

MEASURING MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS VISITOR SURVEY



HOW TO COLLECT YOUR DATA

1. Determine visitor survey questions

Before you begin building your visitor surveys, take a step back to consider what metrics you would like to collect based on your market's goals and the type of visitor information that would be of greatest interest to your target audience. Some examples include [how visitors heard of the market](#), [what their shopping habits and behaviors are both in the market and in the surrounding area](#), and [their demographics including where they are coming from](#). If you're interested in collecting shopper demographic data or other diversity, equity, and inclusion-related metrics, you might consider consulting the Farmers Market Coalition's [Anti-Racist Farmers Market Toolkit](#).

Some information you may want to collect every year to track how it changes and make comparisons, other information you may only need to collect every 3-5 years or even just once if you do not expect it to change as frequently.

Be conscientious about not collecting more data than you will analyze and use to inform your market. Collecting more data than you will use will make the survey longer for customers and is a waste of time to collect and record. Try also not to ask customers for data you can get elsewhere. For example, if you want to know how many people are using a Bridge Card at your market, the batch receipt on your point of sale device can give you that information so you may not need to ask customers that question.

The Farmers Market Coalition's [Visitor Survey](#) is a great resource to get you started. Based on your market's needs, the document can be edited to add or delete questions.

If you would like to use MIFMA's Economic Impact Model (coming soon!), it is recommended to ask the following questions to improve the accuracy of your model results:

- What is your home zip code?
- What will you buy at the farmers market today?
- How much money have you spent, or do you plan to spend at the market today?
- How much money have you spent or do you plan to spend in the surrounding area today (shopping, eating, or other activities outside of the farmers market)?



2. Select survey dates

If your market is not counting customers each market day, then it is recommended to collect visitor surveys on the same day visitor counts are performed. Collecting both visitor surveys and counts on the same market day allows you to ensure you've collected a representative number of responses based on your attendance for that day. Additionally, if resources are tight, it gives you the possibility to take advantage of the same set of volunteers for both tasks.



It is recommended to collect visitor surveys on the following days¹:

- 3RD MARKET DAY
- AN AVERAGE MARKET DAY
- A BUSY MARKET DAY (holiday, special event, etc.)
- 3RD TO LAST MARKET DAY

If your market runs multiple days a week:

- Collect visitor surveys four times a season for each day the market is open.

If you operate a year round market, then it is recommended to do one of the following:

- Conduct your visitor surveys over four days during the indoor season and four days during the outdoor season.
- OR
- Over four market days during the Winter/early Spring, and four market days during the Summer/Fall

3. Identify sample size and selection interval

SAMPLE SIZE: refers to the number of survey responses collected.



The larger the sample size or the more survey responses received, the more confidence you can have that your survey results are representative of your market's customers as a whole. The sample sizes provided in the table on the next page are the recommended minimum number of survey responses to collect in order to obtain a representative sample based on your market's number of visitors.

SELECTION INTERVAL: refers to the number of adult market visitors that pass by before you can ask a visitor to take a survey.

For example, if your selection interval is 8, then you would ask to survey every 8th adult that walks past the survey line. Selection intervals help reduce bias among those performing the survey.

The weather, customers' willingness to take surveys, and a market's experience with data collection could all contribute to challenges in achieving the recommended sample size and selection interval below. Markets should strive to meet this methodology, but may need to adjust if the minimum sample size is not being achieved and should continue to collect as many surveys as they can over the market season. Additional recommendations, are included under Step 7.



Minimum Sample Size & Selection Intervals² 90% Confidence Interval, 5% Margin of Error

Average Number of Visitors Per Day (adults only)	Minimum Sample Size (# of survey responses over market season)	Selection Interval (Survey every — person)
100+	74	1
300+	143	2
1,000+	214	4
2,500+	245	8
5,000+	257	12

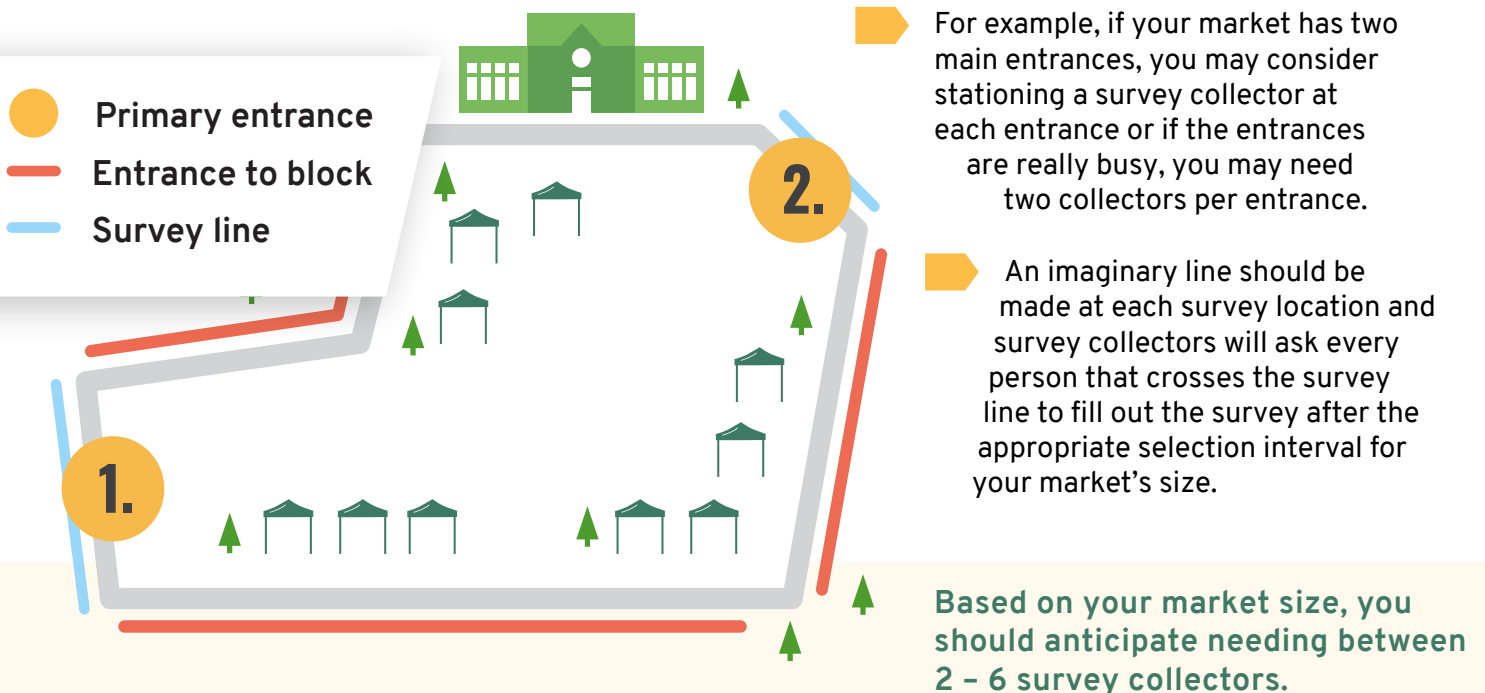
Based on your market's average number of visitors per day, determine your **minimum sample size** and **selection interval**.

Visitors who volunteer to take a survey, but are not in your selection interval, should be encouraged to fill out the survey to promote survey participation. Volunteers can be indicated at the top of your survey. However, it is important to note that if the majority of survey responses are volunteers, your data may not be representative of your visitors as a whole and may be skewed to one type of market visitor. If visitors are in a group, only allow one person per household to fill out the survey.



4. Determine survey locations

Identify the location(s) within the market that will be best to administer the survey. You will want to choose high-traffic areas such as a market entrance or next to the market manager's tent. The number of survey locations needed should be based on the size of your market and the number of survey collectors you have. You will want to choose location(s) to cover areas where most shoppers pass by.



²Recommended Visitor Survey Sampling Framework developed by the Farmers Market Coalition:
<https://farmersmarketmetrics.guide/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Visitor-Survey.pdf>

5. Prepare for data collection

If you are using paper surveys, it's recommended to include:

- Market name and collection date
- Minimum sample size
- Desired selection intervals
- The survey location



Print enough surveys to meet your minimum sample size and plenty of extras! We recommend putting a stack of visitor surveys on a clipboard and providing each survey collector with a clipboard and a pen or pencil.



Instead of pen and paper, markets can also take advantage of using an online survey.

Online survey tools such as [Google Forms](#), [Survey Monkey](#), or others allow you to build the survey electronically.



At the market, survey collectors can have [phones or tablets](#) available with the survey or provide a QR code for visitors to take the survey on their own devices. Online surveys will minimize the need for data entry later but require more technological aptitude to create and implement.

6. Train survey collectors

Prior to each collection day, you, another market staff member, or an experienced volunteer will want to train any new survey collectors. Conducting a few role plays may help ease any anxiety survey collectors are experiencing and teach best practices when interacting with visitors.



Survey collectors may have a better response rate if they ask questions such as:

“Do you have a few minutes to help the market today?”

instead of

“Would you like to take our survey?”

Show each survey collector where they will be collecting surveys and how to perform the selection interval.

7. Perform your visitor surveys!

Position survey collectors at your predetermined market location to begin collecting visitor surveys. Follow-up with survey collectors throughout the day to find out their progress towards reaching the minimum sample size and answer any questions. You will want your data collectors to consistently collect surveys over the whole market day. This ensures you are including the voice of visitors that shop at the end of the market day along with the beginning and middle. If you collect all your visitor surveys during one time period, your data may be skewed towards one type of visitor demographic.

Have survey collectors try their best to meet the minimum recommended sample size by the end of the market day. If you have trouble meeting your minimum sample size, the following are recommendations to try:



DECREASE OR ELIMINATE YOUR SELECTION INTERVAL.

If you are currently asking every 4th adult, consider asking every other adult or every adult that crosses the survey line from a new shopping party to participate in the survey.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SURVEY COLLECTORS.

You may need to increase the number of survey locations throughout the market or for busy entrances, station more than one survey collector at each entrance.



CHANGE YOUR SURVEY LOCATION(S).

For example, if your survey collectors are not having a good response rate collecting surveys at the market entrance, consider asking visitors who are exiting the market instead. Some visitors who are entering the market may be too excited to get to purchase certain items in the market and not want to take a survey while entering. If you are surveying visitors exiting, it is recommended to provide a table for visitors to place their shopping bags on while filling out the survey. It may take some trial and error to find the survey location(s) that will yield the most successful response rate.

CHANGE YOUR SURVEY METHOD.

If your market is really struggling, you could consider switching your survey method such as performing a dot survey³. However, this survey method significantly reduces the number of questions you can ask and limits the analysis you can perform on the data. This survey method could be used as a stepping stone for markets starting data collection, but due to the limitations, markets should continue to strive to use the survey method outlined in the steps above.



For a richer data analysis options, collect and separate surveys into different time frames to be able to compare responses from visitors at the beginning of the market to those received in the middle or end.

³Additional information on the dot survey methodology: <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/sr1088.pdf>

HOW TO STORE, AGGREGATE, AND ANALYZE YOUR DATA

Store your data

If you collected paper surveys, we recommend that you enter the data as soon as possible into an electronic file as the paper surveys are susceptible to being lost, damaged, or accidentally discarded. If you are not able to enter the data as part of your market's daily close-out activities, then we recommended labeling them with the date they were collected and storing them together in a safe space. An Excel or Google spreadsheet works well for storing this data.

Try using [MIFMA's Data Entry Template!](#)

If you used an online survey, then your data should already be entered into an electronic file.

Aggregate your data

At the end of the season, calculate the mean, median, and mode of each numerical response.

MEAN: the average value of your data set.

MEDIAN: the middle value of your data set when ordered from least to greatest.

MODE: the value that occurs most often.

Additionally, percentages for each response to a survey question can be calculated. Using an Excel spreadsheet can help make these calculations easier.

Examples are pre-populated in [MIFMA's Data Entry Excel Template](#).

Analyze the data

Take a look at your market data at the end of the season and try comparing it to other data you've collected to identify trends. Did average visitor responses change throughout the market season or compared to last year? Are there any correlations between survey responses that would be important to pull out? For example, does the amount of money visitors spend at the market correlate with how far they are coming from or if it is their first time at the market? Were visitor responses what you expected? What results surprised you? Creating graphs and/or charts of your data can be helpful when identifying trends.



Use your analysis of visitor responses collected to identify possible solutions or changes to improve the market in the future.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS

Report your findings

Consider publishing your data in a report to share with a variety of audiences. Think about what information your sponsoring organization, market sponsors, vendors, market shoppers, etc. might like to know or what you are asking of them and build your report based on the audience you plan to share it with.

Try using [MIFMA's report and/or infographic templates](#) to share your visitor count data.

Share your findings!

Share your report and/or infographics with your target audience and congratulate yourself on a job well done!



517-432-3381



480 Wilson Rd., Room 172
East Lansing, MI 48824



mifma.org

