Food Insecurity in Florida

Presentation to the Senate Committee on Agriculture

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Overview

1. Project Scope & Methodology
2. Background on Food Insecurity
3. Food Insecurity Measures and Related Indicators
Project Scope

- Identify definitions and measures of food insecurity
  - Review academic literature and other studies
  - Identify and define commonly used measures and describe any limitations

- Using existing data sources, compile county-level data in Florida for
  - Measures of food insecurity
  - Other associated indicators
Methodology

- Literature Review
  - Populations affected
  - Health impacts
  - Measures of and indicators related to food insecurity
  - Limitations of food insecurity measures and indicators

- Food Assistance Program Review
  - Background information and eligibility criteria for federal and state food assistance programs
  - Available data sources related to program participation

- Data Collection, Analysis, and Presentation
  - Compiled county-level information on food insecurity measures and other indicators in Florida
    - Food Insecurity Measures
    - Federal Food Assistance Participation Measures
    - Economic Indicators
    - Homeless Population
Background
Food Insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

**U.S. Food Insecurity**
- 14.9% (2011)
- 10.5% (2019)

**Florida Food Insecurity**
- 16.2% (2014)
- 13.0% (2018)
Populations Affected by Food Insecurity

What populations are more likely to be food insecure?

- Females
- Younger adults
- Those from a racial/ethnic minority group
- Those who have lower socioeconomic status
- Households with children
- Those who live in poverty
- Those who are unemployed

What are the health impacts of food insecurity?

- For adults: poor nutrition, mental health problems, diabetes, hypertension, and trouble sleeping
- For Children: anemia, poor nutrition, cognitive problems, higher risk of hospitalization, poor health generally, asthma, behavioral problems, depression, and poor oral health
Food Assistance Programs

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
- The largest federal nutrition assistance program that helps low-income people buy nutritious food

**National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**
- A federally assisted meal program that provides nutritionally balanced meals each day to students in both public and private schools

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**
- Federal program that provides nutritious foods intended to supplement participants’ diets, as well as health-based resources such as health screenings and nutrition counseling for eligible women and children
Food Insecurity Measures and Related Indicators
Food Insecurity Measures and Related Indicators

**Food Insecurity Measures**
- Household Food Insecurity, 2018
- Child Food Insecurity, 2018
- Projected Food-Insecure Population, 2020
- Projected Child Food Insecurity, 2020

**Federal Food Assistance Program Participation Measures**
- Students on Free and Reduced-Price Meals, Fall 2020
- SNAP Participation, December 2020

**Economic Indicators**
- Individuals in Poverty, 2019
- Families in Poverty, 2019
- Unemployment Rates, 2020

**Homeless Population**
- Homeless Population, Point-in-Time, 2020
Food Insecurity Measures

- Standard measure is based on questions from the U.S. Census Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS)
  - Includes household survey questions about difficulty meeting food needs at any time during in the past 12 months
  - Available at the state level but unavailable at the county level

- County level food insecurity data are generated by Feeding America, the largest national domestic hunger-relief organization
  - County-level estimates based on statistical models using results from the CPS-FSS, combined with information from American Community Surveys
  - Measures presented include county-level household food insecurity rates, child food insecurity rates, and projected 2020 food insecurity estimates
In 2018, county-level household estimated food insecurity in Florida ranged from 9.5% in St. Johns County to 19.8% in Hamilton County.
Child food insecurity in Florida in 2018 ranged from 13.7% in St. Johns County to 29.5% in Madison County.
Projected Food Insecure Population, 2020

Food insecurity rates for 2020 are projected to increase in Florida and nationally, largely resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Florida: 17.0%

Federal Food Assistance Program Participation Measures

- Participation in food assistance programs helps alleviate food insecurity, but participation rates are not good measures of food insecurity; rather, they are indicative of underlying conditions that contribute to food insecurity.

- Populations on food assistance programs could be more vulnerable to food insecurity without these programs.

- In our research, we present information on recent statewide trends in SNAP participation and county-level participation in SNAP, students on Free and Reduced-Price Meals, and WIC-eligible population and WIC population served.
Students on Free and Reduced-Price Meals, Fall 2020

Students on Free and Reduced-Price Meals in Fall 2020 ranged from a low of 22.8% in St. Johns County to a high of 100% in Gadsden and Jefferson Counties.

* With funding multiplier applied.

Household SNAP participation rate in Florida ranged from 9.3% in Sumter County to 49.0% in Miami-Dade County in December 2020.

Source: Florida Department of Children and Families. https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/StandardDataReports.asp
Economic Indicators

- Individuals and families who are in poverty and those who are unemployed are more likely to be food insecure
- Individuals who have incomes above the federal poverty level may also be food insecure
  - A study that examined trends in food insecurity from 2011 to 2017 found that 58% of all food-insecure households reported incomes above the federal poverty level
- In our research, we present county-level data on individuals and families in poverty and unemployment rates
The percentage of individuals in poverty in Florida in 2019 ranged from 8.2% in St. Johns and Sumter Counties to 29.9% in Hamilton County.

Unemployment rates in December 2020 ranged from 3.6% in St. Johns and Wakulla Counties to 8.7% in Osceola County.
The homeless population is particularly vulnerable to food insecurity but may be underrepresented in other measures of food insecurity and related indicators.

Continuum of Care geographic areas count the number of people experiencing homelessness in their geographic area on a given day.

In our research, we present homeless population point-in-time counts, which ranged from 2 in Washington County to 3,472 in Miami-Dade County in 2020.
# Summary of Food Insecurity Measures and Related Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Food Insecurity Measures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Federal Food Assistance Participation Measures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Economic Indicators</strong></th>
<th><strong>Homeless Population</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • U.S. Census CPS Household survey questions collect data on food insecurity; these are unavailable at the county level. | • Participation in food assistance programs helps alleviate food insecurity, but participation rates are not good measures of food insecurity. They are indicative of underlying conditions that contribute to food insecurity. | • These are predictors of food insecurity but are not direct measures of food insecurity.  
• These indicators provide information on populations that may be vulnerable to food insecurity. | • The homeless population is particularly vulnerable to food insecurity but is not captured in other measures of food insecurity and related indicators. |
| • Feeding America generates county-level food insecurity estimates. | • Populations on food assistance programs could be more vulnerable to food insecurity without these programs. | | |
Questions?
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