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# Food Security Among Hispanic Adults in the United States, 2011-2014

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## What Is the Issue?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) monitors the extent and severity of food security—access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life—in all U.S. households through an annual, nationally representative survey. Households classified as food insecure have difficulty during the year providing adequate food for all household members due to a lack of resources. Hispanics represent one of the most diverse and fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States. According to the Census Bureau, Hispanics made up 17 percent of the U.S. population, or some 55 million people, in 2014. Yet, little is known about the food security conditions among Hispanic subpopulations as distinguished by origin, immigration status, time in the United States, household composition, income, metropolitan residence, and region.

## What Did the Study Find?

In 2014, 14.0 percent of all U.S. households were food-insecure and 5.6 percent suffered very low food security. Food insecurity was about twice as prevalent among **Hispanic households** (22.4 percent) as among non-Hispanic **White** households (10.5 percent) but less prevalent than among non-Hispanic **Black** households (26.1 percent). The prevalence of very low food security—when the food intake of some household members is reduced and normal eating patterns disrupted at times during the year due to limited resources—followed a similar pattern: 6.9 percent for Hispanic households versus 4.5 percent for White households and 10.4 percent for Black households.

Trends in food insecurity from 2000 to 2014 among Hispanic households appear to be closely related to trends in the U.S. labor market.

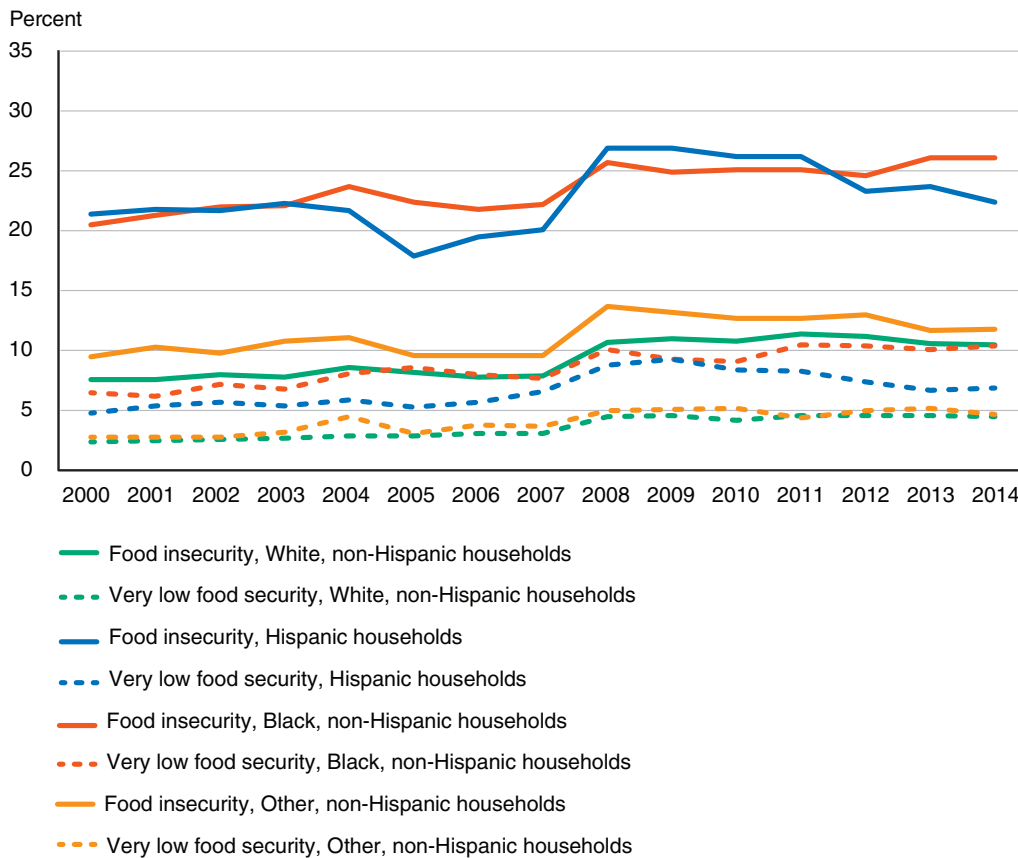
Food insecurity for U.S. Hispanic **adults** living in food-insecure households during 2011-2014 differs by Hispanic origin, immigration status, household composition, and metropolitan status, but differs little by State of residence.

- Food insecurity was less prevalent among Hispanic adults identifying themselves as originating from Cuba (12.1 percent) versus those from Mexico, Central and South America, or Puerto Rico (20.8, 20.7, and 25.3 percent, respectively).
- Food insecurity was less prevalent among Hispanic adults who are U.S. citizens (18.9 percent) than among noncitizens (24.4 percent).

ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

- The food insecurity of Hispanic adults declined with the length of time they lived in the United States. This reflects the higher naturalization rate of those who have lived in the United States longer.
- The prevalence of food insecurity was higher for Hispanic adults living in households headed by single women with children (30.7 percent) and with incomes below the Federal poverty line (37.3 percent) than for all Hispanic adults (20.6 percent). Prevalence rates were lower for Hispanic adults living in households with no children (18.1 percent), households with elderly members (18.1 percent), and households with incomes above 185 percent of the Federal poverty line (9.4 percent).
- Food insecurity was more prevalent among Hispanic adults living in households in principal cities (21.3 percent) than for those in suburban and other outlying parts of metropolitan areas (18.8 percent).
- The prevalence of food insecurity among Hispanic adults differs little across States and groups of States.

**Trends in food insecurity and very low food security by race and ethnicity, 2000-2014**



Source: Calculated by USDA, Economic Research Service using Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.

## How Was the Study Conducted?

We use 4 years of data from the annual Food Security Supplement conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau as a supplement to the Current Population Survey. Data from 4 years, 2011-2014, were combined to provide reliable food security prevalence statistics for Hispanic adult subpopulations by economic, demographic, origin, immigration status, and geographic characteristics. The food security of each household was measured by responses to a series of questions about the experiences and behaviors of household members related to their ability to obtain adequate food for a healthy and active life using the identical procedures and classifications as used by USDA to produce food security statistics for the United States.