FEEDING AMERICA

Hunger in America 2014

National Report

Hunger in America 2014

National Report Prepared for Feeding America

Authors

Nancy S. Weinfield, PhD, Westat
Gregory Mills, PhD, Urban Institute
Christine Borger, PhD, Westat
Maeve Gearing, PhD, Urban Institute
Theodore Macaluso, PhD, consultant
Jill Montaquila, PhD, Westat
Sheila Zedlewski, Urban Institute

August 2014

Table of Contents

Chapter   **Page**

Tables

	Tables (continued)	Page

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the strong support and vision of the core Hunger in America 2014 team at Feeding America: Maura Daly, Elaine Waxman, PhD, Emily Engelhard, Theresa DelVecchio Dys, Monica Hake, Amaris Kinne, Brittany Morgan, Meghan O'Leary, and David Watsula. The quality of the product was also much improved through sound advice from the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of Feeding America as well as through review of the report by outside experts.

<u>Technical Advisory Group of Feeding America</u>

Craig Gundersen, PhD, Endowed Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Alison Jacknowitz, PhD, Associate Professor, American University
Robert Santos, Chief Methodologist, Urban Institute

<u>Expert Reviewers</u>

John Cook, PhD, Associate Professor, Boston University
Colleen Heflin, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Missouri
Dean Jolliffe, PhD, Senior Economist, The World Bank Development Research Group
Rich Lucas, Acting Associate Administrator, USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Nancy Mathiowetz, PhD, Professor, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Molly Scott, Senior Research Associate, Urban Institute
Hilary Seligman, MD, Assistant Professor, University of California San Francisco
Anita Singh, PhD, Branch Chief, USDA Food and Nutrition Service SNAP Evaluation Branch
Laura Tiehen, PhD, Economist, USDA Economic Research Service

At Westat, several staff made critical contributions throughout the course of the study, especially Nancy Weinfield, PhD, Jill Montaquila, PhD, and Christine Borger, PhD. During data collection, Julie Bollmer, PhD and Roline Milfort, PhD spent long hours obtaining necessary information from the food banks and providing feedback to them throughout the sampling process. Additional support came from Susan Acker, Bryan Davis, Matthew English, Lauren Faulkner, William Frey, PhD, Beth Hintz, Jennifer Kawata, Laurie May, PhD, Martha Palan, Jarnee Riley, Beth Slotman, and many others.

At the Urban Institute, Maeve Gearing, PhD, Gregory Mills, PhD, Tracy Vericker, PhD, and Sheila Zedlewski all contributed to the final report products, providing their expertise, writing, and analysis. Programming support was provided by Sybil Mendonca.

The members of the Feeding America Report Review Committee, representing both Feeding America National Office Staff, network staff, and the TAG, provided valuable feedback and

revisions during the review phase of the study. We also acknowledge the contributions of the Feeding America Member Advisory Committee (MAC) who provided support throughout the entirety of the study.

We would also like to acknowledge and extend our sincere gratitude to the staff and volunteers at each of the participating food banks, agencies, and programs, who dedicated their time and efforts to the Hunger in America study and were integral to the implementation of the study in the field.

Finally, we acknowledge each of the clients who graciously agreed to share their stories with us through participation in the Client Survey. Their contributions made this study possible.

Introduction and Background 1

Feeding America, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief organization, has conducted the most comprehensive study of hunger in America every four years since 1993. Like the prior studies, Hunger in America 2014 (HIA 2014), the latest iteration, documents the critical role that the charitable food assistance network plays in supporting struggling families in the United States. Study results are based on surveys of food programs in the charitable food assistance network supported by Feeding America, and clients that access services through that network in 2012-2013.[1] In addition to this report on the Feeding America national network, this study has resulted in 42 state reports and 196 food bank reports detailing network activities on local levels.

The current assessment occurs in a period with historically high demand for food assistance. Unemployment and poverty rates have remained high since the Great Recession of 2008,[2] and the number of households receiving nutrition assistance from the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has increased by approximately 50 percent between 2009 and 2013.[3] Demand for charitable food assistance has also expanded. HIA 2014 finds an increased number of individuals relying on charitable assistance to access nutritious foods for themselves and their families.

1.1 The Charitable Food Assistance Network Serves a Critical Need

The federal government annually measures household food security – defined as all people in a household having enough food for an active healthy life at all times – and distinguishes four levels of

---

[1] All identified programs were invited to participate in the Hunger in America 2014 (HIA 2014) Agency Survey. For the Client Survey, data collection visits were not conducted at programs that exclusively serve adults with severe cognitive or mental health disabilities, children, or other confidential populations such as victims of domestic violence.

[2] Officially the recession lasted from December 2007 through June 2009.
See http://www.nber.org/cycles/cyclesmain.html.

[3] SNAP caseload statistics are from www.fns.usda.gov/pd/16SNAPpartHH.htm.

food security from high to very low.[4] Households classified as having low or very low food security are combined into the category of food insecure. In 2012, more than one in seven (17.6 million) U.S. households experienced food insecurity at some time during the year.[5] All of these households experienced limited or uncertain access to adequate food including reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. About 7 million of these households had members who went hungry or skipped meals, an indication of very low food security. Rates of food insecurity are particularly high in households with incomes near or below the federal poverty level and in single-parent households with children. Although about half of those who are food insecure live in White, non-Hispanic households, the rate of food insecurity is about twice as high among Black and Hispanic households.[6]

Federal food assistance programs help to alleviate hunger and poor nutrition for millions of food-insecure individuals. These programs are targeted at low-income households, with specific programs targeting vulnerable populations like children, seniors, and pregnant or post-partum women. About six in 10 food-insecure households participate in one or more of the three largest federal food and nutrition assistance programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).[7]

SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is the largest nutrition assistance program. Participating low-income households receive monthly SNAP benefit allotments in the form of electronic debit cards (also known as EBT, or electronic benefit transfer). While SNAP is intended for low-income households, it is not targeted for any specific subgroup within that population. SNAP benefits can be redeemed only at authorized retailers and are limited to the purchase of food

---

[4] The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines four levels of food security. High food security indicates no reported food-access problems. Marginal food security indicates one or two reported problems that are typically anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house, but with little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake. Low food security indicates reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet and indicates little or no reduced food intake. Very low food security indicates reports of multiple disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. The food security measure used in HIA 2014 combines high and marginal food security into a single category. Definitions are from http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx#.U76oj_ldW-g

[5] Alicia Coleman-Jensen, Mark Nord, and Anita Singh. (2013). *Household Food Security in the United States in 2012*, ERR-155 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service), http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx. Earlier years are available at the same web site.

[6] Ibid., Table 2, p. 13.

[7] Ibid., Table 2, p. 13.

items for use at home as well as seeds and plants to produce food. The WIC program offers nutrition education and supplemental foods to low-income pregnant and post-partum women, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. NSLP is a federal meal program that provides a nutritionally balanced free or reduced-price lunch to eligible children at school.[8] These programs, along with other aspects of the federal nutrition safety net, not only alleviate hunger, they also improve nutrition and health outcomes. For individuals and families who receive federal nutrition assistance, charitable food assistance may serve as a complement to federal assistance in alleviating hunger. Nonetheless, despite providing critical assistance, federal nutrition assistance programs do not reach everyone at risk of hunger in the United States.[9] For example, an estimated 27 percent of the food-insecure population in 2012 had household incomes above the standard eligibility thresholds for federal nutrition assistance programs. For these individuals and families, charitable food assistance may be the only available source of support.

Feeding America supports a nationwide network of food banks that help to combat hunger through coordinated efforts with affiliated agencies in all 50 states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. At the national level, Feeding America secures food from corporate manufacturers, retailers, and produce suppliers, and facilitates the acquisition of government food supplies by the food banks, distributing a total of more than three billion pounds of food and grocery products annually. Additionally, Feeding America provides more than $30 million worth of grants to support local anti-hunger initiatives in communities nationwide. Feeding America also provides member food banks with technical assistance, including support to maximize participation in SNAP and other previously mentioned federal nutrition assistance programs. Individual food banks also independently solicit food and financial donations from regional manufacturers, retailers, and businesses. The food banks work with a network of agencies to support local hunger-relief programs by distributing food and by raising awareness about the scope of hunger within their service areas.

---

[8] Program descriptions from www.fns.usda.gov.

[9] Numerous recent studies show how federal food assistance programs reduce food insecurity. For example, a 2013 study finds that participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for about six months is associated with a 4.6 percent decrease in the number of food-insecure households; longer participation further reduces food insecurity. See James Mabli, Jim Ohls, Lisa Dragoset, Laura Castner, and Betsy Santos. (2013). *Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service). Brent Kreider, John V. Pepper, Craig Gundersen, and Dean Jolliffe. (2012). "Identifying the Effects of SNAP (Food Stamps) on Child Health Outcomes When Participation is Endogenous and Misreported." *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 107 (499): 958-975. Published studies by Caroline Ratcliffe, Signe-Mary McKernan, and Sisi Zhang. (2011). "How Much Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Reduce Food Insecurity?" *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 93 (4): 1082-1098; and by Elton Mykerezi and Bradford F. Mills. (2010). "The Impact of Food Stamp Program Participation on Household Food Insecurity," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics,* 92 (5): 1379-1391 show that SNAP participation substantially decreases the risk of household food insecurity.

1.2   The Weak Economy Has Increased Demand for Food Assistance

The economy has experienced an unusually slow recovery since the deep recession in 2008 and 2009. The nation's poverty rate reached 15.1 percent in 2010, the highest rate since 1993. The poverty rate remained at 15 percent in 2012 with 46.5 million people living in poverty. This is the largest number living in poverty since statistics were first published more than 50 years ago.[10]

Sustained high poverty rates arise in part from high unemployment and falling household incomes. The U.S. unemployment rate exceeded 7.0 percent for five years between late 2008 and late 2013 (about 11 million people in any given month), the longest period of high unemployment in 70 years.[11] While the unemployment rate indicates that a large number of people cannot find jobs, many others are employed part time because they cannot find full-time work. The government's measure of underemployment that includes all of these groups averaged 14 percent in fiscal year 2013, compared to a prerecession rate of 8.4 percent in 2007.[12] On average, about 24 million people were underemployed in 2013. Additionally, others may work full time but due to low wages their earnings do not lift them above the poverty line. Perhaps not surprisingly, real household income dropped 8.3 percent between 2007 and 2012.[13] Poverty, unemployment, and income, along with other demographic characteristics, are key drivers of individual and household food insecurity across the country.[14]

These economic trends have contributed to rapid growth in the numbers of households seeking and receiving food assistance. The number of people participating in SNAP, the largest federal food

---

[10] Statistics for 2012 (the latest data available) are from Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica Smith. (2013). "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012." *Current Population Survey*, 60-245 (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau). Poverty statistics for additional years are from the same source and found at www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data.

[11] Congressional Budget Office, "What Accounts for the Slow Growth of the Economy After the Recession?" (Washington, DC: Author, November 14, 2012), and data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000.

[12] The measure of labor underutilization includes the total unemployed, plus all persons marginally attached to the labor force, plus total employed part time for economic reasons as a percent of the civilian labor force plus all persons marginally attached to the labor force, found at http://www.bls.gov/CPS/.

[13] DeNavas-Walt et al., "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012."

[14] Craig Gundersen, Emily Engelhard, Amy Satoh, and Elaine Waxman. (2014). Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2014. See www.feedingamerica.org/mapthegap.

assistance program, rose to a new high of 47.6 million in 2013, up from 33.5 million in 2009.[15] While some of this growth can be attributed to changes in SNAP rules, recent studies conclude that the weak economy explains most of the increase.[16] Other government programs that provided nutrition assistance in 2013 also saw high levels of enrollment. About 9 million people received WIC benefits in 2013. In the same year, 21.5 million children received free or reduced-price school lunches, and 11.2 million children received school breakfasts.[17]

The increased need for food assistance observed within federal nutrition programs is mirrored in the number of clients seeking help from the charitable food assistance network. Despite known undercounts of those seeking charitable help, government studies have documented increases in the number of individuals getting help from food pantries and emergency meal programs in 2012 compared with 2010.[18] Feeding America, as the nation's largest charitable food assistance organization, plays a critical role in helping those in need access nutritious food for themselves and their families.

1.3   How the Feeding America Network Delivers Food Assistance

The Feeding America network secures and provides food to families struggling with hunger, educates the public about the issue of hunger, and advocates for policies that protects people from going hungry.

The Feeding America network provides food to people facing hunger through a multilevel approach. Through the Feeding America national office in Chicago, food, grocery items, and funds are secured for the network through national relationships with corporate manufacturers and retailers, produce suppliers, individuals, foundations, government entities, and other partners. The Feeding America national office also supports the safe delivery and distribution of food throughout their network with a robust logistics and transportation system.

---

[15] Participation data from http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

[16] See, for example, Peter Ganong and Jeffrey B. Liebman. (2013). "Explaining Trends in SNAP Enrollment." (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University and NBER).

[17] Participation data from: WIC - http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files//pd/wisummary.pdf; National School Lunch Program - http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/slsummar.pdf; and School Breakfast Program - http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/sbsummar.pdf

[18] Coleman-Jensen et al., *Household Food Security in the United States in 2012*.

National programs are an important part of local hunger-relief efforts. Using best practices, the Feeding America network establishes and replicates several hunger-relief programs. One example of a national program is the Mobile Pantry Program, through which food banks utilize dry/refrigerated vehicles to provide food to clients in areas where traditional pantries may not be accessible or where certain foods, such as produce, are difficult to distribute. The Mobile Pantry Program extends food banks' reach, ensuring that more clients across diverse geographies are served.

Feeding America member food banks are on the front lines of hunger-relief.[19] In addition to securing food and funds through the Feeding America national office, food banks secure local resources as well. While Feeding America's national office does not receive any federal funds, many food banks receive federal hunger-relief funding in the form of commodities, meal reimbursements, or grants. Food banks may also receive state and local funding to support their work. Food banks distribute food through a network of nonprofit partner agencies to support the programs they operate such as food pantries, kitchens, and shelters in their service area. Each food bank may work with hundreds of partner agencies to get food to people facing hunger. Some food banks also collaborate with Partner Distribution Organizations (PDOs). While PDOs are not direct members of the Feeding America network, they are independent nonprofit organizations contracted to fulfill certain food banking responsibilities, such as product distribution management and food solicitation within a portion of a member's service area.

Partner agencies vary in size; some operate a single program, such as a food pantry in one room, while others are large community organizations that distribute food through various programs at multiple locations.[20] Partner agencies can provide either emergency or nonemergency food assistance to clients, or in the case of large multiservice agencies, both. Emergency food programs include pantries that distribute unprepared grocery products and kitchens that provide prepared meals on site. Nonemergency programs have a primary purpose other than food distribution—for example a rehabilitation, youth, or senior program that also provides the people it serves with food. Additionally, food banks and partner agencies provide clients with outreach, education, referral, and/or application assistance with federal nutrition programs.

---

[19] Feeding America member food banks have entered into a formal contract that outlines the standards that must be adhered to by all member food banks. Other nonmember food banks in the nation may provide similar services as Feeding America member food banks, but this study only addresses the services provided and clients served by member food banks.

[20] Partner agencies are charitable organizations that have typically entered into a contract with a Feeding America member food bank that outlines the standards that must be adhered to by all of the respective food bank's partner agencies. Other charitable agencies in the nation may provide similar services as partner agencies in the Feeding America network, but this study only addresses the services provided by those in the Feeding America network.

In all, the Feeding America network distributes over 3.3 billion pounds of food and grocery items through 202 food banks in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC each year. The pathways through which the Feeding America network receives and distributes food are shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1. **Sources of food and channels of food distribution in the Feeding America network**
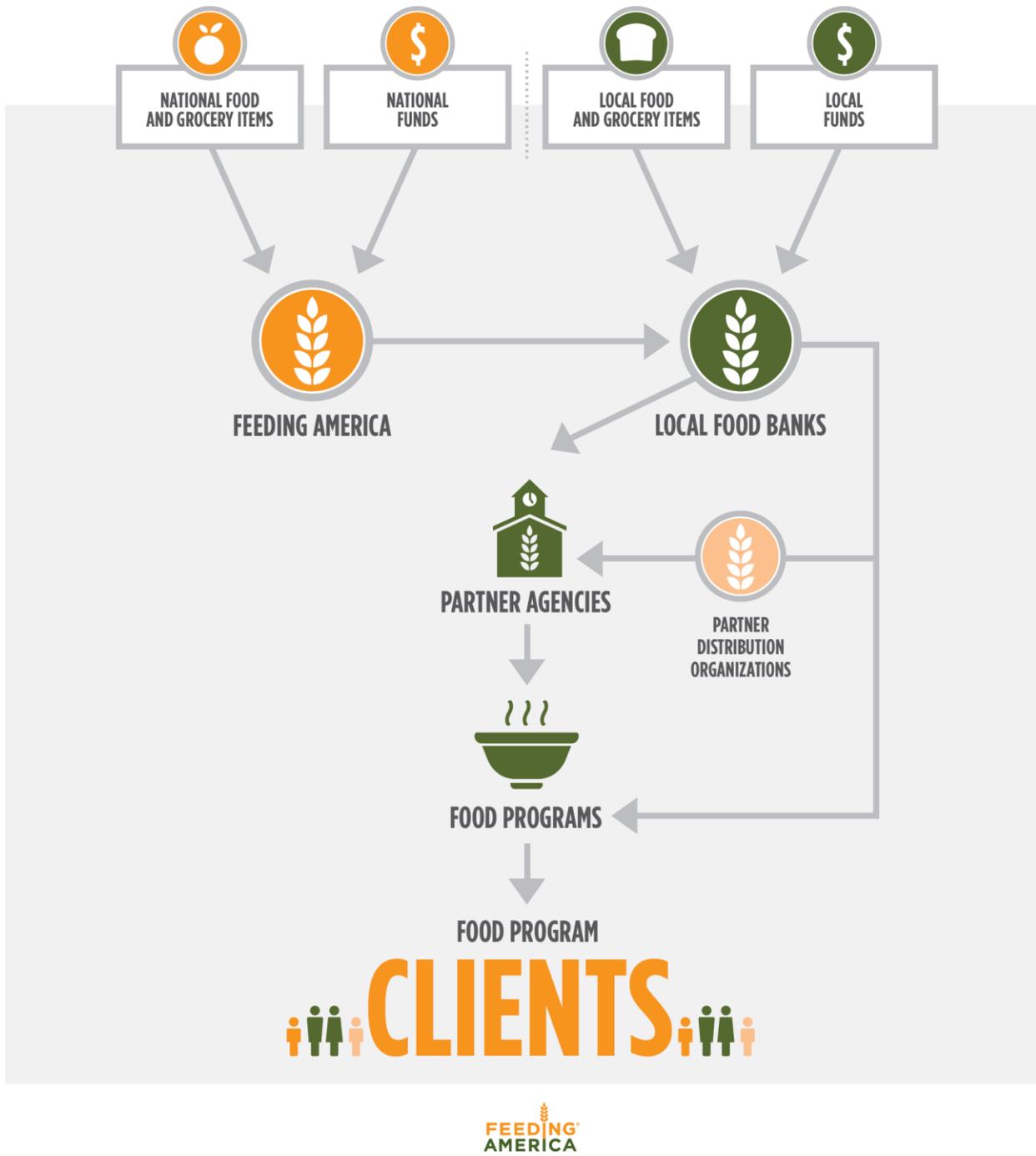
1.4 The Hunger in America 2014 Study Updates the Public on the Use of Charitable Food Assistance

Given the important role that this network plays in reducing hunger across the United States, Feeding America supports quadrennial surveys to document these programs and the clients they serve. The HIA 2014 study includes an Agency Survey and a Client Survey. The Agency Survey details how charitable agencies and their food distribution programs operate, including the sources of food available to them, their use of volunteers, and the challenges they see today and in the future. The Client Survey documents the number and characteristics of the people that use charitable food assistance, including what other sources of food assistance they have available and utilize.

The objectives of the HIA 2014 national study are:

- To create national-, state-, and food bank-level estimates of the number of unduplicated clients served annually, monthly, and weekly through a methodologically sound approach.

- To understand the full scope and role of services in the Feeding America network by broadening the scope of the study from that of the previous study, Hunger in America 2010.

- To provide for appropriate cultural and language competence in the Client Survey, in order to best capture the diversity of the Feeding America network.

- To broaden our understanding of issues relating to:

  - Client health, vulnerability, nutrition choices, and financial hardship;

  - The role of food banks in clients' formal and informal coping strategies;

  - Clients' participation in federal nutrition programs, especially SNAP; and

  - The relation between these clients' coping strategies, food security, federal program participation, and the frequency of food bank usage.

The study's findings will enhance understanding of food assistance needs in America. Considerable data are available to understand use of federal nutrition programs, but little research is available to describe the use of charitable food assistance programs. This gap in knowledge is concerning because the need for food assistance goes beyond federal programs. Many people in need of food assistance are not eligible or do not participate in federal nutrition programs, and often federal

programs do not fully meet the food assistance needs of participants; the charitable food assistance network strives to meet this unmet need.

Using the information in this national report, food bank staff and volunteers will have the data they need to document their role in reducing hunger across the country and communicate this information clearly with donors. This report will also help to inform government officials and the public about food insecurity and the needs of America's low income citizens. Ultimately, the results will help to guide actions to reduce the prevalence and severity of hunger in America. Subsequent reports will describe the survey results for many individual states and local food banks.

The following is a summary of Chapters 2 through 6:

- **Chapter 2** describes the study's data collection methods and challenges.

- **Chapter 3** describes the Feeding America national network, highlighting the results of the Agency Survey. The numbers and locations of food banks participating in the survey, their partners, services provided, and funding are emphasized.

- **Chapter 4** includes estimates of the number of clients using food assistance through the Feeding America network weekly, monthly, and annually, and their demographic characteristics. It also describes the households of clients of the Feeding America network, including languages spoken, their housing characteristics, employment status, and health status.

- **Chapter 5** describes clients' food security, use of both charitable and government food assistance, and coping strategies used to prevent hunger.

- **Chapter 6** provides a summary of the findings.

Meeting the Challenge of Collecting Data about Food Programs and Clients **2**

Key Findings

- Hunger in America 2014 (HIA 2014) employed a multistage design to facilitate the selection of a probability sample and produce the best estimates possible.

- The study differed in many ways from past Hunger in America (HIA) studies, introducing innovations that move the study forward but also limit direct comparisons that can be made between the studies.

- More than 32,000 partner agencies participated in the Agency Survey, and more than 60,000 clients completed Client Surveys.

- Ninety-two percent of member food banks participated in some portion of the study. Data in the report are weighted to allow national estimates that account for nonparticipating food banks.

HIA 2014 followed the pattern of past HIA studies by implementing two surveys—an Agency Survey and a Client Survey—through a collaborative effort of an extended research team. For the current study, the main collaborators were the Feeding America national office research team and their Technical Advisory Group, the research teams at Westat and the Urban Institute, and the network of local Feeding America food banks. Each local food bank identified a study coordinator, or Hunger Study Coordinator (HSC). Each HSC was responsible for coordinating and facilitating local data collection efforts. One hundred eighty-six food banks and 10 Partner Distribution Organizations (PDOs) participated in at least one portion of HIA 2014. Further details of food bank response rates appear in Section 2.5.

The Agency Survey, conducted from October 2012 to January 2013, surveyed the partner agencies of all participating food banks. It gathered information about the agencies' hunger-relief efforts, and the specific programs the agencies operate. Only agencies that responded to the Agency Survey and listed at least one eligible food program could potentially be selected for the Client Survey, which was a survey of the food program clients who receive services from the Feeding America network. Visits to food programs to conduct Client Surveys were carried out by food bank staff and volunteers from April through August 2013. These surveys sought information from clients about their personal circumstances, household demographics, needs and challenges, and use of both government and charitable hunger-relief services.

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the scientific efforts that resulted in the HIA 2014 study, including: the development of the two survey instruments; study and sample design; training of the data collection teams; implementation of the surveys; response rates; methodological issues to consider when interpreting the findings of the study; and an overview of the approach to analyses in this report.

2.1   Study and Sample Design

2.1.1   Instrument Development

Agency Survey

The Agency Survey sought information on partner agencies' organization and services and the programs the agencies operate. This included agency funding sources, staffing, and challenges they face; food, non-food, and food-related benefit programs they operate; and food program details, including operations, services, and client details.

Once a final draft of the Agency Survey had been developed, a cognitive interview pretest was conducted to identify items that were misunderstood or difficult for respondents to answer. Feeding America provided Westat with a list of agencies from which to recruit for the Agency Survey pretest. Cognitive interviews were completed with six agencies. Pretest agencies were selected to vary in size, agency type, and number and type of programs and services provided.

Pretesting was conducted through a combination of paper and telephone activities. Agencies selected for the pretest were sent a hardcopy of the survey by mail. They were contacted via email and subsequently contacted by telephone to confirm they received the survey and to schedule a time for the telephone-based cognitive interview in September or October of 2012. The survey was revised based on pretest findings, and the final web-based version was programmed. The Westat Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the Agency Survey and exempted the survey from further review.

Agencies without Internet access that operated only one program were permitted to submit responses to the survey to Westat by telephone.[21] For agencies with only Spanish-speaking staff, a

---

[21] Forty-six agencies submitted survey responses through the paper/telephone option.

translated version of the Agency Survey was available to assist respondents. A slightly different version of the survey was available depending on the type of program operated by the agency, so that skip patterns were simplified.

Client Survey

The Client Survey sought information from those served by partner agencies and the programs they operate, including individual and household demographics and circumstances; health status, food insecurity and coping strategies; and participation in government and charitable food assistance programs.

The research team conducted cognitive interview pretesting of the Client Survey items in December 2012 with 20 food bank clients representing four service areas. Service areas were selected to include urban, urban/suburban mix, suburban, and rural clients for a variety of different types of food programs. Thirteen of the interviews were conducted in-person, and the remaining seven were conducted by telephone. Clients' understanding of and comfort with the interview questions was probed. Based on the clients' feedback, the survey was then revised and finalized. The Client Survey was then programmed into a computerized version of the survey to be implemented using a touchscreen tablet device (Figure 2-1) and Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interview (ACASI) technology. The ACASI technology allows respondents to hold the tablet, listen through headphones to an audio recording of each question and its response options as they are displayed on the tablet, and select their responses using a stylus. ACASI provides increased privacy for respondents compared to face-to-face interviews, allowing for more accurate and honest responses to potentially sensitive survey questions such as those related to food insecurity or participation in federal programs. The use of ACASI also ensures that appropriate skip patterns are followed automatically, reducing human error that may occur during volunteer-administered client interviews, and allowing volunteers to focus their attention on the successful implementation of the sampling methodology rather than administration of the survey questions. In comparison to self-administered paper surveys, ACASI is more appropriate for populations containing individuals with lower literacy levels.[22] This is the first time that the Client Survey was conducted electronically and through ACASI. Previously, the survey was administered verbally by an interviewer following skip patterns and answers were recorded on paper.

---

[22] Sid J. Schneider and Brad Edwards. (2000). "Developing Usability Guidelines for AudioCASI Respondents with Limited Literacy Skills." *Journal of Official Statistics,* 16: 255-271.

Figure 2-1. Tablet computers ready for data collection at a food program site
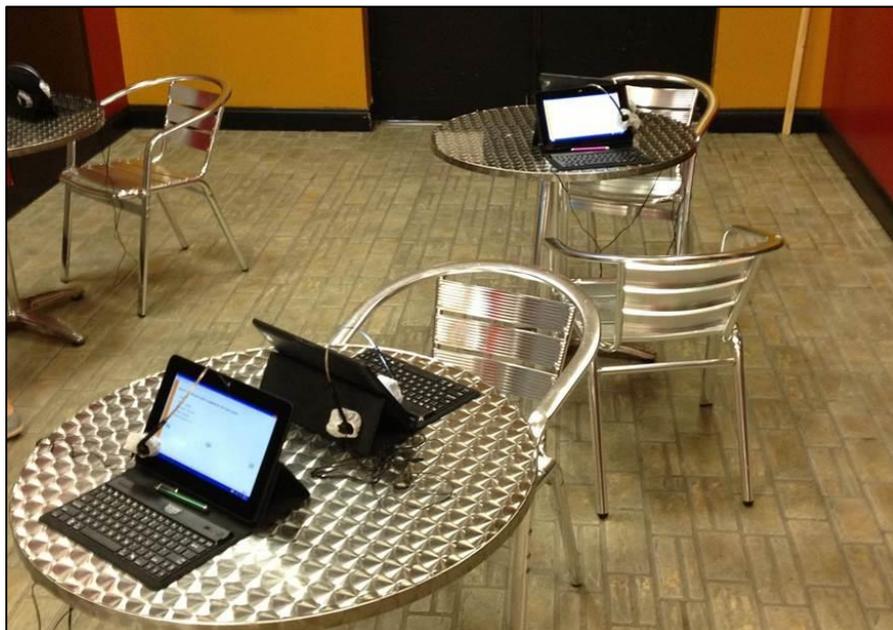
For HIA 2014, the ACASI text and audio were translated and programmed in English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese, which were languages identified by food banks as priorities among the target population. Translation was carried out by professional, certified language translators, and reviewed for accuracy by editors who were native speakers. Audio versions of the survey questions were recorded by native speakers, and reviewed by editors for accuracy and compliance with the written questions.

In March 2013, Feeding America and five participating food banks conducted a second round of pretesting to ensure that the tablets and survey technology were user-friendly for the various client populations. Fifty clients, including both English- and Spanish-speakers, were randomly sampled across 10 charitable food program sites chosen to pretest the Client Survey using the tablet and ACASI technology. These were selected to ensure both geographic and program diversity. After completing the pretest survey, clients responded to evaluations in order to provide feedback about data collection. In these evaluations, 98 percent of the clients reported that the tablet was easy to use, despite nearly half of the clients indicating that they had no prior experience using tablets or laptops. The clients' feedback was used to make additional improvements to the digital surveys, including substantially increasing the audio volume and improving the legibility of the survey questions. The Westat IRB reviewed the Client Survey and all associated procedures and materials, and approved the activities under expedited authority.

New Survey Questions since Hunger in America 2010 (HIA 2010)

The Agency and Client Survey instruments included questions from the HIA 2010 surveys, other validated survey instruments, such as the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Core Food Security Module (CFSM), as well as contributions and revisions from the collaborative 2014 research team. Revisions included the addition of questions to each survey, which were incorporated following feedback that Feeding America received from the network of food banks after HIA 2010.

The Agency Survey featured new questions on nutrition services offered by agencies, agency governance, program sources of funding, as well as the opportunity to provide detail about all of the agencies' programs, not solely emergency food programs as in 2010. The Client Survey incorporated new questions about client health, coping strategies, student status or military service, and languages spoken in the household, to name a few. Copies of the Agency Survey and Client Survey questions appear in Appendix A.

2.1.2   Study Design

A primary goal for HIA 2014 was to design a study that allowed for selection of a probability sample of clients and for collection of data to support national- and food bank-level estimates of the total number of clients served. Below we describe the fundamental design used to achieve these goals. Greater detail on study design, sampling, and weighting is available in the HIA 2014 Technical Volume, available upon request from Feeding America.

HIA 2014 aimed to collect information directly from Feeding America clients, and to describe the number and characteristics of the clients who use the network for charitable food assistance. Because conducting interviews with every client served by every program over an extended period of time was not feasible, probability sampling was used to select a subset of programs at which data collection should occur, the days on which data collection should occur at those programs, and the clients who should be asked to complete the survey. As it applies to HIA 2014, probability sampling is an approach in which each client has a known, positive chance of being selected to complete the survey. With probability samples, it is possible to use the sample to estimate population-level information. The full population of Feeding America clients in the nation is unknown, so it was not possible to select from a known list of clients, as is sometimes possible in probability sampling.

Consequently, the study was designed with a multistage design to facilitate selection of the probability sample.

The first step of the study design was conducting the Agency Survey, which included all partner agencies identified by participating food banks on agency lists they compiled and provided to Feeding America. The Agency Survey was used to obtain an enumeration of eligible food programs in the Feeding America network and basic information about those programs. The differentiation between agencies and their programs proved somewhat challenging, as the line between them in the field is not always clear. The research team worked with food banks and partner agencies to ensure that agencies and their programs were clearly delineated, but ultimately the distinction may not always be precise (see Section 2.6.4). Following the Agency Survey, the sample of clients was obtained using a multistage design. A graphic depiction of the multistage design appears in Figure 2-2. Details of the multistage design appear in the Technical Volume, but the four basic stages were as follows:

- **Stage 1** involved selecting agencies from the set of respondents to the Agency Survey. Agencies that distributed more food per year, measured by pounds as an indication of size, had a greater chance of being selected.

- **Stage 2** involved selecting a sample of programs within sampled agencies.[23] Again, larger programs, based on reports from the Agency Survey of numbers of duplicated clients served,[24] had a higher chance of being selected.

- **Stage 3** involved assigning a sampled program to a "survey day/hours" (a span of hours within a day during the survey data collection period). This was done in a manner that aimed to distribute data collection over the entire survey period and capture the ebbs and flows in the way that clients are served with respect to hours of the day, days of the week, and weeks of the month.

- **Stage 4** involved sending trained data collectors to the sampled program on the assigned survey day. The data collectors maintained a complete tally of all clients served during the survey hours and were provided with the protocol for selecting a random sample of clients to complete the Client Survey (a systematic sample that was based on a random start and a sampling interval provided to the data collectors).

---

[23] To ensure that food banks could feasibly carry out the data collection as designed, allocations were made with input from Feeding America to balance food bank size with operational capacities. Some allocations were reduced or supplemented after the initial sample was drawn if food banks found that they had greater or fewer resources available.

[24] If a program did not report on the duplicated number of clients served, this was imputed to allow for inclusion of the program in Client Survey sampling.

Figure 2-2.   Multistage design of Hunger in America 2014

35,690 AGENCIES were eligible for sampling because they provided basic information on the Agency Survey about at least one food program

STAGE ONE AGENCY

15,972 AGENCIES sampled

STAGE TWO PROGRAM

16,654 PROGRAMS sampled

STAGE THREE DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION

15,235 eligible programs assigned **DAYS/HOURS** for a visit

STAGE FOUR CLIENT

97,133 CLIENTS sampled

FEEDING AMERICA

The Client Survey excluded programs that serve only children or persons with severe cognitive or mental health disabilities, home delivery programs, and confidential locations such as domestic violence shelters where data collection would violate privacy. Within eligible programs, children and clients with severe cognitive or mental health disabilities were deemed ineligible for the survey. Although children were not eligible to participate as respondents, they are included in the client counts and other data when they are members of entire households served by food programs, as is the case with programs that provide groceries.

Following the selection of the sample of programs for the Client Survey, Feeding America identified 79 very large programs that had not been included in the sample, either because the size measures provided for their agencies or the program themselves were missing or inaccurate, or because the agency or program was not listed. Large programs were identified by looking at the proportion of the food bank's total pounds distributed to the partner agency. In such situations, these very large programs or additional program sites were added to the sample with certainty, and the weighting approach was later modified to account for these new additions. A common example included food banks that distribute food directly to clients through food bank-operated programs, rather than programs at partner agencies. These food bank-operated programs represented a large percentage of the food bank's total pounds and may have operated through multiple distribution sites per program.

An overview of the study design appears in Figure 2-3, showing participation of the network in the two surveys, and the participation numbers at each phase of the study.

2.1.3   Program Type Definitions

As mentioned in Section 1.3, Feeding America food banks collaborate with partner agencies that operate programs to support their communities. Four major program categories were used in HIA 2014 to classify services provided by the agencies. Food programs fell into one of two broad categories: meal or grocery. These categories were established because clients are conceptualized differently under each category (see further explanation in this Chapter, Section 2.6.3). Additionally, we expected patterns to emerge among clients utilizing each of the two distinct categories; we discuss these patterns amidst the findings in the coming chapters.

Figure 2-3.   Participation of the Feeding America network in Hunger in America 2014

FEEDING AMERICA

LOCAL FOOD BANKS

186 participated in
AGENCY SURVEY
data collection

178 participated in
CLIENT SURVEY
data collection

PARTNER AGENCIES

32,677 participated
in **AGENCY SURVEY**
data collection

**PARTNER
DISTRIBUTION
ORGANIZATIONS**

10 participated in
AGENCY SURVEY
data collection

9 participated in
CLIENT SURVEY
data collection

FOOD PROGRAMS

12,475 were visited
for **CLIENT SURVEY**
data collection

FOOD PROGRAM

CLIENTS

60,122 completed
the **CLIENT SURVEY**

FEEDING AMERICA

Food programs were probed on the Agency Survey and potentially eligible for inclusion in the Client Survey. Two other categories of non-food programs were identified and probed on the Agency Survey but were not eligible for the Client Survey because they do not distribute food. Non-food programs include both food-related benefits programs, and other non-food programs. Details of the program categories appear below, and the types of the programs in each category are listed in Figure 2-4. Descriptions of the types of programs in each category appear in Appendix B.

MEAL PROGRAMS provide prepared meals or snacks on site or in the client's home to clients in need who may or may not reside on the agency's premises. This category includes all congregate feeding programs along with all other kitchens and shelter programs.

GROCERY PROGRAMS distribute nonprepared foods, groceries, and other household supplies for off-site use, usually for preparation in the client's home. This includes all types of pantries, home-delivered groceries, mobile grocery programs, Commodity Supplemental Food Programs (CSFP), BackPack programs, and Community Gardens.

FOOD-RELATED BENEFIT PROGRAMS provide resources that enable individuals in need to procure meals, groceries, or nongrocery products. These programs typically involve outreach, information and referrals, and/or application assistance to obtain state or federal food assistance benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or nutrition education.

OTHER NON-FOOD PROGRAMS have a primary purpose other than meal programs, grocery programs or food-related benefit programs, such as clothing/furniture assistance or legal assistance. Although non-food programs are not directly related to the issue of hunger, they are included to show the diverse array of services provided through the Feeding America network.

Figure 2-4 highlights the mutually exclusive and exhaustive nature of the meal/grocery distinction across program types included in our sample. It also indicates how the pantries, kitchens, and shelters approach of the HIA 2010 report fits within our broader schema. Senior programs and mobile programs are a subset of special focus and are discussed separately at times in the report.

Figure 2-4.   Program type categorizations used in Hunger in America 2014

	GROCERY	MEAL	FOOD-RELATED BENEFITS	NON-FOOD
MIXED AGE GROUP	• Community Garden • Food Bank-Operated Pantry Program • Food Pantry • Home-Delivered Grocery Program • Mobile Market/Mobile Pantry • Other Pantry Program • School Pantry Program	• Community Kitchen • Food Bank-Operated Meal Program • Group Home • Rehabilitation Program • Residential Program • Shelter • [Soup] Kitchen • Transitional Housing	• Nutrition Education • Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Outreach • Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Assistance and Outreach	• Clothing/Furniture Assistance • Financial Assistance • General Educational Developement (GED) Programs • General Information and Referrals • Health Clinics • Housing Assistance • Job Training • Legal Assistance • Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) • Transportation Assistance • Utility/Heat Assistance
CHILDREN	• BackPack Program	• Afterschool Snack • Child Congregate Feeding Program (non-Kids Cafe) • Day Care • Kids Cafe • Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	• National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Outreach • School Breakfast Program (SBP) Outreach	
SENIORS	• Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) • Senior Brown Bag • Senior Grocery Program • Senior Mobile Pantry	• Home Delivered Meal (or Meals on Wheels) • Senior Congregate Meal		

FEEDING AMERICA

2.2   Agency Survey Implementation

2.2.1   Collecting Data from Partner Agencies

The sample for the Agency Survey was comprised of food bank partner agencies. The process of identifying organizations to be surveyed for the Agency Survey began with a listing of the partner agencies of each participating food bank. Each food bank provided the research teams with a list of their active agencies. The Agency Survey was intended to be a census of the agencies of all participating food banks thus, each active agency received an invitation to complete the survey. The

list was updated as needed during the survey period to reflect recognized omissions, identified inaccuracies, or agencies that became inactive.[25]

2.2.2   Agency Survey Data Collection

One major innovation for HIA 2014 was web-based data collection for the Agency Survey. This mode of data collection was intended to (1) reduce burden on agency staff by automatically applying skip patterns and (2) increase the quality and efficiency of data collected. Beginning on October 19, 2012, Westat sent Agency Survey invitation emails to all the food banks' agencies.[26] The email included instructions for accessing and completing the survey, and for accessing additional resource documents.

The Agency Survey included two components: agency questions and program questions. As part of the agency questions, agencies enumerated the food and non-food programs they operate, including grocery programs such as pantries; meal programs such as kitchens, shelters, or congregate meals; food-related benefits programs such as SNAP outreach and application assistance and nutrition education; and other non-food programs such as legal or clothing assistance. Subsequently, agencies were asked a series of in-depth questions about each food program, for up to 15 of their largest food programs.

For special circumstances when agencies could not complete the Agency Survey online, a paper/telephone version was made available upon request. The paper/telephone version was only available to agencies operating a single program.[27] The paper/telephone version asked the respondent to complete a hardcopy worksheet version of the survey, and to follow up by calling the Westat research team to complete a telephone interview component with an interviewer who read the web survey questions to the respondent and entered responses directly in the respondent's specific web survey. Forty-six agencies completed the paper/telephone version of the survey.

---

[25] It is possible that food banks may not ultimately have listed all the agencies they serve for the purposes of this study. Additionally, some agencies may not have reported on all of their programs within the Agency Survey. The information in this report is based solely on the agencies and programs that participated in this study.

[26] Additional survey invitations were sent in later batches as the agency list was updated by the food banks.

[27] This was because there was a set of program-level survey questions for each program based on program type. Multiple programs would make the paper version too onerous.

2.2.3   Agency Survey Resource Materials

Agencies had access to numerous resources and training materials to help them complete their Agency Survey. The Feeding America and Westat research teams developed tools in a range of media to help facilitate successful completion of the survey by agencies, as well as to equip food banks with sufficient information to similarly support their agencies. These resources included webinars emphasizing the survey's purpose and procedures, and reference guides to assist survey respondents in navigating the study web site and gathering the information and records needed to complete the survey. In addition, the research team created English and Spanish versions of the question-by-question instructions with screenshots of the web survey as a resource for agency staff.

Both Feeding America and Westat allocated staff whose principal role was to provide technical assistance to the food banks and agencies. Westat staffed two helpdesks, which fielded technical and survey content-related questions over email and phone. Feeding America staff supported food bank staff and agency representatives who wanted to discuss strategies for increasing agency response rates, needed additional help reaching out to agencies or had difficulty answering particular questions. Additionally, each food bank's HSC was substantially involved in the Agency Survey data collection process to ensure that agencies could access the web-based survey and to promote a high completion rate of surveys among their agencies. To this end, many food banks offered incentives to agencies completing the survey, such as raffles for donated kitchen equipment, or credits to use towards procuring food from the food bank.

2.2.4   Agency Survey Field Period

The Agency Survey field period was from October 19, 2012 to January 7, 2013. Survey invitations were sent beginning October 19 and continued as the agency list was updated with newly identified agencies eligible for the survey.

The original Agency Survey field period was scheduled to end December 14, 2012, but was extended by three weeks to January 7, 2013 in an effort to allow agencies more time to complete the survey and therefore be eligible for the Client Survey. In addition, several agencies were affected by Superstorm Sandy during October 2012, which influenced their ability to complete the Agency Survey within the original field period.

2.2.5 Agency Survey Monitoring

A web-based study management system (SMS) was developed to allow the HSCs to track their agencies' survey completion progress in real time. HSCs were food bank staff charged with coordinating, implementing, and monitoring all HIA 2014 study operations for their respective food banks. HSCs could view the survey status (not yet started, in progress, or complete) for each of their own agencies, as well as the date of the most recent activity. The SMS also included filtering options and summary reports. HSCs used the SMS to guide their follow-up efforts as needed. Additionally, Feeding America and Westat used the SMS to monitor progress across all food banks.

2.3 Training of Food Bank Hunger Study Coordinators and Volunteer Data Collectors

HSCs were also responsible for all aspects of Client Survey study execution on the local level. They coordinated with sampled agencies and their sampled food programs, and oversaw implementation of the data collection visits. HSCs were expected to recruit and train data collectors who would assist their food bank with the Client Survey data collection. Data collectors, who included both food bank staff members and volunteers from the community, were trained to go to the sampled food programs; conduct client sampling at the programs; gain cooperation and consent to participate from the sampled clients; and aid in the administration of the computerized survey.

To ensure that the HSCs were appropriately prepared to train their data collectors, all HSCs participated in an in-person training conducted by Westat and Feeding America staff. In addition to providing the HSCs with a full understanding of the requirements of the Client Survey data collection and the HSC responsibilities, the training comprehensively reviewed the topics and associated materials that the HSCs would use to train their own data collectors. Topics covered included the processes for sampling, recruiting, and consenting clients; setting up and using the equipment (e.g., tablets, keyboards, headphones); navigating the survey and being able to respond to client questions; handling any problems that might occur in field; and submitting all of the necessary data and information at the end of the program visit.

Westat conducted three two-day in-person trainings in different regions of the country. Every HSC was expected to attend one of these trainings. In the few cases in which an HSC did not attend one of the scheduled in-person trainings, or a different HSC was newly assigned at a food bank, a

follow-up training was conducted. After the trainings, Westat provided HSCs with all of the materials and resources they would need to train their data collectors and to help ensure these trainings were conducted consistently across the food banks, including webinars, manuals, and study data collection forms, as well as resource documents with recommended guidance for recruiting, training, and overseeing volunteer data collectors.

2.4   Client Survey Implementation

As described in Section 2.1 and depicted in Figure 2-2, the sample for the Client Survey was selected using a four-stage sampling approach with the stages of selection being (1) agency, (2) program, (3) survey day/hours, and (4) clients. The following sections describe the details of how the client survey was implemented.

2.4.1   Client Survey Translation

The Client Survey was administered in five languages that were identified with input from participating food banks, with the intent to reach the largest number of clients. Prior to HIA 2014, the Client Survey was only offered in English and Spanish. Most of the 60,122 completed surveys were administered in English, with other language translations utilized as shown in Table 2-1. Although the survey was offered in multiple languages, a client's ability to take the survey in a particular language was dependent on the recruitment and availability of bilingual data collectors. Data collectors were responsible for inviting sampled clients to take the survey and collecting verbal consent; consequently, limited bilingual data collector availability may have precluded some clients from taking the survey.

Table 2-1.   Client surveys administered by language

Language administered	Count	Percentage
English	55,818	92.8%
Mandarin Chinese	101	0.2%
Russian	70	0.1%
Spanish	4,027	6.7%
Vietnamese	106	0.2%
Unweighted total	60,122	100%

2.4.2   Client Data Collection Procedures

In early April 2013, Westat released the food bank sampling plans to the HSCs so they could prepare for data collection beginning in mid-April. HSCs called program staff to discuss visit logistics and formed data collection teams for each visit, with a lead data collector overseeing the equipment and data collection forms. The HSCs were instructed to make these preparations about two weeks before the program visit. For the sampled programs, the assignment of survey day/hours was randomized based on information about the program's days and hours of operation provided in the Agency Survey. Because of incomplete or inaccurate responses to these items, in many cases, the program was not in operation during the assigned survey day/hours. Additionally, in some cases, it was not feasible for the food bank to arrange for data collection to occur during the assigned survey day/hours (e.g., due to resource limitations or weather-related issues). If the HSC discovered that a visit could not be conducted during the assigned day/time, a prespecified procedure was used to assign a replacement survey day/hours.[28] Up to two replacements were permitted before a visit was finalized as "nonresponse," and the data collection did not take place.[29]

Sampling of clients at the programs was carefully specified to achieve seven to eight sampled clients at each program visit. The overall target number of sampled clients was designed to yield a prespecified target number of 70,000 completed Client Surveys, with the assumption that five percent of clients would be ineligible and 75.0 percent of eligible clients would complete the Client Survey. On the day of a program visit, data collectors sampled clients waiting for services and invited those who were sampled to participate in the survey.

For those clients who agreed to participate, data collectors described all survey activities, informed clients that risks were minimal and the study voluntary, and obtained verbal consent from clients to participate. Data collectors instructed the clients in the use of the tablet and the ACASI instrument before allowing the clients to complete the survey. Some food banks provided modest incentives for participation, such as cash or gift cards worth $10 or less, but not all food banks were able to offer

---

[28] Procedures were designed to be compatible with the initial sampling protocol, such as going on the same day of the week during the following week (for example replacing a Monday with the following Monday), or the same day and week of the following month (for example the first Monday of the month during the following month). The Westat Helpdesk was available to assist with complex rescheduling needs.

[29] Final nonresponse was assigned as a status to any program that was eligible for sampling at the time of the Agency Survey and was sampled, but a program visit did not occur. Reasons for nonresponse included: no longer partnering with the food bank; not open during the data collection period; refusal to participate; visit was rescheduled twice and did not occur; program operates only on an on-call basis; or any other reason an eligible sampled program would not be visited.

incentives to clients. Incentives, when provided, were distributed after participation, but were not dependent on full survey completion.

After the close of each program visit, the lead data collector was required to complete a Site Survey for the program. The Site Survey provided a summary of the results of each data collection visit, documenting key variables related to sampling including data collection start and end times, and adjustments to sampling procedures required by logistics of the visit or program operations.[30] Additionally, the Site Survey included questions on the total client flow during the visit, participation status of each sampled client, and reasons for client ineligibility or nonresponse. Reasons for ineligibility included being a minor, or having cognitive impairment or mental health disability that interfered with the ability to consent to participation. Nonresponse included any reason for nonparticipation by an eligible sampled client. These data were compiled in report format and were made available to HSCs and research team staff. HSCs could also review this information for local monitoring of their data collectors' efforts. A copy of the Site Survey appears in Appendix A.

2.4.3   Client Survey Field Period

Client Survey data collection began on April 17, 2013 and continued through August 30, 2013. As designed, a slow rollout of the Client Survey was implemented in April to allow food banks time to adjust to the data collection effort. Food banks were given fewer assignments from April 17 through April 30, which resulted in smaller numbers of completed Client Surveys at the beginning of data collection (see Table 2-2 for unweighted Client Survey completion information).[31] Due to either available program operation days or the need to reschedule visits, some food banks had no data collection visits during these first two weeks. From May through August 2013 assignments were steady, but rescheduling needs resulted in some scheduled visits being shifted to later in the data collection period.

---

[30] Adjustments were typically required for nontraditional operational circumstances such as programs that opened before the scheduled time, or programs that split clients into multiple lines to wait for services.

[31] A survey needed to have responses to at least 50 percent of the core survey items to be considered complete. Core survey items were those that involved no possibility of valid skips due to survey skip logic. Because the survey had extensive skip logic, 50 percent of core items was deemed the minimum necessary for a survey to yield enough valid data for inclusion in analyses.

Table 2-2.   Completed client surveys by month

2013 Month	Count	Percentage
April 17 through April 30	1,395	2.3%
May 1 through May 31	11,766	19.6%
June 1 through June 30	13,966	23.2%
July 1 through July 31	15,739	26.2%
August 1 through August 30*	17,256	28.7%
Unweighted total	60,122	100%

Although the official data collection period ended in August, six of these surveys were actually collected in September.

2.4.4   Client Survey Resources

As with the Agency Survey, food bank staff and data collectors had access to various resources and support throughout client data collection. Westat's telephone and email helpdesk was operational all hours during which data collection took place. Feeding America staff were on-call during business hours to take any overflow calls that could not be answered immediately by the Westat team. Common questions the helpdesk addressed included how to reschedule an assigned data collection window and how to count and sample clients in nontraditional circumstances, e.g., at a food program with multiple client lines. Feeding America staff also supported food banks with volunteer recruitment, pre- and post-data collection documentation, and bolstering food banks' internal capacities for staff time dedicated to HIA 2014.

In addition to remote support, Feeding America and Westat staff provided on-the-ground technical assistance to various food banks to help ensure the success and integrity of client data collection. The Westat team, which designed the data collector training as well as sampling implementation, observed food bank operations and data collection at 10 food bank locations of varying food bank size and capacity. Following the visits, Westat provided feedback to the food banks to help them improve their methods. Feeding America staff also traveled to 45 food banks and visited more than 100 programs on an as-needed basis to provide supplemental trainings of HSCs and data collectors, to serve as additional data collectors when the food banks were in need, and to help troubleshoot study implementation challenges.

2.5   Response Rates

The response rate is the ratio of the number of units with completed surveys to the number of units sampled and eligible for the survey. For example, the units could be agencies, programs, households, or persons. Response rates can be either unweighted or weighted. The unweighted rate, computed using the raw number of cases, provides a useful description of the success of the operational aspects of the survey. The weighted rate[32] gives a better description of the success of the survey with respect to the population sampled, since the weights allow for inference of the sample data (including response status) to the population level. Both rates are usually similar.[33] All of the unit response rates discussed in this section are unweighted; weighted response rates are given in the Technical Volume.

At the food-bank level, participation in the study was high, with 196 member food banks and PDOs participating in the Agency Survey and 187 participating in the Client Survey. Study participation was offered to each Feeding America food bank, and if the food bank's network included PDOs the member could then elect to extend the offer of participation to their PDOs. PDOs are not members of the Feeding America network directly, but are instead independent nonprofit organizations that are contracted to fulfill all primary food banking responsibilities[34] on behalf of the network member in a defined portion of a member's service area.

For HIA 2014, food bank members were given the option of either participating in the study on behalf of their PDO, in which case the agencies of the PDO were included on the member agency list, or choosing to have the PDOs participate independently. Ten PDOs participated independently and were treated identically to all other participating food banks.[35] For the Agency Survey, 186 of the 202 member food banks,[36] or 92.0 percent participated, in addition to 10 PDOs participating independently. For the Client Survey, 178 of the 202 member food banks participated, or 88.1 percent, as well as nine PDOs. For the remainder of this section, all references to "food bank" include both Feeding America member food banks and PDOs that participated on their own.

---

[32] Weighted rates are computed by summing the weights (usually the reciprocals of the probability of selecting the units) for both the numerator and denominator.

[33] Unless the probabilities of selection and the unit response rates in the categories with different selection probabilities vary considerably.

[34] Food banking responsibilities of PDOs include: Product distribution management; agency relations management; food solicitation; fundraising for hunger-related activities; and media and community relations for hunger-related activities.

[35] PDOs were given separate food bank IDs for the study, and they appear separately in the data files and reports.

[36] At the time of the study, the Feeding America network comprised 202 member food banks.

At the agency level, of the 44,659 eligible agencies listed by participating food banks, 32,677 responded to enough questions on the Agency Survey to be included in the *analysis dataset* for the Agency Survey data. A case was included in the analysis dataset if at least 50 percent of the core survey items that all respondents were eligible to answer were in fact answered. Fewer than 50 percent of these responses provided too little data for the case to be validly included in analyses. Thus, under this definition, 73.2 percent of agencies had analytically complete Agency Surveys.

Standards for including agencies and their programs in the *sampling frame* for the Client Survey were less stringent than the standard for inclusion in the *analysis dataset* described above (i.e., analytically complete Agency Surveys). Agencies were included in the Client Survey sampling frame if their Agency Survey was deemed sufficient for use in sampling, meaning that the agency listed and provided basic information on the survey about at least one eligible food program. At the time of agency and program sampling for the Client Survey, there were 42,878 agencies potentially eligible for sampling, and 35,690 of these (83.2 percent) provided basic information about at least one eligible food program and thus were included in the *sampling frame* for the Client Survey. We sampled a subset of these agencies, resulting in a sample of 15,972 agencies, and then sampled one or more eligible food programs from each sampled agency, resulting in a program-level sample of 16,654 food programs,[37] either meal or grocery, selected for participation in the Client Survey data collection (See Section 2.1.2 for a summary of the stages of sample selection).

In addition to programs identified as ineligible and removed from the sampling frame earlier, a total of 1,419 of the 16,654 sampled programs (8.5 percent) were deemed ineligible for the Client Survey by their food banks because upon further inspection it was determined that they, too, only served ineligible clients (children or persons with severe mental or cognitive disabilities), were domestic violence shelters, or their program logistics precluded data collection from occurring (e.g., home delivery such as "Meals on Wheels"). Of the 15,235 program visits assigned to eligible programs, 12,475 visits (81.9 percent) were completed. The distribution of visits to the two broad types of food programs – meal and grocery – appears in Table 2-3.

---

[37] These 16,654 sampled programs were associated with 16,556 distinct programs, as some large programs had multiple distribution sites included in the sample at the request of Feeding America or the food banks.

Table 2-3.   Unweighted distribution of program visits by program category

Type of program	Count	Percentage
Meal	1,732	13.9%
Grocery	10,743	86.1%
Unweighted total	12,475	100%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey.

An estimated 97,133 eligible clients were sampled during those program visits, and 60,122 clients completed the Client Survey,[38] for a client response rate of 61.9 percent.

During the process of sampling clients at the data collection visits, an estimated[39] 1.6 percent of sampled clients were found to be ineligible. Sampled individuals were deemed ineligible for the Client Survey if they were minors initially misidentified as adult clients, and therefore could not consent to participation, or if the data collector determined that the sampled individual was cognitively impaired in ways that precluded understanding and consenting to participation.

Clients could also be deemed eligible but nonresponse if they refused the survey or wished to take the survey but another factor prevented them from doing so. Tracked reasons for refusal or nonresponse included: the program was closing for the day; the sampled individual was picking up food as a proxy for a client, such as a home health aide, and therefore no client was available to complete the survey; concerns about using the computer technology; having a physical impairment that made completion of the survey too challenging; needing to complete the survey in a language not offered; or other reasons not specified. Other reasons for client refusal were observed by data collectors and noted anecdotally but not tracked. Some clients were unable to complete the survey because they were dependent on another individual for a ride, while others reported needing to leave in order to go to a job, school, or appointment. Still other clients declined, reporting feeling ill or unable to leave their children unsupervised at the time that the survey was offered. These reasons for refusal, as well as other unrecorded reasons, may have introduced some bias into the survey results that is difficult to quantify. Considering responses among all 97,133 eligible sampled clients who were invited to take the survey, females participated at a higher rate than males (65.1 percent vs.

---

[38] Client Surveys were submitted for another 5,088 clients that did not meet the completion criterion of having responses to at least 50 percent of the core survey items that all respondents were eligible to answer. Fewer than 50 percent of these responses provided too little data for the case to be validly included in analyses.

[39] The mechanism used for data collectors to report on the sampling of clients was the Site Survey—a form completed by the data collectors following the program visit. Among the 12,475 completed program visits, site surveys were not completed for 56 of these program visits; thus, for these 56 visits, information about the number of sampled clients and the number of eligible clients among those sampled is missing and must be estimated.

58.6 percent), and nonseniors participated at a higher rate than seniors (69.1 percent vs. 49.7 percent).

2.5.1 Characteristics of Client Survey Respondents

All data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report utilize weighted data, representing and describing the clients in the Feeding America network and their households. From an operational perspective it is informative to know some unweighted characteristics of the actual survey respondents. Survey respondents themselves were not necessarily representative of the full network of clients, but their demographic characteristics can provide insight into the perspective they brought to the survey activity.

Survey respondents were most often adult nonseniors, with the highest percentage of respondents falling into the 30-49 year old age range (Table 2-4). Across both meal and grocery programs, respondents did not tend to be in the youngest age group, 18-29.

Table 2-4.   Survey respondents by age group

Age of respondent	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
18-29	15.5%	10.7%	11.3%
30-49	36.2%	37.6%	37.4%
50-59	22.7%	24.3%	24.1%
60 and over	25.5%	27.4%	27.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Unweighted nonreporting respondents	397	2,774	3,171
Total unweighted N	8,070	52,052	60,122

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q3.

Numbers listed under nonreporting respondents include missing data due to item nonresponse.

Across all programs respondents were more likely to be female than male, but a closer look at the program-specific data shows that this trend is reversed for meal programs (Table 2-5).

Table 2-5.   Survey respondents by gender

Gender	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Female	42.5%	70.4%	66.7%
Male	57.5%	29.6%	33.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Unweighted nonreporting respondents	181	1,091	1,272
Total unweighted N	8,070	52,052	60,122

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q2.

Numbers listed under nonreporting respondents include missing data due to item nonresponse.

Finally, the survey respondents were racially and ethnically diverse (Table 2-6). Although 57.7 percent of respondents were White, the overall group of respondents brings together the perspectives of many different races and countries of origin. Variability in survey respondent race and ethnicity may have been limited by the fact that surveys were offered in only five languages (as described in Section 2.4.1), and even administration in those languages was limited by the availability of data collectors who could recruit participants in their preferred language.

Table 2-6.   Survey respondents by race and ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.4%	3.8%	4.0%
Asian	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%
Chinese	*27.1%*	*20.9%*	*21.5%*
Filipino	*22.9%*	*36.2%*	*34.8%*
Other Asian	*46.7%*	*55.7%*	*47.7%*
Black or African American	24.2%	25.6%	25.4%
Hispanic	10.7%	14.4%	13.9%
Mexican	*60.8%*	*67.2%*	*66.5%*
Puerto Rican	*19.9%*	*11.9%*	*12.7%*
Other Latino/Hispanic	*26.6%*	*24.9%*	*25.1%*
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.0%	0.7%	0.8%
White	61.3%	57.1%	57.7%
Some other race	2.3%	1.5%	1.6%
Multiple race or ethnicity	4.6%	3.7%	3.9%
Unweighted nonreporting respondents	196	1,154	1,350
Total unweighted N	8,070	52,052	60,122

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q4, Q4A, and Q4B.

Respondents could mark more than one race/ethnicity subcategory so percentages may not sum to 100%.Respondents who endorsed multiple races or ethnicities were counted under each race/ethnicity endorsed and under multiple race or ethnicity.

Numbers listed under nonreporting respondents include missing data due to item nonresponse.

Other Asian includes Bangladeshi, Burmese, Cambodian, Hmong, Indian (India), Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Other Asian (unspecified).

Other Latino/Hispanic includes Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Costa Rican, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, Cuban, Spanish American and Other Latino (unspecified).

2.6 Methodological Considerations in Understanding and Interpreting Findings

2.6.1 Changes in Program Types between HIA 2010 and HIA 2014

HIA 2010 focused on pantries, kitchens, and shelters, often known as emergency food programs. HIA 2014 includes numerous other program types, thus broadening the spectrum of programs described and included in data collection. As a result, the program type categorizations have changed in HIA 2014. Food programs, which are included in both the Agency and Client Surveys, are now divided more broadly into those that provide meals and those that provide groceries. See Section 2.1.3 for details of program types. Specific subtypes of programs are described in Appendix B.

2.6.2 Underrepresentation of Children Served by the Feeding America Network

One important focus of the Feeding America network is to address the issue of hunger among children. Consequently, the network provides food to many programs that uniquely serve children, including BackPack Programs, Kids Cafe, Afterschool Snack, daycare, child congregate feeding programs, and others. Although information on these programs for children was included in the Agency Survey, the programs were not eligible for participation in the Client Survey. Children could not consent to participate or provide the type of information sought on the surveys, nor were parents present at the programs to consent or answer on their behalf. Similarly, children present during client data collection at eligible meal programs were not eligible to be sampled or invited to respond to the Client Survey. The study does report on households with children who receive grocery program services, thus including children in the client estimates for grocery programs, but overall the study will underestimate Feeding America's services provided to children.

2.6.3   Survey Respondents, Their Households, and Food Program Clients

In understanding the terminology and units of analysis for the Client Survey, it is necessary to consider the concept of the "client," as the definition varied slightly by program type.

- For **meal programs**, the client is the individual who receives the actual prepared meal or snack on site at the program. For example, an individual attending a senior congregate meal program receives services, but no one else at that individual's home may be a food program client. Consequently, when data collectors counted and sampled clients in meal programs, each eligible individual on site was counted and sampled separately. Sampled individuals served as the respondents.

- For **grocery programs**, every member of the household receiving the groceries may benefit from the grocery products brought home; thus, the entire household, or conceptualized differently each individual within the household, is a client. When counting and sampling clients in grocery programs, sampling was done by counting each household group as one client. If the household was sampled, one adult household member volunteered to serve as the respondent on behalf of the household.

Clients who responded to the survey answered questions about themselves and their households. We report data in Chapter 4 on characteristics of both individual clients and the clients' households, to allow an understanding of both the clients who receive food program services (individual food recipients for meal programs, but all individuals in the household for grocery programs), as well as the background and home circumstances of all clients, regardless of whether the entire household receives services. We continue to report data on clients' households in Chapter 5, encompassing both direct recipients of food program services and members of their households, for meal and grocery programs.

2.6.4   Agency List Challenges

At the beginning of the study, food banks provided information to Feeding America about all their partner agencies (the organizations that operate the food distribution programs). This list was used as the foundation for the frame of agencies to which the Agency Survey was distributed. Respondents to the Agency Survey were then used as the frame for the Client Survey sample. During the course of the Agency Survey data collection, however, the research team discovered that the agency list contained some errors and inconsistencies. In some cases, agencies had been inadvertently omitted from the list. In other cases, the programs that the agencies operated were also listed as agencies themselves, particularly if the food banks distributed food directly to the individual

programs. Although the research teams worked with the food banks to clarify terminology, correct errors, and ensure that data were received on all identified agencies and their programs, it is possible that some food banks may not have listed all the agencies they serve for the purposes of this study. The information in this report is based solely on the agencies and programs that participated in this study.

2.6.5   Volunteer Data Collection Efforts

HIA 2014 is the largest data collection we are aware of in the country carried out by volunteer data collectors. Each food bank's data collector pool varied substantially; whereas some food banks used only food bank staff for data collection activities, other food banks may have relied exclusively on external volunteers, interns, or paid data collectors. Although many data collectors were food bank staff engaged with study activities, the added generous efforts of volunteers made the study possible.

Nonetheless, relying on a volunteer workforce to help implement a complex and lengthy data collection presents inevitable challenges. Unlike full-time professional data collectors who are committed only to that task for months on end, volunteers are often able to give only a limited amount of time scheduled around employment, school, and other commitments. This more limited availability may have resulted in some volunteers not having the opportunity to accrue enough experience to master the data collection activities. Limited volunteer availability also presented a challenge for HSCs who needed to staff program visits to be carried out during preassigned days and times to comply with the sample design. Limited volunteer availability sometimes resulted in rescheduled and missed program visits or in too few data collectors at a visit to implement the procedures as intended, introducing some statistical error into the study data. Thus, while the volunteer workforce made the study possible, the limitations of this approach may also affect the precision of some of the estimates.

2.6.6   Natural Disasters

Natural disasters affected both food distribution operations and survey implementation over the course of the study. Agency Survey data collection was disrupted by Superstorm Sandy, which made

landfall on October 29, 2012. Agencies across several food banks were affected.[40] Some agencies were unable to complete the Agency Survey as they turned their attention to an increased level of emergency food distribution and recovery. Additionally, because some agencies closed permanently or discontinued their services in the wake of the storm, this affected the subsequent Client Survey data collection.

In other areas, individual food banks also had data collection disrupted during the Client Survey field period. A tornado struck Moore, Oklahoma, and the adjacent areas on May 20, 2013. Due to the tornado, that local food bank had to cease client data collection for two weeks. Several wildfires also spread through Colorado in June and July of 2013, resulting in that local food bank needing to cease client data collection for two weeks. In each case, the food banks attempted to reschedule visits when possible. When it was not possible, statistical corrections were implemented to compensate for the missed visits.[41]

2.6.7 Changes from Past Hunger in America Studies to Hunger in America 2014

HIA 2014 marks a departure from past HIA studies in several ways. Each of these departures is important for considering HIA 2014 in context and attempting to compare it to past results. Many of these changes were the result of feedback from previous studies. Readers are encouraged to exercise caution and fully understand the limitations of comparing the two studies before drawing conclusions about the differences between them. The novel features of HIA 2014 include:

- **Inclusion of Additional Program Types.** Whereas previous HIA studies focused solely on emergency food programs, specifically pantries, kitchens, and shelters, HIA 2014 expanded the scope of the study to include both emergency and nonemergency programs. For the first time, agencies were asked to provide detailed information about all of their programs on the Agency Survey, allowing for the inclusion of mobile pantry programs, senior programs, rehabilitation programs, and more in the Client Survey. Although the increase in scope of HIA 2014 required additional commitment from participating food bank and agency staff, it has provided a more representative picture of the services provided in the network and the clients who use those services.

---

[40] Food banks and their agencies in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, and West Virginia were affected by Superstorm Sandy.

[41] Because agencies provide disaster relief whenever their region requires it, these events were treated as random events in estimates and no adjustments were made to account for increased client flow that may result from natural disasters.

- **Meal/Grocery Classification.** The shift to including nonemergency food programs created the need to broaden the category of programs. As described in Section 2.6.1, study findings for HIA 2014 are presented for meal programs and for grocery programs, instead of the former pantry, kitchen, and shelter categories. Although we present some key estimates for clients of pantries, kitchens, and shelters, the shift in design means that even those estimates are not fully comparable with previous years' estimates.

- **Digital Data Collection.** One of the most important changes from past HIA studies was the introduction of digital data collection. As described earlier in Section 2.1.1, both the Agency Survey and the Client Survey were moved to a computer-based administration to allow for greater ease for respondents completing the surveys. The use of skip logic offered only the relevant survey questions to each respondent and a more secure and timely submission of survey responses. Data collectors were available onsite to provide assistance to clients who struggled with the technological component. Other challenges inherent to the use of technology, such as temporary loss of Internet connection, may have affected some surveys, however, the potential for human error was minimized by the change from in-person client interviews to electronic surveys.

- **Additional Survey Language Options.** Given the diversity of languages spoken by Feeding America clients, HIA 2014 offered both the Agency and Client Surveys in additional languages. For the first time, the Agency Survey was translated into Spanish to accommodate any Spanish-speaking agency staff. The electronic Client Survey was offered in five languages: English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese. Previously, the Client Survey was only offered in English and Spanish. The three additional languages were selected based on feedback from food bank staff and recommendations from research experts.

- **Timing Adjustment to Allow for Better Client Sample Selection.** In past HIA studies the Agency and Client surveys were conducted at the same time. For HIA 2014, the Agency Survey was conducted before the Client Survey, allowing agency data to be incorporated into the selection criteria for sampling. Due to this shift client data collection was conducted over spring and summer months, whereas in HIA 2010 the data collection was conducted in the spring.

2.7   Summary of Analytical Approach

The analytical approach in this report makes use of all usable responses from the two surveys. In this section, we review the methodology underlying the descriptive tabulations of the weighted survey data we present.

2.7.1   Weighting Survey Data

At the agency level, 32,677 agencies responded to enough questions on the Agency Survey to be included in the analysis sample for the Agency Survey data. At the client level, 60,122 clients provided enough information on the survey to be retained in the analysis sample.[42] All usable responses to the Agency Survey and Client Survey have been weighted. Survey weights are the mechanism used to inflate the sample to the level of the population. A survey weight is a number that may be viewed as the number of "similar" units in the population that the given sampled unit represents. For HIA 2014, the unit could be an agency, a program, a household, or an individual client depending on the data being addressed. Using clients as an example, a client's survey weight is the number of "similar" clients in the population that the given sampled client represents. As such, survey weights account for the sampling of clients. For example, within a given program visit, if one client out of 20 is sampled, a weight of 20 is used to account for each of the sampled clients representing 20 clients in the population).

Survey weights also account for sample losses (i.e., nonresponse) throughout the stages of sampling and data collection. Across the various sources of data for HIA 2014, those sample losses were in the form of food banks declining to participate in the study; agencies from participating food banks failing to complete the Agency Survey; program visits that did not occur; and clients who did not complete the Client Survey. The total weighted N that appears in each data table in this report therefore is the sum of the weighted number of cases used in that analysis, incorporating both the weighted number of responses and adjustments for sample losses. Further detail on the computation of the survey weights appears in Section 4.1.1, and in the Technical Volume.

Programs covered by these surveys include both emergency and nonemergency food programs. As described previously, the Westat team worked with Feeding America to identify two broad food program type groupings: meal programs and grocery programs (see Section 2.6.1 for descriptions of the program types). Westat developed weights that may be used to produce client count estimates by meal or grocery program type, as well as other characteristics of clients. These weights account for the approach that was used for the Client Survey in sampling meal and grocery programs separately, for seasonal patterns in program utilization, and for client duplication (i.e., multiple visits to programs by the same client).

---

[42] A case was included in the analysis sample if at least 50 percent of the core survey items that all respondents were eligible to answer were in fact answered. Fewer than 50 percent of these responses provided too little data for the case to be validly included in analyses.

2.7.2   Valid Survey Responses

The tables in this report commonly display percentage distributions of valid survey responses. These percentages rely on valid responses, total weighted N, and weighted nonresponse. Valid responses occur when a survey respondent is eligible to answer a question and chooses an answer that is one of the presented response options. Total weighted N is the weighted number of units (agencies, programs, households, or individual clients) who were eligible to respond to a particular survey item, regardless of whether the respondent actually provided a valid response. Consequently, total weighted N includes both answers provided to a question and nonresponse. Weighted nonresponse for the Agency Survey and Client Survey accounts for cases that have missing data due to a participating respondent not answering a question. In the few questions where "don't know" or "I'd prefer not to answer" were presented as response options, endorsement of that option is treated as nonresponse. The percentages in the tables reflect the total weighted number of valid responses in the numerator and total weighted N minus weighted nonresponse in the denominator. In addition to reporting the total weighted N in each table, we report the aggregate of all sources of weighted nonresponse, labeled as "weighted nonreporting" in the tables. In Chapters 4 and 5 total weighted N and weighted nonreporting are only listed for "all households," not for any household subtypes that appear in the tables. These additional household type statistics are available from Feeding America upon request.

Due to skip patterns within the survey, some respondents were not eligible to answer some questions based on their previous answers, and the computerized survey skipped those questions. In such cases the skipped questions are called valid skips. Valid skips are not included in the total weighted N since the respondent was not eligible to answer the question.

2.7.3   Tabular Presentation

In Chapter 3 of this report there are two types of tables presented: agency level and program level. Each table type is specified in the table title. **Agency-level tables** present weighted percentage distributions by type of agency. **Program-level tables** present weighted percentage distributions by type of program operated by the agencies. Percentages in the agency-level tables are percentages of the total weighted number of agencies reporting, and those in the program-level tables are percentages of the total weighted number of programs operated by the agencies. Many of the program-level tables address only food programs operated by the agencies.

In Chapters 4 and 5 of this report, we present data on clients' households and on individual clients. Table titles indicate whether the table is at the level of clients' households or individual clients. **Household data** include the weighted number of households receiving grocery services (since the whole household receives food), plus the weighted number of households of the individual clients receiving meal services (representing the broader household of a single client).[43] **Individual client data** include weighted percentages of individual food recipients, multiplying each grocery household by the number of household members, and including the single food recipients at meal programs.

In some tables we present a measure of central tendency. Given the distribution among responses, the mean—the weighted sum of all particular responses divided by the weighted number of total valid responses—can be skewed by a small subset of extremely large or small values. We therefore rely also on the median and mode as measures of central tendency. The median is the value that divides the ordered distribution in half: 50 percent of the weighted responses have smaller values than the median and 50 percent have higher values. The mode is the value most frequently cited among the valid responses.

All the data in the report are estimates based on survey responses that are weighted to reflect the entire Feeding America network. As an estimate, each percentage has a margin of error such that the true value in the population may be slightly higher or slightly lower than that shown. A 90 percent confidence interval indicates a range of values that contains the true value with 90 percent probability. Appendix C includes the tables from the main text, indicating for each percentage estimate the lower and upper end of the 90 percent confidence interval. For each estimate, there is a 90 percent probability that the true value in the population falls within the displayed interval. All statistical significance indicated in the report is based on the 90 percent confidence interval.

2.7.4   Client Counts

We present estimates for both duplicated and unduplicated client counts. Duplicated counts effectively count the number of times clients are reached through food distributions during a given time period (week, month, or year). These estimates count clients each time they receive food: for

---

[43] In all tables in Chapters 4 and 5, the weight used is a monthly weight reflecting the number of unduplicated individual clients served by the Feeding America network in a typical month, or reflecting the number of unduplicated households of clients served by the Feeding America network in a typical month.

meal programs, that is each time an individual receives a meal; and for grocery programs, each time an individual and their household members receive groceries. The counts include each member of a household for each grocery distribution. Unduplicated counts focus on the number of unique individuals served. Unduplicated counts recognize that any client may visit programs repeatedly, and these counts adjust for repetition. In the unduplicated count, the household that comes every month to get groceries from a grocery program will be counted only once in annual counts. We present weekly, monthly, and annual duplicated and unduplicated count estimates in tables. This information is displayed by program type and by client demographics.[44]

2.7.5   Sampling Challenges and Practical Constraints Affecting Precision of Estimates

There are several additional challenges and constraints on sampling and implementation that occurred during the study. HIA operates as an attempt to balance well-established research methodology with the realities of the logistics of a field data collection in a varied and sometimes unpredictable environment. Consequently, several elements of the study design and implementation must be considered as context in interpreting study findings as they have the potential to affect the nature of the probability sample and the precision of the estimates. Although the study's statistical experts implemented corrections for these sources of bias whenever possible, such corrections cannot completely erase the potential for bias. Thus, while we believe the estimates to be as accurate as possible, they should be interpreted in the context of field data that are rarely as precise as highly controlled, statistically ideal probability samples.

The Client Survey sample design was a probability sample with an allocation of the number of program visits for the Client Survey determined individually for each food bank. The selection of agencies and programs was then done with probability proportionate to size and was designed to ensure that agencies and programs that served the most clients and distributed the most food had the highest probability of inclusion in the sample.

Visit allocation numbers that would be optimal for highly precise national estimates were not practical for implementation by food banks with limited resources for data collection. To ensure that

---

[44] The unique set of weights used to produce client count estimates reflects the dual-frame sampling approach that we employed for Client Survey data collection. This approach permitted independent samples from separate sampling frames for clients serviced by meal programs and clients served by grocery programs. Details on the dual-frame approach and estimator appear in the Technical Volume.

food banks could carry out the data collection as designed allocations were made with input from Feeding America to balance food bank size with operational capacities. Some allocations were reduced or supplemented after the initial sample was drawn if food banks found that they had fewer or greater resources available. This approach ensured that assigned program visits would be more likely to be implemented, which is preferable to missed visits due to operational limitations.

Other practical constraints stem from the challenge of implementing Client Survey data collection during the assigned days and times. Although food banks were urged to avoid rescheduling days and times of visits specified during Stage 3 of the sampling process (see Section 2.1.2), it was necessary at times due to misreported hours of operation on the Agency Survey, changes in program food distribution schedules, and challenges related to staffing, equipment resources, and weather. These changes from the randomly assigned windows may introduce some bias in estimates because they are departures from the probability sample design that could not be corrected through weighting.

In the sample design process allocations were further limited to a maximum of one meal program and one grocery program per sampled agency, and one distribution site for multisite programs, to maximize the number of agencies included in data collection.[45] This approach to allocation, while necessary, resulted in varying probabilities of selection of programs and program clients across food banks, potentially affecting the precision of national estimates.

Additionally, some agencies may not have reported on all of their large programs within the Agency Survey. Because the frame of programs eligible for the Client Survey was drawn from those reported in the Agency Survey, agencies and programs not listed were omitted from the sampling frame. In other cases, agencies and programs were listed on the agency list or the Agency Surveys, but the indicators of agency or program size (pounds distributed to the agency by the food bank, or number of clients the programs reported serving) were either missing or inaccurate. At times, this resulted in agencies or programs that were very large yet not sampled. In cases where it was discovered that very large agencies or programs had not been listed or sampled, they were added to the Client Survey sample post-hoc rather than as a part of the overall probability-based sampling selection scheme. At times additional distribution sites were also added to the sample within large programs. In some cases, these additions created exceptions to the rule described above of not more than one meal and one grocery program per agency.

---

[45] Following the HIA 2010 study, an analysis determined that variation between agencies was greater than variation within agencies. Thus, including a larger sample of agencies (rather than a larger sample of clients) would lead to better precision in the survey estimates. Consequently, the decision for HIA 2014 was to include as large a sample of agencies as possible.

Experts at Westat and on the Feeding America Technical Advisory Group worked together to develop procedures to account for these challenges. Further details of the challenges and the solutions implemented appear in the Technical Volume.

Describing the Feeding America National Network **3**

Key Findings

- Feeding America member food banks partner with more than 46,000 charitable agencies. These partner agencies operate more than 58,000 food programs, including nearly 19,000 programs that provide meals for onsite consumption, and more than 39,000 programs that provide groceries for use at home.

- Agencies also provide many other services, including outreach and application assistance to help clients access food-related benefits programs such as the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), nutrition education, and non-food assistance with clothing, job training, or legal issues.

- Programs rely heavily on volunteers. In a typical month, nearly 2 million volunteers dedicate more than 8.4 million hours of their time to hunger relief.

- Approximately 62 percent of the food distributed by the programs comes from Feeding America member food banks, but almost 28 percent of programs reported having less food available than required to meet client needs.

3.1 Feeding America's Network Is Large and Multifaceted

Feeding America food banks and their partner agencies provide food and services to people in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. We estimate that the Feeding America network is currently serving 46.5 million unique individuals in 15.5 million households annually across the United States. The number of clients served and other findings from the Client Survey are further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Feeding America carries out this work through the coordinated efforts of its food banks, their partner agencies, and the food programs operated by those agencies. This chapter describes the structure of the network, characteristics of partner agencies in the network, the services the partner agencies provide, and the challenges they face in delivering charitable food assistance, as reported on the Agency Survey.

3.1.1 Organization of the Network

As described in Chapter 1, the Feeding America national office solicits donations of food, grocery items, and funds for network food banks. Food banks are charitable, nonprofit organizations that

solicit and store donated food until it is distributed to charitable agencies that serve people in need in their service areas. Together, Feeding America and member food banks raise awareness about the issue of hunger; advocate on behalf of food insecure people; and support programs and services that help people access the food they need.

Like the structure of the Feeding America network, food banks each have a network of partner agencies to which they distribute food. Agencies are typically nonprofit or religious organizations that vary substantially in size and scope and operate one or more emergency or nonemergency food programs. These programs are the mechanism for distribution of food directly to individuals in need. In addition to distributing food through their partner agencies, some food banks also distribute food directly to people through their own programs. For the purposes of Hunger in America 2014 (HIA 2014), food programs are categorized into meal programs, which provide prepared meals or snacks on site or in the client's home; and grocery programs, which distribute nonprepared foods, groceries, and other household supplies for off-site use such as for preparation in the client's home.

As of October 2012, the Feeding America network had 202 member food banks. Of these, 186 participated in the HIA 2014 Agency Survey data collection, and 178 continued participation through the Client Survey data collection. An additional 10 PDOs participated independently of their network member food bank partners during the Agency Survey data collection, and nine of those PDOs continued on through the Client Survey data collection. A map of the service areas of all Feeding America food banks appears in Figure 3-1, highlighting the food banks that participated in HIA 2014.

3.1.2   Number and Types of Partner Agencies

At the time of the Agency Survey, the Feeding America network of food banks report partnering with more than 46,000 agencies to help distribute food to clients through their programs. As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.1, all data reported in Chapters 3 through 5 are weighted data. Thus, the data presented in these chapters are based on weights applied to the study sample's data that allow us to estimate the characteristics of the entire network, including both food banks and agencies that participated in HIA 2014, and those that did not.

Figure 3-1. Hunger in America 2014 food bank service areas

Hunger in America 2014
Food Bank Service Areas

Participating Food Bank Service Area

Non Participating Food Bank Service Area

All Feeding America food banks were invited to participate in
Hunger in America 2014. Participating food banks engaged in at
least one phase of data collection.
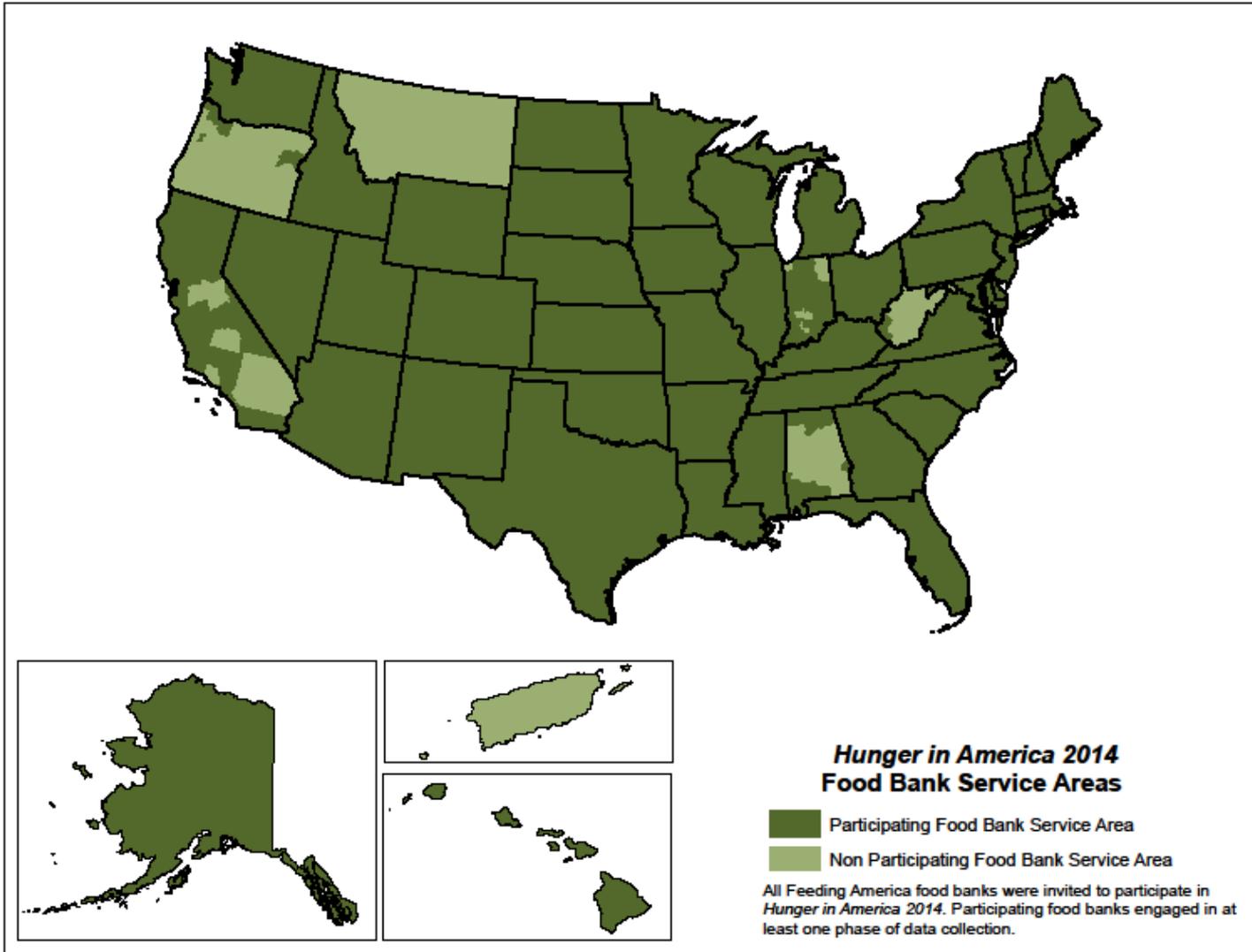
A majority of the agencies are faith based or located in a religious institution.[46] As shown in Table 3-1, religious organizations make up 62.4 percent of the food banks' agencies. The next largest group, at 28.4 percent, is other nonprofit or private organizations that are not faith based. Only 2.7 percent of the agencies are governmental agencies, 3.1 percent are Community Action Programs (CAPs), and 3.3 percent are another type of agency that does not fit into any of the other categories. CAPs provide services, assistance, and other activities aimed at reducing poverty in the community. Governmental agencies include state and/or local government agencies that are not a CAP. More than 90 percent of food banks' agencies are nonprofit and private organizations, either faith based or other nonprofit.

Table 3-1.   Distribution of agencies by subtype

Type of agency	Percentage
Community Action Program (CAP)	3.1%
Faith based or located in a religious institution	62.4%
Governmental agency	2.7%
Some other nonprofit or private organization	28.4%
Other	3.3%
Total	100%
Weighted nonreporting agencies	223
All agencies weighted N	46,117

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q1. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

Some other nonprofit or private organization may include food banks, social service agencies, or other nonprofits unaffiliated with religious or governmental entities. "Other" was a separate response option on the survey.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

---

[46] As part of their contract with Feeding America, member food banks agree to prohibit discrimination in the provision of services by their member agencies.

3.1.3 Types of Programs Operated by the Agencies

Agencies serve clients through a variety of food and non-food programs. Table 3-2 shows the percentage of agencies operating different types of programs. As described in Chapter 2, agencies could operate food or non-food programs. Food programs can be divided more broadly into those that provide meals and those that provide groceries. Non-food programs include food-related benefits programs and other non-food programs. Food-related benefits typically involve outreach, education, information and referrals, and/or application assistance to obtain federal or state food assistance benefits; they also encompass nutrition education programs, such as workshops on healthy eating. Other non-food programs have a primary purpose other than meal programs, grocery programs, or food-related benefit programs such as clothing/furniture assistance; legal assistance; job training; or financial assistance, such as assistance with taxes or budgeting education.

Most agencies (64.9 percent) report having food programs only, 3.5 percent of agencies report non-food programs only, and 31.6 percent of agencies report having both food and non-food programs (Table 3-2). Among agencies with food programs, 24.9 percent of agencies operate only meal programs, 65.5 percent operate only grocery programs, and 9.5 percent of agencies operate both meal and grocery programs (Table 3-3).

Table 3-2. Distribution of agencies by food or non-food programs

Type of agency	Count	Percentage
Agencies with food programs only	29,454	64.9%
Agencies with both food programs and non-food programs	14,354	31.6%
Agencies with non-food programs only	1,566	3.5%
Total	45,374	100%
Weighted nonreporting agencies	744	
All agencies weighted N	46,117	

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

The category "non-food programs" comprises "food-related benefits" as well as other non-food programs. Food-related benefits programs provide resources that enable individuals in need to procure meals, groceries, or nongrocery products. Other non-food programs have a primary purpose other than assistance with food/benefit procurement, e.g., assistance with clothing.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Table 3-3.   Distribution of agencies by meal or grocery programs, among agencies with food programs

Type of agency	Count	Percentage
Meal programs only	10,925	24.9%
Grocery programs only	28,709	65.5%
Both meal and grocery programs	4,173	9.5%
Total	43,808	100%
All agencies weighted N	43,808	

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Estimates are based on participating agencies' listings of the type of program for each program they operate, weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating agencies and food banks. Because only listed programs were available, no count or estimate of programs not reported by participating agencies is possible. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Looking more closely at the distribution of programs across the entire network (Table 3-4), grocery programs comprise 41.1 percent of total programs, followed by other non-food programs (37.0 percent), meal programs (19.9 percent), and food-related benefits programs (2.0 percent). Grocery programs are more than twice as common as meal programs within the network (Figure 3-2). In total, an estimated 58,093 food programs are operating within the Feeding America network. This number, however, does not reflect the number of distribution sites the programs operate. These distribution sites range from single sites to hundreds of sites.

Table 3-4.   Distribution of programs by type of food or non-food program

Type of program	Percentage
Food programs	
Meal	19.9%
Grocery	41.1%
Non-food programs	
Food-related benefits	2.0%
Other non-food	37.0%
Total	100%
All programs weighted N	95,150

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey.

The category "non-food programs" comprises "food-related benefits" as well as other non-food programs. Food-related benefits programs provide resources that enable individuals in need to procure meals, groceries, or nongrocery products. Other non-food programs have a primary purpose other than assistance with food/benefit procurement, e.g., assistance with clothing. See Section 2.1.3 for definitions of program types.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Estimates are based on participating agencies' listings of the type of program for each program they operate, weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating agencies and food banks. Because only listed programs were available, no count or estimate of programs not reported by participating agencies is possible. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Figure 3-2.   Distribution of meal and grocery programs, among food programs

N = 18,967
33%

N = 39,127
67%

⊠ Grocery Programs
‖ Meal Programs
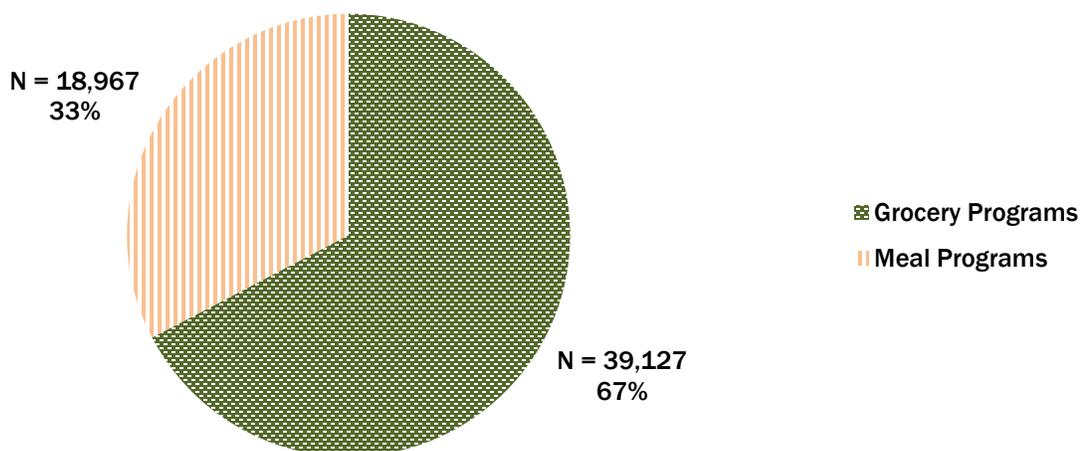
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey.

Total weighted N = 58,093.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

The low percentage of programs offering food-related benefits assistance is striking; however, agencies may be wrapping that type of assistance into the activities at meal or grocery programs, or referring clients to other food-related benefits programs as needed rather than operating programs dedicated to food-related benefits assistance. The large percentage of non-food programs reflects the diversity of ways in which the agencies seek to serve their clients' needs, providing multiservice environments that reach beyond hunger relief.

Agencies provide services to clients through numerous types of meal, grocery, and food-related benefits programs and through non-food programs. Tables 3-5 and 3-6 show the types of meal and grocery programs, respectively, which are offered by agencies in the network. Appendix B provides descriptions of each program type. There are 15 types of meal programs reported (Table 3-5). The most frequently reported meal programs include kitchens (19.8 percent), residential programs (11.5 percent), and Afterschool Snack programs (11.2 percent). Nearly one third of the meal programs serve children (29.8 percent), and 11.6 percent of meal programs serve seniors. Home-delivered meal programs such as Meals on Wheels (5.2 percent) serve a large base of seniors, but other nonseniors such as individuals with disabilities are also eligible for this type of program.

Table 3-5.   Distribution of meal programs by subtype, categorized by program target age group

Meal programs	Percentage
Mixed age group	
Community kitchens	3.4%
Food bank-operated meal program	1.8%
Group home	7.8%
Kitchen	19.8%
Rehabilitation program	3.8%
Residential program	11.5%
Shelter	8.4%
Transitional housing	2.1%
Subtotal	58.6%
Children	
Afterschool snack	11.2%
Child congregate feeding programs (non-Kids Cafe)	3.0%
Day care	7.3%
Kids Cafe programs	3.7%
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	4.6%
Subtotal	29.8%
Seniors	
Home-delivered meal (or Meals on Wheels)	5.2%
Senior congregate meal	6.4%
Subtotal	11.6%
Total	100%
All meal programs weighted N	18,967

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

Programs serving seniors may in some cases serve nonseniors as well.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Estimates are based on participating agencies' listings of the type of program for each program they operate, weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating agencies and food banks. Because only listed programs were available, no count or estimate of programs not reported by participating agencies is possible. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.*

Table 3-6.   Distribution of grocery programs by subtype, categorized by program target age group

Grocery programs	Percentage
Mixed age group	
Community gardens	1.1%
Food pantries	80.9%
Home-delivered grocery program	2.3%
Mobile pantries/mobile markets	3.7%
School pantry programs	0.5%
Subtotal	88.5%
Children	
BackPack Programs	4.2%
Subtotal	4.2%
Seniors	
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	4.5%
Senior brown bag/food box distribution	1.2%
Senior grocery program	1.4%
Senior mobile pantry/just-in-time delivery	0.2%
Subtotal	7.3%
Total	100%
All grocery programs weighted N	39,127

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

The Agency Survey listed three types of pantries noted here under food pantries: Food bank operated pantries, food pantries, and other pantries.

Programs serving seniors may in some cases serve non-seniors as well.

CSFP is administered by states. Not every state is authorized to operate CSFP. Currently CSFP is authorized to operate in 39 states, the District of Columbia, and two Indian Tribal Organizations.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Estimates are based on participating agencies' listings of the type of program for each program they operate, weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating agencies and food banks. Because only listed programs were available, no count or estimate of programs not reported by participating agencies is possible. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.*

There are 10 types of grocery programs reported. The most commonly reported grocery programs serve a span of age groups, with food pantries being the most frequently reported grocery program (80.9 percent). In contrast to the 29.8 percent of meal programs that serve children and 11.6 percent of meal programs that serve seniors, only 4.2 percent of grocery programs serve children (BackPack Programs 4.2 percent) and 7.3 percent of grocery programs serve seniors (CSFP 4.5 percent; Senior brown bag/food box distribution 1.2 percent; Senior grocery program 1.4 percent; Senior mobile pantry/just-in-time delivery 0.2 percent), although children and seniors could certainly be served by mixed-age programs as well.

Federal or local programs that fund meals or groceries, such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are not listed under meal or

grocery programs because these program types represent specific funding sources rather than food program types. Although agencies may operate such programs, they would do so by listing the type of program through which they distribute the actual food, such as listing a daycare as type of meal program operated under the funding mechanism of CACFP. Agencies may also provide assistance to clients in applying for benefits from some of these programs through a food-related benefits program.

Food-related benefits programs provide services such as outreach, education, referral, and/or application assistance. Four out of five food related-benefits programs are federal assistance programs (i.e., SBP, NSLP, SNAP, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children [WIC]). Two are aimed solely at assistance with benefits for children (SBP and NSLP outreach), and one is aimed at assistance with benefits for pregnant and postpartum women in addition to children up to age five (WIC outreach). The child-focused programs make up 18.4 percent of the food-related benefits programs; none of the food-related benefits programs are aimed specifically at seniors. The most commonly reported food-related benefits program is SNAP— assistance/outreach (42.1 percent). In addition, 34.1 percent of food-related benefits programs in the network are nutrition education programs aimed at utilizing program groceries and meals and/or improving health.

Agencies also offer a wide variety of services to their clients through non-food programs. The most frequently reported non-food program is clothing/furniture assistance (17.5 percent of other non-food programs); but other non-food programs include general information and referrals, housing assistance, utility and heat assistance (LIHEAP), health clinics, and many other types of non-food assistance. For example, 44.2 percent of the other non-food programs agencies report operating fall under other types of programs beyond those listed on the survey, reflecting the diversity in scope of programs offered, customized to meet the needs of each local population.

3.2   The Agencies' Programs Provide Hunger-Relief Services to Clients

Feeding America's partner agencies and their programs are on the forefront of service delivery. As noted in Section 3.1, they comprise a diverse group of organizations offering a broad array of services. They are organized and staffed in ways that allow them to carry out their mission while remaining focused and operating within what is typically a limited budget. They obtain the food they

distribute from various sources including their Feeding America food bank partners, and they distribute these meals and groceries to a diverse client base. Although the agencies and their programs employ creative strategies to manage their clients' needs, many perceive an increasing need for services in their service areas and some report struggling to accommodate client demand.

3.2.1   Agency Oversight and Paid Staff

Agencies are often governed by an oversight body such as a board of directors to ensure that they are meeting their mission effectively. Within the Feeding America network of partner agencies this is particularly true, as nearly 82 percent of agencies report being governed by a board of directors or another formal group that provides advice and guidance on their operations. Thus, most partner agencies are benefitting from organized oversight.

In contrast to the high percentage of agencies with board oversight, only 49.0 percent of partner agencies report having paid staff working for them to implement their mission (Table 3-7). Agencies were asked to report staffing in full-time equivalents on the survey (assuming a 40-hour work week), in which multiple part-time individuals could be recorded as equivalent to a full-time employee to allow for comparability across agencies despite different staffing models. The median number of paid full-time equivalent staff is five, or the equivalent of 200 staff hours per week. These paid staff, however, may or may not have been engaged consistently in food program activities, since many agencies reported providing diverse services. The overall pattern of support for agency missions, therefore, is that most agencies are operating with the advice and oversight of a board of directors or similar committee, but only half have paid staff working on their behalf. Agencies and their programs consequently rely heavily on volunteer efforts.

Table 3-7. Agencies employing paid staff and the median number of full-time equivalent paid staff, by type of agency

Type of agency	Employs paid staff	Median number of FTEs
Community Action Program (CAP)	65.5%	3.0
Faith based or located in a religious institution	31.7%	3.0
Governmental agency	83.3%	5.0
Some other nonprofit or private organization	80.3%	8.0
Other	64.0%	5.0
All agencies	49.0%	5.0
Weighted nonreporting agencies	135	
All agencies weighted N	46,117	

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q3 and Q3A.

Some other nonprofit or private organization may include food banks, social service agencies, or other nonprofits unaffiliated with religious or governmental entities. "Other" was a separate response option on the survey.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

3.2.2   Program Volunteers

On the program level, food programs rely on a large volunteer workforce to ensure that they can serve their clients. On the Agency Survey, respondents were asked to provide information on the number of volunteers in an average month for each program described, and the number of hours total worked by volunteers in an average month for each program. Agency Survey respondents were only asked to report about their program volunteers, so data shown do not include other volunteer activities within the Feeding America network at the agency or food bank level such as agency office staff volunteers or food bank warehouse volunteers. In an average month there are 618,000 volunteers who give time to meal programs, and 1,338,000 volunteers who give time to grocery programs across the entire Feeding America network of food programs, for a total of nearly 2 million volunteers across the entire network in an average month (Table 3-8). In total, these volunteers contribute more than 8.4 million hours of their time in a typical month. Breaking this down to the level of individual programs (Table 3-9), the median number of volunteers at a single program in a typical month is slightly higher for grocery programs than meal programs: 18 volunteers per month at an average grocery program compared to 12 volunteers per month at an average meal program. Conversely, the median number of hours worked by all volunteers at a typical program per month is slightly higher for meal programs than grocery programs: 80 hours of total volunteer time per month for an average meal program compared to 60 hours of total volunteer

time per month for an average grocery program, with a median of 60 hours per month per program across all food programs that use volunteers.

Table 3-8. Total number of volunteers and total hours volunteered per month, among programs with volunteers

Total number of volunteers and total hours volunteered	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	
Total number of volunteers per month	618,000	1,338,000	1,956,000
Weighted nonreporting programs	0	0	0
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740
Total hours volunteered per month	2,772,000	5,634,000	8,406,000
Weighted nonreporting programs	148	331	479
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q23 and Q23A.

Total weighted N differs across items because valid skips are not included. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Table 3-9. Median number of volunteers and median number of hours volunteered per program in an average month, among programs with volunteers

Median number of volunteers and median total hours volunteered	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	
Median number of volunteers per program	12	18	16
Weighted nonreporting programs	0	0	0
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740
Median total hours volunteered per program	80	60	60
Weighted nonreporting programs	148	331	479
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q23 and Q23A.

Total weighted N differs across items because valid skips are not included. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Programs report that their volunteers are drawn from all age groups – youth, adult nonseniors, and seniors (Table 3-10). Across all food programs, 54.4 percent of the volunteers are adults between the ages of 19 and 59 (60.5 percent and 52.0 percent for meal and grocery programs, respectively).

Overall, 38.2 percent of the volunteers are seniors aged 60 or older (29.8 percent for meal programs and 41.4 percent for grocery programs). A smaller but nonnegligible 7.4 percent of the volunteers are age 18 or younger (9.7 percent for meal programs and 6.6 percent for grocery programs).

Table 3-10.   Age range of volunteers, among programs with volunteers during the past 12 months

| | Type of program | | |
Age ranges of volunteers	Meal programs	Grocery programs	All food programs
18 years of age and younger	9.7%	6.6%	7.4%
19 to 59 years of age	60.5%	52.0%	54.4%
60 years of age and older	29.8%	41.4%	38.2%
All ages	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	167	280	447
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q23C.

Total weighted N differs across items because valid skips are not included. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Programs are often able to obtain the volunteers they need and once volunteers are engaged with a program they tend to stay engaged. More than 50 percent of both meal and grocery programs report no difficulty in obtaining volunteers (Table 3-11). Obtaining them does, however, pose a substantial challenge for a small percentage of programs, as 8.1 percent of meal programs and 6.7 percent of grocery programs indicate having a lot of difficulty.

While there is some level of difficulty in obtaining volunteers, the level of difficulty involved in retaining them is lower. More than 60 percent of programs report no difficulty in retaining the volunteers they have, and few programs report a lot of difficulty in retention. Overall, the volunteer workforce supporting the Feeding America network is a large group eager to offer assistance and committed to the work they are doing.

Table 3-11.   Programs reporting difficulty obtaining and retaining volunteers by degree of difficulty, among programs with volunteers during the past 12 months

| | Type of program | | |
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	All food programs
Degree of difficulty			
Obtaining volunteers			
No difficulty	51.9%	58.0%	56.3%
Some difficulty	40.0%	35.3%	36.6%
A lot of difficulty	8.1%	6.7%	7.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	182	434	617
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740
Retaining volunteers			
No difficulty	61.3%	70.3%	67.8%
Some difficulty	33.9%	26.9%	28.9%
A lot of difficulty	4.8%	2.8%	3.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	265	697	962
All programs weighted N	13,838	35,901	49,740

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q23D.

Total weighted N differs across items because valid skips are not included. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

3.2.3   Sources of Food—Food Bank, Donations, Purchasing

The 58,093 food programs within the national Feeding America network acquire the food they distribute from various sources, including Feeding America member food banks, other food banks, donations, and purchasing to cover gaps. Looking at the sources of the food distributed by food programs (Table 3-12), the majority of the pounds of food come from Feeding America member food banks (61.8 percent of total poundage). Other sources include food that was purchased (21.6 percent of total poundage), donations (12.8 percent of total poundage), and food from other food banks (3.9 percent of total poundage). There are differences, however, between grocery programs and meal programs. For grocery programs, the vast majority of the pounds of food distributed come from a Feeding America member food bank (70.0 percent), whereas for meal programs, less than half of the total pounds of food served come from that source (44.5 percent). A substantial percentage of the food served by meal programs also comes from food that was purchased (42.5 percent). The difference in the percentage of food poundage that is purchased may

stem at least in part from the distribution model of grocery versus meal programs. Grocery program distributions may contain whatever items are currently available from food banks and donations, thus purchasing can be minimized. Meal programs, in contrast, may need to purchase specific supplemental items to prepare complete meals, necessitating more purchasing.

Table 3-12. Average percentage of total food distributed during the past 12 months, by source

| | Type of program | | |
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	All food programs
Source of food			
Donations	10.2%	14.0%	12.8%
Feeding America food bank(s)	44.5%	70.0%	61.8%
Other food bank	2.8%	4.4%	3.9%
Purchased	42.5%	11.6%	21.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	650	805	1,455
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q26. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

Some responses from the survey were collapsed into broader categories for analysis.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

The items that are purchased vary by program type (see Table 3-13). For meal programs, the items purchased by the largest percentages of programs include primarily perishables, paper goods, and utensils: milk, yogurt, and cheese (47.9 percent); paper plates, napkins, and plastic silverware (46.3 percent); meat, poultry, and fish (43.9 percent); and fresh fruits and vegetables (43.7 percent). For grocery programs, even the items purchased most often are purchased by a smaller percentage of programs and include bread, rice, cereals, and pasta (21.4 percent); canned or frozen fruits and vegetables (18.0 percent); nonmeat proteins such as beans, eggs, peanut butter, and nuts (16.9 percent); and meat, poultry, and fish (15.8 percent).

Table 3-13. Frequently purchased items in the past 12 months, by source

Type of item frequently purchased	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	
Food			
Bread, rice, cereals, and pasta	41.0%	21.4%	27.7%
Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables	34.3%	18.0%	23.2%
Fats, oils, condiments, and sweets	28.3%	6.0%	13.2%
Fresh fruits and vegetables	43.7%	10.5%	21.2%
Meat, poultry, and fish	43.9%	15.8%	24.8%
Milk, yogurt, and cheese	47.9%	10.0%	22.2%
Nonmeat proteins – beans, eggs, peanut butter, and nuts	33.6%	16.9%	22.3%
Non-food			
Baby products (e.g., diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream)	9.6%	5.0%	6.5%
Household products (e.g., laundry detergent)	33.7%	8.5%	16.6%
Paper plates, napkins, plastic silverware	46.3%	8.0%	20.4%
Personal care products (e.g., soap, toothpaste, deodorant)	20.0%	8.5%	12.2%
Weighted nonreporting programs	857	1,206	2,063
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q25.

Other response options were occasionally, rarely, and never.

Survey items in this table allow respondents to mark more than one response, thus percentages may add to more than 100%.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

As noted in Table 3-12, food programs also receive food and grocery products via local donations. Common sources of these donations include churches and religious congregations, local merchants and farmers, local food drives, and government programs (Table 3-14). For each donation source listed, more than half of the grocery programs indicate receiving donations from that source. For meal programs, approximately half of the programs report receiving donations from government programs, local merchants and farmers, and churches and religious congregations. In addition, more than one-quarter of meal programs report receiving donations from local food drives.

Table 3-14.   Programs reporting food donations during the past 12 months, by source

| | Type of program | | |
Source of donation	Meal programs	Grocery programs	All food programs
Churches and religious congregations	48.5%	66.4%	60.7%
Government programs	55.4%	65.3%	62.1%
Local food drives	26.3%	51.7%	43.6%
Local merchants and farmers	54.4%	56.1%	55.6%
Weighted nonreporting programs	781	1,002	1,783
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q24.

Some responses from the survey were collapsed into broader categories for analysis.

Survey items in this table allow respondents to mark more than one response, thus percentages may add to more than 100 percent.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

In summary, Feeding America food banks are the largest source of food for programs on average, but programs do still rely on other sources, particularly donations and purchases. Meal programs, in particular, purchase a substantial percentage of the food they distribute.

3.2.4   Language Diversity of Food Program Clients

On the Agency Survey food programs were asked to indicate the language diversity of the clients they serve by specifying the languages their clients speak at home. Although most programs serve English-speaking clients, the majority of food programs report also serving clients who speak languages other than English at home. Programs report that Spanish is the predominant non-English language that clients speak in their homes. Of all programs reported, 99.0 percent serve English-speaking clients, while 61.7 percent serve clients who speak Spanish in their homes. Programs report that other languages commonly spoken at home by clients include Italian, Chinese, and Vietnamese, but many other languages are also indicated, suggesting the cultural and linguistic breadth of the client base. The variability across clients in the network is vast and demonstrates that the need for food assistance crosses many language and cultural groups across the country. For more information on languages that clients report speaking at home, see Chapter 4.

3.2.5   Restrictions on Service Receipt

The Agency Survey asked respondents about any changes in the limitations on the frequency with which clients can receive food. Findings suggest the programs perceive no significant change in the limitations (Table 3-15). More than 8 percent of the food programs indicate that clients can get food more frequently than they could a year ago (5.3 percent of meal programs, 9.9 percent of the grocery programs, and 8.5 percent of all food programs). Approximately 4 percent of the food programs report that clients can get food less frequently than they could a year ago (2.3 percent of the meal programs, 5.0 percent of the grocery programs, and 4.1 percent of all food programs). Overall findings suggest that, for the majority of the food programs, they do not see restrictions on service receipt as having changed.

Table 3-15.   Programs indicating a change in limitations on clients' frequency of use during the past 12 months

	Type of program		
	Meal	Grocery	All food
Change in limitations	programs	programs	programs
Clients can get food more frequently	5.3%	9.9%	8.5%
Clients can get food less frequently	2.3%	5.0%	4.1%
No change in frequency	93.3%	86.3%	88.5%
Weighted nonreporting programs	2,296	2,701	4,997
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q37.

Some responses from the survey were collapsed into broader categories for analysis.

Respondents were asked to indicate yes/no to each type of change, thus percentages may sum to more than 100 percent.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

3.2.6   Programs' Ability to Serve Clients

The Agency Survey collected data about the food programs' ability to serve clients, specifically whether the programs perceive the number of clients served this year as compared to the prior year to have changed, whether the programs have enough food to meet client needs, and whether programs are having to turn away clients for any reason. Overall, programs report that they perceive demand for food programs to have increased or stayed the same in the 12 months prior to the

survey. Most of the food programs report having enough food to meet client needs, and the majority did not have to turn away clients in the prior year.

In terms of the number of clients served in the last year, more than half of the food programs report perceiving an increase in the number of clients in the past year (Table 3-16). In looking at meal programs versus grocery programs, findings suggest that the increase in demand has been perceived more by the grocery programs than the meal programs, as 65.5 percent of grocery programs report an increase in clients compared to the 44.7 percent of meal programs that report an increase.

Table 3-16. Programs reporting changes in the number of clients compared to the prior year

| | Type of program | | |
| | Meal programs | Grocery programs | All food programs |
Volume of clients compared to prior year			
Saw any increase	44.7%	65.5%	58.9%
About the same	48.6%	27.6%	34.3%
Saw any decrease	6.6%	6.9%	6.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	1,911	2,770	4,680
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q38.

Some responses from the survey were collapsed into broader categories for analysis.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

When asked whether programs had enough food to meet client needs in the last year, the majority of programs indicate that they had at least enough food (85.1 percent of meal programs, 66.3 percent of grocery programs, and 72.4 percent of all food programs; see Table 3-17). Nonetheless, almost 28 percent of the food programs report that they had less food than needed in the past year, indicating that, for some food programs, there is still a shortage of food creating a situation where they are not able to meet the needs of all clients.

Table 3-17. Programs reporting the degree to which they had food available to meet needs of clients during the past 12 months

| | Type of program | | |
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	All food programs
Food available to meet needs of clients			
More food than needed	14.4%	14.3%	14.4%
Enough food to meet needs	70.7%	52.0%	58.0%
Less food than needed	14.8%	33.7%	27.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	1,818	2,571	4,390
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q39.

Some responses from the survey were collapsed into broader categories for analysis.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

The Agency Survey also asked programs whether clients were turned away from services in the last year. Of all the food programs, 72.7 percent indicate that no clients had been turned away in the last year (Table 3-18). Among programs that did turn away clients, 32.8 percent report that they frequently or occasionally turned clients away because clients came more often than the program allowed, 30.3 percent frequently or occasionally turned clients away because the clients live outside the program's service area, and 28.7 percent frequently or occasionally turned clients away because they ran out of food or other things the clients needed. A total of 20.6 percent of meal programs and 30.4 percent of grocery programs report needing to turn away clients.

Table 3-18. Programs turning clients away for any reason during the past 12 months

| | Type of program | | |
	Meal programs	Grocery programs	All food programs
Program turned clients away			
Yes	20.6%	30.4%	27.3%
No	79.4%	69.6%	72.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting programs	1,682	2,307	3,988
All programs weighted N	18,967	39,127	58,093

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q40.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

3.3   Partner Agencies Provide Other Food-Related and Non-Food Services

The Feeding America network's mission to relieve hunger is accomplished not only through food provision but also through the provision of services. Agencies and programs are vital parts of the social safety net in many communities; as such, they connect clients to information about other social services and help them navigate the often confusing process of accessing benefits. These roles have become particularly important during the recent recession, when so many households have struggled with new and deepening poverty. In addition to delving in depth into the food programs operated by the agencies, HIA 2014 probed agencies and programs about their provision of food-related benefits and non-food services.

As noted in Section 3.1.3, partner agencies provide many different types of food-related benefits programs and non-food services. Food-related benefits include outreach, education, referral, and/or application assistance with federal programs such as SBP, NSLP, SNAP, and WIC, as well as many different types of nutrition education programs for clients. Non-food services include assistance with clothing, furniture, health, housing, legal issues, taxes, and more, both in the form of helping clients find needed resources, and helping them navigate government applications and requirements.

3.3.1   Services Related to Government Programs

Many food program clients also qualify for or are already receiving government aid (see Chapter 5 for more detail). One nutrition program serving many of the Feeding America network clients is SNAP. SNAP is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but each state is responsible for distributing the SNAP benefits used to buy food. As of May 2013, more than 15 percent of the U.S. population was receiving SNAP benefits.[47]

The process of applying for SNAP and maintaining benefits can be confusing for many. Eligibility is determined by income and—in some states—assets; and there are additional requirements for employment and citizenship for certain categories of recipients.[48] Further, regulations governing

---

[47] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. "Program Data: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program." See http://www.fns.usda.gov/PD/SNAPmain.htm.

[48] Esa Eslami, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. (2011). "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2010," *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series*. Report No. SNAP-11-CHAR.

eligibility, the process of applying, and the requirements for recertification vary across states.[49] Although some states are moving toward an easier application process, applications are still lengthy and confusing for many individuals and families.[50] Maintaining benefit receipt is also challenging, as beneficiaries must recertify their eligibility at regular intervals.[51]

Many Feeding America agencies help clients navigate these procedures (Table 3-19). In HIA 2014, 22.7 percent of agencies report offering help to clients in screening for SNAP eligibility; 25.0 percent report offering aid for the application itself. Education about SNAP is even more common, with 35.6 percent providing information. Finally, 17.6 percent of agencies report providing help in recertification for SNAP.

Table 3-19. Agencies providing services related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and subtypes of services offered

Type of SNAP service	Percentage
Agencies that provided any SNAP-related services	39.7%
Application assistance[a]	*25.0%*
Education about the program[a]	*35.6%*
Recertification for the program[a]	*17.6%*
Screening for eligibility[a]	*22.7%*
Agencies that did not provide any SNAP-related services	60.3%
Weighted nonreporting agencies	222
All agencies weighted N	46,117

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q10.

[a]Percentages are of those agencies offering SNAP-related services. The survey allowed respondents to mark all SNAP services that they provide, thus percentages do not sum to the total percentage that provide any SNAP services.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

In general, agencies provide help as needed to clients, rather than offering SNAP-related services to all clients at intake (Figure 3-3). Across all types of agencies, 34.2 percent offer SNAP-related services to all clients, and 65.8 percent offer services only to selected clients.

---

[49] For more information, please see the USDA's SNAP Policy Database: http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/snap-policy-database.aspx#.U5WxifldXLA.

[50] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2014). "SNAP: Online: A Review of State Government SNAP Websites." See http://www.cbpp.org/files/8-23-05fa.pdf.

[51] Gretchen Rowe, Sam Hall, Carolyn T. O'Brien, Nancy M. Pindus, and Robin Koralek. (2010). "Enhancing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recertification: SNAP Modernization Efforts." *Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series.*

Figure 3-3.   Outreach approach among agencies offering SNAP-related services
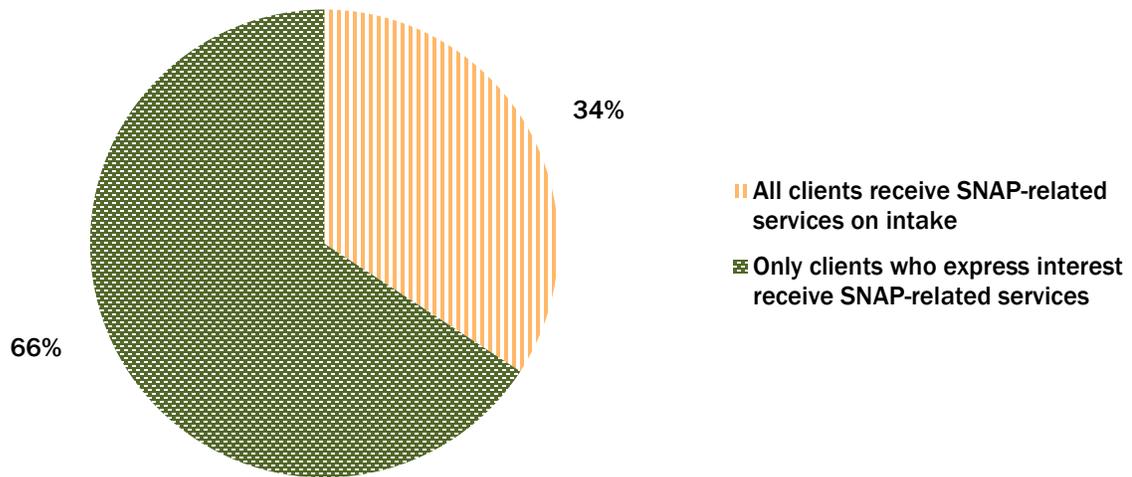
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q10A.

Weighted nonreporting agencies 853; total weighted N = 18,198.

Of course, not all agencies provide SNAP-related services, as these services require a significant investment of agency resources (Figure 3-4). Those who do not offer the services most commonly cite a more narrow mission as their reason; 78.6 percent of agencies not providing services report that SNAP is not a part of what their agency does. Of those reporting other impediments, 65.3 percent of agencies say that staff-related issues prevent them from providing SNAP services, while 61.0 percent lack physical space or electronic equipment. Finally, 43.4 percent identify lack of time as a reason.[52]

---

[52] Although 60.3 percent of agencies reported not providing SNAP-related services, agencies that do not provide such services directly may refer clients for assistance from agencies that do provide these services.

Figure 3-4.   Reasons for not offering SNAP-related services, among agencies reporting not offering them
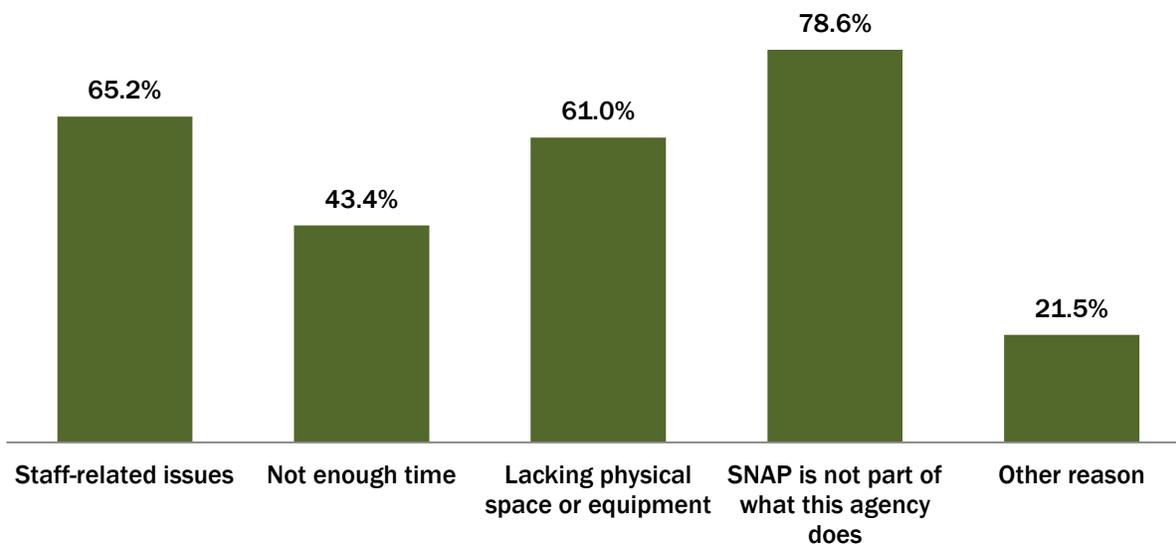
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q10C.

Weighted nonreporting agencies 155; total weighted N = 27,295.

Agencies were asked to mark all reasons that apply. Staff-related issues include not enough staff, lack of staff awareness of SNAP, staff needing more training on SNAP; lacking physical space or equipment includes not enough space for private counseling, and not having the right electronic equipment.

In addition to help with SNAP, agencies may provide information or aid related to other government programs (Figure 3-5). These services related to government programs other than SNAP are less common, but are an important part of the mission of several agencies. After SNAP, Medicaid-related services are the most common, with 29.7 percent of agencies reporting providing some sort of assistance with the federal health care program. Next, 25.5 percent of agencies provide aid with WIC, a federal program which provides pregnant and postpartum women and young children ages 0-5 with nutrition education and vouchers to purchase healthy foods. Some agencies (23.1 percent) also provide help with the Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) program, more commonly known as welfare, while 22.5 percent offer help with housing, such as Section 8 vouchers and other subsidies. Overall, 40.0 percent of agencies report providing assistance with government programs other than SNAP, with 25.0 percent of all agencies reporting that they provide assistance with three or more programs (Figure 3-6).[53]

---

[53] Provision of assistance with these government programs may be underreported if the survey respondents are not familiar with the official names or operation of these programs.

Figure 3-5.   Agencies providing assistance with specific government programs other than SNAP
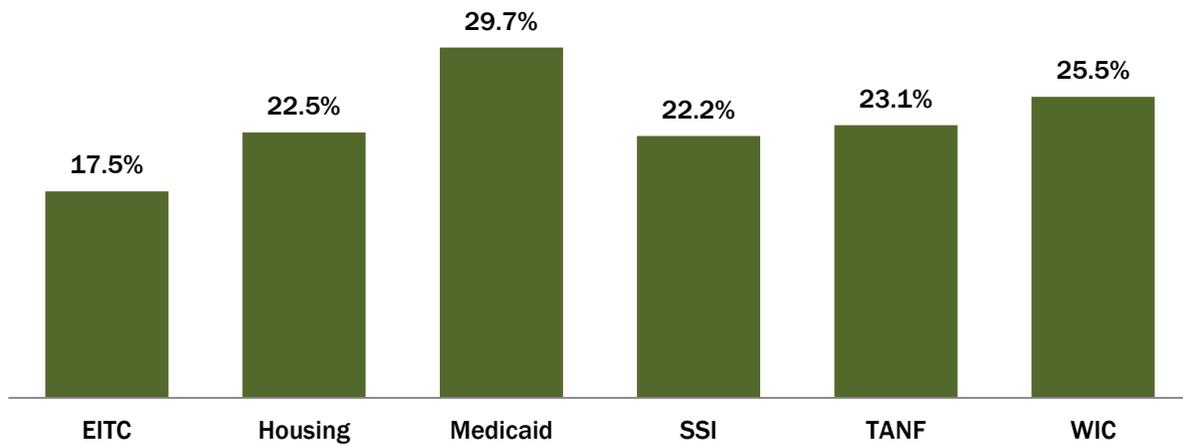
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q12.

Agencies were asked to mark all programs for which they provide services.

Weighted nonreporting agencies 203; total weighted N = 46,117.

EITC – Earned Income Tax Credit.

SSI – Supplemental Security Income

TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

WIC – Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Figure 3-6. Agencies providing assistance with government programs other than SNAP
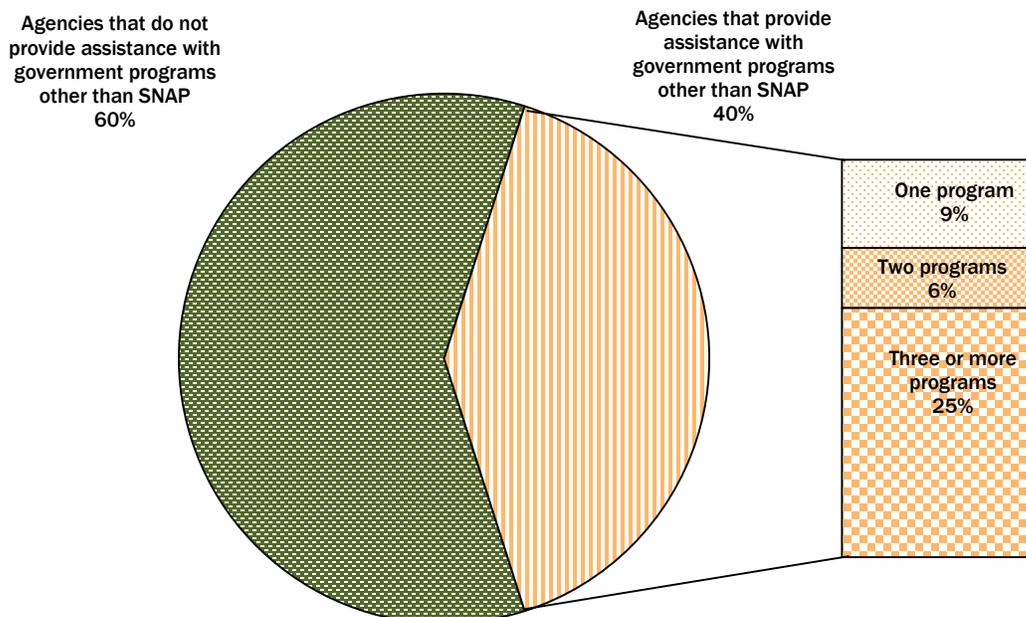
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q12.

Non-SNAP programs include WIC, TANF, EITC, housing, SSI, and Medicaid.

Weighted nonreporting agencies 203; total weighted N = 46,117.

Finally, several agencies also work directly with other federal programs, for example by distributing USDA commodities or operating a child nutrition program. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service operates two commodity programs frequently utilized by hunger-relief agencies, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). In the Feeding America network, 17.7 percent of agencies distribute commodities through the CSFP, which provides a monthly box of nutritious foods. At the time of this study, most (over 97.0 percent) CSFP participants were seniors age 60 and older living in or near poverty; the program also served a small number of low-income women, infants, and children up to age six.[54] Also, 35.7 percent of agencies report distributing commodities through TEFAP, which provides commodities for low-income or homeless individuals through emergency food programs such as pantries, kitchens, or shelters. Finally, 0.9 percent of responding agencies report participating in the Food

---

[54] Since the time of the study CSFP has been changed through Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 11 3-79) known as the Farm Bill, to serve only seniors. See http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/CSFP_Farm_Bill_ Implementation_Memo.pdf.

Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), providing food to Native American families on reservations or other designated areas.

Federal child nutrition programs provide reimbursements for meals served to qualifying individuals rather than directly supplying food for distribution. Feeding America agencies administer two such programs: 5.6 percent of agencies provide a CACFP, and 9.5 percent provide a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). CACFP provides nutritious meals and snacks to low-income children in a variety of settings: daycare centers and child care homes, emergency shelters, and afterschool enrichment programs. CACFP also serves some low-income seniors and disabled adults in adult daycare. SFSP provides meals and snacks to low-income children during the summer when school is not in session.

As part of providing information about available services, many agencies go further by providing information in multiple languages in an effort to reach the local communities. In particular, many agencies have worked to identify and overcome barriers to service receipt in their areas, most commonly in the form of language difficulties (Figure 3-7). Many agencies serve clients who do not speak English or may speak English as a second language (see Chapter 4 for more information on client languages). Previous research has identified lack of English competency as an important factor limiting enrollment in programs like SNAP or other food supports.[55] Among all agencies, 40.3 percent report that they help overcome such barriers by providing information about services in more than one language. Use of multiple languages is particularly common among governmental agencies (58.1 percent) and CAPs (54.5 percent), and slightly less common among other nonprofit or private organizations (48.6 percent) and faith-based agencies (35.0 percent).

---

[55] Gandhi Raj Bhattarai, Patricia A. Duffy, and Jennie Raymond. (2006). "Use of Food Pantries and Food Stamps in Low-Income Households in the United States." *Journal of Consumer Affairs,* 39(2): 276-298; and Susan J. Algert, Michael Reibel, and Marian J. Renvall. (2006). "Barriers to Participation in the Food Stamp Program Among Food Pantry Clients in Los Angeles." *American Journal of Public Health,* 96(5): 807-809.

Figure 3-7. Agencies providing information about services in more than one language, by type of agency
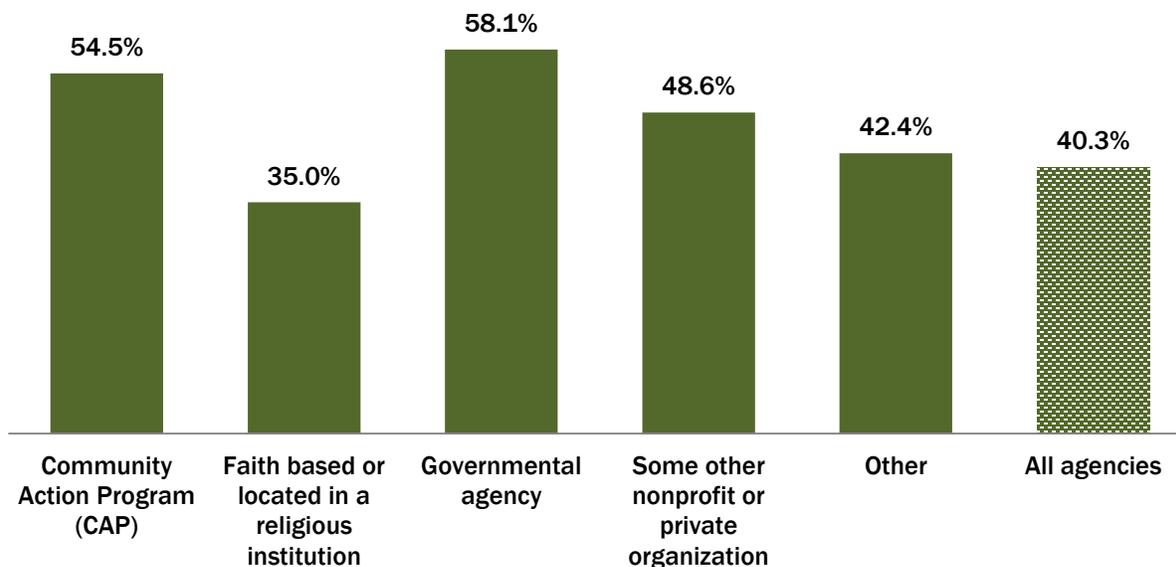
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q18.

Weighted nonreporting agencies 438; total weighted N = 46,117.

In summary, agencies provide a range of services related to other aid programs, showing both the important role that agencies take on in communities and the depth of need of agency clients. This need involves not only poverty and hunger but also concrete barriers to obtaining help, such as language difficulties.

3.3.2 Agency Funding

All of these food, food-related, and non-food programs operated by agencies require significant resources. Agencies in the Feeding America network receive funding from a number of sources, including local, state, and federal governments; individual contributions; corporate support; foundation support; donations from religious institutions; client service fees; and other sources (Table 3-20). On the survey, agencies were asked to detail their sources of support.[56] Results show that most agencies rely on a diversified stream of funding sources. Least common as a funding

---

[56] These sources of support are those that are direct and visible to the agencies, which may differ from sources of support from the food bank.

source are client service fees;[57] 83.0 percent of reporting agencies receive no funding from this source. Similarly, 58.3 percent of agencies receive no government funding, 62.5 percent receive no corporate support, 62.4 percent receive no foundation support, and 40.7 percent receive no funding from religious institutions.

Table 3-20. Agencies reporting level of funding, by source of funds

| | Level of agency funding from the sources | | | |
Source of funding	No funding	Half of total funding or less	More than half of total funding	Total
Client service fees	83.0%	14.2%	2.8%	100%
Corporate support	62.5%	35.9%	1.6%	100%
Foundation support	62.4%	34.8%	2.8%	100%
Government funding	58.3%	23.7%	18.0%	100%
Individual contributions	14.7%	57.6%	27.7%	100%
Religious institutions	40.7%	43.7%	15.7%	100%
Other	68.1%	27.2%	4.7%	100%
Weighted nonreporting agencies				657
All agencies weighted N				46,117

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q15.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.*

In contrast, individual contributions are the most common source of support; 27.7 percent of agencies receive more than half of their funding from these contributions. Second is government funding, with 18.0 percent of agencies receiving more than half of their funding from this source. Religious institutions are third, with 15.7 percent of agencies receiving more than half of their funding from religious organizations. In general, there is a wide variety of different funding combinations, highlighting the different circumstances in which agencies seek and find support.

These funding sources have multiple implications for agencies. First, economic conditions and other circumstances can have a significant impact on the ability of agencies to provide food and services. Although agencies have chosen to maintain their programs' level of food distribution, (see Section 3.2.6) a substantial number of agencies report having to make reductions in other areas such as hours of operation and staffing within the last 12 months (Table 3-21). Staffing reductions

---

[57] Agencies in the Feeding America network are not permitted to charge clients for food. Some agencies, however, may have fees related to other services provided to clients, such as trainings, social activities, or professional services.

are particularly notable since only 51.0 percent of agencies report having paid staff (see Section 3.2.1), and those that do have relatively few full time equivalent staff. CAPs appear to have been the hardest hit: 16.6 percent of CAPs have cut hours of operation, 20.1 percent have laid off staff, and 14.9 percent have limited their service area. Other types of agencies have also faced reductions. For example, 12.3 percent of faith-based institutions have cut hours of operations (4.2 percent have laid off staff and 11.1 percent have limited the service area), while 16.9 percent of other nonprofits or private organizations have laid off staff. No type of agency was immune to reductions.

Table 3-21. Agencies reporting select reductions during the past 12 months

| | Type of reduction | | |
| | Cut hours of | Lay off | Limit service |
Type of agency	**operation**	**staff**	**area**
Community Action Program (CAP)	16.6%	20.1%	14.9%
Faith based or located in a religious institution	12.3%	4.2%	11.1%
Governmental agency	10.4%	13.5%	10.0%
Some other nonprofit or private organization	11.6%	16.9%	10.7%
Other	9.1%	10.3%	9.3%
All agencies	12.1%	8.7%	11.0%
Weighted nonreporting agencies	542	586	700
All agencies weighted N	46,117	46,117	46,117

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q16.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

The survey allowed respondents to mark all that apply, thus percentages do not sum to 100%.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

These reductions are attributed to several different circumstances across different types of agencies (Table 3-22). Among agencies reporting reductions, 61.3 to 74.3 percent of agencies attribute them to less money or food available. Between 29.8 and 43.5 percent of agencies also report needing to serve more clients as a reason for making reductions. Only 18.9 to 23.6 percent of agencies cite a change in what the agency does as resulting in the reductions. Overall, 23.6 percent of agencies report making at least one type of reduction.

Table 3-22.   Agencies reporting select reasons for making reductions, among agencies that reported reductions during the past 12 months

	Type of reason		
Type of agency	Less money or food available	Need to serve more clients or give out more food	Change in what the agency does
Community Action Program (CAP)	74.0%	38.6%	23.6%
Faith based or located in a religious institution	74.3%	43.5%	19.9%
Governmental agency	63.7%	31.8%	23.2%
Some other nonprofit or private organization	73.3%	29.8%	18.9%
Other	61.3%	32.0%	20.2%
All agencies	73.3%	38.2%	19.9%
Weighted nonreporting agencies	242	525	623
All agencies weighted N	10,884	10,884	10,884

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q16A.

Total weighted N differs across items because valid skips are not included.

The survey allowed respondents to mark all that apply, thus percentages do not sum to 100%.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.

Among agencies that have needed to make reductions in the past 12 months, there is some concern on their part about their ability to continue to provide services (Figure 3-8). Over half of agencies that made reductions report being "somewhat" or "very worried" about being able to continue to provide services. Level of worry is highest among CAPs (where 52.5 percent are somewhat worried and 25.3 percent are very worried), and it is also the group with the highest level of service reductions. Faith-based institutions express the least concern, but even here, 21.4 percent are very worried and 43.5 percent are somewhat worried.

Figure 3-8. Agencies reporting level of anxiety associated with continuing to provide services, among agencies that reported reductions during the past 12 months
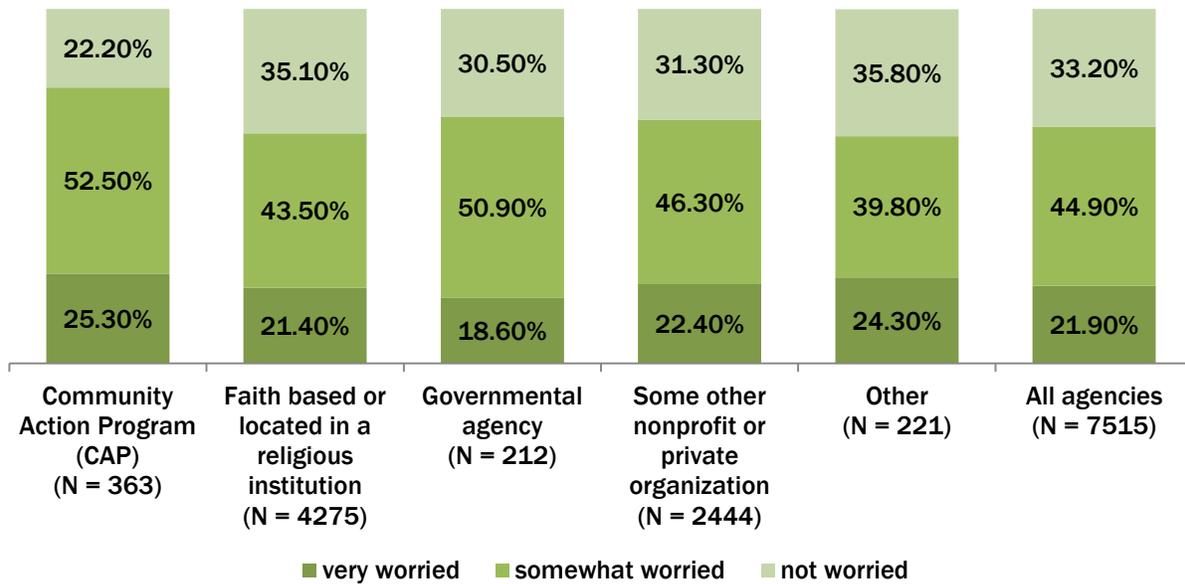
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q16B.

Weighted nonreporting agencies 120; total weighted N = 10,884.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

When these worries are broken down more specifically, several themes emerge (Table 3-23). Among those agencies with reductions that also report being somewhat or very worried about being able to continue to provide services, 55.7 percent of agencies report that not having enough money is a major threat to continuing to provide services. It is, in fact, the most common "major threat" identified. Not having enough food supplies is another problem, identified by 27.8 percent of agencies as a major threat. Less pressing is leadership and board support, and community needs and support. Only 3.4 percent of agencies say that lack of community need is a major threat, while 89.1 percent say it is no threat at all. Other problems identified as somewhat of a threat or a major threat by at least a quarter of agencies include not enough volunteers, not enough money for transportation or other transportation problems, and building or location problems.

Table 3-23. Agencies reporting challenges associated with continuing to provide services, among agencies that reported reductions during the past 12 months

	Level of threat				
Type of threat	Major threat	Somewhat of a threat	Minor threat	Not at all a threat	Total
Not enough money	55.7%	33.1%	8.8%	2.3%	100%
Not enough food supplies	27.8%	36.9%	22.3%	13.1%	100%
Not enough paid staff or personnel	17.1%	22.2%	19.5%	41.1%	100%
Not enough volunteers	14.6%	23.5%	27.2%	34.7%	100%
Not enough money for transportation or no good vehicle to pick up products at the food bank	17.9%	22.3%	21.7%	38.1%	100%
Building or location problems	11.0%	16.7%	22.7%	49.6%	100%
Not enough leadership/board support	3.9%	10.2%	19.0%	66.9%	100%
Not enough community support	6.1%	18.3%	28.8%	46.8%	100%
Community doesn't need this program	3.4%	2.4%	5.0%	89.1%	100%
Weighted nonreporting agencies					19
All agencies weighted N					7,223

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Agency Survey, Q16C.

Total weighted N differs slightly across items.

Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting agencies or programs include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating agencies or their programs. All estimates are weighted to account for survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks and agencies. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips.*

Overall, these concerns and the number of reductions in service faced by agencies highlight the challenging position in which many organizations find themselves. As many have seen the volume of clients seeking food and services increase, the availability of funding and resources has in many cases decreased. In the next sections, we discuss this tension in greater detail as we report on the complex needs of Feeding America clients and their households, as reported on the HIA 2014 Client Survey.

Characteristics of Feeding America Clients and Their Households $\boxed{4}$

Key Findings

- The Feeding America network provides food assistance to an estimated 46.5 million unique clients in 15.5 million households annually. Many of these clients seek services repeatedly throughout the year.

- Clients and their households are diverse, including many different racial and ethnic groups and education levels, and ranging in age from infants to seniors. Thirty-nine percent of households contain at least one child, and 33 percent contain at least one senior.

- The Feeding America network serves client households with military service members. Twenty percent of households include at least one member who has ever served in the U.S. military.

- The majority (93 percent) of client households reside in nontemporary housing, such as houses or apartments. One in 15 households lives in temporary housing, such as a shelter, mission, or on the street. Many respondents have experienced recent housing transitions, with 27 percent having lived in two or more places in the past year, and 16 percent having experienced foreclosure or eviction in the past five years.

- In 23 percent of households, the person employed the most in the past 12 months is currently unemployed. In an additional 42 percent of households, the most employed person of the past 12 months is now out of the workforce and not looking for work, often due to age, poor health, or disability. Among households with employment in the past 12 months, more than half (57 percent) are employed only part-time.

- Many households report health concerns. In 33 percent of households, a member has been diagnosed with diabetes, and in 58 percent of households a member has high blood pressure. In 23 percent of households, no one has health insurance coverage, and 60 percent of households have unpaid medical bills.

- Most households are subsisting on very little income. Seventy-two percent of client households fall at or below 100 percent of the poverty level.

In this chapter we present background information on Feeding America clients and their households through an exploration of their characteristics and circumstances. We illuminate both the diversity of clients' households, and the challenges and barriers they face to ensuring they have sufficient food to meet their needs and those of their household members. We begin by presenting estimates of the number of clients using the Feeding America network in a typical week, month, and year. We

---

estimate both duplicated counts, representing the total number of times clients are reached through food distributions in a given period of time, and unduplicated counts, representing the total number of unique individuals served in that period. We then discuss demographic characteristics of the unduplicated (unique) individuals served annually. Next we move to characteristics of the households of Feeding America clients, to describe the home circumstances of all clients who use the Feeding America network, regardless of whether others who share the household also receive Feeding America services. We address household demographics and housing characteristics, employment, potential barriers to employment, and student status of adult household members. We explore health status and medical expenses faced by the households, and conclude with an examination of income and poverty. These results demonstrate the diversity of the population that the Feeding America network serves, as well as differences between those who participate in the two main types of food programs, meal and grocery. As mentioned in Section 2.1.3, results are presented for meal and grocery programs separately because we expect different patterns may emerge between clients of meal programs and clients of grocery programs.

Data from this chapter are drawn from the Client Survey. The initial sections of this chapter describe Feeding America clients, and those data are weighted to provide national estimates of the number of clients who receive services through the Feeding America network weekly, monthly, and annually. Individual client demographic characteristics are weighted based on the number of unduplicated clients served in a year, and are shown separately for clients of meal programs, grocery programs, and all food programs, both meal and grocery.

Unless otherwise indicated, subsequent data in this chapter are weighted to provide national estimates of clients' households. The weighted household estimates are based on the number of unduplicated households, in a typical month, in which someone from the household is served by a Feeding America food program. The percentages presented in the tables are percentages of client households. As with the individual client data, results are shown for client households of meal programs, grocery programs, and all food programs, both meal and grocery. Because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs, meal program numbers and grocery program numbers in tables do not sum to all food program numbers.

We present the data for all households that include at least one Feeding America client and, as appropriate, for additional household compositions of interest: households with at least one child, households with at least one senior, households with at least one child and one senior, and

households with no children or seniors. Children are defined as those under 18 years old, and seniors are defined as those 60 years old and older.

We explore statistically significant differences between meal and grocery client households where applicable to illuminate the ways in which clients who are reached through these types of food programs may differ in their backgrounds and needs. Similarly, we explore statistically significant differences between the household compositions of interest to highlight the ways in which different types of households, and particularly those containing children or seniors, have different needs and resources. Appendix C of this report contains the 90 percent confidence intervals for data in the report tables. Where statistically significant differences are reported between subgroups of clients or client households, the determination of statistical significance is based on the 90 percent confidence intervals. Where possible, we also present information in the text from relevant national surveys sponsored by the federal government, to place the Hunger in America 2014 (HIA 2014) findings in context.

4.1   Estimating Clients Served by Feeding America

Estimating the duplicated and unduplicated counts of clients served by Feeding America is an important way of quantifying the reach of the Feeding America network:

- **Duplicated counts** are estimates of the number of times clients are reached through Feeding America network food distributions during a given time period. These estimates count clients each time they receive food: for meal programs, that is each time an individual receives a meal and for grocery programs, each time an individual and his or her household members receive groceries. The grocery program counts include each member of a household for each grocery distribution. For example, a client visiting a grocery program twice a month, picking up food for his or her household of five people, would be counted as 10 duplicated clients for the month. Similarly, if the same client instead visited a meal program four times in one month, he or she would be counted each time, resulting in four duplicated clients.

- **Unduplicated counts** are estimates of the total number of *unique* clients served by the Feeding America network during a week, month, or year. Clients who report returning repeatedly for service are counted only once in this statistic, providing an estimate of the number of unique individuals helped by the network.

Because grocery programs distribute food to an entire household, but meal programs distribute food to each person present to consume a meal or snack, the unit in which clients may be conceptualized

differs. Entire households are clients for grocery programs, whereas individuals receiving a meal are clients for meal programs. Combining data on household clients for grocery programs and individual clients for meal programs can therefore be confusing. To avoid potential misunderstanding of the client count estimates, we present the information on duplicated and unduplicated clients in two ways: by individuals served and by households served.

When calculating estimates of **individuals** served, we multiply the number of client households receiving groceries by the number of people in each household,[58] expanding the estimate of grocery clients to represent the number of individuals who benefit from the groceries. We leave meal clients at the individual level. This allows meal and grocery clients to be described in the same unit—the number of individuals receiving food.

When calculating estimates of client **households** served, we adjust the estimate of individual meal clients to account for individuals from the same household who receive meal services, ultimately arriving at an estimate of the number of households in which at least one person is served by a Feeding America meal program. We leave grocery clients at the household level. This allows both meal and grocery clients to be described in the same unit – the number of households receiving food.

In the following sections we describe the statistical procedures used in estimating client counts. More detailed information on the estimation procedures appears in the Technical Volume.

4.1.1   Method for Computing Client Count Estimates

Duplicated Client Count Estimates

Duplicated client count estimates—the number of times clients are reached through food distributions in a given period of time—are computed by combining data from all stages of sampling (see Figure 2-2 for details) with a series of adjustments to account for the timing of data collection. These adjustments include calculations that take into consideration whether the data collection occurred at an ebb or flow in the annual cycle of services available, and correct for that. As described in the preceding section, an additional adjustment is then applied to allow all the data to

---

[58] Respondents were asked to report their household size in Question 1 of the Client Survey.

be transformed to either individual or household units. This process is expanded upon in the following paragraphs.

For the HIA 2014 estimates initial base weights were first computed. A base weight is a multiplier that, in this case, accounts for the different likelihoods of being selected at each of the stages of sampling (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2, for details of the stages of sampling). At each stage, a sample was drawn from the population, so the effect of the corresponding weights at each stage is to account for the members of the population that were not selected in the sample. When calculating the weights, both sampling of the place and time of the program visit itself,[59] and sampling of clients during the program visit were accounted for. The base weights were also adjusted to account for nonresponse at each stage of sampling. The final base weight for each client respondent corresponds to the number of food distributions the particular respondent represents. Thus, the sum of these weights is an estimate of the total number of times all clients are reached through food distributions at programs in the Feeding America network during the HIA 2014 data collection period. These weights were then adjusted further, using the following factors:

- A time adjustment factor to convert the data from the data collection period to the appropriate reference period (week, month, or year).

- A seasonal adjustment factor, which was the ratio of the average number of days the program was open in a month to the number of days the program was open in the month during which the program visit occurred, to account for whether the data collection month was an ebb or flow in seasonal service.

- The number of household members for grocery clients, to convert number of grocery client households into individuals to allow for estimates of duplicated individuals served; or

- The adjustment to account for individual clients from the same household who receive meal services, to convert the number of meal client individuals into households to allow for estimates of duplicated households served.

The sum of these adjusted weights is the duplicated count, an estimate of the total number of either individual or household food distributions at programs in the Feeding America network during a week, month, or year.

---

[59] Sampling of the place and time of the visit included sampling of the agency, program, and day/time. If a program included multiple sites or vehicles operating during the sampled day/time, sampling at this stage also included sampling a site or vehicle at which to conduct data collection.

Unduplicated Client Count Estimates

Unduplicated client count estimates use the duplicated client count estimates described in the last section as their basis. For weekly and monthly estimates, two additional adjustment factors were applied:

- An unduplication factor that accounts for the number of times the client received services from the same type of program (meal or grocery) in the week/month to remove repeated uses.

- A compositing or overlap factor used only when computing estimates for all program types together that removes the double-counting of clients served by both meal and grocery programs during the specified timeframe.

The sum of these adjusted weights is the weekly or monthly unduplicated client count, an estimate of the total number of either individuals or households served by programs in the Feeding America network during a week or month.

Because it is difficult for people to report accurately on intermittent activities taking place during the previous 12 months, we used a different approach in estimating annual unduplicated client counts that paralleled that used in the Hunger in America 2010 (HIA 2010) report. A "newcomer rate" was estimated separately for meal and grocery programs. The newcomer rate was defined as the proportion of clients who indicated on the survey that they were receiving services from that type of program (meal or grocery) for the first time in the past 12 months. This newcomer rate factor was applied to the weight used to compute the monthly unduplicated client count estimates, to estimate the unduplicated number of monthly clients who are newcomers. The annual unduplicated client count estimate was then obtained by summing:

- One month's unduplicated client count; plus

- 11 times the estimated unduplicated number of monthly clients who are newcomers.

This calculation takes a month of unduplicated clients and adds the estimated number of new clients who would receive services each month through the rest of the year, resulting in an estimate of the total number of unique (unduplicated) clients in a year.

4.1.2   Estimates of Clients in the Feeding America Network

In this section we present the duplicated and unduplicated client count estimates for the Feeding America network (Table 4-1). The table includes individual clients and households served for all programs and individual clients for meal and grocery programs,[60] for a typical week, month, and the full year. Because the numbers of clients served are estimates based on a sample, they have an associated margin of error that includes sampling error. Each of these estimates of the number of clients has a margin of error displayed underneath. The 90 percent confidence interval is the estimate plus or minus the margin of error. Although we believe the client count estimates best represent the data, the margins of error and confidence intervals are the range of numbers in which we can say, with 90 percent confidence, that the true client counts fall.

Using the duplicated client count estimation techniques described previously, we estimate that clients in the Feeding America network are reached through food distributions 7.5 million times in a typical week, 32.4 million times in a typical month, and 389.2 million times annually. Looking at the duplicated number of households in which at least one member is served by Feeding America, we find that households are reached through food distributions 2.9 million times in a typical week, 12.6 million times in a typical month, and 151.6 million times annually.

Grocery programs distribute food to duplicated clients 6.0 million times in a typical week, 26.3 million times in a typical month, and 315.3 million times annually. Meal programs, which are much less numerous within the network, distribute food to duplicated clients 1.4 million times in a typical week, 6.2 million times in a typical month, and 73.9 million times annually.

Because these numbers are duplicated numbers, they represent the number of times clients are reached through food distribution, not the unique number of individuals or households served. Using the unduplicated client count techniques we described previously, we estimate the number of unique individuals served by Feeding America across all food program types to be 5.4 million weekly, 17.1 million monthly, and 46.5 million annually. Looking at unique households served, we estimate the numbers at 1.8 million households weekly, 5.8 million households monthly, and 15.5 million households annually.

---

[60] Because the count of all program clients removes double counting of clients who reported using both meal and grocery programs, the counts for meal and grocery do not sum to the total number of clients for all programs.

Table 4-1.   Estimates of the number of clients served by program type

	Weekly		Monthly		Annually	
	Duplicated counts	Unduplicated counts	Duplicated counts	Unduplicated counts	Duplicated counts	Unduplicated counts
Total number of individual clients						
All programs	7,465,000	5,356,000	32,437,000	17,069,000	389,242,000	46,516,000
Margin of error	±318,000	±245,000	±1,382,000	±724,000	±16,589,000	±1,998,000
Total number of individual clients by meal and grocery programs						
Meal programs	1,418,000	656,000	6,162,000	1,772,000	73,938,000	3,298,000
Margin of error	±123,000	±58,000	±536,000	±178,000	±6,432,000	±334,000
Grocery programs	6,047,000	5,084,000	26,275,000	16,621,000	315,304,000	45,938,000
Margin of error	±299,000	±249,000	±1,299,000	±726,000	±15,586,000	±2,015,000
Subtypes of programs[a]						
Pantries	5,895,000	4,890,000	25,615,000	15,900,000	307,376,000	43,950,000
Kitchens	871,000	196,000	3,785,000	382,000	45,425,000	711,000
Shelters	155,000	34,000	672,000	88,000	8,062,000	164,000
Senior	341,000	220,000	1,483,000	680,000	17,799,000	1,805,000
Mobile	335,000	284,000	1,457,000	847,000	17,487,000	2,339,000
Total number of client households						
All programs	2,908,000	1,834,000	12,637,000	5,760,000	151,645,000	15,498,000
Margin of error	±131,000	±71,000	±569,000	±208,000	±6,832,000	±567,000

[a]Subtypes of programs are not exhaustive nor are they mutually exclusive; thus, they do not sum to the total client counts. Confidence intervals for program subtypes can be found in Appendix C.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients.*

We also present the client counts broken down to estimate service within some program subtypes of interest—pantries, kitchens, and shelters as in HIA 2010, programs for seniors, and mobile programs (Table 4-1).[61] As in HIA 2010, the unduplicated annual count of clients utilizing grocery programs (45.9 million) statistically significantly outnumbers that of clients utilizing meal programs (3.3 million). New to this year's study, we also analyzed the unduplicated annual count of clients utilizing senior programs (1.8 million) and mobile programs (2.3 million). The wide use of senior programs demonstrates the high quantity of need among seniors, particularly those who may be subsisting on a fixed income. The large constituency of mobile pantry clients represents an expanding initiative within the Feeding America network to reach people in need who may have difficulty receiving assistance through brick-and-mortar food programs. While looking at Table 4-1, it is important to note that the client counts at program subtypes are not exhaustive (there are more program subtypes than the five included in the table), nor are they mutually exclusive (a single mobile pantry program may be included both under pantries and under mobile programs, for example).

4.1.3   Selected Demographic Characteristics of Feeding America Clients

In this section we examine the demographic characteristics of all unduplicated (unique) **individuals** served directly by Feeding America annually, including age, race/ethnicity, and education level and student status of adult clients (Table 4-2). In Section 4.2 we will present demographic characteristics of the households of Feeding America clients, looking instead at client households served in a typical month. Those data describe the **household** circumstances of unduplicated clients served in a typical month, regardless of whether other household members themselves are also clients, to provide context for the life circumstances of clients in a typical month.

The age breakdown of individual clients served annually is notable in several ways. Across all food programs the most common listed age range is 30-49 years, including 26.0 percent of clients. Combining relevant categories, however, a full 28.5 percent of clients are children under age 18. This figure, encompassing 12 million children, is one we know to be an underestimate as programs that only serve children were excluded from eligibility for the Client Survey, and children at multiage meal programs were not eligible to be sampled for the survey and are thus not represented. The

---

[61] Because of the dual-frame design of HIA 2014, the study was not designed to support these program subtype estimates reliably, and therefore they should be interpreted cautiously. Confidence intervals for these estimates appear in Appendix C.

Table 4-2. Selected demographic characteristics of Feeding America clients

Demographic characteristics	Type of program				All food programs	
	Meal		Grocery			
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Age						
0-5 years[a]	–	–	3.5M	8.5%	3.5M	8.2%
6-17 years[a]	–	–	8.5M	20.9%	8.5M	20.3%
18-29 years	0.4M	15.0%	5.8M	14.2%	6.0M	14.3%
30-49 years	1.1M	38.6%	10.4M	25.5%	10.9M	26.0%
50-59 years	0.8M	26.0%	5.9M	14.4%	6.1M	14.6%
60-64 years	0.2M	7.4%	2.2M	5.4%	2.3M	5.4%
65 years or older	0.4M	13.1%	4.6M	11.2%	4.7M	11.2%
Total	2.9M	100%	40.8M	100%	42.0M	100%
Weighted nonreporting clients	0.4M		4.4M		4.5M	
Total weighted N	3.3M		45.2M		46.5M	
Race/ethnicity						
Single race or ethnicity	3.1M	95.0%	39.7M	95.2%	40.9M	95.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	*0.1M*	*2.3%*	*1.0M*	*2.2%*	*1.0M*	*2.2%*
Asian	*0.0M*	*1.1%*	*0.6M*	*1.4%*	*0.6M*	*1.4%*
Black or African American	*1.0M*	*30.2%*	*11.6M*	*26.0%*	*12.0M*	*26.1%*
Hispanic, Latino	*0.3M*	*10.4%*	*8.9M*	*20.0%*	*9.0M*	*19.7%*
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*0.0M*	*0.3%*	*0.2M*	*0.5%*	*0.2M*	*0.5%*
White	*1.6M*	*49.5%*	*19.3M*	*43.2%*	*19.9M*	*43.4%*
Some other race	*0.0M*	*1.3%*	*0.9M*	*2.1%*	*0.9M*	*2.0%*
Multiple races or ethnicities	0.2M	5.0%	2.1M	4.7%	2.2M	4.7%
Total	3.2M	100%	44.6M	100%	45.9M	100%
Weighted nonreporting clients	0.1M		0.6M		0.6M	
Total weighted N	3.3M		45.2M		46.5M	
Education level of adult clients						
Less than high school (HS)	0.6M	18.7%	8.0M	26.5%	8.2M	26.1%
HS diploma	1.1M	32.8%	11.1M	36.6%	11.5M	36.4%
General equivalency diploma or GED	0.5M	14.7%	2.9M	9.6%	3.1M	10.0%
License, certificate, or degree beyond HS	0.2M	7.2%	2.1M	7.1%	2.2M	7.1%
Some college or 2-year college degree	0.6M	19.0%	4.4M	14.7%	4.7M	14.8%
4-year college degree or higher	0.2M	7.7%	1.7M	5.5%	1.8M	5.7%
Total	3.2M	100%	30.2M	100%	31.6M	100%
Weighted nonreporting clients	0.1M		2.1M		2.2M	
Total weighted N	3.3M		32.4M		33.7M	
Student status of adult clients						
Full-time student	0.1M	4.0%	2.0M	6.9%	2.1M	6.7%
Part-time student	0.1M	4.0%	1.0M	3.5%	1.1M	3.5%
Not a student	3.0M	92.0%	26.6M	89.7%	27.8M	89.8%
Total	3.2M	100%	29.7M	100%	31.0M	100%
Weighted nonreporting clients	0.1M		2.7M		2.7M	
Total weighted N	3.3M		32.4M		33.7M	

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, and Q6a.
Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Data are weighted to represent annual unduplicated numbers of clients.
License, certificate, or degree beyond HS includes business, trade, or technical licenses.
[a]Child clients are underestimated due to the exclusion of programs from the Client Survey that serve only children.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

estimated 12 million children does account for grocery program household members under the age of 18; the actual number of children served by the Feeding America network, however, is likely much greater. Seniors are an important but slightly less prevalent group, with 5.4 percent of all clients between 60-64 years old, and 11.2 percent of all clients 65 years old or older.

Clients are racially and ethnically diverse, with 43.4 percent identifying themselves as White, 26.1 percent as Black or African American, 19.7 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 6.1 percent as another single race, and 4.7 percent as multirace or multiethnic.

The most common level of educational attainment among adult clients is a high school degree or general equivalency diploma (GED), with 46.4 percent of all adult clients reporting either a high school diploma or GED. More than a quarter (26.1 percent) of adult clients have not completed high school. In the higher ranges of educational attainment, 14.8 percent of adult clients have completed some college or a two-year college degree, and 5.7 percent have completed a four-year college degree or higher level of education. Ten percent of adult clients are seeking to increase their levels of education, with 6.7 percent in school full-time and 3.5 percent in school part-time.

4.1.4   Interpreting Changes in Client Estimates from 2010 to 2014

Based solely on the unduplicated client counts, it appears that the Feeding America network has seen an increase over the past four years in the number of clients served annually. Estimates from the HIA 2010 study placed the annual unduplicated client count at that time at 37 million individuals. This apparent growth in unduplicated clients served by the network is likely the combination of changes in the scope and interpretation of the HIA study between 2010 and 2014, and actual growth in the network during that time. Some increase in the number of annual unduplicated clients is expected due to inclusion of additional programs not previously represented in the data.

As outlined in Section 2.6.7, however, HIA 2014 differs substantially in design from HIA 2010. A number of improvements were made, including implementing a more representative program classification system (meal/grocery), employing digital data collection, increasing the number of Client Survey languages, conducting the Agency Survey in advance of the Client Survey, and most importantly, including additional program types in the study.

Over the past four years the nature and structure of food programs in the Feeding America network have grown more diverse. As more is learned about clients, new programmatic strategies are being implemented to ensure that clients can access food in the manner most convenient to their circumstance. Improvements to HIA 2014 have tried to capture this evolution. For this reason, and the others described here, we caution against making any direct comparisons between the two studies.

4.2   Feeding America Clients Come from a Diverse Set of Households

An overview of the generational composition of the clients' household members provides context for the remainder of this chapter, focusing specifically on whether the households contain children under age 18 or seniors age 60 or over.[62] Across all food programs, both meal and grocery, 38.6 percent of client households include at least one child, 33.1 percent of households include at least one senior, 6.4 percent of households contain at least one child and at least one senior, and 34.8 percent of households contain neither children nor seniors (Table 4-3). Data from the 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS) estimate that nationally only 32 percent of U.S. households contain a child under age 18, suggesting that households with children may be disproportionately represented in the Feeding America network.[63]

Looking at specific types of food programs,[64] we see that the overall pattern described for all food programs holds true for grocery programs, with both households with at least one child (40.7 percent) and households with at least one senior (33.7 percent) being strongly represented. A different pattern emerges, however, for meal programs, as only 9.9 percent of clients at meal programs are from households with at least one child, 25.6 percent are from households with at least one senior, and 65.4 percent are from households containing neither children nor seniors. Households with at least one child, with or without a senior also present in the home, are statistically significantly more likely to use grocery programs as compared to meal programs (using the 90 percent confidence intervals as the standard). Among meal programs that were eligible to be

---

[62] The number of client households containing children is underestimated due to the exclusion from the Client Survey of programs serving only children. See Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2, for further details.

[63] 2013 Current Population Survey, America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2013: Households (H table series) Table H-2.

[64] Meal clients and grocery clients do not sum to all food program clients, as the unduplicated count that forms the basis for all food program clients removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

visited for Client Survey data collection, particularly shelters and residential programs, many are only available to adults which may help explain this pattern. Because programs that only serve children were excluded from the Client Survey, this is likely an underestimate of the households with children that use meal programs.

Table 4-3.   Client household composition

| | Type of program | | All food |
Composition of household	Meal	Grocery	programs
Mutually exclusive household compositions			
Households with at least one child (no seniors)	9.1%	33.8%	32.1%
Households with at least one senior (no children)	24.8%	26.8%	26.7%
Households with at least one child and one senior	0.8%	6.9%	6.4%
Households with no children or seniors	65.4%	32.5%	34.8%
All households	100%	100%	100%
Potentially overlapping household compositions			
Households with at least one child	9.9%	40.7%	38.6%
Households with at least one senior	25.6%	33.7%	33.1%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.5M	0.5M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q3.

Children are less than 18 years of age; seniors are 60 years or older.

Household subtypes are not mutually exclusive, thus percentages do not sum to 100%.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program percentages and grocery program percentages do not sum to all food program percentages because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.2.1   Household Size of Clients

Household size is an important indicator of the level of resources needed for the number of individuals in need of food. This is particularly relevant for grocery programs since the distributed products may be intended for or used by the client's entire household. Table 4-4 presents the percentage of households for each size category. Across all food programs, we found that 28.4 percent of client households include only the client (i.e., they were single member households), 37.3 percent include two to three members, and 29.2 percent include four to six members. Only 5.1 percent of the households include more than six members. The households that use grocery programs follow this pattern, with most client households being multiperson households. In

contrast, meal programs follow a statistically significantly different pattern, as the vast majority of meal client households (70.1 percent) are single-member households.

Table 4-4.   Client households by size

Household size	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
1 member	70.1%	24.6%	28.4%
2-3 members	22.9%	38.6%	37.3%
4-6 members	5.9%	31.3%	29.2%
More than 6 members	1.0%	5.5%	5.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.7M	0.7M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
1 member	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2-3 members	57.9%	29.6%	30.5%
4-6 members	38.2%	59.2%	58.4%
More than 6 members	3.8%	11.2%	11.0%
Households with at least one senior			
1 member	62.5%	32.6%	34.5%
2-3 members	31.9%	43.0%	42.2%
4-6 members	4.7%	20.3%	19.4%
More than 6 members	0.9%	4.1%	3.9%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
1 member	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2-3 members	50.2%	24.7%	24.8%
4-6 members	40.1%	60.9%	60.9%
More than 6 members	9.7%	14.3%	14.3%
Households with no children or seniors			
1 member	80.4%	42.4%	48.0%
2-3 members	16.4%	42.6%	38.7%
4-6 members	2.4%	13.5%	11.9%
More than 6 members	0.8%	1.5%	1.4%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q1 and Q3.

Children are less than 18 years of age; seniors are 60 years or older.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.*

4.2.2   Ages of Household Members

Previously we described the unweighted age ranges of survey respondents (Section 2.5.1) to describe the characteristics of survey participants, and we provided the distribution of ages of individual clients (Section 4.1.3) to characterize those whom Feeding America reaches through food distribution. But here we describe the age ranges of all the Feeding America client household members, from infants to seniors (Table 4-5), to demonstrate the household characteristics of Feeding America clients. The age groups displayed are not mutually exclusive, as households can have members from multiple age groups. The most common age group across all programs is the 30-49 year old group, with 47.9 percent of households containing a member of that age range. Over 16 percent of households contain at least one child age five or younger. Almost a quarter (23.4 percent) of client households contain a senior 65 years or older.

Table 4-5.   Client households containing members in select age ranges

Age groups in household, in years	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
0-5	3.8%	17.4%	16.3%
6-17	7.5%	33.7%	31.9%
18-29	15.1%	27.9%	27.1%
30-49	37.7%	48.7%	47.9%
50-59	34.8%	31.1%	31.2%
60-64	10.6%	12.3%	12.1%
65 and over	15.8%	23.9%	23.4%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.5M	0.5M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q3.

Households can have individuals in many age groups, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.2.3   Single and Multiple Race/Ethnicity Client Households

Previously we described the unweighted racial and ethnic characteristics of survey respondents (Section 2.5.1), and we provided the distribution of race and ethnicity of individual clients (Section 4.1.3) to characterize the clients of Feeding America food programs. In our examination of household demographic characteristics, we explore the racial and ethnic diversity within clients' households by examining whether all members of the clients' household are of a single race or ethnicity, or of multiple races and ethnicities (Table 4-6). Single-person households are categorized based on the individual's reported status as single or multiple race or ethnicity. This exploration is relevant when considering recent literature that documents the distinct cultural experiences of multiracial individuals and households as compared to those who are of a single race.[65] Across all programs, 14.7 percent of client households include household members who are of different racial/ethnic groups. Households of meal and grocery clients follow very similar patterns.

---

[65] Kelly Faye Jackson. (2012). "Living the multiracial experience: shifting racial expressions, resisting race, and seeking community." *Qualitative Social Work,* 11(1): 42-60.

Table 4-6.   Single and multiple race/ethnicity households

Race/ethnicity	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Single race or ethnicity	88.9%	84.7%	85.3%
Multiple race or ethnicity	11.1%	15.3%	14.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.1M	0.1M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Single race or ethnicity	72.4%	76.6%	76.5%
Multiple race or ethnicity	27.6%	23.4%	23.5%
Households with at least one senior			
Single race or ethnicity	84.8%	88.5%	88.6%
Multiple race or ethnicity	15.2%	11.5%	11.4%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Single race or ethnicity	73.8%	78.3%	78.1%
Multiple race or ethnicity	26.2%	21.7%	21.9%
Households with no children or seniors			
Single race or ethnicity	92.2%	88.4%	89.2%
Multiple race or ethnicity	7.8%	11.6%	10.8%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q4, Q4A, and Q4B.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

One person households were counted as single or multiple race or ethnicity based on the individual's reported status as single or multiple race or ethnicity.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.*

When comparing different types of households, those containing children are statistically significantly more likely to contain multiple races or ethnicities than those without children. Across all programs, nearly one in four (23.5 percent) households with at least one child contain household members who are from more than one racial/ethnic group. Although the difference may in part be due to households without children more often being single person and therefore single race/ethnicity households, the findings may also be a reflection of the current changing demographics of the nation, as shown in the 2010 Census report that indicates increases since 2000 in the percentages of people of different races and ethnicities who are married or live together.[66]

---

[66] U.S. Census Bureau, Households and Families 2010, 2010 Census Briefs, C2010BR-14.

4.2.4   Educational Attainment in Client Households

Educational qualifications often drive employment opportunities and, in turn, income. Education also provides benefits beyond the individual; better education produces positive spillovers to society as a whole through greater productivity, higher earnings, greater civic engagement, and more innovation.[67] Because of these spillovers, we are interested not only in individual educational attainment but also educational attainment at the household level. Consequently, in addition to reporting the educational attainment of all adult clients (Section 4.1.3), we use reporting of the educational attainment of all adult members of client households to calculate the highest educational level among the adults within each client household (Table 4-7).

Table 4-7.   Client households by highest educational attainment, among adult household members

Education level	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Less than high school (HS)	15.0%	13.9%	14.3%
HS diploma	26.9%	32.2%	31.9%
General equivalency diploma or GED	20.1%	12.4%	13.0%
License, certificate, or degree beyond HS	7.0%	9.2%	9.0%
Some college or 2-year college degree	19.2%	22.7%	22.3%
4-year college degree or higher	11.7%	9.5%	9.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.5M	0.6M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q5.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

License, certificate, or degree beyond HS includes business, trade, or technical licenses.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Across all programs, in 31.9 percent of households the highest level of education among adult members is a high school diploma; an additional 13.0 percent have a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). For nearly 15 percent of households the highest educational attainment is less than a high

---

[67] Walter W. McMahon. (2007). "An Analysis of Education Externalities with Applications to Development in the Deep South." *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 25(3): 459-482.

school diploma. For these households the lack of higher education may limit employment opportunities, which may render them more susceptible to economic fluctuations. Although client households with high levels of educational attainment are less prevalent, nearly 10 percent of households report the highest education level at a four-year college degree or higher, and collectively 40.8 percent of households contain a member with education beyond high school, demonstrating the range of household circumstances among those seeking charitable food assistance.

4.2.5   Households with Military Service Members

The Client Survey included a question regarding military service to ascertain whether anyone in the client's household has ever served in the U.S. military.[68,69] Looking at program type, we see a similar pattern of military service across household arrangements for grocery programs. The pattern for meal programs, however, is somewhat different as a statistically significantly higher 29.5 percent of client households include a past or present military service member.

---

[68] The Client Survey also included a question about current military service, the results of which were originally included here. See erratum related to current military service data at: http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/hunger-in-america/errata.html.

[69] Footnote intentionally left blank.

Table 4-8.   Client household military service

Military service	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
No household member has ever served	67.4%	78.3%	77.7%
At least one household member has served	29.5%	19.6%	20.3%
Other	3.1%	2.1%	2.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted non-reporting client households	0.2M	0.5M	0.6M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
No household member has ever served	90.8%	86.1%	86.2%
At least one household member has served	8.9%	12.9%	12.9%
Other	0.3%	1.0%	1.0%
Households with at least one senior			
No household member has ever served	63.0%	67.9%	67.1%
At least one household member has served	34.1%	29.5%	30.4%
Other	2.9%	2.6%	2.6%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
No household member has ever served	69.1%	75.5%	75.3%
At least one household member has served	30.3%	23.4%	23.5%
Other	0.6%	1.1%	1.2%
Households with no children or seniors			
No household member has ever served	67.0%	80.0%	78.7%
At least one household member has served	29.1%	17.8%	19.2%
Other	3.9%	2.2%	2.1%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q10.

*In this table the category 'Other' encompasses clients who did not indicate whether anyone in their household ever served in the military.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.2.6　Languages Spoken at Home

Across all programs, 90.7 percent of households speak English as one of the primary languages of the adults at home (Table 4-9). Only 13.1 percent of households speak Spanish as one of the primary languages of adults at home, and 4.1 percent indicate other languages as one of the primary languages. These numbers may be underestimates of the circumstances of the full network because households served by nonparticipating food banks in Puerto Rico and California may be more likely to speak languages other than English as a primary language at home. Also, although surveys were offered in five languages, data collectors were not always available to recruit in all languages and this may have limited variability in respondent languages.

Table 4-9.　**Client households by primary language(s) spoken in household among adults**

Languages	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
English	95.7%	90.2%	90.7%
Spanish	6.9%	13.7%	13.1%
Other Indo-European languages	1.5%	1.1%	1.2%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	0.4%	1.7%	1.6%
Arabic	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Other languages not specified	0.8%	1.0%	1.0%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.6M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q9.

Respondents could mark more than one language so percentages may not sum to 100%.

Other Indo-European languages include French, Russian, Haitian Creole, and German; Asian and Pacific Island languages include Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Korean, and Hmong.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Some differences emerge between meal and grocery client households, as statistically significantly more meal clients than grocery clients report speaking English as a primary language at home. Grocery client households are statistically significantly more likely than meal client households to speak Spanish or Asian and Pacific Island languages as a primary language at home.

4.2.7   Housing Characteristics

Housing circumstances can be an important indicator of stability in the lives of Feeding America clients, including type of housing, payment arrangements, ability to store and cook food, and recent transitions in housing circumstances.

The Client Survey differentiated between temporary and nontemporary housing. Nontemporary arrangements are defined as those that have the potential to be long-term residences, such as apartments and houses, and temporary arrangements are those that, although they could be long-term situations, are not typically intended to house people long term, such as shelters or motels. Across all food programs, 93.2 percent of client households are residing in nontemporary housing, and 6.9 percent are residing in temporary housing (Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1.   Client households in temporary versus nontemporary housing
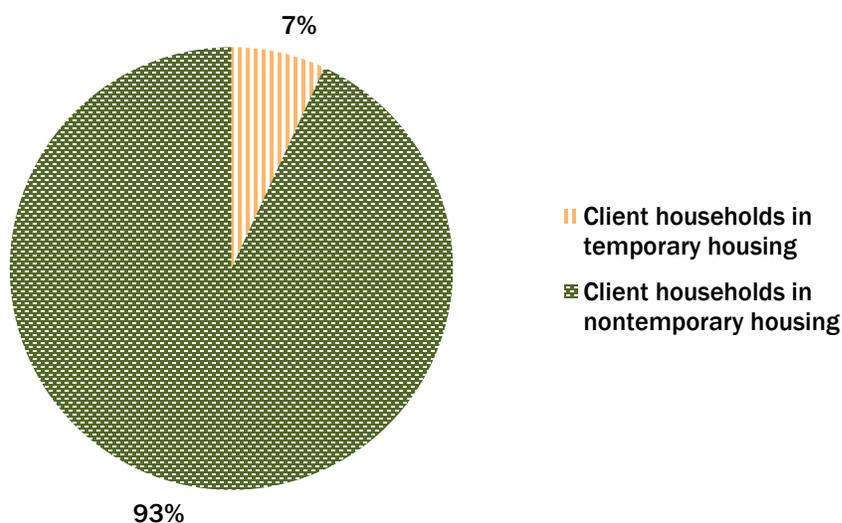
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q18.

Weighted nonreporting client households 0.6M; total weighted N 5.8M.

Among the 93.2 percent of client households residing in nontemporary housing (Table 4-10), the most common types of nontemporary housing are houses or townhouses (42.9 percent), apartments (33.7 percent), and mobile homes or house trailers (12.5 percent). Households with at least one child and households with at least one senior are both statistically significantly more likely than all households to be living in houses or townhouses, and statistically significantly less likely to be living in apartments.

Table 4-10. Client households by type of nontemporary housing

Type of nontemporary housing	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Nontemporary housing	66.4%	95.5%	93.2%
Apartment	*30.2%*	*34.3%*	*33.7%*
House or townhouse	*20.2%*	*44.6%*	*42.9%*
Military housing	*0.3%*	*0.2%*	*0.2%*
Mobile home or house trailer	*3.9%*	*13.3%*	*12.5%*
Rented room in a rooming or boarding house	*11.8%*	*3.1%*	*3.9%*
Temporary housing	33.6%	4.5%	6.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.6M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Nontemporary housing	72.3%	96.9%	96.3%
Apartment	*30.6%*	*31.1%*	*30.8%*
House or townhouse	*24.8%*	*50.8%*	*50.2%*
Military housing	*0.0%*	*0.2%*	*0.2%*
Mobile home or house trailer	*4.1%*	*13.3%*	*13.1%*
Rented room in a rooming or boarding house	*12.8%*	*1.5%*	*2.0%*
Temporary housing	27.7%	3.1%	3.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Households with at least one senior			
Nontemporary housing	88.6%	97.9%	97.5%
Apartment	*36.0%*	*30.7%*	*30.8%*
House or townhouse	*37.4%*	*51.0%*	*50.6%*
Military housing	*0.1%*	*0.1%*	*0.1%*
Mobile home or house trailer	*8.3%*	*13.6%*	*13.1%*
Rented room in a rooming or boarding house	*6.8%*	*2.5%*	*2.9%*
Temporary housing	11.4%	2.1%	2.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q18.

Italicized lines sum to the percentage of client households in nontemporary housing. Numbers may not sum exactly due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Overall, a small but notable percentage (6.9 percent) of Feeding America client households report living in temporary housing (Table 4-11). The most commonly reported types of temporary housing are shelters, missions, or transitional living situations (2.6 percent of all households), and living on the street (1.5 percent of all households). Meal program client households are statistically significantly more likely than grocery program client households (33.6 percent of meal program

Table 4-11. Client households by type of temporary housing

Type of temporary housing	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
Temporary housing	33.6%	4.5%	6.9%
Abandoned building, bus or train station, park, campground, or airport	*0.9%*	*0.3%*	*0.4%*
Car, van, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV)	*1.1%*	*0.3%*	*0.4%*
Living on the street	*7.3%*	*1.0%*	*1.5%*
Motel or hotel temporarily	*1.3%*	*0.4%*	*0.4%*
Rented room in a rooming or boarding house	*0.9%*	*0.7%*	*0.8%*
Residential treatment facility or supervised housing	*3.3%*	*0.1%*	*0.5%*
Shelter, mission, or transitional living situation	*17.8%*	*1.3%*	*2.6%*
Unknown	*0.8%*	*0.3%*	*0.3%*
Nontemporary housing	66.4%	95.5%	93.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.6M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Temporary housing	27.7%	3.1%	3.7%
Abandoned building, bus or train station, park, campground, or airport	*0.1%*	*0.1%*	*0.1%*
Car, van, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV)	*0.1%*	*0.2%*	*0.2%*
Living on the street	*1.4%*	*0.3%*	*0.4%*
Motel or hotel temporarily	*3.2%*	*0.7%*	*0.8%*
Rented room in a rooming or boarding house	*0.1%*	*0.9%*	*0.8%*
Residential treatment facility or supervised housing	*0.9%*	*0.1%*	*0.1%*
Shelter, mission, or transitional living situation	*20.7%*	*0.8%*	*1.3%*
Unknown	*1.1%*	*0.1%*	*0.2%*
Nontemporary housing	72.3%	96.9%	96.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Households with at least one senior			
Temporary housing	11.4%	2.1%	2.5%
Abandoned building, bus or train station, park, campground, or airport	*0.2%*	*0.1%*	*0.1%*
Car, van, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV)	*2.3%*	*0.2%*	*0.2%*
Living on the street	*4.5%*	*0.4%*	*0.6%*
Motel or hotel temporarily	*0.0%*	*0.1%*	*0.1%*
Rented room in a rooming or boarding house	*0.2%*	*0.6%*	*0.5%*
Residential treatment facility or supervised housing	*1.0%*	*0.1%*	*0.2%*
Shelter, mission, or transitional living situation	*2.5%*	*0.3%*	*0.4%*
Unknown	*0.8%*	*0.3%*	*0.3%*
Nontemporary housing	88.6%	97.9%	97.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q18A.

Italicized lines sum to the percentage of client households in temporary housing. Numbers may not sum exactly due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because*

the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

client households compared to 4.5 percent of grocery program client households) to report residing in temporary housing, a finding likely attributable to many meal programs being designed to serve shelter residents and others in temporary housing. Relatively fewer households with at least one child or at least one senior report temporary housing. Some of the client households residing in temporary housing are considered "homeless" as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); others may not be if they are living in temporary housing situations that do not meet this definition.[70] At least 4.9 percent of client households from all food programs may meet HUD's definition of "homeless."[71] This percentage is greater among client households at meal programs, with 27.1 percent that may meet the HUD definition of "homeless." The remaining 2.0 percent of all food program households and 6.5 percent of meal program households in temporary housing may or may not be considered homeless, depending on their resources and circumstances.

Among those households in nontemporary housing, clients report how their household pays for the place where they currently live (Table 4-12). Across all food programs, 63.7 percent of households rent or lease their home. Just 15.4 percent of households have a mortgage and 11.5 percent own their housing free and clear.

---

[70] The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by S. 896. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009SEC. 103. [42 USC 11302] GENERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUAL.

[71] This percentage includes client households reporting residing in abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, parks, campgrounds, or airports; residing in cars, vans, boats, or recreational vehicles; living on the street; and residing in shelters, missions, or transitional living situations.

Table 4-12. Client households with various housing payment arrangements, among clients residing in nontemporary housing

Payment for housing	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
Do not have to pay rent	14.5%	8.8%	9.3%
Own free and clear	8.8%	11.5%	11.5%
Own with mortgage	6.7%	15.8%	15.4%
Rent or lease	70.1%	63.9%	63.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	0.7M	5.1M	5.3M
Households with at least one child			
Do not have to pay rent	8.6%	8.4%	8.4%
Own free and clear	3.2%	8.3%	8.2%
Own with mortgage	12.2%	16.4%	16.4%
Rent or lease	76.0%	66.9%	67.0%
Households with at least one senior			
Do not have to pay rent	7.0%	7.6%	7.7%
Own free and clear	20.9%	20.2%	20.7%
Own with mortgage	11.6%	20.6%	20.2%
Rent or lease	60.6%	51.6%	51.4%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Do not have to pay rent	31.8%	7.5%	7.6%
Own free and clear	13.0%	16.7%	16.8%
Own with mortgage	29.4%	25.6%	25.7%
Rent or lease	25.8%	50.2%	50.0%
Households with no children or seniors			
Do not have to pay rent	18.8%	10.8%	12.2%
Own free and clear	3.7%	7.6%	7.4%
Own with mortgage	3.6%	12.2%	11.7%
Rent or lease	74.0%	69.3%	68.7%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q19.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Comparing households across the two programs types, grocery program client households are statistically significantly more likely than meal program client households to own a home with a mortgage. Looking across household compositions, households that include seniors are statistically significantly more likely than other household types to own a home with either a mortgage or free and clear.

Another housing-related characteristic we examine is recent housing transitions experienced by survey respondents (Table 4-13). Because respondents could have experienced housing transitions that did not involve their entire household, this analysis is done at the respondent level, as opposed to the household level. Therefore, we explore the weighted percentage of respondents experiencing transitions rather than households. More than one-quarter (26.9 percent) of respondents report living in two or more places in the past 12 months. Clients at meal programs report the highest number of moves: 48.2 percent report living in two or more places over the past 12 months.

A smaller but substantial number of respondents report other housing transitions. Across all programs, 22.3 percent of respondents report they started living with another person or family in the past 12 months, and 15.5 percent report having experienced foreclosure or eviction in the past five years. More meal than grocery program respondents report these types of transitions.

Table 4-13.   Respondents by recent housing transitions

Transition	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Number of places respondent lived within the last 12 months			
1	51.8%	76.0%	73.1%
2	24.1%	14.8%	15.7%
3 or more	24.1%	9.2%	11.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting respondents	0.2M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	1.8M	5.4M	6.0M
Respondent started living with another person or family within the past 12 months			
Yes	31.0%	21.4%	22.3%
No	69.0%	78.6%	77.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting respondents	0.1M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	1.8M	5.4M	6.0M
Respondent experienced a foreclosure or eviction during the past 5 years			
Yes	19.3%	15.0%	15.5%
No	80.7%	85.0%	84.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting respondents	0.1M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	1.8M	5.4M	6.0M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q17, Q20, and Q21.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Total weighted N for this table represents the weighted number of survey respondents. Because respondents at grocery programs were not randomly selected among household members, respondent experience may not represent all Feeding America clients.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the

The final housing characteristic we examine is cooking or cold storage capacity at home (Table 4-14). Having access to equipment to cook and store food at home is an essential element of preparing meals at home. When considering that most meal programs, such as kitchens and shelters, provide pre-prepared meals to clients outside of the home, it is not surprising that statistically significantly fewer meal program client households, as compared to grocery program client households, have these capacities. It is possible that meal program clients rely on these programs to prepare the food they consume because they do not have individual access to equipment that cooks or keeps food cold. Overall most client households report having equipment to cook and store food, which was defined broadly, and therefore may include households that have only provisional equipment such as hot plates, camp stoves, or coolers.

Table 4-14.   Client households by cooking or cold storage capacity at home

Housing contains...	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
Equipment to cook food	77.3%	95.6%	93.9%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.9M	1.0M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Equipment to keep food cold	75.2%	95.5%	93.4%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.9M	0.9M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Equipment to cook food	89.9%	96.8%	96.7%
Equipment to keep food cold	88.5%	97.0%	96.8%
Households with at least one senior			
Equipment to cook food	91.2%	97.2%	96.9%
Equipment to keep food cold	90.0%	97.1%	96.6%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Equipment to cook food	92.2%	97.2%	97.1%
Equipment to keep food cold	91.9%	97.2%	97.1%
Households with no children or seniors			
Equipment to cook food	70.6%	93.7%	89.6%
Equipment to keep food cold	67.5%	93.2%	88.4%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q44 and Q45.

Equipment to cook food includes stove, microwave, or hot plate. Equipment to keep food cold includes any place to store food to keep it cold so it does not spoil, like a refrigerator.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.3   Work, School, and Barriers and Bridges to Work

Employment increases the likelihood of becoming financially secure. Yet not everyone is able to participate in the workforce, either due to labor market conditions or extenuating personal situations. The Client Survey asked respondents to report on the employment status of select people in their households, time spent out of the workforce, and potential barriers or bridges that their households face in seeking employment, including adult student status. Specifically, the survey asked respondents whether they had worked for pay within the last 12 months; whether they typically worked part- or full-time; and whether they had worked within the last four weeks. If respondents indicated that they had not worked for pay within the last four weeks, the Client Survey probed how long they had been out of work; whether they were actively looking for work during the previous four weeks; and if not, reasons why not. If another person in the household was employed in the past 12 months, respondents were asked to answer this same battery of questions for the other person in their household who worked the most months in the past 12 months. Employment circumstances were asked only about these two people in the household to ease survey burden on respondents.

In the following sections, the person in the household with the greatest number of months of employment over the past 12 months—regardless of whether this was full- or part-time employment—is referred to as the most employed person. It is this person in the household on whom all the employment data are reported. We first explore the number of months the most employed person in each client household has worked during the past year, and whether that employment is typically full-time or part-time.

We then turn to an examination of employment in the past four weeks. We describe employment status in the past four weeks of the most employed person in each household, and focus specifically the subset of households in which the most employed person has not worked within the past four weeks. In these analyses, we examine how long the most employed person who is not currently working has been without employment; whether he or she has looked actively for work in the past four weeks; and if not looking for work, reasons why not.

Finally, we explore potential barriers and bridges to employment that some Feeding America households face, including extenuating circumstances that may prevent employment, and educational activities that may ultimately promote employment.

These data provide a glimpse of employment in client households, but should be interpreted within the limitations of what the survey questions reveal. For analytic clarity we focus on the person in the household with the most months of employment over the past 12 months, but this person may not be the only employed person in the household. If the most employed person has been without employment in the past four weeks it is possible, for example, that another household member has since become the primary earner, or seasonal employment has caused a temporary interruption in employment. Thus, while the data do describe the employment circumstances of the person employed the most months in the past year, they do not fully account for employment of other household members who may have worked less often.

4.3.1   Household Employment

As described in the previous section, in analyzing household employment we focus on the most employed person in the household, defined as the person who has worked for pay the most number of months within the past 12 months. This individual is typically a primary source of income for the household. As such, interruptions in this individual's employment may have profound effects on the household's ability to be self-sufficient, potentially increasing their need for charitable food program services.

Looking first at months employed by the most employed person over the past 12 months, we see that across all food programs, both meal and grocery, 53.9 percent of client households include at least one person who has worked for pay in the past 12 months. Among all client households, 34.3 percent report that the person employed the longest has worked more than six of the past 12 months (Table 4-15). Comparing households with at least one child and households with at least one senior to all households, we see that employment rates and durations are statistically significantly higher in households with children, and statistically significantly lower in those with seniors. In households with at least one child, 70.6 percent of households report that someone has worked in the past 12 months, and 48.9 percent worked more than six of the past 12 months. In households with at least one senior, 34.0 percent of households report that someone has worked in the past 12 months, and 21.5 percent worked more than six of the past 12 months. These patterns are similar for meal and grocery programs as well.

Table 4-15.   Client households by most employed person in the past 12 months

Months employed during the past 12 months	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
None	51.7%	45.7%	46.1%
Less than 1 month	6.7%	4.4%	4.5%
1-3 months	10.7%	7.5%	7.6%
4-6 months	9.3%	7.4%	7.5%
7-9 months	10.2%	17.8%	17.3%
10-12 months	11.4%	17.3%	17.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
None	35.4%	29.1%	29.4%
Less than 1 month	5.4%	3.7%	3.7%
1-3 months	9.9%	8.9%	8.9%
4-6 months	7.7%	9.2%	9.1%
7-9 months	21.8%	26.1%	25.9%
10-12 months	19.7%	23.0%	23.0%
Households with at least one senior			
None	69.8%	66.0%	66.0%
Less than 1 month	7.0%	3.2%	3.2%
1-3 months	3.7%	5.0%	5.1%
4-6 months	2.6%	4.3%	4.2%
7-9 months	8.4%	12.0%	12.0%
10-12 months	8.6%	9.4%	9.5%

Data source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q8 and Q8A-H.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.3.2   Full-Time and Part-Time Work

The number of months of employment does not tell the full story of workforce participation. The number of hours typically worked per week is an important factor in achieving the financial stability employment can bring. We define full-time employment using the standard measure of more than 30 hours per week of employment. It is here that we see that although many Feeding America client households have an employed household member, they are typically working part-time rather than full-time (Table 4-16). Across all household compositions, and focusing on all food programs

combined, the person with the longest employment duration is statistically significantly more likely to be employed part-time rather than full-time. Households with at least one child are the most likely to report full-time employment of the most employed person, and households with at least one senior the least likely.

Table 4-16.   Client households by typical hours worked per week, among households with employment in the past 12 months

Typical hours worked per week	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Full-time	41.6%	42.3%	43.0%
Part-time	58.4%	57.7%	57.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	0.5M	2.3M	2.5M
Households with at least one child			
Full-time	49.4%	47.1%	47.0%
Part-time	50.6%	52.9%	53.0%
Households with at least one senior			
Full-time	27.7%	35.6%	35.7%
Part-time	72.3%	64.4%	64.3%

Data source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q8, Q8A and Q8H.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

For the purposes of analyses employment more than 30 hours per week was considered full time.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.3.3   Being Unemployed or Out of the Workforce

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) definition of an unemployed person requires that the individual without a job be 16 years of age or older, has looked for work in the past four weeks, and is currently available for work.[72] Given this definition of unemployment, not all people in Feeding America client households who are not working are officially unemployed. Consequently, we use the term *out of the workforce* to refer to people who are both not currently working and do not meet the technical definition of unemployed. The following data describe unemployment and being out of the

[72] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of unemployment: http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm#unemployed.

workforce among those "most employed" individuals in Feeding America client households who have worked the most months of the past 12 months, but have not worked in the past four weeks. We explore reasons why some have not looked for work in the past four weeks, finding that age and health are often the driving forces behind leaving the workforce.

Figure 4-2 shows employment status in the past four weeks of the most employed person in Feeding America client households: 34.4 percent of households indicate that the most employed person has worked within the past four weeks. Nearly a quarter (23.3 percent) of households report that the most employed person is unemployed and actively looking for work. The remaining 42.3 percent do not meet the BLS requirements for being unemployed; thus, in 42.3 percent of the households that Feeding America serves, the most employed person is out of the workforce.

Figure 4-2. **Employment status in the past four weeks of the most employed person**
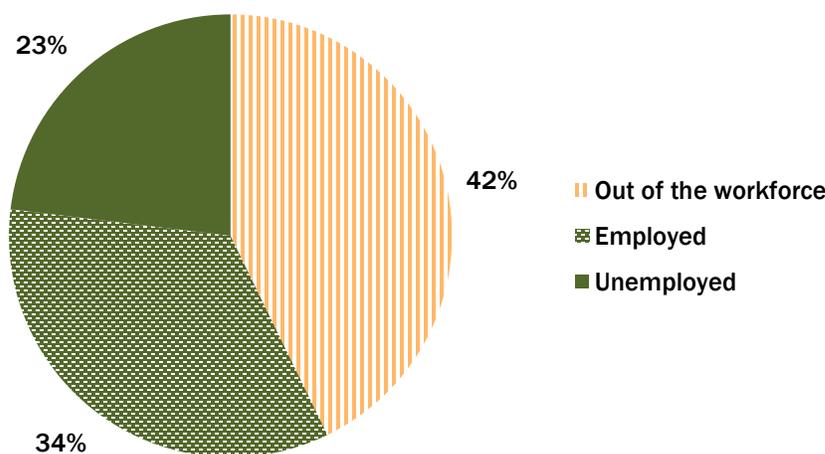
Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q8, and Q8A – 8H.

Number may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Weighted nonreporting client households 2.7M; total weighted N 5.8M.

Among households where the person who was the most employed in the past 12 months is not currently working (encompassing both unemployed and out of the workforce), the majority (70.1 percent) of households report that this person has been without employment for more than one year (Table 4-17). This pattern holds across program type and across household composition type. Health and retirement are the most common reasons why people are not in the workforce (Table 4-18). Also noteworthy is that households with at least one child, as compared to other household

types, report a statistically significantly higher percentage of the most employed person being without employment for six months or less.

Table 4-17. Client households by duration without employment, among client households where most employed person is currently not working

Length of time without employment	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Less than 1 month	4.8%	5.6%	5.6%
1-6 months	19.0%	16.8%	16.8%
7-12 months	9.5%	7.3%	7.5%
More than 1 year	66.6%	70.3%	70.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	0.8M	3.5M	3.8M
Households with at least one child			
Less than 1 month	8.0%	7.5%	7.6%
1-6 months	24.7%	26.7%	26.4%
7-12 months	6.7%	9.3%	9.3%
More than 1 year	60.7%	56.4%	56.7%
Households with at least one senior			
Less than 1 month	1.7%	3.6%	3.4%
1-6 months	6.1%	8.3%	8.3%
7-12 months	9.2%	4.7%	4.8%
More than 1 year	83.0%	83.4%	83.5%

Data source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q8 and Q8A-H.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

To understand better the circumstances surrounding those who are not working, we explore whether the formerly most employed person in the client households who are not currently working have been actively looking for work in the past four weeks, and if not, the main reason for not looking for work (Table 4-18). Nearly a quarter (23.3 percent) of households report that the formerly most employed person is unemployed and actively looking for work. A closer examination of household types shows households with at least one senior are the least likely to report an active job search, with only 13.6 percent of households reporting active job searching.

Table 4-18.   Client households' work status in the past four weeks; and reasons for not looking for work, among client households where formerly most employed person is now out of the workforce

Work status and reasons for not looking for work	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Employed	24.8%	35.0%	34.4%
Unemployed and looking for work	26.1%	23.0%	23.3%
Out of the workforce and not looking for work because…	49.1%	42.0%	42.3%
Are a caretaker for another person	*0.5%*	*1.4%*	*1.3%*
Are disabled or in poor health	*22.5%*	*22.0%*	*21.9%*
Are in school or in job training	*1.6%*	*0.9%*	*0.8%*
Are retired	*13.3%*	*12.4%*	*12.4%*
Because of some other reason	*8.9%*	*3.6%*	*4.0%*
Stopped looking because could not find a job	*1.4%*	*0.8%*	*0.8%*
Unknown	*0.9%*	*1.0%*	*1.0%*
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.1M	0.1M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Employed	40.5%	50.3%	49.9%
Unemployed and looking for work	24.9%	25.5%	25.3%
Out of the workforce and not looking for work because…	34.6%	24.3%	24.8%
Are a caretaker for another person	*2.8%*	*1.7%*	*1.7%*
Are disabled or in poor health	*24.0%*	*13.9%*	*14.4%*
Are in school or in job training	*0.8%*	*0.9%*	*0.9%*
Are retired	*1.4%*	*3.4%*	*3.4%*
Because of some other reason	*5.4%*	*3.4%*	*3.5%*
Stopped looking because could not find a job	*0.0%*	*0.4%*	*0.4%*
Unknown	*0.2%*	*0.4%*	*0.4%*
Households with at least one senior			
Employed	17.8%	21.0%	21.0%
Unemployed and looking for work	13.0%	13.9%	13.6%
Out of the workforce and not looking for work because…	69.2%	65.1%	65.4%
Are a caretaker for another person	*0.4%*	*1.4%*	*1.4%*
Are disabled or in poor health	*16.4%*	*23.9%*	*23.5%*
Are in school or in job training	*0.3%*	*0.6%*	*0.6%*
Are retired	*46.4%*	*33.9%*	*34.6%*
Because of some other reason	*3.1%*	*3.2%*	*3.1%*
Stopped looking because could not find a job	*0.9%*	*0.8%*	*0.8%*
Unknown	*1.7%*	*1.4%*	*1.4%*

Data source: Hunger in American 2014 Client Survey, Q8 and Q8A-H.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Responses for in school or in job training were combined in analyses.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because*

Among all households where the person employed the most in the past 12 months is now out of the workforce, that is, not actively looking for work, the most common reason given (21.9 percent) is that this person is now disabled or in poor health (Table 4-18). The second most common reason (12.4 percent) is because this person is retired. Not surprisingly this pattern differs for households with at least one senior, where the most common reason is retirement, and the second most common reason is being disabled or in poor health. Thus, health and age are the primary reasons why people who have worked the most months in the past 12 months are out of the workforce and no longer looking for work.

4.3.4   Potential Barriers and Bridges to Employment

There are many life circumstances that may act as barriers to employment, such as health, caregiving responsibility, age, and criminal history. Similarly, there are circumstances such as job training and education that may negatively affect current employment status, but ultimately may increase the likelihood of future employment. Client Survey respondents were asked about such circumstances in their households. Although clients do not identify these circumstances specifically as related to household employment status, we describe them here under potential barriers and bridges to employment to provide a fuller picture of the conditions surrounding employment in client households.

Potential Barriers to Employment

In the previous section we presented data on reasons why people no longer in the workforce are not looking for work. The most common reasons for not seeking employment include the worker being disabled or in poor health, or being retired. Some households report that the most employed person is now a caregiver. One specific instance of this probed on the survey is that of grandparents who have responsibility for grandchildren who live with them (Table 4-19). Among client households from grocery programs, 18.3 percent report being grandparents who care for a resident grandchild. This is statistically significantly less common among client households from meal programs, where only 6.8 percent care for grandchildren.

Table 4-19.   Respondents responsible for grandchildren in the household

Employment barrier	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
Care for grandchildren they live with	6.8%	18.3%	17.4%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q11 and Q12.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Another potential barrier to household employment is having household members who have been released from prison in the previous year and may have difficulty finding employment (Table 4-20). Release from prison, while a substantial barrier to employment, is less common overall with only 7.4 percent of meal program client households and 3.0 percent of grocery program client households reporting this barrier.

Table 4-20.   Client households with household member(s) released from prison in the past 12 months

Employment barrier	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
Household member released from prison in past 12 months	7.4%	3.0%	3.2%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q11 and Q12.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Potential Bridges to Employment

Having higher levels of educational attainment can be a bridge to employment, increasing one's employment prospects and potential earnings.[73,74] Obtaining additional education can be challenging, however, requiring investments of time and money. In addition to probing the educational attainment of all food program clients (Section 4.1.3) and the level of educational attainment in client households (Section 4.2.4), the Client Survey probed whether adults in the household are currently students, either full-time or part-time (Table 4-21). Looking at all food programs, 18.7 percent of households contain one or more adult students. Respondents do not always indicate whether each student in their household is attending school full-time or part-time. Among those who do report this information, however, statistically significantly more adult students are full-time rather than part-time. This pattern is similar for grocery program client households. In contrast, a much lower percentage of meal program client households report having students, and the students are evenly split between full-time and part-time. Finally, compared to all households, a statistically significantly higher percentage of households with at least one child contain adult students, and a statistically significantly lower percentage of households with at least one senior contain adult students.

---

[73] Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. (2010). "Help Wanted: Projections of Job and Education Requirements Through 2018." Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

[74] Gloria L. Beckles, and Benedict I. Truman. (2011). "Education and Income—United States, 2005 and 2009." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Supplements, 60(01), 13-17.

Table 4-21. Client households by adult student status

Adult student status	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
At least one adult student	9.5%	19.6%	18.7%
Full-time student(s)	4.7%	12.0%	11.4%
Part-time student(s)	4.7%	6.7%	6.5%
Unknown status	4.6%	12.3%	11.9%
No adult students	90.5%	80.4%	81.3%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.5M	0.5M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
At least one adult student	28.2%	25.8%	25.6%
Full-time student(s)	14.6%	16.6%	16.4%
Part-time student(s)	13.4%	9.7%	9.7%
Unknown status	4.6%	5.2%	5.1%
No adult students	71.8%	74.2%	74.4%
Households with at least one senior			
At least one adult student	4.1%	11.1%	10.7%
Full-time student(s)	3.0%	6.5%	6.3%
Part-time student(s)	1.5%	4.3%	4.2%
Unknown status	3.5%	9.8%	9.5%
No adult students	95.9%	88.9%	89.3%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q6 and Q6A.

Households may have full-time and part-time students, and students of unknown status, so percentages may not sum to the total percentage of students.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.4 Health, Income, and Poverty

In this section we discuss challenges to the well-being of Feeding America clients and their households, including health status and health conditions, medical insurance status, and income and poverty. These challenges can keep people out of the workforce, increase expenses, and limit resources. Together, these challenges may increase a household's need for charitable food assistance.

4.4.1   Health Status and Health Conditions

The Client Survey asked respondents to characterize both their own health and the health of other members of their households. Respondents use a scale from "poor" to "excellent" to describe their health, while they also indicate whether another household member is in poor health. Although such self-reports of health are necessarily broad, research has found that these reports are largely reliable as measures of health and health care use.[75,76] Across all food programs the weighted respondents range in health substantially, from 47.4 percent reporting fair or poor health to 52.6 percent reporting good, very good, or excellent health (Table 4-22). Although the most commonly endorsed category is fair health, the median category is good health.

The respondent's health, however, may be better than that of other household members, particularly for grocery programs since this person was surveyed while out of the home picking up food for the household. Data on whether any household members are in poor health support this, as statistically significantly more households have a member other than the respondent in poor health. This holds true for all households, but particularly for households with at least one child, in which 26.2 percent of households have a member in poor health, and households with at least one senior, in which 32.6 percent of households have a member in poor health.

---

[75] Seppo Miilunpalo, Ikka Vuori, Pekka Oja, Matti Pasanen, and Helka Urponen. (1997). "Self-Rated Health Status As a Health Measure: The Predictive Value of Self-Reported Health Status on the Use of Physician Services and on Mortality in the Working-Age Population." *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology,* 50(5): 517-528.

[76] Daniel L. McGee, Youlian Liao, Guichan Cao, and Richard S. Cooper. (1999). "Self-Reported Health Status and Mortality in a Multiethnic US Cohort." *American Journal of Epidemiology,* 149(1): 41-46.

Table 4-22. Client households by health status of respondent and presence of another household member in poor health

Health status	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Respondent's self-reported status			
Excellent	13.7%	9.5%	10.1%
Very good	20.0%	15.6%	15.9%
Good	27.9%	26.3%	26.6%
Fair	24.1%	29.8%	29.0%
Poor	14.3%	18.8%	18.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
All households			
Another household member in poor health			
Yes	7.5%	25.5%	23.9%
No	20.0%	48.5%	46.2%
Live alone	72.5%	26.0%	29.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.9M	1.0M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Another household member in poor health			
Yes	18.2%	26.5%	26.2%
No	81.8%	73.5%	73.8%
Live alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Households with at least one senior			
Another household member in poor health			
Yes	11.3%	34.1%	32.6%
No	24.7%	31.4%	31.0%
Live alone	64.0%	34.5%	36.4%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q13 and Q13A.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.*

Looking at select health conditions of all household members (Table 4-23), we see that high blood pressure is common among client households—more than half (57.8 percent) of all households have at least one member living with high blood pressure. One third (33.2 percent) of all households report a member with diabetes.[77] Households with at least one senior are particularly affected, with 47.2 percent of households reporting a member with diabetes, and 77.3 percent of households reporting a member with high blood pressure. The difference in percentage of households affected between meal and grocery programs is statistically significant: more households using grocery programs than meal programs had a member suffering from diabetes. An understanding of the select health conditions experienced by Feeding America clients and their household members is particularly relevant given that nutrition education and special diets are often needed for appropriate management of these conditions. The Feeding America network faces an important challenge in helping their clients manage their health through the nutrition assistance they receive from food programs.

Table 4-23.   Client households with member(s) having select health conditions

Select health conditions	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Household member with diabetes	23.2%	34.2%	33.2%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.7M	0.8M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Household member with high blood pressure	51.9%	58.8%	57.8%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.8M	0.8M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Household member with diabetes	18.7%	28.7%	28.4%
Household member with high blood pressure	34.7%	49.8%	49.4%
Households with at least one senior			
Household member with diabetes	29.0%	48.0%	47.2%
Household member with high blood pressure	65.1%	77.9%	77.3%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q14A and Q14B.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

---

[77] Actual presence of these conditions may be underreported, as some clients and their household members may have high blood pressure or diabetes but be undiagnosed.

4.4.2   Health Insurance and Unpaid Medical Bills

Illnesses and medical conditions require management and supervision, and medical care can present a substantial financial challenge. The Client Survey explored whether any member of the clients' household had health insurance, either private or government sponsored (such as Medicaid or Medicare),[78] and whether the households had any unpaid medical bills (Table 4-24). Across all households and all program types, 28.6 percent of households contain no members with health insurance. Lack of health insurance is most common in households with no children or seniors, in which only 59.4 percent of households include anyone with some type of health insurance. Households with at least one senior are the most likely to have health insurance, at 81.1 percent of households, likely due to being eligible for Medicare.[79]

Many households also face unpaid medical bills—55.1 percent of all households report some medical debt. Even with insurance, unpaid medical bills can accumulate due to deductibles and uncovered care. Most household compositions show high levels of unpaid medical bills, but the burden is highest among households containing at least one child and at least one senior, at 64.9 percent. The group with the lowest rate of unpaid medical bills is households with at least one senior, in which nearly half (49.6 percent) of households still face unpaid bills.

---

[78] Medicare is available to most people age 65 or older who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Medicaid is also available to select others younger than 65 who have disabilities or other qualifying conditions or circumstances. Source: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10043.pdf

[79] The Affordable Care Act, which expands health care insurance coverage options for adults and children, particularly those who previously did not have health insurance, went into effect after the fielding period of the Client Survey. See http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts/timeline/timeline-text.html

Table 4-24.   Client households in which no one has health insurance, and client households with unpaid medical bills

Health insurance and unpaid bills	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Has no health insurance	36.5%	27.7%	28.6%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Unpaid medical bills	52.5%	55.6%	55.1%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Has no health insurance	14.2%	23.0%	22.7%
Unpaid medical bills	61.4%	59.9%	59.9%
Households with at least one senior			
Has no health insurance	18.5%	19.2%	18.9%
Unpaid medical bills	39.0%	50.7%	49.6%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Has no health insurance	10.9%	20.3%	20.3%
Unpaid medical bills	60.0%	65.0%	64.9%
Households with no children or seniors			
Has no health insurance	44.7%	38.8%	40.6%
Unpaid medical bills	58.0%	58.2%	57.4%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q15 and Q24.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

4.4.3   Income and Poverty

All of these health and health insurance needs must be met despite limited income. Although households use grocery and meal programs for a variety of reasons, many households rely on charitable food assistance because they are operating with a highly restricted budget and may not have enough money for food. To allow a detailed picture of the finances of Feeding America client households, the Client Survey probed household income in both the past month and in the past 12 months. In order to ensure comparability between the Hunger in America (HIA) study and other nationally-representative assessments of income, the Client Survey used income questions that appear in the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) for both monthly and annual income. While some clients may be able to report annual income, others may more easily recall

income received in the last month, a pattern supported by the higher response rate for the monthly income question (86 percent, see Table 4-25) as compared to annual income question (76 percent, see Table 4-28).

Self-reported income information is commonly probed on surveys, but is subject to error as respondents may not recall all sources and amounts of household income, or may choose to skip such questions for privacy or other personal reasons.[80] Although self-administered interviewing, such as the Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (ACASI) used in HIA 2014, reduces nonresponse to sensitive questions including income, the presence of third parties who may judge the responses negatively may increase misreporting in those who do respond.[81] This may be particularly salient for HIA 2014 clients who completed surveys at food programs with income eligibility requirements. Because program staff responsible for eligibility determinations were present, even if they could not hear responses, clients may have been biased toward providing underestimates of income to avoid inadvertently disqualifying themselves for services.

We first present monthly household income, by program type and household compositions, to give a snapshot of the circumstances of client households at the time of the survey (Tables 4-25, 4-26, 4-27). Looking at all households combined (Table 4-25), households of meal program clients are statistically significantly more likely than those of grocery program clients to report no income at all in the past month, with 26.5 percent of meal program clients reporting no household income as compared to 10.1 percent of grocery program clients. Across all food programs, meal and grocery, 11.7 percent report no income in the past month. Median monthly income is $927, which requires critical budget management to cover all expenses, including but not limited to housing-related costs, food, clothing, transportation, and medical expenses, for all household members. Households with at least one child report slightly higher median monthly incomes at $1,106 (Table 4-26). Despite having slightly higher incomes, however, such households tend to be larger than other household types; thus, they have more people to support.[82]

---

[80] Jeffrey C. Moore, Linda L. Stinson, and Edward J. Welniak, Jr. (2000). "Income Measurement Error in Surveys: A Review." *Journal Of Official Statistics-Stockholm,* 16(4), 331-362.

[81] Roger Tourangeau, and Ting Yan. (2007). "Sensitive Questions in Surveys." *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(5), 859-883.

[82] Among HIA 2014 client households, households with at least one child have a median household size of four, whereas households with at least one senior and all households have a median household size of two.

Table 4-25.   All client households by reported monthly income ranges, and monthly household income as a percentage of the poverty level

Monthly household income	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Income in the past month			
$0	26.5%	10.1%	11.7%
$500 or less	17.2%	12.6%	13.1%
$501 – $1,000	21.2%	30.5%	29.6%
$1,001 – $2,000	18.7%	28.4%	27.4%
$2,001 – $3,000	6.2%	9.4%	9.3%
$3,001 – $4,000	2.4%	3.2%	3.1%
More than $4,000	7.7%	5.7%	5.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median monthly income	$649	$946	$927
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.8M	0.8M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
As a percentage of the poverty level			
0% (no income)	27.1%	10.5%	12.1%
1% – 50%	5.1%	14.9%	14.0%
51% – 75%	14.7%	12.5%	12.7%
76% – 100%	4.7%	12.5%	11.9%
101% – 130%	18.0%	21.5%	20.9%
131% – 150%	0.5%	1.6%	1.5%
151% – 185%	4.4%	11.4%	10.8%
186% or higher	25.5%	15.0%	15.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.9M	1.0M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q22, Q1.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Missing data in household size needed to calculate poverty level may result in some differences between income percentages and poverty level percentages.

*Median income was calculated as follows = (lower bound of median interval) + [[((total weighted N)/2) – (cumulative frequency of groups before the median group)]/(frequency of median group)] *(median group width).*

The federal poverty guidelines provide income limits below which households are deemed to be in poverty. Colloquially referred to as the federal poverty level, the guidelines are updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). Income limits vary by family size and whether the household resides in the 48 contiguous states (including the District of Columbia), Alaska, or Hawaii. Federal poverty guidelines are not specifically defined for Puerto Rico. For most household sizes, the 2013 guidelines approximate the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for 2012. For this report, we compared annualized monthly income by household size to the 2013 poverty guidelines found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Table 4-26.   Households with at least one child by reported monthly income ranges, and monthly household income as a percentage of the poverty level

Monthly household income	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Income in the past month			
$0	12.3%	7.8%	7.8%
$500 or less	18.8%	12.7%	12.8%
$501 – $1,000	27.5%	25.8%	26.0%
$1,001 – $2,000	22.6%	32.7%	32.4%
$2,001 – $3,000	9.0%	12.2%	12.2%
$3,001 – $4,000	3.2%	4.0%	4.0%
More than $4,000	6.6%	4.8%	4.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median monthly income	$844	$1,116	$1,106
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.1M	0.1M
Total weighted N	0.1M	2.0M	2.0M
As a percentage of the poverty level			
0% (no income)	12.3%	7.8%	7.8%
1% – 50%	23.9%	23.6%	23.6%
51% – 75%	8.3%	15.5%	15.2%
76% – 100%	22.6%	14.9%	15.3%
101% – 130%	12.9%	19.6%	19.4%
131% – 150%	2.7%	3.4%	3.4%
151% – 185%	8.8%	8.7%	8.8%
186% or higher	8.6%	6.5%	6.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.1M	0.1M
Total weighted N	0.1M	2.0M	2.0M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q22, Q1.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Missing data in household size needed to calculate poverty level may result in some differences between income percentages and poverty level percentages.

*Median income was calculated as follows = (lower bound of median interval) + [[((total weighted N)/2) – (cumulative frequency of groups before the median group)]/(frequency of median group)] *(median group width).*

The federal poverty guidelines provide income limits below which households are deemed to be in poverty. Colloquially referred to as the federal poverty level, the guidelines are updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). Income limits vary by family size and whether the household resides in the 48 contiguous states (including the District of Columbia), Alaska, or Hawaii. Federal poverty guidelines are not specifically defined for Puerto Rico. For most household sizes, the 2013 guidelines approximate the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for 2012. For this report, we compared annualized monthly income by household size to the 2013 poverty guidelines found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Table 4-27.   Households with at least one senior by reported monthly income ranges, and monthly household income as a percentage of the poverty level

Monthly household income	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Income in the past month			
$0	10.2%	5.3%	5.4%
$500 or less	7.9%	7.2%	7.2%
$501 – $1,000	26.2%	33.0%	32.6%
$1,001 – $2,000	33.3%	33.4%	33.0%
$2,001 – $3,000	8.7%	10.5%	10.6%
$3,001 – $4,000	4.6%	3.5%	3.7%
More than $4,000	9.1%	7.2%	7.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median monthly income	$1,173	$1,136	$1,146
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.1M	0.1M
Total weighted N	0.2M	1.7M	1.7M
As a percentage of the poverty level			
0% (no income)	10.5%	5.5%	5.6%
1% – 50%	1.9%	7.7%	7.3%
51% – 75%	8.2%	9.0%	9.0%
76% – 100%	3.8%	11.7%	11.2%
101% – 130%	27.9%	25.6%	25.4%
131% – 150%	0.2%	1.4%	1.4%
151% – 185%	8.1%	16.4%	15.8%
186% or higher	39.3%	22.7%	24.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	0.2M	1.7M	1.7M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q22, Q1.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Missing data in household size needed to calculate poverty level may result in some differences between income percentages and poverty level percentages.

*Median income was calculated as follows = (lower bound of median interval) + [[((total weighted N)/2) – (cumulative frequency of groups before the median group)]/(frequency of median group)] *(median group width).*

The federal poverty guidelines provide income limits below which households are deemed to be in poverty. Colloquially referred to as the federal poverty level, the guidelines are updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). Income limits vary by family size and whether the household resides in the 48 contiguous states (including the District of Columbia), Alaska, or Hawaii. Federal poverty guidelines are not specifically defined for Puerto Rico. For most household sizes, the 2013 guidelines approximate the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for 2012. For this report, we compared annualized monthly income by household size to the 2013 poverty guidelines found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

The federal poverty guidelines are income levels used to determine a household's eligibility for federal assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), taking into account both income and household size. In 2013, the year in which these data were collected, the federal poverty guideline for a family of four living in the 48 contiguous states or the District of Columbia was $23,550 per year.[83] Looking at monthly income as a percentage of the poverty level, across all households and all food program types, 50.7 percent of Feeding America client households fall at or below 100 percent of the poverty level. These findings are highly similar for meal and grocery program client households. Among households with at least one child, 61.9 percent fall at or below 100 percent of poverty, and among households with at least one senior the figure is 33.1 percent. This demonstrates the depth of need among Feeding America clients' households.

The Client Survey also probed annual income by asking respondents to report total household income during the previous 12 months. In addition to presenting income ranges, we calculate both median annual income, and annual income as a percentage of the federal poverty guideline (Tables 4-28, 4-29, 4-30).

Across all households and all food program types (Table 4-28), 10.2 percent of client households report no income in the previous 12 months. Meal program client households, as compared to those at grocery programs, are statistically significantly more likely to report no income. Households with at least one child (Table 4-29) and households with at least one senior (Table 4-30) report less extreme circumstances, with 6.3 percent and 4.5 percent respectively reporting no income, and no statistically significant differences across meal and grocery programs. Median annual income across all household and food program types is $9,175, and as with monthly income, the median is higher for households with at least one child and households with at least one senior. According to the CPS, in 2012 the median annual income for U.S. households was $51,017,[84] more than five times higher the median income of Feeding America client households.

---

[83] Poverty-level guidelines are higher for Alaska and Hawaii, where cost of living is also higher. http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm. Puerto Rico does not have federally designated poverty-level guidelines, but because no participants from Puerto Rico were included in HIA 2014 weighted estimates that include Puerto Rico were achieved through nonresponse adjustments to the data rather than calculation of poverty levels for individual responses.

[84] DeNavas-Walt et al., "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012."

Table 4-28.   All client households by reported annual income ranges, and annual household income as a percentage of the poverty level

Annual household income	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Income in the past 12 months			
$0	24.9%	8.6%	10.2%
$5,000 or less	27.1%	25.2%	25.0%
$5,001 – $10,000	15.0%	17.9%	17.8%
$10,001 – $15,000	12.8%	17.3%	16.5%
$15,001 – $20,000	6.1%	11.6%	11.1%
$20,001 – $25,000	4.6%	8.0%	7.9%
$25,001 – $30,000	3.0%	4.8%	4.7%
$30,001 – $35,000	2.0%	3.1%	3.1%
$35,001 – $50,000	1.8%	2.6%	2.6%
More than $50,000	2.6%	1.0%	1.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median annual income	$4,615	$9,532	$9,175
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.3M	1.3M	1.4M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
As a percentage of the poverty level			
0% (no income)	25.4%	8.9%	10.5%
1% – 50%	28.0%	31.3%	30.6%
51% – 75%	5.9%	13.5%	13.0%
76% – 100%	12.3%	18.5%	17.9%
101% – 130%	3.3%	11.0%	10.3%
131% – 150%	9.3%	6.2%	6.2%
151% – 185%	5.3%	5.8%	5.7%
186% or higher	10.5%	4.9%	5.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.3M	1.4M	1.6M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q23, Q1.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Missing data in household size needed to calculate poverty level may result in some differences between income percentages and poverty level percentages.

*Median income was calculated as follows = (lower bound of median interval) + [[((total weighted N)/2) – (cumulative frequency of groups before the median group)]/(frequency of median group)] *(median group width).*

The federal poverty guidelines provide income limits below which households are deemed to be in poverty. Colloquially referred to as the federal poverty level, the guidelines are updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). Income limits vary by family size and whether the household resides in the 48 contiguous states (including the District of Columbia), Alaska, or Hawaii. Federal poverty guidelines are not specifically defined for Puerto Rico. For most household sizes, the 2013 guidelines approximate the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for 2012. For this report, we compared annual income by household size to the 2013 poverty guidelines found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Table 4-29.   Client households with at least one child by reported annual income ranges, and annual household income as a percentage of the poverty level

Annual household income	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Income in the past 12 months			
$0	9.6%	6.3%	6.3%
$5,000 or less	21.4%	25.1%	24.8%
$5,001 – $10,000	30.8%	13.0%	13.9%
$10,001 – $15,000	14.4%	14.8%	14.6%
$15,001 – $20,000	3.6%	13.2%	12.9%
$20,001 – $25,000	5.0%	10.4%	10.3%
$25,001 – $30,000	4.4%	7.3%	7.2%
$30,001 – $35,000	3.9%	4.7%	4.7%
$35,001 – $50,000	3.8%	4.0%	4.0%
More than $50,000	3.0%	1.2%	1.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median annual income	$8,085	$11,875	$11,721
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.3M	0.3M
Total weighted N	0.1M	2.0M	2.0M
As a percentage of the poverty level			
0% (no income)	9.6%	6.3%	6.3%
1% – 50%	27.0%	36.7%	36.2%
51% – 75%	37.3%	18.5%	19.1%
76% – 100%	7.2%	15.6%	15.4%
101% – 130%	7.9%	14.4%	14.2%
131% – 150%	1.1%	1.7%	1.7%
151% – 185%	4.3%	3.9%	4.0%
186% or higher	5.6%	2.9%	3.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.3M	0.3M
Total weighted N	0.1M	2.0M	2.0M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q23, Q1.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Missing data in household size needed to calculate poverty level may result in some differences between income percentages and poverty level percentages.

Median income was calculated as follows = (lower bound of median interval) + [[((total weighted N)/2) – (cumulative frequency of groups before the median group)]/(frequency of median group)] *(median group width).

The federal poverty guidelines provide income limits below which households are deemed to be in poverty. Colloquially referred to as the federal poverty level, the guidelines are updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). Income limits vary by family size and whether the household resides in the 48 contiguous states (including the District of Columbia), Alaska, or Hawaii. Federal poverty guidelines are not specifically defined for Puerto Rico. For most household sizes, the 2013 guidelines approximate the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for 2012. For this report, we compared annual income by household size to the 2013 poverty guidelines found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Table 4-30.   Client households with at least one senior by reported annual income ranges, and annual household income as a percentage of the poverty level

Annual household income	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Income in the past 12 months			
$0	7.9%	4.5%	4.5%
$5,000 or less	26.0%	21.0%	20.8%
$5,001 – $10,000	14.7%	20.5%	20.5%
$10,001 – $15,000	24.3%	22.3%	22.0%
$15,001 – $20,000	8.8%	13.2%	13.0%
$20,001 – $25,000	5.3%	9.2%	9.2%
$25,001 – $30,000	4.2%	3.7%	3.8%
$30,001 – $35,000	2.1%	2.9%	2.9%
$35,001 – $50,000	2.6%	2.1%	2.2%
More than $50,000	4.1%	0.7%	1.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median annual income	$10,300	$10,920	$10,955
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.3M	0.4M
Total weighted N	0.2M	1.7M	1.7M
As a percentage of the poverty level			
0% (no income)	8.1%	4.7%	4.7%
1% – 50%	26.7%	24.8%	24.5%
51% – 75%	4.4%	11.9%	11.5%
76% – 100%	14.6%	23.2%	23.1%
101% – 130%	5.5%	11.6%	11.2%
131% – 150%	19.1%	10.2%	10.3%
151% – 185%	6.6%	8.2%	8.2%
186% or higher	14.8%	5.4%	6.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.4M	0.4M
Total weighted N	0.2M	1.7M	1.7M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q23, Q1.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Missing data in household size needed to calculate poverty level may result in some differences between income percentages and poverty level percentages.

*Median income was calculated as follows = (lower bound of median interval) + [[((total weighted N)/2) – (cumulative frequency of groups before the median group)]/(frequency of median group)] *(median group width).*

The federal poverty guidelines provide income limits below which households are deemed to be in poverty. Colloquially referred to as the federal poverty level, the guidelines are updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). Income limits vary by family size and whether the household resides in the 48 contiguous states (including the District of Columbia), Alaska, or Hawaii. Federal poverty guidelines are not specifically defined for Puerto Rico. For most household sizes, the 2013 guidelines approximate the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty thresholds for 2012. For this report, we compared annual income by household size to the 2013 poverty guidelines found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Looking at annual income as a percentage of the poverty level, across all households and all program types, 72.0 percent of Feeding America client households fall at or below 100 percent of the poverty level. These findings are almost identical for meal and grocery programs. Among households with at least one child, 77.0 percent fall at or below 100 percent of poverty, and among households with at least one senior the figure is 63.8 percent.

Reviewing Feeding America client households' income as a percentage of the poverty level is also relevant when considering a household's potential income eligibility for federal nutrition assistance programs, such as SNAP and WIC. Although eligibility for federal nutrition assistance programs is contingent on a variety of criteria not included here, including household size, assets, and citizenship status, household income can provide a directional indicator of a household's potential program eligibility. Across all food programs, both meal and grocery, and all household types, 82.3 percent of households fall at or below 130 percent of the poverty level, which is the federal income guideline for SNAP eligibility. Additionally, 11.9 percent of households fall between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level. Although these households may be ineligible for SNAP, they may be eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and WIC (if there are children or pregnant women in the household), or the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). While 5.7 percent of households report incomes at 186 percent or above the poverty guideline, and thus are likely ineligible for federal assistance programs, it is important to note that these households are still frequenting charitable food programs. A household may have income and/or assets that place them just above the eligibility threshold for federal program support, leaving the charitable sector as one of the few sources of food assistance that they receive. These income distributions demonstrate that charitable food assistance is utilized even by households whose incomes exceed the federal poverty line thresholds.

Clients Households' Use of Food Assistance **5**

Key Findings

- Across all client households, 84 percent are food insecure. In households with at least one child that number rises to 89 percent.

- Client households report making spending tradeoffs between paying for food and paying for other necessities, such as medical care, housing, and utilities. Sixty-six percent of households report choosing between paying for food and medicine or medical care each year, and 31 percent do so every month. Fifty-seven percent of households choose between paying for food and housing annually, with 27 percent doing so on a monthly basis.

- Sixty-three percent of households plan for charitable food assistance as a part of their monthly household budget.

- More than half (55 percent) of client households receive monthly benefits from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Almost half of those not receiving SNAP benefits have never applied, most commonly because they did not think they were eligible. Seventy-two percent of households not receiving SNAP benefits may in fact be income eligible for SNAP.

- Clients and their households often utilize multiple coping strategies to ensure they have enough food. More than 50 percent receive help from family or friends; 79 percent purchase inexpensive, unhealthy food; 40 percent water down food and drinks to make them last longer; and 23 percent grow food in a garden. Fifty-five percent of households report employing three or more coping strategies to get enough food each year.

In this chapter we focus on the use of food assistance by Feeding America clients. We begin by examining food security among Feeding America client households, and the difficult choices these households face in paying for food or paying for other necessities. We describe client households' use of federal and charitable nutrition programs, and the coping strategies clients use to secure enough food for themselves and their households.

5.1   Securing Enough Food for the Household

The use of food programs and difficulty getting enough food to feed one's household are likely deeply intertwined. Households that experience limitations in access to adequate food to the extent that it causes changes in diet or reduced food intake are deemed food insecure.[85] According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 17.6 million or 14.5 percent of U.S. households were food insecure in 2012, including 7.8 million households with children.[86] In this section, we examine challenges Feeding America client households face in providing food for household members, including the level of food insecurity of client households, the tradeoffs they make to secure enough food, and the role charitable food assistance plays in their monthly plan to secure food.

5.1.1   Household Food Security Status

Documenting the extent of household food insecurity through surveys is an important part of understanding the issue of hunger. In survey research that covers a range of topics, however, the detailed measures of food security may present too much burden for respondents. In the Client Survey, we employed the 6-item food security module designed by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.[87] This brief survey module has the advantage of reducing the burden on respondents and although it is broadly comparable to the longer 18-item module, it is somewhat less precise. The 6-item module permits categorization of households as *food secure* or *food insecure*. Households that are *food secure* have access at all times to enough food for a healthy, active lifestyle; households that are *food insecure* have limited or uncertain access to adequate food due to a lack of money or other resources.

Many client households report struggling with food security in the past 12 months (Table 5-1). Looking at all households and all food program types, 83.8 classify as food insecure. Food insecurity is highest in households with at least one child, affecting 88.8 percent of those households. The lowest rate of food insecurity is among households with at least one senior, yet still 76.2 percent of client households with seniors are food insecure. Among all client households, as well as households

---

[85] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx

[86] Coleman-Jensen et al., "Household Food Security in the United States in 2012."

[87] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools.aspx#six

with seniors and households with no children or seniors, grocery program client households are statistically significantly[88] more likely than meal program client households to be food insecure— 85.3 percent of grocery program client households are food insecure, compared to 75.8 percent of meal program client households. Overall, it is apparent that many households served by the Feeding America network struggle to find sufficient nutritious foods.

Table 5-1.   Client households by level of food security

Food security	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Food Secure	24.2%	14.7%	16.2%
Food Insecure	75.8%	85.3%	83.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting households	0.2M	0.7M	0.8M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Food Secure	15.9%	10.9%	11.2%
Food Insecure	84.1%	89.1%	88.8%
Households with at least one senior			
Food Secure	38.6%	21.6%	23.8%
Food Insecure	61.4%	78.4%	76.2%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Food Secure	20.7%	13.1%	13.3%
Food Insecure	79.3%	87.0%	86.7%
Households with no children or seniors			
Food Secure	21.0%	12.0%	13.9%
Food Insecure	79.0%	88.0%	86.1%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q37A, Q37B, Q38, Q38A, Q39, and Q40.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Although most client households are food insecure, there are a variety of reasons why some of Feeding America's client households may identify as food secure. Respondents may take into account the food they receive through the charitable food system or federal programs like SNAP when they are answering the questions on the food security module. This could indicate that their food secure status is contingent on the help they receive. Additionally, households may make

---

[88] All statistical significance in the HIA 2014 report is calculated based on a 90 percent confidence interval.

tradeoffs to ensure that they have enough food on the table, as discussed in the next section of this report. Furthermore, HIA 2014 includes non-emergency programs in its scope, thus capturing clients who are in need but may not classify as food insecure. A food secure status does not indicate a lack of need for charitable feeding support.

5.1.2 Making Difficult Decisions about Buying Food vs. Paying for Other Necessities

We can learn more about the challenges faced by Feeding America clients by looking at the decisions their households make when confronting choices between paying for food and paying for other essentials. These dilemmas can put households in the position of choosing between competing necessities.

Across all food program types, the majority of client households report having to choose between paying for food and paying for medical care (65.9 percent), utilities (69.3 percent), housing (57.1 percent), or transportation (66.5 percent) at some point in the past 12 months (Table 5-2). Households making these tradeoffs most often report doing so every month. Households make choices between food and educational expenses least frequently, perhaps because not all households contain students, although 30.5 percent of households have still found themselves choosing between food and education in the past 12 months. The households of clients visiting meal programs seem to be making these hard choices less often than those at grocery programs, although this may be because some meal programs are residential and thus reduce the need for individual choices between food and competing necessities.

Table 5-2. Client households reporting frequency of choosing between food and other necessities in the past 12 months

How often in the past 12 months, did you or your household have to choose between...	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care			
Ever	52.8%	67.8%	65.9%
Every month	*21.5%*	*31.8%*	*30.8%*
Some months during the year	*19.8%*	*23.8%*	*23.3%*
1 or 2 times a year	*11.5%*	*12.2%*	*11.8%*
Never	47.2%	32.3%	34.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.2M	0.2M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Paying for food and paying for utilities			
Ever	51.1%	71.7%	69.3%
Every month	*23.3%*	*34.7%*	*33.6%*
Some months during the year	*17.8%*	*24.6%*	*23.8%*
1 or 2 times a year	*10.0%*	*12.4%*	*11.9%*
Never	48.9%	28.3%	30.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.4M	0.5M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Paying for food and paying for housing			
Ever	46.6%	58.8%	57.1%
Every month	*23.1%*	*27.9%*	*27.2%*
Some months during the year	*13.9%*	*20.0%*	*19.5%*
1 or 2 times a year	*9.6%*	*10.9%*	*10.4%*
Never	53.4%	41.3%	42.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.4M	0.4M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Paying for food and paying for transportation			
Ever	47.6%	68.7%	66.5%
Every month	*23.8%*	*35.3%*	*34.1%*
Some months during the year	*15.1%*	*22.6%*	*21.9%*
1 or 2 times a year	*8.7%*	*10.8%*	*10.5%*
Never	52.4%	31.2%	33.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.4M	0.4M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Table 5-2. Client households reporting frequency of choosing between food and other necessities in the past 12 months (continued)

How often in the past 12 months, did you or your household have to choose between...	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
Paying for food and paying for education expenses			
Ever	22.0%	31.7%	30.5%
Every month	*9.3%*	*14.8%*	*14.1%*
Some months during the year	*7.0%*	*10.3%*	*10.1%*
1 or 2 times a year	*5.7%*	*6.6%*	*6.3%*
Never	77.9%	68.3%	69.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.4M	0.5M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, and Q29.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

5.1.3   Needing to Plan for Food Assistance to Meet a Monthly Budget

Although charitable food assistance is often seen as an emergency resource, many clients who have persistent difficulty securing food for their households plan to incorporate charitable assistance into their overall monthly strategy for obtaining food. Although some clients report seeking assistance on an emergency basis if or when food runs out, the majority plan for charitable food assistance as an element of their monthly household budgets (Table 5-3).

Table 5-3. Client households reporting different strategies for food assistance

Planned use of programs	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
I usually wait to come until I run out of food	38.5%	36.8%	36.8%
I plan to get food here on a regular basis	61.5%	63.2%	63.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.3M	0.9M	1.0M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
I usually wait to come until I run out of food	46.5%	42.9%	43.0%
I plan to get food here on a regular basis	53.5%	57.1%	57.0%
Households with at least one senior			
I usually wait to come until I run out of food	23.9%	24.2%	24.3%
I plan to get food here on a regular basis	76.1%	75.8%	75.7%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
I usually wait to come until I run out of food	30.6%	29.2%	29.2%
I plan to get food here on a regular basis	69.4%	70.8%	70.8%
Households with no children or seniors			
I usually wait to come until I run out of food	42.3%	40.2%	40.6%
I plan to get food here on a regular basis	57.7%	59.8%	59.4%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q41.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Across all households, 63.2 percent of households plan to get food at meal or grocery programs on a regular basis to help with their monthly food budget. For such households, charitable food assistance is not just a safety net, but an integral part of planning for monthly food. Households with at least one senior are statistically significantly more likely, in comparison to all households, to plan for program visits with 75.7 percent planning visits on a regular basis rather than waiting for food to run out.

5.2 Client Households' Use of Other Food Assistance

Households receiving charitable food assistance through the Feeding America network may also get assistance from other nutrition programs. Survey respondents were asked about household participation in the largest federal food assistance programs, including SNAP and the Special

Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Additionally, those in households with children were asked about participation in the free and reduced-priced school lunch and school breakfast programs, afterschool snack and meal programs, and BackPack weekend food programs that provide children with nutritious and easy-to-prepare food for weekend consumption.

SNAP is the largest federal nutrition assistance program. Eligible households receive their monthly SNAP benefit allotment on an electronic benefits (EBT) card. While some of the eligibility and participation rules vary by state, eligibility is generally limited to households with gross income below 130 percent of the poverty line ($23,550 for a family of four in 2013).[89] In some states, eligible households must pass an asset test, with financial assets limited to $2,000 for nonelderly households and $3,250 for elderly and disabled households. SNAP benefit amounts are based on the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), and families with no net income after allowable deductions receive the maximum allotment, the full cost of the TFP for their household size. Most SNAP households have income and receive a benefit equal to the difference between the maximum allotment and 30 percent of their net income.[90]

Other large federal and charitable food assistance programs focus on households with pregnant and post-partum women and children.[91] WIC provides supplemental foods for low-income pregnant and post-partum women and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. WIC eligibility restricts benefits to families with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (states may use lower income cut offs). Low-income households with children may also qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or a free or reduced price breakfast through the School Breakfast Program (SBP), both federal programs.[92] Afterschool snacks and meals, as well as summer meals, are reimbursable through federal programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), respectively;

---

[89] Most states, including 43 in 2013, use SNAP's optional Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility rules. These rules confer SNAP eligibility to those receiving a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-funded non-cash service such as a brochure about assistance programs. These states typically apply a gross income eligibility limit that ranges between 130 and 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline. See Elizabeth Laird and Carole Trippe, (February 2014). "Programs Conferring Categorical Eligibility for SNAP: State Policies and the Number and Characteristics of Households Affected." Final Report to the USDA. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

[90] See www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility#Deductions? for details on deductions.

[91] The federal government offers additional, smaller, nutrition programs. See www.fns.usda.gov/programs-and-services for a full listing.

[92] Families with incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for a free lunch or breakfast and families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level qualify for a reduced-price lunch or breakfast. See www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/income-eligibility-guidelines.

however, in many cases these programs are offered though charitable agencies apart from the federal programs.[93] Some schools and partner agencies offer these programs for households that qualify.

5.2.1   Client Households' Use of SNAP

Just over half (54.8 percent) of all client households report that they are currently receiving SNAP benefits (Table 5-4). Across all food programs, both meal and grocery, receipt is statistically significantly higher for households with at least one child (58.9 percent), and lower for households with at least one senior (46.6 percent) as compared to all households. Reports of SNAP benefit receipt are similar overall for clients of meal and grocery programs. Receipt of SNAP benefits is often underreported, however, so actual levels of SNAP receipt by Feeding America client households may be higher.[94]

Among all client households not currently receiving SNAP, almost half report that they had never applied for SNAP benefits (Table 5-4). Households with at least one senior are statistically significantly more likely than other households to report never having applied (28.8 percent of households with seniors), and households with at least one senior receiving meal program help are most likely to say that they have never applied for SNAP (34.1 percent of households). This is consistent with the literature indicating that seniors more often avoid SNAP, often because of lack of program knowledge, stigma, a desire for privacy, or a decline in income volatility.[95,96]

---

[93] CACFP is a federally-funded program administered by eligible states that includes at-risk afterschool care programs. SFSP is federally funded and provides free summer meals to children at approved sites located where there are substantial concentrations of low-income children. For more information on both, visit www.fns.usda.gov.

[94] Bruce D. Meyer, Wallace K.C. Mok, and James X. Sullivan. (2009). "The Under-Reporting of Transfers in Household Surveys: Its Nature and Consequences." NBER Working Paper No. 15181. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

[95] See Steven Haider, Alison Jacknowitz, and Robert Schoeni. (2003). "Food Stamps and the Elderly: Why is Participation So Low?" *Journal of Human Resources*, 38 (Suppl.): 1080-1111.

[96] Craig Gundersen, and J. Ziliak. (2008). "The Age Gradient in Food Stamp Program Participation: Does Income Volatility Matter?" Income Volatility and Food Assistance in the United States, 171-216. Edited by D. Jolliffe and J. Ziliak. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Table 5-4. Client households by reported current receipt of SNAP benefits, and among those not currently receiving benefits, whether or not they have applied

Current receipt of SNAP and whether applied	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Receiving SNAP	57.8%	55.1%	54.8%
Not receiving SNAP	42.2%	44.9%	45.2%
Never applied	*19.9%*	*20.1%*	*20.4%*
Have applied	*20.5%*	*23.5%*	*23.4%*
Unknown	*1.8%*	*1.3%*	*1.3%*
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Receiving SNAP	63.8%	59.1%	58.9%
Not receiving SNAP	36.2%	40.9%	41.1%
Never applied	*9.2%*	*15.6%*	*15.5%*
Have applied	*26.7%*	*24.6%*	*24.9%*
Unknown	*0.3%*	*0.7%*	*0.7%*
Households with at least one senior			
Receiving SNAP	46.6%	47.2%	46.6%
Not receiving SNAP	53.4%	52.8%	53.4%
Never applied	*34.1%*	*27.6%*	*28.8%*
Have applied	*14.7%*	*23.4%*	*22.9%*
Unknown	*4.6%*	*1.7%*	*1.7%*
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Receiving SNAP	69.9%	47.8%	47.9%
Not receiving SNAP	30.1%	52.2%	52.1%
Never applied	*15.0%*	*23.5%*	*23.5%*
Have applied	*11.5%*	*27.2%*	*27.1%*
Unknown	*3.6%*	*1.5%*	*1.5%*
Households with no children or seniors			
Receiving SNAP	60.5%	57.9%	57.4%
Not receiving SNAP	39.5%	42.1%	42.6%
Never applied	*15.1%*	*17.1%*	*17.3%*
Have applied	*23.2%*	*23.7%*	*24.0%*
Unknown	*1.3%*	*1.3%*	*1.3%*

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q30, and Q31.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

5.2.1.1   Exhaustion of SNAP Benefits

By definition, SNAP benefits are intended to supplement a household's monthly grocery budget, and Table 5-5 reveals that SNAP benefits typically do not last recipients the entire month. Across all households and food programs, 21.1 percent report that these benefits only last one week or less, 31.3 percent report that benefits last two weeks, and 33.9 percent report benefits last for three weeks. A minority (13.6 percent) report that SNAP benefits usually last four weeks or more. Clients of meal programs are statistically significantly more likely than clients of grocery programs to report that SNAP benefits last for four weeks or longer (25.1 percent compared with 12.7 percent), and the median number of weeks benefits last is two weeks for those in grocery programs, but three weeks for those in meal programs. This may reflect the difference in food preparation patterns between these groups. Grocery clients typically prepare meals at home and use SNAP benefits to purchase the food they make, but meal-program clients may prepare food at home less often since they are receiving meals on site at a program.

Reports of the time that SNAP benefits last are similar across household types, except that households with at least one senior are statistically significantly more likely than other households to report that benefits last one week or less. In contrast to other household types, households with at least one senior using meal programs also have a lower median numbers of weeks that benefits last—two weeks in comparison to three weeks for other household types that use meal programs. These finding are consistent with federal reports indicating that households with seniors do not typically receive the maximum benefit and that their lower monthly SNAP allocation may be due in large part to a smaller-than-average household size: 81 percent of SNAP households with seniors, according to the latest federal study, consisted of a senior living alone.[97] It should be noted, however, that differences in the duration of SNAP benefits may also be attributable to individual households' food preparation and spending patterns, irrespective of benefit size and charitable food program type.

---

[97] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (February 2014.) "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2012." Table 3-3, February 2014. http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2012Characteristics.pdf

Table 5-5.   Client households by reported usual time to exhaustion of SNAP benefits, among households receiving SNAP benefits

Time to exhaustion of benefits	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
1 week or less	14.9%	21.8%	21.1%
2 weeks	29.0%	31.7%	31.3%
3 weeks	31.0%	33.9%	33.9%
4 weeks	16.0%	9.3%	9.9%
More than 4 weeks	9.1%	3.4%	3.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Median number of weeks	3	2	2
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.7M	0.7M
Total weighted N	0.6M	3.1M	3.2M
Households with at least one child			
1 week or less	18.1%	16.8%	16.7%
2 weeks	26.8%	33.0%	32.9%
3 weeks	38.9%	39.1%	39.2%
4 weeks	9.9%	8.4%	8.5%
More than 4 weeks	6.3%	2.6%	2.7%
Median number of weeks	3	2	2
Households with at least one senior			
1 week or less	21.4%	29.6%	29.1%
2 weeks	33.9%	28.4%	28.4%
3 weeks	27.6%	27.3%	27.6%
4 weeks	11.8%	10.7%	10.9%
More than 4 weeks	5.3%	3.9%	4.0%
Median number of weeks	2	2	2
Households with at least one child and one senior			
1 week or less	2.7%	18.3%	18.2%
2 weeks	25.8%	32.1%	32.2%
3 weeks	56.2%	37.3%	37.3%
4 weeks	13.3%	8.9%	8.8%
More than 4 weeks	2.0%	3.4%	3.4%
Median number of weeks	3	2	2
Households with no children or seniors			
1 week or less	11.8%	20.7%	19.4%
2 weeks	26.1%	33.3%	31.8%
3 weeks	32.8%	33.2%	33.8%
4 weeks	18.3%	9.0%	10.5%
More than 4 weeks	11.0%	3.8%	4.4%
Median number of weeks	3	2	2

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q30 and Q30A.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.*

5.2.1.2   Reasons Why Clients Do Not Receive SNAP

There can be many reasons why nearly half of Feeding America clients do not receive SNAP benefits. They may not have applied because they do not know about the program or perhaps know about the program but do not think they were eligible. Others may apply but do not pass the eligibility screens, and others may fail to complete the full application process. SNAP limits eligibility to households with incomes below certain limits, and other state-specific eligibility requirements may affect SNAP eligibility and participation rates. For instance, in some states households must pass an asset test. Also, SNAP benefits are not available to documented immigrants in the country for fewer than five years (unless the applicant is a child under age 18 or a person with a disability), and all undocumented immigrants are excluded. A time limit may also apply to receipt of SNAP for able-bodied adults without dependents who are not working, or in work programs that limit benefits to three months out of a three-year period. This restriction was lifted in many states, however, during 2013 because of high unemployment.[98] Individuals also may not apply or qualify for SNAP benefits for other reasons related to specific eligibility criteria not previously mentioned. Finally, as noted in Section 5.2.1, participation in SNAP is often under-reported by survey respondents and this phenomenon may affect this survey as well, resulting in a lower reported SNAP participation rate than actually exists in the population.[99]

The client households not participating in SNAP may or may not be eligible for SNAP benefits. Nonetheless, reported household cash income provides some indication of SNAP eligibility among nonparticipating households, and reasons for nonparticipation given among this group provide additional insight.

When asked about the reasons they and their household members have never applied for SNAP, clients most often report that they do not think they are eligible for benefits (Table 5-6). Relatively few (6.3 percent) report they have never heard of SNAP; this percentage was likely influenced by the fact that their state-specific SNAP EBT card image was presented in the Client Survey, making recognition of the benefit easier. Only 8.1 percent say that it is too hard to apply for benefits.

---

[98] See www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP/able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawds? for the current status of state waivers due to high unemployment.

[99] Bruce D. Meyer, Wallace K.C. Mok, and James X. Sullivan. (2009). "The Under-Reporting of Transfers in Household Surveys: Its Nature and Consequences." NBER Working Paper No. 15181. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Table 5-6.   Client households reporting select reasons for not applying for SNAP benefits, among households that have never applied

Reasons have not applied	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
All households			
Did not think eligible	48.1%	52.5%	52.1%
Never heard of program	4.3%	6.4%	6.3%
Personal reasons	16.8%	14.9%	14.6%
Too hard to apply	4.7%	8.3%	8.1%
Another reason	32.7%	27.6%	28.4%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.5M	0.5M
Total weighted N	0.2M	1.1M	1.2M
Households with at least one child			
Did not think eligible	64.2%	51.8%	52.1%
Never heard of program	1.1%	7.7%	7.5%
Personal reasons	17.4%	17.1%	17.0%
Too hard to apply	5.8%	10.6%	10.5%
Another reason	13.5%	23.7%	23.5%
Households with at least one senior			
Did not think eligible	53.8%	56.0%	55.0%
Never heard of program	3.5%	4.6%	4.6%
Personal reasons	13.6%	12.4%	12.3%
Too hard to apply	1.1%	8.1%	7.4%
Another reason	32.7%	26.7%	28.3%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q31 and Q31A.

Respondents could mark more than one reason, thus responses may sum to more than 100%.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Over one-third of client households that report having applied for SNAP benefits report not qualifying at some point. Among those that report not qualifying for SNAP benefits, the most common reason given was that their income was too high (Table 5-7). A small percentage of client households reported that either their assets were too high or the application was too difficult. The percentage of client households that report citizenship status as the main reason for not qualifying for SNAP benefits is also small; however, it is possible that citizenship was underreported given that citizenship is a potentially sensitive topic.

Table 5-7.   Client households reporting not having qualified for SNAP benefits at some point, among households that have ever applied, and main reason for not qualifying

| | Type of program | | All food programs |
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Did not qualify for SNAP in the past	29.3%	37.2%	36.3%
Main reason for not qualifying			
Application too difficult	*1.2%*	*1.5%*	*1.5%*
Assets too high	*2.7%*	*4.5%*	*4.4%*
Income too high	*10.4%*	*15.8%*	*15.4%*
Not a U.S. citizen	*0.7%*	*1.0%*	*1.0%*
Another reason	*10.9%*	*11.0%*	*10.9%*
Unknown	*3.4%*	*3.3%*	*3.2%*
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.6M	0.7M
Total weighted N	0.9M	4.3M	4.6M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q32 and Q32A.

Reasons sum to percent that did not qualify. Numbers may not sum exactly due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Many client households' perceptions and experiences indicate that they do not think they are eligible for SNAP (among those that never applied) or that their income disqualifies them (among those that had applied but did not receive SNAP). Self-reported incomes of households not receiving SNAP, however, indicate that 72.0 percent could be income eligible for SNAP (Table 5-8). Most report current incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition to having gross income at or below 130 percent of the poverty level, SNAP applicants must demonstrate that their net income, which is their gross income minus any allowable deductions, is equal to or less than 100 percent of the poverty level to qualify for benefits. Client households that indicate not having qualified for SNAP benefits at some point due to their income being too high may have met the gross income eligibility requirements but not the net income component of the income test. Notably, a smaller percentage of client households that have incomes above 130 percent of poverty may still be potentially eligible for SNAP, because their incomes are below the higher income eligibility level set by their states under Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) for certain households.

Table 5-8.   Client households by potential income eligibility for SNAP benefits, among households not receiving SNAP benefits

Level of potential household income eligibility	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
Potentially income eligible	61.1%	73.0%	72.0%
Income at or below 130% of poverty level	*56.5%*	*62.1%*	*61.7%*
Income from >130% to state-specific BBCE level	*4.6%*	*10.9%*	*10.3%*
Not eligible	38.9%	27.0%	28.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.0M	0.3M	0.3M
Total weighted N	0.5M	2.3M	2.5M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q23 and Q23.

Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) makes households with incomes above 130% of poverty, but below a higher state-set income threshold, categorically eligible for SNAP under some conditions.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Gaps in receipt of SNAP benefits present another factor that can increase the need for private food assistance. SNAP requires households to reapply for benefits on a regular basis, and to be evaluated for continued eligibility at that time. Among client households that either currently receive SNAP or that applied but are not currently receiving SNAP, 29.9 percent report that SNAP benefits had been stopped at some time (Table 5-9). Just under a third of those households report that they missed the recertification deadline, and nearly as many report their income had become too high for eligibility.

Table 5-9. Client households reporting SNAP benefits stopping, among households that have ever applied, and main reason for benefits stopping

Reasons SNAP benefits stopped	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
SNAP benefits stopped in the past	32.5%	29.9%	29.9%
Main reason SNAP benefits stopped			
Time ran out or you missed the recertification deadline	*12.3%*	*9.6%*	*9.8%*
Your income was too high	*6.4%*	*8.8%*	*8.6%*
Some other reason	*12.6%*	*10.4%*	*10.4%*
Unknown	*1.2%*	*1.0%*	*1.0%*
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.7M	0.8M
Total weighted N	0.9M	4.3M	4.6M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q33 and Q33A.

Reasons sum to percent that had benefits stopped. Numbers may not sum exactly due to rounding.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.*

5.2.2 Receipt of Nutrition Assistance Focused on Children

Some client households receive WIC benefits (Table 5-10). As described previously, WIC provides supplemental food and nutrition education to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and children up to age five who are at risk nutritionally. Because the survey did not ask about the presence of pregnant women or nutrition risk it is not possible to determine the eligibility rate within client households. Nonetheless, among client households with children under the age of 18, nearly one-quarter report receiving WIC services.

Table 5-10.   Client households by reported current receipt of WIC benefits

Household composition	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households	5.1%	12.1%	11.5%
Households with at least one child	23.4%	24.7%	24.4%
Households with at least one senior	1.3%	4.9%	4.7%
Households with at least one child and one senior	11.0%	13.8%	13.8%
Households with no children or seniors	4.5%	5.0%	5.1%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.7M	0.8M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q34.

WIC is the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Pregnant women without children in the household are also eligible for WIC. Because WIC serves children only to age five, some households with at least one child may not contain eligible children.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Some client households also benefit from other federal and charitable nutrition programs targeted at school-aged children (Table 5-11). In this report, we consider school-aged children to be children ages 5-18. This particular age group was selected as an approximation for school-aged children that would be age-eligible for child nutrition programs, but there may be slight variation in eligibility given receipt by some younger children, such as preschoolers. Most (93.7 percent) client households with school-aged children report receipt of free or reduced-price school lunch benefits, and 46.2 percent report receipt of free or reduced-price school breakfast benefits. As noted earlier, breakfast is not available in all schools, and some families may prefer to feed their children at home, which may account for the lower rate of participation in school breakfast programs. Households with school-aged children in the meal programs are statistically significantly more likely than those in grocery programs to report receipt of school breakfast benefits.

Table 5-11. Client household participation in programs targeted at children other than WIC, among households with school-aged children

Household participates in...	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	**Grocery**	
Afterschool snack or meal programs	10.1%	8.2%	8.1%
BackPack weekend food programs	10.1%	8.0%	8.0%
Free or reduced-price school breakfast programs	65.1%	45.3%	46.2%
Free or reduced-price school lunch programs	95.2%	93.6%	93.7%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.8M	0.8M
Total weighted N	0.1M	1.4M	1.4M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q35.

WIC is the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Free or reduced-price school breakfast and school lunch programs are fully federally reimbursed. Afterschool snack or meal programs are eligible for reimbursement but may not be reimbursed. BackPack programs are not eligible for federal reimbursement.

School-aged children are children ages 5-18.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Some children receive afterschool snack or meal programs (8.1 percent), and some participate in BackPack weekend food programs (8.0 percent) which are charitable programs and not federally funded. Low rates of participation likely reflect lower availability of these programs. Because multiple programs, both federal and charitable, may be available to families some families may rely on both federal and charitable programs to address child nutrition needs.

5.3   Households' Engagement in Coping Strategies

When faced with the threat of food insecurity, individuals may engage in various coping strategies that range from relatively small changes in eating practices to extreme changes. Coping strategies are active and immediate responses to avoid hunger and its consequences. They are not, however, always successful, and/or may result in unintended negative health effects. In Section 5.1.3 we discussed the spending tradeoffs that Feeding America client households report making between food and other necessities as one type of coping strategy. This section of the report discusses additional coping strategies employed by Feeding America client households.

5.3.1   Coping Strategies to Get Enough Food

Client households report engaging in a range of coping strategies (Table 5-12). Across all households, the purchase of inexpensive, unhealthy food is the most commonly reported coping strategy (78.7 percent). Households with at least one child, as compared to all households, are statistically significantly more likely to report purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food, with 83.5 percent reporting this coping strategy. Grocery program client households are statistically significantly more likely than meal program households to report purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food (80.0 percent as compared to 69.1 percent). This strategy has known risks for negative health outcomes. For example, foods that are higher in fat, sodium, and sugar can contribute to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, low energy levels, and poor nutrition.

Many households also report making less optimal food choices, including eating food past the expiration date[100] (56.1 percent), and watering down food or drink (40.0 percent). More than half of households report purchasing food in dented or damaged packages, although this is not necessarily an unsafe practice if the food is handled safely.[101] Households of grocery program clients are statistically significantly more likely to purchase food with dented or damaged packaging (53.2 percent) as compared to households of meal program clients (44.4 percent). Households with at least one senior, as compared to all households, are statistically significantly more likely to eat food past the expiration date (60.2 percent). Households with at least one child, as compared to all households, are statistically significantly more likely to purchase food in dented or damaged packages (55.4 percent) and to water down food and drink (44.8 percent). These particular coping strategies suggest that some Feeding America clients and their household members are engaging in concerning behaviors in order to feed themselves and their families.

---

[100] Clients were asked about "expiration date" on the survey, which they may have interpreted as either the sell-by date or the best-by date since either can be displayed on products.

[101] See www.fda.gov/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/BuyStoreServeSafeFood/ucm197835.htm

Table 5-12. Client households by coping strategies used to get enough food in the past 12 months

Coping strategies used to get enough food	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
All households			
Eaten food past expiration date	54.1%	57.1%	56.1%
Grew food in a garden	14.6%	23.6%	22.7%
Sold or pawned personal property	31.8%	35.9%	34.9%
Purchased food in dented or damaged packages	44.4%	53.2%	51.7%
Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food	69.1%	80.0%	78.7%
Received help from family or friends	49.7%	53.5%	52.5%
Watered down food or drinks	38.3%	40.9%	40.0%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.2M	0.9M	1.0M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M
Households with at least one child			
Eaten food past expiration date	55.7%	54.4%	54.6%
Grew food in a garden	12.8%	25.9%	25.5%
Sold or pawned personal property	38.4%	45.2%	45.0%
Purchased food in dented or damaged packages	50.9%	55.5%	55.4%
Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food	77.0%	83.7%	83.5%
Received help from family or friends	57.3%	61.4%	60.9%
Watered down food or drinks	45.2%	44.6%	44.8%
Households with at least one senior			
Eaten food past expiration date	59.3%	61.3%	60.2%
Grew food in a garden	22.6%	25.7%	25.4%
Sold or pawned personal property	21.7%	23.4%	22.8%
Purchased food in dented or damaged packages	40.8%	51.3%	50.0%
Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food	58.8%	75.1%	73.5%
Received help from family or friends	36.1%	41.2%	40.5%
Watered down food or drinks	33.4%	35.2%	34.1%
Households with at least one child and one senior			
Eaten food past expiration date	59.5%	62.1%	62.0%
Grew food in a garden	35.6%	29.9%	29.9%
Sold or pawned personal property	24.5%	36.5%	36.5%
Purchased food in dented or damaged packages	54.5%	54.9%	54.9%
Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food	72.5%	81.2%	81.2%
Received help from family or friends	50.3%	53.2%	53.0%
Watered down food or drinks	37.6%	43.3%	43.1%
Households with no children or seniors			
Eaten food past expiration date	53.4%	58.1%	56.1%
Grew food in a garden	13.1%	20.0%	18.8%
Sold or pawned personal property	36.0%	38.9%	37.4%
Purchased food in dented or damaged packages	46.6%	52.7%	50.3%
Purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food	71.8%	81.8%	80.0%
Received help from family or friends	56.0%	57.0%	56.0%
Watered down food or drinks	39.7%	43.2%	41.3%

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q43A through Q43G.

Respondents could select multiple strategies, thus numbers do not sum to 100%.

NOTE: *All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.*

One possible reason for making less optimal food choices is the lack of healthier or better choices that are both available and affordable. The Client Survey also asked clients to identify foods they most want, but do not usually get, from the meal or grocery program they were visiting. Clients identify fresh fruit and vegetables as the most desired item not received (55.0 percent), followed by protein food items like meat (47.1 percent) and dairy products such as milk, cheese, or yogurt (40.0 percent).[102] Nonperishable items, which may be more easily available through the food programs, were identified at much lower rates.

Across all households slightly more than 50 percent receive help from family and friends as a strategy for getting enough food. While this coping strategy may be successful in the short term, it may not be a long-term solution as it could create burden for family or friends who may not have the resources for long-term support. Notably, households with at least one senior are statistically significantly less likely than other household types to receive help from families and friends in getting enough food.

Growing food in a garden is the least commonly employed coping strategy (22.7 percent overall), and it is statistically significantly lower among households of meal program clients (14.6 percent) as compared to grocery program clients (23.6 percent), possibly reflecting that some meal programs are residential and have no facilities for gardens. The percentage of households growing food in gardens is statistically significantly higher, however, among households with at least one child and at least one senior (29.9 percent) as compared to all households.

Selling or pawning personal property to obtain funds for food is reported by 34.9 percent of households overall, but is statistically significantly more common among households with at least one child (45.0 percent), and statistically significantly less common among households with at least one senior (22.8 percent).

Also important is the percentage of households that report engaging in more than one of these coping strategies within the same 12-month period (Table 5-13). More than half of households (54.8 percent) report using three or more coping strategies in the past 12 months. Most households are employing multiple coping strategies, in addition to seeking federal or charitable food assistance, to try to secure enough food, demonstrating that they are expending great effort to piece together solutions to reduce the likelihood of hunger in their households.

---

[102] Clients could identify up to three items they most want, so percentages exceed 100 percent.

Table 5-13. Client households reporting number of coping strategies used to get enough food in the past 12 months

Number of coping strategies used	Type of program		All food programs
	Meal	Grocery	
None	16.4%	10.2%	11.2%
1	19.9%	15.2%	16.0%
2	15.1%	18.4%	18.1%
3	16.9%	19.8%	19.3%
4	18.7%	19.5%	19.2%
5 or more	12.9%	16.9%	16.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Weighted nonreporting client households	0.1M	0.3M	0.3M
Total weighted N	1.1M	5.4M	5.8M

Data Source: Hunger in America 2014 Client Survey, Q43A through Q43G.

Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NOTE: All data were weighted as described in Chapter 2. Percentages reported in tables are calculated from valid responses which exclude nonresponse and valid skips due to survey item skip patterns. Numbers listed under nonreporting clients include missing data due to item nonresponse from participating clients. All estimates are weighted to account for program and client sampling as well as survey nonresponse from nonparticipating food banks, agencies, programs, and clients. Total weighted N reflects the weighted number of respondents eligible to answer the question. It includes missing data but excludes valid skips. Total weighted N can vary across tables because of valid skips. Meal program numbers and grocery program numbers do not sum to all food program numbers because the unduplicated count that forms the basis for the weight for all food programs removes double-counting of clients served by both types of programs.

Summary of Findings 6

Hunger in America 2014 (HIA 2014) is Feeding America's sixth quadrennial comprehensive study of its network of charitable food assistance. Using a four-stage sampling design and two phases of data collection, the study utilizes more than 32,000 surveys of Feeding America member food banks' partner agencies that provide food assistance services, and more than 60,000 surveys of clients served by the meal and grocery programs the partner agencies operate. The survey results, weighted to represent the full national Feeding America network, provide the most up-to-date and complete profile of this critical part of the charitable sector in the United States. We estimate that Feeding America is currently serving 46.5 million unique individuals in 15.5 million households annually across the 50 states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. Feeding America's more than 200 member food banks offer this assistance through collaboration with more than 46,000 partner agencies, and more than 58,000 meal and grocery programs the agencies operate.

Completed at the end of August 2013, HIA 2014 data collection took place during a period with historically high demand for food assistance. Unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity rates remained high since the Great Recession of 2008, and the number of households receiving nutrition assistance from the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) had increased by approximately 50 percent between 2009 and 2013. Demand for charitable food assistance also expanded during this time.

This national report summarizes the study methods, including the challenges and lessons for future research. It describes the range of partner agencies and programs in the Feeding America network, including the services they provide, their sources of food, how they staff their operations, and the challenges they face. The report details the number and characteristics of individual clients served by these programs, and explores clients' household circumstances including demographic characteristics, employment, health, and household income. Client households' food security status, use of other nutrition assistance programs, and coping strategies employed to secure enough food complete this profile. The information will help to guide future policy decisions to address the issue of hunger in America.

6.1 Completing a National Profile of the Feeding America Network and Its Clients

6.1.1 Innovations in Hunger in America 2014

HIA 2014 marks a departure from previous Hunger in America (HIA) studies in an effort to capture more effectively the scope of services provided by the Feeding America network and the characteristics of the clients and households using the services. As described in Chapter 2, HIA 2014 included many additional types of programs, such as nonemergency programs, for the first time, and broadened the program categories to those that provide meals and those that provide groceries. The study design was also modified to use results from the Agency Survey as the basis for the sample design for the Client Survey to ensure a more rigorous random sampling process and better tailor the sampling plans for each individual food bank.

Data collection was modernized to take advantage of the benefits of electronic data collection. For the Agency Survey phase of data collection, the use of electronic surveys allowed for more secure transmission of survey data and increased monitoring of the data collection efforts. Conducting the Client Survey electronically on tablet computers allowed for the embedding of skip logic into the surveys. In addition, the use of tablets made it possible to offer the Client Survey through Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (ACASI), providing the respondents with increased privacy for their responses. ACASI also opened the door to offering the survey in five languages rather than the two languages offered in previous HIA studies.

Finally, innovations in HIA 2014 led to an increased number of completed program visits for the Client Survey at the national level. In an effort to obtain more precise data, and because there is known to be greater diversity among clients across different programs than within the same program, food banks were asked to visit a larger number of their food programs to survey their clients. As a result, food banks collectively visited more than twice as many programs in 2014 as in the previous HIA study.

6.1.2 Select Challenges in Hunger in America 2014

While design and survey innovations have resulted in a study that moves HIA forward in its goal of representing fully the services and clients of the Feeding America network, innovation is not without

consequences: comparisons to previous HIA studies must be made cautiously as the changes in design and population studied mean that direct comparisons of the data are no longer fully interpretable. While some differences in results may be due to changes over time in the network, others may be consequences of the differences between the studies.

Using Agency Survey data as the basis for Client Survey sampling was an innovation that tightened the study design. Yet doing so required that member food banks identify all their partner agencies for the initial frame, and this proved to be an unexpected challenge. The differentiation between partner agencies and the programs they operate is not always immediately apparent or easy to determine, and confusion about who should be included in the agency sampling frame led to inadvertent omissions from the sample. When omissions were discovered after the Client Survey program visit sample was drawn, introduction of those cases into the sample post-hoc changed the nature of the probability sample and required complex statistical adjustments to maintain the integrity of the estimates (see the Technical Volume for details).

Innovation also did not obviate all previous challenges. As in previous HIA studies, children are underrepresented in the Client Survey data. Children are not able to consent to direct participation in surveys. Consequently, programs that serve children uniquely were not eligible to be sampled for the Client Survey, and as children were not eligible to be sampled at multigenerational meal programs, the number of children served by the network is underestimated. This has been a consistent challenge for the HIA studies, and remained so for HIA 2014. Future HIA studies, or embedded sub-studies, may want to look for creative methodologies to estimate more effectively the number of children served.

HIA 2014 also encountered the same benefits and challenges as in past HIA studies related to the use of volunteer data collectors. The study could not be implemented without the dedicated work of the food banks in training and monitoring generous volunteer data collectors alongside their regular staff. Yet volunteer data collectors, with their limited time dedicated to the study, bring a level of unpredictability to the work that resulted in some departures from the specified sampling design and study procedures. The ACASI surveys eased the burden on data collectors to learn skip patterns and survey administration techniques, but could not simplify the complex task of sampling or other operational and scheduling challenges.

6.2   The Feeding America Network of Services

6.2.1   Range of Partner Agencies and Programs

Feeding America's member food banks, working with their partner agencies, provide food and services to people in all 50 states, Washington, DC and Puerto Rico. Based on the Agency Survey, weighted to represent the entire network, the food banks in the Feeding America network partner with more than 46,000 charitable agencies to distribute food to clients through more than 58,000 meal and grocery programs. More than half (62 percent) of partner agencies are faith-based organizations or located in a religious institution, but agencies also include numerous other nonprofit or private organizations, Community Action Programs, and state or local government agencies.

In addition to the 58,000 programs operated by partner agencies that provide clients with meals and groceries, many partner agencies also offer assistance and outreach for food-related benefit programs such as SNAP, nutrition education, and assistance with other non-food challenges related to housing, clothing, and legal advice. Although most agencies offer only food programs (either meal or grocery, 64.9 percent), nearly one-third of agencies offer both food and non-food programs, or provide non-food services such as benefits assistance, outreach, or referrals, as an integrated component of their food programs. The breadth of services offered reflects the diversity of needs among Feeding America clients. While hunger-relief is a major part of most partner agencies' missions, ensuring that people in need can get appropriate assistance with other hurdles of daily life emerges as a strong focus.

6.2.2   Partner Agency and Program Resources

Partner agencies and their programs require personnel, food, and money to operate. Only half of the partner agencies employ any paid staff. Instead they rely on a volunteer workforce to deliver their services. In a typical month, nearly 2 million volunteers contribute more than 8.4 million hours of their time to food programs. Volunteers are of all ages, and once engaged tend to stay engaged.

But volunteers are not enough to perpetuate services; partner agencies and their programs need both food and money to continue operating. Programs acquire food from various sources. The majority comes from Feeding America member food banks (61.8 percent of the total food distributed). Food

also comes from donations, food banks outside the Feeding America network, and purchases to fill gaps. Funding directly to the partner agencies comes from various sources, including individual contributions, religious institutions, government, foundations, corporations, and other sources. Few partner agencies collect funds from client service fees they could charge for non-food services such as trainings, social activities, or professional services, choosing instead to serve clients without charge.

Programs often stretch to meet clients' food assistance needs. To maintain their ability to serve clients, some partner agencies report making reductions during the past 12 months, including cutting back on hours of operation, laying off staff, and limiting service areas. The partner agencies that have scaled back operations most often attribute their actions to reductions in monetary and food donations rather than the increase in demand for food. The majority of the partner agencies making these reductions are at least somewhat worried about their ability to continue providing services, citing need for more money and more food supplies as the most pressing concerns.

6.3 Food Assistance Clients and Their Households Are Diverse

Using the HIA 2014 data, we estimate the Feeding America network serves 46.5 million unique or "unduplicated" individuals in 15.5 million households annually across the United States. Each month 5.8 million unique households receive assistance from the network. Many clients receive food multiple times during the year, so estimating each time clients are reached through food distributions yields a "duplicated" estimate of 389.2 million individual client interactions through food programs in a year.

6.3.1 Client and Household Demographic Characteristics

Individual clients vary greatly in their demographic characteristics. On an annual level, individual clients range from infants to seniors, including 28.5 percent of the clients who are children under age 18 (a likely underestimate for reasons described earlier in this chapter). They are racially and ethnically diverse, and although more than one-quarter of the adults do not hold a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), the majority of adult clients have at least a high school diploma or more. Over one-quarter of the adult clients have completed education beyond

high school, and 5.7 percent hold a four-year college degree or higher. More than 10 percent are currently students, continuing their education.

Households of Feeding America clients are also diverse. Ages of household members vary. Nearly 40 percent of households contain at least one child under age 18, and approximately one-third of households contain at least one senior age 60 or older. Household size varies, with 28.4 percent of households being one-person households. Most meal program clients (70.1 percent) do not live with anyone else with whom they share living expenses. The modal household size for grocery program clients is two to three members, but over 5 percent of grocery program client households have more than six members. More than one in seven client households contain individuals of multiple races or ethnicities. Approximately 20 percent of households contain someone who has either past or present military service.

6.3.2   Challenges Client Households Face

Feeding America clients and their households come from diverse backgrounds and circumstances. Their commonality is a need for food assistance, but food may be only one challenge among many that they face. Looking at income in the past month as a percentage of the poverty level, 50.7 percent of Feeding America client households fall at or below 100 percent of the poverty level. Among households with at least one child, 61.9 percent fall at or below the poverty level, and among households with at least one senior 33.1 percent are at or below the poverty level. One in 10 client households reports having no income during the past year.

In 34 percent of client households, the most employed person worked within the past four weeks. In 23 percent of client households, the most employed person from the past year is currently unemployed, but looking for work and ready for employment. An additional 42 percent are out of the workforce and not looking for work, in most cases because they are retired, disabled, or in poor health. Some households have additional barriers to employment, including caregiving responsibilities, or in a small percentage of households criminal histories that may make finding employment more challenging. Among those who have worked in the past year, 57 percent report typically working only part-time rather than full-time. But nearly 20 percent of all households contain adult students, and education or training may serve as a bridge to future employment.

Health problems are common in client households. Nearly 50 percent of respondents report being in fair or poor health, and nearly one-quarter report having another household member in poor

health. Client households generally have high rates of diabetes (33.2 percent) and high blood pressure (57.8 percent). While chronic disease rates are highest among households with at least one senior (47.2 percent have a member with diabetes and 77.3 percent have a member with high blood pressure), 28.4 percent of households with at least one child have a member with diabetes and nearly half (49.4 percent) have a member with high blood pressure. In 28.6 percent of households, no one in the household has health insurance, and 55.1 percent of households have unpaid medical bills.

Regarding housing, most (93.2 percent) client households reside in a nontemporary housing arrangement, including houses or townhouses (42.9 percent), apartments (33.7 percent), and mobile homes or trailers (12.5 percent). But 6.9 percent live in temporary housing such as shelters, missions, transitional living situations, or on the streets. Temporary housing is more common among those using meal programs (33.6 percent) than those using grocery programs (4.5 percent). At least 4.9 percent of client households meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of "homeless."[103]

6.3.3   Client Households' Food Security, Use of Food Assistance, and Other Coping Strategies

Given their high rates of poverty, many clients struggle to provide sufficient and healthy food for their households. Based on a six-item set of food security questions, 83.8 percent of all client households classify as experiencing food insecurity in the past 12 months. Clients work to make ends meet and secure food however they can, including making tough choices about what necessities they can afford, seeking out various sources of food assistance, and employing a variety of coping strategies to get enough food.

Most client households face tough choices between paying for food and other necessities. For example, 65.9 percent report choosing between paying for food and medical care during the year; 69.3 percent choose between paying for food and utilities, 57.1 percent choose between paying for food and housing, and 66.5 percent choose between paying for food and transportation.

---

[103] This percentage includes client households reporting residing in abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, parks, campgrounds, or airports; residing in cars, vans, boats, or recreational vehicles; living on the street; and residing in shelters, missions, or transitional living situations.

More than 60 percent of client households plan on getting charitable food assistance from a Feeding America program as a regular strategy for making ends meet. Many client households also seek help from government food assistance programs; about half (54.8 percent) report currently receiving benefits from SNAP. Almost half of those not receiving SNAP have never applied for this benefit, most often because they do not think they are eligible. Despite this perception, 72.0 percent of households not receiving SNAP report incomes at or below the SNAP income eligibility limit in their state.

Many households receive other types of nutrition assistance focused specifically on children. For example, among households with at least one child, 24.4 percent receive benefits from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which serves pregnant women and children ages 0-5. Ninety-four percent of households with school-aged children receive free or reduced-price school lunches, and more than 46 percent receive free or reduced-price school breakfast. Approximately 8 percent of households participate in afterschool snack or meal programs, and 8 percent receive nutritious, easy-to-prepare food for the weekends through the BackPack weekend food program.

Besides participation in food assistance programs, client households also engage in a range of other coping strategies to ensure they have sufficient food. More than half receive help from family or friends in getting enough food, and nearly 23 percent grow food in a garden, but many turn to less than optimal solutions. Nearly 79 percent purchase inexpensive unhealthy food just to have enough food, and 40.0 percent water down their food or drinks to make what they have last.

Feeding America client households face a multitude of challenges, and employ many productive and some potentially detrimental strategies to try to ensure that they and their households have enough to eat.

The HIA 2014 national report provides a picture of the circumstances of the national Feeding America network and its clients. Local circumstances are further described through state- and food bank-level reports based on HIA 2014 data. Other Feeding America reports, including Map the Meal Gap, delve further into the need for and use of food assistance in communities across the United States. HIA 2014 and these other studies illuminate the critical role that Feeding America, its member food banks, partner agencies, and their programs play in addressing hunger in America.