



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

The United States Department of Food and Agriculture (USDA) has developed a standardized methodology for measuring food insecurity and hunger. Food security is defined as having access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is categorized as being either *without* hunger (i.e., having limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food) or *with* hunger (i.e., having gone without food for one or more days during the previous 30 days because of insufficient money to buy food).¹

According to the USDA the degree of food insecurity reflects the emotional stress and anxiety experienced by women and the compromising behaviors they engage in to ensure they have enough food for their families such as choosing lower cost, less nutritious food, or choosing to buy food rather than paying for rent or medicine.

The California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) has collected information on food security since 1999 using an abbreviated, validated short version of the USDA's 18 item standardized scale. The short version consists of six questions about a woman's food supply based on monetary constraints. Each question that is answered positively increases the rated severity of food insecurity. Women with 0 or 1 response are rated as food secure, those with 2 to 4 positive responses are rated as food insecure without hunger, and those with 5 or 6 positive responses are rated as food insecure with hunger.

The CWHS indicates the following trends over the six-year period since 1999:

- Although the prevalence of food security among California women decreased significantly from 1999 to 2004 (78.3 percent vs. 73.4 percent respectively), the 2005 rate was 76.5 percent, possibly indicating that the trend is reversing.²
- Both degrees of food insecurity, while having increasing trends from 1999 to 2004 (although not statistically significant) showed a reversal in those trends with a decrease from 2004 to 2005 for both degrees of severity.
 - Food insecurity without hunger decreased from 18.4 percent in 2004 to 15.4 percent in 2005.
 - Food insecurity with hunger decreased slightly from 8.2 percent in 2004 to 8.0 percent in 2005.

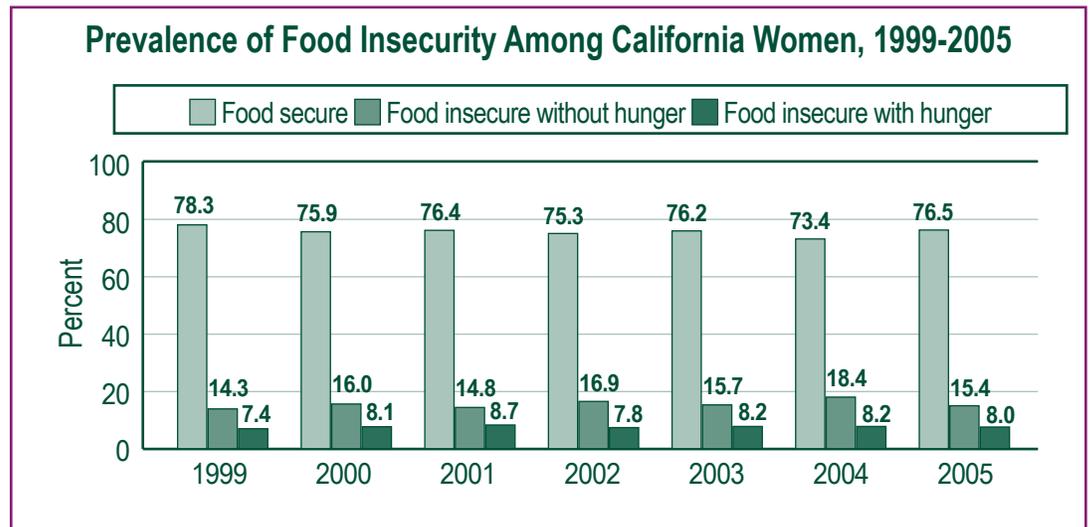
Trends in Food Security Among California Women 1999 to 2005

Department of Social Services
Research and Evaluation Branch

Public Health Message:
Both public and private supplemental food programs should be aware of a possible increasing percentage of food secure women in California and work to sustain this trend. Clear opportunities exist for additional research into the relationship between food security and health outcomes among California women.

Trends in Food Security Among California Women 1999 to 2005

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- 1 Bickel G, Nord M, Price C, Hamilton W, Cook J. *A Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000*. USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation, March 2000.
- 2 Trend was statistically significant using Least Squares Regression.

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