COVID-19 RELATED FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity: not having reliable access to nutritious foods that are needed to live an active and healthy life

Restrictions in 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19 impacted day-to-day life and led to the closure of businesses, schools and childcare centers in the U.S.

Risk of food insecurity (FI) increased significantly as a result, mostly impacting families already at risk of FI, low-income families and families of color.

What did we look at?

We wanted to learn more about changes in household FI risk from pre-pandemic to early-pandemic.

What did we learn?

Factors Impacting FI Risk

- FI risk did not change much from pre- to early pandemic but there were differences based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. This is similar to findings around the country, indicating that certain populations are at a higher risk for FI and the pandemic worsened FI risk for these populations.

In families who were food secure pre-pandemic:

- risk of early-pandemic FI was 2.1x higher for non-Hispanic Black families and 3x higher for other families as compared to non-Hispanic White families.

Early pandemic FI risk was:

- more than 2x higher for families who experienced economic hardship (temporary or permanent job loss or reduced hours) than families who did not experience hardship.

Compared to families with incomes >300% FPL early-pandemic FI risk was:

- 3.2x higher for families >185-300% FPL and 2.5x higher for families ≤185% FPL.

Participant Demographics

Graph 1

Distribution of Families by Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

Graph 1

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Mitigating FI risk and providing stimulus payments and school meals may reduce disparities in response to pandemics.

Families who received the CARES stimulus payment had a 50% reduction in risk of early-pandemic FI.

The percentage of families participating in school meal programs decreased significantly from pre to early pandemic.

Families who participated in school meal programs pre- and early-pandemic had a 80% reduction in FI risk.

Why does it matter?

We need policymakers to think about providing additional support to families who are most vulnerable so these families have the resources they need to help their children grow and develop.

Food security strengthens families’ ability to care for themselves and their children through better nutrition and support for health-related social needs.

Having access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods helps children be healthy, beyond just their physical health.

What can I do?

Reach out to elected officials and encourage them to support policies that advance research on FI and expand current programs or create new programs that may protect families from FI.

To find out who your elected officials are and how you can contact them, visit: http://mdelect.net/

Project Website: marylandschoolwellness.org
For question or to learn more, please email: rdeitch1@jhu.edu


Link to resources:  
Baltimore City Food Access  
Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Maryland Food Bank  
USDA Food & Nutrition Services (contains info on SNAP & WIC)