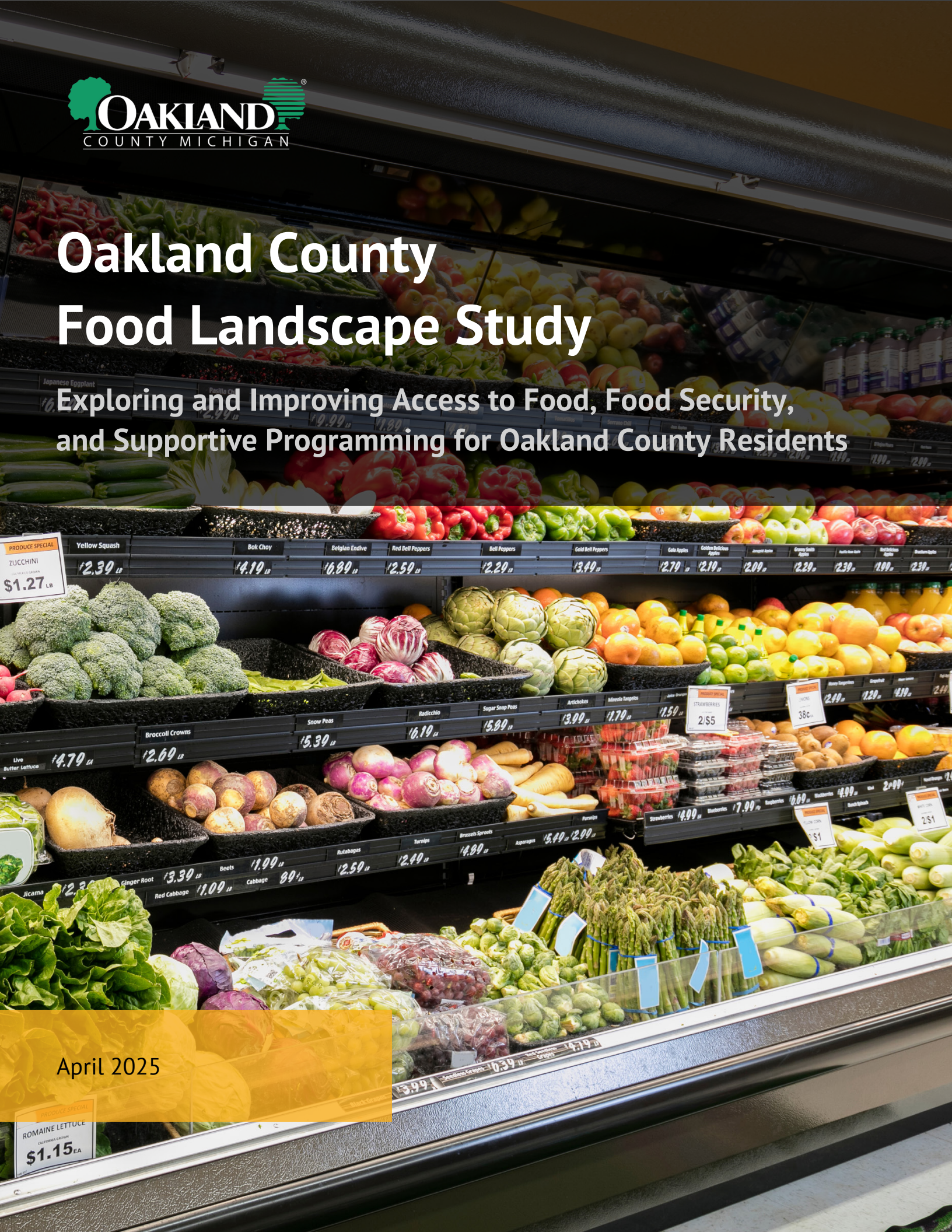
OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN

Oakland County Food Landscape Study

Exploring and Improving Access to Food, Food Security, and Supportive Programming for Oakland County Residents



April 2025



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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

PROJECT BACKGROUND 7

THE FOOD LANDSCAPE IN OAKLAND COUNTY 8

Food Security 8

Access to Nutritious, Local, Culturally Appropriate Food in Oakland County 17

Food Deserts: Limited Access to Food 20

Wasted Food and the Use of Local Foods 25

State of the Current Food Security System 29

ADVANCING CHANGE 36

APPENDIX A: OAKLAND COUNTY FOOD LANDSCAPE STUDY COMMUNITY COALITION ROSTER 40

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY 41

APPENDIX C: OAKLAND COUNTY FOOD LANDSCAPE STUDY 43

Oakland County Food Landscape Study:

Exploring and Improving Access to Food, Food Security, and Supportive Programming for Oakland County Residents

Oakland County Health and Human Services engaged Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to explore food security and access across the county, as well as generate recommendations that will improve access to food and reduce waste of food.



Bread and Butter: Project Components

PSC and Oakland County Health and Human Services worked together on the following project activities:

- Convene a coalition of community members, organizational partners, and food experts to guide the work
- Analyze publicly available data (e.g., Census data, Feeding America food security data)
- Survey community members to learn more about their food purchasing and eating habits
- Interview food system partners such as pantries, schools, and food advocacy groups
- Facilitate community discussions with Oakland County residents, farmers, and food-based businesses

What is food security?

Being food secure means that a household has access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members at all times, including ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods without having to resort to unsafe or unlawful methods to get it.[1]

11% **of Oakland County residents are facing food insecurity, according to estimates from Feeding America.**

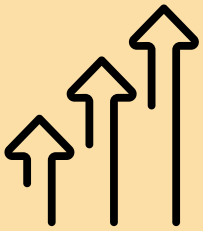
This equates to **140,000 community members** who don't have enough food for everyone in their homes at all times.[2]

The Food Landscape in Oakland County: In a Nutshell

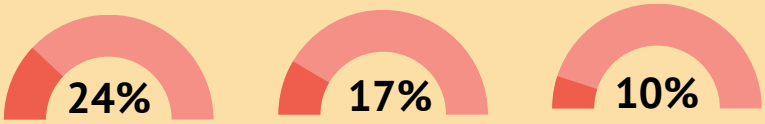


Food security is impacted by several factors, including people's identity and where they live.

Increasing food costs only worsen some people's ability to access food.



Black and Latino/a/x Oakland County residents have higher rates of food insecurity than white residents



44% of survey respondents said they experienced some difficulty accessing food that meets their cultural, religious, or dietary needs.

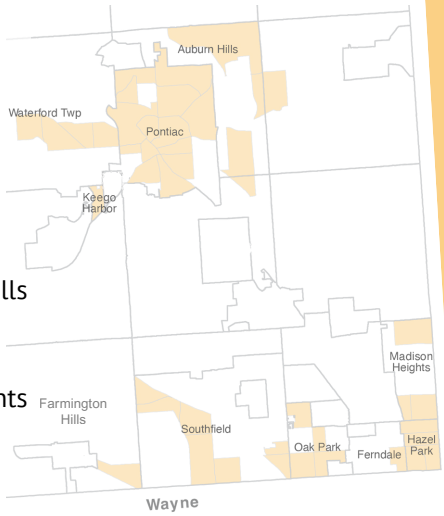
Several areas of Oakland County qualify as food deserts[3]

The majority of:

- Oak Park
- Pontiac
- Hazel Park

Areas of:

- Auburn Hills
- Farmington Hills
- Ferndale
- Keego Harbor
- Madison Heights
- Southfield
- Waterford



Discussion group participants said that cost is a top barrier to accessing food



The average meal cost has increased by more than $1 per meal per person from 2018 to 2022 in Oakland County — an additional cost of $1,183 per person annually. Food prices are expected to continue to rise.[4]

Food costs account for 23% of household costs for a household with two adults and two children in Oakland County, which is 10% higher than the national average.[5]



40% of survey respondents received some sort of food assistance (including public benefit programs, food pantries, and other forms of support).



But only one-third of respondents said they were getting enough food each month, even with food assistance support.

[1] U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. January 10, 2025. "Food Security in the U.S.—Definitions of Food Security." Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/

[2] Feeding America. n.d. "Food Insecurity Among the Overall Population in Oakland County: 2022." Feeding America. https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/michigan/county/oakland

[3] Food deserts are defined as low-income census tracts with a substantial number of residents with low levels of access to retail outlets selling healthy and affordable foods.

[4] Feeding America. n.d. "Food Insecurity Among the Overall Population in Oakland County: 2022.

[5] United for ALICE. 2022. "Household Survival Budget, Oakland County, Michigan." United Way of Northern New Jersey. https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/michigan

A Roadmap Forward

The Oakland Food Landscape Study Community Coalition drafted a series of goals and objectives to improve the food landscape across the county. The Oakland County Health and Human Services Division, in partnership with the Oakland County Food Policy Council, will undertake an action planning process during 2025 to work toward implementing these goals.

Goal 1

Improve access to nutritious, local, culturally appropriate food for all Oakland County residents

Objective 1.1: Reduce barriers to accessing nutritious food

Objective 1.2: Foster food programs that meet the needs and preferences of the people using them

Objective 1.3: Increase food literacy among Oakland County residents

Objective 1.4: Decrease stigma related to food assistance programs



Goal 2

Reduce wasted food and support local farmers and food businesses

Objective 2.5: Maximize existing efforts to reduce wasted food

Objective 2.6: Support local farmers and food-based businesses

Goal 3

Increase collaboration among food system partners and community members

Objective 3.7: Establish and communicate clear goals to develop buy-in from food system partners

Objective 3.8: Promote collaboration and continued communication among established partners and new partners

Project Background

To explore food insecurity in Oakland County, Oakland County Health and Human Services engaged Public Sector Consultants to develop a baseline of food needs and services across the county. PSC used publicly available data to create this baseline and gathered additional data to inform recommendations from the project's community coalition. The goal is to use the outcomes of this project to not only assess the county's food environment—exploring access to food, food security, and programs that serve residents with food insecurity—but to implement future programs and services where they are needed most.

Coalition

An integral part of this work is the Oakland County Food Landscape Study Community Coalition, which is representative of, and includes, stakeholders from food-focused community-based organizations, school districts, business and economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations, and community members.

PSC facilitated five meetings with the coalition to confirm and guide the methodology used for this project, as outlined below, and brainstorm objectives that would improve food access in the county. PSC conducted strategic planning activities throughout the five meetings to facilitate each of the steps outlined in this plan. A full list of coalition members is available in Appendix A.

Methodology

To understand the food landscape in Oakland County, including food insecurity, food access, and disparities in the community, PSC employed several data collection methods, including a community survey, one-on-one interviews, and community discussions, which are each outlined in more detail in Appendix B. PSC analyzed these data to create a variety of maps and other visualizations to help formulate goals for the strategic plan. These visuals are included as exhibits throughout the report.

Key Terms

For the purposes of this report, the following terms are defined below for reference.

Affordability: Affordable food is food purchases that fit within people's household expenditures without putting undue pressure on their budget.

Food literacy: The combination of knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to decide, handle, choose, cook, and eat food (Silva 2023).

Food security: Access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members at all times. Food security includes at a minimum:

- The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods
- Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies)

Food system: all activities and infrastructure involved in producing, processing, distributing, consuming, and disposal of food products (USDA N.D.)

Local food: Locally produced food is grown and consumed within the same county or region (Utah State University Sustainability Extension 2012).

Wasted food: Food that is not used for its intended purpose, such as unsold food from retail stores and uneaten prepared or served food (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2025).

The Food Landscape in Oakland County

Describing the food landscape includes providing a comprehensive overview of food security; access to nutritious, local, culturally appropriate food; the use of local foods; and the state of the food security system for Oakland County residents. Each element of the food landscape is outlined in detail and has informed the strategic roadmap to better meet the needs of the community.

Food Security

Food security, or access to sufficient, nutritionally adequate food for all household members, has long-reaching impacts on the community. Food security impacts physical and mental health, childhood development and educational outcomes, local economies, and how community members interact with each other. The estimates of food security in Oakland County outlined below are drawn from national resources in addition to the results from the Oakland County survey and feedback from community discussions.

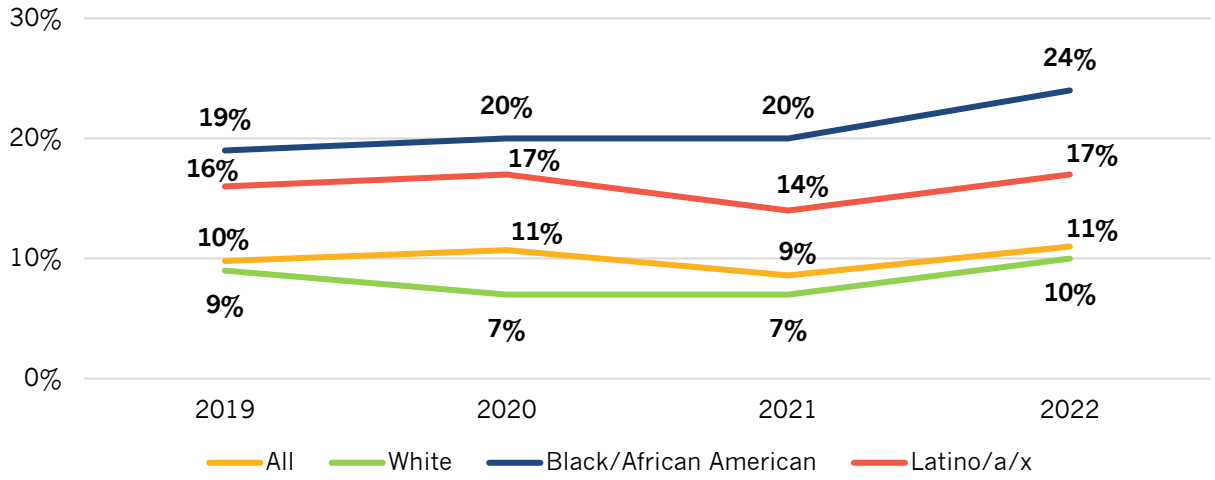
Food Insecurity Estimates

To estimate food security, PSC analyzed rates collected from national resources, including Feeding America. Feeding America is a nonprofit organization that partners with food banks, food pantries, and meal programs to provide nutritious food to the communities that need it most. Each year, Feeding America analyzes food security rates across the country, which are impacted by social, economic, industrial, and other factors. According to the most recent Feeding America estimates, 11 percent of Oakland County residents experienced food insecurity in 2022 (Exhibit 1), which equates to more than 140,000 community members. This rate is equal to that of the food insecurity rate in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite a drop to 9 percent in 2021. While the difference in overall food insecurity rates between years does not immediately appear drastic, in a municipality with as large of a population as Oakland County, the difference between a 9 percent and 11 percent food insecurity rate impacts more than 25,000 people.

While Oakland County consistently has lower rates of food insecurity than the state average, there are disparities across racial and ethnic groups. The highest food insecurity rates are consistently among Black/African American and Latino/a/x Oakland County residents. Black/African American residents' food insecurity rates have increased more than any other racial group currently included in Feeding America estimates, from 19 percent in 2019 to 24 percent in 2022.[6] Food insecurity rates among Latino/a/x residents, while lower than among Black/African American residents, have remained somewhat consistent (between 16 and 17 percent) every year since 2019, with a 3 percent decrease to 14 percent in 2021. Black/African American and white residents did not experience a corresponding drop in food insecurity rates in 2021 (Exhibit 1).

[6] Estimates for Asian, Native American, and Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander residents were not published by Feeding America due to lack of sufficient data that is required to produce reliable estimates.

EXHIBIT 1. Food Insecurity Rate Estimates, by Race, Over Time, Oakland County



Source: Feeding America 2022

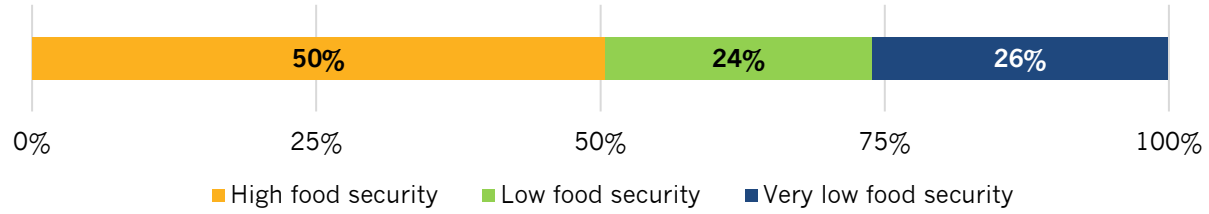
What are health equity zones (HEZs)?

Health equity means to remove barriers to achieving equitable health outcomes between populations that have different social, economic, and environmental factors contributing to the overall health of individuals and communities. Ensuring health equity can include removing obstacles like poverty, discrimination, and the consequential lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and adequate healthcare, which all affect how healthily people can live. During the recent Oakland County Health Community Health Assessment, eight HEZs were identified as communities facing several factors that contribute to inequitable health outcomes. Identifying these HEZs allows the county to focus future public health efforts on the areas in which the greatest health outcome disparities are impacting residents. The elements Oakland County considered when defining the HEZs included average life expectancy, graduation rates, disability prevalence, race and ethnicity, the number of residents with veteran status, and the proportion of residents who meet the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) threshold. The HEZs identified in Oakland County include Pontiac, Hazel Park, Southfield, Royal Oak Township, Oak Park, Madison Heights, Wixom, and Walled Lake. Additional information on HEZ designations and methodology is in Appendix B.

Food Landscape Community Survey

The community survey was distributed through community organizations to reach individuals impacted by food insecurity and through a random selection of Oakland County households to increase the representativeness of the sample. The distribution via community organizations likely overestimates the proportion of those Oakland County residents facing food insecurity due to those community members whom they serve. Nevertheless, the survey found that half of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity in the 30 days prior (Exhibit 2).

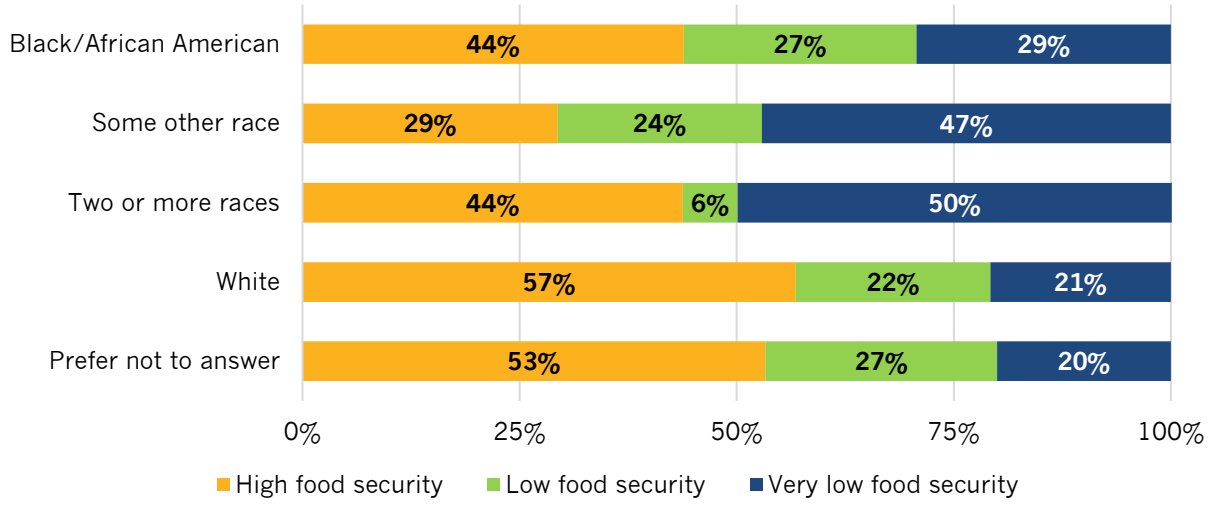
EXHIBIT 2. Levels of Food Security for All Survey Respondents, Oakland County



N = 412

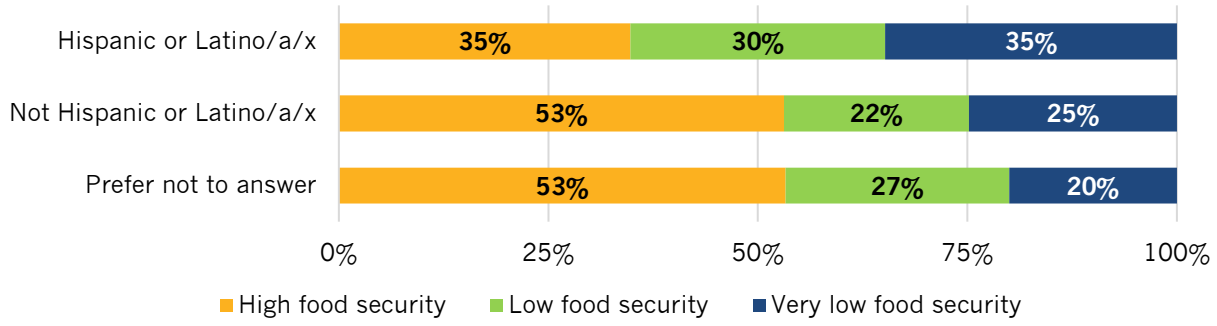
The survey findings observed racial and ethnic disparities in food insecurity rates, with white respondents and non-Hispanic or Latino/a/x respondents reporting higher rates of food security compared to other respondents. Over 70 percent of respondents who identified as some other race reported having low or very low food security, and over half of Black/African American respondents and respondents who are two or more races reported having low or very low food security (Exhibit 3). Almost two-thirds of Hispanic or Latino/a/x respondents reported some level of food insecurity compared to less than half of non-Hispanic or Latino/a/x respondents (Exhibit 4).

EXHIBIT 3. Levels of Food Security for All Survey Respondents by Race, Oakland County



N (Black/African American) = 41; N (Some other race) = 17; N (Two or more races) = 16; N (White) = 259; N (Prefer not to answer) = 15. Note: Due to small sample size, individuals who reported being American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, or Middle Eastern or North African were combined into the "Some other race" category to allow for comparison.

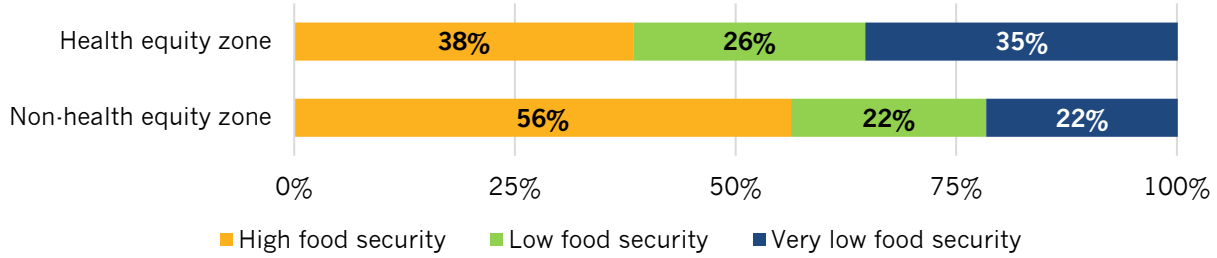
EXHIBIT 4. Levels of Food Security for All Survey Respondents by Ethnicity, Oakland County



N (Hispanic or Latino/a/x) = 23; N (Not Hispanic or Latino/a/x) = 326; N (Prefer not to answer) = 15.

In addition to race and ethnicity, the survey data showed differences in food insecurity rates based on where individuals lived in the county. Because each municipality was defined as an HEZ through their individual data points and all municipalities in comparison with each other are not homogeneous, there cannot be a direct comparison of HEZs and non-HEZs on a broad scale. However, analysis of the survey data showed that residents from HEZs reported higher levels of food insecurity (61 percent) than residents from non-HEZs (44 percent).

EXHIBIT 5. Levels of Food Security: Residents of HEZs Contrasted with Those Not Residing in HEZs, Oakland County



N (Healthy equity zone) = 99; N (Non-health equity zone) = 272

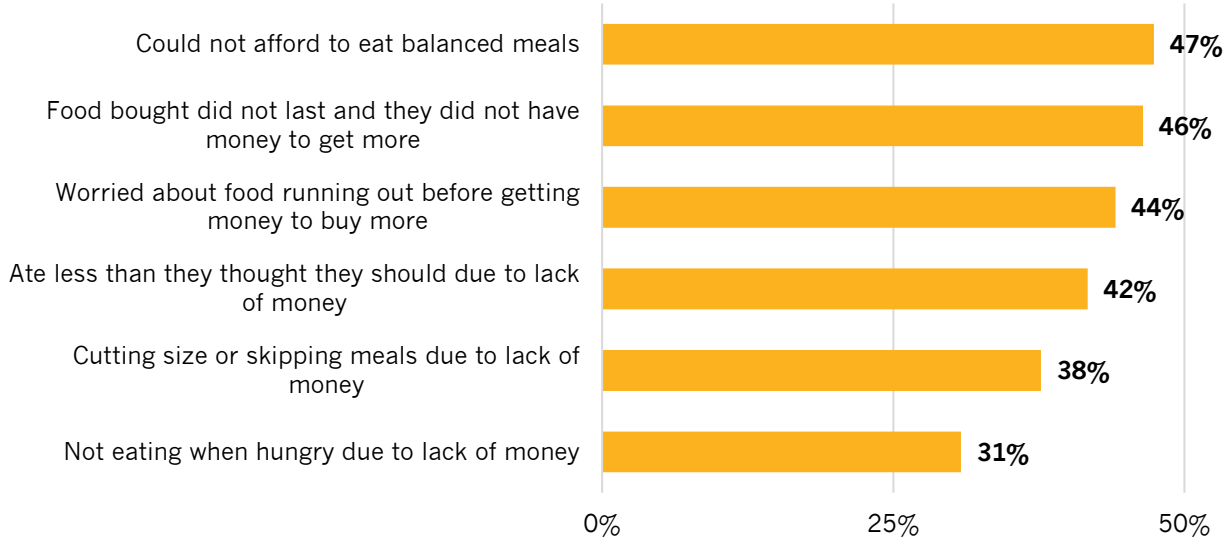
Food Security Challenges

Oakland County residents voiced several food security challenges via survey feedback and community discussions. Inconsistent or insufficient income, the cost of food, access to grocery stores and healthy food, and access to transportation are some of the factors that community members discussed.

The most commonly reported food insecurity challenges among all survey respondents, regardless of where they live, were not being able to afford balanced meals (47 percent), the food they bought did not last and they did not have money to buy more (46 percent), and being worried about whether food would run out before being able to buy more (44 percent). Most concerningly, 31

percent of respondents indicated that they did not eat, even when hungry, because there was not enough money for food (Exhibit 6).

EXHIBIT 6. Food Insecurity Challenges for All Survey Respondents, Oakland County



N = 422. Note: Percentages shown are for respondents who reported "often" or "sometimes" experiencing these different scenarios that are used to define whether an individual or household is food insecure.

Food Affordability

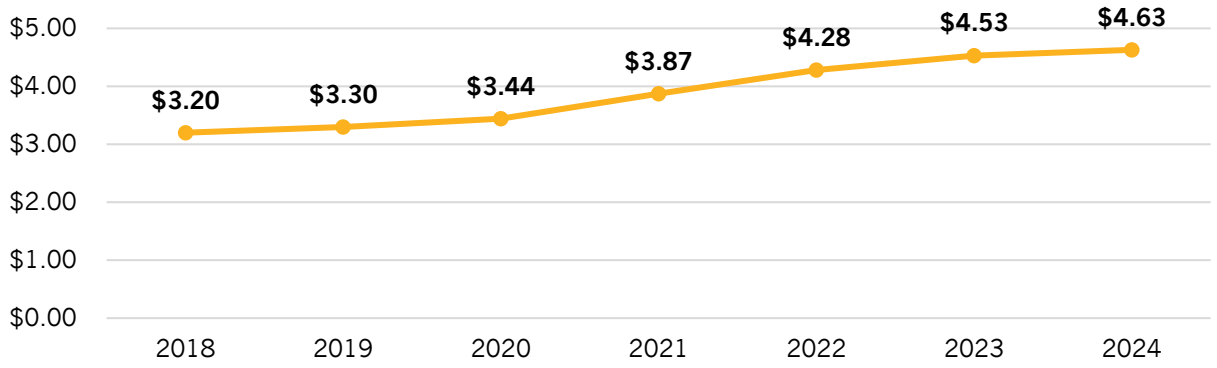
Affordability was a common theme raised during conversations at community discussions and larger events. When asked, "What are some of the biggest barriers related to accessing enough food?," nearly every participant's initial response was related to the high cost of food.

Feeding America estimates that an average meal cost in Oakland County $3.20 per person in 2018. In 2022, that cost increased to $4.28, which means that a household pays an additional $1,183 per person each year for food if a person eats three meals per day. This trend is continuing—food inflation data shows that food costs were expected to increase by an additional 2.3 percent in 2024, or to $4.63 per meal per person (Exhibit 7). This increase in the cost of an average meal from 2018 to 2024, a difference of $1.43 per meal, results in an additional cost of $1,566 per person annually, a significant cost for many households to bear (Feeding America 2022).

"When I go to the store, I can't buy the same things I did five years ago. These price increases are affecting my family."

—Community discussion participant

EXHIBIT 7. Rising Food Cost Estimates per Meal per Person over Time, Oakland County



Source: Feeding America 2022
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) September 2024a
Source: USDA September 2024b

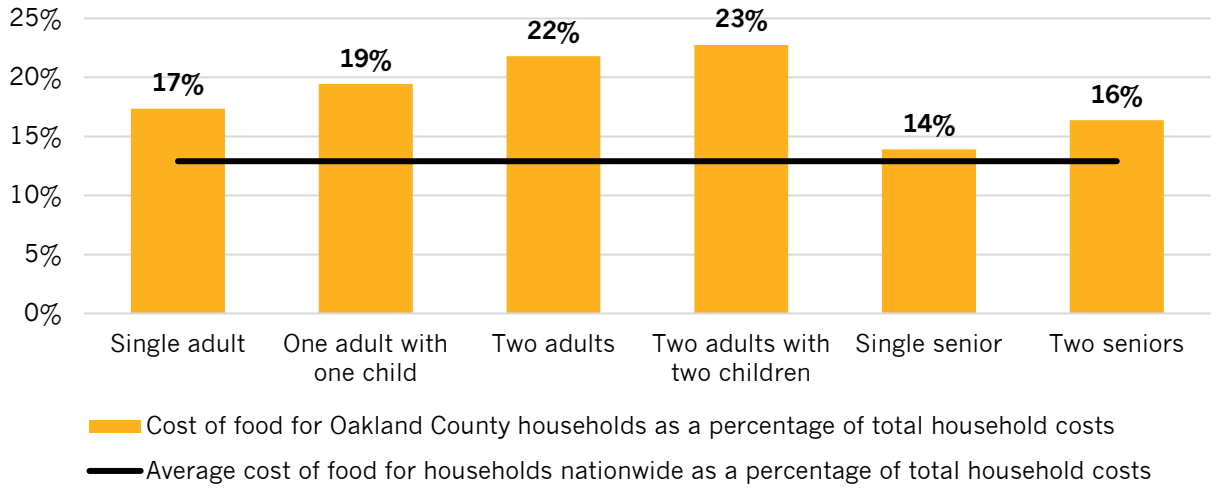
Annual household food costs include groceries and food purchased away from home that a nonhousehold member has prepared (e.g., from a restaurant). The annual household food costs for all household types in Oakland County are more than the national average of 13 percent in 2024 (Exhibit 8). According to ALICE data from United Way, the minimum yearly food cost estimate for a family living in Oakland County with two adults and two children in 2022 was $17,604, which is approximately 23 percent of a family's total annual household costs (Exhibit 8). For some families, this average food cost amounts to half, or more, of their total household income, making it nearly impossible for many Oakland County residents to make ends meet.



"The price of food requires us to be mathematicians. The high price of food means I have to make choices between food and gas to get to school. I worry that I am not going to be able to afford things my kids will eat."

—Community discussion participant

EXHIBIT 8. Food Costs as a Percentage of Annual Household Costs, Oakland County and National Rates



Source: United for ALICE 2022
Source: Sweitzer and Davidenko 2024

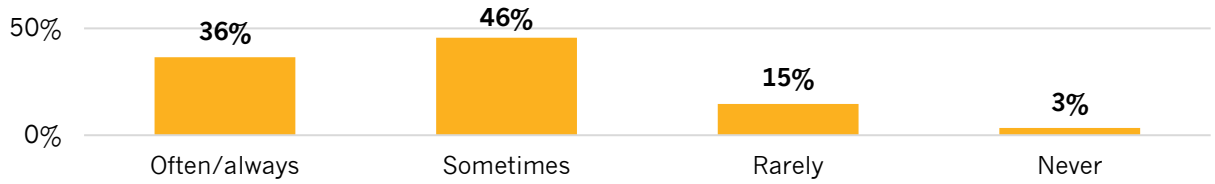
Nutritional Quality

While having access to food is critical, the nutritional quality of the food is equally important and is a component of the USDA's definition of food security (USDA September 4, 2024). When asked about their frequency of eating a healthy diet,[7] just over one-third of respondents said they often or always eat a healthy diet (Exhibit 9). Overall, respondents in HEZs and non-HEZs reported similar rates of having a healthy diet, with between 82 and 85 percent reporting that they often or sometimes consume a healthy diet. Community discussion participants lamented the rising price of produce at grocery stores and the frequent lack of fresh produce at food pantry distribution opportunities, which limits their ability to consume a healthy diet.

> **"Fresh produce is hard to come by. It would be great to know which pantries have fresh vegetables so I can make a plan to get there."**
>
> *—Community discussion participant*

[7] The survey defined a healthy diet for respondents as one that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products or fortified dairy alternatives; includes a variety of proteins such as seafood, lean meats, and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), soy products, nuts, and seeds; is low in added sugars, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol; and stays within a person's daily calorie needs.

EXHIBIT 9. Survey Respondents Reporting That They Consume a Healthy Diet, Oakland County

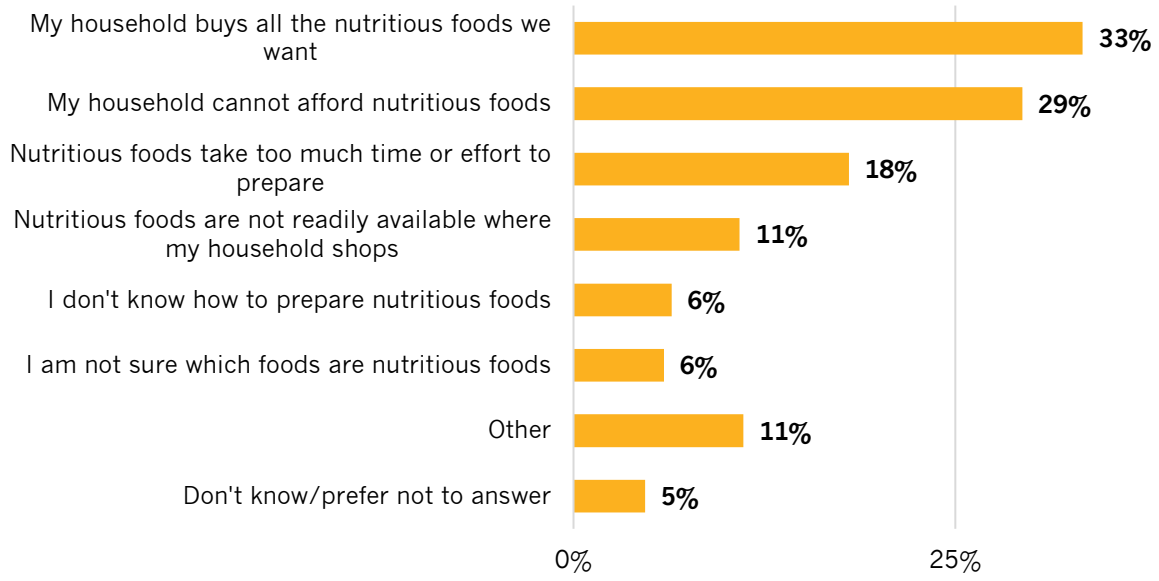


N = 417.

About one-third of all survey respondents, independent of location, said that their household can buy all the nutritious foods that they want (Exhibit 10). However, many respondents reported struggling to access nutritious foods for various reasons. Of respondents, 29 percent said that their household cannot afford nutritious foods, and 18 percent said that nutritious foods take too much time or effort to prepare. Survey respondents also said that nutritious foods were not readily available where they shop (11 percent), they don't know how to prepare nutritious foods (6 percent), and they aren't sure which foods are nutritious (6 percent).

> **"My wages stay the same, but the price of food keeps going up. I like to buy natural and organic, but it is too expensive. I don't always have the option to buy healthy produce."**
>
> *—Community discussion participant*

EXHIBIT 10. Survey Respondents Reporting Their Experience Accessing Nutritious Food, Oakland County



N = 405.

Transportation

Transportation issues and barriers were a consistent topic in community discussion sessions. Discussion participants frequently shared that they have to balance the expense of gas money, the effort required to schedule a ride (either with a service or a friend), and the time investment when they consider the overall "cost" they are paying to access food. Additionally, there are several census tracts in the county where less than 100 residents have access to a vehicle, further limiting their access to food. Participants discussed the potential food access benefits of mobile pantries, additional pantry locations closer to their neighborhood, delivery, and assistance with transportation. Participants also discussed the intersection of unmet needs beyond needing food and struggling with transportation, including the need for clothing, household goods, medical and mental health support, housing, legal services, and employment assistance.

> **"Getting food even if it's 'free' requires time and money. I don't have a car, so I got a ride with a friend who was going to the pantry, but many people do not have vehicles."**
>
> *—Community discussion participant*

Culturally Responsive Practices

Community discussion participants also discussed the need for culturally responsive practices regarding food distribution. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 5 percent of the population in Oakland County is Hispanic or Latino (American Community Survey n.d.a.). Participants cited the need for translators and/or resources to be translated in applicable languages, especially Spanish. Additionally, the differing requirements among food distribution sites and organizations were confusing to navigate for those accessing the assistance, especially for newly arrived community members who may or may not possess documentation to show residency.

> **"Places that distribute food should communicate how they can connect undocumented people with food. Some organizations say that immigrants without documents are not eligible to receive food."**
>
> *—Community discussion participant*

While food distribution staff and volunteer interactions were frequently positive, community members also discussed times when their food distribution interactions were negative enough to

dissuade them from accessing that site again. The interactions discussed by participants included feeling judged based on their need to access a food pantry and their cultural background.

> **"If you have a bad experience, you are not likely to go here even though you need the food. This is not a choice you should have to make between getting food you need and being discriminated against."**
> *—Community discussion participant*

Access to Nutritious, Local, Culturally Appropriate Food in Oakland County

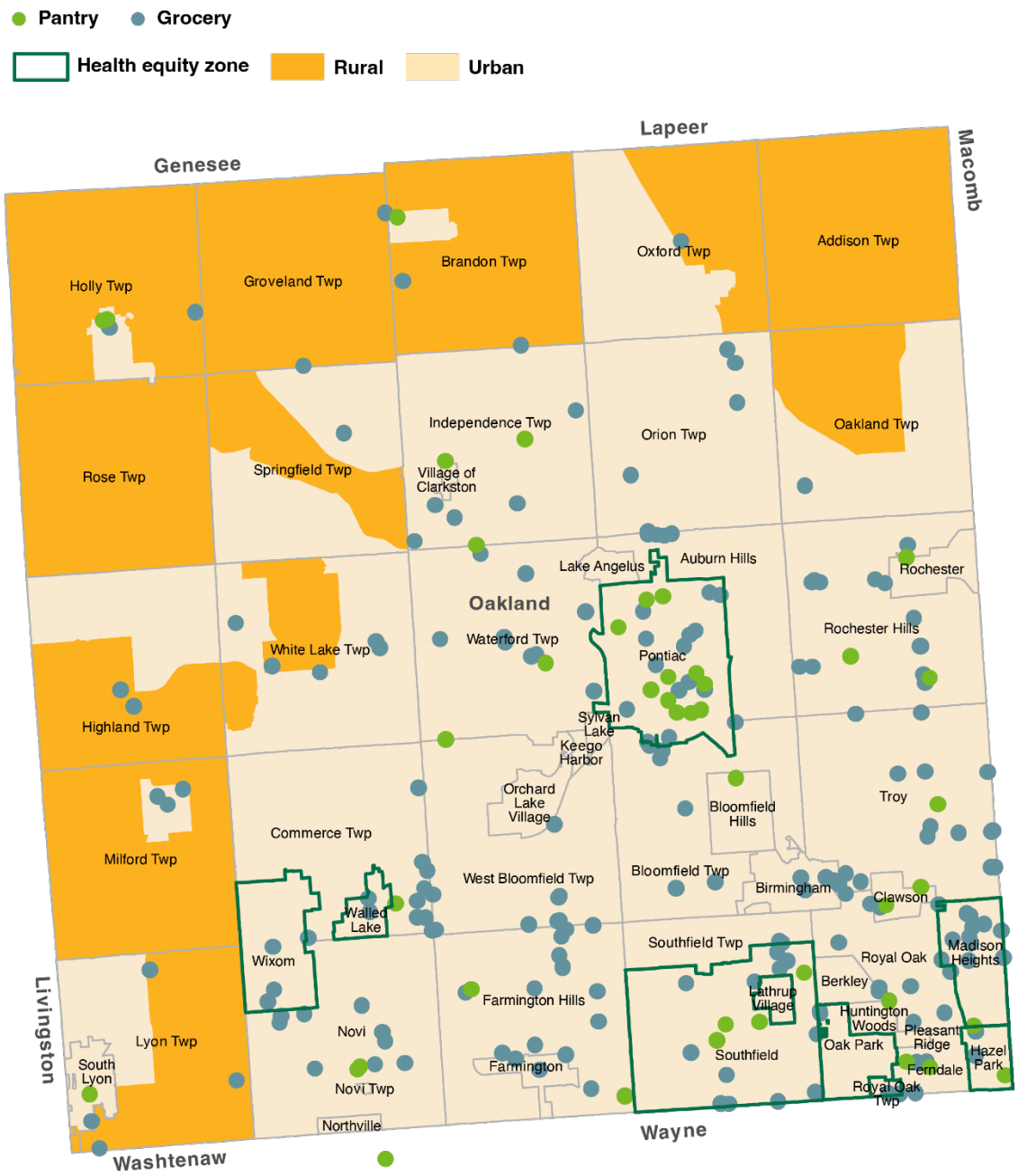
Assessing where and how people can access food, and where gaps exist, can help determine how Oakland County's food system can improve. Lack of food access points can limit people's ability to get enough food that is nutritious, locally produced, and culturally appropriate.

Food Access Points

Food access points, as defined by the USDA, are dedicated locations where people can consistently access nutritious food such as grocery stores, supermarkets, food supercenters, and pantries where people can consistently find produce and other fresh food (January 2025). In spring 2024, there were 158 such access points in Oakland County, including 115 grocery stores, supermarkets, and food supercenters and 43 food pantries (Exhibit 11). When expanding food access points to include convenience stores specialty and ethnic grocers, farmers markets, and farm stands, Oakland County had about 650 locations. These sites, however, may not be available year-round and may not provide consistent access to nutritious food like produce and other fresh food. HEZ communities are outlined in green in the map to show how food access varies across the county, in addition to the urban and rural census tract designations (USDA September 4, 2024).



EXHIBIT 11. Buying Food: Food Access Points in Oakland County



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture 2021

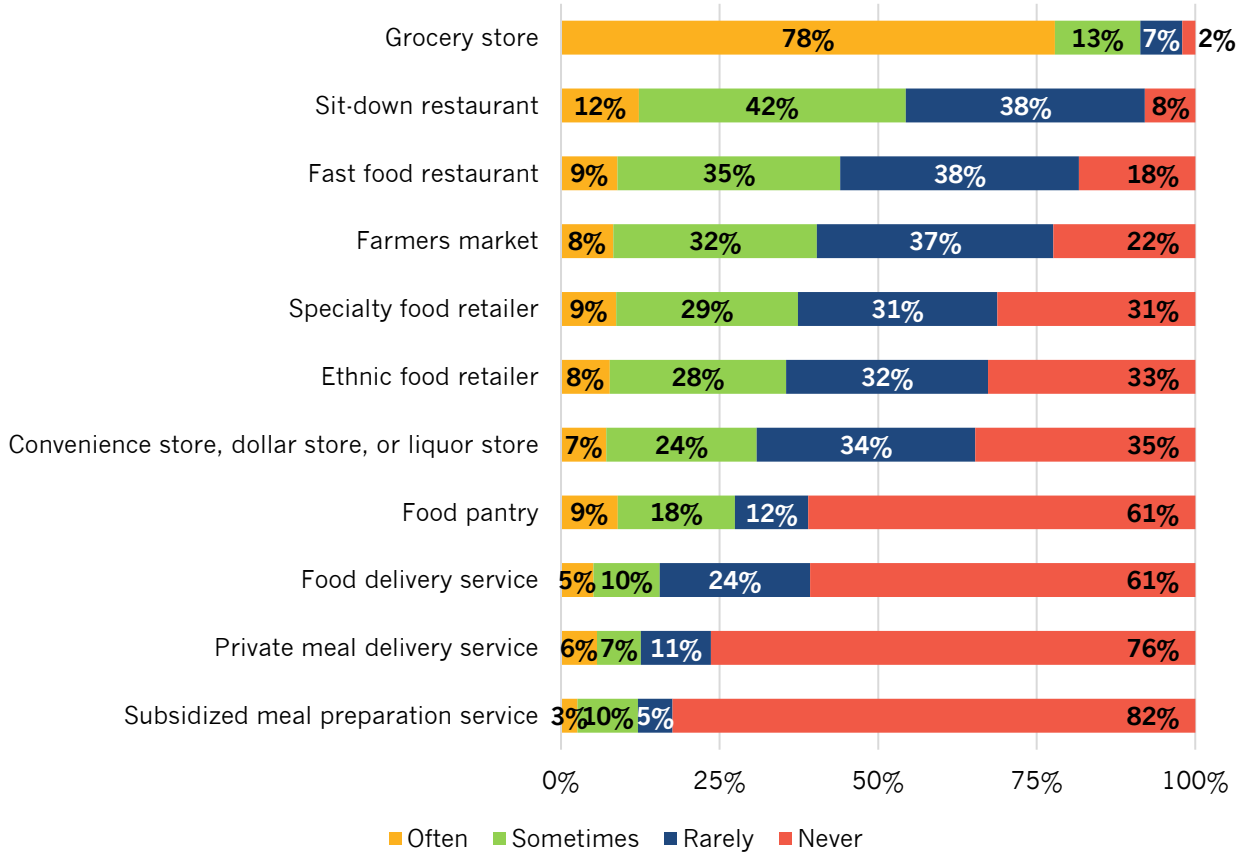
Consumer Purchase Preferences

Grocery stores were the most frequent place from which respondents reported getting their food, with 78 percent reporting that they often got their food from grocery stores (Exhibit 12). According to Oakland County residents, however, the quality of the produce (and other nutritious foods), and convenience of accessing them, can vary significantly depending on location. Residents who

participated in discussions or community events mentioned that, while they knew of grocery stores in their area, they had to plan ahead to get to them because of factors like lack of transportation or distance, among others. They said it would be easier to get to a convenience store for many people in their community, although they felt that food would be lower quality and more expensive than at a grocery store. Convenience, location, and transportation continue to be barriers to accessing healthy foods that residents desire.

> **"The party store near me charges so much more than the grocery store and they have limited items, but the grocery stores are too far away, and the public transit system isn't great."**
>
> *—Community discussion participant*

EXHIBIT 12. Locations at Which Survey Respondents Frequently Purchase Food, Oakland County



N varied by response between 387 and 393.
Source: USDA 2021

Food Deserts: Limited Access to Food

Food deserts are defined as low-income census tracts with a substantial number of residents with low levels of access to retail outlets selling healthy and affordable foods (Nulph et al. 2011). Food deserts are vital to understand and address because they indicate people struggling to access nutritious, affordable food—inadequate food access can negatively impact people's diets and their long-term health outcomes. Mapping food deserts can more easily show where disparities exist across neighboring communities, including by income and vehicle access.

There are many ways to qualify a census tract as a food desert, considering elements such as income level, population density, urban or rural designation, vehicle access, and distance to the nearest grocery store. For this project, two different ways of determining whether a census tract is a food desert are included, both of which consider the distance that low-income residents are from a grocery store and the percentage of residents with a vehicle.



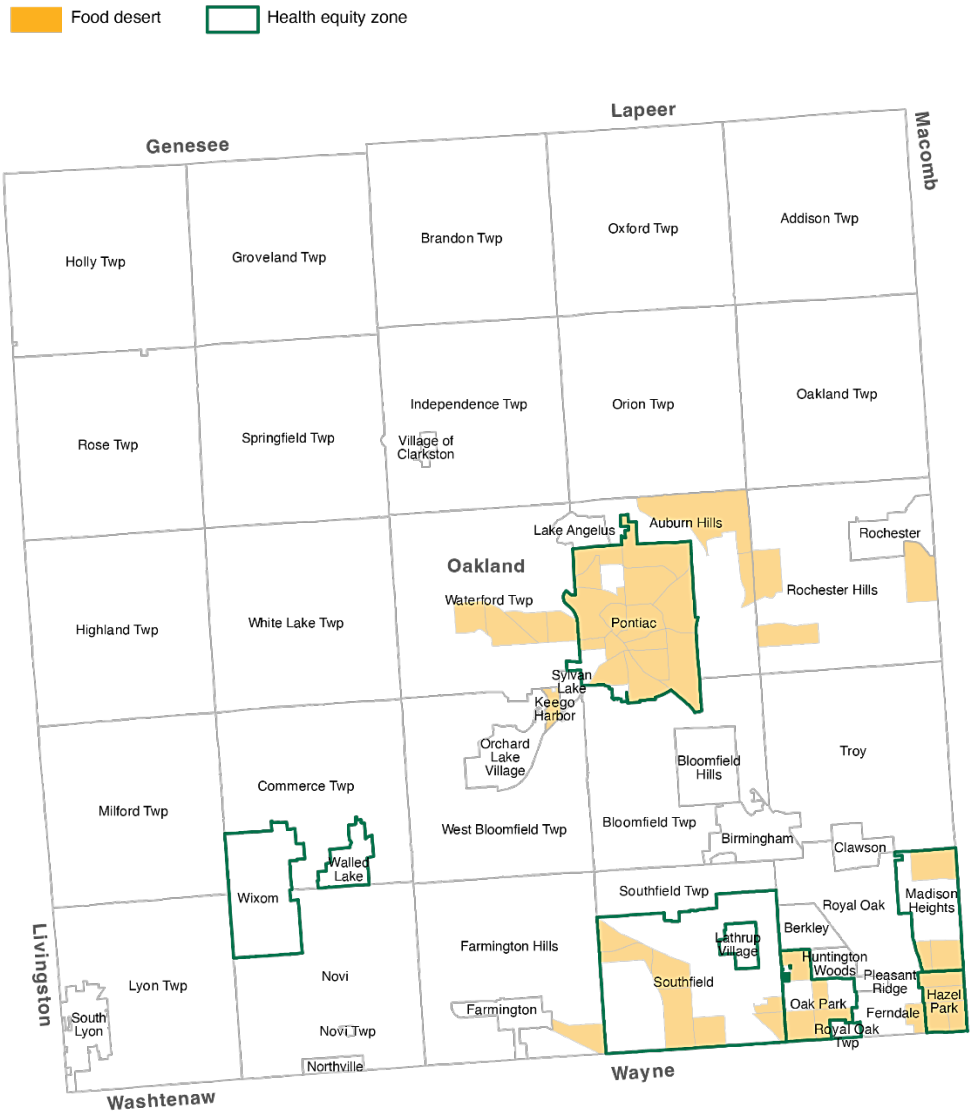
Though census tracts might appear to have ample food access points within their boundaries, these tracts can still be considered food deserts because of the number of low-income people living there and the distance those residents are from the food access location.

Low Income and Low Access at One and Ten Miles

Low-income and low access census tracts at one and ten miles are low-income tracts where at least a third of a population is either more than one mile away from a grocery store in urban areas or more than ten miles away in rural areas (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2025).[8] While access to grocery stores was not an element used to define the HEZs in Oakland County, most low access and low-income food deserts occur within or near an HEZ (see Exhibit 13 on the next page) and an Oakland County resident's access to food varies significantly according to where they live in the county. All food deserts using this definition are in urban areas.

[8] Low-income tracts are tracts with either a poverty rate of 20 percent or more, or a median family income less than 80 percent of the statewide median family income; or a tract in a metropolitan area with a median family income less than 80 percent of the surrounding metropolitan area median family income (USDA 2025).

EXHIBIT 13. Low Income and Low Access at One and Ten Miles, Oakland County



Source: USDA 2022

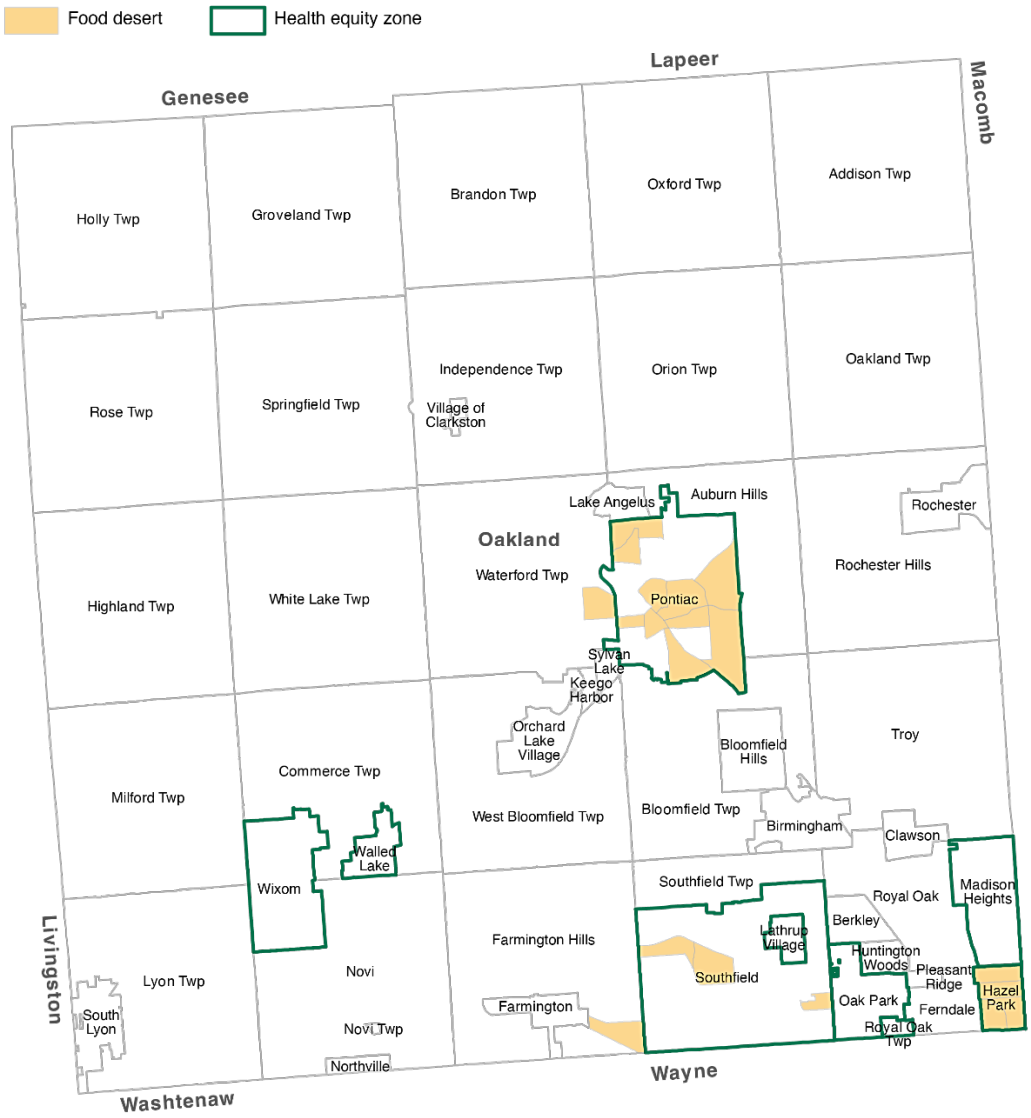
Low Income and Low Access Using Vehicle Access

Low income and low access using vehicle access areas are low-income census tracts in which more than 100 households in the tract have no vehicle available and are more than one-half mile from the nearest grocery store, or when one-third of the residents are more than 20 miles from the nearest grocery store regardless of vehicle access (USDA 2025).[9]

[9] A low-income tract where at least one of the following is true: at least 100 households are located more than one-half mile from the nearest supermarket and have no vehicle access; or at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, live more than 20 miles from the nearest supermarket, regardless of vehicle availability.

Neither vehicle access nor food access were specific elements used to define an HEZ, although data elements like the proportion of residents that meet the ALICE threshold are likely to be correlated to reduced vehicle access. Fewer areas are considered a food desert when taking vehicle access into consideration and, similar to low income and low food access, all of the food desert tracts are in urban areas and are within or near HEZs (Exhibit 14).

EXHIBIT 14: Low-Income, Low Food Access, and Low Vehicle Access Areas, Oakland County



Source: USDA 2022

Culturally Appropriate Food and Practices

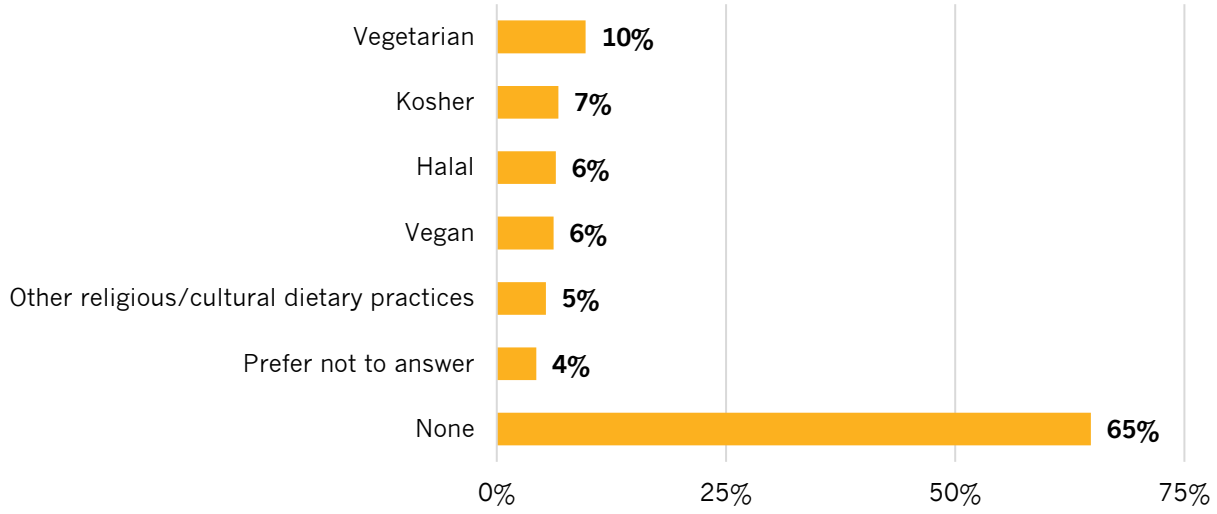
Ensuring that available food is nutritious, locally sourced, and culturally appropriate can help encourage balanced, healthy diets and contribute to improved health outcomes. Culturally appropriate food options can help people feel comfortable in new settings, especially for newly

arrived community members who have recently immigrated to the U.S. Access to familiar foods can help maintain cultural traditions while encouraging balanced diets. Public Sector Consultants (PSC) gathered the following information through interviews with food system organizational partners, the community-wide survey, and community discussions.



Food system organizational partner interviewees shared that offering culturally appropriate food is vital for much of their food distribution, especially when serving ethnically and religiously diverse client populations across Oakland County. About one-third of survey respondents (34 percent) reported that they followed dietary restrictions based on their religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, or personal preferences (Exhibit 15).

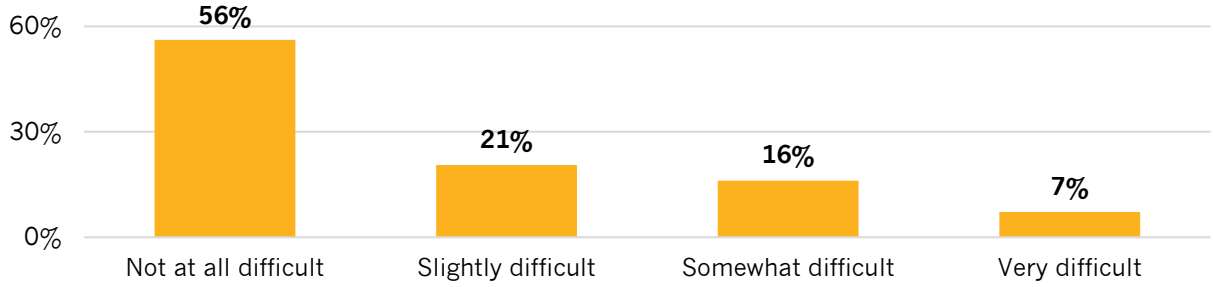
EXHIBIT 15. Dietary Preferences or Restrictions Adhered to by Survey Respondents, Oakland County



N = 372. Note: Percentages may total more than 100 percent because multiple responses were selected.

If people need help accessing food, they may not be able to afford or travel to specialty stores that offer culturally specific foods. When asked about locating food that meets their cultural, religious, or dietary preferences, 44 percent of survey respondents shared that they have experienced some difficulty (Exhibit 16). Community discussion participants talked about the potential benefit of food pantries using a feedback tool to better understand the dietary needs of the people they served, such as a requirement for kosher, diabetic-friendly, or allergen-friendly food.

EXHIBIT 16. Survey Respondents' Difficulty Finding Food That Meets Their Cultural, Religious, or Dietary Preferences, Oakland County



N = 404

Culturally appropriate food is also crucial for providing a sense of belonging and respect for cultural traditions. Interviewees explained that for newly arrived community members, especially those who may be unfamiliar with the food options available in their new communities—familiar ingredients and food products can be comforting.

> **"People want to buy food they're familiar with [that is] culturally relevant. There are few Latino grocery stores in Pontiac."**
>
> *—Food system interviewee*

By providing food with which newly arrived families are familiar, interviewees indicated that food service organizations can develop more robust, trusting relationships with their clients and can, over time, serve more of their holistic needs. In feeling welcome in their community and more trusting of service organizations, clients may be willing to discuss health and wellness concerns and address additional issues through accessing available services, like participating in cooking and nutrition classes or learning about chronic disease management.

> **"[We participate in a] Prescription for Health program where people get vouchers to purchase fruits and veggies, listen to talks [addressing] health issues, participate in classes, and track weight and exercise. We need more of those [opportunities] integrating food and health."**
>
> *—Food system interviewee*

Wasted Food and the Use of Local Foods

Increasing efficiency and promoting environmental sustainability in the local food system can help improve service provision, reduce wasted food, and support improved access to food for community members. Local food producers and restaurants can help save food that would otherwise be discarded—extending the life of this food and sharing it with local food pantries can benefit Oakland County residents who are food insecure while reducing their contributions to the landfill.

Wasted Food

Addressing wasted food is an increasingly important aspect of community sustainability and well-being in Oakland County. Nationally, an estimated 30 to 40 percent of the food supply is wasted, which is approximately 119 billion pounds of food each year (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 2025). Households, grocery stores, and the food service industry are all major contributors to waste, with inefficiencies across the supply chain adding to the problem. Michigan sends over 1.5 million tons of wasted food to its landfills each year (Schoonmaker et al. 2023), with Southeast Michigan responsible for an estimated 1.65 billion pounds of wasted food alone (Todd 2024). Wasted food also results in negative environmental impacts like significant methane emissions, which is why Michigan aims to cut waste in half by 2030 to achieve carbon neutrality via its MI Healthy Climate Plan (Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy [EGLE] n.d.b.).

One way to reduce wasted food is to rescue it before it goes to landfills. According to the community discussion feedback, logistics are the most complicated element of food rescue for smaller ventures, and community organizations can facilitate beneficial connections between local entities and individuals. Discussion participants shared that many businesses and farms have the desire to avoid waste, but that navigating the logistics to donate and receive food requires knowledge and a lot of effort. Community discussion participants cited both centralized coordination and facilitated connections as possibilities to build and support partnerships and make participation in waste-reduction efforts easier.

> **"Our food rescue and donation efforts come from personal relationships we've built in the community. If an organization could make it easier, more people might be willing to participate."**
>
> *–Community discussion participant*

Partner organizations can make a big impact on community waste rates. The City of Southfield and Make Food Not Waste, an environmental nonprofit organization based in Detroit, completed *A Blueprint to Zero Food Waste in Southfield*, which was funded by EGLE. The program aims to reduce

wasted food in Southfield by 100 percent by 2030. If this effort is successful, the county could help other communities replicate these practices. By defining what it takes to divert *all* of a city's wasted food from landfills, Make Food Not Waste's approach is based on two key tenets—that there is no single solution to addressing wasted food, and that collaboration is key to stopping food from ending up in landfills (EGLE, n.d.a.).

Accessing Local Food

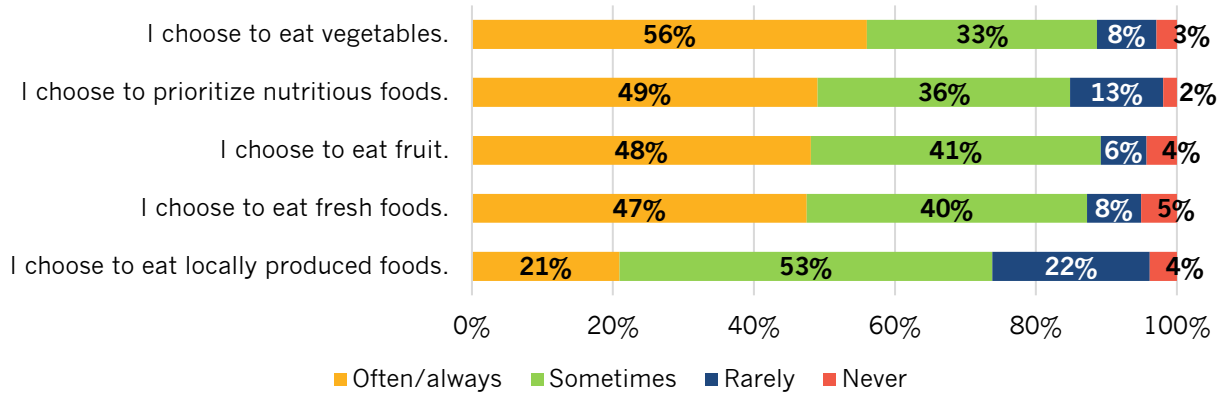
There has been increased attention on access to locally produced foods, as purchasing local foods allows dollars to be circulated in the local economy and these foods are typically associated with more nutritious, sustainably produced food options. Phenomena like the multiplier effect, which describes the impact purchased items have on their local economy, indicate that local food has a multiplier effect of 1.4–2.6 throughout the wider local economy (Jennings 2012), or for every dollar spent on local food, $1.40–$2.60 of local economic activity is generated. This means that the more food dollars that are spent in a local area, the greater the likelihood for that money to remain, circulate, and gradually increase in that community in the form of income, wealth, and jobs. This trend is especially prevalent at farmers' markets, where every dollar of income earned by vendors translates to an additional $0.48 of income for nearby businesses (Cornell Cooperative Extension 2020). These small-seeming gains can be significant when applied in a county like Oakland with high density and demand for fresh, locally grown produce.

> **"When the local food economy is strong, farmers can invest in hoophouses and other infrastructure that helps us grow produce year-round."**
> *–Community discussion participant*

Access to local food, or lack thereof, directly impacts resident choice and opportunity. Among survey respondents, only 21 percent said they often or always choose to eat locally produced foods when they have the option; however, choosing to eat locally produced foods does not consider elements such as the cost and seasonal availability of the food, vicinity of the market, or other factors (Exhibit 17).

> **"It's possible to get local, healthy, fresh food, but it is not always easy."**
> *–Community discussion participant*

EXHIBIT 17. Survey Respondents' Food Choice Preferences When They Have the Option, Oakland County

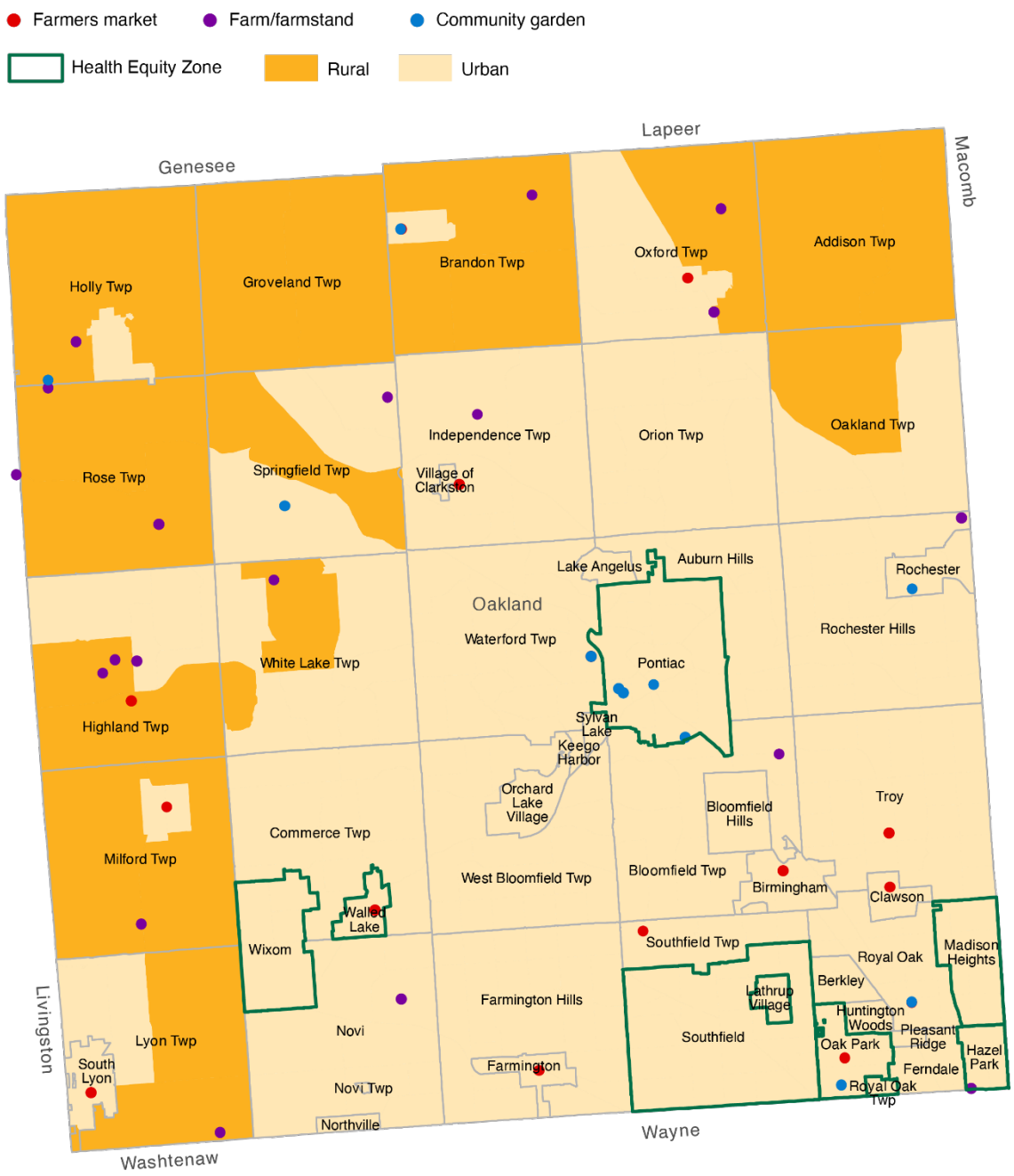


N varies between 414 and 416 depending on response.



When looking specifically at local food access points like community gardens, farms and farmstands, and farmers markets, trends around accessibility emerged (Exhibit 18). When considering the difference between urban and rural designations, and the associated population density in Oakland County's urban areas, urban and HEZ residents have fewer local food access points than rural residents, with the exception of Pontiac (Exhibit 18). Local food access points are associated with providing fresh, local, nutritious foods, albeit often seasonally, and increasing the local food access for urban and HEZ residents can improve the frequency of residents' consumption of nutritious local foods while boosting the local economy.

EXHIBIT 18: Buying Local Food: Local Food Access Points, Oakland County



Source: USDA November 2024

Community discussion participants shared several ideas to improve access to local food. Increasing the number of farmers markets that accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Double Up Food Bucks; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Produce Connection, and other assistance programs—and making sure that community members were aware of that benefit—would help increase resident access to fresh and local food. Currently, a limited number

of growers accept benefits, but community members felt that highlighting those who do accept benefits could not only spread the word to residents about where to shop but also encourage other producers to participate. Discussion participants, including farmers and food-based businesses, also shared that a partner organization or program, such as the Michigan Fitness Foundation or Double Up Food Bucks, can be very helpful in supporting residents' access to local food.

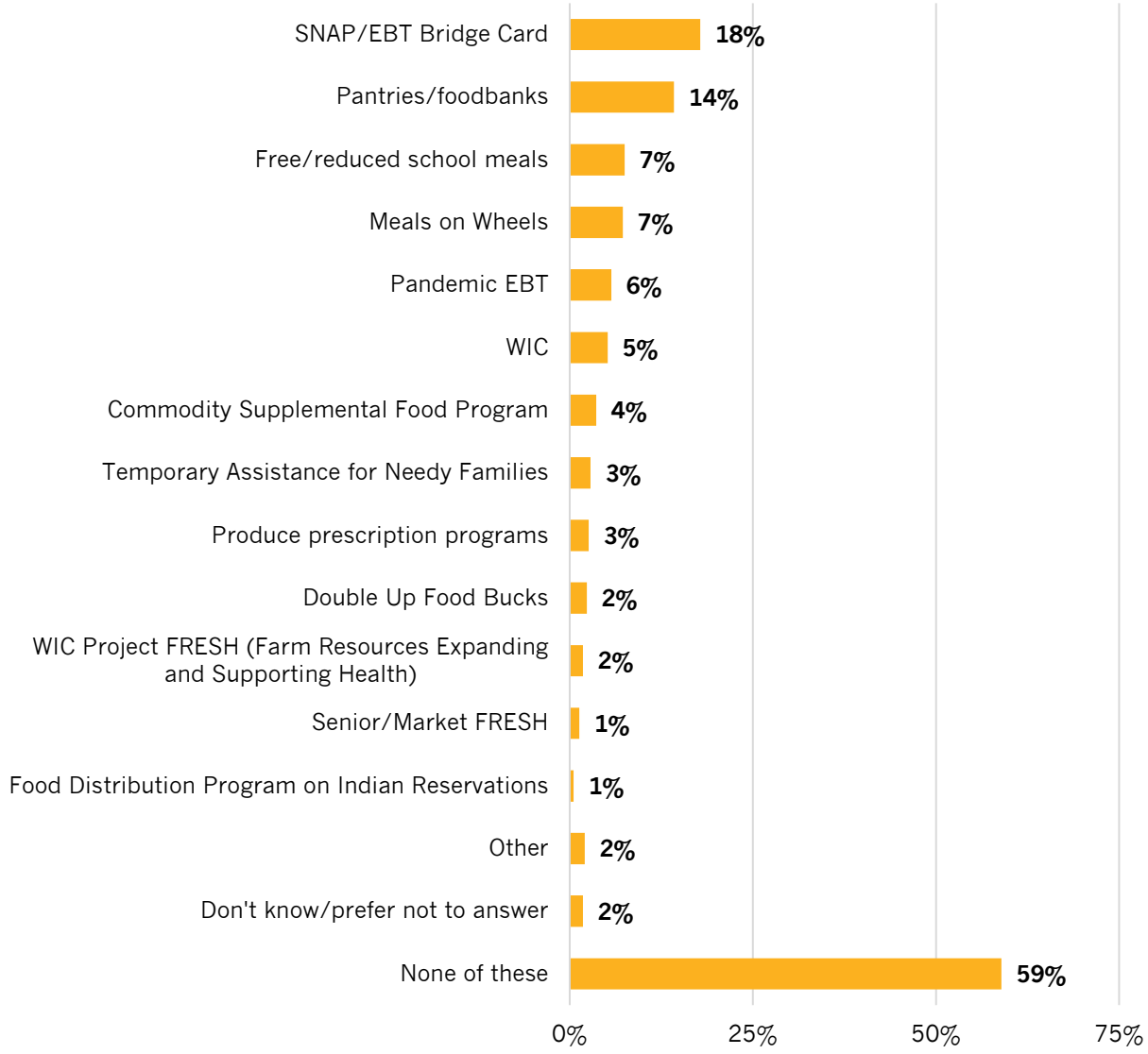
> **"The Michigan Fitness Foundation subsidizes 50 boxes of local produce subscription boxes from our market for customers who use EBT, so those customers are paying 10 percent of the market cost. There is a waiting list, and I wish there was more funding like that available."**
>
> *–Community discussion participant*

Other ideas for improving local food access and consumption included helping farmers create materials to share information about their operation or offerings, advancing a centralized method of promoting farmers and farmers markets, establishing local food distribution trucks, partnering with established organizations to provide nutritional education opportunities and applicable recipe cards at their local markets and schools, and turning national education opportunities into appealing events (e.g., learn to cook local produce night out).

State of the Current Food Security System

Food assistance is a critical component of food security for many Oakland County residents. Approximately 40 percent of survey respondents received some sort of food assistance (including public benefit programs, food pantries, and other forms of support) in the previous 30 days. The most common food assistance accessed was SNAP/EBT (18 percent), followed closely by pantries or food banks (14 percent). Use of other programs such as Meals on Wheels, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC, and summer school meal programs were also reported (Exhibit 19).

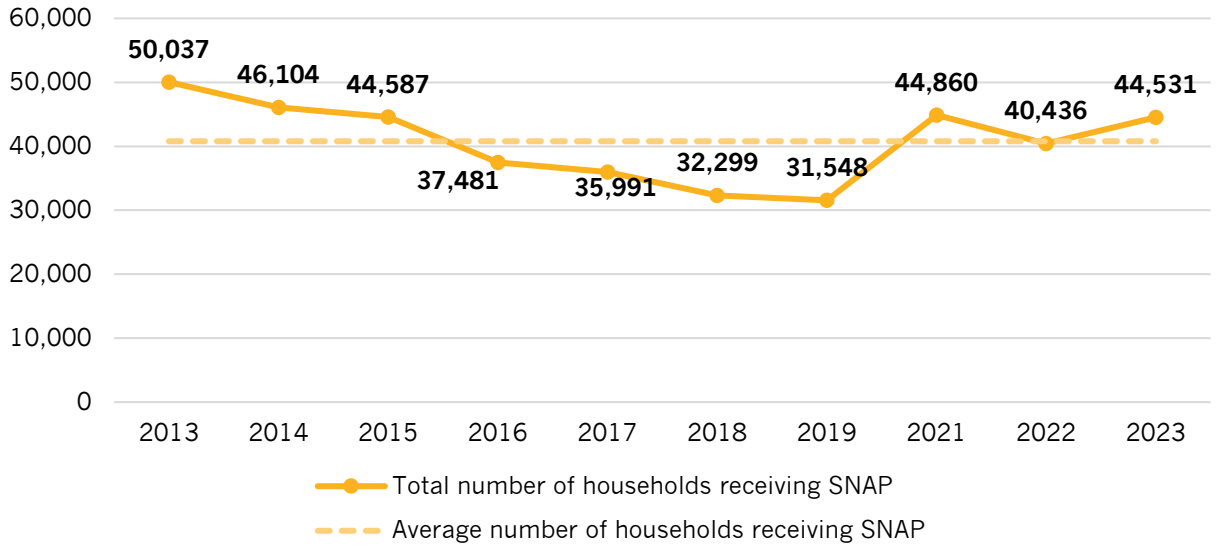
EXHIBIT 19. Food Assistance Programs Used by Survey Respondents, Oakland County



N = 387

The most common form of food assistance in Oakland County is the Food Assistance Program, referred to as SNAP on a national level, administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to the pandemic, the number of residents enrolled in this program was steadily decreasing, reaching a low of about 31,500 households in 2019. This amount spiked to over 44,800 households in 2021 (Exhibit 20). In 2023, 8.3 percent of all households in Oakland County received SNAP.

EXHIBIT 20. Number of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits Over Time, Oakland County

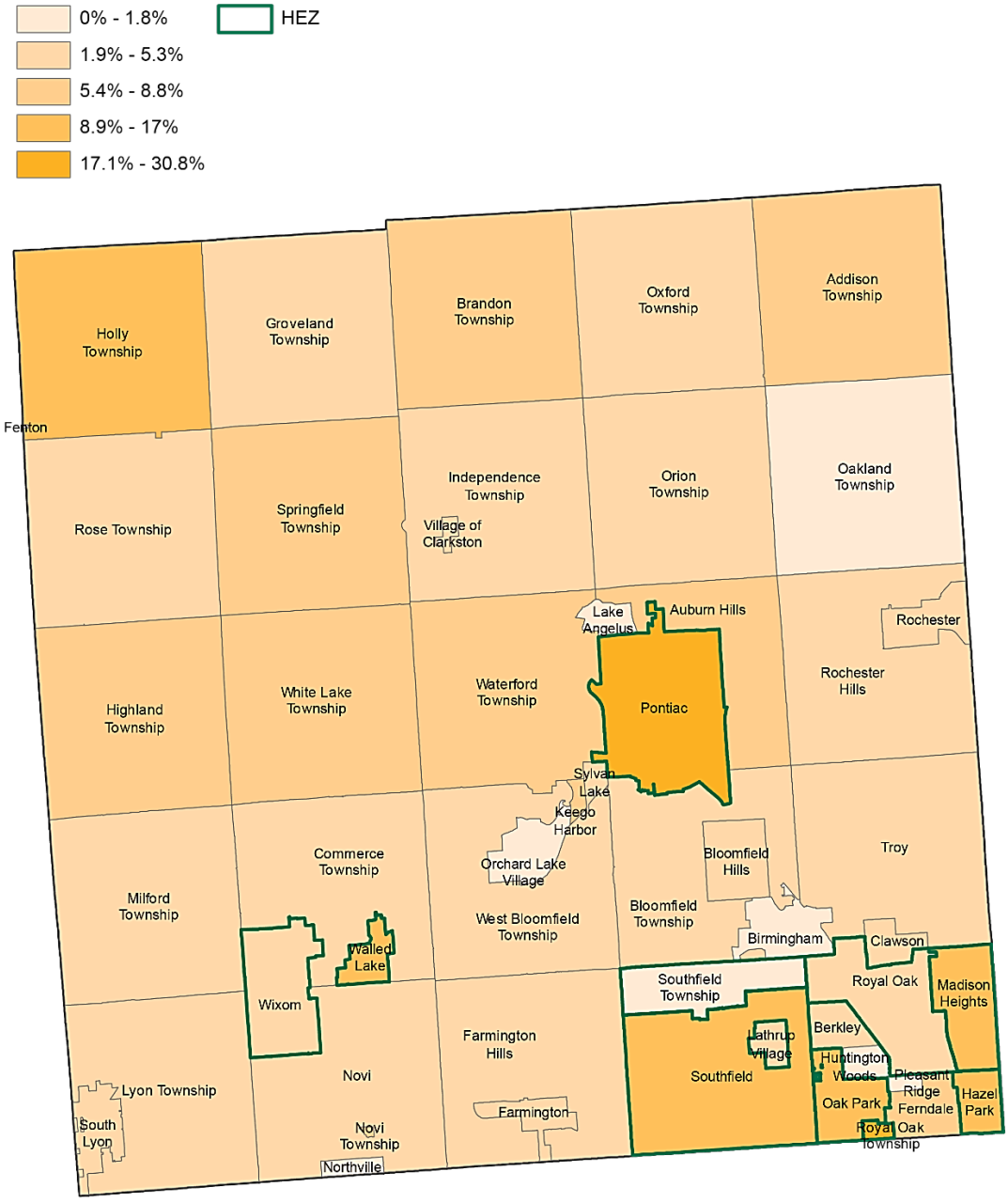


Note: 2020 1-Year estimates were not published by the American Community Survey due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: American Community Survey n.d.b.



The percentage of households with SNAP varies by municipality, ranging from under 3 percent in areas like Bloomfield Hills and Berkley to over 30 percent in Pontiac and Royal Oak. SNAP enrollment data highlighted the higher prevalence of SNAP participants in HEZs and is likely mirrored in the uptake of other forms of food assistance (Exhibit 21). Again, food access was not one of the elements considered when defining the HEZs; however, food security and the need for additional food assistance substantiate the inequitable health outcomes these communities are facing.

EXHIBIT 21. Percentage of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits, by Oakland County Municipality



Source: American Community Survey n.d.c.

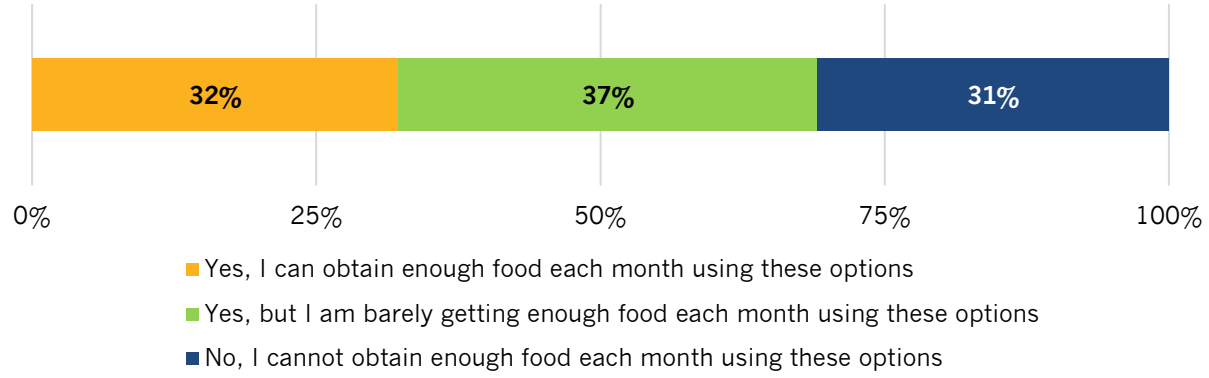
Many residents who participated in the community discussions and larger engagement events both accessed food assistance programs and lived in HEZs, due in part to a project focus on HEZ resident recruitment. They appreciated the food assistance services, and often reported them as helpful, but shared that they often fell short of having sufficient food for their household or leaving them holding on by incredibly thin financial margins.

"It is hard to survive in this economy. As a result, I have adult children and grandchildren back living with me to help them save on expenses, but even with getting help [from a food pantry], it is hard to get food for that many people."

–Community discussion participant

Of those respondents who reported accessing food assistance, only about one-third of respondents reported that they are easily getting enough food each month with the benefits provided to them. Just over one-third of respondents reported they were getting enough food to get by, but just barely. Meanwhile, just under one-third of respondents accessing food assistance were not receiving enough support to meet their food needs (Exhibit 22). Additionally, community members discussed that they are patching together several different kinds of food assistance and support to meet their needs.

EXHIBIT 22. Of Those Survey Respondents Utilizing Food Assistance: Rating Sufficient Food Access, Oakland County



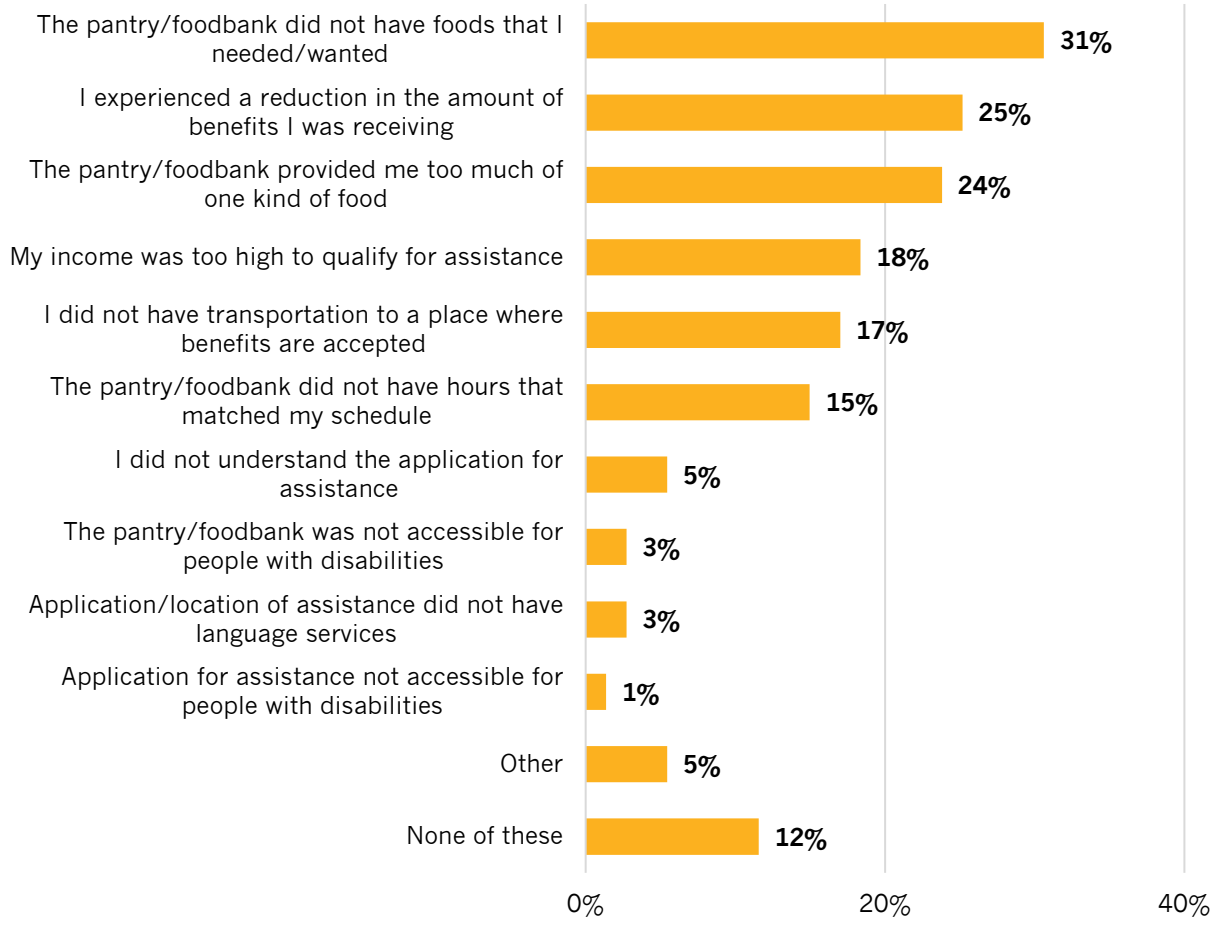
N = 149

Survey respondents who use food assistance programs reported several challenges with accessing this support. The most reported challenges in accessing adequate food assistance included factors such as the pantries/food banks do not have the foods people needed or wanted (31 percent), they received a reduction in their benefits (25 percent), and pantries/foodbanks provide too much of one type of food (24 percent). This was a common topic in conversations with residents, who voiced their frustration with not being able to select the food that best fits their household's needs while shopping at food banks and pantries. A few people specifically reported the frustration of getting too much of one food, which often resulted in them having to discard expired food items. They said that doing so can be distressing, given their familiarity with being food insecure. Other

challenges include income being too high to qualify for adequate benefits, and logistic challenges in traveling to pantries (e.g., transportation, limited hours).

> **"I cannot use three bags of potatoes in one week and I received three bags of potatoes two weeks in a row. I want that food to go to people who can use it and don't want to waste it."**
>
> *–Community discussion participant*

EXHIBIT 23. Of Those Survey Respondents Utilizing Food Assistance: Most Reported Challenges, Oakland County



N = 147



Similar to feedback received from newly arrived community members, other community members also expressed the need for transparency among food distribution sites' requirements or restrictions during community discussions. While most participants acknowledged that it is up to the sites to place requirements upon recipients as they see fit, all discussion participants expressed their confusion over understanding which food distribution site required what. Understanding and navigating the combination of different locations, associated requirements, varying service hours, fluctuating food item availability, and transportation proves to be a continued barrier to those accessing the food they need for their families.

> **"There is a food pantry near where I live that requires a phone interview, a scheduled pickup time during work hours, and documented proof of need paperwork."**
>
> *–Community discussion participant*

Advancing Change

Community insight, national and Michigan data, and survey feedback all underline the need for systems change to improve the food landscape in Oakland County. Residents are struggling to access the food they need, and the current food security system is often insufficient. Oakland County Health and Human Services is dedicated to learning from the data and feedback outlined above and using it to inform a cohesive plan to improve the food landscape for all Oakland County residents. After establishing a baseline for food needs and services in Oakland County, PSC shared the collected data with coalition and community members to inform their recommendations for a plan forward.

The Roadmap for Moving Forward, available as a stand-alone report, will elucidate the county's commitment to improving food access and strengthening both the food system and community. The main goals and objectives included in the roadmap are outlined in the righthand box.

Oakland County Health and Human Services would like to express their appreciation to all those who participated in the coalition and the community members who contributed their feedback via interviews, the community survey, and community discussions. This feedback has directly informed *The Roadmap for Moving Forward* and Oakland County is eager to implement the plan to improve Oakland County's food landscape.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Improve access to nutritious, local, culturally appropriate food for all Oakland County residents

Objective 1.1: Reduce barriers to accessing nutritious food

Objective 1.2: Foster food programs that meet the needs and preferences of the people using them

Objective 1.3: Increase food literacy among Oakland County residents

Objective 1.4: Decrease stigma related to food assistance programs

Goal 2: Reduce wasted food and support local farmers and food businesses

Objective 2.5: Maximize existing efforts to reduce wasted food

Objective 2.6: Support local farmers and food-based businesses

Goal 3: Increase collaboration among food system partners and community members

Objective 3.7: Establish and communicate clear goals to develop buy-in from food system partners

Objective 3.8: Promote collaboration and continued communication among established partners and new partners

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Appendix A: Oakland County Food Landscape Study Community Coalition Roster

- Rock Abboud, Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
- Lori Adkins, Oakland Schools
- Eric Candela, Forgotten Harvest
- Susan Erspamer, Hospitality House
- Angela Gill, Lighthouse
- Sara Gold, Oakland County Executive Office
- Melanie Grund, Oakland County Health and Human Services
- Jeanette (Dyann) Hayes, All Saints Church, Welcome Oakland
- Tyrone Jordan, Oakland County Veterans Services
- Jennifer Lucarelli, Oakland University
- Judith McNeeley, Gleaners Community Food Bank
- Emily Mueller, United Way for Southeastern Michigan
- Amanda Negron, Community member
- William Parker, Pontiac City Council
- Amanda Prince, Community member
- Jessica Ramsay, Gleaners Community Food Bank
- Maralee Rosemond, City of Oak Park, Oak Park Farmers Market
- Katelyn Smoger, Trinity Health Oakland—The Farm
- Jennifer Sweda, Community member
- Chad Techner, Oakland County Food Policy Council, Metro Food Rescue
- Kristen Wiltfang, Oakland County Economic Development and Community Affairs
- Coleman Yoakum, Micah 6 Community

Appendix B: Methodology

To understand the food landscape in Oakland County, including food insecurity, food access, and disparities in the community, Public Sector Consultants (PSC) utilized several data collection methods, including a survey, one-on-one interviews, and community discussions, which are each outlined in more detail below.

Primary Data: Quantitative Community Survey

PSC and Oakland County Health and Human Services developed a survey to better understand the current food access and needs of residents across the county. The survey was distributed using two methods. The first was a mailing to a random section of Oakland County households to increase the representativeness of the sample. The second was targeted, network-based convenience sampling through partnership with community organizations to reach individuals engaged in the food social safety net system. The survey questions are included in Appendix C for reference.

Primary Data: Qualitative Conversations and Discussions

PSC engaged Oakland County residents through ten small discussions and two larger community events. This engagement allowed Oakland County to hear the real-life implications of food access issues and give context to quantitative data. In total, more than 100 residents were engaged in these more in-depth conversations.

Primary Data: Partner Data

PSC facilitated seven interviews with food system organizational partners working in Oakland County. Additionally, partner organizations were requested to share service data to create a more comprehensive single source of programming data in the county.

Secondary Data

PSC analyzed several sets of publicly available data to provide additional context on food access and compare Oakland County's food landscape to that of the state where applicable. Data examined included information about food security, food assistance benefit usage and access, emergency food providers, food availability, and historical and emerging disparities among communities within the county. The main data sources included American Community Survey/U.S. Census Bureau related to population demographics, education, employment, food security, healthcare, housing, income, and poverty. PSC also utilized data from United Way's ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) findings, County Health Rankings, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Green Book.

Health Equity Zone Designations

Health equity zones (HEZs), originally pioneered through the Rhode Island Department of Health's Health Equity Zone Initiative, are designed to “engage the entire community in the creation of solutions to address local priorities” (National Academy of Medicine n.d.). During the recent Oakland County Health and Human Services Community Health Assessment, eight HEZs were identified as communities facing several factors that contribute to inequitable health outcomes. The elements Oakland County considered when defining the HEZs included average life expectancy, graduation rates, disability prevalence, race and ethnicity, the number of residents with veteran status, and the proportion of residents who meet the ALICE threshold. The HEZs identified in Oakland County include Pontiac, Hazel Park, Southfield, Royal Oak Township, Oak Park, Madison Heights, Wixom, and Walled Lake.

Overall, these communities experience higher rates for each of these factors relative to other communities in Oakland County. For example, 66 percent of residents in Pontiac are below the ALICE threshold, compared to just 20 percent in neighboring Bloomfield Charter Township. And while food security was not a factor in determining HEZs, these communities experience lower levels of access to healthy foods compared to other communities. About 8 percent of residents living in Oak Park live one mile or more from a healthy food access point, compared to 14 percent in Huntington Woods (Oakland County Health and Human Services n.d.).

Disparities among communities, such as poverty status and food access, reinforce the need for targeted approaches when considering solutions to community health issues such as food security and access. Throughout this report, data and other outcomes may be disaggregated by HEZs where applicable.

Appendix C: Oakland County Food Landscape Study

Community Survey

Spring 2024

Introduction

Community partners in Oakland County want to hear from you about the availability of food in your community. Your survey responses will help us better understand the community's needs and how to address them. Participation in this survey is voluntary and answers are confidential. No identifying information, such as your name or contact information, is required to complete the survey. After completing the survey, you may choose to enter a drawing for one of twenty $50 Visa gift cards.

This work is supported by Oakland County Health and Human Services.

Instructions

Please respond to each question to the best of your ability. Note that some questions allow for one answer and others allow for multiple answers. This survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

Food Security

1. How often in the last 30 days did you or your household experience the following:

	Often	Sometimes	Never
The food I/we bought did not last, and we did not have money to get more.			
I/we worried about whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.			
I/we could not afford to eat balanced meals.			
I, or other adults in my household, cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food.			
I/we ate less than I/we felt that I/we should because there was not enough money for food.			
I/we did not eat, even when hungry, because there was not enough money for food.			

2. [If *always* or *sometimes* to 1d] How many of the last 30 days did you, or other adults in your household, cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food? [text box]

Healthy Food Access and Barriers

3. How often does your family consume a healthy diet, as defined by the USDA below:

Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products or fortified dairy alternatives.
Includes a variety of proteins such as seafood, lean meats, and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), soy products, nuts, and seeds.
Is low in added sugars, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol.
Stays within your daily calorie needs.

   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often/always

4. How often do you eat fruit?

   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often/always

5. How often do you eat vegetables?

   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often/always

6. I choose to prioritize nutritious foods when I have the option.

   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often/always

7. I choose to eat fresh foods when I have the option.

   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often/always

8. I choose to eat fruit when I have the option.

    a. Never
    b. Rarely
    c. Sometimes
    d. Often/always

9. I choose to eat vegetables when I have the option.

    a. Never
    b. Rarely
    c. Sometimes
    d. Often/always

10. I choose to eat locally produced foods when I have the option.

    a. Never
    b. Rarely
    c. Sometimes
    d. Often/always

11. Of the following food groups included in a nutritious diet, which would you more frequently consume if you had the option?

    a. Fruit
    b. Vegetables
    c. Lean proteins
    d. Low or fat-free dairy (or fortified dairy alternatives)
    e. Whole grains
    f. None of the above

12. Which of the following are reasons that you do not buy as many nutritious foods as you would like? Select all that apply.

    a. Not applicable—my household buys all the nutritious foods we want
    b. My household cannot afford nutritious foods
    c. Nutritious foods are not readily available where my household shops
    d. Nutritious foods take too much time or effort to prepare
    e. I don't know how to prepare nutritious foods
    f. I am not sure which foods are nutritious foods
    g. Other (please describe)
    h. Don't know/prefer not to answer

13. How difficult is it for you to find/obtain food that meets your cultural, religious, or dietary preferences (e.g., kosher, vegan, halal, etc.)?

    a. Very difficult
    b. Somewhat difficult
    c. Slightly difficult
    d. Not at all difficult

Health

14. In general, how would you rate your health overall?

    a. Poor
    b. Fair
    c. Good
    d. Excellent
    e. Don't know/prefer not to answer

15. Have you ever been diagnosed with any of the following chronic conditions? Select all that apply.

    a. Diabetes/pre-diabetes
    b. Overweight/obesity
    c. Heart disease
    d. Hypertension/high blood pressure
    e. Stroke
    f. Arthritis
    g. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
    h. Kidney disease
    i. Cancer
    j. Anxiety or another anxiety disorder
    k. Depression
    l. Other (please describe)
    m. None of these
    n. Don't know/prefer not to answer

16. In general, how would you rate your mental/emotional health?

    a. Poor
    b. Fair
    c. Good
    d. Excellent
    e. Don't know/prefer not to answer

Services and Resources

17. How often do you get food from the following locations?

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Convenience store, dollar store, or liquor store				
Grocery store				
Ethnic food retailer				
Specialty food retailer (e.g., organic food retailer, food co-op, butcher shop)				
Farmer's market				
Sit-down restaurants				
Fast food restaurants				
Private meal delivery service (e.g., Home Chef, HelloFresh, Blue Apron)				
Food pantry				
Subsidized meal preparation service (e.g., Meals on Wheels)				
Food delivery services (e.g., DoorDash)				

18. Locations—how many of each of the following are you aware of in your neighborhood? (drop-down for each with the options none, a few, several, many, unsure).

    a. Convenience, dollar, or liquor store
    b. Grocery store
    c. Ethnic food retailer
    d. Specialty food retailer
    e. Farmer's market
    f. Food pantry
    g. Other (please describe)

19. How far, on average, do you travel to obtain food?

    a. Under 10 minutes
    b. 10–20 minutes
    c. 21–30 minutes
    d. 31–40 minutes
    e. 41–50 minutes
    f. 51–60 minutes
    g. Over one hour
    h. I have food delivered to my residence by a service or another person

20. Within the last 30 days, which of the following food assistance programs have you/has your household participated in? Select all that apply.

    a. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/EBT Bridge Card
    b. Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)
    c. Special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
    d. WIC Project FRESH (Farm Resources Expanding and Supporting Health)
    e. Produce prescription programs
    f. Senior/Market FRESH
    g. Meals on Wheels
    h. Double Up Food Bucks
    i. Free/reduced school meals
    j. Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
    k. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
    l. Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
    m. Pantries/foodbanks
    n. Other, please describe
    o. None of these [Skip to Q23]
    p. Don't know/prefer not to answer [Skip to Q23]

21. Does the food assistance your household receives adequately meet your needs?

    a. Yes, I can obtain enough food each month using these options
    b. Yes, but I am barely getting enough food each month using these options
    c. No, I cannot obtain enough food each month using these options

22. Which of the following challenges have you experienced getting food assistance (SNAP, pantry access, etc.) in the past 12 months? Select all that apply.

    a. The pantry/foodbank I used did not have foods that I needed or wanted for my family
    b. The pantry/foodbank I used provided me too much of one kind of food (e.g., too many perishable foods that my family could not use fast enough)
    c. The pantry/foodbank I wanted to use did not have hours that matched my schedule
    d. I did not have transportation to a pantry or grocery store where benefits are accepted
    e. I experienced a reduction in the amount of benefits I was receiving
    f. My income was too high to qualify for assistance
    g. I did not understand the application for assistance
    h. The pantry/foodbank I wanted to use was not accessible for people with disabilities
    i. The application for assistance was not accessible for people with disabilities
    j. The application or location of assistance did not have language services (e.g., translation, interpretation, etc.)
    k. Other (please describe)
    l. None of these

Socioeconomic Supports/Wraparound

23. I feel like there is a strong sense of community where I live.

    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Disagree
    d. Strongly disagree

Demographics

Text: This form collects demographic data to help better understand the food security needs in our community. Any information that can identify you will remain confidential.

24. What municipality (e.g., city, village, township) do you live in? [drop-down options]
25. What is your monthly household income before taxes?

    a. [Text box]
    b. Don't know/prefer not to answer

26. How many people over the age of 65 live in your household? [text box]
27. How many people between the ages of 18 and 65 live in your household? [text box]
28. How many people under the age of 18 live in your household? [text box]
29. Which of the following dietary preferences or restrictions do you adhere to based on your religious beliefs, cultural background, or personal preference? Please select all that apply:

    a. Halal
    b. Kosher
    c. Vegan
    d. Vegetarian
    e. None of the above
    f. Other religious/cultural dietary practices (please explain)
    g. Prefer not to answer

30. What is the highest level of education that someone in your household has attained?

    a. Less than high school diploma or GED
    b. High school diploma or GED
    c. Some college
    d. Associate's degree or technical certification
    e. Bachelor's degree
    f. Graduate degree (master's degree, PhD, medical degree, law degree, etc.)
    g. Don't know/prefer not to answer

31. Has anyone in your household ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?

    a. Never served in the military
    b. Only on active duty for training in the Reserves or National Guard
    c. Now on active duty
    d. On active duty in the past, but not now
    e. Prefer not to answer

32. Which of the following best describes your race and ethnicity? Select all that apply.

    a. American Indian/Alaska Native
    b. Asian
    c. Black/African American
    d. Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander
    e. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
    f. Middle Eastern or North African
    g. White
    h. Some other race
    i. Prefer not to answer

33. Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

    a. Cisgender* woman
    b. Cisgender* man
    c. Transgender woman
    d. Transgender man
    e. Nonbinary
    f. Prefer to self-describe: _____
    g. Prefer not to respond
    h. Unsure

*Cisgender is a term describing having a gender identity that aligns with the sex or gender marked on your birth certificate.

34. Do you have a disability?

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Prefer not to answer

Closing

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey. If you would like to be entered into the drawing for a $50 Visa gift card, please click this link.

If you, or anyone you know, needs assistance accessing food, please use the following links to get more information on resources that may be available:

Separate Gift Card Survey

Please provide your contact information to be entered into the drawing for a $50 Visa gift card. As mentioned, this information will not be associated with the answers you provided on your survey. If selected, you will receive an email with your gift card details.

35. What is your name? [text box]
36. What is your email? [text box]



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