

Webinar Transcript: Household Food Security in the United States in 2019

Slide 1:

Good morning everyone and welcome to our webinar Household Food Security in the United States in 2019. My name is Jacqueline Michael-Midkiff and I will be your host. As a reminder, this webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the ERS website next week. At any time during the webinar you may enter a question into the chat feature located in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen and our speaker will answer questions at the end of the presentation. Our speaker today is Alisha Coleman-Jensen.

Alisha earned her PhD in rural sociology and demography from Pennsylvania State University. She joined USDA's Economic Research Service in 2009 and is a social science analyst and U.S. food security research team leader. In addition to leading ERS's annual report on household food security in the United States, Alisha's work includes research in understanding determinants and outcomes of food insecurity and methodological research on food security measurement. I think we're ready to start, so Alisha please begin the presentation.

Thank you, Jacqueline. Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us today. First, I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues on the report: Matthew Rabbitt and Christian Gregory of the Economic Research Service and Anita Singh of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. The report released this morning describes the food security of U.S. households during calendar year 2019 and is based on USDA's most recent annual food security survey conducted in December 2019. The report provides information on how many U.S. households had difficulty putting enough food on the table. Food security statistics reflect the extent to which difficult economic conditions result in material hardship in U.S. households.

Slide 2:

First, I'm going to preview some key findings from the from the food security report. Food security in 2019 was down from 2018. In 2019, 10.5 percent of U.S. households were food insecure and that's down from 11.1 percent in 2018. The good news is that the 2019 prevalence of food insecurity was significantly below the pre-recession level in 2007 of 11.1 percent. There's been some interest in following trends in food insecurity since food insecurity increased substantially with the Great Recession in 2008. Children were food insecure in 6.5 percent of U.S. households with children in 2019. That number was not statistically different from 2018, but again was down below the 2007 pre-recession levels. The report Household Food Security in the United States in 2019 presents statistics from data collected in December 2019 and these do not reflect the potential impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic that began in 2020. I will later on in the presentation present some more recent data on food insufficiency during the pandemic, but these annual statistics are based on our most recent data on the full food security measure conducted in the annual food security survey in 2019.

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So we'll be talking today about how many U.S. households were consistently able to put adequate food on the table. So first we'll talk about how food security is measured and the food security survey, then we'll move to some main findings of the annual food security report, and

then talk about food insufficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic, and then close and have a Q&A.

Slide 4:

These show the food security definitions. Food insecurity is a household level economic and social condition. We define food insecurity as being unable at some time during the year to provide adequate food for one or more household members due to a lack of resources. So just to step back and unpack a few things about this definition. So first, unable at some time during the year. So food insecurity is measured at any time during the year calendar year 2019 and some households may have experienced a relatively short-term food insecurity related, for example, to unemployment, while other households may be more chronically food insecure. But if a household experiences just one instance of food insecurity they would be considered a food insecure household. Then, to provide adequate food for one or more household members. So if any household member is food insecure the entire household is food insecure, and some households food insecurity isn't experienced the same across household members. For example, in households with children adults may experience more direct effects of food insecurity than children. And then, due to a lack of resources. So this is about not being able to afford enough to eat. It's not about dieting. It's not about fasting or just not having enough time to eat or anything like that. This is about households reporting that they're not able to afford enough food for their families. We measure food insecurity at two levels of severity. Very low food security is a more severe range of food insecurity where normal eating patterns of some household members were disrupted at times during the year and their food intake reduced below levels they considered appropriate. So similarly to food insecurity overall, this is, very low food security is measured at any time during the year and what we mean by disrupted eating patterns is that households are telling us that they're skipping meals or in more severe situations going a whole day without eating. And again, this is the more severe range of food insecurity where households report they're not able to get enough to eat.

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How is food security measured? Like many things, food insecurity is a continuum. We hope that all households are fully food secure that they can afford enough healthy food. Early research showed that food insecurity was a managed process and what that means is that households have some control over how food insecurity is experienced. So as food security deteriorates, households may become anxious about the household food supply and try to stretch their food and food budget. They may try to juggle household spending to maintain food security. As food insecurity worsens, households may reduce the quality and variety of food or rely on low cost foods and as you see as we go down the slide that increasing gradient of color that as food insecurity worsens we see more severe reductions in intake. So we see reduced food intake among adults and then in the most severe situations we see reductions in food insecurity among, reductions in food intake excuse me, among children.

Slide 6:

These are some examples of the food security survey questions. These follow along that same continuum. Households are asked a series of 10 questions about food insecurity for the household as a whole and adults in the household. And households with children are asked an additional eight items about children's food insecurity. And these questions follow that full range

of severity of food insecurity. So to be considered food insecure households must respond affirmatively to at least three items or three questions indicating food insecurity. So an affirmative response, for example, to the question “we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals”, an affirmative response would be “often” or “sometimes true” in the last 12 months.

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The Current Population Survey is the source for the federal statistics on food security. The Current Population Survey is conducted by the Census Bureau. They interview about 40,000 households each month and is representative of U.S. civilian households. You may have heard Current Population Survey statistics about employment and poverty, as this is also the source for federal statistics on poverty and unemployment. The food security supplement of the CPS is sponsored by the Economic Research Service and this is conducted annually. It's been conducted in December annually since 2001. The 2019 food security survey interviewed about 34,300 households and again it was representative of the U.S. civilian population. And you can find the full set of survey questions along with more information about the survey on the ERS website.

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So let's move on now to the findings from the annual food security report. First, this shows statistics for all U.S. households, 89.5 percent of U.S. households were food secure throughout the entire year in 2019. Food secure means that they had consistent access to adequate food for active healthy living for all household members throughout the year. And then you can see food insecure households affected 10.5 percent of U.S. households. And again, we measure food insecurity at two levels of severity. So for a majority of food insecure households, inadequate food meant primarily inadequate in quality, variety or desirability, but not necessarily, not necessarily inadequate in quantity. These households reported food acquisition problems, but few if any indications of reduced food intake. And these households are represented by the low food security slice and this is 6.4 percent of all households. Again that's that sort of gold slice of the pie and that represented 8.3 million households in 2019. But in a little more than a third of food insecure households, inadequate food meant not enough food and that subset of food insecure households was in the more severe range of food insecurity described as a very low food security and that's represented by the red slice in the chart. 4.1 percent of all U.S. households had very low food security in 2019, which is about 5.3 million households. Households classified in their report as having had very low food security reported that normal eating patterns of some household members were disrupted at times during the year and their food intake reduced below levels they considered appropriate. Most households with very low food security reported that an adult in the household had been hungry at times, but did not eat because there wasn't enough money for food. So again, the overall category of food insecure households, that 10.5 percent, includes households with low and very low food security.

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Turning now to trends in food insecurity and very low food security, there's a number of numbers added to the slide that you'll see here. The top line on the chart shows the prevalence of food insecurity. Again, that includes low and very low food security. With the onset of the recession, food insecurity had increased from 11.1 percent in 2007 to 14.6 percent in 2008. In 2011, food insecurity peaked at 14.9 percent of U.S. households and by 2018 food insecurity had declined to 11.1 percent. In 2019 there was a statistically significant annual decline in food

insecurity to 10.5 percent. Turning now to the red line at the bottom of the chart showing very low food security, again this is the more severe range of food insecurity characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake, the percentage of households classified as very low food secure increased from 4.1 percent in 2007 to 5.7 percent in 2008. By 2018, very low food security had declined to 4.3 percent. In 2019, 4.1 percent of U.S. households were very low food secure and that was not statistically different from 2018.

Slide 10:

This slide has a lot of bars on it and if you're interested in seeing the numbers underlying this chart you can look at table two in our annual food security report. There are two things to take away from this chart.

First, it shows those household characteristics related to a higher prevalence of food insecurity. The patterns of groups with a relatively higher prevalence of food insecurity tend to be the same from year to year. So, in 2019 food insecurity rates were highest for single-mother families and single-father families. Those are represented on the chart as female head no spouse and male head no spouse in those households with children, and then among households with no children we see higher food insecurity rates for women and men living alone. Food insecurity rates were higher for households headed by Black non-Hispanics and households headed by Hispanic adults, and also for low-income households. Food insecurity was higher in principal cities within metropolitan areas and in non-metropolitan areas which are labeled as outside metropolitan areas so those are more rural places.

The second take away from this graph is to see changes in the prevalence of food insecurity between 2018 and 2019. Bars marked with an asterisk show a statistically significant decline. Statistical significance is related both to the size of the change and the margins of error around the estimate. So you can see food insecurity declined significantly for households with no children and more than one adult, children headed by Black non-Hispanic adults, households with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty line. All of the statistically significant changes from 2018 to 2019 were statistically significant declines, there were no statistically significant increases.

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The pattern of findings is similar for very low food security. So the last chart with the blue lines was for overall food insecurity. This chart with the red lines is the prevalence of very low food security. From 2017 to 2018, the prevalence of very low food security declined significantly for households headed by Black non-Hispanic adults.

Slide 12:

This slide shows the prevalence of food insecurity across the states. You'll notice at the top that it says average 2017 to 19. Data for three years were combined to provide more reliable state level statistics. The prevalence of food insecurity varied considerably from state to state. Estimated prevalence of food insecurity in 2017 to 19 ranged from 6.6 percent in New Hampshire to 15.7 percent in Mississippi, and estimated prevalence rates of very low food security ranged from 2.6 percent in New Hampshire to 7 percent in Louisiana. So the map shows the prevalence of food insecurity across the states. The states shaded yellow have food insecurity that's below the U.S.

average, so in terms of food insecurity these states are better off. They have lower food insecurity rates. States that are shaded orange have food insecurity that's near the U.S. average. And states that are shaded the darker orange have food insecurity above the U.S. average, so in terms of food insecurity these states are worse off because they have higher food insecurity rates. And you can see that there is some geographic clustering of somewhat higher food insecurity rates in some of the southern states. In the right sidebar you can see that there was a significant decline in food insecurity from the prior three-year period, 2014 to 16, to the current, 2017 to 19, in 23 states. There were no significant increases. And if you want to see the actual prevalence of food insecurity for your state you can look in the annual food security report in tables 4 and table 5. Table 5 shows the changes over time in state food insecurity rates.

There are a number of factors that account for interstate differences in food security. Many of these are characteristics of the household within the state. So, for example, a state that has higher poverty rates or lower incomes are likely to have higher food insecurity rates as well. So some of those state-level characteristics of households that seem to matter are income, education, home-ownership, employment, and disability. State-level economy and policies also matter. So, for example, a state with a relatively high unemployment rate would likely have a relatively high food insecurity rate. So, for example, some of these state-level economic and policy issues that matter average wages, cost of housing, participation in nutrition assistance programs, unemployment, residential stability, and the tax burden on low-income households.

Slide 13:

To this point I've talked about the food and security of all U.S. households. I'm going to turn now and talk about food insecurity among children and food insecurity among children is a little bit more complicated because we look at the households with children at the household level where anyone is food insecure and then we also look at adults and children separately. And we know from research that parents will often protect their children from food insecurity even when the parents themselves experience reduced dietary quality and intake. In some food insecure households, therefore, only adults are reporting food insecurity. In households with food insecurity among children, the survey respondent reported that the household was unable at some time during the year to provide adequate nutritious food for their children. So just to unpack this definition a bit, similarly to the overall food insecurity definition we're measuring food insecurity at any time during the year and this is focusing on the ability to provide adequate nutritious food for children. In very low food security among children, caregivers reported that children were hungry, skipped a meal, or did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food. And then very low food security among children is the most severe range of food insecurity that we measure in our annual food security report.

Slide 14:

So this slide shows the prevalence of food insecurity in U.S. households with children. In 2019, 13.6 percent of households with children were food insecure. That's about 5.1 million households.

So you see that on the right side of the pie chart. In about half of these households only adults were food insecure and that's represented by the blue slice of the pie that says food-insecure adults only and that represented 7.1 percent of U.S. households with children. And the rest, 6.5 percent of households with children, children were also food insecure at times during the year

and that's about 2.4 million households. And so in this group of households the quality or quantity of children's diets was affected by food security, by food insecurity excuse me. And again, we look at food insecurity at two levels of severity. So households with low food security among children, that's about 5.9 percent of U.S. households with children, reported reductions in children's dietary quality and variety. And as I mentioned adults will often shield children from experiencing very low food security, that's the more severe range of food insecurity characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced intake. But children along with adults experienced very low food security in 0.6 of households with children in 2019. That was about 213,000 households. And in this group of households parents reported that children were hungry, that they couldn't afford enough food.

Slide 15:

I've highlighted here the categories that I'm going to show on the next slide which shows trends in food insecurity and I'm going to be focusing on these three categories. So again, this is food insecurity at the household level with 13.6 percent where either adults or children were food insecure, and then food insecurity among children where their parents caregivers are reporting that children experienced food insecurity, and then the most severe range of very low food security among children.

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So, this trend chart shows food insecurity in households with children at the top of the chart, that's the blue line. The middle purple line is food insecurity among children and the bottom dark purple line is very low food security among children. So similar to overall trends, food insecurity in households with children increased with the recession and has since declined, and food insecurity among children also increased with the recession and has declined. The changes in household food insecurity and households with children, food insecurity among children, and very low food security among children, the changes from 2018 to 2019 were not statistically significant. However, the prevalence of food insecurity in households with children and food insecurity among children is the lowest that we've seen as you can see back to 2001 on this chart. So that is good news for households with children.

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So we're turning now back to looking at all households. So all the statistics to this point represented food insecurity measured over the past year, but we also asked about food insecurity in a more recent period in the 30 days before the survey. So when food insecurity is measured over a shorter period, such as 30 days, the prevalence is lower. So the prevalence of food insecurity in the 30-day period from mid-November to mid-December 2019 was 5.5 percent. The prevalence of very low food security in mid-November to mid-December 2019 was 2.3 percent. And if you're interested in the prevalence of food insecurity in the 30 days before the survey, there's more information about that in our statistical supplement to our food security reports.

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In our annual food security report we look at food spending by food security status and this slide shows median weekly food spending by food security status. So as you may suspect given the definition of food insecurity, food-insecure households spend less on food than food-secure

households. So in 2019, median weekly food spending per person was \$50.00 for food-secure households and \$40.00 for food-insecure households. And when we take into account estimated food need between households of different composition, the typical food-secure household spent 24 percent more for food than the typical food-insecure household.

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We also examined participation in Federal nutrition assistance programs by food security status. In 2019, the majority of food insecure households reported participating in one of USDA's three largest Federal food assistance programs and those are SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formerly Food Stamps, the free or reduced-price school lunch program, and the WIC program. So 58 percent of food-insecure households reported participating in one or more of these programs. The largest share participated in SNAP. Now there is a caveat to these to these numbers that this is self-reported participation in our Federal survey. I mean we know from based on research with self-reported survey data that there is some under-reporting of program participation. Nevertheless, about 42 percent of food-insecure households reported not participating in any of the programs. Some of those households may have been ineligible based on their income or because their household did not include children, or they may have not chosen to participate for other reasons.

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In the survey we also ask households about use of community food assistance programs, primarily food pantries and soup kitchens, and we see that participation in these programs is somewhat lower than participation in Federal nutrition assistance programs, but it's higher among households with food insecurity, particularly very low food security. So in 2019, about 28 percent of food insecure households reported using a food pantry and 38 percent of households with very low food security reported using a food pantry. About 3.7 percent of food insecure households reported visiting a soup kitchen or emergency kitchen and 5.4 percent of households with very low food security reported using a soup kitchen.

Slide 21:

So I'm going to transition now and talk about some more recent data on the COVID-19 pandemic and food insufficiency. So you likely have questions about the impact of COVID on food insecurity. Our annual food security survey which includes our full food security measure is conducted in December each year, so we do not have any 2020 estimates for food insecurity because those data will be collected in December. But we have some data on food insufficiency from a new Census survey that was put in the field just in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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So I'm going to turn and talk about some of those findings now. So the Household Pulse Survey was developed by the U.S. Census Bureau in collaboration with five other Federal agencies, including ERS, and it's intended to produce timely information on the economic and social effects of COVID-19 on U.S. households. It's a weekly online survey. Phase 1 of Pulse began in April 2020 and continued through July and Household Pulse Survey Phase 2 began in August 2020 and will continue through the end of October. So we have estimates from Phase 1 of Pulse now and I'm going to show you some things we've published on our website. If you have more

questions about the Household Pulse Survey, about the survey content, about the other statistics available from Pulse, you can find that information on the Census Bureau website.

Slide 23:

So you may be wondering why I started talking about food insufficiency when I started talking about the Pulse survey and that's because the Pulse survey includes a measure of food sufficiency. Only one question, as you recall the full food security module is 18 questions and we couldn't include all those questions in the Pulse survey. So the Pulse survey includes the question, In the last seven days which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household? Select one of the responses, enough of the kinds of food we want to eat, enough but not always the kinds of food we want to eat, sometimes not enough, and often not enough. So respondents who indicate three or four, sometimes or often not enough to eat, are classified as food insufficient. So food insufficiency means that the household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the last seven days. Now the Pulse survey is a weekly survey. They were collecting information every week and we wanted to see changes across those weeks, so the question references the last seven days. So it's a different time reference period than our other food security questions which generally reference either the last year or the last 30 days.

Slide 24:

This map was posted as an ERS Chart of Note and you can see the link below the chart. It shows rates of food insufficiency for June 18th to June 23rd. This was posted on the ERS website in July and it shows the rates of food insufficiency across the states in mid-June 2020. This is similar in concept to the previous map I showed where states that have food insufficiency below the U.S. average are shaded that green color, so those states are better off in terms of food insufficiency. Food insufficiency near the U.S. average is shaded gray and you can see the U.S. average for food insufficiency was 9.7 percent. So again, food insufficiency means that these households are reporting that they did not have enough to eat in the last seven days, so this is somewhat more severe than food insecurity. It's more similar in concept to very low food security where households are telling us they're just not able to get enough to eat. And then states shaded that blue-teal color have food insufficiency that's above the U.S. average.

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There was also a question on the Pulse survey about child food insufficiency. Child food insufficiency means that children were not eating enough because the household could not afford enough food in the last seven days. And the question was, the children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food. Was that often, sometimes, or never true? And respondents reported that it was often or sometimes true in the last seven days were classified as having child food insufficiency.

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This is a Chart of Note that was posted on the ERS website in August of this year, just a couple of weeks ago. And it shows state child food insufficiency rates in mid-July from July 16th to the 21st. This is sort of a two-for-one chart because it includes both a map and the bars, the bar chart. So just looking at the map first, the lighter-shaded states have food insufficiency for children that was below the U.S. average. The shaded that middle-orange color had food insufficiency for children that was near the U.S. average of 19.9 percent, and the states shaded

darker orange have food insufficiency above the U.S. average so in terms of child food insufficiency those states were worse off because they had higher rates. And then the bar chart shows the U.S. average for child food insufficiency rates for June and July 2020. Again, since this is a weekly survey it shows the weeks over time and you see that there was an increase in child food insufficiency from about 17 percent in June up to nearly 20 percent in July 16 to the 21st. And again this chart is available on the ERS website at the link below.

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So this this closes the presentation of the slides. So just to reiterate findings from the annual food security survey show that downward trends and food insecurity continued in 2019 even falling below pre-recession 2007 levels. Findings from the Household Pulse Survey show that food insufficiency rates have been relatively high during the COVID-19 pandemic. And there's a COVID-19 page on the ERS website and that page will be updated as more information becomes available and you can find links to those charts that I showed if you're interested. I think that we will, oh, one other comment, the food security data visualizations on our website will be updated later today.

Slide 28:

And here is a link to our Food Security in the United States topic page that has a good deal of information and resources including graphics you can download and use, and information about the survey and food security measurement. And there's my contact information if you have any further questions after the webinar ends. But I believe that we'll turn things over for questions now, so I'll turn back to Jacqueline. Thank you.

Thank you, Alisha. And it looks like we do have a few questions. I do want to remind everyone if you have questions for Alisha please feel free to enter them into the chat feature that's at the bottom of your screen.

Alright, first of all, Alisha can you tell us how many people are food insecure in the U.S.?

Yes, so you may have noticed that during the presentation I was talking about households. So food insecurity is a household-level condition where if anyone in the household is experiencing food insecurity then the household is food insecure. So we don't really talk about food insecure people per se, but we do have estimates of the percent of people living in food insecure households and that information is in table 1a and 1b in our food security report. There's the bottom panels in there that show the percent of people in food insecure households and in 2019 35.2 million people were in food insecure households.

Okay, thank you. I have another one here: what factors help to explain trends in food insecurity?

That's a really good question. So with the with the recession an increase in food insecurity and then you know the subsequent declines, ERS conducted some research to understand what factors were related to those national trends and we found that a number of factors were important. One perhaps obvious factor is unemployment and another is inflation and so inflation is the prices that people have to pay. And in addition, the price of food relative to other goods

and services also matters. So as you may expect, increasing unemployment is related to increases in food insecurity, likewise declines in unemployment is related to declining food insecurity. Also increases in inflation and particularly increases in the price of food are also related to increases in food insecurity. Those people have to stretch their resources further to pay for things especially food that's related to an increase in the prevalence of food insecurity nationally.

Thank you. How about, how many food insecure households were working or employed?

These are all great questions and that information is included in our interactive data visualizations and those will be posted at 3:00 today on our website, well they'll be updated with the 2019 estimates. We actually find, so I talked about unemployment being related to higher prevalence of food insecurity, and that's true that people who are unemployed are at relatively greater risk for food insecurity. But actually, if you look at food insecure households and look at their employment status, most food insecure households are actually employed. So while food insecurity can certainly increase with unemployment, in reality the majority of food insecure households are working either full- or part-time so there's other factors as well related to food insecurity and some of those you know, for example income and other factors like disability. There's another interactive data visualization on disabilities and food insecurity, and disabilities are a strong risk factor for food insecurity as well.

Okay, thank you, we have another one here that asks do you have any estimates of food insecurity for cities or for counties.

Unfortunately, we do not have estimates of food insecurity below the state level and that's due to data limitations. So it's, you know it's a good large national survey, but not all counties are identified in the data or even included in the sample. So for confidentiality restrictions, the location or counties of some households is not identified and again not all counties are included so the lowest level of geography that we publish for our statistics is at the state level.

Okay great thank you. Another question that has come in is do you know how often households experience food insecurity.

We estimate how often households experience food insecurity based on their responses to the questions about the frequency of food insecurity and we estimate that for households that experience food insecurity at some time during the year they were food insecure in seven months during the year. So, there's a box in our annual food security report where we explain this further and we refer to food insecurity as recurrent, but not constant. Similarly, households with very low food security experienced those conditions in seven months during the year.

Okay, thank you. Another question, does inflation impact food insecure versus severely food insecure households differently, and to what degree.

That is a really interesting question. So I can't say with certainty based on our findings how it affects the levels of food insecurity differently. Households that may have more limited resources, you know and less sort of wiggle room in their budgets, may be more severely impacted by increases in prices especially food prices.

Okay, we have a couple of questions that have come in about more with regard to the Pulse survey. One of those is where can I find more information on the Pulse survey.

The best place to find information on the Pulse survey is the Census Bureau website. And I don't have, you can Google the Pulse survey and Census to find it. They have a really nice website with some interactive data features. They also have, you know, more information and details about the survey and you can also download public use data files if you're a researcher and interested in analyzing some of the data. And I think they have maps as well on their website, so there's some nice interactive tools there but that's certainly the best place to go for information about Pulse.

Okay, thank you. Now back to food insecurity, a question about, food insecurity seems to be highly impacted by household finances, unemployment, inflation, etc. do we know how access to food impacts food insecurity.

So, you can think about food insecurity as economic access to food, whether people can afford to buy the food that's available. When we think about geographic access to food, like food deserts and things like that or low access low geographic access to food, that can play a role in household food insecurity, but the basic underpinnings of food insecurity are economic. So, for example, if a household lives in an area where they're far away from supermarkets or large grocery stores with, you know, a variety of food, and they have enough economic resources, income or whatever, to easily travel to stores that are further away, then that geographic access may not impact their food insecurity. On the other hand, if a household lives in a more isolated area or in an area with higher food prices or more limited access to stores and they have low income, then that geographic access may be more detrimental to their food insecurity and thereby the geographic access may relate to food insecurity and their ability to acquire enough adequate food for their families.

Okay, great. What measure of food insecurity, for instance low or very low, is equivalent to food insufficiency that was measured in June 2020.

So that's an interesting question. I actually have a slide here that I'm going to pull up just in case of a question like this. So this slide has a side-by-side comparing food insufficiency and food insecurity. So I think I mentioned maybe in passing, so it might have been hard to catch, but food insufficiency is a more severe food hardship than food insecurity. So if you look at the bottom bullet for each, the characteristics of food hardship experienced, for food insufficiency it measures whether a household generally has enough to eat. So it's more closer in severity to very

low food security where very low food security refers to households where they're food insecure to the extent that eating patterns were disrupted and food intake was reduced. So it's not exactly equivalent to very low food security, but it's more similar in concept to very low food security than to food insecurity overall, and certainly to low food security. So as you might recall, households classified as having low food security are characterized as having reductions in dietary quality and variety. So for example, saying that they couldn't afford to eat balanced meals, they had to rely on low-cost foods to feed their families, things of that nature, whereas households with very low food security are telling us that they're skipping meals, not getting enough to eat, which is more similar in concept to food insufficiency which asks about, you know, more simply whether households had enough of the kinds of foods they wanted to eat.

That was terrific Alisha. That actually covered a couple of the other questions that we've got as well about the differences between food insufficiency and food insecurity, so thank you. A follow-up question to this kind of is what was the food insufficiency rate in 2019.

That's a good question. So, those of you who may have followed food insecurity for a while know that food insufficiency was sort of a precursor measure to food security and that food insufficiency question is included on the Federal, on the national, food security survey. So in 2019, 2.8 percent of U.S. households indicated that they sometimes did not have enough to eat and 0.9 percent indicated that they often did not have enough to eat. So overall in 2019, 3.7 percent of households were food insufficient. So that's 3.7 percent food insufficient in 2019 according to the food security survey and that information is in footnote 8 in the annual food security report where we talk about the food insufficiency question.

Okay, wonderful, thank you. Alright and through that you've covered several other questions that we have. So how about, is there general agreement among scholars and officials that food insufficiency is sometimes or often not enough to eat, and does not include the enough to eat but not the types of food wanted category. And let me know if you'd like me to repeat that.

No, I think I understand. So I'm going to move up a few slides to, okay so this shows the food insufficiency question and the question is, which of these statements best describes the food in your household, enough of the kinds of food we wanted, enough but not always the kinds, sometimes not enough, and often not enough. So, it when, in our Charts of Note that I showed you with the maps about the Pulse survey and the food insufficiency findings, we use the categories three and four, sometimes not enough to eat and often not enough to eat, to represent food insufficiency. If you go to the Census website you can find some tables that show the full range of responses, including that category of households saying they had enough, but not always the kinds of food we wanted to eat. And, you know, it depends on what people are trying to understand about the food situation in U.S. households. We really wanted to pull out and highlight this food insufficiency rate as households that were reporting that they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. Others may have wanted to look at the not always having the kinds of food we

want. It's a little bit less straightforward, may be more open to interpretation, but that information is available if people are interested in it. You can find that information on the Census website to look at that full range of responses and how those change over time during the weeks of the pulse survey.

All right, Alisha, we have someone that wants to know if the final food security report will show individual rates as opposed to household rates.

We do not, can you, sorry can you repeat that?

Absolutely, will the final food security report show rates for individuals as opposed to just the households.

So there's a couple of places you can find the food insecurity rate for individuals and I'm just leafing through the report to make sure that I give you the right places. So in table 1a of our annual food security report, that's the report Household Food Security in the United States in 2019, you can see the food security status for all individuals by the food security status of the household. Now we only ask one household the respondent to report on the food security status of the household, so we can't report for each individual in the household because we don't ask each individual. We ask the person most knowledgeable about the household food supply to report for the household and then we classify households based on their responses. So you can see the food security status for individuals within food insecure households. There's also a place in addition to what we consider the main report, we have a report called the Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2019. In that report we show in table s2, the number of individuals by food security status of households and selected household characteristics. So in that table you can look at the percent of individuals by food security status of the household again, and look at that more detailed breakdown, for example by household composition, race, ethnicity, and income to poverty ratio for example. So those are two places you can look to find more information on individuals in food insecure households.

Alright, great, thanks for the clarification. We have time for just another one or two questions. So does the 2019 report or the recent Pulse survey glean any findings from Indian counties or on indigenous food insecurity.

So that's an important question. Native Americans are included in, you know, both surveys. I mean they can identify, they can be identified by self-reported race and ethnicity. In our annual food security report we do not have enough Native Americans to report their food insecurity rates separately, so they're included in the other race ethnicity category. So we don't have specific statistics for that group, but they are included in the survey. Likewise, for the Pulse survey, you know, it's nationally representative so all groups are included, but, you know, the sample sizes for some groups may be smaller based on their size in the population. Users who are able to analyze the data could combine multiple years of the food security survey or multiple weeks of the Household Pulse Survey in order to get larger sample sizes to look at those subgroups in more detail.

Alright, well, thank you Alisha. I think that's all the questions that we have for you today and as a reminder to everyone attending the webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the ERS website in the multimedia section of the newsroom. Thank you all for joining us today and please have a great afternoon.