



National Report Prepared for Feeding America

January 2010



Chapter 4.3 – Estimates of the Number of Pantries in the Network

(Excerpted from Hunger in America 2010)

www.feedingamerica.org

Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Mathematica Reference No.: 06251-600



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4.3 ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF PANTRIES IN THE NETWORK

To estimate the number of pantries in the FA network, we begin by estimating the number of pantries served by the *food banks participating in the data collection*. We then extrapolate to the nonparticipating food banks.

As described in Chapter 3, we began the data collection by asking the participating food banks for lists of all the agencies they served, classified by types of programs the agencies run. A total of 49,386 agencies were listed by the 181 food banks participating in the client survey (Table 4.3.1).¹ However, the food banks listed some of these agencies as running food programs other than pantries, kitchens, or shelters, such as those for day care centers and halfway houses, which were not included in the detailed survey work. As Line 3 of the table shows, after subtracting the agencies without pantries, kitchens, or shelters, 29,802 agencies remained.

To plan the sampling and field operations for the client survey, we obtained detailed operating information for a random sample of these 29,802 agencies. In conducting this work, we found that 14.4% of the agencies that had originally appeared eligible for the survey either were not still operating or were operating types of programs not directly germane to the survey. This left an estimated 27,909 agencies operating types of providers that were to be included in the survey. As Line 6 shows, 91.6% of these 27,909 agencies operated pantries (the others operated kitchens or shelters). An additional step in the derivation accounts for the fact that some agencies operated more than one pantry (Line 8).

¹ Much of the estimation work focuses on the subset of food banks that participated in the client survey, because we have more complete information on the sample frames for them.

Based on these calculations, the estimated final number of pantries served by food banks participating in the client survey is 29,640. The final step in the derivation is to extrapolate from the participating food banks to the entire FA system. The 181 food banks that participated in the client survey represent about 86% of all FA food banks. However, the participating food banks are larger, on average, than the typical food bank. In particular, based on food bank reports to FA, they account for about 88% of all the total food distributed by food banks in the FA system. Based on this information, we use an extrapolation factor of 1.13 to extend the estimates based just on participating food banks to the system as a whole. With this adjustment, the estimate of total pantries in Table 4.3.1 becomes 33,493.

TABLE 4.3.1
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PANTRIES IN THE FA NETWORK

1.	Total operating agencies listed in the files of the participating food banks	49,386
2.	Percentage of agencies listed as operating at least one pantry, kitchen, or shelter ^a	60.3
3.	Subtotal	29,802
4.	Percentage of agencies in Line 3 that were found prior to survey operations (during detailed sampling work) no longer to be operating or to be operating only types of agencies other than pantries, kitchens, or shelters	14.4
5.	Revised subtotal	27,909
6.	Percentage of agencies in Line 5 that operate pantries ^b	91.6
7.	Agencies operating pantries	25,552
8.	Average pantry providers per agency operating pantries	1.16
9.	Final estimate of pantries in participating food banks	29,640
10.	Adjustment factor for nonparticipating food banks ^c	1.13
11.	Final estimate of pantries	33,493

Source: Lines 1-7 are based on client survey records; Line 8 is based on tabulations of agency survey data.

^aRemaining agencies were listed in an “other” category, as operating some other type of provider with food service operations, such as a day care center or a halfway house program.

^bSome additional ineligible agencies were found during the survey work.

^cOn this table, nonparticipating food banks also include those that participated in the agency survey only.