

Ajo Food Security Assessment 2024

May 2024

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Prepared by Ajo Center
for Sustainable
Agriculture

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In partnership with Freeport
McMoRan.

INTRODUCTION

Ajo Center for Sustainable Agriculture is a Native American governed non-profit. One of our programs is the Ajo Food Pantry and we partner with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona for monthly distributions. The purpose of the food security assessment is to determine the root causes of hunger, the level of hunger, and eliminate the stigma around “free food” in our community. This assessment will help us gain a better understanding of food insecurity and the needs of the community. The responses collected for this assessment remain anonymous.





THE PROCESS

Assessment Process

Ajo Center for Sustainable Agriculture developed a survey to learn more about the challenges faced and ways to eliminate the stigma of “free food” from our community. Our team shared the survey online and in-person to gather responses. Through this assessment, 262 community members of Ajo, Arizona and Why, Arizona were surveyed. From their responses we were able to collect the data below and further learn the needs of the community.

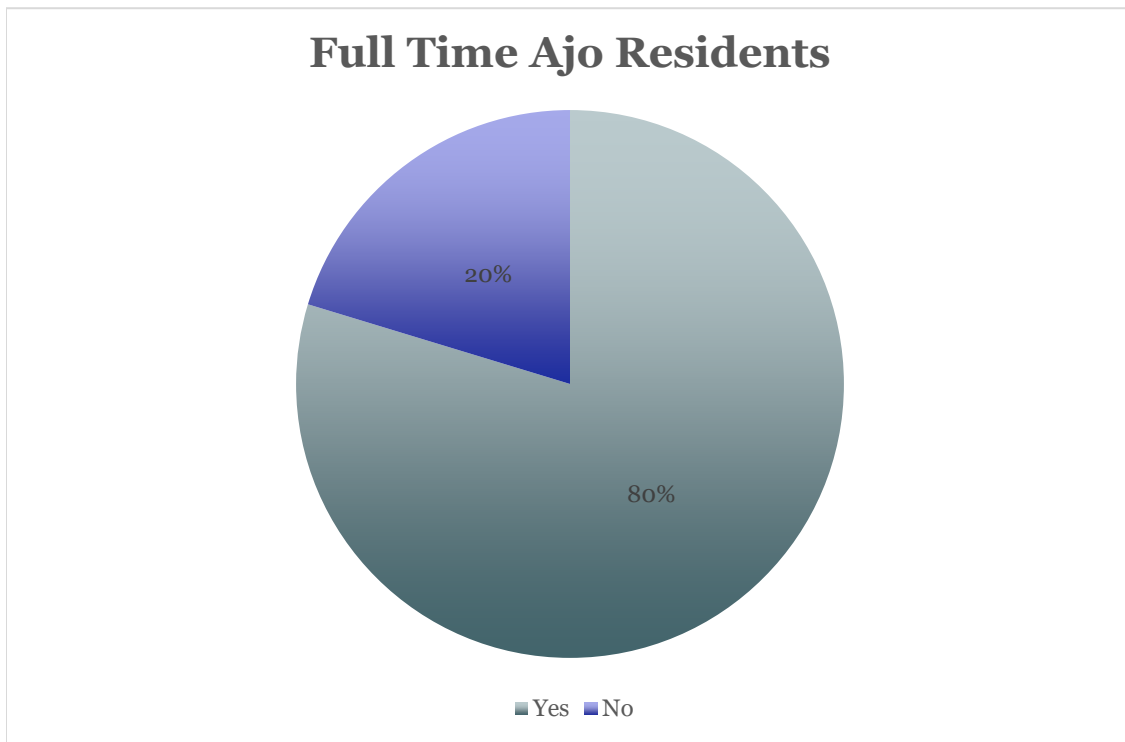
Background

What is food insecurity?
According to Feeding America, food insecurity is when people can't access the food they need to live their fullest lives.

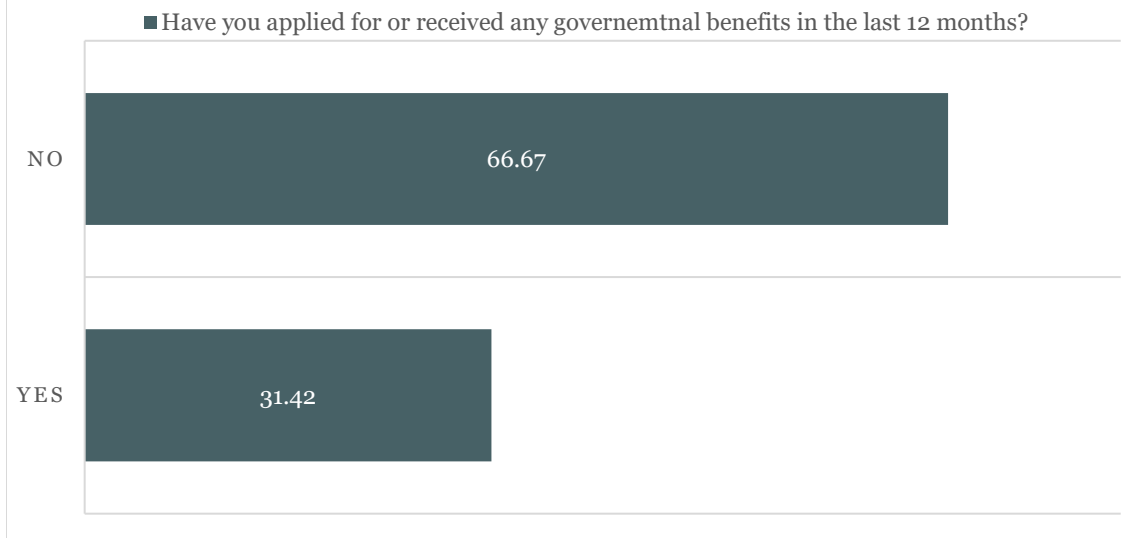
To conduct the food security assessment, we surveyed the communities of Ajo and Why, Arizona. According to the 2022 census, Ajo, Arizona has a population of 2,922 people and Why, Arizona has a population of 102 people.

Ajo Food Security Assessment Results

To conduct the assessment, we gathered information on how many participants were permanent residents in Ajo and Why. Of the 262 responses, 208 stated that they are permanent residents of Ajo or Why. 53 participants stated that they do not live there year-round.

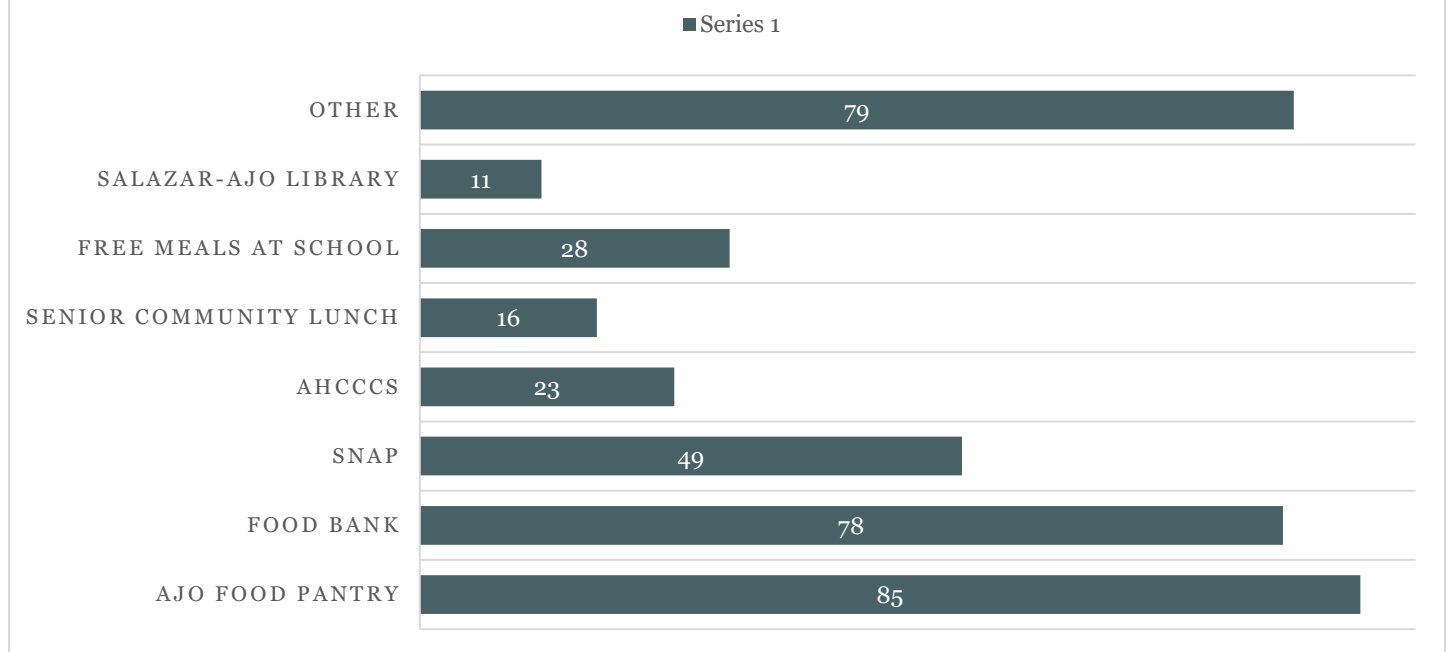


HAVE YOU APPLIED FOR OR RECEIVED ANY GOVERNMENTAL BENEFITS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?



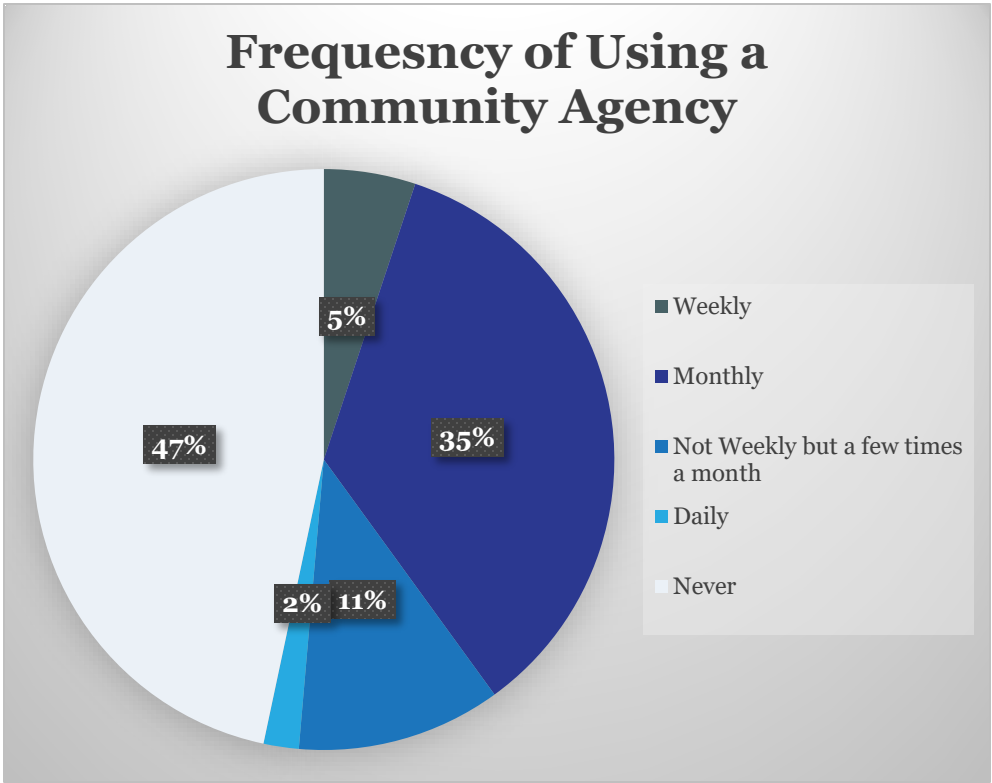
We learned that many participants that we surveyed had not applied for or received governmental benefits in the last year. However, another question, asking participants which agencies they had used in the last year, provided more information.

AGENCIES USED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

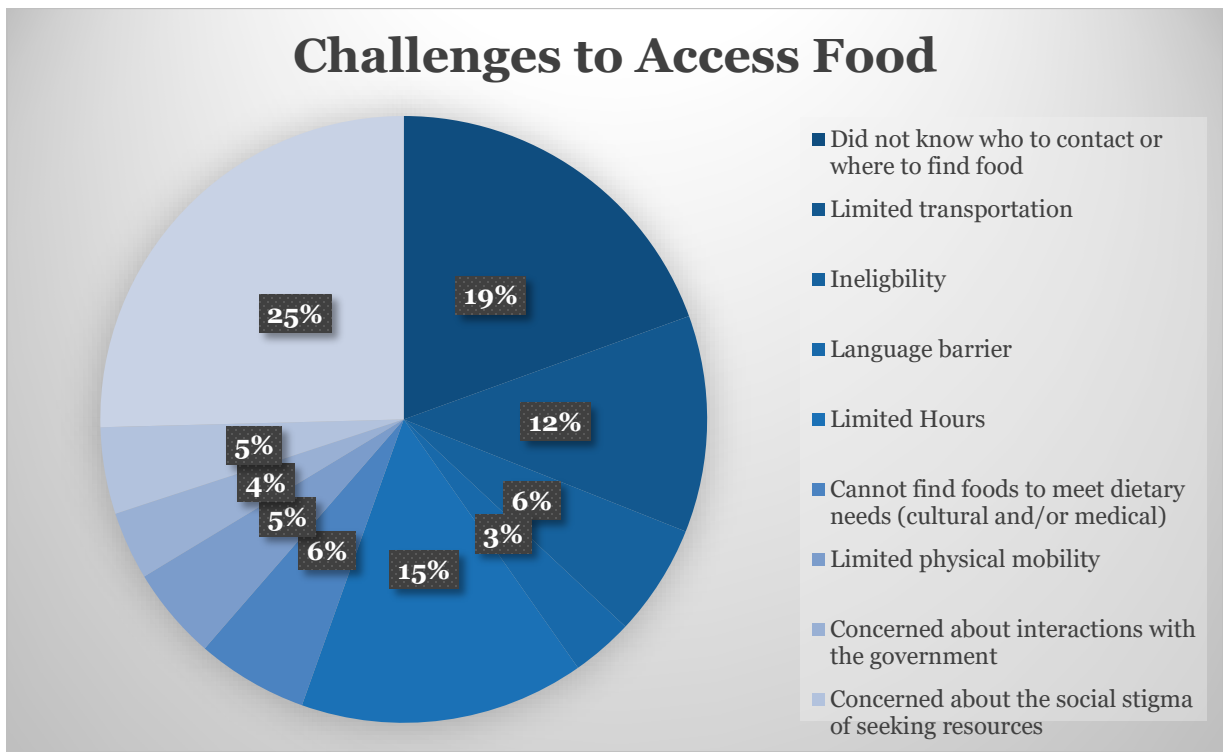


In the above chart, the 'other' response includes not using any agencies, grocery stores, meals on wheels, dollar stores, etc.

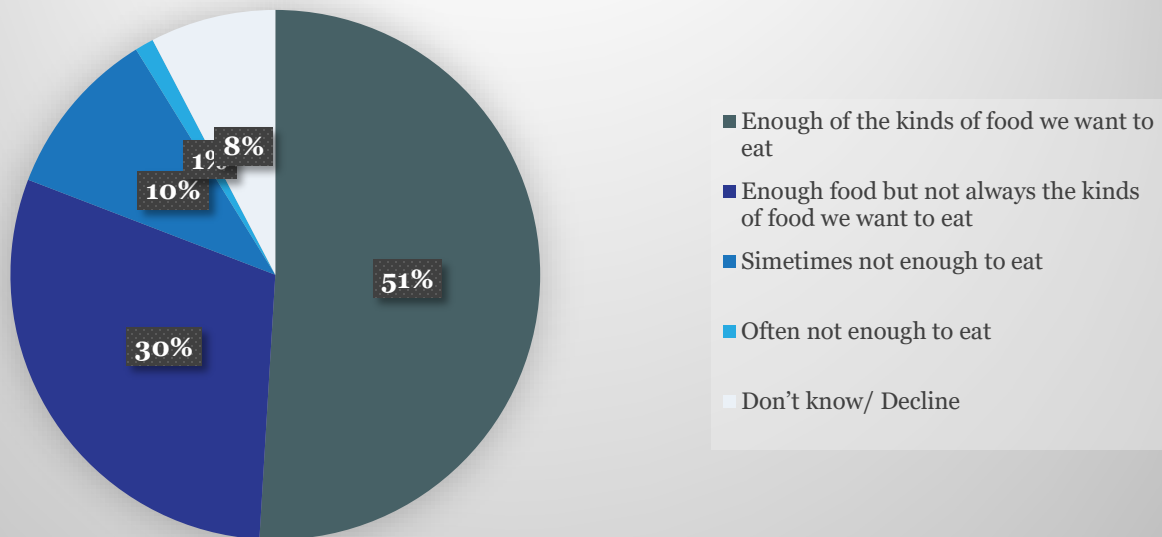
We asked participants how often they seek out food from a community agency. Below is the information shared. As a result of this information, we learned that most of the participants have not used a community agency or seek our assistance monthly.



We wanted to determine what some issues community members were facing that prevented them from accessing food and how they would describe the food eaten in their household. From the surveys we collected we learned that some of the more common challenges included not knowing who to contact or how to access the resource, lack of transportation, could not find foods to meet dietary needs, and much more.

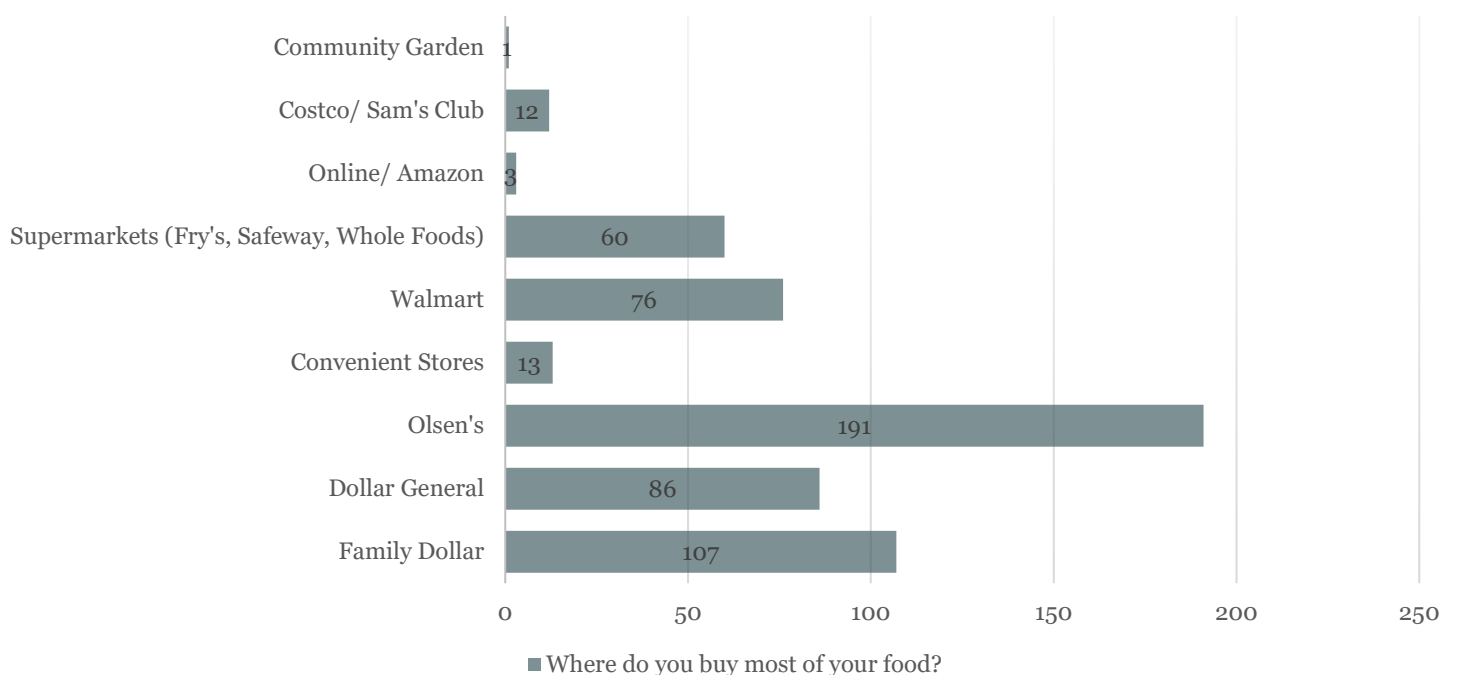


In the last 3 months, which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household?

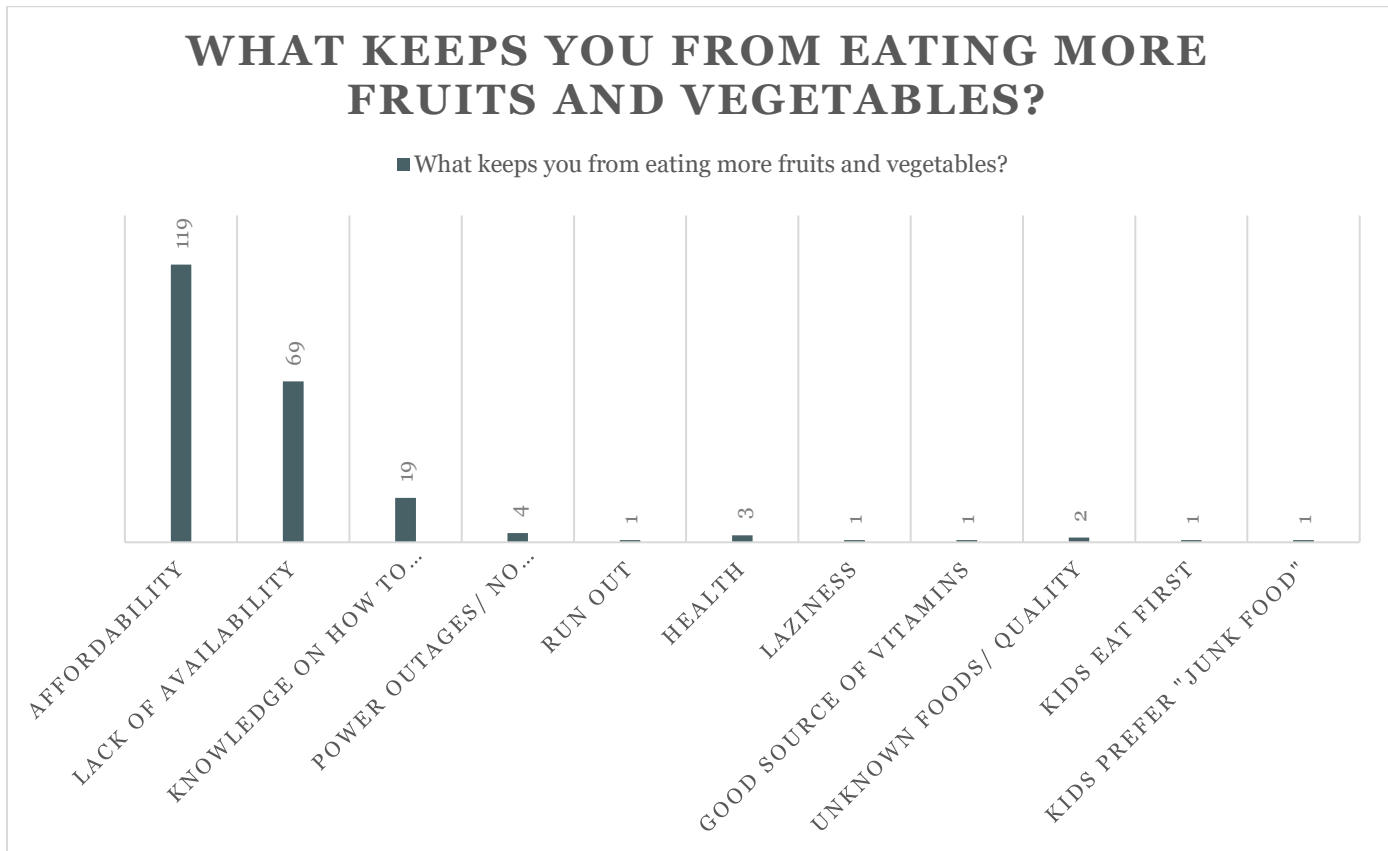


Of the community members that we surveyed, 53 people stated that they do not have access to enough healthy foods. 153 people stated that they make special trips to the city for their groceries. With more than half of the responses stating that they travel for groceries, we wanted to find out where they buy most of their food.

WHERE DO YOU BUY MOST OF YOUR FOOD?

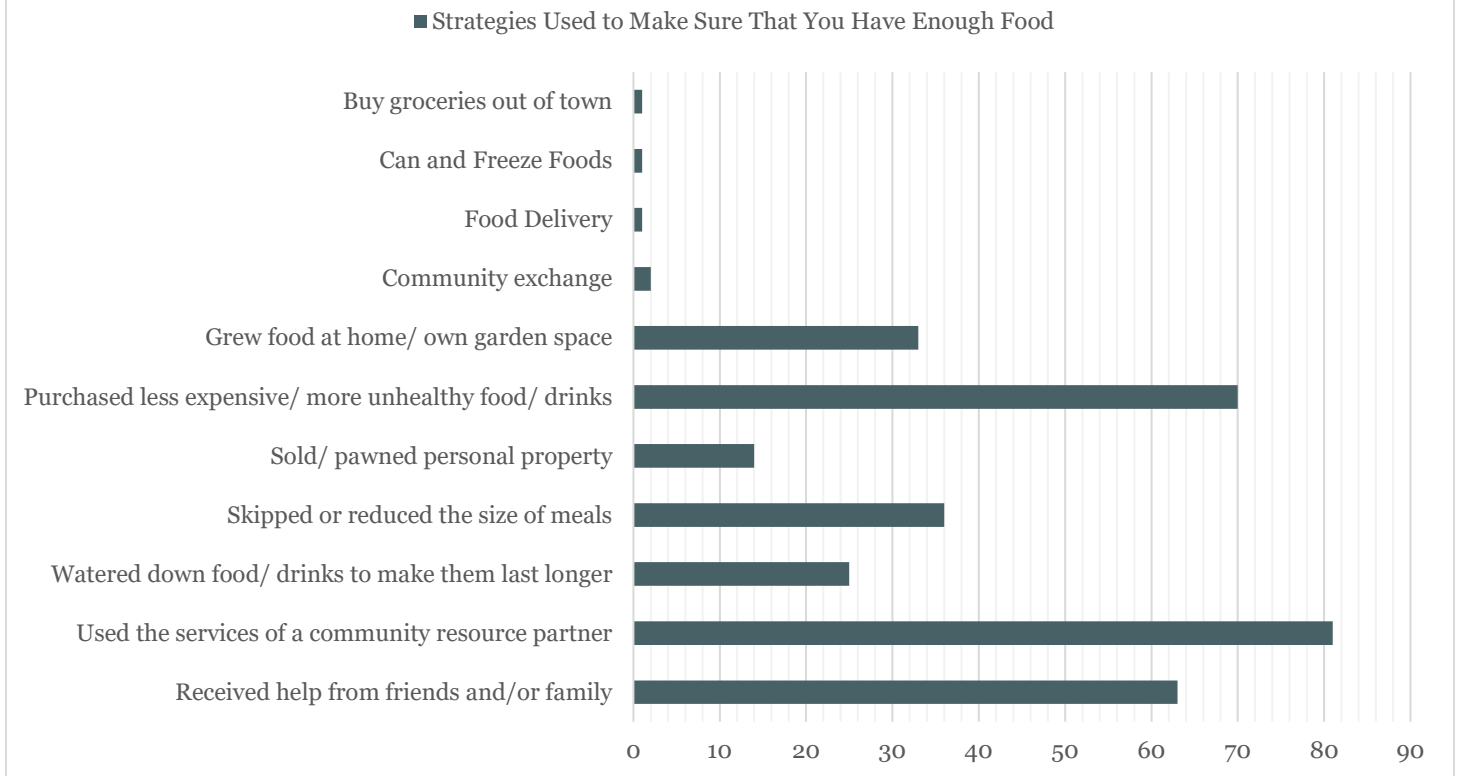


It is important that everyone has access to healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. We asked the community if they incorporate fruits and vegetables into their meals daily, 209 people responded yes with 46 responding no to this question. We asked the community what keeps them from eating more fruits and vegetables. The challenges that they shared are in the chart below.



181 people stated that they do not have access to enough food. Over 86 percent of the community members that we surveyed stated that they do not have access to enough food. With so many people stating that they do not have access, we asked the community what strategies they have used to make sure that they have enough food in their household in the last 3 months.

Strategies Used to Make Sure That You Have Enough Food



With families indicating that they do not have access to enough food, we wanted to gather some feedback on what could make access easier for them. Some of the more common responses included more availability, better hours of store and Ajo Food Pantry, money, larger grocery store in Ajo, more SNAP benefits/ office in town, transportation, more variety of food, etc.

From all the collected data mentioned above in this report, our team continues to work and determine ways to improve our programming and other potential opportunities to better serve the community. We have developed the action plan below focused on offering consistent services through the Ajo Food Pantry with enhanced communication. We strive to work with partners to assist in combating some of the common challenges for the community including transportation, communication, and more.

Action Plan:

Objectives:	Tasks:	Success Criteria:
Provide healthier food to pantry clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Partner with farmers and/or distributors to provide fresh foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Record keeping and interviews with clients to determine they are receiving fresh local foods
Implement stable and sustainable hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Determine the best hours for clients- Maintain the same hours on a weekly and/or monthly basis (limit closures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Able to reach more clients in need during hours- Less confusion on hours from clients
Increase communication of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Share weekly on social media- Posters around town- Ads in Ajo Copper News- Distribute flyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Social media posts/ news articles reach more people