



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on November 9, 2010

Americans on Food Stamps Reach New High

The food-stamp program has grown dramatically during the last few years. The latest figures show that an incredible 42 million Americans are receiving food stamps — about 14 percent of the entire national population. Within the last year, the number of households receiving food stamps has jumped from 16.2 million to 19.4 million. Since July 2007, participation in the food-stamp program has increased almost exponentially — a 50-percent growth in just three years.



Ironically, this fantastic growth in free food for those who qualify for food stamps has coincided with a concerted and public effort to encourage children to eat less and exercise more. Obesity, particularly among the poor, is rapidly becoming one of the most serious public health problems in America. While no one wishes Americans, especially children, to go hungry, the evidence of real hunger among the poor is slight, while the evidence of the poor eating more food than is good for their health is significant.

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The food-stamp data also reveal another interesting fact about America today. Food stamp eligibility is connected with income eligibility, and the data indicate that unemployment or underemployment in America has not been positively affected by President Obama's stimulus package. The number of Americans receiving food stamps is much higher than when the President began his multi-trillion-dollar effort, using borrowed federal dollars to fund activities intended to increase employment. The growth in the food-stamp program also reflects a troubling decline in the traditional and natural impulse of Americans of faith to help out their coreligionists or the average American in need. Orthodox Jews, Mormons, Catholics, and many Protestant denominations look after members of their faith or, in many cases, anyone who is hungry or in other need. The Salvation Army long has made care of the less fortunate a centerpiece of its mission. Charity ennobles the giver without humiliating the recipient. But welfare and food stamps are not charity. It is dependence administered by bureaucrats who are just as dependent upon people needing help as the food-stamp recipients are dependent on others for food.

It is noteworthy that in American history, unlike almost every other country in human history, famine has been unknown. Malnutrition, caused by inadequate knowledge of nutrition, has been present, but private enterprise has addressed malnutrition with things like iodized salt (preventing goiter) or



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vitamin-enriched milk and cereal. Our nation overflows with food. City lots have been set aside for the poor to garden and to reap the fruits of their labor. Churches and other charities quietly feed the poor and the hungry with no tax dollars and no bureaucrats. As a consequence, no one walking the streets of even our poorest cities would see hunger like it has haunted China, Africa, and India in recent memory. Instead, many of our poor are fat, suffering ill health because of too much food and too little activity.



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