



**Nourish
California**



FAIRBANK, MASLIN,
MAULLIN, METZ
& ASSOCIATES

The Lives of
Californians
in 2020

Assets, Challenges, and the
Effects of COVID-19

JANUARY 2021



Background

In the fall of 2020, Nourish California engaged Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) to conduct statewide research that would help illustrate the experiences of individuals and families across California, particularly in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This document is a presentation of the research findings from FM3. A compendium of key findings is available at <https://nourishca.org/event/food-hardship-hope-for-change>.



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Research Approach

An overview of the research methodology



The statewide research was conducted in three phases

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



Interview Methodology

- FM3 conducted 12 in-depth interviews with Nourish California stakeholders throughout California.
- Each conversation was between 30 minutes to an hour in length.
- Interviews were conducted via telephone or Zoom.
- The stakeholder organizations included food banks, advocacy organizations, and organizations providing programming and direct services related to health, well being, and nutrition.



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 had middle or low income and experience with public benefits, and where applicable, experience 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





Stakeholder Interview Findings

Key Themes



Stakeholders reported acutely rising rates of food hardship during the pandemic.

- Food hardship is as an ever-growing challenge during the pandemic that has severely impacted the communities served.
- In most cases, food banks reported more than doubling the number of families they are serving and noted that the pandemic has pushed people into need who previously did not rely on the food bank.
- Other service providers also noted an uptick in need and some who had previously not been in the business of food distribution started doing so with the onset of the pandemic.

This is 100% worse than 2008.

We're going from pushing out over 600,000 pounds of food a week to more than a million pounds.

The pandemic is stressing an already taxed system; a system that probably didn't work well in the beginning.



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. Often even documented immigrants or undocumented immigrants with children who are U.S. 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 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 prevents 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.
Isolation	Older adults are particularly impacted by isolation. 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 older adults 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.

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 presidential administration and structural racism. One stakeholder noted that her clients felt like it was “the price they pay” for being in this country.

Despite these numerous challenges, many stakeholders had big successes in the face of the pandemic.

- Food banks and other service providers reported scaling up rapidly to meet the needs of their community.
- They had been able to increase access to CalFresh and saw CalEITC and Pandemic EBT as major successes.
- One stakeholder mentioned the adoption of a school meal delivery model to account for the fact that many parents could not pick up meals for their kids during the day.
- Others had been able to move community-building events to a virtual format to provide resources and support to their community members.
- Many noted that their successes were driven by their ability to connect with partners in their community and leverage those relationships to meet the community's needs.
- One stakeholder had notable administrative successes in Projects Homekey and Roomkey to support homeless Californians.

We've been able to get volunteers to distribute meals to seniors, do a monthly foodbank for all ages, and provide funding to help seniors with mortgage, rent, and utilities.

We were able to do PPE drives and provide flyers with useful information since many low-income and rural communities don't have access to digital versions.



Many wanted the changes made in response to the pandemic to be made permanent.

- Participants noted that changes like Pandemic EBT, CalFresh emergency allotments, and waiving CalFresh interview requirements were enormously helpful.
- For example, in some areas of the state, stakeholders saw a 20 percentage point increase in approvals for Cal Fresh because the interviews were removed.
- Stakeholders wanted these changes extended and even made permanent.

Pandemic EBT was a huge success and a big benefit to California kids.

The CalFresh emergency allotments have made it clear that benefits were too low to begin with.



Stakeholder organizations need funding now more than ever.

- Stakeholders noted that funding from the CARES Act enabled them to step up and take care of their communities.
- However, some noted that as the funding expired, they'd be unable to keep supporting people in the same way.
- Additionally, food banks noted the limited and fluctuating supply of food increased their expenses significantly as they have to compete with the regular market for foods.

More funding to pay seniors' rents and utilities.

We need to make it easier for Black-led organizations to access funding for capacity building.

There's been an over 300% increase in our food budget.



Participants' organizational priorities for the coming year were a mix of programmatic, systems, and legislative goals.

- Continuing to meet the increased needs of their communities in terms of food, health care, housing, and other basic resources
- Universal school meals – opportunities to collaborate and coordinate with local governments and school districts to meet needs
- Advocating increased funding for nutrition statewide and improving access to CalFresh
- Working to streamline social services referral processes for clients
- Creating an automated state welfare system to make process of applying for benefits and services more user friendly both for staff and clients
- Promoting equity and transparency in the State budget
- Supporting legislation expanding access to CalFresh
- Supporting legislation on homelessness and affordable housing that was vetoed by the Governor in the last cycle
- Improving their financial standing as an organization and increasing fundraising





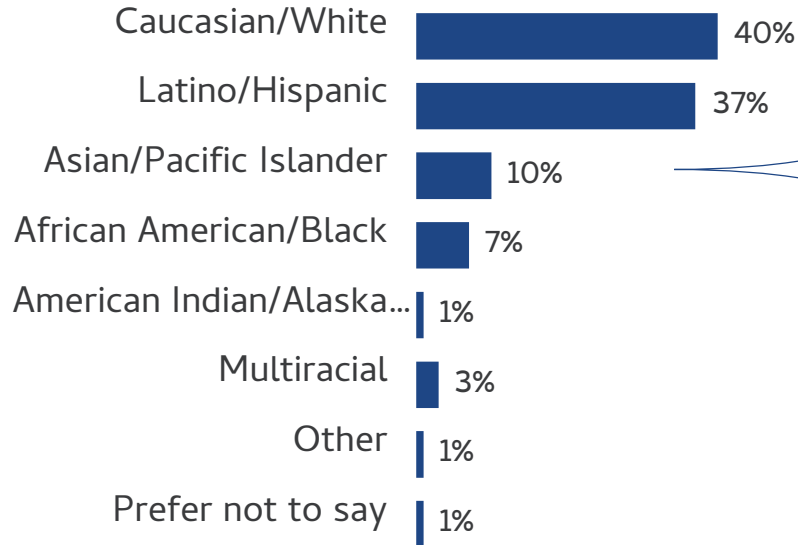
Profile of Survey/Online Interview Respondents

Demographics

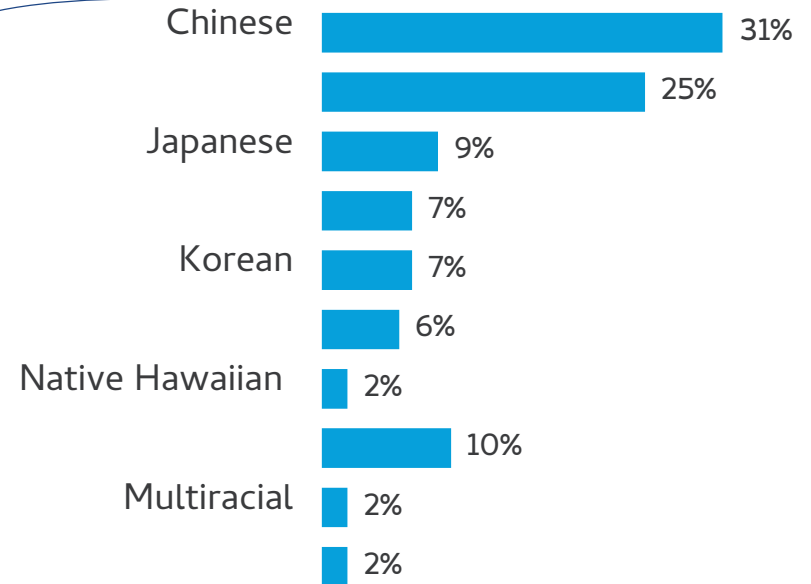


Ethnic and Racial Background of Respondents

Just to make sure everyone is represented, with which ethnic group do you identify yourself: Latino or Hispanic, African American or Black, Caucasian or White, Asian or Pacific Islander, or are you of another ethnic or racial background?

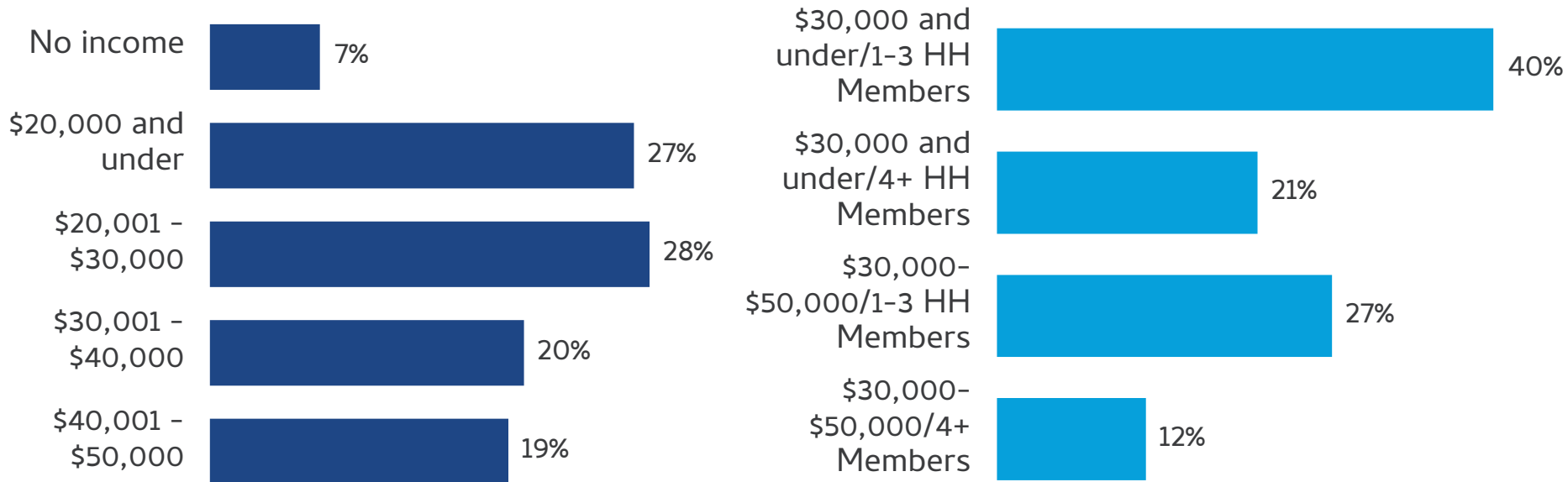


*More specifically, would you say that you are:
(Asked of Asians/Pacific Islanders Only)*



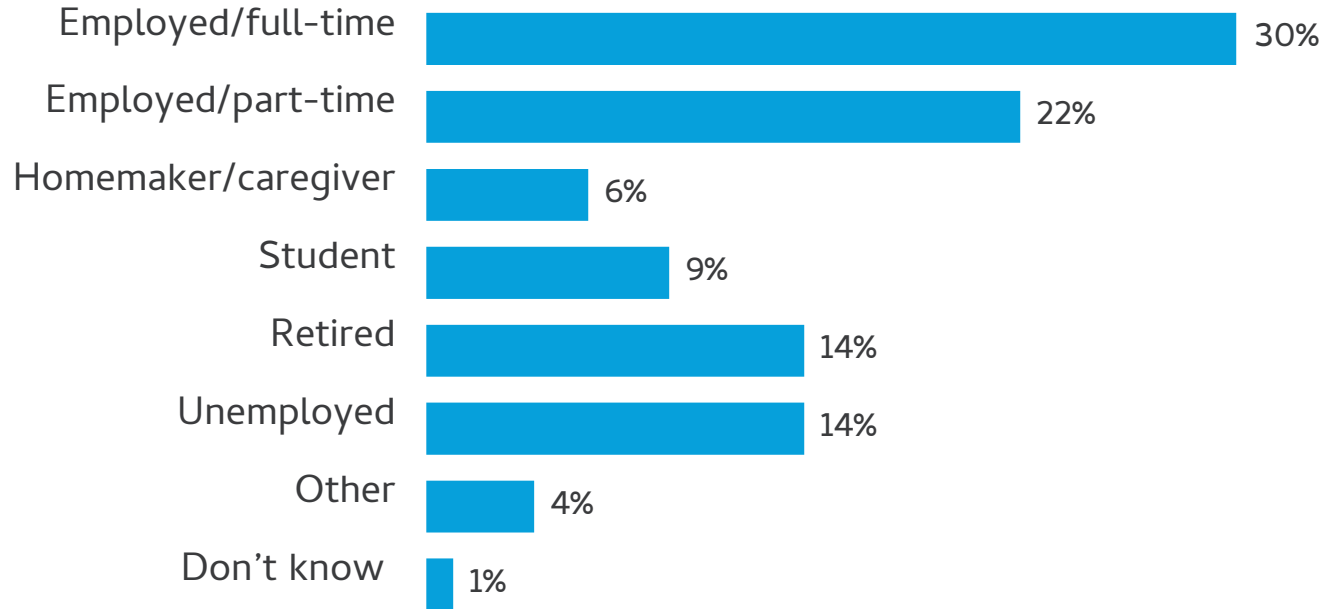
Distribution of Household Incomes

What was the total combined income for all the people in your household before taxes in 2019 ?

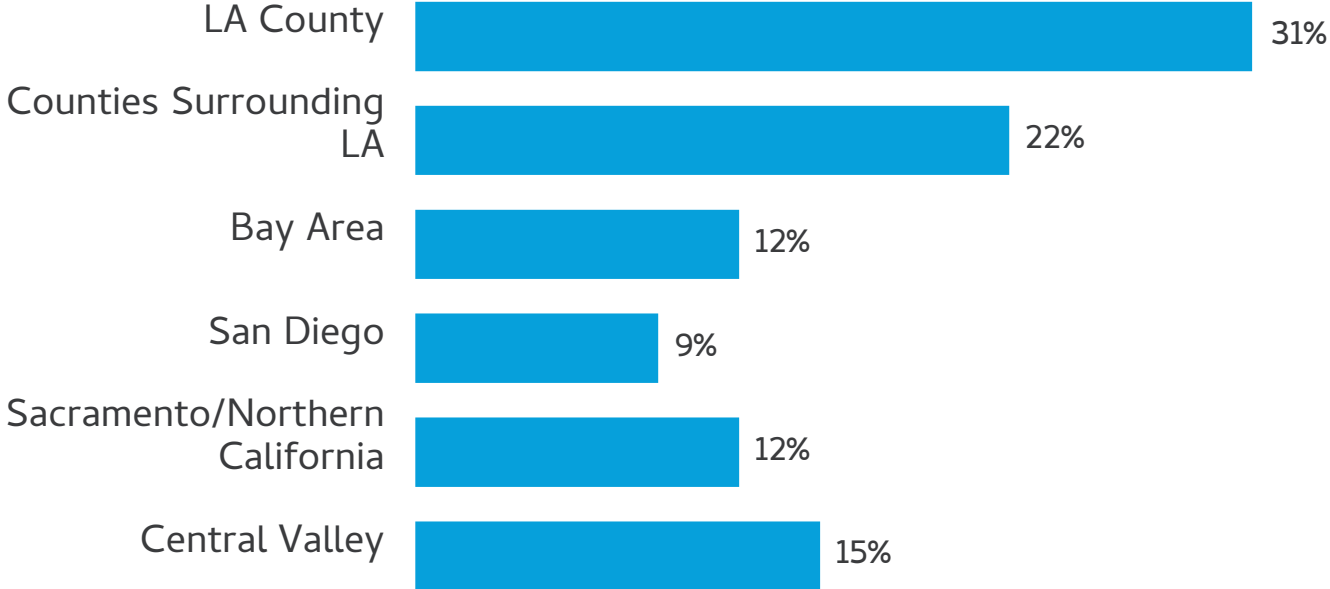


Employment Status

When the coronavirus pandemic started, were you employed outside the home, or were you a homemaker, a student, or retired?



California Region of Residence





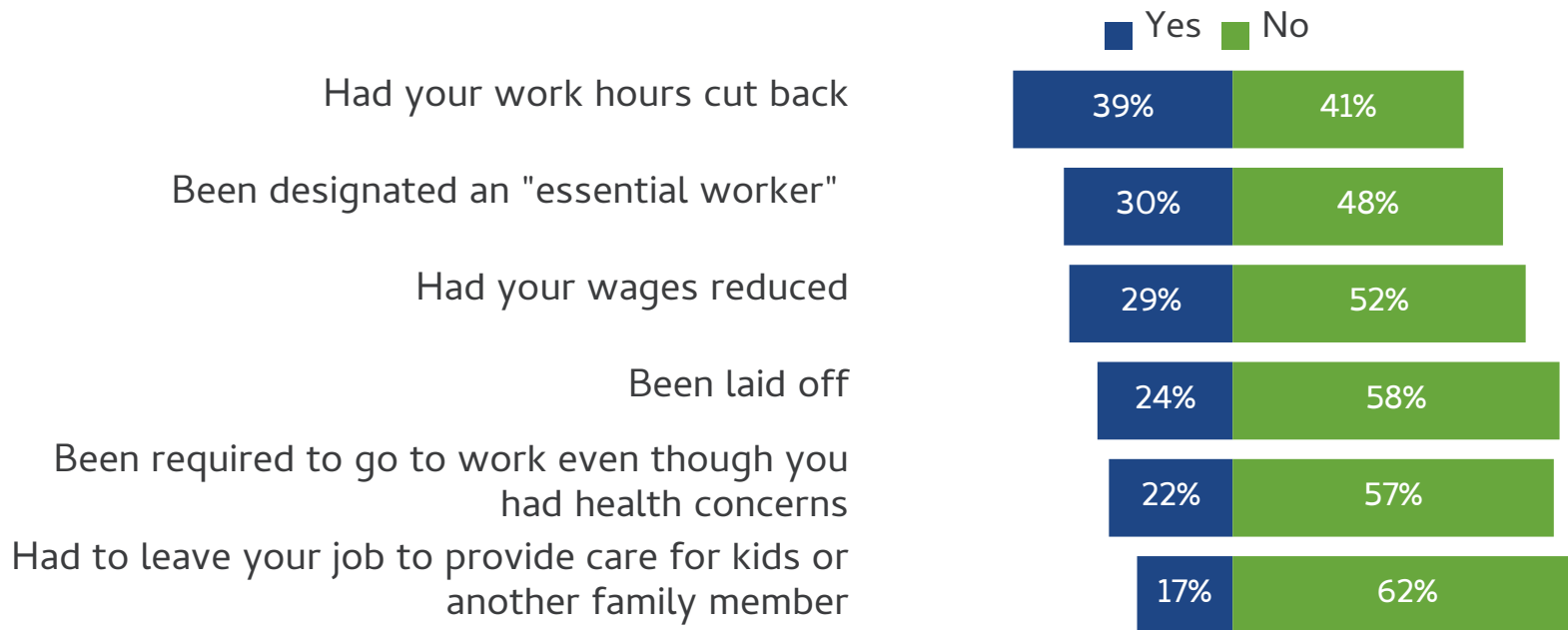
Experiences with the Pandemic

Findings from the online survey and focus groups



Nearly two in five respondents had their hours cut back because of the pandemic.

In response to the coronavirus crisis, have you experienced any of the following:



The highest-income respondents were most likely to have their hours cut back.

Employment Change	All Resp.	None	<\$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000
Had your work hours cut back	39%	28%	40%	38%	38%	46%
Been designated an "essential worker"	30%	12%	28%	31%	37%	32%
Had your wages reduced	29%	20%	33%	30%	25%	28%
Been laid off	24%	17%	23%	26%	21%	26%
Been required to go to work even though you had health concerns	22%	12%	20%	25%	25%	21%
Had to leave your job to provide care for kids or another family member	17%	16%	19%	17%	15%	19%



Q9. In response to the coronavirus crisis, have you experienced any of the following:

Latino and API respondents were especially likely to have their hours cut; African-American respondents were most likely to have been designated an essential worker.

Employment Change	All Resp.	Whites	Latinos	African Americans	Asians/ Pacific Islanders	All People of Color
Had your work hours cut back	39%	31%	48%	31%	41%	45%
Been designated an "essential worker"	30%	20%	39%	43%	24%	37%
Had your wages reduced	29%	22%	34%	25%	34%	33%
Been laid off	24%	22%	28%	14%	21%	24%
Been required to go to work even though you had health concerns	22%	15%	28%	30%	20%	26%
Had to leave your job to provide care for kids or another family member	17%	12%	25%	16%	11%	21%



Q9. In response to the coronavirus crisis, have you experienced any of the following:

Parents of children under age 12 were more likely than others to have left jobs to care for a family member.

Employment Change	All Resp.	No Kids	All Parents	Under 5	Ages 5-12	Ages 13-18	Age 19 and over
Had your work hours cut back	39%	34%	48%	54%	54%	48%	31%
Been designated an "essential worker"	30%	26%	37%	38%	36%	42%	31%
Had your wages reduced	29%	25%	35%	41%	42%	36%	23%
Been laid off	24%	20%	29%	33%	35%	33%	17%
Been required to go to work even though you had health concerns	22%	18%	29%	37%	34%	26%	15%
Had to leave your job to provide care for kids or another family member	17%	11%	29%	42%	39%	26%	7%



Q9. In response to the coronavirus crisis, have you experienced any of the following:

The pandemic had taken a significant toll on focus group participants.

- The impacts of the pandemic included difficulty managing distance learning for children, mental health impacts of isolation, job loss or wage reduction, racial discrimination, and difficulty affording housing and food.
- Additionally, it was clear to respondents that problems that had affected their communities prior to the pandemic, like crime and housing affordability, had not gone away.

Older Adults Group: There is a lot of loneliness. There is a lot of isolation where...people who live alone and if they are not able to reach out via the Internet, they are not getting any interaction and there is a lot of depression and loneliness.

English-Speaking Parents Group: We just came from an outbreak from our church...Right now, I'm already past the COVID, I'm already negative, after the second test, but still a lot of our brethren, two died already.

Cantonese Group: I work at the Hilton Hotel, and they were saying to us that we caused -- a white person told me that we caused COVID-19.

Spanish Food For All Group: My husband being laid off work. Worrying about paying the rent or mortgage and also bills. Not having enough food is horrible. Also, my mother got sick and I couldn't go and take care of her....Also, the transportation that became a problem -- practically everything affected me.





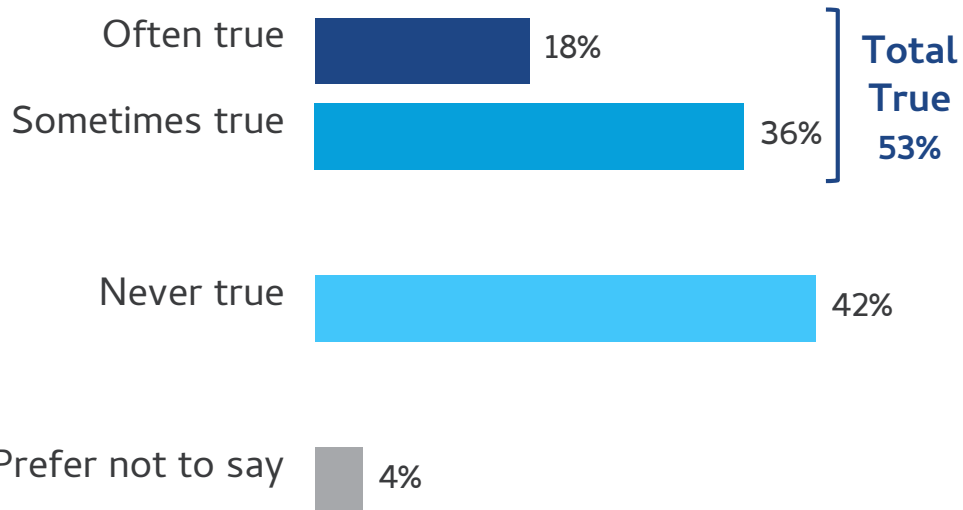
Experiences with Hunger and Food Access

Findings from the online survey and focus groups

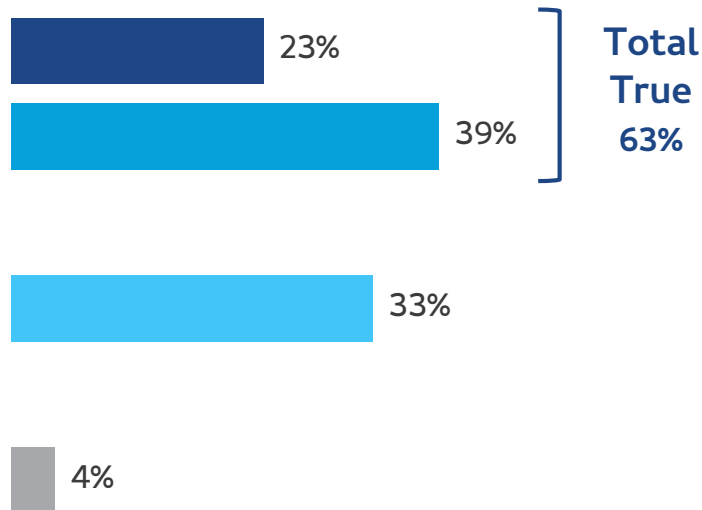


A majority have run out of food before they had money to buy more and three in five have worried about this happening.

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



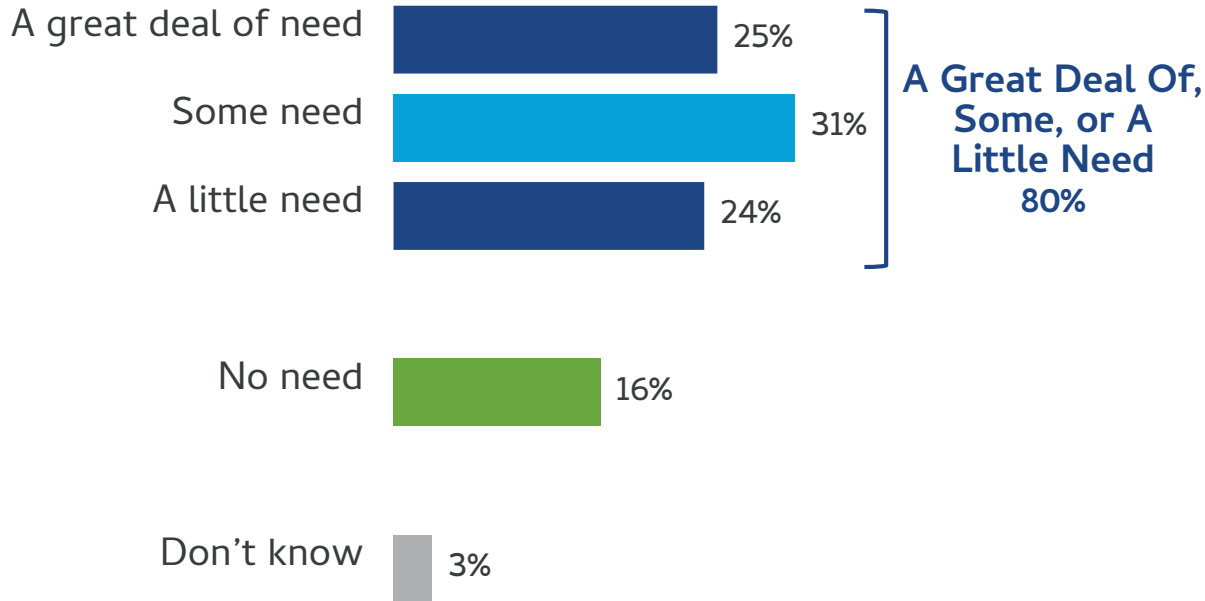
Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.



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?
Q17. Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more. Is this statement often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household?

Four in five expressed at least some level of 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



Respondents with larger households were most likely to be worried and to run out of food.

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%



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?

Q17. Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more. Is this statement often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household?

Latinos, African Americans and younger respondents were most likely to report this concern and to run out of food; 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?

Q17. Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get 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 and to run out of food than were non-parents.

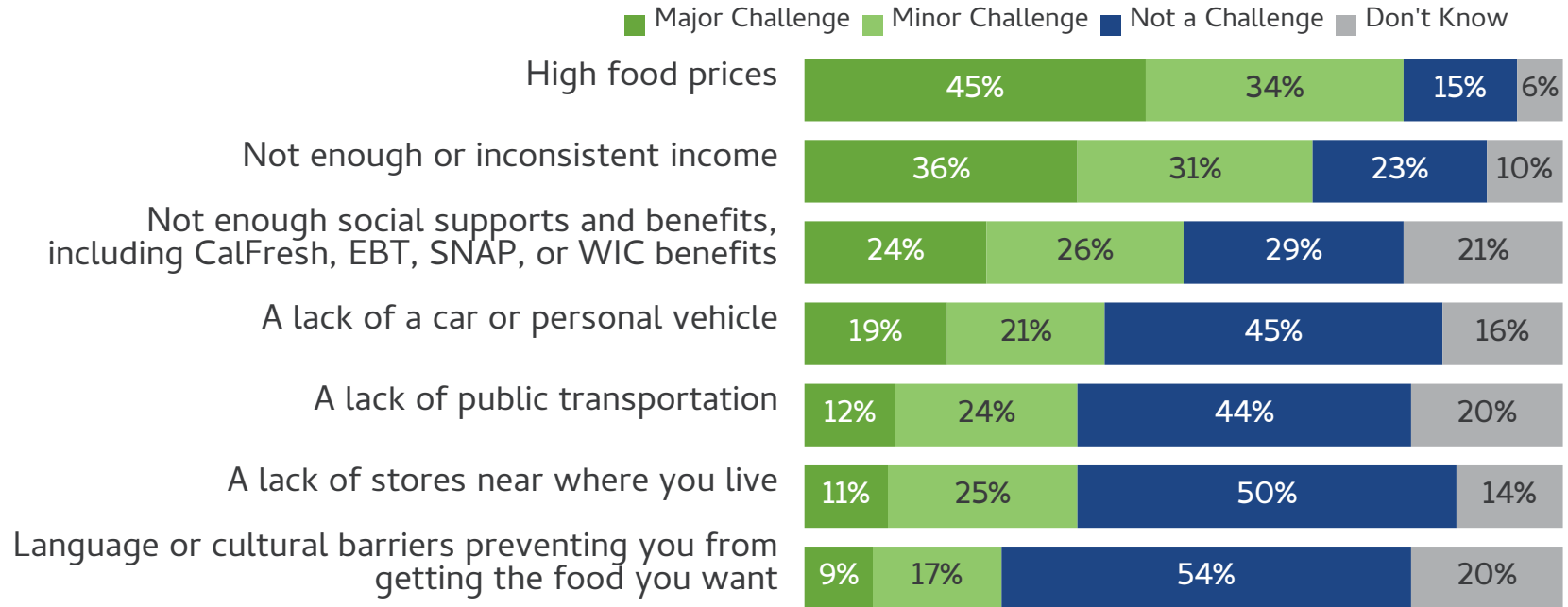
Demographic Group	Worried About Running Out of Food	Ran Out of Food
No Children	56%	48%
All Parents	74%	63%
Under 5 Years Old	83%	68%
Ages 5-12 Years	80%	63%
Ages 13-18 Years	77%	66%
Ages 19 and Older	58%	54%



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?
Q17. Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more. Is this statement often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household?

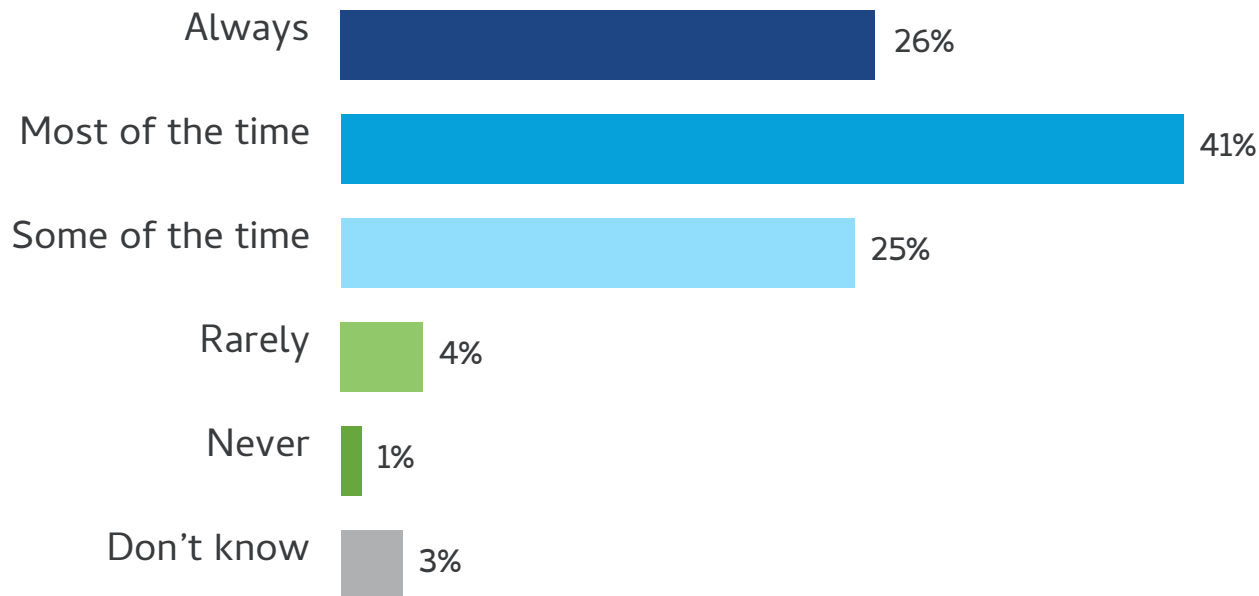
High food prices and inconsistent incomes pose the greatest challenges to accessing food.

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.



Nearly one in three are sometimes able, rarely able, or never able to purchase the foods they need and want.

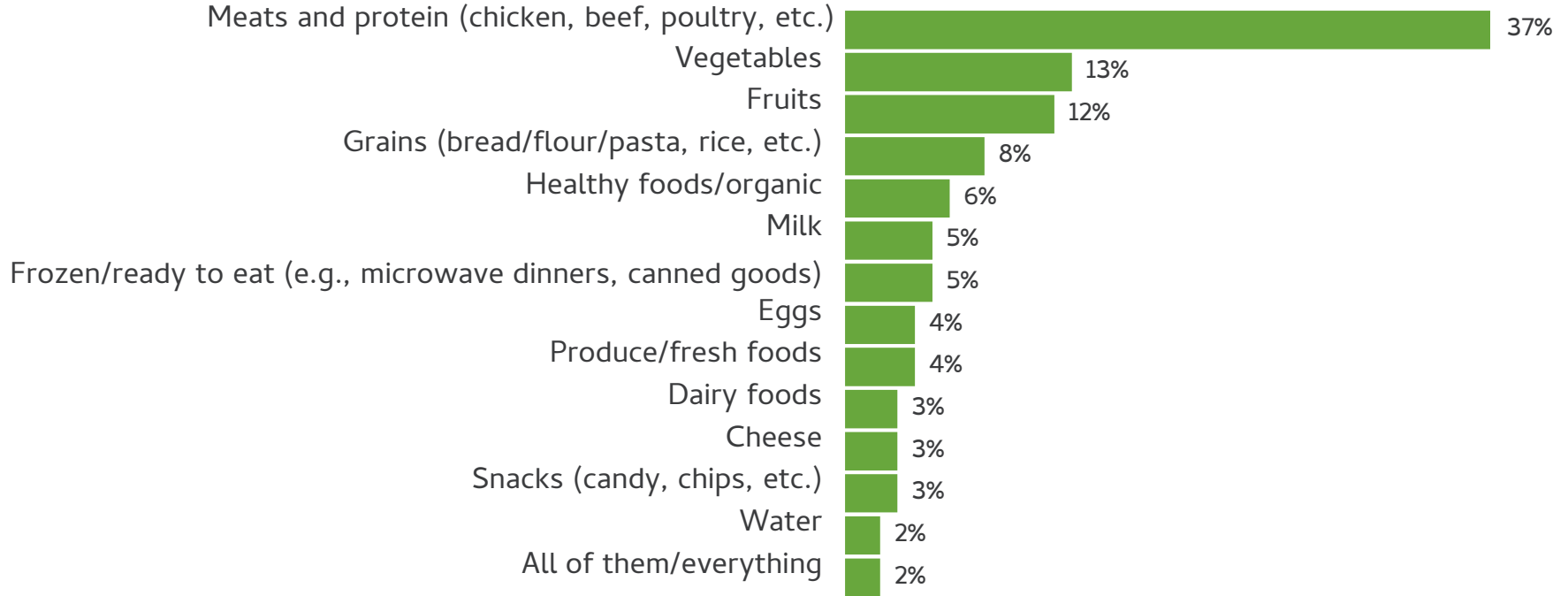
In general, how often are you able to purchase the foods you and your family need and want?



Meat and proteins were seen as the hardest foods to obtain.

Which foods are hardest for you to get?

(Asked of Those Who Get Preferred Foods Sometimes/Rarely/Never, N=332)



With the exception of high food prices, Latino and African Americans tend to face all other challenges more frequently than others do.

Total Challenge by Race/Ethnicity

Challenge	All Resp.	Whites	Latinos	African Americans	Asians/Pacific Islanders	All People of Color
High food prices	79%	80%	79%	81%	75%	79%
Not enough or inconsistent income	66%	62%	70%	71%	64%	69%
Not enough social supports and benefits, including CalFresh, EBT, SNAP, or WIC benefits	50%	43%	57%	66%	43%	55%
A lack of a car or personal vehicle	40%	31%	48%	55%	36%	46%
A lack of public transportation	36%	29%	42%	45%	38%	41%
A lack of stores near where you live	36%	29%	42%	50%	31%	41%
Language or cultural barriers preventing you from getting the food you want	26%	15%	34%	38%	33%	33%



Q20. 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.

Transportation barriers are greatest in LA County and in the Central Valley.

Total Challenge by Region

Challenge	All Resp.	Los Angeles County	Counties Surrounding Los Angeles	Bay Area	San Diego	Sacramento/ Rural North	Central Valley/ Central Coast
High food prices	79%	80%	78%	80%	75%	79%	82%
Not enough or inconsistent income	66%	70%	65%	65%	59%	66%	68%
Not enough social supports and benefits, including CalFresh, EBT, SNAP, or WIC benefits	50%	57%	42%	56%	41%	46%	51%
A lack of a car or personal vehicle	40%	49%	31%	40%	29%	30%	48%
A lack of public transportation	36%	42%	30%	34%	29%	31%	42%
A lack of stores near where you live	36%	40%	28%	41%	31%	37%	41%
Language or cultural barriers preventing you from getting the food you want	26%	31%	17%	29%	21%	20%	33%



Q20. 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.

Parents experience these challenges more acutely than non-parents.

Total Challenge by Age and Parenthood

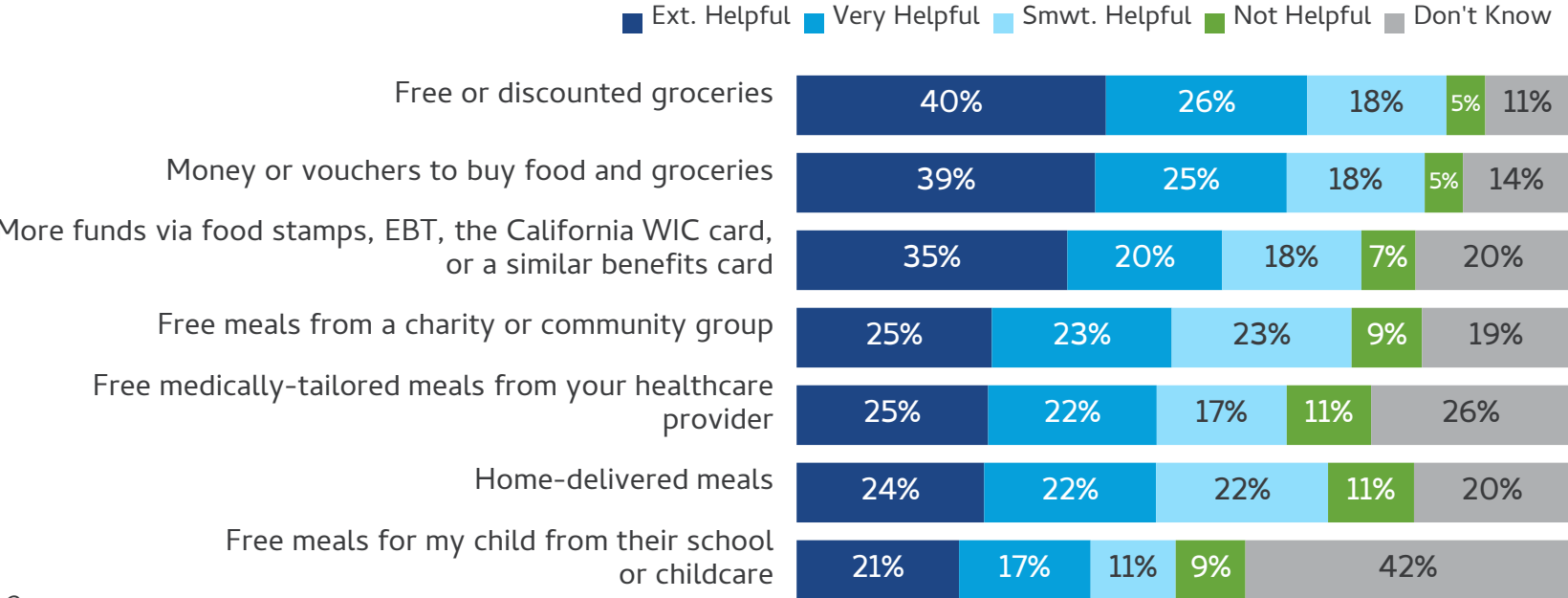
Challenge	All Resp.	Ages 18-39	Ages 40+	Non-Parents	All Parents
High food prices	79%	77%	81%	76%	84%
Not enough or inconsistent income	66%	70%	62%	63%	72%
Not enough social supports and benefits, including CalFresh, EBT, SNAP, or WIC benefits	50%	57%	42%	45%	59%
A lack of a car or personal vehicle	40%	51%	28%	37%	44%
A lack of public transportation	36%	46%	25%	33%	41%
A lack of stores near where you live	36%	44%	28%	32%	44%
Language or cultural barriers preventing you from getting the food you want	26%	36%	15%	23%	31%



Q20. 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.

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.



Respondents of color, in general, were more likely to find these resources helpful than were white respondents.

Extremely/Very Helpful by Race/Ethnicity

Assistance	All Resp.	Whites	Latinos	African Americans	Asians/Pacific Islanders	All People of Color
Free or discounted groceries	66%	58%	71%	77%	63%	71%
Money or vouchers to buy food and groceries	63%	55%	70%	72%	64%	70%
More funds via food stamps, EBT, the California WIC card, or a similar benefits card	55%	49%	62%	63%	51%	59%
Free meals from a charity or community group	48%	39%	59%	49%	49%	55%
Free medically-tailored meals from your healthcare provider	47%	36%	56%	59%	47%	54%
Home-delivered meals	46%	36%	56%	50%	52%	54%
Free meals for my child from their school or childcare	38%	22%	55%	42%	42%	49%



Q22. 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.

Having more funds for food is highly valued by parents.

Extremely/Very Helpful by Age & Parenthood

Assistance	All Resp.	Ages 18-39	Ages 40+	Non-Parents	All Parents
Free or discounted groceries	66%	69%	62%	63%	71%
Money or vouchers to buy food and groceries	63%	66%	60%	60%	69%
More funds via food stamps, EBT, the California WIC card, or a similar benefits card	55%	59%	50%	49%	66%
Free meals from a charity or community group	48%	55%	41%	44%	57%
Free medically-tailored meals from your healthcare provider	47%	55%	38%	43%	53%
Home-delivered meals	46%	54%	38%	44%	50%
Free meals for my child from their school or childcare	38%	51%	23%	27%	56%



Q22

The age gap in helpfulness was closest among Latinos, whereas among other ethnic groups, younger respondents tended to find the assistance most helpful; those with larger households, regardless of income were more likely to value these types of assistance than were others.



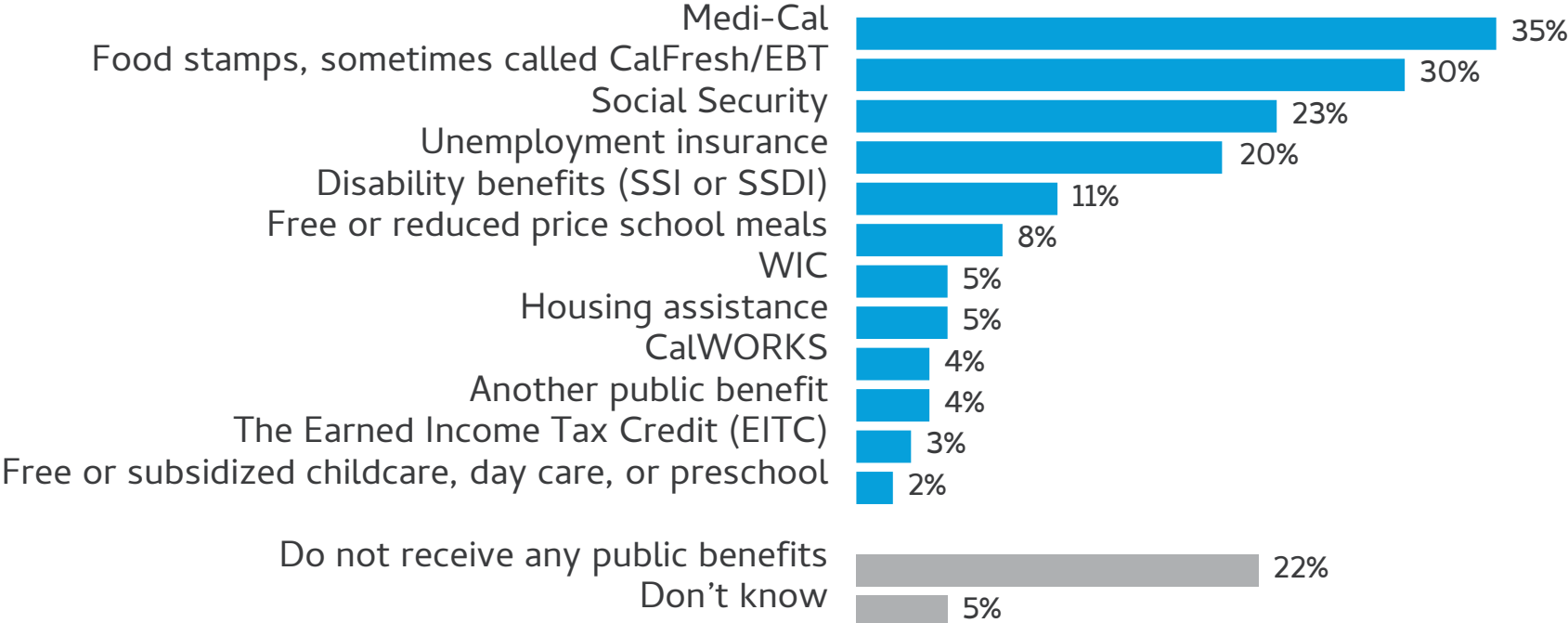
Experiences with Public Benefits

Findings from the online survey and focus groups



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

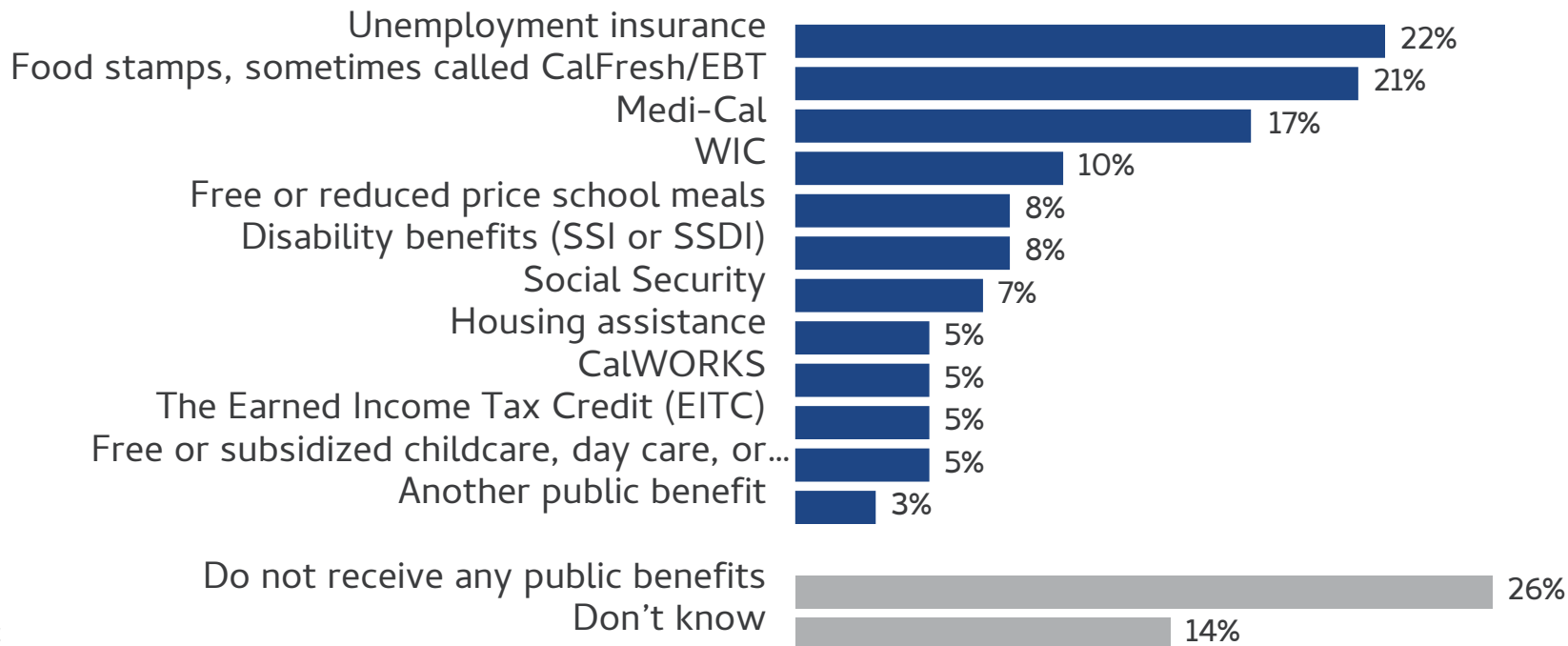
*Please indicate which of the following benefits, if any, your household currently receives.
(Multiple Responses Accepted)*



Unemployment and CalFresh were the benefits most-commonly received in the past.

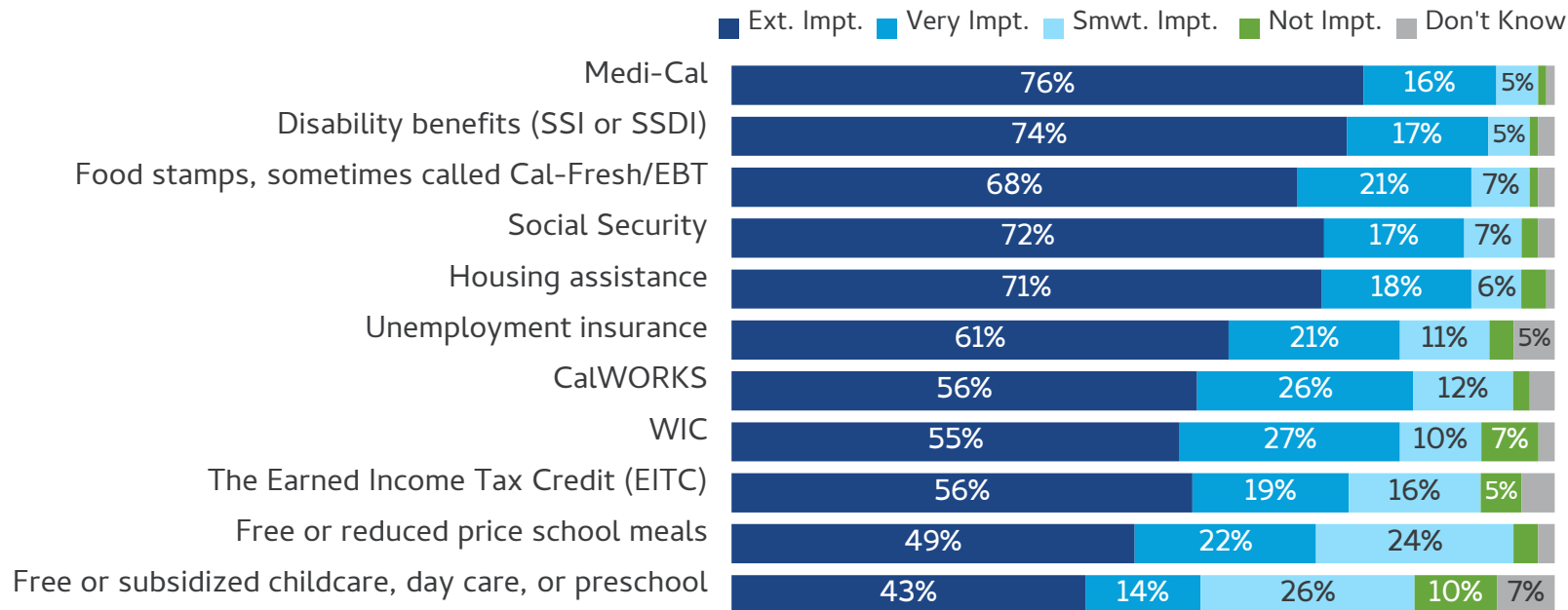
Please indicate which of the following benefits your household has received in the past, but no longer receives:

(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)



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.
- In terms of how long the benefit lasts, 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, strict 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.



Focus group participants were asked about several changes that had been introduced since the start of the pandemic.

- Pandemic EBT provided food benefits to families with children who are eligible for free and reduced school meals.
- The government introduced new rules making it easier to apply for CalFresh/EBT by removing requirements like mandatory interviews and physically signing the application.
- CalFresh offices were closed and all services were provided over the phone and online.
- Check-in reports for those already receiving CalFresh benefits were delayed and pushed back.
- The requirement that new CalFresh applicants be interviewed by a County worker was suspended.
- CalFresh/EBT provided extra benefits, also called emergency allotments, increasing the amount of benefit for recipients who are not already receiving the maximum amount.
- Waived in-person requirements for the WIC application process and WIC appointments.
- Allowing online food purchasing using CalFresh/EBT at Albertsons, Amazon, Safeway, Vons, and Walmart.



Pandemic EBT and the CalFresh 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.



Many participants were eligible for other public benefits.

1. Stimulus payment

- Virtually all participants had received the pandemic cash stimulus payment from the government.
- It was seen as extremely helpful: they used it to pay rent, buy food, make car payments, treat their children, and to save up.
- Many noted another would be welcomed.

2. EITC

- While it is likely most participants received the EITC, only participants in the older adults focus group recognized it.
- They noted that having earned less this year, their tax credit would also be impacted.

3. SSI

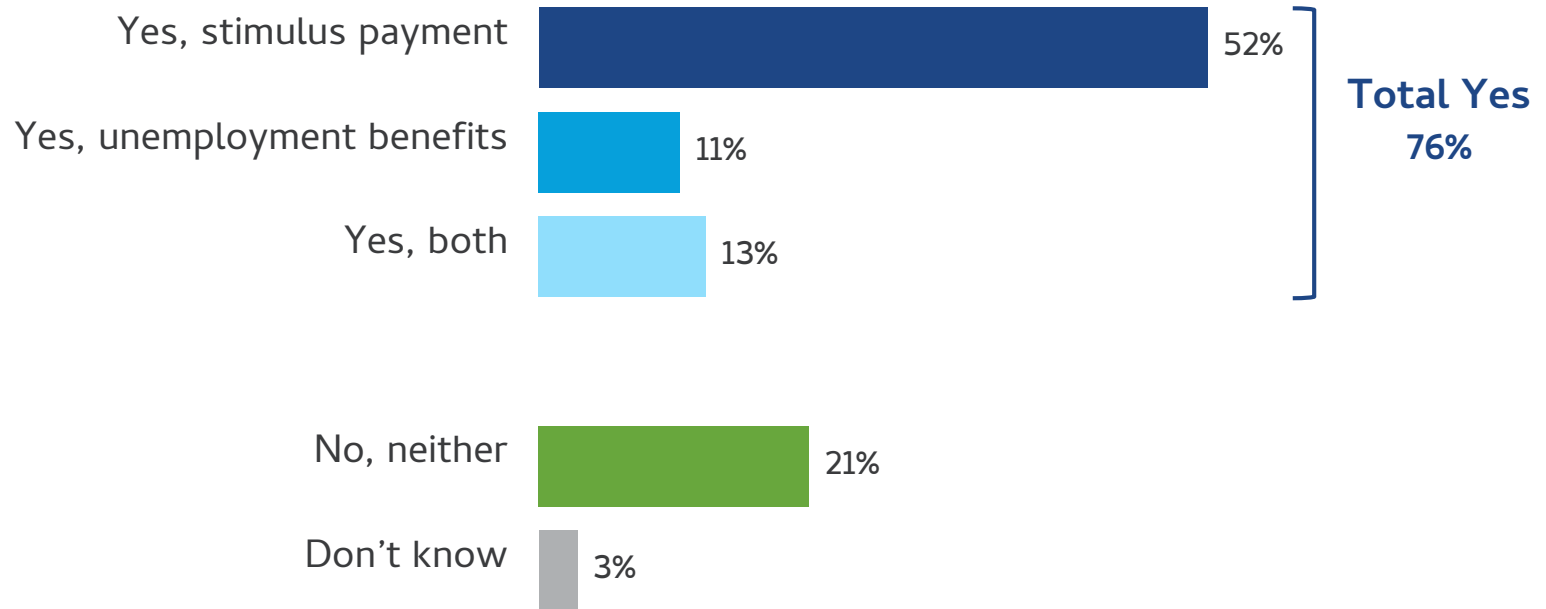
- One of the participants in the older adults group was on SSI but mentioned that it had negatively impacted her CalFresh benefits recently.

English-Speaking Parents Group: I was at Walmart at the time [the stimulus arrived]. I think I had \$80 on my debit card and I trying to purchase a certain amount of stuff, and I didn't know when that check was going to hit my account, I was thinking that it was going to take a little longer but it just shows up in my account. So I was able to get more than I needed.



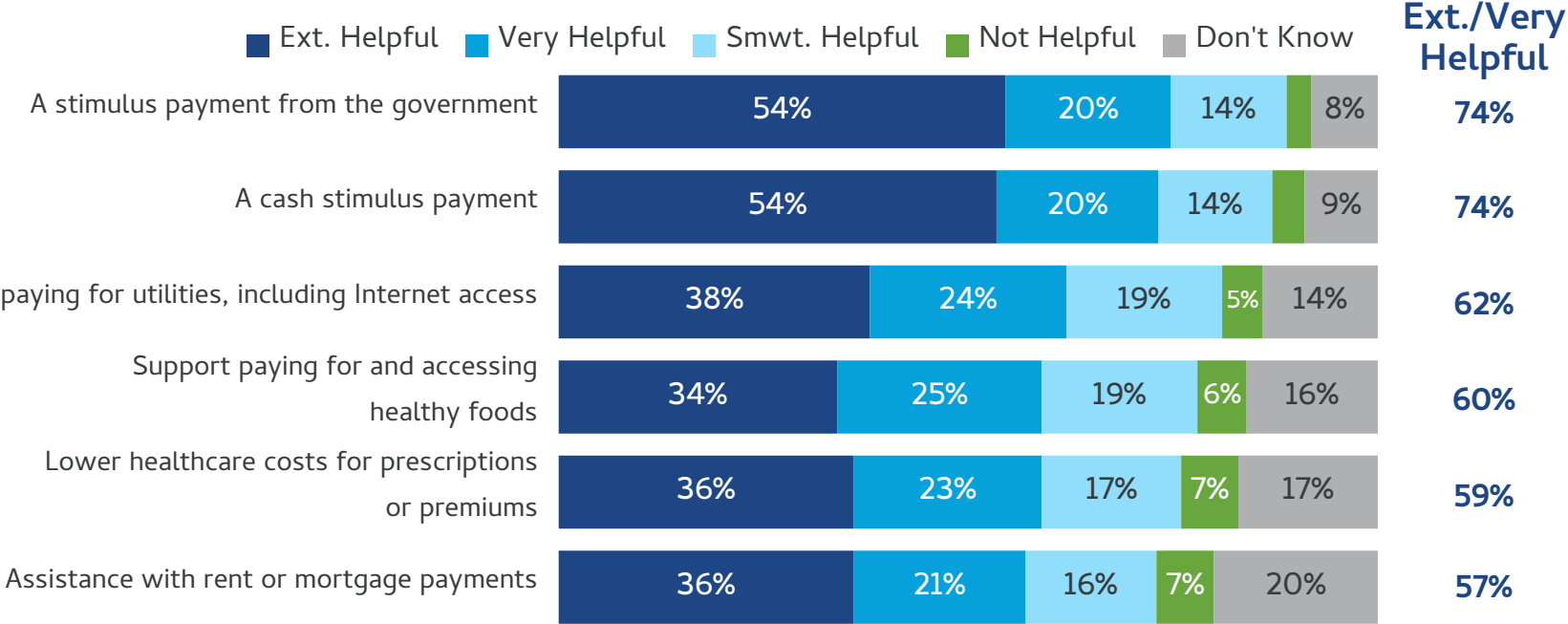
Three-quarters of respondents had received the stimulus payment or unemployment (or both) during the pandemic.

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



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.



A stimulus payment was the single most important benefit across all demographic groups in the survey.

Demographic differences include:

- 65% of parents with a child under 5 would find affordable childcare or preschool extremely or very helpful;
- Women were more likely than men to say it'd be helpful to have support accessing healthy foods (64% compared to 56%);
- Those who have worried about running out of food or money to pay for food and those who rely on CalFresh or WIC were more likely to find all forms of assistance more helpful than others were;
- Half of renters said eviction protections would be helpful, but so did one-third of homeowners;
- Assistance with rent was more important to Latinos and African Americans than other ethnic groups; Latinos 50 and over were especially likely to say this would be helpful; and
- Those with larger households, regardless of income, were especially likely to say changing income eligibility would be helpful.

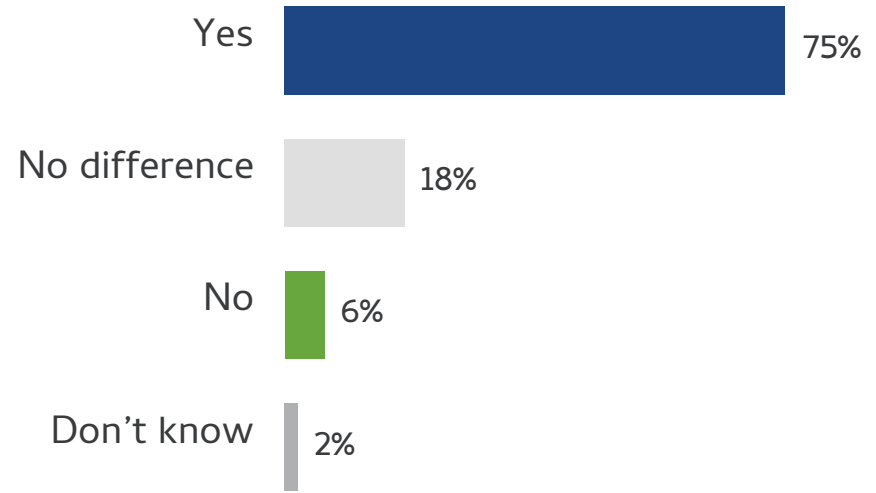
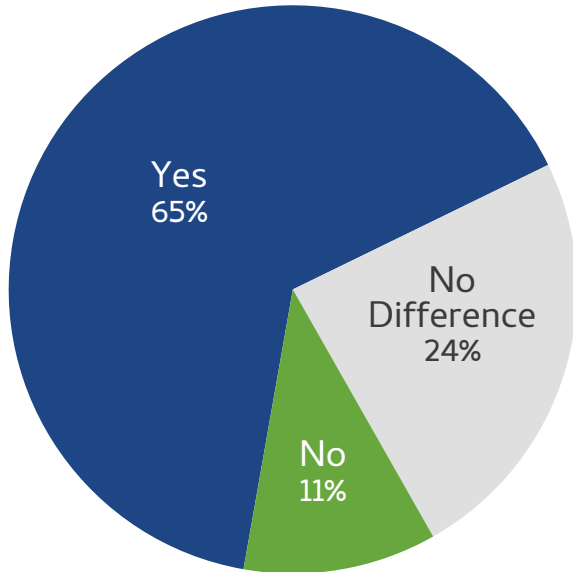


Half of respondents received additional CalFresh funds during the pandemic; those who received the extra funds found them valuable.

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

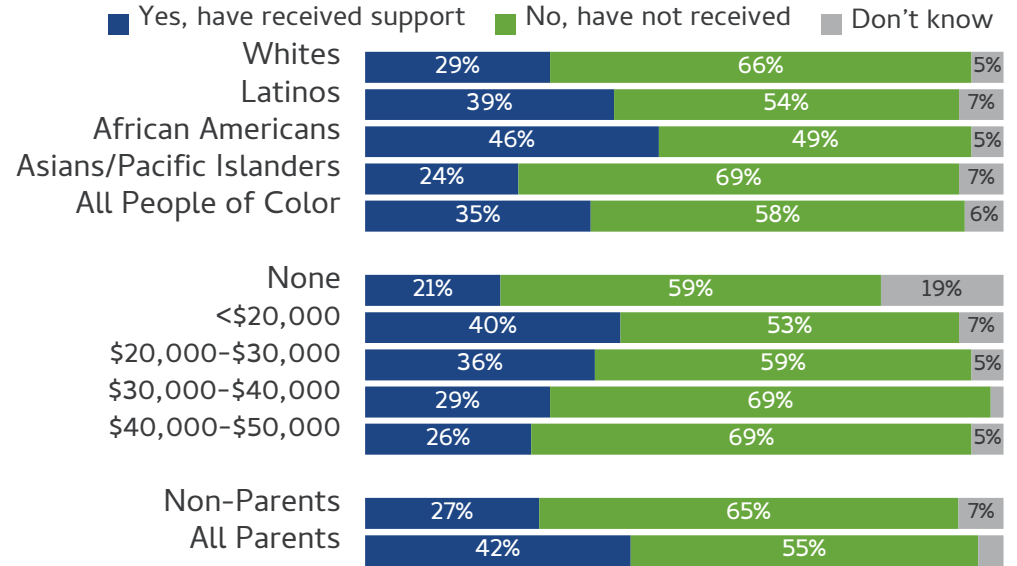
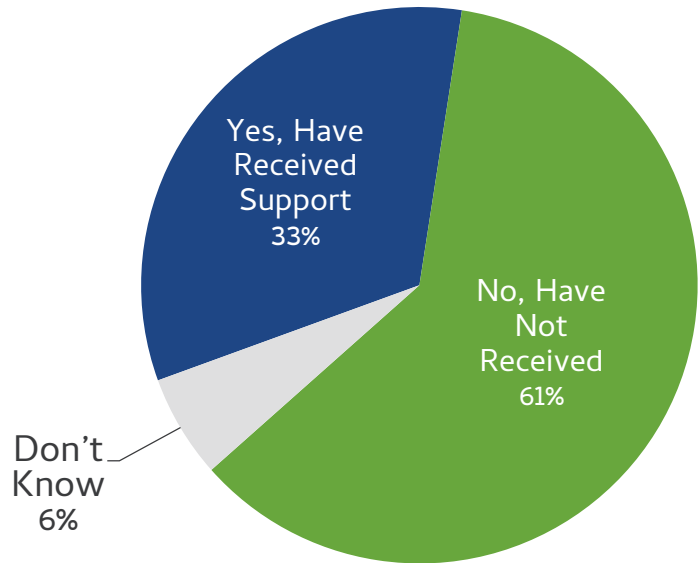
Did these additional funds allow you to purchase more food and/or a greater variety of foods than you normally could?

(Asked of Those Who Received Additional CalFresh Funds)



One-third have received support from a non-governmental organization.

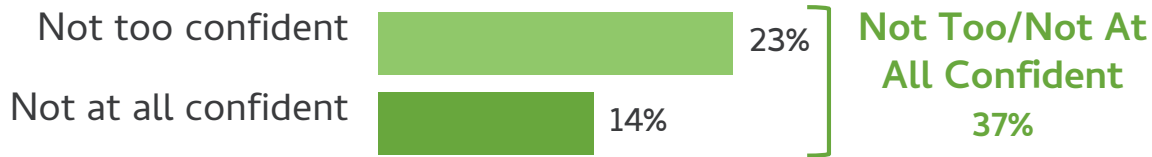
Within the last year have you received support in meeting your basic needs like food, housing, or basic income from a local nonprofit, church, or private organization outside of government?



Those living in larger households, with children under age 12 and under age 40 were all more likely than others to have received non-governmental support.

A majority felt confident they'd know where to turn if they needed help.

How confident are you that if you needed help from the government, a nonprofit, or a private organization to support yourself and/or your family right now, you would know where to turn?



Those least confident about where to turn are:

- Without income
- Men ages 40 and over
- In Sacramento and the Rural North region
- Ages 50 and over
- Asian/Pacific Islanders





Experiences with Natural Disasters

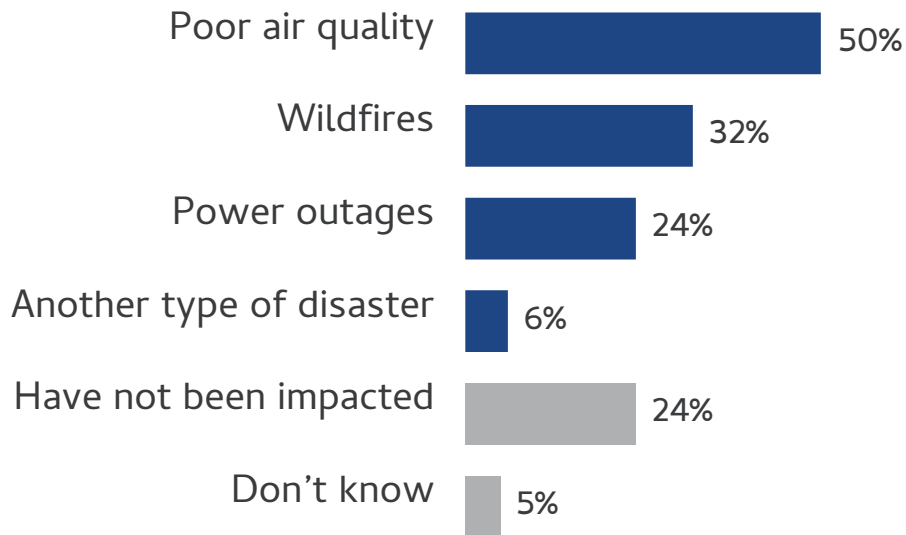
Findings from the online survey and focus groups



One-third of those impacted by a natural disaster had difficulty accessing food during that time.

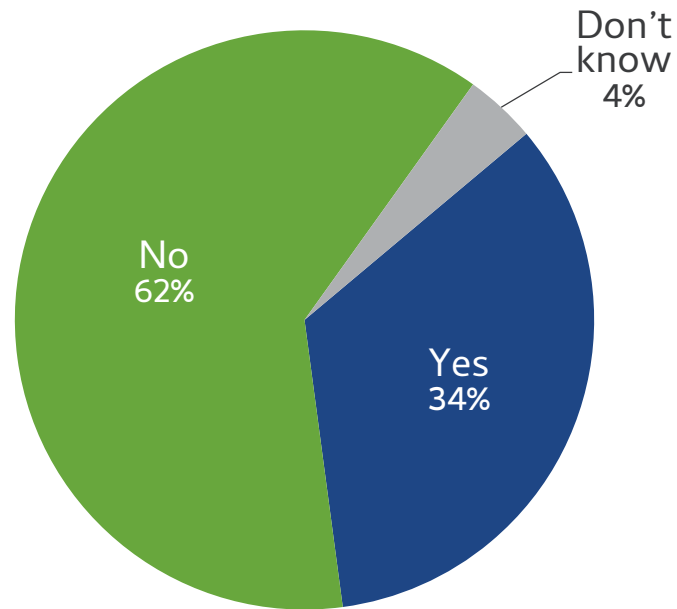
Have you been recently impacted by poor air quality, power outages, wildfires, or another type of natural disaster?

(Multiple Responses Accepted)



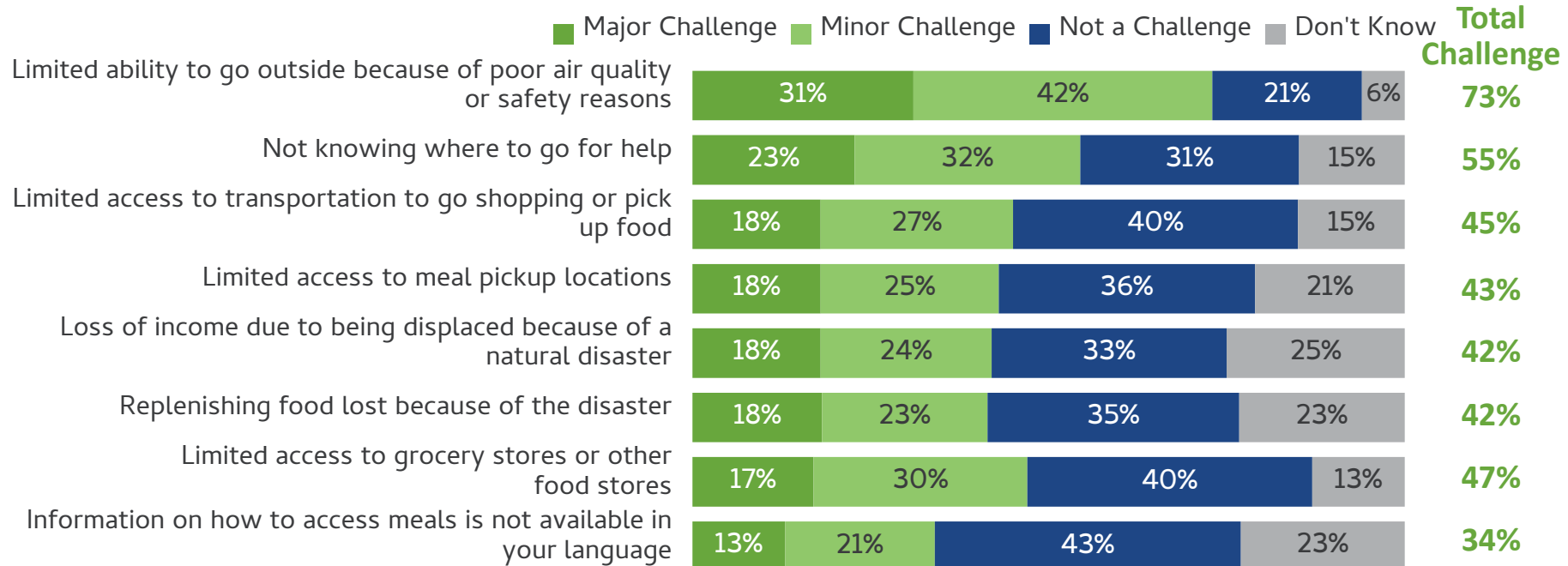
During these natural disasters have you experienced any challenges in accessing enough fresh healthy food for you and your family?

(Multiple Responses Accepted)



Limited ability to go outside was the biggest impact of recent natural disasters.

Here is a list of challenges some people may experience in accessing food during or after a natural disaster. Please indicate if this has been a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you and your family in accessing food during a recent natural disaster.



Limited transportation and access to stores impacted Black respondents the most.

Total Challenge by Race/Ethnicity

Challenge	All Resp.	Whites	Latinos	African Americans	Asians/Pacific Islanders	All People of Color
Limited ability to go outside because of poor air quality or safety reasons	73%	69%	74%	78%	75%	76%
Not knowing where to go for help	55%	48%	58%	73%	59%	60%
Limited access to grocery stores or other food stores	47%	38%	54%	66%	44%	53%
Limited access to transportation to go shopping or pick up food	45%	35%	49%	70%	48%	51%
Limited access to meal pickup locations	43%	32%	53%	53%	44%	50%
Loss of income due to being displaced because of a natural disaster	42%	29%	51%	58%	50%	50%
Replenishing food lost because of the disaster	42%	31%	50%	56%	47%	49%
Information on how to access meals is not available in your language	34%	20%	44%	49%	40%	43%



Q25. Here is a list of challenges some people may experience in accessing food during or after a natural disaster. Please indicate if this has been a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you and your family in accessing food during a recent natural disaster.

Respondents in the greater LA Area were less impacted than those elsewhere in the state.

Total Challenge by Region

Challenge	All Resp.	Los Angeles County	Counties Surrounding Los Angeles	Bay Area	San Diego	Sacramento/Rural North	Central Valley/Central Coast
Limited ability to go outside because of poor air quality or safety reasons	73%	70%	67%	77%	76%	79%	78%
Not knowing where to go for help	55%	62%	47%	56%	58%	53%	50%
Limited access to grocery stores or other food stores	47%	54%	36%	45%	57%	46%	47%
Limited access to transportation to go shopping or pick up food	45%	51%	36%	50%	52%	35%	46%
Limited access to meal pickup locations	43%	49%	35%	42%	49%	42%	41%
Loss of income due to being displaced because of a natural disaster	42%	48%	32%	41%	56%	37%	43%
Replenishing food lost because of the disaster	42%	48%	29%	46%	51%	40%	42%
Information on how to access meals is not available in your language	34%	43%	26%	34%	44%	22%	31%



Q25. Here is a list of challenges some people may experience in accessing food during or after a natural disaster. Please indicate if this has been a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you and your family in accessing food during a recent natural disaster.

Younger respondents were more likely to face many of the challenges that arose from natural disasters.

Total Challenge by Age & Parenthood

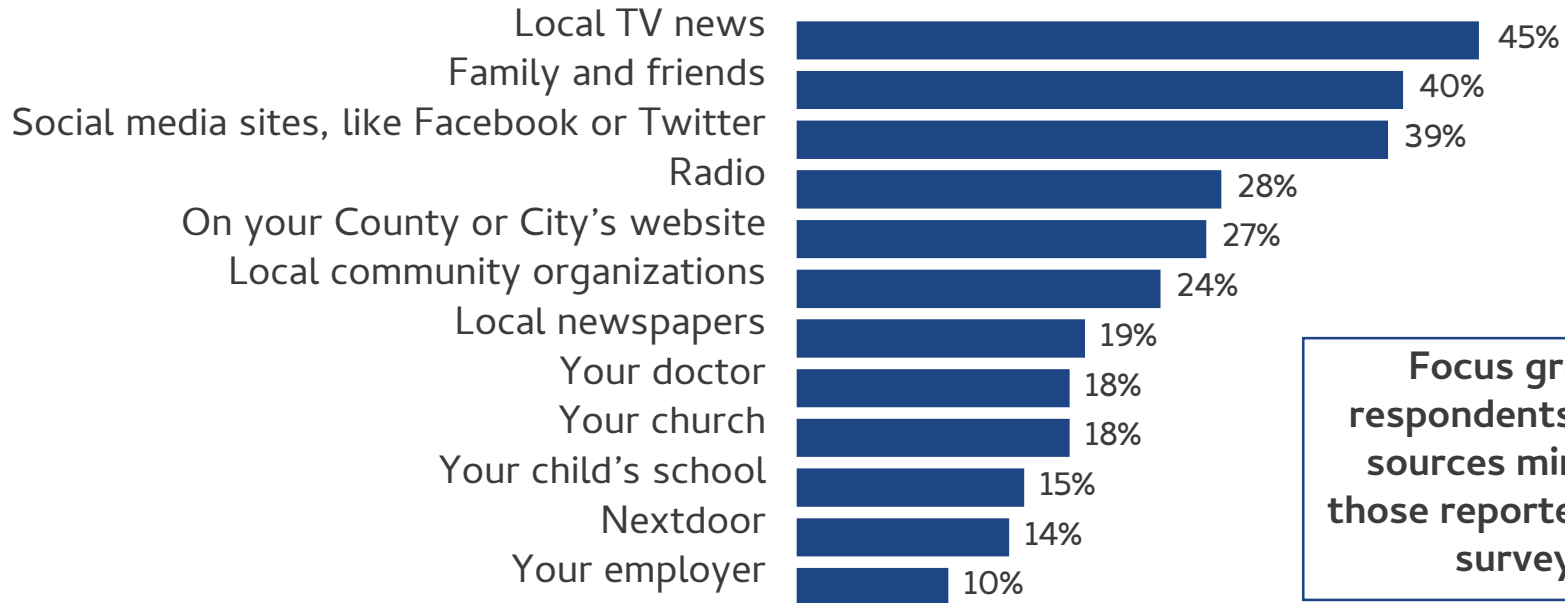
Challenge	All Resp.	Ages 18-39	Ages 40+	Non-Parents	All Parents
Limited ability to go outside because of poor air quality or safety reasons	73%	77%	70%	72%	76%
Not knowing where to go for help	55%	61%	48%	52%	59%
Limited access to grocery stores or other food stores	47%	55%	38%	43%	54%
Limited access to transportation to go shopping or pick up food	45%	55%	33%	42%	50%
Limited access to meal pickup locations	43%	52%	32%	40%	48%
Loss of income due to being displaced because of a natural disaster	42%	54%	27%	37%	49%
Replenishing food lost because of the disaster	42%	50%	32%	38%	48%
Information on how to access meals is not available in your language	34%	46%	18%	29%	41%



Q25. Here is a list of challenges some people may experience in accessing food during or after a natural disaster. Please indicate if this has been a major challenge, a minor challenge, or not a challenge for you and your family in accessing food during a recent natural disaster.

Local TV news, word of mouth and social media are the top news sources on food.

Here is a list of sources where you might get information about food resources to help you meet your basic needs. Which would you prefer to use to get information on this topic: (Multiple Responses Accepted)



Focus group respondents' news sources mirrored those reported in the survey.



Social media was a common source of information among Latino and African American respondents.

By Race/Ethnicity (Multiple Responses Accepted)

News Source	All Resp.	Whites	Latinos	African Americans	Asians/Pacific Islanders	All People of Color
Local TV news	45%	43%	48%	41%	49%	47%
Family and friends	40%	40%	36%	48%	50%	40%
Social media sites, like Facebook or Twitter	39%	30%	46%	47%	37%	45%
Radio	28%	26%	32%	28%	33%	30%
On your County or City's website	27%	31%	21%	26%	36%	25%
Local community organizations	24%	25%	19%	32%	30%	24%
Local newspapers	19%	19%	19%	20%	23%	19%
Your doctor	18%	21%	16%	25%	17%	17%
Your church	18%	18%	18%	22%	14%	17%
Your child's school	15%	10%	20%	16%	16%	19%
Nextdoor	14%	14%	14%	16%	12%	14%
Your employer	10%	6%	11%	13%	16%	12%
Other	6%	7%	4%	3%	6%	6%
Don't know	9%	10%	8%	10%	10%	9%



Q47. Here is a list of sources where you might get information about food resources to help you meet your basic needs. Which would you prefer to use to get information on this topic?

Those in their 40s are most likely to rely on local TV; respondents under 40 rely heavily on social media.

By Age (Multiple Responses Accepted)

News Source	All Respondents	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50+
Local TV news	45%	43%	53%	45%
Family and friends	40%	42%	37%	38%
Social media sites, like Facebook or Twitter	39%	51%	35%	23%
Radio	28%	33%	27%	22%
On your County or City's website	27%	24%	31%	32%
Local community organizations	24%	20%	26%	30%
Local newspapers	19%	18%	20%	21%
Your doctor	18%	20%	23%	15%
Your church	18%	16%	19%	19%
Your child's school	15%	20%	26%	5%
Nextdoor	14%	14%	9%	16%
Your employer	10%	14%	12%	3%
Other	6%	6%	4%	7%
Don't know	9%	8%	7%	11%



Q47. Here is a list of sources where you might get information about food resources to help you meet your basic needs. Which would you prefer to use to get information on this topic?



Challenges with Accessing CalFresh and Other Benefits

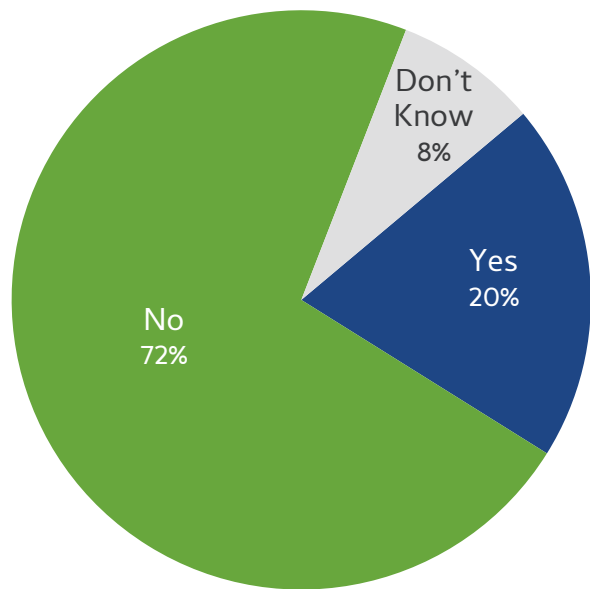
Findings from the online survey and focus groups



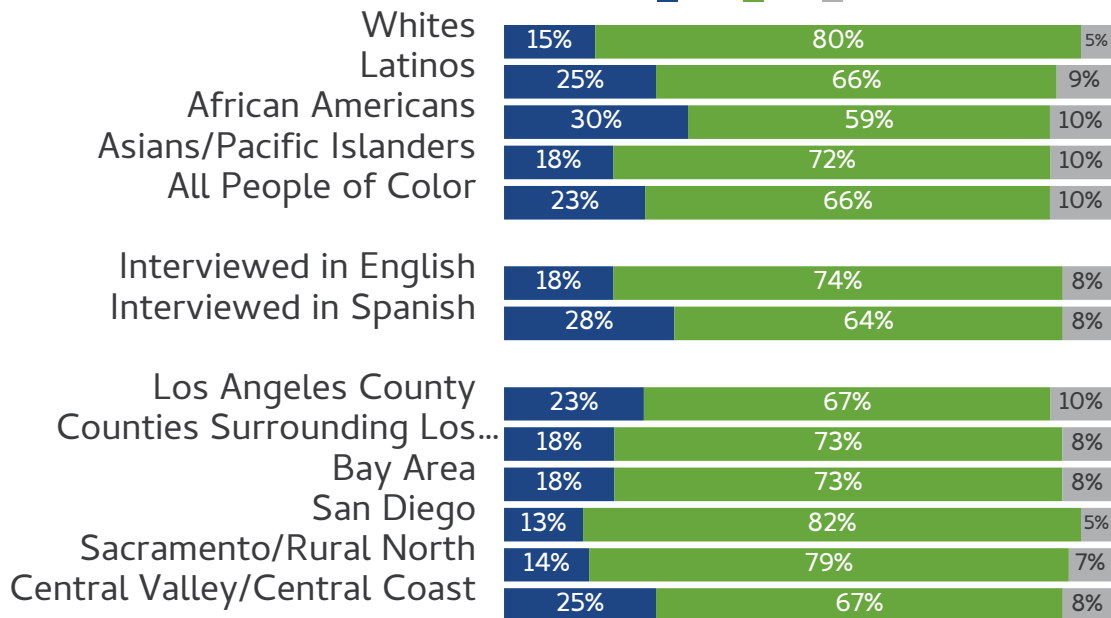
One in five say they've experienced discrimination when applying for public benefits.

Have you ever experienced racial discrimination or bias when trying to apply for support services, including CalFresh/EBT or WIC?

(Asked Only of Those Who Have Used Public Benefits)



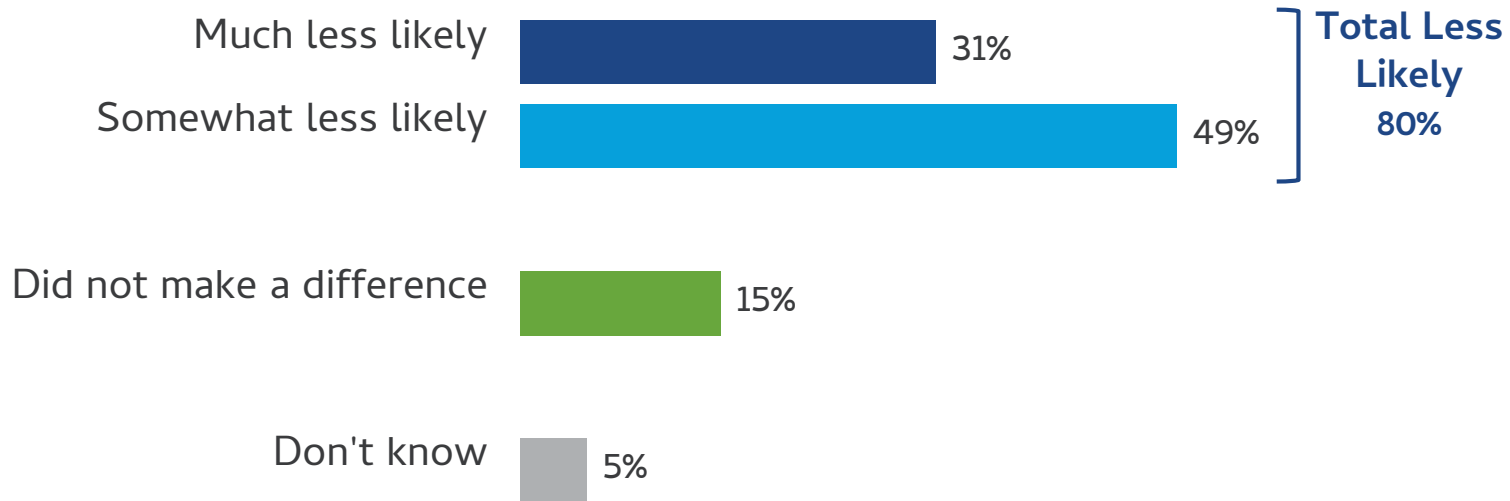
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



Those who experienced discrimination 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?

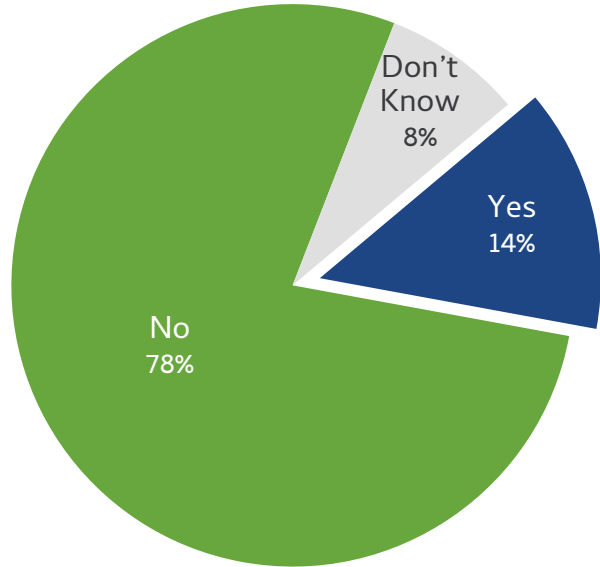
(Asked Only of Those Who Experienced Racism)



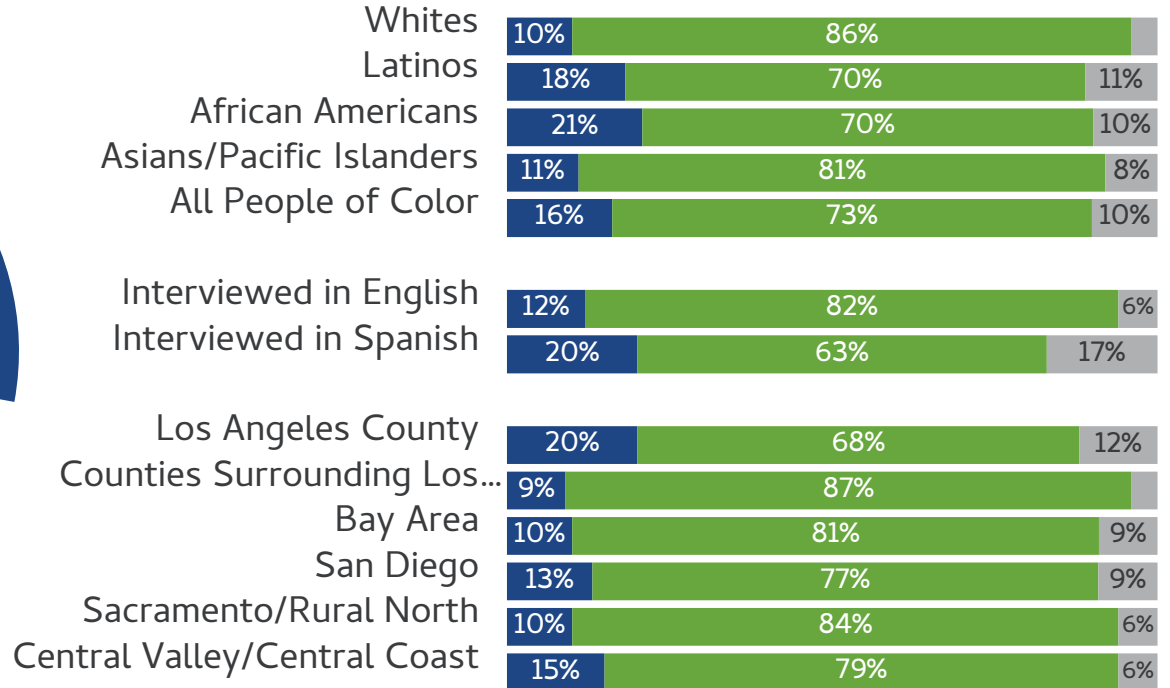
More than one in ten have experienced language barriers.

Have you ever experienced a language barrier when trying to apply for benefits and support services, including CalFresh/EBT or WIC?

(Asked Only of Those Who Have Used Public Benefits)



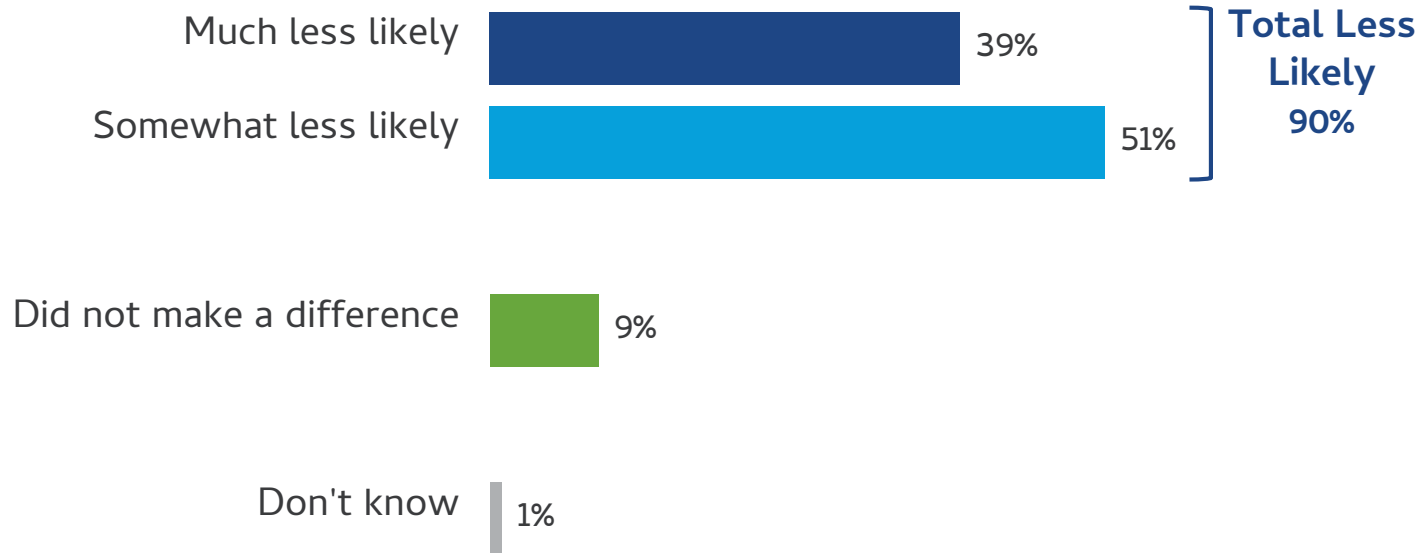
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



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)



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.

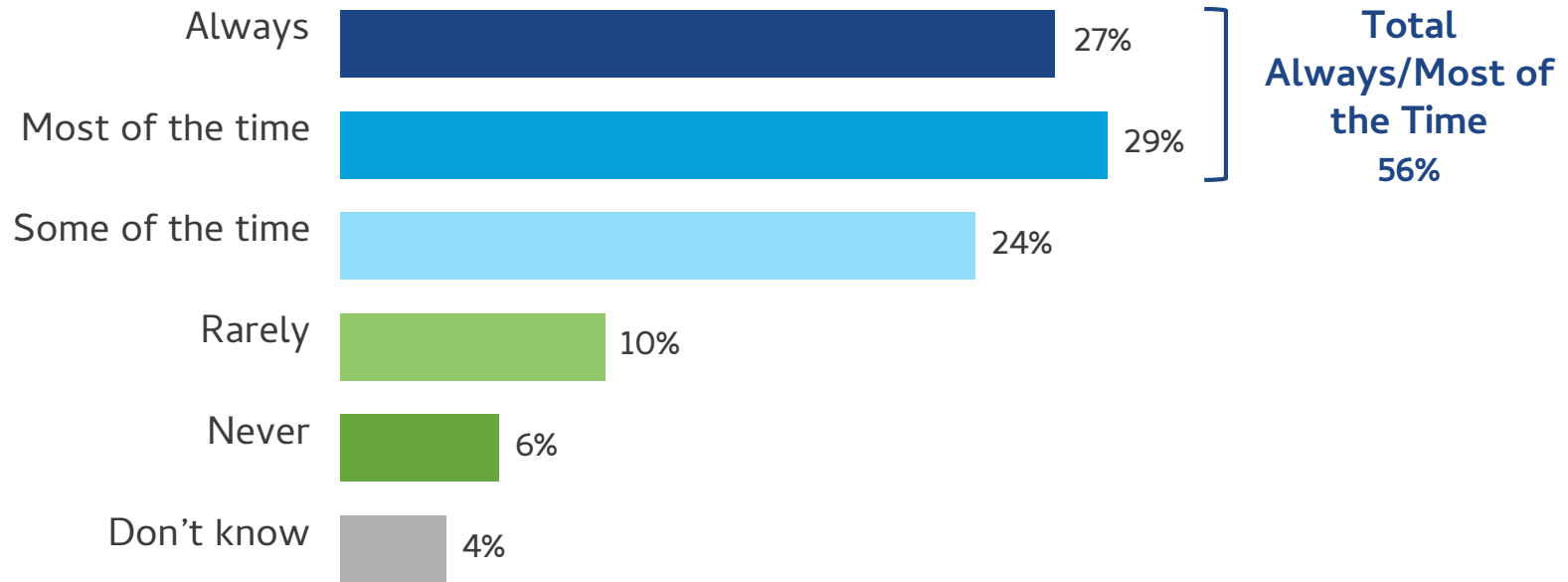
Young Adult Group: Just filling out the paperwork or just the stuff online, I think the confusing part for me was when you get all the paperwork back, there is just so much and I'm like, did I get it, did I not? So that part for me was a little more complicated and then when they call you...they didn't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

Cantonese Group: For me I think that they 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.



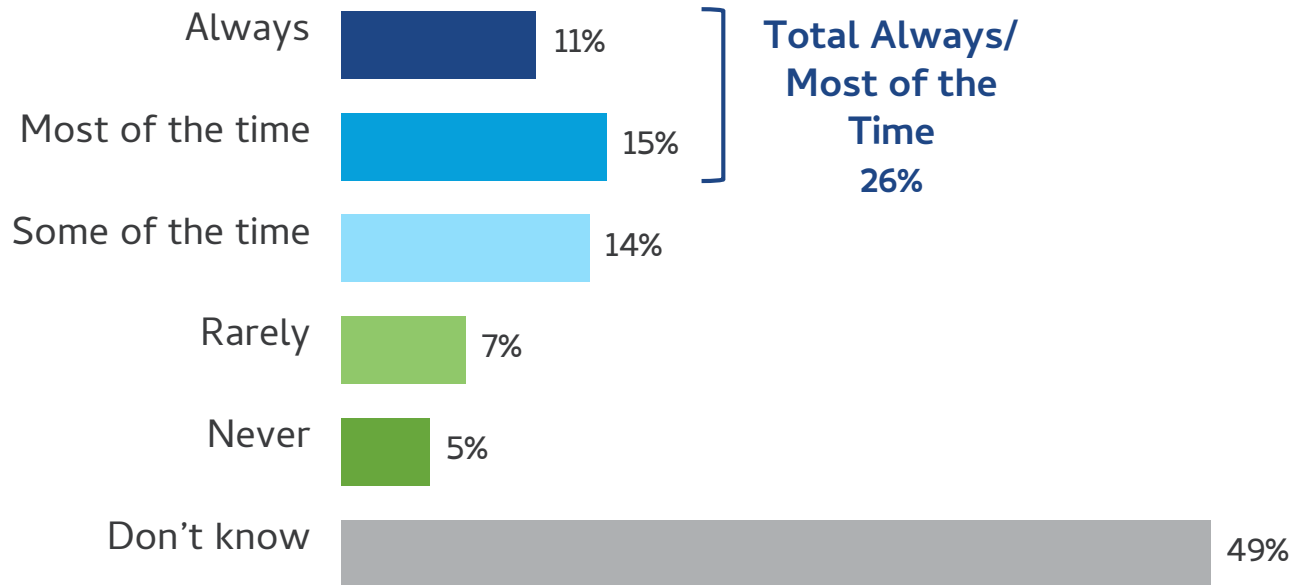
A majority routinely run out of their CalFresh benefits before the end of the month.

*How often do you run out of CalFresh/EBT benefits before the end of the month?
(Asked Only of Those Who Use CalFresh)*



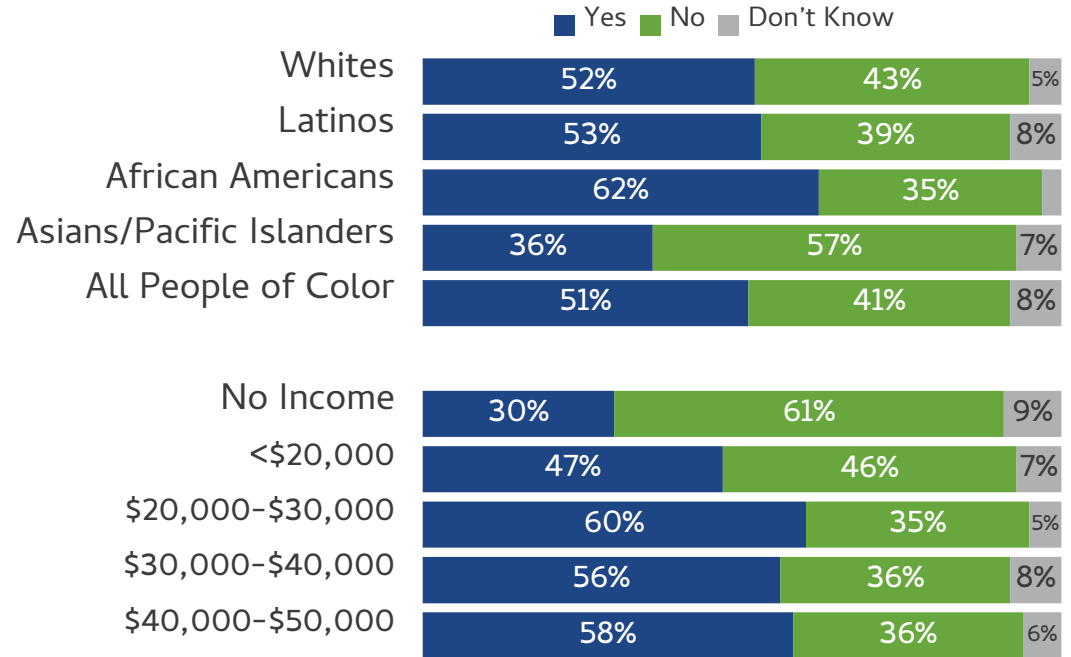
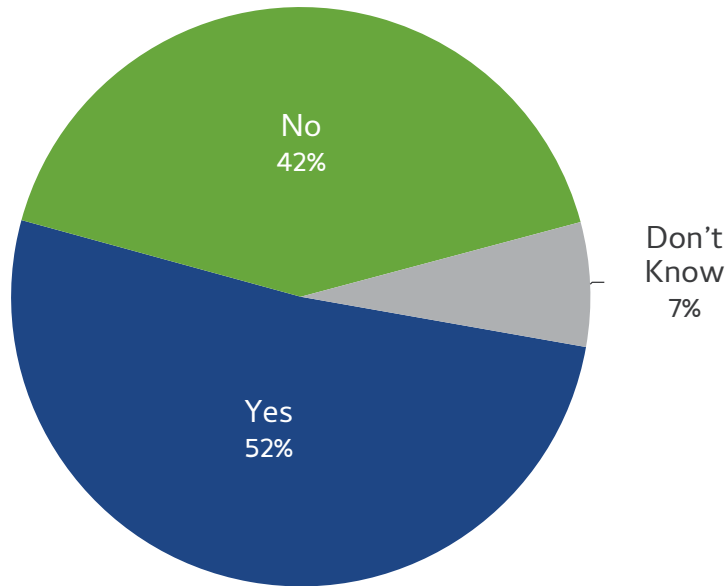
Among those who receive WIC, about one-quarter run out of benefits before the end of the month.

*How often do you run out of WIC benefits before the end of the month?
(Asked Only of Those Who Use WIC)*



Among those who receive WIC, about one-quarter run out of benefits before the end of the month.

*Have you received additional funds from CalFresh/EBT during the coronavirus pandemic?
(Asked of Those Who Use CalFresh or WIC Only)*





Experiences with Meals Served in School and Child Care

Findings from the online survey and focus groups

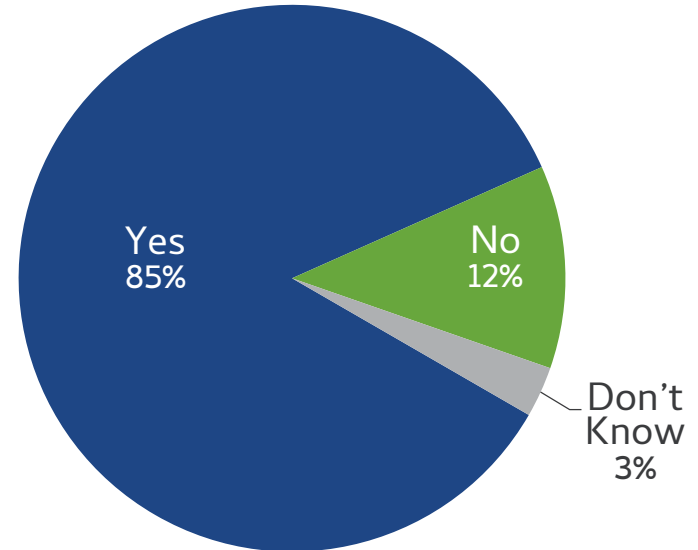
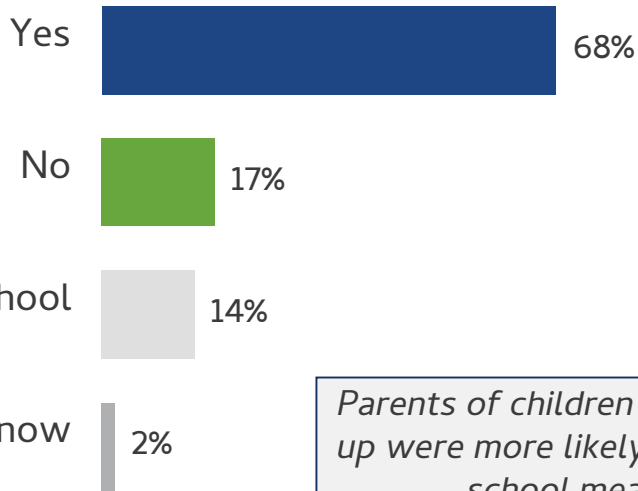


Nearly 7 in 10 parents say their children ate meals at school, preschool, or child care before the pandemic and most received free or reduced-price meals.

Before the pandemic, when school was conducted in-person, did your child eat school meals – or for younger children, did they eat meals in preschool or childcare?

Were any of the school meals your child ate at school, preschool, or childcare free or discounted?

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



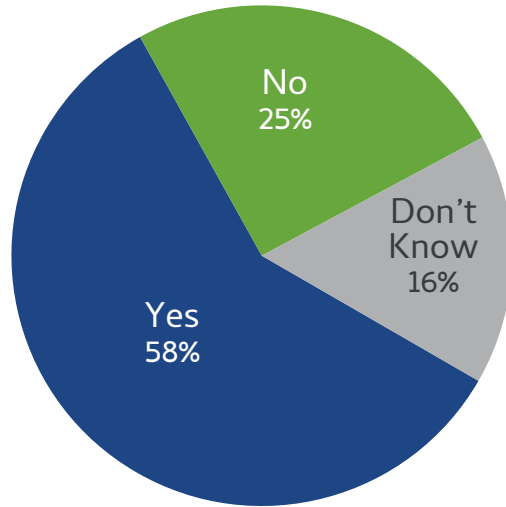
Parents of children ages 5 and up were more likely to rely on school meals.



A majority say their child's school, preschool, or child care offers out-of-school time meals and two-thirds have accessed this benefit.

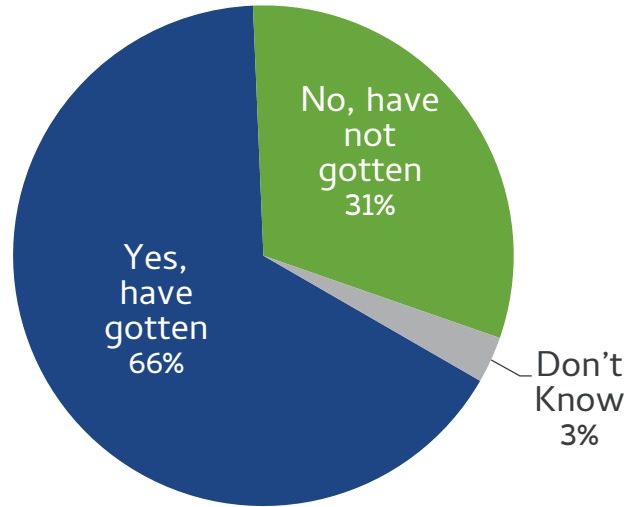
(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)

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)



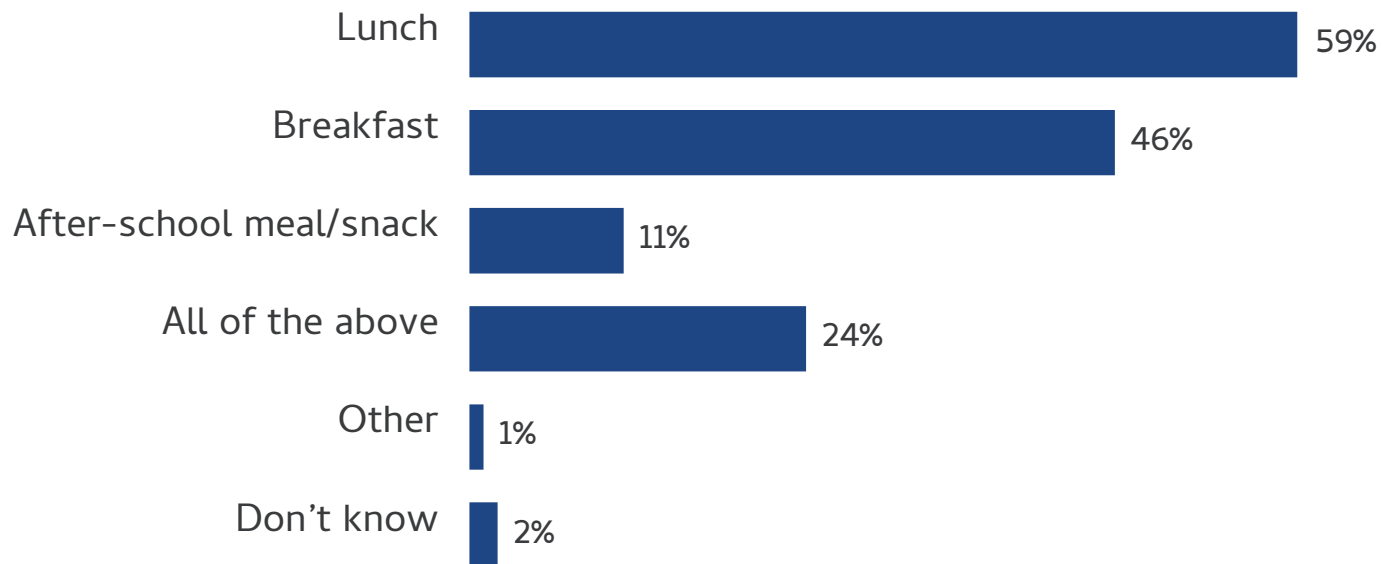
Those most likely to have gone to get the meals are:

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



Lunch was the most common free/discounted meal eaten.

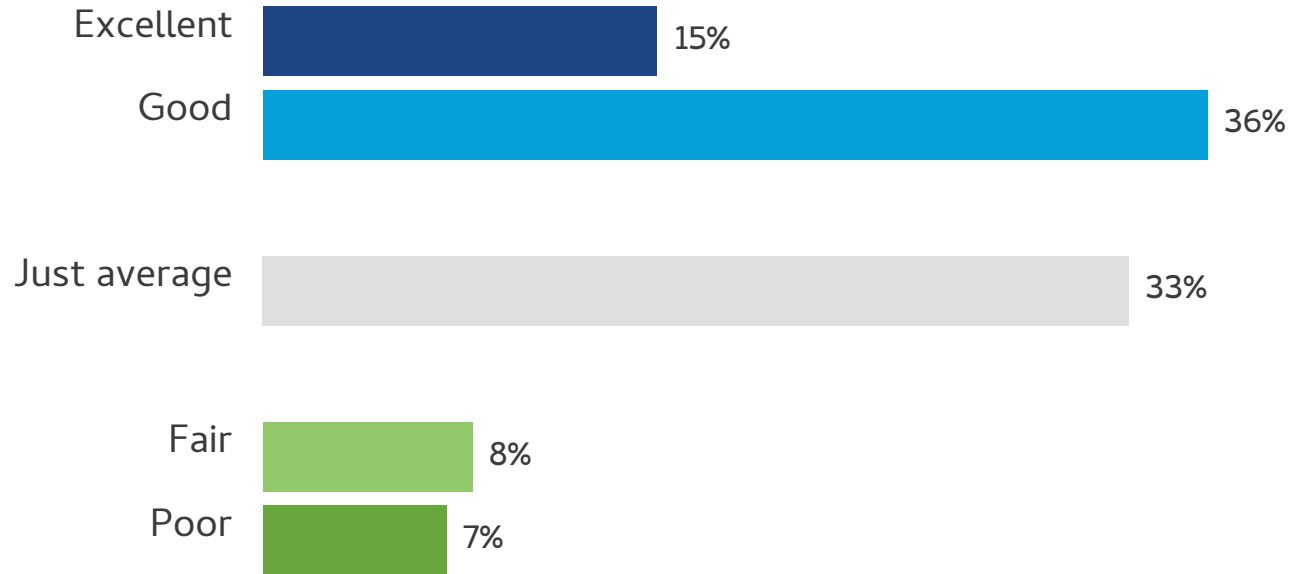
*Did your child eat free or discounted school breakfast, lunch, after-school meals or snacks?
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked Only of Those With Children Who Eat School Meals)*



Parents tend to rate school meals as “good” and “average.”

How would you rate the overall quality of the school, preschool, or childcare meals provided to your child?

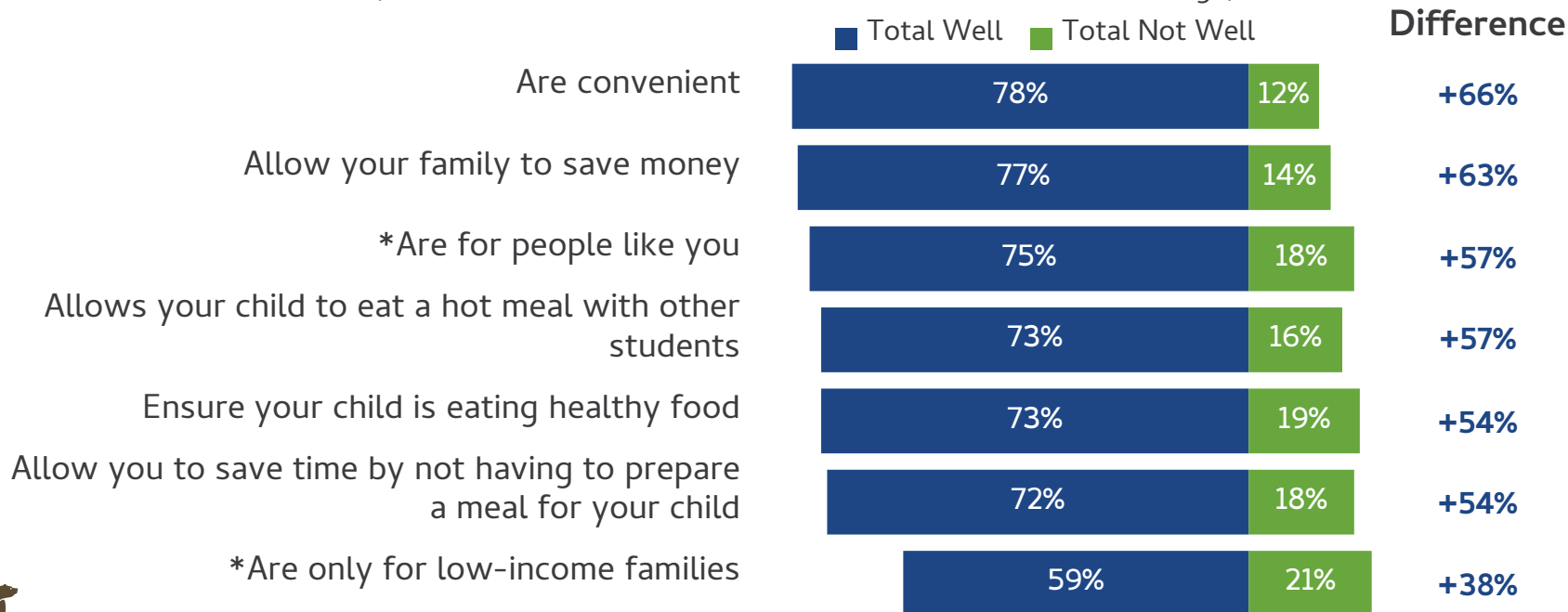
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked Only of Those With Children Who Eat School Meals)



School, preschool, and childcare 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.

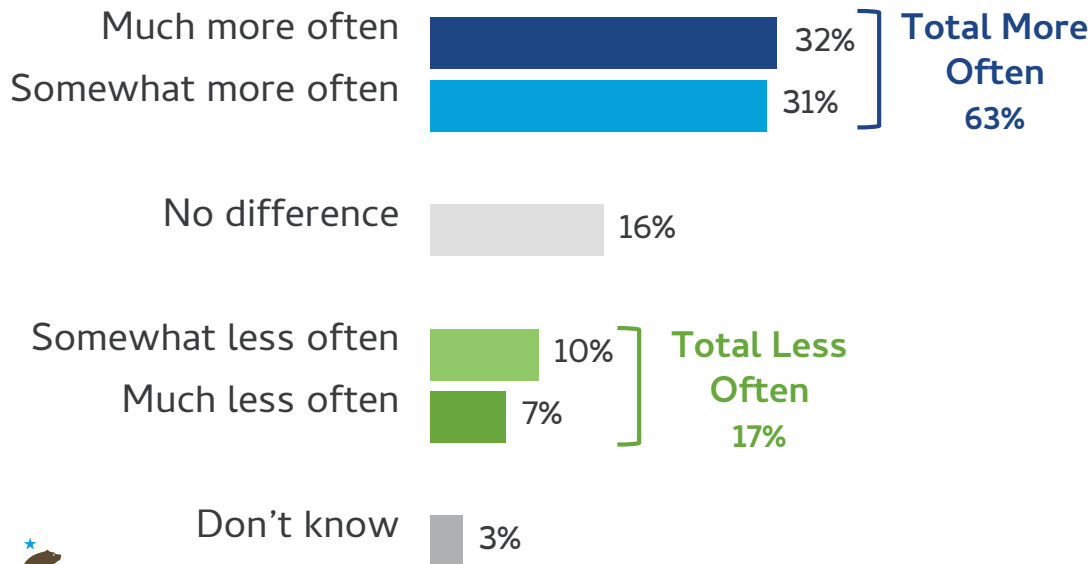
(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)



Since the pandemic started, most families report relying more often on free and discounted meals.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, does your family use those meals provided by the school, preschool, or childcare more often, less often, or has there been no difference in how often your family accesses free or discounted meals?

(Asked of Parents Whose Children's School, Preschool, or Childcare Offer Meals When Not in Session, Such as During School Breaks or the Pandemic)



Groups Most Likely to Go More Often

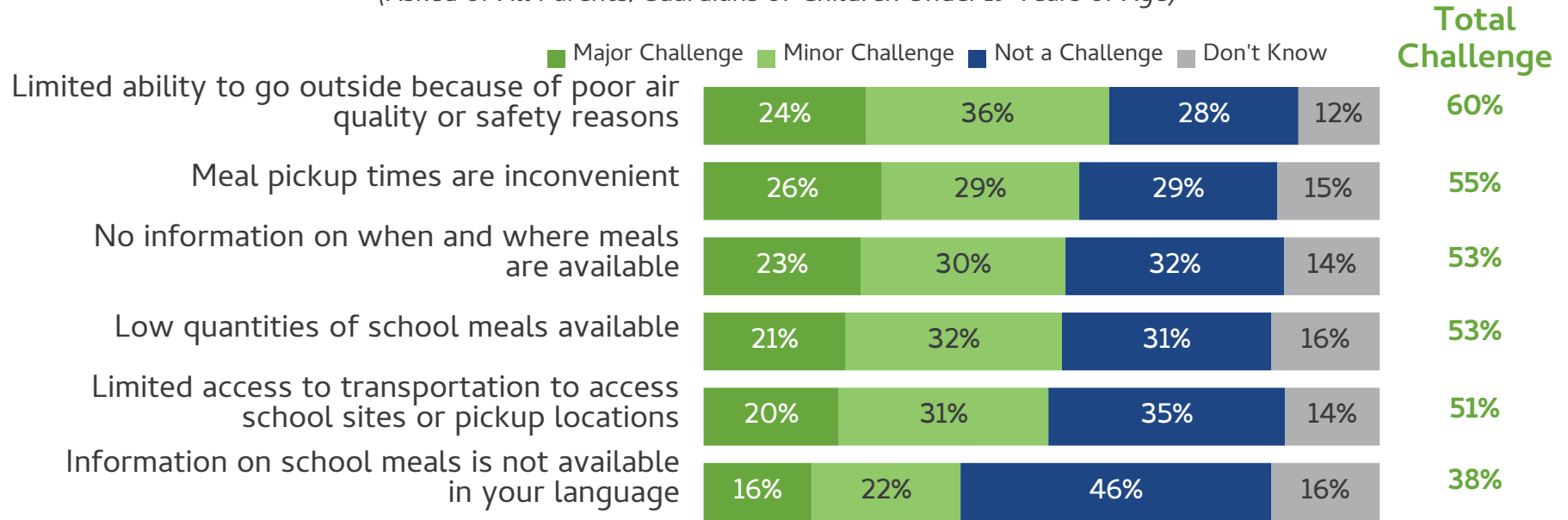
- African Americans
- Los Angeles County Residents
- Residents in Los Angeles Media Market
- Men Ages 18-39
- Non-College Educated Women
- Parents with Children <5 Years Old
- Have Government-Provided Insurance
- Ages 18-29
- Four Year of College or More
- HH Income \$20,000-\$30,000
- Homeowners



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)



White parents were more likely to say they didn't have information on meals and have limited transportation.

*Total Challenge by Race/Ethnicity
(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)*

Challenge	All Resp.	Whites	Latinos	All People of Color
Limited ability to go outside because of poor air quality or safety reasons	60%	62%	56%	59%
Meal pickup times are inconvenient	55%	55%	55%	55%
No information on when and where meals are available	53%	61%	47%	50%
Low quantities of school meals available	53%	53%	52%	53%
Limited access to transportation to access school sites or pickup locations	51%	58%	44%	48%
Information on school meals is not available in your language	38%	39%	35%	38%



Limited ability to go outside affected parents of young children the most.

*Total Challenge by Ages of Children
(Asked of All Parents/Guardians of Children Under 19 Years of Age)*

Challenge	All Resp.	<5 Years	5-12 Years	13-18 Years	19+ Years
Limited ability to go outside because of poor air quality or safety reasons	60%	69%	61%	50%	48%
Meal pickup times are inconvenient	55%	54%	58%	46%	41%
No information on when and where meals are available	53%	58%	56%	45%	34%
Low quantities of school meals available	53%	54%	55%	50%	26%
Limited access to transportation to access school sites or pickup locations	51%	49%	52%	49%	42%
Information on school meals is not available in your language	38%	43%	40%	32%	19%



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 they hadn't been impressed by the quality of the food and that their children didn't always like the food.
- Accessing 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.





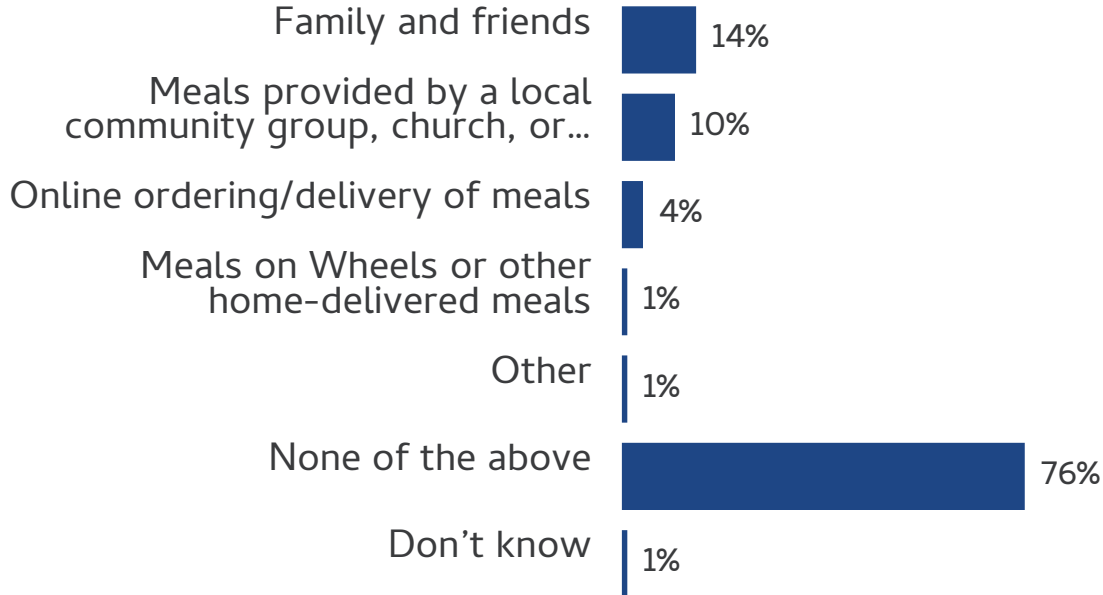
Older Adults' Experiences with Accessing Meals

Findings from the online survey and focus groups



Most older adults don't rely on extra help for meals.

*Do you rely on any of the following for meals?
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked Only of Those Ages 65 and Over)*



Those most likely to rely on extra help for meals are:

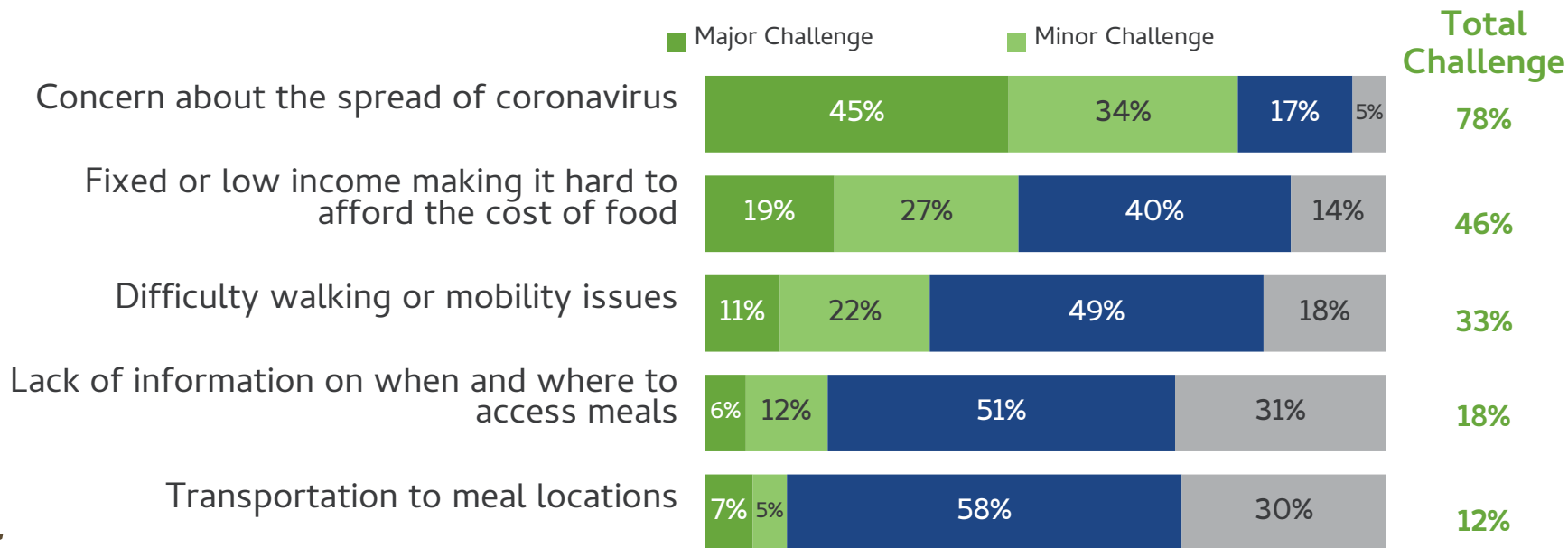
- Individuals with household with incomes under \$20,000
- Sacramento and Rural North region residents
- Immigrants
- Renters
- Bay Area residents



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 Over)



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 utilized special hours for older adults to shop.

Older Adults 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.

Older Adults 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 focus groups



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

- Many immigrant participants 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.



Note: DACA = Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals; TPS = Temporary Protected Status

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?

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