

**The Stockbox Program
Summary of Survey Results**



**Compiled by
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Milwaukee, WI**

August 2008

Background:

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (called CSFP or the Stockbox program in Milwaukee) is a federally funded program available to low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women and the elderly over the age of 60. The Stockbox provides supplemental food in order to improve this population's health, diet and access to proper nutrition. In Milwaukee County, Hunger Task Force has coordinated the Stockbox distribution and delivery to 5,000 recipients each month since 2002.

Methodology:

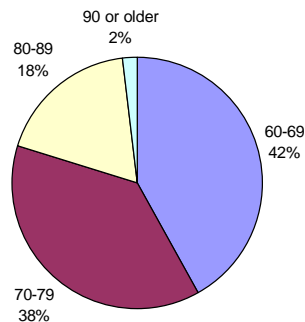
Hunger Task Force created a Stockbox survey of clients in June 2008 in order to gain a better understanding of client preference, financial constraints and opinions about their Stockbox. Hunger Task Force distributed surveys to all 5,000 Stockbox recipients in Milwaukee County at the time of their monthly Stockbox distribution during June. Clients had until July 11 to return the survey and were provided a pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope so that they would not experience any financial barriers to returning the survey. The six-page survey was provided to clients in English only and was created in large print. As incentive to return the surveys, one survey respondent was chosen at random to receive a \$100 gift card to a local grocery store chain. 1,191 surveys were returned at least partially completed, representing a 24 percent return rate.

Results:

Out of the total respondents, 75 percent were female. All respondents were seniors over the age of 60 in the following age categories:

Figure 1:

Age Breakdown of Survey Respondents



Ten percent of respondents were military veterans. The following breaks down languages spoken at home by respondents:

- 87 percent spoke English.
- 7 percent spoke Russian.
- 4 percent spoke Spanish.
- Two to three respondents each indicated they spoke French, Korean, Polish, Vietnamese, Romanian and Urdu.

Many of the Stockbox recipients felt challenged to be able to afford food along with other monthly expenses such as healthcare and prescriptions, mortgage or rent, taxes, and utility payments. Others noted that they had trouble affording personal care items; transportation-

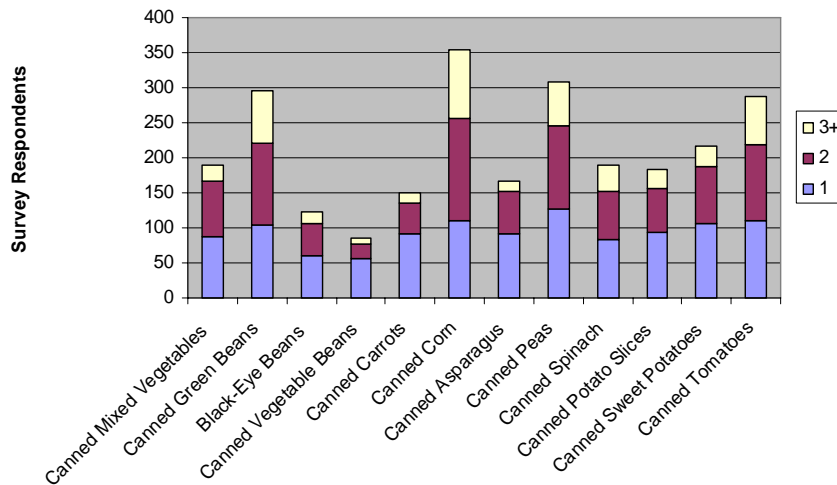
related expenses such as car insurance, gas and bus fares; fresh produce; entertainment such as travel, movies and eating at restaurants; clothes and shoes; vitamins and unexpected expenses that occur during any given month. Forty percent of respondents stated that there had been food shortages in their house over the last six months. Similarly, 37 percent had skipped meals or eaten less because of food shortages in their home.

Client Preference:

As part of this survey, Hunger Task Force wanted to measure client preference for the commodity foods available in the Stockbox. The survey simulated a shopping list, with the cost of each commodity item available to fill the Stockbox. Respondents were asked to choose which items they would purchase and the quantity of each that they would use during a given month, while not exceeding a \$25 budget (the current cost to fill their monthly Stockbox). The survey also allowed respondents to indicate which food items they would not or could not eat due to health, religion, circumstances or personal preference.

For the purpose of consistency and validity, only those surveys that totaled \$25 or less were used for this portion of the analysis (n=598).* The following graphs depict the respondents who indicated that they would “purchase” the commodity food item. Grouped by food category, these graphs show which items were the most popular for Stockbox recipients and also indicate the quantity of each item (one, two, or three or more per month) that the recipients would like to receive each month (the complete totals are attached at the end of the report). The narrative accompanying each graph also highlights which items were marked most frequently as items that respondents would not or could not eat.

A.) Client Preference of Canned Vegetables

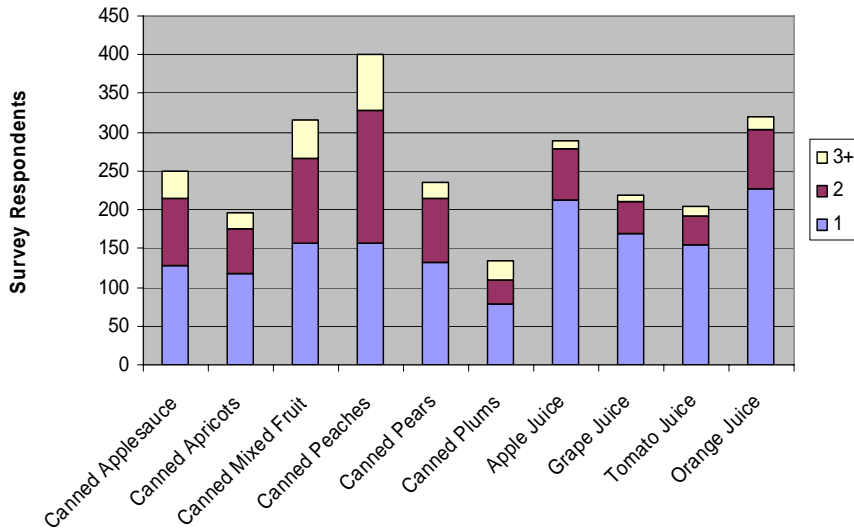


Canned corn was the most popular among Stockbox recipients out of the available commodity canned vegetables, with more than half wanting one or more cans of corn per month. Canned green beans and canned tomatoes were also chosen frequently. The least popular items were canned vegetable beans and black-eye beans. Black-eye beans were also indicated as the food

* For the shopping portion of the survey, only the surveys that correctly completed the shopping exercise that totaled to \$25 or less (n=598) were analyzed. For all other portions in the survey, the responses of the total recipients (n=1,191) were evaluated.

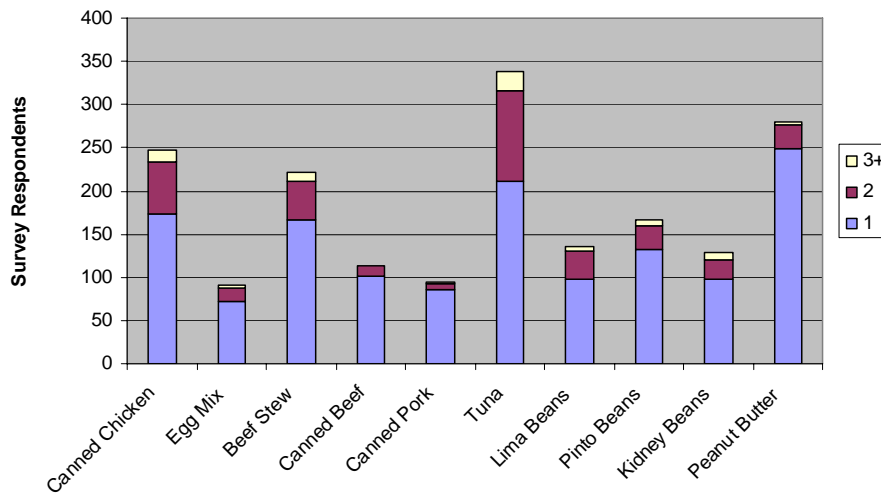
that most people could not or would not eat due to health, religion or personal preferences. Canned vegetable beans and canned asparagus were also high on the list of could not or would not eat.

B.) Client Preference of Canned Fruits and Juices



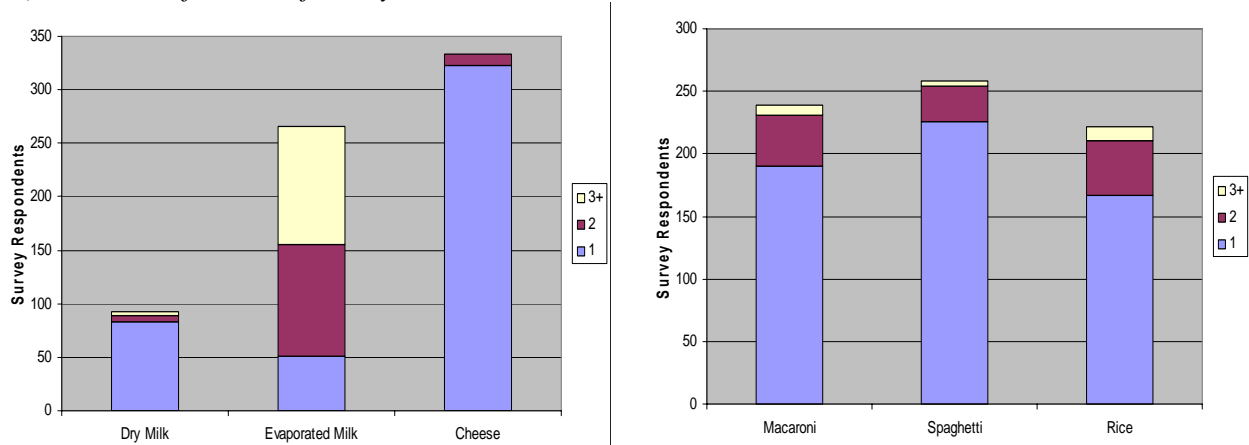
Canned peaches were selected the most frequently out of the available canned fruits and juices. More than 400 recipients indicated that they would like at least one can of peaches per month. Canned mixed fruit was also popular, with canned plums being the least popular and the item that recipients indicated most frequently that they could not or would not eat. Orange juice was preferred most often, followed closely by apple juice.

C.) Client Preference of Proteins



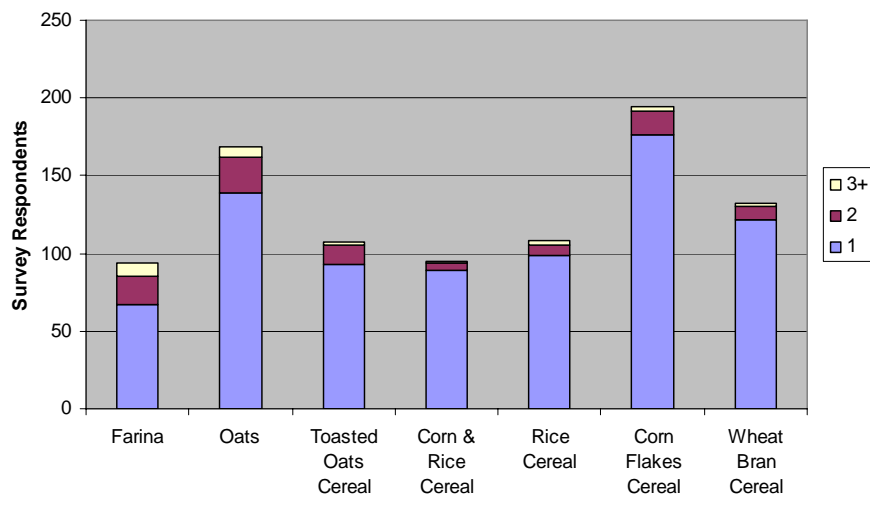
Tuna was by far the most popular protein item, followed by peanut butter, canned chicken and beef stew. Nearly one in three respondents stated that they could not or would not use the egg mix or the canned pork. Lima beans and canned beef were also not well-liked by respondents.

D.) Client Preference of Dairy, Pasta and Rice



Of the respondents who accurately completed the shopping portion of the survey, more than half indicated that they would select the cheese on a monthly basis. Evaporated milk was selected more frequently than dry milk. More than one out of every six respondents wanted three or more cans of evaporated milk each month. A third of respondents stated that they could not or would not use dry milk. All types of pasta and rice were popular with the Stockbox recipients.

E.) Client Preference of Breakfast Cereals

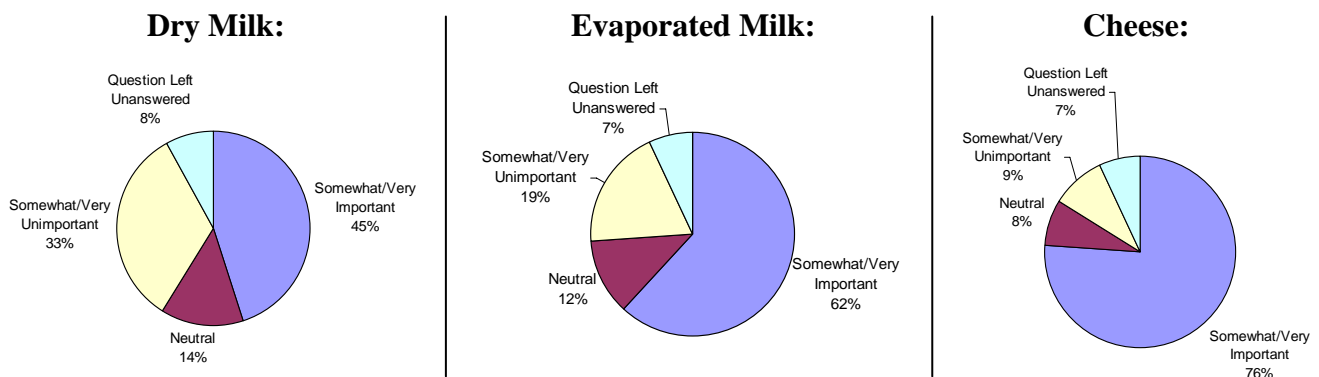


Corn flake cereal was the cereal that was most frequently selected, followed by oat and wheat bran cereals. Nearly all of the respondents only wanted one box of a single type of cereal each month. Farina was the least popular breakfast item.

Dairy

The remainder of the survey examined more specific preferences of dairy items, as well as providing recipients with an opportunity to voice their opinion on the quality and quantity of Stockbox items.

Of particular interest in this survey were the overall attitudes towards the dairy products included in the Stockboxes. While evaporated (canned) milk costs only 50 cents, a package of dry (powdered) milk costs \$2.35, nearly 10 percent of the Stockbox's total value. The block of cheese costs \$4.45, nearly 25 percent of the total value of the Stockbox. While the previous section demonstrated the quantity of these items that people preferred, this survey was also designed to measure the value of receiving these products on a monthly basis since they made up a significant portion of the cost of the Stockbox.



The results (n=1191) showed that Stockbox recipients preferred the more inexpensive evaporated milk over dry milk, while two-thirds of the respondents felt that it was important to receive evaporated milk each month. More than three out of four recipients felt it was important to continue receiving cheese each month.

Client Opinions on Quantity, Quality, Packaging and Preparation

Nearly 80 percent of the total respondents agreed with the statement that the Stockbox program helps them get enough food to be healthy. The survey also asked open-ended questions about the quality and packaging of food, if the quantity of products received were either too much or too little and what items were difficult to prepare. The following were suggestions that were repeated by a number of different survey respondents.

A.) Quantity:

- Nearly all of the available commodity items were noted as being received either too much or too little.
- The items most often repeated as being received too much included: milk (both dry and evaporated), juice, cereal, peanut butter, pasta, rice and dry beans.
- The items that clients most often would like to receive more of included: canned vegetables, canned meats and canned fruit.
- Many indicated that they would like to receive items not currently available through the Stockbox program, including fresh produce, butter, cooking oil, condiments, pudding and baking supplies.

B.) Preparation Difficulties:

- Respondents indicated that they would like recipes to accompany their Stockbox in order to know how to prepare some of the items. Requests for recipes included how to prepare the canned meats and dry milk.

- Others stated that they were unsure how to prepare the dry beans (pinto, lima and kidney).

C.) Packaging Problems:

- Respondents stated that items were often packaged in quantities that were too large for them to use before the item spoiled. Many suggested that foods be packaged into quantities that were more appropriate for people living alone.
- Some mentioned they received dented cans or bags of rice/pasta/beans that had broken open in transit.
- Others stated that the Stockbox itself was too heavy for them to move easily back to their residence.

D.) Quality Concerns:

- Respondents indicated that they were very uncomfortable with the quality of the canned meats, including concerns about the amount of grease, the color and texture and the high fat and sodium contents.
- Others were concerned about the quality of the canned vegetables, including concerns about the high amount of sodium, abnormal textures and stems and leaves found in with the vegetables. Some felt that the quality of the canned vegetables diminished when the vegetables were generic brands.
- Respondents stated that due to health concerns, they could not eat certain foods in their Stockbox because of the high levels of sodium, fat or sugar in many of the food items.
- A few respondents also mentioned concerns with the peanut butter (too oily), the juices (spoiled or sour) and pasta (spoiled).
- Other respondents mentioned that some of the food they received was outdated.
- A few respondents suggested varying the type of cheese, including offering mozzarella cheese on occasion.

Many indicated that they were very thankful for the food they received through the Stockbox program. The Stockbox food helped many seniors have nutritious food throughout the month, that they may not otherwise have had access to with their limited budgets, the cost of food rising and other expenses. Even with the Stockbox assistance however, often recipients did not have enough food to survive the month without experiencing food shortages or needing to skip meals. Many survey respondents asked if it was possible for more food to be included in their Stockbox. As one respondent stated, “All around, there just isn’t enough food.” Another asked, “Can you eat good [*sic*] on \$25?”

Conclusion:

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the data collected in this Stockbox survey, related to the importance of dairy products, the assessment of personal preference and the need for continued support and funding of the Stockbox program.

1.) This survey clearly indicates that receiving dairy items are very important to Stockbox recipients. With more than three-fourths of respondents indicating that receiving cheese on a monthly basis was important, the value of spending such a large portion of the Stockbox cost is validated. At the same time, realizing that clients were much more likely to use evaporated milk

over dry milk allows for the opportunity to invest in the less expensive evaporated milk than the costly dry milk packages.

2.) While there were a number of concerns over preference and quality of the items contained in the Stockbox, it must be emphasized that the majority of respondents found no problems with the Stockbox and appreciated receiving it each month. It is important to continue monitoring and advocating for quality commodity products for our seniors that that are healthy and nutritious. The size of commodity packaging should also be addressed so that seniors who live alone are able to use all of the products in their Stockboxes completely before experiencing spoilage. Seniors should be supplied with recipes on how to prepare healthy meals using the contents of their Stockbox.

3.) The overall assessment of the Stockbox survey indicates the great need for the continuation of the Stockbox program in Milwaukee County, at minimum. While the federal government funds only enough for 5,000 Stockboxes, there are many more seniors eligible for the boxes in Milwaukee County. As food prices continue to increase due to changes in the current economy and as other monthly costs continue to rise as well, the need for Stockboxes will increase even more drastically. As our survey indicates, seniors in Milwaukee are struggling to make ends meet, and they will need increasing federal assistance and continued food and advocacy support through local entities such as Hunger Task Force to maintain a healthy quality of life.

Appendix: Complete Data from the \$25 Stockbox Shopping Exercise

	1	2	3+	Total Will Eat	Can't/Won't Eat	Not Answered
Canned Mixed Vegetables	88	78	23	189	127	282
Canned Green Beans	104	116	75	295	72	231
Black-Eye Beans	61	46	16	123	184	291
Canned Vegetable Beans	57	21	8	86	161	351
Canned Carrots	91	44	16	151	143	304
Canned Corn	111	145	99	355	61	182
Canned Asparagus	92	60	14	166	155	277
Canned Peas	127	119	62	308	66	224
Canned Spinach	83	70	37	190	144	264
Canned Potato Slices	93	63	27	183	134	281
Canned Sweet Potatoes	107	81	28	216	107	275
Canned Tomatoes	111	108	69	288	67	243
Canned Applesauce	127	87	36	250	79	269
Canned Apricots	117	59	20	196	122	280
Canned Mixed Fruit	156	110	49	315	58	225
Canned Peaches	156	172	73	401	29	168
Canned Pears	133	81	21	235	77	286
Canned Plums	78	32	24	134	138	326
Apple Juice	212	66	12	290	78	230
Grape Juice	170	40	8	218	129	251
Tomato Juice	155	37	13	205	115	278
Orange Juice	228	76	15	319	81	198
Canned Chicken	173	61	14	248	126	224
Egg Mix	72	15	4	91	204	303
Beef Stew	166	45	11	222	137	239
Canned Beef	102	12	0	114	170	314
Canned Pork	86	7	2	95	194	309
Tuna	211	105	22	338	62	198
Lima Beans	98	32	5	135	176	287
Pinto Beans	133	26	8	167	154	277
Kidney Beans	97	23	9	129	153	316
Peanut Butter	249	27	4	280	87	231
Dry Milk	83	6	4	93	186	319
Evaporated Milk	51	104	111	266	109	223
Cheese	323	10	0	333	69	196
Macaroni	190	41	8	239	71	288
Spaghetti	226	28	4	258	61	279
Rice	167	44	11	222	76	300
Farina	67	18	9	94	177	327
Oats	139	23	7	169	115	314
Toasted Oats Cereal	93	12	2	107	132	359
Corn & Rice Cereal	89	5	1	95	139	364
Rice Cereal	99	6	3	108	126	364
Corn Flakes Cereal	176	16	2	194	86	318
Wheat Bran Cereal	122	8	2	132	114	352

