ABOUT THE SUNSHINE STATE HUNGER REPORT

This report provides insights from Floridians who experience food insecurity and access your direct service organization. Individuals were surveyed on-site at direct service charities and community groups across a tri-county area — including Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas — that provide food relief. The survey used to collect these insights was the Sunshine State Hunger Survey, which explored food insecurity among community members accessing front-line food relief. The survey was aimed at understanding the Floridians who have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months, as well as the key drivers and resulting effects of food insecurity in their lives. This survey captured responses from over 500 individuals, from 15 sites, between June and August 2018.

Sunshine State Hunger survey written and hosted by Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger. Survey data collected by Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger. Data analysis provided by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Report and visualisation by Lauren Vance.

ABOUT TAMPA BAY NETWORK TO END HUNGER

The Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger is the first network of its kind in the state of Florida. TBNEH was founded in 2011 by leaders from direct service organizations, businesses, and community circles who wanted to work collaboratively to help solve hunger in the Tampa Bay tri-county area — Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas. Today, TBNEH has over 350 members who come together to tackle hunger. Its mission is to end hunger by bringing people together to find solutions that eliminate barriers, increase access, and expand the amount of nutritious food available to the food insecure population. TBNEH created the first and only Hunger Gap Map in the state of Florida, which shows food supply and demand in the network’s tri-county area. As a collective, the Network identifies and implements solutions to hunger through its Work Teams.

ABOUT ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals founded in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1917, by a visionary group of women dedicated to helping the government conserve food and improve the public’s health and nutrition during World War I. Today, the Academy has over 100,000 credentialed practitioners — registered dietitian nutritionists, dietetic technicians, registered, and other dietetics professionals holding undergraduate and advanced degrees in nutrition and dietetics, and students — and is committed to improving the nation’s health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

ABOUT LAUREN VANCE

Lauren Vance is a communications and program consultant for nonprofit agencies and foundations specializing in health, hunger and education. She designs and implements programs that enable organizations to achieve their development goals through instruction and effective communication. Connect with Lauren by emailing LaurenMVance@gmail.com.
WHO USES FOOD BANKS?

The survey was completed by 528 people who visited Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger’s members food banks between June 24 and August 15, 2018. Two thirds of respondents (65%) were food insecure. Survey participants’ ages ranged from 13-100 years old, with an average age of 61 years. The majority of respondents were female (60%), with a high school education (40%) or some college/certificate (28%). 26 survey respondents were currently college students. More than ½ of respondents (59%) were unemployed at the time the survey was collected. 3 in 4 respondents were single, divorced or widowed (79%). Participants included (8.8%) active/retired military.

HOUSEHOLD: The average household size is 2 people and 30% of those surveyed are households with one or more children and 35% with someone 65 years or older. 14% of survey participants are homeless or are living in temporary housing. 14% of participants reported a lack of refrigeration in their household or having utilities turned off.

HEALTH: The average overall health rating of participants was good, though majority (71%) have a chronic disease. The most common chronic diseases in participants were coronary artery disease, diabetes and hypertension. While half (48%) of participants are overweight or obese. This may be in part contributed to coping strategies discussed on page 4. Most participants (86%) have healthcare.

WELL BEING: The overall well being rating in participants was 16.4; a score below 13 indicates poor well-being and is an indication for further evaluation. Participants had a score of 9.73 for generalized anxiety disorder; a score of 10 or more indicates probable diagnosis of GAD.

71% OF THOSE WHO VISIT TBNEH’S MEMBERS FOOD BANKS HAVE A CHRONIC DISEASE. DIABETES, CAD & HYPERTENSION ARE THE MOST COMMON DISEASES.
KEY FINDINGS ON FOOD BANK USE
Two thirds of households who are visiting TBNEH’s members food banks are experiencing food insecurity. About 1 in 2 households visit food banks daily, weekly or monthly. The most common reason people visit food banks is its close proximity to participants homes (39%), while other reasons included customer experience (11%) and the amount of food provided (10%). One third of survey participants reach food banks by driving their own car (33%); others are getting a ride from someone (21%) or riding the bus (18%).

HOW OFTEN DO SURVEY PARTICIPANTS VISIT A FOOD BANK?

- 6% Daily - It is a constant problem that I face
- 11% Weekly
- 25% Monthly
- 20% 3-6 times a year
- 27% Under 3 times a year

Of these, 1 in 3 experience food insecurity EACH WEEK.
TOP 3 COPING STRATEGIES

½ of participants are using at least one coping strategy.

Receiving help from family or friends  
Purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food  
Eating food past expiration date  
Watering down food or drinks

COPING STRATEGIES: Food insecure households exhibit a range of coping techniques that reflect their vulnerability. In this study, the most common coping strategies reported by participants at TBNEH’s members food banks were receiving help from family or friends (22%), purchasing inexpensive and unhealthy food (21%), eating food past the expiration date (10%), and watering down food or drinks (9%). Understanding coping strategies at the household level is critical for implementing appropriate policy and programs related to food insecurity.

FOOD ASSISTANCE: The most common food assistance programs TBNEH’s members participants are utilizing include SNAP (24%), senior congregate meals (24%), Meals On Wheels (14%), and free/reduced lunch (7%). Further developing programs that educate families, with children and people 65+, would be beneficial for decreasing food insecurity in your participants.

SUMMARY

According to Feeding Florida, 3.5 million Floridians are food insecure, including 1.1 million children. Part of what makes food insecurity so difficult to solve is that the underlying causes — poverty, unemployment/underemployment, and inconsistent access to enough healthy food — are often deeply interconnected. Food insecurity impacts a wide range of groups in the community, and is not restricted to the unemployed or homeless. A key part of the solution to hunger in your member’s target population will be focusing on the underlying causes.