

Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen 2017 Survey Results

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Introduction

The fourth annual soup kitchen guest survey was conducted on Thursday, April 27th, 2017, following a pattern of previously conducting surveys in April. There was not a survey conducted in 2015. There were additional survey questions in 2017, and analysis includes some new cross referenced variables to get a closer look at our guests' needs. As per previous surveys, we gave guests the option to share information or a comment about their situation and the role the soup kitchen plays in their lives. Once again these quotes give greater insight into their situations.

Full Year on Year Comparisons, Results from New Questions, Comments

Age	2013 (286 respondents)	2014 (334 respondents)	2016 (365 respondents)	2017 (300 respondents)
21 and younger	0%	0%	2%	0%
22-30	6%	4%	7%	7%
31-45	29%	24%	18%	20%
45-54	30%	32%	32%	33%
55-64	26%	29%	27%	27%
65-72	6%	8%	10%	8%
73+	3%	3%	4%	4%

For the 31 – 45 age range, there has been a steady increase in numbers since the first survey in 2013. Generally speaking, percentages are consistent throughout all years.

Gender	2013 (239 respondents)	2014 (296 respondents)	2016 (334 respondents)	2017 (297 respondents)
Male	88%	87%	87%	88%
Female	12%	13%	13%	11%
MTF	NA	NA	NA	1%

Percentages are consistent with previous years, although there is a dip in an already low percentage of female guests. This year, we added a transgender option which yielded a 1% response.

Race/ ethnicity	2013 (265 respondents)	2014 (334 respondents)	2016 (364 respondents)	2017 (283 respondents)
White	19%	24%	18%	18%
African-American	42%	40%	34%	42%
Asian	3%	4%	5%	4%
Hispanic	25%	19%	33%	23%
Other (2017 “Multi-Ethnic”)	11%	13%	10%	6%

Hispanic and African American responses show almost a 10 percentage point change and are almost inverted in their ratio. This could be due to the number of individuals who identify as both. We changed “Other” to “Multi-Ethnic” this year.

Job Status	2013 (190 respondents)	2014 (322)	2016 (301)	2017 (320)
Employed	23%	14%	19%	19%
Full time Employed	NA	NA	NA	12%
Part time Employed	NA	NA	NA	7%
Unemployed	77%	86%	81%	79%
Unemployed /not retired	NA	NA	NA	60%
Unemployed RETIRED	NA	NA	NA	12%

This year, respondents were asked to qualify their employment status, stating what kind of employment they had, (full or part time). If weren’t working, they were also asked if they were retired.

Living Status	2013 (257 respondents)	2014 (319)	2016 (338)	2017 (260)
Living on street	26%	25%	24%	33%
Living in shelter	32%	35%	32%	21%
Rental accommodation	23%	19%	23%	NA

Rent with a voucher	NA	NA	NA	22%
Home owner	8%	8%	8%	6%
Public Housing	NA	NA	NA	4%
Temporarily staying with someone else	11%	13%	13%	13%

54% of our guests are homeless, either on the street or in shelters. We see a sharp increase in street homelessness and sharp decrease in shelter homelessness, with almost inverted numbers. A revised rental question indicates that most of our guests who rent probably also use vouchers. For the first time, “Public Housing” was mentioned, yielding the lowest of all answers. The percentage of guests who are temporarily staying with someone else stayed exactly the same as the last two surveys, indicating a stable trend in this housing situation. This situation could be construed as “homeless” but for our purposes we have defined it as “at risk of homelessness.”

Homelessness & Employment Status	2017 (45 total combined responses)
Homeless & Employed	60%
Homeless & Employed Full time	60%
Homeless & Employed part time	40%

For the first time this year, we measured the number of homeless guests who are employed as well as their employment status. The number of answers is too small to be significant, particularly with large percentage of homeless who report full time employment. However, this statistic is supported by the studies and news reports about living costs, minimum wage and housing affordability in NYC.

Age and homelessness	2017 (254 respondents)
21 and younger	0%
22-30	5%
31-45	15%
45-54	20%
55-64	13%
65-72	1%
73+	.4%

This year, we measured the correlation between age and homelessness. The highest percentage of homelessness is in the 45 to 54 year range, (at 20%, and with 50 respondents) followed by 31-45 year range. This indicates a stark reality that those in their prime working years are facing homelessness.

Sadly, 19% of our senior guests are homeless. That 81% of our housed senior guests are in need of food emergency services shows the limits of retirement income, social security and food stamps to cover living costs.

Seniors (65 +) & housing	2017 (21 respondents)
Seniors reporting homelessness	19%
Seniors report housing	81%

Served in Military	2013 (297 respondents)			2014 (345 respondents)	2016 (372 respondents)	2017 (291 respondents)
Yes	13%			18%	15%	16%
No	87%	82%	85%	84%		
Military: employment		2013	2014	2016	2017 (45 respondents)	
Military reported employed		NA	NA	NA	14.6%	
Military: reported unemployed		NA	NA	NA	39.6%	
Military: Retired		NA	NA	NA	45.8%	
Military: homelessness		2013	2014	2016	2017 (48 respondents)	
Military reported homeless		NA	NA	NA	40%	

There is a 1% increase in guests with military backgrounds, which is statistically insignificant given the format of this survey but we continue to see a decline since 2014. This may be due to the soup kitchen as a location for information and resource veteran health and housing agencies that actively help veterans apply for benefits, combined with the national effort to reduce veteran homelessness in the past several years. For the first year we also measured military background along with employment status and homelessness. The results show that more guests with military backgrounds are unemployed than employed, while almost half list their employment status as “retired.” Nearly two-thirds of our guests with military backgrounds are homeless.

Education Level	2017 (423 responses. Percentage of 320 surveys*)
High School	18%
College Credits	24%
College Degree	21%
Vocational Training	23%

This was the first year we incorporated a section geared toward educational attainment. It was determined during calculating responses that the question was flawed and next year should be reworded to say “highest level” of education. There were 420 total individual responses to questions. Percentages are based on the total number of surveys. What we can glean from this is that 21% of guests surveyed answered that they have a college degree, and about half have some higher education or vocational training.

We also measured the rate of homelessness against education level and found a startling percentage: over one-fifth of all those reporting having college degrees are also reporting being homeless. Continued surveys will measure validity.

Education Level and Homelessness (139 respondents)	College degree	College credits
Percent of education level attained who are homeless	22%	12%

Guests Receiving benefits	2013 (259 respondents)	2014 (323 respondents)	2016 (360 respondents)	2017 (271 respondents)
Yes	58%	53%	46%	53%
No	42%	47%	54%	47%

The number of guests receiving benefits returned to the 2014 percentage of 53%. This percentage may be due to the lower number of respondents given that in 2016 we had the highest number of respondents and the lowest number receiving benefits, and in 2013 we had the lowest number of respondents and the highest percentage receiving benefits. Still, the results of all four years hover between just under half of our guests, to climbing toward two-thirds.

Conclusion

With more time and resources it would be enlightening to measure more correlations. A seasonal survey would also be a way to confirm results, but given the resources of this organization that is not practical.

What can be confirmed is that with each year’s survey, and with differing numbers of respondents, the percentages are fairly consistent, within a few points of each other, even in the most drastic departures (such as the reversal of street and shelter homelessness or African American and Hispanic ethnicity.) This shows that we continue to be a place known widely amongst New Yorkers with similar needs for nutrition and services. While some guests may have had to rely on the soup kitchen for years or even decade, and others use the soup

kitchen as a temporary means, the fact that the percentage of our demographics stays within a general 10 point range over several years is compelling in and of itself. Sadly, the macrosystemic efforts against poverty, food insecurity and homelessness do not significantly decrease the need for food emergency programs and services we offer.

Sample Guest Testimonials 2017

“This place is wonderful, lots of compassion, mercy and love.” (Guest who’s been unemployed 7 years)

“Charles Jones, self-described member since 1990 “when trailers were here.”

“Helping me with food. I wish to have a job, but it seems that I’m too old. The food is very nutritious and you can have a second serving, or you can have bread and rolls. God Bless America” (Retired woman, 65-72, needs income and unemployed 5 months)

“HASK is a piece of heaven place where we eat, get shoes, jacket, pray. Staff and volunteers like angels.” (Hispanic male, unemployed)

“Mr. Robert has helped me over the years as a good friend as well as the other people here.”

“I admire Holy Apostles. I respect and appreciate all the help this organization has done for me personally, and over the years. May God continue to bless them with prosperity.”

“Serves real food (as opposed to industrial food) with a heart” (Unemployed male, White, 55-64)

“Holy Apostles represents the best of my beloved city. The volunteers and workers truly care about their neighbors. And that’s the loveliest that I can think of. Thank you.” (Hispanic male, 31-45, unemployed and living with someone else”

“Holy Apostles is a safe, welcoming haven with caring individuals and great, big-hearted people. My wife was deported 4 or 5 years ago. Her fines and legal fees bankrupted our 21 year family. My father and stepfather had to adopt our 10-year-old son. Holy Apostles brightens my day” Kyle B. Serg

“I’m an insulin-dependent diabetic and places like Holy Apostles is very important for my survival. Without it, my blood sugar will drop to dangerous levels.” (African-American male. 22-30, unemployed and homeless)

“Thank you. We appreciate everyone here,” (African-American woman, employed, 22-30)

“Helps to take care of my food needs away from home” (African-American male who is retired)

“This is a good place that helps when a lot of other places won’t help you like that.”

“You’re doing just fine. Thank you for your services.” (African-American male, 31-45, unemployed)

“I eat here daily. The food is good, nutritious and they accommodate my vegetarian diet.” (African-American female, 55-64, living in a shelter and unemployed for four years)

“Great food and a place to commune with my fellow homeless. Truly understand the plight of the indigent, and realize. Thanks to everyone who helps us, how truly good human beings can be.” –Garrett

“Since I lost my last job and got reference about this place, I come here on an almost daily basis and it helps me to keep up with my goals. Very helpful” Marie Saby (name difficult to make out. Guest is Caucasian female, 55-64, been unemployed for over 6 years)

“Means a lot to me to eat a hot meal every day,” MTF, 22-30, living on the streets and unemployed for 3 months

“Respect and kindness, thank you Holy Apostles,” Hispanic male, 22-30, unemployed for 5 months and living on the streets

“It is a great place to eat and spend time among friends. Great food and personal help. Thank you,” Hispanic male employed but living on the streets

“It provides the essentials needed for a good day!” Multiethnic 31-45 male, unemployed and living in a shelter

“Great place to come help relieve stress,” African-American male, 45-54, has a job, living in a section 8 apartment and takes meditation here

“Working but suddenly unemployed. I frequent soup kitchen also to volunteer,” Multiethnic male, 55-64, unemployed 1 ½ months

“It is helpful. Extends possibility of a little ease and blends with the ideals of the geopolitical where it exists. There is expression of a unique organization garnered toward the purpose which it projects. There is no hypocrisy,” Multiethnic male, 45-54, unemployed and temporarily living with someone else

“I appreciate coming here and receiving meals with no judgment as to why I’m here. I’ve been coming here off and on for 3 months, and the staff and volunteers are always courteous, smiling and helpful,” White male, 55-64, unemployed for 6 months

“Thank god to have Holy Apostles for holding my mail and trying to help me get food stamps and benefits.” African-American male, 45-54, unemployed 1 month and also takes computer classes

“They have excellent food, staff are very courteous, kind and caring. The food is very good and nutritious,” African-American male, retired, living in a shelter

“It’s great, I always have lunch here. The food is excellent here and they treat me very good here,” Hispanic male, 45-54, Unemployed 7 months and living in a city shelter

“It means to me to be thankful for the little things in life,” African-American male 31-45, working part-time and living in a city shelter