



Activity #4

***Appropriate for 5th grade and above- can be adapted for younger audiences.**

Who Is Hungry?

Description:

Students will list and discuss groups affected by hunger in the United States.

Objectives:

To increase awareness of the groups affected by hunger and identify the access issues that impact food security

Time:

15-20 minutes

Materials:

- Smart board, white board, or flipchart with markers
- Hunger Facts (see below)
- Blank sheets of paper
- Pens or pencils

Activity Directions:

- Share the following facts with students:
 - More than **37 million people (1 in 8 individuals)** are receiving emergency food assistance from the Feeding America network of more than 200 Food Banks.¹
 - **46.2 million Americans (15.1%)** are now living in poverty.²
 - **48.8 million Americans (1 in 6 people)** were food insecure in 2010.³

¹ Feeding America "Hunger in America 2010" study

² U.S. Census Bureau American Communities Survey Profile 2010 – released Sept. 2011

- Have students brainstorm who they think is hungry in the United States and why. Encourage students to think of as many groups and causes as they can.
- Write each idea on the flip chart as a master list.
- Ask the students to choose the two groups from the list they think are most affected by hunger.
- Answer: While our current economic landscape is constantly changing, in 2009 the two largest groups seeking emergency food in this country were **children (38%) and working families (36%)**. This information is based on *Hunger in America* – A study conducted in 2009 and released in 2010 by Feeding America – the nation’s food bank network.
- Note that in December 2007 at the start of the recession, national unemployment was around 4.8%. Today that figure hovers around 9%. (As of November, 2011, Georgia unemployment is at 10.3%)
- Compare perceptions to reality and correct any misconceptions from list⁴ provided below.
 - **Children (38%):** Poverty is the key cause of childhood hunger.
 - **Working Families (36%):** Underemployment, skyrocketing health care and housing costs, and stagnant wages are the primary reasons for many working families needing food assistance.
 - **Acutely or chronically ill (30%):** Thirty percent of people seeking emergency food state that someone in their household is in “poor” health. Increased medical expenses, illness resulting in an inability to shop for and prepare food, and dietary restrictions are a few of the reasons that households with medical issues struggle with food insecurity.
 - **Uninsured or underinsured (24%):** 3.5 million people report that they or another household member lacks any type of health insurance. This is an

³ USDA, *Household Food Security in the United States, 2010*. Data released September, 2011

⁴Feeding America “Hunger in America 2010” Study

<https://www.hungernet.org/research/hungerstudy/National%20Office%20Docs/Hunger%20Study%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

increase of 60% since 2005. When accidents happen or health issues come up for people with no insurance, money that would be used for food is now used for health care expenses.

Almost half of adult clients who seek food assistance at food bank partner agencies (46%) report that they or a household member have unpaid medical or hospital bills.

- **Homeless (10%):** Poverty, health issues, and the lack of a safety net are a few of the causes of homelessness. It's important to note that when food banks were created in the 1970s, it was largely the homeless seeking food assistance. The fact that only 10% of people now seeking help with food are homeless does not mean that the rate of homelessness is decreasing in our country; it simply means that the numbers of struggling working families, children and the sick are increasing.
- **Senior Citizens (8%):** Poverty, health issues and inadequate social support are a few of the issues that impact senior citizens' access to enough food.
- **Unemployed (8.2%)⁵:** The current economic downturn is creating hardship for millions of Americans, with long-term unemployment and underemployment at record highs.

Discussion Questions

- How were the hunger and poverty statistics similar or different from your perceptions of who is hungry in the United States?
- Do you think that the current economic downturn has changed the way we view hunger in this country? If yes, how? If no, why?
- Whose responsibility is it to help the poor and hungry in this country?
- As our country wrestles with deficits and budget cuts, there will be ramifications for the poor in this country. What do you think these ramifications might be? *We encourage you to stay tuned to www.feedingamerica.org and the www.usda.gov regarding hunger and poverty budget and policy decisions.*

⁵ United States Department of Labor, 2012