

# **Hunger Nutrition Coalition Of Bucks County**

Biennial Survey of Hunger  
2017



**HUNGER NUTRITION  
C O A L I T I O N  
O F B U C K S C O U N T Y**

## **Acknowledgements**

The Hunger Nutrition Coalition of Bucks County would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many organizations and volunteers that assisted in the development and administration of the 2017 Biennial Hunger Nutrition Survey. We thank the County of Bucks for its support and Bucks County Opportunity Council for the leadership and coordination which makes this survey possible.

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## **About Hunger Nutrition Coalition of Bucks County**

The mission of the Hunger Nutrition Coalition (HNC) of Bucks County is ensuring food security and access to healthy nutritious food for residents of Bucks County by educating, connecting and promoting the efforts of hunger relief partners.

Members of HNC work cohesively to promote awareness of hunger and nutrition needs in our community and to advocate for those impacted by these issues. Founded in 2001 by invested members of the League of Women Voters, HNC is a community-based collaborative that proudly includes members representing hunger relief partners, community members and organizations with interest. For more information, visit the HNC website at [www.hncbucks.org](http://www.hncbucks.org) or follow Hunger Nutrition Coalition of Bucks County on Facebook or @hncbucks on twitter.

## **About the Survey**

The Hunger Nutrition Coalition conducts a biennial county-wide hunger survey to capture a current snapshot of the state of hunger in our county and to assess trends in hunger and food insecurity over time. This survey serves as a progress report on current food security work and a roadmap for future efforts. The tenth survey was administered in the summer of 2017. Surveys were completed on-site at partner organizations and HNC conducted the analysis.

## **Participating Organizations**

A Woman's Place	BCHIP Adult Health Clinic – Bensalem
WIC Clinics (4)	Bucks County Opportunity Council
Bucks County Emergency Shelter	Lenape Valley Foundation
Eastern Upper Bucks Senior Center	New Britain Food Larder
Soulful Blessings Food Pantry	Pennridge FISH
Keystone Opportunity Center	Harvest Ministries
The Food Center at Morrisville Presbyterian	The Lord's Pantry
Mary's Cupboard	Bucks County Housing Group - Doylestown
Bucks County Housing Group –Milford Square	Bucks County Housing Group - Pennel
Family Service Association of Bucks County	ERA Food Pantry
YWCA – Country Commons Apartments	YWCA – Aspen Grove Apartments
Quakertown Food Pantry	No Longer Bound
Jesus Focus Pantry – Bethanna	

## **HNC Biennial Survey 2017 Executive Summary**

The Hunger Nutrition Coalition of Bucks County conducted its Biennial Hunger Nutrition Survey during the month of June, 2017. Surveys were completed by individuals receiving food and nutrition support from food pantries, non-profit organizations, and governmental organizations in Bucks County. A total of 1,132 surveys were completed and returned by clients receiving one or more types of food support. Surveys were gathered from residents living in 77 zip codes and a review of these indicated all geographic areas of the county were represented. The survey was administered in three languages, English, Spanish and Russian, and participation was voluntary. Striving for brevity and confidentiality, HNC elected not to collect extensive demographic information from respondents, other than zip code and household composition by age. 25 organizations administered the survey to their clients, including food pantries, WIC sites, human service agencies and one senior center.

Results of the survey were compiled and evaluated by a subcommittee of the Hunger Nutrition Coalition of Bucks County using an on-line survey tool to complete the analysis. This report includes tables and figures drawn from the data and interpretation based on informed observation. It should be noted that this is a community-based survey conducted without strict controls. Accordingly, outcomes should be viewed with this in mind, and cannot be said to be rigorously scientific. Nonetheless, given the large sample size and wide range of administration sites, we believe the information is valuable and generally representative of food insecure individuals and families in Bucks County and their needs.

Overall, the results of the survey indicate that some aspects of hunger and food insecurity in the county, such as transportation barriers, remain largely unchanged, while other aspects, such as the availability of fresh foods, are improving. The results revealed that the majority of households surveyed included at least one member who is currently employed and nearly half include one person who is disabled. A new question in 2017 indicated that a large number of the households surveyed included at least one member with a chronic medical condition.

On the following pages we will report the responses to each of 15 questions, including some contextual information as appropriate. Tables and figures are provided to further convey the results.

## Key Findings

- 57.5% of respondents reported that at least one adult in the household was working full-time or part-time. Only 12.9% reported that a household member had been unemployed for more than a year.
- In 2017 fewer respondents (23.2%) reported that household members have to skip meals because of lack of food than in 2015. Further, when they are forced to skip meals, they do so with less frequency than in 2015.
- Respondents reported accessing more food support services (WIC, SNAP, Community Meals, etc) of all types included in the survey.
- The number of respondents who report going without fruits and vegetables has decreased nearly 7% since 2015.
- More respondents report that they are able to access fruits and vegetables at food pantries (66.9% in 2017, up from 58.7% in 2015).
- Only 22.3% of respondents reported that they eat at free community meals. Of those who don't, 45% say they don't because they don't know where they are, 24% don't because of lack of transportation, and 44% say they are not comfortable eating at shared meals.
- Fewer respondents report that they can't access meats but more respondents say they need, but can't access items for a restricted diet (low-fat, low-salt, gluten-free, etc.).
- 75% of respondents report at least one person in their household has high blood pressure, 47% have a household member with diabetes, and 48% have someone with high cholesterol in their household.

## Respondents by Zip Codes

1,123 surveys were completed and returned in 2017. Respondents were asked to indicate in which zip code they resided. Responses came from people living in 77 zip codes in or near Bucks County. Mapping of the respondents' zip codes confirms that surveys were returned from residents living in all areas of the county.

### 1. What is your zip code?

Zip Code	Municipality	Surveys	Zip Code	Municipality	Surveys
18951	Quakertown	124	19030	Fairless Hills	9
18901	Doylestown	121	19056	Newportville	9
19020	Bensalem	98	18917	Dublin	7
18974	Warminster	72	18077	Riegelsville	6
19007	Bristol	61	18954	Richboro	6
18976	Warrington	57	19040	Hatboro	6
18902	Doylestown	43	18949	Plumsteadville	5
18944	Perkasie	36	18920	Erwinna	5
18960	Sellersville	33	18940	George School	4
19057	Levittown	33	18938	New Hope	3
18942	Ottsville	33	18912	Buckingham	2
19055	Levittown	32	18911	Blooming Glen	2
18972	Upper Black Eddy	31	18950	Point Pleasant	2
18914	Chalfont	28	18970	Trumbauersville	1
19067	Morrisville	23	18923	Fountainville	1
19021	Croydon	20	18953	Revere	1
18966	Holland	19	18916	Danboro	1
19053	Feasterville/Trevose	18	18934	Mechanicsville	1
18947	Pipersville	17	18935	Milford Square	1
18969	Telford	17	18039	Durham	1
19047	Penndel	16	18081	Springtown	1
18930	Kintnersville	14	18913	Carversville	1
19054	Levittown	13	18956	Rushland	1
18955	Richlandtown	11	18962	Silverdale	1
18929	Jamison	10	18980	Wycombe	1
18925	Furlong	10		Other	38

## Household Composition

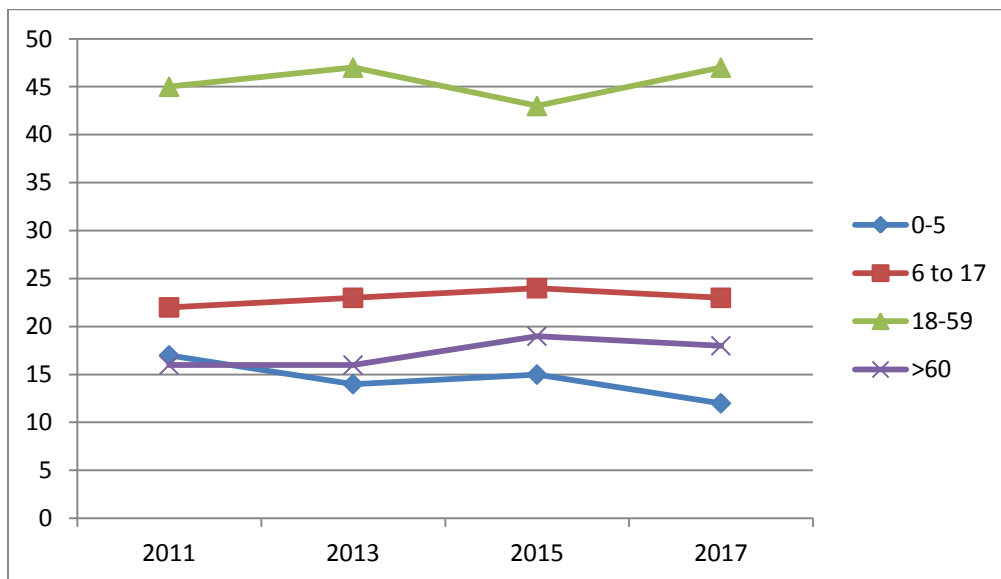
Respondents were asked to indicate how many persons of various age ranges make up their household. The age range choices included 0-5, 6-18, 19-59, and 60 years of age or older. Results indicated that 24.4% of households had at least one child age 5 or under, 33.8% had at least one child between the ages of 6 and 18, 73.7% had at least one adult aged 19-60, and 39.9% included one senior aged 60 or older.

When examined as the percentage of each age group of the total households surveyed, children aged 0-5 made up about 12% of the households, children aged 6-18 made up about 23%, adults made up 47% of total household membership, and seniors aged 60 and over made up approximately 18%. The table below displays these percentages. The largest change since 2011 has been a decrease in households reporting a child aged 0 -5 in the home. This has decreased from 17% of households in 2011 to 12% in 2017.

**2. How many people in your household are age: 0-5, 6 to 17, 18-59, and Age 60 or older?**

*% of the household in each age group*

	2011	2013	2015	2017
<b>0-5</b>	17%	14%	15%	12%
<b>6 to 17</b>	22%	23%	24%	23%
<b>18-59</b>	45%	47%	43%	47%
<b>&gt;60</b>	16%	16%	19%	18%





### Employment Status of Respondents

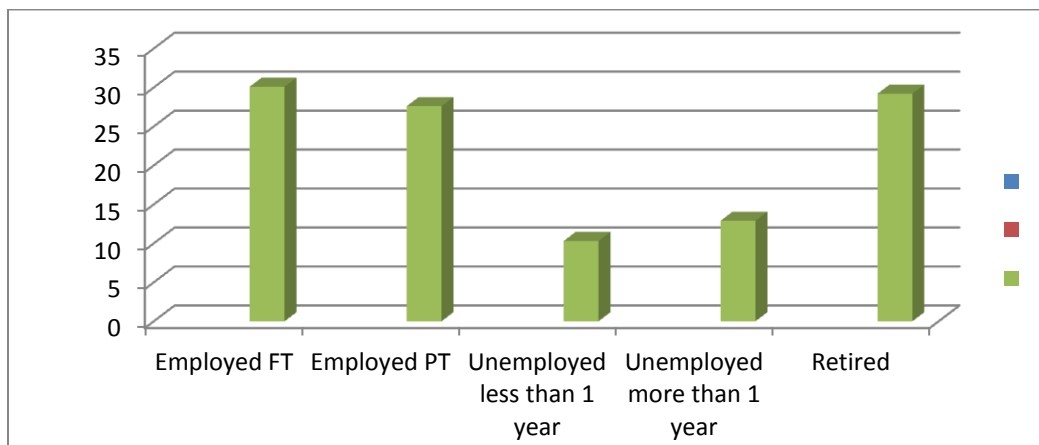
Respondents were asked about the employment status of members of their household. Specifically, they were asked, “Are you or is anyone else in your household employed full-time, part-time, unemployed for less than one year, unemployed for more than one year, retired, or not working due to disability?”

In 2017 30.1% of respondents indicated their household included at least one person working full-time, 27.6% indicated at least one household member is working part-time, 10.3% said at least one person was unemployed, but for less than one year, 12.9% indicated at least one person was unemployed for more than one year, 29.2% reported that the household included at least one retiree, and 42.1% reported that at least one person in the household was disabled.

*Note: Disability was not defined for participants as medically certified or as receiving social security disability. Rather, participants were given the response category of “not working due to disability” as an option for their description of their work status.*

**3. Are you or anyone else in your household employed full-time, part-time, unemployed for less than one year, unemployed for more than one year, retired, or not working due to disability?**

Employed Full-Time	30.1%
Employed Part-Time	27.6%
Unemployed less than 1 year	10.3%
Unemployed more than 1 year	12.9%
Retired	29.2%
Disabled	42.1%

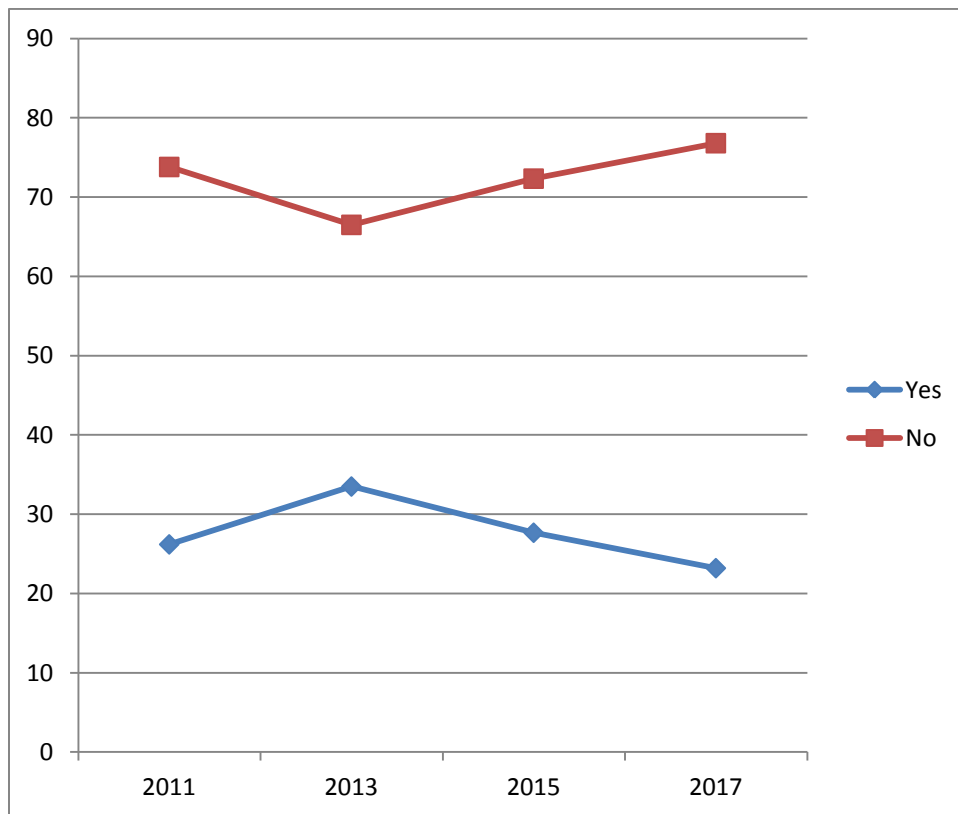


### Skipping Meals

Respondents were asked to respond “yes” or “no” to the following question: “Does anyone in your household have to skip meals due to lack of food in the home?” 23.2% responded affirmatively, indicating someone in their household was compelled to skip meals, while 76.8% said skipping meals was not necessary. This represents a 4.5% decrease from 2015 in those who report meals skipped because of lack of food in the home.

#### 4. Does anyone in your household have to skip meals due to lack of food in the home?

	2011	2013	2015	2017
<b>Yes</b>	26.2%	33.5%	27.7%	23.2%
<b>No</b>	73.8%	66.5%	72.3%	76.8%

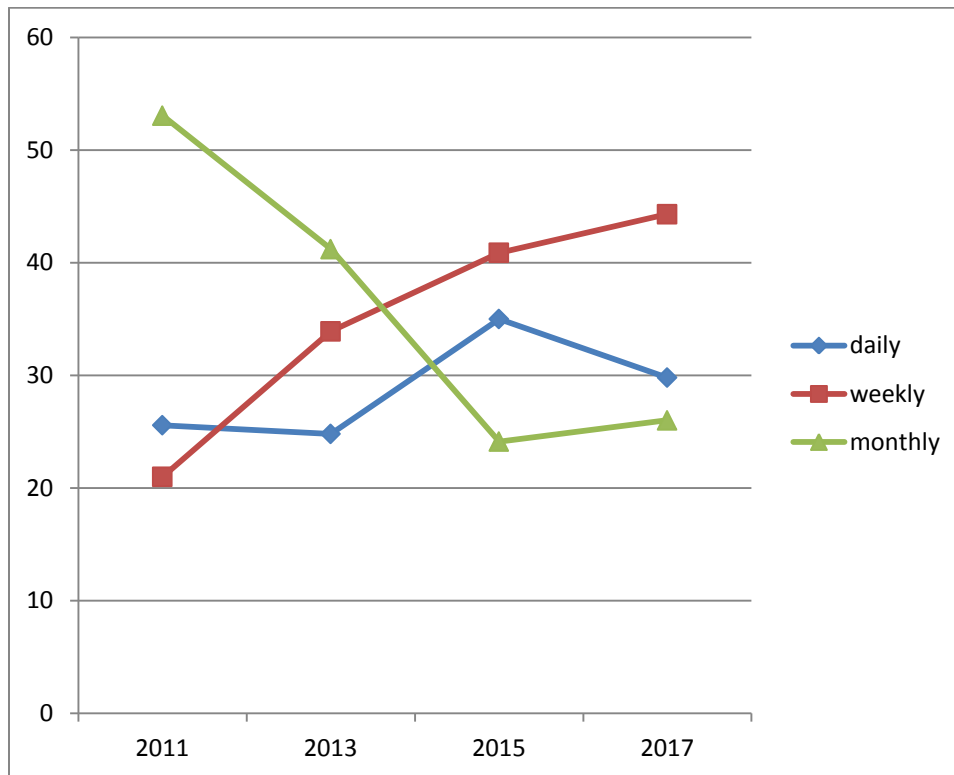


### Frequency of Skipped Meals

Those respondents who indicated on the previous question that someone in their household was compelled to skip meals, were asked about the frequency of those skipped meals. The response categories were monthly, weekly or daily. 26% of those surveyed reported that someone in the household skipped meals on a monthly occurrence, 44.3% indicated that it was on a weekly basis and 29.8% indicated that it was on a daily basis. In comparison to 2015, those who reported skipping on a monthly and weekly basis increased some, while those skipping on a daily basis decreased by 5.2%. This shift indicates that for those people who are compelled to skip meals, it has become a less frequent occurrence.

#### 5. If yes, how often do they skip meals?

	2011	2013	2015	2017
<b>daily</b>	25.6%	24.8%	35.0%	29.8%
<b>weekly</b>	21.0%	33.9%	40.9%	44.3%
<b>monthly</b>	53.1%	41.2%	24.1%	26.0%

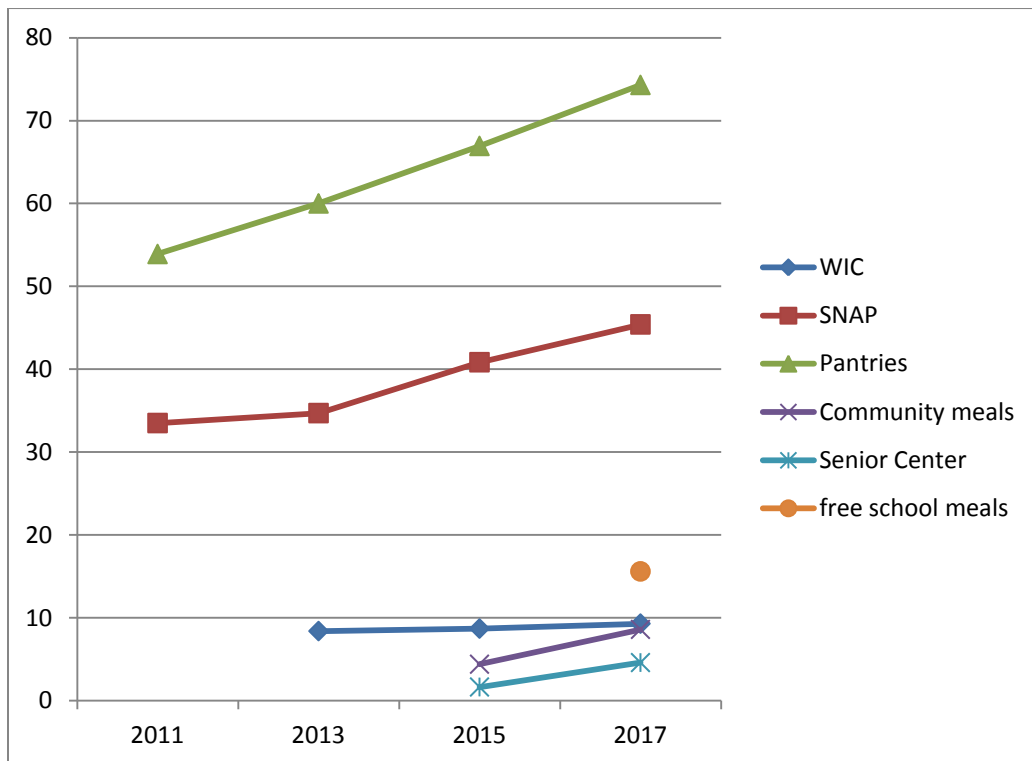


### Sources of Food Assistance

To better understand the various means of food support that respondents access, they were given a list of food relief sources and asked, “Do you receive help from any of these sources?” 9.3% reported receiving assistance from WIC, 45.4% from SNAP (food stamps), 74.3% from food pantries, 4.6% from senior centers, and 15.6% from the free and reduced school lunch program. This represents an increase in all five of the categories surveyed previously in 2015 and would appear to indicate that respondents are utilizing a greater number of supports in general.

#### 6. Do you receive help from any of these sources?

	2011	2013	2015	2017
<b>WIC</b>	-	8.4%	8.7%	9.3%
<b>SNAP</b>	33.5%	34.7%	40.8%	45.4%
<b>Pantries</b>	53.9%	60%	66.9%	74.3%
<b>Senior Center</b>	-	-	1.7%	4.6%
<b>Free School Meals</b>	-	-	-	15.6%

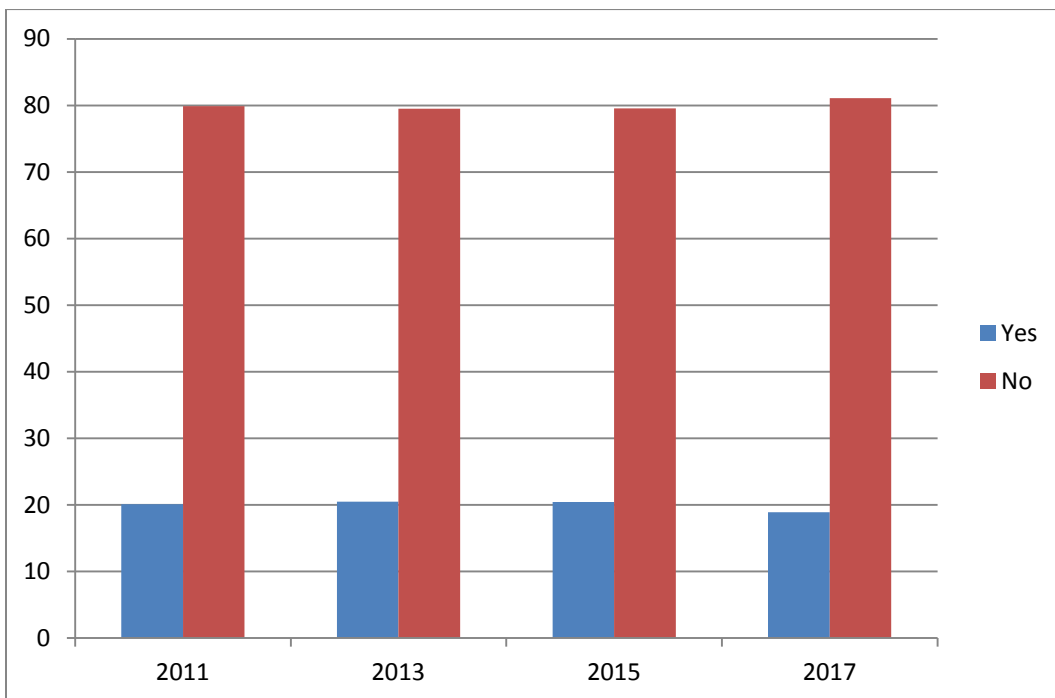


## Transportation

Lack of personal and/or public transportation can be a significant barrier to accessing food support in some communities in Bucks County. Respondents were asked if they had difficulty obtaining support from any of the sources of assistance in the prior question because of transportation difficulties. 18.9% indicated that transportation was a significant barrier and 81.1% indicated that it was not. These percentages have remained relatively static since 2011. It should be noted however, since surveys were administered at public community locations that were sources of assistance, individuals who might have transportation issues may be underrepresented because they could not drive or obtain transportation to sites where surveys were administered. It should be further noted that the question does not assume ownership of a car, but rather accessing any means of transportation to reach food support. Because food support is so vital, it is quite commonplace for individuals to seek rides from friends, family, or others to access it.

### **7 Do you have trouble getting transportation to pantries/any of these services?**

	2011	2013	2015	2017
<b>Yes</b>	20.1%	20.5%	20.4%	18.9%
<b>No</b>	79.9%	79.5%	79.6%	81.1%

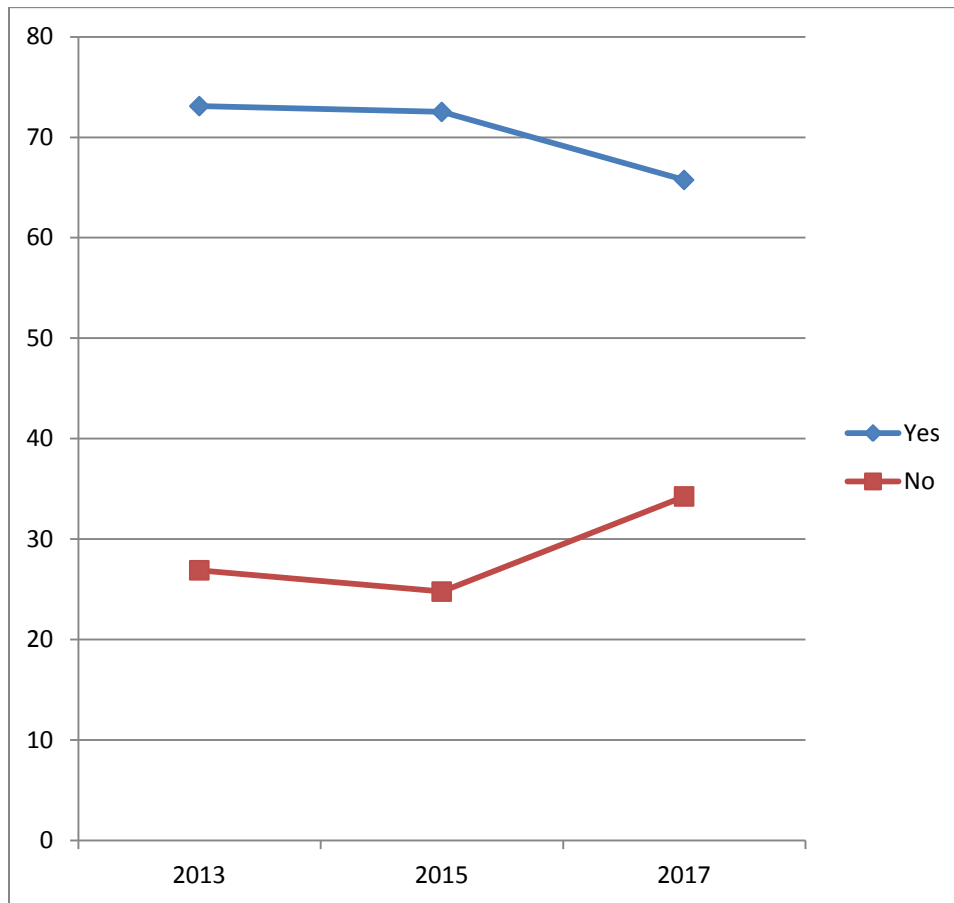


### Access to Produce

In each survey since 2013 respondents have been asked about access to fresh produce. For the second consecutive time, the number of respondents who report that they cannot access fresh produce has decreased, from 73.1% in 2013 to 65.6% in 2017. This indicates progress is being made on the accessibility of fresh fruits and vegetables. This is likely the result of the joint efforts of organizations which have been working to improve access to them.

#### **8. Do you go without fresh fruits and vegetables because they are too expensive?**

	2013	2015	2017
Yes	73.1%	72.5%	65.8%
No	26.9%	24.8%	34.2%

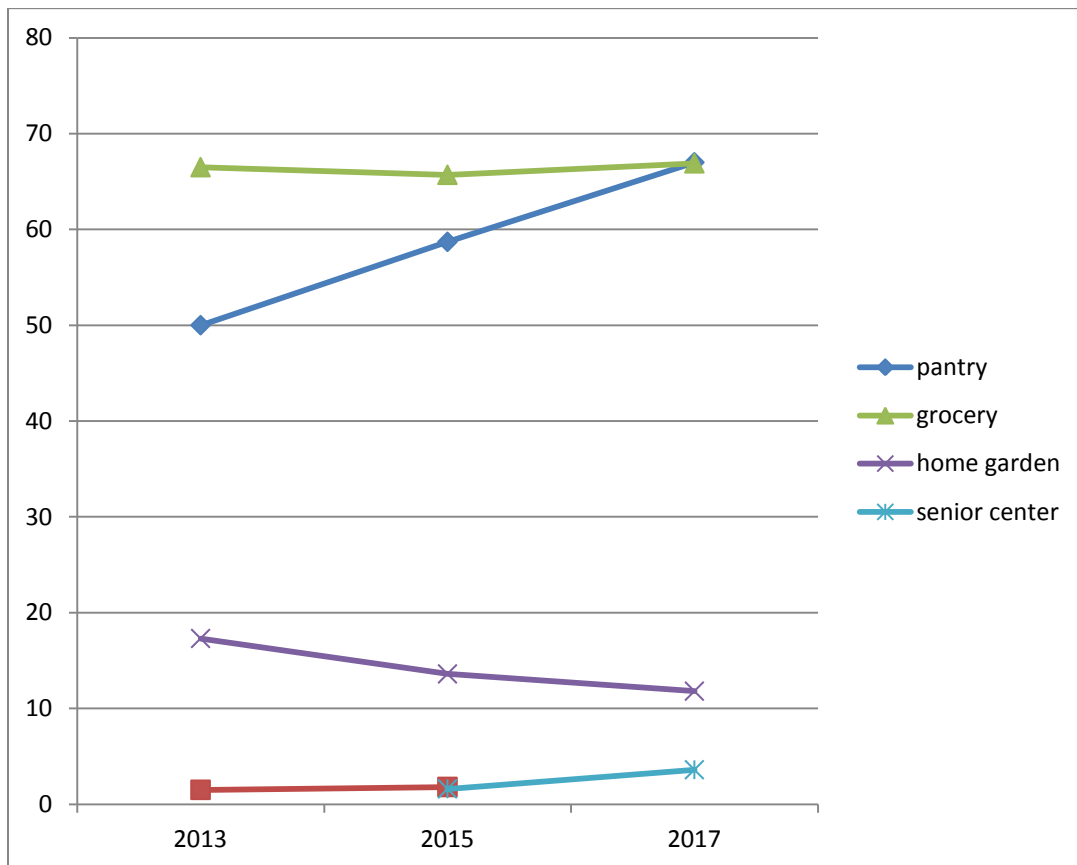


### Sources of Produce

Further exploring access to produce, respondents were asked about *where* they access fresh fruits and vegetables. The response options in 2017 were food pantry, grocery store, home garden and senior center. Respondents could choose multiple response options. Since 2013 the percentage of respondents that reported that they can access fresh produce through food pantries has increased by 17%, while access through home gardening decreased by 5.5% over the same time period.

#### 9. If you do eat fresh fruits and vegetables, where do you get them?

	2013	2015	2017
<b>pantry</b>	50	58.7	67
<b>grocery</b>	66.5	65.7	66.9
<b>home garden</b>	17.3	13.6	11.8
<b>senior center</b>	-	1.6	3.6

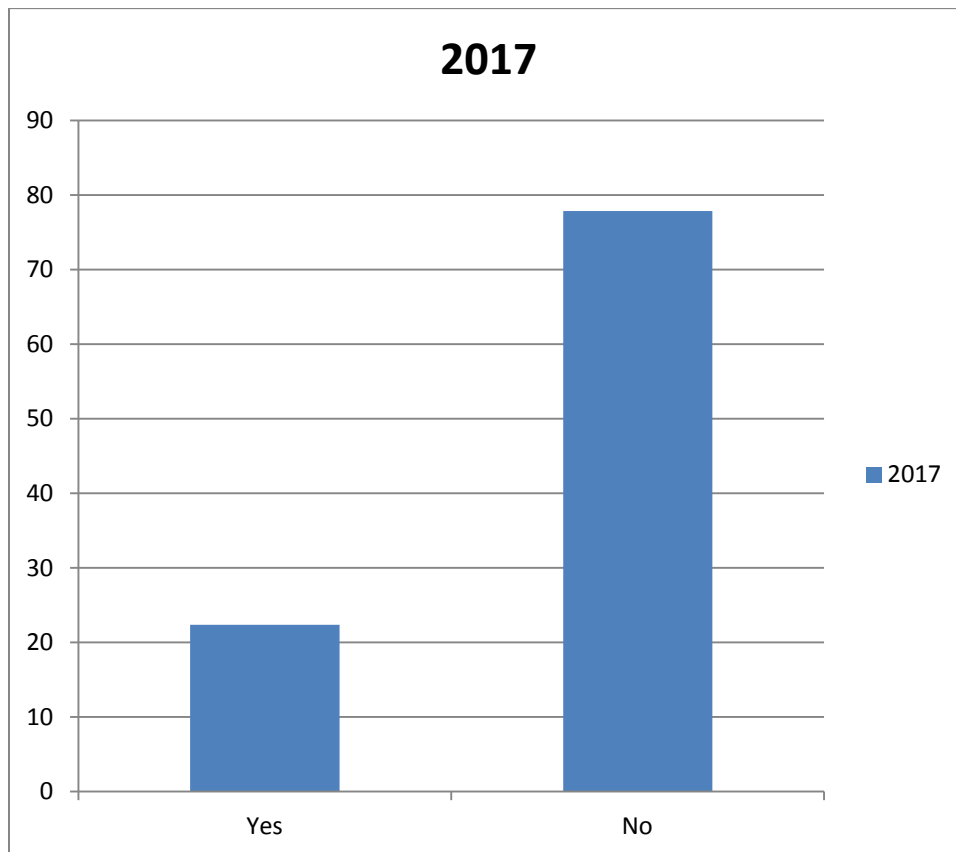


### Shared Community Meals

Recently the number of organizations and faith-based organizations that offer free community meals has been increasing. These provide both a prepared dinner, as well as communal support. Survey participants were asked, “Do you ever eat at free community meals provided by faith-based organizations or other groups?” In 2017, 22.3% of respondents reported that they do eat at these communal meals, while 77.7% responded that they do not. Although queried on this topic in 2015, the form of the question was somewhat different, so it is not possible to look at trend data unfortunately.

**10. Do you ever eat at free community meals provided by faith-based organizations or other groups?**

	2017
Yes	22.3%
No	77.7%



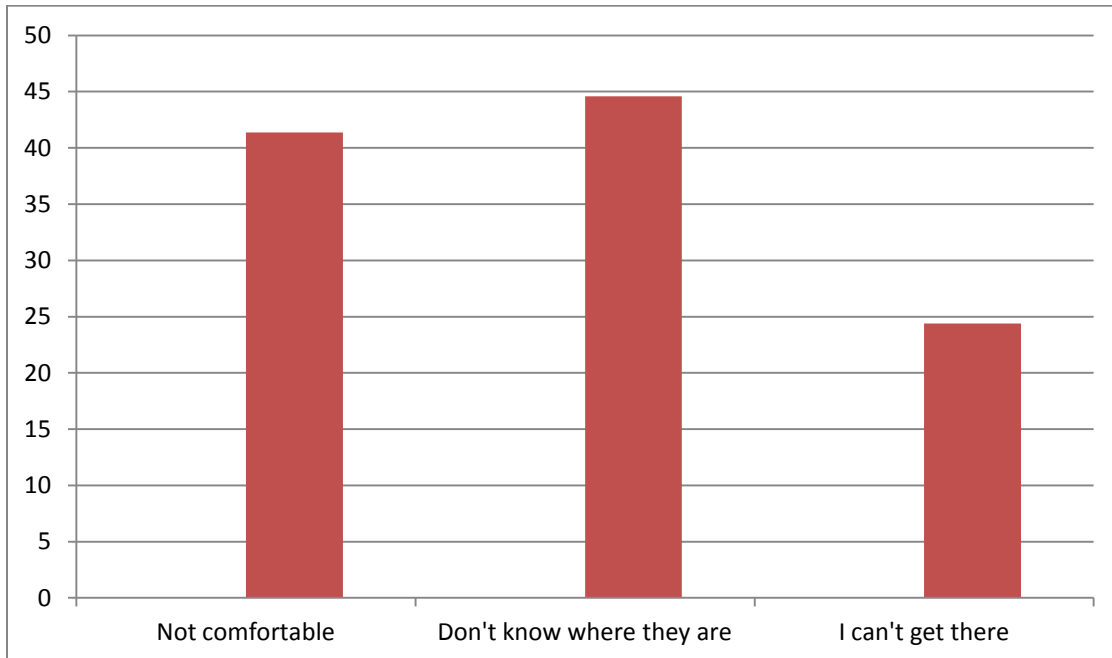


### Community Meals (Continued)

A further question about participation in free community meals examined reasons respondents report for not eating at them. Respondents that answered “no” to the previous question were asked why they do not eat at community meals. Three response options were given and respondents were free to choose more than one reason. 41.4% said they do not eat at shared meals because they do not believe they would be comfortable in such an environment. 44.6% said they do not because they do not know where the meals are offered. 24.4% said that they do not because they lack transportation. The responses suggest possible several actions that could be taken to promote greater utilization, such as better publicizing meal locales and times, arranging additional transportation support, and addressing negative perceptions of community meals among people who are food insecure.

**11. If you answered yes to question 6, why not?**

Not comfortable	41.4%
Don't know where they are	44.6%
I can't get there	24.4%

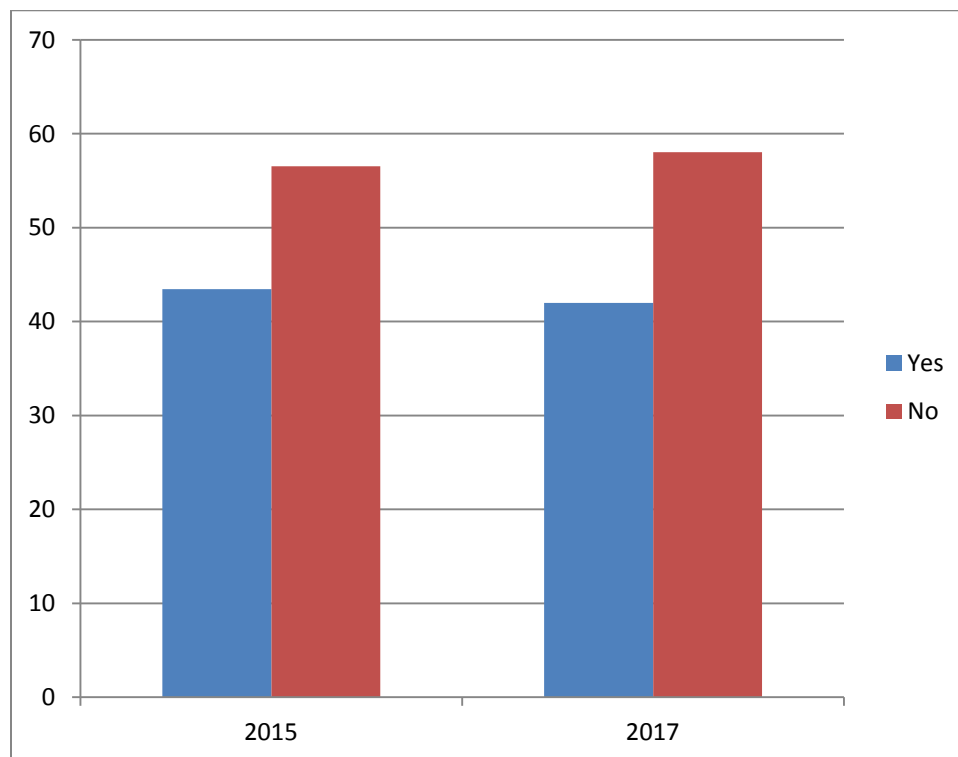


### Information on Nutrition and Healthier Food Preparation

To explore respondents' interest in learning about healthier eating, two questions were added to the survey in 2015; "Would you be interested in information on healthier preparation of food?" And "Would you be interested in information on nutrition?" These questions were repeated in 2017. In 2017, 43.5% indicated an interest in information on healthier preparation of food and 42.6% indicated an interest in information on nutrition. These represent relatively small changes from 2015, which are not likely to indicate statistically significant change.

#### ***12a. Would you be interested in information on healthier preparation of food?***

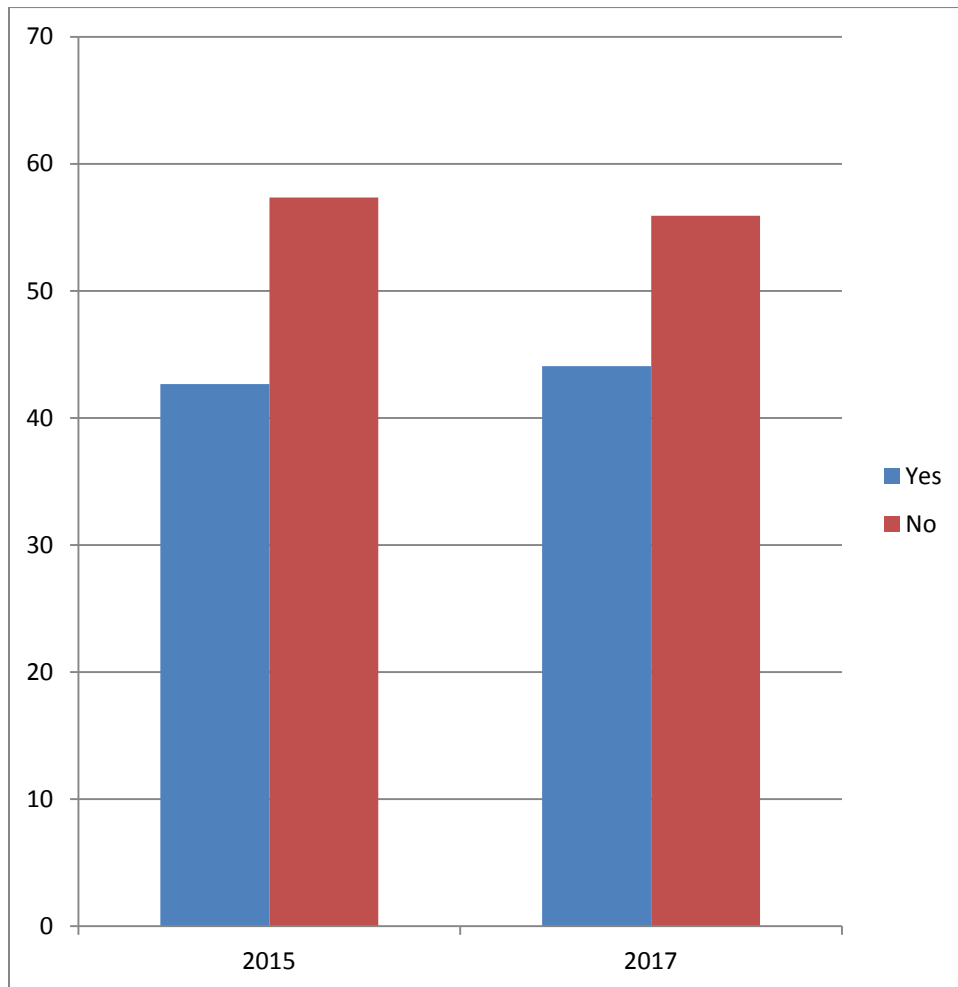
	2015	2017
<b>Yes</b>	43.5%	42.0%
<b>No</b>	56.5%	58.0%



Respondents were also asked about their interest in information on nutrition. In 2017 there was a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who indicated an interest in nutrition education, but again not large enough to likely be statistically significant.

**12b. Would you be interested in information on nutrition?**

	2015	2017
Yes	42.7%	44.1%
No	57.3%	55.9%

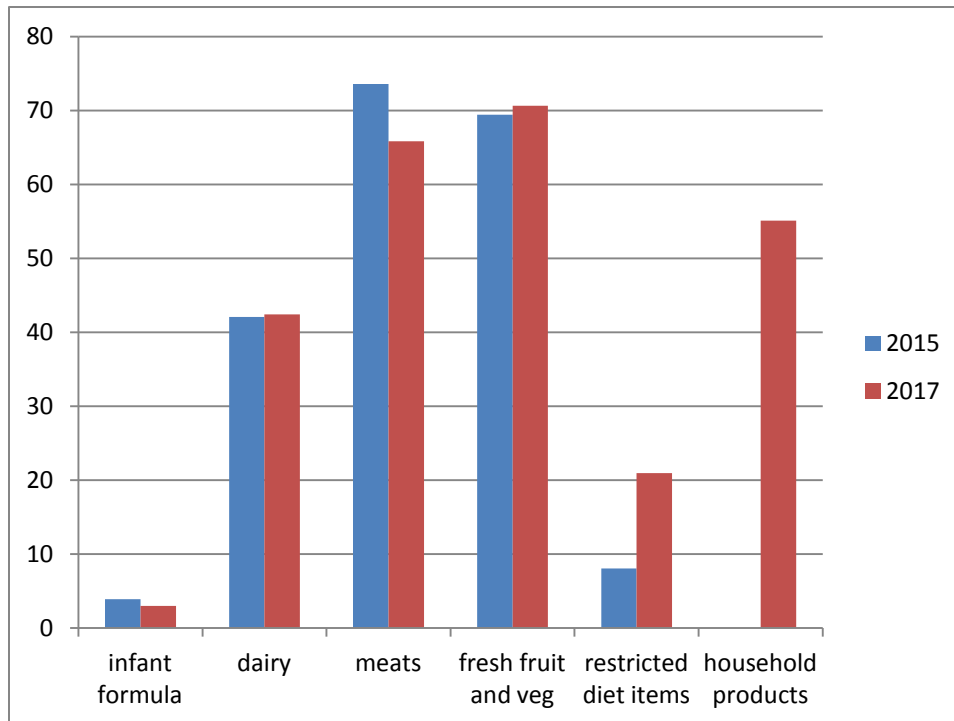


### Other Needed Items

Respondents were asked about other items they need but have trouble obtaining. Several broad categories were given as response options and a new category of “household products” was included in 2017. The number of respondents that reported trouble accessing meats decreased from 73.6% in 2015 to 65.8% in 2017. The biggest increase was in the percentage of people who say they cannot access items for a restricted diet (low-salt, low-fat, gluten-free, etc). This category moved from 8.1% in 2015 to 20.9% in 2017. The other response options remained relatively static. A relatively large number, 55.1%, reported that they have trouble obtaining or affording household products. These are only available in a few pantries and are not items that can be purchased with SNAP benefits.

#### 13. What food items do you need the most that you currently do not have access to?

	2015	2017
infant formula	3.9%	3.0%
dairy	42.1%	42.4%
meats	73.6%	65.8%
fresh fruit and vegetables	69.4%	70.6%
Items for a restricted diet	8.1%	20.9%
household products	-	55.1%



## Additional Needs

Respondents were asked in an open ended question format about what other actions could be taken that would assist them with their food needs. The responses were quite varied, but could be fairly easily grouped into categories. Respondents were most interested in more fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, meats, dairy, and assistance around SNAP (food stamps).

### **14. What else could be done to help?**

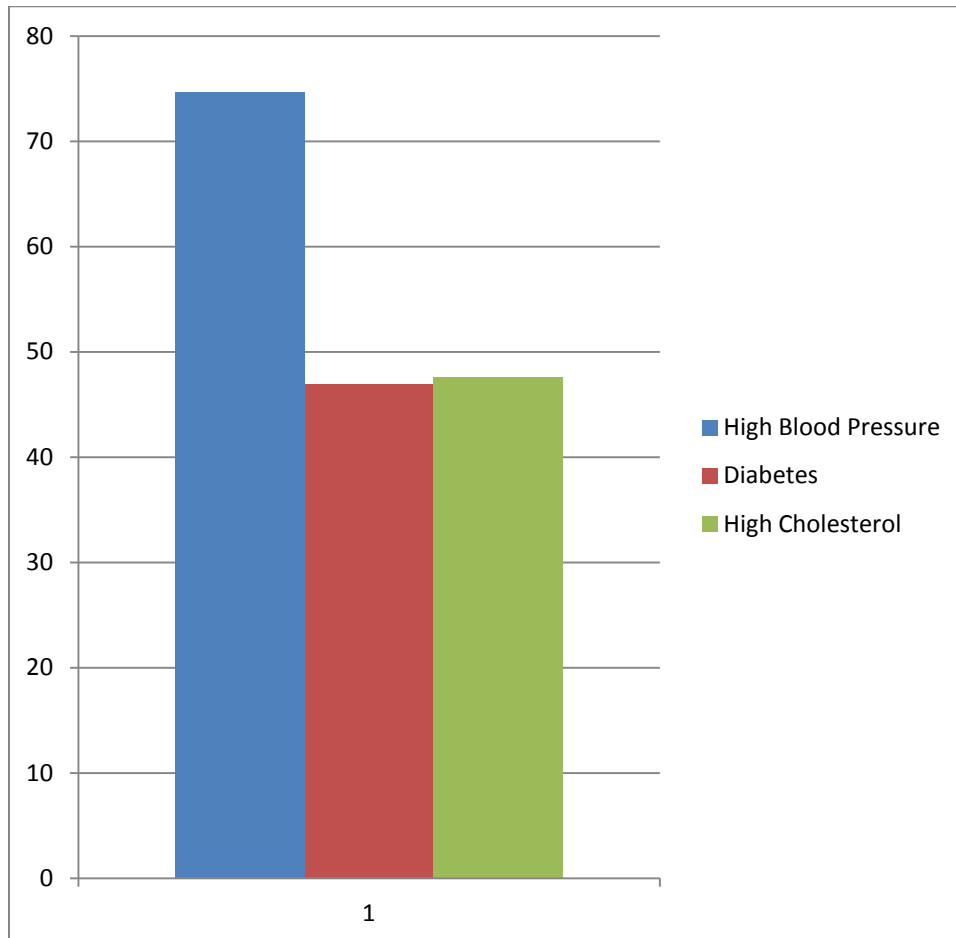
fresh fruits	80
fresh vegetables	77
meat	58
milk/dairy/cheese	44
SNAP	36
non-food items products	22
improved transportation	17
work or assistance finding work	17
special diet foods	13
lower pricing	11
healthier food	10
pantries to allow greater quantity	10
pantries to be open longer hours	8
eggs	8
allow more frequency visits	7
community gardens	6
prepared foods	5
fresh food	5
Info on cooking/nutrition	4
delivery of food	4
fish	3
pet food	3
snacks	3
protein	3
greater variety	3
nutrition/meal planning	3
general financial assistance	3
juices	2
children's food	2
gift cards	2
frozen foods	2
housing	2

## Medical Conditions

Recognizing the important connection between a healthy diet and the management of chronic illnesses, a new question was added to the survey in 2017 about medical conditions. The survey asked, “Do you or does anyone in your household have any of the following conditions?” The response categories were “high blood pressure,” “high cholesterol,” and “diabetes.” The responses indicated a high incidence of all of these conditions among the surveyed households, though it should be noted that these responses were self-reported and not necessarily medically diagnosed. Still, this underscores the need to ensure that our food support efforts include foods that are nutrient rich and healthier.

### **15. Do you or does anyone in your household have any of the following conditions?**

High Blood Pressure	74.7%
Diabetes	47.0%
High Cholesterol	47.6%



## Conclusions

Hunger and food insecurity remain significant problems in Bucks County. The survey results contained in this report indicate that progress is being made in some key areas, however. Collaboration among agencies and with county government is increasing and we believe this is critical to ensuring future progress. There is much work yet to be done. Continued coordinated efforts are needed if we are to ensure that the resources necessary to provide food assistance remain available and are used as efficiently as possible, that people can access that assistance, and to make sure that we are providing the healthiest possible options for those we serve.

Additional note: In late April 2017 a consortium of organizations working together established Fresh Connect, a mobile farmers market for low income families. This program, organized by Bucks County Opportunity Council, Rolling Harvest Food Rescue, St Mary Medical Center, and Philabundance and supported by United Way of Bucks County, has been extremely well received by residents of Bristol Township and Ottsville, where the program currently operates. At the time surveys were taken, this program was still in its infancy and surveys of clients were not conducted at Fresh Connect. Therefore, we believe the effects of this new program are not reflected in the 2017 results. However, should the program continue into 2019, we would anticipate a significant impact on the accessibility on fresh produce reported by survey participants.

### **Addendum: Greater Philadelphia Regional Pantry Coordinator Survey – 2017**

Food pantries are the backbone of the food support system in Bucks County and the dedicated individuals who coordinate pantry operations, often volunteers, have a unique window into how that system operates. They too can provide important information about how their individual pantries function, as well as systemic challenges they face.

In March 2017 the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, in partnership with Philabundance, Share, and local coalitions conducted a comprehensive survey of food pantry coordinators in the southeast Pennsylvania region. Coordinators from 32 pantries in Bucks County participated. The following data was derived from those 32 local pantries and allows a snapshot of the day to day operations of our pantries and the challenges they face.

- 18 of 32 pantries report being “choice pantries,” meaning clients may pick their own foods. This is considered a “best practice” and pantries are encouraged to allow for choice, but not all can or do
- Although there is wide variability, pantries most commonly allow clients to come either once a week or once a month. Each pantry sets its own parameters.
- 50% of pantries will supply food on an emergency basis outside of normal hours, although only 22% say they can deliver food to clients
- 28% of pantries are not handicapped accessible
- 72% of pantries do not have the capacity to serve clients in Spanish or Russian
- Nearly 70% pantries do not provide any other services at their sites
- 18 of 32 pantries say they serve between 100 and 500 families each month
- 25% of pantries say they “sometimes” or “often” run out of food
- The top five foods pantries report needing more of are eggs, dairy, beef, cooking oil and poultry
- The five greatest non-food needs are bags, hand trucks, vehicles, volunteers and cold storage
- The greatest volunteer need is for people who can pick up and deliver food to the pantry
- Most pantries have multiple resource streams, but the most common are individual donations from community members, grants, and congregational support.
- 56% of pantries have no paid staff and are operated by volunteers only
- Less than 1/2 of pantries track clients electronically and less than 1/4 track inventory electronically
- Most pantries are interested in working together to meet clients’ needs and share resources

#### **Possible considerations based on these results include:**

- encouraging and assisting a greater number of pantries to become choice pantries
- Encouraging and assisting a greater number of pantries to become handicapped accessible
- Exploring whether food pantries can function as multi-service centers with co-located services
- Increasing or better managing resources so that the 25% of pantries who report “sometimes” or “often” running out of food will maintain adequate supplies
- Exploring ways to increase and improve tracking systems for better outcomes
- Exploring ways to facilitate increased pantry collaboration
- Identifying mechanisms to assist pantries with the logistics of picking up and delivering bulk supplies