



# Survey on Food Security and Food Habits of Seniors in Salem

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## INTRODUCTION

The Salem Pantry's mission is to eradicate hunger in Salem by providing residents with nutritious foods in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. They have been distributing food since 1991 and have expanded services in the past few years, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the growing food insecurity witnessed among Salem's elderly population. (The Salem Pantry, n.d.)

- Since Mid-March of 2020, mobile distribution sites and home delivery services have provided about 75,000 pounds of food per month, which is an equivalent of about 62,500 meals.
- Since the pandemic started, the pantry has provided food to 2,200 different households and 6,500 unique individuals in the city of Salem.
- Some of their services include mobile markets, emergency grocery assistance with Salem Public Schools, and grocery delivery services

## OBJECTIVES

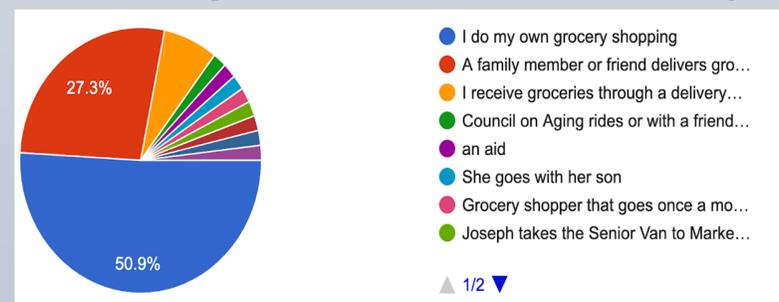
- Identify the number of seniors in Salem Housing Authority buildings who would utilize weekly mobile markets at their buildings and how often they would attend markets.
- Understand what types of produce and groceries they would like to see at mobile markets.
- Identify what other types of perishable and non-perishable goods residents would like to see at mobile markets.
- Identify how residents receive their groceries, specifically if they go to the grocery store, if they receive groceries via delivery service, or if a family member or friend delivers them.
- Identify the number of seniors in Salem Housing Authority buildings who currently receive food from other food assistance programs or services such as SNAP, Meals on Wheels.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

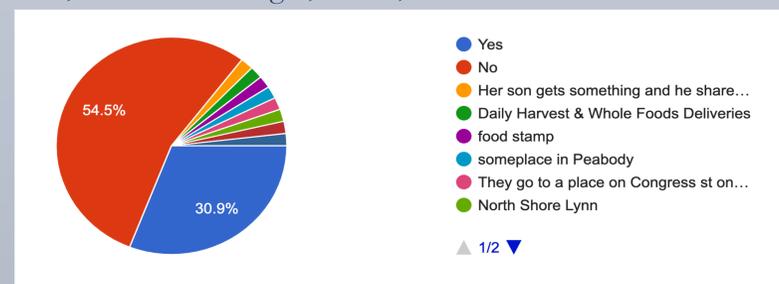
- Met with a representative from Salem Housing Authority (SHA) to get their input on what issues they hoped to address through the survey.
- Created a draft of 12 questions for site supervisor, Robyn Burns, to review and make edits or suggestions.
- Sent a copy of the survey draft to be approved by the representative from the SHA.
- She sent a list of residents who live in the buildings the mobile markets will service.
- Divided list of residents into smaller lists for volunteers to be assigned to call.
- Organized a group of volunteers responsible for contacting residents and created an email of instructions for the survey.
- I called residents who had not been contacted.
- Sent a list of residents to a representative from SHA who had been contacted to increase the number of respondents.

## RESULTS

- Total number of residents asked to participate: 248
- Total number of responses to survey: 54
- Most common produce requests: broccoli, lettuce, carrots, potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplants, plantains, grapes, apples, bananas.
- Other common requests: milk, eggs, chicken, fish, pasta, canned goods.
- Over 50% of respondent residents are able to do their own groceries.



- More than 55% residents receive food from other channels, such as Root, Haven for Hunger, SNAP, etc.



## CONCLUSIONS

In preparation for the mobile markets, I have learned that it will be important to plan and prepare products residents are interested in and prefer. Additionally, it will be important to anticipate how many residents will attend mobile markets, so we are sure to have enough food and volunteers on hand to ascertain the success of the mobile markets.

After completing this internship, I have learned that I thrive when outreach efforts involve working directly with the community. This includes surveying residents over the phone as I enjoyed being able to hear directly from participants about their experiences and preferences.

## RELATED LITERATURE

- Of participants 60 years and older, 51% reported high food insecurity, 21% were marginally food insecure, 13% reported low food insecurity, and 15% reported very low food insecurity. (Wolfson, J. A., & Leung, C. W., 2020).
- The likelihood of any health care expenditure is higher for marginal, low and very low food insecure individuals.
- Compared to food secure households, very low food secure households are 5.1% percentage points more likely to have any health care expenditure and have total health care expenditures that are 24.8% higher. (Dean, E. B., French, M. T., & Mortensen, K., October 2020)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ms. Robyn Burns- Executive Director of The Salem Pantry  
Site Supervisor

## REFERENCES

- Dean, E. B., French, M. T., & Mortensen, K. (2020, October). Food insecurity, health care utilization, and health care expenditures. *Health Services Research*, 55(5), 883+. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A639890303/HWRC?u=massn&sid=HWRC&xid=82e1d7d0The>
- Salem Pantry (Food)*. (n.d.). <https://www.thesalempantry.org/>.
- Wolfson, J. A., & Leung, C. W. (2020). Food insecurity and COVID-19: Disparities in early effects for US adults. *Nutrients*, 12(6), 1648.