



HARD TIMES FOR FOOD HARDSHIP IN U.S., TEXAS

Nearly one in five Texans struggle to afford food, according to a report released last week by the Food Research and Action Center. The Lone Star State is among 20 states with food hardship rates of 20 percent or higher in 2008-2009. Food hardship among families with children was even more pronounced, with 27.2 percent of Texas families reporting difficulty affording food. The study calls for job creation measures and increased investment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) and other federal nutrition programs that help families afford food during tough economic times. To rise to this challenge, Texas needs to fix the problems in its SNAP eligibility system, where staffing shortages are preventing hundreds of thousands of needy Texans from accessing food assistance. Congress can help America's struggling families by extending the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA) additional unemployment benefits.

- **Food hardship—the chronic inability to afford food—rose during 2008 and 2009 due to high unemployment and unstable food prices.**
- **Texas ranks among the 20 states with food hardship rates of 20 percent or higher.**
- **Food hardship is more pronounced among families with children. In Texas, 27.2 percent of these families struggle to afford food.**
- **Texas can address these challenges by fixing the eligibility system.**
- **Congress should move quickly to extend additional unemployment benefits before they expire.**

ROOTS OF FOOD HARDSHIP

FRAC's report is based on data collected by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project. Researchers interviewed 1,000 households per day for almost every day over a two-year period from early 2008 to late 2009. The FRAC analysis breaks down the findings by the nation's 436 congressional districts (including the District of Columbia) and 100 largest metropolitan areas. The result is a bleak mosaic of families and children facing food hardship exacerbated by an ongoing recession, high unemployment, and unstable food prices, which skyrocketed in 2008.

Particularly disturbing was the rate of food hardship suffered by families with children under 18. The FRAC report found that families with children were 1.62 times more likely to experience food hardship in 2009: nationally, 24.1 percent of families with children experienced food hardship, versus 14.9 percent of families without children. In Texas, 27.2 percent of Texas families chronically struggled to afford food. Extensive research has shown that even moderate levels of food insecurity can have a devastating impact on children, affecting health, learning, development, and mental health.

The study calls for job creation measures and increased investment in the public supports that exist to help families struggling with problems like food hardship, such as unemployment insurance and refundable tax credits and federal nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, and summer, afterschool and child care feeding. CPPP calls on Texas to fix the SNAP eligibility system, and urges Congress to extend ARRA's additional unemployment benefits before they expire at the end of this month. Click here to read the full FRAC [report](#).