



# Client Insights Research Initiative

Understanding Needs, Barriers and  
Preferences Related to Produce Selection

# Key Takeaway



We have an opportunity to grow the amount of produce clients take from food shelves

- 60% are sourcing half or more of their produce needs from the food shelf
- Increasing the take-rate of clients will increase both the health and financial security of clients

# Top Barriers



1

## Accessibility

- 84% wish they could get produce more often
- 1 in 5 take public transportation or walk to the food shelf

2

## Freshness

- 85% prefer fresh produce over frozen or canned
- Lack of Freshness is the top reason for not taking produce

3

## Variety

- Over 70% wish there were more choices offered

# Myth Busters



## Preferences

- While they want variety, client's top produce choices are largely similar across demographic groups

## Education

- Clients understand that produce is a nutritious choice: the #1 reason for selecting produce is nutrition

# Response Planning Imperatives



- Increase **accessibility** through increasing frequency of access
- Increase **freshness** through:
  - ✓ Shortening the supply chain
  - ✓ Explore new routes to market, farming 2nds, imperfects, etc.
  - ✓ Better culling

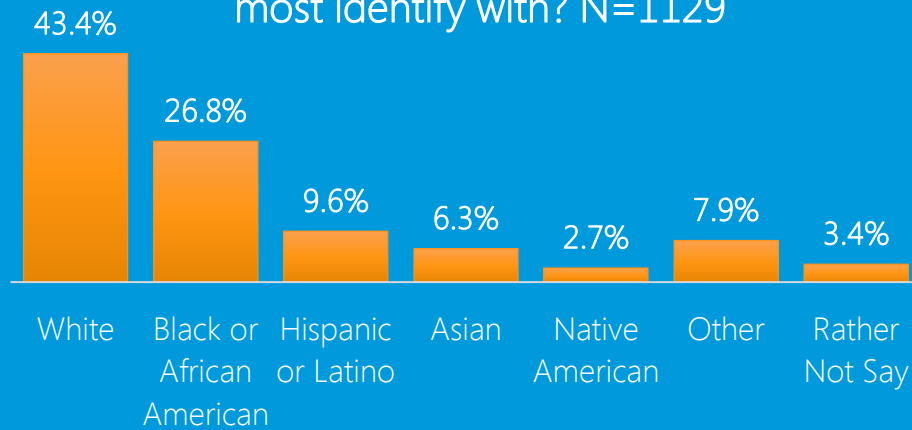
# Respondent Demographics Overview



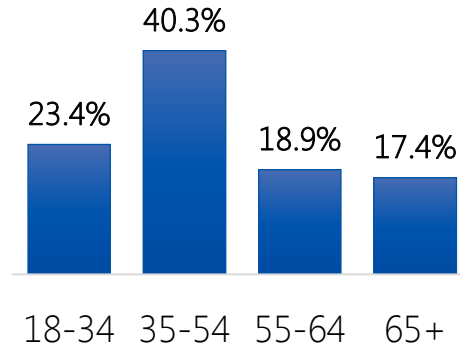
**1,357**

Survey Respondents

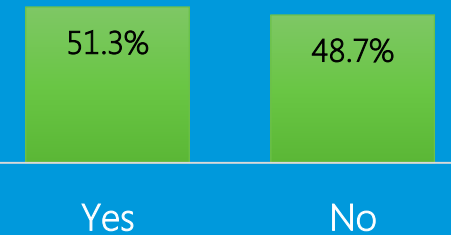
Which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify with? N=1129



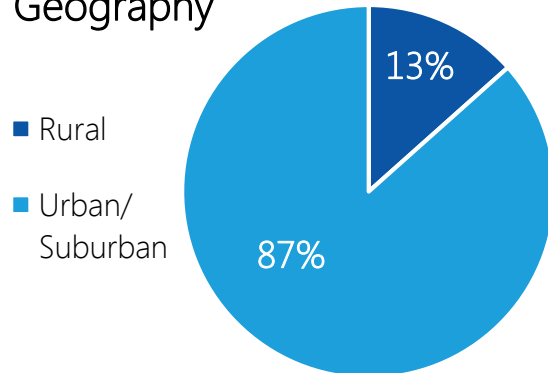
What is your age? N=1124



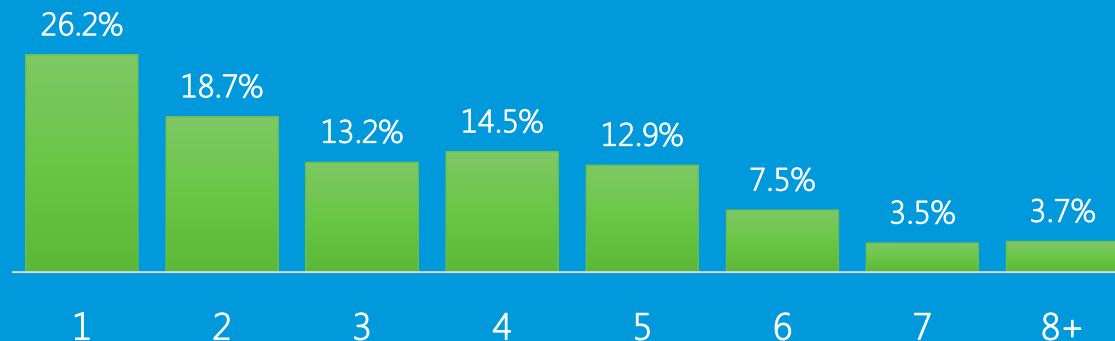
Are there any children under 18 years old living with you? N=1129



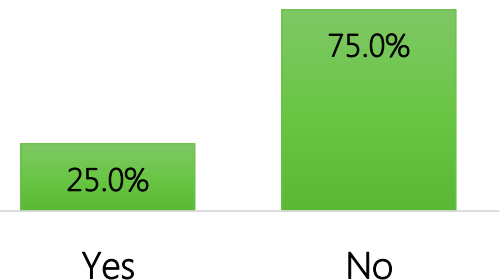
Respondents by Geography



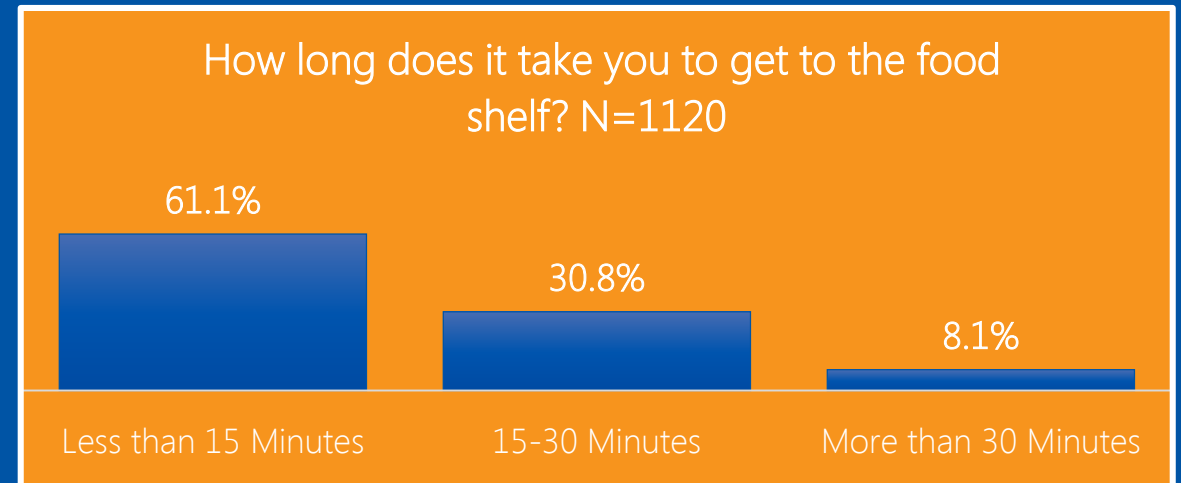
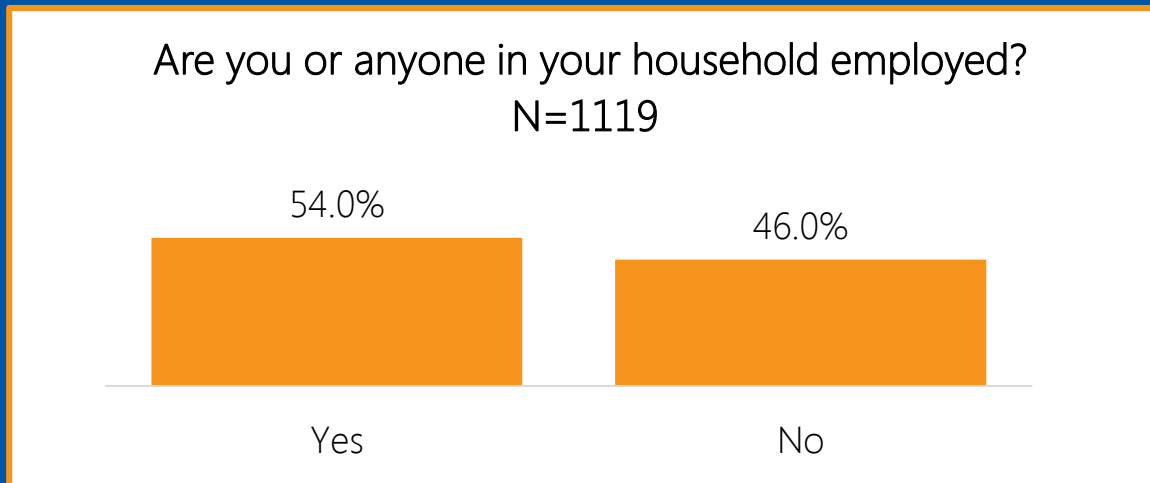
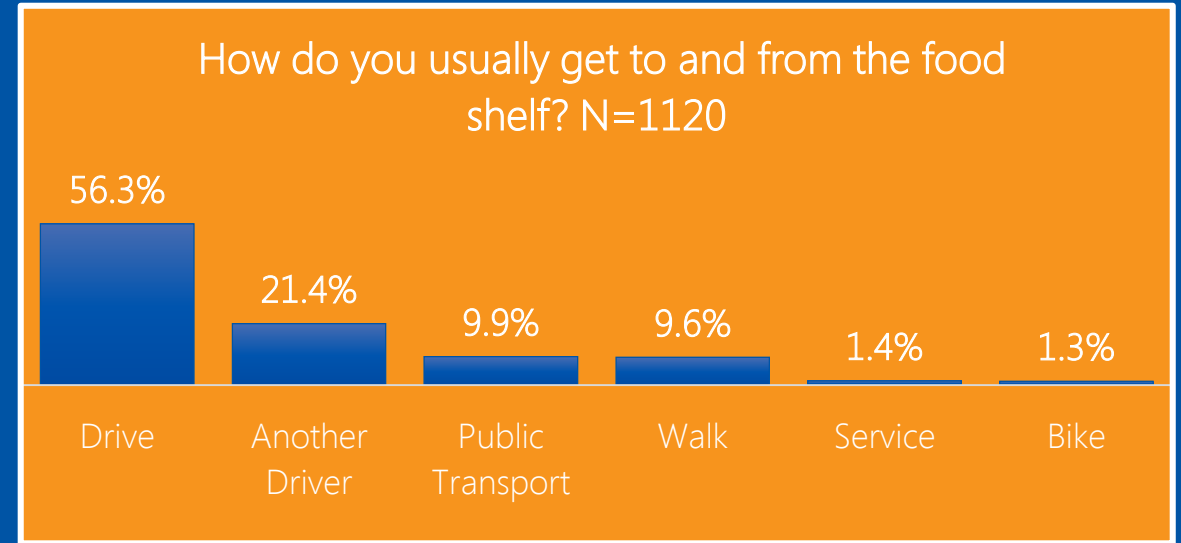
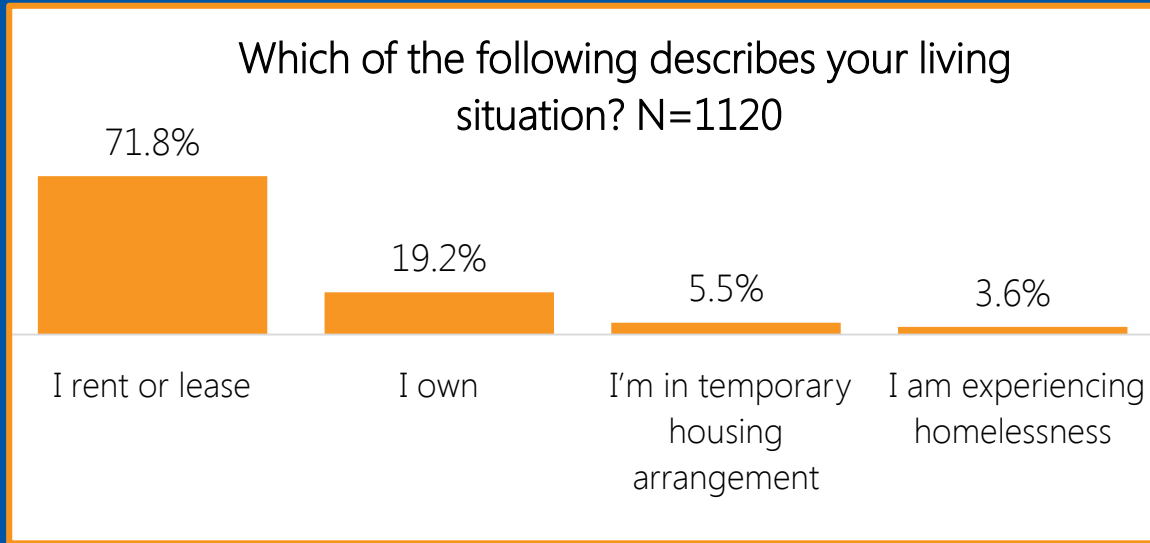
How many people are living with you (including yourself)? N=1113



Are there any adults age 64+ in your household (including yourself)? N=1129



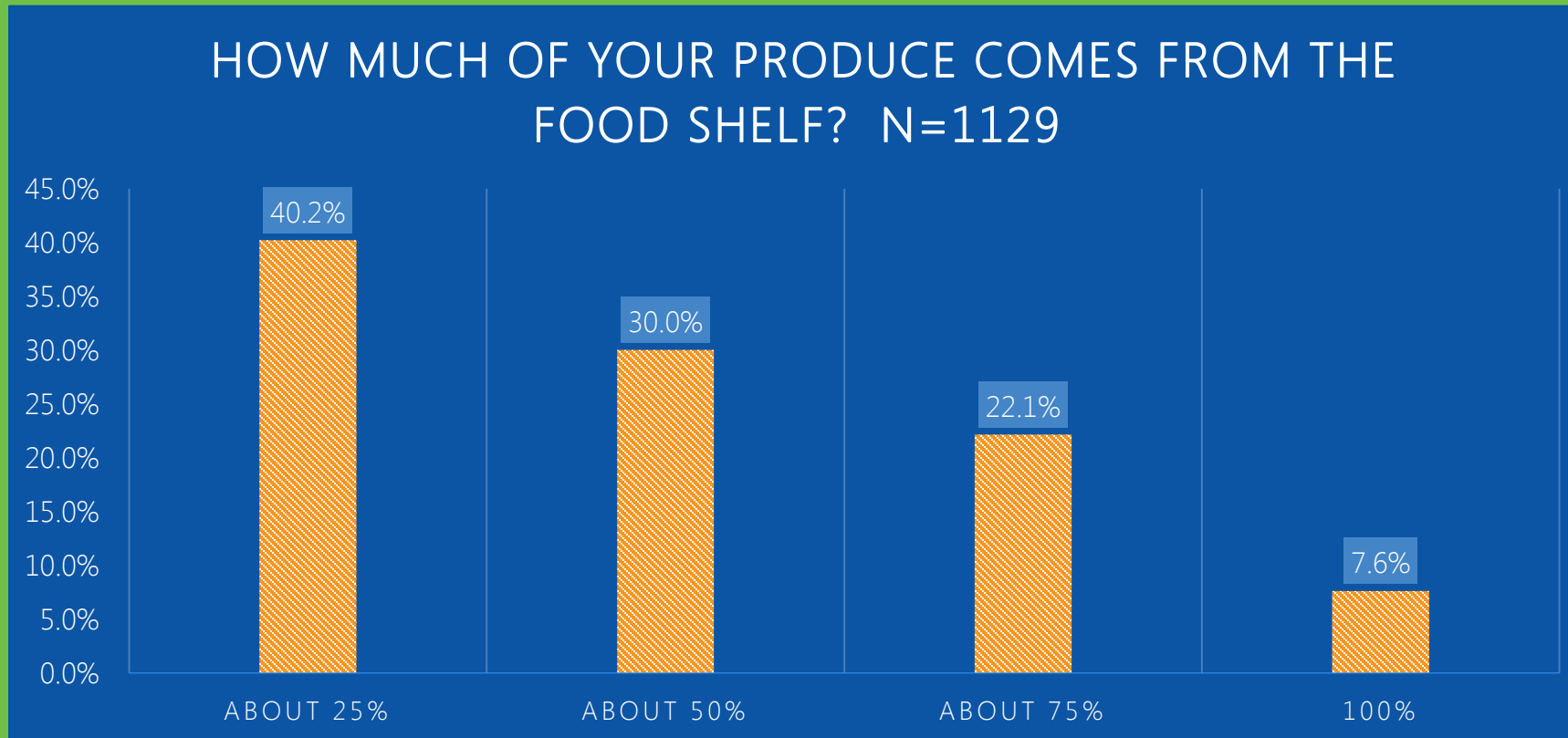
# Most respondents have a stable living situation and live within 15 minutes of their food shelf



# Majority of clients use the food shelf for most of their produce needs



60% receive more than half of their produce from the food shelf





# Nutrition is the most important decision maker when clients visit a food shelf



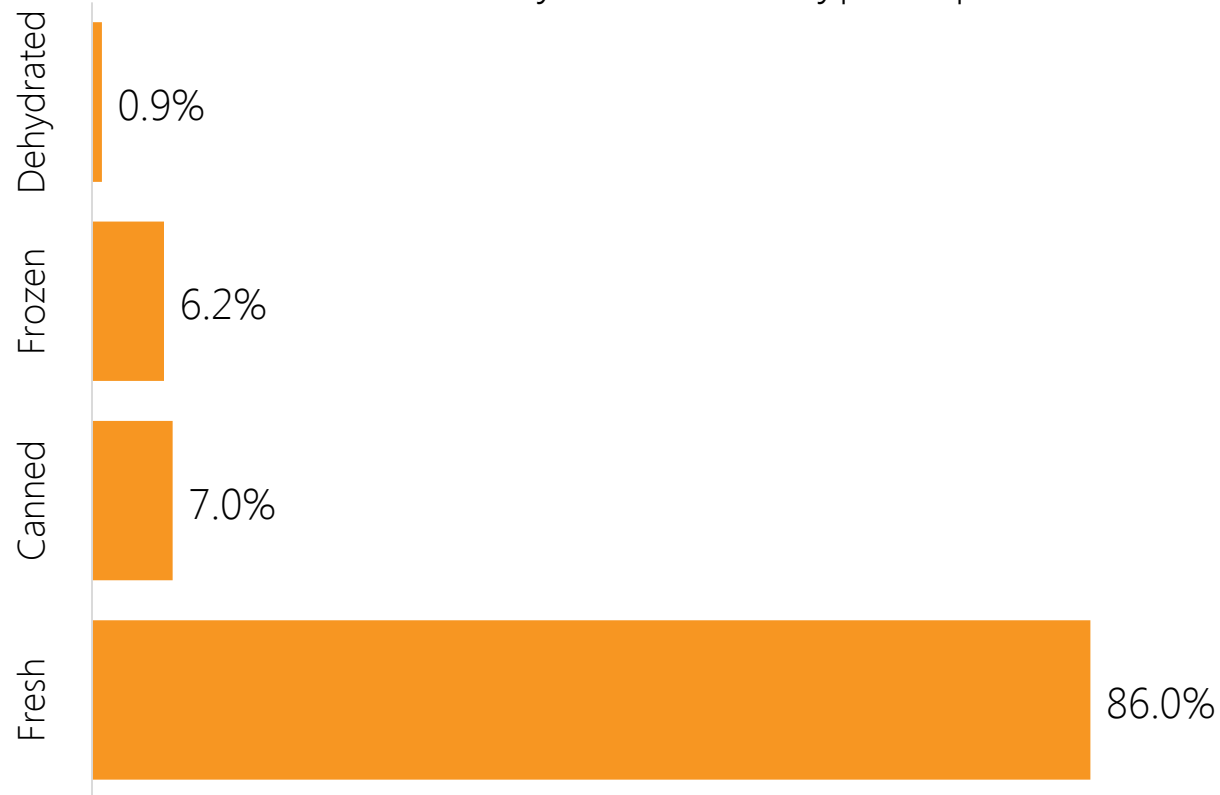
Please circle the most important thing when selecting produce: n=1167



# Fresh produce is the most preferred type of produce across all demographics



Please circle your favorite type of produce:



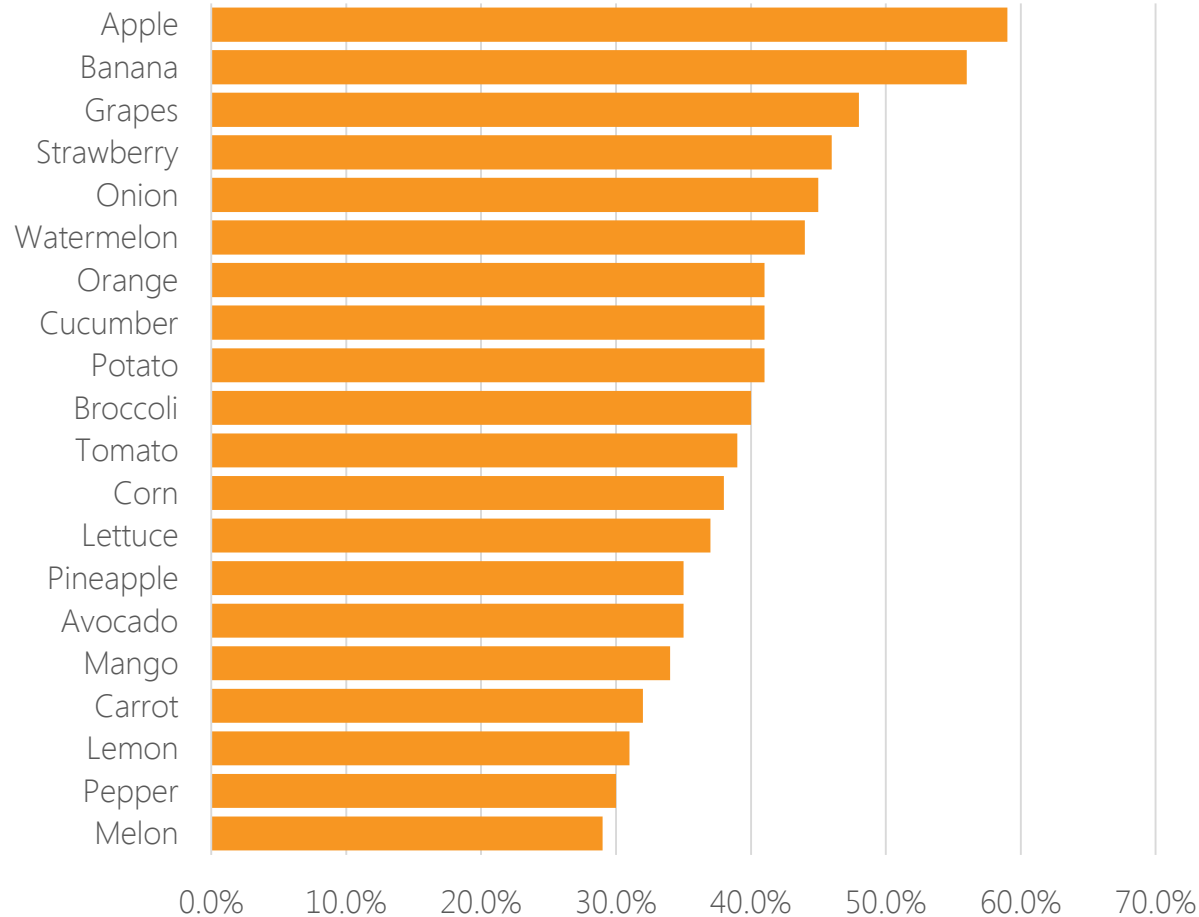
**85% of respondents prefer fresh produce over canned, frozen and dehydrated**

- 30% prefer fresh produce because they view it as more healthy
- 15% prefer fresh produce because of ease/knowledge of preparation
- Those who did select fresh alternatives did so due to easier prep and storage

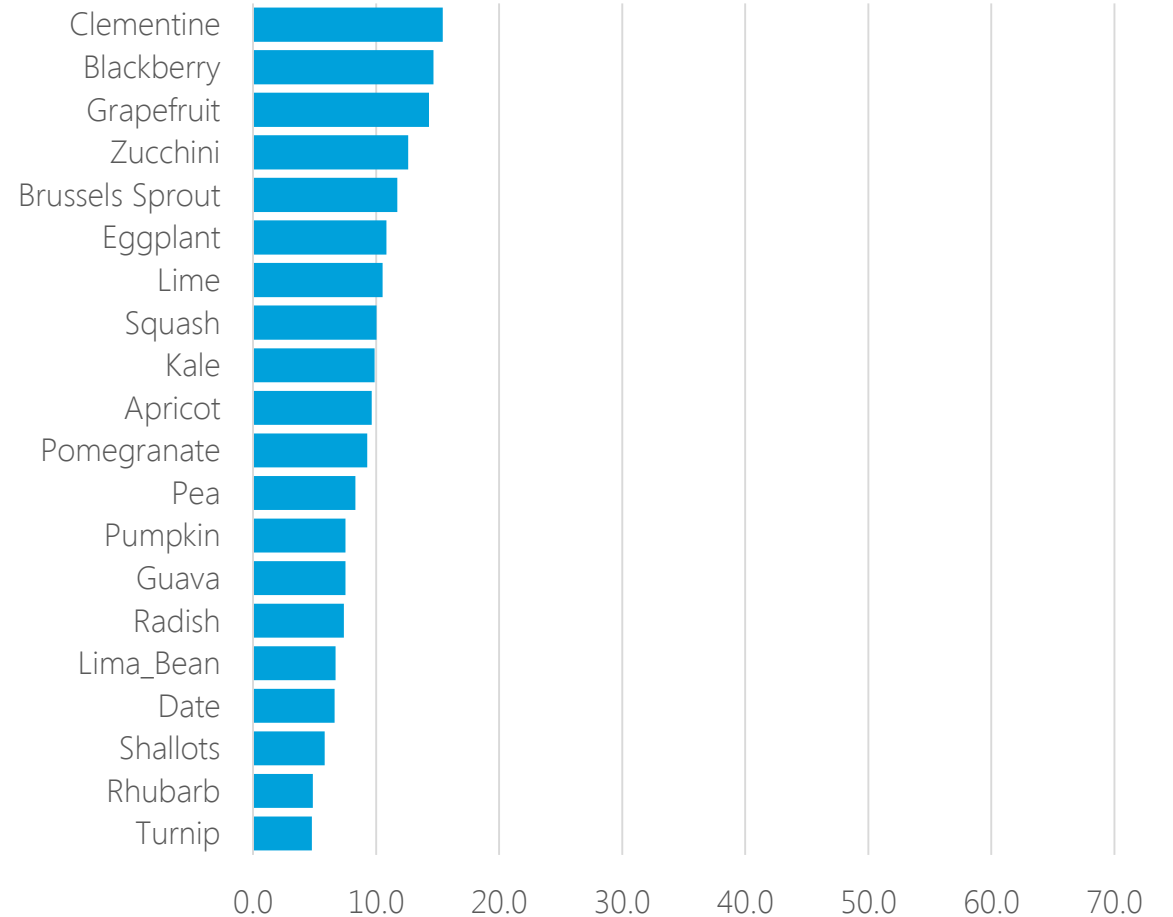
# Top 20 produce items include mix of fruits and veggies



Please select up to 10 of your most preferred produce items that you would choose at the food shelf:



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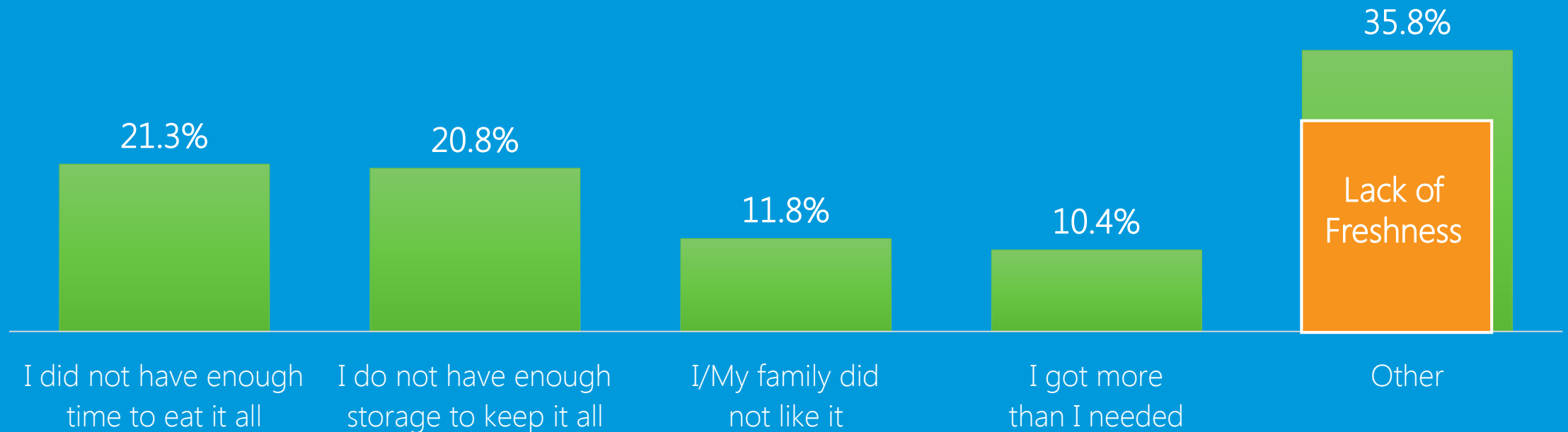


# Quality and freshness are important factors when clients are selecting produce at the food shelf



**62% of Respondents who selected Other (N=215)  
Wrote in that lack of freshness is the other reason they don't get produce at the food shelf**

What is the main reason you do NOT eat produce from the food shelf? n=973

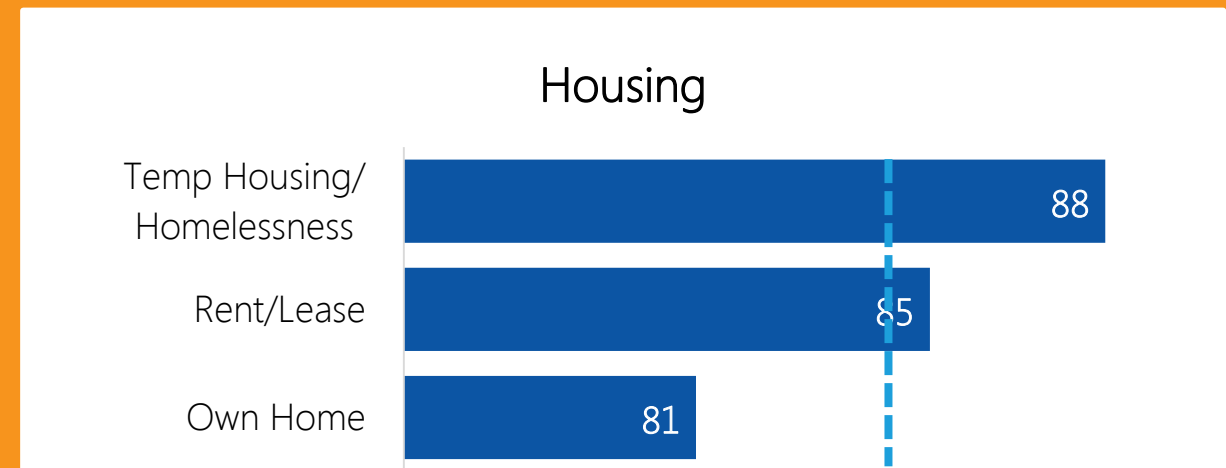
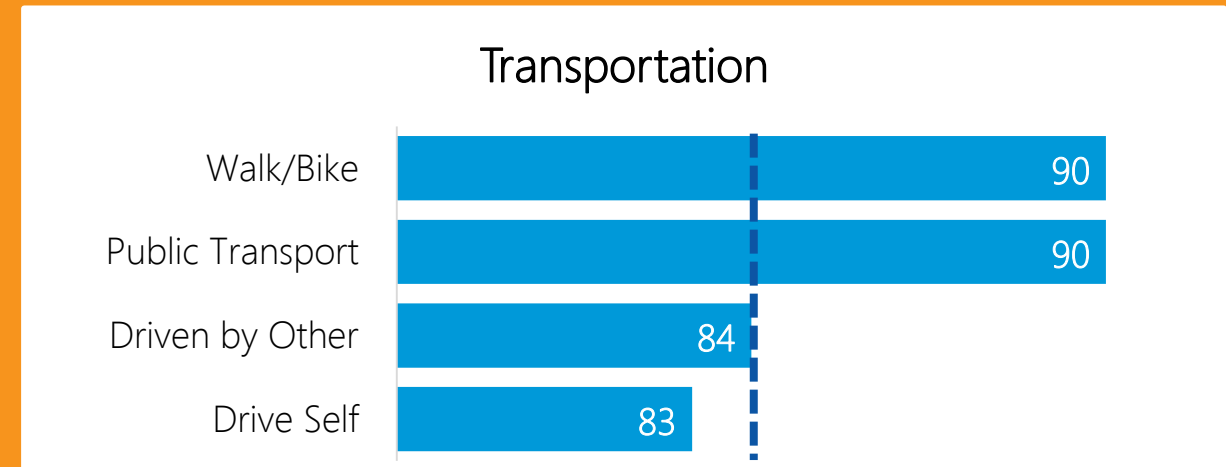


# Almost all clients wish they could come get more produce often



## Strongly Agree/Agree with “I wish I could come here and get produce more often”

- 84% of all respondents wish they could come and get more produce
- 90% of respondents who walk or bike agreed or strongly agreed with this statement
- 87% of respondents who are in temporary housing/homelessness agreed or strongly agreed with this statement





second harvest  
**HEARTLAND**

**Insights to Action**

# Response Action Planning



1

## **Accessibility: Increase Frequency**

- Food Bank Direct Distributions
- Consistent Produce Supply

2

## **Increase Freshness: Supply Chain**

- Farm to Partner/Client Distributions

3

## **Increase Freshness: Supply Chain**

- New order fulfillment procedures
- Quality Control audits

# Accessibility: Food Bank Distributions



## **Short Term:**

Hub & Spoke Expansion

Replication of the  
Penske partnership

## **Long Term:**

SHH Mobile Produce  
Distributions



# Accessibility: Consistent Supply



## Short Term:

Year-Round Case Counted  
Subscription Expansion

Leverage Mixing  
Center/other sources to  
provide smaller amounts of  
mixed produce

## Long Term:

Commodity Specific  
Strategies on "Top 5"

Build strategies around the "gateway"  
commodities (*e.g. bananas, grapes,  
strawberries*) for consistent access to  
most desired commodities

# Freshness: Shortening Supply Chain



## **Short Term:**

Farmers Market Agency  
Pickup (FMAP)

## **Long Term:**

Community Farmers Market  
Hub for partners AND  
community engagement

# Freshness: Culling



## **Produce Pallet Audit**

- Identifying problem sources and/or varieties

## **Potato Repack Audit**

- Procedure changes

# Discussion

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- Increased quality and availability of produce is highly correlated with client-defined quality of service/product. It requires an investment in resources at various points in the supply chain.
  - As regards distribution solutions like 'hub and spoke' do we further develop SHH infrastructure/resources or decentralize development to partner agencies?
  - If we decentralize, what level of financial and technical assistance do we provide partners?
- What is the proper balance in our produce mix in terms of 'easy to deliver' produce vs. the items clients prefer? (e.g. zucchini vs. bananas)
- Farmers Market engagement is a highly visible community engagement response, but likely less efficient in pounds distribution. How do we prioritize these two goals?