



Hunger in America 2014

Executive Summary for Feeding Indiana's Hungry



A Report on Charitable Food Distribution in Indiana in 2013

Glossary

AGENCY

A charitable social-service organization that operates a program(s) that provides food and grocery items supplied by a food bank directly to clients in need.

CHARITABLE FOOD ASSISTANCE

A private social safety net system in which food and grocery items are provided to people in need through charitable feeding programs, such as pantries, shelters, and meal programs.

CLIENT

A client is an individual or a household member who receives food from a member food bank of Feeding Indiana's Hungry. Clients are counted differently depending on whether they visit meal or grocery programs. At meal programs, only individuals present are counted as clients since they typically consume the meal on-site. At grocery programs, all members of the household are counted as clients since they will likely benefit from the food received at the program.

DUPLICATED CLIENTS

The number of times clients are reached through food distributions, from member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry, during a given period of time.

FOOD BANK

A non-profit organization that solicits, receives, inventories and distributes donated food and grocery products pursuant to industry and appropriate regulatory standards. Food banks distribute donated food to charitable social-service agencies, which provide the products directly to clients through various programs. Some food banks also distribute food directly to clients in need.

FOOD PROGRAM

A specific service operated by a charitable agency that distributes food. For *Hunger in America 2014*, food programs are classified as either meal or grocery programs. Many food banks and agencies also operate non-food programs to assist clients with other needs.

FOOD SECURITY & FOOD INSECURITY

As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), food security is the household-level economic and social condition of reliable access to adequate food for an active, healthy life for all

household members. A household is food insecure if, in the previous year, they experienced limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.

GROCERY PROGRAM

A program that distributes non-prepared food and grocery items for off-site use, usually for preparation in the client's home. Grocery programs include all types of food pantries, home-delivered grocery programs, mobile pantries, Backpack Programs, and community gardens.

MEAL PROGRAM

A program that provides prepared meals or snacks to clients at the program site or in their homes. Meal programs include all congregate meal programs, as well as (soup) kitchens, shelters, group homes, rehabilitation programs, transitional housing programs, and community kitchens.

NON-FOOD PROGRAM

A program that serves a purpose other than food distribution to help client's access to other resources, such as providing clothing or furniture donations, legal assistance, housing or education assistance, as well as referrals to other community organizations that also offer assistance.

POVERTY/FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL

A household is considered to be living in poverty if the household income, relative to the number of household members, falls below an amount annually established by the federal government. During the survey period for *Hunger in America 2014*, the federal poverty level was \$23,550 for a family of four. Income as a percentage of the federal poverty level is used to determine eligibility for federal nutrition programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. SNAP is the largest of the federal nutrition programs and provides eligible recipients with financial resources to buy groceries.

UNDUPLICATED CLIENTS

The number of unique individuals who receive food assistance from members of Feeding Indiana's Hungry during a given period of time.

About Feeding America

Feeding America is a nationwide network of 200 member food banks that serve all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. As the largest domestic hunger-relief charity in the United States, the Feeding America network of food banks provides food assistance to an estimated 46.5 million Americans in need each year, including 12 million children and 7 million seniors.

The Feeding America national office supports member food banks across the country by securing food and funds for the food banks; by building partnerships that benefit the network nationally and also provide support for food bank

programs; supporting programs that help improve food security among the people and communities served; and by raising awareness about the problem of hunger and advocating on behalf of food insecure Americans.

In turn, the food banks distribute donated food to community-based hunger-relief agencies across the country and help support feeding programs such as food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, senior centers, and mobile programs that directly serve people in need.

About Feeding Indiana's Hungry

Feeding Indiana's Hungry is a proud Partner State Association of the Feeding America network and works with the eleven Feeding America food banks serving Indiana to fight hunger in Indiana. Supporting food banks that distribute more than 80 million pounds annually, Feeding Indiana's Hungry and member food banks are committed to providing sufficient and nourishing food for low-income families and vulnerable populations across the Indiana.

FEEDING INDIANA'S HUNGRY MEMBERS SERVE MORE THAN

1,100,000
PEOPLE EACH YEAR

About the *Hunger in America* Series

Hunger in America is a series of quadrennial studies conducted by Feeding America and its member food banks that provides comprehensive demographic profiles of people seeking food assistance through the charitable sector and in-depth analyses of partner agencies that provide food assistance.

Hunger in America is the largest study of its kind. The data collected help guide the development of programs and solutions that improve food security for individuals and their households and inform public awareness and policy development for addressing hunger in the United States.

Nationally, *Hunger in America 2014* is the sixth and most comprehensive study in the *Hunger in America* series. Locally, through interviews with more than 1300 clients and surveys from 736 eligible partner agencies, there is a more comprehensive understanding of the people served by the member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry, the personal and economic circumstances of their households, and the response of our partner agencies that provide assistance to those in need.



Methodology

Rich data from two widely distributed surveys comprise the basis for the *Hunger in America 2014* results. For the first time in this study's history, almost all data were collected through electronic surveys. The surveys were conducted in two sequential stages: first, partner agencies completed the Agency Survey; then, clients at select agencies' food programs completed the Client Survey.

The Agency Survey was fielded from October 2012 to January 2013 and contained detailed questions about agencies' services, capacity, and food distribution, including a specific set of additional questions regarding the individual food programs operated by the partner agency.

The Client Survey, fielded from April through August 2013, was implemented through a vast force of data collectors, many of whom were volunteers. In lieu of face-to-face interviews used in years past, *Hunger in America 2014* utilized touchscreen tablet computers and a proven computer software program that allows respondents to simultaneously read and have survey questions read to them through private headphones, maximizing confidentiality. Data collectors followed a prescribed study plan in order to select a random sample of clients at 534 meal and grocery programs across Indiana. More than 1300 clients responded to questions about themselves, their households, and the circumstances that led them to seek assistance from the charitable food network.

Subsequent to the Agency and Client Surveys, the research vendor, Westat, analyzed the data collected

and, together with the Urban Institute, produced the national and local reports, including for Feeding Indiana's Hungry, in the spring and summer of 2014.

While the 2014 iteration of *Hunger in America* is the most comprehensive yet, there are still limitations within this study. One of the most important limitations to note is that programs serving children exclusively, such as Backpack and Afterschool Snack, are notably underrepresented due to the inability to survey minors. Consequently, this report's estimate of the number of children served by Feeding Indiana's Hungry is likely lower than the true number of children reached.

Additionally, in the state of Indiana, eight out of eleven member food banks participated in the 2014 study. Therefore the report provides an estimated number of partner agencies, programs, and clients served throughout the state by participating member food banks. The data provided are the best available estimates for participating food banks' service in this state, but should be viewed as under-representative, given the exclusion of nonparticipating food banks that also serve Indiana. Although the client count estimates provided for the state of Indiana are conservative, other data points would not change significantly from adjustments made to account for nonparticipating food banks. With the exception of client count estimates, all other percentage estimates, averages, and medians provided are considered to reflect the clients served throughout the state of Indiana.

FEEDING INDIANA'S HUNGRY MEMBERS PARTNER WITH 1,857 FOOD PROGRAMS



839 AGENCIES

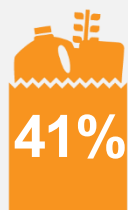
PARTNERED WITH FEEDING INDIANA'S HUNGRY
REACH CLIENTS IN NEED THROUGH
1,857 FOOD PROGRAMS



57% RELY ENTIRELY
ON VOLUNTEERS

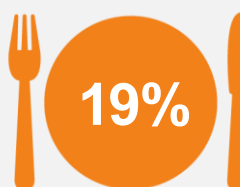


69% ARE FAITH-BASED
ORGANIZATIONS



41%

PROVIDE
GROCERIES



19%

SERVE
MEALS

FEEDING INDIANA'S HUNGRY MEMBERS SERVE
M O R E T H A N

1,100,000
PEOPLE EACH YEAR

OR

1 IN 6

PEOPLE LIVING IN INDIANA

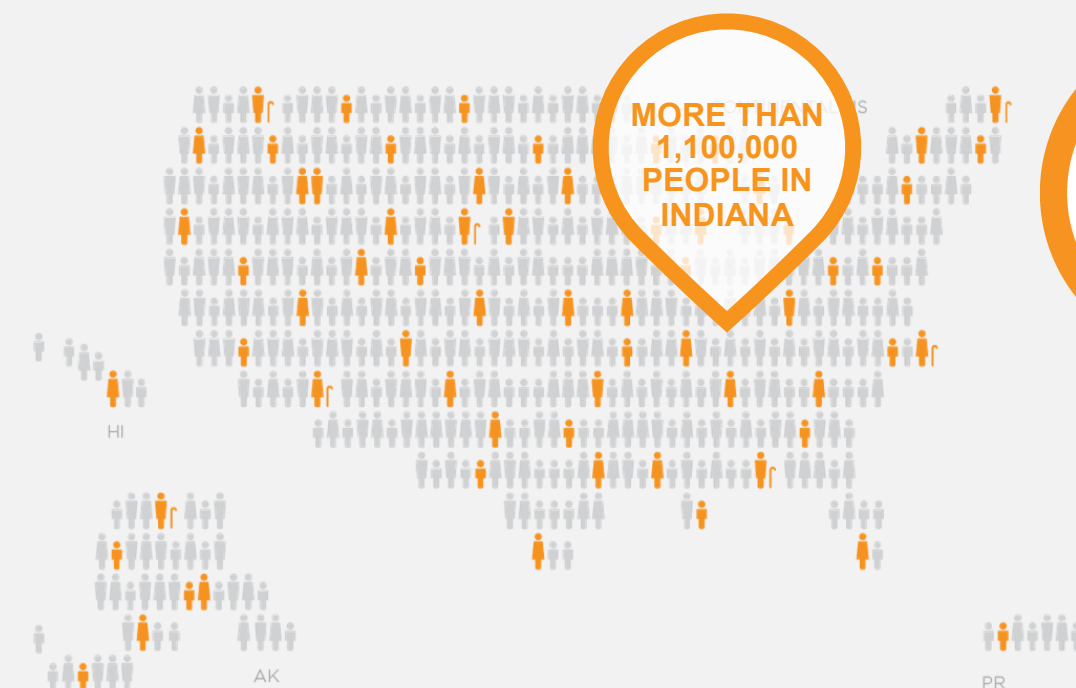
MORE THAN
1,100,000
PEOPLE IN
INDIANA



33%
CHILDREN



13%
SENIORS





How Feeding Indiana's Hungry's Agencies Serve Clients

Feeding Indiana's Hungry member food banks distribute food to more than 1,800 partnering programs in order to reach clients at risk of hunger.

Partner agencies act as the mechanism for the distribution of food directly to clients through food programs that provide either meals or groceries. Some partner agencies also operate non-food programs with a primary focus on other types of assistance, such as nutrition education, food-related benefits outreach, clothing assistance, or job training. An estimated 69 percent of partner agencies identify as faith-based, while the balance are not faith-

based. In addition to distributing food through its partner agencies, Feeding Indiana's Hungry members also distributes food directly through its own programs, such as Back Pack and mobile pantry programs. Based on Feeding Indiana's Hungry administrative records, the food banks are partnered with agencies which collectively operate 1,857 food programs across Indiana serving all 92 counties.¹

Agencies and Food Programs

Partner agencies reach individuals and families in need through various types of food programs.

For the purposes of *Hunger in America 2014*, charitable food programs are categorized into meal programs and grocery programs. Meal programs provide prepared meals or snacks on site or in the client's home to clients who may or may not reside on the agency's premises. Grocery programs distribute non-prepared foods, grocery items and other household supplies for off-site use, usually for preparation in the client's home.

Many meal and grocery programs provide support to individuals of all ages, while others may specifically serve children or seniors. Of the food programs operated by partner agencies of Feeding Indiana's Hungry, 68 percent are grocery programs, such as food pantries, Backpack Programs for children, mobile pantries, and community gardens. The remaining 32 percent of food programs fall under the meal program category. Meal programs include

(soup) kitchens, Afterschool Snack, Kids Cafe, and Meals on Wheels and other home-delivered meal programs.

An estimated 57 percent of partner agencies report having no paid staff. Among the 43 percent of agencies with paid staff, the median number of paid full-time equivalent staff members reported is 4, or the equivalent of 160 staff hours per week. As a result, partner agencies often rely heavily on the efforts of volunteers to operate and support their food programs. Volunteers span all age groups from adults (53%) to seniors (40%) and even children (7%). An estimated 45 percent of programs affiliated with Feeding Indiana's Hungry report some degree of difficulty recruiting volunteers. However, 33 percent of programs report no difficulties in retaining existing volunteers.

¹ The numbers of partner agencies and programs are based on numbers reported by member food banks. All other data presented in this Executive Summary are based on HIA 2014 findings.



Partner agencies receive funding from a variety of sources, such as local, state, and federal governments; individual contributions; corporate support; and donations. Nevertheless, some agencies have experienced recent cutbacks due to having limited resources. An estimated 24 percent of partner agencies report making reductions in the year prior to the survey. Specifically, 14 percent of agencies cut their hours of operation, 7 percent laid off staff, and 10 percent had to limit their service area.

Outreach and Other Non-Food Services

Many agencies provide services related to SNAP and many offer services to help clients with non-food needs.

In addition to operating food programs, many agencies partnered with Feeding Indiana's Hungry also operate programs beyond food distribution, including programs that conduct outreach to assist clients with accessing federal nutrition assistance. These agencies play an important role in helping clients access federal benefits that can increase their food resources, particularly the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which currently helps provide cash benefits to purchase food to 47.6 million people.²

An estimated 30 percent of partner agencies provide some form of assistance connecting clients to SNAP benefits, such as screening clients for eligibility, engaging in outreach activities to educate clients about the program, or helping clients recertify for the program to maintain benefits they already receive. In addition, 22 percent provide information about or assistance in accessing benefits through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which

provides assistance to pregnant and post-partum women, infants, and children up to age five.



In addition to federal program assistance, partner agencies also operate non-food programs to provide other critical non-food goods and services to those in need. The non-food programs offered by agencies include clothing, furniture, or housing assistance, utility and heat assistance, health clinics, job training, financial assistance, and general information and referrals to other services. In addition to the core services of food distribution provided through the Feeding Indiana's Hungry network, the wide array of non-food services helps clients address the other economic and social hardships they may face.

² "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Costs: Fiscal Year 2013," U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, last modified July 11, 2014.

ANNUAL DUPLICATED CLIENTS

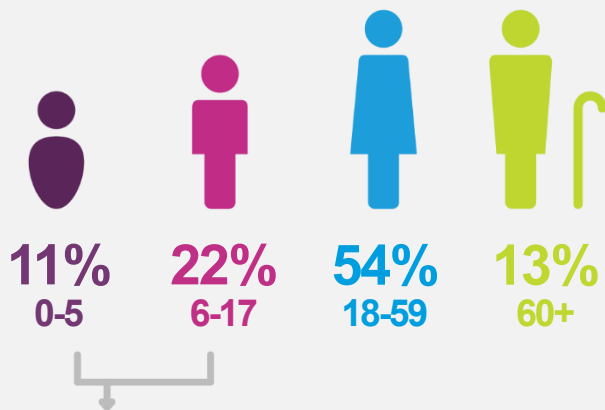


1,857 FOOD PROGRAMS REACH MORE THAN 1,100,000 CLIENTS



**MORE THAN
9.1 MILLION
TIMES EACH YEAR**

CLIENT AGE

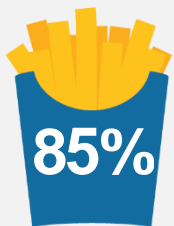


HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY



96% OF CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE

HOUSEHOLD COPING STRATEGIES



85%

**OF HOUSEHOLDS
REPORT PURCHASING
INEXPENSIVE,
UNHEALTHY
FOOD TO FEED
THEIR FAMILY**



89%

**OF HOUSEHOLDS
WITH CHILDREN
REPORT USING
THIS COPING
STRATEGY**

HOUSEHOLD MILITARY SERVICE



22% OF FEEDING INDIANA'S HUNGRY HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WHO HAS SERVED IN THE US MILITARY

HOUSEHOLD SPENDING TRADEOFFS



HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND UTILITIES



HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND MEDICAL CARE



HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND EDUCATION

EDUCATION



36% OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WITH A POST HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION



9% OF ADULTS ARE CURRENTLY IN SCHOOL

HOUSEHOLD HEALTH



64%

OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



34%

OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WITH DIABETES



AND AMONG HOUSEHOLDS WITH SENIORS RATES ARE HIGHER

87%

43%



The People Served by Members of Feeding Indiana's Hungry

Households served by member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry represent a variety of sizes and compositions, races and ethnicities, ages, and languages spoken. In addition to their diverse characteristics, clients also face a wide array of obstacles to food security, such as poor health status, housing instability, unemployment and insufficient income.

Demographics

Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households are diverse in size, age, and race, with many containing vulnerable household members such as children and seniors.³

43 percent of Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households include at least one child, a rate higher than in the general population (32%).⁴ Overall, Feeding Indiana's Hungry serves at least an estimated 122,900 seniors and 319,900 children, although the actual number of children served is underrepresented in this estimate because client-level surveys cannot be collected at child-only programs.

Children and seniors are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of food insecurity. For children, inadequate nutrition is associated with adverse effects in school that have other, long-term consequences.⁵ Additionally, seniors living in food insecure households are often

Clients Served

One in six Hoosiers turns to the member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry for food assistance.

Hunger in America 2014 reveals that each year, at least 1.1 million **unduplicated individuals** receive charitable food assistance through member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry.

Studying the regularity of use of programs among clients also provides a duplicated client count: the number of times individual clients are reached through food distributions on an annual basis. Using this definition, member food banks of Feeding Indiana's Hungry provides assistance to at least 9,162,600 **duplicated clients** each year, illustrating that many individuals are routinely turning to the food bank to meet their nutrition and food budget needs.

missing out on nutrients that are critical to the unique conditions related to aging.⁶

Among all Feeding Indiana's Hungry clients, 71 percent identify as white, 18 percent as African American, and 4 percent as Latino. An additional proportion of clients identify as another race not specified (7%).

³ For the purposes of this report, seniors are defined as those age 60 and over.

⁴ "America's Families and Living Arrangements," 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS), *U.S. Census Bureau*.

⁵ J.M. Murphy, C.A. Wehler, M.E. Pagano, M. Little, R.E. Kleinman, and M.S. Jellinek, "Relationship Between Hunger and Psychosocial Functioning in Low-Income American Children," *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 37, no. 2 (1998): 163-170.

⁶ "Spotlight on Senior Health: Adverse Health Outcomes of Food Insecure Older Americans," *Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger*, 2014.

Language barriers may present challenges to some clients facing hunger. For 99 percent of Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households, the primary language spoken by adults at home is English, although many clients indicated that their household speaks more than one primary language. Nearly 4 percent of client households

use Spanish as a primary language spoken by adults. However, since the Client Survey was only offered to respondents in five languages (English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese), these are likely underestimates of the primary languages spoken by adults at home.

Health

The client population served by Feeding Indiana's Hungry faces significant health challenges, including diabetes and high blood pressure.

More than 53 percent of all survey respondents report having fair or poor health. In addition, 32 percent of households report that at least one member of their household other than the respondent is in poor health. Households who are facing both poor health and food insecurity must overcome multiple challenges, including maintaining a good diet to manage disease.

For the first time, *Hunger in America 2014* included questions about diet-related diseases. Illnesses like high blood pressure and diabetes are prevalent among households served by Feeding Indiana's Hungry. In nearly two-thirds (64%) of client households, at least one member has high blood pressure. In 34 percent of client households, at least one member has diabetes. Among households with seniors, the rates of high blood pressure (87%) and diabetes (43%) are notably higher. These health conditions likely increase household expenses related to medical care, especially for individuals without health insurance.

In general, health challenges create additional financial strains, especially for households with already limited budgets or that lack access to sufficient medical coverage. 30 percent of client households report that no members of the household have health insurance, including Medicaid or Medicare; however, it is important to note that data collection was completed before the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act and thus, client coverage may have improved.

Even with insurance, medical debt can accumulate due to deductibles and uncovered services. More than three-fourths (76%) of client households report having unpaid medical bills. Budget constraints related to healthcare are further revealed in the spending tradeoffs reported by client households. 77 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care in the past year, with 39 percent reporting facing this tradeoff every month.



34%
OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE
A MEMBER WITH
DIABETES



64%
OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE
A MEMBER WITH
**HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE**

Housing

Most Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households reside in stable housing, but many clients have experienced recent housing transitions.

The overwhelming majority (96%) of client households reside in non-temporary housing, meaning that housing is either stable or has the potential to be a long-term living situation. Clients most commonly live in houses/townhouses (48%) or apartments (32%). 30 percent of households living in non-temporary housing own their residence either outright or with a mortgage, while 63 percent rent or lease their home.

The remaining 4 percent of client households report living in temporary housing or housing that is not intended to be a long-term residence, such as a shelter, motel, car, or on the street.

Respondents also report recent housing transitions, indicating some level of instability in their living situations regardless of their type of residence.

1 IN 5 
**RESPONDENTS HAS EXPERIENCED
A FORECLOSURE OR EVICTION
IN THE PAST 5 YEARS**

About one in three (33%) of respondents has lived in two or more places in the past year. More than one in five (21%) respondents has experienced an eviction or foreclosure in the past five years. Some types of housing transitions may reflect clients' strategies for making ends meet. For example, 24 percent of respondents began living with another person or family in the past year.

Employment

Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households struggle to secure adequate employment.

Employment status is a critical factor affecting client households' income and, thus, access to food. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of client households report that at least one household member has been employed in the past year. This rate is even higher for households with children (79%) and slightly lower for households with seniors (48%).

40 percent of employed households report that the longest-employed person, meaning the person that has worked the greatest number of months in the past year, worked part-time, while the national average was 57 percent, suggesting limitations in the household's earning potential.

61% **OF HOUSEHOLDS
WERE EMPLOYED
IN THE PAST YEAR**

For many households, securing and maintaining employment can be challenging and require a significant amount of time. Factors such as age and health status also can directly impact a household member's ability to seek employment. 61 percent of client households have no member employed, which includes client households where at least one member is unemployed and has sought work in the past four weeks as well as households where at least one member is out of the workforce due to a disability, poor health, or retirement.

Education

Many Feeding Indiana's Hungry clients are educated beyond high school; many adult clients are currently enrolled in school.

36 percent of households have at least one adult member with education beyond high school. This includes those with a business, trade, or technical license/certificate, some college, as well as those with two or four-year college degrees. Looking at all adult clients, 22 percent have an educational level beyond high school. While 51 percent of adult clients have earned at least a high school diploma or equivalent, many have also attended or graduated from college (5%).

In addition to past educational attainment, many adult clients are working towards future educational goals. Among adult clients, 9 percent are currently students, including 6 who are full-time and 3 who are part-time students.

Juggling competing responsibilities, including school, household budget management, and food security, can be challenging. 21 percent of households report having to choose between paying for food and paying for education for a child and/or an adult each year.

1 IN 10 ADULTS IS A STUDENT
45,484 ARE FULL-TIME & 22,899 ARE PART-TIME



Income and Poverty

Feeding Indiana's Hungry clients subsist on lower incomes, with a majority reporting that they live below the poverty line.

A larger household size may also increase household expenditures, which can be difficult to manage if some household members are not in the workforce such as children or retirees. 23 percent of client households have only one member, while 35 percent have two to three members, and 42 percent have four or more members.

A majority (68%) of client households are living in poverty with annual household incomes at or below the federal poverty level. In 2013, the year in which the data were collected, the federal poverty guideline for a family of two was \$15,510 while the guideline for a family of four was \$23,550.⁷

68% OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVE IN POVERTY

The federal poverty guidelines are used to determine income eligibility for federal assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC. Although eligibility for federal nutrition assistance programs is contingent on a variety of criteria,

including household size, assets, and citizenship status, household income can be an indicator of a household's potential eligibility for these safety net programs.

The majority of client households (84%) fall at or below 130 percent of the poverty guideline, which is the federal income threshold for SNAP eligibility. An additional 10 percent of households fall between 131 and 185 percent of the poverty guidelines. Although these households may not be eligible for SNAP, they may be eligible for WIC or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Lastly, 6 percent of households report incomes above 185 percent of the poverty guideline, and thus are likely ineligible for any federal assistance, leaving the charitable sector as one of the few sources of food assistance they can receive. It is critical to also note that client households who may appear income-eligible for federal assistance, may have assets or other extenuating circumstances that preclude them from being eligible.

⁷ "2013 Poverty Guidelines," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Military Service

22 percent of households have at least one member that has served in the U.S. military.

For the first time, *Hunger in America 2014* respondents were asked about U.S. military service among members of their household. 22 percent of households report that at least one member that has ever served in the U.S. military. This includes 4 percent of Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households that contain a member who is currently serving full or part-time in the military, either in the Armed Forces, Reserves or National Guard.



**22% OF FEEDING INDIANA'S
HUNGRY CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS
HAVE A MEMBER WHO HAS
SERVED IN THE US MILITARY**



Client Food Insecurity and Coping Strategies

Food Insecurity

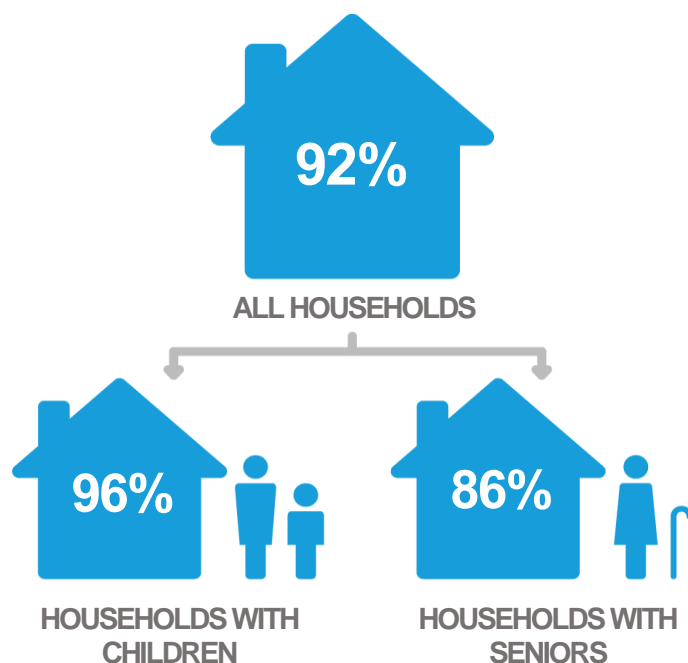
A large majority of Feeding Indiana's Hungry households are food insecure.

Food security refers to the household-level economic and social condition of reliable access to an adequate amount of food for an active, healthy life for all household members. Using the USDA Economic Research Service's validated six-item Core Food Security Module, *Hunger in America 2014* reveals that 92 percent of Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households are food insecure, meaning that they were without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food at some point during the past year. Nationally, according to the USDA, only 14.5 percent of households are food insecure, highlighting the heightened need among Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households.⁸

Children are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of food insecurity because of the association between food insecurity, health, and cognitive development.⁹ Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households with children face an increased risk of food insecurity, with 96 percent classifying as food insecure.

Households with seniors are only at slightly lower risk of food insecurity than all Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households, as 86 percent of client households with

seniors are food insecure. Seniors can also face unique barriers to accessing nutritious food, such as decreased mobility, fixed incomes, health issues, or specific dietary needs.



⁸ Alicia Coleman-Jensen, Mark Nord, and Anita Singh, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2012," *U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service*.

⁹ K. Alaimo, C.M. Olsen, and Edward A. Frongillo, "Food Insufficiency and American School Children's Cognitive, Academic, and Psychosocial Development," *Pediatrics* 108, no. 1 (2001): 44-53.

Federal Program Participation

Less than half of Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households report currently receiving SNAP benefits.

Client households may also receive assistance through federal nutrition assistance programs. Chief among these federal nutrition programs is SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. While the SNAP income eligibility ceiling in this state is 130 percent of the poverty guidelines, equivalent to \$23,550 for a family of 4, other factors such as a household's overall assets, net income, or restrictions based on household composition are also used to determine eligibility for participation.



**45% OF HOUSEHOLDS
REPORT CURRENTLY
RECEIVING SNAP**

33 percent of client households have applied for SNAP but are not currently receiving SNAP. One in five client households (19%) reports never having applied for SNAP benefits. Of these households that have never applied for SNAP, approximately nearly two-thirds (62%) indicate not doing so because they didn't believe they were eligible. However, analysis of reported household income shows that, among client households currently not participating, 61 percent report incomes that would suggest that they may be eligible to receive SNAP. As such, these results suggest that additional education and outreach on SNAP could benefit many households served by Feeding Indiana's Hungry.



**61% OF HOUSEHOLDS
NOT RECEIVING SNAP
MAY BE ELIGIBLE**

Hunger in America 2014 also explores client usage of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides supplemental foods for low-income pregnant and post-partum women and children up to age five to meet their special nutritional needs. Eligibility for WIC is typically restricted to families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. 11 percent of all households report current receipt of WIC benefits. The study does not allow for analysis of WIC receipt among eligible households (households with a child five years old or younger or households with a pregnant woman). Isolating WIC-

eligible households would likely show a greater percentage of client households reporting current receipt of WIC benefits.

Key federal nutrition programs targeted at older children include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). These programs allow low-income children to receive free or reduced-price lunch and breakfast at school. Among households with school-aged children age 5 to 18 served by Feeding Indiana's Hungry, 88 percent report participating in free or reduced price school lunch. Despite this relatively higher level of participation, only 49 percent of the same households participate in free or reduced price school breakfast. Lower participation in school breakfast may be explained by the fact that not all schools operate the program; nevertheless, the lower participation rates point to opportunities for School Breakfast Program outreach and program promotion.

Additionally, it should be noted that there are several programs targeted at children that are offered by the private charitable sector, including Backpack, Kids Cafe, and Afterschool Snack, which are operated directly by Feeding Indiana's Hungry member food banks at 442 sites across Indiana. While these programs are operated by the charitable food bank network, many receive federal reimbursement through initiatives like the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This unique private-public partnership allows Feeding Indiana's Hungry to reach children in need throughout the service area. However, since children served at children's only programs are not included in the scope of *Hunger in America* due to methodological constraints, the number of children reported being reached in this report is certainly an underestimate.

Together, charitable food assistance and federal nutrition assistance programs weave a nutritional safety net for households in need; however, despite participation in one or both of these modes of assistance, many client households continue to struggle with food insecurity, which can lead to difficult choices, including spending tradeoffs and coping strategies.

Spending Tradeoffs

Client households frequently face difficult decisions about household resource management in an effort to ensure they have sufficient food.

Feeding Indiana's Hungry client households often survive on limited budgets and are confronted with choices between paying for food and paying for other essentials.

These dilemmas can put households in the position of choosing between competing necessities. A majority of client households report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities (77%), transportation (79%), medical care (77%), or housing (63%) at some point during the year.

Among households making these spending tradeoffs, typically at least one-third and as high as nearly half report doing so every month. Households also make choices between food and educational expenses (40%); however, because not all households contain students, this rate is lower than the other spending tradeoffs that households regularly face.

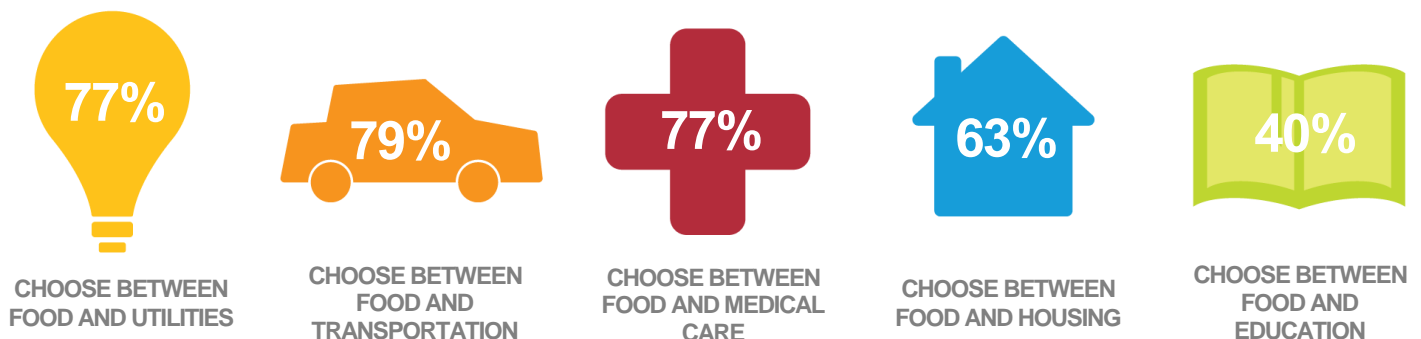
Notably, many households have incorporated charitable food assistance into their monthly food budgets to help

cope with the need to make tradeoffs between accessing food and other everyday essentials.

An estimated 49 percent of households plan to acquire food at meal or grocery programs on a regular basis to help with their monthly food budget. This suggests that these households may be depending upon charitable programs to assist in managing their food needs. For such households, charitable food assistance is not just a safety net; it allows clients to address core food expenses so that limited income can be allocated elsewhere in the household budget to address other basic necessities such as rent and utilities.

Conversely, 51 percent of households report waiting to come to a food program until after food has run out, introducing the possibility of experiencing negative health and nutrition ramifications if immediate dietary needs are not met.

HOUSEHOLD SPENDING TRADEOFFS IN THE PAST YEAR



Coping Strategies

Client households employ a variety of unique mechanisms in efforts to secure sufficient food for all members of the household.

In addition to using federal and charitable nutrition assistance programs and making spending tradeoffs, many households also engage in a number of other coping strategies in order to feed their families.

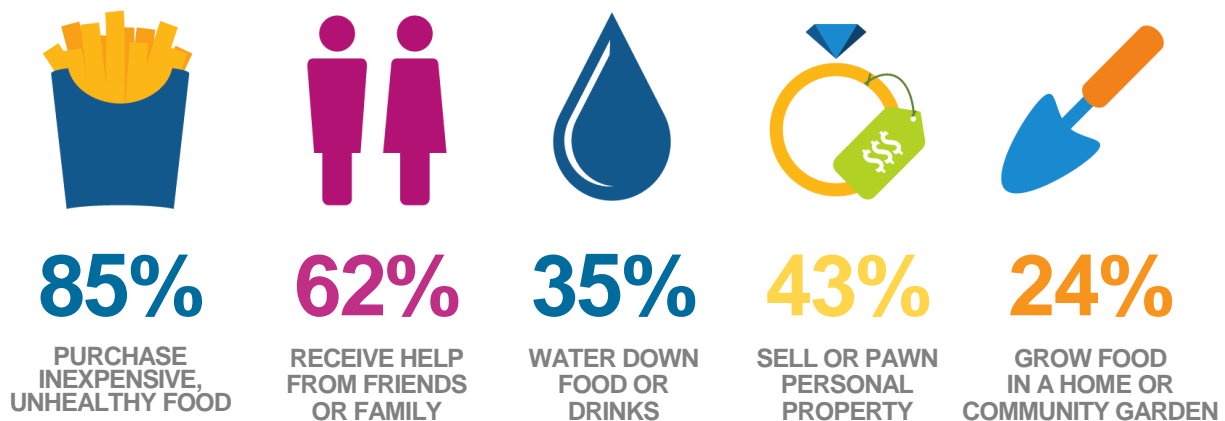
Many households (85%) report purchasing the cheapest food available, even if they knew it wasn't the healthiest option. Unfortunately, this strategy has known risks for negative health outcomes. For example, filling foods with low nutritional value but higher fat, sodium, and sugar content can contribute to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, low energy levels, and poor nutrition.¹⁰ For this reason, the food bank network increasingly works to provide clients with access to healthier food, such as fresh produce, lean proteins and dairy, and whole grains. Nationally, more than three-quarters of the food distributed by the food bank network classifies as these healthier "foods to encourage."

Client households also report engaging in other coping strategies in an effort to secure enough food, such as

purchasing food in dented or damaged packages (65%) and watering down food or drink (35%). Nearly two-thirds of client households (62%) receive help from family and friends as a strategy to get enough food. Furthermore, more than one in three households (43%) reports selling personal property in order to obtain enough food for their household. Growing food in a home or community garden is another coping strategy employed by households to secure enough food, with 24 percent reporting doing so in the past year.

The array of spending tradeoffs and coping strategies exercised by clients highlights the elevated level of need in the Feeding Indiana's Hungry service area. These strategies and choices also signal the need for both a strong system of charitable food assistance and effective federal nutrition assistance policies that combat the problem of hunger.

60% OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTED USING 3 OR MORE COPING STRATEGIES IN THE PAST YEAR



¹⁰ W.P. James, M. Nelson, A. Ralph, and S. Leather, "Socioeconomic Determinants of Health. The Contribution of Nutrition to Inequalities in Health," *BMJ* 314, no. 7093 (1997): 1545-1549.

Implications

Hunger in America 2014 illustrates that addressing food insecurity in Indiana will take the collaborative efforts and services of multiple sectors in the community.

Feeding Indiana's Hungry partner agencies regularly report that they are observing a high demand for charitable food assistance. Collecting data for *Hunger in America 2014* allows the food bank to quantify the breadth and intensity of this need. The results of this research illustrate that receiving support from hunger-relief charities is a growing and crucial component of the coping strategies that individuals in need turn to in order to secure food for themselves and their families.

The data also suggest that the recovery from the Great Recession in 2008 and 2009 has been slow to reach people in the direst economic circumstances. Although many clients who visit programs partnered with Feeding Indiana's Hungry are working towards an education and/or searching for work if they are not already employed, they still experience challenges with food security, underemployment, limited income, and poor health.

Feeding Indiana's Hungry clients often survive on limited budgets and are confronted with choices between paying for food and paying for other essentials like rent or medicine. These dilemmas can put households in the position of choosing between competing necessities and, thus, many clients are relying on federal nutrition programs, as well as routinely turning to Feeding Indiana's Hungry, in order to meet their nutrition and food budget needs.

Hunger in America 2014 captures information about the scope of services that Feeding Indiana's Hungry provides to clients facing hunger, as well as the challenges, barriers, and coping methods that these clients experience. The data illuminate the importance of a strong network of partner agencies and programs, coupled with federal policies and programs that support efforts to fight hunger.

What Can I Do?

Feeding Indiana's Hungry depends on the generosity and support of individuals, foundations, corporations, and manufacturers in order to provide charitable food relief to thousands of individuals in need each year.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, financial donor or hunger advocate, or if you would like more information about Feeding Indiana's Hungry, please visit <http://www.feedingindianashungry.org>.

Acknowledgements

Feeding Indiana's Hungry wishes to acknowledge the tremendous support of all those who assisted with this important research effort, which will guide our work for years to come. This includes the staff and volunteers of our food banks and partner agencies, and particularly the research staff at the Feeding America National Office.

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Finally, we sincerely thank each of the clients who graciously agreed to share their stories with us through participation in the Client Survey.

For more information about Feeding Indiana's Hungry, please visit www.feedingindianashungry.org. For a more detailed technical explanation of the study, please see the Technical Volume of the National Report, which is available at www.feedingamerica.org/hungerinamerica.



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