

Poverty
and Income

Financial
Support

Parental
Employment

Consumption

ES 4.1 Housing Problems

A home's physical condition, its cost burden, the level of crowding,¹ and the quality of the surrounding neighborhood can all affect children's physical, psychological, and material well-being.² 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 percentage 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 2001, while the percentage spending more than half their income on housing doubled from 6 percent in 1978 to 11 percent in 2001 (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 2001, the percentage of renter households (with children and very low income) spending 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 39 percent.

During this same period, the percentage of households (containing children) living in housing with moderate to severe³ physical problems declined from 9 percent in 1978 to 7 percent in 2001. 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 16 percent in 2001.

Differences by Family Type. Among households with children, married-couple families are less than half as likely to live in housing with physical problems than are households with one or more unmarried married adults. In 2001, 5 percent of married-couple households, 11 percent of households with one adult, and 10 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).

¹ 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.

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

³ 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: all households and very low income renter households: Selected years, 1978-2001

	1978	1983	1989	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
All households with children								
Number of households (<i>in millions</i>)	32.3	33.6	35.4	35.4	37.2	37.0	37.5	39.0
Housing problems (<i>percent</i>):								
Any problems	30	33	33	34	36	36	35	36
Moderate or severe physical problems	9	8	9	7	7	7	7	7
Crowded housing	9	8	7	6	7	7	7	6
Cost burden greater than 30 percent	15	21	24	26	28	28	28	28
Cost burden greater than 50 percent	6	11	9	11	12	12	11	11
Severe problems	8	12	10	11	12	11	11	11
Renter households with children and very low income								
Number of households (<i>in millions</i>)	4.2	5.1	5.9	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.2	5.9
Housing problems (<i>percent</i>):								
Any problems	79	83	77	75	77	82	80	80
Moderate or severe physical problems	18	18	18	14	13	16	15	16
Crowded housing	22	18	17	14	17	17	17	15
Cost burden greater than 30 percent	59	68	67	67	69	73	70	70
Cost burden greater than 50 percent	31	38	36	38	38	41	37	39
Severe problems	33	42	31	33	31	32	29	31
Rental assistance ^a	23	23	33	33	33	31	31	31

^a Renters are either in a public housing project or have a subsidy.

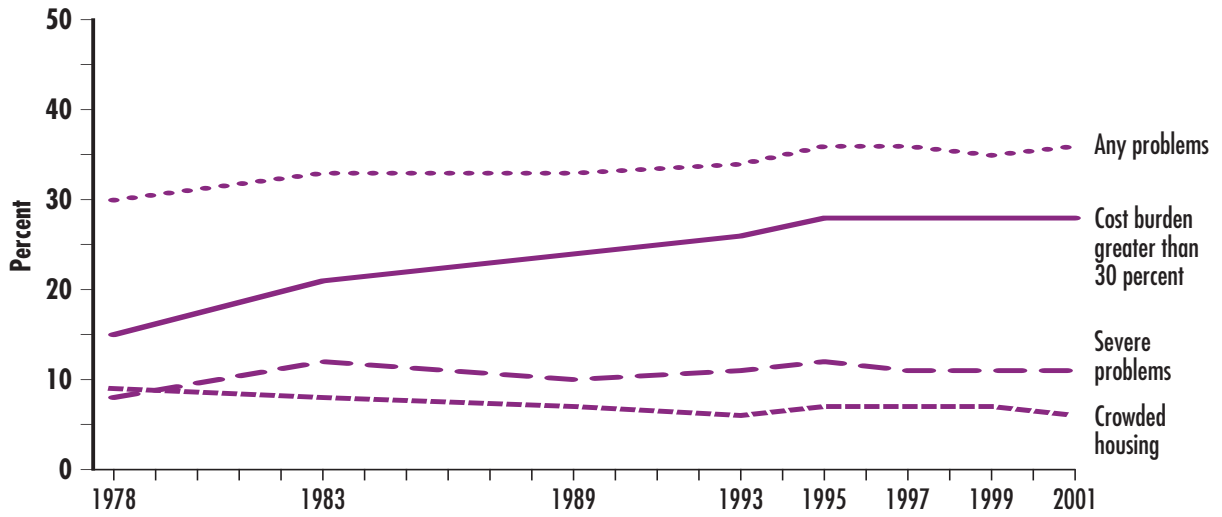
Note: Housing problems include physical problems, excessive cost burden, and overcrowding. Physical problems include plumbing, heating, electricity, upkeep, and/or condition of apartment hallways. Cost burden is the ratio of housing costs to reported household income. "Crowded" is defined as having more than one person per room. Very low income households are those with incomes at or below one-half the median income in a geographic area.

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2003). *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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Figure ES 4.1

Percentage of households with children under age 18 that report housing problems by type of problem:
1978-2001



Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2003). *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2003*. 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 food 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 and other resources and consistent access to adequate, nutritious food.¹

Food-insecure households report having difficulty obtaining enough food, reduced quality or variety of diets, anxiety about their food supply, and increased resort to emergency food sources and other coping behaviors. Most food-insecure households obtain enough food to avoid hunger, using a variety of coping strategies such as eating less varied diets, participating in Federal food assistance programs, or getting emergency food from community food pantries. Only in the more severely food-insecure households are adults hungry at times because they cannot afford enough food, and children are hungry only in the most severely food-insecure households. This is because in most food-insecure households the adults go without food, if necessary, so that the children will have enough. In 2002, 18.1 percent of all children lived in food-insecure households, including 4.3 percent who lived in food-insecure households with hunger, usually only among adults, and 0.8 percent who lived in food-insecure households in which one or more child was hungry at times (Table ES 4.2). This last statistic overstates somewhat the number of children who were hungry due to food insecurity. In some households with more than one child, younger children were protected from hunger when older children are not.

Differences by Poverty Status. Poor children are much more likely than others to live in households experiencing food insecurity. In 2002, 45.6 percent of children in homes with incomes below the Federal poverty level lived in food-insecure households, compared with 11.5 percent in homes with incomes at or above poverty (Figure ES 4.2).

¹ 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, 1995-2002

	1995 ^a	1998	1999	2000	2001 ^b	2002
All children						
In food-insecure households	19.4	19.7	16.9	18.0	17.6	18.1
Food insecure with hunger, adults or children	6.1	4.7	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.3
Food insecure with children's hunger	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.8
Children below poverty						
In food-insecure households	44.4	48.7	44.0	47.2	45.9	45.6
Food insecure with hunger, adults or children	15.6	14.2	11.8	11.9	12.9	12.3
Food insecure with children's hunger	3.4	3.0	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.4
Children at or above poverty						
In food-insecure households	11.2	12.6	10.5	11.5	11.5	12.4
Food insecure with hunger, adults or children	3.0	2.3	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.6
Food insecure with children's hunger	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4

^a Statistics 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.

^b Food insecurity and hunger statistics should be compared across 2-year, 4-year, or 6-year periods to avoid seasonal effects that result from year-to-year alternation in the month in which the survey was conducted.

Note: The food security measure is based on data collected annually in the Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). 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.

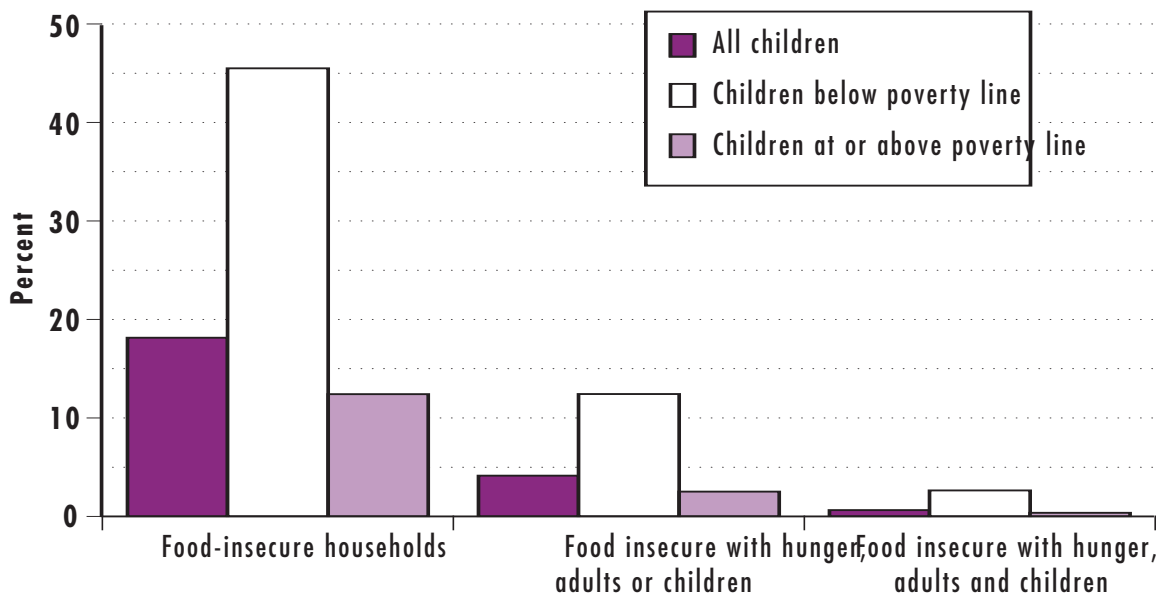
For detailed explanations, see Food and Nutrition Service. (2000). *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security*. Revised 2000. Alexandria, VA: Food and Nutrition Service; and Economic Research Service. (2002). *Food Security in U.S. Households, 1995-1999*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service (2002).

Source: Nord, M., Andrews, M., & Carlson, S. (2003). *Household Food Security in the United States, 2002*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service.

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Figure ES 4.2

Percentage of children under age 18 in food-insecure households, by poverty status and presence of hunger: 2002



Source: Nord, M., Andrews, M., & Carlson, S. (2003). *Household Food Security in the United States, 2002*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service.