



2014 HUNGER IN AMERICA STUDY

Rhode Islanders Face Hard Choices

The 2014 Hunger in America study confirmed that we are serving people at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. In an effort to better understand the population served by our statewide network of member agencies, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank participated in this study, organized by Feeding America, the national network of food banks.

Our agencies now serve more than 63,000 people monthly—nearly twice as many as they served in 2007.

Serving the Poorest of the Poor

The federal poverty level for a family of three is \$19,500. Even at 185% of the poverty level, a family of three earns only \$36,000.

- 76% of our clients are below the federal poverty level.
- 84% of our clients are below 130% of the federal poverty level.
- 97% of our clients are below 185% of the federal poverty level.

Difficult Trade-offs

After the basic costs of living, there is often little left for food if your income is at or near the poverty level. Our clients report making difficult choices and trade-offs on a regular basis.

- 70% of our clients choose between paying a utility bill or buying food.
- 68% choose between paying for medicine or buying food.
- 67% choose between paying for transportation or buying food.
- 62% choose between paying rent or buying food.
- 12% have faced foreclosure or eviction in the last five years.

Connecting Hunger and Health

Not surprisingly, high levels of food insecurity are associated with lower quality of health.

- 89% of our clients are considered food insecure—unable to afford adequate food.
- 22% of our clients are in poor health.

- 74% purchase inexpensive, unhealthy food as a coping strategy when resources are tight.

SNAP Critical to Food Pantry Clients

The Food Bank's network of food pantries is serving nearly twice as many people with the same number of agencies as it did in 2007. Our network could not keep up with this level of need without an increase in the number of people receiving help from the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

SNAP is designed to expand and contract based on the economic security of people at the lowest tiers of the income ladder. Outreach efforts to expand awareness of the program have increased participation among food pantry clients from 35% in 2006 to 82% in 2013.

SNAP enables clients to better manage their food budgets by shopping for their own food at local grocery stores, which fuels the local economy. Even with SNAP benefits, families can run out of food before the end of the month, which is when many turn to food pantries for help.

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Mission The Rhode Island Community Food Bank provides food to people in need and promotes long-term solutions to the problem of hunger.

Vision The Food Bank is an innovative leader in solving the problem of hunger. In partnership with our member agencies, as well as government and community leaders, we work to ensure that no one in Rhode Island goes hungry. We envision a day when everyone in Rhode Island has access to nutritious food through an efficient and sustainable acquisition and distribution network.