



# NYS BRFSS Brief

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and several US Territories. The New York BRFSS is administered by the New York State Department of Health to provide statewide and regional information on behaviors, risk factors, and use of preventive health services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death.

## Food Security

New York State Adults, 2020



### Introduction

Food security is defined by having access at all times to enough food to support an active and healthy life.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, food insecurity is having limited or uncertain access to adequate food due to limited economic resources.<sup>1</sup> Adults experiencing food insecurity have a higher probability of several chronic diseases, including hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, asthma, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease.<sup>2</sup> While the prevalence of food insecurity continually declined nationally from 2011 (16.4%) to 2019 (10.9%), in 2020 (11.8%) there were more than 38 million people in the United States (US) living in food-insecure households, highlighting the public health significance of the problem.<sup>3</sup>

Food security can vary by demographic characteristics and geographic location.<sup>3</sup> For example, in the US rates of food insecurity are higher than average among households with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty threshold, headed by non-Hispanic Black or Hispanic individuals, or located in principal cities of metropolitan areas.<sup>3</sup> A report analyzing 2019 data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) demonstrated similar demographic and geographic dependence in New York State (NYS).<sup>4</sup>

The New York State Prevention Agenda 2019-2024 established a goal to increase the percentage of adults who report being food secure by 5% from 76.4% in 2016 to 80.2% among all adults and by 10% from 55.8% in 2016 to 61.4% among adults with an annual household income of less than \$25,000 (due to lower baseline levels of reported food security).<sup>5</sup>

### Key Findings

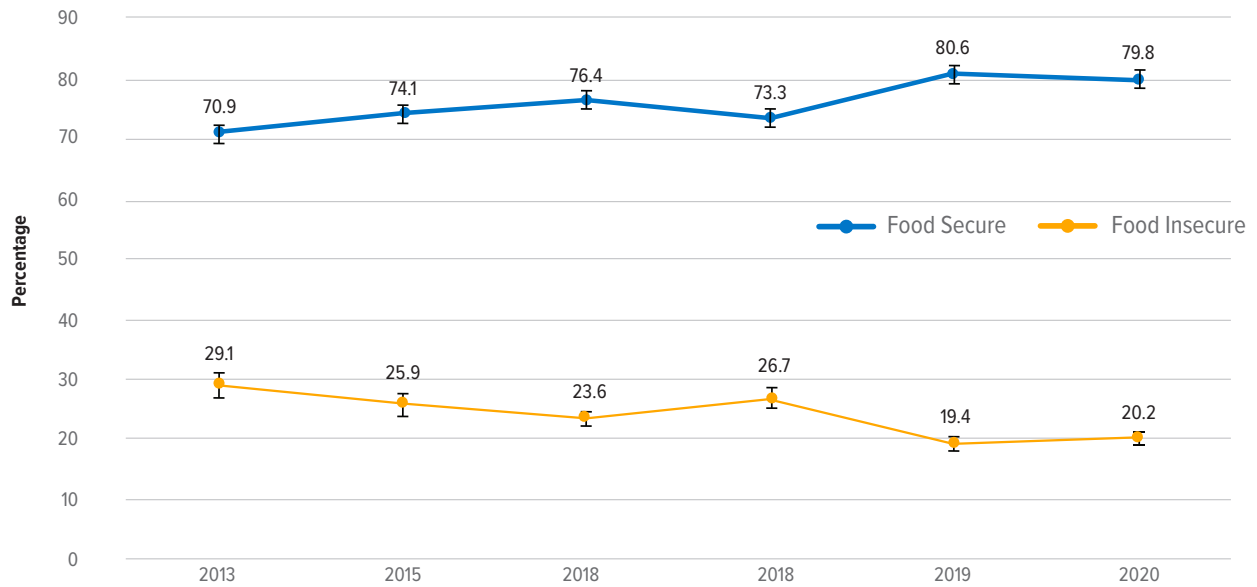


In 2020, 20.2% of adults in NYS indicated they were always, usually, or sometimes worried or stressed about having enough money to buy nutritious meals in the past 12 months (defined as “food insecure”), while 79.8% responded they rarely or never worried about accessing adequate food (defined as “food secure”) which is slightly below the Prevention Agenda 2024 goal of 80.2% (Table 1). The prevalence of reported food insecurity was higher among Hispanic (36.0%) and non-Hispanic Black (25.7%) adults than among non-Hispanic White adults (13.3%) in NYS. Food insecurity was more likely to be reported among women (21.7%), adults with a household income less than \$25,000 (41.9%), those with less than a high school degree (37.4%), and those who were unemployed (35.9%) compared with their counterparts. In addition, food insecurity was higher for respondents living in New York City (NYC) compared to those residing in the rest of the state (24.0% vs. 17.6%, respectively). Readers should note that these statistics reflect survey data collected during the 2020 calendar year and reflect the potential impacts of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic that began in 2020.

## BRFSS Question

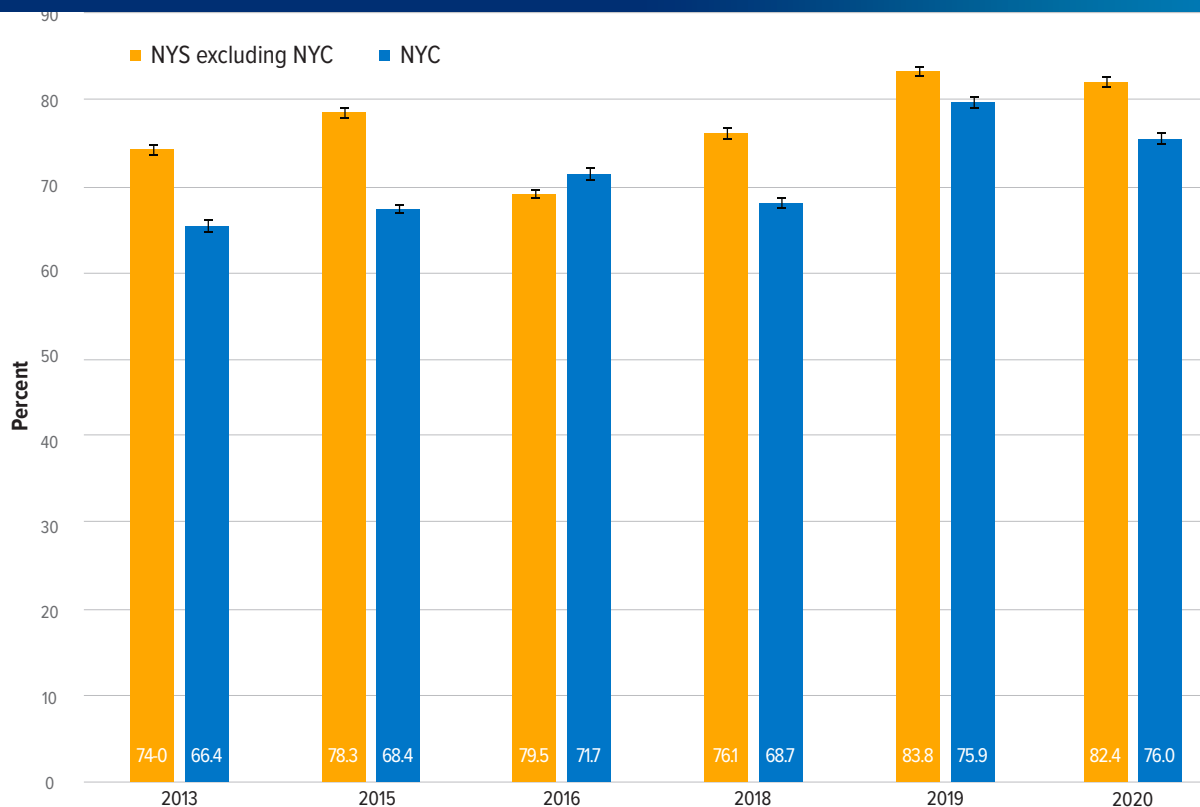
How often in the past 12 months would you say you were worried or stressed about having enough money to buy nutritious meals? Would you say you were worried or stressed-- Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, Never?

### Figure 1. Food security<sup>1</sup> among New York State adults, BRFSS 2013-2020



<sup>1</sup>Food secure individuals are defined as those respondents who indicated that they were rarely or never worried or stressed about having enough money to buy nutritious meals in the past 12 months. In contrast, food insecure individuals are defined as those respondents who indicated they were always, usually, or sometimes worried or stressed about having enough money to buy nutritious meals in the past 12 months.

### Figure 2. Food security<sup>1</sup> by region<sup>2</sup> among New York State adults, BRFSS 2013-2020



<sup>1</sup>Food secure individuals are defined as those respondents who indicated they were rarely or never worried or stressed about having enough money to buy nutritious meals in the past 12 months.

<sup>2</sup>Regions are defined as New York City (NYC) and NYS excluding NYC.

**Table 1. Prevalence of food security by select demographic groups in NYS, BRFSS 2020**

	Food Insecure <sup>1</sup>		Food Secure <sup>1</sup>	
	%	95% CI <sup>2</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	95% CI <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total NYS [N=11,888]</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>19.1-21.3</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>78.7-80.9</b>
<b>Sex<sup>3</sup></b>				
Male	18.6	17.0-20.1	81.4	79.9-83.0
Female	21.7	20.7-23.2	78.3	76.8-79.8
<b>Age</b>				
18-24	22.2	18.3-26.1	77.8	73.9-81.7
25-34	27.0	23.7-30.2	73.0	69.8-76.3
35-44	24.4	21.6-27.2	75.6	72.8-78.4
45-54	18.8	16.3-21.3	81.2	78.7-83.7
55-64	17.8	15.4-20.1	82.2	79.9-84.6
65+	15.1	13.2-17.1	84.9	82.9-86.8
<b>Race, Ethnicity</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	13.3	12.1-14.4	86.7	85.6-87.9
Black, non-Hispanic	25.7	22.3-29.1	74.3	70.9-77.7
Other race or multiracial, non-Hispanic <sup>4</sup>	22.6	18.7-26.5	77.4	73.5-81.3
Hispanic	36.0	32.8-39.2	64.0	60.8-67.2
<b>Education</b>				
Less than high school	37.4	33.2-41.7	62.6	58.3-66.8
High school or GED	23.8	21.6-26.0	76.2	74.0-78.4
Some post-high school	21.2	19.0-23.3	78.8	76.7-81.0
College graduate	9.8	8.7-10.8	90.3	89.2-91.3
<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
Less than \$25,000	41.9	38.9-44.9	58.1	55.1-61.1
\$25,000-\$34,999	27.7	23.4-32.0	72.3	68.0-76.6
\$35,000-\$49,999	24.5	20.7-28.3	75.5	71.7-79.3
\$50,000-\$74,999	14.2	11.7-16.8	85.8	83.2-88.3
\$75,000 or more	6.1	4.9-7.3	93.9	92.7-95.1
Missing <sup>5</sup>	20.5	17.9-23.1	79.5	76.9-82.1
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Employed/self-employed	16.1	14.8-17.5	83.9	82.5-85.2
Unemployed	35.9	31.6-40.2	64.1	59.8-68.4
Not in labor force	21.6	19.7-23.4	78.4	76.6-80.3
<b>Disability Statuse<sup>6</sup></b>				
Yes	37.3	34.7-39.9	62.7	60.1-65.3
No	14.8	13.7-16.0	85.2	84.0-86.3
<b>Region</b>				
New York City (NYC)	24.0	22.1-25.8	76.0	74.2-77.9
NYS excluding NYC	17.6	16.3-18.9	82.4	81.1-83.7

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<sup>2</sup>% = Weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval. <sup>3</sup>Based on respondent's sex at birth or current gender identity at time of interview if sex at birth is missing. <sup>4</sup>Respondents who identified as American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other, or Multiracial. <sup>5</sup>"Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income. <sup>6</sup>Respondents who reported at least one type of disability (cognitive, self-care, independent living, vision, hearing or mobility).



## Discussion

These results show demographic, economic and regional disparities in reported food security that are consistent with national trends and 2019 NYS BRFSS data.<sup>3,4</sup> Consistent with national trends, the prevalence of reported food security in NYS increased from 2013 through 2019, and declined slightly in 2020. The prevalence of reported food security decreased in 2020 below the Prevention Agenda 2024 goal for all adults in NYS.<sup>3</sup> Federal food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) aim to address economic barriers to accessing nutritious foods in income-eligible populations. Other resources, such as emergency food relief organizations (EFROs) including food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens, can further assist those with food insecurity. In NYS, the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) increases access to safe and nutritious food by providing state and federal funds to improve the quality of food distributed to approximately 2,500 EFROs across NYS. Additional initiatives, such as the Commodity Supplemental Foods Program (CSFP) and Stellar Farmers' Market help to address food insecurity specifically in NYC. BRFSS can be used to support policies and initiatives to monitor food insecurity and evaluate the impact of federal and state initiatives to address food insecurity.



## References

1. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (2021, September). Food Security in the U.S.: Key Statistics & Graphics. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics/>. Accessed 12/28/2022.
2. Christian A. Gregory, Alisha Coleman-Jensen. Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Health Among Working-Age Adults, ERR-235, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2017.
3. Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2021. Household Food Security in the United States in 2020, ERR-298, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
4. New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2019. Perceived Food Security. [https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2022-04\\_brfss\\_food\\_security.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2022-04_brfss_food_security.pdf)
5. New York State Prevention Agenda Preventing Chronic Diseases Action Plan available at: [https://health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2019-2024/](https://health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2019-2024/)



## Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health

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## Order Information

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