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## **Likely Voters of Both Parties Overwhelmingly Support Federal Food Safety Net, New National Poll Shows**

**14 Million Working Adults  
in U.S. Struggle Against Hunger, Says New Report**

**1 in 6 American Children Lived in Food Insecure  
Households in 2016-2018**

**New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Kansas, Arkansas Have  
Highest Rates of Hungry Employed Adults**

**Advocates Call Hunger Crisis an “Affordability Crisis”**

A nationwide poll commissioned by Hunger Free America found that five times as many likely voters support increasing federal funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly called the Food Stamp Program – as those who support cutting it. Fifty-eight percent wanted funding increased, with 32 percent wanting such monies boosted significantly. In comparison, 24 percent of likely voters wanted funding kept at the current amount, and only 11 percent wanted it cut.

Even among self-identified Republican likely voters, fewer than one in seven wanted the federal government to spend less on SNAP. Support for SNAP was also very strong among likely voters in swing states and in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Said Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, “This poll explodes the myth that Americans of any persuasion are clamoring to take food assistance away from hungry children, working people, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and those temporarily unemployed. On the contrary, we found that Americans agreed that domestic food aid is under-funded.”

The poll, conducted of 1,000 likely voters nationwide by Kupersmit Research, also found that 88 percent of all likely voters – and 83 percent of Republicans – agreed with Hunger Free America’s call to make it easier for low-income Americans to use modern technologies to access safety programs, thereby reducing both poverty and government bureaucracy.

Benjamin Kupersmit, lead researcher for the poll said, “This poll is consistent with other research focused on hunger that shows significant public support for federal nutrition aid. Our cross-tabs show that only the wealthiest and most conservative Americans support cuts to these popular programs, while calls for such aid to be increased would be well received among low- and middle-income voters, particularly women, across the political spectrum.”

Separately, Hunger Free America released the “2019 United States Hunger Atlas,” which found that, based on an analysis of federal data, nearly one in 10 employed U.S. adults — more than 14 million people — lived in homes that couldn’t always afford enough food in 2016-2018. The report, which outlines food insecurity statistics in all 50 states, also found that more than 17 percent of children and nearly 8 percent of older Americans (adults 60 years and older) lived in food insecure households during the same time period.

The states with the highest rates of food insecurity among employed adults were New Mexico (13.8 percent), Oklahoma (13.2 percent), Louisiana (12.2 percent), Kansas (11.7 percent), and Arkansas (11.7 percent). Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico were consistently on the lists of the top ten states with the highest rates of food insecurity for overall individuals, children, employed adults, and older Americans.

Berg said: “How can it be that, during a time when the official unemployment rate was very low and the wealthiest Americans were doing better than ever, that so many Americans were hungry and impoverished? The answer is simple: tens of millions of Americans earned too little to keep up with soaring costs for housing, health care, child care, and other basic costs of living. The national minimum wage in 2016-2018 was only \$7.25 per hour, the same level since 2009. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition calculated that a full-time worker would have needed to earn at least \$21.20 per hour to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment during that time period. When people don’t earn enough for basic expenses, they go hungry.”

The atlas also reported:

- The states with the highest rates of food insecure children were New Mexico (25.2 percent), Kentucky (24.3 percent), Arkansas (23.6 percent), Louisiana (23.0 percent), and West Virginia (22.8 percent).
- In states with a minimum wage set at \$10 or above, an average of 8.2 percent of employed adults were found to be food insecure, which is more than a full percentage point below the national average of 9.3 percent. In states with a minimum wage set at \$7.25 or below, an average of 9.5 percent of employed adults were food insecure, which is slightly above the national average.
- California is the state with the highest number of food insecure employed adults at more than 1.7 million, followed by Texas (1.5 million), Florida (1.1 million), New York (0.6 million), and Ohio (0.5 million).
- Washington D.C. had the highest rate of food insecurity among older Americans at 12.3 percent followed by New Mexico (12.0 percent), Mississippi (11.5 percent), Louisiana (11.4 percent), and Texas (10.8 percent).
- Nationwide, food insecure Americans would need \$18.3 billion in additional food purchasing power each year to meet their basic food needs, spending as much on food as do non-hungry Americans. The increased food purchasing power could take the form of a combination of higher wages and increased federal nutrition assistance spending.

“The bottom line is that the U.S. hunger crisis is, at its core, an affordability crisis,” Berg added. “The only way to end U.S. hunger is to help Americans better afford food, both by raising wages and ensuring a federal nutrition assistance safety net that is adequately-funded and easy-to-access including benefits such as: SNAP (formerly known as food stamps); meals on wheels and senior center meals for older Americans; WIC for pregnant women and infants; and school breakfasts, lunches, and summer meals for children. Americans also need to be able to easily access affordable childcare, housing, and health care.”

The full report, “The Affordability Crisis and Hunger: Soaring Costs for Housing and Other Basics of Living Leave Less for Food — 2019 United States Hunger Atlas,” can be found on Hunger Free America’s website, [www.HungerFreeAmerica.org](http://www.HungerFreeAmerica.org), through which anyone can also donate, volunteer, or find food resources for those in need. Anyone needing food can call the USDA Hunger Hotline, managed by Hunger Free America on behalf of the federal government, at 1-866-3-hungry.

## Polling Results

**This survey of 1,000 Likely Voters in the 2020 election was conducted online. Quotas were utilized to ensure representation by age, geography, and gender identity; the survey has been weighted to approximate party ID in publicly available national surveys (45% Dem, 39% Rep, 14% Ind/Other (including 29% Strong Dem and 24% Strong Rep)).**

**The survey was conducted November 1-5, 2019 and carries a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$  at the 95% confidence level.**

*Poll Question: Currently, the food stamp program (known as SNAP) costs taxpayers less than 2% of the total federal budget. Do you think spending on food stamps as a percent of the federal budget should be:*

	Increased Significantly	Increased Slightly	Kept Same	Cut Slightly
Republican	20%	21%	36%	6%
Independent	25%	21%	26%	8%
Democratic	44%	31%	15%	3%

*Poll Question: On average, food stamps provide about \$1.40 per meal for those who receive SNAP benefits. Do you think the current benefit of \$1.40 per meal is way too much, a bit too much, about right, a bit too low, or much too low?*

	Bit Too Low	Way Too Low	About Right	Bit Too Much	Way Too Much
Republican	22%	18%	34%	8	9
Independent	25%	24%	23	8	6
Democratic	23%	41%	14	8	7

*Poll Question: Government programs should become more efficient and streamlined and use modern technologies, so people struggling to work their way out of poverty aren't wasting valuable time filling in the same forms over and over, or fighting red tape and waiting on hold on phone trees all day, just to figure out their benefits.*

	Agree 100%	Agree Strongly	Agree a Little
Republican	24%	37%	22%
Independent	34%	35%	17%
Democratic	48%	30%	11%

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