



Food Pantry Client Interviews – Analysis of Results April 2016

Demographics

- The 41 households interviewed had a total of 75 adults and 35 children. About half of the households had children, with an average of 1.75 children in those households. 72% of the persons reported in the interviews lived in households with at least one child. The median ages were 42 for adults and 9 for children.
- All but two of the households lived in towns in Story County and 73% were from zip codes other than Ames. All municipalities in the county were represented except Colo, Gilbert, and Roland. About one fourth of the households were from areas of low accessibility to food as defined by USDA (Zearing-McCallsburg, 3; Collins-Maxwell, 7).
- 78% of adults had either a high school education or some college. 12% had less than a high school education and 10% had a bachelor's degree or higher. No educational level was reported for 7 people.

Food Security/Insecurity

- Responses to the questions designed to determine the respondent's food security scale value indicated that 66% of households are food secure; 24% are food insecure without hunger; and 10% are food insecure with hunger.

Accessibility

- 75% of respondents visit a food pantry once or twice per month and 25% visit more often. 61% regularly visit more than one pantry per month or sometimes do so. 80% of respondents regularly get all the food they need or want, or mostly do so; 20% do not.
- 66% of respondents said that there are other foods that they would like pantries provide. 76% of the comments to this question indicated a desire for fresh produce, meats, and dairy products. About half of the respondents (53%) indicated that other services would be beneficial at the pantry; of these, about half (11) indicated a desire for clothing distribution, which was more than double the next most frequent response (cooking demonstrations, 5).
- Most households have little difficulty getting to the pantry at which they were interviewed. Most households drive their own vehicles (66%) or ride with others (15%). A few bike or walk (12%) or ride CyRide (7%). The cost of transportation is occasionally a problem, but mostly not.
- Pantry hours are satisfactory for most households most of the time. Problems are mainly from random circumstances such as sickness, weather, or work schedules.

Impact

- About one fourth of the households interviewed would experience significant negative consequences if the pantry they were interviewed at were not available. The others would adapt in various ways, or were unsure.
- The question, “What difference does this pantry have on your life?”, received 49 recorded comments. The most frequently expressed comments (24) indicate that the pantries make it possible to have sufficient food and a more balanced diet. Overwhelmingly, these comments indicate a major positive impact on the participants' lives and that they consider the assistance they receive to be adequate or very adequate.
- 61% of the households use additional food assistance besides the pantry they were interviewed at. Most frequently cited were SNAP (41%) and other pantries (17%). A variety of other food resources were also cited. [Note: This appears to be inconsistent with data cited above indicating that 61% of households regularly or sometimes visit more than one pantry per month.]
- About half of the households said they did not need additional food assistance. Additional needs cited more than once were meat and eggs (5), more food (3), and fresh vegetables and fruit (2).
- 51% of households cited special food needs due to health concerns. Most frequently cited were diabetic/low sugar (27%) and low sodium (12%). Gluten free, milk allergy, and low fat/fat free were mentioned more than once. Responses suggest that access to fresh fruits and vegetables could be improved.