

OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL MARCH 13, 2023

**UNITING RURAL PRODUCERS AND URBAN CONSUMERS SURVEY  
DATA ANALYSIS – TECHNICAL REPORT**





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As a result of the events, **91%** felt more connected  
to people who grow/produce their food

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## 04 • 1. Background

## 05 • 2. Methodology

## 05 • 3. Respondents' profile

- 06 • 3.1. Number of surveys by project
- 06 • 3.2. Whether residing in watershed
- 06 • 3.3. Age distribution
- 07 • 3.4. Participation in the Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers project
- 07 • 3.5. Whether involved in growing food for non-personal use
- 08 • 3.6. Preferred learning format
- 09 • 3.7. Whether respondents feel empowered when knowing how their food is grown/produced
- 10 • 3.8. Whether watershed health is important to them
- 11 • 3.9. Whether they believe food producers in Southern Alberta are responsible watershed stewards

## 12 • 4. Project outcomes

- 12 • 4.1. Whether respondents' understanding of food production increased
- 13 • 4.2. Whether respondents feel more connected to the people who grow/produce their food
- 14 • 4.3. Whether respondents feel more trust in the people who grow/produce their food
- 15 • 4.4. Whether respondents would like to learn more about how their food is grown

## 16 • 5. Conclusion

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# 1. BACKGROUND

The Oldman Watershed Council is a not-for-profit organization working in partnership with communities and residents to improve the Oldman watershed in southwestern Alberta. It is one of eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in Alberta.

The OWC's *Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers* project was funded in part by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program, and was designed to build relationships between food consumers and producers.

The program intended to educate, engage, and inform urban consumers in Southern Alberta about agriculture and food production through targeted, innovative, interactive, researched, and collaborative communication packages of videos, written interviews and events.

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## THE THREE GOALS OF THE PROJECT WERE TO:

1. **Connect urban consumers with rural food producers.**
  2. **Provide opportunities for consumers to learn about food production from producers.**
  3. **Increase engagement with OWC.**
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## As part of this project the OWC organized six events:

- **Open Farm days, August 13, 2022**, an event where participants could meet food producers and learn about food production at an OWC booth.
- **Photo Tour 1 on November 19, 2022, and Photo Tour 2 on Saturday November 19, 2022.** Photo Tour 1 took place on a farm, and Photo Tour 2 in Lethbridge's river bottom. Both events included a meal and opportunities to learn about local food and photography.
- **Dinner 1 on December 11, 2022, and Dinner 2 on January 29, 2022**, at Bourbon and Butter in Lethbridge, where participants could enjoy a specially crafted three-course meal made from ingredients that are grown in the watershed, and learn from local food producers how food is produced.
- **A cooking class on December 12, 2022**, at the Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank Community Kitchen, where participants learned how to make a delicious meal made with local ingredients and learn about food production from a local food producer.

At each of the events, all participants were invited to complete a two-page survey.

The *Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers* project included other initiatives, such as the production of ten Oldman Watershed Council: Eats! short videos, where OWC staff sat down for a meal with members of the food production community and talked about where our food comes from, as well as the successes and challenges for food production and the environment in southern Alberta. Eight videos had been released by the end of February 2023.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

OWC collected paper surveys from event participants. All participants were invited to complete a survey. All attendees of the photo tours, dinners and cooking classes completed a survey, but it is likely that some of those participating in the Open Farm Days did not complete the survey, since no registration was required. It is possible that some respondents participated in more than one event, but this was not tracked through the surveys.

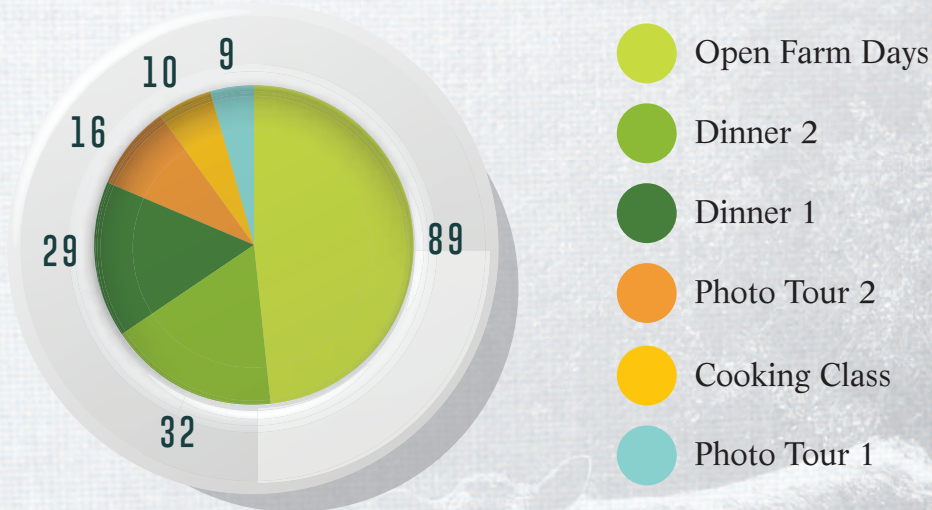
Survey results were posted in a spreadsheet. One of the survey entries had to be discarded, since the participant openly declared that they intentionally chose the “strongly disagree” or “no” options in their responses. The spreadsheet was then used to compile and analyze the data, by event and by age group. Because some of the events had small attendance, survey results should be viewed with caution.

## 3. RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

### 3.1. Number of surveys by project

Almost half of the surveys (48%) were completed at Open Farm Days, 37% at the two dinner events, 14% at the two photo tours, and 5% at the cooking class. Open Farm Days was the only event where pre-registration was not required.

#### NUMBER OF SURVEYS PER EVENT



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As a result of the events, **87%** reported that their understanding of food production had increased

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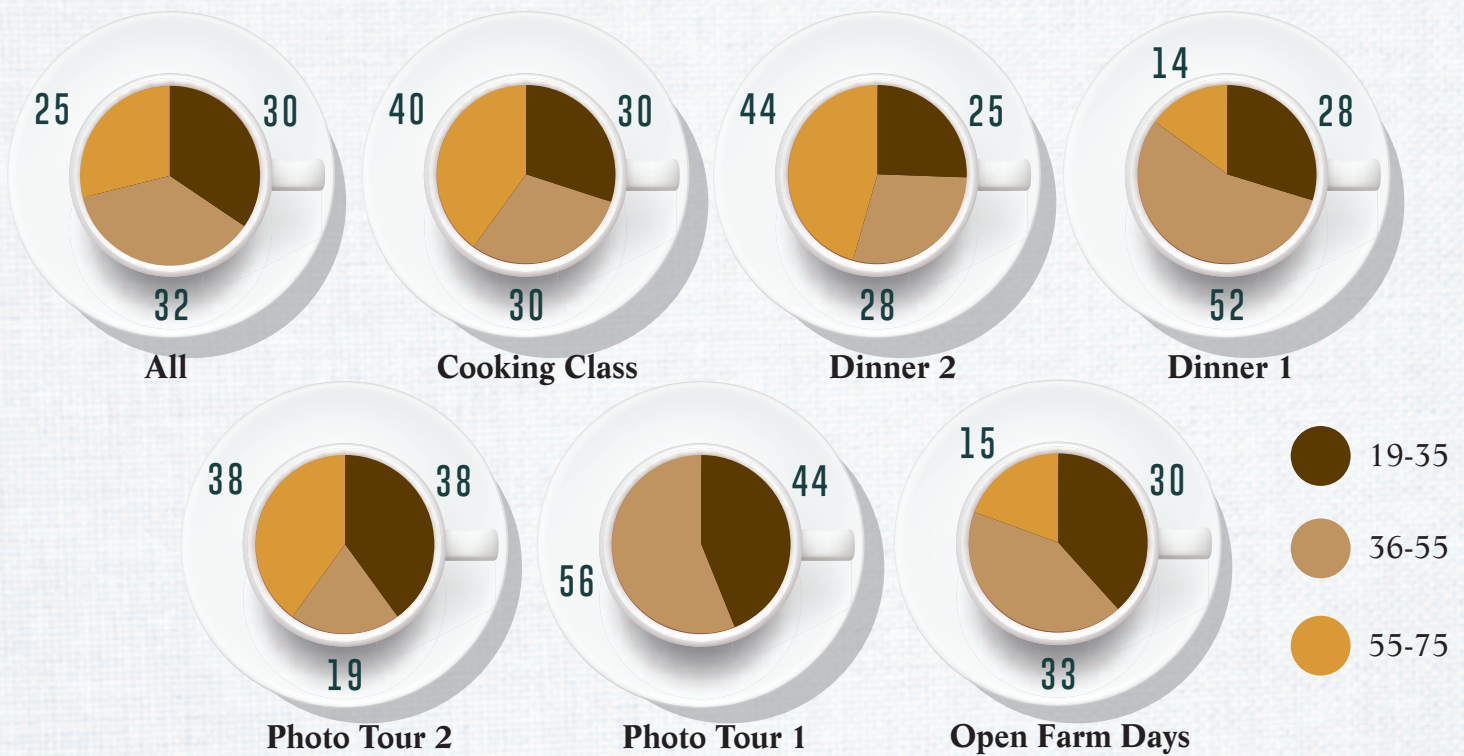
### 3.2. Whether residing in watershed

The majority of respondents stated that they lived in the Oldman river watershed. 8% did not know, and 14% were unsure or did not respond. Except for Open Farm Days, over 90% of participants knew that they lived in the watershed. Of those participating in Open Farm Days, only 64% knew that they lived in the watershed, 11% knew that they did not, and 25% were unsure or did not respond.

#### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS RESIDING IN WATERSHED



#### RESPONDENTS BY AGE GROUP AND EVENT



### 3.3. Age distribution

The survey responses included six age groups, under 12, 13-18, 19-35, 36-55, 67-75, and over 75 years old. 179 respondents posted their age group. The three groups with the most respondents were the 19-35 (30%), the 36-55 (32%) and the 56-75 (25%) year-old groups.

The Open Farm Days event was the only one geared at all ages, with children and youth attending. All other events targeted adults only.



### 3.4. Participation in the Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers project

All events reviewed through the survey were in-person events.

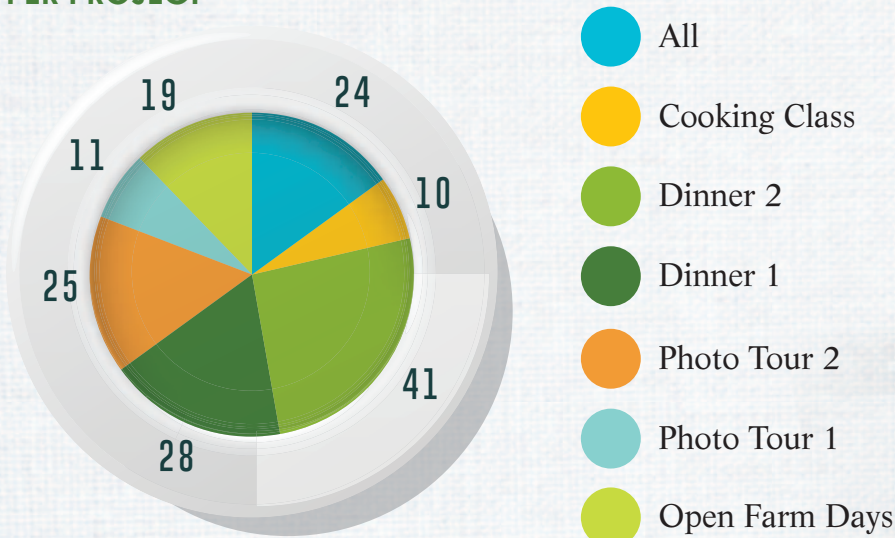
9% of the respondents stated that they had also watched at least one of the OWC:Eats! Video.

### 3.5. Whether involved in growing food for non-personal use

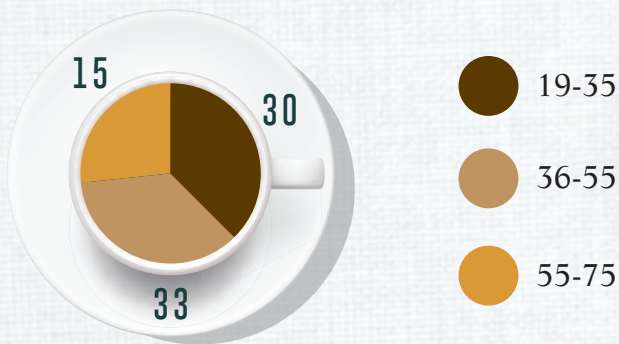
24% of all respondents stated that they have been, or are currently, involved with growing food for non-personal use. The percentage of participants involved in growing food for non-personal use was the highest (28% and 39% respectively) for those who attended one of the dinner events.

## PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS INVOLVED IN GROWING FOOD FOR NON-PERSONAL USE

### PER PROJECT



### BY AGE GROUP



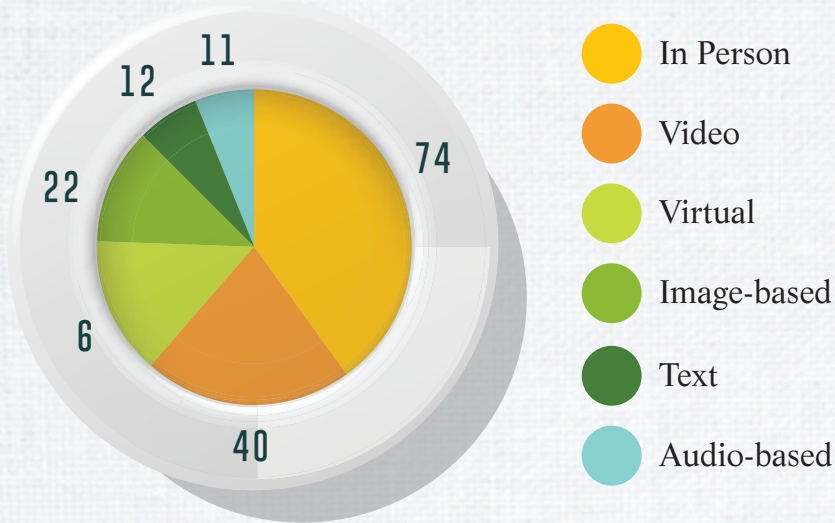
24% of those aged 19-35 and 23% of those aged 36-55 indicated that they were involved in growing food for non-personal use. This is a high percentage, considering that the agricultural industry accounts for 2% of total employment in Alberta in 2020. The survey question did not specify whether the intent was to count only those involved in growing food as a business, or whether those sharing food with neighbours and friends were included as well.



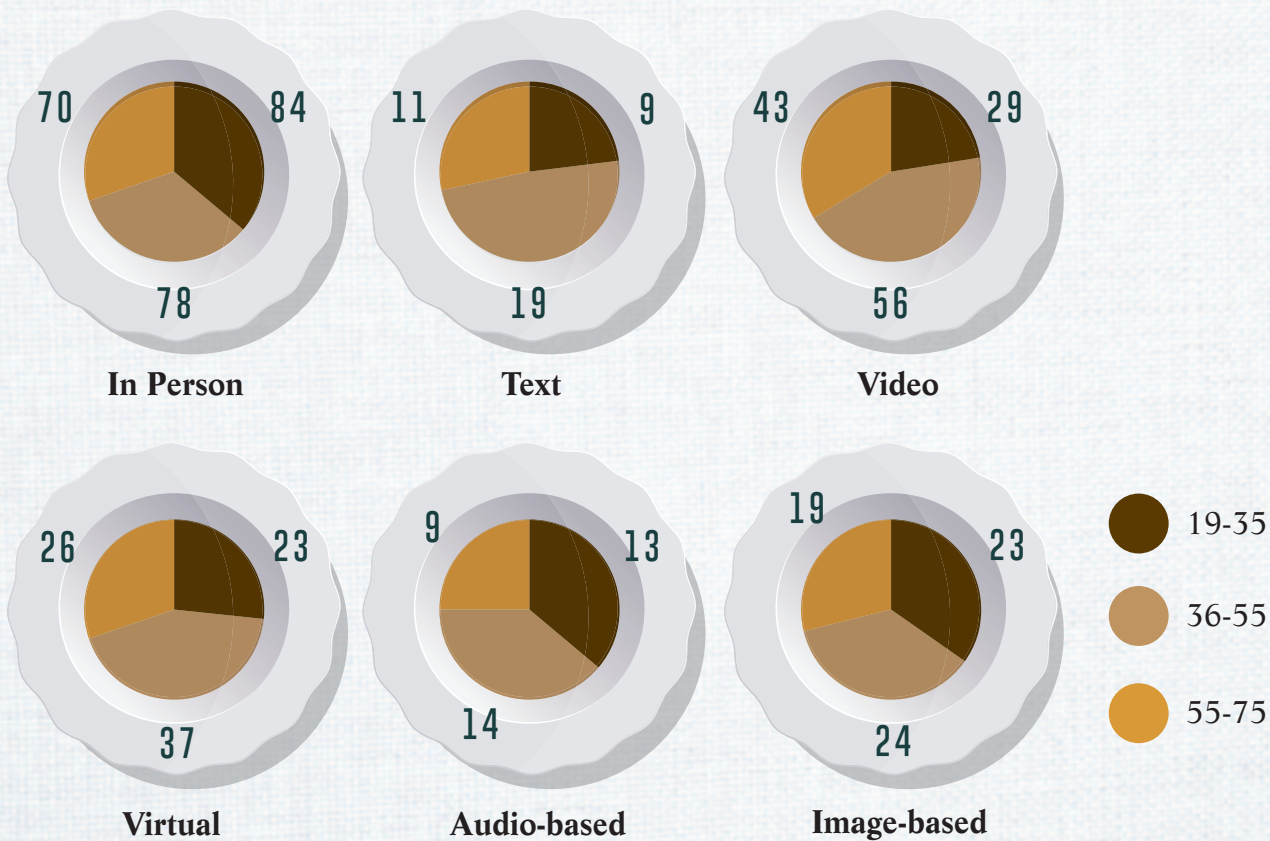
### 3.6. Preferred learning format

Respondents were asked to select the formats they prefer when learning about how their food is grown. 41% of respondents selected one format only, and 59% selected at least two formats. Formats selected most often were in person (74% of all respondents), and video (40%), for all age groups. Results should be viewed with caution because there was some overlap between the format options.

#### PREFERRED FORMATS FOR LEARNING ABOUT HOW FOOD IS GROWN



#### PREFERRED FORMATS FOR LEARNING BY AGE GROUP





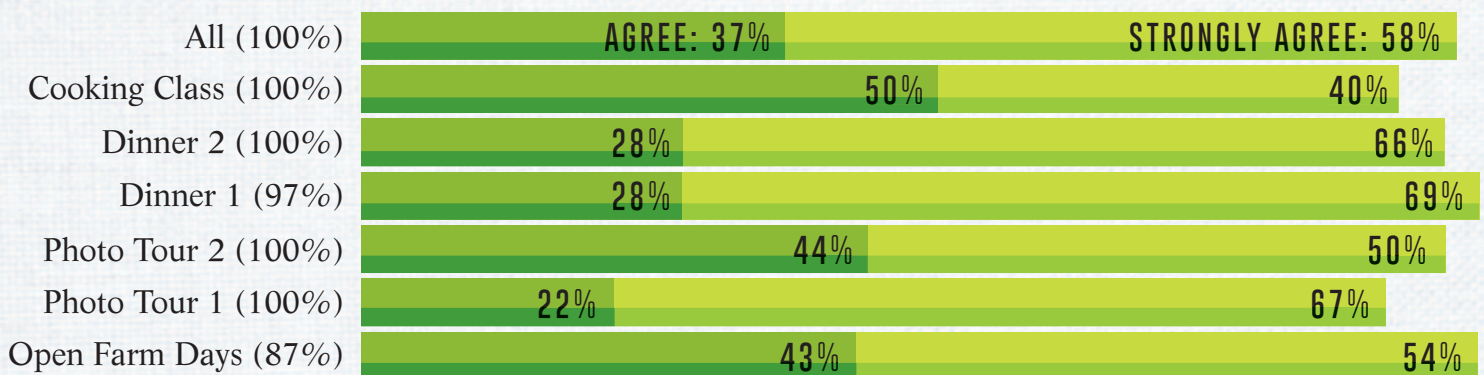
### 3.7. Whether respondents feel empowered when knowing how their food is grown/produced

## 95% of participants agreed that they felt empowered when they knew how their food is produced

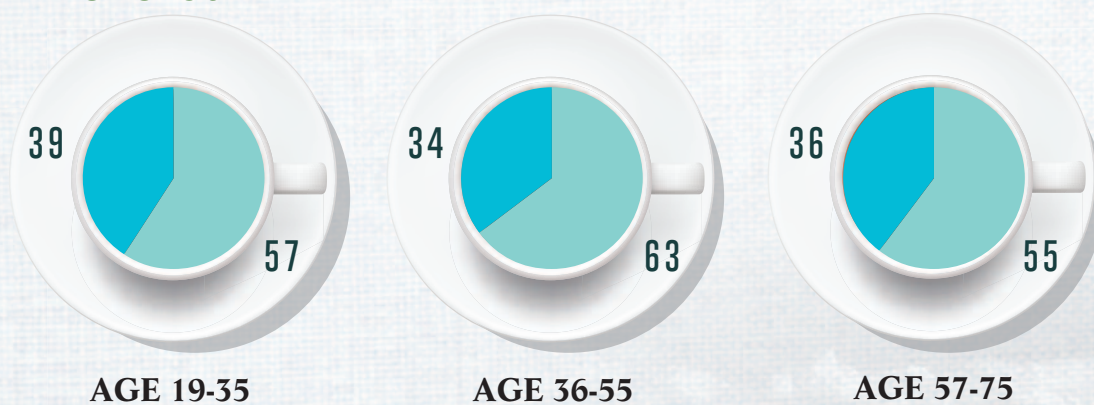
Those attending Photo Tour 1, on a farm, were the least likely to agree. OWC staff indicated that, even though there was a food production learning component, participants in that tour tended to focus on improving their photography skills. Over 90% of respondents in all three age groups agreed that they felt empowered when they know how their food is grown/produced. The two younger groups (19-35, and 36-55) had a higher level of agreement than the oldest group (56-75).

### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO FEEL EMPOWERED WHEN THEY KNOW HOW THEIR FOOD IS GROWN/PRODUCED

#### BY EVENT



#### BY AGE GROUP



● AGREE
 ● STRONGLY AGREE

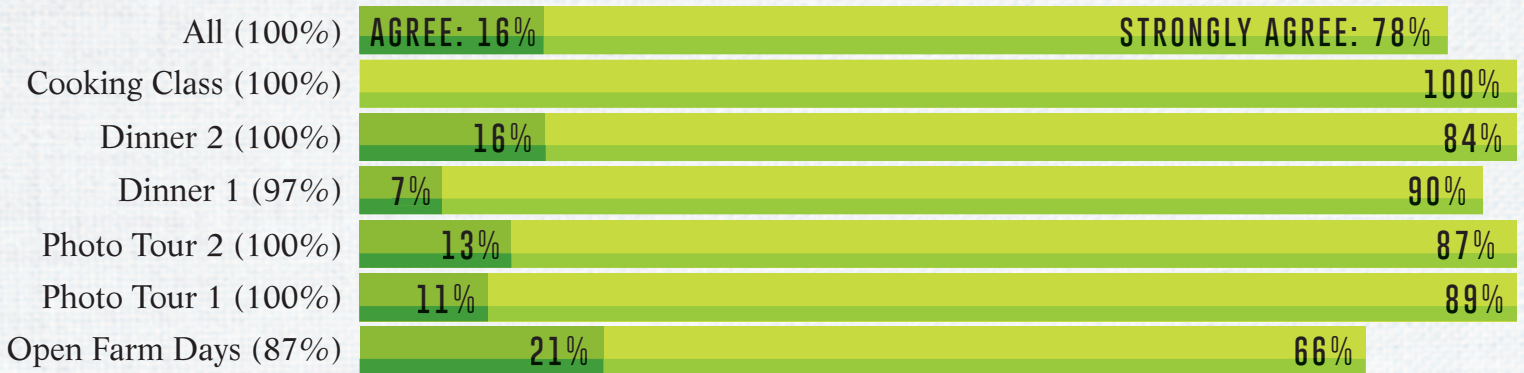


### 3.8. Whether watershed health is important to them

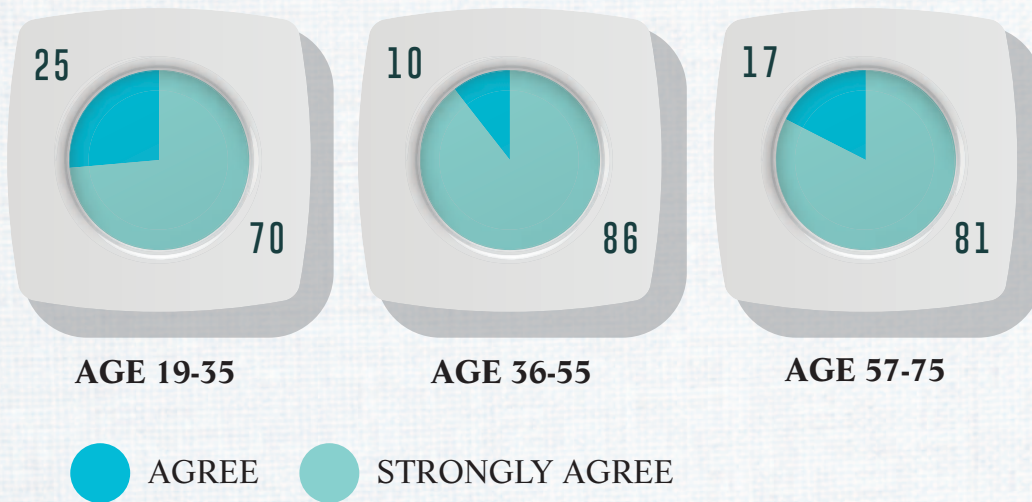
Overall, 16% of respondents agreed and 78% strongly agreed that watershed health was important to them. The percentage of those who agreed was the lowest (88%) for those attending Open Farm Days, and ranged between 97% and 100% for all other events.

#### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO AGREE THAT WATERSHED HEALTH IS IMPORTANT TO THEM

##### BY EVENT



##### BY AGE GROUP



Participants of the three main age groups all indicated high levels of agreement (above 95%) that watershed health was important to them.

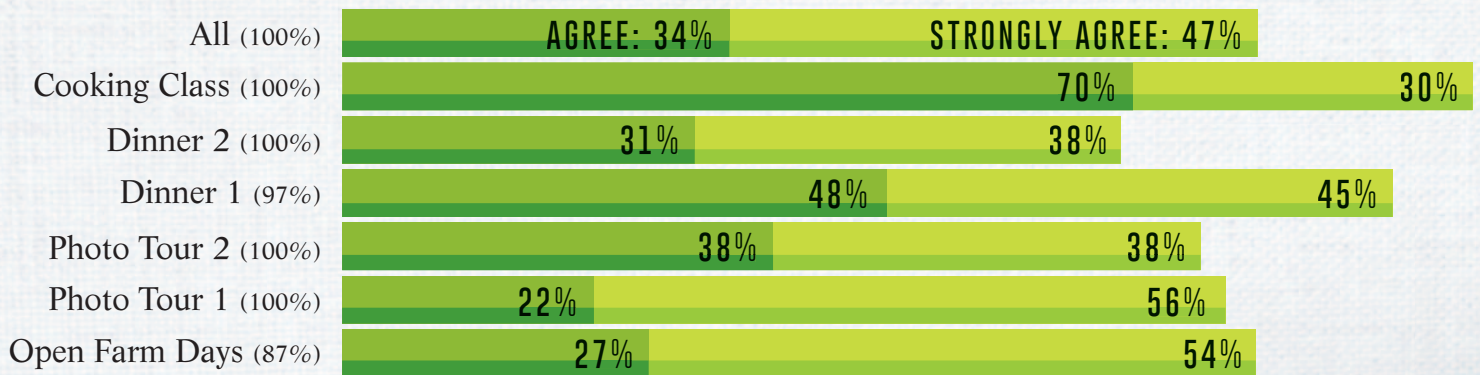


### 3.9. Whether they believe food producers in Southern Alberta are responsible watershed stewards

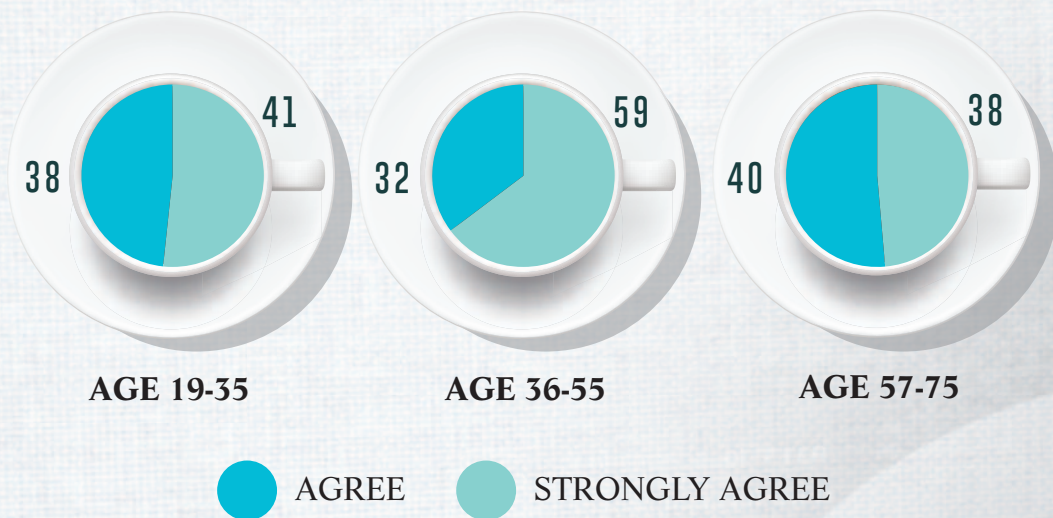
Overall, 34% of respondents agreed and 47% strongly agreed that food producers are responsible watershed stewards. All participants in the cooking class and 93% of participants in dinner 1 agreed or strongly agreed. The percentage of agreement was lower (less than 80%) for the other events. Participants in the 36-55 age group had the highest level of agreement (91%) of all three age groups, regarding their beliefs that food producers are responsible watershed stewards.

#### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVE FOOD PRODUCERS IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA ARE RESPONSIBLE WATERSHED STEWARDS

##### BY EVENT



##### BY AGE GROUP





## 4. PROJECT OUTCOMES

OWC wanted to know whether there was a change in knowledge or attitude, after engaging with OWC's food-related events, content, and/or activities.

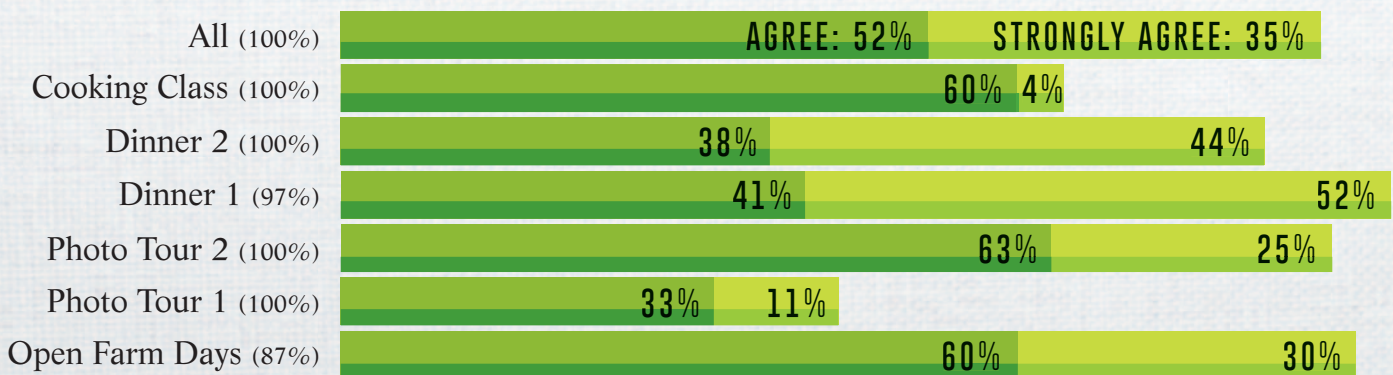
### 4.1. Whether respondents' understanding of food production increased

Most respondents (85%) agreed or strongly agreed that their understanding of food production had increased because of the project.

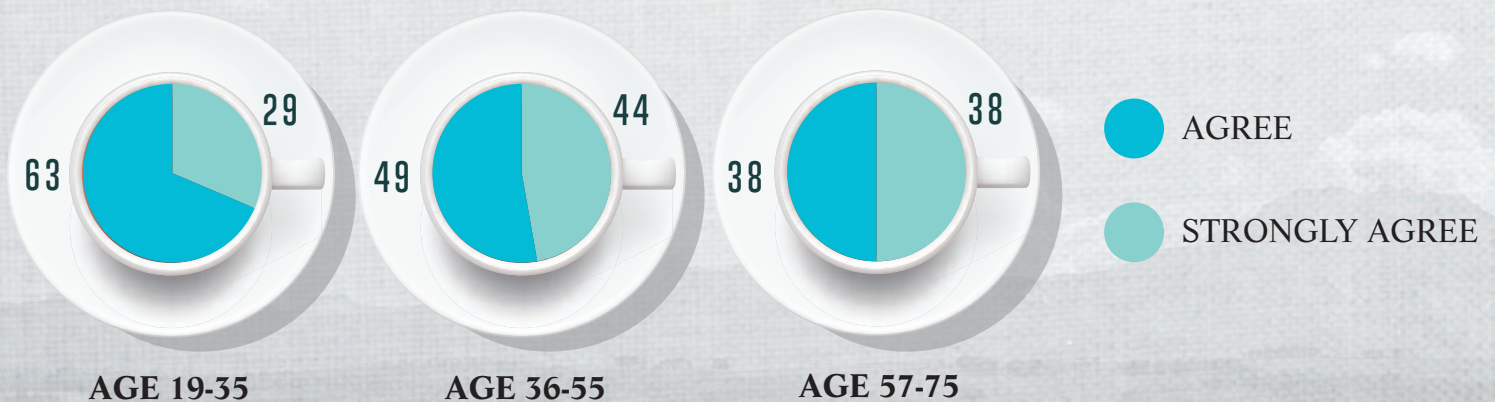
All those attending the cooking class agreed or strongly agreed. Those attending Photo Tour 1, on a farm, were the least likely to agree. All age groups reported increased understanding of food production: 92% and 93% of the two younger age groups (19-35 and 36-55), but only 76% of the oldest group (ages 57-75) agreed or strongly agreed that their understanding of food production had increased.

### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH INCREASED UNDERSTANDING OF FOOD PRODUCTION

#### BY EVENT



#### BY AGE GROUP





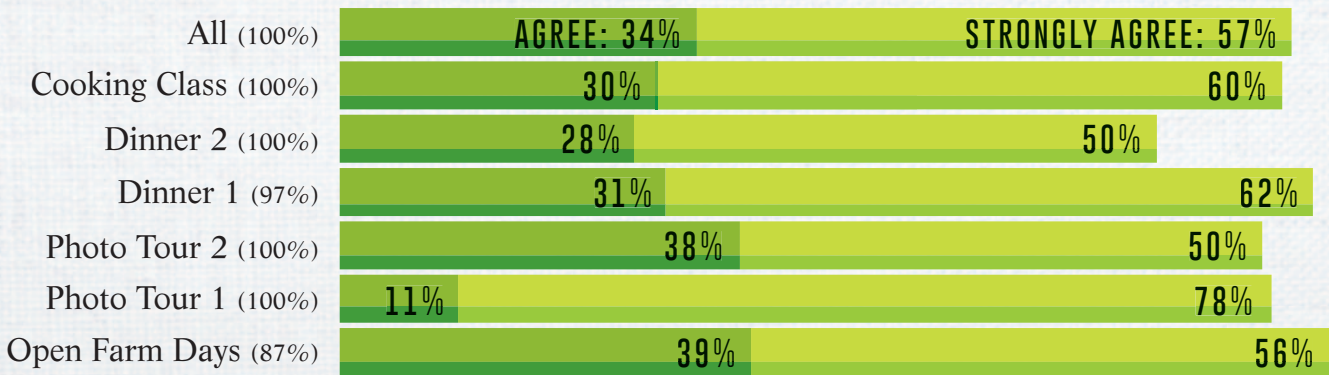
## 4.2. Whether respondents feel more connected to the people who grow/produce their food

Overall, 34% of respondents agreed and 56% strongly agreed that they felt more connected to the people who grow/produce their food.

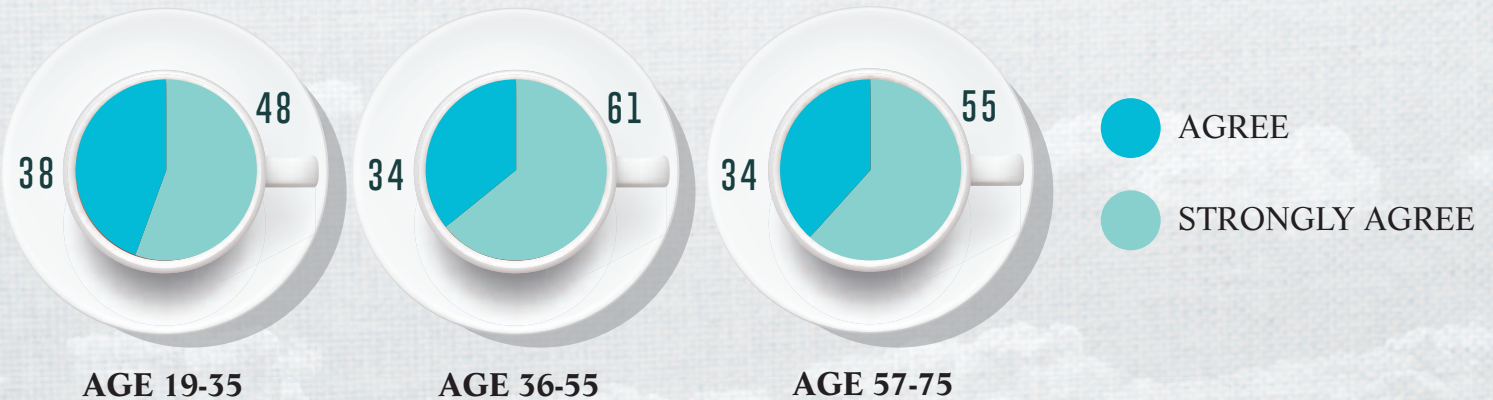
Those attending the Open Farm Days had the highest level of agreement, with 96% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Participants in the 36-55 age group reported the highest level of agreement (95%) of all three age groups, regarding feeling more connected to the people who grow/produce their food.

### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO PEOPLE WHO GROW/PRODUCE THEIR FOOD

#### BY EVENT



#### BY AGE GROUP



As a result of the events, **91%** felt more connected to people who grow/produce their food



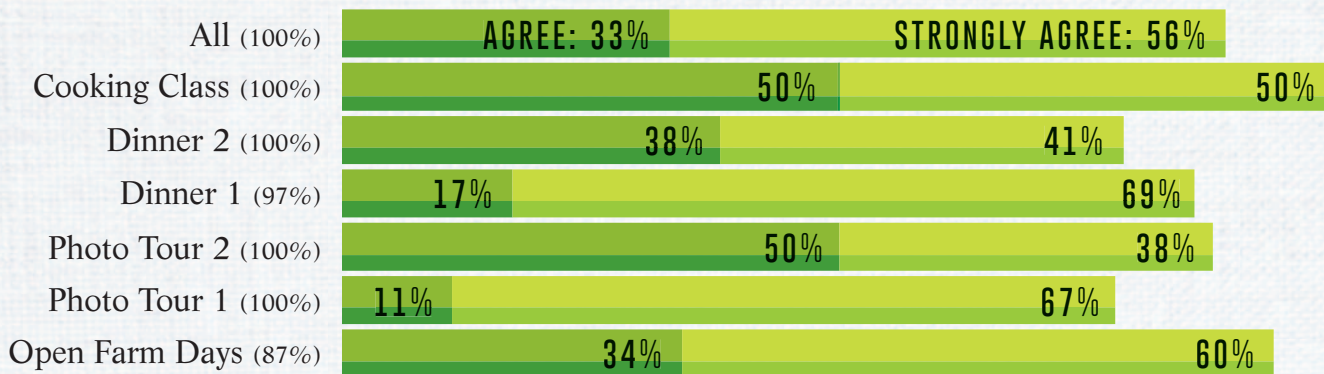
### 4.3. Whether respondents feel more trust in the people who grow/produce their food

Overall, 33% of respondents agreed and 55% strongly agreed that they felt more trust in people who grow/produce their food.

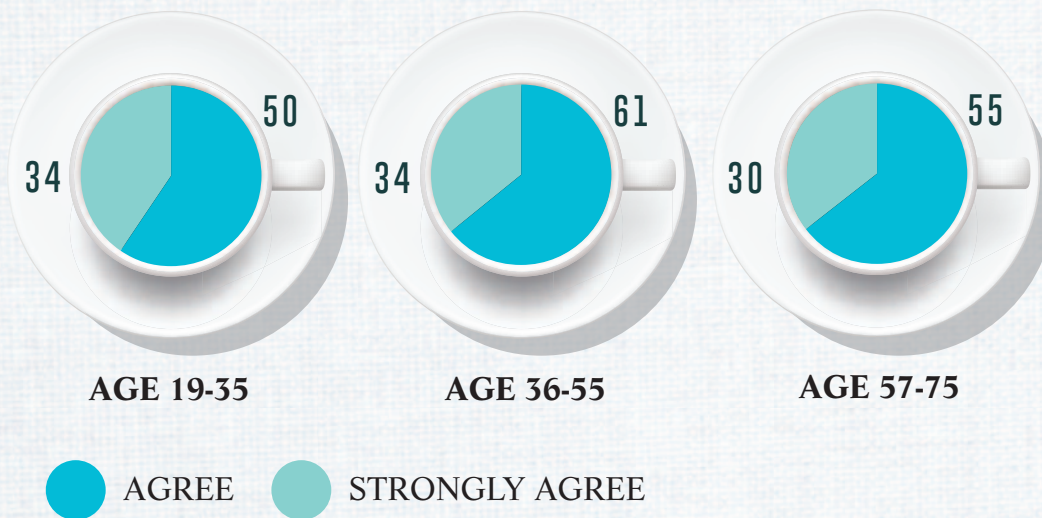
Those attending the Open Farm Days and the cooking class had the highest level of agreement. Participants in the 36-55 age group reported the highest level of agreement (95%) of all three age groups, regarding feeling more connected to the people who grow/produce their food.

#### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO FEEL MORE TRUST IN THE PEOPLE WHO GROW/PRODUCE THEIR FOOD

##### BY EVENT



##### BY AGE GROUP





#### 4.4. Whether respondents would like to learn more about how their food is grown

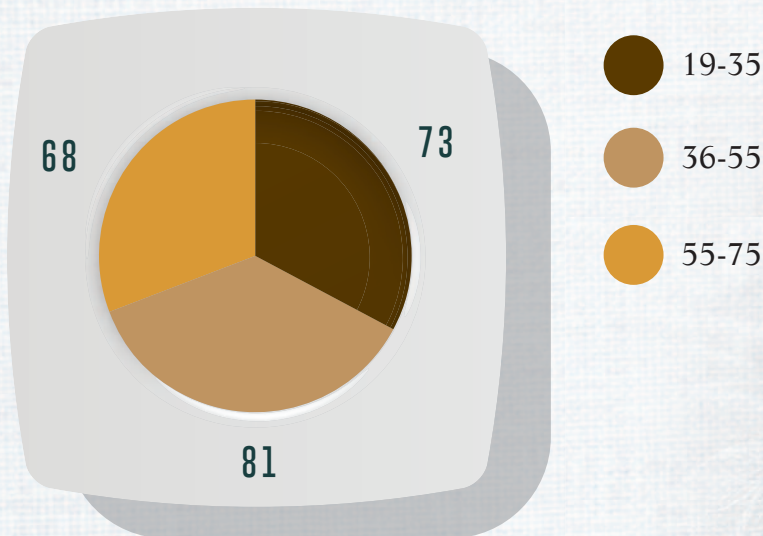
Overall, 72% of all respondents agreed that they would like to learn more about how food is grown; those participating in the cooking class and in Open Farm Days were the least likely to want to learn more. Participants in the 36-55 age group reported the highest level of agreement (81%) of all three age groups, regarding wanting to learn more about how their food is grown.

### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THEIR FOOD IS GROWN

#### BY EVENT



#### BY AGE GROUP





## 5. CONCLUSION

The respondents' profile suggest that those attending the events already had some knowledge of watersheds; 86% of them knew whether or not they lived in the watershed,

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**89% agreed that watershed health was important to them**

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It is unknown what percentage of participants had engaged with OWC prior to this project.

Findings also suggest that most respondents had some knowledge of food production. 24% stated that they were currently, or had in the past produced food for non-personal use 95% felt empowered when knowing how their food is grown/produced, and 81% believed that food producers were responsible watershed stewards.

Survey results confirmed that the project met its goals. As a result of the events, 87% reported that their understanding of food production had increased, 91% felt more connected to people who grow/produce their food, 89% felt more trust in food growers or producers, and 72% would like to learn more about how food is grown.

OWC offered four types of events, Open Farm Days, photo tours, dinners, and a cooking class. Each of them included a learning component, and all had positive outcomes. Because of the small attendance at some of the events, differences in outcomes between events should be interpreted with much caution.

The events attracted people of all ages. Interestingly, those in the 36-55 age group reported the most positive outcomes of all age groups.

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS:





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As a result of the events, **72%** would like to learn more about how food is grown

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