



Hunger in America 2010

Executive Summary



TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

AGENCY A charitable organization that provides the food supplied by a food bank or food-rescue organization directly to clients in need, through various types of programs.

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE Charitable feeding programs whose services are provided to clients who are typically in short-term need of emergency assistance. Hunger in America 2010 only measures emergency food assistance usage by client households of the Feeding America network. Emergency food programs include food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters.

FOOD BANK A charitable organization that solicits, receives, inventories and distributes donated food and grocery products pursuant to industry and appropriate regulatory standards. The products are distributed to charitable human-service agencies, which provide the products directly to clients through various programs.

FOOD INSECURITY USDA's measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members; limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.

KITCHEN (SOUP KITCHEN, COMMUNITY DINING ROOM) A charitable program whose primary purpose is to provide prepared meals, served in the kitchen, to clients in need.

NON-EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE Charitable feeding programs that have a primary purpose other than emergency food distribution, but also distribute food. Non-emergency food programs include afterschool meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal programs, child day care programs, Kids Cafe and Backpack programs.

PANTRY (FOOD PANTRY, FOOD SHELF) A charitable distribution agency that provides clients food and grocery products for home preparation and consumption.

SHELTER (EMERGENCY SHELTER, HOMELESS SHELTER) A charitable program with a primary purpose to provide shelter or housing on a short-term or temporary basis to clients and typically serves one or more meals a day.

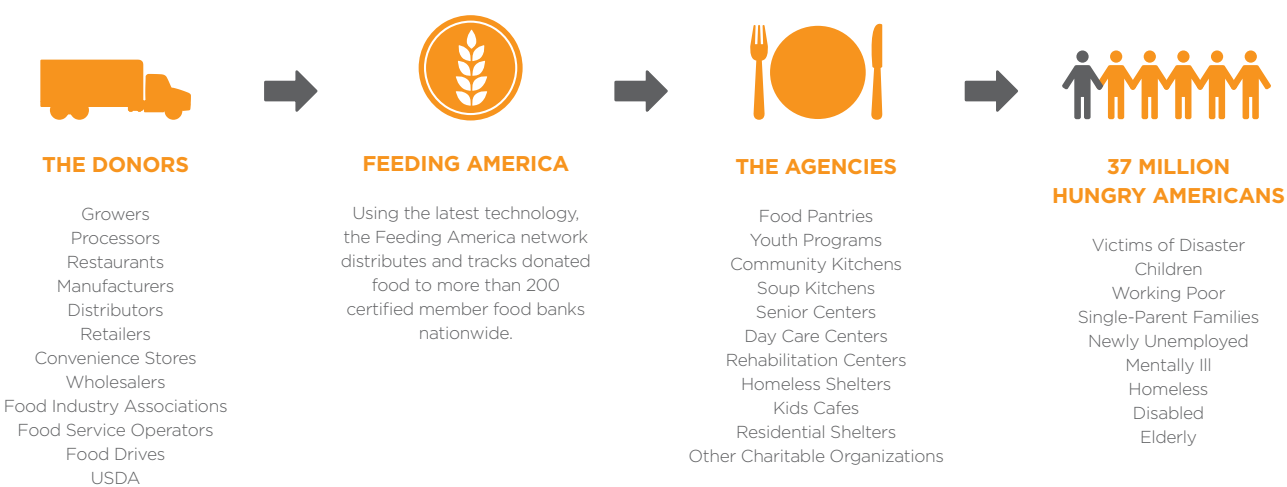
VERY LOW FOOD SECURITY (ALSO SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS FOOD INSECURITY WITH HUNGER) An involuntary state that results in eating patterns of one or more household members being disrupted and food intake reduced, because the household could not afford enough food.

About Feeding America

Feeding America is the nation's network of more than 200 food banks and the largest domestic hunger-relief charity in the United States. Each year, Feeding America secures and distributes more than 2.6 billion pounds of food and grocery products to 61,000 agencies nationwide. Our agency network provides emergency food assistance to an estimated 37 million Americans in need annually.

Our strength is derived from our member food banks, which serve all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, reaching nearly all metropolitan, suburban and rural communities. Hunger does not discriminate and neither does the Feeding America network—our members serve people regardless of their race, age or religion. For more than 30 years, our members have been assisting low-income Americans who struggle to meet their daily needs.

HOW WE WORK





PURPOSE In order to address the problem of hunger, first we must understand it. To that end, Hunger in America 2010, the largest study of domestic hunger ever conducted, provides an in-depth look at who is in need, how the need is met, and by whom.

About Hunger In America 2010

Feeding America seeks not only to immediately alleviate hunger through distribution of food and grocery products to people in need, but also to address the problem of hunger in the long-term by increasing awareness among the public, connecting clients seeking emergency food assistance with federal benefits, and advocating for changes to programs and policies that support low-income Americans and ultimately end hunger. This is our fifth extensive study of hunger, which we have conducted quadrennially since 1993. Through more than 61,000 face-to-face client interviews and more than 37,000 surveys of local charitable agencies, Hunger in America 2010 captures detailed information about who is in need of emergency food assistance and their circumstances, which, in turn, helps charitable feeding organizations develop programs that best support hungry Americans. The results also better inform the public policy discourse so that federal nutrition programs can better serve those in need.

METHODOLOGY

Hunger in America 2010 is the largest, most comprehensive study of domestic emergency food assistance ever conducted. The study provides comprehensive and statistically valid data on the national charitable response to hunger and the people served by food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in the Feeding America network.

This report is based on independent research conducted on behalf of Feeding America by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), a widely respected social policy research firm based in Princeton, New Jersey. MPR is nationally recognized as a leader in the field of human services research. Feeding America contracted with MPR to work with 185 network member participants who voluntarily agreed to collect data in their communities.

All aspects of the study were overseen by an independent Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The TAG was composed of noted social scientists, including demographers, economists, survey research specialists and statisticians, who reviewed survey instruments, the analysis plan and the final results. The TAG members' impartiality, broad range of expertise and regular critical oversight of the project was vital to ensuring that the Hunger in America 2010 project adhered to the highest standards in survey research.

There are two main data sources for Hunger in America 2010: client data and agency data, both of which were collected in late winter and spring 2009. Both the client and agency data collection

instruments mirror the questionnaires used in the 2006 Hunger Study, with a few additional questions that were developed for the 2009 data collection effort. The client data was amassed through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected recipients at emergency feeding sites across the country. Approximately 61,000 individuals offered to share their stories with us, including the circumstances of what led them to the pantry, kitchen or shelter at which they were interviewed. Their willingness to participate in this study makes it possible for us to better understand who seeks emergency food assistance and why. Participating food banks also mailed surveys to each of their member agencies, seeking information about the services available to low-income Americans, and their agencies' needs and stability. The study amassed more than 37,000 agency responses nationwide.

Each of the participating food banks provided MPR with the information needed to develop their sampling frame and were responsible for data collection within their service area. In order to ensure data collection standardization across the country, MPR conducted three regional, two-day in-depth training sessions for all participating members of the study. MPR also provided technical assistance with the implementation of the agency and client surveys. MPR was responsible for data analysis and the writing of the national and local reports, a process which occurred during summer and fall 2009.



Food Insecurity is Rising in America

In the annual USDA survey on food insecurity, the number of Americans found to be food insecure in 2008 rose sharply to 49 million individuals (17.1 million households), a 36% increase over the prior year¹. The Hunger in America 2010 analysis reveals that Feeding America's network of food banks and their partner agencies provide emergency hunger-relief services to an estimated 37 million low-income individuals (14.5 million households) in the United States annually. This represents an increase of 46% in unduplicated annual clients since the Hunger in America 2006 report. The 37 million annual client estimate falls within a 95% confidence interval ranging from 33.7 to 40.2 million unduplicated clients.² Even if the true number falls at the lower end of the confidence interval, it still represents a substantial increase over 2005.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*, November 2009.
² The 95 percent confidence interval range for this estimate is 33.76 million to 40.23 million, based on the study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc.

Who Seeks Emergency Food Assistance?

LOW INCOME PEOPLE WITH FEW RESOURCES

LOW INCOME

The majority of clients seeking emergency food assistance from Feeding America are part of households living below the federal poverty line. In fact, 79% of households served by the Network had annual incomes below the federal poverty level, or less than \$17,163 a year for a household of three in 2008.³ The average monthly income for a household served was \$940 for the previous month and the average yearly household income was \$13,030 for 2008. Conversely, 7% of our clients had incomes above 185% of poverty in 2008, indicating that even individuals with higher incomes may be vulnerable to food insecurity at times.

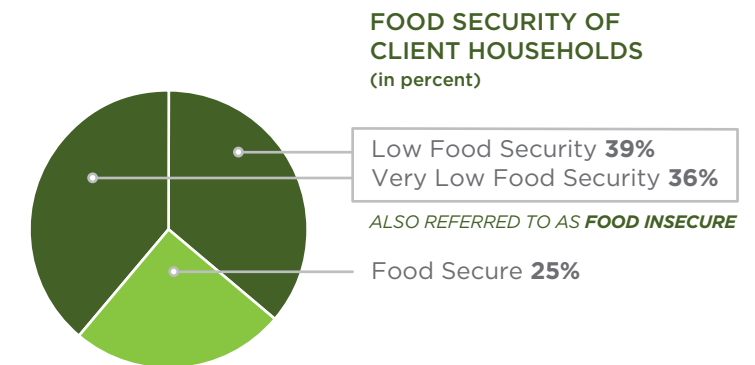
RESOURCE POOR

In addition to living in poverty, recipients of emergency food typically have limited resources from which to draw when struggling with financial difficulties. Ten percent of client households are homeless. Sixty percent do not have access to a working car, up from 46% in 2005. Additionally, Feeding America clients are often faced with choices between food and other basic needs. Many survey respondents indicated that they have been forced to choose between food and utilities (46%); food and rent or mortgage (40%); food or medicine or medical care (34%); food or transportation (35%); and food or gasoline (36%). More than one in three

emergency food recipients must choose between an everyday necessity and sufficient food.

FOOD INSECURE

Utilizing the federal government's measure of food security, 76% of client households served by Feeding America were "food insecure," a 5% increase over 2005. Since 1995, the U.S. Census Bureau and USDA Economic Research Service have collected information through the annual Current Population Survey on "food insecurity," defined as "lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members; limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods." A six-item subset of the food insecurity survey questions are included in the hunger study client survey so that we can assess levels of food security based on federally established definitions. About 36% of our clients are experiencing very low food security, a more serious lack of access to food formerly labeled food insecurity with hunger by the USDA.



³ U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/threshld/thresh08

CHILDREN

Children are especially vulnerable to issues of hunger and poverty. According to the USDA, 17 million, or nearly one in four children in the U.S., are food insecure.⁴ Additionally, about one in five children under age 18 in the United States live in poverty.⁵ Hunger has long-lasting, devastating effects on the health and development of children. Failing to provide children with adequate nutrition in the first three to five years of life can have dire consequences.⁶

Thirty-eight percent or an estimated 13.9 million of the people we serve are children under age 18. About 9% or an estimated 3.2 million of our

clients are young children under age 5. Almost four out of every five food insecure households served by Feeding America have children under 18 living in them.

SENIORS

Scientific evidence supports good nutrition as critical to the health and life quality of America's seniors. Because of issues that relate specifically to age, including decreased mobility, limited outside assistance and fixed incomes, the elderly can be especially vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.⁷ Approximately 8% of Feeding America clients or 2.9 million individuals are over age 65.



⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*, November 2009.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty08/pov08hi

⁶ Feeding America. John Cook, K. Jeng. *Child Food Insecurity: The Economic Impact on our Nation*, May 2009.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032009/pov/new01_100_01

HEALTH ISSUES

Given the high costs of health care, it should come as no surprise that many of the people we serve live in poor health or without access to adequate medical care. One in three of the adults interviewed at emergency feeding sites (30%) state that someone in their household is in "poor" health. One in four adult clients (24%)—3.5 million people—report that they or another household member lacks any type of health insurance. This is an increase of 60% since 2005, at which time there were 2.2 million people (21%) without health insurance. And almost half of our adult clients (46%) report that they or a household member have unpaid medical or hospital bills.

UNEMPLOYMENT

In 2009, more than one-third (36%) of all households served by Feeding America had one or more adults working. When considering the employment status of all adults in client households, 13% are employed full-time and 14% are employed part-time. Among those unemployed adult clients who were interviewed, 22% had been unemployed less than a year, including 8% that had recently lost a job, having been unemployed for three months or less. The recession and rising unemployment rates have created new challenges for many households already living in vulnerable circumstances.

Approximately 32% of all client households served by Feeding America indicate that a job was their primary source of household income for the previous month. Income from employment was the most often reported source of income for client households, followed by Social Security (21%). A small percentage of client households (4%) reported that traditional "welfare" payments (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or General

Assistance) were the household's primary source of income in the past month.

Unfortunately, for many working households that utilize our network's services, income from employment is too often not sufficient to make ends meet. About 49% of recipient households reported incomes of less than \$10,000 in the previous year, a slight decrease from 52% in 2005. The average household income among all client households was \$13,030, with 84% of all client households reporting 2008 annual incomes at or below 130% of poverty and 74% of all households with incomes below the federal poverty level.

SINGLE-FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

The majority of adults served by Feeding America are women (61%) and single-parent households represent over a third of all households with children (36%). The average household size served by Feeding America is 2.7 persons, which is larger than the average size of households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) at 2.2 persons.⁸

Whereas female-headed households with children are more prevalent at food pantry sites, single adult males without children are more prevalent at soup kitchen and shelter sites. The Hunger in America 2010 data are consistent with the USDA Food Security studies, which show that households with children were more affected by food insecurity than other households, and that single mothers with children were especially vulnerable to food insecurity and hunger.

GEOGRAPHY

Hunger in America 2010 reveals that 52% of all adult emergency food recipients (pantries, kitchens and shelters) reside in metropolitan

⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2008*, October 2009.

areas, while approximately 48% live in suburban or rural areas. Slightly less than half (47%) of all adult food pantry recipients (who are most likely to have a permanent residence) reside in metropolitan areas, while 53% live in suburban or rural areas.

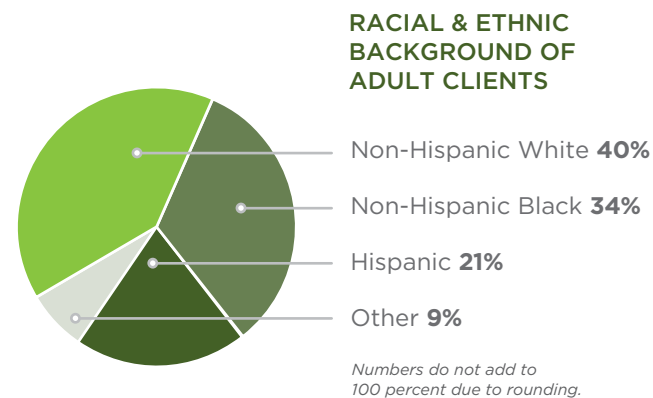
HOUSING STATUS

An estimated 10% of client households served by the Feeding America network are homeless or without a place to live. As would be expected, the overwhelming majority of shelter client households have no other place to live (83%),⁹ followed by 24% of soup kitchen client households. The vast majority of pantry client households report that they have a place to live (97%). Overall, about 90% of all emergency food recipient households do have a place to live, and of those, 67% rent their homes and 7% live free with someone else. Only 24% of client households with a residence own their homes. Approximately 14% of client households receive Section 8 or other public housing assistance. Of those emergency food recipient households with a place to live (either rent or own), 25% reported that they were late in paying the previous month's rent or mortgage.

ALL RACES AND ETHNICITIES

Feeding America serves a diverse clientele. Racial and ethnic background was obtained from adult clients interviewed at emergency feeding sites.¹⁰ While the proportion of adult Hispanic clients served has increased slightly since 2005 from 17% to 21%, the absolute number has increased from 1.8 million to 3 million adults (66% increase over 2005). The percentage of non-Hispanic African-American adults served at emergency food programs has

declined slightly from 38% to 34%. Nevertheless, the overall number of adult African-American clients grew from 3.9 million to 4.9 million (25% increase over 2005). About 40% of our adult client population is non-Hispanic white, which grew from 4.1 million adult clients in 2005 to 5.8 million in 2009. When compared to the racial and ethnic makeup of the U.S. population, it is clear that African-American and Hispanic clients are disproportionately affected by food insecurity.¹¹ Among other adult clients of the Feeding America network, 1% are Asian; 4% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 1% are Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander; and 3% identified themselves as "Other."



EDUCATION STATUS

Approximately 34% of adult clients (over the age of 18) have neither completed high school nor attained the equivalent. For another 39% of emergency food recipient adults, a high school diploma or equivalent is the highest level of education attained. Approximately 23% of all adult clients have completed at least some college.

⁹ Although follow-up questions were not asked of shelter clients who responded that they had a place to live, a number of reasons may exist for why someone staying in a shelter reports having another residence. The shelter may operate day services, and the percentage may also include shelter clients who left their homes because of domestic situations (a father in a shelter and a mother and child still at home), legal issues (recent foreclosure of home/apartment or landlord issues), or even mental health problems.
¹⁰ Racial and ethnic data was not obtained for all household members; therefore these numbers do not reflect Feeding America's total client base.
¹¹ The U.S. Census Bureau reports from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey estimates that 74% of the U.S. population are white alone, 12% are black alone and 13% are Hispanic (of any race). Note that the Hunger Study analysis places races into mutually exclusive categories while the Census Bureau allows the respondent to check multiple racial characteristics.

The 2008-2009 Recession

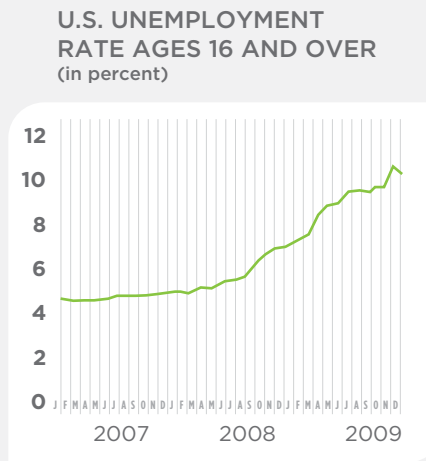
The context for Hunger in America 2010

Data collection for Hunger in America 2010 took place during the deepest recession the U.S. has experienced since the 1930s. During 2005, when the last Hunger in America data were collected, the national unemployment rate averaged 5.1%.¹² By the time data collection for the 2010 study commenced in late winter 2009, the recession was in full swing and the unemployment rate was rising rapidly, jumping from 4.9% at the start of recession in December 2007 to 9.5% when client data collection was completed in June 2009.¹³ The national unemployment rate hovered around 10% by the end of 2009. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in late 2009 that when individuals with marginal labor force attachment and those who were working part-time involuntarily were considered, more than 17 percent of the population was affected by the shifting employment trends. Feeding America food banks reported in a separate survey in September 2009 that unemployment was a major factor in the increase in service requests for emergency food.

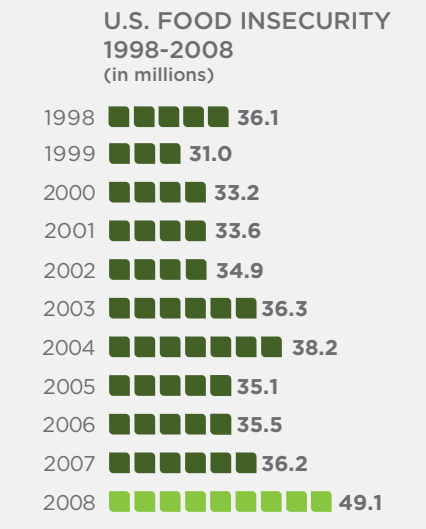
The deteriorating economic climate was accompanied by other evidence of a dramatic increase in the number of individuals struggling with food insecurity. The USDA measures food insecurity on an annual basis and in its *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008* (released in November 2009, based on data collection from December 2008), showed a 36% increase in the percentage of those dealing with food insecurity over the prior year, and an increase of 45% in those challenged by very low food insecurity. A total of 49.1 million individuals were identified as "food insecure," the highest recorded by the USDA since the national household survey began in 1995.

The poverty rate also climbed during the most recent data collection period, accompanied by a decline in U.S. median household income. During the 2005 data collection period for the Hunger Study, approximately 37 million Americans were reported to be living below the official poverty threshold; that number rose to almost 40 million by 2008, the most comparable data available for the 2010 Hunger Study data period. While median income had increased in 2005 for the first time in six years, annual median household income fell 3.6% between the years of 2007 and 2008, after having shown increases in the period between 2005 and 2007. Research documents a rise in poverty following periods of high unemployment, and it is likely that a higher level of need will persist among the most vulnerable communities for the next few years, even after the economy moves into recovery.¹⁴ Moreover, as discussed in the section "Who Seeks Emergency Food Assistance?," many of those who come to the Feeding America network are among the near-poor—those who have incomes above the poverty line but whose resources are insufficient to provide for all their needs or to withstand economic shocks that further jeopardize their limited resources.

The number of people enrolled in the primary federal nutrition program created to combat food insecurity for those with the lowest incomes—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—has also risen significantly. In June 2009, approximately 35.1 million people were enrolled in this program, representing 15.9 million households.¹⁵



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009



Source: Economic Research Service, USDA, "Household Food Security in the United States, 2008"

¹² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009.
¹³ The National Bureau of Economic Research dates the beginning of the 2008-2009 recession from December 2007. NBER defines a recession as a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in production, employment, real income and other indicators. See www.nber.org/cycles/dec2008.
¹⁴ Brookings Institute. Monea, Emily, Sawhill, Isabel. *Simulating the Effect of the "Great Recession" on Poverty*, September 2009. www.brookings.edu/-/media/Files/rc/papers/2009/0910_poverty_monea_sawhill/0910_poverty_monea_sawhill.pdf
¹⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that only 66 percent of those eligible participate in the SNAP program.

Federal Assistance and Hunger Relief

FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) is the nation's true first line of defense against hunger and the largest non-categorical entitlement program for low-income people. SNAP is a critical resource for helping low-income and food insecure families to attain a nutritionally adequate diet. Individuals with incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty threshold are eligible to participate in SNAP.

In 2009, approximately 41% of client households seeking emergency food assistance from the Feeding America network reported that any individual in the household was receiving SNAP benefits at the time of the interview, up from 35% in 2005. This represents 6 million households. In sheer number of households, this represents an increase of 60% since 2005.¹⁶

Of those client households that had never applied for SNAP, 41% believed they were ineligible for the program, mostly because they thought their income or assets were too high (31%). However, an analysis of reported income showed that more than half of these households

(58%) would have been eligible for SNAP benefits, suggesting that there are a large number of individuals who could benefit from additional education and outreach on eligibility.¹⁷

The study also asked clients interviewed if anyone in their household received benefits from the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**. This program provides food, nutrition education and access to health care services for low-income pregnant women, mothers, infants and young children through age 4. Households with incomes at 185% of poverty or below are eligible for WIC. Of households with at least one child between 0-3, 54% reported participating in WIC.¹⁸

Key nutrition programs for older children include the **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP)**.

Among client households with at least one child under age 18, 62% reported participating in NSLP and 53% reported participating in SBP. A much smaller percentage of households—14%—reported that a child participated in the Summer Feeding Program.¹⁹



The State of the Emergency Food Assistance System

Hunger in America 2010 examines the emergency food assistance system provided by agencies in local communities across the country, including food pantries, community kitchens and shelters supported by Feeding America food banks.

The study does not examine the full array of food-related programs that food banks support, such as afterschool meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal sites, child day care,

Kids Cafe and BackPack programs. Instead, the primary focus is on emergency food distribution programs only. Approximately 5.7 million people receive emergency food services in any given week across the network.

Feeding America is the largest private charitable system of domestic hunger relief in the United States. In 2009, a total of 37,212 agencies participated in the Hunger Study, and these

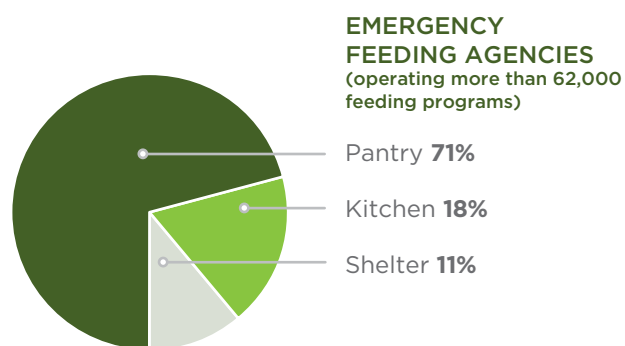
¹⁶ It is important to note that other research suggests that SNAP usage is often understated in self-reported surveys, thus, the actual percentage of clients who are receiving SNAP benefits may be higher. See, for example, Bollinger, C. and M. David. "Estimation With Response Error and Nonresponse: Food Stamp Participation in the SIPP." *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics* 19(2), 129-142, 2001 and Gundersen, C. and B. Kreider. "Food Stamps and Food Insecurity: What can be Learned in the Presence of Nonclassical Measurement Error." *Journal of Human Resources* 43 (2), 352-382, 2008.

¹⁷ Generally, individuals are eligible for benefits if they have a household income of 130 percent or less of the poverty level, but there are some other criteria, such as asset levels, which were not considered in this analysis. Households with incomes at or below 130 percent of poverty are eligible for free lunches and breakfasts, while those between 130 and 185 percent of poverty are eligible for reduced price meals.

¹⁸ A base of children ages 0 to 3 years is utilized (rather than 0-4) to better approximate the main population of children who actually use WIC.

¹⁹ Program participation may be underreported somewhat if the adult participating in the survey is not aware of the child's participation status.

agencies operated 62,245 programs.²⁰ Of these programs, approximately 54% represent a pantry, kitchen or shelter program.²¹ The majority of these emergency feeding programs are pantries (71%), with kitchens making up about 18% and shelters 11%, respectively.



GROWTH IN DEMAND FOR AGENCY SERVICES

Just as the client survey indicates that more individuals are seeking help from the emergency food assistance system than in 2005, the majority of agencies also report an increase in the number of clients who come to their sites. Approximately 74% of pantries, 65% of kitchens and 54% of shelters reported an increase in service demand since the last Hunger Study. One quarter (25%) of food pantries, 12% of kitchens and 10% of shelters also indicated that they sometimes or always had to stretch food resources by reducing meal size or food package portions to meet client demand. Some agencies reported that they had to turn clients away during the past year. Approximately 27% of pantries, 10% of kitchens and 43% of shelters

reported they had done so in the past year. Agencies cited many reasons why clients might be turned away, including individuals needing services not offered by the agency, clients residing out of service area or exceeding program service limits. However, almost half of pantries (45%) and kitchens (46%) reported that a lack of adequate food resources was a factor in being unable to serve individuals who presented themselves at their agencies.

Substantial resources are required to operate emergency food programs effectively, including community support, food, staff and physical space. Food banks provide most of the food delivered by the emergency food system, including 76% of food distributed by pantries, 50% of food prepared and served by kitchens and 41% provided by shelters. Food banks are also the primary distributor of the Federal commodity programs administered by the USDA, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

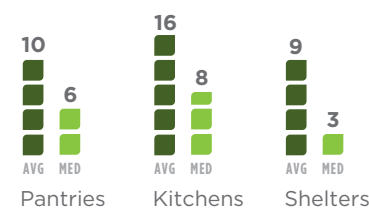
WHO RUNS EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS

Although the percentage of programs run by faith-based or religiously-affiliated programs has declined slightly since 2005 (from 69% to 67%), these organizations are still the primary sponsor of pantries, kitchens and shelters. About one-quarter (24%, up from 23% in 2005) are run by other private nonprofit agencies. Government-affiliated programs make up a small percentage of emergency food programs (about 2%) and their level of sponsorship remained essentially unchanged from 2005.

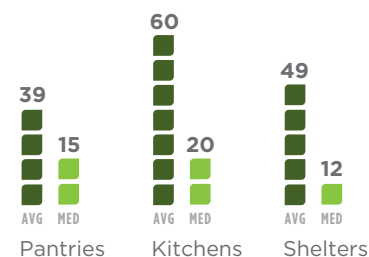
THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are essential to the operation of the private emergency feeding system. As many as 93% of pantries, 87% of kitchens and 72% of shelters in the Feeding America network use volunteers. Moreover, many programs rely *entirely* on volunteers. Approximately 68% of pantry programs and 42% of kitchens have no paid staff at all. Shelters are more likely to rely on at least some paid staff; only 15% reported they have no paid employees.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS DURING PREVIOUS WEEK



AVERAGE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HOURS DURING PREVIOUS WEEK



STABILITY OF OPERATIONS

More than two-thirds of pantries (67%) and kitchens (67%) and almost three-quarters of shelters (73%) report at least one threat to continuing operations. Problems related to funding and food supplies were the most commonly cited problems among pantries and kitchens—48% of pantries and 56% of kitchens stated that funding issues were a threat, while 42% of pantries and 32% of kitchens identified problems with food supplies. Shelters were more likely to cite funding (67%) and less likely to identify problems with food (18%). Only a minority of programs report that problems related to volunteers are an operational threat (15% of pantries, 16% of kitchens and 9% of shelters).

CLIENT SATISFACTION

Emergency food recipients were asked about their satisfaction with the amount, variety and quality of food provided to them at local agencies. The level of satisfaction is high across all three types of emergency food providers (pantries, kitchens and shelters). Ninety-two percent of adult clients interviewed said they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the amount of food they received from their Feeding America network agency and 93% reported they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the quality of the food they received. Ninety percent of adult clients stated that they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the variety of food they received.

²⁰ There are a higher number of programs than agencies because agencies often run two or more types of programs in their communities.

²¹ The remaining agencies operate other non-emergency food programs, as described in the glossary.

Highlights of Findings

This report presents the results of a study conducted in 2009 for Feeding America. The study is based on completed in-person interviews with 61,085 clients served by Feeding America's network, and completed questionnaires from more than 37,212 Feeding America agencies.

How many clients receive food from Feeding America emergency food providers?

- The Feeding America network serves an estimated 37 million different people (in 14.5 million households) annually, with a 95% confidence interval range of 33.8 million to 40.2 million. Approximately 81% of clients are pantry users, 14% are kitchen clients and 5% are shelter clients.
- Approximately 5.7 million different people receive emergency food assistance from the Feeding America system in any given week.

Who receives emergency food assistance?

Feeding America agencies serve a broad cross-section of Americans. Key characteristics include:

- 38% of clients served by the Feeding America network are children under 18 years old.
- 9% of clients are children age 0 to 5 years.
- 8% of clients are age 65 and over.
- Race and ethnicity information was asked only of adult clients who were interviewed and was not collected for all household members. Among adult clients, 40% are non-Hispanic White; 34% are non-Hispanic Black; and 21% are Hispanic.
- 36% of households include at least one employed adult.

- 79% of households report incomes below the official federal poverty level during the previous month.
- 88% of clients report income in the prior month below 130% of poverty, the eligibility level for SNAP. 96% report incomes below 185% of the poverty level.

- 12% of households report receiving cash assistance in the form of General Assistance or TANF in the previous month.

- 31% of households report receiving Social Security benefits and 18% report receiving federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in the previous month.

- Only 7% of households report receiving unemployment insurance payments in the prior month.

- 10% of client households are homeless.

Many Feeding America client households are food insecure or are experiencing very low food security (hunger).

- Among all client households of the Feeding America network, 76% are food insecure, according to the federal government's official food security scale. This includes client households that are food insecure without hunger and those that are food insecure with hunger (also described as very low food security).

- 36% of the client households are experiencing very low food security or hunger.

- Among households with children under 18, 79% are food insecure and 34% are experiencing very low food security or hunger.

- Among households with elderly members (65 and over), 59% are food insecure and 19% are experiencing very low food security or hunger.

Many client households report having to choose between food and other necessities.

- 46% of client households served by the Feeding America network report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.

- 40% of client households had to choose between paying for food and paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.

- 34% of client households had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.

- 35% of client households had to choose between paying for food and paying for transportation.

- 36% of client households had to choose between paying for food and paying for gasoline for a car.

Feeding America clients also receive food assistance from the government.

- 41% of client households served by the Feeding America network are receiving SNAP; however it is likely that many more are eligible based on reported income.

- Among households with children ages 0-3 years, 54% participate in WIC.

- Among households with children under 18, 62% and 54%, respectively, participate in the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs.

- Among households with children under 18, 14% participate in the federal summer food service program.

Many Feeding America clients are in poor health.

- 30% of households served by the Feeding America network report that at least one household member is in poor health.

- 47% of adult clients have unpaid medical or hospital bills.

- 24% of adults have neither public nor private health insurance coverage.

Most adult clients are satisfied with the services they receive from the agencies of the Feeding America national network.

- 92% of adult clients reported they were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the amount of food they received from their Feeding America provider;

- 93% were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the quality of food they received.

- 90 percent of adult clients stated that they were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the variety of food they received.

How large is the Feeding America national network?

- Hunger in America 2010 surveyed more than 50,000 agencies participating in the Feeding America network and there were 37,212 usable responses to the agency survey.

- The survey identified a total of 62,245 agency programs, of which 54% (33,634) are emergency feeding programs. (Agencies may offer more than one type of program.)

- Emergency food assistance programs identified in the survey include 23,842 food pantries, 6,064 soup kitchens and 3,728 emergency shelters.

What types of organizations operate emergency food programs in the Feeding America national network?

- 77% of pantries, 62% of kitchens and 39% of shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious organizations.

- 67% of agencies with a pantry, kitchen or shelter and 55% of all agencies (including those with other programs) are faith-based.

- 24% of agencies with a pantry, kitchen or shelter are sponsored by private, nonprofit organizations with no religious affiliation.

Agencies have been experiencing changes in the need for their services.

- 74% of pantries, 65% of kitchens and 54% of shelters in the Feeding America network reported that since 2006, there had been an increase in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites.

Where do these agencies obtain their food?

- Food banks are the most important source of food for the agencies, accounting for 76% of the food received by pantries, 50% of the food received by kitchens and 41% of the food received by shelters.

- Other important sources of food include religious organizations, government and direct purchases from wholesalers and retailers.

- 54% of pantries, 34% of kitchens and 31% of shelters receive food from the federal government through TEFAP.

Volunteers are vital to the Feeding America network.

- Many programs rely entirely on volunteers; 68% of pantry programs, 42% of kitchen programs and 15% of shelters have no paid staff.



How You Can Help

Feeding America and its nationwide network of more than 200 food banks depend on the generosity and support of concerned individuals, foundations, corporations and manufacturers in order to provide emergency food relief to millions of hungry Americans each year. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, financial donor or hunger advocate, or if you would like more information about the Feeding America network, please visit www.feedingamerica.org.

DONATE FUNDS

Your financial support is deeply appreciated. Every dollar donated to Feeding America helps to provide nine pounds of food and grocery product to the millions of Americans who are at risk of food insecurity, including children and seniors.

To learn more about making a gift to Feeding America, please visit www.feedingamerica.org or call 312.641.6668.

ADVOCATE

Feeding America's advocacy program enables you to contact your elected officials to voice your support for key policies that help support our clients.

Visit www.hungeractioncenter.org for further information.

RAISE AWARENESS

You can be an active partner in the fight to create a hunger-free America. Today, nearly 49 million Americans are at risk of food insecurity.

Visit www.feedingamerica.org to learn more about what you can do to help enlist your family, friends and neighbors in our cause.

With your support, and that of your community, we can make a difference in alleviating hunger in our country.

VOLUNTEER

Each year, volunteers of all ages assist in the fight against hunger in their communities by volunteering at their local food banks. Volunteers sort food and grocery products, pack grocery bags, answer phones and staff special events.

To learn about available volunteer opportunities in your area, please visit www.feedingamerica.org to locate your nearest food bank.

