

Hunger: The Hidden Burden on Teens in the U.S.

"My focus is different when I'm hungry. I'm gonna be thinking about food. I'm gonna be thinking about which one of my classmates has food. I'm gonna be thinking about which one of them might share." – Don, age 16

Overview

From juggling school work and extracurricular activities to completing college applications and managing social pressures, teens in the U.S. face extraordinary pressures.

And for many, there is an additional, invisible layer of stress in their daily lives that comes from shouldering the burden of hunger.

"Hunger in our Schools," a new survey of teachers, students and parents released by No Kid Hungry, analyzes the depth of this hunger crisis and underscores the significant impact it has on our nation's teens.

The Findings

While many parents try to shield their children from their financial strain, kids are not only aware of their families' hardships, they also worry about it.

55% of teens are aware that their parents worry about having enough money for food for the entire family.

35% themselves worry the food at home will run out before there is money to buy more.

59% of teens say they've come to school hungry.

42% of teens say they feel sadness about not having enough to eat. Almost the same amount (**41%**) feel anger.

What Teachers See

Teachers also recognize the toll student hunger takes their ability to teach.

92%

of teachers are concerned with how hunger impacts their students' ability to succeed.

80%

of teachers say hunger affects a student's ability to concentrate.

76%

of teachers see poor academic performance.

62%

of teachers see increased behavioral and discipline problems.

47%

of teachers see sicker, less healthy students.





The Power Of School Meals

Hunger affects children in every community in the United States. Ending hunger means ensuring every child has reliable access to the healthy food they need.

Free and reduced-price school meals can close the gap between kids who have enough to eat and those who don't. These programs can make sure kids have access to food when they need it, regardless of zip code, age, time of year or time of day.

But the traditional method of serving the meal before the school day starts is ineffective. As a result, only a fraction of the students who may need this meal are unable to access it.

When schools make breakfast part of the school day, serving it once school starts instead of before, it reaches more of the kids who need it.

This has a significant impact on test scores, attendance rates, discipline problems and the lives and future well-being of students.

METHODOLOGY

Hunger In Our Schools was conducted by the research firm Salter Mitchell in the spring of 2017. Data from kids and parents came from a 20-minute online dyad survey with N=500 low-income parents at or below 185% of the federal poverty level and their children, aged 13-18, who attend public school in the United States. Margin of error was $\pm 4.4\%$. (If more than one eligible child was in the household one was selected at random.) Data from educators came from a 10-minute online survey of N=325 teachers (K-12), administrators and school support staff in the United States. The margin of error was $\pm 5.4\%$.

ABOUT NO KID HUNGRY

No child should go hungry in America, but 1 in 6 kids will face hunger this year. Using proven, practical solutions, No Kid Hungry is ending childhood hunger today by ensuring that kids start the day with a nutritious breakfast, are able to get the nutrition they need during the summertime, and families learn the skills they need to shop and cook on a budget. When we all work together, we can make sure kids get the healthy food they need. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. Join us at NoKidHungry.org.

———— Families on the Brink ————

The threat of hunger hangs over many low-income families. Many parents are worried about their ability to afford enough food.

64%

of parents say an unexpected expense of \$1500 would make it difficult to feed their children.

59%

of parents say that, within the past year, the food they bought didn't last and there wasn't money for more.

92%

of families in this survey are working - at least one adult in the household works full-time, part-time or multiple jobs.

Learn More

For the full report:
tiny.cc/HIOS

For all press inquiries, contact:

Meredith Brandt
Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry
mbrandt@strength.org
202.769.5554