



HUNGER

A Study of
Emergency Food
Recipients in
Alameda County

the
FACES

FACTS

43% of all individuals who receive
emergency food assistance
in Alameda County
are children under age 18



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THE ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY FOOD BANK: AN OVERVIEW

The Alameda County Community Food Bank serves as the county's central clearinghouse for donated food. In the 2000-2001 fiscal year, the Food Bank collected more than 12 million pounds of food donated by producers, distributors, retailers, growers and individuals.

In turn, this food helped the Food Bank's network of hunger relief agencies — including food pantries, soup kitchens, children's programs, senior centers, emergency shelters and residential programs — provide 800,000 meals each month to low-income and working poor families and individuals.

In addition to food distribution, the Food Bank works to break the cycle of poverty by educating the community and elected officials about the causes of hunger and poverty while advocating for policies that would improve the lives of low-income people. The Food Bank also conducts programs in nutrition education and operates a toll-free emergency food referral hotline (800/870-FOOD in Alameda County).

A nonprofit organization, the Alameda County Community Food Bank is a member of America's Second Harvest (the national food bank network), California Association of Food Banks and California Hunger Action Coalition.

The mission of the Alameda County Community Food Bank is to provide comprehensive services in collaboration with other hunger response agencies to help transform the lives of people in need by:

- Providing nutritious food;
- Advocating for and participating in programs, including nutrition education, that promote the self-sufficiency of people in need; and
- Educating the general public about hunger and advocating for systemic change that addresses its root causes.

*Volunteers at Oakland's
Cornerstone Baptist Church
food pantry unpack USDA
commodities.*



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“I commend the Alameda County Community Food Bank for its work on relieving hunger among poor families. I also congratulate them on publishing this very important report to explain the causes and extent of hunger in Alameda County.”

- Congressman Fortney “Pete” Stark (D-Fremont)

On entering the Food Bank's Hunger: The Faces & Facts into the Congressional Record November 14, 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each month, tens of thousands of low-income Alameda County residents cannot afford well-balanced meals for themselves and their families. Many never imagined they would need food assistance, but barren cupboards and empty pockets have led them to local soup kitchens and food pantries.

More people face this experience each year. The demand for emergency food has increased steadily, even during the economic boom of the late 1990s.¹ As the cost of living increases and government safety net programs are weakened, the numbers will continue to rise.

The Alameda County Community Food Bank participated in a national hunger study to better understand the realities of individuals seeking emergency food assistance. The study was coordinated by America's Second Harvest – the national network of food banks of which the Alameda County Community Food Bank is an affiliate – and Mathematica Policy Research.

Hunger: The Faces & Facts presents the results of a survey of 211 Alameda County Community Food Bank member agencies and 439 individuals, selected at random, who turned to one of the Food Bank's emergency food providers in spring 2001. This report also highlights significant comparisons to a similar study done in 1997. The Food Bank hopes this report will not only inform policymakers and the general public about the circumstances of people who request emergency food assistance but that it will also inspire community and government actions.

“My children have gone hungry once or twice the past year. That's too much.”

- *Michael Walls*

Client at Columbian Gardens food pantry in Oakland

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Children are especially vulnerable to hunger.

- 43% of all individuals who receive emergency food assistance in Alameda County are children under the age of 18; 10% are 5 years old or younger.
- In 47% of households with children, either a parent or child, or both, experience hunger.
- In 32% of households with children, the children have missed meals due to lack of food or not having enough money to buy food, and 21% report that often their children do not have enough to eat.
- Only 10% of parents report their children participate in the summer lunch program, while 60% of the Food Bank's pantries and 100% of soup kitchens report an increase in children receiving emergency food assistance during the summer.



Poor childhood nutrition can have both short-term and long-lasting effects.

Very low-income people access emergency food.

- 73% of households surveyed have incomes below the federal poverty level.
- 37% of households surveyed have at least one employed adult; 9% have two working adults.
- 28% depend on Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for their primary source of income.
- The average monthly income of all Alameda County households receiving emergency food assistance is \$831 compared to the average monthly income of \$4,754 of all U.S. households in 2000.²

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights:*
Article 25 (1948)



Many households have to make difficult decisions between food and other pressing expenses. In the past 12 months:

- 45% of respondents had to choose between paying for food or rent.
- 49% of respondents had to choose between paying for food or utilities.
- 28% of respondents had to choose between paying for food or medicine or medical care.

Federal nutrition programs are under-utilized and do not meet the basic nutritional needs of low-income families.

- Only 21% of households surveyed receive food stamps, while an estimated 80% have incomes that would qualify them for the Food Stamp Program. This represents a sharp decrease from the 37% of respondents in the Food Bank's 1997 study who received food stamps.

- 90% of households receiving food stamps state that their benefits do not last the entire month, reporting that on average, benefits last just over two weeks.
- 62% of households with children report that their children eat free or reduced price school lunches; 44% report that their children eat free or reduced price school breakfasts.

A volunteer (left) collects tickets from people waiting to receive emergency food at Good Samaritan Home food pantry in Oakland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF HUNGER

To end hunger, the Food Bank and its community partners must address the root causes of hunger and poverty by supporting sustainable wages and work, building sustainable communities for low-income families and strengthening government safety net programs.

Support Sustainable Wages and Work

- Increase the minimum wage and create more sustainable wage jobs that allow working families to meet basic needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *(continued)*

“Hunger is isolating: it may not and cannot be experienced vicariously. He who never felt hunger can never know its real effects, both tangible and intangible. Hunger defies imagination: it even defies memory. Hunger is felt only in the present.”

*- Elie Wiesel
Nobel Peace Prize
Recipient*

- Enhance the earned income and child tax credits to benefit low-income families.
- Facilitate effective transitions to economic independence of people leaving the welfare system by ensuring safe, affordable childcare and transportation options and educational opportunities.

Build Sustainable Communities

- Increase the number of affordable housing units.
- Improve access to nutritious food in low-income neighborhoods.

Strengthen Government Safety Net Programs

- Ensure adequate unemployment insurance, cash welfare and Social Security benefits.
- Offer basic healthcare coverage for low-income families.

STRENGTHEN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The Food Bank encourages policymakers to strengthen federal nutrition initiatives by improving the Food Stamp Program and expanding the reach of child nutrition programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and school meals.

Improve Food Stamp Program

- Simplify the Food Stamp Program and application procedures.
- Increase food stamp benefits and reinstate benefits for all residents with eligible incomes.

Increase and Expand Child Nutrition Programs

- Adequately fund the WIC Program to serve all women, infants and children who qualify.
- Increase the number of school meal, summer lunch and after-school snack sites providing nutritious food to low-income children.

Encourage Eligible Families to Participate

- Fund outreach campaigns for all federal nutrition programs.

EXPAND FOOD BANK SERVICES

The Food Bank is committed to strategically expanding its services to meet emerging needs identified in this study.

Assist More People in Need

- Expand Food Bank services in underserved areas of Alameda County.
- Provide support to the Food Bank's network of member agencies to expand service hours and language capabilities.
- Coordinate more emergency food delivery programs for seniors and the homebound.
- Increase the number of non-English speaking communities served.

Enhance Existing Services

- Improve the quality of food provided to Food Bank member agencies.
- Help Food Bank member agencies link clients to other critical services such as government nutrition programs, housing, health services and job training.

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INTRODUCTION

Hunger: The Faces & Facts is a study commissioned by the Alameda County Community Food Bank in partnership with America's Second Harvest and Mathematica Policy Research. It offers the most comprehensive analysis of charitable hunger relief efforts in Alameda County to date.

This study includes personal interviews with 439 people receiving emergency food assistance at food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters throughout Alameda County. Using an extensive questionnaire developed by Mathematica Policy Research, interviewers collected demographic information about those requesting emergency food assistance, learned why and how low-income residents become at risk for hunger and documented how families cope with poverty and hunger.

Interviews were conducted from February to April 2001, before the full effects of California's energy crisis and the nation's failing economy were felt by Alameda County's low-income families and individuals. Since these stories were collected, more than one million jobs were lost nationwide and Alameda County's unemployment rate climbed to a five-year high.

However, while the families interviewed for this study were not yet affected by the worst of the economic downturn, they were among the 31 million Americans who experienced the indignity of hunger or food insecurity.³ According to the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University, the United States had never endured such persistently high levels of food insecurity and hunger during an economic boom as were experienced in the late 1990s.⁴ In fact, a comparison of the findings presented here with a similar study done in 1997 shows that hunger has increased among the Food Bank's client populations and especially among children and working families.

Hunger: The Faces & Facts does not simplify a complex social issue but instead helps readers understand hunger and its effects on all community members. No single strategy or program can end hunger. It takes the combined efforts of government action, charitable service and community involvement to reach a solution.



Families at St. Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room in Oakland gather for a hot meal.

Commissioning this study is one of the ways that the Alameda County Community Food Bank continues to coordinate community efforts to end hunger. After becoming familiar with the faces and facts of hunger, readers are encouraged to join the Food Bank in this endeavor.

“People who are unaware of hunger in their community need to read and hear these stories.”

- *Tonya Hammond*

Interviewer for *Hunger: The Faces & Facts*

Hunger: The physical and mental condition that results from not eating enough food due to insufficient economic, social and community resources.

Food Insecurity: The lack of nutritionally adequate, safe and culturally acceptable food, available through non-emergency sources at all times.

How do families and individuals cope with hunger?

For each person hunger manifests itself differently. Some people may experience hunger on a daily basis, while others may only go hungry once a month or once a year. In Alameda County, an increasing number of people cope with hunger by turning to the Food Bank's network of emergency food providers. For those not yet aware of food assistance programs and for individuals for whom this assistance does not suffice, skipping meals or eating less food is a common and sometimes frequent occurrence. Whether people experience hunger once a month or once a day, it is an indignity that affects one's physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Regular, balanced meals are essential to maintaining good health.

- 66% of clients report at least one adult in their household cutting the size of a meal or skipping a meal due to lack of money to buy food in the previous 12 months; 43% say this happens almost every month.
- 41% report they often cannot afford balanced meals; 38% report they sometimes cannot afford balanced meals.

“When my husband left, he left us with nothing. I didn't have a job, my mother had passed away two weeks before and my kids were 4 and 5 years old. My family was not here in Livermore and we were basically here alone. The food pantry helped us a lot.”

- Cathy Wood

Now working full time, she also volunteers at Interfaith Sharing food pantry in Livermore where she once received emergency food.

Children miss meals due to insufficient resources.

In the United States four million children under age 12 go hungry and an additional nine million are at risk of hunger.⁵ In Alameda County many of the children the Food Bank serves have experienced hunger.

- 43% of all individuals who receive emergency food assistance in Alameda County are children under the age of 18.
- In 32% of households with children, children have missed meals due to lack of food or not enough money to buy food; 21% report that often their children do not have enough to eat. This represents a significant increase from the 1997 study, when 9% of households with children reported their children missing meals.
- In 44% of households with children, children do not eat enough because the household cannot afford to buy enough food.



Katherine McGrue contacted her legislators about creating better food stamp policy.



FACES OF HUNGER: KATHERINE MCGRUE

Katherine McGrue, 26, is a single mother of two children, 5 years and 1 1/2 years old. A resident of San Lorenzo, she works part time as a childcare provider and is a full time student at California State University, Hayward. After she graduates from college, she plans to become a teacher.

Katherine called the Food Bank because she was denied food stamps and needed help with food. She was told her food stamp application was turned down because the value of the three-year-old car she was leasing exceeded the eligibility limit of \$4,650. She needs a reliable car to go to work, take her kids to childcare, and attend school at night when public transportation options are limited.

Katherine received an emergency food referral from the Food Bank, but she didn't stop there. She wrote a letter to her legislative representatives asking them to change the law that limits a person's ability to receive food stamps because they have a reliable car. She knows that as people continue to move from welfare to work, there will be many others in a similar situation.

"I know things will get better," Katherine says. "I am looking forward to graduating and getting a job as a teacher."

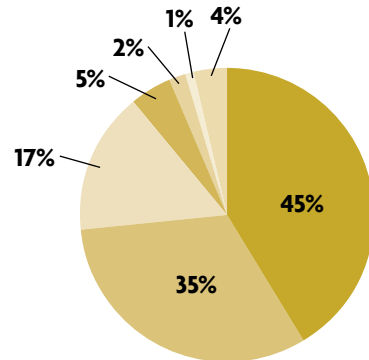
DEMOGRAPHICS OF EMERGENCY FOOD RECIPIENTS

Cities the Food Bank Serves

- Alameda
- Albany
- Berkeley
- Castro Valley
- Dublin
- Emeryville
- Fremont
- Hayward
- Livermore
- Newark
- Oakland
- Pleasanton
- San Leandro
- San Lorenzo
- Union City

Race/Ethnicity of Adults Interviewed at America's Second Harvest Emergency Food Providers

(This represents data collected nationally. Multiple responses were accepted.)

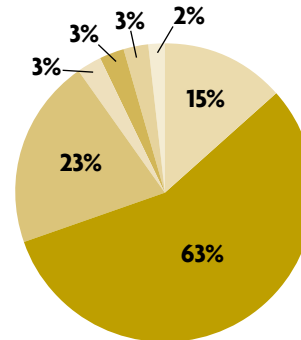


White 45% • African American 35% • Latino 17%
 • Native American or Alaskan Native 5%
 • Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 2%
 • Asian 1% • Other 4%

(Source: America's Second Harvest, Hunger in America 2001.⁶)

Race/Ethnicity of Alameda County Community Food Bank Clients

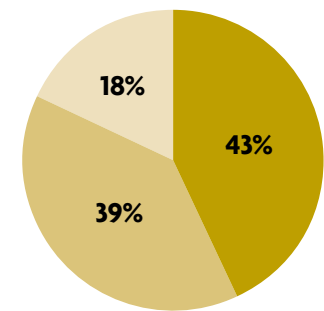
(Multiple responses were accepted. Due to lack of resources, interviewers could not interview clients who did not speak English or Spanish.)



White 15% • African American 63% • Latino 23%
 • Native American or Alaskan Native 3%
 • Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 3%
 • Asian 2% • Other 2%

Age of Alameda County Community Food Bank Clients

(All members of household)



50 & over 18% • 18-49 39% • 0-17 43%

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Finding 2

VERY LOW-INCOME PEOPLE REQUEST FOOD ASSISTANCE



Clients receive a free lunch at a soup kitchen.

Food Pantry: Pantries, often located at churches or community centers, operate on a weekly or monthly basis, distributing bags of food to low-income households. There are approximately 135 food pantries in Alameda County (2001).

Soup Kitchen: Soup kitchens provide cooked meals to needy families or individuals on a weekly or daily basis. A majority of clients are homeless or elderly individuals who do not have access to a place to cook. There are approximately 65 soup kitchens in Alameda County (2001).

Shelter: Shelters provide temporary housing on a nightly or monthly basis to single men and women, seniors, youth and families who are homeless. Shelters provide food on a regular basis. There are approximately 30 shelters in Alameda County (2001).

Most households requesting emergency food assistance are below the federal poverty level.

Since the implementation of welfare reform in 1997, fewer people rely on public assistance and more people are employed. However, while people have moved into jobs, they have not moved out of poverty and remain in food pantry lines.

- 48% of recipient households derive most of their income from public assistance or government benefits, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security, Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). This is a significant decrease from the 62% of recipient households in 1997. Meanwhile, the percentage of recipient households deriving most of their income from jobs jumped from 17% in 1997 to 27.4% in 2001.

- 73% of households surveyed have incomes below the federal poverty level; the average monthly income of those surveyed is \$831.

A food bank serves as a central clearinghouse for a specific geographic region, providing donated and government surplus food.

- Food donated by individuals and corporations is collected, sorted and stored at food banks before distribution to direct service providers like food pantries, soup kitchens or shelters.
- Many food banks, including the Alameda County Community Food Bank, improve the nutritional balance of the food distributed by purchasing food with money received through cash donations and government and foundation grants.
- In Alameda County, the Food Bank also offers nutrition education services and an emergency food referral hotline.

Main Source of Household Income	Client Households in 1997	Client Households in 2001
GA	6.8%	5.4%
TANF (formerly AFDC)	17.6%	5.7%
SSI	18.1%	18.5%
Job	17.0%	27.4%
Social Security	14.6%	9.7%
SSDI/UI/Workers' Compensation	4.8%	8.5%
Other/Unsure	13.5%	14.3%
No Income	7.6%	10.5%

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Jinky and Lucas Madamba worry about paying their rent and other expenses.

FACES OF HUNGER: JINKY AND LUCAS MADAMBA

Jinky Madamba, 33, lives with her husband Lucas, 62, in a one-bedroom Berkeley apartment. After emigrating from the Philippines in 1992, Jinky attended college but had to take a job before receiving her degree. She held two jobs until her husband's health began to deteriorate and she had to stop working in order to care for him.

Although his health steadily declined, Lucas did not see a doctor for seven years because the couple did not have health insurance. Lucas recently learned that he is eligible to receive medical care through the Veterans Administration; his health is improving with medical supervision. Jinky has started working part time as a home care provider, which helps to ensure that they have enough to eat.

While Lucas' health is the couple's primary concern, they also worry about paying their rent and other expenses. They don't know if they are eligible for food stamps. "Food stamps would really tide us over during this difficult time," says Lucas. "Even though we have never gone without food for a whole day, there have been days when all we have to eat is oatmeal."

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

"Even though we have never gone without food for a whole day, there have been days where all we have to eat is oatmeal."

- Lucas Madamba

Health Effects on Children

Children deprived of an adequate diet are at risk of not reaching their full potential. Hungry children may suffer from health problems, including unwanted weight loss, fatigue, headaches, irritability, inability to concentrate and frequent colds. Children subject to an irregular food supply and to low-quality foods are also at increased risk of obesity, diabetes and other complications. In addition, under-nourished children are more likely to be ill or absent from school. The effects of childhood hunger can last into adulthood, causing an increased likelihood for osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease and other adult diseases.⁷

Health Effects on Adults and Seniors

Adults require adequate nutrition to reduce the occurrence of chronic health risks, including cancer, heart disease and diabetes — all of which are prevalent among poor people. For seniors, hunger intensifies the risk of stroke, limits the effectiveness of many medications and may increase the occurrence of depression. Adults relying on emergency food providers receive whatever foods are donated, which may not meet nutritional or cultural needs. Inaccessibility of supermarkets means higher prices, limited variety and greater dependence on processed foods, all of which contribute to a poor diet and sometimes obesity.

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Evelia Buenrostro and her husband work hard to create a good life for their children.



FACES OF HUNGER: EVELIA BUENROSTRO

Evelia Buenrostro, 37, lives with her husband Armando and their four young children, ages 2 to 8 years old, in Hayward. Since emigrating from Mexico nine years ago, the couple has worked hard to provide their children with a safe, stable life.

Armando does construction work, which tends to be seasonal and unreliable as an income source. Evelia was employed as a preschool teacher before coming to the United States. Currently she does not work outside the home because she has been unable to secure reliable, affordable childcare.

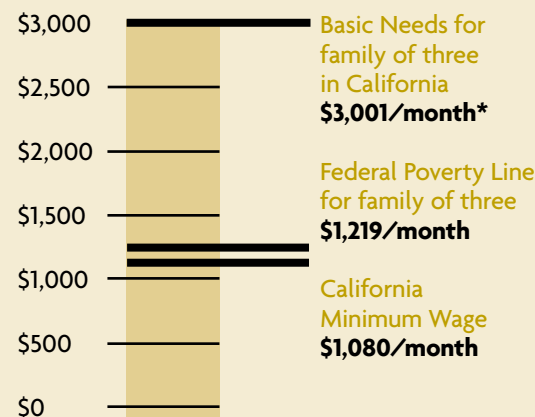
“My children are my life,” she says. She is proud that her oldest child is a great student and earns good grades.

Although the family rents an apartment, Evelia dreams of being able to purchase a home. At times the family has had to cut the size of their meals because they did not have enough money for food. Choosing between buying food and paying for utilities or rent is a decision they often have to make, but they work diligently to ensure their bills are paid on time.

Wage inequality results in limited money for food.

It is not uncommon for working families to request emergency food assistance, especially as wage inequality increases. For example, from 1990 to 1999, the bottom fifth of East Bay wage earners increased their annual income by only \$400, while those in the top fifth gained more than \$34,000. Meanwhile, workers of color and those with limited education saw wage inequities increase even further. From 1990 to 1999, white workers received annual wage increases 15 times greater than those received by workers of color. During the same time period, workers with a college degree increased their income by 5% more while those without one experienced a 5% decrease.⁸ Of the clients surveyed for this study, 9% have earned a bachelor’s degree, 24% have some college education or have completed a two-year degree and 26% have not finished high school.

Federal Poverty Line and Minimum Wage



The federal poverty line is the level at which the federal government determines a family to be impoverished. This level does not account for variances in cost of living across the country.

** Source: California Budget Project, basic budget for a family of three, 2000.⁹*

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More working families need food assistance.

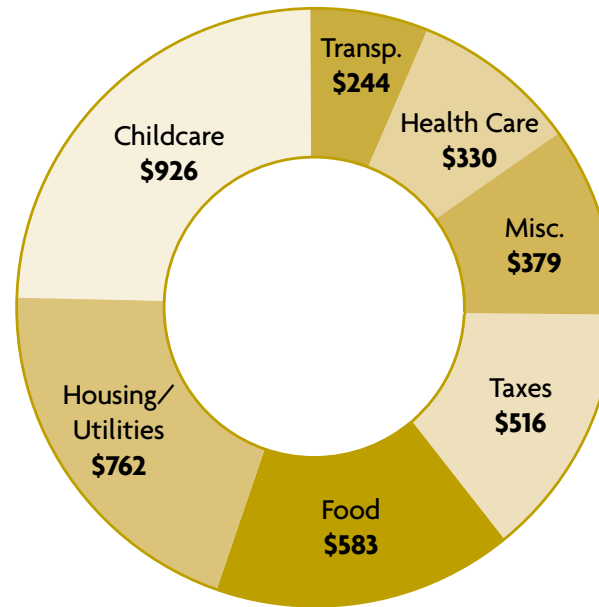
- Of those households surveyed, 37% have at least one employed family member, compared to 24% in 1997; 9% of households have two working adults.
- Working families represent more than 71% of California households eligible for food stamps.¹⁰
- 8% of clients interviewed recently lost their job and have been unemployed for three months or less.

Working families must often decide between paying for housing, utilities, childcare, food and other necessities. Food is the one household expense that may be negotiable. Its purchase is usually postponed until more pressing or fixed expenses are paid.

While the Food Bank can help, many individuals still struggle to balance their family's dietary needs with other bills. The family budget shown at right calculates the actual cost of providing for a family's basic needs in the Bay Area. As shown, the wages needed to support a family are much higher than the minimum wage. In many cases, working families do not earn these wages and face financial difficulties that can lead to hunger.¹¹

Minimum wage does not cover families' basic needs.

More than 30 years ago, the federal minimum wage ensured a decent basic standard of living for full time workers. However, after many years of losing ground to inflation, today's minimum wage only guarantees an income *below* the federal poverty level – just \$10,712 per year – for a family with one adult employed full time.



Family Budget for Two Working Parents and Two Children, \$3,740/month

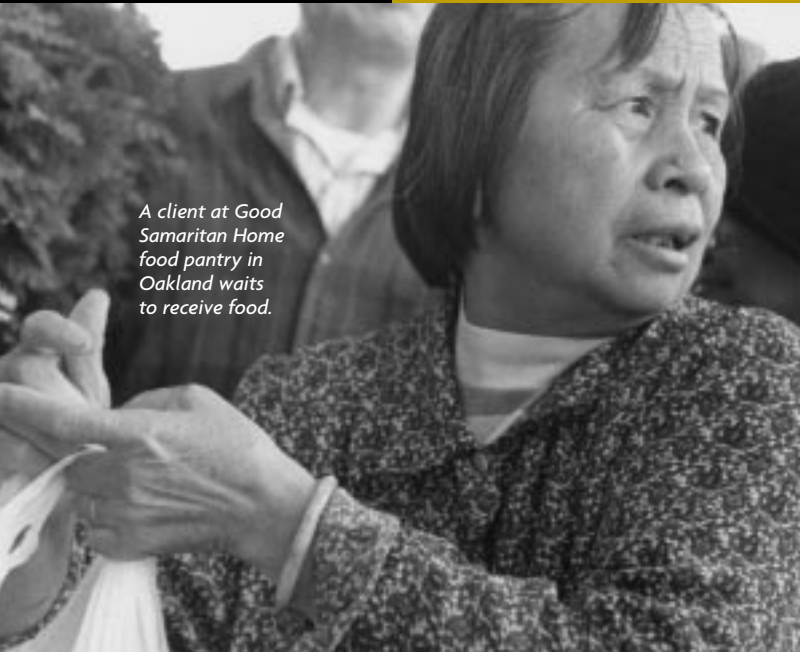
(Source: California Budget Project, basic budget for a family of four, 2000.¹²)

Although California recently increased the state minimum wage to \$6.75 per hour, it still remains 20% lower in real dollars than the 1968 federal minimum wage, keeping a family with a single wage earner below the federal poverty level. Facing this reality, dozens of local governments nationwide have recognized the inadequacy of the federal and state minimum wages by adopting "living wage" laws.¹³

Living Wage: A wage that prevents a full time worker from falling into poverty and allows him or her to afford the necessities of life.

Finding 4

MANY HOUSEHOLDS HAVE TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS



A client at Good Samaritan Home food pantry in Oakland waits to receive food.

More housing assistance is needed.

- 45% of respondents had to choose between paying for food or rent in the past 12 months. This is a significant increase from the 32% who reported having to make the same choice in 1997.
- Only 24% of respondents receive public housing assistance.

Among low-income renter households in California (those with annual household incomes under \$15,000), 91% spend more than 30% of their income toward rent; 67% pay more than 50% of their income toward rent. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers a 30% ratio affordable. In fact, adequate housing for many households that turn to emergency food sites is not affordable, as housing costs require so much of their income that other needs suffer.¹⁴

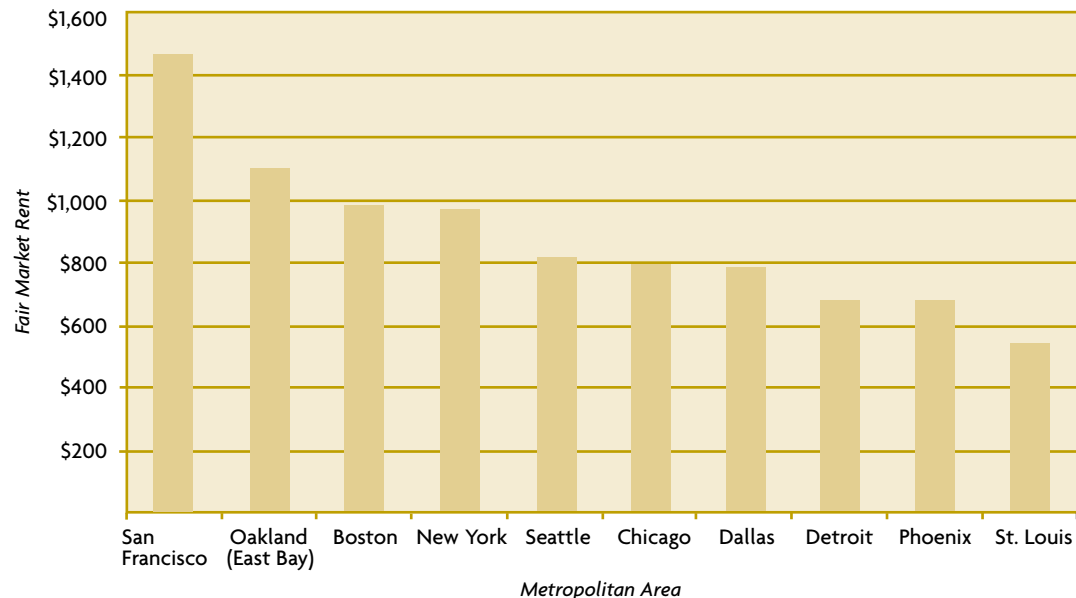
13% of respondents are homeless.

“Besides my poor health, being homeless makes it very difficult to get a job...we don’t want to live like this, but we run into so many walls that prevent us from getting out of this situation.”

- Anthony Castello

Client at Halcyon Baptist Church food pantry in San Leandro

Fair Market Rent for Two-Bedroom Apartments, Selected Major U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2001



(Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2000.¹⁵)

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Lynn J. Hoberg must draw on her limited financial resources to find a new place to live.

FACES OF HUNGER: LYNN J. HOBERG

At age 62, Oakland resident Lynn J. Hoberg is facing her retirement years with virtually no savings, a chronic disability and the daunting task of finding new housing. She worked steadily throughout her adult life and feels surprised and betrayed to find herself in this position.

Lynn was laid off in 1994 when her employer relocated. Soon after, while attending job training, she began having trouble walking. Today she needs two canes to walk and has difficulty performing many household tasks.

Lynn applied for disability benefits but was forced to draw heavily on her savings and life insurance before her payments started. When her healthcare provider raised its rates she had to drop her coverage in spite of her increasing need for it. Even with disability benefits she cannot cover expenses and goes to St. Mary's Center soup kitchen and food pantry in Oakland weekly. She recently learned she no longer qualifies for the \$10 monthly food stamp benefit she received.

She must also find a disabled-accessible, first-floor apartment and leave her apartment of 20 years. This prospect causes her anxiety because decent, affordable housing is increasingly scarce.

Lynn is deeply distressed by her circumstances. She says her work history should demonstrate that she is not asking for a handout but instead some temporary help. She took part in the 2001 Economic Human Rights Tour, during which elected officials met with people living with hunger and poverty.


Lynn feels that access to proper nutrition, decent health care and reasonably priced housing is a birthright, and she urges lawmakers to respond to that challenge. "I hope that as the wealthiest nation in the world we can do more to help people who are in situations like mine."

Grocery and transportation costs strain limited resources.

Limited food dollars buy less in poor neighborhoods due to the lack of supermarkets or other reasonably-priced retail outlets. Groceries at neighborhood markets can cost as much as 76% more than at a chain supermarket or discount store. Therefore many people either shop locally and purchase less than they could at a supermarket or travel out of their neighborhoods to shop, spending precious dollars on transportation costs.¹⁶ Of those surveyed, 61% did not own a car.

Families must make tough choices in paying for food, utilities, medical care and other necessities. During the past 12 months:

- 49% of respondents had to choose between paying for food or paying for utilities.
- 28% of respondents had to choose between paying for food or paying for medicine or medical care; 31% have unpaid medical or hospital bills.
- 9% report having at least one household member refused medical care because they could not pay or because they had a Medicaid or MediCal Assistance card.



Vivian Hain, shown with her family, enrolled in community college to increase her earning potential.

FACES OF HUNGER: VIVIAN HAIN

Vivian Hain, 35, lives with her fiancé Jan Scislawski and their two young children, ages 1 year old and 7 years old, in a makeshift studio in Oakland. The building has no heat, no place to bathe and no kitchen. The family bathes at a public bath and prepares meals on a hotplate.

Until recently, Vivian worked as an office manager in San Leandro while Jan cared for their younger daughter. When Vivian's employer went out of business, her family's quality of life rapidly declined. Although she enrolled in the CalWORKs program and found another job, she earned only \$7 per hour. When her car broke down, she quit her job and asked the Department of Social Services to help her obtain a higher paying position.

After months of looking for a job that would sustain her family, Vivian enrolled at Vista Community College in Berkeley. She is now studying multimedia while Jan looks after their younger child; a Pell Grant covers most of Vivian's school expenses. The family subsists on \$650 per month from CalWORKs and sometimes goes to the food pantry at St. Mary's Center in Oakland.

Vivian has traveled to Sacramento as part of Hunger Action Day to talk to her representatives about legislative changes that would improve the health of low-income Californians by increasing access to affordable, nutritious food.

"I'm determined to make it," says Vivian. But, she says, there should be more support for people who need a little push to self-sufficiency. "I could sure use it."

Government safety net programs have gaps.

- Among survey participants receiving General Assistance (GA) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 32% indicate that the assistance had been discontinued in the past two years.
- Among survey households with at least one child age 5 years or younger, 35% participate in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program.

School meal programs are under-utilized.

- 62% of survey participants who have children report that their children receive free or reduced price school lunches; 44% report that their children receive free or reduced price school breakfasts.
- 10% of parents report that their children participate in the summer lunch program, while 60% of the Food Bank's food pantries and 100% of soup kitchens report an increase in children receiving emergency food assistance during the summer.

While food banks play an important role in alleviating hunger, federal nutrition programs like food stamps and school meals are even more critical in the long-term fight to end hunger.

Despite the importance of these programs, less than half of eligible Californians receive food stamps and an even smaller percentage of children eligible for certain nutrition programs participate. Many families do not know about these beneficial programs or have misconceptions about them, preventing them from accessing benefits for which they are eligible. Even when families are aware, red tape in these programs can create barriers that discourage full participation.¹⁷

Equally troubling is the fact that low-income families that receive food stamps and live in communities with higher costs of living find that benefits do not last the entire month. Food stamp allotments are based on the federal government's Thrifty Food Plan, which does not account for variances in food prices or cost of living across the country. The minimum monthly benefit of \$10 has not increased since 1977.¹⁸

The Food Stamp Program leaves nutritional gaps.

- 21% of households surveyed receive food stamp benefits, while an estimated 80% have incomes that would qualify them for the Food Stamp Program. This represents a sharp decrease from the 37% of respondents in the 1997 study who received food stamps.
- For 90% of the clients receiving food stamps, monthly benefits last three weeks or less. On average, food stamps last just over two weeks.
- 50% of participants receiving food stamps say that the amount of their food stamp benefit decreased over the past 12 months.
- 50% of survey respondents not receiving food stamps said they did not think they were eligible.
- 32% of respondents had applied for food stamps but had not received them during the previous 12 months.

Food Stamps: The Food Stamp Program provides eligible low-income families and individuals with monthly coupons for food purchase. Electronic benefit transfer (EBT) systems are replacing paper coupons; EBT allows recipients to purchase food using a benefits card that is similar to a bankcard.

The Food Stamp Program is targeted toward those most in need. In 2000, households with children received 87% of all food stamp benefits.

Approximately 89% of food stamp households have gross incomes below the poverty line. The length of participation in the program is less than two years for 71% of recipients. Benefits provide an average of about \$.78 per meal per person.²⁰

Eligibility Thresholds for Anti-Poverty Programs for a Family of Four in the East Bay, 2001¹⁹

Program	Threshold for Family of Four per month
U.S. Average Household Income (2000)	\$4,754
USDA Reduced Price School Lunch	\$2,722
Earned Income Tax Credit	\$2,677
Section 8 Housing Subsidies	\$1,921
Food Stamps	\$1,913
USDA Free School Lunch	\$1,913
MediCal (Medicare)	\$1,472
Federal Poverty Line	\$1,471

To be eligible for any of these programs, the combined monthly income for a family of four must be less than the amount indicated.

CONCLUSION

The families and individuals who participated in this study are among the millions of Americans who respond to hunger by turning to emergency food providers. They are people of all ages and ethnicities who survive in a fragile balance that could quickly be upset by sudden illness, divorce, loss of a job or public benefits, eviction or an economic downturn.

Reliance on food assistance is not a new phenomenon, but, as this study shows, a persistent occurrence that only modestly improves in a robust economy. The emergency food network, initially established to provide short-term supplemental food in times of crisis, has become an ongoing food source for many people.

As demand for food assistance grows, the Food Bank must respond by strengthening the capacity of Alameda County's emergency food providers. Yet, while increasing food distribution will help many families and individuals cope with hunger, it is not the solution. In fact, no single strategy or program can end hunger. It will take the combined efforts of government action, charitable service and community involvement to resolve this public health crisis.

In commissioning this study, the Food Bank sought to encourage effective anti-hunger policies and community participation. The following recommendations offer a comprehensive approach to addressing hunger and a blueprint for community involvement.

“The Food Bank's findings on hunger reinforce our urgent need to provide food for low-income families. We must continue to fight for the higher wages, training opportunities and social programs that not only help families meet their immediate needs, but enable them to leave poverty for good.”

- State Assemblymember Dion Aroner (D-Berkeley)

“The Food Bank provides daily nutrition for thousands of families in our county. I see the Food Bank's work as a government responsibility that has not been met. I see my job as a legislator as ensuring the government lives up to that responsibility by providing funding for these efforts and eliminating root causes of hunger.”

- State Senator Don Perata (D-Oakland)

“Congress' decision to reduce the [food stamp] benefit in 1996 has adversely affected poor people. Ninety percent of households receiving food stamps stated that their benefits did not last the entire month, reporting that on average, benefits last 2.2 weeks. This study demonstrates that Congress needs to greatly improve the Food Stamp Program to address the mounting hunger problem in Alameda County and the United States.”

*- Congressman Fortney “Pete” Stark (D-Fremont)
On entering the Food Bank's Hunger: The Faces & Facts into the Congressional Record, November 14, 2001*



Billy Stanberry goes to St. Mary's Center food pantry and soup kitchen in Oakland. His deep love of music helps him remain optimistic about his future.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF HUNGER

To end hunger, the Food Bank and its community partners must address the root causes of hunger and poverty by supporting sustainable wages and work, building sustainable communities for low-income families and strengthening government safety net programs.

Support Sustainable Wages and Work

- **Increase the minimum wage and create more sustainable wage jobs that allow working families to meet basic needs.** A growing number of people requesting emergency food assistance are employed. Policymakers should increase the minimum wage and help to create more sustainable wage jobs to ensure that working families are not poor families.
- **Enhance the earned income and child tax credits to benefit low-income families.** While 14 states have developed Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs that assist low-income workers, California has not. California should adopt an EITC that provides tax relief to the low-income families who experience the heaviest burdens from state taxes. In addition, federal legislators should consider a refundable child tax credit to assist those families who need it most.
- **Facilitate effective transitions to economic independence of people leaving the welfare system.** Nearly 70% of people moving from welfare to work in Alameda County earn less than \$7.50 per hour.²¹ To make this transition successful, families need additional assistance including transitional health care, childcare and food stamps. In addition, state and local administrators should support policies encouraging CalWORKs participants to seek higher education, increasing their probability of obtaining gainful and steady employment.

“Charity, for all its beauty, is never a substitute for systemic justice.”

*- Jonathan Kozol, social activist and author
2000 RESULTS International Conference*

Build Sustainable Communities

- **Increase the number of affordable housing units.** In this survey, 45% of clients report they often must decide between buying food and paying rent and only 24% receive public housing assistance. Among low-income renters in California with annual incomes under \$15,000, 91% spend more than 30% of their income on rent; 67% pay more than half of their income toward rent.²² More resources must be made available for low-income housing.
- **Improve access to nutritious food in low-income neighborhoods.** Due to the lack of supermarkets or other reasonably priced retail food outlets in low-income neighborhoods, groceries can cost up to 76% more in these areas than in wealthier neighborhoods. Local policymakers should develop policies to bring more affordable food outlets to low-income areas.²³

Strengthen Government Safety Net Programs

- **Ensure adequate unemployment insurance, cash welfare and Social Security benefits.** In this survey, 48% of people report that they depend on one of these sources as their primary means of income.
- **Offer basic healthcare coverage for low-income families.** In California, 22.4% of residents under age 65 are without health insurance and 19% of children are uninsured.²⁴ Without health insurance, families are unable to pay for preventative doctor visits, resulting in late diagnoses that are more costly, more life-threatening and keep individuals from their jobs and families longer.



Stroke survivor Ruben Hernandez, with his wife Maria and their daughters, sometimes relies on emergency food assistance to make ends meet.

“I dream to be around for my children to make it through school and college, get married and have children of their own. To be around for that – that’s my biggest dream.”

- Ruben Hernandez

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

STRENGTHEN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The Food Bank encourages policymakers to strengthen federal nutrition initiatives by improving the Food Stamp Program and expanding the reach of child nutrition programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and school meals.

Improve Food Stamp Program

- **Simplify the Food Stamp Program and application procedures.** In order to continue receiving assistance, food stamp recipients must submit monthly income reports and reapply often, requiring several visits to the benefits office. With parents' increasing work and childcare responsibilities, this process prevents eligible families from receiving essential nutritional assistance. State and federal legislation should focus on simplifying the program and reducing paperwork.
- **Increase food stamp benefits and reinstate benefits for all residents with eligible incomes.** Food stamp allotments are based on the federal government's Thrifty Food Plan, which does not account for variances in food prices and cost of living. As a result, benefits for low-income families in areas with higher costs of living do not last the entire month, and many individuals experience chronic hunger. Other families are categorically denied food stamps because they are not U.S. citizens even though they may be residents, or because their automobile's value exceeds \$4,650. Policymakers should ensure that adequate benefits are available for all families with qualifying incomes.

Increase and Expand Child Nutrition Programs

- **Adequately fund the WIC Program to serve all eligible women, infants and children.** Food, nutrition counseling and access to health services are provided to low-income women, infants and children under WIC. Despite its success, this program is continuously underfunded. WIC should be fully funded to serve all who qualify.

- **Increase the number of school meal, summer lunch and after-school snack sites providing nutritious food to low-income children.** Less than 43% of California's low-income children who receive free or reduced price school lunches also receive school breakfasts, summer lunches or after-school snacks.²⁵ State and federal legislation should fund start-up grants for these programs and simplify application and reimbursement processes. In addition, more low-income children would benefit from these critical programs if the state funded outreach and gave stronger directives for schools to participate.

Encourage Eligible Families to Participate

- **Fund educational campaigns for all federal nutrition programs.** Less than 50% of eligible Californians receive food stamps and an even smaller percentage of children eligible for certain nutrition programs participate even when the service exists.²⁶ Many families do not know about these beneficial programs or have misconceptions about them. The federal government provides matching grants to states that fund outreach for these programs and the state should leverage these funds by budgeting for these efforts.

Food pantry client and volunteer Ann Bizzell is the primary caretaker for her three grandchildren.

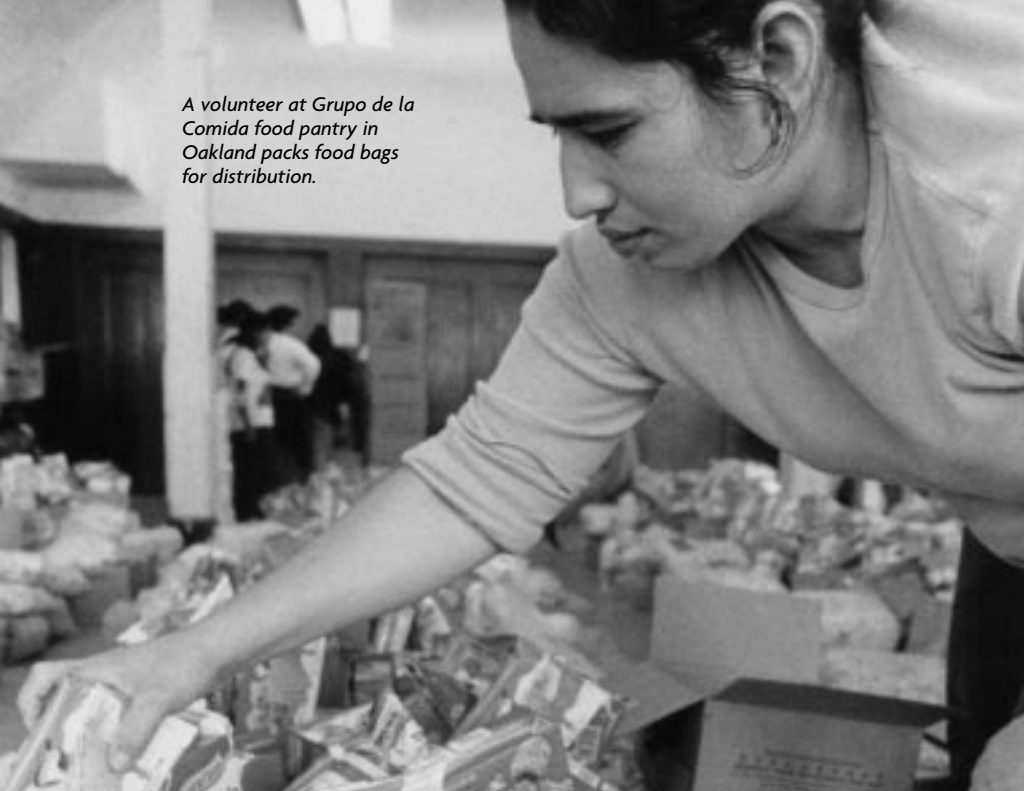
“There’s not a whole lot I would ask for myself, but for my grandchildren. I hope and pray my grandchildren get older, get a fair education and will make it on their own.”

- Ann Bizzell



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A volunteer at Grupo de la Comida food pantry in Oakland packs food bags for distribution.



GET INVOLVED: ENDING HUNGER IS A COMMUNITY EFFORT

Working with individuals, businesses, congregations, civic groups, schools and public officials, the Food Bank can support good public policies, strong government nutrition programs and a robust food bank network. Please take part in these efforts by:

Volunteering

Volunteer in the Food Bank's office or warehouse or at the food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and other agencies that make up the Food Bank's hunger relief network.

Donating Money

Your tax deductible donations support the Food Bank's hunger relief efforts. Make your check payable to "ACCFB" and mail to P.O. Box 24590, Oakland, CA 94623 or visit www.accfb.org to donate online.

Donating Food

Sponsor a food drive or, if your employer is a food distributor, encourage donations to the Food Bank. If you have a garden, consider growing and donating fresh produce to the Food Bank's Plant a Row Program.

Coordinating a Hunger Education Presentation

Invite Food Bank staff to visit your service organization, workplace, community group, place of worship or classroom to give a presentation about hunger and poverty.

Raising Your Voice

Get involved in anti-hunger advocacy efforts to improve government nutrition programs and poverty relief policies.

For more information, contact the Food Bank at (510) 834-3663 or info@accfb.org, or visit www.accfb.org.

The links below are "live" - click on any URL to immediately visit the site.

Visit these websites to learn more about hunger and poverty

www.accfb.org	Alameda County Community Food Bank
www.secondharvest.org	America's Second Harvest Network of Food Banks
www.bayareahunger.org	Bay Area Food Banks
www.bread.org	Bread for the World
www.cbp.org	California Budget Project
www.cfpa.net	California Food Policy Advocates
www.cbpp.org	Center for Budget and Policy Priorities
www.usda.gov/cnpp	Center for Nutrition Policy
www.cppp.org	Center on Public Policy Priorities
www.childrendefense.org	Children's Defense Fund
www.foodsecurity.org	Community Food Security Coalition
www.foodfirst.org	Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
www.frac.org	Food Research and Action Center
www.kids.maine.org	Kids Can Make a Difference
www.resultsusa.org	RESULTS
www.fns.usda.gov	USDA Food and Nutrition Services
www.worldhungeryear.org	World Hunger Year

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METHODOLOGY

Hunger: The Faces & Facts presents the results of a survey conducted by the Alameda County Community Food Bank as part of a national study commissioned by America's Second Harvest and Mathematica Policy Research. Nationwide 104 food banks participated in the study.

For the purposes of this study, two tools — a client survey and an agency survey — were prepared by Mathematica Policy Research and administered by the Alameda County Community Food Bank. The client survey consisted of 83 questions designed to gather data about families and individuals using the emergency food system and identify the levels of hunger they experience. The agency survey consisted of 30 questions and was sent to 298 Food Bank member agencies, resulting in a 71% response rate. Both surveys were similar to surveys used in the 1997 study.

Mathematica Policy Research conducted an in-depth training session for participating food banks to ensure that study coordinators would properly administer the surveys. Using the training manual and materials prepared by Mathematica Policy Research, Food Bank study coordinator Jessica Bartholow trained local interviewers.

The Food Bank provided agency lists that were used for the two-stage sampling process for the client survey. In the first stage, 63 agencies were sampled with probability-proportional-to-size. Sampled agencies were limited to those with food pantries, soup kitchens and/or shelters. The Food Bank then provided Mathematica Policy Research with information on the hours of operation and the number of clients that each sampled agency served on an average day. The second-stage sampling process used this additional information to randomly select 40 agencies for client interviews. Mathematica Policy Research mailed the Food Bank bar-coded client surveys with the list of sites and randomly assigned preferred date and times.

In order to reduce bias, interviewers used client selection forms to randomly select program participants and to account for refusals and ineligible respondents during on-site data collection. Due to lack of resources, interviewers could not interview clients who did not speak English or Spanish. At the end of each week, all completed questionnaires and client selection forms were mailed to Mathematica Policy Research.

In the descriptive data tabulations of clients presented in the study, the percentage figures in the tables are based on the total weighted number of usable responses to the client survey, unless otherwise specified. Responses are weighted to represent clients or households of all emergency food programs of the Food Bank. In general, weights are based on the inverse probabilities of selection in the sampling and also account for survey non-response.

To complement the report with some qualitative information, Food Bank staff conducted additional in-depth interviews with 41 clients after the surveys for the quantitative data were complete. This report details the stories and thoughts of some of these clients.

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Study Coordinators

Jessica Bartholow, Ursula Chanse, Elan Nissenboim and Julie Venci with help from Halley Torres Aldeen from America's Second Harvest.

Interviewers

Interviewers attended an intensive training and generously contributed many hours to help interview 439 clients at 46 Food Bank member agencies throughout Alameda County.

Artensia Barry	Tonya Hammond	Sister Marilyn Medau
Jessica Bartholow	Jean Hom	Sally Moyce
John Braunger	Dianne Jacob	Elan Nissenboim
Ursula Chanse	Irene Juniper	Kathryn Perry
Kim Cole	Joo Eun Lee	Mary Schoen
Caroline Glesmann	Joanne Leskovar	Kristin Tehrani
Elizabeth Gomez	Beverly Madison	Ron Timpson
Jennifer Gorospe	Rita McDonald	Julie Venci

Steering Committee

Steering committee members gave freely of their time, energy and insight to provide ideas about study content and design, fundraising, media strategy and outreach planning.

Alameda County Community Food Bank staff: Jessica Bartholow, Suzan Bateson, Ursula Chanse, Caroline Glesmann, Elizabeth Gomez, Jean Hom, Kris Jensen, Ilsa Lund

Community Members:

Artensia Barry, Food Bank volunteer/anti-hunger advocate
Karen Bridges, Alameda County Social Services Agency
Tori Campbell, KTVU/Fox 2
Chip Conradi, The Clorox Company*
Edlyn Countee, Food Bank volunteer/anti-hunger advocate
Cesar Diaz, freelance journalist/graduate student, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
Lola Hardy, Grace Baptist Church*
Lily Marquez, Institute for Civic Leadership
Sister Marilyn Medau, St. Mary's Center*
Leslie Mikkelsen, Prevention Institute
Anuradha Mittal, Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
Kim Wade, Food Banks of Northern California
* Food Bank board member

Client Participants

More than 425 clients were interviewed for this study and answered sensitive and personal questions. Several clients provided additional information to assist in preparing this study. We extend our thanks to all those whose stories helped to make this study possible and are especially grateful to the following people and their families: Ann Bizzell, Evelia Buenrostro, Anthony Castello and Dawn Gunn, Louritha Deckard and Donniel Johnson, Ethel Gaston, Vivian Hain and Jan Scislowski, Joean Harris, Ruben and Maria Hernandez, Lynn J. Hoberg, Alice Lewis, Deborah Longacre, Jinky and Lucas Madamba, Katherine McGrue, Irene and Nolan Pfeffer, Billy Stanberry, Michael Walls, Nathaniel Ward and Cathy Wood.

Participating Member Agencies

Many thanks to the following food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens that allowed study interviewers to visit their site and interview clients.

Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church	Harbor House
Alameda Emergency Food Bank	Immanuel Temple
Beebe Memorial C.M.E. Church	Lake Merritt UMC Food Pantry
Berkeley Ecumenical Ministries Foundation	McGee Avenue Baptist Church
Berkeley Emergency Food and Housing Project	New Branch of Zion Church of God In Christ
Berkeley Food Pantry	Oakland Catholic Worker
Berkeley Support Services (BOSS)	Oakland Homeless Project (BOSS)
Bethany Baptist Church	Operation Dignity
Catholic Charities of the East Bay	Project Help
Center of Hope	Refuge Community Food Pantry
Centro De Servicios	Salvation Army (Hayward)
Church of the Living God	Salvation Army (Oakland Corps)
Columbian Gardens	Shattuck Avenue United Methodist Church
Cornerstone Baptist Church	South Hayward Parish
East Oakland Switchboard	Square Meals Project
Elmhurst Food Pantry	St. Mary's Center
Elmhurst Presbyterian Church	St. Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room
Emeryville Community Action Program	Telegraph Community Center
Family Emergency Shelter Coalition	True Holiness/Watson Memorial C.O.G.I.C.
Fisher Memorial Church	Wings of Love Maranatha Ministries
Good Samaritan Home	Word Assembly Baptist Church
Grace Baptist Church	Zion's Tabernacle Church of God In Christ
Grupo de la Comida	
Halcyon Baptist Church	

“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech (1964)



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