

Food & Food Insecurity in PEC
A Topline Report
Prepared for **The Food Collective**
October 2019





BACKGROUND

The Food Collective is a group of active food security-focused organizations that operate, to varying degrees, and with varying focus, in Prince Edward County. The collective's steering committee currently includes **Food To Share, The Picton United Church Food Bank, The Wellington Storehouse Foodbank, Prince Edward Learning Centre (PELC), The County Foundation, The County of Prince Edward, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health** and the **Community Development Council of Quinte**.

The coming together of these disparate groups began when some of these organizations, and others, formed the Vital Signs Food Security working group (convened by The County Foundation) back in in 2013.

This group was more formally enshrined through the recent funding, via The Rural Ontario Institute, of a pilot project focused primarily on the opportunities, challenges and successes that arise when a group of regional partners are pulled together formally to tackle the macro issue of food insecurity in rural Ontario.

Each group brought different specialties to the table and each group focused on a variety of specific activities such as experimenting with new food outreach locations and methods or creating a food-focused series of “Learning Commons” sessions.

FARRELL INSIGHT was contacted to benchmark food behaviour and perceptions amongst the resident population AND to methodically take the pulse of those who live with food insecurity in the region to inform and evolve the work of the collective.





**This topline report is focused
exclusively on the survey work
performed in September 2019.**



METHODOLOGY

This survey was fielded online using the professional license of FARRELL INSIGHT on the top-ranked Survey Gizmo research platform.

The survey was distributed online via the established email databases and social media networks of The Food Collective members. A series of direct posts on popular Facebook sites for Prince Edward County residents were also part of the fielding mix. In total this created a potential sample universe of ~20,000+.

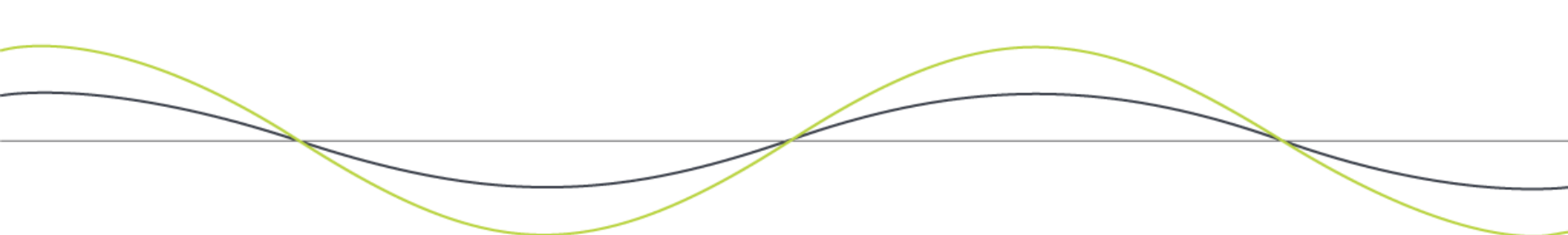
To aid in community awareness a press release was employed and distributed to all usual recipients via the Communications Dept. of the County of Prince Edward. Further, ads were aired on 99.3 County FM (the County's only radio station) – with advertising fees generously handled by W.H. **Williamson** & Co. Limited.

Fielding was exclusively random and relied only on the ad hoc interest of residents (either full time or part time) of Prince Edward County.

NO targeting other than the use of various partner organizations' d-base and social media networks was employed.

The survey was able to be completed online via desktop / laptop, tablet or smartphone to suit the preferences of today's citizen-consumers.

An incentive program of 3 packages worth ~\$200 involving grocery and restaurant certificates was employed to drive survey uptake.



The survey was fielded for ~ 3 weeks in September 2019.

This survey ultimately received 284 total completed responses which provides a confidence interval of +/- 5.7%, 19 times out of 20.

Overall, a fairly broad level of representation.

Raw results were definitely female-driven (80% vs. 20% male) and also more driven by Boomers and War Gen respondents (59% of our sample) though we received fairly significant interest from Gen X and Gen Y (at 40%) and almost none from Gen Z (1%)

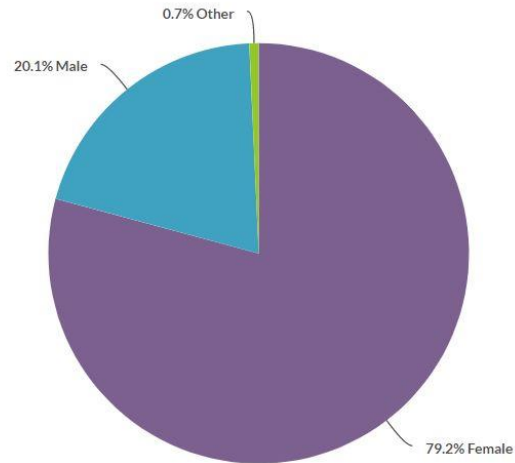
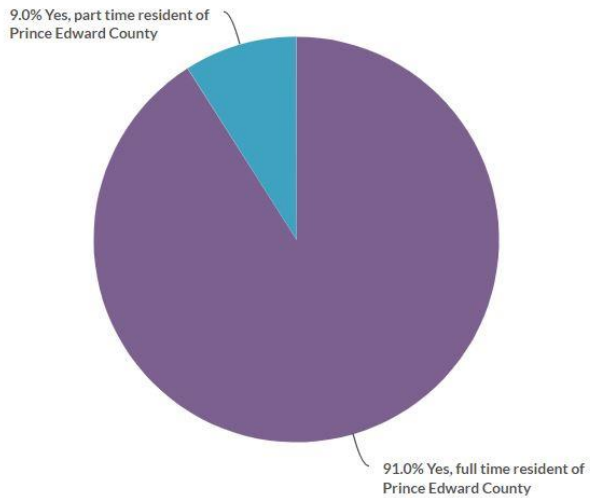
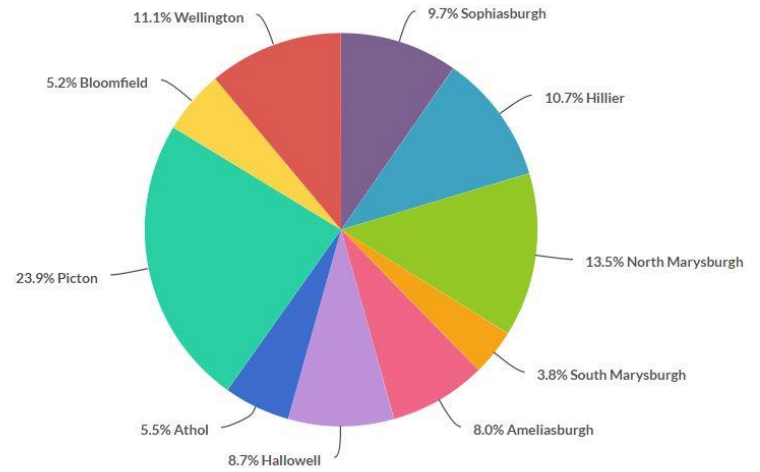
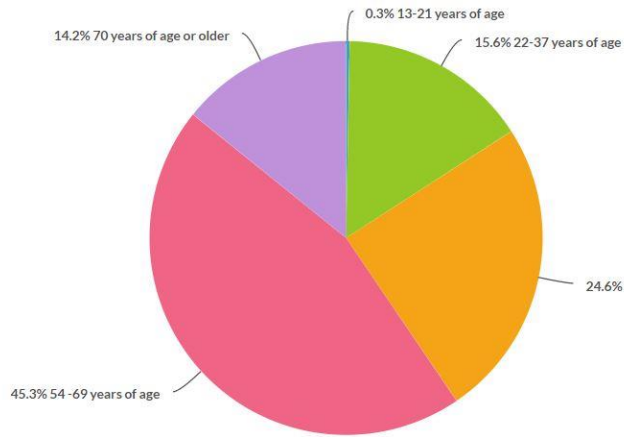
Regionality of representation was strong.

As anticipated, interested input was solicited very largely from full time residents (91% vs. 9% part-time.)

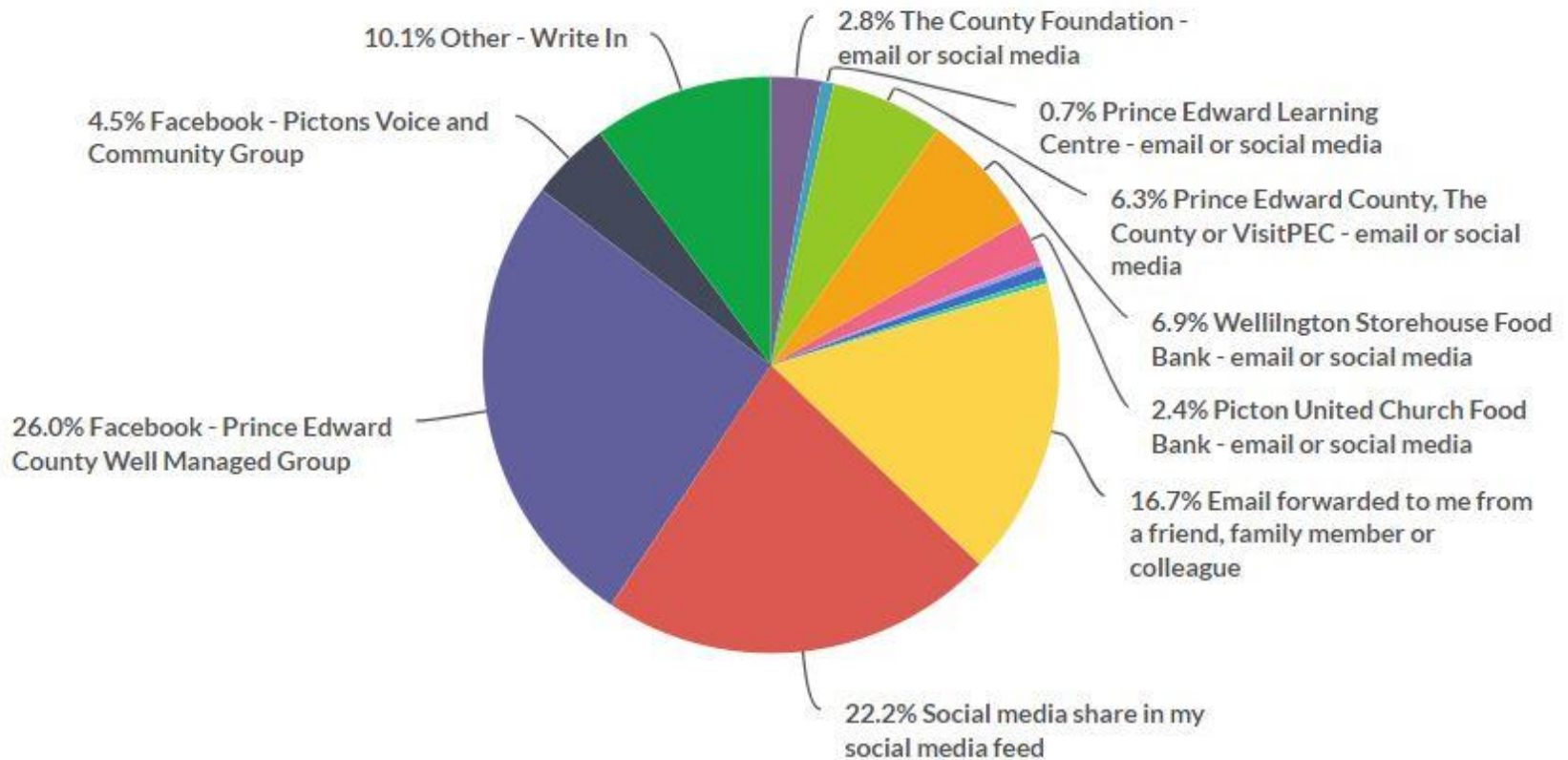
Average time to complete was 14 minutes.

FIELDING RESULTS

**284
TOTAL
COMPLETES**



FIELDING RESULTS



Source of link for the completed surveys is a good window into communication tactics for The Food Collective in general and shows the dominant value of general personal social media (predominantly FB) vs. the email or social media feeds of The Food Collective partners. Over half (53%) of all completes came directly from one of two major PEC-oriented FB pages OR shares in personal social media feed.

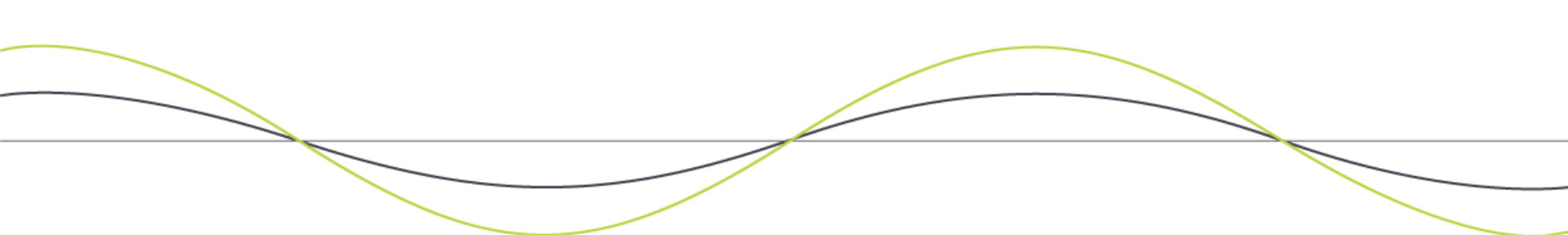


DATA INTERPRETATION

While respondents to this online survey were all self-selected on a completely random basis and we employed quite a diverse array of fielding avenues, including anticipation of ad hoc sharing and forwarding, the results are still not considered truly scientific until we phone in (landline and mobile) using random digit dialing technology – typically a prohibitively costly procedure.

That said, database-driven online fielding is THE dominant survey methodology for market and socio-cultural research globally.

Results here can, and should, be identified, analyzed and interpreted with strong confidence (+/- 5.7, 19 times out of 20) BUT should not be categorically defined as TRUE incidence.



DETAILED FINDINGS

BRINGING THE WORLD TO ITS FEET



There is a substantial presence of food insecurity in The County.

Food insecurity in The County is much more of a prevalent challenge for our younger residents.

Q9.

We're trying to get an updated read on County resident experiences with food in the County. Please simply answer yes or no to the following list of questions.



FOOD INSECURITY IN THE COUNTY

Respondent results indicate a fairly substantial presence of current (“within the past year”) food insecurity in the County.

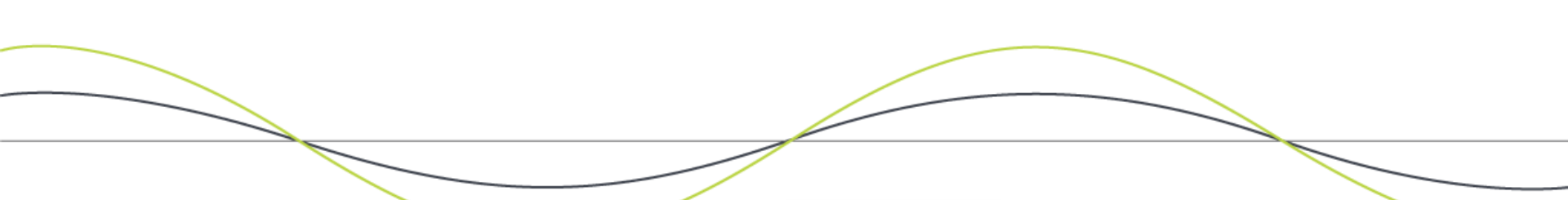
Most significantly, **26%** of residents studied indicate “they have skipped a meal to save some money within the past year” and **24%** say they have “been worried about money to buy food for themselves or their family within the past year”.

Further, **13%** indicate they have “relied on friends or family for cheaper or free food for themselves or their family” and **11%** say they “have had to choose between paying rent / mortgage/ lease or buying food for themselves or their family”, both within the past year.

Lack of reliable transport as a vector for food insecurity is persistent with **7%** indicating they can only purchase food for themselves or their family when provided with free transport from friends or family”.

The difference between those that MAY require some food assistance and those that have actually used a local food bank within the past year (**7%**) supports the common notion that only a small percentage of those in need (often quoted at 25%) actually visit and use food banks or other food assists.

Very importantly, food insecurity in the County is FAR more pronounced the younger you are; Millennials drive ALL the indicators for food insecurity in this survey.



“YES” RESPONSE RESULTS (n = 284)	TOTAL	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer	War Gen
Have you skipped a meal to save some money within the past year?	26%	53%	33%	15%	14%
Have you been worried about money to buy food for yourself or your family within the past year?	24%	51%	32%	17%	7%
Have you personally skipped a meal to have more food for your family within the past year?	15%	31%	24%	8%	2%
Have you relied on friends or family to provide free or more affordable food for you or your family within the past year?	13%	31%	15%	7%	5%
Have you had to choose between paying rent, lease or a mortgage for your home and buying food for yourself or your family within the past year?	11%	27%	15%	6%	2%
Can you only purchase food for yourself or your family when you’re provided with free transport from a friend or family member?	7%	11%	3%	9%	5%
Have you accessed food from a local food bank for yourself or your family within the past year?	7%	13%	8%	6%	7%



Overall, food literacy and a variety of food security best practices appear *relatively* healthy in the County.

Encouragingly, those at-risk and those most in need (Millennials, those struggling to make ends meet and recent clients of local food banks) are also the most engaged in best practices.

As exemplified in our qualitative sessions, self awareness, knowledge and accessing food support are relatively strong amongst these at-risk groups.

There are some positives to work with here in combatting food insecurity locally; certainly not starting from ground zero.

Q9.

We're trying to get an updated read on County resident experiences with food in the County. Please simply answer yes or no to the following list of questions.



FOOD INSECURITY IN THE COUNTY

Residents of The County, in general, indicate strong self-perception of food literacy with 84% saying they “know as much as they’d like about how to prepare healthy, nutritious meals..” and 76% saying the same about “food and nutrition”.

These numbers, however, decrease the deeper we go into the local at-risk population. **In particular, respondents who have accessed local food banks within the past year are significantly less self confident on both these food literacy indicators (63% and 58% respectively).** This mirrors the call out for learning from our qualitative sessions with food bank clients and those enrolled at PELC. **Self awareness is strong.**

Just over 6 in 10 (61%) of respondents indicated they grow their own fruit and vegetables and this remains relatively stable across key at-risk groups. Similarly, there is a healthy desire amongst our County respondents to get involved with various local food access groups – stable at ~50% for general population and identified at-risk groups.

Encouragingly, those at risk in our community are definitely driving best practices for low cost / no cost food access. Millennials, those who are worried about affording food and clients of food banks all register **significantly more incidence of attending community meals, subscribing to food boxes from local farms, subscribing to the Good Food Box and participating actively in community gardens.**

“YES” RESPONSE RESULTS	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 85)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 24)
Do you know as much as you'd like about how to prepare healthy, nutritious meals for yourself or your family?	84%	78%	73%	63%
Do you know as much as you'd like to know about food and nutrition?	76%	71%	68%	58%
Do you grow your own fruit or vegetables for you or your family to eat?	61%	62%	57%	54%
Are you personally interested in volunteering for a local food bank, community garden or other food access group that serves Prince Edward County?	49%	53%	54%	50%
Have you attended a community meal of any kind put on by a local church or local community organization within the past year?	44%	36%	40%	67%
Within the past year have you subscribed to or received at least one box of produce from a local farm?	33%	47%	38%	71%
In the past year have you subscribed to or received at least one box from the Good Food Box program?	14%	36%	29%	79%
Are you involved in a community garden program of ANY kind?	13%	22%	20%	29%



A great majority of all County residents studied affirm confidence in their food skills & knowledge.

However, there are very significant self-reported gaps for Millennials and recent food bank clients when it comes down to feeling they could learn more.

Millennials in particular also report significantly less concern about overly processed food, additives and sugar, salt & trans fats.

Get 'em while they're young.

Q10.

Using a scale of "1" to "5" where "1" means "disagree completely" and "5" means "completely agree" please let us know how much you agree or disagree with the following statements around food, nutrition and health in your life and in the County. We're after your immediate personal reaction to these statements - try not to overthink your response and "go with your gut"!



FOOD SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

While the vast majority of all respondents, including all generations and our key at-risk groups, affirm confidence in their food skills & knowledge **there are very significant self-reported gaps for Millennials and recent food bank clients when it comes down to feeling they are missing “some” or “a lot” of food skills and knowledge (57% and 55% respectively vs. an average of 13% for the general population).**

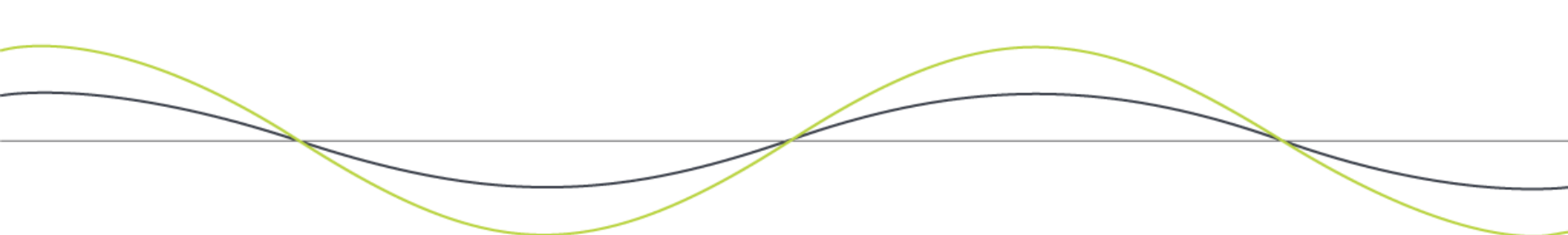
All County residents surveyed value the nutritional importance of fresh fruits and vegetables at comparatively equivalent levels while those most at risk are only very slightly less likely to try to shop for fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets when in season.

Similar trending occurs regarding concerns around overly processed food, additives and sugar, salt & trans fats when comparing ALL County resident responses to those worried about affording food OR recent food bank clients.

However, **Millennials are the only generation studied that reports LESS concern around ALL of these negative aspects of processed and packaged foods – significantly so.**

There is work to be done with our youngest residents around food and nutritional literacy. **Millennials are an important priority as they are the most likely to be raising young families.** Parents are a crucial vector for passing down food habits and knowledge.

TOP2BOX RESPONSE RESULTS Food Skills & Knowledge	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 77)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 22)
I feel confident about my skills and knowledge to make good food choices for myself or my family.	89%	87%	84%	90%
I feel like I am missing a lot / some (combined) of the skills and knowledge to make good food choices for myself or my family.	13%	57%	24%	55%
It's important to me that I, or my family, eat fresh fruits and vegetables regularly.	94%	89%	90%	91%
When in season, I try to purchase food for myself and my family at local farm stands and farmer's markets as much as I can.	84%	76%	70%	73%
It's important to me that I, or my family, eat foods that are not highly processed	86%	67%	81%	82%
It's important to me that I, or my family, eat foods that do not have a lot of additives.	83%	67%	82%	77%
It's important to me that I, or my family, eat foods that are not high in sugars, salt, or transfat.	83%	73%	79%	77%



The impact food choices have on the local economy and the overall provenance of food we eat is quite present in the minds of PEC residents. The environmental impact, not so much. This is especially the case for past year food bank clients and Millennials.

Millennials are also significantly less focused on local economic impact.

Those more at risk of food security are much more interested in community gardening and learning about food nutrition and prep. Eager to participate and eager to learn.

There is a schism between the perceived healthfulness of farm stand fruit and vegetables and a sense that it's more expensive.

Q10.

Using a scale of "1" to "5" where "1" means "disagree completely" and "5" means "completely agree" please let us know how much you agree or disagree with the following statements around food, nutrition and health in your life and in the County. We're after your immediate personal reaction to these statements - try not to overthink your response and "go with your gut"!



FOOD SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

A strong majority (71%) PEC residents think about both the provenance of the food they purchase and consume AND how it will impact the local economy.

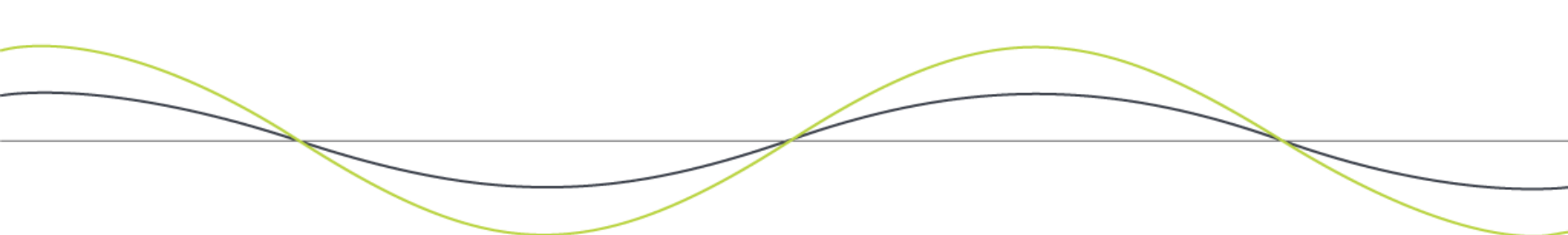
They think less so (53%) about the environmental impact of that food; this is particularly the case for Millennials and past year food bank clients (27% and 32%). Millennials are also significantly less interested in impact on the local economy.

There is a significant gap between the health benefits of fresh fruit and vegetables from farm stands and markets (85% agreement) and the perceived personal fiscal benefits (only 42% think shopping farm stands and markets is less expensive).

Those worried about paying for food and past year food bank clients are significantly more interested in learning more about food preparation or getting involved with a community garden. Millennials, in general, less so.

Is the Millennial's general ambivalence to a number of food awareness indicators a troubling trend or something that will settle back into generational norms as life experience grows?

TOP2BOX RESPONSE RESULTS Food Skills & Knowledge	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 77)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 22)
I regularly think about how my food choices support our local economy.	71%	36%	65%	68%
I regularly think about where my food comes from, how it was made and who produced it.	71%	71%	66%	68%
I regularly think about the environmental impact of my food choices (like the energy it takes to produce the food, get it to market, and the waste it leaves behind).	53%	27%	47%	32%
It is healthier for me and my family to purchase food from local farm stands and farmer's markets when in season.	85%	80%	81%	73%
It is less expensive to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from farm stands and farmer's markets when in season.	42%	42%	38%	41%
I'd be personally interested in learning more about affordable, nutritious foods and how to prepare them.	23%	24%	39%	59%
If community gardens were more readily available near to where I live I would be more inclined to get involved and grow my own fruits and vegetables.	21%	31%	36%	45%



A large majority of PEC residents agree that “access to healthy, affordable food is a human right” and that there should be more hands on learning about food in our schools.

There is less strong agreement (60%) that access to affordable and nutritious food is “a problem for many” in the County. This figure goes up significantly as soon as we speak to those most at-risk for food security however.

Two-thirds of PEC residents agree that food access supports should exist right smack dab in the middle of the areas of the County that need it most.

“Shame” or “embarrassment” continue to be seen as the most persistent barriers to food access supports in the County though lack of awareness is also seen as a driving factor for some.

Q10.

Using a scale of “1” to “5” where “1” means “disagree completely” and “5” means “completely agree” please let us know how much you agree or disagree with the following statements around food, nutrition and health in your life and in the County. We're after your immediate personal reaction to these statements - try not to overthink your response and "go with your gut"!



FOOD SECURITY

Close to 9 in 10 (86%) PEC residents agree that “access to healthy, affordable food is a human right”.

Similar numbers (84%) believe that there should be more hands on learning about food in our schools.

Further, fully 60% of PEC residents agree that access to affordable and nutritious food is “a problem for many” in the County. This figure goes up significantly as soon as we speak to those most at-risk for food security.

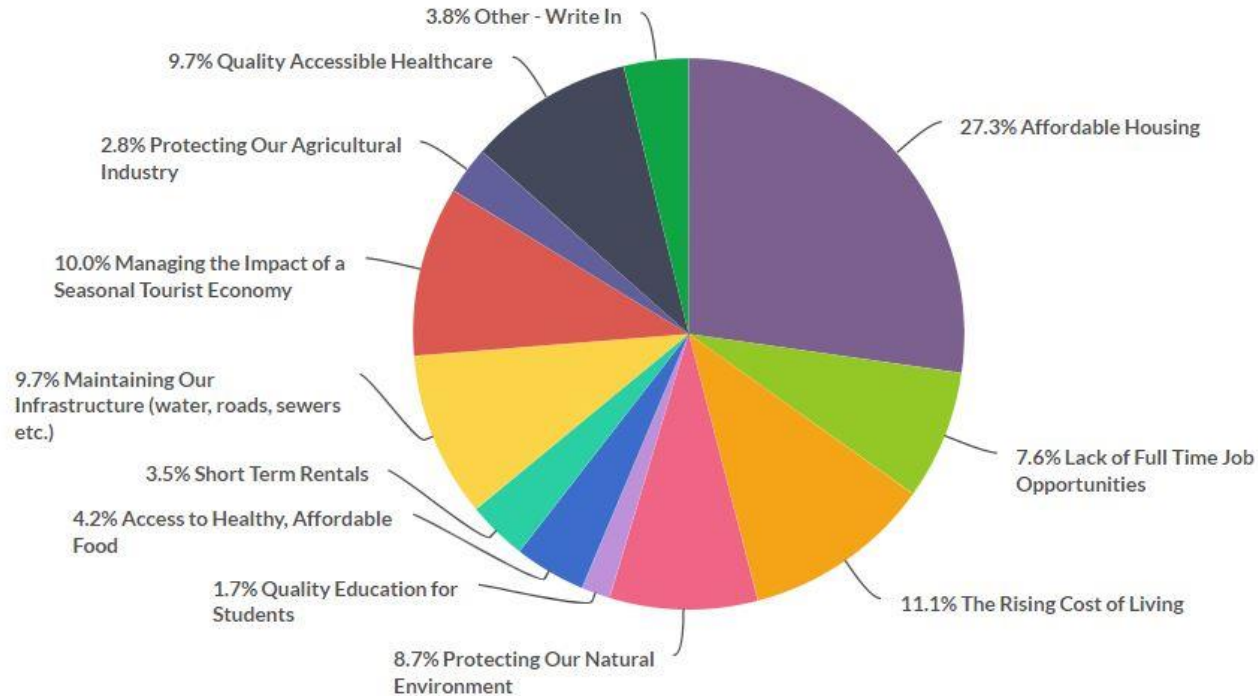
Two-thirds of our study population also affirm that food access supports need to be “right in the middle of areas of our community where the need is the greatest”; this goes up very significantly for those most at risk – especially past year food bank clients. Another clear call out for direct, ongoing and on-site outreach in a growing list of focus areas in the County.

Those most at risk are also most eager to roll their sleeves up to both learn and pitch in. Echoes from our qual research.

7 in 10 PEC residents believe that **“shame” or “embarrassment”** continue to be the persistent barriers to food access supports in the County while a third (34%) believe this is also a product of lack of awareness. Normalization will be fundamental to any continuing food access support in the region.

TOP2BOX RESPONSE RESULTS Food Security	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 77)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 22)
I think that access to affordable and nutritious foods is a human right.	86%	93%	90%	96%
I think that there should be more hands-on education about affordable, nutritious foods and how to prepare them in our schools.	84%	78%	83%	86%
I think many people don't access community food services like food banks and community meals because they are embarrassed or ashamed to be in need of some assistance.	70%	80%	74%	73%
We need more community food services like food banks, community gardens, food preparation classes and community meals available right in the middle of areas of our community where the need is the greatest.	66%	73%	73%	91%
I think that access to affordable and nutritious foods is a problem for many in Prince Edward County.	60%	71%	78%	86%
I think many people don't access community food services like food banks and community meals because they are not aware of them.	34%	40%	43%	32%
I am interested in helping to prepare meals together with other people to learn more about cooking and to share the fruits of our labour with the community.	33%	29%	38%	50%

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN PEC



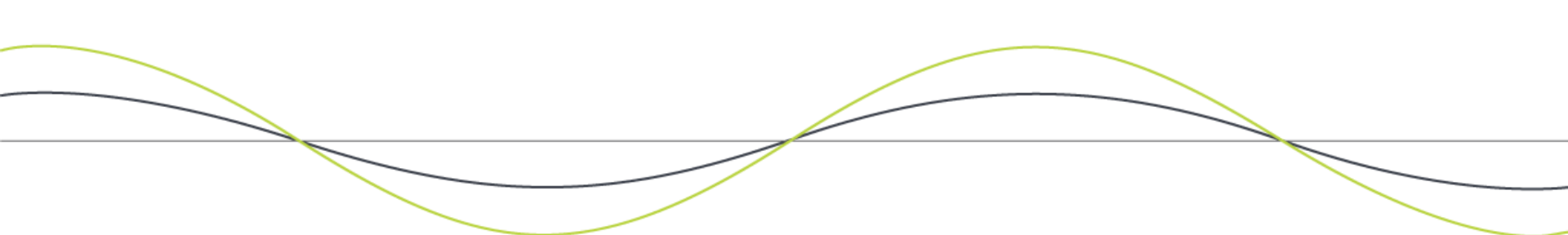
As of September 2019 the ONE issue that residents we surveyed believe is “most critical for Prince Edward County to address” is, by far, **affordable housing** (27%). Cost of living in PEC continues to build momentum as THE County’s highest priority with “the rising cost of living” (11%), “managing the impact of a seasonal tourist economy” (10%) and the “lack of full time job opportunities”(8%) combining with “affordable housing” to account for over half (56%) of all respondent forced choice picks. **“Access to healthy, affordable food”, while definitely linked to the rising cost of living, only registers at 4% within this forced choice scenario.**

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN PEC	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 77)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 22)
Affordable Housing	27%	27%	32%	58%
The Rising Cost of Living	11%	18%	18%	8%
Managing the Impact of a Seasonal Tourist Economy	10%	16%	14%	8%
Maintaining our Infrastructure (water, roads, sewers etc.)	10%	4%	9%	4%
Quality Accessible Healthcare	10%	2%	4%	4%
Protecting our Natural Environment	9%	4%	2%	0
Lack of Full Time Job Opportunities	8%	11%	8%	0
Access to Healthy, Affordable Food	4%	9%	4%	0
Short Term Rentals	4%	4%	1%	4%
Protecting our Agriculture Industry	3%	2%	5%	4%
Quality Education for Students	2%	0	1%	4%
Other (write in)	4%	2%	2%	4%

ACCESS TO HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 77)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 22)
IMPORTANCE	83%	93%	98%	96%
PERFORMANCE OF PEC	31%	27%	15%	13%
ONE ISSUE MOST CRITICAL TO PEC	4%	9%	4%	0

In general, access to healthy, affordable food is seen as a slightly more important issue for those most at risk in the County when compared to the total population AND those who are worried about affording food OR are past year clients of food banks are ~ 50% less impressed by the performance of Prince Edward County in working to improve this.

However, access to healthy, affordable food is NOT near the single top issue for any of these at-risk groups in the County. As the previous chart depicts, Millennials and those worried about affording food are more concerned about the rising cost of living. **Meanwhile, those who are past year food bank clients are doubly more focused than the total population on affordable housing. Indeed, access to healthy, affordable food doesn't even make their single most critical issue list. Finding affordable housing is driving their vulnerability in a very significant way.**



There are VERY significant gaps between the importance PEC residents place on various hot button issues in the County and perceptions of how well Prince Edward County, in general, is handling them.

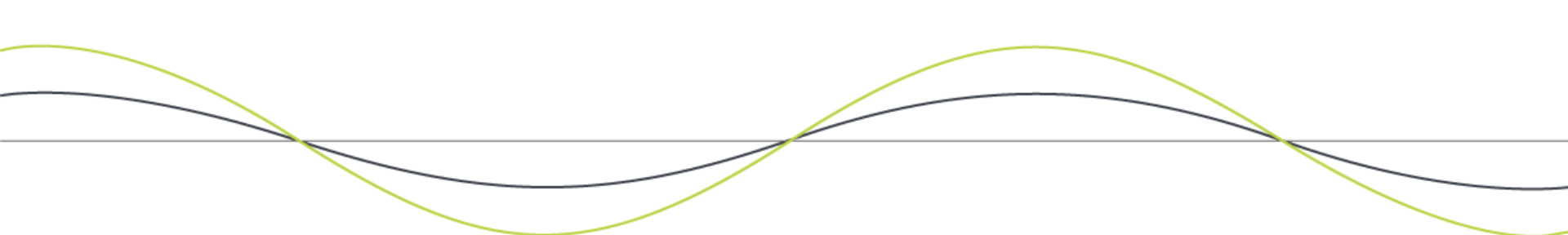
These are most pronounced when it comes to the dominant issues of affordable housing, the rising cost of living and the lack of full time job opportunities.

93% of PEC residents place top2box importance on “access to healthy, affordable food” but only 31% of these same residents rate PEC as “very good” or “excellent” in addressing this issue.

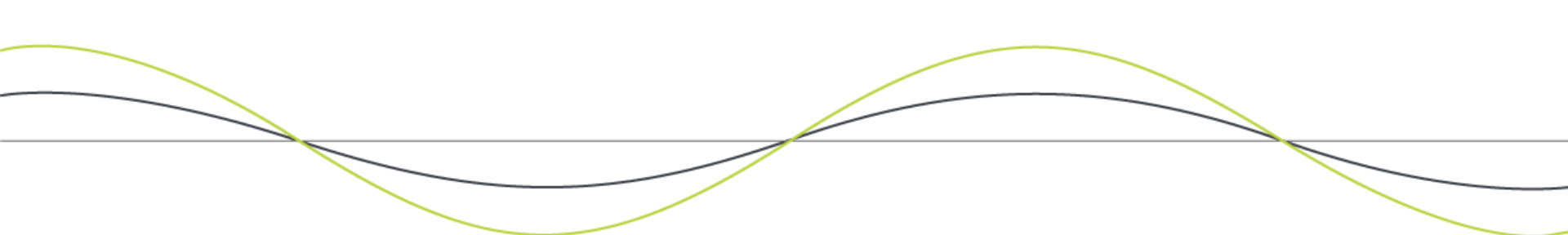
Mind the gap.

Q7.

And for each of the following please let us know how you think Prince Edward County, as a whole, is doing in addressing each of these issues? Please use a scale of “1” to “5” where “1” means “Very Poor” and “5” means “Excellent”



TOP2BOX RESPONSE RESULTS Top Issues in PEC (n = 284)	Importance	Perceived Performance by PEC
Quality Accessible Healthcare	94%	36%
Access to Healthy, Affordable Food	92%	31%
Protecting Our Natural Environment	92%	27%
Maintaining Infrastructure	88%	17%
Affordable Housing	83%	9%
Quality Education for Students	83%	32%
Protecting the Agriculture Industry	81%	32%
Rising Cost of Living	79%	9%
Lack of Full Time Job Opportunities	78%	7%
Managing the Impact of Seasonal Tourism Economy	77%	16%
Protecting Heritage Buildings	57%	38%



On an aggregate level, top media channels for info about community events, news and services are driven by a mix of “traditional” media (newspapers / radio – online or offline) at 43% AND social media channels (facebook and Instagram) at 35%.

However, this mix of media channels shifts dramatically towards social media when we look at top media channels through the lens of key at-risk groups for food insecurity.

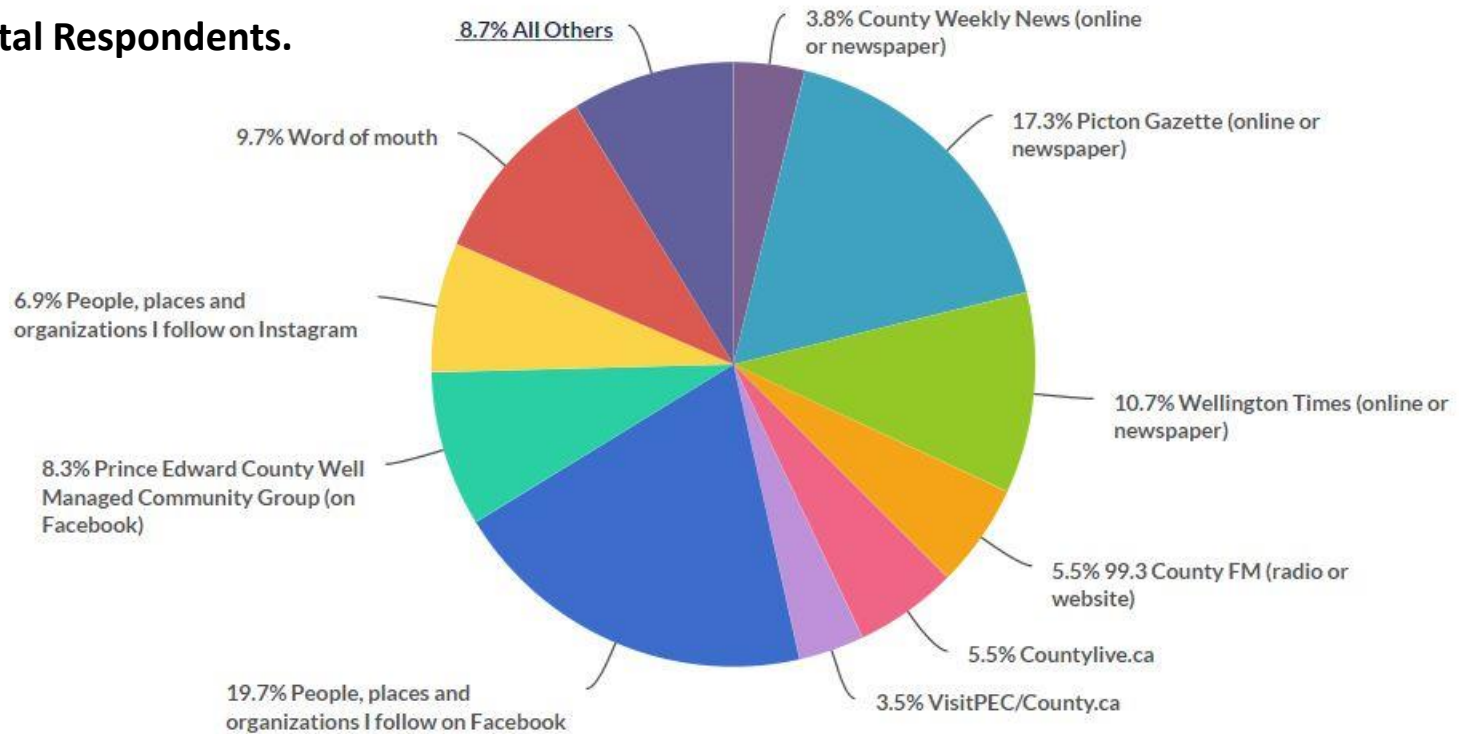
Millennials > 58% Worried About \$ For Food > 42% Food Bank Clients > 53%

Personal Facebook feeds lead social media impact (“word of mouth” attribution here) followed by Prince Edward County Well Managed Community Group (FB).

13. Now, which ONE of these is the resource you rely on the MOST to find out about community events, community news and community services here in Prince Edward County?

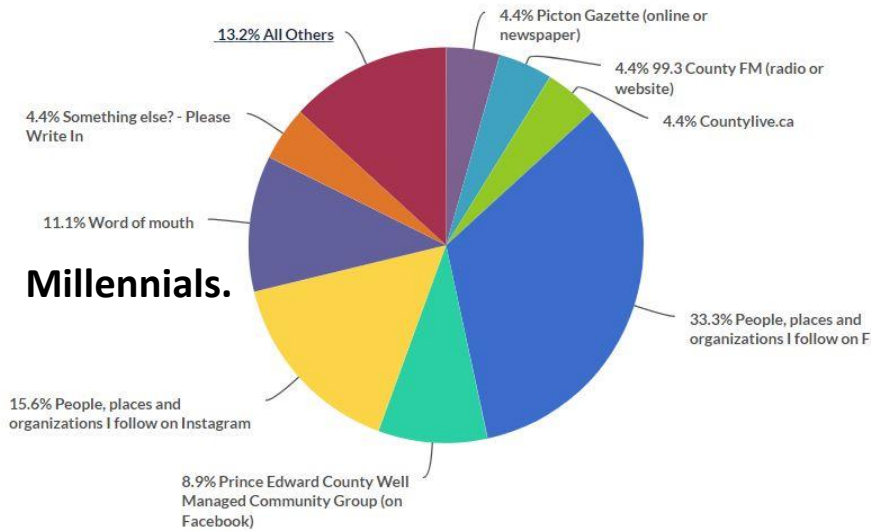
MOST RELIED ON COMMUNITY INFO AND NEWS RESOURCE

Total Respondents.

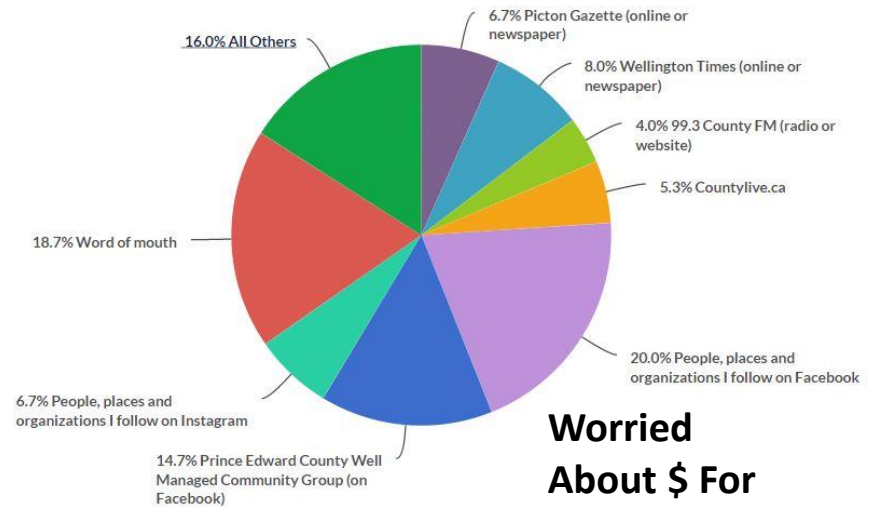


MOST RELIED ON COMMUNITY INFO AND NEWS RESOURCE

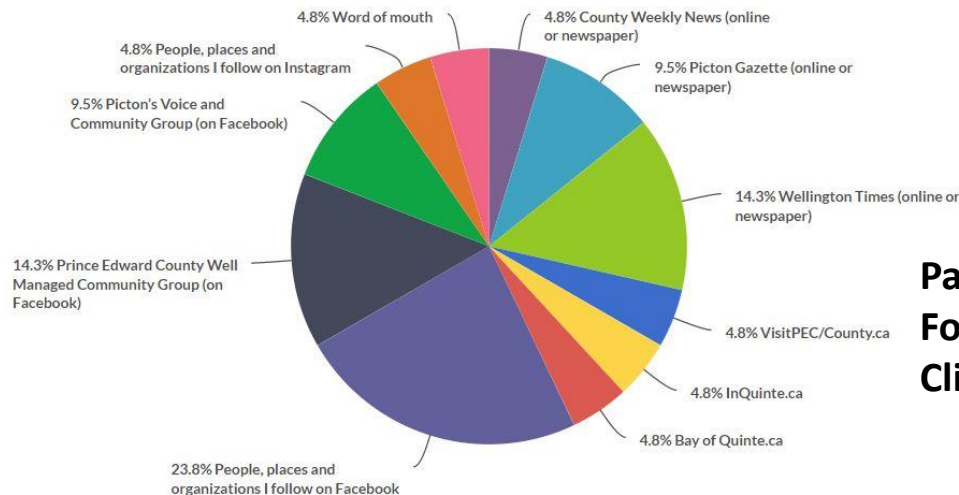
Millennials.

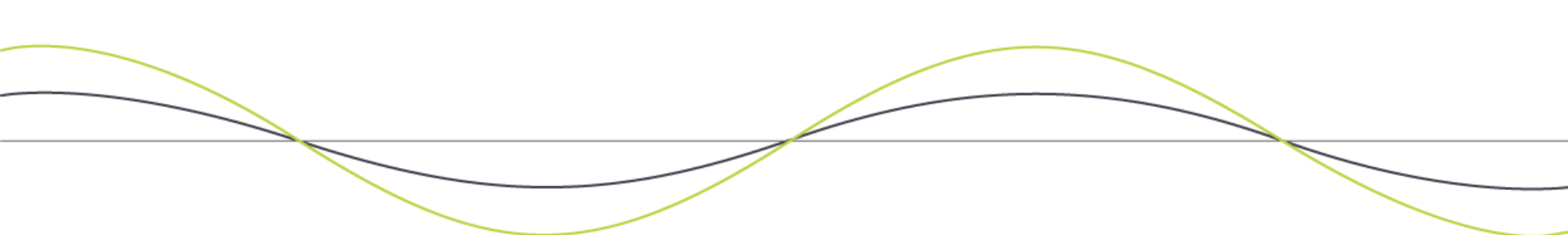


Worried About \$ For Food.



Past Year Food Bank Clients.





A majority of local food-based organizations or services enjoy a combination of strong awareness (very well aware) and general awareness (I have heard of them but I'd like to learn more) at a combined 50% level or more.

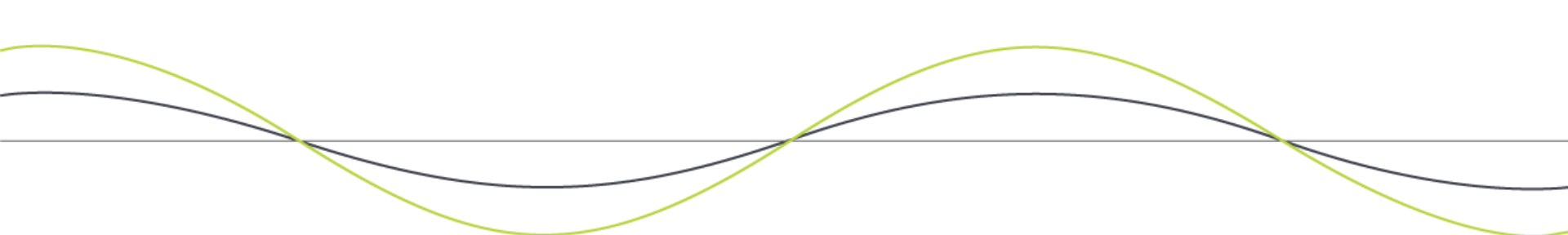
The most recognized organizations studied are our two local food banks.

There is plenty of community interest, however, in almost all of these organizations to nurture and expand as The Food Collective evolves. This interest is another clarion call for more information and outreach.

Q14.

Which of the following local food-based organizations or services are you aware of? Please let us know your level of awareness for each.

Overall Awareness of Food Access and Food Security Groups in PEC (n = 284)	Very Well Aware	Have Heard Of Them But Would Like To Know More	Never Heard of This Group
Wellington Storehouse Food Bank	44%	26%	30%
Picton United Church Food Bank	43%	30%	27%
Prince Edward Learning Centre	32%	42%	26%
Food To Share	30%	24%	47%
Food Not Bombs	30%	35%	35%
Picton Community Garden	30%	40%	30%
The Good Food Box	29%	37%	34%
Wellington Community Garden	21%	30%	49%
Community Meals at HOPE Centre	19%	35%	46%
County Food Hub at Sophiasburgh Central School	18%	39%	43%
Food For Learning	15%	25%	60%
Community Garden at Kente Public School	9%	13%	79%
4H Garden at Sophiasburgh Central School	6%	20%	74%



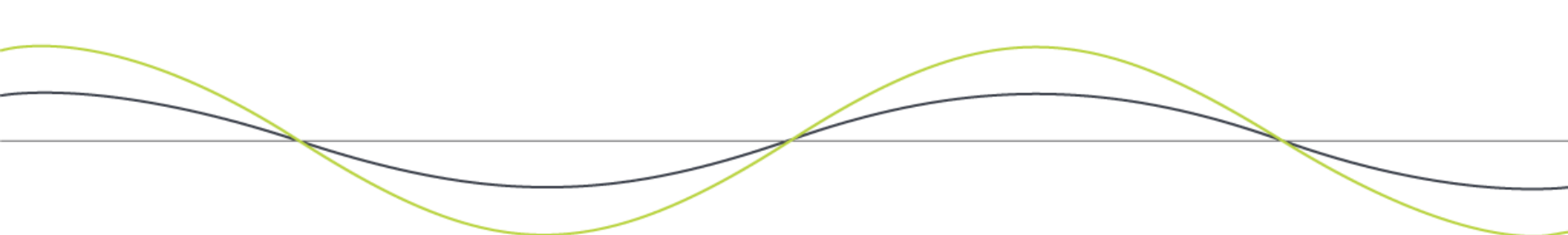
A significant majority (85%) of PEC residents studied think that the recent \$20,000 in funding for Food To Share is either “just right” (44%) or “wish this figure could be higher” (41%).

This support is cross generational and also spans socio-economic indicators including those most at risk for food insecurity in our community.

Momentum.

Q17.

The elected Council for Prince Edward County recently approved a motion to provide \$20,000 in funding to the local food security group Food To Share. Which of the following statements most accurately reflect your opinion of this approved motion?



PERCEPTIONS RE: FOOD TO SHARE FUNDING	TOTAL (n = 284)	Millennial (n = 45)	Worried About \$ For Food (n = 73)	Recent Food Bank Client (n = 21)
I disagree with the use of public funds to support food access and food security in Prince Edward County.	4%	2%	1%	0
While it's a good idea for our municipality to help support food access and food security in Prince Edward County, there are many other worthwhile causes that need funding as well - I'd be more comfortable that the figure approved be less than \$20,000.	11%	22%	14%	14%
I think that food access and food security in Prince Edward County needs to be supported by the municipality and this figure of \$20,000 is just right.	44%	44%	33%	43%
I think that food access and food security in Prince Edward County needs to be supported by the municipality and this figure of \$20,000 is not enough to make a serious impact - I wish this figure were higher.	41%	31%	52%	43%



THANK YOU.

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FARRELL INSIGHT

It's a human journey.



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