



valley vision

FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE POLL

OCTOBER 2021





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Valley Vision

For nearly 30 years, Valley Vision has used research to help governments, businesses, foundations, and community groups better understand the issues facing our region. We believe that knowing and understanding the facts is the best way to establish a common working foundation for collaborative problem-solving. That's why Valley Vision conducts, produces, and interprets research that includes scientific public opinion polls, focus groups, community needs assessments, best practice studies, and other research tools that bring to light the facts local leaders need to make informed decisions that improve our communities.

Capital Public Radio

CapRadio serves California's Capital Region, Central Valley, and Sierra Nevada as the public-supported alternative to for-profit media. As the NPR-member station based in Sacramento, CapRadio connects with communities through seven broadcast stations, live streaming, podcasts, digital communities, live experiences, and more. Known for its award-winning newsroom, CapRadio is recognized as a leader in community-engaged journalism and state government reporting, and CapRadio Music is the exclusive broadcast source of classical and jazz in the region. With

more than 500,000 weekly listeners on-air and online, CapRadio provides a trusted and indispensable source of information, music, and events.

Sacramento State's Institute for Social Research

The Institute for Social Research at Sacramento State University supports community partners in improving programs and policies in the region and throughout the state. Located at the university's downtown location, the Institute offers a broad range of expertise conducting surveys and applied research. Since 1989, our collaborations with government agencies and nonprofit organizations have contributed to public accountability, program fidelity, and the strengthening of communities.

About the Polling Series

Valley Vision and the Institute for Social Research at Sacramento State conduct research via scientifically administered surveys of area resident attitudes since 2017. The survey data informs policymakers and stakeholders on key regional issues by providing on-the-ground public engagement data. The approach used is highly effective and unique — establishing a scientifically valid and demographically representative panel of regional residents that reflects a microcosm of the region as a whole. The panel size is consistently about 1,300 people from six counties – Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado, Placer, Yuba, and Sutter. The panel is weighted to demographically represent the region and each survey achieves a statistically valid margin of error of not more than plus or minus four percent.



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Regional Attitudes Polling Series: Food System Resilience Poll

A program of Valley Vision and CapRadio, fielded by Sacramento State's Institute for Social Research

We are fortunate in the Capital region that we possess a rich bounty of agricultural resources, including fertile soils, a Mediterranean climate, and reliable access to water. In fact, farmers and ranchers in the Sacramento region produce \$17 billion of food annually with more than 250 different crops grown and exported across the globe. We tout year-round farmers' markets, world-class chefs, and top notch educational institutions supporting ag innovation. In recent years, champions across our region — chefs, farmers, advocates, and more — have advanced our food culture, elevating the farm to fork concept into a popular movement that celebrates our region's clearest and most defining asset — FOOD.

For these reasons, the region has adopted the "America's Farm to Fork Capital" branding to take pride in and demonstrate the strength of our food and agricultural assets. Despite these assets, however, we have known for a long time that in our land of abundance, we also face disparities and food insecurity. Further, we know that a majority of our agricultural products are exported from the region while people here at home go hungry. These conditions have only been exacerbated by the pandemic of 2020 and 2021.

Are we living up to our promise of being the nation's Farm to Fork Capital? Through the lens of our farm to fork brand and knowing that we face real challenges, this poll set out to explore people's perceptions around our food system and the connections between food, farm, and community. We wanted to know how well our food system actually meets the needs of all residents. We wanted to know if residents have access to sufficient and nutritious foods that meet healthy dietary needs. We also sought to understand the ways in which the pandemic affected access to food, knowing that millions of people in our country already struggled with getting enough food even before the pandemic. With all the food and agricultural assets that we have, do the lived experiences of our region's residents reflect our vision for what a farm to fork region should be?

In our report, we find examples of strengths in our food system as well as unacceptable instances of food insecurity. This report is designed to help inform system work to build an equitable and accessible farm to fork culture that resonates and benefits all communities. For that purpose, these poll results also helped inform



"We find examples of strengths in our food system as well as unacceptable instances of food insecurity."



Evan Schmidt

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CEO



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Joe Barr
Chief Content Officer



Shannon Williams

Shannon Williams
Executive Director



the Sacramento Region Community Foundation's 2021 Food System Action Plan, (expected to be released October 2021), a robust set of strategies and tactics to guide industry leaders, policy makers, universities, and community groups toward actions that achieve more inclusive, supported, sustainable, and equitable food system practices.

As is always the case about our polling work, it is the beginning of a conversation and an invitation to action. Together, let's achieve an equitable and inclusive farm to fork promise that supports health, prosperity, and sustainability for all and for generations to come.

Best Regards,

Executive Summary

The Capital region's local food system feeds people across the world and is among our strongest regional economic sectors, creating \$12 billion in economic impact in 2018 and supporting more than 55,000 jobs. Additionally, food and ag forms our Farm to Fork Capital culture, a brand that our region proudly enjoys. Additionally, it is critical that our regional food system provides access to healthy food for everyone in our region. A resilient and thriving food system is one that supports a healthy economy, equitable food access, and sustainable practices that ensure agricultural viability well into the future.

Unfortunately, even in the Farm to Fork Capital, there are people still going hungry. Further, the pandemic of 2020 and 2021 has tested and stressed our food system, including our food economy, systems of support, food value chains, and emergency food response. As a result, we saw food insecurity spike as people across the region were struggling to make ends meet.

The promise of the Farm to Fork Capital, combined with a devastating pandemic, leaves us with critical questions about immediate and long-term needs to support a resilient food system. Valley Vision and partners put the

Food System Resilience Poll in the field in August 2021 with the purpose of exploring:

- What is the day-to-day experience of the food system for people across the region, living in the Farm to Fork Capital?
- Are we achieving the Farm to Fork promise for all?

With a survey panel of just over 1,260 respondents in this demographically representative public opinion poll, we gathered data and key findings across the topics that we believe to be key for a resilient, healthy, and vibrant food system.

Key Data Findings

Self-reported food insecurity was higher in the Farm to Fork Capital than the U.S. average overall and disparities in access exist along racial and economic lines and among age groups. Key supports, such as federal stimulus checks during the pandemic, provided important means of increasing food security during a hard time and one-quarter of respondents participated in food assistance programs in the last 12 months. Food shopping to obtain healthy and culturally appropriate food was more difficult for those who are less food secure, and AAPIs in particular were more likely to have difficulty finding culturally appropriate food.



Even though they live in the Farm to Fork Capital, many residents in the region have not had opportunities to grow their own food or participate in a neighborhood garden.

Communities of color and those who are less food secure are more likely to see value in neighborhood gardens, and those who are less food secure are also more likely to be interested in learning how to grow their own food.

Respondents highly value wild, open lands and farmland, and enjoy living in an area with farms and agriculture.

Most respondents have participated in local food and agriculture tourism activities, however a full one-fifth of respondents have not. About half of respondents have knowingly purchased local food, grown within 100 miles of home, however this practice is more likely among white, older, and higher income respondents. Overall, the Farm to Fork brand is a popular one, however Latino respondents as well as those who live in cities were less enthusiastic.

About half of respondents admit to regularly throwing out food, however, the same amount support paying a fee of at least \$5 a month in their utility bill to support food recovery programs that could reduce food waste and hunger.



Finally, the vast majority of respondents are concerned that **climate change poses a real risk to growing food in our region.**

While our Farm to Fork Capital delivers many points of pride, our data shows that we fall significantly short in some of the most fundamental

ways. Food security for all and access to healthy and culturally diverse foods must be the backbone of our Farm to Fork promise. In addition to delivering on basic needs, there are many layers to a Farm to Fork promise: food literacy for every school child, community gardens available in neighborhoods across the region, farms connected with nearby communities, healthy produce in every market, and locally grown food for all, not just the affluent.

A Farm to Fork promise is also made up of champions and people with passion about food, community, and health. Luckily, we have many of those in the Capital region. A few are featured in this report. Valley Vision is also proud to partner with the Sacramento Region Community Foundation on the release of the 2021 Food System Action Plan later this month, detailing system supports and investments needed to support a resilient food system.

“Even though they live in the Farm to Fork Capital, many residents in the region have not had opportunities to grow their own food or participate in a neighborhood garden, especially people of color and people who are less food secure.”



Guest Viewpoint

The Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan



By **Linda Cutler**, CEO of the Sacramento Region Community Foundation

The Action Plan will lay out concrete actions to address food security, such as increasing enrollment in CalFresh, augmenting financial support for food banks, supporting additional capacity for food access communication services, increasing capacity for our emergency food response system, and improving local market support for underserved communities.

The Sacramento Region Community Foundation is proud to partner with Valley Vision on the **Sacramento Region 2021 Food System Action Plan** initiative. The Action Plan, expected to be released publicly in the coming weeks, will create a common framework and identify the strategic priorities, actions, resources, and leadership needed to transform our regional food system, reduce hunger, increase local healthy food consumption, improve health outcomes, and grow our regional economy.

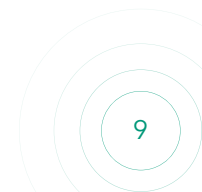
The 2021 Food System Action Plan builds on the [Action Plan of 2015](#), which laid the groundwork for investments, facilities, partnerships, and capacity building to help prepare agencies, institutions, and nonprofits for response and adaptation. Many accomplishments and positive outcomes have occurred since that time, but the massive disruption to the regional economy caused by the pandemic requires that the food system must pivot to acknowledge this new reality, address the deep persistent gaps and disparities, and ramp up to meet new demands.

Developing the 2021 Food System Action Plan involves several months of intensive research and outreach. We also engaged more than 200 stakeholders. The Food System Resilience Poll added to the effort with the addition of nearly 900 survey respondents sharing their experiences and perspectives about all aspects of the food system.

While the Poll provides a window into residents' experience with the food system — access to healthy and affordable food, opportunities to experience food-related activities and agrotourism, and perceptions of food issues in the region — the Action Plan will provide a roadmap for how we can make systemic changes to fundamentally improve these experiences.

For example, the Poll shows that 16 percent of respondents report low or very low food security with disparities across age and other factors. The Action Plan will identify concrete actions to address food security, such as increasing enrollment in CalFresh, augmenting financial support for food banks, supporting additional capacity for food access communication services (such as 2-1-1 or regional expansion of Yolo County's Fresh Text system), increasing capacity for our emergency food response system, and improving local market support for underserved communities. These are just a few of the action steps designed to address the issues that have been identified through the Poll as well as the other engagement, research, and input sessions done for the Food System Action Plan.

The Food Resilience Poll and, upon public release, the Food System Action Plan will be available on Valley Vision's website at www.valleyvision.org. Together they chart a course for the future of our Farm to Fork Capital's food system and how as a region, we can work together to assure it works for all.



Lead Findings

1. Food Access in the Farm to Fork Capital

Fully embracing our region’s identity as the Farm to Fork Capital requires us to look at our own residents’ food access experience: Do they have food security? Can they easily access their choice of food outlet? Are they finding what they need in their grocery stores? These questions are at the heart of what it means to live in the Farm to Fork Capital, and answering them will help improve a critical aspect of our region’s livability.

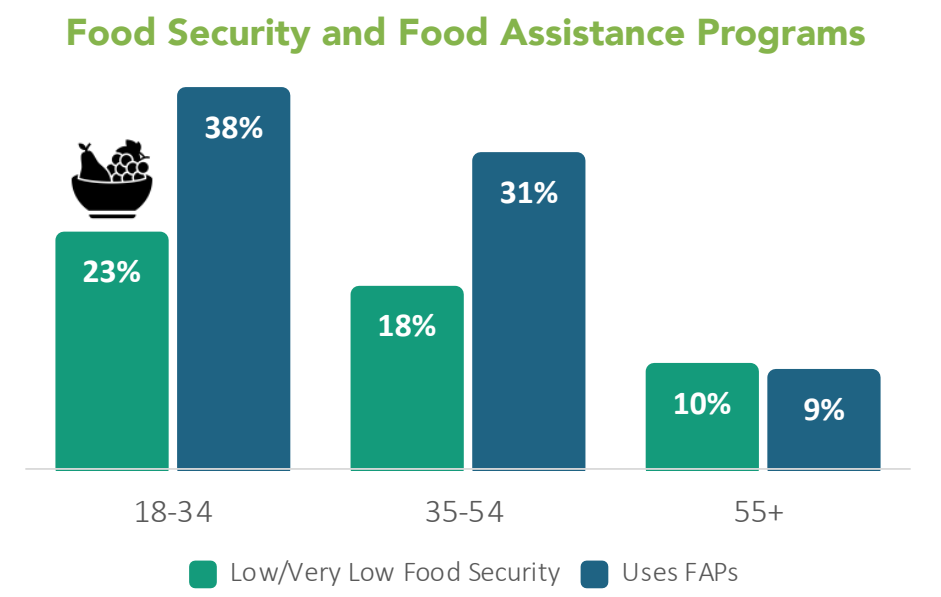
Bottomline:

Self-reported food insecurity was higher in the Farm to Fork Capital than the U.S. average overall.

Food security, as [defined](#) by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” To gauge residents’ food security, this Poll used six questions¹ based on the USDA’s [Six-Item Short Form Survey](#) for identifying food-insecure households and households with very low food security. In line with the USDA’s methodology, residents’ responses were scored, and the total score for each respondent corresponded to either high or marginal food security, low food security, or very low food security.

Overall, 16 percent of respondents self-reported that they have low/very low food security based on the six questions in the survey. Nationally, the [USDA reported](#) that 10.5 percent of U.S. households had low/very low food security at some time during 2020². Other data points suggest that these numbers might be even higher in the Capital region: For instance, a fourth of respondents participated in some kind of food assistance program in the last 12 months and almost half of respondents (47%) used a portion of their stimulus money to buy groceries or food that they could not otherwise afford.

Some groups are more impacted by food insecurity than others. Those who are younger were more likely to self-report low/very low food security and more likely to participate in food assistance programs add (FAPs).

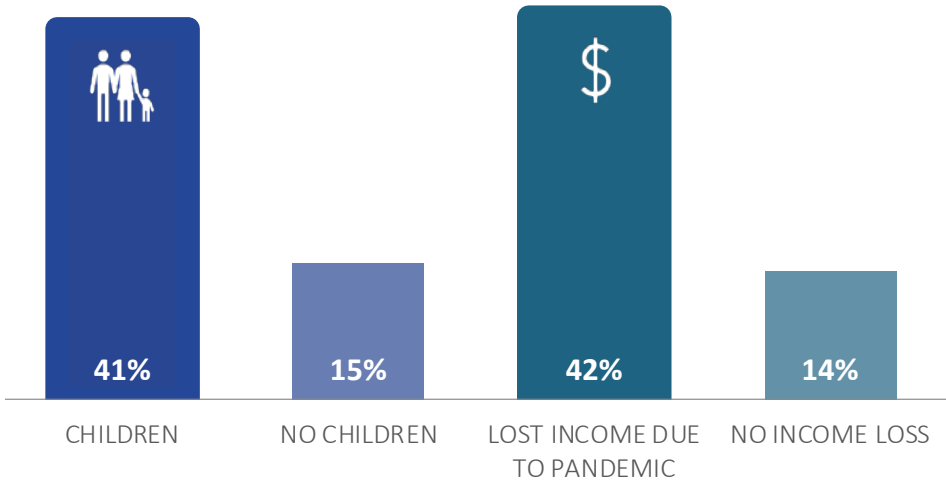


Percentage of those who have low or very low food security and those who participate in Food Assistance Programs (FAPs), by age.



Those with children in the household and those whose income had been reduced by the pandemic were also more likely to participate in food assistance programs.

Food Assistance Programs



Percentage of those who participate in FAPs, by whether they have children in the house and whether they lost income due to the pandemic.

Food security has a direct impact on health. Asked to rate the overall healthfulness of their diet on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being “very poor” and 10 being “excellent,” respondents gave an average rating of 7.2 overall. The most significant difference, however, was between the average rating of those with low/very low food security and those who are food secure: 5.8 versus 7.4.

Bottomline:

Federal stimulus checks during the pandemic were an important means of increasing food security during a hard time.

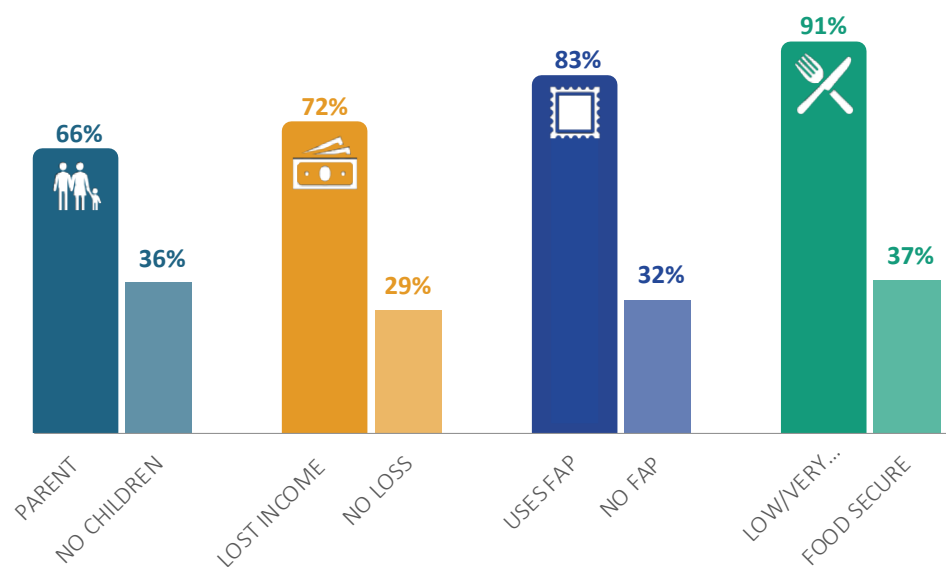
That almost half of respondents used a portion of their stimulus money to buy groceries or food that they could not previously afford indicates that stimulus money likely contributed significantly to food security for the region’s residents over the course of the pandemic. This is consistent with data at a national level. An [analysis of Census Bureau data](#) conducted by the University of Michigan’s Poverty Solutions found that food insufficiency (i.e., not having enough food to eat) fell sharply following the passage of both the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act. The analysis noted that, given how quickly food insufficiency levels dropped, it was likely the result of stimulus money that the federal government was able to quickly deliver to the bank accounts of most U.S. households following these two pieces of legislation.

Households in the region with children were more likely to use part of their stimulus check for food and groceries than those without. This data point from the poll is also consistent with the [Poverty Solutions Census Bureau data analysis](#), which found that the drop in food insufficiency levels following stimulus money distribution was especially significant for households with children.



Those whose income had been reduced by the pandemic, those with low/very low food security, and those who participate in food assistance programs (FAPs) were also more likely to use their stimulus checks for food and groceries.

Used Stimulus Money for Food Due to Pandemic



Percentage of those who used a portion of their stimulus money for food or groceries that they could not previously afford, by various factors.

Bottomline:

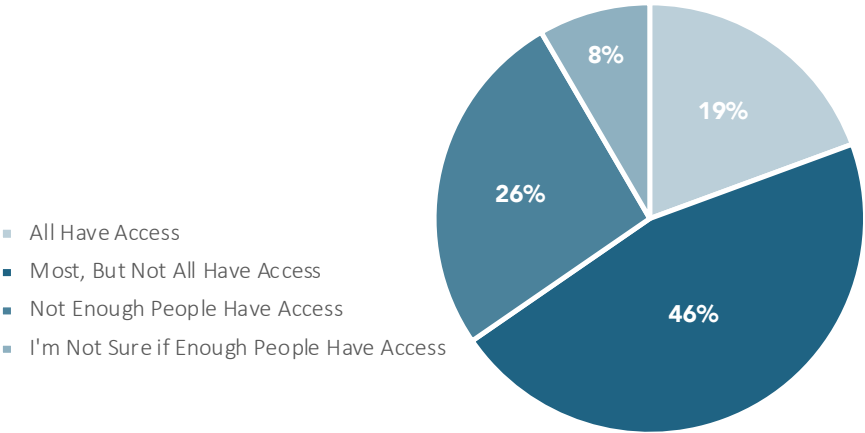
Some people in the region believe that all residents in the community have access to healthy food, but the data shows that this is not the case.

Bottomline:

Racial and economic disparities affect residents' ability to shop for healthy and culturally appropriate foods.

Many in the region expressed care and concern over food security, although there are also misperceptions about food access in the region. One-fifth of respondents agreed that "all residents in my community who want healthy food can access it." With 16 percent self-reporting low or very low food security in the region, our data shows that this is not the case. However, many do recognize the challenges of healthy food access in the region, with 46 percent agreeing that healthy food is available to most but not all, and 26 percent agreeing that not enough people have access to healthy food.

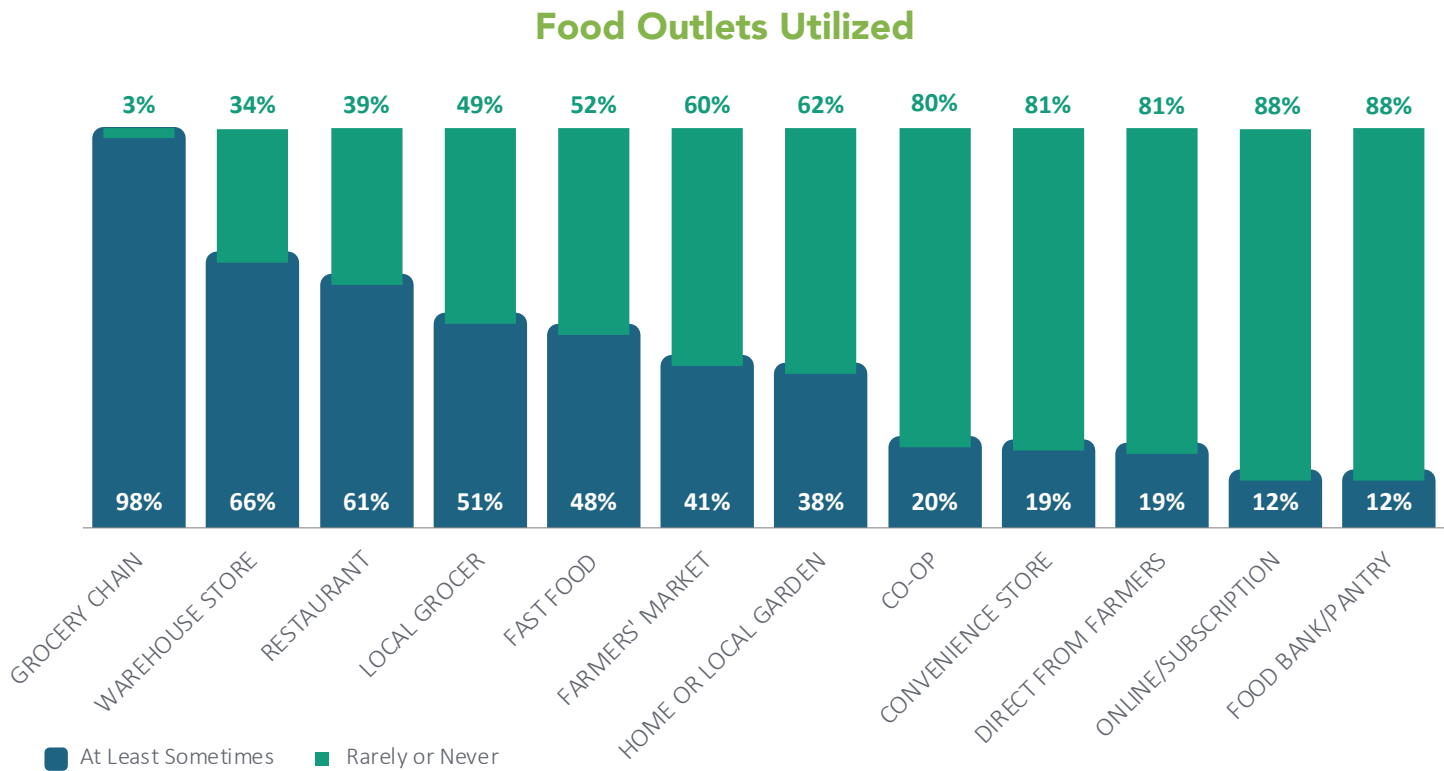
Availability of Healthy Food



Residents' perception about the availability of healthy food in their community.

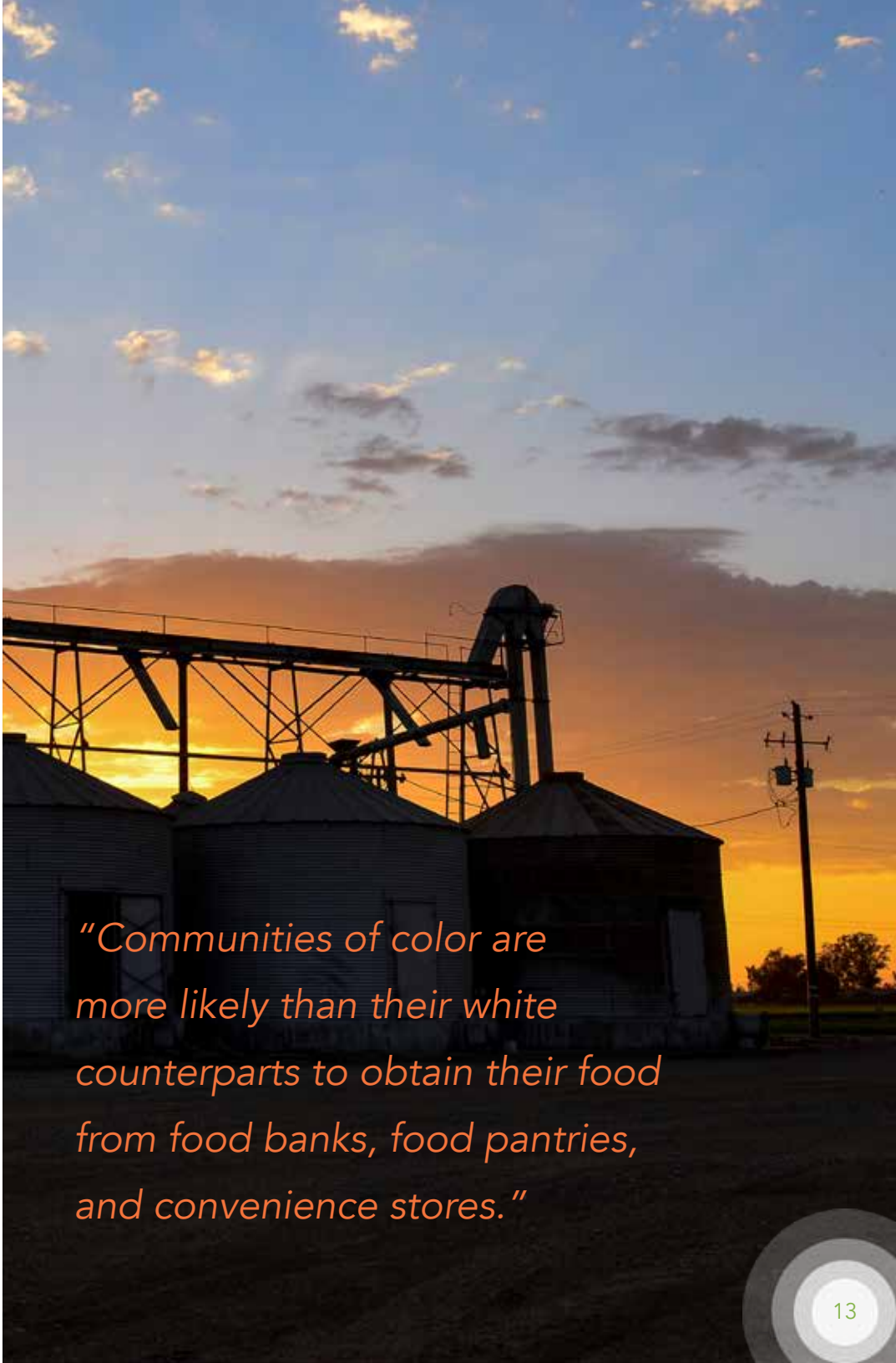
"Many do recognize the challenges of healthy food access in the region, with 46 percent agreeing that healthy food is available to most but not all, and 26 percent agreeing that not enough people have access to healthy food."

The question of food access also includes where people obtain their food, how they get there, and what they buy. Overall, grocery store chains are by far the most utilized food outlet, followed by warehouse stores, and restaurants. Food banks/pantries are the least utilized, however 12 percent of respondents did report using food banks or pantries.



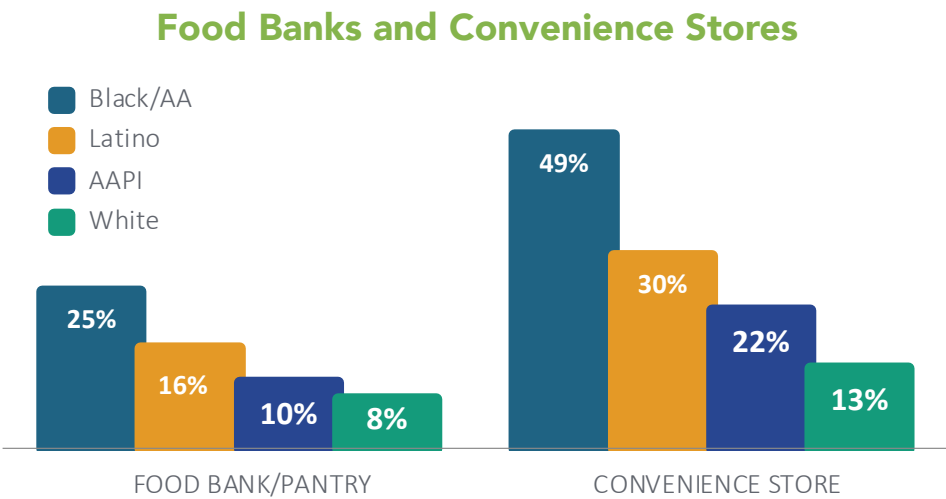
Food outlets most and least utilized.

Choice of food outlets vary across race/ethnicity and levels of food security. For instance, communities of color are more likely than their white counterparts to obtain their food from food banks, food pantries, and convenience stores. This is consistent with data at the national level. Data from Feeding America found that both [Black](#) and [Latino](#) communities are more vulnerable to hunger, particularly during the pandemic.



“Communities of color are more likely than their white counterparts to obtain their food from food banks, food pantries, and convenience stores.”

Additionally, those with low/very low food security and those who participate in food assistance programs are significantly more likely to purchase or obtain food from local groceries, convenience stores, and food banks/pantries.



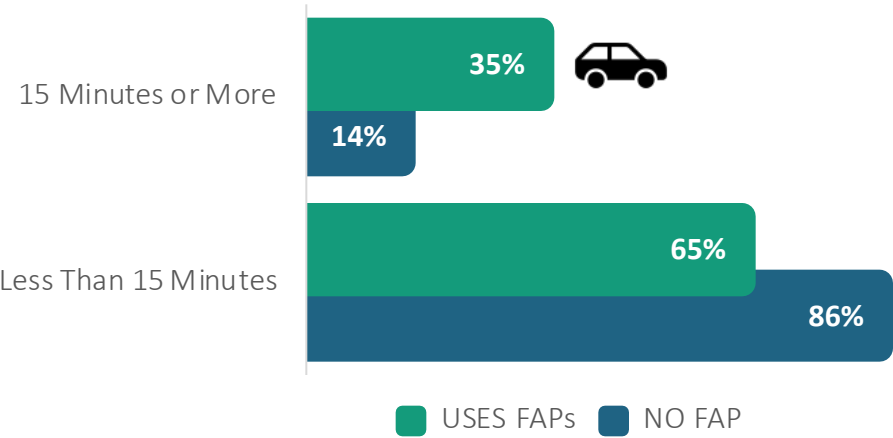
Percentage of those who shop at food banks/pantries or convenience stores at least some of the time, by race.

AAPI – Asian American Pacific Islander
Black/AA – Black/African American



Most respondents drive themselves to their preferred food outlets (84.8%), and two-thirds (64.3%) need only 5-15 minutes of travel time using their preferred mode of transportation. Those who participate in food assistance programs (FAPs) are more likely to have to travel more than 15 minutes to their food outlet of choice.

Travel Time to Food Outlets



Percentage of those who travel less than 15 minutes and percentage of those who travel more than 15 minutes to their choice of food outlet, by participation in FAPs.

Looking at availability of different types of food, most respondents agree that in the past 30 days, their grocery stores have had the variety of fresh produce that they need (87.8%). However, those who earn less and those with low/very low food security are significantly more likely to disagree with that statement.

Access to Ample Variety of Produce



Percentage of those who feel that their grocery store has the variety of fresh produce that they need, by level of food security.



“Those who participate in food assistance programs are more likely to have to travel more than 15 minutes to their food outlet of choice.”

Many people (61.8%) shop at specialized stores to purchase cultural or traditional foods that are specific to their culture, religion, or nationality, and almost two-thirds have a specialized store located right in their city or town. In particular, AAPIs are most likely to shop at least monthly at a specialized store, followed by Latinos, Black/AAs, and those who are white. Those who speak English as a second language were also more likely to shop at specialized stores, as were those who have low/very low food security or whose income was reduced by the pandemic.



Percentage of those who shop at specialized stores by race/ethnicity.

Specialized stores most frequently cited by respondents include Oto’s Marketplace in Sacramento, KP International Market in Rancho Cordova, Ranch 99 in Sacramento and Folsom, La Esperanza in Sacramento, and La Superior in Sacramento.

Notwithstanding the geographic accessibility of these specialized stores to most residents, 13 percent still reported having difficulty obtaining cultural or traditional foods. Further, some people are more likely to have difficulty than others: For instance, looking at responses by race/ethnicity, one-fourth of those who are AAPI (25.6%) said it is difficult for them to get some of the traditional/cultural foods that they want, compared to only 10 percent of those who are white and 6 percent of those who are Black/AA. Those who speak a language other than English as their first language or in their household and those with low/very low food security are also more likely to have difficulty.

Bottomline:

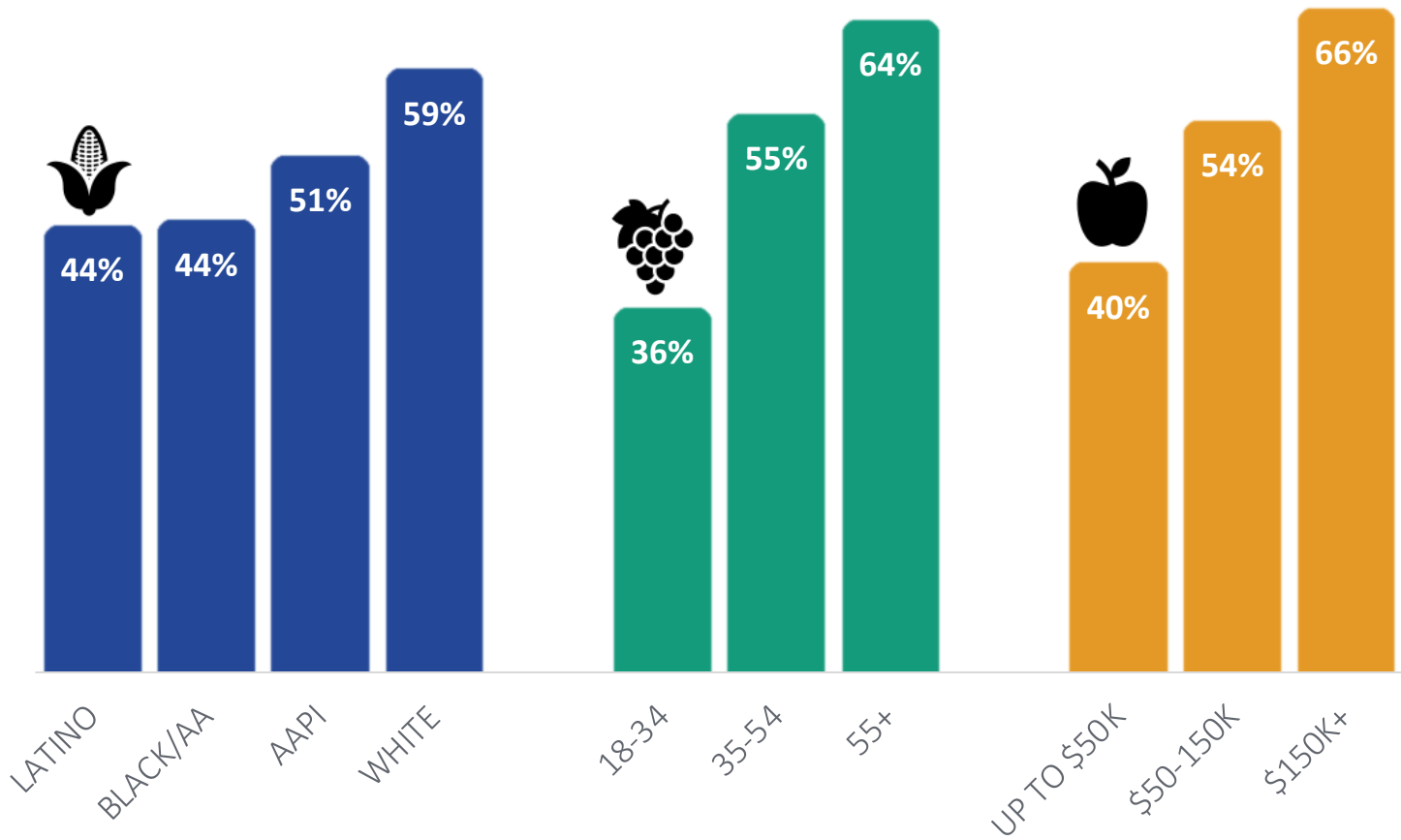
Knowingly purchasing local food, grown within 100 miles of home, is a more likely practice among white, older, and higher income respondents.





Rounding out the question of food access in the Farm to Fork Capital, this poll asked how often residents purposefully purchase food grown locally (i.e., within 100 miles of where they live). Overall, only about half of respondents purchase food grown locally at least monthly (53.2%). Looking at race/ethnicity, those who are white are most likely to purchase food grown locally at least monthly, followed by AAPIs, Black/AAs, and Latinos. Those who are older and those who earn more are also more likely to purchase food grown locally at least monthly.

Choosing Locally Grown Foods



Percentage of those who purchase food grown locally at least monthly, by race/ethnicity, age, and income.

Guest Viewpoint

Changing the trajectory of our food system



By **Mai Vang**
Sacramento City
Councilmember, District 8

I know we have the collective ability to ensure no one in Sacramento goes hungry and to build an equitable and resilient food system that reflects the rich diversity of our community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made one thing clear: that our food system in Sacramento is not working for all. Though we may be America's Farm to Fork Capital, here in our very own backyard many of our families and residents are food insecure. Based on lessons learned during the last year and a half, we have an opportunity to change the trajectory of our food system in a very meaningful way.

In partnership with Mayor Darrell Steinberg, we've launched a Food Justice Task Force in our City to ensure that our most vulnerable communities recover in an equitable manner from the COVID-19 pandemic – focusing on food security and access to healthy, culturally appropriate, and locally grown foods. From our Black, Latino, Southeast Asian, and Indigenous farmers to our local restaurants and food justice advocates on the ground, I know we have the collective ability to ensure no one in Sacramento goes hungry and to build an equitable and resilient food system that reflects the rich diversity of our community.

As we begin to make these plans, it's essential that we include the voices of communities often left behind, organizers on the ground who provide direct services to our communities in need and data provided by organizations like Valley Vision to ensure we take a holistic look at the real needs of everyday Sacramentans. The findings in the Food System Resilience Poll are deeply connected to the racial injustice in this country. While we cannot dismantle this system alone, we can begin to disrupt and transform the food system together by aligning the fights for food and racial justice.

Food is so central to each of our lives and food is central to racial justice. We have a pressing moral responsibility to act collectively and decisively as we recover from the pandemic. Our call to action in the City and for the Greater Sacramento region must include short and long-term investments towards multiple community-based food strategies that center on those most in need. I look forward to working and fighting alongside others to make real progress so every child, family, and community can live a happier and healthier life.

2. Personal Experiences with the Farm to Fork Capital

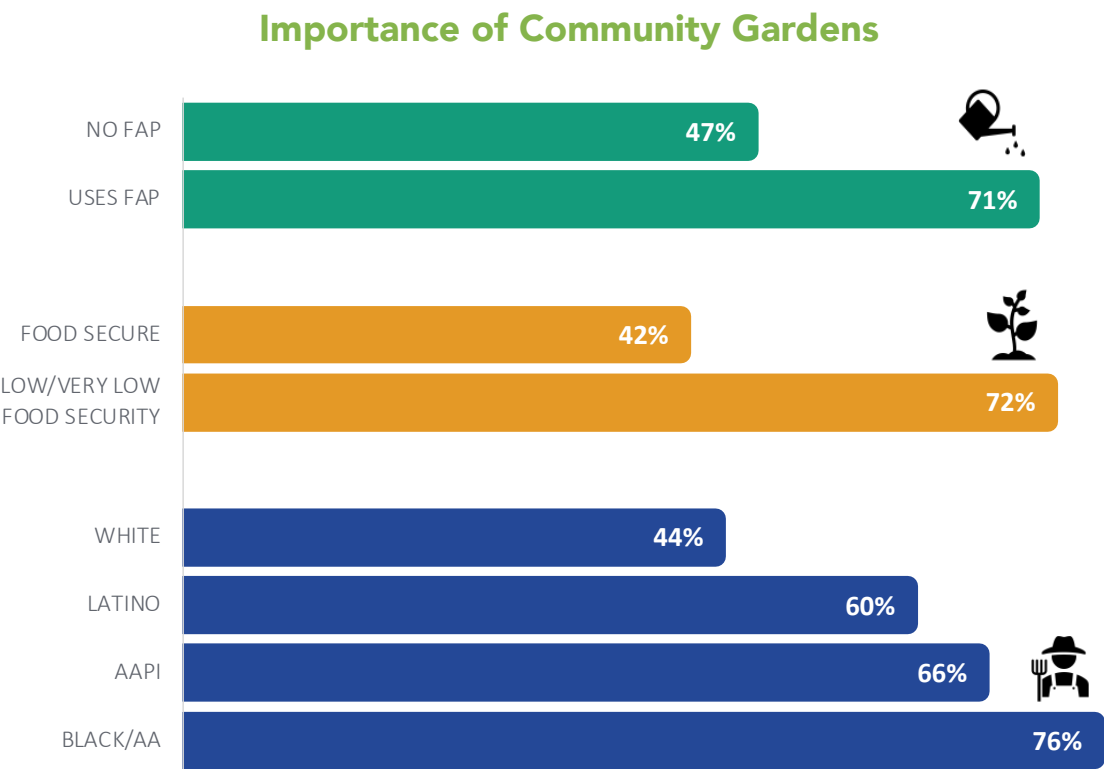
This poll looked at residents’ personal experiences with food and agriculture in the Farm to Fork Capital, including their self-assessment of the healthfulness of their diet, their access to gardens, and their exposure to food and agriculture-related skills and activities. Together, with the data points presented in the previous section on food security and food access, residents’ personal experiences provide a fuller picture of whether they wholly benefit from the region’s Farm to Fork Capital promise.

Bottomline:

Even though they live in the Farm to Fork Capital, many residents in the region have not had opportunities to grow their own food or participate in a neighborhood garden.

As part of our inquiry into personal experiences, this poll looked into residents’ access to gardens for growing their own food, as well as how important they think community gardens are in the neighborhood. Overall, less than half of respondents (45.5%) have their own garden or access to a garden to grow their own food. Among those who do not, the most commonly cited reason was a lack of space (25%), followed by a lack of interest, and a lack of time.

About half of respondents (52.9%) think that community gardens in the neighborhood are important. Looking at responses by race/ethnicity, Black/AAs are significantly more likely to think that community gardens are important, followed by AAPIs, Latinos, and those who are white. Those on food assistance programs and those with low/very low food security are also more likely to think that community gardens are important.



Percentage of those who think that community gardens in neighborhoods are important, by race/ethnicity, food security, and participation in FAPs.

Asked about their interest in learning how to grow their own food, 41 percent said that they are either interested in taking classes about growing their own food or are currently taking classes. Notably, those who have low/very low food security are significantly more likely to be taking class or interested in taking classes (60.3% versus 37.6%).

Although there are opportunities to participate in local food and agriculture tourism across the region, close to one-fifth of respondents (18.1%) reported that they have never done so. Among those who have, the most commonly cited tourism experiences were eating food from a farm, visiting a brewery or winery, and going to an agricultural food or drink festival. In terms of personal exposure to some other food-related activities, almost all respondents reported having at least some exposure to cooking and healthy eating (90.5% and 91.8% respectively), but only 75 percent had at least some exposure to gardening.

Bottomline:

One-fifth of respondents have not participated in local food and agriculture tourism activities.



When asked about their interest in learning how to grow their own food, 41 percent said that they are either interested in taking classes about growing their own food or are currently taking classes.

Guest Viewpoint

Delivering Healthy Food to Everyone Requires Planning and Attention



By **Shawn Harrison**,
Founder and Co-Director
of Soil Born Farms

The recent Food Resiliency Poll, combined with an updated Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan, provide the intentional and forward-thinking action planning that our local food system requires.

Personal Food Experiences and Farm Connections

Many years ago when I was just starting Soil Born Farms in Sacramento, I was deeply influenced by a book I stumbled upon called *How Great Cities are Fed*. Two insights were revealed by this book. The first was that feeding large concentrations of people every day, year-after-year requires a herculean effort. The second insight was that unlike other systems that deliver essential services to large populations such as education, water, transportation, or waste management, delivering healthy food to everyone receives very little planning attention at the local or regional level. This revelation has certainly shaped the work of Soil Born Farms and explains why I am so excited about Valley Vision's work in the food space.

The recent Food Resiliency Poll, combined with an updated Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan, provide the intentional and forward-thinking action planning that our local food system requires. Importantly, the plan reveals that while our region is blessed with many of the resources and skills needed to produce healthy food, there is still much work to be done in order to ensure that our food system can simultaneously deliver healthy food to everyone in our community, protect the environment, and be economically viable.

A couple of significant findings stand out that should capture our attention, and which merit immediate action. Perhaps most significantly, in our region of agriculture abundance, 12 percent or nearly 300,000 residents are experiencing daily hunger. Data shows that our most underserved communities are experiencing food insecurity at significantly higher levels. This is unacceptable.

The ways in which people experience food — through cooking in their homes, gardening in community spaces, or participating in nearby agritourism activities in the region — is also integral to quality of life and long-term health. The reality is, however, that many people living in our self-proclaimed Farm to Fork Capital of America do not have access to these opportunities. For instance, less than half of respondents (45.5%) have their own garden or access to a garden to grow their own food, and close to one-fifth of respondents (18.1%) have never participated in any local food or agriculture tourism, such as eating food from a farm, visiting a brewery or winery, and going to an agricultural food or drink festival.

The good planning currently underway, combined with greater leadership and strategic investment can all help us build a truly health-promoting food system for everyone. Let's seize the opportunity before us and commit ourselves to a healthier future.



3. Regional Attitudes Towards the Farm to Fork Capital

Even before the region’s official branding as the “Farm to Fork Capital” in 2012, its 1.5 million acres of farmland and its business’ and restaurants’ reliance on regionally-sourced produce meant that “Farm to Fork” has long been key to the region’s food system. This poll looks into residents’ current concerns and perceptions of the Farm to Fork Capital, including its branding, community access to food, and land use.

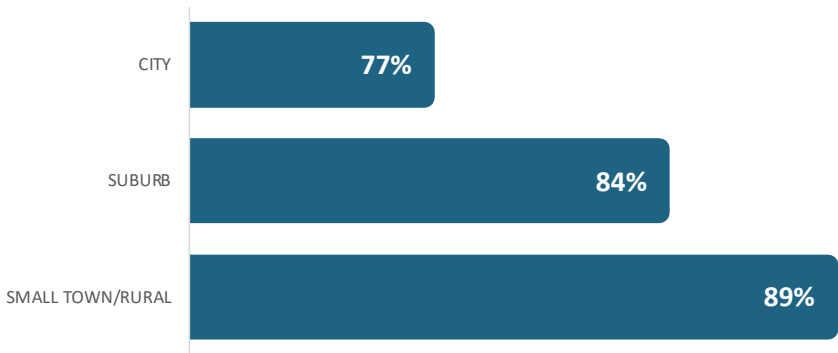
Bottomline:

The Farm to Fork brand is popular overall, but is less popular among those who live in cities and Latino respondents.

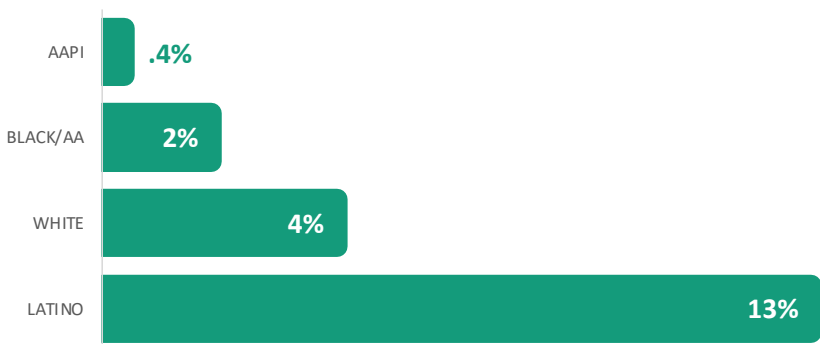
When asked about their feelings towards the region’s “America’s Farm to Fork Capital” brand, 82 percent of respondents agreed that it is a positive brand for the region. Responses varied significantly across different races/ethnicities, as well as between those who live in small town/rural communities and those who live in cities. Latinos were significantly more likely than other races/ethnicities to disagree with the statement that “America’s Farm to Fork Capital” is a positive brand for the region (13.5% of Latinos disagreed, versus 4.3% of those who are white, 2% of Black/AAs, and .4% of AAPIs).

Residents of small town/rural communities indicated a stronger affiliation to the “America’s Farm to Fork Capital” identity, with 89 percent of them saying that they agreed that it is a positive brand for the region, versus just 77 percent of those who live in cities.

Agree “Farm to Fork Capital” is Positive Brand



Disagree “Farm to Fork” Brand is Positive



Percentage of those who agree or strongly agree that the “Farm to Fork Capital” is a positive brand for the region, by race.



Bottomline:

Respondents highly value wild, open lands and farmland, and enjoy living in an area with farms and agriculture.

When it comes to land use, most respondents (87.6%) said it was important for them to live in an area that has local farms or agriculture. Respondents also made clear how much they value preserving certain kinds of undeveloped land. More than half feel very strongly about preserving open space (58.3%), and almost two-thirds feel very strongly about preserving wild space (64.5%) and farmland (60.8%). In fact, when asked to rank in order of importance four different land uses, preservation of open space for plants and animals and preservation of regional farmland were consistently ranked higher (an average ranking of 2 and 2.1 respectively) over building new housing and building new commercial and retail areas (an average ranking of 2.7 and 3.2 respectively).

Bottomline:

Over half of respondents throw away food but most see the value in food recovery programs that help reduce food waste and address hunger.



When asked about how often they throw away food because it was not eaten, over half of respondents said that they throw away food at least occasionally (52%). Those whose income has been reduced by the pandemic are less likely to throw away food, however even in this group, the percentage of those who do is still significant (43.6%).

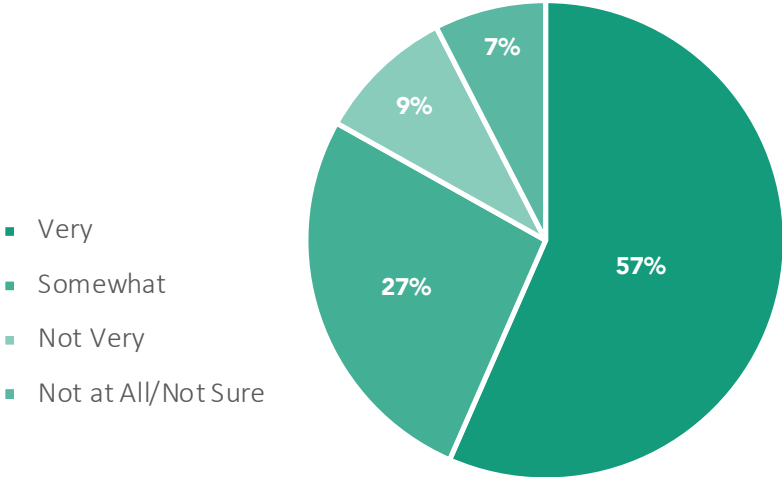
Even so, when asked whether they would be willing to support food recovery programs (defined in the questionnaire as “programs that help reduce hunger and food waste for the local community by collecting edible food that would otherwise go to waste and redistributing it to feed people in need”), more than three-fourths (78%) said they are willing to pay at least one dollar, and almost half (48.7%) said they are willing to pay at least \$5 through their garbage or utility bills.

Climate change poses a real risk to growing food in our region in the views of most respondents.

California’s Climate Change Assessment, advances actionable science to inform decision-makers on solutions to minimize the threat of climate change. The Assessment’s Sacramento Valley Region Report, a regional report led by the University of California Davis, notes that the increased risks of higher temperatures, flooding, drought, and fire brought about by climate change may reduce the economic viability of some agricultural lands in the Sacramento Valley, alter the variety of crops that can be grown in the region, and diminish the productivity of some crops, while increasing the productivity of others.

Residents in the region are aware of and concerned about climate threats. When asked how concerned they were about the impact of climate change (i.e., drought, flood, extreme heat, and poor air quality) on growing food in our region, more than half (56.6%) said they were very concerned, 26 percent said they were somewhat concerned, 9 percent said they were not very concerned, and only 7 percent said they were not at all concerned or did not care. Those who are younger (18 to 34 years old) were most likely to be concerned.

Concern over the impact of climate change on food growth



Respondents' level of concern that the impact of climate change (drought, flood, extreme heat, poor air quality) may have on growing food in our region.



**Valley Vision Vantage
Point: A Farm to Fork
Culture for All**



By **Evan Schmidt**, Valley Vision Chief Executive Officer

Our prized farm to fork culture cannot thrive without the work and passion of many individuals and organizations. Valley Vision applauds the many champions, activists, farmers, educators, chefs, restaurateurs, service providers, and others who support our food system every day.

As we start the long road of pandemic adaptation and recovery, these poll results provide our region’s leaders important insights to confront our food system weaknesses, and also reflect on extraordinary demonstrations of community resilience as people came together to solve problems the pandemic presented.

The emergency food deployment is an example of both. We saw a marked increase in food distributed by food banks across the region — distributing 40 percent more food to roughly 50-100 percent more people compared to pre-pandemic. We saw new organizing and mobilizing to feed people from restaurateurs, community-based organizations, and others.

Still, food insecurity spiked in 2020 and has only decreased once stimulus checks and organized efforts landed in communities. In fact, our poll found that almost half of respondents used at least a portion of their stimulus money to buy food they wouldn’t otherwise had been able to afford. Despite these supports, food insecurity remains higher today than it was in 2019, reflecting the hardships of the pandemic on people’s lives and the systemic challenges of food insecurity.

Another threat to our agriculturally-anchored region is climate change. When Valley Vision partnered with the Sacramento Region Community Foundation in 2015 to create the first [Food System Action Plan](#), climate change and environmental sustainability were recognized as key

themes, but the level of crisis was nowhere near what it is today. Poor air quality, extreme heat, and severe drought all threaten our long-term agricultural viability.

What are some needed actions to support food security and agricultural viability? From Valley Vision’s perspective, it starts with concerted and coordinated strategies, investments, policies, and actions that support:

- Agricultural viability
- Environmental sustainability
- Food economy
- Careers in food and agriculture
- Healthy food access,
- Food, farm and nutrition education

Valley Vision and the Sacramento Region Community Foundation’s 2021 Food System Action Plan details the system supports and investments needed to achieve a resilient food system. While the poll explores lived experiences by those in the community, the Action Plan addresses supports needed to overcome our challenges.

Food and food culture bring us together, nourish us, and connect us to the land. “Farm to Fork” represents the best of who we can be as a region. That is, communities supporting healthy food access for all people, farmers, stewardship of the land, and the connections and cultures that our food represents.



Survey Methodology

Institute for Social Research at Sacramento State University

Summary

Since 2017, the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at Sacramento State University, in partnership with Valley Vision, has used an online survey panel to collect public opinion information about the Greater Sacramento Region. Survey panels are a representative group of individuals who have agreed to participate in multiple surveys over time. In response to the declining response rates and reliability associated with telephone surveys, online survey panels have become an alternative way to gather data about a specific region or population (e.g., GfK's Knowledge Panel, Yougov's Omnibus Panel, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC)'s Amerispeak Panel, and the Pew Research Center's American Trends. Individuals were recruited into the panel by an invitation postcard, which was sent to a random sample of Sacramento Valley households. Any adult in the household could join the panel by going to the online profile or by calling ISR to indicate a preference to participate with mail-in surveys. The strength of this probability-based sampling method is that virtually everyone in the Greater Sacramento Valley had a chance of being included. The most recent recruitment for the Valley Vision panel occurred in January 2021.

The current panel is made up of 1,261 residents from El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Yuba, Sutter, and Yolo counties. Panelists have the option of receiving a \$5 electronic gift card every time they complete a survey. Statistical weighting is used to ensure that survey responses represent the Greater Sacramento Valley.

Sampling and Recruitment | The Greater Sacramento Valley Panel uses probability-based sampling methods. Specifically, to recruit a random sample of Sacramento Valley residents we use the United States Postal Service Delivery Sequence File (USPS DSF) of California residential addresses (stratified geographically by county and Hispanic population), as a sampling frame. We send postcards or letters to the sampled residences and invite adult residents to join the panel (via a URL address, or by calling us to indicate a preference for mail participation). The strength of this sampling method is that virtually everyone in the population has a chance of being included in the sample, but those sampled must also choose to do so. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, Sacramento reviewed and approved recruitment procedures outlined above for protecting the rights of human research subjects.



Consent and Initial Profile | During recruitment (and at the beginning of each subsequent survey), panelists learn that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to opt out at any time. They also learn that their survey responses are strictly confidential. Immediately upon agreeing to join the panel, panelists complete a 15-minute survey that includes questions about their demographics, background, interests, personality, political identity, and household composition. This profile information is merged with future survey data collections, thereby reducing the need to ask panelists to answer these questions with each survey administered.

Survey Procedures | ISR uses the Qualtrics Research Suite online survey platform to administer surveys. The research team optimizes all surveys for completion on mobile phones and tablets, and provides Spanish translations. Panelists receive reminders to complete the surveys every three days following the initial invitation. All subsequent surveys have been offered in both English and Spanish. Each time a panelist completes a survey, they receive a \$5 Tango gift card, delivered directly to their email inbox (or home), which is redeemable at most online retailers. Panelists have the option to receive the Tango gift card or “donate” it back to the study so more people can participate.

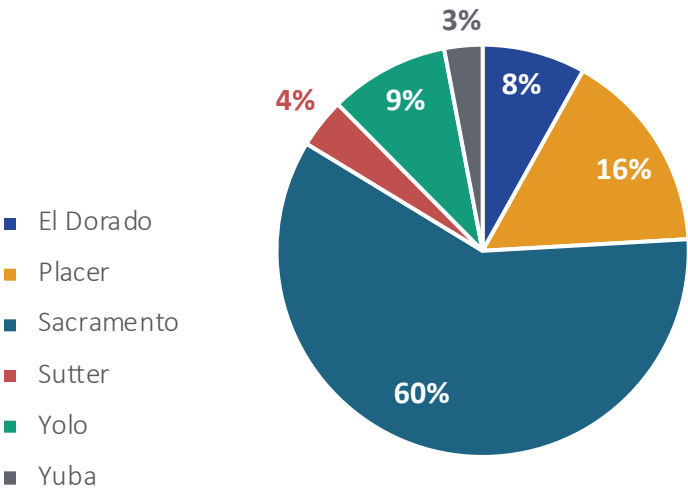
Survey Weighting and Analysis | For each survey, the weighting protocol proceeds in stages. First, the base weights are computed to reflect the various selection probabilities for respondents selected from different sampling frames. Second, we adjust for nonresponse and under-coverage by calibrating the base weights to known population-based control totals for gender and age, race/ethnicity, education, income and county using a ‘raking’ process. The population benchmarks are obtained from the most recent Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 5-year estimates and Nielsen Claritas estimates. Finally, we “trim” the raked weights to reduce extreme values. The weighting process ensures that the responses from the panelists responding to the survey will statistically represent the demographics of the Greater Sacramento Valley.

Surveys are analyzed by reporting out the percent of panelists (who are representative of the Greater Sacramento Valley) providing responses to the various questions. Survey results are also often broken down by panelist characteristics, such as gender, income levels, race, and other key demographic information. When the survey responses are broken down by these categories (or disaggregated into cross-tabulations), a statistical test is run to ensure that the differences among these groups are statistically significant (i.e., any differences are not the result of “noise” in the data).

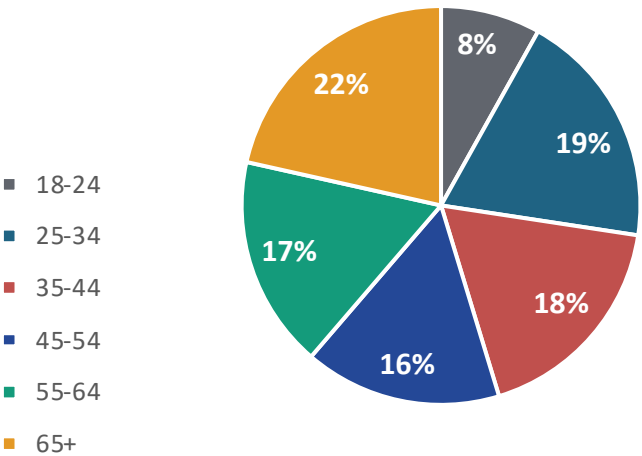


Survey Panel Demographics and Geographic Profile

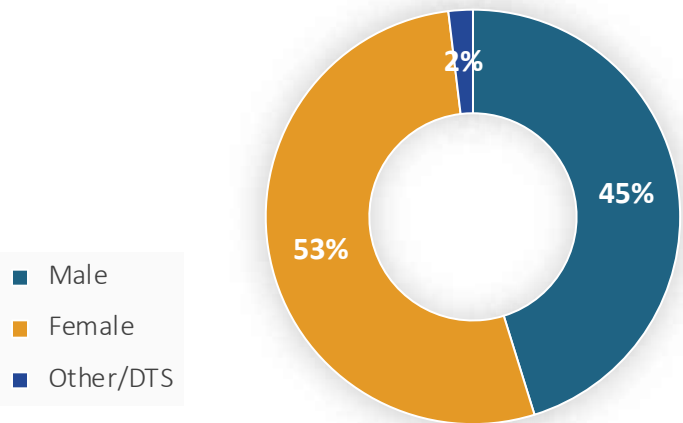
County of Residence



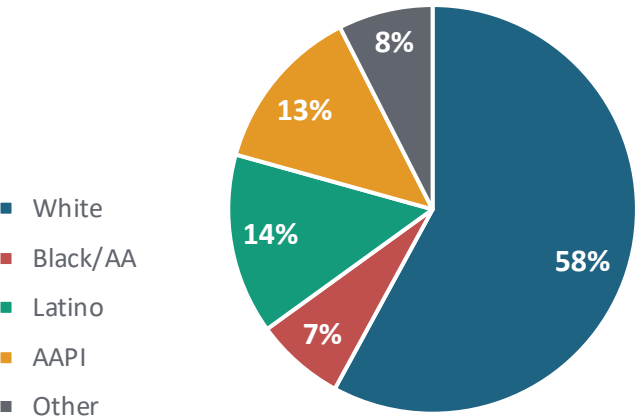
Age



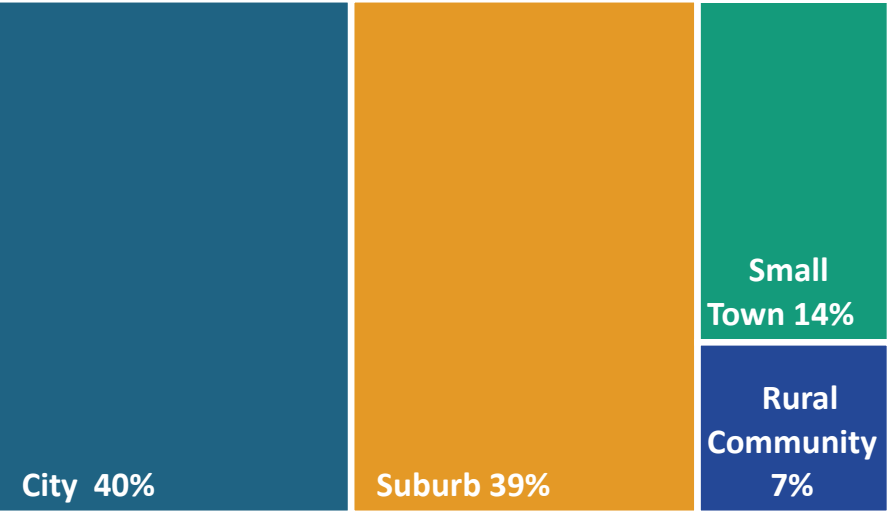
Gender



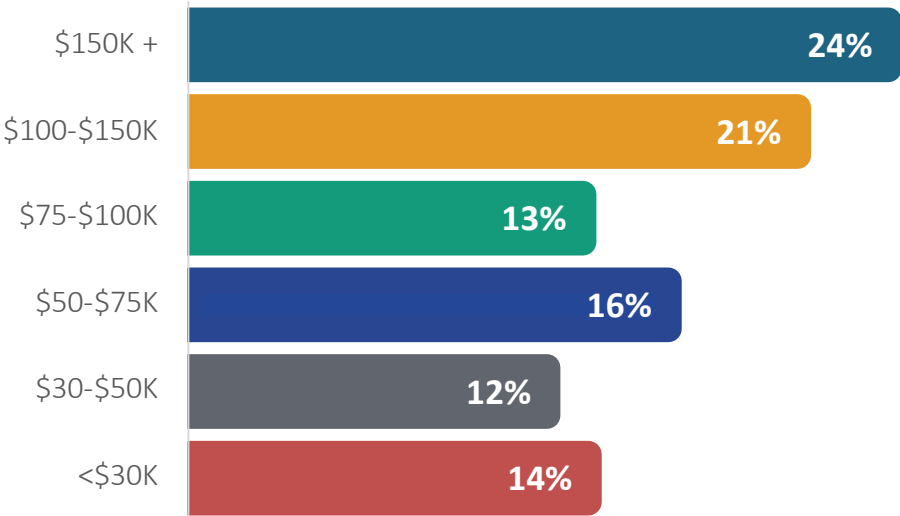
Race



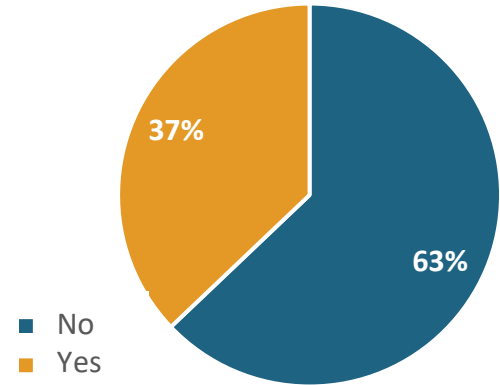
Lives in a ...



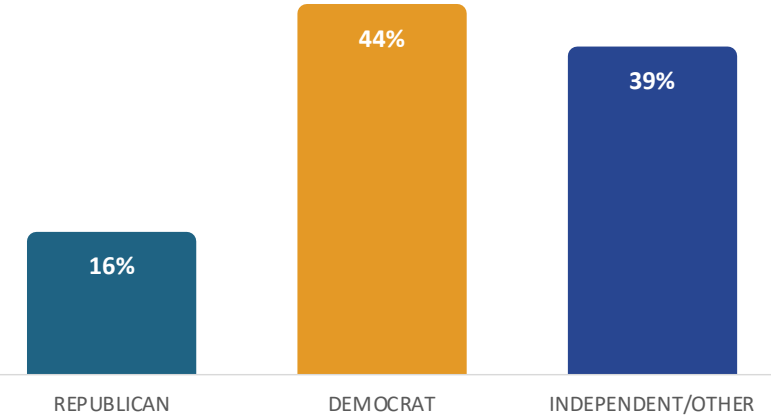
Household Income



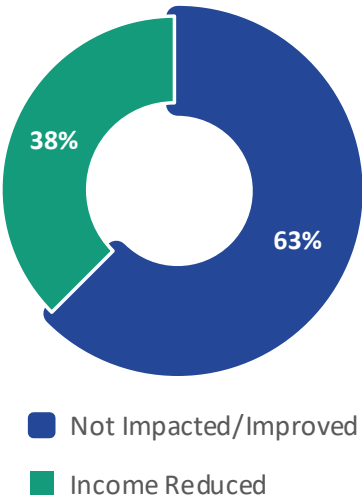
Children Under 18 in the Home



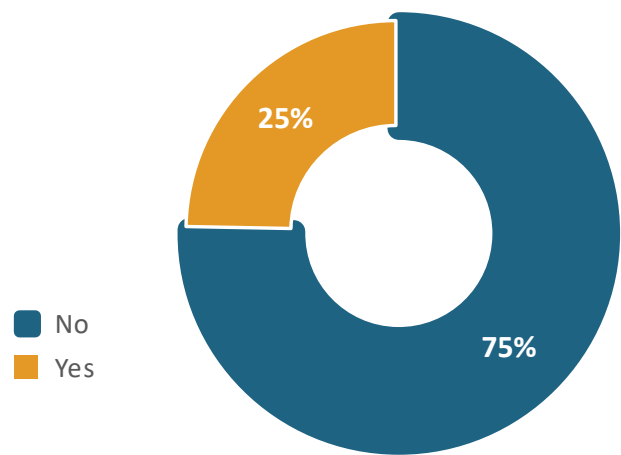
Political Party



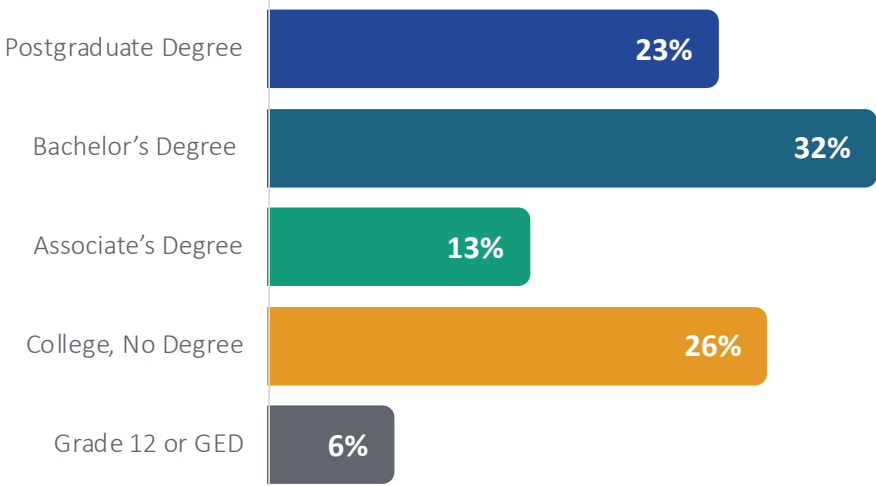
Impact of Pandemic on Income



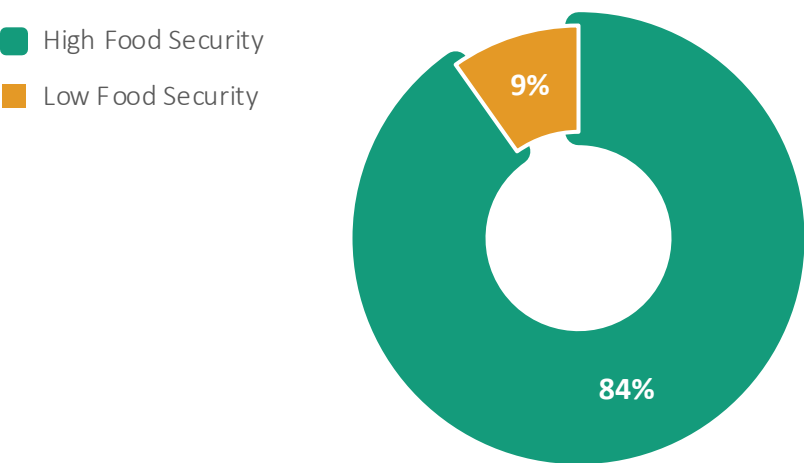
Participates in Assistance Program



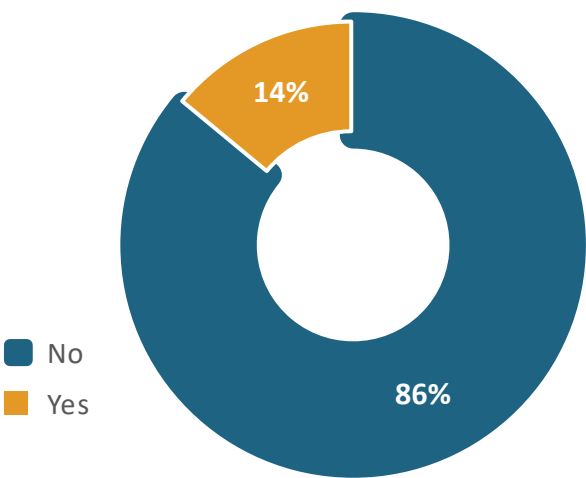
Education



Food Security Level



Student



Endnotes

¹ Please indicate how often each of the following statements are true: In the last 12 months (since June 2020):

...the food that we bought in my household just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true, Don't know).

...we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals in my household (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true, Don't know).

...adults in my household cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food (Yes, No, Don't know).

... how often did adults in your household cut the size of meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough food? (Almost every month, Some months but not every, Only one or two months, I don't know)

...did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes, No, Don't know).

...were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes, No, Don't know).

²To measure this, the USDA used the U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module which contains a series of 18 questions. The USDA's Six-Item Short Form Survey, which was used to measure food security in this Food Resilience Poll, is an acceptable substitute to the 18 question survey. However, it does not directly ask about children's food security, and does not measure the most severe range of adult food insecurity, in which children's food intake is likely to be reduced.





valley vision

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