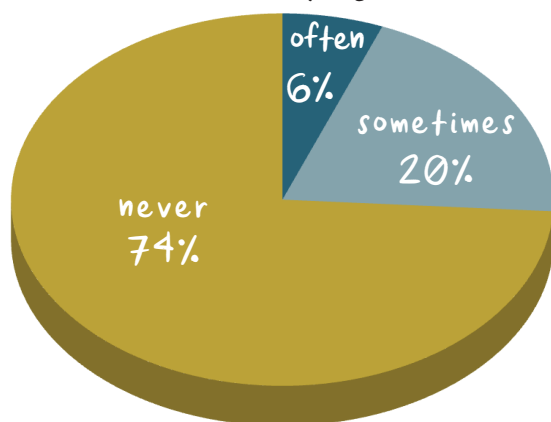


## Goal 1: Ensure Access to Healthy Food for All

The Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment highlighted key needs and opportunities voiced by the community when it comes to ensuring access to healthy food for all:

- **The Rogue Valley is faring worse than the state for both health outcomes and health factors** with higher rates of diet-related diseases than state averages.
- **The Rogue Valley faces higher food insecurity in the region than the state, especially among children:**

Within the past 12 months, the food I bought ran out, and I didn't have money to get more.

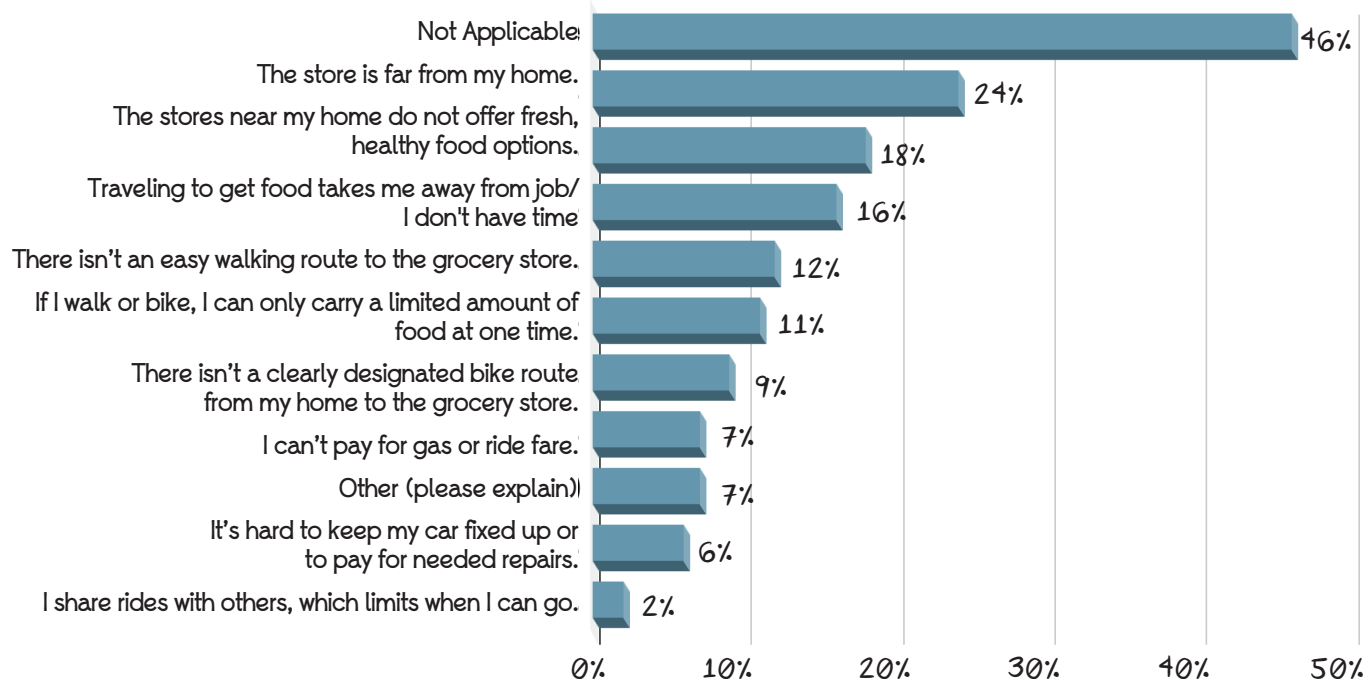


- **Pandemic-related assistance helped food security:** Food insecurity rates *decreased notably between 2018 and 2022* in the Rogue Valley. There was an *increase* in food insecurity rates between

2021 and 2022, particularly among children, as the pandemic-related food assistance programs ended.

- **There is a considerable SNAP gap:** As of 2023, 12% of Rogue Valley residents qualify for the benefit but are not enrolled.
- **Food affordability is a major concern:** Over a third of residents are worried about the high cost of groceries and the affordability of food.
- **Community members need more transportation options and better food choices at grocery stores** (see below graph)
- There is a stated need for more **emergency preparedness coordination** to ensure that food is available in times of emergency.
- **Strong community support networks are emerging:** 64% of community members report providing groceries to others in need.
- **Innovative partnerships are expanding food access:** Healthcare providers, schools, and food banks are creating solutions through programs like Double Up Food Bucks and Protein Bucks, while eight farmers markets and nine CSAs help connect local food to local people.
- **School nutrition programs show strong engagement:** The Rogue Valley leads the state in school meal participation and WIC enrollment, with farm-to-school programs helping connect students to fresh, local food.

What are some challenges you experience when traveling to get food/groceries? Check all that apply.



## Objectives and Actions

The objectives and actions in this goal address critical factors influencing food access, including the physical accessibility of food stores and pantries, the affordability of food, the ability for residents to grow their own food, the strength of the charitable food network, and the resilience of the food system to emergencies. *Nutritious, culturally appropriate, fresh food is foundational to good community health. Food grown, raised and produced locally will be the freshest, transported the least and will support the local economy the most.*

### Objective 1. Ensure that the built environment supports access to healthy food

**Actions:** Improve public transportation; increase the number of neighborhood healthy food outlets; increase the amount of fresh, healthy, locally-grown options grocers stock in retail stores; find ways to better support rural grocers; attract more affordable grocery stores in small, rural areas; find ways to encourage grocery stores and small food businesses to locate in low-income and low fresh food access areas.

### Objective 2. Make food more affordable for Rogue Valley residents

**Actions:** Increase SNAP enrollment among eligible individuals and families; advocate for policies that extend SNAP eligibility; invest in technology support for retailers to make it easier for them to accept SNAP; advocate for state funding to expand Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) and ensure sustainability of the Protein Bucks program; build awareness of existing programs that provide food access at farmers markets; advocate for statewide universal free school meals; advocate for farm-to-school programs at all schools; create innovative grocery retail models that prioritize affordable food; integrate and support the OCFSN Veggie Rx working group to build programs and support in southern Oregon; help make food assistance programs (specifically WIC and DUFb) more easily available to micro-retailers.

“A just and sustainable food system ensures that all people have access to nutritious food, supports the livelihoods of those who produce it, and preserves the health of the environment for future generations.”

### Objective 3. Support RV residents' ability to grow, hunt, and prepare their own foods

**Actions:** Increase community gardens for residents to grow their own foods; expand and promote opportunities to learn skills that support food literacy and cooking skills; invest in farm-to-school programs to teach students how to grow, harvest, cook, and preserve their own food; find ways to encourage Rogue Valley residents to grow their own food; increase support for community/urban farming efforts targeting lower income populations

### Objective 4. Strengthen the charitable food network in the region

**Actions:** Expand pantry access at additional times and locations; expand farm-to-food pantry programs; utilize state and federal funds to buy food from local farms to supply local food pantries; promote and expand Southern Oregon's Neighborhood Food Projects (green bag projects); invest in collaborative grant writing and fundraising support for the network of food banks and pantries in the region

### Objective 5. Strengthen emergency response systems to ensure that food is available in times of emergency

**Actions:** Translate emergency food communications into multiple languages; expand emergency service capacity; utilize existing networks with local churches, businesses, and supportive organizations to enhance community food support and resource sharing; expand energy resilience initiatives that support food preparation; develop locally made freeze-dried MREs for emergency food access; increase fresh produce storage and processing to have available during emergencies.