

Appendix D—Food Security During 30 Days Prior to Food Security Survey

The annual food security survey was designed with the primary objective of assessing households' food security during the 12-month period prior to the survey, but information is also collected with reference to the 30-day period prior to the survey. From 1995-2004, information on 30-day food security was collected for only a subset of the food security questions—those indicating more severe levels of food insecurity. Beginning with the 2005 survey, information on the full set of food security questions has been collected for both the 30 days and 12 months prior to 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. Responses to these questions were used to assess the food security status of households during the 30 days prior to the survey, following the same protocols that were used for the 12-month measure. The 30-day statistics for 2007 are, therefore, comparable with those for 2005 and 2006, but not with those reported for 2004 and earlier years.

About 94 percent of households were food secure throughout the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December 2007 (table D-1).¹ About 7.4 million households (6.3 percent) were food insecure at some time during that 30-day period, including 2.8 million (2.4 percent) with very low food security. The percentage of households that was food insecure was higher than during the same period in 2006 (5.8 percent), while the percentage with very low food security was unchanged.

The number of households that were food insecure at some time during the 30 days from mid-November to mid-December was 57 percent of the number that were food insecure at some time during the entire 12 months prior to the survey; the corresponding statistic for very low food security was 58 percent. If food insecurity during this 30-day period was similar to 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. Similarly, the average household with very low food security experienced that condition in 7 months of the year.² 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 (Cohen et al., 2002a; Nord and Romig, 2006; Nord and Kantor, 2006), so typical frequencies may be somewhat higher than the 6 and 7 months implied by the December data.

The prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security during the 30 days prior to the survey varied across household types following the same general pattern as the 12-month measure. Prevalence rates were lowest for married-couple families with children, households with two or more adults without children, households that included an elderly person, White non-Hispanic households, and households with incomes higher than 185 percent of the poverty line. Prevalence rates were highest for households with children headed by single women, households headed by Blacks and Hispanics, and households with low incomes. Relationships between 30-day

¹The food security survey was conducted during the week of December 9-15, 2007.

²The implied frequency of very low food security (7 months) for those experiencing the condition at any time during the year in 2007 is consistent with that reported in 2005 and 2006, but is lower than that estimated in 2004 and earlier years (8 to 9 months). This is a result of the new methodology for measuring food security during the 30 days prior to the survey, which includes 30-day-referenced questions corresponding to each question in the 12-month measure.

Table D-1

Households by food security status during the 30 days prior to the food security survey and selected household characteristics, 2007¹

Category	Total ¹	Food insecure							
		Food secure		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 households	117,094	109,740	93.7	7,354	6.3	4,586	3.9	2,768	2.4
Household composition:									
With children < 18 yrs	39,384	35,749	90.8	3,635	9.2	2,583	6.6	1,052	2.7
With children < 6 yrs	17,542	15,896	90.6	1,646	9.4	1,232	7.0	414	2.4
Married-couple families	26,645	25,021	93.9	1,624	6.1	1,230	4.6	394	1.5
Female head, no spouse	9,458	7,777	82.2	1,681	17.8	1,112	11.8	569	6.0
Male head, no spouse	2,621	2,347	89.5	274	10.5	209	8.0	65	2.5
Other household with child ²	660	604	91.5	56	8.5	31	4.7	25	3.8
With no children < 18 yrs	77,710	73,991	95.2	3,719	4.8	2,003	2.6	1,716	2.2
More than one adult	45,350	43,693	96.3	1,657	3.7	939	2.1	718	1.6
Women living alone	18,395	17,166	93.3	1,229	6.7	669	3.6	560	3.0
Men living alone	13,966	13,132	94.0	834	6.0	396	2.8	438	3.1
With elderly	27,469	26,538	96.6	931	3.4	615	2.2	316	1.2
Elderly living alone	10,746	10,336	96.2	410	3.8	251	2.3	159	1.5
Race/ethnicity of households:									
White non-Hispanic	82,875	79,209	95.6	3,666	4.4	2,246	2.7	1,420	1.7
Black non-Hispanic	14,209	12,593	88.6	1,616	11.4	1,005	7.1	611	4.3
Hispanic ³	13,378	11,712	87.5	1,666	12.5	1,079	8.1	587	4.4
Other	6,632	6,225	93.9	407	6.1	256	3.9	151	2.3
Household income-to-poverty ratio:									
Under 1.00	11,688	9,110	77.9	2,578	22.1	1,529	13.1	1,049	9.0
Under 1.30	17,395	13,908	80.0	3,487	20.0	2,027	11.7	1,460	8.4
Under 1.85	27,378	22,826	83.4	4,552	16.6	2,732	10.0	1,820	6.6
1.85 and over	65,898	63,904	97.0	1,994	3.0	1,308	2.0	686	1.0
Income unknown	23,818	23,009	96.6	809	3.4	546	2.3	263	1.1
Area of residence: ⁴									
Inside metropolitan area	97,572	91,439	93.7	6,133	6.3	3,788	3.9	2,345	2.4
In principal cities ⁵	32,843	30,320	92.3	2,523	7.7	1,556	4.7	967	2.9
Not in principal cities	47,971	45,504	94.9	2,467	5.1	1,572	3.3	895	1.9
Outside metropolitan area	19,522	18,301	93.7	1,221	6.3	798	4.1	423	2.2
Census geographic region:									
Northeast	21,353	20,118	94.2	1,235	5.8	796	3.7	439	2.1
Midwest	26,506	24,900	93.9	1,606	6.1	1,038	3.9	568	2.1
South	43,239	40,438	93.5	2,801	6.5	1,743	4.0	1,058	2.4
West	25,995	24,283	93.4	1,712	6.6	1,009	3.9	703	2.7

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 9-15, 2007. Totals exclude households whose 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 2007, these represented 462,000 households (0.4 percent of all households.) The 30-day statistics for very low food security 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 2003 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 households in metropolitan statistical areas.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2007 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

and 12-month prevalence rates did not differ greatly across the categories of households listed in table D-1.

The 30-day food security measure facilitates a more temporally precise analysis of the relationship between households' food insecurity and their use of Federal and community food and nutrition assistance programs than does 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. For households that left the Food Stamp Program during the year, the 30-day measure of food security can also provide information about their food security status after they left the program.

The 30-day prevalence of food insecurity (37.1 percent) and very low food security (15.8 percent) among households that left the Food Stamp Program during the year were more than twice the corresponding rates for households in the same low-income range that did not receive food stamps at any time during the year (14.3 percent food insecurity and 6.1 percent very low food security; table D-2). Prevalence rates among food stamp leavers were somewhat higher than those among households that received food stamps during the 30 days prior to the survey. This implies that not all households that left the Food Stamp Program did so because their economic situations had improved to a level that ensured access to enough food without food stamps. Associations of 30-day prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security with use of other food and nutrition assistance programs were similar to those of the 12-month measure reported in table 12.

Table D-2

Prevalence of food insecurity during the 30 days prior to the food security survey, by participation in selected Federal and community food assistance programs, 2007¹

Category	Food insecurity (low or very low food security)	Very low food security
	Percent	
Income less than 130 percent of poverty line:		
Received food stamps previous 30 days	31.8	13.2
Received food stamps in every month during the previous 12 months	31.8	12.4
Received food stamps previous 12 months but not previous 30 days (food stamp leavers)	37.1	15.8
Did not receive food stamps previous 12 months	14.3	6.1
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; school-age children in household:		
Received free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	28.2	8.5
Did not receive free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	11.9	4.3
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; children under age 5 in household:		
Received WIC previous 30 days	25.6	7.0
Did not receive WIC previous 30 days	15.9	4.5
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line:		
Received emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days	55.0	30.8
Did not receive emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days	14.4	5.2

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 9-15, 2007. 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.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2007 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.