Rural City of Wangaratta

Connect Wangaratta

Community Food Survey Engagement Report

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Having good access to sufficient, nourishing, culturally appropriate and affordable food is important for everyone in our community.

The goal of this survey was to hear from the community about how they access food in the Rural City of Wangaratta, to understand the local food system and identify opportunities for improvement.

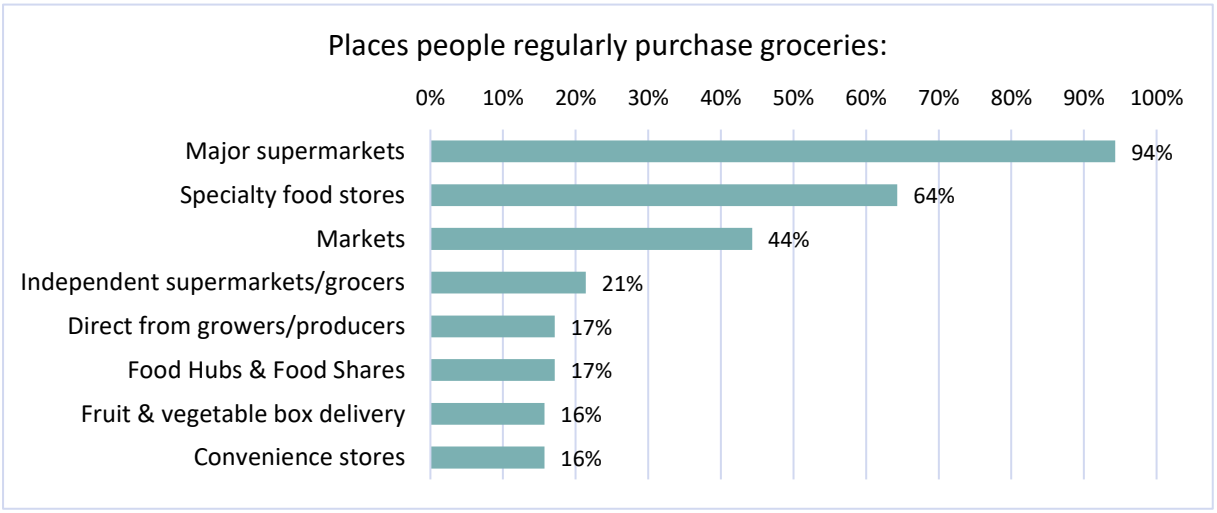
71
Online survey responses

We heard from 71 people across the Rural City of Wangaratta local government area, with over a third of respondents living outside the Wangaratta township. We heard from 60 women, 10 men and 1 non-binary/gender diverse person, and two-thirds of respondents were aged 45 or older.

What we heard

Where and why people shop for groceries

Most people purchase groceries from major supermarkets (94%), including Coles, Woolworths and Aldi. Around two-thirds (64%) of people purchase groceries from specialty food stores, including bakeries, butchers, and cultural food stores. Markets, including farmers markets and community markets, were also commonly named as a place people purchased groceries (44%).



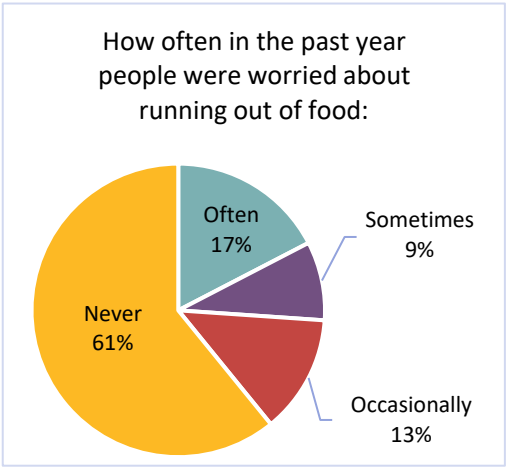
The freshness and quality of the food (51%), supporting local growers and producers (49%), and supporting independent and local stores (38%) were the three most selected reasons for buying food in the locations listed above. The proximity to work or school (33%) and to other shops (23%) were also commonly identified, and one-third of respondents identified that having the cheapest prices was a factor influencing their grocery shopping location.

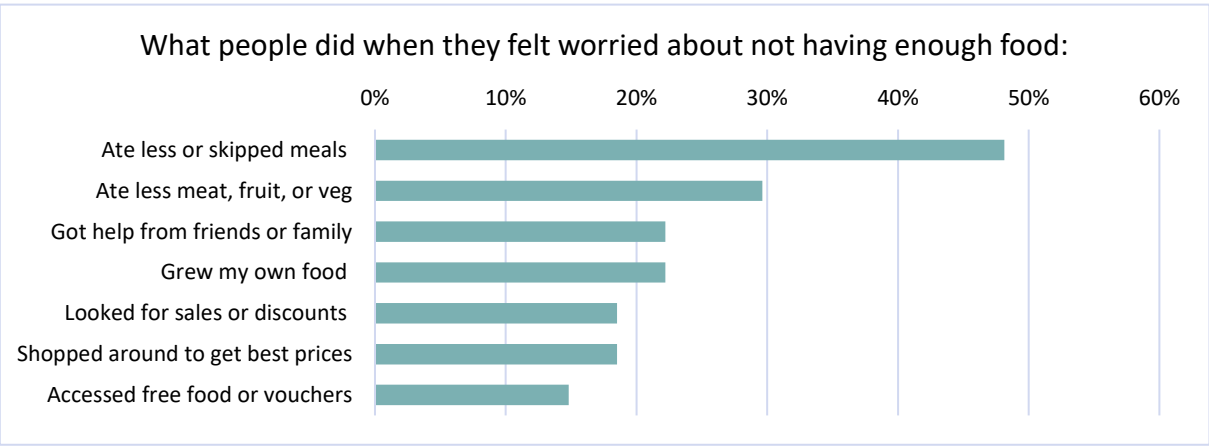


Food Insecurity

Of the 71 people surveyed, 39% had felt worried (often, sometimes or occasionally) about running out of food before being able to buy more, within the past 12 months.

When people felt worried about not having enough food the most common things they did were eating smaller meals or skipping meals (48%) and eating less meat, fruit or vegetables (30%).





Food and farming issues

When asked what they think the most significant issues related to food and farming in the Rural City of Wangaratta area are right now, the most common responses were:

- Cost of living (22)
- Access to locally grown food (15)
- Climate and weather (11)
- Knowledge around nutrition, cooking and growing (9)

Changes in shopping habits

The increases in cost of living have changed how people shop for food:

- Almost 40% of people buy less food than they used to
- A third of people have changed to cheaper brands
- 1 in 4 people reduced the quality of food they purchased, e.g. less fresh food



What the community wants to see more of

When asked what they wanted to see more of in the community, respondents prioritised the following as their top three:

- More opportunities to buy local food within the Rural City of Wangaratta (59.7%)
- Greater visibility of producers in the region (47.8%)
- More community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs etc) (41.8%)

Next steps

The survey results will be used, alongside other data, to identify needs and priorities relating to food access and develop a Local Food Access Needs Assessment.

An action planning workshop will be held later in 2025, facilitated by Sustain: The Australian Food Network to identify local actions to address the needs and priorities raised in the needs assessment.

The Rural City of Wangaratta Sustainable Food Alliance will develop working groups to support implementation of the actions from the workshop.

What is the Sustainable Food Alliance?

The Rural City of Wangaratta is undertaking the VicHealth Local Government Partnership program module 'Building better food systems for healthier communities'. To achieve the goals of the program, Council has engaged with Sustain: The Australian Food Network and collaborated with health services, community groups, schools and individual community members to form the Rural City of Wangaratta Sustainable Food Alliance.

For more information and how to get involved, visit the Community Projects page on the Rural City of Wangaratta website.