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Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2020

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Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2020

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Note to Readers

This supplement provides statistics that complement those in *Household Food Security in the United States in 2020* (ERR-298). That research report provides the primary national statistics on household food security, food spending, and use of Federal food and nutrition assistance programs by food-insecure households. Additional statistics here cover component items of the household food security measure, the frequency of occurrence of food-insecure conditions, and selected statistics on household food security, food spending, and use of Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs.

Keywords: Food security, food insecurity, food spending, food pantry, soup kitchen, emergency kitchen, material well-being, SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Food Stamp Program, National School Lunch Program, WIC, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

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Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2020

Introduction

This supplement provides statistics on component items of the household food security measure, the frequency of occurrence of food-insecure conditions, and selected statistics on household food security, food spending, and use of Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs. It complements *Household Food Security in the United States in 2020* (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021), which provides the primary national statistics on household food security, food spending, and use of Federal food and nutrition assistance programs by food-insecure households.

The statistics presented here are based on data collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS) Food Security Supplement conducted in December 2020. Information about the survey, data, and methods is available in *Household Food Security in the United States in 2020*. All statistics were calculated by applying the Food Security Supplement weights to responses of surveyed households to obtain nationally representative prevalence estimates. Unless otherwise noted, statistical differences described in the text are significant at the 90-percent confidence level.¹

¹Standard errors of estimates were calculated using balanced repeated replication (BRR) methods based on replicate weights computed for the Supplement by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Food Insecurity in Low-income Households

Table S-1 presents food security statistics for households with annual incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line.² By definition, food insecurity results from insufficient household resources; however, many factors that might affect a household's food security (e.g., job loss, divorce, or other unexpected events) are not captured by an annual income measure. Some households experienced episodes of food insecurity, or even very low food security, even though their annual incomes were well above the poverty line (Nord and Brent, 2002; Gundersen and Gruber, 2001). On the other hand, many low-income households managed to remain food secure. In 2020, 66.9 percent of households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line were food secure, while 33.1 percent were food insecure.

²The Federal poverty line in 2020 was \$26,246 annual income for a family of four (two adults and two children). Households with gross monthly income at or below 130 percent of the poverty line are eligible to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp program, provided they meet other eligibility criteria. Children were eligible for free meals in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs if household income was determined to be at or below 130 percent of the poverty line.

Table S-1

Households with annual income below 130 percent of the poverty line by food security status and selected household characteristics, 2020

Category	Total ¹		Food secure	Food insecure					
				All		With low food security		With very low food security	
	1,000	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent
All low-income households	16,474	11,021	66.9	5,453	33.1	3,307	20.1	2,146	13.0
Household composition									
With children < 18 years	6,465	4,032	62.4	2,433	37.6	1,775	27.4	658	10.2
With children < 6 years	3,111	1,973	63.4	1,138	36.6	910	29.3	228	7.3
Married-couple families	2,508	1,635	65.2	873	34.8	698	27.8	175	7.0
Female head, no spouse	3,225	1,908	59.2	1,317	40.8	923	28.6	394	12.2
Male head, no spouse	668	435	65.1	233	34.9	144	21.6	89.0	13.3
Other household with child ²	64	54	84.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
With no children < 18 years	10,009	6,989	69.8	3,020	30.2	1,532	15.3	1,488	14.9
More than one adult	3,986	2,771	69.5	1,215	30.5	639	16.0	576	14.5
Women living alone	3,318	2,403	72.4	915	27.6	464	14.0	451	13.6
Men living alone	2,704	1,814	67.1	890	32.9	428	15.8	462	17.1
With elderly	4,130	3,146	76.2	984	23.8	585	14.1	399	9.7
Elderly living alone	2,268	1,766	77.9	502	22.1	272	12.0	230	10.1
Race/ethnicity of household reference persons:									
White, non-Hispanic	7,510	5,239	69.8	2,271	30.2	1,211	16.1	1,060	14.1
Black, non-Hispanic	3,655	2,172	59.4	1,483	40.6	922	25.3	561	15.3
Hispanic ³	4,165	2,745	65.9	1,420	34.1	1,020	24.5	400	9.6
Other, non-Hispanic	1,144	865	75.6	279	24.4	154	13.5	125	10.9
Area of residence ⁴									
Inside metropolitan area	13,345	8,850	66.3	4,495	33.7	2,752	20.6	1,743	13.1
In principal cities ⁵	5,869	3,816	65.0	2,053	35.0	1,249	21.3	804	13.7
Not in principal cities	5,213	3,449	66.2	1,764	33.8	1,121	21.5	643	12.3
Outside metropolitan area	3,129	2,172	69.4	957	30.6	554	17.7	403	12.9
Census geographic region									
Northeast	2,443	1,615	66.1	828	33.9	488	20.0	340	13.9
Midwest	3,034	2,048	67.5	986	32.5	524	17.3	462	15.2
South	7,449	4,884	65.6	2,565	34.4	1,640	22.0	925	12.4
West	3,548	2,474	69.7	1,074	30.3	655	18.5	419	11.8

NA = Not reported; fewer than 10 households in the survey with this characteristic had food insecurity or very low food security.

¹Totals exclude households for which income was not reported (about 26 percent of households) and those for which food security status is unknown because they did not give a valid response to any of the questions in the food security scale (0.5 percent of low-income households).²Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.³Hispanics may be of any race.⁴Metropolitan area residence is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget delineation.⁵Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 17 percent of low-income households in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Number of Persons by Household Food Security Status and Selected Household Characteristics

The survey measures food security status at the household level. While it is informative to examine the number of persons residing in food-insecure households, these statistics should be interpreted carefully (see tables S-2 for all individuals and S-3 for children). Within a food-insecure household, different household members may be affected differently by the household's food insecurity. Some members—particularly young children—may experience only mild or no effects, while adults were more severely affected. It is more precise to describe these statistics as representing “persons living in food-insecure households” rather than as representing “food-insecure persons.” Similarly, “persons living in households with very low food security” is a more precise description than “persons with very low food security.”

Table S-2

Number of individuals by food security status of households and selected household characteristics, 2020

Category	Total ¹	In food-insecure households							
		In food-secure households		All		In households with low food security		In households with very low food security	
		1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent
All individuals in households	324,790	286,503	88.2	38,287	11.8	25,874	8.0	12,413	3.8
Household composition									
With children < 18 years	156,601	132,646	84.7	23,955	15.3	17,911	11.4	6,044	3.9
With children < 6 years	70,456	58,833	83.5	11,623	16.5	9,043	12.8	2,580	3.7
Married-couple families	107,110	95,773	89.4	11,337	10.6	9,083	8.5	2,254	2.1
Female head, no spouse	35,744	25,404	71.1	10,340	28.9	7,272	20.3	3,068	8.6
Male head, no spouse	12,019	9,940	82.7	2,079	17.3	1,420	11.8	659	5.5
Other household with child ²	1,728	1,527	88.4	201	11.6	NA	NA	NA	NA
With no children < 18 years	168,189	153,859	91.5	14,330	8.5	7,962	4.7	6,368	3.8
More than one adult	130,295	120,207	92.3	10,088	7.7	5,763	4.4	4,325	3.3
Women living alone	20,881	18,579	89.0	2,302	11.0	1,229	5.9	1,073	5.1
Men living alone	17,013	15,072	88.6	1,941	11.4	970	5.7	971	5.7
With elderly	82,961	76,432	92.1	6,529	7.9	4,240	5.1	2,289	2.8
Elderly living alone	15,566	14,280	91.7	1,286	8.3	755	4.9	531	3.4
Race/ethnicity of household reference persons									
White, non-Hispanic	200,829	185,604	92.4	15,225	7.6	9,512	4.8	5,713	2.8
Black, non-Hispanic	39,767	30,231	76.0	9,536	24.0	6,590	16.6	2,946	7.4
Hispanic ³	57,457	46,369	80.7	11,088	19.3	8,176	14.2	2,912	5.1
Other, non-Hispanic	26,737	24,299	90.9	2,438	9.1	1,596	6.0	842	3.1
Household income-to-poverty ratio									
Under 1.00	28,121	17,561	62.4	10,560	37.6	7,009	25.0	3,551	12.6
Under 1.30	44,163	28,688	65.0	15,475	35.0	10,396	23.5	5,079	11.5
Under 1.85	68,454	47,332	69.1	21,122	30.9	14,422	21.1	6,700	9.8
1.85 and over	174,659	165,873	95.0	8,786	5.0	6,212	3.5	2,574	1.5
Income unknown	81,677	73,300	89.7	8,377	10.3	5,239	6.5	3,138	3.8
Area of residence ⁴									
Inside metropolitan area	280,703	248,008	88.4	32,695	11.6	22,223	7.9	10,472	3.7
In principal cities ⁵	93,132	79,749	85.6	13,383	14.4	9,036	9.7	4,347	4.7
Not in principal cities	146,189	131,541	90.0	14,648	10.0	10,256	7.0	4,392	3.0
Outside metropolitan area	44,087	38,495	87.3	5,592	12.7	3,651	8.3	1,941	4.4
Census geographic region									
Northeast	55,110	49,535	89.9	5,575	10.1	3,869	7.0	1,706	3.1
Midwest	67,287	60,075	89.3	7,212	10.7	4,292	6.4	2,920	4.3
South	124,652	107,716	86.4	16,936	13.6	11,780	9.5	5,156	4.1
West	77,741	69,176	89.0	8,565	11.0	5,934	7.6	2,631	3.4

NA = Not reported; fewer than 10 households in the survey with this characteristic had very low food security.

¹Totals exclude individuals in households for which food security status is unknown because they did not give a valid response to any of the questions in the food security scale. In 2020, these exclusions represented about 814,000 individuals (0.3 percent of the U.S. population).²Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.³Hispanics may be of any race.⁴Metropolitan area residence is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget delineation.⁵Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 15 percent of individuals living in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Table S-3

Number of children by food security status of households and selected household characteristics, 2020

Category	Total ¹	In food-secure households		In food-insecure households ²		In households with food-insecure children ³		In households with very low food security among children	
	1,000	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent
All children	72,837	61,115	83.9	11,722	16.1	6,142	8.4	584	0.8
Household composition									
With children < 6 years	35,763	29,621	82.8	6,142	17.2	2,985	8.3	282	0.8
Married-couple families	48,521	43,309	89.3	5,212	10.7	2,618	5.4	187	0.4
Female head, no spouse	18,212	12,742	70.0	5,470	30.0	2,941	16.1	315	1.7
Male head, no spouse	5,409	4,439	82.1	970	17.9	525	9.7	NA	NA
Other household with child ⁴	695	624	89.8	71	10.2	NA	NA	NA	NA
Race/ethnicity of household reference persons									
White, non-Hispanic	40,323	36,140	89.6	4,183	10.4	2,056	5.1	130	0.3
Black, non-Hispanic	10,150	7,093	69.9	3,057	30.1	1,429	14.1	147	1.4
Hispanic ⁵	16,404	12,582	76.7	3,822	23.3	2,242	13.7	288	1.8
Other, non-Hispanic	5,961	5,300	88.9	661	11.1	414	6.9	NA	NA
Household income-to-poverty ratio									
Under 1.00	9,596	5,703	59.4	3,893	40.6	2,027	21.1	176	1.8
Under 1.30	14,482	8,993	62.1	5,489	37.9	2,884	19.9	258	1.8
Under 1.85	21,623	14,172	65.5	7,451	34.5	3,879	17.9	330	1.5
1.85 and over	35,527	33,577	94.5	1,950	5.5	815	2.3	NA	NA
Income unknown	15,687	13,366	85.2	2,321	14.8	1,447	9.2	192	1.2
Area of residence ⁶									
Inside metropolitan area	62,721	52,720	84.1	10,001	15.9	5,215	8.3	510	0.8
In principal cities ⁷	20,224	16,223	80.2	4,001	19.8	2,101	10.4	241	1.2
Not in principal cities	33,430	28,890	86.4	4,540	13.6	2,384	7.1	180	0.5
Outside metropolitan area	10,116	8,395	83.0	1,721	17.0	927	9.2	74	0.7
Census geographic region									
Northeast	11,516	9,939	86.3	1,577	13.7	787	6.8	NA	NA
Midwest	15,301	12,974	84.8	2,327	15.2	1,300	8.5	181	1.2
South	28,523	23,330	81.8	5,193	18.2	2,492	8.7	265	0.9
West	17,496	14,871	85.0	2,625	15.0	1,562	8.9	74	0.4

NA = Not reported; fewer than 10 households in the survey with this characteristic had very low food security among children.

¹Totals exclude households for which food security status is unknown because they did not give a valid response to any of the questions in the food security scale. In 2020, these exclusions represented 179,000 children (0.2 percent).

²Food-insecure households are those with low or very low food security among adults or children or both.

³Households with food-insecure children are those with low or very low food security among children.

⁴Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.

⁵Hispanics may be of any race.

⁶Metropolitan area residence is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget delineation.

⁷Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 14 percent of children living in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Food Security During the 30 Days Prior to the Food Security Survey

The annual food security survey was designed to assess households' food security during the 12-month period prior to the survey, but information was also collected for the 30-day period before the survey. Households that responded affirmatively to each 12-month question were asked whether the same behavior, experience, or condition occurred during the last 30 days. Researchers used responses to these questions to assess the food security status of households during the 30 days before the survey, following the same protocols used for the 12-month measure.³ The 30-day food security measurement protocol was revised in 2005, so 30-day statistics for 2019 are directly comparable with those for 2005 and later years, but not with those reported for 2004 and earlier years.

An estimated 94.3 percent of households were food secure throughout the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December 2020 (table S-4).⁴ An estimated 5.7 percent (7.5 million households) were food insecure at some point during the 30-day period, including 2.3 percent (3 million households) with very low food security. The national level prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security were essentially unchanged from the corresponding 30-day period in 2019 (5.5 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively; see Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020).⁵ However, a few statistically significant changes in prevalence rates occurred for some subpopulations. From 2019 to 2020, 30-day food insecurity declined for women living alone (from 7.5 percent to 6.1 percent) and households headed by White, non-Hispanic adults (from 4.3 percent to 3.8 percent). During this same period, 30-day food insecurity increased for all households with children (from 6.5 percent to 7.7 percent), married couple families with children (from 3 percent to 4.7 percent), households headed by Black, non-Hispanic (from 9.5 percent to 11.8 percent) and Hispanic (7.8 percent to 9.7 percent) adults, households outside of principal cities (from 4.2 percent to 5 percent), and households in the South (from 5.9 percent to 6.8 percent).

The prevalence of 30-day very low food security decreased for women living alone (from 3.7 percent to 2.9 percent) and increased for married couple families with children (from 0.8 percent to 1.3 percent) between 2019 and 2020. (Table 10 in Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021 includes 30-day food security by household reference person's work activities and related COVID-19 employment impacts.)

The number of households that were food insecure at some time during the 30 days from mid-November to mid-December 2020 (7.5 million households; table S-4) was 54 percent of the number of households that were food insecure at some time during the 12 months before the survey (13.8 million households; Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021); the corresponding statistic for very low food security was 59 percent (3 versus 5.1 million households). If food insecurity during this 30-day period was like that for other 30-day periods throughout the year, then these comparisons imply that the average household that was food insecure at some time during the year experienced this condition in 7 months of the year. Likewise, the average household with very low food security experienced that condition in 7 months of the year.⁶ However, analysis of food insecurity in different months suggests that food insecurity is somewhat more prevalent in the summer months (July-September) than in March-April and November-December. This perhaps is because of less access to school meal programs during the summer (Cohen et al., 2002; Nord and Romig, 2006; Nord and Kantor, 2006), so typical frequencies may be somewhat higher than the 7 months implied.

³For questions asking about the frequency of conditions or behaviors (items 5, 10, and 17), responses that indicated the described conditions occurred on at least 3 days of the previous 30 were counted as affirmative. See Nord (2002). Beginning with the 2019 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data, all continuous variables for the number of days out of the previous 30 days that food-insecure conditions occurred are only released after being categorized into ranges of number of days. Most of these recoded variables include at least a category for 1 or 2 days so that the 30-day food security prevalence rate can be calculated the same way as in previous years using 3 or more days as affirmative. Two variables, HESSHM5: "In the last 30 days, did children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?" and HETSSHMF4: "In the last 30 days, how many days did you cut the size of (the child's/any of the children's) meals because there wasn't enough money for food?", did not meet Census guidelines for disclosure such that responses of 1 or 2 days cannot be separated from responses of 3 or more days. Those questions were not used in assessing 30-day food security status, but it is unlikely to affect the estimates since they are the most severe items in the scale and not near the food insecurity or very low food security thresholds.

⁴ The 2020 food security survey was conducted December 13-19, 2020.

⁵ The 2019 food security survey was conducted December 8-18, 2019.

⁶ The number of months is estimated as the monthly rate divided by the annual rate multiplied by 12.

Table S-4

Households by food security status during the 30 days prior to the food security survey and selected household characteristics, 2020¹

Category	Food insecure								
	Total ¹	Food secure		All		With low food security		With very low food security	
		1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent
All households	130,459	122,971	94.3	7,488	5.7	4,465	3.4	3,023	2.3
Household composition:									
With children < 18 yrs	37,903	35,000	92.3	2,903	7.7	2,015	5.4	888	2.3
With children < 6 yrs	16,119	14,900	92.4	1,219	7.6	878	5.5	341	2.1
Married-couple families	24,420	23,272	95.3	1,148	4.7	821	3.4	327	1.3
Female head, no spouse	9,774	8,339	85.3	1,435	14.7	977	10.0	458	4.7
Male head, no spouse	3,296	3,000	91.0	296	9.0	203	6.2	93	2.8
Other household with child ²	413	388	93.9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
With no children < 18 yrs	92,556	87,971	95.0	4,585	5.0	2,450	2.7	2,135	2.3
More than one adult	54,662	52,477	96.0	2,185	4.0	1,239	2.3	946	1.7
Women living alone	20,881	19,601	93.9	1,280	6.1	677	3.2	603	2.9
Men living alone	17,013	15,893	93.4	1,120	6.6	534	3.2	586	3.4
With elderly	41,050	39,581	96.4	1,469	3.6	900	2.2	569	1.4
Elderly living alone	15,566	14,878	95.6	688	4.4	384	2.4	304	2.0
Race/ethnicity of households:									
White, non-Hispanic	85,466	82,183	96.2	3,283	3.8	1,830	2.1	1,453	1.7
Black, non-Hispanic	16,686	14,711	88.2	1,975	11.8	1,159	6.9	816	4.9
Hispanic ³	18,543	16,742	90.3	1,801	9.7	1,201	6.5	600	3.2
Other, non-Hispanic	9,764	9,335	95.6	429	4.4	275	2.8	154	1.6
Household income-to-poverty ratio:									
Under 1.00	10,514	8,409	80.0	2,105	20.0	1,173	11.1	932	8.9
Under 1.30	16,474	13,442	81.6	3,032	18.4	1,759	10.7	1,273	7.7
Under 1.85	25,649	21,647	84.4	4,002	15.6	2,360	9.2	1,642	6.4
1.85 and over	70,710	68,912	97.5	1,798	2.5	1,136	1.6	662	0.9
Income unknown	34,100	32,412	95.0	1,688	5.0	969	2.9	719	2.1
Area of residence: ⁴									
Inside metropolitan area	112,150	105,750	94.3	6,400	5.7	3,847	3.4	2,553	2.3
In principal cities ⁵	38,788	36,119	93.1	2,669	6.9	1,570	4.1	1,099	2.8
Not in principal cities	56,007	53,209	95.0	2,798	5.0	1,785	3.2	1,013	1.8
Outside metropolitan area	18,308	17,220	94.1	1,088	5.9	618	3.3	470	2.6
Census geographic region:									
Northeast	22,247	21,198	95.3	1,049	4.7	643	2.9	406	1.8
Midwest	27,757	26,290	94.7	1,467	5.3	764	2.8	703	2.5
South	50,770	47,306	93.2	3,464	6.8	2,088	4.1	1,376	2.7
West	29,685	28,178	94.9	1,507	5.1	970	3.3	537	1.8

NA = Not reported; fewer than 10 households in the survey with this characteristic had very low food security within the past 30 days.

¹The 30-day prevalence rates refer to the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December; the survey was conducted during the week of December 13-19, 2020. Totals exclude households for which food security status is unknown because they did not give a valid response to any of the questions in the 30-day food security scale. In 2020, these exclusions represented 308,000 households (0.2 percent of all households). The 30-day statistics for 2004 and earlier years were based on a different methodology and are not comparable with these statistics.

²Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.

³Hispanics may be of any race.

⁴Metropolitan area residence is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget delineation.

⁵Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 15 percent of households in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Household Responses to Questions in the Food Security Scale

The 18 food security questions ask about conditions, experiences, and behaviors that range widely in severity (items near the top of the lists in table S-5 are relatively less severe, while those nearer the bottom are more severe). Those indicating less severe food insecurity are observed in a larger proportion of households, and the proportion declines as severity increases (table S-5). The two least severe questions refer to uncertainty about having enough food and the experience of running out of food. The remaining 16 items indicate reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diets and increasingly severe disruptions of normal eating patterns and reductions in food intake. (See page 12 for the complete question wording.)

Three or more affirmative responses are required for a household to be classified as food insecure. All households in that category affirmed at least one item indicating reduced diet quality or disruption of normal eating patterns or reduction in food intake. Most food-insecure households reported multiple indicators of these conditions. A large majority of households (75.5 percent of households with children and 85 percent of those without children) reported no problems or concerns in meeting their food needs (table S-6). Households that reported only one or two indications of food insecurity (9.7 percent of households with children and 6.2 percent of households without children) are also classified as food secure. Most of these households affirmed one or both of the first two items, indicating uncertainty about having enough food or about exhausting their food supply, but did not indicate actual disruptions of normal eating patterns or reductions in food intake. Although these households are classified as food secure, the food security of some of them may have been marginal at times, especially in the sense that they lacked “assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways,” a condition that the Life Sciences Research Office includes in its definition of food security (Anderson, 1990, p. 1598).⁷ Research examining health and children’s development in these marginally food-secure households generally indicates that outcomes are either intermediate between those in highly food-secure and food-insecure households or more closely resemble those in food-insecure households (Radimer and Nord, 2005; Winicki and Jemison, 2003; Wilde and Peterman, 2006).

⁷ The Life Sciences Research Office (LSRO) is a nonprofit organization in Bethesda, MD. Concepts and definitions of food security and related conditions developed by LSRO for the American Institute of Nutrition (Anderson, 1990) provided key parts of the theoretical underpinnings of the household food security measure.

Table S-5

Responses to items in the food security scale, 2017-20¹

Scale item ²	Households affirming item ³			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Percent			
Household items				
Worried food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more	15.6	14.6	13.9	14.2
Food bought didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more	12.8	12.2	11.4	11.4
Couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	12.7	12.2	11.8	11.3
Adult items				
Adult(s) cut size of meals or skipped meals	7.0	6.7	6.4	6.2
Respondent ate less than felt he/she should	7.2	6.6	6.7	6.3
Adult(s) cut size or skipped meals in 3 or more months	5.3	5.1	4.9	4.7
Respondent hungry but didn't eat because couldn't afford food	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.3
Respondent lost weight	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.1
Adult(s) did not eat for whole day	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.2
Adult(s) did not eat for whole day in 3 or more months	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.9
Child items				
Relied on few kinds of low-cost food to feed child(ren)	13.0	11.9	11.3	12.9
Couldn't feed child(ren) balanced meals	8.2	7.4	6.8	7.7
Child(ren) were not eating enough	3.3	3.0	2.9	3.6
Cut size of child(ren)'s meals	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.9
Child(ren) were hungry	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9
Child(ren) skipped meals	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6
Child(ren) skipped meals in 3 or more months	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.5
Child(ren) did not eat for whole day	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1

¹Survey responses weighted to population totals.

²The full wording of each question includes explicit reference to resource limitation, e.g., "... because (I was/we were) running out of money to buy food" or "... because there wasn't enough money for food." See box on pages 12-13 for the complete wording of these questions.

³Households not responding to an item are omitted from the calculations of percentages for that item. Households without children are omitted from the calculation of child-referenced items.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Table S-6

Percentage of households by food security raw score, 2020

Panel A: Households with children—18-item household food security scale			
Raw score (number of food-insecure conditions reported)	Percent of households ¹	Cumulative percent of households ¹	Food security status
0	75.51	75.51	Food secure (85.17 percent)
1	5.74	81.25	
2	3.92	85.17	
3	3.29	88.46	Low food security (10.99 percent)
4	2.42	90.88	
5	2.13	93.01	
6	1.81	94.82	
7	1.34	96.16	
8	1.01	97.17	
9	0.61	97.78	Very low food security (3.84 percent)
10	0.71	98.49	
11	0.40	98.89	
12	0.31	99.20	
13	0.34	99.54	
14	0.16	99.70	
15	0.22	99.92	
16	0.05	99.97	
17	0.01	99.98	
18	0.02	100.00	
Panel B: Households with children—8-item child food security scale			
0	85.86	85.86	Children food secure (92.43 percent)
1	6.57	92.43	
2	4.00	96.43	Low food security among children (6.72 percent)
3	1.98	98.41	
4	0.74	99.15	
5	0.45	99.60	Very low food security among children (0.85 percent)
6	0.13	99.73	
7	0.18	99.91	
8	0.09	100.00	
Panel C: Households with no children—10-item adult food security scale			
0	85.00	85.00	Food secure (91.22 percent)
1	3.53	88.53	
2	2.69	91.22	
3	2.47	93.69	Low food security (4.80 percent)
4	1.25	94.94	
5	1.08	96.02	
6	1.36	97.38	
7	1.14	98.52	Very low food security (3.98 percent)
8	0.68	99.20	
9	0.33	99.53	
10	0.47	100.00	

¹Survey responses weighted to population totals.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Questions Used to Assess the Food Security of Households in the CPS Food Security Supplement

1. “We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
2. “The food that we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have money to get more.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
3. “We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
4. In the last 12 months, did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food? (Yes/No)
5. (If yes to question 4) How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?
6. 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)
7. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry, but didn’t eat, because there wasn’t enough money for food? (Yes/No)
8. In the last 12 months, did you lose weight because there wasn’t enough money for food? (Yes/No)
9. In the last 12 months did you or other adults in your household ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food? (Yes/No)
10. (If yes to question 9) How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

(Questions 11–18 were asked only if the household included children age 0–17)

11. “We relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed our children because we were running out of money to buy food.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
12. “We couldn’t feed our children a balanced meal, because we couldn’t afford that.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
13. “The children were not eating enough because we just couldn’t afford enough food.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
14. In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of any of the children’s meals because there wasn’t enough money for food? (Yes/No)
15. In the last 12 months, were the children ever hungry but you just couldn’t afford more food? (Yes/No)

-continued

Questions Used to Assess the Food Security of Households in the CPS Food Security Supplement

16. In the last 12 months, did any of the children ever skip a meal because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes/No)
17. (If yes to question 16) How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?
18. In the last 12 months did any of the children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes/No)

Coding of Responses

Questions 1–3 and 11–13 are coded as affirmative (i.e., possibly indicating food insecurity) if the response is “often” or “sometimes.” Questions 5, 10, and 17 are coded as affirmative if the response is “almost every month” or “some months but not every month.” The remaining questions are coded as affirmative if the response is “yes.”

Assessing Food Security Status in Households Without Children

Households without children are classified as food insecure if they report 3 or more indications of food insecurity in response to the first 10 questions; they are classified as having very low food security if they report 6 or more food-insecure conditions out of the first 10 questions.

Assessing Food Security Status in Households with Children Age 0–17

Households with children are classified as food insecure if they report 3 or more indications of food insecurity in response to the entire set of 18 questions; they are classified as having very low food security if they report 8 or more food-insecure conditions in response to the entire set of 18 questions.

The food security status of children in the household is assessed by responses to the child-referenced questions (11–18). Households reporting two or more of these conditions are classified as having food insecurity among children. Households reporting five or more are classified as having very low food security among children.

Frequency of Occurrence of Behaviors, Experiences, and Conditions That Indicate Food Insecurity

Most of the questions used to calculate the food security scale also elicit information about how often the food-insecure behavior, experience, or condition occurred. The food security scale does not take all this frequency-of-occurrence information into account, but analysis of these responses can provide insight into the frequency and duration of food insecurity. Frequency-of-occurrence information is collected in the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement using two different methods:

- **Method 1:** A condition is described, and the respondent is asked if this was often, sometimes, or never true for their household during the past 12 months.
- **Method 2:** Respondents who answer “yes” to a question are asked, “How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?”

Table S-7 presents responses to each food security question broken down by reported frequency of occurrence for all households interviewed in the December 2020 survey. Questions using Method 1 are presented in the top panel of the table, and those using Method 2 are presented in the bottom panel. Most households that responded affirmatively to Method 1 questions reported that the behavior, experience, or condition occurred “sometimes,” while 14 to 23 percent (depending on the specific question) reported that it occurred “often.”

In response to Method 2 questions—conditional on affirming the general question—15 to 37 percent of respondents reported that the behavior, experience, or condition occurred “in almost every month”; 38 to 65 percent reported that it occurred in “some months, but not every month”; and 19 to 27 percent reported that it occurred “in only 1 or 2 months.”

Table S-8 presents the same frequency-of-occurrence response statistics for households classified as having very low food security.

Table S-7

Frequency of occurrence of behaviors, experiences, and conditions indicating food insecurity reported by all U.S. households, 2020¹

Condition ²	Ever during the year	Frequency of occurrence			
		Often	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes
		— — Percent of all households — —		Percent of "ever during the year"	
Worried food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more	14.2	3.1	11.2	22.0	78.0
Food bought didn't last and (I/we) didn't have money to get more	11.4	2.2	9.2	19.0	81.0
Couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	11.3	2.6	8.6	23.0	77.0
Relied on few kinds of low-cost food to feed child(ren)	12.9	2.4	10.5	19.0	81.0
Couldn't feed child(ren) balanced meals	7.7	1.1	6.6	14.0	86.0
Child(ren) were not eating enough	3.6	0.5	3.0	15.0	85.0

Condition ²	Frequency of occurrence						
	Ever during the year	Almost every month	Some months but not every month	In only 1 or 2 months	Almost every month	Some months but not every month	In only 1 or 2 months
	— — Percent of all households — —				Percent of "ever during the year"		
Adult(s) cut size of meals or skipped meals	6.2	1.9	2.8	1.5	30	46	25
Respondent ate less than felt he/she should	6.3	1.8	2.8	1.6	29	45	26
Respondent hungry but didn't eat because couldn't afford	3.2	1.0	1.4	0.8	31	43	26
Respondent lost weight	2.1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Adult(s) did not eat for whole day	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.3	37	38	25
Cut size of child(ren)'s meals	1.9	0.3	1.1	0.5	16	58	25
Child(ren) were hungry	0.9	0.2	0.5	0.2	19	54	27
Child(ren) skipped meals	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.1	15	65	19
Child(ren) did not eat for whole day	0.1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA = Frequency of occurrence information was not collected for these conditions.

¹Survey responses weighted to population totals. Households not responding to an item or not responding to the follow-up question about frequency of occurrence are omitted from the calculation of percentages for that item. Households without children are omitted from the calculation of percentages for child-referenced items.

²The full wording of each question includes explicit reference to resource limitation, e.g., "...because (I was/we were) running out of money to buy food," or "...because there wasn't enough money for food."

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Table S-8

Frequency of occurrence of behaviors, experiences, and conditions indicating food insecurity reported by households with very low food security, 2020¹

Condition ²	Ever during the year	Frequency of occurrence			
		Often	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes
		— Percent of all households —		Percent of "ever during the year"	
Worried food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more	97.9	43.9	54.0	45	55
Food bought didn't last and (I/we) didn't have money to get more	95.5	36.1	59.5	38	62
Couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	94.7	39.4	55.3	42	58
Relied on few kinds of low-cost food to feed child(ren)	94.5	32.9	61.6	35	65
Couldn't feed child(ren) balanced meals	87.8	20.7	67.1	24	76
Child(ren) were not eating enough	60.0	12.1	48.0	20	80

Condition ²	Ever during the year	Frequency of occurrence					
		Almost every month	Some months but not every month	In only 1 or 2 months	Almost every month	Some months but not every month	In only 1 or 2 months
		— Percent of all households —			Percent of "ever during the year"		
Adult(s) cut size of meals or skipped meals	96.1	39.2	46.7	10.3	41	49	11
Respondent ate less than felt he/she should	94.1	38.1	42.8	13.1	41	45	14
Respondent hungry but didn't eat because couldn't afford	67.0	24.3	29.8	12.9	36	44	19
Respondent lost weight	46.2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Adult(s) did not eat for whole day	30.0	11.7	11.7	6.7	39	39	22
Cut size of child(ren)'s meals	37.8	7.5	22.3	8.0	20	59	21
Child(ren) were hungry	23.5	4.8	13.3	5.5	20	57	23
Child(ren) skipped meals	15.8	2.5	10.8	2.5	16	68	16
Child(ren) did not eat for whole day	3.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA = Frequency of occurrence information was not collected for these conditions.

¹Survey responses weighted to population totals. Households not responding to an item or not responding to the follow-up question about frequency of occurrence are omitted from the calculation of percentages for that item. Households without children are omitted from the calculation of percentages for child-referenced items.

²The full wording of each question includes explicit reference to resource limitation, e.g., "...because (I was/we were) running out of money to buy food," or "...because there wasn't enough money for food."

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Monthly and Daily Occurrence of Food-Insecure Conditions

Respondents also reported whether the behaviors and experiences that indicate food insecurity had occurred during the 30 days before the survey.⁸ For seven of these behaviors and experiences, respondents also reported how many days the condition had occurred during that period. Table S-9 summarizes responses to these questions.⁹

⁸Beginning with the 2019 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data and continuing in 2020, all continuous variables for the number of days out of the previous 30 days that food-insecure conditions occurred are only released after being categorized into ranges of the number of days that a condition occurred. The result is less precise estimates of the average daily prevalence of food-insecure conditions. The midpoint of the range is used to calculate the average daily prevalence. The average daily prevalence for each condition is still calculated as the product of the 30-day prevalence and the average number of days experienced divided by 30. In prior annual food security reports, these estimates were then used to approximate the average daily prevalence of very low food security. That approximation for the daily prevalence of very low food security is no longer presented, given the less precise estimates of average daily prevalence for the conditions.

⁹Average daily prevalence for these questions is calculated as the product of the 30-day prevalence and the average number of days divided by 30.

Table S-9

Monthly and daily occurrence of behaviors, experiences, and conditions indicating food insecurity reported by all U.S. households, 2020¹

Condition ²	Ever during previous 30 days	For households reporting condition at any time during previous 30 days				Average daily prevalence
		Number of days out of previous 30 days			Monthly average occurrence	
		1- 7 days	8-14 days	15-30 days		
		----- Percent ³ -----			Days ³	Percent ³
Worried food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more	6.42	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Food bought didn't last and (I/we) didn't have money to get more	5.79	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	6.39	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Adult(s) cut size of meals or skipped meals	3.97	63	18	19	8.0	1.06
Respondent ate less than felt he/she should	3.86	55	20	25	9.7	1.25
Respondent hungry but didn't eat because couldn't afford food	2.06	56	20	24	9.4	0.65
Respondent lost weight	1.36	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Adult(s) did not eat for whole day	0.79	71	15	14	7.0	0.18
Relied on few kinds of low-cost food to feed child(ren)	6.71	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Couldn't feed child(ren) balanced meals	4.30	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Child(ren) were not eating enough	2.07	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cut size of child(ren)'s meals	1.22	63	15	22	8.5	0.34
Child(ren) were hungry	0.66	64	27	NA	7.4	0.16
Child(ren) skipped meals	0.44	66	NA	NA	NA	NA
Child(ren) did not eat for whole day	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA = Number of days of occurrence was not collected for these conditions or it is not reported because there were fewer than 10 households in the survey with responses for that question and category.

¹Survey responses weighted to population totals. The 30-day and daily statistics refer to the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December; the survey was conducted during the week of December 13-19, 2020.

²The full wording of each question includes explicit reference to resource limitation, e.g., "...because (I was/we were) running out of money to buy food," or "...because there wasn't enough money for food"

³Households without children are excluded from the denominator of child-referenced items.

Note: Beginning with the 2019 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data and continuing in 2020, the variables for the number of days out of the previous 30 days in which food-insecure conditions were experienced are now reported in categories. The midpoint of the categories was used to estimate the average daily prevalence. The category ranges enable reporting of the conditions in 1-7 day, 8-14 day, and 15-30 day increments as in previous annual reports.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Food Spending by Food-Secure and Food-Insecure Households

Food-secure households typically spent more on food than food-insecure households of similar age-gender composition. The pattern of higher median food spending relative to the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan by food-secure households was consistent across household structure, race, and Hispanic ethnicity, income, residence, and geographic region (table S-10).

Table S-10

Weekly household food spending relative to the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) by food security status and selected household characteristics, 2020

Category	Median weekly food spending relative to December 2020 TFP ¹	
	Food secure	Food insecure
	<i>Ratio</i> (cost of TFP = 1.0)	
All households	1.35	1.14
Household composition:		
With children < 18 yrs	1.22	1.06
At least one child < 6 yrs	1.22	1.06
Married-couple families	1.25	1.07
Female head, no spouse	1.15	1.02
Male head, no spouse	1.16	1.29
Other household with child ²	NA	NA
With no children < 18 yrs	1.44	1.19
More than one adult	1.36	1.09
Women living alone	1.52	1.30
Men living alone	1.69	1.43
With elderly	1.23	1.11
Elderly living alone	1.30	1.28
Race/ethnicity of household reference persons		
White, non-Hispanic	1.41	1.14
Black, non-Hispanic	1.21	1.09
Hispanic ³	1.25	1.14
Other, non-Hispanic	1.30	1.08
Household income-to-poverty ratio:		
Under 1.00	1.11	1.07
Under 1.30	1.11	1.07
Under 1.85	1.11	1.10
1.85 and over	1.48	1.31
Income unknown	1.27	1.07
Area of residence: ⁴		
Inside metropolitan area	1.39	1.15
In principal cities ⁵	1.48	1.19
Not in principal cities	1.40	1.16
Outside metropolitan area	1.17	1.05
Census geographic region:		
Northeast	1.44	1.30
Midwest	1.28	1.13
South	1.31	1.09
West	1.41	1.14

NA=Median not reported; fewer than 100 interviewed households in the category.

¹Statistics exclude households that did not answer the questions about spending on food or reported zero usual food spending and those that did not provide valid responses to any of the questions on food security. These exclusions represented 8 percent of all households.

²Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.

³Hispanics may be of any race.

⁴Metropolitan area residence is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget delineation.

⁵Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 15 percent of households in metropolitan statistical areas.

Note: Beginning with the 2015 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, food spending amounts are categorized in public-use data.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement

Use of Food Pantries and Emergency Kitchens

The December 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) food security survey included questions about the use of two types of community-based food and nutrition assistance programs (see box, “Community Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs,” on page 22). All households with incomes below 185 percent of the Federal poverty threshold were asked these questions. To minimize the burden on respondents, households with incomes above that range were not asked the questions unless they indicated some level of difficulty in meeting their food needs on preliminary screener questions. The questions analyzed in this supplement are:

- “In the last 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever get emergency food from a church, a food pantry, or food bank?” The use of these resources any time during the last 12 months is referred to as “food pantry use.” Households that reported using a food pantry in the last 12 months were asked, “How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?” Households reporting that they did not use a food pantry in the last 12 months were asked, “Is there a church, food pantry, or food bank in your community where you could get emergency food if you needed it?”
- “In the last 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever eat any meals at a soup kitchen or shelter?” The use of this resource is referred to as “use of an emergency kitchen” in the following discussion.

Table S-11 presents estimates of the number of households that obtained emergency food from food pantries or ate at an emergency kitchen one or more times during the 12-month period ending in December 2020. Estimates of the proportion of households using emergency kitchens based on the CPS food security surveys almost certainly understate the proportion of the population that uses these providers. The CPS selects households to interview from an address-based list and, therefore, interviews only persons who occupy housing units. People who are homeless at the time of the survey are not included in the sample, and those in tenuous housing arrangements (e.g., temporarily doubled-up with another family) also may have been missed. These two factors—exclusion of the homeless and under-representation of those who are tenuously housed—bias estimates of emergency kitchen use downward, especially among certain population subgroups. This is much less true for food pantry users because they need cooking facilities to use most items from a food pantry.¹⁰

Table S-12 compares the food security of low-income households that used food pantries and emergency kitchens with that of low-income households that did not use those facilities. Table S-13 shows use of food pantries by household composition, race and Hispanic ethnicity, income, and residence.

¹⁰Previous studies of emergency kitchen users and food pantry users confirm these assumptions. For example, a nationally representative survey of people who use food pantries and emergency kitchens found that about 36 percent of emergency kitchen clients and 8 percent of households that received food from food pantries were homeless in 2001 (Briefel et al., 2003).

Community Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

Food pantries and emergency kitchens are the main direct providers of emergency food assistance. These agencies are locally based and rely heavily on volunteers. Most of them are affiliated with faith-based organizations (see Ohls et al., 2002). Pantries and kitchens play different roles. Food pantries distribute unprepared foods for offsite use, and emergency kitchens (sometimes referred to as soup kitchens) provide individuals with prepared food to eat on-site. Most of the food distributed by food pantries and emergency kitchens comes from local resources, but USDA supplements these resources through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). USDA supplied 2.2 billion pounds of USDA Foods to TEFAP in FY20. This food was provided to community emergency food providers for distribution to the public.

Farmers to Families Food Box Program

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, USDA created the Farmers to Families Food Box Program. USDA purchased fresh foods from American agricultural producers, and these were packed into family-sized boxes. Food banks and other charitable organizations distributed them to households. From May through September of FY 2020, USDA purchased nearly \$2.5 billion of food products, amounting to about 92 million food boxes (Toossi et al., 2021). The Farmers to Families Food Box Program ended on May 31, 2021.

Table S-11

Use of food pantries and emergency kitchens, 2020

Category	Pantries			Kitchens		
	Total ¹	Users		Total ¹	Users	
	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>Percent</i>
All households	130,041	8,695	6.7	130,084	451	0.4
All persons in households	323,616	24,804	7.7	323,798	867	0.3
Adults in households	251,210	16,969	6.8	251,310	724	0.3
Children in households	72,406	7,835	10.8	72,488	143	0.2
Households by food security status:						
Food-secure households	116,420	3,719	3.2	116,465	126	0.1
Food-insecure households	13,561	4,953	36.5	13,578	325	2.4
Households with low food security	8,499	2,648	31.2	8,509	130	1.5
Households with very low food security	5,062	2,305	45.5	5,069	195	3.9

¹Totals exclude households that did not answer the question about food pantries or emergency kitchens. Totals in the bottom section also exclude households that did not answer any of the questions in the food security scale.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Table S-12

Prevalence of food security and food insecurity of households with annual income less than 185 percent of the poverty line, by use of food pantries and emergency kitchens, 2020

Category	Food secure	Food insecure		
		All	With low	With very low
			food security	food security
Percent				
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line				
Received emergency food from food pantry previous 12 months	44.1	55.9	30.0	25.9
Did not receive emergency food from food pantry previous 12 months	78.9	21.1	14.5	6.6
Ate meal at emergency kitchen previous 12 months	30.6	69.4	21.5	47.9
Did not eat meal at emergency kitchen previous 12 months	71.9	28.1	17.8	10.3

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Table S-13

Use of food pantries, by selected household characteristics, 2020

Category	Total ¹	Pantry users	
	1,000	1,000	Percent
All households	130,041	8,695	6.7
Household composition:			
With children < 18 yrs	37,727	3,578	9.5
At least one child < 6 yrs	16,053	1,521	9.5
Married-couple families	24,347	1,426	5.9
Female head, no spouse	9,681	1,772	18.3
Male head, no spouse	3,276	332	10.1
Other household with child ²	423	49	11.6
With no children < 18 yrs	92,314	5,117	5.5
More than one adult	54,542	2,439	4.5
Women living alone	20,812	1,586	7.6
Men living alone	16,959	1,092	6.4
With elderly	40,954	2,101	5.1
Elderly living alone	15,520	935	6.0
Race/ethnicity of household reference persons			
White, non-Hispanic	85,307	3,440	4.0
Black, non-Hispanic	16,564	2,358	14.2
Hispanic ³	18,428	2,272	12.3
Other, non-Hispanic	9,741	625	6.4
Household income-to-poverty ratio:			
Under 1.00	10,420	2,856	27.4
Under 1.30	16,344	4,136	25.3
Under 1.85	25,452	5,440	21.4
1.85 and over	70,648	1,579	2.2
Income unknown	33,941	1,676	4.9
Area of residence: ⁴			
Inside metropolitan area	111,774	7,171	6.4
In principal cities ⁵	38,660	3,190	8.3
Not in principal cities	55,807	2,893	5.2
Outside metropolitan area	18,267	1,525	8.3
Census geographic region:			
Northeast	22,138	1,392	6.3
Midwest	27,698	1,971	7.1
South	50,611	3,349	6.6
West	29,593	1,983	6.7

¹Totals exclude households that did not answer the question about getting food from a food pantry. These exclusions represented 0.6 percent of all households.

²Households with children in complex living arrangements, e.g., children of other relatives or unrelated roommate or boarder.

³Hispanics may be of any race.

⁴Metropolitan area residence is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget delineation.

⁵Households within incorporated areas of the largest cities in each metropolitan area. Residence inside or outside of principal cities is not identified for about 16 percent of households in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Food Spending by Households That Received Food and Nutrition Assistance

Table S-14 presents median food spending relative to the cost of the December 2020 Thrifty Food Plan by households that received food and nutrition assistance and by nonparticipant households in similar low-income ranges.¹¹

Table S-14

Weekly household food spending relative to the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) by participation in selected Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs, 2020

Category	Median weekly food spending relative to cost of the December 2020 TFP
	<i>Ratio</i> (cost of TFP = 1.0)
Income less than 130 percent of poverty line:	
Received SNAP ¹ benefits previous 30 days	1.07
Did not receive SNAP ¹ benefits previous 30 days	1.11
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; school-age children in household:	
Received NSLP ² free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	1.04
Did not receive NSLP ² free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	1.01
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; children under age 5 in household:	
Received WIC ³ previous 30 days	1.07
Did not receive WIC ³ previous 30 days	1.04
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line:	
Received emergency food from food pantry previous 12 months	1.08
Did not receive emergency food from food pantry previous 12 months	1.13

¹SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the Food Stamp Program.

²NSLP = National School Lunch Program.

³WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Note: Beginning with the 2015 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, food spending amounts are categorized in public-use data.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

¹¹Food purchased with SNAP benefits is included in household food spending as calculated here. However, the value of school lunches and food obtained through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is not included. Food from these sources supplemented the food purchased by many of these households.

Food Security During the 30 Days Prior to the Food Security Survey in Households That Received Food and Nutrition Assistance

Table S-15 presents prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security during the 30-day period just prior to the food security survey for households that received selected types of food and nutrition assistance and for nonparticipant households in similar low-income ranges. This complements table 8 of *Household Food Security in the United States in 2020* (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021), which is based on the 12-month measure. Measured food insecurity and reported use of food and nutrition assistance programs are more likely to refer to contemporaneous conditions when both are referenced to the previous 30 days than when one or both is referenced to the previous 12 months.

The prevalence of 30-day food insecurity decreased for households that received SNAP benefits in the previous 30 days (from 29 percent to 23.6 percent), households that received SNAP benefits in every month during the previous 12 months (from 28.9 percent to 23.6 percent), and households that received emergency food from a food pantry in the previous 30 days (from 51.3 percent to 39.7 percent) between 2019 and 2020 (see Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020 for prevalence estimates for 2019). During this same period, the prevalence of 30-day food insecurity increased for households that did not receive SNAP benefits in the previous 12 months (from 11.5 percent to 14.6 percent) and households that did not receive free or reduced-price school lunch in the previous 30 days (from 8.8 percent to 17.5 percent).

From 2019 to 2020, the prevalence of 30-day very low food security decreased for households that received SNAP benefits in the previous 30 days (from 13.9 percent to 10.7 percent) and households that received emergency food from a food pantry in the previous 30 days (from 26.7 percent to 20.6 percent) while the prevalence of 30-day very low food security increased for households that did not receive free or reduced-price school lunch in the previous 30 days (from 3 percent to 5.5 percent).

Table S-15

Prevalence of food insecurity during the 30 days prior to the food security survey, by participation in selected Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs, 2020¹

Category	Food insecure in 30 days prior to survey (low or very low food security)	Very low food secure in 30 days prior to survey
	<i>Percent</i>	
Income less than 130 percent of poverty line:		
Received SNAP ² benefits previous 30 days	23.6	10.7
Received SNAP ² benefits in every month during the previous 12 months	23.6	10.9
Received SNAP ² benefits previous 12 months but not previous 30 days (SNAP leavers)	27.7	12.9
Did not receive SNAP ² benefits previous 12 months	14.6	5.6
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; school-age children in household:		
Received NSLP ³ free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	18.6	4.9
Did not receive NSLP ³ free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	17.5	5.5
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; children under age 5 in household:		
Received WIC ⁴ previous 30 days	16.9	3.0
Did not receive WIC ⁴ previous 30 days	13.0	4.3
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line:		
Received emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days	39.7	20.6
Did not receive emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days	12.0	4.3

¹The 30-day prevalence rates refer to the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December; the survey was conducted during the week of December 13-19, 2020. The number of interviewed households reporting use of emergency kitchens during the previous 30 days was too small to provide reliable food security prevalence estimates.

²SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the Food Stamp Program.

³NSLP = National School Lunch Program.

⁴WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Combined Use of Federal and Community Food and Nutrition Assistance

Both Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs are important resources for low-income households. Designing and managing these programs to function effectively together as a nutrition safety net requires knowing how they complement and supplement each other. The extent to which households that participate in Federal food and nutrition assistance programs also receive assistance from community food assistance programs provides information about these relationships (table S-16).

Table S-16

Combined use of Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs by low-income households,¹ 2020

Category	Share of category that obtained food from food pantry	Share of food pantry users in category	Share of category that ate meal at emergency kitchen	Share of emergency kitchen users in category
	<i>Percent</i>			
Received SNAP ² benefits previous 30 days	37.2	46.3	2.1	48.9
Received NSLP ³ free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	30.0	21.1	0.9	11.8
Received WIC ⁴ previous 30 days	31.4	8.7	NA	NA
Participated in one or more of the three Federal programs	33.3	59.6	1.6	54.1
Did not participate in any of the three Federal programs	14.0	40.4	0.9	45.9

NA= Not reported; fewer than 10 households in the survey reported receipt of WIC and use of an emergency kitchen.

¹Analysis is restricted to households with annual incomes less than 185 percent of the poverty line because most households with incomes above that range were not asked whether they participated in food assistance programs.

²SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the Food Stamp Program.

³NSLP = National School Lunch Program.

⁴WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2020 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

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