



# Eating out in Queensland: Understanding the drivers behind food choice

29 May 2023

**This report shares insights from research into the attitudes and behaviours of Queenslanders when eating out. It explores health as a driver for decision making and uncovers opportunities for encouraging healthier food choices in out-of-home settings.**

## Context

Eating out in Queensland is popular and an increasing ratio of the household budget is being spent on food outside the home.

Food and drinks available in out-of-home settings, however, are typically high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat and low in vegetables and fruit. This makes it harder for Queenslanders to maintain healthy eating patterns.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQId) is driving generational change to ensure healthier food and drink options are more accessible when eating out-of-home. To make an even broader impact, it is essential to understand the expectations of consumers when eating out and the attitudes and behaviours that are driving their purchasing decisions.

## Sample

In August 2022 HWQId consulted a market research panel to recruit research respondents.

Respondents comprised 1,255 Queensland adults. Of those, 752 had primary school children aged 5–12 years and the remaining 503 were either childless or had children not in this age bracket<sup>1</sup>.

Respondents were asked about their experiences and opinions when eating out-of-home at restaurants and cafes, sporting clubs and stadiums, school tuckshops and hospitals.

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<sup>1</sup> The sample size was weighted to accurately reflect the Queensland population; 47 percent were recruited from major cities, 32 percent from inner regional areas, and 21 percent from outer regional areas.

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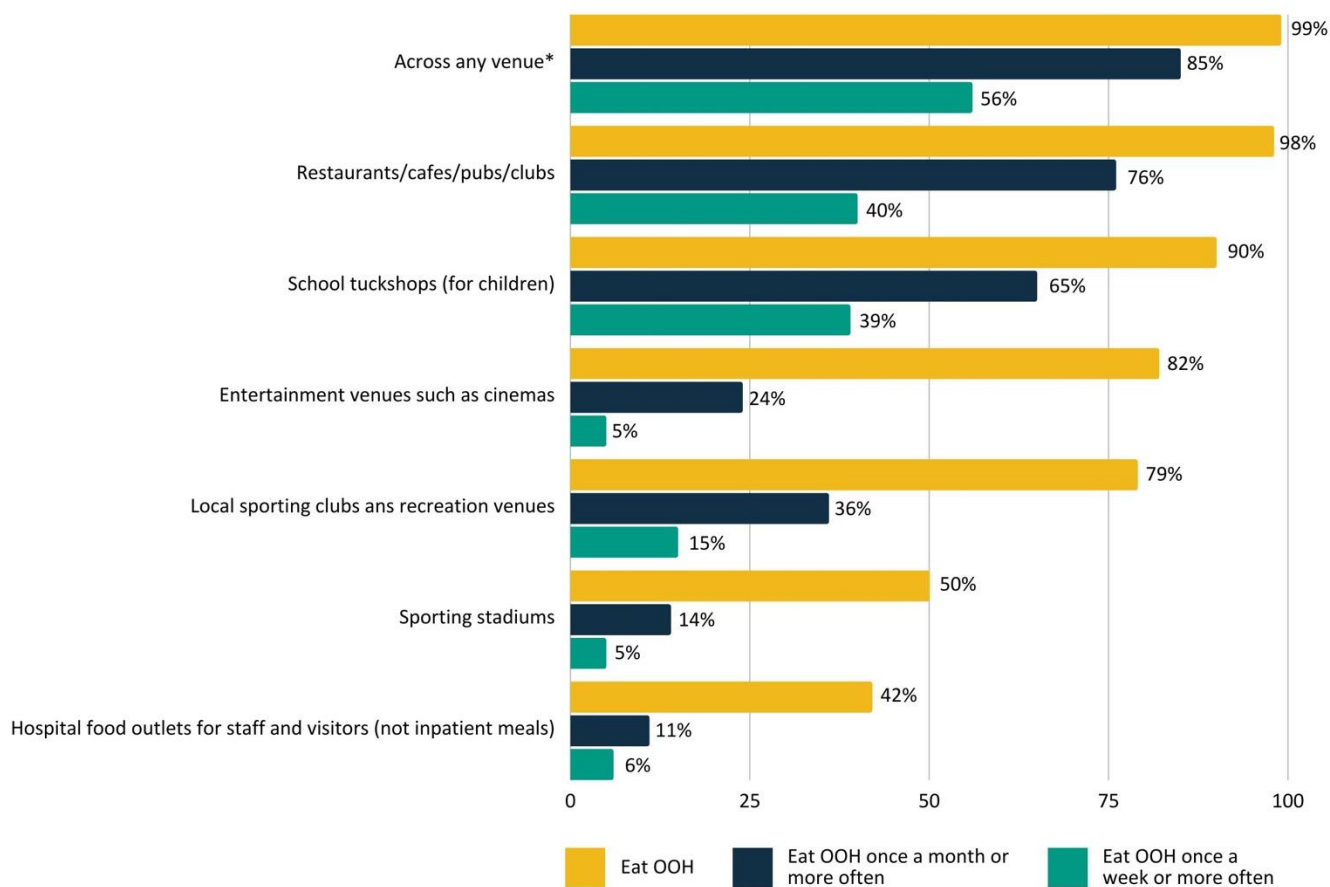
## Findings

### Frequency of eating out in Queensland

The research found that Queenslanders often enjoy eating out-of-home. Key findings were:

- More than half of respondents (over 50 per cent) eat out at least once a week.
- 85 per cent of adults reported that they eat out at least once a month.

Figure 1: Frequency of eating out across various venues



\* Eating out at any venue including restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs; school tuckshops (for child(ren)); local sporting clubs and recreation venues; entertainment venues; sporting stadiums; and/or hospital food outlets.

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## Why do Queenslanders eat out-of-home?

Responses showed the main reasons Queenslanders chose to eat out-of-home were:

- For a treat (45 per cent of respondents);
- Value for money (36 per cent of respondents);
- Convenience (32 per cent of respondents).

At the same time, the greatest concern of respondents was the cost of eating out-of-home. This was significantly more important for respondents with children aged 5–12 years (60 per cent compared with 47 per cent of other adults). Subsequently, food and drink choices appear to be primarily determined by the cost of menu items (70 per cent of responses).

The perceived taste of the food was another important consideration, reported as a major concern by more than one third (38 per cent) of respondents and a major influence on menu choices by more than half (57 per cent) of all respondents.

The food preferences of children was another key consideration for eating in out-of-home settings in addition to cost and taste. For respondents with children aged 5–12 years, 37 per cent indicated that their child's food preferences were a motivator for choosing to eat out and 27 per cent chose items for their child from the kid's menu.

## Does nutrition play a part in decision making?

The healthiness of options when ordering food and drinks out-of-home was only a concern for 9 per cent of respondents with children aged 5–12 years and 15 per cent of all other respondents. The largest barrier to ordering healthier options was the perceived high costs (49–59 per cent of respondents), lack of availability (40–47 per cent) and the perception that healthier food does not taste good (24–28 per cent).

While almost half of respondents noted the lack of availability to healthier options as a barrier, only 12 per cent of adults with children aged 5–12 years and 7 per cent of all other respondents were concerned about this. This may be due to only 35 per cent of respondents believing that eating out can be healthy, and as a result, they are not expecting to find healthier options.

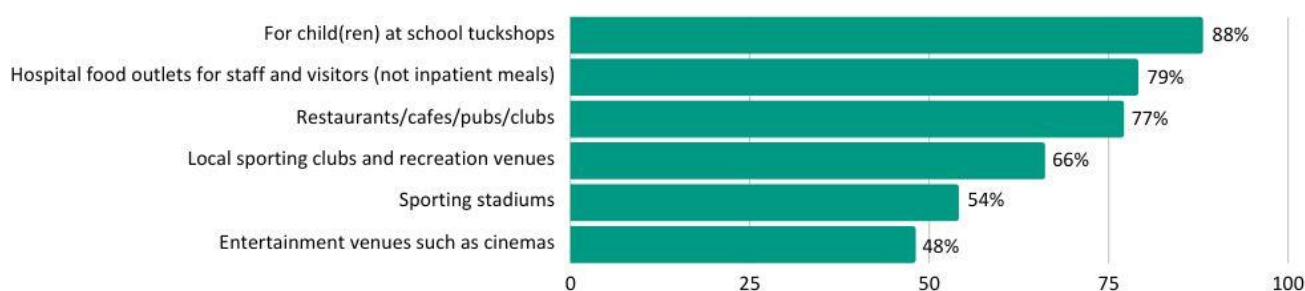
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Despite low numbers of respondents making food and drink choices based on health, many agree that it is important for healthier options to be available. More than half of the respondents (over 50 per cent) considered that it was extremely or very important to have access to healthier food and drink options at all out-of-home settings. Furthermore, 41 per cent of respondents indicated they were extremely or very likely to eat at venues with a reputation for being healthy. Respondents with children aged 5–12 years were significantly more likely to eat at venues with healthier options compared with all other respondents (43 per cent compared to 37 per cent).

**Figure 2: Importance of Healthy Food and Drink Options being Available at Venues ('Extremely' or 'Somewhat' Important)**



These findings pointed to a gap between the perceived importance of healthy options and their actual consideration in decision making when other important factors were involved.

## A Snapshot of the settings

The graphs on the following pages provide detailed insights into each of the out-of-home settings researched, and visualises data for:

- How frequently the setting is visited
- The perceived importance of healthy options in each setting
- The perceived role of government in offering healthy options in each setting
- How many respondents want to see healthier options available in each setting

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## Tuckshops

Figure 3: Offering Healthy Food & Drink Options in School Tuckshops



## Healthcare

Figure 4: Offering Healthy Food & Drink Options in Hospital Food Outlets



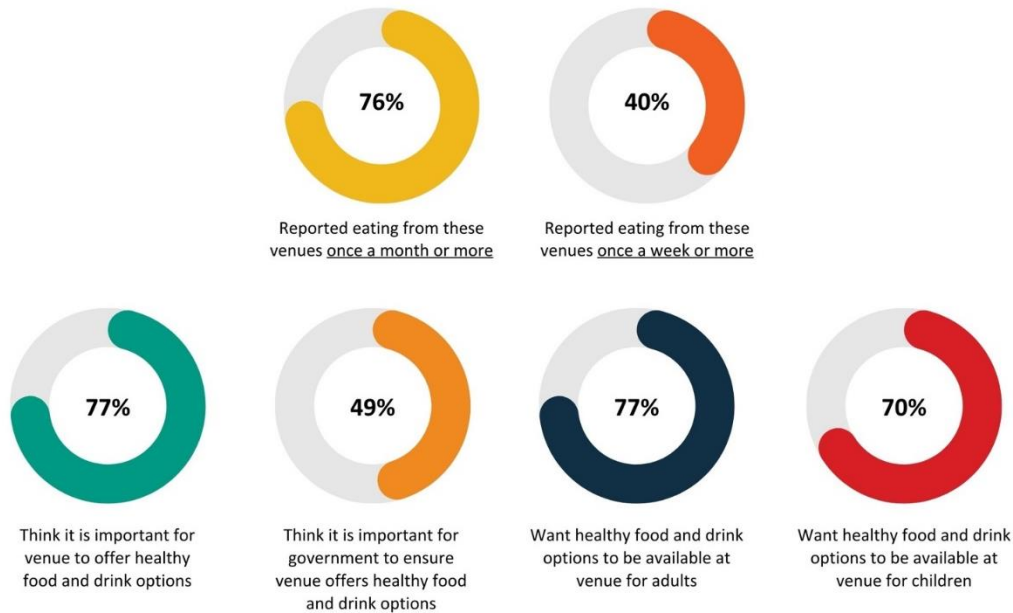
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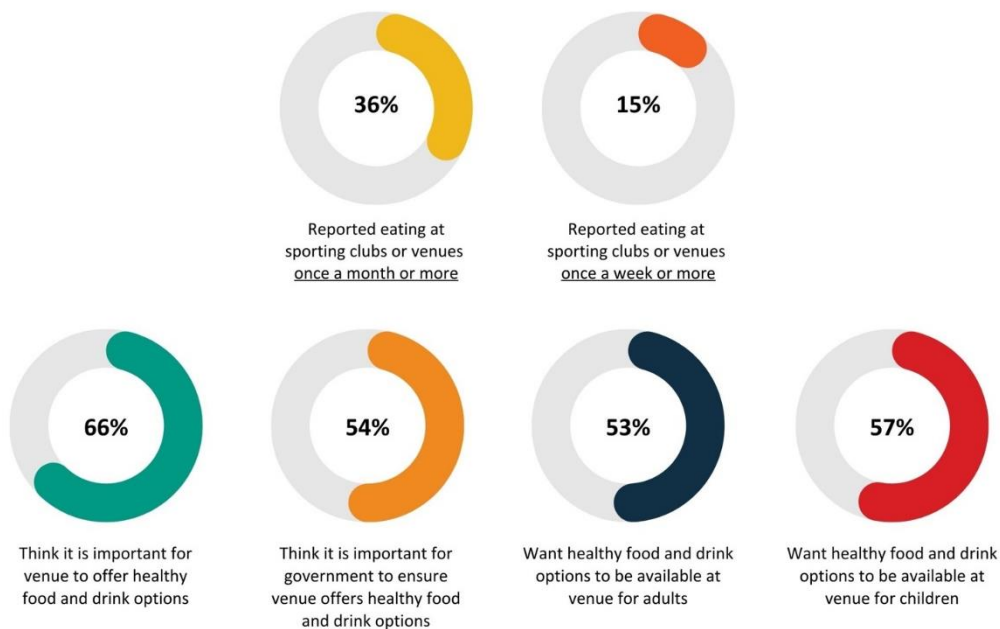
## Restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs

Figure 5: Offering Healthy Food & Drink Options in Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs and Clubs



## Sporting clubs and recreation venues

Figure 6: Offering Healthy Food & Drink Options in Sporting Clubs



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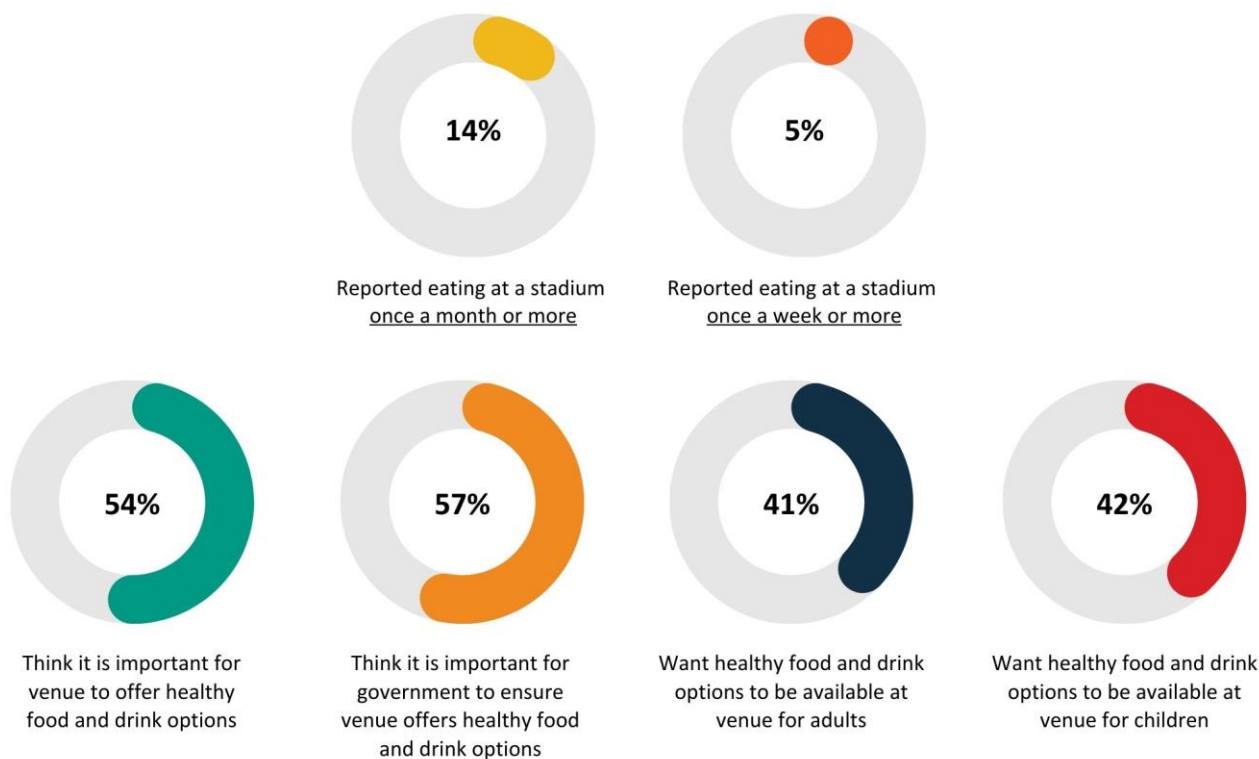
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## Stadiums

Stadiums and local sporting clubs and recreation venues were the only settings where difficulty accessing healthier food and drink options was listed as a major barrier (32% and 26% respectively).

Figure 7: Offering Healthy Food & Drink Options in Sporting Stadiums



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## Conclusion

The results from the research show Queenslanders perceive eating out as a treat but the frequent nature of out-of-home eating may be negatively impacting their health. Queenslanders would like healthier options when eating out and are more likely to prioritise their health when other barriers are addressed. For example, improving the taste, availability and cost of healthier options could influence almost a half of respondents with children aged 5–12 years to choose a venue based on its healthy food and drink options and to order the healthier menu items.

## Next steps

The research presents valuable insights into the motivations and barriers faced by Queenslanders when eating out-of-home. HWQld will use this research to inform a range of policy, program and communication initiatives. These include:

- The research indicated strong support for change in healthcare settings and school tuckshops. These 2 settings have had substantial investment for more than 15 years to successfully improve the availability and promotion of healthier food and drink options. HWQld will continue to support implementation of [The A Better Choice Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Healthcare Facilities](#) and the [Smart Choices Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools](#).
- Research findings highlighted the barriers that Queenslanders faced in accessing healthier food and drinks in local sporting clubs, recreation venues and sports stadiums. These were considered in the implementation of the [A Better Choice Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Sport and Recreation Facilities](#) and the new guidelines intend to make it easier to access healthier options in these settings.
- Since restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs were the most frequently visited out-of-home settings and places where many Queenslanders were seeking for more healthy options to be available, there is an opportunity to explore new actions in these settings. The results will inform a review of the [Healthy Kids Menu Initiative](#).
- The [Queensland response to the National Obesity Strategy 2022–2032](#), addresses several concerns identified in the research, such as the rising cost of food, the inaccessibility of healthy food and the role of the food industry in providing healthier options.
- Targeted communication strategies will challenge the perception that ‘eating out is a treat’ and empower consumers to seek food and drink options they enjoy and that support health and wellbeing.

If you have any questions about this research or Health and Wellbeing Queensland’s initiatives, please contact us at [abetterchoice@hw.qld.gov.au](mailto:abetterchoice@hw.qld.gov.au).