Introduction

Since 1995, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has collected information annually on food spending, food access and adequacy, and sources of food assistance for the U.S. population. The information is collected in yearly food security surveys, conducted as a supplement to the nationally representative Current Population Survey (CPS). A major impetus for this data collection is to provide information about the prevalences of food insecurity and food insecurity with hunger in U.S. households. USDA reports in the *Measuring Food Security in the United States* series have summarized the findings of this research for each year from 1995 to 2002. (See appendix B for background on the development of the food security measures and a list of the reports.)

This report updates the national statistics on food security during 2003, household food spending, the use of Federal and community food assistance by food-insecure households, and the numbers of households using community food pantries and emergency kitchens, using data collected in the December 2003 food security survey. The report also includes information on the prevalence and frequency (number of days) of food insecurity with hunger during the 30-day period prior to the survey—from mid-November to mid-December 2003.

Unless otherwise noted, statistical differences described in the text are significant at the 90-percent confidence level.[1]

[1] Standard errors of estimates, except for State-level estimates, are based on a design factor of 1.6 due to the complex sampling design of the CPS. That is, the standard error of an estimated proportion is calculated as the square root of $[P \times Q \times 1.6 / N]$, where P is the estimated proportion, Q is 1-P, and N is the unweighted number of households in the denominator. The design factor of 1.6 is consistent with estimates based on more complex balanced repeated replication (BRR) methods (Cohen et al., 2002b; Hamilton et al., 1997b). Standard errors of State-level estimates were calculated using jackknife replication methods with "month-in-sample" groups considered as separate, independent samples (see Nord et al., 1999).