

# Access to Healthy/Quality Food in Utah

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## BACKGROUND

Access to healthy and affordable food remains a critical concern across Utah, as highlighted by the USU Extension 2023 Statewide Needs Assessment (Narine, 2023). This comprehensive evaluation identified food and nutrition security as one of the highest priority issues for Extension programming, based on residents' perceptions of where USU Extension efforts should be concentrated. Issues such as ensuring access to affordable healthy foods and addressing hunger were consistently ranked with high priority scores, indicating strong public demand for action in these areas.

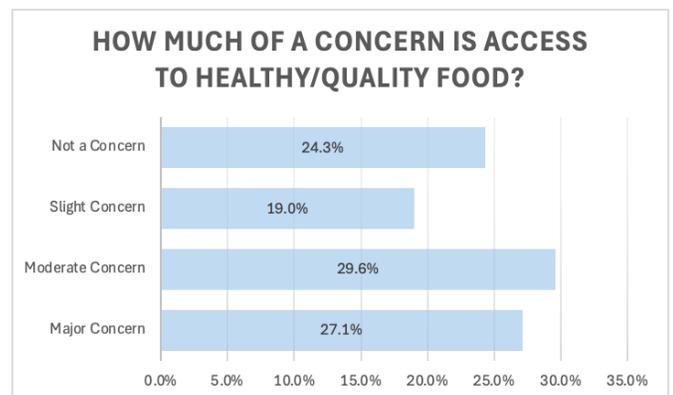
The needs assessment also identified gaps between current resources available on these issues and ideal conditions for the community. This model revealed significant discrepancies in areas directly tied to food security, including the availability of affordable food options, healthy food options, grocery stores accepting food stamps, and the presence of employment support services. These gaps suggest urgent needs that, if addressed, could substantially improve food access and overall well-being for Utah residents.

Further supporting these findings, data from Feeding America (2025) shows that 14.2% people in Utah are food insecure in 2023, a significant increase from 9.2% in 2021. Vulnerable populations, including children, single-parent households, seniors, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, are disproportionately affected.

Together, these insights form a compelling case for expanding efforts to improve food access and nutrition across Utah. This fact sheet explores the current landscape, identifies key challenges, and outlines strategic opportunities for USU Extension and its partners to enhance food security statewide.

***We asked Utahns “As you look to the future of your city, how much of a concern is access to Healthy/Quality Food?”***

The Utah Wellbeing Project (Flint, 2025) collected 13,942 responses to this question from individuals across 51 Utah cities in 2024. Response options were: “Not a concern”, “Slight concern”, “Moderate concern”, and “Major concern.” We found that **three in every four Utahns (75%) were at least slightly concerned, with over a quarter of Utahns (27%) stating that access to food was a “major” concern.** Factors such as income, race, age, having a chronic health condition or disability, and location were associated with levels of concern regarding access to food. Some participants also shared how food access affected their wellbeing in response to open-ended questions.



## INCOME

As income increased, Utahns were less likely to report access to food as a major concern. Among Utahns who reported making \$50,000 or less a year, 63% reported access to food as a moderate or major concern, compared to 56% of those who made over \$50,000 a year.

*“Lower food prices. We [can’t] even buy groceries without going broke.”*  
– Nephi Resident

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Utahns who identified as Pacific Islander (70%), Black (68%), Hispanic (67%), Middle Eastern or North African (65%), and Asian (65%) were all more likely to report access to food as a moderate or major concern compared to White Utahns (56%).

*“[I want more] access to culturally diverse foods and restaurants.... I would love to see an Asian supermarket open in Logan it would eliminate my needs to go elsewhere for ingredients and food.”*  
– Logan Resident

There were even bigger differences when we looked at racial and ethnic differences in concerns about accessing culturally relevant food. While only 24% of White Utahns reported that access to culturally relevant food was a moderate or major concern, 58% of Asian, 48% of Hispanic, 46% of Pacific Islander, and 41% of Middle Eastern or North African Utahns reported that access to culturally relevant food was a moderate or major concern.

## AGE

Accessing healthy or quality food remains an important concern for Utahns across the lifespan, however, we see a slight downward trend in concern as Utahns age. Specifically, of young adults (ages 18-29) 61% expressed that access to food was a moderate or major concern. We saw small gradual decreases as we looked at older groups, with 59% of adults ages 30-39, 57% of adults ages 40-49, 56% of adults ages 50-59, 55% of adults ages 60-69, and 53% of adults 70 years of age or older reporting food access as a moderate or major concern.

## DISABILITY OR CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION

Individuals with disabilities were more likely to be concerned about access to food, with 65% of individuals with a disability reporting it as a moderate or major concern, compared to 56% of those without a disability. There was a similar trend among individuals with chronic health conditions, with 63% of individuals with a chronic health condition reporting access to food as a moderate or major concern compared to 56% of individuals without a chronic health condition.

## LOCATION

Overall, those from rural cities were more likely to find accessing high quality food to be a concern, with 64% reporting it was a moderate or major concern compared to 55% from established cities and 53% from rapid growth cities. At the city level, there were much bigger differences, with the percentage of those who reported it was a moderate or major concern ranging from 31% to 85%.

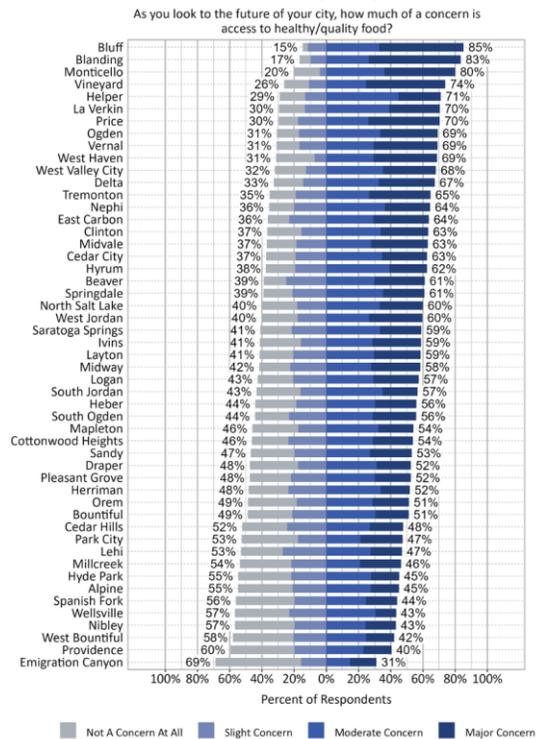
*“The grocery store prices are horrendous, and the food options are just as bad. We need to bring in another grocery store or find a solution to fix this problem. This isn’t a recent problem.... Most people in Blanding travel to other cities at least once a month to buy items in bulk because our grocery store is unreasonably expensive.” – Blanding Resident*

*“[We need to] lower the prices in the grocery stores. We are all struggling and having high prices and no options is despicable!” – Delta Resident*

*“Nutrition is a component of wellbeing. It starts with the kids who are not fed a nutritious meal at school. They say it is, go to the schools and eat lunch for a week. That’s a huge issue here and has been for years.” – Vernal Resident*

*“I wish there was somewhere to buy groceries” – Vineyard Resident*

Concern About Access to Healthy/Quality Food Across Utah (2024)

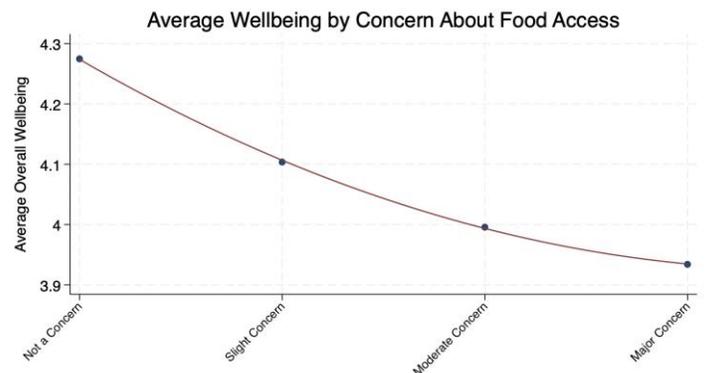


Note. This figure shows how concern about access to healthy/quality food varies across cities in Utah. The cities near the top reported the most concern about access to food, while the cities at the bottom reported less concern.

## CONCERN ABOUT FOOD AND INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Across our sample of nearly 14,000 Utahns, those who reported more concerns about accessing healthy/quality food reported slightly lower levels of overall wellbeing on average.

Increasing access to high quality, healthy foods may be one way to improve overall wellbeing among Utahns.



Note. This figure shows that the average individual wellbeing gradually decreased from 4.3/5 to 3.9/5 as Utahns reported more concern about food.

## CALL TO ACTION

Every Utahn, regardless of income, ZIP code, race, age, or health status, deserves reliable access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally meaningful food. Yet, too many communities across the state face persistent barriers that limit their ability to eat well and live healthy lives.

To build a more equitable and resilient food system, we urge local leaders, policymakers, community organizations, and residents to take bold, coordinated action:

- Expand and sustain local food systems by supporting farmers markets, community gardens, and small-scale producers that keep food dollars local and fresh food accessible.
- Invest in healthy food retail and mobile markets in underserved neighborhoods to close geographic and economic gaps in food access.
- Strengthen connections to existing resources, ensuring individuals and families can easily access food assistance, nutrition education, and support services.
- Support culturally relevant food initiatives that support community needs and traditions.
- Integrate food access with health promotion, linking nutrition education to chronic disease prevention and wellness programs.
- Prioritize funding and policy solutions that address food insecurity in rural areas and among historically underserved groups, ensuring no community is left behind.

## REFERENCES

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Narine, L. K. (2023). *2023 statewide needs assessment* [Report]. USU Extension. Power BI. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiZTZhZTEzNmQtN2RlZi00ZjBiLThtMTktM2YxMTc4ODRkMzM4IiwidCI6ImFjMzUyZjliLWVhbnJmNGNhMi05Y2Y5LWY0YzQwMDQ3Y2VmZiIsImMiOiZ9&pageName=ReportSectionc880f14f6d943b1f0e84>