

1 of 4

responses from nearly 50,000 households.

In measuring food insecurity, researchers looked at low-income households earning no more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which was set at \$22,050 for a family of four in 2009.

Food insecurity ballooned during the economic downturn between 2007 and 2009, as the state's unemployment rate spiked from 5 percent to 11 percent, and inflation-adjusted median household income decreased by nearly 5 percent from 2009 to 2010, the largest decline on record, researchers said.

The study shows that nearly half of low-income households with children could not afford adequate food, and about 51 percent of **Spanish**-speaking, low-income adults experienced food insecurity -- the highest level of among all low-income groups.

"With the economy still in a slump, many families are grappling with difficult choices: 'Do I pay the bills or buy food to feed my children?", said study co-author Gail Harrison, a faculty associate at the Center for Health Policy Research and a professor at UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health. "In a state that is the nation's breadbasket, it's sad to see that so many people don't know where their next meal is coming from."

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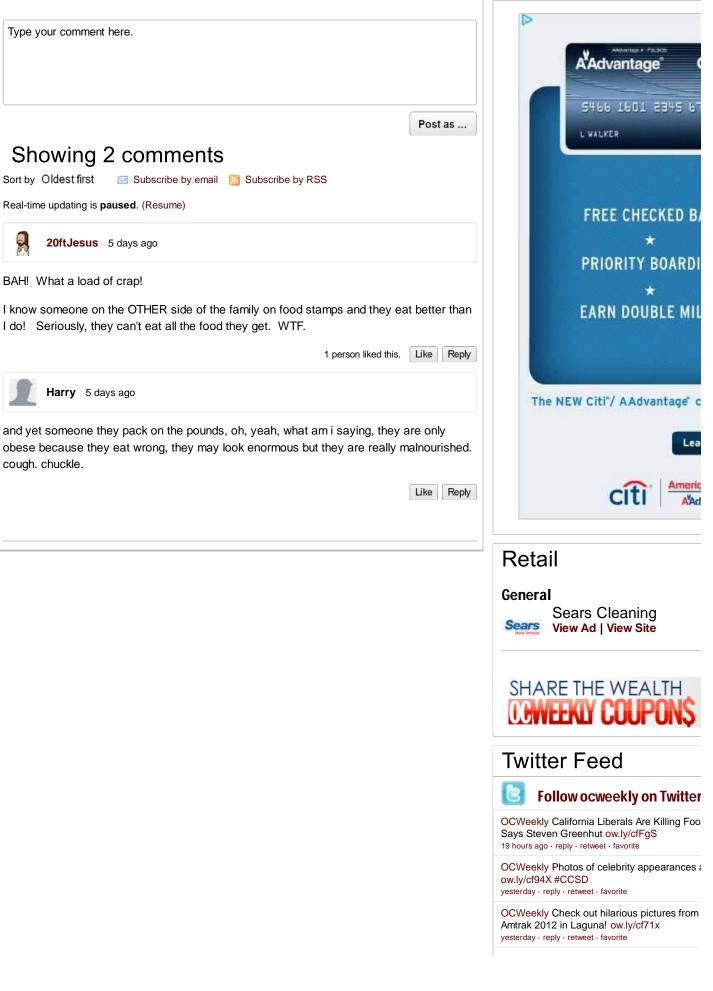
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