



Greater Cleveland  
Food Bank



## FACE OF HUNGER IN NORTHEAST OHIO REVEALED BY NEW FEEDING AMERICA REPORT

*Largest, Most Comprehensive Analysis of Charitable Food Assistance in America Shows  
Depth of Need; More People Making Difficult Choices*

**CLEVELAND – AUGUST 18, 2014** – Three Northeast Ohio food banks partner together to release findings of the most comprehensive study of hunger conducted in the nation. Two in three Northeast Ohio households seeking food assistance from the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio, and the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank’s network have to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities, according to the *Hunger America 2014* report. The study, released today, was conducted by these Northeast Ohio food banks in partnership with Feeding America, the nation’s leading domestic hunger-relief organization.

Nationally, *Hunger in America 2014* found that more than 46 million people turn to agencies and programs of the Feeding America network of food banks every year. Here in Northeast Ohio, more than 574,000 people turn to hunger programs annually.

The study documents client household demographics and the challenges that our clients face. It is the first study that assesses the prevalence of food insecurity among past and active members of the U.S. Military. One in five families we serve contains a veteran or someone currently serving in the military.

“The results of this study show us that the face of hunger is one we might recognize,” said Shirley Stineman, Board Chair of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. “Many of our neighbors who are seeking food assistance have jobs, raise families, work toward education and struggle with health problems, like all of us. Too often, our clients have to make difficult trade-offs to get enough food for their families. As we look ahead to Hunger Action Month this September, it is important to remember the critical work our food banks do every day, and how much more we can do together to solve hunger in Northeast Ohio.”

SNAP cuts and rising food costs have also forced households to make difficult choices, according to data in the study. The effect of gasoline prices that have risen 32 percent in four years is also evident. Two-thirds of client households had to choose between paying for food and paying for transportation costs.

Although the nation has recovered the number of jobs lost in the recession, Ohio is still more than 129,000 jobs behind. Moreover, most jobs lost during the recession were high wage or middle wage jobs, but most jobs added back have been low wage jobs.

Cheryl, a 54-year-old who contacted the Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s Help Center told us “My husband went from \$17/hour to \$8/hour and over 40 hours per week to just 24 hours per week. All of our bills are behind or in collections. I work 33.5 hours a week at \$7.95 per hour....we have neglected just to eat and pay the necessary bills.”



Here's a summary:

#### **CLIENTS STRUGGLING WITH HEALTH ISSUES**

- Four in five households report purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food because they could not afford healthier options.
- Two in three households report having to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- Nearly one in three households include a member with diabetes.

#### **MAKING TOUGH CHOICES AND TRADE-OFFS TO KEEP FOOD ON THE TABLE**

More than two in three households had income at or below the federal poverty level (\$19,530 for a household of three in 2013), forcing them to make sacrifices between one necessity and another.

Following are the choices client households reported making in the past 12 months:

- Two in three report choosing between paying for food and paying for utilities.
- Two in three report making choices between paying for food and paying for transportation.
- Two in three report choosing between paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care.
- More than half report choosing between paying for food and paying for housing.
- One in four report choosing between paying for food and paying for education expenses.

More than half of households reported using three or more coping strategies for getting enough food in the past 12 months. The frequency of these strategies among all households include:

- More than one in three report watering down food or drinks;
- Half report receiving help from friends or family.

*Hunger in America 2014* was conducted using rigorous academic research standards and was peer reviewed by a technical advisory team including researchers from American University, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and the Urban Institute. Nationally, confidential responses were collected on electronic tablets by 6,000 trained data collectors, the majority of whom were volunteers.

The study was funded by The Howard G. Buffett Foundation.

The full national report is available on Feeding America's website at *Hunger in America 2014*.



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***About Feeding America***

Feeding America is a nationwide network of 200 food banks that leads the fight against hunger in the United States. Together, we provide food to more than 46 million people through food pantries and meal programs in communities throughout America. Feeding America also supports programs that improve food security among the people we serve; educates the public about the problem of hunger; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Individuals, charities, businesses and government all have a role in ending hunger. Donate. Volunteer. Advocate. Educate. Together we can solve hunger. Visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org/>. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica](http://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/FeedingAmerica](http://www.twitter.com/FeedingAmerica).

***About the Greater Cleveland Food Bank***

The Greater Cleveland Food Bank is the largest hunger relief organization in Northeast Ohio, providing nearly 39 million meals in 2013 to hungry people in Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Ashland and Richland counties. Our mission is to ensure that everyone in our communities has the nutritious food they need every day. We do this through both food distribution and SNAP outreach efforts. The best and easiest way to help is to go online: visit us at [www.GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org](http://www.GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org). The general public can help by making a monetary donation. For every dollar donated, the Foodbank can provide enough food for four nutritious meals.