



United States Department of Agriculture

Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS) Data

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/USDA, Economic Research
Service Grants Competition Informational Session

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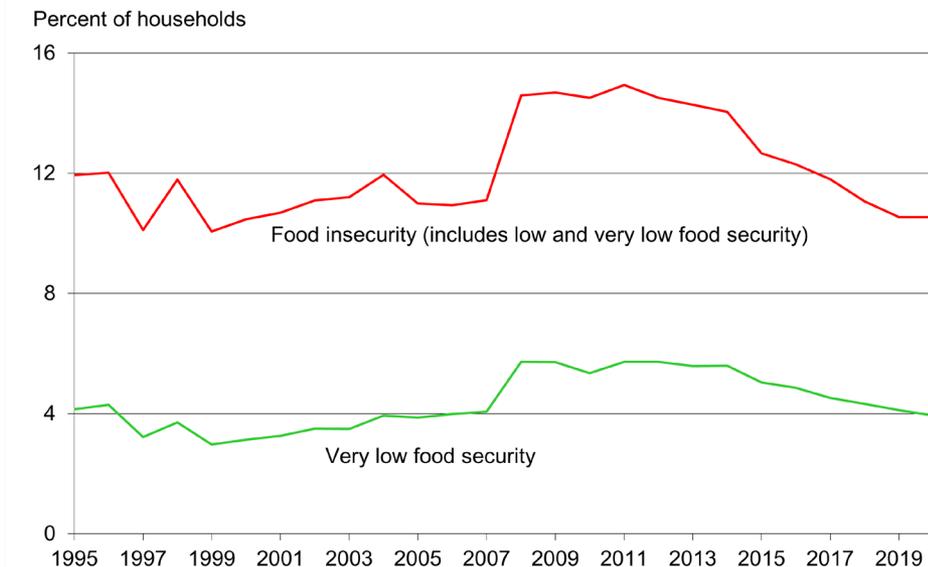
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What is the Current Population Survey-Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS)?

- The CPS-FSS is sponsored by ERS and conducted by the Census Bureau
- The CPS-FSS is the source for annual Federal statistics on food insecurity in U.S. Households
 - The data are the basis for the annual USDA report *Household Food Security in the United States*
 - For all reports in the series, see: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/history-background/#annual>

Trends in prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security in U.S. households, 1995-2020



Note: Prevalence rates for 1996 and 1997 were adjusted for the estimated effects of differences in data collection screening protocols used in those years.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, using data from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, U.S. Census Bureau.



USDA Food Security Definitions

Food Security: Access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

Food Insecurity: Unable, at some time during the year, to provide adequate food for one or more household members because of a lack of resources.

Very Low Food Security: Normal eating patterns of some household members were disrupted at times during the year and their food intake reduced because they could not afford enough food.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/>



What types of research have been conducted with the CPS-FSS?

- Correlates/determinants of food insecurity: Coleman-Jensen, A., and M. Nord. 2013. [Food Insecurity Among Households With Working-Age Adults With Disabilities](#), ERR-144, USDA, ERS.
- Understanding food insecurity for special populations: Rabbitt, M.P. and M.D. Smith. 2021. [Food Insecurity Among Working-Age Veterans](#), ERR-829, USDA, ERS.
- Impact of SNAP on food insecurity: Nord, M. 2013. [Effects of the Decline in the Real Value of SNAP Benefits From 2009 to 2011](#), ERR-151, USDA, ERS.
- Technical research on food security measurement: Coleman-Jensen, A. M.P. Rabbitt, and C.A. Gregory. 2017. [Examining an “Experimental” Food-Security-Status Classification Method for Households With Children](#), TB-1945, USDA, ERS.
- Using longitudinal panels of CPS-FSS data: Coleman-Jensen, A. and M. Nord. 2011. [“Some Households No Longer Eligible for SNAP Have Unmet Food Needs,”](#) *Amber Waves*, September.
- Linking with external data, such as on food prices: Gregory, C.A. and A. Coleman-Jensen. 2014. [“Higher Food Prices Mean Higher Rates of Food Insecurity for SNAP Participants,”](#) *Amber Waves*, May.
- Linking data from other CPS months to expand possible research: Fitzpatrick, K. and A. Coleman-Jensen. 2014. “Food on the Fringe: Food Insecurity and the Use of Payday Loans,” *Social Service Review* 88:4, 553-593
- Using geographic identifiers in the restricted-use data: Courtemanche, C., Carden, A., Zhou, X. and Ndirangu, M. 2019. “Do Walmart Supercenters Improve Food Security?,” *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 41: 177-198.



Current Population Survey Details

Current Population Survey (CPS)

- Conducted by Census Bureau monthly
- In December 2020:
 - Basic CPS interviews completed for about 45,000 households
 - About 34,000 households also completed the FSS
- Representative of U.S. civilian households
- High quality survey: sample, field staff, data management
- Includes demographic and employment characteristics
- Source of employment and poverty statistics



Food Security Supplement Content

The major sections of the survey are:

1. Food Spending
2. Minimum Food Spending Needed
3. Federal Food and Nutrition Assistance Program Participation
4. Food Sufficiency and Food Security
 - This section includes the 18 food security questions that are used to calculate the 12-month Food Security Scales as well as follow-up questions that are used to calculate the 30-day food security scales.
5. Ways of Avoiding or Ameliorating Food Deprivation – Coping Strategies (participation in community nutrition assistance)



What years of data are available?

- The survey has been conducted annually since 1995 and fielded consistently in December since 2001
- Data from all years are available
- Replicate weights are available beginning with the 2010 data
- Longitudinal component: housing units are sampled for 4 consecutive months, out for 8 months, and sampled for the same 4 months the following year
 - Enables matching of households across 2 years of the FSS
 - Enables matching of households to certain other months of the CPS to study additional topics
 - Note that this is not a traditional panel survey as addresses are sampled, not households. Care must be taken to ensure that the same household is being followed over time for any research that includes matching households across months of data.
- Can match to COVID-19 data from the CPS (2020-present):
https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-covid.2022.html



What CPS-FSS data is available in the Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDC)?

- Data from 1997 – 2015 and 2017 is available in the FSRDC
- Data from 2016 and 2018-2020 are scheduled to become available in the FSRDC in the coming months
- The public-use version of the FSS contains State-level identifiers, and information from some continuous variables (such as food spending and SNAP benefit amount) is rounded or reported by categories.
- Data available in the FSRDC includes:
 - Additional geographic detail: The restricted-use version contains census-tract level identifiers
 - Additional detail for continuous variables: continuous variables are not rounded or categorized



Notes of caution about using the data

- Please refer to the user notes in attachment 17 of the documentation to see how the data has changed from year to year
 - Variable locations and topcoding may change from year to year
 - In 2020, Census revised the relationship to reference person variable, PERRP, and all codes have been changed with new and revised categories.
- Variables sometimes do not meet Census guidelines for disclosure and are not released in the public-use data due to small cell sizes; this is especially important for research projects focused on food security among children
- Minor updates are being proposed to the 2022 questionnaire, pending Office of Management and Budget approval



Food Security Supplement Documentation

- A copy of the Food Security Supplement questionnaire is available on the ERS website along with important user notes that are updated annually: [https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-security-in-the-united-states/food-security-in-the-united-states/#Current%20Population%20Survey%20\(CPS\)](https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-security-in-the-united-states/food-security-in-the-united-states/#Current%20Population%20Survey%20(CPS))
 - Also available in the technical documentation on the Census Bureau site: https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-food-security.html
- Food security technical research and reports: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/survey-tools/#technical>



Where is the data?

- Public-use available for download from the Census Bureau:
https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-food-security.html
- Also available from the National Bureau of Economic Research:
<https://www.nber.org/research/data/current-population-survey-cps-supplements-food-security>
 - NBER provides SAS, SPSS, and Stata files for some years:
<https://www.nber.org/research/data/reading-current-population-survey-cps-data-sas-spss-or-stata>
- Restricted-use data available through an FSRDC



Closing

- The CPS-FSS is a high-quality survey
- Has been used for many different research questions
 - A Google Scholar search of “food security supplement” currently returns 1,420 results
- Many more research possibilities!

- Questions about the survey instrument or public-use data should be directed to ERS
- Questions about FSRDC access to confidential data should be directed to Census



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<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-security-in-the-united-states/>

