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Food Insecurity in Northern Illinois

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Food Insecurity in Northern Illinois

A Thesis Submitted to the

University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With Upper Division Honors

Department Of

Dietetics and Nutrition

By

Mary Graham

DeKalb, Illinois

May 2016

University Honors Program

Capstone Approval Page

Food Insecurity in Northern Illinois

Student Name: Mary Graham

Faculty Supervisor: Professor Jane Maxwell

Faculty Approval Signature _____

Department of Dietetics and Nutrition

Date of Approval: February 11, 2016

HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT

Guidelines

Your abstract should begin with a definitive statement of the problem of project. Its purpose, scope and limit should be clearly delineated. Then, as concisely as possible, describe research methods and design, major findings, including the significance of the work, if appropriate, and conclusions.

Students whose thesis involves “creative” work (original, fine art, music, writing, theatre or film production, dance, etc.) should describe process and production. Indicating the forms of documentation on file as “thesis” materials.

Please have your advisor review your abstract for organization, content, grammar and spelling before submission.

**HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT
THESIS SUBMISSION FORM**

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The purpose of this Capstone is to review, analyze, and summarize food insecurity in Northern Illinois. Food insecurity is a problem that affects individuals of many demographics. Those affected by food insecurity span across numerous ages, ethnicities, employment statuses, health statuses, and levels of education. While this is a prevalent problem in Northern Illinois, the United States, and all over the world, many programs and businesses have been established to combat food insecurity and provide resources to those without adequate access to food.

The Northern Illinois Food Bank, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), school lunch programs, food pantries, community gardens, and some other not-for-profit businesses are many resources to Northern Illinois residents that are food insecure. These programs often have set criteria necessary for participants to meet in order to participate and receive resources.

This Capstone Project will provide a detailed review of current data on Food Insecurity in Northern Illinois. Existing statistical information and resources will be summarized, in addition to an overview of demographics affected by food insecurity.

Capstone

Food insecurity has been defined by the USDA as “at times during the year, these households were uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.”¹ The problem of food insecurity is important because adequate food and nutrition affects an individual’s quality of life and ability to succeed in his or her environment. According to the USDA, in 2013, “14.3% of U.S. households were food insecure at some time during the year.”² Solely in Northern Illinois, “one in 7 people struggle with hunger.”³ Food insecurity spans a number of demographics, stems from a variety of reasons, and is being combatted by many programs and organizations.

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Demographics

In the United States, food insecurity affects 17.5 million people and is not limited to any one demographic. Geographically, the South has the highest rate of food insecurity (15.9%), followed by the West (14.1%), Midwest (13.6%), and Northeast (12.4%).

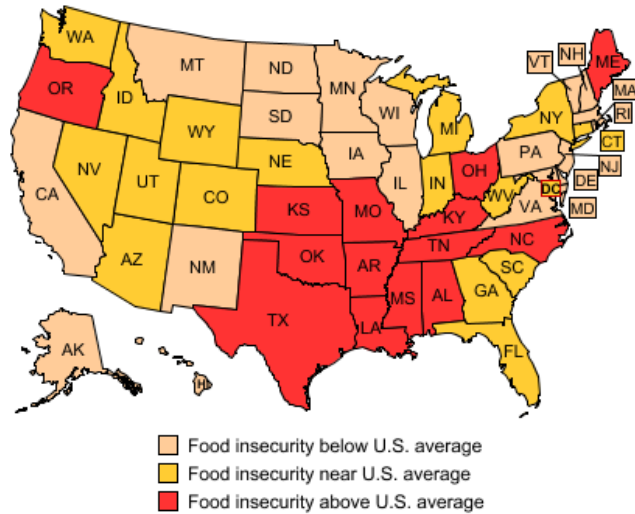


Figure 1: U.S. map of prevalence of food insecurity, average 2012-14

Additionally, food insecurity and income are correlated. Households with incomes below the poverty line were more likely to be food insecure (42.1%) than those whose incomes were above the poverty line (6.7%). Households were 34.8% food insecure if the incomes of the household were below 185% of the poverty threshold. Another factor that showed correlation to food insecurity was the presence of children in the household. Higher levels of food insecurity than the national average (14.3%) were shown in households with children (19.5%), households with children under age 6 (20.9%), households with children headed by a single woman (34.4%) or a single man (23.1%) and other households with children (30.7%). An analysis of ethnicity and food insecurity shows that households headed by Black, non-Hispanics (26.1%) and Hispanics (23.7%) are more likely to be food insecure than other ethnicities.

According to the Hunger in America 2014 Study, in Northern Illinois, the Northern Illinois Food Bank (NIFB) serves 590,400 people annually and their clientele has a diverse background. The NIFB clients identify as a number of ethnicities, including white (40%), Hispanic or Latino (33%), and black or African American (17%).

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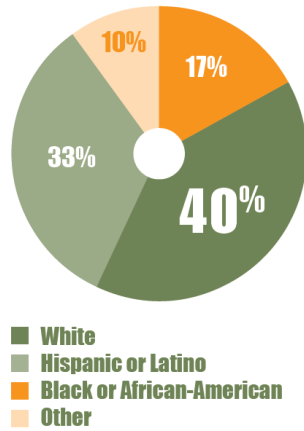


Figure 2: Northern Illinois Food Bank client ethnicity⁴

Additionally, the NIFB’s clients age-wise are mostly under the age of 18 years old (36%), followed by adults age 30-49 (26%), adults age 18-29 (15%), adults age 50-59 (13%), and 60 years or older (9%).

Other factors including poverty, health, employment, housing, and education statuses have also been reported for the NIFB clients. At the NIFB, the majority of their clients (66%) have incomes that fall at or below the federal poverty level, (57%) have unpaid medical bills, (77%) have at least one household member that has worked for pay in the last year, (96%) live in non-temporary housing, and (53%) have a high school diploma. These factors have been shown to impact a household’s ability to attain adequate food.⁴

Programs and Organizations

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A number of programs and organizations in Northern Illinois provide services and food to combat food insecurity and hunger. These organizations and programs often have qualification requirements, a variety of services to meet the needs of the population, and provide for thousands of people who are food insecure in Northern Illinois.

Northern Illinois Food Bank

The Northern Illinois Food Bank (NIFB) serves more than 71,000 people each week across their 13-county service area, including Boone, DuPage, DeKalb, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Ogle, Stephenson, Will & Winnebago counties.

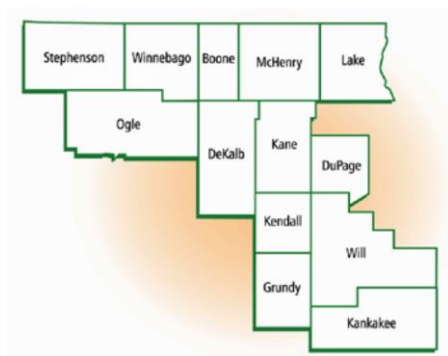


Figure 3: Northern Illinois Food Bank Counties Served⁵

They complete their mission to provide nutritious meals to those in need through connecting with programs and partners. The NIFB acquires resources from donations and volunteers, which are channeled to a network of 800 local food pantries and feeding programs. Each partner organization serves different locations in Northern Illinois and has They also provide food through federal feeding programs Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), have two Mobile Pantry trucks, provide food through their Elderly Food Program, help people apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and provide Holiday Meal Boxes during the holiday season.⁵

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a program through the United States Department of Agriculture that offers nutrition assistance to those that meet their eligibility requirements. To be eligible, applicants must meet requirements based on resources, income, and employment. Once accepted into the program, an Illinois Link Card is provided that is accepted at most grocery stores to be used on foods or food products for human consumption and seeds and plants for use in home gardens to produce food.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

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Authorized by Congress, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides short-term nutrition services to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. The eligibility requirements for this program include categorical, residential, income, and nutrition risk. The benefits provided are supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education and counseling, screenings, and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services. WIC is administered by 90 state agencies, through approximately 47,000 authorized retailers. It operates through 1,900 local agencies in 10,000 clinic sites across the United States.⁷

In Northern Illinois School Nutrition Programs

The Federal government and Illinois State Board of Education provides a number of Nutrition Programs to ensure that students have the adequate nutrition needed to succeed academically. These programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Care Program, and Special Milk Program (SMP).

The NSLP program is a program available to all public and private schools, and residential child care institutions. The schools which choose to be a part of NSLP must operate a non-profit program that offers lunches meeting requirements to all children in attendance. In 2012, it provided low-cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day. The nutrition requirements are based off the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans and currently focus on increasing the availability of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains on the school menu.⁹

The SBP has the same school eligibility requirements as the NSLP and operates in the same manner. This program serves at more than 89,000 schools and institutions in the United States.¹⁰

The Afterschool Care Program is part of the NSLP that focuses on afterschool activities. School requirements for this program are that they must provide regularly scheduled activities and educational or enrichment activities. The requirements for the afterschool snacks are that they must contain at least two different components of the following four: a serving of fluid milk; a serving of meat or meat alternate; a serving of vegetables or fruits or full strength vegetable or fruit juice; a serving of whole grain or enriched bread or cereal. This program serves nearly 26,000 schools and institutions.¹¹

The SMP provides milk to children in schools or childcare institutions that do not participate in other Federal meal service programs. In 2012, 3,647 schools and residential child care institutions, 571 summer camps, and 482 non-residential child care institutions participated in the SMP. The milk served is required to be only pasteurized fluid types of fat free or low-fat (1%) milk that contains vitamins A and D.¹²

Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

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The Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program allows schools to use their USDA Foods entitlement dollars to buy fresh produce. This program serves schools in 46 states, including Illinois, allowing schools to purchase from produce vendors that have contracts with the Defense Logistics Agency. In the 2012-2013 schoolyear, schools received more than \$100 million worth of produce.¹³

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Elderly nutrition program

The Administration on Aging's (AoA) Elderly Nutrition Program provides congregate and home-delivered meals and other nutrition services to its 3 million elderly participants. Participants must be 60 years of age or older, have great economic or social need, be a low-income minority and rural older person, have a spouse in the program, be disabled under age 60 but live in a housing facility occupied primarily by elderly, be disabled residing at home but accompanying older persons to meals, or be a nutrition service volunteers. The meals are required to provide at least one-third of the recommended dietary allowances. Additional health and nutrition services include nutrition screening, assessment, education, and counseling.¹⁴

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Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels is funded through the Older Americans Act, serves nearly 2.4 million seniors, and runs through more than 5,000 independently-run local programs in the United States. This program provides nutritious meals, companionship, and watchful eye on the health and safety of seniors. The meal payment is based on a sliding fee scale, depending on individual circumstances. Meals are offered either at a community center to encourage senior socialization, or can be delivered to the senior's home depending on mobility.¹⁵

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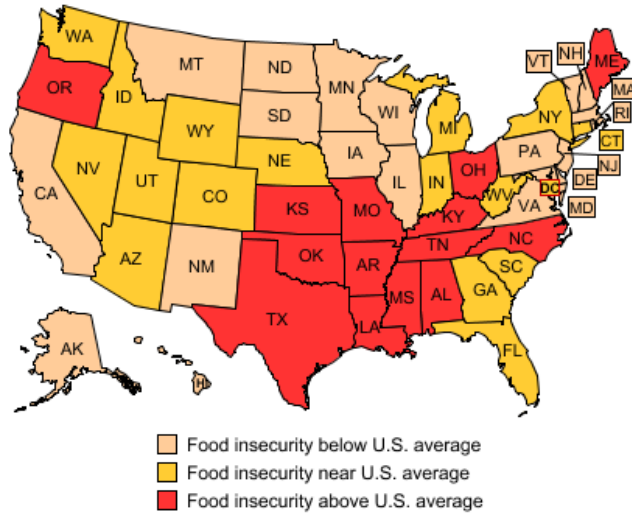
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Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2012-14



Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.

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