



CWHS

# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

**F**ood insecurity and hunger among California women are important nutrition issues with serious consequences to health and social well being. Food insecurity exists when "the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain."<sup>1</sup> As the severity of food insecurity increases, it can lead to hunger, malnutrition, and other harmful conditions. Poverty linked food insecurity and hunger are believed to contribute to depression, nutritional inadequacy, chronic disease, obesity, and other harmful effects on health and well being. In households where food insecurity exists, children face increased risk of hunger and malnutrition. Impoverished younger women and women with young children experience the greatest degree of food insecurity and hunger. Recent welfare reform may increase the number of women threatened with food insecurity.

The 1997 California Women's Health Survey asked women "During the past month, were there any days when you ate less than you felt you should or did not eat at all because there wasn't enough food or money to buy food?" Women who answered yes to this question were considered to be at risk for hunger. Additional survey questions determined the women's age and demographic characteristics.

- Of all women, 10% were at risk for hunger.
- The proportion of women reporting an inadequate food supply declined steadily with increasing age, from 14% of 45-54 year-olds to 5% of women 65 and older.
- Almost half (48%) of the women at risk for hunger are between the ages of 18 and 34, the time period when women are most likely to bear children.

## **RISK FOR HUNGER AMONG WOMEN, BY AGE; CALIFORNIA, 1997**

**Office of Women's Health  
Maternal and Child Health Branch**

### **Public Health Message:**

*One in ten California women do not have a secure food supply. Public health surveillance is necessary to monitor trends in food insecurity and to evaluate the impact of social reforms on women's access to food. Interventions to assure an adequate supply of food should target young women, who are at greatest risk for hunger.*

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<sup>1</sup> "Measuring Food Security in the U.S.: A Supplement to the CPS." Gary Bickel, Margaret Andrews, and Bruce Klein, USDA Food and Consumer Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Alexandria, VA, January 1996.

**Risk for Hunger Among Women, By Age; California, 1997**

