

ARIZONA IS THE NATION'S 7TH WORST STATE IN FOOD HARDSHIPS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Nearly 30% of Families Reported Not Having Enough Money For Food

PHOENIX, Ariz. (Aug. 15, 2011): Arizona ranks among the worst states in the nation – and Tucson and the Phoenix metropolitan area are among the worst cities in the nation – for families trying to put food on the table for their children, according to a new report by the Food Action and Research Center (FRAC).

The analysis of Gallup Data examines food hardship rates – the inability to afford enough food – for households with and without children nationally, in every state, every Congressional District and 100 of the country's largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs).

FRAC's [Food Hardship in America](#) series analyzes data that were collected as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has interviewed more than one million households since 2008. FRAC analyzed responses to the question: "Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?"

As a state, Arizona is tied for seventh worst in the nation with Louisiana with 29 percent of households with children indicating that there was at least one time over the 12-month period when there wasn't enough money for food.

Among the top 25 metropolitan areas with the highest rate of food hardships in households with children for 2009-2010, Tucson is the nation's 15th-worst city with 28.7% reporting at least one day with not enough money for food.

The Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale ranks 20th at 27.7 percent.

"The report clearly shows that food hardship is a critical problem across the country and specifically in Arizona," said Cynthia Zwick, executive director of the Arizona Community Action Association which provides resources and services to the poor, working poor and newly poor. "What it means from the big-picture perspective is that this is the worst possible time to further weaken Federal nutrition programs, as well as other components of the safety net, for low-income families."

In Arizona, the number of individuals needing assistance through SNAP (food stamps) has increased nearly every month since 2007. As of July 2011, 1,102,573 individuals in Arizona were receiving SNAP assistance, the first time the number topped the 1.1 million.

The number of SNAP enrollees in Arizona has doubled since 2007 when 554,289 individuals were enrolled.

“Given the state of the economy, we don’t expect the numbers to decline any time soon,” Zwick said. “That puts pressure on food banks and other human service agencies working so hard to help individuals and families who have nowhere else to turn.”

Zwick said the community can help by donating money and food to agencies like the Arizona Association of Food Banks. Community members can also speak out about the importance of food assistance programs such as SNAP and school meals by contacting their elected representatives, especially Senator Jon Kyl, who has been named to the “Super Committee” that has been tasked with identifying additional ways to cut the Federal budget, she added.

To view the full report, which can be downloaded in a PDF file, go to www.frac.org or www.azcaa.org.