



# Senior Project FRESH

2021 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. Similarly to 2020, the normal educational component and cooking supplies were limited due to COVID-19. 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. 33 participants utilized a proxy shopper in 2021.



## Report Contents

- Participant Characteristics
- Program Activities
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- Report Summary

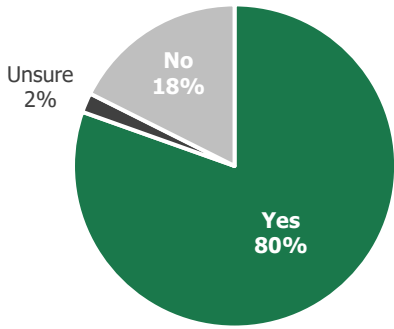
## Data Collection & Analysis

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 one of two \$20 Meijer gift cards. An overview of how many participants completed the surveys is provided below:

- 136 participants completed both the pre- and post-program surveys (a 51% response rate)
- 119 participants completed only the pre-program survey
- 10 participants completed only the post-program survey

In 2021, there were 265 total Senior Project Fresh participants. However, all 300 vouchers in Ottawa Food's possession were distributed, with some participants receiving two rounds of vouchers if they asked, since extras were available.

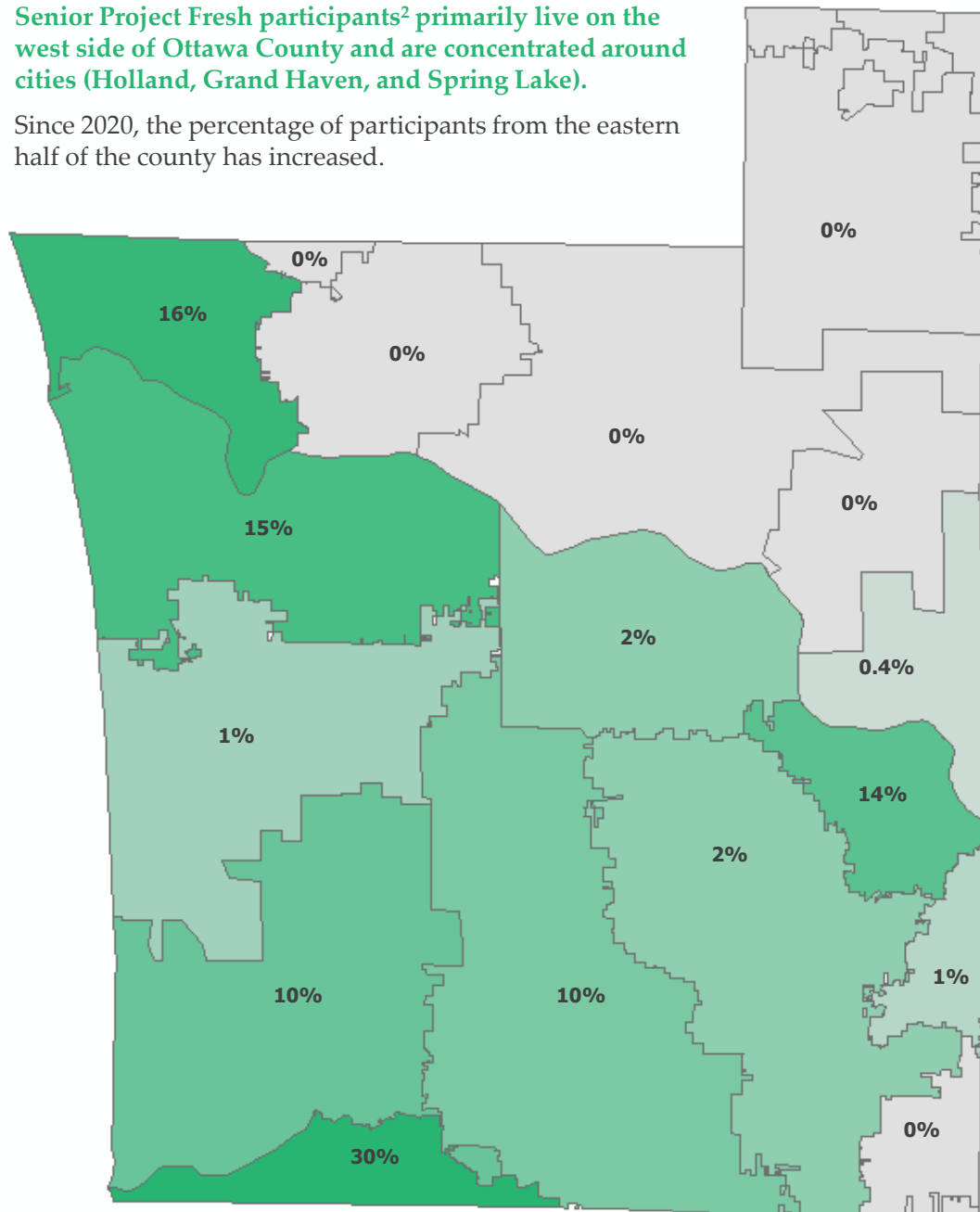




80% of respondents<sup>1</sup> reported participating in a Senior Project Fresh program before, compared to 75% in 2021. There were 45 new participants in 2021.

Senior Project Fresh participants<sup>2</sup> primarily live on the west side of Ottawa County and are concentrated around cities (Holland, Grand Haven, and Spring Lake).

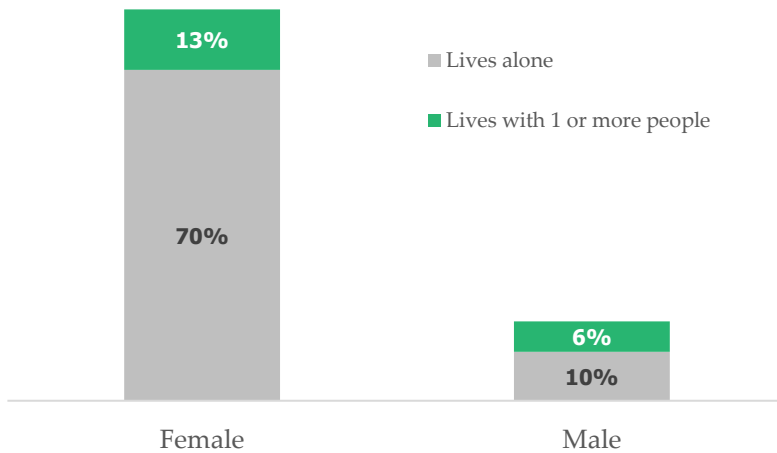
Since 2020, the percentage of participants from the eastern half of the county has increased.



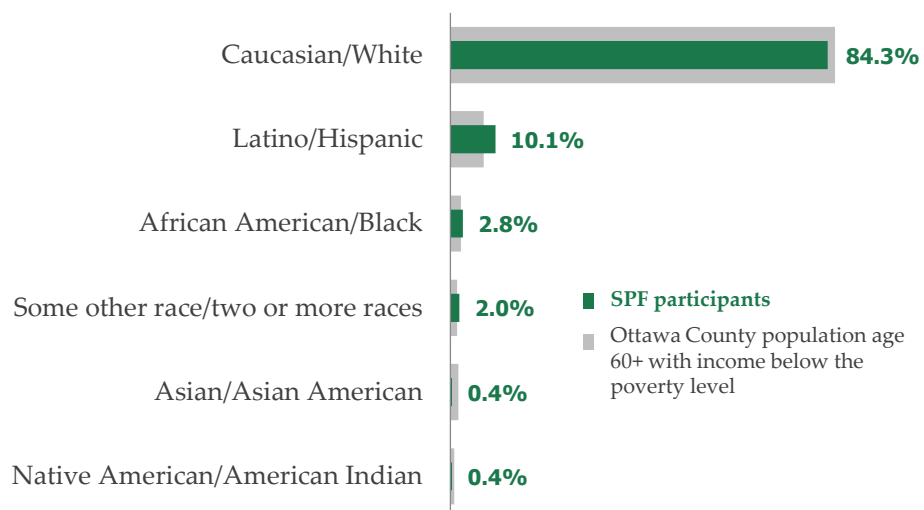
1. 257 participants answered this pre-program survey question.  
2. 251 participants answered this pre-program survey question.

**Substantially more females (83%) participated in SPF in 2021 than males (17%).<sup>1</sup>**

80% of participants report living alone – 6 percentage points more than in 2020.



**Just over 84% of SPF participants<sup>2</sup> report identifying as Caucasian/White**  
(4 percentage points more than in 2020)



1. 249 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. 248 participants answered this pre-program survey question.



# Program Activities

## Content Links

- p.6 [EBT/Bridge Card & Double Up Food Bucks Usage](#)
- p.7 [Farmers Market Visits](#)
- p.8 [Voucher Redemption](#)

## EBT/Bridge Card & Double Up Food Bucks (DUF) Usage

In the past, Ottawa Food had provided each participant with a promotional flyer with general information about using EBT and DUF at the market. This year, participants were provided with information about DUF via a Food Navigator who worked the farmers markets to help educate participants on the benefits associated with DUF.

**51% of participants<sup>1</sup> who reported having an EBT/Bridge Card reported using it at the farmers market this summer and receiving DUF.** In 2020, 61% of participants reported using their EBT/Bridge Card at the farmers market and receiving DUF.  
**8% of participants reported using their EBT/Bridge Card and receiving DUF for the first time this summer.** In 2020, 26% reported using their EBT/Bridge Card and receiving DUF for the first time.

Did not use EBT/Bridge Card or receive DUF at farmers market while participating in SPF this year



Used EBT/Bridge Card and received DUF at farmers market before and during participation in SPF



Used EBT/Bridge Card and received DUF at farmers market for first time while participating in SPF



### 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:

1. 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**.
  2. You'll also receive a match of **FREE Double Up Food Bucks** - (silver tokens) to purchase **Michigan grown fruits & veggies**.
  3. 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.



### Farmers Markets in Ottawa County and Surrounding Areas 2021

 <b>Grand Haven Farmers Market</b> 616-842-4910 300 North Harbor Drive Grand Haven, MI 49417 Saturdays, May 21- Oct. 20, 8 AM - 1 PM, Wednesdays, June 2 - Oct. 27, 8 AM - 1 PM <a href="http://www.grandhavenchamber.org/farmers-market">www.grandhavenchamber.org/farmers-market</a>	 <b>Holland Farmers Market</b> 616-355-1138 150 West 8th Street Holland, MI 49423 May - October: Wed & Sat 8AM - 2 PM November: Wed & Sat 9AM - 1PM December: Sat only 9AM - 1PM <a href="http://www.hollandfarmersmarket.com">www.hollandfarmersmarket.com</a>
 <b>Spring Lake Farm &amp; Garden Market</b> 616-842-4910 225 East Exchange Avenue Spring Lake MI 49456 Thursdays, June 3 - October 14, 9 AM - 2 PM <a href="http://www.grandhavenchamber.org/farmers-market">www.grandhavenchamber.org/farmers-market</a>	 <b>Terra Square Farmers Market</b> 616-669-0200 3380 Chicago Drive Hudsonville, MI 49426 Wednesdays, June - September, 9 AM - 1 PM Saturdays, 6/26, 7/24, 8/28 & 9/25, 9 AM - 1 PM <a href="http://www.terrasquare.com">www.terrasquare.com</a>
<b>The Market at Saugatuck Center for the Arts (SCA)</b> 269-857-2399 400 Culver St., Saugatuck, MI 49453 Tuesdays, June - August, 10 AM - 2 PM Fridays, May 28 - Sept 24, 9 AM - 3 PM <a href="http://www.facebook.com/themarketatsca">www.facebook.com/themarketatsca</a>	<b>Metro Health Farmers Market</b> Metro Health Hospital Village 616-252-5031 5900 Byron Center Ave., S.W. at M-6 Thursdays, May 13 - Oct 14, 9 AM - 2 PM <a href="http://www.metrohealth.net/livehealthy/farm-market/">www.metrohealth.net/livehealthy/farm-market/</a>
<b>Grandville Farmers Market</b> 616-885-4488 4144 Chicago Drive (back parking lot) Tuesdays, June 1 - Oct 12, 9 AM - 1 PM <a href="http://www.cityofgrandville.com">www.cityofgrandville.com</a>	<b>Muskegon Farmers Market</b> 231-722-3251 242 Western Ave. Tues., Thurs. & Sat: May - Nov., 8 AM - 2 PM Saturdays, Dec. - April: 9 AM - 2 PM <a href="http://www.muskegonfarmersmarket.com">www.muskegonfarmersmarket.com</a>

Use SNAP for these items:



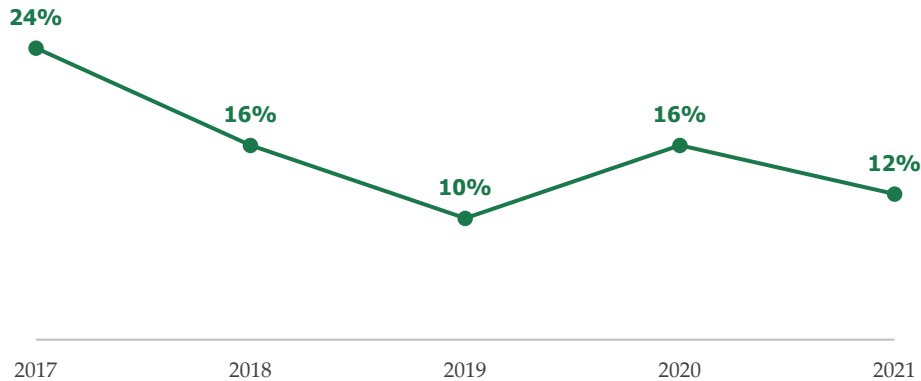
Use Double Up Food Bucks for these items:



1. 65 participants reported in both the pre- and post-program surveys that they had an EBT/Bridge Card and answered these survey questions.

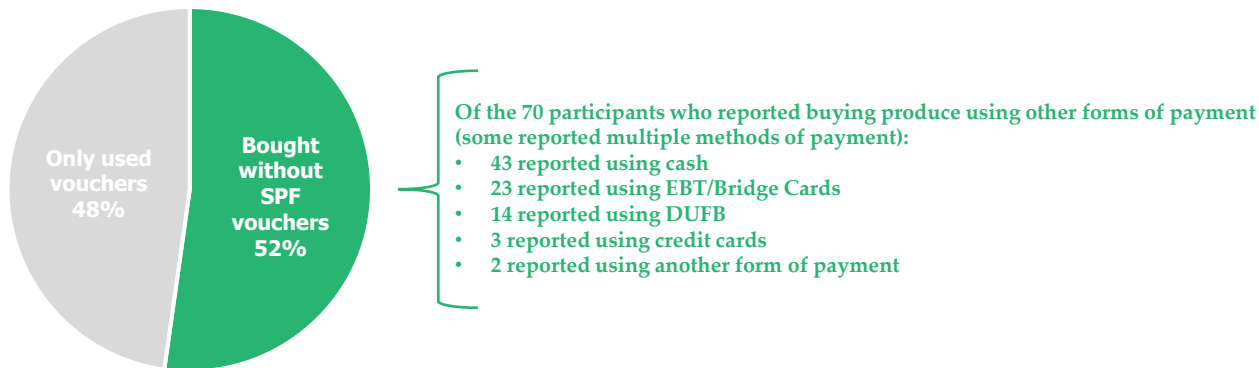
**Prior to participating in SPF, 12% of participants<sup>1</sup> reported not having been to a farmers' market in two years.**

The percentage of SPF participants who have reported not having been to a farmers market in the past two years has decreased by 12 percentage points between 2017 and 2021.



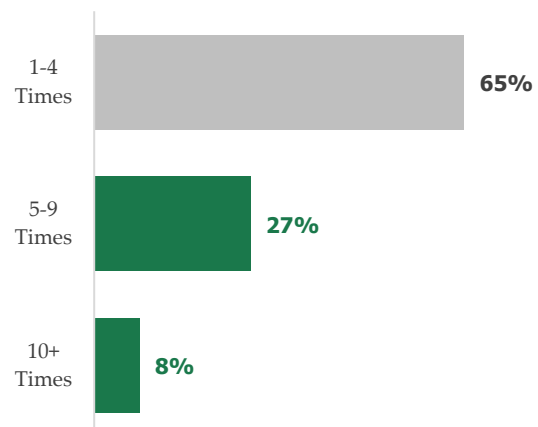
**In addition to using their SPF vouchers, 52% of participants reported purchasing fruits and vegetables at the farmers markets using other forms of payment – achieving the 2021 target of 50%.**

In 2020, 50% of participants purchased produce using other forms of payment.



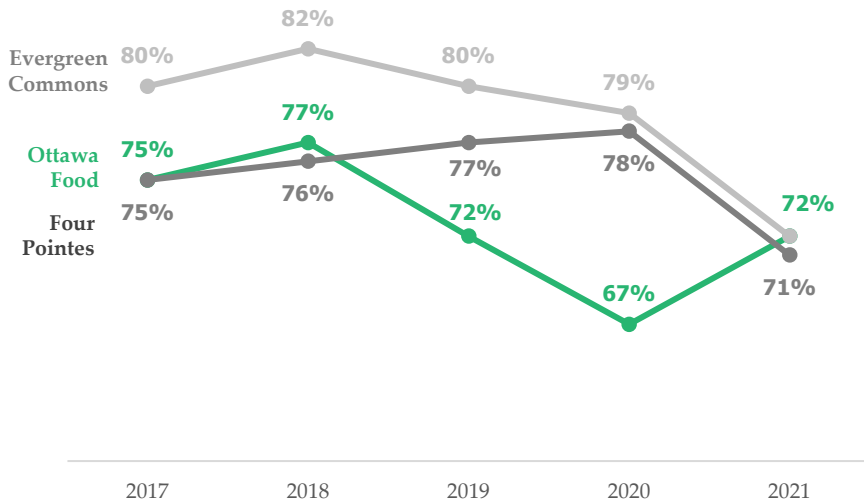
**35% of participants<sup>3</sup> reported going to the farmers market 5 or more times in 2021.**

In 2020, 35% of participants reported going to the farmers market 5 or more times.



1. 257 participants answered this pre-program survey question.  
 2. 134 participants answered this post-program survey question.  
 3. 139 participants answered this post-program survey question.

Ottawa Food's voucher redemption rate of 72% increased from 2020 and reached their goal to achieve a 70% voucher redemption rate.



54% of the nearly \$45,000 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables that were redeemed in Ottawa County during the last 5 years were redeemed by Ottawa Food Senior Project Fresh participants.



\$4,308 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables were redeemed by Ottawa Food SPF participants in 2021.

\$23,996 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables have been redeemed by Ottawa Food SPF participants during the last 5 years.

18% of surveyed participants did not use all of their vouchers in 2021.

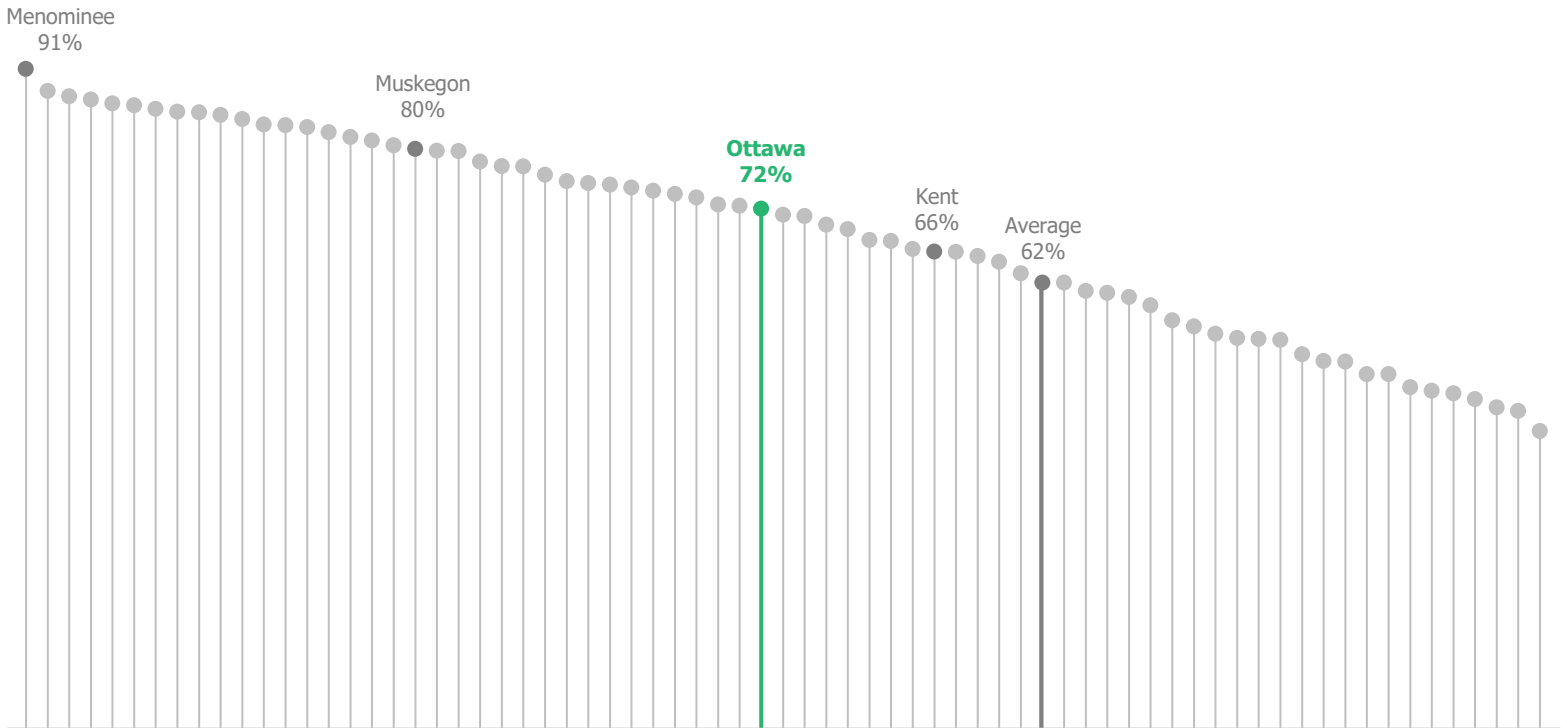
19% of surveyed participants did not use all of their vouchers in 2020.

The following are reasons why participants did not use all their vouchers:

- 'Cause my body has been in a lot of pain + many times back to hospitals! (4 similar comments)
- Transportation (I have no car) (2 similar comments)
- Did not need (2 similar comments)
- Sorry, but I ran out of time (2 similar comments)
- Forgot to go last week of market. (unused \$6) (1 similar comment)
- Had a couple left over. Not enough to get anything, w/o paying too (1 similar comment)
- Given \$40 - didn't use \$6
- I'm in the middle of moving. I'm getting a wheelchair-accessible apt.!
- Couldn't find one open
- Still have \$6.00 left
- One was stuck in purse.
- I was gone a few weeks
- Not enough places to take the vouchers



By combining the voucher redemption rate of the three SPF organizations in Ottawa County, Ottawa County had a voucher redemption rate of 72% and ranked 35<sup>th</sup> of 83 counties<sup>1</sup>, which is an increase from last year's rank of 48<sup>th</sup>.



<b>\$2</b>		<b>MICHIGAN DHHS AGING &amp; ADULT SERVICES AGENCY SENIOR FARMERS NUTRITION PROGRAM MARKET FRESH 2018</b>	<b>\$2</b>	
<p><b>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"</b></p>				
Market Master Number	Farmer Number	Signature of Market FRESH participant/proxy		
001003		<p><b>COUPON EXPIRES OCTOBER 31, 2018</b> Market Master must submit for payment by <b>November 16, 2018</b></p>		

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



# Program Outputs

## Content Links

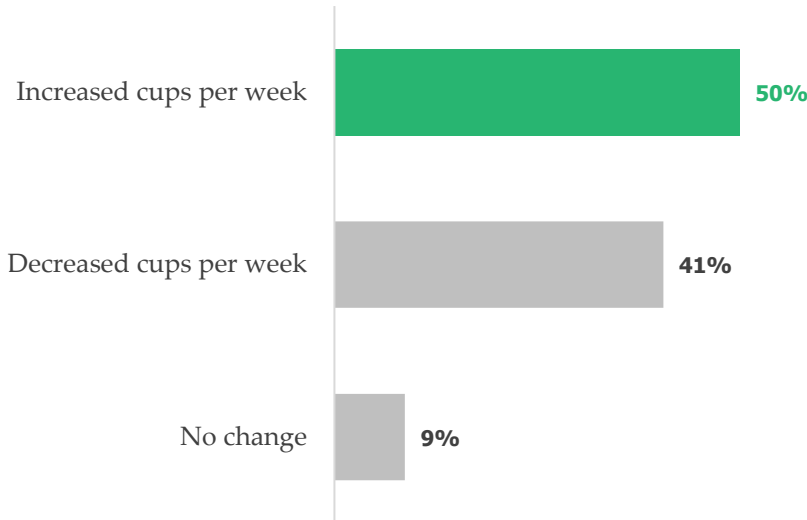
p.11 [Produce Consumption](#)

p.12 [Produce Accessibility](#)

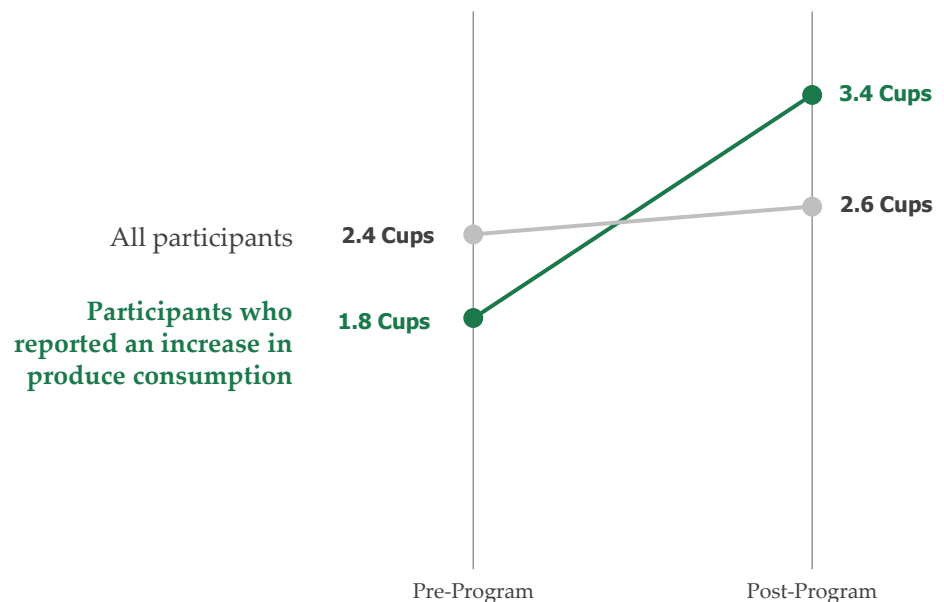
p.13 [Other Self-Reported Benefits](#)

**50% of program participants<sup>1</sup> reported an increase in the total cups of produce<sup>2</sup> consumed per week after participating in the program – reaching the 50% target for 2021.**

In 2020, 47% of participants reported an increase.



**On average, participants<sup>3</sup> who reported an increase in their produce<sup>2</sup> consumption increased their daily consumption by 1.6 cups since participating in SPF.**

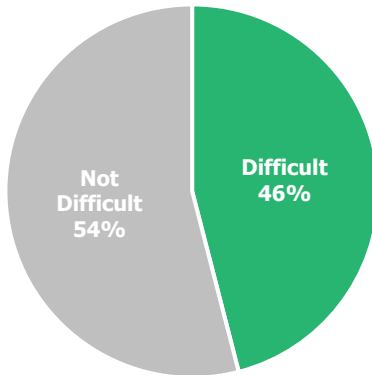


1. 136 participants completed both the pre- and post-program surveys and answered these survey questions.

2. This is based on the number of combined cups of fruits and vegetables consumed pre- and post-program, as reported by the participants.

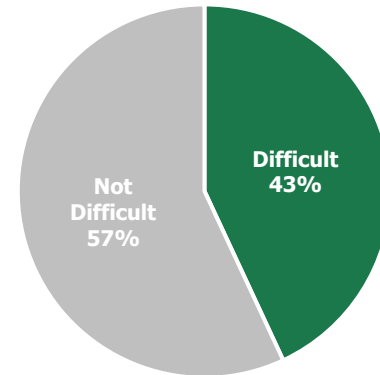
3. 69 of 136 applicable participants increased their produce consumption after participating in SPF.

Pre-Survey



The number of respondents<sup>1</sup> who reported having difficulty getting fresh produce before SPF decreased by 3 percentage points by the end of the program.

Post-Survey



Participants<sup>2</sup> reported the following as reasons why fresh produce was difficult to get before the program:



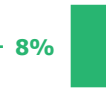
Difficult because fresh produce costs too much



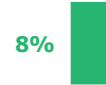
Difficult because no transportation to market



Difficult because fresh produce is not available where I shop



Difficult because other reason



Difficult because market too far away

Walking in store  
So much surgeries, slowly healing - more to come  
Limited transportation in a wheelchair  
Handicap - daughter assists

Participants<sup>3</sup> reported the following as reasons why fresh produce will be difficult to get after the program:



Weather related  
They aren't always good  
Sometimes difficult to get  
Less convenient

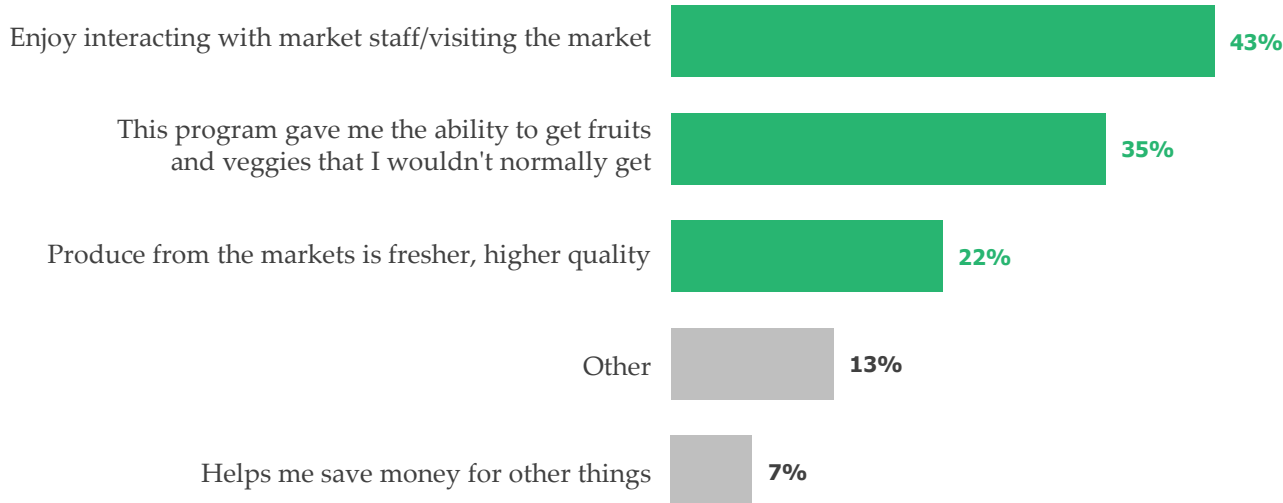


Difficult because market too far away

1. 136 participants who answered both the pre-and post- survey questions were included in these graphs.  
2, 3. 136 participants who answered both the pre-and post- survey questions and who answered that fresh produce would be difficult to get after SPF were included in these graphs. Some participants selected multiple responses; therefore, the chart will not add up to 100%.

Participants<sup>1</sup> identified additional benefits they experienced from participating in Senior Project Fresh.

**The top benefits experienced included enjoying interacting with market staff/visiting the market, having the ability to get fruits and veggies that are normally difficult to get, and that produce from the markets is fresher and of higher quality.**



#### Enjoy interacting with market staff/visiting the market

Went to farmers market which I would not normally do (1 similar comment)  
 Got outside for a little activity (2 similar comments)  
 Very fresh products and helpful vendors  
 I was allowed to get a second booklet of coupons from what was left \_ I am vegetarian (doctor orders) and I really appreciated all the fresh fruits + vegetables I was able to purchase with the coupons. Also the vendors are so friendly  
 Friendly people, and clean  
 Going there! It's fun!  
 Greatly appreciated. Love get out to the market spring/summer/fall  
 I enjoyed talking and meeting new people  
 Meeting friends at market  
 Meeting great vendors  
 The people who are there are so nice - it is good to see them each year!  
 Took friends to markets I found  
 Was able to enjoy the market, and get out in fresh air  
 Went to farmers market in Holland & enjoyed it  
 The enjoyment of going to the farmers market  
 Love buying from South Haven Farmers  
 It was a fun place to shop!

#### Produce from the markets is fresher, higher quality

Enjoyed being able to pick out everything fresh  
 Fruit and veggies are fresh, saved money  
 Get fresh fruit  
 I didn't know this program exists. Received fresh veggies and fruit  
 I like fresh fruit  
 It was nice seeing all the fresh fruits and vegetables  
 The tomatoes are so much better than store bought  
 Very fresh products and helpful vendors

#### This program gave me the ability to get fruits and veggies that I wouldn't normally get

A wonderful program for me to get fruits & veggies  
 Because I get fresh fruits + veggies  
 Fruit that I would have otherwise not be able to get.  
 Get to eat fruits + veg I enjoy  
 Got raw honey and some things couldn't get (elsewhere)  
 Got what I would have not gotten  
 Had more fruits & veggies  
 I bought bulk with cash  
 I eat more fruits + vegetables  
 I really enjoyed what I was able to get (Had my aide go there) They were so good  
 I wouldn't have gone to farmers market if I didn't get vouchers  
 It makes me go to market + get fruits + vegs  
 With Project Fresh I went more often than if I only had cash  
 Made food more accessible and affordable

#### Other Responses

Nice to have something for free.  
 Other yes I used my coupons and enjoyed them. Also this year was very/very hot  
 The food club hub  
 We had lunch under a tree by the farmers' mkt  
 Sharing recipes, connecting with comm. members  
 It's local

#### Helps me save money for other things

Fruit and veggies are fresh, saved money  
 Helped with budget  
 I was able to buy what I usually could not afford. Thank you

1. 57 participants answered this post-program survey question. Some participants listed multiple benefits.

## Improvements from 2020



- Participants who reported an increase in their produce consumption increased their daily consumption by 1.6 cups, on average.
- The senior population on the east side of the county remains largely unreached compared to the west side. However, compared to 2020, the number of participants from the east side of the county increased.
- 52% of SPF participants used a form of payment other than their vouchers to purchase fresh produce in 2021 – reaching this year's goal of 50%.
- The survey response rate this year was 51% - a significant increase over the 2020 response rate of 29%.
- The voucher redemption rate in 2021 was 72% - 2 percentage points ahead of the target of 70% and 5 percentage points higher than the rate in 2020.

## Program Strengths



- \$4,308 in vouchers for fresh produce were redeemed by Ottawa Food SPF participants for a total of \$23,996 since 2017.
- 54% of the nearly \$45,000 in vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables that were redeemed in Ottawa County during the last 5 years were redeemed by Ottawa Food Senior Project Fresh participants.
- Enjoyment of interacting with market staff and visiting the markets in general were the most common self-reported benefits from participating in SPF this year.
- 50% of participants reported an increase in the total cups of produce consumed per week – reaching this year's goal of 50%.

## Program Outreach



- There were 45 new participants in 2021, despite the ongoing difficulties that COVID-19 has imposed upon the program.
- Nearly 16% of SPF participants identify as an ethnic minority compared to 20% in 2020. Although the percent decreased, it's important to note that the percent of SPF participants who are ethnic minorities is higher than the percent of county residents who are of a similar age and income bracket as SPF participants.
- Female seniors who live alone continue to make up the vast majority of SPF participants.

## Opportunities to Improve



- 18% of surveyed participants did not use all their vouchers in 2021.
- 8% of SPF participants used their EBT/Bridge Card to get DUFBS this summer for the first time. In 2020, 26% of participants reported using their EBT/Bridge Card to get DUFBS for the first time.
- 51% 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 61% in 2020.
- The number of respondents who reported having difficulty getting fresh produce before the program decreased by 3 percentage points by the end of the program. This is significantly less than the 15-percentage point decrease in difficulty in 2020.