

Appendix E—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 2006 are, therefore, comparable with those for 2005, 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 2006 (table E-1).¹ About 6.7 million households (5.8 percent) were food insecure at some time during that period, including 2.8 million (2.4 percent) households with very low food security. Changes from the corresponding prevalence rates for the same 30-day period in 2005 (5.7 percent and 2.2 percent, respectively) were not statistically significant.

The prevalence of food insecurity during the 30 days from mid-November to mid-December was 53 percent of that for the entire 12 months prior to the survey; the corresponding statistic for very low food security was 60 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 6 months of the year, and 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 and 12-

¹The food security survey was conducted during the week of December 10-16, 2006.

²The implied frequency of very low food security (7 months) for those experiencing the condition at any time during the year is consistent with that reported in 2005, but is lower than that estimated in 2004 and earlier years (8 to 9 months). The new methodology for measuring very low food security is more consistent with the 12-month measure than was the method used prior to 2005.

Table E-1

Households by food security status during the 30 days prior to the food security survey and selected household characteristics, 2006¹

Category	Total ¹	Food secure		Food insecure					
		1,000	Percent	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	115,605	108,926	94.2	6,679	5.8	3,900	3.4	2,779	2.4
Household composition:									
With children < 18	39,436	36,278	92.0	3,158	8.0	2,157	5.5	1,001	2.5
With children < 6	17,161	15,746	91.8	1,415	8.2	1,016	5.9	399	2.3
Married-couple families	26,614	25,295	95.0	1,319	5.0	973	3.7	346	1.3
Female head, no spouse	9,572	7,994	83.5	1,578	16.5	984	10.3	594	6.2
Male head, no spouse	2,618	2,419	92.4	199	7.6	149	5.7	50	1.9
Other household with child ²	633	572	90.4	61	9.6	50	7.9	11	1.7
With no children < 18	76,169	72,649	95.4	3,520	4.6	1,743	2.3	1,777	2.3
More than one adult	44,742	43,223	96.6	1,519	3.4	801	1.8	718	1.6
Women living alone	17,584	16,451	93.6	1,133	6.4	525	3.0	608	3.5
Men living alone	13,844	12,975	93.7	869	6.3	417	3.0	452	3.3
With elderly	26,840	26,057	97.1	783	2.9	520	1.9	263	1.0
Elderly living alone	10,499	10,215	97.3	284	2.7	175	1.7	109	1.0
Race/ethnicity of households:									
White non-Hispanic	82,268	78,745	95.7	3,523	4.3	2,017	2.5	1,506	1.8
Black non-Hispanic	14,054	12,572	89.5	1,482	10.5	802	5.7	680	4.8
Hispanic ³	12,875	11,512	89.4	1,363	10.6	906	7.0	457	3.5
Other	6,409	6,098	95.1	311	4.9	175	2.7	136	2.1
Household income-to-poverty ratio:									
Under 1.00	11,829	9,442	79.8	2,387	20.2	1,314	11.1	1,073	9.1
Under 1.30	16,830	13,773	81.8	3,057	18.2	1,682	10.0	1,375	8.2
Under 1.85	27,610	23,475	85.0	4,135	15.0	2,311	8.4	1,824	6.6
1.85 and over	64,495	62,886	97.5	1,609	2.5	1,015	1.6	594	0.9
Income unknown	23,500	22,565	96.0	935	4.0	574	2.4	361	1.5
Area of residence: ⁴									
Inside metropolitan area	96,189	90,725	94.3	5,464	5.7	3,181	3.3	2,283	2.4
In principal cities ⁵	32,051	29,796	93.0	2,255	7.0	1,287	4.0	968	3.0
Not in principal cities	47,541	45,236	95.2	2,305	4.8	1,358	2.9	947	2.0
Outside metropolitan area	19,417	18,202	93.7	1,215	6.3	719	3.7	496	2.6
Census geographic region:									
Northeast	21,302	20,217	94.9	1,085	5.1	638	3.0	447	2.1
Midwest	26,560	25,089	94.5	1,471	5.5	853	3.2	618	2.3
South	42,279	39,655	93.8	2,624	6.2	1,498	3.5	1,126	2.7
West	25,464	23,965	94.1	1,499	5.9	911	3.6	588	2.3

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 10-16, 2006. 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 2006, these represented 381,000 households (0.3 percent of all households.) The 30-day statistics for very low food security for 2005 and 2006 are based on a different methodology than 30-day statistics on food insecurity with hunger reported in 2004 and earlier years and are not comparable.

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 2006 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

month prevalence rates did not differ greatly across the categories of households listed in table E-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. That is, 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 (36.6 percent) and very low food security (17.2 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 (13.5 percent food insecurity and 6.2 percent very low food security; table E-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 assured access to enough food without food stamps. Associations of 30-day prevalence rates of 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 11.

Table E-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, 2006¹

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	27.2	11.8
Received food stamps in every month during the previous 12 months	26.8	11.3
Received food stamps previous 12 months but not previous 30 days (food stamp leavers)	36.6	17.2
Did not receive food stamps previous 12 months	13.5	6.2
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; school-age children in household:		
Received free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	22.9	7.3
Did not receive free or reduced-price school lunch previous 30 days	11.2	4.3
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line; children under age 5 in household:		
Received WIC previous 30 days	19.8	5.1
Did not receive WIC previous 30 days	15.4	5.1
Income less than 185 percent of poverty line:		
Received emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days	51.5	30.1
Did not receive emergency food from food pantry previous 30 days	13.0	5.3

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 10-16, 2006. 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 2006 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.