

Food Security Post Pandemic

Massachusetts Municipal Association Human Services Council

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OpenTable

VISION

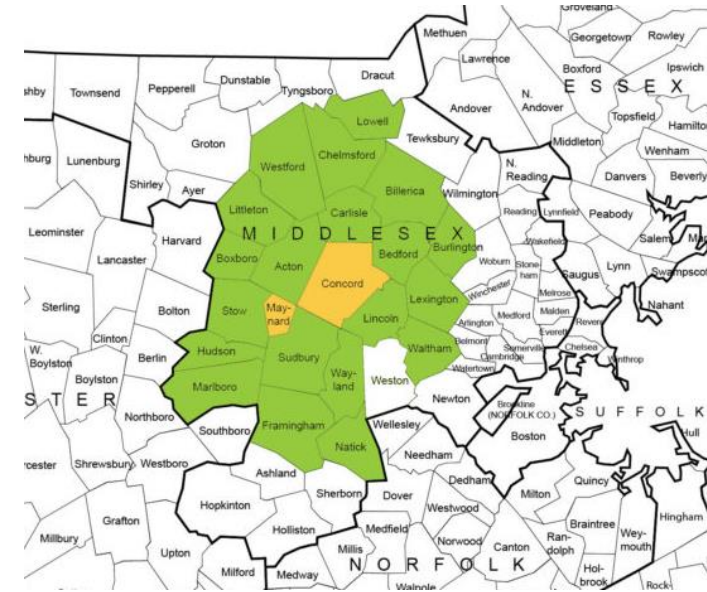
We strive to end hunger by addressing with our partners the systemic causes and immediate impacts of food insecurity.

MISSION

Open Table's mission is to end hunger in our local community by providing healthy food in ways that respect the dignity and diversity of those served.

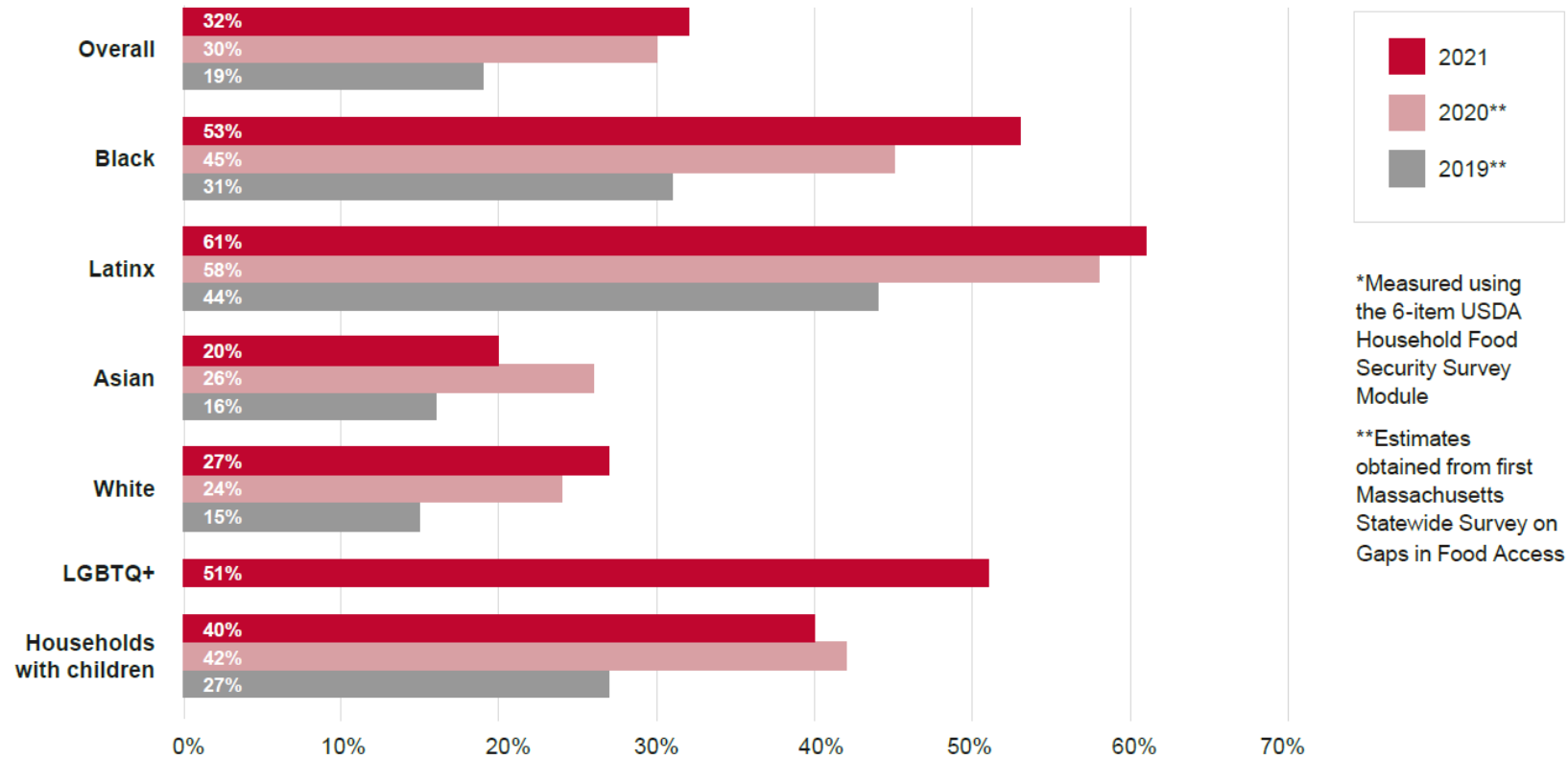
VALUES

We believe that people should not be hungry. We recognize that economic, racial and gender inequality are the main drivers of food insecurity. We welcome our neighbors in need with compassion and respect.



Food Insecurity in MA: Now 1 in 3

Food insecurity* rates among Massachusetts adults



Source: Greater Boston Food Bank (2022) Opportunities to Improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts



Low Income Individuals Forced to Make Tradeoffs

DRIVERS OF FOOD PANTRY USE

Why new food pantry users started using pantries in 2021

✓	
Increased cost of groceries	54%
Decreased income	42%
Quarantined due to COVID-19	28%
Healthcare expenses	24%
Only recently learned about food pantries/banks	21%
Lost federal assistance	20%
Lost housing/housing costs increased	20%
Additional childcare expenses	12%

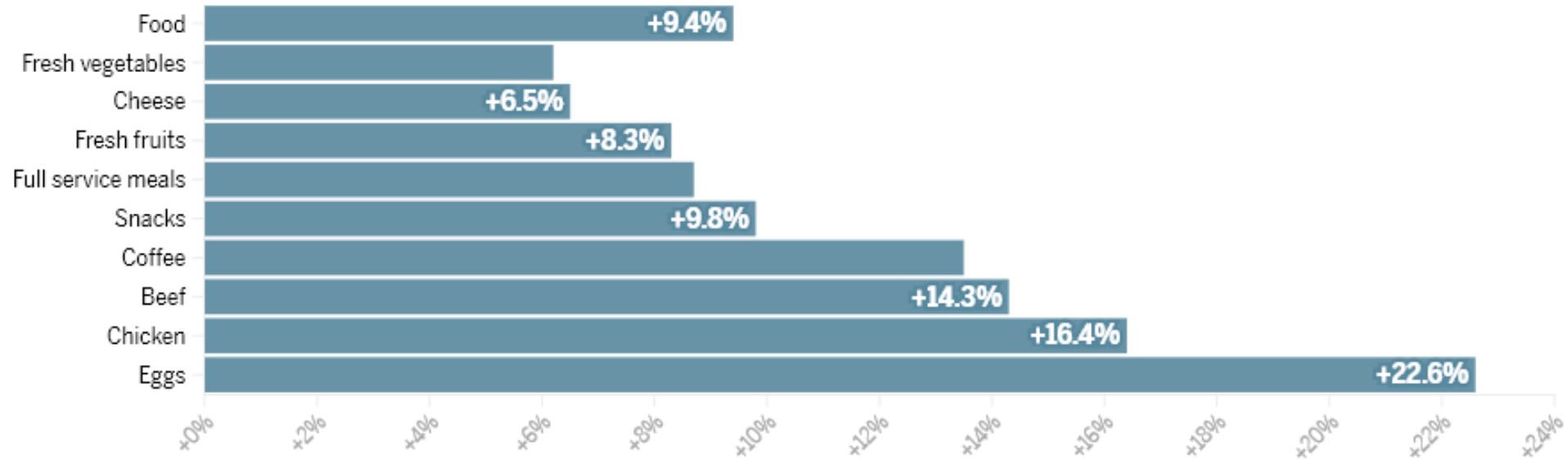
Why food pantry users stopped using pantries in 2021

✗	
Increased federal food assistance	35%
Household income increased	25%
Received help from family or friends	23%
I can't get there when it's open	21%
Too hard to get to	21%
Don't like the food	19%



Food Prices Increased

How the price of food has changed between April 2021 and April 2022



Source: [Consumer Price Index, US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



Those who are food insecure are likely

- Woman Headed Households
- Children
- Elders
- Minorities
- Recent Immigrants



“Great Depression with Minivans”*

- **Suburban Poverty is Growing**

- As urban housing gets more expensive, working poor pushed out.

- **The Hungry here don’t look the part:**

- Cars: a necessity not a luxury
- Middle class appearance: affordable at yard sales, thrift shops
- Phones: bought on installment plans

- **Living on a “Minimum wage diet”**

- Life “on the edge”
- More precarious and exposed by the pandemic



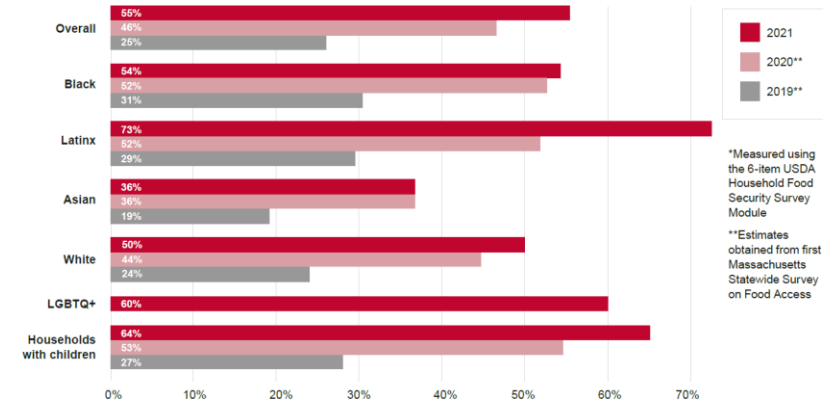
* Arango, Tim. “Vans Full of Families Lined Up for Food” New York Times Magazine Sept 3, 2020, Sec A, p15



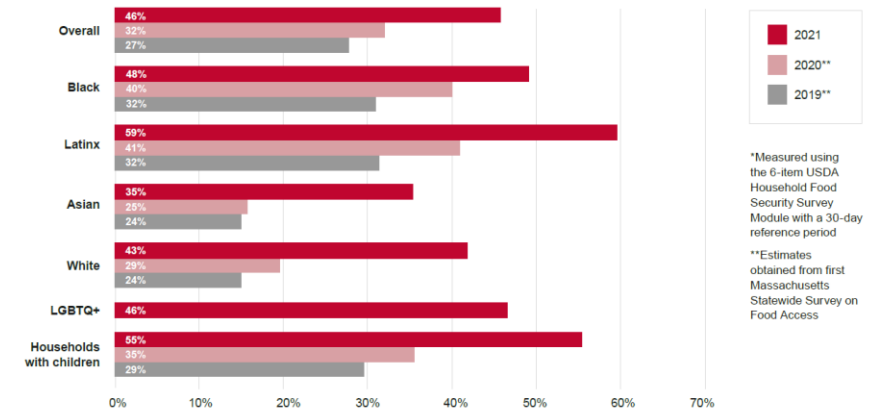
Addressing the Need

- Gov't Funded Nutrition Programs
 - SNAP
 - WIC
 - School Meals
- Privately Funded Food Pantries
- Help from Family and Friends

SNAP use among Massachusetts adults with food insecurity*



Food pantry use among Massachusetts adults with food insecurity*



Source: Greater Boston Food Bank (2022) Opportunities to Improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts



Why people aren't using food resources

- Stigma
 - *I want to support myself*
 - *I feel embarrassed*
 - *I am worried others will find out*
 - *Maybe others need it more*
- Knowledge and Convenience
 - *I don't know where to go*
 - *I don't have the time*
 - *Is it worth it?*
- Eligibility Concerns
 - *Not sure I am eligible*
 - *I am worried about the information I need to share*
 - *I am worried that applying will affect my immigration status*



New Strategies: Many Here to Stay

Before- Equality Lens:

- Everyone comes to the pantry or community supper
- Offer the same food to all

Now- Equity Lens:

- Multiple ways to distribute including mobile programs, prepared meals to go
- Culturally and medically appropriate food



Partnerships are essential

- Health Department
- Schools
- Public Housing Authority
- Councils on Aging
- Boys and Girls Club
- Refugee Resettlement Agency
- Houses of Worship



Drive-thru Pantry with Choice

- Online/phone ordering
Clients can **choose**
Fresh Produce, Dairy, Meats, Pantry Staples
Nutritious Prepared Meals
- Curbside pickup by appointment
- Safe, Convenient, Private



Mobile Program with Community Facing Partners

- Brazilian Immigrant Community
- Preferred culturally appropriate foods

- Hudson Health Dept
 - Housing Authority food drop site
 - Last mile delivery from truck to door
- Assembleia de Deus de Hudson
 - Pop-up market after Sunday services
 - Church run distribution



Healthy Helpings Meal Program

- Low Income Individuals with Heart Disease
- Councils on Aging
- DASH* diet prepared meals
- Grab-and-go at COAs and Public Housing Sites



*American Heart Assoc – Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension



Home Delivery to Asian American Elders

- Low Income Elders without Transportation
- Maynard COA and Housing Authority
- Culturally Appropriate Foods
- Mandarin Speaking Volunteers
- Home Delivery

Other Open Table Programs

- Support for Afghan, Haitian, Ukrainian Refugees
 - Culturally Appropriate Food
 - Kitchen pantry “starter kits”
 - International Institute of New England
- Kids Summer Lunch and Snack Program
 - Meals for children during the summer break
 - Boys & Girls Club, Town Recreation Depts
- Supplemental meals for low income, minority students
 - Frozen meals to go home with on Fridays
 - Robinson Community School (Lowell)



View for the future

- Hunger will persist if root causes of poverty aren't addressed.
- Pandemic crisis put a spotlight on social and health inequities.
- Food Security Organizations like Open Table adapted out of necessity.
- Partnerships make us all stronger and ready to address future challenges.

