

# Results of National Summer Meals Survey of Low-Income Families

March 29, 2013



*center for* BEST  
PRACTICES

[BESTPRACTICES.NOKIDHUNGRY.ORG](http://BESTPRACTICES.NOKIDHUNGRY.ORG)



# Agenda

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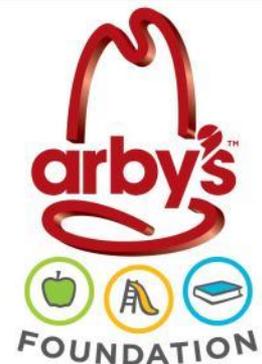
- Welcome and Overview
- Survey Findings + Q&A
- Major Take-Aways
- Resources and Next Steps
- Questions?

## No Kid Hungry and Summer

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- Increasing access to summer meals is a major strategy of No Kid Hungry and Share Our Strength is one of the leading national organizations supporting research in the field
- This survey is part of a larger initiative to work smarter during the summer
- Survey designed to help us understand more about what low-income families' lives are like during the summer and their interest in summer meals programs

This work was made possible through the generous support of the Arby's Foundation





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# Findings

Presented by Lauren Compton, Associate Research Director, APCO Insight



# Methodology

APCO Insight, the opinion research division of APCO Worldwide, designed and conducted the 2013 Summer Meals Survey. The research surveyed low income families in the United States.

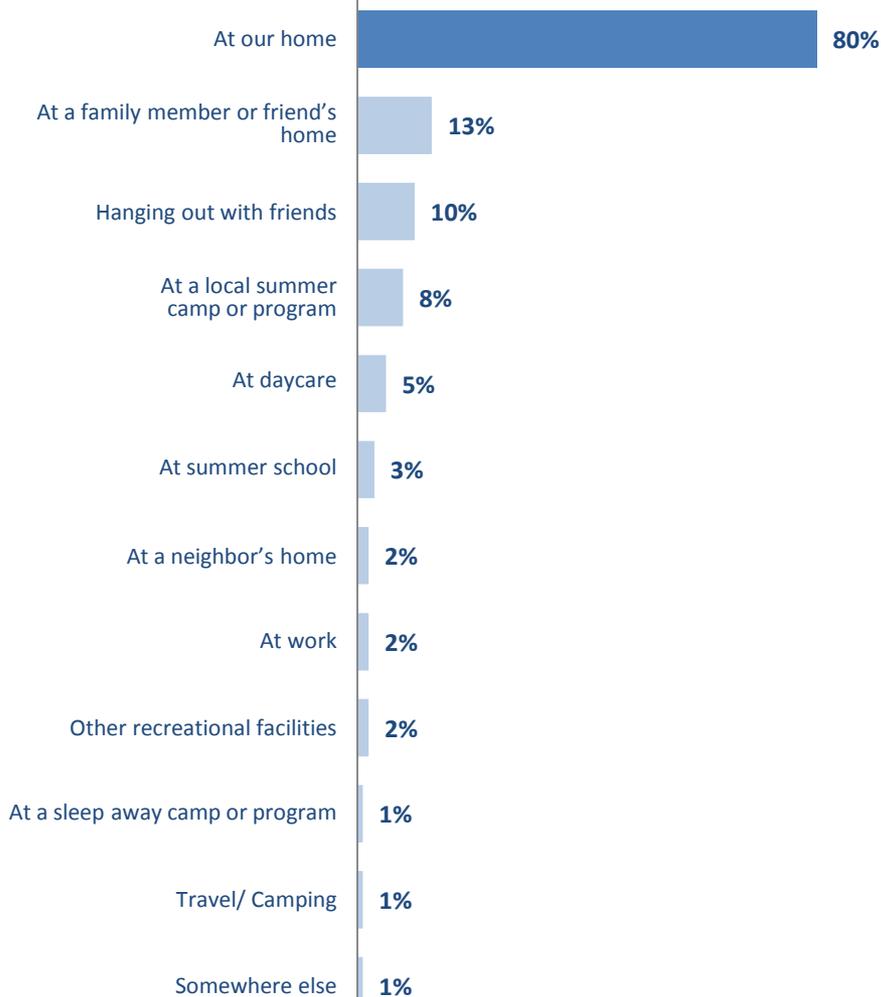
Online, landline and mobile telephone samples account for 45%, 41% and 14%, respectively, of the total completed interviews. Quotas were placed during interviewing and data have been weighted to ensure a representative balance by region, income level and race according to available census data for this population.

Eligibility	Poverty Income Ratio (PIR) $\leq$ 185% At least one child between 2 and 18 living in their household Household decision makers	
Sample Size & Margin of Error	900 national interviews 100 interviews in Baltimore 100 interviews in urban & suburban Colorado 100 interviews in Arkansas counties of focus*	( $\pm$ 3.3% at 95% confidence interval) ( $\pm$ 9.8% at 95% confidence interval) ( $\pm$ 9.8% at 95% confidence interval) ( $\pm$ 9.8% at 95% confidence interval)
Data Collection	Computer Aided Web Interviewing (CAWI) Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)	
Average Length of Interview	16-20 minutes	
Field Dates	February 5-20, 2013	

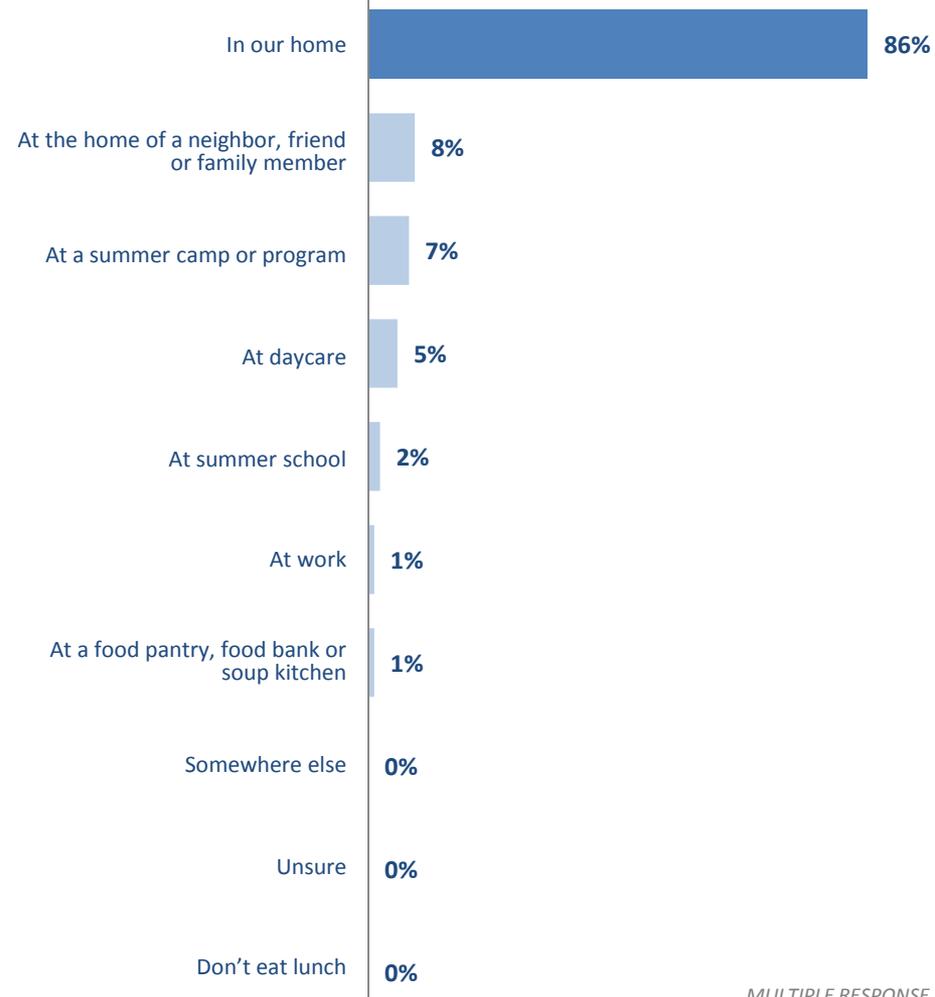
\*Pulaski, Benton, Crawford, Faulkner, Garland, Lonoke, Saline, Washington

# By and large, low income children are passing their summer days and eating lunch at home

*During the summer, my children spend most of their time...*



*During the summer, my children most often eat lunch...*

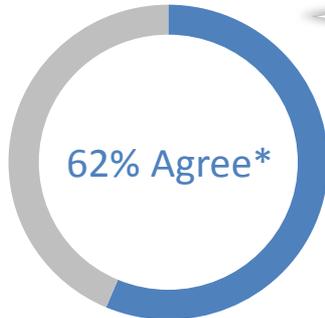


MULTIPLE RESPONSE

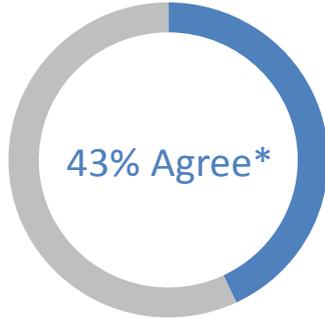
# Summer takes a toll on many low income families' already tight budgets

For families that spend more in the summer, **47%** report spending an additional **\$300+** in groceries each month

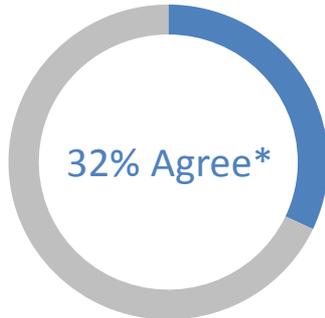
We spend more on food during the summer than during the school year



It is harder to make ends meet during the summer than during the school year

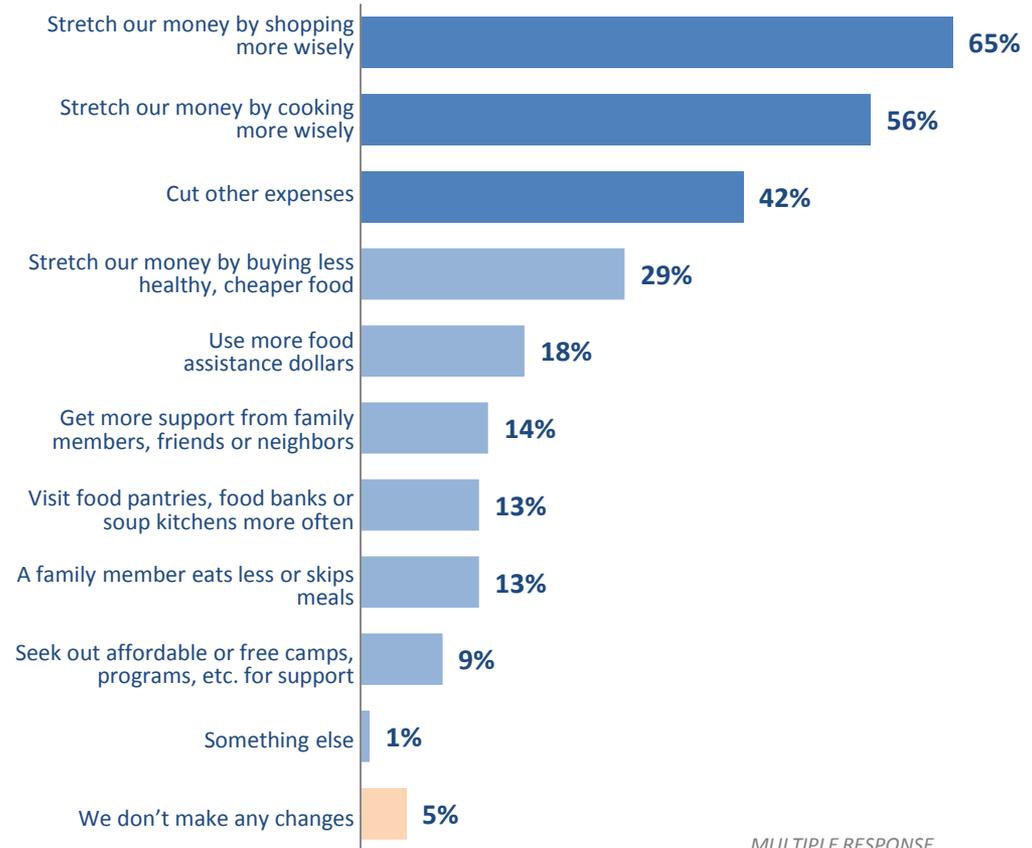


We sometimes find ourselves without enough money for food during the summer



\*Strongly or somewhat agree

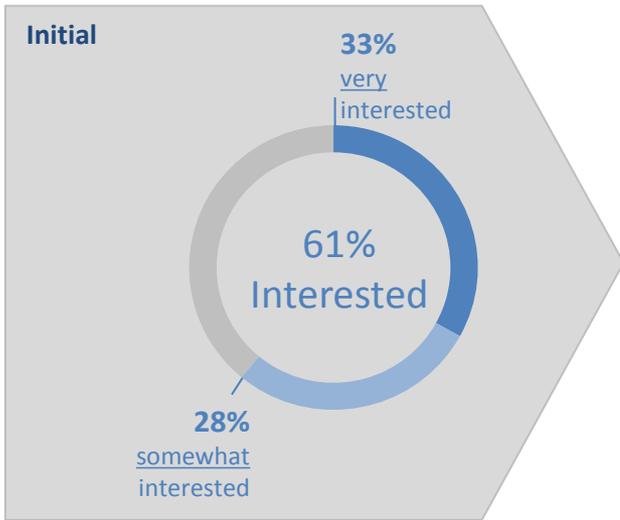
### Common Coping Mechanisms



MULTIPLE RESPONSE (n=630)

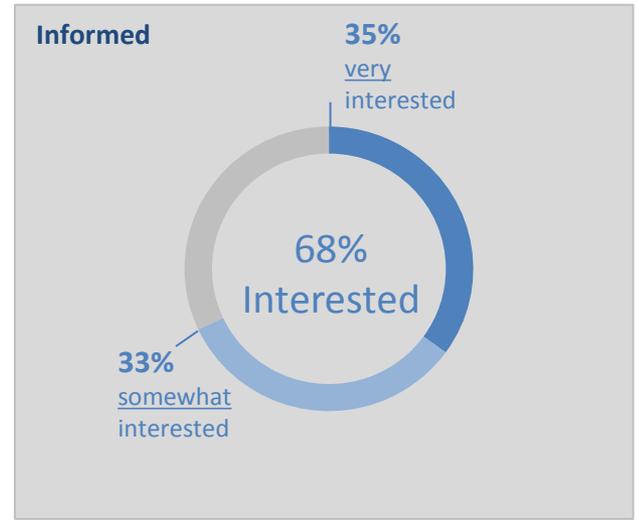
Q4a. Below are a few ways that some parents have said summer impacts their families. When it comes to your family, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements.  
 Q4b. During the summer, on average, how much more would you estimate your family spends on groceries each month?  
 Q5. And what changes, if any, does your family make to deal with increased food costs and/or tighter budgets during the summer?

# Low income families express interest in the Summer Meals program

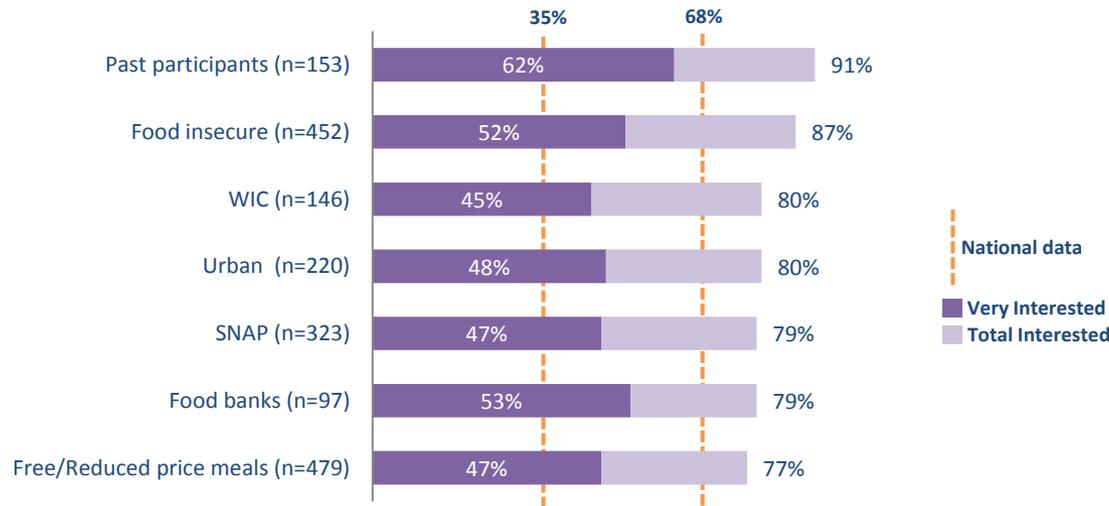


## Description

On weekdays in the summer, free meals are available to kids and teens ages 18 and younger at hundreds of summer meals sites across your state. Many sites offer fun learning and recreational activities so kids and teens can stay active and spend time with friends while enjoying healthy meals. Sites are organized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are held at safe local places like schools, churches, parks and recreation centers, and community centers. Meals served are tasty, follow USDA nutrition guidelines and help families save money.

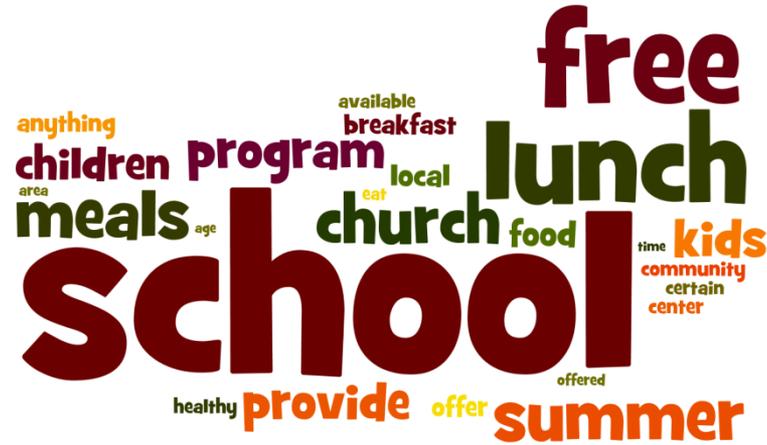
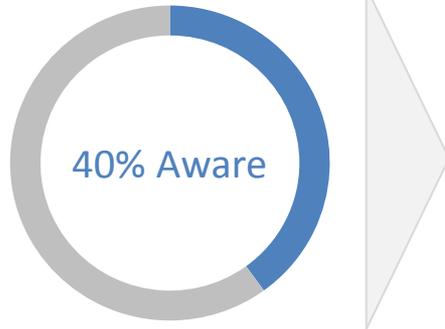


### Family types that report significantly higher interest against national average

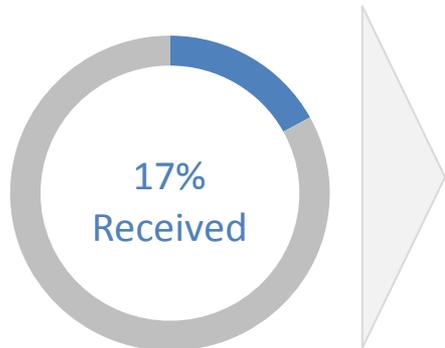


# The majority of parents do not know that free summer meals are available; participation is low

Aware of locations for free summer meals



Received a free summer meal

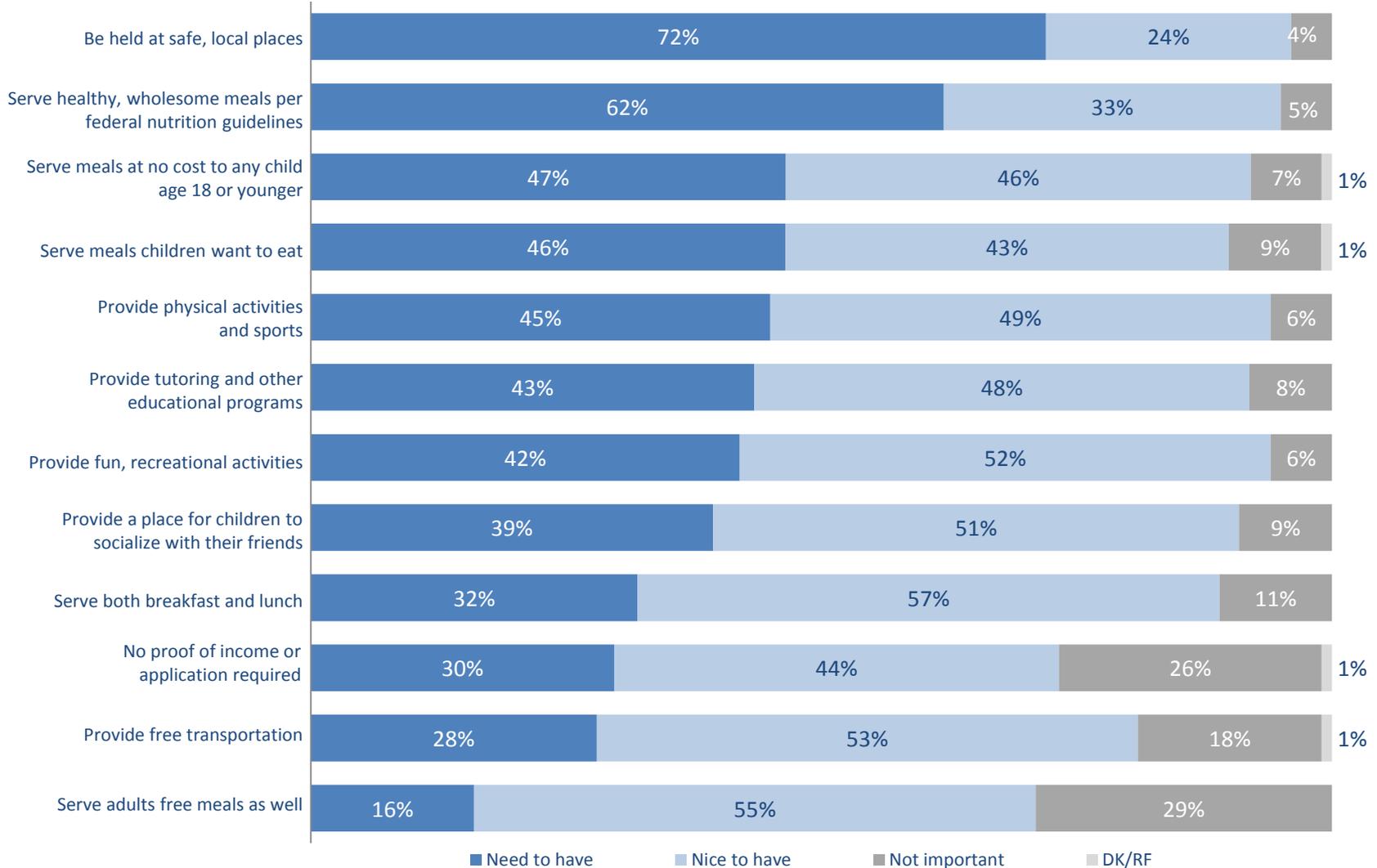


Recommend this free meals site to others (n=153)

Q6a. To the best of your knowledge, are there locations in your community where children can go for free meals in the summer?  
 Q7a. This past summer, did your child receive free meals at a location in your community such as a school, church, parks and recreation center, or community center?  
 Q6b. What, if anything, do you know about these free meals? (n=356) TOP 25 WORDS  
 Q7b. Would you recommend this free meals site to others?

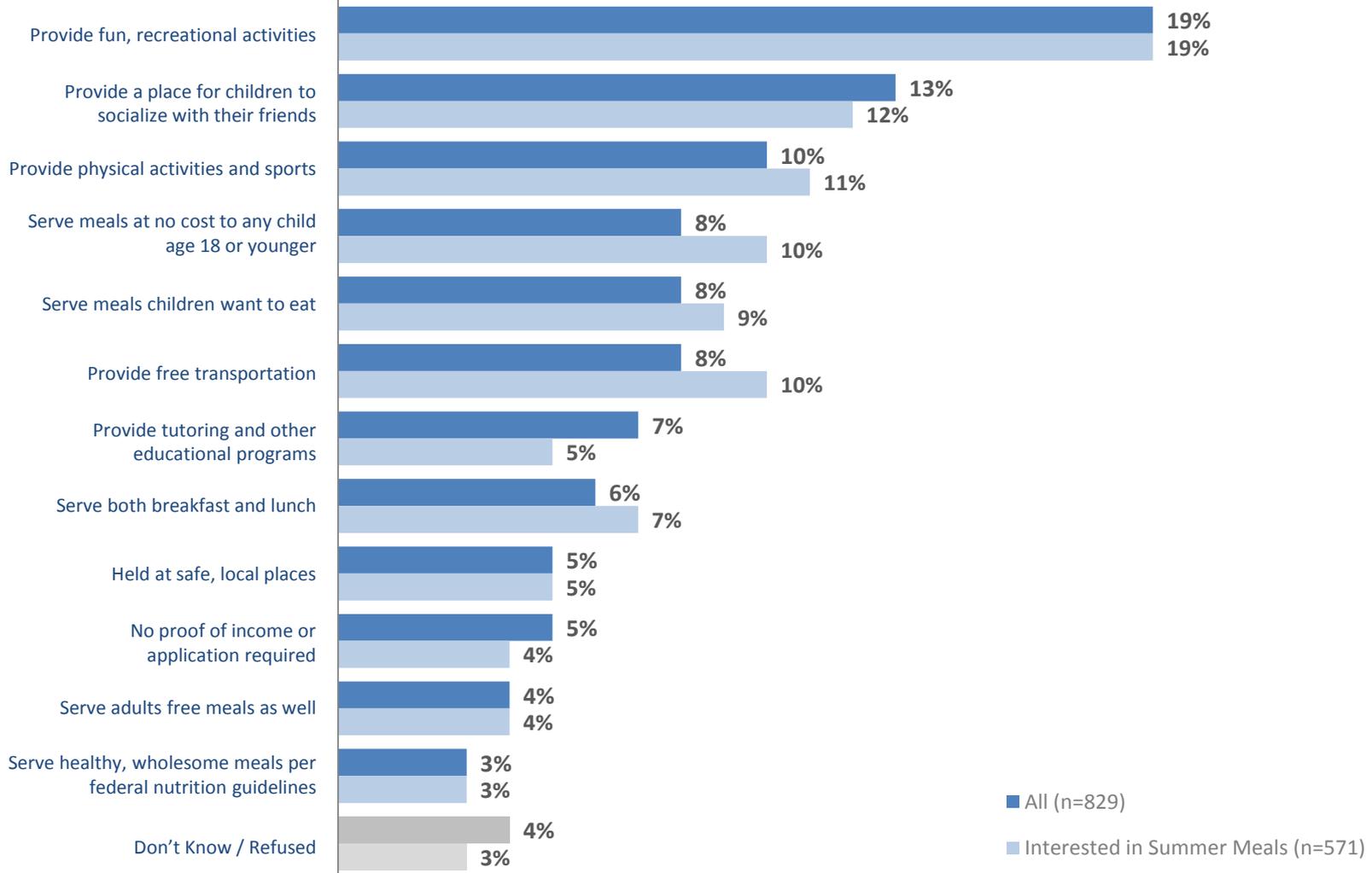
# Safety and health are of utmost importance; free, tasty meals and extracurricular activities are strong incentives

*Importance of services offered by Summer Meals*



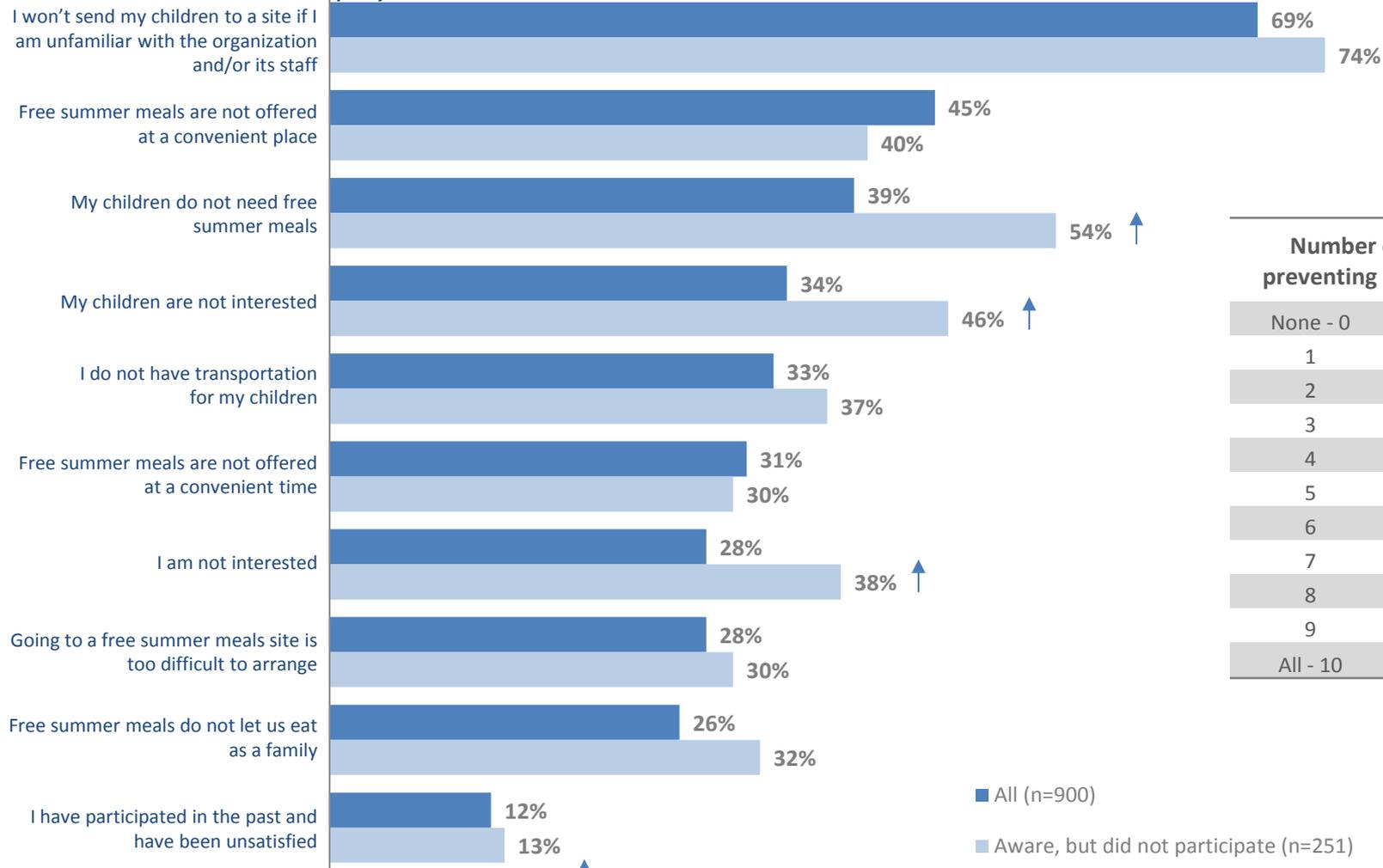
# When thinking from their child's perspective, providing a place for fun activities, socializing are the biggest draws

*Offering that is most likely to increase participation*



# Safety concerns are a significant barrier; in most cases, the greater the need the smaller the obstacle

## Reasons preventing participation (Yes)



↑ Statistically significant difference

### Number of reasons preventing participation

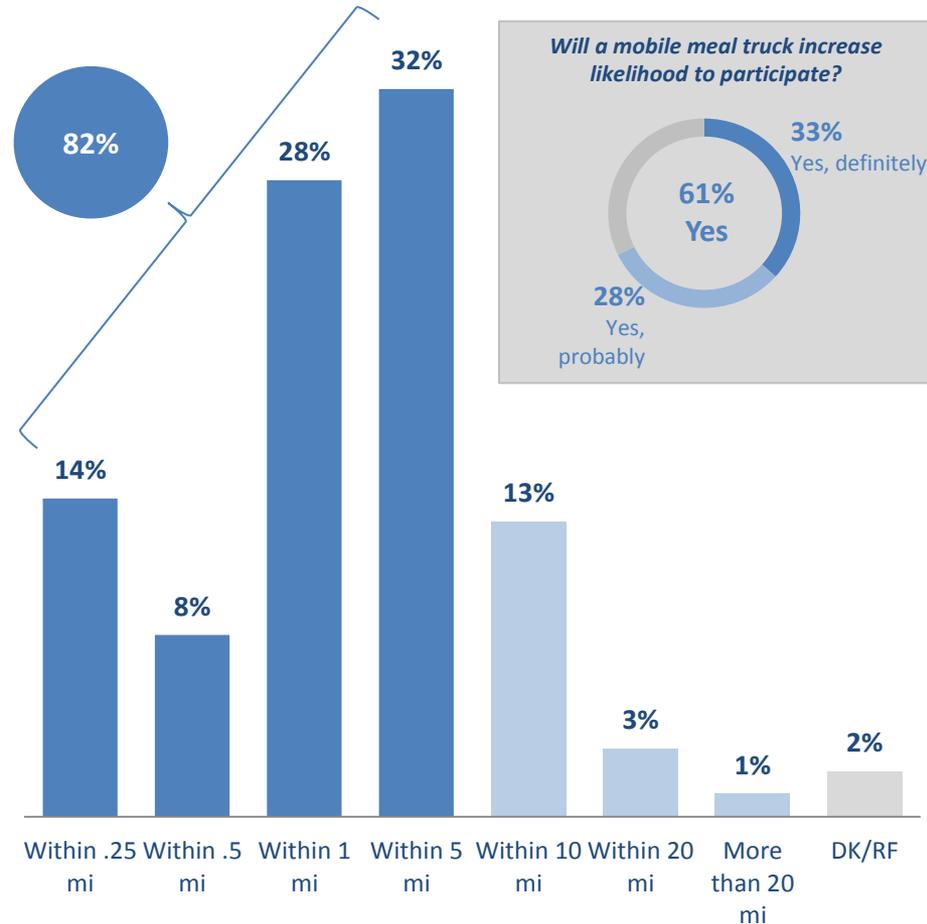
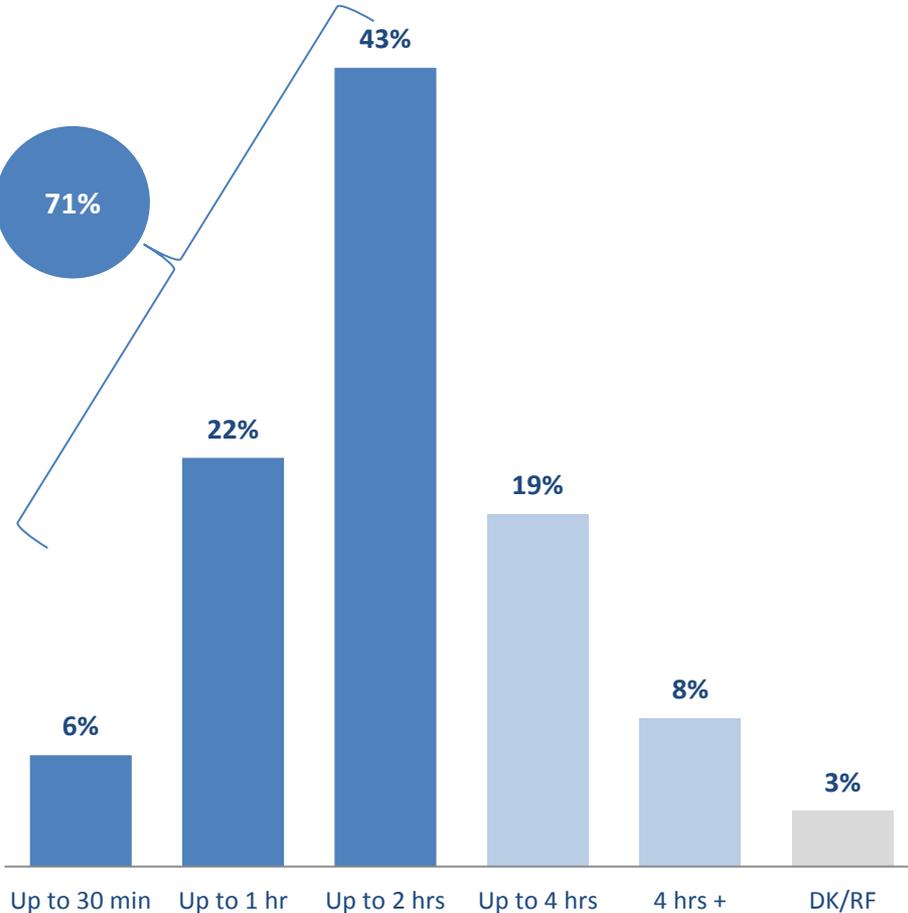
None - 0	8%
1	11%
2	17%
3	17%
4	17%
5	13%
6	7%
7	5%
8	2%
9	1%
All - 10	1%

70%

# To participate, the vast majority say the meal site should be open for up to two hours, within 5 miles

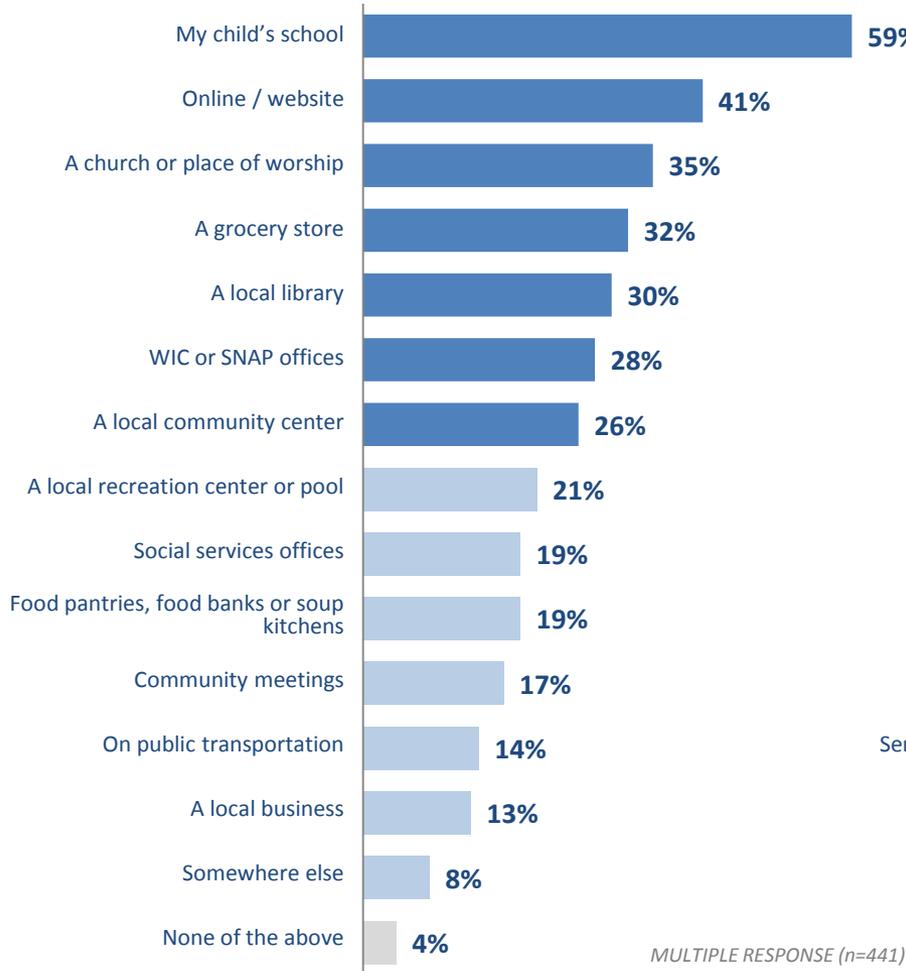
*How long would the meal site need to be open in order for your child to participate?*

*How close would the location need to be in order for your child to participate?*

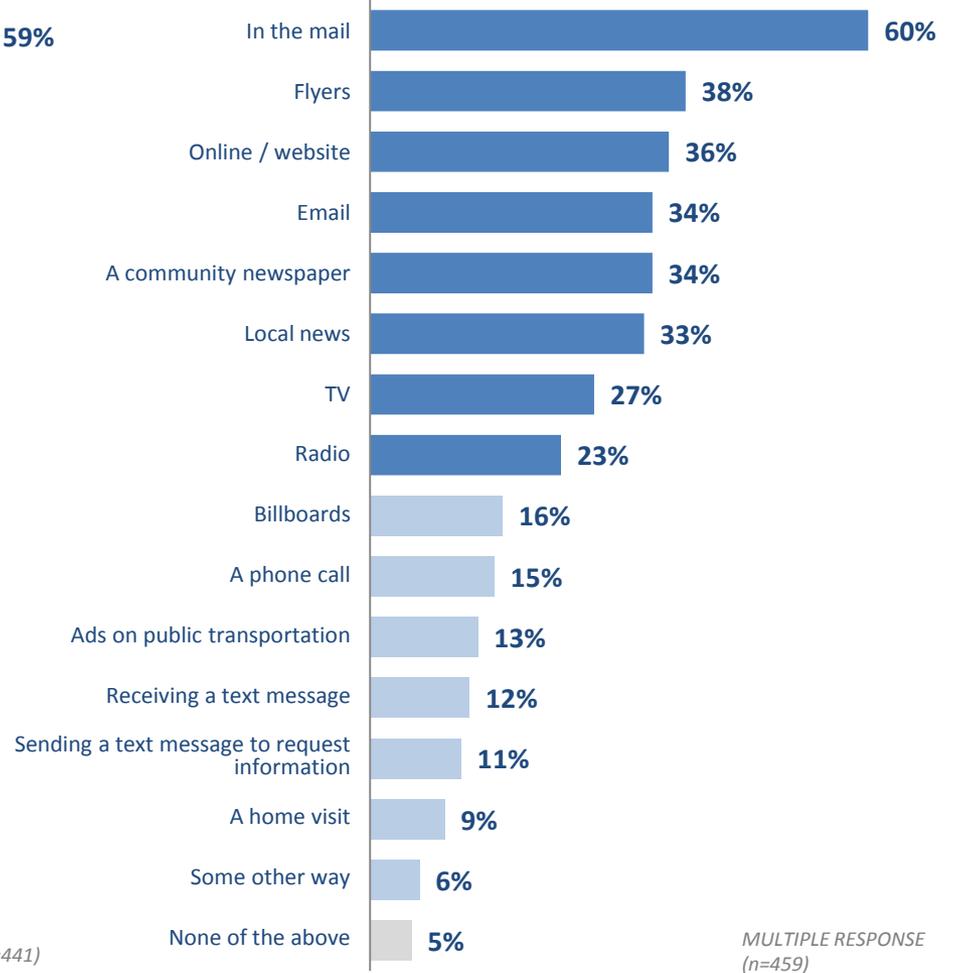


# Parents welcome a variety of information sources; most notably, their children's schools and via the mail

*Where would you want to learn about Summer Meals?*



*How would you want to learn about Summer Meals?*



# Questions?

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# Major Take-Aways

Presented by Share Our Strength Staff

## Key Programmatic Takeaways

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### There is additional need for summer food assistance

- Summer takes a toll on low-income families' budgets, especially with families whose kids eat a free or reduced-price lunch.

### The structure of the program doesn't allow us to reach kids where they already are

- 80 percent of low-income children are at their homes during the summer, and even more eat lunch at home most days; few are already in programs that can serve federally reimbursed summer meals.

## Key Programmatic Takeaways

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### Free summer meals programs are appealing to families

- Most low-income families are interested in the program, especially those who show a need for food assistance.
- Those who have experience with the program are interested in participating again – and 9 of 10 would recommend to others.

### Awareness is a problem – but not the whole problem

- Most families don't know about summer meal programs, but even amongst those who do know, only 1 in 4 report using programs.

## Key Programmatic Takeaways

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### Schools are a critical stakeholder for summer meals

- They are the most trusted source for information about summer programs and fit the bill for meal sponsors and sites.
- Schools should be a primary focus for program retention, expansion and promotion.

### Investments to expand the number or capacity of sites should focus on what families value

- Locations – and the people at those locations – must be considered safe and trustworthy by families.
- Families are looking for convenience, such as extending hours of meal service and using mobile strategies to provide meals at accessible locations.

## Key Programmatic Takeaways

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### Ensure high quality and appealing meals

- The quality of meals matters to parents and appeal matters to kids.
- Work with vendors and sites to improve meal quality; test recipes with kids; provide menus to parents.

### Support programming at sites

- Activities and socialization are a draw for kids.

## Key Marketing & Outreach Takeaways

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- Tap into communications channels of schools and faith communities to get the word out
- Target partnerships where families think about food and receive food assistance – especially WIC Clinics
- Work with partners to include information on websites, create user-friendly summer meals site locator website, and consider online advertising
- Work with grocery stores and Cooking Matters programs to promote summer meals
- Work with media outlets to donate ad space and report on information about the programs in their community
- Closely track what marketing tactics work best by asking families where they heard about the program

## Messaging

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Targeting messaging to low-income, food insecure families may show biggest gains.

- Consider messaging about how it's harder to make ends meet in the summer
- Emphasize that meals are healthy follow federal nutrition guidelines
- Emphasize that the meals are free
- Emphasize that sites are at safe, local places
- Highlight activities that are available at the site
- Include hours of operation

*More messaging info can be found in the Summer Meals Focus Group findings in the No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices website*

## Outreach Materials Best Practices

- Top-ranking channels: direct mail, flyers, online/website, email, community newspapers and local news
- Include website, phone number and text number on materials that are easy to remember, e.g. 1-800-SUMMERFOOD, [www.summerfoodCO.org](http://www.summerfoodCO.org), Text “FoodAR”
- Include site locations and hours of operation
- Use images of diverse audiences
- Track where materials are being distributed and how many
- Develop materials in English and Spanish

**FREE SUMMER MEALS**  
FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Summer should be a stress-free time full of **food, friends and fun**. Free summer meals can help.

- FREE to kids and teens age 18 and under
- Healthy meals based on USDA nutrition guidelines
- Served at sites such as schools and churches that may offer learning and recreational activities
- Fun, safe place for kids and teens to be active and visit with friends
- Help families save money
- No application or proof of income needed

Go to [www.strength.org/summermeals](http://www.strength.org/summermeals) or call 1-866-3HUNGRY to learn more, or text **FOOD** to 877-877 to find a site near you.

**NOKID HUNGRY**  
SHARE OUR STRENGTH

## Tracking Marketing & Outreach Results

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Set up tracking systems for how families hear about the program:

- # of hits to website
- # of calls to hotline
- # of text messages sent to request information
- # of materials disseminated
- Site survey for how kids found about the program
- Paid advertising: Online (# of clicks/estimated audience), TV (estimated audience), radio (estimated audience) and print (circulation)
- Programmatic data: # of meals served by month, # of new sites serving meals, % increase in additional federal funding coming into state

# Resources and Next Steps

Presented by Share Our Strength Staff

# More at the Center for Best Practices Website

- Major Findings
- Full Report
- Cross-tabs
- Webinar Recording
- Links to more resources

The screenshot shows a navigation bar with the following categories: STATE/LOCAL CAMPAIGNS, SCHOOL BREAKFAST, **SUMMER MEALS**, AFTERSCHOOL, EARLY CHILDHOOD NUTRITION, SNAP, and HEALTHY FOODS. Below the navigation bar is a main content area with a light blue background. It features the text: **PROVIDING THE BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES NEEDED TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN FIGHTING CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN YOUR STATE.** To the right of this text is a map of the United States with an orange button that says "View the State of Hunger Map »". Below the main content area is a section titled "Summer Meals".

**SUMMER MEALS HOME**

**EXAMPLES OF NO KID HUNGRY CAMPAIGN EFFORTS**

**SODEXO FOUNDATION SUMMER MEALS OUTREACH TOOLKIT**

**DELOITTE SUMMER MEALS EVALUATION TOOLKIT**

**ABOUT SUMMER MEALS**

**Summer Meals Survey Findings**

To help inform strategies for increasing access to summer meals, Share Our Strength partnered with APCO Insights in 2013 to conduct a national survey to learn more about what low-income families' lives are like during the summer and their interest in summer meals programs. The survey aimed to:

- Gauge current summertime food/meal behaviors of low-income families
- Determine impact of the loss of school meals and how families cope
- Measure awareness of Summer Meals Programs
- Validate barriers to participation uncovered in parent focus groups held in 2012
- Assess interest and willingness to participate
- Evaluate importance of specific program components
- Validate the best communication channels and messengers for outreach to families
- Capture newsworthy data points for potential media coverage

APCO Insight, the opinion research division of APCO Worldwide, designed and conducted the 2013 Summer Meals Survey. The research surveyed 1,200 low income families in the United States; 900 households nationally and oversamples of 100 each in Arkansas, Colorado and Baltimore, Maryland.

## More at the Center for Best Practices Website

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[bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals](https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals)

- Summer Meals Marketing & Outreach Toolkit
  - Press release
  - Radio PSA script
  - Photo Library
  - Tips for school-based outreach
  - Faith-based bulletin insert
  - Community news paper calendar listing
  - Letter to parents
  - Community newspaper article
  - Template print PSA/poster
- Summer Meals Research
- Summer Meals Focus Groups
- Share Our Strength Summer Meals Reports

## Potential New Hooks

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### Potential news hooks include:

- Three in five participants said they spend more on food in the summer
  - Nearly half are spending \$300 more a month on groceries
- 43 percent of families say it's harder to make ends meet in the summer
  - One-third find themselves without enough food in the summer
- More than half of families are cutting costs by shopping (65%) and cooking (56%) more wisely but some buy less healthy, cheaper food, visit food pantries and even eat less/skip meals.

# Questions?

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**Thank you!**