

1. HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

This report presents information on the clients and agencies in the state of Massachusetts. The information is drawn from a national study, Hunger in America 2010, conducted in 2009 for Feeding America (FA) (formerly America's Second Harvest), the nation's largest organization of emergency food providers. The national study is based on completed in-person interviews with more than 62,000 clients served by the FA national network, as well as on completed questionnaires from more than 37,000 FA agencies. The study summarized below focuses on emergency food providers and their clients who are supplied with food by food banks in the FA network. Emergency food programs are defined to include food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters serving short-term residents. It should be recognized that many other types of providers served by food banks are, for the most part, *not* described in this study, including such programs as Congregate Meals for seniors, day care facilities, and after school programs.

Key findings are summarized below:

HOW MANY CLIENTS RECEIVE EMERGENCY FOOD FROM FA FOOD BANKS IN MASSACHUSETTS?

- The FA system in Massachusetts provides emergency food for an estimated 571,600 different people annually.
- About 101,400 different people receive emergency food assistance in any given week.

WHO RECEIVES EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE?

FA agencies in Massachusetts provide food for a broad cross-section of households. Key characteristics include:

- 33% of the members of households in Massachusetts are children under 18 years old (Table 5.3.2).

- 7% of the members of households are children age 0 to 5 years (Table 5.3.2).
- 8% of the members of households are elderly (Table 5.3.2).
- About 47% of clients are non-Hispanic white, 19% are non-Hispanic black, 25% are Hispanic, and the rest are from other racial groups (Table 5.6.1).
- 31% of households include at least one employed adult (Table 5.7.1).
- 69% have incomes below the federal poverty level (Table 5.8.2.1) during the previous month.
- 21% are homeless (Table 5.9.1.1).

MANY CLIENTS ARE FOOD INSECURE WITH LOW OR VERY LOW FOOD SECURITY

- Among all client households served by emergency food programs in Massachusetts, 78% are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes client households who have low food security and those who have very low food security (Table 6.1.1.1).
- 41% of the clients have very low food security (Table 6.1.1.1).
- Among households with children, 79% are food insecure and 31% are food insecure with very low food security (Table 6.1.1.1).

MANY CLIENTS REPORT HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES

- 44% of clients in Massachusetts report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel (Table 6.5.1).
- 34% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage (Table 6.5.1).
- 33% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care (Table 6.5.1).
- 33% had to choose between paying for food and paying for transportation (Table 6.5.1).
- 26% had to choose between paying for food and paying for gas for a car (Table 6.5.1).

DO CLIENTS ALSO RECEIVE FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT?

- 50% of client households in Massachusetts are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (Table 7.1.1); however, it is likely that many more are eligible (Table 7.3.2).
- Among households with children ages 0-3 years, 65% participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Table 7.4.1).
- Among households with school-age children, 61% and 51%, respectively, participate in the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs (Table 7.4.1)
- Among households with school-age children, 20% participate in the summer food program (Table 7.4.1).

MANY CLIENTS ARE IN POOR HEALTH

- 22% of households in Massachusetts 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 IN MASSACHUSETTS

- 88% of adult clients said they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the amount of food they received from their provider; 84% were satisfied with the quality of the food they received (Table 9.2.1).

HOW LARGE IS THE FA SYSTEM IN MASSACHUSETTS?

- At the administration of this survey, 3 food banks or FROs affiliated with FA operated in Massachusetts. Of the agencies that were served by those organizations, 731 agencies that had their operation within the state responded to the agency survey. Of the responding agencies, 587 had at least one food pantry, soup kitchen, or shelter.

WHAT KINDS OF ORGANIZATIONS OPERATE EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS?

- 52% of pantries, 45% of kitchens, and 15% 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, 46% of agencies with at least one pantry, kitchen, or shelter and 38% of all agencies including those 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 WITH EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS REPORTED CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF CLIENTS SEEKING SERVICES?

- Among programs that existed in 2006, 87% of pantries, 75% of kitchens, and 41% of shelters in Massachusetts reported that there had been an increase since 2006 in the number of clients who come to their emergency food program sites (Table 10.8.1).

WHERE DO AGENCIES WITH EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS OBTAIN THEIR FOOD?

- Food banks are by far the single most important source of food for agencies with emergency food providers, accounting for 71% of the food distributed by pantries, 43% of the food distributed by kitchens, and 40% of the food distributed by shelters (Table 13.1.1).
- Other important sources of food include religious organizations, government, and direct purchases from wholesalers and retailers (Table 13.1.1).
- 73% of pantries, 53% of kitchens, and 56% of shelters receive food from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (Table 13.1.1).

VOLUNTEERS ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN THE FA NETWORK

- As many as 95% of pantries, 91% of kitchens, and 58% of shelters in Massachusetts use volunteers (Table 13.2.1).
- Many programs rely *entirely* on volunteers; 55% of pantry programs and 30% of kitchens have no paid staff at all (Table 13.2.1).