



Ypsilanti Area Food Access Survey 2016

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Food Gatherers, in collaboration with the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, and the Washtenaw County Food Policy Council, conducted a food access survey in Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township, MI, during the summer and fall of 2016, to better understand community members' access to food. The survey was originally designed by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, and adapted for use in Washtenaw County to include questions related to food security and individuals' access to food pantries.



The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of perceived food access in terms of:

- Availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood.
- Availability of quality fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood.
- Availability of Michigan grown fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood.
- Availability of food stores in their neighborhood that meet their needs.

The survey also asked respondents about factors that are important to them when deciding where to shop for food (e.g., quality, price), socio-demographics, fruit and vegetable consumption, time traveled to shop for groceries, and mode of transportation.

Additional questions added to the Ypsilanti Area survey included questions related to food security, individuals' use of food pantries, and whether people had enough healthy food to last all month. Individuals were surveyed at a variety of community settings with a goal of targeting primarily low-income individuals. Therefore, survey respondents are not reflective of the general population, as 59% of the respondents were found to be food insecure, compared to an estimated 13.9% of Washtenaw County residents (Map the Meal Gap, Feeding America 2015).

While most survey respondents indicated they could easily access food outlets where they could buy the food they preferred, there are still many community members that struggle with accessing food, both through retail settings as well as the charitable network of food assistance.

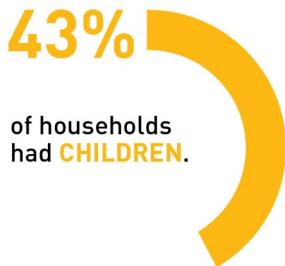
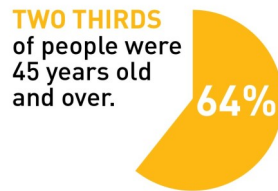
PROCESS

- 294 individuals completed the survey in the Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township area.
- Surveys took approximately 15 minutes for individuals to complete.
- Trained staff and interns at Food Gatherers administered the survey collection at the participating sites using tablets. Paper surveys were available for those who requested it.
- Individuals who completed surveys received \$5 in cash for their time.
- Data entry was done via Qualtrics; data analysis was done by the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, with input from the Center for Regional Food Systems and Food Gatherers.

Site type (and location)	Number
Farmers Markets (Ypsilanti Downtown,	52
Senior Centers (Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township)	57
Low-income Housing Sites (Schooner Cove, Clark East Tower)	42
Food Pantries (Hope Clinic, EMU Swoops, Brown Chapel A.M.E., Bethesda Bible, Family Inc, Unified HARC)	82
Community Event or Public Agency (Parkridge Summer Festival, Public Health Office, Summer Food Site)	61

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Most survey respondents in Ypsilanti were **women**, age **45 or older**, living **under the US poverty line**, who identified as **black or white**. Many also had **children** and were on **Medicare, Medicaid or SNAP**.



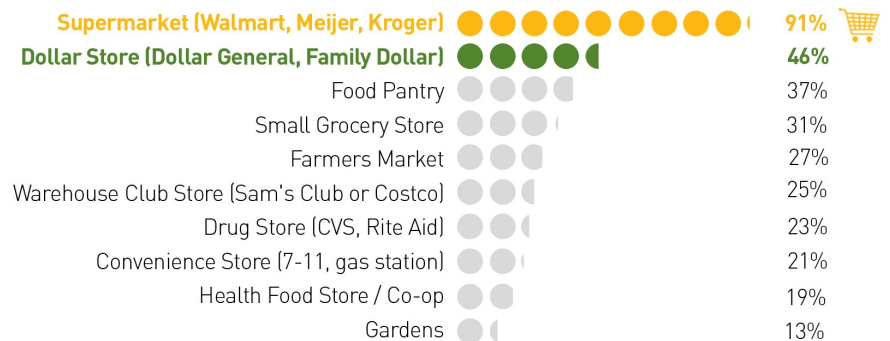
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Food Access

The majority of survey respondents reported having easy access to stores that meet their needs (74%), and most people obtain food at multiple outlets. On average, people frequent 2.5 different locations each month. Nearly all respondents shop at supermarkets, nearly half go to dollar stores, and more than one third visit food pantries. Just over half of people (59%) agreed that it was easy to find fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood.

Slightly fewer people agreed that the fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood were high quality (56%) or that there was a large selection of Michigan grown foods available in their neighborhood (53%).

Nearly all people shop at **SUPERMARKETS**, and nearly half also rely on **DOLLAR STORES**.

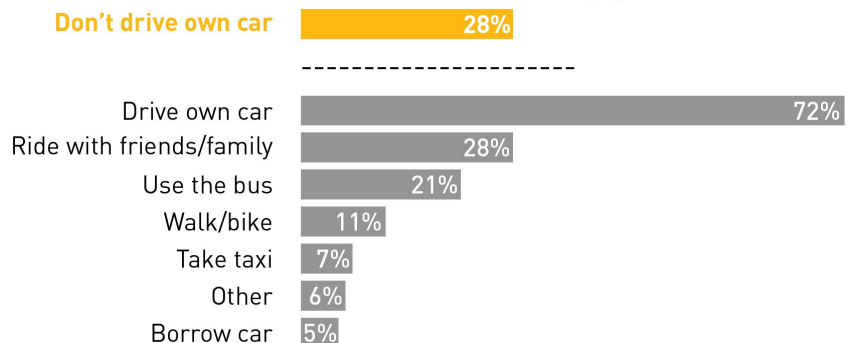


PRICE is the most important factor in deciding where to shop.



Nearly a fifth of respondents (17%) reported travelling more than 20 minutes to buy food, while more than two fifths (44%) traveled less than 10 minutes to buy food.

Nearly one-third of people **DON'T DRIVE THEIR OWN CAR** to buy groceries.



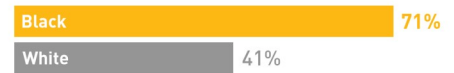
Food Insecurity and Healthy Food Access



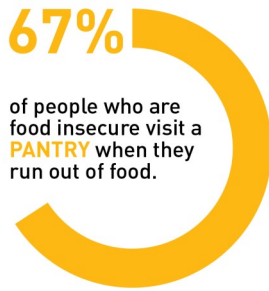
The survey asked two questions about having sufficient money to buy food. Individuals were identified as food insecure if they indicated that they sometimes or often ran out of food or worried about running out of food (59% of respondents).

The challenge of food insecurity was not equally shared among respondents. Respondents identifying as black were more likely to be food insecure compared to white respondents, even when making the same amount of money. 71% of black respondents indicated being food insecure compared to 41% of white respondents.

Even when making the same amount of money, **BLACK PEOPLE** were more likely to be **FOOD INSECURE**.



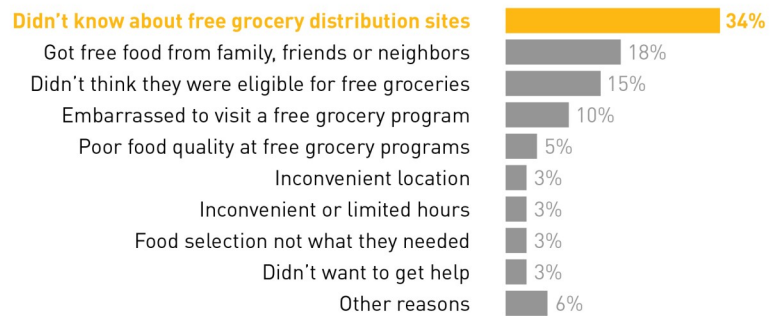
More people living in zip code 48198 said they had poor access to Michigan grown foods (41%) than people living in zip code 48197 (24%).



While most of the respondents struggle with food insecurity, only two-thirds of those who are struggling visit a food pantry when they run out of food. We asked why people didn't go to a food pantry, even if they needed help. Many

individuals reported not knowing about food pantries, which indicates a need for further outreach. Additionally, some didn't know they were eligible to get free groceries, or were embarrassed to visit a program. While some coped by getting food from friends, family or neighbors, there is a need to increase food pantry access, so that individuals struggling with food insecurity are able to get food when they need assistance.

Of the many reasons people did not use food pantries, **ONE-THIRD** reported they **DIDN'T KNOW** about free grocery distribution sites.

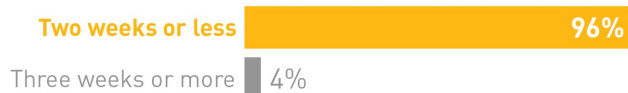


Half of respondents said they **DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH** healthy food to last the whole month.

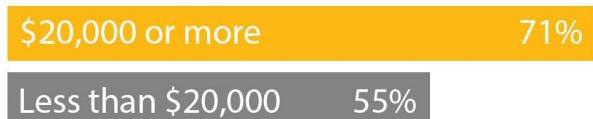


All survey respondents were asked if they felt they ever ran out of food to eat a healthy diet. Half of all respondents said they didn't have enough healthy food. Of those that ran out, nearly all of them had enough healthy food for only two weeks or less, including nearly 20% who said they had no healthy food during the month.

Those who did not have enough healthy food ran out in **TWO WEEKS OR LESS**.



People who earned **\$20,000 OR MORE** were more likely to eat at least 1 cup of vegetables.



Only half of lower-income individuals (55%) (below \$20,000 annual income) reported eating at least 1 cup vegetables per day, compared to 71% of individuals with incomes above \$20,000.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE ACTIONS

The findings from the pilot Food Access Survey in the Ypsilanti Area revealed that nearly all respondents reported easy access to stores that meet their needs, shopping at supermarkets, and traveling less than 20 minutes to buy food. This is promising considering the survey was designed to primarily reach lower income residents. Additionally, about half of respondents reported easy access to fresh, quality and Michigan grown produce. These results may suggest that efforts to increase access to and visibility of fresh fruits and vegetables have made a difference. Despite these encouraging findings, nearly two-thirds of respondents struggle with food insecurity and do not have sufficient financial resources to purchase the foods they need for themselves or their family. Additionally, only 44% of respondents reported receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as “food stamps” or the Food Assistance Program/Bridge Card here in Michigan). This is consistent with other research in Washtenaw County that shows many individuals struggle with food access but do not meet the federally set income guidelines to be eligible for public benefit programs. It is important that individuals struggling with food insecurity understand the variety of resources available to them to better meet their food needs. These options include SNAP, as well as accessing food pantries. Future iterations of this survey with a larger sample may uncover more evidence as to why individuals who are in need of food assistance don't visit food pantries for free groceries. Such findings would better inform community outreach strategies. Based on responses to this survey, Food Gatherers and partner food pantries can work to increase program visibility, so that more people are aware of the availability of free groceries and who is eligible to get free groceries.



Most people are not consuming recommended levels of fruits and vegetables; only 53% reported consuming 1 cup or more of fruit a day and only 60% reported consuming 1 cup or more of vegetables a day. For many people (41%), fresh fruits and vegetables are not available in their neighborhood. Having enough healthy food for the whole month also is a barrier for many individuals who participated in the survey. Future versions of this survey should focus on better understanding a wider range of barriers to healthy food access, and could help determine what factors, such as price, availability, ability to use, and importance of selecting healthy foods are influential in improving access to healthy foods.

This survey was only administered in the Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township area, and future surveys could include a larger geographic area so as to better understand differences in food access in different communities, and uncover any inequities with healthy food access, or affordable food access.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This survey was conducted as part of the Michigan Good Food Charter Shared Measurement project, which aims to catalyze the development of common measures of food system change, foster collaboration in data collection, and build collective capacity for collecting, using and sharing data. The Shared Measurement project is coordinated by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, with technical support from the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition and funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. For more information visit foodsystems.msu.edu.

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