

Recommendations

We recommend that Bucks County stakeholders consider expanding food assistance services by **creating or expanding on an existing food pantry in the Bensalem/Bristol area of Lower Bucks**. This region of Bucks County has the highest proportion and greatest absolute number of individuals estimated to be food insecure, but has relatively few food assistance resources.

A food pantry, as compared to many other types of food assistance services, comprehensively addresses many food access barriers—e.g., cost, eligibility, hours of operation—while offering opportunities to integrate additional services (e.g., prepared meals, benefits enrollment, and nutrition education classes) that support the related needs of food insecure clients. A food pantry/soup kitchen could operate at a stand-alone site, or could potentially be co-located within an existing building and operate during off-hours.

Key Considerations:

- **Census tracts 100303 and 100307** both have high numbers and high percentages of residents who are estimated to be low income and have low food access. Neither of these tracts has many existing food assistance service providers; 100307 only has a single summer food service program. Both tracts fall within Lower Bucks (near Bensalem/Bristol), which was the Bucks County sub-region identified most frequently as in-need of food assistance resources in analyses of Household Health Survey (HHS) data.
- **Physical access** – will the site(s) be located in a population-dense area that is accessible by multiple modes of transit, including public transit?
- **Temporal access** – will the site(s) provide food throughout the whole year (vs. summer food service programs, which only operate for a portion of the year) and on those days and during those hours that maximize access for individuals in need? An ideal expansion site may offer services outside of traditional 8am-6pm weekday work hours, and may also offer services on Saturday and/or Sunday.
- **Financial access** – will the site(s) provide food at no cost? How much food will be available at no cost? How often will clients be able to receive food? Will an expansion site offer food for sale at a reduced cost (compared to standard retail prices)?
- **Food quality** – what types of food will the site(s) offer? How will this relate to different funding streams (e.g., many federal dollars for food assistance require adherence to USDA nutrition standards). How will site facilities—un-refrigerated and refrigerated square footage, kitchen facilities, etc.—influence food offerings?
- **Other access barriers** – how will the site(s) address other potential food assistance barriers, such as age eligibility (e.g., Meals on Wheels), registration requirements and income verification protocols, and non-tangible characteristics such as religious affiliation (if sited at a place of worship) or non-professionalism (e.g., if volunteer operated).
- **Service integration opportunities** – how will the site(s) use provision of food assistance services to build relationships with clients and provide or connect to other needed services, such as enrollment in social services programs, employment training and support, housing, health care, etc.

Methods

Objective: Estimate the number of individuals in need of additional food assistance resources in each Census tract in Bucks County to inform planning efforts.

Data sources: Calculations relied on two primary data sources:

- 1) 2015 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) projections of food insecurity at the Census tract level; and
- 2) A listing of existing food assistance resources in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which was compiled by R&E Group staff in collaboration with stakeholders from St. Mary's Medical Center, Bucks County Opportunity Council, and the United Way of Bucks County.

Approach: Using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, R&E Group calculated buffers (using radii of .5, 1, and 2 miles) around each food assistance site to estimate each site's service area. These buffers were then used to calculate the percentage of each Census tract's total area that was *not* served by a food assistance resource. The resulting percentage was multiplied by that Census tract's estimated population of individuals with low income and low access to food resources (derived from USDA's [2015 Food Access Research Atlas](#)). Recommendations highlight those tracts with significant populations not served by existing food assistance resources.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations to our approach, including:

1. The percentage of the population is calculated using a spatial analysis method that assumes population density is homogenous within each Census tract. In reality, population densities likely vary significantly within Census tracts. Assuming that food assistance sites are located in relatively population-dense areas, we might expect these estimates to over-predict the numbers of residents who are in need of but do not have access to food assistance resources.
2. There are no variables to account for the quality of food, amount of food, frequency of food receipt, seasonality (e.g., summer food service sites are only available during the summer), price of food (e.g., meals on wheels sites typically charge a per-meal fee), nor other important factors (e.g., age or income restrictions, registration requirements, religious affiliations).
3. Sites outside of Bucks County that provide services to Bucks County residents are not reflected in these analyses. Similarly, sites that deliver food (e.g., Meals on Wheels, Jewish Relief Agency) are treated as though their service areas are the same as those of sites that only provide on-site services. The impact of food delivery services is likely underrepresented in these analyses.

Data Tables

Table 1. Estimated Number of Bucks County Residents In Need of but without Access to Food Assistance Resources

	Number of Sites	.5 Miles (%)	1 Mile (%)	2 Miles (%)
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program	22	63,397 (10.1)	60,466 (9.7)	52,413 (8.4)
Food Pantry	51	59,276 (9.5)	49,712 (8.0)	36,080 (5.8)
Free Shared Meals	27	60,783 (9.7)	54,248 (8.7)	45,081 (7.2)
Meals on Wheels	8	63,724 (10.2)	61,442 (9.8)	52,246 (8.4)
Senior Center Meals	11	62,842 (10.1)	58,225 (9.3)	45,294 (7.2)
SNAP Farmers' Market	10	63,845 (10.2)	61,727 (9.9)	56,980 (9.1)
Summer Food Service	34	57,735 (9.2)	49,523 (7.9)	43,390 (6.9)
WIC	49	60,153 (9.6)	48,785 (7.8)	32,940 (5.3)

Table 2. Priority Census Tracts and Municipalities for Additional Food Assistance Resources

	Priority Census Tracts	Corresponding Municipalities
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program	1400000US42017100307 1400000US42017100402 1400000US42017105805 1400000US42017100303 1400000US42017106500	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield
Food Pantry	1400000US42017100307 1400000US42017100402 1400000US42017105805 1400000US42017100303 1400000US42017106500	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield
Free Shared Meals	1400000US42017100307 1400000US42017100402 1400000US42017105805 1400000US42017100303 1400000US42017106500	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield
Meals on Wheels	1400000US42017100307 1400000US42017100402 1400000US42017105805 1400000US42017100303 1400000US42017106500	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield

	Priority Census Tracts	Corresponding Municipalities
Senior Center Meals	1400000US42017100307	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield
	1400000US42017100402	
	1400000US42017105805	
	1400000US42017100303	
	1400000US42017106500	
SNAP Farmers' Market	1400000US42017100307	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield
	1400000US42017100402	
	1400000US42017105805	
	1400000US42017100303	
	1400000US42017106500	
Summer Food Service	1400000US42017100307	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown, Haycock, Milford, Quakertown, Richland, Richlandtown, Springfield
	1400000US42017100402	
	1400000US42017105805	
	1400000US42017100303	
	1400000US42017106500	
WIC	1400000US42017100307	Bensalem, Bristol, Falls, Morrisville, Tullytown
	1400000US42017100303	
	1400000US42017105805	
	1400000US42017100402	
	1400000US42017100302	

Appendices

The appendices below provide geographic representations at the Bucks County sub-region level of Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey (HHS) variables related to food insecurity:

- % of residents who cut meal sizes or skipped meals in the last year due to money;
- % of residents who had difficulty finding fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood;
- % of households receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI);
- % of households receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- % of households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits;
- % of households receiving Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits;
- % of residents whose neighborhood groceries are of fair or poor quality; and
- % of older adults who used meal/food programs in the past year.

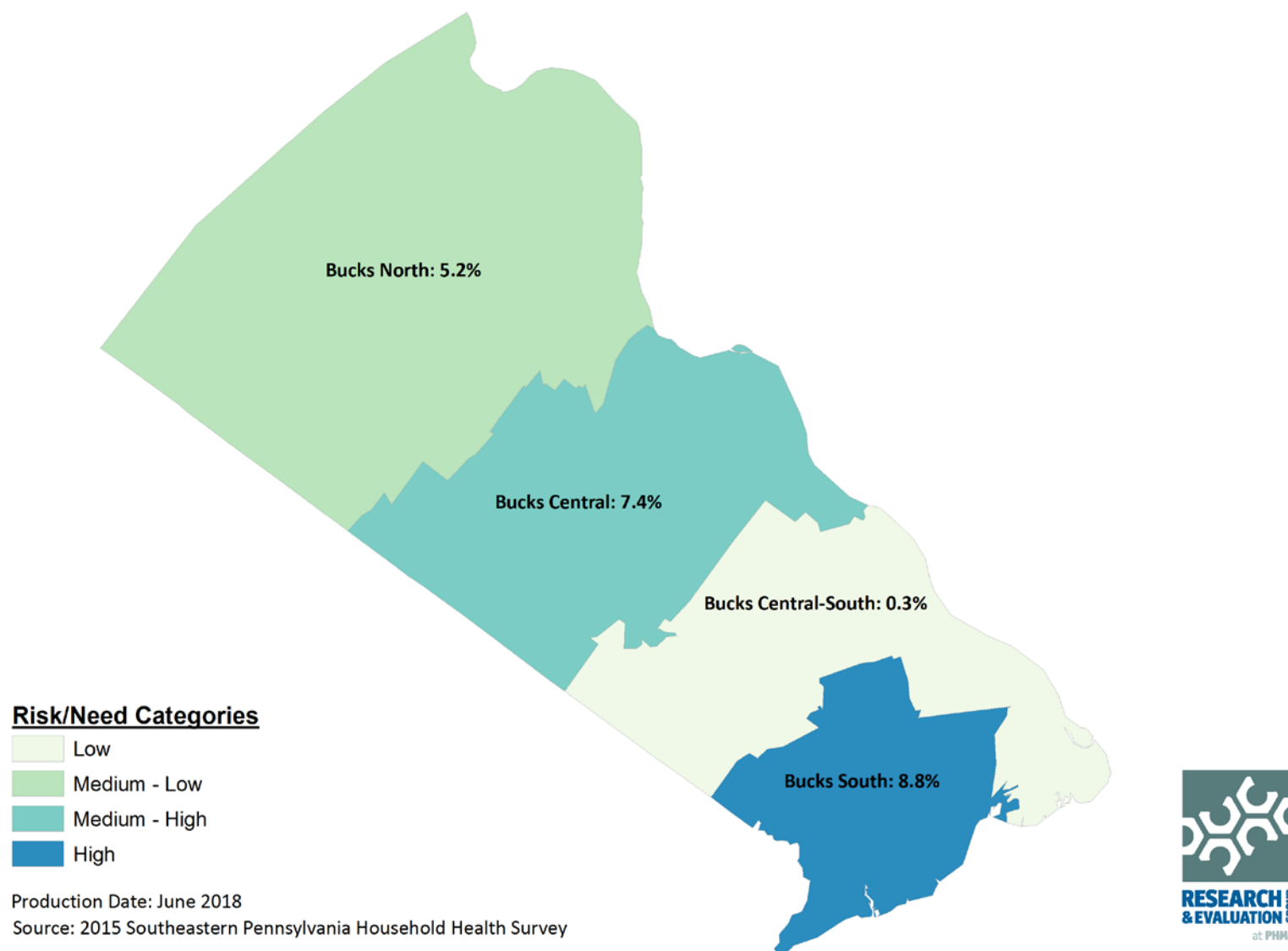
The last map visualizes both the percent and number of Bucks County residents at the Census tract level who were estimated to have low incomes and low levels of food access (i.e., are likely to face issues of food insecurity) according to the USDA's 2015 Food Access Research Atlas.

2018 Bucks County Food Assistance Assessment

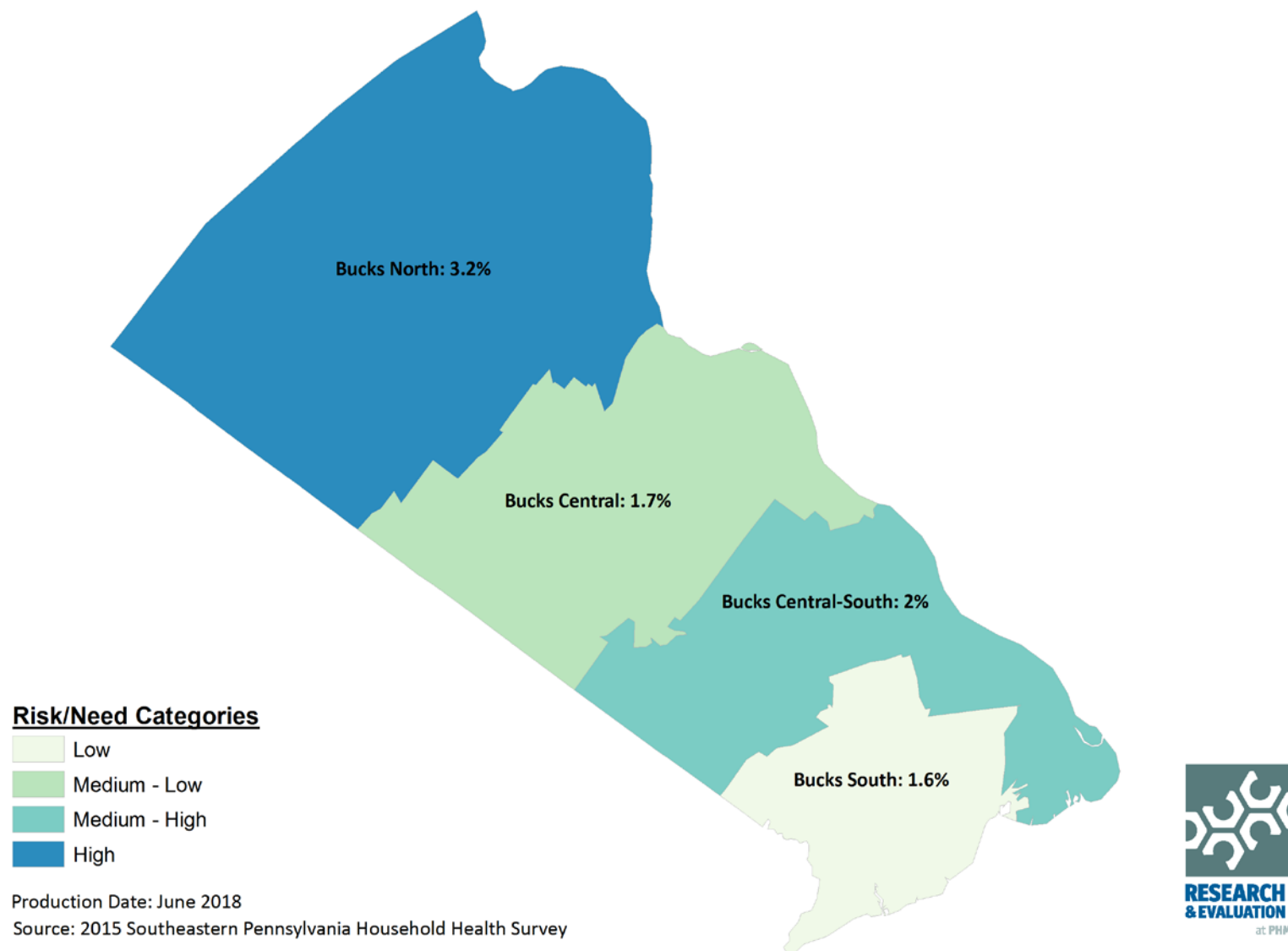
Reference Map: Bucks County **Sub-regions and Select Municipalities**



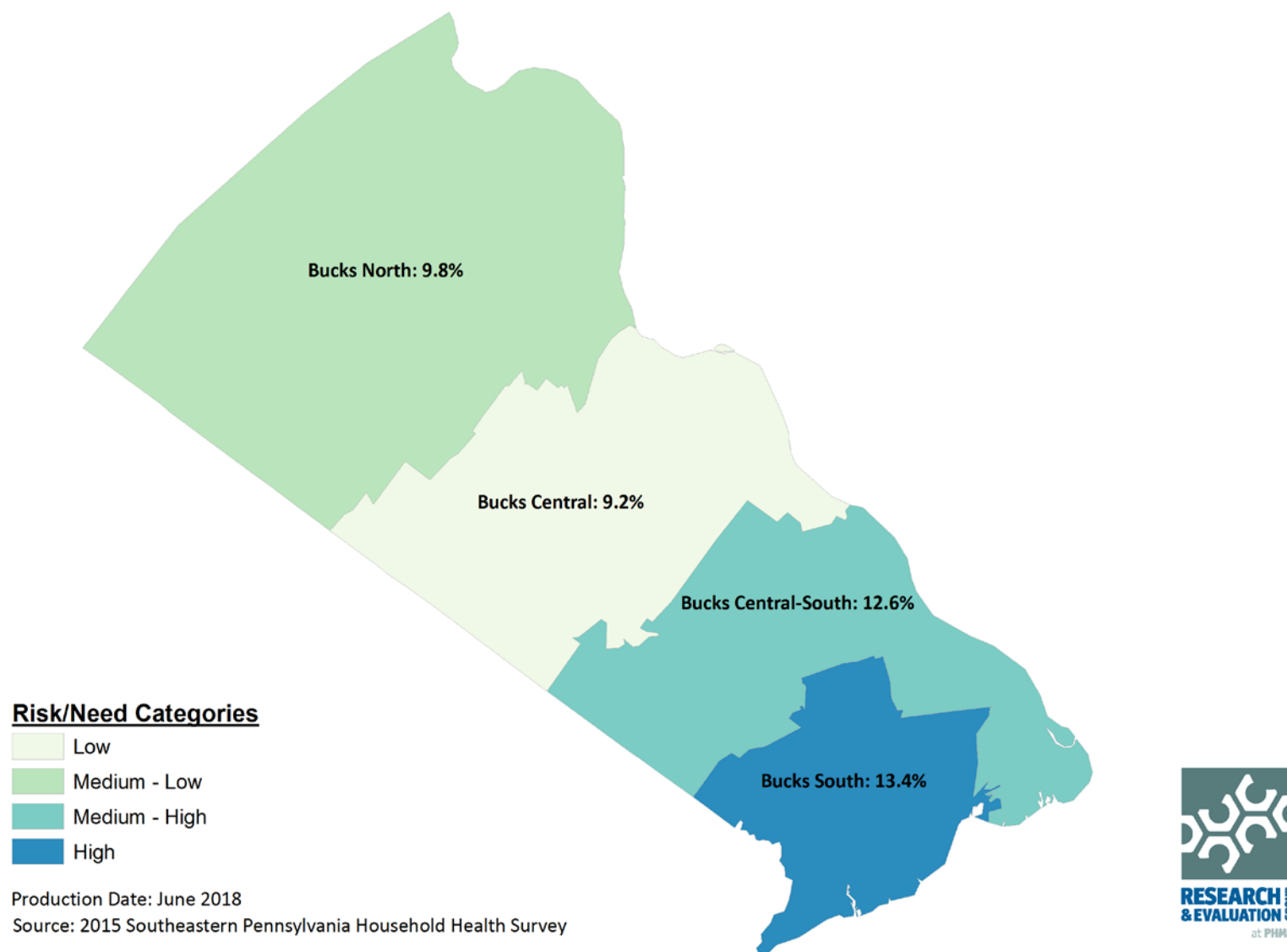
Percent of Residents Who **Cut Meal Size or Skipped Meals** in the Last Year Due to Money



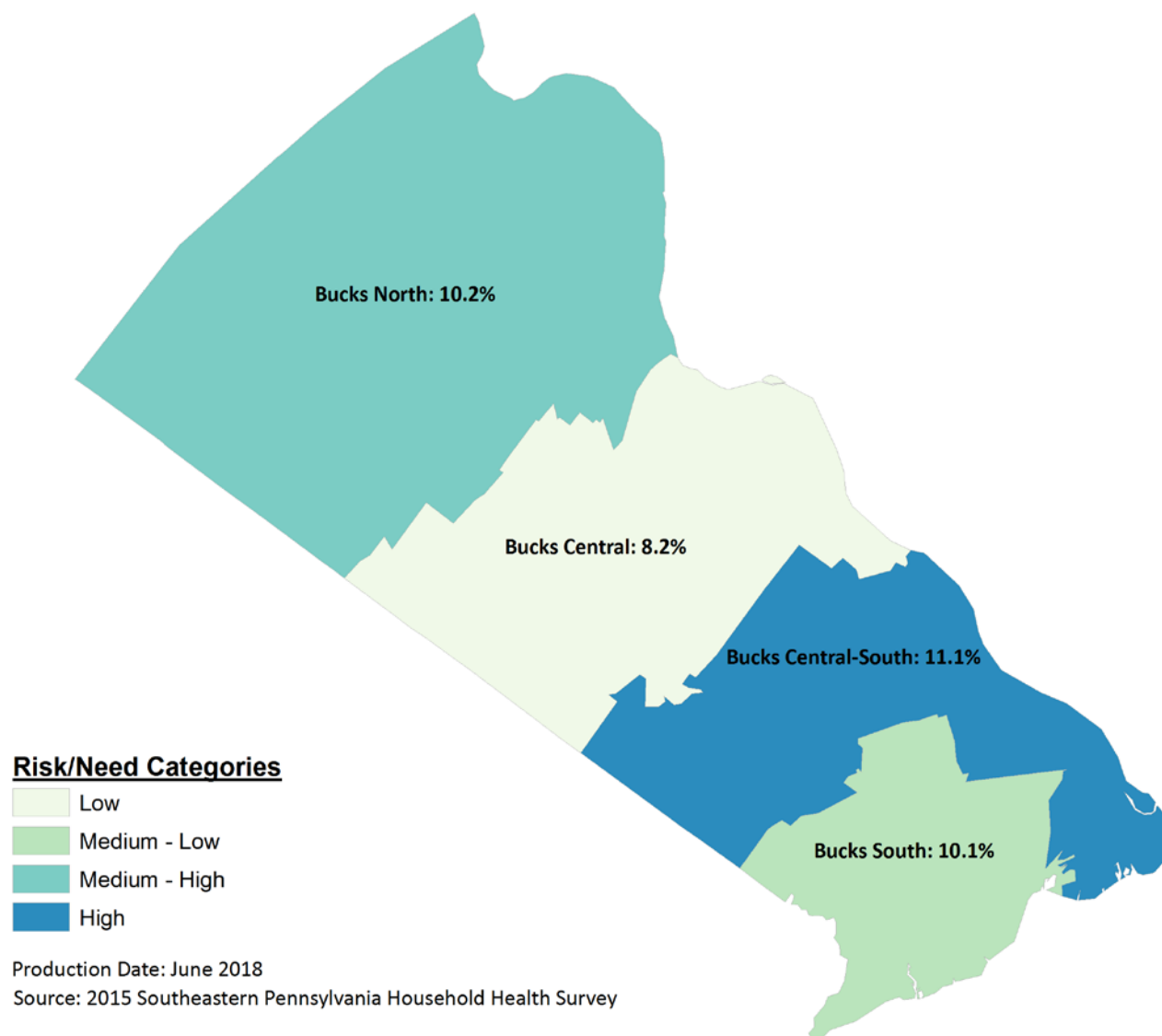
Percent of Residents Who Had **Difficulty Finding Fruits and Vegetables** in Their Neighborhood



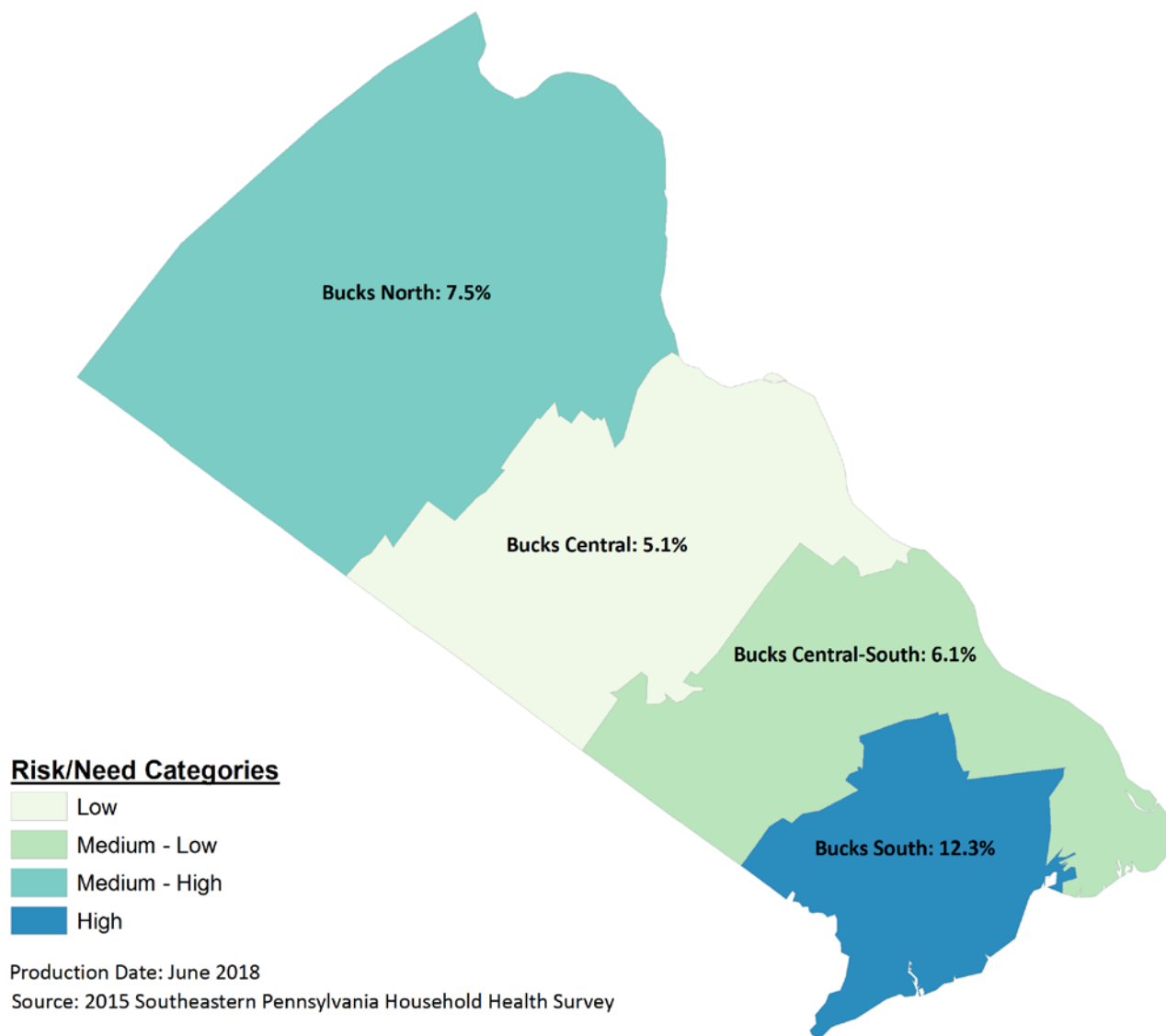
Percent of Households Receiving **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**



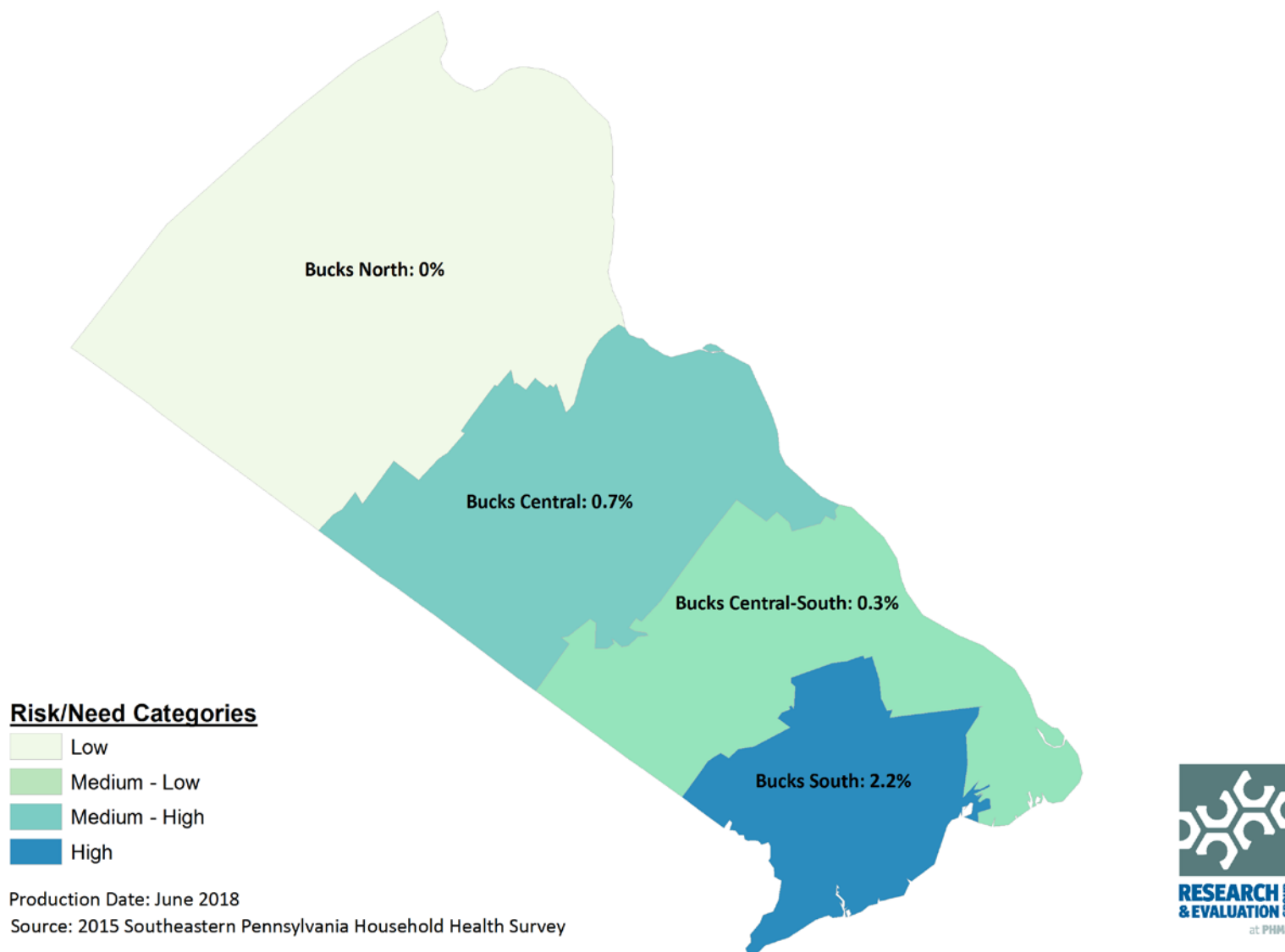
Percent of Households Receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)



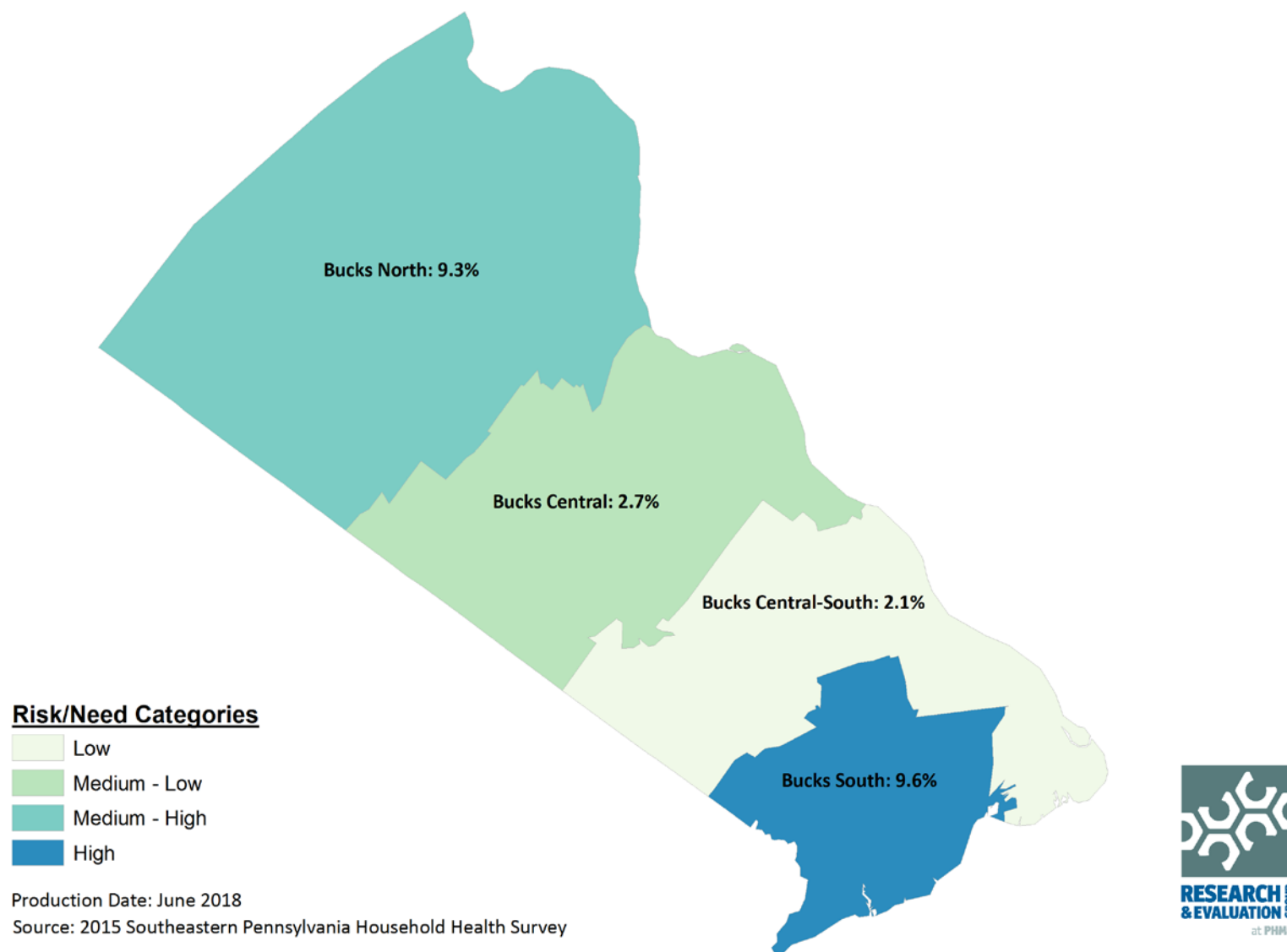
Percent of Households Receiving **SNAP Benefits (Food Stamps)**



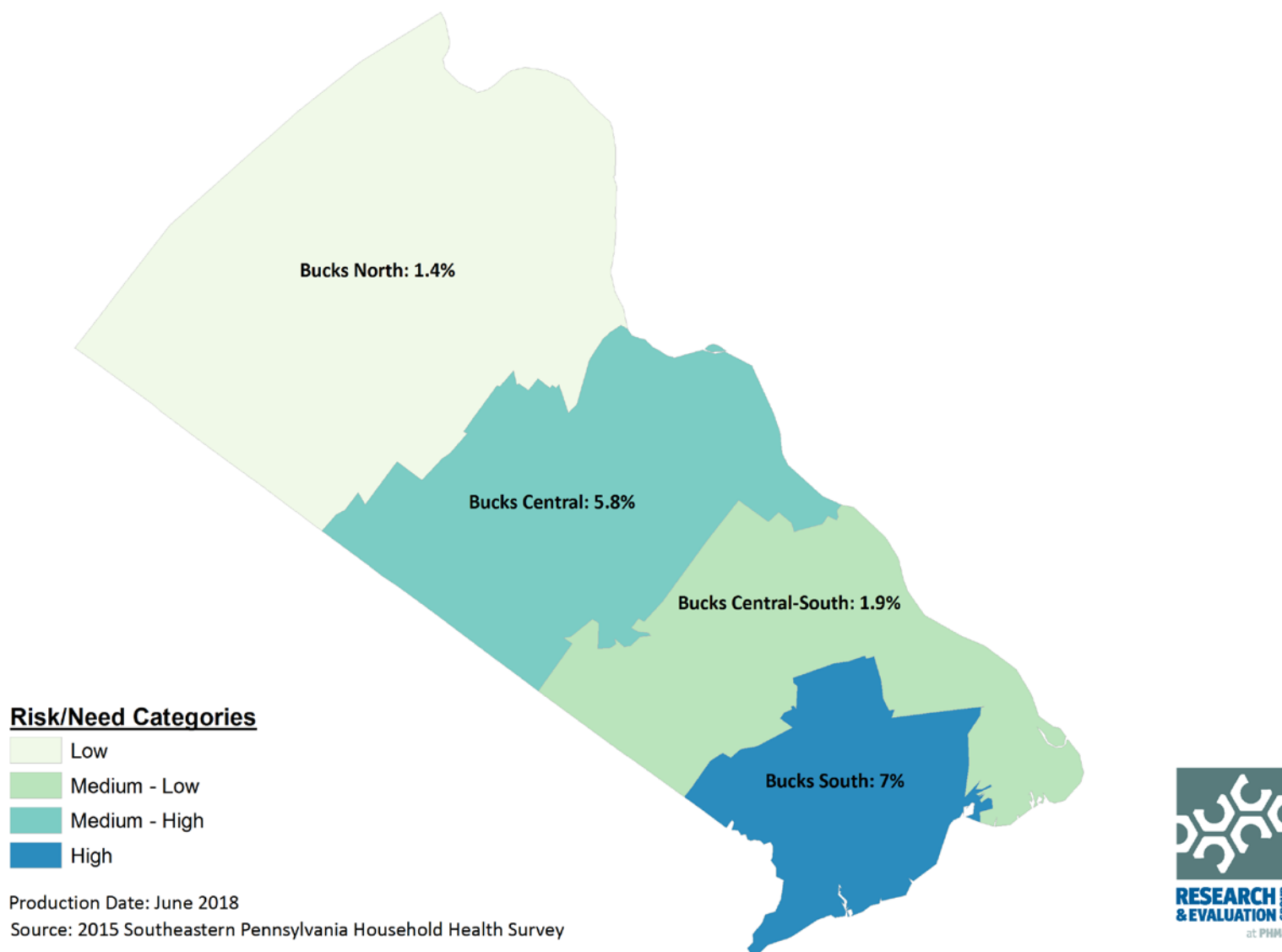
Percent of Households Receiving **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Benefits**



Percent of Residents whose **Neighborhood Groceries** are of Fair or Poor Quality



Percent of Older Adults Who Used Meal/Food Programs in the Past Year



2018 Bucks County Food Assistance Assessment

Bucks County Residents with Low Incomes and Low Food Access By Census Tract, Percent and Number

