



## Venezuela: 75% of population lost 19 pounds amid crisis

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Feb. 19 (UPI) -- Venezuela's Living Conditions Survey found that nearly 75 percent of the population lost an average of at least 19 pounds in 2016 due to a lack of proper nutrition amid an economic crisis.

The survey, called ENCOVI, is a joint effort conducted by the Central University of Venezuela, the Andrés Bello Catholic University and the Simón Bolívar University, along with the Fundación Bengoa food and nutrition group and other non-governmental organizations.

Venezuelans are not consuming the 2,000 recommended daily calories needed, the survey said. Venezuela's extreme poor said they have lost more than 20 pounds.

In the survey, researchers found that most Venezuelans substituted red and white meats with vegetables and tubers -- such as potatoes. According to the survey, 82.8 percent of Venezuelans are considered poor due to their income.

Venezuela is facing a political and economic crisis in which basic goods such as food and medicine are in short supply, unavailable or unaffordable. The United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean predicts Venezuela's gross domestic product will decrease 4 percent in 2017, while the International Monetary Fund estimates inflation will increase 1,600 percent.

Martiza Landaeta, a doctor specialized in nutritional food planning who is the coordinator of research and teaching at Fundación Bengoa, said the government of President Nicolas Maduro needs to urgently address the "intensive" food crisis in Venezuela, RunRunes journalist Lorena Meléndez reported.

"Our children, adolescents, mothers and elderly are dying," Landaeta said.

The survey also found that 93 percent of Venezuelans do not have enough money to cover their food expenses. In the Venezuelan daily diet, healthy fats and snacks have nearly disappeared. Only 78 percent of people said they eat breakfast and 32 percent of people said they only eat twice a day, the survey found.



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The main intake of Venezuela's poorest are carbohydrates, while 30 percent of their diet is made up of protein. About 80 percent of Venezuelans said they do not eat away from home.

The food crisis has also created an education crisis, as more than 1 million children no longer attend school, mostly due to hunger and a lack of public services.

About 30 percent of students who now stay home do not attend school because of water problems at home or on campus, 22 percent do not attend because of electricity blackouts and 15 percent do not attend due to school strikes, the survey found.

About 10 percent said a lack of food at home or in school was the reason for their absence. The survey said those in that category are considered among the poorest who previously never skipped school because they did not have food at home.



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