

dcgreens

# Produce Rx

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES PILOT PROGRAM REPORT

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## BACKGROUND

The DC Greens Children and Families Produce Rx Program (CFPRx) was a one-year pilot, with open enrollment beginning in October 2022 and the program concluding in December 2023. Eligible families had to have at least one child aged 6–12 on DC Medicaid. Each family received a monthly incentive based on family size, starting at \$80 per month, with an additional \$10 per month per child living in the household, capped at \$120 per month for five children or more. Families were given a preloaded debit card to buy fresh produce at participating grocery retailers.

This pilot program sought to test multiple program components:

- the use of a tiered-funds disbursement system based on household size;
- a new Produce Rx payment technology, Fresh Connect;\* and
- a Produce Rx model that included whole families.

In October 2022, 386 families were enrolled through clinic partners and enrollment events.

The data presented in this report derives from two focus groups — one in Spanish, one in English — as well as surveys and our program cardholder reporting database.

\*About Fresh Focused Incentive Mastercard® Prepaid Card is issued by Pathward® N.A., Member FDIC pursuant to license by Mastercard International Incorporated. Mastercard and the circles design are registered trademarks of Mastercard International Incorporated.





# PROGRAM SUMMARY

Implementing the CFPRx program proved to be beneficial to the overall goal of advancing Food Is Medicine initiatives in the District. Through the CFPRx pilot, DC Greens piloted a new program model and innovative payment technology with the Fresh Connect (FC) debit card from About Fresh.

When compared to the loyalty card model used by adult PRx program, the FC card technology provided a more seamless checkout experience for participants and a streamlined process for disbursing funds.

The card technology allowed participants to call a support number in order to check their benefit balance, as well as receive support from the Fresh Connect team if participants had issues using their card.

Within the CFPRx pilot, funds were disbursed on the first of every month and were automatically loaded onto the card.

With the Fresh Connect card, CFPRx participants were able to shop at any Safeway, Walmart, Giant, and Harris Teeter in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

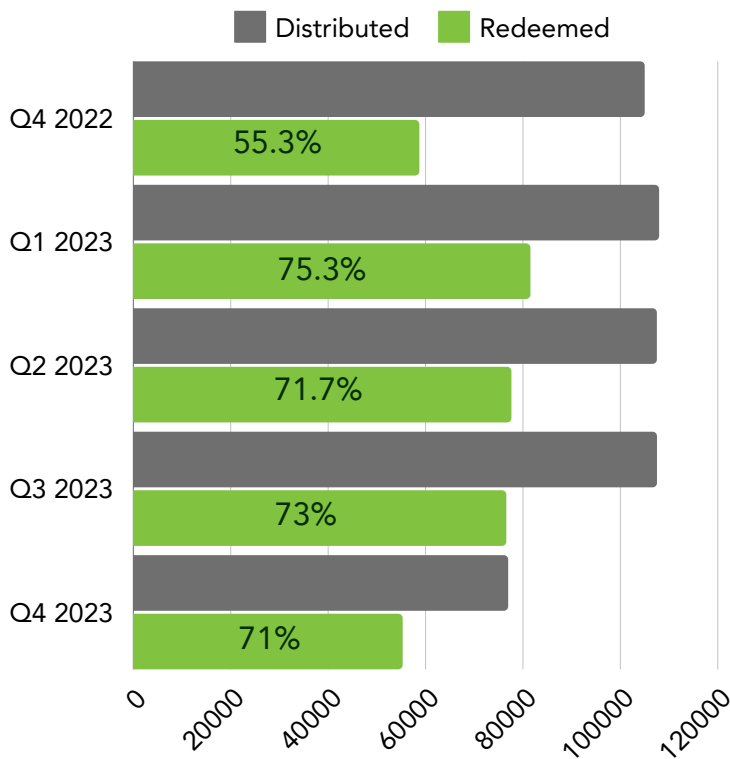
Conducting the CFPRx pilot in tandem with the previous Produce Rx model also allowed the program team to make comparisons and draw conclusions in real time about how to continue improving the program overall.

# REDEMPTION DATA

During the CFPRx pilot program, over \$500,000 was distributed to participants. Redemption rates were calculated by dividing the amount of money participants spent by the amount of money distributed.

We tracked participant transactions in order to measure program activity rates and gather data on how many participants spent their funds across the program year. Over the duration of the pilot, approximately 92% of participants purchased fresh produce during their time of enrollment in the program.

See the bar graph below for a breakdown of redemption rates by quarter.



**\$505,050**

FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

**\$351,430**

DOLLARS REDEEMED

**70%**

OVERALL REDEMPTION RATE

**92%**

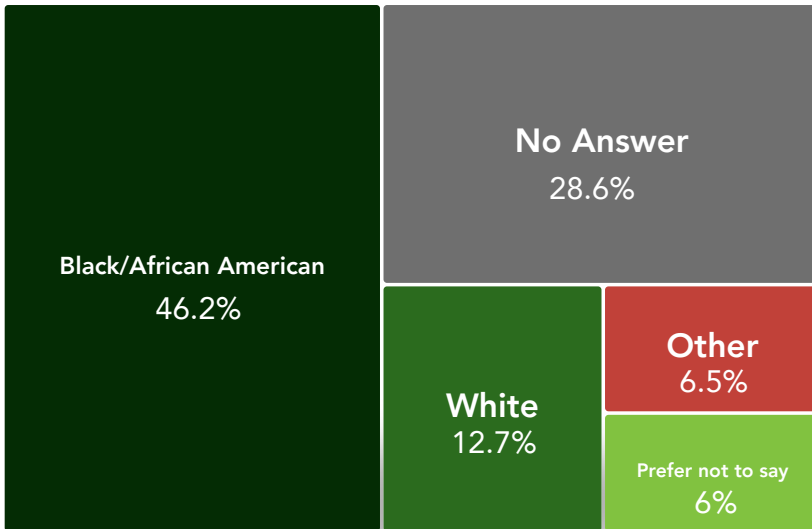
OVERALL ACTIVITY RATE



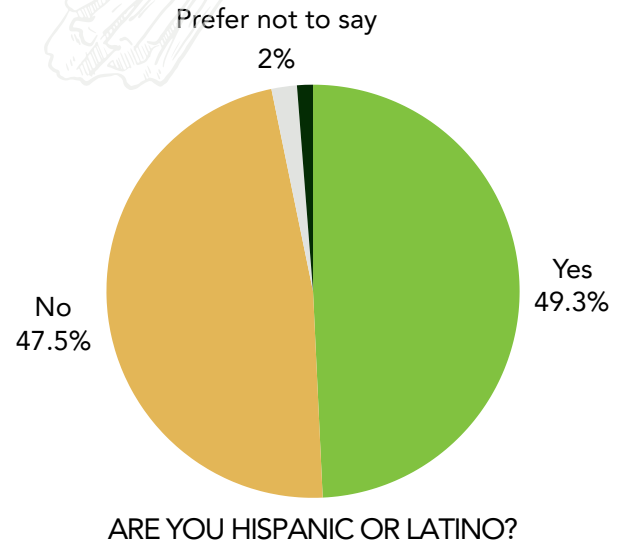
# DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

At the time of enrollment, each head of household completed a baseline survey. The survey gathered demographic information and screened for household food security.

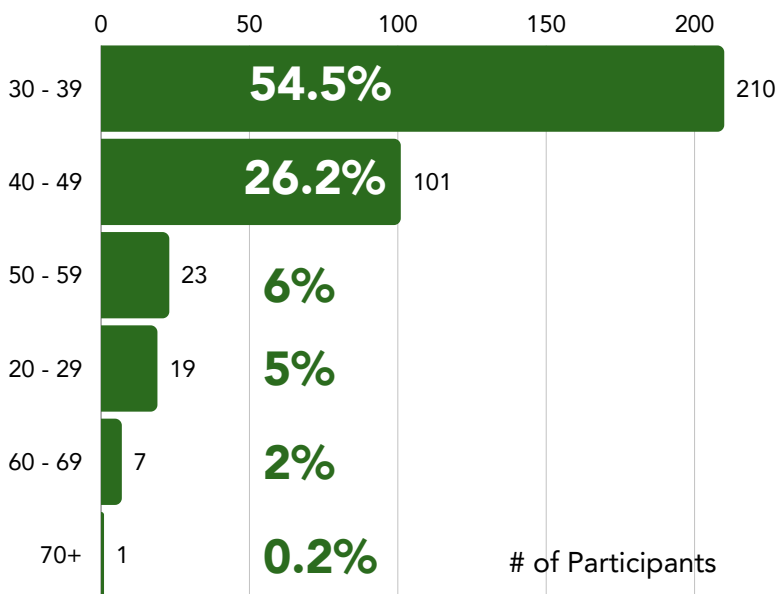
## RACE



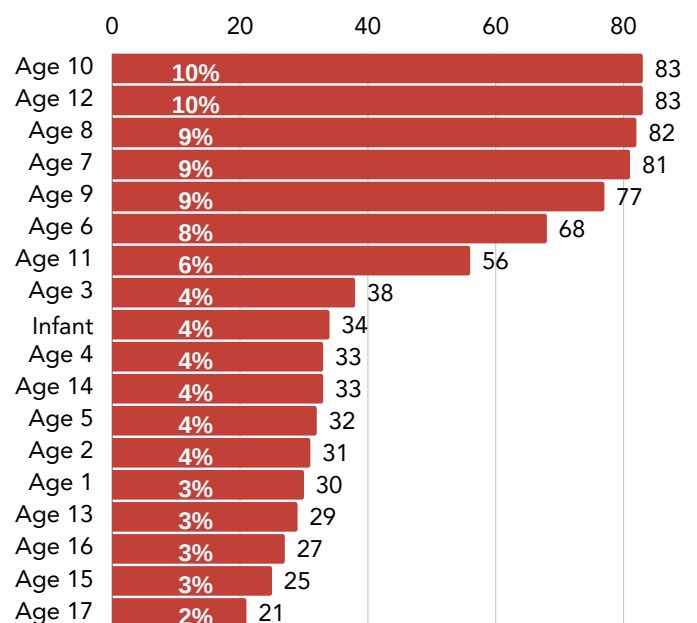
## ETHNICITY



## AGE: HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD



## AGE: ENROLLED CHILDREN





ENROLLED  
IN WIC

21%



ENROLLED  
IN SNAP/EBT

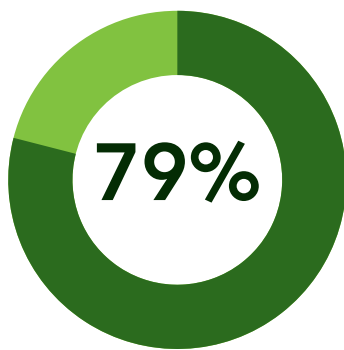
47%



AVERAGE  
FAMILY SIZE

3.7

## FOOD SECURITY STATUS

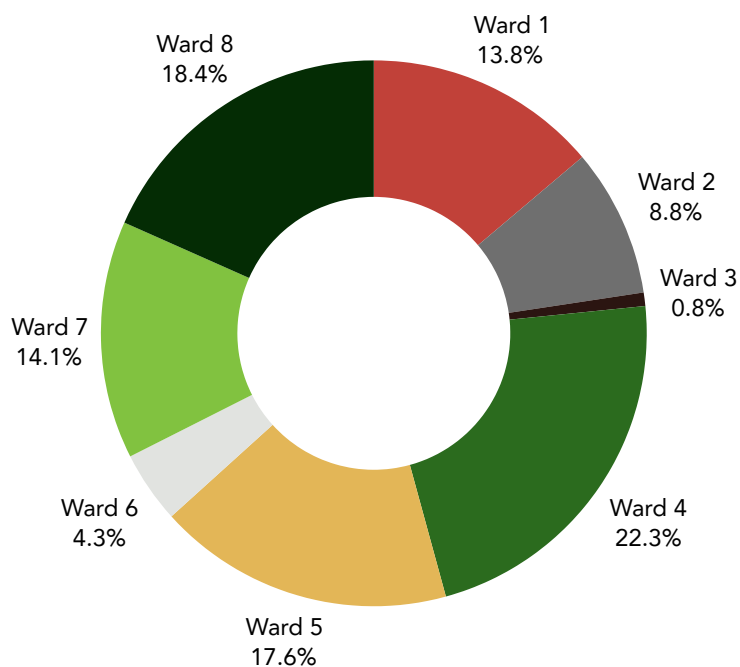


Percentage of patients identified as "food insecure"

## HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD GENDER



## DC WARD LOCATION







# GROCERY STORE UTILIZATION

## TOP 5 MOST USED STORES IN 2023\*

Store Location	Amount Spent	Percentage of Total Dollars
GIANT STORE: 1345 PARK RD NW (WARD 1)	\$66,919.95	23%
GIANT STORE: 1050 BRENTWOOD RD NE (WARD 5)	\$37,002.67	13%
GIANT STORE: 1400 7TH ST NW (WARD 2)	\$31,720.60	11%
SAFEWAY**	\$31,137.66	11%
GIANT STORE: 1535 ALABAMA AVE SE (WARD 8)	\$26,083.59	9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$192,864.47</b>	<b>66%</b>

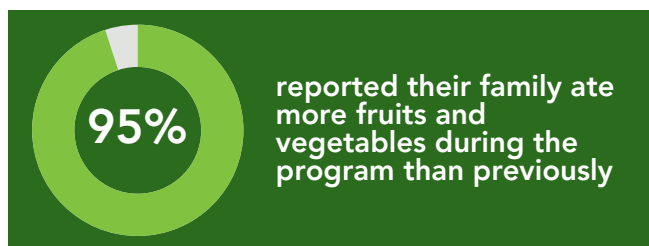
\*In the spring of 2023, Walmart, Safeway, and their affiliates joined as partners, broadening options for participants beyond Giant stores.

\*\*In 2023, the reporting software did not categorize Safeway by individual stores. The table encompasses spending from all 12 Safeway locations in the District of Columbia, as well as Virginia and Maryland locations.

# PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS

## OVERALL BENEFITS

Participants were invited to share their perspectives on self-reported health outcomes, along with overall experience using the program. In this section, you'll find direct quotes from families in the program alongside survey data\* that provide insights into their experiences.



Reported the program increased confidence in ability to prepare healthy and affordable meals for the family.



Reported the program increased motivation to prepare healthy and affordable meals for the family.



\* Out of 121 surveyed

"Life is really hard and food is expensive right now. This program helped me with **all the vegetables and fruits I needed on my table for my kid** and to cook my meals too. This program has been really helpful..."

—FAMILY OF THREE IN WARD 5

"It was easy to sign up and easy to use. I feel like **this was great to be in**, in a food desert such as Ward 8. If I wanted a healthy snack for my family, I could grab and eat healthy on the go as well."

—FAMILY OF SIX IN WARD 8

"My oldest grandson would take those vegetable packs, and he would just come in the kitchen and make himself a meal. He also loves tacos, so the lettuce and tomatoes. They could cut up everything. We really used our benefits... **it benefited my family**. And not only did it benefit my family, but also other people in my building because I could share with them."

—FAMILY OF THREE WARD 6

"I like the fact that I am able to buy fruits and vegetables and make it a part of my daily meal plan to **improve my health**."

—FAMILY OF TWO IN WARD 1



## SELF-REPORTED HEALTH OUTCOMES



It's definitely impacted my life. **I'm not on any of my medication now.** I'm so sad that it's ending, but I'm not going to let that deter me from eating healthy. It keeps me healthy and I go grocery shopping from week to week. I'll meal prep celery, potatoes, grapes, bananas, all the berries, spinach, and carrots.

—FAMILY OF THREE IN WARD 2

"The ability to try more new recipes. The excitement of the entire family cooking together and trying out new fruits and vegetables. **The increase of everybody's moods and the decrease in everybody's pain.** The increase of being able to afford other necessities reduces anxiety and stress. Food benefits lasting a bit longer."

—FAMILY OF SIX IN WARD 6

"Para mi sí fue de mucha ayuda tanto **en mi salud y en la de mi familia** y económicamente." (Eng.: "For me, it was a huge help for my health, my family's health, and economically.")

—FAMILY OF FIVE IN WARD 2

**"Para mi fue un impacto en pensar y tratar de hacer recetas nuevas con vegetales** y hacer caminatas una vez a la semana. Tal día, tal hora voy a ir a la tienda y llevo mi tiempo para caminar un poco antes de llegar a la tienda." (Eng.: "It was impactful for me to think and try to make new recipes with vegetables and have a walk once a week. Once a week, at a specific time, I would go to the store and I would take my time to walk a bit before getting to the store.")

—FAMILY OF FIVE IN WARD 2

"It took a lot of stress getting up for school and [with the program] **they were able to pack fruits to take to school** and snack in the car on an orange or apple that normally I could not buy and it took a lot a stress off of me."

—FAMILY OF THREE IN WARD 6

"As a vegetarian, this program was heaven sent. Fruits and vegetables in D.C. are astronomically expensive. Even at the farmers markets the costs are unbelievably high. **The program allowed me to use the money to extend fruits and vegetables for my child's lunch.** My daughter took lunch to school every single day and she is also a vegetarian. It allowed her to eat fruit after school fruit on the weekends because as we all know children eat 'round the clock and even more so when they're at home. Especially during weekends Christmas break, Spring break ,Thanksgiving break, and any break."

—FAMILY OF THREE WARD 2



## CONCLUSION

The majority of families reported that the program did increase their intake of fruits and vegetables by removing financial barriers and incentivizing the use of specific funds for fresh produce. While acknowledging the program's positive impact, many families expressed that one year was insufficient to fully experience long-term benefits. However, most found the monthly tiered amount adequate for their family size, ensuring they could utilize all of their funds before the month ended.

Regarding children's involvement in the program, participants noted their active participation in mealtime, particularly in selecting produce at the store and assisting with meal preparation. As the qualifying age for the program was children aged 6–12, the program did not include a biomedical assessment component due to the complexities of tracking such metrics in children across a single year. Nonetheless, self-reported outcomes indicate noticeable improvements in household moods and stress levels associated with increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The implementation of a debit card technology for the Produce Rx program resulted in beneficial outcomes for DC Greens, program partners and participants. While some encountered minor issues with specific retailers and certain items not registering through the card, the majority found it convenient to use and track their funds. Constructive feedback primarily focused on extending the program's duration, expanding store locations, and allowing unused funds to roll over from month to month.



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