

Senior Project FRESH



2020
Program
Evaluation

Senior Project Fresh (SPF) aims to increase access to fresh, local produce and improve healthy eating habits among seniors aged 60 years and older at 185% or below the federal poverty level in counties throughout Michigan. Participants receive \$20 in vouchers to purchase fresh produce at local farmers markets. Ottawa Food began offering the SPF program in 2017 as a result of grant funding.

In Ottawa County, three organizations currently participate in SPF: Four Pointes, Evergreen Commons, and Ottawa Food. Four Pointes is located in Grand Haven and serves the northern half of the County. Evergreen Commons is located in Holland and serves the southwestern part of the County. Ottawa Food—which is a collaborative group of local agencies and individuals—also partners with Community Action Agency to provide vouchers to seniors at Commodity Supplemental Food Program distribution locations, thereby serving many areas of the County.

In order to keep participants safe from COVID-19, Ottawa Food SPF flyers and surveys were dropped off at many of the apartment complexes and were given out to people in their cars at drive-up food distribution locations. In an attempt to increase participants' fruit and vegetable consumption and achieve a higher voucher redemption rate, Ottawa Food offers its participants an educational component (e.g., information on farmers markets, how to store and cook fresh produce, etc.) as well as cooking supplies. This year, due to COVID-19, the normal educational component and cooking supplies were limited. Participants were strongly encouraged to assign a proxy to use their vouchers for them, since SPF participants fall into the high-risk category for COVID-19 and may not want to visit the market in person.



Report Contents

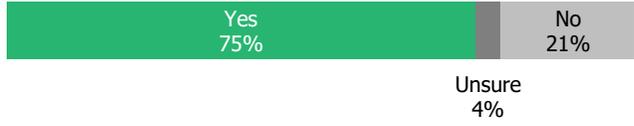
- Participant Characteristics
- Program Activities
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Data Collection & Analysis

The voucher redemption data contained in this report was obtained from the State of Michigan. The remainder of the data was self-reported by participants through the completion of pre-program and post-program surveys. This year, participants who submitted their completed post-program survey were entered to win 1 of 2 \$20 Meijer gift cards. Usually, pre-program surveys are collected during the first in-person education session. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, pre-program surveys were more difficult to get from participants, which resulted in a decreased overall response rate. An overview of how many participants completed the surveys is provided below:

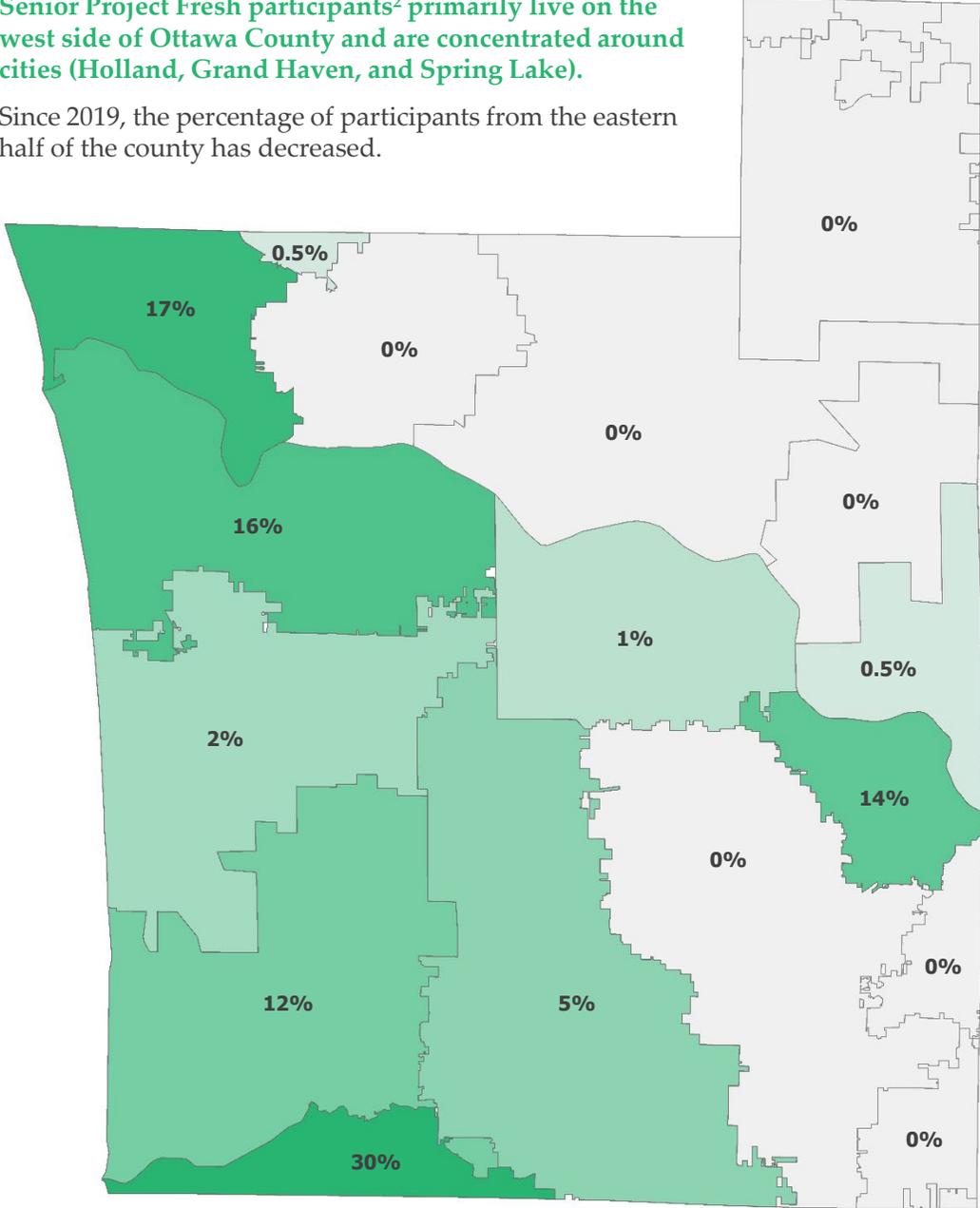
- 74 participants completed both the pre- and post-program surveys (a 29% response rate)
- 150 participants completed only the pre-program survey
- 31 participants completed only the post-program survey

75% of respondents¹ participated in a Senior Project Fresh program before, compared to 76% in 2019. There were 48 new participants in 2020.



Senior Project Fresh participants² primarily live on the west side of Ottawa County and are concentrated around cities (Holland, Grand Haven, and Spring Lake).

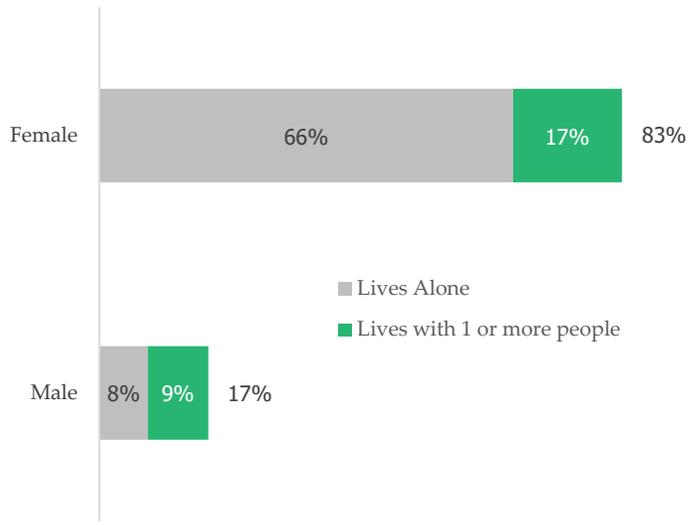
Since 2019, the percentage of participants from the eastern half of the county has decreased.



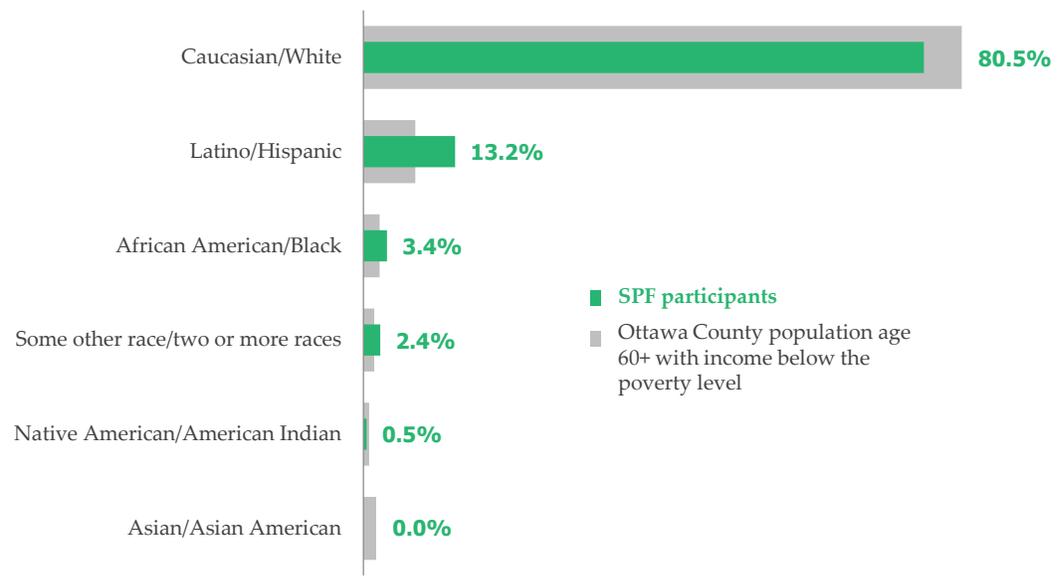
1. 224 participants answered this pre-program survey question.
 2. 208 participants answered this pre-program survey question. Not included in the map are two zip codes -49442 (Muskegon, 0.5%), and 49445 (Muskegon, 0.5%).

Participant Characteristics p. 4

Substantially more females (83%) participated in SPF in 2020 than males (17%).¹
 74% of SPF participants report living alone – 6 percentage points less than in 2019.



Just over 80% of SPF participants² report identifying as Caucasian/White
 (3 percentage points less than in 2019)



1. 209 participants answered this pre-program survey question. Gender of survey respondents is representative of Ottawa County's population who is age 65+ with an income below the poverty level.
 2. 205 participants answered this pre-program survey question.

Program Activities

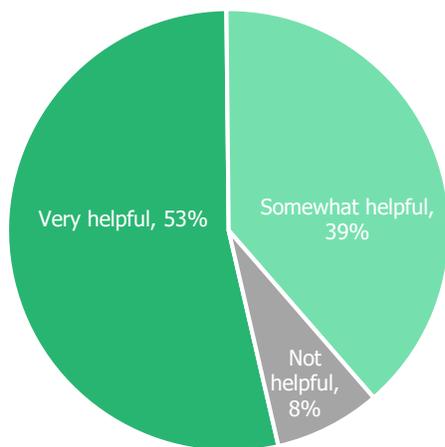


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Under normal circumstances, as part of the additional educational component offered by Ottawa Food, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) staff leads an educational session for SPF participants. Each participant receives recipes and information about shopping at farmers markets, storing and cooking produce, eating well, seasonal availability of produce in Michigan, and how to use EBT/Bridge Cards and Double Up Food Bucks at farmers markets. In addition, participants receive cooking utensils and food storage containers provided through Senior Resources of West Michigan. Due to COVID-19, participants were not required to attend a nutrition education class this year. Instead of the usual cooking supplies, participants were supplied with a flexible cutting mat.

92% of participants¹ who received a flexible cutting mat from SPF reported finding them very helpful or somewhat helpful in preparing and/or cooking fresh fruits and vegetables.²



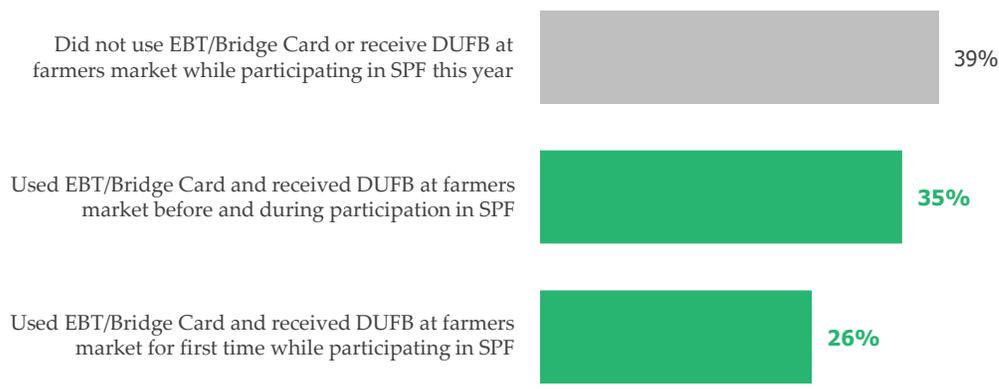
1. 13 participants reported not receiving a cutting mat. According to OCDPH, the cutting mats are thin, and could have stuck to the inside of the survey envelopes that participants received.

2. 35 participants answered this post-program survey question.

EBT/Bridge Card & Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) Usage p. 7

In the past, Ottawa Food had provided each participant with a promotional flyer with general information about using EBT and DUFB at the market. This year, participants were also provided with information about DUFB at specific local farmers markets.

61% of participants¹ who reported they had an EBT/Bridge Card reported using it at the farmers market this summer and receiving DUFB. In 2019, 45% of participants reported using their EBT/Bridge Card at the farmers market and receiving DUFB. **26% reported using their EBT/Bridge Card and receiving DUFB for the first time this summer.** In 2019, 16% reported using their EBT/Bridge Card and receiving DUFB for the first time.



Use your Bridge or Pandemic EBT

at participating Farmers Markets to get tokens to purchase SNAP eligible items. Get an equal amount in **FREE** Double Up Food Bucks for Michigan grown fruit & vegetables. **No registration required!**

How to use your Bridge or Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) Card at participating Farmers Markets and get Double Up Food Bucks Tokens:

- Go to the farmers market information table and use your Bridge/P-EBT Card to purchase (wooden tokens) that are good for **SNAP eligible food items**.
- You'll also receive a match of **FREE Double Up Food Bucks** - (silver tokens) to purchase **Michigan grown fruits & veggies**.
- Look for participating vendors and shop using your tokens.

Note: Farmers Market tokens are not interchangeable between markets. No change is given if total is not used at time of purchase.

Ottawa County Farmers Markets 2020

<p>Grand Haven Farmers Market 616 842-4910 300 North Harbor Drive Grand Haven, MI 49417 Season: Saturday, May 2 - Oct 31, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Wednesday, June 3 - Oct 28, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM www.grandhavenchamber.org/farmers-market</p>	<p>Holland Farmers Market 616 355-1138 150 West 8th Street Holland, MI 49423 Days Open: Wednesday & Saturday Season: May - December Hours: *8:00 AM - 2:00 PM *The first hour of shopping is reserved for seniors ages 60+, the immunocompromised and pregnant women. www.hollandfarmersmarket.com</p>
<p>Spring Lake Farm & Garden Market 616 842-4910 225 East Exchange Avenue Spring Lake MI 49456 Season: Thursdays, June 4 - October 8 Hours: 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM www.grandhavenchamber.org/farmers-market</p>	<p>Terra Square Farmers Market 616-669-1184 3380 Chicago Drive Hudsonville, MI 49426 Season: Wednesdays - June - September 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM Saturdays: 6/27, 7/25 8/29 & 9/26 Hours: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM www.terrasquare.com</p>

Use SNAP for these items:

- Fruits Vegetables
- Honey
- Baked goods Cereals
- Milk & Cheeses Eggs
- Seeds and plants for food
- Coffee beans Coffee grounds
- Dips, Salsas Frozen food
- Meats Poultry

Use Double Up Food Bucks for these items:

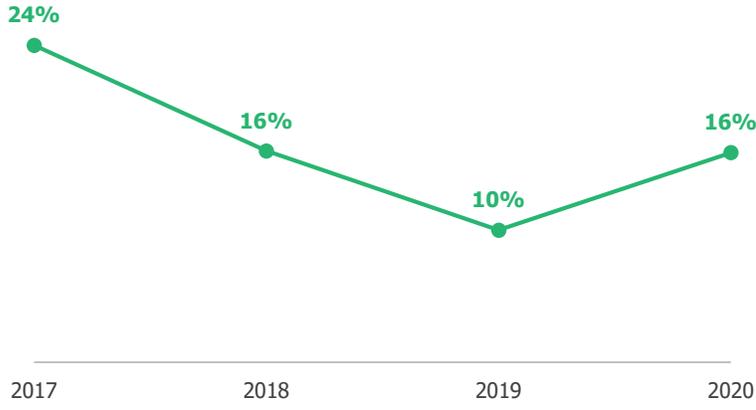
- Michigan Grown Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- Seeds and plants for food

1. 57 participants reported in both the pre- and post-program surveys that they had an EBT/Bridge Card and answered these survey questions.

Farmers Market Visits

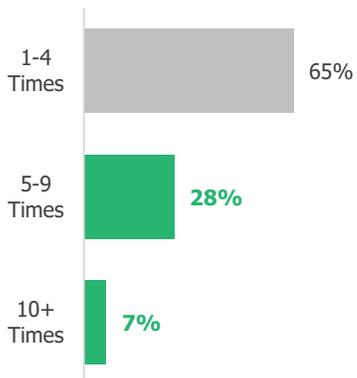
Prior to participating in SPF, 16% of the 2020 participants¹ report not having been to a farmers market in two years.

The percentage of SPF participants who report not having been to a farmers market in the past two years has decreased by 8 percentage points between 2017 and 2020.



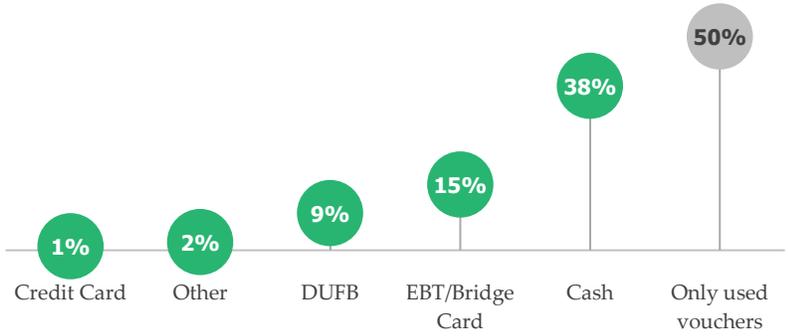
35% of participants² reported going to the farmers market more than 5 times in 2020.

In 2019, 39% of participants reported going to the farmers market more than 5 times.



In addition to using their SPF vouchers, **50% of participants³ reported purchasing fruits and vegetables at the farmers markets using other forms of payment – achieving the 2020 target of 50%.**

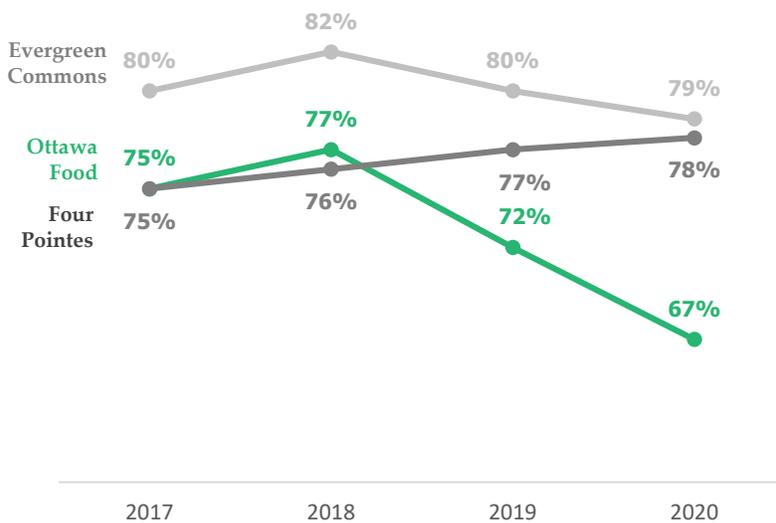
In 2019, 54% of participants purchased produce using other forms of payment.



1. 208 participants answered this pre-program survey question.
 2. 100 participants answered this post-program survey question.
 3. 104 participants answered this post-program survey question. Some participants selected multiple responses; therefore the chart will not add up to 100%.

Ottawa Food's voucher redemption rate of 67% decreased from 2019 and fell slightly short of their goal to achieve a 70% voucher redemption rate.

19% of surveyed participants did not use all their vouchers in 2020. The follow are reasons why participants did not use all their vouchers in 2020:



- Was not able to go as much as I wanted due to Covid (2 similar comments)
- Didn't realize expiration date (2 similar comments)
- Time ran out to go (months) didn't get voucher early enough (2 similar comments)
- Could not get there, car was not working (1 similar comment)
- Was in the process of moving (1 similar comment)
- Food was not very appealing at the farm markets, plus the prices were anywhere from 2-3 times more than the store
- I was in and out of the hospital and then had a head injury that took 3 months to heal
- Lost or misplaced
- My summer was busy with other things. :) Forgot about them
- Saving last \$8.00 for new crop apples
- Because they went through the washing machine



\$4,036 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables were redeemed by Ottawa Food SPF participants in 2020.

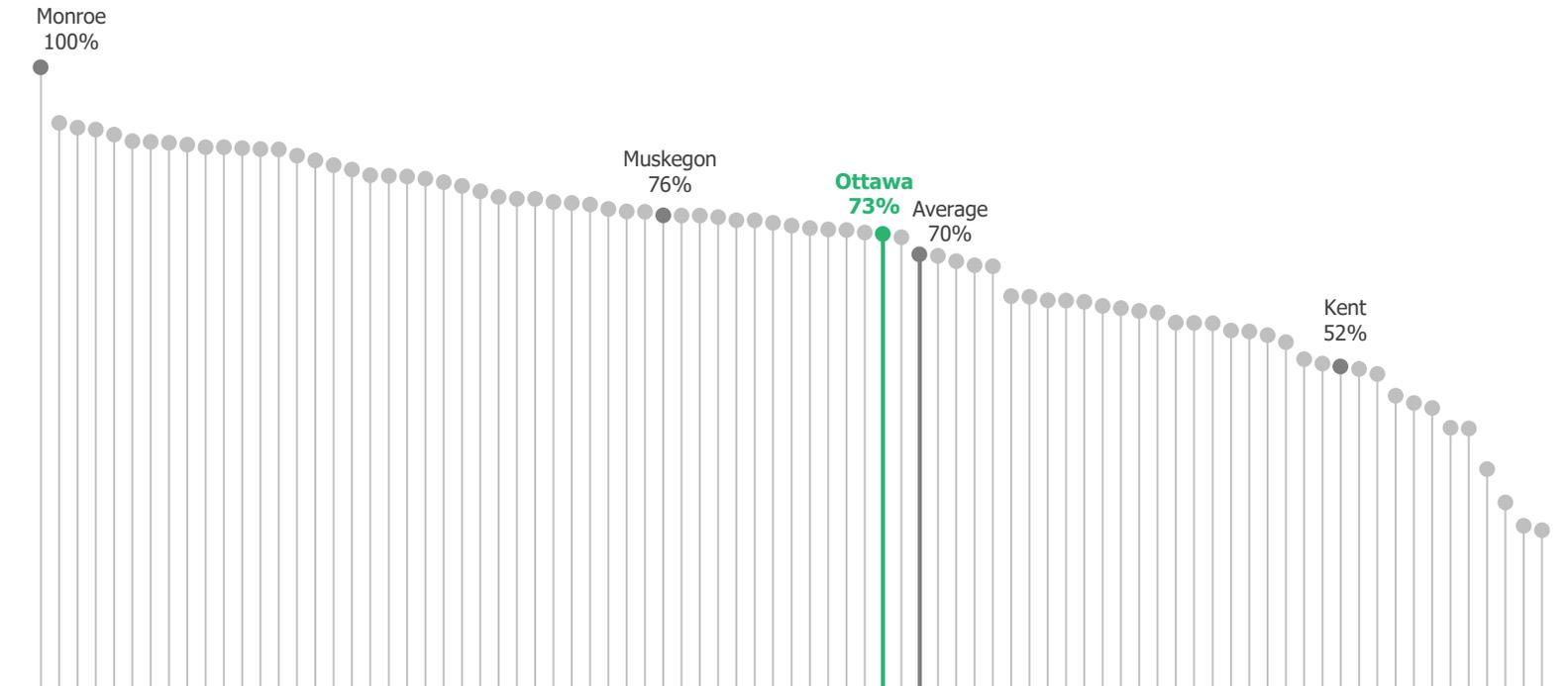
\$19,688 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables have been redeemed by Ottawa Food SPF participants during the last 4 years.



64% of the over \$31,000 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables that were redeemed in Ottawa County during the last 4 years were redeemed by Ottawa Food Senior Project Fresh participants.

Voucher Redemption - Statewide Rankings by County p. 10

By combining the voucher redemption rate of the three SPF organizations in Ottawa County, Ottawa County had a voucher redemption rate of 73% and ranked 48th of 83 counties¹, which is an increase from last year's rank of 59th.



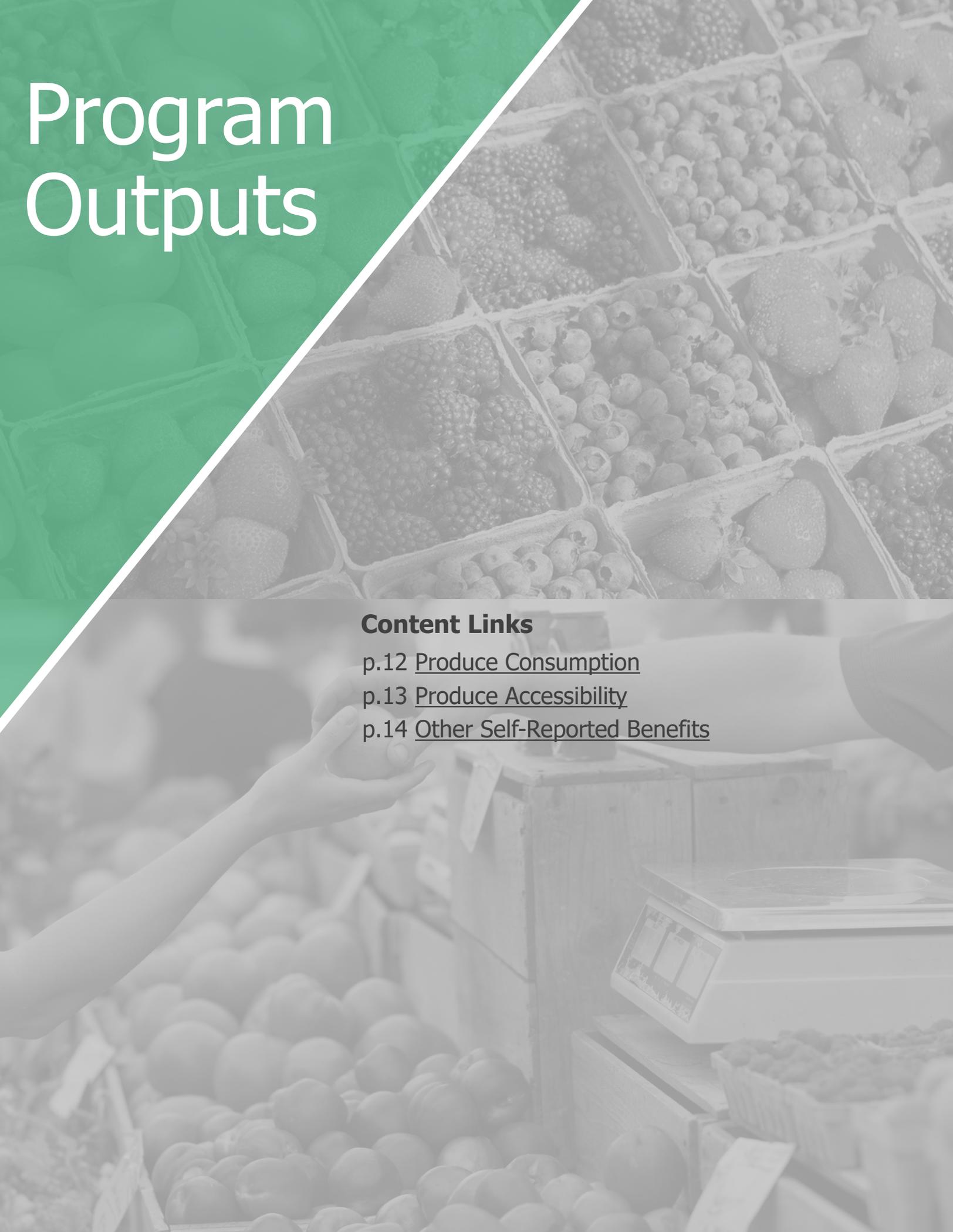
\$2 MICHIGAN DHHS AGING & ADULT SERVICES AGENCY SENIOR FARMERS NUTRITION PROGRAM MARKET FRESH 2018 \$2

This coupon is good for Michigan-grown, unprocessed products.
May only be used at farmers markets and roadside stands displaying the sign
"Senior Project FRESH/Market FRESH Welcome Here"

Market Master Number	Farmer Number	Signature of Market FRESH participant/proxy
001003		COUPON EXPIRES OCTOBER 31, 2018 Market Master must submit for payment by November 16, 2018

1. Wisewoman and "Other" organizations' data are excluded from this ranking.

Program Outputs



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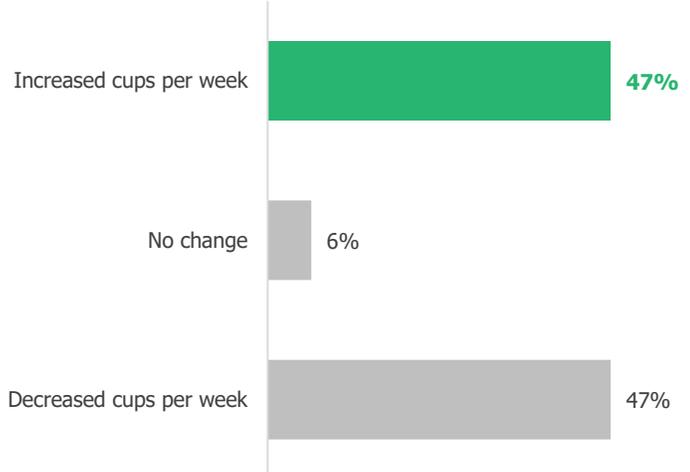
p.14 [Other Self-Reported Benefits](#)



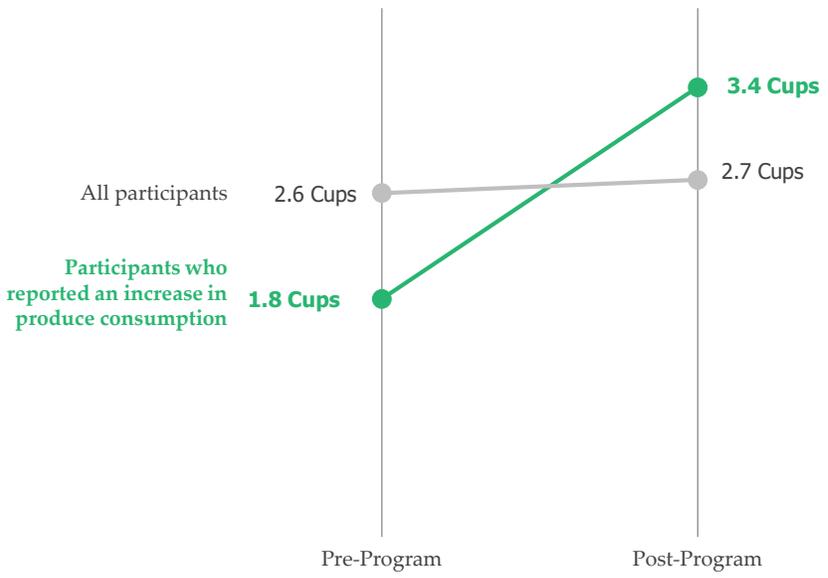
Produce Consumption

47% of program participants¹ reported an increase in the total cups of produce² consumed per week after participating in the program – 3 percentage points short of the 50% target for 2020.

In 2019, 56% of participants reported an increase.

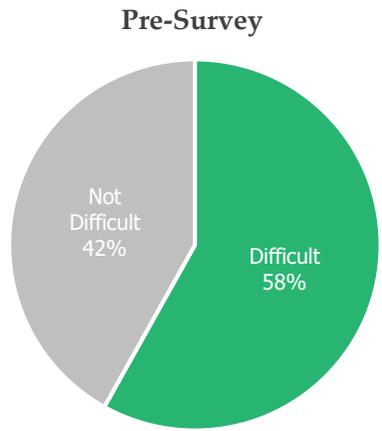


On average, participants³ who reported an increase in their produce² consumption increased their daily consumption by one and a half cups since participating in SPF.

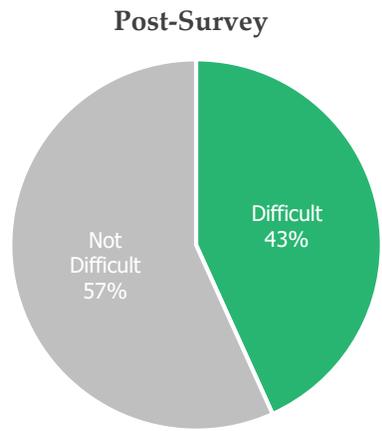


1. 74 participants completed both the pre- and post-program surveys and answered these survey questions.
2. This is based on the number of combined cups of fruits and vegetables consumed pre- and post-program, as reported by the participants.
3. 35 of 74 applicable participants increased their produce consumption after participating in SPF.

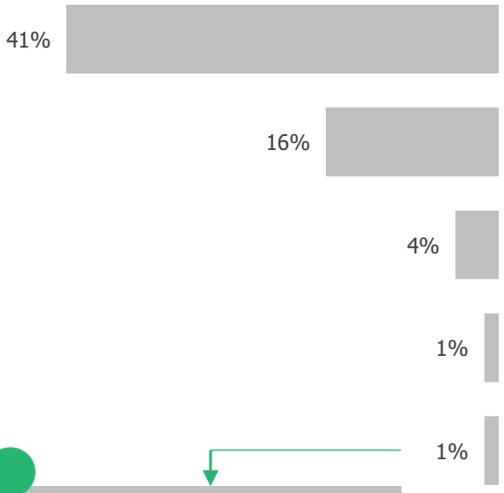
Produce Accessibility



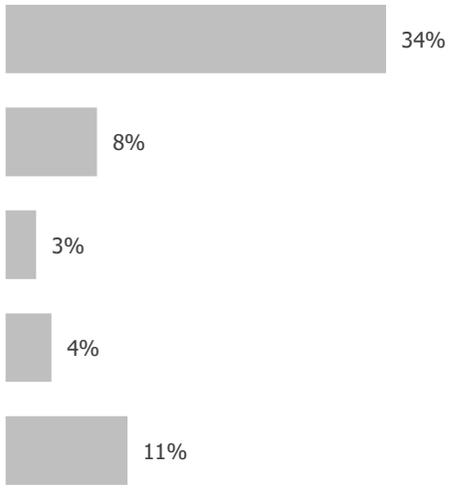
The number of respondents¹ who reported having difficulty getting fresh produce before SPF decreased by 15 percentage points by the end of the program.



Participants² reported the following as reasons why fresh produce was difficult to get before the program:



Participants³ reported the following as reasons why fresh produce will be difficult to get after the program:

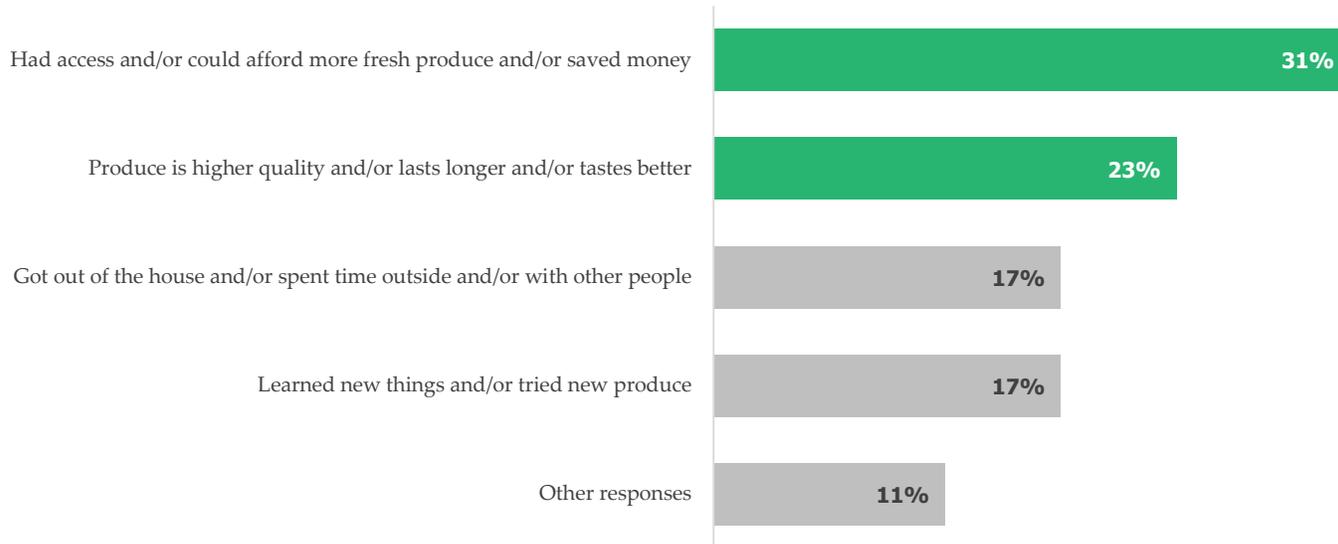


Scared to go into large store with people pushing + not wearing a mask



1. 74 participants who answered both the pre-and post-survey questions were included in these graphs.
 2, 3. 74 participants who answered both the pre-and post-survey questions were included in these graphs.
 Some participants selected multiple responses; therefore, the chart will not add up to 100%.

Participants¹ identified additional benefits they experienced from participating in Senior Project Fresh. **The top benefits include accessing fresh, affordable produce and getting health benefits from tastier, higher quality fruit and vegetables.**



Accessing fresh produce and saving money

- Need free coupons (1 similar comment)
- Get to buy more fruits + veggies (1 similar comment)
- Appreciation for being able to purchase products. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to preserve for the next couple months
- It helps to get stuff when I can get there
- I was able to get plenty of vegetables and fruit instead of bare minimum
- I got stuff I couldn't afford to buy
- Can't afford fruit at farmer market & it help me get fruits from there
- I can't get [produce] at the department
- I bought fruits + veggies I don't get in store because of price.

Healthy, quality, and better tasting produce

- Fresher fruits + vegetables
- Eat good vegetables and fruits that are fresh at the farmer's market
- I love local produce
- The veggies are fresher
- Fresher produce, good prices, Better-tasting food
- I love the farmers market, I love fresh from the garden!
- Health benefits
- A genuine taste for fruits and/or veggies

Getting out & socializing

- It got me outdoors. I love to go to the market. Fall is a beautiful time of the year.
- Getting out of the house!
- Fresh air, fresh garden, fresh flowers, etc.
- Got to talk to a lot of people. They like the program. So do we.
- Meeting and talking with people, getting out in beautiful weather!
- Meeting new people, getting info on veggies I don't normally buy

Learning about fresh produce

- While speaking w/ vendors I learned a better way to have fruit and veggies fresh longer
- I tried some vegetables that I had not tried before
- Learned about some different vegetables & also some new recipes
- Received much information and facts
- Store food, how many servings per day
- The ability to enjoy farm-fresh vegetables + fruit.

Other Responses

- Gratitude. Thank you
- It was good to have some extras on hand
- Got to see a lot of plants and flowers.
- I like all the vendors

Improvements from 2019



- 26% of SPF participants used their EBT/Bridge Card to get DUFEB this summer for the first time. In 2019, 16% of participants reported using their EBT/Bridge Card to get DUFEB for the first time.
- 61% of participants who reported having an EBT/Bridge Card reported using it at the farmers market this summer and receiving Double Up Food Bucks compared to 45% in 2019.

Program Outreach



- There were 48 new participants in 2020, despite the drastic changes that COVID-19 imposed upon the program.
- Nearly 20% of SPF participants identify as an ethnic minority compared to 17% in 2019.
- Female seniors who live alone continue to make up the vast majority of SPF participants.

Program Strengths



- \$4,036 in vouchers for fresh produce were redeemed by Ottawa Food SPF participants for a total of \$19,688 since 2017.
- 64% of the over \$31,000 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables that were redeemed in Ottawa County during the last 4 years were redeemed by Ottawa Food Senior Project Fresh participants.
- Increased access and ability to afford more fresh produce was the most common self-reported benefit from participating in SPF this year
- Participants who reported an increase in their produce consumption increased their daily consumption by one and a half cups, on average.
- The number of respondents who reported having difficulty getting fresh produce before the program decreased by 15 percentage points by the end of the program.
- 50% of SPF participants used a form of payment other than their vouchers to purchase fresh produce in 2020 – reaching this year's goal of 50%.

Opportunities to Improve



- 47% of participants reported an increase in the total cups of produce consumed per week – 3 percentage points short of the target of 50%.
- The voucher redemption rate in 2020 was 67% - 3 percentage points short of the target of 70%.
- 19% of surveyed participants did not use all their vouchers in 2020.
- The senior population on the east side of the county remains largely unreached compared to the west side.

