

Waushara County Food Study Findings

2009-2011



Introduction

In 2008, the *Waushara Prevention Council, Inc.* initiated a program called Vision 2020 to look at ways of reducing poverty in Waushara County. One of the initial projects was to conduct a focus group study which identified the difficulty of residents to obtain the food they need.

In 2009, a USDA Community Food Projects Planning Grant was received to:

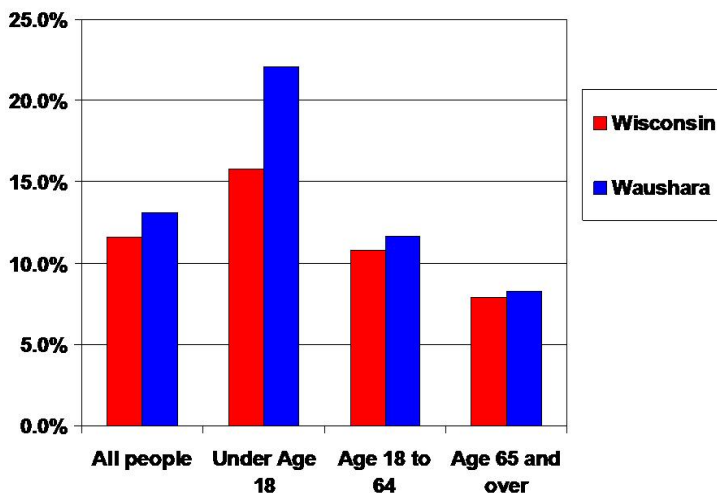
- Assess the food system
- Identify the food needs of Waushara County residents and assess the strengths, barriers, and opportunities of the local food system in meeting those needs
- Identify ways to ensure long-term food security for a growing low-income population
- Identify ways to increase the economic viability of hometown grocery stores and farm stands
- Assess transportation needs
- Explore connecting locally grown produce to consumers

Methodology

A steering committee of representatives from local organization, county staff, and interested residents was formed to direct the study. This committee was known as Waushara Food Connections. This study included: A focus group study of the low-income and the general populations, a survey of the low-income population, an analysis of travel time versus savings on groceries, interviews with the local full service grocery stores, local farmers, and food pantry managers, an analysis of proximity to full service grocery stores, economic and demographic statistics, and lifestyle data.

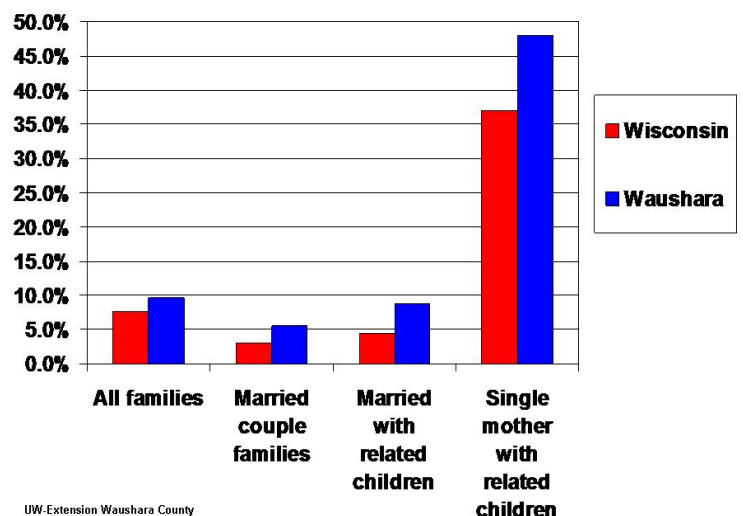
Poverty Statistics for Waushara County

2006 - 2010 Waushara Poverty by Age



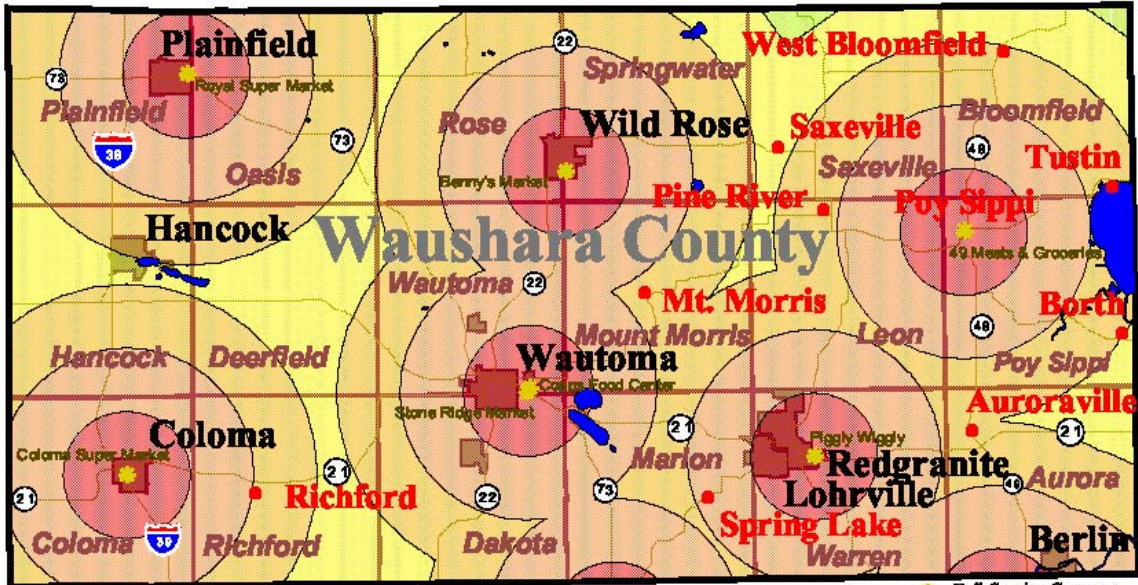
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Source: US Census American Community Survey 2006-2010

2006 - 2010 Poverty by Family Type



UW-Extension Waushara County
Source: US Census American Community Survey 2006-2010

In 2010, the US Census Bureau estimated the poverty rate in Waushara County to be 14.6%, this is consistently greater than the poverty rate in Wisconsin. In the county, the highest poverty rates are for single mothers and youth.

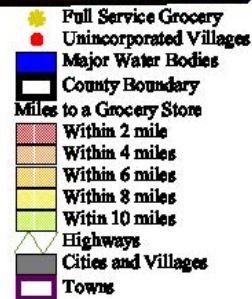


Grocery Stores

- Many live within 2 miles and all live within 8 miles of a grocery store.
- Close proximity to grocery stores decreases transportation issues for low income households.
- If one store is lost, portions of the county will become a food desert.
- This demonstrates the importance of supporting the local economy.

Distance to a Full Service Grocery Store

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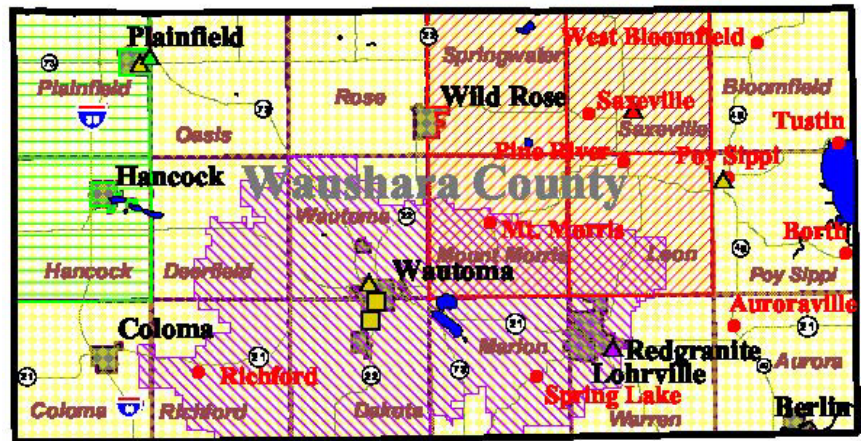


Food Pantries

- 44% of low-income households receive food from food pantries or churches.
- 52% of senior low-income households receive food from food pantries or churches.
- There are 6 food pantries.
- Food pantries are run by nonprofits or churches.
- All food pantries rely on volunteers and donations from the community.

Cost Savings Programs

- Programs offer food at a reduced cost.
- Programs are located in Wautoma and are open to all.
- Ruby's Pantry asks for a \$15 donation for approximately \$100 of *after market food*. Food varies monthly, depending on what is donated.
- A buying club through Grace United Methodist Church that offers grocery store quality food at a discount.



Food Pantry and Cost Savings Program Locations and Service Areas in Waushara County



The color of food pantry or cost saving program symbol represents their service area in Waushara County. For example, New Life Assembly of God Food Pantry's symbol is green, because they serve Waushara County residents in Plainfield and Hancock.

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Myths and Facts

Myth– Low-income households do not try to stretch their food dollars.

99% of low-income households use at least one common method to stretch their food dollars. However, 67% of low-income households have trouble obtaining food because of finances.

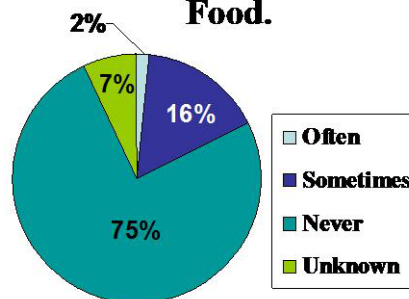
<i>In the last 12 months, what are some of the ways that your household “stretched” food dollars?</i>	
Used coupons	65%
Looked for sales and bought items on sale	84%
Went to several different stores to purchase food at better prices	43%
Made a big shopping trip rather than several small ones	46%
Bought food in bulk	31%
Bought food and prepared it at home rather than buying ready-made foods	63%
Grow vegetables or fruits in a garden	46%
Hunt of fish for food	36%
Not applicable: Did not stretch food dollars	1%

Source: Survey of Low-income Households May 2010

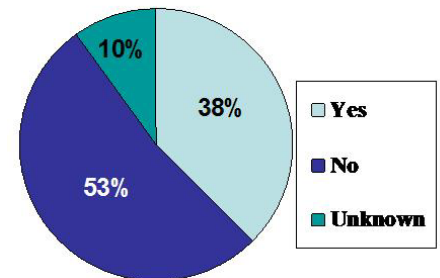
Myth– Transportation is a significant barrier to obtaining food.

Only 2% of households in poverty indicated that they were often unable to obtain the food they needed because of a lack of transportation. Transportation may be a barrier to employment, but not for accessing food. Public transportation to sources of food would not be used by a majority of low-income households.

Did Not Have Transportation to Get Food.



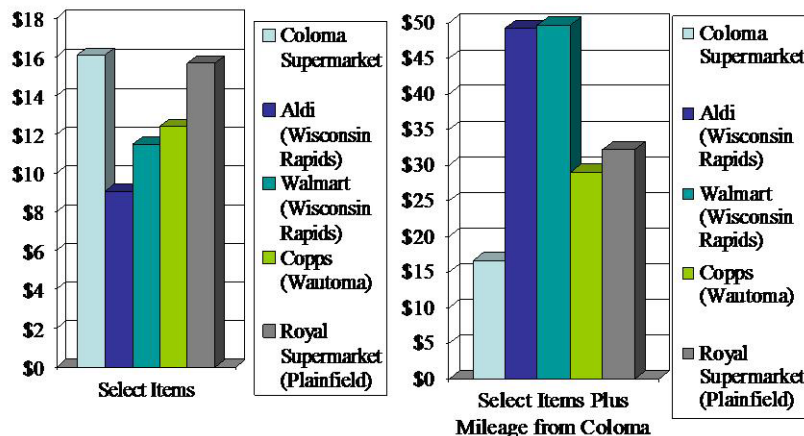
Would Use Public Transportation to Get Food



Source: Survey of Low-income Households May 2010

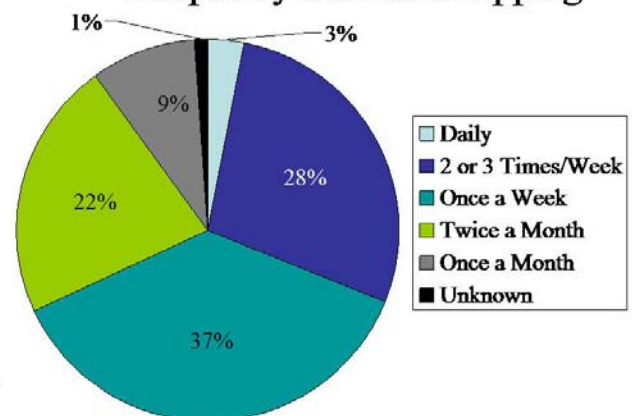
Myth– Shopping locally costs more.

Unless someone is driving out of town for another purpose, or is buying a large amount of groceries at one time, it is more cost effective to shop locally than it is to shop out of town for sales and lower prices. 68% of low-income households shop for food at least once a week. They may not be purchasing enough groceries at lower prices to offset the cost of traveling. The bar charts below compare the cost of shopping at the Coloma Supermarket with the cost to travel to other grocery stores.



Source: Analysis Price and Travel Cost Nov, 2009-Jan, 2010

Frequency of Food Shopping

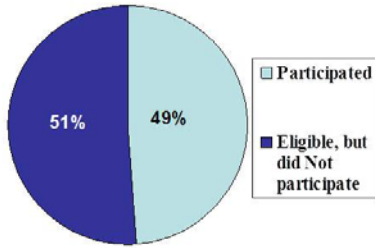


Source: Survey of Low-income Households May 2010

Myth– Local grocery stores are not interested in selling local produce.

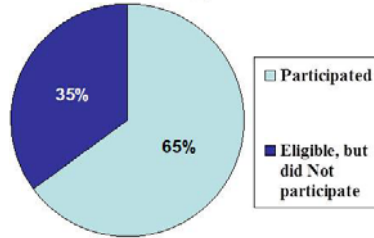
All the full service grocery stores in Waushara County buy some locally produced products and would buy more. The main reservation in buying more local products is concern that local producers may not have the volume and/or quality of products available on a consistent basis to meet the needs of their grocery store.

WIC Program Participation



Source: Survey of Low-income Households May 2010

Food Share Participation



Recommendations

- Enhance Food Pantries and Similar Programs
 - Create a list of food distribution programs to advertised programs
 - Educate consumers on use of food pantry items to make low cost nutritious meals
 - Address storage issue at food pantries
 - Promote food collection drive programs
- Expand community gardens for personal use and/or for food pantry use
- Increase participation in food assistance programs
- Enhance Local Grocery Stores
 - Share study results and additional market research with the local grocery stores
 - Make local grocery stores more attractive as a one-stop-shop by expanding services or advertising with neighboring businesses
- Encourage business models that utilize wholesale buying with other county stores, palette sales, and more generic brand items to lower consumer prices
- Provide additional services for consumers with special needs
- Offer additional specialized dietary items and portion sizes for consumers
- Enhance the current system of farm stands through advertising, a list of locations, and ways to use Food Share and WIC
- Explore opportunities to glean surplus produce left in the field

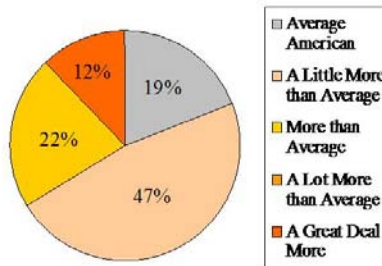
Food Assistance Programs

Not every household that appears to be eligible for various food assistance programs is participating in the program. In particular, half of households that appear eligible for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, and a third of the Food Share Program, also known as the food stamp program, did not use it.

Community Gardening

Waushara County residents are more likely to grow vegetables than the average American. Half of low-income households said they would grow vegetables in a community garden.

Likely to Purchase Vegetable Plants or Seeds



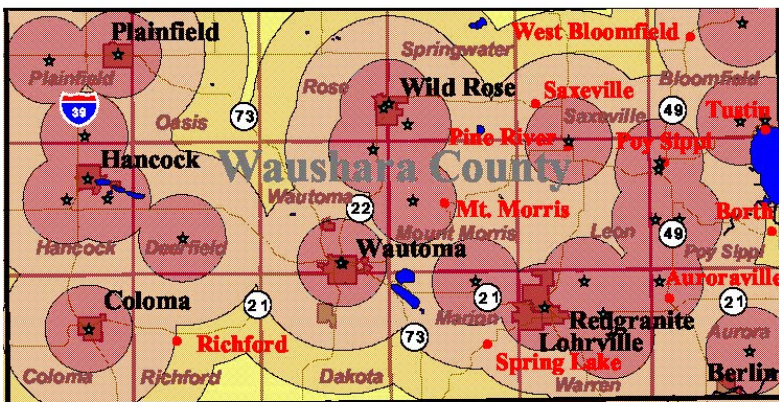
Source: ESRI Community Tapestry 2004

Gleaning Post-Harvest

The number one reason given for not donating more surplus was timing or not being able to have someone pick the food remaining in the field following harvest, before it needs to be plowed under.

Direct Sales from Farms

Most county residents are within 4 miles of a farm stand.



To Receive an Electronic Copy of the Full Study Contact:

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Distance to a Waushara County Farm Stand