



Key Local Findings Hunger in America 2014



Hunger in America 2014 is the largest, most comprehensive study of hunger in America. The study documents the critical role food banks and their member nonprofit agencies play in supporting struggling families in the United States. *Hunger in America* provides a snapshot of people—their circumstances, the challenges they face, and the difficult choices they make between food, rent, utilities or health care—living on limited household incomes.

As many as 388,600 different people receive emergency food assistance annually through the food pantries, mobile food pantries, kitchens and shelters in Harvesters' network.

- Harvesters' network of food assistance agencies serve 388,600 different people annually. As many as 141,500 different people receive assistance from Harvesters' network each month.
- Every year, Harvesters' network provides food assistance—either a meal or groceries—to someone in our 26-county service area nearly 3 million times.
- Across Harvesters' network, 58 percent of agencies reported an increase in the number of clients receiving food assistance.

NOTE: Hunger in America 2014 surveyed food pantries, mobile food pantries, kitchens and shelters in Harvesters' network. The report does not cover other food bank programs that serve children, including after-school and summer programs such as Kids Cafe or weekend feeding programs such as BackSnack, which serves 19,500 students each week during the school year.

Emergency food recipients represent a diverse cross-section of Harvesters' 26-county service area in northwestern Missouri and northeastern Kansas.

- 25 percent of all household members served are children under age 18 (97,150 children a year), including 8 percent of household members (31,088 children) who are age 5 and younger.
- 20 percent of clients are seniors age 60 or older.
- Harvesters' network serves racially and ethnically diverse clients: 59 percent are white, 24 percent are African-American, 9 percent are Hispanic, and the remainder are from diverse racial or ethnic groups.
- 44 percent of clients have attained a high school degree or general equivalency diploma (GED). 16 percent of clients have some college or a two-year college degree. 8 percent have a four-year college degree or higher.
- In 27 percent of households, at least one member has served in the military. 7 percent of households include at least one member currently serving.

While Harvesters' network feeds many working families, under-employment and low household income are key factors in the high need for food assistance.

- 49 percent of the households have an adult member who worked for pay during the last 12 months.
- 61 percent of client households have incomes at or below the federal poverty level. 32 percent of households have incomes of \$10,000 or less, and 36 percent have incomes of \$10,001 to \$20,000.

- Only 5 percent of clients are homeless. 20 percent of clients have experienced a foreclosure or eviction in the last five years. 29 percent live in their own home, while 60 percent rent or lease.
- Of clients reporting they had been out of the work force in the past month and were not looking for work, 37 percent were retired. 52 percent were persons with disabilities or in poor health, or were the caretakers for another person.
- 16 percent of clients reported they were responsible for grandchildren in the household.

In addition to challenges related to employment and food, the households relying on Harvesters may face challenges related to their health and well-being.

- 29 percent of households have at least one member in poor health.
- 37 percent of households have at least one member with diabetes, and 62 percent report at least one member with high blood pressure.
- 62 percent of households have unpaid medical bills.
- 27 percent of households have no members with health insurance.

Harvesters' emergency food recipients are food insecure or experiencing hunger.

- 76 percent of households served by Harvesters are food insecure, using the U.S. government's official food security scale, and have difficulty providing enough safe, nutritious food.
- 29 percent of households wait to receive emergency food assistance until they have run out of food. 71 percent of households receive emergency food assistance on a regular basis.

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

- 63 percent of households have had to choose between paying for food or utilities. 62 percent have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care, and 54 percent have had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- Households cope with food insecurity in a variety of ways. 78 percent report buying the cheapest food available regardless of its nutritional value. 63 percent have eaten food past its expiration date, 57 percent receive help from family or friends, and 34 percent have watered down food or drinks.

Participation in government support or food assistance programs by emergency food recipients is limited. Families with children of school age participate at higher levels.

- 47 percent of households receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or food stamps). Among those not participating in SNAP, 25 percent have never applied for the program.
- Among the households receiving monthly SNAP/food stamp benefits, 86 percent report the benefits are exhausted by the third week of the month.
- 50 percent of households receiving emergency food assistance do not qualify for SNAP/food stamp benefits due to having an income exceeding the threshold of 130 percent of the poverty level (\$2,552 gross monthly income for a family of four.)
- 90 percent of surveyed households with children ages 5 to 18 participate in free or reduced-price school lunch programs. 60 percent participate in breakfast programs, 16 percent participate in weekend backpack programs, and 7 percent participate in after-school programs.

- 9 percent of households receiving emergency food assistance participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Faith-based agencies provide the vast majority of food assistance locally.

- 64 percent of agencies are faith-based or located in a religious entity.

Many programs rely entirely on volunteers for their work.

- 48 percent of Harvesters agencies reported having no full-time staff.
- An average of 5 volunteers give an average of 24 hours a week at an agency. More than half (53 percent) of agency volunteers are ages 19 to 59. 40 percent of volunteers are age 60 and older.
- 40 percent of agencies report at least some difficulty in obtaining volunteers.

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

- Harvesters provides 66 percent of the food distributed by the agencies in our network. 13 percent of the food distributed is obtained through other donations and 19 percent is purchased.
- 81 percent of agencies reported that if they no longer received food from Harvesters it would have a major effect on their program.
- 28 percent of agencies reported turning clients away because they had run out of food during the past 12 months.
- 33 percent of agencies restrict client visits to only once a month. 5 percent allow weekly visits.
- Clients often desire products not always available at an agency. 52 percent want fresh fruits and vegetables, 49 percent want protein foods like meats, and 47 percent want dairy products such as milk, cheese or yogurt.

Harvesters' network members also provide nutrition education and SNAP/food stamp assistance.

- 48 percent of agencies provide some type of nutrition education program, ranging from distributing literature to providing cooking or nutrition classes.
- 28 percent of agencies provide some type of SNAP/food stamp assistance, including screening clients for eligibility, application assistance, and SNAP education.