how many Americans confront food insecurity, precarious housing or homelessness, inadequate health and health care, inferior education, and inadequate income/poverty.

For more details visit [www.humanneeds.vcu.edu](http://www.humanneeds.vcu.edu).