



Key Local Findings Hunger in America 2010



Hunger in America 2010 is the most comprehensive study of hunger ever undertaken. Both nationally and on a local level, the data from the study reveals alarming and unacceptably high levels of hunger. Far too many hungry people in our community lead a fragile existence, often facing difficult choices between the essentials of living: paying for food or rent, utilities or health care.

As many as 295,200 different people receive emergency food assistance annually through the pantries, kitchens and shelters in Harvesters' network.

- Harvesters' network of these food assistance agencies serves as many as 295,200 unduplicated people annually. As many as 66,000 different people receive assistance through Harvesters' network in any given week.
- Harvesters' agencies report an increase in the number of people requesting emergency food assistance since 2005. Seventy-four percent of pantries, 82 percent of kitchens and 61 percent of shelters report an increase since 2005 in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites.

NOTE: Hunger in America 2010 surveyed the food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in Harvesters' network. The report does not include many other food bank programs, such as low-income day care centers or weekend feeding programs such as BackSnack, which this year is providing backpacks to 10,000 students each week.

The demographic profile of emergency food recipients shows a broad cross-section of the 26 counties in northwestern Missouri and northeastern Kansas that Harvesters serves.

- Thirty-seven percent of all members of households served in 2009 are children (up to 109,224 children overall), including 9 percent of members of households (up to 26,568) who are young children between the ages of 0 and 5.
- Of the families with children under the age of 18 who seek food assistance, 45 percent are single-parent households.
- Eight percent of the members of households are elderly.
- Thirty-nine percent of households have at least one adult who is working. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) have incomes at or below poverty.
- Approximately 36 percent of emergency food recipients are white, 51 percent are African-American, 9 percent are Hispanic, and the remainder is from other racial or ethnic groups.

- Approximately 5 percent of all emergency food recipients are homeless, and 20 percent of clients with a place to stay said they received Section 8 or Public Housing Assistance.
- One-quarter (25 percent) of households have at least one member in poor health. Thirty-one percent of clients have no health insurance coverage, and 53 percent of clients reported that they have unpaid medical bills.
- Thirty percent of emergency food recipients have less than a high school education. Sixteen percent have some college or a two-year degree, and approximately 3 percent have completed college or higher.

Emergency food recipients are food insecure or experiencing hunger.

- Among all Harvesters' emergency food recipients, 80 percent are classified as food insecure using the U.S. government's official food security scale. Thirty-seven percent of clients have very low food security (hunger). Among households with children, 78 percent are food insecure and 34 percent are experiencing very low food security (hunger). Among households with seniors, 76 percent are food insecure.

Many emergency food recipients have to make difficult choices between food and other necessities.

- Forty-eight percent of recipients have had to choose between buying food and paying for utilities or heat. Forty-two percent have had to choose between buying food and paying their rent or mortgage, and 30 percent have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.

Participation in government support or food assistance programs by emergency food recipients is limited, although most are eligible to participate.

- Half (50 percent) of households served by Harvesters are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamp) benefits, although many more are eligible to participate. In the previous two years, just 12 percent of clients received general assistance, welfare or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Among emergency food recipient households with preschool-age children, 57 percent participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Among Harvesters' households with school-age children, 65 percent participate in school lunch programs and 61 percent participate in school breakfast programs. Twenty-three percent participate in the summer food program when school is out.

Private charities are providing high quality services to emergency food recipients.

- Ninety-four percent of adult emergency food recipients said they were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the amount of food they receive from their local hunger relief charity. Ninety-one percent were satisfied with the quality of food they received at the local charity. Eight-seven percent of emergency food recipients said they felt they were treated

with respect “all of the time” or “most of the time” by the staff members who distribute food at local charities.

Faith-based organizations provide the vast majority of assistance in the Harvesters network.

- Sixty-nine percent of food pantries, 73 percent of soup kitchens and 54 percent of shelters are run by faith-based organizations affiliated with churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious entities.

Volunteers are crucial to emergency food assistance activities.

- Many programs rely entirely on volunteers for their work, with 62 percent of pantries, 54 percent of soup kitchens and 26 percent of shelters having no paid staff at all.
- The average number of volunteer hours in any given week is 36 hours at food pantries, 31 hours at shelters and 49 hours at soup kitchens.

Harvesters is the single most important source of food for most local hunger relief agencies.

- Harvesters is the most important source of food inventory for most local agencies, providing 73 percent of the food distributed by food pantries, 53 percent of the food served at soup kitchens, and 35 percent of the food provided at emergency shelters. Other important sources of food include religious congregations and purchased food from wholesalers or grocers.
- Agencies reported needing more product from Harvesters in all major food groups, as well as cleaning and personal hygiene products.

To see the entire local Hunger in America 2010 report, visit www.harvesters.org.