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## Food Insecurity Increased in Most States From 2001 to 2011

by **Alisha Coleman-Jensen**



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As the 2007-09 Great Recession and its accompanying higher unemployment took its toll on U.S. families, food insecurity at the national level increased. In 2011, 14.9 percent of U.S. households were food insecure—up from 10.7 percent in 2001. Food-insecure households are those that were, at times, unable to provide adequate food for one or more household members due to insufficient money or other resources for food. States differed both in the percentage of households that were food insecure and in the change in that prevalence rate during the period. Changes in food security may signal worsening or

improving economic conditions in a State or shifts in the composition of a State's population.

From 1999-2001 to 2009-2011, the prevalence of food insecurity was essentially unchanged in nine States. (Data for 3 years were combined to provide more reliable State-level statistics.) Two of these States (North Dakota and Virginia) had food-insecurity rates below the national average in both time periods. For the other seven (Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah), food-insecurity rates were above the national average in 1999-2001 but remained about the same in 2009-11, which put them near the 14.7-percent national average in 2009-11.

For the remaining 41 States and Washington, DC, the percentage of households that were food insecure grew over the decade. States with large increases in food insecurity, however, were not necessarily those with high rates of food insecurity in 2009-11. Among the six States with the greatest increases in food-insecurity rates over the last decade, only Arkansas and Alabama had rates higher than the national average in 2009-11 (19.2 and 18.2 percent, respectively). The other four—Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, and Rhode Island—had rates near the national average in 2009-11.

Food-insecurity rates differ across States due both to the characteristics of their populations and to State-level economic conditions. Households with low incomes, low education levels of adult members, single-parent household heads, adults with a disability, or adults who are unemployed are more likely to be food insecure. Similarly, States with larger shares of households with these characteristics are likely to have higher prevalence rates of food insecurity. State-level economic conditions such as average wage, cost of rental housing, unemployment rate, residential instability, high tax burden on low-income households, and participation in food and nutrition assistance programs can also affect the prevalence of food insecurity in the State. Although not studied empirically, changes in the characteristics of State populations and State-level economic conditions may account for changes in State food-insecurity rates over the last decade.



This article is drawn from...

**Household Food Security in the United States in 2011**, by Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven

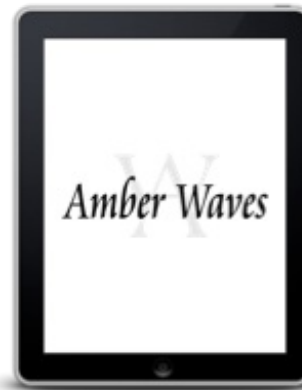
Carlson, USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2012

**Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2011**, by Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson, USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2012

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**Food Security in the U.S.**, by Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Matthew Rabbitt, USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2015



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