AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

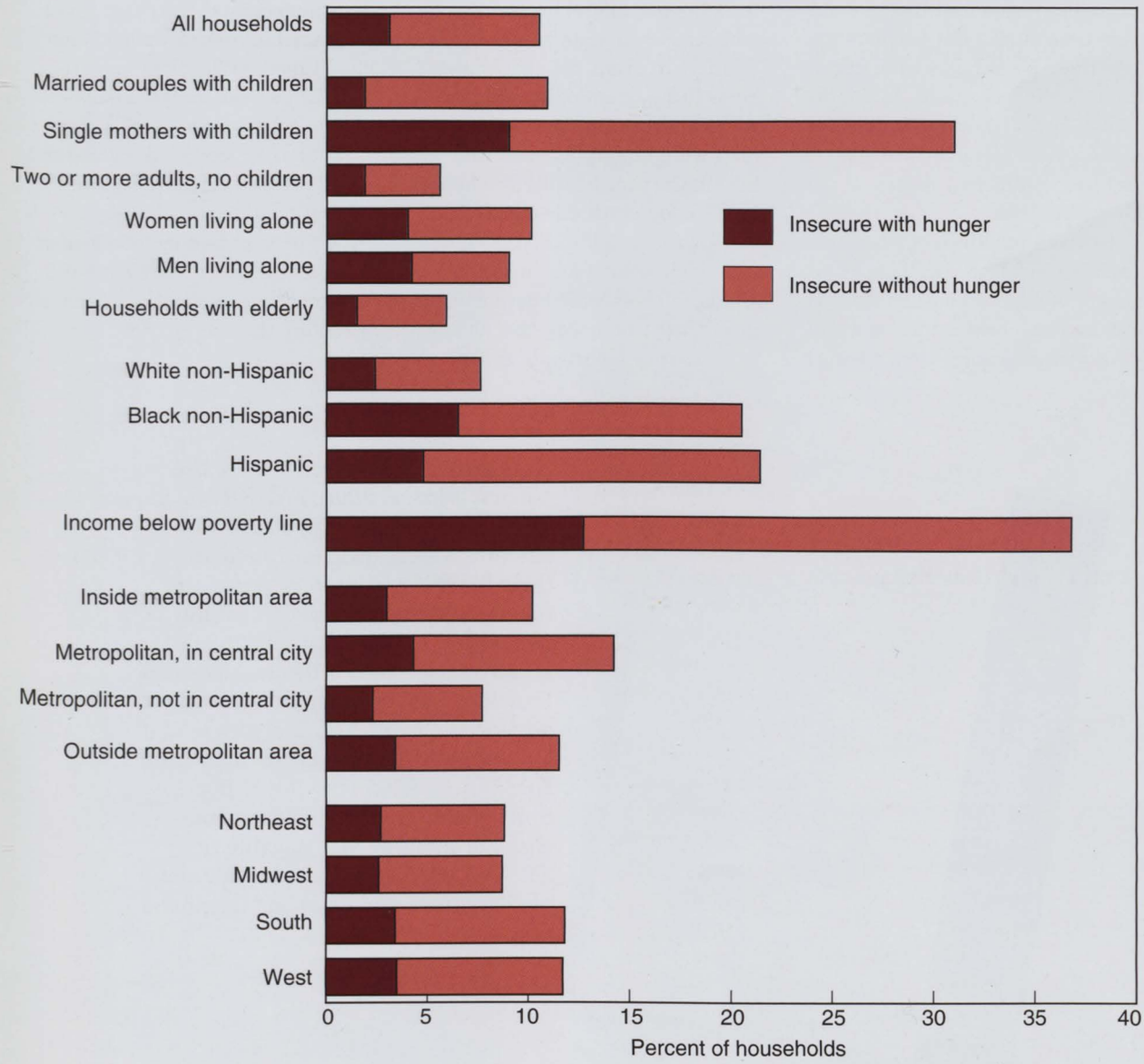
AgEcon Search
http://ageconsearch.umn.edu
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

# ERS Releases New Report, *Household Food Security in the United States, 2000*

According to a new report released by USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), food security—access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life—improved significantly in the United States from 1998 to 2000. The prevalence of food insecurity fell 11.3 percent and the prevalence of hunger fell 15.6 percent. (Comparisons are made with 1998 rather than 1999 because data were collected in a different season in 1999.) The declines were widespread across a range of

**Figure 1—Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger, 2000**




Source: Prepared by ERS based on data from the September 2000 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

demographics, including households of all compositions except elderly persons living alone, all racial/ethnic groups, and all geographic areas except nonmetropolitan areas.

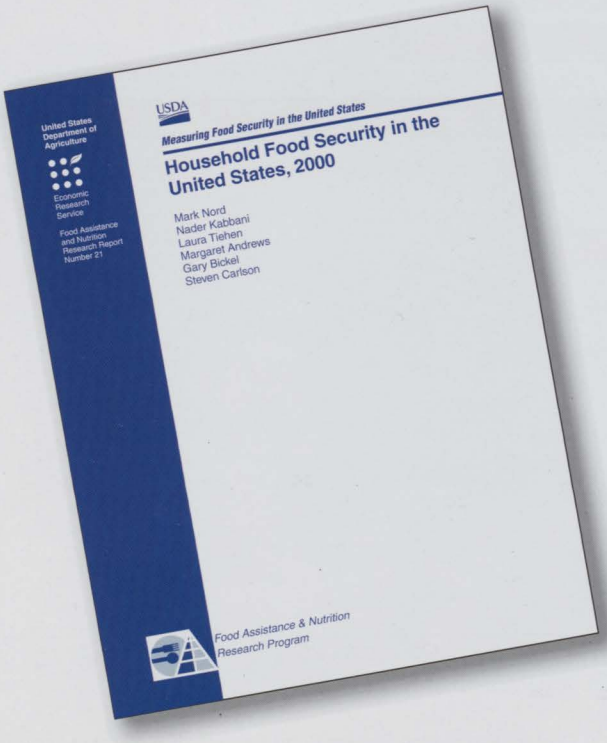
USDA monitors food security through an annual survey of some 40,000 U.S. households, conducted as a supplement to the U.S. Census Bureau's nationally representative Current Population Survey. The most recent food security survey reveals that 89.5 percent of U.S. households were food secure throughout the year ending in September 2000. These households had access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. The remaining 10.5 percent of U.S. households (11 million) were food insecure. At some time during the previous year, these households were uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet basic needs of all household members because they had insufficient money or other resources.

In about one-third of food-insecure households (3.3 million, or 3.1 percent of all U.S. households), one or more household members were hungry at least some time during the year because they could not afford enough food. The other two-thirds of food-insecure households obtained enough food to avoid hunger by using a variety of coping strategies, such as eating less-varied diets, participating in Federal food assistance programs, or getting emergency food from community food pantries.

Single mothers with children had the highest levels of food stress in 2000; 31 percent of these households were food insecure and 9 percent were food insecure with hunger (fig. 1). Black and Hispanic households also had rates of food insecurity and hunger above the national average. In U.S. households, children—especially younger children—are usually protected from hunger unless hunger among adults reaches quite severe levels. Even so, in about 255,000 households (0.7 percent of households with children), one or more children were hungry at some time during the year because the household could not afford enough food.

To provide additional insight into the nature of food insecurity and how low-income households meet their food needs, the 2000 food security report was expanded to include information on household food spending and how food-insecure households used Federal food assistance programs and community food pantries and emergency kitchens. The survey found that, on average, food-insecure households spent 26 percent less on food than food-secure households of the same size and age composition. Among food-insecure households:

- 50.4 percent received help from one or more of the three largest Federal food assistance programs during the month before the survey (23 percent received food stamps, 32 percent received free or reduced-price lunches for children, and 14 percent received benefits from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
- 16.7 percent obtained emergency food from a food pantry, church, or food bank during the 12 months before the survey; and
- 2.5 percent had members who ate at an emergency kitchen some time during the 12 months before the survey. **FR**




***Household Food Security in the United States, 2000***, FANRR No. 21, an be accessed through ERS's Web site at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr21/. Printed copies of the report can be purchased by calling 1-800-999-6779 (weekdays, 8:30-5:00 ET) to charge your order to American Express, Visa, or MasterCard (callers outside the United States, please dial 703-605-6220). Or, order by mail from ERS-NASS, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA, 22161. Make your check or money order payable to ERS-NASS. Please include your complete address and day-time telephone number.