

NORTHERN TERRITORY MARKET BASKET SURVEY 2021

SUMMARY REPORT

The Market Basket Survey (MBS) reports the cost, availability and quality of basic food items in remote stores in the Northern Territory (NT). The 2021 MBS is the twentieth survey in the NT.



Remote stores

Top End Region

Healthy Food Basket	\$913
Current Diet Basket	\$978

East Arnhem Region

Healthy Food Basket	\$920
Current Diet Basket	\$983

Big Rivers Region

Healthy Food Basket	\$856
Current Diet Basket	\$923

Barkly Region

Data combined with Central Australia

Central Australia Region

Healthy Food Basket	\$901
Current Diet Basket	\$953

NT Remote Store Average

Healthy Food Basket	\$901
Current Diet Basket	\$960

Supermarkets

Darwin

Healthy Food Basket	\$618
Current Diet Basket	\$740

Nhulunbuy

Healthy Food Basket	\$652
Current Diet Basket	\$755

Katherine

Healthy Food Basket	\$554
Current Diet Basket	\$679

Alice Springs

Healthy Food Basket	\$548
Current Diet Basket	\$637

What's in the survey?

The MBS includes two food baskets:

Healthy Food Basket – based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Current Diet Basket – based on the latest survey data of the dietary patterns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

Both baskets feed a family of six for a fortnight.

The baskets are costed in remote stores and a major supermarket and corner store (small supermarket) in each regional centre.

In remote stores information is also collected on:

- variety and quality of fresh fruit and vegetables
- availability of healthy foods
- store characteristics such as store management type.



Results from 2021 survey

A healthy diet costs less!

Compared to a Healthy Food Basket, the Current Diet Basket costs -



18%

More in district centre supermarkets (\$703 compared to \$593)



6%

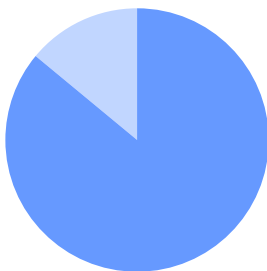
More in district corner stores (\$807 compared to \$787)



6%

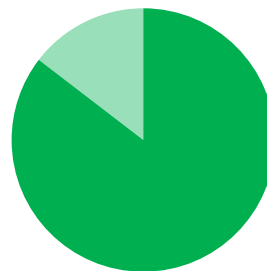
More in remote stores (\$960 compared to \$901)

Fruit and vegetable quality



86 %

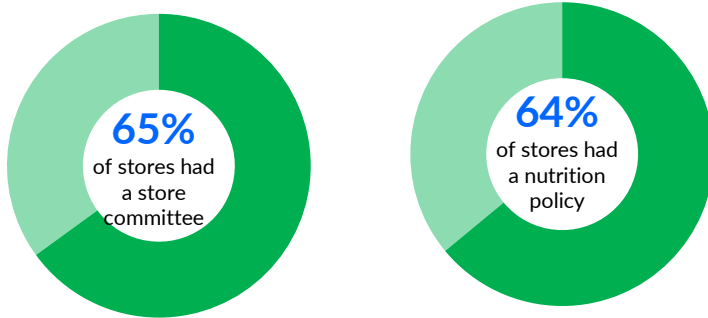
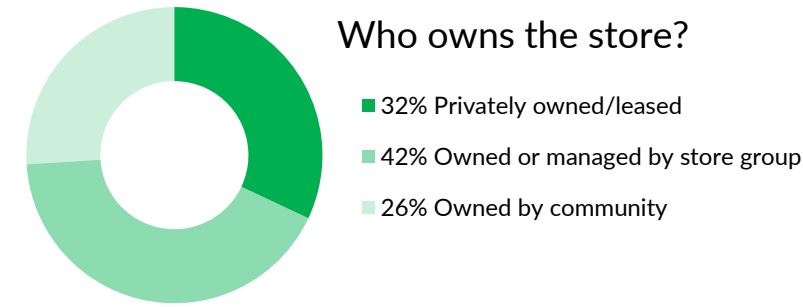
of fresh fruit were rated to be of good quality in the 2021 survey



82 %

of fresh vegetables were rated to be of good quality in the 2021 survey

Remote store characteristics

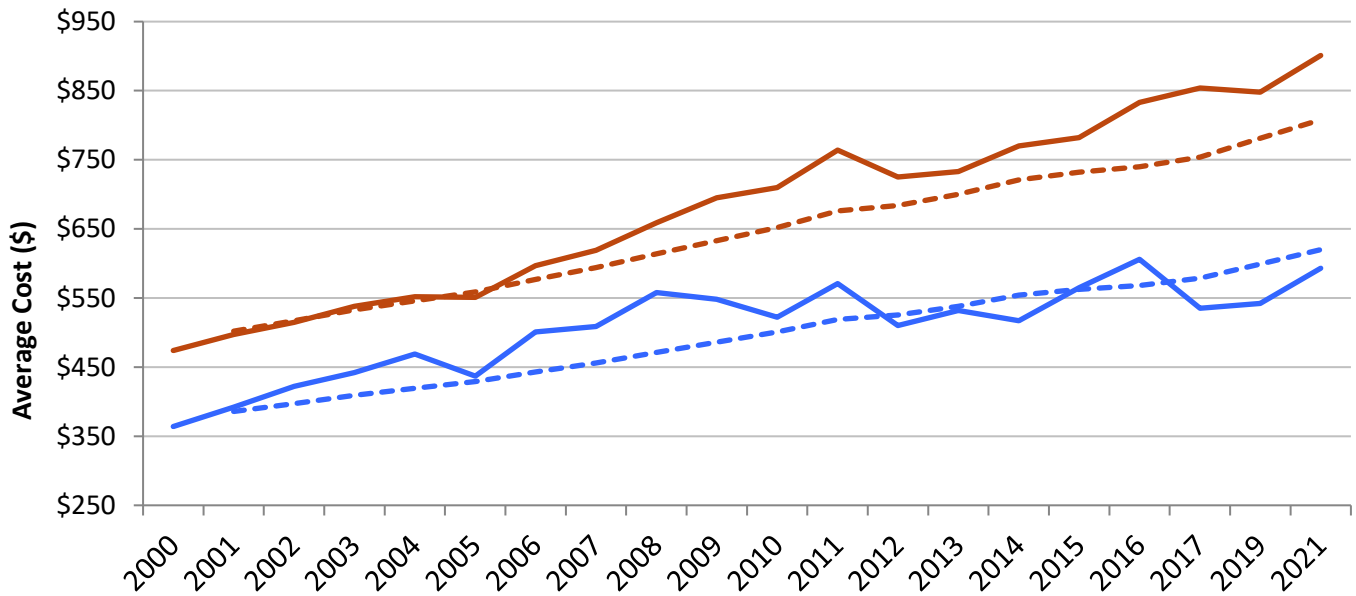


62%

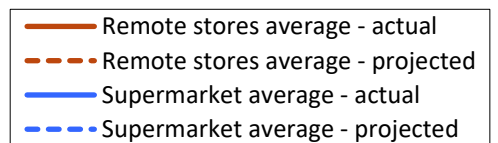
of employees were Aboriginal. The proportion of Aboriginal employees was highest in stores that were either owned (88%) or managed (71%) by a store group (e.g. ALPA and Outback Stores)

Cost of Healthy Food Basket since 2000

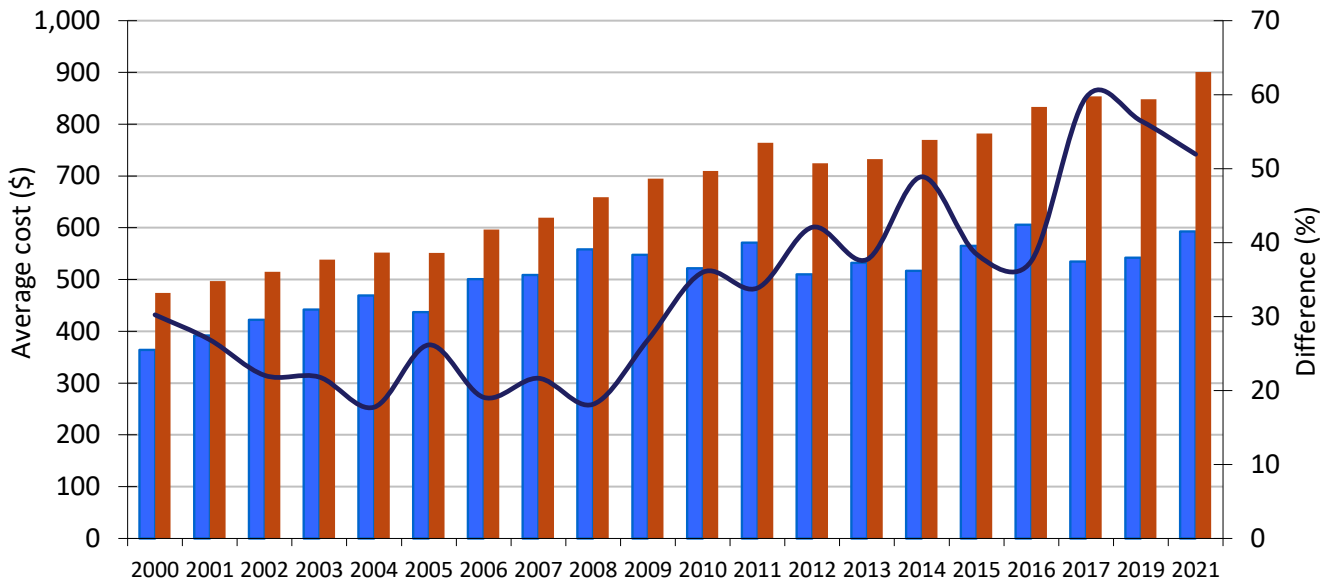
Cost of the Healthy Food Basket compared with projected cost of the Healthy Food Basket with annual Consumer Price Index increase, remote stores and district centre supermarkets, 2000 - 2021



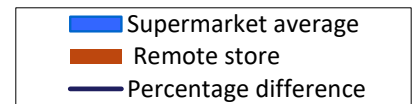
Using the 2000 Healthy Food Basket cost as a baseline, a projected cost of the Healthy Food Basket has been calculated using annual Consumer Price Index increases. The actual cost of the Healthy Food Basket has been higher than the projected cost of the basket since 2006. In district centre supermarkets, the actual cost of the basket has been below the projected cost from 2017.



Cost of the Healthy Food Basket, remote stores compared with NT Supermarkets, 2000-2021



The cost difference between remote stores and the district centre supermarkets was the highest in 2017 when the Health Food Basket cost 60% more in remote stores. In the 2021 the Healthy Food Basket cost 52% more in remote stores than district centre supermarkets.



Discussion and Conclusions

The 2021 MBS is the twentieth survey of remote community stores in the Northern Territory.

Results from the 2021 MBS showed the average cost of the Current Diet Basket was more expensive than the Healthy Food Basket in all districts and all store types. The average cost of the Healthy Food Basket in remote stores was 52% higher than the average district centre supermarkets.

Compared with 2019, the average cost of the Healthy Food Basket increased by 6% in remote stores and by 9% in district centre supermarkets.

Some limitations to the survey include:

- Store managers were given prior notice of the survey period, which may have influenced store prices and availability during the survey period.
- The food baskets contain only a relatively small number of items (41). Significant changes in the price of 1 or 2 items may have an unduly inflated effect on the total cost of the basket.
- The survey is conducted over a 3 month period. During this time frame there is the potential for large variations in the prices of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- The same brand and pack size for each item is not always available in each store. When that is the case, similar items of a different brand or pack size may have to be priced.
- The survey does not necessarily include the same stores each year.
- The baskets priced are using most comparable products, not usually the cheapest products.

More details on the food basket and survey methodology can be found in the full 2019 NT Market Basket Survey report (available at <https://health.nt.gov.au/professionals/nutrition-and-physical-activity>).