



# How household food insecurity is classified matters for monitoring and research

Men, Fei & Li, Tim. "How household food insecurity is classified matters for monitoring and research."  
*CRDCN research-policy snapshots*. January 2023

## What the researcher(s) did

Canada and the United States monitor food insecurity using the same 18-item questionnaire but with different classification schemes to determine food insecurity status and severity. The researchers examined how estimates of food insecurity and its association with adults' health in Canada differ when applying the different schemes from the two countries.

## What the researcher(s) found

The prevalence and distribution of food insecurity in Canada differed depending on the classification scheme used, primarily for moderate food insecurity. However, associations between food insecurity, including the marginal category, and poor health outcomes, based on self-reported and objective measures (e.g. hospitalization), were similar across the schemes applied.

## RDC Datasets used

**Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) 2005–2017**

**Discharge Abstract Database (DAD) 2003–2017**

**Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database (CVSD) 2005–2017**

## Policy areas this research can inform

- Government
- Health
- Statistical methods

## Policy implications of this research

As interest in food insecurity monitoring grows, it's critical for researchers and policy-makers to consider how food insecurity is classified and exercise caution when comparing findings across studies. Despite using the same questionnaire in the US and Canada, a nontrivial share of food-insecure households in Canada would be considered food secure in the US. However, such difference should not prevent Canada-US comparisons for associations with health outcomes. The finding that adults with marginal food insecurity have worse health than those without indication of food insecurity also highlights the need to recognize it as a distinct category in monitoring and research.

## Read the full article

Men, F., & Tarasuk, V. (2022). Classification Differences in Food Insecurity Measures between the United States and Canada: Practical Implications for Trend Monitoring and Health Research. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 152(4), 1082-1090. doi:10.1093/jn/nxab447

