

Understanding the Faces of Hunger



Mayor's Internship Program 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Research Team	3
Executive Summary	5
Current Research	6
Methodology	6
Meal Scheduling	7
Results & Analysis	8
Demographics	8
Meals	10
Services	13
Limitations & Recommendations	19
Survey Format	19
Survey Process	21
Meal Providers	22
Conclusion	24

RESEARCH TEAM

Nayadis Couce | University of Pennsylvania, 2018 | B.A. Health & Societies | Department of Human Services, Finance Division | Nayadis is a rising junior at the University of Pennsylvania, studying Health and Societies with a concentration in Healthcare Markets and Finance. On campus, she manages the finances for both the Cuban American Undergraduate Student Association and the Homelessness Outreach and Advocacy Project (HOAP), which focuses on ending the negative stigma that surrounds homelessness. After graduation, Nayadis plans on obtaining a Master in Public Health and Business Administration.

Devon Greenwood | University of Pennsylvania, 2017 | B.A. Urban Studies | Office of Leadership Investment | Devon is a rising senior at the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in Urban Studies and minoring in Urban Education. On campus, she is involved in various groups focused on education and sustainability. After graduation, Devon plans to attend law school and pursue a career in public interest law.

Anil Jhanwar | Carnegie Mellon University, 2017 | MA in Public Policy & Management | Office of the Chief Administrative Officer | Anil is passionate about using data to improve public life. At school, he hosts a radio show on current policy issues and has interviewed several council representatives on the show. He is determined to work in the field of data driven policy making, directly in local government or through public sector consulting firms.

Jasmine Joung | University of Chicago, 2017 | B.A. Economics and Public Policy | Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity | Jasmine is a rising senior at the University of Chicago studying Economics and Public Policy, with a specialization in Poverty. In school, she participates in the Women in Public Service Program and plans to write her thesis on Housing First initiatives in Chicago. After graduation, she intends to work for a couple years before returning to school for a Master in Public Policy.

Vera Liu | Lehigh University, 2017 | M.S. Quantitative Finance | City Treasurer's Office | Vera is working with City Treasurer on several programs relevant to bond deals. She combined her quantitative knowledge with real practice and became more interested in public finance and asset management through this experience. After graduation, Vera hopes to work in the Municipal Capital Market and use her quantitative skills to help local governments with their financing and investments.

Ruoxi Pan | Lehigh University, 2017 | M.S. Accounting and Information Analysis | City Treasurer's Office | Ruoxi Pan is pursuing a Master of Science in Accounting and Information Analysis at Lehigh University. After graduation, she hopes to work in public accounting, preferably in the financial sector. Later, she would like to use her financial expertise to help NGOs and communities grow.

Tiana Rodriguez | La Salle University, 2018 | B.A. Social Work | Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services | Tiana Rodriguez is a rising junior at La Salle University where she currently is majoring in Social Work and minoring in Women's Studies. After graduation, she plans to attend graduate school and get her Master in Social Work.

Kristin Yeakel | University of Pennsylvania, 2017 | B.A. Political, Philosophy, and Economics | Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services | Kristin is a rising senior at the University of Pennsylvania studying Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) with a concentration in Choice and Behavior. During the school year, Kristin volunteers at the Lea Elementary School in West Philadelphia. After graduating, Kristin plans to attend law school.

Patrick Zancolli | University of Pennsylvania, 2018 | B.A. Political Science | Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service | Patrick is a rising junior at the University of Pennsylvania, studying Political Science with intended minors in French and History. This fall, Patrick will have the opportunity to intern and take political science courses in D.C. through the Penn in Washington program. After graduation, Patrick wants to participate in Teach for America and then attend law school.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the Mayor's Internship Program, a group of nine students assisted the Food Access Collaborative in collecting data from June 2016 to July 2016. This is the Food Access Collaborative's fourth summer conducting surveys at emergency meal sites with the goal of learning more about who meal guests are, understanding why guests seek emergency meals, and identifying the challenges guests face and what additional services they may need. The survey consists of interviews with meal guests at both outdoor and indoor meal sites. The results of 248 total surveys have been summarized and analyzed in this report. Additionally, the Mayor's Internship Program team shared their takeaways from the experience and compiled a list of recommendations to improve upon the project in future years.

BACKGROUND

Food Access Collaborative (FAC)

The Food Access Collaborative was established in 2012 by Mayor Nutter. The Collaborative consists of a network of anti-hunger advocates who work to increase the quality and quantity of emergency meals served in safe and dignified settings and to increase access to the social and health services that are necessary to stabilize the lives of vulnerable Philadelphians. The FAC focuses on three key activities:

- Increasing the number of meals available in a safe and dignified setting until it addresses current need;
- Improving connections to social and health services for meal guests;
- Improving the health and nutrition of meals served.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Since 2013, the FAC has been conducting an annual survey of meal guests. The main purpose of this study is to better understand how the city of Philadelphia can combat hunger and increase autonomy among vulnerable Philadelphians by shedding light on meal guests' demographics, health conditions, access to supportive services, and by identifying how guests define a safe and dignified meal. Additionally, by measuring this data over time, we can measure the effectiveness of current efforts and adapt policies to best meet the needs of emergency meal guests.

METHODOLOGY

General Information and Procedure

Over the course of seven weeks, the team surveyed 248 emergency meal guests. Of these 248 surveys, 130 were conducted at outdoor meal sites and 117 were conducted at indoor meal sites. We surveyed at outdoor meal sites whenever possible, primarily along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. If the assigned outdoor meal was cancelled, if there was bad weather or if the team members were unable to find it, then surveys were conducted at indoor meal sites: primarily St. John's Hospice and Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission. The survey was created by the FAC and vetted by the Yale Evaluation Group at The Consultation Center. The interviews were conducted anonymously, and guests were not required to answer any questions if they felt uncomfortable. In exchange for completing a survey, guests were given two SEPTA tokens. The team worked in pairs, and each surveyor was required to complete 5 surveys every week and to write a brief blog post about the surveying experience. The results were entered into a Google form and downloaded into an excel sheet which automatically coded the data. The collected data has been analyzed and summarized, but the number of responses cited per question may vary due

to refusals, blank answers, or multiple responses to open ended questions. The data and recommendations in this report are drawn from the survey responses and blog posts.

Meal Scheduling

The calendar of outdoor meal providers changed repeatedly throughout the summer for a variety of reasons, so contacting meal providers weekly was the best way to maintain updated information. We used a list of outdoor permits to help identify contact information. As surveying progressed throughout the summer, surveyors would note changes to meal site locations and time, and the calendar would be updated accordingly. The calendar featured below represents the last week of surveying in mid-July. The calendar does not include Friday, Saturday or Sunday because the team was unavailable to conduct the survey during these times; however, there are outdoor meal providers serving on the weekends.

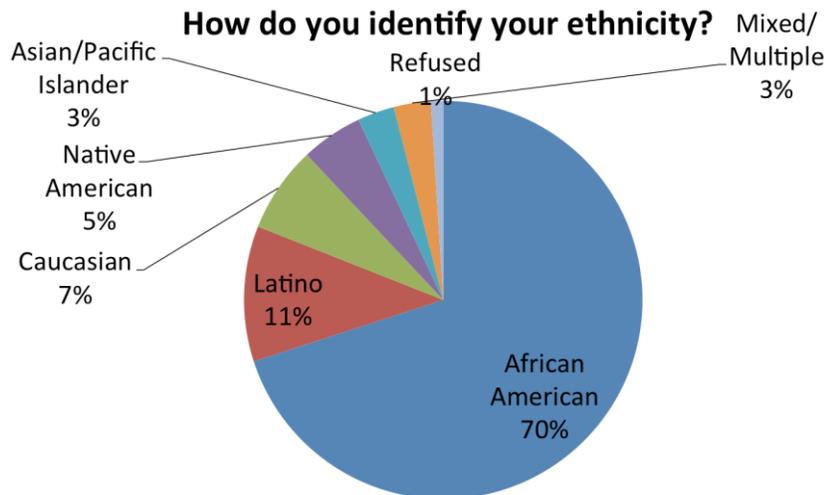
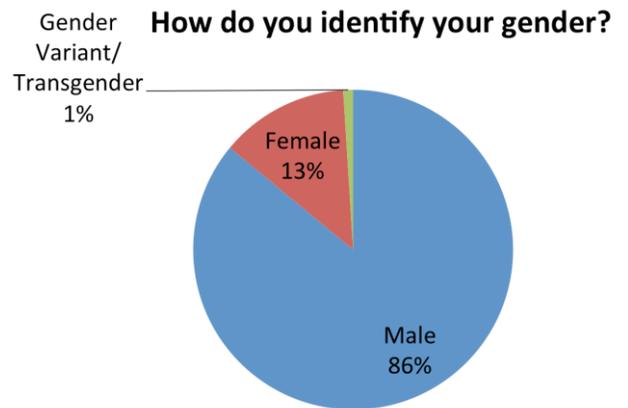
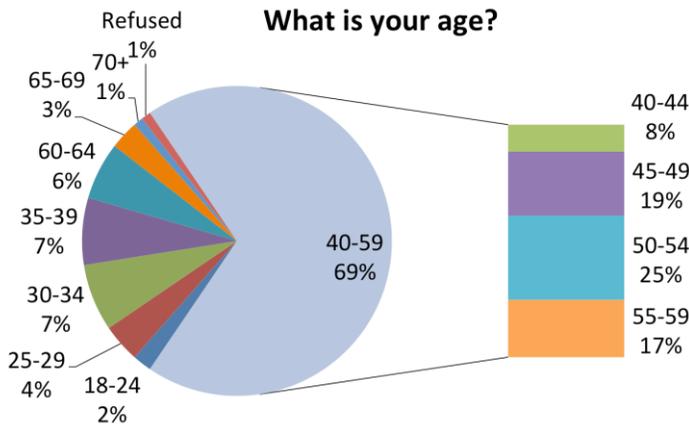
Outdoor Meal Site Calendar [Dinner Times]			
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Philly Restart Family Court (20th & Vine) 4-5 PM	Ian Yae's In Touch 20th and Parkway 6:30-7:30PM	10th and Filbert Street 7PM	Thursday Mama Family Court (19th & Pkwy) 4:30-5:30 PM
	Church of Living God (North Side of City Hall) Intersection of JFK Blvd. and Broad Street 7PM-9PM		

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

When comparing the data to last year’s outdoor survey, we noted that in 2016 the research team conducted 53% of the surveys at outdoor meal sites, and 47% of the surveys were at indoor meal sites. In 2015, 77% of surveys were at outdoor meal sites and 23% for indoor meal sites.

The most frequent responses for age, ethnicity, and gender for 2015 are: 22% of guests were 50-54 years old, 87% of guests were Male, and 76% of guests were African American. The 2016 demographics are found below.

DEMOGRAPHICS

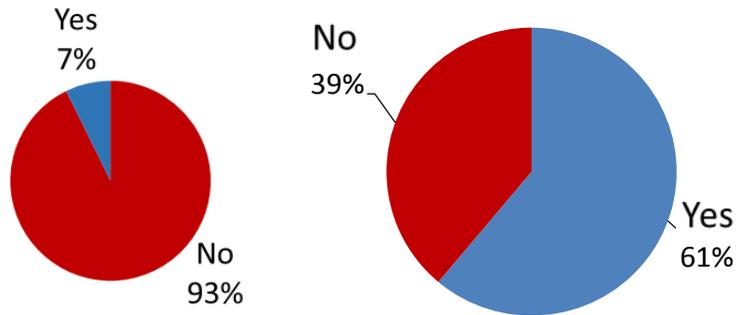


Question:

Left Graph: Are you a veteran of the US Armed Forces or National Guard?

Right Graph: Cross analysis of surveyed veterans and if they had been homeless/stayed in an emergency shelter include between June 2015 and June 2016.

Veteran Status?	
Yes	18
No	228

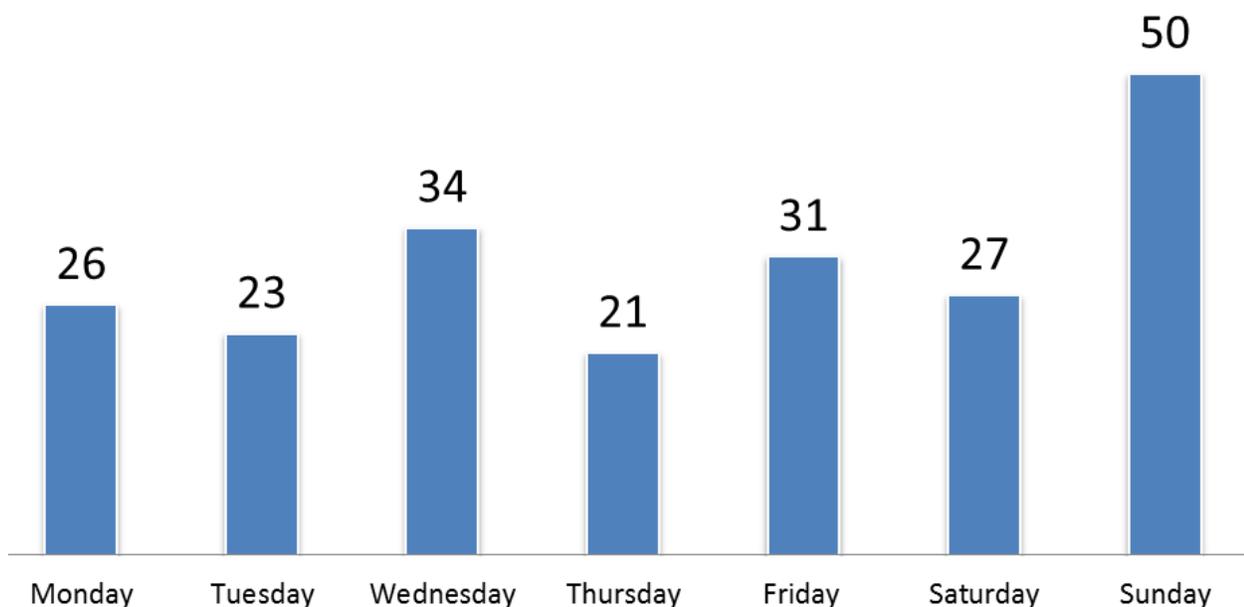


Question Analysis: 7% of respondents indicated that they were veterans of the US Armed Forces or National Guard. In December 2015, the city of Philadelphia declared that it had reached functional zero in the number of homeless veterans in the city, with all veterans who wanted permanent housing being placed in permanent homes¹. However, the results from our survey showed that two-thirds of the veterans we surveyed, which is 11 guests or 4.62% of the total population that we surveyed, said that they had been living in the streets or in an emergency shelter at some time in the past year. This potentially shows that more veterans have become homeless since the initiative to end veteran homelessness was declared successful and new measures might need to be put in place to ensure that the number continues to stay at functional zero. Another explanation for the discrepancy may reflect that the survey inquires about having lived in an emergency shelter or on the streets in the last year. The last year constitutes from June 2015 to June 2016, providing a five month interval before veteran homeless reached functional zero which could explain why the 4.62% was obtained from the survey responses.

¹ Nadolny, Tricia L. "Homelessness "effectively Ended" for Phila. Vets." *Philly.com*. N.p., 19 Dec. 2015. Web. 29 July 2016.

MEALS

Question: Are there specific days of the week that you have trouble finding a meal?

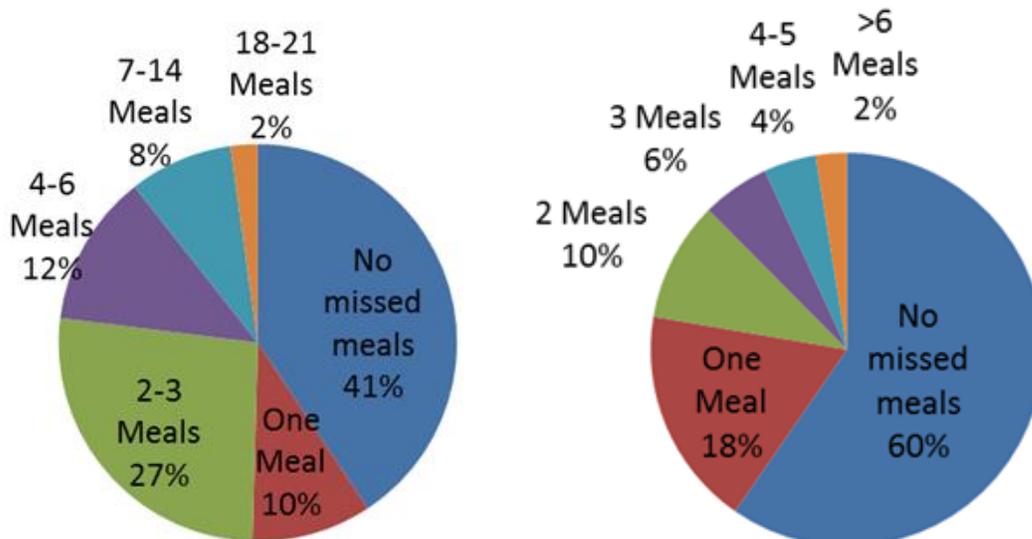


Question Analysis: About 212 people answered this question. At least 10% of respondents have trouble finding a meal on any given day. Sunday received the highest number of responses (22%), followed by Wednesday (15%) and Friday (13%). The result is consistent with information and experience we have about current meal providers' schedules. While the team was unavailable to survey on weekends, the FAC's meal flyer indicates that there are fewer indoor meal providers serving meals on Sunday as compared to other days in the week. Additionally, during our survey time, we often had difficulty finding outdoor meal providers on Wednesdays, as this meal was not served on the Parkway. This result indicates a gap in emergency meals, and it may be beneficial to launch new meal times to meet these needs.

Question:

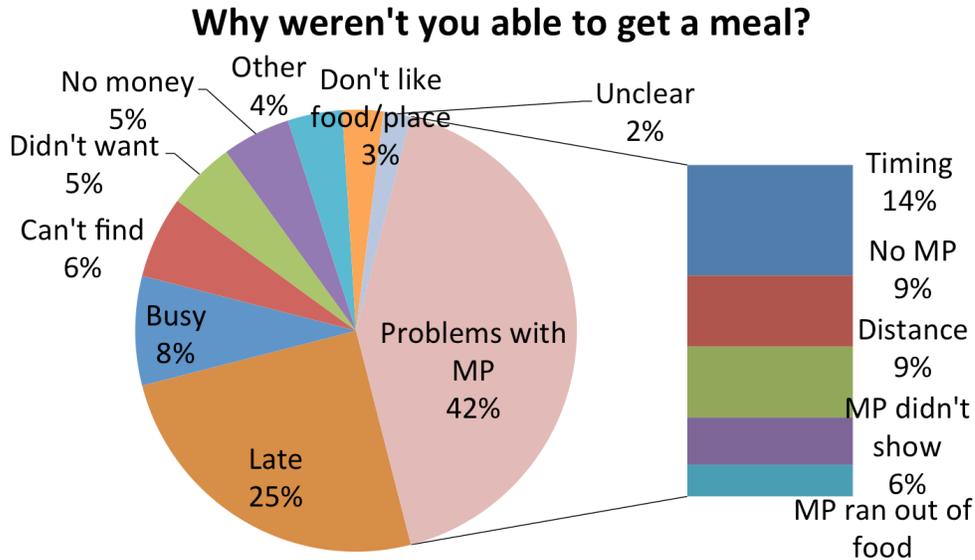
Left Graph: In the past week, how many times did you want a meal but were unable to get one?

Right Graph: Yesterday, how many times did you want a meal but were unable to get one? The day before yesterday? 2 days ago?



Question Analysis: The graphs above show the number of meals people wanted but missed in the past week as well as the past three days. More than half of the respondents missed more than 1 meal in the past week, and 10% missed an average of at least one meal every day in the past week (missed 7-21 meals in the past week). However, the graph on the right may be a more accurate result since it is easier to recall what happened in the last three days than in the past week. It shows 22% of people missed more than 1 meal in the past three days and 6% of respondents missed at least one meal every day in the past three days. In average, people missed 2.5 meals in the past week, and 0.9 meals in the past three days (which would be 2.1 meals for the week). Regardless, these results indicate that meal guests' needs are not being fully met by the current schedule of free meals.

Question: Why weren't you able to get a meal? (MP=Meal Provider)



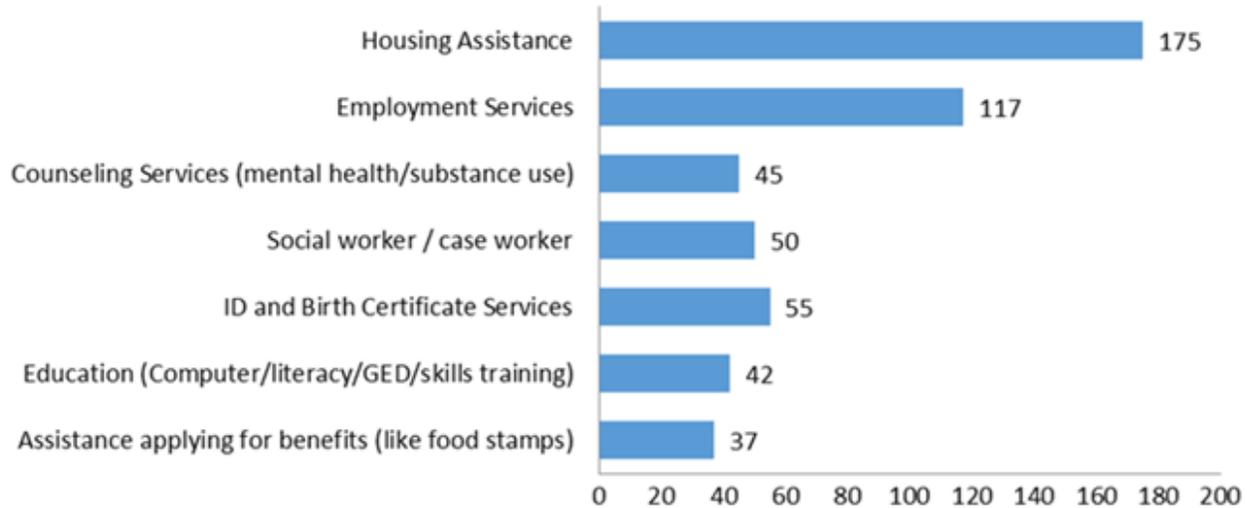
Note: Some responses may be coded into more than one reason.

Question Analysis: The most common responses were due to the meal guests arriving late, the times meals are served, the location of the meal (distance), and the inability to find a meal (no meal provider). Among guests who miss meals, approximately 42 percent of guests miss meals due to reasons that potentially could be resolved by meal providers. For example, 14 percent miss meals due to the times meals are served. Providers usually serve at traditional hours, but some guests noted that they stay awake at night and sleep during the day, which makes it harder to find a meal.

Other preventable reasons for missed meals include: distance to meal sites, lack of meal providers for certain days and times, meal providers not showing up, and meal providers running out of food. FAC could work with providers to serve meals at additional times and locations, and

to explore strategies to ensure meal providers show up on time, provide enough food for everyone, and communicate their services to meal guests.

Question: Out of the following, what are the top two services you would like to have access to at free meal sites?

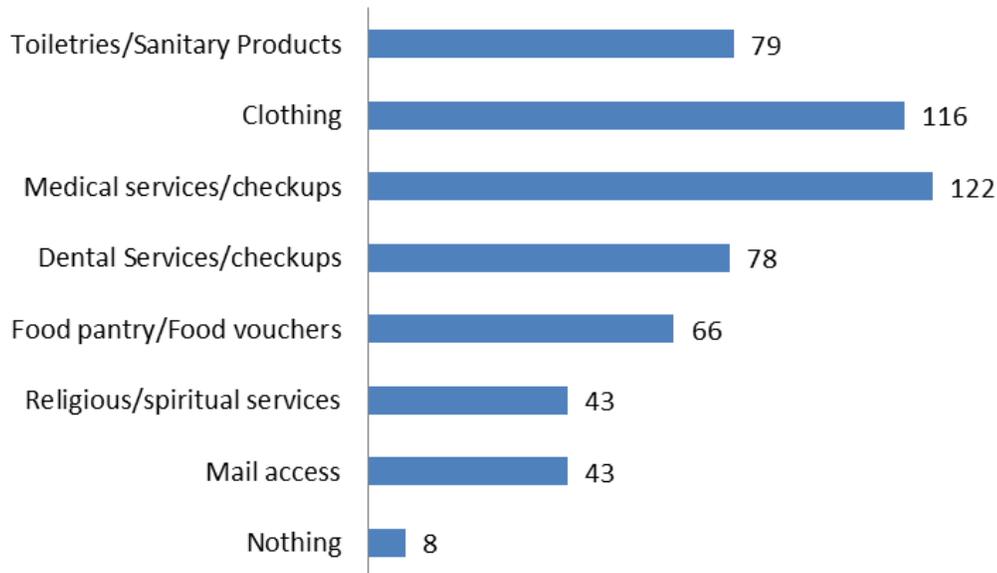


The top two services requested by respondents were housing assistance (34%) and employment services (23%) which also are the first two options listed in the survey. This shows a correlation between how the services were ordered in the survey and the top services selected by the respondents. The results may be true indications of the most wanted services or due to respondents trying to expedite the surveying process.

Only 9% of respondents chose social worker/caseworker. A possible explanation for such a low request include that social workers provide support with the rest of the listed services such as housing assistance, employment services, ID and birth certificate services, etc. Thus, the demand for social workers and caseworkers may be higher than the indicated 9 percent because there is an overlap in the services that social workers and caseworkers provide with the listed options. In addition, respondents might gravitate towards selecting the other options such as counseling services and assistance applying for benefits, because these are concrete and clear points of how

the respondent could be helped. A lack of knowledge by respondents of the role of a social worker/caseworker might deter respondents from selecting this service.

Question: Which of the following additional services would you most like to see at free meal sites? (Pick Two)



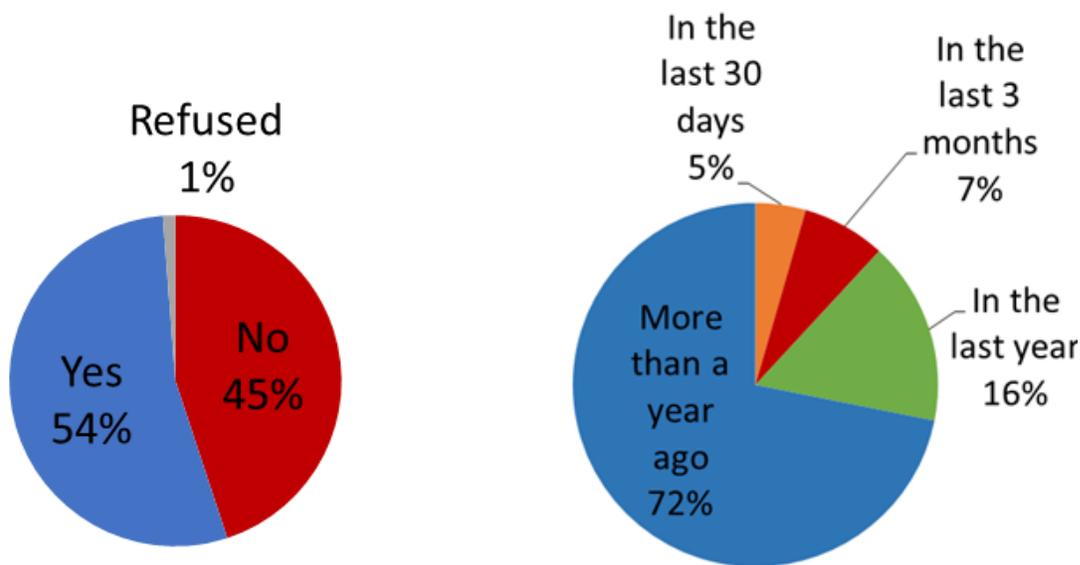
Question Analysis: The data represents the number of guests who selected each service, indicating that respondents desire the following services from most to least: medical services/checkups (22%), clothing (21%), toiletries/sanitary products (14%), dental services/checkups (14%), food pantry/food vouchers (12%), mail access (8%), religious/spiritual services (8%), and nothing. These findings are not surprising, since after having proper food nourishment, good health, clothes to wear, and proper personal hygiene are arguably three of the most important needs people have. Similar to the previous question, the service choices that came back with the highest findings also were the first three choices listed in the question. Some

respondents may have preferred to get through the survey quickly rather than provide answers reflective of their own wants and needs.

Question:

Left Graph: Have you ever been incarcerated?

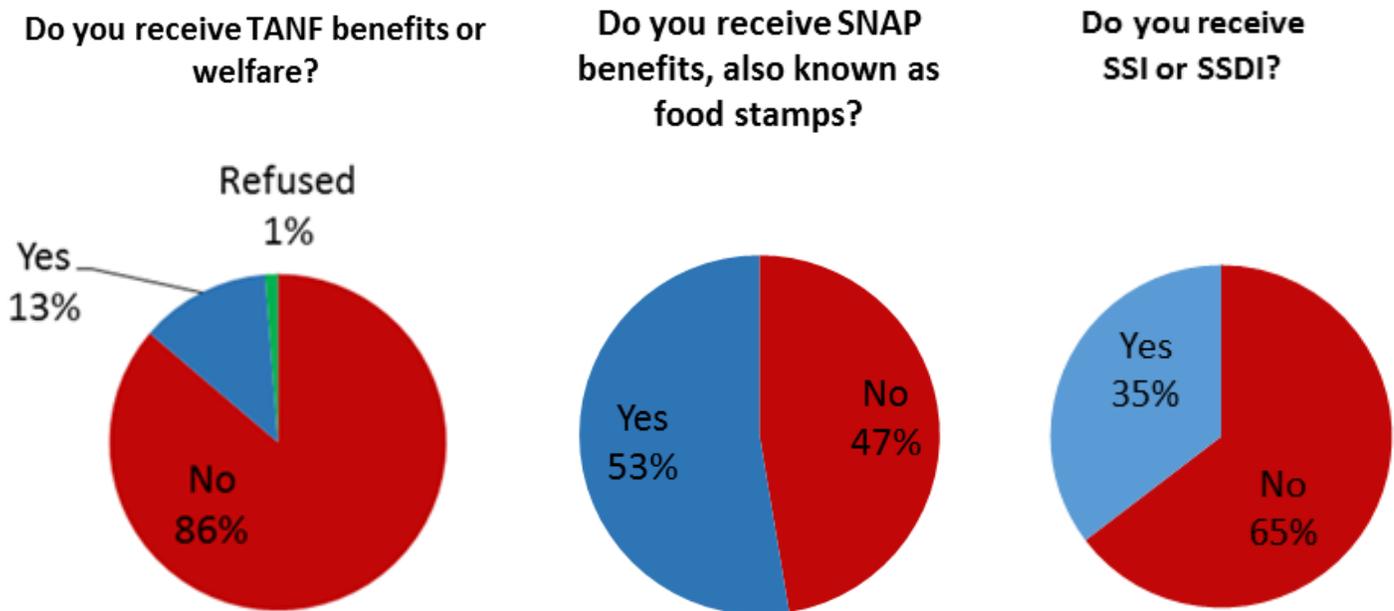
Right Graph: If yes, how recently were you incarcerated?



Question Analysis: Of the 246 individuals who responded, 133 (54%) have been incarcerated. This figure is down from 2015 when 66% of survey respondents had experienced incarceration. The shift could be the result of improved reentry initiatives; however, the incarceration rate in summer 2014 was even lower at 46%. This suggests that changes in the data may not be indicative of programmatic changes, but rather of the fluctuating employment and housing stability that previously incarcerated individuals experience. Of the 133 guests who have been incarcerated, 97 (72%) were last incarcerated over a year ago, and only 5% of formerly incarcerated respondents have experienced incarceration in the past 30 days. These findings

suggest that individuals struggle with successful reentry, as the nearly three-quarters of formerly incarcerated meal guests were released more than a year ago, yet still experience food insecurity.

Question: Do you receive SNAP/TANF/SSI-SSDI benefits?



Question Analysis: SNAP coverage (52%) is highest among respondents, while TANF is lowest (13%). Given that respondents are meal guests, one could expect an even higher rate of SNAP participation since it is designed to support food insecure individuals. Additional research could be conducted to better understand why more individuals seeking free meals are not receiving benefits by asking and systematically analyzing the barriers faced by people who qualify for specific benefits but are not receiving them.

Question: How many times have you been to the emergency room in the past three months?

Emergency Room Visits	Count	Percent Distribution
0	136	54.84%
1	45	18.15%
2	26	10.48%
3	12	4.84%
4	14	5.65%
5	5	2.02%
6 & Above	6	2.42%
Refused	3	1.21%
Unsure	1	0.40%
TOTAL:	248	100.00%

Question Analysis: 112 of the 248 respondents (45%) indicated that they have been to the emergency room in the past three months, which is higher than the general population (25% of Americans frequent the emergency room once per year²). The main reasons for these visits were limb pain/injury (13%), torso pain (9%), blood pressure (6%), assault (5%), asthma (5%), diabetes (5%), and heart condition (5%).

² Newport, F. (n.d.). One in Four Americans Visited Hospital Emergency Room in Past Year. Retrieved August 05, 2016, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8812/one-four-americans-visited-hospital-emergency-room-past-year.aspx>

3% of visits to the emergency room were for medical checkups such as blood work, vaccination, and to obtain medicine. This indicates that a lack of health insurance and primary care options may force a subset of meal guests to seek primary care services in the emergency room which often have higher medical costs.

Along the same lines, a total of 4 % of meal guests experienced dehydration and reported falling down which might help explain why 13% of emergency room visits were for limb pain and limb injuries. These three categories are important because multiple survey respondents noted that there was a lack of clean potable water; thus, exacerbating the chances that meal guests would depend on the emergency room as a primary resource to recover from the signs and effects of dehydration.

LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

During seven weeks of conducting surveys, the team had the opportunity to observe and interact with meal providers and meal guests, providing insights into how to better serve meal guests.

The process of surveying involves many connected steps from design to implementation.

Throughout the project, the team noted challenges and potential solutions to address them.

Below are some limitations and possible recommendations to completely or partially overcome them in order to enhance the quality of the project. Recommendations have been classified into three categories: survey format, survey process, and meal providers.

Survey Format

Limitation: Some respondents thought the 37 question survey was too long.

Recommendation: The script to introduce the survey indicates that the survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. While most surveys only take 10 minutes, some last a little longer. The script could be changed to 15 minutes, as it would be better to overestimate the time commitment so that respondents appreciate ending early instead of feeling inconvenienced when it lasts longer.

Limitation: The extended survey section, given to every 5th respondent, does not flow in an appropriate order with the categories of questions. For example, the questions which ask about

reasons for frequenting indoor/outdoor meal providers (Question#33-34) refer back to a previous question (Question #8) and come suddenly after personal background questions like race, age, and gender.

Recommendation: The entire survey, including the extended questions, should be categorized into sections such as personal information, free meal access, health, services, and so on to make the survey process smoother.

Limitation: Some of the questions, such as those related to an individual's health, are very personal. If either the surveyor or the respondent feels discomfort, it could potentially change how the person answers which can affect the data.

Recommendation: One way to make these questions easier for both the surveyor and the respondent could be to add a line at the beginning of the health section stating: "*Remember that you are free to refuse to answer any question if you do not feel comfortable answering it.*" This could help make everyone more comfortable and potentially get more accurate survey results.

Limitation: Respondents often were confused by the question "If you had to pick the 3 meals you want but miss most often, what would they be?" Some respondents listed specific meal choices (ex. eggs and scrapple) rather than a general standard meal time (i.e. breakfast/lunch/dinner) on a given day of the week.

Recommendation: The importance of utilizing the laminated index card that illustrates all possible options for meals throughout the week should be emphasized to the surveyors. In addition to the laminated cards, future surveyors should take special care to read the question exactly as written, as well as to provide verbal examples (i.e. Monday breakfast, Thursday lunch,

Sunday dinner). Providing verbal examples of what a response could look like often helped clarify any confusion. However, providing these examples may result in respondents simply repeating back the sample responses that the surveyor gave. This highlights the importance of phrasing this question in a clear manner.

Survey Process

Limitation: To capture the environment where meals are being served, the team was asked to take pictures during surveying. This was a challenge as guests shared how intrusive photographs are to the meal attendees. This feedback from the guests made the team hesitant to take any photographs.

Recommendation: The photograph requirement should be eliminated since it can make guests uncomfortable, and it compromises the anonymity of the meal guests.

Limitation: The team members were not able to provide solutions or follow up measures to needs that meal guests highlighted during the survey. For example, meal guests were asked if they receive SNAP benefits and if they have a state issued ID, but were not told how they can access these services.

Recommendation: The survey teams could have flyers to pass out to meal guests with information on how to get the services they need. This could help guests access the resources they need.

Limitation: Many times respondents would recommend a friend to speak with the surveyor next. This decreases the randomization of individuals being surveyed and could produce skewed data.

Recommendation: Surveyors could approach the meal site and ask every fifth person waiting in line to take the survey. This would result in a more randomized sample of the population.

Meal Providers

Limitation: One of the main challenge for meal guests is consistency. Surveyors had trouble finding the exact time and location of outdoor meals; guests often had the same problem.

Sometimes outdoor meal providers would show up half an hour to an hour late to the meal site location, or not show up at all. In addition, due to construction on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, meal providers often could not provide meals in their usual locations, making it hard for them to offer a consistent meal.

Recommendation: Meal providers should develop a consistent time and location where they will serve their meal and communicate this to their meal guests. FAC could make a poster of the outdoor meal schedule and distribute it to meal guests.

Limitation: A well-dressed meal guest reported that he missed a meal because the meal provider indicated that the food was only available to the homeless. This can cause people to feel ashamed and undignified in seeking emergency meals.

Recommendation: There could be more training and outreach to educate the public and meal providers in particular about who experiences hunger in our community in order to help combat stereotypes. For example, it should be emphasized to meal providers that not everyone who experiences hunger is homeless, and that there is not one face to hunger or homelessness in our community.

Limitation: Through interactions with meal guests, the team learned that some of them had dietary restrictions based on religious beliefs or medical issues. However, meal guests often had limited or no choice regarding the food they were served.

Recommendations: Meal providers should tell guests the ingredients and ask guests about any dietary restrictions before serving the meal. Providers could offer alternative meal options both to meet these needs and empower meal guests by allowing them to choose what they eat.

Limitation: Some of the meals served were not very nutritious, which could exacerbate health issues related to diet.

Recommendations: Meal providers could consider provide healthier options including more vegetables, fruits and protein rich food.

Limitation: Some guests have unconventional sleep schedules which causes them to miss meals served at traditional breakfast, lunch and dinner hours. While these meal times help guests develop a reliable schedule, they do not meet the needs of people who stay awake at night and sleep during the day.

Recommendation: While it would be difficult for providers to serve at midnight and all hours of the day, they could consider serving a late evening meal or provide bagged meals for people to take with them and eat at their convenience.

CONCLUSION

Although the Food Access Collaborative's project was not the top choice for team members, we all benefited from this project. It was an eye-opening experience that introduced us to the complexities and diversity of who experiences food insecurity. We learned to appreciate the perspective of meal guests and understand who they are as individuals. We put a lot of effort into making the guests as comfortable as possible while answering personal questions. We developed rapport with the guests, not only asking the questions in the survey but engaging them in additional conversation. Listening to their life stories, we could let meal guests relax and feel like they were talking to a friend. Nonetheless, their embarrassment and hesitation was palpable at times.

A recurring problem we encountered was the high uncertainty of the outdoor meal times. Not only was this an inconvenience for us as surveyors, but it gave us a view into the difficulty that many individuals face when trying to locate free meals. We recommend that outdoor food providers connect and collaborate with one another, develop an efficient system for communicating with meal guests, and make the schedule of food service more consistent.

Meal guests need more than meals. Through detailed data analysis, we concluded that the most needed additional services are housing assistance and employment services. It would be beneficial to make information about these services available at free meal sites.

From this project, we gained valuable experience conducting field research, had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of individuals in the Philadelphia community, and were able to incorporate our insights from working in our separate departments into our respective approaches. We were exposed first-hand to the extreme level of need that is present in the community and were able to have a small impact on creating a solution. We hope that our work on this project will improve the meals and services that meal guests are receiving and contribute to improving the lives of individuals experiencing hunger in Philadelphia.