

Appendix B. Food Sufficiency and Food Security

Food Sufficiency

Measures of food sufficiency are based on the following series of questions developed by the Census Bureau. In each instance, household heads were asked whether the household had:

1. Enough to eat and the kinds of food wanted,
2. Enough to eat but not always the kinds of food wanted,
3. Sometimes not enough to eat, or
4. Often not enough to eat.

The SIPP and the SPD both framed the questions in terms of the preceding 12 months.

This series of questions were included in the Ninth Wave of the 1993 SIPP and in the 1998 SPD.

In this paper, households are identified as being food insufficient if the head reports that they either sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.

For more information, see www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/ or www.sipp.census.gov/spd/

Food Security

Measures of food security are based on a series of 18 questions developed by USDA. The definition of food security is access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. This is considered a condition necessary for the U.S. population to be healthy and well nourished, and so the concept of food security is used in administering food assistance programs. The complete list of the 18 questions is available at:

www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/

This module of questions is used as a supplement to the Current Population Survey. In addition, the module was also used in the 1998 SPD.

From these questions, one can distinguish whether the individual or household is food secure, food insecure without hunger, or food insecure with hunger. In addition, a food security scale can be created to measure the severity of food insecurity and hunger. The scale ranges from 0 to 13; however, values of 0 (all questions answered “no”) are coded as -6 in the SPD. For more information, see the ERS food security website above, or Bickel, et al. (2000) or Nord, et al. (2002).

In this paper, food insecurity is defined in terms of households that are food insecure without hunger or food insecure with hunger.