



Going Global: Estimating Comparable Prevalence Rates of Food Insecurity Experienced by Adults in 150 Countries

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Voices of the Hungry (VoH), a project of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, attempts to estimate comparable national prevalence rates of food insecurity among adults in 150 countries. The national estimates are based on an experiential measure of food insecurity—lack of consistent economic access to adequate food for active healthy lives—calculated from conditions and behaviors reported by adults in nationally representative surveys in each country. Deriving internationally comparable prevalence estimates based on an experiential measure is a formidable challenge, considering the differences in languages, cultures, and livelihood arrangements that exist across countries. Statistical theory and methods for latent trait analysis based on item response theory (IRT) provide a general approach and many of the statistical tools needed to accomplish this task, although some adaptation and extension of those methods is required. This presentation describes the details of the process from data collection to comparable national statistics and presents results of the analyses in data collected in the first year of the project.

Keywords: food security; experiential measures; voices of the hungry; item-response theory.