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Chapter 3: Methods
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3. METHODS

This study had two components: (1) an agency survey that collected information about the food programs operating in the FA network, and (2) a client survey that collected information from the people using food pantries, emergency kitchens, and shelters in order to provide a better understanding of their needs. Mathematica designed the sampling frame based on data provided by each of the participating food banks. These food banks also assisted Mathematica with the data collection. Mathematica provided technical assistance with the implementation of the agency and client surveys.

This section provides an overview of the methods used in the survey and analysis work. (Detailed information is in the Technical Appendix of the report.) We first discuss two key activities common to both surveys: (1) instrument development, and (2) the training of food bank staff on survey procedures. We then describe each of the two surveys.

3.1 INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The data collection instruments for this study were based on the questionnaires used in the 2005 study, revised to reflect the 2005 data collection experience and the needs of FA. Mathematica worked closely with FA to ensure that the revisions would generate high-quality data.

The 2009 agency survey instrument included the following question that was not asked in 2005:

- Whether SNAP eligibility counseling or outreach was provided by the pantry, kitchen, or shelter and, if so, what kind?
Similarly, the 2009 client survey instrument included the following set of questions that were not asked in 2005:

- Whether there is a grandchild living in the respondent’s household and, if so, whether the respondent provides basic needs to the grandchild?
- Whether anyone in the respondent’s household participates in the BackPack Weekend Food Program?
- For households with children, whether the child or children participated in the Summer Food Program in the summer of 2008 and, if not, the reasons for not participating?

3.2 TRAINING OF FOOD BANK STUDY COORDINATORS

To ensure that each food bank study coordinator had the proper knowledge to administer the surveys, Mathematica conducted three regional, two-day, in-depth training sessions. Most of the training dealt with showing the study coordinators how to prepare local interviewers to conduct the client survey. Each coordinator also received a training video that demonstrated the client interview process and a manual that contained sample materials and outlined the responsibilities of FA network members.

3.3 AGENCY SURVEY

Mathematica developed the sampling frame for the agency survey by first creating a database of all active agencies identified by participating FA network members. The agency survey sample consisted of a census of the agencies provided by the participating members.

Using the database, Mathematica staff printed bar-coded mailing labels to identify the agencies and their addresses and then shipped the proper number of questionnaires, labels, and mailing envelopes to each participating member. Some members mailed advance letters informing agencies of the planned survey. Both at the training and in the manual, study
coordinators received instruction on assembling and mailing the questionnaires. Each envelope included a personalized cover letter.

Agencies also had the option to complete the survey online. In letters mailed to their member agencies, food banks provided the web address and log-in information that each agency could use to complete the questionnaire online. In addition, those agencies for which Mathematica had valid e-mail addresses were sent an electronic invitation to participate. Reminder e-mails were sent every two weeks during the early part of the field period and weekly toward the end of the February-to-June 2009 field period to agencies that had not submitted a questionnaire.

The cover letter, as well as the instructions on the hard copy questionnaire, directed the agency to mail the completed questionnaire back to Mathematica. In most instances, agencies did so, but some members collected the surveys from their agencies and mailed them to Mathematica in bulk. When Mathematica received a questionnaire, staff logged it into a database by scanning the bar code on the mailing label. Each Monday morning, Mathematica sent an e-mail to the members listing all the questionnaires received the previous week. These emails served as the basis for the mailing of reminder postcards to those agencies that did not return the questionnaire within two weeks of the initial mailing, and a second mailing, this time of questionnaires, to agencies that did not return the first one within two weeks after the mailing of reminder postcards. The weekly e-mails also helped the member study coordinators schedule reminder calls to agencies that did not return the questionnaire within three weeks after the second mailing. Occasionally, in areas where response to the mailings of questionnaires was particularly low, member coordinators completed the questionnaires with nonresponding
agencies over the phone. Members were also asked to apprise Mathematica of agencies that no longer provided food services so that they could be identified as ineligible in the database.

After Mathematica received the questionnaires, logged them into the database, and reviewed them, they were shipped to a subcontractor for data capture and imaging. The subcontractor optically scanned them and produced data files and CD-ROMs with images of each completed questionnaire for Mathematica. Chart 3.3.1 summarizes the sequence of activities of the agency survey.
CHART 3.3.1
AGENCY SURVEY ACTIVITIES

HUNGER IN AMERICA 2010
FEEDING AMERICA NATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY

- Review of Agency Survey Design from 2005 Study
  - Agency Survey Redesign
    - Agency Survey Final Design
      - Develop Web Survey
        - Finalize Web Survey
          - Survey Instrument Printing
            - Survey Materials and Instructions Mailed to Participating Food Banks
              - Mailing Label Generation
                - Database Preparation
                  --Cleaning and editing
                  --Addition of tracking numbers
              - Participating Food Bank Survey Mailing
              - Web Survey Instructions Emailed to Food Banks with Valid Email Addresses
                - Email Reminders Sent to Non-responding Agencies
                  - Follow-up with Agencies Not Responding to Initial Mailing
                    - Assist Food Banks and Agencies
                      - Data Processing
                        --Data capture by optical scanning
                        --Data tabulation and analysis
                      - Report Preparation
                        --National
                        --Local
                        --State
                        --Special Reports

Responsibility for Activity
- Mathematica Policy Research
- Participating FA Network Members
3.4 CLIENT SURVEY

Preparation for the client survey began with the selection of the FA providers where interviewing was to take place. As previous Hunger in America surveys had done, the client survey in the 2010 study focused on obtaining data on emergency food providers in the FA system and on the people those providers serve. The three types of providers whose clients were included in the 2009 survey (and previous Hunger in America surveys) were food pantries, emergency kitchens, and shelters. Many food banks also provide food to other types of agencies, such as those serving congregate meals to seniors and agencies operating day care centers or after-school programs. These other types of agencies perform important roles, but they were defined to be outside the purview of the study because they do not focus on supplying emergency food to low-income clients.

At the outset of the 2010 study, Mathematica asked the FA food banks that chose to participate to provide Mathematica with lists of all the agencies they served, indicating whether each agency was involved in emergency food provision and, if so, what type of agency it was (pantry, kitchen, shelter, or multitype). Mathematica sampling statisticians then drew initial samples of the agencies where interviews were to take place. These selections were made with probabilities proportional to a measure of size based on reported poundage distributions as the measure of size; that is, large agencies had greater probabilities of selection.

After the initial sampling, Mathematica asked the food banks to provide detailed information for the providers or programs in the sample of agencies. The information sought included when they were open and the average number of clients they served per day. For small, medium, and large food banks (as classified by FA), the sample of agencies for this detailed information was approximately 57, 76, and 95, respectively. Mathematica then used the detailed
information from the sample of agencies to form three pools of providers and drew samples of providers for the client interviewing. At this time, Mathematica also selected a reserve sample to account for possible refusal or ineligibility of a provider selected in the primary sample.

For each sampled provider or program, Mathematica selected a specific day and time when the interviewing was to occur, based on the detailed information the food bank had sent. Mathematica also provided a range of acceptable dates and times in case the selection was not workable for the data collectors. The food banks were responsible for sending staff or volunteers to each selected program at the specified date and time to conduct the interviews. The data collectors were to use (1) the client selection forms developed by Mathematica and approved by FA, and (2) a questionnaire that Mathematica and FA had designed jointly. Clients at the facilities were selected for the interviews through locally implemented randomization procedures designed by Mathematica.\(^5\) In total, more than 62,000 clients were interviewed. Mathematica had another firm (a subcontractor) optically scan the completed questionnaires into an electronic database, and the resulting data files provided the basis for the client analysis.

During the fielding, Mathematica used randomly selected site replacements only when an agency, provider, or program refused to participate in the client interview effort or if, after conferring with the food bank and agency, Mathematica determined the provider to be ineligible for the study. In cases where food banks did not have reserve sample, Mathematica drew a supplemental first-stage sample and requested additional information or assigned an additional visit to a program among the programs already sampled. In some instances, Mathematica discovered while obtaining additional information that an agency (or provider) was no longer

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\(^5\) These procedures involve enumerating the client being served at the time of data collection (for example, by when they came to the facility or their place in a line), then taking a “1 in n” sample with a random starting point.
operating or did not run a pantry, kitchen, or shelter. In such instances, Mathematica dropped the agency (or provider) from the sample.

For the client questionnaires, Mathematica prepared bar-coded labels with identification numbers. Mathematica also developed and printed client selection forms designed to allow the interviewer to randomly select program participants and to enumerate the number of completed interviews, refusals, and ineligible sample members during on-site data collection. Mathematica shipped these materials and client questionnaires to food banks for distribution to the individual data collectors.

After data collection at a provider was completed, the food bank study coordinators shipped questionnaires and client selection forms back to Mathematica, where staff logged each questionnaire into a database by scanning the bar-coded label on the cover page. As with the agency survey, Mathematica each Monday morning sent an e-mail to the members listing the agencies where client questionnaires were completed the previous week. The e-mails allowed the member study coordinators to monitor their progress in completing the client survey portion of the study.

After Mathematica received the questionnaires and logged them into the database, they were shipped to the subcontractor for data capture and imaging. The subcontractor optically scanned the questionnaires and produced data files. As with the agency survey, Mathematica received CD-ROMs containing data files and electronic images of all completed client questionnaires. Chart 3.4.1 summarizes the sequence of activities in the client survey.
CHART 3.4.1
CLIENT SURVEY ACTIVITIES

HUNGER IN AMERICA 2010
FEEDING AMERICA NATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY

Review of Client Survey from 2005 Study

Client Survey Redesign

Client Survey Final Design

Spanish Translation of Final Survey

Survey Instrument Printing

Webinars for Hunger Study Coordinators

Training Material Development

Revision of Training DVD

Data Collection and Training Materials Shipped to Food Banks

Sample Frame and Database Creation

Database Preparation
- Cleaning and editing
- Addition of ranking numbers

Sampling Design

Interviewing Date and Time Assigned

Labels and Client Selection Forms Printed

Hunger Study Coordinator Training

Interviewer Training

Conduct Interviews with Clients at Sampled Agencies

Follow-up with Food Banks for Interview Problem Solving

Data Processing
- Data capture by optical scanning
- Data tabulation and analysis

Report Preparation
- National
- Local
- State
- Special Reports

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIVITY

- Mathematics Policy Research
- Participating Food Banks
- Feeding America

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3.5 RESPONSE RATES

As Chart 3.5.1 shows, of the FA national network of 205 members, 185 member food banks covering all or part of 47 states and the District of Columbia participated in the agency survey. Of those members, 184 completed data collection for the client survey.

**Client Survey.** A total of 184 network members contacted 12,700 agencies to gain access for on-site client data collection. Of those agencies, 12,554 provided detailed information about their programs and 6,454 were sampled for their program sites and participated in client data collection.

FA network members’ staff and volunteers sampled 82,301 clients at the eligible agencies; of those 1,557 were determined to be ineligible for age or other reasons. Client interviews were completed with 62,143, or 77.0%, of the eligible respondents. Client interviews from three network members were excluded from the national study due to data collection problems. Thus, the estimates in chapters 5 through 15 are based on 61,085 interviews from 181 network members.

**Agency Survey.** A total of 185 participating FA network members sent out questionnaires to 50,471 eligible agencies. Mathematica received completed questionnaires from 37,098 (73.5%) agencies.

**FA Research Involvement.** Chart 3.5.2 shows the organizations and individuals involved in the national study. It also identifies the completed numbers of responses from the client interviews and the agency survey, by program type. For the service areas of food banks

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6 Interviews were conducted only with respondents age 18 or older.

7 Some additional questionnaires were mailed out to agencies who were later found to be no longer operating or to be otherwise ineligible.
participating in the Hunger in America 2010 study, see Chart 3.5.3. The shaded and unshaded areas of the chart together represent the service areas of the FA national network.

CHART 3.5.1
STUDY OVERVIEW

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\[ a \] This includes Puerto Rico.

\[ b \] Client survey conducted in 47 states and Washington, DC.
CHART 3.5.2

ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS
3.6 ANALYSIS METHODS

Most of the findings presented in this report are based on tabulations of the survey data. In this section, we describe the methods used in this work.

3.6.1 Tables

In the descriptive tabulations of clients presented in chapters 5 through 9, the percentage figures in the tables are based on the total weighted number of usable responses to the client survey, unless specified otherwise. Responses are weighted to represent clients or households of all emergency food programs. In general, weights are based on the inverse probabilities of selection in the sampling and also account for survey nonresponse. Weights were scaled so that the final weights represent a month-level count of different clients, as derived in Chapter 4 of the national report.

Similarly, all tables containing information obtained from the agency survey, as presented in chapters 10 through 14, are based on the weighted total number of usable responses to the agency survey, unless specified otherwise. The descriptive tabulations in these chapters represent all FA emergency food programs. The weights, calculated based on the sampling frame, also account for survey nonresponse.

Percentage distributions in the client tables are presented by the type of the programs where clients were interviewed (pantries, kitchens, or shelters). When appropriate, the percentage distribution for “all clients” is shown in the last column. Most tabulations of the agency data are presented by the type of programs operated by the agencies.

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8 To reduce variances in the analysis, we truncated weights with extremely large values. However, to keep the sum of weights unchanged, we then adjusted the weights by an adjustment factor, which is the ratio of the sum of the original weights to the sum of the truncated weights.

9 Originally, we computed weights to make the sample representative at the weekly level. We later converted them to a monthly scale to take into account the fact that, compared with kitchen and shelter users, most pantry users do not visit the program in any given week.
The percentages in the tables are rounded to one decimal place and are based only on the valid responses. They exclude missing, “don’t know,” refusal, and other responses deemed incomplete for the question.

The sample sizes presented at the bottom of single-panel tables (or at the bottom of each panel of multipanel tables) reflect the total number of responses to the question (unweighted). Where the question relates to a subset of the respondents, the appropriate sample size is presented. In general, these sample sizes include missing responses, as well as “don’t know” and refusal responses. We report the percentages of item nonresponse in notes to each table.

The main reason for including only valid responses is to present appropriately the weighted percentage distribution among the main response categories of interest. Our preliminary analysis of item nonresponse revealed little evidence of any systematic biases, and excluding missing data also has the advantage of being consistent with the convention used in the Hunger in America 2006 study commissioned by FA.

Some tables also present the average (mean) or the median values associated with the variable of interest. The average, a measure of central tendency for continuous variables, is calculated as the weighted sum of all valid values in a distribution, divided by the weighted number of valid responses. The median is another measure of central tendency. It is the value that exactly divides an ordered frequency distribution into equal halves. Therefore, 50% of the weighted number of valid responses have values smaller than the median, and the other 50% have values larger. The median is suitable only for describing central tendency in distributions where the categories of the variable can be ordered, as from lowest to highest.
3.6.2 Other Methodological Considerations

Certain other conventions should be noted in interpreting the findings of the study and how they are presented. Below we discuss the distinction between *clients* and *respondents* and describe the structure of reports available from the project.

**Clients Versus Respondents.** *Clients* are defined differently by program type. The kitchen and shelter programs are viewed as serving only those who are present at the program site. (Thus, in general for these providers, the survey respondents are representative of all clients.) However, pantry programs are regarded as serving all members of respondents’ households.

At the kitchen and shelter providers, the sampling unit was the individual. That is, the interviewers were instructed to treat members of a single household as separate respondents if they were selected by our random sampling process and met other eligibility criteria (such as being at least 18 years old). At the pantry programs, on the other hand, the sampling unit was the household because clients typically obtain food for themselves and their household. Only one interview was completed for each randomly selected household, even when two or more members of the household were present at the program.

Ideally, the survey would have obtained all relevant information about every member of the household, especially among pantry users. However, so as not to overburden respondents, the survey was designed to acquire information about at most 10 members of the household, including the respondent. Also, this series of questions was limited to a set of variables of interest, such as sex, age, relationship to the respondent, citizenship, and employment status.

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10 One exception was children at the kitchens and shelters. They were clients, but they were not respondents, because only clients 18 or older were interviewed for this study. However, the children were taken into account in estimating the total number of clients.
Because households with more than 10 members are uncommon, we do not believe that this has significantly affected our estimates.

**National Versus Local Reports.** Hunger in America 2010 has produced a set of reports to serve both national and local interests and to be useful to a wide range of audiences with varying needs. This national report consists of information gathered through 181 participating members for the client survey and 185 members for the agency survey. In addition, in most cases, a local report was generated containing information on clients and agencies served by a particular member. There are roughly 185 member-level local reports. In addition, state-level reports were produced when all FA network members in a particular state participated in this study. About 41 states achieved full participation of their members.

In addition to the comprehensive national and local reports, FA will disseminate *Hunger in America 2010: An Extended Executive Summary*, which contains key findings from the comprehensive national report. A Technical Appendix, which describes in detail the methodologies of the current study, will be available separately for technical audiences.

Tables in the local and national reports are numbered comparably to facilitate comparisons between the local and national findings. Not all tables from the national report are reproduced in the local documents.

**Statistical Sampling Variation and Measurement Error.** As with all estimates relying on statistical samples, the client survey estimates in this report are subject to “sampling error,” resulting from the fact that they are based on *samples* of clients rather than information about *all* clients. The margins of error due to this factor vary among individual estimates, depending on such factors as sample sizes, the nature of the client characteristics being estimated, and the number of different providers within a food bank at which the client data collection took place.
In addition to the sampling error, error also exists in the estimates from the operational components of the survey (non-sampling error), such as nonresponse, reporting error, and measurement error. While the sampling design and sample sizes can impose some control on the sampling error (and while this error can be quantified), the non-sampling error reflects the degree of success in designing the questionnaire and data collection procedures and in conducting the data collection activities at all stages. Unfortunately, the non-sampling error cannot be quantified. The exact amount of variation (both sampling error and non-sampling error) will be different for different data items, and the relative contribution of sampling error and non-sampling error to the total survey error will also vary by survey estimate.

For most percentage estimates based on the full sample size, this sampling variation can lead to 90% confidence intervals extending approximately plus or minus 1.5 percentage points around the estimate. For instance, if a certain client characteristic percentage is estimated to be 60% and the “margin of error” is 1.5 percentage points, we can be reasonably certain it is somewhere in the range of 58.5 to 61.5 percentage points. In many instances, particularly when the sample is divided into subgroups, the width of the 90% confidence interval can be greater.

Confidence intervals for pantry clients, who make up most of the overall sample, are similar to those described above. For kitchens or shelters, with their smaller sample sizes, confidence intervals tend to be in the range of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

The ranges of precision highlighted above focus only on sampling variation due to statistical sampling and the number of completed interviews. As noted previously, other forms of survey error (the non-sampling error) will increase overall survey error. These other forms of error include:

- **Nonresponse.** When completed interviews are obtained from only a portion of the clients selected for the survey
• **Response Error.** When the client interviewed does not provide an accurate answer to a question because the client either misunderstands the question or chooses not to provide an accurate answer

• **Reporting Error.** When counts or other information used in the sampling and other data collection activities are in error or missing

• **Measurement Error.** When the question in the questionnaire is not worded effectively to obtain the desired information from the client

These forms of error exist in all surveys, but the size of the non-sampling error (relative to the sampling error) depends on the design of the data collection activities and implementation of these by all persons involved. In this survey, most of the interviewers did not have extensive experience in data collection work, and while Mathematica supplied general training guidelines and materials, there was undoubtedly considerable variation between food banks as to how the training was implemented. Inevitably, as in any survey, some interviewers may have read questions incorrectly, clients may have understood questions incorrectly, and even correct answers may sometimes have been incorrectly recorded on the survey instrument. All these factors may have led to “non-sampling error” that is in addition to the sampling error discussed above. Indeed, estimates of income suggesting that there are clients with high income levels and estimates of SNAP participation suggesting rates of participation that are lower than expected among the population receiving emergency food indicate that response error may be present in the answers to several survey questions.

**Estimating Client Turnover Rates Within the FA System.** An important goal of the periodic FA surveys has been to develop *annual* estimates of the number of clients participating in the FA emergency food assistance system. However, it is much more straightforward to estimate the number of clients *at a given point in time* than to estimate the number over a year. This is because the *annual* number depends on turnover in the system. As an example, consider
a pantry that serves 100 clients per month. If the *same* clients go to the pantry month after month, then the *annual* number of clients for the pantry will be equal to 100 since there is no turnover across months. If *mostly the same* clients go to the pantry month after month, then the *annual* number of clients for the pantry will be slightly greater than 100 to account for a few clients leaving and others replacing them. If *mostly different* clients come each month, however, the pantry could serve 1,000 clients, or even more, in a year. Thus, taking into account the amount of client turnover can have major implications for overall client estimates.

Turnover rates are important for the *research objective* of making annual estimates of different clients. They are much less important from an *operational perspective*, however, and most FA providers do not have reliable data on the total number of different clients served in a year. Also complicating annual estimation research is the constraint that, for logistical reasons, the survey can observe the system directly for only a few months.

Because of these factors, the study depends on information obtained during the client interviews to draw inferences about client usage of the system over a 12-month period. Survey recall problems pose formidable challenges to interpreting the data, however, because many clients may not accurately recall and report their past usage patterns for an entire year. Typically, clients are able to supply accurate information about their usage of the emergency food system during a recent period, such as a week (or even perhaps a month), but as the period gets longer, recall usually becomes less reliable. While long recall periods are a problem for many surveys, they may be particularly problematic for the FA client population, because many of them are concentrating on how to meet day-to-day household needs with low resources, rather than thinking about the past year.

As in the 2005 survey, we tried to examine client turnover based on the self-reports of survey respondents about their patterns of using the FA system. The research strategy focuses on
the “newcomer rate,” defined as the percentage of clients at a given point in time who have started using FA providers within the past month but had not used the FA system in the previous 12 months. If we can estimate “newcomers” defined in this way for 12 months in a row, the sum yields a measure of all the people who entered the system during the past year.\textsuperscript{11}

The 2009 survey used a question that was first added to the questionnaire in 2005:

P61b   Now, thinking about the past year, did you or anyone in your household use a pantry…

1 □ Every month, (12 MONTHS)
2 □ Almost every month, (10-11 MONTHS)
3 □ Most months, (6-9 MONTHS)
4 □ Some months, (4-5 MONTHS)
5 □ Just a few months, (2-3 MONTHS)
6 □ Just this month?
D □ DON’T KNOW
R □ REFUSED

Using this question, we find that the point estimate of the percentage of clients that are newcomers in the previous month is 15.6% for pantries—by far the most important component in the total estimates. This implies that, at the typical pantry on a given day, 15.6% of clients have started using the pantry that day or at some other time in the previous month and have not previously used the system for at least a year (or ever).

Despite the economic distress that the country was experiencing in early 2009, the 2009 newcomer rate based on the survey data was only marginally higher than it had been in 2005. Given the very large increase in the national unemployment rate between 2005 and 2009, and

\textsuperscript{11} Key to the approach outlined in the text is that a “newcomer” is defined as a person who starts using the FA system and has not previously used it for at least a year. Of course, some people may enter and exit the system several times during the year; however, in making annual unduplicated estimates, we want to count these people only once a year.
even larger county-level increases in the service areas many food banks participating in the study, Mathematica, Feeding America staff, and members of the Technical Advisory Group had expected a substantial increase in the newcomer rate. Regression analyses revealed neither an association between the newcomer rate and unemployment in 2009 nor an association between changes in the newcomer rate and changes in unemployment between 2005 and 2009, and the lower-than-expected 2009 estimates were attributed to underreporting of the newcomer rate in the survey data. As a result, the newcomer rate was adjusted upward based on changes in the average monthly national unemployment rate from the 2005 survey period (January through June 2005) to the 2009 survey period (January through June 2009). For pantries, this adjustment increased the newcomer rate from 15.6% to 20.8%.

3.7 REPORTING CONVENTIONS IN FOOD BANK REPORTS

In some instances, there were certain client-based tabular analyses for which fewer than 30 observations were available. (This happened mostly with shelters and, to a lesser extent, kitchens.) In these instances, the relevant tabulations have not been included in the tables, because there are too few client observations for the results to be statistically reliable.\textsuperscript{12}

When client tabulations have been suppressed because of small sample sizes, the entry \textit{n.p.} (“not presented) is made in the relevant columns of the tables. In these cases, the client observations are included in computing the “total” column, which is aggregated across the three types of programs.

In some instances, there may be no observations available at all for a column of a table. In those cases, we have entered \textit{N.A.} (“not available”). In other instances, a survey question is

\textsuperscript{12} On the other hand, when presenting agency findings, we have reported tabulations with fewer than 30 programs, in part because some of the smaller members do not have as many as 30 kitchens or shelters.
asked only of clients at a specific type of program, such as pantries. In these cases, the entry *n.a.* ("not applicable") is made in the relevant columns of the tables.