

DATA & ANALYTICS OF COLUMBUS WEDNESDAY

Beyond the Numbers

How Mid-Ohio Food Collective Combines Data, Customer Insights,
and Human-Centered Design to Fight Hunger



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We have data.

We still have questions.



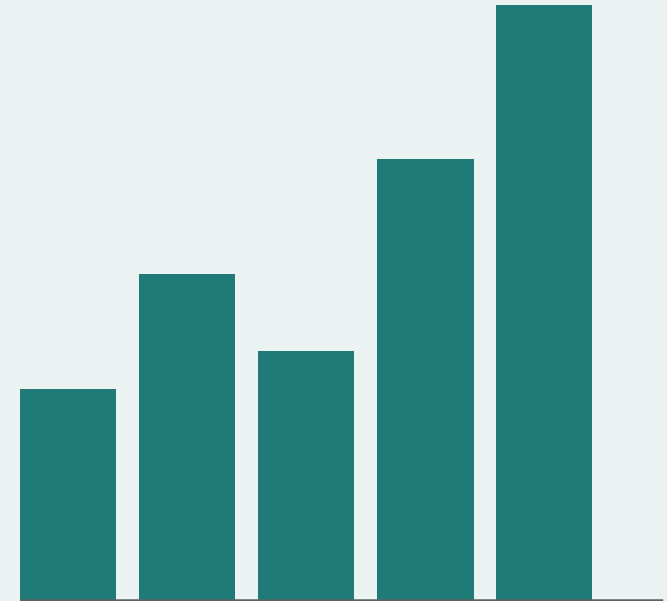
Data is incredibly powerful.



It helps us understand what is happening.



But we kept running into moments where we knew what was happening — and still couldn't confidently answer why.



The data told us WHAT.

*It couldn't always tell us
WHY.*



The Missing Piece

Two gaps kept showing up as our customer insight platform took shape:



Customers weren't meaningfully involved in shaping decisions.



We needed stronger qualitative insight to sit alongside quantitative data.

WE KNEW	WE DIDN'T KNOW
Participation	Experience
Utilization	Frustration
Trends	Context
Outcomes	Why

*The numbers weren't wrong. **They just weren't the entire story.***



Needing Food is a Very Psychological Problem

Psychology is summed by the ABC's:

Affect: What people **feel**

- People may feel shame about seeking out resources in their community

Behavior: What people **do**

- People may choose to come to a food pantry (or not), and then can choose to return (or not)

Cognition: What people **think**

- People may believe that they will be judged or stigmatized for needing food at a pantry

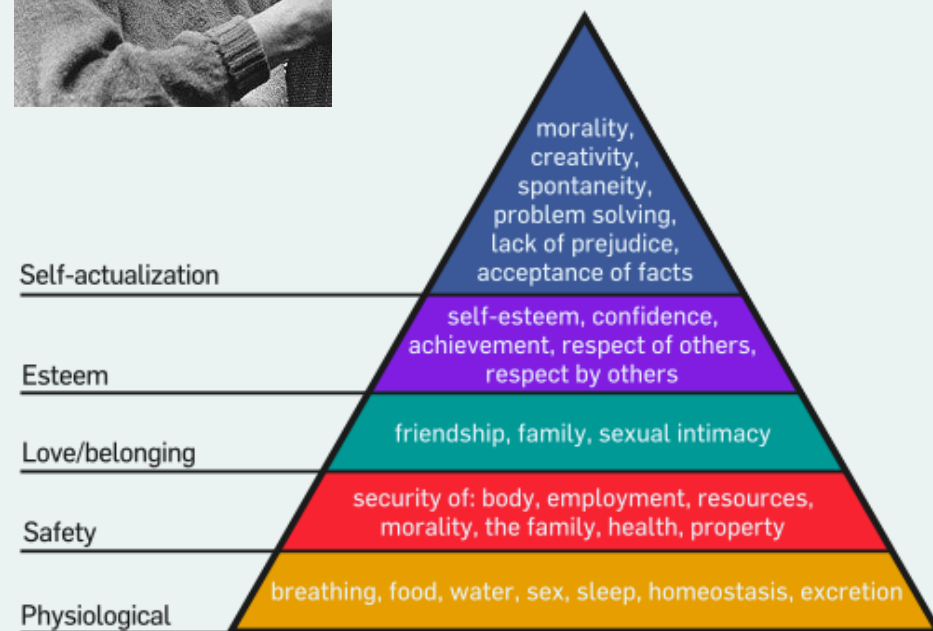
The Mid-Ohio Food Collective has decades of service level data on which individuals in our community are receiving service throughout our 20 county service area – who visited where, how many are in the family, where that family lives, etc.

While MOFC has behavioral data about what happens, we don't have much data at all when it comes to what people feel or think. Let's see what happens if we just have behavioral data...



Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs posits that you need to take care of basic needs before you can handle higher-order needs. **Food is a basic physiological need.**



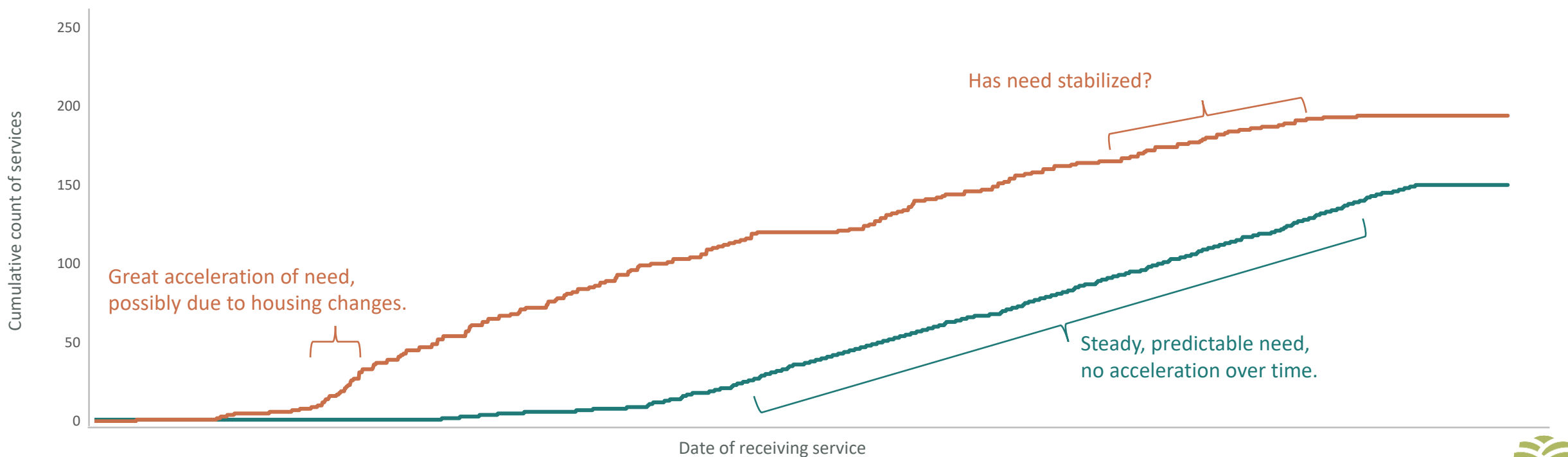
There IS something happening, but what exactly is happening...?

Below are data on two individuals who live by themselves who have accessed services in their communities...the pattern of their need at time varies and our data allows us to make hypotheses about them, but we can never be 100% certain of their lived experience.

Quantitative Data: Service events, timestamped, and reported address at each service event

Qualitative Data: We don't have any survey or other instrument to determine what is happening at each moment in time

External Data: Franklin County had over 5,400 eviction filings in the 3 months in which one neighbor experienced an acceleration of need



What Human-Centered Design Actually Means

Not sticky notes. A discipline for finding better questions.



Empathy

Understanding lived experience, not just behavior.



Curiosity

Asking what the data can't explain on its own.



Structured Inquiry

Disciplined listening, not casual conversation.



Testing Assumptions

Checking what we believe against what's real.



Involving Users

Customers help shape the decisions that affect them.

Human-centered design doesn't replace data. *It helps us ask better questions about the data.*



Building a New Kind of Insight Capability



THEN

Build a customer council



GROWING

Teams start requesting insights



TODAY

A connected customer insight platform

Five components, one connected platform:



Customer Insight Reports



Cross-Functional
Collaboration



Customer Advisory Council



Heart of the Table



Shared Network Learning

This stopped being a program **and started becoming infrastructure.**



How We Collect Intelligence Today

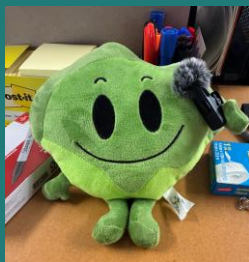
Human Intelligence Systems



Focus Groups



One-on-One Interviews



Customer Advisory
Council



Heart of the Table



Co-Design Workshops



These aren't engagement activities.
They're data collection systems.



Mid-Ohio Kitchen – *Bringing Everyone to the Table*



Mid-Ohio Kitchen is the Mid-Ohio Food Collective's production kitchen — the place where ingredients become meals for children and families across our service area.

It is one of the few points in our system where we make something ourselves, rather than distribute what we receive.

Every day, the team makes decisions about recipes, portions, and menus for people they rarely get to meet.

That distance between the kitchen and the table is where our curiosity started.



Kids Café - *Feeding Our Future*

Kids Café meals are prepared by Mid-Ohio Kitchen (MOK) because we know that good nutrition powers learning, growth, and success. Through partnerships with schools and after-school programs, MOK provides fresh, healthy meals to students ages 18 and under across our community. Every meal served helps students thrive in school and at home.



- **Often served, not often surveyed** - Typically, kids receive a meal, eat it, and leave for the next activity. Leaving little to no time to ask them about how their meal service was.
- **Adults speak for kids** - Most feedback on how to improve meal services comes from kitchen staff, parents, and site partners. The eaters themselves is the missing piece.
- **Understanding “plate waste”** - We could see what came back uneaten. We couldn’t see why.



Kids Café Feedback Kiosk

*Two choices.
Faces instead of words.
And a voice message so kids can explain,
in their own words, what they think of
their meal.*

ψ MID-OHIO KITCHEN KIDS CAFE

Today's Meal:



Mac & Cheese



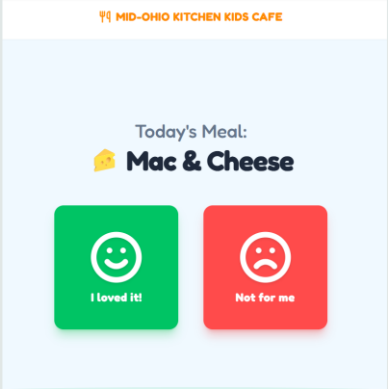
I loved it!



Not for me

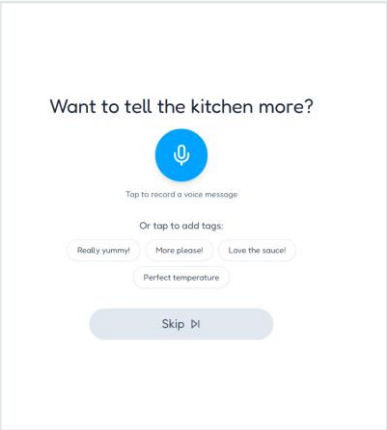


What a Child Sees at the Kiosk



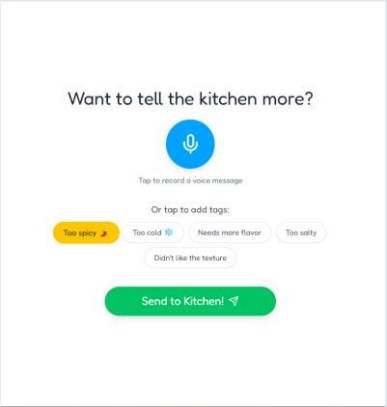
1 Choose a face

Two big choices, not a 1–5 scale. Faces and colors mean pre-readers can answer too.



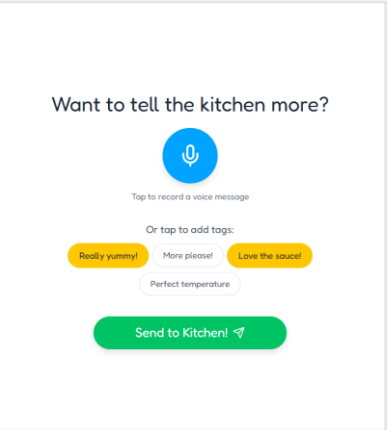
2 Gives the option to say more

A voice message lets kids explain in their own words. Skip is always there, so no one feels pressured.



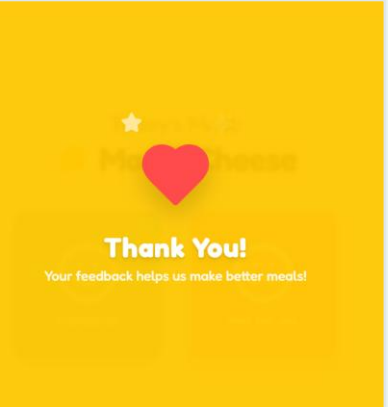
3 Tags that fit

“Not for me” brings up tags like Too spicy or Too cold, so the kitchen learns what to fix.



4 Send to the kitchen

“Send to Kitchen!” tells kids a real person is listening to them.



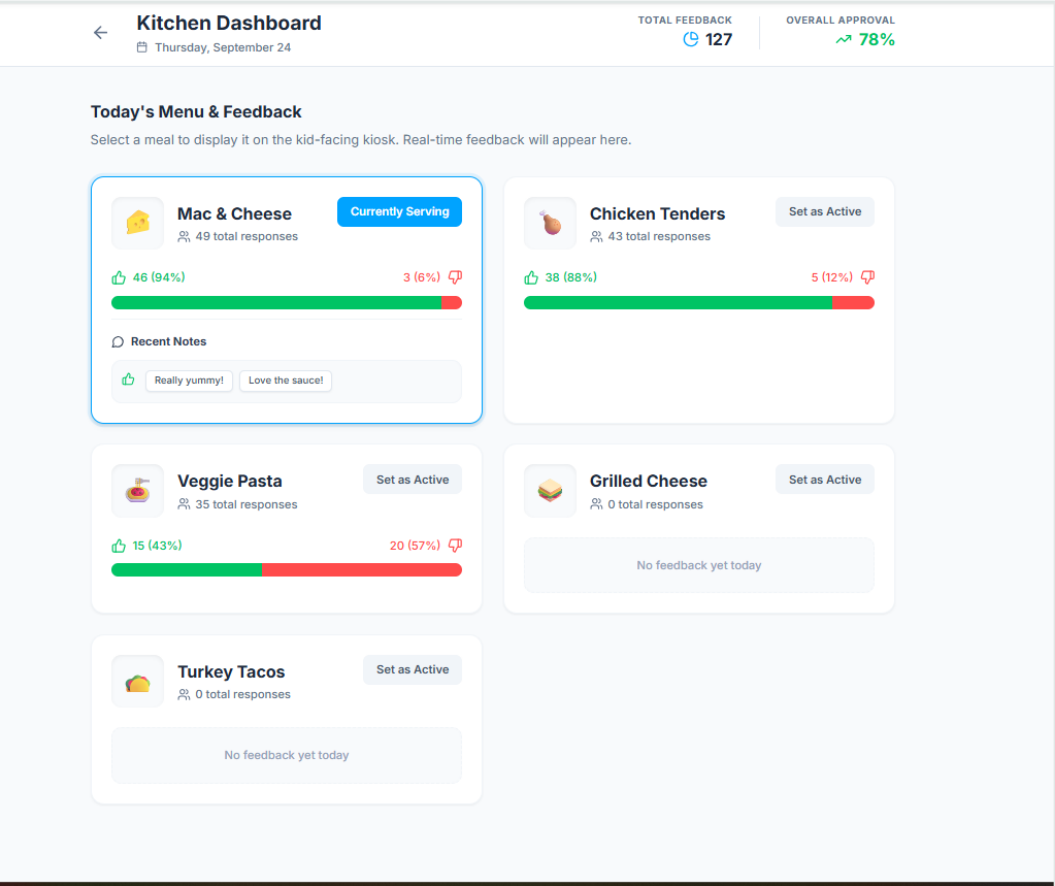
5 A thank-you

Closing the loop shows kids their opinion counts, which builds trust.

Every screen is designed with the “end eater” in mind



What the Kitchen Sees in Real Time



Prototype · sample data

1 Choose today's meal

The kitchen picks which meal appears on the kids' kiosk and can switch it anytime.

2 Watch the what

Approval bars and response counts update as kids interact with the kiosk, so the team sees reactions as they happen in "real time" during meal services.

3 Hear the why

Tags and voice messages explain the numbers. A low score paired with "Didn't like the texture" prompts the kitchen team to discuss changes to the menu.

The what and the why, together, straight from the people we are providing these meals for.



What Led Us to Build the Kiosk

THE MOMENT

A learning campaign led to asking: What do our kids think about their meal services? If they were here, what might we learn from them directly?

THE CONSTRAINT

Traditional surveys don't work with children. Reading levels vary, attention is short, mealtime is fast, and partners may be stretched for time already.

THE IDEA

If we meet kids where they eat and let them answer with faces and their own voices, feedback becomes part of the meal, not extra work.



The prototype didn't start with technology - It started with a group of people who provide meals for children every day and wanted to hear from them.



Beyond children, adults love to provide their thoughts as well!

Google Reviews

Thousands of points of data exist, in perfect chronological order, in which individuals who have (or have not) provided open-ended feedback on our different locations.

Once you've ingested the data (and it can be tedious), what would you like to investigate?

- ... how the community viewed MOFC during and after COVID?
- ... how incorrect hours of operations inconvenience neighbors?
- ... how a neighbor's first experience with MOFC felt?

These are all questions that can be investigated both **quantitatively and qualitatively**, and allow for Nicole and others to dig deeper into what is going on, and how.

Quantitative Data: Starred rating provided to Mid-Ohio locations

Qualitative Data: Verbatim feedback on Mid-Ohio services

External Data: Well...Google certainly isn't internal...

Mid-Ohio Food Collective

3960 Brookham Dr, Grove City, OH 43123, United States

[Write a review](#)

4.7 ★★★★★ 1,765 reviews ⓘ

1 review

★★★★★ 3 months ago



Mike E.

Local Guide · 166 reviews · 6 photos

★★★★★ 3 months ago

Good place, plenty of space for maneuvering

Hover to react



Joel Ramey (Jackfirerose)

7 reviews

★★★☆☆ 3 months ago

Phone system is complicated

Hover to react



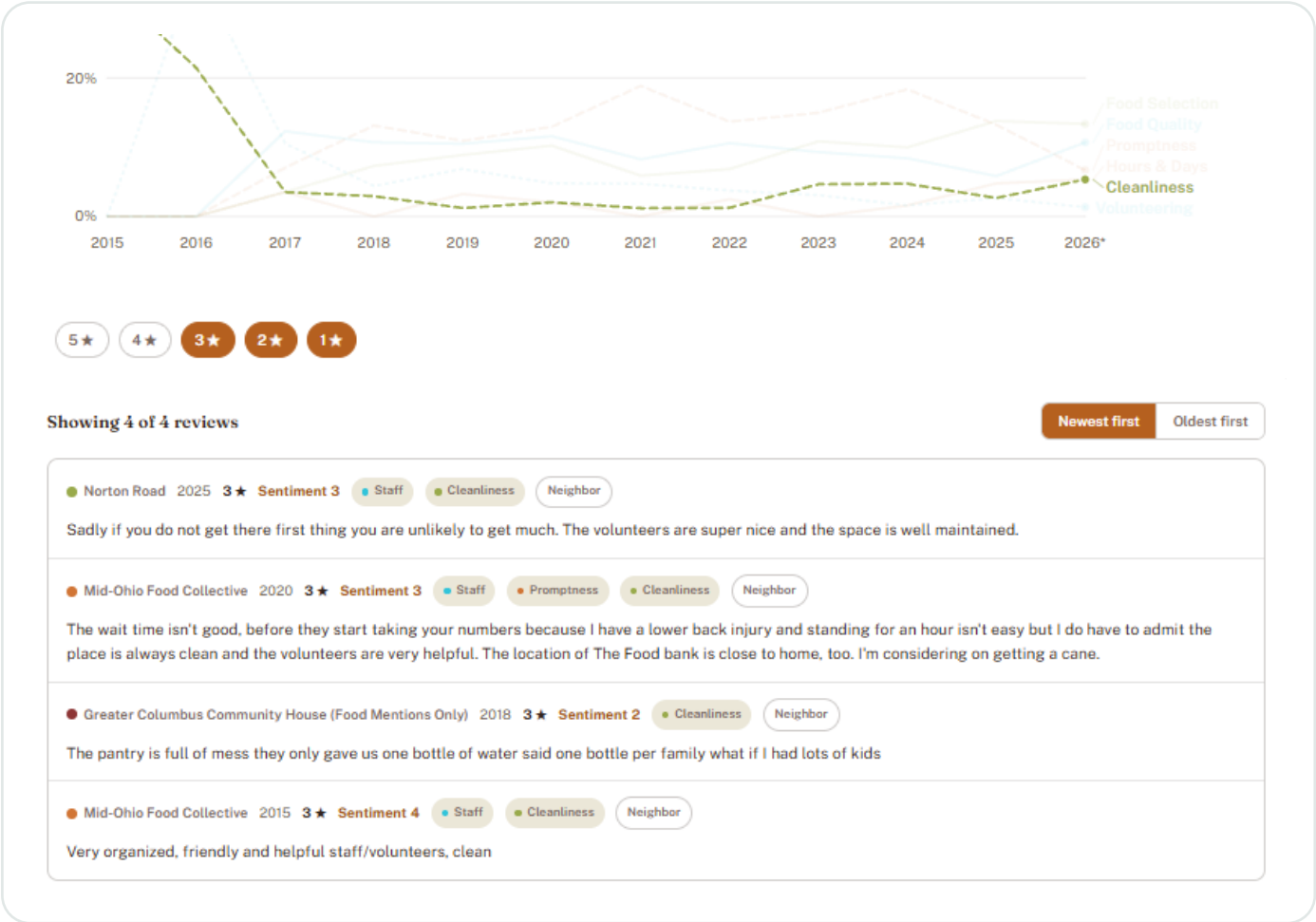
Cleveland Johnson

2 reviews

★★★★★ 4 months ago



What are reviewers saying about the cleanliness of our facilities?



The benefit to having thousands of data points across time is that you can identify trends that are worrisome or need addressing.

In any given year with a decent amount of total reviews, 5% or fewer reviews bring up the topic of the cleanliness of our facilities.

There are only four reviews in years and years of data collection that mention cleanliness with a 3 star or worse rating.

One review said a pantry was "full of mess" and another mentioned having "... a lower back injury and standing for an hour isn't easy but I do have to admit the place is always clean..."

If our facilities weren't clean, would the community trust our food?

If our facilities weren't clean, could individuals with mobility concerns navigate the locations?

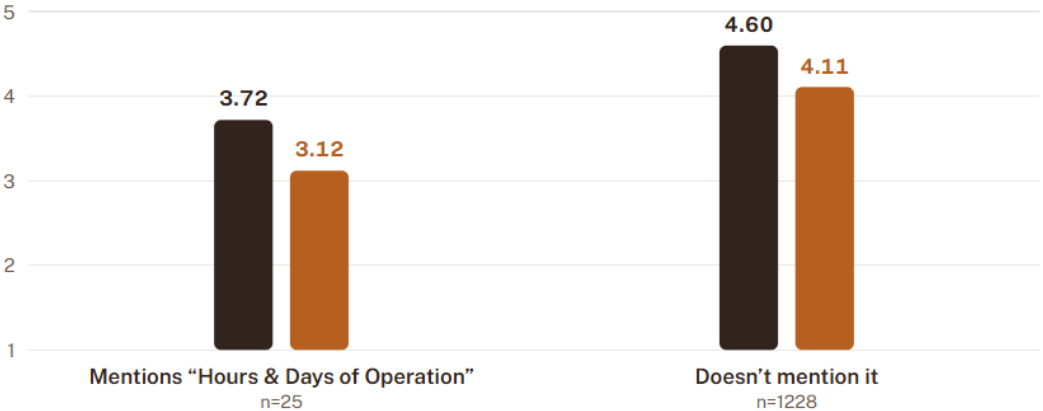


What is a neighbor saying when they mention MOFC's hours and days of operations?

Does mentioning hours/days change the score?

Average sentiment and star rating for reviews that mention this theme vs. those that don't.

■ Stars ■ Sentiment



None of the 115 Google-translated reviews raise this theme, vs. 2.2% of English-original reviews — suggestive, but with only 25 total mentions of this theme, too small a sample to call this a real language gap yet.

Reviews that mention this theme

YEAR	LOCATION	STARS	SENTIMENT	REVIEW
2017	Mid-Ohio Food Collective	3 ★	2	Need to show correct hours of operation. Came down from Columbus on July 17th. Arrived at 6:30 in the morning trying to beat the heat. Google said they opened at 8:00 am and found out they are not open on Monday's. Tuff luck for me I guess. 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔
2017	Mid-Ohio Food Collective	5 ★	4	This is a really good food bank they give you lots. Look them up On th internet for when they are open and what days they are closed and what time they open

Having accurately posted hours of operations seem to be table-stakes for our neighbors – there should not be a need to mention anything about them in a review.

But if they DO mention our hours of operations, it drops both their Google Review scores and the sentiment of their review.

"Google said they opened at 8:00 am and found out they are not open on Monday's. Tuff luck for me I guess."

What does it cost a neighbor to receive service?

Time (e.g., 1-2 hours time commitment)

Opportunity (e.g., a shift at work)

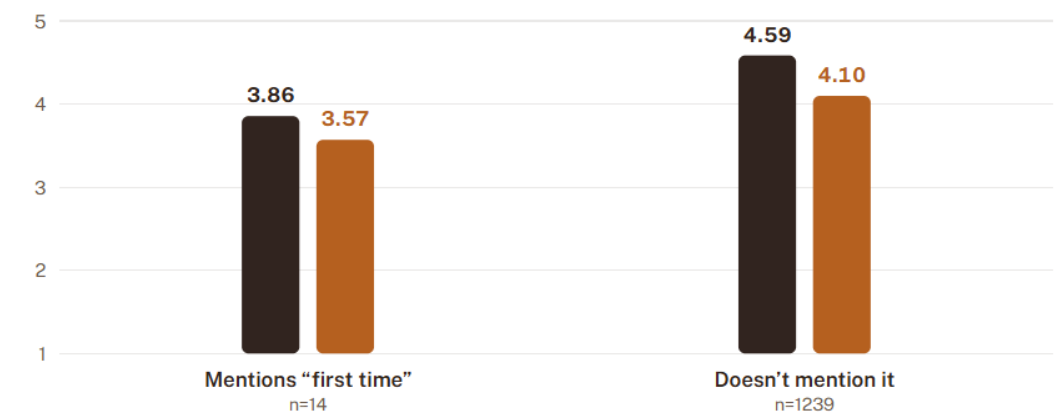
Money (e.g., car fuel, bus pass, childcare costs)

Nicole and her work can help us understand what a "Closed" sign means to a neighbor when they've given up so much to receive service.

What does a first-time experience look/feel like to a neighbor?

Does mentioning “first time” change the score?

Average sentiment and star rating for reviews that mention it vs. those that don't.
■ Stars ■ Sentiment



None of the 115 Google-translated reviews mention “first time”, versus 14 of the 1,138 English-original reviews (1.2%). With this few total mentions, treat the comparison as suggestive rather than a settled pattern.

Matching reviews (14 of 14 shown)

YEAR	LOCATION	STARS	SENTIMENT	REVIEW
2025	Norton Road	2 ★	2	I went here yesterday, for the first time. No meat, no eggs, no milk, no cheese, very limited fruit. Plenty of the stuff that nobody wants (garbanzo beans and prunes). I will try again. And, update the post if it is better.
2025	Norton Road	1 ★	1	I visited this place for the first time yesterday, without knowing what rules they had in place, so I asked one of the guys that was sitting by the front doors if he worked there. His face turned red and stared at me viciously and said, no I don't work in...

MOFC knows if a service visit is the first time the family has received charitable food assistance within our footprint, and/or if it is the first time receiving assistance at a location.

What **anxieties or expectations** do comments mentioning their first-time experience mention?

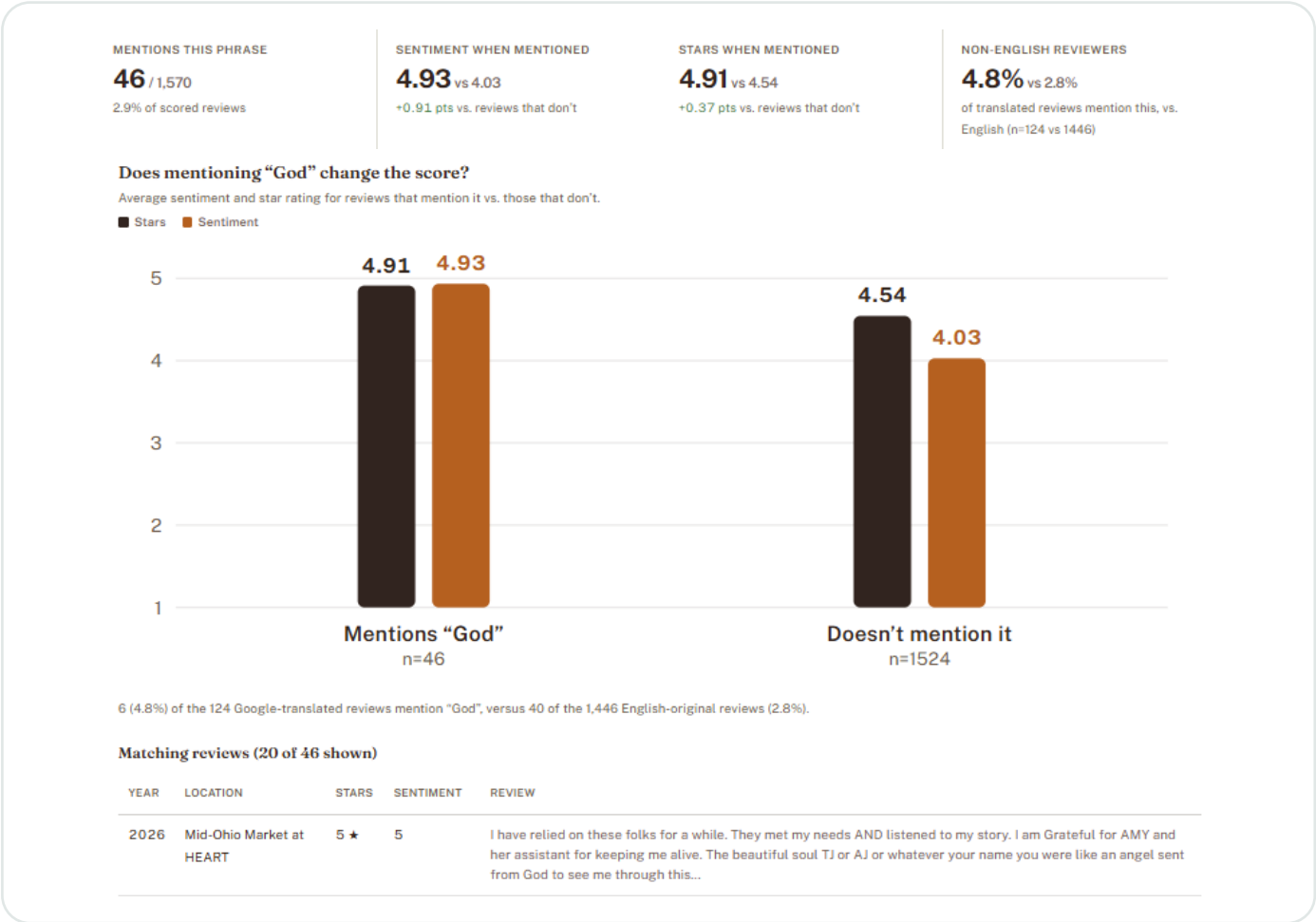
“I went here yesterday, for the first time. No meat, no eggs, no milk, no cheese, very limited fruit. Plenty of the stuff that nobody wants (garbanzo beans and prunes). I will try again. And, update the post if it is better.”

Reviews that expressly mention it was their first-time experience are not as positive overall as reviews that don't mention it.

Nicole and her work can help us discover what fears may accompany a first-time visit, and what can make a MOFC location more welcoming.



How do people express thanks? Are there differences in populations of neighbors?



One final comparison, and it's a reminder that people are extremely grateful for the food that they receive and the support that is provided to them.

Google Reviews provide us further insight into the lives of our neighbors, allowing us to understand how our non-native English speaking neighbors differ from our native English speaking neighbors.

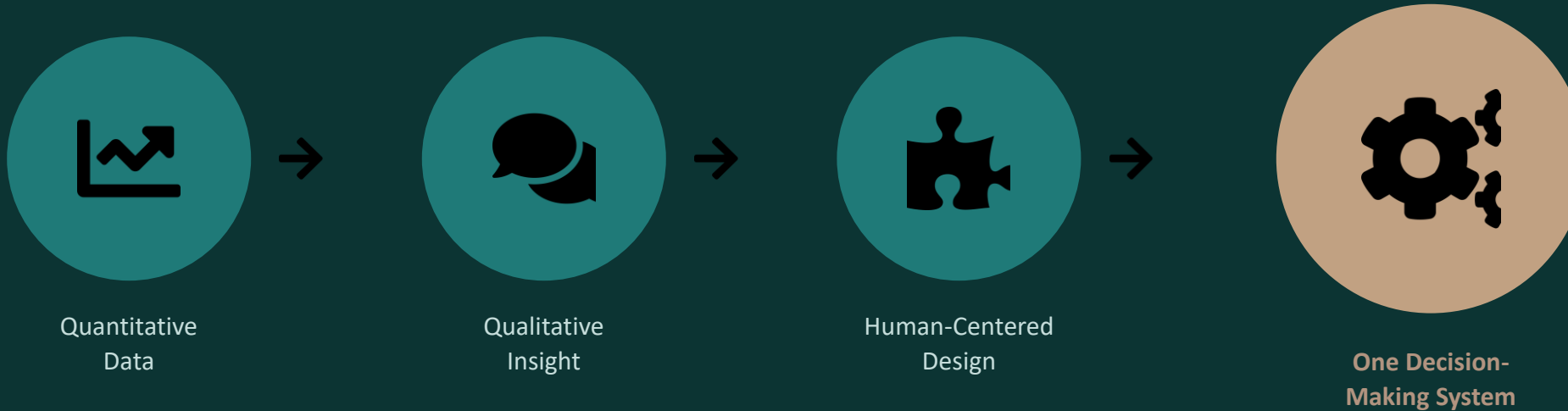
Who mentions God in their Google Review?

4.8% of non-native English speakers
2.8% of native English speakers

Understanding how people express thanks to MOFC for our work can help us better understand how we are perceived in the community and the role that we serve.



The Future



NEXT UP: THE KIDS CAFÉ KIOSK PILOT / GOOGLE REVIEWS DASHBOARD PROMOTION

Testing the prototype with kids to learn from the kids we serve and hear what they have to say about their meal services.
Letting organization leaders explore the Google Reviews Dashboard's wealth of information.

At MOFC, we're working toward a future where quantitative data, qualitative insight, and human-centered design aren't separate activities — they're part of a single decision-making system.



Where could curiosity change your work?

Think of something in your work that the numbers don't fully explain.

What are you still wondering about?

Whose perspective is missing?

What would you ask them?



THANK YOU | QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Let's Connect

Data tells us what is happening. People tell us why.
We'd love to hear your questions, reactions, and what this sparks for your own work.



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