

COVID-19 FOOD NEEDS IN TRAVIS COUNTY 2-1-1 CALL ANALYSIS SUMMARY REPORT

MAY 2020

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INTRODUCTION AND FINDINGS

Introduction

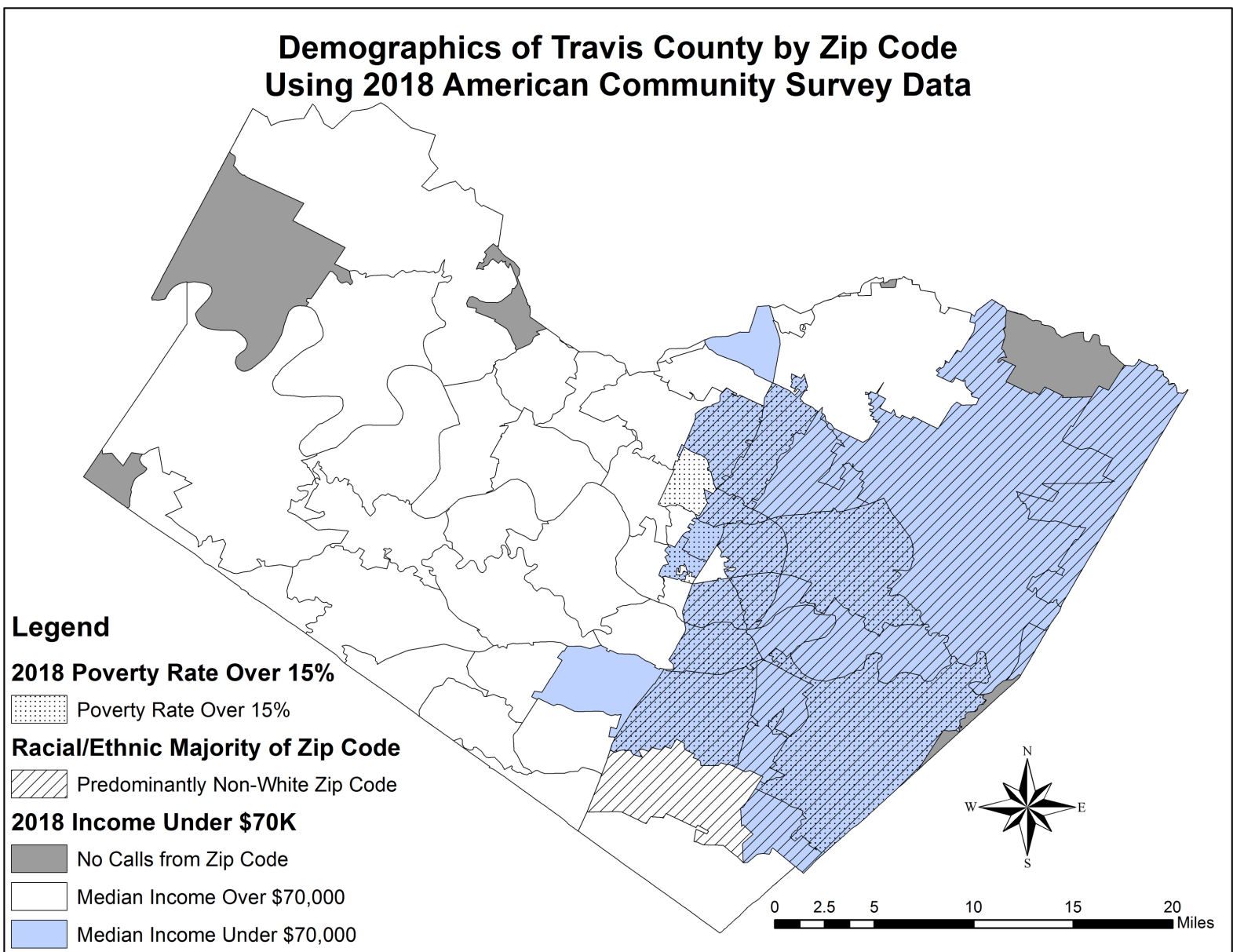
In early April 2020, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability reached out to Dell Medical School and UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin for assistance in identifying areas where there are unmet food needs in Austin pertaining to COVID-19. The team from the UTHealth School of Public Health analyzed 2-1-1 call data from January-April 2019 and January-April 2020 and performed geospatial analyses with 2-1-1 call data and access to food need assets to identify areas with unmet food needs related to COVID-19 in Travis County that was presented in previous reports. This work expands on that report and analyzes May 2020 data. Through these analyses we were able to gain greater understanding of food needs among 2-1-1 callers from Travis County as well as identify areas with high volume and percentage of food need calls with limited access to food assets.

Demographics of Callers

According to the 2019 2-1-1 Trends Report from the United Way for Greater Austin, a typical caller to 2-1-1 are single mothers who are having issues with economic and food insecurity factors. The findings of from our 2020 analysis validated these findings, in that callers to 2-1-1 are most commonly women, primarily speak English or Spanish, and have called 2-1-1 previously (but there was an increase in first time users in April 2020). There is higher call volume to 2-1-1 in the Eastern Crescent of Travis County. Many of the zip codes that make up the Eastern Crescent of Travis County have higher poverty rates, have a lower median income, and are predominantly racial/ethnic minority, according to 2018 American Community Survey data as shown in **Figure 1**.

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Figure 1: Demographics of Travis County by Zip Code Using 2018 American Community Survey Data



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Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Call Trends

In order to contextualize the seasonality and trends of 2-1-1 call data, we compared January-May 2019 call data to January-May 2020 call data. Typically call volume is highest in January, then declines monthly through March and then increases slightly in April and declines slightly in May, as evident in the 2019 data. However, the following occurred in May 2020:

- Increased overall call volume in May 2020 than in 2019 (7141 vs. 5487 calls).
- There was over double the food need call volume in May* 2020 than in 2019 (2846 vs. 1319 calls).
 - *Note: the primary driver for this increase in food need calls in May 2020 were SNAP-related transfer, information and referral calls to 2-1-1 which were then transferred to Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC).
- There was a decline in overall and food need call volume from April (9498 calls and 4123 food calls) to May 2020 (7141 calls and 2846 food calls).
- The majority of calls to 2-1-1 in May 2020 were regarding health/mental health, food, and housing issues, which was also the case in March and April 2020.

When analyzing by week as seen in **Figure 2** of note:

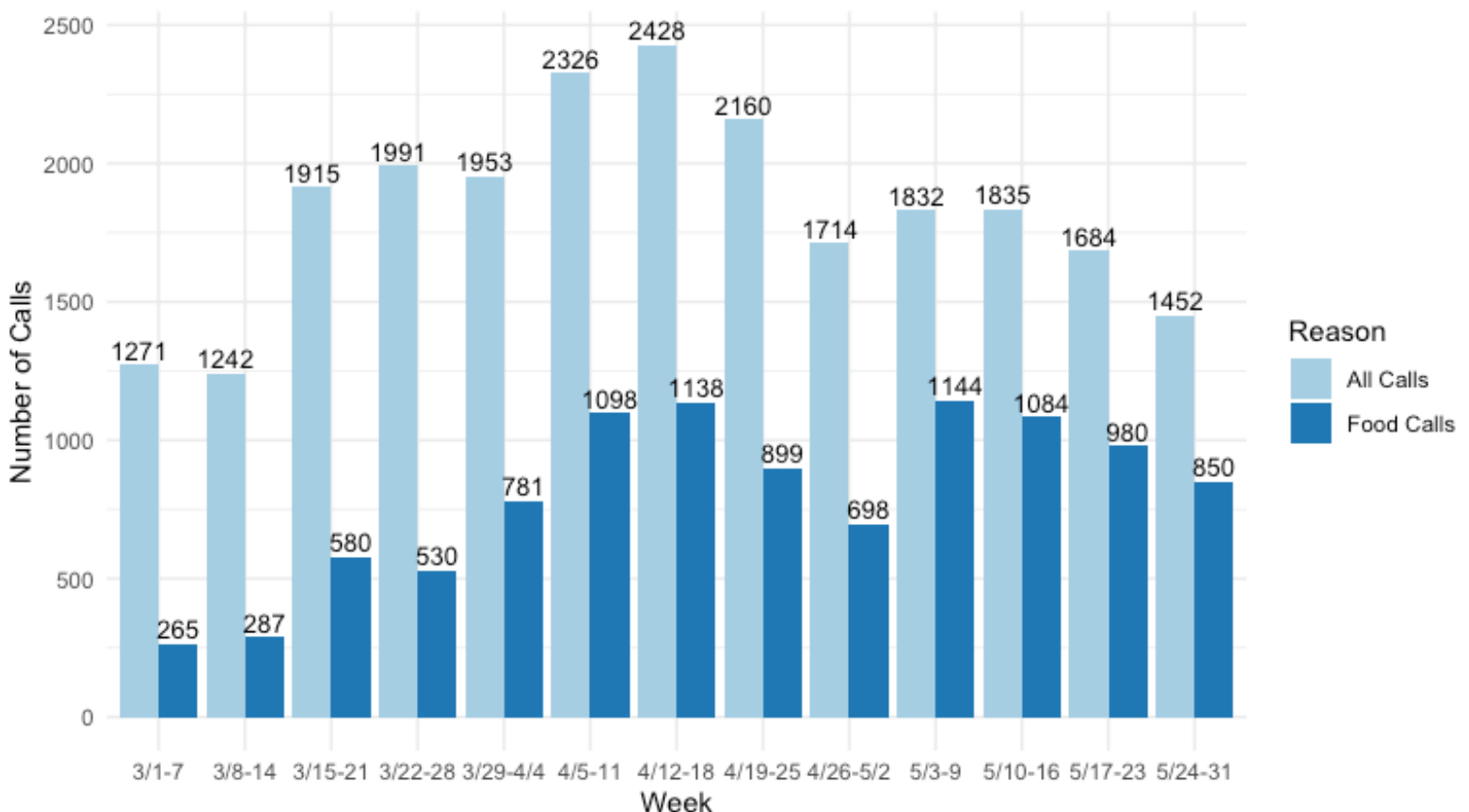
- For a detailed discussion of the call trends for March and April 2020, please see the previously developed March/April Report.
- While overall and food need calls to 2-1-1 were declining week to week in April, they increased during the first full two weeks of May (May 3-9, and May 10-16)
 - The increase for overall and food need call volume these two weeks was likely due to the announcement of Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) in early May

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Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Call Trends Continued

- As previously stated, the main drivers for this call increase were due to the high volume of calls to 2-1-1 that were transferred to HHSC on SNAP.
- Call volume declined during the two remaining weeks of May, however further analysis of June data would be helpful to identify trends as cases of COVID-19 increased in the Travis County area

Figure 2: Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Calls in Travis County from March-May 2020 by Week



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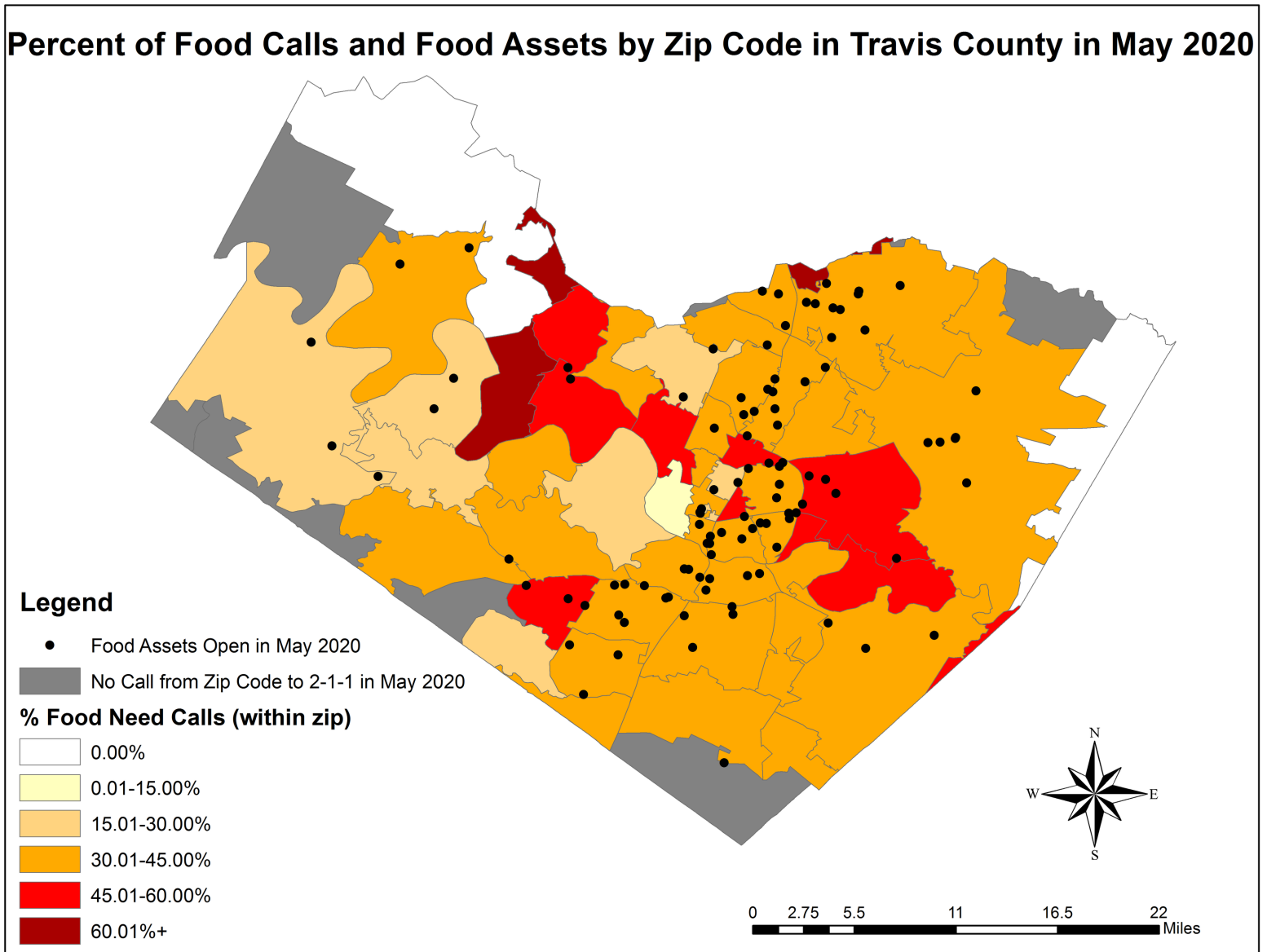
Spatial Examination of Food Need 2-1-1 Calls–May 2020

Spatial analysis of the 2-1-1 overall and food call data for Travis County required translating the 2-1-1 call data from May 2020 to be mapped by zip code and including locations of COVID-19 food assets that were listed on ConnectATX.org that were located in Travis County and open during the respective months. With this analysis there were several key trends:

- The majority of callers to 2-1-1 (overall and for food needs) were from zip codes located in the Eastern Crescent of Travis County.
- Areas with the highest proportion of their calls regarding food needs in May and locations of COVID-19 food assets are shown in **Figure 3**.
- Almost identical to April 2020, over 30% of the calls to 2-1-1 were regarding food needs in nearly 80% of the zip codes in Travis County with calls to 2-1-1 in May 2020.
- However, more zip codes in April 2020 had over 45% of the calls to 2-1-1 regarding food needs than in May 2020.
- There were more COVID-19 food assets in May than in April 2020 because several of the sites that had previously closed developed strategies and systems to ensure safety for their employees and clients (such as having sufficient PPE, adapting to drive thru or curbside strategies, etc.). Future analysis of June and subsequent months will provide greater insight since some of these locations have since opened back up.
- There are pockets in western and eastern Travis County that do not have COVID-19 food assets located within the zip code. These pockets located within the Eastern Crescent are particularly alarming given the high call volume to 2-1-1 and the historically underserved communities in these areas.

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Figure 3: Percent of Food Need Calls to 2-1-1 by Zip Code and COVID-19 Food Needs Assets in Travis County in May 2020



CONCLUSION

Conclusion and Recommendations

Given our analysis, zip codes with potential unmet food needs have been identified. There are a couple of key zip codes of interest as areas with unmet food needs, specifically: 78754 and 78747. Both of these zip codes are located in the Eastern Crescent and are zip codes that had a high overall and food need call volume to 2-1-1 in March, April, and May 2020. Additionally, there are COVID-19 food assets only located in neighboring and not within the zip code as of May 2020. While there are other zip codes with a high proportion of food needs calls within zip code outside of the Eastern Crescent of Travis County, these areas have a relatively small total call volume, thus future analysis should be conducted to further examine these trends. Furthermore, the greatest call volume of food needs calls to 2-1-1 exists in other zip codes in the Eastern Crescent that do have food needs assets located within the zip code. These resources should not be shifted or removed given the high need in these areas. Continued analysis of 2-1-1 call data in June and July 2020 can be particularly help further identify call trends and areas with unmet food needs given the rise of COVID-19 cases in Travis County during that time.

**For Additional Questions, Please Contact Kathryn Janda at
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