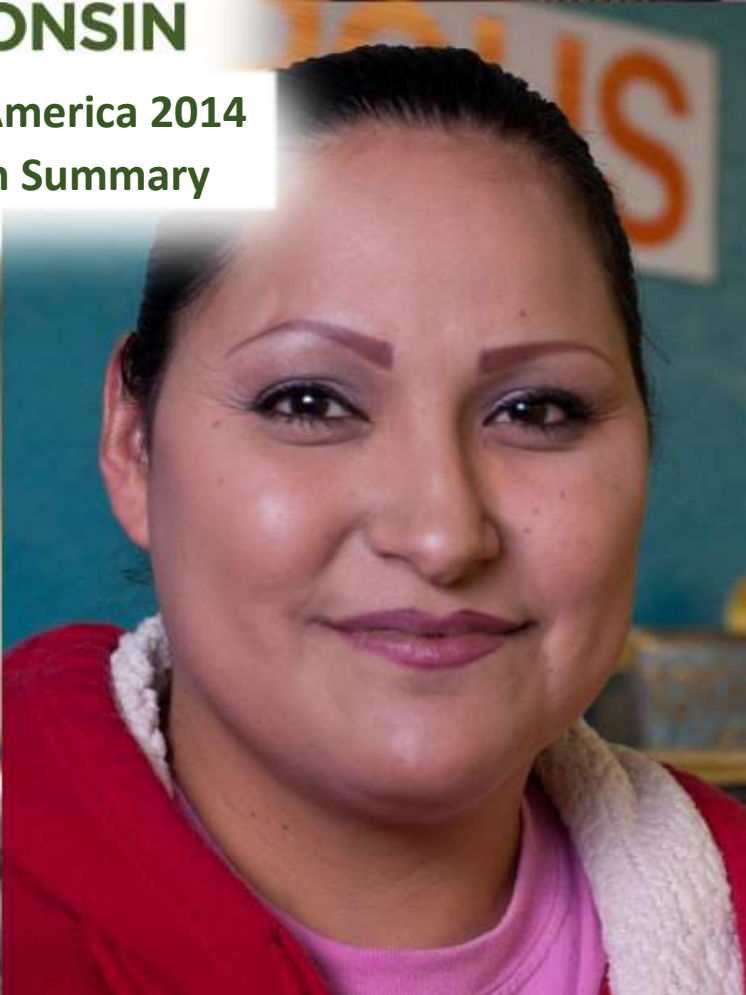
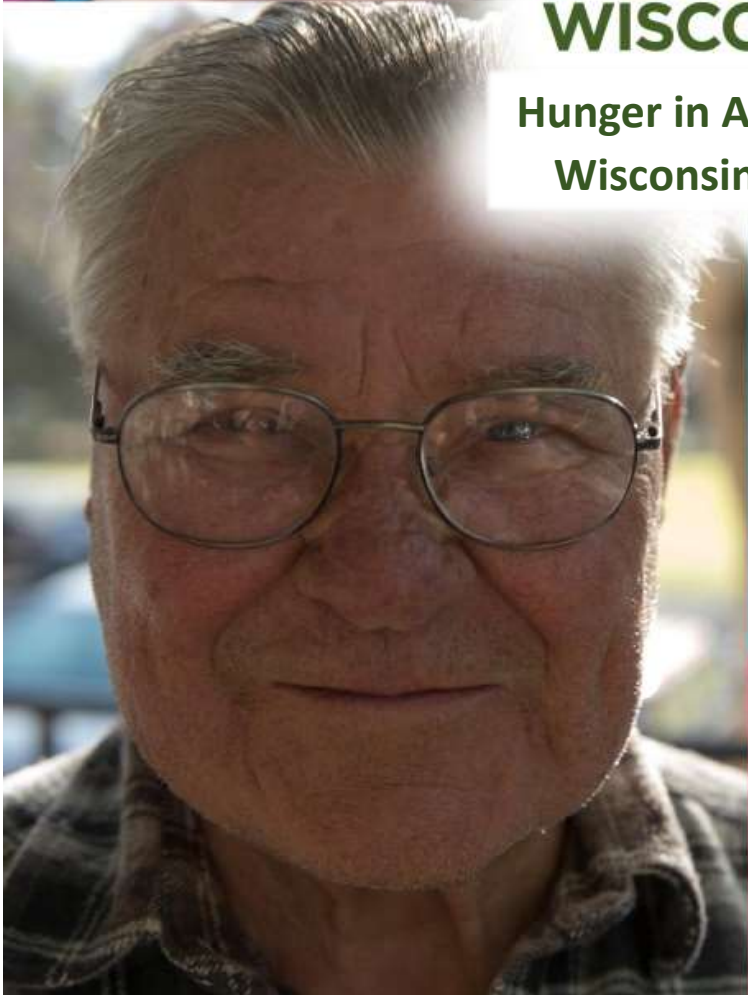




**FEEDING[®]
WISCONSIN**

**Hunger in America 2014
Wisconsin Summary**



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 Feeding Wisconsin member food bank. 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 Feeding Wisconsin member food banks, 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 Feeding Wisconsin members 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 Wisconsin

Feeding Wisconsin is proud to be a Feeding America Partner State Association and works to fight hunger in the state of Wisconsin. Through our six member food banks, we distribute nearly 40 million meals annually. Feeding Wisconsin is committed to ensuring that all Wisconsin families have access to the food and benefits they need to work, learn, and live healthy lives.

FEEDING WISCONSIN SERVES
5 8 7 , 6 0 0
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 1,300 clients and surveys from 702 eligible partner agencies, there is a more comprehensive understanding of the people served by Feeding Wisconsin, 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 748 meal and grocery programs across the Feeding Wisconsin service area. More than 1,300 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 Wisconsin, 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 Wisconsin is likely lower than the true number of children reached.

FEEDING WISCONSIN PARTNERS WITH 752 LOCAL AGENCIES



752 AGENCIES

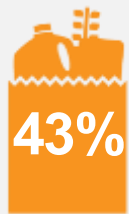
PARTNERED WITH FEEDING WISCONSIN REACH CLIENTS IN NEED THROUGH 1568 FOOD PROGRAMS



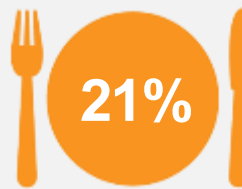
54% RELY ENTIRELY ON VOLUNTEERS



62% ARE FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS



PROVIDE GROCERIES



SERVE MEALS

5 8 7 , 6 0 0

OR

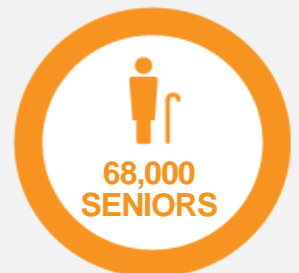
1 IN 10

PEOPLE LIVING IN WISCONSIN

724,320 FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE IN WISCONSIN



273,140 CHILDREN



68,000 SENIORS



How Feeding Wisconsin's Agencies Serve Clients

Feeding Wisconsin distributes food to more than 750 partner agencies in order to reach clients at risk of hunger.

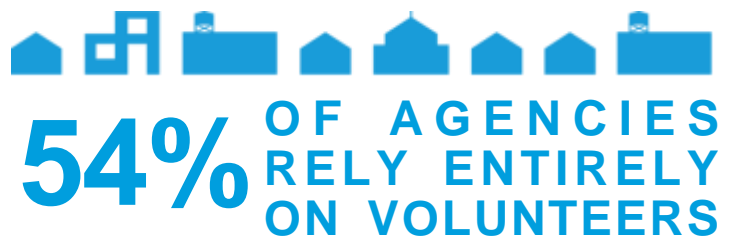
Partner agencies act as the mechanism for the distribution of food directly to clients through food programs that provide either meals or groceries. Some partner agencies also operate non-food programs with a primary focus on other types of assistance, such as nutrition education, food-related benefits outreach, clothing assistance, or job training. An estimated 62% 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 Wisconsin member food banks also distribute food directly through their own direct distribution programs, such as Backpack and Mobile Pantry programs. Overall, Feeding Wisconsin and its more than 750 partner agencies operate over 1,000 food programs and 527 non-food and food-related benefit programs in Wisconsin.¹

Agencies and Food Programs

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

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 996 food programs operated by partner agencies of Feeding Wisconsin, 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 54 percent of partner agencies report having no paid staff. Among the 46 percent of agencies with paid staff, the median number of paid full-time equivalent staff members reported is 4, totaling 160 staff hours a 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 (55%) to seniors (37%) and even children (8%).

¹ The numbers of partner agencies and programs affiliated with Feeding Wisconsin are based on the findings from HIA 2014, but they may vary somewhat from the food bank's administrative records.

In total, 28,400 volunteers provide aid to Wisconsin food programs each week, contributing a total of 107,600 hours per week.

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 23 percent of partner agencies report making reductions in the year prior to the survey. Specifically, 12 percent of agencies cut their hours of operation, 9 percent laid off staff, and 11 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 Wisconsin 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 39 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, 26 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.



**39% OF AGENCIES
OFFER ASSISTANCE
WITH SNAP**

In addition to federal program assistance, partner agencies also operate 546 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 Wisconsin 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

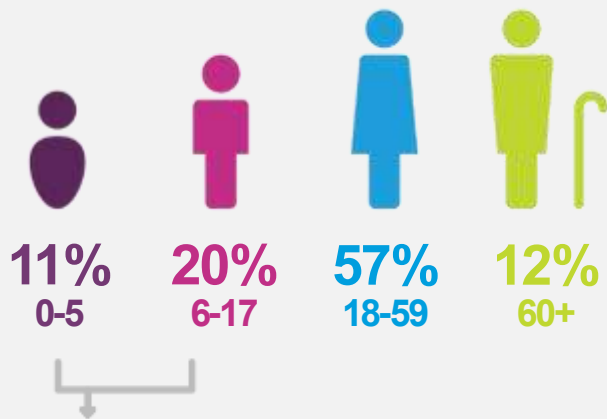


1500 FOOD PROGRAMS REACH 587,600 CLIENTS



4.5 MILLION TIMES EACH YEAR

CLIENT AGE



HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY



92% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE

HOUSEHOLD COPING STRATEGIES



82% OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORT PURCHASING INEXPENSIVE, UNHEALTHY FOOD TO FEED THEIR FAMILY



85% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN REPORT USING THIS COPING STRATEGY



19% OF FEEDING WISCONSIN HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WHO HAS SERVED IN THE US MILITARY

HOUSEHOLD SPENDING TRADEOFFS

70% HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND UTILITIES

64% HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND MEDICAL CARE

31% HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND EDUCATION

HOUSEHOLD HEALTH



53% OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



34% OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WITH DIABETES

EDUCATION

27% OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WITH A POST HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION



1 IN 10 ADULTS IS CURRENTLY IN SCHOOL

AND AMONG HOUSEHOLDS WITH SENIORS RATES ARE HIGHER

74% **49%**



The People Served By Feeding Wisconsin

Households served by Feeding Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin client households are diverse in size, age, and race, with many containing vulnerable household members such as children and seniors.³

35 percent of Feeding Wisconsin client households include at least one child, a rate on par with than the general population (32%).⁴ Overall, Feeding Wisconsin serves an estimated 68,000 seniors and 173,500 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 missing out on nutrients that are critical to the unique conditions related to aging.⁶

Among all Feeding Wisconsin clients, 57 percent identify as white, 23 percent as African American, and 9 percent as Latino. An additional proportion of clients identify as another race not specified (11%).

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.

Clients Served

One in ten Wisconsinites turns to Feeding Wisconsin for food assistance.

Hunger in America 2014 reveals that each year, 587,600 **unduplicated individuals** receive charitable food assistance through Feeding Wisconsin.

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, Feeding Wisconsin provides assistance to 4,500,000 **duplicated clients** each year, illustrating that many individuals are routinely turning to the food bank to meet their nutrition and food budget needs.

Language barriers may present challenges to some clients facing hunger. For 96% percent of Feeding Wisconsin 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. More than 6 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 Wisconsin faces significant health challenges, including diabetes and high blood pressure.

About 43 percent of all survey respondents report having fair or poor health. In addition, 21 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 Wisconsin. In more than half (53%) 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 (74%) and diabetes (49%) 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. 27 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 half (59%) of client households report having unpaid medical bills. Budget constraints related to healthcare are further revealed in the spending tradeoffs reported by client households. Nearly two thirds (64%) of households surveyed report choosing between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care in the past year, with 34 percent reporting facing this tradeoff every month.



34%
OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE
A MEMBER WITH
DIABETES



53%
OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE
A MEMBER WITH
**HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE**

Housing

Most Feeding Wisconsin client households reside in stable housing, but many clients have experienced recent housing transitions.

The overwhelming majority (94%) 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 (52%) or apartments (33%). 26 percent of households living in non-temporary housing own their residence either outright or with a mortgage, while 64 percent rent or lease their home.

The remaining 6 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 7 

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

About than one in four (25%) of respondents has lived in two or more places in the past year. About one in seven (15%) 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 Wisconsin client households struggle to secure adequate employment.

Employment status is a critical factor affecting client households' income and, thus, access to food. More than half (59%) of client households report that at least one household member has been employed in the past year. This rate is higher for households with children (78%) and lower for households with seniors (39%).

44 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, suggesting limitations in the household's earning potential.

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. Similarly, 59 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.

**59% OF HOUSEHOLDS
WERE EMPLOYED
IN THE PAST YEAR**

**78% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH
CHILDREN
WERE EMPLOYED
IN THE PAST YEAR**

Education

Many Feeding Wisconsin clients are educated beyond high school; many adult clients are currently enrolled in school.

40 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, 27 percent have an educational level beyond high school. While 55 percent of adult clients have earned at least a high school diploma or equivalent, many have also attended or graduated from college (19%).

In addition to past educational attainment, many adult clients are working towards future educational goals. Among adult clients, 11 percent are currently students, including 6 percent who are full-time and 5 percent who are part-time students.

Juggling competing responsibilities, including school, household budget management, and food security, can be challenging. 31 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 
24,000 ARE FULL-TIME & 20,200 ARE PART-TIME

Income and Poverty

Feeding Wisconsin 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. 40 percent of client households have only one member, while 33 percent have two to three members, and 27 percent have four or more members.

A majority (62%) 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

62% 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 (75%) fall at or below 130 percent of the poverty guideline, which is the federal income threshold for SNAP (FoodShare) eligibility. An additional 15 percent of households fall between 131 and 185 percent of the poverty guidelines. In Wisconsin, these families are still eligible to apply for SNAP as well as other child nutrition programs like WIC or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Lastly, 10 percent of households report incomes above 185 percent of the poverty guideline. For those families who may no longer qualify for federal programs, the charitable sector would be 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

19 percent of Wisconsin households that visit our food programs 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. 19 percent of households report that at least one member that has ever served in the U.S. military. This includes

4 percent of Feeding Wisconsin 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.



19% OF FEEDING WISCONSIN HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A MEMBER WHO HAS SERVED IN THE US MILITARY



Client Food Insecurity and Coping Strategies

Food Insecurity

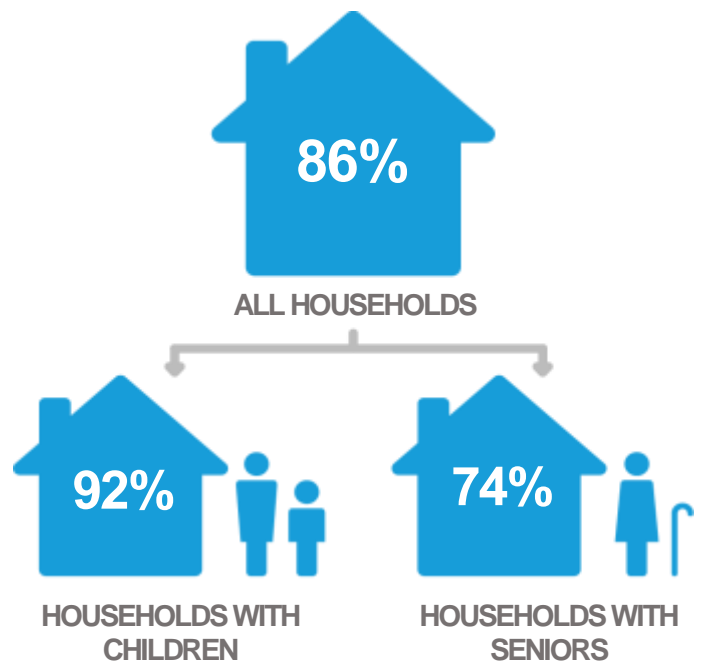
A large majority of Feeding Wisconsin households are food insecure.

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 86 percent of Feeding Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin client households with children face an increased risk of food insecurity, with nearly 92 percent classifying as food insecure.

Households with seniors are only at slightly lower risk/are also at risk of food insecurity than all Feeding Wisconsin client households, as 74 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

Nearly two-thirds (61%) of Feeding Wisconsin client households report currently receiving SNAP (FoodShare) 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, known in Wisconsin as FoodShare. While the SNAP income eligibility ceiling in this state is 200 percent of the poverty guidelines, equivalent to an annual income of \$47,700 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.



**61% OF HOUSEHOLDS
REPORT CURRENTLY
RECEIVING SNAP**

One in seven client households (16%) reports never having applied for SNAP benefits. Of these households that have never applied for SNAP, approximately half (56%) 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, 68 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 Wisconsin.

**68% 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. 16 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 Wisconsin, 98 percent report participating in free or reduced price school lunch. Despite this relatively higher level of participation, only 43 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 Wisconsin members at sites throughout the state. 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 Wisconsin to reach children in every corner of the state. 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 Wisconsin 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 (70%), transportation (71%), medical care (64%), or housing (58%) at some point during the year.

Among the households making these spending tradeoffs, typically one-third of them report doing so every month. Households also make choices between food and educational expenses (31%); however, because not all households contain students, this rate is lower than the other spending tradeoffs that households regularly face.

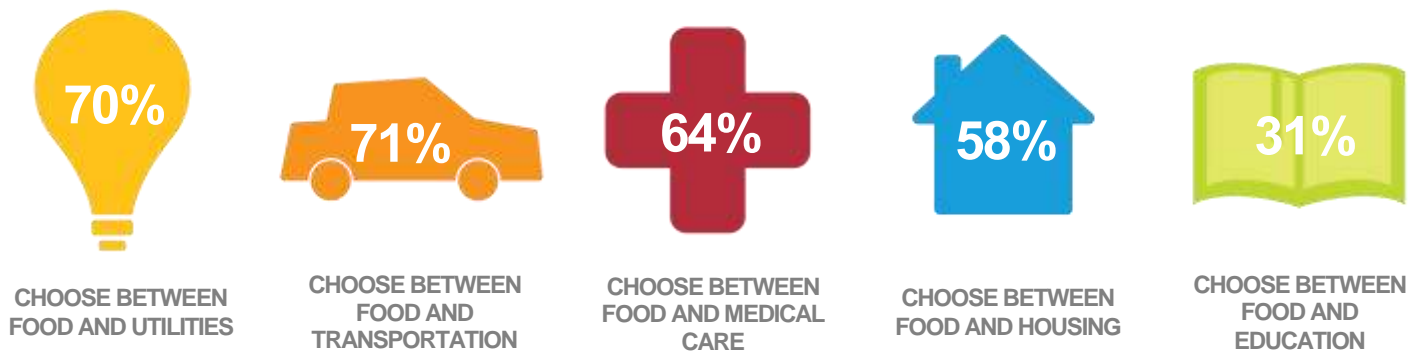
Notably, many households have incorporated charitable food assistance into their monthly food budgets to help cope with

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

An estimated 61 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, 39 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.

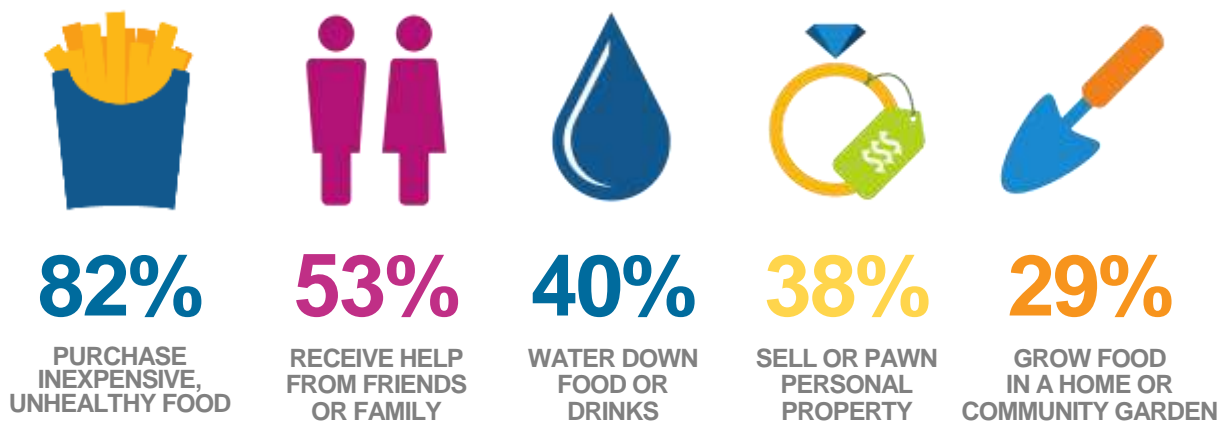
In addition to using federal and charitable nutrition assistance programs and making spending tradeoffs, many households also engage in a number of other coping strategies in order to feed their families.

Many households (82%) 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." In Wisconsin, we are actively working with agricultural partners to increase our supply of fresh fruits and produce.

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 (53%) and watering down food or drink (40%). More than half of client households (53%) receive help from family and friends as a strategy to get enough food. Furthermore, about one in three households (38%) reports selling personal property in order to obtain enough food for their families. Growing food in a home or community garden is another coping strategy employed by households to secure enough food, with 29 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 Wisconsin 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.

59% 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 Wisconsin will take the collaborative efforts and services of multiple sectors in the community.

Feeding Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin's network of food banks and agencies, in order to meet their nutrition and food budget needs.

Hunger in America 2014 captures information about the scope of services that Feeding Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin, please visit www.FeedingWI.org

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For more information about Feeding Wisconsin, please visit www.FeedingWI.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.