

# Allegheny County Quality of Life Survey 2023 – Results on Food Access – Brief

**By: Sabina Deitrick, PhD**

**University Center for Social and Urban Research**

**University of Pittsburgh**

**Contact: [sabinad@pitt.edu](mailto:sabinad@pitt.edu)**

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## UCSUR's 2023 QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY

The University of Pittsburgh Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR), with UrbanKind, conducted its 2023 Allegheny County Quality of Life survey in Summer - Fall 2023. The 100-plus question survey was funded by the Pittsburgh Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and UCSUR. The survey asks a large diverse community sample for their personal perceptions of quality of life and livability, how they are changing, and quality of life in their own neighborhood. The project builds on previous QOL surveys conducted by UCSUR. The survey results are presented in multiple ways. This brief focuses on results of the module on **food access** for residents. Total survey respondents = 2,038 (414 African American/Black respondents).



### QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY BY FOOD ACCESS QUESTIONS

- Across Allegheny County, 21.3% of respondents reported living in a neighborhood with fair to poor access to a grocery store that sells fresh produce and healthy food, with significant differences across groups. City of Pittsburgh residents were much more likely than residents in the rest of Allegheny County (outside the City of Pittsburgh) to rate their neighborhood's access to such grocery stores as fair to poor, 38.2% versus 14.1% respectively, with Black city residents even higher at 42%. Black respondents' rating of their neighborhood's access to such a grocery store differed significantly from non-African American residents. 42.8% of African American respondents reported excellent or very good access to such grocery stores, compared to 64.6% for white and other residents, while 37.8% of African American respondents reported fair or poor access to such grocery stores, compared to 18.9% for White and other residents.
- The COVID pandemic increased the need for household food assistance. Nearly one-quarter (23.9%) of all respondents across the county reported receiving food from an organization, such as a food bank, food pantry, church or food rescue service, to help feed them and their family since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Rates were higher for residents with lower incomes (<\$50,000), residents with less than a college education, and City of Pittsburgh residents compared residents in the rest of the county. In the City of Pittsburgh, 57.4% of Black respondents received food from an organization since the start of the COVID pandemic.
- Receiving food assistance has been critical for many residents over time. One quarter of survey respondents reported receiving food assistance at some point before the pandemic. "Yes" responses to the question were higher for female respondents (26.0) than male respondents (21.9%), Black (56.6%) residents than white/other (19.8) residents, and for those with lower levels of educational attainment and lower income levels.
- The widespread incidence of food insecurity for many in Allegheny County was also revealed in a question focused on getting enough food for themselves/their household in the month before taking the survey. While 7.9% of all respondents across Allegheny County reported that they and their household *sometimes* or *often* did not have enough to eat, particular subgroups reported much higher levels of food insecurity. 15.9% of young respondents (age 18-29) reported sometimes or often not having enough to eat. The figures were also higher for those with a high school education or less (15.3%) and those making less than \$25,000 per year (23.0%) or \$25 – \$50,000 per year (13.0%). One fifth of African American respondents also reported sometimes or often not having enough to eat for their household.
- The same groups also responded that their household has difficulty paying for food. Overall, 8.5% of survey respondents reported their household often or always had difficulty paying for food, compared to three-quarters reporting never or rarely having difficulty paying for food. Respondents reporting difficulty paying for food was higher for Black respondents (22.4%), female respondents (10.5%), younger ages (14.4%), and those making less than \$25,000 (21.0%) or making between \$25 - \$50,000 annually (16.4%).
- Survey results were also tabulated for respondents who identified as Hispanic/Latino. 12.7% of Hispanic respondents reported often or always having difficulty paying for food and one-quarter reported that sometimes their household does not have enough to eat. Unlike most other groups, respondents identifying as Hispanic were more likely to report receiving food from an organization since the beginning of the COVID pandemic (27.0%) than receiving food assistance before the pandemic (11.1%).

Allegheny County Quality of Life Survey 2023 results: [https://ucsur.pitt.edu/allegheny\\_county\\_qol\\_2023.php](https://ucsur.pitt.edu/allegheny_county_qol_2023.php)