

Household Food Security in the United States

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The views expressed are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the Economic Research Service or USDA.



Outline of Briefing

- **What is food security?**

“How many U.S. households were consistently able to put adequate food on the table?”

- **How is it measured?**
- **Food security survey**
- **Main findings of annual food security report**
- **Food security in Oregon**



Part of USDA's mission:

- **To harness the Nation's agricultural abundance to end hunger and improve nutrition and health in the United States.**

USDA Food Assistance Programs:

- **\$108.9 billion in FY 2013**
- **Served 1 in 4 Americans**
- **Increased sharply since 2008**
- **The heart of the Nation's nutrition safety net**



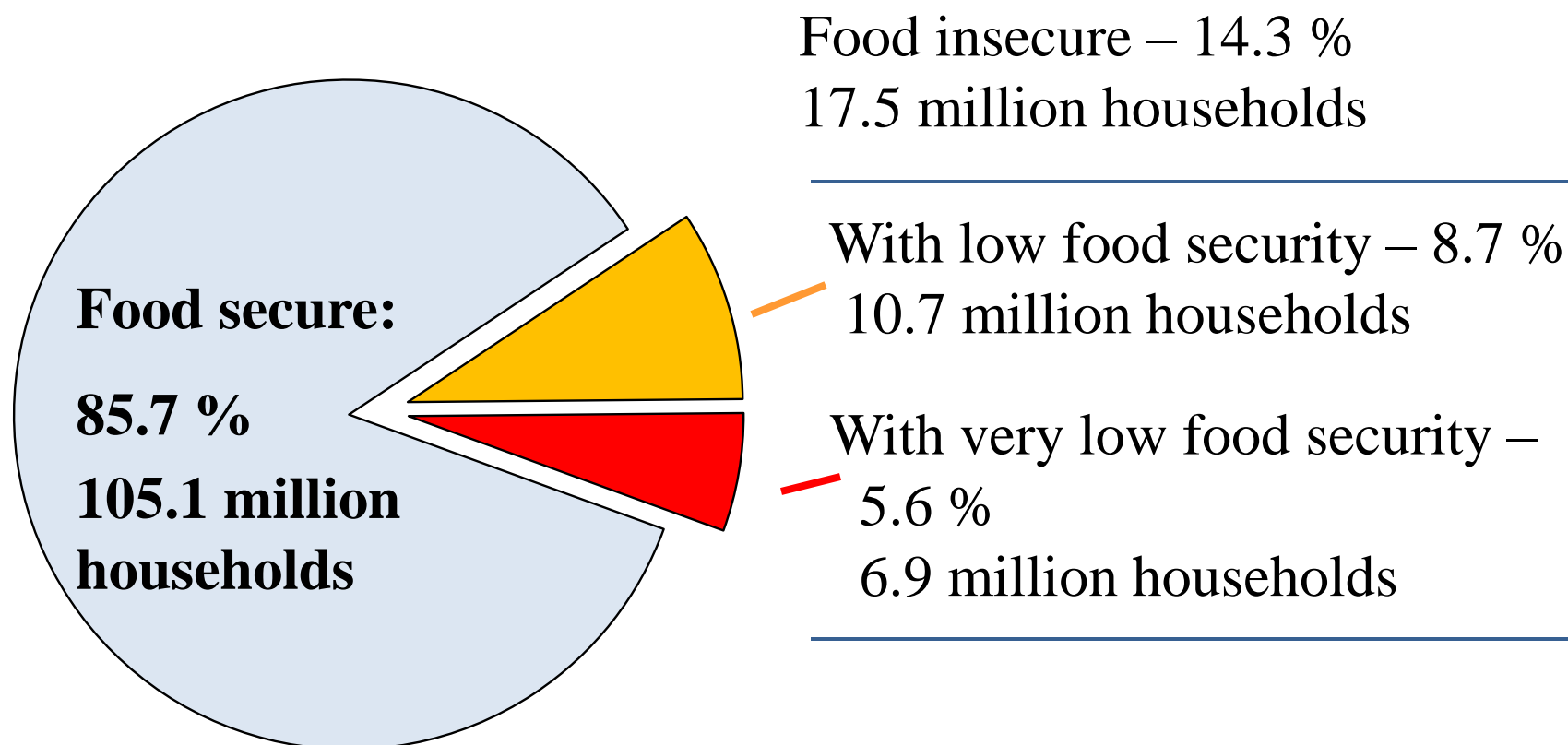
National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990

- **Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan for the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Program**

 **Assigned responsibility to USDA and NCHS to develop standardized methods for measuring food insecurity**



U.S. Households by Food Security Status, 2013



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Food Security, Food Insecurity, Hunger

Conceptual Definitions

(from American Institute for Nutrition)

Food Security: Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Includes at a minimum (1) ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Food Insecurity: Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Hunger: The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.



Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security

Operational Definitions - USDA

Food Insecure Households: unable, at some time during the year, to provide adequate food for one or more household members due to a lack of resources

Very Low Food Secure Households: normal eating patterns of some household members were disrupted at times during the year and their food intake reduced below levels they considered appropriate



How is food security measured?

Food secure

Food insecure

**Low food
security**

**Very low
food security**

Worry, stretch, juggle

Reduce quality and variety of diet

Reduce food intake (adults)

Reduce food intake of children



Examples of Food Security Survey Questions

“The food that we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have money to get more.” Was that often, sometimes or never true for you in the last 12 months?

In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?

In the last 12 months, did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food?



Categories of food security

Food secure	High food security	Raw score 0
	Marginal food security	1 2
Food insecure . . .	Low food security	3 4 5
		6 7 8
		9 10
	Very low food security	



Annual food security survey

- **Current Population Survey (CPS)**
 - **Conducted by Census Bureau**
 - **45,000 households**
 - **Representative of U.S. civilian households**
 - **Source of employment and poverty statistics**
 - **High quality sample**
 - **Well trained, well managed field staff**
 - **High response rate**
 - **High quality data management**
 - **Fielded annually in December**



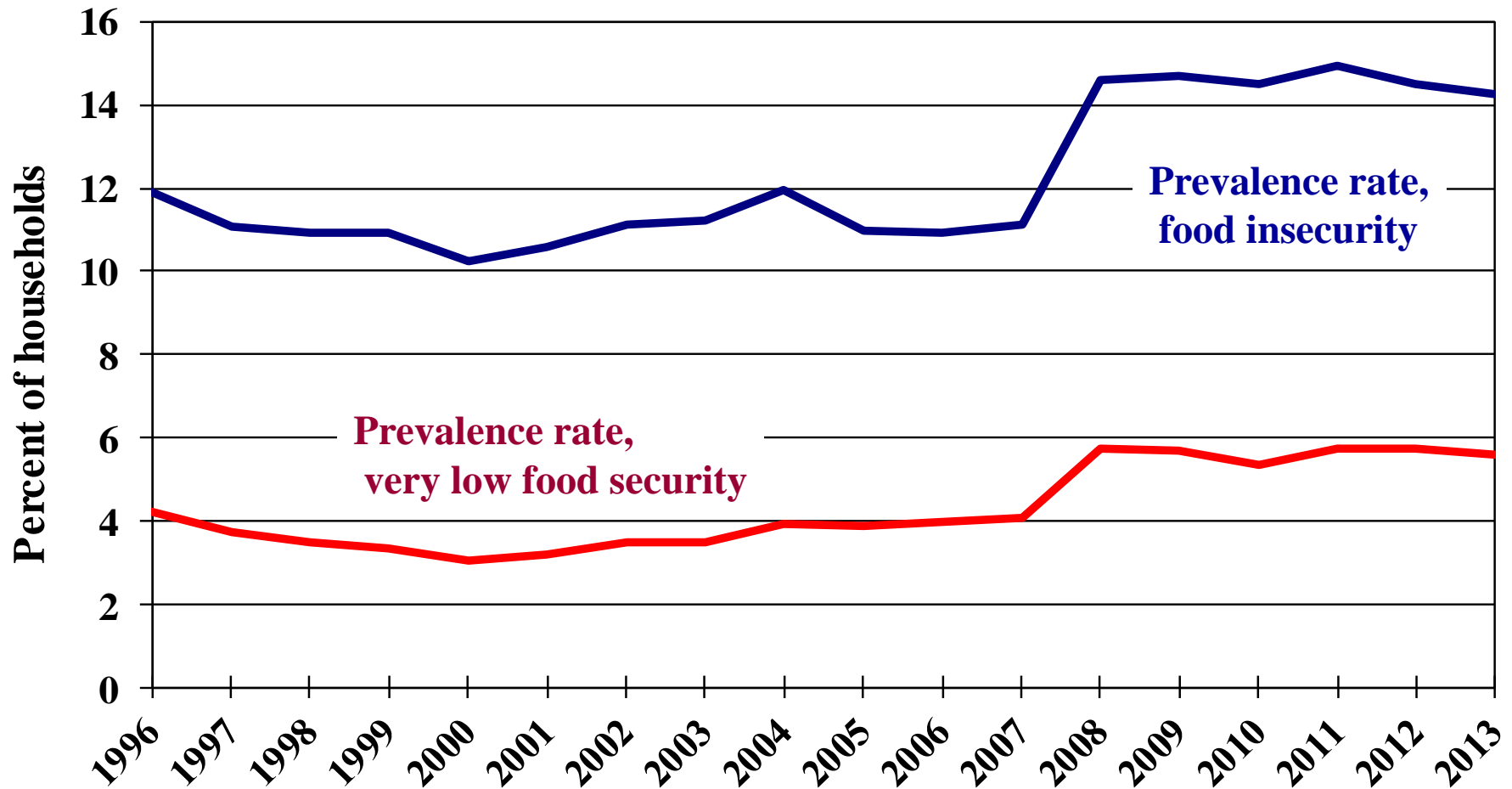
Main surveys in the U.S. household food security monitoring and research system:

Current Population Survey (CPS) Food Security Supplements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food security• Use of food programs• Food spending• Income• Employment	National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food security• Use of food programs• Food intake• Nutritional status• Health	Early Childhood Longitudinal Surveys (ECLS-K, ECLS-B) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food security• Use of food programs• Child health• Child development• Child educational achievement	National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food security• Use of food programs• Health status• Chronic conditions• Healthcare access and use
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Trends in food insecurity

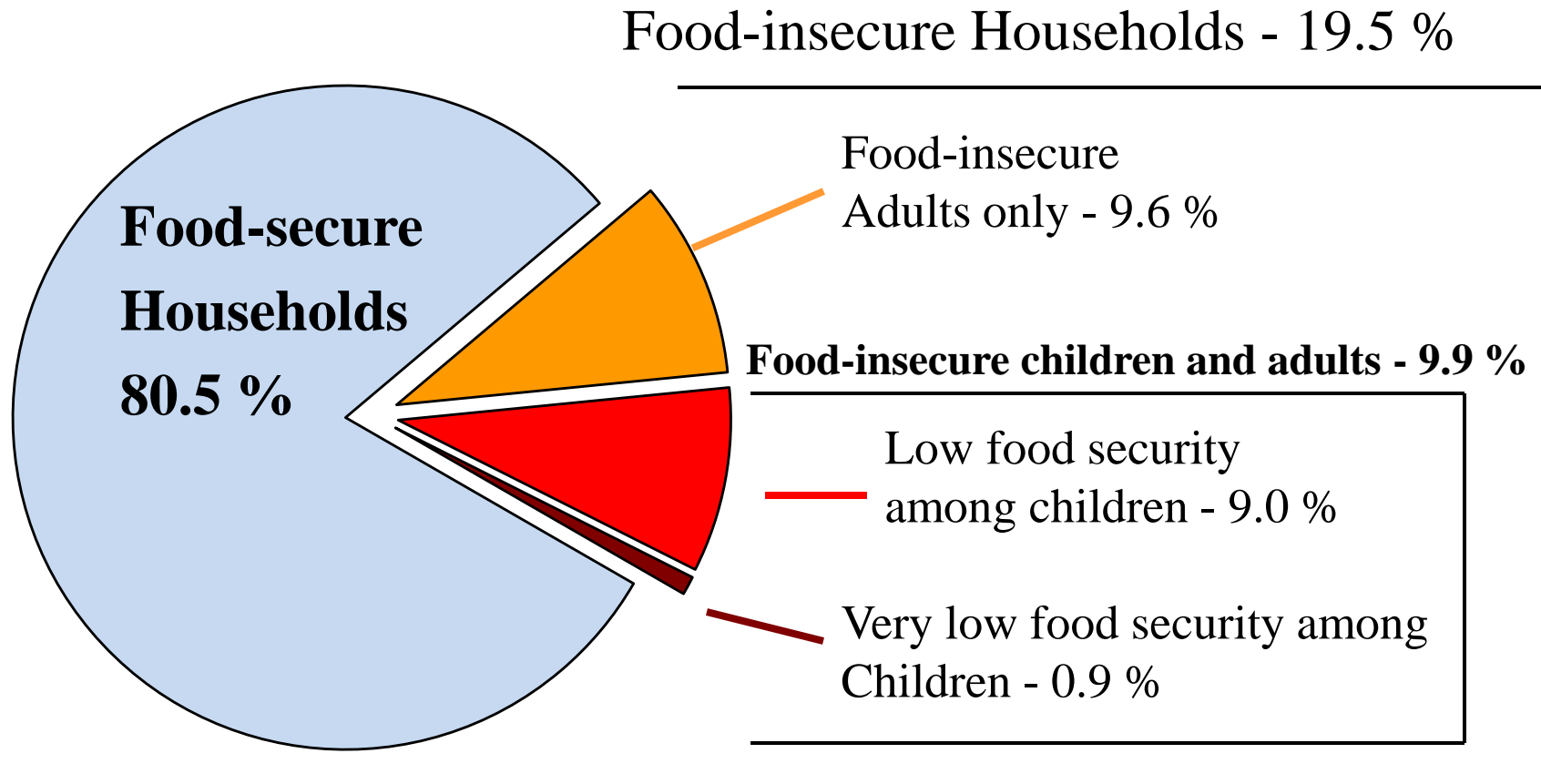
(2-year averages 1996-2001, single-year rates 2002-13)



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



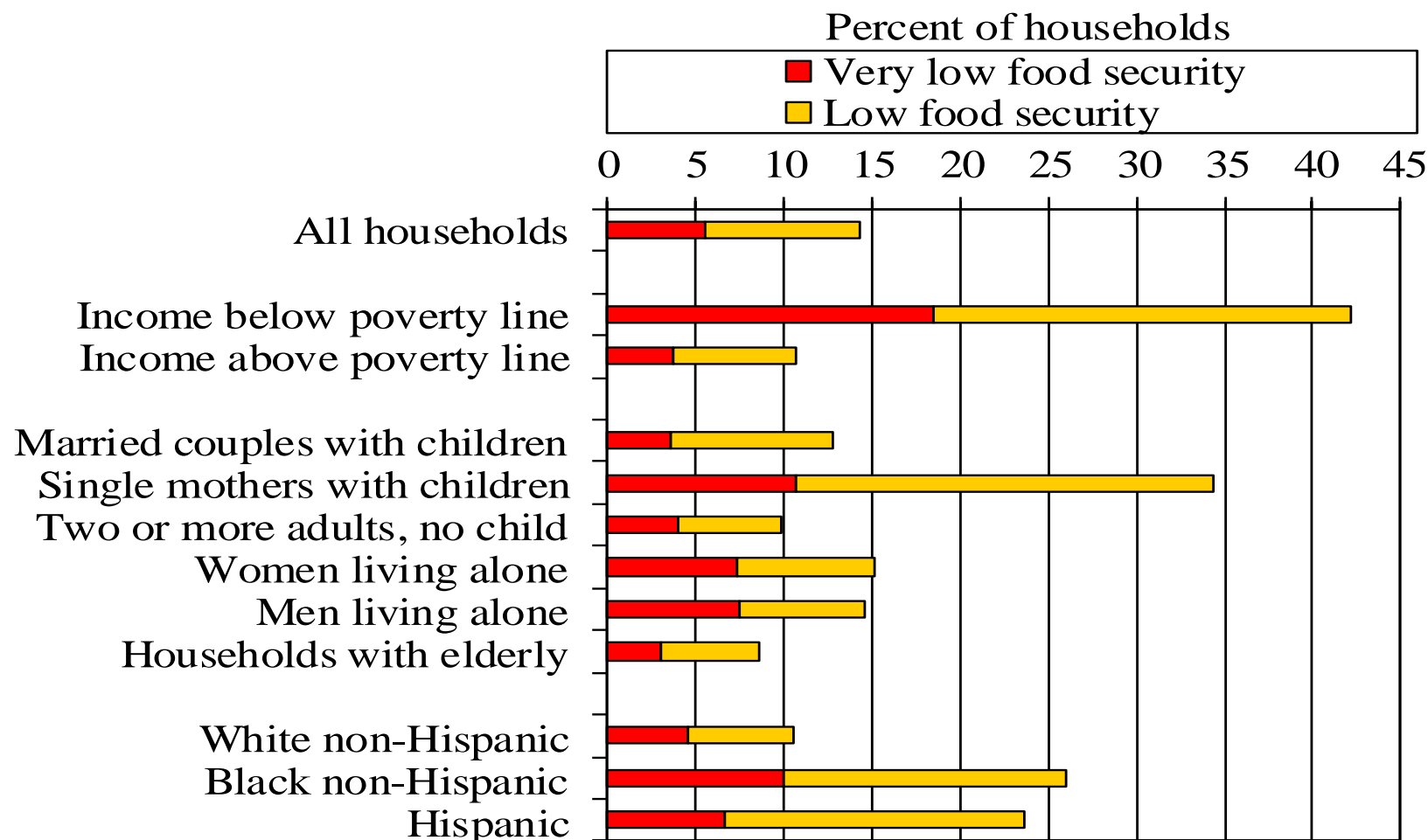
U.S. Households with children by food security status, 2013



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Food insecurity by household characteristics, 2013

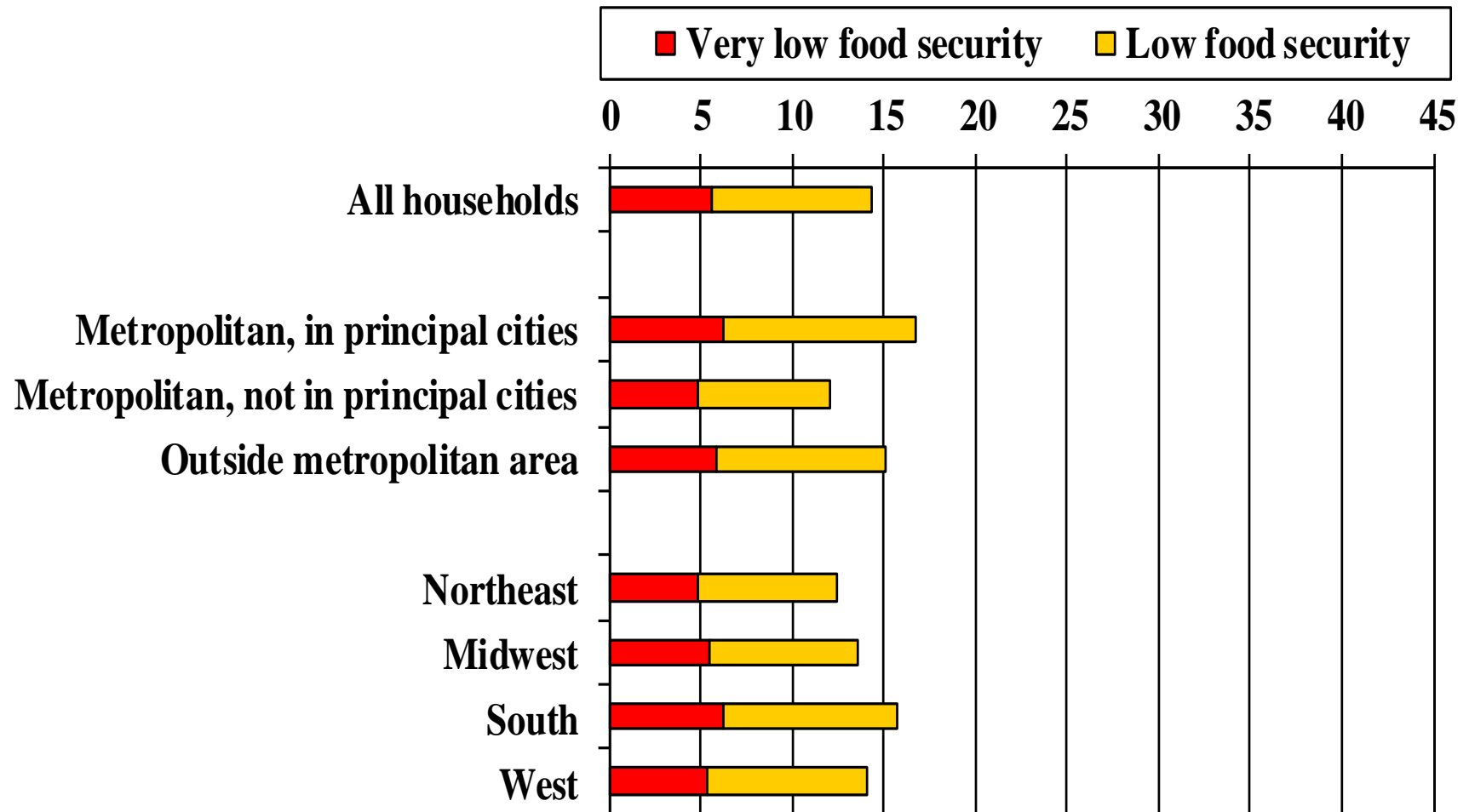


Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Food insecurity by metropolitan residence and region, 2013

Percent of households



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Factors that account for inter-state differences in food security

- **Characteristics of resident households**
 - **Income**
 - **Education**
 - **Home ownership**
 - **Employment**
 - **Disability**
- **State-level economy and policies**
 - **Average wages**
 - **Cost of housing**
 - **Participation in food-assistance programs**
 - **Unemployment rate**
 - **Residential stability**
 - **Tax burden on low-income households**



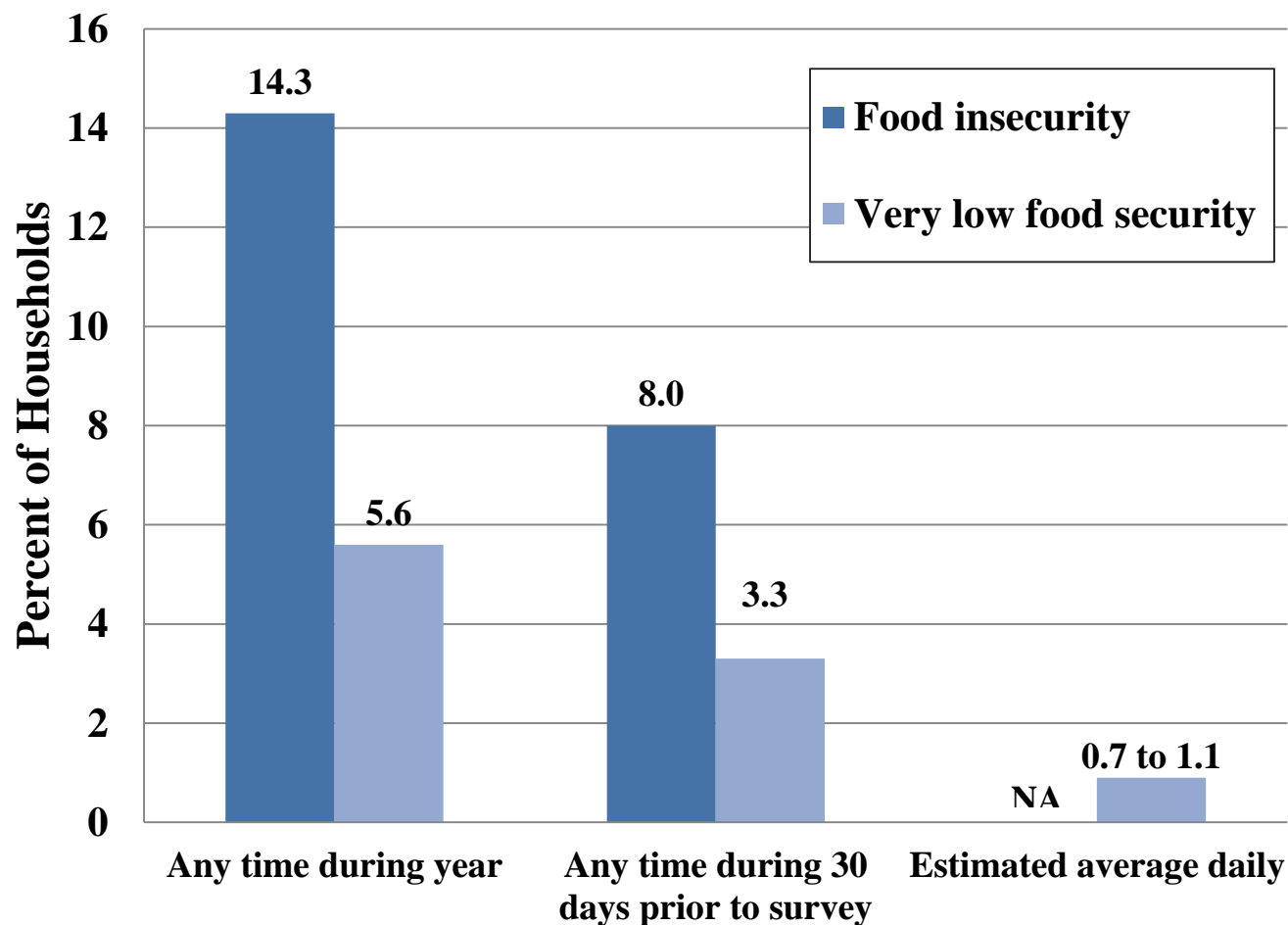
Factors that account for inter-state differences in food security

Taken together, these factors account for most of the inter-state differences in the prevalence of food insecurity (86 % in one study).

Source: “What Factors Account for State-to-State Differences in Food Security?”, by Judi Bartfeld, Rachel Dunifon, Mark Nord, and Steven Carlson, USDA/ERS, Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-20), November 2006



The prevalence of food insecurity depends on the length of time over which it is measured (2013)



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Food insecurity is usually recurrent but not usually chronic

Of households with very low food security:

- About 1/4 “in only 1 or 2 months”**
- 1/3+ recurrent but not chronic**
- About 1/3 “almost every month”**
- Typically in 7 months, in 1 to 7 days each month**

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Use of Federal food assistance programs by food-insecure households, 2013

Program	Share of food-insecure households that participated in the program during the previous 30 days
	Percent
One or more of the three largest Federal food assistance programs	62.2
SNAP (Food Stamps)	46.2
Free or reduced-price school lunch	33.1
WIC	11.0
None of the three programs	37.8

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Use of community food assistance programs, 2013

Category	Pantries		Kitchens	
	1,000	Percent	1,000	Percent
All households	6,194	5.1	710	0.6
Food security status:				
Food secure	1,669	1.6	143	.1
Food insecure	4,520	26.1	562	3.3
Low food security	2,141	20.2	181	1.7
Very low food security	2,379	35.3	381	5.7

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



Food spending by food security status, 2013

Median weekly food spending
relative to the cost of the Thrifty

Category

Food Plan*

All households 1.16

Food security status:

Food secure 1.21

Food insecure .93

Low food security .95

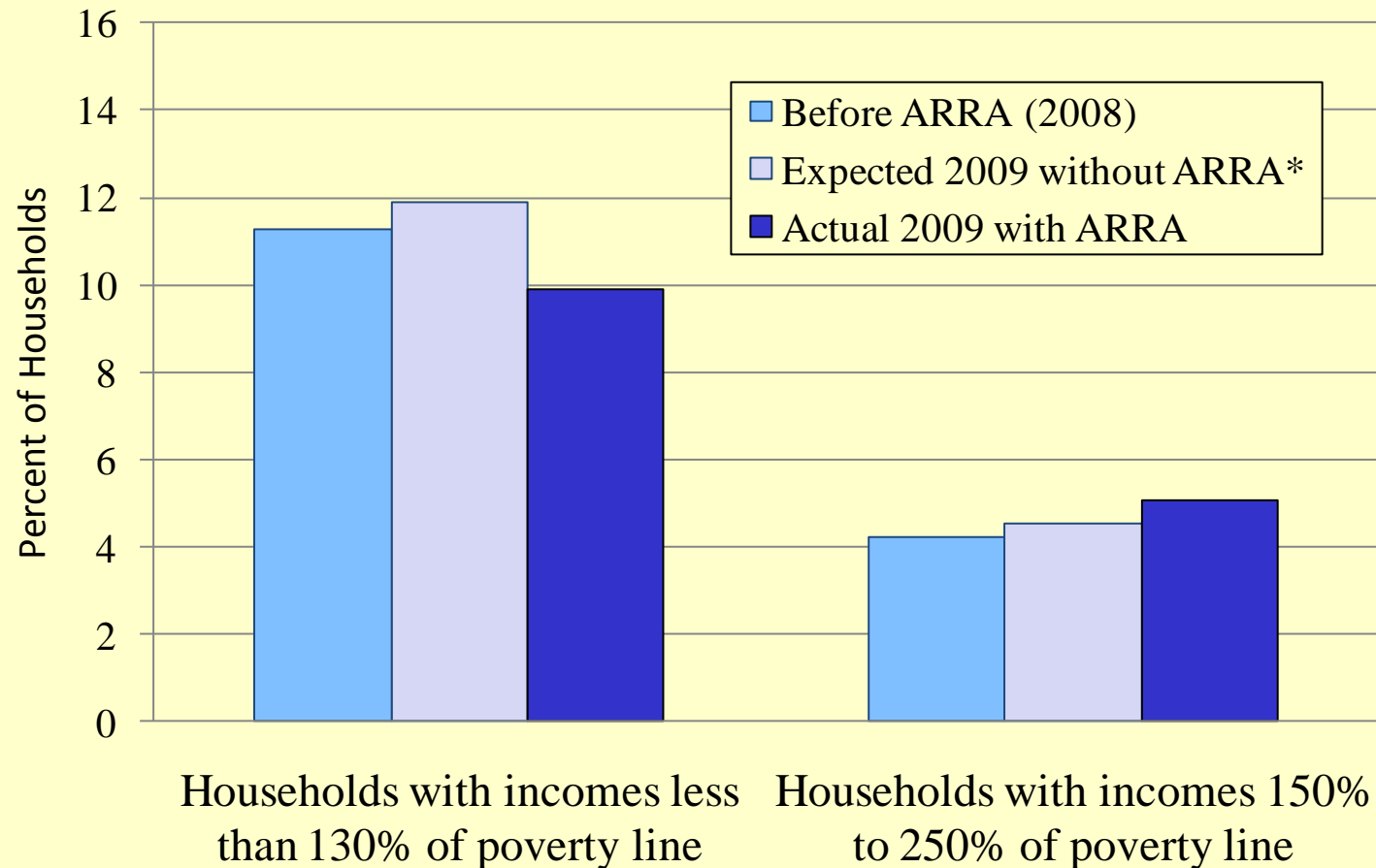
Very low food security .91

***\$128 per week for family of two adults and two young children**

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the December 2013 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



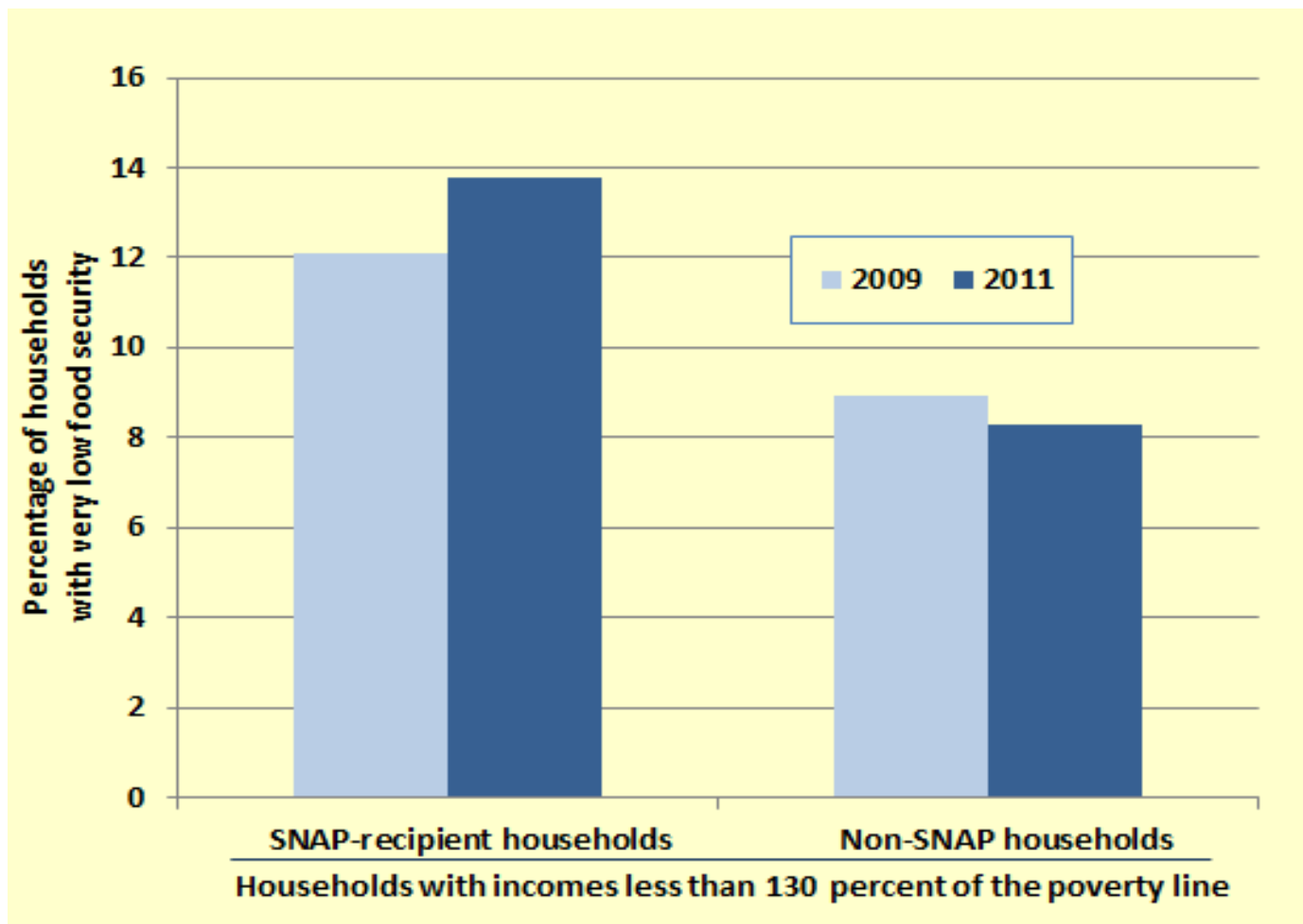
Findings from ERS study of reduction in very low food security associated with ARRA increase in SNAP benefits ...



Source: "Food Security Improved Following the 2009 ARRA Increase in SNAP Benefits", by Mark Nord and Mark Prell, USDA/ERS, Economic Research Report No. (ERR-116), April 2011



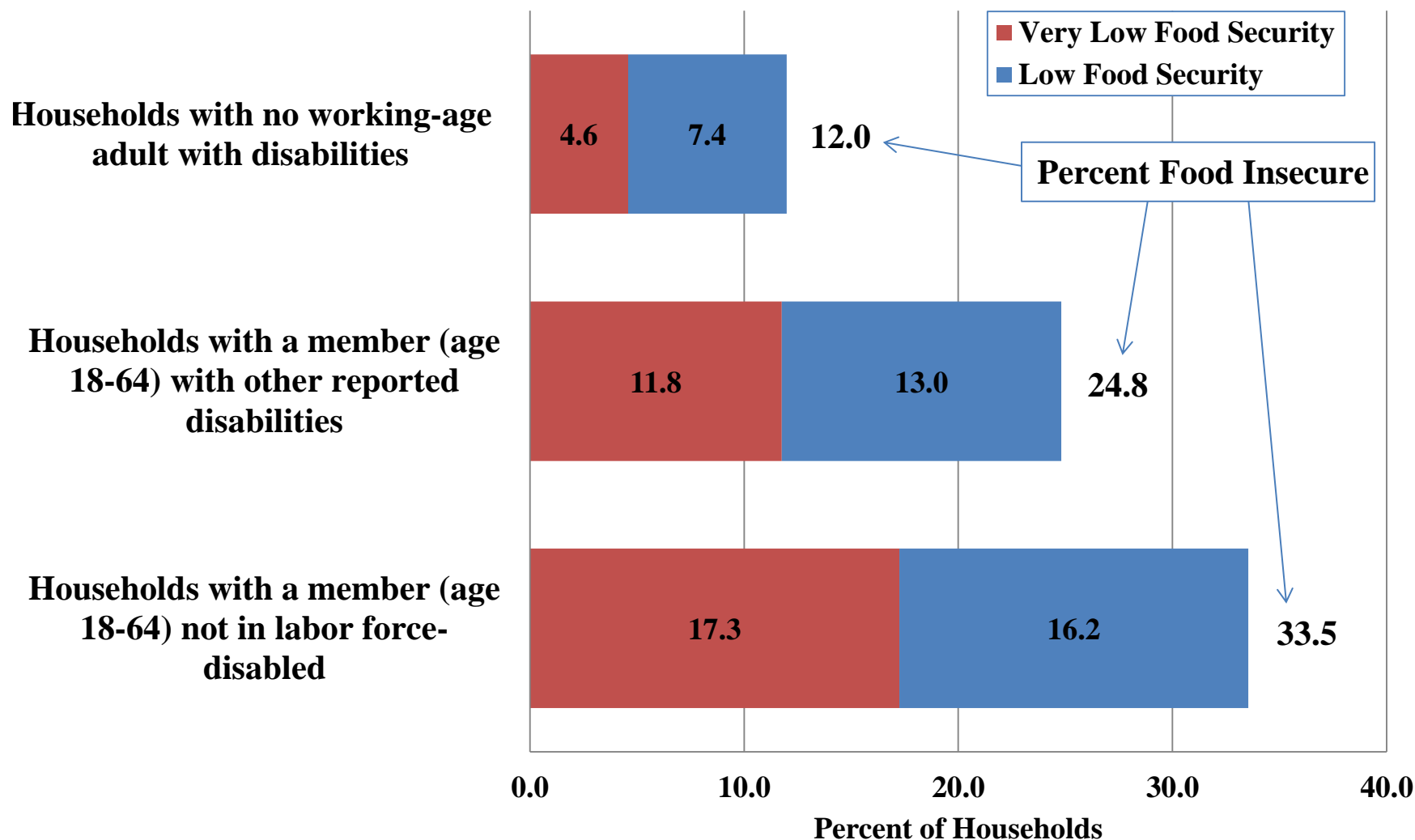
...and the subsequent increase in very low food security associated with the decline in SNAP benefits due to food-price inflation



Source: “Effects of the Decline in the Real Value of SNAP Benefits From 2009 to 2011”, by Mark Nord, USDA/ERS, Economic Research Report No. (ERR-151), August 2013



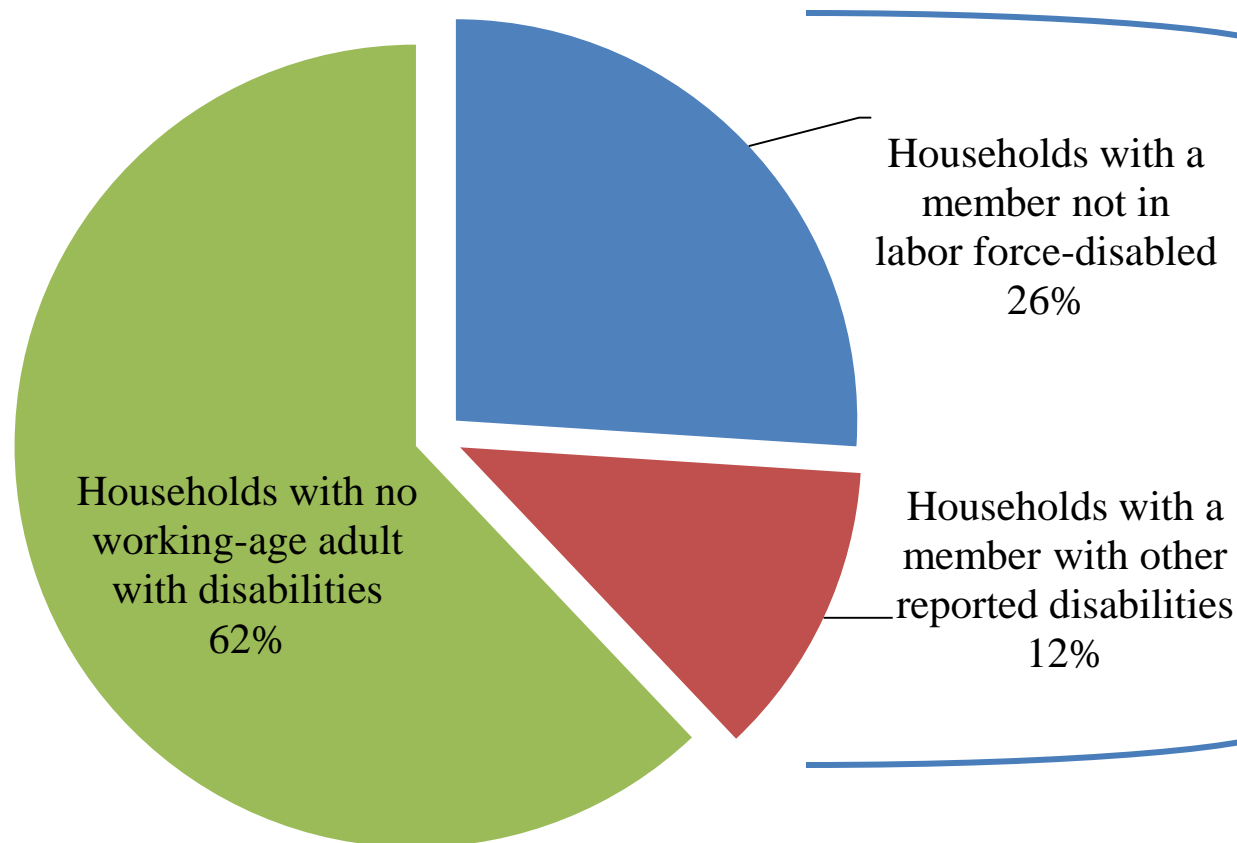
Prevalence of Food Insecurity by Disability Status



Source: Calculated by USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the December 2009 (MIS 5-8) and December 2010 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



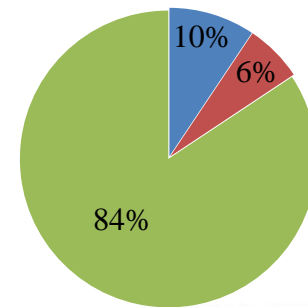
Disability Status of Households with Very Low Food Security



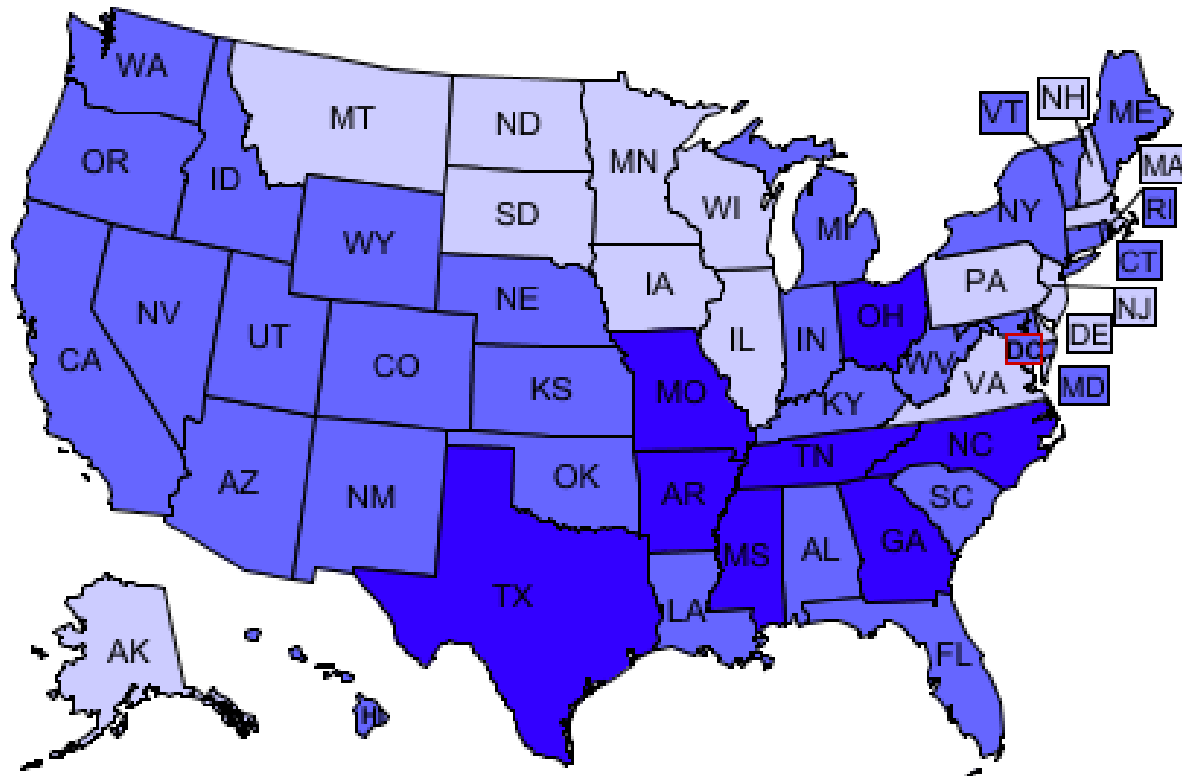
Households
with
working-
age adults
with
disabilities
38%

Source: Calculated by USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the December 2009 (MIS 5-8) and December 2010 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Disability Status of all
Households with
Working-age Adults



Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2011-13



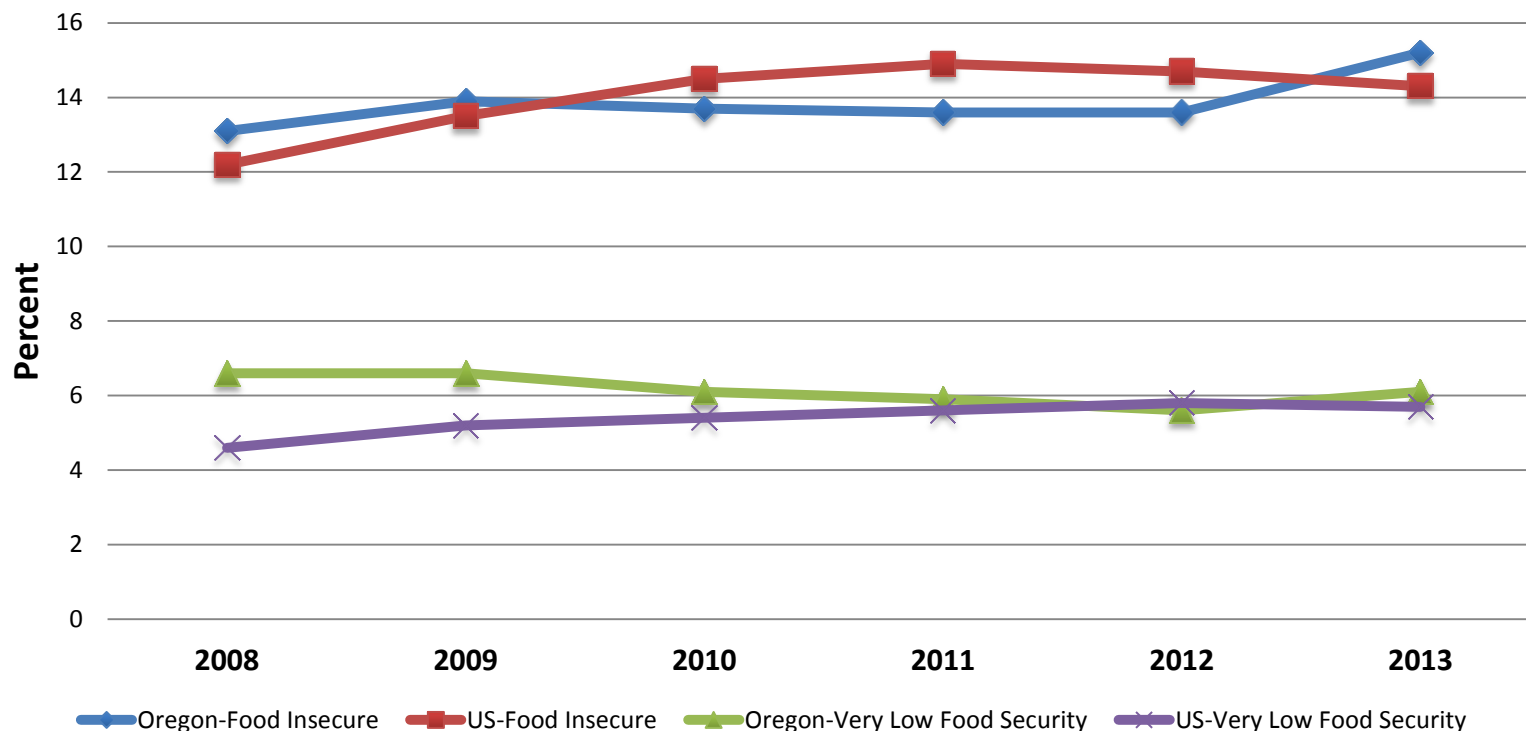
- Food insecurity below U.S. average
 Food insecurity near U.S. average
 Food insecurity above U.S. average

Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.



Food Insecurity Rates in Oregon are Comparable to Whole US

Food Insecurity in the US and Oregon, 2008-2013



- **Source: Household Food Insecurity in the United States 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013. All reports available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/readings.aspx#reports>.**



For more information....

<http://ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us.aspx>

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