

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as "having access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life." USDA categorizes food insecurity into two levels: (1) food insecure without hunger and (2) food insecure with hunger.

Food insecurity without hunger means that a woman has limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food. Food insecurity with hunger means food intake has been reduced to an extent that a woman has experienced the physical sensation of hunger because there wasn't enough money to buy food.¹

The Healthy People 2010 Goal for food security is to reduce it by half, from 12.0 percent to 6.0 percent.²

USDA has developed a standardized methodology for measuring food insecurity and hunger. The California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) has collected information on food security since 1999 from about 4,000 women each year. The CWHS used an abbreviated, validated six-item version of the USDA's 18-item standardized scale to measure the occurrence and severity of food insecurity. The scale consists of six questions about the woman's food supply based on monetary constraints. Each question increases the level of severity of food insecurity. Women who had no responses or answered positively to one question were food secure, those who

responded positively to two, three, or four questions were food insecure without hunger. Those responding positively to five or six questions were food insecure with hunger. The CWHS indicates the following trends over the five-year period since 1999:

- Food security has been decreasing among California women, from 78.3 percent in 1999 to 73.4 percent in 2004. The decrease was statistically significant.³
- Food insecurity without hunger increased from 14.3 percent in 1999 to 18.4 percent in 2004, although the increase was not statistically significant. Food insecurity with hunger has also increased from 7.4 percent in 1999 to 8.2 percent in 2004, but the increase was not statistically significant.
- Food insecurity (with and without hunger combined) increased significantly for both Black/African American and White women. The food insecurity rate for Black/African American women increased from 15.2 percent in 1999 to 35.1 percent in 2004, and for White women from 11.4 percent in 1999 to 14.7 percent in 2004.
- Food insecurity rates (with and without hunger combined) increased for all age groups, with the largest increase among young women aged 18-24. Their food insecurity rate increased from 28.1 percent in 1999 to 41.1 percent in 2004, although the increase was not statistically significant.

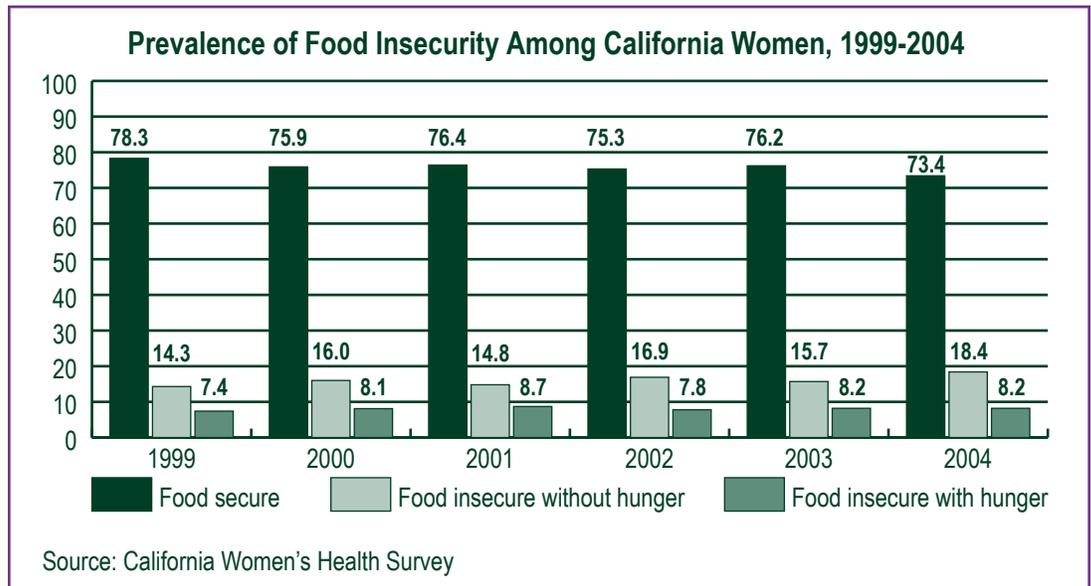
Trends in Food Security Among California Women, 1999 to 2004

Department of Social Services
Research and Evaluation Branch

Public Health Message:
Public and private programs that provide healthy food for food insecure women should be aware that food security among California women is decreasing and this trend needs to be reversed in order to have all California women food secure.

Trends in Food Security Among California Women, 1999 to 2004

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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 US Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2010, 2nd ed. With Understanding and Improving Health and Objectives for improving Health, 2 Vols. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, Nov. 2000.
- 3 Trend was statistically significant using Least Squares Regression.

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For additional copies of CWHS 2003-2004 Data Points please contact the Office of Women's Health:

Download copies at the Office of Women's Health website

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or contact OWH staff at P.O. Box 997413, MS 0027, Sacramento, CA 95899-7413 or call (916) 440-7626.