

RESEARCH REPORT

Insights from the 2023 Meals-to-You Pilot Program

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Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Executive Summary	6
Data Collection	6
Program Reach	6
Timeliness of Program Initiation	7
Participant Experience and Hardship	7
Recommendations	8
Insights from the 2023 Meals-to-You Pilot Program	9
Meals-to-You in Summer 2023	10
Outline of the Report	10
Evaluation Methodology	12
Data Collection and Analysis Activities	13
School District Data	13
Participant Data	13
MTY Program Staff and Vendor Interviews	14
Shipping Data Analysis	14
MTY Program Reach	16
Program Enrollment and Recruitment among School Districts	19
School District Characteristics	19
Internet and Computer Access	20
Take-Up of the Program	21
Experiences with Enrollment	23
Motivation to Participate in the Program	23
Enrollment Experiences	24
Technical Assistance and Communication with Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty	25
Program Implementation	26
Participant Program Experience	26
Enrollment in Meals-to-You and Delivery Experiences	27
Value of Meals-to-You to Participants	31
Program Implementation Challenges for Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty and Vendors	33
Food Insecurity among Meals-to-You Participants	36
The Food Environment in Summer 2023	36

Food Inflation	36
End of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Emergency Allotments	36
Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer	37
Rising Food Insecurity	37
Food Insecurity among Meals-to-You Participants	38
Subgroup Population Analyses	39
Descriptive Program Outcome	40
National Food Hardship Benchmark Comparison	42
Recommendations for Future Implementation	44
Prioritize Timely Program Initiation	44
Enhance Outreach and Enrollment Experience	44
Improve Vendor Management and Shipping Processes	45
Enhance Participant Experience through Communication Options	46
Appendix A. Participant Survey Methodology	47
Summer 2023 Meals-to-You Participants	47
Survey Weights	48
Design Effects	48
Appendix B. Satisfaction with Box Contents	50
Appendix C. Sample Menus and Box Pictures from Program Vendors	57
Appendix D. Comparison of Race and Ethnicity of Meals-to-You Participants and Enrolled Students by Districts	60
Notes	62
References	64
About the Authors	65
Statement of Independence	67

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes findings from year 5 of an ongoing evaluation of Meals-to-You (MTY), a pilot program administered by the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty (BCHP) and funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The MTY program is designed to deliver shelf-stable boxes of food to children in eligible households during the summer, when school meals are not available. The goal of the program is to address the increased risk of children’s food insecurity during the summer in rural and remote communities that lack access to summer meal sites.

The first year of the program in 2019 tested the model in multiple school districts in Texas. In 2020, the program was expanded to include children in parts of Alaska and New Mexico. As part of the emergency response to reductions in access to school meals resulting from COVID-19 school closures, the program was also expanded across the country in 2020 (Waxman et al. 2021). In 2021, BCHP continued the program in certain areas of Alaska, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. The MTY pilot was originally meant to last for three years and expire in summer 2021, but USDA decided to extend the program to a fourth and fifth summer in the same states as 2021. This report covers the 2023 summer MTY program, which we refer to throughout this report as MTY.

Data Collection

We developed our insights through a mixed-methods approach to data collection and include survey data with school districts responsible for outreach and enrollment, survey data with participating households, interviews with food vendors and programmatic team members, and analysis of administrative data, including shipping information.

Program Reach

Eligible households included those with any child enrolled in a public school in a participating MTY school district who qualified for free or reduced-price school meals or attended a school utilizing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and who signed up for the program during its district’s enrollment window. Forty-six school districts participated in MTY, with 26 in Texas, 8 in New Mexico, 11 in Alaska, and 1 in Utah. The 2023 MTY program served 3,855 households and 9,016 participants in

Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. Through weekly shipments of boxes, the program successfully delivered roughly 669,460 meals during the summer.

Timeliness of Program Initiation

Similar to 2022, MTY enrollment occurred on an expedited timeline in 2023 because of a delay in BCHP receiving the program contract from USDA. School districts, vendors, and BCHP team members emphasized that the most vital and overarching consideration to maximize the success is for the program to be funded and planned well in advance of the intended launch date. Adequate time for planning and implementation affects the following:

- **Contract execution.** The ability of an implementing organization to secure contracts with vendors and conduct outreach to school districts depends on timely finalization.
- **Securing box contents.** Vendors need sufficient time to order and receive affordable products that also meet nutrition standards and to establish plans for complex shipping to remote locations.
- **Take-up of the program.** School districts need sufficient time to recruit and enroll parents and caregivers, especially given many competing activities as the school year comes to an end. Timely program initiation can maximize the ability of the program to serve high-need families and limit gaps in food access between the end of the school year and the start of summer, which is a period of increased food insecurity among families with children.

We found that about 20 percent of eligible students across districts participated in MTY during summer 2023. School district perspectives on enrollment processes are described in more detail throughout the report, but overall, we found that school districts found the timeline challenging. However, districts did feel well-supported by the BCHP team in terms of resources provided to conduct outreach.

Participant Experience and Hardship

The 2023 summer MTY program took place during a period of elevated food prices and in the wake of changes to the food assistance safety net that likely affected participating families. We measured food insecurity at the end of the summer and saw an overall household food insecurity rate of 59 percent at the end of the summer. Food insecurity was highest among respondents from New Mexico.

We also observed high rates of very low food security, a more severe form of hardship representing periods of reduced food intake because the household lacked money and other resources for food, among MTY households, with an overall average of 23 percent. We also utilized national data from the US Census Household Pulse survey from a similar period as a benchmark to assess the level of need in the MTY population and found that households participating in the Meals-to-You program reported substantially higher levels of hardship nationally than in 2023, highlighting the disproportionate level of need in rural communities served by the program.

Overall, MTY survey participants generally reported a positive experience with the program. The majority (96 percent) found enrollment easy, and 85 percent were satisfied with box contents. The most common cited value of the program was the convenience of shipping items directly to the household or post office. However, the predictability of boxes arriving was a challenge, particularly in Alaska, where about three in five households did not know when to expect their first box. Notably, school districts that offer a federal summer feeding program are not permitted to also offer MTY at the same time, regardless of whether students within a district can attend the sites due to transportation or other barriers; this also pushed the start date of MTY for some districts further into the summer. This gap in food service is difficult for families when they cannot consistently rely on having food available.

Recommendations

Above all, we recommend addressing timeliness of program initiation, as the impact of late initiation has cascade effects throughout the program. Key stakeholders highly recommend that plans are completed for summer programs no later than January so that states and school districts are aware of their options, program operators have time to conduct timely outreach and contract with vendors, and vendors have time to optimize purchasing and shipping plans. Longer planning times can also foster innovation in program operations and evaluation. We also recommend that implementing organizations include regular family input in the program design process and provide families with information on box contents and when to expect shipments during enrollment. Finally, to avoid damages and other complications when shipping to rural areas, we recommend prioritizing high-performing vendors and promoting consistency in vendor operation through detailed documentation and training.

Insights from the 2023 Meals-to-You Pilot Program

The Meals-to-You (MTY) program is designed to deliver shelf-stable boxes of food to children in eligible households when school meals are not available. The goal of the program is to address the increased risk of children’s food insecurity during the summer, specifically students in rural and remote communities who lack access to summer meal sites. Beginning in 2019, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty (BCHP) to pilot this home-delivered food box program. Eligible households included those with any child enrolled in a public school in a participating MTY school district who qualified for free or reduced-price school meals or attended a school utilizing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)¹ and who signed up for the program during its district’s enrollment window. If a household had one child who qualified for the program, all children under 18 in the household could receive an allotment of meals regardless of age or school enrollment status.

BCHP contracted with the Urban Institute as the independent program evaluator of the original three-year pilot program and subsequent expansions of MTY in 2022 and 2023. This report covers the 2023 summer MTY program in Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.² For additional information and background about the MTY program, please see prior reports published from 2020 through 2022 (Gutierrez, Gupta, Waxman, Anderson et al. 2022; Gutierrez, Gupta, Waxman, Blagg et al. 2022; Gupta et al. 2022, 2023; Waxman et al. 2021).

BOX 1

Overview of the Meals-to-You Program Structure

The summer 2023 MTY process began with BCHP submitting a proposal for the program. After the contract was signed in early May 2023, BCHP reached out to school districts that had participated in MTY in 2022, as well as a few additional districts. Interested districts signed up with BCHP to offer the program to eligible households in their schools. Most households enrolled in the program in the last two weeks of May 2023.

Like the previous four program summers, participating households received boxes shipped weekly containing five days' worth of prepackaged, shelf-stable food, including five breakfasts, five lunches, shelf-stable milk and juice, and five snack items for each enrolled child. In 2023, the MTY program served 3,855 households and 9,016 participants across 46 school districts in Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah.³

Meals-to-You in Summer 2023

In 2023, MTY enrollment occurred on an expedited timeline due to a delay in BCHP receiving the program contract from USDA. When BCHP began enrollment in mid-May, they found substantial interest from school districts overall, and from Alaska in particular. BCHP enrolled 46 districts through a process that they had streamlined from previous years, but some districts did not meet the cutoff date because of the very short turnaround time. We discuss the impact of this truncated timeline on several aspects of the program throughout the report.

Outline of the Report

This report summarizes findings across four components of the MTY program evaluation:

1. **School district analysis** assesses the characteristics of participating school districts and their experiences with enrolling families.
2. **Program implementation analysis** assesses program operation processes, effectiveness, and challenges.
3. **Program outcome analysis** for summer 2023 includes an analysis of household food security among participants responding to a post program survey and a comparison of those results to a national benchmark among households with children at the end of the summer. The analysis is

limited due to the short timeframe for initiating an evaluation after the USDA contract was signed and the more limited scope of the evaluation project. Urban could not survey participants at the beginning of the program, so this report does not include a pre-post analysis of food security changes, as has been done in prior years.

4. **Participant analysis** assesses participants' experience and satisfaction with the program.

The report concludes with recommendations for future implementation of MTY or similar programs.

Evaluation Methodology

In prior evaluations (see Gupta et al. 2023 and Waxman et al. 2021), we identified possible impacts of the MTY program based on variation in the number of meals received across participants. Given this analysis has been conducted in prior summers and because of late program initiation, we did not conduct a baseline participant survey. Therefore, we do not present an impact assessment or pre-post comparison in this report. With additional advance planning and funding, a more rigorous program evaluation that included a control group could be conducted in the future.

We structured the evaluation to explore the following research questions for the 2023 program year:

School District Experience with Enrollment and Program Take-Up of Meals-to-You

1. How did school districts experience and support the enrollment process? What are opportunities for improvement?
2. Among enrolled districts, what were the application and participation rates among eligible children? Did this participation rate vary by district type (e.g., Community Eligibility Provision participation) or other observable district or student characteristics?
3. How could participation rates among eligible children be improved?

Program Implementation

Program function

4. Did the program successfully deliver food boxes as expected for enrolled households? How could program implementation be improved?
5. Did households with students participating in the program regularly receive food resources through this program with meals in good condition? How could this be improved?
6. Did shipping and delivery experiences differ by observable participant characteristics, including geographic differences? If so, how?

Program satisfaction

7. What was the overall program experience of participating households?
8. Did participants find their special dietary needs were accommodated, and did they still receive a variety of food options?
9. How satisfied were households with enrollment, delivery (or local site pick-up, if applicable), amount of food, and content of food boxes?

Program implementation and processes

10. What insights and learnings emerged from participants and school districts that could inform future iterations of the program?
11. What resources and challenges affect states' abilities to operate a meal box program? What are any implications for future design?
12. How does MTY fit among other summer nutrition assistance programs (congregate or noncongregate meal services or electronic benefits transfer options) from the perspective of participants and school districts?

Participant food hardship

13. What was the food security status of participating households at the end of the program?
14. How did food hardship among participating households compare with other national survey data among households with children in a similar period?

Data Collection and Analysis Activities

To answer these research questions, we collected data from multiple sources, including school districts, program participants, and MTY program staff and vendors. We also analyzed program data. The Urban Institute Institutional Review Board approved all data collection activities.

School District Data

To understand school districts' experiences with enrolling eligible families, we administered a survey in July and August 2023 to all 46 participating school districts. Our survey assessed the districts' experience with the program and any challenges or barriers in enrollment and implementation. A district staff member from 26 of the 46 districts responded (57 percent response rate). Survey data were analyzed descriptively, and no weights were used given the small pool of respondents. We also conducted interviews with six school district personnel from Alaska, New Mexico, and Texas. We conducted all interviews over the phone and thematically analyzed all interview notes.

Participant Data

To assess participants' experiences, we fielded one round of a survey at the end of the summer to households that had agreed to be contacted during the enrollment process. The goal was to gather

feedback on program experience, satisfaction, and food security status at the conclusion of the program. We surveyed 2,360 households that consented to be contacted in August and September 2023. Of those invited to respond, 1,318 respondents (56 percent) participated in the survey.

The research team fielded the survey online or by phone to one adult per household. The survey asked about the household's characteristics, household members' experiences and satisfaction with the program (enrollment, delivery, food, and customer service), and any material or food hardship faced in the household. Most respondents (89 percent) completed the surveys online through the survey platform Qualtrics. The research team conducted outreach and shared the link through text message, email, and a folded mailer. We contracted with an external firm, Research Support Services Inc., to conduct phone surveys to nonrespondents in areas with low internet connectivity, particularly in Alaska. Roughly 11 percent of respondents completed the survey by phone. Surveys were available in both English and Spanish.

Because not all MTY participants consented to the research or responded to the survey, analyses of participant data included a series of statistical weights to ensure that the profile of respondents aligned with the overall population profile based on race and ethnicity, state, and school district. This adjustment means the results are more likely to reflect the overall MTY participant population, even though not all of them responded to the research surveys. For more information about survey and weighting methodology, see appendix A.

MTY Program Staff and Vendor Interviews

In September 2023, we spoke with key members of the BCHP team involved in program implementation about experiences and process challenges in administering the program during summer 2023. We conducted interviews with administrative, financial, programmatic, data management, case management staff involved with enrollment, and customer support team members. We also conducted interviews with both participating vendors: McLane Global (McLane) and PepsiCo Food for Good (PepsiCo). We conducted all interviews over video conference, and thematically analyzed interview notes.

Shipping Data Analysis

Finally, to inform questions about box receipt, delivery timing, and the number of meals received (program dosage), we analyzed shipping data. The BCHP team created an administrative dataset that

logged every box shipped to every participant in the program. We used these data to create a consolidated, household-level shipping dataset that included all MTY boxes that households received. We used this dataset as the source for our final counts of meals, boxes delivered, and participants and households in the program.

MTY Program Reach

The summer 2023 MTY program served 3,855 households and 9,016 participants in Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. The box shipments began in June, with the program originally scheduled to end in August, though a small amount (< 5 percent) of boxes continued to be shipped through October because of delivery issues. The program delivered 669,460 meals.

Table 1 provides information on the characteristics of participating households based on the survey data collected in August and September 2023. Participants resided in households with an average of three children, and single adults headed about one in five households (20 percent). Overall, 37 percent reported their race or ethnicity as Hispanic, 28 percent as Alaska Native, 24 percent as white, 2 percent as Native American, and 1 percent as Black, which is roughly reflective of enrolled MTY districts' combined student demographics (see table 1). The vast majority of respondents reported that at least one adult in the household was working (88 percent), and the majority of households reported incomes in 2022 below 250 percent of the federal poverty level.⁴ It is notable that more than one in four households (28 percent) reported incomes that reflected deep poverty (below 50 percent of the federal poverty level), suggesting a particularly high risk for material hardship.

About 4 in 10 (37 percent) households reported receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funds in the past month. Receipt of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (known as WIC) in the last 30 days was less common (20 percent), which could be expected because the target recruitment population was families with children in elementary, middle, and high school, although younger children in those households could be served.⁵ Additionally, the majority of households (81 percent) reported not receiving free meals through summer school or other activities at any point during the summer. About 1 in 10 households (9 percent) reported that their children had received meals from school in-person during the summer, while 6 percent reported receiving meals through other activities like camp, and only 4 percent utilized grab-and-go meals.

Participants gave a range of responses regarding time required to travel to the nearest grocery store: over half (56 percent) reported they could purchase groceries with a travel time of 10 minutes or less, while more than one in five (21 percent) needed to travel 20 or more. About 1 percent reported ordering almost all groceries via home delivery (see table 1).

TABLE 1

Demographic and Social Characteristics of Meals-to-You Households, End of Meals-to-You Program 2023

	Mean or percentage (%)
Number of children per household (mean)	2.7
Number of people per household (mean)	4.9
Single-adult household (%)	19.7
Race or ethnicity (%)	
Hispanic/Latinx	36.5
Alaska Native	28.3
White	23.5
Native American	2.4
Black	1.3
Other or mixed*	8.0
Geography (%) ^a	
Alaska	41.1
Texas	34.9
New Mexico	23.9
Retail food access (%)	
<i>Have a vehicle available</i>	90.8
<i>Distance to nearest grocery^b</i>	
Less than 5 minutes	27.8
5–10 minutes	28.0
11–20 minutes	22.2
21–40 minutes	15.0
More than 40 minutes	6.3
Order almost all groceries to be delivered	0.6
Anyone in the household employed (%)	87.5
Household income levels in 2022 (%)	
Below 50% of the FPL	28.0
Between 50–138% FPL	40.2
Between 138–250% FPL	21.4
Between 250–400% FPL	7.7
Above 400% FPL	2.6
Anyone with a disability in the household (%)	14.5
Benefit receipt in 30 days prior (%)	
Medicaid, MA, or CHIP	66.0
SNAP	37.1
WIC	20.4
Unemployment insurance	3.6
FDPIR	2.7
Received non-MTY summer meals^c (%)	
Received from school	9.4
Received from another summer activity	5.8
Received from grab-n-go	4.1
Did not receive any summer meals	81.2

Source: MTY survey conducted August 14–September 21, 2023, N = 1,318. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

Notes: CHIP = Children’s Health Insurance Program; FDPIR = Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; FPL = federal poverty level; MA = Medical Assistance; MTY = Meals-to-You. Participation in benefit programs may be underreported because of self-reporting.

* Other/mixed race includes those that reported their race as Asian, Hawaiian Native, or Pacific Islander.

^aArizona and Utah are not included due to low sample size. One school district with one household enrolled in the program from Arizona and five households enrolled from Utah.

^bBased on respondent’s most common mode and route of travel.

^cReceived non-MTY summer meals at any point in the summer.

Program Enrollment and Recruitment among School Districts

We drew on multiple sources of information to describe and analyze participating school districts, including publicly available data on school districts and population demographics, a school district survey, and six interviews with school district personnel. School districts that participated in the survey were largely representative of the overall group of MTY districts: 26 districts in total responded to the survey, including 7 of the 11 Alaska districts, 6 of the 8 New Mexico districts, and 13 of the 26 Texas districts.⁶ District survey respondents and interview participants were program points of contact and navigators who acted as district liaisons with BCHP. Both survey respondents and interview participants provided information on their experiences in conducting outreach to families, verifying student eligibility, and completing enrollment; their communication and interaction with the BCHP team; and any feedback, comments, or concerns they had about the program.

School District Characteristics

Forty-six school districts participated in the MTY program in the summer of 2023. Table 2 summarizes district characteristics from public data sources. Most districts were rural and located in Texas (26), followed by Alaska (11), New Mexico (8), and Utah (1). The average district included five schools and served slightly more than a thousand students. MTY school districts were more likely to enroll white (39 percent) and Hispanic/Latinx students (32 percent), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native (22 percent) and Black students (3 percent).

TABLE 2
Characteristics of School Districts Enrolled in the Meals-to-You Program, Summer 2022

	Mean/Percentage	Minimum	Maximum
Number of schools (mean)	5	1	29
Number of students enrolled (mean)	1039	71	12620
Demographics of all students in enrolled school districts (%)			
White	39.2	0	88.3
Hispanic/Latinx ^a	31.6	0	96.7
American Indian/Alaska Native	21.5	0	100.0
Two or more races	3.9	0	31.3
Black	2.8	0	23.1
Asian	0.9	0	23.0
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1	0	1.6

	Mean/Percentage	Minimum	Maximum
Unknown	0.0	0	0.2
Income and eligibility (%)			
Living at or below 100% federal poverty level	23.3	7.0	49.2
Students eligible for MTY	85.8	6.1	100.0
Household internet access (%)			
No internet	23.9	7.3	64.8
Internet on cell only	21.6	1.7	65.7
State (%)			
Alaska	23.9		
New Mexico	17.4		
Texas	56.5		
Utah	2.2		
Rurality^b (%)			
City	0		
Suburb	0		
Town			
Remote	10.9		
Rural			
Fringe	6.5		
Distant	15.2		
Remote	67.4		
Total number of districts (N)	46		

Source: School and school district demographic and directory data from the Common Core of Data and Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates via the Urban Institute Education Data Portal, <https://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer>, and internet and computer data at the school district level from National Historic Geographic Information System 2017–21 five-year estimates, <https://www.nhgis.org/>.

Notes: Table describes 2021–22 school year descriptive characteristics of 46 MTY districts. Poverty and computer/internet data are unavailable for four school districts. “Eligible for MTY” is defined as students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals either through individual meal applications or enrollment in a Community Eligibility Provision school or district.

^a The data source uses the term *Hispanic*, but we use the preferred terms *Hispanic/Latinx* to reflect the different ways people self-identify.

^b The following National Center for Education Statistics definitions apply to district rurality designations: “cities” include territories inside both an urbanized area and a principal city; “suburbs” include territories inside urbanized areas but outside principal cities; and “towns” are territories inside urban clusters. “Rural” describes territories outside of urban clusters. For other rurality definitions, see “NCES Locale Classifications and Criteria,” National Center for Education Statistics, accessed February 13, 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/locale_classifications.pdf.

Internet and Computer Access

Families living in rural areas often struggle to regularly access the internet and computers.⁷ In the average MTY district, almost one in four households did not have any kind of internet and, in one school district in Alaska, as many as 65 percent of households did not have internet. Among households with internet, an average of 22 percent of households only had internet on their phones. Historically, MTY enrollment procedures were set up to be conducted primarily online. This likely made participation more difficult and potentially excluded families with higher need and less access to online resources. In 2023, all school districts in Alaska were offered the mass enrollment alternative by the BCHP team to

ensure that every eligible child in a household that wanted to participate would be enrolled. This was also offered to schools that wanted to sign up after the school year ended to expedite enrollment and remove barriers to participation since children were no longer in school. Under this approach, the school district could enroll on behalf of families that wanted to receive meals, so that families did not have to rely on an internet connection to enroll themselves. If a participant was required to enroll online, it was only because the school district opted for that method, potentially due to lack of capacity to manage the additional workload of mass enrollment.

Take-Up of the Program

The goal of the MTY program is to reach households with children in rural and remote areas, as historically, participation is low in rural areas for existing summer meal options such as the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) which offers in-person meals.⁸ Estimates show participation decreased in 2022 compared with 2021, with the number of operating sites decreasing as well.⁹

Over one-quarter of students in participating in MTY lived at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty line (see table 2). However, 59 percent of MTY districts participated in the federal school meal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in 2022–23, which makes all students eligible for free meals and therefore eligible for MTY. Overall, 87 percent of students enrolled in MTY districts were eligible to participate in MTY. Of eligible students, only 20 percent participated in MTY. This section explores explanations for this relatively low program take-up.

In general, school meal participation during the academic year varies with student ages. Young students, such as those in elementary school, are more likely to eat their school's onsite breakfast and lunch compared with older students (Mirtcheva and Powell 2009). The same has been found for summer meal programs, where more participating households have elementary-age children than teenage children.¹⁰ In MTY, however, we see roughly similar participation rates between younger and older children. Almost 7 percent of MTY participants were under six years old, compared with 38 percent who were elementary school ages (6–10 years old), 24 percent middle school (11–13 years old), and 30 percent high school (14 years old and up). One reason why high school students participated in the program at a similar level as younger students might be that 69 percent of those students came from households that also included younger participants. It could also be that a school meal box program has less social stigma than an in-person meal program.

Research shows that participation rates in school meal programs also vary by students' race and ethnicity, where Black and Hispanic/Latinx students are more likely to participate than white students (Mirtcheva and Powell 2009). We explored the participation rates by race and ethnicity among districts where 100 percent of students were eligible for MTY. The first two columns in table 3 compare the race and ethnicity makeup of districts with less than 100 percent student eligibility for MTY and districts with 100 percent eligibility. Districts with 100 percent student eligibility were similar demographically to those with less than 100 percent eligibility. Columns 2 and 3 in table 3 compare the share of students participating in MTY with the share of students enrolled in the district by race and ethnicity, among districts with 100 percent MTY eligibility. The race and ethnicity makeup of MTY participants is similar to the demographic makeup of all eligible students enrolled in participating districts, with one exception: students who identified as two or more races were less likely to participate in MTY relative to their representation in the districts. See appendix D for individual district racial and ethnic group breakdowns of participation in MTY and enrollment in school.

TABLE 3

Race and Ethnicity Characteristics of Meals-to-You Participants versus Districts' Enrolled Students, 2022

	Some District	All District Students Eligible to	
	Students Eligible to Participate in MTY	Participate in MTY	
	Share students by race/ethnicity enrolled in district	Share students by race/ethnicity enrolled in district	Share of students by race/ethnicity among MTY participants
American Indian or Alaska Native	15.4	25.7	28.6
Asian	1.5	0.5	0.4
Black or African American	2.4	3.0	2.8
Hispanic/Latinx ^a	28.0	34.2	32.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2	0.1	0.5
Two or more	4.7	3.2	0.4**
White	47.7	33.2	29.9
Number of districts	19	27	27

Source: Author analysis of MTY data.

Notes: MTY = Meals-to-You. Participation rates are created among MTY participants that were enrolled in the participating school district. Race is known for 100 percent of students enrolled in districts and 95.5 percent of MTY participants. Differences in the column statistics are indicated by * $p \leq 0.1$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$.

^a The Common Core of Data source uses *Hispanic*, and the MTY survey data uses *Latino/a*, but we use the preferred terms *Hispanic/Latinx* to reflect the different ways people self-identify.

Experiences with Enrollment

Motivation to Participate in the Program

School district personnel ranked the importance of contextual factors in deciding to participate in the MTY program. At least 77 percent of survey respondents reported that inflation and transportation costs were “very important” to school districts in deciding to participate in MTY. Another important factor in deciding to participate in MTY was the lack of other onsite meal options, with about two in three respondents (62 percent) ranking this as very important. Finally, given that many of these districts were returning to the program, two in three respondents (65 percent) ranked family interest as very important.

District survey respondents were also asked in an open-ended format about their school district’s motivation or goal for participating in the program. Most respondents (out of 15) reported that their primary goal was to provide meals during the summer to children and families in need. They mentioned barriers to accessing meals in rural areas included limited transportation, rising food costs, and lack of other resources. One school district interviewee from Alaska also commented on limited food availability, stating that “most stores don’t have fresh produce. They get in potatoes, onions, carrots, and that’s about it. I would see kids using the cards to get chips and soda and snacks. When kids are sent the MTY boxes, we know they get a healthy variety of food.”

Starting in the summer of 2023, school districts across the country could use the newly permanent noncongregate meal option authorized at the end of 2022, which means that program operators can provide grab-and-go meals rather than requiring meals to be eaten in-person.¹¹ However, USDA provided minimal guidance to ensure take-up of the new option. We asked districts if they offered a noncongregate option in summer 2023, and 19 percent indicated that they did, while 62 percent did not, and the remainder did not know, which aligns with the limited information available about this option. Those that did offer the program cited the reason being that students live too far away from school to attend in-person options, and that their typical congregate program (e.g., summer school session) does not cover the entire summer. Those that did not offer it largely cited lack of staffing and resources to operate. One district noted, “Our kitchens are closed in the summer. We have no staff in the summer to pack and hand out meals to the kids.”

When asked which summer meal option they thought would best serve their districts’ needs between MTY, noncongregate, congregate, and Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), districts

overwhelmingly chose MTY (55 percent) followed by Summer EBT (28 percent); noncongregate meals (14 percent) and congregate meals (3 percent) were much less popular. Proponents of Summer EBT cited the flexibility; one district noted, “Meals-to-You requires internet access to sign up, and in some areas of our school district, that option is not available. If they get Summer EBT added on to their regular EBT card automatically, it’ll reach more students without parents having to submit something online.” Those who favored MTY as the most preferable program cited limited grocery store options and limited transportation to get there, with one respondent from a district in Alaska noting,

Some communities in our area do not have grocery stores. The communities that do have stores, the groceries are extremely overpriced. So, an EBT card would not be beneficial. In our communities most families, including all the children, are doing subsistence in the summer months. These families are out at fish camps or hunting camps stocking up on fish, meat, and berries for the winter. Kids are not in the communities to participate in grab-and-go meals or noncongregate meals. Our schools are closed in the summer and the school staff are participating in subsistence as well, and they are not available to cook or hand out meals for congregate meals.

Enrollment Experiences

According to survey data, over half of responding districts (58 percent) reported that families enrolled in the MTY program by themselves through the MTY website, while about one-third of school districts offered enrollment assistance over the phone. Only 4 of 27 surveyed districts (all in Alaska) used BCHP’s mass enrollment process, which allowed school district personnel to enroll on behalf of families that wanted to receive meals, so that families did not have to rely on an internet connection to enroll themselves. This process was offered to all districts in Alaska.

Two in three districts (65 percent) found that enrolling families was “very easy.” However, many struggled with the short enrollment window and had families wanting to sign up after the deadline had passed. As noted previously, school districts enrolled families on a short timeline (about two weeks) because of the late approval of the program from USDA. BCHP reopened enrollment for a few school districts interested in participating near or after the initial enrollment deadline passed; however, later enrollment meant households would receive fewer boxes. In these cases, districts often had a single staff member working on weekends just to get families signed up. One school district survey respondent stated, “Some of the families waited too late to sign up and I wished there was a way that we could do late sign ups.” Another surveyed district noted that while they found the program helpful, receiving information earlier in the year is critical given how busy the end of the school year is.

I honestly love the program and believe that it is a necessary resource. I would like to see more information be sent to schools starting in March or early April since the end of the year gets very hectic for school staff and parents. I think having this information would allow our school to be better prepared and able to market better. But we will definitely be doing this program again if it is offered.

—Participating MTY district

Technical Assistance and Communication with Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

The BCHP team offered remote customer service support, dedicated district points of contact, and technical assistance to school districts as they navigated the different stages of the MTY enrollment process. One district interviewee from Texas agreed that the initial information, communication, and technical assistance materials provided were very helpful. Technical assistance materials for districts included a slide show training, a YouTube explainer video about how to enroll and verify families in the online system, and a sample flyer in English and Spanish that school districts could adapt for outreach. All outreach and training materials were available in English and Spanish as well. One district noted that a short informational video directed to families explaining the program, how to apply, and what they could expect to receive would have been helpful to reduce the number of calls they fielded.

Most district respondents strongly agreed that their questions and concerns were addressed appropriately when communicating with the BCHP team. They appreciated the quick responses from team members and strong communication.

Program Implementation

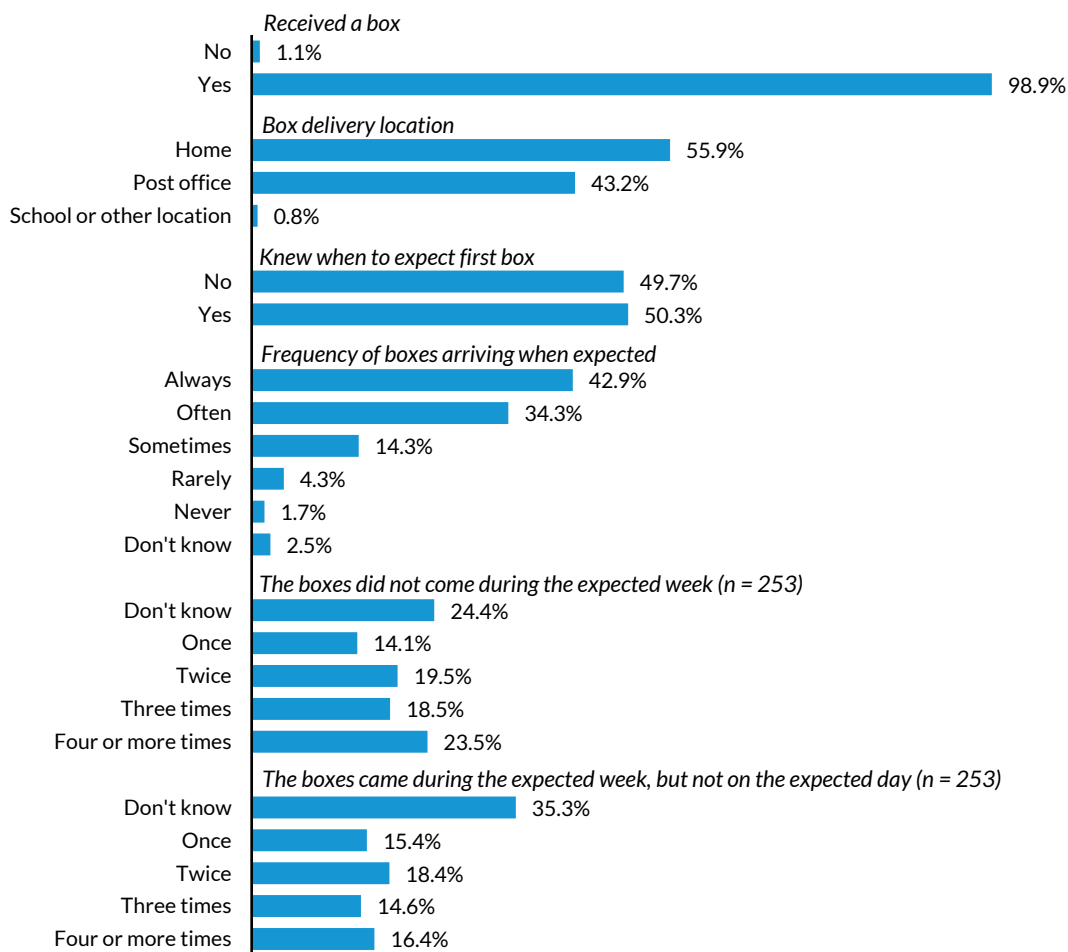
In the fifth summer of the MTY program, the implementation team leveraged learnings from the prior four summers and streamlined processes for enrollment and overall program management. Given that the program operated with the same geographic footprint as the prior two summers and no significant changes were made to program operations, the implementation team focused on key processes to improve participant experience.

Participant Program Experience

Participants in the summer 2023 MTY program generally reported a positive experience in surveys. Figure 1 summarizes participants' responses to several questions related to enrollment, receipt of boxes, and customer service.

FIGURE 1

Participants' Experience with Delivery Frequency in the Meals-to-You Program, End of Summer 2023



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Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 1,318. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

Enrollment in Meals-to-You and Delivery Experiences

Despite the short enrollment windows, most respondents who managed to enroll (96 percent) reported that enrollment into the program was somewhat easy or very easy (data not shown). However, one district interviewee from Alaska stated that because of the window, they were “blasted with applications and calls.” Many districts reported that the enrollment window was too short for this program and that they would like to see preparations begin earlier in the year.

Boxes could be delivered to participants’ homes or to another accessible location, which was an important program flexibility in very rural areas where door-to-door delivery is not available. By the

end of the summer, almost all respondents (99 percent) had received at least one box. A little over half of surveyed participants (56 percent) reported having their boxes delivered to their home and nearly half (43 percent) reported having boxes delivered to a post office. The remainder reported having them delivered to a school or other location.

One recurring issue in prior years of MTY was the lack of stability in the timing of box deliveries (Gupta et al. 2023). We learned that participants did not know when the program would start and, often, boxes did not come during the week they were scheduled to be delivered. This was particularly prevalent in Alaska, where shipping is often irregular and unpredictable. This year, we asked participants if they knew when to expect their first box, to which half (50 percent) said yes (figure 1). Across states, we saw that 42 percent of those in Alaska said yes, while 53 percent in New Mexico and 59 percent in Texas said yes, indicating the higher unpredictability in Alaska (data not shown). School district survey respondents echoed this concern, particularly highlighting a gap between when school ended and when boxes began arriving. One school district respondent in Alaska noted that over two months after the last day of school, boxes still had not arrived, and another stated, “The Meals-to-You boxes seemed to be very slow to arrive. Many families did not start to receive boxes until the last week of June.”

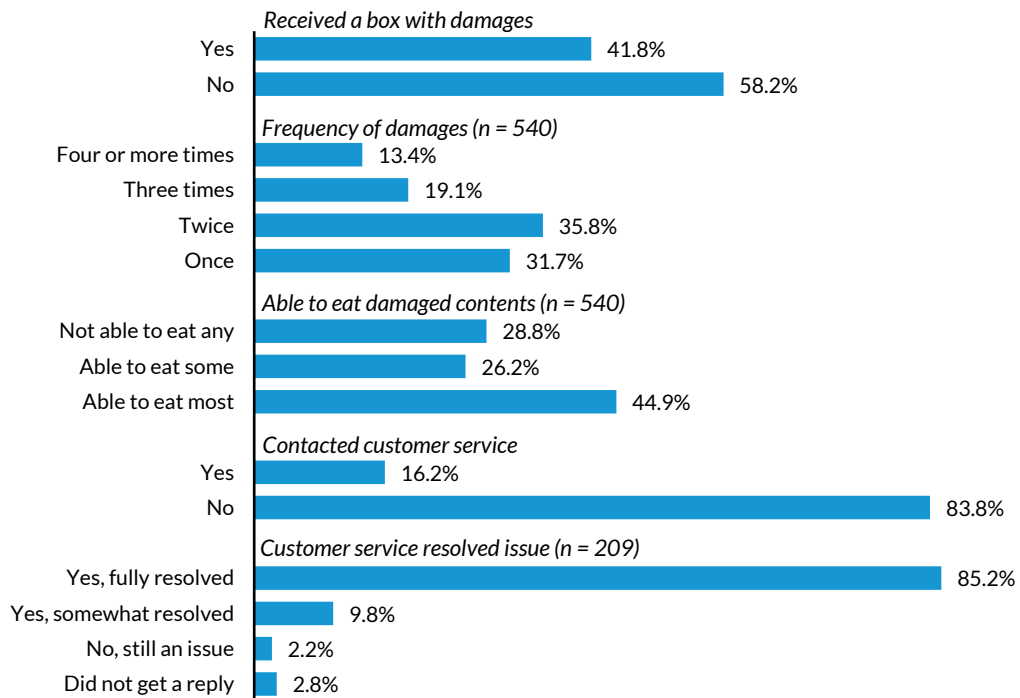
In a similar vein, we asked participants how often their boxes arrived when they expected them to. A little over three in four said their boxes always or often arrived when expected. Among those that said their boxes sometimes, rarely, or never came on time, a quarter (24 percent) said the boxes did not come during the expected week four or more times during the summer, and 16 percent said the boxes did not come on the expected day during the summer. A large portion of respondents said that they did not know, aligning with the idea that participants often did not know when to expect the boxes at all (figure 2). The BCHP team shared with participants that boxes should arrive weekly and sent households in Alaska a notice as to when boxes should start arriving. Households could also access tracking information through their online portal.

DAMAGES TO BOXES

Damages to shipped boxes were slightly lower during summer 2023 compared with summer 2022. As summarized in figure 4, less than half of surveyed participants (42 percent) reported receiving one damaged box by the end of the summer (compared with 54 percent in 2022; Gupta et al. 2023). Among those who did, the majority (68 percent) reported receiving damaged boxes more than once. A little less than half (44 percent) of participants in Alaska reported experiencing damaged boxes; the rates were slightly lower in New Mexico and Texas (38 percent in New Mexico, and 42 percent in Texas; data not

shown). Almost half (45 percent) of the survey respondents reported still being able to eat most of the contents of the damaged boxes, while more than one-quarter (29 percent) said they were not able to eat any. The most commonly damaged items were milk or juice boxes getting crushed (58 percent) and foil-top items like applesauce or bean dip getting punctured (50 percent). This was followed by damages to cereals (30 percent) and plastic-top items like vegetable cups (21 percent). Bagged snacks like crackers and chips and canned goods were much less likely to be damaged (15 percent and 3 percent; data not shown). With these issues, nearly one in six (16 percent) participants reported contacting customer service. Among them, the vast majority (85 percent) said their issue was fully resolved (figure 2).

FIGURE 2
Participants' Experience with Damages in the Meals-to-You Program, End of Summer 2023



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Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 1,302. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF MEALS-TO-YOU BOXES

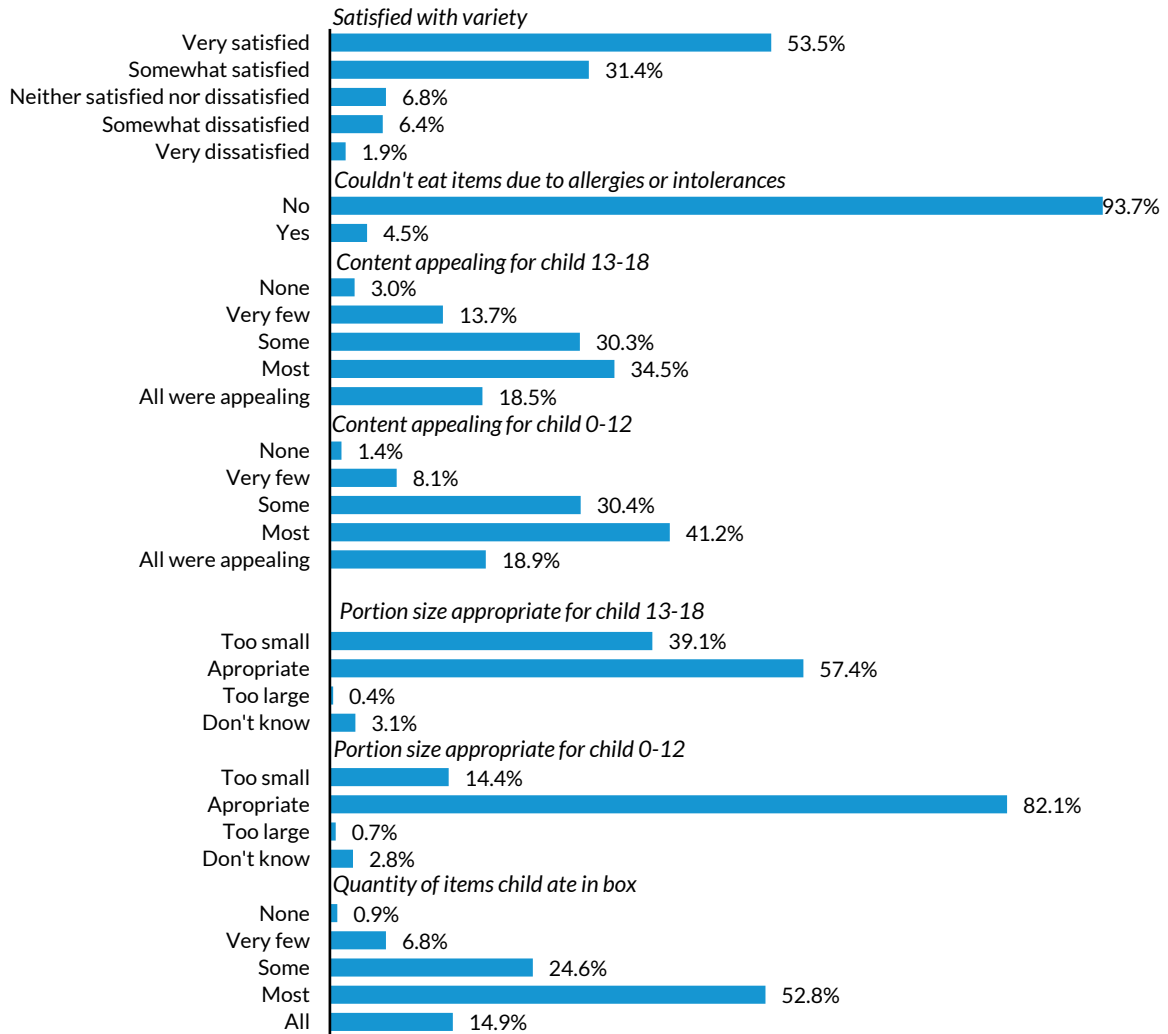
Participants had mixed opinions on the quality and appeal of box contents. As shown in figure 3, the majority (85 percent) of respondents were very (54 percent) or somewhat (31 percent) satisfied with box contents, and two-thirds (68 percent) said their children ate all or most of the box contents. About a

quarter (25 percent) said they ate some, while less than a tenth (8 percent) said their children ate very few or none of the food items.

All boxes contained the same items, regardless of the age of the child. Echoing sentiments from prior years, respondents often felt that box items were “snacky” and more appropriate for younger children. Survey respondents felt that most or all of the box contents were more appealing for younger children (60 percent) in comparison with older children (53 percent). And while the majority (82 percent) of respondents felt the portion sizes were appropriate for young children, far fewer respondents (57 percent) felt the portion sizes were appropriate for older children. Finally, very few (5 percent) of respondents reported their children could not eat certain box contents because of allergies or intolerances, which was similar to the rate in 2022 (all households were asked to report or request any dietary accommodations during enrollment). Appendix B includes a detailed breakout of surveyed participants’ perceptions of box contents and pictures of the boxes.

FIGURE 3

Participants' Perceptions of Box Components, End of Summer 2023



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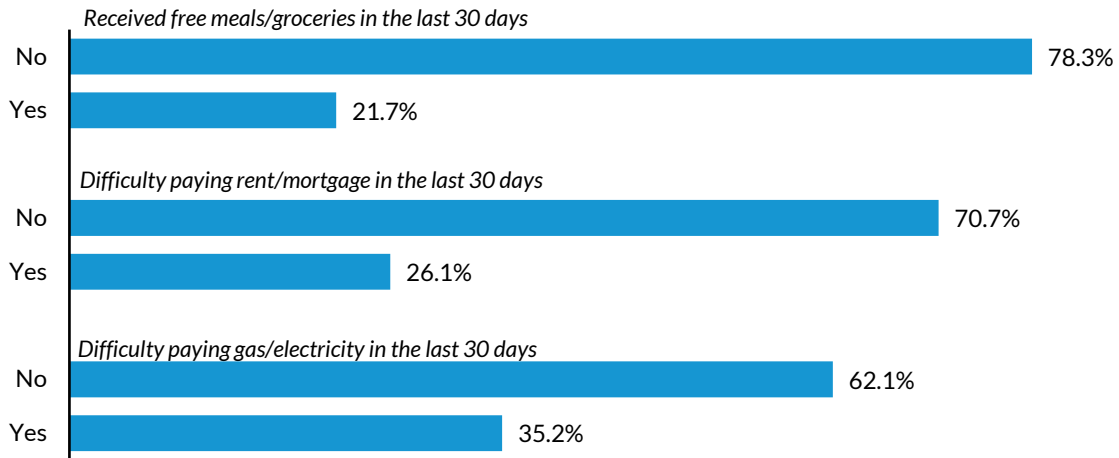
Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 1,302. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

Value of Meals-to-You to Participants

Overall, despite issues with timing of receiving boxes and mixed perceptions on box contents, families continue to value the MTY program. Survey data document that MTY households experienced very high rates of food insecurity in summer 2023 and were at significantly higher risk for other financial and material hardship. About one in four respondents had difficulty paying rent or mortgage (26 percent) and more than one-third (35 percent) had difficulty paying gas or electricity in the prior 30 days (figure

8). Moreover, about one in five (22 percent) reported receiving free meals or groceries in the prior 30 days, indicating a need to further supplement household food resources (figure 4).

FIGURE 4
Material and Economic Hardship of Participants, End of Summer 2023



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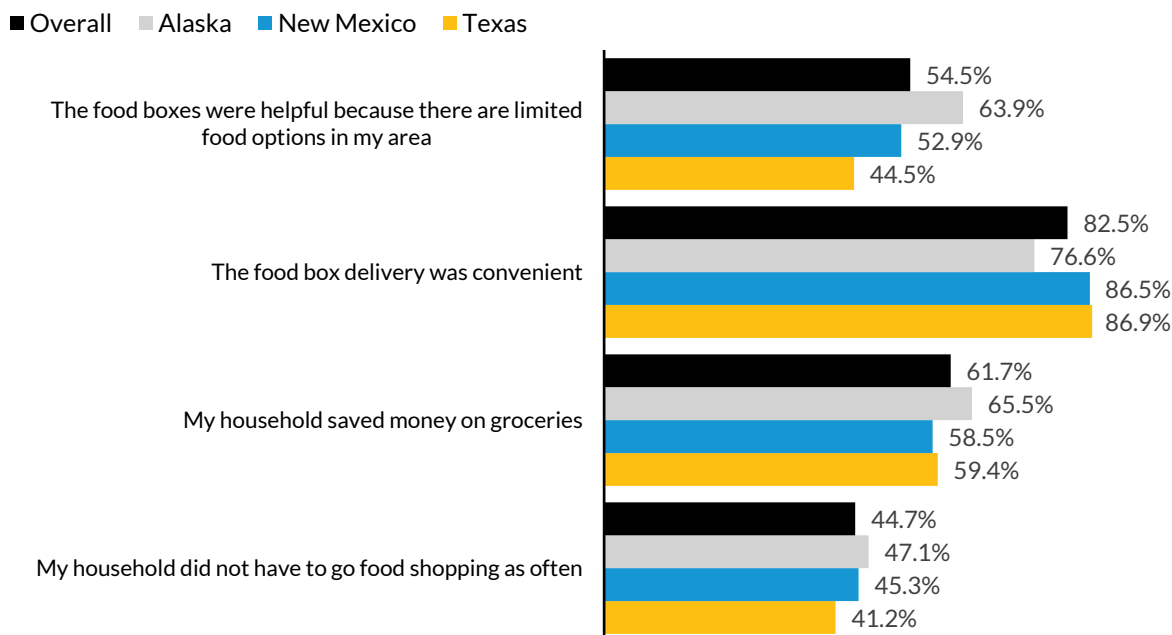
Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, $N = 1,279$. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

Although food price inflation slowed in 2022, prices still rose in 2023.¹² Survey respondents found the MTY program helpful in this time of need. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62 percent) indicated that their household could save money on groceries because of the MTY program (figure 9).

Convenience was another program benefit: 83 percent of survey respondents rated the food box delivery as convenient, and 45 percent indicated that it saved them time grocery shopping. The benefits of home delivery were especially valued in Alaska, where it is difficult to access retail food options: 64 percent of respondents in Alaska agreed that the food boxes were helpful because of limited shopping options, compared with 45 percent of respondents in Texas and 53 percent of respondents in New Mexico (figure 5).

FIGURE 5

Perceptions about Effects of Food Boxes, Overall and by State, End of Summer 2023



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Source: Meal-to-You survey, round 2, conducted August 14 through September 2023 (N = 1269). All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

Notes: Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the above statements on a five-point scale (1 being “strongly agree,” 5 being “strongly disagree”). Agreement is represented here as a response of 1 or 2.

Program Implementation Challenges for Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty and Vendors

In 2023, Baylor contracted McLane and PepsiCo as MTY vendors. Broadly, each vendor was responsible for sourcing box contents that adhered to summer nutrition requirements, mailing boxes to families, and tracking deliveries. McLane shipped to Texas, and some Alaska and New Mexico households. PepsiCo shipped most of the boxes in Alaska and New Mexico, and all boxes to the few households in Arizona and Utah. Two carriers managed shipments, including the US Postal Service (USPS) and United Parcel Service (UPS). UPS was used for shipments that went to direct addresses, which constituted the shipping for much of the lower 48 states. USPS remained the main carrier for boxes in Alaska because of its higher capacity for last-mile shipping.¹³ PepsiCo used UPS primarily, but it relied on USPS as a last-mile shipper in very rural communities. We conducted interviews with BCHP staff and both MTY vendors to document program experiences, implementation challenges, and views on potential solutions.

A recurring performance challenge for BHP and its vendors over the program's five years has been the late federal approval of the program and the lack of certainty around the implementation timeline. The delay in USDA approval for the summer 2023 program caused ripple effects throughout the program. However, with the BHP implementation team and its vendor partners attempted to minimize the consequences of the delay as much as possible. Both vendors reported being able to quickly develop and sign contracts. They also prepared ahead of time by purchasing items that they thought would make a return for the year, like shelf-stable milk. However, the late approval did force the vendors to ship products on a quick turnaround, with one vendor noting that they had only two weeks to prepare for the start of the program. The late approval time also limited the capacity of vendors to negotiate food items and buy in bulk, which could have made the program more cost efficient. One of the vendors did note that they interviewed multiple shippers to get the best prices and shipping times.

Another issue facing vendors was a delay in invoicing and being reimbursed for program expenses. Because of the delay in obtaining initial approval from USDA, BHP could not set up the invoicing process before the program began. In addition, BHP was setting up a new grants management system. These issues led to delays in processing payments.

Returning vendors relied on past knowledge from MTY, which helped as new vendor staff entered key management roles. BHP also began onboarding sessions and one-on-one meetings with vendors in the spring of 2023 to orient new team members, though BHP reported they would have liked to offer more trainings to cover more topics in depth with the new vendor personnel. Vendors did, however, report smooth onboarding processes that likely built on prior years' trainings and established protocols.

Another challenge for vendors concerned relationships with USPS and post offices. Post offices play an important role as a last-mile shipper in very rural communities that lack access to commercial shippers, and USPS is the shipper of choice for packages going to Alaska. Post offices also served as pick-up locations for many families to retrieve their MTY boxes. This meant that it was important for vendors to develop good relationships with local postal officials and understand the nuances of shipping to remote areas of Alaska. Both vendors struggled with this at different points in MTY implementation.

Vendors saw an improvement in the shipment quality of MTY boxes this year compared with previous years, and households reported fewer late or damaged boxes than in previous years. Damages that did occur could be attributed in part to external factors, such as the extreme summer heat in New Mexico and Texas in summer 2023, as well as to shipper mishandling of the MTY boxes. Vendors improved their box packaging from 2022 to try to minimize damages in transit.

Despite the delay in approval, this summer was notably smoother than previous years. The BCHP team made several improvements that contributed to this outcome. For example, they implemented specific process protocols that new hires and key staff could consult when onboarding or unsure of next steps. They expanded their case support team, which created an efficient system for responding to participants' questions and concerns. They also established a dedicated phone and text messaging system to ensure participants could reach them through multiple methods, a key learning from prior years, as not all participants have access to e-mail. This contact information was provided in writing in English and Spanish in all boxes participants received. The BCHP team also conducted site visits at each vendor early in the summer to catch any process issues, and a second set of site visits midsummer. These helped the BCHP team understand how boxes were packaged and identify items that could be more prone to damages (such as fruit squeeze tubes).

Food Insecurity among Meals-to-You Participants

This 2023 analysis focused on assessing participant experience and school district experience. In prior summers, we estimated exploratory program impacts of the program on food insecurity, but that was not possible this year given the late program initiation and insufficient random variation in meal box delivery. With advance planning and funding, a more rigorous program evaluation with a control group could be conducted in the future. Below, we discuss the food environment in the summer of 2023 to contextualize the resources participants may have had available, as well as the level of hardship given rising food prices. We then present findings on food insecurity from the end-of-summer survey conducted in August and September 2023, and benchmark these findings using national survey data on food hardship from the Census Household Pulse Survey.

The Food Environment in Summer 2023

The 2023 summer MTY program took place in a period of elevated food prices and in the wake of changes to the food assistance safety net that likely affected participating families.

Food Inflation

Families across the US have experienced rapid increases in food prices in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have affected family food budgets. In 2022, the annual increase in overall food prices was 9.9 percent, and the rate was higher for food purchased for use at home (11.4 percent). Although the rate of food price inflation slowed in the first six months of 2023 to 4.8 percent, it remained well above the average annual rate experienced in the last two decades.¹⁴

End of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Emergency Allotments

Although families faced higher food prices, additional support through SNAP that had assisted many households during the COVID-19 pandemic came to an end in early 2023. Among MTY households, 37 percent reported participating in SNAP in the month before the survey (see table 1). During the COVID-19 public health emergency, Congress authorized state SNAP programs to provide an additional monthly benefit, known as emergency allotments, to all participating SNAP households. Three of the

four states participating in MTY 2023—New Mexico, Texas, and Utah—continued offering these benefits until Congress ended this pandemic-era option for all states after February 2023. Several states ended the emergency allotments for its residents earlier, including Alaska, which terminated them after August 2022. The loss of these additional benefits represented a significant decrease in monthly food resources for many households. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated the average household benefit decrease for each state.¹⁵ Table 4 displays these estimates for MTY 2023 states.

TABLE 4

Average Change in Monthly State Benefit Per Person after End of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Emergency Allotments

State	Average monthly benefit change per person (in dollars)	Average monthly benefit change per person (percentage)
Alaska	-\$61	-13%
New Mexico	-\$83	-30%
Texas	-\$92	-34%
Utah	-\$150	-55%

Source: Estimates from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, based on United States Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program administrative data as of September 2023.

Notes: One household from Arizona also participated in MTY 2023 but is excluded from analysis given the small number of participants there.

Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer

Summer 2023 was the last year that states had the option to distribute benefits to school-age children through the Pandemic EBT program. Two of the four states (New Mexico and Utah) offered a summer 2023 Pandemic EBT benefit to households qualifying for free and reduced-price meals. Both New Mexico and Utah issued a one-time benefit of \$120 (equal to three months of \$40 monthly benefits), but the timing varied: New Mexico began distributing summer benefits in September 2023, while Utah issued benefits in July 2023. Neither Alaska nor Texas applied to participate in Pandemic EBT for summer 2023.¹⁶

Rising Food Insecurity

Food insecurity among households with children increased significantly between 2021 and 2022, from 12.5 percent to 17.3 percent (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2022). The 2021 rate was the lowest since USDA began using the current food security module in 2001, and research indicates that the expanded

monthly child tax credit implemented in 2021 had a positive impact on food security among families with children (Karpman et al. 2022). However, the expanded credit was allowed to lapse at the end of 2021. The combination of less assistance and rising food prices likely contributed to the significant increase in food insecurity in 2022 (Rabbitt et al. 2023).

Food Insecurity among Meals-to-You Participants

We measured food security on the end-of-summer survey using USDA’s six-item food security module (see box 2). We examined food insecurity in several ways: as a categorical variable of food secure versus food insecure, as a categorical variable of very low food security versus not very low food security, and as a continuous measure, which can provide a more nuanced look at changes in the depth of food insecurity. Respondents were defined as food insecure if they responded affirmatively to at least two of the six questions, and they were defined as having very low food security (VLFS) if they responded affirmatively to at least five of the six questions (see box 2). We calculated the continuous food insecurity measure based on the number of affirmative responses, meaning respondents could have a score from 0 (no affirmative responses) to 6 (affirmative responses to all six questions). Consistent with the framing of the food security questions, the unit of analysis in the survey was the household. The survey, which was administered around the time the program ended, asked respondents to reflect on their food security in the previous 30 days.

BOX 2

United States Department of Agriculture Six-Item Household Food Security Survey Module

Affirmative responses are in italics:

- **“The food that we bought just didn’t last, and we didn’t have money to get more.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for your household in the last 30 days?** *Often true, Sometimes true, Never true*
- **“We couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for your household in the last 30 days?** *Often true, Sometimes true, Never true*
- **In the last 30 days, did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?** Yes, No
 - » **In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen?** *Less than 3 days, 3 days or more*
- **In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money for food?** Yes, No
- **In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food?** Yes, No

While food insecurity is a validated measure of hunger, there is some research that points to the module’s limitations in assessing food availability and the lived experience of food insecurity (Ballard et al. 2014). We addressed this by asking additional questions related to lived experiences in our participant survey.

Sources: “US Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form,” USDA Economic Research Service, September 2012, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8282/short2012.pdf>; Ballard, Terri J., Anne W. Kepple, Carlo Cafiero, and Josef Schmidhuber. 2014. “Better Measurement of Food Insecurity in the Context of Enhancing Nutrition. *Ernahrungs Umschau* 61 (2): 38–41. <https://doi.org/10.4455/eu.2014.007>.

Subgroup Population Analyses

We know from qualitative research (described later in this report) that experiences in receiving boxes varied substantially across different places and among different groups. For example, survey data show households in Alaska received boxes with higher rates of damages (see “Participant Program Experience”), and shipping data show greater variation in when boxes arrived in Alaska. Additionally,

school districts in New Mexico started school earlier than in Alaska and Texas, meaning box shipments ended earlier in the summer. In addition, there have been long-standing disparities in rates of food insecurity among Hispanic/Latinx (Rabbitt, Smith, and Coleman-Jensen 2016) and Alaska Native (Walch et al. 2018) populations when compared with white households. In light of these considerations, we look at food insecurity for the following subgroup populations:

- **State:** Alaska, New Mexico, and Texas¹⁷
- **Race and ethnicity of survey respondent:** white non-Hispanic, Alaska Native, and Hispanic or Latinx¹⁸

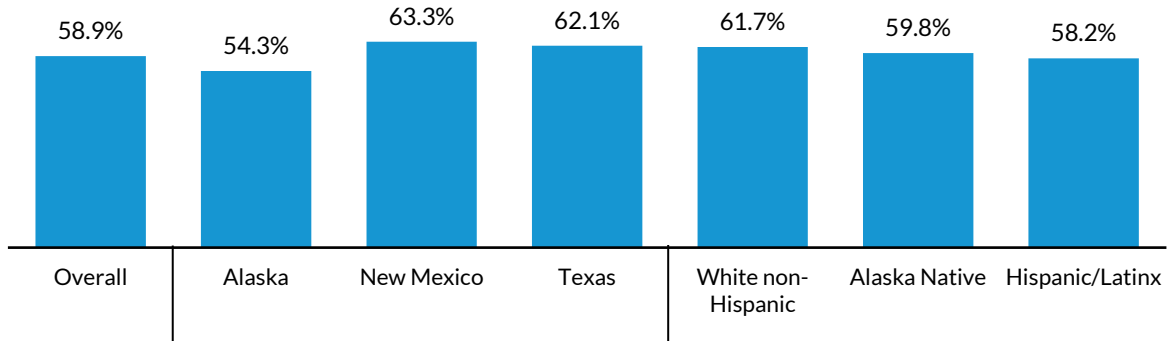
Descriptive Program Outcome

For the descriptive analysis, we assessed household food insecurity as reported in the survey. Figure 6 summarizes the rate of reported food insecurity for MTY participants overall, by state, and by major racial and ethnic group. We see an overall household food insecurity rate of 59 percent at the end of the summer, with similarly high rates across state and different racial and ethnic groups. The high rates of food insecurity observed in MTY-participating households demonstrated the elevated need these families faced. Notably, food insecurity was highest among respondents from New Mexico, affecting almost two in three households that participated in the survey (63 percent; figure 6).

We also examined the rate of VLFS among MTY households (figure 7). VLFS is a more severe form of hardship, representing periods of reduced food intake because the household lacked money and other resources for food. We observed high rates of VLFS among MTY households, with an overall average of 23 percent.

FIGURE 6

Reported Share of Meals-to-You Households Reporting Food Insecurity, Overall and by State and Race and Ethnicity, End of Summer 2023



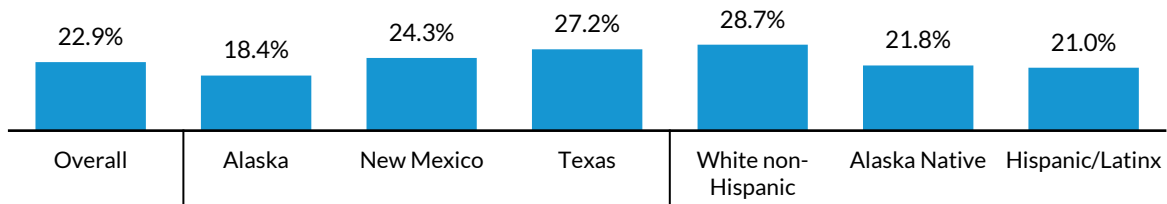
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Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023.

Note: N = 1,318; Alaska, n = 475; New Mexico, n = 417; Texas, n = 415; white non-Hispanic, n = 278; Alaska Native, n = 325; Hispanic/Latinx, n = 540.

FIGURE 7

Reported Share of Meals-to-You Households Reporting Very Low Food Security, Overall and by State and Race/Ethnicity, End of Summer 2023



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Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023.

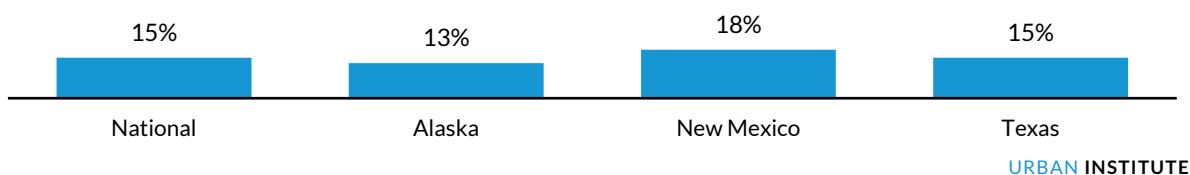
Note: N = 1,318; Alaska, n = 475; New Mexico, n = 417; Texas, n = 415; white non-Hispanic, n = 278; Alaska Native, n = 325; Hispanic/Latinx, n = 540.

National Food Hardship Benchmark Comparison

Based on USDA household food security data from 2022, MTY households report much higher levels of food insecurity than the average for households with children across the US (58.9 percent versus 17.3 percent; Rabbitt et al. 2023). Particularly notable is the high level of VLFS among MTY households when compared with the 2022 national average (22.9 versus 5.5 percent; Rabbitt et al. 2023). Although national food security data for 2023 are not yet available, data from the US Census Household Pulse survey¹⁹ collected in August and September 2023 (the period similar to when we collected survey data from MTY households) provide a point of comparison for food hardship. The Pulse Survey asks questions about food *insufficiency* in the prior seven days and is a different, less detailed measure than household food *insecurity*. According to the USDA, food insufficiency is a more severe measure of food hardship and may be more similar to the very low food security measure.²⁰ Although the measures are different, the food insufficiency metric can provide some directional insight into household needs.

To create a comparable sample of a sufficient size, we combined Pulse Survey rounds from weeks 60 to 62 of data collection, spanning the period July 26 to October 2, 2023. This roughly aligns with our survey period, August 14 to September 21, 2022. Restricting the sample to households with children (weighted $N= 38,046,137$ households), we find that nationally during this period, 15 percent of households reported experiencing food insufficiency in the prior seven days. Households in New Mexico reported higher rates of hardship, with almost one in five households (18 percent) reporting food insufficiency (see figure 8).

FIGURE 8
Food Insufficiency among Households with Children from the Household Pulse Survey, July 26–October 2, 2023



Source: Author analyses of Household Pulse Survey data, weeks 60–62. Sample is restricted to households with children. Household weights are divided by three to account for the combination of three waves. Total weighted $N = 38,046,137$; Alaska $N = 78,836$; New Mexico $N = 242,109$; Texas $N = 3,787,611$.

Notes: A few households from Arizona and Utah also participated in Meals-to-You 2023, but these states are excluded from analysis given the small number of participants there.

Though the MTY survey and the Census Household Pulse Survey use different measures of food hardship, households participating in the Meals-to-You program reported substantially higher levels of VLFS than the food insufficiency rates found on a national and state-level in a comparable period in 2023, highlighting the disproportionate level of need in rural communities served by the program.

Recommendations for Future Implementation

In this section, we draw on the summer 2023 MTY experience as well as lessons learned since the origination of the MTY program to provide key recommendations for improving future rounds of this or other similar programs.

Prioritize Timely Program Initiation

- **Complete summer plans and contracts by January.** The success of any summer meals program is dependent upon sufficient planning and implementation time for program operators, school districts, and vendors. Key stakeholders highly recommend that plans are completed for summer programs no later than January so that states and school districts are aware of their options, program operators have time to conduct timely outreach and contract with vendors, and vendors have time to optimize purchasing and shipping plans.
- **Use longer planning times to enhance program evaluation and foster innovation.** More rigorous evaluation designs, such as the use of a waitlist control strategy, require significant time for planning and communicating to school districts. Future program innovations—for example, testing inclusion of fresh food options as part of the box contents or more customization of box contents for ages or preferences of participants—are only likely to emerge if it is an expectation that home-delivered food box strategies are part of an ongoing suite of noncongregate summer options.

Enhance Outreach and Enrollment Experience

- **Plan for a seamless transition from school year to summer delivery.** Ideally, program outreach and enrollment can occur in such a manner that households begin receiving boxes as soon as in-person attendance ends for the academic year. A “seamless” approach to ensuring children have ongoing access to meals without a break in those supports is essential to optimize the potential to improve food insecurity. To do so, program operators need to coordinate with school districts to provide for a sufficient enrollment window well in advance of the beginning of summer break.

- **Provide families with more information during enrollment.** Families would also benefit from more information on what the program is, how to apply, what contents they can expect to receive in their boxes and communication on when the first shipment should be expected. Options for enhancing communication could include visual examples of the boxes and sample menus, as well as a short video or audio overview of the program.
- **Include regular family input in the program design process.** Survey data on program experience and satisfaction should continue to be an important component of continuous quality improvement. In addition to surveys of participants in prior years, interviews and focus groups with caregivers have provided valuable insights into how a home-delivery program can best meet their family. Program operators and vendors would benefit from engaging with a family advisory panel on an ongoing basis, especially given the unique context of many rural and remote communities.

Improve Vendor Management and Shipping Processes

- **Prioritize close attention to and investment in shipping.** Over time, BCHP and its vendors have gained critical knowledge that has allowed them to improve box contents, quality of packaging, and reliability of shipping. Nevertheless, shipping in particular has continued to be a persistent challenge in rural and remote areas and requires close attention and troubleshooting throughout the summer. One consistent recommendation from Alaska stakeholders has been the use of USPS Priority Mail for package shipping to increase the odds of timely delivery. Program funds should be allocated in anticipation that rural and remote shipping is more costly but also represents an investment in improving food access for families with children.
- **Promote consistency in vendor performance through detailed documentation and training.** Vendor personnel can be expected to change over time, and in the absence of careful planning and training, important institutional knowledge may be lost. Running multiple training programs and collaborating with vendors to maintain detailed program documentation are important steps that program operators can take to minimize disruptions due to personnel changes. In addition, it is highly recommended that vendors are engaged in a thorough review of all monitoring evaluation data collected throughout the program, especially participant feedback, so that they can better understand how households experience their products and services and be equipped to develop new strategies for future program iterations.

- **Leverage the power of site visits for community and vendor insights.** Site visits to rural and remote communities participating in MTY 2023 significantly enhanced BCHP’s insights into program management and quality improvement. Similarly, scheduled site visits to vendor operations helped BCHP to better understand vendor processes and more effectively monitor performance. Both strategies should be incorporated into ongoing program management in future years. In addition, if possible, vendors should be encouraged to visit remote communities, especially in Alaska, to maximize understanding of how to navigate the unique context.

Enhance Participant Experience through Communication Options

- **Support families through multiple communication channels.** In 2023, BCHP used diverse strategies for communicating with families around customer service, including email, text, and phone calls, and this information was sent in both English and Spanish in the first box. Staff observed that different types of channels tended to receive distinct types of information. For example, participants sent pictures of damaged boxes as attachments to emails while positive compliments were often received by phone. The research team also notified families about the survey via a flyer in English and Spanish in boxes a week before it was launched.
- **Explore how to give families visibility to shipping status.** MTY households have consistently expressed a desire for more information about shipping status, including notification of when to expect the first shipment and a means for tracking ongoing shipment status.

Appendix A. Participant Survey Methodology

This appendix describes the sample size, response rates, and survey weight variables that were created for the analysis of the 2023 MTY participant surveys.

Summer 2023 Meals-to-You Participants

We surveyed a subset of households that were enrolled in the 2023 MTY program and consented to participate in the program evaluation out of 3,889 participating households. We selected a random sample of consenting participants in Alaska ($n = 1,005$), New Mexico ($n = 610$), and Texas ($n = 741$), and all participating households in Arizona ($n = 1$) and Utah ($n = 3$). In total, 2,562 households consented to receive surveys; the decision to select a random sample in was largely because we anticipated a lower sample to enroll in the program.

The summer participants took one survey, fielded August 14 through September 21, 2023. Most of the surveys were completed online via a link sent either to participants' email address or via a text message. To improve the response rate (particularly in Alaska, where internet connectivity can be challenging), a subset of households (largely from Alaska) that did not respond to the online survey were invited to complete a phone survey administered by Research Support Services, Inc. Of the 1,318 responses, 142 were completed by phone and the remaining were done online. Table A.1 shows the response rates by state. On average, the surveys took about 10 minutes to complete, and respondents were given a \$20 (Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah) or \$30 (Alaska) gift card for completing the survey.

TABLE A.1
2023 Meals-to-You Program Survey Response Rates

Survey	Sample size	Completed surveys	Response rate
All Participants	2,360	1,318	55.8%
Texas Participants	741	460	62.1%
Alaska Participants	1,005	541	53.8%
New Mexico Participants	610	315	51.6%
Arizona/Utah Participants	4	1	25.0%

Source: Author's analysis of survey data.

Survey Weights

Each of the 1,318 respondents received a survey weight. The survey weights reduce potential nonresponse bias by adjusting our sample so that the respondents and nonrespondents end up with the same distribution of characteristics as the demographic profile of the full MTY population. The survey weights ranged from a low of 0.72 to a high of 1.82 with a standard deviation of 0.29.

Survey weights affect variance estimates and, as a result, tests of significance and confidence intervals. Variance estimates derived from standard statistical software packages that assume simple random sampling are generally too low, which can lead to overstated significance levels and overly narrow confidence intervals. The impact of the survey weight on variance estimates is measured by the design effect and is explained in more detail in the next section of this appendix.

These survey weights include the following nonresponse adjustments:

- An adjustment to correct for the differential response rates by state with Alaska and New Mexico having lower response rates than Texas
- An adjustment to correct for the slightly higher response rates for households receiving shipments from McLane versus PepsiCo
- A small adjustment to correct for slightly lower participation rates of families who were enrolled through school district mass enrollment
- Adjustments were also made for differential school district response rates. For example, the Lower Kuskokwim school district in Alaska and the Gadsden Independent schools in New Mexico had higher response rates than the other school districts in their states

The final weights were then normalized so that the sum of the weights equaled the number of participants for each survey.

Design Effects

Post-data collection statistical adjustments are required due to the disproportionate participation rate of sampled families. The post-data collection adjustments require analysis procedures that adjust the standard errors that one would obtain doing a simple random sample that involved no adjustments. Therefore, when using survey weights, variance estimation requires estimating the survey design effect associated with the weighted estimate. The term *design effect* is used to describe the variance of the weighted sample estimate relative to the variance of an estimate that assumes a simple random sample.

In a wide range of situations, the adjusted standard error of a statistic should be calculated by multiplying the usual formula by the design effect (*deft*). Thus, the formula for computing the 95 percent confidence interval around a percentage is

$$\hat{p} \pm (deft \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{n}})$$

where \hat{p} is the sample estimate and n is the unweighted number of sample cases in the group being considered.

TABLE A.2

Design Effects for the Survey Weights in the Summer Meals-to-You Program, 2023

	Design effect
All Participants	1.07
Alaska Participants	1.15
New Mexico Participants	1.04
Texas Participants	1.04

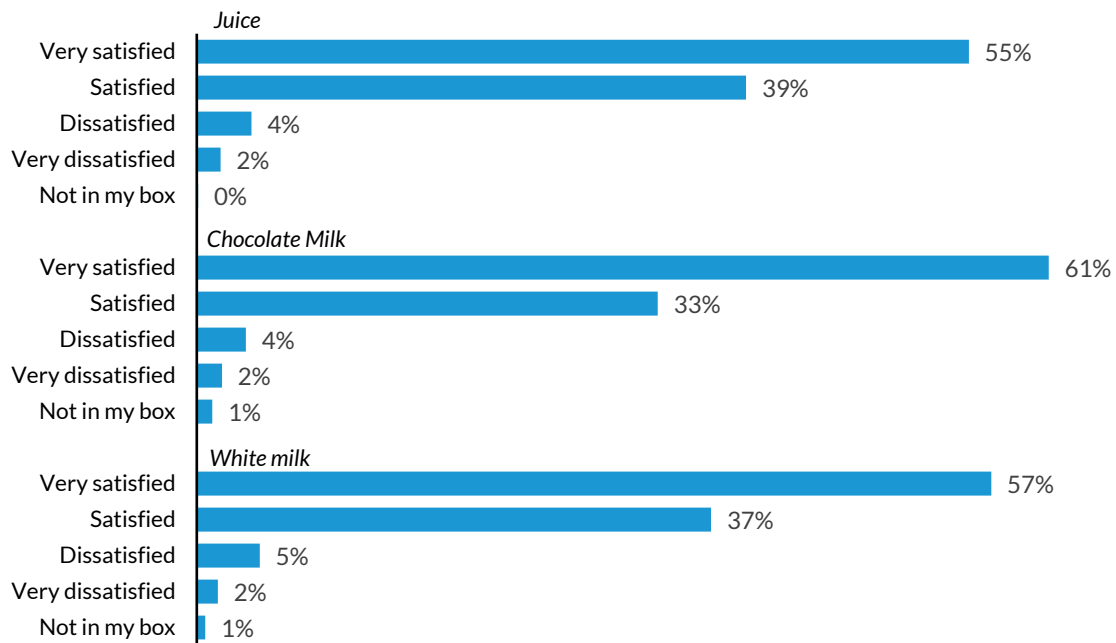
Source: Authors' analysis of survey data.

To get a more accurate estimate of the standard errors associated with a weighted estimate, one would multiply the unweighted standard error by the appropriate *deft* value shown in the table above. For example, suppose one was using the weight on a measure for the Alaska sample and the estimate had an unweighted standard error of 0.0212. The weighted estimate would not change; however, the standard error of the estimate would be 0.0224 (0.0212 x 1.15).

Appendix B. Satisfaction with Box Contents

FIGURE B.1

Satisfaction with Specific Pepsi Box Contents: Drinks

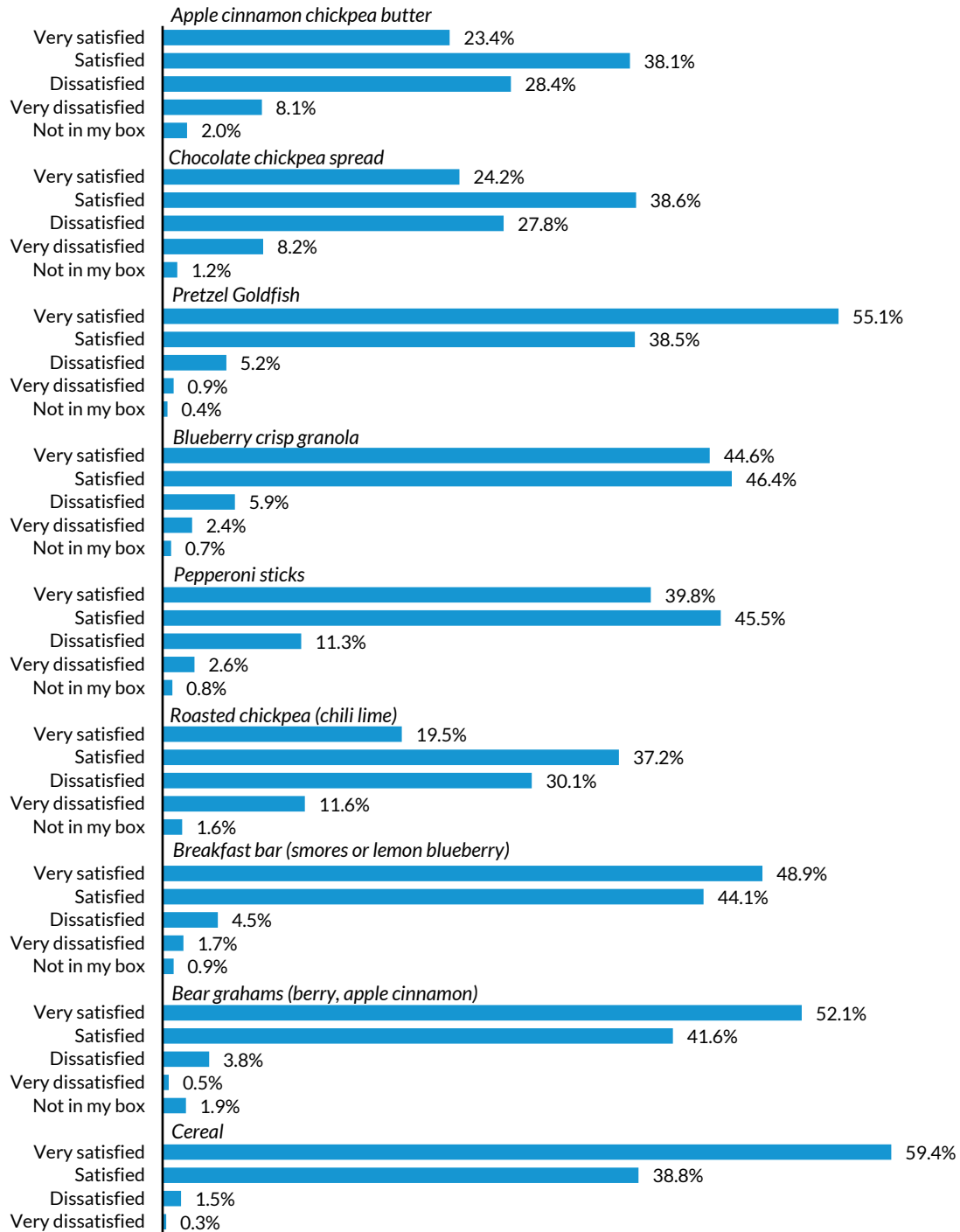


URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, $N = 850$. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

FIGURE B.2

Satisfaction with Specific Pepsi Box Contents: Cereals and Snack Items

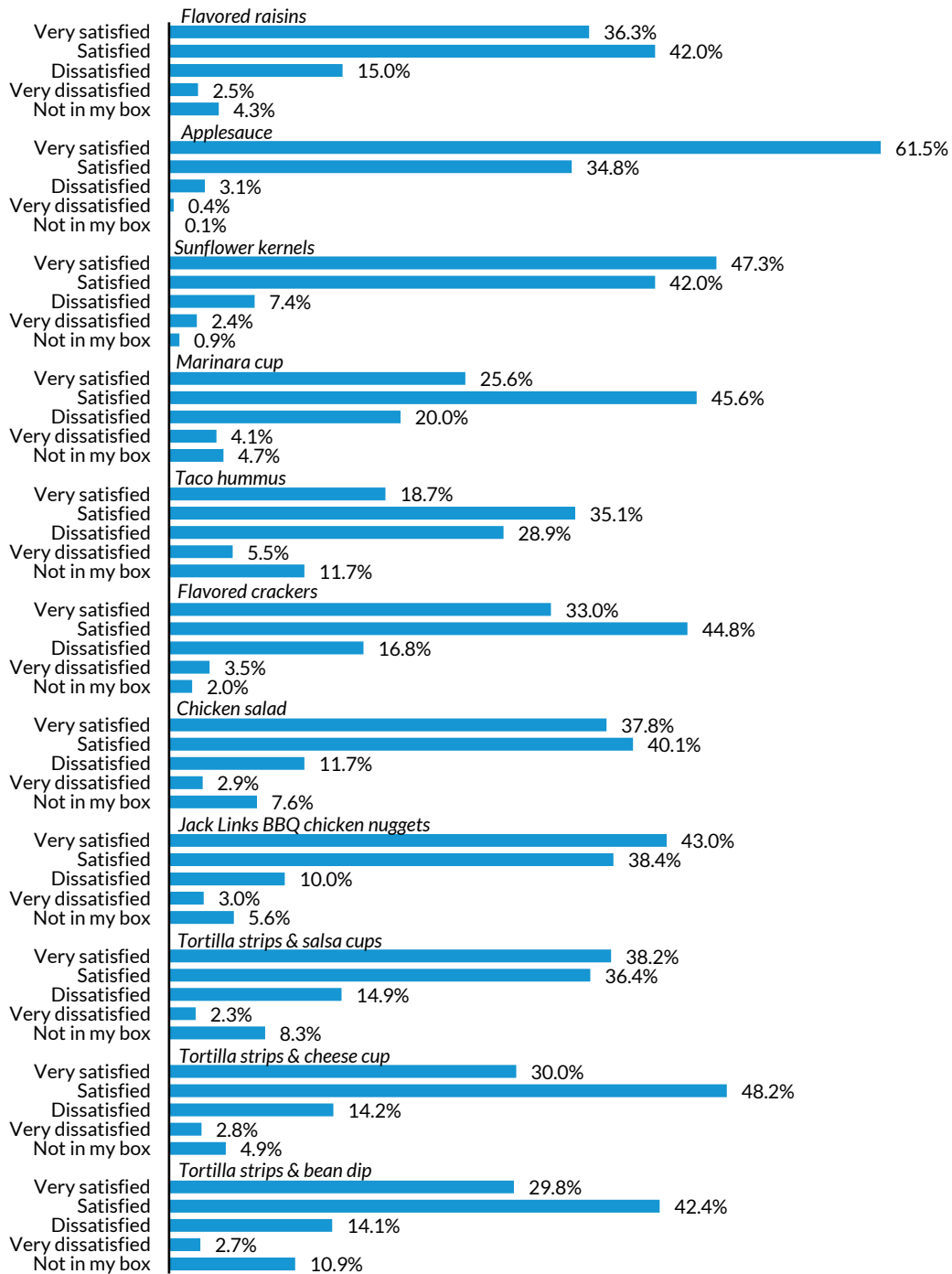


URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 856. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

FIGURE B.3

Satisfaction with Specific Pepsi Box Contents: Meal Items

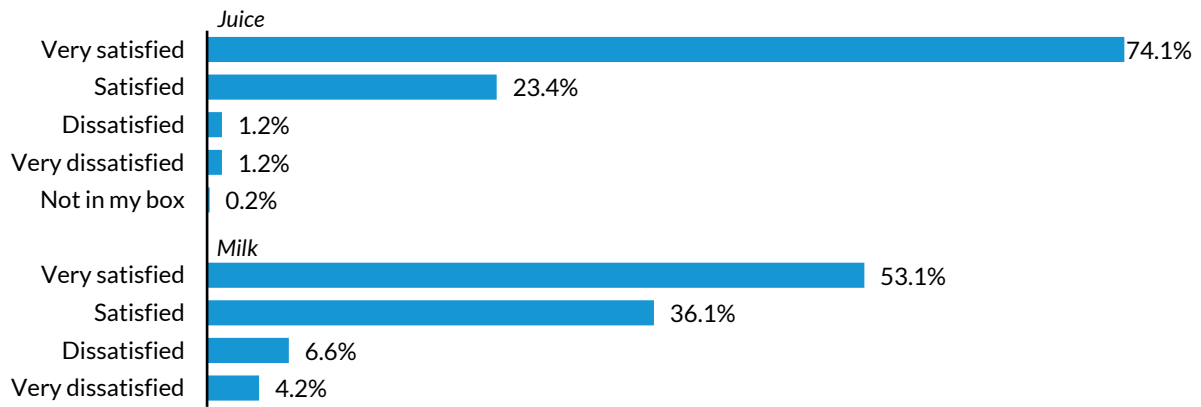


URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: MTY survey conducted August 14-September 21, 2023, N = 856. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

FIGURE B.4

Satisfaction with Specific McLane Box Contents: Drinks

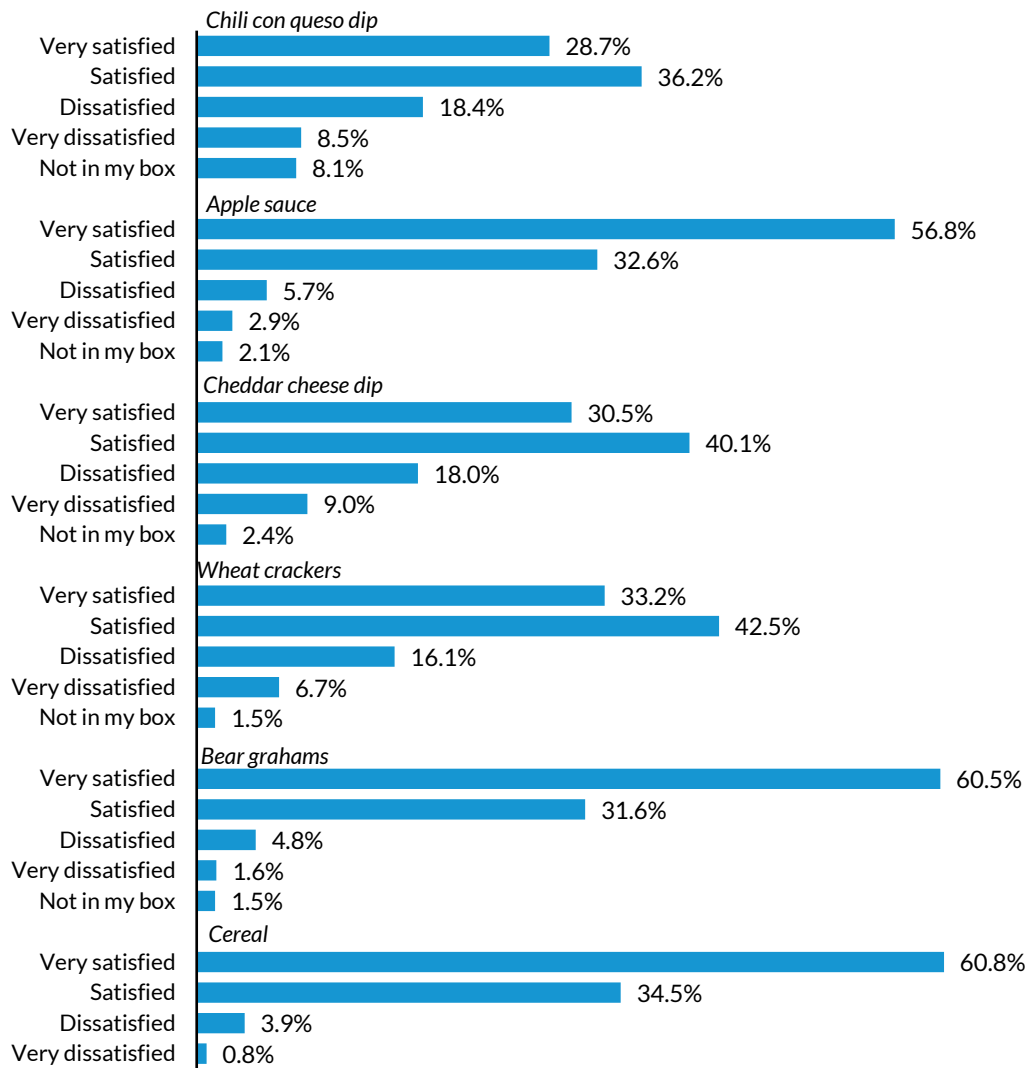


URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 438. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

FIGURE B.5

Satisfaction with Specific McLane Box Contents: Cereals and Snack Items

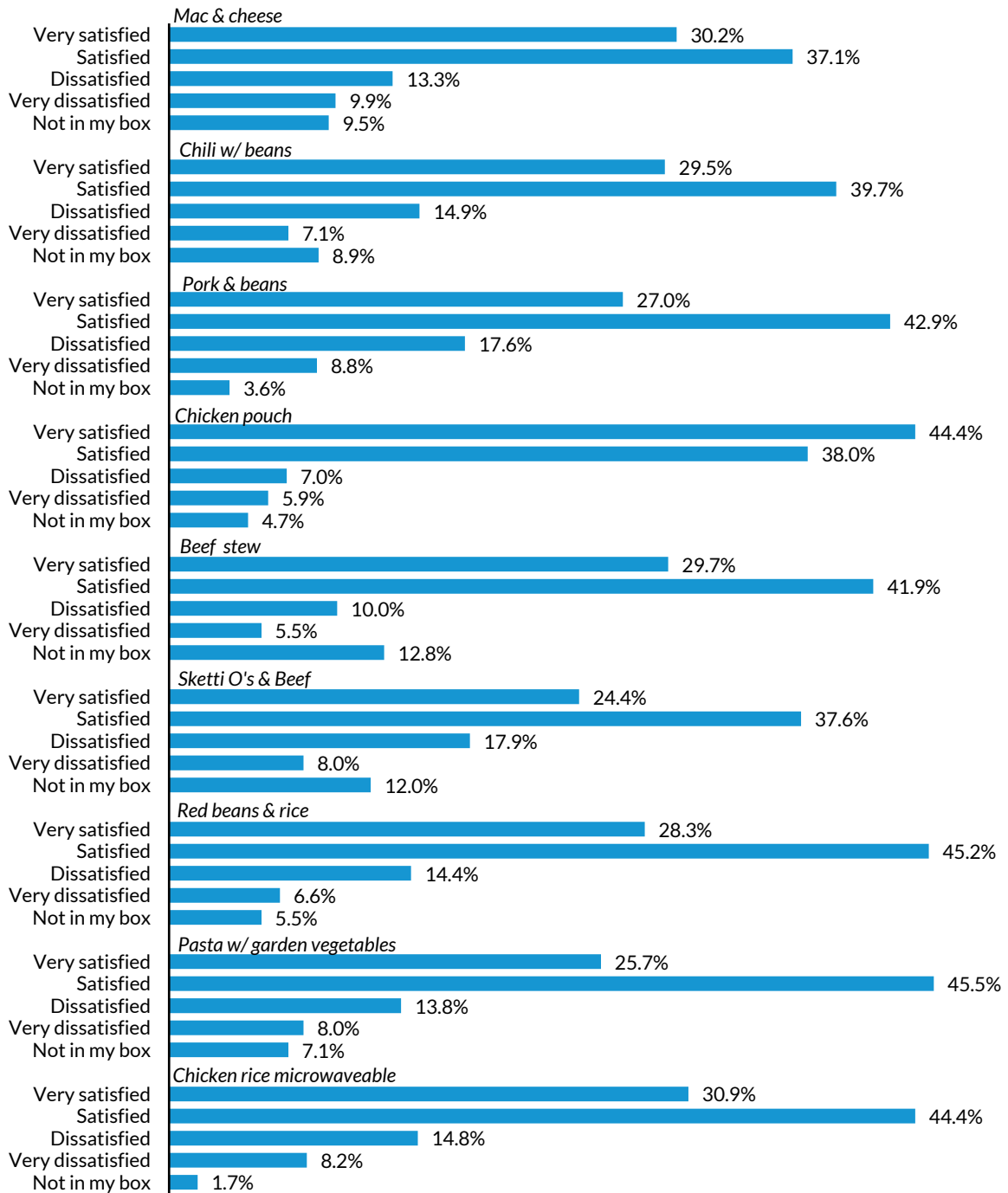


URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Meals-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 438. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

FIGURE B.6

Satisfaction with Specific McLane Box Contents: Meal Items 1

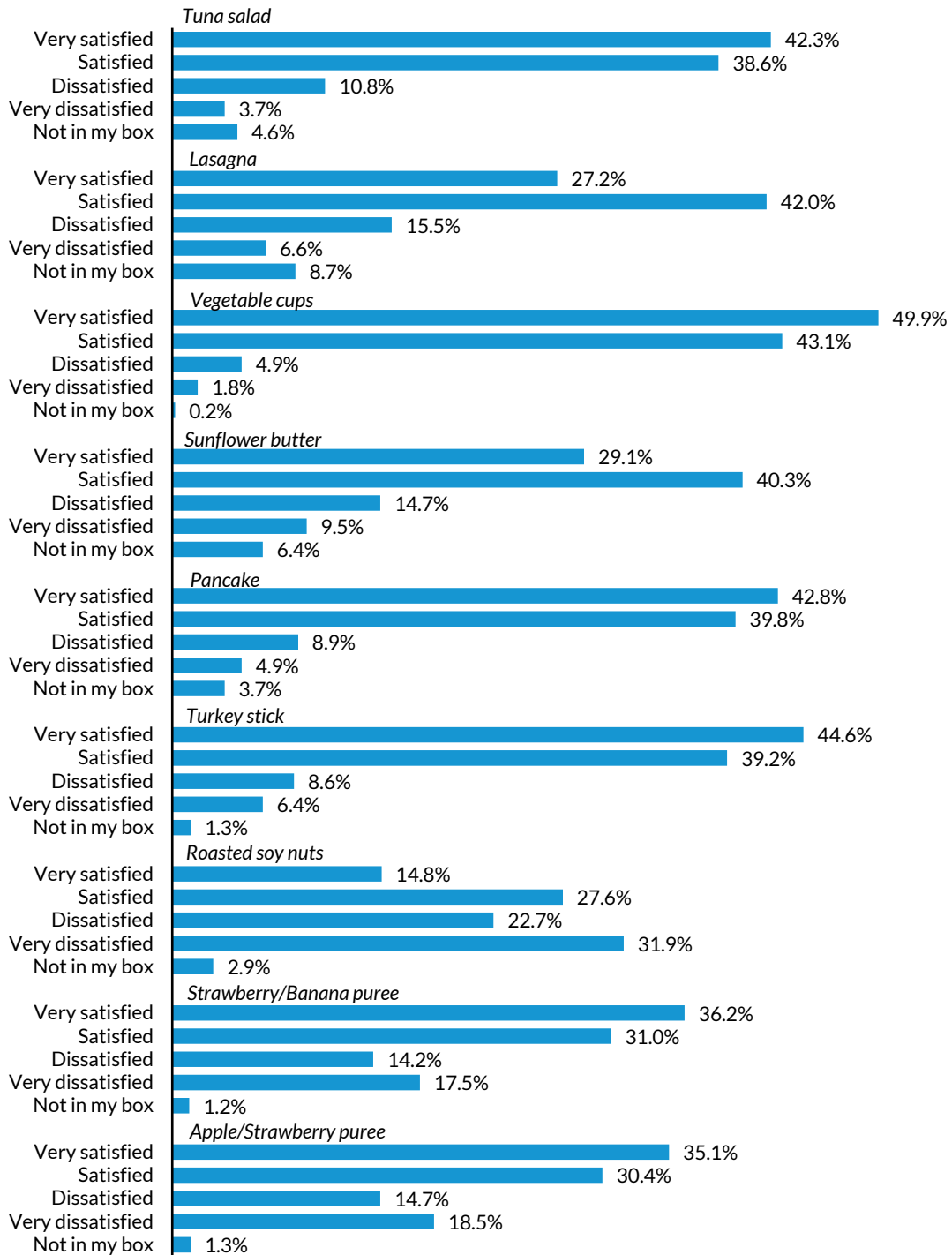


URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Meal-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 438. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

FIGURE B.7

Satisfaction with Specific McLane Box Contents: Meal Items 2



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Meal-to-You survey conducted August 14 through September 21, 2023, N = 438. All estimates are weighted to account for nonresponse.

Appendix C. Sample Menus and Box Pictures from Program Vendors

FIGURE C.1
Sample Pepsi One-Day Menu

Monday			
		Day 1	Amount
Breakfast		Cereal Bowl- Blueberry Chex	
	Bread/Grain	Blueberry Chex 1oz	1 oz
	Fruit/Veg	100% Fruit Juice 4.23oz_ Orange Tan	0.5 cup
Lunch		Apple Cinn- Chickpea Butter: FFG-6012	
	Bread/Grain	Goldfish Pretzels	1 oz
	Meat/Alt	Apple Cinn- Chickpea Butter cup	1 oz
	Meat/Alt	Sunflower Kernels- Salted & Roasted	1 oz
	Meat/Alt		
	Fruit/Veg	Zee Zee's Apple Sauce- Flavored	0.5 cup
	Fruit/Veg	Veg Juice 4.23oz - Tropical Twist	0.5 cup
	Dairy	8oz Milk	1 cup
Snack		Yogurt Parfit	
	Bread/Grain	Blueberry Crisp Granola 1oz	1 oz
	Meat/Alt	SS Yogurt, 4 oz	1 oz
Dairy		Milk_ 80 oz Total	
		1% 32oz Milk_ White	4 cups
		1% 32oz Milk_ White	4 cups
		Fat Free 8oz Milk_Chocolate	1 cup
		Fat Free 8oz Milk_Chocolate	1 cup

Source: Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty.

FIGURE C.2
Sample Pepsi Box Contents



Source: Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty.

FIGURE C.3
Sample McLane One-Day Menu

Day 1 Menu	Size (oz)	Meal	Number of Units
Dairy Pure 1% Shelf Stable Milk 27/8oz	8	Breakfast	1
SunCup 100% Very Berry Juice 40/4.23 oz	4.23	Breakfast	1
BOWLPAK CHEERIOS LG 96/1oz	1	Breakfast	1
Dairy Pure 1% Shelf Stable Milk 27/8oz	8	Lunch/Supper	1
Cut Green Beans Low Sodium Vegetable Cups 72/4oz	4	Lunch/Supper	1
Market Street Classic Apple Strawberry Puree, bulk 200/2.25	2.25	Lunch/Supper	1
Nature's Select Dry, Roasted Soy Nuts 280/1oz	1	Lunch/Supper	1
MC TRADER LASAGNA 24/7.5OZ	7.5	Lunch/Supper	1
HONEY PEPPERED TURKEY STICK - Bulk 288/0.6oz	1	Snack	2
MJM Savory Bites Wheat Crackers 155/1oz	1	Snack	1

Source: Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty.

Appendix D. Comparison of Race and Ethnicity of Meals-to-You Participants and Enrolled Students by Districts

	American Indian or Alaska Native		Asian		Black or African American		Hispanic or Latino/a		Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		Two or More		White	
	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District
Lower Kuskokwim SD (AK)	90.1	96.6	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.2	2.5	2.7
Nenana City SD (AK)	50.0	14.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	2.6	0.0	2.6	0.0	1.6	0.0	11.1	42.1	66.5
Nome Public Schools (AK)	83.3	54.6	2.6	0.7	1.7	0.1	1.7	1.3	0.0	0.4	1.3	31.3	6.4	11.5
Northwest Arctic Borough SD (AK)	96.6	92.4	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.2	1.6	5.2	0.4	1.5
Yukon Flats SD (AK)	100.0	98.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
Yup'it SD (AK)	100.0	98.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.4
Gadsden Independent Schools (NM)	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.4	84.6	96.7	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	9.7	2.7
Hozho Academy (NM)	36.2	37.4	0.7	1.2	0.0	0.6	47.0	36.4	1.3	0.0	0.7	4.8	10.1	19.5
Red River Valley Charter School (NM)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	66.7	39.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	56.3
Springer Municipal Schools (NM)	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	85.1	89.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	12.2	9.4
Brady ISD (TX)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	1.2	0.0	39.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	57.1	56.6
Buffalo ISD (TX)	1.5	0.2	0.0	1.2	6.8	3.0	42.1	43.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	46.6	49.2
Charlotte ISD (TX)	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	78.8	87.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	18.5	12.6
Crockett County Consolidated SD (TX)	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.5	100.0	74.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	23.7
Eden CISD (TX)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.4	0.5	52.7	65.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	37.8	32.4
Eustace ISD (TX)	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.1	2.5	1.0	11.5	14.4	1.4	0.0	0.4	3.8	81.4	80.5
Florence ISD (TX)	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	5.1	0.8	42.4	49.8	0.0	0.1	3.4	1.9	49.2	46.9
Grapeland ISD (TX)	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	18.9	20.1	8.8	9.3	0.0	0.0	2.0	3.5	65.5	65.5
Leon ISD (TX)	0.0	0.7	2.3	2.2	3.9	1.1	38.3	36.0	2.3	0.0	1.6	1.4	50.0	58.6
Malakoff ISD (TX)	0.8	0.3	0.8	0.2	12.9	10.8	17.2	20.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	4.2	66.8	64.4
Memphis ISD (TX)	4.1	0.2	1.4	0.0	5.4	7.7	63.5	60.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	17.6	30.1
Nueces Canyon CISD (TX)	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.4	32.4	40.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	56.8	57.5
Oakwood ISD (TX)	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.9	23.1	6.4	11.1	8.5	0.0	0.0	7.3	51.1	58.5
Paint Rock ISD (TX)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.4	0.0	51.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	100.0	45.1
Tidehaven ISD (TX)	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	100.0	54.4	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.0	42.4
Aneth Community School (BIE)	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

	American Indian or Alaska Native		Asian		Black or African American		Hispanic or Latino/a		Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		Two or More		White	
	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District	MTY	District
Ch'Ooshgai Community School (BIE)	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Notes: BIE = Bureau of Indian Education; ISD = Independent School District; MTY = Meals-to-You; SD = School District. Race is known for 100 percent of students enrolled in districts, and 95.5 percent of MTY participants.

Notes

- ¹ The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) makes all students in the school eligible for free meals and therefore eligible for MTY. See USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “Community Eligibility Provision,” accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision>.
- ² The program largely takes place in Alaska, New Mexico, and Texas. One school district with five households enrolled in the summer 2023 program from Utah, and one household enrolled from Arizona.
- ³ The number of boxes is derived from total number of meals successfully marked as delivered to participants divided by 10 meals, which was the average MTY box size. This number comes from a shipping dataset created by BCHP.
- ⁴ Households might have had higher incomes if they were in a CEP district or if they reported different income on the survey than might have been captured by program eligibility calculations.
- ⁵ WIC serves pregnant and postpartum women and their children up to age 5 if they meet income guidelines of 185 percent of the federal poverty level.
- ⁶ The survey was also sent to the participating district in Utah, but they did not respond.
- ⁷ Sophia Weng, “Could Investments in Community Broadband Bridge the Digital Divide?”, *Urban Wire (blog)*, August 11, 2022, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/could-investments-community-broadband-bridge-digital-divide>.
- ⁸ USDA Food and Nutrition Services, “Summer Food Service Program Characteristics Study,” March 2019, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program-characteristics-study>.
- ⁹ Food Resource and Action Center, “Hunger Doesn’t Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2023,” July 2023, <https://frac.org/summer-report-2023>.
- ¹⁰ Vericker, Tracy, Melissa Rothstein, Mary Gabay, Hyunshik Lee, Vivian Gabor, Sujata Dixit-Joshi, Bibi Gollapudi, Kevin Baier, and Laurie May. 2021. *USDA Summer Meals Study Volume 1. Participant and Nonparticipant Characteristics*.
- ¹¹ Emily Gutierrez and Poonam Gupta, “Considerations for States Choosing Summer Meal Options for Students,” *Urban Wire (blog)*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/considerations-states-choosing-summer-meal-options-students>.
- ¹² “Food Price Outlook,” US Department of Agriculture, last updated October 25, 2023, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook/summary-findings/>.
- ¹³ Last-mile delivery refers to the final step of the delivery process in which a product is transported from a fulfillment center to the recipient’s address. This is challenging in rural areas where population density is low and addresses are far apart or inexact.
- ¹⁴ “Prices for Food at Home up 13.5 Percent for Year Ended August 2022,” TED: The Economics Daily, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 15, 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/prices-for-food-at-home-up-13-5-percent-for-year-ended-august-2022.htm>.
- ¹⁵ Lauren Hall, “End of SNAP’s Temporary Emergency Allotments Resulted in Substantial Benefit Cut,” *Off the Charts (blog)*, September 21, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/end-of-snaps-temporary-emergency-allotments-resulted-in-substantial-benefit-cut>.
- ¹⁶ “State Guidance on Pandemic EBT,” US Food and Nutrition Service, last updated November 03, 2023, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt>.

- ¹⁷ Note that Arizona and Utah were not considered from the state-specific analyses because of the small sample sizes.
- ¹⁸ About 12 percent of surveyed households identified as another race, including Black, Asian, Native American, or mixed race. These households are included in other analyses but are not included in the race and ethnicity subgroup analysis because the diversity of the category makes findings difficult to interpret.
- ¹⁹ “Measuring Household Experience during the Coronavirus Pandemic,” US Census Bureau, August 23, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>.
- ²⁰ Food insufficiency is a more severe condition than food insecurity and measures whether a household generally has enough to eat, and in some ways is closer in severity to very low food security than to overall food insecurity. See “Food Security in the US: Measurement,” USDA Economic Research Service, last updated October 25, 2023, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/measurement>.

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About the Authors

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