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Household Food Security in the United States, 1998 and 1999

Detailed Statistical Report

By Barbara Cohen, James Parry, and Kenneth Yang, IQ Solutions

ERS contact: Mark Nord

Abstract

This report provides estimates of the prevalence of food insecurity and hunger in U.S. households in 1998 and 1999 and trends since 1995 based on nationally representative data in the Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The report also provides estimates of the prevalence of hunger among children in food-insecure households (1995 through 1999) based on a child-specific scale. Prevalence rates are reported at the national level, along with breakdowns by household structure, race, ethnicity, income, metropolitan residence, and region.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1995, data from the Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) have been analyzed annually as part of the Food Security Measurement Project. This report is the third in a series of detailed statistical reports on food security, insecurity, and hunger in U.S. households. It provides estimates of the prevalence of food insecurity and hunger in U.S. households in 1998 and 1999, along with the prevalence of food insecurity in households with children, and of hunger among children in those households (in 1995 through 1999), using a child-specific scale. Prevalence rates are reported at the national level, along with breakdowns by household structure, race, ethnicity, income, metropolitan residence, and region. This report also provides an assessment of the changes in prevalence of food insecurity and hunger for selected periods between 1995 and 1999.

The following highlights some of the key findings detailed in this report.

Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger, 1998 and 1999

In 1998, 88.2 percent of all U.S. households were food secure throughout the entire year. Household food security was not attained at all times for approximately 12 million U.S. households. More than half of these were households with children (6.7 million). About 22 million adults and 14 million children lived in these food insecure households. Included among households classified as food insecure are those classified as “food insecure with hunger.” In these households, one or more members were hungry at some time during the year as a result of inadequate food supplies or resources for food. Included among the food-insecure households were 3.8 million classified as food insecure with hunger. About 6.5 million adults (3.3 percent) lived in food insecure households with hunger.

In 1999, 89.9 percent of all U.S. households were as food secure throughout the entire year. Food insecurity was registered by 10.5 million U.S. households again with slightly more than half being households with children (5.6 million households). Living in these food insecure households were 18.9 million adults and 12.1 million children. In 1999, 3.1 million households were food insecure with hunger, and these households included 5.1 million adults.

Prevalence of Hunger Among Children

In 1998, 331,000 households (0.9 percent of all households with children present) were food insecure with hunger among both adults and children. Approximately 716,000 children lived in these most severely food insecure households. Not all of these children experienced hunger, but either they or another child in the household did.

In 1999, about 219,000 households (0.6 percent of all households with children) were food insecure with hunger among both adults and children. About 511,000 children lived in these 219,000 households.

Similar analyses for 1995 through 1997 indicate that in 1995 and 1996 approximately one percent of all households with children were food insecure with hunger among children. In 1997, less than one percent (0.8 percent) of households with children were food insecure with hunger among children.

Prevalence of Food Insecurity Among Subpopulations, 1998 and 1999

While the food security prevalence rates were near the national average for many subgroups in the U.S. in both 1998 and 1999, some groups experienced notably higher rates of food insecurity and hunger. These included single-woman headed households with children, Black households, Hispanic households and Households with incomes below the poverty line. For several other subgroups, food insecurity and hunger were substantially lower than the national average rate: These included households with 2 adults and no children, households in which elderly people lived alone, households which included elderly people, households with income at or above 185% of the poverty line, and white, non-Hispanic households.

Changes in Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger Between 1995 and 1999

Overall the proportion of households registering food insecurity declined by 1.6 percentage points from 1995-1999, and the percentage classified as food-insecure with hunger declined by 1.1 percentage points. Over the same period, the prevalence food insecurity with hunger among children declined 0.5 percentage points. The improvements in food security extended to almost all types of households and all regions of the country, including the groups with the highest rates of food insecurity and hunger.