EXPLORING THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY IN NEW JERSEY

2024 - 2025

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Prepared by

CENTER FOR NUTRITION & HEALTH IMPACT

Prepared for

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE FOOD SECURITY ADVOCATE

Acknowledgements

The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA), in partnership with the Center for Nutrition & Health Impact (CNHI), deployed measurement tools to assess the six dimensions of food security (access, availability, utilization, stability, agency, and sustainability) in New Jersey. This research aimed to comprehensively assess food security across the state utilizing measures for each of the six dimensions, supplementing the traditional USDA Household Food Security Survey Module. This research helps inform practice-based actions and policy recommendations to address food insecurity in New Jersey.

About the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA)

OFSA is a convener and collaborator building consensus across resident leaders, "food and" pantries, community kitchens, community-based organizations, the six state-designated food banks, legislators, state agencies, agriculture, food rescuers, and others to make true food security a reality for everyone. Visit www.nj.gov/foodsecurity/ to learn more.

About the Center for Nutrition & Health Impact (CNHI)

CNHI is a nonprofit research institute providing expertise in measurement and evaluation to develop, enhance, and expand public health programs. Our research focuses on encouraging healthy eating and active living, improving food security and healthy food access, and promoting local food systems. With expertise in public health nutrition, we are dedicated to building measurement strategies to assess the impact of innovative health-related programs. CNHI works nationally and internationally, partnering with other nonprofits, academia, government entities and private foundations to conduct research, evaluation and strategic planning. Visit centerfornutrition.org to learn more.

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Authors

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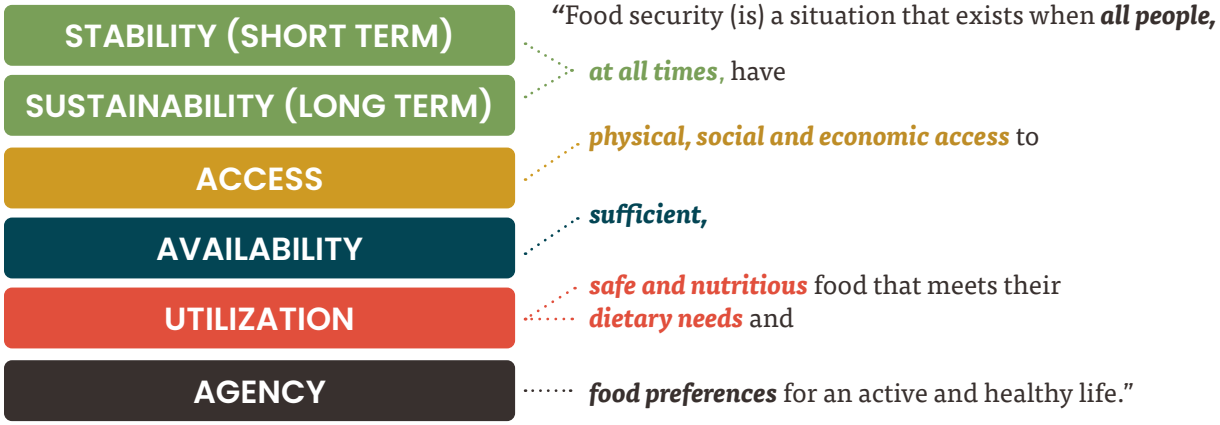
The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) partnered with the Center for Nutrition & Health Impact (CNHI) in 2024-2025 to develop and implement a set of measures framed around the six dimensions of food security.

Six Dimensions of Food Security



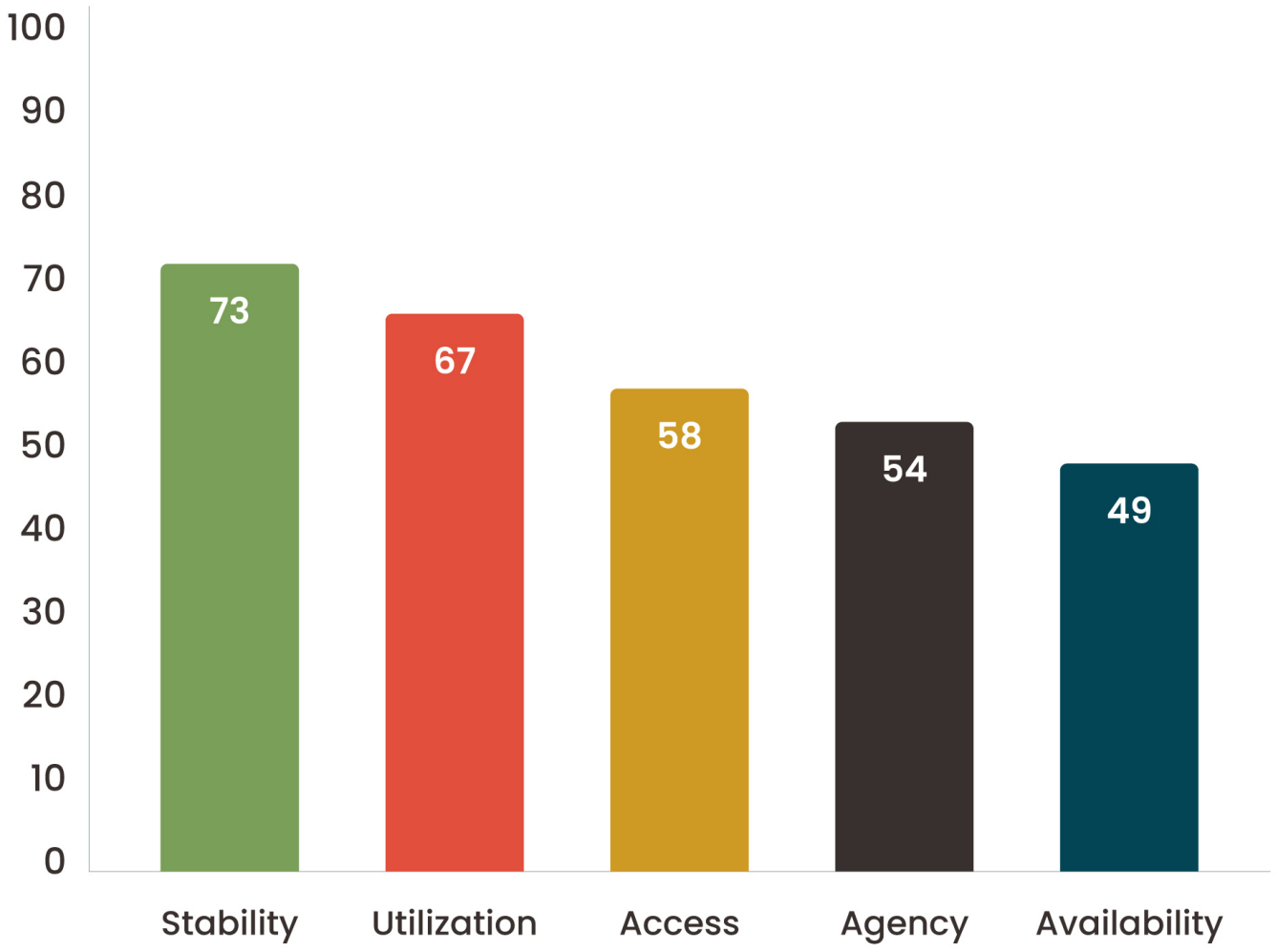
There were three main phases of survey data collection for this project:

1. **Statewide sample** of New Jersey community members (n=974) via a **Qualtrics** survey panel.

2. **Oversampling** within **nine areas** across New Jersey that were **identified as experiencing higher rates of food insecurity** (n=1,054) to ensure representation among the most impacted New Jerseyans in the sample.

3. In-depth **survey of food system experts** (n=61) that focused on sustainability topics.

Scores[a] across five of the six dimensions of Food Security in New Jersey (Statewide sample, n=2,028)



[a] Scores are standardized to 0-100 scale, with higher scores being more desirable.

Stability: Reported food access stability across seasons of the year.

Utilization: Reported ability to make healthy meals from food one can access.

Access: Perceived economic access to enough food.

Agency: Perceived ability to act on one's own food choices, and engage in processes that shape the food system.

Availability: Perceived availability of healthy and liked foods at food stores.

Below are the results for **five** dimensions of food security across the whole sample. Higher scores indicate more favorable outcomes for each dimension, with 100 being the highest possible score. Findings for the first five dimensions are explained in more detail in the following sections in order from highest to lowest scoring. Sustainability was assessed differently from the other five dimensions, so it was not included in the graph above. For this metric, food system experts across New Jersey were surveyed to understand their perceptions of sustainability issues, and those findings are presented below.

- *Stability*
- *Utilization*
- *Access*
- *Agency*
- *Availability*

Stability: *the reliable access to foods over time*

SCORE: 73/100

Key Findings:

- **46%** of food insecure households indicated they experienced monthly cycles of food insecurity.
- **42%** of food insecure households indicated they experienced seasonal cycles of food insecurity.
- Households in North and South Jersey were more likely to experience monthly cycles of food insecurity (Scoring **69/100** & **65/100**, respectively) than Central Jersey (Scoring **79/100**).

Recommendations:

- Monthly nutrition assistance programs, like SNAP and WIC, and seasonal programs like the Summer Food Service Program, might be leveraged to address monthly and seasonal food access instability.

Utilization: *the ability to make healthy and safe meals with the food a household has access to*

SCORE: 67/100

Key Findings:

- The most common food equipment barrier was a lack of kitchen tools and cooking equipment (**44%**).
- The most common food, skills, and time barrier was lacking healthy ingredients to make a healthy meal (**70%**).
- **42%** of households did not have access to a refrigerator, freezer, or other way to keep food from spoiling.
- Parents/caregivers faced more utilization barriers than non-parents, with utilization scores of **61/100**, compared to **73/100**, respectively.

Recommendations:

- Establish programs to support households with kitchen equipment and expand access to nourishing ready-to-eat food options.

Access: *having the resources and means to obtain enough food for one's household*

SCORE: 58/100

Key Findings:

- Non-English speaking survey respondents had lower economic food access scores than English speaking respondents (**36/100** compared to **62/100**, respectively).
- Parents/caregivers had lower economic food access scores than non-parents (**45/100** compared to **65/100**, respectively).
- Households in North Jersey scored **55/100** and South Jersey scored **50/100** for economic food access, both lower than Central Jersey scoring **71/100**.

Recommendations:

- Simplify SNAP, WIC, and Summer EBT enrollment processes and increase outreach to maximize participation.
- Emphasize language access in all social support/safety net programs.
- Increase support for parents to reduce financial strain and improve household food security, especially young and low-income parents/caregivers.

Agency: *the power to make decisions about foods eaten and produced*

SCORE: 54/100

Key Findings:

- Agency, both in terms of being able to act on one's own food choices and being able to engage with and shape the food system were among the lower scoring metrics.
- Parents/caregivers scored lower than non-parents (**50/100** compared to **67/100**, respectively).
- SNAP, WIC, and food pantry clients all need support for agency (scoring **42/100, 43/100**, and **39/100**, respectively).

Recommendations:

- Promote client-choice food pantry models with healthy food options.
- Create inclusive governance models that allow residents experiencing food insecurity to help shape food policy and programs.

Availability: *the physical presence of foods*

SCORE: 49/100

Key Findings:

- Parents/caregivers scored lower than non-parents (**35/100** compared to **56/100**, respectively).
- Non-English speaking survey respondents scored lower than English speakers (**28/100** compared to **52/100**, respectively).
- Respondents in North (**46/100**) and South Jersey (**42/100**) scored lower than respondents in Central Jersey (**60/100**).

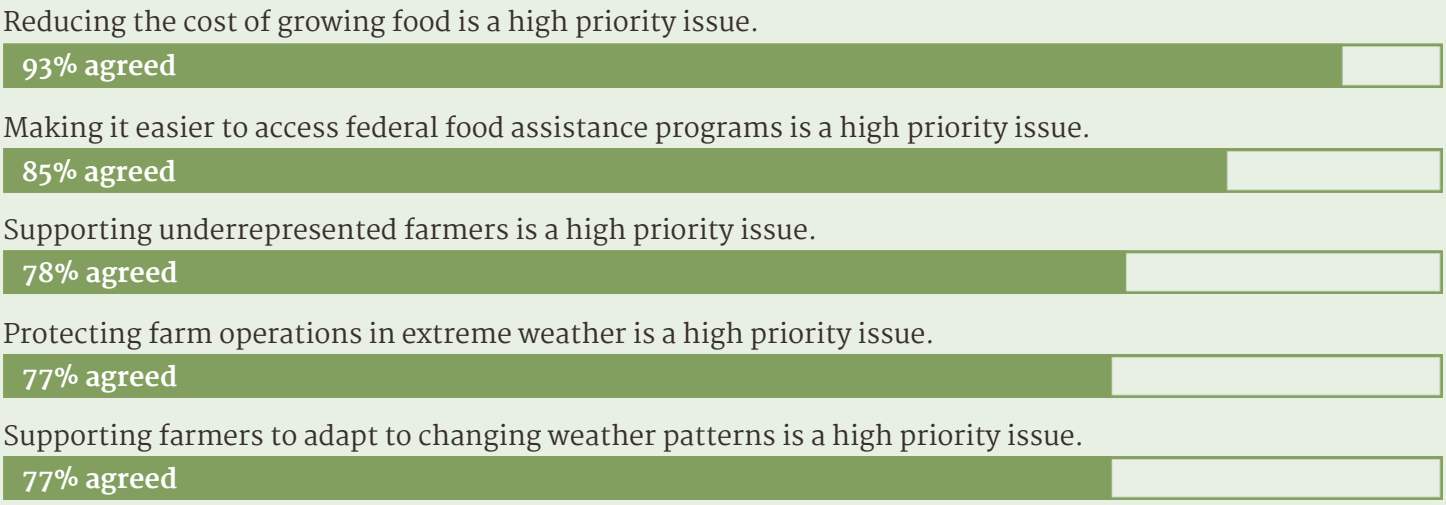
Recommendations:

- Expand efforts to increase the availability of affordable fruits, vegetables, and culturally preferred foods in grocery stores and food pantries.
- Invest in new and existing grocery retailers and farmers markets in underserved areas to expand availability of nourishing food.

Sustainability: *the food system's ability to provide long-term food security*

Key Findings:
To promote a more sustainable food system and ensure adequate food supplies for future generations, both residents and food system experts agreed that focusing on supporting farmers (e.g., through technical assistance and funding), reducing food waste, promoting food affordability, and ensuring that food system activities are safe for the environment were top priorities.

WHICH SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES ARE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO ADDRESS IN NJ?



Recommendations:

- Expand grants, technical assistance, infrastructure to promote financial viability and resiliency of New Jersey farmers and reduce production costs and prices for consumers.
- Provide support to help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns and extreme climate events.
- Support farming cooperatives among small and mid-size farms to increase efficiency and market power.
- Prioritize funding, land access, and business support for first-generation and historically underrepresented farmers.
- Expand education, training, mentoring, and financial support for current and future farmers to strengthen business management, regulatory compliance, and adoption of sustainable practices.
- Promote living wages and fair labor standards across the food system.
- Emphasize and promote environmental protections across food production, processing, and distribution.
- Support programs enabling donation of edible surplus food and promote composting or diversion of inedible food waste from landfills.

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BACKGROUND

Food security (defined as all people at all times having access to enough food for an active, healthy life),[1] has historically been measured within the context of four dimensions: availability (physical presence of food), access (ability of people to obtain physically available food), utilization (whether people can utilize available food), and stability (people's food security status can vary over time).[2] In recent decades, researchers and practitioners have recognized two additional dimensions: agency and sustainability.[3-5] Agency refers to "the capacity of individuals or groups to exercise a degree of control over their own circumstances and to provide meaningful input into governance processes," emphasizing the importance of empowerment, participation, and equity in food systems. Sustainability refers to the "long-term ability for food systems to provide food security and nutrition in a way that does not compromise the economic, social, and environmental bases that generate food security and nutrition for future generations," which highlights the interdependence between food systems and broader ecological and societal health.[3-5] By incorporating all six dimensions – availability, access, utilization, stability, agency, and sustainability – into the assessment of food security, researchers and decision-makers can adopt a more comprehensive and inclusive strategy, enhancing efforts to achieve lasting food security.

New Jersey, though one of the geographically smallest, is among the most densely populated United States (U.S.) states, with over 9.5 million residents.[6] The state's landscape is diverse, encompassing major urban areas, sprawling suburban communities, and approximately 10,000 farms that contribute to both local and national food systems.[7] Despite the agricultural presence and economic diversity, food insecurity remains a persistent challenge in New Jersey. Between 2021 and 2023, an average of 9.8% of New Jersey residents, nearly one in ten people, experienced limited or uncertain access to adequate food.[1,6] To effectively understand and address this issue, it is essential to examine food security through a comprehensive lens that includes all six dimensions, as each dimension can reveal a different facet of the problem, help identify targeted interventions, and steward resources sustainably. Recognizing the complexity of the factors that affect food insecurity, and the importance of leveraging the six dimensions, New Jersey has taken a proactive stance through the leadership of the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) to reduce food insecurity and improve the lives of the state's residents.

OFSA was established in 2021 by the state governor as the first executive level office of its kind in the U.S., reflecting a growing recognition of food security as public policy priority. To accomplish its mission, the office has — to date — focused on four key areas: advising the governor's office and the legislature on food security research, evaluation, and best practices; supporting state agencies in food security work; collaborating with the philanthropic sector; and supporting and participating in community food security work.[8] To further advance its mission, OFSA has developed a comprehensive, data-driven Strategic Plan that will inform their activities and direction in the coming years.

In 2023, to deepen its strategic impact, OFSA partnered with the Center for Nutrition & Health Impact (CNHI), a national non-profit nutrition research center, to develop and implement a set of survey measures framed around the six dimensions of food security. These measures are designed to capture residents' lived experiences and perceptions across all six dimensions.

This data collection initiative aimed to inform OFSA's strategic planning efforts to ultimately guide cross-sector collaboration and policy development across the state. Also, findings can serve as a baseline from which future progress can be measured. This may be particularly important now that future USDA food security measurement efforts may be discontinued (based on information available at the time of this report). By embedding the six dimensions framework into its operations, OFSA is positioning New Jersey as a national leader in systems-based approaches to food and nutrition security. This report outlines the findings from CNHI's efforts as well as resulting recommendations.

STUDY OVERVIEW AND BRIEF METHODS

From January - July 2025, we partnered with Qualtrics and organizations across New Jersey to conduct surveys for each of the six dimensions of food security. Based on the survey responses, metrics and quantitative findings were generated. Survey weights were created based on demographic variables to make findings more representative of the general population of New Jersey. For the first five dimensions of food security (availability, access, stability, utilization, and agency), thirteen metrics were reported from validated scales and sub-scales within the survey. Because all the metrics had different scoring approaches, the scores were standardized to a 0-100 range with higher scores indicating better food security, making it easier to compare metrics. Higher scores indicate being in a better situation with respect to each metric, with 100 indicting the highest possible score for the metric. For the sixth dimension, sustainability, both New Jersey community members and food system experts were asked their opinions across several sustainability topics. **Table 1**, on page 4, defines the metrics and findings presented in this report.

There were three main phases of survey data collection. The first phase involved collecting a statewide sample of New Jersey community members (n=974) via a Qualtrics survey panel. The second phase focused on oversampling within nine areas across New Jersey that were identified as experiencing higher rates of food insecurity (n=1,054), referred to as “at risk communities”. This was to ensure representation among the most impacted New Jerseyans in the sample. Second phase recruitment was conducted with the help of partner organizations such as food pantries, shelters, and resource hubs, who each recruited around 50-150 survey participants from among the people they served. For the third phase, food system experts in the areas of food security, agriculture, retail, environmental issues, and economic development completed an in-depth survey that focused on 35 sustainability topics. They were asked to rate how well New Jersey was doing for each topic and which were the highest priorities to address. While community members were asked their opinions about some selected sustainability topics, the expert survey allowed a more in-depth exploration of food system sustainability in New Jersey.

There are two main sections in this report. In the first section, we examine scores for the first five food security dimensions among the whole sample and across various sub-populations. We also look at responses solely from the food insecure sub-sample. The purpose of the first section is to identify groups that may face food insecurity disparities and to inform tailored intervention approaches. The second section focuses on food system sustainability. In this section, we not only describe what topics the experts and community members felt were most important to address, but we also describe some of the sustainability-enhancing approaches the experts recommend. The report then closes with a summary of the key takeaways and recommendations driven by the findings.

Table 1. Definitions and examples of the metrics used in the report, and how they relate to each of the six dimensions of food security

Dimension of Food Security	Metric Description	Validated Scales and Sub-Scales	Example Questions
Availability	Food Availability (Stores): perceived presence of healthy food, quality produce, and foods that the respondent likes at places they shop for food.	Perceived Limited Availability Scale (at stores)	In the last 12 months, the food stores (I/we) went to had very few quality fruits and vegetables.
	Food Availability (Pantries): perceived presence of healthy food, quality produce, and foods that the respondent likes at food pantries.	Perceived Limited Availability Scale (at food pantries)	In the last 12 months, the places (I/we) got free food had very few quality fruits and vegetables.
Accessibility	Economic Food Access: perceived ability to purchase enough food for their household.	Household Food Security Survey Module (6-item version)	In the last 12 months, the food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more.
Utilization	Utilization (Total Score) Food Skills & Time (Sub-Score): ability to select healthy foods, prepare meals from scratch, and have time to prepare meals.	Utilization Barriers Scale and Sub-Scales	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not know how to select healthy foods from the food options (I/we) had.
	Food Equipment (Sub-Score): having cooking equipment, food storage, and a sanitary area to prepare meals.		In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not have a way to cook meals (e.g., stove, oven, microwave, hot plate or other appliance).

Dimension of Food Security	Metric Description	Validated Scales and Sub-Scales	Example Questions
Stability	Seasonal Food Stability: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter variation in being able to afford enough food for the household. Monthly Food Stability: beginning, middle, and end of month variation in being able to afford enough food for the household. Random Food Stability: intermittent variation in being able to afford enough food for the household. Chronic Food Stability: chronic state of limited ability to afford enough food for the household.	Food Insecurity Stability Scale	In the last 12 months, when did your household usually run out of food before getting money to buy more? (Select all that apply)
Agency	Agency (Total Score) Food Choice Agency (Sub-Score): ability to act on household food choices. Food System Engagement (Sub-Score): ability to be involved in activities that shape the food system.	Household Food Security Agency Scale	In the last 12 months, (I/we) had little choice in the food (I/we) (was/were) able to eat. In the last 12 months, (I/we) could not change food-related issues in (my/our) community, even if (I/we) wanted to.

Dimension of Food Security	Metric Description	Validated Scales and Sub-Scales	Example Questions
Sustainability	Food system experts' opinions: experts were asked how well NJ was doing across 35 food system sustainability topics and then asked which were the highest priorities to address. NJ community members' opinions: community members were asked to rank the importance of 12 food system sustainability topics.	Opinion questions	How is the state doing with reducing the cost of growing food in NJ for producers (examples include changes to land costs, costs associated with permitting/regulations, and costs for distribution and scaling operations)? We need to make sure farmers in NJ have what they need for success.

Perceived Limited Availability Scale, Utilization Barriers Scale, & Food Insecurity Stability Scale: Calloway EE, Carpenter LR, Gargano T, Sharp JL, Yaroch AL.
New measures to assess the "Other" three pillars of food security–availability, utilization, and stability. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity. 2023 Apr 26;20(1):51.
Household Food Security Survey Module: Bickel, Gary, Mark Nord, Cristofer Price, William Hamilton, and John Cook. Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Alexandria, VA, March 2000
Household Food Security Agency Scale: A forthcoming manuscript to describe the development and validation is in development.

AVAILABILITY, ACCESS, STABILITY, UTILIZATION, AND AGENCY

While there was demographic variety within the sample, survey respondents (n=2,028) were majority women (60.2%), about half were under the age of 50 (52.8%), and most were either non-Hispanic White (40.3%), Latino/Hispanic (25.0%), or non-Hispanic Black (22.8%). Respondents tended to live in lower-income households (70.0% made <$4,001 per month), with two or more adults (75.5%), and in urban counties (81.7%). Additional sample characteristics are presented in **Table 2**, below.

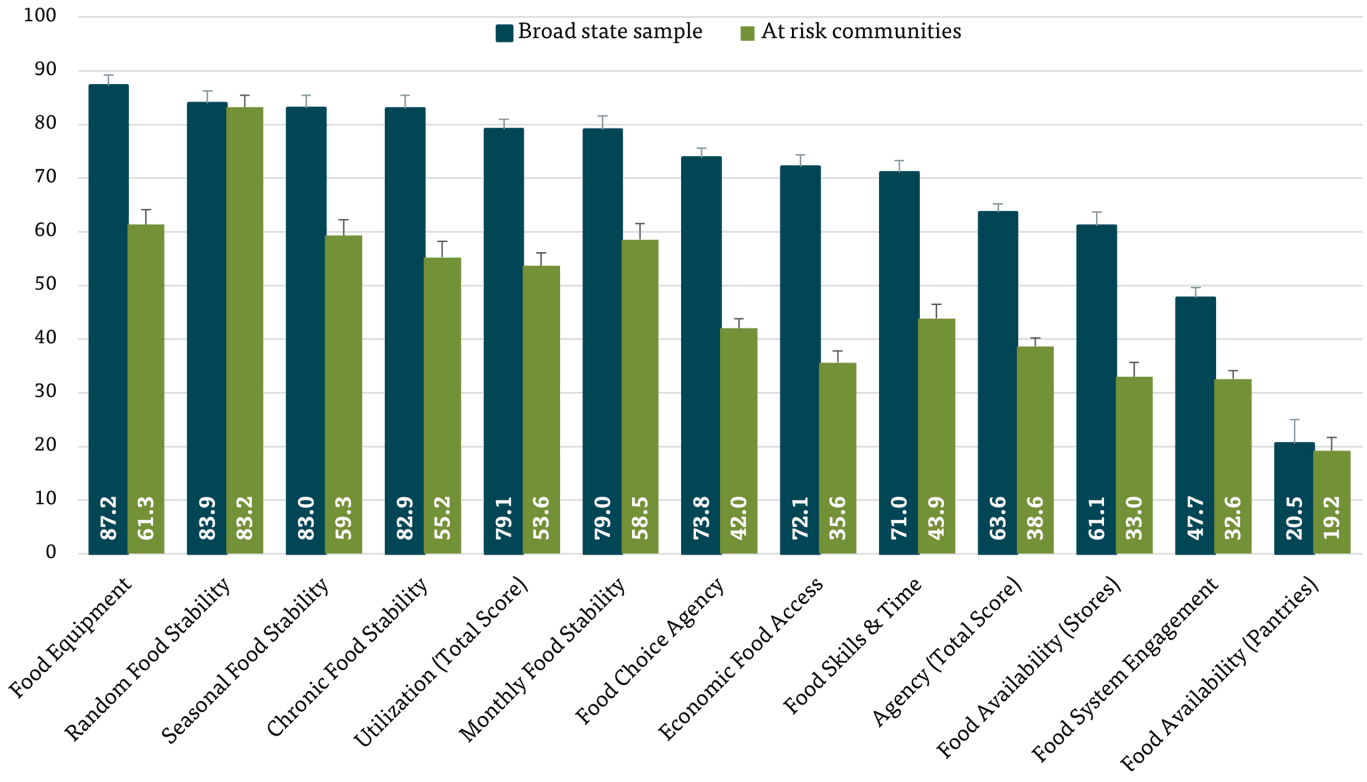
Table 2. Sample characteristics of New Jersey community members who provided survey data for the report

Characteristic	n (%)	Characteristic	n (%)
Age		**Gender**	
18-34	450 (22.2%)	Women	1182 (60.2%)
35-49	621 (30.6%)	Men	763 (38.9%)
50-64	508 (25.1%)	Another option	19 (1.0%)
65+	449 (22.1%)	**Monthly Household Income**	
Race/Ethnicity		$0-$2,000	835 (48.3%)
White (non-Hispanic)	771 (40.3%)	$2,001-$4,000	375 (21.7%)
Latino or Hispanic	478 (25.0%)	$4,001-$8,000	263 (15.2%)
Black (non-Hispanic)	437 (22.8%)	$8,001+	255 (14.8%)
Multi-racial/-ethnic (non-Hispanic)	87 (4.5%)	**Educational Attainment**	
Asian (non-Hispanic)	84 (4.4%)	High school graduate or less	901 (47.1%)
Am. Indian/AK Native (non-Hispanic)	40 (2.1%)	Some college, trade school, or associates degree	440 (23.0)%
Middle Eastern/N. African (non-Hispanic)	15 (0.8%)	Bachelor's degree	349 (18.3%)
Native HI/Pac. Islander (non-Hispanic)	3 (0.2%)	Master's degree or higher	222 (11.6%)

Characteristic	n (%)	Characteristic	n (%)
Parent/Caregiver		**Current WIC Utilization**	
Yes	780 (38.5%)	Yes	148 (7.3%)
No	1248 (61.5%)	No	1880 (92.7%)
Adults in Household		**Current Food Pantry Use**	
Two or more adults	1506 (75.5%)	Yes	943 (46.5%)
Female-headed, single adult	280 (14%)	No	1085 (53.5%)
Male-headed, single adult	209 (10.5)%	**Regions in New Jersey**	
English-Speaking		North	796 (42.0%)
Yes	1631 (80.4%)	Central	549 (29.0%)
No	397 (19.6%)	South	549 (29.0%)
Current SNAP Utilization		**Rurality/Urbanicity**	
Yes	475 (23.4%)	Urban county	1548 (81.7%)
No	1553 (76.6%)	Rural county	346 (18.3%)

Figure 1, below, compares each of the thirteen metrics for the first five dimensions of food security between the broad statewide sample to the sample recruited from at risk communities. Higher scores indicate being in a better situation with respect to each metric, with 100 indicating the highest possible score for the metric. The broad statewide sample included participants across the state and used sample weighting to approximate state-representativeness. The sample from communities at risk for food insecurity included participants recruited across nine areas across New Jersey that were identified as experiencing higher rates of food insecurity (Atlantic City, Camden City, Garfield, Newark, Paterson, Pittsgrove, Phillipsburg, Trenton, Salem).

Figure 1. Scores[a] across 13 metrics that assess dimensions of food security in New Jersey: Comparing the broad state wide sample (n=974) to the sample from at risk communities across the state (n=1,054).



[a]Scores are standardized to 0-100 scale, with higher scores being more desirable.

Compared to the broad statewide sample, the participants from at risk communities scored lower for nearly every metric. Particularly large disparities were seen for food choice agency, economic food access, perceived availability of healthy and liked foods in grocery stores, chronic food stability, and food skills and time. These findings indicate that there are areas within New Jersey that are struggling across these five dimensions to a much greater degree than the state overall, and for many in these areas, accessing enough healthy food may be a chronic challenge. According to these findings, at-risk communities may benefit from programs and support to build food purchasing power, increase food options, increase the availability of affordable healthy foods in stores, and building food knowledge and skills.

As a whole, looking at the broad statewide sample only, New Jersey scores relatively high for access to food equipment and sanitary spaces to prepare meals, ability to make health meals form the food options they have, and many experience a stable food situation (e.g., one without monthly or seasonal cycles). Overall, New Jerseyans in the broad statewide sample score relatively lower for availability of healthy and liked foods at stores, feeling like they can engage in activities and processes that can shape the food system around them (e.g., advocate for healthier foods in schools), and for those who utilize food pantries, many felt there were not healthy or liked foods provided. These scores on the broad statewide sample indicate some areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. These scores can serve as a baseline for measuring future progress across these first five dimensions of food security.

Findings Among the Food Insecure Sub-Sample

In this section, we will take a "deep dive" into the food insecure sub-sample by examining responses to individual survey questions (as opposed to examining aggregate scale scores) that are included in the scales described in **Table 1** and shown in **Figure 1**. This section will provide a better understanding of the questions the participants responded to and practical information about the needs of the food insecure sub-sample.

A total of 1,066 households reported experiencing food insecurity (58.4% of the sample with full data). This included those considered to have "low" (23.9%) and "very low" (34.5%) food security using USDA's Household Food Security Survey Module (6-item version). Note that this proportion is higher than USDA estimates due to intentional oversampling in areas most impacted by food insecurity in New Jersey. The following section highlights challenges the food insecure sub-sample faces by taking a deeper look at responses to some of the individual survey questions that were used to calculate food security metrics described in the report. The findings for this sub-section are centered around answering three questions: 1) where do food insecure households in New Jersey get food, 2) when do they have trouble obtaining food, and 3) what challenges do they encounter with preparing healthy meals?

Where do food insecure households in New Jersey get food?

Food insecure households use money from jobs and non-governmental and governmental food assistance programs such as food pantries (69%), SNAP (34%), and WIC (10%). These households shop for food at grocery stores (68%) and "dollar" stores (46%) and frequently also get food for free from food pantries (69%) and friends/family (39%). **Table 3**, below, shows sources of food reported by food insecure households. At stores where participants purchased food, many felt it was "often" or "sometimes" true that stores had few quality fruits and vegetables (76.1%), few foods good for one's health (68.4%), and few foods they liked (68.1%). At food pantries, participants felt it was "often" or "sometimes" true that pantries had few foods they liked (58.8%), few quality fruits and vegetables (58.3%), and few foods good for one's health (56.0%).

Table 3. The percentages of food insecure households in New Jersey that report acquiring food from several different free or purchased sources

Food Sources	n (%)
Free Food Sources	
Food pantry	739 (69.3%)
Friend/family	414 (38.8%)
Food grown/fished/hunted	126 (11.8%)
Found food/discarded food	64 (6.0%)
Purchased Food Sources	
Grocery store/supermarket	725 (68.0%)
Dollar stores	489 (45.9%)
Big box store (e.g., Walmart)	409 (38.4%)
Convenience store/bodega	265 (24.9%)
Wholesale club store (e.g., Costco)	223 (20.9%)
Fruit/vegetable stand	166 (15.6%)
Farmer's market	162 (15.2%)
Restaurant/fast food	154 (14.4%)

When do food insecure households have trouble getting food?

Households were asked three questions about times in which they worried their food would run out, when the food did run out, and when they could not afford a balanced meal. A total of 45.8% of food insecure households indicated they experienced monthly cycles of food insecurity and 42.1% indicated they experienced seasonal cycles of food insecurity. The most common times of the month to experience food insecurity were at the end of the month, followed by the middle. The most common seasons to experience food insecurity were winter, followed by summer. **Table 4** shows the seasons and times of the month where families reported they most struggled with food insecurity. Other temporal types of food security stability reported included intermittent food insecurity (22.2%) and chronic food insecurity (54.4%).

Table 4. For households who reported experiencing cyclical food insecurity, this table displays the seasons and times of the month they reported.

Times Food Insecure	n (%)
Seasons	
Spring	89 (19.2%)
Summer	182 (40.5%)
Fall	101 (22.5%)
Winter	320 (71.3%)
Times of the Month	
Beginning	119 (24.4%)
Middle	211 (43.2%)
End	320 (65.6%)

What challenges did food insecure households encounter with preparing healthy meals?

Households were asked about the barriers they faced with utilizing the food they had access to in order to prepare a healthy meal. There were equipment and space related barriers and barriers related to food, skills, and time. The most reported tangible food equipment barrier was lacking kitchen tools and equipment (44.2%) and the most common food, skills, and time barrier was lacking healthy ingredients to make a healthy meal (70.0%). **Table 5**, below, shows the frequency of responses to all eight challenges households were asked about.

Table 5. Reported barriers food insecure households faced when utilizing their accessed food they had access to in order to prepare a healthy meal.

Challenges faced when preparing healthy meals	n (%)
Food Equipment Challenges	
Did not have the kitchen tools or utensils needed to cook meals (e.g., pots, pans, a stirrer, can opener, knife, spoons/forks, or other utensils).	461 (44.2%)
Did not have a way to cook meals (e.g., stove, oven, microwave, hot plate or other appliance).	439 (42.1%)
Did not have access to a refrigerator, freezer, or other way to keep food from spoiling.	437 (41.8%)
Did not have a clean and sanitary area to prepare meals.	394 (38.1%)
Food, Skills, and Time Challenges	
Could not make a healthy meal from the food options we had.	728 (70.0%)
Did not have time to cook meals.	653 (62.7%)
Did not know how to select healthy foods from the food options we had.	630 (60.6%)
Did not know how to make homemade meals from the food options we had (e.g., "meals from scratch" or meals without pre-made items).	549 (53.0%)

The overall findings in this section show that food insecure households in New Jersey are not utilizing SNAP at high rates, instead many may be relying on food pantries more frequently. Despite low SNAP rates, food insecure households are supplementing food they get from pantries (and friends and family) with purchasing food at grocery stores, dollar stores, and "big box" stores. Also, the end and middle of the month and winter and summer are when households may struggle the most with food insecurity. Finally, households face both tangible and intangible challenges to preparing healthy meals, such as lacking cooking equipment, healthful ingredients, or time to cook healthy meals. These findings can help inform tailored intervention approaches and will be incorporated into the recommendations section at the end of the report.

Comparing Food Security Metrics Across Sub-Groups

For the following section, we examine the full sample (n=2,028) of survey respondents and all 13 metrics that span the first five dimensions of food insecurity – availability, access, utilization, stability, and agency. In this section, we compare various demographic and geographic sub-groups across the metrics. This section is intended to identify strengths and challenges of certain groups, which may inform targeting of intervention approaches. The sub-groups included in this section are grouped by parenting status, number of adults in the household, language use, food assistance program utilization, regions within NJ, rurality, age, income, and race/ethnicity.

Currently Parenting/Caregiving

This analysis compared food insecurity metrics for participants who reported actively parenting/caregiving a child under 18 years old (n=780; referred to as "parents") versus participants who did not have children in their household or whose children were adults (n=1,248; referred to as "non-parents"). The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by parental status, which could inform policy and system changes.

When comparing these groups, it is important to acknowledge that they differ in other ways, besides their parental/caregiving responsibilities. For example, non-parents were on average older, had higher incomes, and had higher educational attainment. These factors can help explain some of the group differences in **Figures 2 and 3**, below.

Figure 2. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing parents and non-parents.

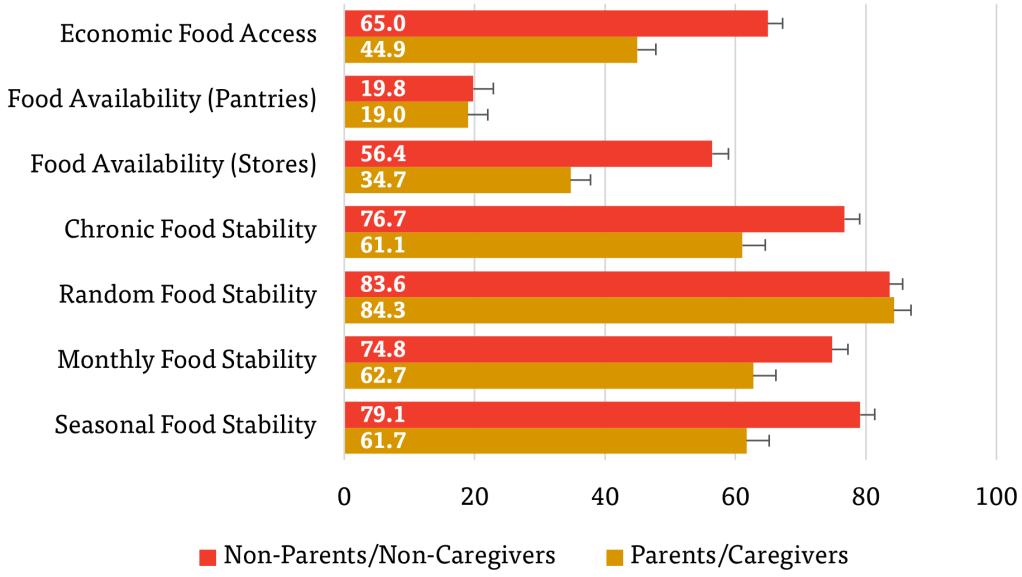
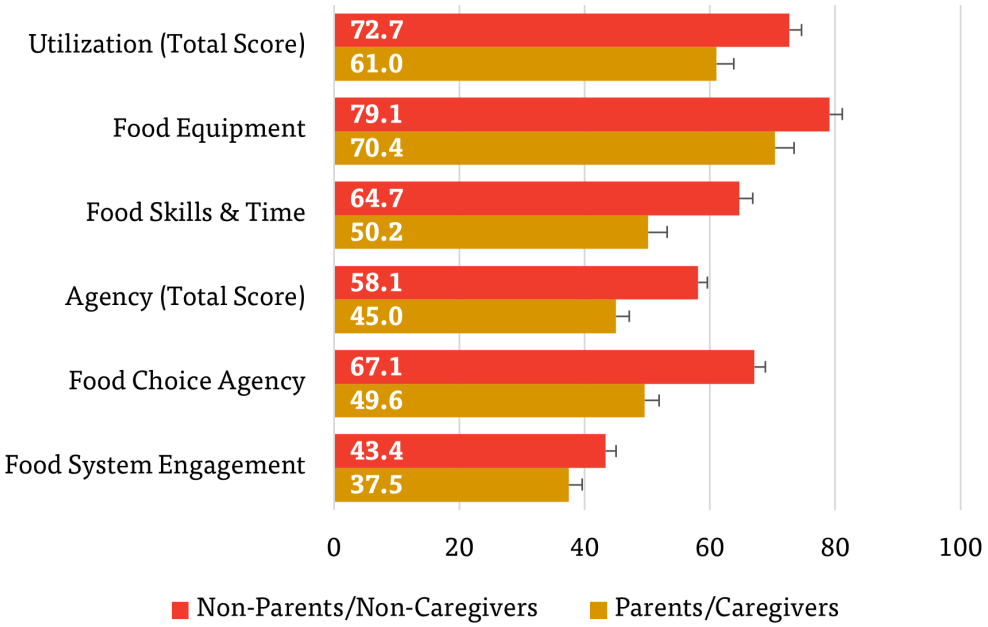


Figure 3. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing parents and non-parents.



Nonetheless, highlighting the differences between these groups can be helpful in targeting and developing policy and systems-based solutions. **Figures 2 and 3** show that for most of the metrics, parents scored worse than non-parents. Most notably, parents struggled with economic food access and limited availability of healthy foods in their area. They were also more likely to be chronically food insecure and have monthly and seasonal fluctuations in their food security status. Additionally, parents faced more utilization barriers (particularly limitations in food skills and time to cook) and felt they had less ability to act on their food preferences. These findings show that parents in New Jersey generally need more support across the five dimensions to address food insecurity.

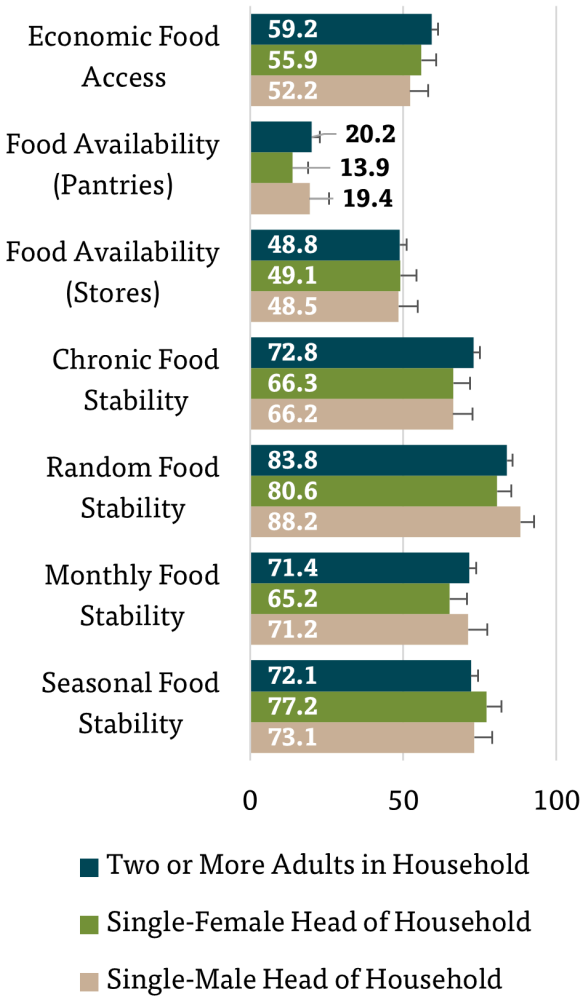
Single-Head Households

This analysis compared households with two or more adults (n=1,506) to households with one adult (referred to as "single-headed households"). Additionally, the single-headed households were broken into female-headed (n=280) and male-headed (n=209). The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by household composition and reported gender of single-headed households, which could inform policy and system changes.

There are important differences between these households that must be considered when interpreting the results. For example, respondents for households with two or more adults were, on average, younger, had higher incomes, and were more likely to be parents, compared to single-headed households. Single female-headed and single male-headed households also differed. Female-headed households had higher education and were more likely to be parents but were similar by income and age to male-headed households.

For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 4**, these household types did not vary significantly; however, female-headed households had numerically lower scores for having healthy foods available at food pantries.

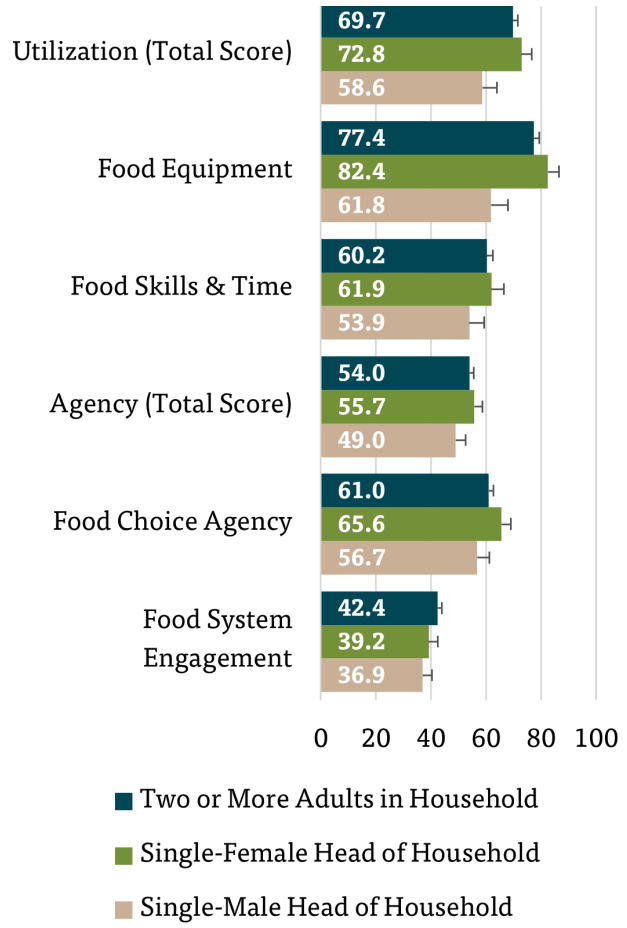
Figure 4. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing single-headed households to multi-adult households.

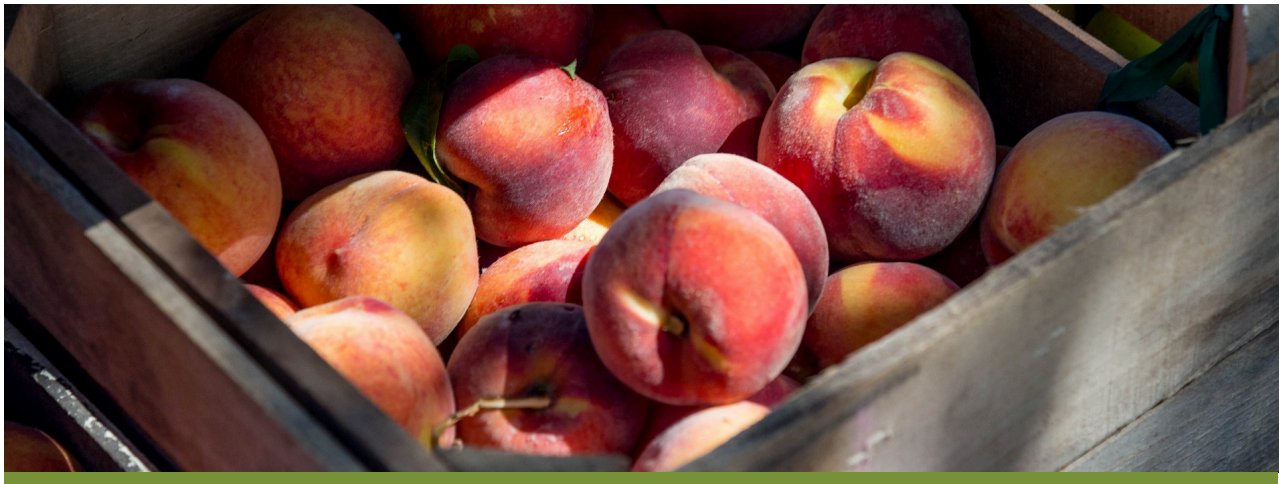


For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 5**, male-headed households scored significantly lower than female-headed households when it comes to being able to use available food to prepare healthy meals, with their lower score being driven by reported deficits in food preparation and storage equipment, and sanitary places to prepare meals. These findings show that while single-headed households in New Jersey did not always score lower than households with two adults, when they did, needs might be different for female-headed and male-headed households.

> "It mostly depends on factors that are not entirely up to us like the prices at grocery stores that are too high for us to be able to afford to make a healthy and balanced meal."
>
> ~ New Jersey Resident

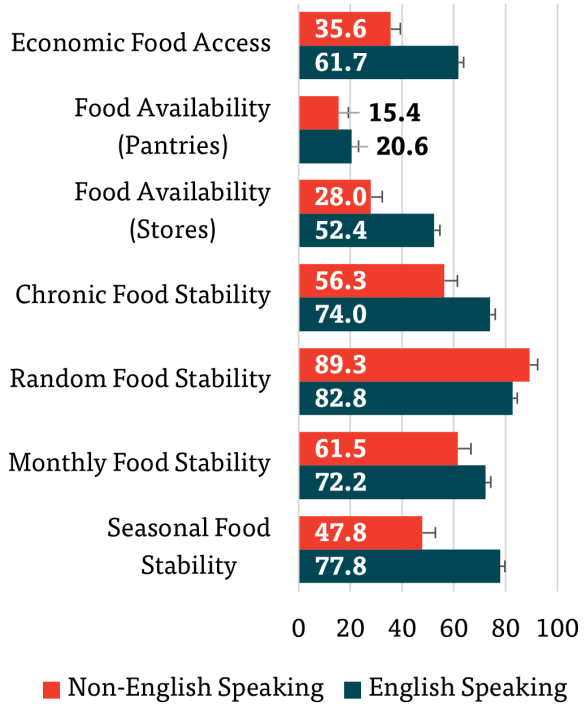
Figure 5. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing single-headed households to multi-adult households.





Language Use

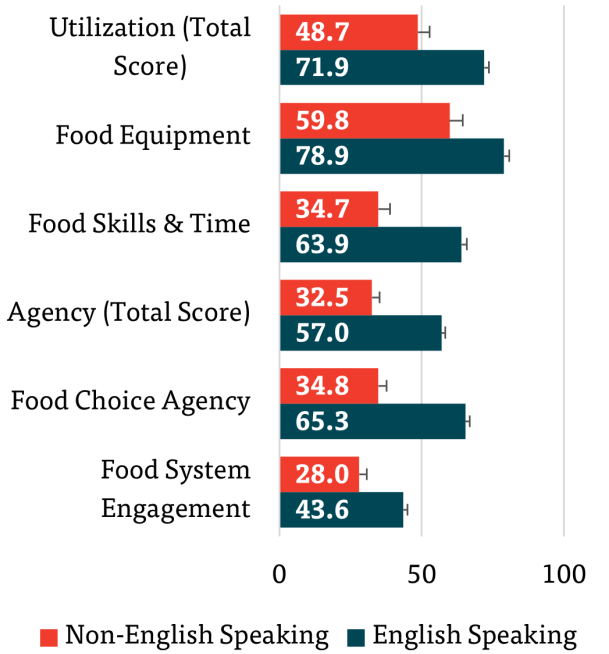
Figure 6. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing English and Non-English Speakers.



This analysis compared households with a respondent who took the survey in English (n=1,631, referred to as "English-speaking") to households with a respondent who took the survey in any other language (n=397, referred to as "non-English-speaking"). The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by language use, which could inform policy and system changes. English-speaking participants were on average older, had higher incomes, had higher educational attainment, and were less likely to be parents compared to non-English-speaking participants. These differences are important to note when interpreting the findings.

For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 6**, non-English-speaking participants reside in households with significantly lower financial access to food, lower availability of healthy food in stores, and were more likely to experience chronic food insecurity and seasonal variation in their food insecurity status. For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 7**, non-English-speaking participants reside in households that score lower on every metric, especially for having food skills and time to prepare healthy meals and in food choice agency (or the ability to act on their own food choices to meet their own food needs). These findings show that non-English-speaking New Jersey households may face greater challenges across five dimensions of food insecurity and may benefit from additional support using language-accessible approaches.

Figure 7. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing English and Non-English Speakers.



Assistance Use: SNAP, WIC, and Food Pantries

This analysis compared households that utilized the SNAP program (n=475; referred to as "SNAP users"), the WIC program (n=148; referred to as "WIC users"), and/or food pantries (n=943; referred to as "food pantry clients"), to non-SNAP (n=1,553), non-WIC (n=1,880), and non-food-pantry (n=1,085) households, respectively. The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by assistance utilization program or type.

It is important to note that many of the survey participants were recruited at food pantries, leading to the high number represented in the dataset. Also, the choice to utilize assistance programs in the first place often indicates food insecurity. So, it is expected that SNAP, WIC, and food pantry users will score lower than those who do not access these programs. What is more important to examine is differences in need across users of these three assistance types. Also, users of these assistance types differ in important ways such as WIC users being younger, less likely to speak English, and more likely to be parents than the other two groups. All three are similar for income and educational attainment.

Figure 8. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing SNAP users to Non-SNAP users.

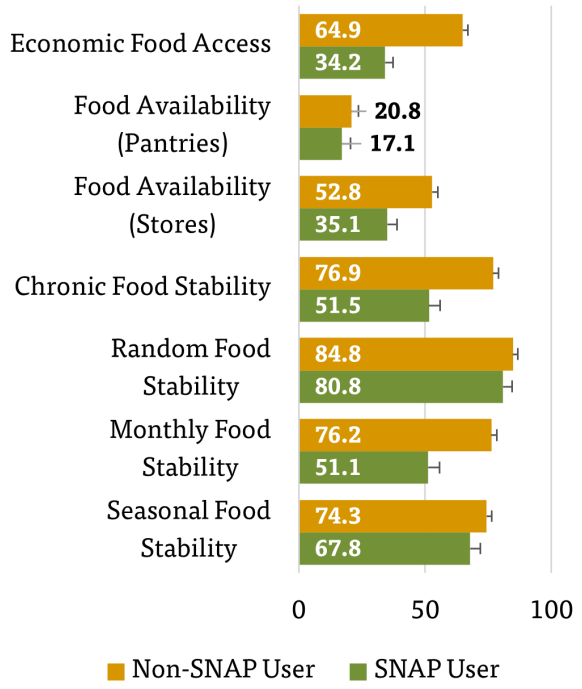
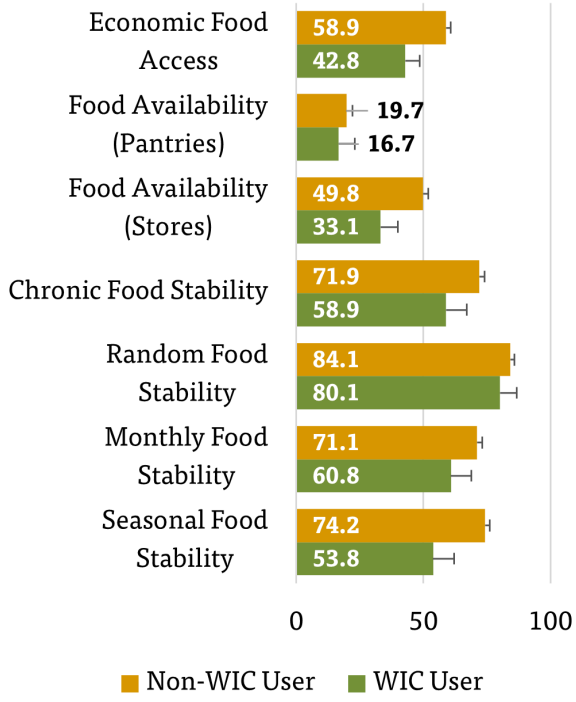
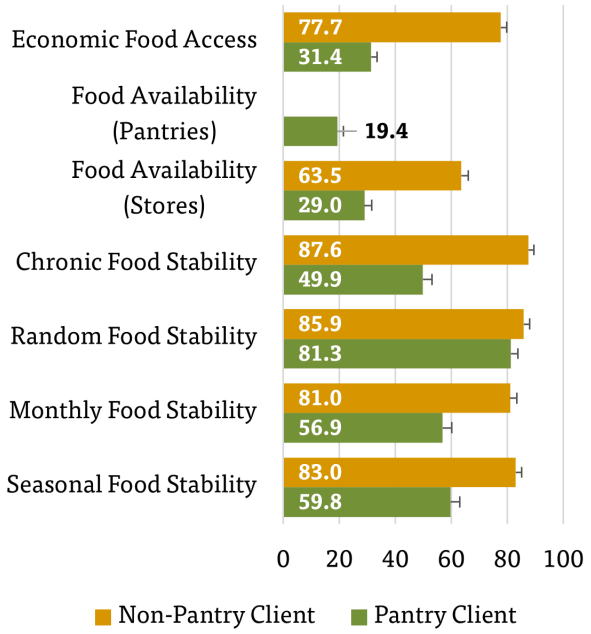


Figure 9. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing WIC users to Non-WIC users.



For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figures 8, 9, and 10**, WIC users generally scored higher across the metrics, with SNAP users and food pantry clients scoring similarly to each other. Of note: food pantry clients scored lower than the other groups for having availability of healthy foods in nearby food stores, which may partially drive them to seek out food pantries. Another finding is that WIC users were more likely to face seasonal cycles of food insecurity, possibly driven by external factors such as other children in the household losing access to school lunch during the summer. These findings indicate that SNAP users and food pantry clients in New Jersey may need additional support when compared to WIC users, in general. However, WIC users may especially benefit from support to address seasonal food insecurity.

Figure 10. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing food pantry clients to non-food-pantry clients.



"I don't have a lot of money so I can't buy the foods that I like nor do I have transportation to go to stores."

~ New Jersey Resident

For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figures 11, 12, and 13**, WIC users did not significantly differ from non-WIC users for utilization metrics, while SNAP users were significantly lower than non-SNAP users, and food pantry clients had even larger disparities between themselves and non-food-pantry-clients. Food pantry clients need support with food equipment, food skills, and time for preparing healthy meals. For agency, all groups scored significantly lower than non-WIC and non-SNAP users, especially with disparities in their perceived ability to act on their own food choices. WIC users did not differ from non-users for food system engagement agency, but SNAP users and food pantry clients did significantly differ on this metric from non-users. These findings indicate that SNAP users and especially food pantry clients in New Jersey need support to gain food equipment and skills needed to prepare healthy meals from the foods they have access to. Additionally, all three groups perceive limited agency, especially related to food choices, and could use more support in these areas.

Figure 11. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing SNAP users to Non-SNAP users.

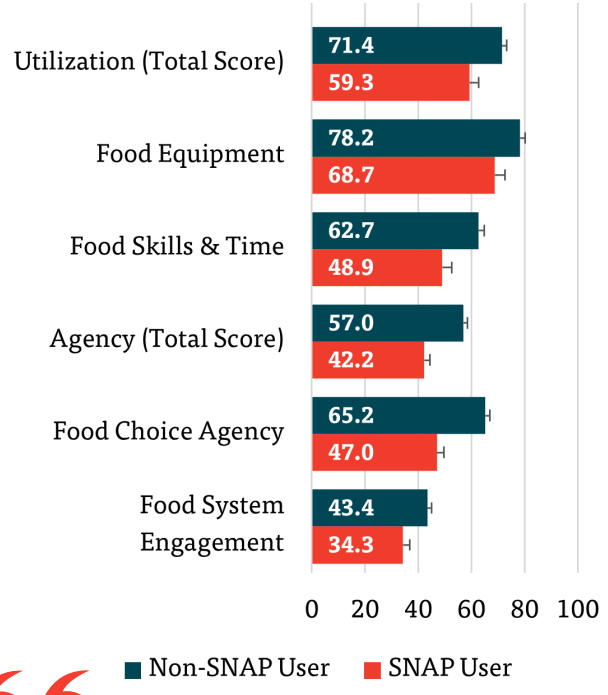
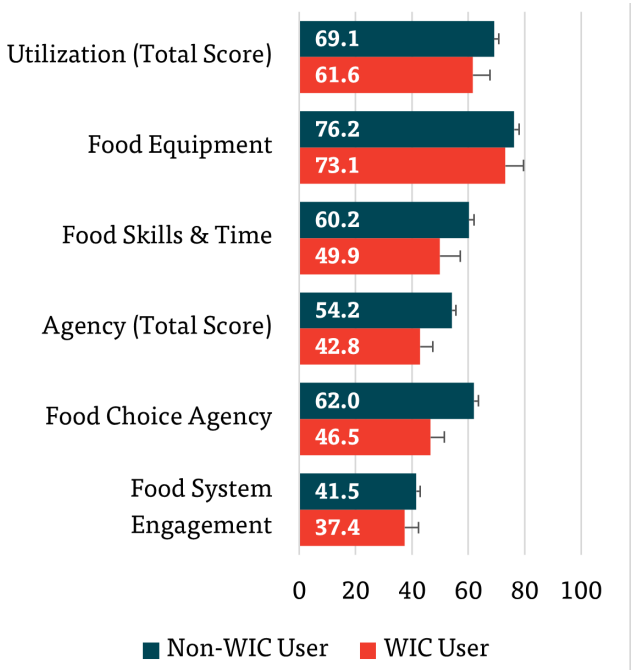


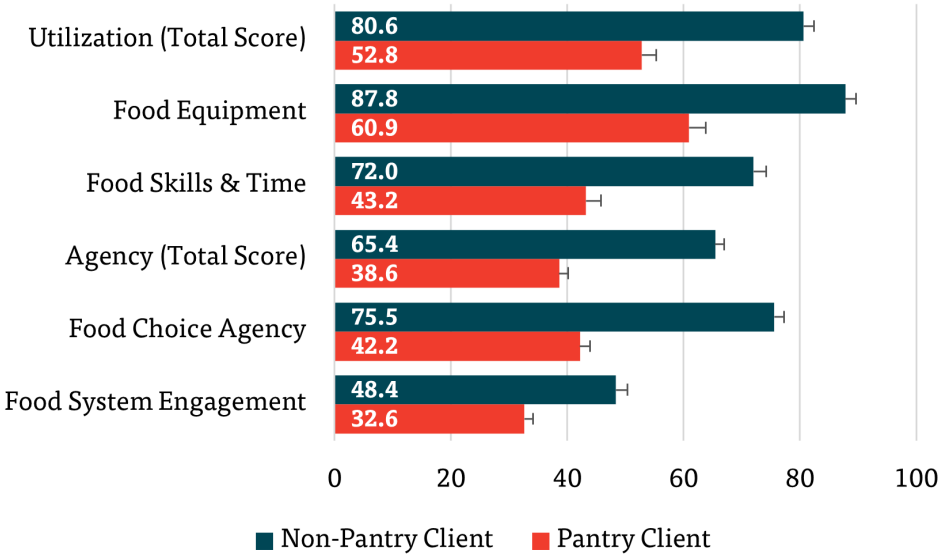
Figure 12. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing WIC users to Non-WIC users.



"We have little to no power over food growth or impact over what can be done about making sure there is a better distribution of healthy foods in the area to families of all incomes."

~ New Jersey Resident

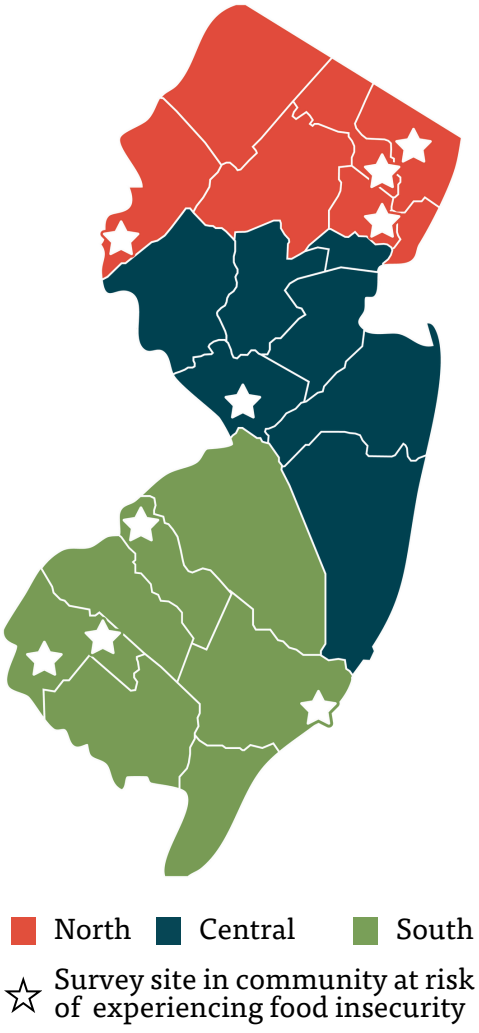
Figure 13. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing food pantry clients to non-food-pantry clients.



Regions within New Jersey

This analysis compared households located in North (n=796), Central (n=549), and South (n=549) Jersey. Counties were assigned one of the three regions based on the Office of the Governor's Official Map of Central Jersey, from both the broad statewide sample and at risk community sample. Central Jersey is considered to include Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset, and Union counties. Counties above Central Jersey were considered North Jersey and counties below Central Jersey were considered South Jersey. The purpose of analyzing the regional data was to see if food insecurity needs vary by region within New Jersey, which could inform targeted policy and system changes.

Central Jersey participants were on average older, had higher incomes, and had higher educational attainment compared to the other two regions. Also, South Jersey participants were more likely to speak English compared to North Jersey participants, but had no difference with Central Jersey participants. Finally, North Jersey participants were more likely to be parents than Central Jersey participants, but not more likely than South Jersey. These differences are important to note when interpreting the findings.



For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 14**, North and South Jersey scored similarly and typically lower than Central Jersey across most of the metrics. Central Jersey particularly scored better for economic food access and experiencing less chronic food insecurity. For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 15**, again, North and South Jersey scored similarly and typically lower than Central Jersey across most of the metrics. Central Jersey particularly scored better for being able to utilize accessible food to make healthy meals and for food choice agency. These findings show that households in North and South Jersey, compared to Central Jersey, may face similar food insecurity struggles and could benefit from increased support across five dimensions of food insecurity.

Figure 14. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing North, Central, and South Jersey.

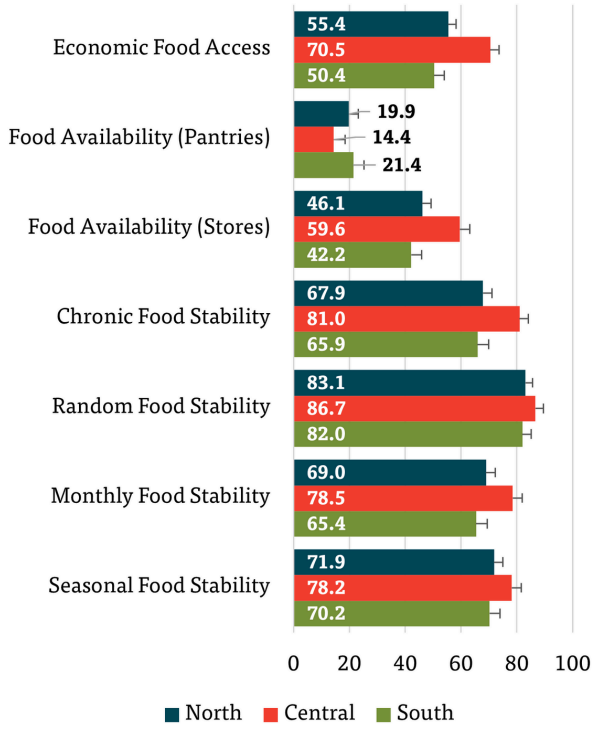
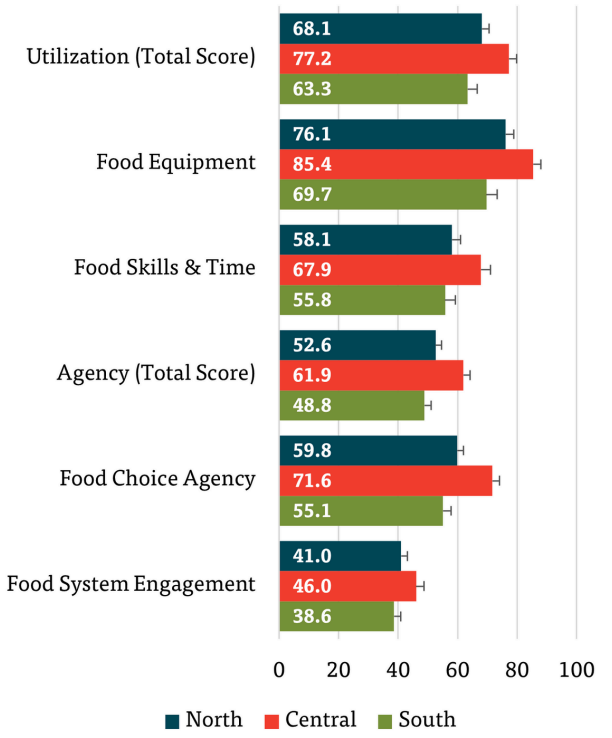


Figure 15. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing North, Central, and South Jersey.



Rurality/Urbanicity

This analysis compared households located in rural counties (n=346) to those in urban counties (n=1,548). Rurality was based on the New Jersey State Office of Rural Health (NJSORH) designations. The following counties were considered rural: Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Hunterdon, Salem, Sussex, and Warren. Non-rural counties were considered urban counties. The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by rurality/urbanicity within New Jersey, which could inform targeted policy and system changes.

Participants from households in rural counties, on average, had lower incomes and educational attainment and were more likely to be parents compared to households in urban counties. These differences are important to note when interpreting the findings.

For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 16**, both rural and urban households scored similarly across the metrics, with rural counties generally scoring slightly lower numerically. Rural counties may also experience more monthly cycles of food insecurity on average. For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 17**, households in rural counties scored higher for being able to utilize accessible food to make healthy meals, which was driven by better access to food preparation and storage equipment and sanitary places to prepare meals. The two groups did not differ for agency scores or sub-scores. These findings show that households in rural and urban counties may face different food insecurity challenges. Specifically, households in urban counties may benefit from support to address food equipment needs for meal preparation, while households in rural counties may benefit from support to address monthly fluctuations in food insecurity.

Figure 16. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing rural and urban counties.

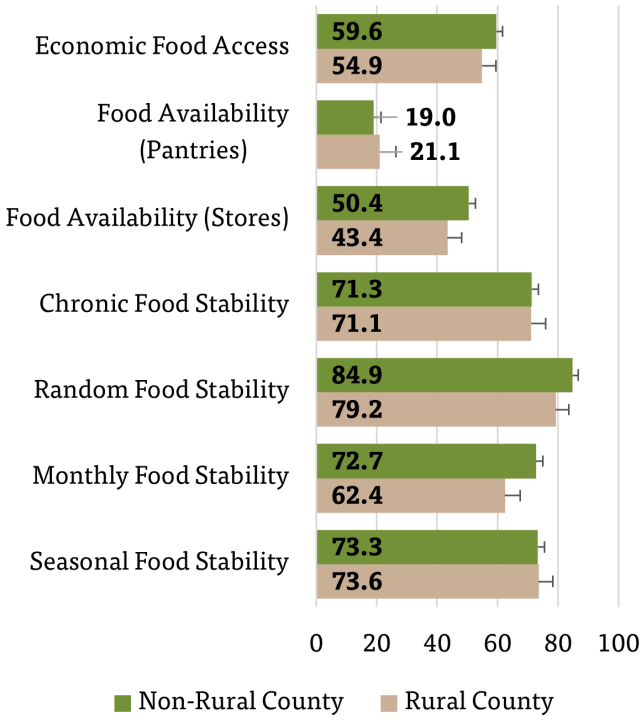
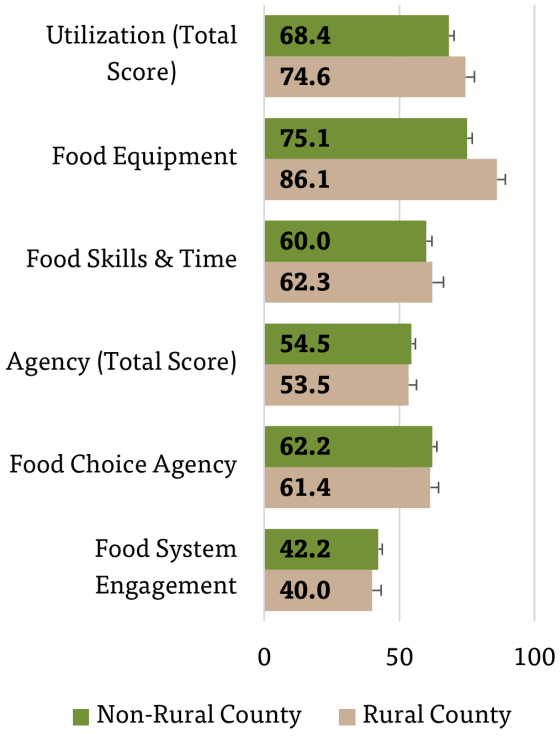


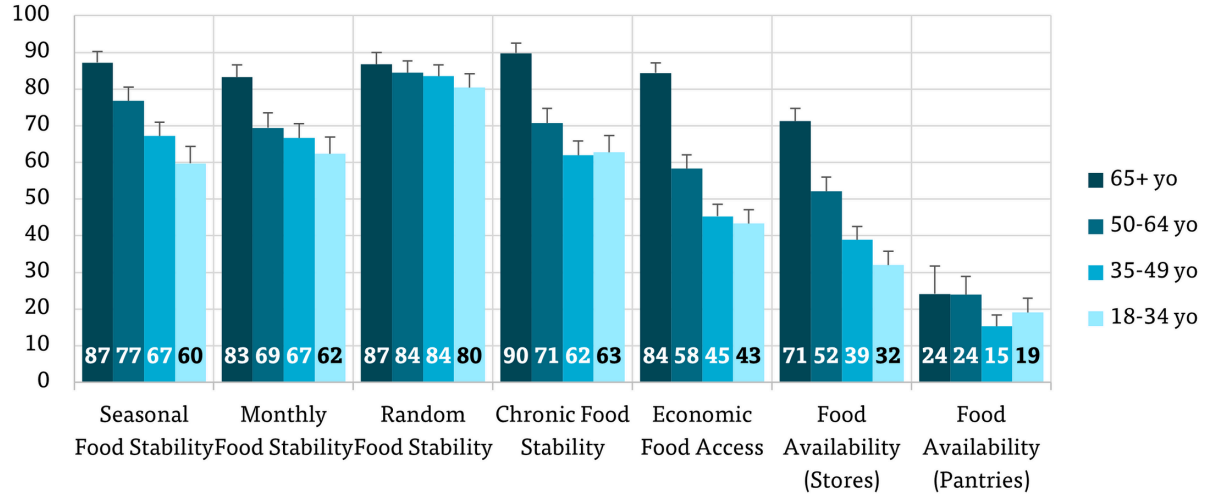
Figure 17. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing rural and urban counties.



Age

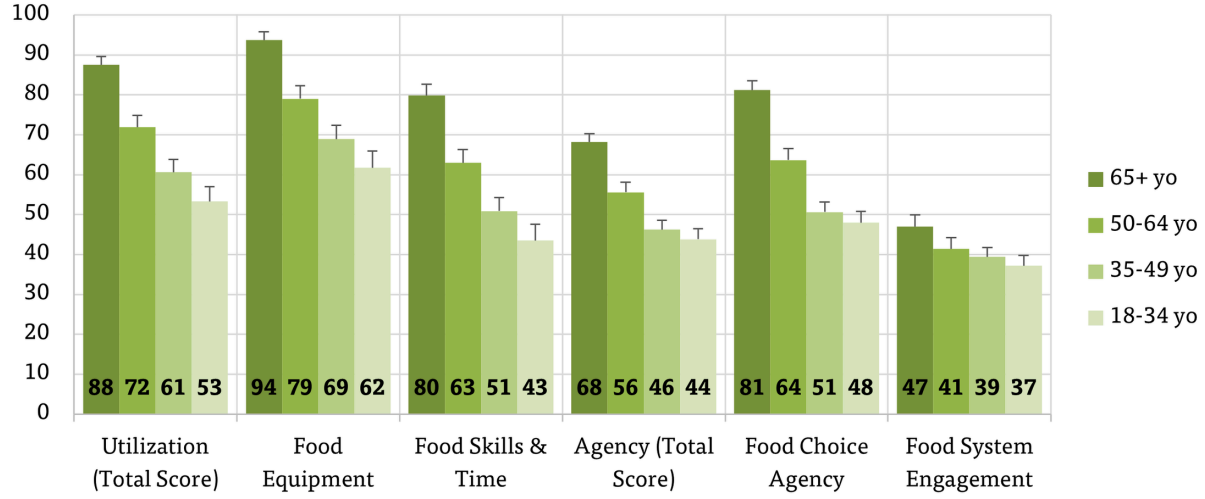
This analysis compared households across age groups: 18-34 years old (n=450), 35-49 years old (n=621), 50-64 years old (n=508), and 65+ years old (n=449). The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by age group. It is also important to consider differences across age groups when interpreting the findings. Income, education, and the percentage of English speaking participants generally increased with age, while likelihood of actively parenting a minor child decreased with age.

Figure 18. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing across age groups.



For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 18**, participants generally scored higher across all metrics as age increased. For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 19**, a similar and even more pronounced pattern was seen where scores increased with age. These findings show that younger New Jersey households, on average, may need more support across food insecurity dimensions, compared to older households.

Figure 19. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing across age groups.



Monthly Household Income

This analysis compared households across income groups: $0-$2,000 per month (n=835), $2,001-$4,000 per month (n=375), $4,001-$8,000 per month (n=263), and $8,001+ per month (n=255). The purpose of this analysis was to see to what extent food insecurity needs vary by monthly household income. It's also important to consider differences across income groups when interpreting the findings. Age, education, and the percentage of English-speaking participants generally increased with income, while likelihood of actively parenting a minor child decreased, particularly when comparing the two highest to the two lowest income groups.

For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 20**, participants generally scored higher across all metrics as income increased, particularly for economic food access and chronic food insecurity. For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 21**, a similar pattern was observed. For many metrics, the two highest income groups scored similarly. These findings show that income is unsurprisingly associated with lower scores across food insecurity metrics, and households making under $4,000 per month may be especially at risk.

Figure 20. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing across income groups.

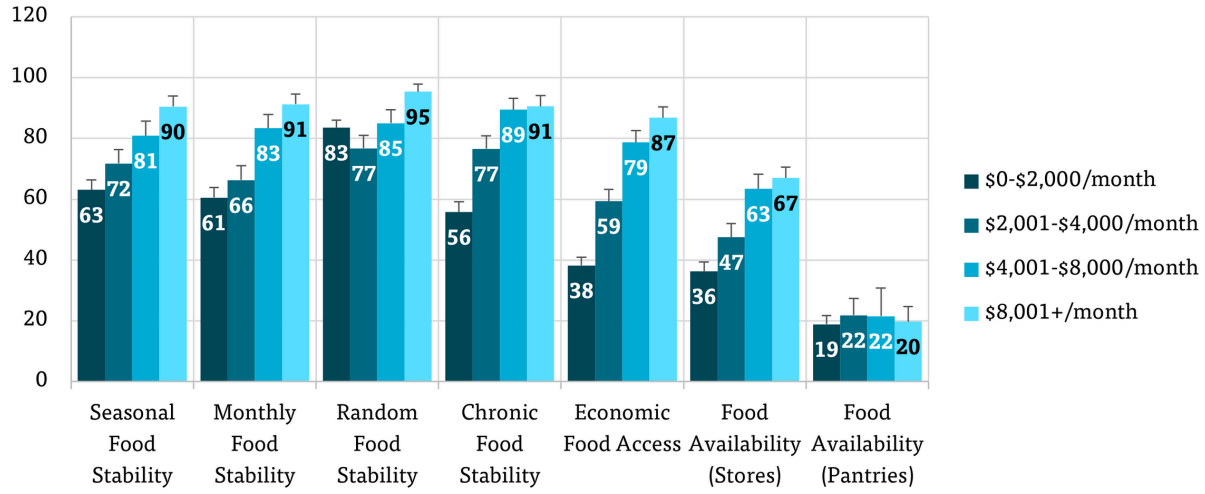
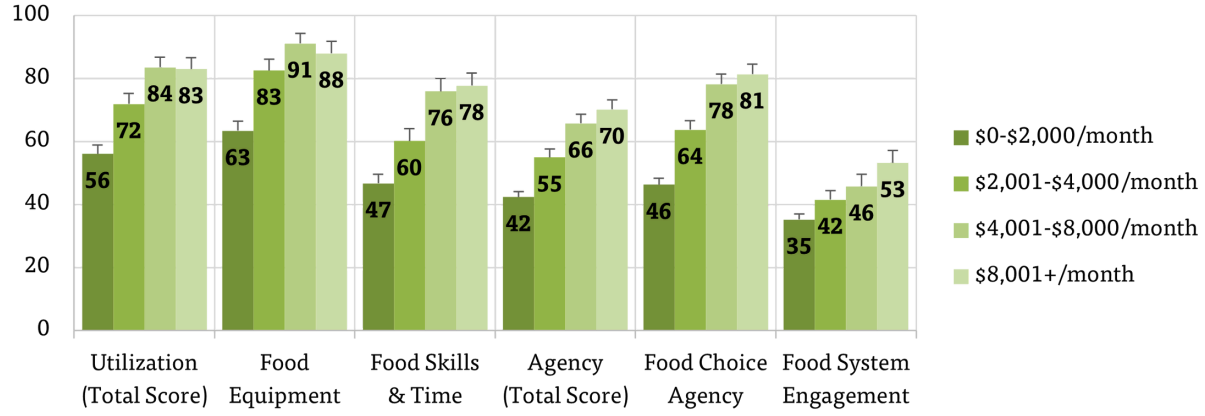


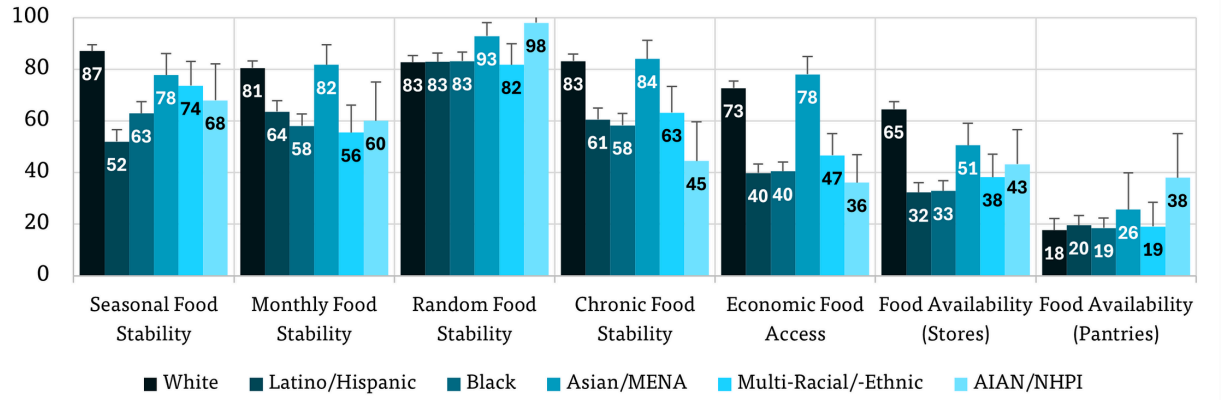
Figure 21. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing across income groups.



Race/Ethnicity

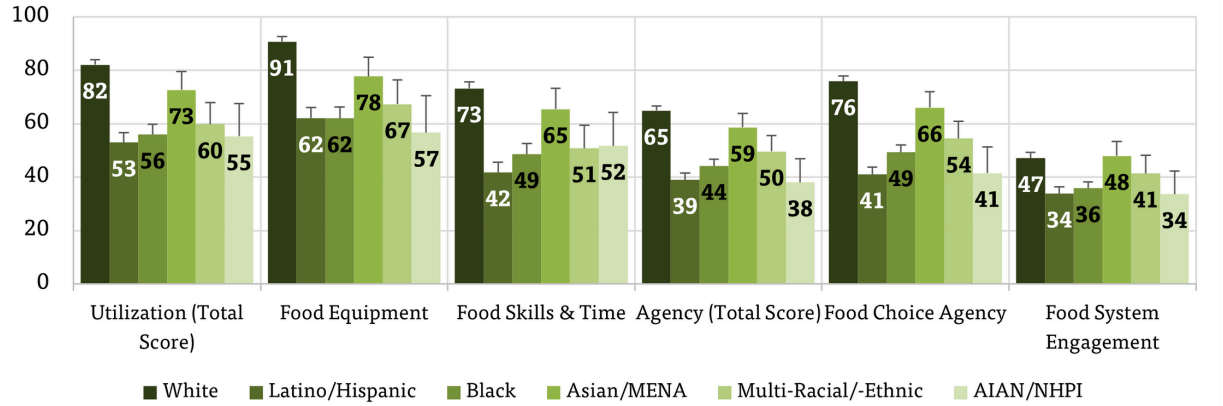
This analysis compared households across racial/ethnic groups: White (n=771), Latino (n=478), Black (n=437), Asian or Middle Eastern/North African (n=99; referred to as "Asian/MENA"; note: due to the small size of the MENA group, it was combined with the Asian group due to geographic and cultural similarities), multi-racial/-ethnic (n=87), and American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (n=43; referred to as "AIAN/NHPI"). The purpose of this analysis was to see if food insecurity needs vary by group. It's also important to consider differences across these groups when interpreting the findings. For example, Asian/MENA and White participants had higher average incomes and education than the other groups. Also, parenting, English speaking, and age varied across the groups.

Figure 22. Metrics for economic food access, food availability, and stability of access across time: Comparing across racial/ethnic groups.



For the access, availability, and stability metrics in **Figure 22**, White and Asian/MENA participants generally scored the highest across metrics, and Latino and Black participants generally scored the lowest. For the utilization and agency metrics in **Figure 23**, a similar pattern was observed. These findings show that, relative to White and Asian/MENA New Jerseyans, those who are Latino and Black may benefit from additional support across the dimensions of food insecurity.

Figure 23. Metrics for food utilization and agency: Comparing across racial/ethnic groups.



SUSTAINABILITY

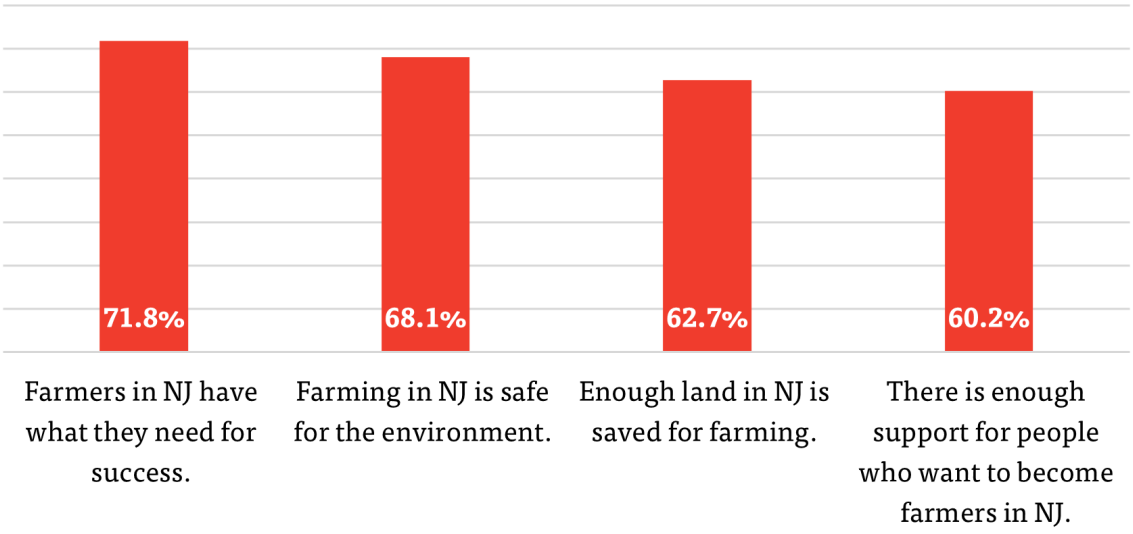
Findings Among New Jersey Residents

As part of the resident survey, respondents were asked to rank 12 food system sustainability issues as low, medium, or high importance to address in NJ. The goal of these survey items was to understand the NJ residents' top priorities to ensure the food system's ability to provide long-term food security.

While most items were ranked as high importance, a few stood out as top priorities for NJ residents. Regarding issues related to agriculture and land use (**Figure 24**), almost three-quarters of respondents (71.8%) agreed that a high priority for food system sustainability is for farmers in NJ to have what they need for success. Fewer residents ranked having enough land in NJ saved for farming (62.7%) and having enough support for people who want to become farmers in NJ (60.2%).

Agriculture & Land Use

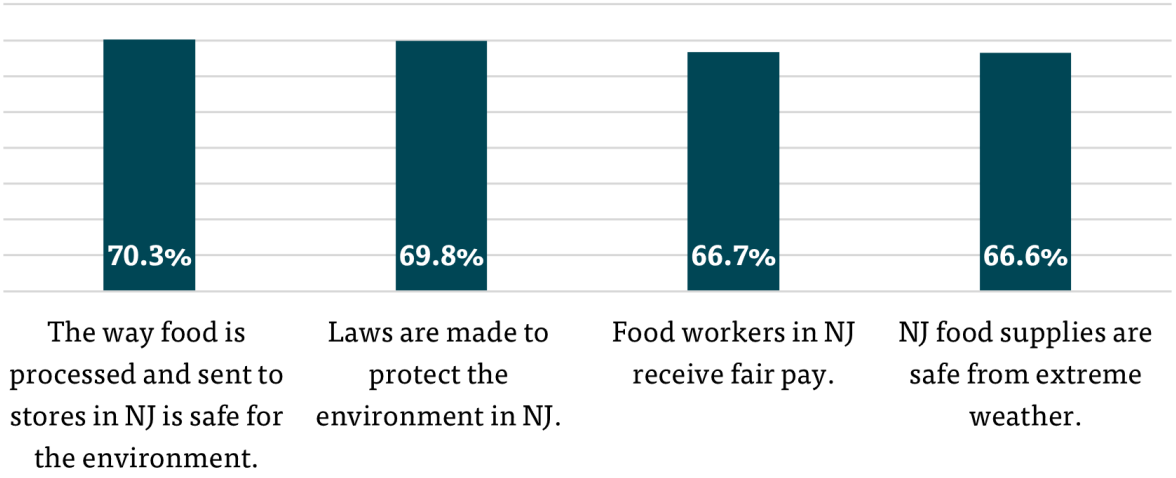
Figure 24. The percentage of New Jersey community members who felt the following Agriculture & Land Use issues were a "high" priority to address.



Food System Resilience

For issues related to food system resilience (**Figure 25**), most respondents agreed that the way food is processed and sent to stores in NJ should be safe for the environment (70.3%) and that laws should be made to protect the environment in NJ (69.8%).

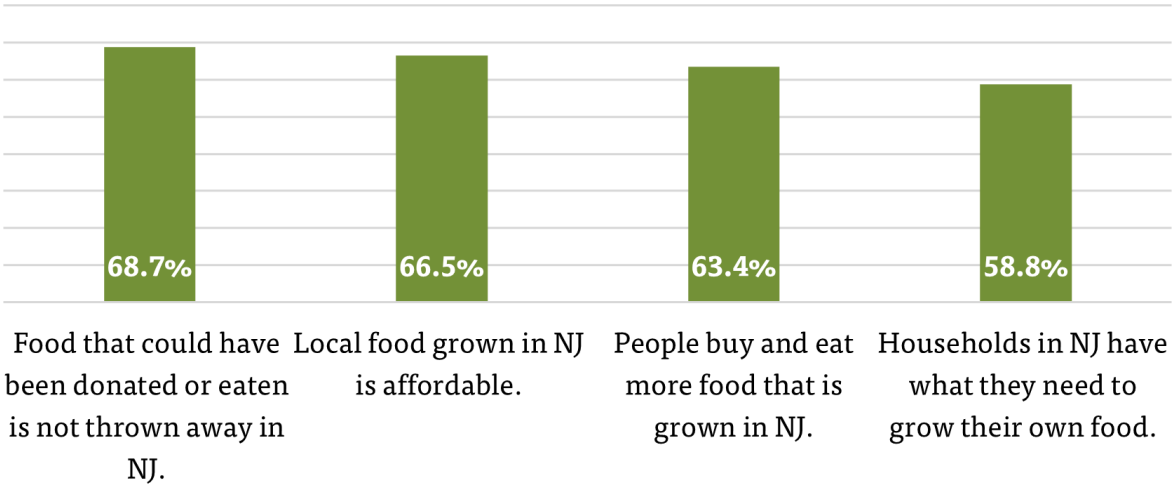
Figure 25. The percentage of New Jersey community members who felt the following Food System Resilience issues were a "high" priority to address.



Local Food & Food Waste

Regarding issues of local food and food waste (**Figure 26**), NJ residents agreed that households having what they need to grow their own food (58.8%) was less important than the other topics.

Figure 26. The percentage of New Jersey community members who felt the following Local Food & Food Waste issues were a "high" priority to address.



Findings Among Food System Experts

Due to the complexity of topics related to food system sustainability, such as agricultural practices, markets, costs, and climate, we developed a supplemental sustainability survey for NJ food system experts. The food system expert survey complements the residents' perspectives on sustainability. We worked with OFSA and their Executive Committee to identify a sample of participants for this survey (e.g., farmers, agriculture advocates, state agency representatives, private sector, philanthropy, emergency food assistance, etc.). We collected surveys from 61 food system experts across New Jersey from February through April 2025.

Survey respondents reported their area(s) of expertise within the food system (**Table 6**). The majority (75.4%) reported expertise in food security, including emergency food, food justice, and health and nutrition assistance programs. There was also well-distributed representation of experts in food production (39.3%), food manufacturing and retail (37.7%), environmental issues (34.4%), and economic development (31.2%). Most respondents were between 31 and 60 years old (77.6%), the majority were White (83.6%), and over half identified as a woman (60.7%). A third of respondents worked statewide (32.8%), and at least four experts from each county took the survey. Additional sample characteristics are shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6a. Characteristics of food system experts who participated in the sustainability survey (n=61)

Expertise [a]	n (%)
Food security, food justice, emergency food, and health and nutrition assistance programs	46 (75.4%)
Food production, agriculture and related industries (farming, fishing, and forestry)	24 (39.3%)
Food manufacturing, transportation, distribution, institutional purchasing, and grocery/retail/farmers markets	23 (37.7%)
Environmental issues, food waste/recovery, and sustainability	21 (34.4%)
Economic and/or agricultural development, urban and rural planning	19 (31.2%)

[a]Participants were allowed to select multiple areas of expertise.

Table 6b. Characteristics of food system experts who participated in the sustainability survey (n=61[a])

Area/County [b]	n (%)
Statewide	20 (32.8%)
Mercer County	13 (21.3%)
Camden County	11 (18.0%)
Essex County	10 (16.4%)
Middlesex County	10 (16.4%)
Atlantic County	9 (14.8%)
Passaic County	9 (14.8%)
Burlington County	8 (13.1%)
Gloucester County	8 (13.1%)
Somerset County	8 (13.1%)
Cumberland County	7 (11.5%)
Hunterdon County	7 (11.5%)
Morris County	7 (11.5%)
Salem County	7 (11.5%)
Bergen County	6 (9.8%)
Union County	6 (9.8%)
Warren County	6 (9.8%)
Hudson County	5 (8.2%)
Monmouth County	5 (8.2%)
Ocean County	5 (8.2%)
Cape May County	4 (6.6%)
Sussex County	4 (6.6%

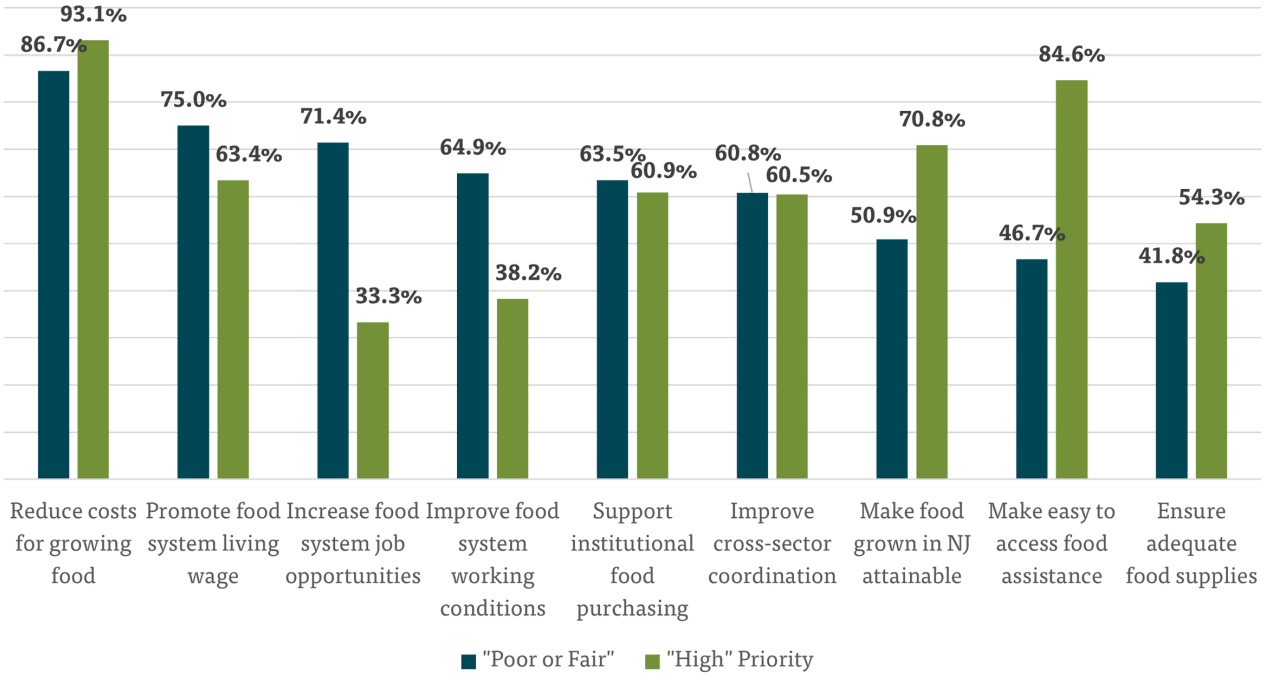
Age	n (%)
18-30 years	4 (6.9%)
31-45 years	25 (43.1%)
46-60 years	20 (34.5%)
Over 60 years	9 (15.5%)
Race/Ethnicity	**n (%)**
White or European American	46 (83.6%)
Hispanic or Latino	4 (7.3%)
Black or African American	3 (5.5%)
Asian or Asian American	3 (5.5%)
Middle Eastern or North African	2 (3.6%)
Gender	**n (%)**
A woman	34 (60.7%)
A man	21 (37.5%)
Some other way	1 (1.8%)

[a]Sample size may vary based on missing responses
[b]Participants were allowed to select multiple counties.

Food system experts were asked about four categories of food system sustainability issues, based on their areas of expertise: 1) Nutrition Security and Food Affordability, 2) Agriculture and Land Use, 3) Food System Economy, and 4) Food System Resilience. These categories were developed based on the New Jersey Food System Dashboard, a tool created by Rutgers University to improve the accessibility and transparency of food system data in NJ. Respondents were asked to rate how well New Jersey was doing across 35 issues within the four categories. Respondents were then asked to indicate which were the highest priorities to address.

Nutrition Security and Food Affordability

Figure 27. Nutrition Security and Food Affordability: Percent Responding "Poor or Fair" & Identifying "High" Priority Issues.



NJ does emergency food and food assistance well. The state must address the root issues of food affordability by reducing the cost of growing food for producers and promoting job opportunities and a living wage for food system workers.

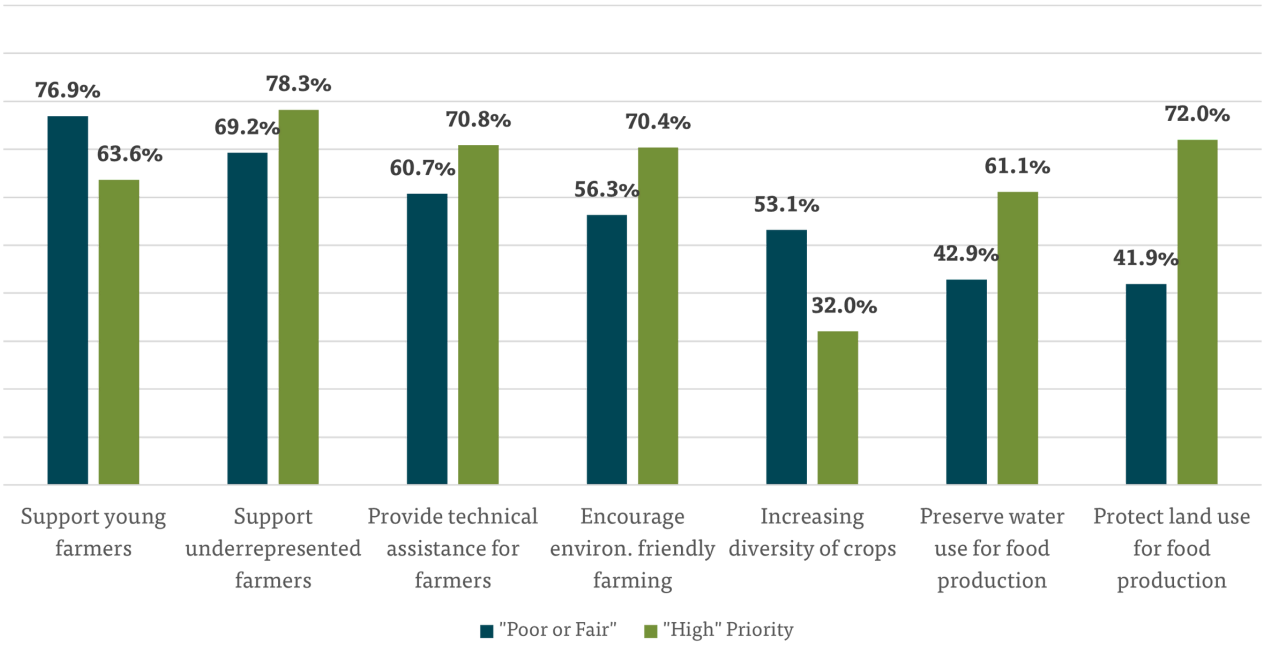
Findings related to Nutrition Security and Food Affordability are shown in **Figure 27**. Experts in nutrition security and food affordability felt that NJ is doing well at ensuring adequate food supplies are available to meet the needs of residents through the efforts of food banks, food pantries, and non-profit organizations. NJ is also doing moderately well at making it easy for residents to access nutrition and food assistance programs when they need them through food pantries and governmental programs. One expert elaborated, "Emergency food seems well covered in the state, but addressing the systemic issues in the food system is the bigger, harder thing to address." Another acknowledged that despite improved access to food assistance programs, recent sociopolitical changes mean this access is "unfortunately likely to become more challenging for NJ residents."

Food system experts agreed that NJ has room for improvement in reducing the cost for farmers to grow food, promoting a living wage for all who work within the food system, and increasing job opportunities in the food system (e.g., farmworkers, factory workers, grocery store staff, and restaurant staff). One expert discussed challenges earning a living wage in the food system: "It is hard to make a living wage working in the food and farming industry, including for owners, let alone the workforce in the company." Experts felt that reducing the cost for producers to grow food, promoting a living wage for food system workers, and continuing to focus on easy access to food assistance programs are the highest priorities to address in NJ.

> "Taking care of those who work in the food system should be placed on an equal priority level as those who experience food insecurity, and those workers are often experiencing food insecurity themselves. Improving working conditions and promoting living wages is an important and high priority piece of this puzzle."
>
> ~ Food System Expert

Agriculture and Land Use

Figure 28. Agriculture and Land Use: Percent Responding "Poor or Fair" & Identifying "High" Priority Issues.

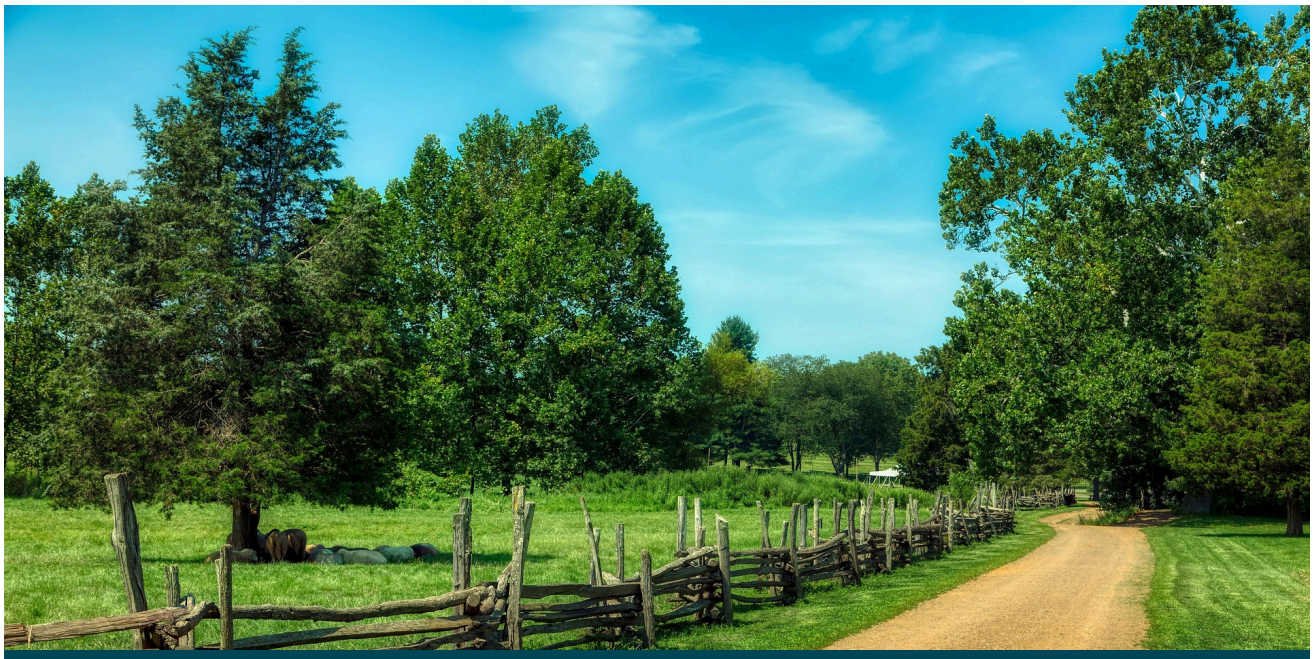


NJ must continue to support farmers by preserving land and water for food production. More support and technical assistance for farmers, especially young and underrepresented farmers, should come in the form of education, training, mentoring, and financial assistance.

Findings related to Agriculture and Land Use are shown in **Figure 28.** According to experts in agriculture and land use, NJ is doing well when it comes to preserving land and water use for food production. One expert emphasized the success of recent efforts in this sphere: "With the recent establishment of the Organic Farming Board and the work of organizations like [Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey] NOFA NJ, food production that prioritize healthy soil, water, and air are heavily promoted." While experts agreed that land preservation for farming is going well, many also felt that this is a high priority to address, as noted by an expert, "As the most densely populated state, with the highest land values, we cannot protect enough land for food production." Other experts noted that it is important to change regulations to encourage urban agriculture, which would help to set aside more land for food production: "It would certainly help to have a state-mandated definition and some guidelines for urban ag because most municipalities go, 'Well the state doesn't recognize it why should we,' but those changes in zoning/ordinances must be adopted at the local level, so someone has to go first to define it."

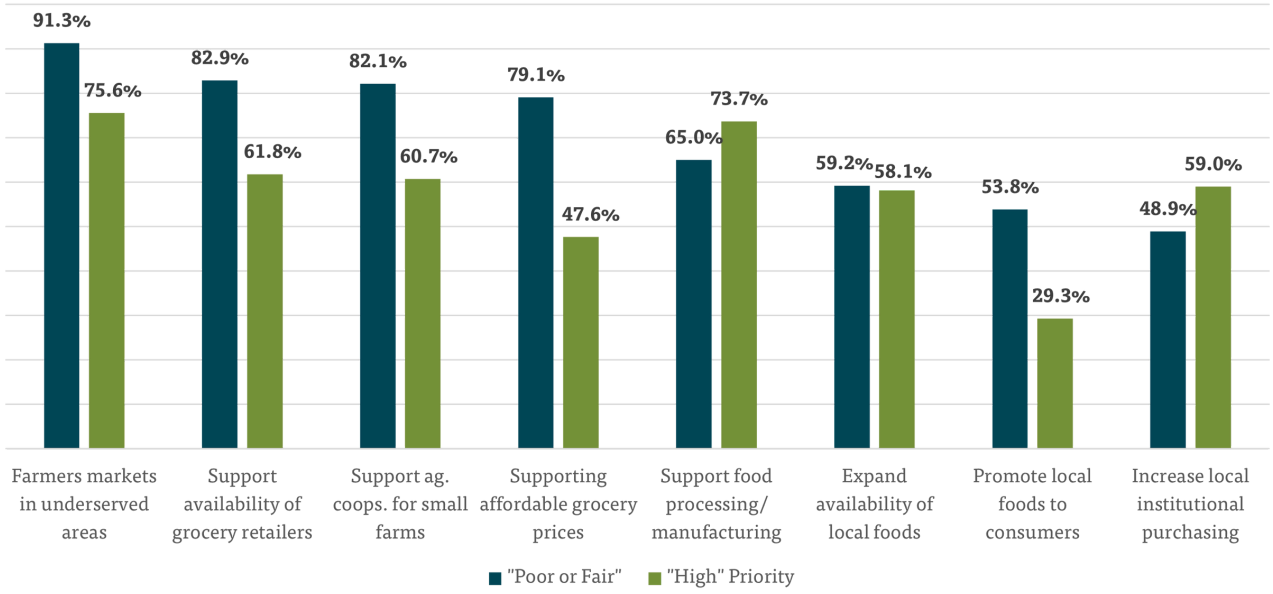
Food system experts felt that NJ should improve support and technical assistance (TA) for farmers, particularly for young and underrepresented farmers (i.e., first-generation producers and producers who have been excluded and underrepresented). One expert mentioned that "NJ has great TA but the largest issue(s) around it are outreach [and] awareness." Support for farmers and future farmers may include education, training, mentoring, and financial support to improve farmers' abilities to manage their business, comply with regulations, and implement better environmental practices. This technical support is especially critical to incentivize sustainable farming practices.

> "Regenerative and organic farming practices are also more labor-intensive and require skilled workers, and there is a need for more resources to be allocated to farmers for operations and training."
>
> ~ Food System Expert



Food System Economics

Figure 29. Food System Economics: Percent Responding "Poor or Fair" & Identifying "High" Priority Issues.



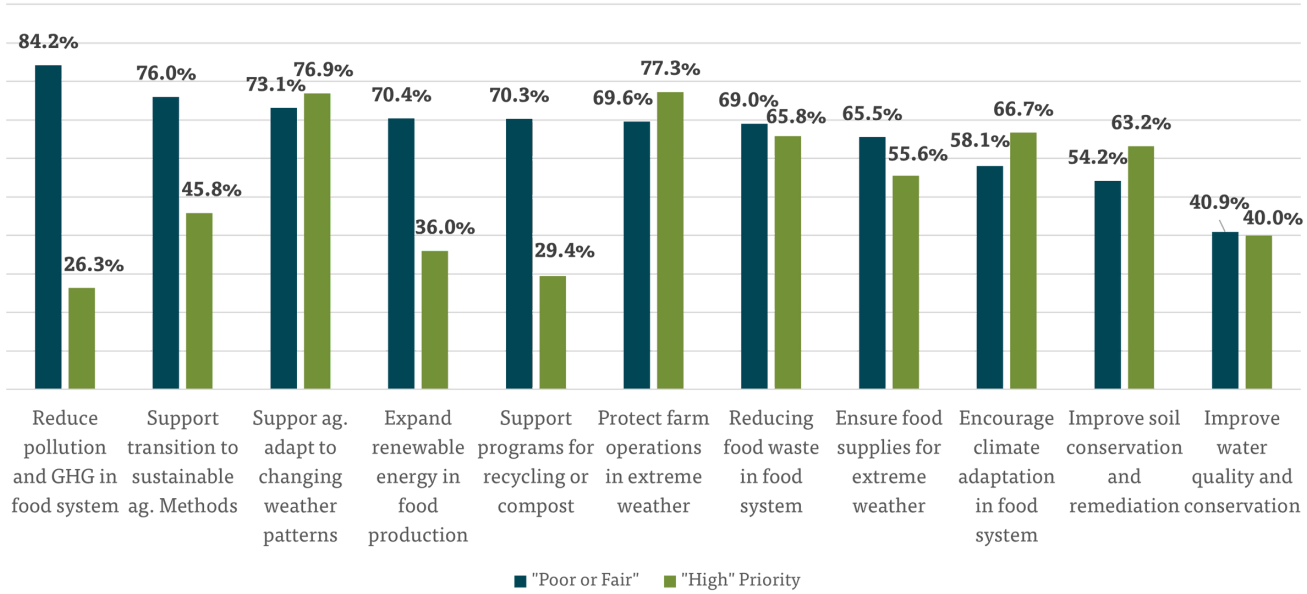
Local food is well-promoted to NJ consumers; however, places to obtain local foods are limited, especially in areas that have been underserved or excluded from economic investments.

Findings related to Food System Economics are shown in **Figure 29**. Efforts to promote local foods to NJ consumers and to increase local institutional food purchasing are going well in NJ, according to experts in food system economics. While local food promotion has been successful, one expert noted that it has historically been limited to the same regions:"We have been promoting locally grown agriculture in the same locations for generations. We need to expand our footprint to hit all areas, including underserved locations; that is a must for the sustainability of the markets."

NJ could improve support for a variety of food retail operations in the state. Experts agreed that farmers markets, grocery stores, and agricultural cooperatives should be supported, which could improve access to markets for producers and access to food for all communities, especially areas that have been underserved or excluded from economic investments. One expert elaborated, "Supporting the cost of local food retail in NJ should be a high priority, and should take into account farmers markets, food hubs, online sales and delivery platforms for farmers, mobile markets, as well as wholesale opportunities for farmers and growers."

Food System Resilience

Figure 30. Food System Resilience: Percent Responding "Poor or Fair" & Identifying "High" Priority Issues.



Experts agree that efforts to conserve soil and water health are going well in NJ. More support is needed for farmers to adapt to climate change to protect farms from extreme weather events and changing weather patterns.

Findings related to Food System Resilience are shown in **Figure 30**. Food system resilience and sustainability experts felt that NJ is doing well when it comes to improving soil and water quality. However, despite moderate agreement on these issues, one expert noted: "I foresee water availability (and management of excess water) as a growing challenge." Experts felt that NJ is not doing enough to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from food system operations or to support a transition to sustainable agricultural methods, but they did not feel these issues are the highest priority to address.

Experts agreed that climate adaptation methods, such as supporting farmers to adapt to changing weather patterns and providing financial protection for farmers during extreme weather events, are the highest priority to address. One expert shared: "It is also unclear to me if NJ has emergency preparedness plans for farmers (particularly livestock) as well as food security in order to address feeding folks in emergency scenarios."

OVERALL TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A total of 2,028 New Jersey community members and 61 food system experts provided data across the six dimensions of food security. These findings helped quantify the scope and type of food insecurity related issues faced by New Jerseyans and highlight difficulties faced by specific sub-populations. See **Table 7**, below, for a summary of the findings. We hope that the results of this data collection effort can inform future programmatic, systems-based, and policy approaches to reduce disparities and address food insecurity for all New Jerseyans.

Across the metrics for availability, access, stability, utilization, and agency, groups facing a greater degree of challenges generally included parents/caregivers of children, non-English-speaking respondents, SNAP users and food pantry clients, single-headed households, households in North and South Jersey (instead of Central Jersey), lower-income and younger households, and households with more Black and Latino members.

"The thing [that] makes it hard for me or my family to affect food issues in our area is that we don't have connections to any of the people who are involved with feeding our area."

~ New Jersey Resident

Table 7. Summary of key findings from each section of the report, organized by the six dimensions of food security.

Food Insecurity Dimension	Key Findings
Availability	Reported availability of healthy foods, quality produce, and foods that met people's preferences were reportedly lacking at places where people shopped for food and at food pantries. Current parents/caregivers of children, non-English-speaking respondents, food pantry clients, those in North or South Jersey, younger respondents, and lower-income households may especially need support with availability of healthy foods that meet their preferences. Food pantries in general may need more support to offer healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and foods that meet clients' preferences.
Access	Households that faced the most difficulty being able to afford enough food and/or running out of food before having money to buy more included current parents/caregivers of children, non-English-speaking participants, households in North and South Jersey, younger respondents, and households with income under $4,000 per month.
Stability	Many households faced monthly and/or seasonal cycles of food insecurity, particularly current parents/caregivers of children (monthly and seasonal cycles), younger households (monthly and seasonal cycles), non-English-speaking participants (seasonal cycles), WIC users (seasonal cycles), SNAP users and food pantry clients (monthly cycles), North and South Jersey (monthly cycles), urban counties (monthly cycles), and households with income under $4,000 per month (monthly cycles). Some households were more likely to experience chronic food insecurity, including current parents/caregivers of children, non-English-speaking participants, households in North and South Jersey, and households with income under $2,000 per month.

Food Insecurity Dimension	Key Findings
Utilization	Many households faced challenges with being able to prepare healthy meals that were related to a lack of food preparation and storage equipment and sanitary areas to prepare meals. These households included those who were current parents/caregivers of children, single male-headed households, non-English-speaking participants, food pantry clients, households in North and South Jersey and in urban counties, households making under $2,000 per month, and younger households. Many households faced challenges with being able to prepare healthy meals that were related to limited food knowledge and skills, or limited time to prepare meals. These households included current parents/caregivers of children, non-English-speaking participants, SNAP users and food pantry clients, households in North and South Jersey, younger households, and households making under $4,000 per month.
Agency	Agency, both in terms of being able to act on one's own food choices and being able to engage with and shape the food system were among the lower scoring of the 6 food security dimensions. Particularly, households with current parents/caregivers of children, non-English-speaking participants, SNAP users, WIC users, food pantry clients, households in North and South Jersey, and younger respondents scored lowest.
Sustainability	To sustain the food system and ensure adequate food supplies for future generations, both residents and food system experts agreed that focusing on supporting farmers (e.g., through technical assistance and funding), reducing food waste, promoting food affordability, and ensuring that food system activities are safe for the environment were top priorities. Additionally, food system experts recommended promoting living wages within the food system, supporting representativeness among farmers, increasing farmers markets and grocery retailers in areas with lower availability of healthy foods, promoting farming cooperatives among small and mid-size farms, and assisting farmers to adapt to changing weather patterns and protection from extreme weather events.

Based on these findings, prioritizing the development of approaches to address the following topics may be warranted:

- Encourage increased availability of affordable fruits and vegetables, healthy foods, and foods that meet people's preferences at food stores and food pantries. Many groups reported limited availability of healthy foods and foods that met their preferences at stores in their area.
- Emphasize language accessibility in social support/safety net programs.
- Support programs that assist parents, particularly younger and lower-income families with children. These groups faced significant challenges with economic access to enough food (and monthly and seasonal cycles of food security instability), limited healthy food availability at stores, struggles with time and skills to prepare healthy meals, and constrained ability to act on their own food choices due to external factors.
- Consider policy approaches that address the seasonality of food security, especially during the winter and summer months (e.g., Summer EBT when households lose access to school lunches) and monthly cycles (e.g., larger and/or bi-weekly SNAP allotments).
- Develop programs that help households acquire needed food preparation and storage equipment, and/or that provide food appropriate for those with unstable housing (or other situations) who may not have consistent access to sanitary areas to prepare meals.
- Streamline access to, and increase awareness of, SNAP and WIC programs to improve purchasing power, thus promoting food choice agency among food insecure households.
- Support choice pantry models with healthy food options available, thus promoting food choice agency among food pantry clients.
- Enable increased community input and opportunities for community members to engage in processes that shape food policy and practices (particularly for those who face social and economic barriers).

Recommendations from New Jersey Residents and Food System Experts

Whether seasoned food system experts or residents, New Jerseyans share common goals when it comes to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the food system for current and future generations. Long-term investment and cross-sector collaboration are necessary and possible to ensure all New Jerseyans, at all times, have access to nutritious food that meets their preferences and needs.

1. Farmers in NJ should have the resources and support they need to be successful now and in the future.

- Allocate funding to alleviate production costs for farmers.
- Teach new farmers about sustainable production methods, how to take advantage of the current support available, and how to engage with market channels designed to help them be profitable.
- Provide financial and technical support for farmers to convert from conventional farms that grow commodity crops to diversified farms that grow specialty crops.
- Create a formalized agricultural apprenticeship program that establishes a clear pathway into commercial agriculture careers and includes wrap-around support for wage growth, business planning and development, start-up costs, and market access.
- Train and financially support new and beginning farmers from communities with high rates of food insecurity and expand funding for community farming.
- Implement universal basic income to address low wages across the food system and to make it easier to become (as well as stay) a farmer.

2. Food grown in NJ should be accessible and affordable for all.

- Implement a "New Jersey Healthy Food & Fair Wages Act," which ensures all residents have access to affordable, nutritious food by subsidizing local produce, raising the minimum wage, and supporting sustainable farming practices.
- Expand eligibility and streamline the application process for federal food assistance programs like SNAP, WIC, Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), and school meals.
- Fund efforts to increase redemption rates of the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to increase SNAP, WIC, and Senior FMNP dollars spent on NJ-grown food.
- Adopt universal free school meals and prioritize the purchase of NJ-grown food in all schools.
- Provide food literacy education around nutrition, farming, and cooking in schools.
- Ensure emergency food programs have the funding necessary to meet the current and future needs of NJ communities.
- Develop coordinated regional food hub storage and distribution systems that support local farmers and growers, ensuring market opportunities for farmers and making local food more accessible to consumers, especially those in urban low-resourced communities.
- Address overhead expenses to encourage local small store owners to sell healthy food.
- Require institutions to spend a certain percentage of their food purchasing budgets on NJ-grown food.

3. Unused food that can be eaten should be donated and food that can no longer be eaten should be composted or otherwise diverted from landfills.

- Invest in statewide coordination to pick up, transport, and distribute rescued and surplus food to communities that need it.
- Incentivize the prevention of food waste and encourage food donation.
- Require residential food waste separation for composting or anerobic digestion.

> "It's difficult because when you don't have money you can't make a choice."
>
> ~ New Jersey Resident

4. Food production, processing, and distribution should be safe for the environment.

- Provide income insurance to farmers to incentivize activities that improve long-term production and conservation.
- Invest in agricultural infrastructure for farmers to implement sustainable and regenerative practices, such as practices to conserve healthy arable soil for future generations.
- Allocate funding for operations and training for farmers to employ regenerative and organic farming practices, which are more labor-intensive and require skilled workers.
- Promote the benefits of sustainable farming and eating locally grown food to NJ consumers.
- Address the environmental hazards that negatively affect underserved, industrialized communities through community-based green development initiatives.

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Appendix A. New Jersey Community Member Survey

Survey items:

- Demographic/Screening questions (9 items)
- USDA Household Food Security Survey Model (HH2 + 6 item)
- Stability (3 items)
- Limited availability (8 items)
- Utilization barriers (8 items)
- CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1 NJOFSA project) (6 Food Choice items; 4 Civic Engagement items)
- Sustainability (12 items)

Inclusion criteria:

- Must be a New Jersey resident
- Must be 18 years or older

Introduction:

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey!

Taking part in this survey is voluntary. You can choose to not answer any questions you do not want to answer, and you can stop at any time. Whether or not you choose to take the survey won't change any services you receive now or in the future. All responses will be confidential and no identifiable information will be shared outside of the study team.

If you complete this survey, your responses will be used for a project evaluating food issues across the state of New Jersey.

Topic	Wording	Answer Choices	Source
Demographic Questions (Included near the beginning for branching logic)			
Screen _NJ	Do you live in New Jersey?	• Yes • No	Screening
Screen _age	What is your age?	• Text entry (validate 1-100)	Screening
D1	*How many adults currently live in your household, including yourself?	• Drop down list: 1-10+, Don't know or prefer not to answer	Branching logic
D2	*How many children under age 18 currently live in your household?	• Drop down list: 0-10+, Don't know or prefer not to answer	Branching logic
D2a	*If 1 or more is selected for D2:* Are you a parent and/or primary caretaker for any of the children in your household?	• Yes • No • Don't know or prefer not to answer	Demographics
The following questions ask about your and/or your household's food situation.			
HH2	In the last 12 months, (I/we) worried whether (my/our) food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more.	• Often true • Sometimes true • Never true • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey

			Model; needed for stability measure
FSS1	*If "sometimes true" selected for HH2:* In the last 12 months, <u>when</u> were you usually worried about running out of food? (Select all that apply)	• Spring • Summer • Fall • Winter • Beginning of the month • Middle of the month • End of the month • Randomly, no certain time frame • Don't know	CNHI Food Insecurity Stability
HH3	In the last 12 months, the food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more.	• Often true • Sometimes true • Never true • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey Model

FSS2	*If "sometimes true" selected for HH3:* In the last 12 months, <u>when</u> did your household usually run out of food before getting money to buy more? (Select all that apply)	• Spring • Summer • Fall • Winter • Beginning of the month • Middle of the month • End of the month • Randomly, no certain time frame • Don't know	CNHI Food Insecurity Stability
HH4	In the last 12 months, (I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.	• Often true • Sometimes true • Never true • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey Model
FSS3	*If "sometimes true" selected for HH4:* In the last 12 months, <u>when</u> was your household not able to afford to eat balanced meals? (Select all that apply)	• Spring • Summer • Fall • Winter • Beginning of the month • Middle of the month • End of the month • Randomly, no certain time frame • Don't know	CNHI Food Insecurity Stability

AD1	In the last 12 months, did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?	• Yes • No • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey Model
AD1a	*If yes to AD1:* How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?	• Almost every month • Some months but not every month • Only 1 or 2 months • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey Model
AD2	In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?	• Yes • No • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey Model
AD3	In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?	• Yes • No • Don't know	USDA Household Food Security Survey Model

The following question asks about where you and/or your household get food.			
A	In the last 12 months, from which of the following food stores has your household gotten food? (Select all that apply)	• Supermarket or grocery store (mostly sells food and household items) • Discount or big box store like Target or Walmart • Wholesale club like Costco, B.J.'s, or Sam's Club • Dollar store, 99 cent store, or similar place • Convenience store (e.g., 7-11 or MiniMart), bodega, corner store, or another similar place • Farmer's market • Produce store or fruit and vegetable stand • Restaurant, cafeteria, fast food, or another similar place • None of the above • Don't know • Other: _____	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability
The following questions ask about your opinions on food that is available at the food stores (you/your household) has gotten food from.			
AvS1	In the last 12 months, the food stores (I/we) went to had <u>very few</u> quality fruits and vegetables.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability

AvS2	In the last 12 months, the food stores (I/we) went to had very few foods that (I/we) liked.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability
AvS3	In the last 12 months, the food stores (I/we) went to had very few foods that were good for (my/our) health and well-being.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability
B	In the last 12 months, from which of the following sources has your household gotten food? (Select all that apply)	• Food banks, food pantries, religious sites, 'Meals on Wheels,' or other places or programs that offer free food [IF YOU SELECT THIS, THEN ALSO ANSWER AvP1, AvP2, and AvP3] • Food donated from friends, family, neighbors, or other people you know • Food we grow or harvest, and/or we go hunting/fishing for food • Found discarded food to eat • None of the above • Don't know • Other:_____	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability

For those that selected the first answer option to B above: **The following questions ask about your opinions on food that is available at food banks, food pantries, and similar places your household has gotten food.**			
AvP1	In the last 12 months, the places (I/we) got free food had very few quality fruits and vegetables.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability
AvP2	In the last 12 months, the places (I/we) got free food had very few foods that (I/we) liked.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability
AvP3	In the last 12 months, the places (I/we) got free food had very few foods that were good for (my/our) health and well-being.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Perceived Limited Availability
The following questions ask about cooking skills and equipment.			
U1	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not have access to a refrigerator, freezer, or other way to keep food from spoiling.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers

U2	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not have a way to cook meals (e.g., stove, oven, microwave, hot plate or other appliance).	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers
U3	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not have the kitchen tools or utensils needed to cook meals (e.g., pots, pans, a stirrer, can opener, knife, spoons/forks, or other utensils).	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers
U4	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not have a clean and sanitary area to prepare meals.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers
U5	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not know how to select healthy foods from the food options (I/we) had.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers
U6	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not know how to make homemade meals from the food options (I/we) had (e.g., "meals from scratch" or meals without pre-made items).	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers

U7	In the last 12 months, (I/we) could not make a healthy meal from the food options (I/we) had.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers
U8	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not have time to cook meals.	• Never true • Sometimes true • Often true • Don't know	CNHI Utilization Barriers
The following questions ask about your and/or your household's ability to make choices about the food you eat.			
FCA2	In the last 12 months, (I/we) had little choice in the food (I/we) (was/were) able to eat.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
FCA6	In the last 12 months, (I/we) could not plan (my/our) meals ahead of time, even if (I/we) wanted to.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
FCA9	In the last 12 months, the choice of when to eat was not up to (me/us).	• Strongly agree • Agree	CNHI Agency Item

		• Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	Pool (Phase 1)
FCA10	In the last 12 months, the choice of where (I/we) got (my/our) food from was not up to (me/us).	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
FCA12	In the last 12 months, the choice to eat foods that met (my/our) taste and cultural needs was not up to (me/us).	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
FoodChoiceAngecy	*[If Agree or Strongly Agree to any FCA Qs]* What makes it hard for you (or your family) to make your own choices about food?	Open text	
The following questions ask about your and/or your household's ability to get involved in the types of food that are grown and sold in New Jersey.			

Civic Engagement Agency (CEA) 13	In the last 12 months, the decision of the types of food grown, sold, or provided in our communities was not up to (me/us).	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
CEA16	In the last 12 months, (I/we) did not feel that (I/we) could impact the types of food grown, sold, or provided in (my/our) community, even if (I/we) wanted to.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
CEA20	In the last 12 months, (I/we) could not change food-related issues in (my/our) community, even if (I/we) wanted to.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree • Don't know	CNHI Agency Item Pool (Phase 1)
CivicEngagement	*[If Agree or Strongly Agree to any CEA Qs]* What makes it hard for you (or your family) to affect food issues in your area?	Open text	
Please rate the following as low, medium, or high importance for making sure that New Jersey can provide enough food for people now and future generations.			

We need to make sure…			
S1	Farmers in NJ have what they need for success.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S2	There is enough support for people who want to become farmers in NJ.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S3	Enough land in NJ is saved for farming.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S4	Farming in NJ is safe for the environment.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
Please rate the following as low, medium, or high importance for making sure that New Jersey can provide enough food for people now and future generations. **We need to make sure…**			

S5	Households in NJ have what they need to grow their own food.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S6	Local food grown in NJ is affordable.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S7	People buy and eat more food that is grown in NJ.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S8	Food that could have been donated or eaten is not thrown away in NJ.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
Please rate the following as low, medium, or high importance for making sure that New Jersey can provide enough food for people now and future generations. **We need to make sure…**			
S9	Food workers in NJ receive fair pay (like farm workers, food factory	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)

	employees, and grocery store employees).	• Don't know	
S10	The way food is processed and sent to stores in NJ is safe for the environment.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S11	NJ food supplies are safe from extreme weather (like flooding, hurricanes, and high temperatures).	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
S12	Laws are made to protect the environment in NJ.	• Low importance • Medium importance • High importance • Don't know	Sustainability Resident Item Pool (Phase 1)
SI	Please let us know if there are any ways to improve the survey questions (anything you found confusing or unclear).	Open text	Feedback
Demographics			
D3	Do you describe yourself as a man, a woman, or in some other way?	• A man • A woman • Some other way	Demographics

		• Don’t know or prefer not to answer	
D4	What is your racial or ethnic background? (Select all that apply)	• American Indian or Alaskan Native • Asian or Asian American • Black or African American • Hispanic or Latino • Middle Eastern or North African • Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander • White or European American • Another race or ethnicity not listed (please specify): _____ • Don't know or prefer not to answer	Demographics
D5	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	• No formal education • Some elementary or middle school • Some high school, no diploma • High school graduate (or equivalent - e.g., GED) • Not in college currently but have some college credit, no degree • In college currently, no degree • Associate degree or trade school • Bachelor’s degree • Master’s degree or higher • Don’t know or prefer not to answer	Demographics

D6	In the past 12 months, which New Jersey county did you live in the longest?	• Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, Sussex, Union, Warren, Don't know or prefer not to answer	Demographics
D7	Each month, about how much income from wages, salary, or tips does your household make?	• $0 – $1,000 per month • $1,001 – $2,000 per month • $2,001 – $3,000 per month • $3,001 – $4,000 per month • $4,001 – $5,000 per month • $5,001 – $6,500 per month • $6,501 – $8,000 per month • $8,001 – $9,500 per month • $9,501 – $11,000 • $11,001 or more per month • Don't know or prefer not to answer	Demographics
D8	Which of the following have you or anyone in your household participated in during the last 12 months?	• Free or reduced-price school lunch or breakfast program	

	(Select all that apply)	• New Jersey Summer EBT card for food for families with school aged children during the summer school break • Food pantry, food bank, food shelf, soup kitchen, or other similar place that helps with free food. • New Jersey SNAP (Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program) on the "Families First" EBT card, formerly called "food stamps" • NJ FamilyCare or Medicaid • WorkFirst NJ (NJ's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - TANF) • WIC (Program for Women, Infants, & Children). • Other: _____ • None of the above • Don't know or prefer not to answer	

Appendix B. New Jersey Food System Expert Survey

Survey items:

- Demographic/Screening questions (8 items)
- Nutrition Security and Food Access (9 items + 1 open-ended)
- Agriculture and Land Use (7 items + 1 open-ended)
- Food System Economics (8 items + 1 open-ended)
- Food System Resilience (11 items + 1 open-ended)
- Open-ended (1 item)
- Snowball sampling (1 item)

Topic	Wording
FirstPage	Thank you for your interest in this survey! You will be asked questions about the food system in New Jersey. The goal is to collect information that will help inform approaches New Jersey should take to ensure there is enough healthy food for everyone in the state now and for future generations. All information you provide will be kept confidential and no identifiable information of anyone participating in this survey will be shared outside of the Center for Nutrition and Health Impact (www.centerfornutrition.org) team that is conducting the survey. Would you like to take the survey? • Yes • No
Instructions	The questions in this survey ask about nuanced issues related to the food system in New Jersey. While these are complex topics, for this survey, we are looking for a high-level understanding of the general issues across the state. While taking the survey, consider New Jersey overall, both across the state and different localities. Try to think about the various **policies, practices, and programs** being implemented by governmental and non-governmental groups. For each of the topics in this survey, you will be asked "How well is New Jersey doing?" Next, among the topics you rate lower, you will be asked which are higher priorities to address. There are no right or wrong answers, just use your best judgement. You will also have optional text boxes where you can explain any answers if you would like to. If a

	question is outside your area of expertise, or you are unsure, you will have the opportunity to indicate that and skip the question.
Expertise	Which of the topic areas below best align with your areas of expertise? (Select all that apply) A. Food production, agriculture and related industries (farming, fishing, and forestry) B. Food manufacturing, transportation, distribution, institutional purchasing, and grocery/retail/farmers markets C. Economic and/or agricultural development, urban and rural planning D. Environmental issues, food waste/recovery, and sustainability E. Food security, food justice, emergency food, and health and nutrition assistance programs F. None of the above
Experience	Within the area(s) of expertise you selected above, which of the following best fits the experience you have working in that field(s)? • Less than 5 years • 6-9 years • 10-19 years • 20 or more years
Organization	What organization do you work for?
Position	What is your current position at the organization?
County	What county(ies) do you primarily work in? (Select all that apply using the 'control' or 'command' key)
Prompt	The following questions are about nutrition security and food affordability related topics. In general, how is New Jersey doing in the following areas? • Response options: Not in my area of expertise/Not sure, Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent
NSFA1	Supporting the agricultural sector to make food grown in NJ more attainable for all consumers, especially those who are food insecure and/or utilizing food and nutrition assistance benefit programs.
NSFA2	Reducing the cost of growing food in NJ for producers. Examples include changes to land costs, costs associated with permitting/regulations, and costs for distribution and scaling operations.
NSFA3	Ensuring there are adequate food supplies to meet the needs of residents in NJ. Examples include food and resources for food banks, food pantries, and non-profit organizations.
NSFA4	Supporting institutional food purchasing for diverse populations to meet resident's social, cultural, and health needs. Examples of institutional food service providers include schools, hospitals, food banks, or food pantries in NJ.

NSFA5	Promoting a living wage for all who work within the NJ food system. Examples include workers in farms, factories, grocery stores, and restaurants.
NSFA6	Improving working conditions for those who work within the NJ food system. Examples include jobs in farms, factories, grocery stores, and restaurants.
NSFA7	Increasing job opportunities within the NJ food system. Examples include jobs in farms, factories, grocery stores, and restaurants.
NSFA8	Making it easy for NJ residents to access nutrition and food assistance programs when they need them. Examples include the Child and Adult Care Food Program, School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, Summer EBT, Women's Infants and Children or WIC, and senior nutrition program.
NSFA9	Improving cross-sector coordination to promote programs that increase purchasing power of local, NJ-grown foods for NJ residents.
Prompt	Help prioritize the following issues by rating the level of importance for each one. When considering importance, rate issues as higher importance if they require immediate action or issues that are timely and/or likely to have the greatest positive impact on the New Jersey food system in the long-term.
NSFA_Priority_1 - NSFA_Priority_9	[Display items for which respondent selected "Poor"/ "Fair" / "Good" and use response options: High priority to address, Moderate priority to address, Lower priority to address]
NSFA_Open	If you would like to further explain any of your answers in this section or provide more context, please use the space below (Optional):
Prompt	The following questions are about urban and rural agriculture and land use related topics. In general, how is New Jersey doing in the following areas? • Response options: Not in my area of expertise/Not sure, Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent
ALU1	Protecting land use for food production in NJ.
ALU2	Preserving water use for food production in NJ.
ALU3	Offering education, training, mentoring, and financial assistance for young people to get involved in food production in NJ.
ALU4	Offering food production education, training, mentoring, and financial assistance for anyone interested in NJ, especially first-generation producers and producers who have been excluded and underrepresented.
ALU5	Providing technical assistance for NJ farmers. Examples include business management support or financial and regulatory compliance guidance.
ALU6	Encouraging food production practices in NJ that support clean air and water, and healthy soil.
ALU7	Increasing diversity of crops grown and sold in NJ.

Prompt	Help prioritize the following issues by rating the level of importance for each one. When considering importance, rate issues as higher importance if they require immediate action or issues that are timely and/or likely to have the greatest positive impact on the New Jersey food system in the long-term.
ALU_Priority_1 – ALU_Priority_7	[Display items for which respondent selected "Poor" / "Fair" / "Good" and use response options: High priority to address, Moderate priority to address, Lower priority to address]
ALU_Open	If you would like to further explain any of your answers in this section or provide more context, please use the space below (Optional):
Prompt	The following questions are about economic issues related to the food system and similar topics. In general, how is New Jersey doing in the following areas? • Response options: Not in my area of expertise/Not sure, Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent
FSE1	Supporting grocery retailers to offer local, NJ-grown food at affordable prices in all communities, including areas that have been underserved or excluded from economic investments. Examples of grocery retailers include grocery stores, warehouse clubs, discount stores, convenience stores, bodegas, and other similar businesses that sell food to consumers.
FSE2	Supporting grocery retailers to operate profitably in all communities, including areas that have been underserved or excluded from economic investments.
FSE3	Advertising and promoting local, NJ-grown fruits, vegetables, and other foods to consumers in NJ.
FSE4	Supporting food processors and manufacturers to operate profitably in NJ.
FSE5	Expanding availability and locations in NJ for residents to attain purchase local, NJ-grown foods.
FSE6	Increasing institutional purchasing of food grown in NJ. Examples of institutional food service providers include schools, hospitals, food banks, or food pantries in NJ.
FSE7	Supporting agricultural cooperatives to improve access to larger markets/purchasers for small farmers.
FSE8	Supporting the costs of operating farmers markets in low food access areas, designated food desert communities, or opportunity zones.
Prompt	Help prioritize the following issues by rating the level of importance for each one. When considering importance, rate issues as higher importance if they require immediate action or issues that are timely and/or likely to have the greatest positive impact on the New Jersey food system in the long-term.
FSE_Priority_1 – FSE_Priority_7	[Display items for which respondent selected "Poor" / "Fair" / "Good" and use response options: High priority to address, Moderate priority to address, Lower priority to address]

FSE_Open	If you would like to further explain any of your answers in this section or provide more context, please use the space below (Optional):
Prompt	The following questions are about food system resilience related topics. In general, how is New Jersey doing in the following areas? • Response options: Not in my area of expertise/Not sure, Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent
FSR1	Reducing food loss or food waste in the NJ food system.
FSR2	Offering education, training, mentoring, and financial assistance programs for recycling or composting food.
FSR3	Improving water quality, water conservation, and watershed management.
FSR4	Improving soil conservation, soil remediation, and erosion reduction.
FSR5	Expanding renewable energy sources for food production, distribution, and trade. Examples include electric vehicles in food transport and on-farm-energy production or use.
FSR6	Supporting transition to low-spray, sustainable, regenerative, and/or organic agricultural methods.
FSR7	Reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from food system operations in NJ.
FSR8	Supporting infrastructure investments for NJ farmers to adapt to the effects of irregular and changing weather patterns on food production.
FSR9	Providing financial protection for NJ farmers during extreme weather events or natural disasters.
FSR10	Ensuring adequate food supplies to meet demand for NJ residents during extreme weather events or natural disasters.
FSR11	Encouraging and incentivizing adoption of climate adaptation and mitigation measures across the food supply chain. Examples include reduced tillage, cover cropping, solar-powered cold storage, and fuel efficient farm equipment.
Prompt	Help prioritize the following issues by rating the level of importance for each one. When considering importance, rate issues as higher importance if they require immediate action or issues that are timely and/or likely to have the greatest positive impact on the New Jersey food system in the long-term.
FSR_Priority_1 – FSR_Priority_11	[Display items for which respondent selected "Poor" / "Fair" / "Good" and use response options: High priority to address, Moderate priority to address, Lower priority to address]
FSR_Open	If you would like to further explain any of your answers in this section or provide more context, please use the space below (Optional):
Advice	If you had the **power to make one thing happen** to ensure New Jersey has enough healthy food for everyone in the state now and future generations, what is one approach or policy you would enact and why?
D1	What is your age?

D2	Do you describe yourself as a man, a woman, or in some other way?
D3	What is your racial or ethnic background? (Select all that apply)
SnowBall	Who else should take this survey? Please nominate others you know who work within any of the following areas in New Jersey: A. Food production, agriculture and related industries (farming, fishing, and forestry) B. Food manufacturing, transportation, distribution, institutional purchasing, and grocery/retail/farmers markets C. Economic development, urban and rural planning, and agricultural economics D. Environmental issues, food waste/recovery, and sustainability E. Food security, food justice, emergency food, and health and nutrition assistance programs F. None of the above [Add form to allow up to 5 contacts: name, organization, role, email, areas of expertise, geography they primarily work within (Statewide, South NJ, Central NJ, North NJ)]