About Long Island Cares, Inc.

Founded by the late Harry Chapin, Long Island Cares, Inc. brings together all available resources for the benefit of the hungry and food insecure on Long Island, as well as providing for other humanitarian needs for our community. We sponsor programs that help families achieve self-sufficiency, improve food security, and educate the public about causes and consequences of hunger on Long Island.

At Long Island Cares Inc, our vision is “A Hunger-Free Long Island”.

While food insecurity is a concern for many Long Islanders, it is becoming a more looming and dire issue for many more since the nation saw a 9% increase in inflation, the highest rate seen in 42 years (tradingeconomics.com, 2022). Government-entitled programs, like SNAP, that aim to combat food insecurity, have consistently fallen short of their work. As such, food banks are tasked in providing for the immediate needs of their respective regions. At Long Island Cares, Inc., we are proud to be a long-standing presence and source of emergency food and supplies for Long Islanders in need for the past 42 years.

Feeding America, the largest domestic hunger-relief organization in the U.S., is a powerful and efficient network representing the nation’s 200 food banks collectively working to end food insecurity. There are 10 dedicated food banks providing for the needs of New Yorkers. Long Island Cares, Inc. is the regional food bank for Long Island, supporting both Nassau and Suffolk Counties with emergency food and supplies. (Hunger in New York, 2022).

Long Island Cares, Inc. regularly participates in local and state research run by Feeding America. Most recently, we were part of an annually published study titled Map the Meal Gap, which aims to “improve the understanding of food insecurity and food costs at the local level.” Data yielded from the last study, conducted in 2020, identified that 175,350 Long Islanders are suffering from food insecurity out of the total 1,882,580 New Yorkers that are suffering (Overall (all ages) Hunger and Poverty in the United States, 2020).
A Message from our Chief Executive Officer

I am pleased to share this report on *The State of Food Insecurity on Long Island*. The last time a comprehensive analysis of hunger and food insecurity was implemented was 2014, when Feeding America published their *Hunger in America Study Report* that provided data compiled from all 50 states. During the past eight years so much has transpired that would push the needle when it comes to food insecurity across Long Island. The staff at Long Island Cares, Inc. believed the time was right to implement our own study to accurately illustrate the impact of food insecurity in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Major weather events across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, the longest government shutdown in American history, two presidential elections, inflation, an increase in new immigrants coming to America, and a global pandemic have negatively impacted the quality of life for many Long Islanders. These events and others are some of the root causes of food insecurity. For Long Islanders that struggle to put nutritious meals on their tables, these events, along with unemployment, living in poverty and residing in low-income communities have resulted in a significant increase in visits to our food pantries and soup kitchens, including visits to Long Island Cares’ five satellite locations. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in 480,000 people turning to The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank for emergency food assistance, while inflation and the increase in fuel and food costs resulted in an increase of between 50-90% in visits to our 325 community-based member agencies.

Our staff and I are asked about the people experiencing food insecurity in one of the richest regions in the United States. By surveying 1,014 Long Islanders who receive assistance from Long Island Cares, Inc. and our member agency network, we were able to compile a picture about food insecurity on Long Island. The data staff collected and analyzed provide valuable demographic, social and personal information to our organization and elected officials, funding sources and policymakers, to understand who among our neighbors need food assistance. The results of our study will also be used to discuss the future needs of our region and organization, including what policies need to be implemented or revised, and how Long Island Cares, Inc. might want to expand programs and services.

I want to thank our staff and student interns for working with Dr. Jessica Rosati, Chief Programs Officer, and Ana Penavić, Research Assistant, for coordinating the study and compiling the data contained in this report. Understanding who among us is impacted by food insecurity will better equip us to respond to a sad reality that our founder, Harry Chapin, often referred to as “The Shame of America.”

Paule T. Pachter, ACSW, LMSW
Chief Executive Officer, Long Island Cares, Inc.
Statement of Need

Feeding America last published their own “State of Food Insecurity” report in 2014. This incredibly inclusive report shared valuable data and insight on charitable food distribution in the United States. (Hunger In America Study | Feeding America, 2014). Long Island is no stranger to the obstacles that impact the root causes of hunger and poverty. To best serve those in need, we obtained and analyzed data that demonstrates the impact of food insecurity by demographic, and equally as important, that provides insight in understanding the experiences of those utilizing the emergency food network available on Long Island. Data acquired through studies like this provides us with an outline to develop programs and policies that meet the diverse needs of those we serve.

Method

A quantitative study was employed utilizing the web-based survey platform, Qualtrics XM (Qualtrics XM // The Leading Experience Management Software). Quantitative research results in quantified results. The survey was drafted in conjunction with the staff at Long Island Cares, Inc., and Stony Brook University Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) students. Questions were tested, revised, and refined in an effort to develop a survey aimed to identify participant demographics (who are we serving) and program experience (how are we doing); 23 questions were drafted, and 1,014 respondents participated.
Data Collection

Twelve (12) emergency food pantries participated in this study. Sites were selected based on number of people served and demographic location. Data was collected by way of survey from April through July 2022 on-site by Long Island Cares, Inc. and/or site-represented staff.

Which pantry do you frequent?
1,014 responses

- Our Holy Redeemer
  - Freeport
  - 24

- Grace Care Food Pantry
  - Medford
  - 16

- Loaves and Fishes Pantry
  - Wyandanch
  - 72

- Gammy’s Pantry
  - Lawrence
  - 191

- Pronto of Long Island
  - Bay Shore
  - 91

- Calvary Chapel
  - Holbrook
  - 12

- Long Island Council of Churches
  - Freeport/Riverhead
  - 16

- Long Island Cares — The Harry Chapin Food Bank Essential Market
  - Bethpage
  - 93

- Long Island Cares Nassau Center for Collaborative Assistance
  - Freeport
  - 247

- Long Island Cares Hunger Assistance and Humanitarian Center of the Hamptons
  - 103

- Long Island Cares Harry Chapin Food Bank and Humanitarian Center of Huntington Station
  - 43

- Long Island Cares South Shore Service Center and Lindenhurst Annex
  - 106

The State of Food Insecurity on Long Island

3
Presentation of Findings

Demographics

A total of 1,014 households were surveyed, with the total family composition representing 1,715 individuals.

The composition of a household utilizing the emergency food network ranged from 1-13 people.

What is your family composition?
seniors 65 and up adults 18 and up children under 18
1,715 responses

- Children: 30.5%
- Adults: 49%
- Seniors: 20.5%

What is the size of your household?

- 1-4 People: 72%
- 5-9 People: 27%
- 10+ People: 1%

How many people do you shop for?

- 1,003 responses

- 10+ People: 1%

“My family was lucky enough to have our needs fulfilled by this program.”
How long have you been a recipient of this food pantry?
1,018 responses

Greater than a year: 58%
Less than a year: 42%

What is your Racial/Ethnic Background?
1,037 responses
- Asian American: 2%
- African American: 18%
- Hispanic or Latinx: 54%
- Native American or Alaska Native: 1%
- Caucasian: 21%
- Prefer not to say: 2%
- Other: 2%

What is your marital status?
1,006 responses
- Married: 45%
- Single/never married: 30%
- Domestic Partner: 5%
- Widowed: 6%
- Separated: 5%
- Divorced: 9%
- Domestic Partner: 5%
- Single/never married: 30%
- Married: 45%
What is your highest level of education?

1,002 responses

- Doctorate: 0.7%
- Masters: 3%
- Trade: 1.3%
- College: 16%
- Some College: 20%
- Some High School: 11%
- High School: 28%

"nunca estoy triste, puedo tener algo para comer"
(I'm never sad, I can always have something to eat)

What is your current employment status?

1,005 responses

- Full time: 18%
- Part time: 22%
- Unemployed/looking for work: 16%
- Unemployed/not looking for work: 15%
- Student: 1%
- Retired: 23%
- Other: 5%
“The pantry has helped me give my family something to eat for dinner”

What is your household income?
998 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,520</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,520-49,999</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 or above</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Assistance</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Income</td>
<td>13%</td>
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</tbody>
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“Me ayudado por que no estoy trabajando, me ayuda con ahorros. Me ayuda con los niños tengo 4 niños”
(It helped me because I’m not working, it helps me with savings. It helps me with my 4 children)
Post-COVID supply chain issues, coupled with the rising cost of goods, have impacted not only Long Island but the entire nation. To better understand why people are turning to food pantries for support, the following question was posed:

Why do you utilize this pantry?
1,689 responses

“My ayudando con la comida la comida es lo más importante”
(Helped me with food, food is the most important thing)

Despite inflation at a record 8-9%, many participants choose to only utilize the pantry closest to their home. Most pantries offer monthly support, while others allowed participants to frequent bi-weekly. The emergency food network has the flexibility to change operations based on need and access to nutritious food.

How many other pantries do you visit in a month?
1,018 responses

None 63%

More than 3 3%

1 through 3 34%
Program Participation

Traditional approaches to food insecurity aim to alleviate the emergency need for food. However, food pantries provide much more than an immediate resolution in addressing food insecurity. For many, participants are utilizing the emergency food network as a long-term supplement to meet their food needs.

Food pantries provide staple food items that are used to prepare a meal. As the regional food bank for Long Island, Long Island Cares, Inc. facilitates both the New York State Department of Health, Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), funded through The Department of Agriculture and Markets. Program regulations surrounding these funding sources require that Long Island Cares, Inc. encourages client-choice pantries and ensure that the individuals utilizing the emergency food network are being provided a minimum of a three-(3) day supply of food, equating to nine (9) meals per person in each household.

Foods distributed at food pantries are categorized by food group. Based on household size, families are then able to pick and choose the items they like to ensure they receive a nutritiously balanced array of products.

What food products do you hope to access at the pantry?

1,248 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Grains</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen Protein</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Produce</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Me gusta tener frutas y verduras para cocinar."  
(I like having fruits and vegetables for cooking)
The tag line of Long Island Cares, Inc. reads "Because it takes more than food to feed the hungry." Understanding that our neighbors are often in need beyond the provisions of food, Long Island Cares, Inc. has expanded our support to include household and personal care items.

How long does the food from the pantry last?
1,018 responses

- 3 Days 29%
- More than one week 35%
- 5 Days 36%

What household items are you most in need of?
1,686 responses

- Cleaning Supplies 33%
- Paper products 35%
- Hygiene Products 32%
Established in 2009, Baxter’s Pet Pantry offers pet food and supplies to Long Island pets in need. Pet food, when available, is offered through our network of emergency food providers, as well as through all satellite offices operated by Long Island Cares, Inc. The home of Baxter’s Pet Pantry can be found at the Lindenhurst Annex; families in need can frequent Baxter’s as needed for their pet food needs.

“The little money we have can be saved and used elsewhere”

Would you like to receive pet food at your pantry?
If yes, for what animal?

Do you receive pet food at this pantry?
1,018 responses

Yes 35.4%
No 64.6%
The holiday season is the busiest time of year for Long Island Cares, Inc. — what we like to call our own “Super Bowl.” It is the time of year that the most publicity surrounds food banks to provide a holiday meal for families in need. For decades, Long Island Cares, Inc. has ensured Long Island families are celebrating their holidays with a full festive table. To best understand what a traditional celebration meal looks like to the diverse population living on Long Island, and to ensure that we are providing culturally appropriate foods inclusive for all, we asked respondents to describe what a traditional celebration meal looks like to them.

“I’m happy to have access to Halal food, especially during the holidays”

The dietary needs of participants utilizing food pantries is vital information. Most foods distributed by Long Island Cares, Inc. include low sodium, no sugar, and lean proteins.

Are there any dietary restrictions in the home due to allergies, religion, and/or illness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>16.4%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
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</table>
Improving access and client satisfaction are vital to ensuring we are implementing best practices from a human services standpoint, as well as towards a service delivery standpoint.

“"A great source for great food""
Implications for Further Action

The data collected in this study are vital to the future development of programs for Long Island Cares, Inc. The collected results favor the way in which we and our partners operate within the emergency food network; however, we will strive for an even more optimal and inclusive experience for all. Additional research needs to be conducted to better understand barriers in accessing food, as well as increasing efforts that address the systemic issues surrounding poverty and food insecurity. Long Island Cares, Inc. and our partners will continue in our commitment to serving Long Islanders in need until our support is no longer needed.

References

Food Insecurity among Overall (all ages) Population in New York. (2020).

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United States Inflation Rate, August 2022, Data 1914-2021 Historical. (2022).

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