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Farmers Market Purchase Frequency

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Farmers markets are an anchor to a community's local food system and represent a high profile channel for local food system development in most communities. This study investigates various demographic and behavioral aspects that influence purchasing patterns at farmers' markets. In 2023, with funding and support from the Kentucky Center for Agricultural and Rural Development, a team from the University of Kentucky's Department of Agricultural Economics (AEC) conducted a survey online that included a question prompting Kentucky residents to indicate how often they had purchased locally sourced food from farmers markets over the past 12 months. Consumer data collected in a 2023 survey conducted by UK AEC researchers sheds light on various demographic and behavioral aspects that influence purchasing patterns at farmers markets. The 2023 Local Food Vitality Index Survey covers multiple aspects of local food system performance and customer behavior including asking Kentucky residents to indicate how often they had purchased locally sourced food from farmers markets over the past 12 months.

While there are no drastic differences across age groups, findings indicate that seniors aged 65 and above were regular, but more occasional shoppers at farmers markets (1-5 times per year) while younger consumers under 35 years old and between 35 and 54 indicated purchasing local food from farmers market more frequently. Furthermore, men were more likely to purchase from farmers markets compared to women, suggesting gender-specific preferences in shopping behavior at these markets.

Figure 1: Farmers Market Purchase Frequency by Age (Less than 35 years old)

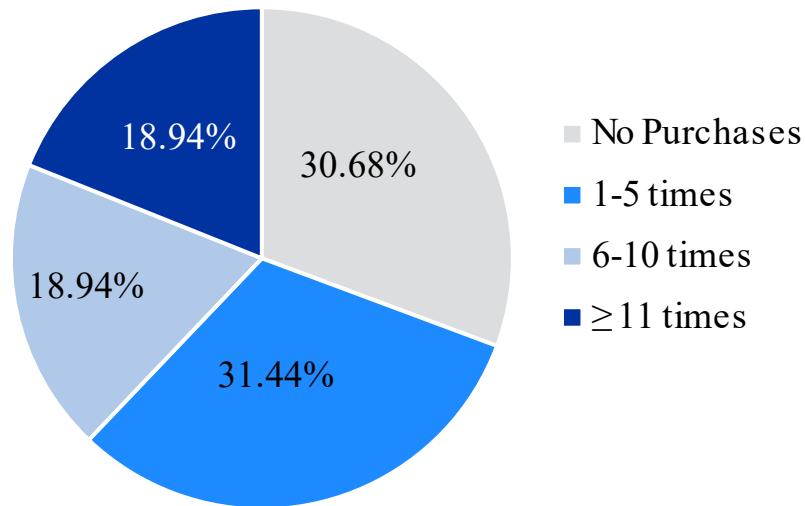


Figure 2: Farmers Market Purchase Frequency by Age (35-54 years old)

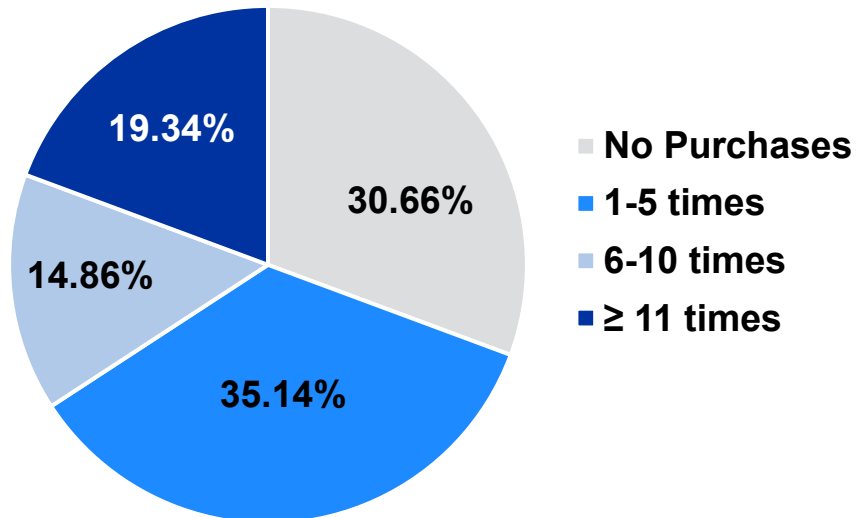


Figure 3: Farmers Market Purchase Frequency by Age (55-64 years old)

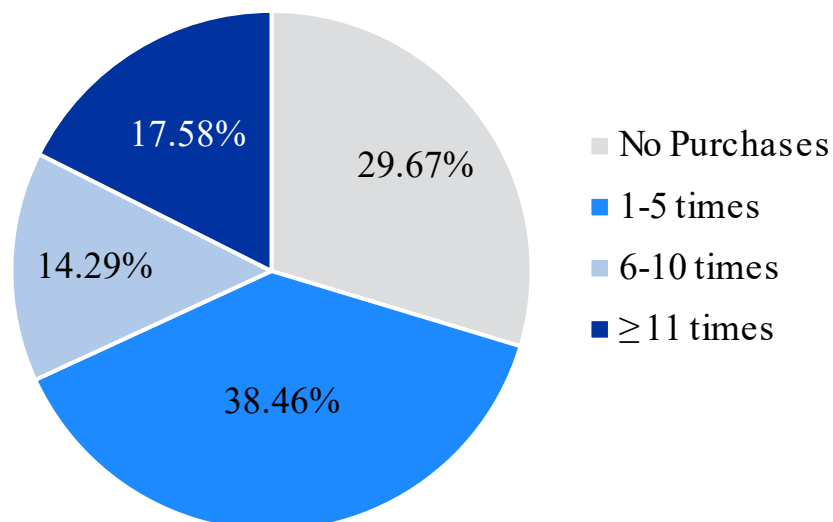


Figure 4: Farmers Market Purchase Frequency by Age (Greater than 65 years old)

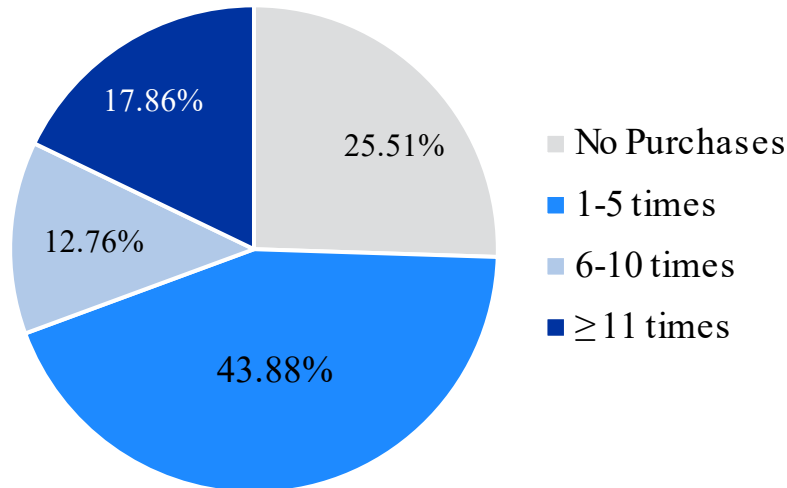


Figure 5: Farmers Market Purchase Frequency by Gender (Women)

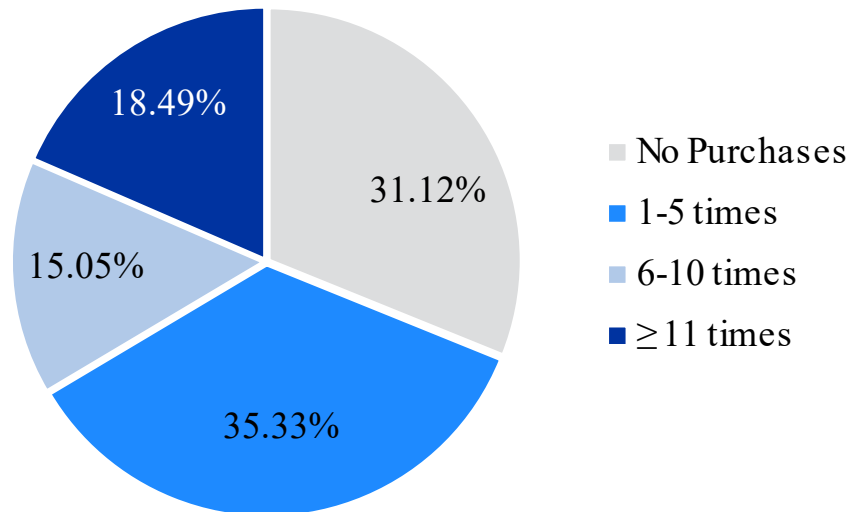
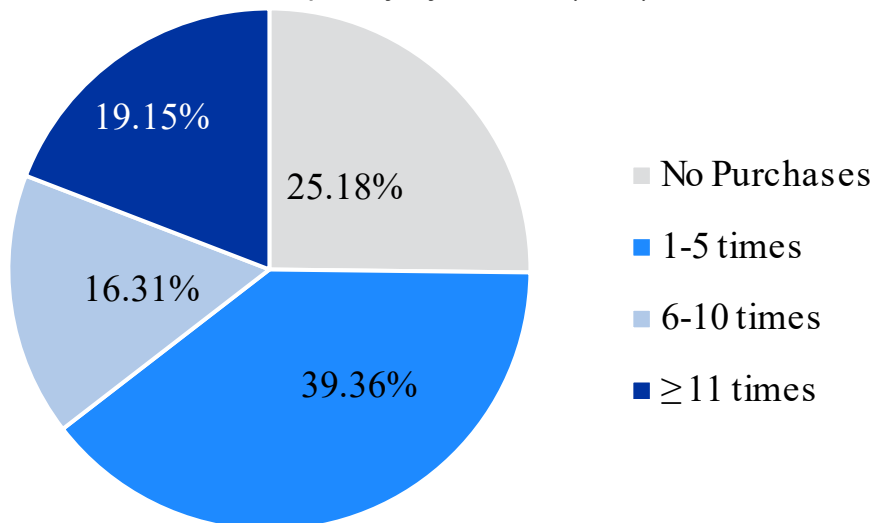


Figure 6: Farmers Market Purchase Frequency by Gender (Men)



Consumers with higher education levels, particularly those with college degrees, exhibited increased purchasing frequency at farmers' markets. Similarly, individuals with higher income brackets demonstrated a tendency to purchase more from farmers' markets compared to lower-income groups. These findings suggest that education and income play significant roles in influencing consumer behavior toward locally sourced products, particularly at farmers markets.

The findings indicate that farmers market purchase frequency varies by region. Residents of South Central Kentucky are more inclined to visit farmers' markets compared to residents in other areas. Furthermore, the study identified a correlation between years of residency in a neighborhood and farmers' market visits. Consumers who had lived in a neighborhood for a longer period showed a higher inclination to purchase from farmers markets frequently.

There are a number of other insights we will draw from these data in the coming months through publications at the Center for Crop Diversification. In addition to price data, budgets, and other Extension resources available from the University of Kentucky Center for Crop Diversification, the research findings from this survey can assist farmers in customizing their marketing approach to best serve consumers. Exploring consumers' demands from different customer demographics ensures all customer needs are considered in the market's development.

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