

Results of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service-Administered School Food Authority Survey III on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers 16 nutrition assistance programs with the mission to increase food security and reduce hunger—in partnership with cooperating organizations—by providing children and people with low income access to food, a healthy diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. Child Nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or no-cost lunches to millions of children each school day. These programs are administered by School Food Authorities (SFAs), entities composed of one or more schools that receive reimbursements to serve meals meeting Federal requirements.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted school meal operations beginning in School Year (SY) 2019–2020. The pandemic disrupted the supply chain for food, equipment, and other supplies used in school foodservice as well as the labor market. While economic conditions have improved in some ways, issues remain that affect the cost and availability of food and labor. To provide the best possible support to States and Child Nutrition program operators, FNS has been engaging SFAs to collect timely and accurate information regarding current school food challenges. The first School Food Authority Survey on Supply Chain Disruptions gathered information on the scope of supply chain disruptions during SY 2021–2022¹ and the second survey was administered for SY 2022–2023.²

The School Food Authority Survey III on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation was administered by FNS from January 29, 2024 to March 19, 2024, through a 20-minute online questionnaire. The survey was sent to all SFAs operating Child Nutrition programs³ in schools to gather information on the impacts of continued supply chain disruptions during SY 2023–2024. The response rate for the survey was 71 percent with SFAs from all States and territories responding.

The results below were weighted⁴ to be nationally representative. Illustrative quotes from open-ended responses are included throughout the report in beige call-out boxes.

¹ [Results of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service-Administered School Food Authority Survey on Supply Chain Disruptions \(March 2022\)](#)

² [Results of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service-Administered School Food Authority Survey II on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation \(July 2023\)](#)

³ Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-risk Afterschool Meals; Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP); National School Lunch Program (NSLP); NSLP Afterschool Snack Service; School Breakfast Program (SBP); Special Milk Program (SMP); and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) (only if operated during unanticipated school closures during SY 2023–2024).

⁴ See Appendix A for methodology.

Key Findings

- **Ninety-five percent of School Food Authorities (SFAs) experienced one or more supply chain-related challenges.** High food costs, staffing shortages, and product shortages are the challenges most frequently identified by SFAs. Very large and large SFAs are generally more likely than small or medium SFAs to report supply chain-related challenges.⁵
- **There continue to be signs of improvement in how operational challenges are impacting school food service.** Declines seen from SY 2021–2022 to 2022–2023 continued through 2023–2024. Compared with SY 2022–2023, SFAs were less likely to name increased overall program costs, increased staff stress or workload, reduced student participation, and difficulty complying with meal pattern requirements in SY 2023–2024. However, SFAs were more likely to report increased labor costs as a challenge (40 percent, up from 31 percent).
- **Suburban SFAs reported more workforce challenges.** Compared with rural and urban SFAs, suburban SFAs more frequently reported labor shortages and higher labor costs. They were also more likely to report higher staff stress and more difficulty retaining staff.
- **SFAs in States offering Healthy School Meals for All (HSMFA)⁶ were less likely to see a reduction in student participation in SY 2023–2024 compared with SFAs in non-HSMFA States.** Twenty-seven percent of SFAs in States without HSMFA policies reported reduced participation compared with only 14 percent of SFAs in HSMFA States. SFAs in States offering HSMFA were also more likely to report using scratch cooking and increasing purchases of local foods to address supply chain challenges.
- **Over one in five SFAs (21 percent) increased local food purchases as a strategy to address challenges.** Large and very large SFAs, SFAs in suburban areas, and SFAs in States operating HSMFA were more likely to increase their purchase of local foods. Compared with SY 2022–2023, more SFAs in SY 2023–2024 reported increasing their purchase of local foods due to external funding and State and local policies and programs.
- **Fewer SFAs report operating at a surplus or breaking even.** At the end of SY 2022–2023, 72 percent of SFAs reported operating at a surplus or breaking even. That percentage is a decrease from 82 percent of SFAs in SY 2021–2022.

“With our community, it has been a huge help to our families to have free meals. We are in an area that is below blue collar and a lot of families live below the poverty line. Having a free school meals program has ensured that our students are fed and healthy.” – Small rural SFA

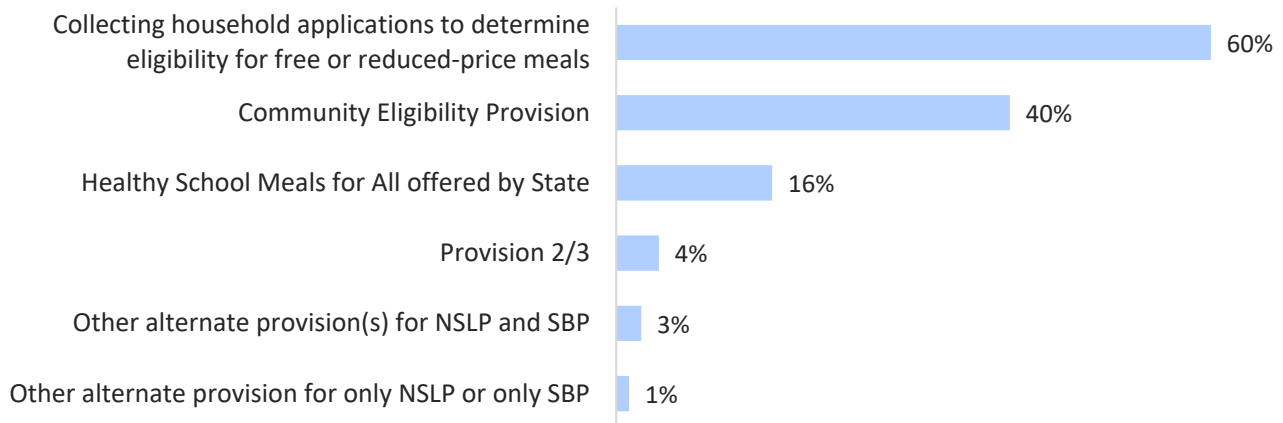
⁵ SFA size defined by student enrollment: Small (1–999); Medium (1,000–4,999); Large (5,000–24,999); Very Large (>25,000+).

⁶ States with HSMFA policies in place in SY 2023–2024 are California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, and Vermont. HSMFA is a State-wide initiative where States can distribute free school meals to all students regardless of household income levels. Note that while some U.S. territories (e.g., Guam, Virgin Islands) offer free meals to all their students, this is done through the Community Eligibility Provision; therefore, these territories are not included with HSMFA States.

School Meal Applications and Eligibility

Exhibit 1.1. Three out of five SFAs reported that schools were collecting household applications to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals in SY 2023–2024. Two-in-five SFAs reported that schools used the Community Eligibility Provision,⁷ while 16 percent operated in a State offering Healthy School Meals for All.

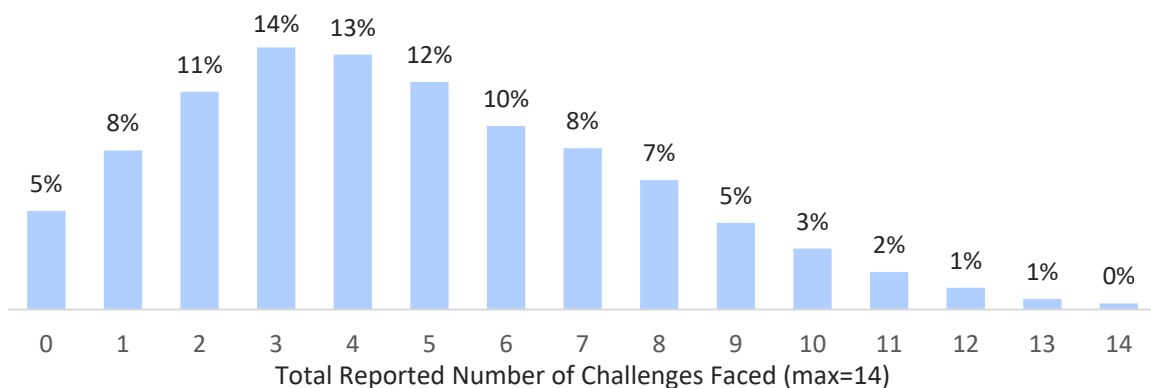
Methods of Operating the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP) in School Year 2023–2024⁸



Supply Chain Challenges

Exhibit 2.1. Almost all SFAs (95 percent) reported one or more supply chain-related challenges in the first quarter of SY 2023–2024. While private SFAs, small SFAs, and SFAs located in urban areas were marginally less likely than their counterparts to experience challenges, challenges were reported by at least 92 percent of respondents in each group. The median number of challenges SFAs reported in SY 2023–2024 was four, compared with five in SY 2022–2023.⁹

Proportion of School Food Authorities Reporting Multiple Supply Chain-Related Challenges in School Year 2023–2024¹⁰



⁷ Schools operating the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) are not required to collect applications to determine eligibility.

⁸ Responses may not sum to 100% because multiple responses were permitted. n=12,861; weighted n=17,834

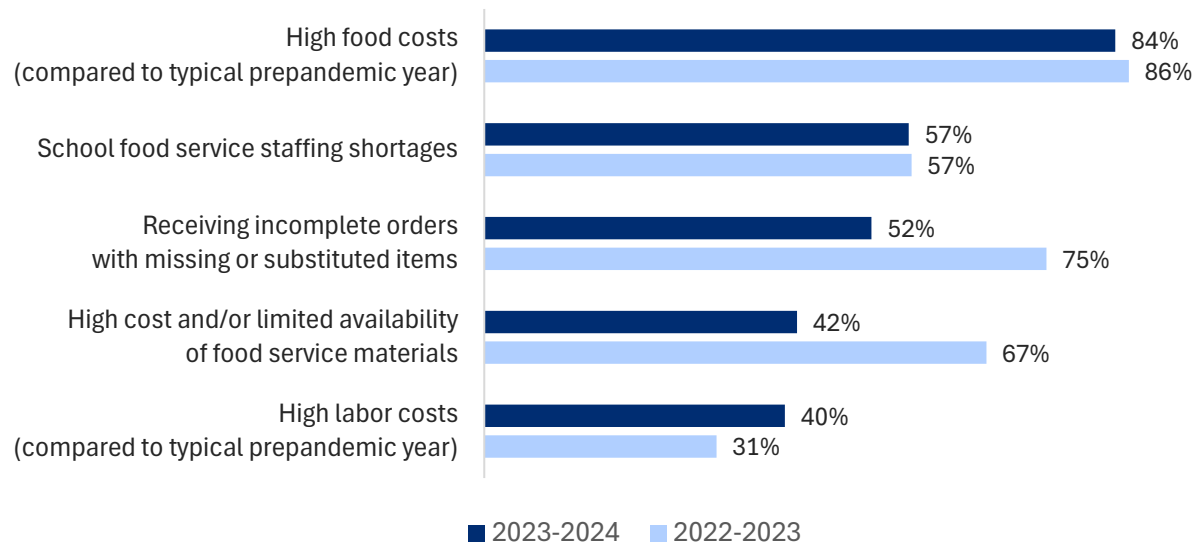
⁹ Note that the SY 2022–2023 survey gave SFAs fewer challenges to select from than the SY 2023–2024 survey for this question (11 vs. 14). All SY 2023–2024 survey questions can be found in the Appendix. Note that since these surveys began in response to the pandemic, we do not have comparable data on the number of challenges prior to the pandemic.

¹⁰ SFAs that selected “I don’t know” in response to a question were classified as missing data and therefore are not included in the analysis for that question.

“Lack of vendors and procurement requirements are driving cost. We are a medium size school district [...] and when we went out for bid according to the federal requirements, only two vendors would respond and of those two vendors only one complied with bid specs. For milk we only have one vendor in our area so they are able to set the milk price for as high as they would like.” – Large rural SFA

Exhibit 2.2. High costs, staffing shortages, and product shortages were the most common supply chain challenges reported in SY 2023–2024. There were some improvements from prior years. Fewer SFAs reported receiving orders with missing or substituted items in SY 2023–2024 (52 percent, down from 75 percent in SY 2022–2023 and 84 percent in SY 2021–2022) and fewer reported the high cost and/or limited availability of food service materials (42 percent, down from 67 percent in SY 2022–2023) or food service equipment (29 percent, down from 47 percent). However, more SFAs reported higher labor costs (40 percent, up from 31 percent).

Top Five Supply Chain Challenges Reported by School Food Authorities (SFAs) in School Year 2023–2024 and the Change From School Year 2022–2023



“The vendors that I have had said the reason [they] don't want to bid on schools is because of the products they have to carry and it doesn't sell enough of the product to justify selling the whole-grain products.” – Small rural SFA

Exhibit 2.3. Eleven percent of SFAs reported challenges with vendors discontinuing participation in school food service in SY 2023–2024. This is a decline from 21 percent reporting this challenge in SY 2022–2023. In SY 2023–2024, over half of SFAs believed that vendors discontinued participation due to shortages of labor (56 percent) as well as the high cost of food (53 percent) and labor (48 percent). The percentage of SFAs that cited food shortages as a factor decreased (39 percent, down from 56 percent in SY 2022–2023), but the percentage who cited “difficulty producing items that meet SFA specifications” increased slightly (51 percent, up from 42 percent in SY 2022–2023) and those who cited “Federal, State, or procurement regulations” more than doubled (19 percent, up from 8 percent in SY 2022–2023).

Factors Driving Decreases in Vendor Participation in School Food Service Operations in School Year 2023–2024 as Reported by School Food Authorities (SFAs)¹¹

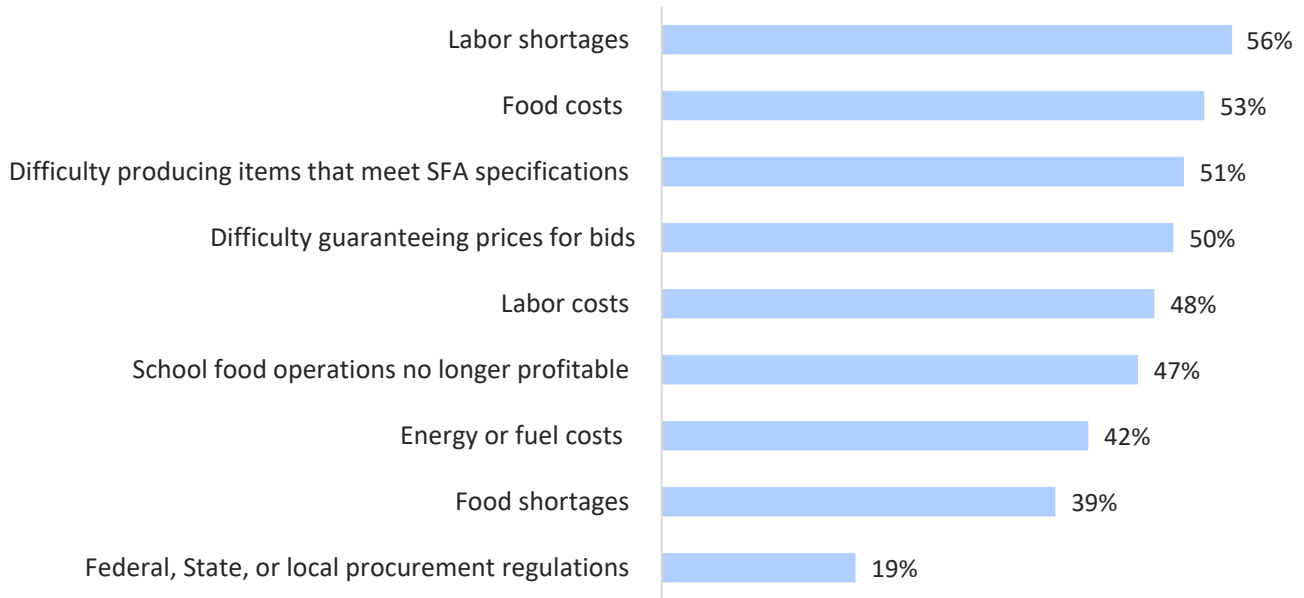
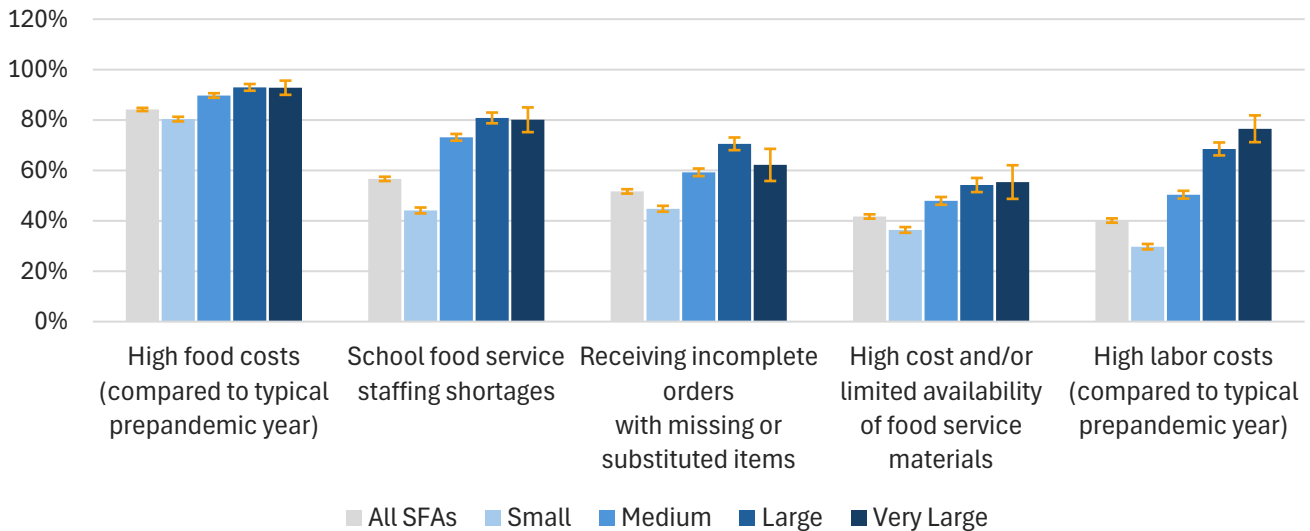


Exhibit 2.4. Small SFAs reported supply chain challenges less frequently than larger SFAs. Across the top five supply chain-related challenges reported by SFAs, very large and large SFAs were more likely to report challenges than medium and small SFAs, while medium SFAs were more likely to report challenges than small SFAs, with the exception of “receiving incomplete orders.” This pattern where smaller SFAs tend to report fewer challenges is consistent with findings from the SY 2021–2022 and SY 2022–2023 SFA surveys.

Leading Supply Chain Challenges in School Year 2023–2024, by School Food Authority (SFA) Size

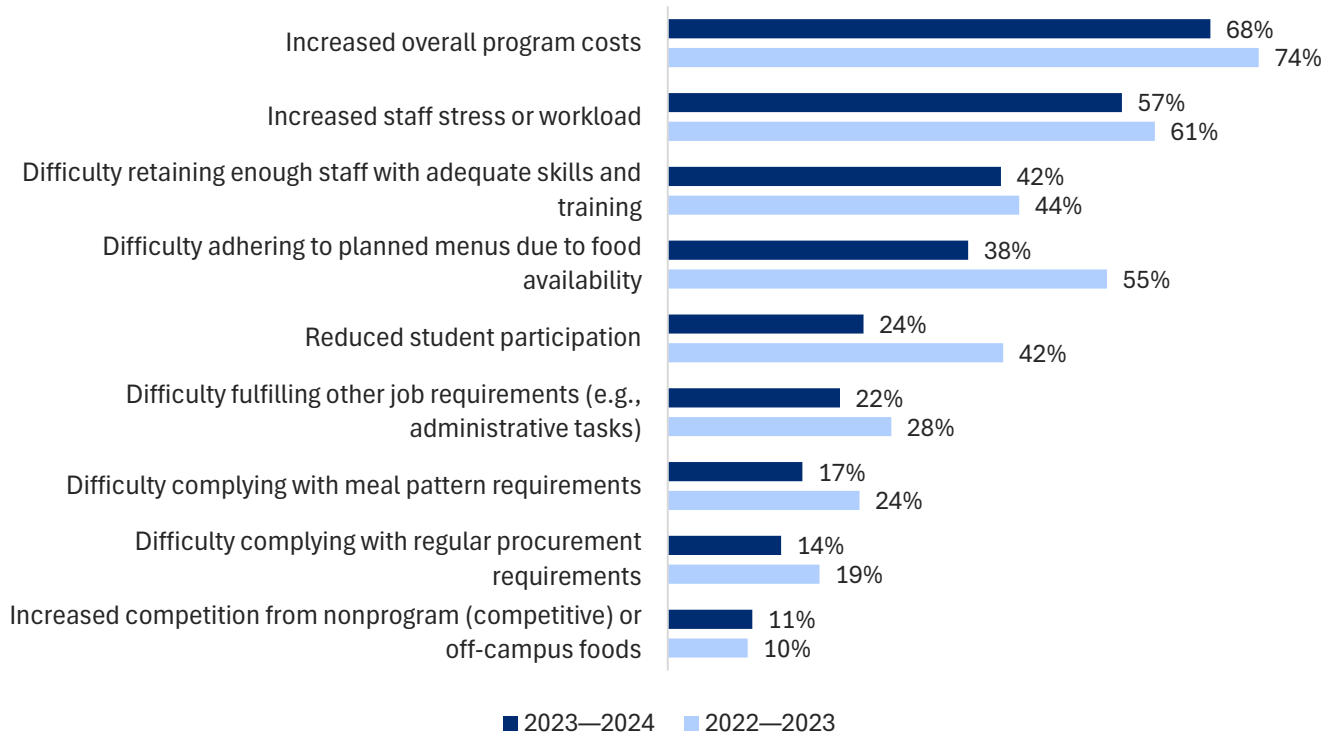


¹¹ Includes only SFAs that reported experiencing incomplete orders with missing or substituted items as a supply-chain related challenge in SY 2023–2024. n=1,228 SFAs; weighted n=1,662 SFAs.

Impacts of Challenges on School Food Operations

Exhibit 3.1. Among SFAs reporting challenges, almost all (90 percent) reported that challenges impacted school food operations. More than half of all SFAs reported impacts such as increased overall program costs (68 percent) and increased staff stress or workload (57 percent). While challenges remain common, there were improvements across the board compared with SY 2022–2023. In SY 2023–2024, SFAs were less likely to report supply chain challenges leading to increased overall program costs (68 percent, down from 74 percent in SY 2022–2023), difficulty adhering to planned menus due to changing or limited food availability (38 percent, down from 55 percent), and reduced student participation (24 percent, down from 42 percent).

**Impacts of Challenges Affecting School Food Authorities (SFAs)
in School Year 2023–2024 and the Change From School Year 2022–2023¹²**



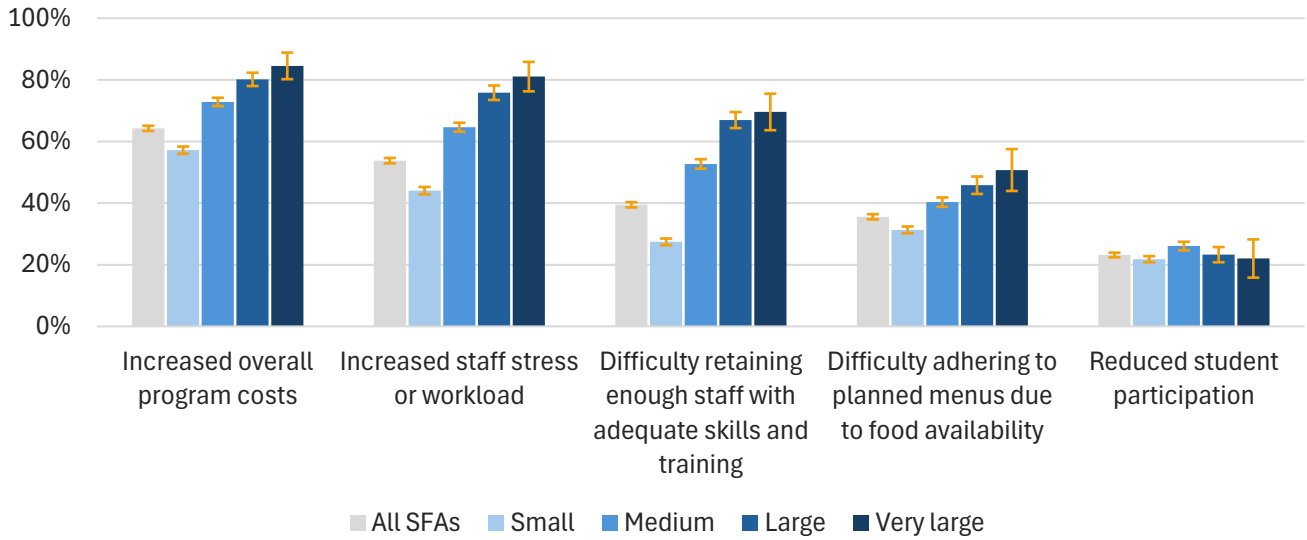
“Food cost is a major factor in my school meal program. It is obviously directly tied to meal participation and revenues. Giving students free meals was a great idea. It increased participation and removed the old stigmas from School Food Programs . . . Then we returned to ‘normal’ meal operations and unfortunately nothing about returning was ‘normal’ . . . With minimal paid meal revenue being received and paid reimbursements for paid meals at \$0.42 with \$0.08 for HHFKA. This compounds the food cost, placing districts in a difficult situation financially. The Supply Chain Assistance funds [we] have received has kept us ‘afloat’.”

– Medium-sized rural SFA

¹² Includes SFAs that reported experiencing any challenges in SY 2023–2024. n=11,923 SFAs; weighted n=16,504 SFAs.

Exhibit 3.2. Larger SFAs more frequently reported negative impacts to school meal operations as a result of supply chain-related challenges. Among all SFAs, over two-thirds (68 percent) reported that challenges increased their program costs and over half (57 percent) reported increased staff stress. Among very large SFAs, these percentages were higher (85 percent and 82 percent, respectively). However, unlike other leading impacts, there was no trend by SFA size among those who reported reduced student participation.

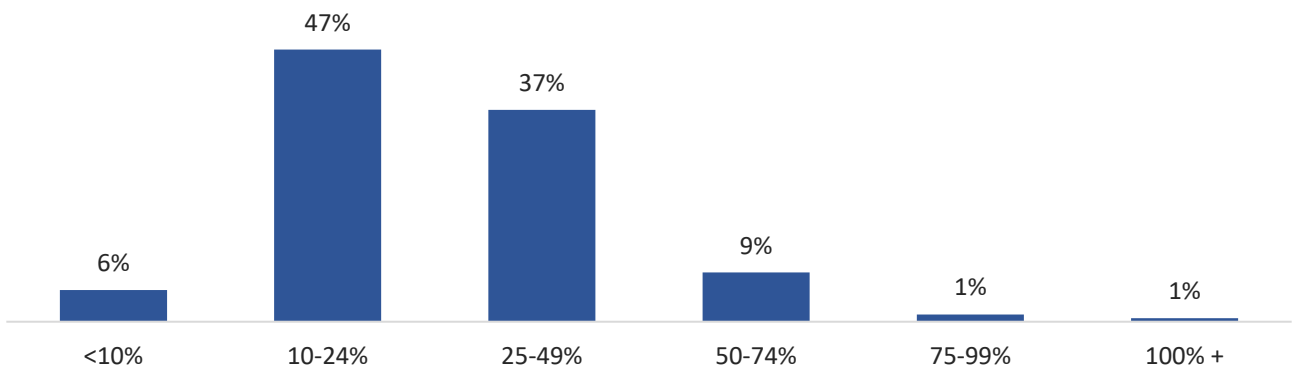
Leading Impacts to School Meal Operations Among School Food Authorities (SFAs), by SFA Size



Challenges Related to Food Costs

Exhibit 4.1. Of the 84 percent of SFAs that reported facing higher food costs compared with a typical prepandemic year, almost half estimated that food costs increased between 10 percent and 24 percent. Another 37 percent of SFAs estimated increases between 25 percent and 49 percent, and about 11 percent of SFAs estimated that food costs increased by 50 percent or more.¹³ These results are similar to SY 2022–2023.

Estimated Increase in Food Costs in School Year 2023–2024 Compared With a Typical Prepandemic Year¹⁴

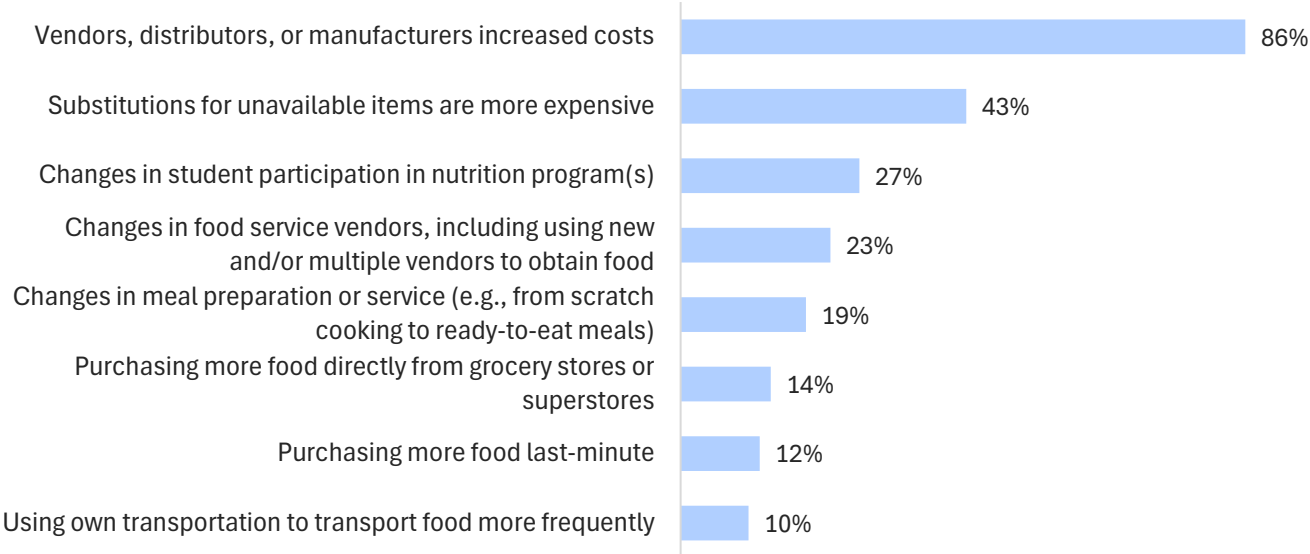


¹³ For comparison, the rate of inflation in the price of “food away from home” from December 2019 to December 2023 was 26 percent. Source: [Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Food Away from Home in U.S. | FRED | St. Louis Fed](#)

¹⁴ Includes only SFAs that reported experiencing high food costs as a supply-chain related challenge in SY 2023–2024. n=9,294 SFAs; weighted n=12,831 SFAs.

Exhibit 4.2. Of those SFAs that identified increased food costs as a challenge in SY 2023–2024, the primary driver of increased food costs was identified as cost increases by vendors, distributors, or manufacturers (86 percent, down from 89 percent in SY 2022–2023). About 4-in-10 SFAs said that using more expensive items as substitutions for unavailable items was a factor (43 percent, down from 70 percent in SY 2022–2023).

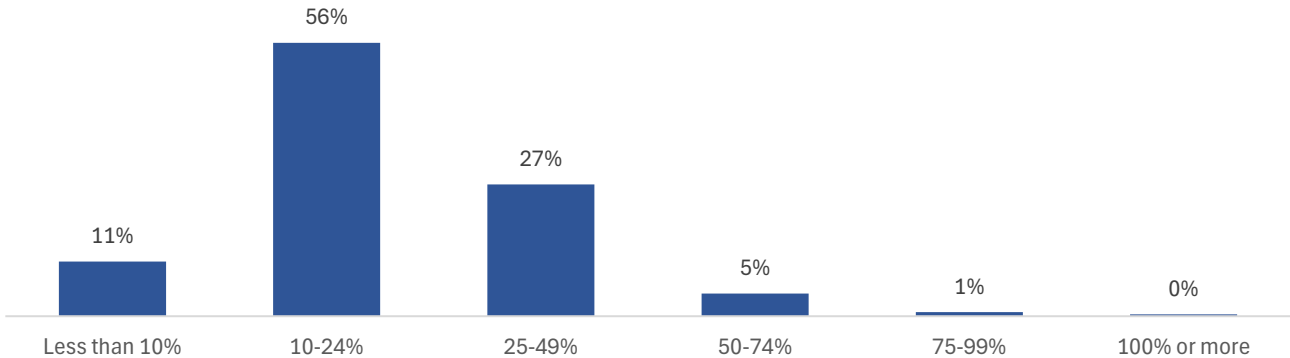
Factors Contributing to Increased Food Costs in School Year 2023–2024¹⁵



Challenges Related to Labor

Exhibit 5.1. Of the 40 percent of SFAs that reported facing higher labor costs compared with a typical prepandemic year, over half estimated that labor costs increased between 10 percent and 24 percent. Another 27 percent of SFAs estimated increases of between 25 to 49 percent. These results are similar to SY 2022-2023.

Estimated Increase in Labor Costs in School Year 2023–2024 Compared With a Typical Prepandemic School Year¹⁶



¹⁵ Includes only SFAs that reported experiencing high food costs as a supply-chain related challenge in SY 2023–2024. n=10,549 SFAs; weighted n=14,572 SFAs.

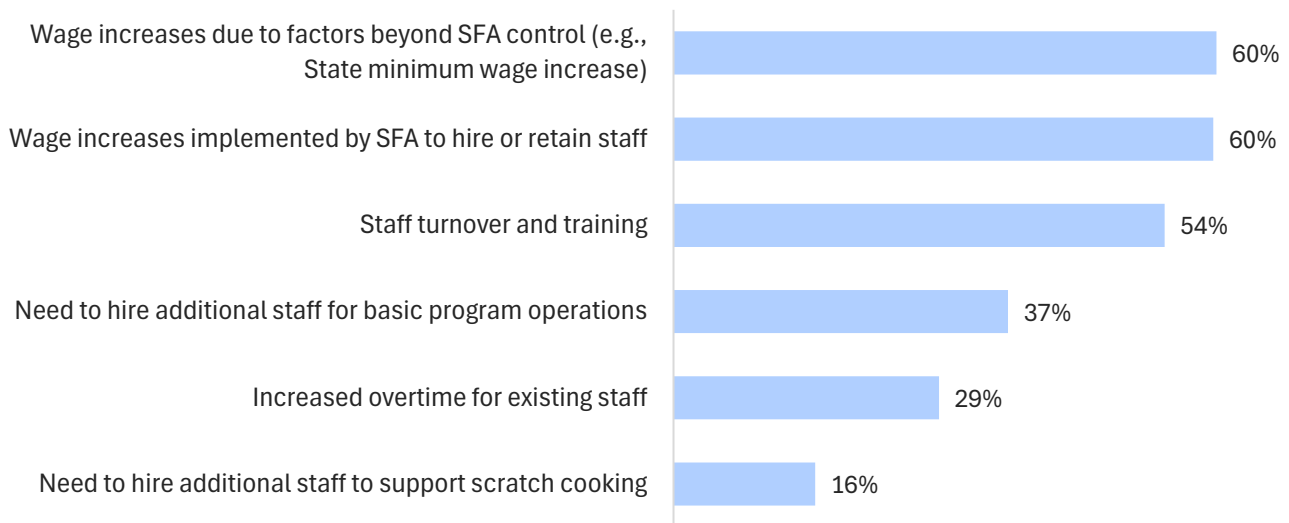
¹⁶ Includes only SFAs that reported experiencing high labor costs as a supply-chain related challenge in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=4,693 SFAs; weighted n=6,453 SFAs.

“I budgeted a 10 percent increase across the board for my staff this year, including substitute Food Service workers, retention and recruitment purposes, and also to acknowledge the dedication of my staff through the last few years. My sub food service worker budget lines have been consistently overspent due to the need for extra people in kitchens as well as difficulties filling permanent positions due to lack of applications.”

– Medium-sized suburban SFA

Exhibit 5.2. The primary drivers of increased labor costs were wage increases and staff turnover and training. More than half of SFAs cited wage increases due to factors beyond SFA control (60 percent) and a similar share reported wage increases implemented by the SFA to hire or retain staff.¹⁷ Slightly fewer (54 percent) identified staff turnover and training as a factor contributing to increased food costs. For each of the factors in the figure below, a higher proportion of suburban SFAs reported they contributed to increased labor costs compared with rural and urban SFAs.

**Factors Contributing to Increased Labor Costs in School Year 2023–2024
as Reported by School Food Authorities (SFAs)¹⁸**



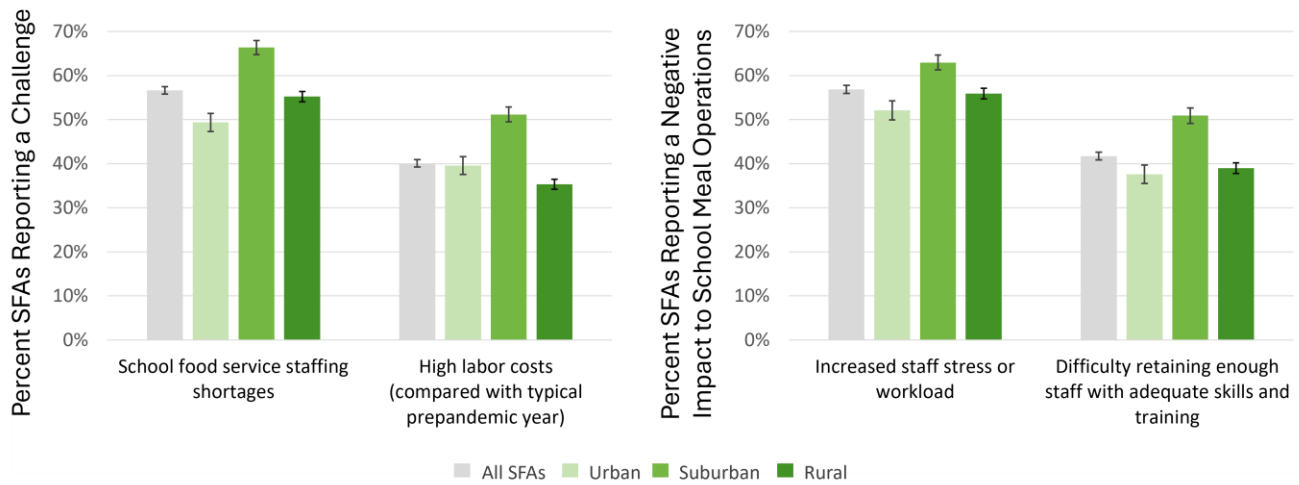
“Outside businesses and us are competing for the same employees. Many of them pay ‘better’ and we try and keep up but sometimes we can’t. We need to pay better those who take care of our students/kids/future vs. any other foodservice employer. Our students DESERVE the best.” – Large rural SFA

¹⁷ Historically, wages for foodservice workers in schools have not kept pace with inflation. While there is evidence that average hourly earnings for foodservice workers in elementary and secondary schools did slightly outpace inflation from 2019 to 2023, many schools remain unable to match wages for comparable jobs in institutional foodservice or the private sector. For reference, please see average hourly earnings data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics [National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates](#): “Elementary and Secondary Schools,” “Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations.”

¹⁸ Includes only SFAs that reported experiencing high labor costs as a supply-chain related challenge in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=5,106 SFAs; weighted n=7,031 SFAs.

Exhibit 5.3. Suburban SFAs reported labor challenges more frequently than rural and urban SFAs. These challenges include staffing shortages and labor costs. Subsequently, when asked about the impact of reported challenges, suburban SFAs were more likely to cite high staff stress and difficulty retaining skilled staff.

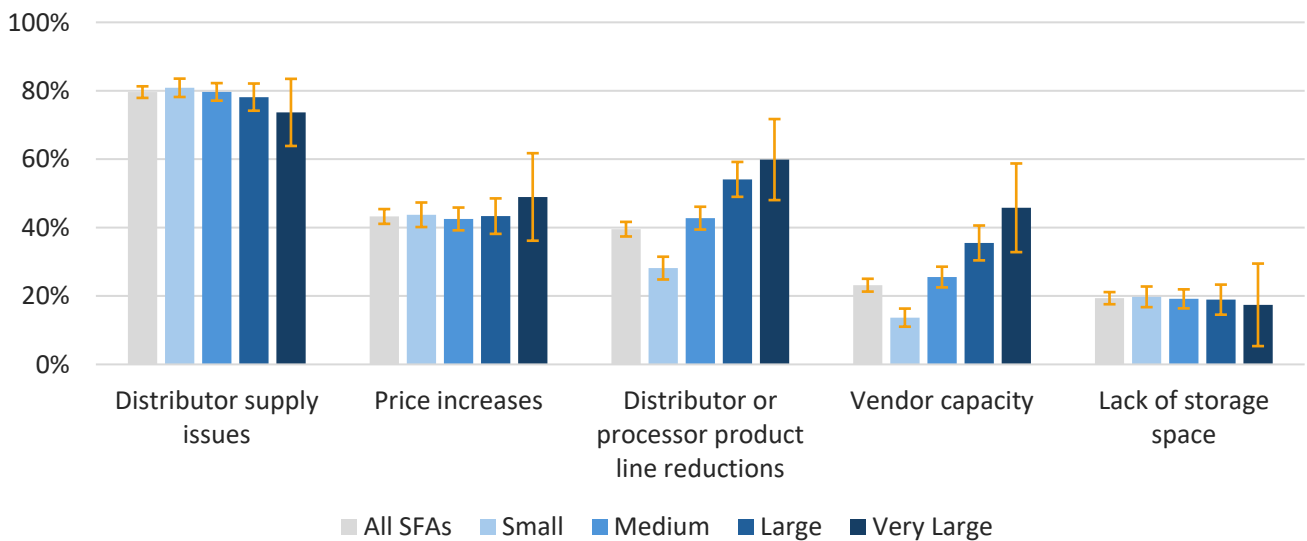
Labor Challenges and Impacts in School Year 2023–2024, by School Food Authority (SFA) Urbanicity



USDA Foods

Exhibit 6.1. Only one-in-five (20 percent) SFAs using USDA Foods in SY 2023–2024 reported challenges receiving processed products, a decline from 37 percent during SY 2022–2023. The top factors contributing to challenges were distributor supply issues (80 percent), price increases (43 percent), and product line reductions (40 percent), with some variation by SFA size.

Factors Contributing to Challenges Receiving USDA Foods in School Year 2023–2024¹⁹



¹⁹ Includes only SFAs that reported experiencing any challenges getting USDA Foods processed end products in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=2,070 SFAs; weighted n=2,769 SFAs.

SFA Strategies to Address Supply Chain Challenges

Exhibit 7.1. SFAs reported using a variety of purchasing strategies to help address supply-chain related challenges. However, fewer SFAs reported using most strategies compared with SY 2022–2023. Half of SFAs reported planning further ahead or placing orders further in advance.

Purchasing Strategies Used by School Food Authorities (SFAs) to Address Supply Chain Challenges²⁰

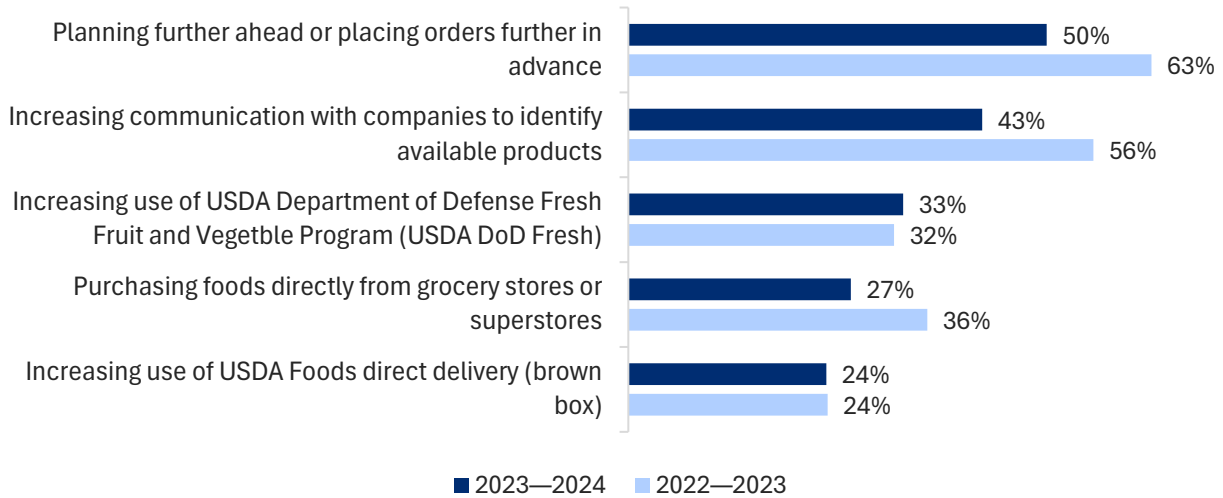
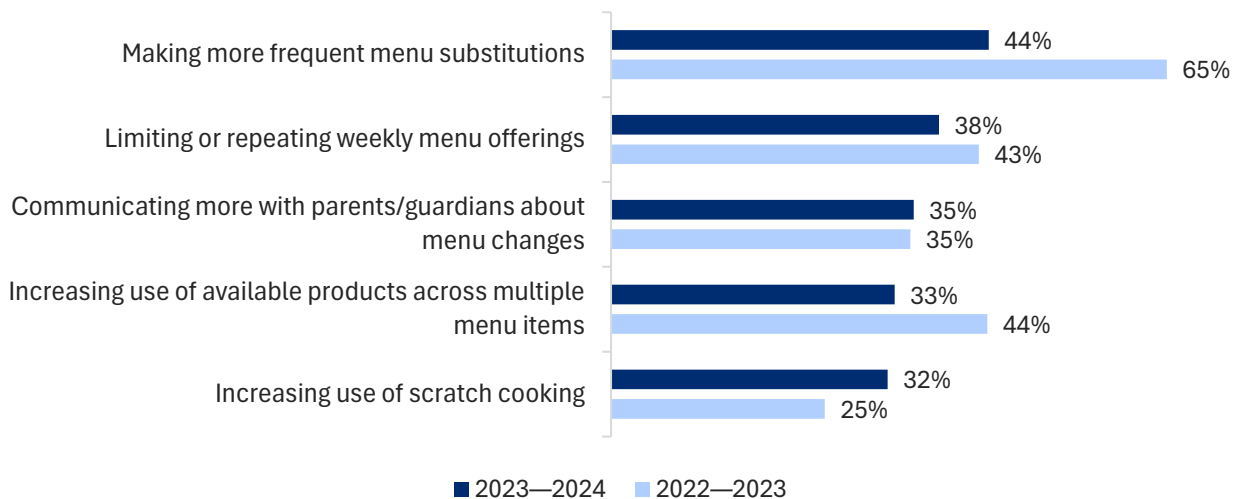


Exhibit 7.2. SFAs also reported using a variety of other operational strategies to help address supply chain issues. SFAs commonly used menus as a tool to adapt to challenges, including making more frequent menu substitutions (44 percent), limiting or repeating weekly menu offerings (38 percent), and increasing the use of products across multiple menu items (33 percent).

Other Strategies Used by School Food Authorities (SFAs) to Address Operational Challenges²¹



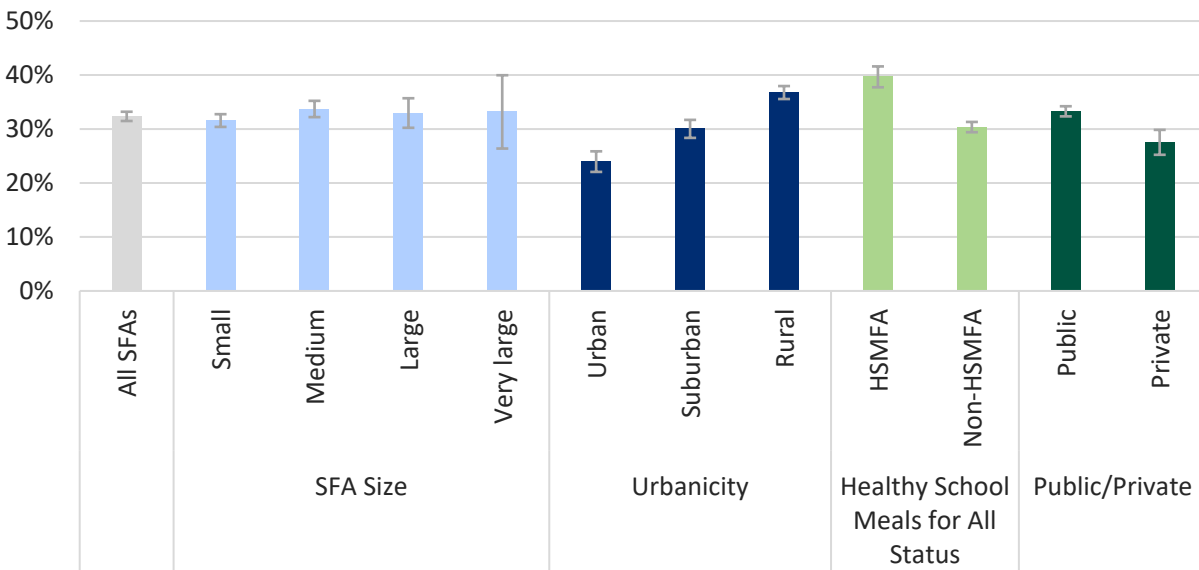
²⁰ Includes the 95 percent of SFAs that reported experiencing any supply-chain related challenges in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=11,334 SFAs; weighted n=15,670 SFAs.

²¹ Includes the 95 percent of SFAs that reported experiencing any supply-chain related challenges in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=11,707 SFAs; weighted n=16,188 SFAs.

Changes in Scratch Cooking

Exhibit 8.1. Almost one-third (32 percent) of SFAs reported increasing the use of scratch cooking to address supply chain challenges during SY 2023–2024, while 11 percent of SFAs decreased the use of scratch cooking. This represents a net increase in SFAs using scratch cooking compared with SY 2022–2023, when 25 percent of SFAs reported increasing the use of scratch cooking and 14 percent decreased the use of scratch cooking. SFAs most likely to report increasing the use of scratch cooking were those in rural areas (37 percent), in States offering HSMFA (40 percent), and public SFAs (33 percent).

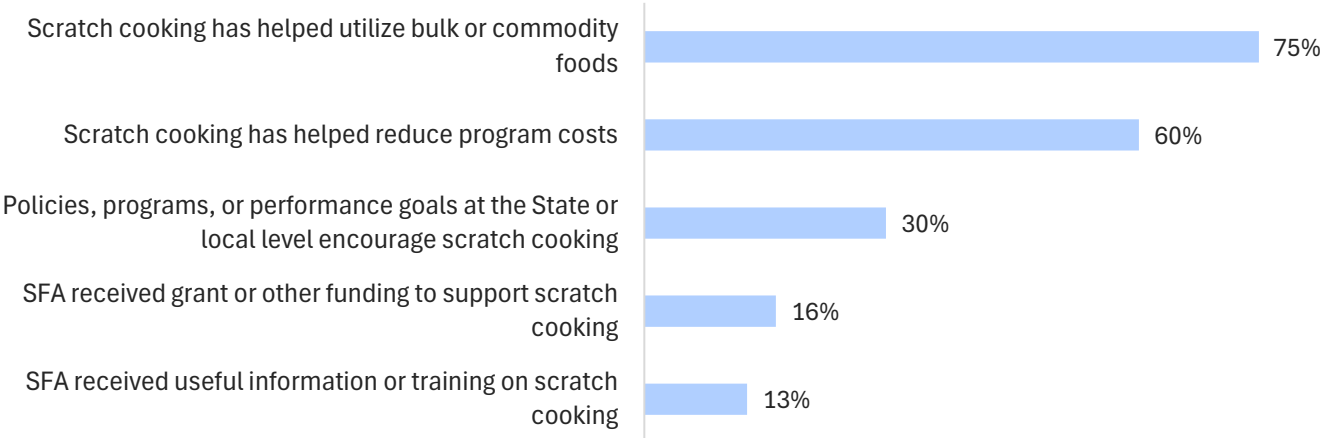
Percent of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Increasing Scratch Cooking in School Year 2023–2024



“Food costs are getting scary high. My team works really hard to get quality meals out to our students. I have had to bring on more staff to help with scratch cooking, which we have had to move more to scratch because the vendors are not making the same food our students were used to. With the broken trust from vendors we are slowly moving into scratch cooking.” – Medium-sized suburban SFA

Exhibit 8.2. Among SFAs that increased the use of scratch cooking to address challenges (32 percent), 75 percent reported that it helped to utilize bulk or commodity foods, and 60 percent reported it helped to reduce program costs. Compared with SY 2022–2023, a slightly larger proportion of SFAs cited “policies, programs, or performance goals” (30 percent, up from 23 percent in SY 2022–2023) and receiving a “grant or other funding” (16 percent, up from 7 percent) to support scratch cooking. Among SFAs that decreased the use of scratch cooking (11 percent), nearly all (87 percent) cited lack of staff or training as the reason.

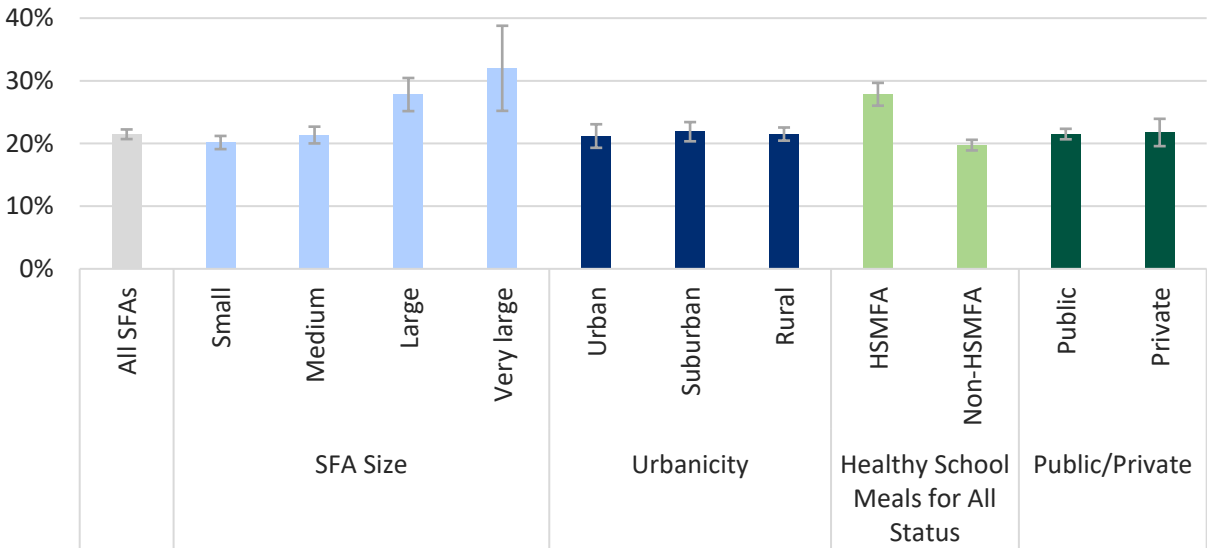
School Food Authority (SFA) Reasons Provided for Increasing Scratch Cooking in School Year 2023–2024²²



Changes in Local Food Purchases

Exhibit 9.1. Over one-fifth (21 percent) of SFAs reported increasing purchases of local foods to address supply chain challenges, while just 3 percent of SFAs decreased local food purchases. Large SFAs and very large SFAs were more likely to increase local food purchases (28 and 32 percent, respectively). SFAs with less than 35 percent of students certified for free or reduced-price lunch (i.e., SFAs with more students paying full price) and SFAs in States offering Healthy School Meals for All were also more likely to report increasing the purchase of local foods (24 and 28 percent, respectively). There was a statistically significant correlation between increasing scratch cooking and increasing local food purchases; among all SFAs that increased local food purchases, 51 percent increased scratch cooking.²³

Percent of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Increasing the Purchase of Local Foods in School Year 2023–2024

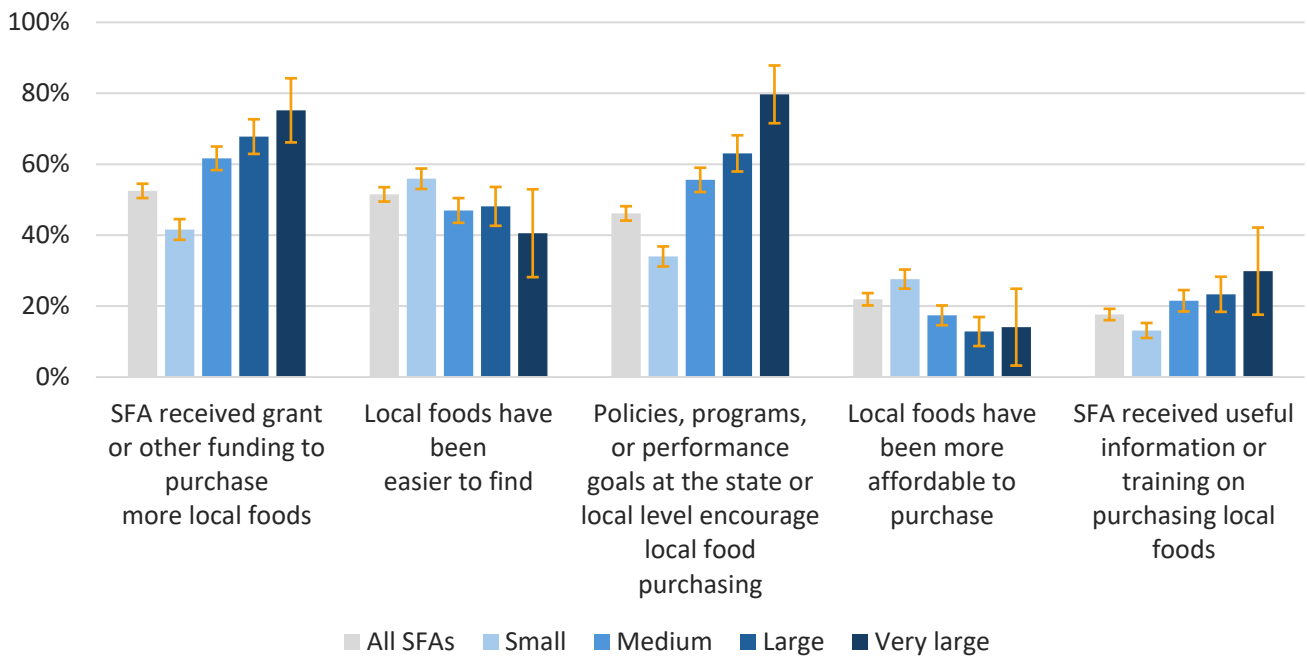


²² Includes only SFAs that reported increasing the use of scratch cooking as a strategy to address challenges in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=3,753 SFAs; weighted n=5,172 SFAs.

²³ There was a statistically significant association between the two variables, $p < 0.001$ chi-squared test.

Exhibit 9.2. Among those that increased purchases of local foods, more SFAs said that grants, policies, and programs played a role in their decision in SY 2023–2024. In SY 2023–2024, over half of SFAs (52 percent) reported that receiving a grant or other funding led to an increase in their purchase of local foods,²⁴ compared with 23 percent in SY 2022–2023. In addition, 46 percent of SFAs cited policies, programs, or performance goals at the State or local level as a reason, versus 28 percent in SY 2022–2023. In contrast, SFAs were less likely to report purchasing more local foods because they were easier to find (51 percent in SY 2023–2024, compared with 71 percent in SY 2022–2023).

School Food Authority (SFA) Reasons Provided for Increasing Local Food Purchases in School Year 2023–2024, by SFA Size²⁵



“Inflation and supply chain issues are the major factors to increases in food costs. Increase in hot lunch costs per student to keep up with inflation is a problem. Families are struggling to make ends meet. It is hard sometimes to find local sources of produce or milk products at a reasonable price and to check the quality of the products. Local meat prices are very high. Farming cost[s] are ridiculous. Our school is very thankful for all the help the USDA is giving us through the grants.” – Small rural SFA

²⁴ Of note: the [Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program](#) (LFS) was a \$200 million program launched in 2022, with most funding awarded during the 2023–2024 school year. The LFS established cooperative agreements that allow for States to procure local unprocessed or minimally processed domestic foods that are unique to their geographic area and meet the needs of their schools. Funding is awarded to States, who then subaward funding to SFAs. LFS has funding periods of 18 months, and funds continue to be used in SY 2024–2025.

²⁵ Includes only SFAs that reported increasing the purchase of local foods as a strategy to address challenges in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=2,357 SFAs; weighted n=3,258 SFAs.

Changes in Student Participation

Exhibit 10.1. The majority of SFAs believe that participation in School Year 2023–2024 was about the same or greater than prepandemic participation (44 and 32 percent, respectively).²⁶ Only 24 percent of SFAs believed participation was lower than prepandemic participation, with notable variation by SFA size.

Student Participation in School Meal Programs in School Year 2023–2024 Compared With a Typical Prepandemic School Year (e.g., 2018–2019)²⁷

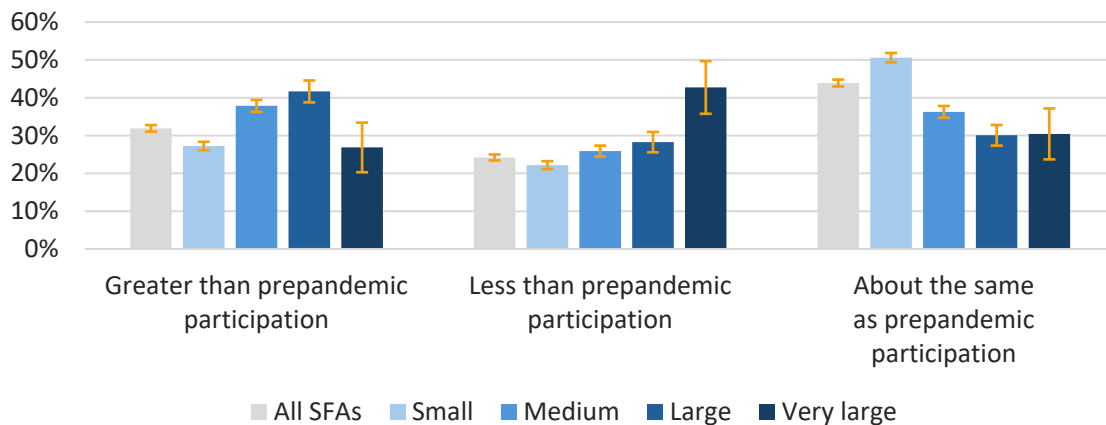
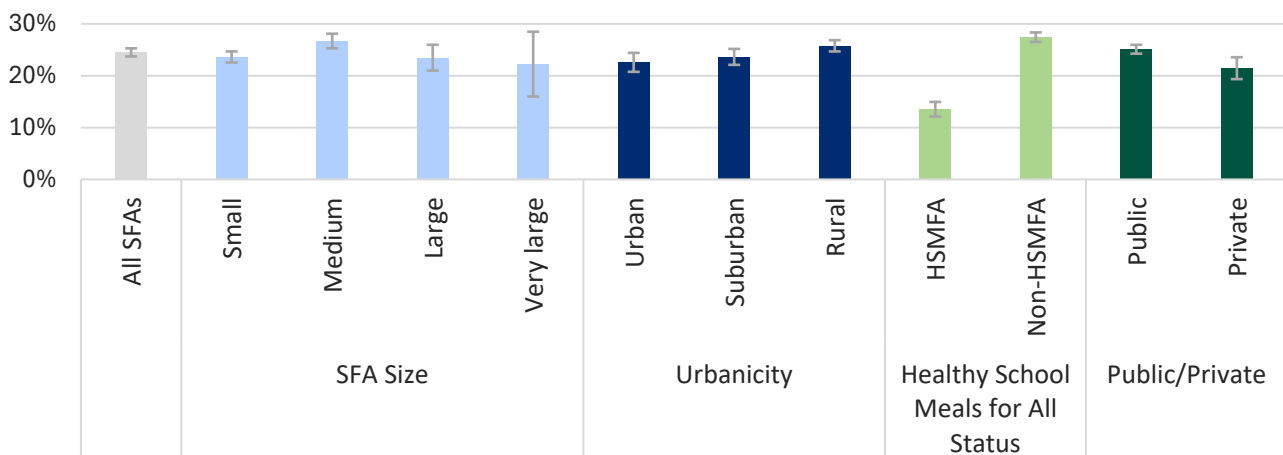


Exhibit 10.2. About a quarter of SFAs (24 percent) estimated that student participation in SY 2023–2024 was lower than SY 2022–2023 because of supply chain challenges they faced. This is compared with 42 percent who reported that challenges led to a reduction in participation from SY 2021–2022 to SY 2022–2023. Only 14 percent of SFAs located in States with HSMFA policies in SY 2023–2024 reported reduced student participation compared with 27 percent of non-HSMFA schools. Medium-sized SFAs (27 percent), SFAs in rural areas (26 percent), and public SFAs (25 percent) were all more likely to report reduced student participation.

Reduction in Student Participation Reported by School Food Authorities (SFAs) in School Year 2023–2024 Compared With 2022–2023

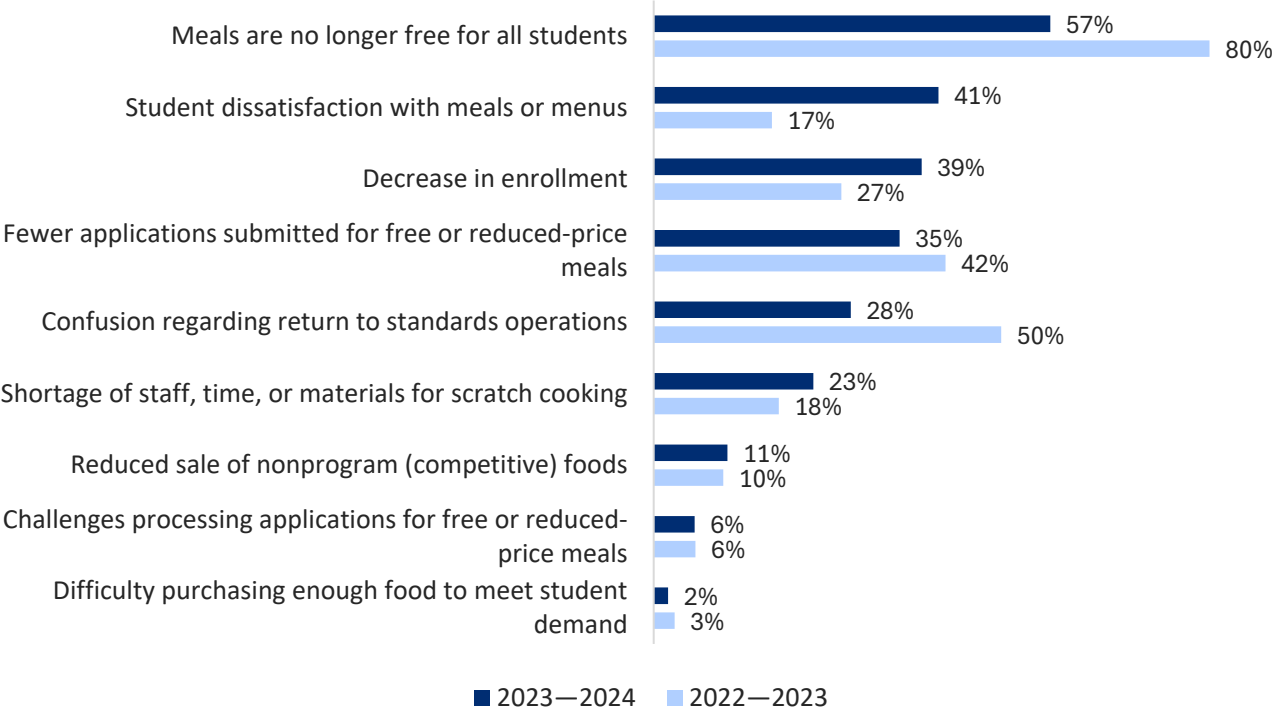


²⁶ In October 2023, the minimum Identified Student Percentage (ISP) threshold needed for schools to qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) [was lowered](#) from 40 percent to 25 percent, potentially increasing the number of schools able to offer school meals at no cost and impacting their rates of student participation.

²⁷ The survey did not specify whether SFAs should interpret an “increase in participation” as an increase in the number of students or in the percent of the student body (see Appendix A, Question 17).

Exhibit 10.3. Of the 24 percent of SFAs that reported decreased participation, most identified the primary drivers of decreased student participation as meals no longer being free for students (57 percent), followed by student dissatisfaction with meals (41 percent). Compared with SY 2022–2023, SFAs were less likely to report “meals are no longer free for all students” as a reason for decreased student participation (57 percent in SY 2023–2024, down from 80 percent in SY 2022–2023). However, the proportion of SFAs citing “student dissatisfaction with meals or menus” rose from 17 percent to 41 percent. In SY 2023–2024, SFAs in urban areas and those in HSMFA States were more likely to cite “student dissatisfaction with meals or menus.”

School Food Authority (SFA) Reasons Provided for Decreased Student Participation²⁸



“The reason we have an account balance is due [to...] the additional Supply Chain Assistance received. [The] Supply Chain Assistance help offset increases in personnel pay and food cost. The additional kids served in 2021–2022 and lack of staff created a false sense of covering cost but when we are properly staff[ed] to truly meet the needs to serve kids, we will not be able to cover cost with the current reimbursement rate.”

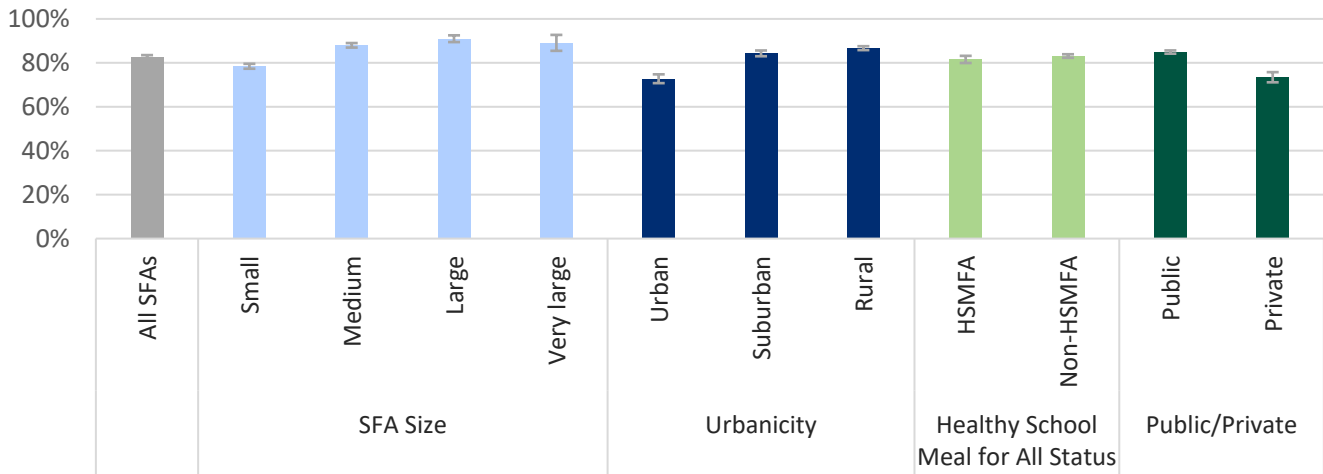
– Large rural SFA

Supply Chain Assistance Funds

Exhibit 11.1. The majority of SFAs (83 percent) accepted the Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) funds made available in SY 2023–2024. Public SFAs, SFAs located in suburban or rural areas, and medium, large, or very large SFAs were all more likely to accept all their SCA funds.

²⁸ Includes only SFAs that reported reduced student participation as an impact of challenges they faced in SY 2023–2024. Multiple responses were permitted. n=2,878 SFAs; weighted n=3,946 SFAs.

Percent of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Accepting all Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) Funds

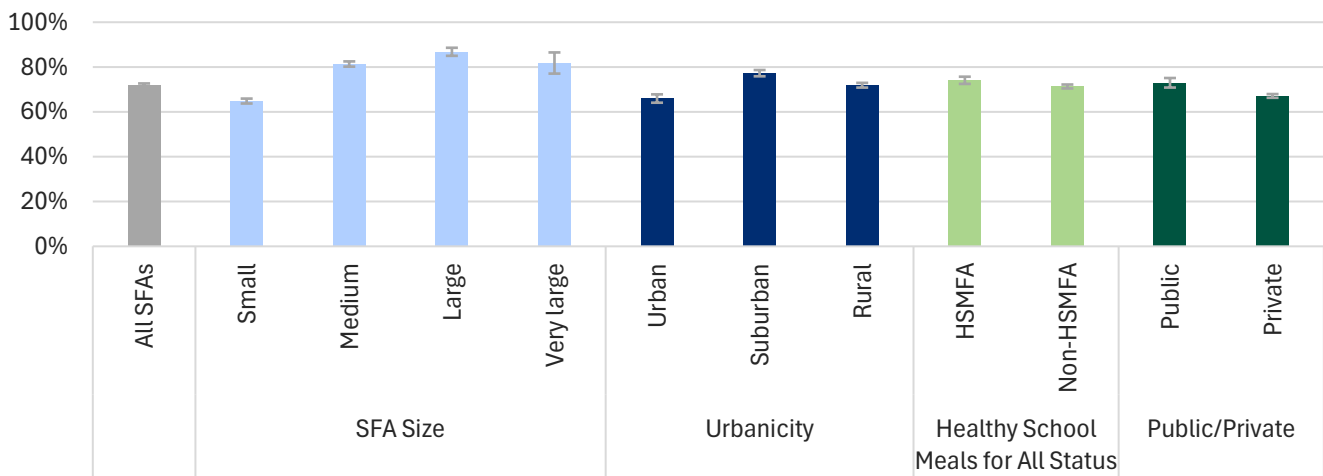


“The Supply Chain Assistance is a great thing for Districts and has allowed us to upgrade equipment that is very old and dated. With the assistance and the surplus, we were able to buy a new dish machine.”
 – Medium-sized suburban SFA

SFA Nonprofit School Foodservice Account Status

Exhibit 12.1. Seventy-two percent of all SFAs reported that they either operated at a surplus (46 percent) or broke even (26 percent) at the end of the prior school year (SY 2022–2023). This financial status was more likely among SFAs that were medium to very large in size, suburban or rural, or public.

Percent of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Operating at a Surplus or Breaking Even at the End of the Prior School Year 2022–2023



“Because our food cost increased, our prices have to remain consistent with our costs. Parents’ [financial struggles impact] our meal participation and leads to an increase in school meal debt. While we operated at a surplus last year, [...] we likely will not operate at a surplus moving forward.” – Medium-sized rural SFA

Exhibit 12.2. The percentage of SFAs reporting that they operated at a surplus at the end of the prior school year, SY 2022–2023, decreased compared with the end of SY 2021–2022. The percentage of SFAs operating at a deficit by the end of the school year increased from 18 percent in SY 2021–2022 to 28 percent in SY 2022–2023.²⁹ While SFAs did not have a complete picture of their SY 2023–2024 financial status at the time of this survey, 31 percent of SFAs predicted they would end the first quarter of SY 2023–2024 operating at a deficit, while only 29 percent predicted operating at a surplus (not shown below).

Financial Status of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Across Multiple School Years (SYs)

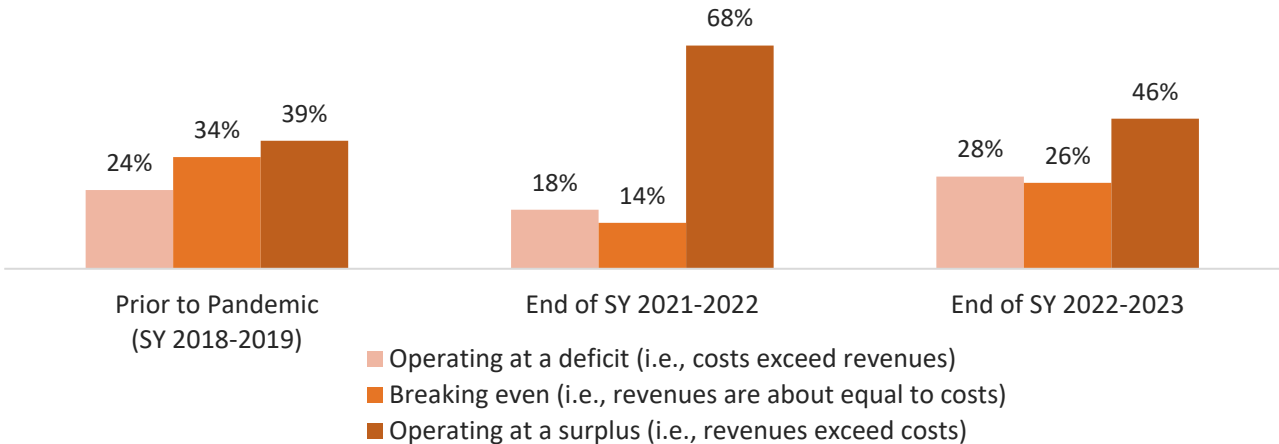
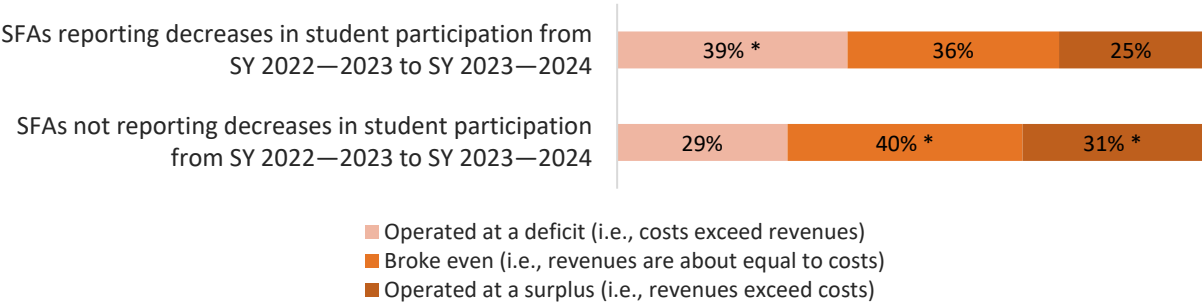


Exhibit 12.3. SFAs reporting decreases in student participation in their child nutrition programs in SY 2023–2024 were more likely to predict operating at a deficit at the end of the first quarter of SY 2023–2024. Over a third (39 percent) of SFAs reporting decreased student participation in SY 2023–2024 predicted they would operate at a deficit by the end of the first quarter of SY 2023–2024, compared with 29 percent of SFAs that did not report decreased student participation, suggesting that participation trends may impact financial status.

Relationship Between Student Participation in School Year (SY) 2023–2024 and School Food Authority (SFA) Financial Status at the End of the First Quarter of School Year 2023–2024



*Difference by whether a SFA reported reduced student participation statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ using a Wald test

²⁹ Note that in SY 2021–2022, a number of resources were available to help schools navigate supply chain challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These included a [series of waivers](#) that allowed schools to serve free meals to all students and operate with some flexibilities that reduced costs; [Supply Chain Assistance funds and funds to buy U.S.-grown foods](#); and reimbursements to local program operators [for emergency operating costs](#). In SY 2022–2023, the Federal government no longer provided free school meals for all students, reimbursements for emergency operating costs, and [certain waivers](#).

APPENDIX A

Key SFA Characteristic Definitions

HSMFA: States offering Healthy School Meals for All during the 2023–2024 school year include California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, and Vermont. Note that while some U.S. territories (e.g., Guam, Virgin Islands) offer universal meals to their students, this is done through the Community Eligibility Provision; therefore, these territories are not included with HSMFA states.

SFA Size: Small SFAs were defined as those with fewer than 1,000 students, medium SFAs were those with 1,000–4,999 students, large SFAs were those with 5,000–24,999 students and very large SFAs were those with 25,000 or greater students.

Urbanicity: FNS applied urbanicity classifications for SFAs based on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) database, which included detailed information on urbanicity for public SFAs. For the purposes of this analysis, twelve detailed categories of urbanicity were condensed into three broad categories: urban (large city, midsize city, or small city), suburban (large suburban area, midsize suburban area, small suburban area, or fringe town), and rural (distant town, remote town, fringe rural area, distant rural area, and remote rural area). These locale assignments were not available for private SFAs, so this data was imputed based on the data for public SFAs in the same city and state and, if necessary, zip code.

Weighting Methodology

The response rate for the survey was 71 percent. Estimates may be biased if respondents are systematically different from non-respondents. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) used a similar approach to addressing non-response bias as the approach used in the Farm to School Census.³⁰ Response rates by key characteristics were assessed to determine any potential bias and non-response weights were created to adjust for this variation. School Food Authority (SFA) size category, public/private status, urbanicity, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and geographic region were all deemed significant predictors of survey response through estimating a binary logistic regression model. Coefficients from the regression model were used to predict the propensity of each SFA to complete the survey and took the inverse of these propensities to create inverse propensity weights. The resulting weights were then adjusted so that the sum of the weights of responding SFAs was equal to the number of SFAs in the population.

Appendix A Table 1: Unweighted and Weighted Sample Sizes

Characteristic	Unweighted Respondents [Percent (N)]	Weighted Respondents [Percent (N)]
Total	70.8% (13,298)	100% (18,451)
MWRO (Midwest Regional Office)	30.8% (4,091)	28.9% (5,330)
SWRO (Southwest Regional Office)	15.8% (2,104)	16.1% (2,969)
MPRO (Mountain Plains Regional Office)	11.9% (1,581)	12.5% (2,310)
NERO (Northeast Regional Office)	10.5% (1,396)	11.2% (2,058)
WRO (Western Regional Office)	11.6% (1,537)	11.5% (2,127)

³⁰ [Farm to School Census and Comprehensive Review | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

Characteristic	Unweighted Respondents [Percent (N)]	Weighted Respondents [Percent (N)]
MARO (Mid-Atlantic Regional Office)	9.7% (1,292)	10.4% (1,925)
SERO (Southeast Regional Office)	9.8% (1,297)	9.4% (1,732)
Small (1–999 students)	55.4% (7,363)	59.6% (10,740)
Medium (1,000–4,999 students)	30.8% (4,096)	29.7% (5,363)
Large (5,000–24,999 students)	9.1% (1,210)	9.1% (1,642)
Very Large (25,000+ students)	1.6% (207)	1.6% (284)
Public	82.7% (10,999)	83.8% (15,107)
Private	14.1% (1,877)	16.2% (2,922)
Rural	52.8% (7,025)	52.5% (9,466)
Suburban	25.3% (3,365)	26.2% (4,721)
Urban	18.7% (2,486)	21.3% (3,842)
HSMFA State	78.7% (2,831)	21.0% (3,866)
Non-HSMFA State	21.3% (10,467)	79.0% (14,585)

Analytic Approach

All “don’t know” responses were recoded as missing values for analysis. For all figures where survey responses were compared by SFA characteristic, chi-squared tests were used to test whether there was an overall association between the two categorical variables. In all cases, the chi-squared tests were statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. This indicated some level of association and allowed for comparisons within SFA characteristics (e.g., different size SFAs or different HSMFA status). All proportions were generated using 95% confidence intervals and adjusting for survey weights to make results nationally-representative. Analysis was conducted in STATA 18.

APPENDIX B

SFA SURVEY III ON SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, school nutrition professionals have met extraordinary challenges to ensure every child can get the food they need to learn, grow, and thrive. As State Agencies (SAs) and School Food Authorities (SFAs) continue to work together to administer and operate Child Nutrition Programs, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) seeks to better understand the critical issues SFAs are facing.

This survey is mandatory and is intended to ensure the USDA has national, representative-level information to assess the scope, reach, and variation in challenges and mitigation strategies. The survey focuses on current operational challenges in school food service, including those related to school food procurement, program administration, and program finances. The results will be used to assist USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and its partners to enhance the toolbox for administrators and school nutrition professionals working hard to make sure students are served healthy and nutritious meals.

You can find the results of last year's survey here:

[SFA Survey on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation \(SY 2022-2023\)](#)

Click NEXT to continue.

The survey has a maximum of 30 questions and is estimated to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. **FNS is asking all SFAs that participate in the Child Nutrition Programs to complete this survey by March 11, 2024.**

Please note that the survey includes questions about changes in overall food costs, labor costs, and student participation in recent years. If this information is not readily available to you, we encourage you to provide your best estimates.

We sincerely appreciate your participation in this survey, particularly as many of you have little time available given the exceptional levels of effort you are putting into feeding children. As such, we have made this survey as short and simple to complete as possible.

For technical assistance, please submit a request form to the DIR help desk by clicking here. Click here for Frequently Asked Questions.

We thank you in advance for your contribution to this important effort.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is collecting this information to better understand the impacts of school food vendor, cost, and labor issues on school districts nationwide. This is a mandatory collection. FNS will use the information to develop tailored resources, tools, and flexibilities to support school districts in serving students healthy and nutritious meals. This collection does not represent personally identifiable information (PII) under the privacy act of 1974. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0689. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 20 minutes (0.33 hours) per response for SFA Directors, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-0689). Do not return the completed form to this address.

Please click Next>> to begin the survey.

Q1. Since the start of the regular 2023-2024 school year, which child nutrition programs has your SFA operated? For this and all other questions, do not include programs operated during summer 2023. *Select all that apply.*

1. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) [GO TO Q2]
2. School Breakfast Program (SBP) [GO TO Q2]
3. NSLP Afterschool Snack Service
4. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool Meals
5. Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
6. Special Milk Program (SMP)
7. Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) (select only if SFA operated SFSP during unanticipated school closures since the start of the regular 2023-2024 school year)
8. SFA is not operating any of the above child nutrition programs during school year 2023-2024 [GO TO Q33]

[ALL GO TO Q4 EXCEPT WHERE SPECIFIED ABOVE]

Q2. How are the schools in your SFA operating the school lunch and/or breakfast programs in school year 2023-2024? *Select all that apply.*

[OPTIONS 5 AND 6 CANNOT BE SELECTED TOGETHER]

1. Collecting household applications to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals
2. Provision 2/3
3. Community Eligibility Provision
4. Universal free meals offered by state or territory
5. Operating other alternate provisions for NSLP and SBP
6. Operating other alternate provision(s) for only NSLP or only SBP

Q3. Do all schools in your SFA currently serve all school meals at no charge to students?

1. Yes
2. No [GO TO Q4]
98. I don't know [GO TO Q4]

Q3_TXT. What challenges has your SFA experienced in serving all school meals at no charge to students?

[OPEN TEXT FIELD]

[DISPLAY IF ANSWER Q2=3 AND Q3_TXT NOT ASKED]

Q_CEP. What challenges has your SFA experienced in serving school meals through the Community Eligibility Provision?

[OPEN TEXT FIELD]

Q4. Which food service model(s) does your SFA use? *Select all that apply.*

1. Food Service Management Company (FSMC)
2. Vended meals company (provides meals only)
3. Purchase meals from other schools or central kitchens
4. Self-preparation (independent kitchen, base kitchen, or production kitchen)

Q5. What, if any, challenges has your SFA experienced during school year 2023-2024? *Select all that apply.*

1. High food costs (compared with a typical pre-pandemic school year)
2. High labor costs (compared with a typical pre-pandemic school year)
3. High cost and/or limited availability of food service materials (e.g., plates, trays, utensils)
4. High cost and/or limited availability of food service equipment or parts
5. School food service staffing shortages
6. Challenges receiving deliveries on usual days, times, or locations
7. Receiving incomplete orders with missing or substituted items
8. Receiving items that are damaged or unusable due to distributor issues
9. Increase in minimum cases or dollar amount required for food delivery
10. Increase in product cancellations by distributor or vendor
11. Food vendors discontinuing participation in school food service operations
12. Low number of bids for food service contracts
13. Lack of storage space to store additional food in the event of shortages
14. Shortage of milk cartons
15. SFA has not experienced any of these challenges in school year 2023-2024
98. I don't know

Q6. Has your SFA experienced any challenges getting USDA Foods processed end products during school year 2023-2024?

1. Yes
2. No [\[GO TO Q8\]](#)
3. SFA has not used USDA Foods processing during school year 2023-2024 [\[GO TO Q8\]](#)
98. I don't know [\[GO TO Q8\]](#)

Q7. To the best of your knowledge, what factors have contributed to challenges getting USDA Foods processed end products during school year 2023-2024? *Select all that apply.*

1. Vendor capacity
2. Distributor supply issues
3. Distributor or processor product line reductions (SKU rationalization)
4. Price increases
5. Inability to purchase as much food as SFA would like to due to lack of storage space
98. I don't know

Q8. How are the challenges your SFA is experiencing impacting school meal operations? *Select all that apply.*

[\[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY ORDER\]](#)

1. Reduced student participation
2. Reduced sale of nonprogram (competitive) foods
3. Increased competition from nonprogram (competitive) or off-campus food sales
4. Increased overall program costs
5. Difficulty offering enough reimbursable meals to participating children due to lack of food
6. Difficulty meeting meal modification requirements for children with food and nutrition-related disabilities
7. Difficulty adhering to planned menus due to changing or limited food availability
8. Difficulty complying with meal pattern requirements
9. Difficulty complying with regular procurement requirements
10. Inability to offer afterschool snacks or suppers

11. Increased staff stress or workload
12. Difficulty retaining enough staff with adequate skills and training
13. Difficulty fulfilling other job requirements, such as completing federal or state reporting forms, due to time spent addressing challenges
14. SFA has not experienced any of these impacts in school year 2023-2024
98. I don't know

Q9. What, if any, purchasing strategies has your SFA used to address challenges during school year 2023-2024? Select all that apply.

[RANDOMIZE DISPLAY ORDER]

1. Aligning product specifications with other SFAs
2. Aligning product specifications with available vendor products
3. Using cooperative purchasing agreements
4. Increasing use of local vendors or working with multiple vendors
5. Increasing use of USDA Foods direct delivery (brown box)
6. Increasing use of USDA DoD Fresh
7. Leveraging state contracts for bids
8. Conducting emergency procurements
9. Increasing use of micro-purchases
10. Purchasing foods directly from grocery stores or superstores
11. Increasing local food purchases
12. Decreasing local food purchases
13. Requesting shorter bids or making more frequent orders
14. Increasing communication with vendors, distributors, and/or manufacturers to identify available products
15. Planning further ahead or placing orders further in advance
16. SFA has not used any purchasing strategies to address challenges in school year 2023- 2024
98. I don't know

Q10. What other strategies has your SFA used to address challenges during school year 2023- 2024? Select all that apply.

1. Communicating more with parents/guardians about menu changes
2. Increasing use of scratch cooking
3. Decreasing use of scratch cooking
4. Limiting or repeating weekly menu offerings
5. Making more frequent menu substitutions
6. Increasing use of available products across multiple menu items
7. Using state funding to cover excess costs of serving school meals
8. Limiting service options (e.g., stopping breakfast in the classroom)
9. Receiving deliveries at nontraditional days, times, or locations
10. Picking up orders when usual delivery methods are not workable
11. SFA has not used any other strategies to address challenges in school year 2023- 2024
98. I don't know

[ASK Q11 AND Q12 ONLY IF Q5=1, HIGH FOOD COSTS]

Q11. You indicated that your SFA has faced challenges due to increased food costs. To the best of your knowledge, approximately how much have your food costs increased from a typical pre- pandemic school year (e.g., 2018-2019)?

1. Less than 10%
2. 10-24%
3. 25-49%
4. 50-74%
5. 75-99%
6. 100% or more
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q12 IF ANSWER Q5=1, HIGH FOOD COSTS]

Q12. To the best of your knowledge, what factors have contributed to changes in your food costs? Select all that apply.

1. Changes in student participation in nutrition program(s)
2. Changes in food service vendors, including using new and/or multiple vendors to obtain food
3. Changes in meal preparation or service (e.g., from scratch cooking to ready-to-eat meals)
4. Vendors, distributors or manufacturers increased costs
5. Purchasing more food directly from grocery stores or superstores
6. Purchasing more food last-minute
7. Using own transportation to transport food more frequently
8. Substitutions for unavailable items are more expensive
9. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q13 AND Q14 ONLY IF Q5=2, HIGH LABOR COSTS]

Q13. You indicated your SFA has faced challenges due to increased labor costs. To the best of your knowledge, approximately how much have your labor costs increased from a typical pre- pandemic school year (e.g., 2018-2019)?

1. Less than 10%
2. 10-24%
3. 25-49%
4. 50-74%
5. 75-99%
6. 100% or more
98. I don't know

Q14. To the best of your knowledge, what factors have contributed to changes in your labor costs? Select all that apply.

1. Wage increases due to factors beyond SFA control (e.g., state minimum wage increase)
2. Wage increases implemented by SFA to hire or retain staff
3. Need to hire additional staff for basic program operations
4. Need to hire additional staff to support scratch cooking
5. Increased overtime for existing staff
6. Staff turnover and training
7. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q15 AND Q16 ONLY IF Q8=1, REDUCED STUDENT PARTICIPATION]

Q15. You indicated your SFA has faced challenges leading to reduced student participation. To the best of your knowledge, approximately how much has student participation decreased across the child nutrition programs your SFA operates since the start of last school year (2022-2023)?

1. Less than 10%
2. 10-24%
3. 25-49%
4. 50-74%
5. 75-99%
6. 100% or more
7. I don't know

Q16. To the best of your knowledge, what factors have contributed to decreases in student participation?
Select all that apply.

1. Fewer parents/guardians submitting applications for free or reduced-price meals
2. Challenges verifying or processing applications for free or reduced-price meals
3. Confusion from students or parents/guardians regarding return to standard operations (e.g., changes to meal service, payment, or applications)
4. Difficulty purchasing enough food to meet student demand
5. Student dissatisfaction with meals or menus
6. Shortage of staff, time, equipment, or materials required for scratch cooking
7. Reduced sale of nonprogram (competitive) foods
8. Decrease in enrollment
9. Meals are no longer free for all students
10. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q17 FOR ALL CASES]

Q17. In general, how did student participation in your SFA's child nutrition programs last school year (2022-2023) compare with participation in a typical pre-pandemic school year (e.g., 2018- 2019)?

1. Greater than pre-pandemic participation
2. Less than pre-pandemic participation
3. About the same as pre-pandemic participation
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q18 AND Q19 ONLY IF Q5=7, RECEIVING INCOMPLETE ORDERS WITH MISSING OR SUBSTITUTED ITEMS]

Q18. You indicated your SFA has received incomplete orders with missing or substituted items. To the best of your knowledge, how frequently do you receive incomplete orders with missing or substituted items?

1. Rarely
2. Sometimes
3. About half of the time
4. Most of the time
5. Almost always

Q19. To the best of your knowledge, when you receive an incomplete order with missing or substituted items, approximately how many items in the order are affected?

1. 1 Less than a quarter of items
2. 2 About a quarter of items
3. About half of items
4. About three quarters of items
5. More than three quarters of items

[DISPLAY Q20 ONLY IF Q5=11, FOOD VENDORS DISCONTINUING PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS]

Q20. You indicated your SFA has experienced food companies discontinuing participation in school food service operations. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following factors are driving this change?

Select all that apply.

1. Federal, state, or local procurement regulations (please specify)
2. Labor shortages
3. Food shortages
4. Labor costs
5. Food costs
6. Energy or fuel costs
7. Difficulty producing items that meet SFA specifications
8. Difficulty guaranteeing prices for bids due to changes in food costs
9. School food operations are no longer profitable
10. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q21 ONLY IF Q9=11, INCREASING LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES]

Q21. You indicated your SFA increased its local food purchases during school year 2023-2024 due to supply chain challenges. To the best of your knowledge, what factors contributed to this decision? *Select all that apply.*

1. Local foods have been easier to find
2. Local foods have been more affordable to purchase
3. Policies, programs, or performance goals at the state or local level encourage local food purchasing
4. SFA received grant or other funding to purchase more local foods
5. SFA received useful information or training on purchasing local foods
6. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q22 ONLY IF ANSWER Q9=12, DECREASING LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES]

Q22. You indicated your SFA decreased its local food purchases during school year 2023-2024 due to supply chain challenges. To the best of your knowledge, what factors contributed to this decision? *Select all that apply.*

1. Local foods have been more difficult to find
2. Local foods have been more expensive to purchase
3. Local foods have been more difficult to process or prepare due to lack of staff or training
4. Local foods have been more difficult to process or prepare due to kitchen equipment
5. Local foods have been more difficult to prepare or serve due to changes in meal service (e.g., use of grab-and-go meals)
6. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q23 ONLY IF ANSWER Q10 =2, INCREASING USE OF SCRATCH COOKING]

Q23. You indicated your SFA increased its use of scratch cooking during school year 2023-2024 due to supply chain challenges. To the best of your knowledge, what factors contributed to this decision? Select all that apply.

1. Scratch cooking has helped reduce program costs
2. Scratch cooking has helped utilize bulk or commodity foods
3. Policies, programs, or performance goals at the state or local level encourage scratch cooking
4. SFA received grant or other funding to support scratch cooking
5. SFA received useful information or training on scratch cooking
6. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

[DISPLAY Q24 ONLY IF ANSWER Q10=3, DECREASING USE OF SCRATCH COOKING]

Q24. You indicated your SFA decreased its use of scratch cooking during school year 2023-2024 due to supply chain challenges. To the best of your knowledge, what factors contributed to this decision? Select all that apply.

1. Scratch cooking has been more difficult due to cost or availability of ingredients
2. Scratch cooking has been more difficult due to lack of staff or training
3. Scratch cooking has been more difficult due to lack of kitchen equipment
4. Scratch cooking has been more difficult due to changes in meal service (e.g., use of grab-and-go meals)
5. Other (please specify)
98. I don't know

Q25. Does your SFA contract directly with any food distributors? If your SFA uses only food distributors contracted by another organization, such as a State agency or cooperative, then answer no.

1. Yes [GO TO Q26 GRID]
2. No [GO TO Q28]
98. I don't know [GO TO Q28]

Q26 GRID. In the table below, select how many distributors your SFA contracts with directly, how frequently you re-bid contracts with those distributors, and how often you receive deliveries by type of distributor (e.g., milk, produce, bread/bakery, broadline, or other). Do not count any food distributors contracted by another organization, such as a State agency or cooperative. Enter "0" if your SFA does not contract directly with any distributors of the specified type.

Distributor type	How many distributors does your SFA contract with directly for this product? [DROPDOWN]	How frequently do you re-bid contracts for this product? <i>If you have two or more distributors for the same product, count how many times total you re-bid contracts for this product from any distributor.</i> [DROPDOWN]	How often do you typically receive deliveries from these distributors? <i>If you have two or more distributors for the same product, count how many times total you receive any delivery of this product from any distributor.</i> [DROPDOWN]
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Milk	0 1 2 3 4 5 or more	Every year Every 2-3 years Every 4 or more years	Twice or more per week Once per week Once every 2-3 weeks Once per month Less than once per month
Produce	0 1 2 3 4 5 or more	Every year Every 2-3 years Every 4 or more years	Twice or more per week Once per week Once every 2-3 weeks Once per month Less than once per month
Bread/Bakery	0 1 2 3 4 5 or more	Every year Every 2-3 years Every 4+ years	Twice or more per week Once per week Once every 2-3 weeks Once per month Less than once per month
Broadline	0 1 2 3 4 5 or more	Every year Every 2-3 years Every 4+ years	Twice or more per week Once per week Once every 2-3 weeks Once per month Less than once per month
Other (please specify)	0 1 2 3 4 5 or more	Every year Every 2-3 years Every 4+ years	Twice or more per week Once per week Once every 2-3 weeks Once per month Less than once per month

Q27. Does your SFA typically forecast purchase volumes on bids?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Sometimes/it depends
98. I don't know

Q28. Did your SFA accept all or some of their Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) fund?

1. Yes, SFA accepted all of it
2. Yes, SFA accepted some of it
3. No
98. I don't know

Q29. At the end of school year 2022-2023, what was the status of your school food service account balance?

1. Operated at a surplus (i.e., revenues exceeded costs)
2. Broke even (i.e., revenues are about equal to costs) [\[GO TO Q31\]](#)
3. Operated at a deficit (i.e., costs exceeded revenues) [\[GO TO Q31\]](#)

Q30. To the best of your knowledge, how has your SFA used surplus funds (or does your SFA plan to use surplus funds) for any of the following? Select all that apply.

1. Cover the cost of reduced-price meals
2. Hire new staff
3. Increase pay rate for staff
4. Improve meal quality
5. Kitchen equipment repair or maintenance
6. Purchase new kitchen equipment
98. I don't know

Q31. What do you predict will be the status of your school food service account balance in the first quarter of school year 2023-2024?

1. Operate at a surplus (i.e., revenues exceeded costs)
2. Breakeven (i.e., revenues are about equal to costs)
3. Operate at a deficit (i.e., costs exceeded revenues)

Q32. What else would you like FNS to know about the challenges your SFA is experiencing?

[\[OPEN TEXT FIELD\]](#)

[ALL GO TO THANK YOU](#)

[\[DISPLAY Q33 ONLY IF ANSWER Q1=8, SFA IS NOT OPERATING ANY OF THE ABOVE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS DURING SCHOOL YEAR 2023-2024\]](#)

Q33. If your SFA is not currently operating any of the federal child nutrition programs listed on the previous screen, you are not eligible to complete the survey. Please click SUBMIT to submit your response and end the survey.

If you have reached this page in error, please click BACK to edit your response on the previous screen and continue the survey.

THANK YOU. Those are all of the questions we have for you today. Thank you for your participation. To submit your responses, click SUBMIT below.

For technical assistance, please contact SFASupplyChainSurvey@dir-online.com.