

## **IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF KITCHEN CLIENTS**

About 5,300 emergency kitchens provide food assistance to needy individuals across the United States. In this chapter we describe the characteristics of these individuals. While the client survey was of adults (age 18 and older) who visited emergency kitchens, it also gathered information on household characteristics, such as indicators of food security. We analyzed the survey data to infer patterns of emergency food utilization by kitchen clients, satisfaction with food offered at emergency kitchens, and household members' eligibility for, and participation in, federal food assistance programs.

### **A. NUMBERS OF CLIENTS SERVED BY EMERGENCY KITCHENS**

We estimated weekly numbers of unique or different people (adults and children) served by emergency kitchens based on the numbers of clients observed at the kitchens we visited and on how often clients reported that they received meals at one or more emergency kitchens during a 7-day period that included the day of their interview. Based on these data, about 487,000 different adults received food from emergency kitchens during a typical week in 2001 (Table IV.1). About 163,000 children accompanied these adults and also received meals, resulting in a total of 650,000 persons served by emergency kitchens during a typical week in 2001.

Using information provided by respondents about how many weeks in a row they received meals from a kitchen, we estimated the number of unique kitchen clients during a month to facilitate comparison to the number of pantry clients during a month. About 856,000 adults and 275,000 children (or 1.1 million people total) visited emergency kitchens during a typical month in 2001.

TABLE IV.1

ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF DIFFERENT CLIENTS SERVED BY  
EMERGENCY KITCHENS WEEKLY AND MONTHLY IN 2001

	Weekly Number	Monthly Number
Total Persons (all ages)	650,000	1,131,000
Adults age 18 and older	487,000	856,000
Children under age 18	163,000	275,000

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

NOTE: See Appendix A for details regarding the methods used to estimate unique numbers of clients.

As described more fully in Appendix A, the estimates are derived from sampling probabilities and include adjustments for survey nonresponse and other factors relating to survey coverage. The estimates may be quite sensitive to a number of factors including sampling error, measurement error, non-coverage of small providers and providers who are open infrequently or on an ‘emergency basis’ only, and seasonality. (The latter factor results from the data collection having been limited to only approximately four months.) However, despite these limitations, we believe that the estimates provide the best estimates of the kitchen population which can be obtained from the available data, and that they represent a reasonably good approximation of the number of clients at emergency kitchens in a typical week and month.

The study design limits our ability to measure patterns of kitchen use over a year. As described earlier, data collection occurred during a 14-week period and while we collected a limited amount of data about clients’ use of kitchens for the previous 12 months, space limitations on the instrument precluded obtaining all the data necessary to fully characterize annual usage. In addition, these data may contain considerable measurement error in clients’

abilities to accurately estimate the number of weeks in a row that they had visited one or more kitchens during the last year.

As noted with the pantry clients, the annual number cannot be derived by simply multiplying the monthly number by 12, which would assume that an entirely new set of clients is served each month, nor is it equal to the monthly number, which would assume that no new clients are served each month. Some indication of the potential range of possible numbers of different clients annually can be derived by examining the implications of alternative estimates of turnover in the system, where we define turnover as the average percentage of the clientele which is “new” each month in the sense of not having used a kitchen in the previous 12 months.<sup>1</sup> If, to take a likely lower bound, we assume that this turnover rate is only 5 percent per month, this would imply that the annual number of different clients is 1.8 million. On the other hand, if we assume a monthly turnover rate of 9 percent of the caseload, this would imply that the annual number of different clients is 2.2 million.

This estimate of the annual number of kitchen clients (1.8 to 2.2 million people) is broadly comparable to that of 1.5 to 1.8 million clients in America’s Second Harvest network. (For the Second Harvest estimate, see Kim, Ohls, and Cohen 2001, as modified by subsequent revisions which will be reflected in the final version). The potential reasons for the differences are similar to those noted in Chapter III with regard to pantries. The EFAS client survey’s estimate of 1.8 to 2.2 million annual kitchen clients is much higher than that of 1.0 million kitchen clients from the

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<sup>1</sup>About six percent of kitchen clients said that this was their ‘first visit’, suggesting that this was their ‘first ever visit’, however it is also likely that this may have been their first visit ‘this week’ or their ‘first visit for this episode’. Thus, we believe that a weekly turnover rate of six percent is too high.

September 2000 CPS (Nord et al. 2002). The CPS does not include the homeless population in the U.S., which would underestimate the total number of kitchen clients.

## **B. CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS**

The demographic and employment characteristics of emergency kitchen clients shed light on the reasons that these individuals seek food assistance. Many emergency kitchen clients report additional indicators of material hardship, such as homelessness, food insecurity and hunger, and lack of access to various amenities, including kitchen appliances, a working telephone, or a working motor vehicle.

### **1. Demographic Characteristics of Kitchen Clients**

About 60 percent of emergency kitchen clients are male, and 71 percent are between 30 and 59 years old (Table IV.2). More than two-fifths (45 percent) of kitchen clients are non-Hispanic black; about one-third (35 percent) are non-Hispanic white; 14 percent are Hispanic; and 6 percent are in a different racial/ethnic group, including American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or multiracial. The vast majority of clients (95 percent) report that they are U.S. citizens.

Sixty one percent of emergency kitchen clients are high school graduates or have completed a GED. Almost one-quarter (23 percent) have attended at least some college, and 9 percent have never attended high school. About 39 percent of kitchen clients have less than a high school education.

Fewer than one-fifth (18 percent) of kitchen clients report that they were married or living with a partner, while more than two-fifths (44 percent) report that they had never been married.

TABLE IV.2

SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS  
OF ADULT EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

	Percent	(SE)
Age		
18 to 29 years	14.5	2.51
30 to 44 years	35.8	2.41
45 to 59 years	35.3	2.55
60 years and older	14.4	2.77
Gender		
Male	60.4	3.53
Female	39.6	3.53
Race/Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	35.4	4.67
Non-Hispanic black	44.8	4.18
Hispanic	13.8	2.30
Other	6.0	1.81
Marital Status		
Married	11.6	1.89
Living as married	6.7	0.98
Widowed	8.9	1.79
Divorced/separated	28.4	2.28
Never married	44.4	3.09
Educational Attainment		
Less than 8th grade	6.4	1.15
Completed 8th grade	3.0	0.56
Some high school	29.6	2.49
Graduated from high school	31.0	2.47
GED <sup>a</sup>	5.2	1.28
Trade school	1.4	0.45
Some college	19.3	2.51
Graduated from college	3.2	0.61
Post-graduate education	0.9	0.35
Self-Reported Health Status		
Excellent	13.9	1.52
Very good	18.9	1.94
Good	25.9	2.22
Fair	27.5	2.58
Poor	13.9	2.01
Citizenship		
U.S.	94.5	1.52
Non-U.S.	5.5	1.52
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	<b>2,424</b>	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>The number of respondents obtaining a GED may be underestimated due to persons reporting "graduated from high school," regardless of whether a GED or high school diploma was obtained.

Almost 60 percent of emergency kitchen clients report that their health is “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.” Approximately 40 percent of clients report that their health status is “fair” or “poor.”

## **2. Employment Characteristics of Kitchen Clients**

Only 16 percent of emergency kitchen clients report being employed (Table IV.3). About 39 percent of clients are looking for work but unemployed, and 45 percent are not in the labor force. Of those clients not in the labor force, three-quarters report that they are disabled, unable to work, or retired.

On average, employed kitchen clients work 33 hours per week. Half of the employed clients work 20 to 39 hours per week, and 40 percent work 40 or more hours per week. Of unemployed kitchen clients, 21 percent have been unemployed for less than a month, 52 percent have been unemployed for at least a month, but less than a year, and 27 percent have been employed for a year or more.

## **3. Residential Status of Kitchen Clients**

About half of all adult emergency kitchen clients (52 percent) report renting their residence, and only 7 percent are homeowners (Table IV.4). One-third (36 percent) of emergency kitchen clients are homeless, and nearly 1 out of every 10 clients reported living outdoors.<sup>2,3</sup> The remaining 5 percent live in a residence for free, but do not consider themselves homeless. The

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<sup>2</sup>We classified respondents as homeless if they considered themselves to be homeless, or if they reported living in a location not intended for permanent housing, such as a shelter/mission, car/van, abandoned building, public space/railroad station, or outdoors.

<sup>3</sup>Among America’s Second Harvest network clients, 26 percent of kitchen clients considered themselves homeless (Kim, Ohls, and Cohen 2001).

TABLE IV.3

EMPLOYMENT-RELATED CHARACTERISTICS OF  
ADULT EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

	Percent	(SE)
Employment Status		
Employed	16.0	2.00
Unemployed	38.9	3.52
Not in labor force		
Not looking for work	5.8	0.82
In a job training program	1.3	0.25
Disabled/unable to work	23.5	2.23
Retired	10.0	2.25
Homemaker	2.5	0.88
Student	2.0	1.08
Number of Hours Worked Per Week by Workers (mean) (n = 339)	32.6	1.23
Number of Hours Worked Per Week by Workers (n = 339)		
1 – 9	3.4	1.23
10 – 19	9.9	3.45
20 – 39	47.8	5.80
40 or more	38.9	5.31
Length of Unemployment/Time Spent Looking for Work (n = 1,219)		
Less than a month	21.2	3.16
1 to 3 months	32.8	2.15
4 to 6 months	15.0	2.00
7 to 11 months	4.1	0.92
12 to 23 months	9.9	1.42
24 months or more	16.9	2.38
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	<b>2,416</b>	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

TABLE IV.4

## RESIDENTIAL STATUS OF ADULT EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

	Reside in This Setting		Of Those Residing in This Setting, Percentage That								
			Are Not Homeless						Are Homeless		
	Percent	(SE)	Own Residence		Rent Residence		Reside for Free		Percent	(SE)	
			(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)
All settings	100.0	0.00	7.1	1.60	52.0	3.57	4.6	0.85	36.2	4.17	
House/condominium	22.5	3.12	26.9	4.71	53.4	5.42	10.1	2.57	9.5	3.25	
Mobile Home	5.1	1.48	19.9	7.55	55.5	15.75	5.8	3.02	18.8	10.39	
Apartment	34.6	3.67	0.1	0.13	91.2	1.52	3.5	1.10	5.2	1.28	
Room	8.7	1.76	N/A	--	46.1	6.67	5.1	1.66	48.8	6.92	
Hotel/Motel	2.6	1.27	N/A	--	62.9	11.85	15.6	14.31	21.5	5.60	
Shelter/Mission	12.4	2.57	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--	100.0	0.00	
Car/Van	2.7	0.92	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--	100.0	0.00	
Abandoned Building	1.3	0.48	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--	100.0	0.00	
Public Space/ Railroad Station	1.3	0.40	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--	100.0	0.00	
Outside	8.8	1.43	N/A	--	N/A	--	N/A	--	100.0	0.00	
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	<b>2,417</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>1,017</b>		<b>121</b>		<b>1,136</b>		

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

N/A = not applicable.



most common type of residence for kitchen clients is an apartment (35 percent of clients), followed by a house or condominium (23 percent), and by a shelter or mission (12 percent).

#### **4. Household Characteristics of Kitchen Clients**

The majority of emergency kitchen clients live alone (52 percent) and receive services from a provider in a metropolitan area (88 percent, Table IV.5). Of clients living alone, more than two times as many are male as are female. Sixteen percent of kitchen clients live in households that include at least four people, and the average household size—counting single person households—is 2.1 members. Twenty percent of kitchen clients live with children under the age of 18. Another twenty percent of kitchen clients live in households that include a person age 60 or older. About one-quarter (26 percent) of kitchen client households include employed persons, and one-third include recipients of cash welfare assistance.<sup>4</sup>

The vast majority of kitchen clients (96 percent) report that some or all of the members of their household are U.S. citizens. The other 4 percent report that no household members are U.S. citizens.

### **C. FOOD SECURITY**

Food security is defined as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (Hamilton et al. 1997; Bickel et al. 2000, p. 6). Using the six-item short form to categorize food security for each household, we determined that three-fourths of emergency kitchen clients have been food insecure at some time during the 12 months preceding the interview (Table IV.6). One-fourth (27 percent) of kitchen clients have been food insecure

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<sup>4</sup>That is, recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or General Assistance (GA).

TABLE IV.5  
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT  
EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

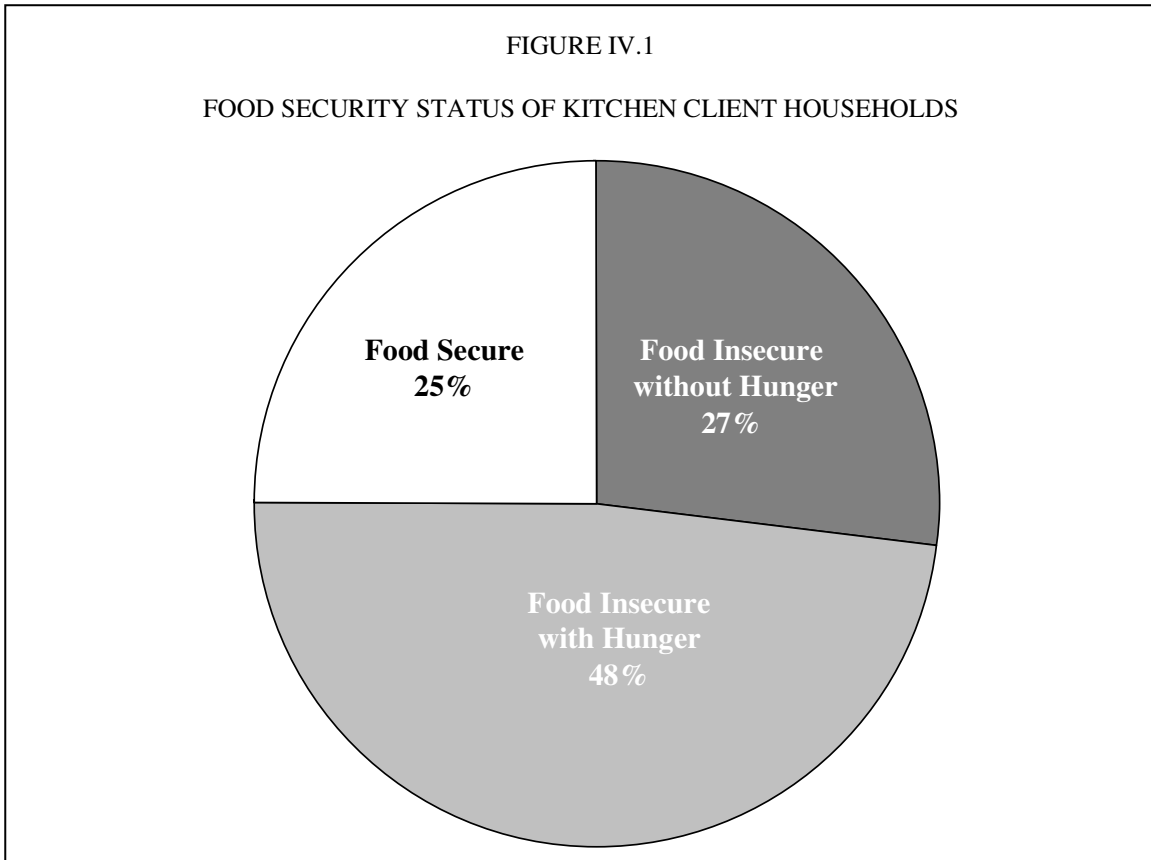
Characteristic	Percent (Unless Otherwise Stated)	(SE)
<b>Household Composition</b>		
Single female respondent living alone	14.1	1.93
Single male respondent living alone	37.7	2.89
Single respondent living with children under the age of 18	11.4	1.38
Married/cohabiting respondent living with children under the age of 18	8.3	1.47
Married/cohabiting respondent living without children under the age of 18	10.0	1.42
Single respondent living with other adult(s)	18.4	2.19
<b>Number of Household Members</b>		
1	54.0	2.52
2	19.4	1.74
3	10.9	1.50
4	6.9	1.26
5	3.9	0.57
6 or more	4.9	0.91
Average number	2.1	0.08
Median number	1.0	0.00
<b>Number of Children Under Age 18</b>		
0	80.4	2.21
1	7.9	1.09
2	5.4	1.08
3	2.9	0.67
4 or more	3.3	0.91
Average number	0.4	0.07
<b>Number of Household Members Age 60 or Older</b>		
0	80.3	2.72
1	17.6	2.51
2	1.9	0.56
More than 2	0.2	0.13
Household contains member(s) who is/are employed	26.3	2.88
Proportion of household with cash welfare last month	33.5	3.17
Proportion of household with cash welfare and person employed	7.1	1.60
<b>U.S. Citizenship</b>		
No household members are citizens	3.6	1.44
Some household members are citizens	4.7	0.96
All household members are citizens	91.7	1.51

TABLE IV.5 (continued)

Characteristic	Percent (Unless Otherwise Stated)	(SE)
Metropolitan Status of Provider		
Metropolitan	88.4	5.28
Non-Metropolitan	11.6	5.28
<b>Sample Size</b>	2,425	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

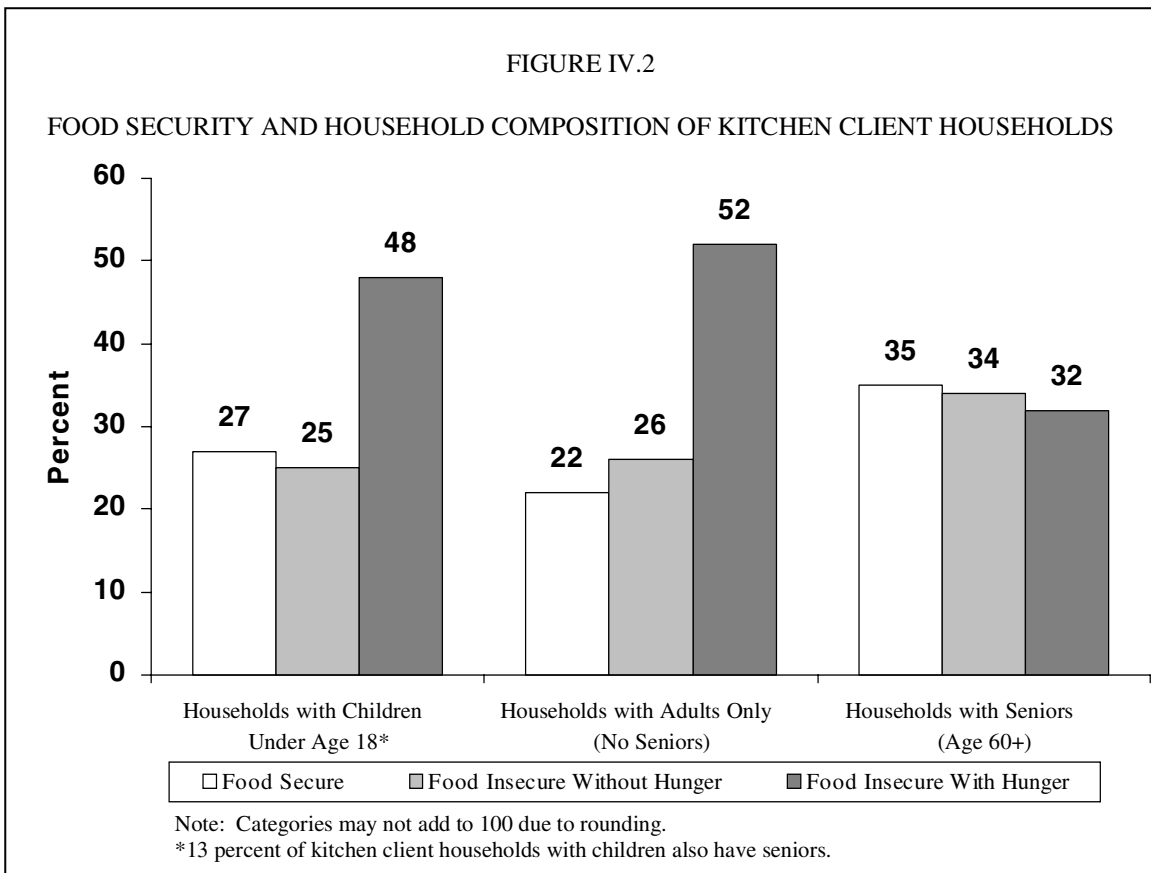
without hunger, and one-half (48 percent) of kitchen clients have been food insecure with hunger (Figure IV.1).



In addition to the six-item short form used to classify household food security, a seventh question on severe food-related hardship was asked since this is a vulnerable population. Responses to the seven individual food security questions are found in Appendix D. Two-fifths (41 percent; see Table D.7) of all kitchen client households report that one or more adult members did not eat for a whole day during the last year because of a lack of money for food. This is an indication of severe food-related hardship for a subset of kitchen client households.

While food insecurity is common among all household types, the prevalence and severity of food insecurity varies by household composition. About one-half (48 to 52 percent) of kitchen client households with children or with neither children or elderly persons are food insecure with

hunger, compared with only 32 percent for households with no children but at least one elderly person (Figure IV.2).<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup>We also assessed responses to individual indicators of food insecurity and hunger for all kitchen client households and for households of different sizes (Table D.7 in Appendix D). In general, single-person households report more frequent and more severe episodes of food insecurity. This is most likely due to a disproportionate number of the single-person households consisting of homeless men. About two-thirds of all kitchen clients report that household members ate less than they should because “there wasn’t enough money to buy food.” Half of kitchen clients residing alone report “not eating for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food,” compared with one-third of clients living in households containing two to four people, and one-fourth of clients living in households of five or more people.

TABLE IV.6  
 FOOD SECURITY STATUS OF EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS,  
 BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE  
 (Percentages)

	All Households	(SE)	Households With Children Under 18 <sup>a</sup>	(SE)	Households With No Children but with Persons Age 60 or Older	(SE)
Food Secure	25.0	2.60	27.2	4.79	34.6	6.92
Food Insecure	75.0	2.60	72.8	4.79	65.3	6.92
Food Insecure without Hunger	27.4	2.20	24.9	3.92	33.8	6.43
Food Insecure with Hunger	47.7	2.97	47.9	6.02	31.5	5.41
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	2,402		406		363	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>13 percent of kitchen client households with children also have seniors.

The prevalence of food security for kitchen client households receiving FSP benefits is generally similar to the food security of other seemingly eligible households (Table IV.7). For households ineligible for FSP benefits because of higher levels of income and resources, the proportion that are food secure (44 percent) is substantially higher than for households participating in the FSP (22 percent) and other FSP-eligible households (19 percent).

#### **D. INCOME, POVERTY, AND MATERIAL HARDSHIP**

The survey of EFAS clients allows us to construct both income- and consumption-oriented measures of the hardships faced by kitchen client households. Using income-oriented measures, we can compare the monthly or annual cash income of a household with the corresponding poverty threshold for households of that size. Using consumption-oriented measures, we can investigate what proportion of kitchen households have access to certain basic necessities, such as permanent shelter and sufficient food to avoid food insecurity with hunger.

##### **1. Income and Poverty Levels**

The survey of EFAS clients included two measures of household income: (1) last month's income, and (2) last year's income. The average income of kitchen client households was \$708 for the most recent month, and \$9,907 for the most recent year (Table IV.8). Average monthly income for the most recent year ( $\$826$  or  $\$9,907 \div 12$ ) was higher than average income for the most recent month, consistent with the hypothesis that the average kitchen client household has experienced a recent decline in its cash income. Compared with the corresponding average income levels, median household income levels were somewhat lower: \$549 for the most recent month, and \$7,000 for the most recent year.

In the most recent month, 86 percent of kitchen client households had incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level, and therefore met the gross income requirement for the Food

TABLE IV.7

FOOD SECURITY STATUS OF EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS,  
BY PARTICIPATION IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM  
(Percentages)

	All Kitchen Households	(SE)	Kitchen Households That Participate in FSP <sup>a</sup>	(SE)	Kitchen Households That Do Not Receive Food Stamps, but are Seemingly Eligible	(SE)	Kitchen Households That Do Not Receive Food Stamps and Are Seemingly Ineligible for FSP	(SE)
Food Secure	25.0	2.60	22.0	3.48	19.3	2.74	43.8	6.53
Food Insecure	75.0	2.60	78.0	3.48	80.7	2.74	56.2	6.53
Food Insecure without Hunger	27.4	2.20	22.9	3.46	31.7	3.24	24.2	4.90
Food Insecure with Hunger	47.7	2.97	55.1	3.81	49.0	4.01	32.0	7.38
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	2,402		899		1,114		332	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

NOTE: Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Defined as participation in the last year.



TABLE IV.8

## INCOME AND POVERTY OF EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

Characteristic	Percent Unless Otherwise Stated	(SE)
Household Income Last Month (mean dollars)	708	51.7
Household Income Last Month (median dollars)	549	22.8
Household Income Last Month as a Percentage of Poverty		
At or below 130%	86.3	2.15
Above 130%	13.7	2.15
Annual Household Income (mean dollars)	9,907	904.9
Annual Household Income (median dollars)	7,000	10.9
Annual Household Income as a Percentage of Poverty		
At or below 50%	42.8	3.65
51 to 100%	28.0	2.14
101 to 130%	12.0	1.80
Above 130%	17.2	2.53
<b>Sample Size</b>	2,425	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

Stamp Program. Fourteen percent of kitchen client households had incomes above 130 percent of the poverty level during the most recent month, and 17 percent had incomes above 130 percent of the poverty level during the most recent year. Seventy one percent of kitchen client households were at or below the poverty level over the course of the most recent year.

## **2. Consumption-Oriented Indicators of Material Hardship**

We investigated several indicators of material hardship experienced by kitchen client households, including homelessness, food insecurity and hunger, and lack of access to various amenities useful for obtaining, preparing, or storing meals, such as kitchen appliances, a working telephone, and a working motor vehicle.

As noted above, approximately one in three (36 percent) emergency kitchen clients are homeless, and one-half (48 percent) are food insecure with hunger (Table IV.9). About 30 percent of kitchen clients lack access to a stove, oven, or microwave, and a similar percentage lacks access to a refrigerator. Over half (53 percent) of kitchen clients lacks access to a working telephone, and three-quarters (76 percent) lack access to a motor vehicle.

Of homeless kitchen clients, three-fifths (62 percent) are food insecure with hunger, compared with two-fifths (40 percent) of non-homeless clients. Dramatic differences between homeless kitchen clients and non-homeless kitchen clients were also evident in the proportion of clients with access to certain amenities. Seventy percent of homeless kitchen clients report they do not have access to a stove, oven, or microwave; 72 percent report they do not have access to a refrigerator; and 77 percent report they do not have access to a working telephone. In comparison, 8 percent of the non-homeless clients report they do not have access to kitchen appliances, and 8 percent report they do not have access to a refrigerator. About two in five kitchen clients who are not homeless nonetheless lack access to a working telephone. The

TABLE IV.9

INDICATORS OF HARDSHIP FOR ADULT  
EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

	Frequency for All Clients		Frequency for Homeless Clients		Frequency for Non- Homeless Clients	
	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)
Homeless	36.2	4.17	100.0	0.00	0.0	--
Food Insecure						
Food insecure without hunger	27.4	2.20	23.3	2.67	29.7	3.48
Food insecure with hunger	47.7	2.97	61.6	3.69	39.8	3.70
Lack access to stove, oven, or microwave	30.2	4.26	69.7	4.14	7.8	2.16
Lack access to refrigerator	30.8	4.15	72.0	4.13	7.5	1.98
Lack access to a working telephone	52.9	3.80	77.3	3.02	39.0	4.09
Lack access to a working car, truck, or motorcycle	75.7	3.38	89.1	3.49	68.1	4.11
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	2,418		1,136		1,282	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

NOTE: Refer to Table IV.4 for the proportion of all clients considering themselves homeless, regardless of residential setting.

proportion of kitchen clients without access to motor vehicles is also higher for homeless clients (89 percent) than for non-homeless clients (68 percent).

## **E. CHARACTERISTICS OF EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM USE**

Federal food assistance programs are an important means of ensuring that individuals and families have enough to eat.<sup>6</sup> Additional sources of food include private emergency kitchens, food pantries and shelters, and food from nontraditional sources such as restaurant handouts, trash cans, and dumpsters. This section provides information on the frequency and duration of visits to emergency kitchens, as well as other sources of food that clients sought in the 12 months preceding their interview. Participation in public food assistance programs are described later in section G.

### **1. Use of Other Sources of Emergency Food Assistance by Kitchen Clients**

We studied sources of emergency food assistance for four groups of emergency kitchen clients: (1) clients visiting a kitchen for the “first time ever” (6 percent), (2) clients who are visiting a kitchen for the first day this last week (39 percent), (3) clients who visited a kitchen on two to five days in the last week (43 percent), and (4) clients who visited a kitchen on six or seven days in the last week (13 percent) (Table IV.10).

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<sup>6</sup>Government food assistance programs, including the Food Stamp Program (FSP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), child care meals, the Summer Food Service Program, and senior meals programs, will be discussed later in this chapter. Other government programs include the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), which provides food to low-income pregnant, postpartum, and lactating women, infants, preschool age children, and senior citizens age 60 or older.

TABLE IV.10

USE OF EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE BY EMERGENCY KITCHEN USERS  
(Percentages)

	All Kitchen Clients	(SE)	Clients Who Are Visiting For the First Time Ever	(SE)	Clients Who Are Visiting For the First Time This Week	(SE)	Clients Who Have Visited 2-5 Times in the Past Week	(SE)	Clients Who Have Visited 6-7 Times in the Past Week	(SE)
Proportion of All Kitchen Clients	100.0	0.00	5.7	1.44	38.7	2.59	42.7	2.11	12.9	1.36
Number of Weeks in a Row Visiting Kitchens During This "Episode"										
1 month or less	57.7	2.30	100.0	0.00	64.6	4.80	53.1	2.68	34.4	3.18
> 1 month but less than 6 months	23.0	2.04	N/A	--	18.8	3.86	26.1	1.85	34.7	2.92
> 6 months but less than 1 year	3.4	0.53	N/A	--	2.4	0.98	3.7	0.61	6.8	1.09
> 1 year	15.9	2.05	N/A	--	14.2	3.67	17.1	2.40	24.2	4.05
Children or Other Family Members Accompanied Client on Day of Observation	20.5	2.60	20.8	11.32	23.2	4.81	19.2	2.52	16.8	3.13
Use of (Other) Sources of Emergency Food in the Last 12 Months										
Food pantries	37.4	3.17	12.5	6.42	31.9	5.16	44.5	3.53	40.9	4.20
Shelters	44.6	3.78	23.0	10.83	40.6	5.68	45.4	4.05	63.5	3.61
Restaurant handouts/dumpster/ trash can	17.5	1.91	7.2	5.14	11.4	2.67	22.0	2.49	25.4	2.70
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>2,425</b>		<b>61</b>		<b>414</b>		<b>1,152</b>		<b>798</b>	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

N/A = not applicable.

Nearly three-fifths (58 percent) of emergency kitchen clients report that their current “episode” of kitchen use began within the last month.<sup>7</sup> Only 16 percent of kitchen clients report that their current episode of kitchen use began a year or more before the survey. These findings suggest that most kitchen clients have relatively short-term needs for emergency food assistance or that they have sporadic episodes of need.

Among clients who have visited an emergency kitchen six or more times in the last week, only one-third (34 percent) report that their current episode of assistance began within the last month. This finding indicates that two-thirds of frequent kitchen visitors rely on this food assistance for multiple months. One-quarter (24 percent) of clients visiting kitchens on nearly a daily basis report that their current episode of assistance began at least a year before the survey.

Many kitchen clients rely on additional forms of emergency food assistance. Thirty-seven percent of kitchen clients report relying on food pantries during the last year and 45 percent report relying on shelters. Eighteen percent report getting food from a restaurant handout or back door or from a dumpster or trash can. Compared with clients visiting a kitchen for the first time ever, clients who visited kitchens about once per day are much more likely to have relied on other sources of emergency food assistance during the last year.

On the day of the interview, a child or other family member accompanied one-fifth (21 percent) of adult emergency kitchen clients and also received food from the kitchen, mobile van, or food wagon. The proportion of kitchen clients who live alone and who visit the kitchen alone is higher for homeless clients (65 percent) than for non-homeless clients (40 percent) (data not

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<sup>7</sup>An “episode” is defined by consecutive weekly use of one or more kitchens. Respondents were asked “For how many weeks in a row have you had one or more meals from this or any other kitchen, mobile van, or food wagon?” A break in weekly visits to a kitchen would signify the end of an “episode”.

shown). Nine percent of homeless kitchen clients and 16 percent of non-homeless kitchen clients were accompanied by children on the day of their visit to the kitchen.

## **2. Factors That Precipitated the Need for Emergency Food Assistance**

The most common reason kitchen clients give for seeking emergency food assistance is low wages or being on a fixed income, indicated by 84 percent of clients (Table IV.11). Eighty-two percent of clients say that they have run out of money or have high expenses, 73 percent cite unemployment or other job-related difficulties, and 55 percent cite health or personal problems. About 69 percent of clients indicate that they prefer to get assistance from an EFAS kitchen than directly through a government program, and 41 percent cite problems with food stamps or welfare as their reason for seeking emergency assistance.

## **3. Inaccessibility to Emergency Food**

While most kitchens serve meals to anyone who requests them, some kitchens have specific guidelines regarding who may receive a meal. For instance, some kitchens will only serve specific populations, such as those living in a particular place, those with (or without) children in the household, or those meeting specific income guidelines (Ohls et al. 2001). Hours and days of operations, as well as the availability of food, might also dictate whether or not an individual receives a meal. For these reasons and others, 30 percent of kitchen clients report that they needed food from a kitchen in the last 12 months, but were unable to get it (Table IV.12). This number reflects the access of those who live in areas that have access to an emergency kitchen, since they were sampled at a kitchen, and does not necessarily reflect access of the general population.

TABLE IV.11

EVENTS/FACTORS PRECIPITATING THE NEED FOR EMERGENCY  
FOOD ASSISTANCE BY ADULT KITCHEN CLIENTS

	Percentage of Adult Kitchen Clients	(SE)
Reasons for Seeking Emergency Food Assistance <sup>a</sup>		
Low wages/on a fixed income	84.0	1.74
No more money/high expenses	81.5	2.43
Unemployment/other job-related problems	72.9	3.16
Prefer to get food here instead of asking for help from the government	68.8	2.82
Health or personal problems	55.0	2.63
Problems with food stamps or welfare	40.7	2.91
<b>SAMPLE SIZE<sup>b</sup></b>	2,417	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>Multiple responses allowed for this question.

<sup>b</sup>Of the factors listed above, 51 individuals answered “don’t know” and 1 refused to answer whether or not they “prefer to get food here instead of from the government; 15 or fewer individuals answered “don’t know” to each of the other factors.



TABLE IV.12

## INACCESSIBILITY TO EMERGENCY FOOD BY ADULT KITCHEN CLIENTS

	Percent	(SE)
Kitchen Clients who Had Trouble Getting Food From Kitchens (n = 2,421)	30.4	2.39
Reasons For Inability To Get Food <sup>a</sup> (n = 757)		
Did not arrive on time	24.6	4.06
Transportation problem	24.5	4.85
Provider ran out of food	20.8	2.94
Kitchen closed on weekends	10.4	2.38
Kitchen closed on weekdays	9.2	2.67
Closed-unspecified	5.2	2.25
Respondent's behavior	4.3	2.39
Did not meet income guidelines	3.3	1.46
Lacked proper identification or papers	3.1	0.98
Did not live in a certain area	2.8	1.17
Did not have referral	2.5	0.90
Client was sick	2.2	0.61
Lack of information about provider services	2.1	0.74
Came too often	1.4	0.54
Other <sup>b</sup>	5.3	1.14
In the last 12 months, Client Has Been Unable To Get Food		
Often	27.0	4.76
Sometimes	21.1	2.82
Rarely	29.7	4.51
Only once	22.2	3.18
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	<b>773</b>	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>Multiple responses allowed for this question.

<sup>b</sup>Includes all responses which were given by less than 1 percent of clients.

The two top reasons clients cite for not being able to receive food from an emergency kitchen are failure to arrive at the kitchen on time and a transportation problem, each cited by one-quarter of clients (Table IV.12). One-fifth of clients who were unable to receive assistance in the last report that the kitchen had run out of food, and one-tenth of clients report that a kitchen was not open on weekends.<sup>8</sup>

One-quarter (27 percent) of clients who were unable to get emergency food assistance from a kitchen during the last year say that this problem is something they encounter “often,” while half say they encountered the problem only once or rarely. The survey did not collect information about the extent to which clients of one emergency kitchen have access to other emergency kitchens.

## **F. CLIENT SATISFACTION WITH KITCHEN PROVIDERS**

The survey of kitchen clients included two measures of client satisfaction with emergency food assistance: (1) satisfaction with the amount of food received from the provider they visited on the day of the survey, and (2) satisfaction with the variety of food available from that provider. In addition, the survey asked clients about their perceptions of any religious activities that EFAS provider might have offered, such as prayer at mealtime.

### **1. Level of Satisfaction with the Amount and Variety of Food Received**

Overall, client satisfaction with both the amount and variety of food received at emergency kitchens is high. Nearly all of the kitchen client population is either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with both the amount as well as the variety of food they receive from their

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<sup>8</sup>Most emergency kitchens do not serve meals every day of the week. More than 80 percent of kitchens serve meals on at least some weekdays, but only about half operate on weekends. Of breakfast, lunch, and supper, about two-thirds of all kitchens serve lunch, about half serve supper, and slightly less than a third serve breakfast (Ohls et al. 2001).

provider (92 percent and 91 percent, respectively; Table IV.13). This is similar to what was found in the America's Second Harvest study (Kim, Ohls, and Cohen 2001), where 93 percent of adult emergency food recipients were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the amount of food they receive from their local hunger relief charity. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of clients are "very satisfied" with the amount of food received at the EFAS kitchen, while about three-fifths (59 percent) are "very satisfied" with the variety of food received at the kitchen.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. Client Perceptions of Faith-Based Activities**

About three-fifths of kitchen clients receive services from providers affiliated with a religious organization. It might be expected that providers linked to religious groups would be more likely than secular providers to ask kitchen clients to participate in religious activities, such as prayers at meals. However, the proportion of clients who report that they were asked to participate in prayers or other religious activities is about one-third for both "religious" and "non-religious" providers (Table IV.14). Of clients asked to participate in religious activities, two-thirds describe themselves as "very comfortable" with these activities; one-quarter describe themselves as "somewhat comfortable" with these activities; and only one-tenth describe themselves as "somewhat uncomfortable" or "very uncomfortable" with these activities.

Among clients who report that they were asked to participate in religious activities, four-fifths report that they did not share a religious affiliation with the provider (data not shown). Clients' comfort level with religious activities offered by the provider is not dramatically

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<sup>9</sup>Table D.8 in Appendix D indicates how kitchen client satisfaction varies by race/ethnicity and sex.

TABLE IV.13

## KITCHEN CLIENTS' SATISFACTION WITH EFAS PROVIDER'S FOOD

	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Somewhat Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied	
	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)
Amount of Food (n=2,399)	64.0	2.92	27.6	2.26	6.2	1.49	2.2	0.66
Variety of Food (n=2,403)	58.5	3.02	32.0	2.37	6.2	1.38	3.3	0.82

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

TABLE IV.14

## EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROVIDER-SPONSORED RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

	Frequency for All Clients		Frequency for Clients of Religious Providers		Frequency for Clients of Non-Religious Providers	
	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)
Clients asked to participate in prayers or other religious activities (n = 2,386)	34.4	2.70	34.7	3.61	34.1	3.54
Among clients asked to participate in religious activities: (n = 906)						
Feel very comfortable with religious activities	66.4	3.61	68.8	5.26	63.6	5.48
Feel somewhat comfortable with religious activities	23.4	3.08	20.3	4.53	27.0	4.87
Feel somewhat uncomfortable with religious activities	6.8	1.49	5.9	1.41	7.8	2.76
Feel very uncomfortable with religious activities	3.4	0.84	5.0	1.36	1.6	0.71
Clients who perceive their provider as secular or having a different religious affiliation than their own (n = 2,371)	87.9	2.11	87.4	1.67	88.4	3.96
Among clients perceiving their provider as secular or having a different religious affiliation than their own: (n = 2,056)						
Clients asked to participate in prayers or other religious activities	31.7	2.71	32.0	3.72	31.4	3.38
Among clients asked to participate in religious activities by a provider seen as secular or having a different religious affiliation: (n = 736)						
Feel very comfortable with religious activities	63.1	5.11	65.8	7.23	60.0	7.53
Feel somewhat comfortable with religious activities	25.4	4.43	22.6	6.33	28.5	6.56
Feel somewhat uncomfortable with religious activities	7.4	1.91	5.5	1.55	9.6	3.54
Feel very uncomfortable with religious activities	4.1	1.02	6.1	1.62	1.9	0.85
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	<b>2,386</b>		<b>1,401</b>		<b>985</b>	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

different for clients unaffiliated with any religion than for clients as a whole. These findings suggests that either religious activities—such as mealtime prayers—offered by kitchen providers are not perceived as objectionable by most clients, *or* that the clients who are present at kitchens that ask them to participate in religious activities are those who are more likely to be comfortable with such activities.

## **G. FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION**

A number of federal food assistance programs are available to low-income people and people who meet certain eligibility criteria, in addition to the food commodity programs described earlier. The client survey was designed to investigate the frequency of participation in the major food assistance programs: Food Stamp Program (FSP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), child care meals, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and senior meal programs. Of primary interest was whether EFAS clients participated in food assistance programs that they seem eligible for and how often EFAS clients receive benefits from multiple programs.

### **1. Participation in Food Assistance Programs**

A majority (55 percent) of emergency kitchen clients is in households that have received no assistance from a public food assistance program during the last year (Table IV.15). Three-tenths (29 percent) of kitchen clients are in households that have received assistance from a single public food assistance program over the last year, and only 15 percent are in households that have received assistance from two or more government programs.

TABLE IV.15

PARTICIPATION OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS IN PUBLIC  
FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR ADULT  
EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS

Participation in Food Assistance Programs in the Last Year <sup>a</sup>	Households of All Kitchen Clients		Seemingly Eligible Households <sup>b,c</sup>	
	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)
No Programs	55.4	3.03	24.6	3.75
One Program	29.4	2.17	27.4	3.57
Two or More Programs	15.2	2.13	47.9	4.52
Food Stamp Program (FSP)	35.6	2.81	44.4	2.84
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	5.9	1.08	53.1	7.41
Meals in Child Care Program or Head Start	1.9	0.62	18.8	4.47
School Breakfast Program (SBP)	10.1	1.74	71.3	5.20
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	11.4	1.73	80.0	4.11
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	4.9	1.12	31.1	5.46
Meals-on-Wheels or Senior Meals Program	4.5	1.25	24.5	5.01
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	2,398			

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

NOTE: The percent of eligible cases out of all kitchen clients, except the cases with unknown program eligibility are: FSP: 82%; WIC: 11%; Meals in Child Care Program or Head Start: 10%; SBP: 14%; NSLP: 14%; SFSP: 16%; Meals-on-Wheels or Senior Meals Program: 19%.

<sup>a</sup>Participation in the last year does not necessarily mean that the household participated in the last month.

<sup>b</sup>When program participation is not reported, seemingly eligible households are identified by income/resources (FSP program), income/household characteristics (WIC, NSLP, SBP), or household characteristics only (remaining programs).

<sup>c</sup>Sample size varies by program.

Among clients in households that appear to be eligible for multiple programs,<sup>10</sup> 48 percent are in households that have actually received assistance from two or more programs. Among clients in households eligible for at least one government food assistance program, three-quarters are in households where members participate in at least one program, and one-quarter are in households where members participate in no programs.

Among specific government food assistance programs, kitchen clients' households use the FSP most (Table IV.15; Figure IV.3). More than one-third (36 percent) of kitchen clients report some FSP participation by a household member during the last year. Eleven percent of kitchen clients report that household members participated in the free and reduced-price component of the NSLP during the last year, and 10 percent of kitchen clients report participating in the SBP. The proportion of clients reporting household members' participation in each of the other programs is much lower: only 6 percent participate in WIC; 5 percent each for the SFSP and Meals-on-Wheels or senior meals programs, and only 2 percent for meals offered through a child care center or Head Start program.

Among kitchen clients in households that appeared eligible for assistance through particular government food assistance programs,<sup>11</sup> participation rates of household members vary considerably by program. About 80 percent of clients with households eligible for NSLP report NSLP participation during the last year, and 71 percent of clients in households eligible for the

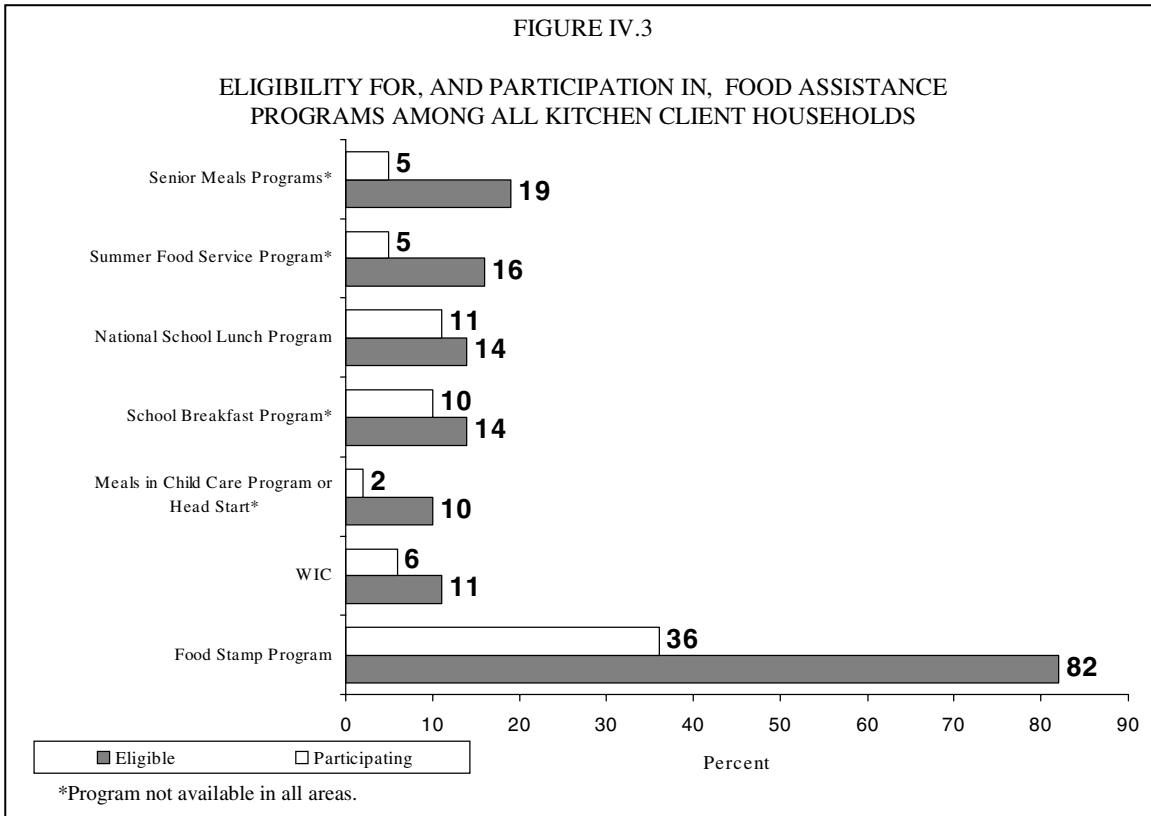
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<sup>10</sup>Despite the presence of demographic, income, and asset information for the households in the survey, the measurement of program eligibility during the past year was imprecise because household characteristics may have changed from month to month over the course of the year.

<sup>11</sup>Appendix C describes how program eligibility was estimated based on household characteristics. As noted for pantry client households, the numbers reflect use of the program by households who appear to be eligible. Due to data limitations, they do not reflect whether the programs are locally available to respondents. The SBP, the SFSP, senior meals programs and meals in child care programs are not available in all areas.



SBP report SBP participation during the last year (Table IV.15). More than one-half (55 percent) of clients with household members eligible for WIC report participation during the last year. In comparison, about 44 percent of clients with households eligible for the FSP report participation during the last year.



Participation rates of eligible household members in other government programs are well under half for each program (with the exception of WIC), but this may reflect limitations in the survey data. Only one-third (31 percent) of clients with household members eligible for the SFSP report participation during the last year, but the EFAS survey does not indicate how many children per household participate in summer programs offering SFSP meals. Only one-quarter of clients with household members eligible for nutrition benefits through Meals-on-Wheels or some other senior meals program report receiving such benefits. Only one-fifth (19 percent) of

clients with household members eligible for nutrition benefits through a child care center or Head Start program report that members receive such benefits. Once again, the fact that the survey data do not distinguish children actually in child care or Head Start from other young children leads to a lower estimate of participation in these feeding programs than would otherwise be the case.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. Reasons for Not Participating in Food Assistance Programs**

More than half of all kitchen client households (56 percent) are seemingly eligible kitchen households with no FSP participation in the last year (Table IV.16). Among these households, 70 percent have not applied for the FSP in the last year, while 12 percent have applied and have been turned down. About half of those turned down plan to reapply for food stamps.

About one in seven seemingly eligible kitchen households (14 percent) is not currently participating in the FSP, but participated in the last year. About 41 percent of these households have used food stamps in the last year and are currently reapplying for the program. Eleven percent applied for food stamps in the last year, were turned down, and are reapplying. Ten percent applied in the last year, were turned down, and are not reapplying.

The most common reason that applicants gave for being turned down for food stamp benefits is that their income is too high (35 percent of seemingly eligible kitchen clients with no FSP participation in the last year, and 25 percent of those not currently participating, but who participated in the last year). This reason for denial was reported by four percent of all seemingly eligible kitchen client

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<sup>12</sup>Participation in food assistance programs varies by the frequency with which clients visit kitchens and by the particular program (see Table D.9, Appendix D).

TABLE IV.16

REASONS NOT CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (FSP)  
(Seemingly Eligible Kitchen Client Households Not Currently Participating)

	Percentage of Subgroup	(SE)
<b>Households With No FSP Participation in the Last Year</b>		
As a percentage of all seemingly eligible pantry households (n = 1,997)	55.7	2.85
Application for the FSP in the last 12 months (n = 1,085 <sup>a</sup> )		
Did not apply for food stamps	70.4	3.60
Applied for food stamps, were turned down, and are reapplying	5.3	1.25
Applied for food stamps, were turned down, and are not reapplying	6.4	1.37
Applied for food stamps, and not turned down	17.9	26.4
Reasons Application for FSP Was Turned Down (n = 123 <sup>b,c</sup> )		
Income was too high	35.4	9.11
Work requirements were not satisfied	22.9	8.84
Missing paperwork	7.8	2.92
Too many assets	4.6	3.83
Citizenship status	3.0	2.78
Barriers to Applying for Food Stamps/Never Applied (n = 889 <sup>c,d</sup> )		
Don't think they qualify, sanctioned, lost eligibility, or doubtful of eligibility	36.3	4.00
Do not know about FSP or how to get benefits	11.5	3.68
Prefer not to receive welfare/help from government	11.0	2.34
No longer need food stamps	9.3	2.73
Too much paperwork/can't fill out forms	8.2	1.28
Feelings of embarrassment/discomfort	7.4	3.71
Small benefits not worth the effort	4.2	0.95
Do not have transportation to Food Stamp office	2.9	0.95
Questions too personal	1.3	0.43
Food Stamp office hours are inconvenient	0.5	0.29
Negative attitudes of Food Stamp office staff	0.4	0.20
<b>Households Not Currently Participating in the FSP, but Participated in the Last Year</b>		
As a percentage of all seemingly eligible pantry households (n = 1,997)	13.8	1.82
<b>Participation in FSP in the last 12 months (n = 262<sup>e</sup>)</b>		
Have used food stamps in the last 12 months and are currently reapplying for the program	40.6	6.12
Have used food stamps in the last 12 months and are not currently reapplying for the program	59.4	6.12

TABLE IV.16 (continued)

	Percentage of Subgroup	(SE)
<b>Application for the FSP in the last 12 months (n = 262<sup>e</sup>)</b>		
Applied for food stamps in the last 12 months, were turned down, and are reapplying	10.7	2.42
Applied for food stamps in the last 12 months, were turned down, and are not reapplying	9.8	2.04
Applied for food stamps, and not turned down	79.5	3.05
<b>Reasons Application for FSP Was Turned Down for Those Who Lost Food Stamps in the Last Year, Reapplied and Were Turned Down (n = 62<sup>c,f</sup>)</b>		
Work requirements were not satisfied	45.7	11.93
Income was too high	25.1	9.47
Missing paperwork	20.6	6.64
<b>Barriers to Applying for/Receiving Food Stamps If Not Turned Down (n = 173<sup>c,g</sup>)</b>		
Don't think they qualify, sanctioned, lost eligibility, or doubtful of eligibility	45.7	10.53
Prefer not to receive welfare/help from government	8.5	5.78
No longer need food stamps	4.0	3.25
Too much paperwork/can't fill out forms	2.8	1.56
Questions too personal	2.1	1.90
Small benefits not worth the effort	1.8	1.58
Negative attitudes of Food Stamp office staff	1.3	0.90
Food Stamp office hours are inconvenient	1.1	0.80
Feelings of embarrassment/discomfort	0.6	0.67
Do not have transportation to Food Stamp office	0.2	0.10
Do not know about FSP or how to get benefits	0.0	--

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

NOTE: Sample for all tabulations is limited to seemingly eligible households not currently participating in FSP.

N/A = not applicable

<sup>a</sup>Base is all seemingly eligible households with no participation in the FSP in the last year.

<sup>b</sup>Base is households in previous panel who had applied for food stamps in the last year and were turned down.

<sup>c</sup>Multiple responses were allowed, but responses with very low frequency are not reported.

<sup>d</sup>Base is all seemingly eligible households not receiving food stamps in the last year who have not applied for food stamps in the last year, and do not have plans in the near future to apply.

<sup>e</sup>Base is all seemingly eligible households that participated in the last year, but that are not currently receiving food stamps.

<sup>f</sup>Base is all seemingly eligible households that are not currently receiving food stamps, but have received food stamps during the past year, stopped receiving them and were turned down when they reapplied for the FSP.

<sup>g</sup>Base is all seemingly eligible households that are not currently receiving food stamps, but have received them in the last year and have not had an FSP application turned down in the last year.

households. The second most common reason for denial is failure to comply with work requirements (23 percent of kitchen clients with no participation in the past year and 46 percent of those not currently participating, but who participated in the past year). This represents four percent of all seemingly eligible kitchen client households not currently receiving food stamps.

When asked what barriers they face in applying for or receiving food stamps, 36 percent of kitchen client households with no FSP participation in the past year who have never applied for food stamps cite either doubts about their eligibility, loss of eligibility, or previous sanctions, as the most common barriers to FSP participation. Among kitchen client households who are not currently participating in the FSP but have participated in the past year and have not had an FSP application turned down, 46 percent cite either doubts about their eligibility, loss of eligibility, or previous sanctions, as the most common barriers to FSP participation. The households that report these barriers to current FSP participation represent almost 28 percent of all seemingly eligible pantry households that are not currently receiving food stamps.

Kitchen clients were also asked why household members did not participate in each of four child nutrition programs during the last year: WIC, SBP, NSLP, and SFSP. For WIC and the NSLP, the most common reason cited by clients with seemingly eligible household members is doubt about eligibility (48 percent of clients with household members seemingly eligible for WIC, and 24 percent of clients with household members seemingly eligible for the NSLP) (Table IV.17). In the case of the SBP, in contrast, 40 percent of kitchen clients with seemingly eligible household members report that they did not participate because their child eats breakfast at home. In the case of the SFSP, almost half (44 percent) of kitchen clients with seemingly

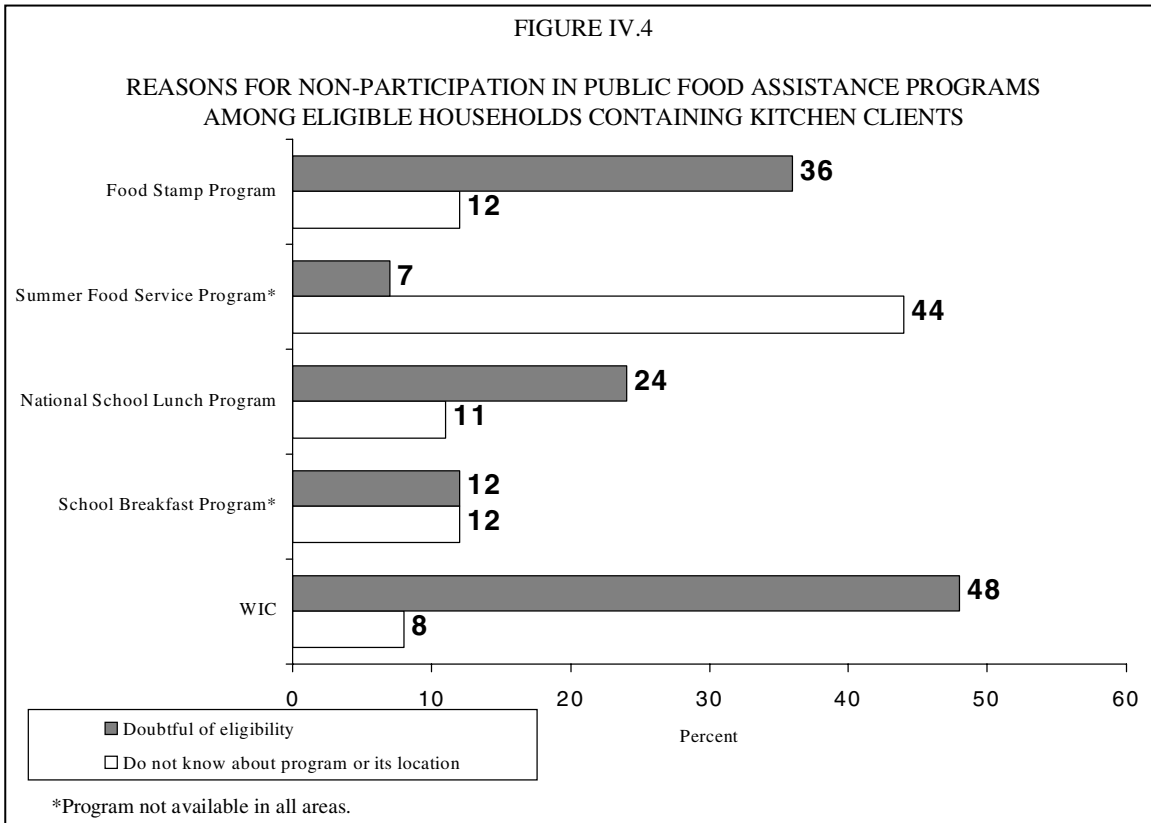
TABLE IV.17

REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS AMONG SEEMINGLY ELIGIBLE  
BUT NON-PARTICIPATING HOUSEHOLDS CONTAINING EMERGENCY KITCHEN CLIENTS  
(Percentages of Adult Respondents Indicating Given Reason)

Reason for Non-Participation	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)		School Breakfast Program (SBP)		National School Lunch Program (NSLP)		Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	
	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	(SE)	Percent	SE
Doubtful of eligibility	47.7	9.96	11.7	5.46	23.6	9.65	7.3	2.97
Do not know about program or its location	7.5	3.98	11.7	3.83	11.0	4.99	44.1	9.72
Program unavailable in school/area	0.0	--	5.5	2.45	3.2	2.05	13.0	6.86
Do not know how to participate or do not know how to get benefits	10.3	6.43	1.7	1.31	2.2	2.11	1.5	0.94
Difficulty filling out forms	1.6	1.58	1.0	0.75	0.0	--	0.0	--
Lack transportation to program or office hours inconvenient	1.2	0.76	5.1	2.67	0.0	--	5.2	2.71
Feelings of embarrassment or discomfort	0.8	0.86	13.2	5.96	8.9	6.44	0.1	0.09
Not worth the trouble	0.0	--	0.2	0.17	0.3	0.28	0.7	0.42
Do not like food that is served	0.0	--	7.6	4.59	4.1	3.54	0.9	0.62
Do not eat meal at that time of day	0.0	--	13.0	5.95	0.0	--	0.0	--
Eat meal at home or from other sources of support	2.4	1.85	39.8	10.18	25.4	18.24	11.2	5.24
<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>	70		77		54		161	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

eligible household members report that they are unaware of the program, a far higher percentage than for any of the other child nutrition programs (Figure IV.4). In part, this reflects the relatively limited availability of the SFSP.



## **H. CONTRASTING DIVERSE GROUPS OF KITCHEN CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS**

While not all household members accompany EFAS clients on their visits to soup kitchens, understanding the diversity of kitchen client households can be useful for several reasons. For instance, investigating how groups differ in terms of household characteristics, income, poverty levels, residential status, and food security can indicate which groups face the greatest hardships and which have the most cash income. Moreover, comparing program participation patterns can

indicate which groups of kitchen client households are most dependent on EFAS for food assistance and which have the most access to public food assistance programs.<sup>13</sup>

### **1. Households Defined by Demographic Characteristics**

One-fifth (20 percent) of kitchen client households include children younger than 18, while 17 percent includes elderly members (60 or older) but no children (Table IV.18).<sup>14</sup> The remaining 63 percent includes neither children nor elderly members.

As we would expect, kitchen client households with children are larger than others, averaging 4.3 persons per household compared with 1.4 to 1.6 persons per household for the groups of households without children (Table IV.18). Of the three types of households, those with elderly members are the least likely to rely on workers for economic support. The proportion of households relying on cash welfare (TANF, SSI, or GA) is larger for households with children than for households with neither children nor elderly members.

Monthly and annual incomes are highest for kitchen client households with children and lowest for households with neither children nor elderly members (Table IV.18). Despite these differences in average income levels, the distribution of income relative to the poverty level is similar for all three groups.

Households with elderly members and no children are more likely to live in an owner-occupied dwelling than are other types of kitchen client households (Table IV.19). Kitchen clients living with neither children nor elderly members are significantly more likely to be

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<sup>13</sup>Appendix C describes the analytic methods we used to test for the statistical significance of differences between groups of households and to account for sample design effects.

<sup>14</sup>Of kitchen client households including children, 13 percent includes an elderly member (Table IV.18).



TABLE IV.18

HOUSEHOLD, INCOME, AND POVERTY CHARACTERISTICS OF KITCHEN  
CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

Characteristics	Group 1 Households with Children under Age 18 (20% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 2 Households without Children but with Elderly (Age 60+) (17% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 3 Households with Neither Children or Elderly (63% of Kitchen HHs)	
	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)
<b>Household Characteristics</b>						
Household includes elderly (%)	12.6 <sup>b,c</sup>	3.00	100.0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00	0.0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00
Persons per household	4.3 <sup>b,c</sup>	0.16	1.6 <sup>a</sup>	0.11	1.4 <sup>a</sup>	0.06
Household with workers (%)	47.1 <sup>b,c</sup>	5.87	12.6 <sup>a,c</sup>	3.62	23.3 <sup>a,b</sup>	3.50
Household with cash welfare (%)	44.6 <sup>c</sup>	5.48	31.3	5.18	29.4 <sup>a</sup>	4.06
<b>Income and Poverty</b>						
Monthly cash income (\$)	1,046 <sup>b,c</sup>	128.4	777 <sup>a,c</sup>	46.4	589 <sup>a,b</sup>	51.8
Monthly income ≤ 130% of poverty (%)	89.5	3.92	83.7	3.74	86.0	2.22
Annual cash income (\$)	13,045 <sup>c</sup>	1,389.4	10,352	1,655.9	8,873 <sup>a</sup>	996.4
Annual income ≤ 50% of poverty (%)	53.4	4.82	38.1	6.14	49.7	4.36
Annual income 51-100% of poverty (%)	36.0	5.17	43.9	6.29	31.3	3.67
Annual income 101-130% of poverty (%)	2.9	1.41	5.5	3.14	3.3	0.67
Annual income > 130% of poverty (%)	7.7	2.50	12.4	4.24	15.7	3.15
Sample Size	415		325		1,622	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>Significant difference from mean for group 1 at the 0.05 level<sup>b</sup>Significant difference from mean for group 2 at the 0.05 level<sup>c</sup>Significant difference from mean for group 3 at the 0.05 level

TABLE IV.19

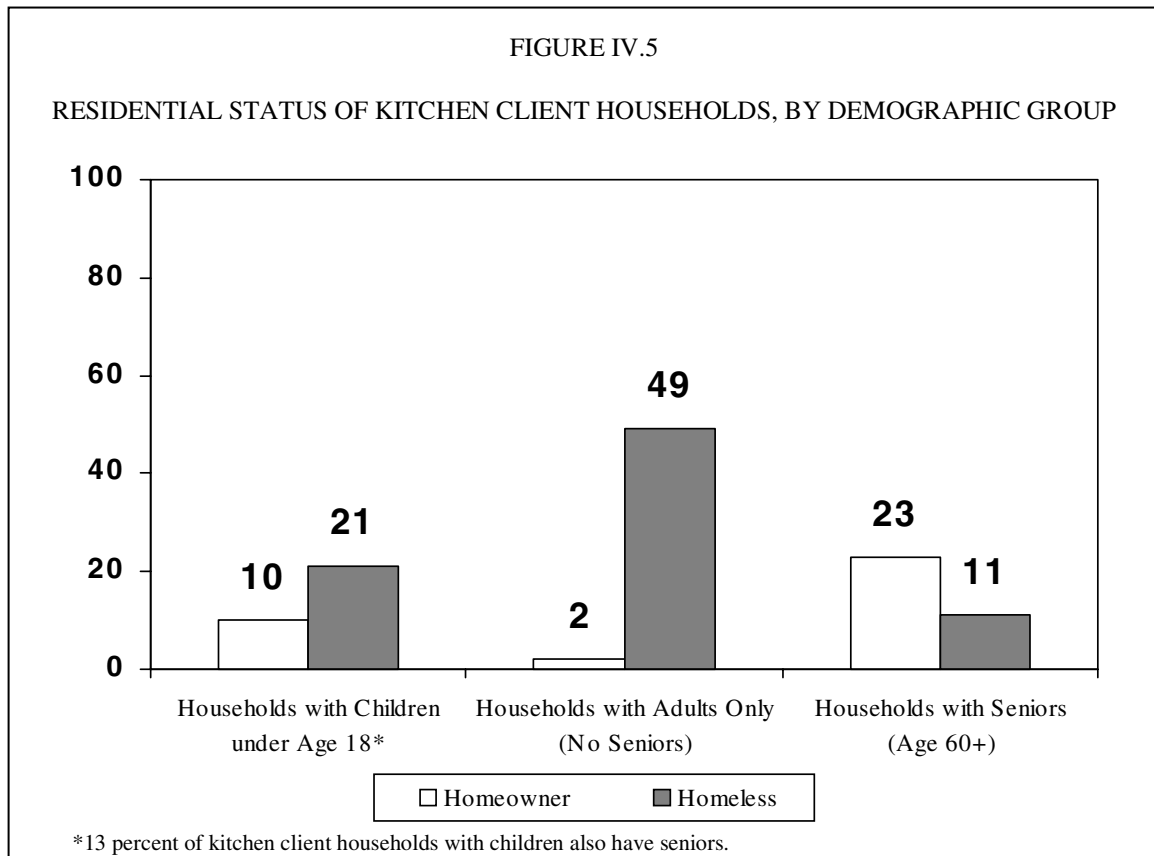
RESIDENTIAL STATUS, FOOD SECURITY, AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION  
OF KITCHEN CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

Characteristics	Group 1 Households with Children under Age 18 (20% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 2 Households without Children but with Elderly (Age 60+) (17% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 3 Households with Neither Children nor Elderly (63% of Kitchen HHs)	
	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)
<b>Residential and Food Security Status</b>						
Household member owns residence (%)	9.8 <sup>b,c</sup>	2.62	22.8 <sup>a,c</sup>	6.21	2.4 <sup>a,b</sup>	0.61
Homeless respondent (%)	20.8 <sup>c</sup>	4.61	10.9 <sup>c</sup>	3.24	48.5 <sup>a,b</sup>	4.63
Food secure (%)	27.2	4.79	34.6	6.92	21.7	2.66
Food insecure (%)	72.8	4.79	65.4	6.92	78.3	2.66
Food insecure without hunger (%)	24.9	3.92	33.8	6.43	26.3	2.27
Food insecure with hunger (%)	47.9 <sup>b</sup>	6.02	31.5 <sup>a,c</sup>	5.41	52.0 <sup>b</sup>	3.13
<b>Program Participation</b>						
Problems with FSP or welfare reported (%)	50.0	5.86	36.8	5.58	39.1	2.92
HH includes FSP recipients (%)	52.1 <sup>b,c</sup>	5.73	32.7 <sup>a</sup>	5.59	30.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.09
HH includes eligible non-recipients of the FSP (%)	36.6 <sup>c</sup>	5.13	40.0	5.62	48.9 <sup>a</sup>	3.00
HH members are ineligible for the FSP (%)	7.5 <sup>b,c</sup>	2.38	25.1 <sup>a</sup>	5.5	18.3 <sup>a</sup>	3.14
HH members' FSP eligibility is uncertain (%)	3.7	1.3	2.2	1.01	2.6	0.86
HH members rely on public food assistance (%)	86.0 <sup>b,c</sup>	3.87	47.8 <sup>a,c</sup>	5.02	30.8 <sup>a,b</sup>	3.14
HH members rely on multiple EFAS programs (%)	75.0 <sup>b</sup>	4.62	57.0 <sup>a</sup>	6.30	66.2	3.38
HH members rely on kitchens only (%)	4.8 <sup>b,c</sup>	1.7	23.9 <sup>a</sup>	5.17	26.6 <sup>a</sup>	3.53
Sample Size	415		325		1,622	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

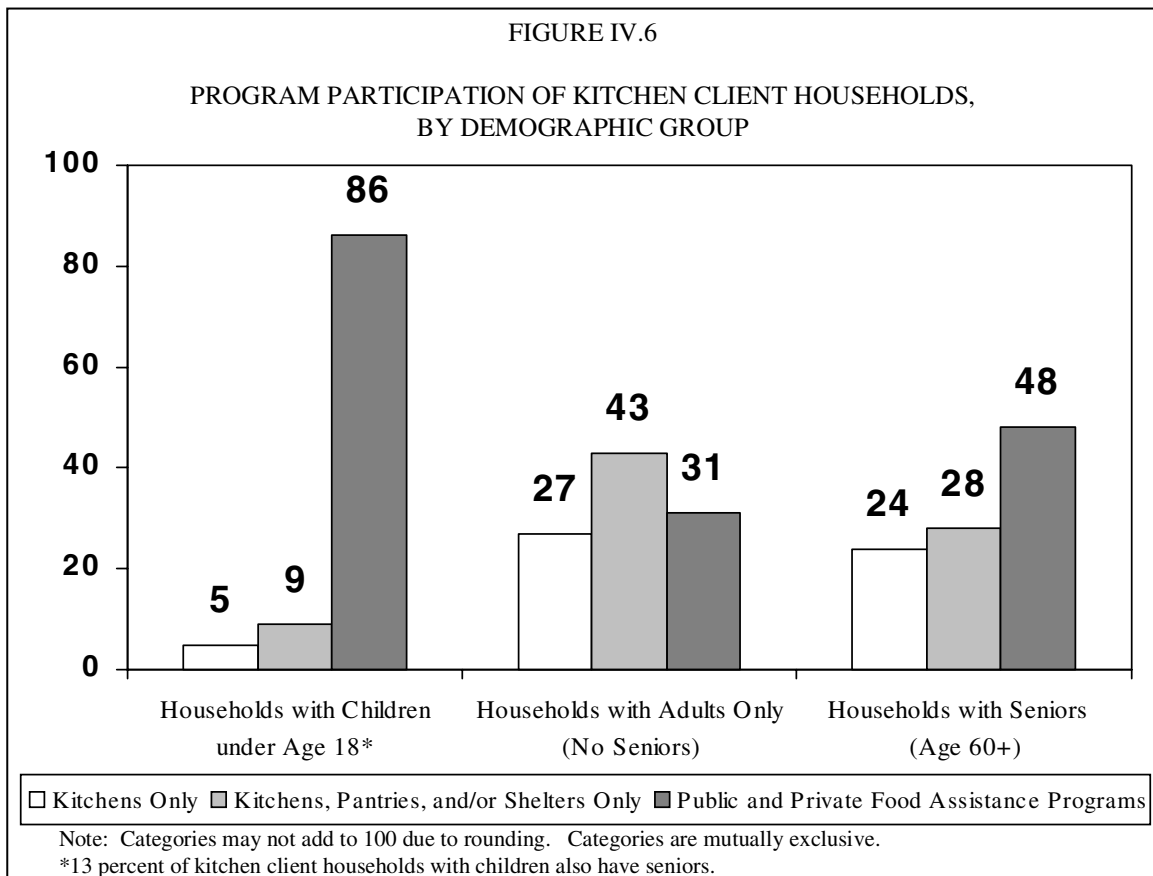
<sup>a</sup>Significant difference from mean for group 1 at the 0.05 level<sup>b</sup>Significant difference from mean for group 2 at the 0.05 level<sup>c</sup>Significant difference from mean for group 3 at the 0.05 level

homeless than are other kitchen clients; nearly half (49 percent) of kitchen clients living with neither children nor elderly persons are homeless (Figure IV.5). About half (52 percent) of kitchen client households without children or elderly members and about half (48 percent) of kitchen client households with children experience food insecurity with hunger, compared with one-third (32 percent) of kitchen client households with elderly members and no children.



Perhaps because of their greater reliance on cash welfare, kitchen client households with children are more likely than other households to report receiving food stamps (Table IV.19). Kitchen client households with elderly members are less likely than those with children to be eligible for food stamps. The vast majority (86 percent) of kitchen client households with children receive assistance from such public food assistance programs as the FSP, WIC, School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, or child

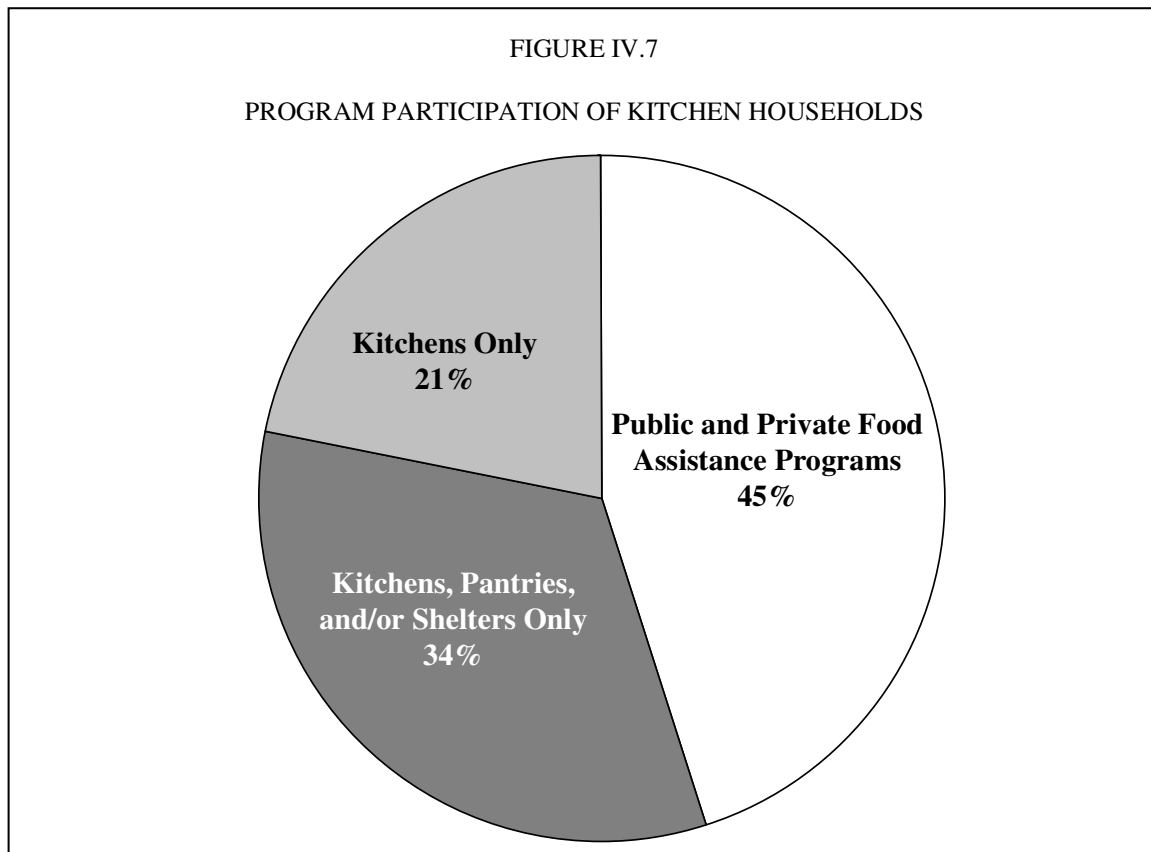
care or elder nutrition programs (Figure IV.6). Households with neither children or elderly members are more likely than other kitchen client households to rely not on public food assistance programs but on other sources of EFAS, such as shelters and food pantries. This finding is consistent with the higher prevalence of homelessness among this group of kitchen clients.



## 2. Households Defined by Participation in EFAS and Public Food Assistance Programs

Almost half (45 percent) of kitchen client households rely on one or more of the public food assistance programs listed above for food assistance (Table IV.20, Figure IV.7). One-third (34 percent) relies on multiple sources of EFAS (such as shelters or food pantries, in addition to soup

kitchens) but not on public food assistance programs.<sup>15</sup> About one-fifth (21 percent) relies on EFAS kitchens for food assistance but neither public food assistance programs nor EFAS pantries or shelters.



As we would expect, households using public food assistance programs—many of which are targeted at children—are much more likely to include children than are other kitchen client households (Table IV.20). Those using public food assistance programs are larger on average than are other kitchen client households (2.6 persons per household versus 1.6 persons), and are more likely to be receiving cash welfare benefits (TANF, SSI, or GA).

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<sup>15</sup>As shown later in Table IV.21, 74 percent of kitchen client households using public food assistance programs also use two or more forms of private food assistance.

TABLE IV.20

HOUSEHOLD, INCOME, AND POVERTY CHARACTERISTICS OF KITCHEN  
CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS, BY PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Characteristics	Group 1 Households Using Public and Private Food Assistance Programs (45% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 2 Households Using Kitchens, Pantries and/or Shelters Only (34% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 3 Households Using Kitchens Only (21% of Kitchen HHs)	
	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)
<b>Household Characteristics</b>						
Household includes children (%)	37.1 <sup>b,c</sup>	3.47	5.3 <sup>a</sup>	2.12	4.4 <sup>a</sup>	1.49
Household includes elderly (%)	23.7 <sup>b</sup>	3.34	14.7 <sup>a</sup>	3.02	19.2	5.40
Household has neither children nor elderly (%)	45.6 <sup>b,c</sup>	4.33	81.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.47	78.6 <sup>a</sup>	5.45
Persons per household	2.6 <sup>b,c</sup>	0.13	1.6 <sup>a</sup>	0.08	1.6 <sup>a</sup>	0.09
Household with workers (%)	27.6	3.76	21.1	3.40	30.9	5.44
Household with cash welfare (%)	45.4 <sup>b,c</sup>	4.35	26.8 <sup>a</sup>	3.99	19.4 <sup>a</sup>	6.57
<b>Income and Poverty</b>						
Monthly cash income (\$)	711	69.4	633	64.3	828	93.3
Monthly income ≤ 130% of poverty (%)	90.4	3.17	83.0	3.74	81.4	3.76
Annual cash income (\$)	8,982 <sup>c</sup>	839.2	9,292	1,011.7	12,763 <sup>a</sup>	2,084.8
Annual income ≤ 50% of poverty (%)	53.7	4.19	47.3	4.05	41.0	7.92
Annual income 51-100% of poverty (%)	35.9	3.76	34.3	4.14	31.0	7.94
Annual income 101-130% of poverty (%)	2.5	0.86	4.8	1.83	4.0	1.56
Annual income > 130% of poverty (%)	7.9 <sup>c</sup>	2.31	13.6	2.50	24.0 <sup>a</sup>	6.05
Sample Size	1,079		911		384	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>significant difference from mean for group 1 at the 0.05 level

<sup>b</sup>significant difference from mean for group 2 at the 0.05 level

<sup>c</sup>significant difference from mean for group 3 at the 0.05 level

Households using only EFAS kitchens tend to have higher levels of annual income than kitchen client households using public food assistance programs (Table IV.20). Consistent with this finding, households using only EFAS kitchens are more likely to have had incomes above 130 percent of the poverty level during the last year than other types of kitchen client households.

Rates of homeownership are similar for all three groups of kitchen client households defined by program participation, but rates of homelessness vary significantly by group. The prevalence of homelessness is highest (51 percent) for kitchen clients using multiple forms of EFAS and lowest (20 percent) for clients only using EFAS kitchens (Table IV.21). This probably reflects those in the multiple EFAS user group being more likely to be users of shelters. One-third of kitchen clients with household members using public food assistance programs are homeless.

The prevalence of food insecurity for kitchen client households is highly correlated with participation in EFAS and public food assistance programs (Figure IV.8). The prevalence of food insecurity is highest (88 percent) for kitchen client households using multiple forms of EFAS and lowest (53 percent) for households using only EFAS kitchens. About three-fourths (76 percent) of kitchen client households using public food assistance programs are food-insecure. While more than half of those using public food assistance programs or multiple forms of EFAS experience food insecurity with hunger, only 28 percent of clients using only EFAS kitchens experience food insecurity with hunger. Taken together, these findings suggest kitchen client households using public food assistance programs face fewer material hardships than those relying only on multiple forms of EFAS, but they face more material hardships than households relying only on kitchens.

TABLE IV.21

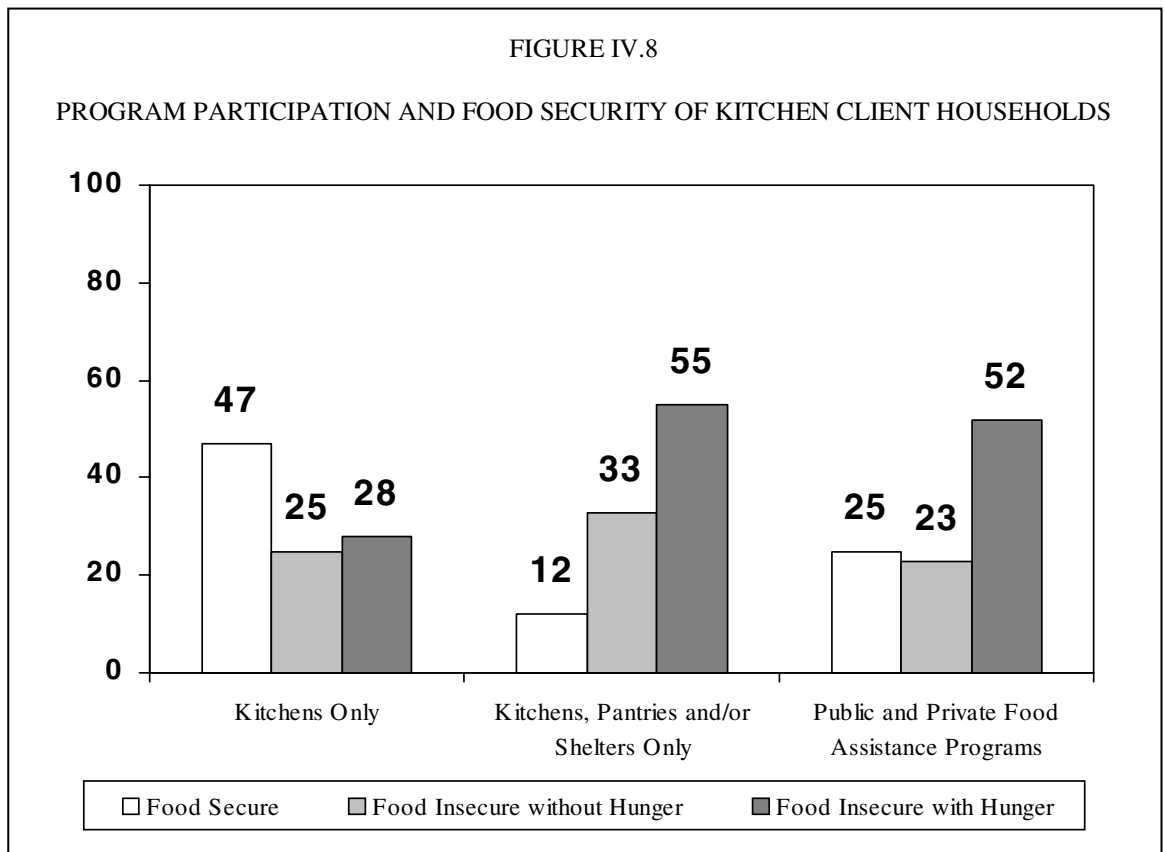
RESIDENTIAL STATUS, FOOD SECURITY, AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION  
OF KITCHEN CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS, BY PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Characteristics	Group 1 Households Using Public and Private Food Assistance Programs (45% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 2 Households Using Kitchens, Pantries, and/or Shelters (34% of Kitchen HHs)		Group 3 Households Using Kitchens Only (21% of Kitchen HHs)	
	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)	Mean	(SE)
	<b>Residential and Food Security Status</b>					
Household member owns residence (%)	8.0	2.33	5.4	1.56	8.2	2.13
Homeless respondent (%)	33.2 <sup>b,c</sup>	5.48	50.5 <sup>a,c</sup>	4.87	19.7 <sup>a,b</sup>	4.15
Food secure (%)	24.5 <sup>b,c</sup>	4.07	12.0 <sup>a,c</sup>	1.85	47.1 <sup>a,b</sup>	5.83
Food insecure (%)	75.5 <sup>b,c</sup>	4.07	88.0 <sup>a,c</sup>	1.85	52.9 <sup>a,b</sup>	5.83
Food insecure without hunger (%)	23.4	3.53	33.0	3.87	24.8	5.69
Food insecure with hunger (%)	52.1 <sup>c</sup>	4.12	55.0 <sup>c</sup>	4.54	28.1 <sup>a,b</sup>	4.47
<b>Program Participation</b>						
Problems with FSP or welfare reported (%)	49.4 <sup>b,c</sup>	4.10	40.4 <sup>a,c</sup>	3.21	22.4 <sup>a,b</sup>	5.03
HH includes FSP recipients (%)	80.2	2.96	0.0	--	0.0	--
HH includes eligible non-recipients of the FSP (%)	14.9 <sup>b,c</sup>	2.70	70.7 <sup>a</sup>	4.23	64.0 <sup>a</sup>	5.58
HH members are ineligible for the FSP (%)	4.5 <sup>b,c</sup>	1.25	26.2 <sup>a</sup>	4.07	31.0 <sup>a</sup>	5.66
HH members' FSP eligibility is uncertain (%)	0.4 <sup>b,c</sup>	0.20	3.2 <sup>a</sup>	1.16	5.0 <sup>a</sup>	1.56
HH members rely on pantries, kitchens, and/or shelters (%)	74.0 <sup>b,c</sup>	3.00	100.0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00	0.0 <sup>a</sup>	--
Sample Size	1,079		911		384	

SOURCE: National Emergency Food Assistance System Client Survey (2001).

<sup>a</sup>significant difference from mean for group 1 at the 0.05 level<sup>b</sup>significant difference from mean for group 2 at the 0.05 level<sup>c</sup>significant difference from mean for group 3 at the 0.05 level





Given the disproportionate prevalence of homelessness and food insecurity faced by kitchen client households using only multiple forms of EFAS, policymakers may want to consider ways to expand the participation of these households in public food assistance programs. While about 71 percent of these households appear to be eligible for the FSP, forty percent experienced problems receiving FSP or welfare benefits. Kitchen client households using multiple forms of EFAS have, relative to the poverty level, a similar distribution of annual income as have kitchen client households using public food assistance programs. Nonetheless, the proportion of FSP-eligible households considering themselves ineligible for food stamps is twice as high for households using multiple forms of EFAS (42 percent) as for households using public food assistance programs (22 percent—data not shown). It is possible that the FSP work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents could be one of the reasons that many members of the

kitchen-user population believe they are ineligible. However, given the high proportion of eligible households considering themselves ineligible for the FSP, educating kitchen clients on the eligibility standards for the FSP and other public food assistance programs could help increase needy individuals' participation in these programs.