Food Insecurity in the United States of America: A Comparison between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), also known as COVID-19, altered everyday life in the United States of America and around the world. In 2020, 20,727,942 people residing in the United States of America were infected, with 356,666 succumbing to the virus.” I(Center for Disease Control 2021). Social distancing measures discouraged in-person interaction which led to many businesses, schools, and food services having to operate at reduced capacity or to close completely (Ryan 2021). Soon after, revenues declined, employees were dismissed, and numerous businesses were forced to file bankruptcy (Pak et al. 2020). Consequently, the number of people in the United States of America who struggle to put food on the table has increased. Newspaper and media outlets showed long lines of people seeking assistance from food banks across the USA (Leddy et al. 2020). In summation, the economic ramification of spread mitigations strategies caused a severe economic crisis and a rapid increase in food insecurity.

The pandemic is not the first economic crisis to bring about food insecurity in the United States of America. The Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009) caused by the collapse of the U.S. housing bubble, also left a substantial number of residents of the USA unemployed and food insecure (Gundersen & Ziliak 2018). To save the USA economy, the federal government

approved unprecedented fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies (Christiano et al. 2015). Experts credit these policies for the economic recovery and argue generous government intervention prevented a worse outcome (i.e., Blinder & Zandi 2010; Lui et al. 2013). While significant amounts of recovery aid were given to (financial) corporations which recouped rather quickly, much of the negative effects brought on by the Great Recession such as unemployment, rising food prices, and food insecurity were felt years beyond its official end date of June 2009 (Grusky, Western, & Wimmer 2008; Redbird & Grusky 2016). This chapter compares food insecurity rates among adults and children during the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. We analyze the causes and mitigation strategies to prevent rising food insecurity rates brought on by economic crises, lastly, we offer short-term and long-term recommendations to prevent and reduce food insecurity in the future.

FOOD INSECURITY IN AMERICA

The lack of access to adequate nutrition is a persistent problem in the United States of America, with significant spikes during the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic (Myers & Painter, 2017). Feeding America - a network of more than 200 food banks across the USA - defines food security as, “having access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members (Feeding America 2014).” Research by Feeding America shows that during the peak of food insecurity in 2010, caused by the Great Recession, 15.7% of adults did not meet the criteria of being food secure (Gundersen et al. 2012). When the economy recovered, food insecurity rates dropped slowly for adults to 15.2% in 2012, 15.2% in 2014, 13% in 2016, and 12.17% in 2018, demonstrating that recovery to pre-Great-Recession food-security

rates took nearly a decade (Gundersen et al. 2012). The food-insecurity rates for children, whose development is more severely threatened by the lack of healthful nutrition, are much higher and rise faster in times of economic downturn with 23.4% at its peak as an outcome from the Great Recession in 2010, 22.7% in 2012, 22.5% in 2014, 18.1% in 2016, and 16.9% in 2018 (Gundersen et al. 2012) (see Table 1). Estimates for October 2020 from Feeding America already project a more significant rise in food insecurity due to COVID-19 than during the Great Recession with a food insecurity rate of 15.99% for adults and 24.27% for children. These estimates for October 2020 are based on alternative models as contemporary data is not yet available, and thereby have greater margins of error (Gundersen et al. 2020). Given the higher-than-expected infection rates and deaths in the Fall of 2020, the Winter of 2020/2021, and new lockdowns in various states and cities, the food insecurity rates are likely to be underestimated in these latest models (USDA 2021). Food insecurity is a salient problem in the USA, as the lack of sufficient and healthful nutrition can lead to a variety of serious long-term negative outcomes, especially in children, including declining mental health (Elgar et al. 2020), reduced academic performance (Lee et al. 2018), and poor physical health (Cook et al. 2006). Furthermore, studies show food-insecure families are particularly vulnerable to pandemics as they are more prone to infection and succumbing to the virus (Wolfson & Leung 2020). Therefore, food insecurity is a critical social justice issue which requires an immediate and long-term priority on the USA policy agenda.

- Table 1 here

FOOD PRICES AND AVAILABILITY

65 The academic literature demonstrates that protectionist policies by key exporting
66 countries, panic-buying and increased demand in importing countries, and risks and uncertainties
67 on the global market led to rising food prices during and after the Great Recession (Aday & Aday
68 2020; Gundersen & Ziliak 2018; US Department of State 2011; Perz et al. 2018). In particular, the
69 prices of nutritionally valuable foods such as fruits, vegetables, and eggs increased significantly
70 during the Great Recession (Mead et al. 2020). Early in the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, people
71 of the USA feared supply challenges and started hoarding food, disinfectants, and toilet paper
72 (Garbe, Rau, & Toppe 2020). This response is not entirely unwarranted because COVID-19
73 restricted the movement of workers, caused changes in consumer demand, forced certain
74 production facilities to temporarily close, increased the restriction of food trade policies, and
75 created financial challenges in the food supply chain (Aday & Aday 2020). Early in the pandemic,
76 the United States experienced an oversupply of meats, fish, and dairy due to limited demand
77 from the hospitality and tourism industry. However, many links in the supply chain, such as
78 producers, wholesalers, and retailers, have managed to reinvent themselves by quickly
79 redirecting from restaurants and institutional customers to retail markets (Nicola et al. 2020; US
80 Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). This shift was partly possible because of effective collaboration
81 with the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which offered flexibility. For
82 example, the FDA extended delivery hours to replenish supermarkets, in addition to lifting some
83 of the packaging and labeling requirements for certain foods to redirect the oversupply caused
84 by reduced away-from-home meals and increased retail demand (FDA 2020; Mazili 2020; Reiley
85 2020; Nicola et al. 2020). As a result of a swift reorganization in the U.S. agri-food system,
86 concurrent with the plummeting oil values which comprise a substantial portion of the cost of

food production, food prices remained relatively stable (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). In other words, while rising food prices can be partially to blame for food insecurity during the Great Recession, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 did not have the same effect. To illustrate, the data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020) showed food prices increased in June 2008 on average by about 15% compared to June 2007, while the price difference between June 2020 and June 2019 was less than 3% (for price increases for specific products, see Table 1).

- Table 2 here

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER AND RACE

Now that we have established food availability and affordability has remained relatively stable compared to pre-COVID-19 levels, we evaluate another major crisis, rising levels of unemployment (Kochhar 2020). Both the Great Recession and the health crisis of COVID-19 had immense economic impact resulting in mass unemployment. We find the unemployment rate for workers active in the labor market was significantly higher in May 2020 at 13% than at the unemployment peak of the Great Recession in 2020 at 10% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). With voluntary and mandatory lockdowns, the dynamics of unemployment are dissimilar to the Great Recession, with many blue-collar workers being dismissed while communications technology allowed many white-collar workers to work remotely (Akkermans, Richardson & Kraimer 2020). One of the most notable hard-hit demographic group is women, with an unemployment rate of 14.3%. at the height in May 2020, compared to men with an unemployment rate of 11.9%. The demographic statistics are drastically different compared to the height of the Great Recession in July 2010 when the unemployment rate was 9.4% and 12.3%

for women and men respectively (Bateman & Ross 2020). Moreover, minorities have been more affected than Whites as we see a 16.7% unemployment rate for Asian women, 17.2% for black women, and 19.5% for Hispanic women, compared to an 11.9% unemployment rate for White women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Immigrant workers were also substantially impacted, especially unauthorized ones, who are more vulnerable to job loss during economic crises. Education is a protective factor against economic downfall with an unemployment rate for bachelor holders at 7.2% in May 2020 vs 5.3% at the Great Recession peak, the workforce with some college education had an unemployment rate of 12.9% vs 9.0%, high school graduates suffered an unemployment rate of 15% vs 11.9%, and those without a high school diploma were most likely to be unemployed at 18.5% in May 2020 vs 17.9% during the Great Recession (for unemployment statistics by demographics see Table 2).

Women constitute most employees in education and hospitality, some of the hardest-hit sectors during COVID-19, which explains at least in part why women are experiencing more job impact (Kochhar 2020). Millions of women, particularly single parents, were already struggling to support not only themselves but also their families on low wages before the lockdowns (Blau & Kahn 2017; Lu et al. 2020). The challenges women face in the labor market are not new as for decades low wages have long been associated with female-dominated occupations (Power 2020). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of women and their families into greater financial difficulties. Analysts at Brookings observed based on the 2018 American Community Survey data, that 46% of women worked in low paying jobs, with median earnings of \$10.93 per hour before COVID-19 (Bateman & Ross 2020). Black (54%) and Hispanic women (64%) are more likely to be in low-earning jobs than White women (40%).

Fifteen percent of these low-earning women are single parents, 63% are in their prime working years (ages 25-54), and 57% are working full time, suggesting the work is not solely a side job. 41% percent of female workers live in households that earn less than 200% of the federal poverty level (which is comparable to approximately \$43,000 for a family of three) (*Ibidem*). Many women who were able to maintain their employment struggled too, because female-dominated positions such as healthcare, education, hospitality, and cleaning have limited options for telework. These women must physically go to work, thereby increasing the risk of contracting COVID-19 and contaminating their families (Baker, Peckham & Seixas 2020; Fisher et al. 2020). Working mothers are further burdened with finding and paying for childcare since schools and daycares are often operating at reduced hours or being closed entirely due to COVID-19 (Zammaro, Perez-Arce, & Prados 2020). Therefore, women with young children need to find alternative and affordable childcare arrangements that are not always available (Petts, Carlson, & Pepin 2020; Morrissey 2020). Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic particularly threatens the livelihoods of low-income families, women, and minorities, groups already facing social inequalities.

- Table 3 here

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND EMPLOYEE PAID LEAVE

In times of economic downturn, unemployment insurance is vital to making ends meet for families when jobs abruptly disappear. In 1935 the United States established a federal-state unemployment insurance program to temporarily help laid-off workers if they are actively looking for a new job (Wandner 2019). Although unemployment benefits vary state by state,

151 most states provide up to 26 weeks of benefits to replace about half of a worker's last earned
152 wages with a capped maximum. In the past decade, unemployment insurance payments were
153 about \$387 per week nationwide, with the lowest average unemployment insurance benefits in
154 Mississippi at \$215 per week to the highest average unemployment insurance benefits of \$550
155 per week in Massachusetts. Since payments are capped, unemployment insurance benefits
156 substitute a higher percentage of the last earned wages of lower-income workers than of higher-
157 income workers (Kovalski & Sheiner 2020). Unfortunately, in a major crisis such as the Great
158 Recession, regular unemployment insurance benefits do not sufficiently help to keep affected
159 workers and their families afloat. Hence, during the Great Recession, Congress enacted the
160 Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which temporarily extended the
161 unemployment insurance benefit duration from 26 weeks to 99 weeks (Hagedorn et al. 2013).
162 The Emergency Unemployment Compensation program only provided benefits to those eligible
163 for regular state unemployment insurance benefits. Additionally, in 2009, Congress signed the
164 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which directed benefits to workers including a weekly
165 compensation increase of \$25 for all recipients of unemployment assistance programs and
166 "suspended income taxation of the first \$2,400 of unemployment benefits received for taxable
167 years beginning after December 31, 2008 (Congressional Research Service 2020: 8)." Research
168 shows government stimulus packages were critical, but not enough, in protecting the most
169 vulnerable and rebuilding the economy. Despite resistance the American Recovery Reinvestment
170 act was terminated on December 29, 2012 (National Employment Law Project 2012; Boteach,
171 2012).

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented job loss and changed life-work dynamics across the United States, Congress approved the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in March 2020, which offered a one-time \$1200 stimulus payment for all adults regardless of employment status and an additional \$500 per dependent (Edmondson 2020). The FFCRA also increased unemployment insurance benefits by \$600 per week from March 2020 to July 2020 to help families pay for necessities (Department of Labor 2020). While research shows families on unemployment benefits were more likely to become food insecure (Raifman et al. 2021), Republicans and Democrats could not reach an agreement for an extension of the relief package to distribute additional unemployment compensation. Republicans argued the additional \$600 per week was too high, therefore workers would rather stay home and collect unemployment benefits than go back to work. Democrats contended there was not sufficient work available, moreover, the additional unemployment benefits would boost the economy (Werner 2020). The Republican party made a counterproposal which offered 70 percent of the last earned wages starting in October, in addition to a \$200 per week bonus until then. Democrats rejected this proposal maintaining the assistance was not sufficient and would take too long for states to set up a new unemployment insurance program. During these negotiations, unemployed workers did not receive any much-needed compensation (Long 2020). Eventually, in late December Congress approved a new relief package which pays an additional \$300 per week between December 27, 2020, and March 13, 2021 (Terrell 2020). Typically, people who fall in certain categories such as workers who leave their jobs voluntarily, students & recent graduates, self-employed & freelancer workers, and undocumented & immigrants will not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits (Long & Bhattacharai 2020). However, to offer affected

families in crisis additional assistance the FFCRA expanded eligibility to include part-time workers, freelancers, independent contractors, and the self-employed (Department of Labor 2020). Yet, undocumented migrant workers and those seeking their first jobs such as new high school and college graduates are not covered by the temporary pandemic relief packages (Kru & Brantley 2020; Haar 2021).

In addition to job loss, many individuals were suddenly unable to go back to work because of childcare needs or fear of exposure to the virus and potential transmission to themselves and/or vulnerable family members (Petts, Carlson & Pepin 2020). Therefore, the FFCRA made the requirements for availability to work more flexible. For instance, it waived the requirement to be actively looking for work, eliminated one-week waiting periods, and workers can quit for certain reasons which are deemed a ‘good cause’ such as to escape a domestic violence situation, taking care of an immediate family member, or to accompany a spouse who is relocating for employment (Department of Labor 2020). The Department of Labor also enacted new paid leave regulations, which allows workers to take “up to two weeks of paid sick leave at the employee’s regular rate of pay where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined, and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis (Department of Labor 2020).” Workers can also request “up to twelve weeks of paid family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee’s regular rate of pay, where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or childcare provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19 (*Ibidem* 2020).”

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

In times of personal or national crises, individuals and their families rely on government food assistance. To assist vulnerable families, the Food Stamp program was established in 1939 as a way to help unemployed citizens of the USA during the Great Depression (1928-1939) (USDA 2018; Wilde & Nord 2005). During the Great Recession (2007-2009), the program was revamped under the new name Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and 'stamps' or 'coupons' were replaced with Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards (Bleich et al 2020). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 invested \$45.2 billion to increase monthly benefits for an average of \$133 per individual, or a 13.6% increase for food-insecure recipients (Nord & Prell 2011). However, this recovery act expired in 2013, resulting in a benefit decrease of 5% of the total SNAP budget or about \$10 per participant per month¹ (Center of Budget and Policy Priorities 2013). During the Great Recession not only were the benefits increased, but also the number of individuals and their families filing for food assistance to get additional assistance rose significantly (see Table 4). While the number of participants decreased after its peak in 2013, due to rising and persistent social inequality, participation in SNAP never went back to levels as low as prior to the Great Recession.(USDA 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic applications for SNAP participation is increasing and the United States government has made several adjustments to meet the rising demand. To reduce levels of acute food insecurity resulting from the unforeseen ramifications of the pandemic, the USDA allows states to increase benefits to the maximum for SNAP participants

¹ Specific benefits may vary depending on household size and state

who previously did not qualify for the full amount. Furthermore, states may provide food replacement for children who would otherwise have received free or reduced-price meals from schools. Finally, to reduce the risk of infection, the USDA piloted an online purchasing program and approved flexible regulations to help states to manage increased workloads to ensure low-income individuals and their families can gain and maintain access to EBT cards (Center of Budget and Policy Priorities 2020). Six days after the 2021 Presidential inauguration, Biden used an executive order to expand the SNAP benefit by 15% for all recipients, which should assist families with rising food costs, especially because children are missing free or reduced-cost breakfasts and lunches at school which proved an effective strategy against childhood food insecurity (Bartfeld & Ahn 2011; Nova & Reinike 2021).

While SNAP is critical in reducing food insecurity, it does not completely solve the food insecurity problem as many food insecure individuals and their families are ineligible for SNAP participation. To be eligible for participation, individuals must have a net income under the federal poverty line (income limits are higher in Hawaii and Alaska) which is \$1,064 net a month for an individual and \$2,184 net a month for a family of four. Furthermore, households should have \$2,250 in countable resources or less, with the exception of \$3,500 or less if at least one member of the household is 60 years or older or disabled (USDA 2020). The home is not included in the countable resources, however other possessions such as vehicles do count as a resource for SNAP purposes (although some exceptions apply for example if the individual/family lives in the vehicle or the vehicle is needed for income-generating purposes such as truck or taxi drivers). Students and undocumented immigrants generally cannot apply for food assistance. Maximum monthly allotments range from \$234 for an individual to \$782 for a family of four but vary from

state to state (*Ibidem*). At times individuals may not qualify for SNAP participation or the benefits are insufficient and consequently need to resort to other resources to meet their needs.

Table 4 here

FOOD BANKS AND THE FARMER TO FAMILIES FOOD BOX PROGRAM

Food banks are integral in supplementing the nutritional needs for food-insecure individuals and their families as government subsidies such as unemployment insurance and SNAP do not cover the need for some social groups or are insufficient. In such cases, individuals can resort to charitable organizations such as food banks to meet their nutritional needs. Reliance on food banks has increased tremendously over time and spiked during economic crisis. Using data from the 2002–2019 December Current Population Survey, Zeliak (2020) showed that the receipt of charitable food among adults ages 18 and older increased over 70% from 5.7% in 2002 to 9.8% in 2015. While reliance on food banks declined slightly to 9.1% in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented demand with 14.5% in June 2020 of the sample indicating having received charitable food that month. Feeding America’s research showed a 55% increase in demand for food assistance in the January to March 2021 compared to the year before (Feeding America 2021). With COVID-19 still ravaging throughout the USA as of the time of writing, the numbers above show that the reliance on food banks is substantially larger than during the Great Recession. In addition to increased demand, since the pandemic began food banks have been increasingly under pressure to mitigate food insecurity because of decreased food donations and fewer available volunteers (Feeding America 2014). Even with a potentially successful vaccination campaign underway, the economic setback for individuals and their

278 families across the United States should not be underestimated as the effects are likely to be
279 protracted.

280 One measure to mitigate the reduced capacity of food banks and to assist producers
281 unable to sell their goods to restaurants, hotels, and other foodservice businesses is the Farmers
282 to Families Food Box Program (Broad Leib et al. 2021). The FFCRA authorized the USDA to
283 purchase produce, meat, and dairy from companies, whose sales have been directly affected by
284 altered patterns of consumption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to distribute this food
285 through food banks, community and faith-based organizations, and other non-profits to people
286 of the USA in need. The program delivered 132.8 million food boxes in 2020. As of January 2021,
287 this program has been renewed six times since May 15, 2020, and is currently expected to run
288 until April 2021 (USDA 2021).

289 DISCUSSION

290 This chapter shows the United States ought to anticipate long-term food insecurity which
291 despite mitigating measures such as unemployment insurance, increase in SNAP benefits, and
292 the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, is likely to be worse than the Great Recession. We
293 illustrated that notwithstanding the increase of government benefits, the Great Recession caused
294 a decade-long food insecurity crisis for many individuals, in particular children. Contrary to the
295 Great Recession, which particularly affected male-dominated fields such as construction workers,
296 the COVID-19 pandemic has particularly affected female-dominated professions such as those in
297 the leisure and education sectors. Furthermore, with schools operating at reduced capacity or
298 entirely online, many women are forced to (temporarily) leave their jobs as school and childcare

options are unavailable or unaffordable. Therefore families, in particular female-headed and minority households with children, have faced significant financial challenges and will struggle to feed their families adequately. While additional unemployment benefits, work leave options, expansion of SNAP, and the Farmers to Family Food Box Program offer some much-needed relief, additional support is needed to increase food security numbers in the United States, specifically for children. Therefore, we offer the following policy recommendations to mitigate the increased food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Government institutions and organizations should anticipate long-term ramifications from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Great Recession taught us that without a significant upscaling of financial assistance, such as unemployment benefits and/or SNAP, it will likely take over a decade to achieve pre-recession food security rates. Delays in extensions and expansions of much-needed relief could create new spikes in food insecurity. Therefore, the USA should be proactive in providing financial resources to prevent unhealthy coping strategies such as skipping meals to save food for later (Niles et al. 2020) as lack of nutrition will, especially in children, lead to developmental delays and negative health outcomes (Cook et al. 2006; Wolf & Morrissey 2017)
- While additional monetary assistance significantly reduced food insecurity, bureaucracy, ineligibility, lack of knowledge about available government subsidies, and limited funds despite receiving some subsidies many families are left without food. Therefore, food banks and charity organizations play a crucial role in immediate food assistance. As demand is expected to remain high and donations low for the foreseeable future, programs such as the Farmers to Family Food Box program should be extended and

eventually gradually reduced until donations increase and demand declines.

Furthermore, the pandemic is a good opportunity to assess whether the retail sector

can increase contributions as their revenues are record high and strategic donations in

particular in produce, dairy, meat, and fish products could reduce food waste.

- Low-income families often cannot afford nor access sufficient and healthful food

options. As many schools are closed or operating at reduced capacity, events are

canceled, and doctor visits are limited, malnutrition in children may go unnoticed, and

especially recently food-insecure parents may not be aware of the available resources.

Therefore, institutions such as schools, churches, and medical staff should get assistance

to check on the well-being of children and share information (in person, through

telecommunication, and on their listservs) with parents about the importance of a

nutritionally valuable diet as well as how and where to find additional assistance such as

the nearest food bank.

- The underlying cause of food insecurity is systemic social, gender, and racial/ethnic inequality, among other forms of inequality persistent in the United States of America.

Women and members of racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to work for low wages,

to be looked over for raises and promotions, and struggle balancing work and childcare

(Bateman & Ross 2020). Financial hardships caused by gender and racial/ethnic

inequalities are further exacerbated by the pandemic, in particular in households with

children, leading to a higher risk of food insecurity (e.g., Leung et al. 2012; Huang,

Potochnick & Heflin 2018). Therefore, additional measures are necessary to reduce

gender and race/ethnic inequality such as the enforcement of affirmative action and anti-

discrimination laws, a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, paid maternity leave, and high-quality childcare to empower families to be self-sufficient.

Implementing the above policy recommendations is critical in order to avoid a potential repeat ten-year setback in the fight against food insecurity as was witnessed during the Great Recession. While immediate and short-term intervention can help keep families fed and afloat during this prolonged health and economic crisis, the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic especially for families and their children of lower social class, female-headed households, and/or minorities should not be underestimated. This chapter has shown that these already vulnerable populations have been particularly hard hit in terms of food insecurity and unemployment, childcare, and the virus itself. The US government and charity organizations have a challenging task ahead to ensure healthy development of food insecure families and reduce the ever-growing social inequality gap. Our work has examined food insecurity during two economic crises in the USA, with the intention to highlight the issue and propose useful mitigation strategies learned from the past.

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Table 1 Food Insecurity for Adults and Children During the Great Recession, Before and During Covid-19

	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Adults	15.7%	15.2%	15.2%	13%	12.17%	15.99%
Children	23.4%	22.7%	22.5%	18.1%	16.88%	24.27%

Note: This data estimates represent the state of food insecurity in the United States using the most recently available data from the Census. As such, the data does not capture the impact of COVID-19 directly. Instead, America examined how food insecurity may increase nationally and locally based on projected changes to poverty and unemployment because of the pandemic. Source: Feeding America 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Table 2 Food Prices Before and during Great Recession and before and Covid-19 Crises

	June 2007	June 2008	% change	June 2019	June 2020	% change
Bananas	0.512	0.633	21.14%	0.574	0.588	2.41%
Tomatoes	1.510	1.814	18.29	1.812	1.922	5.89%
Bread	1.193	1.373	14.03%	1.280	1.474	14.09%
Chicken	1.134	1.181	4.06%	1.590	1.747	9.41%
Beef	2.739	2.835	3.45%	3.951	4.165	5.27%
Milk	3.427	3.773	9.61%	3.054	3.255	6.37%
Eggs	1.373	1.920	33.22%	1.554	1.203	-25.46%
Mean			14.83%			2.57%

Note: Average price data in US dollars. Bananas, tomatoes, chicken, bread, and beef per Lbs., milk per gallon, and eggs per dozen. Prices not seasonally adjusted. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 3 Unemployment rate at the Peak of the Great Recession and May 2020

	<i>Peak Recession</i>	<i>May 2020</i>
All workers	10.6%	13%
Men	12.3%	11.9%
White	10.6%	9.7%
Black	21.2%	15.8%
Asian	9.7%	13.3%
Hispanic	15%	15.5%
Women	9.4%	14.3%
White	7.6%	11.9%
Black	15.3%	17.2%
Asian	8.6%	16.7%
Hispanic	13.4%	19.5%
Immigrant Status		
U.S. Born	10.3%	12.4%
Foreign Born	11.8%	15.7%
Education		
Less than High School	17.9%	18.5%
High School diploma	11.9%	15.0%
Some College	9.0%	12.9%
4-year bachelor's degree	5.3%	7.2%

Note: The unemployment rate reflects individuals in the labor force actively looking for work, ages and 16 older (25 and older for the education category), non-seasonally adjusted. Estimates for the Great Recession refer to the highest unemployment rate record for each group; The earliest peak was June 2009 for Asian women and the latest July 2010 for white and Hispanic women; the earliest peak was July 2009 for workers with at least a 4-year bachelor's degree and the latest in August 2020 for workers with some college education. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 4 National Level of Annual Summary of SNAP Participation and Costs

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2020
N	33,490	44,709	47,636	45,767	42,317	35,703	42,995
\$	50,359	71,810	76,066	69,645	63,711	55,621	36,335

Note: Cost is presented in millions of USD. FY 2020 participation data are from April and preliminary; Cost is up to July 10th, 2020; data may include disaster assistance. Data is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>