

Surveys are conducted quarterly: March, June, September, December

Cost of Food at Home for a Week in Alaska
March 1998
22 Communities Surveyed

Up to three stores in each of twenty two communities were surveyed during March of 1998 for the cost of a specific set of food and non-food items. The 104 food items selected were taken, with some modification, from the USDA Low-cost Food Plan which is itself based on a nationwide survey of eating habits of Americans, conducted in 1977-78. In addition, the costs of such items as water, propane and electricity were collected. All costs were adjusted to reflect local sales tax where applicable. Since Wasilla and Palmer were combined in this census, their differing sales taxes were averaged when calculating food costs.

The estimated prices of unavailable food items in various communities were calculated as the expected cost as judged from the prices of all available items relative to the price of those items in Anchorage. The percent of foods unavailable in each community are shown in the survey.

Weekly food consumption rates for a family of 4, children 6 - 11 years, form the basis of the expressed food costs. All other costs are ratios of that cost as calculated from the USDA Cost of Food at Home survey issued December, 1997. The cost for this family of 4 can be calculated from the table by summing the individual members. For smaller families such a sum would be too low and should be adjusted up by 20%, 10% or 5% for families of 1, 2 or 3 persons respectively. Similarly, the sum for larger families would be too high and downward adjustments of 5% and 10% are suggested for 6 and 7 or more member families. These adjustments reflect that some economies may be realized when preparing foods

for larger families.

The USDA Cost of Food at Home for March 1998 was not available at the time of publication. The December 1997 adjustments for family size were used in the present report. Figure 1 shows the cost ranked results for the cost of food for a week for a family of four with school aged children. Portland, Oregon food costs were 21% less than Anchorage or Fairbanks, a typical difference. The next most expensive region of the state was the panhandle followed by western communities.

Figures 2 and 3 show the relationship between the cost of a 2" x 4" x 8' board and the cost of electricity relative to the cost of food during the present survey period. The points in figures 2 and 3 represent the communities of the present survey. Not surprisingly, some of the same factors that determine food costs are influencing the cost of non-food items since the relationships were roughly linear. However, the correlations are not exact, indicating that other factors are at work.

PLEASE SEE BELOW FOR FIGURES 1-3

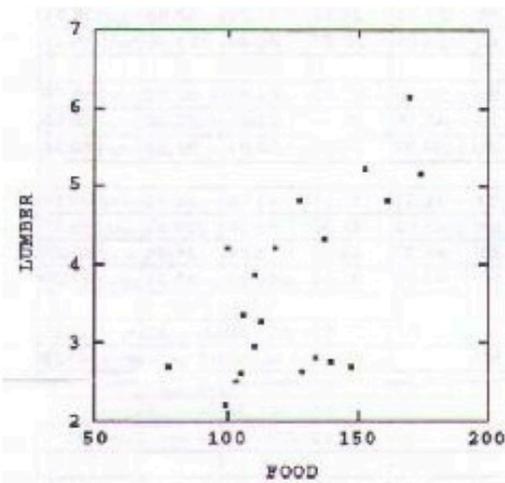
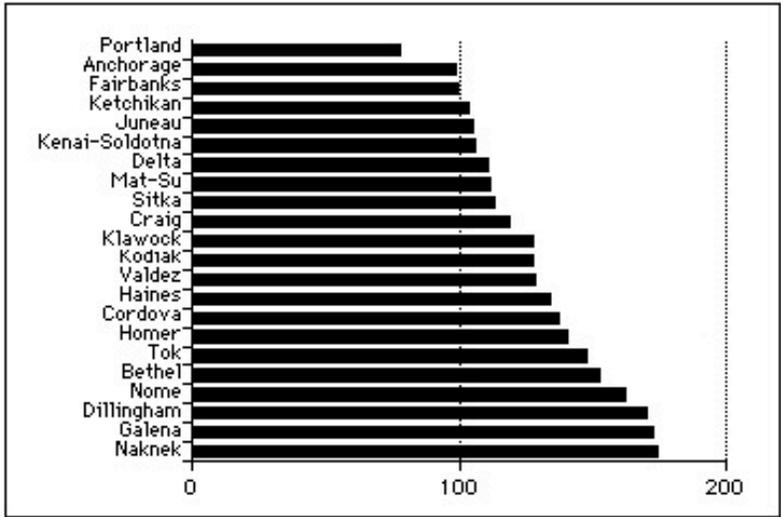


Figure 2. The dollar cost of a 2" x 4" x 8' board relative to food costs.

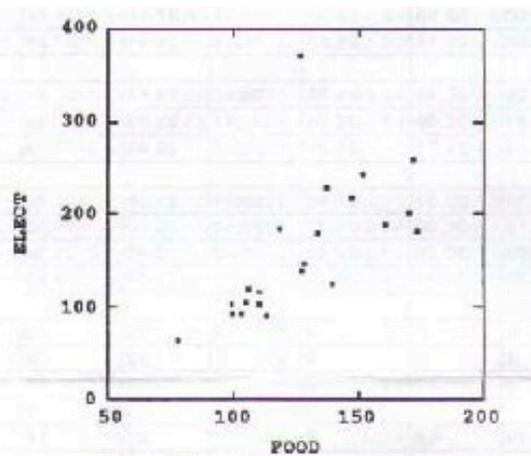


Figure 3. The dollar cost of 1000 kW of electricity relative to food costs.

For further information concerning the Alaska food cost survey contact [Bret Luick](mailto:luick@alaska.gov), 907.474.6338 at Alaska Cooperative Extension. Further information on the USDA survey is available from the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion and on the world wide web at <http://www.usda.gov/fcs/cnpp.htm>.