



Food Hardship & Opportunities for Change

Key Findings from Statewide Research
Conducted in Fall 2022



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Spanish-language slides are available at: <https://nourishca.org/food-hardship-slides>.

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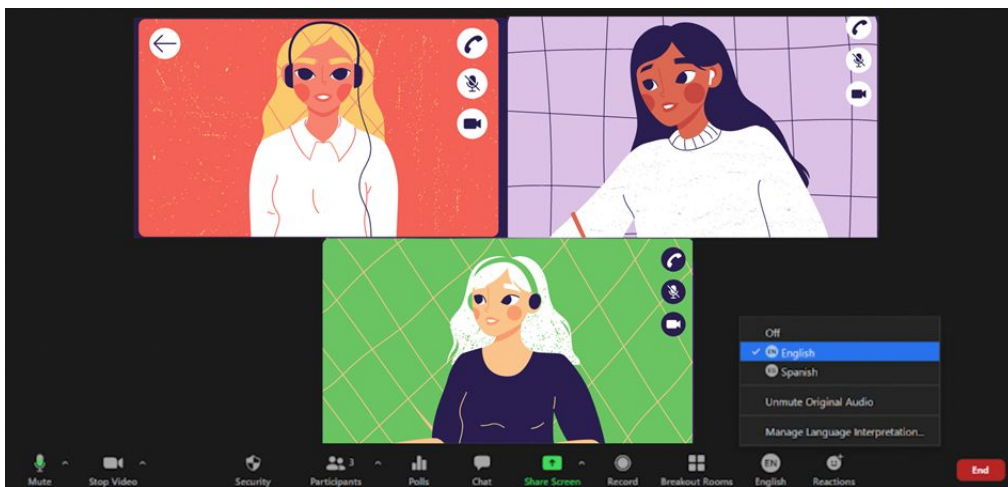


Webinar recording and materials will be available at nourishca.org

Las grabaciones y los materiales de los seminarios web se compartirán posteriormente en nourishca.org



Spanish Interpretation / Interpretación en Español



English Channel

1. Click the “Interpretation” button on the screen controls
2. Select English
3. For Closed Captioning click on the button on your screen

Canal de Español

1. *En los controles haga clic en “Interpretation”*
2. *Haga clic en “Spanish” y el audio en inglés se escuchará en bajo volumen.*
3. *Para eliminar el audio en inglés y solo escuchar la traducción al español haga clic en “Mute Original Audio”*





Today's Agenda

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





Tia Shimada

Director of Programs, Nourish California

Tia provides overarching direction for programmatic work at Nourish California, leading the organization's efforts to develop people-centered, evidence-based priorities. She also oversees Nourish California's policy research agenda and helps foster the organization's efforts to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of its work from internal decision making to policy advocacy.



Lucia Del Puppo

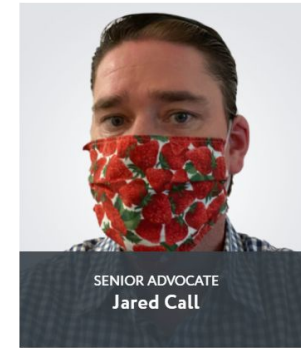
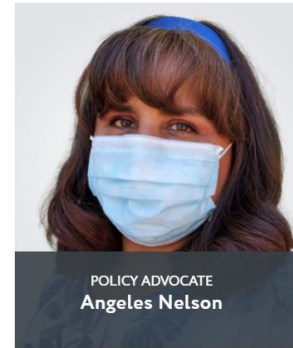
Senior Vice President, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3)

Lucia has provided research on public attitudes toward investing in early childhood education and youth programs, support for restorative justice policies and perceptions of school safety, food policy issues such as sugar-sweetened beverages and food insecurity, support for anti-tobacco policies, and messaging on key policy issues, including the coronavirus pandemic, paid family leave, and homelessness. Lucia's prior experience includes providing policy research for the San Francisco Human Services Agency and the San Francisco Planning Department, as well as working as a systems and management consultant for federal agencies at Accenture.



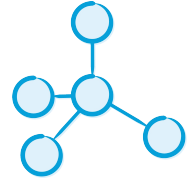
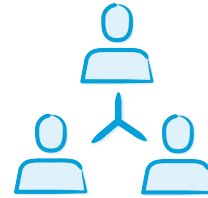
Who We Are & What We Do

- Collaborate with diverse community partners for policy change, ensuring equitable access to food, health, and well-being for all Californians
- Advocacy, engagement, research
- Optimize existing programs & pursue new approaches




Developing Policies & Priorities: What We Work to Understand

- Lives & experiences of our fellow Californians
- Scale & specifics of challenges
- Starkest inequities
- What's working now and why
- What changes Californians want to see
- Survey, interviews, and focus groups



Survey Specifics and Methodology

Dates	September 7-15, 2022
Survey Type	Online Survey
Research Population	Californians with Incomes Below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line
Total Interviews	1,114
Data Collection	 Online Interviews
Survey Tracking	2020 and 2021
Languages	English and Spanish

(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)



Focus Group Methodology

- Seven two-hour long moderated small group discussions conducted in October 2022.
- All participants recruited had middle and low-incomes and those who were eligible had experience with public benefits, specifically CalFresh and WIC.

Group Topic	Participant Profile	Date
Kern County Drinking Water	Kern County CalFresh Recipients	Oct. 11
Food4All	Bay Area Cantonese-speaking Immigrants	Oct.12
Food4All	Central Valley Spanish-speaking Immigrants	Oct.12
WIC	WIC Recipients	Oct. 13
WIC	Spanish-speaking WIC Recipients	Oct. 13
Experiences of Older Adults	Older Adults of Color	Oct. 20
Kern County Drinking Water	Spanish-speaking Kern County CalFresh Recipients	Oct. 20



Cautions in Interpreting Focus Group Results

- While we spoke with several dozen participants, and recruited them to represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives, they do not constitute a random and representative sample of Californians.
- As such, their opinions cannot be generalized to the broader population of residents with any kind of statistical precision.



Key Findings

1. Majorities reported worrying about affording food and have run out of food without money to buy more; respondents increasingly said they need more money to pay for food and high food prices are a major barrier.
2. Respondents increasingly said that CalFresh benefits run out before the end of the month “most of the time” and broadly agreed that when benefits run out it is hard to afford the food they need and want.
3. Respondents reported adopting a number of strategies to pay for food when funds run out; most commonly they described purchasing less food and changing what they eat.



Key Findings Continued

4. Negative experiences with public benefit programs, either experiences of discrimination and/or language barriers, reduced the likelihood that people would apply again, finish an application, or continue using the program.
5. WIC participants viewed all aspects of the program as very helpful; a plurality said that returning to access services in person would be harder for them.
6. If benefit increases received during the pandemic, such as WIC and P-EBT were to end, Californians with low and middle income said it would be harder for them to afford the food they need and want.





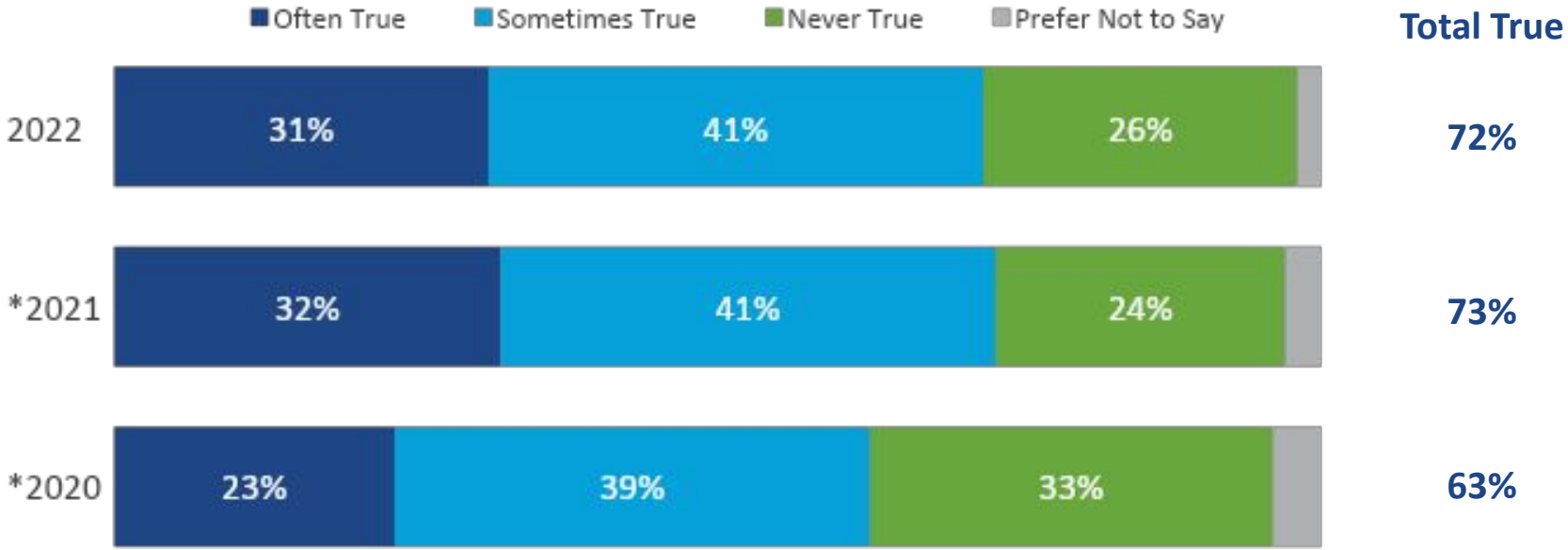
Experiences with Food Hardship



Seven in ten worried about running out of food in the past year.

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

Is this statement often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household?

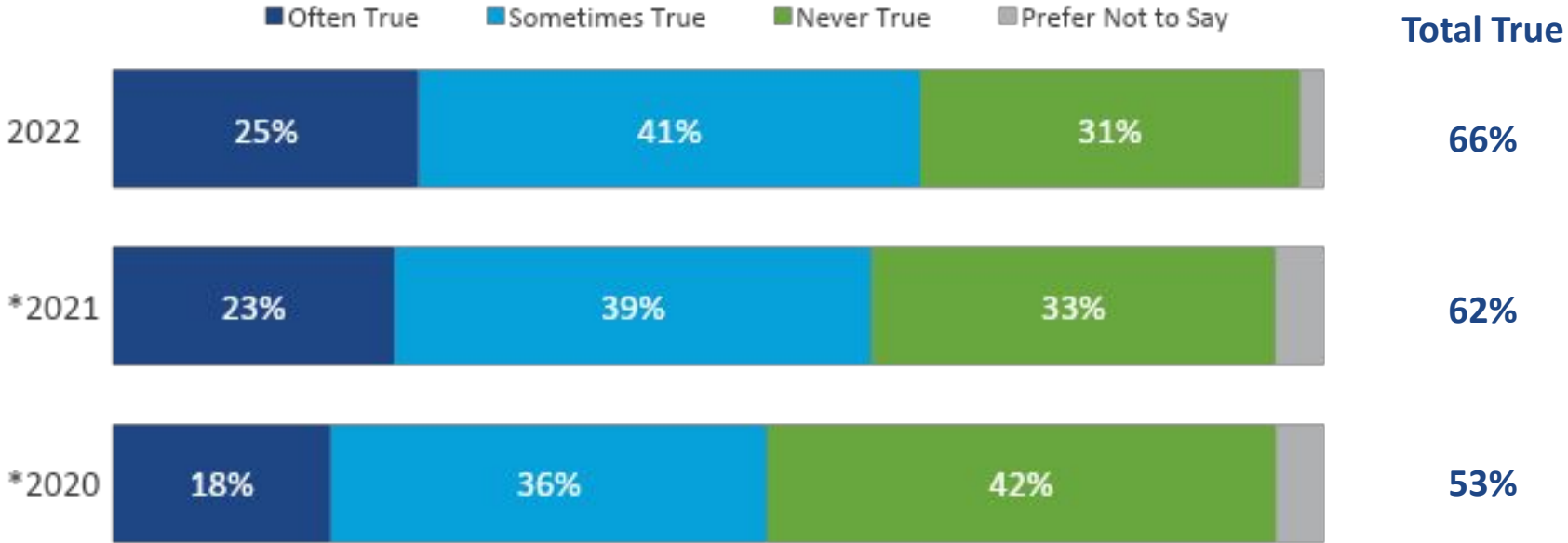


*Q16. *Wording Slightly Different*

Two-thirds experienced not having money to get food.

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

Is this statement often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household?



* Q17. *Wording Slightly Different

While highly likely to experience food hardship, respondents 65 and over were less likely than other age groups to have these experiences.

Total True

Demographic Group	Within the past 12 months I worried whether food would run out before I got money to buy more.	Within the past 12 months the food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more.
Race/Ethnicity		
White	73%	64%
Latino/a	73%	70%
Black/African American	78%	72%
Asian/Pacific Islander	64%	59%
All People of Color	72%	68%
Age		
18-29	74%	69%
30-39	76%	71%
40-49	79%	72%
50-64	69%	64%
65+	54%	44%

* Q16 & Q17.



Majorities across the state have had this experience in the past year.

Total True


Demographic Group	Within the past 12 months I worried whether food would run out before I got money to buy more.	Within the past 12 months the food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more.
Language of Interview		
English	73%	67%
Spanish	71%	66%
Region		
Los Angeles County	72%	67%
Counties Surrounding Los Angeles	66%	59%
Bay Area	78%	72%
San Diego	73%	58%
Sacramento/Rural North	71%	65%
Central Valley/Central Coast	77%	75%
Residence		
Homeowners	69%	62%
Renters	74%	70%
Live with Family	69%	59%



Those with children ages 6-12 were most worried.

Total True

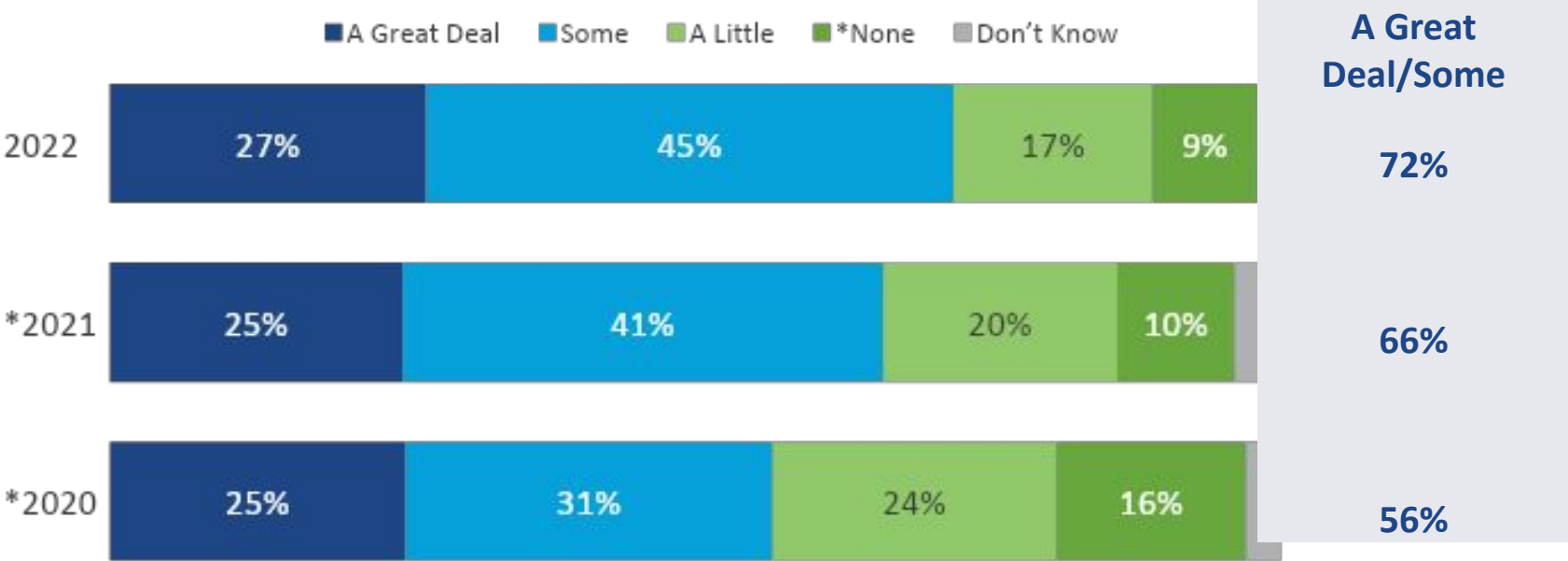
Demographic Group	Within the past 12 months I worried whether food would run out before I got money to buy more.	Within the past 12 months the food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more.
Children		
Under 6 Years Old	75%	74%
Ages 6-12 Years	82%	77%
Ages 13-18 Years	75%	73%
Ages 19 or Older	71%	67%
LGBTQ+		
Yes	81%	80%
No	71%	65%
U.S. Born/Immigrant		
U.S. Born	72%	67%
Immigrant	75%	69%

 Q16 & Q17.



Nearly three-quarters said their household needs at least “some” more money for food.

How much more money does your household need to get the food you need and want:

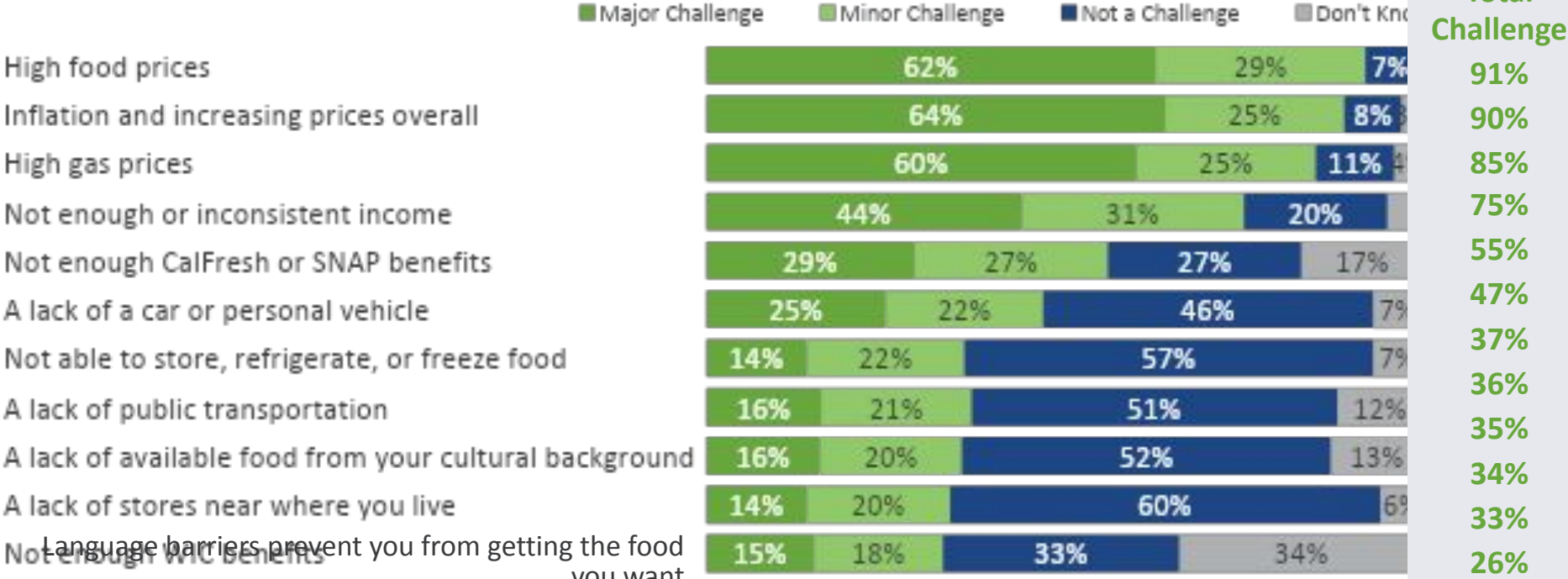


* Q21. *Wording Slightly Different



High food prices, inflation, and rising gas prices presented the greatest challenge to getting enough food.

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



Q20.

Focus Group Comments on Rising Costs of Food

Spanish language WIC group: *I use food stamps and I was talking with my neighbor and saying with the inflation people that are working are thinking about getting food stamps for the same reason, everything is expensive. Even though you are working how are you going to do it. You can't just work and be fine because you are thinking of other ways to get money to pay for food.*

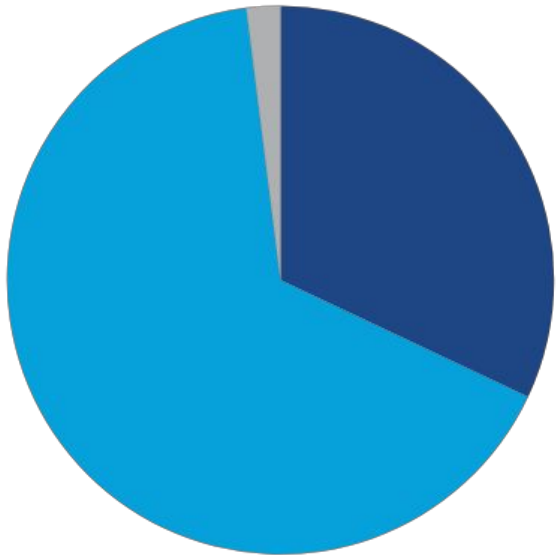
Older Adults Group: *One of my favorite [foods] believe it or not is oxtails and for awhile I was able to buy oxtails at 3.99 a pound which is high, but I went to grocery store the next time and they are 10.99 cents a pound.*

Older Adults Group: *I set aside a hundred dollars for groceries it seems like you don't get a hundred dollars' worth of groceries anymore you get like fifty dollars' worth because of the prices. So it seems like to me everything goes up and nothing goes down.*

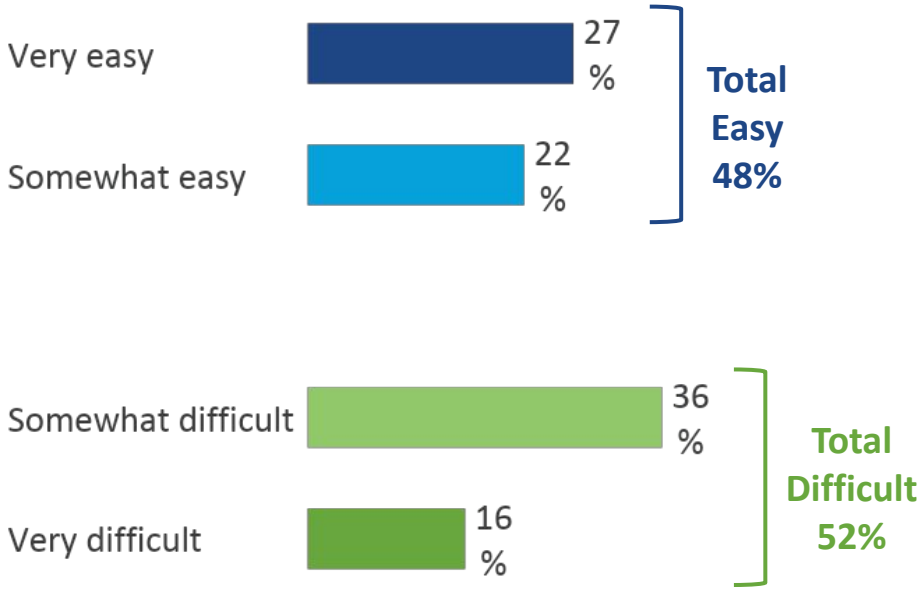


Only half of formula-feeding parents said it was easy to find their child's preferred formula in the last 6 months.

Is there a child in your household who has used baby formula in the past 6 months?
(Asked of Parents With a Child Under Age 5, n=179)



In the last 6 months, how easy or difficult has it been to find your child's preferred baby formula?
(Asked of Parents Who Use Formula, n=57)



* Q53 & Q54.

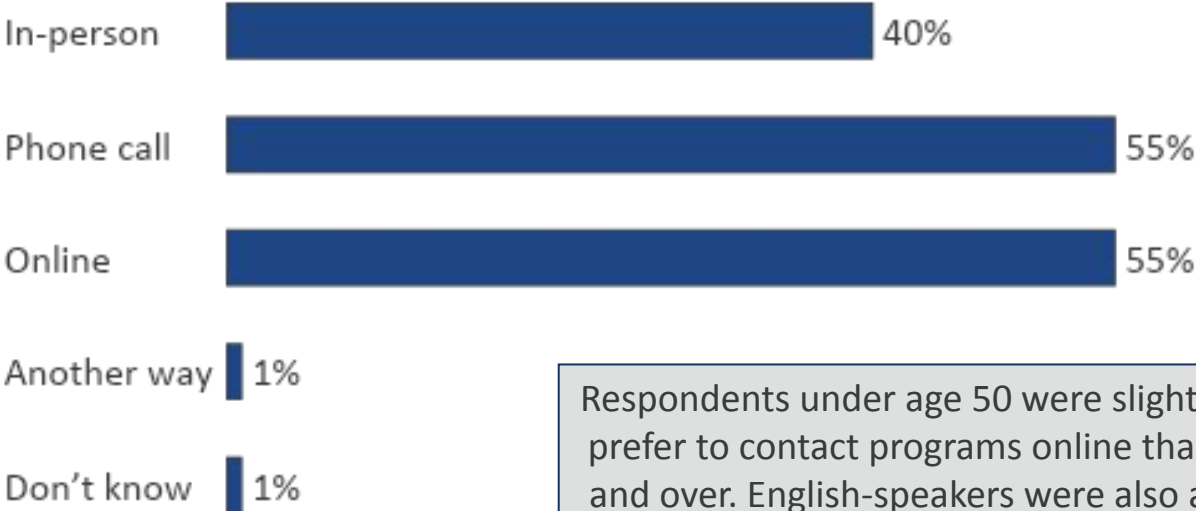


Experiences with Public Benefits



Majorities preferred connecting with public programs via phone and online; two in five favored going in person.

*How do you prefer to connect with public programs
(For example, to apply, ask questions, or provide necessary information)?
(Multiple Responses Accepted)*



Respondents under age 50 were slightly more likely to prefer to contact programs online than those ages 50 and over. English-speakers were also a bit more likely to prefer online than Spanish-speakers.



Q12.

Among some immigrants, public charge was seen as a deterrent to applying for benefits.

- Focus group participants were not all familiar with the term “public charge” specifically, but there was widespread understanding of the concept.
- In both Spanish and Cantonese-language groups, those who were not yet naturalized or were undocumented tended to fear repercussions of asking for help.
- Participants avoided getting benefits they needed for fear of the repercussions of being considered a public charge.

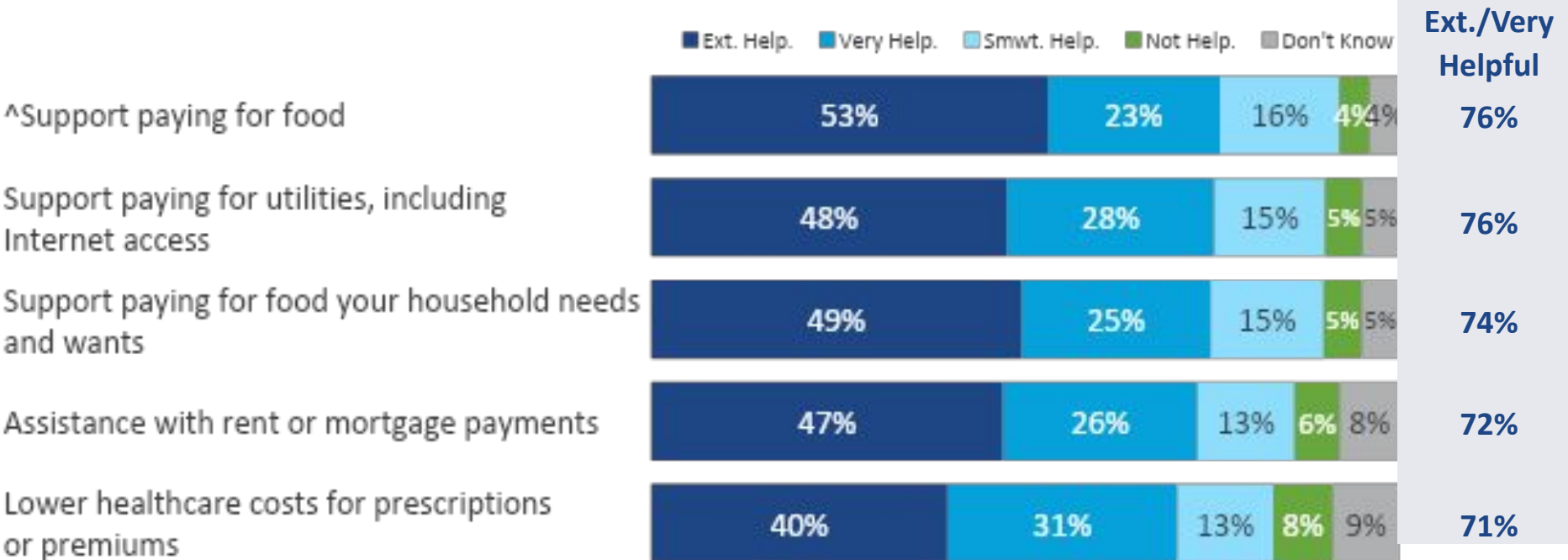
Spanish language group: *I didn't want to use any type of aid until one day I was feeling really sick. I thought I was really sick and when I went to urgent care, they told me I had appendicitis. Without insurance I wouldn't be able to pay the \$40,000. I had to get public aid and apply for Medi Cal and they treated me. But like everyone I thought no because I didn't want it to affect me in the future but I had to do it.*

Cantonese language group: *I am not naturalized yet and I have two children and since I heard about this news, I worry about our life in the future, so I did not collect any benefits at all.*



Support paying for food and utilities were seen as the most helpful types of potential assistance.

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 your household.



* Q15. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Two-thirds perceived cash assistance and cash rebates as very helpful.

Cash assistance through a state or federal program such as CalWORKS or social security or disability benefits (SSDI or SSI)

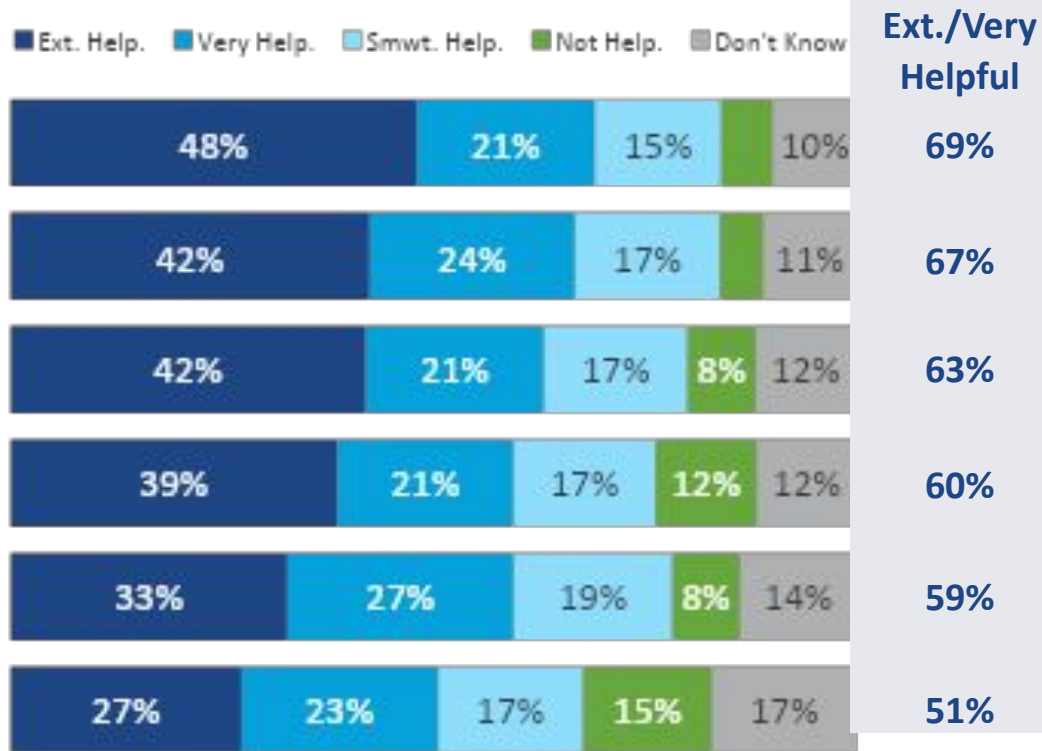
^A cash rebate

An increased tax return or tax credit

Help with paying off debt

Increasing income eligibility for nutrition programs so your household could qualify

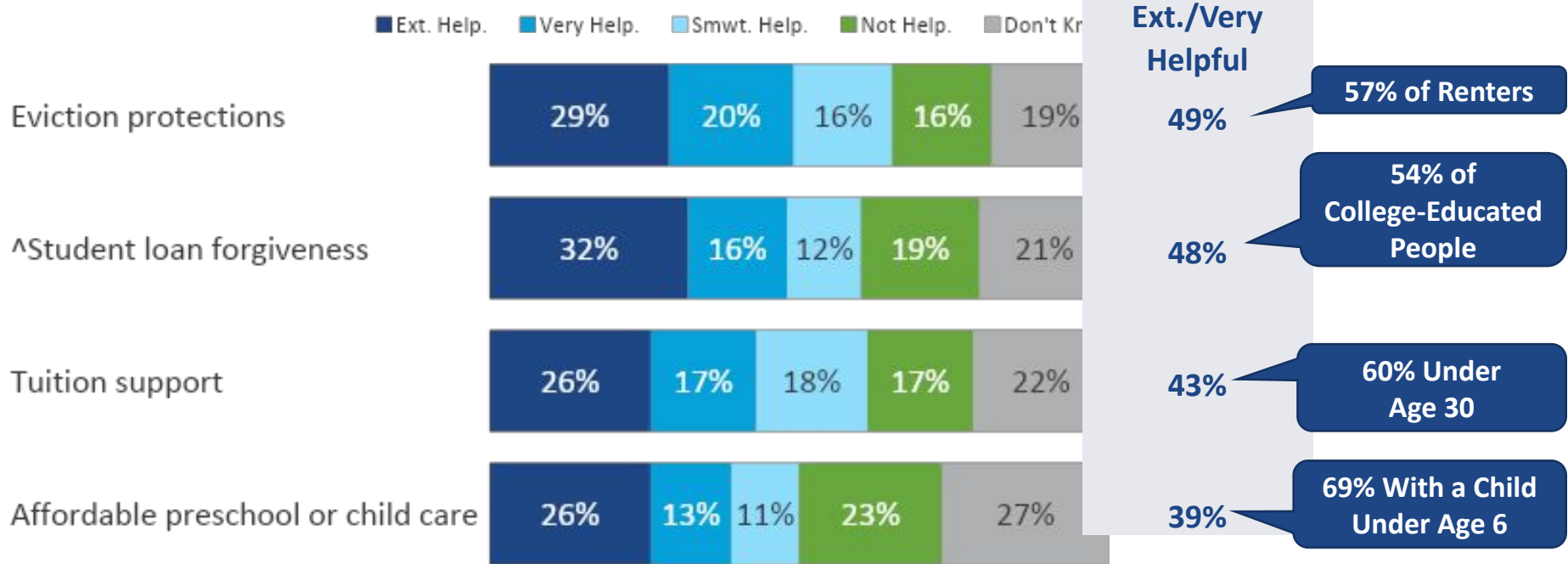
Support paying for food from my cultural background



Q15. 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 your household. ^Not Part of Split Sample



Eviction protections, support aimed at students and childcare rank lower overall but were important to the specific populations they serve.



Q15. 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 your household. ^Not Part of Split Sample



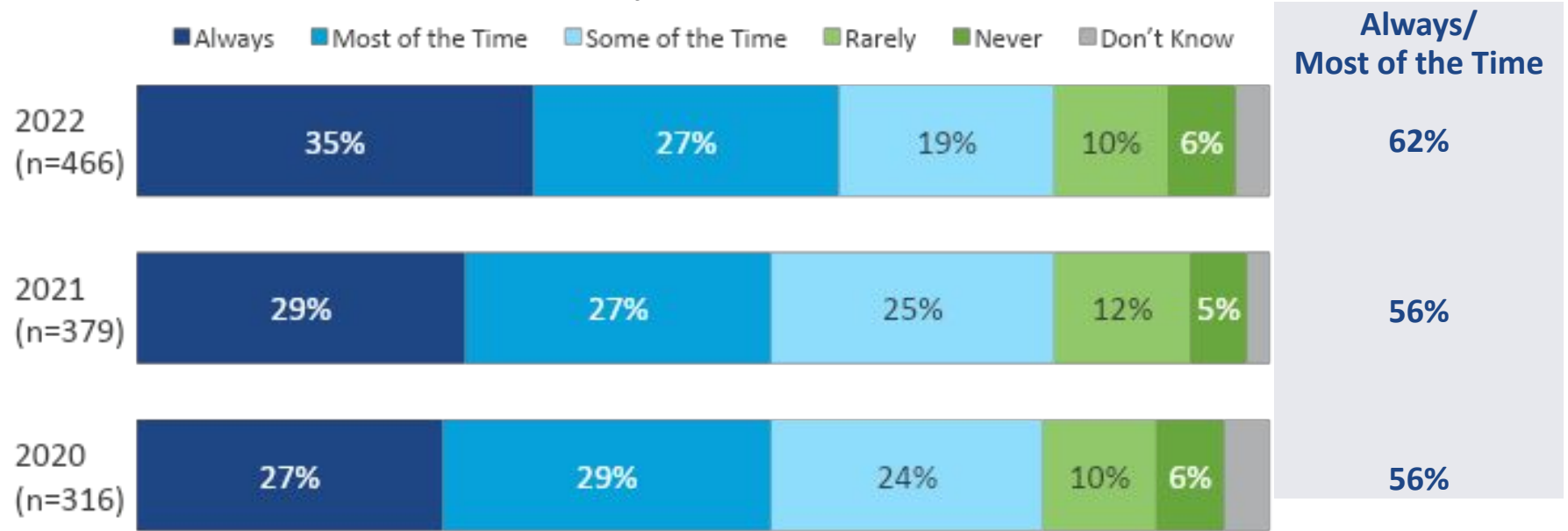


Experiences with CalFresh



Three in five said their CalFresh benefits run out before the end of the month most of the time.

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



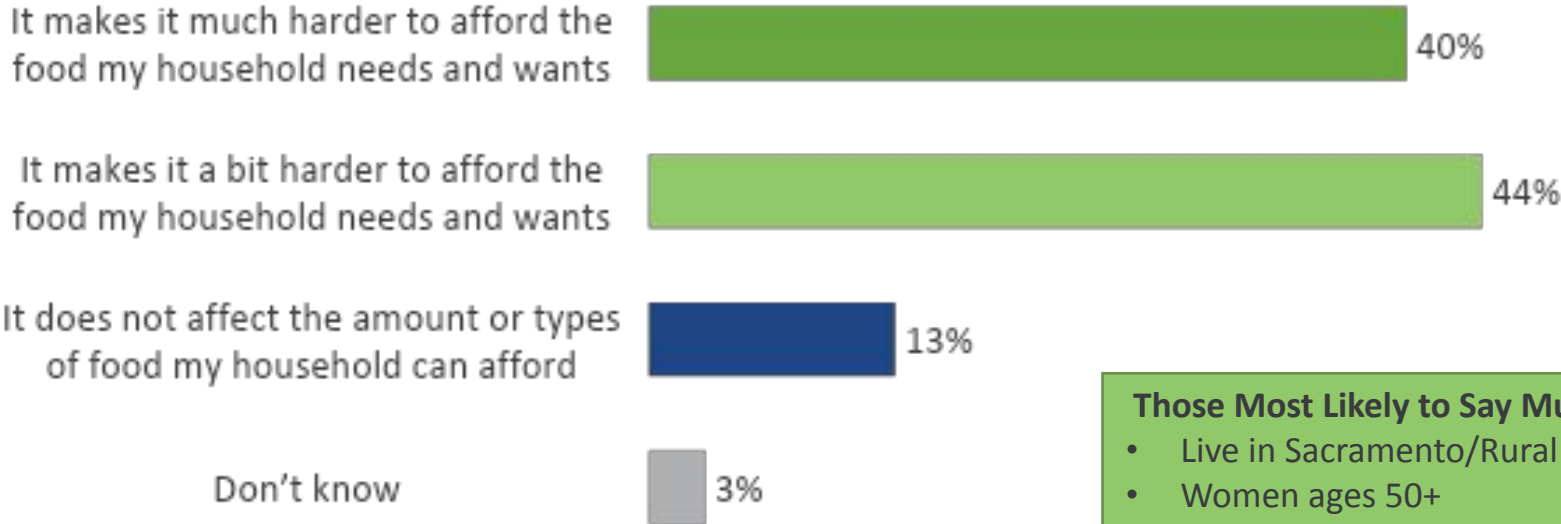
**Q39. *Wording Slightly Different*



More than four in five said that running out of benefits makes it harder for them to afford food.

Which of the following describes your experience when your CalFresh benefits run out:

(Open-ended; Asked of Those Who Run Out of Benefits At Least Some of the Time, n=376)



Total Harder
84%

- Those Most Likely to Say Much Harder:**
- Live in Sacramento/Rural North
 - Women ages 50+
 - Some College Education
 - AAPI



Q41.

Given the rising cost of living, focus group participants adopted a number of different strategies to afford food.

- With the rising cost of food and living, several reported purchasing less food, buying on sale, relying on food banks and using CalFresh to afford the food they need and want.
- The increased benefits that were available during the pandemic, such as P-EBT, were helpful, particularly for those with children at home.
- CalFresh was seen as an important tool in helping participants afford food even though many said it does not last to the end of the month.

Spanish language group: *EBT has helped me a lot because now food is so expensive it is a big help. With the size of our family -- right now it is only my husband and myself it has helped us a lot. It helps because I can use my EBT in a lot of places.*

Spanish language group: *The most difficult thing is having eliminate things so you can make ends meet. When shopping like for meat is it really expensive. You have to cut certain things you like to eat and buy what you can afford.*

Cantonese language group: *Food is so expensive without CalFresh, I would not be able to buy food for my family.*



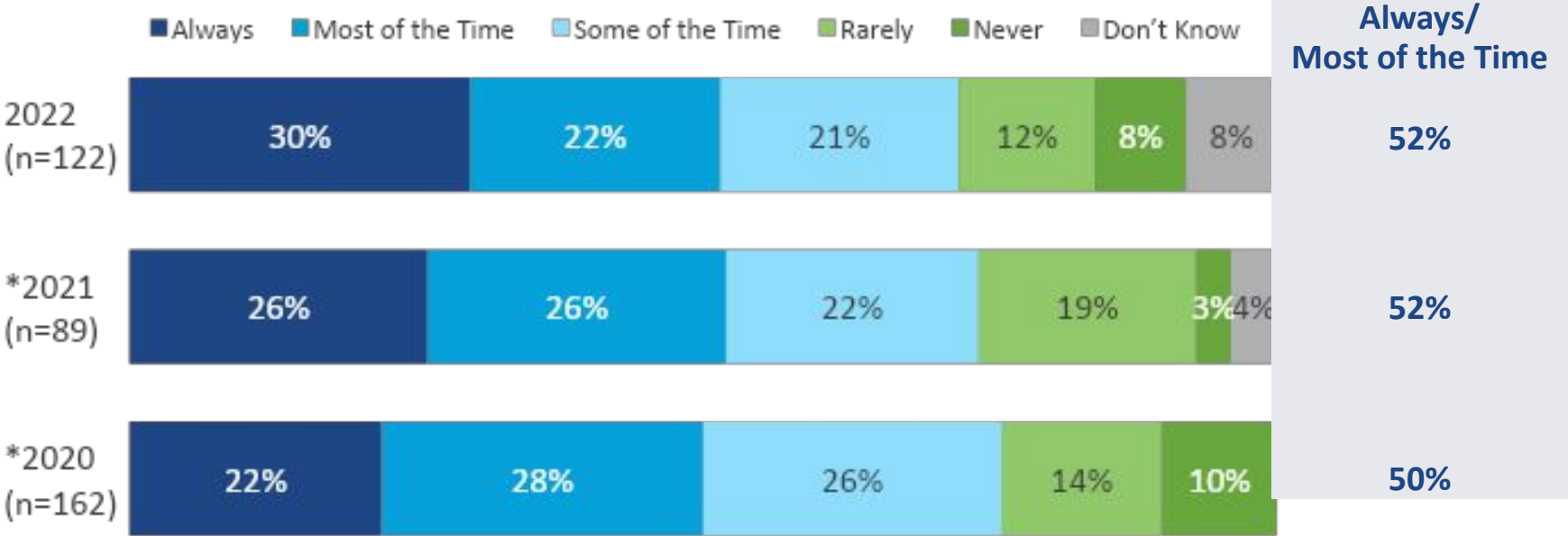


Experiences with WIC



Half of respondents have consistently said their WIC benefits run out before the end of the month.

How often do your WIC benefits run out before the end of the month?
 (Asked of All Respondents Who Use WIC)



* Q47. *Wording Slightly Different; 2020 Data Recalculated to Remove Don't Know as It Included Broader Audience



Many wished the WIC benefit extended past the age of 5.

- Participants noted that the program is still helpful as their kids get older and it would be valuable to keep receiving it.
- The impact of ending the benefit seemed greater among Spanish-language participants, potentially because they are less likely to be eligible for CalFresh or feel safe applying due to concerns about immigration status than participants in other groups.
- Other issues that were mentioned were small children not eating much at school and confusion about the cutoff age for children.

Spanish language group: *I wish they wouldn't stop giving it to the children until they were 13 years old or 12 years old when they are teenagers. How sad it is when your child turns five.*

Spanish language group: *It is like an ache; they have turned five and no more WIC. It is like a part of your life that is gone. I would love them to do this. It would be good if it went to at least ten years.*

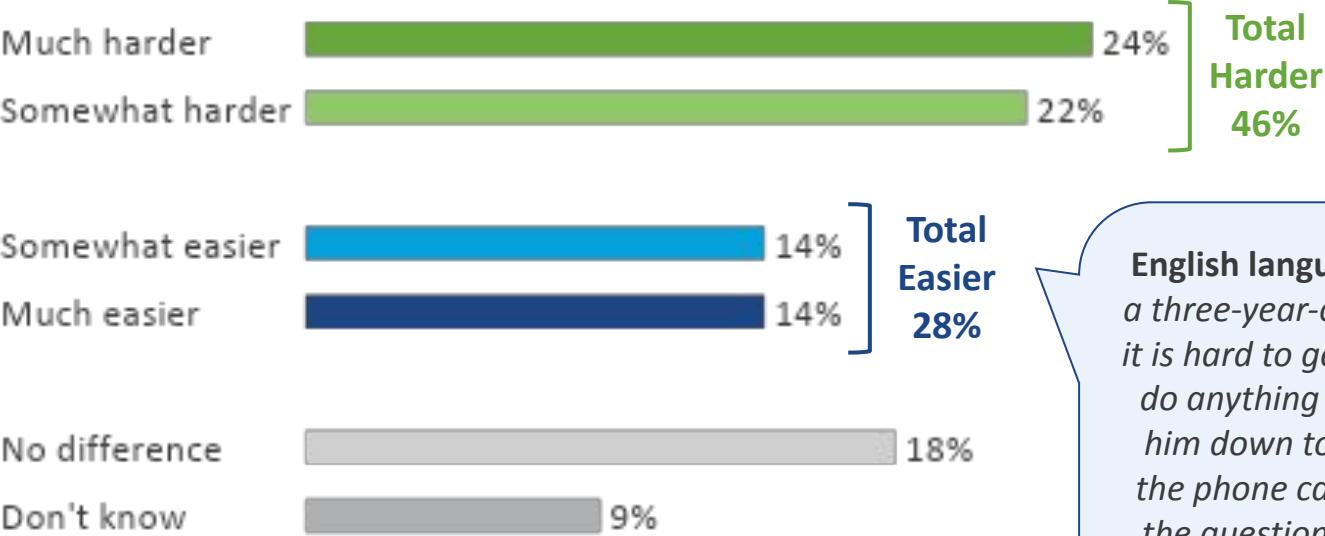
English language group: *Now that [my son] is older. He was drinking Lactaid and now that I have to buy my stuff it is really expensive, like, a lot.*



Nearly half said returning to renewing WIC in person would be harder for them.

During the pandemic, the rules were changed so that WIC participants were allowed to enroll and to renew their benefits without having to go to an office in-person. Suppose the rules were to change back and people were required to go in-person to renew their WIC benefits. How would that affect you: Would it be easier or harder to renew your WIC benefits or would it make no difference?

(Asked of All Respondents Who Use WIC, n=122)



English language group: I have a three-year-old and sometimes it is hard to get him in the car to do anything especially to take him down to the office. With the phone call I just answer all the questions and usually it is like over in three minutes.

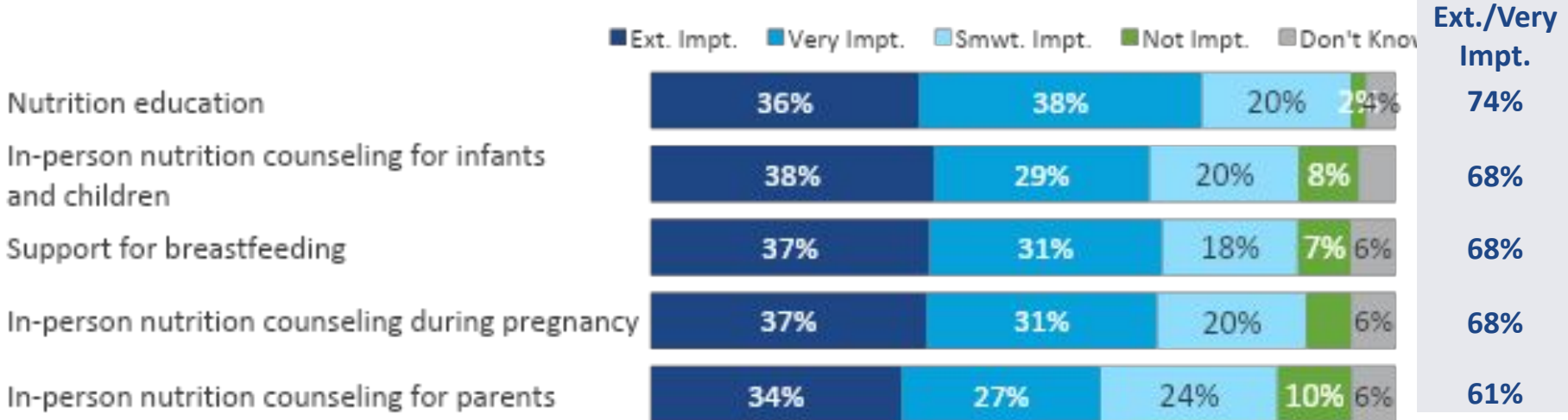


Q48.

All of the WIC services were seen as highly important.

Here is a list of some WIC services. Please indicate how important you think the service is: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important.

(Asked of All Respondents Who Use WIC, n=122)



Spanish language group: *I didn't want to breastfeed because [my daughter] was hurting me. They helped me a lot to learn how to breastfeed. They also gave me the pump and helped me.*

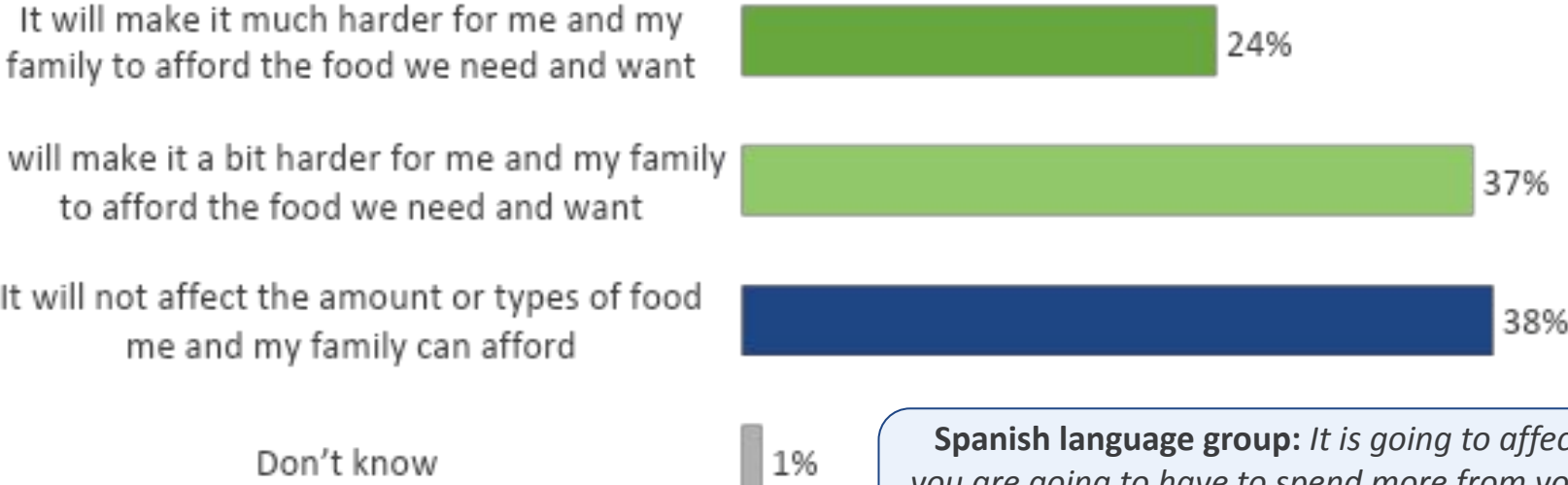


Q49.

Three in five of those who received increased WIC funds said losing these would make it much harder for them to afford food.

These increased WIC funds may be ending soon, so the monthly benefits for fruits and vegetables will decrease to \$9 per child and \$11 for people who are pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding. How will this change affect you?

(Asked of All Respondents Who Received Increased WIC Funds, n=75)



Total Harder
61%

Spanish language group: *It is going to affect us because you are going to have to spend more from your own pocket and I am going to have to - whatever I make I am going to have to spend more.*

However, participants also expressed consistent frustrations with the program's limitations.

- Participants noted that the limitations on types of foods included in the program, requirements for specific sizes of packaging that were not always available, and the emphasis on dairy when many prefer to not eat it was challenging and wasteful.
 - One participant noted that she has gestational diabetes and it is a challenge to ensure the available items suit her diet.
- There was also frustration that certain types of food were only available to some people in the program, for example canned tuna was only available while breastfeeding.
- They also felt like the benefit stopping at age 5 was a challenge and a few noted that the reduction in benefits as their kids got older didn't make it worth the trouble to maintain the benefit.

English language group: *I'll want Cheerios but they don't have that size that WIC is requesting but yet you are allowing me to get two small boxes but I can't get one big box that is less ounces than this. So, to me it is like it is the same why can't I just get cereal. So, it is the limitations that they put on it on top of like I said not already using some of the other products like dairy. So, the stuff that I can get or want to eat is limited, except the formula.*

English language group: *There is a lot of focus on milk, cheese, yogurts and things like that when we don't use.*





Experiences with Unfair Treatment

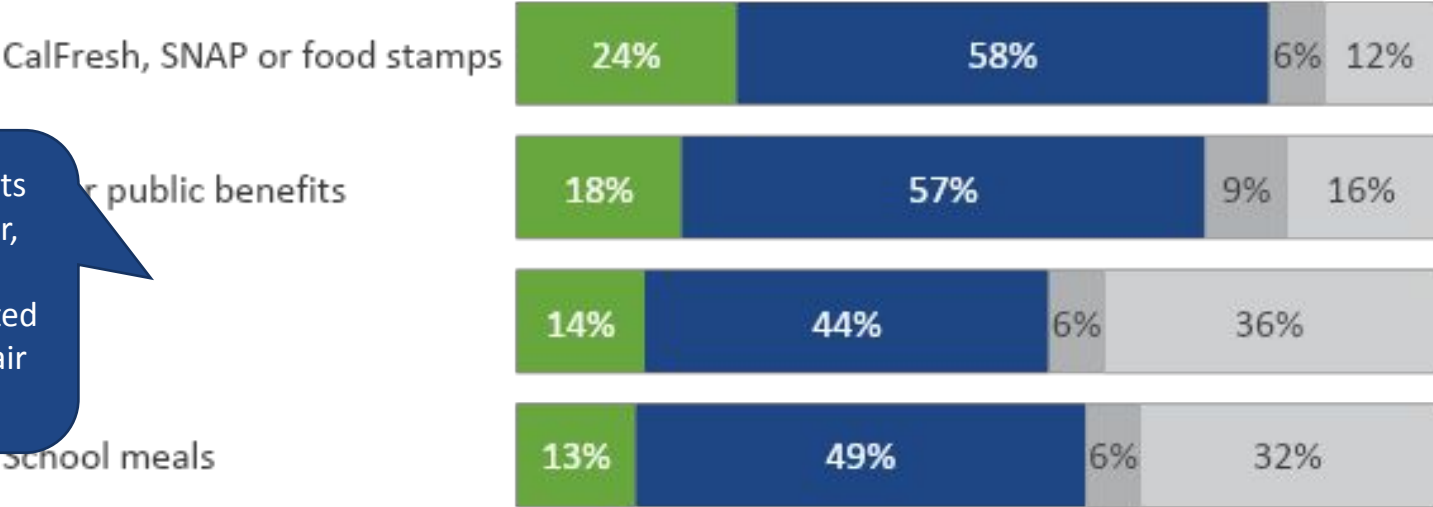


One-quarter of respondents reported having experienced discrimination or bias when applying for or participating in CalFresh.

Have you ever experienced discrimination or bias when applying for or participating in any of the following programs:

(Asked of Those Who Ever Applied for Public Benefits, n=835)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know ■ Don't Receive/NA

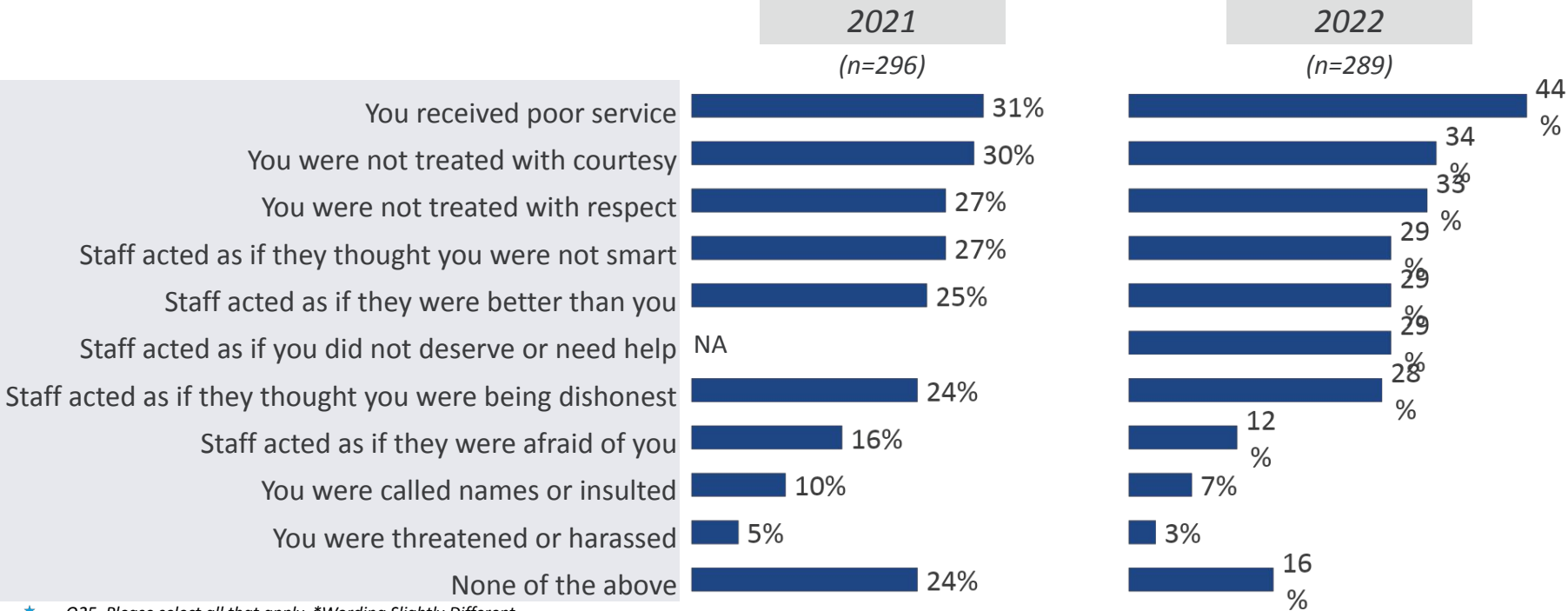


LGBTQ+ respondents and people of color, particularly Black respondents, reported higher rates of unfair treatment.



Those with negative experiences most often received poor service and a lack of courtesy.

**When applying for or participating in a public program, did you experience any of the following?
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked of People Who Experienced Discrimination/Bias)*



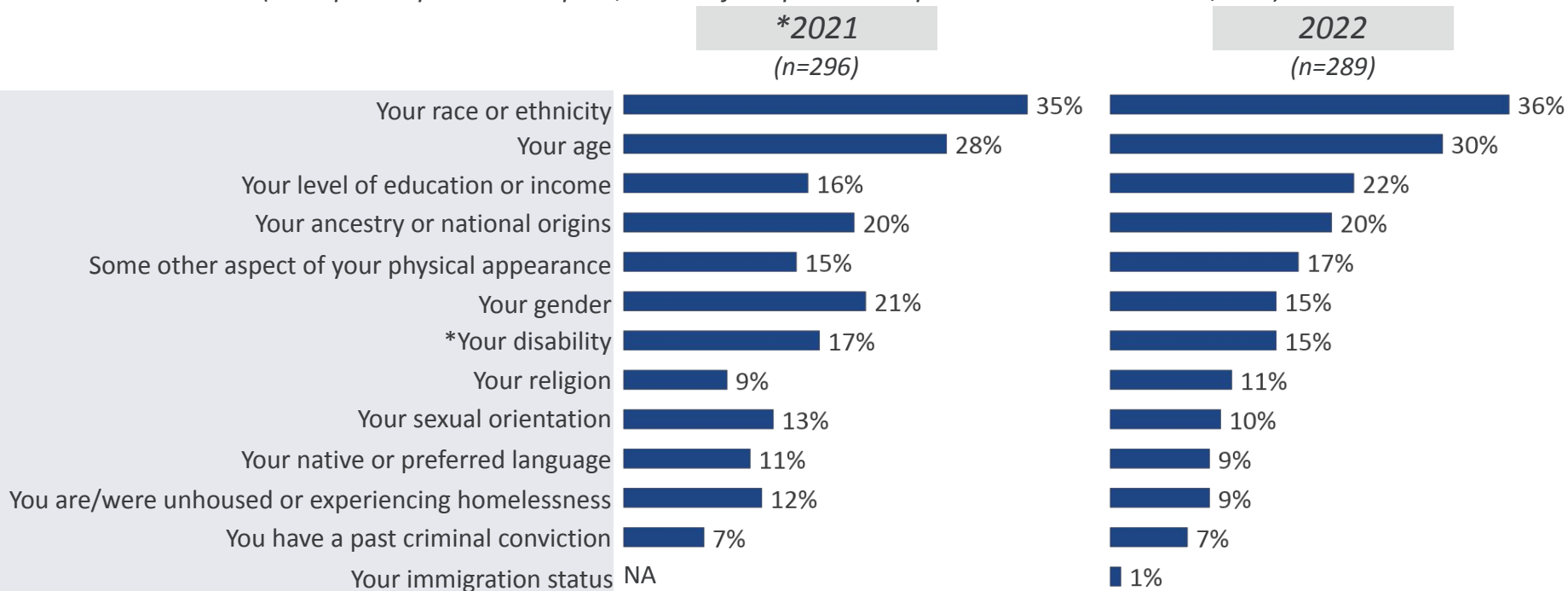
**Q25. Please select all that apply. *Wording Slightly Different*



Their ethnicity was most commonly seen as the reason for the unfair treatment.

**What do you think was the main reason for these experiences?*

(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked of People Who Experienced Discrimination/Bias)



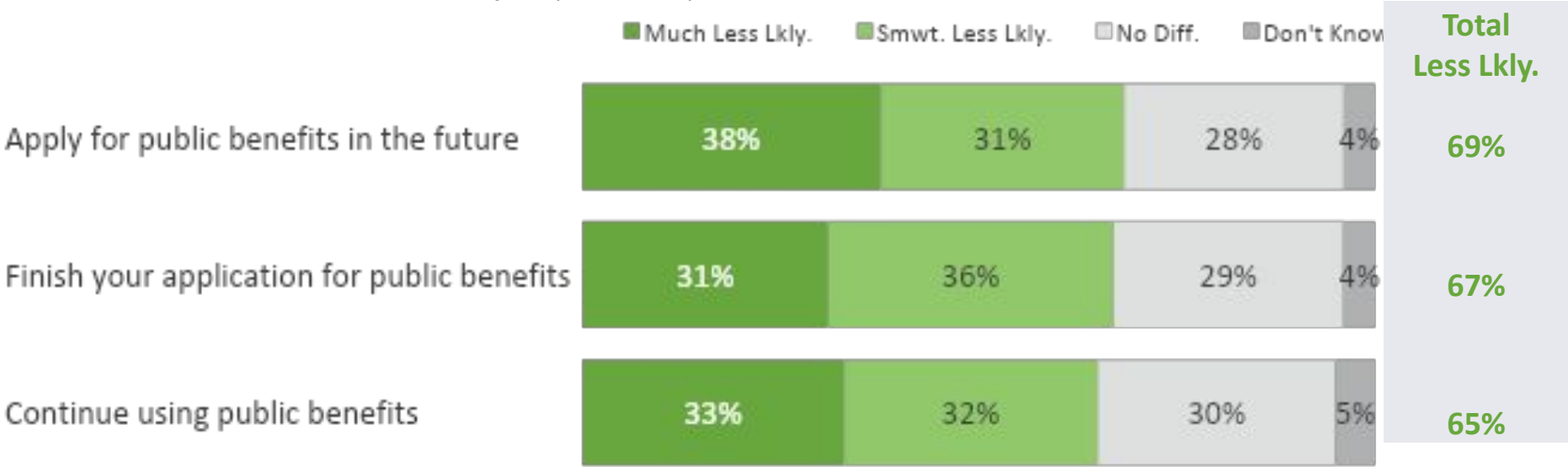
**Q26. Please select all that apply. *Wording Slightly Different*



Two-thirds would be less likely to apply for, finish an application for, or continue using benefits after an experience with discrimination.

Did your experience with discrimination or bias make you much less likely to do each of the following, somewhat less likely to do each of the following, or did it not make a difference?

(Asked of People Who Experienced Discrimination/Bias, n=289)



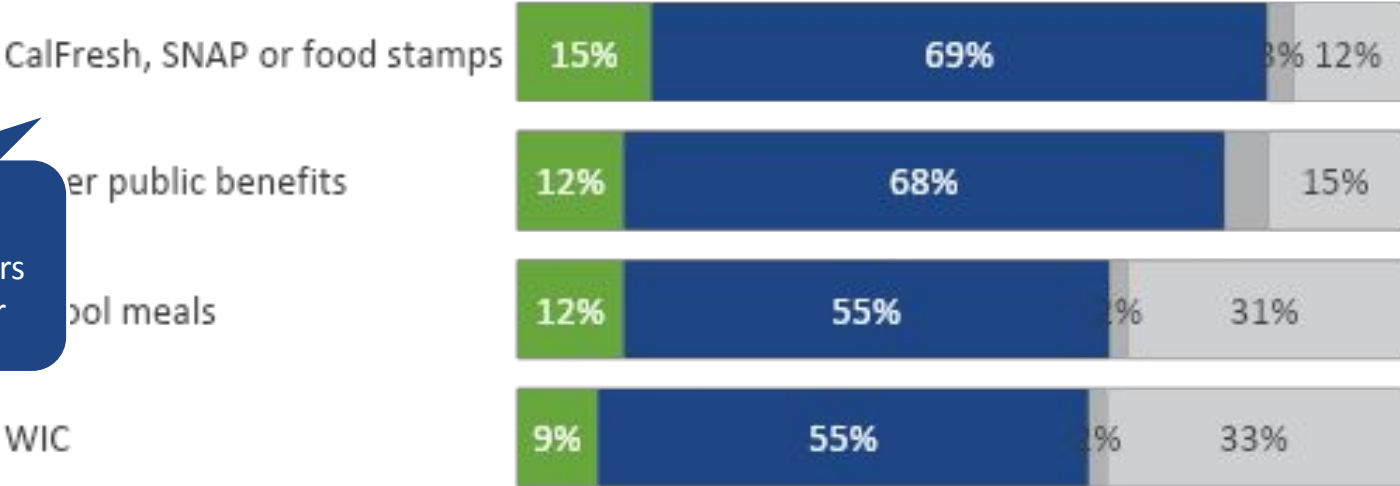
Q27.

More than one in ten experienced a language barrier when applying or participating in CalFresh.

Have you ever experienced a language barrier when applying for or participating in any of the following programs:

(Asked of Those Who Ever Applied for Public Benefits, n=835)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know ■ Don't Receive/NA



20% of Spanish-speakers experienced barriers when applying for CalFresh.

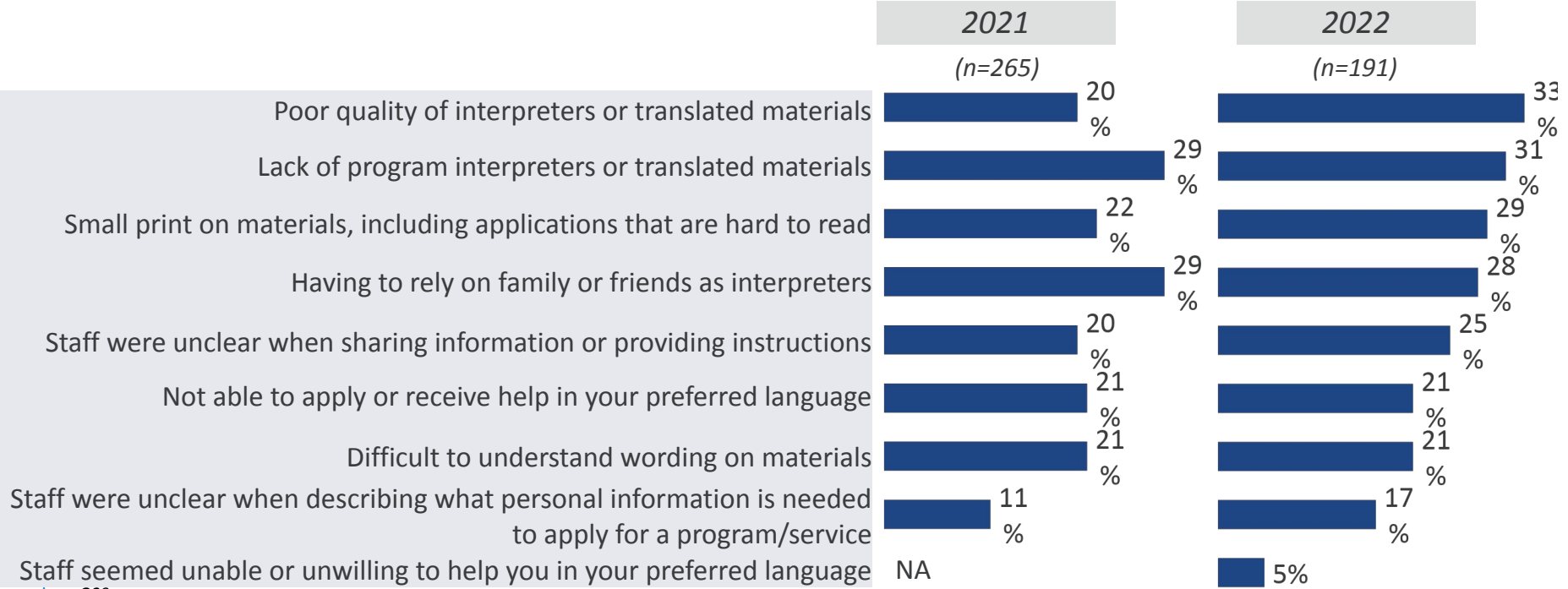


Q28.

Poor quality of interpreters and a lack of translated materials were the most common experiences.

Which of the following barriers did you experience? Please select all that apply.

(Multiple Responses Accepted; Asked of People Who Experienced Language Barriers, n=191)



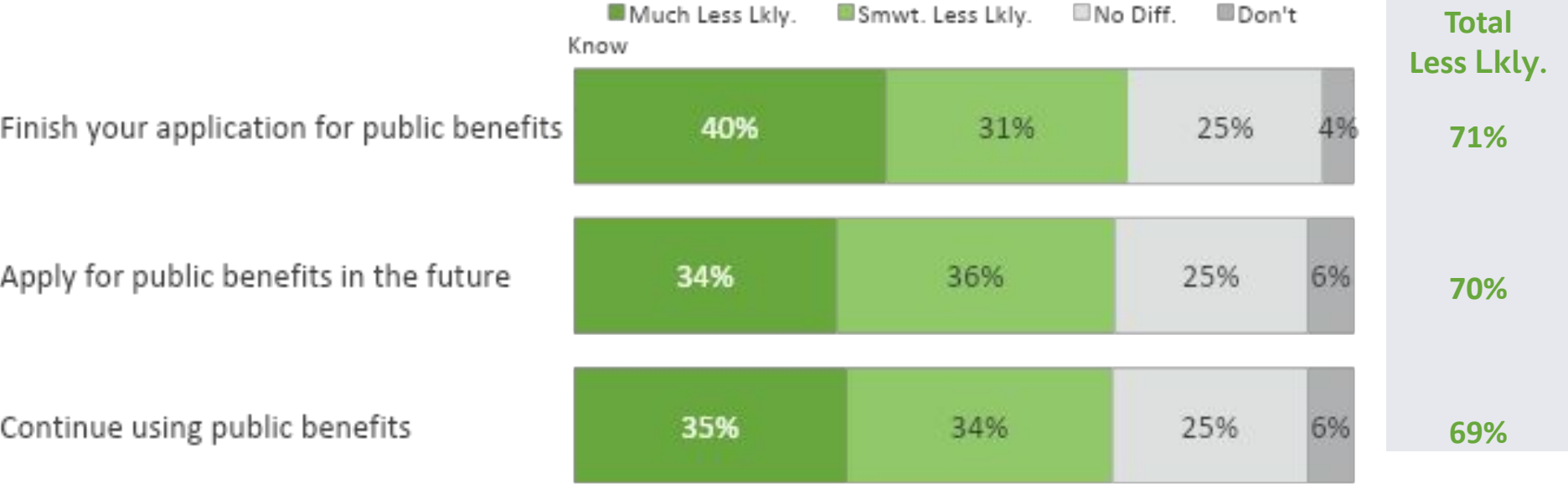
Q29.



Language barriers affected the likelihood that respondents would continue applying for or using benefits.

Did your experience with these language barriers make you much less likely to do each of the following, somewhat less likely to do each of the following, or did it not make a difference?

(Asked of Those Who Experienced a Language Barrier, n=191)



Cantonese-speaking focus group participants reported facing language barriers frequently.

- Participants in the Cantonese language group noted that they had encountered language barriers when using CalFresh and experienced long wait times to access an interpreter.
- This group also described facing discrimination and negative interactions when using their benefits in stores.
- While most in this group did not fear impacts to their immigration status, they did express discomfort with asking for help, in general, and confusion about which benefits are available to them.

Cantonese language group: *The Chinese people in Chinatown told me that you are using the government money. So it is some sort of an ugly word. Very unpleasant words.*

Cantonese language group: *I think they don't have enough interpreters and you do need to wait for a while... Sometimes I need to wait for an hour so that they can find an interpreter to help me.*





Experiences with P-EBT



P-EBT was a welcome help for immigrant focus group participants.

- The parents who had received P-EBT found it helpful in affording food for their children, particularly as they were home more during the peak pandemic and not receiving meals outside the home.
- One participant said they worried about their immigration status and their children's privacy when receiving P-EBT.
- Most were expecting it when they received it; one participant noted that they thought they should receive it but didn't try to seek it out when they didn't get it because of their immigration status.

Cantonese language group: *I did worry about the [immigration] information being shared and I worried that maybe my child would be looked down upon at school because the information would be known by others.*

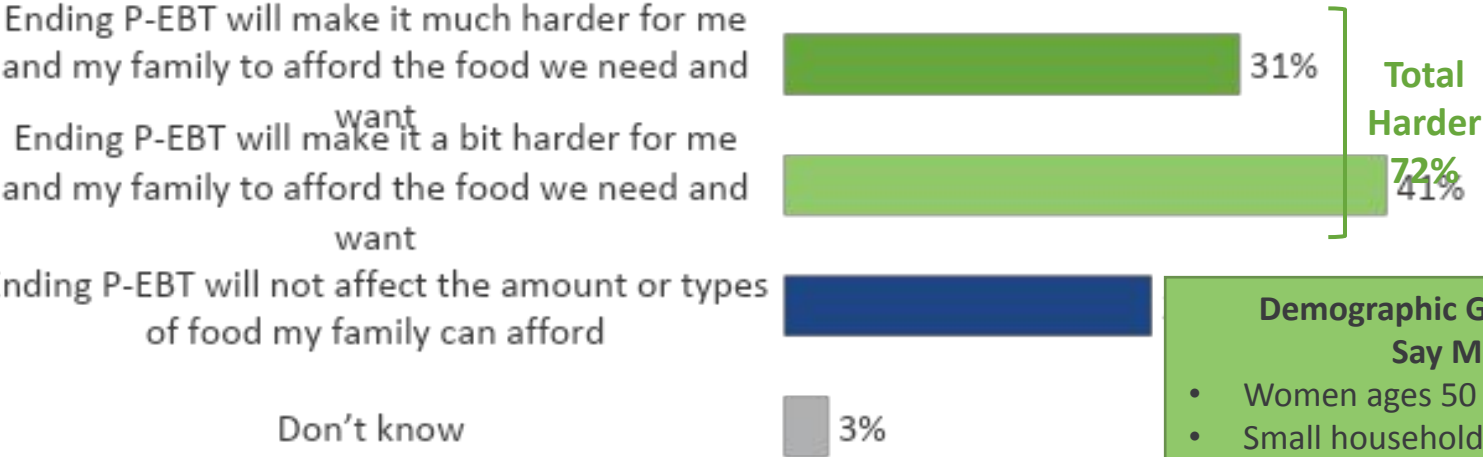
Spanish language group: *During that time, the [children] weren't going to school so they were eating more. I had to buy more things, breakfast, milk, eggs. It is just the like the regular EBT. So, you can buy normal food.*



Nearly three-quarters of recipients said that ending P-EBT would negatively impact them.

The P-EBT program may come to an end in the future. Which of the following comes closest to your experience:

(Asked of Parents/Guardians Who Received P-EBT, n=315)



Demographic Groups Most Likely to Say Much Harder:

- Women ages 50 and over
- Small households
- Under \$30,000 in HH income and 1-2 people
- Ages 30-39 and 75+
- San Diego
- Non-College Educated Women



Q32.

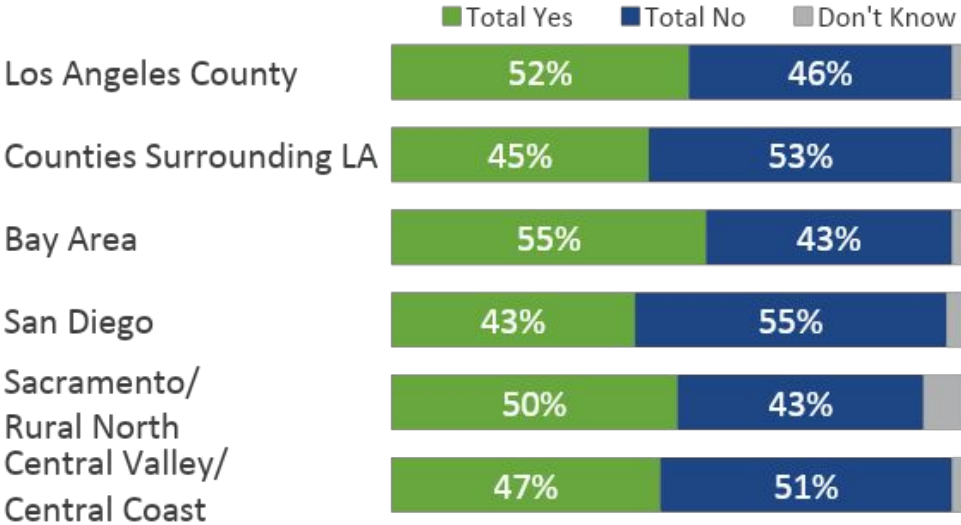
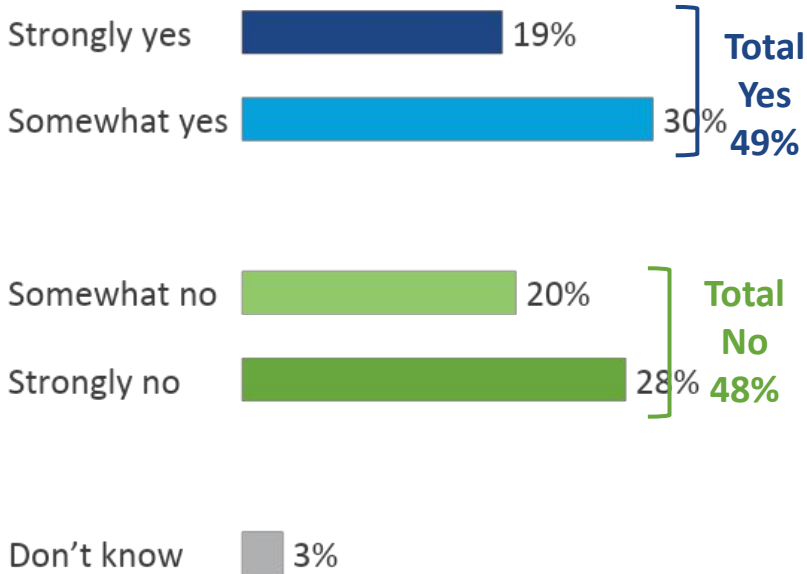


Accessing Drinking Water



Respondents were divided on whether they trust the drinking water in their home.

Overall, do you trust that the tap water in your home is safe to drink?



Kern County Spanish language group: *I think you can get sick if you drink that water and it tastes horrible.*

Water was an expense for all focus group participants.

- All participants purchased bottled water, although the amount they reported spending varied widely given different family circumstances and preferences.
- While the cost of water was not a major burden individually, participants noted that it was a high priority item for them and that in general, cost of living had risen and created financial pressures for them and their family.
- Those who participated in the Kern County pilot program to provide CalFresh benefits for drinking water said it allowed them to afford to buy more food, including fruits and vegetables.

Kern County Spanish language Group: *I think even if you have to leave something behind water is indispensable. We have to buy water first at least my case.*

Kern County Spanish language group: *[We spend] between \$40 and \$45 because I have a large family. We are seven and the children every day have to take bottled water to school, all five of them.*

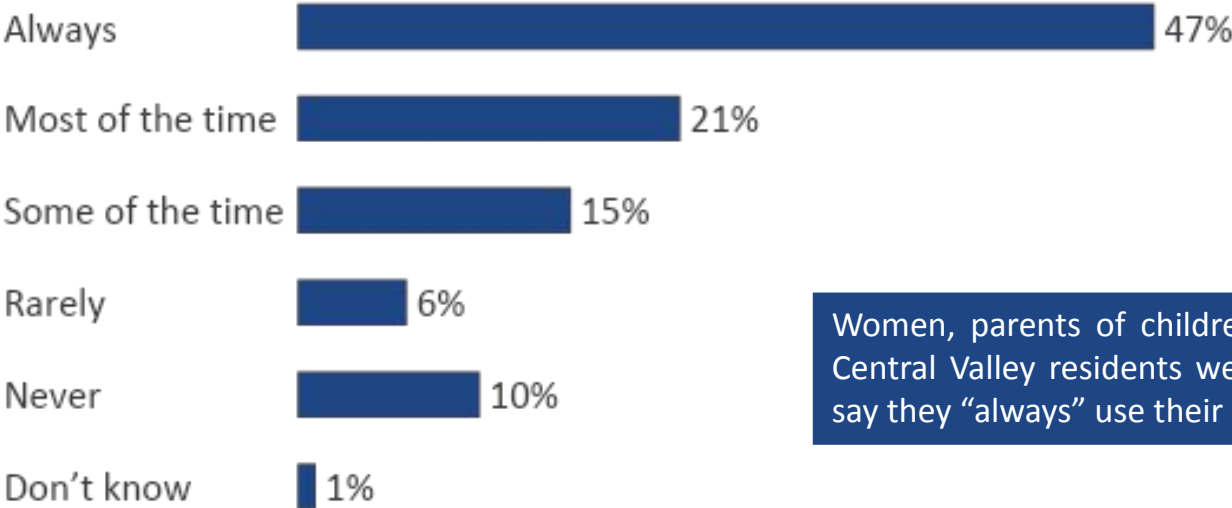
Kern County English language group: *[Getting \$50 additional for water] is probably not going to change anything that I do with the water that I already do. But it would absolutely be helpful. It would absolutely be another dinner and, like, it would absolutely bring more food in to the house.*



Half “always” use CalFresh benefits to purchase bottled drinking water.

And how often do you use your CalFresh benefits or any type of benefit to purchase bottled drinking water?

(Asked of Respondents Who Use CalFresh, n=466)



Women, parents of children ages 6-12 and Central Valley residents were most likely to say they “always” use their benefit this way.

Participants had little trust in public organizations when it comes to water.

- Participants expressed trust in family and friends, people in their community, and in the Spanish language group, organizations like the Immigration Council on water issues.
- They said that they do not trust public agencies or the water district on this topic.
- Spanish language participants even said they felt like the water district tries to confuse them and says one thing and does another.

Kern County Spanish language group: *[I trust] no one in the district. One talks and the letter that arrives says nothing will help you if you drink it. You will only be affected if you have been drinking it for a long time...They use that letter as an excuse saying that we told you the information...I trust that program that is called Immigration Council and they are helping us to investigate more about the water and all that can cause us harm.*

Kern County English language group: *At the end of the day you can only trust yourself. You can't depend on anybody around you. I mean that is a life lesson in itself. But you can't depend on no information, no water companies, no politicians, you have to educate yourself and you have to do what is necessary for your family and yourself to make sure that you get the food and the drinking water that you need. It is sad but it is true.*





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Questions & Answers

Please submit your questions through the Q&A box



What You Can Do Right Now



Join ENACT Day to call for policies that advance health equity

Register (English): bit.ly/ENACT2023 Register (en Español): bit.ly/ENACT-Espanol



Sign on to help

- Households afford drinking water when their tap water is not safe

Individuals: bit.ly/Water-Support Organizations: bit.ly/Water-Org-Support

- Nourish young kids in child care and support the providers who feed them

Individuals: bit.ly/FWC-Support Organizations: bit.ly/FWC-Org-Support

- People buy more with their CalFresh benefits through Fruit & Vegetable Pilot

Coming soon! Subscribe for updates: <https://nourishca.org/get-involved/subscribe/>



What You Can Do Right Now



<https://act.nourishca.org/>

Visit our Action Center to

- Engage with the **Food4All Campaign**: food assistance for Californians regardless immigration status. No exclusions. No exceptions. No delays.
- Join the **Thriving Transitions Campaign**: support justice impacted individuals accessing food and other critical resources immediately upon release from prison or jail





Thank you!

Have thoughts or questions to share?

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