

Amherst Health Department  
Survey of the Fort River Neighborhood  
November 2015



## ABOUT THIS SURVEY PROJECT

### December 2015

The neighborhood near Fort River Elementary School in Amherst is home to two apartment complexes: Watson Farms and Colonial Village. Healthy Hampshire (a regional public health initiative) partnered with the Health Department, the Conservation Department and the Amherst Regional Public Schools Family Center in summer 2015 to conduct a survey of residents in these complexes to gain a better understanding of how to meet their needs around three priorities:

- 1) Where people get their food
- 2) Their knowledge and use of community facilities in Amherst, such as the pools
- 3) Their interest in utilizing the Fort River Farm as a place for recreation and gardening

With a grant from the Office of the Attorney General, the Amherst Health Department worked with Amherst Regional Public Schools Family Center to hire a group of local teens to work on a variety of projects over the summer of 2015 related to healthy food and gardening. One of the projects included being trained in survey techniques and then actually going door to door in these two apartment complexes asking people to take the survey.

The survey was offered in English and Spanish, and several of the youth surveyors were able to verbally administer it in Spanish if requested. 45 people responded to the survey.

The data will be used by the Town of Amherst in policy decisions and planning of capital projects that impact access to healthy food and fitness opportunities.



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### About Us

Healthy Hampshire works with municipal and community leaders to effect changes to community policies and systems that will promote access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity for all residents. It is part of the Mass in Motion statewide initiative through the Department of Public Health. For more information about Mass in Motion, see: [www.mass.gov/massinmotion](http://www.mass.gov/massinmotion).

This report was assembled by Community Health Solutions of the Collaborative for Educational Services: [collaborative.org/community-health](http://collaborative.org/community-health).

For more information about this project or to obtain copies of this report or the photo documentation, please contact:

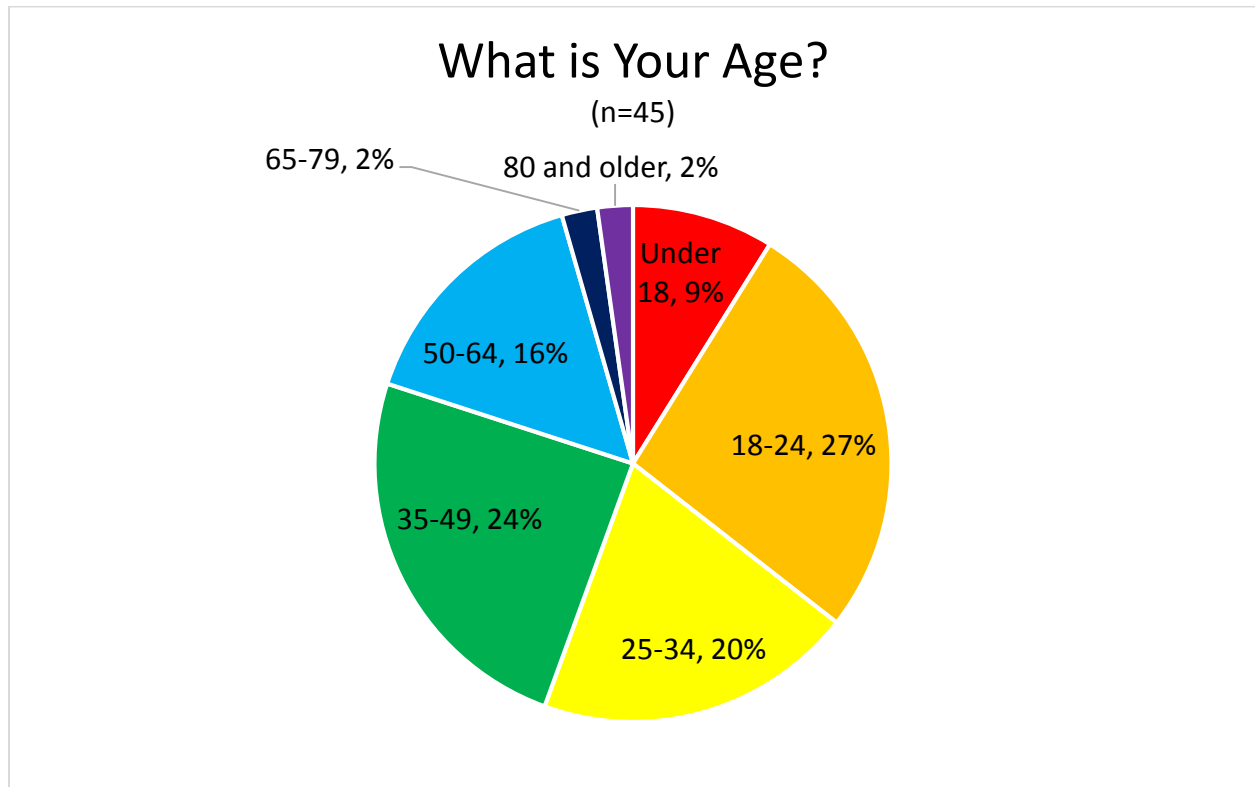
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Health Department

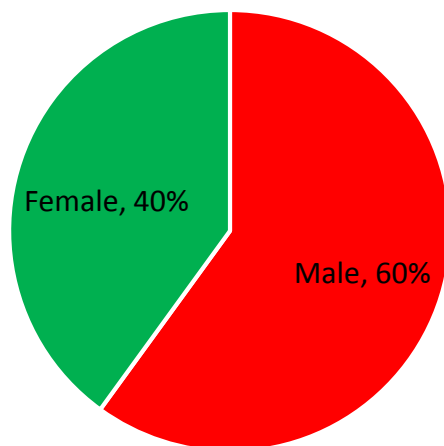
## DEMOGRAPHICS

- Forty-five survey respondents provided demographic information for themselves.
- Respondents were fairly evenly divided among four major age groups: 18-24, 25-34, 35-49, and 50 and over.
- 60% percent of survey respondents were male and 40% were female.
- While respondents sometimes identified themselves with more specific ethnicity categories, approximately 30% identified as Salvadoran and/or Latino. The other major ethnic groups represented were white (24%), Asian (24%) and African-American (16%).



## What is Your Gender?

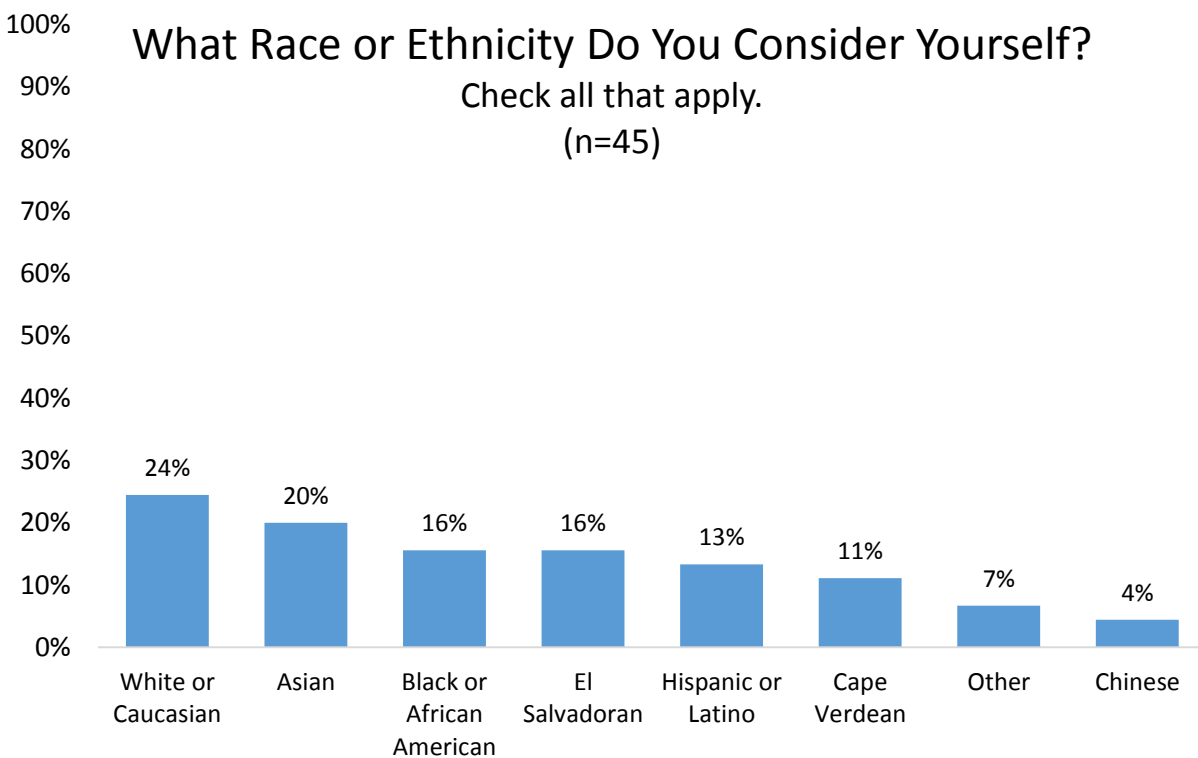
(n=45)



## What Race or Ethnicity Do You Consider Yourself?

Check all that apply.

(n=45)



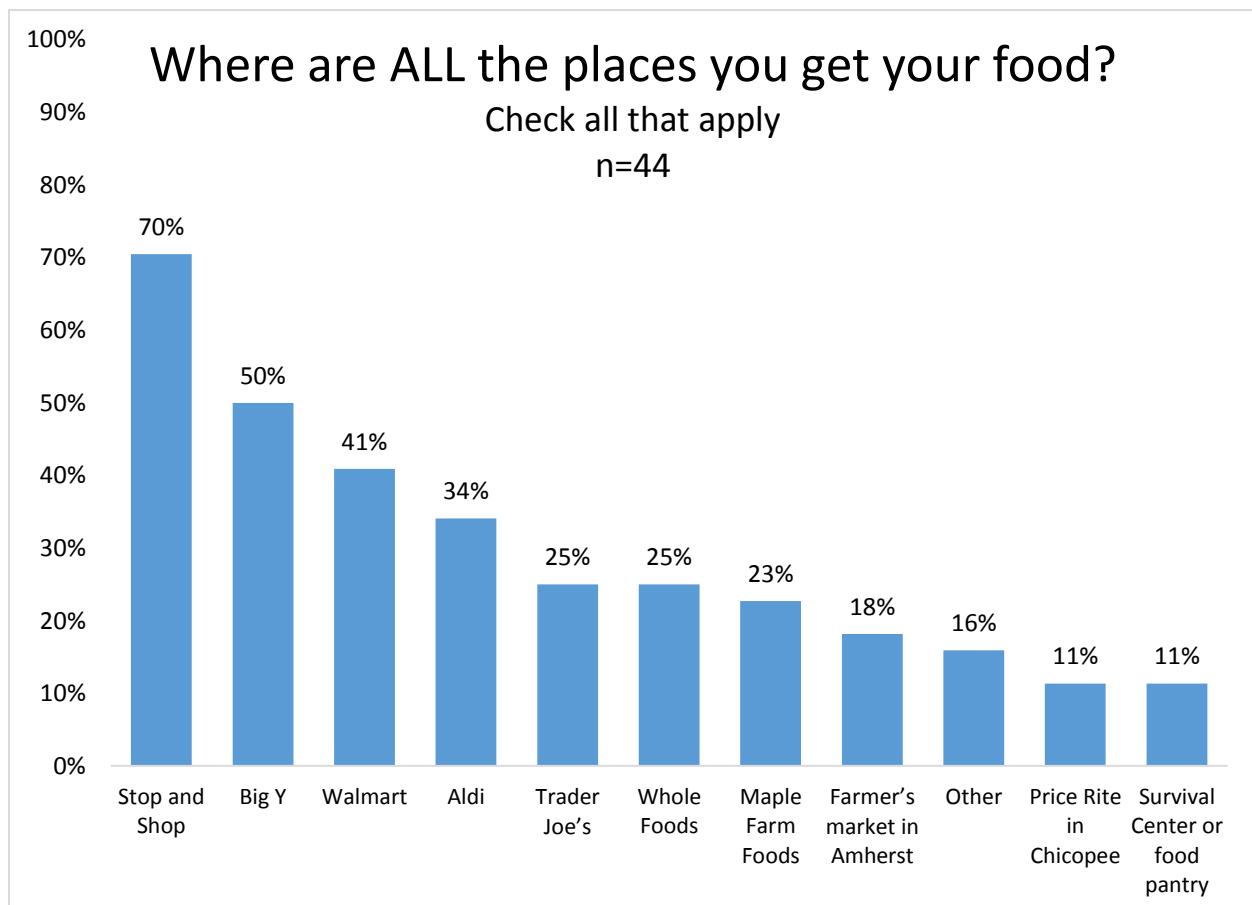
## WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR FOOD, AND HOW DO YOU GET THERE?

Over 70% of survey respondents reported that they get groceries at Stop and Shop (most of them mentioned other stores as well). Other frequently-mentioned stores included:

- Big Y (50%)
- Wal-Mart (41%)
- Aldi (34%)
- Trader Joe's and Whole Foods (25% each).

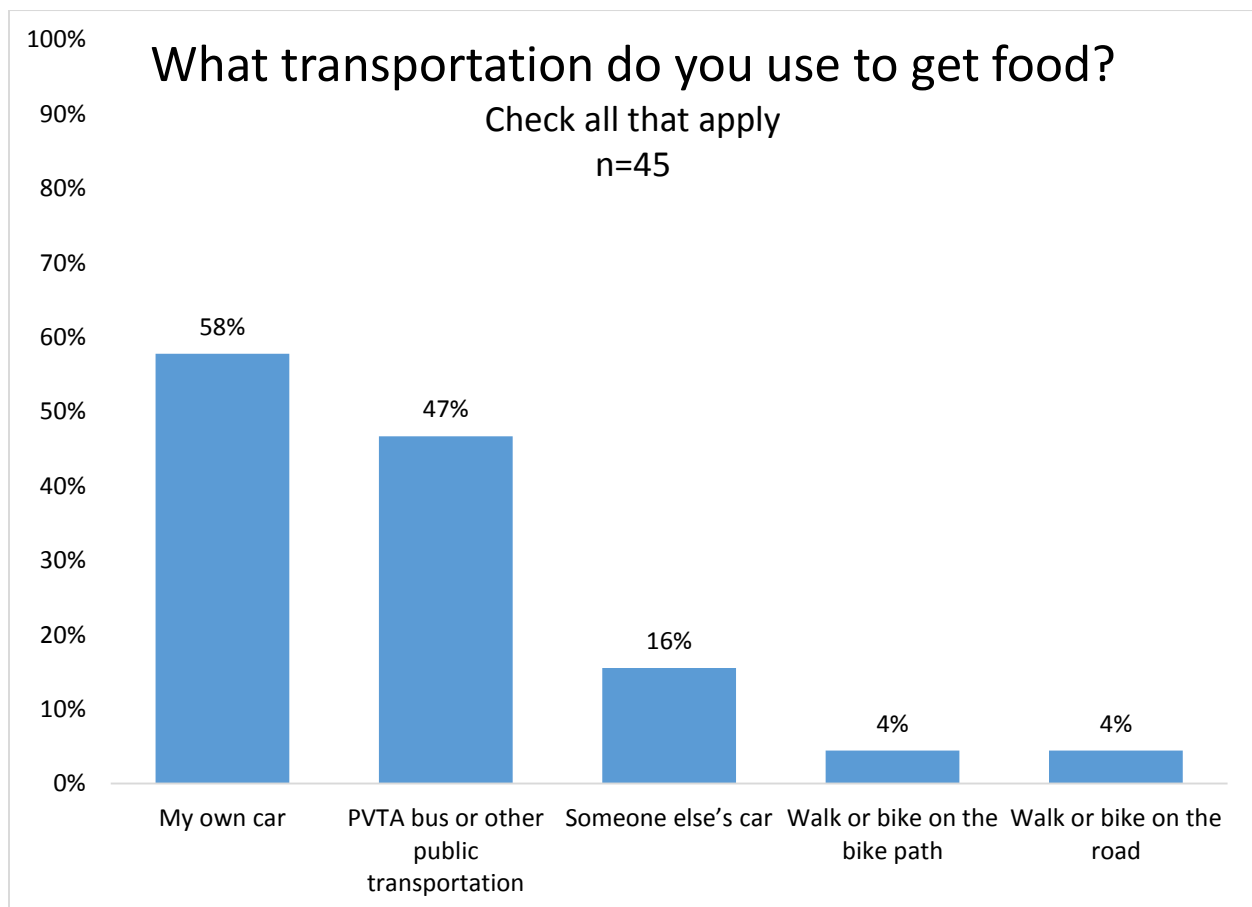
The seven people who mentioned other sources of groceries listed:

- Local farms (3)
- Convenience stores (2)
- Dining hall (1)
- Own garden (1)



A majority of survey respondents reported that they use their own car to get their food, with a substantial minority reporting taking the bus. A few reported that they use someone else's car, and only three respondents reported walking or biking to get food.

Most (81%) of the respondents who reported using their own car did not report using any other means of transportation to get food. However, 35% of the respondents who use the bus also reported at least one other means of transportation.

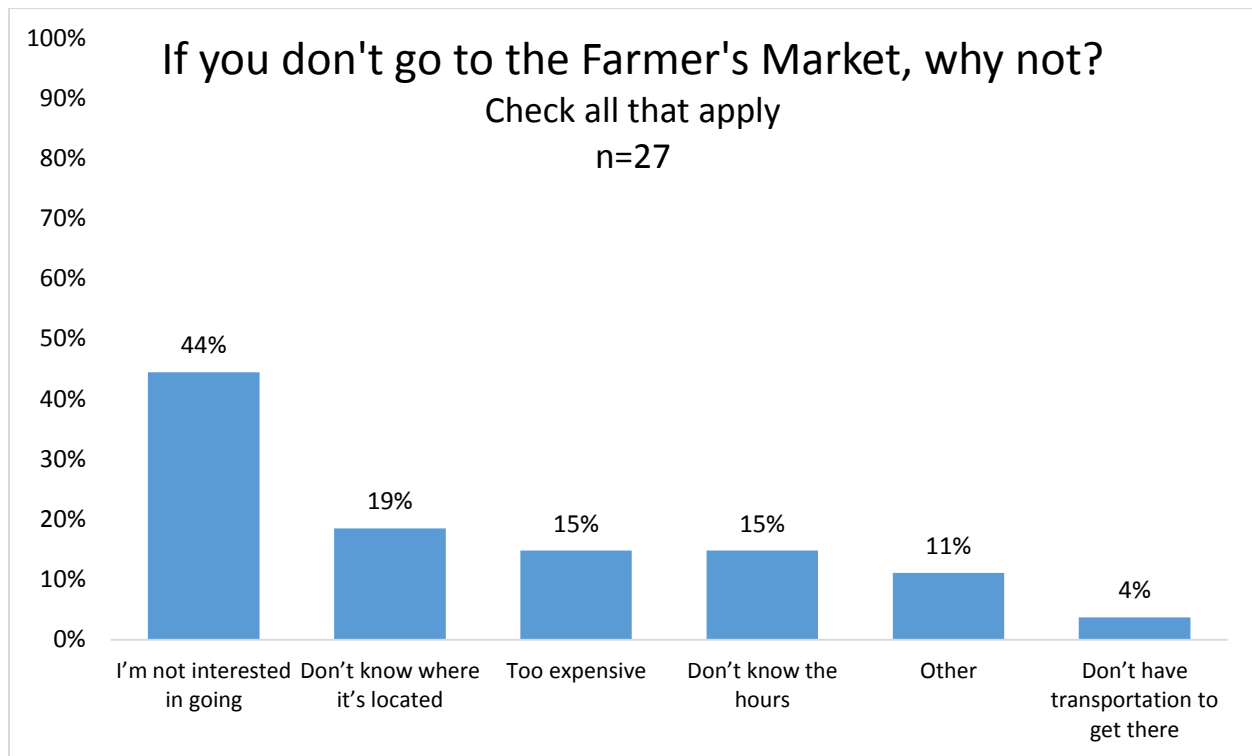


### ***The Farmer's Market***

Just under 30% of respondents reported that they go to the farmer's market in Amherst on Sundays. Of those who reported a reason why they do not go, many (44%) said that they were not interested in going. Nearly 20% reported that they do not know where the market is, and 15% each reported that the market is too expensive and/or they don't know its hours of operation. Only one person

reported that a lack of transportation prevents her or him from going to the market.

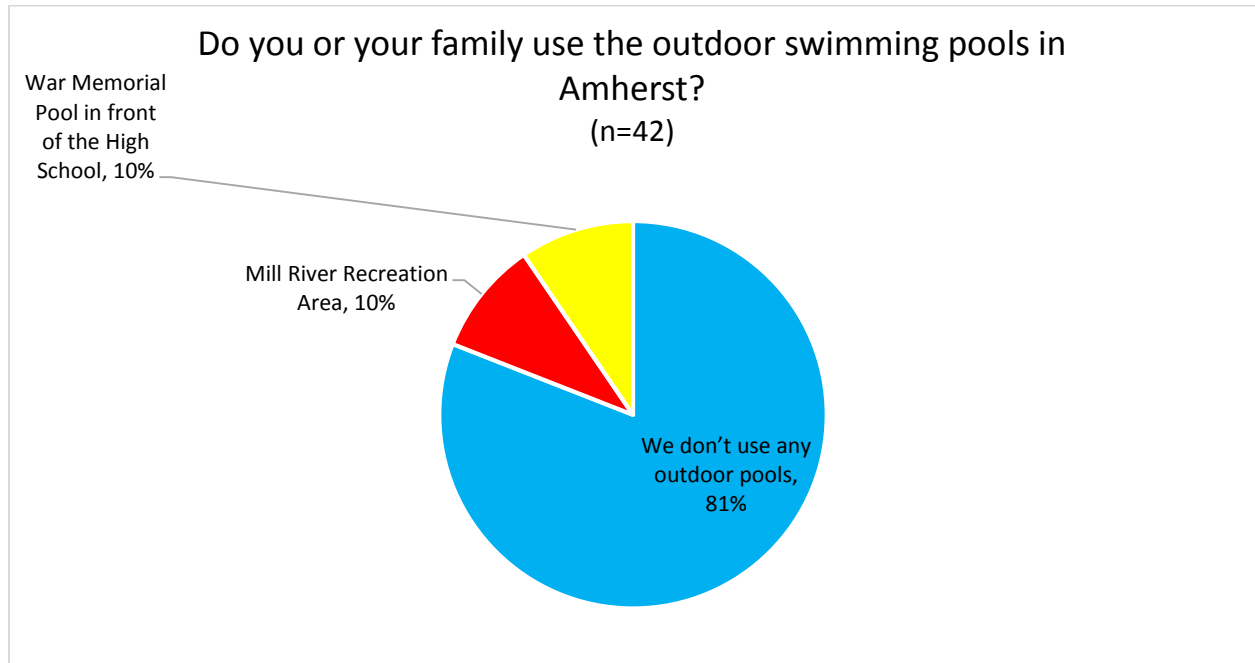
Three people listed other reasons why they don't attend: one didn't know about it, one reported preferring to buy everything at one store, and one would like to go but has been traveling frequently.



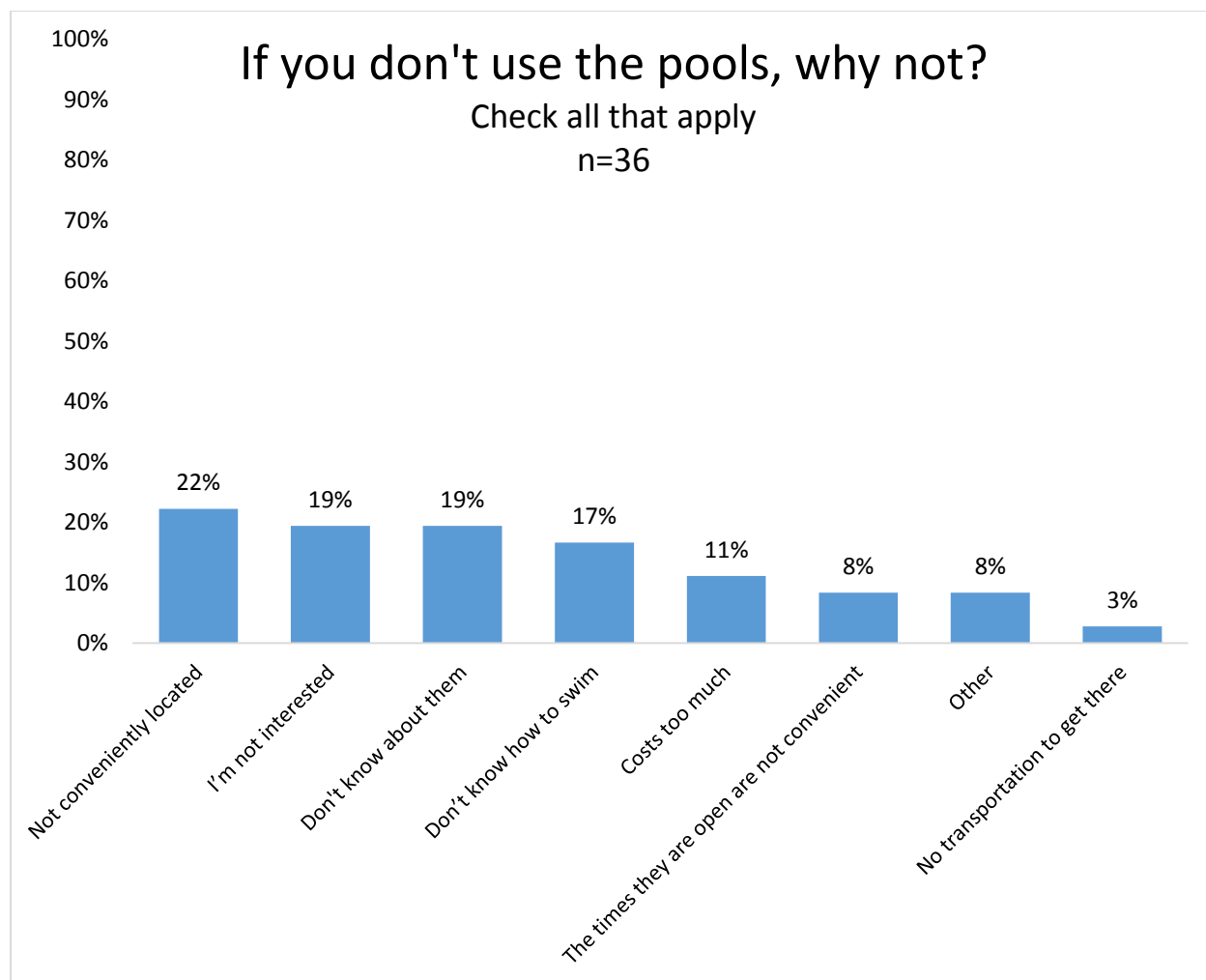


## RECREATION: SWIMMING POOLS

Over 80% of survey respondents reported that they do not use either of the public swimming pools in Amherst. Four respondents each reported using the Mill River Recreation Area pool and the War Memorial pool in front of the high school (each reported using only one of the pools.)



Thirty-six people gave reasons why they did not go to either of the pools. The most common answer, cited by eight respondents, is that the pools are not conveniently located. Seven people each reported that they are not interested in the pools and/or they don't know about them. Six people reported that they do not know how to swim, and four reported that the pools cost too much. Only one person reported that she or he had no transportation to get to the pools.

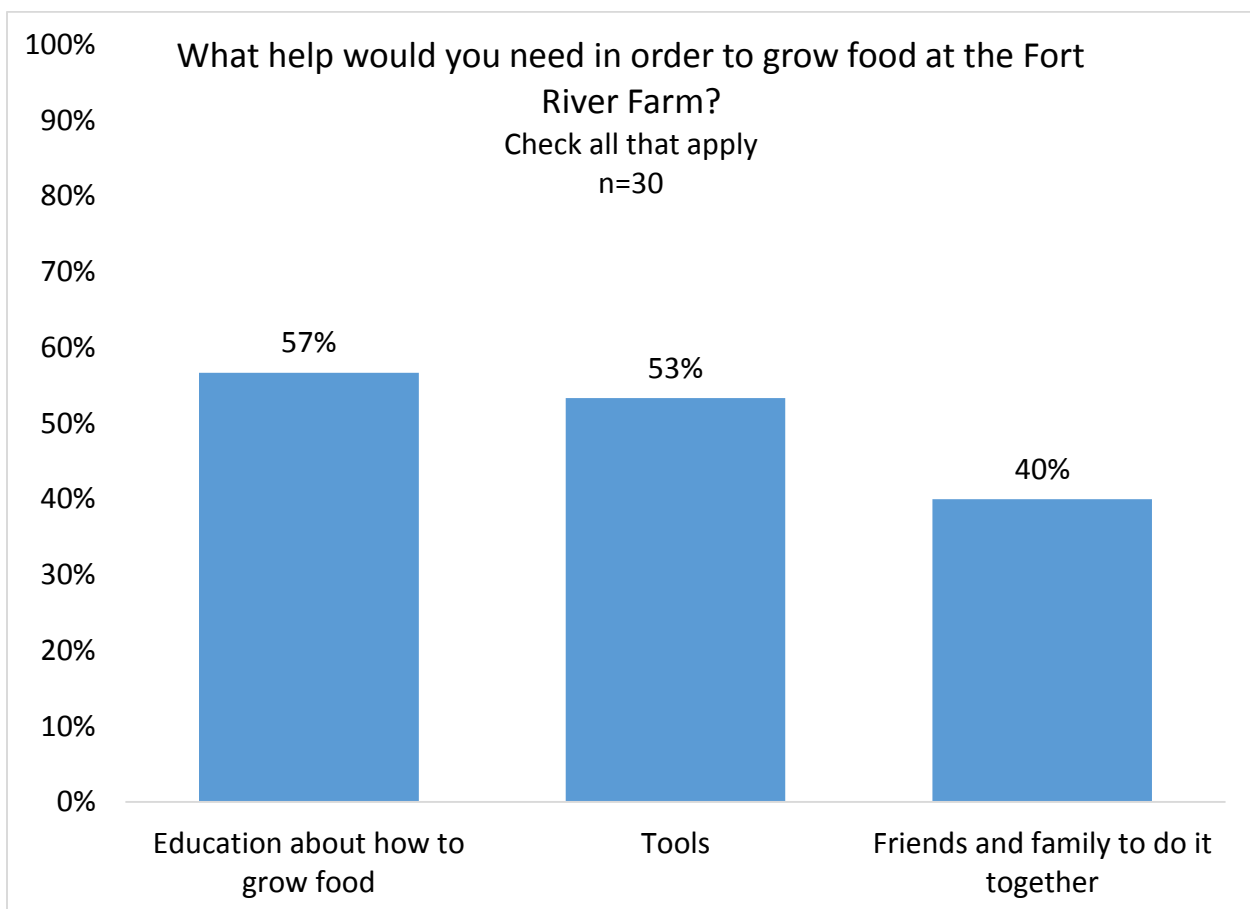
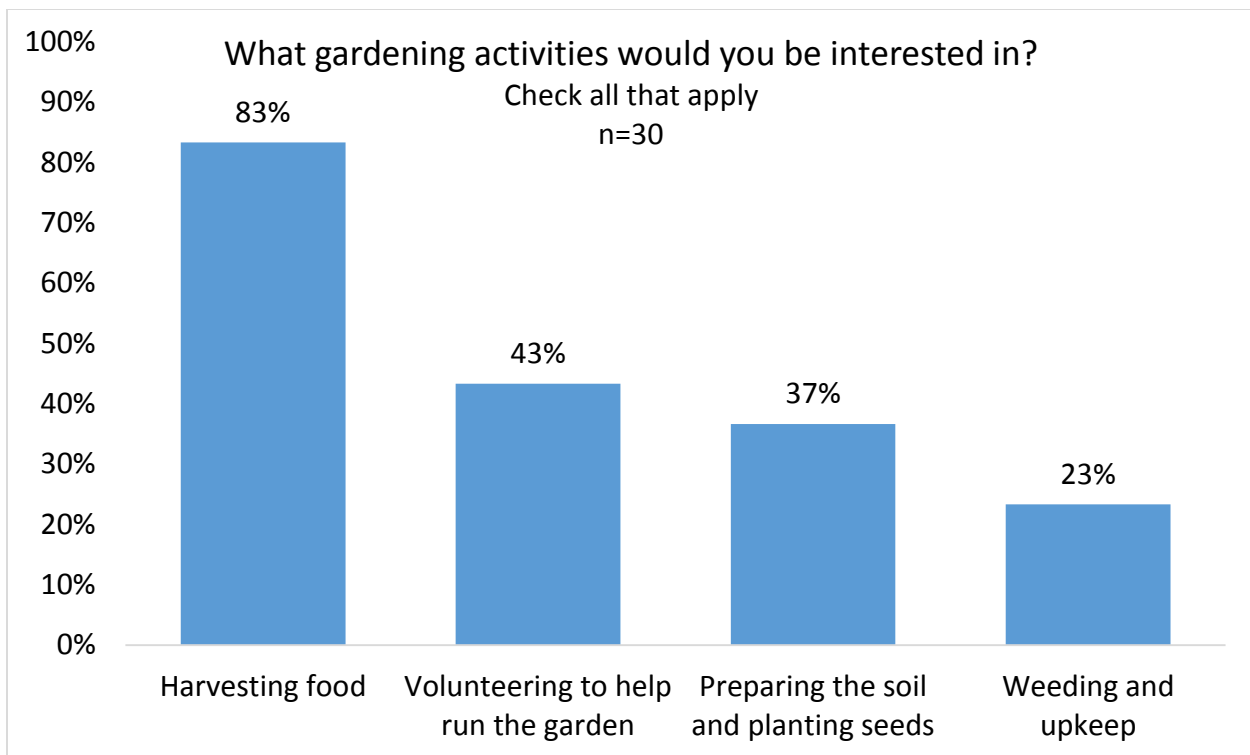


## FORT RIVER FARM

Of 46 respondents, only three reported having their own garden or access to another garden somewhere else. *About two-thirds of respondents reported that they would be interested in gardening at Fort River Farm.* Of 30 people who indicated which activities at the farm would interest them, 25 (83%) would be interested in harvesting food, 13 (43%) would be willing to help run the garden, 11 (37%) would be interested in preparing the soil and planting seeds, and 7 (23%) would be interested in weeding and upkeep.

Of 30 people who noted that they would need help with gardening, 17 (57%) reported that they would need education about gardening, and 16 (53%) reported that they would need tools. Twelve respondents (40%) would need friends and family members to garden with them.





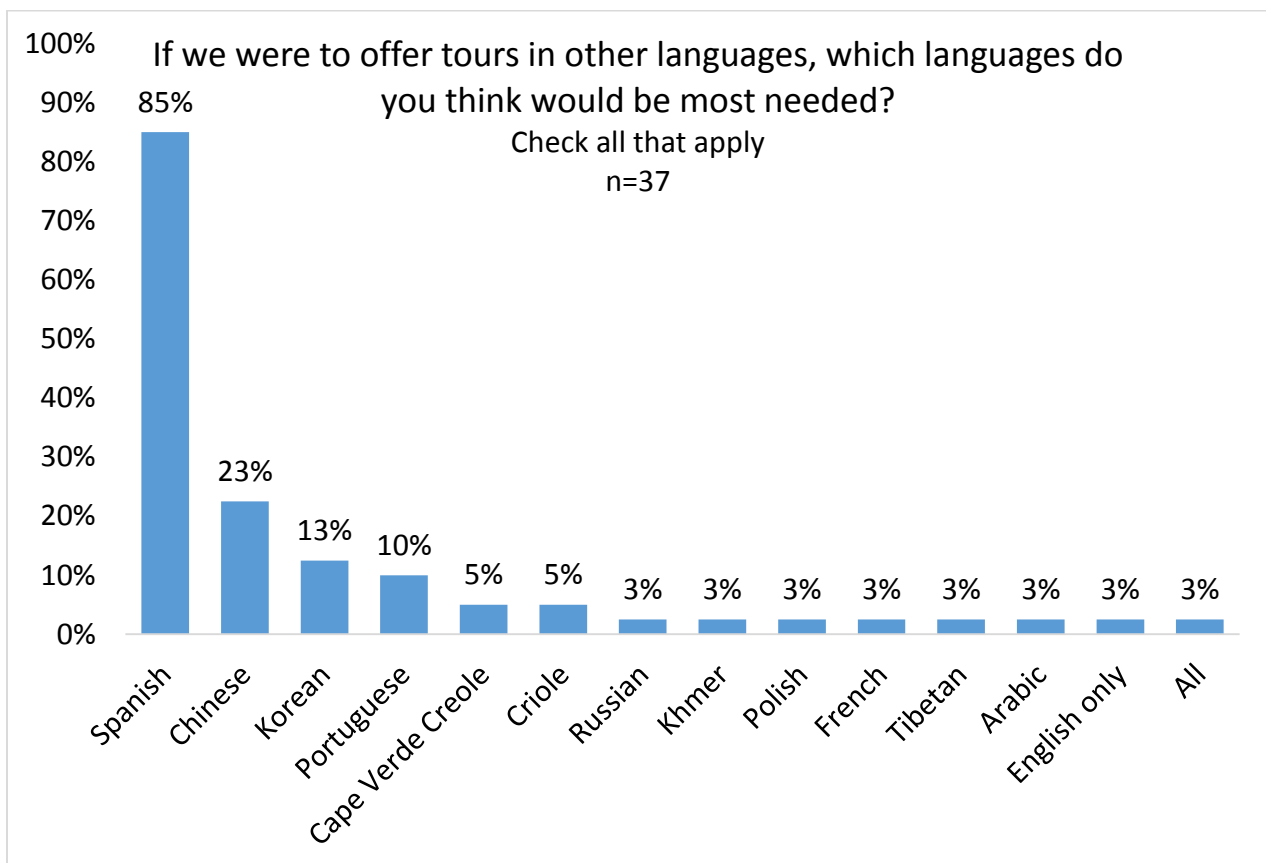
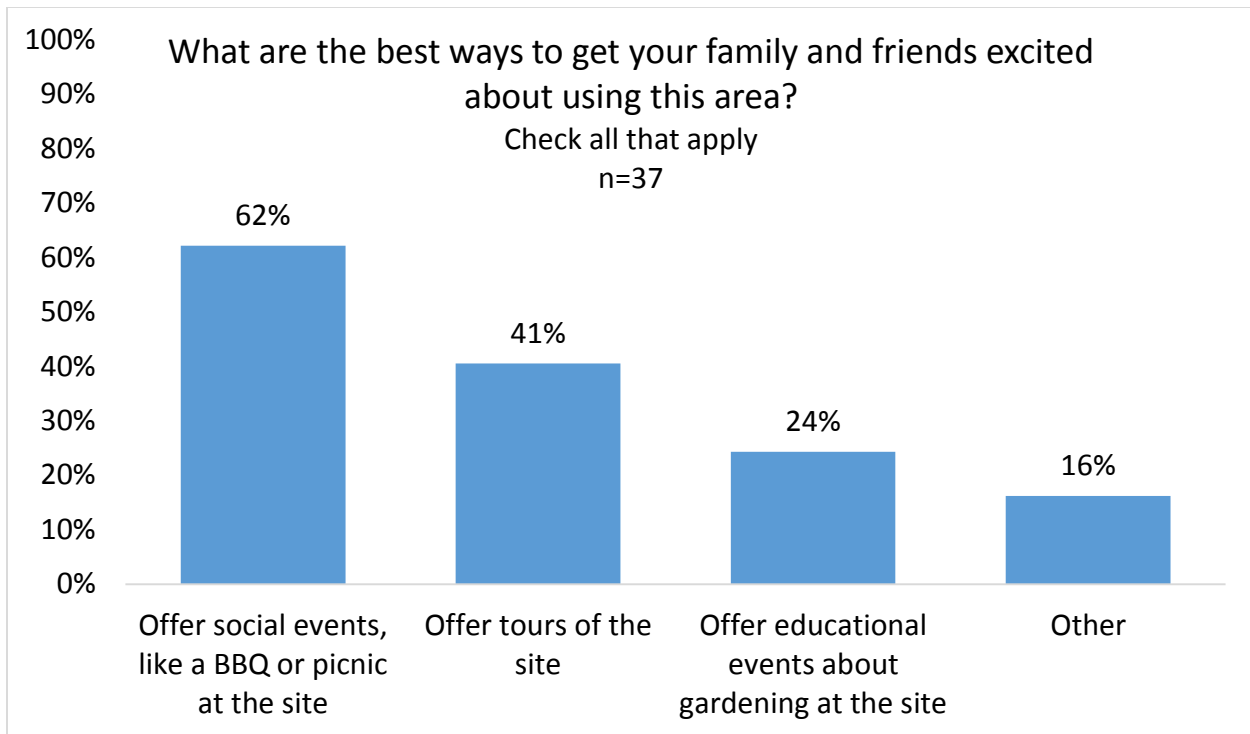
Only 13 survey respondents (31%) reported that they are a parent or guardian to a child under the age of 18. Eight of those 13 respondents (62%) reported that they would be interested in growing food with their children, and seven of them (54%) said that they would be interested in volunteering at the site to help maintain the garden or trail with their children. Four (31%) reported that they would be interested in using the nature trail with their children. Only one respondent with children would not be interested in any of these activities.

When asked to choose from a list of the best ways to get family and friends excited about using the Fort River Conservation Area, *the most popular response (noted by 62% of respondents) was to offer social events such as picnics or barbecues at the site.* This was followed by offering tours of the site (41% of respondents) and offering educational events about gardening at the site (24%). Six people suggested other ways to get friends and family excited, including:

- Advertising the low cost of farming
- Field trips
- Showing friends
- Social media meet-ups
- Mail
- Visiting

We also asked what the best ways would be to spread the word about Fort River Farm. The most popular responses were by advertisements (flyers, posters, etc) and using social media, with about one-third of respondents selecting each category. E-mail was also a frequent suggestion.

Thirty-four of 40 respondents (85%) suggested that offering tours in Spanish would be helpful. Other frequently-cited languages included Chinese (23%), Korean (13%), and Portuguese (10%).





## SURVEY SAMPLE

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Surveyor: \_\_\_\_\_

### Amherst Health Department Survey of the Fort River Neighborhood

The Amherst Health Department wants to help all residents to eat healthier and exercise more so that they may live longer, healthier lives. We want to know more about how we can improve healthy food options and recreational opportunities for residents in the Fort River neighborhood. We also want your input on the development of the Fort River Farm Conservation Area which is located off of Route 9, behind Fort River School (see map handout). The Town of Amherst would like to create a place where people can grow food together, where farmers can grow food to sell, and where people can go to walk and enjoy nature. We will not ask for your name or your address. Thank you for taking this survey!

#### Food: The first few questions ask you about your food choices.

1. Where are ALL the places you get your food? (check all that apply)  

<input type="checkbox"/> Stop and Shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Maple Farm Foods	<input type="checkbox"/> Farmer's market in Amherst
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Trader Joe's	<input type="checkbox"/> Survival Center or food pantry
<input type="checkbox"/> Walmart	<input type="checkbox"/> Price Rite in Chicopee	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Aldi	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole Foods	
2. What transportation do you use to get food? (check all that apply)  

<input type="checkbox"/> PVTa bus or other public transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Taxi	
<input type="checkbox"/> My own car	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk or bike on the bike path	
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone else's car	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk or bike on the road	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
3. Do you go to the farmers' market in Amherst, located downtown on the common on Saturdays?  
☐ Yes      ☐ No (skip to #5)
4. If **NO**, why don't you use the farmers' market? (check all that apply)  

<input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't have transportation to get there
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know where it's located	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm not interested in going
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know the hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

#### Recreation: The next few questions ask you about where you get exercise or enjoy the outdoors.

5. Do you or your family use the outdoor swimming pools in Amherst? (check all that apply)  
☐ We don't use any outdoor pools  
☐ Mill River Recreation Area (skip to #7)  
☐ War Memorial Pool in front of the High School (skip to #7)
6. If you don't use the pools, why not? (check all that apply)  

<input type="checkbox"/> Not conveniently located	<input type="checkbox"/> The times they are open are not convenient	
<input type="checkbox"/> No transportation to get there	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know how to swim	
<input type="checkbox"/> Costs too much	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm not interested	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

#### Fort River Farm: The next few questions are about the **Fort River Farm** that is currently being developed by the Town of Amherst. We want your input on how to create this farm and recreation area, and whether you'd be interested in using it.

7. Do you currently have a garden?  
☐ Yes, at home  
☐ Yes, at a community garden  
☐ Yes, I have a garden somewhere else. Where is it? \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ No, I don't have a garden

8. Would you be interested in gardening at the Fort River Farm? **(show map & explain concept)**  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No (Skip to #11)                      ☐ I don't know
9. What gardening activities would you be interested in? (check all that apply)  
☐ Preparing the soil and planting seeds                      ☐ Harvesting food  
☐ Weeding and upkeep                      ☐ Volunteering to help run the garden
10. What help would you need in order to grow food at the Fort River Farm? (check all that apply)  
☐ Education about how to grow food                      ☐ Tools  
☐ Friends and family to do it together                      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are you a parent or guardian to children under 18 years of age?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No (skip to #13)
12. What types of activities would you like to do with your children at the Fort River Farm? (check all that apply)  
☐ Growing food with my children  
☐ Using the nature trail with my children  
☐ Volunteering at the site to help maintain the garden or trail with my children  
☐ I'm not interested
13. We want the Fort River Conservation Area to be used by as many people in the community as possible. What are the best ways to get your family and friends excited about using this area? (check all that apply)  
☐ Offer educational events about gardening at the site                      ☐ Offer tours of the site  
☐ Offer social events, like a BBQ or picnic at the site                      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
14. How can we spread the word to your family and friends about the Fort River Farm?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. If we were to offer tours of the site in other languages, what languages do you think would be most needed?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### Information about you

16. What is your age range?  
☐ Under 18    ☐ 18-24    ☐ 25-34    ☐ 35-49    ☐ 50-64    ☐ 65-79    ☐ 80 and older
17. What is your gender?  
☐ Male    ☐ Female    ☐ Transgender    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
18. What race or ethnicity do you consider yourself? (check all that apply)  
☐ Black or African American                      ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander                      ☐ Cambodian  
☐ White or Caucasian                      ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native                      ☐ Chinese  
☐ Asian                      ☐ Cape Verdean                      ☐ Puerto Rican  
☐ Hispanic or Latino                      ☐ El Salvadoran                      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
19. Are there any other ideas or concerns you would like to share with us today?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_