



FOOD INSECURITY AND SNAP PARTICIPATION IN THE LGBT COMMUNITY

Taylor N. T. Brown, Adam P. Romero, and Gary J. Gates



the
**Williams
INSTITUTE**

MADE POSSIBLE WITH A GRANT FROM

ConAgra Foods
Foundation

JULY 2016

I. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contrary to popular stereotypes of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community as affluent, research demonstrates not only widespread economic diversity among LGBT people but also that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people are often more likely to be poor than straight people and that transgender individuals face extremely high rates of poverty.¹

This report examines one form of poverty – food insecurity – among LGB/T and non-LGB/T people using the most recent population-based data available.² People are described as “food insecure” when they have limited or uncertain access to adequate food. We also examine participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, which is another way to assess risk for food insecurity. To qualify for SNAP benefits, a person or household must generally meet certain poverty-level income and resource thresholds.

Analyses of multiple data sources demonstrate that food insecurity and SNAP participation are common among LGB/T people, and that LGB/T individuals and adults in same-sex couples often experience food insecurity and SNAP participation at higher levels than their non-LGB/T and different-sex couple counterparts. Key findings include:

- More than 1 in 4 LGBT adults (27%), approximately 2.2 million people, experienced a time in the last year when they did not have enough money to feed themselves or their families, compared to 17% of non-LGBT adults.
- 18% of LGB adults reported that they or someone in their family went without food for an entire day in the past 30 days.
- 14% of LGB adults reported running out of food for their families and not having money for more in the past 30 days.
- 9% of LGB adults reported that they ate less than they believed they should in the past 30 days.
- 6% of LGB adults reported going hungry in the past 30 days.

With respect to SNAP, key findings include:

- More than 1 in 4 LGB adults aged 18-44 (27%) participated in SNAP, compared to 20% of non-LGB adults in that age range.
- More than 1 in 10 adults in same-sex couples (11%) participated in SNAP, compared to 9% of adults in different-sex couples.

Food insecurity and SNAP participation are not distributed evenly across the LGB/T community. Rather, we find that women, younger people, certain racial and ethnic minorities, those without college degrees, unmarried individuals, and those with children in the home are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Key findings include:

- Among LGBT people, 31% of women and 22% of men reported not having enough money for food in the past year.

¹ See *infra* notes 14-16.

² “LGB/T”, “LGBT”, and “LGB” are used as follows in this report. We use “LGBT” when discussing the Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, because it contains a measure of LGBT-identity and, therefore, allows for the comparison of LGBT to non-LGBT individuals. We use “LGB” when discussing the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and/or the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), because each contains a measure of sexual orientation (but not gender identity) and, therefore, allows for the comparison of LGB to straight individuals. We use “LGB/T” when discussing all three surveys. See *infra* Part III.B for additional descriptions of these surveys and our methodology.

- 31% of LGBT people aged 18-29 and 29% of LGBT people aged 30-49 reported not having enough money for food in the past year.
- Among LGBT people, 42% of African-Americans, 33% of Hispanics, 32% of American Indians and Alaskan Natives, and 21% of Whites reported not having enough money for food in the past year.
- 35% of LGBT people with a high school degree or less and 29% of LGBT people with some college education reported not having enough money for food in the past year.
- 30% of unmarried LGBT people and 15% of married LGBT people reported not having enough money for food in the past year.
- 33% of LGBT people raising children and 24% of LGBT people not raising children reported not having enough money for food in the past year.

Using multivariate analyses, we find that elevated risk of food insecurity and SNAP participation for LGB/T individuals and adults in same-sex couples remains even when differences in demographic characteristics are taken into account, including gender, age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity. Key findings include:

- LGBT adults are 1.62 times more likely than non-LGBT adults, on average, to report not having enough money for the food that they or their families needed at some point in the last year.
- LGB adults aged 18 to 44 are 1.36 times more likely than non-LGB adults of the same age to have participated in SNAP in the past year.
- Adults in same-sex couples are 1.58 times more likely than different-sex couples to have participated in SNAP in the past year.

II. BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as having limited access to adequate food due to lack of money and other resources.³ In 2014, 14% of U.S. households, or 17.4 million households, were food insecure at some time during that year, down from a recent high of 14.9% in 2011. Nearly 6% of households reported very low food security in 2014, meaning that these households experienced multiple disruptions to normal eating patterns and reduced food intake.⁴

In 2014, rates of food insecurity were higher than the national average in households with incomes below 185% of the official poverty line (33.7%); households with children (19.2%) and especially children under age 6 (19.9%); households with children headed by single women (35.3%); and households headed by Black, non-Hispanics (26.1%) and Hispanics (22.4%). Geographically, food insecurity is most common in nonmetropolitan areas and in the U.S. South.⁵

The USDA monitors the extent and severity of food insecurity in U.S. households through the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement. This survey is sponsored by the USDA's Economic Research Service and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau as a once-a-year supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS).⁶ The CPS and the Food Security Supplement provide critical information regarding disparities across social statuses such as race, ethnicity, gender, and age. However, neither the Food Security Supplement nor the parent CPS measures respondents' sexual orientation or their gender identity in a way that captures transgender status or identity. Consequently, researchers cannot analyze these data to examine food insecurity among LGBT-headed households.

In addition to the CPS Food Security Supplement, the USDA has utilized several other surveys to measure and assess food insecurity and poverty among households and individuals.⁷ None of these surveys directly measures respondents' transgender identity or status. As explained in the methods section below, one of these surveys – the National Health Interview Survey – recently added a direct measure of respondents' sexual orientation and contains a module addressing food insecurity, allowing for some assessment of food insecurity by sexual orientation.

In addition to monitoring food insecurity in the U.S. population, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers fifteen domestic food and nutrition assistance programs. The largest is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which was known as the Food Stamps Program until 2008. The program provides monthly benefits for eligible individuals and households to purchase food. To be eligible for SNAP benefits, households must meet several tests related to household resources, incomes, and other circumstances. Under the gross income test, for example, generally a household may qualify for SNAP only if its gross monthly income does not exceed 130% of the official poverty level for that household's size.⁸

In an average month of fiscal year (FY) 2014, SNAP provided benefits to about 15% of individuals in the United States, or 46.5 million people. The average monthly benefit was about \$125 per person.⁹ In FY 2013, the gross monthly

³ See U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Definitions of Food Security, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>.

⁴ Coleman-Jensen et al., Household Food Security in the United States in 2014, at 8 & Tab. 1A (2015), <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1896841/err194.pdf>.

⁵ Id. at 13-15.

⁶ Id. at 2.

⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Food Security in the U.S., Overview of Surveys, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-security-in-the-united-states/documentation.aspx>.

⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Eligibility, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility>.

⁹ Coleman-Jensen et al., Household Food Security in the United States in 2014, at 29 (2015), <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1896841/err194.pdf>.

income of 83% of SNAP households was less than or equal to 100% of the applicable federal poverty level.¹⁰ Among SNAP participants in FY 2013, more than half (56%) were female; more than four in ten (44%) were children; nearly half (46%) were nonelderly adults age 18-59; and 9% were age 60 or older. Nearly all SNAP beneficiaries were U.S. citizens (96%), 3% were non-citizens, and less than 1% were refugees. Nearly four in ten SNAP beneficiaries were White (38%), 26% were African American, 16% were Hispanic, 2.4% were Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 1.4% were Native American, and 0.8% were multi-racial.¹¹

Numerous federal surveys collect information about SNAP participation.¹² As explained in the methods section below, two of these surveys directly measure respondents' sexual orientation, but none measures respondents' gender identity in a way that captures transgender identity or status.

Despite a lack of federal data on food insecurity and SNAP participation among LGBT individuals and households, research has demonstrated elevated levels of food insecurity and poverty more generally in the LGBT community. Utilizing data from 2012 and earlier, Gates (2014) found that rates of food insecurity and SNAP participation were higher for LGBT adults and adults in same-sex couples when compared to non-LGBT adults or adults in different-sex couples, respectively, after taking into account gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education levels.¹³ This prior report also found that bisexuals, women, and racial/ethnic minorities were particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and reported relatively higher rates of SNAP participation. The present reports' findings – based on more recent data and additional data sources – are by and large consistent with Gates (2014).

Looking at poverty more broadly, Badgett et al. (2013) and Albelda et al. (2009) documented higher rates of poverty among LGB people compared to straight people; that gender, race, education, and geography influence poverty rates among LGB populations, and that the children of same-sex couples are particularly vulnerable.¹⁴ Kastanis and Wilson (2014) found similar patterns of racial/ethnic disparities in income, employment, and college completion among individuals in same-sex and different-sex couples.¹⁵ Grant et al. (2011) indicate high rates of poverty, unemployment, and economic vulnerability of transgender individuals, especially among racial and ethnic minorities.¹⁶

¹⁰ Gray, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2013, at 13 (2014), <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2013.pdf>.

¹¹ Id. at Tab. A23. The race of 16% of SNAP beneficiaries was unknown. Id.

¹² See Prell et al., Annual and Monthly SNAP Participation Rates, at 5 (2015), <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1890738/err192.pdf>.

¹³ Gates, Food Insecurity and SNAP (Food Stamps) Participation in LGBT Communities (2014), <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Food-Insecurity-in-LGBT-Communities.pdf>.

¹⁴ Badgett et al., New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community (2013), <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGB-Poverty-Update-Jun-2013.pdf>; Albelda et al., Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community (2009), <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Albelda-Badgett-Schneebaum-Gates-LGB-Poverty-Report-March-2009.pdf>.

¹⁵ Kastanis & Wilson, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Socioeconomic Wellbeing of Individuals in Same-sex Couples (2014), <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census-Compare-Feb-2014.pdf>.

¹⁶ Grant et al., Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (2011), http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf.

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

These analyses use the data sources described below in Table I. Each survey is population-based, meaning that it is representative of, and can be used to describe, the populations from which the samples are drawn.

Table I. Description of Surveys

Name	Sample Population	Sample Size	Food Insecurity Measures	LGB/T or Same-sex Couple Measure
Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, June-December 2014	Adults ages 18 and older	LGBT: 2,964 Non-LGBT: 81,134	Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?	Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender? (yes or no)
National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), 2011-2013	Adults ages 18-44	LGB: 675 Non-LGB: 9,658	In the year [INTERVIEW YEAR], did you or any members of your family living here receive food stamps or SNAP benefits?	Do you think of yourself as . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heterosexual or Straight • Homosexual, Gay, or Lesbian • Bisexual • Something else
American Community Survey (ACS), 2014	Adults ages 15 and older in a cohabiting relationship with a spouse or unmarried partner	Same-sex couples: 6,503 Different-sex couples: 621,266	In the past 12 months, did you or any member of this household receive benefits from the Food Stamp Program or SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)?	Respondents are asked the sex of all members of the household. Person 1 is asked to identify how all other household members are related to him or her. Cohabiting couples are those where Person 1 identifies his or her relationship to another individual in the household (age 15 or older) as either “husband/wife” or “unmarried partner.”

Name	Sample Population	Sample Size	Food Insecurity Measures	LGB/T or Same-sex Couple Measure
National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), 2014	Adults ages 18 and older	LGB: 860 Non-LGB: 35,284	<p>At any time during the last calendar year, did you/any family members living here receive SNAP or food stamp benefits?</p> <p>“I/We worried whether my/our food would run out before I/we got money to buy more.” Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true . . . in the last 30 days?</p> <p>“The food that I/we bought just didn’t last, and I/we didn’t have money to get more.” Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true . . . in the last 30 days?</p> <p>“I/We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true . . . in the last 30 days?</p> <p>The remaining seven questions were administered only to those who responded affirmatively to one of the three lead questions above.</p> <p>In the last 30 days, did you/another adult in your family ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?</p> <p>In the last 30 days, how many times did this happen?</p> <p>In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money for food?</p> <p>In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food?</p> <p>In the last 30 days, did you lose weight because there wasn’t enough money for food?</p> <p>In the last 30 days, did you/another adult in your family ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food?</p> <p>In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen?</p>	<p>Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesbian or Gay • Straight, that is, not lesbian or gay • Bisexual • Something else

A. MEASURING FOOD INSECURITY AND SNAP PARTICIPATION

The concept of food insecurity incorporates many different aspects of individuals’ and households’ relationship with food. It addresses the extent to which individuals and households have the resources to access food, whether their access is regular and sufficient, and whether the food they are able to access is healthy and filling, in addition to other issues.

As detailed in Table 1, the Gallup Daily Tracking Survey measures one aspect of food insecurity – not having enough money to buy the food needed for oneself and one’s family – from the perspective of the prior year. Similarly, two of

the National Health Interview Survey's (NHIS) three lead questions on food insecurity measure not having enough, and worrying about not having enough, money to buy sufficient food, but from the perspective of the prior 30 days. The third of the NHIS's lead questions asks about a different dimension of food insecurity – the ability to afford a balanced meal in the last 30 days.

These three lead food insecurity questions on the NHIS are asked of all respondents. Those respondents who answer affirmatively to at least one of the three lead questions are asked seven additional questions that inquire about cutting meal sizes, skipping meals, not eating for whole days, losing weight, and other experiences of food insecurity.

The NHIS food insecurity module is sponsored by the USDA and is drawn from the USDA's Guide to Measuring Household Food Security. According to the Guide, the USDA considers someone food insecure if they affirmatively answer three or more questions on the NHIS food insecurity module.¹⁷ In our analyses of the NHIS, we too identify individuals as food insecure when they respond affirmatively to three or more of the ten food insecurity questions; this is our “composite measure” of food insecurity (see Figure I).

SNAP participation is another way to examine food insecurity, because SNAP benefits are intended to reduce food insecurity and because those who qualify for SNAP benefits are at risk for food insecurity due to their incomes and resource levels. The NHIS, National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), and the American Community Survey (ACS) all measure SNAP participation over the prior year.

B. MEASURING LGB/T FOOD INSECURITY AND SNAP PARTICIPATION

With the Gallup data, we can examine LGBT people's experiences with one form of food insecurity compared to non-LGBT people, because the Gallup Daily Tracking Survey asks people if they identify as LGBT. With the NHIS and NSFG data, we can examine LGB people's experiences with food insecurity and SNAP participation compared to straight individuals because both surveys directly measure respondents' sexual orientation.¹⁸ There are a number of different ways in which sexual orientation can be measured in surveys, including by asking respondents about their self-identification, sexual behavior, or sexual attraction. The data that we analyze from the Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, NHIS, and NSFG provide information about respondents' self-identification, and the following analyses should be understood within this context.

With the ACS data, we can examine SNAP participation among cohabiting adults in same-sex couples (married and unmarried) compared to cohabiting adults in different-sex couples (married and unmarried), because ACS respondents identify their and other household members' sex as well as their relationship to others in the household (including spouse and unmarried partner).

The NHIS, NSFG, and ACS do not include a direct measure of gender identity in a way that captures transgender identity or status. The Gallup measure of LGBT identity includes identification as transgender, but it is not possible to disaggregate this sample. For these reasons, we are unable to separately analyze transgender people with these data.

Throughout this analysis, as noted above, references to LGB, LGBT, and LGB/T indicate which survey samples we are discussing. A sample identified as LGB includes individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and refers to data from the NHIS and/or NSFG. A sample identified as LGBT includes individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender and refers to data from Gallup. When we use the term LGB/T, we are referring to all

¹⁷ See Bickel et al., Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000. (2000), <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FSGuide.pdf>.

¹⁸ In data from the NHIS and NSFG, we identify individuals as LGB if they self-identified as homosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The reference group for the LGB variable in the NHIS and NSFG includes individuals who self-identified as heterosexual or straight (that is, not lesbian or gay). The reference group for the LGBT variable in the Gallup survey includes individuals who responded that they did not identify as LGBT.

three of these data sets. We use this acronym because the NHIS and NSFG samples we analyze are not designed to capture transgender status or identity.

With these data, as well as data on survey respondents' gender, age, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment, we are able to compare food insecurity and SNAP participation across subsamples. Analyses of data in this report include findings from bivariate analyses designed to look at basic group differences and multivariate regression analyses. The latter are intended to help us understand whether the main factor of interest, LGB/T identity, remained a significant predictor after controlling for other variables. We assess whether differences in point estimates are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level throughout our analyses and have conducted additional Bonferroni error corrections to control for variation within variables. In our analyses, we use weights to account for possible response biases, including in non-responses.

C. LIMITATIONS TO COMPARING FINDINGS ACROSS SURVEYS

There are constraints to comparing findings across surveys and our analyses of these data are not intended to address discrepancies between datasets. For example, as noted above, the food insecurity measures differ between the Gallup survey and the NHIS in term of timeframe. The populations we analyze also differ. As described above, the Gallup survey samples include LGBT and non-LGBT adults; the NHIS and NSFG samples include LGB and straight adults; and the ACS sample includes data from adults in cohabiting couples. Respondents to the Gallup survey, NHIS, and NSFG may or may not be in a couple. Furthermore, analyses distinguishing same-sex couples from different-sex couples in the ACS are distinct from analyses distinguishing LGB/T people from non-LGB/T people. Same-sex coupling and LGB/T-identity are different demographic measures, and LGB/T people (especially bisexuals) may be coupled with someone of a different sex.

In addition, respondents to the NSFG were between ages 18 to 44, respondents to the ACS were ages 15 and older, and respondents to the NHIS and Gallup survey were ages 18 and older. Thus, data drawn from the NSFG are biased toward younger adults compared to the Gallup and NHIS data. Younger adults are generally more likely to experience higher rates of SNAP participation and food insecurity relative to older adults.

The time periods in which these data were collected also affect our ability to compare across surveys. The NSFG data we analyze were collected from 2011 to 2013 early in the recovery from the recent recession. According to the USDA, 2011 saw the highest rate of food insecurity in more than 13 years.¹⁹ Data from the Gallup survey, NHIS, and ACS were drawn in 2014 during a period of somewhat improved economic conditions.

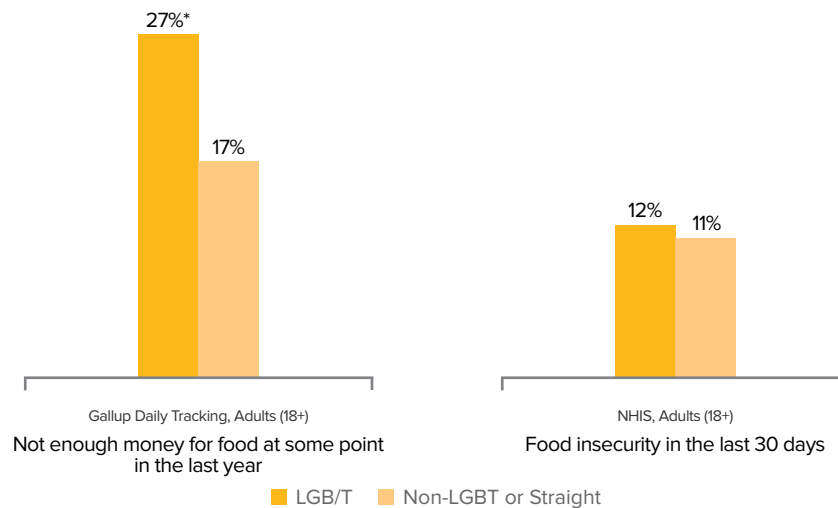
¹⁹ Coleman-Jensen et al., Household Food Security in the United States in 2014, (2015), available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1896841/err194.pdf>.

IV. FINDINGS

A. LGB/T IDENTITY AND SAME-SEX COUPLE STATUS

Across the different data sources we consider, we find some evidence that LGB/T adults are more likely to experience food insecurity than their non-LGB/T counterparts (see Figure I and Figure II).

Figure I. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB/T Identity (Gallup Daily Tracking & NHIS)



*Difference with Non-LGBT or straight is significant at $p < 0.05$

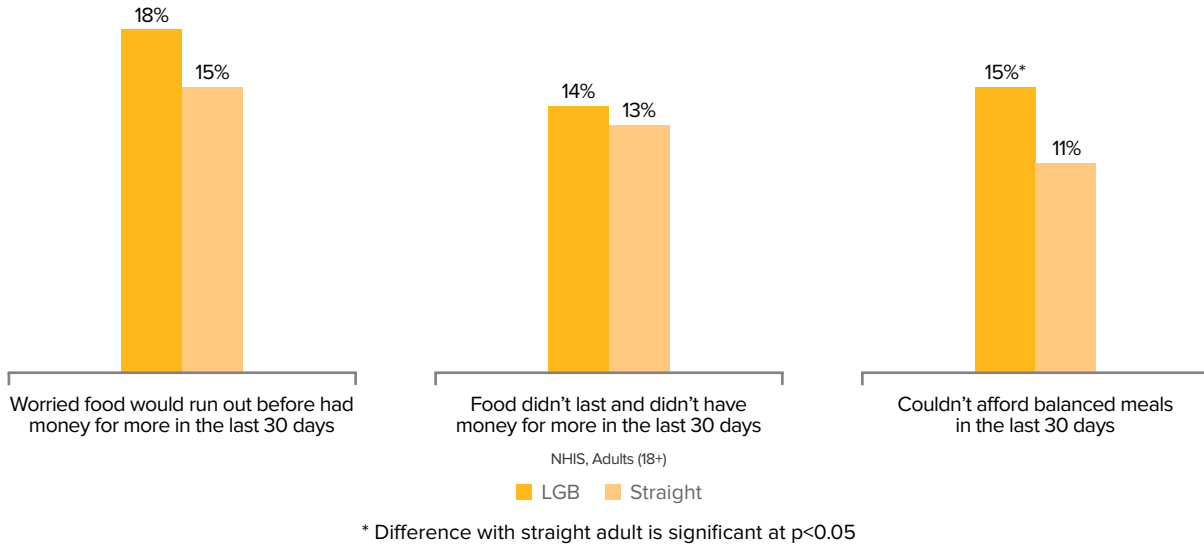
In the Gallup data, 27% of LGB/T respondents and 17% of non-LGB/T respondents stated that there was a time in the last year when they and/or their families did not have enough money for the food they needed, representing a statistically significant difference in LGB/T and non-LGB/T adults' experiences with food insecurity. This implies that more than 2.2 million LGB/T adults in the United States experienced this particular form of food insecurity in the past year.^{20, 21}

In the NHIS data, an estimated 12% of LGB/T adults and 11% of straight adults experienced food insecurity in the past 30 days, based on the composite measure of food insecurity. This finding indicates that rates of food insecurity between LGB/T and straight adults are similar. However, responses to the ten individual food insecurity questions in the NHIS show that some differences exist for specific measures of food insecurity. Figure II includes estimates from the three lead questions on food insecurity in the NHIS.

²⁰ In this report, for ease of reference, we state "in the past year" or "in the past 30 days." By these, we mean "in the year prior to" or "in the 30 days prior to" when the particular survey was administered.

²¹ Gallup data show that approximately 3.5% of adults in the US are LGB/T, implying a population of approximately 8.4 million LGB/T-identified adults. See Gates *supra* note 13, at 4 n.8.

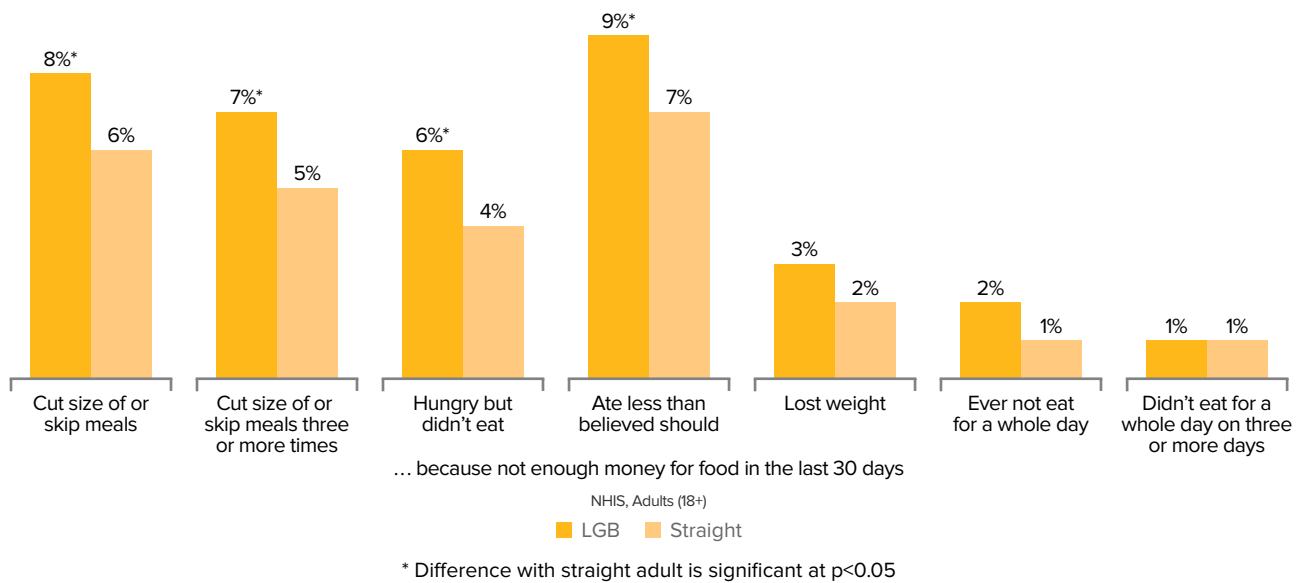
Figure II. Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB Identity (NHIS)



In the NHIS, LGB and straight adults reported similar rates of worrying in the past 30 days that their food would run out before they had money to buy more, or having their food not last without having money for more. While the estimates are higher among LGB adults, differences with straight adults are not statistically significant. However, LGB adults (15%) were significantly more likely than straight adults (11%) to report not being able to afford balanced meals in the last 30 days.

We also find significant differences between LGB and straight adults in four of the NHIS's secondary measures related to food insecurity (see Figure III).

Figure III. Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB Identity (NHIS)



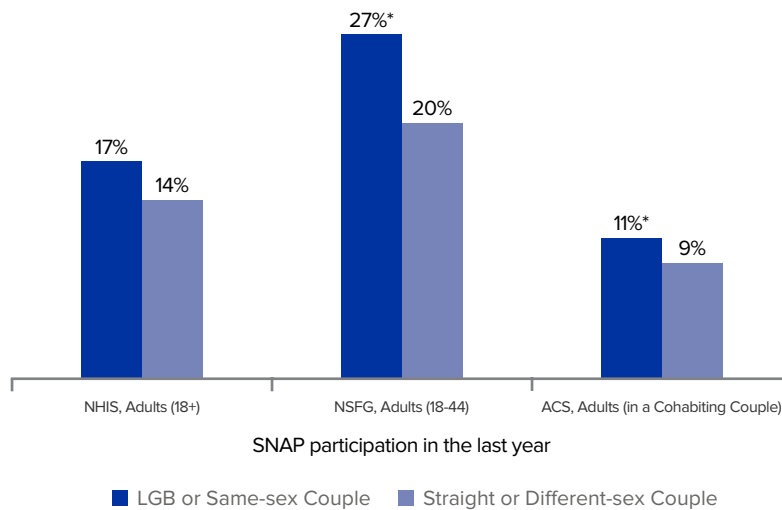
An estimated 8% of LGB adults cut the size of or skipped meals in the last 30 days, compared to 6% of straight adults; 7% of LGB adults had to do so three or more times in the last 30 days, compared to 5% of straight adults; 6% of LGB

adults reported being hungry but not eating in the last 30 days, compared to 4% of straight adults; 9% of LGB adults reported that they ate less than they believed they should in the last 30 days, compared to 7% of straight adults.

The three other secondary measures of food insecurity in the NHIS do not indicate significant differences between LGB and straight adults; though, in two of these cases, estimates are higher among LGB adults when compared to their non-LGB counterparts. These include losing weight (3% for LGB adults and 2% for straight adults), not eating for a whole day (2% for LGB adults and 1% for straight adults), and having to do so three or more times in the last 30 days (1% for LGB adults and 1% for straight adults) because there wasn't enough money for food.

Participation in SNAP provides additional information on individuals who may be at risk of experiencing food insecurity. The data indicate that rates of SNAP participation are higher among LGB adults and adults in same-sex couples than straight adults and adults in different-sex couples (see Figure IV).

Figure IV. SNAP Participation, by LGB Identity or Couple Type (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)



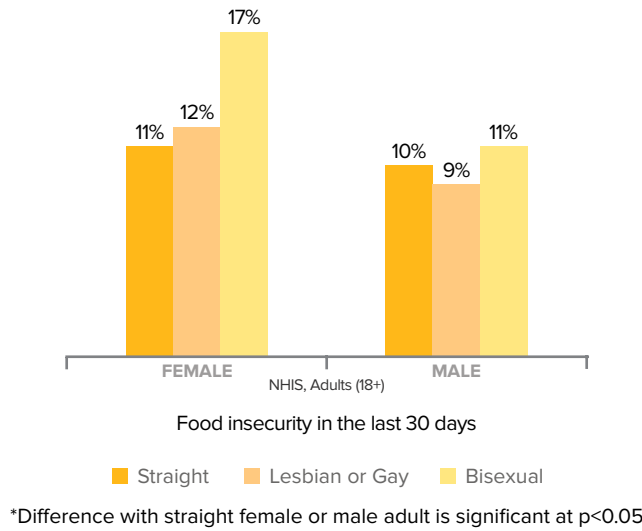
*Difference with straight or different-sex couple is significant at $p < 0.05$

In the ACS data, adults in same-sex couples have a statistically significant higher rate of SNAP participation in the last year than adults in different-sex couples (11% and 9%, respectively).

In the NSFG, more than one in four (27%) adults between the ages of 18 and 44 who identify as LGB reported participating in SNAP, compared to one in five (20%) straight adults in that age range. This implies that approximately 1.37 million LGB adults ages 18 to 44 years old participated in SNAP in the last year. In the NHIS, differences in SNAP participation between LGB and straight adults were not significant.

The data also indicate some differences between subsamples of LGB adults and straight adults. When bisexual adults are analyzed independently of lesbian, gay, and straight adults, and by gender, they have similar if not higher rates of food insecurity than straight adults, though these differences may not be statistically significant (see Figure V).

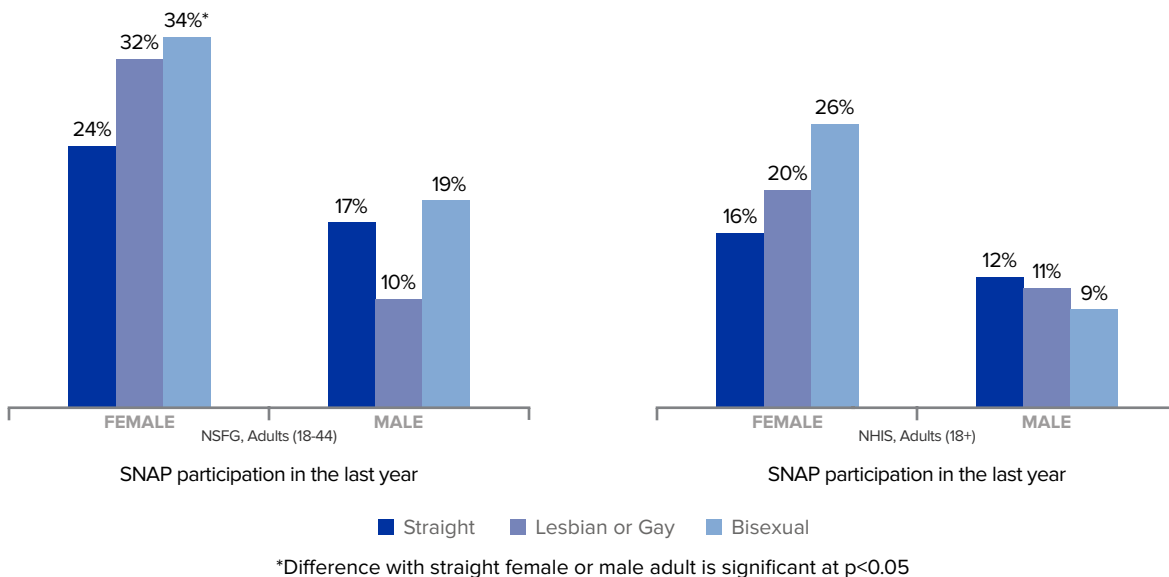
Figure V. Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by Sexual Orientation and Gender (NHIS)



In the NHIS data, bisexual women report the highest rates of experiencing food insecurity (17%) among women. Among men, straight, gay, and bisexual adults report similar rates of experiencing food insecurity; differences among men are not statistically significant.

Similar patterns appear in the data when examining SNAP participation rates (see Figure VI).

Figure VI. SNAP Participation, by Sexual Orientation and Gender (NSFG and NHIS)



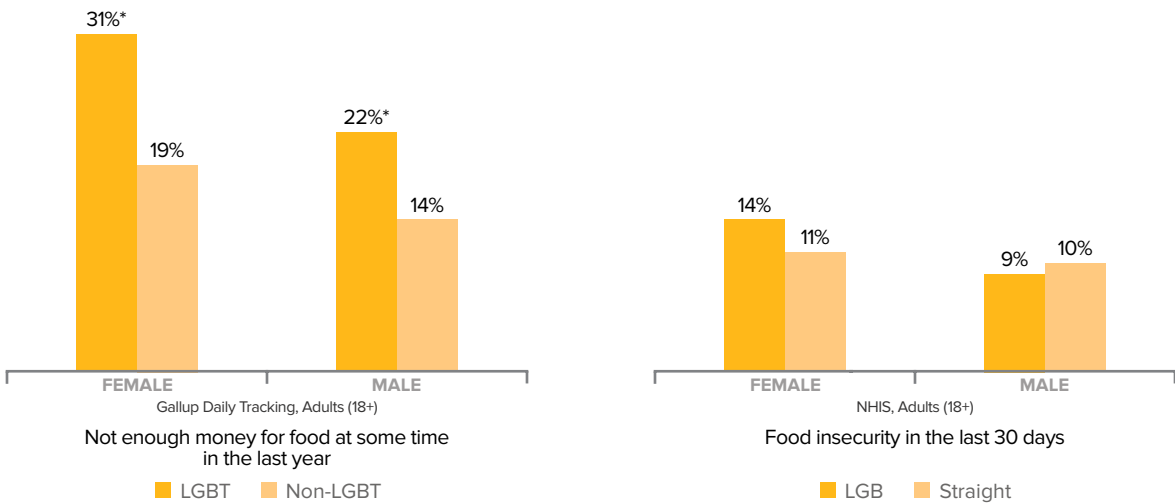
Bisexual women appear to experience the highest rate of SNAP participation. According to the NSFG, more than one in three bisexual women between the ages of 18 and 44 (34%) participated in SNAP in the last year. This is significantly higher than rates of SNAP participation among straight women in that age group (24%). According to the NHIS, one in four bisexual women above the age of 18 (26%) participated in SNAP in the last year; though, this rate is not significantly higher than the rate among straight women (16%). Lesbians also evidence a relatively high rate of SNAP participation, though not at a statistically significant different rate than straight women.

Gay men appear to participate in SNAP at lower or comparable rates to straight men, and bisexual men appear to participate in SNAP at comparable rates to straight men. None of these differences are statistically significant.

B. GENDER

According to the data we consider, gender appears to affect rates of food insecurity and SNAP participation, with women generally having higher rates of food insecurity and SNAP participation than men. Among women and among men, LGBT people are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than non-LGBT people in the Gallup data, but the differences are not significant in the NHIS data (see Figure VII).

Figure VII. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB/T Identity and Gender (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)

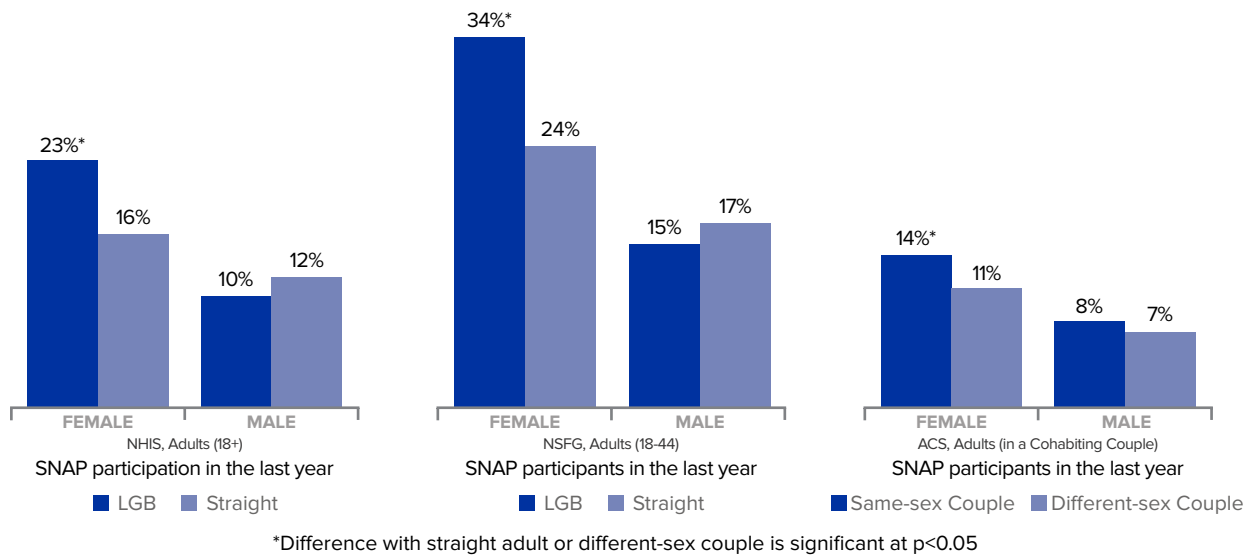


*Difference with non-LGB/T adult is significant at p<0.05

In the Gallup data, nearly one in three women who identify as LGBT (31%) reported not having enough money for food at some time in the last year, compared to approximately one in five women who do not identify as LGBT (19%). Men who identify as LGBT (22%) were also significantly more likely to have experienced this aspect of food insecurity than men who do not identify as LGBT (14%). In the NHIS data, however, differences according to LGB identity among women and men were not statistically significant.

Rates of SNAP participation appear to be higher among women who identify as LGB or are in a same-sex couple compared to their straight counterparts and those in a different-sex couple (see Figure VIII).

Figure VIII. SNAP Participation, by LGB Identity or Couple Type and Gender (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)

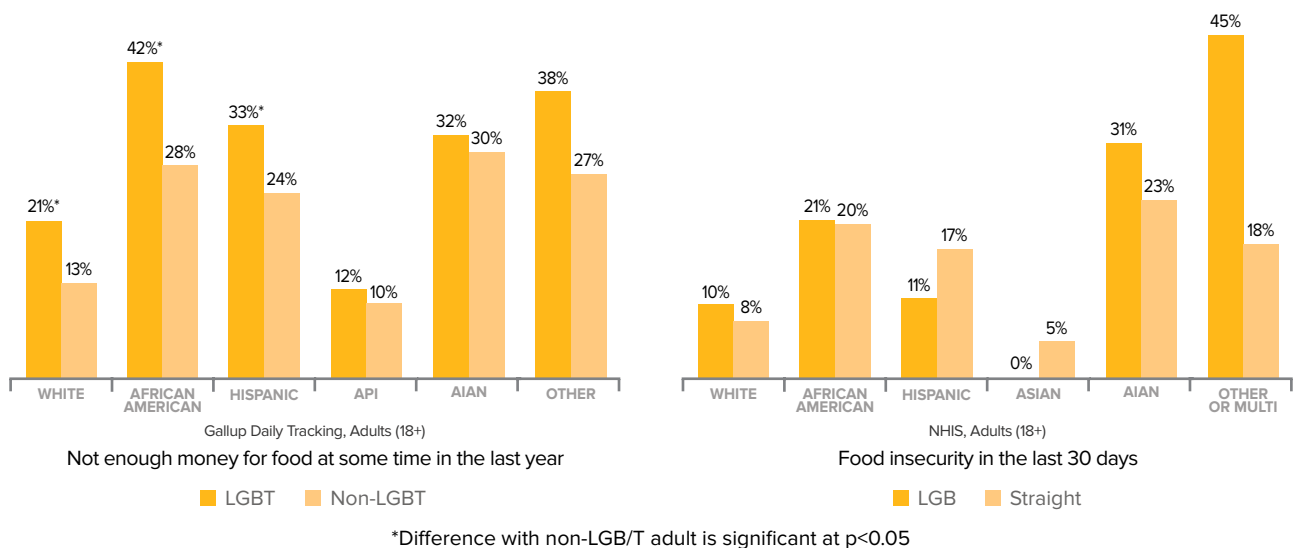


In the NHIS, 23% of LGB women reported participating in SNAP in the past year, compared to 16% of straight women. In the NSFG, 34% of LGB women and 24% of straight women between the ages of 18 and 44 reported participating in SNAP in the past year. In the ACS, 14% of women in same-sex couples, compared to 11% of women in different-sex couples, reported participating in SNAP in the past year. Among men, there were not significant differences in these data according to LGB identity or status as a member of a same-sex couple.

C. RACE/ETHNICITY

Some notable differences in rates of food insecurity are apparent according to individuals' race and ethnicity (see Figure IX).

Figure IX. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB/T Identity and Race/Ethnicity (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)

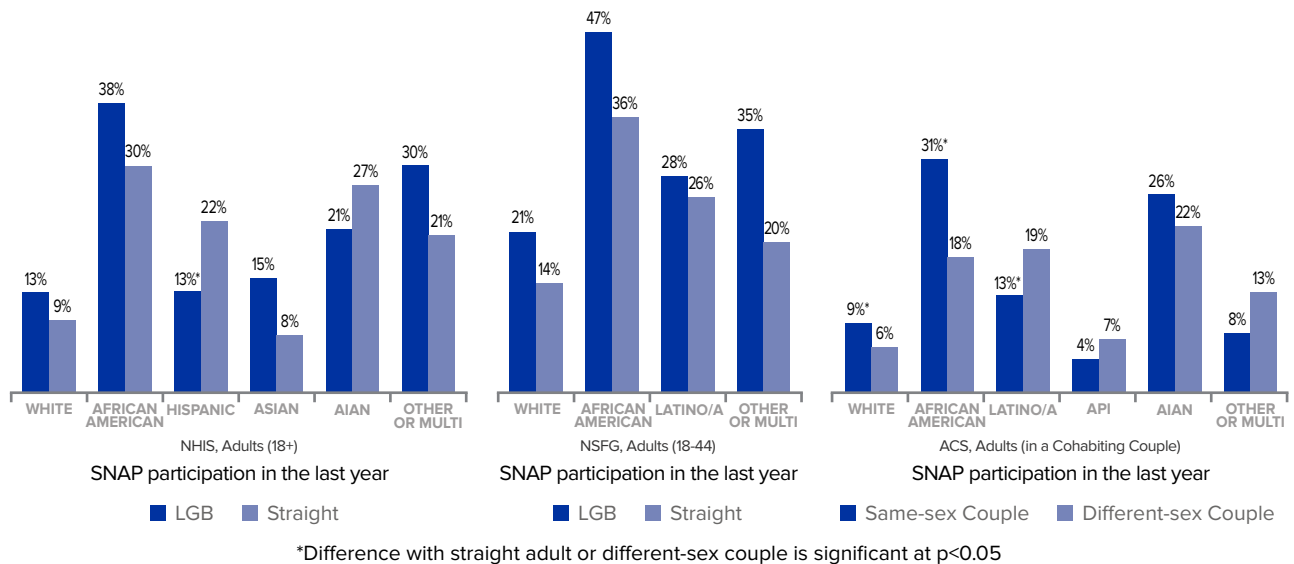


Adults who are African-American, Hispanic, or American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) report some of the highest rates of the particular experiences of food insecurity measured in the Gallup and NHIS. Adults who are multiracial or of another race or ethnicity (other than White, African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander (API), or AIAN) also report high rates of food insecurity experiences.

In the Gallup data, among adults who are White, African-American, or Hispanic, those who identify as LGBT are significantly more likely than those who do not identify as LGBT to have reported not having had enough money for food at some time in the last year. Using the composite measure of food insecurity in the NHIS, we do not find significant differences by LGB identity within racial and ethnic groups.

Some disparities are evident in rates of SNAP participation between adults who identify as LGB and those who identify as straight and between same-sex and different-sex couples according to these individuals' race and ethnicity (see Figure X).

Figure X. SNAP Participation, by LGB Identity or Couple Type and Race/Ethnicity (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)

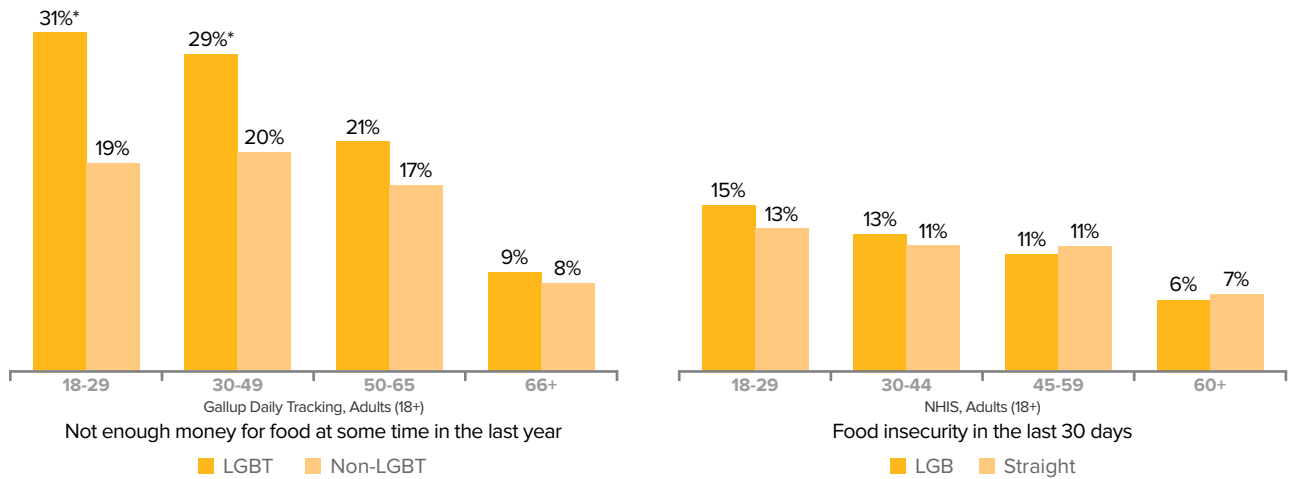


In the ACS, White and African-American adults who are members of a same-sex couple report significantly higher rates of SNAP participation in the past year than their counterparts in a different-sex couple. Similarly, in the NHIS and NSFG, rates of SNAP participation among White and African-American adults who identify as LGB also appear to be higher than among those who identify as straight, but these differences are not statistically significant. In the ACS and NHIS, Latinos and Hispanics who identify as LGB (13%) or are a member of a same-sex couple (13%) show evidence of having significantly lower rates of SNAP participation than adults who identify as straight (22%) or are in a different-sex couple (19%).

D. AGE

Individuals' age also may affect their likelihood of experiencing food insecurity. There is evidence to suggest that disparities by age exist, regardless of LGBT identity, with younger people reporting higher rates of food insecurity. Within age brackets, disparities also exist between adults who identify as LGB/T and those who do not (see Figure XI).

Figure XI. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGBT Identity and Age (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)

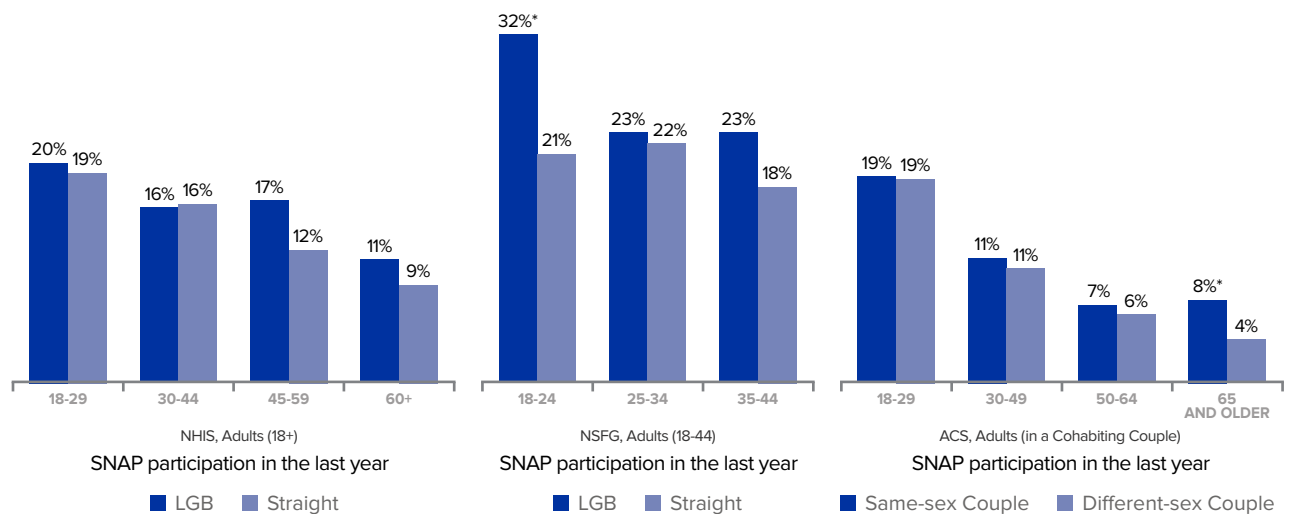


*Difference with non-LGBT/T adult is significant at $p < 0.05$

Young adults (between the ages of 18-29) and adults in early middle age (between the ages of 30 and 49) who identify as LGBT in the Gallup data reported not having had enough money for food at some time in the past year at significantly higher rates than their counterparts who do not identify as LGBT. Nearly one in three (31%) young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 who identifies as LGBT reports having experienced this one type of food insecurity. In the NHIS data, though, there do not appear to be significant differences in rates of experiencing food insecurity by sexual orientation according to the composite food insecurity measure.

The data do not indicate consistently that disparities in rates of SNAP participation exist between adults who identify as LGB or are in a same-sex couple compared to their counterparts who identify as straight or are in a different-sex couple (see Figure XII). There are two noteworthy exceptions.

Figure XII. SNAP Participation, by LGBT Identity or Couple Type and Age (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)



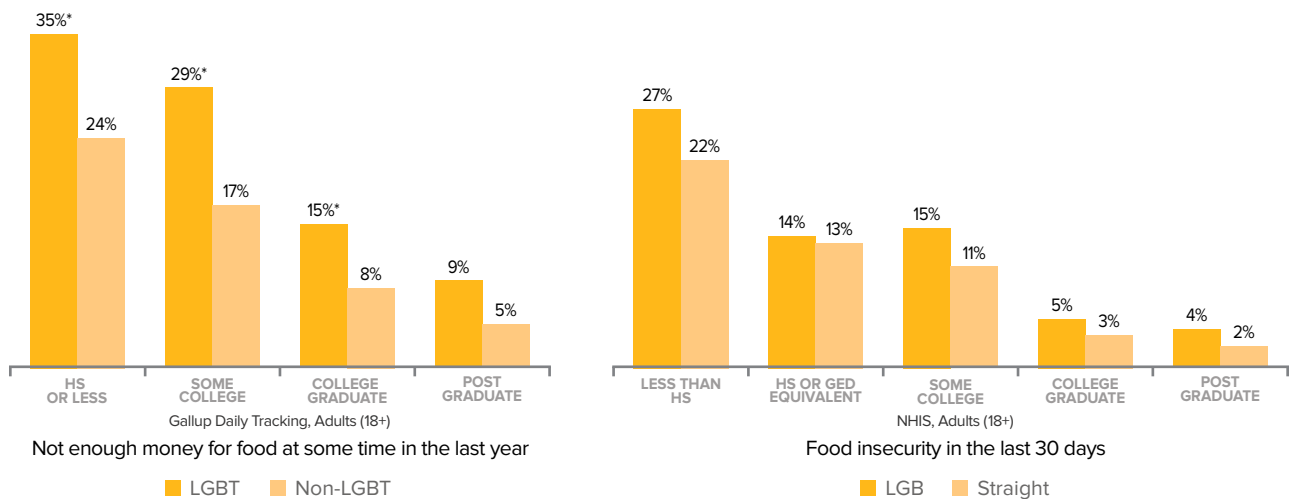
*Difference with straight adult or different-sex couple is significant at $p < 0.05$

Adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who identify as LGB (32%) report significantly higher rates of having participated in SNAP in the past year than straight adults in that same age range (21%). Similarly, adults ages 65 and older who are in a same-sex couple (8%) report significantly higher rates of SNAP participation in the past year than adults of that age in a different-sex couple (4%).

E. EDUCATION LEVEL

Evidence indicates that individuals' level of education influences their likelihood of experiencing food insecurity. Differences in rates of food insecurity within categories based on individuals' level of educational attainment also appear to exist between individuals who identify as LGB/T and those who identify as straight or non-LGBT (see Figure XIII).

Figure XIII. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB/T Identity and Educational Attainment (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)

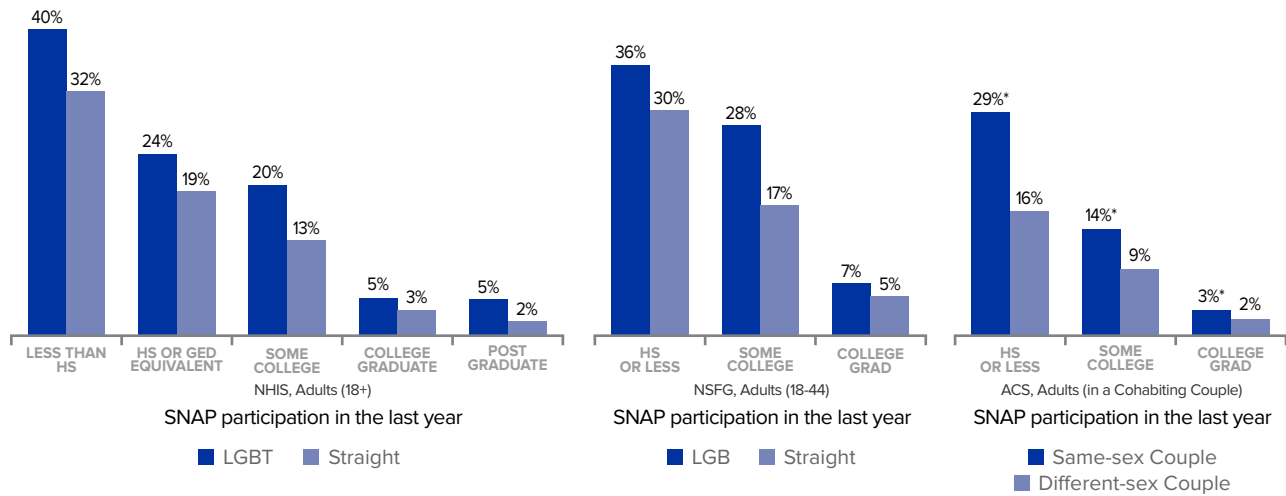


*Difference with non-LGB/T adult is significant at $p < 0.05$

In the Gallup data, individuals who identify as LGBT who have graduated from high school or received less education (35%), received some college education (29%), or graduated from college (15%) reported not having had enough money for food at some time in the last year at significantly higher rates than their non-LGBT counterparts. Based on the composite measure of food insecurity in the NHIS, there do not appear to be significant differences in the reported rates of food insecurity between LGB and straight adults at different levels of educational attainment, though at each educational level there were higher rates for LGB adults.

Adults who identify as LGB and adults who identify as straight did not report participation in SNAP at significantly different rates according to educational attainment; though LGB adults did have higher rates at each education level (see Figure XIV). Evidence does indicate that adults who report being in a same-sex couple participate in SNAP at a higher rate than those who report being in a different-sex couple at all levels of educational attainment, however.

Figure XIV. SNAP Participation, by LGB Identity or Couple Type and Educational Attainment (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)

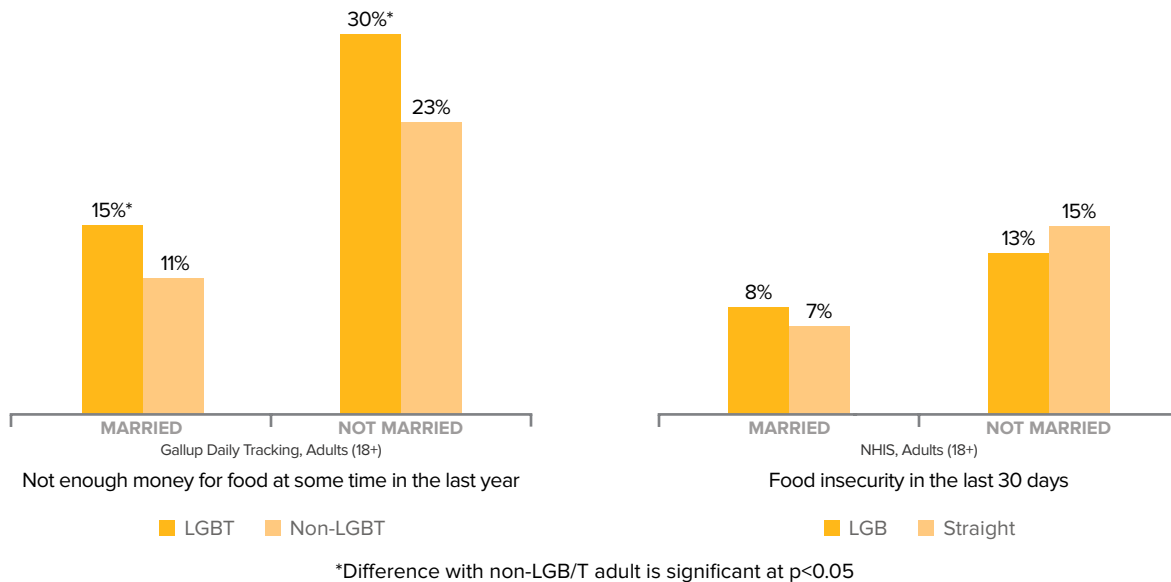


*Difference with straight adult or different-sex couple is significant at p<0.05

F. MARITAL STATUS AND CHILD REARING

When the data we analyze were collected through the Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, NHIS, NSFG, and ACS, same-sex marriage was legal in a limited number of states. Because of this, it is possible to examine rates of food insecurity and SNAP participation by marital status in these data. The evidence indicates that unmarried individuals have higher rates of food insecurity than married individuals and that individuals' likelihood of experiencing food insecurity may be affected by LGB/T identity, regardless of marital status (see Figure XV). However, when we examine data in Gallup, NHIS, and NSFG, it is important to remember that marital status among LGB/T people does not indicate whether a marriage is a same-sex or different sex marriage. Significant proportions of individuals who identify as LGB/T may be in a different-sex married couple, particularly among bisexual individuals. The ACS is the only source of data in this analysis that we use to examine individuals in same-sex couples compared to different-sex couples.

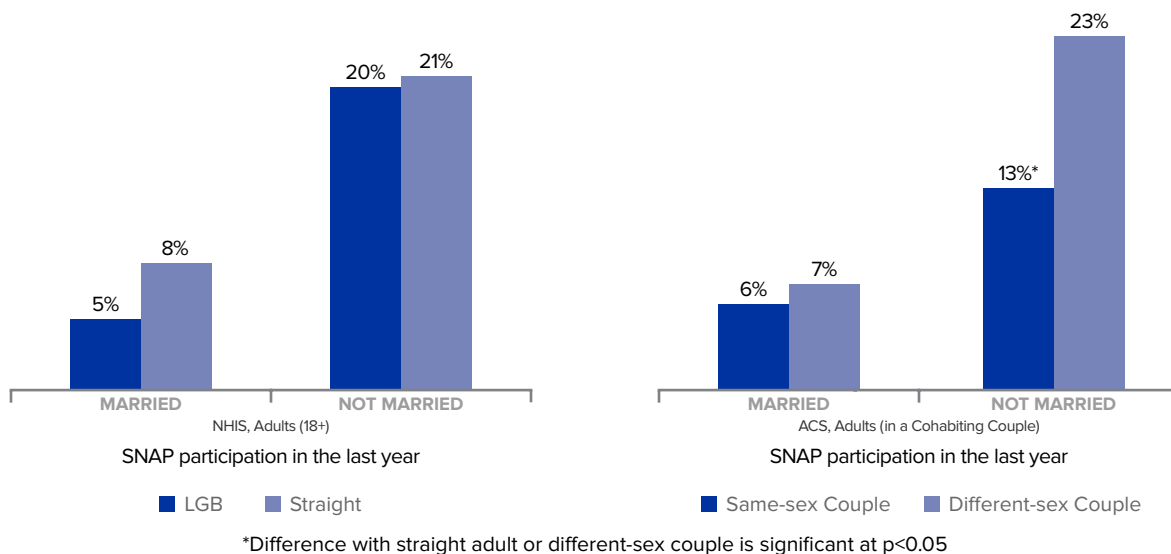
Figure XV. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB/T Identity and Marital Status (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)



Among married adults in the Gallup data, individuals who identify as LGBT (15%) reported not having had enough money for food at some time in the past year at significantly higher rates than non-LGBT individuals (11%). Similarly, unmarried adults who identify as LGBT (30%) report significantly higher rates than their non-LGBT counterparts (23%). Using the composite measure of food insecurity available in the NHIS data, however, there is not evidence to indicate a significant difference by marital status between adults who identify as LGB and those who identify as straight.

Data from individual adults in the NHIS and ACS do not indicate that a similar relationship exists for rates of SNAP participation (see Figure XVI).

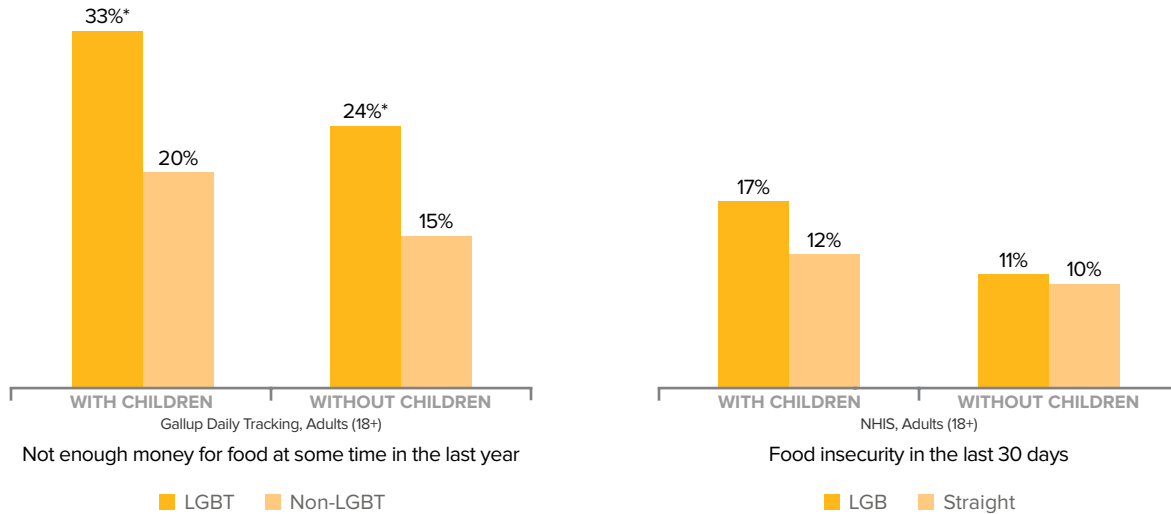
Figure XVI. SNAP Participation, by LGB Identity or Couple Type and Marital Status (NHIS and ACS)



Among married individuals and among unmarried individuals in the NHIS, individuals who identified as LGB do not appear to have significantly different rates of SNAP participation than straight individuals. Among cohabiting couples in the ACS, unmarried adults in same-sex couples reported SNAP participation at a significantly lower rate than unmarried adults in different-sex couples, though.

In addition to marital status, the data allow us to examine patterns of raising children and evaluate differences in rates of food insecurity according to this variable (see Figure XVII).

Figure XVII. Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity, by LGB/T Identity and Raising Children under Age 18 (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)

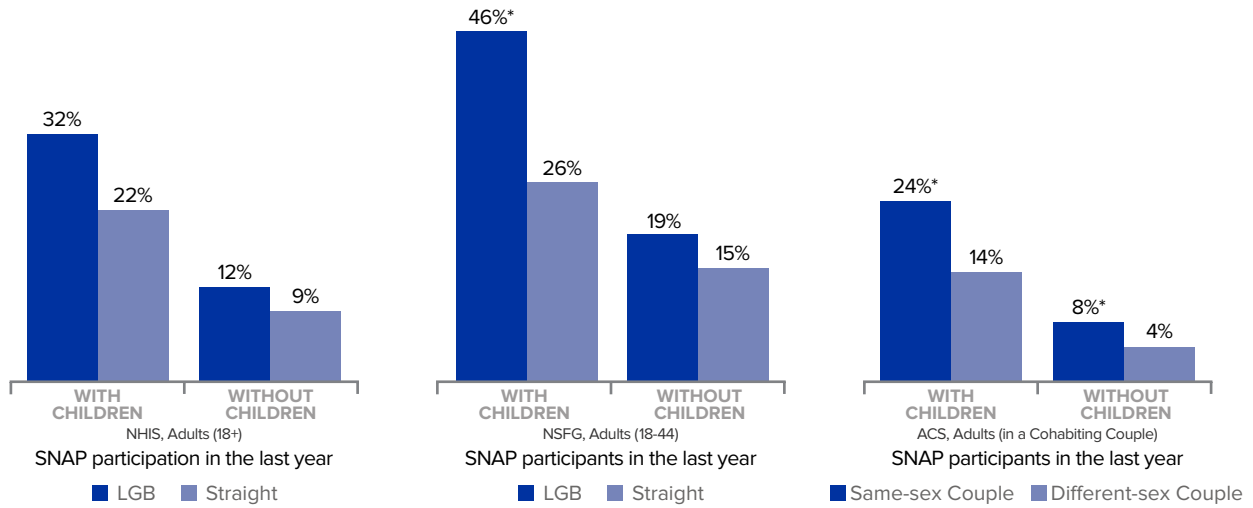


*Difference with non-LGB/T adult is significant at p<0.05

Among those raising children and those not raising children in the Gallup data, adults who identify as LGBT reported not having enough money for food at significantly higher rates than non-LGBT adults. An estimated 33% of LGBT adults who are raising children indicate experiencing this particular form of food insecurity in the past year, compared to 20% of their non-LGBT counterparts. In the NHIS data, LGB adults raising children reported higher rates of food insecurity in the past 30 days than straight adults with children, but not at a rate that was significantly different.

Among adults who identify as LGB, both those who are and are not raising children appear to have higher rates of SNAP participation than adults who identify as straight, though not at significantly higher rates in some cases (see Figure XVIII).

Figure XVIII. SNAP Participation, by LGB Identity or Couple Type and Raising Children under Age 18 (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)



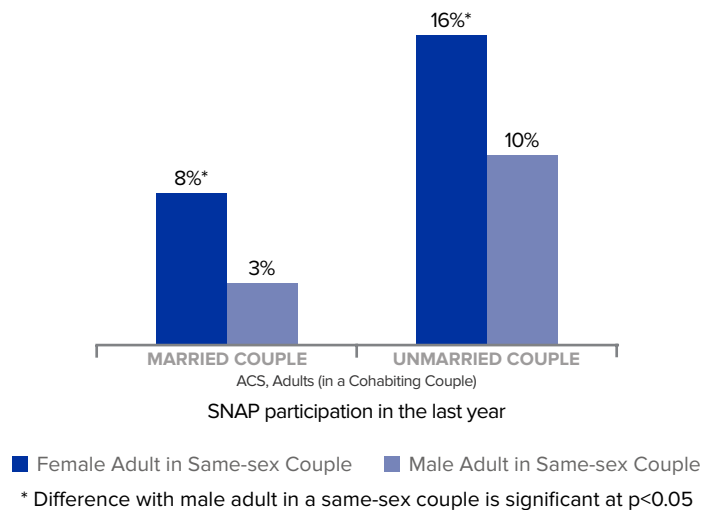
* Difference with different-sex couple or straight adult is significant at p<0.05

Data from the NHIS show that nearly one in three LGB adults with children (32%) participated in SNAP in the last year, compared to 22% of straight adults with children. In the NSFG, 46% of LGB adults between the ages of 18 and 44 who are raising children participated in SNAP, a significantly higher rate than among straight adults so aged and raising children (26%).

In the ACS, we find that adults in same-sex couples are significantly more likely to have reported participating in SNAP in the past year than adults in different-sex couples, regardless of whether they are raising children.

With data indicating that LGB women have higher rates of SNAP participation than LGB men, we also attempt to measure whether differences in SNAP participation according to marital status and raising children are evident among both men and women. In the ACS data, women in same-sex couples participated in SNAP in the last year at significantly higher rates than men in same-sex couples regardless of whether they were married or unmarried (see Figure XIX).

Figure XIX. SNAP Participation, by Marital Status and Gender among Adults in Same-sex Couples (ACS)

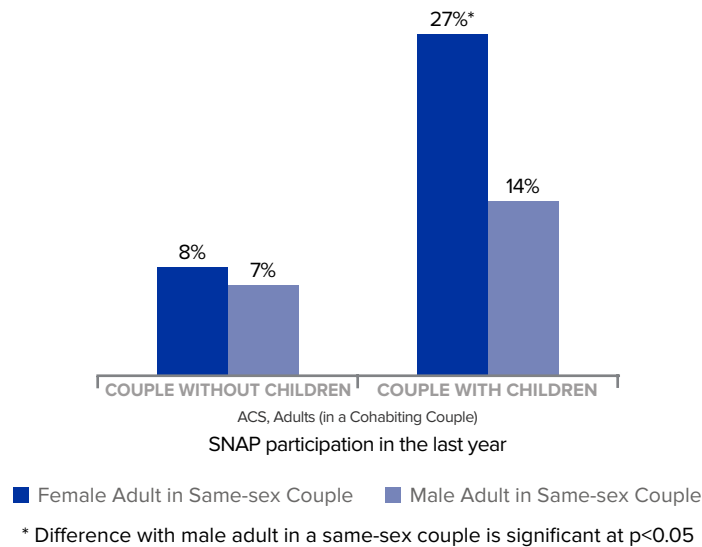


* Difference with male adult in a same-sex couple is significant at p<0.05

While 16% of unmarried women in same-sex couples reported participating in SNAP in the last year, 10% of unmarried men in same-sex couples reported SNAP participation. An estimated 8% of married women in same-sex couples compared to 3% of married men in same-sex couples reported SNAP participation in the last year.

The data indicate that women in same-sex couples who are raising children (27%) are also significantly more likely than men in same-sex couples raising children (14%) to have participated in SNAP in the last year (see Figure XX).

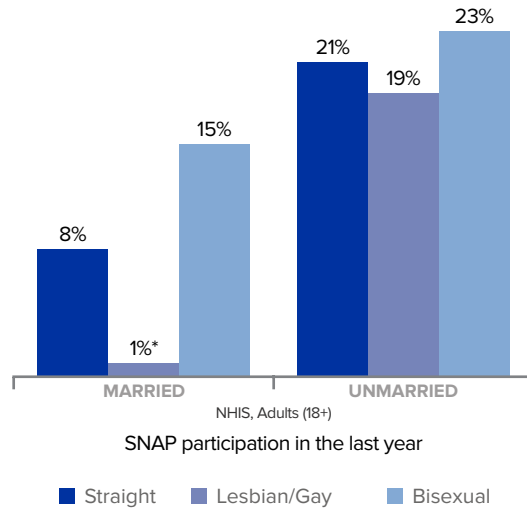
Figure XX. SNAP Participation, by Raising Children under Age 18 and Gender among Adults in Same-sex Couples (ACS)



The same relationship is not found between women and men who are not raising children. This indicates that women may be largely responsible for the higher rate of SNAP participation among same-sex couples with children relative to different-sex couples with children (see Figure XVIII).

Bisexual women and lesbians have, on average, some of the highest rates of SNAP participation (see Figure VI). Data from the NHIS allow us to examine what effects sexual orientation, including bisexuality, has on participation in SNAP according to marital status and raising children under age 18 (see Figure XXI and Figure XXII).

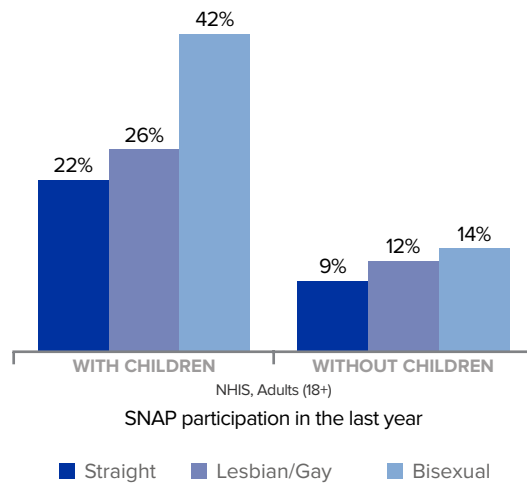
Figure XXI. SNAP Participation, by Marital Status and Sexual Orientation among LGB Adults (NHIS)



* Difference with straight adult married or unmarried is significant at $p < 0.05$

The NHIS data do not indicate that there are significant differences in SNAP participation between bisexual and lesbian/gay unmarried adults and straight unmarried adults. Similarly, the data do not indicate significant differences between bisexual married adults and straight married adults. However, married lesbian or gay adults appear significantly less likely to have participated in SNAP in the last year compared to married straight adults.

Figure XXII. SNAP Participation, by Raising Children under Age 18 and Sexual Orientation among LGB Adults (NHIS)



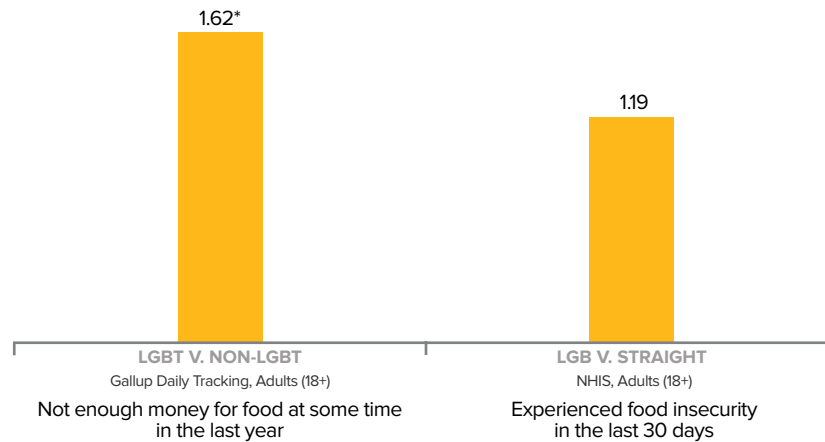
* Difference with straight adult with or without children is significant at $p < 0.05$

According to the NHIS data, more than four in ten bisexual adults raising children (42%) participated in SNAP in the last year. Among those without children, lesbian or gay, bisexual, and straight adults did not report participating in SNAP at significantly different rates.

G. MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

These data provide evidence for disparities in food insecurity and SNAP participation between LGB/T and straight adults and between adults in same-sex and different-sex couples. The aim of the next set of analyses, using multivariate logistic regression, is to assess whether differences between LGB/T and non-LGB/T people exist even after taking into account differences in key demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity.

Figure XXIII. Odds of LGB/T Adults Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity Relative to non-LGB/T Adults (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)

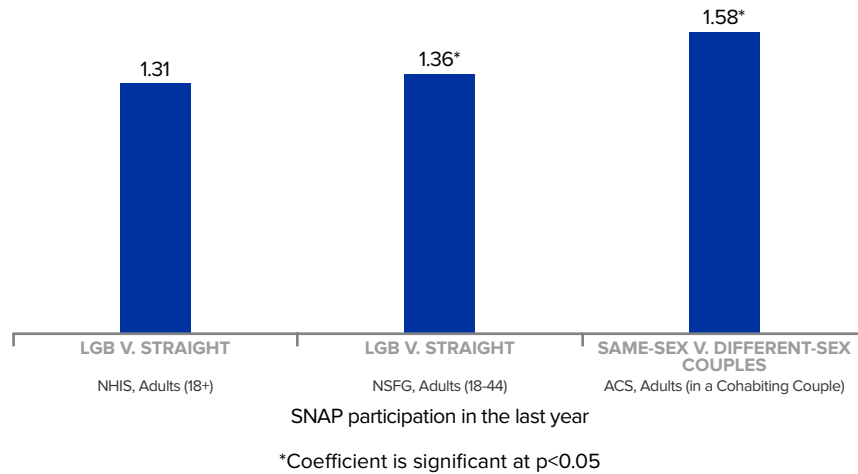


*Coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$

There is some additional evidence that LGB/T status matters in explaining differences in food insecurity, controlling for other variables. In the Gallup data, LGBT adults are 1.62 times more likely than non-LGBT adults, on average, to report not having had enough money for the food that they or their families needed at some time in the last year (see Figure XXIII). The NHIS does not definitively indicate that differences in the likelihood of food insecurity may be attributed to LGB identity.

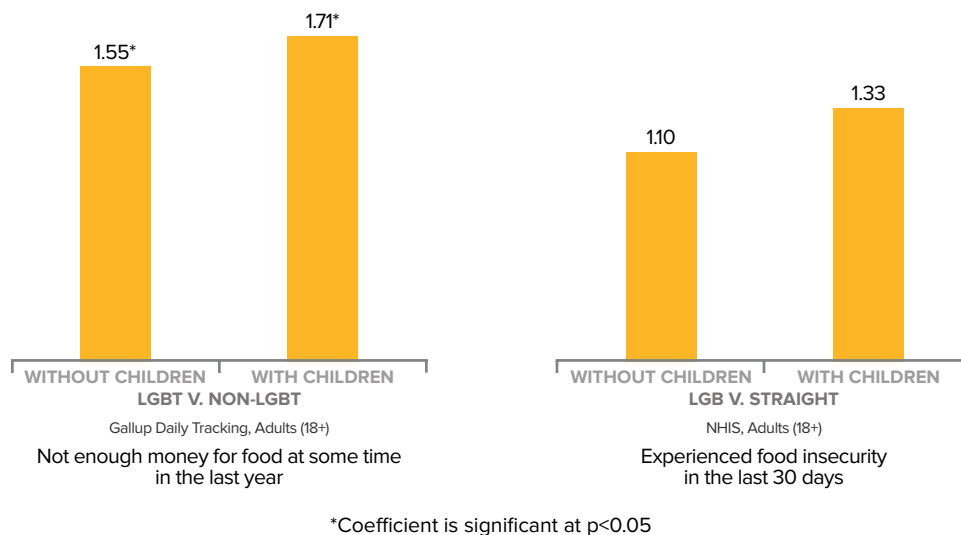
The NSFG and ACS data indicate that LGB adults between the ages of 18 and 44 and adults in same-sex couples are significantly more likely to have participated in SNAP in the last year (see Figure XXIV), ranging from 1.36-1.58 times greater likelihood compared to non LGB adults and different sex couples.

Figure XXIV. Odds of LGB Adults and Adults in Same-sex Couples Having Participated in SNAP Relative to Non-LGB Adults and Adults in Different-sex Couples (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)



Multivariate analyses also indicate that LGB/T adults and adults in same-sex couples are significantly more likely to have experienced food insecurity in the last year and participated in SNAP. This relationship holds among both LGB/T adults and adults in same-sex couples who are raising children and those who are not raising children (see Figure XXV and Figure XXVI).

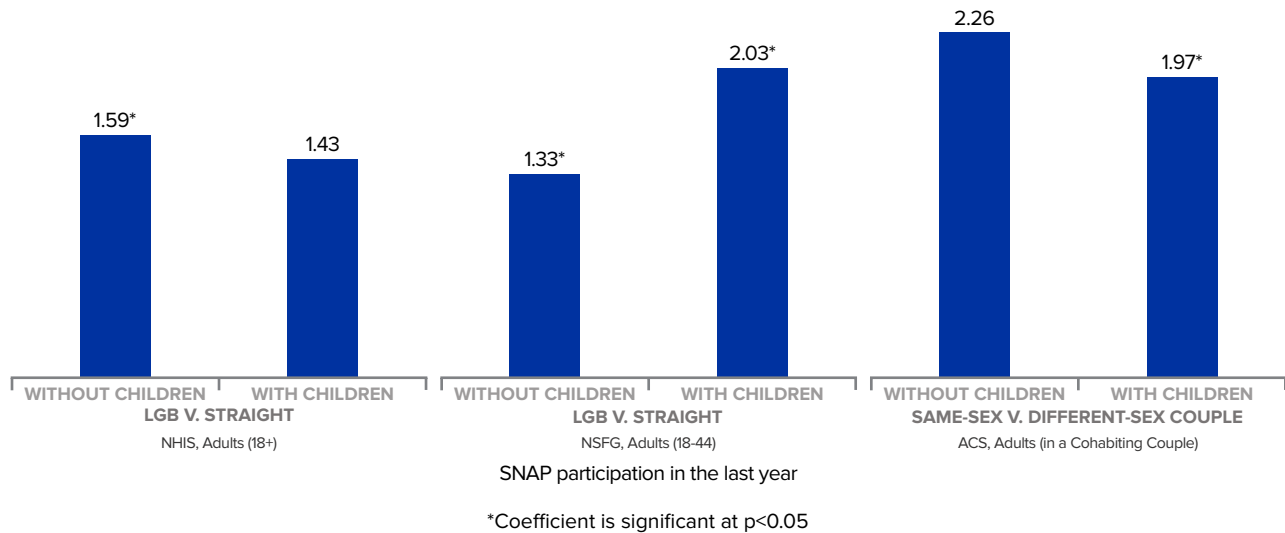
Figure XXV. Odds of LGB/T Adults Not Having Had Enough Money to Pay for Food and Having Experienced Food Insecurity by Raising Children Under 18 Relative to Non-LGB/T Adults (Gallup Daily Tracking and NHIS)



Gallup data indicate that LGBT adults raising children under 18 are 1.71 times more likely than non-LGBT adults raising children to have not had enough money for the food that they or their families needed in the last year. Similarly, the Gallup data indicate that LGBT adults without children are 1.55 times more likely than non-LGBT adults without children to have not had enough money for the food that they or their families needed in the last year. The NHIS data do not conclusively indicate a significant difference in experiencing food insecurity in the last 30 days between LGB and straight adults, either among those with children or those without children.

NSFG data indicate that LGB adults between the ages of 18 and 44 are significantly more likely to have participated in SNAP in the last year than their straight counterparts, both among those raising children and among those not raising children (see Figure XXVI).

Figure XXVI. Odds of LGB Adults and Adults in Same-sex Couples Having Participated in SNAP by Raising Children under Age 18 Relative to Non-LGB Adults and Adults in Different-sex Couples (NHIS, NSFG, and ACS)



Most notably, in the NSFG, LGB adults raising children are more than two times as likely as straight adults raising children to have participated in SNAP in the last year. Among adults in couples, those in a same-sex couple who are raising children under 18 are 1.97 times as likely as adults in different-sex couples raising children to have participated in SNAP; those in a same-sex couple who are not raising children under 18 are 2.26 times as likely as adults in different-sex couples not raising children, though this relationship is not statistically significant. These data provide strong evidence that LGB/T adults and adults in same-sex couples are more likely to have experienced food insecurity and participated in SNAP than non-LGB/T adults and adults in different-sex couples, and this is true both for individuals who are and individuals who are not raising children.

V. CONCLUSION

These data provide additional evidence that LGB/T identity and status as a member of a same-sex couple do affect the prevalence of experiences of food insecurity and rates of SNAP participation. Furthermore, within groups defined by gender, age, race and ethnicity, education, marital status, and experience with raising children, LGB/T individuals and individuals in same-sex couples often report higher rates of food insecurity experiences and SNAP participation than their counterparts. When demographic factors are controlled, LGB/T identity and status as a member of a same-sex couple significantly increase odds of SNAP participation and food insecurity experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Taylor N. T. Brown is a Public Policy Analyst at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. He holds a Master of Public Policy from the University of Virginia.

Adam P. Romero is Senior Counsel and Arnold D. Kassoy Scholar of Law at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. He holds a J.D. from Yale Law School.

Gary J. Gates is retired Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. He holds a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the Heinz College of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank Brad Sears, M. V. Lee Badgett, Bianca D. M. Wilson, and participants in the 2016 Food Equity Symposium at U.C. Irvine School of Law for their thoughtful comments on this study.

We are grateful to the ConAgra Foods Foundation for partially funding this study.

The Williams Institute is committed to the highest standards of independent inquiry, academic excellence, and rigor. Research findings and conclusions are never altered to accommodate other interests, including those of funders, other organizations, or government bodies and officials.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law
Box 951476
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1476

(310) 267-4382

williamsinstitute@law.ucla.edu
www.williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu