

# **In Perspective: An Assessment of Milwaukee County Food Pantry Clients**



**A report prepared for Hunger Task Force**

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## I. Executive Summary

This study provides a snapshot of Milwaukee County food pantry clients during an economic recession. The purpose of this report is to assess to what extent the economic downturn has impacted household eating habits of food pantry clients from different food pantries within Hunger Task Force’s emergency feeding network. Specifically, the study examined 523 food pantry clients from 35 food pantries within Hunger Task Force’s emergency feeding network. Surveys and interviews were conducted in order to compile data on household demographics, the extent of hunger and usage of federal nutrition assistance programs. Furthermore, this report humanizes the voices behind the data and provides action steps to help emergency food clients during these difficult economic times.

### Major Findings

- **Food pantry clients are hungry.** Despite monthly food pantry visits, a substantial number of clients report skipping meals, eating less, and feeding dependents less several days out of the month due to household food shortages.
- **A majority of food pantry clients do not receive FoodShare.** Fifty-six percent of respondents do not receive FoodShare benefits.
- **Despite promotion of the ACCESS website, the majority of individuals are applying for FoodShare in person.** Sixty-eight percent of respondents applied for FoodShare at either the Coggs Building or Robles Center. Only ten percent report using the ACCESS website to apply for benefits.
- **FoodShare allocations are insufficient.** Sixty-nine percent of respondents say their FoodShare benefits only last for two to three weeks.
- **A lack of employment contributes to the need for emergency food assistance.** Eighty-two percent of food pantry respondents report they are unemployed. Forty-two percent are seeking employment.
- **A high number of respondents were “new” food pantry users.** Twenty-six percent of respondents report using the pantry for less than three months. Nineteen percent of respondents report using the food pantry between three and six months.
- **Unemployment benefits are underutilized.** Although 82 percent of respondents report they are unemployed, only 3 percent report receiving unemployment benefits.
- **Food pantry clients generally like the food and customer service they receive at their food pantry visits.** Fifty-two percent of respondents believe the food they receive from the pantry is high quality, fresh and nutritious. Eighty-seven percent report that they feel respected and welcomed at the food pantry they visit.

- **“Word of mouth” is the most popular method for finding out about a food pantry.** Sixty-three percent of the respondents report they discovered the food pantry through family and friends versus only 20 percent finding the food pantry through 2-1-1- @ Impact.
- **A majority of food pantry clients have basic household amenities.** Over 90 percent of respondents report they have stoves and refrigerators. Eighty-four percent of food pantry clients have microwaves.
- **Some food pantry clients do not believe they are eligible for FoodShare.** About one-fifth of respondents report not receiving FoodShare benefits because they think they are ineligible.
- **Most clients report that Hunger Task Force food allotments last longer than 2-3 days.** Fifty-eight percent of respondents report food pantry allotments lasting about a week or more. During interviews, respondents report they are able to preserve food pantry commodities by supplementing food in their household with food pantry provisions.

## **II. Hunger and Poverty Context**

### **National Scope**

Recently, emergency food assistance usage has skyrocketed. In 2008, 14.6 percent of U.S. households were food insecure at least some time during that year, up from 11.1 percent in 2007. This is the highest recorded rate of food insecurity since 1995 when the first national food security survey was conducted by the USDA. The USDA defines food security as an individual's access to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life. (USDA, 2008)

The injustice of hunger is exacerbating health conditions for children throughout the nation as well. In 2008, 16.7 million children lived in food-insecure households. Among those, 5.2 million lived in households with very low food security (USDA, 2008). In response, in July 2009 President Barack Obama committed to a 7-point strategy to end childhood hunger by 2015.

According to the USDA, nationwide, 8.8 million adults and 4.5 million children lived in households that obtained food from food pantries. The number of households using food pantries was 22 percent higher in 2008 than in 2007. Of the households that obtained food from a food pantry from December 2007-December 2008, 26 percent used pantries almost every month, 28 percent used pantries in "some months, but not every month," and the remaining 46 percent used pantries in only one or two months. About 31 percent of households that used food pantries were classified as food secure (USDA, 2008).

There is a correlation between hunger and poverty. In short, poverty leads to people being unable to afford food and hence people go hungry. In 2008, 13.2 percent of Americans were living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008). Furthermore, in October 2009 the unemployment rate surged to 10.2 percent, the highest it's been in 26 years (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

### **Local scope**

On a local perspective, 1 out of 4 residents in the City of Milwaukee was living in poverty in addition to 1 out of 3 children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008). The number of residents that were unemployed in Milwaukee County peaked at 9.3% in October 2009 (Gassman, 2009). In comparison, the city of Milwaukee's unemployment rate of 10.6% ranks as second worst in the nation among the 50 largest U.S. cities.

FoodShare participation in Milwaukee County has increased from September 2008-September 2009 by 37 percent. During the month of November 2009, 199,575 individuals participated in FoodShare, the highest participation in Milwaukee County history (Gassman,

Roberta, 2009). As a result, a backlog in FoodShare application processing caused more than 30,000 applicants to wait over 30 days for either a Quest card to purchase food or a rejection of their application. More than 5,700 individuals waited more than 100 days to receive an answer to their request for help (Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel 2009). The circumstances violate federal SNAP benefits. According to the USDA, if an individual is approved for SNAP benefits, benefits should be received 30 days from the date the application is filed. If an individual qualifies for expedited benefits due to very low income, benefits should be received within 7 days from the file date.

A study performed by Children's Health Watch draws a correlation between increased subsidized housing and decreases in hunger in children (2009). In Wisconsin, a 2009 report concludes nearly 184,000 children under age 18 were food insecure from 2005-2007. In 2008, 45 percent of Milwaukee renters were unable to afford 2-bedroom housing at Fair Market Rent. The annual income needed to afford 2-bedroom housing at Fair Market Rent was \$31,800. According to the Milwaukee Public Policy Forum, public subsidy programs help less than one out of every three extremely low income and very low income renter households in Milwaukee County. The vast majority of households in Milwaukee County are renting in the private market without any direct government housing (Public Policy Forum 2009).

Several child nutrition programs aid in feeding Milwaukee's youth. From 2008-2009, Fueling Young Minds, a local summer meals collaboration between Hunger Task Force and the Harley-Davidson Foundation, saw a 47.7% increase in meals served to children 18 and younger. During the 2008-2009 school years, 79 percent of Milwaukee Public School students qualified for free or reduced price meals. Even the number of Universal Free Breakfast sites in Milwaukee increased from 75 participating schools to 81 in 2009.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a key source of support for serving nutritious meals and snacks in child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, after-school programs, shelters and adult day care centers. Until 2009, the CACFP program only provided meals for kids 12 and under, so the Serving up Supper for Kids Program was created to supplement the CACFP program by funding 721,500 meals to feed kids 18 and younger at twenty-five Community Learning Centers in Milwaukee. The Serving up Suppers for Kid's Program is a partnership between Kohl's Department Stores and Hunger Task Force.

In fiscal year 2009, Hunger Task Force experienced record demand at Milwaukee-area emergency food pantries as 9.5 million pounds of food was distributed to Hunger Task Force's network of 80 emergency feeding organizations. Seventy-two emergency feeding organizations within Hunger Task Force's network receive TEFAP commodities. TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income needy

persons, including elderly people, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance. In December 2009, 47,754 clients utilized Hunger Task Force affiliated food pantries, a 24 percent increase since the same date in 2008.

In September 2009, a survey was conducted by Hunger Task Force including 50 pantries within Hunger Task Force's network. One hundred percent of pantry staff reported an increase in the number of people served compared to 2008. Approximately 47.5 percent of food pantries reported a large increase in the number of individuals served. Ninety-five percent of respondents attributed the increase in pantry usage to new visitors versus 35 percent to more frequent visits and 32.5 percent to larger households (Hunger Task Force, 2009a).

This report will determine who is using Hunger Task Force's emergency feeding network and why these programs are being utilized. Data collection is based on 35 food pantries within Hunger Task Force's network. This report will specifically look at household demographics, the extent of hunger, use of federal nutrition assistance programs, and the effects of the economy on household eating habits. Moreover, this report will provide research and recommendations to improve service within Hunger Task Force's food pantries and ultimately improve service to those in need of emergency food in the community.

### III. Methodology

This study summarizes responses from food pantry clients within Hunger Task Force's food pantry network. Data was gathered from September 14-December 3, 2009 in Milwaukee County. A random sampling of thirty-five food pantries that adhere to Hunger Task Force Standards of Excellence and reflect a county-wide geographic representation of Hunger Task Force's network was selected.<sup>1</sup> All pantries are located in Milwaukee County in the cities of Cudahy, Franklin, Milwaukee, Oak Creek, South Milwaukee, and Wauwatosa.

Paper-based surveys offered in two languages (Spanish and English) were utilized to collect data. A Bill Emerson Hunger Fellow<sup>2</sup> administered the surveys with clients. Although an attempt was made to personally administer every survey, a few respondents requested to complete the survey independently. Clients were encouraged to provide honest feedback and were apprised that their comments would not hinder the continuation of services at the food pantry.

The surveys were conducted in the form of a face-to-face interview. The survey used was a modification of a 2008 instrument used to conduct an assessment of food pantries in Milwaukee County by Hunger Task Force (Hunger Task Force, 2009 b). The actual survey was a four-page, 35-item questionnaire (see Appendices A and B).

The survey was structured to quantitatively assess individuals using food pantries in Milwaukee County. In addition, qualitative techniques were also employed since it utilized less structure and allowed the Fellow to gain more insight into the respondent's personal experiences. The interviews proved to add dimension to the survey since in-depth personal stories were collected.

Food pantry clients were randomly selected during agency hours of operation. Participating in the survey was not a prerequisite for receiving emergency food allotments. The majority of food pantry clients was interviewed or completed a survey while waiting to go through the intake process at the food pantry. Others waited around after they received their food to complete the survey. A sample size of 500 individuals was determined in order to achieve a confidence level of 95%. A total of 520 surveys were collected.

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<sup>1</sup> Standards of Excellence is a set of guidelines for "best practices" that rates HTF food pantries on a scale of 1-4, one being the lowest and four being the highest.

<sup>2</sup> The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship program, a project of the Congressional Hunger Center, is a year-long leadership development program designed for individuals interested in working to eliminate hunger and poverty. <http://hungercenter.org>

The results of the study are limited by the voluntary nature of the surveying tool. Although respondents were encouraged to fully complete the survey, questions were answered by choice; thus, certain findings may not be representative of the entire sample size. The convenience of sampling individuals who spoke either English or Spanish is a limitation. As a result, Russian, Hmong, and Arabic only speakers were not included in this survey.

The results will be used to improve future exploratory studies of food pantries in the area. The information presented is not an all-inclusive representation of hunger and poverty in Milwaukee. Rather, all data collected in this report should be viewed as a snapshot in time of the current economic conditions and effects on hunger and poverty in Milwaukee County. Future studies are necessary to remain abreast on how the economy affects household eating habits in Milwaukee County.

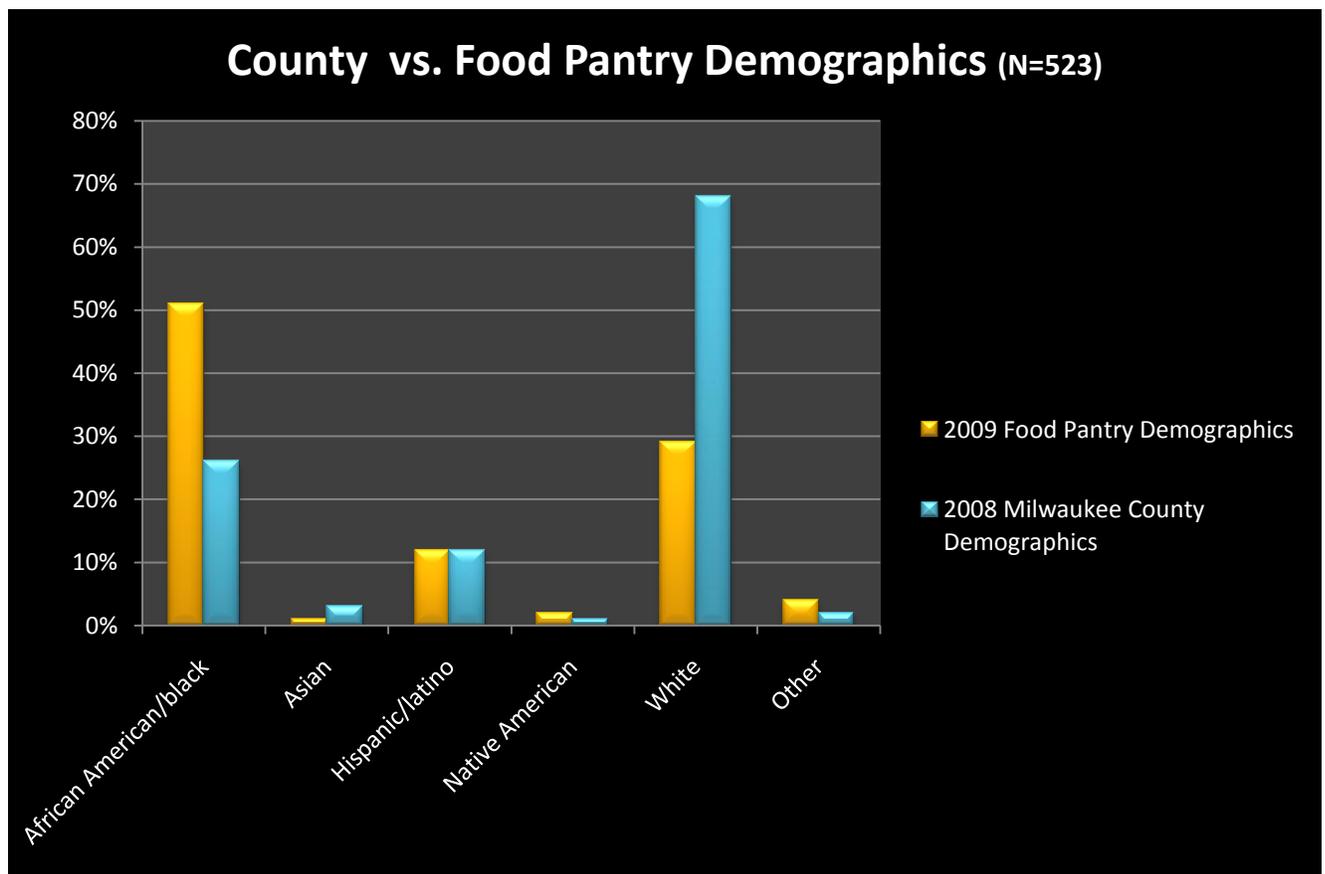
#### IV. Survey Results

A copy of the survey tool is available in *Appendix A* on page 39 and on page B.

##### A. Demographics

There are disparities in the representation of a few racial groups in Milwaukee County relative to demographics in this study. As a result, Figure 1 will compare Milwaukee County demographics with the food pantry customer demographics collected in this survey.

Figure 1



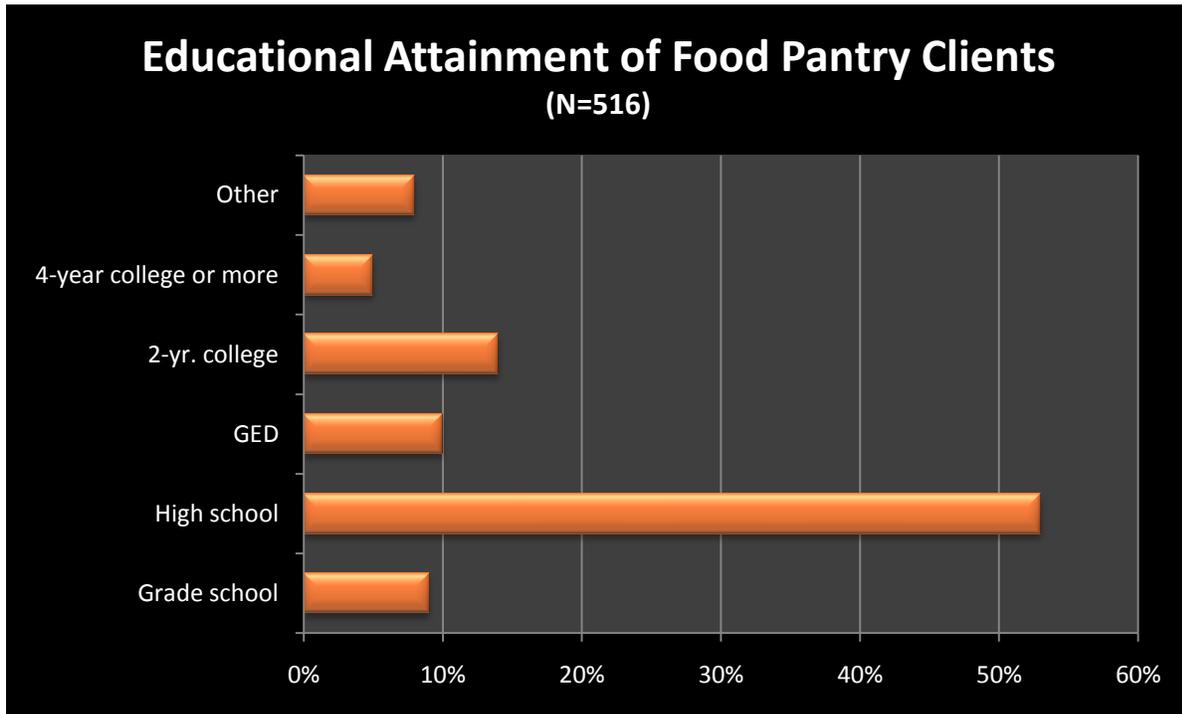
(Hunger Task Force, 2010)

- Although African Americans/black persons only made up 25.7% of Milwaukee County residents in 2008, the percentage of African American/black persons who utilized food pantries in the county is twice as high (51%).
- Similarly, the percentage of whites is underrepresented in the food pantry (29%) population in contrast to the white population in the county (68%).

## B. Education

Respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education completed. Due to different interpretations of this question, results may be slightly skewed.

Figure 2



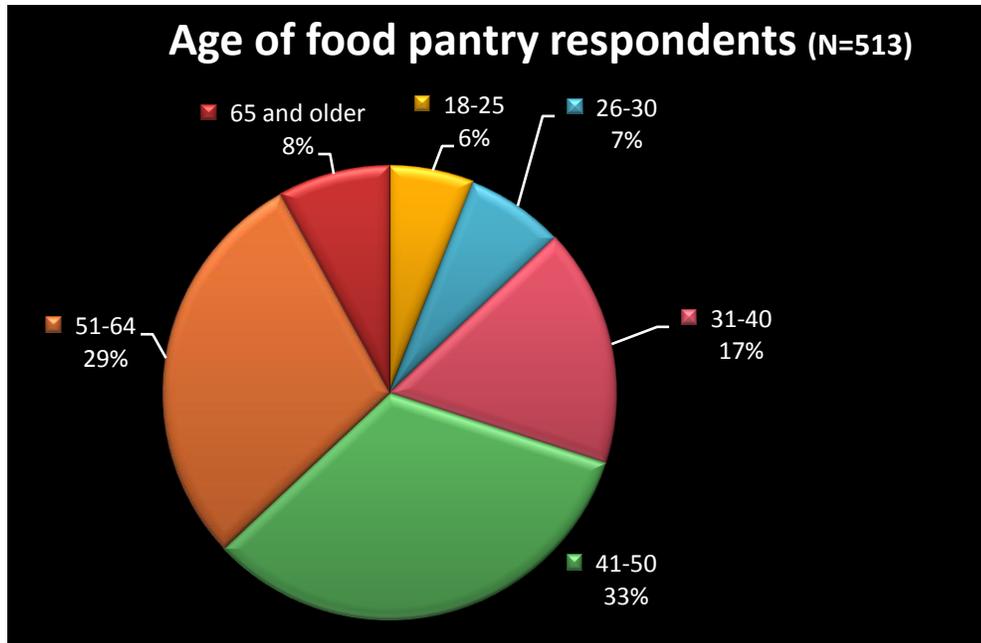
(Hunger Task Force, 2010)

- Many respondents indicated high school is the highest level of education achieved because they completed at least one grade in that category.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated they do not have any college education.
- Explanations listed under other include:
  - Master's degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - HSED (High School Equivalency Diploma)
  - Some college
  - Trade/ technical school

### C. Age

Figure 3 summarizes the ages of food pantry respondents.

Figure 3



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- One third of food pantry respondents are between the ages 41-50.
- The second largest percentage of food pantry respondents include people 50 years old and older.

Respondents were asked how many individuals in each age group they supported. *Figure 4* reflects age composition of the individuals in households that receive food pantry allocations.

Figure 4

### Household Population by Age Group (N=521)

Age Group	Number per household					Total
	1	2	3	4	None	
Children age 0-5	12%	9%	4%	2%	73%	100%
Children age 6-18	14%	13%	9%	6%	58%	100%
Adults age 19-64	33%	11%	4%	2%	50%	100%
Seniors age 65 or older	8%	0%	0%	0%	92%	100%

(Hunger Task Force 2010) \*Data in this chart does not include the respondent.

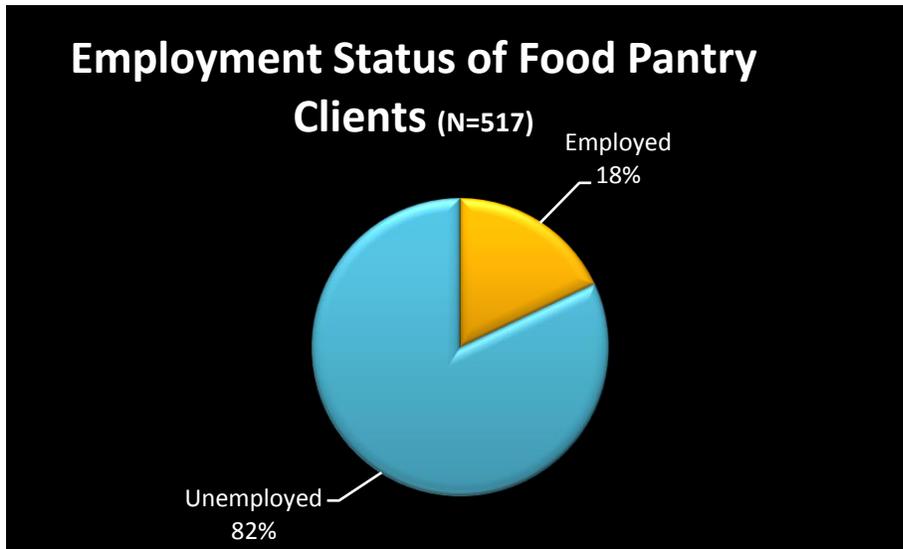
- Most food pantry clients live in households with young children (18 and younger).
- A third of food pantry respondents live with one other adult.

## D. Employment and Finances

### 1. Employment

Respondents were asked to cite their current employment status. The following data was gathered.

Figure 5



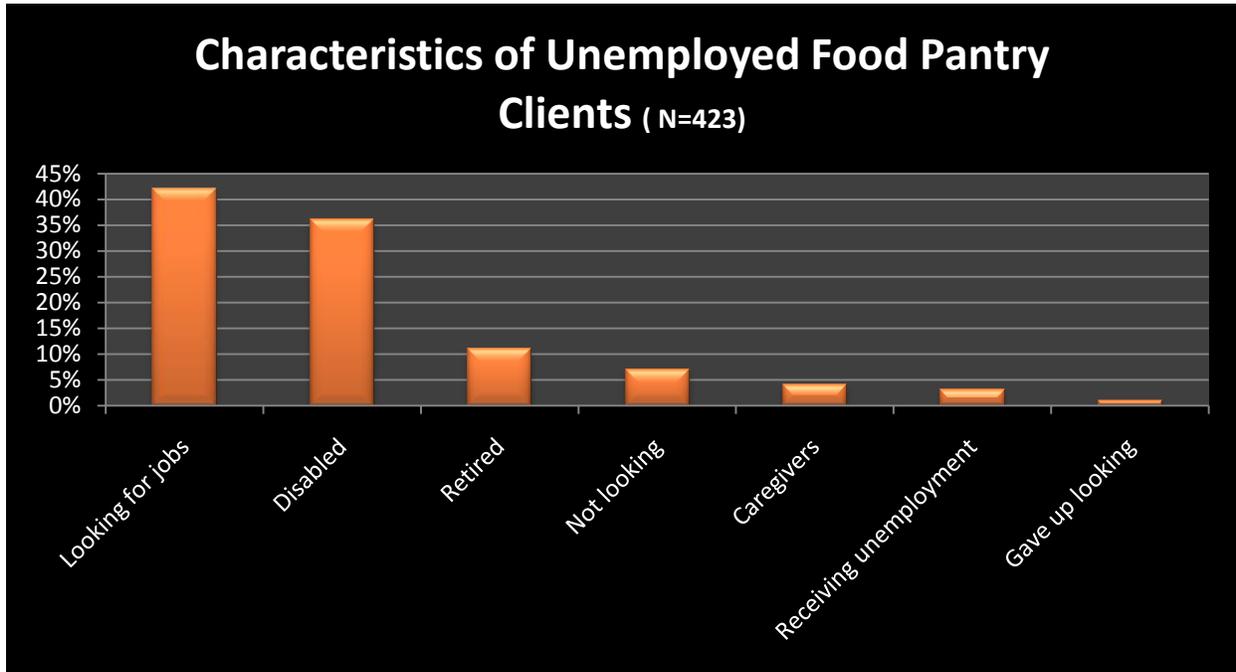
(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Eighty-two percent of food pantry recipients reported they are unemployed.
- Among the employed, 47 percent have full time jobs, 43 percent have part-time jobs, 4 percent have multiple jobs, and 15 percent have temporary jobs.

## 2. Unemployment

Figure 6 illustrates data extracted from those individuals who report they are unemployed.

Figure 6



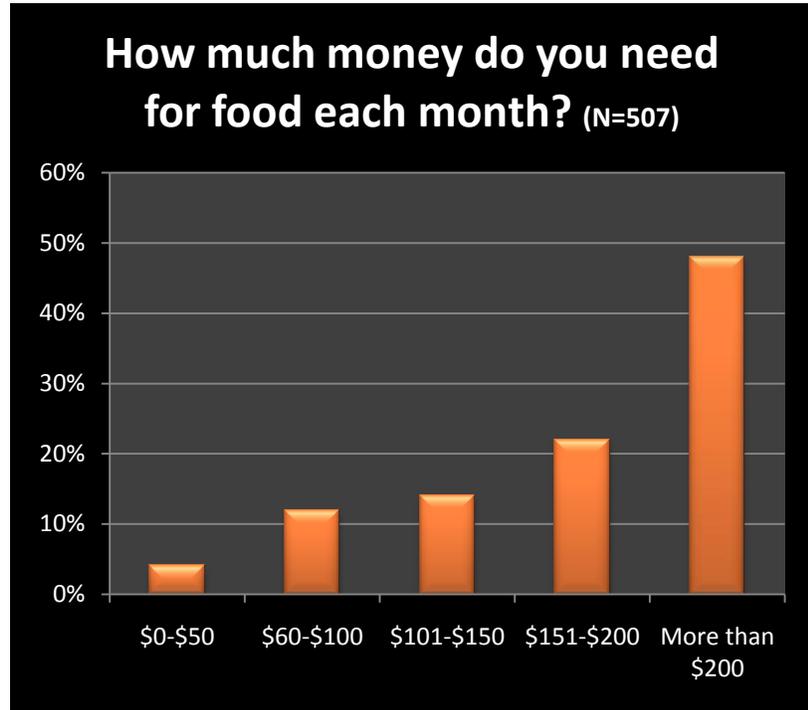
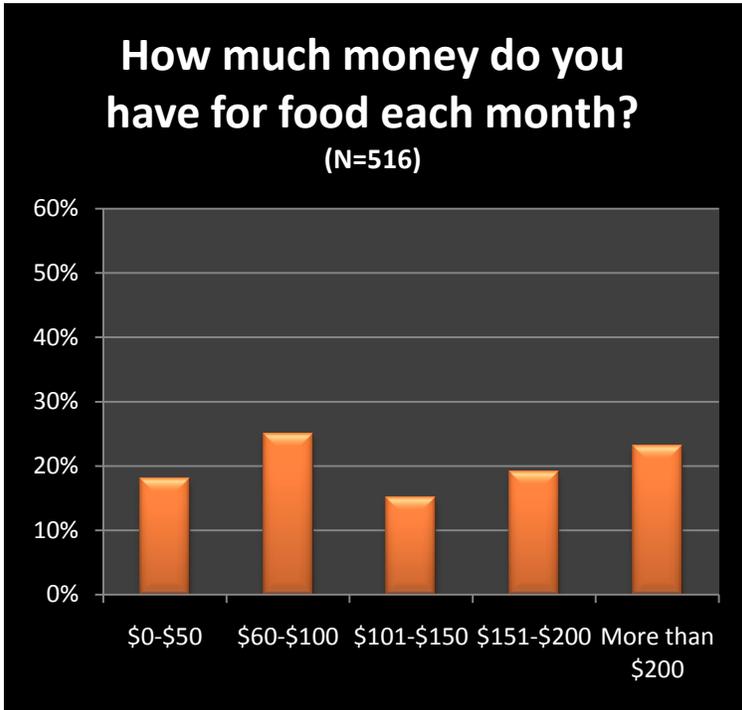
(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Of the respondents who report they are unemployed, 60 percent are out of work for more than a year, 15 percent are out of work for 2-5 months, 12 percent are unemployed for 6-9 months, 7 percent are unemployed for 9-12 months, and 4 percent are unemployed for 2-5 months.
- About one-fourth (26%) of respondents in this group live in households where one person has a job and 59 percent of respondents lived in households with no one working.

### 3. Personal Finances

First, respondents were asked how much money they have available for the purchase of food each month. Then they were asked how much money they need each month to feed themselves and or their family.

Figure 7 and 8



\*Data presented in these charts includes FoodShare benefits.

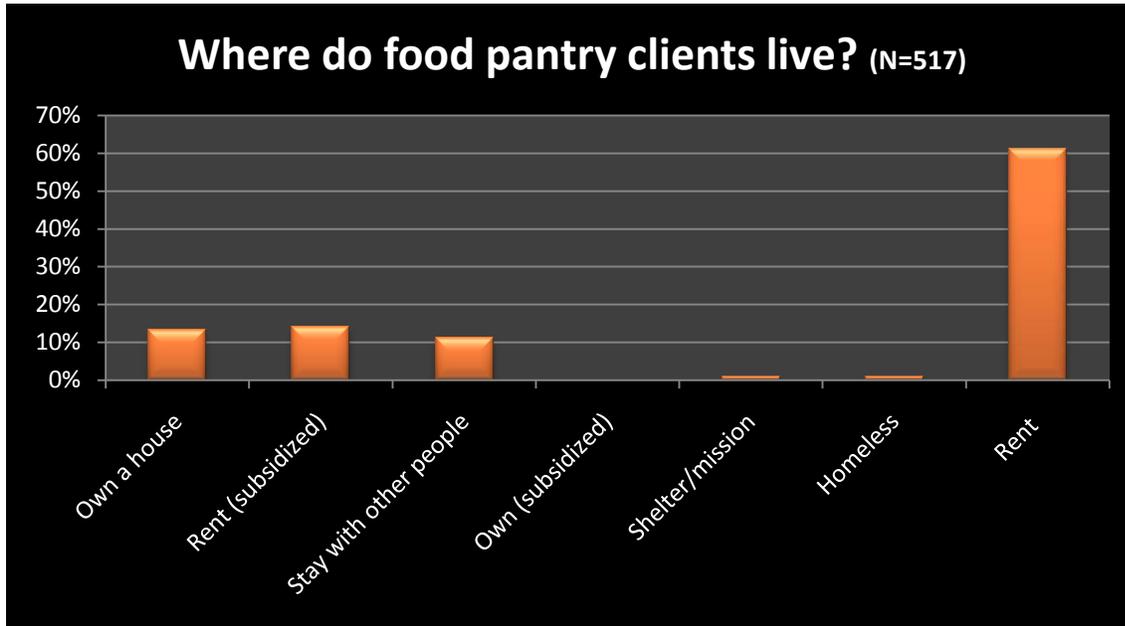
(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- In contrast to the amount of money respondents have available to spend on food each month, almost half (48%) of the respondents report needing more than \$200 to feed those they support each month.

### E. Housing and Transportation

The survey also asked respondents about their current living conditions and transportation situation.

Figure 9

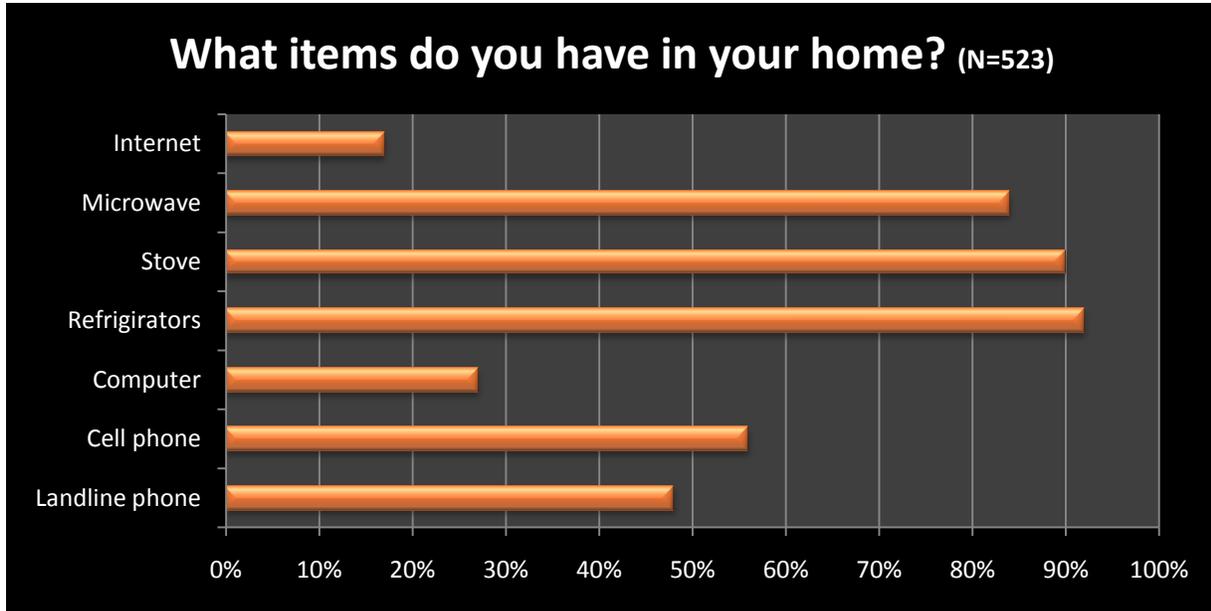


(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- More than half (61%) of emergency food recipients categorize themselves as renters. Only 13 percent classify themselves as renters in subsidized households.
- Author's note: A study ("**Give me Shelter: Responding to Milwaukee County's Affordable Housing Crisis**", May 2009) conducted by the Milwaukee Public Policy Forum shows that public subsidy programs help less than one out of every three extremely low income and very low income renter households in Milwaukee County.

In order to better understand living conditions, respondents were asked if they own specific household items. The results are depicted in the graph below.

Figure 10

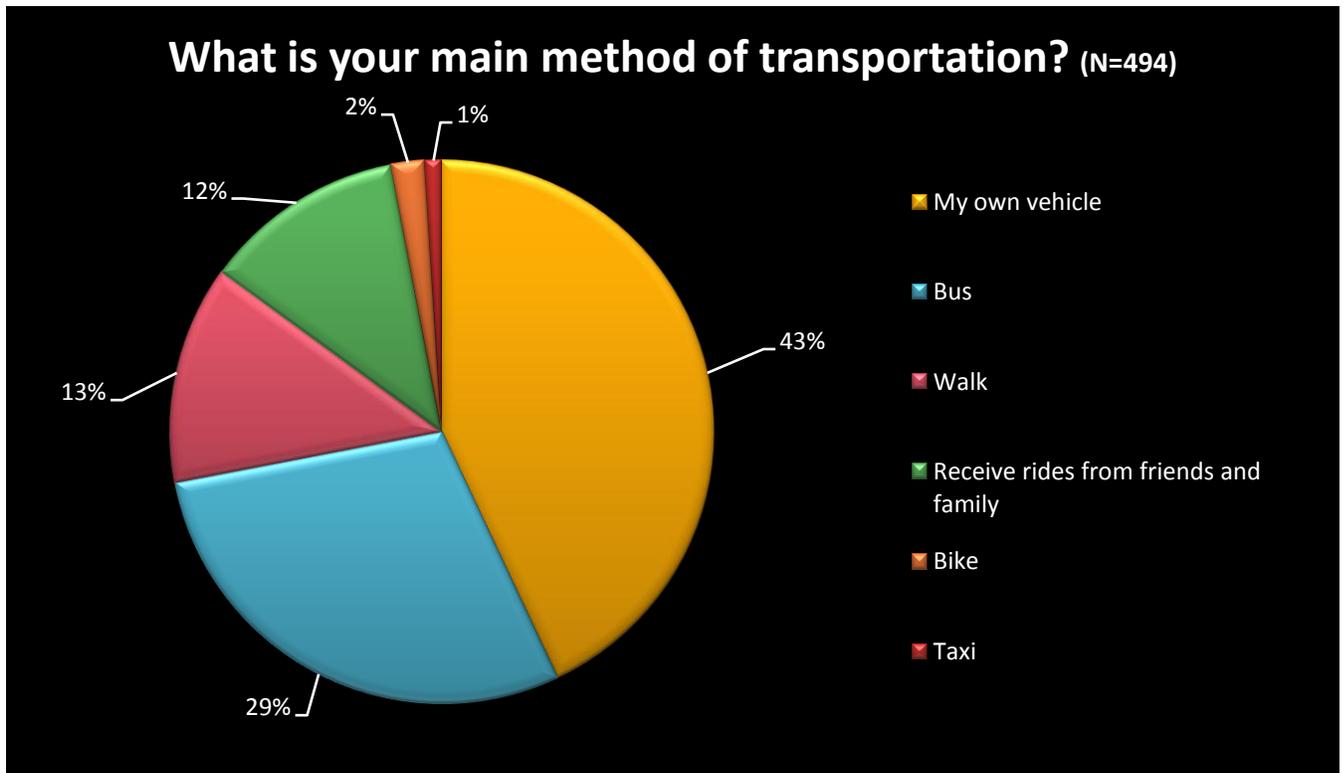


(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- More individuals own cell phones than land line phones.
- More than 80% of respondents report that they have basic tools including stoves, microwaves, and refrigerators.

Respondents were asked to cite their primary mode of transportation.

Figure 11



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Almost half (43%) of respondents cited their own vehicles as their primary form of transportation.
- Almost half (41%) of the respondents are dependent on some external source of transportation.

## F. Hunger and Assistance

### 1. Types of assistance

One survey question inquired about the ways in which the household would receive some form of income each month. Respondents were able to select all applicable sources. The following table summarizes the responses to this question.

Figure 12

What form(s) of income will you receive this month? (N=523)

<b>FoodShare (Food Stamps/Quest card)</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>Medical assistance/Badger Care/ Badger Care Plus</b>	47%
<b>Social Security/SSI/SSDI</b>	43%
<b>Family and friends</b>	31%
<b>Work (job)</b>	24%
<b>WIC</b>	11%
<b>Unemployment benefits</b>	11%
<b>Child care assistance/support</b>	6%
<b>Housing Assistance/ subsidized housing</b>	6%
<b>W-2</b>	5%
<b>Foster Care Payments</b>	0%

(Hunger Task Force 2010)

SNAP is the nation's first line of defense against hunger and was also the most cited form of income from respondents. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), also known as FoodShare in Wisconsin, is a federal entitlement program that helps feed over 35 million people in the U.S. each month. As of November 2009, 10 percent of the 5.6 million people living in Wisconsin were receiving FoodShare. Thirty-one percent of Wisconsin FoodShare recipients live in Milwaukee County. (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2009)

## 2. Food Assistance

Respondents were also asked to note all the ways their household would receive food in that particular month. Again, respondents could select all choices that applied.

Figure 13

**How will your family receive food this month? (N=523)**

<b>Food pantry</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Paying with cash/debit card</b>	56%
<b>Quest/FoodShare benefits</b>	54%
<b>Eating with friends/family</b>	31%
<b>Free/reduced price school lunch</b>	25%
<b>Farmers markets</b>	23%
<b>Free/reduced price school breakfast</b>	19%
<b>Soup kitchen/meal program</b>	17%
<b>WIC</b>	11%
<b>Receive food from family/friends</b>	8%
<b>Senior Stockbox</b>	6%
<b>Paying with credit card</b>	3%

(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- More than half of respondents rely on FoodShare benefits, cash or debit cards.

Figure 14 summarizes client responses regarding their household eating habits within the past month.

Figure 14

**Eating Habits of Food Pantry Clients (N=520)**

	Never	1-2 days	3-6 days	7 or more days	Total
Ate less	42%	28%	18%	12%	100%
Skipped meals	46%	33%	15%	6%	100%
Fed dependents less	76%	14%	6%	4%	100%

(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Fourteen percent of respondents reported feeding their dependents less on one or two days out of the month due to a shortage of food in their household.
- A third of the respondents skipped meals at least 1-2 days out of the month.

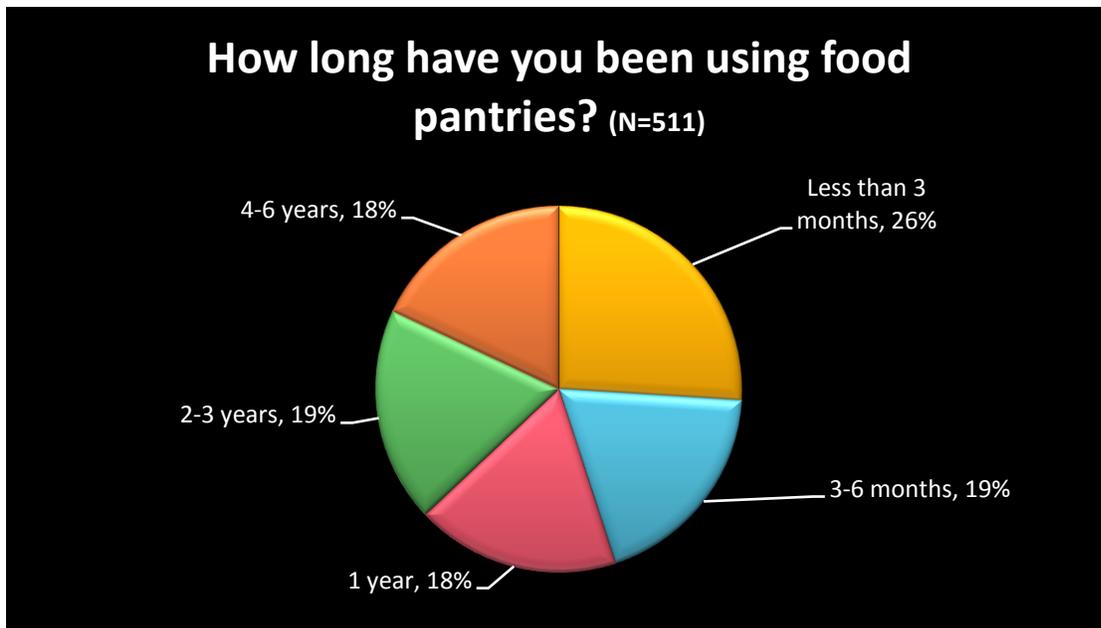
### 3. Frequency of assistance

Per Hunger Task Force network policy, food pantry clients are limited to one visit at the same location per month. However, if there are other locations that service an individual's zip code, clients can receive food from that location as well. We asked clients how many pantries they visited in the last month and found that:

- 80 percent of individuals were visiting the food pantry for the first time in that particular month
- 12 percent were visiting the food pantry for the second time in the last month
- 5 percent were visiting for the third time
- 3 percent visit four or more pantries in the last month

Respondents were also asked about the extent of their food pantry visits.

Figure 15

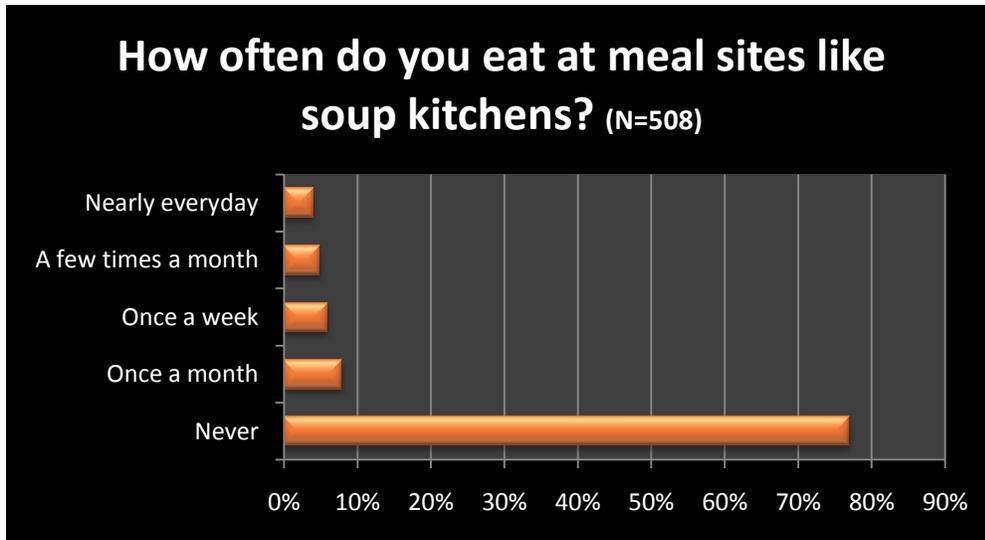


(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- About half of the respondents are new food pantry clients (users for less than 6 months).

Food pantry clients were also asked how often they utilize meal sites such as soup kitchens.

Figure 16



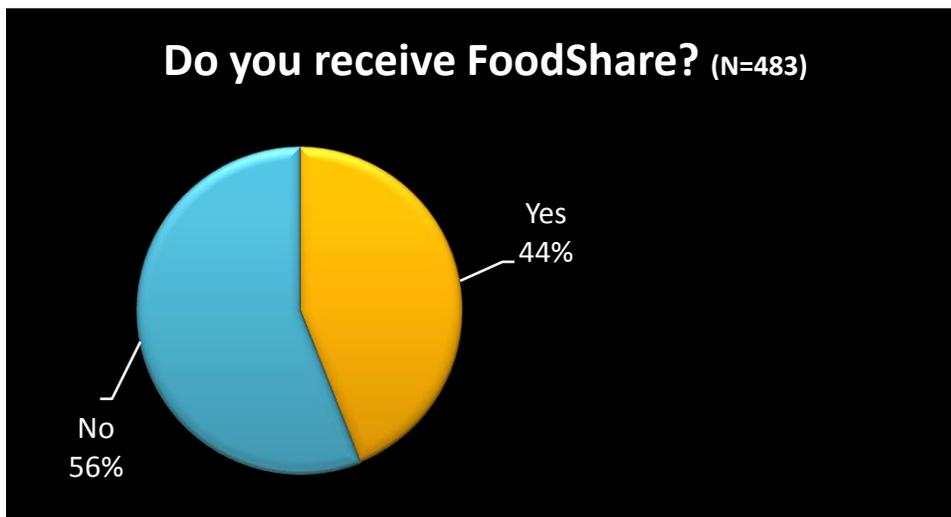
(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- More than three-fourths of respondents said they never eat at a meal site.

#### G. FoodShare

- Figure 17 illustrates the percentage of respondents who receive FoodShare versus the individuals who do not. Notably, more than half of the respondents do not receive FoodShare benefits.

Figure 17



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

Figure 18 details where individuals who currently receive FoodShare applied for benefits.

Figure 18



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- More than half (68%) of the respondents applied for FoodShare at either the Coggs Building or Robles Center.
- The Robles Center closed on December 31, 2009. Currently, FoodShare applicants must visit UMOS Inc., MAXIMUS, the Marcia P. Coggs Human Services Center, or other community ACCESS points for face-to-face assistance.

Figure 19 shows the monthly dollar amount of FoodShare benefits received among individuals who are currently receiving FoodShare.

Figure 19

How much do you receive in FoodShare benefits each month? (N=285)

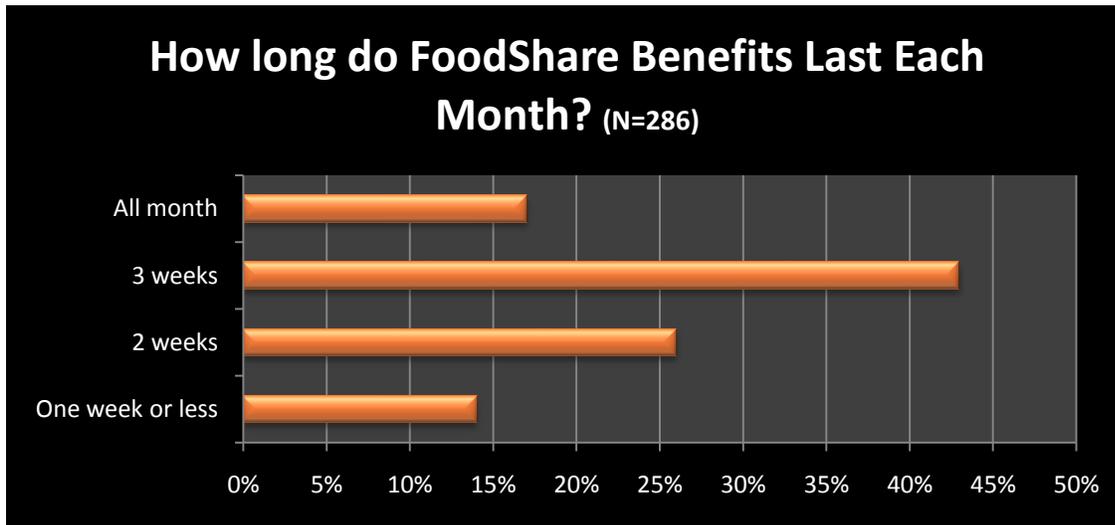
Dollar amount received	Percentage of Respondents
\$10-\$50	10%
\$51-\$100	15%
\$101-\$200	47%
\$201-\$300	11%
More than \$300	17%

(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Almost half of the FoodShare recipients receive \$101 to \$200 in monthly benefits.
- The average monthly FoodShare benefit payment in Milwaukee County was \$118 for the year 2009.
- Author’s note: Every food stamp dollar spent in Milwaukee County generates at least \$1.84 in economic activity. (United States Department of Agriculture 2008)

Respondents were asked to what extent their FoodShare benefits sustained themselves and their household members during the month.

Figure 20



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Most individuals stated the money provided about three week’s worth of food purchases.



## H. Food pantry bag contents

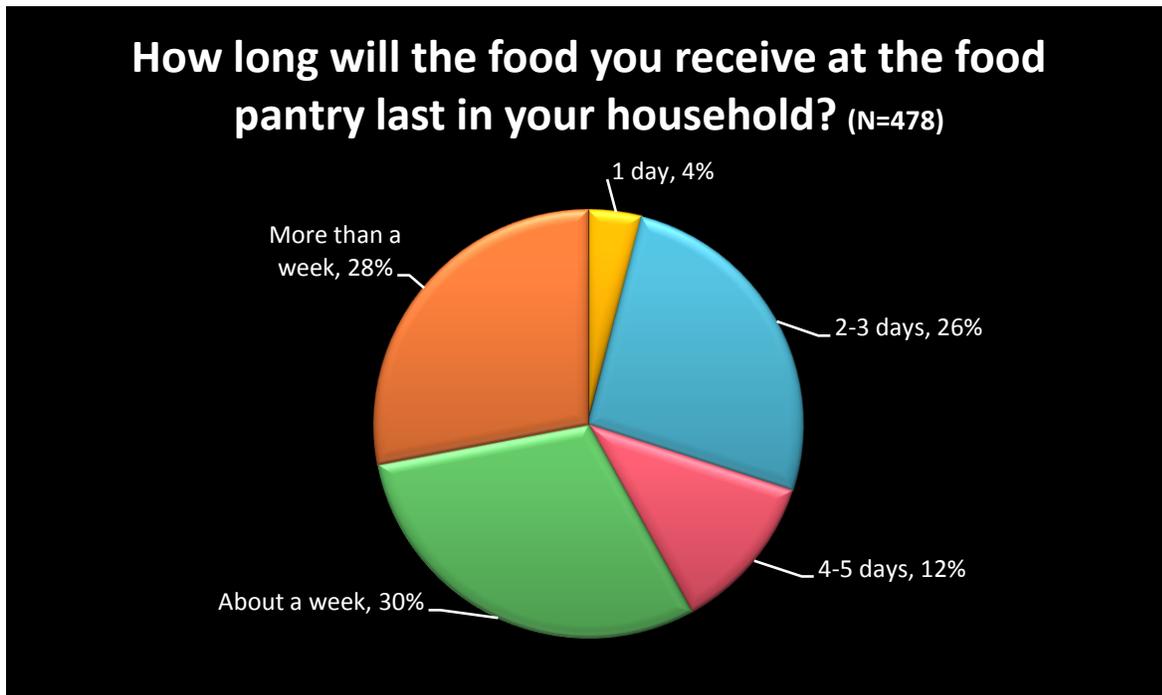
Hunger Task Force distributes government commodities as well as purchased and donated food free of charge to its emergency food network. Products include: fresh produce, frozen meats, fish, canned and dry non-perishables (fruit, vegetables, meats, pasta, rice), dry and shelf stable milk, nuts, fresh dairy products, bakery items, beverages (water, juice) and granola bars.

Hunger Task Force's allocation strategy is based on both the federal government's food pyramid for a proper nutritional mix and the proper quantity of food to feed 100 clients. Each month food pantry staff/volunteers submit reports detailing the number of clients served each month. Hunger Task Force adjusts food allocations based on each increase of 100 pantry clients. The following section summarizes the responses from various questions that were asked relating to the food distributed at food pantries.

### 1. Duration

The survey asked food pantry clients to what extent the food they received at the pantry will sustain their household.

Figure 22



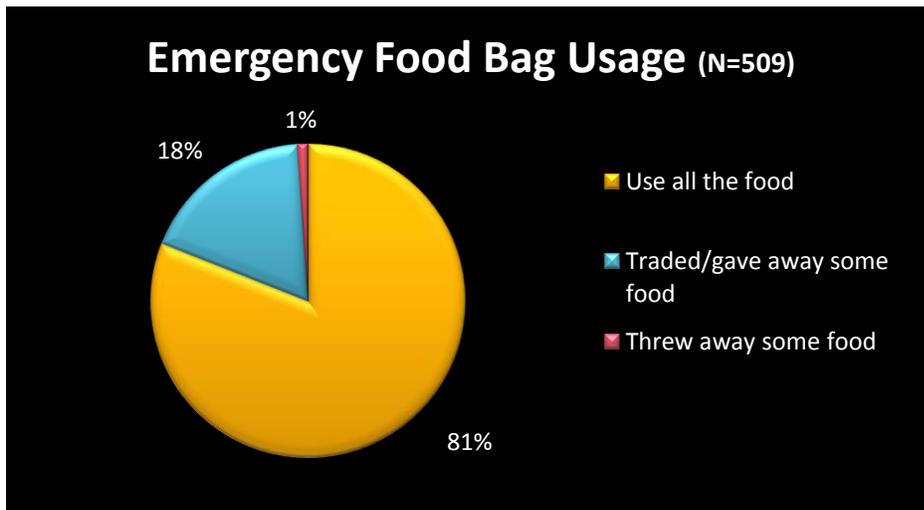
(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- About a third of respondents said the food they received at the pantry lasts for about a week.

- During interviews, many respondents state they use food pantry items to combine with food they already have to make meals stretch until the end of the month.
- Bags are packed according to household size in an effort to accommodate a range of families at food pantries.

Respondents were asked, “Do you throw out/trade/give away some of the food in your emergency food bag?” Below are the findings along with the reasons individuals gave for taking specific actions.

Figure 23

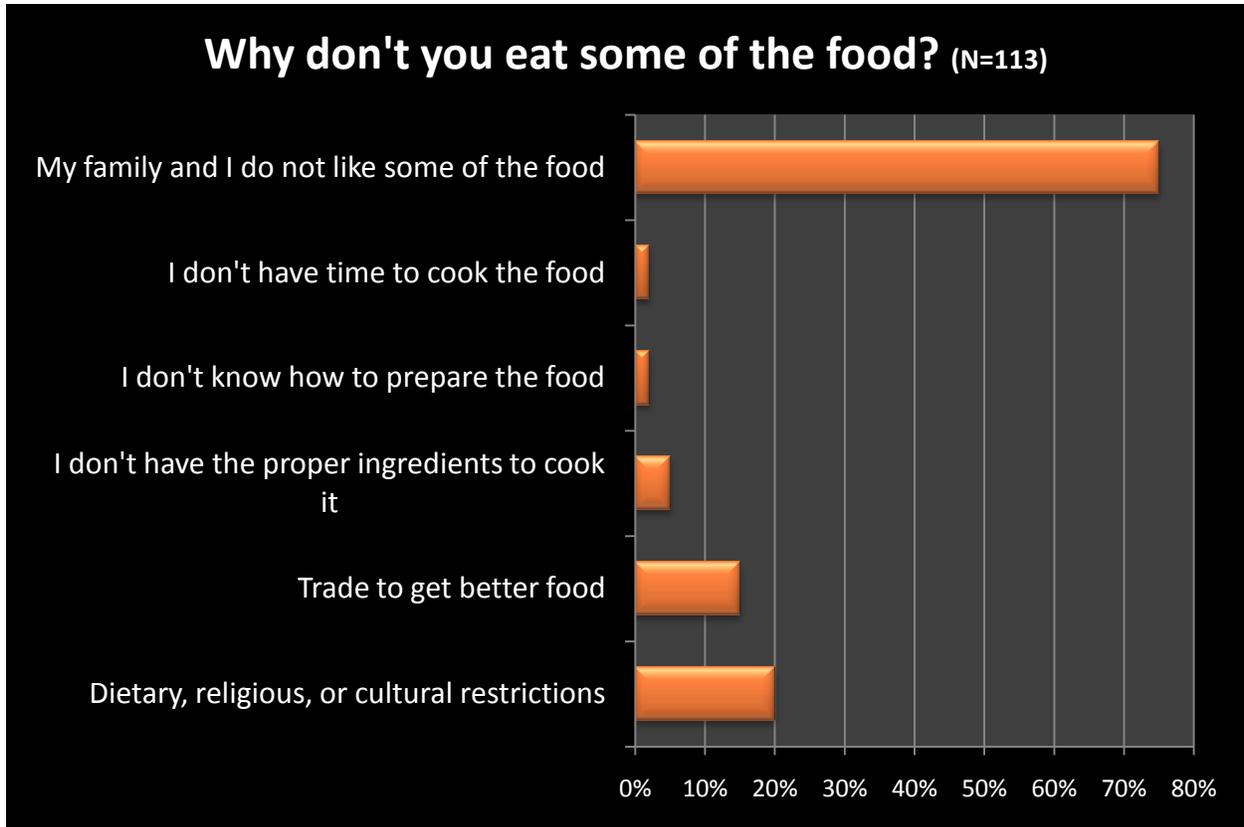


(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- Of the individuals who chose to answer this question, 18 percent state they trade, give away, or discard some food.

If respondents state they discard some of the food, we inquired about why this action was taken. Below, are the reasons respondents do not consume some of the food they receive.

Figure 24



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

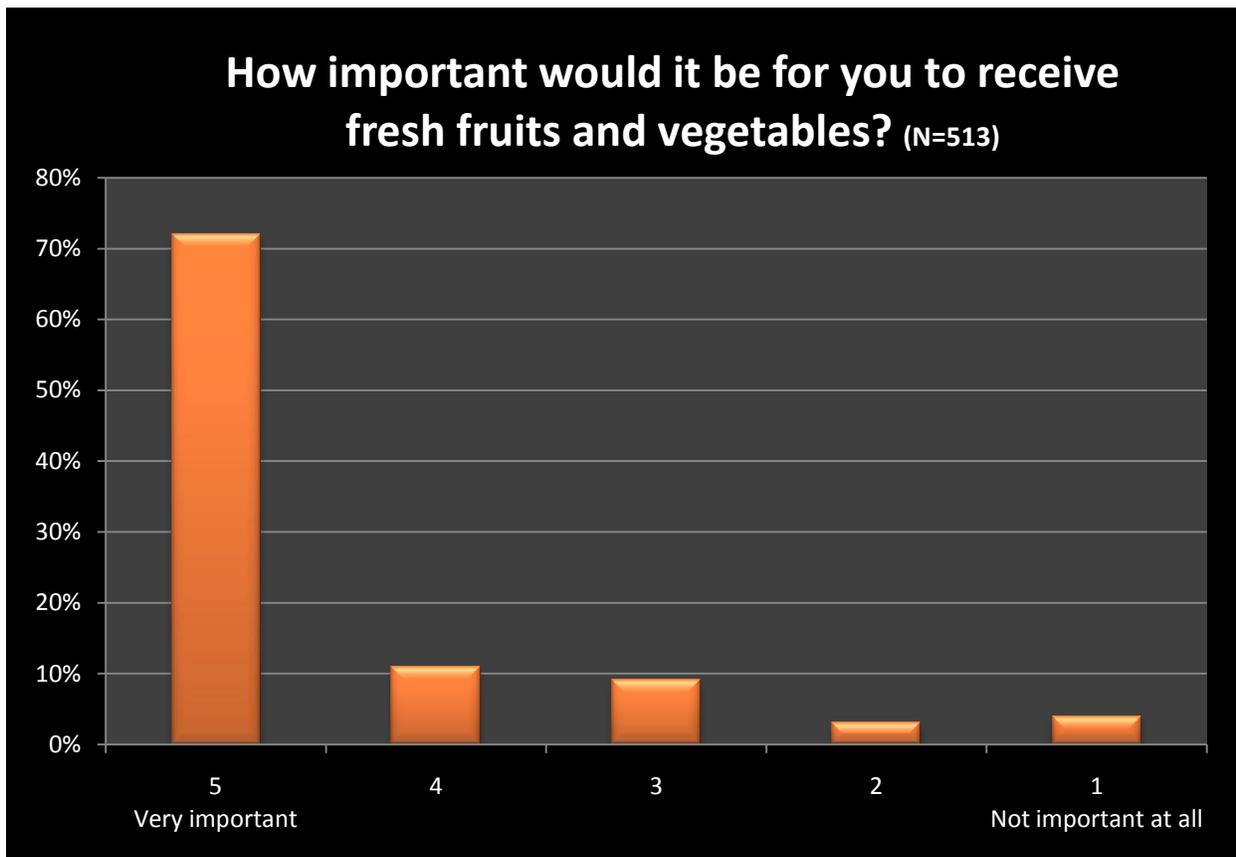
- Among those who throw out food (95 individuals), some indicate they do so because the food was spoiled or expired.
- During client interviews many individuals who state they do not like some of the food feel it would be more useful to give it to someone who could use it.

Some food pantries in Hunger Task Force’s network receive fresh fruits and vegetables. On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents rated the importance of receiving these goods in their emergency food bags. Five represented “very important” while a rating of one signified it was “very unimportant.”

Figure 25 describes the importance of produce for food pantry respondents.

## 2. Importance of Produce

Figure 25



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- About three-fourths (72%) of respondents feel it is very important to have fresh fruits and vegetables in their emergency food bags.

## I. Food Pantry Service

Figure 26 displays responses to questions related to food pantry service.

Figure 26

### How do Food Pantry Clients Rate their Food Pantry? (N=452)

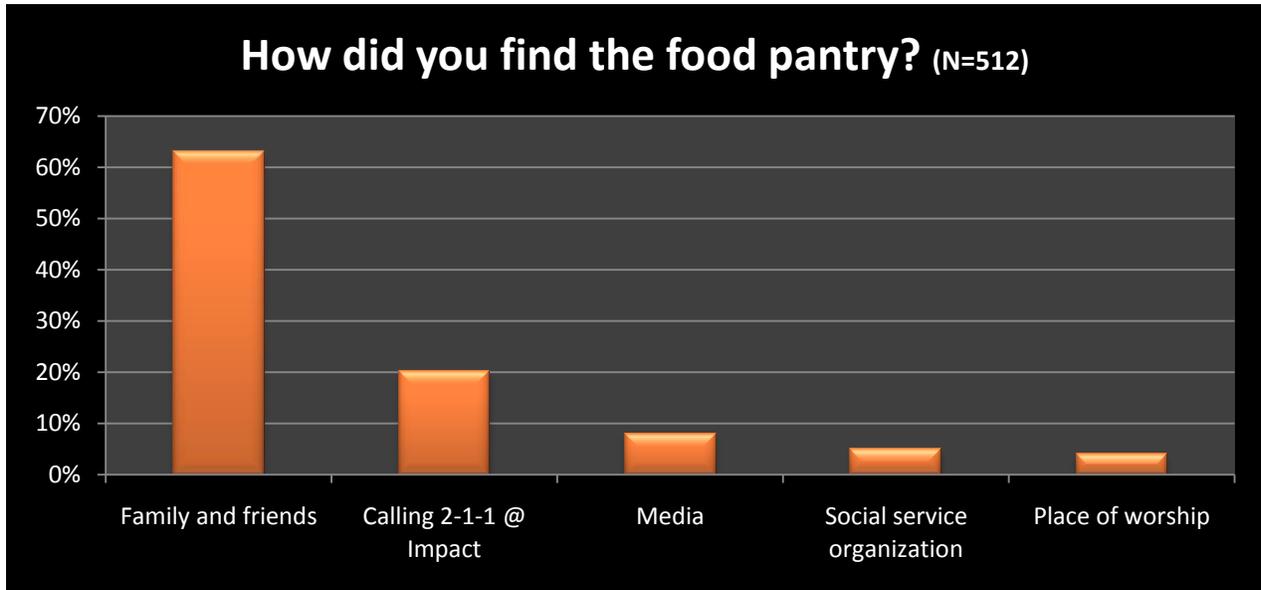
Questions	Always %	Often %	Seldom %	Never %	Total
The food received at this pantry is high quality, fresh and nutritious.	52	38	9	1	100%
The food received here is appropriate for our culture, religion, and dietary needs.	59	28	7	6	100%
This pantry is clean and sanitary.	81	17	1	0	100%
I feel safe when I visit this pantry.	88	11	1	0	100%
There are enough people working when I visit.	75	18	6	1	100%
I'm treated with respect and made to feel welcome at this pantry.	87	11	1	0	100%
They tell me about 2-1-1@ Impact or FoodShare when I visit this pantry.	53	12	8	27	100%

(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- All area food pantries are encouraged to operate at least two days per week to meet Hunger Task Force Standards of Excellence requirements.
- Respondents are generally satisfied with food pantry service.
- Large numbers of respondents reported the pantry would be more convenient to visit if they were open more during weekday hours (32%).

Finally, clients were asked how they discovered the food pantry.

Figure 27



(Hunger Task Force 2010)

- More than half of the respondents found out about the pantry through word of mouth from family and friends.

## **VI. Findings**

### **Demographics**

- African Americans are overrepresented as a population that seeks emergency food assistance in Milwaukee County in contrast to the population of African Americans residing in the county.
- Most individuals seeking emergency food assistance are over forty years of age.

### **Education**

- The highest level of education that most respondents possess is equivalent to a high school diploma or less.
- A substantial number of respondents have earned an associate's degree.

### **Family Composition**

- The majority of food pantry clients live in households with children.

### **Unemployment**

- Milwaukee County residents need employment opportunities in order to provide sufficient amounts of food for their families. The majority of respondents are unemployed.
- Unemployment benefits appear to be underutilized.

### **Government Assistance**

- The average monthly food stamp allotment does not suffice for many food pantry users in Milwaukee County.
- Many of the individuals who receive SSI/SSDI benefits are not applying to FoodShare for fear of their SSI/SSDI benefits being terminated.
- Most respondents prefer to apply for FoodShare with some type of face-to-face assistance.
- FoodShare is underutilized, as only half of respondents receive benefits.
- More FoodShare outreach and education needs to be conducted. About a fifth of respondents do not believe they are eligible.

### **Eating habits**

- A significant portion of food pantry respondents are skipping meals, eating less, and feeding their dependents less because they do not have enough food.

- The majority of respondents prefer fresh fruits and vegetables.
- The majority of food pantry clients do not eat at meal programs or soup kitchens.

#### **Food pantry usage**

- The number of “first-time” food pantry users is rising in Milwaukee County.
- Respondents are generally satisfied with food pantry service. Most food pantry recipients said pantry allotments generally last for about a week.
- “Word of mouth” is the most popular method for finding out about a food pantry.

## **VII. Recommendations**

### **1. Food Share Improvements**

- Hunger Task Force should utilize its citizen advocacy group “Voices Against Hunger” to expand fully accessible access sites in Milwaukee County.
- Hunger Task Force should expand community presentations to include education around ACCESS. Specific targets include individuals at community centers, school-related functions, places of worship, and town hall meetings.
- Hunger Task Force should create a “Voices Against Hunger College Edition” (a citizen advocacy group for young adults) or “Voices” specific to ethnic groups (ie. Voices Latino), to distribute FoodShare educational material to families receiving emergency food. (Include students with multiple language capabilities.)
- Hunger Task Force should conduct more outreach to the elderly population by using the aforementioned subgroup and Hunger Task Force staff to visit senior subsidized housing complexes and centers to educate individuals on FoodShare.

### **2. Advocacy efforts**

- Hunger Task Force should explore policy efforts and campaigns reducing unemployment in Milwaukee County.

### **3. 211 @ Impact**

- Hunger Task Force should lead outreach efforts to increase awareness of 211@ Impact.

## V. "Voices of Milwaukee County"



*"My daughter is 10. She knows. She says, 'Daddy, do you wanna talk about it?' I just tell her to eat up."*

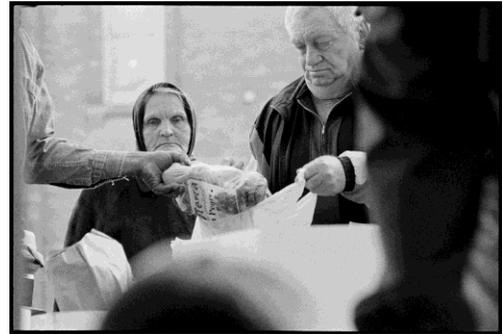
*"It's hard to make \$100 worth of groceries stretch for a month when you have 2 boys. Most days, I'll skip meals so my boys can eat."*

*"I don't have anyone to help me. One week I fell down my porch stairs and couldn't get to the pantry. I don't wanna talk about how I ate that month."*

*"It's about sacrificing. I guess you could say I'm fasting cus I haven't ate in 2 days."*

*"I'm a first timer. I'm ashamed to come here. I feel like there are so many other people who need this food more than I do."*

*"No, I have a home. I'm just frustrated you know. Electricity got cut off...I come to get milk for my baby. The milk in the fridge is spoiled."*



*"I'm only 22. I had to drop out of college to get a job. I won't stop dreaming though."*

*"If I make one dollar over what SSI says, they will cut my disability off! If I get food stamps I can't pay my rent. Rent or food?"*

*"This is one of the few places that make you feel human when you come for assistance."*



*"I just pray every day that I'll be able to buy food in the grocery again one day."*

*"I have diabetes so I think that's really good if we can get fresh food. My doc says less sugar, less salt."*

*"Think about it. My check is \$1200 a month. Minus \$800 for rent, about \$150 for utilities, \$70 a month for gas, \$75 for my cell phone...that leaves me with about \$100 to get groceries for the month, hygiene, and anything for my child."*



*"Yo deseo que alguien habla espanol. Necesito alimento como otras familias necesitan el alimento."-I wish someone spoke Spanish. I need food like other families need food.*

*"I usually just eat one meal a day. If I do that, I can eat for the whole month. I'm a little older now so it doesn't bother me as much."*

*"I have a Master's degree and I still can't get a job. The economy is terrible."*

*"I used to volunteer here. Now I'm coming here for food. Pretty ironic wouldn't you say?"*



*"No one is hiring except fast food. Earning \$7 an hour, day care for 2, which is way more than I'd be making in 2 weeks. Plus, I'll still have bills and expenses I can't pay. What do I do? I'm in a constant hole."*

*"It gets really tough at the end of the month. I wanna make it last, but my kids HAVE to eat. All that brain development stuff happens for them now."*

*"I'll admit-I trade some. Who wants to eat canned vegetables and rice EVERY night of the month?"*

## VIII. Appendix A: Food Pantry Survey 2009 (English version)

Pantry ID \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### Hunger Task Force 2009 Food Pantry Survey

*Participation in this survey is voluntary and confidential.*

#### Demographics:

1. What is your gender?                     Male                     Female
  
2. What is your race/ethnicity (check all that apply):
  - African American/Black     Asian     Hispanic/Latino     Native American
  - White     Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. My ZIP code is: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - Grade school     High school     GED     2-year college
  - 4-year college or more                     Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is your age?
  - Younger than 18     18-25     26-30     31-40     41-50     51-64     65 and older

6. How many small children (age 0-5) do you support?	0	1	2	3	4	More than 4
How many school children (age 6-18) do you support?	0	1	2	3	4	More than 4
How many adults, (age 19-64) NOT including yourself, live with you?	0	1	2	3	4	More than 4
How many seniors (age 65 or older), NOT including yourself, live with you?	0	1	2	3	4	More than 4

#### Employment and Finances:

7. Are you: (check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (Answer questions 8, 9, 10)
If employed, do you have a (Check ALL that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Full-time job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Part-time job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Full-time job AND a part-time job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Multiple jobs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Temporary job (s)</li> </ul>	If unemployed, I am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Looking for work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not looking for work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A disabled person</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A caregiver (for children or a disabled/ill relative)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Retired</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Receiving Unemployment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gave up looking for work</li> </ul>

\*8. How long have you been out of work?

- About a month     2-5 months     6-9 months     9-12 months     More than 1 year

\*9. Were you:     Laid off     Position was eliminated     Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

\*10. If you did find a new job, what was the pay difference?

- Lower than previous job                     Higher than previous job

Pantry ID \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

11. How many people living with you, INCLUDING yourself, regularly work for pay?  
 None  1  2  3  4  More than 4
12. What is the average dollar amount you are able to spend on food in a month?  
 \$0-\$50  \$60-\$100  \$101-\$150  \$151-\$200  More than \$200
13. How much money do you NEED to feed those you support?  
 \$0-\$50  \$60-\$100  \$101-\$150  \$151-\$200  More than \$200
14. Do you:  Own a house  Rent in subsidized housing  
 Stay with other people  Own in subsidized housing  
 Stay in a shelter or mission  Homeless  Rent
15. Which items do you have in your home? (check ALL that apply):  
 A landline phone  A cell phone  A computer  a refrigerator  
 A microwave  A stove/oven  internet
16. Your main method of transportation is (check one):  
 A car you own  Getting rides from family/friends  Bus  Taxi  Bike  Walking
- Hunger and Assistance:**
17. Check ALL the ways you and those living with you will work or get benefits this month:  
 Foster Care Payments  Social Security/SSI/SSDI  W-2  
 Housing Assistance/subsidized housing  Family and friends  
 Medical Assistance/Badger Care/Badger Care Plus  Unemployment benefits  
 Child Care Assistance/Support  WIC  
 FoodShare (Food Stamps/ QUEST card)  Work (job)
18. Check ALL the ways you and your household will get food this month:  
 QUEST/FoodShare benefits  Paying with cash/debit card  
 Using WIC benefits  Paying with a credit card  
 Free or reduced-price school lunch  Free or reduced-price school breakfast  
 Eating with friends and family  Senior Stockbox  
 Food pantry  Soup Kitchen/meal program  Family and friends  Farmers Market
19. In the last month, did you ever eat less than you wanted to because you did not have enough food in your home?  
 No, never  Yes, on 1 or 2 days  Yes, on 3 to 6 days  Yes, on 7 or more days
20. In the last month, did you ever skip a meal because your household was short on food?  
 No, never  Yes, on 1 or 2 days  Yes, on 3 to 6 days  Yes, on 7 or more days
21. In the last month, did you ever decrease the amount of food you fed your dependents because you were short on food in your home? (Do not answer if you do not have dependents)  
 No, never  Yes, on 1 or 2 days  Yes, on 3 to 6 days  Yes, on 7 or more days

Pantry ID \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

22. In the last month, how many times have you or someone in your household visited a food pantry like this one, INCLUDING this visit?

- Today is my first visit in a month
- Twice
- 3 times
- 4 or more times

23. How long have you been using a food pantry like this one?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 to 6 months
- 1 year
- 2 -3 years
- 4-6 years

24. On average, how often do you eat at free meal sites (soup kitchens/meal programs)?

- Never
- Once a month
- Once a week
- Nearly everyday
- A few times a month

**FoodShare:**

25. Do you receive FoodShare (foodstamps/QUEST card)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Answer questions 26, 27, 28)	<input type="checkbox"/> No (Answer question 29)
<p>26. How did you apply for FoodShare? (check ALL that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At the Coggs/Robles office</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At a food pantry or other social service site</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> online using ACCESS</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Over the telephone</li> </ul> <p>27. How much do you receive in FoodShare benefits each month?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$10-50</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$51-100</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$101-200</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$201-300</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More than \$300</li> </ul> <p>28. How long does the food you purchase with your FoodShare benefits last in your household?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One week or less</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 2 weeks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 3 weeks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All month</li> </ul>	<p>29. What are the reasons you do not receive FoodShare? (check ALL that apply):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I applied for them but I did not qualify</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I used to get FoodShare, but I was cut off from benefits</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I do not think that I am eligible</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I cannot get to the office to apply</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Language is a barrier</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The time it takes to maintain my FoodShare case isn't worth the money I receive</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The application process is too complicated to apply</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I do not know how to apply</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I do not want help from the government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I applied but never received a answer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Someone else in my house gets FoodShare</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I've never heard of Food Share</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor customer service by FoodShare representatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify: _____</li> </ul>

**Food Pantry Visit:**

30. How long will the food you receive at the food pantry last in your household?

- 1 day
- 2-3 days
- 4-5 days
- about a week
- more than a week

31. Do you throw out/trade/give away some of the food in your emergency food bag?

- Yes, I throw out some food
- Yes, I trade/ give away some of the food
- No, I use all the food

If you answered "yes," why? (Check ALL that apply):

- I or my family do not like some of the food.
- I or my family cannot eat some of the food because of dietary, religious or cultural reasons.
- I am able to get better food or other things by trading or giving food away.
- I do not know how to prepare some of the food.
- I do not have time to cook some of the food.
- I do not have the proper ingredients to cook the food.
- I am homeless.



## Appendix B: Food Pantry Survey 2009 (Spanish version)

Pantry ID \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

### Hunger Task Force 2009 Encuesta Despensa de Alimentos

*La participación en esta encuesta es voluntaria y confidencial.*

#### Demografía:

1. ¿Que es su genero?  Hombre  Mujere
2. ¿Cual es su raza o su etnicidad? (Marque todos que aplicas)
  - African American / Negro  Asian  Hispano/Latino
  - Native American  Blanco  Otro, especificas: \_\_\_\_\_
3. ¿Que es su código postal? \_\_\_\_\_
4. ¿Que es el nivel educativo más alto que completó?
  - la escuela primaria  Secundaria  GED
  - 2 años universitarios  4 años universitarios  otro, especificas: \_\_\_\_\_
5. ¿Cuántos años tienes?
  - Menores de 18  18-25  26-30  31-40  41-50  51-64  65 y mayor

6. ¿Cuántos niños pequeños (0-5) se cuida de?	0	1	2	3	4	Mas de 4
¿Cuántos niños pequeños (6-18) se cuida de?	0	1	2	3	4	Mas de 4
¿Cuántos adultos (19-64), NO incluido usted, viven con usted?	0	1	2	3	4	Mas de 4
¿Cuántos ancianos (65 y mayor), NO incluido usted, viven con usted?	0	1	2	3	4	Mas de 4

#### Empleo y las Finanzas:

7. ¿Esta trabajando? (Marque TODOS que aplicas)

<input type="checkbox"/> Empleadas Si trabaja, tiene (marque TODOS que aplicar) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Empleo a tiempo complete</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tiempo parcial de empleo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Empleo a tiempo completo y tiempo parcial de empleo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Varios trabajos</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Trabajo temporal</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Desempleadas (Contesta preguntas 8, 9, 10) Si desempleadas, es usted: (marque TODOS que aplicas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Buscando de trabajo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No buscando de trabajo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Una persona discapacidad</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A médico para los niños discapacitados o la familia enfermos</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Jubilado</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recibir cheques de desempleo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Abandonó buscar de trabajo</li> </ul>
--	---

- \*8. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha estado desempleado?

Alrededor de un mes  2-5 meses  6-9 meses  9-12 meses  Mas de 1 ano

- \*9. Se le:  Despidió  Posición fue eliminada  Otro, especificas: \_\_\_\_\_

Pantry ID \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\*10. Si has encontrado un nuevo trabajo, cuál era la diferencia salarial?

- inferior al trabajo anterior       superior al trabajo anterior

11. ¿Cuántos personas viviendo contigo, INCLUIDO usted, trabajan regularmente para pagar?

- Ninguno       1       2       3       4       Mas de 4

12. ¿Cuál es el promedio en dólares que pueden pasar para gastar en comida y víveres en un mes?

- \$0-\$50       \$60-\$100       \$101-\$150       \$151-\$200       Mas de \$200

13. ¿Cuánto necesita para alimentar a los que el apoyo?

- \$0-\$50       \$60-\$100       \$101-\$150       \$151-\$200       Mas de \$200

14. Yo:  Aquilo una casa       Vivo con otra personas       Personas sin hogar

Vivo en una vivienda subvencionada       Vivo en una albergue o en la mision

Soy dueño de una casa       Alquiler en viviendas subsidiadas

15. ¿Que cosas tiene en su casa? (marquee TODOS que aplicas)

teléfono fijo       móvil       ordenador       refrigerator

microondas       estufa / horno       internet

16. Su principal método de transporte es (marquee todos que aplicas)

Su propio coche       Un taxi       Una bicicleta       Caminar

Por autobus       Recibiendo paseos de los amigos y familia

### El Hambre y la Asistencia:

17. Marca de TODOS las maneras en que usted y los que viven con usted van a trabajar o reciben beneficios este mes:

Pago de cuidado de crianza       WIC       Amigos y familia

FoodShare(food stamps/QUEST card)       Seguridad social/SSI/SSDI

Ayuda de vivienda /vivienda subsidiada       Beneficios por desempleo

Asistencia de medico/BadgerCare/ BadgerCarePlus       Empleo

La asistencia de cuidado infantil / de apoyo       W-2

18. Marca de TODOS las maneras en que usted y los que viven con usted consiguen alimentos este mes:

Pagando dinero en efectivo o tarjeta de débito       Despensa de alimentos

Usando los beneficios de Food Share       Anciano stock box

Usando los beneficios de WIC       Mercado de agricultores

Gratis/ redujo el precio del almuerzo escuela       Redujo el precio del desayuno

escuela       comedor/ programa de comida       Comiendo con amigos /familia

QUEST / beneficios de FoodShare       Pagando con tarjeta de credito

19. ¿En el último mes, alguna vez se come menos de lo que quería porque no tenía suficiente comida en su casa?

- No, nunca       Si 1 o 2 días       Si 3-6 días       Si 7 días o mas

Pantry ID \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

20. ¿En el último mes, alguna vez se pierda comida, porque su familia se quedó corto en los alimentos?

- No, nunca
- Si, 1 o 2 días
- Si, 3-6 días
- Si, 7 días o mas

21. ¿En el último mes, alguna vez disminuir la cantidad de comida que comes sus dependientes, porque se corta en los alimentos?

- No, nunca
- Si, 1 o 2 días
- Si, 3-6 días
- Si, 7 días o mas

22. ¿En el último mes, cuántas veces usted o alguien en su hogar visitó una despensa de alimentos de este tipo, INCLUYENDO esta visita?

- Hoy es mi primer visita en un mes
- Dos veces
- 3 veces
- 4 veces o mas

23. ¿Cuánto tiempo a usado una despensa de alimentos como ésta?

- Menor de 3 meses
- 3-6 meses
- 1 año
- 2-3 años
- 4-5 años
- Mas de 5 años

24. ¿En promedio, con qué frecuencia usted come en los lugares de comida gratis (programas de comida/ comedores)?

- Nunca
- Una vez al mes
- Una vez a semana
- Casi todos los días
- Un par de veces al mes

**FoodShare:**

25. ¿Recibe FoodShare (food stamps/tarjeta de QUEST)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Si (Si tu contesta si, contesta preguntas 26,27,28)	<input type="checkbox"/> No (Si tu contesta no, contesta pregunta 29)
26. ¿Como se aplicara para Food Share?(marquee todos que aplicas) <input type="checkbox"/> A la oficina de Coggs/Robles <input type="checkbox"/> A despensa de alimento otro agencia de servicio social <input type="checkbox"/> Por internet usando ACCESS <input type="checkbox"/> De telefono  27. ¿Cuántos recibes en los beneficios de FoodShare cada mes? <input type="checkbox"/> \$10-\$50 <input type="checkbox"/> \$51-\$100 <input type="checkbox"/> \$101-\$200 <input type="checkbox"/> \$201-\$300 <input type="checkbox"/> Mas de \$300  28. ¿Cuánto tiempo dura la comida que tu compras con su beneficios de FoodShare? <input type="checkbox"/> Un semana o menor <input type="checkbox"/> 2 semanas <input type="checkbox"/> 3 semanas <input type="checkbox"/> Todo el mes	29. ¿Cuáles son las razones que no reciben FoodShare? (Marque TODOS que aplicas): <input type="checkbox"/> Creo que no soy elegible <input type="checkbox"/> Solía tener FoodShare, pero estaba separado de los beneficios <input type="checkbox"/> No sé cómo aplicar <input type="checkbox"/> Solicité pero no me califica <input type="checkbox"/> No puedo llegar a la oficina para aplicar <input type="checkbox"/> El proceso de aplicar es complicado <input type="checkbox"/> El tiempo que se necesita para mantener mi caso, no vale el dinero que recibo <input type="checkbox"/> Idioma es una barrera <input type="checkbox"/> No quiero que la ayuda del gobierno <input type="checkbox"/> Aplicado, pero nunca recibió una respuesta <input type="checkbox"/> Alguien en mi casa se recibe FoodShare <input type="checkbox"/> Nunca he oído de FoodShare <input type="checkbox"/> Mal servicio al cliente en la oficina de FoodShare <input type="checkbox"/> Otro, especifica: _____

30. ¿Cuánto tiempo la comida que reciben hoy en la despensa de alimentos permanecer en su casa?

- 1 día
- 2-3 días
- 4-5 días
- Un semana o mas

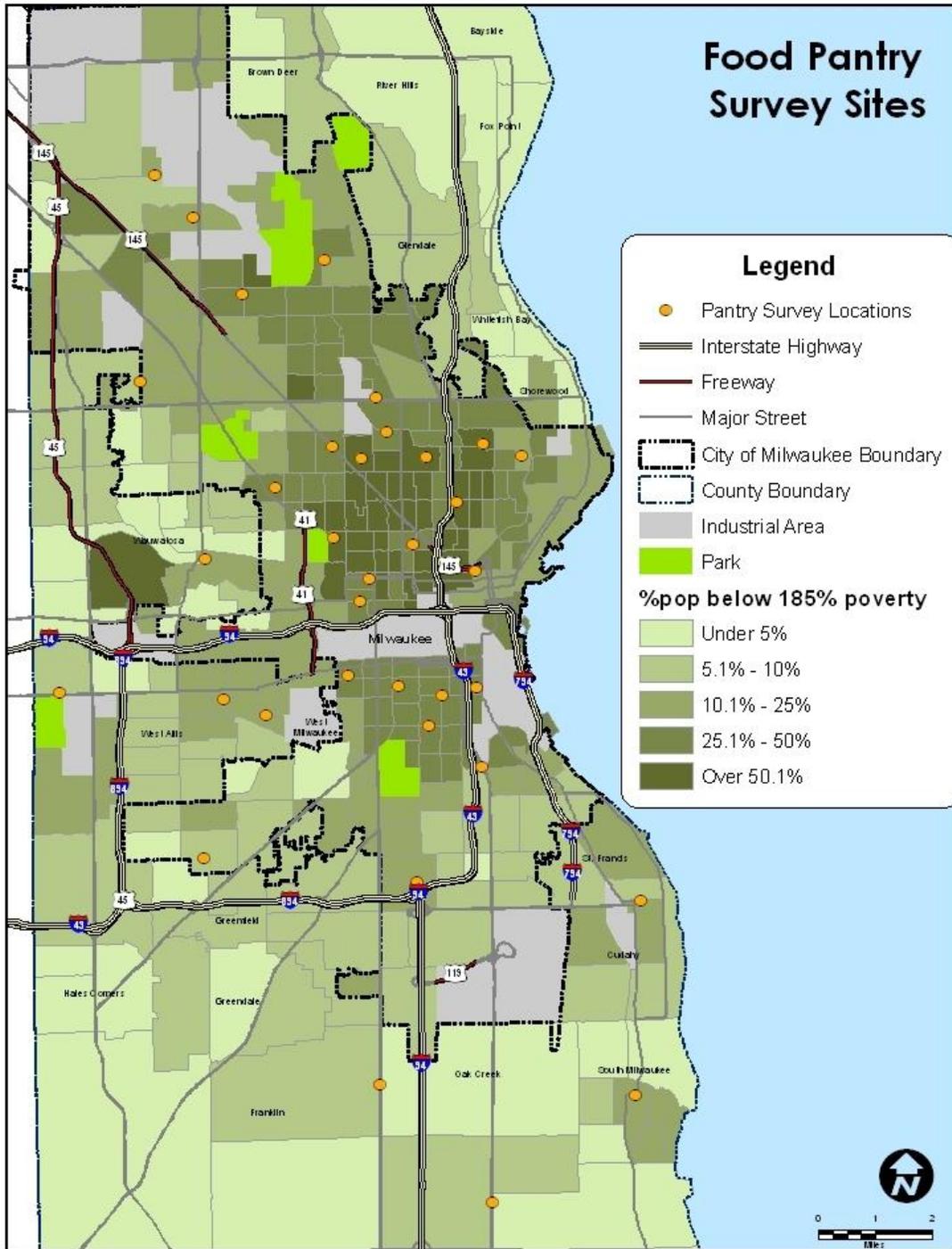
31. ¿Te tirar / comercio / regalar algo de la comida en la bolsa de alimentos de emergencia?

- Si, Me tire algo de comida
- Si, comercio o regalar algo de comida
- No, utilizar todos los alimentos

Si contesta si, porque (Marque TODOS que aplicas)



# Appendix C: Food Pantry Survey Sites



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