

# Expand Community Voice North Carolina Profile

SOUTHEAST REGION FFY2023 PROJECT



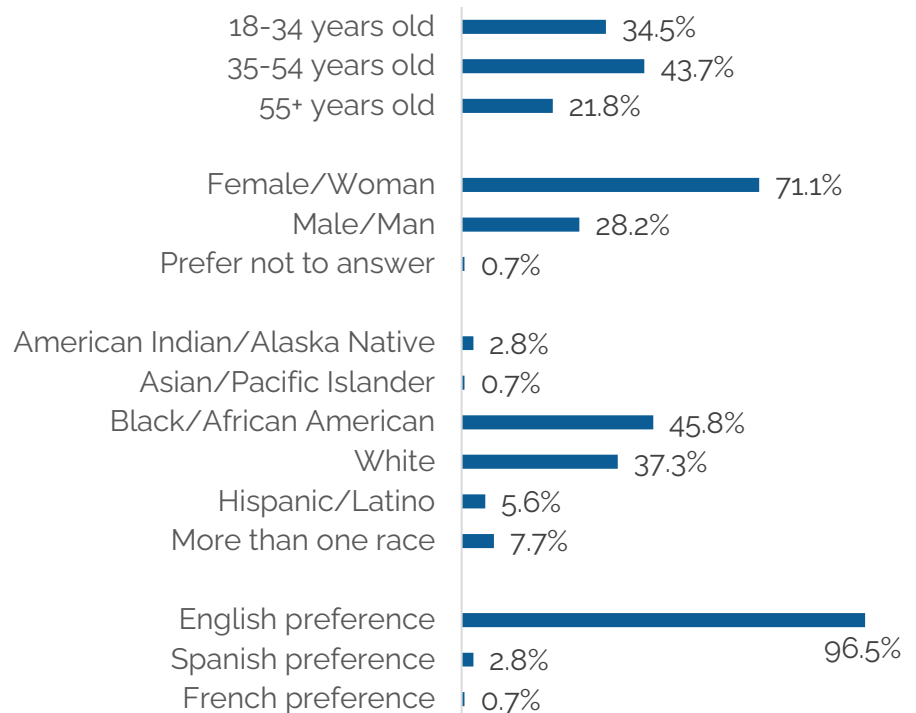
## Project Overview

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 to the online survey across all states, with 142 (33.4%) respondents from North Carolina.

Nine community residents participated in feedback groups or key informant interviews. Online survey respondent demographics are in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Description of the North Carolina Online Survey Respondents (n = 142)**



## 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 North Carolina respondents reported using SNAP benefits at some point (78.9%), about one third of respondents (36.6%) 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 = 18), "benefit is not enough" (n = 6), and "do not want to apply" (n = 6). Reasons for not participating in SNAP-Ed included "do not know about SNAP-Ed" (n = 57) and "do not want to attend SNAP-Ed classes" (n = 13).

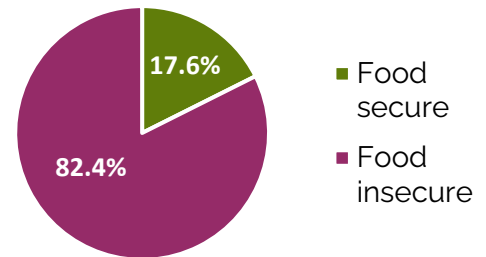
**78.9%**  
Ever used SNAP

**36.6%**  
Ever participated in SNAP-Ed

## Food and nutrition security

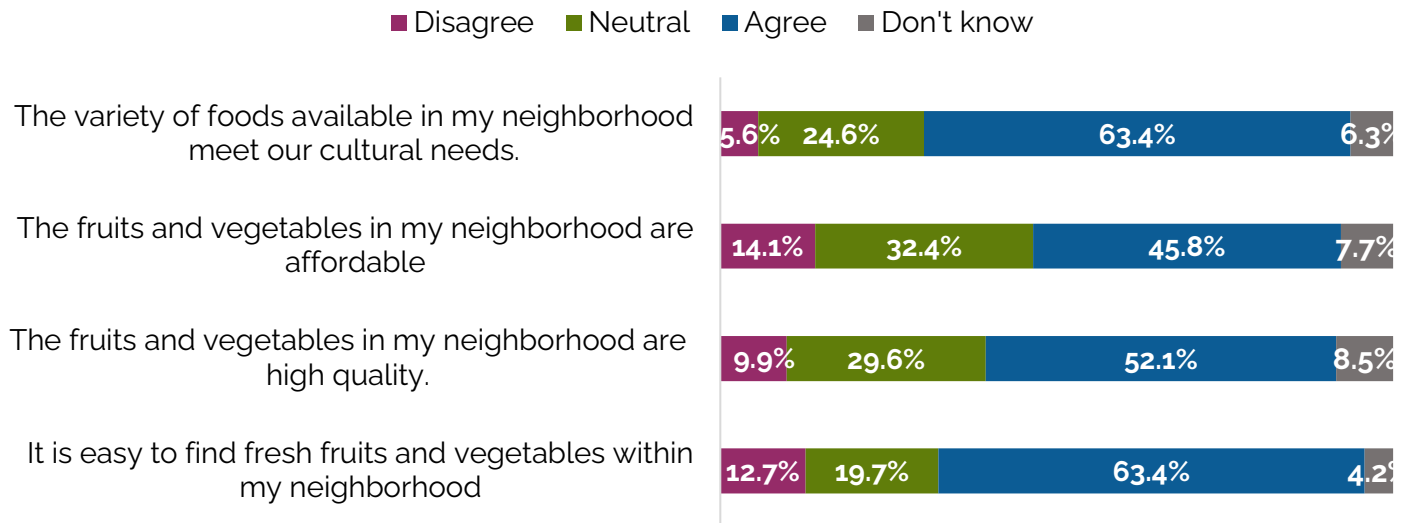
Food and nutrition security are rooted in access, availability and affordability of nutritious food. Food insecurity is defined as “consistent lack of access to enough food to lead a healthy and active life.” In North Carolina, about 12.5% of the population are considered food insecure (Feeding America, 2023), but among those surveyed, more than 80% experienced food insecurity (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Food Security Among Online Survey Respondents (n=142)



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). About half of survey respondents reported they had access high quality, affordable produce and two-thirds of respondents reported they had access to fresh, culturally specific produce. (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Food Access Among Online Survey Respondents (n=142)



Respondents in North Carolina primarily shop at supermarkets like Kroger, Publix, Aldi, Food Lion or Piggly Wiggly, and superstores, like Walmart or Target. Health food stores, ethnic markets that provide culturally specific foods and household or community gardens were the places that were reported the least for regularly 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 (50.4%, n = 70), better variety of produce (40.3%, n = 56) and higher quality produce at local stores (26.6%, n = 37). To improve access to SNAP-Ed, recommendations included more information about SNAP-Ed (42.1%, n = 59), classes closer to home (26.4%, n = 37) and classes offered at convenient times (23.6%, n = 33). 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 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.
- **Further Explore Equity Among Hispanic/Latino Populations:** More work needs to be done to address the needs of Hispanic/Latino populations, such as state-level 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 for participants, hold classes in places where people already gather, and use low-impact, data-collection methods.

*"...But if we had more accessible things that weren't so pricey, I think that would help. That's honestly a part of why half of us are obese. The cheapest things are the most unhealthiest things in the world."*

*-North Carolina community resident*

*"Increase [the] amount given for those without reliable or easily accessible transportation...I usually order online for Walmart delivery, which is more expensive...Therefore, I spend more EBT... Also can't get to food pantries due to transportation."*

*-North Carolina community resident*

*"There's a lot of people from different places here, but I find that a lot of people just don't know these [SNAP-Ed classes] exist."*

*-North Carolina community resident*

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**NC SNAP-ED**

