



A LOOK AT FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION AND ACCESS IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

March 2014

March is National Nutrition Month, an annual campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to bring attention to the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. According to the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, Americans eat less than the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables, whole-grains, dairy products, and oils.¹ At the same time, American diets exceed the recommended intake levels of calories from solid fats and added sugars, refined grains, sodium and saturated fat.²

In honor of National Nutrition Month, PHMC's Center for Data Innovation and Community Health Data Base are highlighting data from the 2012 Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Household Health Survey on the health and nutrition of residents in this region. The SEPA Household Health Survey is a survey of 10,000 households in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties. This article specifically examines fruit and vegetable consumption, access to fruits and vegetables in one's neighborhood, and how these indicators relate to health status and chronic conditions.

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

In the Southeastern Pennsylvania region, more than half of adults (18+) consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables on a typical day (53%).

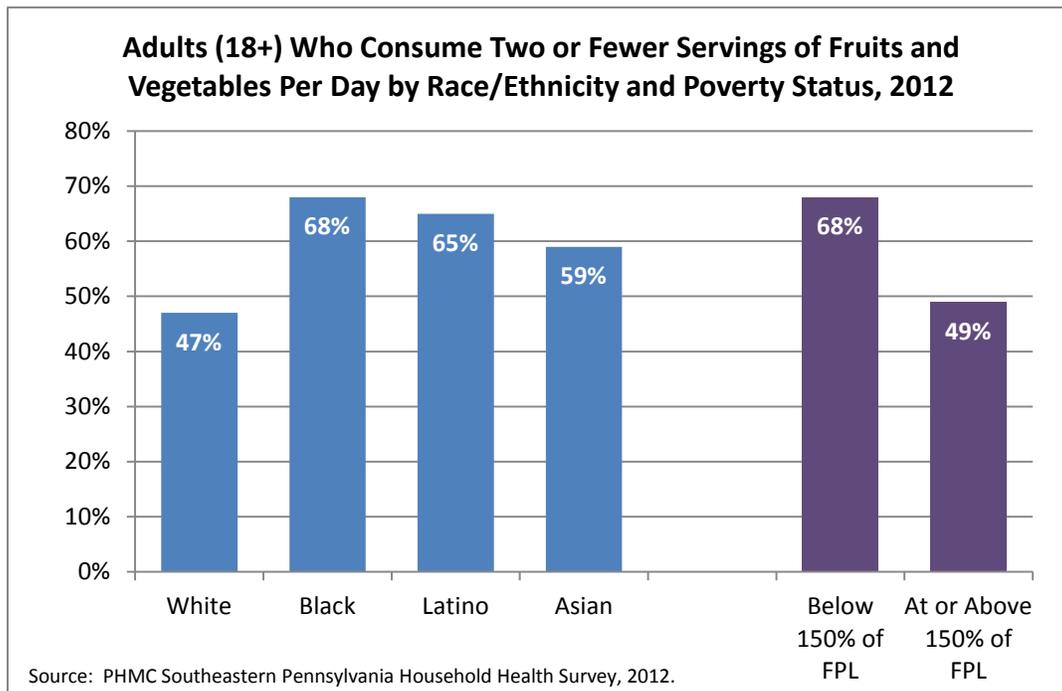
- Adults in Philadelphia County are more likely to consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables on a typical day (61%) compared with those in Delaware (52%), Bucks (48%), Montgomery (47%), and Chester (46%) Counties.
- Men are more likely to consume two or fewer servings (60%) compared to women (47%).
- Black, Latino and Asian adults (68%, 65% and 59% respectively) are more likely to consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables daily than white adults (47%).
- In addition, nearly seven in ten adults living below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) consume two or fewer servings of fruits/vegetables on a typical day (68%), which is substantially higher than those living at or above 150% of the FPL (49%).
- As education attainment increases, so does fruit and vegetable consumption. Three-quarters of adults with less than a high school diploma eat two or fewer servings on a typical day (74%) compared to 41% of adults with a college degree or more.

¹ The President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. Available at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm>.

² The President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. Available at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm>.



- Adults who are unemployed are more likely to consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables (65%) in comparison to adults who work full- or part-time (50%).



Access to Fruits and Vegetables

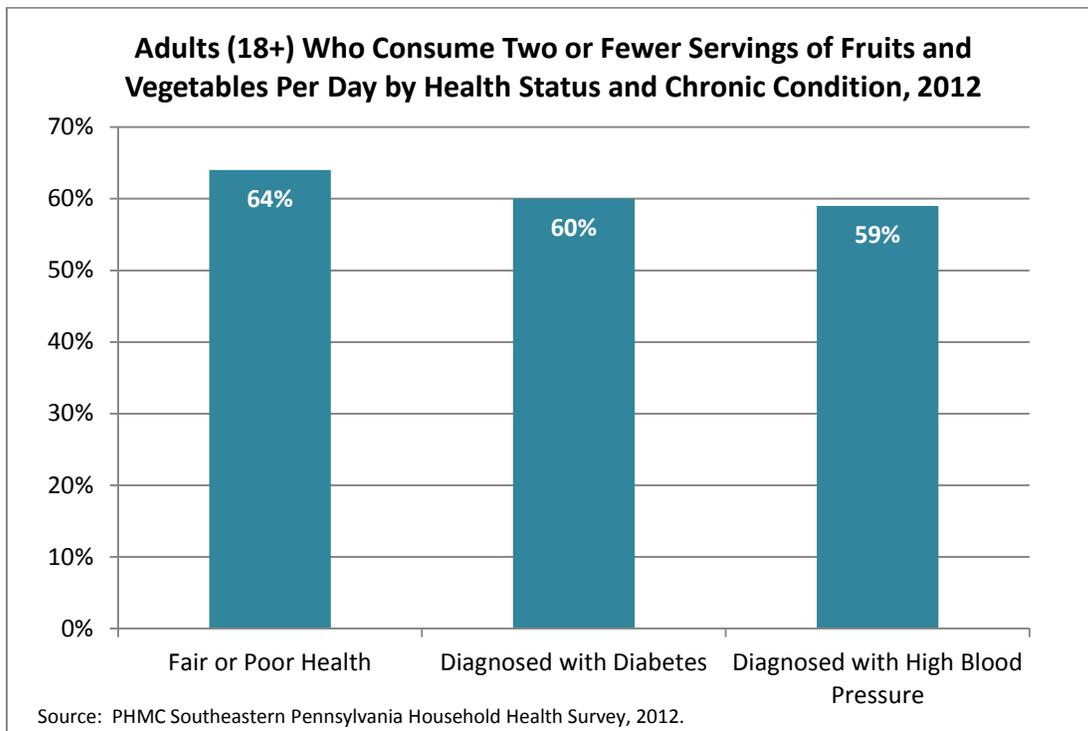
Across the region, approximately 5% of adults (18+) have a difficult or very difficult time finding fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood, representing approximately 163,000 adults.

- Black and Latino adults are more likely to have a difficult/very difficult time accessing fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood (11% and 10% respectively) compared to Asian and white adults (4% and 3% respectively).
- Approximately 12% of adults living below 150% of the FPL have a difficult or very difficult time finding fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood in comparison to 4% of adults at or above 150% of the FPL.
- Similar to fruit and vegetable consumption, as education attainment increases, so does the ease with which adults can find fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood. One in ten adults with less than a high school diploma have a difficult or very difficult time (10%) compared to 3% of those with a college degree or more.

Health Status and Chronic Conditions

Fruit and vegetable access and consumption can have a significant impact on one's overall health. There is substantial scientific evidence demonstrating an association between fruit and vegetable intake and reduced risk of major chronic diseases.

- More than six in ten SEPA adults who are in fair or poor health consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables on a typical day (64%), representing approximately 317,600 adults.
- One in ten adults who are in fair or poor health finds it difficult or very difficult to access fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood (10%).
- Approximately 60% of adults who have been diagnosed with diabetes consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Similarly, 59% of adults with high blood pressure consume two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables on a typical day.



Conclusion

It is clear that many Southeastern Pennsylvania adults are not consuming sufficient servings of fruits and vegetables. Access to fresh produce is a barrier for a number of these residents. It is also evident that disparately impacted groups are more likely to have limited access to fresh produce and to consume fewer servings of fruits and vegetable per day. In addition, adults who are in fair/poor health or suffer from chronic conditions, including diabetes and high blood pressure, are more likely to consume fewer servings of fruits and vegetables.

For more information about the findings presented in this article, please contact Sarah Ingerman at singerman@phmc.org.

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