

BRFSS Brief

Number 2022-04

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.

Perceived Food Security

New York State Adults, 2019

Introduction and Key Findings

Food security is characterized by having access at all times to enough food to support an active and healthy life.¹ In contrast, food insecurity is characterized by limited or uncertain access to adequate food due to limited economic resources.¹ 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.² While national prevalence of food insecurity has continually declined nationally since 2011, in 2019, more than 35 million people in the United States (US) lived in food-insecure households highlighting the public health significance of the problem.³

Food security can vary by demographic characteristics and geographic location.³ 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, located in rural areas or in principal cities of metropolitan areas.³ A report analyzing 2016 data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) demonstrated similar demographic and geographic variation in New York State (NYS).⁴

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).⁵

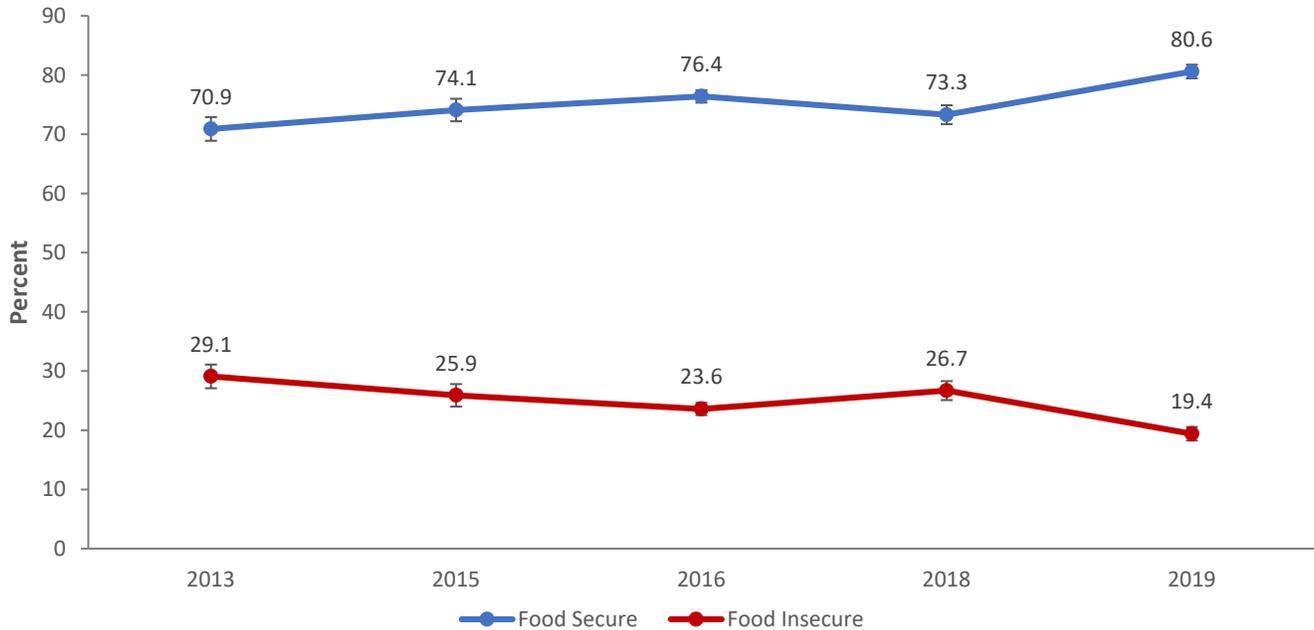
Key Findings

In 2019, 19.4% 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 80.6% responded they rarely or never worried about accessing adequate food (defined as “food secure”) which exceeds the Prevention Agenda 2024 target of 80.2% (Table 1). However, the prevalence of reported food insecurity was higher among Hispanic (30.3%) and non-Hispanic black (27.5%) adults than among non-Hispanic white adults (13.9%) in NYS. Food insecurity was more likely to be reported among women (21.9%), adults with a household income less than \$15,000 (40.9%), those with less than a high school degree (33.7%), and those who were unemployed (28.0%) compared with their counterparts. In addition, food insecurity was higher for respondents living in NYC (24.1%) compared to those residing in the rest of the state (16.2%) **Readers should note that these statistics reflect data collected during the 2019 calendar year and do not reflect the potential impacts of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic that began in 2020.**

BRFSS Question

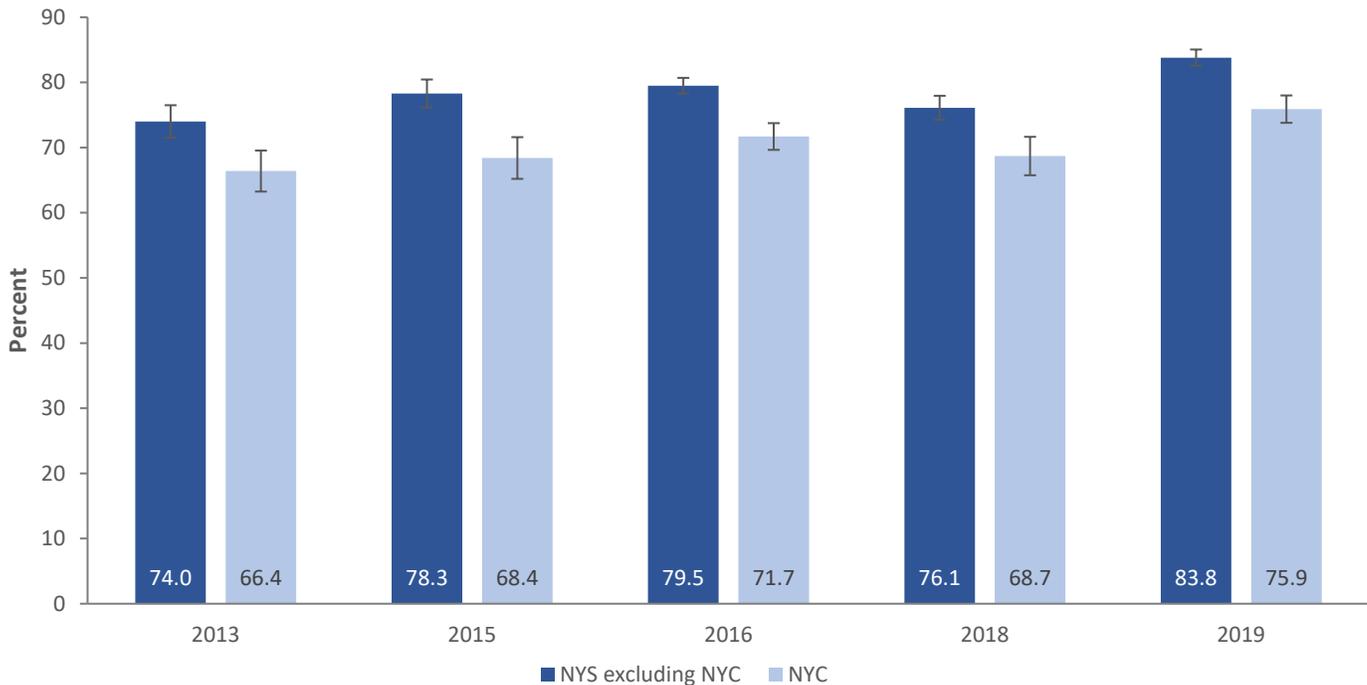
How often in the past 12 months would you say you were worried or stressed about having enough money to buy nutritious meals? Would you say you were worried or stressed-- Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, Never?

Figure 1. Food security¹ among New York State adults, BRFSS 2013-2019



¹ 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 security¹ by region² among New York State adults, BRFSS 2013-2019



¹ 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.

² 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 2019

	Food Insecure ¹		Food Secure ¹	
	%	95% CI ²	% ^b	95% CI ²
Total NYS [N=11,012]	19.4	18.3-20.6	80.6	79.4-81.7
Sex³				
Male	16.3	14.9-18.1	83.7	82.1-85.3
Female	21.9	20.4-23.5	78.1	76.5-79.6
Age				
18-24	20.3	16.2-24.5	79.7	75.5-83.8
25-34	24.2	20.8-27.6	75.8	72.4-79.2
35-44	23.1	19.7-26.5	76.9	73.5-80.3
45-54	21.3	18.6-24.0	78.7	76.0-81.4
55-64	19.6	17.1-22.1	80.4	77.9-82.9
65+	11.8	10.2-13.4	88.2	86.6-89.8
Race, Ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	13.9	12.7-15.1	86.1	84.9-87.3
Black, non-Hispanic	27.5	23.8-31.2	72.5	68.8-76.2
Other race or multiracial, non-Hispanic ⁴	19.6	15.2-24.0	80.4	76.0-84.8
Hispanic	30.3	27.1-33.6	69.7	66.4-72.9
Education				
Less than high school	33.7	29.3-38.2	66.3	61.8-70.7
High school or GED	23.3	20.8-25.7	76.7	74.3-79.2
Some post-high school	20.2	18.0-22.3	79.8	77.7-82.0
College graduate	10.1	8.9-11.4	89.9	88.6-91.1
Annual Household Income				
Less than \$25,000	39.3	36.3-42.4	60.7	57.6-63.7
\$25,000-\$34,999	27.8	23.0-32.6	72.2	67.4-77.0
\$35,000-\$49,999	19.1	15.5-22.7	80.9	77.3-84.5
\$50,000-\$74,999	13.8	10.6-17.0	86.2	83.0-89.4
\$75,000 or more	5.8	4.6-6.9	94.2	93.1-95.4
Missing ⁵	21.6	18.9-24.4	78.4	75.6-81.1
Employment Status				
Employed/self-employed	18.2	16.6-19.7	81.8	80.3-83.4
Unemployed	28.0	22.6-33.4	72.0	66.6-77.4
Not in labor force	19.7	17.9-21.5	80.3	78.5-82.1
Disability Status⁶				
Yes	33.5	31.0-36.0	66.5	64.0-69.0
No	14.2	13.0-15.4	85.8	84.6-87.0
Region				
New York City (NYC)	24.1	22.0-26.2	75.9	73.8-78.0
NYS excluding NYC	16.2	14.6-17.4	83.8	82.6-85.1

¹Food 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.

²% = Weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval. ³Based on respondent's sex at birth or current gender identity at time of interview if sex at birth is missing. ⁴Respondents who identified as American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other, or Multiracial. ⁵"Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income. ⁶Respondents 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 2016 NYS BRFSS data.^{3,4} These data also show the prevalence of reported food security has generally increased from 2013 through 2019, consistent with the national trend with 2019 food security estimates exceeding the Prevention Agenda 2024 target for all adults in NYS³ 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 2,600 EFROs across NYS. Additional initiatives, such as the Commodity Supplemental Foods Program 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. **Readers should note that these statistics reflect data collected during the 2019 calendar year and do not reflect the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

References

1. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (2020, 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 9/3/2021.
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. Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2020. Household Food Security in the United States in 2019, ERR-275, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
4. New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2016. Perceived Food Security. https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/1810_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/

Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health
Evaluation, Research & Surveillance Unit, Division of Nutrition

Order Information

Copies may be obtained by contacting:

BRFSS Coordinator
New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Empire State Plaza, Rm. 1070
Corning Tower Albany, NY 12237-0679

Release date of 2/9/2022

Or by phone or electronic mail:

(518) 473-0673
or
BRFSS@health.ny.gov
or
www.health.ny.gov