



Association of Arizona Food Banks

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For Immediate Release: January 26, 2010

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New Report Provides Ultra-Current Information on Hunger by State and Metro Area

PHOENIX, ARIZONA: According to a new report, one in five Arizona households (20.5%) in 2009 reported not having enough money to buy food that they needed during the prior twelve months for themselves or their family. This ranks Arizona 17th worst in the country, and worse than 2008, when Arizona ranked 22nd with 18.8% of households struggling with food hardship. Nationwide, 18.5% of respondents reported food hardship in 2009, down from when the hardship rate peaked in the fourth quarter of 2008 at 19.5%.

The data comes courtesy of a new report released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), which compiles data from 2008 and 2009 by state and Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), vividly showing the impacts the current recession is having on hunger and food hardship—the inability to afford enough food.

“This data confirms what we’re seeing in communities throughout Arizona, and it provides a current look at how pervasive households’ struggle with hunger have become that we didn’t previously have,” said Ginny Hildebrand, president and CEO of the Association of Arizona Food Banks. “Certainly there’s still much work to be done to assist our struggling individuals and families in this economy.”

In the Phoenix metro area, the food hardship rate for all households was 19.8% in 2008-09, ranking it 27 out of the 100 largest MSAs. The percentage was higher for households with children, with 27.4% reporting food hardship over the same time period.

“These striking numbers show how badly Arizona’s economy struggled in 2009,” said Sharon Pierson, director of the Desert Mission Food Bank in Phoenix. “Desert Mission has seen the impact of increased food hardship by serving more clients than ever before.”

In the Tucson metro area, the food hardship rate for all households was 18.8% in 2008-09, ranking 37 out of the 100 largest MSAs.

The FRAC report analyzes survey data collected by Gallup. The ability to provide such localized data and such up-to-date data comes from Gallup’s partnership with Healthways, interviewing 1,000 households per day almost every day since January, 2008 as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project. For this report, more than 530,000 people were asked whether there were times over the preceding year that they did not have enough money to buy food they or their family needed. To read the full report, visit www.azfoodbanks.org or www.frac.org.

The Gallup survey question on food hardship is very similar to one posed by the Census Bureau and analyzed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its official measure of food insecurity, but because of sample size, Gallup provides a closer, more localized and more recent look at food hardship. Official government data on food insecurity have a nearly one-year time lag and do not go below the state level.

These new numbers are especially relevant as Congress looks at jobs legislation and other strategies to mitigate the damage of the recession, and reauthorizes child nutrition legislation this year. AAFB and our member food banks have joined FRAC in calling for improvements in a range of federal nutrition programs, including SNAP (food stamps) and child nutrition programs, and for more efforts to boost the economy, create more well-paying jobs and reduce unemployment.

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.

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