

Oregon experienced its largest single-year decline in food insecurity in the past 20 years. That is according to a new report from Professor Mark Edwards at Oregon State University which showed that Oregon's hunger rate (officially "Very Low Food Security") also declined. While this is good news, hunger remains persistently high in Oregon and well above pre-recession levels.

By the numbers

From the 2013-15 data to the 2014-16 data, the rate of food insecurity in Oregon went from 16.1 percent to 14.6 percent and the rate of hunger declined from 6.6 percent to 6.2 percent. The rate for individual states is calculated on a three-year average, which could mean that this decline is a result of both the exclusion of 2013 data and the inclusion of 2016 data. The increase in food security appears to be attributed to the strength of economic recovery in Oregon.

Recent History of Oregon and U.S. Hunger & Food Insecurity Rates

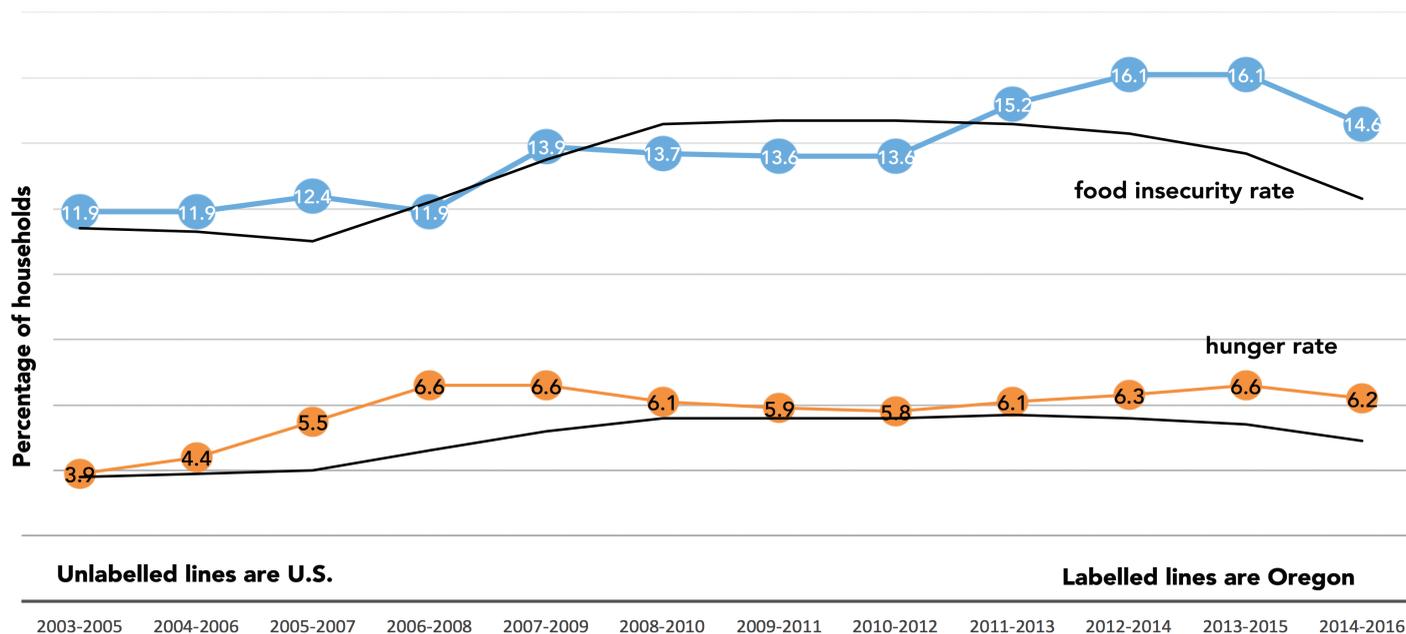


Chart courtesy of Mark Edwards, Oregon State University.

Why this is still not enough

Even though this reduction is obviously good for the state, Oregon's rate of food insecurity remains higher than the national average. The number of Oregon adults and children living in food insecure households is 560,000 and those in households experiencing hunger is 238,000. Oregon now has the 12th highest rate of hunger in the United States. This is an improved ranking compared to the 1999-2001 report when Oregon had the highest hunger rate of any state at 5.8 percent. Despite our improved ranking, a higher percentage of Oregonians experience hunger now (6.2 percent) than when Oregon had the worst hunger rate. Much of this can be attributed to the severity of the Great Recession. Oregon also has the highest hunger rate of any state in the Northwest United States.

Disparities in experiences of hunger

Also, these new numbers, while overall are a net positive for our state, still disproportionately affect certain groups.

The food security rate amongst renters in Oregon, for example, fell by three percent but still remains higher than renters in the rest of the United States. The rate of very low food security among Oregon renters came in at 13.1 percent as compared to the national rate of 9.3 percent. Renters in Oregon are seven times more likely to experience hunger than homeowners, which is double the disparity experienced in the rest of the nation.

Single mothers are also disproportionately affected by food insecurity, following a historical trend in Oregon. This number has steadily and significantly declined from 48 percent in 2012-14 and 44 percent in 2013-15 to now 40 percent in the latest average, but this is still almost seven percent higher than the national average. This is compared to couples with children in Oregon whose rate of food insecurity have dropped by three percent, now making the difference between these households and the national average no longer statistically different.

Rural communities are seeing continual rise in rates of food insecurity and hunger, in contrast to consistent improvements in urban areas. Residents in rural Oregon counties are five percent more likely to experience food insecurity and hunger than those in rural communities across the country and are 5.5 to 6.5 percent more likely than urban Oregonians to experience food insecurity or hunger. Trends in urban hunger are driving down hunger rates overall but taking this wholecloth ignores the struggle facing rural Oregonians to put food on the table.

Communities of color continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, food insecurity and hunger. Hispanic Oregonians, for example, experience hunger at a rate of 30.5%, as compared to 14.9% of white Oregonians. This is because of compounding factors such as access to resources, systemic and institutional racism and interpersonal discrimination.

Sources

¹ Edwards, Mark, 2017. "Food Insecurity in Oregon and the U.S.: Uneven Recovery in the Midst of Overall Improvement (2014-2016)." School of Public Policy and the Rural Studies Program, Oregon State University. https://appliedecon.oregonstate.edu/sites/agscid7/files/oregonhungerreport_28oct2017.pdf

Graph "Recent History of Oregon and U.S. Hunger & Food Insecurity Rates" are courtesy of Mark Edwards. Charts adapted from Mark Edwards' "Food Insecurity in Oregon and the U.S.: Uneven Recovery in the Midst of Overall Improvement (2014-2016)." Graph "Hunger and food insecurity by race" adapted from Oregon State University, Calculations from combined 2010-2015 Current Population Survey December supplement, provided by Prof. Mark Edwards, 2016.

For More Information, Contact

Matt Newell-Ching, matt@oregonhunger.org, 503-956-9735

Hunger and food insecurity in renters and owners, 2014-2016

	Oregon	Rest of the U.S.
Renters	13.1%**/29.1%**	9.3%/22.8%
Owners	1.8%/5.9%	2.8%/7.5%

Hunger and food insecurity and marital status, 2014-2016

	Oregon	Rest of the U.S.
Couples with children	2.4%/13.3%	2.6%/10.4%
Couples without children at home	3.5%/5.9%	2.5%/6.3%
Single mothers	14.2%/40.2%*	11.1%/32.7%
Alone		
Women	10.1%*/22.4%**	7.3%/16.1%
Men	7.1%/12.1%	6.9%/14.3%

Hunger and food insecurity in rural and urban residents

	2014-2016	
	Oregon	Rest of the U.S.
Rural	11.2%**/20.7%**	6.6%/15.7%
Urban	5.7%/14.0%	4.9%/12.5%

	2010-2012	
	Oregon	Rest of the U.S.
Rural	5.7%**/13.7%**	6.0%/15.3%
Urban	5.8%/14.6%	5.5%/14.5%

Note: Numbers to the left of the slash marks are hunger ("very low food security") rates; to the right are the food insecurity rates.

*p<.05 There is less than a one-in-twenty chance that Oregon rate appears different from the U.S. merely by chance.

**p<.01 There is less than a one-in-one hundred chance that Oregon rate appears different from the U.S. merely by chance.

Hunger and food insecurity by race

