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MASTER OF NONPROFIT ADMINISTRATION

# Missed Connections:

## Exploring the Interconnection of Food Insecurity and Housing Instability in the Bay Area and the Role of NPOs

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# INTRODUCTION

- This project examines the connection between food insecurity and housing instability and how NPOs could better address these issues jointly
- I examined how the Nonprofit Sector is already addressing these issues separately and interview experts in both food insecurity and housing instability to get their insight at how the sector could be more collaborative



# OBJECTIVES



Is there a relationship between food insecurity and housing instability?



What are NPOs doing to address these issues already?



Is there a better model that NPOs can use to achieve food security and housing stability?

# METHODS AND APPROACHES

1. Literature review of 25 scholarly articles
2. 5 expert interviews
  - a. 3 interviews of experts in the food security field
  - b. 2 interviews of experts in the housing stability field
3. Analysis of more than 6 hours of interviews



# Defining Food Insecurity through Relevant Literature

- Food insecurity exists on a **continuum**
- Food insecurity affects individuals **physical, emotionally, and socially**
- Reducing meals/portion sizes or buying lower quality food are two of the most common ways people save money when in crisis

Table 1: Terms the USDA Uses to Describe Food Security

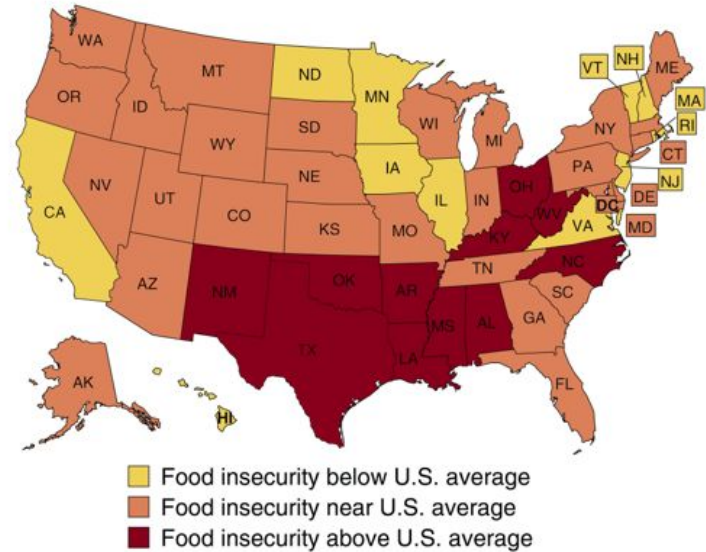
Term	Definition
Food insecure	At times during the year, these households were uncertain of having, or unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or resources for food. Food insecure households encompass those with “low food security” and “very low food security”.
Low food security	These food-insecure households obtained enough food to avoid substantially disrupting their eating patterns or reducing food intake by using a variety of coping strategies, such as eating less varied diets, participating in Federal food assistance programs, or getting food from community food pantries.
Very low food security	In these food-insecure households, normal eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake was reduced at times during the year because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.

Source: Author's creation adapted from [USDA's website](#)

# Food insecurity throughout the United States

- Food insecurity throughout the US had been reduced from 2018 to 2019
- Several studies conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic show that food insecurity is increasing as people suffer economic hardships and job loss

Figure 1: Food Insecurity Throughout the US, average 2017-2019

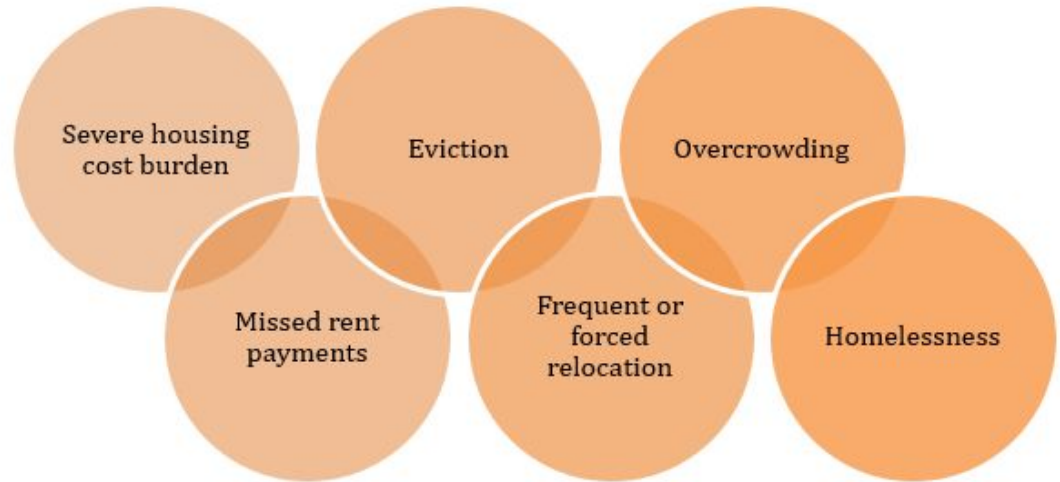


Source: Author's creation adapted from USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the 2017-2019 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

# Defining Housing Instability through Relevant Literature

- Housing instability also exists on a **continuum**
- Unlike “food insecurity”, there is **no standard definition of “housing instability”**

Indicators of Housing Instability



*Source: Author's creation.*

# Measuring Housing Instability

- While most researchers use the USDA's Adult Food Security Survey Module there is not a most utilized tool to measure housing instability
- The most common sources to measure housing instability are the American Housing Survey, American Community Survey, and Survey of Income and Program Participation

Table 4: Summary of Data

Indicator	Key Measure(s)	Data Source
Housing Quality	HUD measure of severely inadequate housing	American Housing Survey
Housing Cost Burden	Moderate rent burden: households paying 30-50% of income on housing (rent & utilities)	American Housing Survey American Community Survey
	Severe Rent burden: households paying more than 50% of their income on housing (rent & utilities)	Survey of Income and Program Participation
Homelessness	HUD Definition: People living in homeless programs, on the streets, or places not suitable for human habitation	Point-in-Time estimates Consolidated State Performance Report for EdFacts
	HUD definition plus people doubled-up for economic reasons or living in hotels or motels	
Residential Instability	Number of moves, forced Moves	Panel Survey of Income Dynamics
	Forced moves including evictions, formal and informal, condemned buildings, and landlord foreclosures	Milwaukee Area Renters Survey American Housing Survey
	Doubling up, forced moves, and evictions in previous 3 months	American Community Survey
	Doubling-up: multi-family households	Survey of Income and Program Participation

Source: Author's creation adapted from The Urban Institute's *Improving Measures of Housing Insecurity: A Path Forward*



# Interview Questions

1. In your experience, have you seen a connection between housing instability and food insecurity? Why do you think that is? Or why don't you think there is a connection?
2. In your opinion, do you think it would be beneficial for the nonprofit sector to address these two issues together? Why or why not?
3. What do you think nonprofits could do or should do to advocate for those experiencing food insecurity (or housing instability)?
4. In your opinion, what could the public or private sector do to help the nonprofit sector to address these issues?
5. In your opinion, is there anything that you think the nonprofit sector is doing that should continue or be expanded to address food insecurity (or housing instability)?

# Interview Results

- “If society viewed housing and food as basic human rights, it would be easier to get funding to support our work.” - Marisa Melo, Executive Director, Alameda County Meals on Wheels
- “We can work hard every day, but without a living wage our work is only a bandage.” Anonymous, Director of Advocacy, Bay Area Food Bank

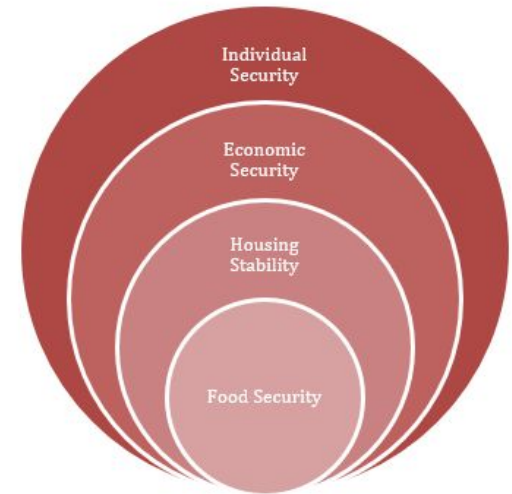
## Top Suggestions from Expert Interviews



# IMPLICATIONS

- Understanding that without economic security housing stability and food security are impossible
- Access to affordable and safe housing as a human right
- Access to nutritious and healthy food as a human right

**Figure 1: Security Needs for Individuals**



*Source: Author's creation.*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Joint advocacy between food and housing focused nonprofits
2. Pressure on government & private sectors to fund coalition building to hire dedicated staff to work on these important issues
3. Best practices of incorporating food into housing design
4. Stronger referral programs between food and housing focused nonprofits

# REFERENCES

- Bowen, E. A., Lahey, J., Rhoades, H., & Henwood, B. F. (2019). Food Insecurity Among Formerly Homeless Individuals Living in Permanent Supportive Housing. *American Journal of Public Health, 109*(4), 614–617.  
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## SUMMARY

- Food insecurity and housing instability are linked and often exacerbate each other
- NPOs have referral systems in place
- A societal shift to view access to housing and food as human rights is critical

## PURPOSE

To illuminate the interconnection of housing instability and food security in order to create a bigger and more effective safety net for those experiencing economic hardships.

## RESEARCH

- Is there a relationship between food insecurity and housing instability?
- How can NPOs better address these issues jointly?

## METHODS

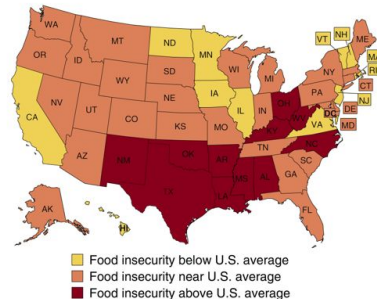
- Literature review of 25+ articles
- 5 semi-structured expert interviews
- Analysis of expert interviews

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

Top Suggestions from Expert Interviews

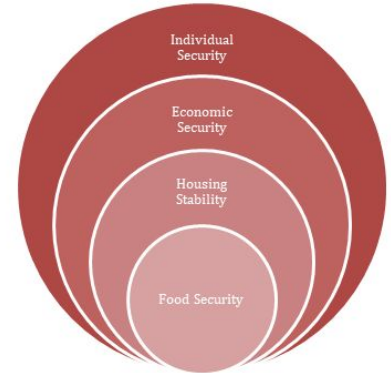


Figure 1: Food Insecurity Throughout the US, average 2017-2019



Source: Author's creation adapted from USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the 2017-2019 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

## RESULTS



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Joint advocacy between food and housing focused NPOs
2. Pressure on public & private sector to fund coalitions
3. Stronger referral programs between food and housing NPOS

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