

# Survey of SNAP Food Providers in Eight Kentucky Counties:

## STORE ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY OF FOOD TYPES

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In 2018 a survey was conducted of stores accepting SNAP electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards in the Kentucky counties of Bourbon, Boyle, Breathitt, Jackson, Knott, Lincoln, Madison, and Owsley. The survey was a component of research conducted by CEDIK at the University of Kentucky, in conjunction with the Kentucky Grocers and Convenience Store Association to gain a better understanding of local food environments and to learn more about grocery store policies and practices. The reports in this series explore the challenges and practices of stores that accept EBT cards and the implications for local food access in the study area. All the participating counties represent areas of high eligibility for participation in the federal SNAP programs.

Two hundred and sixty surveys were sent by mail with a pre-paid return envelope to the addresses of stores provided by the USDA SNAP website<sup>1</sup> listing stores that accept SNAP EBT cards. Surveys went to one hundred and sixty-eight addresses in the Central Kentucky counties (in dark blue on map above), and fifty-one addresses located in the Eastern counties (in lighter blue). Sixteen percent of the total initial mailing were returned undelivered. Twenty-eight surveys, or twelve percent of the deliverable surveys, were completed and returned. Surveys were completed by the store owners, managers, or a designated representative.

This report examines store access and availability of food types for understanding the healthy eating choices available to residents of the communities and the health status of the communities.

### Access to Foods by Type

To gain a better understanding of the types of foods available to the residents of the surveyed

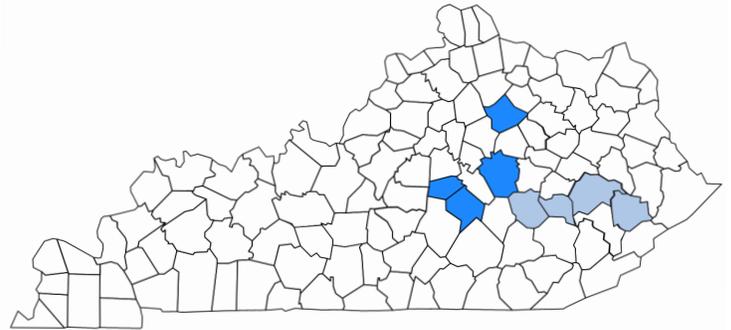


FIGURE 1. KENTUCKY COUNTIES PARTICIPATING IN SURVEY.

Central Kentucky: Bourbon, Boyle, Lincoln, and Madison (darker blue)

Eastern Kentucky: Breathitt, Jackson, Knott and Owsley (lighter blue)

counties, questions were asked about the percentage of store floor space allocated to various types of food. The results provided a better understanding of the overall availability of the kinds of food items stocked in the stores. For the purpose of this study, drinks were separated out from foods. Foods include fresh produce and meat, and processed, canned or frozen items.

Of the twenty-four stores that responded, on average 60% of their sales consisted of foods. Three farmers markets reported that their food sales were 100%. Another three self-identified supermarkets reported that 100% of their sales were food sales.

As may be expected, farmers markets averaged 92% of fresh produce by booth space. The remaining space included fresh breads (7% of booth space), and prepared foods. Convenience stores provided a different picture of the food items being offered to consumers. The average total food sales reported by convenience stores were 16% (central KY), 28% (eastern KY). Convenience stores indicated that on average 22% of their sales consist of food items, while drinks account for 32% of the shelf space.

FIGURE 2. AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF SHELF SPACE BY FOOD TYPES (EXCLUDING FARMERS MARKETS).

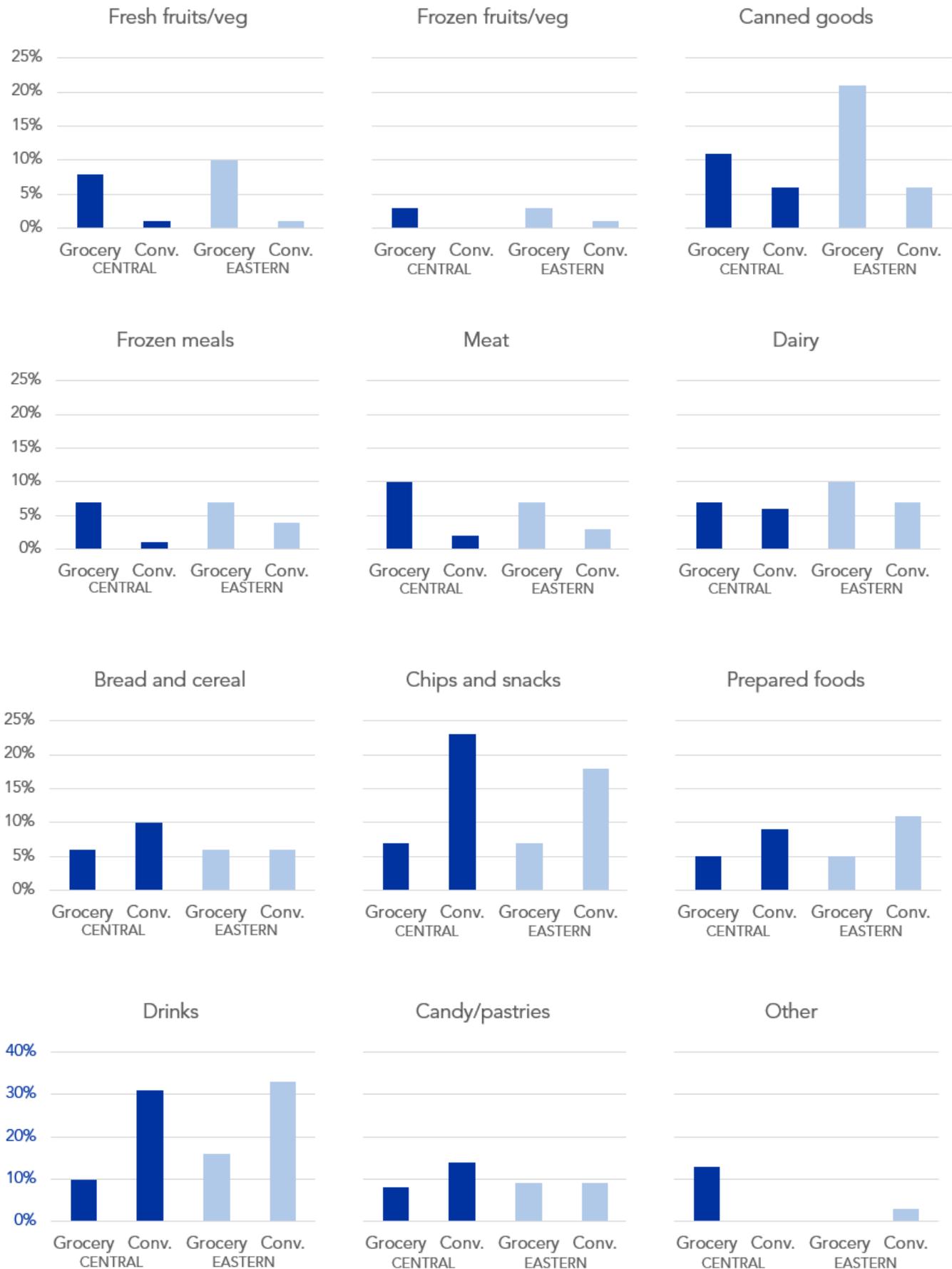


FIGURE 3. WEEKDAY HOURS\* OF OPERATION BY STORE TYPE AND REGION.

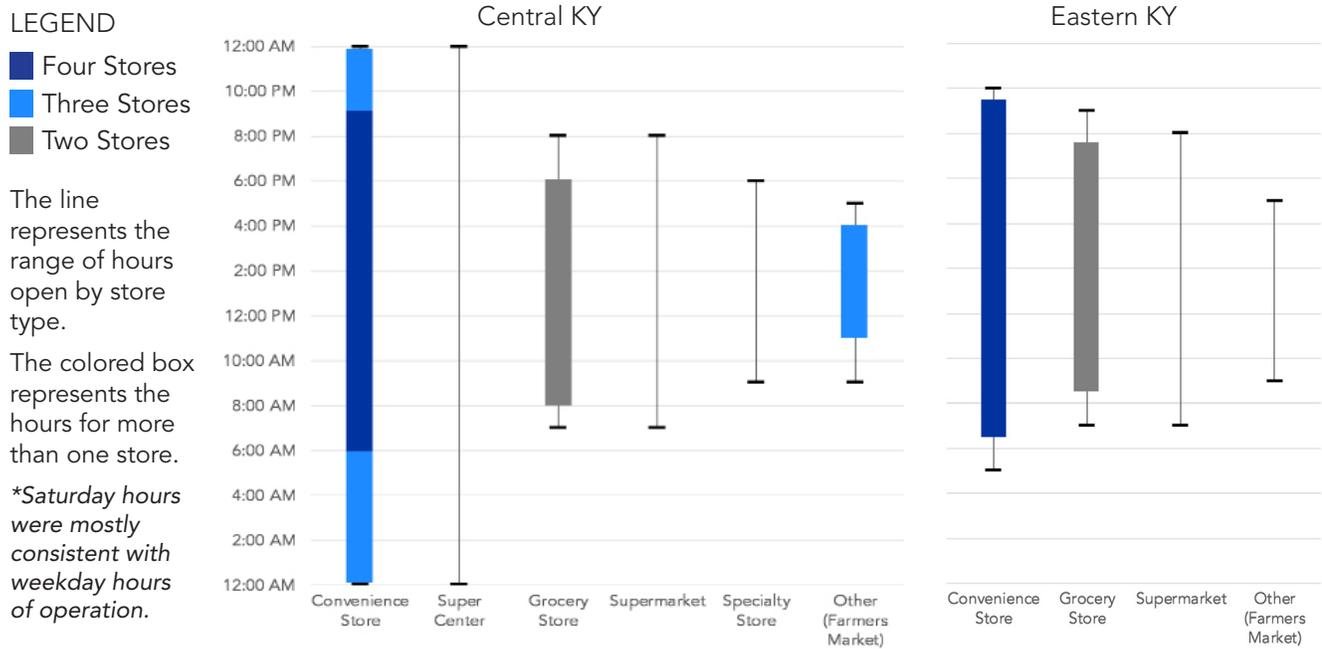
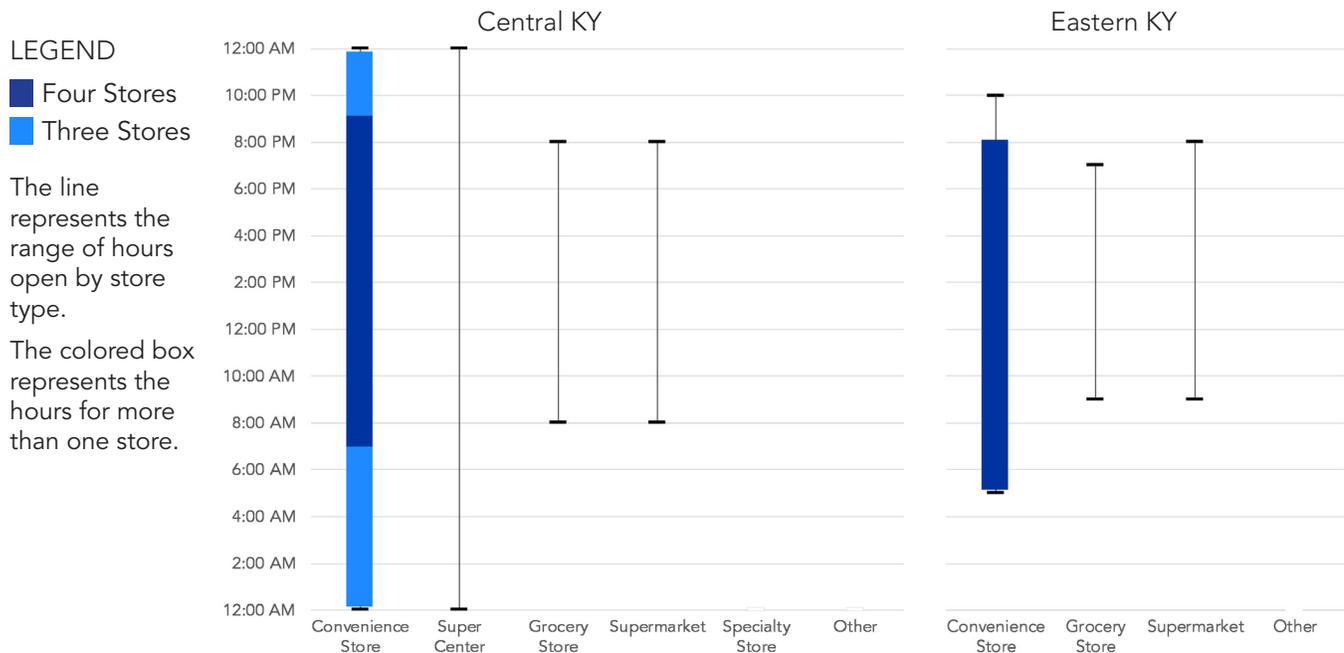


FIGURE 4. SUNDAY HOURS OF OPERATION BY STORE TYPE AND REGION.



### Store Operation Hours

Twenty-five out of 28 stores reported their hours of business operation. Weekday hours of operation for both Central and Eastern Kentucky counties are represented in Figure 3, and Sunday hours of operation are represented in Figure 4. One survey respondent indicated that as a farm, they did not have established hours of operation. Out of the 25 respondents, four businesses were

open 24 hours throughout the week (7 days). One grocery had inconsistent hours, open from 7am until they sold out on one weekday and one weekend day. Another grocery was open two weekdays and one weekend day in the mornings. On average, most food providers were open from late morning to early evening (11am-5pm). Typical hours were between 7am and 9pm on weekdays. There was a distinction between

weekend operations with food providers opening later and closing earlier than on weekdays. Several food providers (36%) were not open on Sundays. Farmers markets operate at various daily and hourly schedules.

### Barriers to Store Access

Food access is a critical component of healthy thriving communities. When asked what barriers are faced by customers trying to get to their businesses, almost 70% of survey respondents noted *"I don't know."* Of the service providers who indicated barriers (30%), lack of transportation was the most frequently identified barrier, followed by schedule incompatibility and lack of customer mobility. One store indicated an awareness that the distance from customers' homes to the store was an obstacle. Several of the service providers who indicated barriers provided further insights. One store representative noted, *"[they] were off the main road and not located in a busy area."* Another store mentioned that, *"access from the roadway"* was a barrier. One farmers market noted *"schedule incompatibility"* as a barrier for their customers because their store was open only one weekday.

### Summary

While survey response numbers were small, this study summary presents insight into local groceries' hours of operation and types of food available to their customers in the sampled counties of central and eastern Kentucky. SNAP food service providers who responded to the 2018 Grocer's Survey in Central and Eastern Kentucky have hours of operation that overlap with a typical work day. This can create an accessibility issue for people working a typical 8am-5pm job. On average, consumers in Eastern Kentucky experience 49% fewer hours of access to food per week than consumers in Central Kentucky counties. Some barriers for customers that the food providers were aware

of include the location of their operations, mobility of customers to get to their stores, and operation hours that are incompatible with their customers' daily schedules. The types of foods available differed depending on the store's main function. In particular, convenience stores were the most frequent responders to the survey in the eight counties, and had the most limited fresh or healthy food options. Overall, there are barriers in access to fresh, local, healthy foods for residents of the eight counties, both spatially (location in community, store space allocation) and temporally (days and hours of business).

In this small study, there is indication that more barriers exist for accessing healthy foods for communities in Eastern Kentucky. Ultimately, the consumption of fresh, healthy foods is a two-part process that must be embraced by all parties involved to achieve the desired goal. Residents must be willing and purposeful to seek out and consume healthy foods, while food providers need to better supply stores with healthy food options and adjust business operations to accommodate their customers.

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*Note: A series of publications on the Survey of SNAP Food Providers in Eight Kentucky Counties can be found at [cedik.ca.uky.edu/pse-survey](http://cedik.ca.uky.edu/pse-survey)*

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