

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

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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-August, and October 2019 and 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 those reports and analyzes November 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.

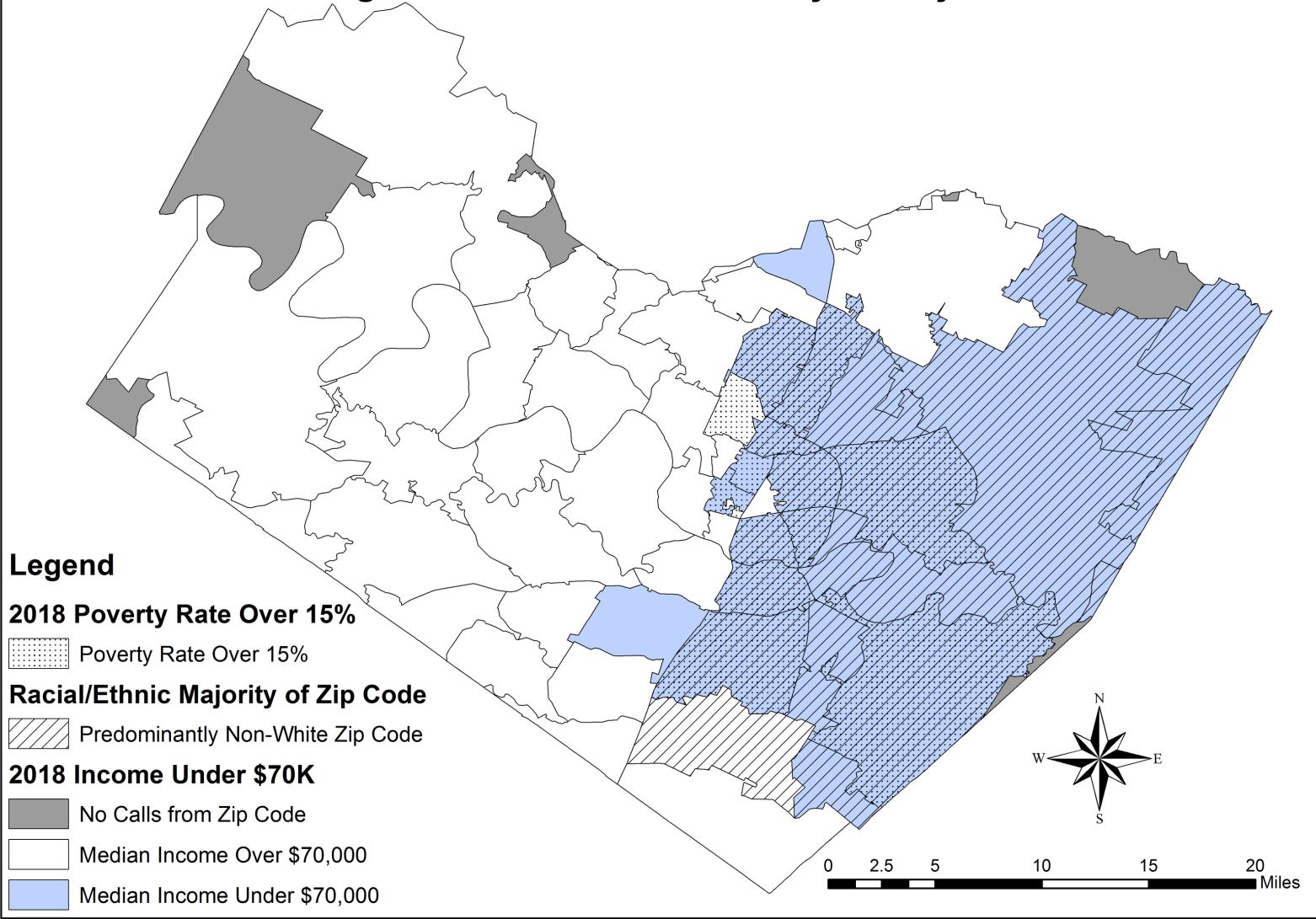
## Demographics of Callers

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**.

# FINDINGS

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

## Demographics of Travis County by Zip Code Using 2018 American Community Survey Data



# FINDINGS

## 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-August and October-November 2019 to January-August and October-November 2020 call data. Typically call volume is high in January, then fluctuates to peak in July and decreases through November, as evident in the 2019 data. However, the following occurred in November 2020:

- Increased overall call volume in November 2020 than in 2019 (6307 vs. 5553 calls).
- There was a decrease in overall call volume from October (6588 calls) to November 2020 (6307).
- There was over 1.6 times the food need call volume in November 2020 than in 2019 (2435 vs. 1513 calls).
- There was a decline in food need call volume from October (2751 food calls) to November 2020 (2435 food calls), however this is still consistently higher food need call volume than we have seen all summer.
- The majority of calls to 2-1-1 in November 2020 were regarding food, housing, and health/mental health issues, which was also the case in all previous reports.
- Connectatx.org had more overall (2,244) and food specific (45%) page visits in November 2020 than in October 2020.

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

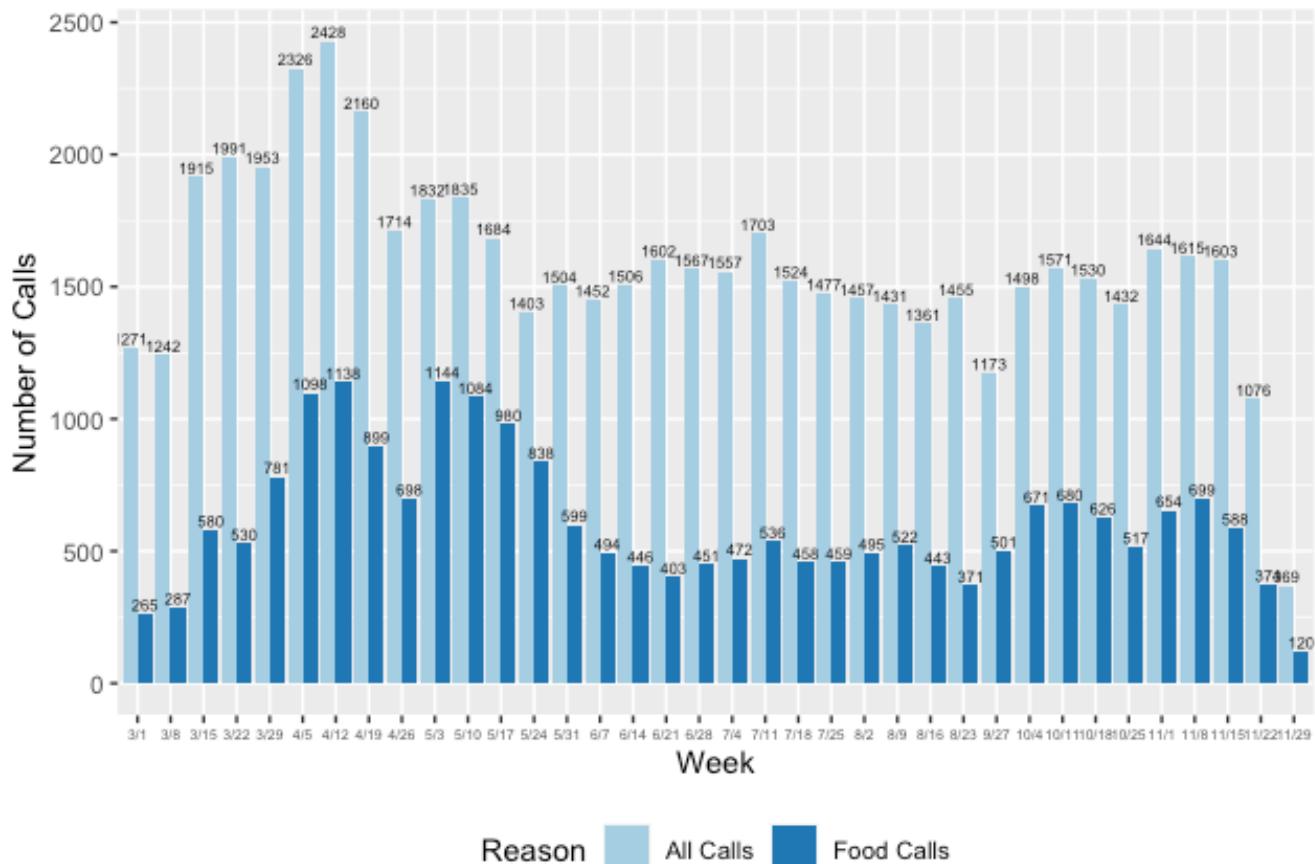
- For a detailed discussion of the call trends for March-October 2020, please see the previously developed reports.
- Overall call volume remained high during the first three weeks of November, with numbers similar to what was seen in June and July 2020.
- Food need call volume was also consistently high during the first three weeks of November, which is consistent with October 2020 and the highest we have seen since late May.

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

- While it appears that call volume decreased the week of Thanksgiving, and dramatically decreased the week of 11/29, that is because that week was two days.
- Overall and food need call volume throughout November, are still higher than they were in early March, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Additional analysis of call data could help shed light on how food needs are being experienced by Travis County residents during the continued COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2: Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Calls in Travis County from March-August, October and November 2020 by Week



# FINDINGS

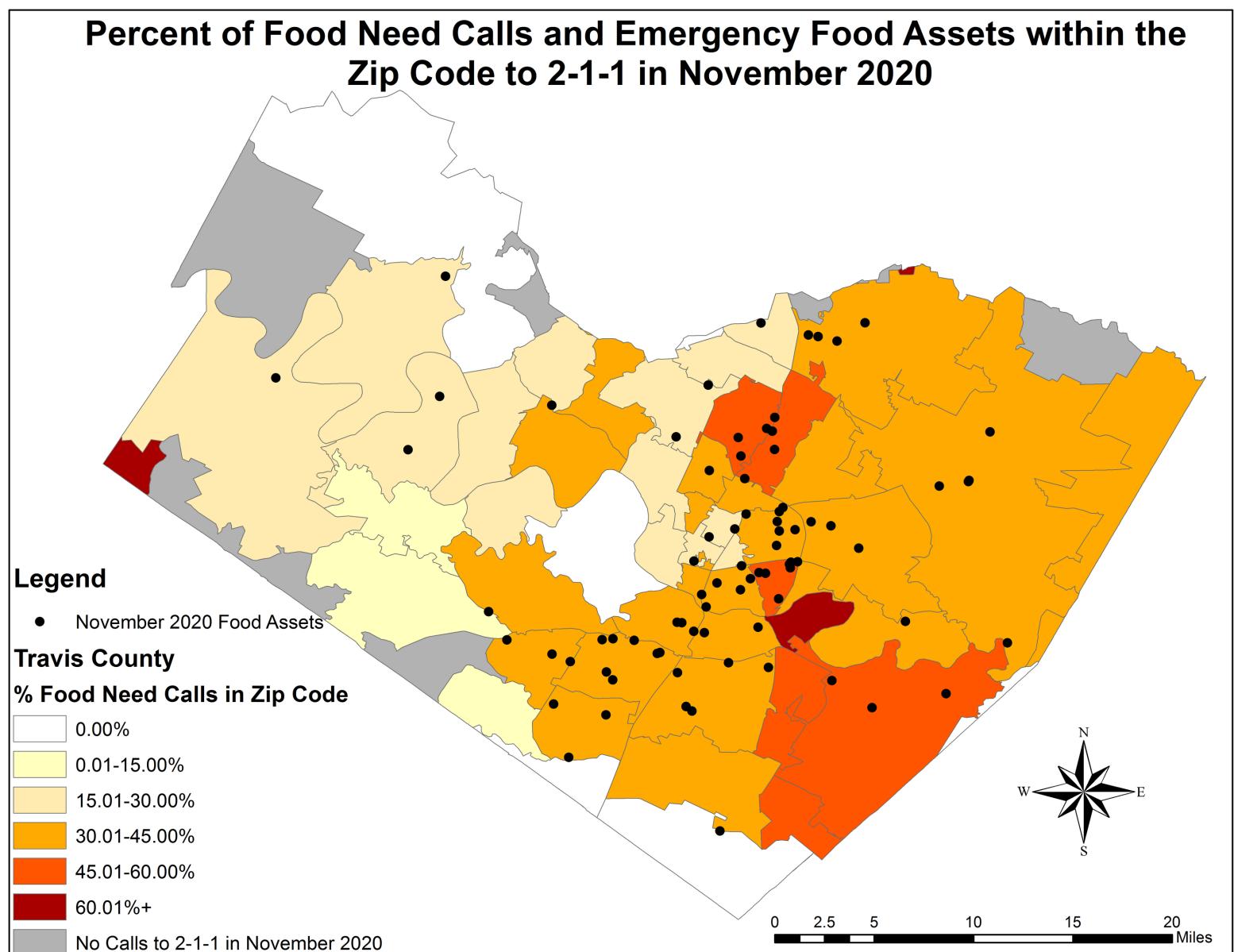
## Spatial Examination of Food Need 2-1-1 Calls - November 2020

Spatial analysis of the 2-1-1 overall and food call data for Travis County required translating the 2-1-1 call data from November 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 month. 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 November and locations of COVID-19 food assets are shown in **Figure 3**.
- There same number of zip codes from Travis County had residents who called 2-1-1 in October and November 2020.
- There was an decrease in the number of zip codes that had over 30% of the calls to 2-1-1 were regarding food needs in from October (68.3%) to November (54.4%), however that is still more than August (54.1%) 2020.
- There are pockets throughout 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.
- The high number of zip codes that had over 30% of the calls to 2-1-1 regarding food needs demonstrates that food needs are still a consistent issue for Travis County residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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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 November 2020



# CONCLUSION

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Given our analysis, zip codes with potential unmet food needs have been identified. Consistent with the previous reports, there are a couple of key zip codes of interest as areas with unmet food needs, specifically: 78754 and potentially 78617. Zip code 78754 is located in the Eastern Crescent and had one of the top 20 highest overall and food need call volume to 2-1-1 from March through August and October and November 2020, and there are COVID-19 food assets only located in neighboring and not within the zip code as of October 2020. Also, while there are a couple of emergency food assets that were open in the 78617 zip code, due to their high food need call volume, and the consistently high proportion of food need calls in October and November 2020, future analysis and work should be conducted to determine if this region needs additional emergency food resources in order to meet unmet food needs. Additionally, due to the increase in the proportion of food need calls, zip codes that consistently have high proportion of food need calls and high food call volume should be closely monitored in future analyses.

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 fall 2020 can help further identify call trends and areas with unmet food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**For Additional Questions, Please Contact Kathryn Janda at  
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