

Are Iowa Families Meeting Their Food Needs?



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Today's Focus

- Conceptualize what it means to 'meet food needs'
- Assess whether or not families are meeting their food needs
- Investigate national information
- Examine specific evidence for Iowa



Food Security: Defining Meeting Food Needs

What is Food Security?

Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Food security includes at a minimum: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies). (USDA definition)

What is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity is either:

1. Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or
2. Limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.
(USDA definition)

How is Food Security Measured?

Based on responses by families to questions about the food eaten in their household in the last 12 months.

- 10 questions if they do not have children
- 18 questions if they do have children

How is Food Security Measured?

Questions include:

- Did you worry whether food would run out before you got money to buy more?
- Did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
- Were you ever hungry but did not eat because you couldn't afford enough food?
- Was there a time you couldn't feed your children a balanced meal because you couldn't afford to?
- Did a child in your household ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

How is Food Insecurity Measured?

Classifications based on number of affirmative responses:

- Food secure: 2 or fewer
- Food insecure: 3 or more
 - Low food security:
 - 3 to 5, households without children
 - 3 to 7, households with children
 - Very low food security (food intake reduced / eating patterns disrupted):
 - 6 or more, households without children
 - 8 or more, households with children



Assessing Food Security: USDA Estimates

Prevalence of Food Insecurity: 2007

- 13.0 million U.S. households (11.1%) were food insecure.
 - Low food security: 8.3 million households (7.0%)
 - Very low food security: 4.7 million households (4.1%)
- 36.2 million individuals (12.2%) in these households.
 - 23.8 million adults (10.6%)
 - 12.4 million children (16.9%)

Prevalence of Food Insecurity: 2007

Prevalence rates are higher for these households:

- In poverty
- With children, headed by single women
- With children, headed by single men
- Black household head
- Hispanic household head

Prevalence of Food Insecurity: 2007

Prevalence rates are lower for these households:

- With children, headed by a married couple
- With no children
- With more than one adult and no children
- With elderly persons

Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Iowa: 2005-2007

- 11.7% of households were food insecure (143,000 households)
 - 7.2% low food security (88,000 households)
 - 4.5% very low food security (55,000 households)

Trends in Food Insecurity

US:

- Increased from 1999-2004
- Fell to its current level in 2005

Iowa:

- 8.0% in 1996-1998
- 10.2% in 2002-2004
- 11.7% in 2005-2007



**Iowa State University:
Surveys of Food Pantry Participants**

ISU Surveys of Food Pantry Participants

- Administer a 4-page questionnaire to individuals that visit food pantries
- Ongoing effort since 2002
- Coordinated through Iowa State University Extension
- Funding received from Iowa Department of Human Services, Food Stamp Outreach

ISU Surveys of Food Pantry Participants

Investigates food needs, as well as issues related to available resources, health and housing

Builds on USDA methodology for assessing food security

ISU Survey of Food Pantry Participants: 2008

Food pantries in four counties: Black Hawk, Kossuth, Polk, and Woodbury

Questionnaires distributed at two time periods:

- February – March (“Winter”)
- July – August (“Summer”)

Not all the pantries were able to distribute questionnaires during both time periods for a variety of reasons (e.g., summer flooding)

ISU Survey of Food Pantry Participants: 2008

Today's focus:

- Black Hawk and Woodbury counties for the two periods
- 927 completed questionnaires

Who visited these food pantries?

Two-thirds were female

Average age: 45 years

Limited education:

- One-fourth with less than a high school education
- About half earned a GED or high school diploma
- One-fourth with an education beyond high school

Households averaged 2 to 3 members

Circumstances: Resources

Average monthly household income:

- \$1,025 in Winter
- \$1,995 in Summer

About one-half of respondents were receiving Food Assistance (Food Stamps).

About 30% received Food Assistance in the past.

Circumstances: Employment

Most were not working: 77.2% (Winter), 66.2% (Summer)

Almost half have not worked in over a year: 50.8% (Winter), 38.5% (Summer).

Among working respondents:

- Half reported wages of \$8.00 per hour or less.
- 30% worked 40 or more hours per week.

Circumstances: Health

Diabetes: 1 of 5

High blood pressure: 1 of 3

Asthma : 1 of 5

Allergies: 1 of 4

Obese: 2 of 5

Overweight, but not obese: 1 of 3

Pantry Visits

Visited the pantry 7 or more times in the last 12 months:

- Winter respondents: 39%
- Summer respondents: 8%

Visited the pantry 3 or fewer times in the last 12 months:

- Winter respondents: 22%
- Summer respondents: 77%

Meeting Food Needs

Food secure: Winter respondents: 18%

Summer respondents: 4%

Food insecure, low food security:

Winter respondents: 35%

Summer respondents: 31%

Food insecure, very low food security:

Winter respondents: 46%

Summer respondents: 65%



2009 and Beyond



Food insecurity in the US and in Iowa is expected to increase as the economic crisis continues



Questions?