

1. HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

This report presents information on the clients and agencies served by the FreestoreFoodbank. The information is drawn from a national study, Hunger in America 2006, conducted for America's Second Harvest (A2H), the nation's largest organization of emergency food providers. The national study is based on completed in-person interviews with more than 52,000 clients served by the A2H food bank network, as well as on completed questionnaires from more than 30,000 A2H agencies. The study summarized below focuses mainly on emergency food providers and their clients who are supplied with food by food banks in the A2H network. Here, emergency food providers are defined to include food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters serving short-term residents. It should be recognized that many other types of provider organizations served by food banks are, for the most part, *not* described in this study. These providers who are not covered included such services as Congregate Meals for seniors, day care facilities, and after school programs.

Key findings are summarized below:

HOW MANY CLIENTS RECEIVE EMERGENCY FOOD FROM THE FREESTOREFOODBANK?

- The A2H system served by the FreestoreFoodbank provides food for an estimated 161,600 different people annually.
- Approximately 28,600 different people receive assistance in any given week.

WHO RECEIVES EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE?

A2H agencies served by the FreestoreFoodbank provide food for a broad cross-section of households. Key characteristics include:

- 34% of the members of households served by the FreestoreFoodbank are children under 18 years old (Table 5.3.2).
- 13% of the members of households are children age 0 to 5 years (Table 5.3.2).
- 6% of the members of households are elderly (Table 5.3.2).
- About 57% of clients are non-Hispanic white, 41% are non-Hispanic black, 1% are Hispanic, and the rest are from other racial or ethnic groups (Table 5.6.1).
- 30% of households include at least one employed adult (Table 5.7.1).
- 79% have incomes below the official federal poverty level (Table 5.8.2.1) during the previous month.
- 14% are homeless (Table 5.9.1.1).

MANY A2H CLIENTS ARE FOOD INSECURE OR ARE EXPERIENCING HUNGER

- Among all client households served by emergency food programs of the FreestoreFoodbank, 82% are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes client households who are food insecure without hunger and those who are food insecure with hunger (Table 6.1.1).
- 45% of the clients are experiencing hunger (Table 6.1.1).
- Among households with children, 83% are food insecure and 39% are experiencing hunger (Table 6.1.1).

MANY CLIENTS REPORT HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES

- 44% of clients served by the FreestoreFoodbank report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel (Table 6.5.1).
- 40% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage (Table 6.5.1).
- 28% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care (Table 6.5.1).

DO A2H CLIENTS ALSO RECEIVE FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT?

- 34% of client households served by the FreestoreFoodbank are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits (Table 7.1.1); however, it is likely that many more are eligible (Table 7.2.1).
- Among households with preschool children, 68% participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Table 7.4.1).
- Among households with school-age children, 53% and 42%, respectively, participate in the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs (Table 7.4.1).

MANY A2H CLIENTS ARE IN POOR HEALTH

- 24% of households served by the FreestoreFoodbank report having at least one household member in poor health (Table 8.1.1)

MOST CLIENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE FROM THE AGENCIES OF THE FREESTOREFOODBANK

- 87% of adult clients said they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the amount of food they received from their A2H provider; 90% were satisfied with the quality of the food they received (Table 9.2.1).

HOW LARGE IS THE FREESTOREFOODBANK?

- The FreestoreFoodbank included approximately 457 agencies at the administration of this survey, of which 306 have responded to the agency survey. Of the responding agencies, 211 had at least one food pantry, soup kitchen, or shelter.

WHAT KINDS OF ORGANIZATIONS OPERATE EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS OF THE FREESTOREFOODBANK?

- 79% of pantries, 50% of kitchens, and 34% of shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious organizations (Table 10.6.1).
- At the agency level, 70% of agencies with at least one pantry, kitchen, or shelter and 55% of all agencies including those only with other types of programs are faith-based (Table 10.6.1).
- Private nonprofit organizations with no religious affiliation make up a large share of other types of agencies (Table 10.6.1).

HAVE AGENCIES BEEN EXPERIENCING CHANGES IN THE NEED FOR THEIR SERVICES?

- 72% of pantries, 67% of kitchens, and 63% of shelters of the FreestoreFoodbank reported that there had been an increase since 2001 in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites (Table 10.8.1).

WHERE DO THESE AGENCIES OBTAIN THEIR FOOD?

- Food banks are by far the single most important source of food for the agencies, accounting for 69% of the food used by pantries, 52% of kitchens' food, and 37% of shelters' food (Table 13.1.1).
- Other important sources of food include religious organizations, government, and direct purchases from wholesalers and retailers (Table 13.1.1).
- 69% of pantries, 53% of kitchens, and 55% of shelters of the FreestoreFoodbank receive food from government commodity programs (Table 13.1.1).

VOLUNTEERS ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN THE A2H NETWORK

- For the FreestoreFoodbank, 92% of pantries, 85% of kitchens, and 71% of shelters use volunteers (Table 13.2.1).
- Many programs rely *entirely* on volunteers; 64% of pantry programs and 32% of kitchens have no paid staff at all (Table 13.2.1).