

Food Councils and Federal Committees: Community Responses to Inaction on Food Insecurity by Government

PRESENTERS:

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Background:

- **Food insecurity:** a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food
 - geographically overlaps with: Poverty, BIPOC communities, and food deserts
- **Food deserts:** Area with a large proportion of low income households with inadequate access to transportation
 - few food retailers providing fresh produce and healthy groceries for affordable prices
- **Food Council:** a centralized organization focusing on coordinating charity and advocacy efforts in its area

Legal Framework:

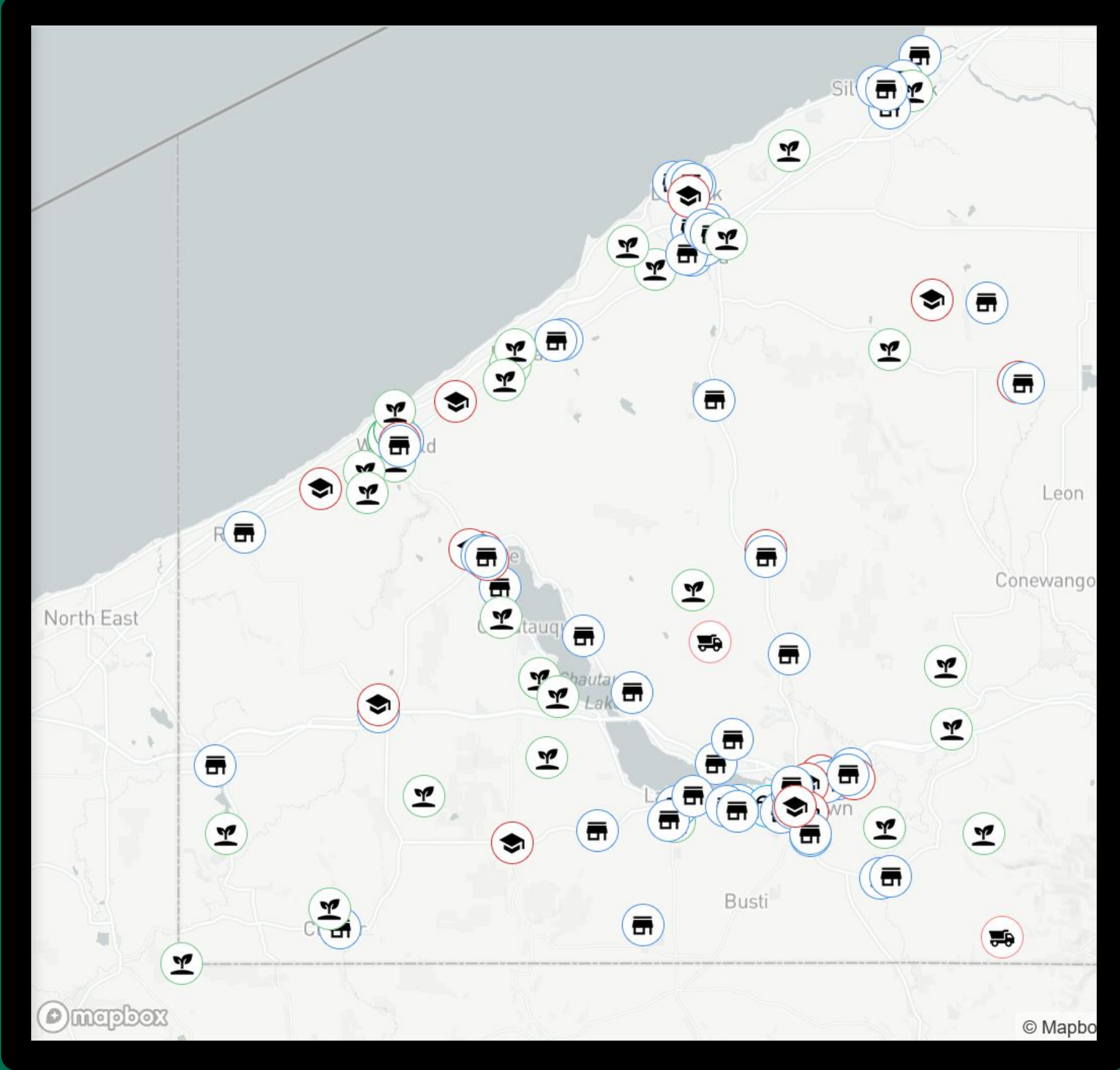
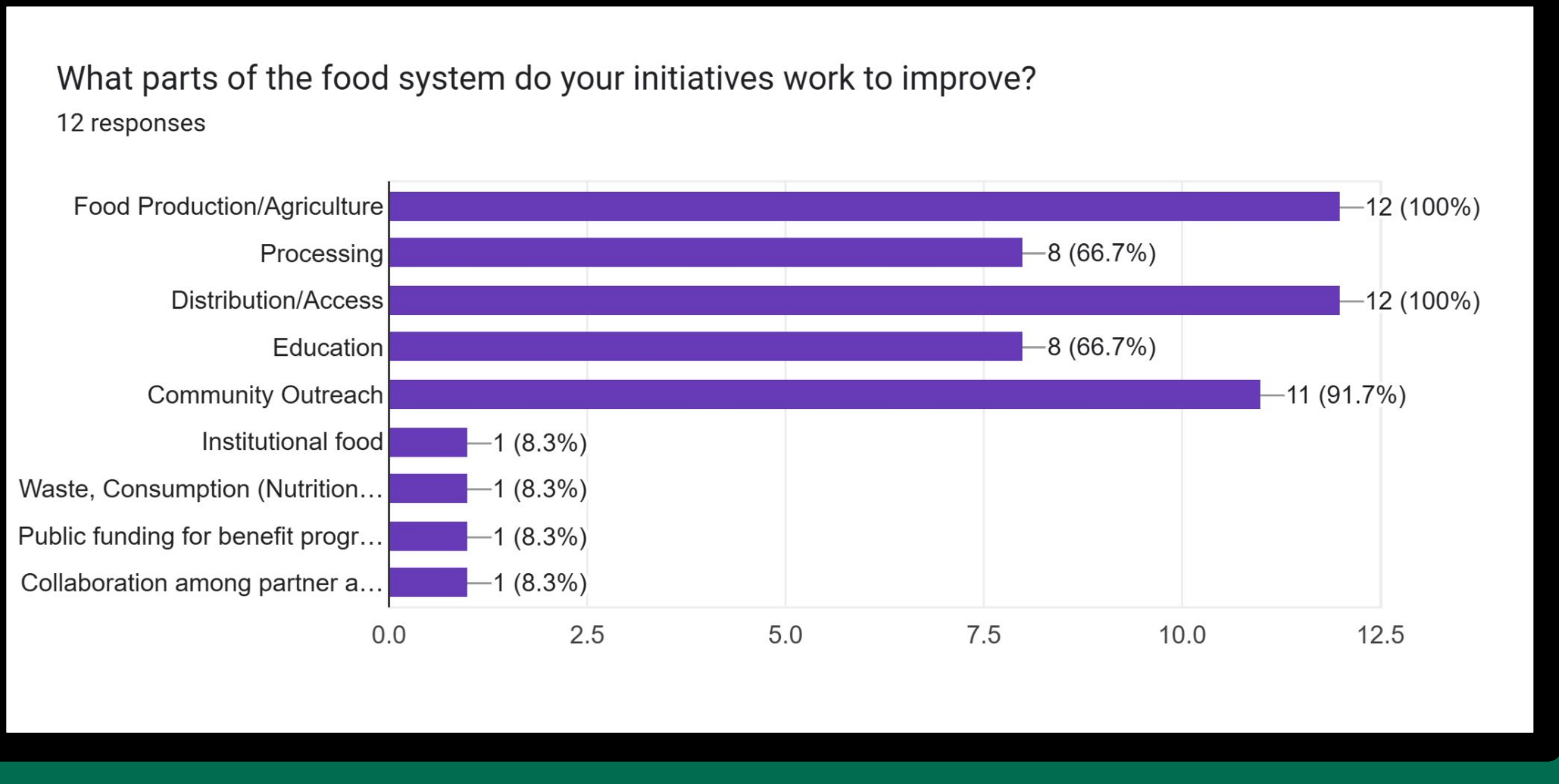
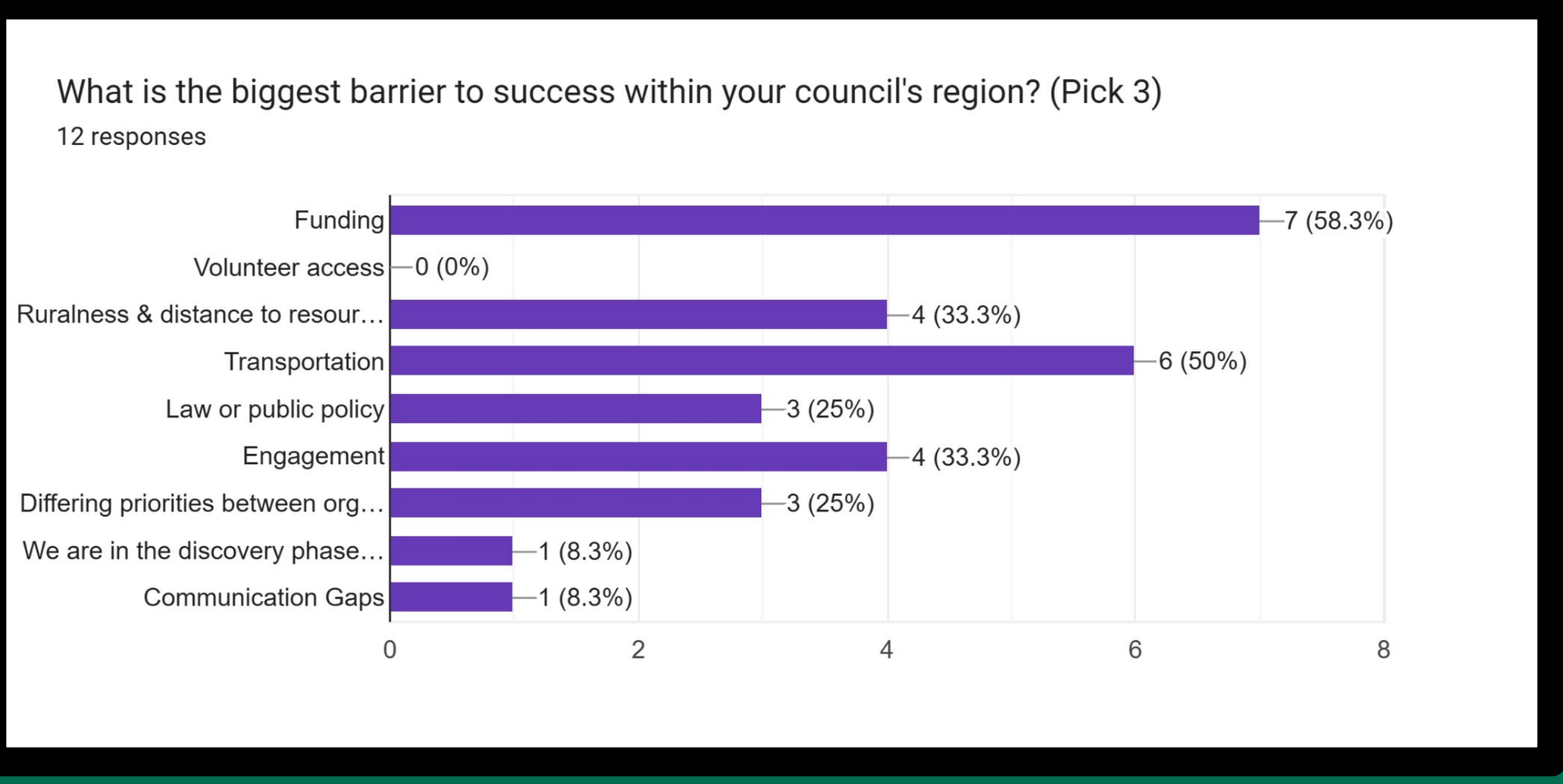
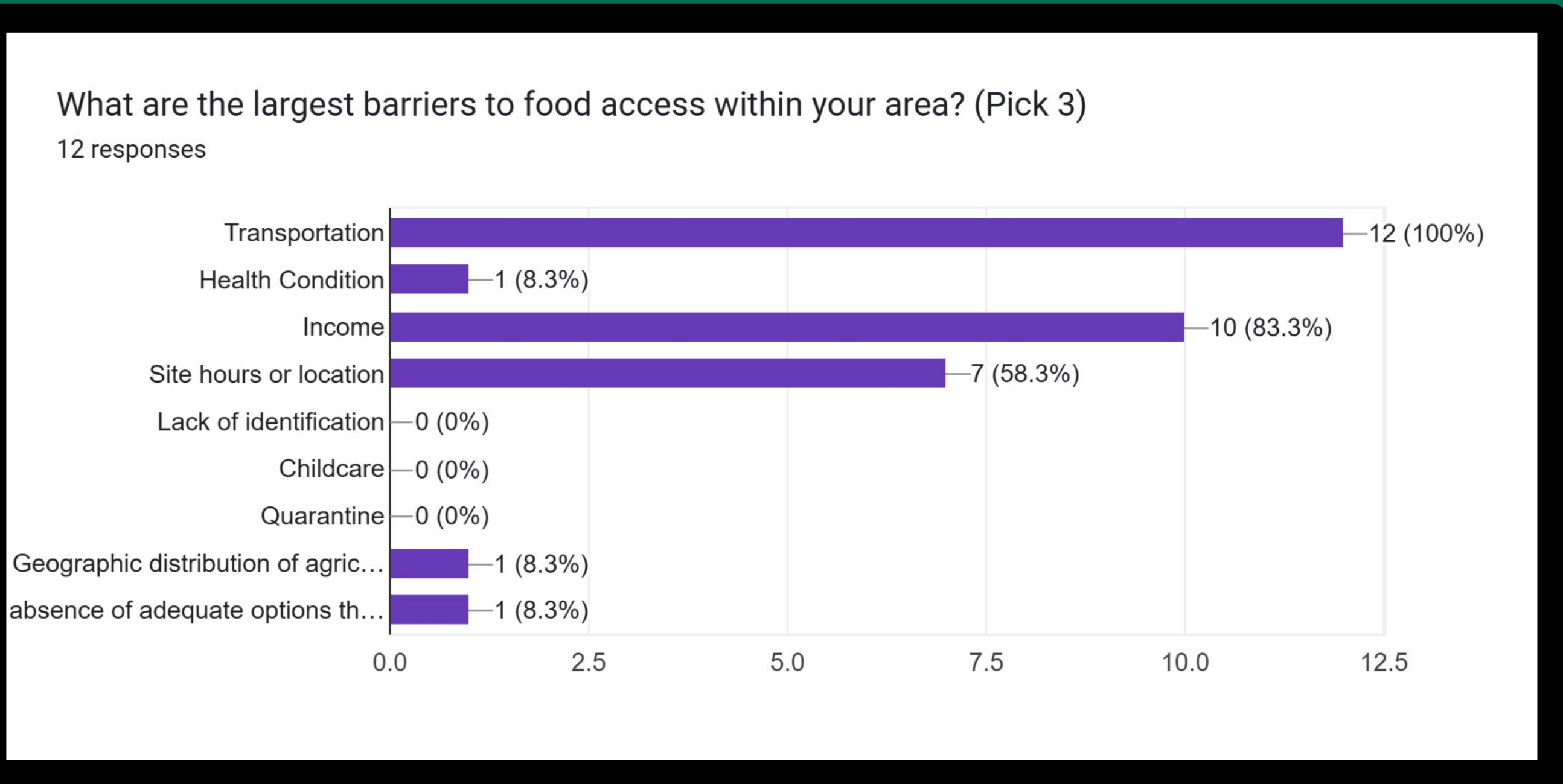
- The **U.S. government** is **not obligated** to **prevent hunger** by the Constitution or any other document
- **International agreements** like the **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** and the **Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger** require countries to work to eliminate hunger, but they are **unenforceable**
- **Race** and **hunger** are **linked**, and **racist language** in the food system operates through forces such as **anti-competitive covenants** and **infrastructural exclusion**, which civil rights law **fails to regulate**
- Despite it being a prominent issue in the U.S., **government solutions** like the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** have been insufficient

Question:

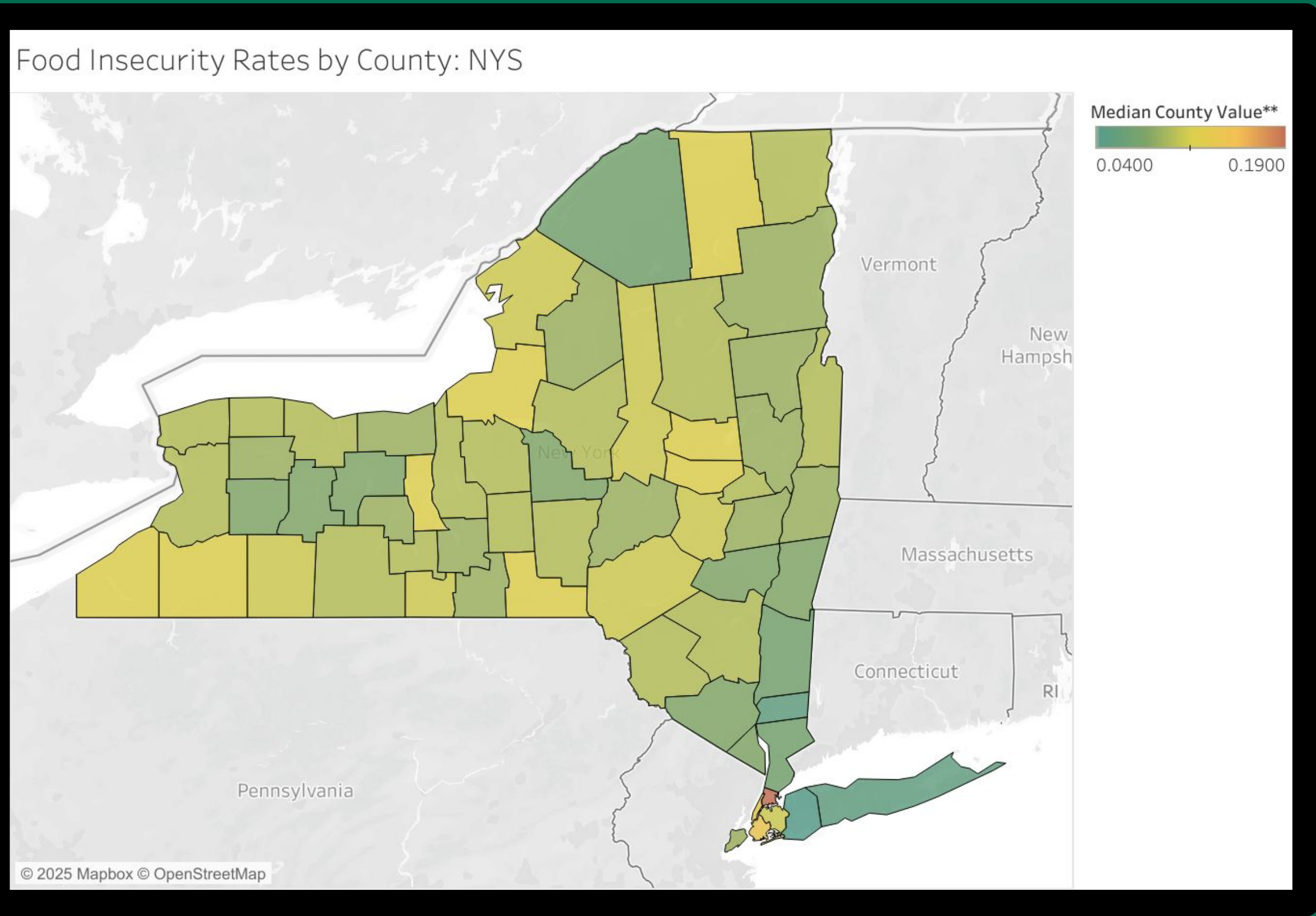
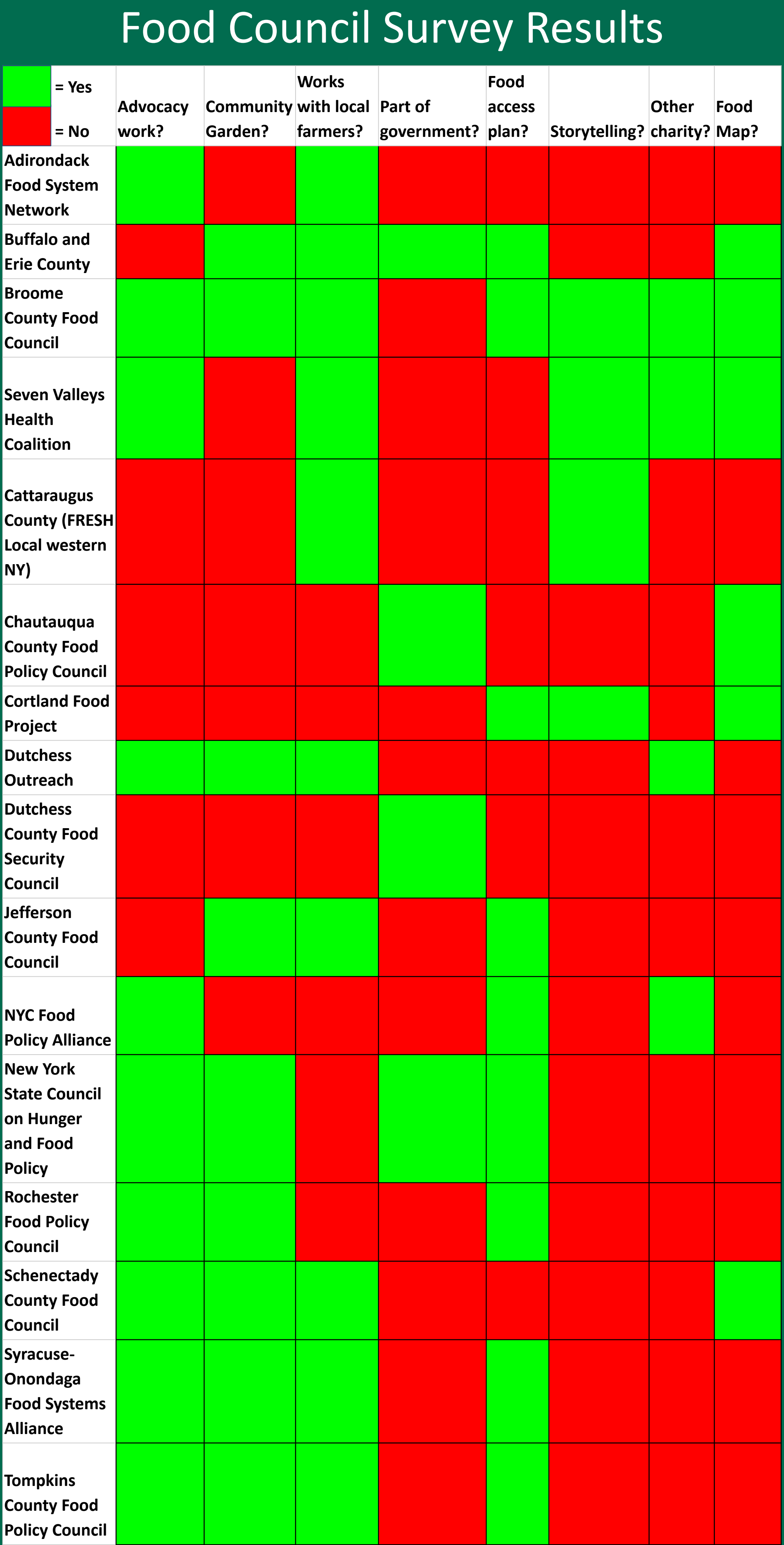
- How can communities and local governments work together to reduce the impacts of food insecurity?

Methodology:

- Crafted a **survey** that was sent to various food council organizations across New York State, assisted by **food council** and **data science experts**
 - conducted **cross comparison** of food council initiatives and priorities
- **Goal:** to **hear directly** from food councils the **problems** they face within their **organizations** and **communities**



Chautauque County Food System Map
Food system maps commonly display locations where individuals can acquire groceries from community sources. This map of Chautauque County highlights grocery stores, farmers markets, schools, and farms



Food Insecurity Rates by County: NYS

Graph Summary

- **Advocacy**
 - Food councils do **advocacy for:** expansions to **nutritional programs**, emergency **feeding programs**, and **sustainability**
 - Rural food councils advocate more for farmers
- **Local farmers**
 - Assisting local farmers includes: **promoting farmers’ markets**, **financial support**, and **education**
- **Part of government**
 - Government-run food councils tend to lack initiatives of non-government run food councils
- **Food access plans**
 - ~½ of food councils had food access plans
 - **food access plans develop the food system** and its many branches
- **Food maps**
 - Food maps commonly display: **farmers markets**, food charities, **food banks**, grocery stores, soup kitchen, **farms**, etc
- **Food council survey responses**
 - **Transportation** contributes **greatly** to **food accessibility**, as do **income** and **site hours**
 - **Funding** is a **common issue** for food council success, as well as **transportation**
 - Issues are specific to region
 - **ruralness and distance** to food resources **harms food council success**

Implications

The problem of **food deserts** is demonstrated by **transportation** being one of the **largest barriers to access** food. This poses a difficult problem for communities to fix. Simultaneously, **government-run** food councils show themselves to have **different priorities** than traditional ones, focusing more on **policy** than **charity** or **advocacy**. If their policy is focused on **urban redevelopment**, government and food councils could **work in tandem** to attack **multiple aspects** of hunger

Another large focus for food councils is **advocacy**. However, many food councils do not focus on **education** as much as **other areas** of the food system, and very **few** employed **storytelling**. Relocating resources to these areas could fix the commonly cited problem of **engagement**, increasing **community awareness** of food insecurity, encouraging more **donations**, and giving a **spotlight** to **advocacy efforts**