Hungry People are working families, seniors and children.

Families and seniors face a tough choice—Buying food or paying for Housing, Healthcare or Heat.

Demand for emergency food continues to rise.

This report highlights Second Harvest Heartland’s findings on the families, children and seniors served by member food shelves, soup kitchens and shelters in our 59 county service area.

Data collected for Hunger in America 2006, the fourth national study of people served by America’s charitable emergency food network. This study was commissioned by America’s Second Harvest—the Nation’s Food Bank Network.
Hungry and Food Insecure People are:

- **Families** trying to make ends meet working for poverty level wages.
- **Children** whose cognitive, emotional and physical development depend on access to wholesome foods and good nutrition.
- **Seniors** on fixed-incomes with little discretionary income to accommodate rising healthcare expenses or cost of living increases.

**Profile of households served:**

- 47% of households had one or more employed adult
- 50% of food shelf households had children younger than 18
- 12% of households had at least one member over the age of 65*

*This percentage does not reflect senior congregate dining site users or those enrolled in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

Profile of individuals comprising the households:

- 93% U.S. citizens
- 73% are registered voters
- 39% live in rural or suburban communities

Food Shelf Clients respond to the question - What kind of place do you live in now?

- House 42%
- Mobile Home 10%
- Apartment 40%
- Room 3%
- Live with family or friends 1%
- Homeless 3%

47% of households using emergency food report that their main source of income is paid employment. 29% of households report their main source of income is social security.

Family Intake Samples at a Minnesota Suburban Food Shelf


Husband – 29, Wife – 27, three children ages 11, 9 and 4. Employed, but not much work due to weather. Monthly income is $1,600.

Husband – 50, Wife – 43, two children 14 and 9. Has been unemployed and just started job.

Food Insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods is uncertain or the ability to acquire food in socially acceptable ways is limited. Hunger is the uneasy or painful sensations caused by lack of food.
The overall monthly income for the households surveyed showed that 79.7% of households earned less than $20,000.

**CHOICES**

“If you have enough to eat, you may have many problems. If you or your children are hungry, you only have one problem.”

— John Arnold, Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan

Virtually all households reported that they had to make difficult choices between buying food and paying for one or more other primary necessities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food or heat or utilities</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food or rent or mortgage</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food or medicine or medical care</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food or all three</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What would you do to make sure your family had enough to eat?

- 29% - Adults who didn’t eat for a whole day because they couldn’t afford food.
- 53% - Adults who skipped or cut the size of meals because they couldn’t buy enough food.

And what if it still wasn’t enough?

- 23% - Children who didn’t eat enough because their family couldn’t afford enough food.
- 11% - Children who skipped meals because their family couldn’t afford enough food.
- 16% - Children who were hungry at least once during the previous year.

“I’ve never encountered a family that has any pride in admitting that they are having difficulty feeding their children... and the instance of hunger or food insecurity is increasing, particularly in families that are playing by the rules.”

— Dr. Diana Cutts, Staff Pediatrician at Hennepin County Medical Center

The average yearly household income varied among the food emergency groups:

- $11,760 for food shelf users
- $9,480 for feeding program users
- $6,720 for shelter users

Poverty level for a family of four is defined as $19,350 annually, compared to the average annual wage of $46,249 in Minnesota.”

— Minnesota Office of the State Demographer, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons in Family Unit</th>
<th>48 Contiguous States and D.C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$ 9,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$12,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$16,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$19,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


“There are a lot of people that really need help. Now that the gas prices went up, the electric prices went up. Everything went up. We don’t know what’s going to happen. By the time you get done paying your rent and your utilities, there’s very little left for food.”

— Senior woman living in our rural Wisconsin service area
The need for emergency food is increasing.

78% of the food shelves, 52% of the soup kitchens and 44% of the shelters have seen an increase in users.

Low-income families and seniors must use many sources to access sufficient amounts of food.

In order to acquire adequate amounts of food, people need strong, intact, accessible federal food support (Food Stamps, WIC, Surplus Commodities Programs, School Lunch/Breakfast programs) for longer-term needs and charitable emergency food providers for crisis assistance.

People use one or more other public and private resources to help meet food needs, including:

- Food Stamps: 36.1% of households
- Child day care or government assistance for child care: 66.7% households with children 0-5 years
- School lunch program: 64.4% households with children younger than 18
- School breakfast program: 55.2% households with children younger than 18
- Summer food program: 13.4% households with children younger than 18

Weakened federal food programs place additional demand on emergency food providers.

The government is increasingly shifting the responsibility of meeting basic human needs from public programs to private and non-profit groups. The system that was intended to provide emergency hunger relief has become a chronic solution for working families struggling to pay the rising costs of housing, health care, dependent care and utilities.

More people are seeking Emergency Food Services and Food Banks are responding.

Second Harvest Heartland is working to:

- Increase the amount of food that is available for distribution through the emergency food network by soliciting donations from food manufacturers and grocers.
- Obtain funding from the State of Minnesota to purchase and distribute milk through the six America’s Second Harvest food banks and their emergency food networks.
- Assess the total need for emergency food in our 59-county area and work with food shelves to increase their dry, refrigerator and freezer capacity to distribute the additional poundage.
- Collaborate with Minnesota federal nutrition program administrators to eliminate participation barriers and urge Congress to keep federal programs intact and funded adequately.

Methodology

This report summarizes responses from 460 in-depth individual client interviews conducted at 50 metro, suburban and rural food shelves, soup kitchens and shelters and 432 agency surveys received from member agencies throughout Second Harvest Heartland’s 59-county service area. The data was collected from February-April 2005 and is part of the national study, Hunger in America 2006, commissioned by America’s Second Harvest – the Nation’s Food Bank Network.