



State of Missouri Key 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 Missouri lead a fragile existence, often facing difficult choices between the essentials of living: paying for food or rent, utilities or health care.

More than 700,000 different people receive emergency food assistance annually through the food bank network in Missouri.

- The six food banks serving Missouri provide emergency food assistance for an estimated 728,400 different people annually through their networks of pantries, kitchens and shelters.
- About 139,300 different people receive emergency food assistance through pantries, kitchens and shelters in the food bank network in Missouri in any given week.
- Among programs that existed in 2006, 83% of pantries, 73% of kitchens and 69% of shelters in Missouri report an increase since 2006 in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites.

The demographic profile of emergency food recipients shows a broad cross-section of the state's population.

- 39% of members of households served in Missouri are children under 18 years old (284,076 annually), including 10% of members of households (72,840) who are young children between the ages of 0 and 5.
- 7% of the members of households are elderly.
- 42% of households include at least one adult who is working. 75% have incomes below the federal poverty level.
- 34% of households in Missouri report having at least one household member in poor health. 20% of clients do not have health insurance and 54% of clients report that they have unpaid medical or hospital bills.
- About 66% of clients are non-Hispanic white, 27% are non-Hispanic black, 4% are Hispanic, and the rest are from other racial groups.
- 7% of emergency food recipients are homeless.

Emergency food recipients are food insecure or experiencing hunger.

- Among all client households served by emergency food programs in Missouri, 77% are food insecure or experience very low food security, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. 36% of clients experience very low food security (hunger).

Among households with children, 76% are food insecure and 33% are food insecure with very low food security (hunger).

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

- 48% of clients in Missouri report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- 36% have had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- 37% have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- 30% have had to choose between paying for food and paying for transportation.
- 40% have had to choose between paying for food and paying for gas for a car.

Many households also receive government support, although it is likely that many more are eligible to participate.

- 53% of client households in Missouri are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits; however, it is likely that many more are eligible.
- Among households with children ages 0-3 years, 65% participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- Among households with school-age children, 66% participate in the federal school lunch program and 62% participate in the school breakfast program. Among households with school-age children, 12% participate in the summer food program.

Nonprofit charities are providing high quality services to emergency food assistance recipients in Missouri.

- 94% of adult clients say they are either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the amount of food they receive from their provider.
- 93% of clients are satisfied with the quality of the food they receive.
- 94% of emergency food recipients say they feel they are 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 food bank network in Missouri.

- 67% of pantries, 51% of kitchens and 41% of shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious organizations.

Volunteers are crucial to the food bank network and its agencies.

- As many as 93% of pantries, 83% of kitchens and 80% of shelters in Missouri use volunteers.
- Many programs rely *entirely* on volunteers; 62% of pantry programs and 32% of kitchens have no paid staff at all.

Food banks are the most important source of food for most local hunger relief agencies.

- Food banks are by far the single most important source of food for agencies, accounting for 69% of the food distributed by pantries, 40% of the food distributed by kitchens and 41% of the food distributed by shelters.
- Other important sources of food include religious organizations, government and direct purchases from wholesalers and retailers.

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