

Perceptions of Hunger Among Adults 50+

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A light gray, curved graphic element is located at the bottom of the page, mirroring the shape of the red graphic at the top. It is a solid, horizontal band that tapers slightly towards the right side.



Perceptions of Hunger Among Adults 50+

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Survey conducted by
GfK

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Background and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to better understand people's perceptions of hunger in the United States and interest in hunger as a charitable cause. The information was gathered to help AARP and the AARP Foundation in their efforts to combat hunger among the 50+ population.

This study was conducted via telephone by GfK Custom Research. Questions were included on GfK's OmniTel and Hispanic OmniTel surveys on December 15-20, 2010. OmniTel interviews were conducted from among a nationally representative sample of 1330 adults age 50 or older (margin of error +/- 3 percent) and among 501 Hispanic adults age 50 or older (margin of error +/- 6 percent).

Executive Summary

This study surveyed American adults 50+ to better understand their perceptions of hunger and interest in hunger as a charitable cause. The telephone survey was conducted on December 15-20, 2010 by GfK among a nationally representative sample of 1330 adults age 50 or older (margin of error ± 3 percentage points) and among 501 Hispanic adults age 50 or older (margin of error ± 6 percentage points).

- When asked directly whether it is one of the most important issues facing the country, fourteen percent (14%) of adults age 50 and over consider hunger the single most important issue or problem facing the United States, and another seven in ten consider hunger an important (44%) or somewhat important (25%) issue or problem. Hispanic adults 50+ were significantly more likely to consider hunger the single most important issue or problem (35%).¹
- Two-thirds of adults 50+ have donated money to an organization providing food to those in need (67%) and a similar percentage donated food (66%) within the past year. Hispanic adults 50+ were less likely to say they had participated in these activities.
- If asked, almost eight in ten respondents said they would be interested in giving money or food directly to a person, family member, or neighbor in need (79%). Six in ten would be interested in donating food to an organization (63%) and five in ten would be interested in donating money to an organization providing food to those in need (51%).
- When told that approximately 51 million people in the US face hunger each day, approximately one-half of respondents (47%) said this statistic was higher than they thought. And when told that approximately 6 million people over age 60 face hunger each day, two-fifths of respondents (41%) said this statistic was higher than they thought.
- Most respondents were aware of organizations with whom they could donate food to those in need (79%), people, family members, or neighbors who they could give money or food to directly (76%), and organizations to which they could donate who provide food to those in need (75%).
- When recited ways to help someone who is hungry respondents were most interested in dropping food at a collection site in the community (49%), followed by dropping food at a food bank (23%) and then making a monetary donation in person (14%).
- When asked whether they would be most likely to give money, food or time to help fix hunger approximately one-half said food (48%) followed by money (30%) and time (15%).

¹ Please bear in mind throughout the report that the differences between the Hispanics 50+ sample and the general population 50+ sample may be a function of income differences: Hispanic sample median income is \$18.2K and general sample median income is \$41.6K.

Detailed Findings

Hunger Awareness

Respondents were asked to think about the biggest issues or problems currently facing the United States and indicate whether they thought hunger was the single most important issue. Fourteen percent said they thought hunger was the single most important issue and another seven in ten thought hunger was either an important issue (44%) or somewhat important issue (25%). Respondents with the lowest levels of income were more likely to indicate hunger was the single most important issue (21% among those with income under \$40K).

More than one-third of Hispanic adults age 50 and over considers hunger the single most important issue (35%), and another five in ten thought hunger was either an important issue (34%) or somewhat important issue (16%). Older Hispanic adults (65+) were more likely to consider hunger the most important issue (46%) compared to those who are younger (31% of 50-64). Additionally Hispanic women were more likely to respond that hunger was the single most important issue (42%) compared to men (28%).²

Table 1: How important an issue or problem is hunger in the United States?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Single most important issue	14	35
Important issue	44	34
Somewhat important issue	25	16
Not too big an issue	8	7
Not at all an issue	6	8
Don't know	3	1

² Please bear in mind throughout the report that the differences between the Hispanics 50+ sample and the general population 50+ sample may be a function of income differences: Hispanic sample median income is \$18.2K and general sample median income is \$41.6K.

Interviewers told respondents that approximately 51 million people in the U.S. face the threat of hunger each day and asked whether this statistic was higher, lower, or about the same as they thought. Almost half of respondents (47%) said the statistic was higher than they thought. Almost two-fifths (37%) indicated this statistic was about what they had thought. A similar percentage of Hispanic adults age 50 and older (51%) thought that 51 million people facing hunger in the US was a higher than they thought.

Interviewers also asked whether hearing that 6 million US residents over age 60 face hunger each day was higher, lower, or about what they thought. A slightly lower percentage (41%) thought this was higher than they thought.

Table 2: Is 51 million facing hunger each day higher than you thought?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Higher than thought	47	51
Lower than thought	9	17
About what thought	37	27
Don't know	8	6

Table 3: Is 6 million over 60 facing hunger each day higher than you thought?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Higher than thought	41	43
Lower than thought	10	15
About what thought	42	38
Don't know	6	5

The majority of those 50+ (90%) are aware of organizations or people with whom they could help with either food or monetary donations (90% for Hispanics 50+). Eight in ten (79%) know how to donate food to those in need and three-quarters know how to give money or food directly to a person in need (76%) or donate money to provide food to those in need (75%). Women were significantly more likely than men to say they know how to help with the issue of hunger for each of the opportunities. Additionally, younger respondents (50-64) were significantly more likely than older respondents (65+) to know how to help with each of the possible opportunities.

Table 4: Do you know of specific organizations or people with whom you could do the following? (percentage responding yes)

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Donate food to those in need	79	73
Give money or food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	76	80
Donate money to provide food to those in need	75	54
Volunteer time to provide food to those in need	61	57
Volunteer time organizing a group of people to provide food to those in need	41	48
None	10	9

Helping Hunger

Respondents were read a list of possible ways to help someone who is hungry and asked to select the one way they thought would be easiest. Among adults 50+, one-half said the easiest way to help hunger was to drop food at a collection site in the community (49%). Nearly one-quarter selected dropping food at a food bank (23%) as the easiest way to help and fourteen percent selected making a monetary donation at a food bank or community organization.

Table 5: Which of the following would be the easiest way for you to help someone who is hungry?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Drop food at a collection site	49	41
Drop food at a food bank	23	24
Make a monetary donation in person	14	23
Make a monetary donation online	4	1
Send a monetary donation via text message	1	3
Don't know	9	8

Respondents were asked which philanthropic activities (from a list) they have participated in within the last year, and which activities from the same list they would be interested in participating in if asked. Almost nine in ten (88%) had participated in at least one of the activities, most frequently donating money (67%) or donating food (66%) to an organization that provides food to those in need. While eight in ten Hispanic adults had participated in at least one of the activities (79%), fewer Hispanic adults cited participating in each of the activities compared to the general population.

When asked which philanthropic activities they would participate in if asked, eight in ten adults 50+ would give money or food directly to a person in need (79%) and three-fifths would donate food to an organization (63%). Younger respondents (50-64) were more likely to participate in all activities if asked compared to older respondents (65+).

Table 6: Which activities have you participated in within the last 12 months?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Donated money to organization providing food	67	30
Donated food to an organization providing food	66	31
Gave money or food directly to a person in need	62	51
Volunteered time at a food bank or organization	19	14
Volunteered time organizing people to provide food	13	8
None	12	21

Table 7: Which activities would you participate in if asked?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Give money or food directly to a person in need	79	54
Donate food to an organization providing food	63	46
Donate money to organization providing food	51	34
Volunteer time at a food bank or organization	36	37
Volunteer time organizing people to provide food	21	28
None	12	15

Adults age 50 and older said they would be most likely to give food (48%) to help solve the issue of hunger among older Americans, followed by money (30%) and time (15%). Hispanics age 50 and older were also most likely to give food (45%) but more interested in giving time (29%) and less interested in giving money (20%) compared to the general population.

Table 8: Would you be most likely to give money, food, or time to help fix the problem of hunger among the 60+?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1330)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=501)
Food	48	45
Money	30	20
Time	15	29
Don't know	8	6

Regional Differences

Overall, responses were fairly consistent across geographic regions (see Regional Annotated Questionnaire in Appendix B). There are a few regional differences worth noting. When asked which activities they have engaged in, respondents in the West were more likely to say they have given money or food directly to a person in need (69%) compared to those in the Northeast (58%), Midwest (59%) or South (62%). When asked in which activities they would be interested in participating, respondents in the South were more likely to say volunteering time while respondents in the West were more likely to say giving money or food directly.

Finally, when asked whether they know where they can donate or volunteer, respondents in the South were more likely to say they know where to donate their time, while respondents in the West were more likely to say they know where to donate food or money.

Table 9: Which activities have you participated in within the last 12 months? By Region

	% Northeast	% Midwest	% South	% West
Donated money to organization providing food	69	65	68	70
Donated food to an organization providing food	67	65	66	69
Gave money or food directly to a person in need	58	59	62	69
Volunteered time at a food bank or organization	17	17	21	19
Volunteered time organizing people to provide food	8	9	17	15
None	11	13	13	10

Table 10: Which activities would you participate in if asked? By Region

	% Northeast	% Midwest	% South	% West
Give money or food directly to a person in need	79	76	79	82
Donate food to an organization providing food	65	63	61	62
Donate money to organization providing food	53	51	48	52
Volunteer time at a food bank or organization	33	36	37	34
Volunteer time organizing people to provide food	15	19	25	20
None	11	14	12	10

Table 11: Do you know of specific organizations or people with whom you could do the following? (percentage responding yes) By Region

	% Northeast	% Midwest	% South	% West
Donate food to those in need	80	78	77	85
Give money/food directly to a person	75	75	74	81
Donate money to provide food to those in need	73	73	73	81
Volunteer time to provide food to those in need	59	58	62	65
Volunteer time organizing people to provide food	37	39	45	41
None	9	10	13	6

Appendix A

Annotated Questionnaire

Please note, all data are given in percentages. Asterisks indicate that cell size is negligible. Not all percentages will add up to 100 due to rounding.

General Audience Base: 1330 unless otherwise specified

Hispanic Audience Base: 501 unless otherwise specified

1. Thinking about the biggest issues or problems currently facing the United States, would you say the issue of hunger is . . .

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

	% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1 The single most important issue or problem	14	35
2 An important issue or problem, but not the biggest	44	34
3 A somewhat important issue or problem	25	16
4 Not too big an issue or problem,	8	7
5 Or, not at all an issue or problem	6	8
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't Know	3	1

2. Which of the following philanthropic activities have you participated in within the last 12 months? How about....

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY.

	% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1 Donated money to an organization providing food to those in need	67	30
2 Donated food to an organization providing food to those in need	66	31
3 Volunteered time at a food bank or org. providing food to those in need	19	14
4 Volunteered time organizing people to provide food to those in need	13	8
5 Gave money/food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	62	51
(DO NOT READ) None	12	21

3. Which of the following philanthropic activities would you be interested in participating if asked? How about....

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY.

	% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1 Donating money to an organization providing food to those in need	51	34
2 Donating food to an organization providing food to those in need	63	46
3 Volunteering time at a food bank or org. providing food to those in need	36	37
4 Volunteering time organizing people to provide food to those in need	21	28
5 Giving money/ food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	79	54
(DO NOT READ) None	12	15

4. **There are approximately 51 million people in the United States who face the threat of hunger each day. Please tell me if you think this statistic is higher, lower or about the same as you thought.**

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

		% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1	Higher than you thought	47	51
2	Lower than you thought	8	17
3	About what you thought	37	27
dk	(DO NOT READ) Don't know	8	5

5. **There are approximately 6 million people in the United States over the age of 60 who face the threat of hunger each day. Please tell me if you think this statistic is higher, lower or about the same as you thought.**

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

		% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1	Higher than you thought	41	43
2	Lower than you thought	10	15
3	About what you thought	42	38
dk	(DO NOT READ) Don't know	6	5

6. **According to recent statistics, there are 51 million people in the United States facing the threat of hunger each day, six million of whom are over the age of 60. Knowing this, how likely would you be to donate time or money to efforts that assist the hungry if asked? Would you say....**

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

		% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1	Extremely likely	12	11
2	Very likely	24	28
3	Somewhat likely	38	37
4	Not too likely	9	8
5	Not at all likely	15	12
dk	Don't know (DO NOT READ)	2	4

7. **Please indicate, for each of the following, whether you do or do not know of specific organizations or people with whom you could do the following. How about....**

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.

	% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
Donate money to provide food to those in need	75	54
Donate food to those in need	79	73
Volunteer time to provide food to those in need	61	57
Volunteer time organizing people to provide food to those in need	41	48
Give money/food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	76	80
None	10	9
Don't Know	*	*

8. What do you think would be the easiest way for you to help someone who is hungry?

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

	% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1 Send a monetary donation via text message	1	3
2 Make monetary donation online	4	1
3 Make monetary donation in person (food bank or community org.)	14	23
4 Drop food at a food bank or food pantry	23	24
5 Drop food at a collection site (grocery store, event)	49	41
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't know	9	8

9. Thinking about the problem of hunger, would you be most likely to give money, food or your time to help fix this problem among those over the age of 60?

INTERVIEWER: SELECT ONE RESPONSE.

	% Gen Pop	% Hispanic
1 Money	29	20
2 Time	15	29
3 Food	48	45
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't Know	8	6

Appendix B

Annotated Questionnaire--Regions

Please note, all data are given in percentages. Asterisks indicate that cell size is negligible. Not all percentages will add up to 100 due to rounding.

General Audience Base: 1330 unless otherwise specified

1. Thinking about the biggest issues or problems currently facing the United States, would you say the issue of hunger is . . .

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

		Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1	The single most important issue or problem	16	13	15	11
2	An important issue or problem, but not the biggest	43	45	42	47
3	A somewhat important issue or problem	26	25	25	26
4	Not too big an issue or problem,	8	9	7	9
5	Or, not at all an issue or problem	6	7	7	5
dk	(DO NOT READ) Don't Know	2	1	4	3

2. Which of the following philanthropic activities have you participated in within the last 12 months? How about....

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY.

		Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1	Donated money to an organization providing food to those in need	69	65	68	70
2	Donated food to an organization providing food to those in need	67	65	66	69
3	Volunteered time at a food bank or org. providing food to those in need	17	17	21	19
4	Volunteered time organizing people to provide food to those in need	8	9	17	15
5	Gave money/food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	58	59	62	69
	(DO NOT READ) None	11	13	13	10

3. Which of the following philanthropic activities would you be interested in participating if asked? How about....

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1 Donating money to an organization providing food to those in need	53	51	48	52
2 Donating food to an organization providing food to those in need	65	63	61	62
3 Volunteering time at a food bank or org. providing food to those in need	33	36	37	34
4 Volunteering time organizing people to provide food to those in need	15	19	25	20
5 Giving money/ food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	79	76	79	82
(DO NOT READ) None	11	14	12	10

4. There are approximately 51 million people in the United States who face the threat of hunger each day. Please tell me if you think this statistic is higher, lower or about the same as you thought.

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1 Higher than you thought	50	46	46	45
2 Lower than you thought	6	8	7	13
3 About what you thought	35	37	38	36
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't know	8	9	9	6

5. There are approximately 6 million people in the United States over the age of 60 who face the threat of hunger each day. Please tell me if you think this statistic is higher, lower or about the same as you thought.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1 Higher than you thought	41	41	41	42
2 Lower than you thought	12	9	9	15
3 About what you thought	41	42	44	40
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't know	6	8	7	3

6. **According to recent statistics, there are 51 million people in the United States facing the threat of hunger each day, six million of whom are over the age of 60. Knowing this, how likely would you be to donate time or money to efforts that assist the hungry if asked? Would you say....**

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1 Extremely likely	12	12	14	12
2 Very likely	22	20	24	30
3 Somewhat likely	43	40	34	36
4 Not too likely	10	11	9	8
5 Not at all likely	11	15	17	12
dk Don't know (DO NOT READ)	2	2	2	2

7. **Please indicate, for each of the following, whether you do or do not know of specific organizations or people with whom you could do the following. How about....**

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Donate money to provide food to those in need	73	73	73	81
Donate food to those in need	80	78	77	85
Volunteer time to provide food to those in need	59	58	62	65
Volunteer time organizing people to provide food to those in need	37	39	45	41
Give money/food directly to a person, family member or neighbor in need	75	75	74	81
None	9	10	13	6
Don't Know	1	*	-	1

8. **What do you think would be the easiest way for you to help someone who is hungry?**

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST. SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1 Send a monetary donation via text message	2	1	1	0
2 Make monetary donation online	5	1	3	7
3 Make monetary donation in person (food bank or community org.)	11	15	14	17
4 Drop food at a food bank or food pantry	25	22	23	24
5 Drop food at a collection site (grocery store, event)	46	51	50	45
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't know	11	9	9	7

9. Thinking about the problem of hunger, would you be most likely to give money, food or your time to help fix this problem among those over the age of 60?

INTERVIEWER: SELECT ONE RESPONSE.

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
1 Money	31	31	26	34
2 Time	11	16	17	13
3 Food	49	46	48	47
dk (DO NOT READ) Don't know	9	8	9	7