Who’s Hungry?
Louisa County Survey of Food Insecurity and Unmet Needs
Report of Results
November 2018

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At CSR, Jim Ellis, formerly Director of Research at CSR, had overall responsibility for the proposal development and initial, mail-based project design, and he oversaw the focus groups at the beginning of the project. Project leadership was then transferred to Thomas Guterbock, CSR Director, who was assisted by Yasamin Miller of YMG Consulting in shifting the data collection strategy to telephone and face-to-face modes. Guterbock and Miller oversaw managing questionnaire design and development and data collection in the pilot and production phases.

Survey operations for this complex study were managed by Dr. Guterbock and Matthew Starnowski, Survey Operations Manager, assisted by Elliot Toms, who provided technical support, and a team of interviewers (Suzanne Mawyer, Michelle Paul, Brian Hamshar, and Stephanie Fick) supervised by Thomas Woodson, field supervisor. Ila Crawford, Fiscal Technician, managed the incentive cards provided to respondents.

Data analysis was supervised by Kara Fitzgibbon, Senior Project Coordinator at CSR; assisted by Research Analysts Shayne Zaslow, Hexuan Zhang, Sean Johnson, and Rebecca Brookman. Shayne Zaslow created the maps shown in this report, using ArcGIS software. At earlier stages of the project, Graduate Research Assistant Meghan Smith and undergraduate Research Assistant Rachel Kopelove helped with the literature review and demographic analysis tasks.

Kathryn Wood, Senior Project Director at CSR, was primary author of the report.

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The most important acknowledgment goes to the more than 500 residents of Louisa County without whose participation there would be no survey to report. We are grateful to those residents for their time and their trust in us to make their voices heard through this analysis and report.

The Center for Survey Research is responsible for any errors or omissions in this report. Questions may be directed to the Center for Survey Research, P.O Box 400767, Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4767. CSR may also be reached by telephone at 434-243-5232; by electronic mail at surveys@virginia.edu, or via the World Wide Web at: https://csr.coopercenter.org.
Executive Summary

Survey Purpose

The Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia conducted a multi-year, multi-faceted survey of residents of Louisa County, Virginia to understand the needs of disadvantaged citizens, primarily concerning those who have difficulty securing adequate food to feed themselves and their families.

The survey was designed and conducted in partnership with the Louisa County Resource Center (LCRC), supported by a generous grant from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation. The Resource Council is the primary source of supplemental food for disadvantaged citizens in Louisa County. The survey was specifically designed to:

- Locate those who need but are not receiving services from the Resource Council
- Uncover specific geographic areas in Louisa County that need more focus.
- Learn more about how LCRC Community Cupboard clients use the food assistance
- Understand other unmet needs of low-income or food-insecure Louisa residents
- Gather opinions from cross-section of Louisa residents on important local resource needs.

Louisa County, Virginia is a primarily rural county located between Charlottesville and Richmond. According to the US census, it has 35,860 residents comprising 13,146 households. The County population is 18.0 percent African-American and 2.7 percent Hispanic. According to 2017 estimates from the United States Census Bureau, 12.2 percent of residents fall under the Federal Poverty Level, while 30.6 percent are below 200% of that threshold.

Impact

This lengthy and complex project provides a rich source of information about food issues in Louisa County as well as providing some thoughts about other, non-food needs in the County.

This study was unique in its use of probability-based, general population survey methods to directly assess food insecurity in a sizable rural area. The use of multiple survey modes and sampling from multiple survey frames, including a small number of additional interviews using non-probability methods, proved crucial to the study’s success.

The survey successfully identified unmet needs for food assistance in the county. As a result, LCRC has initiated a satellite food service in the Green Springs area of the County, and plans are under way for a similar service that will better address food needs in the County’s eastern end.

Major Findings

Prevalence rates for food insecurity in 2017 were much higher for Louisa (22.3 percent), than measured by USDA for the United States (11.8 percent).\(^1\) Louisa was also atypical for Virginia. Results for Virginia (covering 2013-15) reported by USDA suggest that about 10 percent of households were food insecure.

\(^1\) See: Household Food Security in the United States in 2017 for information on USDA measurement of Food Security.
Household characteristics also influence the degree of food insecurity. In Louisa, non-white households were somewhat more likely to experience food insecurity than white households, and families with children were more likely to experience food insecurity than were families without children.

Louisa Poverty, Population, and Food Security Distributed Unevenly Across the County

Contrary to intuition, poverty alone cannot be a proxy for food insecurity. Both Louisa and Mineral census tracts had lower concentrations of food insecurity even though they had higher concentrations of poverty. Conversely, Green Spring and Cuckoo-Bumpass had a higher concentration of food insecurity than poverty rates alone would suggest.

Comparing the distribution of LCRC clients with the distribution of food insecurity, we can see that Green Spring, Cuckoo-Bumpass, and Jackson-Holly Grove are potentially underserved by LCRC. These three areas are more distant from the food pantry’s location than are the other census tracts.

Variety of Services Utilized by At-risk Louisa Residents

All at-risk respondents were asked whether they had received food, meals, or food assistance from any of a list of organizations, including Meals on Wheels, churches, and community organizations. Nearly 47 percent of these respondents said they had received help from community-based organizations (which would include the Louisa County Resource Council Community Cupboard), 20 percent received help from church or religious organizations, and 15.4 percent from WIC.
those with moderate, low, or very low food security did not use the food pantry. Awareness of the food pantry varied by the respondent’s location in the County, with 97 percent of residents of Cuckoo-Bumpass saying they had heard of the pantry, while only 70 percent of residents of Jackson-Holly Grove said so.

**Of All Aspects, Food Pantry Clients Appreciated Staff the Most**
Most pantry users were satisfied with the services. No major barriers were identified that explain lack of pantry use. Instead, when explicitly asked why they do not use the pantry, most at-risk respondents reported either not needing it or feeling others were needier.

**Louisa County Resource Council Has a Broader Mission Than Simply Providing Food**
Healthcare was mentioned by more than half of the at-risk respondents as a pressing non-food need, followed by financial assistance, transportation, and phone and internet access. Among those indicating healthcare needs, paying medical bills was cited by nearly two-thirds, and over half reported needing help to attain health insurance.

All survey respondents, whether at-risk or not, were asked what they perceived to be the most pressing needs in Louisa County. Again, healthcare was identified as the most pressing need, while transportation and phone or internet access were in the top four. Louisa’s rural location exacerbates the problem of availability of health care, transportation, and high-quality cell and internet service, and that the financial burden related to each kind of service is an individual issue for needy residents in the county.

**Methods**
A complex, multi-mode, multi-frame survey was designed to address challenges of collecting sensitive information about food security from rural residents. The process began with a series of focus groups designed to refine concepts and vocabulary, explore issues, and test the questionnaire. Three survey modes were employed: telephone interviews from the Center for Survey Research Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) lab; in-person, door-to-door interviews; and web-based, self-administered questionnaires. Face-to-face, intercept interviews were conducted at two selected locations in the County to fill data gaps in the probability survey.

Questionnaire development was a collaborative process between the Louisa County Resource Council and the Center for Survey Research. The LCRC specified topics to explore, and CSR drafted a questionnaire that was modified based on feedback from LCRC and several focus groups.

Three sampling frames were used for probability sampling. These included an Address-Based Sample (ABS) of postal addresses; a cell phone sample; and a low-income household targeted “Consumer Cell” sample. The list of all addresses within Louisa County was divided into two strata, based on two aggregations of census block groups. Stratum 1 comprised seven block groups having the highest percentages of people under
100% of the Federal Poverty Level [FPL]. Stratum 2 encompassed the remaining 10 block groups in the county. The resulting ABS sample was then divided into four groups, based on the stratum and on whether the address was successfully matched to a phone number.

Several Steps Taken to Ensure Adequate Coverage and Representation

It was essential to oversample poorer parts of Louisa County to attain a sample size of sufficient size for studying food insecurity. This was achieved by stratifying Census blocks into two groups: those with higher and lower poverty rates. We then intentionally oversampled households in the higher-poverty stratum.

A weighting procedure was applied so that the final sample would more accurately represent the population of interest. Cases from groups that were under-represented in the sample receive greater weight, while cases from overrepresented groups are given lesser weight. As a result, the final, weighted probability sample closely represents Louisa County adult population with respect to the percent Black or African-American, the percent under 200% of FPL, and the percent of adults aged 65 or more. The sample is also close to the proportion of Hispanic adults in the County due to the additional non-probability, local interviews.

A variety of techniques were applied in order to maximize response rates. For example, there was some local media and some social media coverage of the survey effort. Telephone interviewers made multiple attempts to reach respondents. An advance letter was mailed to sampled households and door hangers and informative handouts were prepared for use in the field. A web option was offered to all survey participants.

### Figure ES-6. Stratum and Match Between Phone Number and Addresses Based on Different Frames

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<td>Phone only</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consumer cell</td>
<td>Low income projected ≥20%</td>
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<td>Phone only</td>
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<td>ABS</td>
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I. Introduction

About the Survey

This report presents the results of a multi-year, multi-faceted survey of residents of Louisa County, Virginia, undertaken from July, 2017 through May, 2018, to understand the needs of disadvantaged citizens, primarily with regard to those who have difficulty securing enough food to feed themselves and their families. The study was funded by a grant from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation on behalf of the Louisa County Resource Council, the primary source of supplemental food for disadvantaged citizens in Louisa County.

Specific goals of the project were to:

- Estimate the prevalence of food insecurity in the Louisa County population by asking residents directly about their food needs;
- Learn more about how the Louisa County Resource Council Community Cupboard clients use food assistance received from the LCRC;
- Learn why some who need food assistance do not use LCRC resources;
- Understand other unmet needs of low-income or food-insecure Louisa residents;
- Gather opinions from a cross-section of Louisa residents on important local resource needs.

Louisa County, Virginia is a primarily rural county located between Charlottesville and Richmond. According to the US census, it has 35,860 residents comprising 13,146 households. The County population is 18.0% African-American and 2.7% Hispanic. According to 2017 estimates from the United States Census Bureau, 12.2% of residents fall under the Federal Poverty Level, while 30.6% are below 200% of that level.

Summary of Methods

From its outset, the study presented a number of design challenges. Food insecurity is a sensitive topic and as such can be difficult to discuss with respondents. In more general terms, low-income rural residents can be difficult to reach for this kind of survey. Many have cell phones only (no landline), many are distrustful of survey telephone calls, and literacy may be an issue making paper survey forms difficult to complete. Since one goal of the survey was to estimate prevalence, a scientific probability sample was required. The survey therefore needed to represent both the disadvantaged population and the general county population.

The federal government assesses food security nationally via a periodic supplement to the Current Population Survey conducted by the US Bureau of the Census, with results reported by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That study sets the standard on how to measure and report food security or insecurity. But due to challenges such as those described above, there are few existing studies that directly assess food insecurity in a local area by directly asking residents about their food situation. The non-profit organization Hunger in America performed survey-based assessments of food security in different regions of the country over several years, but they surveyed only people who were already clients of local food banks. That method makes it difficult to estimate unmet need among those who are not food bank clients. The few studies that attempted local area general population assessments were


undertaken in urban poverty areas.\textsuperscript{4} \textsuperscript{5} The general practice in many areas has been to estimate food insecurity based simply on the prevalence of poverty in an area. As far as we know, the current study is unique in its use of probability-based, general population survey methods to directly assess food insecurity in a sizable rural area.

**Survey Design**

In order to meet the challenges of the study, a complex, multi-mode, multi-frame survey was designed, beginning with a series of focus groups to refine concepts and vocabulary, explore issues, and test the questionnaire. Three survey modes were employed: telephone interviews from the Center for Survey Research Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) lab; in-person, door-to-door interviews; and web-based, self-administered questionnaires, using the Qualtrics platform. At the end of the data collection period, additional face-to-face, intercept interviews were conducted at two selected locations in the County.

**Questionnaire Development**

The development of the questionnaire was a collaborative process between the Louisa County Resource Council and the Center for Survey Research. The LCRC specified topics to explore, and CSR drafted a questionnaire that was modified based on LCRC feedback.

Two focus groups conducted in October and December, 2017 explored issues of vocabulary and issues for non-clients. The questionnaire was tested by the third focus group in May, 2017, after which the questions were refined.


**The Sample**

Three sampling frames were used for probability sampling, with all samples supplied by Marketing Systems Group. First, an Address-Based Sample (ABS) of postal addresses was obtained, with some names and telephone numbers appended. Secondly, a cell phone sample was obtained for Random Digit Dialing, and finally we obtained a targeted “Consumer Cell” sample with cell phone numbers and addresses, aimed at reaching low-income households.

**The Pilot Study**

Due to design challenges and complexity, CSR planned and executed a full-scale pilot study, involving all three modes and all three sampling frames, extending from June to August 2017. Telephone, in-person, and web interviews totaled 109 completions. The pilot study was highly successful, and the questionnaire was changed in only a few places.

**Non-Probability Sampling**

The pilot study did however show that, given available study resources, non-probability methods would be needed to increase the number of disadvantaged households included in the survey data. The Center for Survey Research then added face-to-face, intercept interviews at two locations in Louisa County: the University of Virginia Health Clinic at Zion Crossroads, and at St. Jude’s Roman Catholic Church in Mineral.

**Oversampling and weighting**

In order to achieve a sample size of sufficient size for studying food insecurity, it was necessary to oversample poorer parts of Louisa County. For the oversampling, Census block groups were stratified into two groups: those with higher and lower poverty rates. We intentionally oversampled households in the higher-poverty stratum.
Weighting the data

Prior to analysis, the collected data from the probability samples (combining results from the pilot and production phases of interviewing) were statistically weighted. Weighting is an adjustment that allows some cases to count more than others in the tabulation of results. Cases from groups that are under-represented in the sample are given greater weight, while cases from over-represented groups are given lesser weight, so that the final sample will more accurately represent the population of interest. The data were first weighted to compensate for the intentional over-sampling of households in the higher-poverty areas (census block groups) of the County. At that point, the demographic profile of this “base-weighted” probability sample was compared to population data from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. The sample matched the population data closely on most variables of interest, but still somewhat over-represented households below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Therefore, an additional “post-stratification” weighting step was added to bring that percentage into agreement with the census figures for Louisa County. (Weighted and unweighted demographics and additional information on weighting are provided in Appendix D—Methods Report.)

The final, weighted probability sample is closely representative of the Louisa County adult population with respect to the percent Black or African-American, the percent under 200% of FPL, and the percent of adults aged 65 or more. With the non-probability cases added to constitute the full sample, the sample is also close to the proportion of Hispanic adults in the County.

Survey Production Phase

CSR employed a number of techniques in order to maximize response rates. There was some local media and some social media coverage of the survey effort. Telephone interviewers made multiple attempts to reach respondents. For in- person interviews, an advance letter was mailed to sampled households, and door-hangers and informative handouts were prepared for use in the field. Respondents who completed an interview—whether by phone, in person, or through the Internet—were provided with a $5 Walmart gift card. Some telephone cases were moved to the field for face to face contact. Field interviewers, like telephone interviewers, made multiple attempts, on weekdays, evenings, and weekends. Finally, the web option was offered to all.

Between October and December 2017, data were collected from households in the probability samples, yielding 372 completed interviews—206 by phone, 150 in-person, and 16 on the web. The non-probability interviews occurred between December 2017 and January 2018 at the health clinic, yielding 49 completions, and at St. Jude’s in March and April 2018, yielding 9 completions.

Both the probability and non-probability samples were used in our analysis, but not in the same way. For measures of food insecurity prevalence, only the probability samples were used, combining the 109 interviews from the pilot study with the 372 interviews from production, yielding a total of 481 in the probability sample, weighted to reflect the oversampling on poverty.

For results on food pantry usage and disadvantaged household needs, we added 58 non-probability cases, for a full sample N of 539 cases.

Demographic Profile

Among the weighted full sample, two-thirds of respondents were female, which may be a product of the recruitment selection process in which the household member most knowledgeable of household groceries and consumption was requested to participate. One-fifth of respondents were younger than 40 years old (20.3%), 18.7% were aged 40 to 49, 20.8% were between 50 and 59, and over two-fifths were 60 and older (combined 40.2%). Over a third of the sample (combined 37.8%)
had an annual household income below $35,000—with 14.4% earning less than $15,000. Another third (35.0%) had a household income between $35,000 and $74,999. Just over a quarter (27.1%) of respondents had a household income of $75,000 or higher.

Less than three percent (2.5%) of the sample ethnically identify as Hispanic/Latino. Approximately four-fifths of respondents racially identity as White; approximately one in five (19.4%) identify as Black or African American, and four percent of respondents identified as another race (including American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and other racial categories not listed in the questionnaire). For specific percentages of the weighted full sample, see Table 10 in Appendix D.
II. Food Insecurity in Louisa County

Measuring Food Security and Insecurity

One major purpose of the survey was to measure the prevalence of food insecurity in Louisa County. The basic USDA definition of food security states, “Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Food insecurity is anything less than that. The terminology used here reflects both the USDA emphasis on food security and our research interest in the lower end of the food security scale: food insecurity.

Measuring food security is a complex and difficult matter, and in the United States, the Department of Agriculture measures the level of food security annually, with the most recent data available from 2016. The Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2016 indicates that 87.7% of households were food secure in 2016.

The USDA uses a series of 18 questions to measure food security, some of which are asked only of families with children. However, a six-item short form for assessing food security is an acceptable substitute to reduce respondent burden. The USDA then categorizes food security into four categories, based on a continuum, including high food security, marginal food security, low food security, and very low food security.

The survey results reported here utilized the six-item short form to assess food insecurity prevalence in Louisa County. It is also very important to note that in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, data reported is from the weighted probability sample, so that the results are generalizable to the Louisa County population.

A number of questions were asked prior to the six-item module. First, to get a general sense of food insecurity in Louisa, all respondents were asked whether they knew of people around them who do not have enough food on a regular basis. More than two-thirds of our respondents (69.3%) said they did not know of people near them who did not have enough food.

That question was followed by a question that asked the respondent to consider the food eaten in their household in the past six months, and select among four statements that might describe their food situation.

As Figure II-1 shows, about three-quarters of our respondents (73.8%) said they had enough of the kinds of food they want to eat. Twenty percent said they had enough food but not always the kinds they wanted, while six percent said they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. This question was a screener question that determined whether or not the respondent was asked the six items from the USDA food security module. If the respondent answered with anything other than

---

that they had enough of the kinds of food they wanted, they were considered to be “at risk” and were asked the USDA module of questions.

A second screener question pertaining to income followed the first question about food. The respondent was asked whether their household income was above 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line, which was calculated based on household size as reported by the respondent in one of the opening questions. If the respondent answered that their income was below that level, they were also considered to be “at risk” and were asked the USDA module of questions. In the weighted probability sample, about 30% of respondents reported their income as below 200% of the FPL. USDA guidelines on assessing food security in sample surveys suggest that it is generally safe to assume that a household that is above 200% of the FPL and reports that they have had enough of the food they want in the past six months is a household with high food security. That is the approach followed in this survey.

Finally, a third screener, again pertaining to income, asked about the respondent’s feelings about their household income. Figure II-2 shows that forty-three percent felt they were living comfortably on their income, and an additional forty-one percent said they were getting by on their income. Eleven percent were finding it difficult, and five percent were finding it very difficult to get by on their present income. Any response other than “living comfortably” was considered to be “at risk.”

Based on the combined screener questions, 344 respondents of 539 total respondents were found to be “at risk” for food insecurity and were asked the six items used by the USDA to measure food security. The percentages reported below reflect the at-risk population on each of these items.

**Six USDA Food Insecure Items**

To specifically measure food security of individual respondent’s households, we employed the USDA six-item short form food security survey module. The following figures report the distribution of responses on each of the questions. The interviewer began by saying, “The following are statements that people have made about their food situation. For each statement, please indicate whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months.”

The first item asked whether it was often true, sometimes true, or never true that “the food that we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have money to get more.” As shown below, 12.1% of the “at risk” households in our weighted probability sample said that it was often true, while an additional 28.9% said that it was sometimes true. Well over half of our at-risk respondents said this was never true.

**Figure 9: Food Did Not Last and Could Not Buy More**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Often True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the second item: “My household couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals,” 10.9% of at-risk respondents said it was often true, while 24.9% said it was sometimes true. Well over half of our at-risk respondents said this was never true.

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9 These figures refer to the full weighted sample, including both probability and non-probability respondents.

said it was sometimes true, and 64.2% said it was never true.

Figure 10: Could Not Afford to Eat Balanced Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Often True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third USDA item asked, “In the last 12 months, did you (or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?” More than three-quarters of the at-risk respondents said they had not done this, while 22.8% said they had.

Figure 11: Have Cut Size of Meals or Skipped Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those respondents indicating they had skipped or cut the size of their meals were asked how often that happened. Of this group, nearly 42% said it happened almost every month, while 39.2% said some months but not every month, and 19% needed to cut or skip meals only one or two months in the last twelve months.

Figure 12: Frequency of Cutting Size of or Skipping Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost every month</th>
<th>Some months but not every month</th>
<th>Only 1 or 2 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, a more dire question asked, “In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food?” Fourteen percent of at-risk respondents had done this, while 86 percent had not.

Figure 14: Did Not Eat Because There Was Not Enough Money

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food Insecurity Score

The next important task for analysis was to determine a summary measure to capture the results of these six items as provided by our respondents. Figure II-9 below shows an indexed score with the percent of our respondents who had one or more indicators of food insecurity based on the six-item module. We now move our discussion to include all respondents in the probability sample by assigning all who were not considered to be at
risk a score of zero. The higher number reflects more answers indicating food insecurity, the score of zero shows that no answers indicating food insecurity were provided by respondents. More than two-thirds of respondents in the entire weighted, probability sample indicated no food insecurity whatsoever.

**Figure 15: Food Insecurity Index Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Food Security</th>
<th>Weighted Probability Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Level of Food Security**

To summarize more clearly, and to follow the USDA terminology, we translated the food insecurity score into categorized levels of food security.

Following the USDA guidelines, taking scores of 0 and 1 as indicators of high or marginal food security, a total of 77.7 percent of our respondents fit into this category. Scores of 2, 3, or 4 are considered to indicate low food security, while scores of 5 and 6 are considered to indicate very low food security (or high food insecurity). Of our respondents, 12.3 percent fall into this middle category, while an additional 10 percent fall into the lowest food security category. Figure II-10 and Figure II-11 below illustrate these findings graphically. Those respondents with scores indicating high or moderate food security can be considered “food secure,” while those with either low or very low food security are considered “food insecure.”
In total, our data indicate that 22.3 percent of households in Louisa County experience food insecurity. This percentage of households represents 8,433 persons in Louisa who are food insecure\(^\text{11}\).

**Who is Food Insecure?**

To understand the question of who is hungry in Louisa County, we want to explore the connections between food insecurity and demographic variables that might make a difference such as race, age, household size and household composition. All of these characteristics were found to be statistically significantly related to the level of food security experienced by a household.

**Food Security and Race**

Figure II-12 illustrates the connection between race and food insecurity. The relationship is seen most easily if we examine the percent of respondents who had high or marginal food security.

Comparing whites and African Americans, 79.7 percent of whites experienced high or moderate food security, while 65.9 percent of black or African American respondents did. It is important to note that the number of Hispanic respondents in our probability sample was very low and therefore they were not analyzed separately but instead included in the “other” category, which also includes multi-racial respondents. This group had the largest proportion of respondents who experienced high or marginal food security.

**Food Security and Age**

Age presents another interesting connection. The most food secure age groups were the youngest and oldest age groups: those under 30, for whom 77 percent had high/marginal food security, while 85 percent of those 60 years of age and older had high or marginal food security.

**Food Security and Household Size**

As might be expected, food insecurity is related to household size and to household composition. Among our respondents,

\(^{11}\) The 95% Confidence Interval for this estimate ranges between 6,587 to 10,279 persons in Louisa who experience food insecurity.
households consisting of only one person and households of seven people or more were more likely to have very low food security than were other categories. It is important to note that only a very few of our respondents reported the largest household size. When low security and very low security are combined, households with two members do better than the other households, as Figure II-14 below shows.

**Figure 20: Food Security by Household Size**

![Bar chart showing food security by household size]

**Food Security and Household Composition**

Figure II-15 illustrates our findings regarding household composition and food insecurity. Households with children were more likely to be food insecure than were households without children. The level of food insecurity was approximately 30 percent for each group, but the level of food insecurity varied, depending upon whether the household was headed by a single adult or multiple adults. Twenty percent of households with children headed by a single adult were found have very low food security, with another 10 percent having low food security. For households headed by multiple adults, the percentages essentially flipped. Nine percent had very low food security, while 20.4 percent had low food security.

In comparison, 8.8 percent of multiple adult households with no children reported very low security, and an additional 8 percent low security. For single adult households, 13.9 percent reported very low food security, with 8.9 percent having low security.

To summarize this data by household type, households headed by more than one adult were more likely to be food secure, as were households without children. Households headed by one adult with children had the highest levels of food insecurity.

**Figure 21: Food Security by Household Composition**

![Bar chart showing food security by household composition]

**Distribution of Food Insecurity around Louisa**

One of the concerns that motivated this research effort was to learn if there were parts of Louisa County that were not being adequately served by the Community Cupboard, the large and active food pantry that is operated by the LCRC. The food pantry itself is centrally located, between the town of Louisa and Mineral, but Louisa County stretches for many miles to the east and west of this location. An important research question for this study was to learn whether the need for food assistance in the far eastern and western parts of the County was being met.

A first step in this analysis was undertaken in the early months of the project, while the survey was still in its design stages. LCRC made available to CSR, on a confidential basis, an electronic file with the address locations of every food pantry client from the prior three years. CSR then prepared a spot map showing
the location of LCRC clients. The resulting map is shown in Figure II-16 below.

Figure 22: Location of LCRC Food Pantry Clients

It is evident from the map that LCRC draws clients from every populated part of Louisa County. The scatter of points on the map does not seem to suggest that LCRC clients are concentrated in areas closer to the pantry itself, and there is no absence of clients in the Green Springs area to the west, nor in the Jackson or Holly Grove areas to the east. At first glance, this map seems to suggest that LCRC’s services are spread fairly evenly across the County, despite the sense of staff members that they have fewer clients from points farther away.

However, this initial impression turns out not to be correct. One reason is that when multiple families are LCRC clients and come from the same address, they are shown as only one point on the map. That is, some of the map points represent multiple families from the same location (for example, when an LCRC client family moves out and the next family in the same location also becomes a client). So, the scatter of points does not fully represent the scatter of clients. More importantly, the client-location map does not tell us where the need for food assistance is. Without information on
the extent of food insecurity in various areas, it is not possible to assess whether LCRC is fully meeting the needs of each area. This is why the survey data were needed: to find out—

*Figure 23: Map of Food Insecurity around Louisa*

Figure II-17 displays the geographic distribution of households in the survey’s probability sample by their food-security category. The red dots show households that reported very low food security, orange dots show households having low food security, and the smaller, blue dots indicate interviewed households with high or marginal food security. The map also shows the boundaries of the six census tracts that Louisa County comprises. The map illustrates that our sampling strategy succeeded in covering all parts of the County. However, it also indicates that households with very low food security are concentrated in certain parts of the County.

To assess the degree to which LCRC has been serving food insecurity needs in different parts of the County, it is necessary to consider the location of the LCRC food pantry clients in relation to the prevalence of food-insecure households by location. To do so, we can group household locations into census tracts. In assessing LCRC’s service coverage, we need to take into account the fact that the census tracts are not equal in population size, and that
neither the incidence of poverty nor the incidence of food insecurity is equal across tracts. With that in mind, we first consider the distribution of poverty in relation to population across tracts.

**Distribution of Poverty around Louisa**

The following figures and discussion highlight the complex distribution of population, poverty, and food insecurity in Louisa County, utilizing the data from our survey in combination with U.S. Census data. Since surveys of food security at the local level are difficult and expensive to undertake, planners in many localities simply rely on poverty figures as a proxy for food insecurity. This makes some sense, since poverty and food insecurity are certainly correlated. However, there are many other factors, other than income, which can affect the food security of a household. The present survey affords an opportunity to assess the extent to which the location of food insecurity is tied to the location of poverty.

Figure II-18 compares the distribution of poverty with the distribution of the overall population in Louisa. The dark bars reflect the population distribution, while the light bars reflect the distribution of those residents whose income is equal to or lower than 150% of the federal poverty line. Neither population nor poorer residents are distributed equally across census tracts. Green Spring has a higher percent of the population, with a lower level of poor residents compared to its total population. For Jackson-Holly Grove and Louisa, we see the opposite. Approximately 21 percent of the poorer residents live in Louisa census tract and another 21 percent in Jackson-Holly Grove, but the Louisa tract accounts for only 14 percent of the entire Louisa County population, and Jackson Holly Grove only 17 percent. In other words, the percent of poverty in these areas is disproportionate to their population size. This indicates that the percentage of poor residents is higher and more concentrated in these two census tracts.

**Figure 24: Distribution of Poverty around Louisa**

![Distribution of Poverty around Louisa](image)

**Distribution of Poverty and Food Insecurity around Louisa**

Figure II-19 expands on Figure II-18 to include the distribution of food security across census tracts. The red bars show the distribution of very low food security, while the gold bars show the distribution of low food security.
The graph shows that of all respondents indicating very low food security, just over 2 percent live in Mineral, and 6.7 percent in Ferncliff. About 16 percent are in Green Spring. The highest occurrence of very low food security is in Cuckoo-Bumpass, where 35.6 percent of all very low food secure respondents live, followed by 28.9 percent living in Jackson-Holly Grove. Eleven percent of very low food secure residents live in Louisa. Regarding low food security, 36.7 percent are in Green Spring, with the smallest percent, 6.7 percent residing in Mineral.

**Figure 25: Distribution of Poverty and Food Security around Louisa**

![Bar chart showing distribution of poverty, food insecurity, and LCRC clients around Louisa.](image)

**Distribution of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and LCRC Clients around Louisa**

Figure II-20 adds yet another variable to this complex graph: LCRC client distribution. Based on the client list provided by LCRC, we identified the census tract for each client in order to compare the location of clients with the location of need. Of all LCRC clients, 18 percent are in Green Spring, 23 percent are in Louisa, 9 percent in Ferncliff, 16 percent in Mineral, about 22 percent in Cuckoo-Bumpass, and 13 percent in Jackson-Holly Grove. This graph highlights a notable discrepancy in the Jackson-Holly Grove tract at the eastern end of the County. Based on survey results, that tract contains about 29 percent of the County’s households with very low food security, yet it accounts for only 13 percent of LCRC clients. In contrast, the Mineral tract, just to the east of the food pantry, has only five percent of the County’s very low food security clients, but accounts for 16 percent of LCRC clients.
Figure 26: Distribution of Poverty, Food Security, and LCRC Clients around Louisa

To make interpretation easier, we combined the two levels of food security for Figure II-21. Together, the summary of low and very low food security provides a measure of food insecurity. Examined this way, the level of food insecurity in Louisa County looks significantly more evenly distributed among census tracts. While Mineral shows the lowest level at 5.2 percent, and Ferncliff has about 8 percent of the total, Jackson-Holly Grove has 17.5 percent, Green Spring and Cuckoo Bumpass each have about 28 percent of the total, and Louisa has 13.3 percent.

While food insecurity is certainly associated with poverty, the graph shows that food insecurity in Green Spring’s tract is more prevalent than one would expect based on the percentage of the county’s poorer households living there, while the opposite is true in Mineral, where food insecurity is lower than one would expect if it strictly followed the distribution of poverty.
Comparing the distribution of LCRC clients with the distribution of food insecurity, we can see that Green Spring, Cuckoo-Bumpass, and Jackson-Holly Grove are potentially underserved by LCRC. These three areas are more distant from the food pantry’s location than are the other census tracts. The survey data make clear what could not be discerned from a simple spot map of LCRC clients: closer-in areas are getting more of the food pantry’s food (in relation to food insecurity levels) than are the areas further away.

To address these unmet needs for food assistance, LCRC has recently begun a satellite food service in the Green Springs area of the County, and plans are already under way for a similar service that will better serve food needs in the County’s eastern end.

For precise distribution percentages of each variable across the six census tracts, see Table II-1.
Table II-1: Summary Distribution by Census Tract: Population, poverty, food security, and LCRC clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population Distribution</th>
<th>150% Poverty</th>
<th>Very Low Food Security</th>
<th>Low Food Security</th>
<th>LCRC Clients</th>
<th>Low or Very Low Food Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Spring</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisa</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferncliff</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuckoo-Bumpass</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson-Holly</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Community Cupboard as a Resource

Sources of Food Assistance

In this chapter and in portions of Chapter IV, we report on data from the full sample, combining our weighted probability sample with the additional interviews obtained through targeted intercepts (that is, the non-probability sample). This gives us the largest number of “at risk” respondents (those that reported incomes below 200% of FPL, said they did not always have all of the kinds of food they wanted, and/or were not ‘comfortable’ with their current income).

All at-risk respondents were asked whether they had received food, meals, or food assistance from any of a list of organizations, including Meals on Wheels, churches, and community organizations. Nearly 47 percent of these respondents said they had received help from community-based organizations (which would include the Louisa County Resource Council Community Cupboard), 20 percent received help from church or religious organizations, and 15.4 percent from WIC, as Figure III-1 shows. Nearly a third of respondents said that they had never received help from any of these sources.

When asked specifically about the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps), 29 percent of the at-risk respondents reported using SNAP, while an additional 27 percent said they had used it in the past. Forty-four percent of this group of respondents had not used it at any point in time.

Awareness of Food Pantry

One of the purposes of this survey was to determine how aware Louisa County residents are of the food pantry run by the Louisa County Resource Council. Survey respondents...
determined to be at risk of food insecurity were asked whether they had heard of the food pantry. Overall, at-risk residents were well aware of the pantry. About 85 percent of at-risk households in the full sample had heard of it, and 15 percent had not, as illustrated by Figure III-3.

Figure 30: Awareness of Food Pantry

![Awareness of Food Pantry](image)

Awareness of the food pantry varied by the respondent’s location in the County, with 97 percent of residents of Cuckoo-Bumpass saying they had heard of the pantry, while only 70 percent of residents of Jackson-Holly Grove said so. Figure III-4 shows this variation in more detail. Notably, awareness of LCRC is highest in the three areas closest to the food pantry’s location (Louisa, Mineral, and Cuckoo-Bumpass).

Figure 31: Awareness of Food Pantry by Location

![Awareness of Food Pantry by Location](image)

Use of Food Pantry

Those who had indicated having heard of the pantry were then asked whether they had in fact used it. Approximately 38 percent of our at-risk respondents who said they were aware of the pantry reported that they were currently using the pantry, while another 27.5 percent had used it in the past but were not currently using it. Slightly more than one-third reported that they had not ever used the food pantry (34.8 percent). Figure III-5 illustrates these findings.

Figure 32: Use (Current or Former) of Food Pantry

![Use of Food Pantry](image)

Figure III-6 illustrates use of the pantry by location. Of those who have heard of the pantry, Louisa contains the highest percentage who currently use it, while Green Spring and Ferncliff contain the relative fewest current users.

Figure 33: Use of Food Pantry by Location

![Use of Food Pantry by Location](image)

Experiences Using Food Pantry

Respondents who indicated using the food pantry were then asked several follow-up questions about their experiences and practices related to the pantry.
Use of Pantry Food
Respondents who use the pantry were asked the frequency with which they used all the food they received from the pantry. Most (54 percent) indicated that they always used all the food. An additional 27 percent said they often used it all, while smaller numbers reported sometimes, rarely or never using all the food. Figure III-7 provides the details for this question.

Figure 34: Frequency of Using All of the Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another question probed whether those who received food from the LCRC pantry shared it with others not in their household. Figure III-8 shows that sharing food is quite common among our sample of food recipients. While only 14 percent reported always sharing the food, a substantial number often or sometimes did, with 38.4 percent saying they never shared.

Figure 35: Frequency of Sharing the Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfaction among Clients
One purpose of this survey was to determine the level of satisfaction among clients of the LCRC food pantry and to determine ways in which service to clients could be improved. Figure III-9 shows that in general, among those respondents who reported receiving food from the pantry, satisfaction is quite high. About 29 percent said they were very satisfied, and an additional 46 percent said they were satisfied. Taken together, three-quarters of food pantry clients can be described as satisfied with the services they receive. Overall, 18 percent of respondents reported being dissatisfied, with an additional 7.3 percent saying they were very dissatisfied.

Figure 36: Satisfaction with Food Pantry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do clients like about the pantry? Those who said they were satisfied or very satisfied were asked an open-ended question about what they liked the most. Figure III-10 provides a summary of client responses, in descending order, showing that staff people made the most positive impression, more than factors pertaining to food. The complete responses to these open-end questions can be found in Appendix C.
In contrast, those respondents who said they were dissatisfied with the pantry were asked what would make them more satisfied. Figure III-11 illustrates a summary of the responses. More than half of the responses pertained to food type or variety. Food quantity and quality were also mentioned by a significant number of respondents, followed by policy, pantry staff, and miscellaneous other things.

Finally, respondents who currently use or had previously used the pantry were asked what the pantry could offer to help the community more. Figure III-12 provides a summary of the responses. While some respondents did suggest increasing the amount of meat or more variety in the type of foods, nearly 15 percent said they thought that no change was needed. Adding household goods, baby items, and providing delivery were other suggestions.

Barriers to Use of Food Pantry
What of those who have not used the food pantry? We asked those at-risk respondents who had not used the pantry why they had not. The responses are reported below in Figure III-13.
Despite the distribution figures in Chapter II suggesting distance and location as possible factors explaining disproportionate distribution of LCRC use and food security, these reasons are not highly reported when explicitly asked. Beyond the potential need for expanded marketing, this question did not identify any major barriers to use.

The most commonly cited answer was the feeling that the respondent did not need pantry assistance (35.9%), followed by the opinion that others are more needy (18%). An additional eighteen percent said they did not qualify for pantry assistance. Serving as the highest reported substantive barrier, approximately one in eight respondents from this subsample said they did not use the pantry due to a lack of awareness of the service.
IV. Non-Food Needs in Louisa

Self-Reported Needs

Another focus of this survey pertained to needs other than food that lower-income or potentially needy residents of Louisa might have. Since the Louisa County Resource Council has a broader mission than simply providing food, the LCRC Board asked that the survey questionnaire explore other unmet needs. Our “at risk” respondents were asked about a series of possible needs that they might currently have or have had in the past several months. The percentage of at-risk respondents who reported having a given need are presented below in Figure IV-1. At the top of the list is healthcare, mentioned by more than half of the respondents as a pressing need, followed by financial assistance, transportation, and phone and internet needs.

When a category of need was identified, our interviewers probed to determine specifically what the respondent meant, and the respondent who could indicate multiple aspects within a given need (thus percentages may exceed 100%). The following graphs indicate the specific follow-up responses pertaining to healthcare, financial assistance, transportation, phone/internet, employment, childcare, housing, legal assistance, and life skills. More detail pertaining to the general “something else” categories can be found in Appendix C.

Healthcare

Among those indicating healthcare needs, paying medical bills was cited by nearly two-thirds, and over half reported needing help to attain health insurance. See Figure IV-2 for complete list of healthcare needs.

Financial Assistance

Approximately three-fifths of at-risk respondents reporting the need for financial assistance request general assistance.
Transportation

Among those reporting transportation needs, 55.4% needed help paying for gas, car insurance, and car repairs. Another fifty-percent reported not having access to a car, for which they could use assistance. See Figure IV-4 for complete list of transportation needs.

Employment

Seven out of eight respondents with employment needs specifically reported needing help to find a job. Approximately one-half would like programs that teach new job skills. See Figure IV-6 for reference.

Phone/Internet

Approximately half of respondents who reported phone/internet needs said they needed assistance getting and/or paying for phone/internet service. Over half of these respondents indicated “something else.” These open-end responses can be seen in Appendix C.

Childcare

Approximately two in five respondents with childcare needs reported needing assistance with healthcare for children. Approximately thirty percent requested before and after-school programs. Over half of respondents said something not listed, and these answers can be found in Appendix C.
**Housing**

Half of respondents with housing needs requested assistance with home repair costs. Approximately 40 percent reported needing help with both paying utilities and paying rent. Refer to Figure IV-8.

**Legal Assistance**

Over one-third of respondents with legal needs reported requiring help with green cards or work permits. Nineteen percent needed help with incarceration issues. Nearly half cited something else.
Life Skills

Of those who reported needing help with life skills, three-fifths cited caring for someone with a disability or special needs. Nearly one-third would like assistance learning to cook healthy meals. Refer to for Figure IV-10 complete list.

Figure 50: Self-Reported Life Skills Needs

Perceived Needs of Louisa Residents

Finally, all respondents to our survey, whether at-risk or not, were asked what they perceived to be the most pressing needs in Louisa County. As compared to questions asked of only the at-risk respondents, these questions probed a broader view of county needs, beyond the individual respondent’s own personal situation. Figure IV-11 shows the percentage of all respondents who identified a particular need category as pressing for the county. Comparing Figure IV-1 with this graph shows striking similarity. In both cases, healthcare is identified as the most pressing need, while transportation needs and phone/internet services are in the top four. Second place among the at-risk was financial assistance, while among all respondents, the more varied “other” category takes second. However, it is clear that for residents of Louisa, healthcare, transportation, and telephone and internet service were very important. As in the prior section, the specific needs within each broader area of need are presented in the graphs below.

Figure 51: Overall Ranking of Perceived Community Needs

Healthcare

Two in five respondents who reported healthcare as a County-wide need considered free clinics to be an important specific healthcare need. One quarter cited a need not listed (see Appendix C for full responses). One in five respondents reported closer urgent care as a perceived need. For the complete list, see Figure IV-12.
**Transportation**

The highest reported perceived transportation need was transportation for seniors, followed by expanded Jaunt service. One in five cited affordable transportation fares. Refer to Figure IV-13 for all listed transportation needs.

**Phone/Internet**

Among respondents who perceived phone/internet as major needs across Louisa, two-thirds reported access to better high-speed internet as a need. Twenty-eight percent reported a need for better cell service/coverage. Refer to Figure IV-14 for complete list of phone/internet needs.
Help with Children

The highest reported perceived childcare need was an expansion of child activities, followed by childcare for all ages. One in five reported the perceived need for afterschool programs. Refer to Figure IV-15 Figure IV-13 for all perceived childcare needs.

Employment

Two-thirds of respondents who perceived employment assistance as a major need in the community reported job training as a specific employment need.

Housing

Among respondents who considered housing assistance an important need in the community, over half considered there to be a specific need for affordable housing. Over 30 percent reported a need for assistance with other housing costs.

Life Skills

Finally, among those who considered a need in the community for assistance with life skills, 40.7 percent considered there to be a need for re-training those with disabilities. One-fifth reported a perceived need for assistance with cooking and one-fifth reported a need for informing people about opportunities. For the “other” responses, see Appendix C.
Figure 58: Perceived Community Life Skills Needs

- Re-training those with disabilities: 40.7%
- Other: 40.7%
- Cooking: 22.2%
- Informing people about opportunities: 22.2%
V. Conclusions

This study is unique in that it deployed probability-based, general population survey methods to directly assess food insecurity in a sizable rural area. The use of multiple survey modes and sampling from multiple survey frames, including a small number of additional interviews using non-probability methods, proved crucial to the study’s success. This lengthy and complex project provides a rich source of information about food issues in Louisa County as well as providing some ideas about other, non-food needs in the County.

Presence of Food Insecurity in Louisa

Perhaps most important for the purposes of this report, the survey found that approximately 23 percent of Louisa County residents experienced some level of food insecurity. While 77 percent can be considered food secure, 13 percent had low food security and about 10 percent experienced very low food security. This combined household figure produces an estimate of 8,433 persons who experienced food insecurity in Louisa County.

The non-white population was somewhat more likely to experience food insecurity than the white population, and families with children were more likely to experience food insecurity than were families without children.

Where is the Need?

Mapping the location of respondents who were identified as food insecure showed differences in concentration by census tract.

Taking the food insecure population as a whole, census tracts where food insecurity was most concentrated were Cuckoo-Bumpass and Green Spring. Each tract contained about 28 percent of the combined low and very low food secure residents. In contrast, census tracts with the highest level of food security were Mineral and Ferncliff.

It is important to note that when low and very low levels of food security are combined, the distribution across census tracts becomes more even than if you examine food security levels separately (as done in Figure II-19).

These findings also showed that poverty alone cannot be a proxy for food insecurity. Based on the relative distribution of poverty, one would expect Green Spring and Cuckoo-Bumpass to have lower concentrations of food insecurity than our survey results demonstrated—instead, each tract had a higher concentration of food insecurity than poverty rates alone would suggest. Conversely, both Louisa and Mineral had lower concentrations of food insecurity even though they had higher concentrations of poverty. One possible explanation is that since both Louisa and Mineral have high rates of LCRC use, it may be the food pantry that alleviates food insecurity in these tracts despite experiences of poverty.

Awareness and Use of Food Pantry

The Louisa County Resource Council provides a food pantry to assist those who need help with food. An important thrust for this survey was to determine the level of awareness of the LCRC food pantry. Did those residents who could benefit know about it?

Our data show that in fact there is a high level of awareness of the pantry. Eighty-five percent of at-risk residents had heard about the Community Cupboard. Of those who had heard of the pantry, nearly two-thirds (65.2%) currently use the pantry or had used it in the past.

In terms of satisfaction, the data show that most pantry users are satisfied with the services. About three-quarters of those who used the pantry say they were satisfied or very satisfied with it.

As noted in Chapter III, no substantive major barriers were expressed to explain lack of pantry use. Instead, when explicitly asked why they did not use the pantry, most at-risk respondents reported either not needing it or feeling others were more needy.
Other Needs in Louisa

Beyond the discussion of food insecurity, survey respondents identified a variety of other issues of concern. Questions about their own needs were asked of at-risk respondents, and a more general question about perceived community needs across Louisa County was asked of all respondents. Three particular categories of need emerge from the opinions of respondents. Healthcare, transportation, and phone/internet services were identified by many respondents—both as self-reported and perceived community needs.

Healthcare

For at-risk respondents, healthcare was primarily a problem of financial burden. Healthcare bills created stress, lack of insurance was a problem. Stepping away from the personal aspect of need and asked about what Louisa County needs, healthcare-related responses tended to be more about availability: the need for free clinics, more urgent care providers, etc. The financial burden of healthcare is a common concern across the United States, as even a cursory glance at the daily news suggests. The availability issue is likely related to the rural aspect of Louisa County. In central Virginia as elsewhere, healthcare services tend to be located in more urban settings, in this case in Charlottesville or Richmond, and Louisa sits about halfway between the two.

Transportation

A similar dichotomy was found around matters of transportation need. Self-identified needs of the at-risk respondents had to do with money for gasoline, for a car payment, etc. The more general description of needs for the county had more to do with accessibility: transportation for elderly to appointments, expanded Jaunt service, etc.

Phone/internet

The parallel distinction also was true for phone and internet needs, the third category mentioned by a significant number of responses. For the at-risk respondents, the issue was cost: paying for internet service, finding cell-phone plans that were affordable. For the County as a whole, the identified needs clustered around availability: the need for better high-speed internet, for better cell phone coverage, and for better access to broadband internet.

It is clear that Louisa’s rural location exacerbates the problem of availability of health care, transportation, and high-quality cell and internet service, and that the financial burden related to each kind of service is an individual issue for needy residents in the county.