

# Expand Community Voice Georgia Profile

SOUTHEAST REGION FFY2023 PROJECT

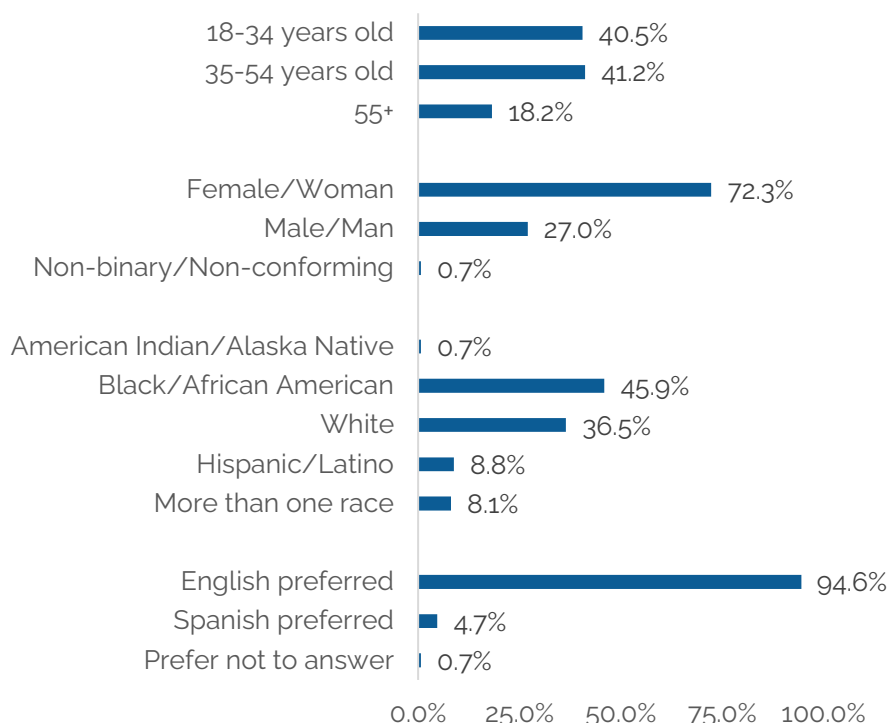


## Project Overview

The Public Health Institute Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN) in coordination with Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina undertook the **FFY2023 Expand Community Voice project** in the Southeast Region to capture the lived experiences of the SNAP-Ed eligible community. An online survey and feedback groups were conducted to assess equitable practices in SNAP and SNAP-Ed and provide recommendations for SNAP-Ed programming to increase food and nutrition security for all populations.

There were 425 SNAP-Ed-eligible respondents for the online survey, with 148 (34.8%) respondents from Georgia. Thirteen community residents participated in feedback groups or key informant interviews. Online survey respondent demographics are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Description of the Georgia Online Survey Respondents (n=148)**



## Access to SNAP and SNAP-Ed

Access to SNAP and SNAP-Ed means everyone has an equal opportunity to fully participate in programs and services. While most Georgia respondents (70.9%) reported using SNAP benefits at some point, about one third of respondents (30.4%) reported ever participating in SNAP-Ed programming, such as classes like Cooking Matters or Food Talk. The analysis did not find any significant differences in SNAP or SNAP-Ed participation by race or ethnicity. Reasons for not participating in SNAP included "do not think I qualify" (n=16) and "too difficult to apply" (n = 10). Reasons for not participating in SNAP-Ed included "do not know about SNAP-Ed" (n = 60) and "do not want to attend SNAP-Ed classes" (n = 18).

**70.9%**  
Ever used SNAP

**30.4%**  
Ever participated in SNAP-Ed

## Food and nutrition security

Food and nutrition security are rooted in access, availability and affordability of nutritious food. Food insecurity is defined as “*consistent lack of access to enough food to lead a healthy and active life.*” In Georgia, about 11% of the population are considered food insecure (Feeding America, 2023), but among those surveyed, almost 80% experienced food insecurity (Figure 2).

Nutrition security is defined as “*having consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being and prevent (and if needed, treat) disease*” (USDA NIFA). More than half of respondents reported they had access to fresh, high quality, affordable culturally specific produce (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Food Security Among Online Survey Respondents (n=148)

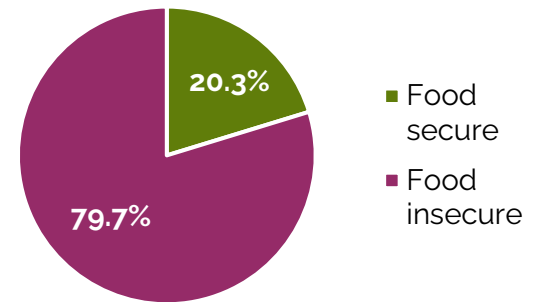
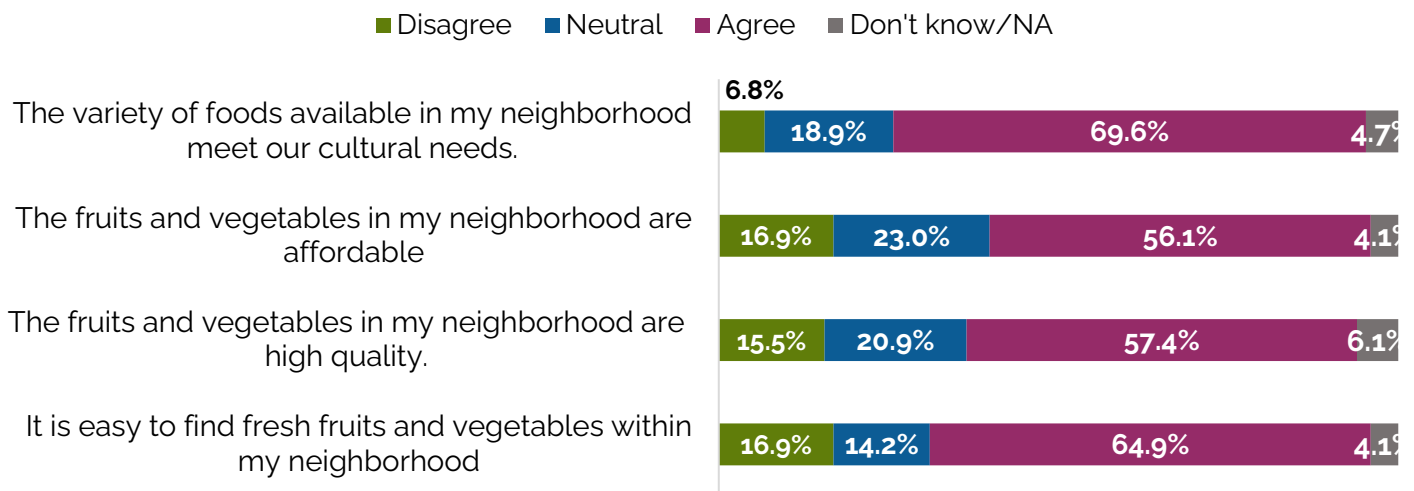


Figure 3: Food Access among Online Survey Respondents (n=148)



Respondents in Georgia primarily shop at superstores, like Walmart or Target, and supermarkets like Kroger, Publix, Aldi, Food Lion or Piggly Wiggly. Gardens, health food stores and ethnic markets that provide culturally specific foods were the most underused places that respondents reported accessing food.



## Community Recommendations to Improve Equity of SNAP and SNAP-Ed

To improve community access to healthy food, survey respondents recommended more farmers' markets or farm stands (47.6%, n=70), better variety of produce at local stores (31.3%, n=46) and higher quality produce at local stores (31.3%, n=46). To improve access to SNAP-Ed, recommendations included more information about SNAP-Ed (38.6%, n=56), classes offered at convenient times (23.4%, n=34), and classes closer to home (22.1%, n=32). Other recommendations from community members included marketing SNAP-Ed classes to reach a broader audience, hiring SNAP-Ed instructors with similar race/ethnicity as participants, and cooking culturally relevant meals during classes.

## Recommendations to Improve Equity in SNAP and SNAP-Ed

In order to continue to provide equitable practices within SNAP and SNAP-Ed, several key recommendations are proposed:

- **Embed Feedback Systems into SNAP-Ed Nutrition:** Integrate feedback systems into program activities and policy, systems and environmental (PSE) changes to encourage participants to share suggestions for improvement as well as areas of strength.
- **Market SNAP-Ed Classes Through Multiple Strategies:** Diversify marketing strategies to reach a wider and more diverse audience for SNAP-Ed programming, such as radio broadcasts, listservs, and in-person outreach at schools and clinics.
- **Explore Equity Among Hispanic/Latino Populations:** More needs to be done to address the needs of Hispanic/Latino populations, such as needs assessments or listening sessions.
- **Design Programs for Low-Literacy:** Use accessible materials, alternative communication channels, and varied educational strategies to address the needs of individuals.
- **Assess Equity through Multiple Dimensions of Access:** Consider the acceptability, affordability, availability, accessibility, accommodation and awareness of programs.
- **Meet People Where They Are:** Offer convenient times, hold classes in places where people already gather, and use low-impact data-collection methods.

*"I think the food should be more affordable. While we always have food, it's just so expensive that eating healthy sometimes isn't possible. The healthier food is more expensive than the fatty unhealthy food."*

*-Georgia community resident*

*"Having people that look like you teaching the classes ...if I see somebody who is from my community, and looks like me that I know and see throughout the community, church, or school, I think it's a trust factor and just representation matters."*

*-Georgia community resident*

*"I think the SNAP education program is a good concept. But I think definitely we just got to work on getting it to the people that really need it and can benefit from it."*

*-Georgia community resident*

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