

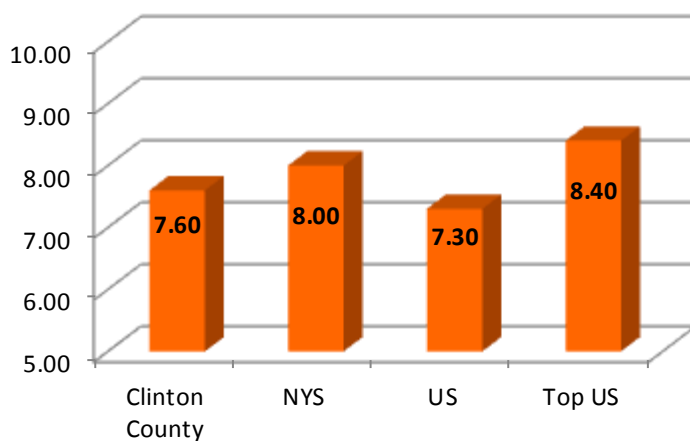
CLINTON COUNTY FOOD ENVIRONMENT

Our food choices are shaped by the complex world in which we live– by the kinds of foods we purchase for our homes, by how far we live from the nearest supermarket or fast food restaurant, student participation in school meal programs, even by how our government supports farmers. The food environment is defined as the physical and social surroundings that influence what we eat. They are multifaceted, taking into account home, community and consumer settings. Food environments are dynamic and difficult to measure and monitor because quality, quantity, availability and accessibility of food are ever changing. However, understanding

the food environment is essential to advancing efforts aimed at changing dietary behaviors and addressing chronic disease on a population level. Food environments are also relatively easy to change with coordinated effort and support of community stakeholders.

New strategies are emerging to capture characteristics of home, consumer and community food environments. This profile aims to stimulate conversation and bring attention to the importance of our local food environment and to identify strengths and challenges for our county to consider as it plans for community health.

Food Environment Index



In the *Children's Food Environment State Indicator Report* released in 2011, the CDC evaluated the community food environment on the state level utilizing a modified Retail Food Environment Index (mRFEI). The mRFEI measures the number of healthy and less healthy food retailers in a given area. To see the report and how New York State measures up, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/childrensfoodenvironment.pdf>

The Food Environment Index (FEI) is a measure used by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in the annual County Health Rankings. The index considers factors that contribute to a healthy food environment and reflects measurements of access and food insecurity. Access encompasses income and proximity to food stores. In rural areas, living close to a grocery store is defined as living less than 10 miles from a store. Food insecurity estimates the percentage of the population who did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year. Values for FEI range from 0-10, with 0 representing the unhealthiest environments and 10 indicating the healthiest environments.

- The healthiest U.S. counties scored an average of 8.4 on the Food Environment Index.
- 2015 FEI values for New York State counties ranged from 6.3– 8.0.
- Clinton County's FEI was slightly better than the U.S. median value but lower compared to the overall NYS value. This is likely related to a combination of food accessibility challenges and higher food prices within the county.

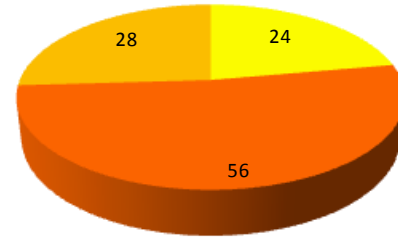


WHERE FOOD IS BEING PURCHASED

Where one shops for food greatly influences dietary behaviors and nutritional quality of meals. Rural food environments are characterized by reliance on a wider variety of food sources compared to more urban areas. Non-traditional food stores, such as drug stores and dollar stores, and convenience stores generally have limited selection, foods of lower nutritional quality and higher prices compared to conventional supermarkets and grocery stores.

- Over 75% of all food outlets in Clinton County are non-traditional or convenience stores.
- The number of non-traditional stores is the fastest growing subdivision of food outlets in the county.

Food Stores Available in Clinton County

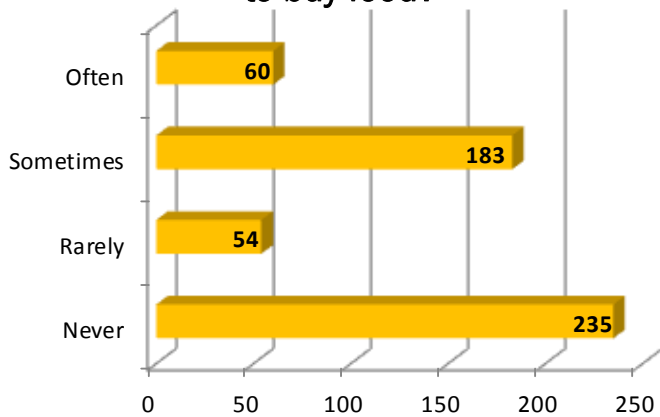


Legend: Conventional/Traditional (Yellow), Convenience (Orange), Non-Traditional (Light Yellow)

Source: City-Data.com

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING GROCERY STORES AND HEALTHY FOODS

Is it ever hard for you to get to/from a store to buy food?



Source: CCPT/CCHD Food Access Survey, 2014

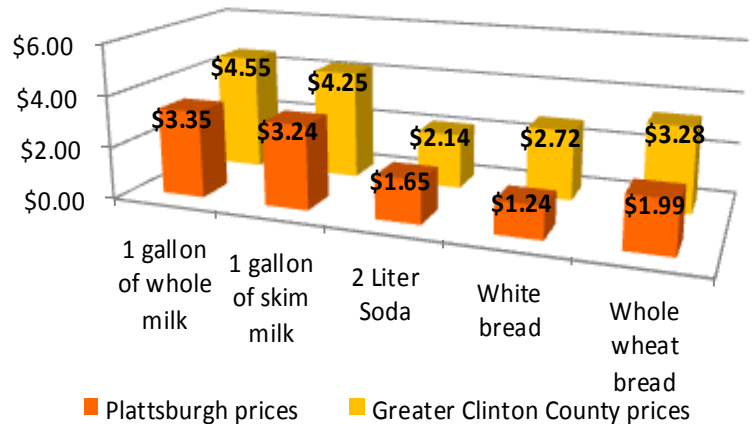
A 2014 local survey targeting lower income families and striving to understand public transportation use captured access challenges. While 88% of respondents get most of their food from a large food retailer within the City of Plattsburgh, 45% of all respondents indicate they 'sometimes' or 'often' have difficulty getting to a store to buy food, with an additional 10% experiencing this 'rarely.'

According to market trends, the retail food industry is consolidating, leading to fewer but larger stores in more urban areas. In rural communities, this leads to an uneven distribution of food sources creating areas of concentration and other areas where few or no grocery stores exist. Additional barriers, such as transportation and pricing, influence the accessibility and affordability of healthy foods. Low-income, rural communities are more likely to have:

- Residents with restricted or no vehicle access and limited transportation options.
- Families who spend a much higher percentage of their budget on transportation costs, almost twice that of their more affluent and urban counterparts.
- Rural food outlets with limited floor space.
- Pricing strategies that aim to recoup increased delivery charges related to distance from regional distribution centers.

A 2015 observational study included 14 stores located throughout Clinton County. The study found prices of foods outside the City of Plattsburgh were consistently higher, on average 38%, compared to price points for the same food items in stores within the city. In addition, healthier foods were often priced higher than their less nutritionally dense counterparts. For example, whole wheat bread cost an average of 66 cents more per loaf regardless of where it was purchased. The study also found over half of the stores surveyed outside of Plattsburgh carried no variety of fresh produce.

Food Prices in Clinton County



Source: Community Food Environment Survey, 2015

FOOD ENVIRONMENT & RATE OF CHRONIC DISEASE

The Reality of Being Overweight and Hungry

They are linked.



Source: www.eatright.org

The consumption of nutritious foods is essential to achieve and maintain good health, and to prevent and manage nutrition-related health conditions, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Ensuring a healthy diet is more difficult in areas with compromised food access.

Conventional supermarkets continue to provide the greatest variety of healthy foods, including fresh produce, lean proteins and whole grains. Non-traditional and convenience stores most often provide processed, packaged foods with a longer shelf life and lower nutritional value. A high reliance on these types of foods or inconsistent access to healthy foods qualifies as food insecurity.

Residents of communities and neighborhoods considered food insecure consume less fruits and vegetables and often have higher BMIs than those living in areas with a greater number of full service grocery stores. Researchers have also found people who live near supermarkets or in areas where food markets sell fresh produce (supermarkets, grocery stores, farmers' markets, etc.) have lower rates of diet-related diseases, like obesity, than their counterparts in neighborhoods lacking food access.

MOBILIZING ACTION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES, HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Families

- Patronize locally owned food businesses that offer healthy options.
- Buy locally grown foods.
- Support healthy food initiatives in schools and worksites.
- Encourage student participation in school meal programs.
- Use public transportation and other environmentally sensitive modes of travel to access food outlets.
- Choose nutrient dense, low calorie foods for family meals.
- Take advantage of nutrition learning opportunities to support the development of sound nutritional habits.

Healthcare Professionals

- Refer to programs that teach the public how to select and prepare fresh and locally grown foods.
- Display images depicting healthy food choices and eating behaviors in public areas.
- Support efforts that increase availability of healthy food choices throughout your community, especially in non-traditional food outlets.
- Educate the community and its leaders on the benefits of a healthy food environment.
- Facilitate and encourage family participation in local food assistance programs.

Community Leaders

- Support environmental and food policy approaches.
- Approve legislation that supports improvements in the built environment that make it easier for families to be physically active and eat well.
- Back evidence based solutions that decrease the incidence and prevalence of chronic disease.
- Advocate for programs that increase access to fresh, healthy foods for all families.
- Let federal representatives know you and your constituents support national food assistance programs.

Clinton County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or disability in employment or the provision of services.

Clinton County Health Department
133 Margaret St.
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
518.565.4840
clintonhealth.org

