



Issue Brief



Release Date: August 2018

San Diego County Food Insecurity (2016)

The research for this brief was conducted with input and guidance from the Hunger Free San Diego Advisory Board, a collaboration of agencies facilitated by San Diego Hunger Coalition and part of the Hunger Free Communities Network. Please cite this report as: *San Diego Hunger Coalition. Hunger Free San Diego Issue Brief: 2016 San Diego County Food Insecurity. San Diego, CA; August 2018.*

Summary of Estimates

Population Experiencing Food Insecurity: 1 in 7 people

The need for food assistance in San Diego County remains high. According to the latest research provided by San Diego Hunger Coalition, an estimated **486,000 people in San Diego County experienced food insecurity in 2016**. This represents 323,000 adults and 163,000 children who did not always have enough food for an active, healthy life. Similar to the decrease in national and state rates in 2016, this is a slight drop from the 2015 food insecurity rate in San Diego of 16% (or an estimated 505,000 people).

	1 in 5 children (22%)
1 in 7 people (15%) →	1 in 8 adults (13%)
	1 in 11 seniors (9%)

Population At Risk of Food Insecurity: 1 in 5 people

In San Diego County, an estimated additional 185,000 people are “food secure” but rely on CalFresh and/or WIC to supplement their food budget. This represents 96,000 adults and 89,000 children who are *at risk of food insecurity* should they lose CalFresh or WIC benefits. **The total population in San Diego County that is either food insecure or food secure with CalFresh or WIC assistance is 671,000 or 1 in 5 people.**

Characteristics of Households Food Insecure

- Nearly half of adults (44%) and children (45%) that live in households below 200% of Federal Poverty Level experience food insecurity.
- Half (50%) of low-income African Americans experience food insecurity, compared to 42% of low-income Latinos, 40% of low-income Whites, and 34% of low-income Asians.
- Sixty percent (3 out of 5) of low-income single parent households experience food insecurity.
- Fifty percent of low-income adults experiencing food insecurity are living with a disability.
- More than half (55%) of low-income adults experiencing food insecurity are employed.

Analysis

Why is food insecurity so prevalent in San Diego County?

The food insecurity rate indicates how many people *do not have enough money to provide adequate food for themselves*. The questions in food security surveys ask people if they have ‘*enough money for*’ or are ‘*able to afford*’ the food they need, therefore the measure does not take into account whether or how well that need has been met by federal or charitable nutrition programs. While connecting people experiencing food insecurity with food assistance does improve their supply of food and reduce their risk of hunger, it does not necessarily improve their ability *to purchase enough food with their own money*. Therefore, the food insecurity rate will only improve if people’s economic conditions improve.