



# Fact Sheet

## *Hunger & Poverty*

### Is There Poverty in Wisconsin?

America's Dairyland has a poverty problem.

- 11% of Wisconsin's 5.3 million residents live in poverty (1).
- A family of four is considered poor if they live on less than \$20,600 a year, or around \$400 a week. Research shows that this family needs to earn twice this amount to make ends meet.
- 1 in 3 of Wisconsin's children live in low-income families (2)
- Child poverty is much worse for children of color— 48 percent of black children and 37 percent of Latino children are poor in Wisconsin as compared to 9 percent of white children (3).
- 9 percent of Wisconsinites lack sufficient food, or 1 out of 11 households (4).

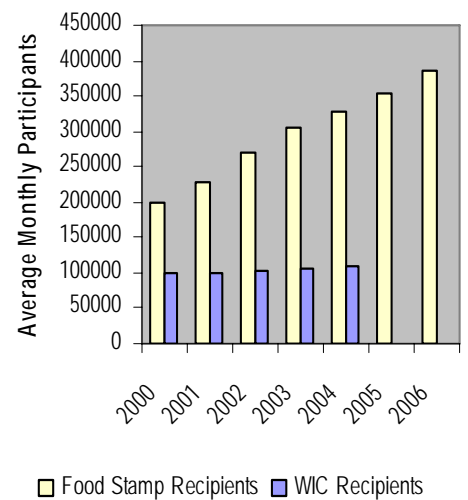


### What About Poverty in Milwaukee?

- 26 percent of all Milwaukee residents live in poverty, making it the seventh poorest city in the country (5).
- 38.5 percent of Milwaukee's children live in poverty as compared to 14 percent of Wisconsin's children (6).
- Milwaukee lost 30,000 local family-supporting manufacturing jobs between 1999 and 2003 (7).
- The economic depression in Milwaukee's urban core is more severe than the Great Depression, with 59 percent of black males 16 and older not working (8).
- Median household income in Milwaukee has fallen 14.7 percent between 2000 and 2006. (9)
- Each month, Hunger Task Force provides emergency food to over 34,000 individuals at food pantries and over 58,000 meals at soup kitchens.

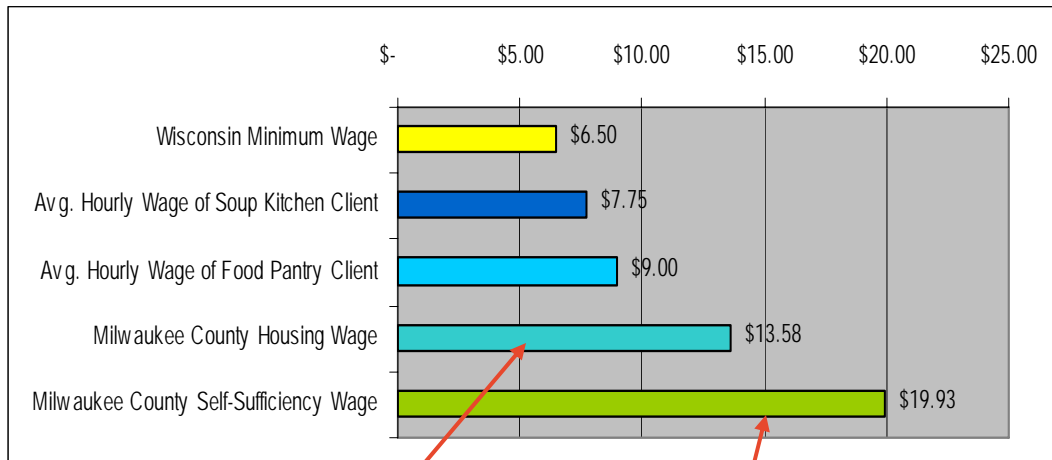
### Growing Need for Food Assistance:

#### *Wisconsin Participants in FoodShare & WIC*



Sources: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services; FRAC

## Hourly Wages—Are They Enough To Live On?



The **housing wage** in Milwaukee County is \$13.58 an hour (10). This is the amount a full-time worker must earn to afford a two-bedroom fair-market apartment at \$706 / month.

The **self-sufficiency wage** in Milwaukee County is \$19.93 an hour (11). This wage is an estimate of how much income a family would need to cover basic costs such as housing, food, child care, transportation and taxes—without needing help from government programs such as welfare and Food Stamps.



## Who Is Hungry?

In Fall 2005, more than 1,500 Milwaukee food pantry and soup kitchen clients answered a Hunger Task Force survey to help us better understand who our clients are and the difficulties they face. Our findings reflect national trends:

- ➔ **Single moms, children and the disabled:** Children make up half the clients at food pantries. In households that have children, 82 percent are headed by a single parent. Thirty percent of food pantry adult clients are disabled, while 7 percent are retired.
- ➔ **The working poor:** Forty-two percent of able-bodied food pantry clients are working. The average food pantry client earns \$9 per hour, while soup kitchen clients reported a lower hourly wage of \$7.75 per hour.
- ➔ **The homeless and unemployed:** Thirty-eight percent of soup kitchen clients are homeless. Almost half are unemployed. A third of all clients lack a high school diploma. The vast majority of clients lack basic resources such as a phone or a car.
- ➔ **Chronic Clients:** Emergency food does not end hunger. Over half of clients report cutting meal sizes or skipping meals—signs of ongoing hunger—with many doing so to enable their children to eat. In addition, well over half of all clients access emergency food more than six times per year.

To read the complete report, "[In Search of a Hunger-Free Community](http://www.hungertaskforce.org)," visit our website: [www.hungertaskforce.org](http://www.hungertaskforce.org)

## How Does Hunger Affect Kids?



Hunger makes children more likely to have :

- Chronic illness
- Behavioral problems
- Physical, mental and emotional delays
- More school absences, and tardiness

## Effectiveness of providing

### Universal Free Breakfast

High percentages of staff at 58 public schools report positive impacts from offering free breakfast to all students (12).

- Over 71 percent of school staff reported that UFB had a positive impact on learning and learning readiness.
- 59 percent reported free breakfast has a positive impact on student behavior
- 72 percent reported that it was important that UFB program be expanded to other schools

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## Food Assistance Facts

### Dial 2-1-1:

- 2-1-1 is a community referral service providing information on local social services available in over 20 counties.
- In 2006, the number one reason people phoned 2-1-1 in Milwaukee was to request a referral to a local food pantry or soup kitchen.



### Emergency Feeding Organizations:

- Hunger Task Force provides FREE food to 80 Milwaukee-area food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters.
- Member organizations must adhere to a set of standards that promote the dignity and respect of all clients.

### FoodShare:

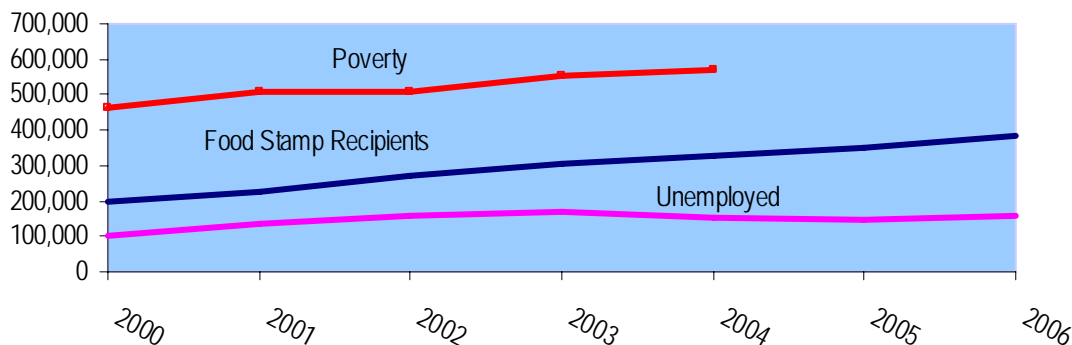
- More than 383,000 Wisconsinites receive food stamps (called FoodShare in Wisconsin) (13).
- In Wisconsin the average monthly benefit per household is \$186 (14).
- Milwaukee County represents 39 percent of total state caseload (15).
- FoodShare caseloads have increased 70 percent between 2002 and 2007.
- Hunger Task Force food pantry clients report their FoodShare benefits only last 2 ½ weeks.

### School Meals:

- Each day in Wisconsin, over 583,288 students eat free or reduced price school lunch (16).
- In Milwaukee, 77 percent of public school students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, reflecting the high poverty rate (17).



## Growing Need Among Wisconsin Individuals



Sources: US Census; Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services; Wisconsin Workforce Development

## OUR ADVOCACY

### A Four-Step Continuum:

#### ➔ Research

We identify, conduct and disseminate research on nutrition programs. We are strong advocates for FoodShare, WIC, school meals and summer meal programs.

#### ➔ Education

We educate the public about hunger and poverty through presentations, workshops, hunger simulations and tours.

#### ➔ Organizing

We organize citizens for collective action through our anti-hunger advocacy group, *Voices Against Hunger*. *Voices* members contact lawmakers, write letters, attend public meetings and help push forward our anti-hunger agenda.

#### ➔ Lobbying

We lobby local, state and federal officials on anti-hunger legislation and public policies.

To learn more,  
read our  
**2007**

**Advocacy Agenda  
Fact Sheet.**

## Food Assistance Facts...Continued

### School Breakfast:

- Wisconsin is ranked 51st in the U.S., behind even the District of Columbia, for feeding low-income children school breakfast, with only 26.5 percent of Wisconsin students who eat subsidized lunch getting breakfast in school during the 2004-05 school year (18).
- In Milwaukee public schools, only 11 percent of low-income students who eat lunch also eat breakfast (19).

### Summer Meals:

- Each July, over 28,000 Wisconsin children participate in summer meals— a 50 percent increase in the last 10 years (20).
- Over 660,000 meals were served through Milwaukee's Fueling Young Minds summer meals program in 2006.

### Stockbox for Seniors (CSFP):

- Hunger Task Force provides supplemental food to more than 5,000 low-income seniors in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties.
- Almost half of Stockbox recipients report that they face food shortages every month or most months (21).
- One-third of recipients report that if they couldn't receive a Stockbox, they would go without medication, car insurance, or personal care items to buy food (22).



### WIC:

- In fiscal year 2006, 112,181 women, infants and children received WIC benefits in Wisconsin.
- About half the participants were children, a quarter were infants, and a quarter were adult women (24).

## In Their Own Words:



### What Food Pantry Clients Want You to Know—

*"I am a very responsible person and I'm just going through a bad time in my life."*

*"I have 3 children...I'm a single parent trying to hold a job and go to school."*

*"Why is our nation so rich? Why do we suffer so much? And why are there so many poor?!?"*

*"It's hard to maintain a budget when you're unemployed."*

### Why People Come to a Food Pantry—

*"My food stamps ran out."*

*"I'm homeless."*

*"I make low wages."*

*"My rent and utilities are high."*

*"I'm unemployed."*

*"I have health problems."*

## Sources:

- 1: *American Community Survey*, US Bureau of the Census, 2006.
- 2: *Wisconsin Statistics*, National Center for Children in Poverty, 2006.
- 3: *American Community Survey*, US Bureau of the Census, 2006.
- 4: *Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin Communities*, UW-Extension Impact Report, 2005.
- 5: Hunger Task Force calculation from the *American Community Survey*, US Bureau of the Census, 2006.
- 6: *Ibid.*
- 7: White, Sammis B., "Jobs in the New Millennium: Wisconsin's Regional Economies 1999-2003", Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Inc., Volume 17, No. 4, p. 12, 2004.
- 8: Schmid, John, "Hit by a Global Train", Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Dec. 4, 2004.
- 9: *American Community Survey*, US Bureau of the Census, 2006. After adjusting for inflation
- 10: *Out of Reach*, National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2005.
- 11: *Milwaukee County Food Security Profile*, Wisconsin Food Security Project, UW-Extension, 2005.
- 12: *Preliminary Findings From 2006-2007 Universal Free Breakfast Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools*, Hunger Task Force, February 2007
- 13: *FoodShare Wisconsin Program at a Glance*, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, p.1, Feb. 2006.
- 14: *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 15: Hunger Task Force yearly calculation made from DHFS data on *Average Annual FoodShare Caseload Recipients* as of April 2006.
- 16: *Wisconsin School Free/Reduced Eligibility Data for School Fiscal Year 2006, by County*, Department of Public Instruction, 2006.
- 17: Data shared by Nutrition Services, Milwaukee Public Schools.
- 18: *Wisconsin: State of the States*, FRAC, 2006.
- 19: Data shared by Nutrition Services, Milwaukee Public Schools
- 20: *Wisconsin: State of the States*, FRAC, 2006.
- 21: *CSFP Survey*, Hunger Task Force, 2005.
- 22: *Ibid.*
- 23: USDA Food and Nutrition Services, Program Data 2006.