



Food Insufficiency and Anxiety

Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development

Overview

Researchers from the NERCRD and the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education at Penn State University used Household Pulse Survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau to address three questions: how did unemployment, income loss and food insufficiency induced by COVID-19 affect mental health? Which predictor was the most important? In addition, which population subgroups suffered more mental health disorders (i.e., anxiety) during the pandemic?



Key findings:

- The pandemic significantly impacted both food sufficiency and mental health of the population, with food insufficiency having a larger negative impact on mental health than income loss.
- Unemployment was associated with better mental health, possibly due to reduced fear of exposure to the covid virus at the place of work.
- Larger effects on mental health were found in mortgage paying-households, among males, and in non-metro areas.
- The results indicate the need for effective and timely policies targeting disadvantaged groups to maintain or improve their mental well-being, as well as food sufficiency levels, during future economic crises and public health emergencies.

Resources:

- Pan, Yuxuan, Linlin Fan, and Stephan J. Goetz. 2023. “Economic Shocks, Food Insufficiency and Mental Health: Evidence from Covid-19 Pandemic,” available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4650481> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4650481>