



# Food Insecurity among US Children with Disabilities

Susan L. Parish, PhD, MSW  
Subharati Ghosh, PhD  
Rajan Sonik, JD, MPH  
Leah Igdalsky

Lurie Institute for Disability Policy  
Heller School for Social Policy & Management

National Association for Welfare Research and Statistics  
Atlanta, August 2015

LURIE INSTITUTE FOR DISABILITY POLICY

## Background: Income poverty and children with disabilities

- Children with disabilities are more likely to grow up in poverty than their non-disabled peers (Emerson & Hatton, 2009)
  - The relationship between disability and poverty is likely bi-directional (Elwan, 1999)
- Having a child with a disability is a significant determinant of material hardship (Parish et al, 2008; Emerson & Hatton, 2009)

## Background: Elevated costs of care

Families raising children with disabilities incur direct and indirect costs

Direct costs of care:

- Expenses for therapies, rehabilitation, equipment, home modifications, transportation, preventive and emergency services

Indirect costs of care:

- Guardians may need to work fewer hours or give up employment completely to care for the child with a disability

## Background: Is the safety net enough?

- Different US programs in the support individuals with disabilities and their families
  - SSI: disability income transfer
  - SSDI: disability income transfer
  - TANF: general welfare
  - SNAP: food assistance
- But, these programs are probably not sufficient for families raising children with disabilities
- For example, no evidence that SSI reduces material hardships in households with children with disabilities (Ghosh & Parish, 2014)



## Background: Food Insecurity

- Lack of nutritious and safe foods, typically due to financial resource constraints (Bickel et al., 2000)
- 20% of US households with children experienced low or very low food insecurity in 2013 (USDA, n.d.)
- Well-established evidence that food insecurity causes a host of deleterious child outcomes (child health, academic achievement, emotional well-being)

# Background: Food Insecurity and Disability

- Elevated rates of food insecurity among households with an adult with disabilities (Huang, Guo, & Kim, 2010; Coleman-Jensen & Nord, 2013)
- Limited research on food insecurity among children with disabilities
  - Existing studies have shown households including children with disabilities more likely to experience food insecurity compared to other households (Parish et al., 2008; DeRigne, et al., 2014)



# Background: Food Insecurity and Disability

- Disability is associated with reduced assets and higher income needs, which may explain the association between disability and food insecurity (Huang et al., 2010)
  - Increased income needs due to costs of transportation, elevated health care costs, etc.
  - Reduced employment and higher living expenses lead to reduced assets



# Aims

- There are few current, population-based studies in about food insecurity in US households that include children with disabilities
- Our aims:
  - Understand the prevalence of food insecurity among families that include children with disabilities
  - Understand rates of SNAP receipt among families that include children with disabilities



## Methods

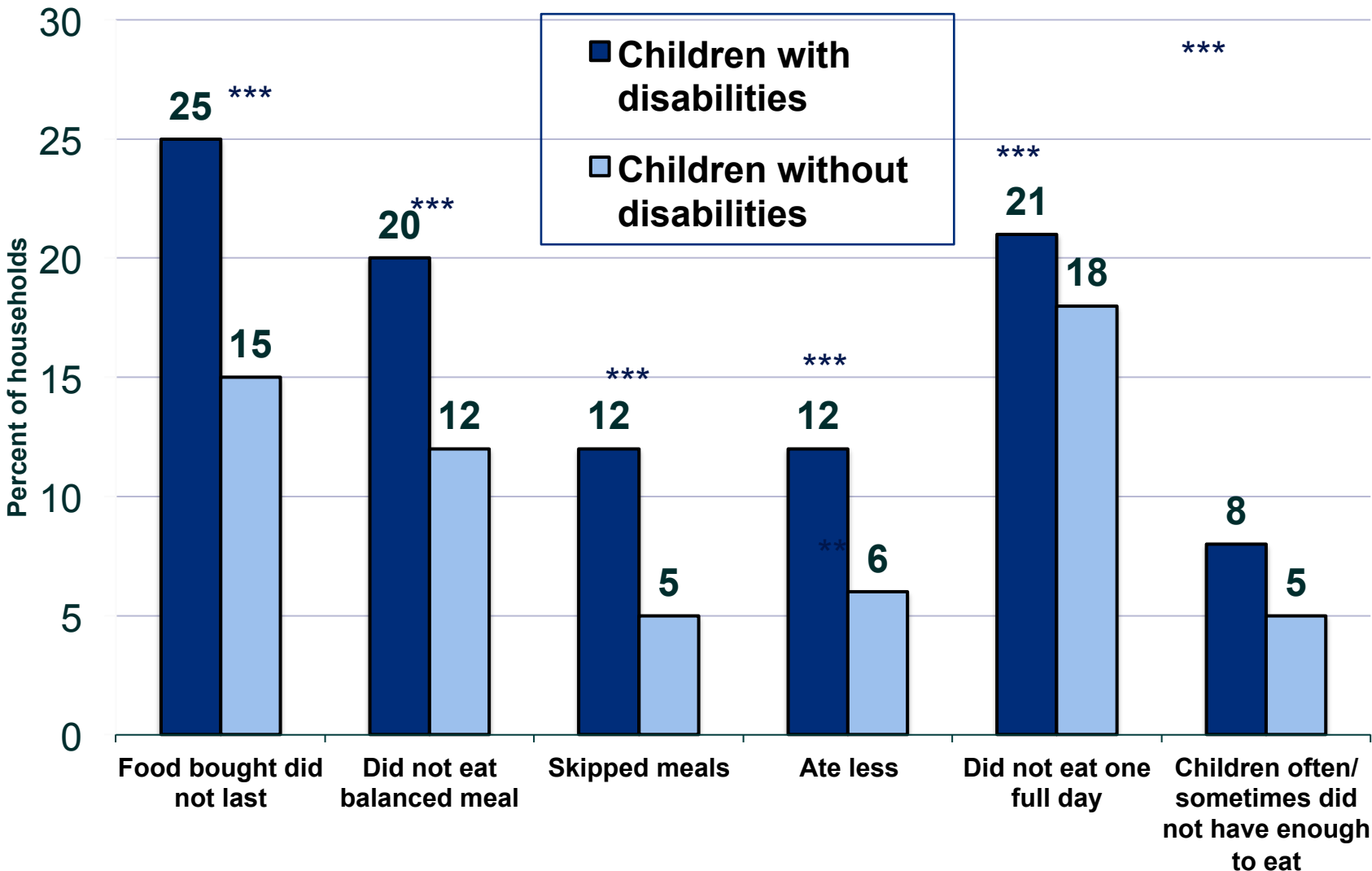
- Analyzed the 2004 and 2008 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation
  - N= 37,368 households in 2004 and 38,850 households in 2008 panels
- Representative of US non-institutionalized population-
- Detailed questions about program participation, assets, income and employment
- Questions of interest: disability status of children in the household and food insecurity
- Created a six-item food insecurity scale to identify low and very low food security households

# Description of the Sample

Characteristic	Household includes children with disabilities N=4,273	Household does not include children with disabilities N=20,468
White	64%	60%
Black	15%	14%
Hispanic/Latino	15%	19%
Households with income below 100% FPL***	22%	17%
Households with adult with disability***	50%	26%
Married***	59%	68%
Single Mother***	33%	23%

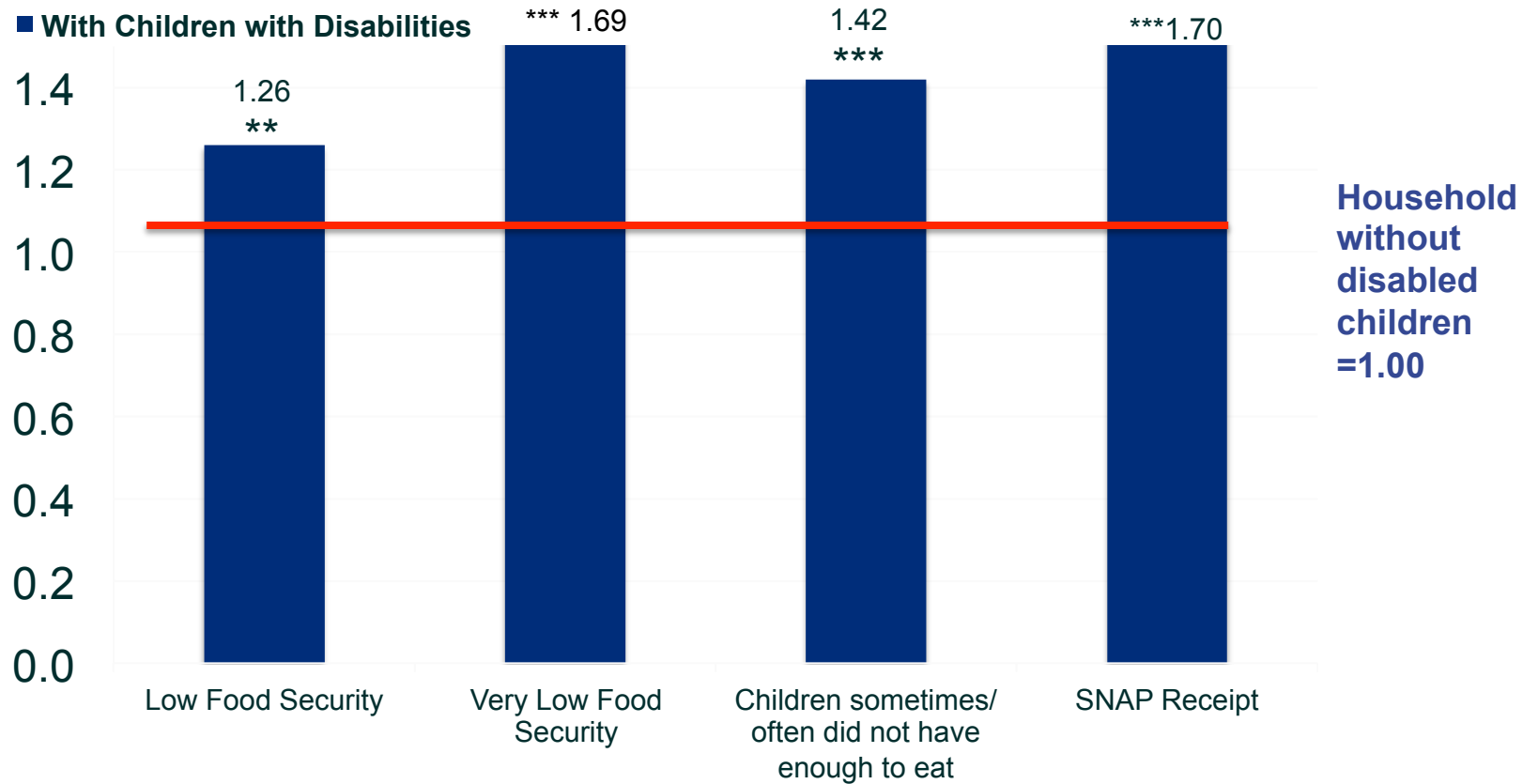
\*p <.05. \*\*p <.01. \*\*\*p <.001  
 Note. 44,862.50 is 185% FPL for a family of four in 2015

# Food Insecurity Scale



\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001

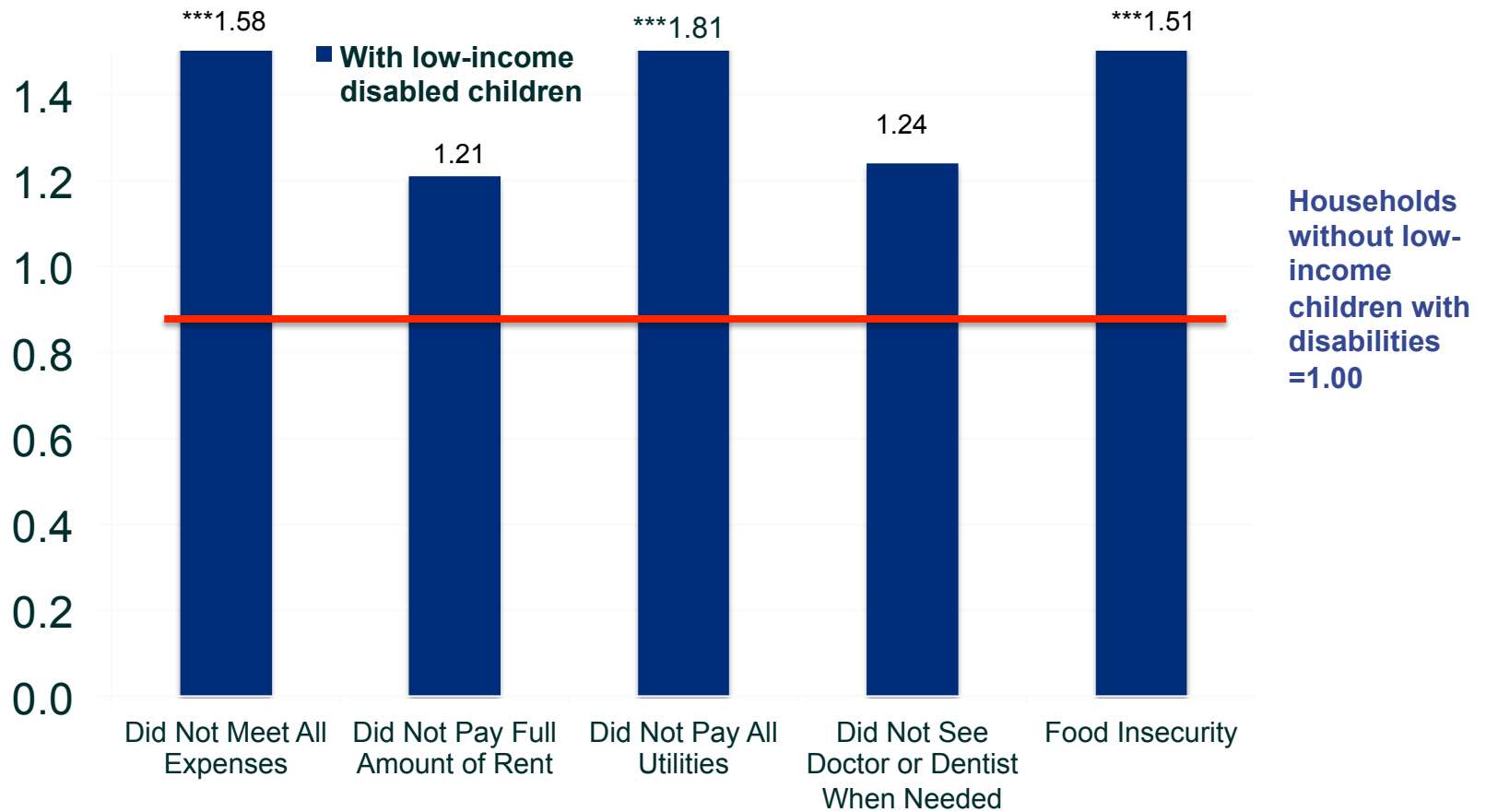
# Food Insecurity and Receipt of Food Stamps Among Low-Income US Households with Children



Note. 44,862.50 is 185% FPL for a family of four in 2015

\*p <.05. \*\*p <.01. \*\*\*p <.001

# Material Hardship in Low-Income US Households without Low-Income Disabled Children



Note. 44,862.50 is 185% FPL for a family of four in 2015

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001

# Conclusions

- Families that include children with disabilities are more likely to report low food security, very low food security, and having children who sometimes or often did not have enough to eat
- Families that include children with disabilities are more likely to be food insecure and more likely to receive SNAP benefits
- *Children with disabilities are highly likely to live in households with food insecurity, and improving the safety net system for these households is vitally important*



## Thank You

Acknowledgement: Support for this research was provided by the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University

LURIE INSTITUTE FOR DISABILITY POLICY

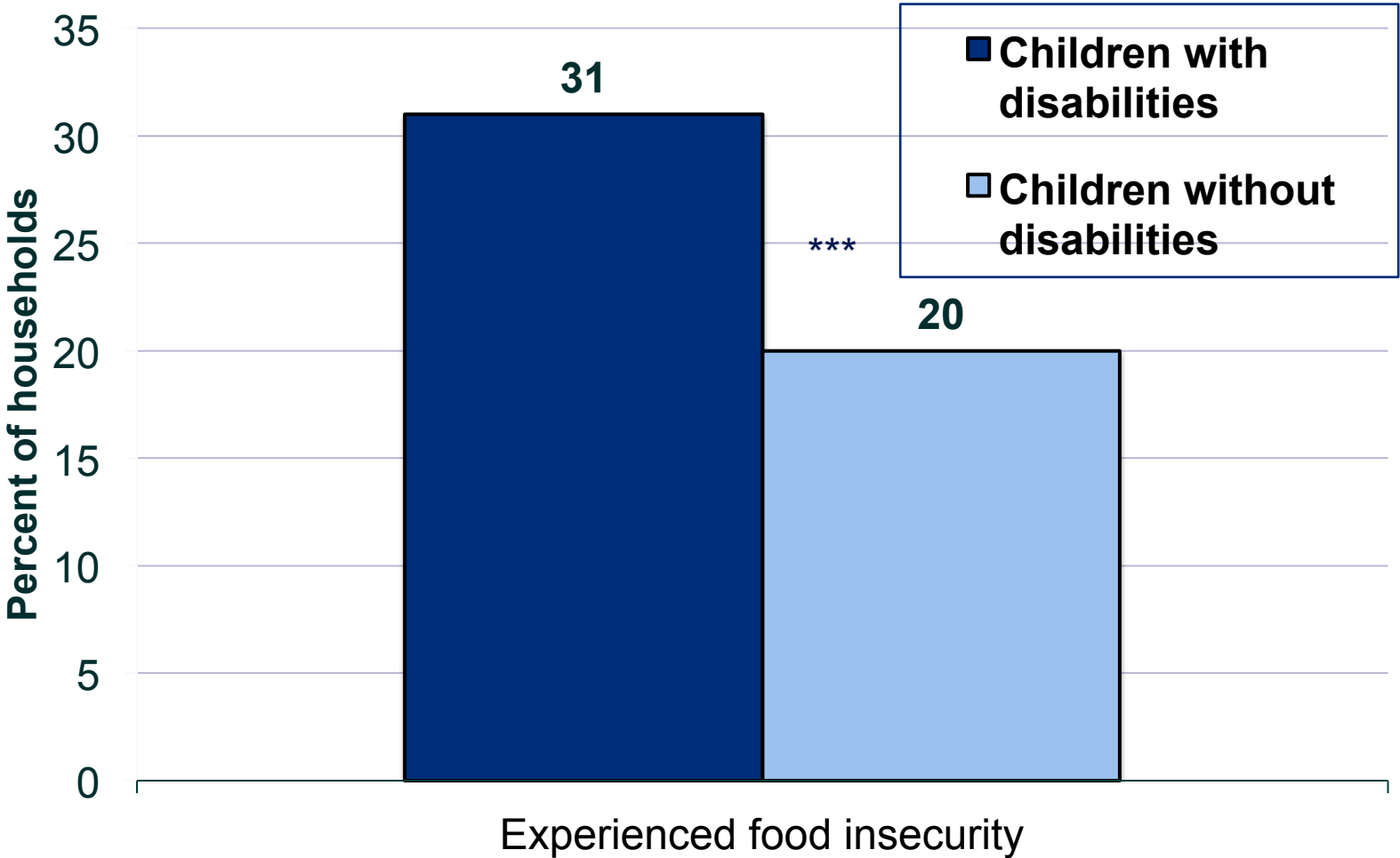


# References

- Bickel, G., Nord, M., Price, C., Hamilton, W., & Cook, J. (2000). Guide to measuring household food security in the United States. Revised 2000. (6). USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Alexandria, VA.
- Coleman-Jensen, A., & Nord, M. *Food Insecurity Among Households With Working-Age Adults With Disabilities*, ERR-144, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, January 2013.
- DeRigne, L.A., Quinn, L., Sottdard-Dare, P., & Mallett, C. (2014). Food insecurity in US families with children with limiting health conditions. *Health*, (6), 2461-68.
- Emerson, E., & Hatton, C. (2009). Socioeconomic position, poverty and family researcher. In *International Review of Research in Mental Retardation*. San Diego: Elsevier Academic Press Inc., (37), 91-129.
- Elwan, A. (1999). "Poverty and Disability: A Survey of the Literature," *SP Discussion Paper No. 9932*. The World Bank, December 1999.
- Ghosh, S., & Parish, S. L. (2014). Deprivation Among U.S. Children With Disabilities Who Receive Supplemental Security Income. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
- Huang, J., Guo, B., & Kim, Y. (2010). Food insecurity and disability: Do economic resources matter? *Social Science Research*, 39(1), 111-124.
- Parish, S. L., Rose, R. A., Andrews, M. E., Grinstein-Weiss, M., & Richman, E. L. (2008). Material hardship among U.S. families raising children with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 75, 71-92.
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d). Key Statistics and Graphics. Available from: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>



# Rates of Food Insecurity



\*p <.05. \*\*p <.01. \*\*\*p <.001