

Food Insecurity in 2022: *Notable Research Findings from the USDA's Annual Food Security Report*

On Wednesday, October 25th, 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released its annual study about food security in the U.S., [Household Food Security in the United States in 2022](#). Food security is the household-level economic and social condition of having access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

The study is based upon data collected through the Current Population Survey (CPS) in December 2022 and includes a main report (focused on household food security, food expenditures, and use of Federal food and nutrition assistance programs) and a statistical supplement (that includes additional statistics such as individual-level data). Together, the two reports provide data about different populations and household types, including by age, select racial/ethnic groups, geography, household income, and other household characteristics.

What does the latest USDA report show?

The report reveals that food insecurity in the United States rose sharply in 2022, with increases observed for nearly every subgroup and household type described in the report.

In 2022, an estimated 44 million people (13.5% or 1 in 7), including 13 million children (18.5% or 1 in 5), in the U.S. were living in food insecure households. This reflects an increase of 30% and 45%, respectively, compared to 2021; it is the highest rates and numbers since 2014;¹ and the largest one-year increase since 2008.²

On the following pages, we highlight eight notable research findings. Unless otherwise noted, all findings are based upon results at the individual level taken from the citation below (as well as prior years of the Statistical Supplement). While food insecurity is measured at the household level but not necessarily experienced directly by every member of a household, Feeding America has chosen to consider results about all individuals living in food-insecure households because we assume that the negative effects of food insecurity within a household are also having some negative effect on all household members.

Source for 2022 data in this document:

Rabbitt, M.P., Hales, L.J., Burke, M.P., & Coleman-Jensen, A. (2023). *Statistical supplement to household food security in the United States in 2022* (Report No. AP-119). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://doi.org/10.32747/2023.8134352.ers>

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¹ In 2014, 48.1 million individuals (15.4%) including 15.3 million children (20.9%) lived in food-insecure households.

² The increase from 2007 to 2008 in food insecurity among all individuals was approximately 34%.

Notable Research Findings

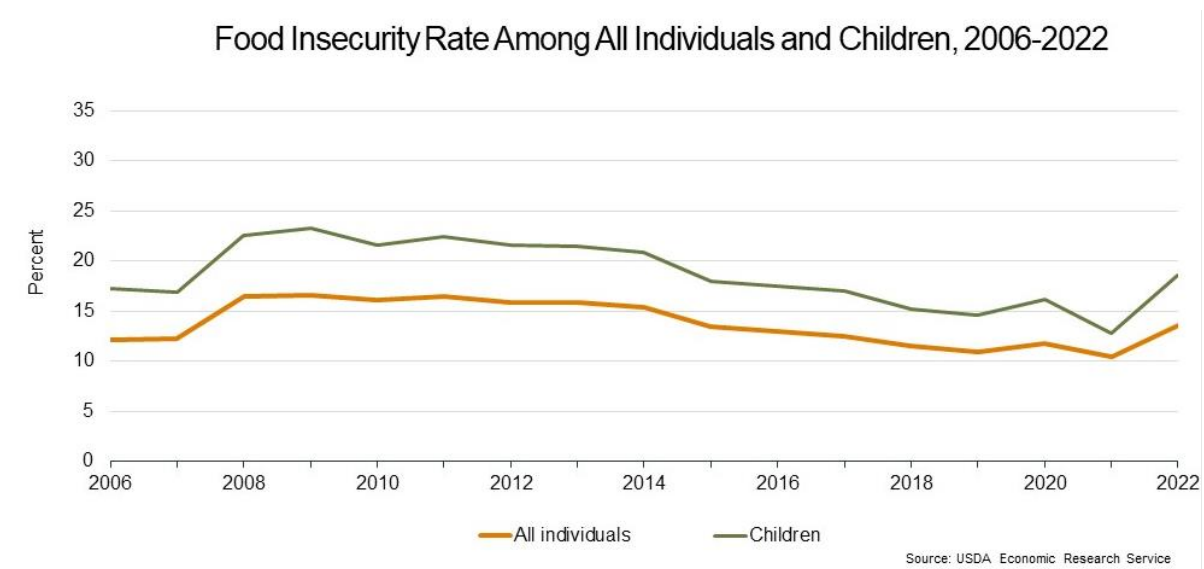
1. 44 million people (1 in 7) experienced food insecurity in 2022 – 10 million more compared to 2021

Food insecurity levels dipped to record lows in 2021, but nearly a decade of decline was reversed in 2022 as the rate among all individuals jumped by 30 percent, from 10.4% to 13.5%. The overall food insecurity rate and the number of people living in food-insecure households is now the highest it has been since 2014, and the change is the largest one-year increase since 2008. (See Figure 1 and 2.)

2. 13 million children (1 in 5) experienced food insecurity in 2022 – 4 million more compared to 2021

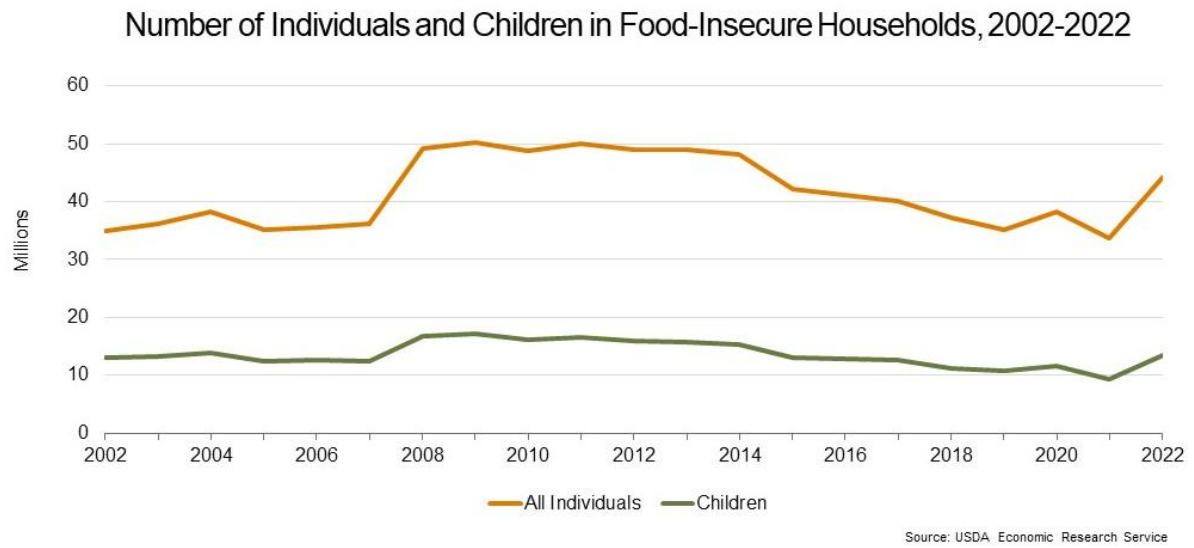
Similar to the overall population, in 2021 the food insecurity rate among children (12.8%) reached the lowest it has been since the USDA began measuring food insecurity in the mid-1990s, but 2022 has brought a similarly sharp increase, rising by 45% to 18.5%. In September 2023, the U.S. Census Bureau released its annual reports about poverty and income, which revealed that the child poverty rate more than doubled between 2021 and 2022.³ The increase first in the supplemental child poverty measure and now in child food insecurity highlights the effects of the expiration of many programs including the Child Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax credit, and the end of stimulus payments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. (See Figure 1 and 2.)

Figure 1.



³ The significant increase in poverty was observed through the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). While the official poverty measure focuses on cash income, the SPM accounts for programs designed to assist low-income families and individuals that are not included in the official poverty measure, including the Child Tax Credit and COVID-19 stimulus payments.

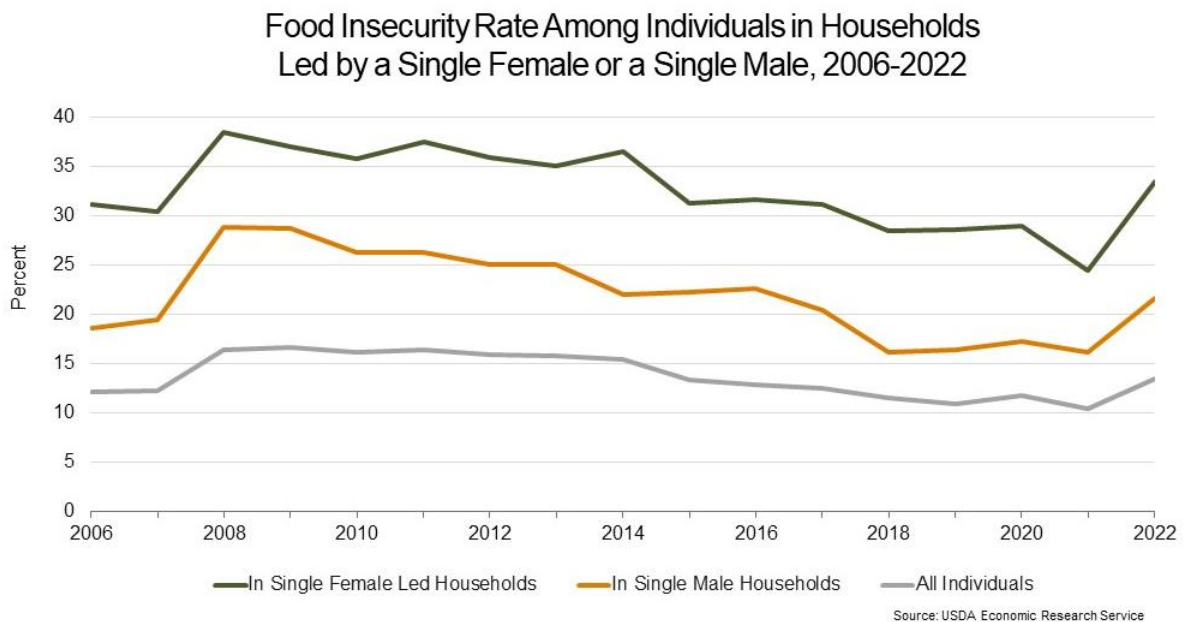
Figure 2.



3. Food insecurity in single-parent households is especially high – Up to 1 in 3

Food insecurity among members of households with children led by a single female rose significantly from 2021 to 2022, from 24% to almost 34% (1 in 3), a change of +37%. Food insecurity among members of households with children led by a single male rose at a similar rate (+33%), from 16% to almost 22% (1 in 5). (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3.



4. Racial disparities declined, but food insecurity remains disproportionately high among communities of color

Between 2021 and 2022, there was a decline in food insecurity disparities by race – defined as the food insecurity rate for Black and Latino (Hispanic) individuals relative to the food insecurity rate for white individuals. However, food insecurity increased for all three populations, with the decrease in disparity driven mainly by an especially large increase in food insecurity among white people. Year-over-year changes aside, Black and Latino individuals continue to be more than two times as likely to experience food insecurity compared to white people. (See Table 1 and Figure 4.)

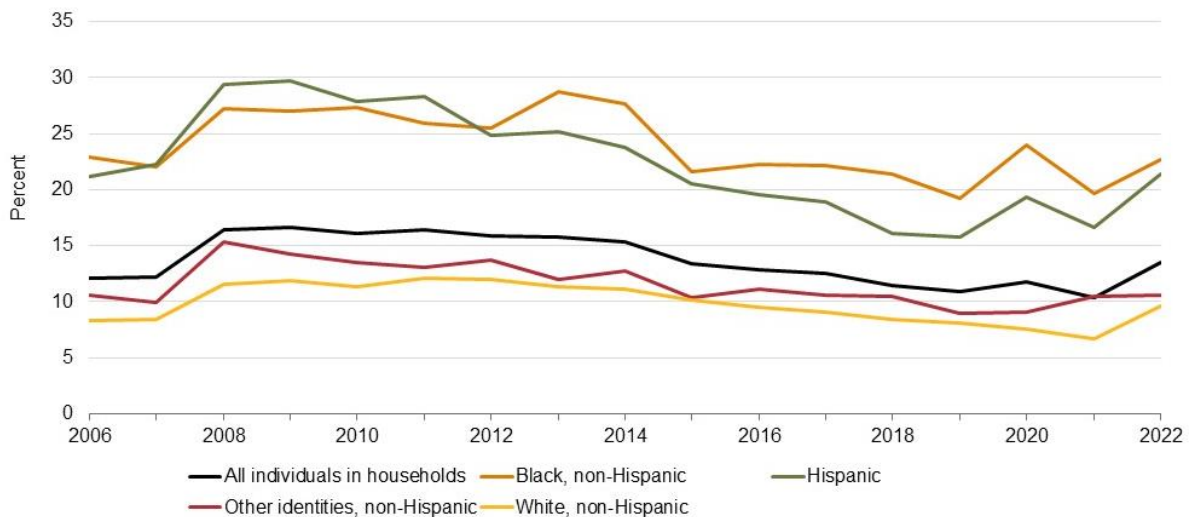
Table 1. Food Insecurity Rates and Racial Disparities Among Black, Latino, and White Individuals (2021-2022)

| Year | Black Individuals | | Latino Individuals | | White Individuals |
|------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Food Insecurity Rate | Rate compared to white individuals | Food Insecurity Rate | Rate compared to white individuals | Food Insecurity Rate |
| 2022 | 22.7% | 2.4 times | 21.4% | 2.2 times | 9.6% |
| 2021 | 19.7% | 2.9 times | 16.6% | 2.5 times | 6.7% |

Source: Calculations based on data from USDA Economic Research Service.

Figure 4.

Food Insecurity Rate Among Individuals by Race/Ethnicity, 2006-2022

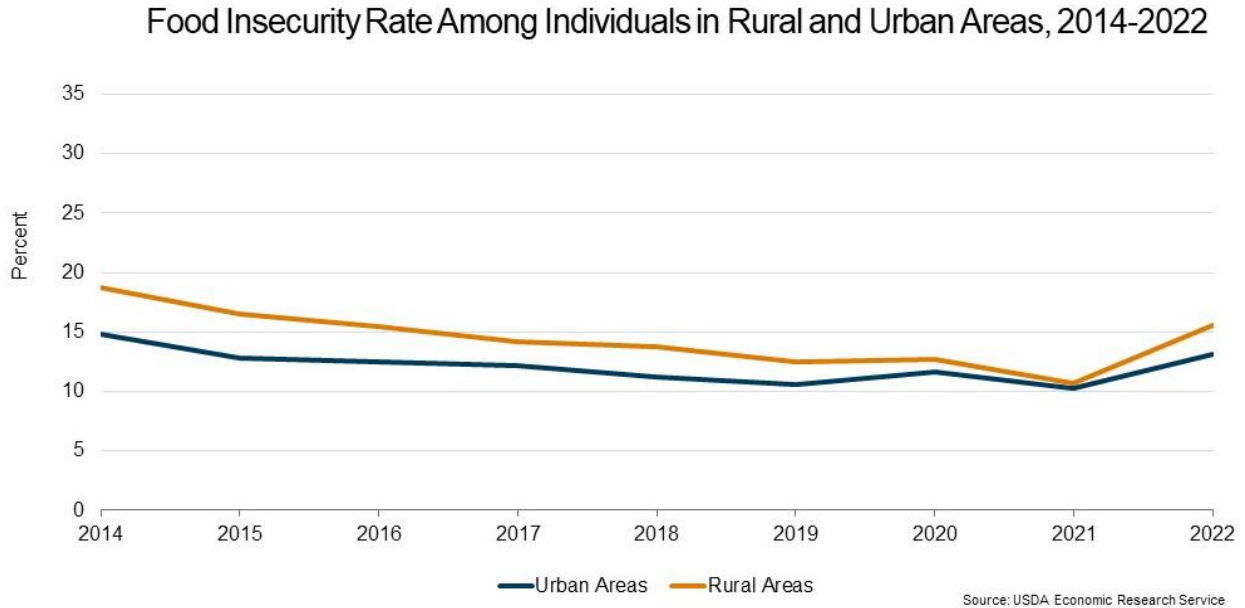


Source: USDA Economic Research Service

5. Geographically, food insecurity was highest in rural areas, cities, and the South (16%)

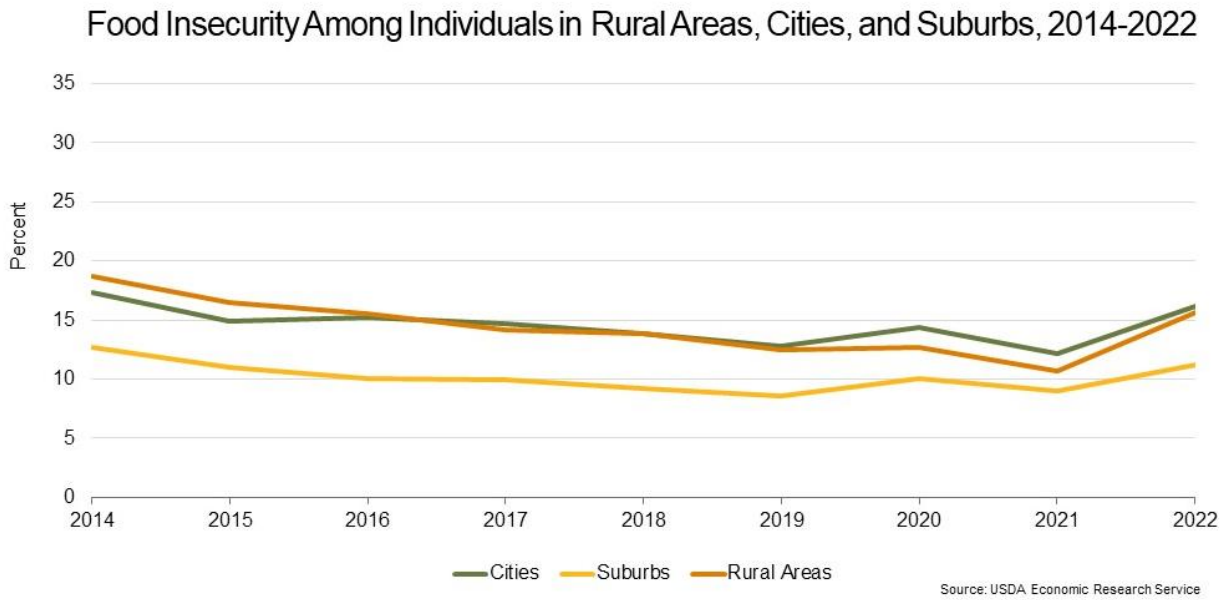
When considering metropolitan (urban) and nonmetropolitan (rural) areas, food insecurity 2022 was higher in rural areas (15.6%) compared to urban areas (13.1%). (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5.



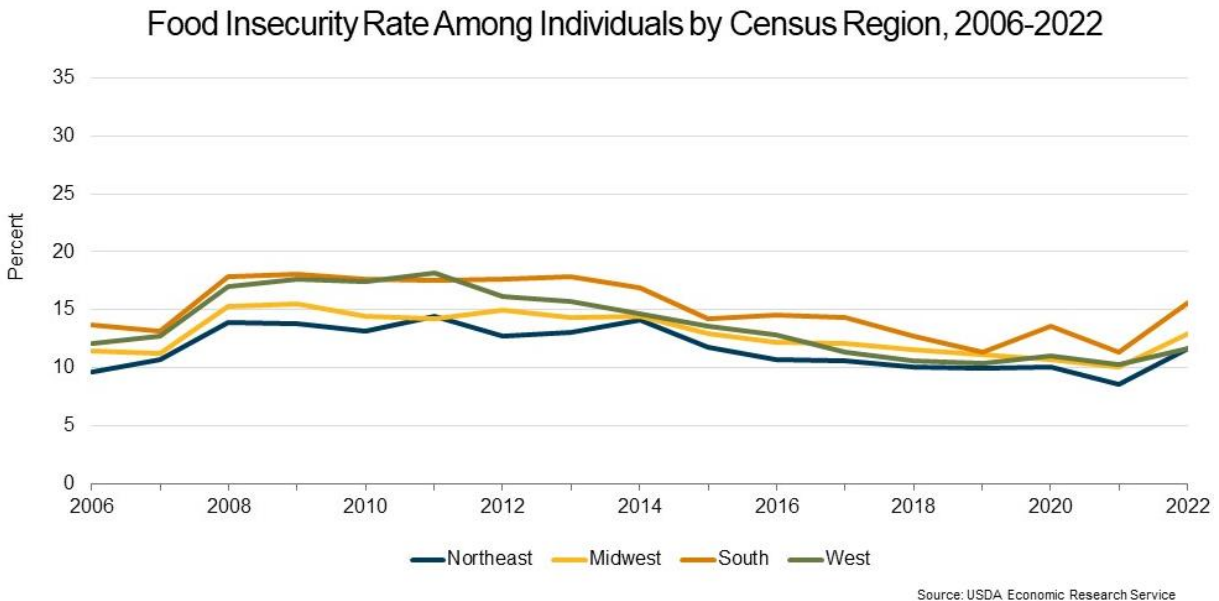
Urban areas are comprised of principal cities and suburbs (urban areas not in principal cities), and when those two areas are considered separately alongside rural areas, food insecurity was similar in rural areas (15.6%) and cities (16.2%) and lower in suburbs (11.2%). (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6.



Among the four Census regions in the country, food insecurity among individuals living in the South was the highest (15.6%) and increased the most (+37%) from 2021 to 2022. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7.

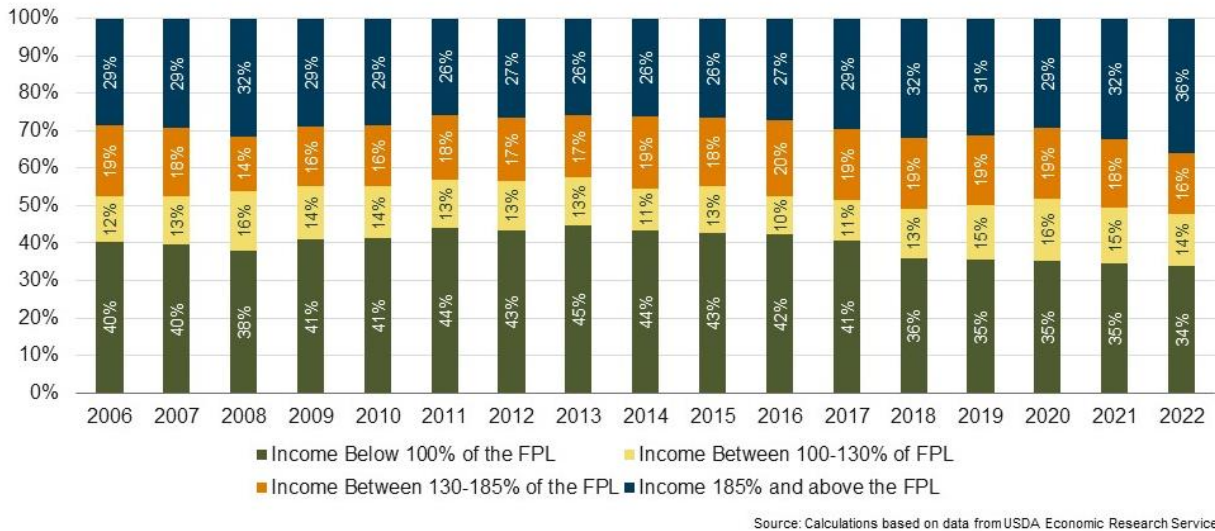


6. 36% of people experiencing food insecurity may be ineligible for federal programs

Even though income is inversely related to food insecurity, many of the people who experience food insecurity have income above the federal poverty line (FPL), and an increased share – 36% - have income above 185% of the FPL. In 2022, this amounts to more than 13 million people who had difficulty making ends meet but also had an income level that was too high to qualify for most federal food assistance benefits. For people in this situation, the charitable food system can be a critical support. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8.

Percent of Food-Insecure Individuals by Household Income, 2006-2022

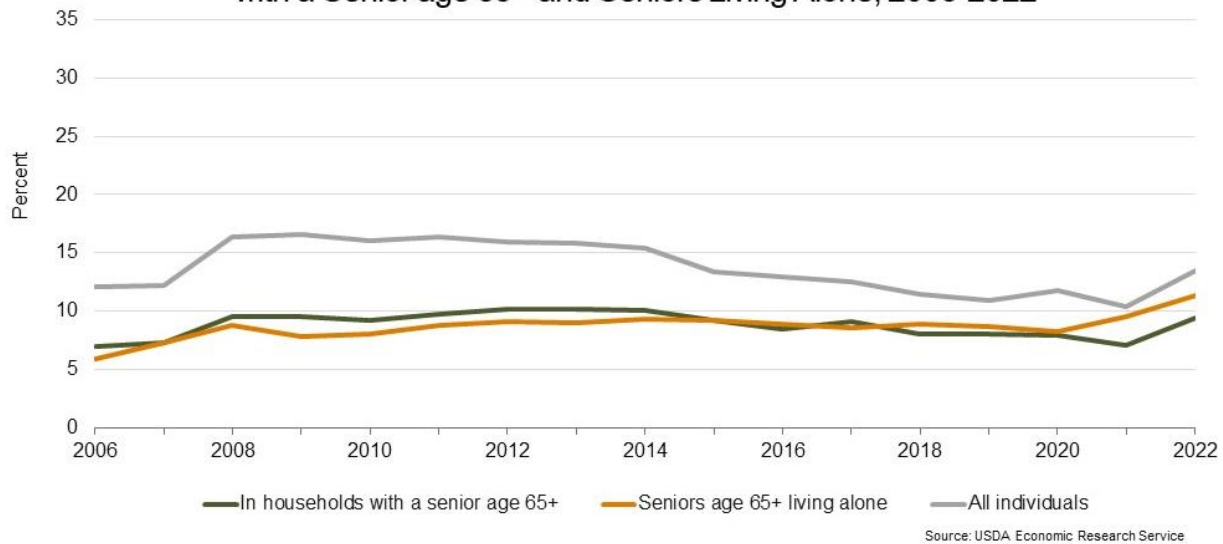


7. Two million more senior household members experienced food insecurity in 2022

Food insecurity continues to be lower among seniors compared to younger people, but seniors were not spared when it came to increasing food insecurity from 2021 to 2022. The food insecurity rate among individuals living in households with a senior age 65+ rose from 7.1% in 2021 to 9.4% in 2022 (1 in 11), which was an increase of 32% and equivalent to two million more people. The rate was even higher among seniors 65+ living alone, at 11.4% (1 in 9). (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9.

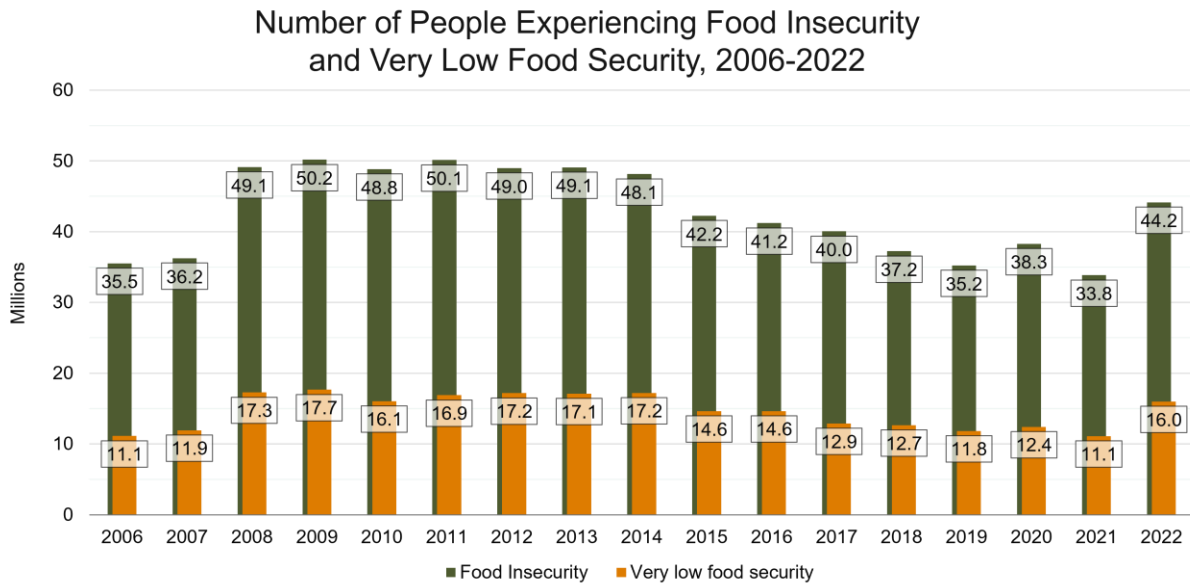
Food Insecurity Rate Among Individuals in Households with a Senior age 65+ and Seniors Living Alone, 2006-2022



8. 16 million people experienced a more severe level of food insecurity in 2022

Among the 44 million people who experienced food insecurity in 2022, more than one third - nearly 16 million people – experienced a more severe level of food insecurity referred to as *very low food security*, which is characterized by reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns at times during the year because of limited money and other resources for obtaining food. (See Figure 10.)

Figure 10.



Source: USDA Economic Research Service