

# GREENMARKET CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS 2011



## Introduction

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GrowNYC's Greenmarket program operates 54 farmers markets in the five boroughs of New York City and has been providing healthy, fresh produce to New York City communities for 35 years. Our producer-only markets include more than 230 farmers from the Northeast, including parts of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New England.

Greenmarket works to increase low-income New Yorkers' access and ability to purchase fresh and nutritious food. Nearly all of our Greenmarkets accept EBT (Food Stamps) and many farmers also accept other federal, state and city programs, including Health Bucks, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and the WIC Vegetable and Fruit Checks (also called WIC Cash Value Vouchers or WIC CVV).

In 2011 GrowNYC received a grant from the Wholesome Wave Foundation to launch an incentive program for customers to spend their WIC Vegetable and Fruit checks in seven farmers market. Though approximately \$33 million is available in these checks each year in New York State, most are spent at grocery stores while only a tiny fraction is spent at farmers markets. The goal of the incentive program was to educate and encourage the public to spend these checks at Greenmarket.



As part of the grant, Wholesome Wave asks partners to conduct customer surveys in markets with the Wholesome Wave funded incentive to determine a few key demographic factors and spending patterns of those using the program. Greenmarket elected to conduct the survey at eight additional markets in order to learn more about the community of shoppers who support farmers markets. This report provides an analysis of the data collected at these eight markets.

## Study Purpose and Objectives

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This survey was developed in collaboration between GrowNYC and Wholesome Wave to learn more about Greenmarket customers in eight markets in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Through a series of questions, this survey determined awareness about the acceptance of federal benefits, shopper frequency, customer spending both at the market and in the surrounding neighborhoods, demographic information, and more. Overall the data collected should provide a clearer picture of who is shopping at the eight markets surveyed, why, and what they're spending. The information resulting from these surveys will influence how GrowNYC provides incentives for shoppers, especially those with federal benefits. Additionally, understanding the customers more thoroughly would allow GrowNYC to further tailor the markets to respond to demand.

## Study Design and Methodology

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Surveys were administered in eight markets during August and the first two weeks of September 2011. Markets surveyed included: Sunset Park, Williamsburg, and Boro Park in Brooklyn, Mount Sinai, Fort Washington and 175th Street in Manhattan and Poe Park and Parkchester in the Bronx. Markets were selected in part to assess their potential for success in future participation in Greenmarket's WIC CVV incentive program. Poe Park, Parkchester and Fort Washington were visited twice, while the other five markets were visited once.

Those conducting the survey took care to make sure no one took the survey more than once. Customers were selected at random in the market and asked if they would answer a few brief questions. There was no incentive given for participation in the survey. Surveys were conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese and administered during the hours each market was most active. A total of 559 surveys were conducted. The table below shows the markets represented in the data and number of customers surveyed. From a statistical perspective, all markets generated representative survey data.

Market Name	Borough	Number of Responses
Williamsburg	Brooklyn	37
Boro Park	Brooklyn	59
Sunset Park	Brooklyn	29
Poe Park	Bronx	144
Parkchester	Bronx	42
Fort Washington	Manhattan	52
Mt. Sinai	Manhattan	59
175th Street	Manhattan	124

## Limitations

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Resource and time constraints limited data collection to eight markets. These markets were not selected with a randomized design. The resulting data is less representative and therefore less accurate than it would be if all markets were surveyed, or if the markets surveyed were selected through a randomized process.

Selection bias, inherent to all surveys of this nature, is another limitation of the study. Although survey administrators were advised to select customers at random, there is always the possibility that the survey participants who were recruited may be different than the general population of market shoppers.



In addition, shoppers who speak a language other than English, Spanish or Chinese represented a problem for our survey administrators. We were unfortunately unable to survey shoppers who spoke other native languages although they may constitute part of a market's customer population.

The survey was three and half pages long and some of the customers surveyed chose not to finish the whole survey. Others chose to skip questions. We included the majority of the surveys even if they were not entirely complete, and omissions and missing data are noted in the survey results.

Lastly, the number of Food Stamp customers shopping in a market will change within each month in accordance to when money is replenished on EBT cards.

## Summary of Survey Results

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Eighty percent of shoppers at the eight markets surveyed were aware that their market accepted Food Stamps. The majority (36%) knew from signage they saw by passing by/through the market. The other most common ways of finding out the information were from the WIC Program (21%) and by word of mouth (14%).

Nearly half of the customers surveyed (43%) shopped at the market weekly, while 12% came several times per month and 18% came several times per year. First time shoppers accounted for 16%. A quarter of the shoppers noted that this was their first year buying produce at the Greenmarket while 14% began shopping there last year and 60% had been coming for two years or more. The data was split almost exactly in half between customers who said that the market was their primary reason for visiting the neighborhood and those who had another reason for being there, such as living or working nearby. Ninety-five percent of customers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the location of the market was convenient for them.

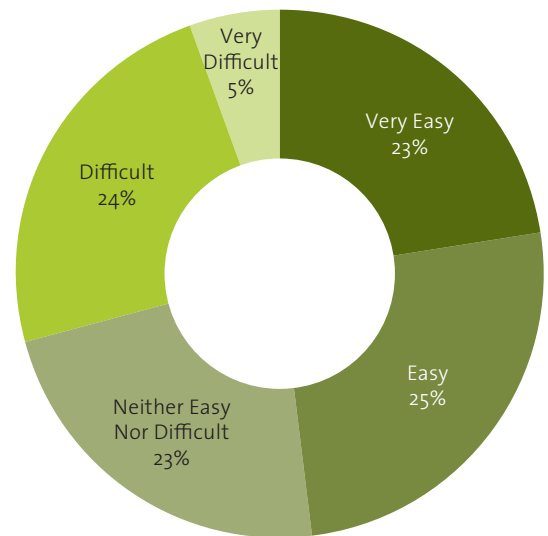
Close to 70% of shoppers received some kind of federal benefits and more than half (270) had spent a portion of their federal benefits at the markets the day they were surveyed. There were 164 shoppers who spent an average of \$22.50 of their Food Stamps the day in which they were surveyed. In terms of cash and credit, 204 shoppers spent an average of \$16.60 at the market the day they were surveyed and fewer than fifty people indicated how much they had spent in each Health Bucks, Senior FNMP, WIC FNMP, WIC CVV, and Greenmarket Bucks (see full results for all average amounts spent and standard deviations). Thirty percent of those surveyed said that they were planning to spend an average of \$30.45 elsewhere in the area, whereas 42% did not plan to shop anywhere else and 27% gave no answer. In other words, customers who planned to shop elsewhere in the neighborhood expected to spend more at neighborhood businesses than they spent at Greenmarket, providing economic benefits for the local community.

When asked whether it was easy or difficult to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in customers' neighborhoods outside the farmers market where the survey was being conducted, 29% of respondents said that it was difficult or very difficult.

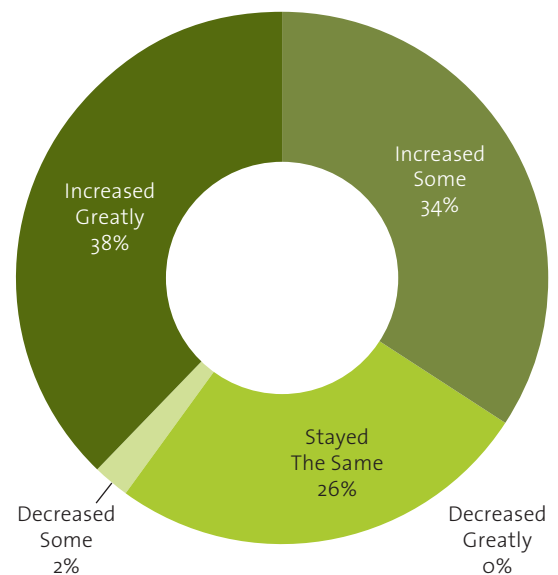
**Particularly in the Bronx and at 175th Street, shoppers stressed that the farmers market provided greatly increased access to fresh produce.**

With increased access to fruits and vegetables, many shoppers noted an increase in their consumption of produce. **Almost three-quarters or respondents said that they bought and ate more fresh fruits and vegetables as a result of shopping at the farmers market.** Of those surveyed, nearly half of the customers said that they buy most, almost all or all of their fresh fruits and vegetables from the farmers market during the season when it's open. Nearly everyone surveyed (94%) said that the quality of the produce was very important in their decision to come to the farmers market. Slightly fewer (87%) said the selection of produce was very important, many (80%) said that supporting local farmers was a very important component, 64% said Food Stamp acceptance was very important, 74% said taking part in the community was very important and about half said that other activities and events at the market were important.

29% of respondents reported it difficult or very difficult to buy quality, fresh produce in their neighborhood, outside of the Greenmarket

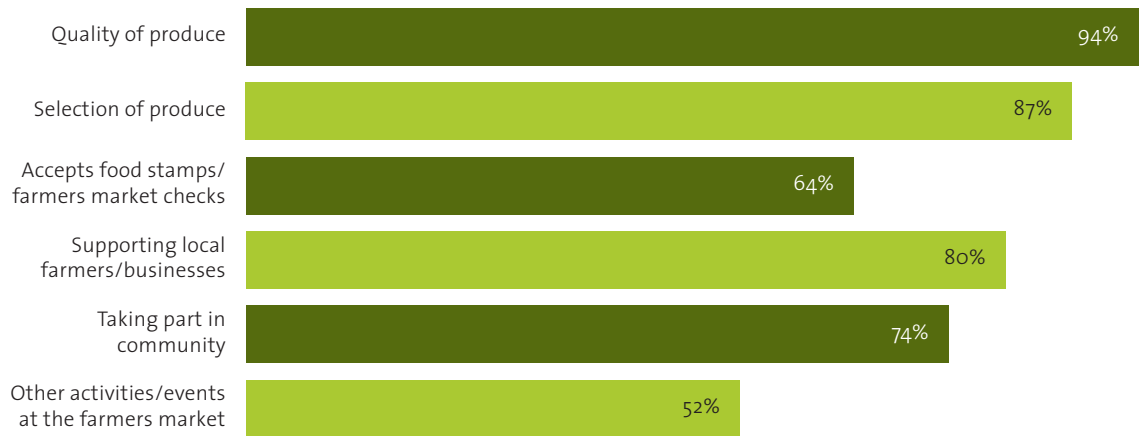


Nearly 80% of shoppers reported that their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables increased or increased greatly as a result of shopping at the farmers market



In terms of customer demographic, 84% of survey participants were female and 16% were male. On average, each household had 2.53 children (under 18 years old) and 2.31 adults. A quarter of respondents read *The New York Times*, followed by the *Daily News* (24%), *El Diario* (19%) and *El Especialito* (17%). Survey participants were from 92 zip codes with concentrations in the neighborhoods of Washington Heights in Manhattan, Fordham in the South Bronx and Borough Park in Brooklyn. In terms of language, 57% of participants took English language surveys, while 42% took Spanish surveys and 1% took the surveys in Chinese.

### Almost all shoppers reported the quality and selection of produce as very important in their decision to shop at the farmers market



Percentage of shoppers responding with a “very important” rating

## Conclusion

These results indicate that customers in these eight areas are generally very satisfied with the location of the farmers markets as well as the quality and selection of their produce. Most shoppers surveyed were aware that the markets accept federal benefits and were happy to spend some portion of their Food Stamps and WIC checks, as well as cash, at the farmers markets in order to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. The presence of the markets in the neighborhoods surveyed generally increased shoppers’ access to fresh produce, and certainly increased the quality and variety of fruits and vegetables available, leading customers to consume fresher, healthy foods. Additionally, the presence of the markets may increase spending and shopping in their neighborhoods, as many of the market shoppers planned to spend money elsewhere in the area. Overall, the results of the survey illustrate the markets are serving the needs of their communities quite well.

## Acknowledgements

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The GrowNYC Greenmarket program was founded in 1976 with a two-fold mission: to promote regional agriculture by providing small family farms the opportunity to sell their locally grown products directly to consumers, and to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the freshest, most nutritious locally grown food the region has to offer. For more information on GrowNYC and its programs visit [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org).

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