



Hunger In America 2006

Local Report for Long Island: Fact Sheet

In 2005, Long Island Cares and Island Harvest collaborated to conduct a study of the emergency food programs (EFPs) throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The report demonstrated that almost two hundred sixty thousand (259,387) Long Island residents turn to EFPs (soup kitchens, food pantries or shelters) for help each year. The population relying on emergency food to make ends meet is largely comprised of children, women, people of color, and the working poor.

Emergency Food Programs

Almost two thirds (63 percent) of EFPs are faith-based organizations.

Changes in Need

During the past four years, there has been an increase in the number of clients at more than two-thirds (67 percent) of food pantries, 54 percent of soup kitchens and 32 percent of shelters.

During the summer months, the number of children served increases at 38 percent of food pantries and 36 percent of soup kitchens.

Reliance on Volunteers

The vast majority of EFPs rely on unpaid volunteers: 89 percent of soup kitchens, 90 percent of food pantries and 54 percent of shelters.

Many programs rely entirely on volunteers: 51 percent of food pantries and 59 percent of soup kitchens have no paid staff at all.

Program Challenges

Funding: Funding problems are experienced by three-fourths (75 percent) of shelters, 47 percent of soup kitchens, and almost one-half (47 percent) of food pantries.

Food: Insufficient food supplies are experienced by 45 percent of food pantries, more than one-quarter (31 percent) of soup kitchens and 10 percent of shelters.

Paid Staff: Problems regarding paid staff is experienced by over 14 percent of soup kitchens and 12 percent of food pantries.

Turning Clients Away: Among programs turning away clients almost one-half (47 percent) of food pantries and 32 percent of soup kitchens turned away clients at least once due to the lack of food resources.

Emergency Food Program (EFP) CLIENTS

Demographic Characteristics of Clients

Gender: Women comprise the majority (77 percent) of clients seeking food assistance at EFPs (predominantly Pantries and Soup Kitchens). In addition, 54% of clients consuming food are females.

Education: 38 percent of clients have less than a high school education, more than one-fourth (27 percent) have completed high school or an equivalent, 25 percent have completed some college/two year degree and almost 5 percent have completed college or higher.

Race/ethnicity: 32 percent of clients are Black/African American, 37 percent are White, almost 23 percent are Latino/Hispanic, and the rest are from other racial or ethnic groups.

Client Household Characteristics

Household Composition: Almost 36 percent of all people in client households are children, 15 percent are elderly and 50 percent are non-elderly adults.

Housing: The vast majority (70 percent) of client households rent their place of residency. Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of client households receive Section 8 or Public Housing Assistance. 4 percent of clients are homeless.

Working Poor: Almost one-half (47 percent) of client households have one or more adults employed. Among working age adults in client households, 21 percent (approximately 25,602 people) are employed full-time and 17 percent (approximately 20,725 people) are employed part-time. Among clients who have worked before or are currently working, more than one-sixth (15 percent) have held or currently hold managerial or professional jobs.

Income Levels: More than one half (57 percent) of client households have monthly incomes below the official federal poverty level. Over 9 percent of client households have no income. Average monthly client household income is \$1010, with half of all client households having monthly incomes of \$800 or less (median). By contrast, the average monthly income for the general U.S. population in 2004 was \$5,006, with half reporting incomes of \$3,724.

Sources of Income: Employment comprises the main source of income for one-fourth (25 percent) of client households and is followed by Supplemental Security Income (10 percent), social security (20 percent) and Disability (SSDI)/Workers' Compensation (4 percent).

Participation in Food Assistance Programs

Food Stamps: 27 percent of client households are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits. Food stamps only last client households that participate in the program an average of 2.6 weeks, with benefits running out for as many as half within two weeks (median).

WIC: Among client households with preschool children, less than one-half (44 percent) participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Child Food Nutrition Assistance Programs: Among client households with school-age children, 54 percent participate in the federal school lunch program and almost one-third (30 percent) participate in the school breakfast program. However, only 14 percent participate in the summer food service program (SFSP).

Participation of Other Public Benefits Programs

Public Assistance: About 10 percent of client households received public assistance/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or welfare during the past two years. Among those who had received assistance, more than one-sixth (16 percent) indicated that the assistance was discontinued. Of these some were sanctioned by a welfare (or another) agency.

Extent of Hunger

In 80 percent of client households during the past year, it was often or sometimes true that the food they bought just did not last and that they did not have enough money to get more.

More than one-third (34 percent) of client households experienced times during the past year when they were hungry but did not eat because they could not afford enough food.

More than one-sixth (16 percent) of client households said that there were times when they did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food.

During the past year, nearly one-half (45 percent) of client households ate less than they felt they should because there was not enough money to buy food.

Almost every month during the past year, about one-third (33 percent) of client households had to cut the size of their meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food.

More than 93,000 children are served annually by LI Cares and Island Harvest.

About 42% of client's children often and sometimes were not eating enough because their households could not afford enough food.

More than 21% of client's children skipped meals because there was not enough money for food.

Choosing between Food and Other Necessities

About one-half (45 percent) of client households had to choose between paying for food and rent/mortgage.

More than one-third (42 percent) of client households had to choose between paying for food and utilities/heating fuel.

More than one-fourth (28 percent) of client households had to choose between paying for food and medicine/medical care.

Health Status, Insurance and Access to Medical Care

About 40 percent of clients have at least one household member in poor health.

46 percent of clients receive Medicaid, more than one-third (42 percent) receive Medicare, and as little as 34 percent have private health insurance.

More than one-third (36 percent) of clients have unpaid medical or hospital bills.