

**WIC FAMILY FOOD
ACCESS PROJECT,
2011**



PHASE 2, TEAM A: FINANCIAL ACCESS AND FOOD INSECURITY

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Outline

- Basic definition of food insecurity
- Determinants of food insecurity in populations and households
- Methods of assessing food insecurity
- Rates of food insecurity in the US and among high risk groups
- Recommended interventions to address food insecurity
- Basic information about SNAP program



Definition of food insecurity

What is food insecurity?

- “Limited or intermittent access to nutritionally adequate, safe, and acceptable foods accessed in socially acceptable ways”¹
- Low food security: multiple indications of food access problems, but little or no actual reductions of food intake¹
- Very low food security: eating patterns of one or more members were disrupted and food intake was reduced¹

What is food insecurity?

- The term “food insecurity” includes low food security and very low food security
- Before 2006¹
 - ▣ Low food security was known as “food insecure without hunger”
 - ▣ Very low food security was known as “food insecure with hunger”



Determinants of food insecurity in populations and households

Determinants of food insecurity

- Food insecurity is associated with : **high housing costs, high utility costs, lack of education, transportation costs, and health care costs**¹
- Food insecurity rates are highest in the south; lowest in the northeast¹
- Food insecurity is more common in large cities than in rural areas¹

Determinants of food insecurity

- Food insecurity is associated with an event that **puts stress on the household budget**¹
- Food insecurity is more common among families that **stopped receiving SNAP benefits in the previous year** than in families currently receiving SNAP benefits²
- Families living near or below the FPL experience higher rates of food insecurity¹

Food insecurity rates parallel poverty rates¹



Methods of assessing food insecurity

Food Security Assessment: A Brief History⁴

- 1994- USDA's Food and Nutrition Service partnered with DPHHS to hold a conference to identify an appropriate tool to measure food insecurity.
- Since 1996- The food security statistics are reported by ERS based on annual surveys developed by the U.S. Food Security Measurement Project, a collaboration among Federal agencies, academic researchers, and non-profit agencies.
- 2006- Release of IOM report, "Food Insecurity and Hunger in the United States: An Assessment of the Measure." Recommended ongoing annual surveying with minor adjustments to the survey tool.

USDA Six-item Food Security Scale⁵

- Developed by researchers at the National Center for Health Statistics
- Focuses on financial constraints
- Does not directly ask about children's food security; thus the most severe form of food insecurity cannot be measured
- Justified this exclusion through the rationale that surveys with time and resource constraints would not have the sample size to make precise estimates of the most severe form anyway

Six-Item Food Security Survey

HH3. I'm going to read you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months—that is, since last (name of current month).

The first statement is, "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true
- DK or Refused

HH4. "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true
- DK or Refused

AD1. In the last 12 months, since last (name of current month), did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

- Yes
- No (Skip AD1a)
- DK (Skip AD1a)

AD1a. [IF YES ABOVE, ASK] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

- Almost every month
- Some months but not every month
- Only 1 or 2 months
- DK

AD2. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?

- Yes
- No
- DK

AD3. In the last 12 months, were you every hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?

- Yes
- No
- DK

[End of Six-Item Food Security Module]

Assessing household food insecurity through the six-item survey⁵

- Raw Score 0-1: High or marginal food security
- Raw Score 2-4: Low food security
- Raw score 5-6: Very low food security

- Food insecurity refers to low food security and very low food security
- To minimize respondent burden, respondents may be screened after the first three questions.

How Good is It?

- Does not directly address children's food security, and may miss the most severe range of food insecurity
- May ignore non-financial causes of food security
- Does correctly classify 97.7% of households as food insecure, and has satisfactory sensitivity and specificity⁶.
- Less respondent burden; can be screened after 3 items for food secure individuals

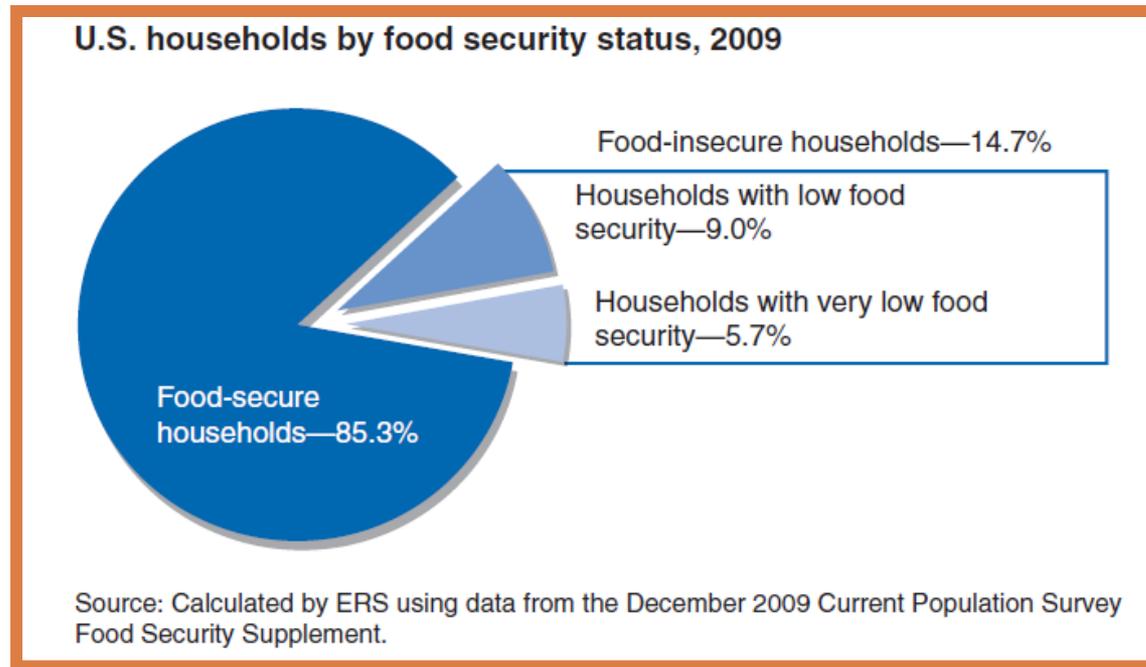
Conclusion

- When feasible, use of the 18-item U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module is recommended.
- Full scale survey categorizes households into Food Secure or Food Insecure, and further subdivides insecure into Low food Insecurity or Very Low Food Insecurity
- While brief, the 6-item form has relatively small bias and is a potentially useful tool for national, state, and local applications

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Rates of food insecurity

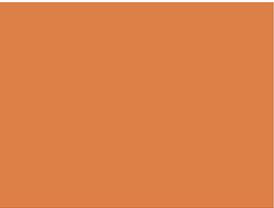
Rates of food insecurity



This is the highest rate of food insecurity since the first national food security survey in 1995³.

Rates of food insecurity in the US, 1998-2009¹





Basic information about SNAP Program

What is SNAP?⁸

- 1964- Food Stamp Program becomes permanent
- 1974- FSP goes nationwide
- 1996- Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act
- 2008- Changed named to SNAP
- The largest of the USDA's nutrition assistance programs
- 2010 average monthly participation⁷
 - ▣ 40 million people
 - ▣ 18.6 million households
- Washington Nov 2010 participation⁷
 - ▣ 1 million people (a 13.7% increase since Nov 2009)
 - ▣ 500,000 households (a 18.9% increase since Nov 2009)



SNAP Participation rates

- SNAP participation follows trends in the poverty rate and the unemployment rate
- 2008 national participation rates⁹
 - ▣ 66% among all eligible participants
 - ▣ 54% among working poor
- 2008 Washington participation rates⁹
 - ▣ 80% among all eligible participants
 - ▣ 65% among working poor



Barriers to Participation^{10,11}

Barriers

- Burden of application
 - ▣ Official language and threats of fine and jail time
 - ▣ Repeated visits to office during working hours
 - ▣ Low benefits
- Language barriers
- Social stigma
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of knowledge of program

Enhancers

- Knowledge of program
- Expectation of a large benefit
- Large and sudden drop in household income
- Change in household composition



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Recommended interventions to address food insecurity

Recommended Interventions

- Increase participation in food assistance programs
 - ▣ Streamline the application process for food assistance programs
- Increase funding for school meals
- Support food security through policies that strengthen infrastructure
 - ▣ Housing, transportation, employment
 - ▣ Social networks
- Tax policies that support low income families

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