



Boston Collaborative for Food & Fitness

Jamaica Plain Community Assessment – Compiled Data

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Survey Development and Data Collection

Report by P.K. Newby

Methodology

In the spring and summer of 2008, several members of the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness (BCFF) participated in the development of a survey designed to assess food and fitness behaviors among Bostonians living in five neighborhoods of interest: Dorchester, East Boston, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, and Roxbury. Together with a team of graduate students at the Tufts School of Nutrition Science and Policy, the group developed an initial draft of a survey based on BCFF interests. To the extent possible, content areas (e.g., neighborhood safety) and questions used on the survey were based upon extant questionnaires identified in a literature review conducted by the Tufts students. After this draft was developed, it was reviewed and modified by members of the Food and Fitness committees of the BCFF and the final survey was compiled with the assistance of Kirstin Newby (Scientific consultant). The final survey, entitled "What do You Think About Food and Physical Activity in Your Neighborhood?" comprised 16 pages and 64 questions in three key areas: (1) Demographics (e.g., income, age, sex); (2) Food (food intakes, preferences, and expenditures; shopping behaviors and preferences; factors influencing food purchases; and interest in growing food); and (3) Fitness (neighborhood physical activity practices; neighborhood fitness facility use and non-use; neighborhood walking and biking; and commuting practices). The first page of the survey assured individuals that participation was anonymous and confidential and they could choose not to answer any questions. The survey was written in English and was also translated to Spanish and Haitian Creole. As well, the survey was posted online for use directly in the community organization offices.

Between July and November 2008, six community organizations working with the BCFF administered the survey to convenience samples in their (five) neighborhoods. Specifically, youths working in each organization received brief training in data collection and approached people in their neighborhoods about taking the survey. Each of the community organizations had different approaches to data collection and surveyed different population groups. For example, many of the survey participants in Mattapan were individuals at a farmers' market, which was the focus of some of the community development work in that neighborhood. (No further information about where other individuals in Mattapan were sampled is available.) In East Boston, individuals were sampled at the following organizations and places: East Boston YMCA, Harborside Community Center, Orient Heights Community Center, Curtis Guild School, East Boston High School, Eagle Hill Community Area, Maverick Landing, Paris St. Community Center, and Jeffries Point. In Roxbury, data were collected in various spots around the neighborhood where people tended to congregate, including the park, T stop, Brigham Circle, and the Tobin. No data were provided from the organizations in Jamaica Plain and Dorchester about where individuals were surveyed in these neighborhoods despite repeated attempts to ascertain this information. The vast majority of surveys were completed by individual respondents (i.e., data are self-reported). In less than 5%, surveys were administered by the youth (i.e., the survey was read to the respondent and completed by the youth). No individuals completed the survey directly online.

Following data collection, staff at the BCFF entered survey data into Survey Monkey, a commonly used web-based database (where the online survey resided). In total, 665 individuals participated in the survey, as follows: Dorchester (n=222); East Boston (n=84); Jamaica Plain (n=100); Mattapan (n=102); and Roxbury (n=108). Because this survey was focused on collecting information from individuals living in the five neighborhoods of interest, 39 individuals were excluded from the analysis because they either did not provide information about where they lived or they lived in areas outside the neighborhoods of interest (e.g., Newton). After these exclusions, 616 individuals were included in the analysis; sample size for each question varied, since not all individuals answered each question.

Survey data were analyzed for all participants and also stratified by neighborhood. eight tables were created (appended), and a power point presentation of the findings for the entire group was presented at a quarterly meeting of the BCFF on December 16, 2008. Using the original power point template, findings from the individual five neighborhoods were then presented at the community meetings that occurred in January and February 2009.

Major Findings

All of the findings appear in Tables 1 through 8 (*Appendix 1*) and there is far too much data to discuss every finding in detail; readers are encouraged to consult the tables for the full set of results. Many of the key results (for the total dataset) are also presented graphically in slides from a powerpoint presentation given at a BCFF meeting in December 2008 (*Appendix 2*). Note that neighborhood specific results appear in the tables but not the slides; these data were presented in separate slides at the BCFF community meetings for each neighborhood that were created by BCFF directly. The goal of this section is to highlight major findings from the survey, both as a whole and by neighborhood. Throughout the section, some notes to help guide the interpretations of findings are provided.

Survey Participants

Table 1 provides information about who participated in the survey, both as a whole and in each neighborhood. Aside from income, it can be seen that neighborhoods differed significantly ($P<0.05$) by age, sex, race/ethnicity, language spoken, marital status, and employment. ($P<0.05$ means that differences are “statistically significant,” reflecting real differences across neighborhoods.) Very few respondents in any of the neighborhoods were >65 years old, and only 11% were aged 50-65 years (ranging from 7% in Jamaica Plain and 16% in Mattapan). More than half of all individuals sampled were <35 years, although proportions differed across neighborhoods: 42% of individuals in Roxbury were aged 15-25 years, compared to 14% in East Boston, where 31% were aged 25-35 years. East Boston also had the largest proportion of adults aged 36-50 years (42%).

Overall, the majority of individuals sampled were female (67%), ranging from 50% in Roxbury to 76% in East Boston. As expected, race/ethnicity differed across neighborhoods, with the largest proportion of Hispanics living in East Boston (60%) and Jamaica Plain (52%) and the largest proportion of African Americans living in Mattapan (65%) and Dorchester (50%). The

majority of participants spoke English as their primary language (68%), although 19% spoke Spanish as their primary language; 50% of East Bostonians spoke Spanish as their primary language. Eight percent of individuals in Roxbury spoke Cape Verdean as their primary language, while 28% of individuals in Mattapan spoke Haitian Creole. Marital status of participants differed by neighborhood, ranging from 33% single in East Boston to 63% single in Roxbury.

Forty-one percent of individuals worked full-time (ranging from 36% in Dorchester to 44% in Jamaica Plain), with an additional 32% working part-time or self-employed (ranging from 29% in East Boston to 38% in Roxbury). An appreciable percentage of individuals (12% total) were either retired, homemakers, or unable to work. Differences in income across neighborhoods were not significant.

(See Appendix A, Table 1, PK Newby Final Report)

Jamaica Plain Survey Data Summarized

Participants

- 63% aged <35 years, 29% aged 35-50 years
- 69% female
- 52% Hispanic
- 55% English / 38% Spanish speaking
- 55% single
- 80% full/part/self-employed

Food intakes and behaviors

- 67% reported that higher food prices have affected grocery purchases, with 15% eating /serving fewer vegetables and 26% eating/serving smaller meals
- More than half of individuals did not consume fruit (56%) or vegetables (58%) in the home – the highest proportion across neighborhoods
- 74% ate meals away from home in the past week
- 17% grow their own food, mainly in their own yard (53%)
- 52% would like to grow their own food, mainly in their own yard (69%), while 60% reported interest in growing food in a community garden (the highest proportion across neighborhoods)

Food shopping behaviors and preferences

- Supermarket is the main place food is purchased (91%), followed by a bodega (29%), and car is the main way accessed (67%), followed by walking (15%)
- 13% mainly shop at a farmers' market
- The majority of people shop at their favorite place to buy food (84%)

Food purchasing preferences and behaviors

- The majority of individuals stated that taste, price, health, and convenience have some or great impact on their food purchases
- 70% stated that “organic” had some or great impact
- 65% stated that “local” had some or great impact

Physical activity and commuting behaviors

- 77% reporting walking regularly, followed by 18% who belonged to a health club
- 16% reported no regular physical activity
- 21% believe commuting by walking/biking is out of the questions and 11% have never thought about it

Neighborhood physical activity behaviors and characteristics

- 75% like walking/biking in their neighborhood
- 62% reporting using walking spaces/paths, followed by public parks/playgrounds (32%)
- The majority of respondents reported favorable characteristics affecting walking and biking, although fewer said streets were litter free (46%)

(See Appendix B, Powerpoint Presentation with Jamaica Plain Data, PK Newby and MGA Consultants)

Overall findings across neighborhoods

- Income, weekly grocery expenditures, and some of the places where people currently grew food or wanted to grow food (e.g., own yard, another yard, and pots/window boxes) did not differ across neighborhoods.
- The majority of individuals eat away from home, and, in general, people do not consume enough fruit and vegetables at home.
- Higher food prices did always affect vegetable consumption; more people reported that they decreased their meat consumption due to higher food prices.
- The majority of individuals surveyed presently shop at their favorite place to buy food, which was most frequently stated as a supermarket. Individuals in Roxbury and Mattapan were most likely not to shop at their favorite place to buy food, mainly due to transportation time (Mattapan) and difficulty accessing (38%) and cost (30%) in Roxbury. However, the numbers of respondents to these questions are very low, since the majority of individuals surveyed did shop at their favorite place.
- 16% of individuals in all neighborhoods reported a farmers' market as their favorite place to buy food (n=100, 16%) – this number is likely spuriously high since 33% of these individuals reside in Mattapan, where we know that individuals were surveyed at a farmers market. It is more likely that this number fluctuates around 10%, as reflected in the other neighborhoods.
- Convenience, organic, local, brand, and coupons showed no differences across neighborhoods in impacting food purchasing, while the impacts of taste, price, and health on food purchasing did differ across neighborhoods.
- A high proportion of individuals reporting walking or biking in their neighborhoods
- Where individuals were physically active did not differ across neighborhoods, although there were significant differences comparing the proportion who did not get regular physical activity.
- No major differences seemed to emerge across neighborhoods with regards to neighborhood physical activity, as the majority of individuals enjoyed walking in their own neighborhoods. Many respondents “agreed” with many of the statements about their neighborhood, with the main area of disagreement surrounding litter on the streets and the presence of bike paths.
- Because of the small numbers of individuals who were not physically active in their neighborhoods, these findings are not discussed.

(See Appendix C, Community Profile, MGA Consultants)

Hyde Square/Jamaica Plain Community Meeting
SUMMARY OF AREAS OF INTEREST AND CONCERN

FOOD SYSTEMS

FARMERS MARKETS

More local food at farmers markets

More farmers markets that are open every day and take government programs

LOCAL STORES

Fresh vegetables in bodegas

Store owned co-ops by people

Fresh and affordable produce

SCHOOLS

Young people can't wait to go to school because the food is so good

School lunches fresh!

TRANSPORTATION

Better transportation

GARDENING

More space to grow food, more gardens

Private gardens

Community gardens: combined with playgrounds

CO-OPS sharing equipment

Commitment for a community garden

Home grown produce

MARKETING

More ads promoting healthy food, especially to kids

RESTAURANTS

Less fast food restaurants

More healthier options in restaurants

Restaurants have the nutrition facts

Healthier options at JP Licks

How to make all fast food restaurants healthier and support the community

EDUCATION

Better understanding of health

More information on who and how the food is produced

GENERAL

People more fit and healthy/energetic and happier

Eating more fresh foods

Fresh food is more affordable than junk food
More people enjoying healthy food
Less health problems
Apple trees everywhere
Ban on high fructose corn syrup
More vegetarians
Water is free everywhere
Less grease
Less white bread
Veggies
Fruits
Drinking water instead of soda
Less meat more fish

BUILT ENVIRONMENT / ACTIVE LIVING

BIKING

More bike lanes on Main Streets
Bike racks
More bike riding/walking
Putting in bike lanes
More bike paths
More bike lanes

WALKING

Streets only pedestrian - Downtown Crossing

INFRASTRUCTURE

No empty planters that are well maintained
Fixed sidewalks / paved better
More smooth roads / streets
They're fixing the sidewalk
Filling in the planters
Paths are better lit

PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Better lighting in the parks
More playgrounds
More parks

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Increase publicity of community centers and expand hours
Joining community centers

SCHOOLS

More PE in schools

ACTIVITIES

Affordable sports teams for kids
More outdoor senior programs
Swim in Jamaica Pond
More organized sports (baseball, boxing) (*starred)

GENERAL

People are more fit
Better looking city – looks like paradise
More people out on the streets
Less cars, traffic
People staying active
People walking their dogs

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

More trees
Cleaner landscape
Pleasant environments
Neighbors bonding more
More people outside
People active in groups, socializing
Block parties

SAFETY

Roads and sidewalks are safe
Less harassment, more safety (but not more 5-0) (??) (*starred)
Getting across the Jamaicaway crossings, bridges, crosswalk lights
Community-based security (crime watch)

Appendix A: Sample characteristics among 616 survey respondents, stratified by neighborhood, PK Newby

Appendix B: Powerpoint Presentation, PK Newby and MGA Consultants

Appendix C: Community Profile, MGA Consultants

Appendix D: Bikeability Assessment Information Sheet, Mass Bike

Appendix D: Walkability Audit, Walk Boston