

Food Supports: Conversations with Neighbors

Results of 2021 Neighbor Research



second harvest
HEARTLAND®

What did we want to learn?

Research question 1

How many unique people received support through Second Harvest Heartland and the network of food shelves and hunger-relief program partners within Second Harvest Heartland's service area in 2021?

Research question 2

What are the demographic and economic characteristics of people receiving support?

How did we gather data?

- In-person surveys with 889 people across 55 sites from October to December 2021
- 30-minute interviews with 20 people in December - February
- Monthly reported service data

- Oversampled in areas with more people of color
- Survey data was weighted to be representative of Second Harvest's whole service area





813,130

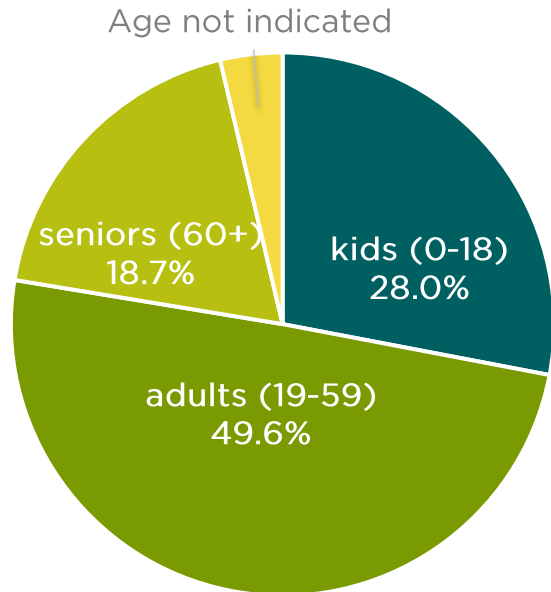
unique people served in 2021

Who is seeking support from the network?

Demographic information

Snapshot of individuals served

Seniors and kids make up nearly half of all people seeking support.



- Nearly equal split of men and women
- Racial breakdown of those served:
 - 41% White only
 - 22% Hispanic/Latino only
 - 15% Black/African American only
 - 7% Asian only
 - 5% Multiple races/ethnicities
 - 2% American Indian or Alaska Native only
 - 0.2% Another race/ethnicity not list only
 - 8% Race/ethnicity not indicated

Kids are underestimated in this research

Snapshot of households served

Size

- Varied from 1 to 12 people
- 5 people households were the most common (18.5%)
- 61% of households had at least 4 people

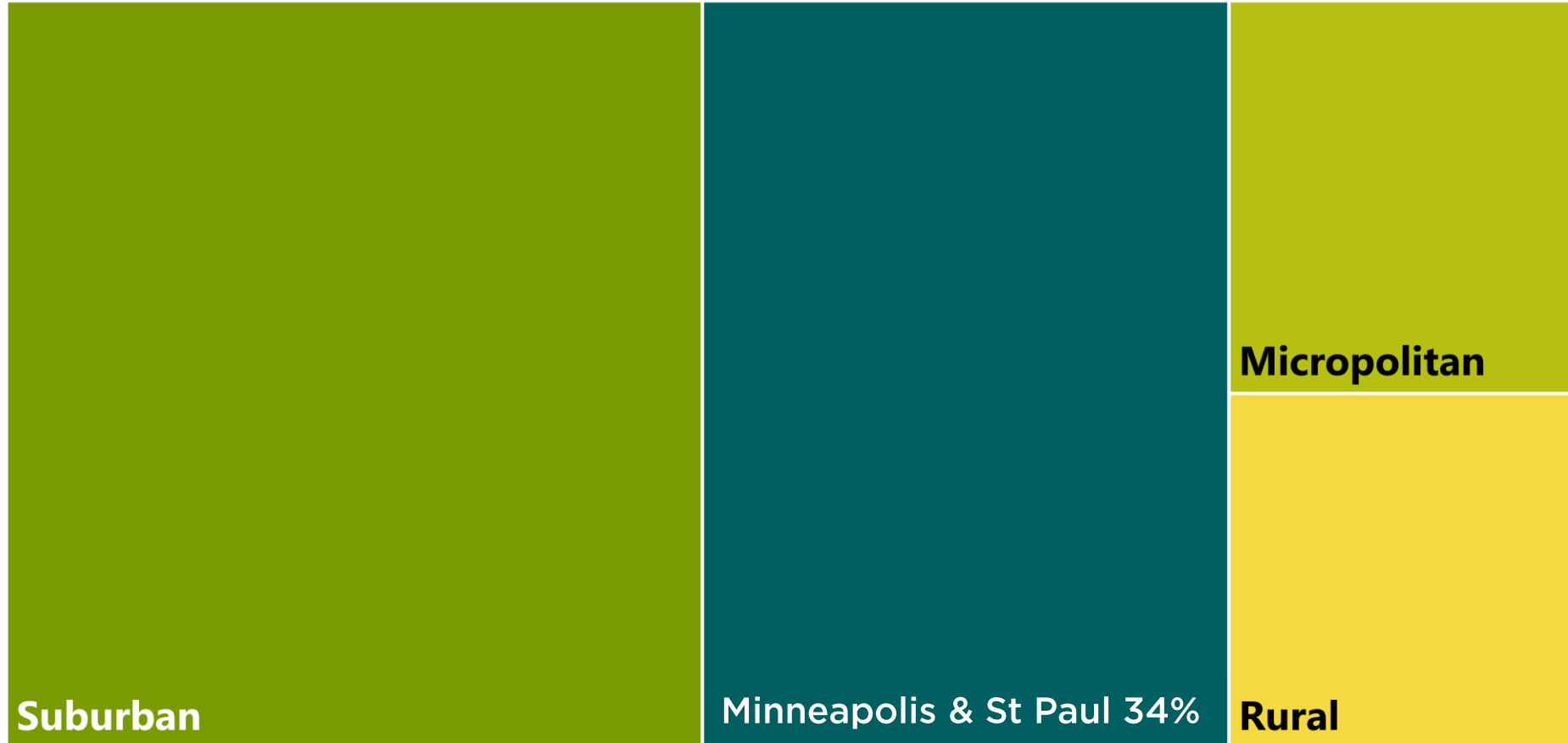
Housing

- Most people rent their homes (46%)
- Many own their homes (38%)
- 11.4% live with other people
- Estimated over 12k live in shelters (1.6%)

Income

- Over half (53%) had a household income of less than \$35k
- 62.9% of people live in household where someone worked for pay
- 20% of people had social security or pension
- 18.9% had income from SSDI or SSI

Suburbanites make up nearly half of people seeking services from the network.



Key Takeaways



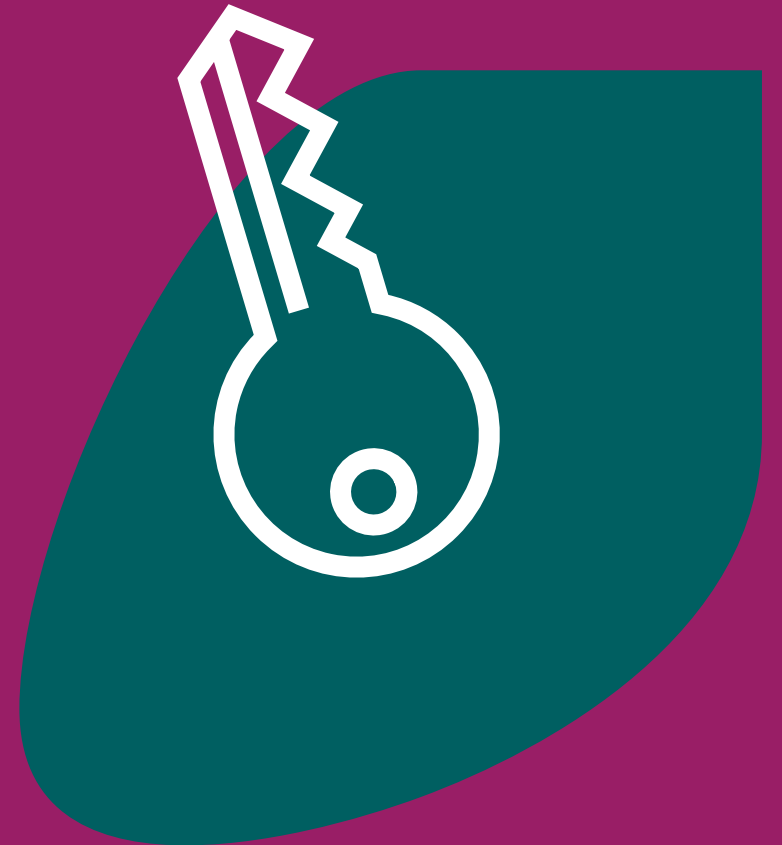
Collectively we reached over 800,000 unique people in 2021!



Almost 63% of people had someone in their household working for pay



44% of the people sought support in the suburbs



Food Support Use

Use prior to COVID, need for additional support,
and use of federal programs

Pre-COVID use of support was common

- 50.8% of people had used food support before COVID



Food programs as a way of life



“Well, usually we go twice a week and then there's the [meal program] that's three days a week, so Monday through Friday we're basically there for suppers you know, we go to these free meals. And then the pantry usually once a week or [food pantry] but that's the only pantry that I go to.”





New visitors made up almost half (47%) of people seeking services

“Up until two years ago I was able to work because of the contact with people. When COVID hit...I started to have issues with diabetes due to lack of mobility...when the shutdown came, and all of a sudden, there was no money and looking at what the electric bill was and I still have a car payment because I bought a car, just before the shutdown, I wasn't planning not to be working ...that's when I investigated the food distribution option.”

Need exists for more support

- Nearly a third (31%) of people needed more free food/meals



Current use of federal food programs was common

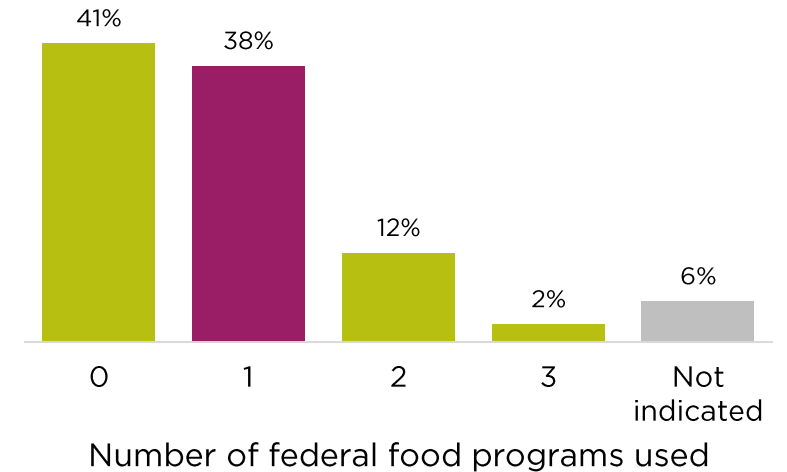


- 53% of people were using SNAP, WIC, or free/reduced school meals

SNAP and F/R School Meals were used the most



Of people who benefited from federal programs, most only used **one**.



People are leveraging multiple resources



“I have the EBT card and it fills in the gaps, for me, but I could never and I don't know how people do it, but I could never afford on the freshest. I look at some of these salads and I'm amazed at them and I get to eat them and I'm looking at the store and I think, I can't never afford that.”

“At first with the COVID impact... we had to apply for economic assistance...The only thing we could get is free food... how to buy gas...When we applied for emergency service and they helped us pay our rent...We can have free food and to be homeless is no fun...no more stress... sometimes our kids want this kind of food.”



Key Takeaways



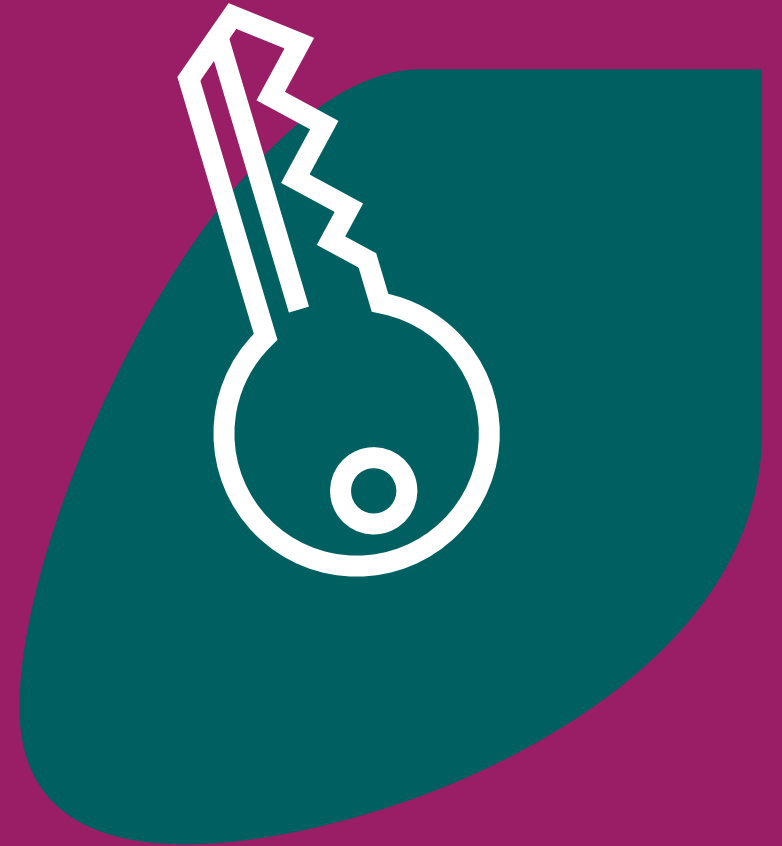
Almost half (47%) of visitors were new since COVID



Nearly a third (31%) of people needed more free food/meals



Over half (53%) were also currently using federal programs



Accessing Support

Transportation and challenges making meals

Over 71% of people drove themselves to get food support



- 93% of MN & WI households have vehicle access

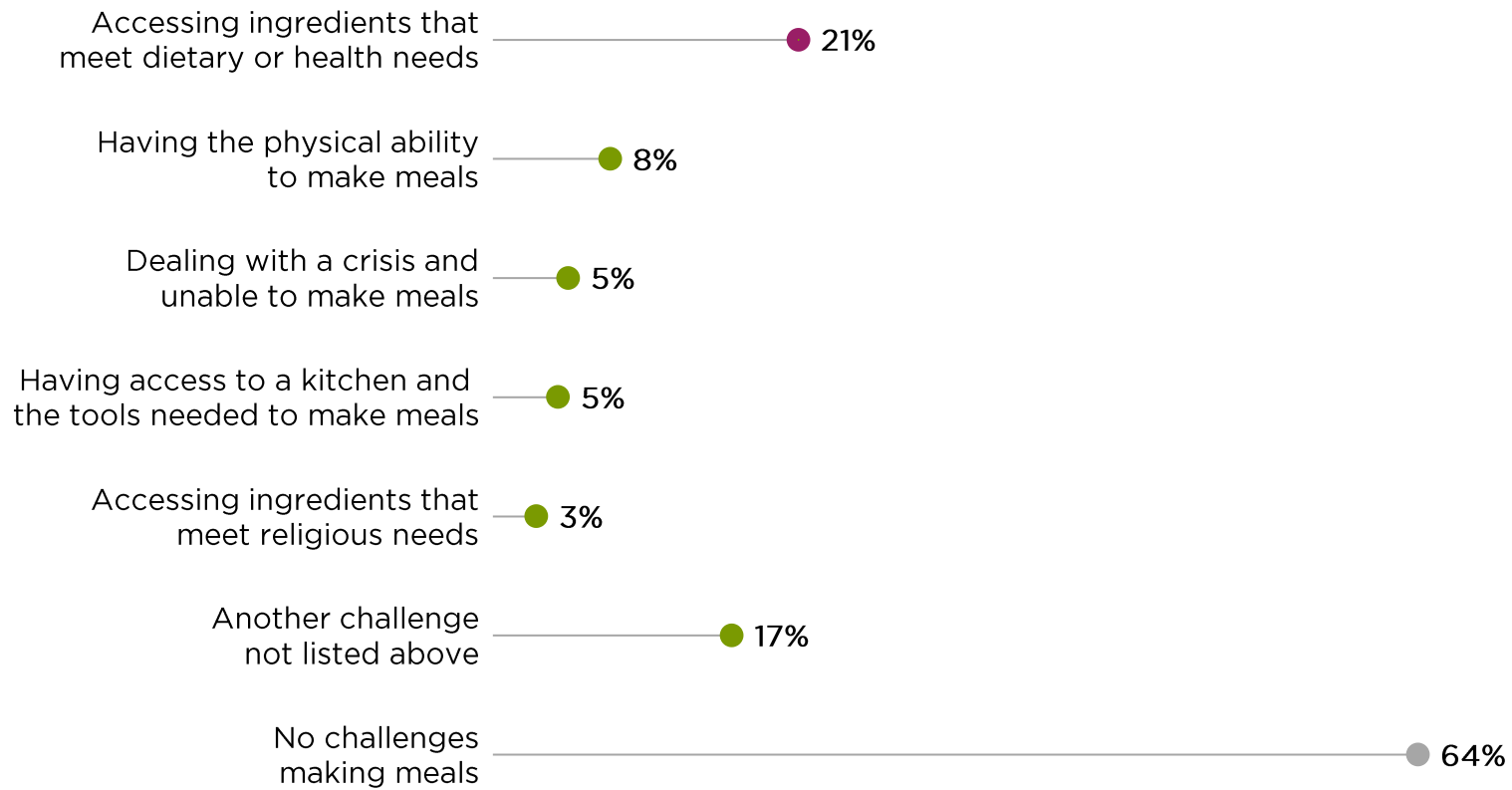
Transportation could be a challenge



“[speaking of a previous program they used] But the one downtown was hard to get to, and sitting in your car waiting. A lot of times I didn’t even go because it was so inaccessible. The times, like there was only one time slot and sitting there waiting. There was only one time, Saturday morning from 8-11. It was difficult. There was nowhere to park, it was right on the corner going up bridge street so you had to park several blocks away, and getting into the building was hard. It was an unpleasant experience to try to even get to.”



Accessing ingredients that meet dietary or health needs was the most common challenge to making meals.



People wrote in other challenges they faced

- Most common was living in a shelter (n=32),
- Followed by mental health or depression (n=20)
- Lacking ingredients for dietary or health needs (n=15)
- Lacking ingredients generally (n=13),
- Lacking spices or seasoning (n=8)



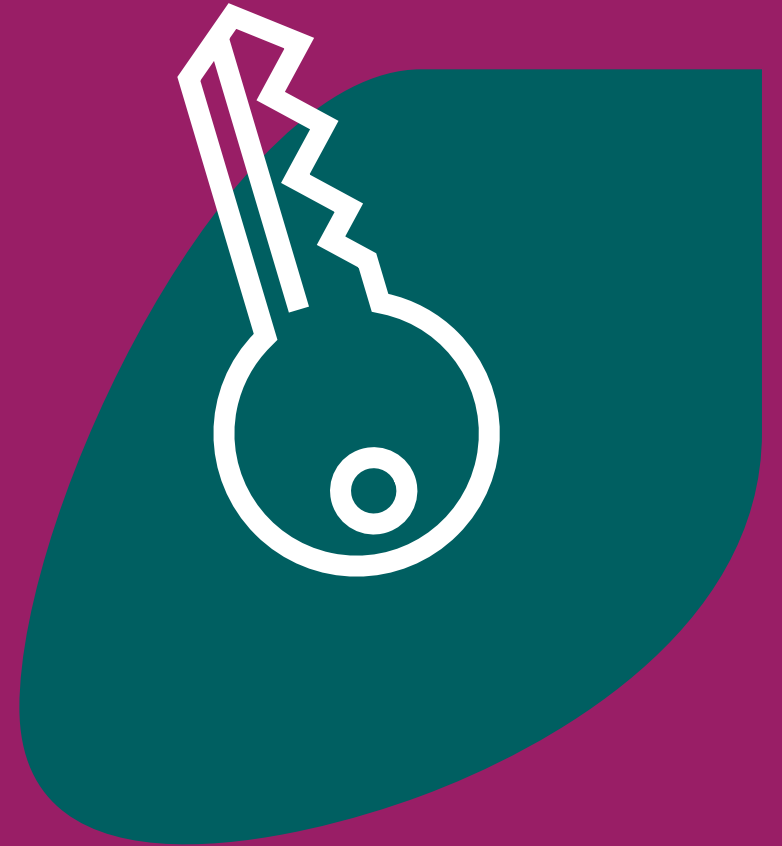
Key Takeaways



Most people drove to programs, but transportation can be challenging for many



Almost 1 in 4 people struggled to make meals because they didn't have the right ingredients



Subgroup Results

Differences by race, geography and household size

A guide to the results

Racial breakdown

White only

A race/ethnicity other than White = People of color

Geographic breakdown

Minneapolis and St Paul = Minneapolis and St Paul

Non-metropolitan = Suburban, rural, and cities outside of the 7- county metro (e.g. St Cloud)

Household size

Small households = households with 1-3 people

Large households = households with 4 or more people



Differences were most common by geography and household size

Group differences were most common based on geography and least common based on neighbor race.

Groups were either **more likely** or **less likely** to fit a particular characteristic. No color indicates no significant differences between groups.

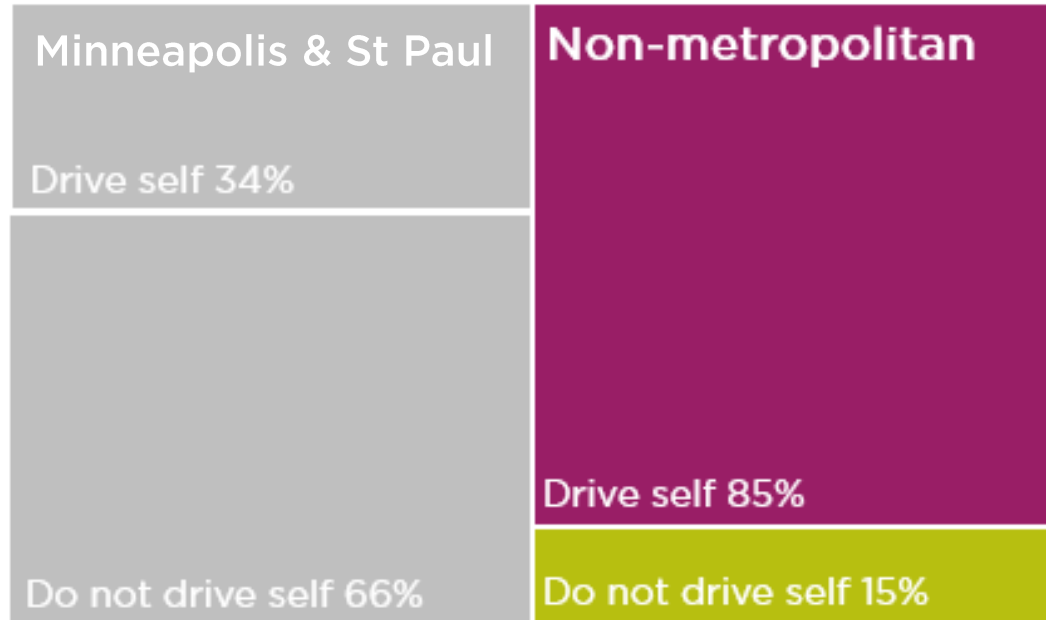
Survey Areas	Geography		Household Size		Race	
	Mpls & St Paul	Non-metro	Large	Small	White	People of color
Transportation- drove in their own vehicle	More likely	Less likely	Less likely	More likely	Less likely	More likely
Other programs- participate in federal programs	Less likely	More likely	Less likely	More likely	More likely	Less likely
Needed support- need more free food			Less likely	More likely		
Prior use- had not received support before COVID	Less likely	More likely				
Challenge making meals- did report challenges	Less likely	More likely				



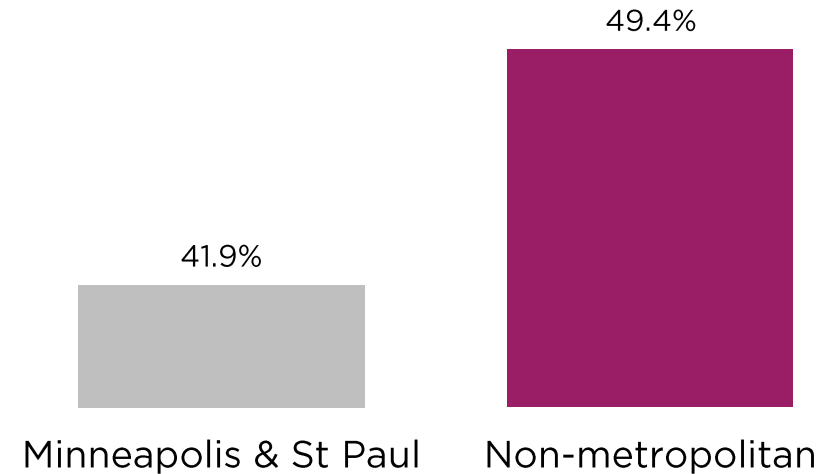


Those getting services outside of Minneapolis & St Paul differed from the rest of the network

People living in outside Minneapolis and St Paul are much more likely to **drive themselves** to services.



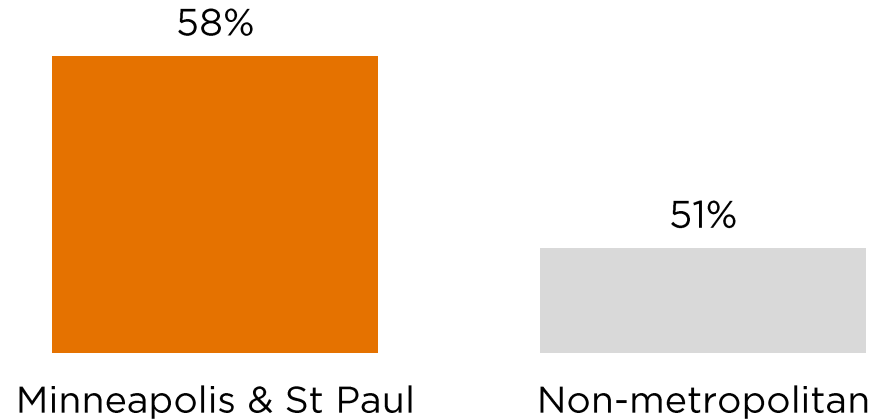
Outside Minneapolis and St Paul more people had not received support prior to COVID



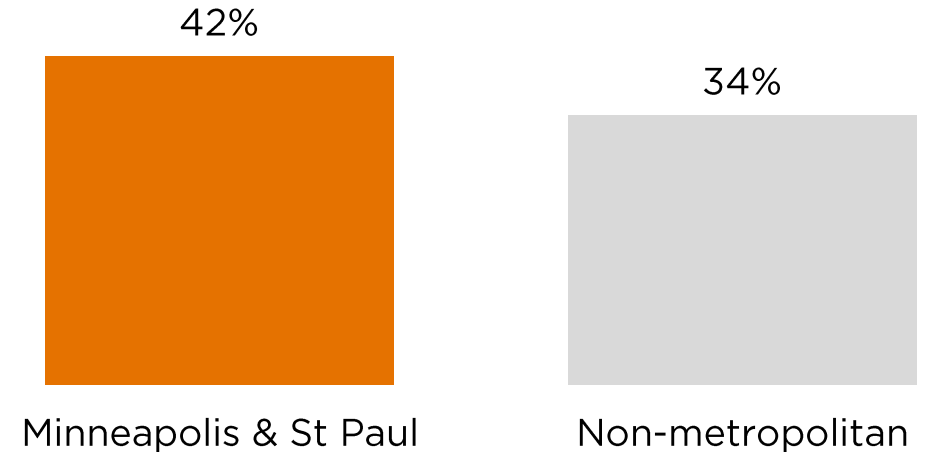
Minneapolis & St Paul



In **Minneapolis & St Paul** people were more likely to participate in federal nutrition programs

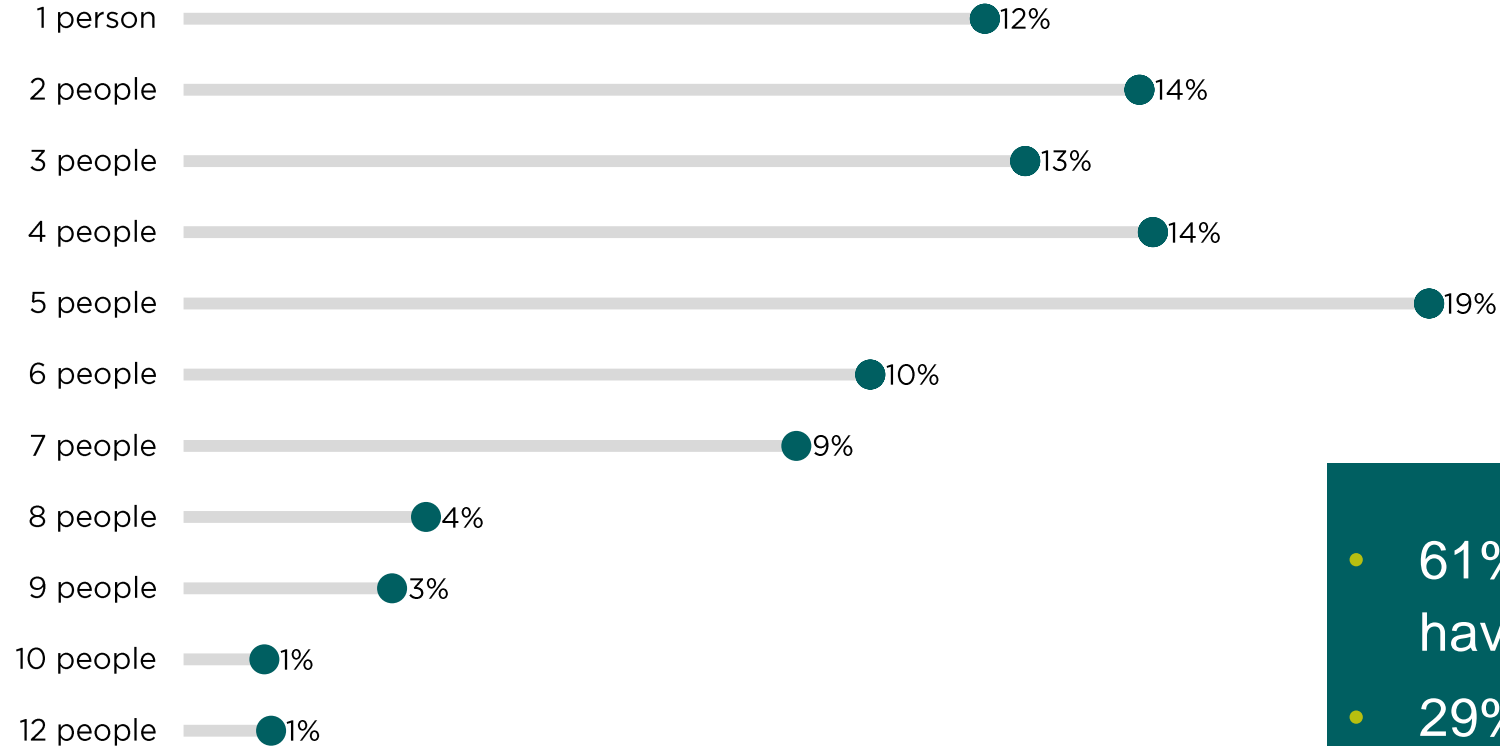


In **Minneapolis & St Paul** people were more likely to have challenges making meals





Households vary significantly in size



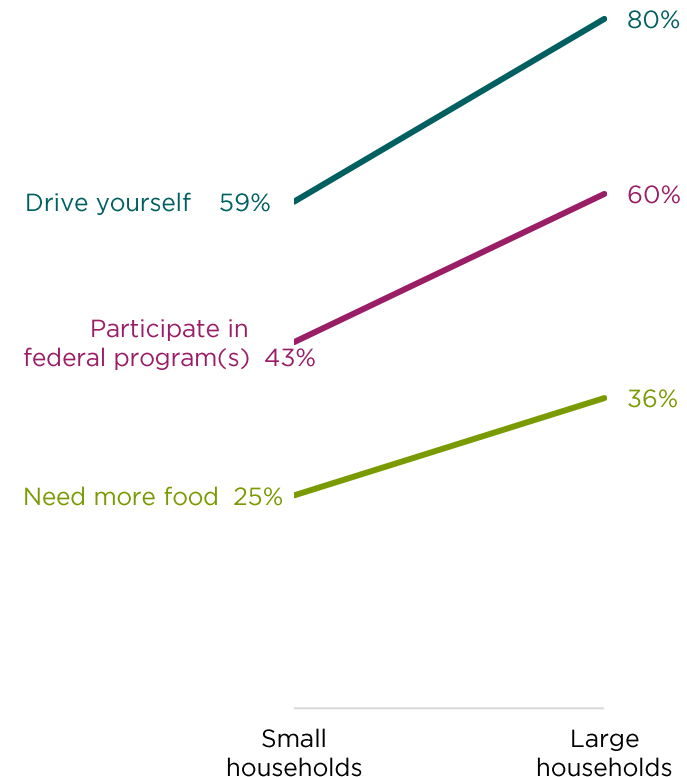
- 61% of households have 4 or more people
- 29% of households have 6 or more people



Large households have unique needs and resources



- More likely to report they need more free meals/groceries
- More likely to already be using federal programs
 - SNAP, WIC, F/R school meals
- More likely to drive themselves to a food support site

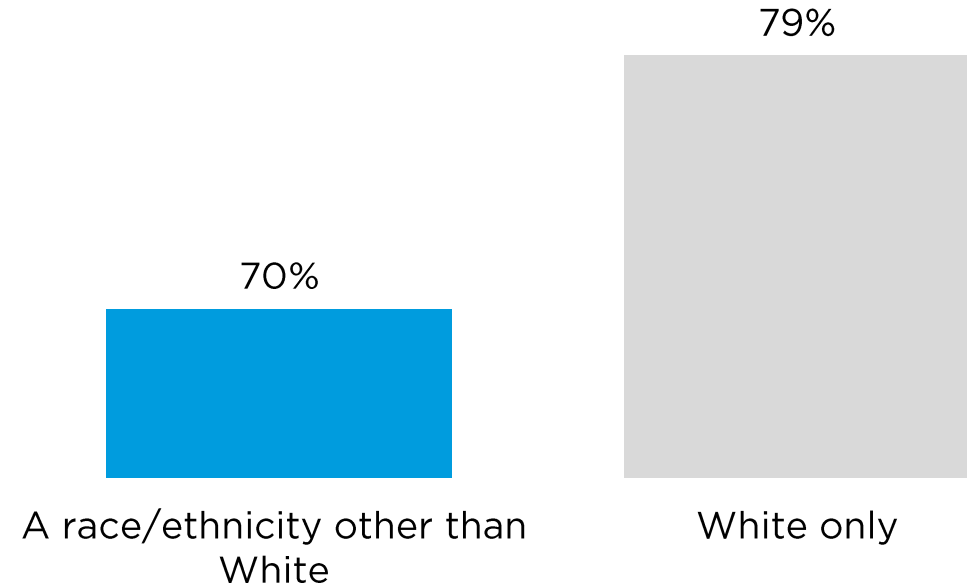


Least number of differences seen based on race



- Households with people of color were more likely to be using federal programs
- Less likely to drive themselves to food support sites
 - Relied on other forms of transportation

People of color people are less likely to drive themselves to get services



Key Takeaways



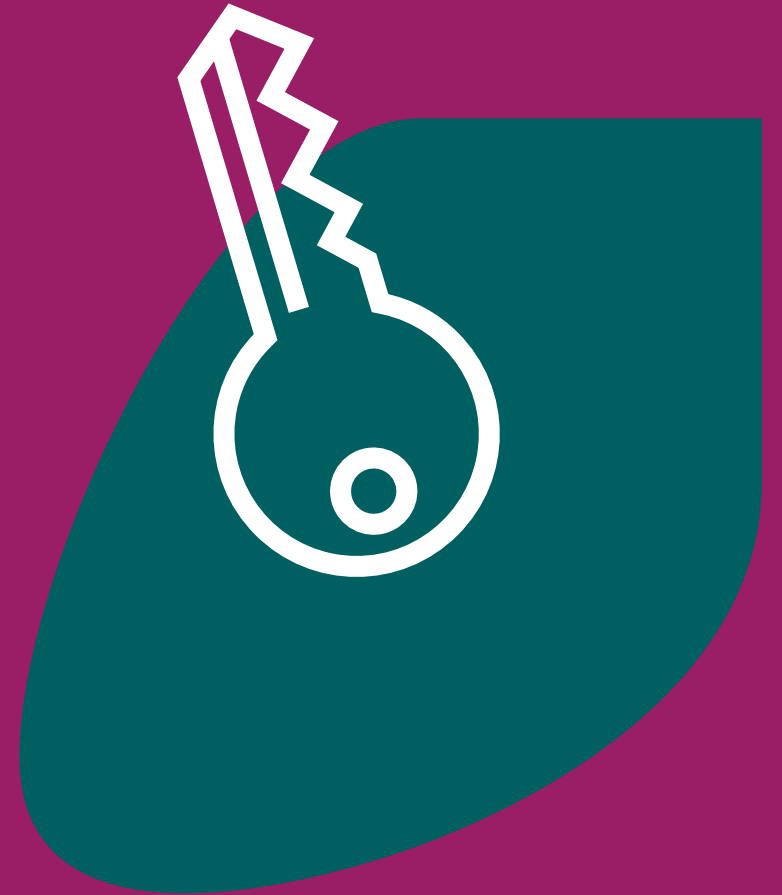
Large households were more likely to need more food



New visitors were more common outside Minneapolis & St Paul



People of color were less likely to drive themselves to sites



Additional Interview Results

20 people shared their experiences

People liked the convenience of new COVID processes



“Everything is boxed, you drive up and there’s no contact. It’s so efficiently done and just so convenient.”

“You can choose what you need [from the smartphone app] and then they bring things to your car.”

“They figured out how to make the queue work with pagers through COVID... they have been pretty decent as far as adapting and keeping themselves accessible [during COVID]...their website is informative.”



However, there were some drawbacks



“The mechanics of food distribution has changed since COVID with drive through food pick-up protocol. Before COVID19 shoppers could walk into the pantry and shop. Now groceries are pre-sorted and boxed/bagged.”

“Know that before it was in-person, now it’s a little difficult with people having to wait in the car like an hour or two during the cold... Prior to COVID it was selecting what you want, but now it’s premade boxes.”

“...before people would often get together and talk and chit chat, it was king of a social thing, but now with COVID...you were only some to come down at the time you signed up for it.”



Getting quality food and the right food in the right amounts could be a challenge



“They have the [food pantry], but they just give you a couple of sacks. Most of the time that’s just canned goods that you can't even use and you just end up giving it away. You don’t get to have a choice of what you want...you want it to feel like you have a little bit of dignity, where you can pick what you want and what you don’t want because like at [other food pantry] you can pick out what you want, and what you don't want”

“I could get most of the carbohydrates, like rice, and oil. Sometimes they bring vegetables but most of the time... they had canned food I didn’t like. But the eggs, and starting [in the beginning], they didn’t have the meat option but later they started giving chicken and other meat. That helped me a lot.”



Stigma could be too, but there are some ways to overcome it.



“I had that stigma in me really holding me back, but what happened is when I started going there, the way they treated me, it was just like I was going to the grocery store...that breaks the barrier to be honest”.

“Back home... they sell food like one penny, everything you buy you have to pay one penny... You have the feeling you are buying the stuff. I had the stigma in the beginning...And some people know that if they know you go there, they'll look at you in a different way...But for me I'll go there today and later give back.”



Stigma could be too, but there are some ways to overcome it.



“Sometimes it’s embarrassing....it’s [the food pantry] in a small outside [location]. People see you waiting in line outside...it shouldn’t be a barrier...and so you know if other workers or people are there, you might feel a little like waiting in line outside is probably a little barrier for some people. I think it's less and less of a barrier because everybody's having a harder time trying to make it.”



People were grateful for support they received



“I tried [food pantry] once and I was blown away by the variety and the quantity, yeah and it was like oh my gosh this is not a brown bag with rice and a can of soup and can of vegetables. This is support for a household and I went a second time and I called some of my neighbors.”

“And also, the staff there is very, very helpful and they encouraging, you know, they talk to you nicely, they don't treat you like as if you were a beggar so that makes a difference. ...they treat people as if they are all human, not like beggars”.



There were common themes when people expressed appreciation



- A wide variety of food available
- Providing the amount of food that's appropriate for the household
- Treating people with respect
- Helpful and friendly staff
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Meat



Key Takeaways



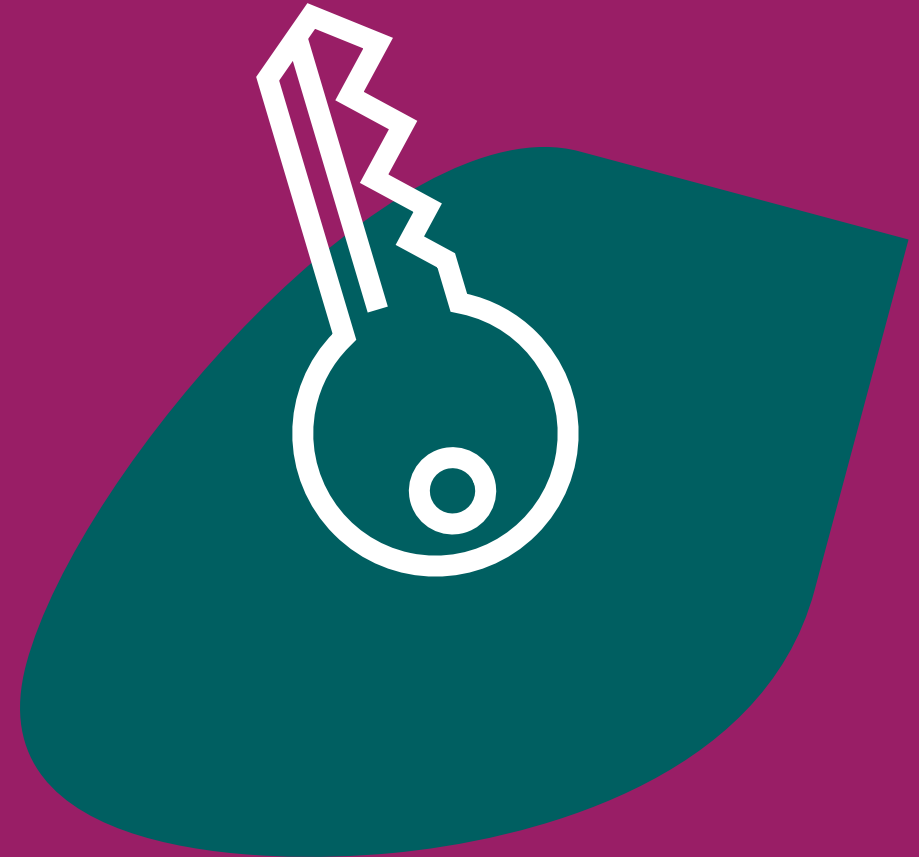
People missed the ability to choose their own foods during COVID



People notice and appreciate when we provide the amount and types of food they want



How we treat and serve people can help reduce the stigma they feel and contributes to a positive experience



What's next?

- Information posted to Agency Zone
- Full report is available on SHH's website at 2harvest.org/clientreport
- An executive summary of the results is on the way
- Start sharing the results outside the network



A close-up photograph of a hand raised in the air, palm facing forward. The hand is in sharp focus, showing the texture of the skin and the lines on the palm. In the background, several other hands are also raised, but they are out of focus, creating a sense of a group of people participating in a discussion or a lesson. The background is a solid, muted green color, likely a chalkboard or a wall in a classroom.

Questions?

Thank you

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