

Finding food security in Portland, Oregon: A qualitative study among SNAP recipients

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: The purpose of this study is to understand how Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients obtain food security. The following individuals may be interested in hearing the results of this study: Individuals who work with SNAP recipients; individuals working to end hunger; individuals who work with underserved populations; individuals working to attain health equity; and registered dietitians.

ABSTRACT: Between 2013 and 2015, Oregon was the only state to see an increase in food insecurity even as Oregon's economy grew. The Department of Human Services contracted with Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon and Central City Concern to conduct focus groups to understand how to improve rates of food security in the Portland region. We conducted eight focus groups with 67 SNAP recipients, a pre-focus group survey, and two case study interviews. The following research questions guided our study: what prevents SNAP participants from becoming food secure? How do SNAP participants obtain food security? A diverse sample of individuals participated in this study including but not limited to African Americans, Native Americans, Southeast Asian immigrants, single mothers, and seniors. A team of five community researchers analyzed the data using thematic analysis. This study used the social ecological model to organize the results of the focus group data. Our model included six factors: individual, interpersonal, perceived environment, personal environment, built environment, and policy; and 29 sub-factors that affected focus group participants' food security status. This study concluded that food security is found when aspects of individuals' lives discussed in the model - such as housing, employment, and living in a safe neighborhood - are stabilized.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Define the social ecological model and discuss how it can be useful in understanding public health issues of relevance to presentation attendants.
- Discuss the varied, multi-level factors that impact the complex nature of food insecurity among SNAP recipients in Portland.
- Explain the perspectives of SNAP recipients and their successes and difficulties in obtaining food security (direct quotations from focus groups will be provided).
- Discuss how food security is experienced among diverse populations.
- Gain access to a visual summary and full report explaining the findings of this study (found here: <https://oregonhunger.org/finding-food-security>)
- Identify how to take action to end hunger in Oregon.

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