



# FOOD INSECURITY DURING COVID-19 IN VERMONT

## Impacts and Implications

Meredith T. Niles, PhD  
Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences &  
Food Systems Program  
University of Vermont  
[mtniles@uvm.edu](mailto:mtniles@uvm.edu)

Emily H. Belarmino, MPH, PhD & Farryl Bertmann, PhD, RDN



The University of Vermont

# CONSISTENT FOOD INSECURITY

- 3 survey rounds (March (n=3,200), June (n=1,200), September 2020 (n=600))
- **33%** increase in food insecurity in March 2020 compared to before COVID-19
- Nearly **30%** Vermont households have faced food insecurity since COVID-19
- Approximately **1/3** of food insecure are newly food insecure

## Vermont Household Food Insecurity

Vermont Annual Average 2018

11.3%

UVM Survey: March-April 2020

24.1%

UVM Survey: March-June 2020

23.0%

UVM Survey: March-September 2020

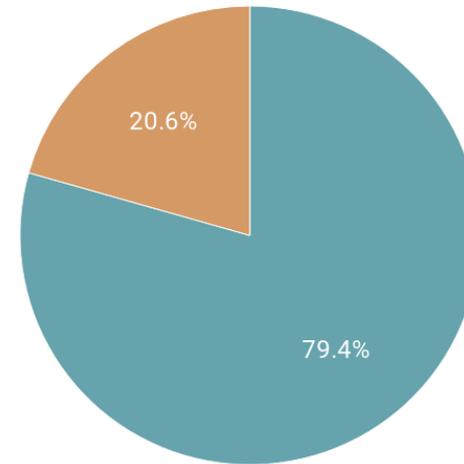
29.0%



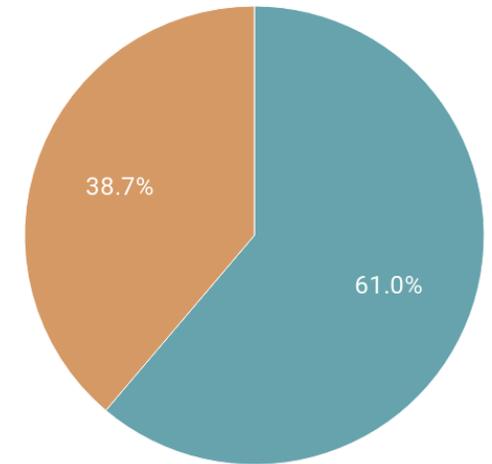
# WHO IS MOST AFFECTED

- Across all studies more likely to be food insecure:
  - Households with children
  - Households earning less than \$50K annually
  - Respondents without college education
  - Households with job disruption (40% of respondents)

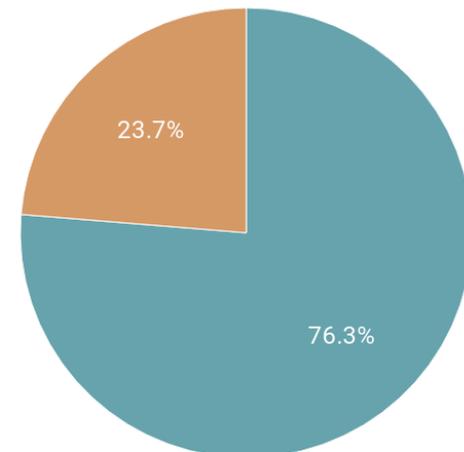
■ Food Secure ■ Food Insecure



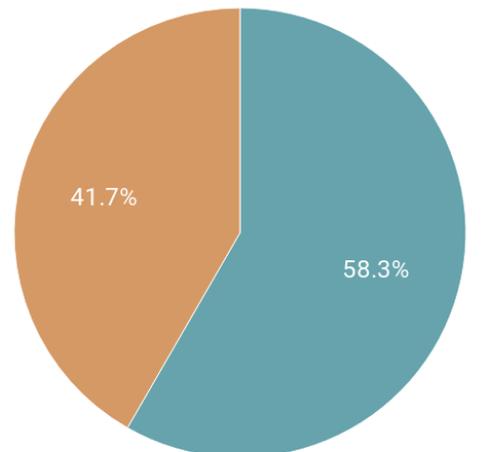
No Job Disruption



Job Disruption



No Children in Household

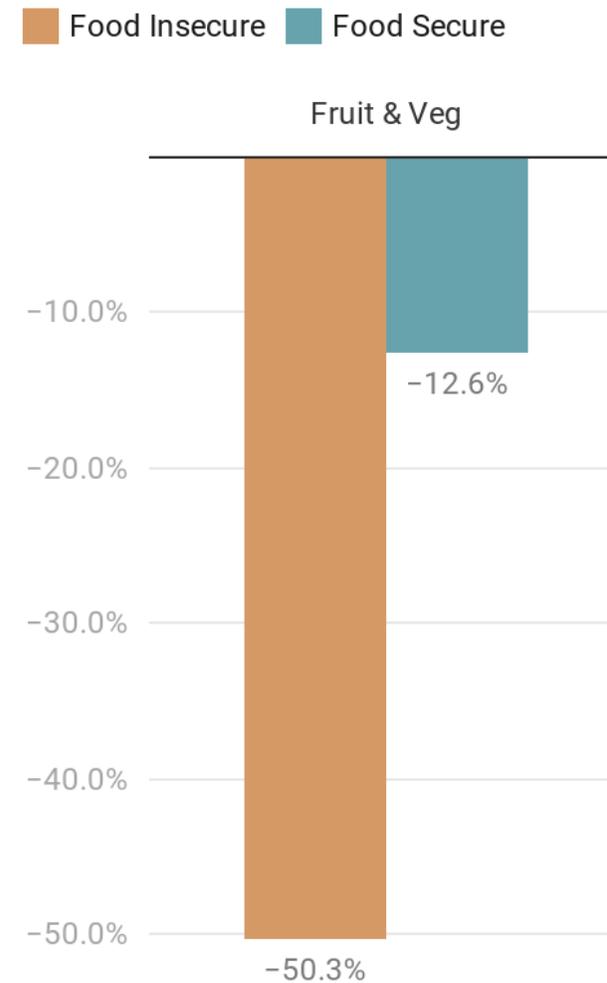


Children in Household



# DIET QUALITY IMPACTS

- Diet quality is changing since COVID-19
- Reduced fruit and vegetable consumption
- **Over 50%** of food insecure are eating less fruits and vegetables

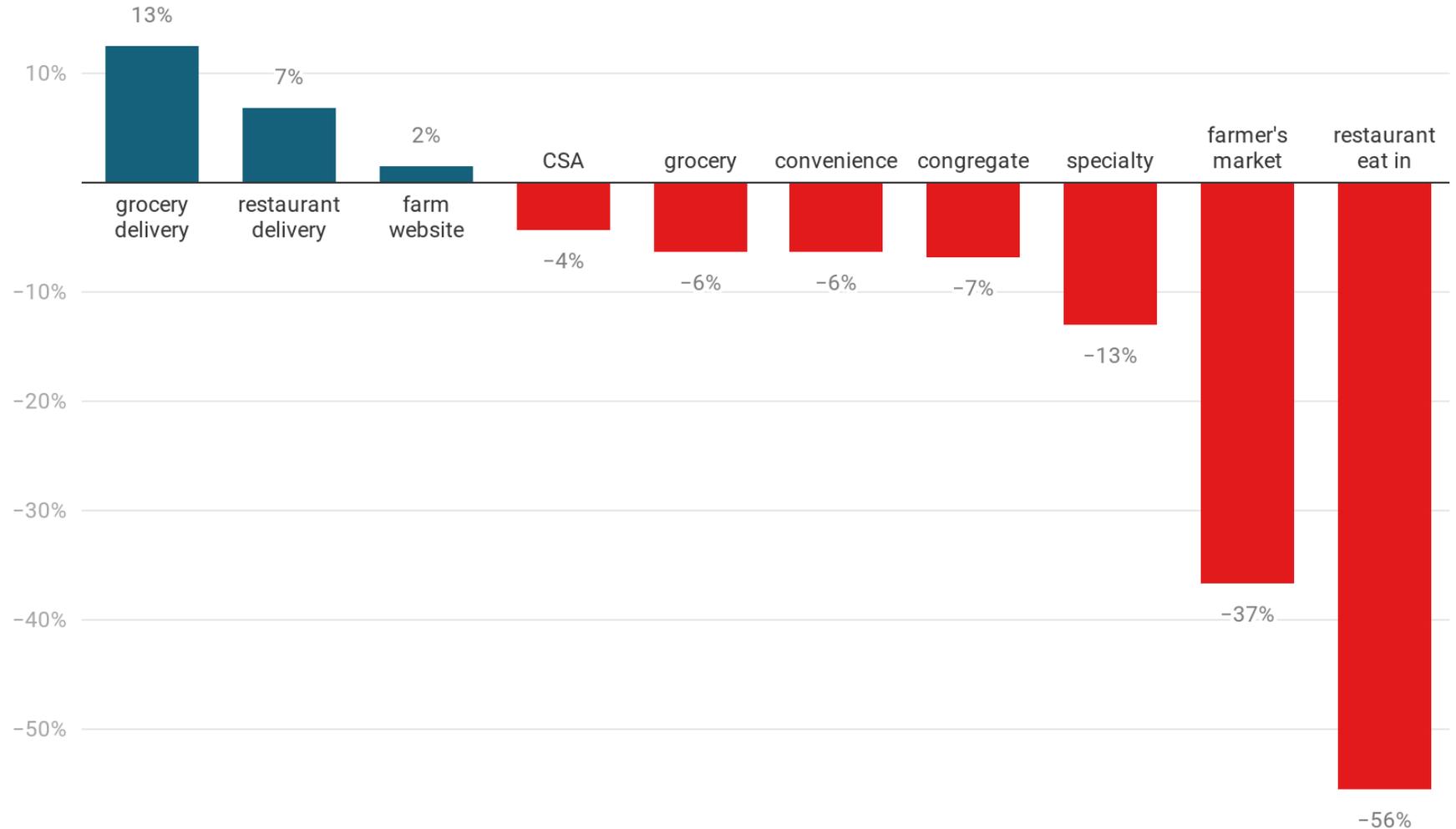


Percent of respondents (August/September 2020) indicating they are eating less of a given food group since COVID-19



# SHIFT IN FOOD SOURCES

- Major losses at farmers' markets, restaurants
- 6% decline in people sometimes or often choosing local products
- Potential new opportunities for delivery, e-commerce

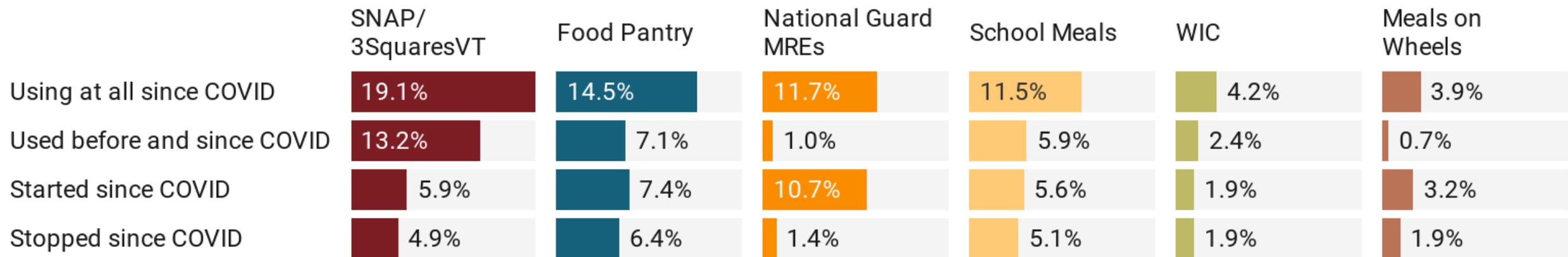


Change in food sources since COVID-19 among respondents (August/September 2020)



# USE OF ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- **1/3** of respondents used some food assistance program since COVID-19 (and there's an increase in use)
- Use more common among food insecure households, households with children, households with job disruption



Use and change in use of various food assistance programs since COVID-19 among respondents in August/September 2020



# HELPFUL STRATEGIES

- **PROGRAMS:** Increasing concerns about loss of food assistance programs between March-Sept.
- **SAFETY:** More than **50%** want increased safety of stores and supply chain
- **FINANCIAL HELP: 1 in 3** seek additional financial assistance
  - \$149 a week for food insecure households
  - \$130 a week for food secure households
  - Increasing concerns (March-September) about food costs

“Food prices have gone up. I am much less likely to use the food pantry because of the increased number of people who need help. I try to find other ways to cut down but mostly have just increased my debt and maxed out credit.”

Vermont respondent



# NEXT STEPS

- Two rounds of future surveys planned in 2021
- Additional survey conducted in collaboration with Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets of farmers and food businesses- forthcoming report
- Any additional analysis? What else would be useful?
- Eight briefs- all available: <https://www.nfactresearch.org/vermont-policy-briefs>
- [mtniles@uvm.edu](mailto:mtniles@uvm.edu)

