

# Ask Alabama Poll Results



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SUMMER 2009 POLL RELEASE #4

## PRESS RELEASE

### Many are skipping meals, eating less to cope with economy

*Statewide poll finds that 27% believe that 'a lot' of Alabama families are going without.*

**Auburn, August 24, 2009:** Auburn University's Center for Governmental Services released more statewide polling results today, this time revealing that many Alabama residents could be going hungry because of the prolonged recession. A statewide survey of adults found that 27 percent believe that "a lot" of Alabama families are cutting the size of meals or are skipping mealtime altogether because of financial considerations. Another 36 percent said that "a fair number" of other families could be doing the same. Only one-third of those surveyed feel that eating has been generally unaffected by the economy.

"We didn't ask people directly whether they themselves have cut back," said AU pollster David Hill. "Many individuals we poll may be too proud and reluctant to tell an interviewer bluntly that they are going hungry. So we ask the question indirectly, inquiring about families in general. This provides us a sense of what people are hearing from friends, neighbors, and others in their communities."

The economy's effect on hunger is likely to be concentrated among the state's have-nots, those with the least income. "Of those poll respondents that reported annual household incomes of less than 20 thousand dollars, 51 percent said "a lot" of families are eating less," said poll analyst Patrick Rose. By comparison, only 8 percent of those with the highest household incomes, \$150 thousand plus annually, believe a lot of Alabama families are cutting back.

The AU polling staff found that awareness of meal cutbacks was greatest in the southwest and southeast corners of the state, and among African Americans. Educational attainment was also a strong factor in perceptions of hunger. Almost eighty percent of adults with only a grade-school education say that "a lot" of Alabama families are eating less because of the economy.

"These polling results remind us very poignantly of the real and very personal impacts that economic conditions are having on our population," said the Center for Governmental Services Director, Dr. Don-Terry Veal. "This motivates us to work harder with the local governments we serve to find ways and means to provide a safety net for those that might be going hungry."

AU pollster Hill says that other polls also show that the recession is affecting American's eating habits in diverse ways. "A recent nationwide Gallup survey," Hill said, "found that Americans are eating higher calorie food in response to feeling economically stressed. This indulgence is causing weight gain, according to the Gallup study."

*The Ask Alabama survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted with a stratified random sample of 639 adult householders July 6 -- 19, 2009. The sample's geographic, gender, race, and age distributions were weighted to be proportionate to the United States Census Bureau's data for Alabama's adult (18+ years of age) householders. Patrick Rose, Manager of the Center's Survey Research Laboratory that conducted the interviews, said that poll results based on the full statewide sample have a margin of error of  $\pm 4$  percentage points.*

**The Ask Alabama Poll is to be conducted quarterly** by the Center for Governmental Services, a unit of Auburn University Outreach that provides research, consulting and training to government agencies, not-for-profit associations, and private sector clients.

**Prior releases from the current poll include:**

**August 3 – CONSUMER CONFIDENCE.** Alabama residents have mixed views on the state of the economy.

**August 10 –MANUFACTURING.** Alabama residents see manufacturing and autos leading economic recovery.

**August 17 – SCHOOLS.** 60 percent of Alabama residents give their local public schools a grade of A or B; ratings top national figures from Gallup.

**Future releases from the current poll include:**

**NEWS MEDIA.** Internet is a growing news source in Alabama; threatens to overtake newspapers.

**STATE IMAGE.** Alabama is seen as a friendly place to raise a family or retire; but don't consider starting a business or looking for a job.

**JOBS.** Better pay and benefits top of list of what Alabama job seekers want.

**For additional interviews on hunger and Auburn University's hunger initiatives, contact:**

- Barbara Struempler, Ph.D., Professor, Nutrition & Food Science, Nutritionist, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, work: 334-844-2217, cell: 344-844-2216
- Douglas Casson Coutts, Visiting Professor (on assignment from the UN World Food Programme), Department of Nutrition and Food Science, Phone: (334) 844-3215, Cell: (202) 441-4463

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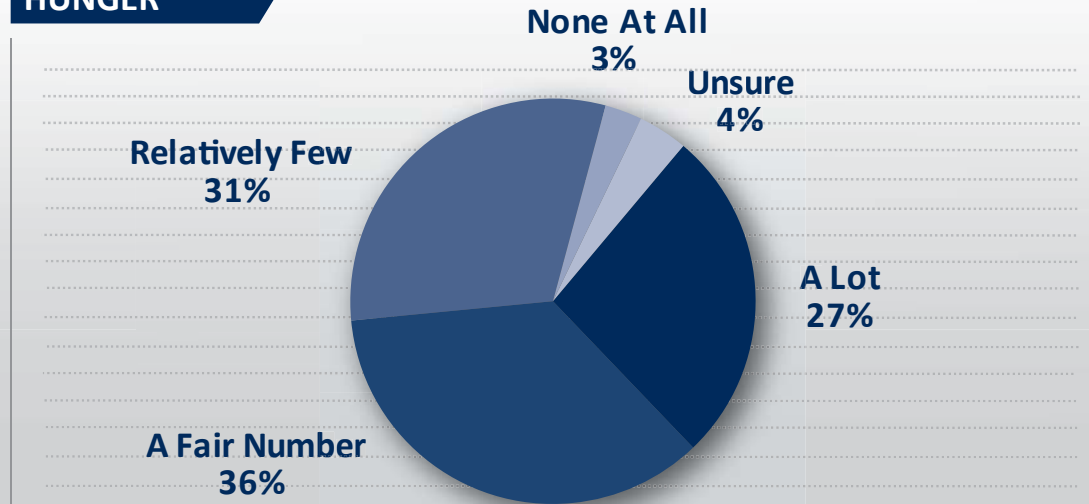
AUBURN  
CENTER FOR GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES

## Many are eating less or even skipping meals because of money worries.

### Question

Thinking about everyone who lives in Alabama, how many families do you think have to cut the size of meals, skip meals, or eat less than they should because they are concerned about not having enough money to buy food?

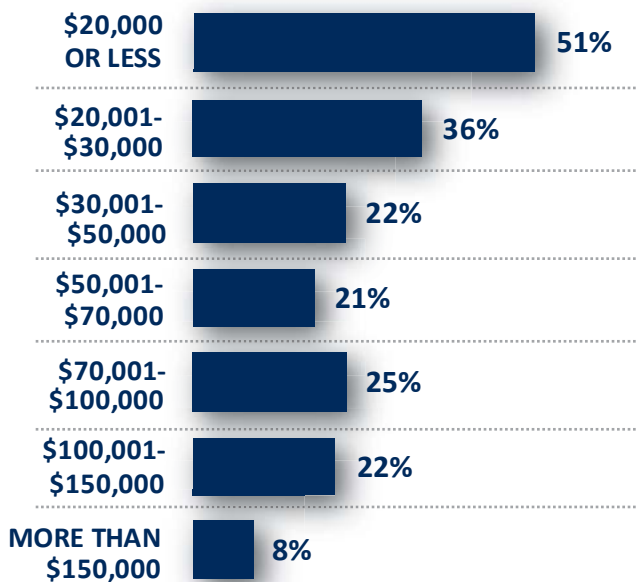
### HUNGER



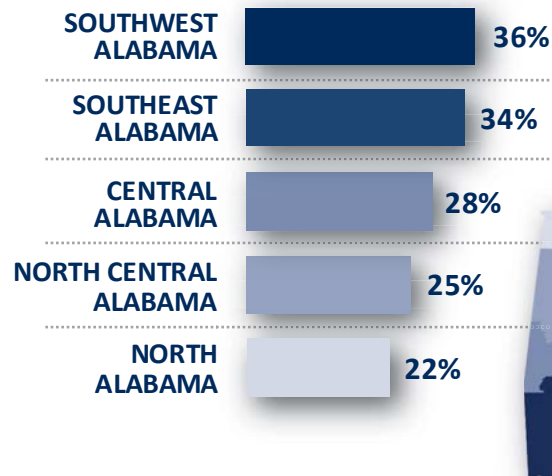
Due to rounding, some charts may not sum to 100%.

## Percent "A Lot" By Selected Characteristics of Respondents

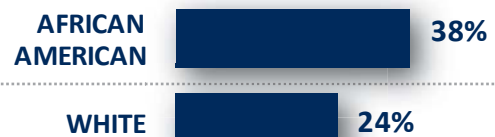
### BY INCOME



### BY GEOGRAPHY



### BY RACE



The Ask Alabama survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted with a stratified random sample of 639 adult householders in Alabama from July 6 to July 19, 2009. The sample was chosen so as to ensure that each region of the state was represented in proportion to its population. The sample's geographic, gender, race, and age distributions were weighted to be proportionate to the United States Census Bureau's data for Alabama's adult (18+ years of age) householders. Results based on all 639 respondents have a margin of error of ±4 percentage points.