Press Release

Has Food Insecurity Risen During the Pandemic?

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Official reports and news stories indicate that hunger is rising in the United States because of the pandemic and its economic fallout. Yet a close analysis of the data does not reveal such a clear trend, writes AAF's Director of Human Welfare Policy Tara O'Neill Hayes. The most recent data on food security show a number of historically inconsistent or perplexing trends, making it difficult to make any historical comparisons or draw firm conclusions, she concludes.

An excerpt:

> *Over the course of the year, the surveys indicate that overall food insufficiency increased even as unemployment reached its lowest levels since the start of the pandemic, particularly in November and December….One possible explanation for the rise in food insufficiency toward the end of the year may be that money for food began competing with other expenses that were suddenly increasing in the fall, such as heating costs as the weather began to cool or holiday gifts in December. Regardless of reason, the survey responses show that food insufficiency reached as high as 20 percent among people with a loss in employment income and 12 percent overall in December, despite unemployment reaching its lowest point since April, another inconsistency with historical trends.*

Read the Analysis