

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION



ERS USDA Household Food Security in the United States, 2008 Report *CFSC Fact Sheet*

This week the USDA released its annual *Household Food Security in the United States* report based on findings from the Economic Research Service (ERS). **The 2008 report shows the highest levels of domestic food insecurity since national statistics started being tracked in 1995.** Please visit the [ERS USDA Household Food Security in the United States, 2008](#) website for more information or to read the report in full.

Definitions

The report defines *food security* as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.”ⁱ It defines *food secure households* as households that “report no food-insecure conditions or...only one or two food-insecure conditions,”ⁱⁱ and *food insecure households* as households that “report three or more food-insecure conditions.”

Food insecure households are subcategorized in the report as either:

- 1) *low food security* when households “reported multiple indications of food access problems, but typically have reported few, if any, indications of reduced food intake,” or
- 2) *very low food security* when “food intake of one or more members was reduced and eating patterns disrupted because of insufficient money and other resources for food.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Overview of report findings

- The report shows 17 million (14.6%) of all US households were *food insecure* - an increase from 13 million (11.1%) households in 2007. Of these 17 million, 6.7 million (5.7%) households reported *very low food security* - an increase from 4.7 million (4.1%) households in 2007.^{iv}
- The report states that children “are usually shielded from the disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake that characterize very low food security.” However, data shows this was not the case for 506,000 (1.3%) food insecure households with children in 2008. This is also an increase from 2007 when 323,000 (0.8%) food insecure households reported their children experienced disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.^v
- Rates of food insecurity were higher in households:
 - with incomes near or below the Federal poverty line
 - with children headed by a single adult
 - that are Black or Hispanic^{vi}
- Households in large cities and rural areas were more commonly food insecure than in suburban and outlying city areas.^{vii}
- Food insecure households varied regionally and were most prevalent in the South, intermediately in the Midwest and West, and least in the Northeast.^{viii}

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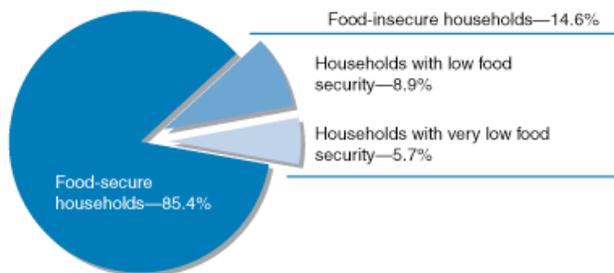
- The report states “food secure households spent more for food than food insecure households.”^{ix}
- Of the food insecure households that were surveyed, 55% said they had utilized one or more of the National School Lunch, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, or Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children programs in the previous month. In addition, 20% of food insecure households reported using food pantries and 2.6% ate one or more meals at a community emergency kitchen during the previous year.^x

How community food security can help

- *Community food security is* “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Hamm, 2001)
- There are several policies and programs that help build community food security and can combat the rising number of food insecure households in the U.S. Some major focuses that can help fight increasing food security are:
 - **Farm to School** – can help improve child nutrition while strengthening local economies through purchasing and processing school food locally.
 - **Food Policy Councils** – help empower local communities through policies that directly affect various sectors of their local food system.
 - **Healthy Cornerstone Initiatives** – increase access to healthy fruits and vegetables by bringing grocery stores into low-access communities.

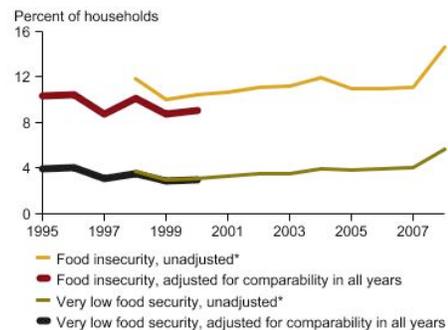
Report graphics^{xi}

Figure 1
U.S. households by food security status, 2008



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2008 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Trends in prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security in U.S. households, 1995-2008



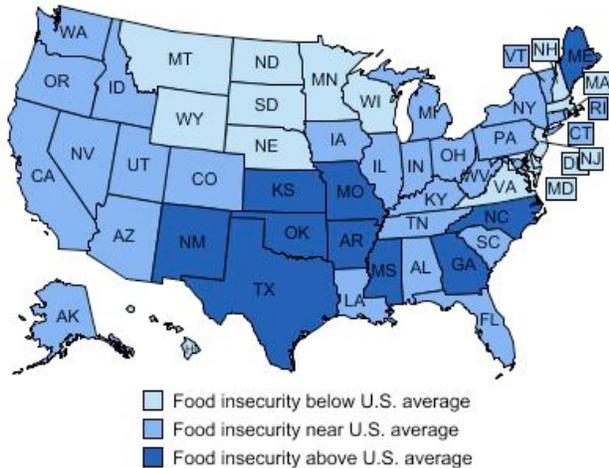
*Data as collected (unadjusted) in 1995-97 are not directly comparable with data collected in 1998 and later years.

Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.

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Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2006-08



Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplemental data.

ⁱ Nord, Mark, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*. ERR-83, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. November 2009, 2.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., 2-3.

^{iv} Nord, Mark, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. *ERS Report Summary: Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*. ERR-83, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. November 2009, 2.

^v Ibid., 2.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Nord, Mark, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*. ERR-83, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. November 2009, 4.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} "ERS/USDA Briefing Room - Food Security in the United States: Statistics and Graphics." USDA Economic Research Service - Home Page. http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/stats_graphs.htm (accessed November 17, 2009).