



## Association of Arizona Food Banks

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#### **Community Food Bank:**

*Serves: Pima, Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties*

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#### **St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance:**

*Serves: Metro Phoenix, Central & West Maricopa, West Pinal, Yavapai, Mohave, Coconino, and Northern Navajo & Apache Counties*

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#### **United Food Bank:**

*Serves: East Valley, East Maricopa, East Pinal, Gila, and Southern Navajo & Apache Counties*

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#### **Yuma Community Food Bank:**

*Serves: Yuma, La Paz and Imperial, CA Counties*

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### **Massive Hunger in America Study Shows More Arizonans Seeking Emergency Food Assistance**

PHOENIX, ARIZONA: The fourth edition of the quadrennial Hunger In America study released today by Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, reports that 888,100 unduplicated Arizonans—almost half (46%; 408,526 total) of them children under the age of 18—received emergency food in 2009. This represents a stunning 85% increase over the previous 2006 study. A staggering 74% of those households live below the federal poverty level, which is \$22,050 annually for a family of four.

These Arizona numbers are well above the 46% increase of those who received emergency food nationwide, no doubt a result of the economy, housing crisis and rising unemployment in the years between studies. Across America, one in eight people (37 million)—including 14 million children and nearly 3 million seniors—received emergency food in 2009.

"The figures contained in the study reinforce the struggles many Arizonans have experienced in the last several years as the economy has worsened," said Ginny Hildebrand, president and CEO of the Association of Arizona Food Banks (AAFB). "Fortunately, they also provide concrete numbers regarding how we can improve."

One of the most striking revelations is the increase in the number of client households in Arizona who experienced food insecurity, defined as limited or uncertain availability of or ability to acquire nutritionally adequate and safe foods in socially acceptable ways. In 2009, 77% of client households experienced food insecurity, up from 71% in 2006. Of these, 86% had children under the age of 18, compared to 73% in 2006.

In what could be called a silver lining, only 38% of those client households experienced very low food security—essentially outright hunger—in 2009, virtually no increase compared to 2006. This contrasts with the results nationwide, which saw a 54% increase. This validates recent expanded efforts statewide to provide for the most vulnerable households. Other selected Hunger in America 2010 findings for Arizona include:

- An 18% decline in faith-based food pantries and a 32% decline in faith-based soup kitchens from 2006 to 2009, which may be an indication of a shift in how the faith-based community serves those in need.
- A 43% decline in the number of seniors 65+ receiving emergency food from 2006 to 2009.
- Food pantries turned away clients 22% more often and soup kitchens 24% more often, which speaks to both the lack of emergency food available and the rapid increases in demand brought on by the economy.

The study also revealed interesting findings for the four Feeding America food banks serving Arizona:

**Community Food Bank:**

- The number of unduplicated clients seeking emergency food assistance increased 81% from 2006 (98,200) to 2009 (178,200).
- 83% of clients' household incomes fell below the federal poverty level in 2009 vs. 61% in 2006, a 36% increase.

**St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance:**

- Nearly half a million individuals are provided with emergency food every year, and of those, nearly half are working poor families, where at least one adult works but is unable to meet the family's total needs.
- More than half reported choosing between buying food and paying rent or mortgage, more than 25% are college educated, and more than 25% reported choosing between buying food and paying for medical care.

**United Food Bank:**

- The number of unduplicated clients seeking emergency food assistance increased 94% from 2006 (92,700) to 2009 (179,800).
- 78% of pantries in United's service area rely on United as their primary source of food, including 84% for federal TEFAP commodities—the highest percentage of the four Arizona food banks—which speaks to the importance of getting food to rural areas that often struggle to find additional food resources.

**Yuma Community Food Bank:**

- A staggering 97% of client households with children are food insecure, and 32% of client households must choose between paying for food and paying for medicine and/or medical care.
- Both percentages likely result from Yuma County having the highest unemployment and poverty rates in Arizona.

The Hunger in America 2010 methodology includes data collected from February-June, 2009. In-depth face-to-face interviews with 1,390 people seeking emergency food were conducted at food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other emergency feeding program sites, as well as with 526 food providing agencies statewide. Nationally, Feeding America collected quantitative and qualitative feedback from 61,000 face-to-face client interviews and more than 37,000 agencies, making this study the largest, most-comprehensive ever on domestic hunger.

A summary of Arizona findings is available at [www.azfoodbanks.org](http://www.azfoodbanks.org). The full national report is available at [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org). AAFB will publish a more in-depth report on hunger in Arizona later in the spring.

Established in 1984, the Association of Arizona Food Banks is a private, non-profit organization serving five-member regional food bank warehouses (Community Food Bank, Desert Mission Food Bank, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, United Food Bank, Yuma Community Food Bank) and a network of nearly 1,700 food pantries and agencies. As one of the first state associations in the nation, AAFB was instrumental in the development of a statewide gleaning project, and our advocacy efforts have brought about beneficial state and federal legislation for our member food banks and the people they serve. For more information, to find a food bank or pantry in your area, or to learn more about donation and volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.azfoodbanks.org](http://www.azfoodbanks.org).