

Summary and Conclusions

The revised 30-day food security scale proposed here—specifically for the limited set of 30-day referenced items collected by the CPS-FSS—is conceptually consistent with that developed by Hamilton et al. (1997b) and differs only in two technical details. The changes result in a scale that is conceptually and operationally more consistent with the 12-month scale. The metric of the proposed scale is also specified more precisely than had been done by Hamilton et al. in order to make it consistent in meaning with the 12-month scale across the entire range that the 30-day scale measures. That is to say, equal scores on the two scales represent (probabilistically) the same array of conditions and behaviors, differing only with regard to the time period (30 days versus 12 months) during which those conditions and behaviors may have occurred.

The revised 30-day scale is suitable for monitoring and research purposes within the range of food insecurity and hunger that it measures. It is only slightly less reliable than the 12-month scale, a result of its being based on a smaller number of items. The main limitation of the revised 30-day scale, as of its predecessor, is that it lacks coverage of the less severe range of insecurity. If it is feasible to do so, adding 30-day follow-up questions to some or all of the less severe food security questions in the CPS-FSS could overcome this limitation.

The 30-day food security scale is expected to complement, not replace, the 12-month scale. Assuming that food security at the national level continues to be assessed annually, the 12-month scale—which registers insecurity at any time during the annual cycle—is a logical monitoring tool. However, prevalence statistics based on the 30-day scale could provide additional perspective on the persistence and prevalence of food insecurity and hunger. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the 30-day scale will be in research applications, where its greater temporal specificity can help overcome temporal mismatch

problems that complicate and obscure associations between the 12-month scale and variables measuring determinants and outcomes of food insecurity and hunger.