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Fruit and Vegetable Bucks: Adams County Grocery Store Snap Incentive Program

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Abstract

Veggie Bucks provides a 50% discount on all fresh fruits and vegetables sold through Kennie's Market produce department at the point of sale for the 5 highest cost items. The incentive period ran January - April, 2017. Intended outcomes include an increase in the number of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased by SNAP recipients at Kennie's Market locations in Biglerville and Gettysburg by 10% in January-April 2017 compared to baseline figures obtained in 2016, and to familiarize SNAP recipients with fresh fruits and vegetables and to provide information about the ACFMA markets' Double Dollars program. SNAP recipients were invited to sign up for the program upon showing their ID and EBT card and were provided a Kennie's Frequent Shopper card if they did not have one already.

Keywords

Produce, Program, Food Justice

Disciplines

Community-Based Research | Food Security | Health Policy | Social Welfare

Comments

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Background

- In Adams County Pennsylvania, 8.5% of the population lives below the federal poverty line, 11% report being food insecure, and one in 13 county residents receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- Many low-income individuals face the challenge of not having enough income to purchase desirable foods like fresh fruits and vegetables. Most report that bills for housing, electricity and car payments are fixed and essential. Food is the one expense that can be variable, so many try to spend as little as possible on it.
- The most recent county community health needs assessment found that only 4% of residents report eating the recommended 2.5 cups of vegetables a day, a number that has not changed since the last assessment in 2011. This, coupled with limited exercise, is having a tremendous impact on the health of our community, where 68% are overweight or obese.
- With rich agricultural potential, a growing interest in a local foods movement, growth of farmers' markets in the county, and the stated community need for greater access to healthier food, the Adams County Food Policy Council (ACFPC) has brought together stakeholders to make a number of strides toward improving the health of our community.
- Through this collaboration, the Council applied to the **Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program** through the United States Department of Agriculture.

Program Aim

The goal of the Adams County Grocery Store SNAP Incentive for Produce in Winter/Early Spring is to assist county residents who receive SNAP assistance to purchase additional fresh fruits and vegetables.

Program Description

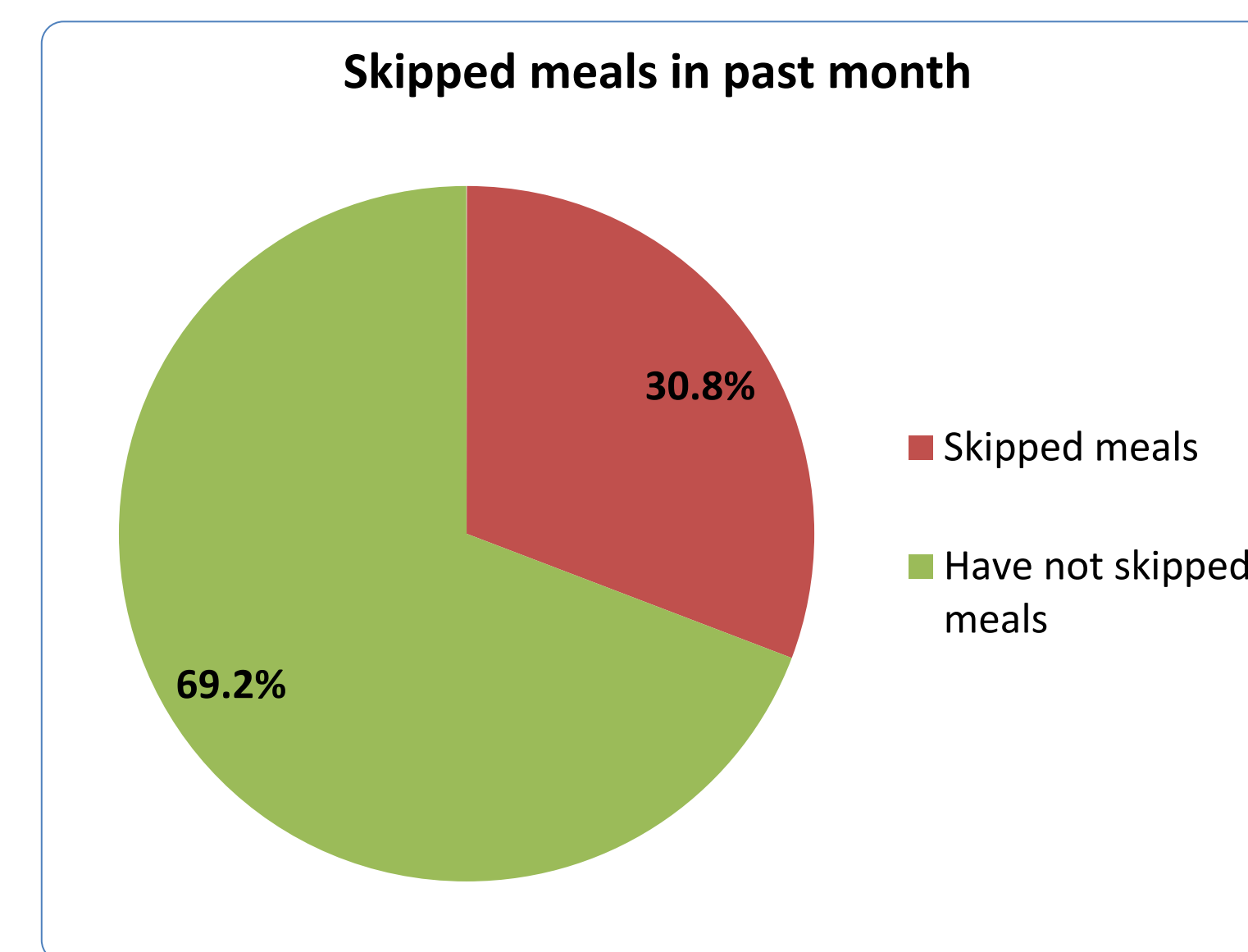
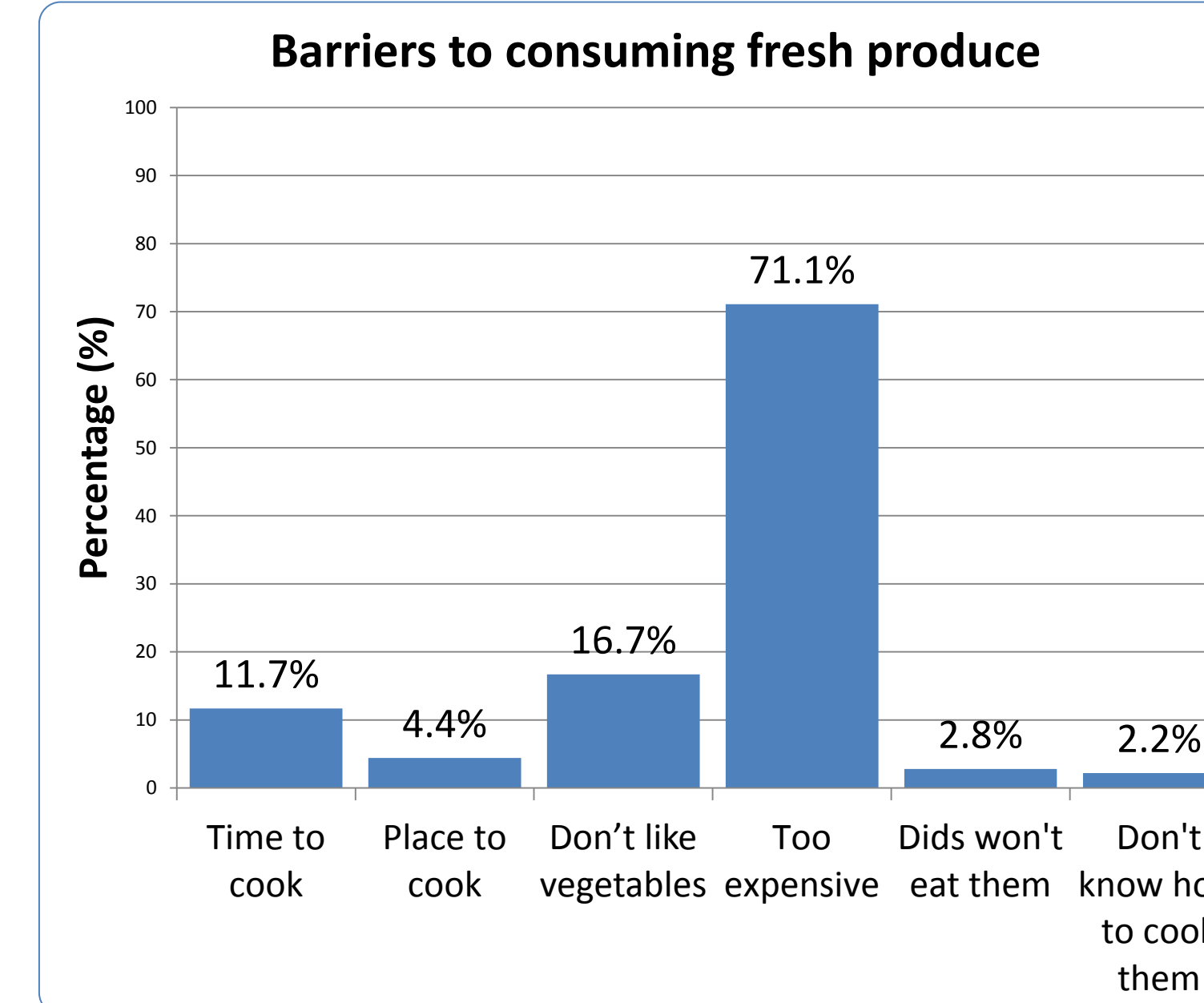
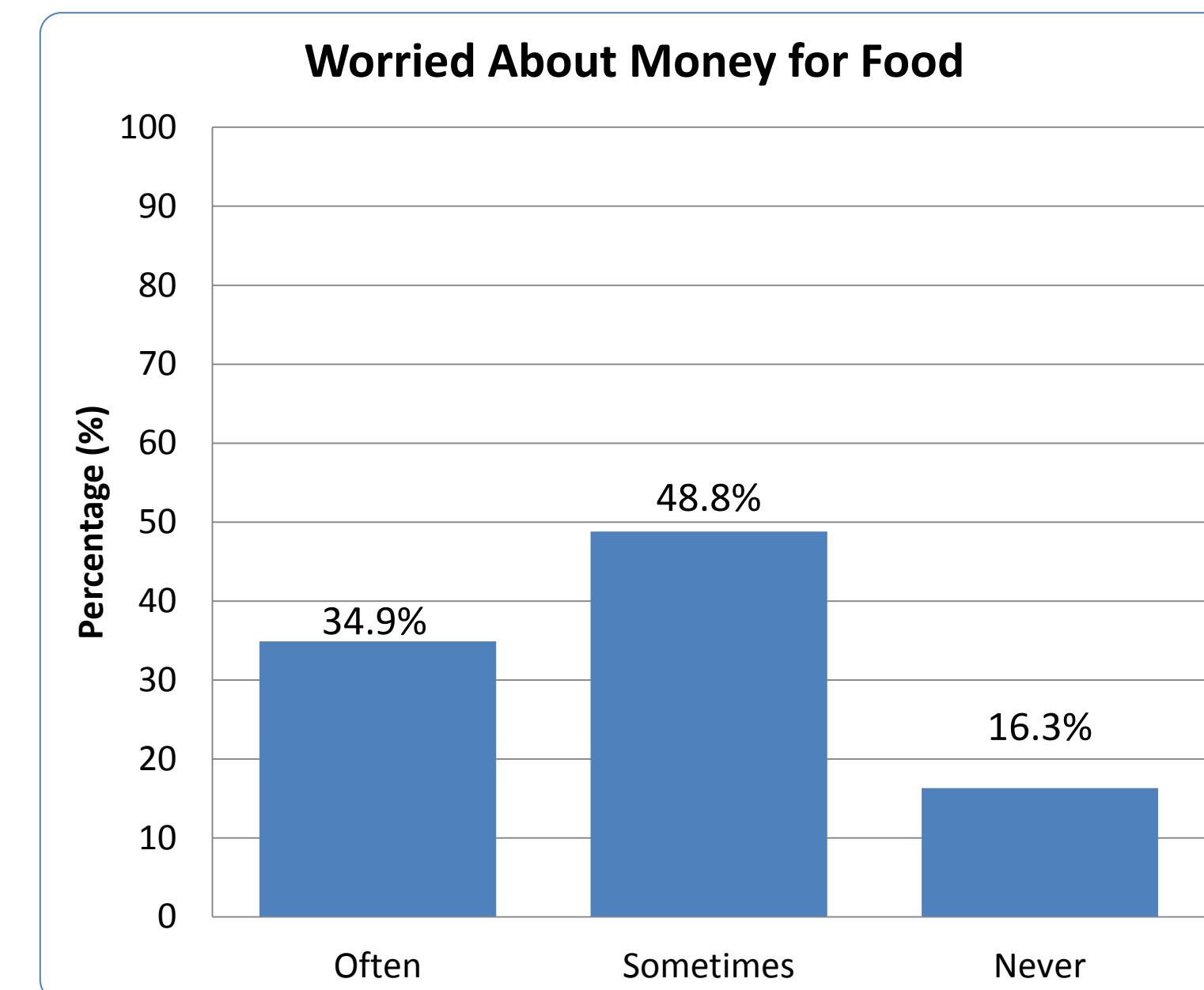
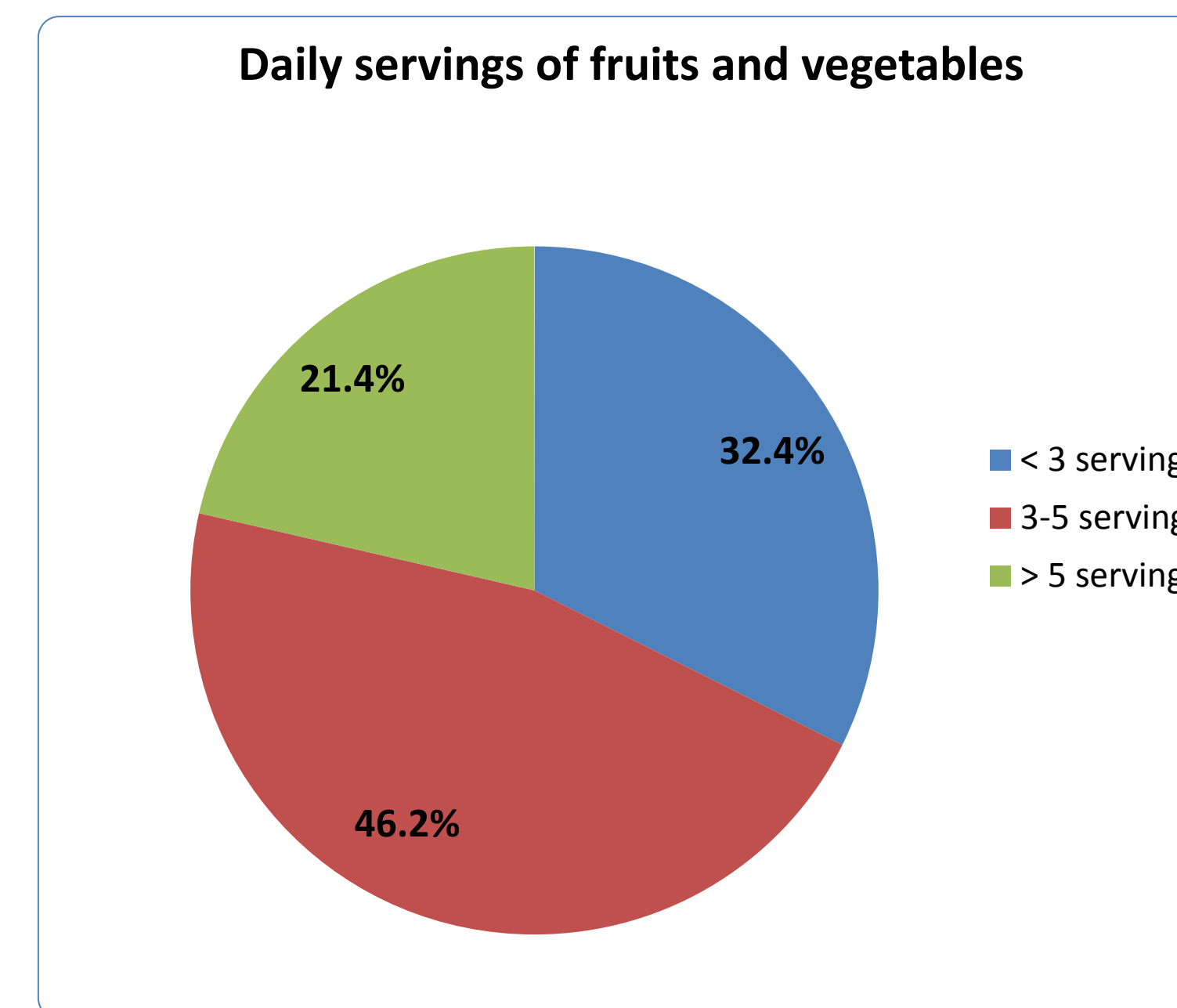
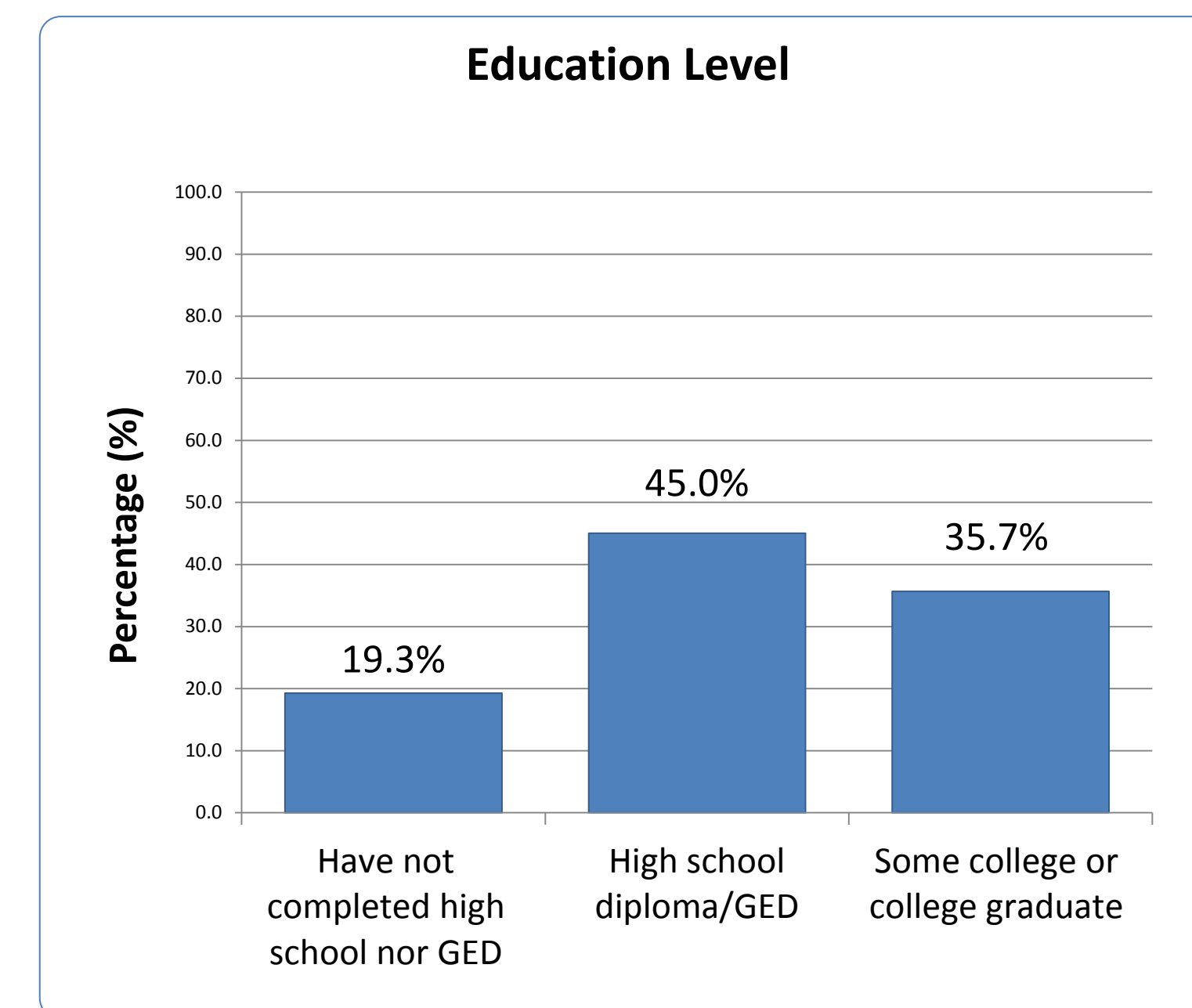
- Veggie Bucks* provides a 50% discount on all fresh fruits and vegetables sold through Kennie's Market produce department at the point of sale for the 5 highest cost items. Incentive period: January - April, 2017
- Intended outcomes: Increase the number of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased by SNAP recipients at Kennie's Market locations in Biglerville and Gettysburg by 10% in January-April 2017 compared to baseline figures obtained in 2016.
- An additional goal of the *Veggie Bucks* promotion is to familiarize SNAP recipients with fresh fruits and vegetables and to provide information about the ACFMA markets' Double Dollars program.
- SNAP recipients were invited to sign up for the program upon showing their ID and EBT card and were provided a Kennie's Frequent Shopper card if they did not have one already.
- Kennie's created a register system group using Shopper Card numbers for the purpose of providing discounts on fresh produce.
- A total of 200 participants were enrolled as of 3/24/17.

Evaluation Methods

- Pre-program surveys (n=173): community and student volunteers collected brief baseline surveys at sign-up tables or with local agencies. Surveys were also available at Kennie's customer service counters.
- Questions included sociodemographic variables, fruit and vegetable consumption, and experiences of food insecurity, signing up for the program or attending store tours.
- Post-program surveys: Participants will be asked about their perception of the program – ease of use, did it enable them to stretch their monthly food budget, did it enable them to purchase more fruits and vegetables.
- The project team will use the results of these surveys to guide future plans for sustaining the project and for providing customer point of view information for the process evaluation.
- The project team will meet post-program to complete a self-assessment of the process, including areas of challenge and success experienced while implementing the project. Results of the self-assessment and of the SNAP customer surveys will be shared with USDA.
- Kennie's Market provides reports at the end of every month to identify the total discounts given to the customer group. Kennie's will also prepare a comparison report for the customer group at the end of the program, comparing total fresh produce sales for a selected time period before the program and total produce sales during the incentive period for measuring the increase achieved.
- This evaluation research has been approved by the Gettysburg College Institutional Review Board.

Pre-Program Survey Results

Participant characteristics



	"I worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more"				*p-value
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Adults skipped meals in past month					
	Yes	54	38	0	0
	No	90	63	28	100
Reported that fruits and vegetables were too expensive					
	Yes	102	71	13	46
	No	42	29	15	54

Table 1. Association between worrying whether food would run out and skipping meals and financial barriers. *Chi-square.

Usage

	WK#1	WK#2	WK#3	WK#4	WK#5	WK#6	WK#7	WK#8	WK#9	WK#10	WK#11	WK#12
Gettysburg	\$170.21	\$269.70	\$263.34	\$187.56	\$298.64	\$550.15	\$371.69	\$378.59	\$428.31	\$586.58	\$2,155.89	\$2,956.04
Biglerville	\$74.12	\$23.99	\$49.82	\$24.36	\$63.74	\$70.44	\$60.48	\$83.52	\$60.33	\$77.12	\$457.20	\$495.90
Total	\$244.33	\$293.69	\$313.16	\$211.92	\$362.38	\$620.59	\$432.17	\$462.11	\$488.64	\$663.70	\$2,613.09	\$3,451.94
Cumulative	\$244.33	\$538.02	\$851.18	\$1,063.10	\$1,425.48	\$2,046.07	\$2,478.24	\$2,940.35	\$3,428.99	\$4,092.69	\$6,705.78	\$10,157.72

Pre-Program Analysis Summary

As hypothesized, the biggest barrier SNAP participants face is the expense associated with buying fresh fruits and vegetables. Over 70% of participants reported that it is difficult to buy fresh fruits and vegetables because they are too expensive. While there were additional barriers, such as food preferences and lack of time or a place to cook, the overwhelming majority reported primarily financial barriers. As *Veggie Bucks* was designed to reduce this barrier, we hypothesize that the post-survey results will show that participants were able to better meet their families' nutritional needs while participating in this program by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption rates. We also expect to see a reduction in the number of adults who had to skip meals in the past month. Usage has increased over time, partly due to increased participant enrollment, but also because the incentive amount offered was increased from a 50% discount to a 100% discount.

Sustainability

ACFPC has a performance history of sustaining projects designed to improve access of low-income consumers to fruits and vegetables. The SNAP Double Dollars program conducted in partnership with the ACFMA markets has grown since 2011. The *Healthy Options* program, also conducted in partnership with the ACFMA, assists low-income families who do not qualify for SNAP (income between 160%-250% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines) to purchase healthy local food at ACFMA markets. The program began in 2011 and has grown steadily since then. All the funds used to pay for the SNAP Double Dollars and *Healthy Options* programs have been raised privately. With additional funding from Gettysburg Hospital and cooperation with Kennie's Market, ACFPC has been able to expand the program to allow *Healthy Options* families to purchase WIC-eligible fruits and vegetables in the fall/winter months.

ACFPC members have already begun to reach out to local leaders to discuss fund-raising to support the Fruit and Vegetable Bucks program once the grant period ends. Improving the capacity of low-income county residents to be able to purchase fruits and vegetables will help support the local economy. This activity also supports Healthy Adams County's goal to reverse the trend of overweight/obesity by increasing the number of adults meeting the daily recommended consumption of fruits and vegetables throughout the county. ACFPC members have also reached out to the Food Trust in Philadelphia, a current FINI grantee, to explore the potential for future partnership to expand the Food Trust's current areas of operation to include South Central Pennsylvania.

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