

U.S. Food Insecurity Declined in 2016, but Millions Still at Risk

Food insecurity in the U.S. declined for the fifth straight year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) annual report released last week.

Even so, more than 15 million households were food insecure in 2016.

According to USDA definitions, "food-secure households have consistent access throughout the year to adequate food for active healthy living for all household members," while "food-insecure households, at some time during the year, lack that access."

There are two sub-categories of food insecure households: low and very low food security.

The former refers to households that "get enough to eat, but reduce the quality, variety or desirability of their meals to do so."

The latter applies to households that have to "reduce the amount of food they eat below usual levels and below the amount they consider appropriate."

Among the 15.6 million food insecure households last year, 6.1 million (4.9 percent of all U.S. households) experienced very low food security.

From 1995 to 2007, the percentage of food insecure households ranged between 10 percent and 12 percent, [USDA data shows](#), until the 2008 financial crisis and resulting economic recession significantly increased the number of food insecure households.

"Changes from 2015 to 2016 in food insecurity overall (from 12.7 to 12.3 percent) and in very low food security (from 5.0 to 4.9 percent) were not statistically significant," the report summarized, "but they continued a downward trend in

food insecurity from a high of 14.9 percent in 2011.”

Leading concerns among food insecure households included running out of food before having funds to buy more, not being able to eat balanced meals, having to skip meals and eating less at meals to make available food last longer.

“Rates of food insecurity were substantially higher than the national average for households with incomes near or below the Federal poverty line, households with children headed by single women or single men, women and men living alone, Black- and Hispanic-headed households, and households in principal cities and nonmetropolitan areas,” the USDA found.

The full report is available [here](#).