

FEEDING THE VALLEY ALLIANCE

FOOD ACCESS IN THE UPPER
WHITE RIVER VALLEY -
ROCHESTER, HANCOCK, AND
GRANVILLE, VT

SUMMER 2020

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Assessment of Food Security in the Towns of Rochester, Hancock, and Granville, VT: Summer 2020

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Front cover photo by Donna "Lolly" Lindsey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Key Findings	5
Introduction	6
What is Food Security?	6
SNAP and 3SquaresVT	7
Factors Affecting Food Security	8
Who is More Likely to Face Food Insecurity?	9
COVID-19	9
Analysis: Rochester, Hancock, and Granville	10
Demographics	10
Existing Resources	11
Food Support	11
Groceries	12
Farmers' Markets	13
Community Gardens	13
Survey Methodology	14
Online Surveys	14
Phone Interviews	14
Community Ambassadors	14
Limitations	15
Findings	15
Demographics of Survey Respondents	15
Analysis of Food Insecurity	16
Food Shelf Use	17
Employment Trends	18
Factors Affecting Food Security in Rochester, Hancock, & Granville	19
Barriers to Food Accessibility	20

Recommendations	23
Future Questions & Areas of Research	28
Additional Resources	29
For Consumers	29
For Advocates	29
Glossary	30
Author Bios	31
Appendices	32
Local Food Resources	32
Area Food Shelves	37
Survey Texts	38
Food Shelf Checklists	39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, local community members began to see food insecurity as a growing challenge in the Rochester, Hancock, and Granville communities. Local area leaders gathered for weekly Zoom meetings to see how we could support each other and our communities in a variety of areas. Food insecurity emerged as a serious concern.

The impact on local, state and national economies brought about record unemployment. Federal programs to provide cash assistance to businesses and individuals were approved but delayed in their implementation. Now, the country faces what is predicted to be an extended economic recession. The federal government has yet to pass additional stimulus to bolster the economy and it is left to state and local governments, along with non-profits, to provide assistance.

This spring and summer, there was some increase in aid and we saw enormous lines of cars form as people waited for distribution of food assistance. Businesses have closed, extra unemployment benefits have ended, and we are facing another surge in COVID-19 cases as winter comes upon us. Despite the bleakness of the situation, Vermont communities have once again sprung into action. As with Tropical Storm Irene, there is the understanding that our friends and neighbors need help and we must rise to meet the challenge.

This pandemic has given us the opportunity to focus on our local food system. This work has been long overdue but it often takes an unprecedented event like this to spotlight critical needs. This study was commissioned to help us determine the need in our own community and to examine ways to best use the resources we have available to us. Beyond that, we must look at our local food system and work to make it more equitable and inclusive so that no one is left behind and no one goes hungry.

~ Monica Collins, Victor Ribaudo, and Donna “Lolly” Lindsey

KEY FINDINGS

This report examines the state of food security in the towns of Rochester, Hancock, and Granville, Vermont during the early summer of 2020. The goal of this study was to determine whether existing resources were sufficient to ensure food security in the three towns and, if not, to provide recommendations for increasing food access. Using survey responses of town residents, personal accounts from community members and key players in the local food system, and a multitude of resources, this report reviews the existing level of food security, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security, and barriers to healthy food accessibility in these towns.

Results from the study showed several key findings:

- First, while survey responses demonstrated a **decrease in food security and availability** since the onset of the pandemic, **few respondents reported the pandemic as the sole reason** for their food insecurity, indicating this as a preexisting condition.
- Second, the overall **hours worked and rate of employment** among residents **decreased** since the pandemic, suggesting a potential reason for rise in food insecurity.
- Third, community input highlighted **poverty and cost of living, presence of a disability, and increased food prices as factors affecting food security**. Additional physical barriers to food access include **transportation** limitations; **accessibility** issues due to a disability; **stigma, time** constraints, and **paperwork** requirements associated with visiting the local food shelf; and **lack of knowledge or comfort with using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** benefits.

This report concludes with a list of recommendations for increasing food access in the community. Recommendations include suggestions for making the Rochester Food Shelf more accessible, visible, and customer-oriented; increasing ease of use of government resources such as SNAP; incorporating food security into the town plans; building additional links with local producers; funding municipal projects that focus on food security through grants; engaging community members in sharing resources and knowledge; and advocating for living wages. An Appendix includes additional resources for both consumers seeking food assistance and for advocates.

INTRODUCTION

Bounded by the main spine of the Green Mountains to the west and the Braintree Mountain range on the east, this narrow valley is comprised of three towns, all on the far borders of their respective counties, Addison County (Hancock and Granville), and Windsor County (Rochester). All three communities are located contiguously on the Route 100 corridor in Central Vermont and are closely tied by geography, jobs, and family connections. Given the small populations and closeness of the towns, a regional approach to assessing the area's food security is important in helping to provide a cohesive view of food accessibility.

Prior to this study, the valley had struggled with accessing social services due to availability in the area and the distances that residents need to travel to access services when needed. When COVID-19 arrived, the need to address food security in particular became an urgent concern. This study was developed to assess the state of food insecurity in Rochester, Hancock, and Granville, and assist community leaders in the process of developing strategies to address the food security and access needs of these three towns.

Note: This report was written in August of 2020. Food security is a volatile status, and the varied nature is only exacerbated by the pandemic. This report is representative of data gathered from late May to July 2020, but please note that this data is not likely to be permanently representative of the Rochester, Hancock, and Granville communities.

What is Food Security?

Many individuals and families in the United States experience hunger. Hunger is a symptom of food insecurity, which is in turn a symptom of poverty. While the COVID-19 pandemic and its response measures have brought discussions of hunger and food security into many public and private conversations, the definition can be unclear. Food *security* exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.¹ Put succinctly, being food secure means having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. Being food insecure exists in the absence of reliable access to adequate food.

Food insecurity and hunger can both be terms used politically. Some anti-hunger advocates push for strictly using the word hunger, because of the powerful humanity and urgency of the word. While this report recognizes the importance of word choice, it primarily uses the terms

¹ Committee on World Food Security (October 2009). Reform of the Committee on World Food Security. Food and Agriculture Organization. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-k7197e.pdf>

“food security” and “food insecurity” to maintain consistency, as they were the phrases used in the surveys and many of the research materials at the time of distribution.²

In 2018, 11.1 percent of households in the United States were food insecure at some point throughout the year.³ Vermont was slightly under this percentage, coming in at 9.6% across the state, 3.3% of which experienced “very low” food security.⁴

SNAP AND 3SQUARESVT

Several federal programs exist to increase national food security. In 2018, only an estimated 56% of food insecure households used the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).⁵ SNAP funds are distributed to electronic benefit (EBT) cards that can be used at eligible market⁶ to purchase food.⁷ The national program is administered by each state, and Vermont’s program is called 3SquaresVT.

In 2019, 38 million individuals in the United States used SNAP benefits, 69,000 of which were Vermont residents (11% of the state

Term	USDA Definition
Food insecurity	Food-insecure households had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources.
Very low food security	“Very low” food security happens when “the food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns disrupted at times because the household lacked money and other resources for obtaining food.” ¹

² For more information on talking about hunger, please see A Place at the Table (2020), *Shifting Perspectives on Hunger: A Playbook*. Available through FoodisFuel.org and here: <https://www.foodisfuel.org/wp-content/themes/foodisfuel/doc/APATT%20Messaging%20Playbook.pdf>

³ Colmen-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M.P., Gregory, C.A., Signh, A. (2019, September). Household Food Security in the United States in 2018. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 3. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/94849/err-270.pdf>.

⁴ Nchako, C. and Cai, L. (March 16, 2020). A Closer Look at Who Benefits From SNAP: A State by State Fact Sheet, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Vermont>; Colmen-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M.P., Gregory, C.A., Signh, A. (September 2019). *Household Food Security in the United States in 2018*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 23.

⁵ Colmen-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M.P., Gregory, C.A., Signh, A. (September 2019). *Household Food Security in the United States in 2018*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 33.

⁶ SNAP is not exclusive to traditional grocery stores and can be used at any eligible store or market. In many states, this includes some farm stands and farmers’ markets.

⁷ For more information on eligible markets, go here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/eligible>. SNAP dollars can only be used to purchase foods and cannot be used on toiletries, household goods, alcohol, or cigarettes, even though these items are often sold at retailers who accept SNAP.

population).⁸ In March 2020, 69,063 Vermont individuals received 3SquaresVT benefits, which resulted in a total of \$10,718,637 distributed to Vermont households for food purchases.⁹ As of August 2020, the March 2020 SNAP usage data was the most recent available data. Information shared directly by the Director of 3SquaresVT showed that the number of 3SquaresVT applications received by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) totaled **5,742 for the ten weeks leading up to the pandemic (January 5-March 14)** and increased to a total of **7,338 for the first ten weeks after the onset of the pandemic**, from March 15-May 23rd. The most applications on record for 2020 came in during the early weeks of the pandemic: 1,115 from March 22-28, and 1,281 from March 29-April 4.

The pandemic increased the importance of SNAP, but also laid bare more of the systemic issues that impact food insecurity -- issues that SNAP, by design, is unable to impact. SNAP is a crucial program for providing families with food, but for lasting change that increases food access, work is needed on a systemic and structural level.

FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY

Hunger and poverty result from systemic inequities that create disadvantages for certain populations. Among factors that impact food security are income¹⁰, employment status, household structure, cost of housing, state unemployment levels, state-level policies that affect unemployment insurance, and the State Earned Income Tax Credit.¹¹ Other factors can include location, proximity to affordable food, access to transportation, dietary needs, individual health, available time for procuring and preparing food, and access to the places, skills, and equipment necessary for cooking.

⁸ Nchako, C. and Cai, L. (March 16, 2020). A Closer Look at Who Benefits From SNAP: A State by State Fact Sheet, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Vermont>

⁹ The totals are calculated by their Department of Children and Families (DCF) districts, rather than by county. Hancock and Granville are under the Middlebury district, which has 1,706 households. Rochester is in the Hartford district, which is home to 2,379 of those households.

Agency of Human Services, Department of Children and Families. ESD District Offices. Retrieved July 2020 from <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/contact-us/districts>

¹⁰ Minimum wage in the state of Vermont is \$10.78/hour, which calculates to \$431.20 (before taxes) for a 40-hour workweek. The median hourly wage in VT is \$19.68.

US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019, May). *May 2019 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates Vermont*. https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_vt.htm#00-0000

¹¹ Colmen-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M.P., Gregory, C.A., Singh, A. (2019, September). *Household Food Security in the United States in 2018*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 19. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/94849/err-270.pdf>.

WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO FACE FOOD INSECURITY?

According to a University of Vermont (UVM) 2020 food security study, respondents experiencing food insecurity were more likely to be people of color, female, live in households with children, and live in larger households.¹² This information mirrors national data.¹³

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread economic decline and the exacerbation of many of the factors that worsen food insecurity. Since the onset of the pandemic, food supply chain disruptions, skyrocketing unemployment rates, closures of schools and workplaces, and changes in national grocery shopping habits have led to an increase in the national rate of food insecurity to 47%.¹⁴ In September 2019, 1 in 7 U.S. households with children faced hunger. Now, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, 1 in 4 families with children face hunger, even if parents have remained employed: According to No Kid Hungry, “74% of food insecure parents who are still working are in essential industries,” which attests to structural wage and income issues that lead to food insecurity.¹⁵

Two state-wide studies conducted by UVM reviewed survey data to assess the early food security impacts of the pandemic.¹⁶ The respondents from their April 2020 survey reported a “33% increase in food insecurity since the coronavirus outbreak began in Vermont (from 18% to 24%).”¹⁷ A follow-up study in June reported that “more than half of respondents were unemployed, furloughed, or had their work hours reduced in the last 30 days and still at the time of the survey.”¹⁸

¹² Niles, Meredith T.; Bertmann, Farryl; Morgan, Emily H.; Wentworth, Thomas; Biehl, Erin; and Neff, Roni (2020, April). *The Impact of Coronavirus on Vermonters Experiencing Food Insecurity*. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty Publications. 19. <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/calsfac/19>

¹³ “[R]ates of food insecurity were higher than the national average in 2018 for...all households with children, households with children under age 6, households with children headed by a single person, people living alone (women: 14.2%, men: 12.5%), households with Black, non-Hispanic (21.2 percent) and Hispanic (16.2 percent) heads of household, and households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold.” ERS study pg 14

¹⁴ No Kid Hungry (July 2020). *The Longest Summer, Childhood Hunger in the Wake of Coronavirus*. https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/The_Longest_Summer.pdf

¹⁵ No Kid Hungry (July 2020). *The Longest Summer, Childhood Hunger in the Wake of Coronavirus*. https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/The_Longest_Summer.pdf

¹⁶ This study and other faculty publications from UVM College of Agriculture and Life Sciences can be found here: <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/calsfac/>

¹⁷ Niles, M.T., Farryl B., Morgan, E.H., Wentworth, T., Biell, E., and Neff, Roni (2020, June). *Food Access and Security During Coronavirus: A Vermont Study* College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty Publications, 21. <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/calsfac/21>

¹⁸ Belarmino, E.H., Bertmann, F., Wentworth, T., Biehl, E., Neff, R., and Niles, M.T. (2020, June). *The Impact of COVID-19 on the Local Food System: Early findings from Vermont*. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty Publications. 23.

As of summer 2020, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to ripple throughout the nation. As the initial weeks of the pandemic's economic disruptions have stretched to months, many families face extended job loss or reductions in hours and earnings. As unemployment benefits decrease, immediate response measures taper out, and schools enter uncertain reopenings, food insecurity remains a widespread threat. Feeding America, a leading national anti-hunger organization, estimates the 2020 overall food insecurity rate to reach 14.4% in Addison County and 15.8% in Windsor County. This is a leap from 9.5% and 10.4%, respectively, in 2018.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, since the onset of the pandemic in March, national demand for emergency food services has skyrocketed and food banks and shelves remain pressed to meet the demand.²⁰

ANALYSIS: ROCHESTER, HANCOCK, AND GRANVILLE

Demographics

The towns of Rochester, Hancock, and Granville have populations totaling approximately 1,700 residents. The table below lays out the towns' demographic data from the 2010 Census.²¹ Notably, each of the towns' poverty rates exceed those of their county, and both Rochester's and Hancock's median household incomes fall at least \$10,000 below the county median household income. As previously mentioned, these towns are unable to access the full scope of resources available to their counties due to geographic and other barriers, and therefore have distinct needs that are overlooked when considering only county-wide data.

¹⁹ Feeding America (June 3, 2020). *The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity*.

<https://www.feedingamericaaction.org/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-food-insecurity/>

²⁰ Nicolas Kulish, 'Never Seen Anything Like It': Cars Line Up for Miles at Food Banks. NY Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/business/economy/coronavirus-food-banks.html?searchResultPosition=1>

²¹ Hancock town, Addison County, Vermont. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved July 2020 from

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0600000US5000131525>; Granville town, Addison County, Vermont.

United States Census Bureau. Retrieved July 2020 from

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0600000US5000129575>; Rochester town, Windsor County, Vermont.

United States Census Bureau. Retrieved July 2020 from

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0600000US5002760100>; Poverty, United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2018). <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17826>

	Rochester	Hancock	Granville	Vermont²²
Mean Age	55.7	52.1	40.9	43.1 ²³
Race	<u>White alone:</u> 99% <u>Two or more races:</u> 0.7%	<u>White alone:</u> 92% <u>American Indian and Native Alaskan alone:</u> 0.6% <u>Asian alone:</u> 0.9% <u>Two or more races:</u> 0.7%	<u>White alone:</u> 96.3% <u>American Indian and Native Alaskan alone:</u> 0.9% <u>Asian alone:</u> 1.4% <u>Two or more races:</u> 1.4%	<u>White alone:</u> 94.2% <u>Black or African American alone:</u> 1.4% <u>American Indian and Native Alaskan alone:</u> 0.4% <u>Asian alone:</u> 1.9% <u>Two or more races:</u> 2% <u>Hispanic or Latino:</u> 2%
Education	<u>High School or Equivalent:</u> 31.8% <u>Some college:</u> 17.1% <u>Associate's degree:</u> 8.2% <u>Bachelor's degree:</u> 22.3% <u>Graduate or Professional degree:</u> 15.7%	<u>High School or Equivalent:</u> 40.8% <u>Some college:</u> 14.2% <u>Associate's degree:</u> 6.9% <u>Bachelor's degree:</u> 16.9% <u>Graduate or Professional degree:</u> 4.6%	<u>High School or Equivalent:</u> 33% <u>Some college:</u> 22.7% <u>Associate's degree:</u> 6.8% <u>Bachelor's degree:</u> 20.1% <u>Graduate or Professional degree:</u> 10.6%	<u>High School or higher, 25+ years:</u> 92.6% <u>Bachelor's degree or higher:</u> 37.3%
Poverty Level per Capita	12.3%	10.8%	13.6%	11% (as of 2019) ²⁴

EXISTING RESOURCES

A sentiment that echoed throughout the interviews and survey responses gathered during this study was that people in the valley community look out for one another. This fact is made clear among the resources that exist in the community.

FOOD SUPPORT

Rochester Food Shelf is the only food shelf physically located within the community, and thus is one of the primary providers of supplemental food in the Rochester, Hancock, and Granville region. At least two of the people we spoke with in our interviews had used the Food Shelf in the past. Respondents expressed relief and comfort knowing that there was a reliable food

²² US Census Bureau. *QuickFacts Vermont*. Census.gov. Retrieved July 2020 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/VT/PST045219>

²³ Data USA, *Vermont*. Retrieved July 2020. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/vermont/>

²⁴ United States Census Bureau, *Quick Facts Vermont*. Retrieved June 2020 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/VT/PST045219>

resource local to the community. One respondent clarified that even if someone needed food during a time that the pantry was not open, the organizers of the Food Shelf are very responsive and able to put together boxes of food when people need them. The organizers are also known to deliver boxes of food to families unable to get to the food shelf. Delivery is primarily available for seniors or for community members with limited transportation. More information on use rates of the Rochester Food Shelf can be found in the Food Shelf Use subsection below.

Survey respondents cited the Randolph Food Shelf,²⁵ Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE) in Middlebury, and Upper Valley Haven as other food shelves that they or someone they knew used (currently or in the past). The full list of area food shelves is attached in the Appendix of this report.

In addition to traditional food shelves, the area has other innovative ways in which people can access food, the majority of which rose out of the pandemic. School breakfast and lunch is a crucial pillar of children's food access. Meals on Wheels brings meals to the homes of seniors in the community. Produce distributions and food drop-offs have become an increasingly popular way to increase the availability of fruits and vegetables in a community, particularly since the start of the pandemic. This summer, HOPE conducted three food drop-offs in Granville and served ten families in June, twenty in July, and thirty in August. Additionally, fruits and vegetables were distributed through Veggie Van Go, a program that provides fresh produce once per month at different schools and health centers. This summer, distributions were held at the Gifford Health Center and Rochester School. The program is run in partnership with Vermont Food Bank and recipients do not need to provide proof of income in order to receive food. In addition to fresh food, the program provides cooking education and resources, and has staff on hand to help interested and eligible individuals sign up for 3SquaresVT.²⁶

GROCERIES

Other than a gas station market, Rochester's only grocery store is Mac's Market, which accepts 3SquaresVT benefits. Hancock's Hubbard's Country Store and the Granville Country Store are also nearby, but neither accepts 3SquaresVT. Randolph, about 30 minutes away from Rochester, has a Shaw's -- the closest large chain grocery store -- and several other places to buy food, including a specialty shop and a Dollar General. All three accept 3SquaresVT. Additionally, Mehuron's in Waitsfield, frequented by residents of these towns, is a larger store and accepts 3SquaresVT. In the broader region, several convenience stores and gas stations

²⁵ Randolph Food Shelf typically is not able to serve residents of Rochester, Hancock, or Granville, but they were able to accommodate people from these towns in the initial months of the pandemic. If you are a resident of Rochester, Hancock, or Granville and are interested in using the Randolph pantry, we ask that you call them in advance to confirm their current policy on your town.

²⁶ Veggie Van Go, Vermont Food Bank. <https://www.vtfoodbank.org/share-food/veggievango>

exist and many accept 3SquaresVT benefits. It should be noted that stores must meet minimum stocking requirements in order to accept 3SquaresVT benefits. These requirements are based on selling a variety of food items in different categories (such as milk, eggs, bread, and canned goods) or a large amount of a staple food (such as a butcher shop).²⁷

Many of the interviewees reported largely doing their grocery shopping in Middlebury or Rutland, where there is a wider selection of food available, often for cheaper prices than smaller markets. The ability to “stock up,” as interviewees said, requires a certain level of upfront capital or credit to make extra purchases so that they last longer. Reliable transportation is also a necessity to access any food resource.

Farmers’ Markets

Rochester and Randolph both have a farmers’ market throughout the summer months. As the beginning of the 2020 market season, the Rochester Farmers’ Market and Exchange was unable to accept 3SquaresVT benefits. By the close of the study, the market applied to accept EBT benefits, and anticipates accepting EBT in the 2021 market season. Randolph Farmer’s Market does accept 3SquaresVT and Crop Cash, a program run through the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) that multiplies up to \$10 of 3SquaresVT dollars used at a farmers’ market. Typically, variations of these programs across the nation double the spending power of SNAP dollars: For example, a person who receives 3SquaresVT benefits can pay \$10 at the farmers’ market, and receive \$20 worth of tokens to spend on food at the market.²⁸

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Many survey respondents and interviewees mentioned the increase they noticed in home gardens this spring. For those who cannot farm where they live, there are two community gardens in the surrounding area, one in South Royalton and one in Warren,²⁹ though these are at least 35 to 45 minutes away.

A full list of local food resources can be found in the Appendix.

²⁷ To view requirements and examples: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/eligible>

²⁸ NOFA VT. *Double Your Money With Crop Cash*. Retrieved June 2020 from <https://nofavt.org/cropcash/doubleyourmoney>

²⁹ Vermont Community Garden Network. *Community Garden Directory*. Retrieved May 2020 from https://vcgn.org/garden-directory/garden_directory_category/community/

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

ONLINE SURVEYS

A survey of Rochester, Hancock, and Granville residents was conducted online via Google Forms. The survey was open from May 29, 2020 to June 15, 2020. During that time, 147 people completed the survey. The survey asked respondents to answer questions about the previous 12 months and the months after March 15, the day we used to represent the beginning of the pandemic and its impacts. Each respondent took the same survey, but some questions varied by the respondent's answer. For example, if the respondent indicated that they received SNAP or used a food shelf, they were given a set of questions asking about those experiences. The full text of the survey, including the conditional sections, can be found in the Appendix.

The survey was advertised through a variety of formats to gain responses from as many residents as possible. This included promotions on several public community Facebook pages, residents' personal Facebook accounts, Front Page Forum, and flyers with a survey link posted in Mac's Market, the post office, and other high-traffic areas. These flyers were also mailed out to all residents of the three towns and an article was published in *The Herald* in early June mentioning the survey.

Some phone calls were placed to residents who were believed to be at risk for food insecurity and therefore interested in responding to the survey. Five surveys were filled out by volunteers through those calls. An effort was also made to distribute surveys to community members who visited the Rochester Food Shelf or who use Meals on Wheels. The survey was not permitted for distribution at the Rochester Food Shelf due to privacy concerns, and none of the Meals on Wheels surveys were returned.

PHONE INTERVIEWS

Six phone interviews were conducted with people who responded to the survey. Each conversation lasted from 20-30 minutes, and respondents were offered a \$25 gift card to Mac's Market as compensation. Qualitative data was gathered through these interviews as well as through comment areas in the survey.

COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

A second survey was distributed to community members who play an integral role in community food access. The target audience of this survey were people who work in emergency food distribution, farming and agriculture, education, healthcare, and other community organizations. This ambassadors' survey was advertised in the description of the community survey, and the authors and team members reached out directly to some

community ambassadors to share the survey. Video and phone interviews were conducted with community ambassadors to gain additional qualitative data.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions on in-person interactions, this survey was primarily distributed online, thus limiting responses to people who had access to a computer. We acknowledge that the pandemic exacerbated disparities in internet access, as schools, libraries, and many workplaces were forced to close. In future efforts with longer time frames, distributing a mail-in survey or making surveys available at frequently-visited places (such as local grocery stores) would be a more effective way to reach the broader population. Additionally, all surveys are subject to community interest, so residents interested in food and community issues were more likely to respond to the survey.

In the survey's open-ended answer section, respondents noted limitations of the survey questions including: 1) The survey did not include an option to indicate if respondents were receiving unemployment benefits due to pandemic-related job loss, and 2) The income area of the survey was geared towards one earner, and did not allow respondents to discuss how the jobs/income of different earners in the household had been impacted.

Finally, multiple attempts were made to reach Rochester Food Shelf coordinators to get their valuable feedback and ensure that the Food Shelf is represented accurately. We recognize that it is an extremely busy time for emergency food resources, and unfortunately we were unable to have a discussion with anyone from the Food Shelf during the research and writing process. In an email dated August 15, 2020, the food shelf operators shared the following comment: "We are holding steady at the foodbank, have adequate volunteers and funds. There has not been a huge spike in need." They did not wish to speak further. We reached out again with the finalized report, and were able to integrate their final corrections or comments into the report before sharing it with the broader community. Other relevant anecdotal information came from community members and not anyone officially affiliated with the Food Shelf.

FINDINGS*

**As mentioned above, it should be noted that this report was written in August of 2020 based on data gathered in late May through July 2020. Additional factors since the time of data collection, such as the reduction in unemployment checks and the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic, will affect the current situation.*

Demographics of Survey Respondents

Of the survey respondents, 68.3% were from Rochester, 15.9% from Hancock, 15.9% from Granville. This closely mirrors the population makeup of the three towns, as Rochester

residents account for about 65% of the three-town population.³⁰ Of the respondents, just over half (52.8%) reported being part of a two-person household, 81.8% responded having no children in the household, and 51% of respondents indicated having one or two seniors in the household. As seniors are more likely to experience food insecurity, the majority of respondents having at least one senior in the household suggests a higher likelihood of this status in this population.

Analysis of Food Insecurity

Bearing in mind the limitations regarding the number of food shelf users the survey reached, the survey responses offered insight into the level of food insecurity across the three towns, including an increase since the COVID-19 pandemic. **29% of respondents reported not having enough of the foods they wanted to eat** in the past 12 months, apart from the pandemic. This includes **7.6% of respondents who reported either sometimes or often not having enough food to eat.**

Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months? (~June 2019-June 2020)

146 responses



After March 15, 2020, the number of respondents who reported not having enough of the foods they wanted to eat increased to **33.4%**. The most common reasons cited for not having enough of the preferred foods were **1) not enough money for food** and **2) the kinds of food wanted were not available**. In fact, respondents who indicated the latter increased by 45% after March 15, 2020. This indicates a decrease in availability of desired food for both food insecure and food secure households and likely reflects the supply-chain disruptions that resulted as restaurants and cafeterias closed and people relied more heavily on grocery store foods.

³⁰ Rochester: 1,105. Hancock: 323. Granville: 352. (via town Census pages, links in footnote 21.)

A few survey questions asked respondents about their ability to afford enough food and balanced meals. Results indicated that nearly a quarter of respondents could not afford or were concerned about affording food, and few cited the pandemic as the sole cause.

- **13.8%** of respondents reported **cutting the size or skipping a meal** due to not having enough money for food. Importantly, **only 2.1% of respondents reported the pandemic as the sole reason** for this, which points to preexisting food insecurity in the community.
- **76.4%** of respondents reported that it was never the case that they could not afford to eat balanced meals (i.e., they could *always* afford to eat balanced meals).
- Only 1.4% reported not being able to afford balanced meals due to the pandemic, while **22.2% reported often or sometimes not being able to afford them**, regardless of the pandemic. This further indicates underlying food insecurity before the pandemic hit.
- Similarly, **23.7% reported sometimes or often worrying whether their food would run out before they got money** to buy more in the last 12 months, with an additional 2.1% reporting this but only due to the pandemic.

10.3% of respondents reported receiving 3SquaresVT (SNAP) benefits at the time of the survey, which is comparable to Vermont's overall enrollment rate of 11% in 2019.³¹ This is slightly higher than the national rate of SNAP enrollment in 2019, which was approximately 9% of the U.S. population. No survey respondents indicated receiving Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits. Of the respondents currently enrolled in 3SquaresVT, only four (26.7%) reported visiting food shelves. This means that 2.7% of all survey respondents reported using both 3SquaresVT and visited a food shelf. Furthermore, many 3SquaresVT recipients reported not knowing about benefit-stretching programs, such as Crop Cash or Farm Share.

FOOD SHELF USE

The Rochester Food Shelf is a crucial pillar of food access in the community. The food shelf is open once a month, from 8:30-10:00am on the last Saturday of each month. Use of the Rochester Food Shelf increased in March and April. In January and February, the Food Shelf served 11 and 15 families, respectively. In March and April, 23 families used the Food Shelf, with numbers declining back to 14 families in May and 15 families in June.

An early report issued by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at UVM found that “87% of respondents usually or always reduced grocery trips in the early weeks of the pandemic in

³¹ Nchako, C., and Cai, L. (2020, March 16). *A Closer Look at Who Benefits From SNAP: A State by State Fact Sheet*, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Vermont>

order to avoid exposure.”³² With this data in mind, it is possible that one barrier to food shelf access is fear of virus transmission. If this were true, it could impact the amount that food shelf use increased after the onset of the pandemic. As a result, changes in food shelf usage alone should not be a sole measure of food access needs.

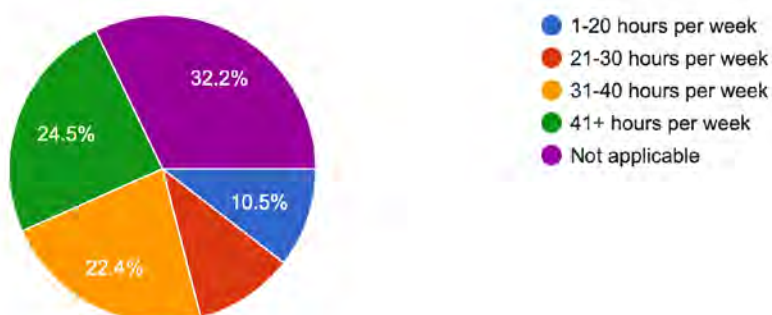
EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Trends in employment and hours worked emerged from survey responses, which provide insight as a contributor to food insecurity. Responses showed an overall trend in decreased hours worked and increased unemployment since March 15th. As of January 1, 2020 only 1.4% of respondents reported having no job for reasons other than being disabled, retired, or a student. Since March 15th, this grew to 13.2% of respondents. As of January 1st, 66.3% of respondents had one, multiple, or a per diem job. 22.9% said they could telework and their income did not change since March 15, 2020.

Since March 15th, the percentage of respondents who worked 41+ hours per week decreased from 24.6% to 13.9%. The percentage of respondents who worked 31-40 hours per week decreased from 21.8% to 18.8%. Finally, the percentage of respondents who worked 1-20 hours/week *increased* from 10.6% to 14.6%. In sum, about 35% of respondents who were employed as of January 1st decreased their hours worked or number of jobs held after March 15th.

How many hours per week did you work, on average?

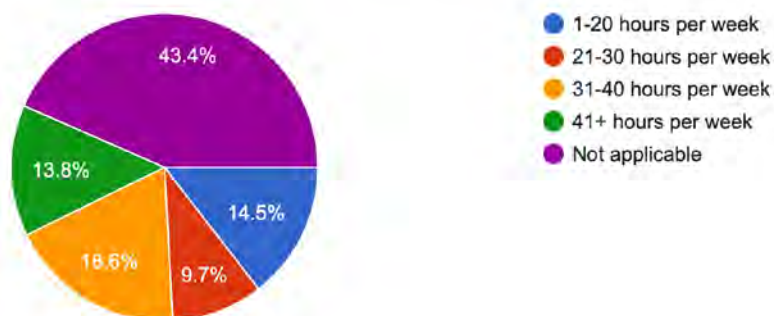
143 responses



³² Vermont Research News (2020, July 2). *Grocery Food Trips Decline*, The University of Vermont Center for Research on Vermont. <https://us15.campaign-archive.com/?u=419435f747e6262297b150ca2&id=f5e6860a3a>

Since March 15, 2020, about how many hours have you worked each week (on average)?

145 responses



Even though the limited data from this study may not show significant correlations between reduced employment and reduced food security, underemployment, unemployment, and low wages can be major predictors of food insecurity. Temporary Federal enhanced unemployment benefits and mortgage and rent forbearance may have also affected these correlations.

FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY IN ROCHESTER, HANCOCK, & GRANVILLE

Though a larger sample size is needed to establish conclusive predictors of food insecurity in these towns, the data collected through this study and additional research offer several suggestions. Increased unemployment since the onset of the pandemic likely contributed to increased food insecurity. However, as previously mentioned, few households reported the pandemic as the sole cause of food insecurity. Other factors affecting food security in Rochester, Hancock, and Granville include poverty, disabilities, and increase in food prices since the pandemic.

1. **Poverty and Cost of Living:** The level of poverty in these communities may be a main factor of food insecurity. The Vermont Basic Needs Budget³³ estimates that in a two-adult rural household without children, each wage earner needs to make around \$12.71/hour. This translates to an annual household income of about \$52,800. Both Rochester and Hancock's median incomes fall below this, as of the 2010 Census. It should also be noted that the hourly wage that would meet the estimated Basic Needs Budget increases dramatically for single wage-earner households, which do not benefit from the economies achieved by multi-person households, as well as those with children. Thus, a single wage-earner household with one child would need to earn

³³ Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office (2019, January 15). *Vermont Basic Needs Budget and Livable Wage*. Vermont.gov. <https://lifo.vermont.gov/assets/Subjects/Basic-Needs-Budgets/2c974b591b/2019-Basic-Needs-Budget-and-Livable-Wage-report-FINAL-1-15-2019-v2.pdf>

\$25.11/hour to take care of transportation, child care, food, health care, housing, and other basic needs.

2. **School Closures and Child Care:** Food access is impacted by the changes to education. As families prepare for a new school year, many issues are made clear: It may be risky for schools to reopen, but many parents are left facing continued struggles of childcare. For parents who can work remotely, balancing work and homeschooling responsibilities can be challenging. For parents who must go into work, traditional childcare centers are also jeopardized by the pandemic and may not be an accessible, affordable, or safe option for some families. Overall, access to childcare can be limited in rural areas.
3. **Disabilities:** Difficulties with hearing, vision, cognitive function, mobility, or other disabilities can increase medical or living expenses and cause barriers to food accessibility (expanded upon in the Barriers to Food Accessibility section below). One survey respondent commented that “elders and disabled people who work part time to supplement social security” may not be eligible for supplemental benefits due to owning stocks or other assets. “I own a home and a car but have lots of expenses like medical, taxes, insurance. This does not leave much to live on.”
4. **Increase in Food Prices:** Food prices have risen during the pandemic.³⁴ While price increases may not be long-term, survey respondents also cited the price differential between local and organic options. One respondent stated “Our food bill has dramatically increased and quality (e.g., organic options) has decreased.... We don’t feel safe shopping at large (cheaper) supermarkets.”
5. **Climate Change:** Changes in temperature and precipitation have made growing food difficult. One community ambassador stated that the summer had been rough because their well ran dry, causing most of their garden to die. On both the personal and commercial level, increasingly intense weather events and temperatures have been, and will continue, threatening food security and sovereignty.³⁵

BARRIERS TO FOOD ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to factors that can lead to food insecurity, additional barriers to food accessibility (i.e., physical access to food) can impede residents’ ability to maintain a consistent and nutritious diet. Below are several barriers to accessibility that were apparent in this study, though this is not an exhaustive list.

³⁴ Robert Johansson (2020, May 28). *Another Look at Availability and Prices of Food Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic*. United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2020/05/28/another-look-availability-and-prices-food-amid-covid-19-pandemic>

³⁵ Food Forward (2019, October 25). *Climate Change and Food Security*. <https://foodforward.org/2019/10/climate-change-food-security/>

1. **Transportation:** Rochester, Hancock, and Granville are in a relatively isolated rural setting. Public transportation is available in all three towns from Tri-Valley Transit.³⁶ Outside of this, residents must rely largely on access to personal vehicles or carpooling in order to travel to work and grocery stores, or obtain other resources. 11.3% of survey respondents cited difficulty getting to a store as a reason they have not had enough food or the kinds of food they want in the past 3 months.

Other respondents felt that the geographic isolation has its benefits, expressing that the Valley communities are uniquely suited to supporting one another throughout the initial impacts of the pandemic. “It’s already very isolated here,” said one Granville resident, “People help each other.” In interviews, respondents often made similar comments, suggesting that if someone is in need, the community will support them. In response, they were asked to consider whether or not they thought the need would be visible. Responses were mixed, with many respondents acknowledging that “people are good at hiding when they’re in need.”

2. **Disabilities:** People with illnesses or disabilities often face income restraints as well as physical barriers to preparing food. Often, low-cost healthy foods need some amount of preparation before they can be consumed, which can be a barrier for people with disabilities. This also extends to people who do not have the time, the necessary information, or the equipment or cooking space needed to prepare food.
3. **Food Shelf Accessibility:** Several factors came up as barriers to accessing a food shelf. Feedback from community members indicated some barriers specific to the Rochester Food Shelf. While some town residents visit other food shelves in the region, this study focused on the Rochester Food Shelf, as it is the only one located in the community.
 - a. **Stigma:** A common barrier to accessing food resources is the stigma people feel around seeking out help. Because the Rochester, Hancock, and Granville communities are small and most residents know one another, residents may be too proud or hesitant to show a need for assistance. One survey respondent stated “I’m too embarrassed to go to a food shelf.” Additionally, some respondents expressed concern that having the only Food Shelf in the community be located at the church was uncomfortable for those who did not feel that they were, or could be, part of the church community.³⁷ One interviewee reported taking a low-income family member out of town to receive

³⁶ For more information on the Tri-Valley Transit, contact Mike Reiderer, TVT's Community Relations Manager, by email at mreiderer@trivalleytransit.org.

³⁷ The Rochester Food Shelf noted that the majority of people who come to the food shelf are not involved in the church community.

food assistance because of the uncomfortable dynamic they experienced at the Food Shelf.

The Rochester Food Shelf coordinators stated, "We understand some people may be reluctant to ask for help. You may call 767-3030 for a more private time. We treat everyone with dignity and respect."

- b. **COVID-19 Exposure:** Anxiety around the spread of COVID-19 likely dissuades people from visiting a food shelf, particularly in the case of elderly or immunocompromised individuals. While the Rochester Food Shelf has made some food deliveries to households, the Food Shelf organizers' time or resources in delivery may not extend to every household who could benefit from this service. Moreover, the limited hours that the Rochester Food Shelf is open further concentrates customers rather than spreading them out to minimize virus spread.
- c. **Time Constraints:** The Rochester Food Shelf is open for 1 ½ hours per month. This means that not all residents may be able to access the Shelf during its hours and limits the extent to which people can rely on this resource as a source of food. Some survey respondents also commented that they did not know where the food shelf was or what its hours were. It should be noted that community members can call the Rochester Food Shelf to make appointments outside of regular hours if they cannot make the set monthly time.
- d. **Paperwork:** One respondent cited paperwork concern as a deterrent for receiving food from the Food Shelf. Vermont Food Bank has requirements for sites that receive food products from them. If the site receives products through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) products, the food shelves must gather eligibility information.
 - i. The TEFAP statement of eligibility form requires that the head of household confirm their eligibility, but proof of income is not required. Address and phone number are optional.
 - ii. The guidance for distribution sites issued by the Vermont Food Bank clearly states that "[t]he regulations **do not require** that applicant households provide independent verification of address, income, or persons in household (for example, pay stubs, driver's license, etc.). Sites **should not** ask for any independent verification of any of this information, and **should not** ask for any additional information as a prerequisite of receiving U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foods. If an agency requests additional information from the applicant to

determine the eligibility for other assistance programs – including receipt of other donated foods – the agency must make it clear to the applicant that this information is not required in order to receive USDA Foods from TEFAP” (emphasis in original).³⁸

4. **Applying for SNAP:** Responses from the survey indicated confusion around applying for SNAP or who to contact about questions. Additionally, SNAP eligibility requirements were cited as a barrier. One respondent commented “I have tried applying for various assistance programs over the years but our income is just above the allowed amount to qualify and because of that no organization would help us. Now that my husband and I are retired I worry that we may now need the help but we may continue to be just above the line. There has to be a way for people like us that just need an occasional hand up to get assistance without having to go without.”
5. **Using & Stretching SNAP:** 20% of survey respondents receiving SNAP reported using benefits at a farmers’ market, farm stand, and/or for a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share. Of the remaining 80%, 71.3% reported accessibility issues (“I have a hard time getting to a farmer’s market, farm stand, or CSA where I can use it”) or not knowing about this benefit. Additionally, 80% of respondents receiving SNAP reported not being aware of benefit-stretching programs such as Crop Cash, Farm Share, or Senior Farm Share.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are recommendations for increasing food security in the three towns, based on information gathered through the survey responses, interviews with community ambassadors, and additional research. These recommendations offer a foundation for building upon existing resources and developing plans that work for this unique community.

1. **Rochester Food Shelf:** In order to maximize the effectiveness of the Shelf, the following factors could be implemented.
 - a. **Expanded hours:** Weekly, rather than monthly, hours would make this resource more accessible to more people. We acknowledge that this would require additional volunteer time and coordination. Conducting a survey of residents to understand the most convenient times for the most community members may inform which hours would be best. Additionally, an extra distribution day at the Food Shelf focused entirely on produce, with fewer requirements, a more

³⁸ The Rochester Food Shelf reports that the paperwork required is minimal and they are not able to make any changes to the existing requirements. Names are kept confidential. They report to the Vermont Food Bank on a quarterly basis. TEFAP forms are completed once annually.

community feel (e.g., including a cooking demonstration, sharing, and connecting with neighbors) could provide more availability in a less stigmatized setting.

- b. **Increased visibility:** Currently, the Rochester Food Shelf has informational signs at the local post office. Using more signage near the Food Shelf, flyer around local businesses, and conducting outreach with community members through various media (e.g., Front Porch Forum or neighborhood listservs, at community events, or at grocery stores) could increase the awareness of the Food Shelf's existence for people who may be looking for assistance.
- c. **Center the family + flexibility:** In general, allowing food shelf clients to choose their own food lets the experience become more tailored to the individual, rather than assuming that one box of food fits every family's needs. The Rochester Food Shelf does implement a "choice" pantry, which is an important component of maintaining a dignified and autonomous experience for food assistance recipients. During the pandemic, they have been using a check-list system so that customers can request what they receive (see Appendix). Similarly, allowing customers to pick up food for other families would create more flexibility and reduce accessibility issues. It is important to note that the pandemic has impacted the ability for some emergency food resources to implement choice pantries: Food shelves might pre-make boxes for families to reduce the number of people who must enter the building or the time that they spend inside. Boxes might also be pre-made for delivery or to manage a strained food supply.
- d. **Enroll in programs to extend capacity for local, fresh food:** The Vermont Food Bank's Vermont Fresh Program can help increase the Food Shelf's infrastructure to help produce stay better, or to produce recipes for nutrition education. This year the Food Shelf participated in the Food Bank's Vermonters Feeding Vermonters program, which connects local farmers with food shelves and meal sites to support both the farmer and consumers seeking food assistance. The Food Shelf reports that the program was a win-win for community members and local farmers.
- e. **Make delivery more widespread:** Expanding existing delivery practices beyond seniors and people with limited transportation can make food more accessible in these communities. Making delivery options available for people who do not feel comfortable visiting the Food Shelf, whether it be due to stigma, COVID-19 spread, social anxiety, and other factors, may increase their likelihood of using the Shelf's resources. This would require additional commitment from Food Shelf coordinators and volunteers. Many community members we spoke with were

interested in helping with food access efforts, so recruiting volunteers should not be a barrier to implementing these additional efforts.

- f. **Prioritize dignity in emergency food:** Many people struggle with the stigma associated with receiving food assistance. It is crucial for food shelves and other food resources to make the experience as comfortable as possible in order to ensure that families struggling with food access actually come to the pantry. One of the interviewees expressed the discomfort of having the Rochester Food Shelf at the church, saying that it was not “neutral ground.” While it is important to have food resources located at popular community hubs (the church is an excellent example), those who do not attend or associate with the church may feel uncomfortable using the food shelf. Overall steps that food shelves can take include:
 - i. Implementing choice models (such as the grocery store model) allow community members to feel more like they are shopping and less like they are being handed food.
 - ii. Incorporating dignity and respect into the mission of food assistance organizations can be a helpful way to ensure that those are values prioritized in all of the organization’s actions.
 - iii. Reducing the amount of paperwork necessary for receiving food helps reduce barriers to food access. Paperwork intimidates people for various reasons, including stigma, privacy concerns, and immigration status.
2. **Government resources:** Survey results showed a gap in community members eligible for nutrition assistance and those who take advantage of government programs. Below are ideas to begin closing this gap.
 - a. **Liaison:** A liaison rooted in the community and knowledgeable about SNAP, WIC, and other programs could assist food insecure residents in determining eligibility, enrolling in, and taking advantage of these programs.
 - b. **SNAP outreach:** Local anti-poverty and anti-hunger organizations, such as Hunger Free Vermont, could expand outreach around SNAP and other nutrition incentive programs. An important step in increasing usage of assistance programs is increasing awareness around them.
 - c. **Outreach around benefit-stretching programs:** 80% of survey respondents using SNAP indicated they do not use benefit-stretching programs (e.g., Crop Cash, NOFA-VT Farm Share) because they were unaware of these resources. Additional outreach by local and state organizations around these programs is needed. Ensuring that education around these programs is available wherever the

programs are distributed (SNAP enrollment office or informational websites) or where the programs can be used (e.g., informational signs at farms and farmers' markets that use the programs) could help increase use.

- d. **Reduce stigma of SNAP enrollment:** While the pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity and increased inequality, some survey respondents expressed that it has also made aid programs more visible and less stigmatized to first-time users. Continuing to normalize hunger-relief services is crucial to addressing food insecurity.
 - e. **Increasing accessibility of existing services:** Current food providers can grow their impact by implementing programs that prioritize the needs and concerns of food insecure community members. For example, while citing the school bus food drop-offs as an example, one interviewee suggested that use of food support programs increased during the pandemic not only because the need was greater, but because access was made much easier. According to this respondent, widespread use helped normalize food assistance and also helped food reach families who had trouble accessing it before. By reshaping questions and conversations around food insecurity, food providers may open up new and more appropriate food distribution channels.
 - f. **Rochester Farmers' Market:** Once the Rochester Farmers' Market is able to accept EBT payments, it could enroll in NOFA-VT's Crop Cash program for SNAP recipients to extend their benefits further.
 - g. **Career and Tech Centers:** Career and tech centers can be utilized as a liaison to food insecure students. Depending on the resources and abilities of the centers, these services can be provided in different ways. The centers could have small pantries on site to provide immediate food assistance, and could provide information about enrolling in SNAP, and could help refer students to appropriate resources. Many schools are exploring options for opening a food shelf, because the school is somewhere students already go and is ideally somewhere they feel safe.³⁹ Additionally, school pantries can be a food resource without paperwork that necessitates parental involvement or approval.
3. **Incorporate food security into town plans:** Rochester, Hancock, and Granville can implement food security goals into their next town plans to make sure there is funding in for food security initiatives. See the Resources section below for more information.

³⁹ For more information on the Feeding America school pantry program, and to locate one near you, go to Feeding America, School Pantry Program: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/hunger-relief-programs/school-pantry>

4. **Incorporate food security screening into healthcare visits:** Food insecurity is a “social determinant of health,” meaning that a patient’s food security status drastically impacts their everyday life and their overall health. Implementing food security screenings helps healthcare providers connect food insecure individuals or families to resources. Humana and Feeding America created a toolkit for healthcare providers, available at <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resource/food-insecurity-screening-toolkit/>
5. **Links to local farms:** Farmers should be involved in future discussions around making food more accessible. While many farms generously donate food to banks and shelves, programs that increase access while compensating farmers should also be considered. A group of interested community members or town leaders could speak with nearby CSA farms about adding a drop site in one of the towns, for example.
6. **Funding opportunities for the towns:**
 - a. Municipal Planning Grant through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development: This year (2020), the grant is focused on COVID-19 recovery. It could be used to implement some of the above recommendations further. Applications are due October 1st and could be considered in future years.
 - b. Local Food in Your Community grant through the Agency of Agriculture: \$2,000 to \$5,000 for projects that improve existing and emerging community-driven market models to increase points of access to fresh fruits and vegetables in Vermont communities. Revisit this opportunity in 2021, with likely a June deadline.
7. **Community involvement:** Community members sharing resources to grow, cook, and preserve food together could offer training and tools to residents who are already strapped for food and/or time. A few examples of such programs are below.
 - a. Community members could lead lectures through the library about food sovereignty, home gardening, or cooking. UVM Extension could be another valuable resource for education in these areas.
 - b. Increase food sovereignty in the community by reducing barriers to land access for home and public garden use. Zoning regulations in the towns should be looked into to determine where additional community gardens, school gardens, and edible plants can be incorporated.
 - c. Consider alternative transportation models, such as C.I.D.E.R. (cidervt.org), which can assist elderly and people with disabilities to increase mobility. The Tri Valley Transit, which exists in Randolph, could potentially be expanded to the valley.

- 8. Advocate for mandatory living wage:** As reiterated throughout this report, food insecurity is a symptom of poverty. Poverty cannot be addressed without raising wages. Town leaders and community members should advocate on a state-wide level for increased minimum wage and a mandatory living wage by supporting relevant legislation, such as [H.429](#), [H.510](#), [H.577](#), and [H.646](#). The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) maintains an updated web page of national policy developments on food security issues. The page provides context around the bills and proposals and helps the public submit comments on legislation. Available at <https://frac.org/action>

FUTURE QUESTIONS & AREAS OF RESEARCH

This report has indicated numerous areas for further research and more in-depth data collection. Below are areas we have identified that would benefit from deeper analysis.

1. Ideas for future surveys:
 - a. Additional time and effort should be spent gaining the perspectives of food insecure residents. This might be achieved by mailing paper surveys to all town residents or through outreach through 3SquaresVT.
 - b. With more robust data from food insecure residents, a regression analysis could be used to determine the greatest predictors of food insecurity.
 - c. Conduct a survey of successful food shelf models, promotions and outreach, accessibility, and infrastructure to determine how the Rochester Food Shelf can be the most effective.
2. Evaluate the landscape of food insecurity after unemployment benefits decrease, after schools reopen in the fall, or in another six months to compare the compounding effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through time.
3. Map out resources and services specific to these towns through a public-facing, interactive tool, similar to the Food Retailers map by the Hunger Council of Washington County and Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.⁴⁰
4. Research town housing costs, the presence of affordable housing, town policies around housing and land use, minimum lot sizes, and other factors that can affect property value, cost of living, and land access.
5. Examine whether the towns could provide some of their land and facilities for food access initiatives, e.g., in the form of a community garden on town-owned lands or a food shelf on land that is not taxed.

⁴⁰ Many thanks to Sarah Danly for this suggestion. Faye Mack at Hunger Free Vermont (fmack@hungerfreevt.org) could be a valuable resource for mapping assistance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For Consumers

- General information on applying for SNAP (3SquaresVT):
 - You will need your Supplemental Security Income (SSI) number, pay stubs for earned income and check stubs for unearned income (alimony, child support), information about resources (bank accounts, investments, property), household bills. You do not have to include SSI for people in household not applying, but you need to give info about their income and resources.
 - For online application and more information visit <https://dcf.vermont.gov/mybenefits/apply>
 - Use USDA's SNAP Retail Locator to find food establishments that accept 3SquaresVT
- Local Food Resources (included in Appendix)
- Area Food Shelves (included in Appendix)
- One Planet After School Program (free lunch continues during summer months)
- Upper Valley Hunger Council
- Upper Valley Strong
- Vermont Food Bank Agency Locator
- VeggieVanGo
- Vermont 211

For Advocates

- **How to donate to the Rochester Food Shelf**
 - Monetary donations can be mailed to: Federated Church of Rochester at PO Box 197, Rochester, VT with “Food shelf” in the memo line, or
 - Call Kevin or Ruth (Food Shelf Coordinators) at 802-767-3030 to donate.
- **Vermont-Specific Resources**
 - Farm to Plate's Vermont Food and Health Program Inventory
 - *Impact of Coronavirus*: studies by UVM (<https://www.uvm.edu/cals/nfs/food-insecurity-impact-covid-19>)
 - *Food systems disruptions: Turning a threat into an opportunity for local food systems* (<https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/802/788>)
- **Town Planning Resources**
 - Farm to Plate Local Planning for Food Access
 - Healthy Food Policy Project

GLOSSARY

Emergency food system: This is a blanket term for food access resources, including food banks, food pantries, and meal programs. The term is used even outside of traditional emergencies, such as natural disasters or pandemics.

Food accessibility: Accessibility to sources of healthy food, as measured by distance to a store or by the number of stores in an area. Individual-level resources that may affect accessibility, such as family income or vehicle availability. Neighborhood-level indicators of resources, such as the average income of the neighborhood and the availability of public transportation. (ERS)

Food availability: Sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production or imports, including food aid. (FAO)

Food insecurity: Food-insecure households had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources. (USDA)

Food security: Exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (Committee on World Food Security, 2009)

Food shelf: A food shelf is a place where families can access food to take home and supplement the food that they purchase. Another common and synonymous term is “food pantry.” Food shelves differ from Food Banks because they directly serve the community. There are several food shelves throughout Vermont, located in churches, community centers, etc.

Food sovereignty: Food sovereignty is the peoples’, Countries’ or State Unions’ right to define their agricultural and food policy. (La Via Campesina)

Food bank: Though sometimes used interchangeably with “food pantry” or “food shelf,” a food bank is a distribution hub that provides food products to food pantries and meal sites (such as senior meals or community meals). Typically, community members cannot come directly to the food bank to receive food. In Vermont, the primary food bank is Vermont Food Bank.

Very low food security: The food intake of one or more household members has been reduced and their eating patterns disrupted at times because the household lacked money and other resources for obtaining food. (USDA)

AUTHOR BIOS

Johanna Doren is completing her Masters in Food and Agriculture Law and Policy degree from Vermont Law School. She has garnered broad experience in the food system from working on diversified organic vegetable farms, promoting Community Supported Agriculture at FairShare CSA Coalition in Wisconsin, working with a non-profit that gleans and redistributes perishable foods, and conducting research on food policy at the Vermont Farm to Plate Network. She can be reached at johannadoren@vermontlaw.edu.

Emily Whittier received her Masters of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy degree from Vermont Law School in 2020. Emily's food system experience includes running a school food distribution program at a food bank, working at a food pantry throughout college, interning on a farm that grew for Washington State's Farm to Food Bank program, and conducting research on food policy in the correctional system with the Food and Agriculture Clinic at VLS. Emily now works as a Community Food Systems Coordinator at Oregon State University Cooperative Extension of Wasco County. She can be reached at emilyawhittier@gmail.com.

APPENDICES

Local Food Resources

Retail Food Resources (within 15 miles of each town center)

Food store type	Address	Takes EBT?
Supermarkets		
Shaw's	127 VT Hwy 12S Randolph, VT 05060	Yes
Shaw's	8 Washington St Middlebury, VT 05753	Yes
Hannaford's	Court St Middlebury, VT 05753	Yes
Shaw's	27 Mad River Canoe Rd Waitsfield, VT 05673	Yes
Mehuron's	Village Square Shopping Center Waitsfield, VT 05673	Yes
Groceries		
Mac's Valley Market	233 South Main St Rochester, VT 05767	Yes
Dollar General 12464	105 VT Route 12 S Randolph, VT 05060	Yes
Chef's Market Produce & Provisions	2 Salisbury St Randolph, VT 05060	Yes
Central Market	183 S. Main St Bethel, VT	Yes
Country/General Stores		
Floyd's Store	3 Main street Randolph Center, VT 05061	No
Roxbury Country Store	1616 Roxbury Rd Roxbury, VT 05669 9702	Yes

Hubbard's Country Store	38 VT 125 Hancock, VT 05748	No
Granville Country Store	5358 VT 100 Granville, VT 05747	No
Convenience and gas/grocery combinations		
Cumberland Farms 8003	7 Central St Randolph, VT 05060	Yes
Champlain Farms 280	16 N Main St Randolph, VT 05060	Yes
Champlain Farms 120	137 S Main St Bethel, VT 05032	Yes
Skip Mart	12 N Main St Rochester, VT 05767	No
JD's Quick Stop	523 VT 100 Hancock, VT 05748	No
Co-ops		
Middlebury Food Coop	9 Washington St Middlebury, VT 05753	Discounts for holders of SNAP, WIC, and other benefits
Lebanon Food Coop	12 Centerra Pkwy Lebanon, NH 03766	Yes
South Royalton Market	222 Chelsea St South Royalton, VT 05068	Yes
Hunger Mountain Coop	623 Stone Cutters Way Montpelier, VT 05602	Yes
Other food stores		
Kinney Drugs 102	151 VT Route 12 S Randolph, VT 05060 9237	Yes
Rite Aid 10309	12 N Main St Randolph, VT 05060 1127	Yes

Data source: FNS SNAP retailer locator, Yellowpages, and Google Maps; Date of collection: 5/14/2020

Farmer's Markets

Farmer's Market	Address	Phone	Hours/season of operation	Takes EBT?
Randolph Farmers' Market	Gifford Medical Center Green	802-730-6615	May 30 - October 10, 2020 Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Yes
Rochester Farmers Market & Exchange	Rochester Park	802-353-4620	June 5-October 9, 2020 Fridays, 3-6 p.m.	No
Waitsfield Farmers' Market	Mad River Green	Not listed	May 16-October 10, 2020 Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	

Data source: NOFA-VT; Date of collection: 5/15/2020

Community Gardens

Name of community garden	Address	Phone	Contact person
South Royalton Community Garden	223 South Windsor St South Royalton, VT 05068	970-999-4695	Lisa Dragon
Rootswork Community Garden	Behind East Warren Schoolhouse Warren, VT 05674	Not listed	Jeremy Gulley

Data source: Vermont Community Garden Network; Date of data collection: 5/15/2020

School-Based Gardens

Name and Type of School	Address	Phone	Contact Person
Rochester School	222 South Main St Rochester, VT 05767	Not listed	Not listed
Stockbridge Good Health Garden	2933 VT Rte 107 Stockbridge, VT 05772	Not listed	Donna Gallant
Randolph Elementary School Gardens	40 Ayers Brook Rd Randolph, VT 05060	802-728-9555	Kristen Gage
South Royalton School and Community Garden	223 South Windsor St South Royalton, VT 05068	970-999-4695	Lisa Dragon

Data source: Vermont Community Garden Network; Date of data collection: 5/15/2020

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Programs (nearby, take EBT or NOFA farm share)

Name of Farm	County Served	Address	Phone	EBT	NOFA Farm Share	Contact Person
Golden Russet Farm	Addison	1329 Lapham Bay Road Shoreham, VT 05770	802-897-7031	No	Yes	Will and Judy Stevens
Elmer Farm	Addison	855 Case Street Middlebury, VT 05753	802-388-3848	No	Yes	Jennifer & Spencer Blackwell
Heartwood Farm	Windsor	559 Bowman Rd Barnard, VT 05031	802-392-3859	No	Yes	Justin and Carin Park
Luna Bleu Farm	Windsor	96 Boles Road South Royalton, VT 05068	802-763-7981	No	Yes	Suzanne Long & Tim Sanford
Tunbridge Hill Farm	Windsor	135 Manareh Hill Road Tunbridge, VT 05077	802-889-3565	No	Yes	Jean & Wendy Palthey

Data source: NOFA VT; Date collected: May 16, 2020

List of all Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Programs that serve the counties:

Serves Windsor County	Serves Addison County
Bloodroot Farm Cedar Circle Farm Crossroad Farm (Norwich) Crossroad Farm (Post Mills) Deep Meadow Farm Evening Song Farm Farm and Wilderness Foundation Free Verse Farm and Apothecary Greybar Farm Harlow Farm Heartwood Farm, LLC Hogwash Farm Honey Field Farm Kiss the Cow Luna Bleu Farm Maple Wind Farm	Burnt Rock Farm Elmer Farm Family Cow Farmstand Footprint Farm Four Pillars Free Verse Farm and Apothecary Full Moon Farm Golden Russet Farm Green and Gold CSA Last Resort Farm Maple Wind Farm New Leaf Organics Stony Loam Farm Trillium Hill Farm Wood's Market Garden

Old Athens Farm Old Road Farm Root 5 Farm Shire Beef LLC Snowberry Farm Sunrise Farm Sunshine Valley Sweetland Farm Tunbridge Farm Uphill Farm	
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Area Food Shelves

Site Resource	Location	Serves	Open Times	COVID-Updates?	Contact & Website
Federated Church of Rochester (Food Pantry)	15 North Main St, Rochester, VT 05767	Rochester, Hancock, and Granville	Generally open the last Saturday of the month with exceptions when last Saturday falls on or near religious holidays 8:30 – 10am		(802) 767-3012 No Website
Randolph Area Food Shelf	12 Prince St Unit #3, Randolph, VT 05060	Randolph, Brookfield, Braintree, & East Granville. Latest electric bill or name of landlord for verification of residence required annually.	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 3:00pm - 5:00pm Tuesday 1:00pm - 5:00pm Thursday 5:00pm - 7:00pm	Pre-packed food bags; Social distancing; Will deliver groceries to those who are unable to or do not feel safe to leave their homes. Call the Food Shelf at (802) 431-0144	(802) 431-0144 http://www.randolphareashelf.org
Bethel Area Food Shelf	129 Church St, Bethel, VT - 05032	Barnard, Bethel, Gaysville, Pittsfield, Stockbridge	Monday 12:00pm - 2:00pm Wednesday 4:00pm - 6:00pm		http://bethelfoodshelf.org
Roxbury Union Congregational Church	1664 Roxbury Rd, Roxbury, VT - 05669	Roxbury	Wednesday 1pm - 4:30pm; Or by appointment in emergency CURRENTLY CLOSED	Currently closed; Call Claire at 485-7779 if you need food assistance. She will put a box together for you.	(802) 485-7840 https://roxburyvt.org
Brandon Area Emergency Food Shelf	Route 7 & Union St, Brandon, VT - 05733	Brandon, Sudbury, Forestdale, & parts of Goshen	Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:30am-9am		(802) 247-6720 none
South Royalton Area Food Shelf	2955 Vermont Rt. 14, South Royalton, VT - 05068		Thursday 11:30am - 1:30pm 5:00pm - 7:00pm		802-763-7633 foodshelf@unit-edchurchofsoro.org http://www.unitedchurchofsoro.org/foodshelf
HOPE	282 Boardman St, Middlebury, VT 05753	Addison county residents, but as of 7/2020 Rochester residents also welcome call ahead to make sure.	Monday-Friday 9:30-3:30	Masks required	802-388-3608 http://www.hope-vt.org/

SURVEY TEXTS

Community Ambassadors Survey

Sponsored by the Feeding the Valley Alliance; Linda Anderson, Moderator

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. The information you provide will be used in our food security assessment for the towns of Hancock, Granville, and Rochester. This survey is intended for distribution among community stakeholders who may have an insider perspective to share on food security in the towns of Rochester, Hancock, and Granville.

The purpose is to understand what resources are already available, as well as what barriers the providers are facing, what resources are needed to provide their services, etc. This assessment seeks to measure the typical food security in these communities, as well as the specific impact COVID-19 has had on community food security.

Ideally, the information below could be obtained through an in-person interview during a site visit. However, due to the current health and safety situation and efforts to reach as many people as possible, we are distributing virtual surveys. We have more open-ended questions we'd love the opportunity to discuss with you. If you are interested in discussing anything via telephone or Zoom, please indicate that at the end of the survey and we will reach out to you to set up a time.

This survey is being conducted with help from students in the Master's of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy program at Vermont Law School. Our names are Johanna and Emily! If you have any questions while filling out this survey, please do not hesitate to reach out. Including both of us in an email will ensure we are able to respond as efficiently as possible: Johanna Doren (johannadoren@vermontlaw.edu); Emily Whittier (emilywhittier@vermontlaw.edu).

Lastly, we recognize that the people doing important food access work may also be facing food insecurity on a personal level. To anonymously take our food security assessment survey for town residents, please follow this link. Feel free to share the following link with other community members who may be interested in sharing their thoughts: <https://tinyurl.com/valleyfoodsurvey>

1. What is your current role in providing food/resources to the community? Please check all that apply

Check all that apply.

- ☐ My organization provides supplemental food
- ☐ My organization facilitates access to food
- ☐ I work for a community nonprofit
- ☐ I work in healthcare in the community
- ☐ I am a local policymaker
- ☐ I am a community organizer
- ☐ I am a local farmer
- ☐ I run a local grocery store or general store that sells food

Other: ☐ _____

2. Please briefly describe the service(s) you or your organization provide:

3. If your organization provides supplemental food, does your organization have the resources (supplies, staff, funding, etc) to adequately address the needs in your community?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other: _____

4. If you answered "yes" or "sometimes" above, please explain.

5. Do you think that many households in the community have a problem with food security? Please try to focus on the towns of Hancock, Granville, and Rochester when selecting your answer.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

6. Why do you think that household food security is a problem? (Feel free to include anecdotes/personal stories that give you a sense that residents may be food insecure. Please do not use names.)

7. How do people cope with the problem of food insecurity in your community?

8. Do you think your community has the resources it needs to address food insecurity, both in typical times and in COVID-19 times? Please explain.

9. Are you interested in having a phone call or Zoom meeting to provide more information about your experiences with your community?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No *Skip to question 12*

Contact
information

Please provide your contact information so we can reach out to you to set up a time to talk more about community food security. Thank you!

10. Name

11. Email address

12. You indicated that you are not interested in having a phone call or Zoom interview. Thank you for the important feedback you've already shared! Is there anything else you'd like to address before you submit your responses?

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Google Forms

Community Food Security Assessment Survey

Sponsored by the Feeding the Valley Alliance; Linda Anderson, Moderator

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this anonymous survey. We are gathering information to understand the typical food security in your community, as well as the specific impact COVID-19 has had on community food security. Food security means having reliable access to enough affordable, healthy food. Food insecurity is defined as limited or uncertain access to enough healthy foods.

This survey will ask you to answer questions while thinking about your situation at the beginning of this year, as well as your current level of food security during the coronavirus pandemic. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. You don't have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with, but the more questions you answer, the better we can understand what the community needs and it will help us think about ways to increase access to food in the valley. Open-ended answers may be quoted, but won't be tied to any identifying information.

All surveys are anonymous and none of this information will be used to identify you. If you need immediate help accessing food, please call the Rochester Food Shelf at 802-767-3030 or call 211 for a list of food resources available in central Vermont.

This survey is being conducted with help from students in the Master's of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy program at Vermont Law School, Johanna and Emily. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to them! Including both email addresses in your message ensures a response as quickly as possible. Please reach out to: johannadoren@vermontlaw.edu and emilywhittier@vermontlaw.edu

Untitled Section

1. Do you live in Rochester, Granville, or Hancock?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Rochester
- ☐ Granville
- ☐ Hancock

2. How many people (total, including you) are currently in your household?

3. How many children (18 years or under) are in your household?

4. How many seniors (65+) are in your household?

5. Please think about your employment as of January 1, 2020: Did you have a job?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ No job
- ☐ One job
- ☐ Multiple jobs
- ☐ I work per diem
- ☐ No job, I am a student
- ☐ No job, I am retired
- ☐ No job, I am disabled

6. How many hours per week did you work, on average?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-20 hours per week
- ☐ 21-30 hours per week
- ☐ 31-40 hours per week
- ☐ 41+ hours per week
- ☐ Not applicable

7. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months? (~June 2019-June 2020)

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat
- ☐ Enough but not always the kinds of food we want
- ☐ Sometimes not enough to eat
- ☐ Often not enough to eat
- ☐ Don't know

8. Here are some reasons why people don't always have enough or the kinds of the foods they want to eat. Please indicate if any of the following is a reason why YOU haven't always had enough or the kinds of food you want in the past 12 months. Please select all answers that apply to you.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Not enough money for food
- ☐ Kinds of food I want are not available
- ☐ Not enough time for shopping or cooking
- ☐ Too hard to get to the store
- ☐ I am on a specialized diet (gluten free, diabetic, etc.)
- ☐ No working stove available
- ☐ Not able to cook or eat because of health problems
- ☐ Don't know or not applicable

9. Now please think about your current situation, including the impacts COVID-19 has had on your employment since March 15, 2020, and select the option that feels closest to your situation: Do you have a job?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I was able to telework and my income did not change
- ☐ No job
- ☐ One job
- ☐ Multiple jobs
- ☐ Per diem
- ☐ No job, I am a student
- ☐ No job, I am retired
- ☐ No job, I am disabled

10. Since March 15, 2020, about how many hours have you worked each week (on average)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-20 hours per week
- ☐ 21-30 hours per week
- ☐ 31-40 hours per week
- ☐ 41+ hours per week
- ☐ Not applicable

11. Please answer the next two questions in relation to your current situation, during the coronavirus pandemic, beginning March 15, 2020: Which of these statements best describe the food eaten in your household in the past 3 months?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat
- ☐ Enough but not always the kinds of food we want
- ☐ Sometimes not enough to eat
- ☐ Often not enough to eat
- ☐ Don't know

12. Please indicate if any of the following is a reason why YOU haven't had enough food or the kinds of food you want in the past 3 months. Please select all answers that apply to you.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Not enough money for food
- ☐ Kinds of food I want are not available
- ☐ Not enough time for shopping or cooking
- ☐ Too hard to get to the store
- ☐ I am on a specialized a diet
- ☐ No working stove available
- ☐ Not able to cook or eat because of health problems
- ☐ Don't know or not applicable

The next four questions will ask you to indicate if statements are often true, sometimes true, never true, or only true because of the pandemic. Please select only one response.

13. Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have enough money to get more.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Never true
- ☐ True, but only as a result of a pandemic-related unemployment or change

14. Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Never true
- ☐ True, but only as a result of a pandemic-related unemployment or change

15. "We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Never true
- ☐ True, but only as a result of a pandemic-related unemployment or change

16. In the past 12 months, did 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?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes, but only as a result of a pandemic-related unemployment or change

17. Are you currently receiving WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) Benefits?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. Are you currently receiving 3Squares VT (SNAP/food stamp) benefits?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes *Skip to question 19*
- ☐ No *Skip to question 24*

3SquaresVT

The next questions will ask you about 3SquaresVT, which is nationally known as SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

19. Please check off the types of places where you used your 3SquaresVT benefits in the past year (or, if you haven't had them for a year, since you started receiving benefits).

Check all that apply.

- ☐ A grocery store
- ☐ A gas station or general store
- ☐ A food co-op or health food store
- ☐ A farm stand
- ☐ A farmer's market
- ☐ A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share
- ☐ Not applicable

Other: ☐ _____

20. If you did not use your benefits at a farmer's market, farm stand, or a CSA share, why not?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I didn't know I could
- ☐ I don't know how to
- ☐ I have a hard time getting to a farmer's market, farm stand, or CSA where I can use it
- ☐ I am not interested
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other: _____

21. Do you use any of the programs below that match or stretch EBT benefits? You may select multiple answers.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes, Crop Cash (doubles the value of EBT dollars at a Farmers' Market)
- ☐ Yes, Farm Stand Match (50% off at farm stands)
- ☐ Yes, Farm Share (subsidized CSAs)
- ☐ Yes, Senior Farm Share
- ☐ No, I was not aware of these programs
- ☐ No, I was aware of these programs but I am not interested
- ☐ Not applicable

22. If yes, how did you learn about the program(s) you used?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Heard about it online
- ☐ Learned about it at the farmer's market or farm stand
- ☐ Learned about it from the food shelf
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other: _____

23. Do you currently go to a food shelf or food pantry to get food?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes *Skip to question 30*
- ☐ No *Skip to question 27*

24. If you do not receive 3SquaresVT (SNAP/food stamp) benefits, did you received them at at a time during the last 12 months?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. If you did not receive 3SquaresVT benefits at all during the last year, why not? Please select all answers that apply to you.

Check all that apply.

☐ I don't need 3SquaresVT (food stamps)

☐ I am not eligible

☐ I don't know how to apply or who to contact me to help me apply

☐ I don't believe in getting government assistance

☐ I feel too embarrassed to apply

☐ The application process is too complicated

☐ The benefits aren't worth it

Other: ☐ _____

26. Do you currently go to a food shelf or food pantry to get food?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes *Skip to question 30*

☐ No *Skip to question 27*

Questions for residents not using
a food shelf

Please answer these questions if you responded that you are not currently using a food pantry.

27. You indicated that you do not use the local food shelf for supplemental food. Please check as many boxes below that apply to why not.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ My family and I have enough to eat
- ☐ My family and I sometimes need more to eat, but I don't know if we're eligible to go to the food shelf
- ☐ I do not know where the food shelf is or when it is open
- ☐ I can't get to the food shelf because of transportation issues
- ☐ I can't get to the food shelf during its open hours
- ☐ I'm too embarrassed to go to a food shelf

Other: ☐ _____

28. If you and your family needed food, where would you look to learn about the available resources in your community?

29. Is there anything this survey didn't address that you'd like to share?

Thank you!

Thank you so much for your time! We appreciate your time and feedback. Your contribution is very important to understanding food security in Rochester, Hancock, and Granville!

If you need food resources, please call 211 for assistance or look at this chart of local food shelves:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iZn2AsnwHXNI-NgEnLscRFmnpYs7WeAbVzSjy7JXvM/edit?usp=sharing>

Questions for Pantry
Customers

Please complete these questions if you checked yes to "Do you currently go to a food shelf or food pantry for food."

30. Which food shelf or pantry do you visit for food? If you visit multiple, please list them.

31. Do you leave your community to go to this food shelf and access these resources?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

32. If yes, please check all of the reasons why.

Check all that apply.

☐ I don't know where to access food in my community

☐ I find the food shelf that I go to easier to use

☐ The hours are more accessible to me

☐ I am able to get more food at the food shelf that I go to

☐ I prefer the food that's available at the food shelf that I go to

☐ No one at the food shelf that I go to knows me

☐ I do not leave my community to access food resources

33. During the past year, how often did you visit a food shelf for food?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Every week

☐ Every month

☐ Once every couple of months

☐ A few times during the year

☐ I started using the food shelf because of COVID-19's impact on me or my family

34. Did you ever have trouble getting to your food shelf?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

35. If so, what trouble did you have getting there? Please select all of the answers that apply to you.

Check all that apply.

☐ No trouble

☐ My transportation is unreliable

☐ I had trouble carrying my food home

☐ I can't always get here when the food shelf is open

☐ Parking near the food shelf is hard

Other: ☐ _____

36. We want to know if and how the food shelf has helped you during the past year. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
I had enough to eat each month because of the food I got from the food shelf	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ate healthier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I went without food less often	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Without the food shelf, I would not have been able to pay for other basic necessities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. What items do you usually get at the food shelf?

38. Is there anything that you would like to get at the food shelf that isn't usually available there?

39. Is there anything this survey didn't address that you'd like to share?

Thank you!

Thank you so much for your time! We appreciate your time and feedback. Your contribution is very important to understanding food security in Rochester, Hancock, and Granville!

If you need food resources, please call 211 for assistance or look at this chart of local food shelves:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iZn2AsnwHXNI-NgEnNLscRFmnpYs7WeAbVzSjy7JXvM/edit?usp=sharing>

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FOOD SHELF CHECKLISTS



Client Information

You must live in **Randolph, Braintree, Brookfield, or East Granville.**

Location: 12 Prince St., Unit 3
Randolph, Vermont
www.randolphareafoodshelf.org
802-431-0144

Open Mon., Wed., Fri. 3 – 5 PM
Tuesdays 1-5 PM
Thursdays 5-7 PM

(Closed all federal holidays and when schools are closed due to inclement weather)

The Food Shelf strives to provide quality food for our clients. We obtain food from various sources such as The Vermont Foodbank, local stores, and locally grown & produced donations.

GUIDELINES:

- Sign up during regular Food Shelf hours.
- You will need to sign a disclaimer stating that the Food Shelf will not be held responsible for the food we provide.
- An account includes **every person** living in your household.
- Bring in a piece of mail, driver's license, or other form of identification that shows your name and an address within our service area as proof of residency.
- You will receive a punch card on your third visit; card is REQUIRED each visit.*

Cards are non-transferable, client use only

*There is a \$1 fee for replacement punch cards.

- Clients are allowed 2 visits per month 7 days apart (2 additional visits are allowed each quarter by request) Clients participating in the USDA foods program may shop for those once per month.

THE SHOPPING/ CHECK OUT PROCEDURE IS:

- **Shopping can be done by client, other household member or official proxy only.**
- Enter and check in at the front desk. A shopping list for your family size will be provided. This list will include a variety of canned goods, cereal, pasta, crackers, frozen meat, bread, juice, dairy, and other items as available.
- Your shopping list will be used when you check out your groceries with our volunteer. A volunteer will check against the list to make sure you are getting the correct groceries for your family size and then will box or bag your groceries.
- We do not allow exceptions to the shopping list.

Randolph Area Food Shelf:

- Is governed by a board of trustees and decisions are made by committee. We function with over 50 devoted volunteers. There is no paid staff.
- Buys the majority of its inventory from the Vermont Foodbank and is supported by numerous food drives and donations from our communities.

Use help us be fair to everyone by shopping according to your family size and following the guidelines listed on both sides of this pamphlet.

Food Shelf – 4/25/20

Rochester Food Shelf

Item Availability not guaranteed. We will do our best to meet your requests.

Name: _____

Qty in Household: _____

Cat Food	
Dry	
Wet	

Dog Food	
Dry	
Wet	

Cold Cereal	Limit 1 List top 3 preferred varieties
Raisin Bran	
Rice Crispies	
Corn Flakes	
Mini Wheat	
Cheerios	

Baking Needs	Limit 1 Each Item
Pancake Mix	
Cornbread Mix	
Sugar	
Flour	

Canned Meats	Limit 2 Each Item
Tuna	
Chicken	

Canned Vegetables	Limit 2 Each Item
Mixed Vegetables	
Green Beans	
Carrots	
Peas	
Potatoes	
Creamed Corn	
Corn	
Mushrooms	

Sauces	Limit 2 Each Item
Diced Tomatoes	
Tomato Sauce	

Canned Pasta	Limit 2 Each Item
Spaghetti Rings	
Spaghetti w/ meat	
Beef Ravioli	

Canned Beans	Limit 2 Each Item
Kidney Beans	
Black Beans	
Baked Beans	
Northern Beans	

Food Shelf – 4/25/20

Item Availability not guaranteed. We will do our best to meet your requests.

Juice	Limit 1
<i>Orange</i>	
<i>Apple</i>	
<i>V8</i>	
<i>Cran-Grape</i>	

Milk	Limit 1 Each Item
<i>Box</i>	
<i>Powdered</i>	
<i>Protein Drinks (8 Oz.)</i>	

Soup	Limit 2 <small>List top 3 preferred varieties</small>
<i>Chicken Noodle</i>	
<i>Tomato</i>	
<i>Barley Beef</i>	
<i>Vegetable Beef</i>	
<i>Cream of Mushroom</i>	
<i>Vegetable</i>	

Spreads	Limit 1 Each Item
<i>Grape Jelly</i>	
<i>Strawberry Jelly</i>	
<i>Peanut Butter</i>	

Hot Cereal	Limit 1
<i>Oatmeal</i>	

Canned Fruit	Limit 1 Each Item
<i>Applesauce</i>	
<i>Fruit Cocktail</i>	
<i>Peaches</i>	
<i>Pineapple</i>	
<i>Pears</i>	
<i>Mandarin Oranges</i>	

Miscellaneous Items	Limit 1 Each Item
<i>Tempura Batter</i>	
<i>Mazza Ball Soup</i>	
<i>Shake n' Bake</i>	
<i>Canned Salmon</i>	
<i>PAM</i>	
<i>Pickled Beets</i>	
<i>Yams</i>	
<i>Enchilada Sauce</i>	
<i>Water Chestnuts</i>	
<i>Beef Ramen</i>	
<i>Jello Fruit Cups</i>	
<i>Almond Butter</i>	
<i>Muscle Milk Powder</i>	
<i>Diapers - Size 1</i>	

Food Shelf – 4/25/20

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Paper Products	Limit 1 Each Item
Adult Diapers	
Toilet Paper	
Paper Towels	

Dried Fruit & Nuts	Limit 1 Each Item
Cherries	
Dates	
Peanuts	
Soy Nuts	

Personal Products	Limit 1 Each Item
Shampoo	
Conditioner	
Body Wash	
Soap	
Toothpaste	
Flossers	
Combs	

Beverages	Limit 2 Each Item
Soda	
Water	
Seltzer	

Condiments	Limit 1 Each Item
Mayo	
Oil	
Ketchup	
Mustard	
Marinades	

Salad Dressing	Limit 1 List top 3 preferred varieties
Ranch	
Honey Mustard	
Vinaigrette	
Caesar	
Blue Cheese	
Italian	
Creamy Italian	
Dill	
Thousand Island	

Beans	Limit 1 List top 3 preferred varieties
Pinto 1 lb bag	
Black 1 lb bag	
Great Northern 1 lb bag	
Lentil 1 lb bag	

Food Shelf – 4/25/20

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<i>Sides</i>	Limit 1 Each Item
<i>Stuffing</i>	
<i>Potato Flakes</i>	

<i>Rice</i>	Limit 2 List top 3 preferred varieties
<i>White 1 lb. bag</i>	
<i>Brown 1 lb. bag</i>	
<i>Mixes</i>	

<i>Pastas</i>	Limit 4 List top 5 preferred varieties
<i>Egg Noodle</i>	
<i>Spaghetti</i>	
<i>Rigatoni</i>	
<i>Elbows</i>	
<i>Ziti</i>	
<i>Penne</i>	
<i>Specialty / Mixes</i>	
<i>Mac n' cheese</i>	
<i>Stroganoff Skillet Mix</i>	
<i>Beef Pasta Skillet Mix</i>	