

WSU FOOD WASTE CLIENT SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

BACKGROUND

According to the USDA, food waste is a major issue, with waste accounting for 30 - 40% of the food supply in the US. Food waste occurs for a variety of reasons. To gain a better understanding of why food gets wasted, Gleaners developed a set of focus group questions with the assistance of student interns from Wayne State University to explore food waste among pantry clients.

Four student interns from Wayne State University worked with the Gleaners Evaluation Coordinator to recruit pantry clients for focus groups focused on understanding food waste. The purpose of these focus groups were to understand how clients define food waste, why food waste occurs in their households, and strategies to avoid food waste.



METHODOLOGY

Three student interns from Wayne State University worked with the Gleaners Evaluation Coordinator and staff to survey clients attending distributions at mobile pantries and agency partner pantries. The purpose of the survey is to measure food usage and waste and what contributes to waste.

MOBILE PANTRY AND PANTRY PROFILE:

- Total Mobile Pantry Sites: 10
 - 4 School Food Mobile Sites
 - 1 Senior Food Mobile Site
 - 5 USDA Mobile Sites
- Total Traditional Pantries: 9
 - 4 Client Choice Pantries
 - 5 Box Pantries



WHO TOOK THE SURVEY:

- Total Surveys Collected: 961
- Final Sample, N=644 (Surveys with missing data were removed and excluded from analysis)
 - Mobile Pantries, N=378
 - Traditional Pantries, N=266

Mobile Pantries N=378

Traditional Pantries N=266

DISTRIBUTION ATTENDANCE

On average, mobile pantry clients reported:

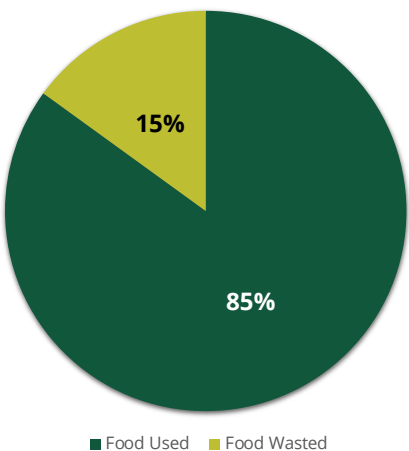


On average, traditional pantry clients reported:

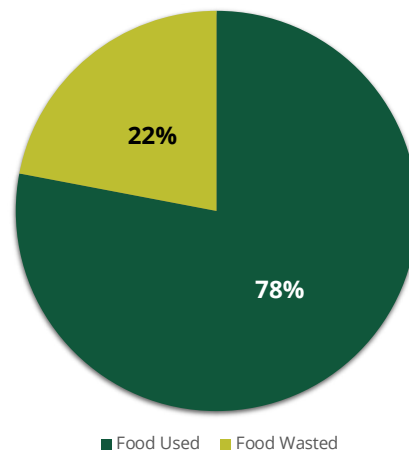


FOOD USAGE AT HOME

Mobile pantry clients reported using **85%** of the food provided at a distribution, while waste accounted for **15%**:



Traditional pantry clients reported using **78%** of the food provided at a distribution, while **22%** of the food was wasted:



REASONS FOOD GOES TO WASTE

Clients were given a list of the most common reasons that food may go to waste and instructed to check off all reasons waste may happen in their homes. Responses are displayed in the table below:

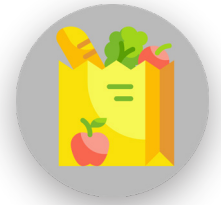
REASON	N (MOBILE PANTRIES)	N (TRADITIONAL PANTRIES)	TOTAL N
Food was close to expiring	133	163	296
Received a food I did not like	149	81	230
Had too many of the same food item	97	85	185
Other*	N/A	N/A	154

*Responses displayed in the table on page 3

REASON LABELED OTHER**

N

Food already spoiled	40
Dietary restrictions	15
Food allergy & could not eat item	11
Did not know how to prepare food item	5
Food storage issues	4
Unhealthy food item and did not eat	1
None	75



**Responses were not compared by pantry type, responses were de-identified prior to analysis

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS:

From the findings, the following conclusions can be made:

- Food waste is slightly higher among traditional pantry clients in comparison to mobile pantry clients
 - Traditional pantry clients reported 22% of the food received at a distribution goes to waste in comparison to 15% of mobile pantry clients
- Food usage is slightly higher among mobile pantry clients - with clients reporting using 85% of the food received from a distribution in comparison to 78% utilization among traditional pantry clients
- Traditional pantry clients attended a food distribution more times in the last 12 months in comparison to mobile pantry clients
- The most common reason for food waste was the food being close to expiration when received

Next steps:

- Compare with Household Impact Model (HIM) waste calculation

