

Household Food Security 2015-ERS Transcription

Good morning everyone and welcome to our webinar, Household Food Security in the United States in 2015. My name is Nancy McNiff and I will be your moderator today. Our speaker is Alisha Coleman-Jensen. Alisha is a Social Science Analyst with the Food Assistance Branch at the Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Her research focuses on the measurement and determinants of food insecurity in the United States. She is the lead author of USDA's Annual Report on Household Food Security, analyzing the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in U.S. households. This report includes changes in food insecurity from previous years, the prevalence of food insecurity by selected household characteristics, and food insecurity among children. I think we're ready to start Alisha so you can begin your presentation.

Thank you, Nancy. Good morning to everyone and thank, thank you for joining us today. As Nancy mentioned the report released this morning by ERS describes the food security of U.S. households during calendar year 2015 and it's based on USDA's most recent Annual Food Security Survey conducted in December 2015. The report provides information on how many U.S. households had difficulty putting enough food on the table in 2015. These food security statistics reflect the extent to which difficult economic conditions result in material hardship in U.S. households and we'll see as if, as the presentation goes on that the percentage of U.S. households that were food insecure declined significantly from 2014 to 2015.

This slide shows the outline of what we'll be discussing today. So how many U.S. households were consistently able to put adequate food on the table is our primary question. We'll talk about how food security is measured, some of the main findings from the annual food security report. I'll go over some of the details about our food security survey on which the estimates are based, and then provide a summary of our main findings. And we'll take questions at the, at the end.

So first, statistics for all U.S. households. 87.3% of U.S. households were food secure throughout the year in 2015. Food secure means that they had consistent access to adequate food for active healthy living for all household members throughout the year. I'm going to talk now about the two categories of food, food insecurities that we report on. These are food insecurity in the more severe range of food insecurity labeled as very low food security. As you can see in the pie chart, 12.7% of U.S. households were food insecure in 2015. That's about 15.8 million households. Food insecure households were unable, at some time during the year, to provide adequate quantity or quality of food for one or more household members due to a lack of resources. We divide food insecure households by the level of severity of food insecurity experienced. For about two thirds of food insecure households, inadequate food meant inadequate in quality, variety or desirability, but not in quantity of food. These 7.7% of households are labeled with low food security on the chart and are represented by the gold slice

and that represents 9.5 million households in 2015. However, in a little more than a third of food insecure households, inadequate food actually meant not getting enough food. This subset of food insecure households was in the more severe range of food insecurity which we describe as very low food security and that's represented by the red slice in the pie chart. Five percent of all U.S. households had very low food security in 2015, that's about 6.3 million households. Households in the, classified and are reported as having had very low food security, reported that normal eating patterns of some household members were disrupted at times during the year, which means that they may have been skipping meals or in, or in more severe situations going a whole day without eating, and their food intake was reduced below levels they considered appropriate. These households are telling us that they're just not getting enough to eat. 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.

You can see the definitions of food insecurity and very low food security on this slide. Food insecurity is a household level, economic and social condition while hunger is an individual level of physiological, physiological condition that is not measured directly. So very low food security describes the severe range of food insecurity, a condition which may lead to hunger and again, very low food security is a subset of food insecure households in that severe range of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a continuum like many things and early research showed that food insecurity was a managed process meaning that households managed to some extent the situations that they faced as they became food insecure. So as food insecurity deteriorates, households may become anxious about the household food supply, they may try to stretch their food and food budget, and they may juggle household spending and their budgets in order to maintain food security. As food insecurity worsens, households may reduce the quality and variety of their food or rely on low-cost foods to feed their families. And then as food insecurity becomes more severe, as we move down this chart into the red area here, adults may reduce their own food intake while trying to ensure that children get enough to eat and in the worst, most severe situations we see reduced food intake among children. We typically see, or often see that adults will try to reduce their own intake in order to protect their children.

Households are asked a series of 10 questions about food insecurity for the household as a whole and about adults in the household and households with children are asked an additional eight items about children food insecurity. Households must respond affirmatively to at least three items indicating food insecurity to be considered food insecure. And this slide shows three, just examples, from this range of food in, food insecurity questions and again, these range across the continuum of food insecurity. So for example, a relatively less severe question asked, the food that we bought just didn't last and we didn't have enough money to get more, was that often, sometimes or never true for you in the last 12 months? So households that respond that was often or sometimes true for them would have been considered to have an affirmative response. In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't

enough money for food? Again, a household that says yes would have an affirmative response to that question. And then as we go down to more severe questions for example, did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food? You can see the full set of 18 questions either in our report that was released this morning or on our website.

Turning now to trends in food insecurity and very low food security over the past several years. The top blue line in the graph shows overall food insecurity, again this includes a low and very low food security, and the red line shows the prevalence of very low food security again that's the more severe range of food insecurity. And we've added here some key numbers or percentages for the prevalence of food insecurity. We see that in 2007, before the, the reshe, the recession totally set in, 11.1% of U.S. households were food insecure. Food insecurity peaked at 14.9% in 2011. By 2014, food insecurity had declined to 14.0% and that decline from the peak of 14.9% was statistically significant. And then in 2015 we saw an even greater decline to 12.7% and that is a statistically significant decline from 14% in 2014. And this is the largest year to year change we've seen in food insecurity, the largest drop that we've seen since the recession. You can see on the bottom portion of the graph, the prevalence of very low food security and again before the recession set in, in 2007, 4.1% of U.S. households were food insecure, excuse me, 4.1% of U.S. households were very low food secure. That peaked at 5.7% in 2011 and 2012 or the 5.6% in 2014 and declined significantly to 5.0% in 2015. And that decline from 5.6% to 5.0% was a statistically significant decline. And that decline is meaningful given especially the severity of the situation in those households.

This bar chart shows the pre, shows changes in the prevalence of food insecurity by household characteristics between 2014 and 2015. Bars that are marked with an asterisk show a statistically significant decline. I'll note that there were no statistically significant increases for any of the sub-populations from 2014 to 2015. And I'll also note that the food, declines in food insecurity were especially concentrated in households with children. You can see in the first set of bars, well the very top bar shows the prevalence for all households, and again that was 20, in 2014 that was 14% of U.S. households and by 2015 that had declined to 12.7%. The next set of bars shows the prevalence of food insecurity by household composition. So households with children typically have higher food insecurity rates than households without children and we see that again in 2015, 16.6% of U.S. households with children were food insecure in 2015 versus 10.9% of households with no children in 2015. Within households with children, married-couple households have the lowest food insecurity rates, 10.2% in 2015 while single mother households labeled female head, no spouse has the highest food insecurity rates at 30.3%. Male head, no spouse is single father households and 22.4% of those households were food insecure in 2015. Continuing down the graph within household composition, households with more than, more than one adult, 8.5% were food insecure in 2015, and women living alone, 14.7% were food insecure, 14.0% of men living alone were food insecure. We typically see relatively lower food insecurity rates among the elderly and we see that again in 2015, 8.3% of households that included an elderly adult age 65 and over were food insecure in 2015. And then following again

down the graph we see the prevalence of food insecurity by race and ethnicity, 10% of, of white non-Hispanic head of households were food insecure in 2015, 21.5% of black non-Hispanic households and 19.1% of Hispanic head of households were food insecure in 2015. As you may suspect, food insecurity is closely related to income and when we see higher food insecurity rates among households in poverty, those are households with incomes below one. One referring to the household income to poverty ratio, so those below one have income below the federal poverty line, 38.3% of those households in poverty were food insecure in 2015. Conversely, one, for households with incomes above 185% of the poverty line 5.8% were food insecure. And the very bottom set of bars shows the prevalence of food insecurity by area of residence which refers to metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas or rural and urban areas. So households in principal incorporated cities refers to central cities as metropolitan areas and 14.1% of households in those areas were food insecure in 2015. Not in principal incorporated cities refers to suburban areas, outside major areas or major cities and that, the prevalence rate of food insecurity for those suburban areas was 10.4%. Food insecurity in non-metropolitan or rural areas, that's labeled outside of metropolitan areas at the very bottom of the graph with 15.4% in 2015. So you can see that food insecurity tends to be somewhat higher in central cities and in rural areas and somewhat lower in suburban areas.

This slide shows the prevalence of food insecurity for each of the states. We use three years of data to establish reliable estimates for the states to ensure that each state has a large enough sample size to produce reliable estimates. So these data are based on averages from 2013 to 2015 and states colored light purple have food insecurity below the U.S. average. So in terms of food insecurity these states are relatively better off. Food insecurity near the U.S. average is states shaded the medium purple color, so those are near the U.S. average and food insecurity above the U.S. average refers to states shaded the darker purple or blue and in terms of food insecurity, those shaded darker purple or blue are relatively worse off in terms of food insecurity. The prevalence of food insecurity varies considerably from state to state. Estimated prevalence of food insecurity in 2013 to 15 ranged from 8.5% in North Dakota to 20.8% in Mississippi and you can see that on the right side of, of the, of the slide. There was a significant increase in food insecurity from 2010 to 12 to 2013 to 15, so that's the immediate the three year period immediate, immed, previously to the 2013 to 15, the current period. So Oregon was the only state that had a significant increase from those two time periods from 13.6% to 16.1%. There was significant declines in food insecurity from 2010 to 12 to 2013 to 15 for 11 states, those are listed there. And you can see the percentages for state level food insecurity in tables four and table, table five in the Annual Food Security Report. Very low food security is not shown on the map so these, the map only shows food insecurity, but the prevalence of very low food security is included in tables four and five and the prevalence ranges from 2.9% in North Dakota to 7.9% in Mississippi. So there are a number of factors that account for inner-state differences in food security. Past research, research has shown that characteristics of households within the state are related to state food insecurity rates. So for example income, education level, home ownership, employment, and disability characteristics of the households within those states are

important to state food insecurity rates. So for example, states with higher poverty rates also tend to have higher food insecurity rates, but state level economy and policies also matter. So for example, average wages, the cost of housing within a state, participation in food assistance programs, the unemployment rate, residential stability, so moves within a state, and the tax burden on low income households are also factors that have been shown in previous research to relate to state level food insecurity rates.

I'm going to turn now and in, in the next few slides focus on the, focus on food insecurity in households with children. Now food insecurity among children and food insecurity in households with children is a little bit more complicated because we measure food insecurity at the household level and then we measure food insecurity among adults and children separately. So as I mentioned before, parents will often try to protect their children to the extent they can from food insecurity even when the parents themselves experience reduced dietary quality and reduced intake. So in some households with food, that are food insecure, only adults are food insecure. But we measure food insecurity among children which means that the household respondent reports that, that household was unable, at some time during the year, to provide adequate, nutritious food for their children. So one or more children in those households had reductions in dietary quality or quantity. And again, similarly to household food insecurity, we measure food insecurity among children at two levels of severity. So very low food insecurity among children means that 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 this is the most severe food insecurity situation that USDA reports on for U.S. households.

And the next slide shows the prevalence of food insecurity in U.S. households with children in 2015. So in 2015, 16.6% of households with children were food insecure. This again refers to food insecurity among anyone in the household, so adults or children. That's about 6.5 million households. In about, in about half of these households only adults were food insecure and the rest, 7.8% of households with children, children were also food insecure at times during the year. So food insecurity among children refers to the, the darker orange and the maroon slices of the pie chart whereas the lighter orange slice of the pie chart refers to food insecurity among adults only in households with children. So again in the, in the group of households with food insecurity among children, the 7.8% of households, the quality or quantity of children's diets was directly affected by food insecurity. But, so children along with adults experienced very low food security in .7% of households with children, that's about 274 thousand households. In this group of households, parents reported that children were hungry and they weren't getting enough to eat and very low food security among children was down from 1.1% in 2014.

This next slide shows trends in food insecurity in households with children again, from 2001 to 2015. The top dark blue line shows food insecurity in households with children, again this refers to food insecurity among any household members, so adults or children. Food insecurity among children, the red line refers, red or orange, refers to households where caregivers reported that children are having reductions in dietary quality or quantity. And then again, very low food

security among children is the more severe range of food insecurity among children where children are not getting enough to eat. And similar to the overall trend chart, we've added numbers here to indicate the prevalence of each of these conditions before the, before the recession in 2007 at their peak and then in 2014 and 2015. So food insecurity in households with children was 15.8% in 2007, peaked at 21.3% in 2009 and had declined to 19.2% in 2014, and then we saw a more significant decline to 16.6% in 2015. Food insecurity among children, the middle line on the graph, was at 8.3% in 2007, peaked at 11% in 2008, was 9.4% in 2014 and had declined to 7.8% in 2015. And I'll note here that the prevalence of food insecurity among children, again that's the middle line, is the lowest that we've measured, so that's 7.8%. So food insecurity among children has declined down to below the pre-recessionary levels. Food insecurity among children was .8% in 2007, peaked at 1.3% in 2008, was 1.1% in 2014 and declined significantly to 0.7% in 2015.

I'm turning back now to talk about all households so this is about all U.S. households, not just households with children. And this graph shows, shows the prevalence of food insecurity by different time periods. So up to now in the presentation, all of the statistics I've talked about refer to food insecurity during the past calendar year, during the past 12 months. And our survey is conducted each year in December, so it was conducted in mid-December 2015, so the 12.7% of food insecurity refers to the prevalence of food insecurity in calendar year 2015. And food insecurity is measured such that any indication of food insecurity or any experience of food insecurity, three or more affirmative responses to those questions were to qualify a household as being food insecure. Now some of those households may have experience of household food insecurity only once, for example, if they lost a job or had a sudden change in income or something like that, whereas for some households it may have been a more chronic condition. So in addition to food insecurity measured annually we also ask about food in, food insecurity experienced in the 30 days before the survey. So again, our survey is conducted in mid-December. So this, 30 days before the survey refers to the period of mid-November 2015 to mid-December 2015. And you can see here that the prevalence is lower and that's as we would expect because again, not all households are food insecure throughout the year. They may only be food insecure at some times during the year. So 7.0% of U.S. households is, were food insecure in the 30 days before the survey, 2.9% experienced very low food security. And then we estimate the prevalence of very low food security, the daily prevalence. We don't estimate the average daily occurrence of food insecurity because information was not collected on the number of days that less severe food insecure conditions occurred. So we estimate the, the average daily prevalence of very low food security to be .6 to 1% of U.S. households.

In our survey we also ask about participation in federal food assistance programs along with community food assistance programs and I'll present that information next, and that is also available in our Annual Food Security Report. So this slide shows the share of food insecure households that participated in one of the largest, one of USDA's three largest federal food assistance programs and those are the SNAP program, formally Food Stamps, also called the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program and the WIC program for infants and, women, infants and children. So about 59% of food insecure households reported participating in one of these nutrition assistance programs and the largest share of these participated in SNAP, about 45% of food insecure households participated in the SNAP program. That leaves about 41% of food insecure households that did not participate in any of, of these three programs. Some of these households may not have qualified for assistance and some may have chosen not to participate for other reasons.

Households in the survey are also asked about their participation in community food-assistance programs so this would mean receiving food from food pantries or receiving meals at emergency kitchens or soup kitchens. And overall, the participation in these programs is somewhat lower than participation in federal assistance programs and these programs are not necessarily available in all, all areas. We see that about 5% of U.S. households attend, received food, food from a food pantry in 2015 and a greater portion of households participated among the food insecure and especially the very low food secure. So 28.2% of food insecure households received food from a food pantry in 2015 and 36.1% of very low food secure households did so.

Again we also see greater use of soup kitchens among those that are food insecure, but lower prevalent rates overall. So about 3.5% of food insecure households obtained food from a soup kitchen and 5.8% of very low food secure households did so. We also asked households about their food spending, their average week, weekly food spending and we present median weekly food spending per person in the households by their food security status. So in 2015 we estimate that the average food secure household spent about \$50.00 per week, per person on food and the average food insecure household spent about \$38.00 per week, per person on food. So taking in, into account estimated food need, what we mean by that is accounting for household size and the composition of the households, so the gender of the household members and the age of household members because we estimate the different ages, for example, are going to need different amounts of food. We estimate that the typical food secure household spent 27% more for food than the typical food insecure household.

This slide shows some information about the Annual Food Security Sur, Food Security Survey. You may be fam, familiar with the Current Population Survey, this is also the source for federal unemployment statistics and poverty statistics so if you hear about the monthly unemployment rate, that's also coming from these data. And each December the Census Bureau asks questions about household food situations, it's called the Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey. The Food Security Supplement is sponsored by ERS, the Economic Research Service of USDA and is conducted by the Census Bureau. About 40,000 households are interviewed each year and it's a high quality data source. And we've been measuring food insecurity in U.S. households since 1995.

So I'm just going to summarize the main findings here that we've talked about. Food security, excuse me, that should say food insecurity is down significantly to 12.7% of households in 2015

and that's the lowest since the recession. It's still above pre-recessionary levels and that, again, should say food insecurity is down significantly to 12.7% of households in 2015. Very low food security was down to 5% in 2015 and food insecurity among children at 7.8% and very low food security among children at 0.7% was also down to pre-recession levels.

For more information you can visit our website. It's ers.usda.gov and we have, there's a rotating news feature on the front page and the Food Secur, Food Security Report is one of those news features so you can just click on it there. And you can also email me with questions or give me a call if you have further questions. I think we're going to open the time now to some questions and I'm going to turn it over to Nancy to do that. Thank you.

Thank you Alisha. We have a number of questions and we're going to try to get to all of them if possible. Heather first had a question about, I think it was slide number five and when you ca, when you talk about the quality, I think it's, I think it's slide number five, I'll bring up. When you say reducing the quality and variety of diet, I think she's talking about, when you categorize the term quality in this survey, is quality, the determination of what quality is, is it up to the discretion of the individual who is answering the survey or is it, do you know if it's categorized or defined in some way?

Sure, thanks for that...

...quality food?

Right, thank you for that question. So as I mentioned you can see the full list of questions either in our report or online. For example, one question is, we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals, was that often, sometimes or never true for you in the last 12 months? Another question is we relied on a few kinds, on only a few kinds of low cost food to feed our children because we were running out of money to buy food. So we ask these questions and we're relying on, the respondent to assess the quality of their diet and have some idea what a balanced diet represents. We do not tell them what they, what they should be eating or what a balanced diet is. We rely on their own, own assessment of those questions.

Okay, next question is from Robert. Do you have any data breaking out the, I guess the sample of people by their employment status, is that in the report anywhere?

We don't present that in our annual report. There are some statistics in other more detailed reports, for example, we have a report on food insecurity in households with children where we look at food insecurity among children by the employment status of, of the adults in the household. That is not a statistic that's included on our Annual Food Security Report, but I can tell you that based on previous research we typically see relatively higher food insecurity rates among those households that do not have a full time working adult. So for example, households that have someone who's only, only unemployed or people working part time and especially people who are out of the labor force due to a disability. That being said we see higher food

insecurity rates among those groups, but still the majority of food insecure households do include someone that's working either full time or part time and I don't have the statistics off the top of my head for 2015. Those are just general trends that we see from year to year.

Okay, Diane had a question about, and then actually there's someone else that kind of talked about the same question. In terms of food insecurity in families with children, is there a time of year when that peaks, meaning like during the summer or during vacation breaks from school?

That's a good question. So these, as I mentioned, these data, I'm showing the trend chart here for households with children, food insecurity in households with children, these are based on annual estimates so food insecurity at any time during the year and it's an open question as to the seasonality of food insecurity. Some previous studies have shown that food insecurity does increase in the summer when children are out of school primarily because, it's thought to be because they don't have access to school meals because some children receive free or reduced price breakfast and lunch at school. Whereas other studies have shown there's not a huge difference by summer versus asking the question in December. So I would say there is some evidence that food insecurity does increase in households with children in summer months, but we couldn't analyze that here given that the survey is conducted each year in December.

Okay, so Jonathan has a question that I think you had suspected people would ask. Do you have any idea as to the reason for the significant decline in food insecurity prevalence in the past year given that the economic recovery has been going on for about six years or so?

Why this past year was so much better do you think?

Right, so that's a really interesting and important question. To this point it speculation on our part in that we haven't done research to definitively say exactly what is the cause for the decline. Our first focus is on getting the numbers out to the public and then we, we work on some of those more involved research studies as time goes on. I will say that some other economic indicators are continuing to show improvement, for example the unemployment rate. Some prior research conducted by ERS and others has shown that food insecurity is closely related to changes in prices. In the, in the last couple of years, fuel prices and gasoline prices have continued to decline and those may be a factor related to food insecurity. I will also mention that some of you may be familiar with the Food Research and Action Center, FRAC, publishes estimates of food hardship. Their methodology and the actual measure is a little bit different from USDA's food insecurity measure. They're not exactly the same thing but they're obviously related and FRAC reported earlier this summer that food insecurity continue, or excuse me, FRAC reported that food hardship continued to decline in 2015. So these two estimates from different data sources sort of show similar trends in the experiences of, of food difficulties faced in the U.S.

Okay, we have a question from Mark kind of related in the sense that he's asking about Feeding America's Meal, Map the Meal Gap calculation. Do you know how this, or your measure

compares to this Map the Meal Gap calculations and by Feeding America and specifically, do you know if they incorporate your numbers into their calculation?

So I'd, I would refer the question or the Map to Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap to make sure that I answer the question correctly because those aren't, again our data, but my understanding is that Map the Meal Gap, Gap is based on the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement which again is the data source for our estimates. So those data start from the same, or those estimates start from the same source, but Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap estimates rely on other data that they bring into their models to estimate food insecurity in local areas. So for example, they use data on poverty and unemployment and, and some other factors to estimate the prevalence of food insecurity in specific counties. Now we cannot use the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement to get, to obtain a direct estimate of the prevalence of food insecurity at the county level based on direct responses to the survey. And that's because the Current Population Survey is about 40,000 households which is obviously a large sample, but it's not large enough to produce reliable county level estimates. Many counties are actually not identified in the survey based on where the respondent lives because some counties are, are small enough that identifying which county the respondent lives in would present some, some risks to confidentiality. And for some other, for example, metro areas you would need to combine multiple use of data of the Food Security Supplement to have a direct measure of the prevalence of food insecurity in those areas.

Okay, somebody had a question about the demographics of the entire survey sample, so do you have information on, you know, who the, who the people were that were asked the questions?

Sure, so the, the survey is nationally representative and the Census Bureau carefully weights the survey to ensure that the, the respondents, the 40,000 or so respondents that are actually in the survey represent U.S. households. So this is a nationally representative sample and as I mentioned, we do report in our, our annual, we include statistics in our annual report on food insecurity by various household characteristics, and in some other research we also examine some, some characteristics that aren't included here. So for example, as I mentioned, employment of, of household adults, disability status of household adults. We've seen in previous research that households that included an adult with a disability have much higher likelihoods of food insecurity than households that do not include adults with disabilities. So there's a fair amount of demographic information that's collected on each of these respondents and it's been used by both ERS researchers and academic researchers and on government researches to conduct numerous studies to understand correlates or determinants of food insecurity based on these different household characteristics.

Okay, Olivia had a question about whether you have county level data as well as the state level.

So I mentioned this when I was talking Feeding America, we cannot produce county level estimates of food insecurity that are based on direct survey responses to the food insecurity

questions because the county of residence for some respondents is not identified because of confidentiality restrictions. Census Bureau is very careful to make sure that there's no way that someone who's analyzing these data can actually identify an individual respondent, and so many, many counties are not identified in the data particularly rural counties. And even from metropolitan counties we would need to combine multiple years of data to obtain reliable estimates and we wouldn't be able to do that for all areas in the United States. As I mentioned when I talked about the state food insecurity rates, we combine three years of data just to get reliable estimates, estimates at the state level.

Okay, Jessica had a question specifically on the ages of the children in the households. Is there any question on the survey that, you know, deals with the ages of the children as far as, for example, if they're less than five, they would be eligible for WIC? Is, is there any, you know, breakdown of how the ages of the children besides just less than 18 years old?

We, in the, in the survey there's a complete household roster of household members and their ages. So we do know the ages of children in these households. One caveat is that we do not ask about food insecurity of each individual child. We ask broadly if any children in the household are experiencing these food insecure situations or food insecure conditions. And as I noted comparing adult food insecurity to children's food insecurity, adults tend to protect children from food insecurity to the extent they can and we also see that sometimes older children, like adolescents or teenagers will try to protect younger siblings from food insecurity. So it's important to note that not all children within a household will experience food insecurity in the same way and we can't identify which individual child was experiencing food insecurity. We have looked at the prevalence of childhood, of children's food insecurity by the age of the oldest child in the household and we tend to see that food insecurity among children is, is higher in households with older children and tends to be lower in households with younger children and so those are some sort of general findings of the report. And we also, when I showed the slide showing participation in SNAP, WIC and the School Meals Programs, these are referring to households with, for school meals and for WIC, those are among households with children within the eligible age range, so with school-age children or children within the WIC eligible age range, so young children.

Okay, here's another question from Andrew. Does this report include data on a number or percent of households that participate in federal nutrition programs or that visit emergency food providers?

I don't have that in the slides, but we do have in the Food Security Report, we do have participation. You know, sorry, I do show on the slide that participation in food-assistance programs by food security status and then we also have in the report the prevalence of food insecurity by participation in these programs. I will note a caveat that these are self-reported participation data. That means that these are relying on the survey respondent to tell the interviewer that they do participate in SNAP, or School Lunch or WIC, Free or Reduced Price

School Lunch or WIC. And some we know from other research that self-reported participation is lower because some households don't want to report their participation, they may be embarrassed or not want to report for other reasons. So if you're looking for data on the national, the national number, the, nationally the number of households that participate in these programs, it would be better for you to rely on, on program data from the Food and Nutrition Service of USDA than to rely on these self-reported data.

Do you have any information in the survey or in the data about where food insecure households purchase their food, for example grocery stores or convenience stores, etc.?

So when we ask about household food spending we go through a whole array of questions about how much did you spend at grocery stores last week, how much did you spend at restaurants last week, how much did you spend at convenience stores, how much did you spend at cafeterias or places like that, or how much did you spend at specialty grocery stores. So we do ask the full range of places where people typically spend money on food. And then those are combined into a total amount spent on food. So these statistics, the dollar values we show here, are based on reported spending at all those different food sources or food retail sources, so it includes food purchased for preparation and consumption at home and food purchased for eating away from home. We only, in the report, we only show the overall food spending. We don't show the, the amount of food spending by each individual store type.

Okay, we have a question from Pam about is there any way to measure, for example if there were no food aid programs, what, how much higher food insecurity would be?

That's an interesting question. It's certainly difficult to do research on counterfactuals. I don't, I can't say that I've seen any research on what the prevalence of food insecurity would be without any of those programs. There is a significant body of research to show that food assistance programs do help to reduce food insecurity or put another way that food assistance programs help to improve food security. And the research that delves into that question is very careful to take account of the fact that households that are experiencing food insecurity or who are likely to experience food insecurity are also more likely to participate in these, these nutrition assistance programs because they need them. So when we, when we or when others research the question to understand how participation in these programs effects food insecurity, we must account for that self-selection into the programs. And when you're able to account for that research does show that food-assistance programs, particularly the SNAP program which has been the most, research does show that SNAP helps reduce food insecurity. And we recently had a sort of natural experiment because SNAP benefits were increased due to the stimulus, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, so there was a temporary increase in food insecurity and research conducted by some colleagues at ERS has shown that, that increase in SNAP benefits helped to improve food insecurity. So there, and there's other studies conducted by the Food and Nutrition Service and conducted by academic researchers that also point to the (Indistinct) to the effect of, of nutrition-assistance programs on food insecurity.

Okay, Adrian is asking about whether we have data on the website or in the report that has to do with the food insecurity distribution for households over the federal poverty line?

So we have in the report the prevalence of, we show in the report the prevalence of food insecurity by different income thresholds. So we chose under 1, under 1.3 and under 1.85 because those are meaningful cut points in terms of under 1 means those households have income below the federal poverty line, 1.3 or 130% is a cutoff for SNAP eligibility and under 1.85% or 185% is the cutoff for WIC and, and school meals programs are in there as well. So that's why we present the prevalence of food insecurity by each of these income thresholds and then we present the prevalence of food insecurity for those with incomes above 185%. And as I mentioned, food insecurity obviously, as you can see here, is much lower for households with, with moderate or high incomes.

Caroline has a question and that will probably be our last question because we're running out of time. Is there any correlation of the recent decrease in food security to the decrease in the birth rate?

I can't, I, I'm, I can't say that I've seen any research on that and I wouldn't want to speculate. I can't say if there's a correlation or not, it's certainly an interesting question though.

Okay, that is all the time we have for questions. I'm sorry if we didn't get to your question. Alisha may be able to answer your questions afterwards if you want to email her. Let me get the slide up that has her email. Also, I just wanted to let everybody know that we are record, we recorded this webinar and after we have it closed captioned we will post it on our website at www.ers.usda.gov and you can watch it in its entirety then and it will take about a week for that to happen. But yeah, if you have any other questions, feel free to email Alisha and thank you all for joining us today and thank you, Alisha for your presentation.

Thank you.