



# **Boston Collaborative for Food & Fitness**

## ***Mattapan Community Assessment – Compiled Data***

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## *Survey Development and Data Collection*

*Report by P.K. Newby*

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)*

## *Mattapan Survey Data Summarized*

### Participants

- 49% aged <35 years, 16% aged 50-65 years (the highest proportion of older adults across neighborhoods)
- 66% female
- 65% African American
- 59% English / 28% Haitian Creole speaking
- 50% married
- 74% full/part/self-employed

### Food intakes and behaviors

- 57% reported that higher food prices have affected grocery purchases, with 8% eating/serving fewer vegetables and 27% eating/serving smaller meals
- 39% consumed fruit and vegetables (40%) in the home several times per week
- 68% ate meals away from home in the past week
- 19% grow their own food, mainly in their own yard (53%)
- 40% would like to grow their own food, mainly in their own yard (72%)

### Food shopping behaviors and preferences

- Supermarket is the main place food is purchased (87%), followed by a farmers' market (33%) and big box store (24%), and car is the main way accessed (73%), followed by walking (12%)
- 33% mainly shop at a farmers' market (*recall that participants were surveyed at a farmers' market*)
- The majority of people shop at their favorite place to buy food (81%)

### 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
- 49% stated that "organic" had some or great impact
- 51% stated that "local" had some or great impact

### Physical activity and commuting behaviors

- 80% reporting walking regularly, followed by 22% who belonged to a health club
- 18% reported no regular physical activity – the highest proportion across neighborhoods
- 22% believe commuting by walking/biking is out of the questions and 31% have never thought about it – the highest proportion across neighborhoods

*(Note on interpretation: Of all the neighborhoods, Mattapan residents are the least active and least likely to commute by walking or biking. Although opportunities for activity for older individuals may be important for these respondents, it is not clear that these residents are significantly different from the other neighborhoods sampled, given so few individuals in this age range were surveyed in other neighborhoods. In other words, this is likely a function of age differences in neighborhoods rather than a true difference in physical activity and commuting behavior.)*

### Neighborhood physical activity behaviors and characteristics

- 61% like walking/biking in their neighborhood
- 69% reporting using walking spaces/paths, followed by public parks/playgrounds (29%)
- The majority of respondents reported favorable characteristics affecting walking and biking, although fewer said streets were litter free (42%) or had bike paths in their neighborhood (41%)

*(See Appendix B, Powerpoint Presentation with Mattapan Data, PK Newby; Appendix C, Community Profile, MGA Consultants; and Appendix D, Bikeability Assessment Info Sheet, Mass Bike)*

### ***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.

## **MATTAPAN COMMUNITY MEETING**

### **SUMMARY OF AREAS OF INTEREST AND CONCERN**

#### **FOOD SYSTEMS**

##### ***GARDENING/LOCAL PRODUCTION***

Gardens in homes

More home gardens

Backyard gardens

- a. Community markets
- b. Farmers markets
- c. Improved grocery stores
- d. Healthy schools

Having our own farms

Cows – make our own milk and cheese

We work, walking, natural workout by working on farms

Government gives more land for farming

Church gardens

People getting healthy food from their own gardens

##### ***SCHOOLS***

All schools gardens roof top or vicinity – kids will have food grown at the site

Healthier foods/ snacks in school – low in grease

Young people will learn the process of producing (*accompanied by drawings of tomatoes, plums, mango, banana, apple, grapes, oranges, etc.*)

Healthier school lunches

Schools with gardens, teaches students about gardening

(Better) school lunches

Head start centers

Healthy food in schools, food grown in school garden (\* starred)

##### ***LOCAL STORES***

Real supermarkets in neighborhood

Considerably decreased advertising for tobacco and soda

Supermarkets have better prices

The cost would be less

Healthy food less \$\$ than junk food \* (starred)

Places that sell junk food will sell healthy food

Village market

Stop & Shop

Organic food store



### ***FARMERS MARKETS***

More farmers markets than liquor stores  
More farmers markets – one on every corner  
Large active farmers market  
Farmers market  
People getting healthy food from local farmers markets

### ***GENERAL***

No more candy drives – healthy school initiatives, alternate fundraisers – potlucks with food from own garden  
Available counseling for weight issues  
Eating more fruits and vegetables and grains  
Fresh vegetables and fruits

- e. Less processed foods
- f. Less additives – no pesticides

More veggies and fruits  
Healthy foods  
A lot of fish, shrimp, lobster (more protein)  
Fresh chicken and eggs  
Fruits and vegetables

### ***RESTAURANTS***

McDonalds, Burger king GONE – (also) KFC, Popeyes  
Much less fast food  
Organic restaurants

### ***IMPACT ON COMMUNITY***

People cook – McDonalds and fast food stores close!  
Cooking leads to sharing food and meals – no violence!  
People exercise more – exercise together!  
Proud of your community  
People living longer

- g. Less disease
- h. Less problems with obesity
- i. Less pollution

Leaner, stronger people

- j. Less learning disabilities
- k. Greener environment

NO high blood pressure, no high blood sugar, no high cholesterol  
No stress, sleeping well  
Children working side by side  
Happy people everywhere  
Music playing  
People live longer and save money and time  
More healthy options

Senior center to serve healthy foods  
Communities coming together and sharing  
People are more aware of healthy food  
People are more active, exercising more  
Less smoking and alcohol

People are eating: Beans and millet, greens, fruits, vegetables; more Haitian food, less McDonalds; more locally grown produce – especially from our own yards, gardens; whole grains

What does this look like?

- a. Healthier people, healthier communities
- b. Less obesity

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT / ACTIVE LIVING**

### ***SCHOOLS***

Kids will have phys. ed.  
Kids walking to school in neighborhood  
Phys. ed.  
Martial arts – yoga

### ***SAFETY***

Elders walking streets safely daily  
Neighborhood watch  
Peace, more activities, healthy

### ***ACCESSIBILITY***

Access to health care, including transportation

### ***WALKING***

More walkways  
Walking groups for seniors  
Going on walks  
Everyone will walk to school and work\*  
More walking than driving – fewer cars

### ***BIKING***

More biking  
Bike racks  
Incentives from employers if bike to work  
Expand Bikes Not Bombs

- a. learn to build own bikes

Biking – bike paths and cars that pay attention  
Bike more, walk more and less driving  
Everyone will be riding to school and work  
Close down streets on Sundays to allow biking, running etc. like Memorial Drive on Sundays)

## **ACTIVITIES**

Visiting zoo

Kite festival etc. at Franklin Park

More concerts in park

Learn to swim at Mildred Community Center

Water aerobics for seniors

Families and friends – weekend activities outside house

Swimming and yoga and stretches and karate

Running, walking, biking – more people *moving*

- a. Neponset Riverway completed (greenway)
- b. Canoeing, roller skating, horseback
- c. 10K runs (5, 1)
- d. Bike tours

Tons of Saturday sports programs for children that are financially accessible

Soccer

Canoeing on the Neponset River

## **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Indoor tracks

YMCA or more community centers in Mattapan

Weekdays – churches/community centers – flexible hours

All kids will take swim (swimming?)

Senior center for exercise

Stationary bikes

More bike riding classes

More indoor exercises

Affordable centers

Healthier people because of centers to be active

People get to live longer, they are walking more, swimming at community centers

More swimming pools, kids swim teams, leagues

Churches have yoga classes

More sports centers means more people visiting them

Indoor gyms and fitness places - large places

## **IMPACT ON COMMUNITY**

Have focus groups without being requested

Family gatherings, community connected

Community better connected

Less pollution

More people around

Communication – more meetings to help each other

- a. Work
- b. Transportation
- c. Snow issue (*shoveling?*)

Churches are active together

### ***PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS***

Running – parks

Well-maintained parks

More parks

More green space

More parks open, walking trails

a. Decrease in diabetes related deaths

Clear paths and more open space developed

Save parks

Signs for parks and trails

### ***INFRASTRUCTURE***

Better lighting

Sidewalks clearly marked

Well-lit crosswalks

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

*Appendix B: Powerpoint Presentation, PK Newby*

*Appendix C: Community Profile, MGA Consultants*

*Appendix D: Bikeability Assessment Information Sheet, Mass Bike*