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## Household Food Security in the Mountain West, 2021

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**HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST, 2021**

**Health Fact Sheet No. 21 | February 2023**

Prepared by: Zachary Walusek, Corryn Richardson, Issac Hernandez-Alcaraz, Annie Vong,  
Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

**PURPOSE:**

This fact sheet examines data on household food security published by the United States Department of Agriculture.<sup>1</sup> We examine the prevalence of household food insecurity and very low food security in Mountain West states (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah) and the United States national average for comparative analysis.

**ABOUT THE DATA:**

The United States Department of Agriculture collected data on “Household Food Security in the United States in 2021” to examine the status of food security in American households through 2021. The original report is based on data from the December 2021 Current Population Survey, which 42,949 households completed. This fact sheet focuses on the 2021 Food Security Supplement portion of the survey, completed by 30,343 households. This represents a small sample of the 132 million households in the United States. The food security survey asked one adult respondent per home about food insecurity experiences and behaviors. Questions asked within the food survey measured if respondents lacked the ability to buy whole meals, if they had to reduce meal sizes, or if they did not have money for food, causing them to be hungry. The number of food-insecure conditions reported by the household determined the household’s food security status. Food insecurity is influenced by both household and state-level factors such as average wages, housing prices, unemployment, state-level policies that affect access to nutrition assistance programs, state-earned income tax credits, and unemployment insurance.

**KEY TERMS:**

Food Secure Households	A household that meets the criteria that all people in the household always have access to enough food for an active, healthy life.
Food Insecure Households	Any household that was, “at times, unable to acquire adequate food for one or more household members because they had insufficient money and other resources for food.” This description includes Low Food Security households and Very Low Food Security households, but is used as the specific description for Low Food Security households.
Very Low Food Security Households	A household “in which the food intake of one or more members was reduced and eating patterns disrupted because of insufficient money and other resources for food.”

**KEY FINDINGS:**

1. Among Mountain West states, New Mexico has the highest percentage of households facing food insecurity (11.5%) and very low food security (4.5%).
2. In the Mountain West, Arizona has the lowest percentage of households facing food insecurity (10.1%) and very low food security (3.1%).
3. Colorado (9.1%-10.5%) and Utah (9.8%-11.2%) are the only two Mountain West states to experience a rise in food insecurity from 2016-2018 to 2019-2021.
4. Arizona had the greatest decline (-2.0%) in very low food security from 2016-2018 to 2019-2021.
5. New Mexico and Nevada are the only two Mountain West states to have a higher average percentage of very low food security than the national average for all three time periods: 2009-2011, 2016-2018, and 2019-2021.

<sup>1</sup> Alisha Coleman-Jensen et. al, “Household Food Security in the United States in 2021,” (2022). *U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service*. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=8969.2>

Table 1 displays the percentage of households that experienced food insecurity. The state with the highest percentage of households with food insecurity is New Mexico (11.5%) and the state with the lowest percentage of households is Arizona (10.1%). Compared to the national percentage of households facing food insecurity (10.4%), only two states have a lower percentage: Arizona (10.1%) and Nevada (10.2%). Three states with a higher percentage of food insecurity are: Colorado (10.5%), Utah (11.2%), and New Mexico (11.5%).

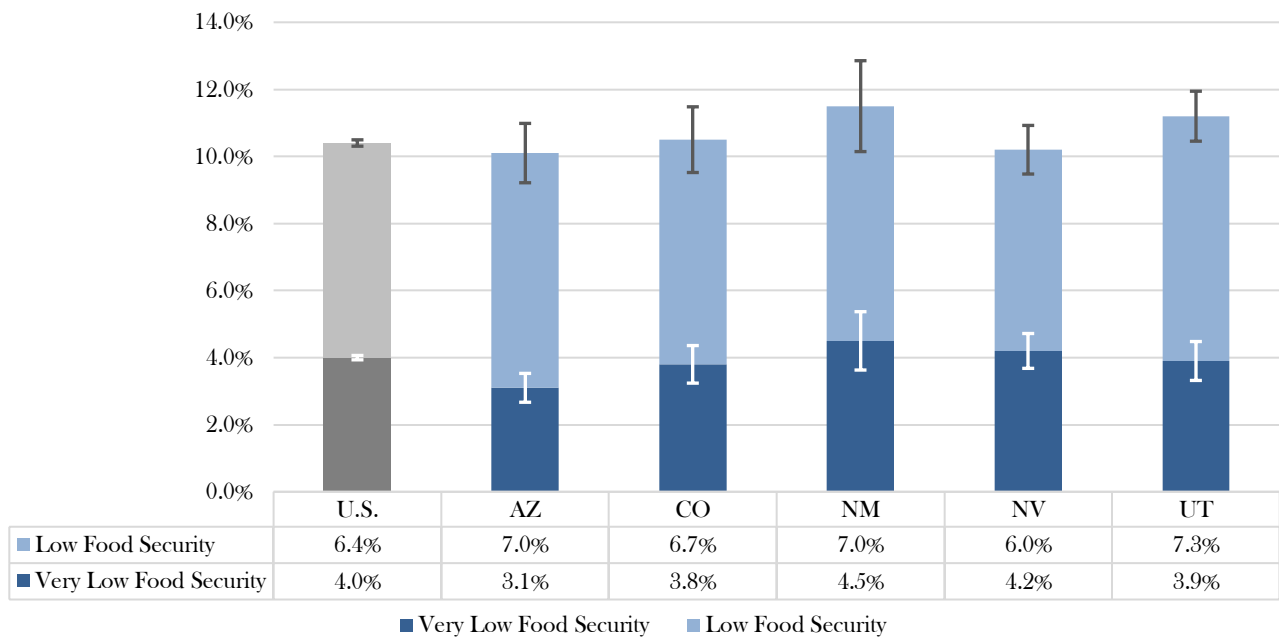
**Table 1: Prevalence of Food Insecurity & Very Low Food Security in the Mountain West, 2019-2021**

State	Number of Households	Interviewed	Food Insecurity		Very Low Food Security	
			Prevalence	Margin of Error	Prevalence	Margin of Error
U.S.	130,708,000	98,794	10.4%	0.19	4.0%	0.13
AZ	2,929,000	1,624	10.1%	1.77	3.1%	0.86
CO	2,345,000	1,034	10.5%	1.96	3.8%	1.12
NM	865,000	1,886	11.5%	2.71	4.5%	1.74
NV	1,220,000	1,410	10.2%	1.45	4.2%	1.04
UT	1,139,000	1,329	11.2%	1.49	3.9%	1.16

\*Adapted from “Household Food Security in the United States in 2021”. *U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.*  
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=8969.2>

Figure 1 displays a comparison of food insecurity and very low food security across all five Mountain West States and the national average. Arizona has the lowest percentage of households with food insecurity (10.1%). Colorado (10.5%), New Mexico (11.5%), and Utah (11.2%) all rank above the national average for food insecurity at 10.4%. Only New Mexico (4.5%) and Nevada (4.2%) rank above the national average (4.0%) on very low food security.

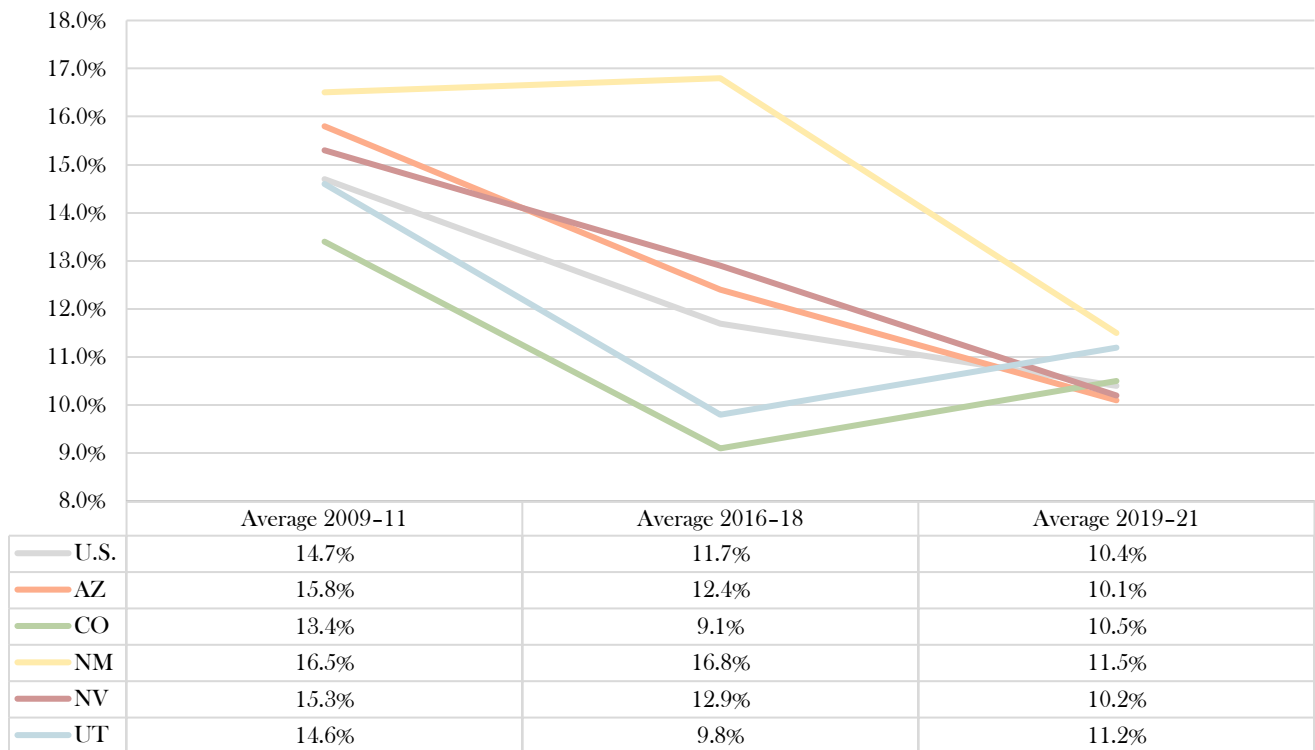
**Figure 1: Prevalence of Food Insecurity & Very Low Food Security in the Mountain West, 2019-2021**



\* Adapted from “Household Food Security in the United States in 2021.” *U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.*  
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=8969.2>

Figure 2 displays the change in prevalence of food insecurity in the five Mountain West states and nationally. New Mexico (16.5%) had the highest percentage of food insecurity from 2009 to 2011; New Mexico (16.8%) also had the highest percentage of food insecurity from 2016-18. The state with the largest decline in prevalence of food insecurity between 2016-2018 and 2019-2021 was also New Mexico, with a decrease of 5.3%. The state with the largest decline in prevalence of food insecurity overall (from 2009-2011 to 2019-2021) is Arizona, with a decrease of 5.7 percentage points. Utah and Colorado experienced an increase in food insecurity from 2016-2018 to 2019-2021, both with an increase of 1.4 percentage points. In 2019-2021, Colorado (10.5%), New Mexico (11.5%), and Utah (11.2%) all have a higher percentage of food insecurity compared to the US national average (10.4%).

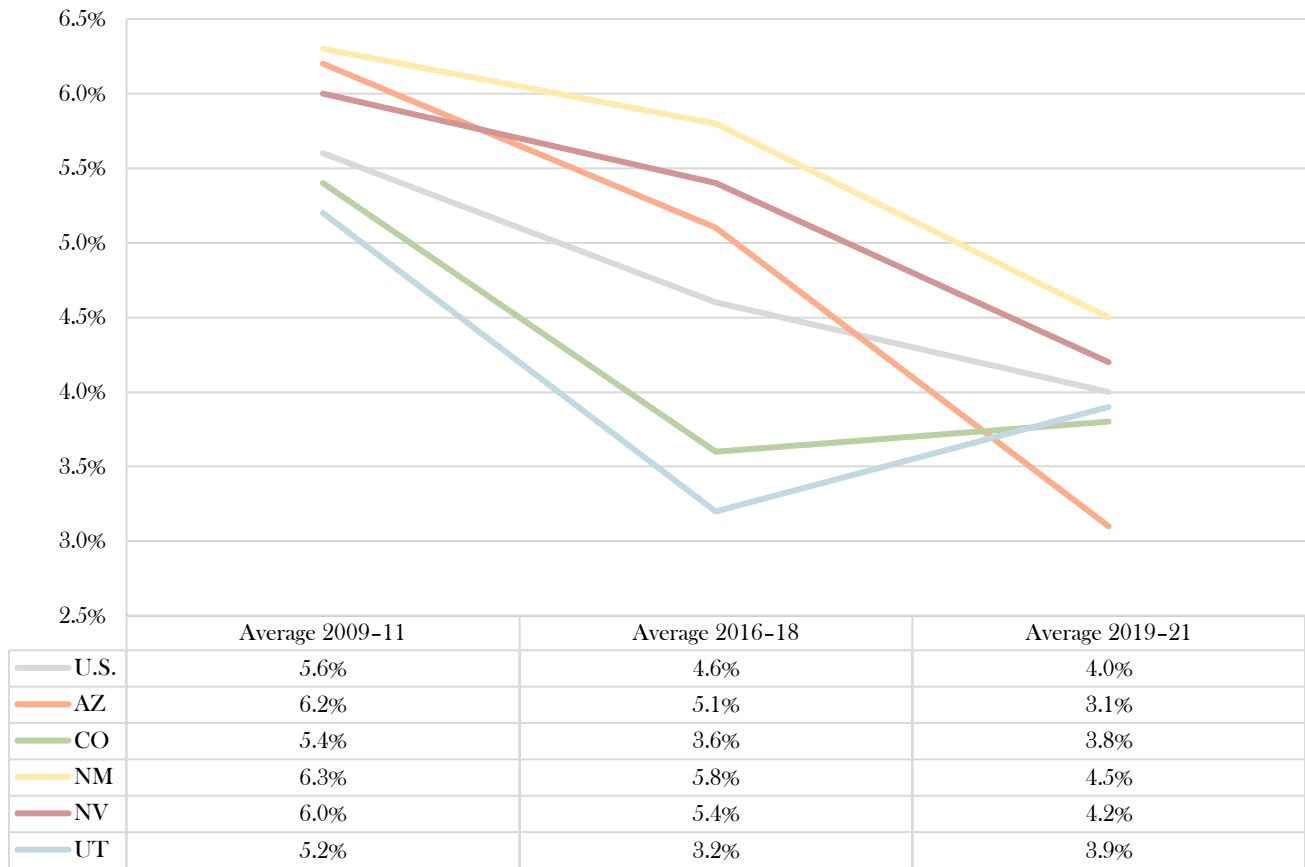
**Figure 2: Change in Prevalence of Food Insecurity in the Mountain West, 2009-2011, 2016-2018, and 2019-2021**



\* Adapted from “Household Food Security in the United States in 2021.” *U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=8969.2>

Figure 3 displays the change in prevalence of very low food security in the five Mountain West states and nationally. The state with the highest percentage of households that experiences very low food security in 2019-2021 was New Mexico (6.3%). Arizona had the largest decline in very low food security from 2009-2011 to 2019-2021, with a decrease of 3.1 percentage points, and had the largest decline in very low food security from 2016-2018 to 2019-2021, with a decrease of 2.0 percentage points. The only two states where households experienced an increase in very low food security from 2016-2018 to 2019-2021 are Colorado and Utah, with an increase of 0.2 and 0.7 percentage points respectively. In 2019-2021, New Mexico (4.5%) and Nevada (4.2%) experienced a higher average percentage of households facing very low food security compared to the U.S. national average (4.0%).

Figure 3: Change in Prevalence of Very Low Food Security in the Mountain West, 2009-2011, 2016-2018, and 2019-2021



\* Adapted from "Household Food Security in the United States in 2021." *U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.* <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=8969.2>