

Oakville Women Focus On Food

Introduction

Last winter a group of women came together to talk about what was going well and what their challenges were, living in the community of Oakville. Together they prioritized access to food and food bank use as the most pressing issue for them and their families. This was a topic that they would like to pursue and find out how others felt about it. They decided that a community survey would be a good way of finding out broader opinion on accessing food issues. The Meeting House Church & Family Resource Programs of Canada provided the funding for the project . A survey was created and a group of women set out to speak with others living in low income in North Oakville. They knocked on doors and met with people living in the housing communities in North Oakville (the communities of Chautauqua, Knox Heritage, Donaughy, Rimmington, Golden Briar and Elm).

Survey Results

The survey responses came from 84 homes, representing 271 people in North Oakville, living in low income. See Table 1 for the breakdown of households by age.

Table 1 - Ages represented in households responding to survey

It is important to note that a number of people did not want to complete the survey, indicating that they did not use food banks or did not like to use food banks.

Ages	#
0-5	45
6-12	56
13-20	42
20-60	117
Over 60	11

Household Food

Table 2-Describing household food (summarizes responses about how people feel about food in their households.)

Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat	Enough but not always the kinds of food we want to eat	Sometimes not enough to eat	Often not enough to eat
23%	18%	23%	3%

When asked about how satisfied they are about the type of food eaten in their household, only 21% said they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied; yet, 45% of families said they had enough food but not always the kinds they want;

Survey respondents were asked where they get their food most often.

93% grocery store, 49% food bank, 10% convenience store, 8% Farmers Market, 6% church for help, 1% family

Challenges with Access to Food

Thirty-three percent of survey respondents said they don't always have enough to eat.

Ninety six percent of respondents worry that they will run out of food before they have money to buy more.

Table 2 - Running out of food (summary of how many people worry about running out of food)." The results show that running out of food is a concern for many

	#
Often true	34%
Sometimes true	62%
Never true	4%

When people don't have enough food - 46% of survey respondents shop, 48% go to a food bank, 25% go without and 23% borrow from someone else. Out of the people who chose the "other" category 4% asked a church, 4% asked their family and others had smaller food portions, or used credit cards.

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Survey respondents said that the following were the hardest food items to get:

- Meat (43%)
- Fresh food (23%),
- Fresh fruit & vegetables (18%),
- Home country food (14%),
- Dairy (14%),
- School snacks (7%),
- Organic (5%),
- Luncheon meat (2%)

Table 3 - Barriers faced to accessing food (summarizes the top two barriers faced in accessing food)

Location of stores	Cost of food	Transportation	Not sure what to buy
10%	80%	49%	6%

Other responses from a few respondents spoke to food allergies and special diet challenges like being gluten free.

Thirty-four people responded to the question about the ideal situation for accessing food. Thirteen people just would like to have enough money to go to the grocery store and another 7 said they would like to be able to go to the grocery store. Other comments to add to that, focused on access to healthy food and transportation to get back and forth from the grocery store or having food delivered when mobility is an issue. Only two people mentioned food banks, but they were in the context of wishing food banks had different approaches or systems for distributing food.

Food Banks

The survey probed people about their food bank experience and their suggestions for positive changes. The largest response to the question about what people would like to see in terms of improvements in food banks were healthy, fresh food and variety

“We always cook at home but buying ingredients is expensive.”

“I don’t always have enough money & a way to get food home.”

“I want to be able to provide healthy food for my children.”

“I wish I had enough money to purchase healthy foods.”

Other responses about how to improve food banks included:

- Healthy fresh food (58)
- better locations/ better transportation/walking distance(19)
- not expired food/ or bugs in food (13)
- reduce line ups (7)
- more times (6)
- allowed to take more food (5)
- welcoming/accepting/respectful/understanding (5)
- more variety (diapers, not just soups and other canned goods) (4)

