

Summary of the results of the EEFC MOP committee's Member Survey

More than 500 people responded to the MOP committee's Member Survey, which was sent on March 1, 2020 to all members for whom the Co-op has emails (4,665), and also available in a paper format at Customer Service in the store. This summary of the highlights is based on an analysis of the results by students in Chatham University's Food Studies program's Research Methods course and their teacher, Nadine Lehrer. Respondents' comments included here anonymously are meant to serve as illustrations, not to be representative of the comments for the relevant question.

1. We asked **how members participate**. The large majority (99%) said they shop at the store. About half read e-news and the *Co-operator*. Just over a quarter (28%) said they vote in the board election. On the question of whether members wanted more opportunities to participate, more than half of those who responded said no. Of those who wanted more engagement, many said they would like to participate in more events or have the opportunity to volunteer.
2. We asked if there were **barriers to participation**. Over a third of respondents to this question said no. Of those who identified barriers, distance from their house to the Co-op was one of the biggest barriers expressed, along with busy schedules with no time to spare. Some wanted more daytime events. Among those who mentioned the lack of parking, one noted that it's "such a problem to find parking just when I want to shop that I have no desire to deal with that issue to attend a meeting or other activity." One identified the lack of gender-neutral bathrooms as a barrier. Comments about less tangible barriers included lack of transparency about board actions and "Much of what made the co-op unique has disappeared."
3. We asked if respondents were interested in **member-led community building activities** to support the Co-op's mission, giving some options and an opportunity for open-ended responses. About two-thirds of survey respondents (318) answered this question. Most (66%) were interested in urban farming. Many offered specific suggestions, including a cooking/baking contest.
4. We asked if members wanted to **volunteer** if opportunities were available, and gave a choice of broad categories. About one-third of survey respondents (184) answered this question. Of those, most (59%) were interested in volunteering at other food justice organizations. Almost half (47%) were interested in helping at the store. Smaller percentages were interested in publicizing the Co-op at events (22%) or engaging members and shoppers about Co-op events (18%). Comments in the "Other" category included partnering with specific organizations and "Helping with the co-op that people are trying to start in Homewood."
5. We asked people about **how they engage** with the Co-op and **what membership means** to them through a series of agree/disagree statements.
 - Most respondents (82%) said they relied on the Co-op to research or provide socially and/or environmentally responsible foods or products.

- 79% felt the Co-op community was diverse and inclusive.
- Three-quarters (76%) felt the Co-op was more than just their grocery store.
- 71% agreed that they feel a sense of belonging when they shop there.
- Fewer (43%) felt like owners of the Co-op.
- 23% felt a sense of belonging when attending Co-op meetings or events, but that number rose to 43% if respondents who said the question did not apply to them were removed.
- 70% agreed that the Co-op was effective at communicating with them regarding major changes or issues, with less than half (46%) agreeing that the Co-op sought their input on important decisions. Fewer (42%) felt their voice mattered in how the Co-op was run. Most (66%) felt they had ample opportunities to be involved in the Co-op, with half (50%) interested in the decisions made and discussions taking place at board meetings.

6. 161 respondents answered a question about what the Co-op could do to **promote a more inclusive culture**. The largest group (16%) said the Co-op was **doing a good job** now. One respondent said, “I see so many diverse faces on staff as well as shopping in the store, even more so than ever before.” 14% mentioned that **prices were too high** for many Pittsburgh residents to afford; some suggested free membership or a sliding scale for people with low incomes. Many commented on issues with the **physical space**. “I hate that my choices for groceries are either to support Amazon or go somewhere that clearly deprioritizes accessibility,” one said. A number commented on issues regarding **race**. Some suggested increasing outreach to communities such as Homewood, Wilkinsburg, and the Hill District; carrying more items produced by black-owned businesses; and membership campaigns and incentives (such as discounts) targeting specific communities or groups. One wrote, “It’s a Pittsburgh problem, but the city itself lacks real diversity, equity, and inclusion. So, how might the Co-op step out and do something different than the city as a whole?”

7. We asked **why people belong** to the Co-op, giving a range of options on an agree/disagree scale, and an open-ended option.

- The leading reason was the products carried (95% for quality of products, 90% for product selection, 88% for bulk selection). 44% belonged because they can place special orders.
- 92% agreed that they belonged because the Co-op is a local, alternative business.
- 78% belonged because of member-ownership, and 58% because of member-driven government.
- 67% belonged for a sense of community, 61% for staff’s knowledge, 54% for the café and deli, and 51% for convenience.
- 49% belonged for the discounts, and 28% for prices.

144 respondents wrote in additional reasons for belonging, with the largest percentages noting product selection (35%) and that the Co-op is an alternative business model (23%). Other comments included “Educating me about issues,” and “The only place I trust to put health, environment, workers’ rights above profits.”

8. We listed **issues the Co-op supports** in various ways and asked where the Co-op should focus its efforts if we could do more. Respondents were in favor of supporting (and doing more with) all the issues listed. Their top choices were supporting local sourcing (93% agreed or strongly agreed), ecologically responsible growing and production of products (93%), ecologically friendly packaging (92%), and supporting fair labor/Fair Trade practices (89%). These were followed by addressing local hunger (82%), supporting other small businesses (73%), supporting other cooperative businesses (70%), and donating to community organizations (62%).
9. We asked if there were **other issues** the Co-op should support. 114 respondents answered, with almost half saying no. Of those who wrote in answers, 25% fell into community/outreach/collaboration, and 20% into equality/empowerment/issues of race.
10. We asked how people prefer to **receive information** from the Co-op, giving a range of options. The large majority wanted to receive information by email. About a quarter of respondents (27%) also favored the Co-op website; store bulletin board, posters, or banners (25%); or handouts/displays at registers (24%). Just under one-fifth (18%) preferred social media (this varied quite a bit by age). Very few preferred announcements over the store loudspeaker (4%), board meetings (2%), or other meetings (2%).
11. We asked about the Co-op's **educational programming**. Of the 420 respondents who answered, 66% were interested in gardening and composting workshops. Just over half were interested in workshops on cooking (56%), nutrition and diets (56%), food and mindfulness (52%), local hunger issues (52%), and food and climate change (52%). Just under half were interested in food sourcing (49%) or food justice (45%) workshops, and about a third were interested in food labeling (36%), food activism (35%), food safety (32%), or workshops on cooperatives in general (32%).
12. We asked for any **other comments** about membership and participation. 136 respondents answered, with about 50 saying they had nothing to add. Other comments included positive and negative statements about staff. One said, "I appreciate that there is always someone I can talk to when I want to ask about a product, if it's in stock, etc." Another who identified as a regular shopper said, "it would be nice if staff got to know my name, or at the least regularly acknowledged that I am a member." Some felt communication about member-related events could be improved. "There is often a lack of information in the store about events that define us as a co-op, such as elections and the annual meeting," one said. "Making this information available and informing staff do not seem to be a priority."
13. We asked for **demographical information**. For race, respondents were asked to choose all that apply. The large majority of respondents (90%) identified as white (for part or all of their racial identity), followed by 5% black/African American, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Latinx/Hispanic. Only 2% said they were 18 to 24 years of age, while other age spans were

represented fairly evenly. 71% of respondents identified as female. Just over half (54%) said they lived in a two-person household. 57% held a graduate degree or some level of graduate education, and another 29% had a 4-year college degree. 68% identified as middle income (with 16% low and 16% high). The mean number of years as a member of the Co-op was 12.