

Fact Sheet

Hunger in America 2010: San Antonio & Southwest Texas



Hunger in America 2010 is the first comprehensive research study that captures the connection between a weak economy and increased needs for emergency food assistance. The data was collected in the heart of the 2009 economic downturn (February-June 2009).

According to *Hunger in America 2010: San Antonio and Southwest Texas*, the San Antonio Food Bank (SAFB) is providing emergency food assistance to more than twice as many individuals *each week* than in 2006 – **58,000 people every week compared to 25,000 in 2006.**

- The San Antonio Food Bank serves 230,900 individuals annually, including 83,000 children (36%) and 32,500 seniors (14%).
- Approximately 58,000 people receive emergency food assistance from an agency served by the San Antonio Food Bank each week.
- These numbers are based on surveys conducted at emergency feeding centers, such as soup kitchens and food pantries, but do not factor in many individuals also served at non-emergency locations, such as Kids Cafe programs and senior centers.

Client Households

- 51 percent of client households served are food insecure, meaning they do not always know where they will find their next meal.
- 36 percent of all client households of the emergency food programs had low food security. Another 15% of these client households have very low food security, meaning they are sometimes completely without a source of food.
- Among the client households with children younger than 18, 46% had low food security and 11% had very low food security.
- Of the approximately 58,000 people the SAFB network serves in a week:
 - 67 percent of households have incomes below the federal poverty line.
 - The average monthly income for client households is \$1,240.
 - 46 percent of households have one or more adults who are working.
 - 8 percent of client households are homeless.

Tough Choices

Many of the client households served by the San Antonio Food Bank report that their household incomes are inadequate to cover their basic household expenses.

- 48 percent of clients served by the SAFB report having to choose between paying for utilities or heating fuel and food.
- 47 percent of clients said they had to choose between paying for rent or a mortgage and food.
- 24 percent of clients report having to choose between paying for medical bills and food.
- 22 percent of clients report having to choose between transportation and food.
- 39 percent of clients report having to choose between paying for gas for a car and food.
- 25 percent of all clients interviewed are living in households without health insurance
- 40 percent of clients have unpaid medical or hospital bills.
- One-third of households report having at least one member of their household in poor health.

Role of Federal Government

- 44 percent of pantries, 5% of kitchens, and 33% of shelters receive food from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).
- 33 percent of client households are receiving SNAP (formerly food stamps) benefits.
- 69 percent of client households with children ages 0 to 3 participate in the WIC program.
- Among households with school-age children, 57% participate in the federal school lunch program and 42% participate in the school breakfast program.

Clients, Income and Eligibility for Federal Programs

- 67 percent of clients have household incomes below the federal poverty line, 84% of the clients households had an income of 130% of poverty level or below.
- The majority of households seeking assistance from the SAFB network are eligible for federal nutrition programs, yet 44% of households believed they were not eligible.

Agencies

- As many as 91% of pantries, 77% of kitchens, 85% of emergency shelters in the SAFB network use volunteers.
- 73 percent of the pantries, 48% of the soup kitchens, and 67% of the shelters are run by faith-based or religion-affiliated non-profit agencies.

The SAFB is the main source of food for many local hunger-relief charities in Southwest Texas.

- Food banks are by far the single most important source of food for agencies with emergency food providers, accounting for 84% of the food distributed by pantries, 59% of the food distributed by kitchens, and 39% of the food distributed by shelters.
- 63 percent all agencies served by the San Antonio Food Bank are faith based, 34% are other nonprofit and 3% are operated by the government.

Methodology

Hunger in America 2010: San Antonio and Southwest Texas is a scientific study that involved 319 face-to-face interviews with people seeking emergency food assistance from one of the partner agencies served by the SAFB. 231 SAFB partner agencies participated in *Hunger in America 2010: San Antonio and Southwest Texas* by completing an agency survey.

The research conducted on for this study was done on behalf of Feeding America in conjunction with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), a leading social policy research firm based in Princeton, N.J.

The Economic Landscape

The economic recession of 2009, resulting in dramatically increasing unemployment and poverty nationwide, has driven sharp increases in need for emergency food assistance and enrollment in federal nutrition programs.

During 2005, when the last Hunger in America data was collected, the national unemployment rate averaged 5.1 percent.¹ When the data collection for the 2010 study commenced in late winter and spring of 2009, the recession was in full swing and the unemployment rate was rising rapidly, jumping from 4.9 percent at the start of recession² in December 2007, to 9.5 percent when client data collection was completed in June 2009.

In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that when individuals with “marginal labor force attachment” and those who were working part-time involuntarily were considered, more than 17 percent of the population was affected in late 2009 by the shifting employment trends.

Background: The **San Antonio Food Bank** is a 501 c 3 non-profit organization providing millions of pounds of food to over 450 charitable organizations in Southwest Texas serving those in need. In addition to food distribution, the San Antonio Food Bank provides numerous programs that not only solve the immediate problems of hunger, but help individuals and families gain long-term food security. For more information on the SAFB and how you can fight hunger in your community and across Southwest Texas, visit www.safoodbank.org. For information on Feeding America and national hunger issues, visit www.feedingamerica.org.

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Found on the web December 16, 2009 at http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data_tool=latest_numbers&series_id=LNS14000000

² The National Bureau of Economic Research dates the beginning of the 2008-2009 recession from December 2007. NBER defines a recession as a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in production, employment, real income, and other indicators (Found on the web December 16, 2009 at <http://www.nber.org/cycles/dec2008.html>).