



# BROWARD COUNTY



# FOOD SECURITY SURVEY

NO MORE EMPTY PLATES!



Million Meals Project  
Broward County's Solution To Hunger

## CCB Million Meals Steering Committee

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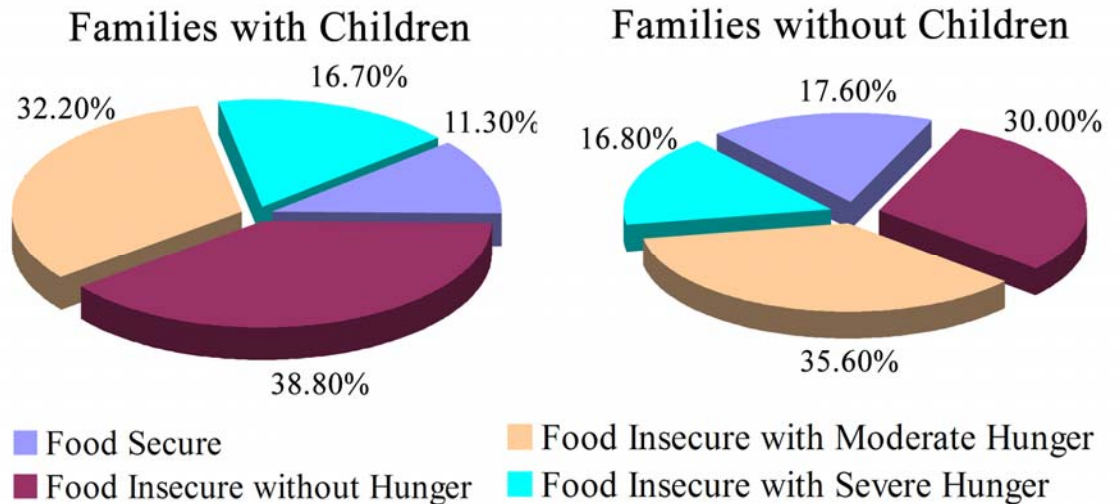
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## INTRODUCTION

The presence of hunger in American households due to insufficient resources to obtain food has been a long standing challenge to U.S. health, nutrition, and social policy. The success of the nation's nutrition assistance safety net, beginning with the National School Lunch Program in 1946 was later under girded by the Food Stamp Program and special programs for unusually vulnerable groups. These programs have meant that extreme forms of hunger, common in Third World countries, have been virtually eliminated in the United States. However, less severe forms of food insecurity and hunger--deprivation in basic need for food--are still found within the U.S. and remain a cause for concern.

### A SNAPSHOT OF LEVELS OF FOOD SECURITY IN BROWARD COUNTY BY SURVEY

Those surveyed had incomes of \$35,000 or less. Families with incomes of \$35,000 or less comprise 36.7% of Broward County households, or over one third of the population



## **BACKGROUND**

Five years ago Marti Forman of the Cooperative Feeding Program and Steve Sampier of the Memorial Hospital System made a presentation to the Coordinating Council of Broward (CCB). The two community activists wanted the Council to be aware of the ever-increasing issue of hunger in our Broward Community. Up until then, no one on the Council had realized that people in Broward were going without food on a regular basis. Since that time, the problem has only increased. The Council made a commitment that day to work toward eradicating hunger in Broward County. From that resolution came the formation of the CCB's Million Meals Committee.

The Committee began to hold meetings of community leaders and activists. The Committee grew to over sixty-five member agencies throughout the community.

Through the insightful benevolence of the Children's Services Council of Broward, the CCB Million Meals Committee was granted funding to provide for a full time staff person at the Council and for expenses related to the work of the Committee. Arnold Jean-Baptiste was hired to fill that role.

From that point forward, the Committee began its assault on hunger in Broward County. The first order of business was to create a program of monthly food drives sponsored by various agencies and businesses throughout Broward to try to address the immediate needs of Broward's food pantries and banks. The Committee has consistently collected over one million pounds of food each year towards that end. The food is distributed to member food pantries and food banks for provision to their clients.

The Committee also developed its Strategic Plan so that it could identify what needed to be done, both short-term, and long-term to eradicate hunger in Broward County. One of

the most important tasks included in the Plan was the commissioning of a study of hunger in Broward County. While anecdotal evidence of hunger and food insecurity were reported there was no accurate data verifying hunger and food insecurity in Broward that would support strategic planning for food supply systems to address the need.

In March of 2007, thanks to another grant from the Children's Services Council, the Broward Regional Health Planning Council was engaged to conduct a hunger study. The study was patterned after a study done several years ago by the Palm Beach County Food Security Team. The idea was that there would then be two studies of South Florida communities accomplished with the same ground rules, so that "apples-to-apples" comparisons could be made. The Broward Study used the same survey format as that used in Palm Beach County, the USDA's Household Food Security Survey (HFSS). Several additional questions regarding demographics were added to the base HFSS.

## **ABOUT THE USDA HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY SURVEY**

The HFSS measures food insecurity, and food insecurity with and without hunger, throughout the nation. Specifically, the survey measures a household's financial ability or constraints in obtaining enough food for an entire year. Food insecurity is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon which varies through a continuum of successive stages as the condition becomes more severe. Each stage consists of characteristic conditions and experiences of food insufficiency to fully meet the basic needs of household members, and of the behavioral responses of household members to these conditions. A variety of indicators is needed to capture the many combinations of food conditions, experiences, and behaviors that, as a group, characterize each such stage.

The HFSS was developed by a Federal interagency working group which formed the Food Security Measurement Project in 1992. Throughout the development of the survey, the one objective held firmly in view was to make the final instrument appropriate and feasible for use in locally designed and conducted food security surveys. This objective was achieved with the food security core survey module.

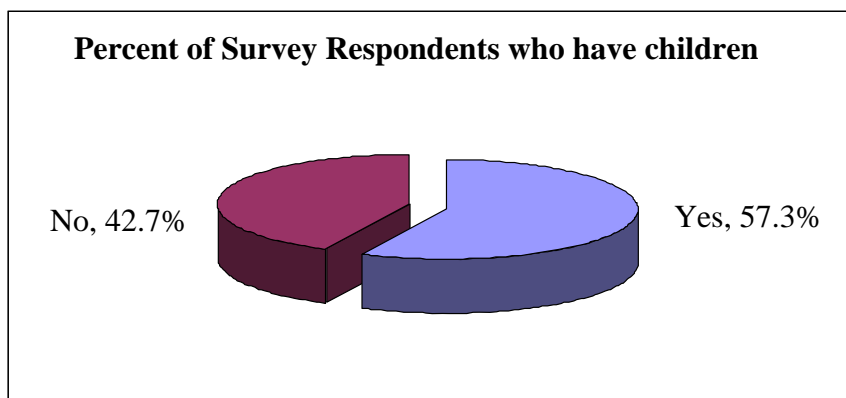
The key strength of the instrument is that its multiple indicator questions capture and distinguish the *various levels of severity* throughout *the full range of severity* within which the phenomenon of food insecurity/ hunger is experienced in U.S. conditions. This feature is critical for accurately assessing the *prevalence* of food insecurity because the greater the severity, the less the prevalence and each separate indicator captures a *different degree* of severity. The frequency of the multiple indicators varies widely depending upon *exactly which* level of severity each one reflects. The survey measures a household's financial ability or constraints in obtaining enough food for the entire year.

As mentioned earlier, while anecdotal evidence of hunger and improper child nutrition is prevalent throughout Broward County, recent and accurate data regarding hunger and food insecurity is minimal. The anecdotal evidence points to a growing problem which is having a significant impact upon children. We do know that almost one third (31%) of all households that are eligible for food stamps actually receive them, 44% of all students enrolled in Broward County elementary schools qualify for free and reduced lunches, and that 15% or 56,873 of Broward's children live in poverty. Food pantries have confirmed that they now serve 100 percent more clientele than they did two years ago. Lack of income, low paying jobs, high utility bills, transportation problems, and disabilities were named as the top reasons.

## PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

The Broward Regional Health Planning Council surveyed 909 persons with regard to their food security. There were 837 surveys determined to be valid. Hunger surveys were targeted to persons with a median household income of \$35,000 or less. Surveyors conducted these activities at venues such as North Broward Hospital District, Memorial Health Care System, Social Security Administration, and Broward Community and Family Health Center Sites.

Of those persons surveyed, the largest majority, 51.9%, were black non-Hispanic. High school or GED was completed by 38.7% of those surveyed and 79.2% had English as the language most often spoken.



## KEY FINDINGS

- **50.7%** of respondents who were **Food Insecure with Severe or Moderate Hunger** worried whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more.
- **50.6%** of respondents who were **Food Insecure with Severe or Moderate Hunger** bought food that didn't last and they did not have enough money to get more.

## FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

In response to the first three questions below, respondents from Broward County most often answered “Sometimes True”.

- **77.5%** of respondents relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed the children because they were running out of money to buy food.
- **65.1%** couldn't afford to feed their children a balanced meal.
- **57.8%** of respondents could not afford enough food to feed their children.
- **31.2%** cut the size of their child's meal because there wasn't enough money for food.
- **16.7%** of respondents had to skip meals at least once because there was not enough money for food.
- **25.7%** of respondents that their children were hungry but they could not afford more food

## ADULTS

- **61.9%** of Broward County respondents cut the size of their meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food. Respondents indicated that this occurred most often in “Some months but not every month”.
- **57.4%** of respondents ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money to buy food.
- **43.6%** of respondents were hungry but didn't eat because they couldn't afford enough food.
- **27.3%** of respondents did not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SOLUTIONS

The Coordinating Council of Broward is now planning activities that will make the overall Broward community aware of the results of the hunger survey. The Committee will also revise its Strategic Plan to reflect the data found in the hunger survey. Also being sought are grants which will fund efforts to address various components which create hunger in our community. One such effort is the Community Gardening Program which was launched by the CCB Million Meals Committee two years ago.

Organizations that support the CCB Million Meals Committee are committed to using the results of the Hunger Survey to implement collaborative programs and systemic changes to increase household food security and healthy initiatives for the residents of Broward County.

Adding the health risks of food insecurity, with and without hunger, to the financial instability that many Broward County households are facing can cause extreme consequences for the long-term productivity of the County.

Community partners, government agencies, corporations, and consumers are welcome to join the CCB Million Meals Committee. For information on how to join in the efforts of the CCB Million Meals Committee to eradicate hunger in Broward County, please contact Arnold Jean-Baptiste (“JB”) at the Children's Services Council of Broward, 954-377-1000.