



Nourish California

Food Hardship & Hope for Change

Key findings from
statewide research



New Name. New Brand.
Same Mission.



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Webinar recording and materials will be shared afterwards at nourishca.org





Today's Discussion

- **Introduction**
- **Key Findings**
- **Q & A**
- **Opportunities for Action**



What We Do

- Policy, advocacy, research
- Close measurable gaps in access to nutritious, affordable food
- Support Californians who face the starkest inequities and greatest need
- Optimize existing programs & advocate bold new approaches



Who We Serve

- All Californians without resources to meet basic needs, particularly...
- Children: school, child care, preschool, summer
- Pregnant woman & young families: critical stages of development
- Immigrants: excluded from essential programs & services
- Elders: aging with dignity & security



What We Need to Understand

- Lives & experiences of Californians in the COVID-19 era
- Scale & specifics of challenges
- What's working now and why
- Survey, interviews, and focus groups





Key Findings from the Research

Lucia Del Puppo

Vice President, FM3



Research Approach

The statewide research conducted included three phases:

1. Executive interviews among Nourish California's stakeholders
2. A survey of 1,000 middle and low-income Californians
3. Six focus groups among middle and low-income Californians



Survey Methodology

- 1,000 online interviews with middle and low-income California residents. Respondents had to have a household income of \$50,000 or less to qualify to participate
- Interviews conducted October 20–November 13, 2020
- Interviews conducted in Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese
- Some percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding



Focus Group Methodology

- Six two-hour long moderated discussions with 6-8 participants per group conducted the week of November 16, 2020
- All participants recruited were middle and low-income and had experience with public benefits, and where applicable, with CalFresh or WIC specifically.

Group Profiles	Region	Language
Younger adults	Inland Empire/LA	English
Immigrant Californians	LA Area	Spanish
Immigrant parents of children <5	LA Area	Spanish
Parents of children <18	Bay Area	English
Older adults	Sacramento/Central Valley	English
Immigrant Californians	Bay Area	Cantonese





Findings from Stakeholder Interviews

Key Themes



Challenges in accessing food were varied and most had been intensified by the pandemic.

Challenge	Description
Immigration status	Immigration status has been a barrier to participation in CalFresh and in other public services since Trump was elected in 2016. Recent changes to the public charge rules have increased this sense of fear and often even documented immigrants or undocumented immigrants with children who are citizens are afraid to ask for help.
Language barriers	Stakeholders mentioned the need for public materials and applications to social services in more languages – particularly for South Asian and indigenous communities. These language barriers and sometimes literacy pose a big challenge for clients trying to access supports. However, food banks tended to say they felt well-equipped to serve the non-English speaking communities in their areas.
Culturally appropriate food	A lack of culturally appropriate food available at food banks makes it hard for clients to know what to do with the food provided and preventing them from cooking the foods they prefer.

Logistical obstacles posed a big challenge.

Challenge	Description
Transportation	Residents of rural areas often do not have adequate transportation to access services and food. This has been heightened during the pandemic as carpooling has become a more dangerous option than it previously was.
Isolation	Seniors are particularly impacted by isolation and the supports that were once in place to bring them together in person have been limited by the pandemic.
CalFresh Application	The online application is hard to access for those with limited language proficiency and seniors who are not comfortable with online applications. Stakeholders requested greater flexibility in allowing them to fill it out on behalf of their clients. Residents in rural areas have limited access to broadband and the Internet making it hard to access applications or information online.
Air Quality	The wildfires had not impacted any stakeholders' communities directly, but several felt the air quality impacts and said it negatively affected their communities' ability to leave their homes and get the services they need.

Racism played a prevalent role in limiting food access, as well.

Challenge	Description
Communities of color	Multiple stakeholders representing specific communities felt that the lumping together of “communities of color” was a problem for them both in policy and in providing the appropriate services to their community. There was a sense that this viewpoint grouped together so many diverse populations with different challenges and needs.
Food apartheid and environmental racism	Food deserts and environmental racism make it hard for Black communities to access or grow healthy foods.
Racism	Many stakeholders said their clients encounter racism – both systemic and outright. Although there weren’t specific instances of people encountering it when accessing benefits, it is a major obstacle to obtaining services and accessing healthy foods both because of fear mongering from the Administration and structural racism. One stakeholder noted that her clients felt like it was “the price they pay” for being in this country.



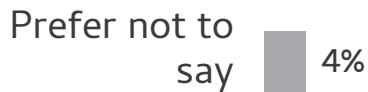
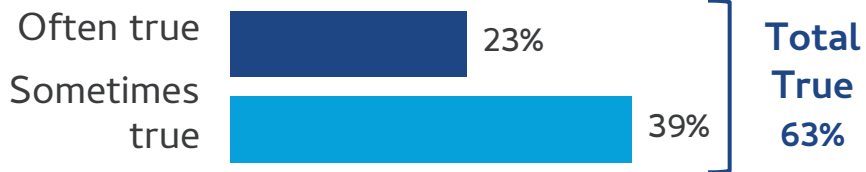
Experiences with the Pandemic, Hunger and Food Insecurity

Findings from the online survey and focus groups

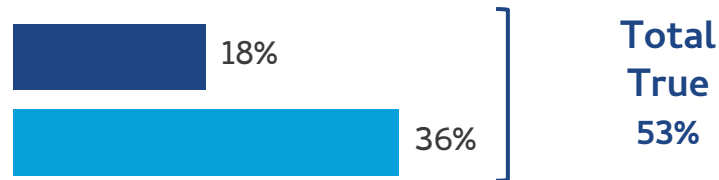


A majority have run out of food before they had money to buy more and three in five have worried about this happening.

Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.

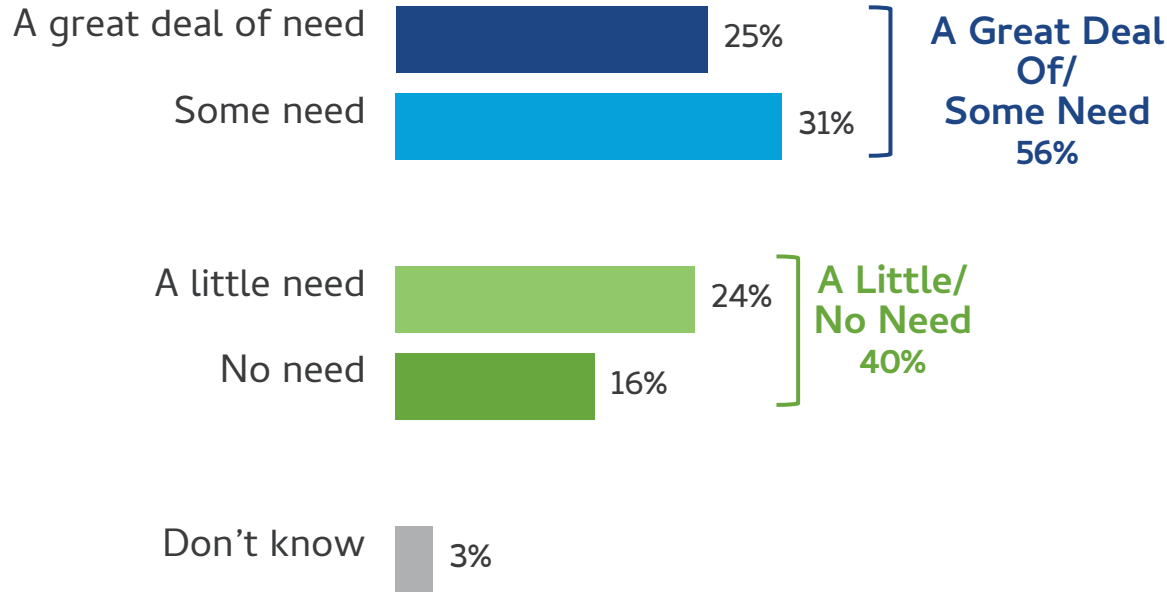


Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.



A majority expressed at least some need for additional money for food.

How much need would you say you have for additional money to get your family the food you need and want:



Groups Most Likely to Have a Great Need

- No Health Insurance
- No HH Income
- Have Children 13 to 18 Years Old
- High School Educated
- Ages 30-49
- Have Children
- Have Children <5 Years Old
- Have Children >19 Years Old
- Latinos
- Los Angeles County
- HH Income <\$20,000
- Central Valley



Q21

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Respondents with larger households were most likely to be worried.

Demographic Group	Worried About Running Out of Food	Ran Out of Food
All Respondents	63%	53%
Gender		
Men	63%	54%
Women	62%	53%
Household Income		
None	69%	56%
<\$20,000	65%	57%
\$20,000-\$30,000	63%	58%
\$30,000-\$40,000	58%	50%
\$40,000-\$50,000	62%	45%
Household Income by Household Size		
Under \$30,000/1-3 HH Members	60%	52%
Under \$30,000/4+ HH Members	72%	66%
\$30,000 and over/1-3 HH Members	52%	42%
\$30,000 and over/4+ HH Members	77%	60%



Latinos, African Americans and younger respondents were most likely to report this concern; Latinos were highly concerned across age groups.

Demographic Group	Worried About Running Out of Food	Ran Out of Food
All Respondents	63%	33%
Race/Ethnicity		
Whites	53%	44%
Latinos	75%	66%
African Americans	69%	65%
Asians/Pacific Islanders	51%	42%
<i>All People of Color</i>	69%	60%
Age by Ethnicity		
Whites 18-49	70%	59%
Whites 50+	41%	33%
Latinos 18-49	74%	64%
Latinos 50+	77%	74%
All POC 18-49	72%	61%
All POC 50+	58%	55%
Age		
18-39	72%	60%
40+	52%	46%



Q16. Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more. Is this statement often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household?

Parents, especially those with underage children, were much more likely to be concerned than were non-parents.

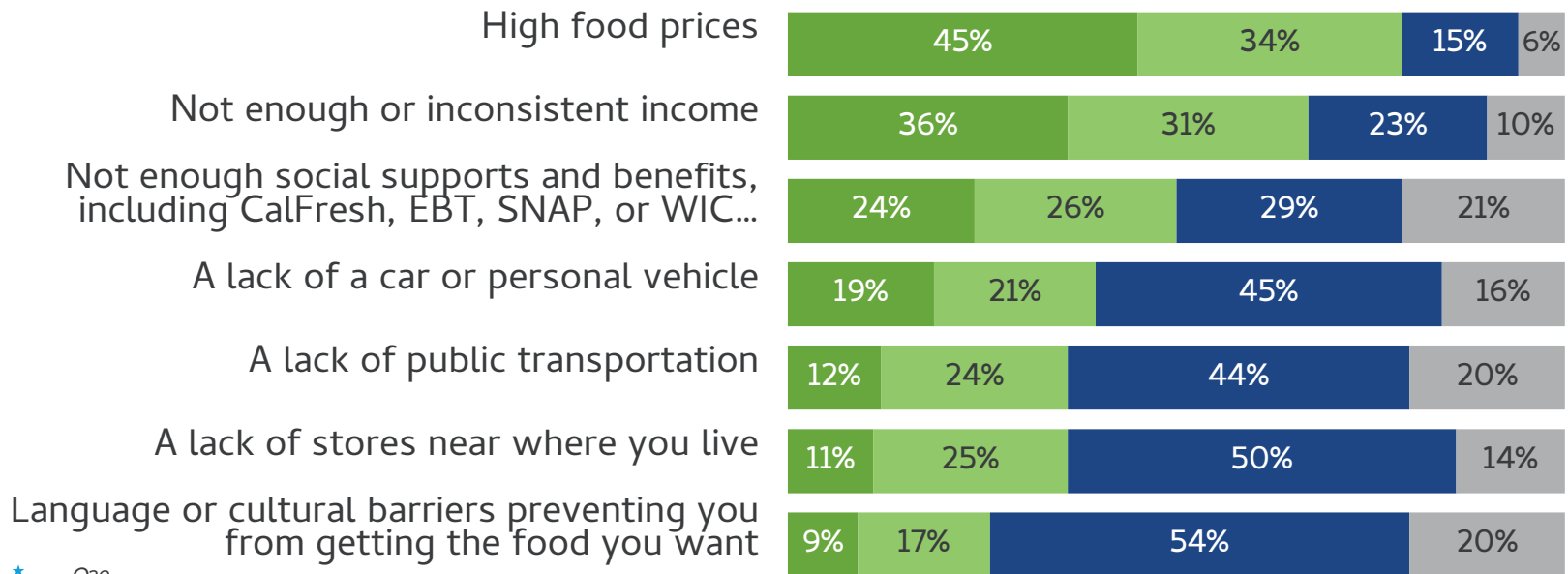
Demographic Group	Worried About Running Out of Food	Ran Out of Food
<i>No Children</i>	56%	48%
All Parents	74%	63%
Under 5 Years Old	83%	68%
Ages 5-12 Years	80%	63%
Ages 13-18 Years	77%	66%
Ages 19 and Older	58%	54%



High food prices and inconsistent incomes pose the greatest challenges to accessing food.

Here is a list of barriers some people may experience in getting enough food for themselves and their families. Please indicate if this is a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you and your family in accessing food.

■ Major Challenge ■ Minor Challenge ■ Not a Challenge ■ Don't Know

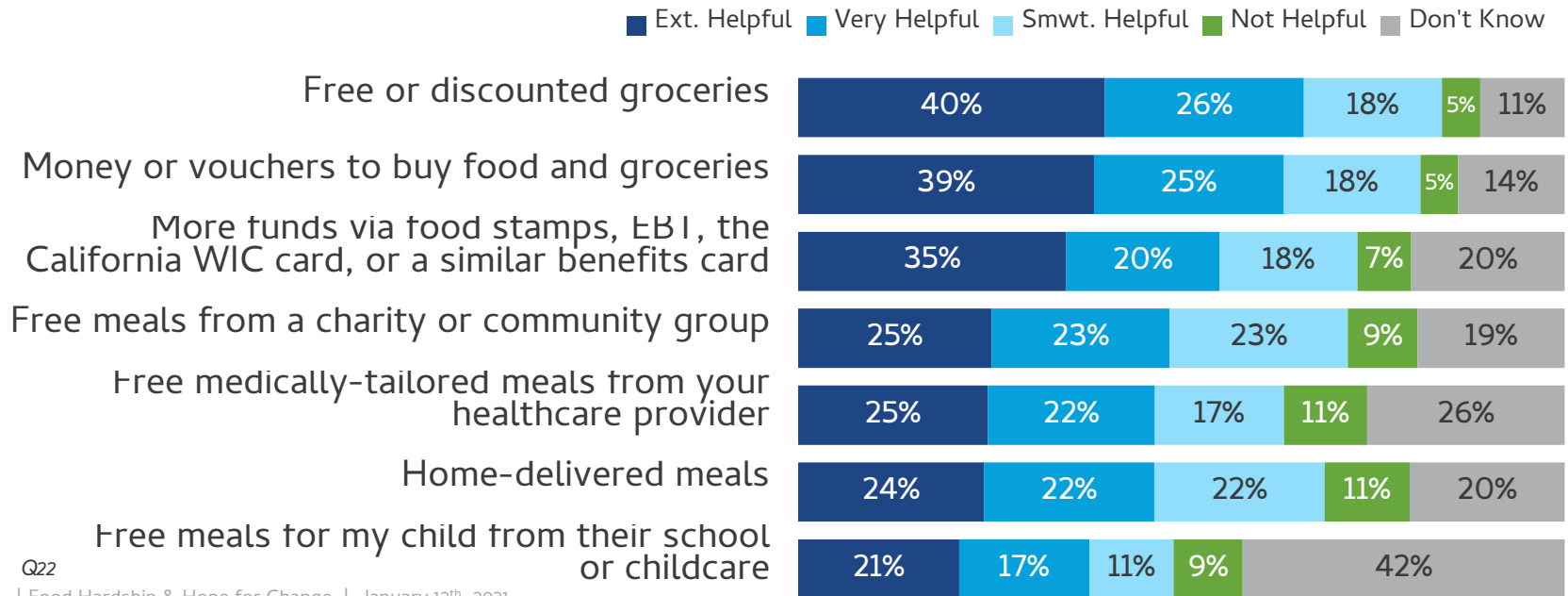


Q20

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Free groceries and money to purchase food would be the most helpful forms of assistance for most families.

Here are several different types of assistance you could receive related to accessing enough fresh, healthy food for you and your family. For each one, please indicate if this type of assistance would currently be extremely helpful, very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not helpful for you and your family.



Q22

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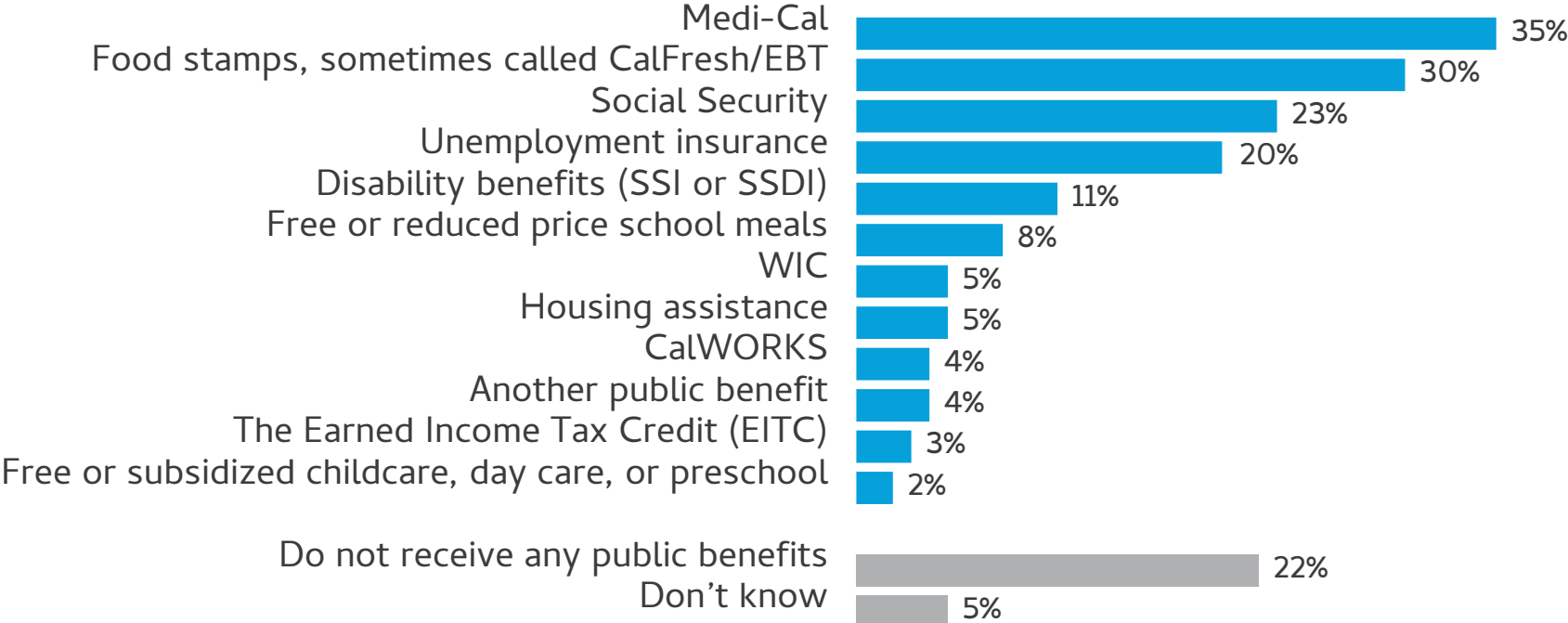
Experiences with Public Benefits during the Pandemic

Findings from the online survey and focus groups



Medi-Cal and CalFresh were the most commonly-used public benefits.

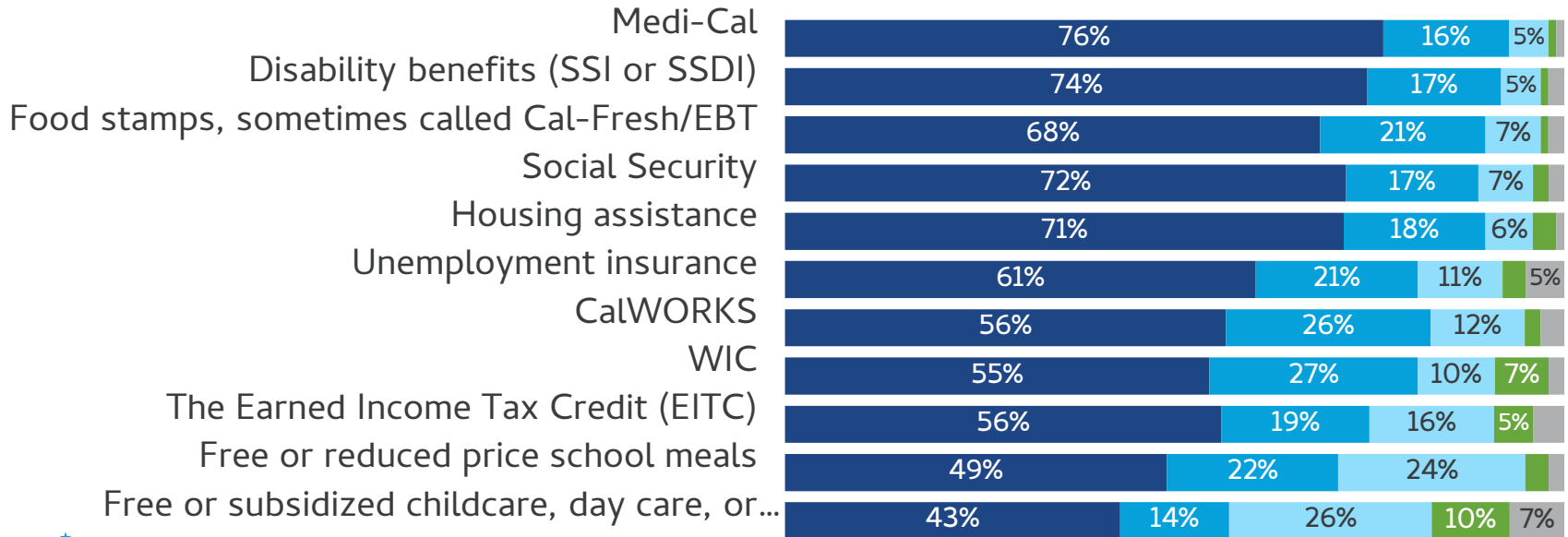
*Please indicate which of the following benefits, if any, your household currently receives.
(Multiple Responses Accepted)*



Among survey respondents, Medi-Cal, disability benefits, and CalFresh were the most highly valued benefits among those who receive them.

You previously indicated that your household currently receives the benefits listed below. Please indicate how important each benefit is to you and your family right now: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important
(Asked Only of Those Currently Receiving Public Benefits)

■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not Impt. ■ Don't Know



Q12.

Focus group participants who had experience with CalFresh and WIC viewed them as helpful.

- Both CalFresh and WIC were highly valued by current and former recipients.
- Their experiences on how long the benefit lasts varied, some felt it was enough to get through the month while others said it did not cover the whole month but was helpful nonetheless.
- Many of those who were not currently eligible for the programs – either because of their immigration documentation status or income eligibility issues – wished they had access.
- Those who are not eligible have relied on food pantries, aggressive budgeting and support from community groups like churches.

Spanish Speaking Parents Group: It has been a positive experience. It has helped out a lot in the hard times. It has really helped a lot. Thank God it has helped a lot. I don't know what we would do without that help. It has helped us a lot to buy more that we need.

Young Adult Group: I personally used CalFresh and I've had WIC before and they definitely both help. They've gotten me if not through the next month, through the end of the month and that's how I feed my family, so it helps.



Pandemic EBT and the emergency allotment were the most helpful changes that had been made.

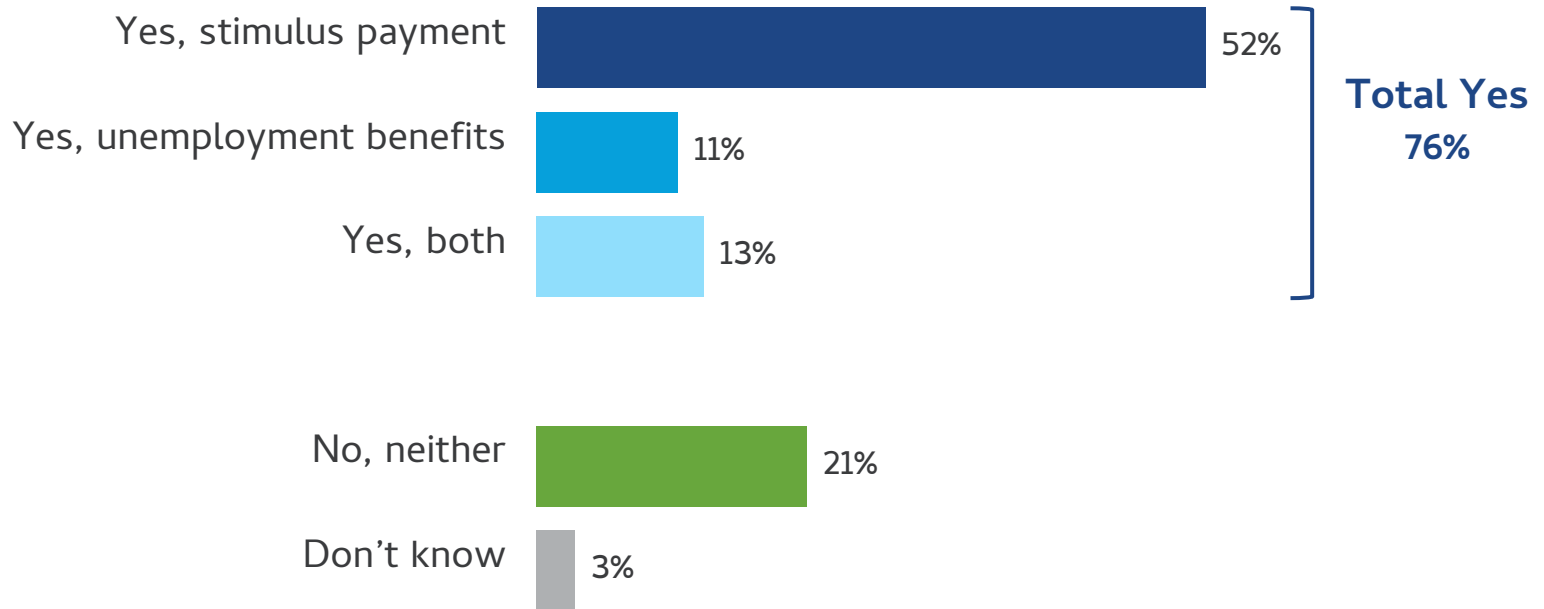
- A few noted experiencing the change to the phone/online interview format and felt it had been helpful.
- The changes people most often noticed were the increased CalFresh benefit and Pandemic EBT.
 - Parents were grateful for Pandemic EBT and hopeful it would come back.
 - They did note it took a bit longer than they would have liked (in some cases a few months) to become available after they'd applied.
- Few were aware of the ability to make purchases online but those who used it liked it.
 - One participant noted that some of the delivery minimums posed an obstacle to using the service.

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Young Adult Group: I personally used CalFresh and I've had WIC before and they definitely both help. They've gotten me if not through the next month, through the end of the month and that's how I feed my family, so it helps.

Three-quarters of respondents had received the stimulus payment or unemployment (or both) during the pandemic.

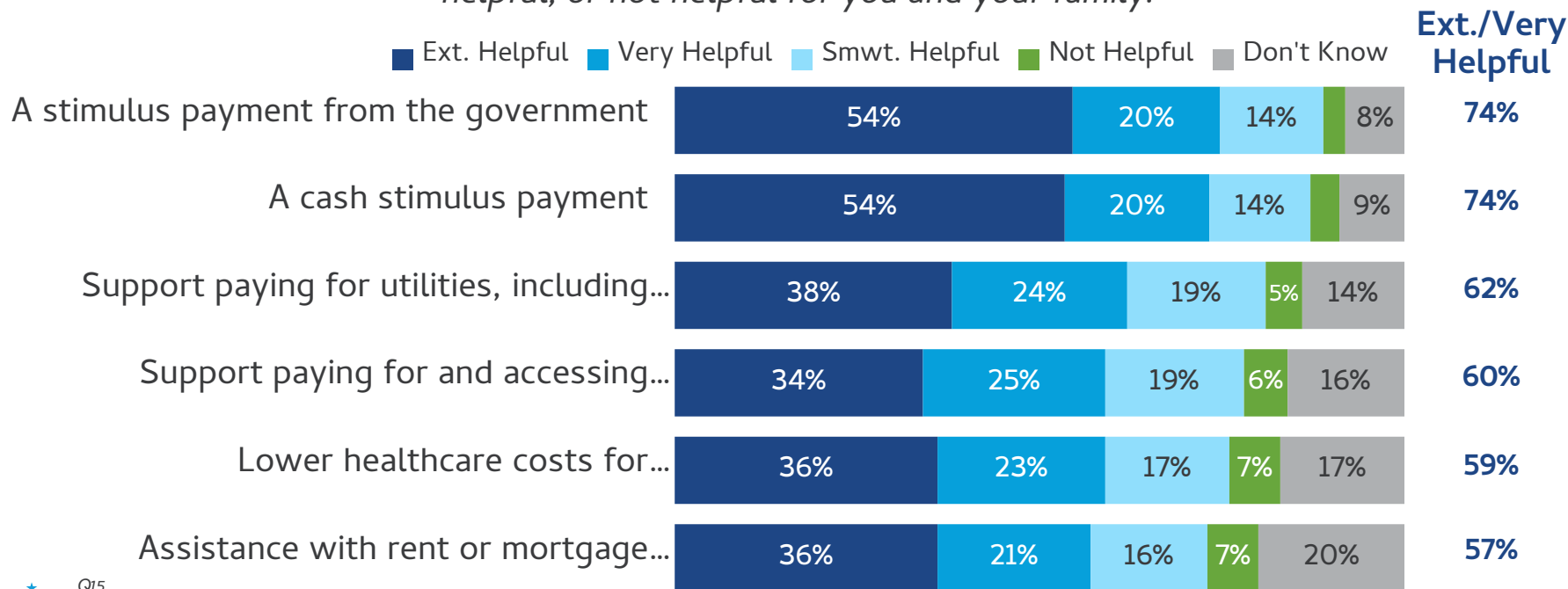
During the coronavirus crisis have you received a stimulus payment and/or unemployment benefits?



Q26.

Respondents felt a stimulus payment would be the most helpful assistance to receive.

Here are several different types of assistance your household could potentially receive. Please indicate if this type of assistance would currently be extremely helpful, very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not helpful for you and your family.

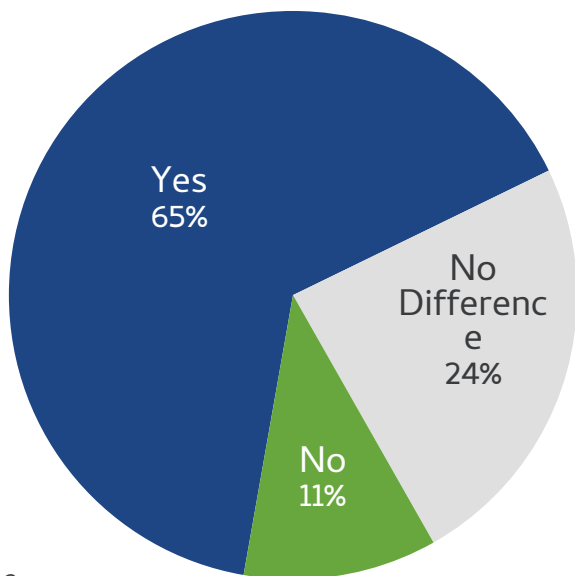


Q15.

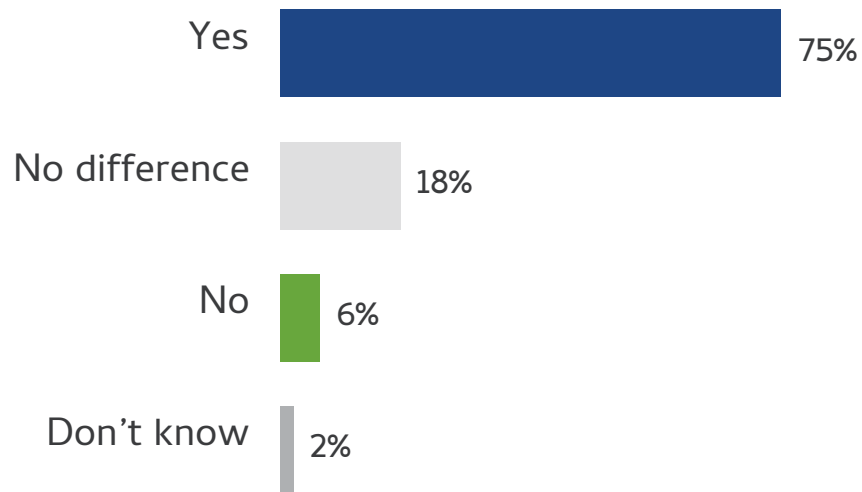
Half of respondents received additional CalFresh funds during the pandemic; those who received the extra funds found them valuable.

Did these additional funds help to make your benefits last through the whole month?

(Asked of Those Who Received Additional CalFresh Funds)



Did these additional funds allow you to purchase more food and/or a greater variety of foods than you normally could?



Q43 & Q44.

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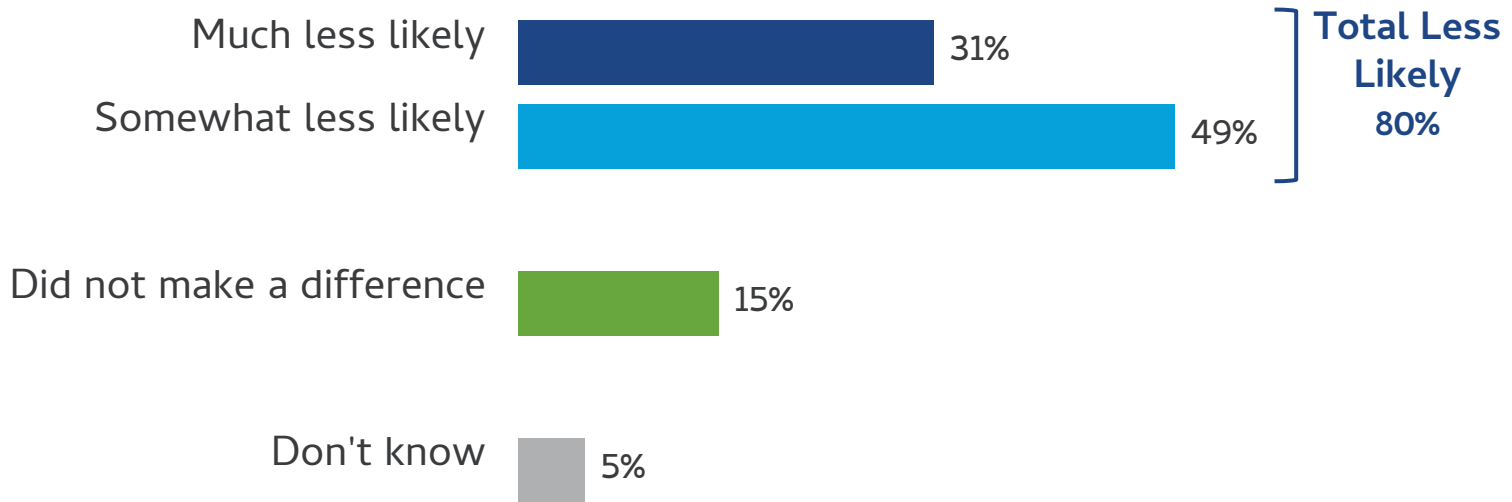
Challenges with Accessing CalFresh and Other Benefits

Findings from the online survey and focus groups



One in five say they've experienced discrimination when applying for public benefits; those who experienced this were much less likely to apply for services in the future as a result.

*Did that experience with racial discrimination and bias make you much less likely to apply for services in the future, somewhat less likely to do so, or did it not make a difference?
(Asked Only of Those Who Experienced Racism)*

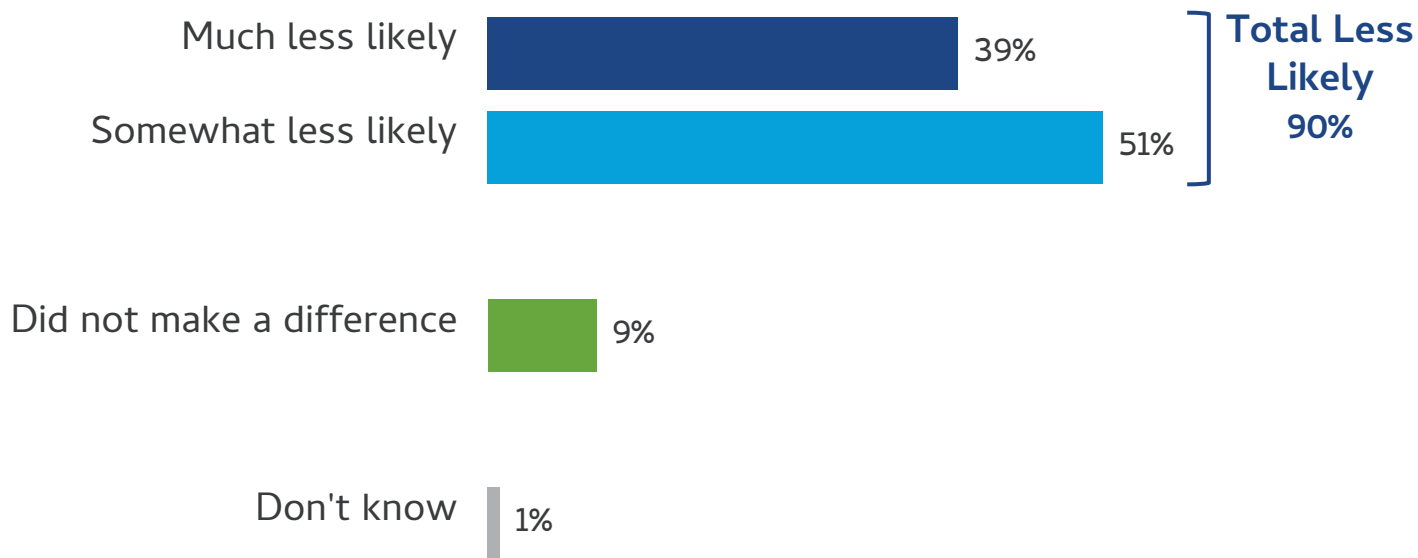


Q28.

More than one in ten have experienced language barriers; those barriers have also impacted the likelihood they'd apply for benefits again.

Did that experience with a language barrier make you much less likely to apply for services in the future, somewhat less likely to do so, or did it not make a difference?

(Asked Only of Those Who Experienced Language Barriers)



Q30.

Participants in the focus groups didn't feel necessarily discriminated against based on their ethnicity, but had other negative and discriminatory interactions while applying for benefits.

- Male participants said they felt shamed for being there asking for help for their families and some reported having to bring in their kids to prove that they were a primary caregiver.
- Others noted that the employees they dealt with were short with them and reluctant to help. These experiences made them more reluctant to ask for help in the future.

Spanish Speaking Parents Group: It is like they don't want you to ask for help. They ask you about your children and then say if you are unable to care for them why did you have so many. It is like they are personally giving you the money. It is like they are the ones actually helping you. That is how they discriminate against you.

English Speaking Parents Group: Because I was a man, I felt discriminated against. There is a lot of folks there, a lot of women with children and they need help for sure, we all do sometimes. But me going in as a man trying to represent my family—I was a man and they looked at me and it felt like maybe like I deserved it—that was just my feeling—that's my takeaway.



Participants' experiences applying for CalFresh varied widely.

Level of Difficulty	Number of Times Chosen
Very easy	1
Somewhat easy	10
Somewhat difficult	14
Very difficult	7

- Those who had experience with both CalFresh and WIC tended to think WIC was easier to apply for.
- The challenges respondents faced in applying included language barriers, rude CalFresh employees, and confusion about paperwork and eligibility.
- These challenges tended to impact all respondents regardless of their background.

Young Adult Group: Just filling out the paperwork or just the stuff online, I think the confusing part for me was when you get all the paperwork back, there is just so much and I'm like, did I get it, did I not? So that part for me was a little more complicated and then when they call you...they didn't really give me a definite answer, so I'm still kind of confused.

Cantonese Group: For me I think that should list all the documents required clearly. Sometimes I think there is a discrepancy between the English and the Chinese translation. The requirements listed there is quite different between English and Chinese.



Experiences with Meals Served in School and Child Care

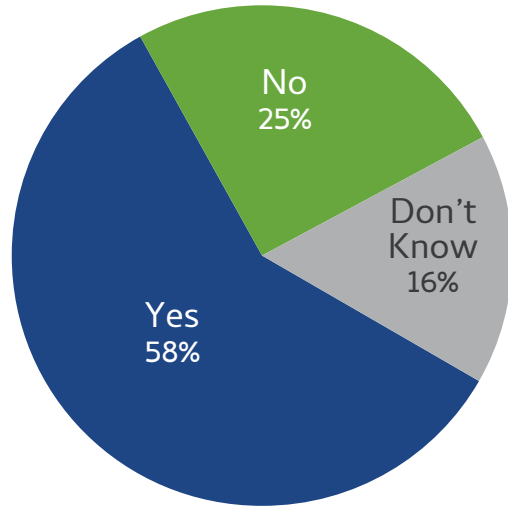
Findings from the online survey and focus groups



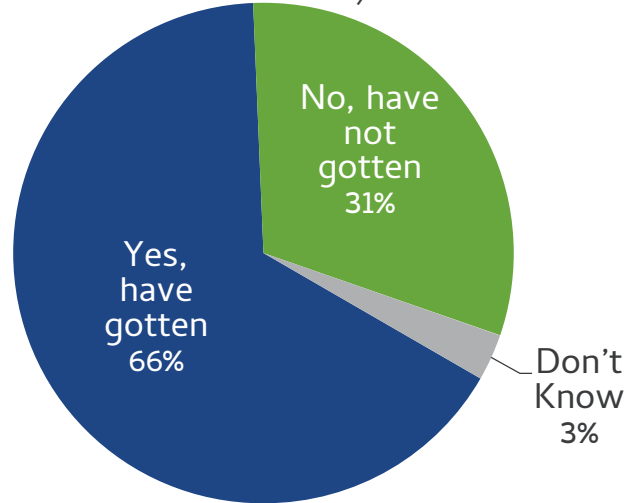
A majority say their child's school offers out-of-school meals and two-thirds have taken advantage of this benefit.

(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)

Does your school, preschool, or childcare provide meals when school is not in session, such as during summer and winter breaks or during the pandemic?



Has your family ever gone to get those meals?
(Asked of Those Who Responded Yes to Meals Provided by School/Preschool or Childcare)



Those most likely to have gone to get the meals are:

- Central Valley and LA region residents
- In their 40's
- Have incomes between \$30,000 and \$40,000



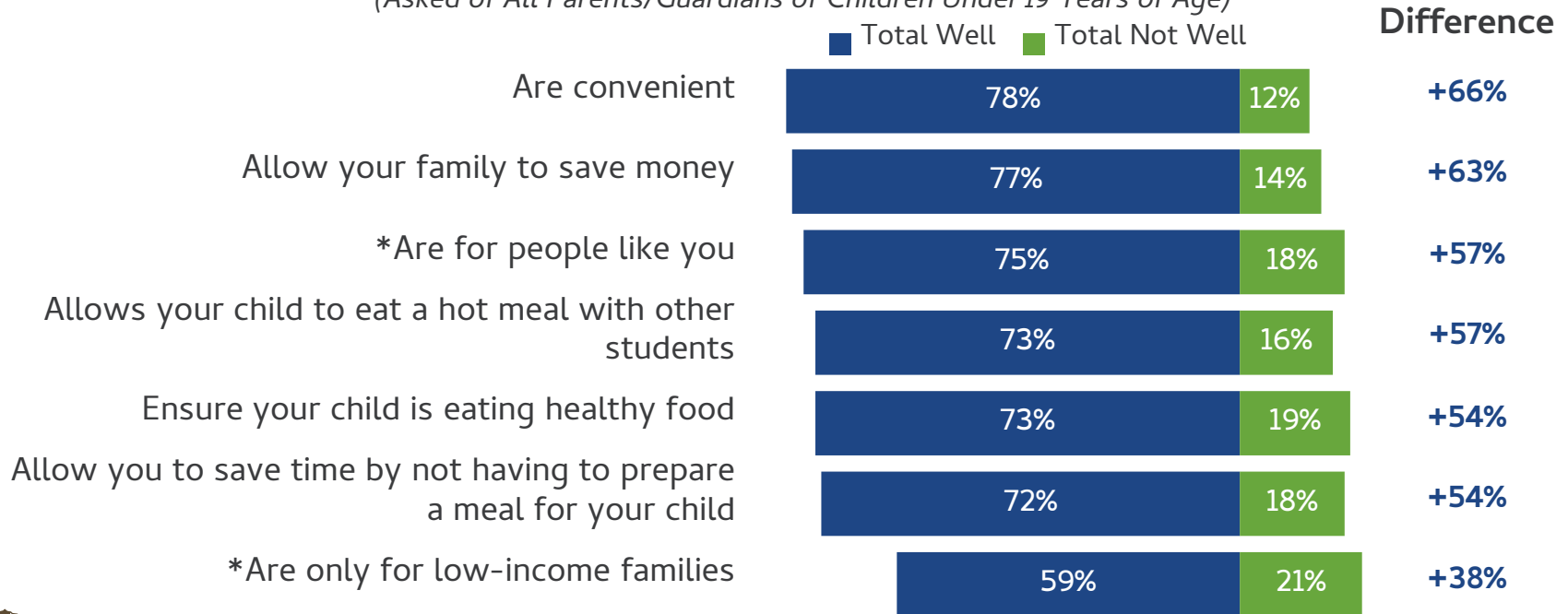
Q36 & Q37.

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School, preschool, and child care meals are seen as convenient and allow parents to save money.

Here are some descriptions of free and discounted school, preschool, and childcare meals. Please indicate if you think this describes free and discounted school meals very well, somewhat well, not too well, or not well at all.

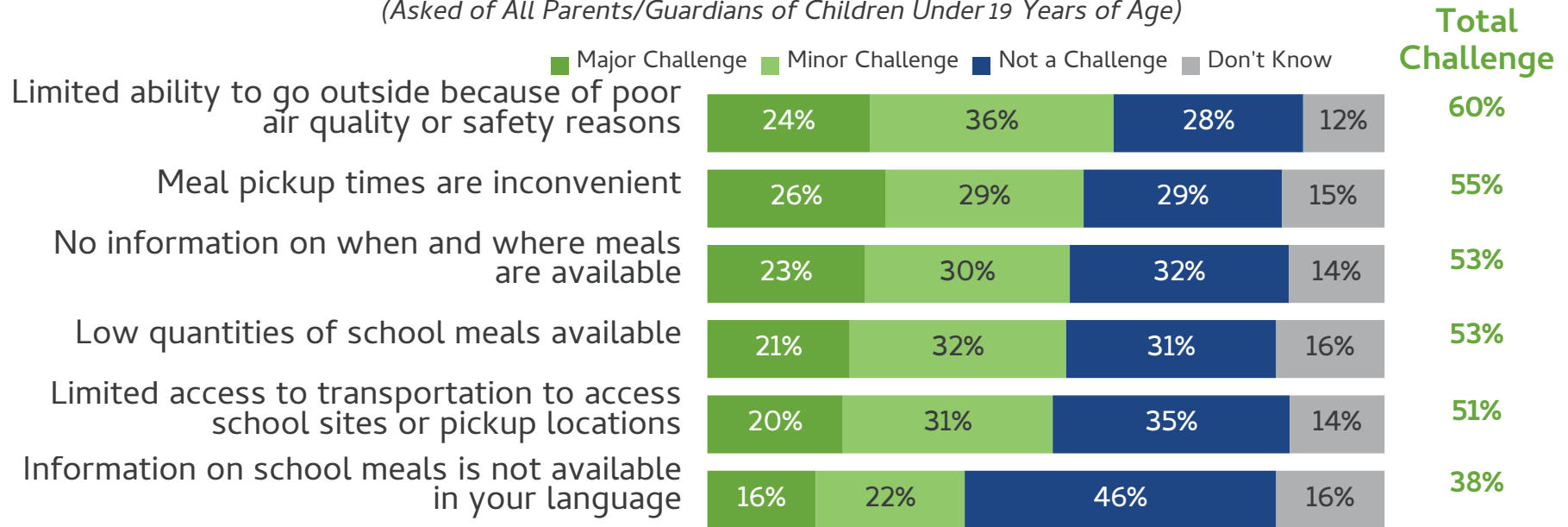
(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)



Air quality, inconvenient pickup times and lack of information were the most common challenges for accessing school meals.

Here is a list of challenges some families may face in accessing free or discounted school, preschool, or childcare meals when school is out of session. Please indicate if this has been a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you and your family in accessing these meals.

(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)



Q39.

Most focus group parents said their children's schools offered school meals.

- They noted that schools were offering meals before the pandemic and had continued to do so since schools had closed.
- They saw it as helpful both from a cost and a convenience perspective by helping them with the cooking and cleaning.
- Several noted that their children, however, didn't always like the food and that they hadn't been impressed by the quality of the food.
- Accessing the meals since the pandemic was relatively easy; at most they said they'd been asked to show their child's school ID.
- However, the long lines for pickups, inconvenient pickup times, and distance to the school were barriers.

Spanish-Speaking Parents Group:

[We show] the children's ID that they get from the school. It doesn't matter which school they attend only that they are attending school. Even if it is closed but it proves that the child is a student and eligible to get the breakfast.

English-Speaking Parents Group:

There was a couple of times where they would give us two boxes so I would shoot out to Pittsburg to drop one off at my sisters because she has her grandkids there and some of the stuff that my son won't touch anyways.



Older Adults' Experiences with Accessing Meals

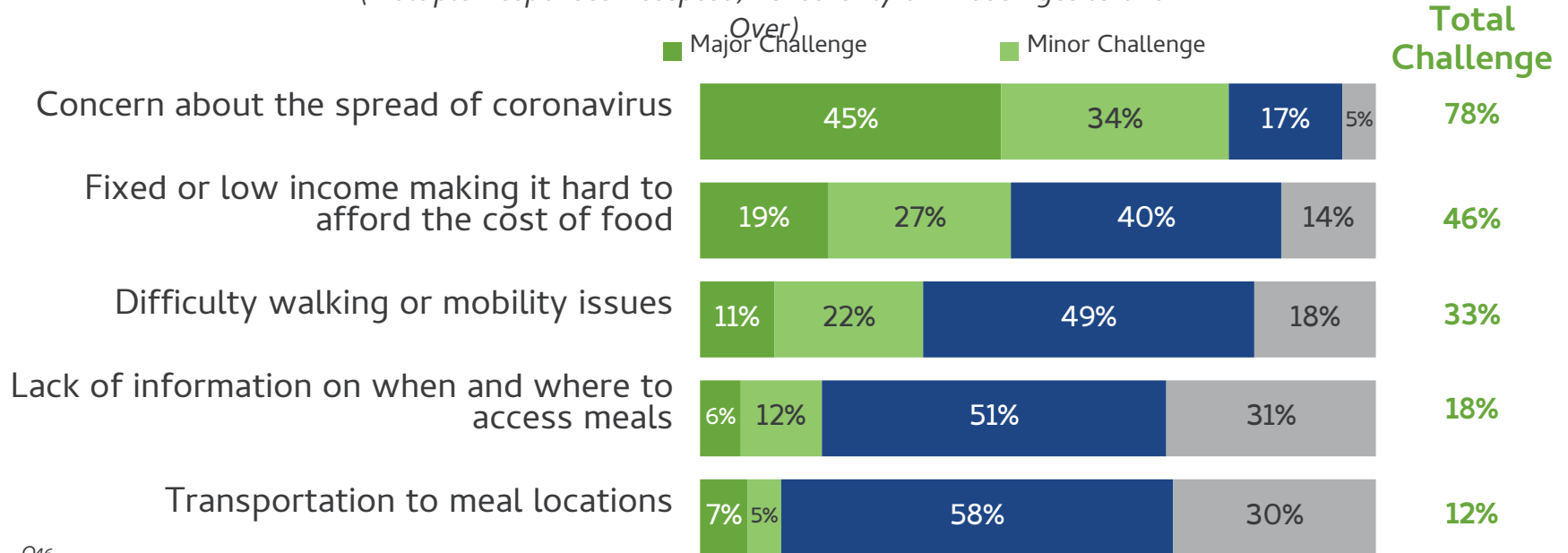
Findings from the online survey and focus groups



The biggest challenging in accessing food and support is fear of the coronavirus.

Here is a list of challenges some seniors may experience in accessing food services and support. Please indicate if this has been a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you in accessing food.

(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked Only of Those Ages 65 and



Q46.

Isolation was seen as a major problem in the focus group conducted among older adults.

- Participants either had experienced loneliness during the pandemic or knew someone who had.
- Additionally, because of the pandemic, they were getting out less and running in-person errands less often to be safe.
- Most in the group did not have transportation barriers and took advantage of senior hours for shopping.

Seniors Group: Being single and living alone it was, you know, an issue before the pandemic, and the additional isolation of, you know, wanting to visit friends but everybody is isolating so just pretty much cutting off most of my social connections is really tough

Seniors Group: Where I do most of my shopping is a local Raley's. I know everybody in the store. They all know me and everything. When the pandemic first started there and a Target that is not far from me had -- they started early morning hours for seniors-- for people...I would get up and take advantage of the hours when they only allowed people in our age group in.



Immigrants Experiences with Food Assistance

Findings from the online survey and focus groups



Many focus group participants were aware that food assistance is limited for immigrants.

- Many participants who were immigrants were aware that their options for help are more limited than they are for others.
- They rely on food banks and churches to fill the gaps that CalFresh would fill.
- Some noted issues with the quality of food and cultural appropriateness offered by food pantries.
- While adults were familiar with these barriers, the DACA and TPS young adults tended to be unaware that they were restricted from accessing help and were less familiar with the limits in place.
- Adult immigrants were slightly more familiar with public charge rules than young adults were, but overall the subject was confusing for many.
- However, many did worry that asking for help could negatively impact their immigration status or path to citizenship – even if they were unsure of the mechanics.
- There was a distinct sense that the political climate matters and a Biden presidency will make it easier for immigrants to get help when they need it.



Comments from focus group participants

Spanish-Speaking Food For All Group:

[Immigrants] go to food banks. I know a lot of people that are undocumented, and they don't have children here so they can't get help. If you are a mother or father immigrant that has a child born here, they will help you. But if you have children not born here, they won't help you. So, they go to food banks or shelter that will give them food.

Cantonese Group: A lot of things at the beginning when I went to the food bank, some of the things that I got I did not like. But the thing is what can you do? You take whatever they give you. If I didn't like it -- if it is really that bad, then I just left.

Young Adult Group: So personally, I'm what [is] considered DACA, so I have a work permit. I was actually in the process of getting my green card right before they closed down the state...And one of my fears of just applying for any kind of help is in the long run, getting a green card or even a citizenship, they would be like, "oh she was getting help from the government so she cannot." ...I have never asked for any help, the only thing I actually applied for was unemployment...Even going to school, I pay for everything in cash. I would work two jobs and pay because I didn't want to get interviewed one day and be like you are a burden to the U.S., we're not going to help you out.



Extending benefits to immigrants was seen as directly helpful for participants and their families.

Level of Difficulty	Number of Times Chosen
Very Helpful	12
Somewhat Helpful	4
Not that Helpful	0
Not at all Helpful	1

Young Adult Group: The lack of options causes the immigrant community to not seek out help, so that means they won't seek out help from their state until they are extremely sick and then they...go to the ER at that point. All these things are actually related. So some public benefits in my opinion should be provided regardless of citizenship. Because...I see it as a cost cutting measure.

- The idea of extending food benefits to include all immigrants was perceived as helpful.
- Several noted that immigrants pay taxes and deserve to have access to the same programs others do.
- Participants in the young adult group especially drew the connection between helping immigrants and building a healthier society.

Questions?

Please use the Q&A





Take Action

- Nourish California: State Legislative Agenda
<https://nourishca.org/get-involved/action-center/state-legislative-advocacy/>
- CA Hunger Action Coalition: Advocacy Week (starting 1.15.21)
<https://nourishca.org/event/virtualadvocacyweek1-15/>
- Child Care and End Child Poverty: Advocacy Day (1.21.21)
<https://conta.cc/3nFwzCa>





Thank you!

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