

**UCLA STAFF RETIREES  
Food Insecurity Survey  
2013 – 2014**

**The UCLA Emeriti/Retirees Relations Center  
(ERRC)**

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**UCLA Emeriti/Retirees Relations Center  
Food Insecurity Survey Report  
2013-2014**

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**Appendix**

Food Insecurity Survey Questionnaire

Summarized Tally of Responses

## Introduction

The phenomenon of Food Insecurity is described by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a “household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food”. *Feeding America*, which was formerly *America’s Second Harvest*, conducts studies and produces multi-dimensional “Hunger in America” reports that provide detailed statistics pertaining to food insecurity in this country. According to the most recent study published in 2012\*, *Feeding America* delivers food to more than 37,000,000 Americans annually. The ‘Senior Hunger’ segment of that report offers the following key findings:

- 30% of client households with seniors indicated that they have had to choose between food and medical care.
- 35% of these households had to choose between food and paying for heat and utilities.
- The number of food insecure seniors is projected to increase by 50% when the youngest of the Baby Boomer Generation reaches age 60 in 2025.

The Emeriti/Retirees Relations Center’s (ERRC) Food Insecurity Survey was undertaken to determine the extent to which UCLA staff retirees are affected.

The questionnaire was designed to elicit data that is specific to food insecurity and therefore included only the four items listed below:

1. Is there enough food in the household?
2. Must choices be made between food and other necessities?
3. Is it possible to afford healthy food or household items required to sustain an acceptable quality of life?
4. Are there multiple generations residing in the household and if so, must the respondent skip meals to accommodate others?

Space was also available on the document for comments and clarifications. A copy of the survey with the compilation of the results is included in this report.

As of July 17, 2013, the date of the survey, there were 5,986 retired staff for which there were current addresses in the ERRC database. They were all included in the survey population. Of the total number contacted, 1,494 or 25% responded.

The results of the survey were compiled using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS).

\**Feeding America* reports that the next iteration of the “Hunger in America” study, “Hunger in America 2014” will be released in May 2014.

## Executive Summary

The Food Insecurity Survey conducted by the Emeriti/Retirees Relations Center produced sufficient data to confirm that most UCLA staff retirees are not food insecure. However, the survey also revealed that approximately 21% of respondents either do not have enough food; or they don't have the kind that they want or in some cases, the kind that they need.

In a meeting with Professor Gail Harrison, UCLA Jonathan and Karin Fielding School of Public Health, she explained that food insecurity in California is experienced by 15% of the population. She suggested that this be the benchmark for determining the materiality of food insecurity among retired staff, using the number of survey respondents as the basis of the calculation. Since 21% exceeds the benchmark, it may be reasonably assumed that a significant number of staff retirees are food insecure. The information below summarizes the survey findings by category:

### **Is there enough food in the household?**

I have enough food, and the kind I want.	1,185
I have enough food, but not always what I want.	261
I don't have enough food.	46

The results from this question produced the baseline for analysis of the remainder of the questionnaire, i.e., there were 1,494 responses with 1,185 or 79% representing those with enough food; and 21% with not enough food or not enough of the kind of food that is wanted or needed. Two responses in this category were not checked.

### **Must choices be made between food and other necessities?**

Consistent with the conclusions from the first category, 21% of respondents checked 'Yes' to this question. There was a fairly even distribution among three choices:

1. Medication 99
2. Household Items 118
3. Rent/Mortgage 98

### **Is it possible to afford healthy food or household items required to sustain an acceptable quality of life?**

I could not afford:	Frequently	Occasionally	N/A
To purchase healthy food items.	63	144	1,287
Household items to sustain acceptable quality of life.	42	117	1,335

A cancer victim, one of several respondents with unforeseen health challenges, commented that she has depleted her savings and is running up credit card debt because she needs high quality food and medical supplements. Food is too expensive and she must therefore make adjustments to her quality of life.

A subset of this question was:

**If any item above was checked, was aid sought from groups such as family members, food banks, Meals on Wheels, religious/government agencies?**

Only 75, or 5%, of respondents in this category do seek aid; 95% do not.

The reasons given in descending order for why assistance is not requested:

- 89 were unaware that assistance is available.
- 86 were too embarrassed.
- 69 didn't want to.
- 40 have physical limitations.
- 27 have no transportation.

And then there is the person who must choose between food, medication and the mortgage who tried the local senior center for food, but the \$2.50 per meal is more than she can afford. So, since she can cook a pot of beans or soup for less, she no longer goes to the senior center.

And another who has never applied for assistance because she always felt that there were so many with greater need.

**Are there multiple generations residing in the household and if so, must the respondent skip meals to accommodate others?**

There were 205 responses in this category. Of that number only 5% state that they must skip meals to accommodate household members. This occurs frequently for 14 retirees; and only occasionally for 61 others.

**Conclusion**

The total number of staff retirees contacted was 5,986 of which 1,494 responded. Of this group 21% indicated that they are experiencing some degree of food insecurity. By extrapolation this means that approximately 1,200 retirees are food insecure.

## Comments

### Food Insecure

**M.C.** – “Frequently run out of cash for medication and groceries.

**Barbara** – “Money is just not enough for my husband and me, and I really should be eating to continue to be healthy. If there is any assistance available, please let me know how I can pursue information. It would be greatly appreciated.”

**Sheila** – “Thank you for holding this survey. I had to file bankruptcy. My rent is over 42% of my income. Clothes are wearing out. I do as much mending as possible. Cut my own hair. Very difficult to write all of this. Had surgery, joint replacement. I’m scared!”

**Kathy** – “If you know anywhere for help, where can I go?”

**Anonymous** – “My temple provided some meals. Food stamps were denied. I now get some Meals on Wheels”.

**Grace** – “Since retirement I am foster parent to twin girls, age 3½ years. I get WIC food stamps for their food”.

**Maryam** – “My income is 1/3 of what I was making when I worked. I was forced to retire because of longer disability than I anticipated. I have to take care of disabled brother financially, so I have to make sure I can balance my own expenses and medications I have to have.”

**Edmund** – “Could not get help because I own my house”.

**Anonymous** – “Applied for Cal Fresh and was denied”.

**Mariatessie** – “I went to the Department of Public Social Services just because the Social Security Administration pension is not enough for my basic monthly necessities. That’s why I received a Golden State Advantage Electronic Benefits Card which is really a help to our food”.

### Coping

**Winifred** – “I have enough money to eat and take care of the necessary things. If I have a little more it will be nice. Can have a better quality life. I do not need any help, but nice if I can have a part time job. Thanks.”

**Melissa** – “Because I live with my domestic partner, I do not have to worry much about food. However, my pension is small....Without my domestic partner, food would be an issue. I will have to work part time as well for greater financial security.”

**Shirley** – “I am a widow (twice). I now have a dear friend that has been subsidizing my food and some entertainment”.

**Eloise** – “It helps financially to live in a state that does not have a state income tax.....When I was planning retirement I looked for a state with no income tax. Food prices are the same here as in California. I do make choices. We eat less meat, less amount, less choices. The COLA does not match the food prices.....”

**Anonymous** – “We don’t go out as often, or vacation, don’t buy any extra household items. FOOD comes 1<sup>st</sup>! As do medications.”

**Ellen** – “I teach private piano lessons to supplement my retirement check. As long as I am able to do this, I am ok without help.”

**Dr. Schwartz** – “When I lived in Brooklyn I had to use Meals on Wheels, which I did for years. Now my meals come with my rent.....”

**Mary** – “Thank you for worrying about me. Your concern for me has set my pen to paper. I probably fit very nicely into your area of concern. However the answer is ‘No, I am not hungry’. I have a low income and high medical expenses. I maintain a small savings account. I should apply for food stamps but.....I shop for bargains and I cook my own meals.....I have learned to cope with life’s necessities.....”

### *In Appreciation*

**Delia** - “Thank you for your concern and thoughtfulness.”

**Mercedes** – “Thanks for thinking of retirees.”

**Annie** – “Thanks for your concern.”

**Martha** – “Thank you for your concern. I and my family are blessed.....need to slow down on fat food and fast food. We are eating better fruits and vegetables.”

**Kwong** – “I am very glad this is available for people who needed it. Please continue the good work! Thank you.”

### *Musings*

“Due to the value of US dollars is weak and weaker and the inflation going up and up, it is shameful that the pension is not enough for the living. All this will make less people dare to retire earlier or on time”.

“I hope the cost of living doesn’t get much higher! Insurance expenses are nearly impossible”.

“Housing is a huge problem. If retirees are sacrificing food and other necessities, lack of affordable housing is likely a contributing factor”.

“.....If we need any help it is not with Food Insecurity but with Long Term Care Insecurity.....”

“.....I obtained a Reverse Mortgage, and that is how I try to keep my standard of living.....”

## Emeriti/Retirees Relations Center Food Insecurity Survey

1. Which of the following best describes food in your household (check one)

- I have enough food, and the kind I want.
- I have enough food, but not always what I want.
- I don't have enough food.

2. Do you ever have to make a choice between food and other necessities?  
(Check all that apply)

- medications     household items     rent/mortgage
- education/social/entertainment activities

3.

Check one

Frequently    Occasionally    N/A

I could not afford to purchase healthy food items			
I could not afford household items to sustain acceptable quality of life			

Yes                  No

If any item above was checked, was aid sought from groups such as family members, food banks, Meals on Wheels, religious organizations/government agencies		
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If the response is Yes, please list group(s):


If the response is No, please check reason(s):

Unaware that assistance is available	
No transportation	
Embarrassed	
Didn't want to	
Physical limitations	
Other	



4.

Check one

Yes

No

Do you live in a multi-generational household?		
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If the response is Yes, please check one

Frequently

Occasionally

N/A

Did you eat less or skip meals to accommodate others?			
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**Personal Information Section (optional)**

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If your comments exceed the space provided, you may continue on a separate page.

A postage paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience. **Please return your survey by August 19th.**

