

**SECTION 2. ECONOMIC SECURITY**

**Poverty and Income**

**Financial Support**

**Parental Employment**



### ES 4.1 Housing Problems

A home's physical condition, its cost burden, the level of crowding,<sup>1</sup> and the quality of the surrounding neighborhood can all affect children's physical, psychological, and material well-being.<sup>2</sup> This section presents recent trends in both the cost burden and the physical quality of housing for all households with children under age 18.

Spending more than 30 percent of income on housing may compromise the budget for other essential goods and services. However, the share of all households (containing children) spending more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing increased from 15 percent in 1978 to 28 percent in 1999, while the share spending more than half their income on housing doubled from 6 percent in 1978 to 11 percent in 1999 (Table ES 4.1). For renter households with children and very low income, the trend was similar, but housing expenses were a much higher share of income. Between 1978 and 1999, the percentage of renter households (with children and very low income) paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing rose from 59 percent to 70 percent, while the percentage spending more than 50 percent rose from 31 percent to 37 percent.

During this same period, the percentage of households (containing children) living in housing with moderate to severe<sup>3</sup> physical problems declined from 9 percent in 1978 to 7 percent in 1999. For renter households (with children and very low income), the percentage living in housing with moderate to severe physical problems declined from 18 percent in 1978 to 13 percent in 1995, before increasing to 15 percent in 1999.

**Differences by Family Type.** Married-couple families with children are the least likely to experience housing with physical problems, followed by households with one adult and households with two or more adults who are not married. In 1999, for example, 6 percent of married-couple households with children, 11 percent of households with one adult, and 12 percent of households with two or more unmarried adults lived in housing with moderate to severe physical problems. Similarly, among all households with children, married couples are the least likely to be paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. For example, in 1999, 20 percent of married-couple households paid more than 30 percent, compared with 54 percent of households with one adult and 34 percent of households with two or more unmarried adults (Figure ES 4.1).

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<sup>1</sup> Physical problems include plumbing, heating, electricity, upkeep, and/or condition of apartment hallways. Cost burden is the ratio of housing costs to reported household income, while crowding is more than one person per room.

<sup>2</sup> Kaufman, T. (1996). *Housing America's Future: Children at Risk*. Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed information of "moderate" and "severe" physical problems, see U.S.Census Bureau & U.S.Department of Housing and Urban Development. (1999). American Housing Survey for the United States in 1997. *Government Housing Reports*, H150/95RV.

**Table ES 4.1**

Percentage of households with children under age 18 having selected housing problems:<sup>a</sup>  
all households and very low income<sup>b</sup> renter households: Selected years, 1978-1999

|  | 1978 | 1983 | 1989 | 1993 | 1995 | 1997 | 1999 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>All households with children (in millions)</b>                        | 32.3 | 33.6 | 35.4 | 35.4 | 37.2 | 37.0 | 37.5 |
| Housing problem (percent)  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Any problems   | 30   | 33   | 33   | 34   | 36   | 36   | 35   |
| Moderate or severe physical problems                                     | 9    | 8    | 9    | 7    | 7    | 7    | 7    |
| Crowded housing  | 9    | 8    | 7    | 6    | 7    | 7    | 7    |
| Cost burden greater than 30 percent                                      | 15   | 21   | 24   | 26   | 28   | 28   | 28   |
| Cost burden greater than 50 percent                                      | 6    | 11   | 9    | 11   | 12   | 12   | 11   |
| Severe problems  | 8    | 12   | 10   | 11   | 12   | 11   | 11   |
| <b>Renter households with children and very low income (in millions)</b> | 4.2  | 5.1  | 5.9  | 6.6  | 6.5  | 6.4  | 6.2  |
| Housing problem (percent)  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Any problems   | 79   | 83   | 77   | 75   | 77   | 82   | 80   |
| Moderate or severe physical problems                                     | 18   | 18   | 18   | 14   | 13   | 16   | 15   |
| Crowded housing  | 22   | 18   | 17   | 14   | 17   | 17   | 17   |
| Cost burden greater than 30 percent                                      | 59   | 68   | 67   | 67   | 69   | 73   | 70   |
| Cost burden greater than 50 percent                                      | 31   | 38   | 36   | 38   | 38   | 41   | 37   |
| Severe problems  | 33   | 42   | 31   | 33   | 31   | 32   | 29   |
| Rental assistance <sup>c</sup>   | 23   | 23   | 33   | 33   | 33   | 31   | 31   |

<sup>a</sup> Housing problems include physical problems, excessive cost burden, and overcrowding. Physical problems include plumbing, heating, electricity, upkeep, and/or condition of apartment hallways. Cost burden is the ratio of housing costs to reported household income. "Crowded" is defined as having more than one person per room.

<sup>b</sup> Very low income households are those with incomes at or below one-half the median income in a geographic area.

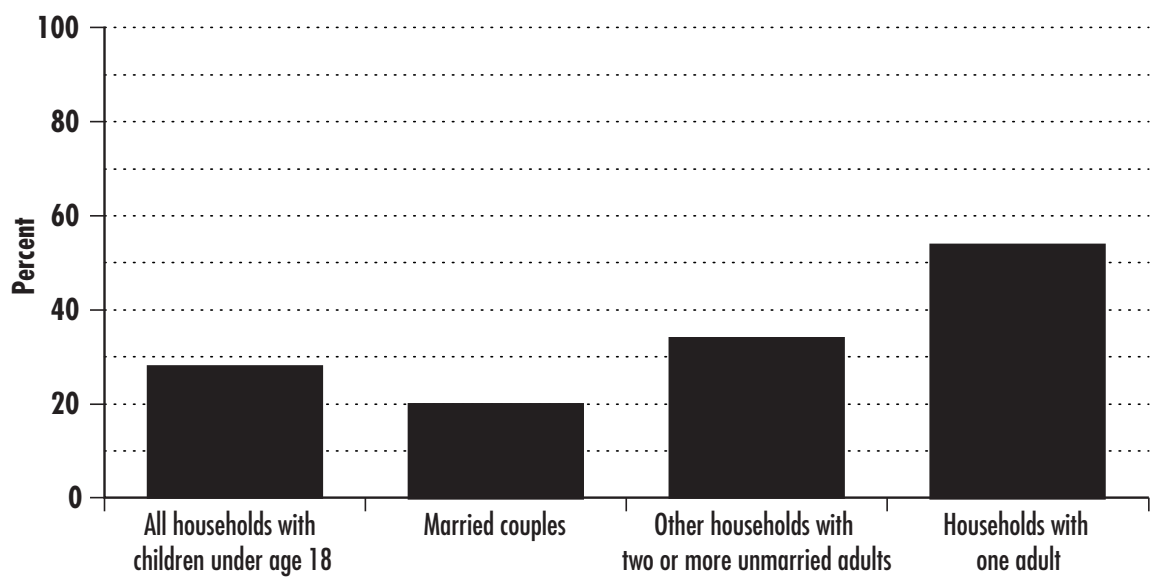
<sup>c</sup> Renters are either in a public housing project or have a subsidy.

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2002). *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

## Consumption

**Figure ES 4.1**

Percentage of households with children under age 18 and paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing: 1999



Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2002). *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



### ES 4.2 Food Security

Children's good health and development depend on a diet sufficient in nutrients and calories. Food security has been defined as access at all times to enough nourishment for an active, healthy life. At a minimum, food security includes the ready availability of sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe food, and the assurance that families can obtain adequate food without relying on emergency feeding programs or resorting to scavenging, stealing, or other desperate efforts to secure food. A family's ability to provide for children's nutritional needs is linked to income or other resources and secure access to adequate, nutritious food.<sup>1</sup>

Members of food-*insecure* households are at risk of hunger, that is, the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The following indicator measures food insecurity on a scale that indicates increasing levels of severity of food insecurity and accompanying hunger. Food-insecure households without hunger report having difficulty obtaining enough food, reduced quality of diets, anxiety about their food supply, and increased resort to emergency food sources and other coping behaviors. Most food-insecure households do not report actual hunger for household members. In 2000, 18.1 percent of all children lived in food-insecure households, and 4.1 percent of adults or children lived in food insecure households with hunger (Table ES 4.2). However, food-insecure households with moderate and severe hunger report increasing difficulty obtaining food and decreased food intakes. However, the number of children who actually experience hunger themselves, even though they may live in a food-insecure household where one or more family members experience hunger, is believed to be significantly smaller than the total number of children living in such households. This is because in most such households the adults go without food, if necessary, so that the children will have food.

**Differences by Poverty Status.** Poor children are much more likely than others to live in households experiencing food insecurity. In 2000, 47.2 percent of children in homes with incomes below the Federal poverty level lived in households experiencing food insecurity, compared to 11.5 percent of children living at or above poverty (Figure ES 4.2).

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<sup>1</sup> Life Sciences Research Office and American Institute of Nutrition. (1990). *Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult to Sample Populations*. Bethesda, MD.

**Table ES 4.2**

Percentage of children under age 18 in food-insecure households, by poverty status and presence of hunger: Selected years, 1995-2000<sup>a</sup>

|   | 1995 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| <b>All children in food-insecure households</b> | 19.4 | 19.7 | 16.9 | 18.0 |
| With hunger, adults or children <sup>b</sup>    | 6.1  | 4.7  | 3.8  | 4.1  |
| With hunger, adults and children <sup>c</sup>   | 1.3  | 1.0  | 0.7  | 0.8  |
| <b>Below poverty</b>                            | 44.4 | 48.7 | 44.0 | 47.2 |
| With hunger, adults or children <sup>b</sup>    | 15.6 | 14.2 | 11.8 | 11.9 |
| With hunger, adults and children <sup>c</sup>   | 3.4  | 3.0  | 2.2  | 2.2  |
| <b>At or above poverty</b>                      | 11.2 | 12.6 | 10.5 | 11.5 |
| With hunger, adults or children <sup>b</sup>    | 3.0  | 2.3  | 1.9  | 2.1  |
| With hunger, adults and children <sup>c</sup>   | 0.6  | 0.5  | 0.4  | 0.5  |

<sup>a</sup> Data for 1995 are not precisely comparable to the more recent years, due to a change in method of screening CPS sample households into the Food Security Supplement. However, the effect for 1995 (a slight downward bias) is perceptible only for the broadest category of household food insecurity identified. Food insecurity and hunger among children in 2000 appear slightly higher than in 1999, however, this is due, in whole or in part, to variation in the data collection periods in adjacent years. Comparison of 2000 to 1998 or of 1999 to 1995 are free of this seasonal effect and are therefore more accurate.

<sup>b</sup> In previous versions of this report, this category was designated “food-insecure with moderate or severe hunger.” However, that designation failed to clarify that hunger referred to household members generally and not specifically to children.

<sup>c</sup> In previous versions of this report, the most severe level of food insecurity was “food-insecure with severe hunger.” This included a range of severity in which hunger was experienced by children as well as adults, and was measured on the household scale. The current category more specifically measures children’s hunger and is based on the Children’s Food Security Scale.

Note: The food security measure is based on data collected annually in the *Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey*. The most severe level reported is based on the newly developed Children’s Food Security Scale, while the less severe levels are based on the broader Household Food Security Scale. The three levels of severity reported are nested, in the sense that households experiencing more severe levels of insecurity are subsets of those households that experience less severe levels. The dividing lines, or designated thresholds, between the successive categories reflect a consensus judgment of an expert working group on food security measurement.

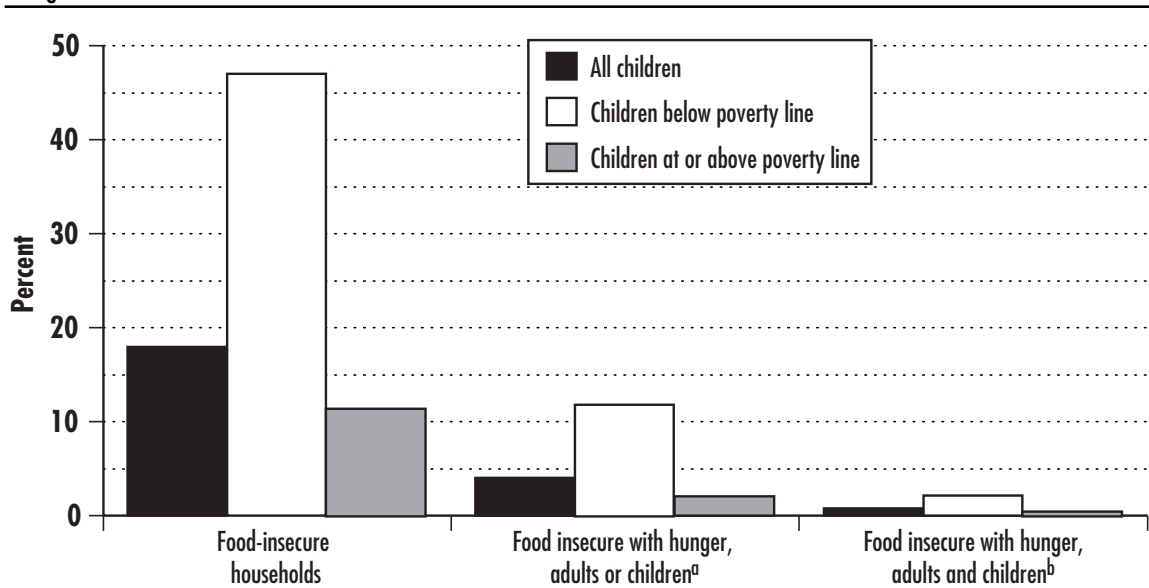
For detailed explanations, see Economic Research Service (2002). *Household food security in the United States, 2000*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service; Economic Research Service (2002). *Measuring the food security of children in U.S. households*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service; and Food and Nutrition Service (2000). *Guide to measuring household food security*. Alexandria, VA: Food and Nutrition Service.

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2002). *America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2002*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

**Consumption**

**Figure ES 4.2**

Percentage of children under age 18 in food-insecure households, by poverty status and presence of hunger: 2000



- a In previous versions of this report, this category was designated “food-insecure with moderate or severe hunger.” However, that designation failed to clarify that hunger referred to household members generally and not specifically to children.
- b In previous versions of this report, the most severe level of food insecurity was “food-insecure with severe hunger.” This included a range of severity in which hunger was experienced by children as well as adults, and was measured on the household scale. The current category more specifically measures children’s hunger and is based on the Children’s Food Security Scale.

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