

Handout #7 » Causes of Hunger

UNEMPLOYMENT

Some people can't find work for various reasons, including recessions, age, disability, or homelessness.

INSUFFICIENT EMPLOYMENT

Many jobs do not generate enough income to lift a family out of poverty.

LOW INCOME

HUNGER & FOOD INSECURITY

When families do not have enough income to cover all their expenses, they may choose to eat less food – or eat cheaper, less nutritious food – rather than be homeless, or go without heat and electricity.

HIGH EXPENSES

HOUSING

Housing costs have risen much faster than income for lower-income households.

HEALTH CARE

Health care and health insurance costs keep climbing.

CHILD CARE

Workers with young children often need to pay for child care.

TRANSPORTATION

Families may need a vehicle to get to work or go grocery shopping.

BARRIERS TO FOOD SECURITY

Lack of Income

Poverty and hunger are closely linked. But even people with moderate or high incomes can experience hunger and food insecurity if their income drops during part of the year, or if they encounter higher expenses from an uninsured illness, accident, or loss.

Lack of Access

Some rural and inner city residents have difficulty getting to a grocery store that is far from where they live. They may rely on more expensive, lower-quality food from nearby convenience stores.

Lack of Knowledge

Some people may not have the knowledge or skills to prepare nutritious meals on a limited budget. Or, they may not know how to handle and store food safely.

Lack of Participation

Some people may be eligible for food assistance programs, but don't participate because:

- » They are unaware of or confused about the programs that are available;
- » It too difficult to apply - the forms are too long or too hard to understand, the application site is hard to get to, or the application site is not open on evenings or weekends;
- » Some programs, such as School Breakfast, may not be available where they live.

Additional Barriers

Lack of personal, family, or community resources due to:

- » age
- » divorce or death of spouse
- » homelessness
- » disability
- » loss of job benefits
- » lack of education
- » absence of social support programs