

# Empty Tables:

## The Hidden Reality of Food Insecurity



As part of their multi-year partnership in the fight against hunger, Sara Lee Bread and U.S. Hunger set out to explore the nation's awareness and understanding of food insecurity through a survey of more than 2,000 U.S. adults. Key findings are highlighted below.



Americans aren't clear on what food insecurity is or the extent of its impact...



**13.5 million American households** are affected by food insecurity—equivalent to 1 in 10.<sup>1</sup> Yet, only 24% of Americans recognize it as one of the most pressing issues facing American households today.



**Almost 3 in 10 (29%)** Americans say they are **not at all/not very familiar** with the term "food insecurity".



**76%** of Americans believe food insecurity is **NOT** among the top three issues impacting American households today.

Food insecurity is more common than many think among the average American family...



**38%** of Americans believe households earning less than \$25,000 annually are the income level that submit the most requests for food assistance, when food insecurity realistically impacts households that earn anywhere from \$25,000 to 149,000 annually<sup>5</sup>.



**47%** of Americans believe food insecurity is rare among the average American family (i.e. dual income household).



...And even more so in **female caregiver households**.



**Only 37%** of Americans believe food insecurity is among the top three issues impacting female caregivers today.



**Almost 3 in 10 (29%)**

Americans believe most food assistance applicants are unemployed, yet many female caregivers are employed — or have multiple jobs — and are still in need of support<sup>2</sup>.



**3 in 5 (60%)** Americans are unaware that female caregivers are most likely to sacrifice personal meals when experiencing food insecurity — yet nearly **90 percent** of female caregivers sacrifice their own meals to feed their families<sup>3</sup>.



**38%** of Americans think unstable housing is among the most common housing situation for American households who experience food insecurity, but a majority (**58%**) of female caregivers do have stable housing and still rely on food assistance<sup>4</sup>.

However, Americans have a desire to **learn more** and **take action to help**.



**82%** of Americans said they are interested in helping to fight food insecurity and help more American families know where their next meal will come from.

For more information, visit [saraleebread.com](https://saraleebread.com) and [ushunger.org](https://ushunger.org).

<sup>1</sup> USDA. USDA ERS - Definitions of Food Security. [www.ers.usda.gov](https://www.ers.usda.gov). Published September 8, 2021. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-foodsecurity/>  
Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, Anita Singh, September 2022. Household Food Security in the United States in 2021, ERR-309, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Lee and US Hunger - Lived Experiences of the Female Caregiver, Page 21

<sup>3</sup> Sara Lee and US Hunger - Lived Experiences of the Female Caregiver, Page 12

<sup>4</sup> Sara Lee and US Hunger - Lived Experiences of the Female Caregiver, Page 14

<sup>5</sup> Sara Lee and US Hunger - Lived Experiences of the Female Caregiver, Page 12

Survey Method: This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Sara Lee Bread from November 25 - 27, 2024 among 2,083 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Sara Lee Bread.

