



Community Trust in Rural Industries

Year 4 insights, 2023

Rural industries (fishers, farmers and foresters) embarked on this research program in 2019 committed to the development of a deeper understanding of the role and drivers of community trust in their respective industries.

Strong community trust drives the relationship with rural industries

Trust and acceptance continues to be robust, with community recognizing the importance of rural industries to Australia.



91.4% of respondents agreed that rural industries are important to our way of life in Australia.



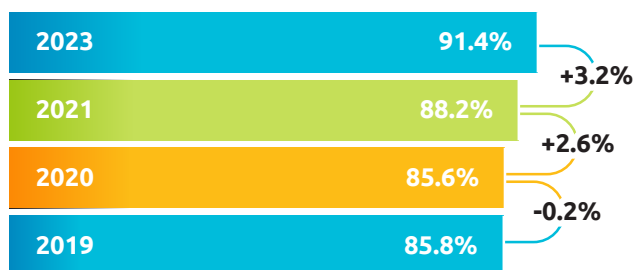
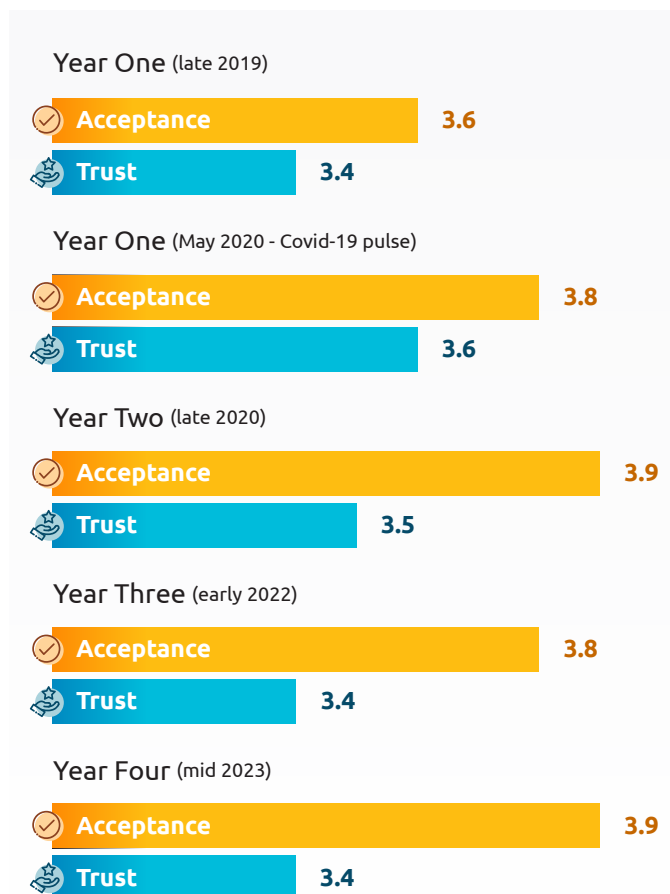
87.8% of respondents agreed that regional communities are important for producing safe, high quality food and fibre products.



85% of respondents agreed that rural industries generate significant jobs in regional areas.



Rural industries are important to our way of life in Australia.



Those in rural industries are trusted caretakers of the environment

Environmental responsibility was the strongest driver of trust and acceptance in 2023.



64.5% of respondent agreed that farmers, fishers and foresters are responsible stewards of the land and sea (increased by 4% in 2023).



82.5% of respondents believed that environmental management is a shared responsibility across all rural industries (increased from a consistent average of around 80% over the first three years).

Water issue pressures have eased, but these issues are highly localised.



40% of respondents agreed that much of Australia is currently in drought (down 24% from 2020).



23% of respondents thought that rural industries used more water than they were entitled to (down 5% from 2020).

Animal welfare is a complex, important issue

There is a continued expectation that animals will be treated with dignity and respect, whilst the community continues to grapple with the complexity of animal welfare, shifting their views.



Three quarters of Australians agreed with the statement "the welfare of animals is not just about the absence of harm to them."

71% of respondents agreed that animal welfare is a complex topic.



43% of participants think about fish and livestock differently in the context of welfare.

47% of participants agreed with the statement "animal welfare in rural industries needs to improve even though it means meat and dairy prices will increase."



Responsiveness continues to be key to building trust

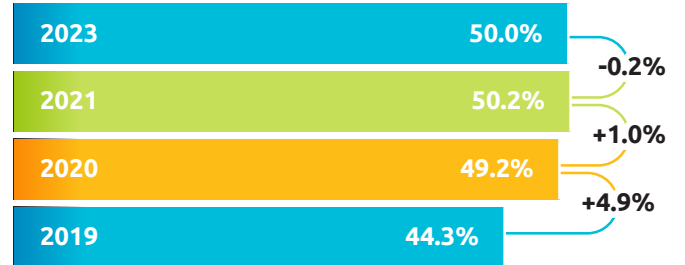
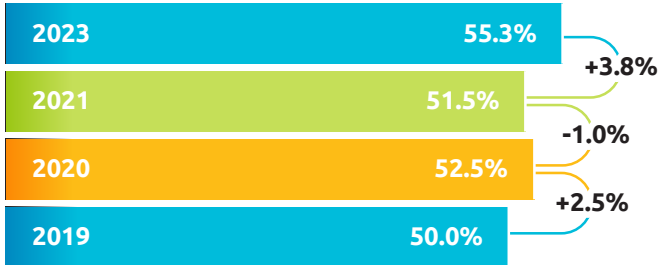
Collective effort from rural industries to listen and respond to community is showing, with more opportunities to improve.



Rural industries listen to and respect community opinions.



Rural industries in Australia are prepared to change their practices in response to community concerns.



An opportunity to engage

Rural identity plays a large role in how community members feel connected to rural industries, and is a trend to watch.



37.3% of respondents believed rural industry was part of their heritage (a decrease of 5% since 2020).



61.7% of people agreed that when they buy Australian rural industry products, they feel connected to those who produced them (a decrease of 4.4% from 2020).

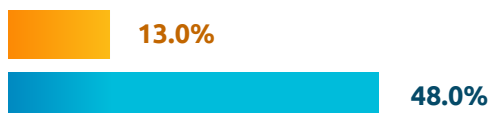
It is about who you know

Perceptions of information sources varied depending on how many people participants knew in rural industries.

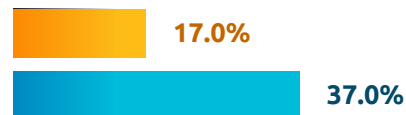
I believe the information I see is an accurate representation of Australian rural industries.



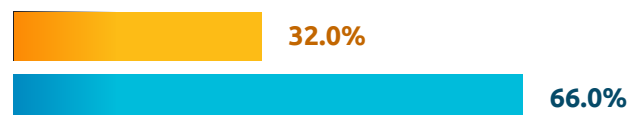
I actively seek information about Australian rural industries.



The information I see on Australian rural industries often portrays them in a negative light.



Most of the people around me share my views on Australian rural industries.



None More than 10

Priorities for industry



Be **responsive** and **proactively engage** with the community on the areas community identified that matter most to them.



Communicate effectively with the community on their concerns, through listening and responding.



Map industry practices and **critically review** them against key drivers of trust, responding directly to concerns from insights with action.



Understand how your industry is addressing issues such as environmental impact, be clear about how your industry is addressing these key concerns.

About the program

The Community Trust in Rural Industries program is a cross-sector initiative involving 7 Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) to build the capacity of food and fibre industries to productively engage with the community. Year Four of the Community Trust in Rural Industries program of work has delivered deeper insights into the pathways to community trust and acceptance for Australia's farmers, fishers, and foresters. With 3,028 surveys of Australian citizens included in the Year Three analyses and 22,222 participating in the four annual surveys since 2019, this program represents a significant dataset of community attitudes toward rural industries. The nature of this program means we are able to see changes across time and make visible the perspectives and expectations of the Australian community as they evolve and respond to changes in the environment, industry engagement and social context. Voconiq is an Australian data science company built on a platform of research developed by Australia's national science agency, CSIRO. For further information www.agrifutures.com.au/nationalrural-issues/community-trust/



CITATION

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