

Food Security in Jimma Zone

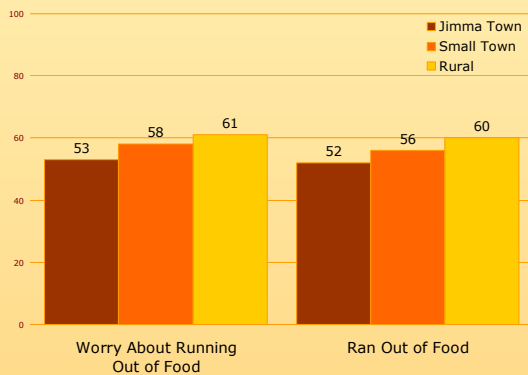
This Policy Brief describes the prevalence of food insecurity among families, adults, and children, and identifies factors that increase food security.

Based on data from Round 1 (September 2005-March 2006) of the Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth

Adequate amounts of food are essential to the nutritional health of families and affect their susceptibility to disease. Food insecurity is widely associated with the Ethiopian nation. Families with worries about having enough food and families that have run out of food are subject to considerable stress, which can lead to depression. Food shortages can negatively affect school enrollment, the ability to work, and the migration of family members.

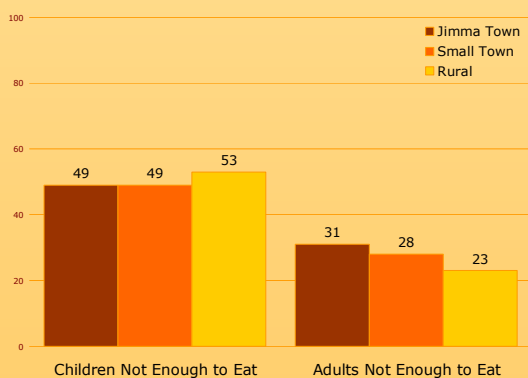
To what extent do households in Jimma Zone worry about having sufficient food for their families? To what extent have they experienced inadequate supplies of food? Are adults or children more likely to go hungry when there are food shortages?

The Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth asked households several questions about food security during the past three months. In this Policy Brief we focus on the availability of food, considering whether families have been exposed to food shortages one or more days during the past three months.



Households Running Out of Food

Food insecurity is a major problem for households in Jimma Zone. Over one-half of families in Jimma Town worry about running out of food and have actually run out of food. The rate of food insecurity is 8% higher in rural households.



Enough Food to Eat

When food shortages occur, children are especially unlikely to get enough to eat. In Jimma Town 49% of children, compared to 31% of adults, have lacked adequate food. In the rural areas, where it is essential that adults be able to engage in heavy physical farm labor, 53% of children and 23% of adults have gone hungry.

What family characteristics promote food security? Can membership in a strong support network help provide greater food security? We use a multiple regression model of food security to answer these questions.

Food security is defined as not having to worry about adequate food, always having adequate food (amount and variety) for adults and children. Urban assets include a functioning television, clock, stove, sofa, and spring or sponge mattress. Rural assets include a functioning radio, tape recorder, table, and a chair or stool. Productive assets include number of oxen, cows, goats and sheep, horses and mules, and one or more cart (*gari*). Membership in a social support network means giving and receiving help with watching children, sharing coffee or salt, loans of 10, 50, or 100 birr, and help with the school enrollment and employment of children.

Food Security

(regression coefficients)

Urban Household Assets	0.27
Rural Household Assets	0.25
Production Assets	0.04
Small Town vs. Jimma Town	0.10
Rural vs. Jimma Town	0.37
Support Network	0.33

Rural and productive assets promote food security. Taking these into account, rural families have greater food security. Higher urban assets also promote food security, but families in Jimma Town are least likely to enjoy food security.

Membership in a support network promotes food security of households, taking into account household resources and place of residence.

Policy Recommendations

A majority of households in the Jimma Zone lack food security. They worry about the lack of food and face food shortages. These problems are least in rural communities and in families with substantial resources. Membership in a strong support network substantially reduces the risk of food shortages and promotes food security.

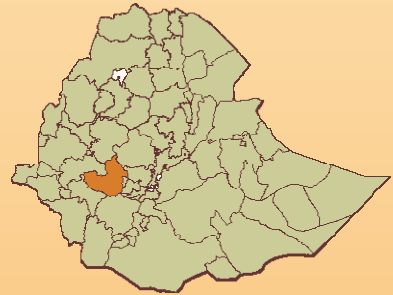
The lack of food security in the Jimma Zone is especially disturbing because it is one of the richest agricultural areas of Ethiopia. Direct food aid can be a short-term solution, and may be especially important for destitute families who are isolated from social support.

It is clear that interventions are needed to increase food security in the long-term. These measures might include the diversification of crops, greater use of fertilizer, and better storage facilities to ensure foods during poor harvests and between harvests. Households engaged in growing products for markets should be encouraged to grow family vegetable gardens as well. Addressing the food security problems is particularly important for children who are most subject to food shortages, and need adequate nutrition for normal growth, school enrollment and employment.

Successful development programs to promote food security are one of the best ways to promote the health of residents of Jimma Zone.

The Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth

The Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth (JLFSY) began in 2005. It is representative of Jimma Town, the small towns of Yebu, Serbo, and Sheki, and nearby rural areas. The stratified sample includes 3500 households and 2100 boys and girls ages 13 to 17, yielding about 700 adolescents each for Jimma Town, the small towns, and the rural areas. Household data were collected from the household head or the spouse of the head. Adolescents were directly interviewed. Questionnaire data were collected by trained interviewers in the Amharic and Oromifa languages.



Jimma Zone in Ethiopia

The JLFSY is an interdisciplinary effort by specialists in epidemiology, community health, biostatistics, demography, sociology, and economics. The study examines critical challenges that youth face such as health, education and training, employment and earnings, forming families, and becoming productive citizens. A special focus of the study is on key sources of support for youth as they meet these challenges including parent and kin investments, household resources, parent and kin guidance, local community infrastructure, and informal support networks.

Funding for this research is generously provided by grants from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Compton Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This research is being conducted by faculty and students affiliated with the **Partnership in Improving Reproductive Health**



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