

Rapid Response Data Briefing: Understanding the Food Security Supplement (FSS)

October 7, 2025

Panelists

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What's in the Food Security Supplement (FSS)

What: Comprehensive, annual, national and state-level statistics on food insecurity.

Who: Sponsored by USDA, FSS is a supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Sample size was ~54,000 households in 2023.

Where: Nationwide, with data for states.

When: Typically conducted in December, data released in September.

How: 18-item household survey measure added to the CPS (10 questions are asked of adults, and 8 more if there are children in the household). Plus questions on food spending, food assistance, and food-related hardships.

Why the Food Security Supplement Can't Be Replaced

There are rumors that FSS is “redundant,” but that’s simply not true.

Are there other surveys that ask *something* about food insecurity? Yes, but:

- Periodic or cover only specific ages/groups
- Not the main topic or outcome of interest
- May not be analyzed or released on a timely basis.

Is there another data source that is comprehensive, annual, and available for state or local data needs? No.

FSS data are critical to monitoring changes in food security related to changes in economics and participation in food assistance programs.

Why the Food Security Supplement is Important

1980s Recession and budget cuts in federal safety net programs mean that communities start to see a higher demand for emergency food, especially among women and families with young children. Some government officials deny there is hunger.

“Well, I don't know of any authoritative figures that there are hungry children. I've heard a lot of anecdotal stuff, but I haven't heard any authoritative figures...” - Edwin Meese

Why the Food Security Supplement is Important

- **SNAP is the nation's main defense against hunger.**
- The **ERS Food Security Report** tracks how well SNAP reduces hunger and food hardship.
- Data show that **SNAP participation improves food security**, lowering rates of skipped meals and hunger.
- Without this report, there's **no consistent national measure** of whether SNAP protects families or if policy changes increase hardship.
- It ensures **accountability and evidence-based policymaking.**

Why the Food Security Supplement is Important

- The ERS report tracks **food insecurity by state**, revealing how factors such as wages, housing costs, and local policies shape access to food.
- These state-level differences highlight where families face greater hardship and help guide **targeted responses and equitable policy design**.
- The report also compares household food spending to the **Thrifty Food Plan (TFP)**—the benchmark used to set SNAP benefit levels.
- In **2023**, the typical U.S. household spent **17% more than the TFP cost**, showing that even a “minimal-cost” healthy diet remains **out of reach for many families**.
- This analysis provides the **foundation for adjusting SNAP benefits** to reflect real food costs and nutritional standards.

Why the Food Security Supplement is Important

- The Household Food Security Scale has been adopted to a shorter version & added to many federal & non-federal surveys
 - Ex. Hunger Vital Signs
- Many WIC researchers use data from the household food security survey to compare to food security collected as part of their research
- No other national food security surveys assess child-level food security - critical for WIC
- Critical for assessing the impact of policy changes, like the current updates to the WIC food packages, and then changes to the fruit & vegetable benefit in 2020

Bad news

■ **Future Data Availability** Future data and reports are terminated. No other survey provides comparable data.★

■ **Policy Termination** coincides with cuts to SNAP, removing ability to evaluate policy impact.

■ **Statutory Framework** Authorized* under broad research on food system, consumers, and human nutrition, but not required. Evidence Act directs agencies to improve data for policymaking.★

■ **Staffing/Resources** USDA placed economists and researchers for the survey and report on administrative leave. Survey cost is only ~\$1M.★

Slightly better news

■ **Historical Data Availability** The nearly three decades of data remain available. 2024 report is slated to be released this October.

■ **Data Quality** OMB re-approved the survey in April 2025 with no changes to methodology.

dataindex.us Comment Form – Save the Data

tinyurl.com/dataindex-FSS-comment

Why your voice matters: When major changes happen to federal data collections, agencies typically invite public comments. In this case, USDA is not accepting comments — but they should be. That's why we created this form: to gather your perspectives and stories, aggregate them, and send them to each [state Department of Agriculture](#). We believe state agriculture leaders are well-positioned to push USDA to reinstate the Food Security Supplement and are among the most likely to be listened to by federal decision-makers. Your voice can help demonstrate the urgency of keeping this essential data flowing.

Comment deadline: Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at 11:59 PM ET

FRAC's FAN Action Alert – Save the Report

tinyurl.com/FRAC-FAN-Action-Alert

Personalize your message

I urge your support in reinstating the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) Household Food Security report. This longstanding report has been the nation's most reliable tool for understanding how many American families struggle to keep food on the table and how well federal nutrition programs are working.

For more than three decades, the ERS report has provided policymakers with objective, nonpartisan data essential for sound decision-making. By measuring food insecurity consistently year after year, the report allows Congress and USDA to:

- Evaluate whether taxpayer-funded nutrition programs such as SNAP, WIC, and school meals are delivering results;
- Identify where gaps exist and ensure resources are used efficiently; and
- Track progress and measure the impact of policy changes over time.

Eliminating this report removes a critical accountability measure. Without it, policymakers will be left without clear evidence of whether nutrition programs are effective, where improvements are needed, or whether dollars are being spent wisely.

The most recent data revealed that one in seven households, 47.4 million Americans, including 13.8 million children, faced food insecurity. This reality has significant consequences for our economy, workforce readiness, and the strength of our communities. We also know that food insecurity responds to policy intervention: rates dropped to historic lows in 2021 when families received temporary support, but rose again after those supports expired and inflation increased. This kind of data demonstrates what works and what does not.

The ERS report is not about expanding programs; it is about ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsible governance. It ensures that Congress has the best available information available to make decisions affecting millions of families and to maintain public confidence in USDA's stewardship of nutrition programs.

I respectfully urge you to support efforts calling on USDA to reinstate the ERS Household Food Security report. Ensuring access to accurate, consistent data is a matter of good government and fiscal responsibility, and it will help strengthen families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Attend the 2025 USDA Data Users' Meeting

tinyurl.com/USDA-data-users-meeting

Data Users' Meeting

This event is organized by the National Agricultural Statistics Service in cooperation with the World Agricultural Outlook Board, Farm Service Agency, Economic Research Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

This meeting is an opportunity to update data users on recent and pending changes in the various statistical and information programs important to agriculture, and to seek comments and input on these programs.

Date and Time: October 21, 2025 from 1-4:30 pm CST

Registration: Can sign up virtually and is free and open to the public.

Agenda: Agency reviews (including ERS) and an open forum for participants.

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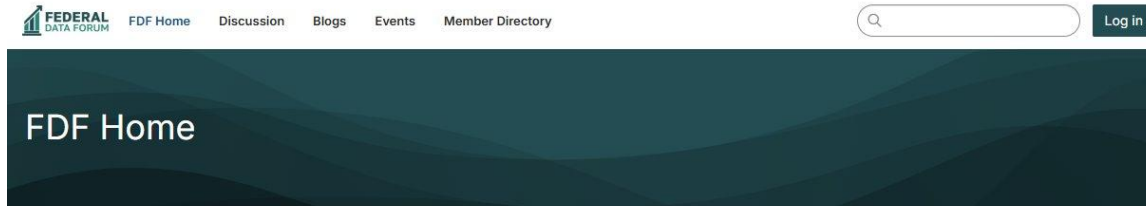
America's Data Index

Monitoring America's federal data infrastructure from dataset availability and new releases to planned and unplanned changes to collections.



To Keep Up to Date, Join the Federal Data Forum

federaldataforum.prb.org



Latest Discussions List

Most Recent

MM RE: September Release of CPS ASEC

By: [Mark Mather](#), 23 hours ago

Posted in: [Federal Data Users](#)

Hi Flo, I'm hoping the Census Bureau will announce their release schedule for the 2024 income, poverty, and health insurance data in the next couple of weeks. Last year, this information was posted on July 16: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2024/schedule-income-poverty-acs.html> ...

JJ new book "Preserving government information: past, ...

By: [James Jacobs](#), 23 hours ago

Community Quick Links

- ? Community FAQs
- 📁 Data Resources

Community Events List

- JUL 9** Rapid Response Data Briefing: American Time Use Survey
📍 Online
- JUL 22** Association of Public Data Users' unConference 2025
📍 Online

Take Action

dataindex.us Comment Form to Save the Data (Submit by 10/21/25)

tinyurl.com/dataindex-FSS-comment

FRAC FAN Action Alert - Email Your Member of Congress to Save the Report

tinyurl.com/FRAC-FAN-Action-Alert

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