

Appendix E. Food Security During 30 Days Prior to Food Security Survey

The annual food security survey was initially designed with the primary objective of assessing households' food security during the 12-month period prior to the survey. Some information was also collected with reference to the 30-day period prior to the survey, but before 2005, this included only a subset of the food security questions—those indicating more severe levels of food insecurity.

Beginning with the 2005 survey, information on the full set of food security questions was collected for both the 30 days and 12 months prior to the survey. Households that responded affirmatively to the 12-month question were asked whether the same behavior, experience, or condition occurred during the last 30 days. Responses to these questions were used to assess the food security status of households during the 30 days prior to the survey, following the same protocols that were used for the 12-month measure. The new methodology supports estimates for food security, low food security, and very low food security during the 30-day period prior to the survey, whereas the older methodology supported only estimates of very low food security.

About 94 percent of households were food secure throughout the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December 2005 (table E-1).⁴⁰ About 6.7 million households (5.9 percent) were food insecure at some time during that period, including 2.5 million (2.2 percent) that had very low food security.⁴¹

The prevalence of food insecurity during the 30 days from mid-November to mid-December was 54 percent of that for the entire 12 months prior to the survey; the corresponding statistic for very low food security was 57 percent. If food insecurity during this 30-day period was similar to that for other 30-day periods throughout the year, then these comparisons imply that the average household that was food insecure at some time during the year experienced this condition in 6 months of the year, and the average household with very low food security experienced that condition in 7 months of the year.⁴² However, analysis of food insecurity in different months suggests that food insecurity is somewhat more prevalent in the summer months (July-September) than in March-April and November-December (Cohen et al., 2002a; Nord and Romig, forthcoming), so typical frequencies may be somewhat higher than the 6 and 7 months implied by the December data.

The prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security during the 30 days prior to the survey varied across household types following the same general pattern as the 12-month measure. Prevalence rates were lowest for married-couple families with children, households with two or more adults without children, households that included an elderly person, White non-Hispanic households, and households with incomes higher than 185 percent of the poverty line. Prevalence rates were highest for single parents, Blacks, Hispanics, and households with low incomes. Relationships between 30-day and 12-month prevalence rates did not differ greatly across the categories of households listed in table E-1 except that 30-day prevalences were a larger

⁴⁰ The food security survey was conducted during the week of December 11-17, 2005.

⁴¹ Because of this change in methodology, the 30-day statistics for very low food security in this report are not directly comparable with 30-day statistics for food insecurity with hunger in previous years' reports. Using the previous years' methodology, the prevalence of very low food security during the 30 days prior to the December 2005 survey would have been 2.9 percent (essentially unchanged from 2004) compared with 2.1 percent using the new methodology.

⁴² The implied frequency of very low food security (7 months) for those experiencing the condition at any time during the year is lower than that reported in previous years (8 to 9 months). The new methodology for measuring very low food security is more consistent with the 12-month measure than was the method used in previous years.

Table E-1

Prevalence of food security and food insecurity during the 30 days prior to the food security survey by selected household characteristics, 2005¹

| Category | Total ¹ | Food insecurity | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|-------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|
| | | Food security | | All | | Low food security | | Very low food security | |
| | 1,000 | 1,000 | Percent | 1,000 | Percent | 1,000 | Percent | 1,000 | Percent |
| All households | 114,437 | 107,704 | 94.1 | 6,733 | 5.9 | 4,203 | 3.7 | 2,530 | 2.2 |
| Household composition: | | | | | | | | | |
| With children < 18 | 39,601 | 36,342 | 91.8 | 3,259 | 8.2 | 2,340 | 5.9 | 919 | 2.3 |
| With children < 6 | 17,615 | 16,119 | 91.5 | 1,496 | 8.5 | 1,096 | 6.2 | 400 | 2.3 |
| Married-couple families | 26,776 | 25,399 | 94.9 | 1,377 | 5.1 | 1,041 | 3.9 | 336 | 1.3 |
| Female head, no spouse | 9,659 | 8,078 | 83.6 | 1,581 | 16.4 | 1,101 | 11.4 | 480 | 5.0 |
| Male head, no spouse | 2,536 | 2,298 | 90.6 | 238 | 9.4 | 152 | 6.0 | 86 | 3.4 |
| Other household with child ² | 630 | 567 | 90.0 | 63 | 10.0 | 46 | 7.3 | 17 | 2.7 |
| With no children < 18 | 74,836 | 71,362 | 95.4 | 3,474 | 4.6 | 1,863 | 2.5 | 1,611 | 2.2 |
| More than one adult | 44,267 | 42,726 | 96.5 | 1,541 | 3.5 | 850 | 1.9 | 691 | 1.6 |
| Women living alone | 17,019 | 15,981 | 93.9 | 1,038 | 6.1 | 530 | 3.1 | 508 | 3.0 |
| Men living alone | 13,550 | 12,655 | 93.4 | 895 | 6.6 | 483 | 3.6 | 412 | 3.0 |
| With elderly | 26,609 | 25,879 | 97.3 | 730 | 2.7 | 502 | 1.9 | 228 | 0.9 |
| Elderly living alone | 10,749 | 10,432 | 97.1 | 317 | 2.9 | 212 | 2.0 | 105 | 1.0 |
| Race/ethnicity of households: | | | | | | | | | |
| White non-Hispanic | 82,144 | 78,571 | 95.7 | 3,573 | 4.3 | 2,190 | 2.7 | 1,383 | 1.7 |
| Black non-Hispanic | 13,732 | 12,120 | 88.3 | 1,612 | 11.7 | 982 | 7.2 | 630 | 4.6 |
| Hispanic ³ | 12,397 | 11,166 | 90.1 | 1,231 | 9.9 | 835 | 6.7 | 396 | 3.2 |
| Other | 6,164 | 5,846 | 94.8 | 318 | 5.2 | 197 | 3.2 | 121 | 2.0 |
| Household income-to-poverty ratio: | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 1.00 | 12,646 | 10,026 | 79.3 | 2,620 | 20.7 | 1,588 | 12.6 | 1,032 | 8.2 |
| Under 1.30 | 17,264 | 13,978 | 81.0 | 3,286 | 19.0 | 1,980 | 11.5 | 1,306 | 7.6 |
| Under 1.85 | 27,205 | 22,909 | 84.2 | 4,296 | 15.8 | 2,630 | 9.7 | 1,666 | 6.1 |
| 1.85 and over | 65,030 | 63,361 | 97.4 | 1,669 | 2.6 | 1,068 | 1.6 | 601 | 0.9 |
| Income unknown | 22,202 | 21,434 | 96.5 | 768 | 3.5 | 505 | 2.3 | 263 | 1.2 |
| Area of residence: ⁴ | | | | | | | | | |
| Inside metropolitan area | 94,945 | 89,422 | 94.2 | 5,523 | 5.8 | 3,436 | 3.6 | 2,087 | 2.2 |
| In principal cities ⁵ | 31,708 | 29,366 | 92.6 | 2,342 | 7.4 | 1,384 | 4.4 | 958 | 3.0 |
| Not in principal cities | 46,998 | 44,845 | 95.4 | 2,153 | 4.6 | 1,389 | 3.0 | 764 | 1.6 |
| Outside metropolitan area | 19,492 | 18,280 | 93.8 | 1,212 | 6.2 | 768 | 3.9 | 444 | 2.3 |
| Census geographic region: | | | | | | | | | |
| Northeast | 21,196 | 20,221 | 95.4 | 975 | 4.6 | 662 | 3.1 | 313 | 1.5 |
| Midwest | 26,387 | 24,752 | 93.8 | 1,635 | 6.2 | 1,026 | 3.9 | 609 | 2.3 |
| South | 41,653 | 39,042 | 93.7 | 2,611 | 6.3 | 1,555 | 3.7 | 1,056 | 2.5 |
| West | 25,202 | 23,689 | 94.0 | 1,513 | 6.0 | 961 | 3.8 | 552 | 2.2 |

¹The 30-day prevalence rates refer to the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December; the survey was conducted during the week of December 12-18, 2004. Totals exclude households whose food security status is unknown because they did not give a valid response to any of the questions in the food security scale. In 2005, these represented 395,000 households (0.3 percent of all households.) The 30-day statistics for very low food security are based on a different methodology than 30-day statistics on food insecurity with hunger reported in previous years and are not comparable.

²Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.

³Hispanics may be of any race.

⁴Metropolitan area residence is based on 2003 Office of Management and Budget delineation.

⁵Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 17 percent of households in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2005 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

proportion of 12-month prevalences in households with lower incomes than in those with incomes above 185 percent of the poverty line.

The 30-day food security measure facilitates a more temporally precise analysis of the relationship between households' food insecurity and their use of Federal and community food assistance programs than does the 12-month measure. That is, measured food insecurity and reported use of food assistance programs are more likely to refer to contemporaneous conditions when both are referenced to the previous 30 days than when one or both is referenced to the previous 12 months. For households that left the Food Stamp Program during the year, the 30-day measure of food security can also provide information about their food security status after they left the program.

The 30-day prevalence of food insecurity (32.4 percent) and very low food security (13.9 percent) among households that left the Food Stamp Program during the year were more than twice the corresponding rates for households in the same low-income range that did not receive food stamps at any time during the year (14.6 percent for food-insecure households and 5.7 percent for households with very low food security; table E-2). Prevalence rates among food stamp leavers were similar to, or slightly higher than, those among households that received food stamps during the 30 days prior to the survey. This implies that not all households that left the Food Stamp Program did so because their economic situations had improved to a level that assured access to enough food without food stamps. Associations of 30-day prevalence rates of very low food security with use of other food assistance programs were similar to those of the 12-month measure reported in table 11.

Table E-2

**Prevalence of food insecurity during the 30 days prior to the food security survey,
by participation in selected Federal and community food assistance programs, 2005¹**

| Category | Food insecurity (low or very low food security) | Very low food security |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| | <i>Percent</i> | |
| Income less than 130 percent of poverty line: | | |
| Received food stamps previous 30 days | 28.2 | 11.2 |
| Received food stamps previous 12 months but not previous 30 days (food stamp leavers) | 32.4 | 13.9 |
| Did not receive food stamps previous 12 months | 14.6 | 5.7 |
| Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; school-age children in household: | | |
| Received free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days | 23.6 | 7.4 |
| Did not receive free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days | 11.3 | 2.8 |
| Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; children under age 5 in household: | | |
| Received WIC previous 30 days | 22.6 | 5.9 |
| Did not receive WIC previous 30 days | 13.7 | 4.2 |
| Income less than 185 percent of poverty line: | | |
| Received emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days | 53.8 | 24.8 |
| Did not receive emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days | 13.7 | 5.1 |
| Ate meal at emergency kitchen previous 30 days | 62.7 | 34.1 |
| Did not eat meal at emergency kitchen previous 30 days | 15.3 | 5.9 |

¹The 30-day prevalence rates refer to the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December; the survey was conducted during the week of December 11-17, 2005.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2005 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.