



AFAC

Arlington Food Assistance Center Annual Client Survey 2023 Report

May 2023

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction & Background..... | 3 |
| About AFAC..... | 3 |
| Food Distribution Sites..... | 4 |
| Methods..... | 5 |
| Dissemination of Surveys..... | 5 |
| Survey Questions..... | 7 |
| Reporting & Evaluation..... | 7 |
| Results & Discussion..... | 8 |
| Survey Participation..... | 8 |
| Welcome..... | 10 |
| Quantity of Food..... | 12 |
| Dietary Needs..... | 14 |
| Cultural Needs..... | 17 |
| Other Free Food Resources..... | 20 |
| Eating Less or Skipping Meals..... | 23 |
| School Meals..... | 27 |
| Open Ended Comments..... | 29 |
| Conclusion..... | 30 |
| Appendices..... | 32 |
| Appendix A: Sample Menu..... | 32 |
| Appendix B: 2023 Client Survey Questions..... | 33 |
| Appendix C: 2023 Home Delivery Phone Survey Questions..... | 35 |
| Appendix D: 2023 Survey Infographic..... | 38 |

Introduction & Background

Every year, the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) conducts an in-depth survey to gather client feedback. Responses help AFAC adapt its services and programs to best meet the needs of the community.

Questions asked in this survey help identify areas in which AFAC succeeds and those it can improve. Information obtained from the survey is shared with community partners to celebrate successes and provide external resources that address issues and problems the survey identifies.

About AFAC

AFAC is a community based, volunteer-driven organization that provides low-income Arlingtonians dignified access to free and nutritious supplemental groceries each week. Since 1988, AFAC's sustainable food distribution model continues to be a vital resource for low-income families. When families have regular access to AFAC food, they can direct their limited financial resources to other essential needs such as housing, utilities, medication, and transportation.

AFAC is a privately funded 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization with an annual budget of nearly \$8.5 million. AFAC does not receive any federal or state funding. AFAC receives \$577,000 from Arlington County Government, which is approximately 6.8% of what it takes to operate the organization. AFAC relies on the generosity of the Arlington community to provide the funds, food donations, and volunteer services that are essential to its operations.

Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic began, Arlington families continue to access AFAC services in record numbers. Last year, AFAC recorded 108,660 family visits, consisting of 12,462 individuals from 5,141 families. One-third of the individuals served were children, and 14% were seniors on a fixed income. Nine percent of all individuals were disabled. More than 3 million pounds of food were distributed to families in need last year.

This year, with the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and many pandemic-era safety net programs coming to a close, AFAC is serving more families than ever before. To date, AFAC has served 31% more families this year than in the same time period last year.

AFAC operates under the Choice Model, which means that clients can select foods that meet their dietary and cultural needs. The Choice Model has been proven to reduce waste as families are more likely to eat the foods that they choose to take home and know how to prepare. Families can choose their favorite fresh fruits and vegetables with even more variety during the growing season as AFAC's shelves are replenished by Farmers Markets and local gardens. Families are able to make choices between meats and from a selection of breads and canned goods. AFAC buys meats, milk, eggs and other fresh items so that families can get the nutrition

they need every week. AFAC is committed to distributing as much nutritious food as possible. To see a sample menu, please go to Appendix A.

Food Distribution Sites

As of March 2023, AFAC has seventeen distribution sites in Arlington. All distribution sites are classified as Open, Community, or Senior sites with the exception of Home Delivery, which is a special program because of its unique format and requirements. Open sites are available to any Arlington resident without additional restrictions. Community sites are available to clients who reside in that particular community or participate in a program offered by the property's Resident Services. Senior sites are available to residents who live in those respective properties.

| Site | Facility Type | Site Category | Distribution Days |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Nelson | AFAC Headquarters | Open | Monday through Saturday |
| Home Delivery | Clients' Homes throughout Arlington | Special Program | Monday through Thursday |
| The Apex | Apartment Community | Community | Wednesday |
| Arlington Mill | Community Center | Open | Monday |
| The Cadence | Apartment Community | Community | Wednesday |
| The Carlin | Senior Apartments | Senior | Thursday |
| Clarendon UMC | Church | Open | Saturday |
| Claridge House | Senior Apartments | Senior | Monday |
| Columbia Hills | Apartment Community | Community | Tuesday |
| Culpepper Garden | Senior Apartments | Senior | Friday |
| Gates of Ballston | Community Center | Open | Friday |
| Gilliam Place | Apartment Community | Open | Monday |
| Hunters Park | Senior Apartments | Senior | Tuesday |
| Queens Court | Apartment Community | Community | Thursday |
| The Springs | Apartment Community | Community | Wednesday |
| Woodbury Park | Apartment Community | Community | Thursday |
| Woodland Hill | Senior Apartments | Senior | Tuesday |

Nelson distribution takes place at AFAC's headquarters at 2708 South Nelson Street in Arlington, VA. Nelson is the only center with eight separate food distributions throughout the week¹. The Nelson site accounts for more than half of all AFAC families served and can see up to 1,600 families in a given distribution week. All other food distribution centers take place only one time per week. Depending on the site, the average weekly distribution can serve between 30 – 150 client families each week.

Home Deliveries began in March 2020 as an option for any Arlington resident in quarantine for COVID-19 or homebound due to a severe medical condition or disability. Home Delivery eligibility assessments are completed by Arlington County's Department of Human Services and other select social service agencies. Deliveries are made by AFAC volunteers or sent via DoorDash four days per week.

In recent months, there have been a number of changes to distribution sites. In August 2022, AFAC opened a new distribution site at Gilliam Place in partnership with APAH, Our Stomping Ground, and Arlington Presbyterian Church. In December 2022, the AFAC grocery distribution at Whitefield was relocated to a new building, The Cadence. In January of 2023, AFAC's grocery distribution at Marbella closed and relocated to Queens Court.

Clients with an active AFAC referral may receive groceries from their assigned food distribution site once every week. Caseworkers assign a food distribution site at the time of referral to AFAC. With the approval from their social worker, a client family can switch to any open distribution site, but not to a community or senior site unless they live in those buildings.

Methods

Dissemination of Surveys

AFAC volunteers and staff conducted in-person surveys at all Open and Community sites. Clients were asked if they wanted to participate in a voluntary, anonymous survey and were offered to complete the survey while they waited to pick up groceries. Some clients indicated that they would prefer to have volunteers read the survey questions to them. In that case, volunteers were instructed to record the responses word-for-word.

At Senior sites, resident services staff at each property distributed the surveys to senior clients as they picked up their food for the week and clients returned the paper surveys the following week.

¹ Monday through Friday, 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM; Tuesday and Thursday 6:00 - 7:00 PM; Saturday 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Home Delivery clients were surveyed by phone. Therefore, those surveys were not anonymous. Volunteers received a script to follow during the phone survey, which included assuring clients that their responses would be confidential. AFAC used the phone survey as an opportunity to collect additional information from home delivery clients that helps the program run successfully, like emergency contact information, preferred method of communication, and requests for text reminders of deliveries. Each home delivery client was called a second time if they did not answer the first call. If they did not answer either call, they were not included in the survey.

| Site | Date(s) survey was conducted in-person or distributed | Method | # of clients served during this period |
|----------------------|--|---------------|---|
| Nelson | February 6 - 11 | In-person | 1,535 |
| Home Delivery | February 2 – March 21 | Phone | 139 |
| The Apex | February 15 | In-person | 53 |
| Arlington Mill | February 13 | In-person | 114 |
| The Cadence | February 15 | In-person | 84 |
| The Carlin | February 9 | Distributed | 80 |
| Clarendon UMC | February 18 | In-person | 41 |
| Claridge House | February 6 | Distributed | 161 |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | February 14 | In-person | 112 |
| Culpepper Garden | February 7 | Distributed | 84 |
| Gates of Ballston | February 17 | In-person | 113 |
| Gilliam Place | February 13 | In-person | 44 |
| Hunters Park | February 7 | Distributed | 34 |
| Queens Court | February 16 | In-person | 79 |
| The Springs | February 15 | In-person | 45 |
| Woodbury Park | February 23 | In-person | 110 |
| Woodland Hill | February 7 | Distributed | 136 |
| | | Total | 2,964 |

Surveys were conducted in February and March 2023 over the course of seven weeks. The first week (February 6-11), surveys were conducted at every Nelson distribution and were handed out Senior sites. The following week (February 13-18), surveys were conducted at the remaining sites, with the exception of Woodbury Park, which took place on February 23. Phone surveys were made to Home Delivery clients from February 3 - March 21.

With the help of bilingual volunteers and staff, and the written translation services of Alboum Associates, AFAC collected information from clients in Amharic, Arabic, English, Korean, Mongolian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Survey Questions

To see the 2023 Client Survey, go to Appendix B: [2023 Client Survey Questions](#) and Appendix C: [2023 Home Delivery Client Survey Questions](#)

In this year's survey, AFAC clients were asked if they feel welcome when they pick up groceries from AFAC and if they access other free food resources in the region. Clients with children were asked if their children receive free or reduced priced meals through Arlington Public Schools. This year, the survey included a question that was last asked in 2016, regarding clients eating less or skipping meals because they do not have enough food. Next, clients were asked if the AFAC menu meets their dietary and cultural needs. This year's survey also included a question about whether or not the food that AFAC provides is enough. Clients were offered the opportunity to share additional thoughts in an open-ended question at the end of the survey.

Reporting & Evaluation

Completed paper surveys were collected and sorted by distribution site by AFAC's Client Services Department. Surveys completed at Nelson were also sorted by distribution day and time. This was done to see if there were any significant differences in answers between clients who came during the weekday daytime hours versus those who came on evenings or Saturday.

Home Delivery clients were surveyed by telephone, and volunteers entered responses directly into an online Google Form. There was some overlap of questions with Home Delivery clients and all other clients. Responses to overlapping questions were combined with the general survey data.

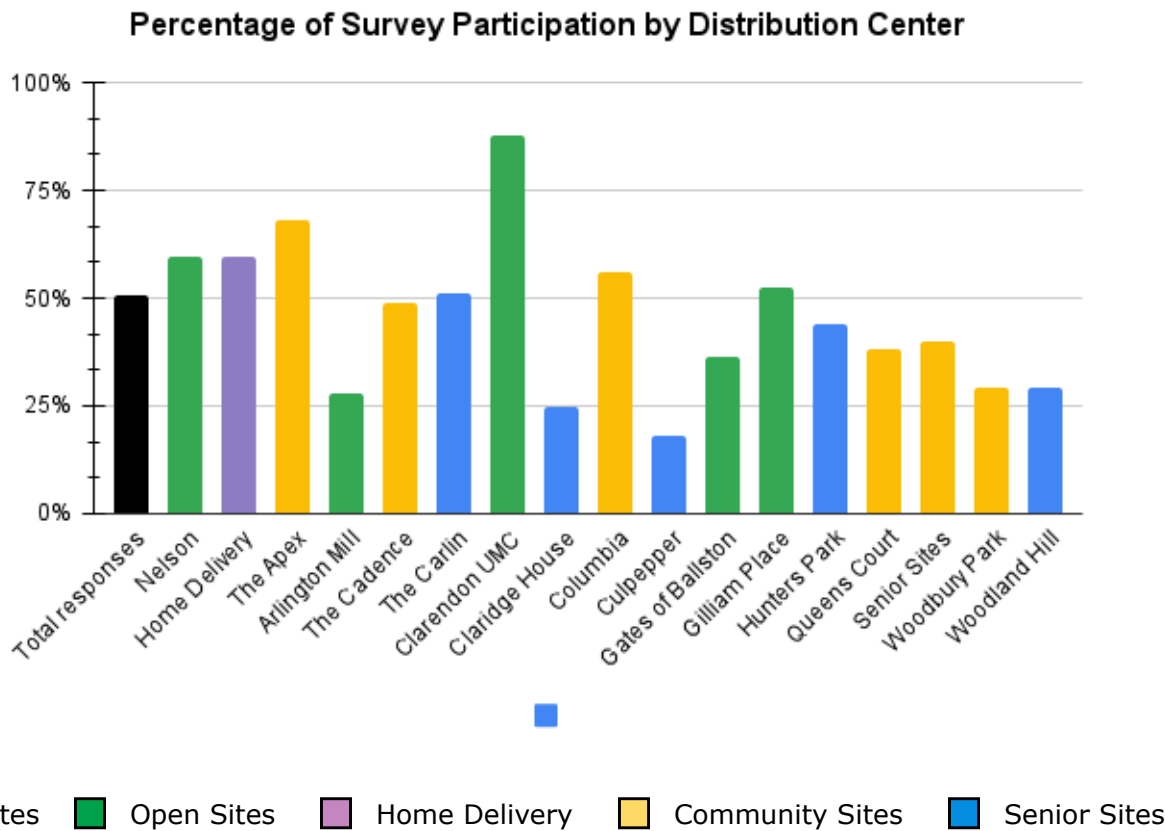
Volunteers entered all survey responses into an online Google Form version of the survey. Entries were saved on a corresponding Google Sheet.

For surveys that were completed in other languages, volunteers and staff who were fluent in those languages translated their answers into English so the responses could be entered into the Google Form.

For free response questions, data entry volunteers sorted responses into categories to identify recurring themes. Categories with few responses were considered uncategorized, while answers with recurring themes were added as new categories during the analysis of the data.

Results & Discussion

Survey Participation



AFAC had a 50.6% overall survey participation rate, or 1,501 survey participants out of 2,964 families served with groceries during the survey dissemination period this year. In 2022, the overall participation rate was 52.8%, with 1,154 responses.

Survey Participation Rates by Distribution Center

| Distribution Site | # of survey participants | # of clients checked in | Response Rate | Change in Response Rate from Last Year |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--|
| Total responses | 1,501 | 2,964 | 50.6% | -2.1% |
| Nelson | 915 | 1535 | 59.6% | 0.8% |
| Home Delivery | 83 | 139 | 59.7% | 15.1% |
| The Apex | 36 | 53 | 67.9% | -4.1% |
| Arlington Mill | 32 | 114 | 28.1% | -27.3% |
| The Cadence | 41 | 84 | 48.8% | 15.5% |
| The Carlin | 41 | 80 | 51.3% | -9.6% |
| Clarendon UMC | 36 | 41 | 87.8% | 12.1% |
| Claridge House | 40 | 161 | 24.8% | -4.4% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 63 | 112 | 56.3% | -5.9% |
| Culpepper Gardens | 15 | 84 | 17.9% | -13.3% |
| Gates of Ballston | 41 | 113 | 36.3% | -13.1% |
| Gilliam Place | 23 | 44 | 52.3% | n/a |
| Hunters Park | 15 | 34 | 44.1% | 12.5% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 79 | 38.0% | -23.8% |
| The Springs | 18 | 45 | 40.0% | n/a |
| Woodbury Park | 32 | 110 | 29.1% | 1.8% |
| Woodland Hill | 40 | 136 | 29.4% | -17.9% |

The distribution site with the highest rate of survey responses was Clarendon UMC, with 87.8% of clients participating in the survey. Other sites with high participation rates include The Apex (67.9%), Home Delivery (59.7%), and Nelson (59.6%).

The site with the lowest response rate was Culpepper Gardens, with only 17.9% of clients participating in this year's survey. This is a decrease of 16.4% from the previous year at this site. The next three lowest sites were: Claridge House (24.8%), Woodland Hill (29.4%), and Woodbury Park (29.1%). Overall at Senior Sites, participation was 30.5%, a 9.3% decrease from the previous year.

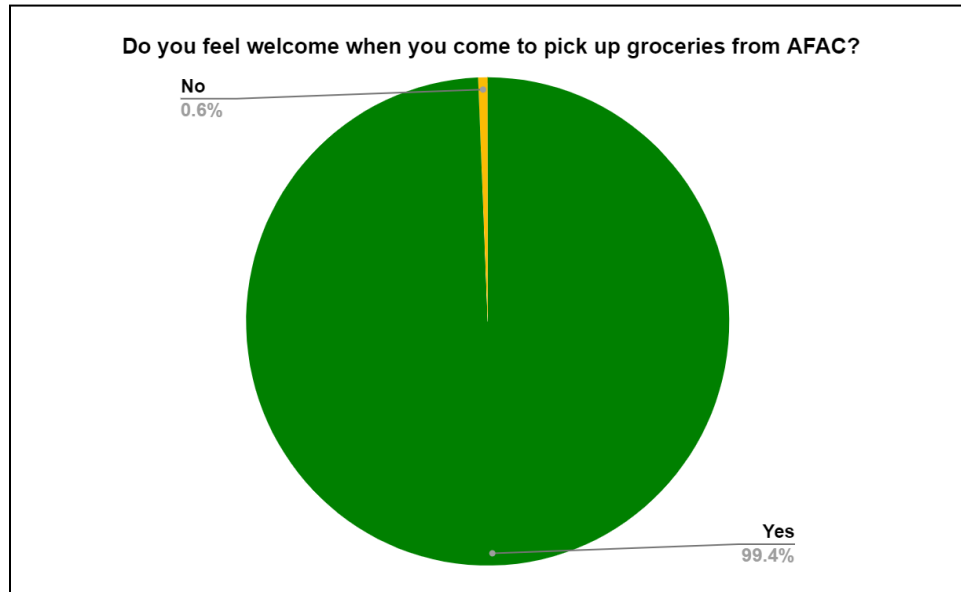
At Nelson, the response rate was 59.6%, a slight increase of 0.8% from the previous year. The consistent high response rate can be attributed to operational procedures. Clients were spaced out standing in line as they waited to enter the building, giving volunteers the opportunity to interact with clients as they waited.

There was a large difference in survey participation between sites where the surveys were conducted in-person (54.4%) versus senior sites where surveys were distributed with the food and returned at the following visit (30.5%). While being able to offer a contactless version of the survey to clients at senior sites has value, it is much more effective to conduct surveys in real time. This reduces the chances of clients forgetting to fill out the survey or losing the paper between food distribution visits. In order to reach a higher level of survey participation from AFAC clients at Senior Sites, the survey should be conducted in-person in the future, if possible.

The response rate of Home Delivery clients this year was 59.7% (83 responses), up from 44.6% (50 responses) in 2022. Conducting phone surveys with Home Delivery clients led to both more responses and a more meaningful understanding of Home Delivery clients' experiences than with the paper survey used previously.

Welcome

Clients were asked the question, "Do you feel welcome when you come to pick up groceries from AFAC?" and could select "Yes" or "No."² This was followed by the question, "If No, please explain." Home Delivery clients were not asked this particular question, as their weekly groceries are delivered directly to their doors.



² Home Delivery clients were not asked this question, as their weekly groceries are delivered directly to their doors.

Do you feel welcome when you come to pick up groceries from AFAC?

| Distribution Site | Yes | No | Total Responses to Welcome Question | Percent Who Responded "Yes" |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--|------------------------------------|
| Total responses | 1,393 | 9 | 1,402 | 99.4% |
| Nelson | 894 | 7 | 901 | 99.2% |
| The Apex | 36 | 0 | 36 | 100.0% |
| Arlington Mill | 31 | 1 | 32 | 96.9% |
| The Cadence | 41 | 0 | 41 | 100.0% |
| The Carlin | 40 | 1 | 41 | 97.6% |
| Clarendon UMC | 36 | 0 | 36 | 100.0% |
| Claridge House | 38 | 0 | 38 | 100.0% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 63 | 0 | 63 | 100.0% |
| Culpepper Gardens | 15 | 0 | 15 | 100.0% |
| Gates of Ballston | 41 | 0 | 41 | 100.0% |
| Gilliam Place | 23 | 0 | 23 | 100.0% |
| Hunters Park | 15 | 0 | 15 | 100.0% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 0 | 30 | 100.0% |
| The Springs | 18 | 0 | 18 | 100.0% |
| Woodbury Park & The Frederick | 32 | 0 | 32 | 100.0% |
| Woodland Hill | 40 | 0 | 40 | 100.0% |

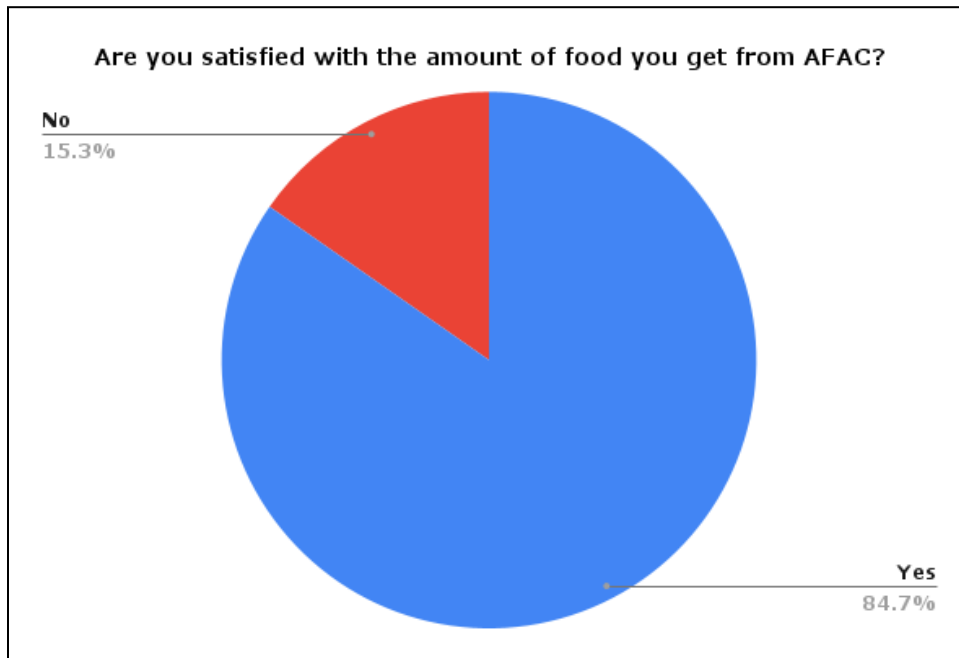
Ninety-nine percent (99.4%) of clients responded with "Yes." Of those 0.6% (9 clients) who said that they do not feel welcome when they come to pick up groceries at AFAC, six included comments about why they do not feel welcome. Those comments included behavior of other clients (3), unkind treatment by volunteers (2), and discrimination (1).

In order to obtain more detail about clients' experiences when picking up groceries, changing the question and evaluating the responses using a Likert scale would be valuable. It is possible that asking, "How often do you feel welcome when you pick up groceries from AFAC?" would give more information in the future.

Clients overwhelmingly feeling welcome at AFAC is an indicator that AFAC's staff, partner agency staff, and volunteers are successfully ensuring that clients feel comfortable and respected when they come to AFAC's doors.

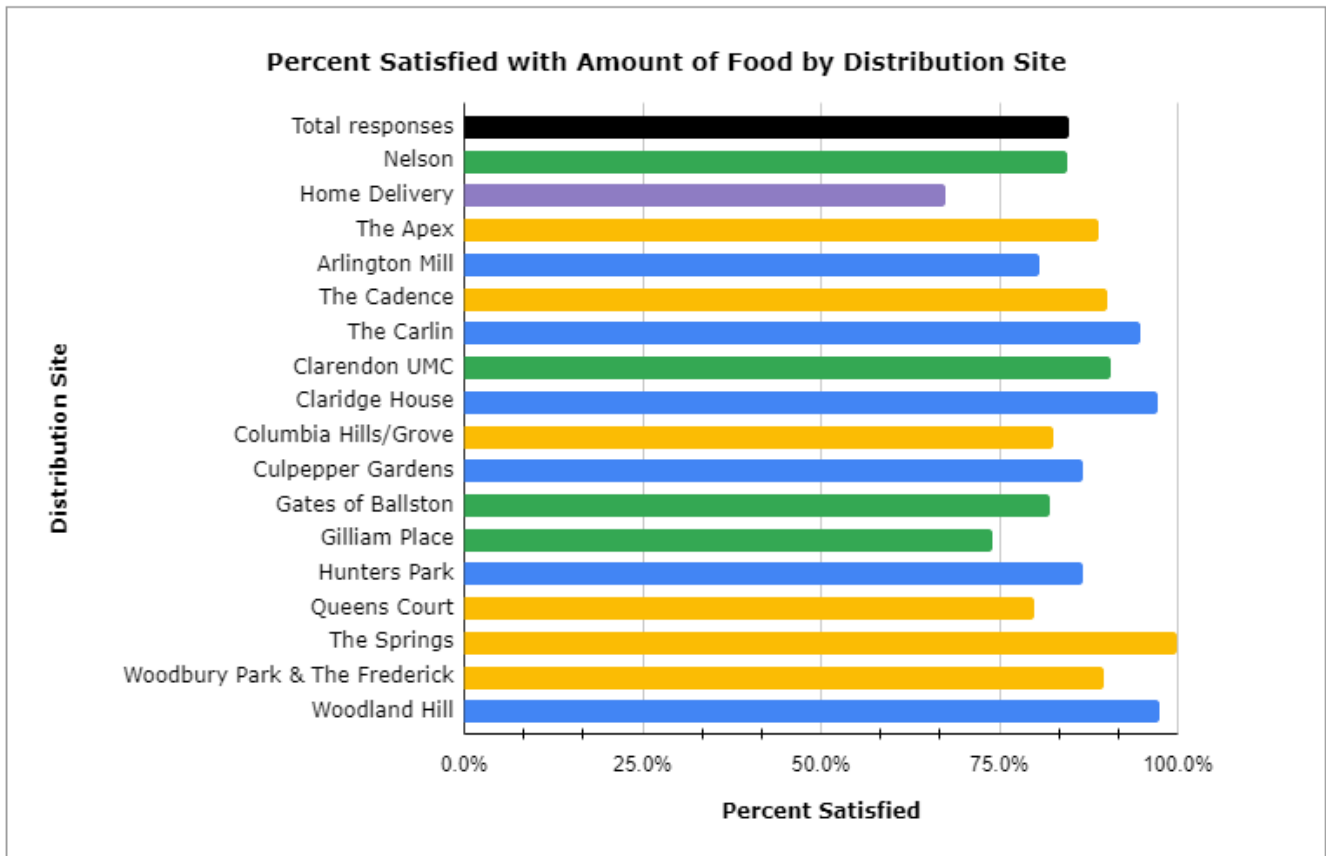
Quantity of Food

Clients were asked the question, "Are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?" Respondents could select "Yes" or "No." If the client answered "No," there was a space to explain.



Overall, 84.7% (1,233 families) of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the amount of food they get at AFAC. Of the 223 (15.3%) who reported that they were not satisfied with the amount, 98 (43.9%) of those indicated that it is not enough food overall, and 100 (44.8%) responded that there is not enough of a specific kind of food. Comments about specific foods included:

- "Can't afford eggs anymore...need more eggs,"
- "lactose-free options please,"
- "would like more vegetables," and
- "more meat would be good."



All sites
 Open Sites
 Home Delivery
 Community Sites
 Senior Sites

Are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?

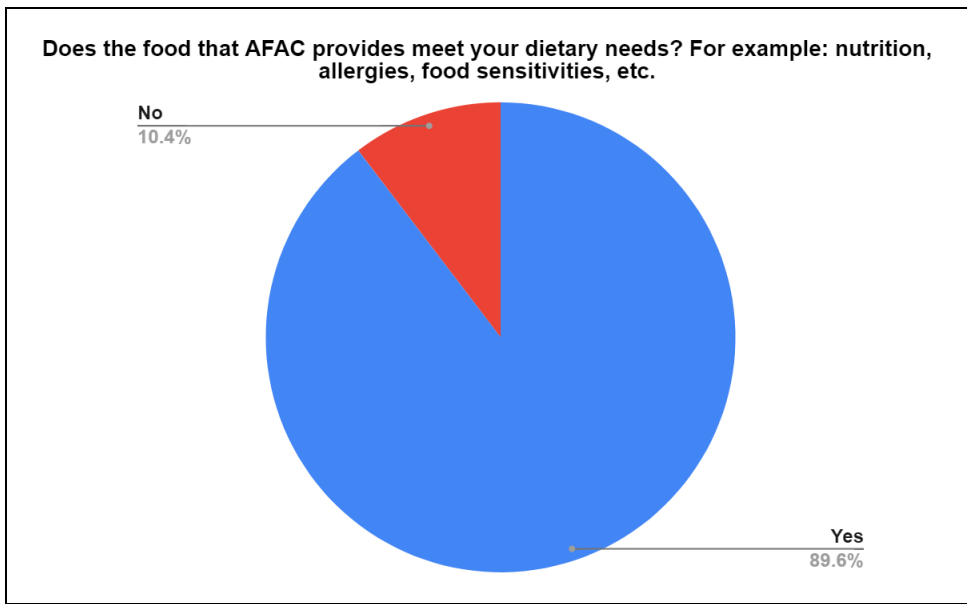
| Distribution Site | Total Responses | Yes | No | Percent Satisfied |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|-------------------|
| Total responses | 1456 | 1233 | 223 | 84.7% |
| Nelson | 892 | 753 | 139 | 84.4% |
| Home Delivery | 80 | 54 | 26 | 67.5% |
| The Apex | 36 | 32 | 4 | 88.9% |
| Arlington Mill | 31 | 25 | 6 | 80.6% |
| The Cadence | 41 | 37 | 4 | 90.2% |
| The Carlin | 38 | 36 | 2 | 94.7% |
| Clarendon UMC | 32 | 29 | 3 | 90.6% |
| Claridge House | 36 | 35 | 1 | 97.2% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 63 | 52 | 11 | 82.5% |

| Distribution Site | Total Responses | Yes | No | Percent Satisfied |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|-------------------|
| Total responses | 1456 | 1233 | 223 | 84.7% |
| Culpepper Gardens | 15 | 13 | 2 | 86.7% |
| Gates of Ballston | 39 | 32 | 7 | 82.1% |
| Gilliam Place | 23 | 17 | 6 | 73.9% |
| Hunters Park | 15 | 13 | 2 | 86.7% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 24 | 6 | 80.0% |
| The Springs | 18 | 18 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Woodbury Park & The Frederick | 29 | 26 | 3 | 89.7% |
| Woodland Hill | 38 | 37 | 1 | 97.4% |

The site with the lowest rate of satisfaction in terms of the amount of food provided by AFAC was the Home Delivery group, 67.5%. Home delivery clients have access to the full selection of choices offered to AFAC clients who pick up groceries in-person. Further analysis shows that of the 26 home delivery clients who indicated that they are not satisfied with the amount of food they receive from AFAC, 20 of them (76.9%) do not access other free food resources in the region. Home delivery clients also reported eating less or skipping meals at a high rate, 40.7% (33 of 81 respondents). By nature, home delivery clients are unable to easily supplement their AFAC groceries with a trip to the grocery store and do not have a local support system who can bring them food. This creates an opportunity for AFAC to consider increasing the amount of food delivered and also sharing information with home delivery clients about other free food delivery services in the area, like Meals on Wheels and Food & Friends.

Dietary Needs

Clients were asked the question, "Does the food that AFAC provides meet your dietary needs? For example: nutrition, allergies, food sensitivities, etc." Respondents could select "Yes" or "No." If the client answered "No," there was a space to explain.



Overall, 89.6% of the clients responded that the food AFAC provides meets their dietary needs. Of the 154 clients who indicated that AFAC groceries do not meet their dietary needs, 44.8% did not provide any details and 19.5% responded with answers that were uncategorized. Twelve (12.3%) indicated that they would like more vegetables to meet their dietary needs.

Responses from Respondents Who Indicated Their Dietary Needs are Not Being Met by Food They Receive at AFAC

| Comment | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| No Explanation Provided | 69 | 44.8% |
| Uncategorized | 30 | 19.5% |
| More Vegetables | 19 | 12.3% |
| More Diabetes-Friendly Items | 12 | 7.8% |
| More Low-Sodium Items | 8 | 5.2% |
| Fewer Canned Goods | 7 | 4.5% |
| More Fruit | 6 | 3.9% |
| Allergy to a Particular Food | 3 | 1.9% |
| Total | 154 | 100% |

Does the food that AFAC provides meet your dietary needs? For example: nutrition, allergies, food sensitivities, etc.

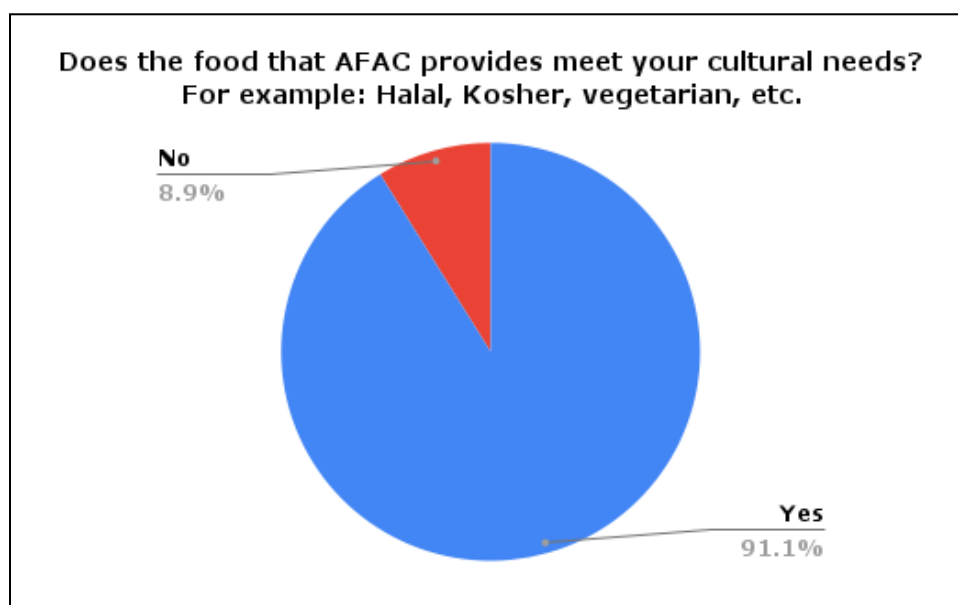
| Distribution Site | Total Responses | Yes | No | Percent Who Responded "Yes" |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| All Sites | 1,448 | 1,299 | 149 | 89.7% |
| Nelson | 882 | 803 | 79 | 91.0% |
| Home Delivery | 81 | 66 | 15 | 81.5% |
| The Apex | 36 | 36 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Arlington Mill | 31 | 22 | 9 | 71.0% |
| The Cadence | 41 | 38 | 3 | 92.7% |
| The Carlin | 38 | 30 | 8 | 78.9% |
| Clarendon UMC | 35 | 32 | 3 | 91.4% |
| Claridge House | 35 | 30 | 5 | 85.7% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 63 | 58 | 5 | 92.1% |
| Culpepper Gardens | 14 | 12 | 2 | 85.7% |
| Gates of Ballston | 39 | 37 | 2 | 94.9% |
| Gilliam Place | 23 | 20 | 3 | 87.0% |
| Hunters Park | 14 | 12 | 2 | 85.7% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 26 | 4 | 86.7% |
| The Springs | 18 | 18 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Woodbury Park & The Frederick | 30 | 28 | 2 | 93.3% |
| Woodland Hill | 38 | 31 | 7 | 81.6% |

| Site Categories | Total Responses | Yes | No | Percent Who Responded "Yes" |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| All Sites | 1,448 | 1,299 | 149 | 89.7% |
| Open Sites | 1,010 | 914 | 96 | 90.5% |
| Senior Sites | 139 | 115 | 24 | 82.7% |
| Community Sites | 218 | 204 | 14 | 93.6% |
| Home Delivery | 81 | 66 | 15 | 81.5% |

There was some variation by site and by site category. While 100% of respondents at The Apex and The Springs indicated that the food they receive at AFAC meets their dietary needs, only 71.0% and 78.9% of respondents at Arlington Mill and The Carlin respectively responded similarly. When analyzing the responses by site category, a lower percentage of respondents at senior sites (82.7%) and home delivery clients (81.5%) indicated that AFAC groceries meet their dietary needs. This raises the concern about many seniors' special dietary needs and the low survey response rates at senior sites.

Cultural Needs

Clients were asked the question, "Does the food that AFAC provides meet your cultural needs? For example: Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, etc." Respondents could select "Yes" or "No." If the client answered "No," there was a space to explain.

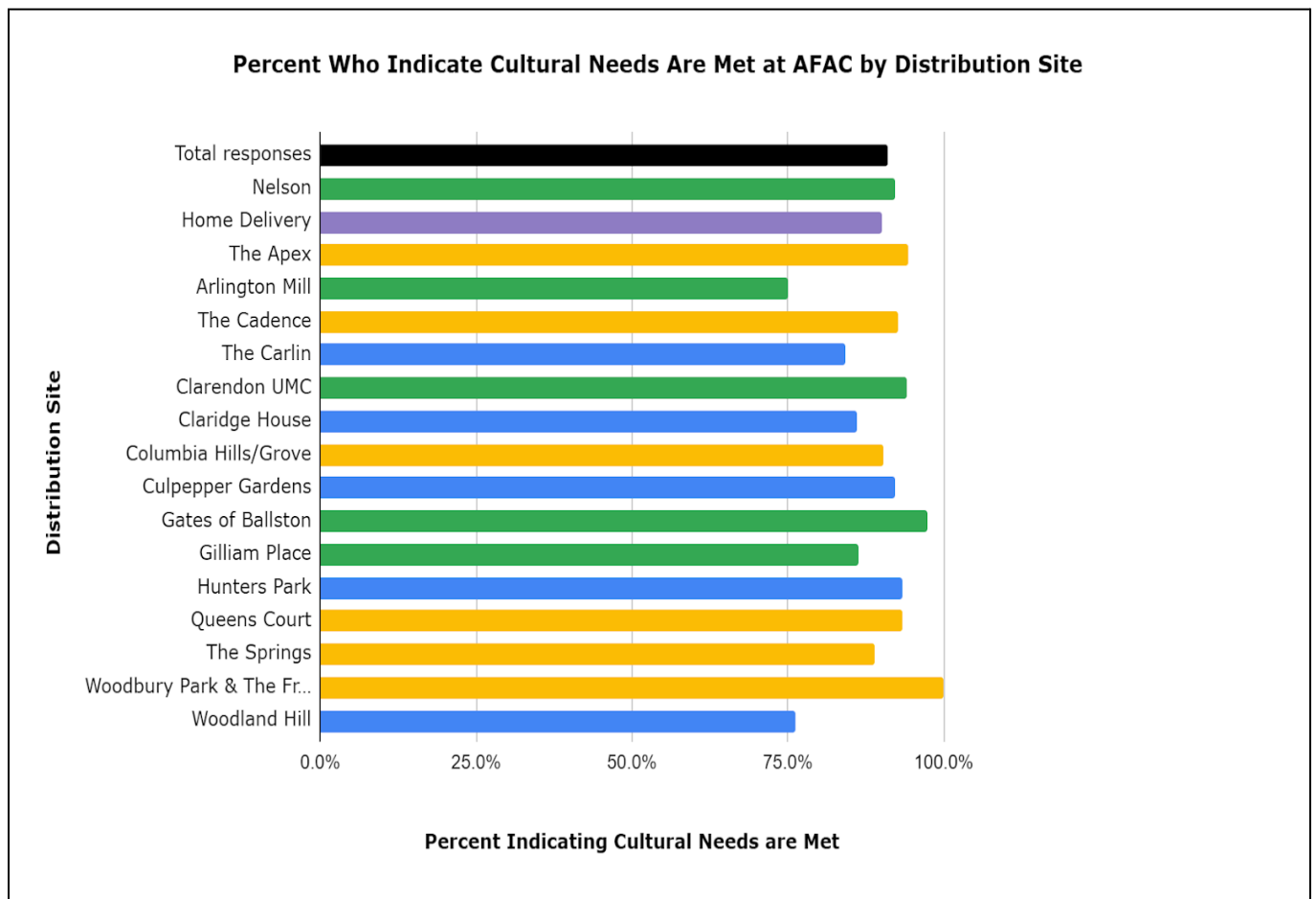


Overall, 91.1% of respondents indicated that the food AFAC provides meets their cultural needs. Of the 127 (8.9%) clients who indicated that AFAC groceries do not meet their dietary needs, 52.0% did not provide any details. Twenty-one (21.3%) indicated that there are not enough vegetarian or vegan options. When analyzing AFAC's standard weekly menu, more than 90% of the food available is vegetarian, and 80% is vegan. AFAC's policy is to allow families who eat vegetarian diets to receive either a plant-based protein or an additional dozen eggs. Vegan clients are offered three plant based proteins, as they are not taking milk, meat, or eggs. Clients are encouraged to request vegetarian and vegan options in case they are available. Sharing this information routinely with clients may lead to vegetarian or vegan families leaving AFAC with more of the food they need. In addition, ensuring that families are aware that Halal chicken and fish are available as frozen protein options may help the 12.6% (16 clients) of respondents to select food that meets

their cultural needs. Uncategorized responses included “Ethiopian food,” “plantains,” “oil,” along with other specific food items.

Responses from Survey Participants Who Indicated Their Cultural Needs are Not Being Met by Food They Receive at AFAC

| Comment | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| No explanation provided | 66 | 52.0% |
| Not enough vegetarian/vegan options | 27 | 21.3% |
| Not enough Halal options | 16 | 12.6% |
| Not enough Kosher items | 2 | 1.6% |
| Uncategorized | 16 | 12.6% |
| Total | 127 | 100.0% |



All sites
 Open Sites
 Home Delivery
 Community Sites
 Senior Sites

**Does the food that AFAC provides meet your cultural needs?
For example: Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, etc.**

| Distribution Site | Total Responses | Yes | No | Percent Satisfied |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Total responses | 1,435 | 1,308 | 127 | 91.1% |
| Nelson | 874 | 805 | 69 | 92.1% |
| Home Delivery | 81 | 73 | 8 | 90.1% |
| The Apex | 36 | 34 | 2 | 94.4% |
| Arlington Mill | 28 | 21 | 7 | 75.0% |
| The Cadence | 41 | 38 | 3 | 92.7% |
| The Carlin | 38 | 32 | 6 | 84.2% |
| Clarendon UMC | 34 | 32 | 2 | 94.1% |
| Claridge House | 36 | 31 | 5 | 86.1% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 62 | 56 | 6 | 90.3% |
| Culpepper Gardens | 13 | 12 | 1 | 92.3% |
| Gates of Ballston | 40 | 39 | 1 | 97.5% |
| Gilliam Place | 22 | 19 | 3 | 86.4% |
| Hunters Park | 15 | 14 | 1 | 93.3% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 28 | 2 | 93.3% |
| The Springs | 18 | 16 | 2 | 88.9% |
| Woodbury Park & The Frederick | 29 | 29 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Woodland Hill | 38 | 29 | 9 | 76.3% |

There was some variation by site and by site category. While 100% of respondents at Woodbury Park & The Frederick indicated that the food they receive at AFAC meets their cultural needs, only 75.0% and 76.3% of respondents at Arlington Mill and Woodland Hill respectively responded similarly. Arlington Mill is an open site that serves families from a variety of backgrounds, with Latinos being the largest single ethnic group at that site (55.4%). The survey response rate at Arlington Mill was low, 28.1%, a drop of 27.3% from last year, so it is difficult to know if the response is representative of the group. Of the 7 survey participants from Arlington Mill who indicated that their cultural needs are not met by AFAC groceries, only 2 indicated a specific reason, both saying that their needs as vegetarians/vegans were not met.

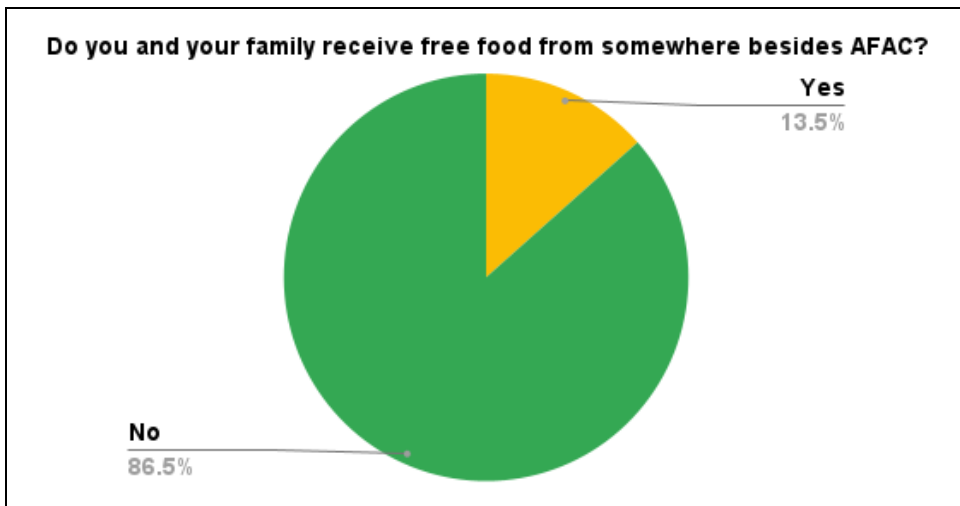
Woodland Hill is a senior site in which 36.5% of residents receiving AFAC groceries are Vietnamese and 28.1% are Korean. The other 35.4% of residents come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This information, coupled with the survey response rate of 29.4% (down by 17.9% from last year), indicates that further conversation with residents picking up AFAC groceries at Woodland Hill is necessary to understand how AFAC food can meet residents' cultural needs.

Other Free Food Resources

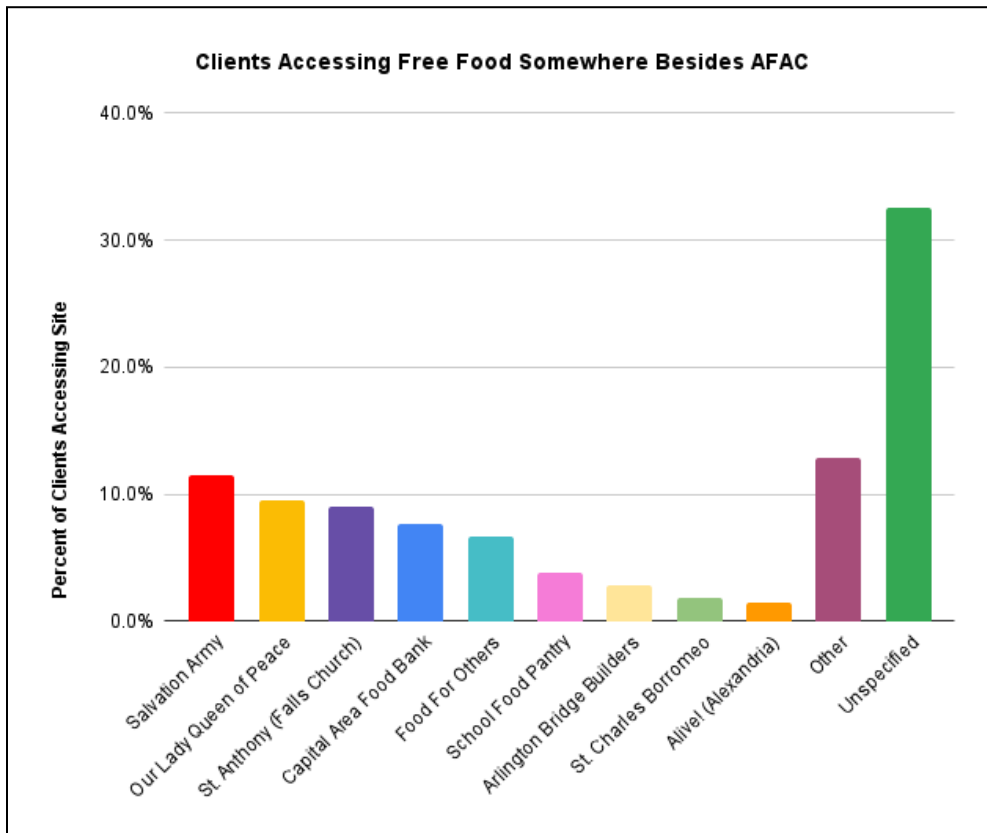
Clients were asked, "Do you and your family receive other free food from somewhere besides AFAC?" and could select "Yes" or "No." If they answered "Yes," there was a checklist of free food pantries in the region, along with an option to write-in any response not provided. This question was specific to regional food pantries and did not include benefits such as SNAP or WIC. As AFAC is a key partner in the Arlington County Food Security Coalition, the responses to this question were important in showing the use of the food pantry network in Arlington. The coalition's mission is to create an interconnected food security system in Arlington that works together to meet its residents' need to feed themselves and their families, healthy and culturally appropriate food, in an affordable and dignified manner.

The checklist of food pantries on the survey was:

- Our Lady Queen of Peace
- Capital Area Food Bank (Women's Club of Arlington, Arlington Mill Community Center, or Mount Olive Baptist)
- Salvation Army
- St. Charles Borromeo
- Arlington Bridge Builders
- School food pantry
- Alive (Alexandria)
- Food for Others (Barcroft, S. Dickerson, Gunston)
- St. Anthony's (Falls Church)
- Other: _____

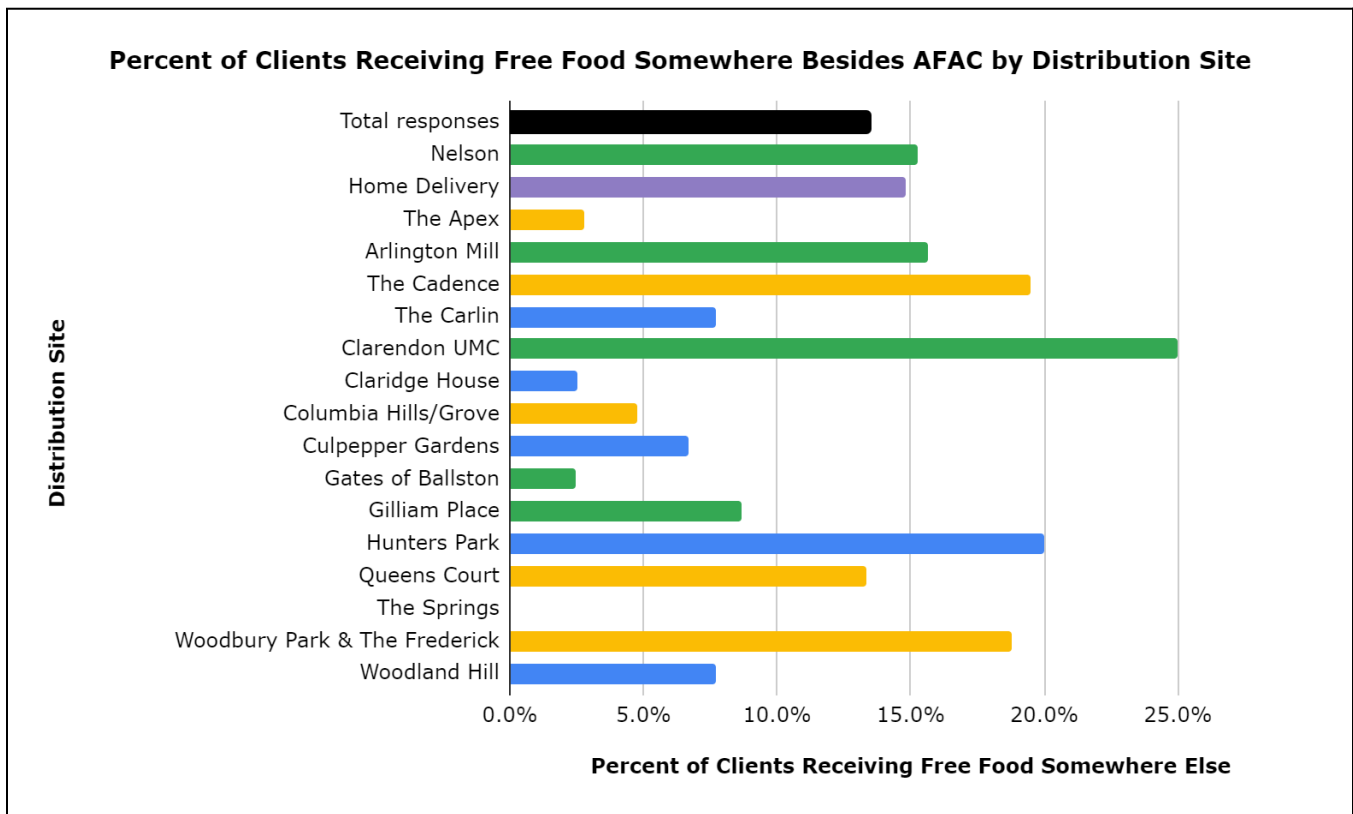


The data collected in this year’s survey show that 86.5% of clients self-reported that they do **not** access free food from other places besides AFAC. Of the 13.5% who do access free food elsewhere, 32.5% of them did not specify a location where they go. Of the specific locations mentioned, 24 respondents (11.5%) indicated that they receive free food from Salvation Army, and 20 (9.6%) responded that they receive free food from Our Lady Queen of Peace. Among the ‘Other’ answers were unspecified churches, Meals on Wheels, and twelve other locations not included in the checklist.



Of the 200 responses to this question, 61.5% indicated that they go to one other free food site. Seven clients (3.5%) indicated that they go to two other locations for free food, and two clients replied that they go to three other pantries for food assistance (1%).

Survey volunteers offered flyers with Arlington food assistance resources to clients, particularly if someone responded that they were not accessing other free resources in the area.³ The survey presented a nice opportunity to offer resources in-person in real time to clients who may need additional food.



All sites
 Open Sites
 Home Delivery
 Community Sites
 Senior Sites

³

Do you and your family receive other free food from somewhere besides AFAC?

| Distribution Site | Total | Yes | No | Percent of Clients Receiving Free Food Somewhere Else |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--|
| Total responses | 1,485 | 200 | 1,285 | 13.5% |
| Nelson | 904 | 138 | 766 | 15.3% |
| Home Delivery | 81 | 12 | 69 | 14.8% |
| The Apex | 36 | 1 | 35 | 2.8% |
| Arlington Mill | 32 | 5 | 27 | 15.6% |
| The Cadence | 41 | 8 | 33 | 19.5% |
| The Carlin | 39 | 3 | 36 | 7.7% |
| Clarendon UMC | 36 | 9 | 27 | 25.0% |
| Claridge House | 40 | 1 | 39 | 2.5% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 63 | 3 | 60 | 4.8% |
| Culpepper Gardens | 15 | 1 | 14 | 6.7% |
| Gates of Ballston | 41 | 1 | 40 | 2.4% |
| Gilliam Place | 23 | 2 | 21 | 8.7% |
| Hunters Park | 15 | 3 | 12 | 20.0% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 4 | 26 | 13.3% |
| The Springs | 18 | 0 | 18 | 0.0% |
| Woodbury Park & The Frederick | 32 | 6 | 26 | 18.8% |
| Woodland Hill | 39 | 3 | 36 | 7.7% |

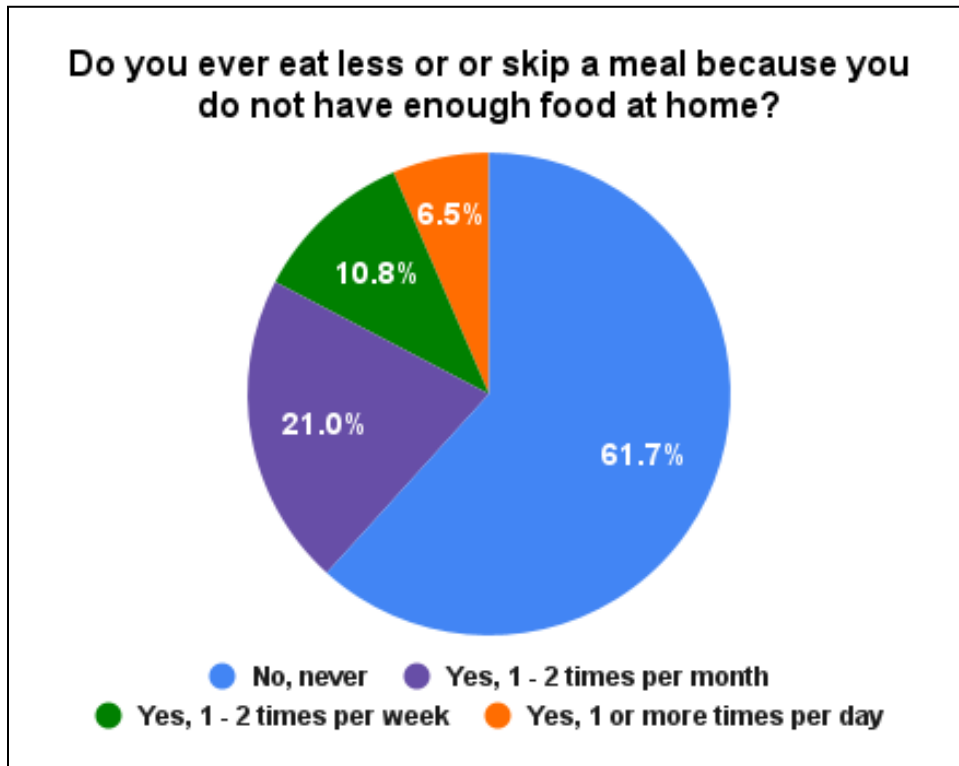
When comparing responses by distribution site, there is an interesting range of people accessing other food resources besides AFAC. While no clients at The Springs reported receiving food elsewhere, 25% of clients who receive AFAC groceries from Clarendon UMC go somewhere else for food assistance.

Eating Less or Skipping Meals

To better understand the severity of food insecurity among AFAC participants, clients were asked a question about the frequency of skipping meals. This question was last asked in AFAC’s 2016 survey. The question was, “There are many people

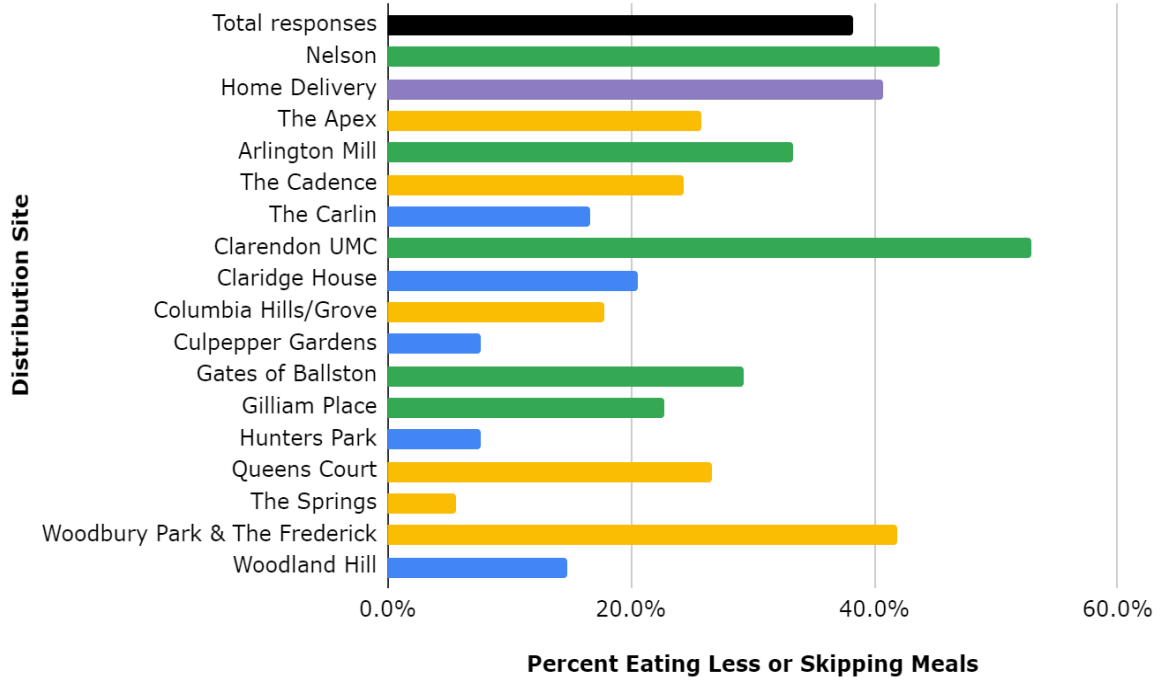
in Arlington who cannot afford all the food they need. Do you ever eat less or skip a meal because you do not have enough food at home?" Responses included:

- No, never
- Yes, 1-2 times per month
- Yes, 1-2 times per week
- Yes, 1 or more times per day



Of the 1,450 respondents, 61.7% indicated that they do **not** eat less or skip meals because of not having enough food. This is down 7.6% since the question was last asked in 2016. Twenty-one (21.0%) percent of this year's respondents indicated that they eat less or skip meals one to two times per month, and 10.8% eat less or skip meals one or two times per week. Of particular concern are the 6.5% who responded that they eat less or skip meals one or more times per day because there is not enough food at home. Of those 94 clients, most of them (85.1%) are clients at the Nelson Street location. While there are food resource flyers available in the waiting area at Nelson, increased outreach to clients with free food resources could be very valuable. As noted previously, survey volunteers distributed flyers as clients completed the survey.

Percent of Respondents Eating Less or Skipping Meals by Distribution Site



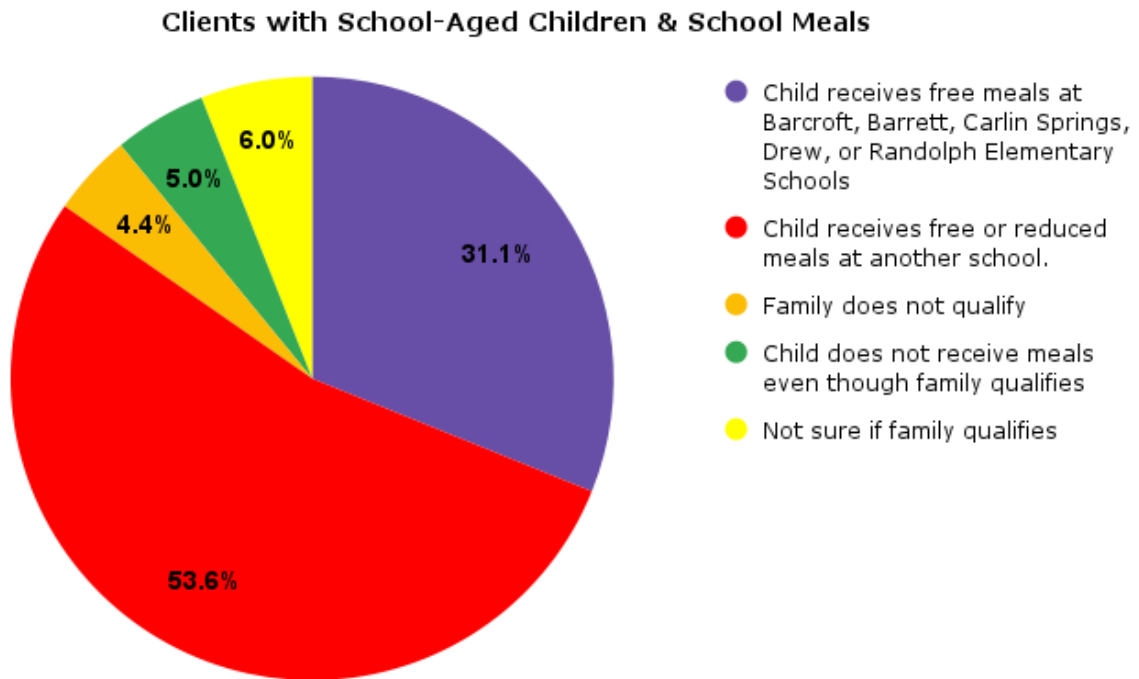
All sites
 Open Sites
 Home Delivery
 Community Sites
 Senior Sites

Do you ever eat less or skip a meal because you do not have enough food at home?

| Distribution Site | Total responses | Total Eating Less or Skips Meals | Percent Eating Less or Skipping Meals | Number of Responses | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | Never | 1-2 times per month | 1-2 times per week | 1 or more times per day |
| Total responses | 1,450 | 555 | 38.3% | 895 | 304 | 157 | 94 |
| Nelson | 890 | 404 | 45.4% | 486 | 219 | 105 | 80 |
| Home Delivery | 81 | 33 | 40.7% | 48 | 9 | 20 | 4 |
| The Apex | 35 | 9 | 25.7% | 26 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Arlington Mill | 30 | 10 | 33.3% | 20 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| The Cadence | 41 | 10 | 24.4% | 31 | 4 | 6 | 0 |
| The Carlin | 36 | 6 | 16.7% | 30 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Clarendon UMC | 34 | 18 | 52.9% | 16 | 9 | 5 | 4 |
| Claridge House | 39 | 8 | 20.5% | 31 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 62 | 11 | 17.7% | 51 | 9 | 1 | 1 |
| Culpepper Gardens | 13 | 1 | 7.7% | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Gates of Ballston | 41 | 12 | 29.3% | 29 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| Gilliam Place | 22 | 5 | 22.7% | 17 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Hunters Park | 13 | 1 | 7.7% | 12 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Queens Court | 30 | 8 | 26.7% | 22 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| The Springs | 18 | 1 | 5.6% | 17 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Woodbury Park | 31 | 13 | 41.9% | 18 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Woodland Hill | 34 | 5 | 14.7% | 29 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Nelson | 890 | 404 | 45.4% | 486 | 219 | 105 | 80 |
| Monday | 131 | 54 | 41.2% | 77 | 34 | 17 | 3 |
| Tuesday AM | 114 | 39 | 34.2% | 75 | 28 | 11 | 0 |
| Tuesday PM | 59 | 21 | 35.6% | 38 | 11 | 9 | 1 |
| Wednesday | 147 | 70 | 47.6% | 77 | 44 | 15 | 11 |
| Thursday AM | 127 | 70 | 55.1% | 57 | 21 | 18 | 31 |
| Thursday PM | 34 | 18 | 52.9% | 16 | 14 | 4 | 0 |
| Friday | 155 | 60 | 38.7% | 95 | 37 | 19 | 4 |
| Saturday | 121 | 70 | 57.9% | 51 | 30 | 12 | 28 |
| Open Sites | 1,017 | 449 | 44.1% | 568 | 247 | 116 | 86 |
| Senior Sites | 135 | 21 | 15.6% | 114 | 12 | 9 | 0 |
| Community Sites | 217 | 52 | 24.0% | 165 | 36 | 12 | 4 |

Of survey respondents who picked up groceries from an AFAC site on Saturday (132 families at Nelson Street and Clarendon UMC combined), 54.5% (72 families) reported both eating less or skipping meals **and** not accessing other free food. This suggests that more charitable food pantry options are needed during weekend hours.

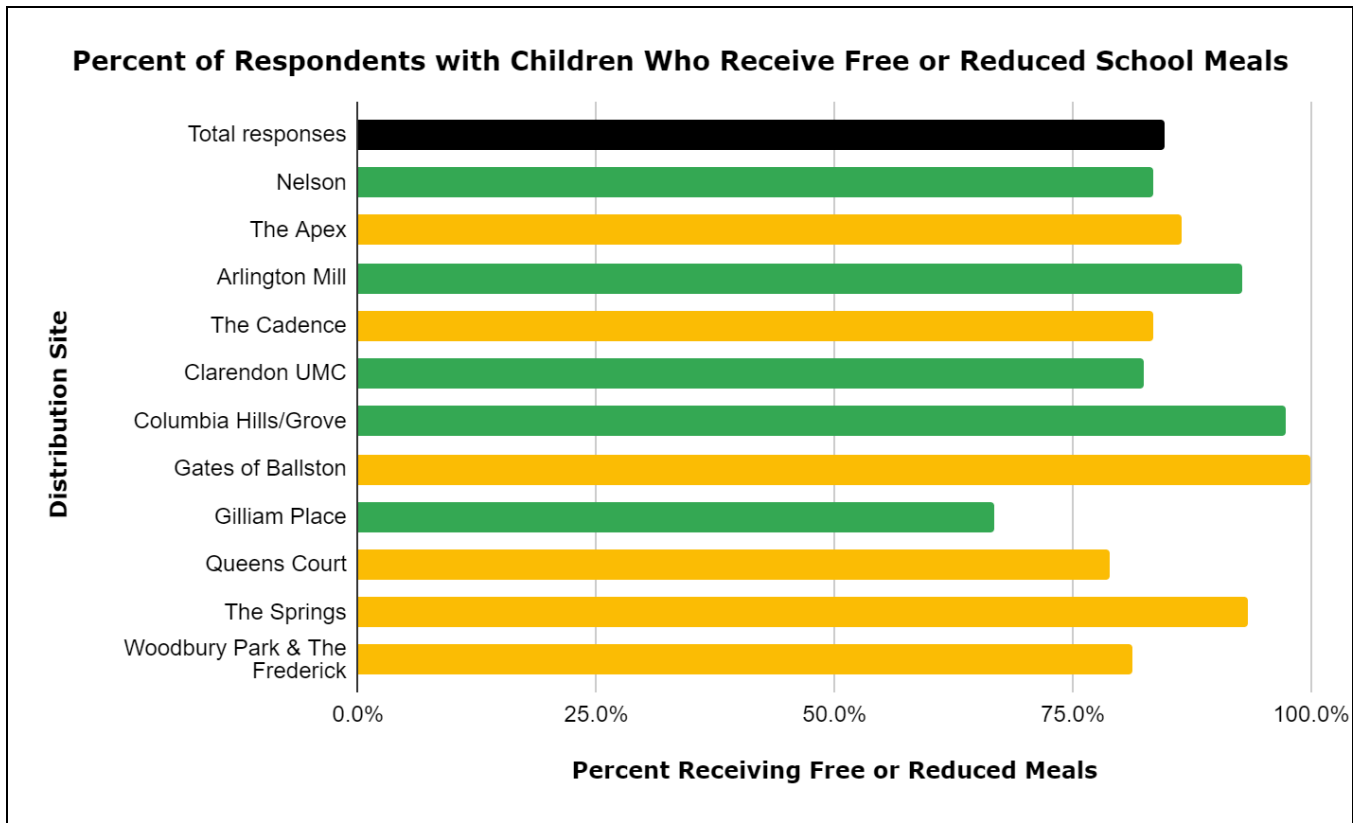
School Meals



Clients were asked, “If you have school-aged children, does your child receive free or reduced price meals through Arlington Public Schools?” More than one response was possible, as some clients have children who attend different schools. Possible responses included:

- No, I don’t have school-aged children.
- Yes, my child receives free meals at Barcroft, Barrett, Carlin Springs, Drew, or Randolph Elementary Schools.⁴
- Yes, my child receives free or reduced price meals at another school.
- No, my family does not qualify.
- No, my child does not receive meals even though my family qualifies.
- No, I’m not sure if my family qualifies.

⁴ Students attending Barcroft, Drew, Carlin Springs, Randolph, and Barrett are all eligible to receive free school meals, because these schools qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) under USDA regulations, so those schools were separated from others in the survey response options.



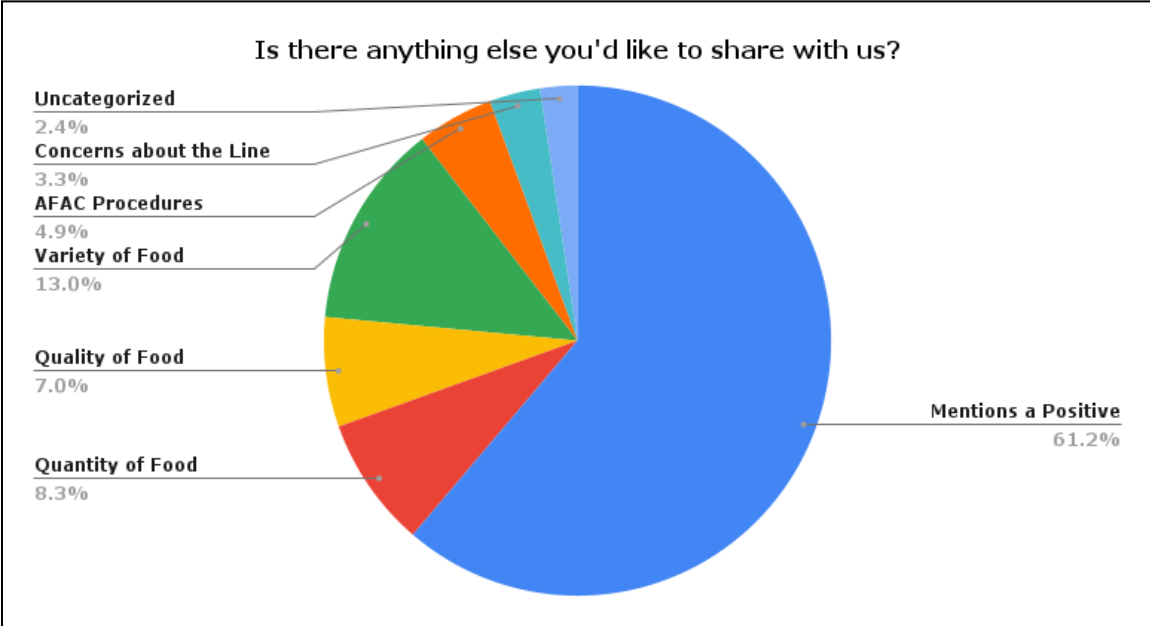
All sites
 Open Sites
 Community Sites

If you have school-aged children, does your child receive free or reduced price meals through Arlington Public Schools?

| Distribution Site | Total Responses | Receives Free or Reduced Meals | Percent with School-Aged Children Who Receive Free or Reduced School Meals |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Total responses | 1,206 | 580 | 84.7% |
| Nelson | 859 | 405 | 83.3% |
| The Apex | 37 | 19 | 86.4% |
| Arlington Mill | 32 | 13 | 92.9% |
| The Cadence | 45 | 25 | 83.3% |
| Clarendon UMC | 32 | 14 | 82.4% |
| Columbia Hills/Grove | 63 | 37 | 97.4% |
| Gates of Ballston | 41 | 19 | 100.0% |
| Gilliam Place | 23 | 6 | 66.7% |
| Queens Court | 30 | 15 | 78.9% |
| The Springs | 18 | 14 | 93.3% |
| Woodbury Park & The Frederick | 26 | 13 | 81.3% |

Overall, 84.7% of clients with children responded that their children receive free or reduced meals through Arlington Public Schools, with 30.9% at CEP schools and 53.4% at other schools in the county. Interestingly, 6.2% of respondents were not sure if their family qualifies for free or reduced school meals. AFAC posts information about school meals in the waiting room at Nelson Street, but it may be useful to also send the information to other sites or to host school staff at our food distributions to answer families' questions about the school meal application.

Open Ended Comments



The final question on the survey was "Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?" The free-response question offered clients the opportunity to share more about their experiences picking up groceries from AFAC. Responses were coded based on the following groups: "Mentions a Positive Response," "Quantity of Food," "Quality of Food," "Variety of Food," "AFAC Procedures," "Concerns about the Line," and "Uncategorized."

The majority of comments (61.2% or 414 comments) included a positive response. Some of the positive comments include, "I thank all volunteers for their help. They are like my family." "Thank you for the help and all the food you offer." "I like the vegetables--thank you!" "Everything is good."

Comments that were coded into Variety of Food (13.0%) included "I would like more variety of fruits and vegetables," "Would like whole milk," "more choices," and "more fish and a better variety of fish."

In terms of the quantity of food available for families at AFAC, clients' comments (8.3%) included "Not enough food," "My family needs more," "Sometimes the need

is so great that they can only accommodate a little so everyone gets something,” and “It’s not enough because I have two children.”

Comments that were coded into Quality of Food (7.0%) included “Some food is expired,” “Don’t give cans. It’s not healthy,” and “The frozen chicken is too thick for someone my age to cut.”

Comments about AFAC Procedures (4.9%) and Concerns about the Line (3.3%, mainly at the Nelson Street location) were separated during coding, as AFAC staff are aware that long lines and cutting in line can be particularly stressful for families. Staff have posted policies regarding line etiquette at the front of the Nelson building and have included information about how to avoid long lines in the quarterly client newsletter. Comments about the line include, “Place holding is a problem,” “Move the line faster,” and “Can two lines be made?” Comments about other AFAC procedures include “Extend your hours to 1:00 on Saturdays,” “Handicapped parking is insufficient near AFAC... need more. When scanning in, I would like to identify as a non-meat person so I can get more veggies,” and “More personalized attention will make the line go faster.”

Conclusion

Overall, survey respondents reported being satisfied with the groceries they receive at AFAC and their experiences when picking up food at AFAC distributions.

AFAC will report survey results to clients, stakeholders at each distribution site, and the Arlington County Food Security Coalition. The survey report will also be published on AFAC’s website. Along with sharing full survey results, AFAC will share an infographic that summarizes the results in a way that is easy to understand. *To see the 2023 Client Survey Infographic, go to the Appendix D.*

Responses from the survey give AFAC an opportunity to reflect on how to improve the free grocery program. As a leader in the Food Security Coalition, AFAC can make recommendations to other local food pantries as well. For example, more charitable food distributions on Saturdays may fill a gap and reduce the number of families eating less or skipping meals.

Many respondents shared that they would like more food from AFAC. AFAC’s food purchase budget for fiscal year 2023 is \$1,300,000. As of May 2023, AFAC has overspent the food purchase budget by \$500,000. AFAC staff has made an effort to increase food drives in the community. Forty percent of the food distributed at AFAC sites is donated, so encouraging food drives should increase the amount of food AFAC is able to provide. In addition, the survey was conducted at the time of year when fresh fruit and vegetable donations are at their lowest. Coordinating with local farms and farmers’ markets will increase produce donations. AFAC remains committed to purchasing foods that are nutritious, fresh, and culturally relevant to the populations served.

Some clients made recommendations that are already in place at AFAC, like vegetarian substitutions. This provides AFAC with an opportunity to respond directly to clients through AFAC's quarterly client newsletter that is distributed at the Nelson location. This includes information about vegetarian and vegan options, nutritional information regarding the menu, and other free food resources. Additionally, AFAC may decide to share the client newsletter at other sites.

AFAC values the qualitative feedback provided by its clients and is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of the low-income population it serves in a dignified manner.

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Menu



AFAC

WEEKLY MENU

- 2% Milk
- Dozen eggs
- Your choice of frozen protein including chicken, chicken hotdogs, fish, and ground beef.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Canned goods including soups, tuna, beans, vegetables, and more.
- Dry goods including oatmeal, cereal, rice, pasta, dry beans
- Bread and dessert items

Most foods are purchased by AFAC to ensure freshness, high quality, and availability. Some foods are donated by grocery stores and community food drives. Menu items may change based on availability.

Appendix B: 2023 Client Survey Questions

1. Do you feel welcome when you come to pick up groceries from AFAC?

- Yes
- No

If **no**, please explain: _____

2. Do you and your family receive free food from somewhere besides AFAC?

- Yes
- No

If **yes**, where else do you get free food? *(select all that apply)*

- Our Lady Queen of Peace
- Capital Area Food Bank (Women’s Club of Arlington, Arlington Mill Community Center, or Mount Olive Baptist)
- Salvation Army
- St. Charles Borromeo
- Arlington Bridge Builders
- School food pantry
- Alive (Alexandria)
- Food for Others (Barcroft, S. Dickerson, Gunston)
- St. Anthony’s (Falls Church)
- Other _____

3. If you have school-aged children, does your child receive free or reduced price meals through Arlington Public Schools?

- I don’t have school-aged children.
- Yes, my child receives free meals at Barcroft, Barrett, Carlin Springs, Drew, or Randolph Elementary Schools
- Yes, my child receives free or reduced price meals at another school
- No, my family does not qualify.
- No, my child does not receive meals even though my family qualifies.
- No, I’m not sure if my family qualifies.

4. There are many people in Arlington who cannot afford all the food they need. Do you ever eat less or skip a meal because you do not have enough food at home? *(select one)*

- No, never
- Yes, 1 - 2 times per month
- Yes, 1 - 2 times per week
- Yes, 1 or more times per day

5. Does the food that AFAC provides meet your dietary needs? For example: nutrition, allergies, food sensitivities, etc.

- Yes
- No

If **no**, please explain: _____

6. Does the food that AFAC provides meet your cultural needs? For example: Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, etc.

- Yes
- No

If **no**, please explain: _____

7. Are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?

- Yes
- No

If **no**, please explain: _____

8. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

Appendix C: 2023 Home Delivery Phone Survey Questions

The Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) needs your help to better serve our community! Clients at AFAC's food distribution centers have participated in the annual survey. Their feedback will help us determine how we can improve our services. Your help entering the client feedback online will help us to easily view and understand client concerns and needs. As an AFAC volunteer, it is your responsibility to keep **confidential** any personal information provided by AFAC clients. The survey is voluntary and some clients might not want to answer specific questions. Please leave those responses blank on the form below.

Please call the number on the sheet. If the client is not home on the first try, please leave a voicemail if possible letting the client know that you are calling from AFAC and will call them back.

Client Name: _____

Client Phone Number: _____

What language is the survey conducted in?

- English
- Spanish
- Amharic
- Arabic

Script:

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____, and I am an AFAC volunteer. I am calling because you receive grocery deliveries from AFAC, and we are interested in learning more about your experience. Do you have a few minutes to talk? Everything we discuss will be confidential.

Script for voicemail:

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____, and I am an AFAC volunteer. AFAC is conducting their annual client survey, and I was calling to learn more about your experience with their home delivery program. I will try to call you another time. Have a good day. Bye.

9. Do you and your family receive free food from somewhere besides AFAC?

- Yes
- No

If **yes**, where else do you get free food? (select all that apply)

- Our Lady Queen of Peace
- Capital Area Food Bank (Women's Club of Arlington, Arlington Mill Community Center, or Mount Olive Baptist)
- Salvation Army
- St. Charles Borromeo

- Arlington Bridge Builders
- School food pantry
- Alive (Alexandria)
- Food for Others (Barcroft, S. Dickerson, Gunston)
- St. Anthony's (Falls Church)
- Other _____

10. There are many people in Arlington who cannot afford all the food they need. Do you ever eat less or skip a meal because you do not have enough food at home? (select one)

- No, never
- Yes, 1 - 2 times per month
- Yes, 1 - 2 times per week
- Yes, 1 or more times per day

11. Does the food that AFAC provides meet your dietary needs? For example: nutrition, allergies, food sensitivities, etc.

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain: _____

12. Does the food that AFAC provides meet your cultural needs? For example: Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, etc.

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain: _____

13. Are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain: _____

14. Is the number I called you on the best number to reach you?

- Yes
- No

15. Do you have a backup number?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what is the number? _____

8. If we cannot get ahold of you, is there another person we can call?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what is their name and number:

9. How do you prefer we contact you if there are ever changes to your delivery?

- Text
- Letter
- Email
- Phone call
- Other: _____

10. If you prefer a text, would you be interested in receiving a weekly reminder text about the delivery?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you know who to contact if you have a question about your grocery delivery or a change in your schedule? (If no, please tell them to call AFAC at 571-384-1448).

- Yes
- No

12. How has AFAC's home delivery program impacted your life?

14. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

- Yes
- No

If yes, say: Thank you for being willing to share. I will write down what you tell me.

Closing script: Thank you so much for taking the time to answer my questions today. AFAC will be reporting on the results of the survey, which will be shared with you in the spring. Have a wonderful day.

Appendix D: 2023 Survey Infographic

