

CHAPTER 6 FOOD CONSUMPTION: SURVEY RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the development, data collection and data analysis strategies, and the major findings of the Missoula County Food Consumption Survey. During the spring of 2004, surveys were administered to 624 Missoula County residents to provide increased understanding of local food consumption issues. The survey was designed to respond to the following question developed by the Community Food Assessment Steering Committee: “What concerns do Missoula County residents of various income levels have about food (including quality, access and transportation to food outlets, cost, eating behaviors and choices), and what do they perceive as the County’s food-related assets?” Understanding food consumers’ concerns, food-related behaviors and food-related assets in Missoula County is a first step toward identifying and advocating for necessary changes in the local food system.

MISSOULA COUNTY FOOD CONSUMPTION SURVEY DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

Data Collection and Analysis

Students and faculty developed the Missoula County Food Consumption Survey based on a review of food consumer surveys used in other communities in the United States and through consultation with the Steering Committee and others informed about food-related issues in the county. The survey contained both open- and closed-ended items.¹ We pre-tested the survey by administering it to individuals with varying educational and income levels and made revisions based on their feedback.

We used three different methods to survey county residents about food consumption issues – mall intercept,² mail-in, and by locating surveys at various agencies and organizations (e.g., St. Patrick’s Hospital, Missoula Food Bank, YWCA, YMCA, several local churches, etc.). Survey administration was completed in March 2004. We conducted the mall intercept surveys two Saturday afternoons at Southgate Mall in Missoula. At each administration session, eight trained survey administrators located themselves at different high traffic areas in the mall, approached people and explained the purpose of the survey, and requested their participation.

¹ A copy of the four-page consumption survey is available from the authors.

² Mall intercept surveys are increasingly becoming a viable strategy for survey administration due to low costs and expediency of information gathering. See Hornik, J. and Ellis, S. (1988). Strategies to secure compliance for a mall intercept interview. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 52, 539-551.

Initially, potential respondents were asked if they were at least 18 years old and if they were Missoula County residents. We established an age cut-off of 18 because parental consent is required for younger research participants. Moreover, we wanted to gather information from individuals with the most food consumption experience, especially those who were the primary purchasers of household food. Because the purpose of the food consumption research was to understand food-related issues in Missoula County only, we wanted to ensure that our sample consisted exclusively of Missoula County residents. Situating ourselves at the largest shopping area in the County also provided us with an opportunity to gather information from County residents living outside the city limits.

Depending upon reading level, the survey took approximately 5 to 15 minutes to complete. Potential respondents were also given the option of taking a survey with them and returning it to us in a stamped and addressed envelope if they felt limited time prevented them from completing the survey at the mall. Over five hundred surveys were administered at the mall including mailed-in surveys. Survey administrators kept a tally of survey completers and refusals.

While all survey methods have strengths and limitations regarding response rates, we estimate the mall intercept response rate at approximately 40%. This means that approximately 60% of the county residents we asked to take the survey refused. Although we can not claim a representative selection of respondents, we were able to obtain a sampling of Missoula County residents with income levels closely approximating the U.S. Census data statistics (2000) for income levels in the County. Our sample, however, was weighted heavier on the extremely low-income range (less than \$10,000 per year) than represented in the Census data (see following section and Table 1, Appendix). After eliminating 37 surveys mistakenly filled out by nonresidents and those containing at least one page of incomplete responses, 470 surveys were obtained through the mall intercept method.

Surveys were also administered at various agencies and organizations in Missoula County. Missoula Food Bank clients completed over 100 surveys. Agency staff incorporated the survey into their intake procedure. An additional 154 surveys were completed at other local organizations and churches that serve individuals with varying income levels. In total, 624 surveys were analyzed for the results contained in this report.

We analyzed the closed-ended survey items using statistical software. We performed frequencies and percentages on these items and used chi-square analyses, where appropriate, to determine whether significant differences in responses existed between individuals in different income categories. The open-ended items, some of which allowed respondents to further elaborate on the closed-ended items, were analyzed using content analysis, a technique used to identify themes and patterns in textual data.

About Survey Respondents

Table 1 in the Appendix contains demographic data on survey respondents. Two-thirds of the survey respondents were female (66.5%) and over three-quarters of respondents

identified themselves as non-students (76.8%). Most people completing the survey were the primary household food shopper or shared this responsibility with another person in the household (90.4%) and 88.1% had the primary responsibility for household food preparation or shared this duty with another family member. Educational levels ranged from those having less than a high school education to those with a graduate level degree; however, 69.6% of the sample had at least some college education. Yearly household incomes also varied across a wide range; 55.6% earned incomes less than \$30,000 per year compared to the U.S. Census statistics which indicate that 50% of households in Missoula County subsist on yearly incomes of \$34,454 or less.

Forty-three percent of respondents had children under the age of 18 residing in their households and almost 80% had at least two people residing in the household. Fourteen percent used food stamps in the past year and 9.3% participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in the past year. Overall, the demographic data provide an interesting picture of the individuals who completed the survey. For example, one startling finding is the number of people who have a college education but whose income levels are far below or hover near the poverty line. The demographic data alone expose an issue intricately linked to food security, namely the ability to earn an income sufficient to purchase the necessary food items to sustain a family.

FINDINGS FROM THE MISSOULA COUNTY FOOD CONSUMPTION SURVEY

Food-Related Problems and Concerns

This section is organized according to the dominant themes most relevant to respondents. These are arranged in order of their importance. Note that broad categories are broken into smaller sub-themes and addressed depending upon their relevance to respondents.³ Those survey items of significant importance are represented in pie charts or bar charts. We ask our readers to refer to the tables provided in the Appendix of this report for the complete survey analysis. Table 3 lists the frequencies and percentages for survey items pertaining to problems and concerns (see Appendix). Table 4 lists the frequencies and percentages for survey items related to food consumer behaviors (see Appendix). The broad themes addressed in the following section include food quality, the price of food and other cost of living issues, local food, availability, and transportation.

Food Quality. In an effort to understand respondents' concerns regarding food quality, the survey included items that addressed issues such as the freshness of food, the nutritional value of food, food safety, and use of and access to organic foods. The survey contained four items that specifically addressed concerns regarding food safety, pesticide residues on foods, and eating organic foods. By far, total responses to these items indicate that food quality is the most important food issue for the Missoula County residents who completed the survey.

³ We remind our readers that although we report the findings in individual categories for ease of understanding, there is significant overlap among the categories.

Of the food quality items, respondents considered food safety their primary concern. This should not be surprising. In recent years, food safety issues are addressed almost daily in the mass media: mad cow disease, food additives and pesticide usage and their linkage to cancer, and other challenges to the current industrial food production model.⁴ Note that almost 82% of respondents perceived food safety as at least somewhat of a problem or concern for them (Figure 1). Likewise, response rates to an item addressing pesticide usage were similar (Figure 2) with almost 83% of respondents indicating this was at least somewhat of a problem or concern for them.

Taken together, these findings support the notion that respondents are quite concerned about the safety aspects of food quality. Numerous responses addressed linkages between food production methods and health-related illnesses. For example one respondent stated, “I think a lot of pesticides and preservatives cause a lot of our health problems today.” Closely linked to food safety is the use of and access to organic foods consisting of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and meats.⁵ Findings illustrated in Figure 3 indicate that more than half

Figure 1: Food Safety

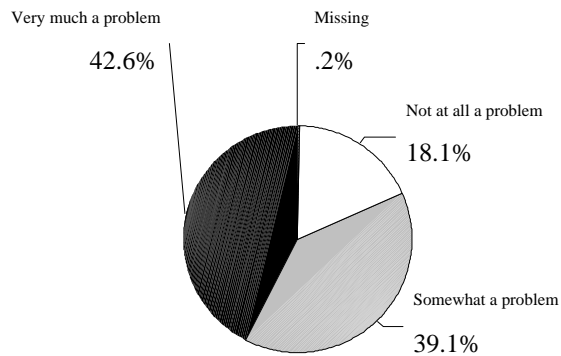


Figure 2: Pesticide Residues on Foods

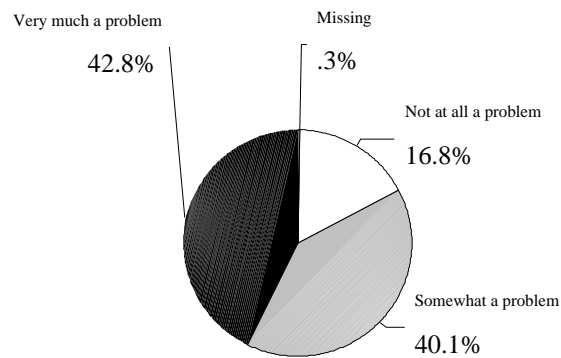
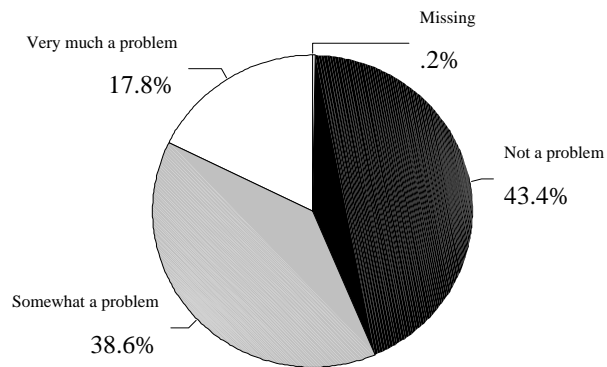


Figure 3: Whether the Food I Eat is Organic



⁴ For a discussion of the food safety issues linked to the contemporary, industrial agriculture, see: Kimbrell, A. (Ed.). (2002). *Fatal harvest: The tragedy of industrial agriculture*. Covelo, CA: Island Press

⁵ “Organic is a labeling term that denotes products produced under the authority of the Organic Foods Production Act. The principle guidelines for organic production are to use materials and the practices that enhance the ecological balance of natural systems and that integrate the parts of the farming system into an ecological whole.” Downloaded from: http://www.optco.com/usda_act.html

of the respondents (56.4%) viewed whether the food they ate was organic as at least somewhat of a problem or concern for them. In addition, approximately 51% of respondents indicated they buy organic food with some regularity (Figure 4) and 36% of those surveyed reported they would like to see more organic foods in local grocery stores. Judging from the open-ended responses concerning why people shop where they do, 5% of the responses indicated the availability of organic foods determined where some people choose to purchase food. However, a number of respondents identified cost as a major barrier to accessing organic foods. One respondent summed up this issue and addressed the conundrum many low income people find themselves in when it comes to eating healthy foods: “Vegetables, fruit or any other natural foods cost a lot more than junk food.”

Food Freshness and Nutritional Quality. Approximately 68% of respondents indicated that food freshness was at least somewhat of a problem or concern, with 28% reporting it was very much a problem or concern for them (Figure 5). A similar response pattern was noted concerning the nutritional quality of food.

The Price of Food and Other Cost-of-Living Concerns. Any discussion of hunger or food insecurity must address the ability to purchase food. While per capita income in Missoula County is higher than in other counties in the state, it is still below the national average. The survey contained seven items addressing food costs and other cost-of-living issues that have a direct effect on people’s ability to eat well.

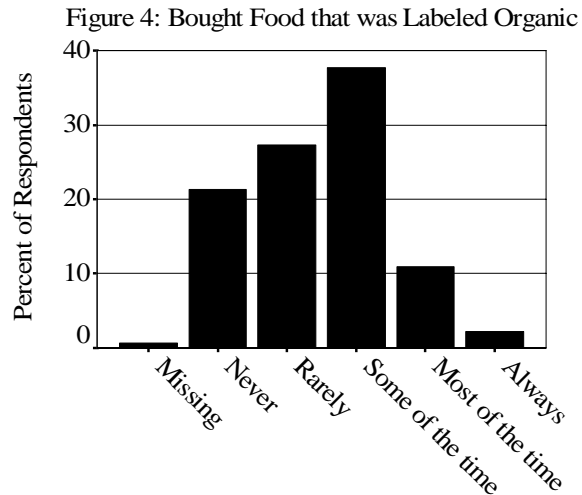


Figure 5: The Freshness of Food I Like to Eat

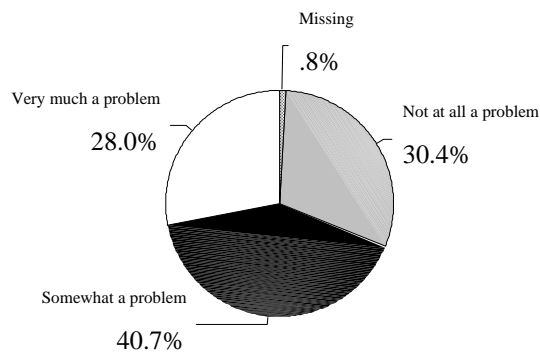
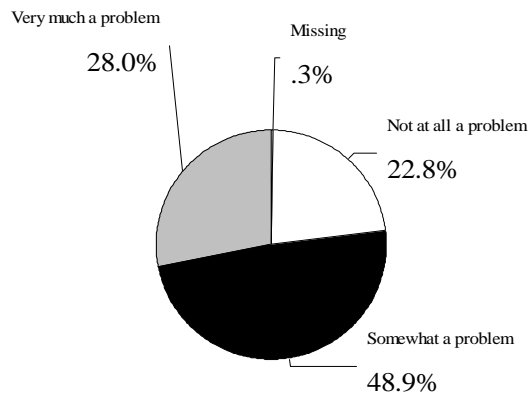


Figure 6: The Price of Food I Like to Eat



Responses indicated that food costs and other cost-of-living issues are major concerns for many of the county residents who completed the survey.

Food Costs. Approximately 77% of respondents identified that the price of food they like to eat is “somewhat” (49%) or “very much” (28%) of a problem or concern (Figure 6). Thirty-six responses to the open-ended question asking respondents to comment on additional concerns reiterated that the cost of food, in general, is too high. Most of these addressed the high cost of “healthy” foods. Concerning food-related behavior, 424 or 67.9% of respondents at least some of the time shopped for the least expensive food available (Figure 7).

Assessing Food Insecurity. Cost-of-living expenses are directly connected to issues of food insecurity. Five survey items addressed the issue of food insecurity. Respondents were asked if they had enough money to buy the food they needed, limited the size of meals, skipped meals, worried about having enough to eat for themselves or their families, or went to a food pantry or soup kitchen to acquire food. Respondents identified that having enough money to buy the food they needed for themselves and their families was a major concern (Figure 8). Sixty-five percent reported this as at least somewhat of a problem or concern for them.

Figure 7: Shopped for the Least Expensive

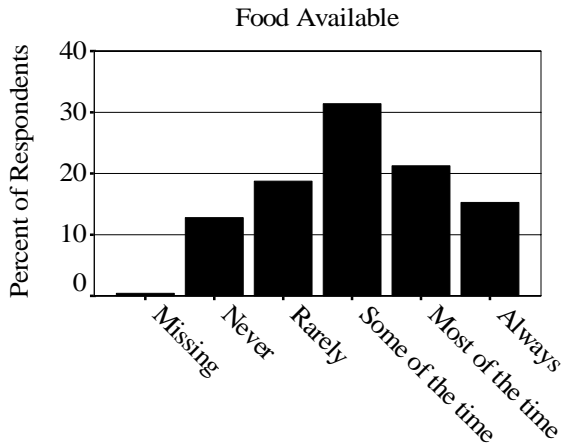


Figure 8: Having Enough Money to Buy the

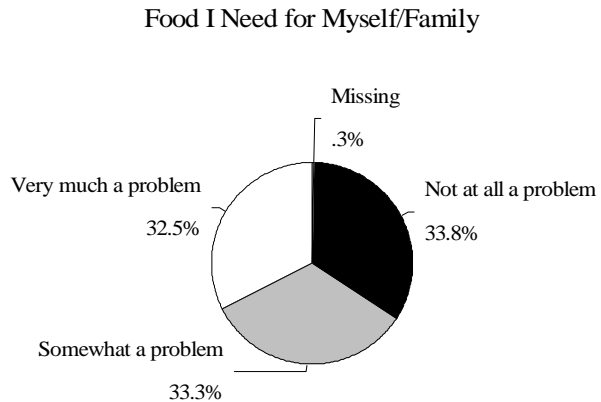
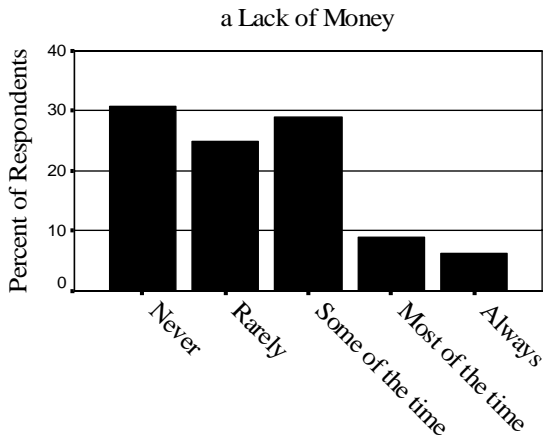


Figure 9: Limited the Size of Meals Due to



Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that they limit the size of meals at least some of the time because they lack sufficient funds to purchase food (Figure 9). Approximately 35% skipped a meal at least some of the time due to lack of money.

Two survey items in this category were developed to assess the most serious food security issues, namely whether people worried about having enough food to feed themselves and their families and if they had to access local food resources in order to get enough food to survive. Thirty-one percent of respondents worried at least some of the time about having enough food to eat, while 13.6% found it necessary to go to food pantries or soup kitchens for food to feed themselves and their families.

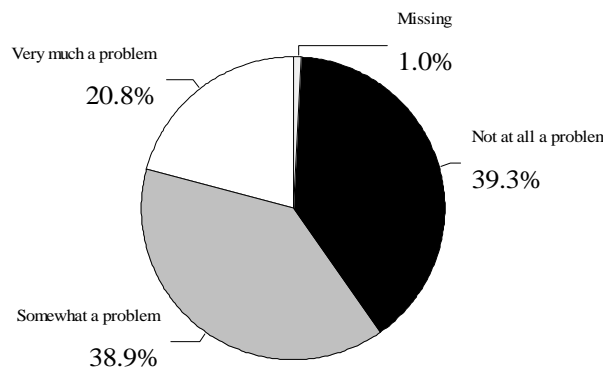
Other Cost-of-Living Issues. Wages have not kept up to cost of living increases in Missoula County. Utility rates have almost doubled in the past two years and rents and the cost of purchasing a home have skyrocketed. To understand what other issues besides the price of food might be affecting peoples’ ability to eat well, one survey item asked respondents to respond to the categories outlined in Table 5 of the Appendix. We rank ordered responses to determine respondents’ most pressing concerns. The top four categories were personal income too low (46.7%), high fuel/heating costs (39.9%), high rent (36.3%), and health/medical costs (27.8%). Responses to the open-ended question asking if respondents had additional concerns or problems provided further support for the importance of cost of living as a major food-related concern.

“The Montana income is too low!! Some things are just as expensive here as in California where the minimum wage is \$6.75. Even working full time at minimum wage is not enough to live on.”

“Purchasing food would not be as much of a problem if working wages were higher and health insurance and dental were available.”

Local Food. Survey respondents were concerned with the distance their food travels, which we hypothesize correlates with an expressed desire for access to more locally grown and produced foods. Sixty percent of the responses indicated that “how far away the food I eat/buy comes from” is “somewhat (39%) or “very much (21%) of a problem or concern” (Figure 10). The need for more and access to locally produced foods was the highest-ranking response to the open-ended question where we asked respondents for additional comments on food-related concerns or problems. Moreover, 55% of respondents indicated they would like to see more local foods in grocery stores. Another indicator in support of

Figure: 10: How Far Away the Food I Eat/Buy Comes From



respondents' concern regarding local food was their response to the survey item asking them the frequency at which they bought food that was grown or produced in Montana. Almost 80% of the total sample reported they bought Montana-grown or produced food items at least some of the time (Figure 11).

Similar to the results from the preceding questions concerning local foods, 51% of the Missoula County residents who completed the survey shopped at the Farmers' Market. Twenty-four respondents also listed "store offers local food options" as the main reason for where they buy their groceries. A number of responses also indicated that many residents choose where they do their grocery shopping based on whether the business is locally owned.

Availability. Another food-related issue that survey respondents voiced concern about was the availability of the kinds of foods they like to eat, the variety of food to choose from in local food outlets, and being able to find culturally appropriate foods. Fifty-three percent of respondents indicated the availability of foods they like to eat is at least somewhat of a concern for them (Figure 12) and 51% reported having at least somewhat of a problem with the variety of foods available in local stores. A lesser concern was finding access to culturally appropriate foods. Thirty percent of respondents expressed at least somewhat of a concern in this regard.

Open-ended responses to the question, "What foods are you unable to find in Missoula County?" indicated difficulties finding Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, Mexican, Latin American, and Kosher foods. Almost one half of the responses in this category addressed the issue of culturally appropriate foods. In addition, Table 6 illustrates the particular kinds of foods consumers would like to see more of in the grocery stores where they shop (see Appendix). Note that most of these items have already been addressed elsewhere in

Figure 11: Bought Food that was Grown or Produced in Montana

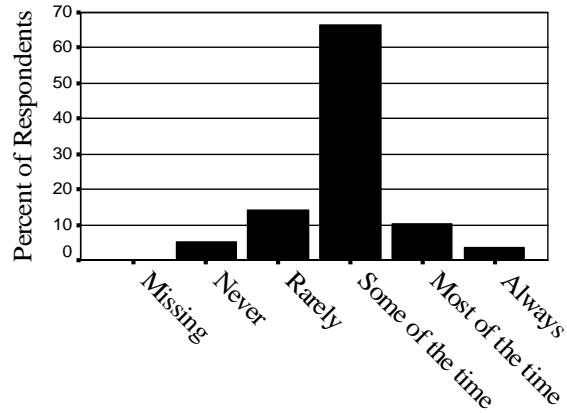
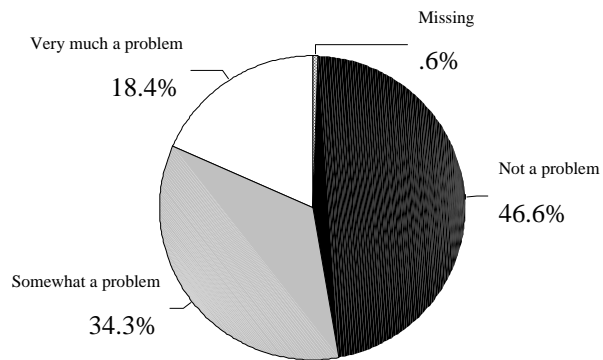


Figure 12: Availability of the Foods I Like to Eat



this report but almost 26% of respondents wanted grocery stores to increase the availability of ethnic foods.

Transportation and Access to Food Outlets. The importance of transportation as a food-related issue often falls beneath the radar screen. More populated communities around the country, especially those in urban areas, are discovering that access to food outlets is an especially significant issue for low-income community residents.⁶ As community development increases, larger food outlets move to suburban areas leaving neighborhood residents with limited access to grocery stores. Low-income residents with inadequate transportation or those who are transit dependent must purchase food for higher cost at convenience stores in their neighborhoods. Transportation to food outlets is an emergent issue for Missoula County as population increases rapidly and development follows to meet housing needs.

Six survey items related directly to transportation issues; two related to transportation concerns and four asked respondents to identify modes of transportation used when traveling back and forth to food outlets. Almost 22% of respondents felt transportation was at least somewhat of a problem or concern for them. Thirty-three percent of the responses indicated that being within walking/biking distance to a food store was at least somewhat of a problem or concern for them. As for how the Missoula County residents who filled out the survey traveled to food outlets, the majority reported they usually drove their cars (85.7%). Only 9% of respondents indicate using a public form of transportation at least some of the time. Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported they walked or rode their bicycles to a food store at least some of the time.

Why Respondents Shop Where They Do

Knowing why people shop where they do provides information about what motivates people to buy food at certain places and not others. It also indirectly tells us about food-related concerns such as transportation, cost, and food quality. We asked respondents to fill in the following open-ended statement: *I shop most often where I do because. . .* Some respondents provided multiple reasons and some responses could not be coded.⁷ The list below presents the content analysis derived from 440 responses to this survey item and the frequency of response categories.

❖ Prices/Affordability	159
❖ Location of store: Total	144
❖ Convenience Total	84
Convenience in general	48
Convenience because of one-stop shopping	14

⁶ See Pothukachi, K. Joseph, H., Burton, H., and Fisher, A. (2002). *What's cooking in your food system? A guide to community food assessment*. Venice, CA: Community Food Security Coalition. pp. 30-31 for the Milwaukee Food System Assessment Study addressing food-related transportation issues in low-income neighborhoods.

⁷ Some respondents wrote additional concerns and others made general comments that did not necessarily relate to the reasons why they shop where they do.

Convenience because store sells everything needed/wanted	14
Convenience because of location	8
❖ Store(s) offers a variety of food	50
❖ Store(s) offers local food options	24
❖ Store(s) offers organic food options	22
❖ Good sales, discounts and rewards	22
❖ Store is locally owned	22
❖ Good quality and freshness of food	21
❖ Good service, friendly and helpful staff	19
❖ Familiar with store/habit	18
❖ Store(s) offers specialty or special diet foods	10
❖ Size/layout of store	9
❖ Special privileges/employee discount	8

The most important factor in determining where respondents shopped for food was price and affordability. Out of 696 reasons for why people shop where they do, 159 or approximately 23% addressed the issue of price. The second highest ranking reason was the location of the food outlet. Twenty-one percent of responses or 144 responses fell in this category which supports the importance of easy access as a factor in consumer decision-making about where to shop. Convenience was the third highest-ranking reason for why people shop where they do with 84 or 12% of responses in this category.

Comparison of Responses Based on Income Level

One purpose of the Missoula County Food Assessment was to investigate whether food-related concerns, problems, or behaviors varied according to respondents' income level. In other words, are there differences between low-, middle-, and high-income food consumer groups who participated in the survey and how might these differences help us better understand the impact of income level on residents' food concerns and behaviors?

To compare differences in responses based on income level, we used a nonparametric statistical analysis called chi-square to analyze the relationship among income groups and their responses to the survey items.⁸ For example, it helped us answer the question, "Are there differences between how low-income residents responded to survey items pertaining to food safety when compared to those with higher incomes?" To conduct the chi-square analysis the *yearly household income* item was collapsed into three categories. Low-income was designated as \$29,999 and below; middle-income was between \$30,000 and \$59,999; and high-income was \$60,000 and above. In addition, we collapsed value labels for the items we wanted to explore for relationships, so for example, "somewhat a problem or concern" and "very much a problem or concern" were coded as a "yes"

⁸ Chi-square analysis is a test of association. It is probably the most used statistical tool to explore differences between groups. For further information refer to Weinbach, R. and Grinnell, R. (2001). *Statistics for social workers*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon. (pp. 187-214).

response. “Not a problem or concern” was coded as a “no” response. Table 7, in the Appendix, lists those items found to vary significantly based on income.⁹

The chi-square analyses pinpoint survey items where significant relationships exist between income level and responses given to the item. Low-income respondents are more likely to be concerned about transportation to and from food outlets than middle- or high-income residents. However both low- and middle-income residents are more concerned than high-income residents about the price of food. Concerns about having enough money to buy the food they need decreased steadily and significantly from low-, to middle-, to high-income. Pesticide residues on foods and food safety issues appear to be very important to respondents regardless of income level.

Concerning food-related behaviors, middle- and high-income respondents are more likely to drive their cars to food outlets than those individuals in the low-income group. Low income respondents are more likely to walk or ride their bicycles than respondents in the higher income groups. While these differences are certainly not surprising when we consider the high cost of maintaining personal transportation, they do help us understand who is affected most by food-related transportation issues. This knowledge can help inform future decision making that addresses how low-income families gain access to food outlets and the proximity of competitively-priced food outlets to low-income neighborhoods and rural areas in Missoula County. Food-related behaviors such as buying food labeled organic and food produced or grown in Montana appear to be very important to respondents regardless of income level.

The chi-square analyses on food security items such as “skipped a meal due to lack of money” and “limited the size of meals due to lack of money” also point out expected differences among income groups. Low-income respondents are more likely to engage in these behaviors than middle- and high-income respondents. This group also differs from the higher income groups because they shop more often for the least expensive foods. Again, as would be expected cost-of-living issues such as high rent, low personal income, and high fuel/heating cost have a far greater impact on low-income respondents. High mortgage payments, however, seem to most affect middle-income respondents. Common sense would suggest that low-income respondents are less likely to own their own homes, and therefore mortgages would be less of a concern for this group; high-income respondents are more likely to have fewer difficulties affording their mortgage payments than middle-income respondents. Health and medical costs appear to be very important to respondents regardless of income level.

⁹ When chi-square analyses are conducted on more than one survey item, the probability of achieving a significant result is increased just by chance. To adjust for this, a statistical procedure called the Bonferroni correction was used which raises the bar for determining significance. Given that 35 chi-square analyses were performed, the cutoff point to determine significant differences between income groups was adjusted from $p < .05$ to $p < .0014$. See Newton, R.R. and Rudestam, K.E. (1999). *Your statistical consultant*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

MISSOULA COUNTY FOOD-RELATED ASSETS

When conducting a community food assessment, it is as important to gather information about what consumers perceive to be the food-related assets in the community as it is to gather information about concerns and problems. Knowing what works well provides a base upon which to enhance existing assets and recognize and support the community for its accomplishments. We asked respondents the following open-ended question: “*What are the food-related assets or strengths you have noticed in Missoula County?*” Responses to this question are listed below in order of those reported most frequently:¹⁰

❖ Farmers’ Market	39
❖ Good Food Store	30
❖ Availability of organic foods	27
❖ Availability of local foods	21
❖ Availability of alternative food sources	21
❖ Variety of food	18
❖ Community Gardens/Garden City Harvest	10
❖ Availability of specific foods (e.g., for diet)	9
❖ Availability of fresh foods	9
❖ Variety & amount of food stores/outlets	9
❖ Local farms	7
❖ Government Food Assistance Programs	7
❖ Community is concerned about food issues	5
❖ Other/miscellaneous	27

The majority of responses related to healthy food resources available to consumers in Missoula County such as the Farmers’ Market, the Good Food Store, the community gardens and other Garden City Harvest programs, and government food assistance programs. A second theme concerned the availability of specific types of food in Missoula County. Respondents were pleased about having access to organic foods, locally grown and produced foods, local farms, and having access to a wide variety of foods. A number of respondents praised the community for its high level of food consciousness. Some examples are listed below:

- ❖ A great variety of locally raised foods. Yeah, Lifeline; now we have dairy, too!
- ❖ Availability of Good Food Store, large garden projects/groups.
- ❖ Availability of organic food, farmers' market.

¹⁰ Some respondents provided multiple strengths or assets, some did not respond, and some wrote in concerns and problems instead of assets. In total, 178 or approximately 29% of the sample responded to this question.

- ❖ Expansion of GFS [Good Food Store], better public transportation, and the different agencies that feed the hungry.
- ❖ Farmers' Market - reasonable and fresh. Good system - food bank, many food opportunities for the less fortunate.
- ❖ Farmers' Market is great - Good Food Store is wonderful - great variety, local wineries and Bayern Brewing superb! Flathead cherries/honey & locally grown flowers and Benson's Farm as two thumbs up!
- ❖ Getting better at supporting local growers, fresh produce at stores in town.
- ❖ Good network of agencies that assist those with food insecurity issues in locating resources; emphasis on organically grown/raised products seems to be gaining mainstream respect due to the GFS [Good Food Store] and programs like GCH [Garden City Harvest].
- ❖ Good quality in stores; food stamp program; WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) and Missoula Food Bank are great resources.
- ❖ I believe that Missoula has a pretty good variety of food though it's the same in every store. We have quite a few options for fruit (some better than others) but there is always the farmers' market which is great.
- ❖ I think this community is really pulling together and people are helping each other out. We're starting to support each other!
- ❖ I try to buy all my food within a 350-mile radius. Lot of gardening here. Lot of concern.
- ❖ It's possible to find almost any type of food here with such a wide variety of grocery stores.
- ❖ PEAS [Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society] and other organic farms are great. Good Food Store is great but we need more neighborhood markets with whole foods. The family farms and Saturday Farmers' Market are great.
- ❖ Thank God for the Food Bank! At one time in my life I was hungry - no longer a problem.
- ❖ The Food Bank plays a valuable role in the community. I appreciate the awareness in the community about food-related issues.

- ❖ The push toward more local foods and made in Montana products and the availability of fresh produce.

SUMMARY OF MISSOULA COUNTY FOOD CONSUMPTION SURVEY RESULTS

The Missoula County Food Consumption Survey provides a snapshot of food-related problems or concerns, food-related behaviors, and food assets in Missoula County as perceived by survey respondents. Food quality issues (food safety and access to fresh, nutritious foods) were by far the most important concerns voiced by survey respondents. The price of food and other cost-of-living issues such as low wages, rent, utilities, and health care costs, which compromise one's ability to purchase foods, were the second most important concerns. These issues were particularly salient for low-income respondents.

Access to local foods, availability of the kinds of foods people like to eat, and transportation and access to food outlets were noteworthy areas as well. One-fifth of respondents were very concerned about how far away the food they ate came from and more than half of respondents indicated they would like to see more local foods in grocery stores. Issues concerning the availability of certain kinds of foods primarily addressed access to culturally appropriate or ethnic foods. Transportation to and from food outlets appears to be an emerging issue as the county continues its pattern of rapid growth and development and transportation needs increase, especially for low-income individuals and households. Furthermore, price and location were respondents' most important reasons for why they shop where they do and both of these issues link to transportation concerns. As communities experience growth, grocery stores often relocate from low-income neighborhoods to areas of new development creating access problems for individuals who are transit dependent. Convenience stores remaining in these neighborhoods charge higher prices than grocery stores.

Despite the challenges noted, survey participants also indicated that Missoula County is rich in food-related resources. Respondents praised the County's civic-mindedness, increased access to locally-produced food (e.g., at the Good Food Store), and the various organizations that work to address and create awareness about food-related problems (e.g., the Missoula Food Bank, WIC, Garden City Harvest/PEAS).