



Household Food Security in the United States, 2011 **September 5, 2012**

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA) released its annual study measuring food security in the United States, *Household Food Security in the United States, 2011*. This report also presents statistics on how much households spent on food, and the extent to which food insecure households participated in federal and community food assistance programs for 2011.

The following include key highlights from the study.

- In 2011, 50.1 (16.4%) million *people* lived in *food insecure households* compared to 48.8 million (16.1%) in 2010.ⁱ This change is not statistically significant, meaning that the number of food-insecure people is largely unchanged from 2011 and the difference in numbers could be the result of sampling variation.
- In 2011, 17.9 million (14.9%) households are food insecure compared to 17.2 million (14.5%) in 2010.ⁱⁱ
- Very low food security rates increased to 5.7% of all households from 5.4% in 2010, returning to the level seen in 2008 and 2009.ⁱⁱⁱ Very low food security rates are particularly concerning because they indicate the most serious condition, when food intake of some household members is reduced and normal eating patterns are disrupted at times during the year due to limited resources.
- In 2011, 16.7 million (22.4%) children are living in food insecure households compared to 16.2 million (21.6%) in 2010. In 2011, 8 million (20.6%) households with children are food insecure, the same number of households as in 2010 (20.2% of households in that year).^{iv}
- In 2011, 2.5 million (8.4%) households with seniors experienced food insecurity compared to 2.3 million (7.9%) in 2010. The number of food insecure households composed of seniors living alone increased from .9 to 1.0 million (8.8%) in 2011.^v
- Race/Ethnicity of food insecure individuals^{vi}:
 - 24.1 million (22.8 million last year) White non-Hispanic individuals
 - 9.5 million (10.0 million in 2010) Black non-Hispanic individuals
 - 13.8 million (13.3 million last year) Hispanic individuals
- Race/Ethnicity of food insecure households with children^{vii}:
 - 15.5% (3.6 million) White non-Hispanic households
 - 29.2% (1.5 million) Black non-Hispanic households
 - 32.3% (2.4 million) Hispanic households
- Areas of Residence among all households^{viii}:
 - Cities: 17.7% (5.9 million) food insecure households
 - Suburbs: 13.2% (6.5 million) food insecure households
 - Rural: 15.4% (3 million) food insecure households



- Rates of food insecurity were substantially higher than the national average for some households including:
 - Households with children (20.6 percent) especially households with children headed by single women (36.8 percent) or single men (24.8 percent)^{ix}
 - Black non-Hispanic households (25.1 percent)^x
 - Hispanic households (26.2 percent)^{xi}.

Food Insecurity and Food Access

- The typical food secure U.S. household spent 17% more on food than the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan, taking into account the age and gender of the household members.^{xii} Food insecure households actually spent 6% less than the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan.^{xiii} The Thrifty Food Plan is defined by the USDA as a minimal cost meal plan that shows how a nutritious diet may be achieved with limited resources.
- Food secure households spent approximately almost a quarter (24 percent) more on food each week than the typical (median) household of the same size and composition that was food insecure.^{xiv}
- 5.1% of all U.S. households (6.1 million households) accessed emergency food from a food pantry one or more times during 2011.^{xv} This represents an increase of 8.1% percent over 2010, when 5.6 million households (4.8%) reported using a food pantry. As the USDA report notes, these figures are certainly understated relative to the actual utilization in the population.
- Nearly 1 in 4 *food insecure* households (24.2%, or 4.3 million households) accessed emergency food from a food pantry one or more times during 2011.^{xvi}
- Over half (57.2%) of food insecure households below 185% of the federal poverty line reported participating in one or more of the three largest federal food and nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, NSLP, and WIC) in the previous 30 days.^{xvii} In 2010, the rate was 59.2%.

State Food Insecurity Rates

State food insecurity rates are measured by averaging three years of data in order to obtain a more reliable statistic. The following numbers are the averages for years 2009-2011.

Seven states exhibited **statistically significant** higher *household* food insecurity rates than the national three-year average, 2009-2011. The national three-year average increased from 14.6% (average 2008-2010) to 14.7% (average 2009-2011).^{xviii}

Mississippi	19.2%
Texas	18.5%
Arkansas	19.2%
Alabama	18.2%
Georgia	17.4%
California	16.2%



North Carolina 17.1%

Twenty-seven (27) states exhibited **statistically significant increases** in household food insecurity rates from the prior three-year period, 2006-2008, to 2009-2011. The number shown is the increase in percentage points in the state's three year food insecurity rate.^{xix}

Alabama	4.9% increase
Hawaii	4.7% increase
Washington	4.3% increase
California	4.2% increase
Kentucky	3.8% increase
Rhode Island	3.8% increase
Massachusetts	3.6% increase
Montana	3.6% increase
Wyoming	3.5% increase
North Carolina	3.4% increase
Utah	3.4% increase
Florida	3.2% increase
Georgia	3.2% increase
Louisiana	3.1% increase
Maryland	2.9% increase
Nebraska	2.9% increase
Nevada	2.9% increase
Arizona	2.6% increase
South Dakota	2.4% increase
Idaho	2.3% increase
Illinois	2.2% increase
Michigan	2.2% increase
Ohio	2.2% increase
Texas	2.2% increase
Missouri	2.0% increase
New Jersey	2.0% increase
New York	2.0% increase

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err141.aspx>



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

ⁱ Table 1A
ⁱⁱ Table 1A
ⁱⁱⁱ Table 1A
^{iv} Table 1B
^v Table 2
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