

A night-time photograph of the Boston harbor. On the left, a historic wooden building with many windows is visible, with a sign that reads "BOSTON TEA PARTY SHIPS & MUSEUM". In the background, modern skyscrapers of the city skyline are lit up. A white bridge with blue decorative elements spans the water in the middle ground. A small boat is docked in the foreground. The water reflects the lights from the buildings and the bridge. The overall scene is a mix of old and new architecture.

Boston Food Access Council

6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, September 14
BCYF Tobin Community Center

Welcome and Introductions
Boston Food Access Council Meeting
Thursday, September 14th, 2017





Mayor's Office of Food Access

Improve equitable access to nutritious food in order to foster a more food secure city with vibrant, inclusive food cultures, reflective of the diverse residents of the Boston.

Mayor's Office of Food Access

Increasing Food Access and Food Security

FOOD SECURITY

All people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Physical

Can constituents get to the food they need and want?

Economic

Can constituents afford the food they need and want?

Social

Is food that meets the cultural preferences and needs of constituents accessible?

Welcome and Introductions

Boston Food Access Council

Convened beginning in June 2017

- ❖ **Twenty stakeholders with expertise to help OFA move the needle on food insecurity**
 - Will advise OFA on development of a strategic plan to increase access to food constituents need and want
 - Will provide support to OFA to implement that plan
 - Members and their organizations bring a range of assets to the tabling, including:
 - Strong ties to communities they serve
 - Understanding of needs of constituents
 - Desire and ability to solicit input from constituents
 - Research experience valuable to the field
 - Creation of innovative programs that improve food access
 - History of effective advocacy around important food access policies
- ❖ **Quarterly public meetings**
 - Opportunity to share progress on the food action plan
- ❖ **Community input will help to guide the work of the BFAC**
 - BFAC meetings open to the public
 - Plans underway to develop regular Community Steering Meetings



Overview of Agenda

*Boston Food Access Council Meeting
Thursday, September 14th, 2017*



Overview of Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Brief overview of OFA and BFAC

- Brief overview of OFA and BFAC
- Members introduce themselves, their organizations

Overview of agenda

Explanation of data gathering process and data presentation

- Process for listening sessions, survey, and qualitative data gathering
- Data findings

Data discussion

BFAC priorities presentation

- Selection for priorities and initiatives described
- Priorities presented

Priorities discussion

Public comments, questions

Closing

- Next steps
- Dates for future meetings
 - Thursday, December 14th, 6p - 8p, TBD

MEETING GOALS

- Review data and other considerations used to develop BFAC priorities
- Consider and agree upon BFAC priorities
- Receive constituent input

Quick Housekeeping

- ❖ **Opportunities for commentary from public attendees:**
 - During priorities discussion
 - Time for general questions at end of meeting
- ❖ **No microphone**
- ❖ **Restrooms down hallway by back door of conference room**

Explanation of Data Gathering Process

*Boston Food Access Council Meeting
Thursday, September 14th, 2017*



Food Insecurity Assessment

❖ **What does food insecurity look like in Boston?**

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- Why?

Food Insecurity Assessment

November 2016 - Present

- ❖ **Community listening sessions**
 - Resident input
 - Gain an understanding of the experiences of constituents, how we can support them
- ❖ **Community food access survey**
 - Where and how often do constituents get food?
 - How they get to that food?
 - What do constituents look for when acquiring food?
- ❖ **Quantitative data**
 - 30+ layers of data to understand relevant social, demographic, and economic trends that impact food insecurity and food access trends
 - Interactive GIS map to come, can be used by constituents to find resources

Explanation of Data Gathering Process

Listening Sessions

December 2016 - April 2017



6

Languages spoken
(English, Spanish,
Vietnamese, Cape Verdean
Creole, Haitian Creole,
Cantonese)



128

Boston residents
reached



11

Listening sessions
conducted



14+

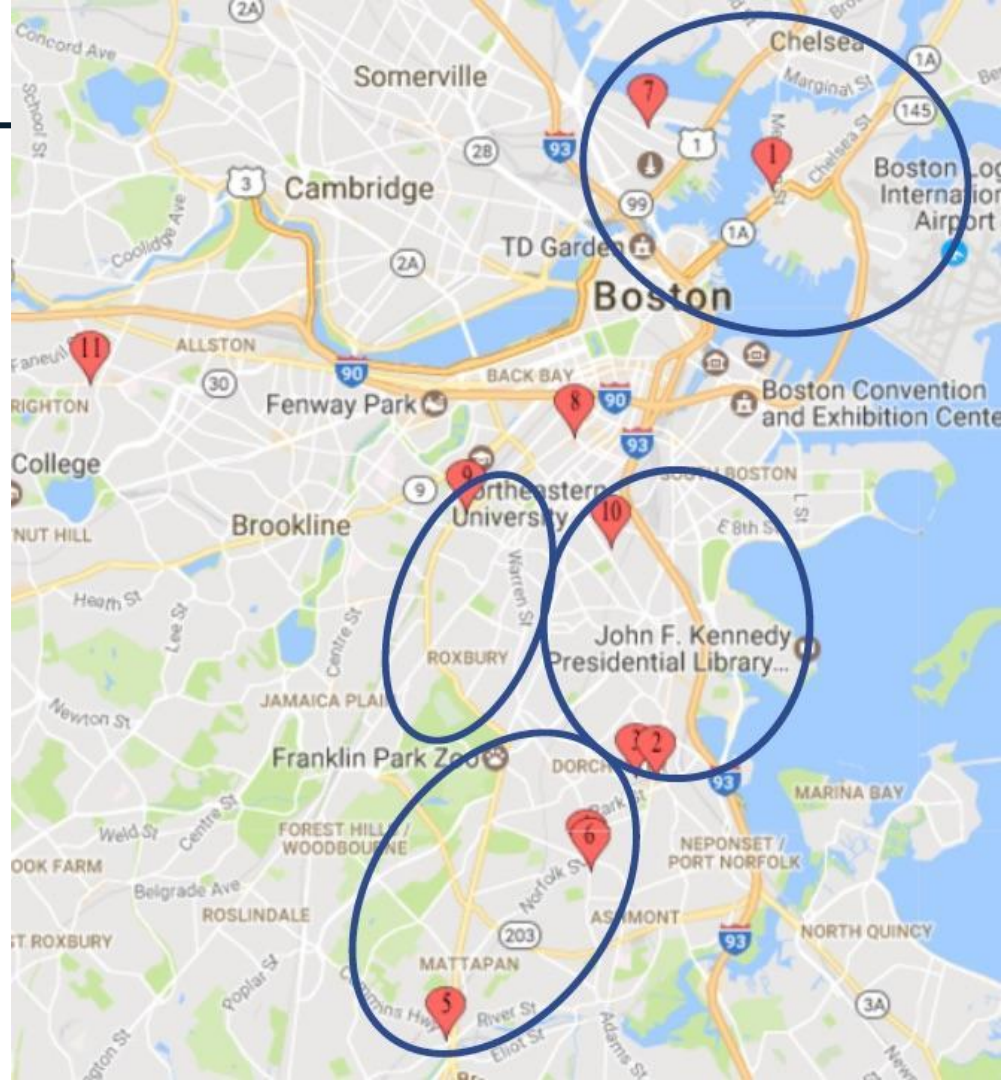
Agencies
worked with

Explanation of Data Gathering Process

Listening Sessions

December 2016 - April 2017

- East Boston Neighborhood Health Center
- Kit Clark Adult Day Health (1500 Dorchester Avenue)
- Kit Clark Senior Services - Vietnamese Center
- Kit Clark Adult Day Health (645 Washington Street, Dorchester)
- Mattapan ABCD/Family Services Center
- Codman Square NDC/Codman Square Branch BPL
- Boston Dream Center
- IBA/Villa Victoria
- Whittier St Health Center
- La Alianza Hispana
- Allston/Brighton Food Pantry



Food Access Survey

December 2016 - April 2017

❖ **Some demographic questions including:**

- Household make-up
- Age
- Country of origin

❖ **Questions pertaining to participants' habits for acquiring food including:**

- Types of food outlets used most frequently (including retail and free/emergency food sources)
- How participants travel to food outlets
- Participants' top considerations when acquiring food (including cost, quality, freshness, etc)



241

Surveys received

- Most Boston neighborhoods represented, with majority of participants coming from Dorchester and Hyde Park
- Approximately half of participants were age 60+
- 43% of participants reported being born outside of the US

Data Gathering Process

Quantitative Data (partial list)

Demographic	Socio-economic	Food Insecurity	Food Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Race/ethnicity- Foreign born- <18- 60+- Single head of household	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Poverty rates- Unemployment- Education level- Household income- Renter-occupied housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Food insecurity estimate by census tract- SNAP and WIC usage data- Boston Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System food access data; responses of “often” or “sometimes true” to statements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"The food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more"</i>• <i>"We were hungry but didn't eat because we couldn't afford enough food"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Food pantries- Meal sites- Senior meal sites- Reduced-price mobile fruit and vegetable outlets- Supermarkets

- ❖ Data sets compiled with support from:
 - Boston Planning and Development Agency (formerly BRA)
 - Boston Public Health Commission
 - Greater Boston Food Bank
 - MA Department of Public Health
 - Boston Housing Authority
 - Commission on Affairs of the Elderly, City of Boston

Presentation of Data Findings
Boston Food Access Council Meeting
Thursday, September 14th, 2017

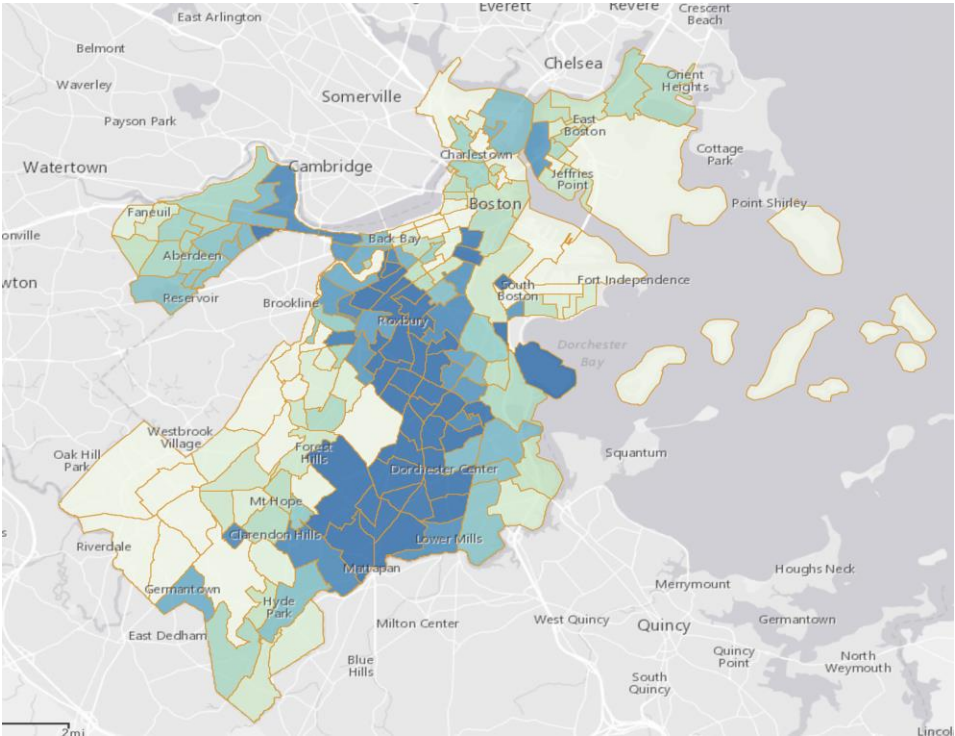


Data Overview: Food Insecurity Trends

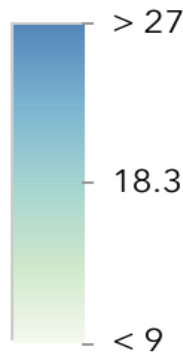
- ❖ 1 in 8 **U.S.** residents are food insecure
- ❖ 1 in 10 **Massachusetts** residents are food insecure
- ❖ 1 in 6 **Boston** residents are food insecure
- ❖ **National food insecurity rates by population:**
 - 1 in 5 Black/African-Americans
 - 1 in 5 Latinos
 - 1 in 10 Whites
 - 1 in 10 Other non-Hispanic
 - 1 in 6 children
 - Almost 1 in 10 seniors

Data Overview: Food Insecurity Trends

Map of Food Insecurity in Boston by Census Tract



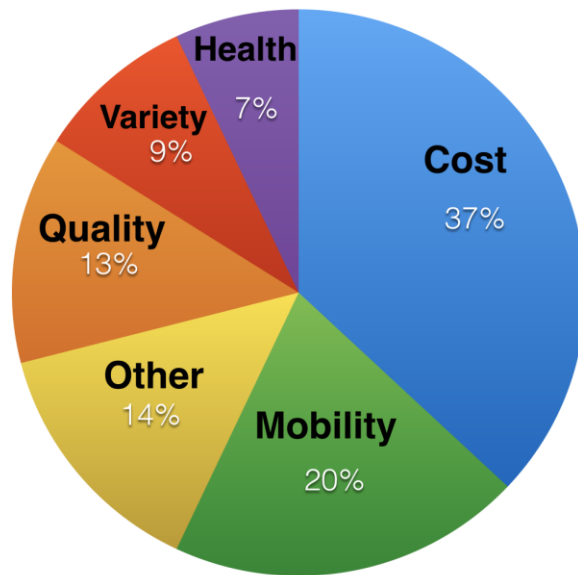
Percent of Food Insecure Individuals



Top Concerns for Food Access

In the **Listening Sessions**, participants cited the cost of food **twice** as much as mobility issues, followed by “other” reasons, food quality, variety, and health value.

● Cost ● Mobility ● Other ● Quality ● Variety ● Health value



In the **Food Access Survey**, **financial barriers** to food access were cited most commonly:

- Not enough money for food
- Food is too expensive
- Healthy food is unaffordable

Data Overview: Cost of Food

Food Shopping Location

Food Vendor	Frequency	Percent
Bodega	47	19.5
Grocery Store	186	77.2
Big Box Store	29	12
Wholesale Store	40	16.6
Farmer's Market	71	29.5
Home Garden	9	3.73
Community Garden	9	3.73
School Cafeteria	4	1.66
Home Meals	7	2.9
Food Bank or Pantry	80	33.2
Senior Meal Site	21	8.71
Fast Food	54	22.4
Church or Community Organization	43	17.8

In the Food Access Survey, **grocery stores** were reported as the most common place people buy food regularly, followed by **food banks/meal pantries** and then **Farmer's Markets**.

Table 4. Frequency and Percent of Survey Participants who reported that they shop at various Food Locations

Data Overview: Cost of Food

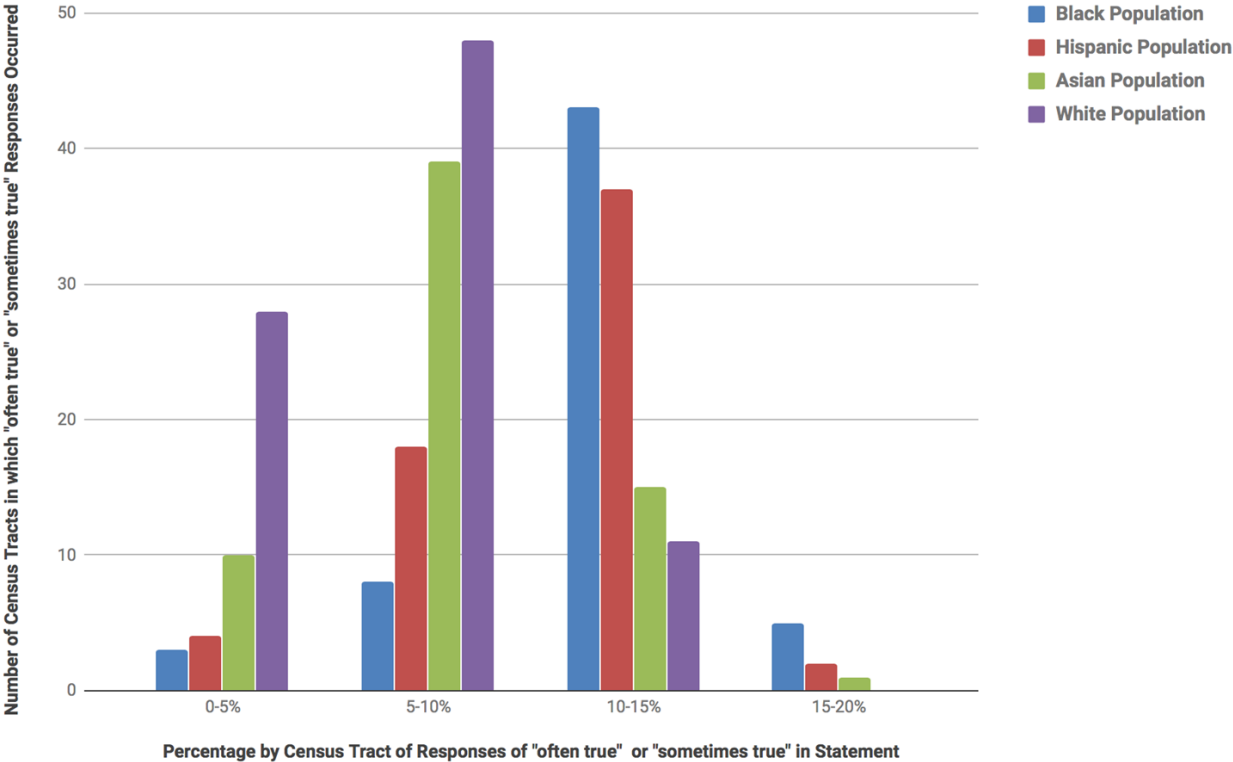
- ❖ Participants cited a wide variation in costs at food outlets, depending on the type of outlet and its neighborhood location.
- ❖ Some outlets that were identified as “very affordable” or “moderately affordable” received poor marks in other areas, such as quality, variety, and proximity to certain neighborhoods.

Shopping Habits: Ways Participants Shop to Save Money

- ✓ Buy things in bulk that can be frozen
- ✓ Split store memberships
- ✓ Share food with neighbors before it goes bad
- ✓ Utilize points systems to get deals
- ✓ Use coupons/sales flyers
- ✓ Select stores where tolls can be avoided

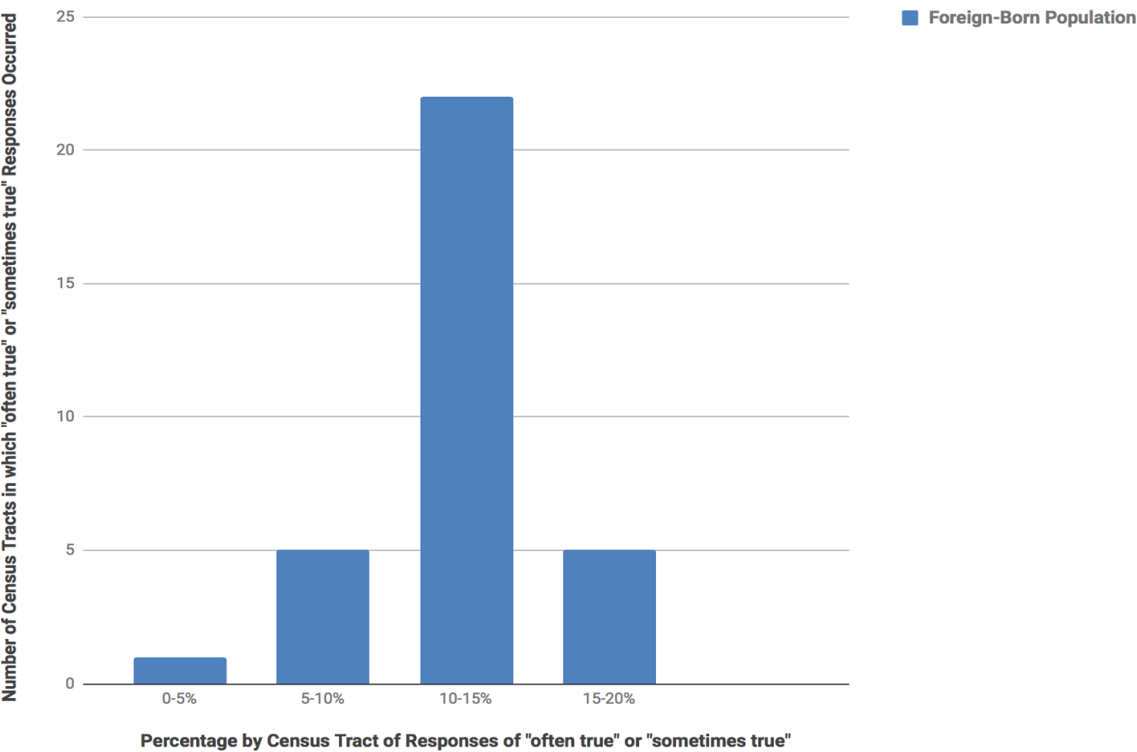
Data Overview: Cost of Food

In Census Tracts with Higher than Average Rates of Race/Ethnicities, Responses to Statement "We were hungry but didn't eat because we couldn't afford enough food"



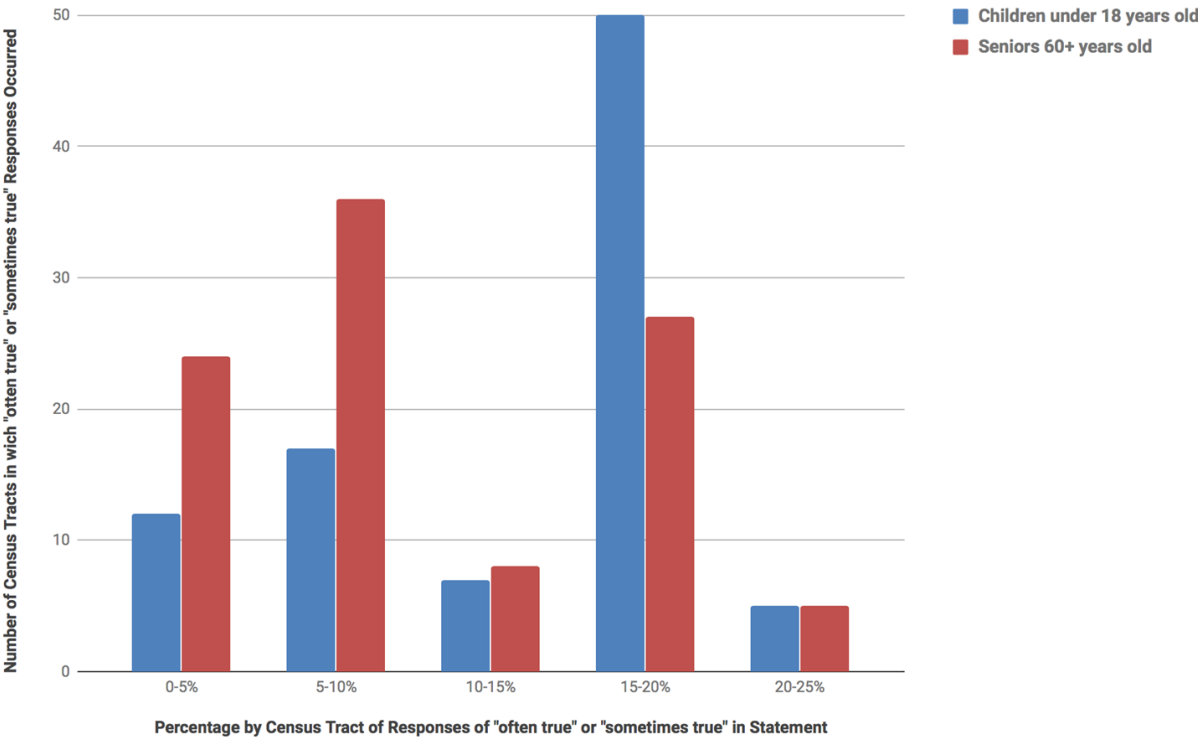
Data Overview: Cost of Food

In Census Tracts with Higher than Average Rates of Foreign-Born Residents, Responses to Statement "We were hungry but didn't eat because we couldn't afford food"



Data Overview: Cost of Food

In Census Tracts with Higher than Average Rates of Children Under 18 years old and Seniors 60 and Older, Responses to Statement "We were hungry but didn't eat because we couldn't afford enough food"



Data Overview: Cost of Food

SNAP Utilization: Out of the 7 listening sessions in which SNAP was mentioned, participants in 4 sessions said that their benefits were **not enough**.

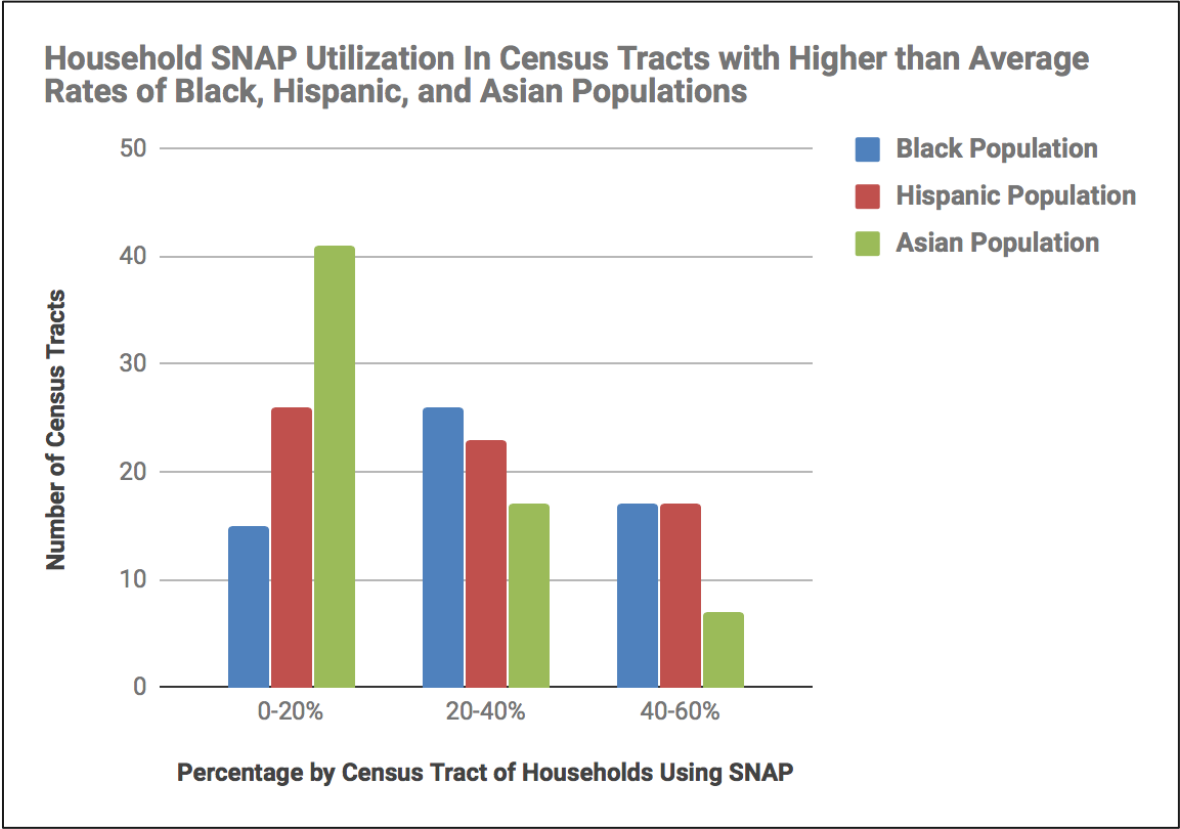
Eligibility/Application Process

- ❖ Administrative burden
- ❖ Lack of assistance
- ❖ Confusion/frustration about perceived rules of eligibility
- ❖ Fear about current administration's potential changes to policies

Awareness of Benefits

- ❖ Fewer than 5 participants across all sessions were aware of Boston Bounty Bucks
- ❖ Helpful if the maximum benefits cap was raised
- ❖ Money from Senior FMNP program doesn't last
- ❖ Confusion about which farmer's markets accept benefits

Data Overview: Cost of Food



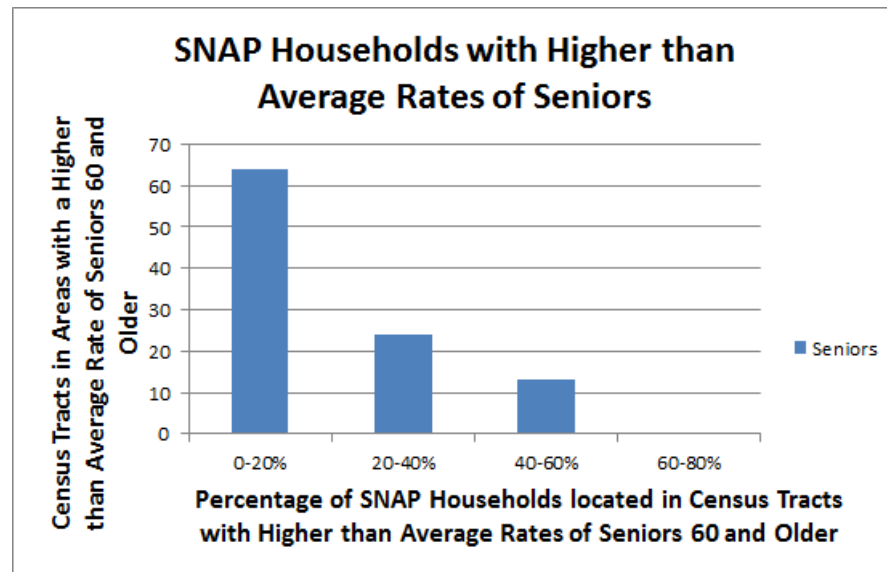
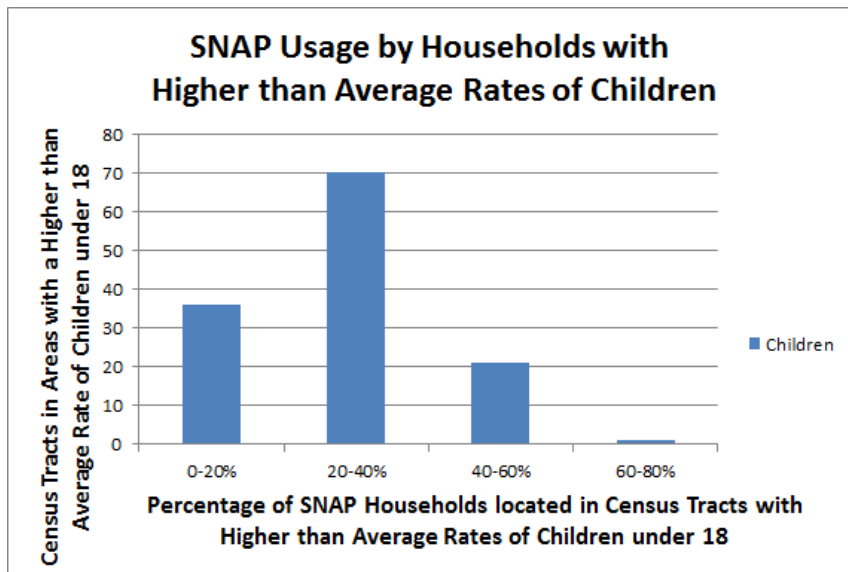
Data Overview: Cost of Food

The data shows that almost all of the city's census tracts with a higher than average White population are located in areas where household SNAP usage falls **below 20%**, while about one-third of the census tracts with a higher than average Black and Hispanic population are located in areas where **40-60%** of households receive SNAP benefits.

Race/Ethnicity Populations with Higher than Average Rates in Census Tracts	Census Tracts with 0-20% of SNAP Households	Census Tracts with 20-40% of SNAP Households	Census Tracts with 40-60% of SNAP Households
Foreign-Born Population	21%	50%	29%
Black Population	26%	45%	31%
Hispanic Population	39%	35%	36%
Asian Population	63%	26%	11%
White Population	91%	9%	0%

Data Overview: Cost of Food

Households SNAP usage also varies among households in census tracts with higher than average rates of children and seniors.



Data Overview: Mobility/Physical Access to Stores

In the Food Access Survey, **physical access** to food outlets was the second most commonly cited issue for participants.

Listening Session participants also cited **mobility**, or physical access, to food outlets as their second biggest concern.

Participants said they had trouble accessing food outlets as a result of:

- ❖ Inconvenient location - affordable foods are located outside of their neighborhood
- ❖ Inconvenient times
- ❖ Difficulty carrying purchases and thus, limitations on the amount they can buy in one trip
- ❖ Reliance on friends or family for rides or help with physical tasks
- ❖ Limited parking
- ❖ Cost of tolls, gas, cab and bus fees
- ❖ Need to walk to store

Data Overview: Mobility/Physical Access to Stores

Food Insecurity Data Map

- ❖ Map of Supermarkets, Fruit and Vegetable Pick-Up sites, and Farmer's Markets in Boston



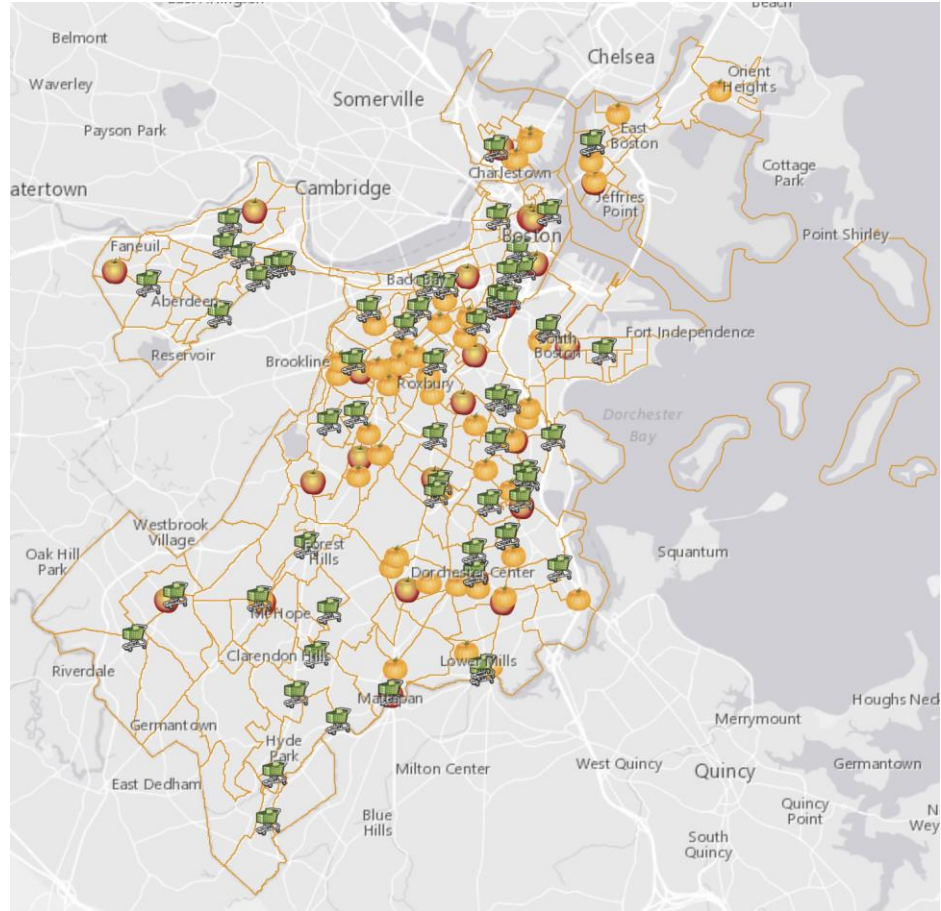
Supermarkets



Fruit & Vegetable Sites



Farmer's Markets



Data Overview: Mobility/Physical Access to Stores

Most Common Modes of Transportation to Food Outlets

Listening Sessions

1. MBTA/public transportation
2. Privately owned vehicles
3. Ride-sharing services
4. Walking

Food Access Survey

How do you get to the locations where you get food?	Frequency	Percent
Own a car	47	19.5
Walk	89	36.9
Bike	2	0.83
Bus/Public Transportation	93	38.6
Taxi	16	6.64
Ride with Friend	36	14.9

Table 12. Modes of Transportation to Food Store Location

Data Overview: Food Quality

Participants in 6 out of the 11 listening sessions said that **food quality** is important to them.

Concerns:

- ❖ Overall quality of food has decreased
- ❖ Food is spoiled when purchased
- ❖ Size of food packaging is smaller but not cheaper
- ❖ Some Dorchester participants said that they prefer organic food but can't always access the stores that offer it
- ❖ 79% of Hyde Park responders said availability of fresh food was “somewhat important” or “very important”

To assess freshness when purchasing foods, participants said they:

- ❖ Check expiration dates
- ❖ Rely on neighbors to tell them what they saw at the store
- ❖ Shop at stores that draw crowds, under the assumption that food turnover will be higher and fresher

Data Overview: Variety

Variety of foods was not the top concern for participants, but several people expressed frustration at not being able to access the foods they prefer.

- ❖ Difficulty finding cultural foods
 - Food resources become less relevant if lack cultural variety
- ❖ Participants mentioned shopping at specific stores for vegetarian products and produce selections

Data Overview: Health Value

In five listening sessions, participants noted specific **health concerns** and **health needs** that they consider when food shopping:

- ❖ Diabetes
- ❖ Hypertension
- ❖ Weight gain
- ❖ Chemicals in food
- ❖ Lining in canned foods

Data Overview: Community Support

Participants from all sites said that they rely on their **community** for food services and resources, and for information on how to access those resources.

- ❖ East Boston - sites that provide cooking, gardening courses
- ❖ Dorchester - free meals for seniors
- ❖ Food pantries/community meals throughout the city
- ❖ Fellow neighbors and residents

“Information is a really big issue. I wouldn’t know about Fair Foods if I wasn’t here at the library for other things.”

- Dorchester resident

Data Overview: Community Support

Community gardening received mixed reviews as a food access strategy.

Benefits

- ❖ Social gathering space
- ❖ Easy to find space
- ❖ Fees are affordable

Challenges

- ❖ Weather
- ❖ Not cost-efficient
- ❖ Rodents/people take food

School food was mentioned as a food resource in 5 of the 11 listening sessions.

- ❖ Parents emphasized their reliance on school food as an important resource for their family
- ❖ School breakfast generally received positive reviews
- ❖ Some concern about quantity, preparation and unhealthy options
- ❖ Need for additional food options that accommodate for allergies and other special needs

Data Overview: Requested Support

Many participants said they would like to receive more **educational materials** on nutrition and food resources.

- ❖ Nutrition education: How to make healthy choices, understand labels, and assess food quality
- ❖ Classes on budgeting
- ❖ Cooking classes
- ❖ More resources and coupons in multiple languages (especially Vietnamese and Chinese)

Discussion of Data Findings

*Boston Food Access Council Meeting
Thursday, September 14th, 2017*



Presentation of Priorities

*Boston Food Access Council Meeting
Thursday, September 14th, 2017*



Presentation of Priorities

How should OFA and the BFAC move forward to address food insecurity and food access issues in Boston?

- What barriers should we tackle first, and how?
- What are entities in the City - including organizations represented on the BFAC - doing to address these needs?
- How can we support and improve what's already happening and build upon it?

Presentation of Priorities

Development of priorities considered:

- **Data**
 - Listening sessions guided analysis
- **Input from BFAC members**
- **Work of BFAC organizations, and other groups in Boston**
- **Work of OFA**
 - **Physical access**
 - **Economic access**
 - **Social access**

Presentation of Priorities

Modes of Operation of the BFAC

People are our constituents, namely the residents of Boston who face barriers accessing the food they need and want. Our work will engage constituents through:

- Education that will support constituents to access food that they want and that allows them to maintain health and budget
- Outreach that will empower constituents to access helpful resources
- Listening and engagement to ensure ample opportunity for their input into the work of the BFAC.

Partnerships will make our work thrive and last. Partnerships can include:

- Pooling resources to best leverage organizational strengths
- Funding partnerships

Programs will provide resources, support services, and other access opportunities to our constituents. The BFAC may work to strengthen existing or create new programs. Programs can:

- Provide resources and services directly to constituents.
- Build systems that support the food access needs of our constituency.
- Support other work areas (such as workforce development, elderly or immigrant affairs, and so on) through which our constituency's food access needs can be supported.

Policies will support the work of the BFAC by institutionalizing changes and improvements to food access for Boston constituents. Policy work that can support improvements to food access include:

- Exploration of policies and regulations that can be implemented in the City of Boston
- Exploration of and support of institutional policies in Boston institutions

Presentation of Priorities

Equity as an Overarching Principle and Guide

- BFAC will focus work in communities and among populations who face **the greatest need**.
- **Community input** will guide the work of the council to ensure that this occurs
 - **BFAC meetings open to the public**
 - **Separate community meetings** where community members will be updated on the work, plans of the council; **opportunity to provide feedback** that the Council will consider in their work
- Data will inform the work, **highlight social and economic disparities**

Presentation of Priorities

Address Access through Economic Development

1. ***Retail Initiatives for Improved Food Access*** –Support the development of new or work with existing small and large businesses and other food retail outlets, like farmers markets and mobile markets, to find opportunities to improve financial, physical, and cultural access to food for all Bostonians.
2. ***Workforce Development*** – Reduce food insecurity by supporting programs that increase employment, income stability, and the ability to access food.

Presentation of Priorities

Improve Access to Public Supports

1. **School Food** - Strengthen school, afterschool, and summer meals programs to ensure that all BPS children have access to meals they want to eat, and to ensure that BPS families can consistently rely on those meals to feed their children, thereby reducing the burden on families in need.
2. **Public and Community Assistance** - *Support and streamline access to SNAP, WIC, and other forms of public and community assistance that can mitigate the risk of food insecurity, and consider opportunities to further leverage those resources.*
3. **Transportation and Resource Proximity** - Consider opportunities to make public and other forms of transportation more accessible and affordable for individuals whose physical access to food is limited by proximity or mobility, and consider opportunities to fill physical gaps in food outlets in high-need areas.

Presentation of Priorities

Foster Food Sovereignty

1. ***Community Gardens*** – Increase access to community gardens for individuals in need so that they can grow their own healthy produce at a minimal cost.
2. ***Urban Agriculture*** – Support urban agriculture initiatives to provide communities with improved physical, financial, and cultural access to locally-grown food coming from locally-owned farms.
3. ***Food Recovery*** – Find opportunities to for communities and businesses to reduce food waste and increase food access.

Presentation of Priorities

Support Social and Behavioral Shifts to Increase Food Security

1. ***Institutionalizing food insecurity supports***— In community health centers, schools, food pantries, and beyond, including food insecurity screenings and referrals, direct supports, and nutrition and other education.
2. ***Prioritizing availability of healthy, affordable food in institutional settings*** – Working with public and private institutions to build a culture in which the healthy choice is the easy choice.
3. ***Increasing dignity and decreasing stigma*** – Working to reduce stigma around food insecurity and food access issues so that those in need are comfortable seeking help.

Discussion of Priorities

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Discussion of Priorities

Address Access through Economic Development

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Questions? Comments?

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Closing

*Boston Food Access Council Meeting
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Next Steps

Next Meeting:

Thursday, December 14th 6p - 8p

Location TBA

(Second Thursdays of the month, on quarterly schedule)

Save the date:

Thursday, December 14th, 6p - 8p

Goals for Meeting #3

- Progress reports from working groups that have convened
- Plan to convene remaining working groups
- Discuss strategies moving forward, consider measurement and evaluation processes

THANK YOU

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City of Boston
Mayor Martin J. Walsh



Innovation & Technology