



**SCHOOL
NUTRITION
ASSOCIATION**

SCHOOL NUTRITION TRENDS REPORT

SY 2025-26

ABSTRACT

SNA surveyed its school nutrition director members in October 2025 to evaluate trends and assess financial and operational challenges for school meal programs, including barriers to offering local foods and resources needed to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods (UPFs).

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Objectives

- Identify the most salient current challenges facing school nutrition programs.
- Track the adequacy of reimbursement rates and trends in school meal prices.
- Evaluate the financial sustainability of school meal programs and the extent of unpaid meal charges/debt.
- Examine challenges school nutrition programs face in offering local foods.
- Understand what resources are necessary to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods (UPFs).
- Capture emerging menu trends.

Figure 1: Background and Sample

Background and Sample	
Survey open period	10/1/2025 - 10/31/2025
Full sample of surveyed school districts	3,890
Total number of unique respondent school districts	1,240
Response rate (after de-duplication)	31.9%

A note on interpreting statistical significance in this report: throughout this report, associations between variables that have been found to be statistically significant by a Chi-Square Test of Independence¹ are notated with the following symbols and corresponding meanings:

<https://libguides.library.kent.edu/spss/chisquare#:~:text=The%20Chi%2DSquare%20Test%20of%20Independence%20determines%20whether%20there%20is,Chi%2DSquare%20Test%20of%20Association.>

** Statistically significant at the .001 level or lower (highest level of significance).

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

For example, if there is an ** next to 'Free-and-Reduced %' in a table of results for a question asking if the respondents are 'Not at all concerned', 'Moderately concerned' or 'Seriously concerned', then we can assume that the pattern of results to the question ("concern" in this example) are significantly statistically different based on the respondents' free-and-reduced % category.

However, if there are no *s, then it is not likely that the difference in responses is statistically significant – in other words, there is no real, measurable difference in the outcome value of one variable as it relates to the other, above and beyond the expected random chance of responses being what they may.

Statistically significant association is different from causation. While these statistical tests can determine if a difference in responses is significantly different based on the attributes of another variable, they cannot determine causation. In other words, while we may know two variables are significantly associated with this test, we cannot know if one is truly causing the difference in the other.

Executive Summary

CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

- The top five challenges for school meal programs, calculated by combining the percentages of each item rated as 'moderate' or 'significant' challenges, are:
 1. Food costs (98.1% serious/moderate challenge, n = 1,206)
 2. Labor costs (95.2% serious/moderate challenge, n = 1,178)
 3. Equipment costs (94.5% serious/moderate challenge, n = 1,168)
 4. Administrative/regulatory burdens (94.0% serious/moderate challenge, n = 1,162)
 5. Limited culinary skills among staff (87.8% serious/moderate challenge, n = 1,085)
- The top 3 challenges for school meal programs are all rated as challenges at a higher rate than they were last year:
 - Equipment costs increased from 91.4% to 94.5% serious/moderate challenge this year
 - Food costs and labor costs increased slightly:
 - Food costs increased from 97.9% in 2024 to 98.1% serious/moderate challenge this year
 - Labor costs increased from 94.9% in 2024 to 95.2% serious/moderate challenge this year

Refer to [Appendix A](#) for response summary tables on each challenge, disaggregated by USDA FNS region, free-and-reduced rate, district enrollment and other selected variables.

Several statistically significant associations were identified, including:

- The Southeast and Southwest FNS regions both reported significant challenges with food costs, labor costs, and equipment costs at statistically significant levels higher than the overall average reported rates of these challenges.

- Respondents from districts that do not offer free meals to all students districtwide reported significant challenges with getting families to submit free-and-reduced meal applications/household income forms at a rate 19% higher than respondents from districts that offer meals to all students districtwide².
- 53.4% of respondents from the Western FNS region reported significant challenges with procurement issues (e.g. long lead times, substitutions, late deliveries, insufficient bid responses), which is 18.9% higher than the overall percentage for all respondents.

MEAL PRICES AND UNPAID MEAL DEBT

- The reported median per meal charge for students who pay full price for reimbursable meals increased in all but one category (high school breakfast) for both breakfast and lunch, with a range from a 1.6% increase for lunch at the high school level to an increase of 5.6% for breakfast at the elementary level.
- While median unpaid debt went down from \$6,900 in Fall 2024 to \$6,000 in Fall 2025, the districts that reported the most debt reported considerably higher amounts of debt than prior years.
 - Looking at the 90th percentile of districts reporting unpaid meal debt since Fall 2022 (that is, districts with a reported unpaid meal debt that is 90% higher than the rest of districts with reported unpaid meal debt), there was a 73% increase between Fall 2022 and Fall 2025. The figure at the 90th percentile increased from \$65,000 to \$86,660 from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 alone.
 - Programs with the largest amounts of debt have taken on a considerable amount of debt in the last year. Despite 123 fewer programs reporting debt, there was a large increase in the total reported debt (from \$20,265,861 in 2024 to \$25,288,737 in 2025), combined with a 49% increase in the average reported debt from \$26,456.74 in 2024 to \$39,329.30 in 2025.

² School nutrition programs offering free meals to all students districtwide may do so through several means: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide, local or state provision of free meals for all students, or a combination of the previous. At the time of writing, nine states (California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Vermont) have dedicated state funds to provide free school meals permanently.

- The largest percentages of directors reporting unpaid debt are from the Mountain Plains and the Midwest FNS regions, those programs with <26% free-and-reduced, and those programs not serving free meals to all students.
 - 92.2% of programs that do not offer meals free to all students reported having unpaid meal debt/charges, compared to 23.3% of programs who do offer all meals free.
 - Programs that must charge for meals reported having meal debt at a rate almost four times higher than programs that offer all meals free.
 - There is a statistically significant, inverse relationship between free-and-reduced percentage category and reporting unpaid meal debt: the percentage of programs with <26% free-and-reduced reported having unpaid debt at a rate four times higher than programs with >65% free-and-reduced. This gap has grown since last year, when programs with <26% free-and-reduced reported debt at a rate three times higher.

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 94.9% (n = 1,171) of responding directors reported serious or moderate concern for the financial sustainability of their school nutrition program 3 years from now, compared to 92.1% (n = 1,258) last year, and 91.6% (n= 1,183) of responding directors who responded the same in SY 2023-24.
 - The percentage of responding directors who report they have 'serious concern' for the financial sustainability of their school nutrition programs 3 years from now has consistently increased since SY 2023-24: from 44.6% in SY 2023-24 to 46.0% in SY 2024-25, up to 51.3% this year.
 - Programs not offering free meals to all students districtwide reported serious concern at a rate of over 10 percentage points more than programs that do offer free meals to all students districtwide.
- The percentage of school nutrition directors who reported that reimbursement rates were not sufficient to cover the costs of producing breakfast and lunch increased slightly (from 62.6% to 63.1% for breakfast and from 67.4% to 69.6% for lunch). Meanwhile, just over a quarter of respondents reported that breakfast reimbursement rates were sufficient to cover costs (26.1%, up from 24.8% last

year) and 20.7% of responding directors reported that lunch reimbursement rates were sufficient to cover costs (up slightly from 20.5% the previous year). The percentage of school nutrition directors who reported 'Don't know/Not sure' for lunch and breakfast decreased (from 12.6% in 2024 to 10.7% in 2025 for breakfast and 12.2% in 2024 to 9.7% in 2025 for lunch).

- The percentage of school nutrition directors reporting that per meal reimbursement rates alone are sufficient to cover the cost of producing a lunch was almost two and a half times as high for programs serving free meals to all students districtwide, compared to programs not serving free meals to all students (27.4% vs. 11.2%). For breakfast, it was almost twice as high for programs serving free meals to all students districtwide, compared to programs not serving free meals to all students (32.9% vs. 16.5%).

LOCAL FOODS

- Almost three-fourths (73.0%, n = 904) of respondents reported their program was working to offer more local foods with school meals.
- The top five challenges school nutrition programs face in offering local foods are:
 1. Higher cost (68.9%, n = 854)
 2. Short local growing season (53.1%, n = 658)
 3. Limited capacity/resources to process raw local foods (48.5%, n = 602)
 4. Insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributors (48.1%, n = 597)
 5. Insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases (37.7%, n = 468)
- There is a statistically significant relationship between FNS region and citing the challenge of a shorter local growing season in regard to offering local foods, with respondents from the Northeast, the Mountain Plains, and the Midwest citing the highest rates of challenge, and respondents from the Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions citing the lowest rates of challenge.

- Notably, 71.8% of respondents in the Northeast region reported short local growing season as a challenge, versus 36.9% of respondents from the Southeast region.

RESOURCES NEEDED TO REDUCE RELIANCE ON UPFS

- School nutrition programs reported needing **increased** resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals:
 1. Funding (99.1%, n = 1,198)
 2. Time to test recipes/Menu development (96.1%, n = 1,163)
 3. Culinary training (94.8%, n = 1,147)
 4. Staff (94.4%, n = 1,139)
 5. Equipment and infrastructure (93.7%, n = 1,130)

MENU TRENDS

- Approximately two-thirds of all responding school nutrition programs offer scratch-prepared entrees (71.1%, n = 771), locally-grown/raised foods (66.1%, n = 718), culturally relevant menu options (65.3%, n = 708), and clean label options (64.8%, n = 621) on a daily or weekly basis.

Respondent Characteristics

Figure 2: [USDA FNS Region](#)

Region	n	%
Mid-Atlantic	106	8.6
Midwest	298	24.1
Mountain Plains	112	9.0
Northeast	142	11.5
Southeast	241	19.5
Southwest	161	13
Western	179	14.4
Total	1,239	100.0

Figure 3: District Enrollment

Enrollment	n	%
<1,000	213	17.2
1,000 - 2,499	302	24.4
2,500 - 4,999	230	18.5
5,000 - 9,999	204	16.5
10,000 - 24,999	176	14.2
>25,000	115	9.3
Total	1,240	100.0

Figure 4: Free-and-Reduced Rate

Free-and-reduced %	n	%
<26%	196	15.8
26 - 50%	448	36.1
51 - 65%	292	23.5
>65%	304	24.5
Total	1,240	100.0

Figure 5: Do any of the schools in your district currently participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

CEP Participation	n	%
Yes	766	61.8
No	452	36.5
Don't know/Not sure	22	1.8
Total	1,240	100.0

Figure 6: Do all schools in your district serve all meals free to all students?

Free Meals Status	n	%
Not All Meals Free	514	41.5
All Meals Free	726	58.5
Total	1,240	100.0

Results

CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

- The top five challenges for school meal programs, calculated by combining the percentages of each item rated as 'moderate' or 'significant' challenges, are:
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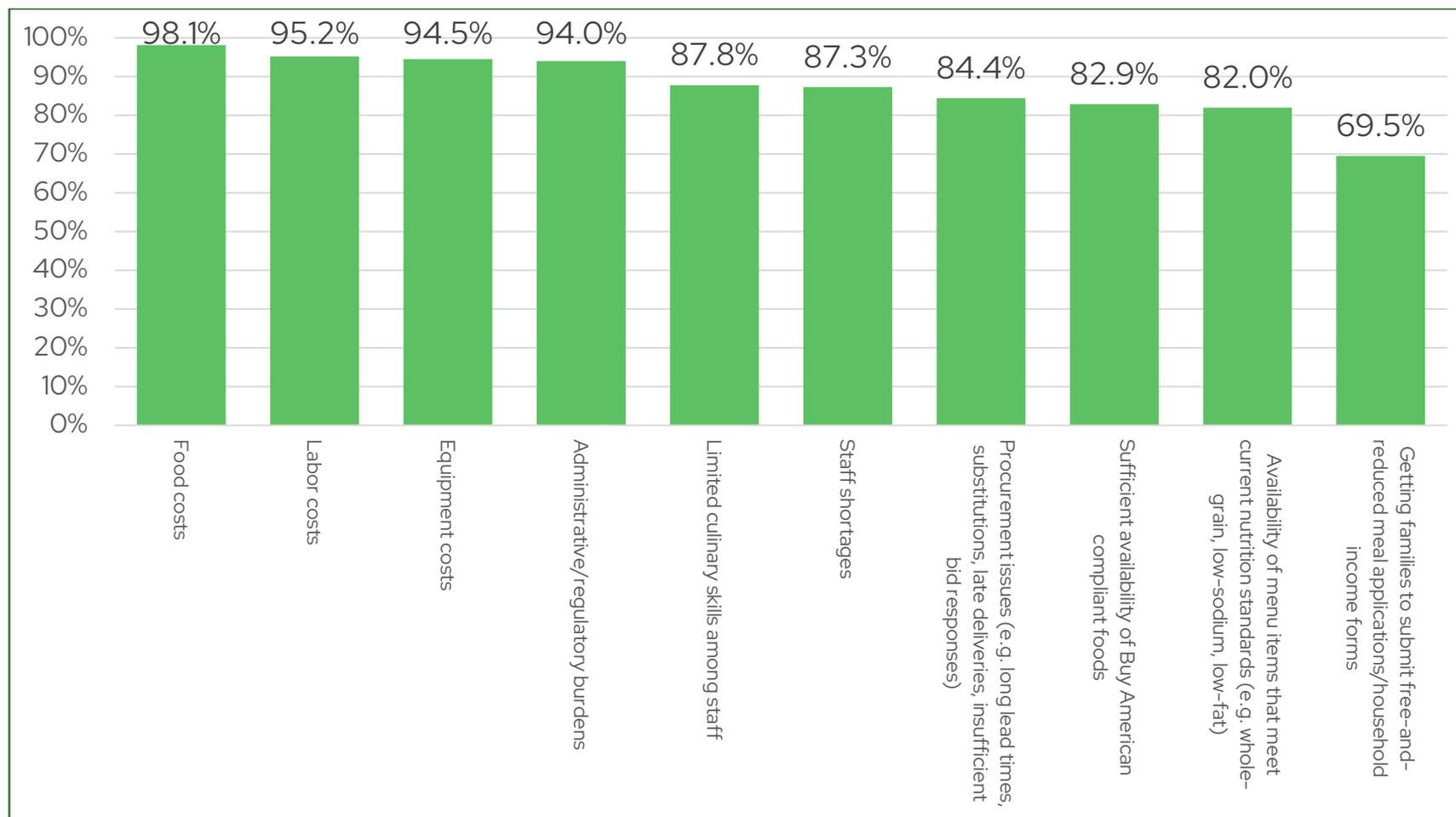
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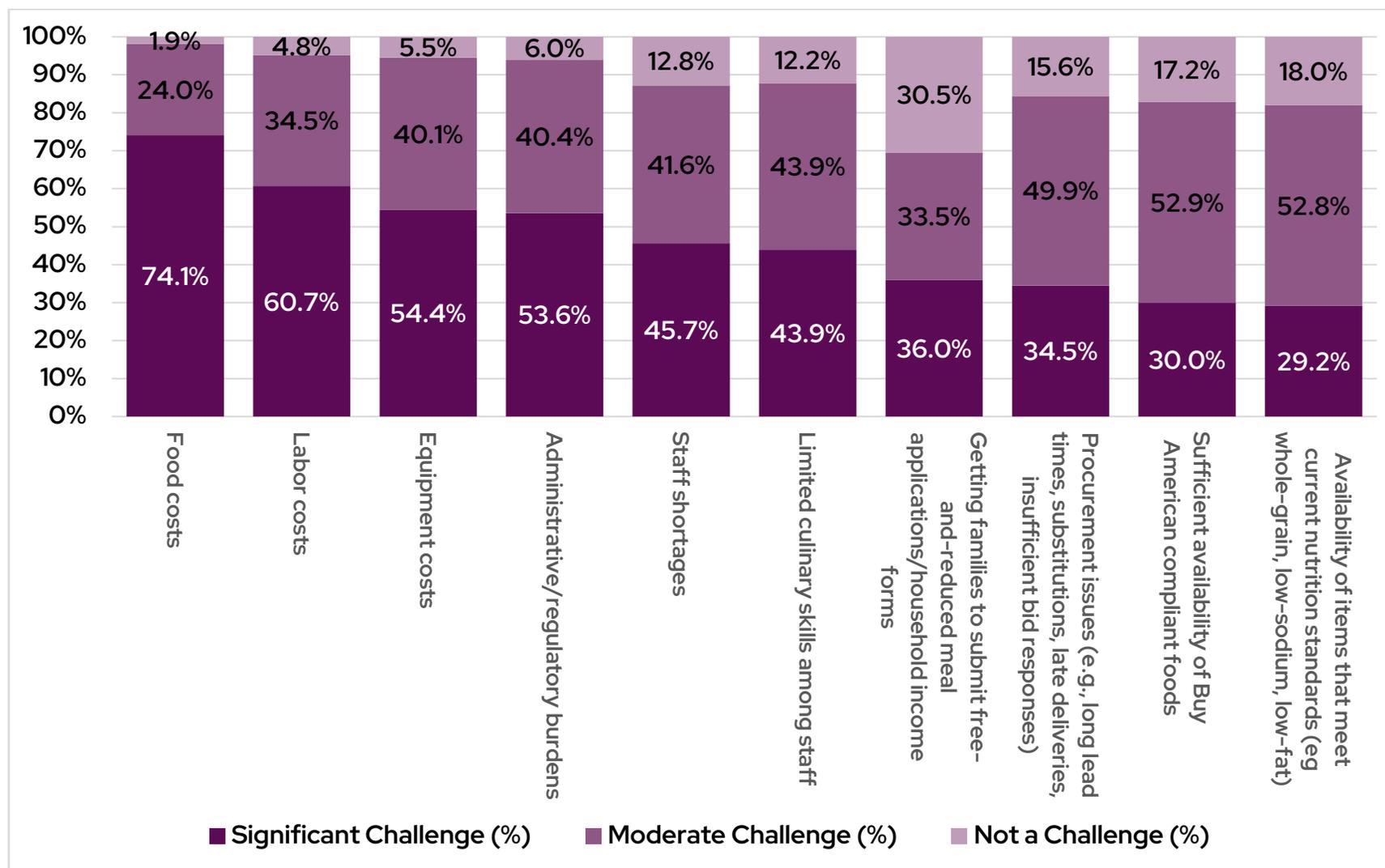
³ School nutrition programs offering free meals to all students districtwide may do so through several means: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide, local or state provision of free meals for all students, or a combination of the previous. At the time of writing, nine states (California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Vermont) have dedicated state funds to provide free school meals permanently.

Figure 7: Significant or Moderate Challenges for Your School Meal Program (%)



Note: Each bar represents the percentage of school nutrition director respondents who identified a given item as either a 'Significant' or 'Moderate' challenge for their school meal program. Number of responses to items varies. Minimum n = 855; Maximum n = 1,206.

Figure 8.1: Challenges for Your School Program by Severity



Note: Number of responses to items varies. Minimum n = 855; Maximum n = 1,206.

Figure 8.2: Challenges for Your School Program by Severity

#	Issue	Significant Challenge (%)	Moderate Challenge (%)	Not a Challenge (%)	n
1	Food costs	74.1%	24.0%	1.9%	1,229
2	Labor costs	60.7%	34.5%	4.8%	1,237
3	Equipment costs	54.4%	40.1%	5.5%	1,236
4	Administrative/regulatory burdens	53.6%	40.4%	6.0%	1,236
5	Staff shortages	45.7%	41.6%	12.8%	1,239
6	Limited culinary skills among staff	43.9%	43.9%	12.2%	1,236
7	Getting families to submit free-and-reduced meal applications/household income forms	36.0%	33.5%	30.5%	1,230
8	Procurement issues (e.g., long lead times, substitutions, late deliveries, insufficient bid responses)	34.5%	49.9%	15.6%	1,239
9	Sufficient availability of Buy American compliant foods	30.0%	52.9%	17.2%	1,235
10	Availability of items that meet current nutrition standards (e.g. whole-grain, low-sodium, low-fat)	29.2%	52.8%	18.0%	1,235

Figure 9: Significant/Moderate Challenges for Your School Meal Program - Comparison between SY 2025-26 and SY 2024-25

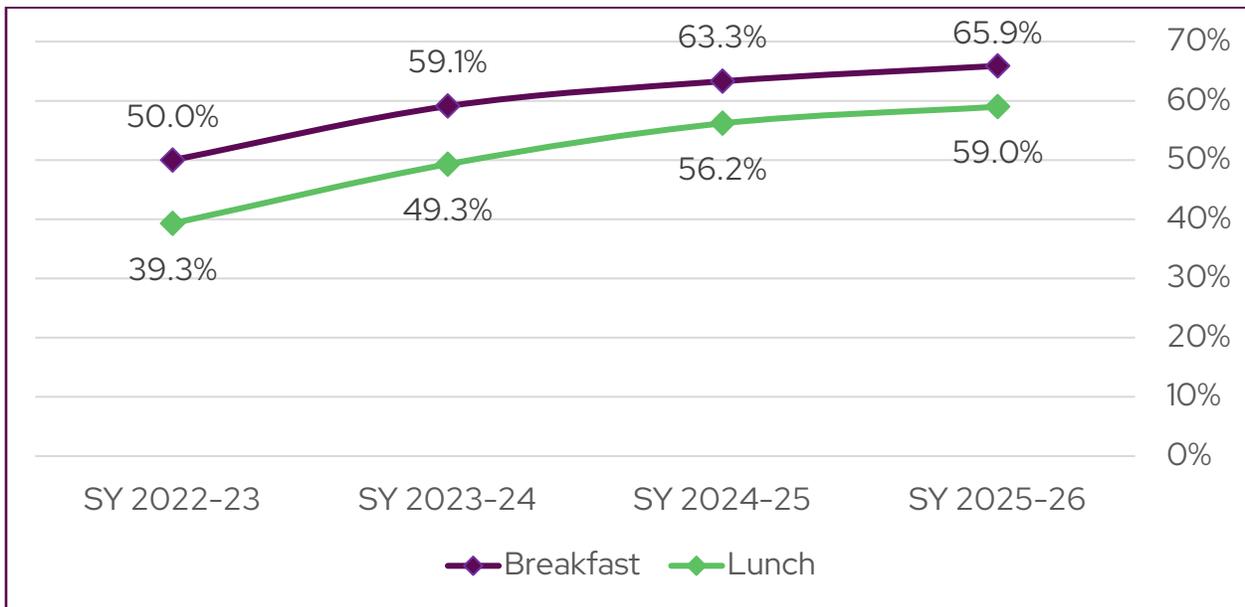
#	Issue	Significant or Moderate Challenge SY 2025-26 (%)	Significant or Moderate Challenge SY 2024-25 (%)
1	Food costs	98.1%	97.9%
2	Labor costs	95.2%	94.9%
3	Equipment costs	94.5%	91.4%
4	Administrative/regulatory burdens	94.0%	-
5	Limited culinary skills among staff	87.8%	-
6	Staff shortages	87.3%	88.7%
7	Procurement issues (e.g. long lead times, substitutions, late deliveries, insufficient bid responses)	84.4%	86.8%
8	Sufficient availability of Buy American compliant foods	82.9%	-
9	Availability of menu items that meet <i>current</i> nutrition standards (e.g. whole-grain, low-sodium, low-fat)	82.0%	86.2%
10	Getting families to submit free-and-reduced meal applications/household income forms	69.5%	69.9%
Note: n of specific items varies.			
<p>Red = % of respondents rating a challenge as 'Significant or Moderate' has increased from last year to this year. Green = % of respondents rating a challenge as 'Significant or Moderate' has decreased from last year to this year.</p>			

MEAL PRICES AND UNPAID MEAL DEBT

- The reported median per meal charge for students who pay full price for reimbursable meals increased in all but one category (high school breakfast) for both breakfast and lunch, with a range from a 1.6% increase for lunch at the high school level to an increase of 5.6% for breakfast at the elementary level.
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- There is a statistically significant, inverse relationship between free-and-reduced percentage category and reporting unpaid meal debt: the percentage of programs with <26% free-and-reduced reported having unpaid debt at a rate

four times higher than programs with >65% free-and-reduced. This gap has grown since last year, when programs with <26% free-and-reduced reported debt at a rate three times higher.

Figure 10: Is your program currently offering free school breakfast and/or lunch to ALL students districtwide? – SY 2022-23 – SY 2025-26



Note: School nutrition programs offering free meals to all students districtwide may do so through several means: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide, local or state provision of free meals for all students, or a combination of the previous. SY 2025-26: n = 1,240. SY 2024-25: n = 1,387. SY 2023-24: n = 1,343. SY 2022-23: n = 1,224. Percentages may not total to 100.0% due to rounding.

Figure 11: Per meal charge for students who pay full price for reimbursable meals for SY 2025-26

	School Level	10th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile (median)	75th percentile	90th percentile	Average	n
Breakfast	Elementary	\$1.48	\$1.63	\$1.90	\$2.23	\$2.50	\$1.93	365
	Middle	\$1.50	\$1.75	\$2.00	\$2.25	\$2.52	\$2.00	366
	High	\$1.50	\$1.75	\$2.00	\$2.30	\$2.75	\$2.06	363
Lunch	Elementary	\$2.35	\$2.75	\$3.00	\$3.30	\$3.62	\$3.02	465
	Middle	\$2.69	\$2.90	\$3.20	\$3.50	\$3.86	\$3.23	467
	High	\$2.75	\$3.00	\$3.25	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$3.32	465

Note: This question asked only of those who indicated that they were not 100% CEP districts and indicated that they were not providing breakfast and/or lunch for free to all students in their district.

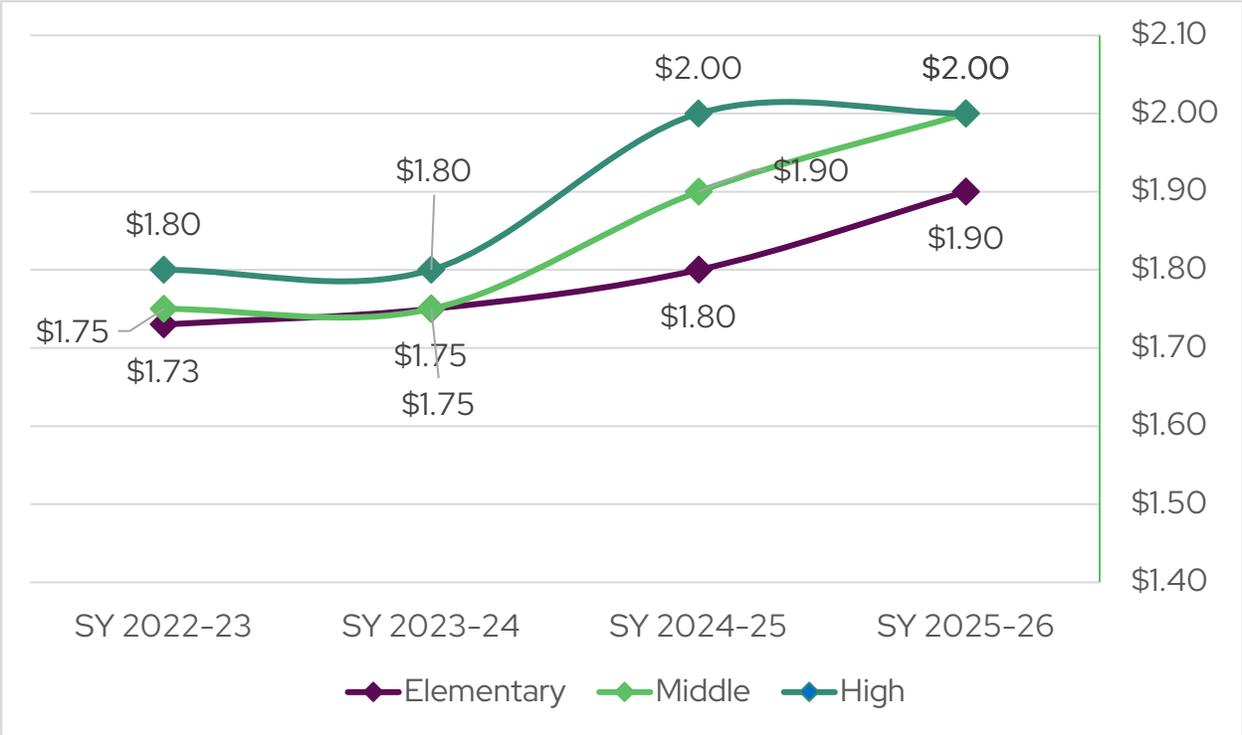
Figure 12: Median per meal charge for students who pay full price for reimbursable meals - SY 2025-26 vs. 2024-25

	School Level	SY 2025-26	SY 2024-25	% Difference
Breakfast	Elementary	\$1.90	\$1.80	5.6%
	Middle	\$2.00	\$1.90	5.3%
	High	\$2.00	\$2.00	0.0%
Lunch	Elementary	\$3.00	\$2.95	1.7%
	Middle	\$3.20	\$3.10	3.2%
	High	\$3.25	\$3.20	1.6%

Note: This question asked only of those who indicated that they were not 100% CEP districts and indicated that they were not providing breakfast and/or lunch for free to all students in their district.

Color code: Red indicates a price increase, yellow indicates no change from SY 2024-25 to SY 2025-26.

Figure 13: Median per meal charge for students who pay full price for breakfast by grade level: SY 2022-23 to SY 2025-26

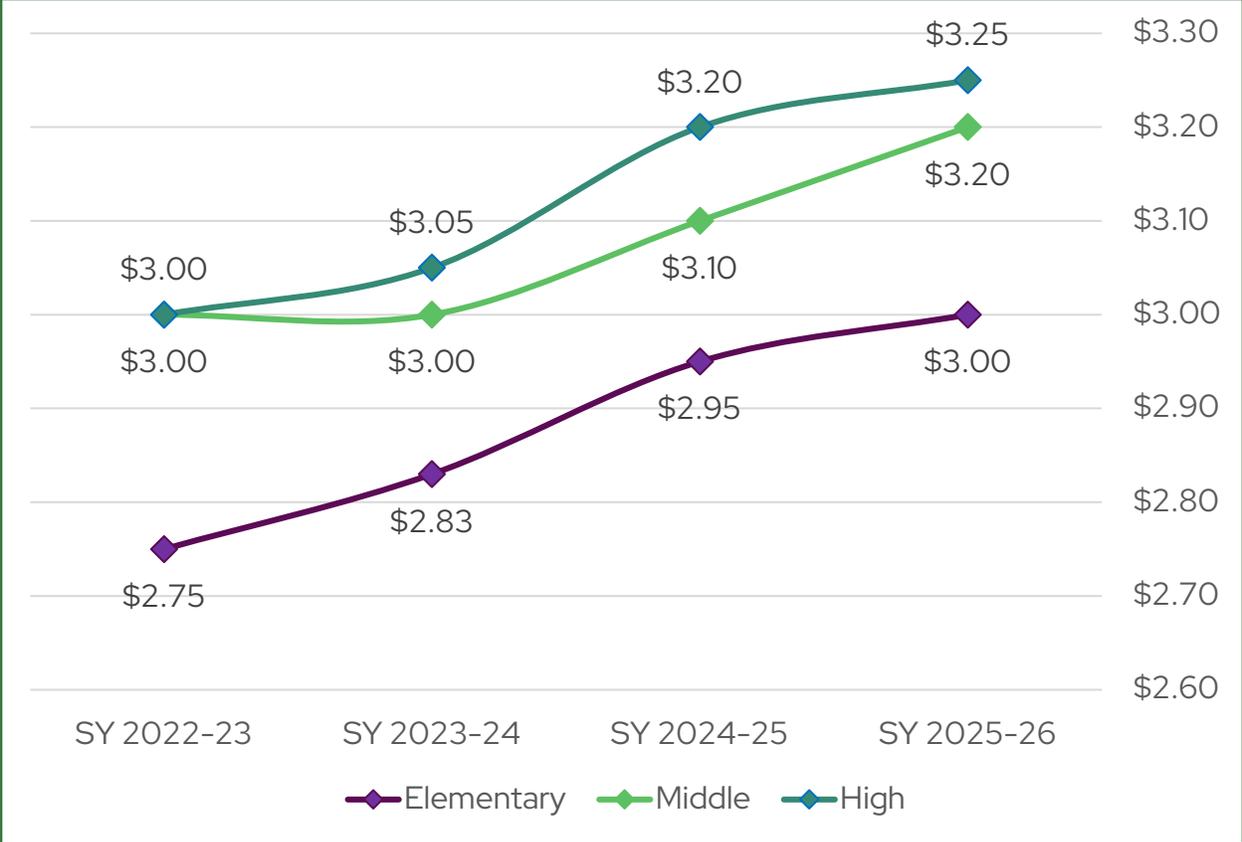


Note: This question asked only of those who indicated that they were not 100% CEP districts and indicated that they were not providing breakfast and/or lunch for free to all students in their district.

Figure 14: Median per meal charge for students who pay full price for breakfast for SY 2025-26 - Breakouts

	Overall	Elementary (n)	Middle (n)	High (n)
		\$1.90 (365)	\$2.00 (366)	\$2.00 (363)
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	\$1.68 (16)	\$1.68 (16)	\$1.68 (16)
	Midwest	\$1.85 (113)	\$2.00 (113)	\$2.00 (110)
	Mountain Plains	\$2.05 (69)	\$2.10 (66)	\$2.10 (68)
	Northeast	\$1.85 (23)	\$2.03 (24)	\$2.25 (25)
	Southeast	\$1.75 (49)	\$1.80 (49)	\$1.85 (49)
	Southwest	\$1.70 (64)	\$1.85 (65)	\$2.00 (61)
	Western	\$2.35 (30)	\$2.45 (32)	\$2.50 (33)
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	\$2.00 (93)	\$2.10 (92)	\$2.20 (91)
	26 - 50%	\$1.90 (196)	\$2.00 (198)	\$2.00 (196)
	51 - 65%	\$1.85 (51)	\$2.00 (51)	\$2.00 (52)
	>65%	\$1.75 (25)	\$1.75 (25)	\$1.83 (24)
District Enrollment	<1,000	\$2.00 (51)	\$2.15 (53)	\$2.20 (54)
	1,000 - 2,499	\$2.00 (80)	\$2.00 (78)	\$2.00 (75)
	2,500 - 4,999	\$1.85 (69)	\$2.00 (69)	\$2.00 (70)
	5,000 - 9,999	\$1.90 (52)	\$2.00 (53)	\$2.00 (52)
	10,000 - 24,999	\$1.93 (60)	\$2.00 (60)	\$2.00 (60)
	25,000+	\$1.70 (53)	\$1.75 (53)	\$1.75 (52)
<p>Note: This question asked only of those who indicated that they were not 100% CEP districts and indicated that they were not providing breakfast and/or lunch for free to all students in their district.</p>				

Figure 15: Median per meal charge for students who pay full price for lunch by grade level: SY 2022-23 to SY 2025-26



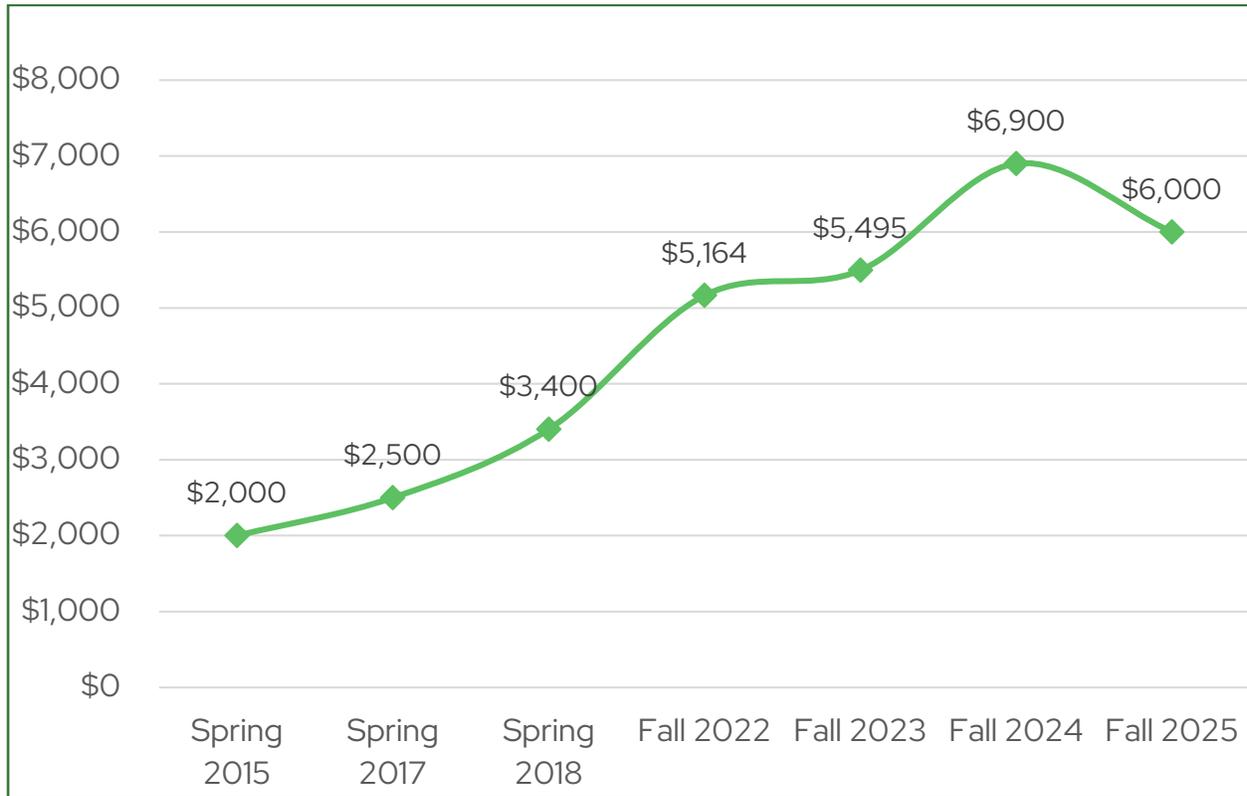
Note: This question asked only of those who indicated that they were not 100% CEP districts and indicated that they were not providing breakfast and/or lunch for free to all students in their district.

Figure 16: Median per meal charge for students who pay full price for lunch for SY 2025-26 - Breakouts

	Overall	Elementary (n)	Middle (n)	High (n)
		\$3.00 (465)	\$3.20 (467)	\$3.25 (465)
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	\$3.00 (41)	\$3.10 (40)	\$3.25 (41)
	Midwest	\$3.00 (139)	\$3.20 (141)	\$3.20 (138)
	Mountain Plains	\$3.08 (74)	\$3.30 (72)	\$3.30 (74)
	Northeast	\$3.28 (24)	\$3.63 (24)	\$3.75 (25)
	Southeast	\$2.85 (63)	\$3.00 (63)	\$3.00 (64)
	Southwest	\$2.75 (82)	\$3.00 (84)	\$3.10 (79)
	Western	\$3.45 (41)	\$3.70 (42)	\$3.75 (43)
Free-and-Reduced%	<26%	\$3.20 (117)	\$3.40 (115)	\$3.50 (112)
	26 - 50%	\$3.00 (233)	\$3.20 (238)	\$3.25 (235)
	51 - 65%	\$2.85 (75)	\$3.00 (74)	\$3.00 (79)
	>65%	\$2.90 (40)	\$3.00 (40)	\$3.00 (39)
District Enrollment	<1,000	\$3.10 (75)	\$3.23 (74)	\$3.30 (73)
	1,000 - 2,499	\$3.10 (99)	\$3.25 (98)	\$3.35 (94)
	2,500 - 4,999	\$3.00 (89)	\$3.28 (90)	\$3.35 (93)
	5,000 - 9,999	\$2.95 (67)	\$3.15 (70)	\$3.25 (68)
	10,000 - 24,999	\$3.00 (73)	\$3.20 (73)	\$3.25 (75)
	25,000+	\$2.85 (62)	\$3.00 (62)	\$3.03 (62)

Note: This question only asked of those who indicated that they were not 100% CEP districts and indicated that they were not providing breakfast and/or lunch for free to all students in their district.

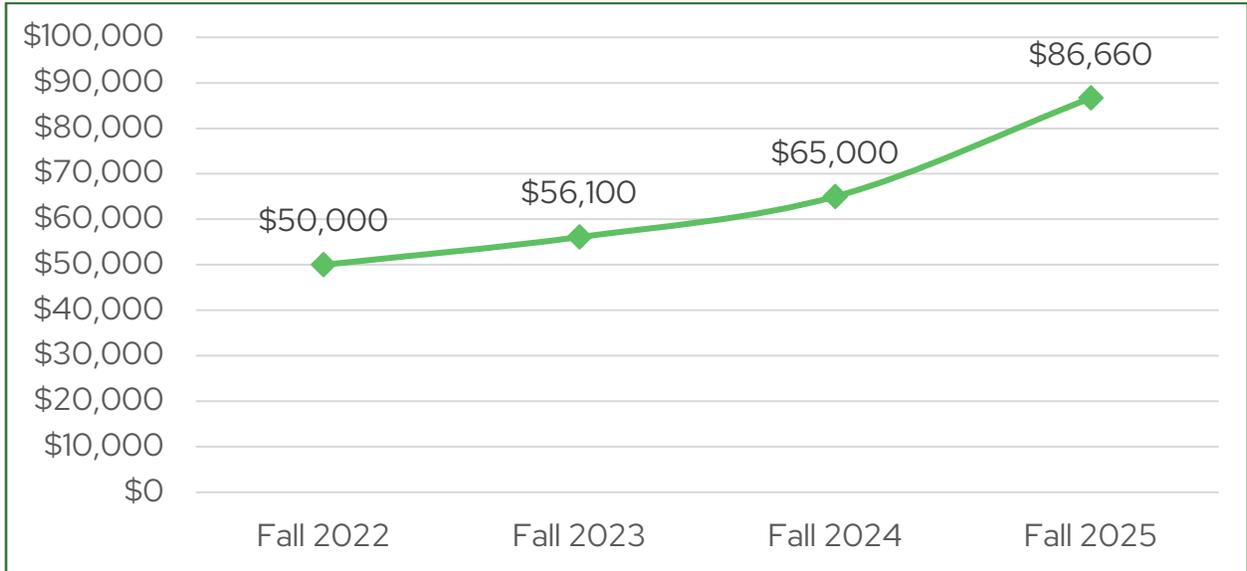
Figure 17: Reported median unpaid charges/debt: Spring 2015 – Fall 2025



Note: Spring 2015 n = 627. Spring 2017 n = 897. Spring 2018 n = 570. Fall 2022 n = 808. Fall 2023 n = 847. Fall 2024 n = 766. Fall 2025 n = 643.

- While median unpaid debt went down from \$6,900 in fall 2024 to \$6,000 in fall 2025, the districts that reported the most debt reported considerably higher amounts of debt than prior years. Looking at the 90th percentile of districts reporting unpaid meal debt since Fall 2022 (that is, districts with a reported unpaid meal debt that is 90% higher than the rest of districts with reported unpaid meal debt), there has been a 73% increase between Fall 2022 and Fall 2025. The figure at the 90th percentile increased from \$65,000 to \$86,660 from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 alone.
- Programs with the largest amounts of debt have taken on a considerable amount of debt in the last year. Despite 123 fewer programs reporting debt, there was a large increase in the total reported debt (from \$20,265,861 in 2024 to \$25,288,737 in 2025), combined with a 49% increase in the average reported debt from \$26,456.74 in 2024 to \$39,329.30 in 2025.

Figure 18: Unpaid meal charges/debt: 90th percentile figures from Fall 2022 to Fall 2025



	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Median	\$5,164	\$5,495	\$6,900	\$6,000
Average	\$22,655	\$21,940	\$26,457	\$39,329
90th Percentile	\$50,000	\$56,100	\$65,000	\$86,660
Total Reported Debt	\$19,189,031	\$17,727,508	\$20,265,861	\$25,288,737
Total N	847	808	766	643

Figure 19: Median unpaid meal charges/debt - SY 2025-26 vs SY 2024-25

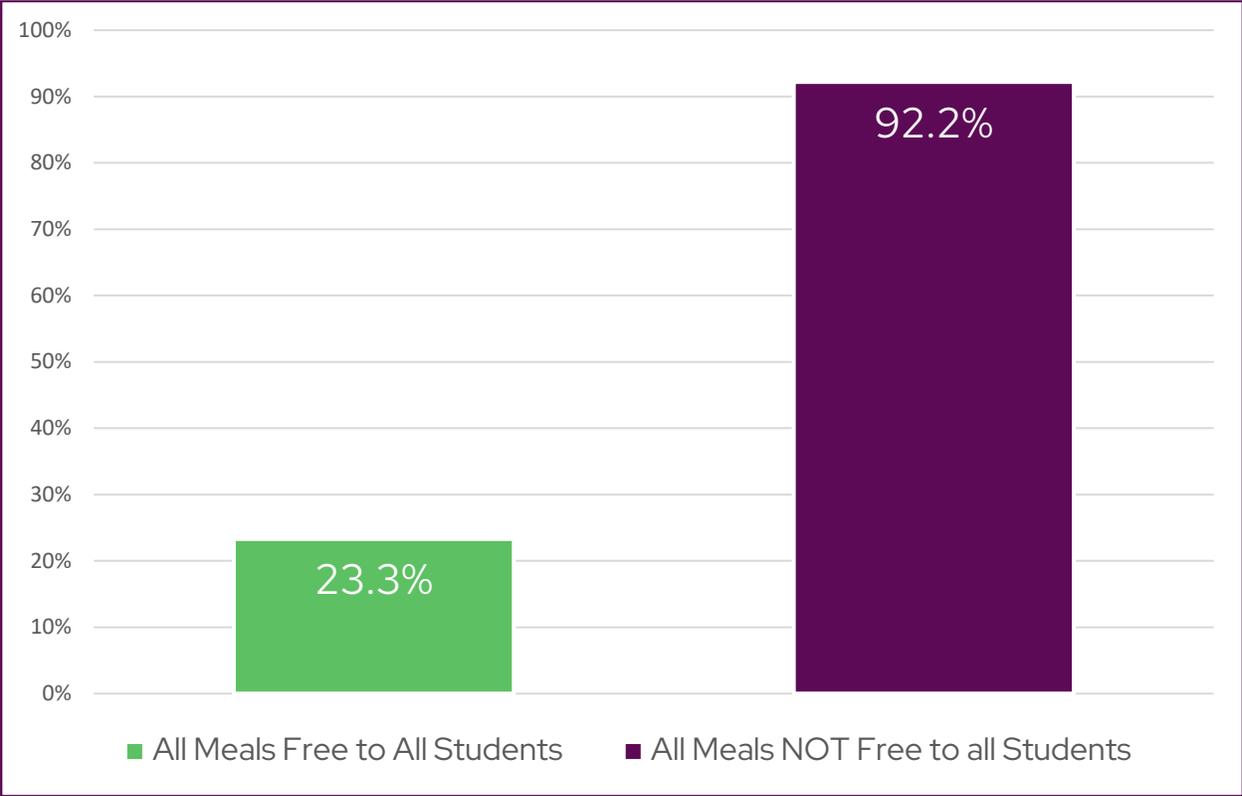
		SY 2025-26	SY 2024-25	Difference	SY 2025-26 N	SY 2024-25 N
Overall		\$6,000.00	\$6,900.00	\$900.00	643	766
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	\$19,000.00	\$18,108.00	(\$892.00)	59	65
	Midwest	\$4,500.00	\$4,000.00	(\$500.00)	195	249
	Mountain Plains	\$6,000.00	\$6,861.50	\$861.50	79	88
	Northeast	\$2,230.00	\$4,996.50	\$2,766.50	62	68
	Southeast	\$8,800.00	\$7,527.00	(\$1,273.00)	85	100
	Southwest	\$10,664.00	\$12,000.00	\$1,336.00	95	121
	Western	\$8,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$2,000.00	67	75
Free-and- Reduced%	<26%	\$4,419.50	\$4,964.00	\$544.50	156	176
	26 - 50%	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$0.00	311	360
	51 - 65%	\$6,324.50	\$7,736.00	\$1,411.50	116	147
	>65%	\$6,662.00	\$5,000.00	(\$1,662.00)	60	83
District Enrollment	<1,000	\$2,000.00	\$1,353.00	(\$647.00)	107	111
	1,000 - 2,499	\$3,500.00	\$4,200.00	\$700.00	141	181
	2,500 - 4,999	\$6,893.50	\$5,300.00	(\$1,593.50)	126	165
	5,000 - 9,999	\$10,405.00	\$10,000.00	(\$405.00)	107	129
	10,000 - 24,999	\$20,000.00	\$22,916.50	\$2,916.50	95	104
	25,000+	\$44,000.00	\$40,713.50	(\$3,286.50)	67	76
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	\$2,800.00	\$3,500.00	\$700.00	169	203
	No	\$7,965.00	\$8,040.00	\$75.00	474	561

Color coding: **red**=reported debt increased from SY 2023-24 to SY 2024-25, **gold**=reported debt stayed the same from SY 2023-24 to SY 2024-25, **green**=reported debt increased from SY 2023-24 to SY 2024-25.

Figure 20: Reported unpaid meal charges/debt: Breakouts

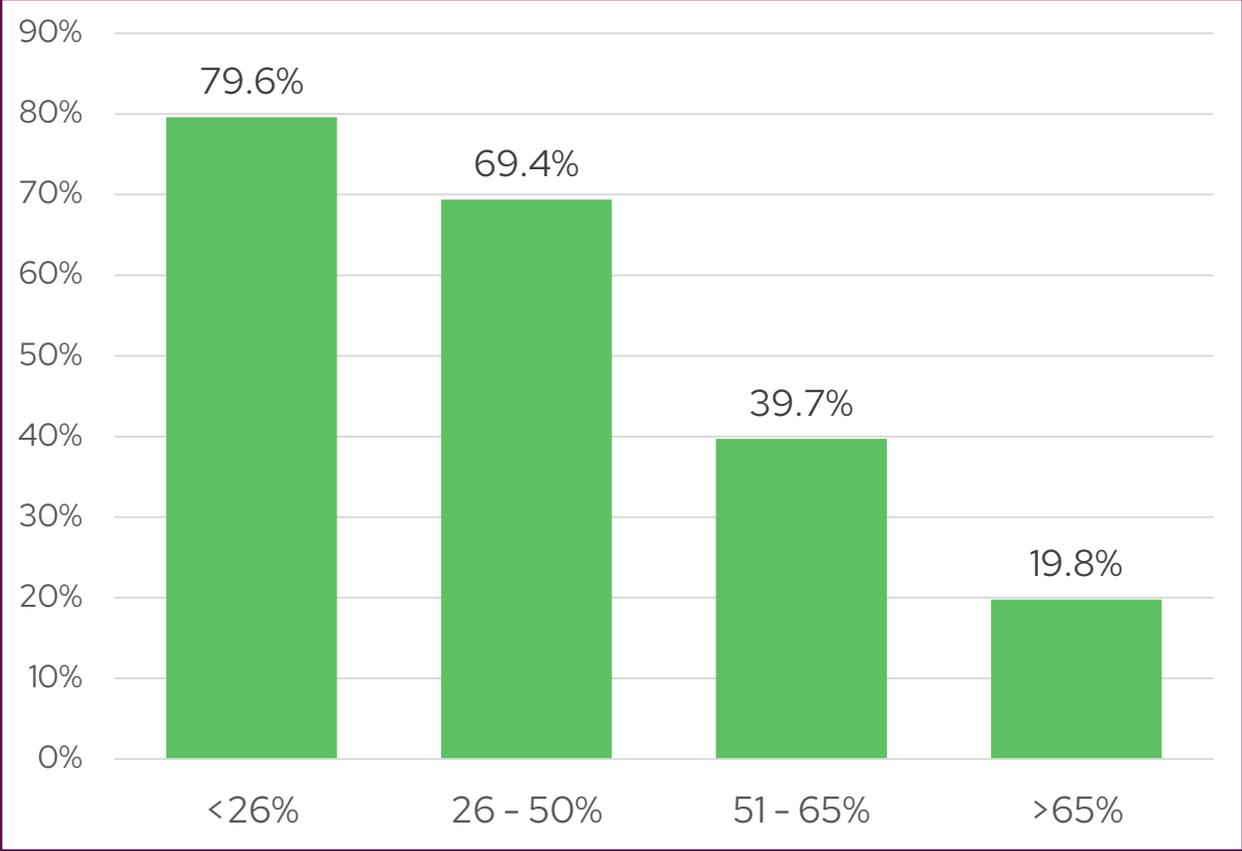
	Overall	Reported Unpaid Meal Debt (%)	10th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile (median)	75th percentile	90th percentile	Average	Total Reported Debt	n
		51.9%	\$492.80	\$2,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$26,500.00	\$80,660.00	\$39,329.30	\$25,288,737	643
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	55.7%	\$912.00	\$4,352.00	\$19,000.00	\$64,300.00	\$200,000.00	\$144,158.64	\$8,505,360	59
	Midwest	65.7%	\$389.60	\$1,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$12,000.00	\$472,126.00	\$19,377.54	\$3,778,620	195
	Mountain Plains	70.5%	\$350.00	\$1,800.00	\$6,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$85,000.00	\$35,341.94	\$2,792,803	79
	Northeast	43.7%	\$200.00	\$567.50	\$2,230.00	\$6,275.00	\$23,850.00	\$7,963.18	\$493,717	62
	Southeast	35.3%	\$1,120.00	\$2,950.00	\$8,800.00	\$40,000.00	\$87,060.00	\$32,364.22	\$2,750,959	85
	Southwest	59.0%	\$1,123.60	\$3,966.00	\$10,664.00	\$40,000.00	\$131,900.00	\$44,327.35	\$4,211,098	95
	Western	37.4%	\$487.00	\$2,000.00	\$8,000.00	\$44,850.00	\$103,851.40	\$39,644.48	\$2,656,180	67
Free-and-Reduced%**	<26%	79.6%	\$300.00	\$1,725.00	\$4,419.50	\$12,000.00	\$50,633.00	\$21,959.24	\$3,425,642	156
	26 - 50%	69.4%	\$513.20	\$2,068.00	\$8,000.00	\$31,252.00	\$90,243.00	\$46,246.83	\$14,382,763	311
	51 - 65%	39.7%	\$432.00	\$1,404.00	\$6,324.50	\$28,764.50	\$100,000.00	\$43,168.78	\$5,007,578	116
	>65%	19.8%	\$519.80	\$2,266.75	\$6,662.00	\$52,500.00	\$100,000.00	\$41,212.56	\$2,472,754	60
District Enrollment	<1,000	50.5%	\$285.00	\$566.00	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$10,326.60	\$4,690.92	\$501,928	107
	1,000 - 2,499	46.7%	\$300.00	\$798.50	\$3,500.00	\$10,852.00	\$29,800.00	\$10,837.87	\$1,528,139	141
	2,500 - 4,999	54.8%	\$477.50	\$2,851.00	\$6,893.50	\$19,000.00	\$45,420.00	\$14,929.02	\$1,881,056	126
	5,000 - 9,999	52.5%	\$1,033.60	\$3,250.00	\$10,405.00	\$49,641.00	\$103,317.60	\$40,033.42	\$4,283,576	107
	10,000 - 24,999	54.0%	\$1,884.40	\$5,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$71,000.00	\$240,000.00	\$68,305.16	\$6,488,990	95
	25,000+	58.3%	\$4,202.20	\$8,600.00	\$44,000.00	\$102,548.00	\$248,400.00	\$158,284.30	\$10,605,048	67
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	23.3%	\$200.00	\$712.50	\$2,800.00	\$14,500.00	\$60,000.00	\$18,958.41	\$3,203,972	169
	No	92.2%	\$715.00	\$2,825.50	\$7,965.00	\$30,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$46,592.33	\$22,084,765	474
<p>Note: Debt ranges from \$5 to \$4,000,000. Among the 643 unique school districts that reported their unpaid meal debt, total accumulated debt equaled \$25,288,737.</p>										
<p>**Chi-square tests of independence showed there are statistically significant associations between FNS Region, Free-and-Reduced%, and Offering Free Meals to ALL students districtwide, and reporting that a school district has unpaid meal debt. $p < .001$.</p>										
<p>Note: School nutrition programs offering free meals to all students districtwide may do so through several means: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide, local or state provision of free meals for all students, or a combination of the previous. At the time of writing, nine states (California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Vermont) have dedicated state funds to provide free school meals permanently.</p>										

Figure 21: Percentage of programs reporting any unpaid meal charges/debt by All Meals Free Status



Note: School nutrition programs offering free meals to all students districtwide may do so through several means: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districtwide, local or state provision of free meals for all students, or a combination of the previous. At the time of writing, nine states (California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Vermont) have dedicated state funds to provide free school meals permanently. n = 643.

Figure 22: Percentage of programs reporting any unpaid meal charges/debt by Free-and-Reduced



Note: n = 643.

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 94.9% (n = 1,171) of responding directors reported serious or moderate concern for the financial sustainability of their school nutrition program 3 years from now, compared to 92.1% (n = 1,258) last year, and 91.6% (n= 1,183) of responding directors who responded the same in SY 2023-24.
 - The percentage of responding directors who report they have 'serious concern' for the financial sustainability of their school nutrition programs 3 years from now has consistently increased since SY 2023-24: from 44.6% in SY 2023-24 to 46.0% in SY 2024-25, up to 51.3% this year.
 - Programs not offering free meals to all students districtwide reported serious concern at a rate of over 10 percentage points more than programs that do offer free meals to all students districtwide.
- The percentage of school nutrition directors who reported that reimbursement rates were not sufficient to cover the costs of producing breakfast and lunch increased slightly (from 62.6% to 63.1% for breakfast and from 67.4% to 69.6% for lunch). Meanwhile, just over a quarter of respondents reported that breakfast reimbursement rates were sufficient to cover costs (26.1%, up from 24.8% last year) and 20.7% of responding directors reported that lunch reimbursement rates were sufficient to cover costs (up slightly from 20.5% the previous year). The percentage of school nutrition directors who reported 'Don't know/Not sure' for lunch and breakfast decreased (from 12.6% in 2024 to 10.7% in 2025 for breakfast and 12.2% in 2024 to 9.7% in 2025 for lunch).
 - The percentage of school nutrition directors reporting that per meal reimbursement rates alone are sufficient to cover the cost of producing a lunch was almost two and a half times as high for programs serving free meals to all students districtwide, compared to programs not serving free meals to all students (27.4% vs. 11.2%). For breakfast, it was almost twice as high for programs serving free meals to all students districtwide, compared to programs not serving free meals to all students (32.9% vs. 16.5%).

Figure 23: Are SY 2025-26 NLSP/SBP per meal reimbursement rates alone sufficient to cover the cost of producing a meal (including food, labor, supplies and other costs) in your program? – SY 2022-23 to SY 2025-26

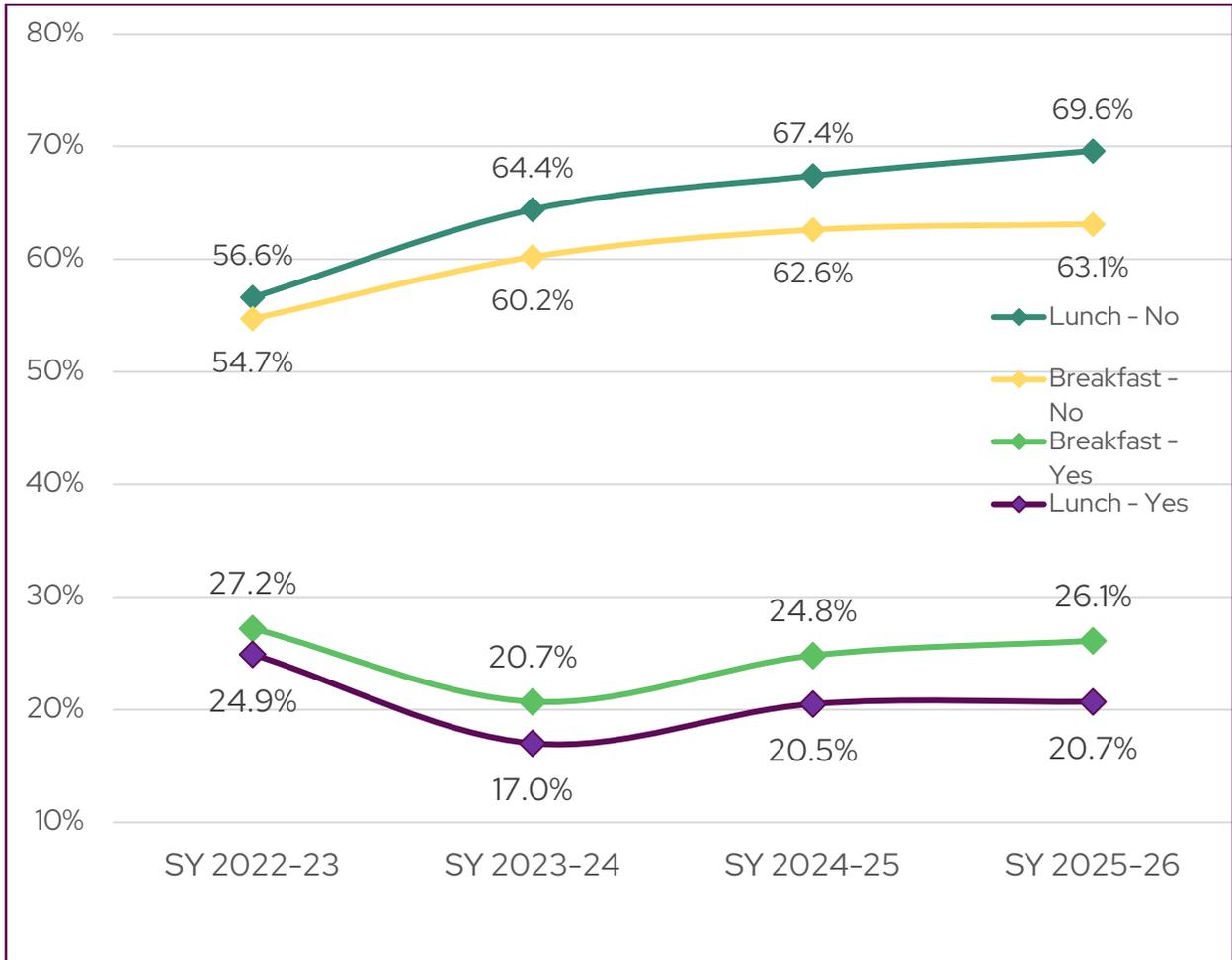


Figure 24: Are the SY 2025-26 SBP per meal reimbursement rates alone sufficient to cover the cost of producing a breakfast (including food, labor, supplies and other costs) in your program?

	Overall	Yes	No	Don't know/Not sure	n
		26.1%	63.1%	10.7%	1,229
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	13.3%	72.4%	14.3%	105
	Midwest	27.4%	60.5%	12.2%	296
	Mountain Plains	17.0%	67.0%	16.1%	112
	Northeast	32.4%	57.7%	9.9%	142
	Southeast	26.9%	66.7%	6.4%	234
	Southwest	24.8%	66.5%	8.7%	161
	Western	32.6%	56.2%	11.2%	178
Free-and-Reduced%*	<26%	17.9%	67.9%	14.2%	190
	26 - 50%	25.3%	64.9%	9.8%	447
	51 - 65%	26.0%	65.8%	8.2%	292
	>65%	32.7%	55.0%	12.3%	300
District Enrollment*	<1,000	23.3%	59.0%	17.6%	210
	1,000 - 2,499	25.7%	63.3%	11.0%	300
	2,500 - 4,999	31.1%	57.9%	11.0%	228
	5,000 - 9,999	22.5%	69.1%	8.3%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	30.6%	63.0%	6.4%	173
	25,000+	21.9%	70.2%	7.9%	114
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	32.9%	57.1%	10.0%	721
	No	16.5%	71.7%	11.8%	508

*Chi-square tests of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region (p = .003), Free-and-Reduced % category (p = .004), and district enrollment (p = .008) and whether the SY 2025-26 SBP per meal reimbursement rates were sufficient for a school meal program to cover the cost of producing a reimbursable breakfast (including food, labor, supplies, and other costs).

**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between free meals status and whether SBP per meal reimbursement rates alone are sufficient to cover the cost of producing a meal (including food, labor, and other costs).

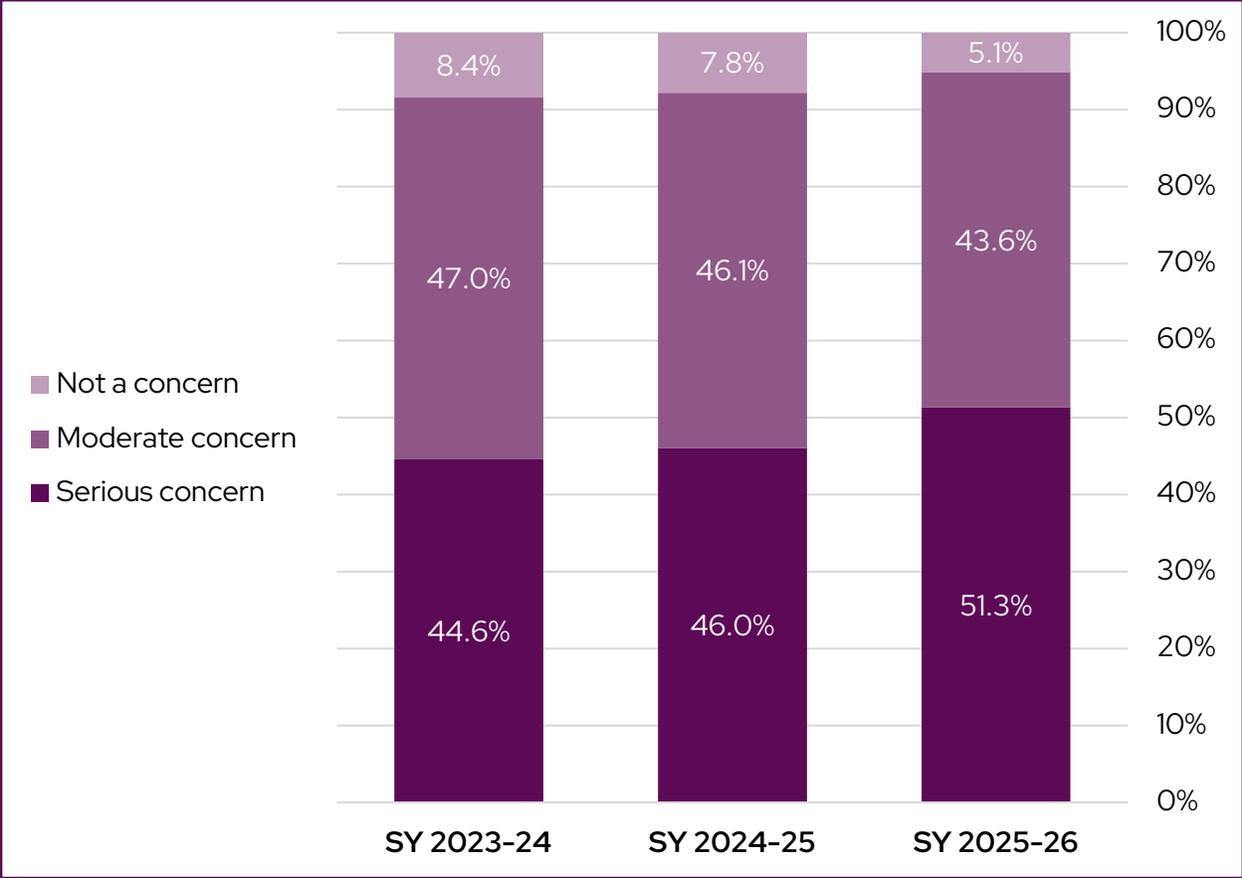
Figure 25: Are the SY 2025-26 NSLP per meal reimbursement rates alone sufficient to cover the cost of producing a lunch (including food, labor, supplies and other costs) in your program?

	Overall	Yes	No	Don't know/Not sure	n
		20.7%	69.6%	9.7%	1,227
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	10.6%	76.9%	12.5%	104
	Midwest	24.3%	66.6%	9.1%	296
	Mountain Plains	8.9%	75.9%	15.2%	112
	Northeast	31.0%	60.6%	8.5%	142
	Southeast	19.1%	73.6%	7.2%	235
	Southwest	16.4%	74.8%	8.8%	159
	Western	25.8%	63.5%	10.7%	178
Free-and-Reduced%*	<26%	17.6%	73.6%	8.8%	193
	26 - 50%	19.6%	71.5%	9.0%	445
	51 - 65%	17.9%	73.2%	8.9%	291
	>65%	27.2%	60.7%	12.1%	298
District Enrollment	<1,000	17.1%	68.7%	14.2%	211
	1,000 - 2,499	18.7%	70.3%	11.0%	300
	2,500 - 4,999	24.1%	64.9%	11.0%	228
	5,000 - 9,999	22.8%	71.3%	5.9%	202
	10,000 - 24,999	24.3%	69.4%	6.4%	173
	25,000+	16.8%	76.1%	7.1%	113
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?***	Yes	27.4%	62.4%	10.2%	719
	No	11.2%	79.7%	9.1%	508

*A chi-square test of independence showed there is statistically significant association between free-and-reduced % category and whether the SY 2025-26 NSLP per meal reimbursement rates were sufficient for a school meal program to cover the cost of producing a reimbursable lunch (including food, labor, supplies, and other costs). p = .019.

***Chi-square tests of independence showed there is statistically significant association between FNS region, free meals status and whether the SY 2025-26 per meal reimbursement rates were sufficient for a school meal program to cover the cost of producing a reimbursable lunch (including food, labor, supplies, and other costs). p < .001.

Figure 26: What is your level of concern regarding the financial sustainability of your school nutrition program 3 years from now? – SY 2023-24 to SY 2025-26



Note: SY 2025-26 n = 1,234; SY 2024-25 n = 1,366; SY 2023-24 n = 1,292.

Figure 27: What is your level of concern regarding the financial sustainability of your school nutrition program 3 years from now? – Breakouts

	Overall	Serious Concern	Moderate Concern	Not a Concern	n
		51.3%	43.6%	5.1%	1,234
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	50.9%	46.2%	2.8%	106
	Midwest	45.0%	47.3%	7.7%	298
	Mountain Plains	51.8%	45.5%	2.7%	112
	Northeast	45.1%	47.9%	7.0%	142
	Southeast	62.3%	35.2%	2.5%	236
	Southwest	57.8%	36.6%	5.6%	161
	Western	46.6%	48.3%	5.1%	178
Free-and-Reduced%	<26%	52.1%	42.3%	5.7%	194
	26 - 50%	52.1%	42.5%	5.4%	447
	51 - 65%	47.6%	46.6%	5.8%	292
	>65%	53.2%	43.2%	3.7%	301
District Enrollment	<1,000	49.3%	46.0%	4.7%	213
	1,000 - 2,499	49.8%	44.9%	5.3%	301
	2,500 - 4,999	49.3%	46.3%	4.4%	229
	5,000 - 9,999	53.4%	42.2%	4.4%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	52.0%	40.5%	7.5%	173
	25,000+	57.9%	37.7%	4.4%	114
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?**	Yes	46.5%	47.5%	6.0%	722
	No	58.0%	38.1%	3.9%	512

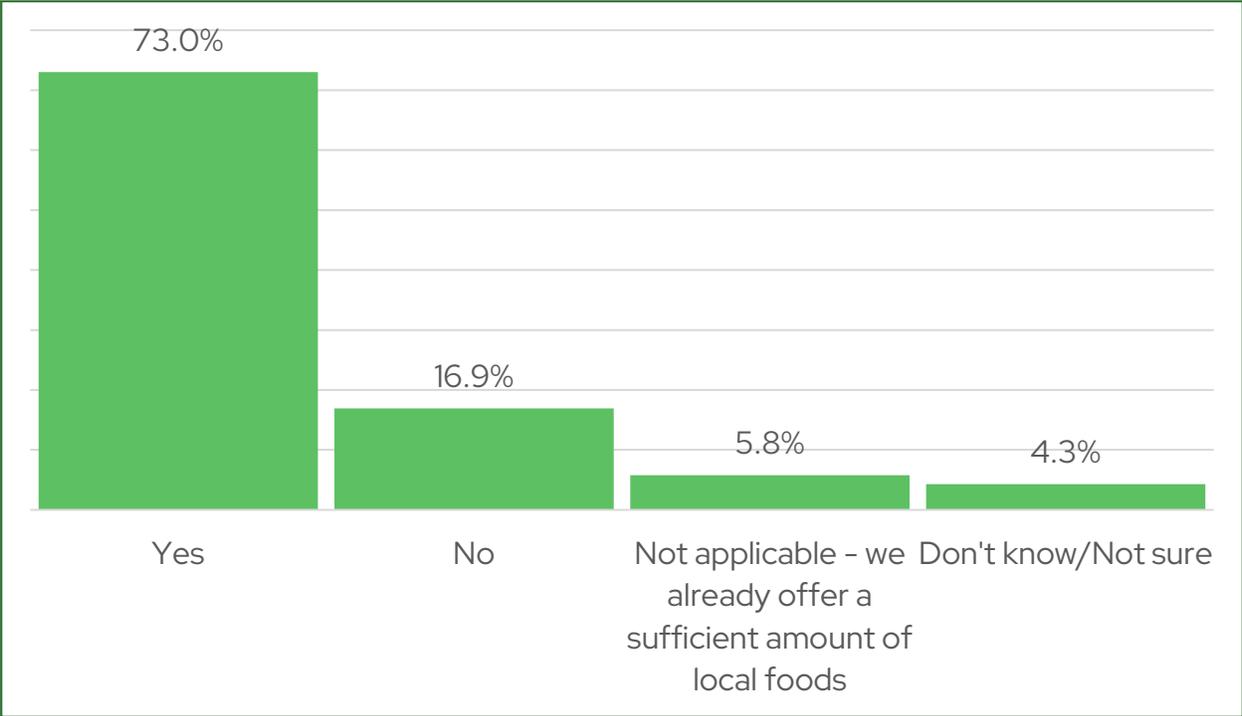
*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported level of concern regarding the financial sustainability of your school nutrition program 3 years from now. $p = .003$.

**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between free meals status and reported level of concern regarding the financial sustainability of your school nutrition program 3 years from now. $p < .001$.

LOCAL FOODS

- Almost three-fourths (73.0%, n = 904) of respondents reported their program was working to offer more local foods with school meals.
- The top five challenges school nutrition programs face in offering local foods are:
 1. Higher cost (68.9%, n = 854)
 2. Short local growing season (53.1%, n = 658)
 3. Limited capacity/resources to process raw local foods (48.5%, n = 602)
 4. Insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributors (48.1%, n = 597)
 5. Insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases (37.7%, n = 468)
- There is a statistically significant relationship between FNS region and citing the challenge of a shorter local growing season in regard to offering local foods, with respondents from the Northeast, the Mountain Plains, and the Midwest citing the highest rates of challenge, and respondents from the Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions citing the lowest rates of challenge.
 - Notably, 71.8% of respondents in the Northeast region reported short local growing season as a challenge, versus 36.9% of respondents from the Southeast region.

Figure 28: Is your program working to offer more local foods with school meals?

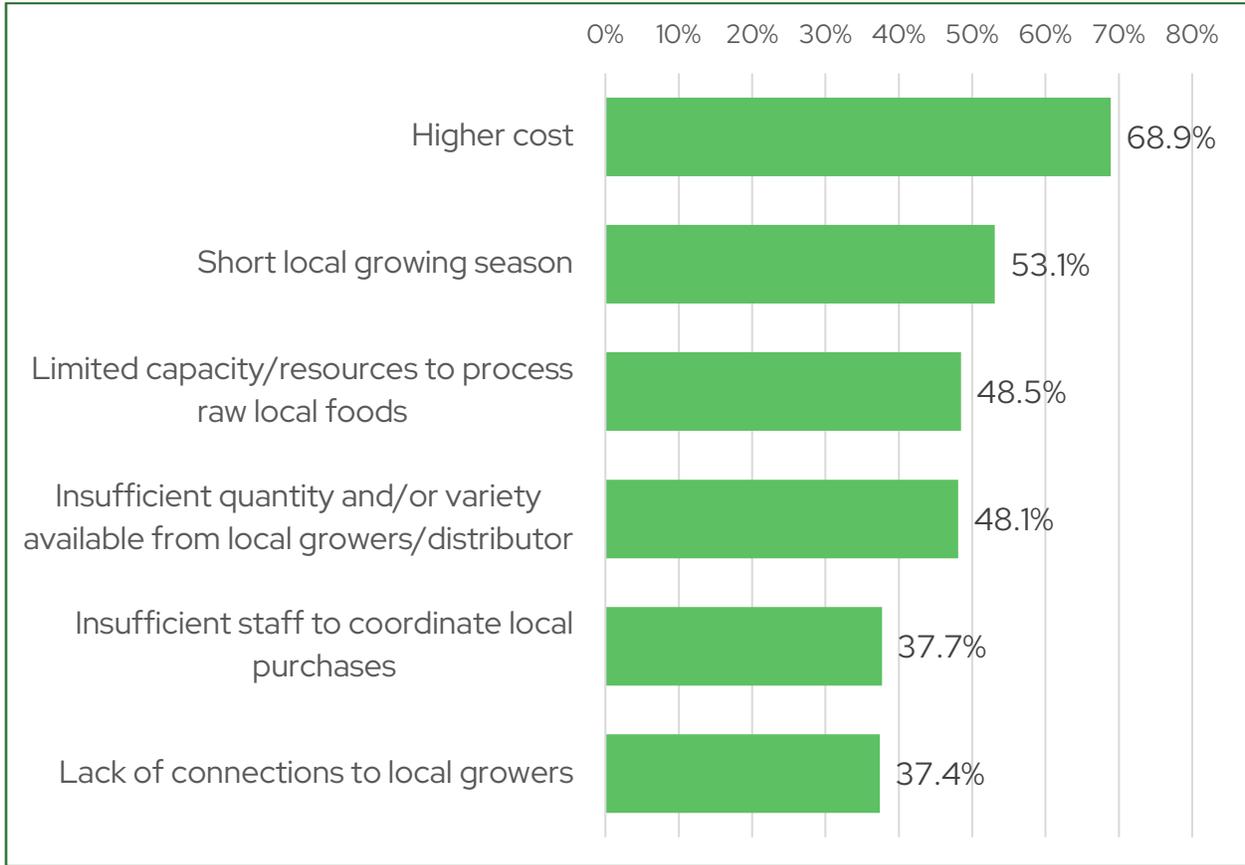


n = 1,239.

Figure 29: Is your program working to offer more local foods with school meals? - Breakouts

		Yes	No	Not applicable - we already offer a sufficient amount of local foods	Don't know/ Not sure	n
	Overall	73.0%	16.9%	5.8%	4.3%	1,239
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	75.5%	19.8%	3.8%	0.9%	106
	Midwest	69.4%	20.2%	6.4%	4.0%	297
	Mountain Plains	70.5%	14.3%	7.1%	8.0%	112
	Northeast	81.0%	9.9%	5.6%	3.5%	142
	Southeast	72.2%	19.5%	3.3%	5.0%	241
	Southwest	70.8%	15.5%	8.7%	5.0%	161
	Western	76.0%	14.5%	6.1%	3.4%	179
Free-and-Reduced%	<26%	72.8%	16.9%	4.6%	5.6%	195
	26 - 50%	69.2%	18.5%	7.8%	4.5%	448
	51 - 65%	77.1%	15.8%	5.5%	1.7%	292
	>65%	74.7%	15.8%	3.9%	5.6%	304
District Enrollment	<1,000	68.1%	22.5%	4.2%	5.2%	213
	1,000 - 2,499	69.8%	19.6%	4.7%	6.0%	301
	2,500 - 4,999	70.4%	18.3%	7.8%	3.5%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	79.4%	11.8%	6.4%	2.5%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	75.6%	13.1%	6.8%	4.5%	176
	25,000+	80.0%	12.2%	5.2%	2.6%	115

Figure 30: What challenges do you face in offering local foods?



Challenge	%	n
Higher cost	68.9%	854
Short local growing season	53.1%	658
Limited capacity/resources to process raw local foods	48.5%	602
Insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributor	48.1%	597
Insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases	37.7%	468
Lack of connections to local growers	37.4%	464

Figure 31: What challenges do you face in offering local foods? - Disaggregated by FNS Region

Challenge	FNS Region						
	Mid-Atlantic	Midwest	Mountain Plains	Northeast	Southeast	Southwest	Western
Higher cost*	67.9%	63.8%	75.9%	74.6%	63.5%	77.6%	68.7%
Short local growing season**	52.8%	67.1%	69.6%	71.8%	36.9%	39.1%	39.1%
Limited capacity/resources to process raw local foods	47.2%	46.3%	44.6%	52.8%	46.1%	49.1%	55.3%
Insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributor*	56.6%	42.3%	50.9%	43.0%	53.9%	54.7%	41.9%
Insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases	44.3%	38.9%	36.6%	38.7%	37.3%	32.3%	36.9%
Lack of connections to local growers*	35.8%	41.3%	45.5%	30.3%	40.2%	39.8%	26.8%

*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported challenges offering local foods, including higher cost (p = .008), insufficient quantity and/or variety available from lower growers/distributors (p = .007), and lack of connections to lower growers (p = .006).

**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported challenges offering local foods, including short local growing season. p < .001.

Figure 32: What challenges do you face in offering local foods? Disaggregated by District Enrollment

Challenge	District Enrollment					
	<1,000	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	10,000 - 24,999	25,000+
Higher cost*	63.8%	70.5%	67.8%	71.6%	76.1%	60.0%
Short local growing season**	62.9%	56.0%	55.2%	50.5%	48.3%	34.8%
Limited capacity/resources to process raw local foods**	38.5%	51.0%	49.1%	51.5%	52.3%	48.7%
Insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributor	45.1%	42.4%	43.9%	46.1%	60.8%	61.7%
Insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases	36.2%	40.7%	40.9%	35.3%	39.8%	27.8%
Lack of connections to local growers*	41.3%	40.4%	42.2%	35.8%	34.7%	20.0%

*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported challenges offering local foods, including higher cost (p = .031), and lack of connections to lower growers (p = .001).
 **A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported challenges offering local foods, including short local growing season. p < .001.

Figure 33: What challenges do you face in offering local foods? – Disaggregated by Free-and-Reduced % Category

Challenge	Free-and-Reduced Percentage			
	<26%	26 - 50%	51 - 65%	>65%
Higher cost*	72.5%	72.5%	64.7%	62.8%
Short local growing season**	55.4%	55.4%	53.4%	43.8%
Limited capacity/resources to process raw local foods	47.8%	47.8%	48.3%	47.4%
Insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributor*	47.1%	47.1%	53.1%	50.0%
Insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases*	37.1%	37.1%	37.7%	33.2%
Lack of connections to local growers	36.6%	36.6%	39.4%	38.8%

*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported challenges offering local foods, including higher cost (p = .002), insufficient quantity and/or variety available from local growers/distributors (p = .040), insufficient staff to coordinate local purchases (p = .029)
 **A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and reported challenges offering local foods, including short local growing season. p < .001.

RESOURCES NEEDED TO REDUCE RELIANCE ON UPFS

- School nutrition programs reported needing **increased** resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals:
 1. Funding (99.1%, n = 1,198)
 2. Time to test recipes/Menu development (96.1%, n = 1,163)
 3. Culinary training (94.8%, n = 1,147)
 4. Staff (94.4%, n = 1,139)
 5. Equipment and infrastructure (93.7%, n = 1,130)

Figure 34: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals – Sorted by ‘Extreme Severity’

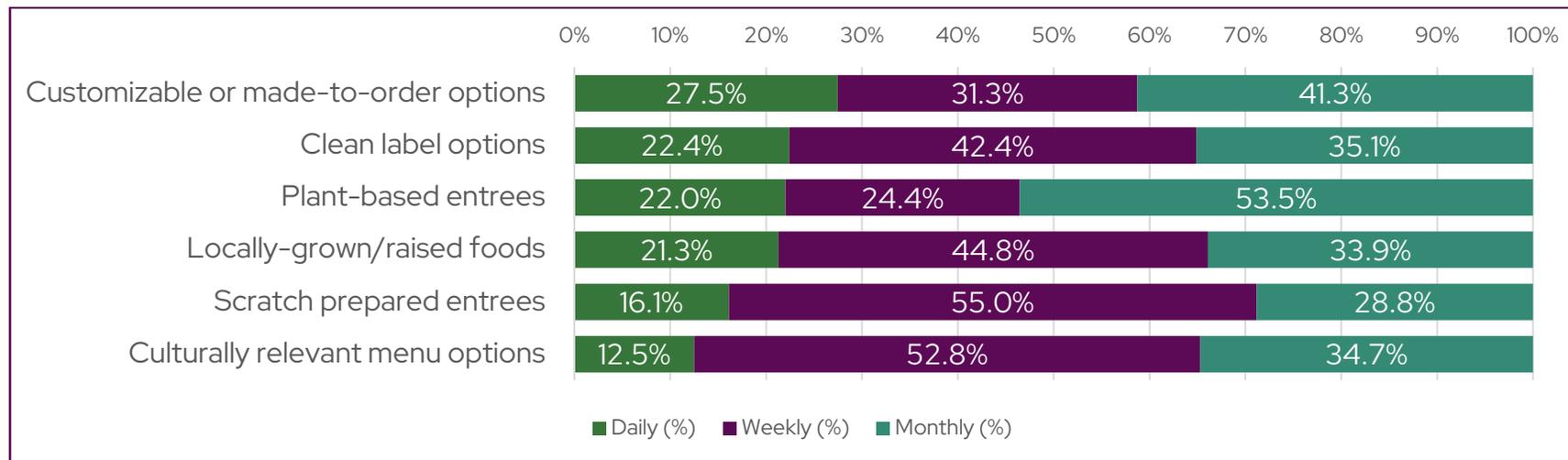


n varies by item: minimum = 1,205 to 1,210. See Appendix B for breakdowns by FNS region, Free-and-reduced %, student enrollment size and free meals status.

MENU TRENDS

- Approximately two-thirds of all responding school nutrition programs offer scratch-prepared entrees (71.1%, n = 771), locally-grown/raised foods (66.1%, n = 718), culturally relevant menu options (65.3%, n = 708), and clean label options (64.8%, n = 621) on a daily or weekly basis.

Figure 35: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals?



Offering	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Monthly (%)	n
Customizable or made-to-order options	27.5%	31.3%	41.3%	928
Clean label options	22.4%	42.4%	35.1%	959
Plant-based entrees	22.0%	24.4%	53.5%	908
Locally-grown/raised foods	21.3%	44.8%	33.9%	1,086
Scratch prepared entrees	16.1%	55.0%	28.8%	1,127
Culturally relevant menu options	12.5%	52.8%	34.7%	1,084

Figure 36: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? – SY 2025-26 vs SY 2024-25

Offering	Daily - 2025	Daily - 2024	Weekly - 2025	Weekly - 2024	Monthly - 2025	Monthly - 2024
Scratch prepared entrees	16.1%	17.4%	55.0%	59.3%	28.8%	23.4%
Culturally relevant menu options	12.5%	12.3%	52.8%	50.5%	34.7%	37.2%
Locally-grown/raised foods	21.3%	27.8%	44.8%	42.8%	33.9%	29.5%
Clean label options	22.4%	18.3%	42.4%	40.8%	35.1%	40.8%
Customizable or made-to-order options	27.5%	29.0%	31.3%	30.8%	41.3%	40.2%
Plant-based entrees	22.0%	21.6%	24.4%	27.3%	53.5%	51.1%

Note: n varies by item. Minimum n = 908, Maximum n = 1,127.

Color Code:

2025 percentage has decreased compared to 2024 percentage
2025 percentage has increased compared to 2024 percentage

Appendix A:

Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program: Disaggregated by USDA FNS region, Free-and-Reduced Rate, and District Enrollment and selected variables

Table A1: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Food costs

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		1.9%	24.0%	74.1%	1,228
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	0.0%	27.4%	72.6%	106
	Midwest	3.7%	25.3%	71.0%	297
	Mountain Plains	0.0%	23.4%	76.6%	111
	Northeast	4.3%	27.0%	68.8%	141
	Southeast	0.9%	15.7%	83.4%	235
	Southwest	0.0%	21.9%	78.1%	160
	Western	2.2%	30.9%	66.9%	178
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	3.1%	26.5%	70.4%	196
	26 - 50%	2.0%	23.3%	74.7%	447
	51 - 65%	1.1%	22.5%	76.5%	285
	> 65%	1.7%	24.9%	73.4%	301
District Enrollment	<1,000	2.8%	24.2%	73.0%	211
	1,000 - 2,499	1.0%	19.1%	79.9%	298
	2,500 - 4,999	1.3%	23.6%	75.1%	229
	5,000 - 9,999	2.5%	27.6%	70.0%	203
	10,000 - 24,999	2.8%	26.7%	70.5%	176
	25,000+	0.9%	26.8%	72.3%	112
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	2.4%	25.5%	72.2%	719
	No	1.2%	22.0%	76.9%	51-

**Chi-square tests of independence showed there are statistically significant associations between FNS Region the rating of the severity of the challenge of food costs by respondents. P<.001.

Table A2: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Labor costs

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		4.8%	34.5%	60.7%	1,236
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	2.8%	39.6%	57.5%	106
	Midwest	7.0%	39.9%	53.0%	298
	Mountain Plains	3.6%	25.0%	71.4%	112
	Northeast	5.7%	36.9%	57.4%	141
	Southeast	4.2%	23.8%	72.1%	240
	Southwest	1.9%	35.6%	62.5%	160
	Western	5.6%	40.2%	54.2%	179
Free-and-Reduced%	<26%	5.1%	33.3%	61.5%	195
	26 - 50%	4.0%	33.3%	62.6%	447
	51 - 65%	4.8%	35.3%	59.9%	292
	>65%	5.6%	36.3%	58.1%	303
District Enrollment	<1,000	9.4%	35.4%	55.2%	212
	1,000 - 2,499	3.7%	35.2%	61.1%	301
	2,500 - 4,999	5.2%	30.9%	63.9%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	3.9%	38.2%	57.8%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	3.4%	33.1%	63.4%	175
	25,000+	1.7%	33.9%	64.3%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	5.8%	37.5%	56.7%	723
	No	3.3%	30.4%	66.3%	514

** : A Chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS Region and the rating of the severity of the challenge of labor costs by respondents. P<.001.

Table A3: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Equipment costs

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		5.5%	40.1%	54.4%	1,235
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	5.7%	38.7%	55.7%	106
	Midwest	7.1%	45.8%	47.1%	297
	Mountain Plains	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	112
	Northeast	7.7%	51.4%	40.8%	142
	Southeast	3.3%	24.3%	72.4%	239
	Southwest	5.6%	32.5%	61.9%	160
	Western	7.3%	44.1%	48.6%	179
Free-and-Reduced%*	< 26%	5.6%	44.4%	50.0%	196
	26 - 50%	4.2%	44.2%	51.6%	448
	51 - 65%	5.9%	41.0%	53.1%	290
	>65%	7.0%	30.5%	62.6%	302
District Enrollment	<1,000	7.5%	36.6%	55.9%	213
	1,000 - 2,499	4.3%	38.3%	57.3%	300
	2,500 - 4,999	5.2%	39.6%	55.2%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	5.4%	41.9%	52.7%	203
	10,000 - 24,999	4.6%	42.3%	53.1%	175
	25,000+	7.0%	46.1%	47.0%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	6.6%	37.1%	56.3%	723
	No	3.9%	44.4%	51.7%	513
<p>** , * :Chi-square tests of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS Region (p < .001), Free-and-reduced % (p = .008), and free meals status (p = .009) and the rating of the severity of the challenge of equipment costs by respondents.</p>					

Table A4: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Staff shortages

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		12.8%	41.6%	45.7%	1,238
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	5.7%	37.7%	56.6%	106
	Midwest	16.4%	42.6%	40.9%	298
	Mountain Plains	8.9%	40.2%	50.9%	112
	Northeast	12.8%	36.9%	50.4%	141
	Southeast	12.4%	39.4%	48.1%	241
	Southwest	12.4%	44.7%	42.9%	161
	Western	13.4%	46.9%	39.7%	179
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	9.7%	43.9%	46.4%	196
	26 - 50%	14.5%	39.8%	45.6%	447
	51 - 65%	11.3%	42.1%	46.6%	292
	>65%	13.5%	42.1%	44.4%	304
District Enrollment	<1,000	16.5%	44.3%	39.2%	212
	1,000 - 2,499	15.9%	40.7%	43.4%	302
	2,500 - 4,999	9.6%	40.4%	50.0%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	13.2%	44.1%	42.6%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	8.0%	38.6%	53.4%	176
	25,000+	10.4%	40.9%	48.7%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	13.5%	39.9%	46.6%	725
	No	11.7%	44.0%	44.4%	514

Table A5: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Availability of menu items that meet current nutrition standards (e.g. whole-grain, low-sodium, low-fat)

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		17.9%	52.8%	29.3%	1,234
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	16.0%	53.8%	30.2%	106
	Midwest	21.1%	49.7%	29.2%	298
	Mountain Plains	16.1%	59.8%	24.1%	112
	Northeast	17.6%	64.8%	17.6%	142
	Southeast	17.2%	51.0%	31.8%	239
	Southwest	15.7%	49.7%	34.6%	159
	Western	18.0%	48.9%	33.1%	178
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	21.1%	52.6%	26.3%	194
	26 - 50%	19.0%	54.2%	26.8%	448
	51 - 65%	15.1%	54.8%	30.1%	292
	> 65%	17.3%	48.8%	33.9%	301
District Enrollment**	<1,000	17.4%	46.0%	36.6%	213
	1,000 - 2,499	11.0%	55.2%	33.8%	299
	2,500 - 4,999	17.5%	57.2%	25.3%	229
	5,000 - 9,999	20.6%	55.4%	24.0%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	22.3%	49.7%	28.0%	175
	25,000+	27.0%	50.4%	22.6%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	17.2%	51.9%	30.9%	722
	No	19.1%	54.0%	26.9%	513
<p>** : A Chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between district enrollment and the rating of the severity of the challenge of availability of menu items that meet current nutrition standards (e.g. whole-grain, low-sodium, low-fat). P<.001.</p>					

Table A6: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Getting families to submit free-and-reduced meal applications/household income forms

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		30.5%	33.5%	36.0%	1,229
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	45.3%	27.4%	27.4%	106
	Midwest	15.9%	35.6%	48.5%	295
	Mountain Plains	12.6%	48.6%	38.7%	111
	Northeast	35.5%	34.0%	30.5%	141
	Southeast	45.0%	26.1%	29.0%	238
	Southwest	31.7%	33.5%	34.8%	161
	Western	32.8%	33.9%	33.3%	177
Free-and-Reduced%**	< 26%	10.3%	46.9%	42.8%	194
	26 - 50%	19.3%	36.3%	44.4%	446
	51 - 65%	36.3%	32.2%	31.5%	289
	> 65%	54.5%	21.9%	23.6%	301
District Enrollment	<1,000	31.9%	31.4%	36.7%	210
	1,000 - 2,499	31.0%	32.0%	37.0%	297
	2,500 - 4,999	33.2%	29.7%	37.1%	229
	5,000 - 9,999	33.5%	31.5%	35.0%	203
	10,000 - 24,999	27.8%	38.1%	34.1%	176
	25,000+	20.0%	45.2%	34.8%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide? **	Yes	47.5%	24.2%	28.3%	718
	No	6.6%	46.5%	46.9%	512
<p>**Chi-square tests of independence showed there are statistically significant associations between FNS Region, Free-and-Reduced %, and All Meals Free Status, and the rating of the severity of the challenge of getting families to submit free-and-reduced meal applications/household income forms. (p < .001).</p>					

Table A7: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Procurement issues (e.g., long lead times, substitutions, late deliveries, insufficient bid responses)

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		15.6%	49.9%	34.5%	1,238
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	12.3%	53.8%	34.0%	106
	Midwest	22.5%	52.0%	25.5%	298
	Mountain Plains	16.1%	55.4%	28.6%	112
	Northeast	16.9%	54.9%	28.2%	142
	Southeast	15.4%	46.9%	37.8%	241
	Southwest	11.2%	53.4%	35.4%	161
	Western	9.0%	37.6%	53.4%	178
Free-and-Reduced%*	< 26%	16.3%	53.1%	30.6%	196
	26 - 50%	17.0%	52.1%	30.9%	447
	51 - 65%	14.7%	51.4%	33.9%	292
	> 65%	13.8%	43.1%	43.1%	304
District Enrollment**	<1,000	24.9%	47.9%	27.2%	213
	1,000 - 2,499	15.9%	53.6%	30.5%	302
	2,500 - 4,999	14.0%	51.5%	34.5%	229
	5,000 - 9,999	16.2%	48.5%	35.3%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	8.5%	43.2%	48.3%	176
	25,000+	10.4%	53.0%	36.5%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	14.6%	45.3%	40.1%	726
	No	17.0%	56.3%	26.7%	513
<p>** , * : Chi-square tests of independence showed there are statistically significant associations between FNS region (p < .001), district enrollment size (p < .001), All Meals Free Status (p < .001), and Free-and-reduced % (p = .027) and the rating of the severity of the challenge of procurement issues (e.g., long lead times, substitutions, late deliveries, insufficient bid responses).</p>					

Table A8: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Sufficient availability of Buy American compliant foods

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		17.2%	52.8%	30.0%	1,234
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	20.8%	48.1%	31.1%	106
	Midwest	18.5%	55.0%	26.5%	298
	Mountain Plains	13.4%	54.5%	32.1%	112
	Northeast	16.2%	56.3%	27.5%	142
	Southeast	18.1%	53.6%	28.3%	237
	Southwest	13.0%	46.6%	40.4%	161
	Western	18.5%	52.8%	28.7%	178
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	19.0%	48.2%	32.8%	195
	26 - 50%	14.3%	56.0%	29.7%	448
	51 - 65%	15.8%	55.1%	29.1%	292
	>65%	21.7%	49.0%	29.3%	300
District Enrollment*	<1,000	15.6%	48.1%	36.3%	212
	1,000 - 2,499	16.4%	53.2%	30.4%	299
	2,500 - 4,999	17.0%	50.9%	32.2%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	16.7%	53.9%	29.4%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	16.5%	54.5%	29.0%	176
	25,000+	24.6%	60.5%	14.9%	114
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	18.3%	52.4%	29.3%	723
	No	15.6%	53.5%	30.9%	512
<p>*A chi-square tests of independence showed there are statistically significant associations between district enrollment size and the rating of the severity of the challenge of procurement issues (e.g., long lead times, substitutions, late deliveries, insufficient bid responses). p = .046.</p>					

Table A9: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Administrative/regulatory burdens

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		6.0%	40.3%	53.7%	1,235
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	2.8%	34.0%	63.2%	106
	Midwest	7.4%	43.8%	48.8%	297
	Mountain Plains	8.0%	47.3%	44.6%	112
	Northeast	7.1%	44.0%	48.9%	141
	Southeast	4.6%	41.7%	53.8%	240
	Southwest	6.8%	30.4%	62.7%	161
	Western	4.5%	38.2%	57.3%	178
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	5.6%	37.2%	57.1%	196
	26 - 50%	6.9%	42.1%	51.0%	447
	51 - 65%	5.5%	36.4%	58.1%	291
	> 65%	5.3%	43.7%	51.0%	302
District Enrollment	<1,000	8.5%	44.5%	46.9%	211
	1,000 - 2,499	4.3%	39.2%	56.5%	301
	2,500 - 4,999	7.0%	37.4%	55.7%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	7.4%	38.2%	54.4%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	4.0%	39.2%	56.8%	176
	25,000+	4.4%	47.4%	48.2%	114
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	5.4%	40.7%	53.9%	723
	No	6.8%	40.0%	53.2%	513
*Chi-square tests of independence showed there are statistically significant association between FNS region and the rating of the severity of staff shortages by respondents. p = .041.					

Table A10: Please indicate the extent to which the following issues are a challenge for your school meal program. - Limited culinary skills among staff

	Overall	Not a Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Significant Challenge	n
		12.2%	43.8%	44.0%	1,235
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	9.4%	30.2%	60.4%	106
	Midwest	17.8%	43.4%	38.7%	297
	Mountain Plains	11.7%	43.2%	45.0%	111
	Northeast	9.9%	48.2%	41.8%	141
	Southeast	11.7%	45.4%	42.9%	240
	Southwest	9.9%	39.8%	50.3%	161
	Western	9.5%	50.8%	39.7%	179
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	12.9%	40.7%	46.4%	194
	26 - 50%	13.4%	44.5%	42.1%	447
	51 - 65%	12.3%	42.8%	44.9%	292
	> 65%	9.9%	45.9%	44.2%	303
District Enrollment**	<1,000	22.2%	46.7%	31.1%	212
	1,000 - 2,499	13.7%	39.7%	46.7%	300
	2,500 - 4,999	7.4%	51.7%	40.9%	230
	5,000 - 9,999	10.3%	43.1%	46.6%	204
	10,000 - 24,999	10.3%	39.4%	50.3%	175
	25,000+	6.1%	41.7%	52.2%	115
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	11.5%	42.8%	45.7%	722
	No	13.2%	45.3%	41.4%	514
<p>**, *A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region (p = .003) and district enrollment size (p < .001) and the rating of the severity of staff shortages by respondents.</p>					

Appendix B

Please indicate your program's need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Disaggregated by USDA FNS region, Free-and-Reduced Rate, District Enrollment, and Free Meals Status

Table B1: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Equipment and Infrastructure

	Overall	Extreme Need	Moderate Need	No Need	n
		54.1%	39.6%	6.3%	1,206
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	57.1%	39.0%	3.8%	105
	Midwest	45.7%	46.0%	8.3%	289
	Mountain Plains	51.9%	39.8%	8.3%	108
	Northeast	48.2%	45.3%	6.5%	139
	Southeast	58.2%	37.9%	3.9%	232
	Southwest	55.8%	37.2%	7.1%	156
	Western	65.3%	29.0%	5.7%	176
Free-and-Reduced%*	< 26%	53.6%	41.7%	4.7%	192
	26 - 50%	53.3%	42.0%	4.6%	433
	51 - 65%	52.1%	37.3%	10.6%	284
	> 65%	57.6%	36.7%	5.7%	297
District Enrollment	<1,000	49.8%	41.1%	9.1%	209
	1,000 - 2,499	54.4%	37.4%	8.2%	294
	2,500 - 4,999	50.0%	45.1%	4.9%	226
	5,000 - 9,999	56.2%	39.3%	4.5%	201
	10,000 - 24,999	62.3%	33.5%	4.2%	167
	25,000+	54.1%	40.4%	5.5%	109
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	54.2%	38.7%	7.1%	708
	No	54.0%	40.8%	5.2%	498
*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region (= .013), free-and-reduced rate (p = .031) and the program's need for equipment and infrastructure.					

Table B2: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Staff

	Overall	Extreme Need	Moderate Need	No Need	n
		62.3%	32.1%	5.6%	1,207
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	67.9%	27.4%	4.7%	106
	Midwest	60.4%	33.7%	5.9%	288
	Mountain Plains	63.3%	29.4%	7.3%	109
	Northeast	67.9%	27.9%	4.3%	140
	Southeast	66.8%	28.9%	4.3%	232
	Southwest	58.3%	37.2%	4.5%	156
	Western	54.3%	37.7%	8.0%	175
Free-and-Reduced%*	< 26%	70.7%	28.3%	1.0%	191
	26 - 50%	60.6%	33.6%	5.8%	432
	51 - 65%	60.3%	32.1%	7.7%	287
	> 65%	61.3%	32.7%	6.1%	297
District Enrollment	<1,000	52.9%	38.9%	8.2%	208
	1,000 - 2,499	61.9%	31.3%	6.8%	294
	2,500 - 4,999	67.4%	27.8%	4.8%	227
	5,000 - 9,999	63.2%	31.8%	5.0%	201
	10,000 - 24,999	65.5%	32.1%	2.4%	168
	25,000+	64.2%	31.2%	4.6%	109
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	62.1%	31.5%	6.3%	710
	No	62.6%	33.0%	4.4%	497
*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between free-and-reduced rate and the program's need for staff to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals (p = .039).					

Table B3: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Culinary training

	Overall	Extreme Need	Moderate Need	No Need	n
		57.5%	37.3%	5.2%	1,210
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	66.0%	29.2%	4.7%	106
	Midwest	52.1%	42.1%	5.9%	290
	Mountain Plains	49.5%	42.2%	8.3%	109
	Northeast	61.4%	33.6%	5.0%	140
	Southeast	59.5%	37.1%	3.4%	232
	Southwest	57.7%	38.5%	3.8%	156
	Western	60.2%	33.5%	6.3%	176
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	58.9%	38.5%	2.6%	192
	26 - 50%	54.7%	39.8%	5.5%	435
	51 - 65%	57.8%	34.8%	7.3%	287
	> 65%	60.5%	35.1%	4.4%	296
District Enrollment**	<1,000	44.5%	44.5%	11.0%	209
	1,000 - 2,499	58.1%	35.8%	6.1%	296
	2,500 - 4,999	59.3%	38.1%	2.7%	226
	5,000 - 9,999	63.7%	34.8%	1.5%	201
	10,000 - 24,999	60.9%	34.9%	4.1%	169
	25,000+	60.6%	33.9%	5.5%	109
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	58.5%	36.5%	5.1%	710
	No	56.2%	38.4%	5.4%	500
<p>**A Chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between district enrollment and the program's need for culinary training to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals. p < .001.</p>					

Table B4: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Funding

	Overall	Extreme Need	Moderate Need	No Need	n
		79.2%	19.9%	0.8%	1,209
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	81.9%	18.1%	0.0%	105
	Midwest	75.9%	23.1%	1.0%	290
	Mountain Plains	77.1%	22.9%	0.0%	109
	Northeast	75.7%	21.4%	2.9%	140
	Southeast	84.9%	15.1%	0.0%	232
	Southwest	85.9%	13.5%	0.6%	156
	Western	73.9%	25.0%	1.1%	176
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	80.7%	18.2%	1.0%	192
	26 - 50%	80.5%	18.4%	1.1%	435
	51 - 65%	77.9%	21.4%	0.7%	285
	> 65%	77.8%	21.9%	0.3%	297
District Enrollment	<1,000	77.5%	22.0%	0.5%	209
	1,000 - 2,499	80.3%	19.3%	0.3%	295
	2,500 - 4,999	78.3%	19.9%	1.8%	226
	5,000 - 9,999	83.1%	15.9%	1.0%	201
	10,000 - 24,999	75.7%	23.7%	0.6%	169
	25,000+	79.8%	19.3%	0.9%	109
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	76.9%	22.0%	1.1%	710
	No	82.6%	17.0%	0.4%	499

*A Chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region ($p = .015$) and free meals status ($p = .036$) and the program's need for culinary training to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals.

Table B5: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Time to test recipes/Menu Development

	Overall	Extreme Need	Moderate Need	No Need	n
		62.5%	33.6%	4.0%	1,210
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	69.8%	27.4%	2.8%	106
	Midwest	62.1%	33.4%	4.5%	290
	Mountain Plains	62.4%	34.9%	2.8%	109
	Northeast	60.7%	34.3%	5.0%	140
	Southeast	62.5%	34.5%	3.0%	232
	Southwest	64.7%	30.1%	5.1%	156
	Western	58.0%	38.1%	4.0%	176
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	69.6%	28.3%	2.1%	191
	26 - 50%	61.1%	35.6%	3.2%	435
	51 - 65%	62.7%	32.8%	4.5%	287
	> 65%	59.6%	34.7%	5.7%	297
District Enrollment	<1,000	61.5%	34.1%	4.3%	208
	1,000 - 2,499	62.5%	32.8%	4.7%	296
	2,500 - 4,999	65.6%	31.7%	2.6%	227
	5,000 - 9,999	60.7%	34.3%	5.0%	201
	10,000 - 24,999	59.8%	38.5%	1.8%	169
	25,000+	65.1%	29.4%	5.5%	109
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	60.6%	34.9%	4.5%	710
	No	65.2%	31.6%	3.2%	500

Table B6: Please indicate your program’s need for increased resources in the following categories to expand scratch preparation and reduce reliance on UPFs in school meals - Nutrient-dense, pre-prepared menu alternatives

	Overall	Extreme Need	Moderate Need	No Need	n
		47.7%	43.3%	9.0%	1,205
USDA FNS Region	Mid-Atlantic	54.7%	40.6%	4.7%	106
	Midwest	47.4%	45.3%	7.3%	289
	Mountain Plains	40.7%	45.4%	13.9%	108
	Northeast	47.8%	39.1%	13.0%	138
	Southeast	47.4%	43.5%	9.1%	232
	Southwest	49.4%	42.3%	8.3%	156
	Western	46.9%	44.6%	8.6%	175
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	52.6%	39.1%	8.3%	192
	26 - 50%	45.4%	45.8%	8.8%	432
	51 - 65%	51.7%	39.9%	8.4%	286
	>65%	44.1%	45.8%	10.2%	295
District Enrollment	<1,000	44.0%	44.9%	11.1%	207
	1,000 - 2,499	50.9%	42.0%	7.2%	293
	2,500 - 4,999	49.3%	41.0%	9.7%	227
	5,000 - 9,999	49.3%	42.3%	8.5%	201
	10,000 - 24,999	43.5%	45.2%	11.3%	168
	25,000+	46.8%	47.7%	5.5%	109
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	47.5%	42.5%	10.0%	708
	No	48.1%	44.5%	7.4%	497

Appendix C

Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Disaggregated by USDA FNS region, Free-and-Reduced Rate, District Enrollment, and Free Meals Status

Table C1: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Scratch prepared entrees

	Overall	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	n
		16.1%	55.0%	28.8%	1,127
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	15.5%	48.5%	36.1%	97
	Midwest	9.6%	48.9%	41.5%	270
	Mountain Plains	10.5%	67.6%	21.9%	105
	Northeast	20.9%	54.5%	24.6%	134
	Southeast	10.5%	63.2%	26.3%	209
	Southwest	20.4%	55.1%	24.5%	147
	Western	30.5%	51.2%	18.3%	164
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	17.9%	50.8%	31.3%	179
	26 - 50%	13.4%	54.2%	32.3%	402
	51 - 65%	15.4%	61.4%	23.2%	272
	> 65%	19.7%	52.6%	27.7%	274
District Enrollment	<1,000	19.1%	55.9%	25.0%	204
	1,000 - 2,499	10.8%	59.0%	30.2%	268
	2,500 - 4,999	14.0%	51.9%	34.1%	214
	5,000 - 9,999	17.2%	54.2%	28.6%	192
	10,000 - 24,999	21.6%	52.9%	25.5%	153
	25,000+	18.8%	54.2%	27.1%	96
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?**	Yes	19.7%	52.8%	27.5%	669
	No	10.9%	58.3%	30.8%	458
<p>**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region, free meals status, and the frequency of offering scratch-prepared entrees.</p>					

Table C2: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Culturally relevant menu options

	Overall	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	n
		11.0%	46.1%	30.3%	1,084
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	9.5%	49.5%	41.1%	95
	Midwest	13.3%	46.1%	40.6%	256
	Mountain Plains	10.6%	52.1%	37.2%	94
	Northeast	9.2%	48.5%	42.3%	130
	Southeast	12.4%	57.9%	29.7%	202
	Southwest	15.2%	59.3%	25.5%	145
	Western	14.9%	56.5%	28.6%	161
Free-and-Reduced%*	<26%	12.5%	55.4%	32.1%	168
	26 - 50%	11.4%	50.1%	38.5%	387
	51 - 65%	9.3%	56.1%	34.6%	269
	>65%	17.7%	51.5%	30.8%	260
District Enrollment**	<1,000	10.2%	46.9%	42.9%	177
	1,000 - 2,499	8.9%	48.2%	42.9%	247
	2,500 - 4,999	9.6%	49.0%	41.3%	208
	5,000 - 9,999	13.5%	58.9%	27.6%	192
	10,000 - 24,999	20.5%	55.8%	23.7%	156
	25,000+	17.3%	65.4%	17.3%	104
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	13.2%	53.3%	33.5%	644
	No	11.6%	52.0%	36.4%	440
<p>**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between district enrollment and the frequency of offering culturally-relevant menu options. $p < .001$.</p> <p>*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region ($p = .038$), free-and-reduced % ($p = .049$) and the frequency of offering culturally-relevant menu options.</p>					

Table C3: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Plant-based entrees

	Overall	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	n
		22.0%	24.4%	53.5%	908
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	26.6%	27.8%	45.6%	79
	Midwest	20.3%	16.7%	63.0%	227
	Mountain Plains	12.2%	28.4%	59.5%	74
	Northeast	34.1%	26.2%	39.7%	126
	Southeast	15.6%	25.2%	59.2%	147
	Southwest	18.3%	23.5%	58.3%	115
	Western	26.4%	31.4%	42.1%	140
Free-and-Reduced%	<26%	26.9%	24.4%	48.7%	156
	26 - 50%	24.2%	24.5%	51.2%	322
	51 - 65%	17.7%	22.1%	60.2%	226
	>65%	19.6%	27.0%	53.4%	204
District Enrollment**	<1,000	10.3%	13.1%	76.6%	145
	1,000 - 2,499	17.3%	17.8%	64.9%	202
	2,500 - 4,999	18.2%	20.6%	61.2%	170
	5,000 - 9,999	25.5%	29.2%	45.3%	161
	10,000 - 24,999	30.8%	36.8%	32.3%	133
	25,000+	38.1%	37.1%	24.7%	97
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	23.0%	22.2%	54.8%	553
	No	20.6%	27.9%	51.5%	355

**A Chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region, district enrollment and the frequency of offering plant-based entrees. $p < .001$.

Table C4: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Locally grown/raised foods

	Overall	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	n
		21.3%	44.8%	33.9%	1,086
USDA FNS Region**	Mid-Atlantic	24.5%	39.4%	36.2%	94
	Midwest	19.1%	47.9%	33.1%	257
	Mountain Plains	10.3%	49.5%	40.2%	97
	Northeast	34.3%	43.3%	22.4%	134
	Southeast	20.8%	37.1%	42.1%	202
	Southwest	10.7%	46.4%	42.9%	140
	Western	28.4%	50.0%	21.6%	162
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	24.0%	46.3%	29.7%	175
	26 - 50%	21.5%	43.6%	34.9%	390
	51 - 65%	17.4%	46.4%	36.2%	265
	> 65%	23.0%	44.1%	32.8%	256
District Enrollment	<1,000	22.3%	39.9%	37.8%	188
	1,000 - 2,499	20.6%	39.7%	39.7%	257
	2,500 - 4,999	20.0%	50.0%	30.0%	200
	5,000 - 9,999	22.3%	51.6%	26.1%	188
	10,000 - 24,999	17.9%	48.3%	33.8%	151
	25,000+	26.5%	39.2%	34.3%	102
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	23.1%	44.3%	32.7%	655
	No	18.6%	45.7%	35.7%	43
**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region and the frequency of offering customizable or made-to-order options.					

Table C5: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Customizable or made-to-order options

	Overall	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	n
		27.5%	31.3%	41.3%	928
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	25.6%	32.9%	41.5%	82
	Midwest	31.3%	32.9%	35.8%	246
	Mountain Plains	24.7%	34.2%	41.1%	43
	Northeast	39.7%	30.6%	29.8%	121
	Southeast	18.6%	31.1%	50.3%	161
	Southwest	27.1%	30.5%	42.4%	118
	Western	23.0%	26.2%	50.8%	126
Free-and-Reduced%*	< 26%	37.2%	34.0%	28.8%	156
	26 - 50%	28.3%	32.8%	38.9%	332
	51 - 65%	21.9%	31.1%	46.9%	228
	> 65%	25.0%	26.9%	48.1%	212
District Enrollment	<1,000	26.9%	23.7%	49.4%	156
	1,000 - 2,499	22.4%	35.0%	42.5%	214
	2,500 - 4,999	28.5%	30.7%	40.8%	179
	5,000 - 9,999	34.2%	27.3%	38.5%	161
	10,000 - 24,999	26.9%	36.6%	36.6%	134
	25,000+	27.4%	35.7%	36.9%	84
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?*	Yes	24.1%	29.2%	46.7%	555
	No	32.4%	34.3%	33.2%	373

*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region (p = .008), free-and-reduced % (p = .002) and the frequency of offering customizable or made-to-order options.

**A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between free meals status and the frequency of offering customizable or made-to-order options. p < .001.

Table C6: Approximately how often does your program offer the following in reimbursable meals? - Clean label options

	Overall	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	n
		22.4%	42.4%	35.1%	959
USDA FNS Region*	Mid-Atlantic	24.1%	27.7%	48.2%	83
	Midwest	16.3%	46.7%	37.1%	240
	Mountain Plains	22.2%	39.5%	38.3%	81
	Northeast	29.4%	43.7%	26.9%	119
	Southeast	20.1%	43.1%	36.8%	174
	Southwest	26.3%	42.4%	31.4%	118
	Western	25.7%	43.8%	30.6%	144
Free-and-Reduced%	< 26%	26.9%	36.3%	36.9%	160
	26 - 50%	25.0%	41.9%	33.1%	332
	51 - 65%	16.5%	45.9%	37.6%	242
	>65%	21.8%	44.0%	34.2%	225
District Enrollment*	<1,000	21.1%	42.8%	36.2%	152
	1,000 - 2,499	18.3%	38.8%	42.9%	224
	2,500 - 4,999	18.3%	42.8%	38.9%	180
	5,000 - 9,999	25.9%	44.1%	30.0%	170
	10,000 - 24,999	26.8%	42.8%	30.4%	138
	25,000+	29.5%	46.3%	24.2%	95
Offer Free Meals to ALL students districtwide?	Yes	24.1%	43.0%	32.9%	584
	No	19.7%	41.6%	38.7%	375
*A chi-square test of independence showed there is a statistically significant association between FNS region (p = .032), district enrollment (p = .048) and the frequency of offering clean label options.					