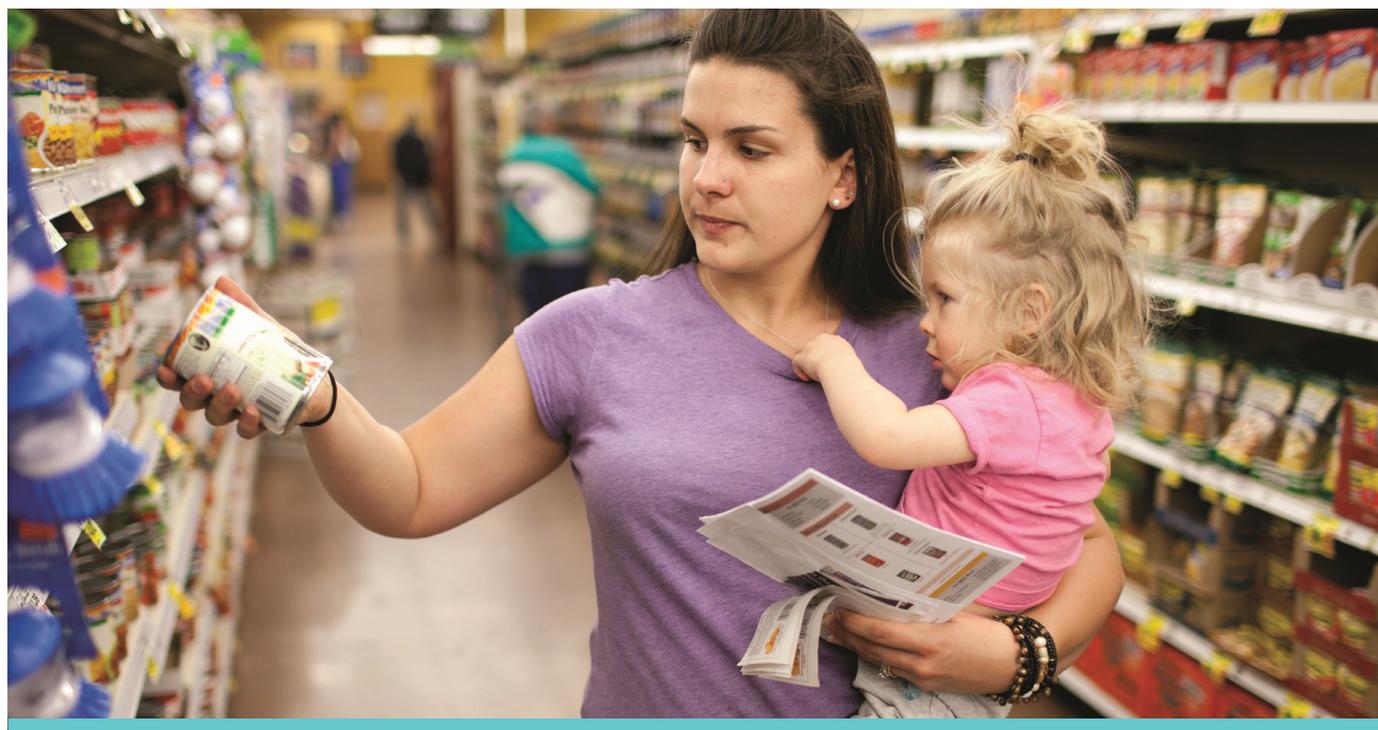


Rising Food Prices & Childhood Hunger

Middle-Income Families Surveyed Among Those Who Struggle to Feed Their Children Due to Rising Food Prices



OVERVIEW

According to the **Consumer Price Index Report** from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, food prices rose 9.5% in February 2023 compared to the previous year. As a result, food insecurity has become a pressing issue affecting more families with middle incomes across America, although families with lower incomes have been hit hardest.

Two surveys of middle- and lower-income parents of children attending public schools (K-12) conducted by Ipsos between January 30–February 2, 2023, on behalf of Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry campaign shed light on this problem.

The data reveals that **the rising cost of food** over the last year has:

1. Left many surveyed middle-income families vulnerable to food insecurity and created daily struggles for some surveyed lower-income parents to provide food for their children.

2. Taken a toll on parents’ and children’s mental and physical health with surveyed parents noticing an impact.

Among 3,000 parents of public-school children surveyed, 58% of middle-income and 68% of lower-income families reported it had become harder to afford enough food for their children over the last year.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of parents with middle incomes and 87% of parents with lower incomes cited the rise in food prices as the reason for this struggle.

Surveyed parents report that federal and state food assistance can be game-changing, yet stigma around them still exists.

FINDINGS

Families are Struggling to Afford Enough Food

Families with middle incomes who were surveyed are skipping meals to feed their children.

- One in 5 families with middle incomes reported that they or their children have skipped a meal in the last year due to rising food prices.



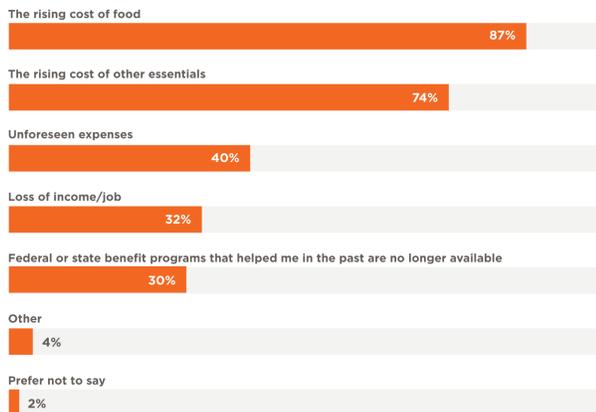
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) of parents with middle incomes reported it has become harder to afford food for their children, and of those, 95% reported struggling to afford enough food for their children at least monthly.

Families with lower incomes who were surveyed have been hit the hardest.

- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of parents with lower incomes reported that it has become more difficult to afford food in the past year.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) reported that, in addition to the cost of food itself, the rising costs of other necessities, such as utilities, gas, rent, and clothes contributed to the difficulty of affording enough food.

Select all that apply. What made it harder to afford enough food for your children?

Lower income



Many parents surveyed are an unexpected expense away from not being able to afford enough food for their children.

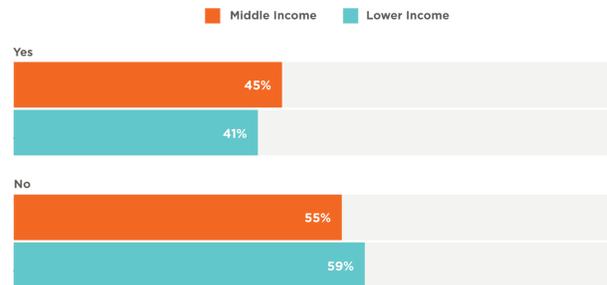
- Two in five families with lower incomes say an unexpected car repair or medical bill made it harder to afford enough food for their children. Among families with middle incomes, 50% reported the same.

Children and Parents' Well-Being is Suffering

Surveyed parents are noticing a negative impact on their children's well-being.

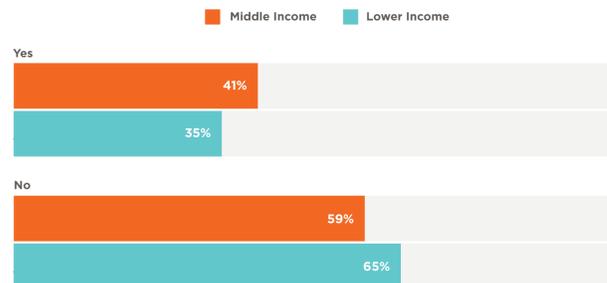
- Forty-one (41%) percent of parents with lower incomes and 45% of middle-income parents noticed a negative change in their children's mental health as a result of not having enough to eat.

Have you noticed a negative change in your child(ren)'s mental health due to not having enough to eat?



- Surveyed parents also reported noticing negative changes in their children's physical health. This was true for 41% of parents with middle incomes and 35% of parents with lower incomes.

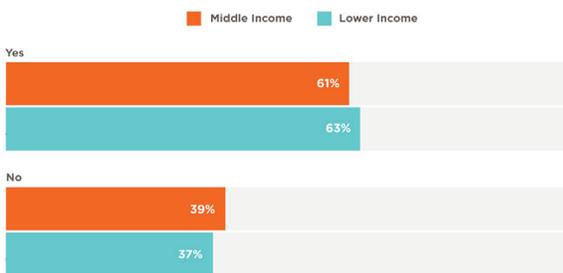
Have you noticed a negative change in your child(ren)'s physical health due to not having enough to eat?



The struggle to provide three nutritious meals a day for their children is also taking a toll on surveyed parents' mental health and well-being.

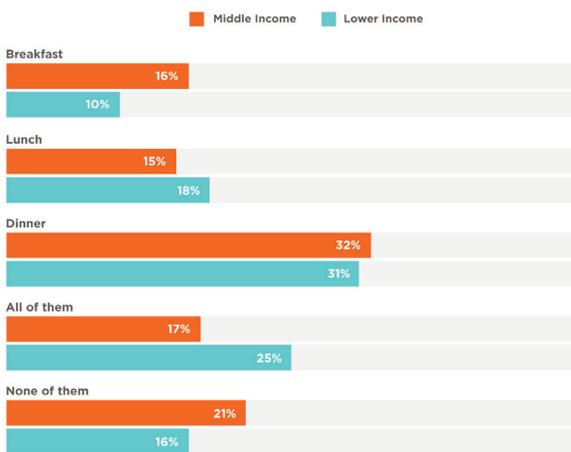
- Sixty-three percent (63%) of parents with lower incomes and 61% of parents with middle incomes who have struggled to provide food in the last year reported a negative change in their mental health due to not having enough to eat.

Have you noticed a negative change in your mental health due to not having enough to eat?



- Further, 84% percent of parents with lower incomes and 79% of parents with middle incomes said that when it comes to ensuring their children are eating three nutritious meals each day, at least one meal causes them stress and worry – for one in three that meal is dinner.

When it comes to ensuring your child(ren) is/are eating 3 nutritious meals each day, which meal causes you the most stress or worry?

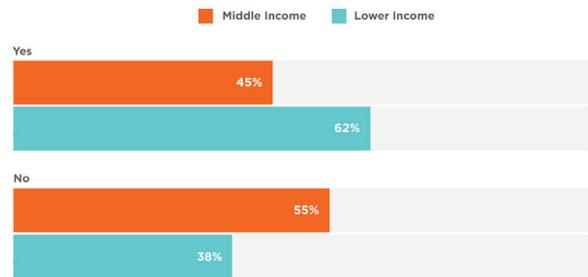


Food Assistance Programs

Food assistance programs can be game-changing for those in need.

- Sixty two percent (62%) of surveyed families with lower incomes and 45% for surveyed families with middle incomes participated in food assistance programs for the first time last year.

During the last 12 months, have you or your children participated in any food assistance programs for the first time?



“
It has provided essentials and made it easier to afford to feed me and my child healthy food regularly.”

Mother with lower income

- Thirty percent (30%) of surveyed lower-income parents who reported it had become harder to afford enough food for their children over the last year, attributed the ending of federal or state programs as the reason. Among surveyed families with middle incomes, 25% reported the same.

Barriers kept surveyed families from accessing food assistance programs.

- Fifty-three (53) percent of the families with lower incomes who did not participate in a food assistance program for the first time in the prior year, cited not knowing about the programs or if they qualify, difficulty with the application, or ineligibility due to other requirements as the reasons for not applying.

Stigma still exists for those who stand to benefit from food assistance.

- Of surveyed parents with middle-incomes who chose not to participate in a food assistance program for the first time, 12% said they were too proud to ask for help. One parent described participating even though it was “embarrassing.”

THE NO KID HUNGRY PERSPECTIVE

The rise in food prices is exacerbating childhood hunger in America. Parents are paying significantly more in groceries than they did a year ago, forcing many to skip a meal so their children can eat or make impossible choices between affording groceries or paying the rent.

Families with lower incomes continue to be the most vulnerable, but today, even families with middle incomes are living on the margin of food insecurity.

In addition to the school meals program, one of the best ways to feed kids is by ensuring their families have the resources to feed themselves. And in times of crisis, programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) work together to help cope and make sure families and kids get the nutrition they need. As the survey validated, many families navigated the stress of providing meals for their children by participating in a food assistance program for the first time.

To meet the need and support struggling families, we need these programs to be stronger and eliminate the bureaucratic and logistical barriers

that make these programs hard to access. That's why No Kid Hungry is working to support and expand these solutions to ensure all kids have access to three healthy meals a day. We're doing this through improving access to federal nutrition programs, providing grants to schools and community organizations to connect kids with the healthy food they need to thrive and advocating for better laws and policies that help families keep food on the table.

“
My child started kindergarten this year and qualified for free/reduced breakfast and lunch at school. With him eating both [meals] most days at school it has helped us save some food for after school snacks for him and dinner.

Mother with lower income

“
It kept me at ease that at least my kids are eating properly, as inflation rises it is getting harder for me to [keep] up.”

Father with middle income



ABOUT THE STUDY



The two Ipsos polls were conducted between January 30-February 2, 2023, on behalf of No Kid Hungry. For the first survey, a sample of 1,500 adults age 18+, who were screened as a parent of a child/children attending a Kindergarten through 12th grade public school, with an annual household income between \$47,000 and \$142,000, from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. For the second survey, a sample of 1,500 adults age 18+, who were screened as a parent of a child/children attending a Kindergarten through 12th grade public school, with an annual household income of less than \$47,000, from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English.

The sample was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel, partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding."

Ipsos Survey Sources:

Middle-Income Source: Ipsos (2023). Survey of 1500 participants who are a parent or guardian of one or more children attending K-12 public schools. Conducted from January 30 to February 1, 2023. HH income: \$47,000-\$142,000.

Lower-Income Source: Ipsos (2023). Survey of 1500 participants who are a parent or guardian of one or more children attending K-12 public schools. Conducted from January 30 to February 2, 2023. HH income: under \$47,000.

Survey and Data Sources:

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Summary

Middle-income definition based on Pew Research Center's household earning between two-thirds and double an area's median household income. Median household income based on Census Bureau income data (\$70,784 in 2021, the most recent data) for the average size household in the United States (3). Lower-income definition based on household income that is less than the lowest calculated middle-income bracket.

ABOUT NO KID HUNGRY

No child should go hungry in America. But millions of kids in the United States live with hunger. No Kid Hungry is working to end childhood hunger by helping launch and improve programs that give all kids the healthy food they need to thrive. This is a problem we know how to solve. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of Share Our Strength, an organization committed to ending hunger and poverty.

Learn more at NoKidHungry.org