



**Arlington Food Assistance Center
Annual Client Survey
2022 Report**

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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 where AFAC succeeds and where AFAC can improve. Information obtained by the survey can also be shared with community partners to provide external resources that can 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 million. AFAC does not receive any federal or state funding. AFAC does receive \$555,000 from Arlington County Government, which is 7% of what it takes to operate AFAC. We must rely on the generosity of the Arlington community to provide the funds, the food donations, and the volunteer services that are essential to AFAC's operations.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause more families to access the services AFAC provides. Last year, AFAC recorded 113,677 family visits, consisting of 13,905 individuals from 5,583 families. One-third of the individuals served were children and 12% were seniors on a fixed income. Seven percent of all individuals were disabled. More than 3 million pounds of food were distributed to families in need.

Food Distribution Sites

Site	Facility Type	Site Category	Distribution Days
Nelson	AFAC Headquarters	Open	Monday through Saturday
Home Delivery	Client's Homes	Open	Monday through Friday
The Apex	Apartment Community	Community	Wednesday
Arlington Mill	Community Center	Community	Monday
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	Community	Friday
Hunters Park	Senior Apartments	Senior	Tuesday
Marbella	Apartment Community	Community	Thursday
Whitefield	Apartment Community	Community	Wednesday
Woodbury Park	Apartment Community	Community	Thursday
Woodland Hill	Senior Apartments	Senior	Tuesday

As of February 2022, AFAC has fifteen distribution sites. All distribution sites are classified as Open,

Community, or Senior sites. Open sites are available to any Arlington resident without additional restrictions. For the purpose of this report, Home Delivery clients will be classified as an Open Site, even though participation in this program has requirements. Community sites are only available to clients who reside in that particular community or participate in a program offered by the building's management. Senior sites are only available to residents who live in their respective properties.

Nelson distribution takes place at AFAC's headquarters at 2708 South Nelson Street in Arlington, VA. Nelson is the only center with seven separate food distributions throughout the week (weekday daytime hours of 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM Monday through Friday, weekday evening hours of 6:00 – 7:00 PM on Thursday, and weekend hours of 9:00 – 11:00 AM on Saturday). The Nelson site accounts for more than half of all AFAC families served and can see up to 1,300 families in a given distribution week. All off-site 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.

Until July 2021, one senior site, Culpepper Garden, held a food distribution every other week. Since then, a "mini distribution" was added to take place on alternating weeks. "Mini distributions" are limited to bread, milk, and eggs. Approximately two-thirds of the AFAC clients who reside at Culpepper Garden pick up food during the "mini distributions." These changes to the distribution schedule and offerings were made at the request of the residents and with the assistance of Resident Services staff.

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 four days per week.

In the summer of 2021, AFAC closed two food distribution centers. After ten years of service, the Saturday distribution at Green Valley Community Service Center (formerly Nauck CSC), came to a close. In 2020, the governing organization, Bonder & Amanda Johnson Community Development Corporation was taken over by Bridges to Independence. The distribution center saw fewer and fewer families using the grocery services. AFAC volunteers deliver groceries to 17 former Green Valley clients who are elderly or disabled. The remaining clients pick up their groceries at Nelson.

The food distribution at Assembly of God Church was opened in July 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The site was opened to serve residents of the Buckingham neighborhood when nearby Gates of Ballston food distribution reached its capacity. In June 2021, after one year of service, the need abated and the site was closed. The small number of clients remaining were redirected to Nelson or Gates of Ballston sites.

A new distribution site was opened at The Apex apartments in February 2021 in partnership with AHC, Inc. It started small, serving about 25 residents, but has more than doubled in size.

Clients with an active AFAC referral may receive groceries from their assigned food distribution site once every week. Social workers 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

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, surveys were conducted differently at some sites due to health and safety precautions. Prior to the pandemic, AFAC volunteers and staff would conduct in-person surveys at all sites. In 2021 and 2022, this method was still used at all Open and Community sites with volunteers wearing face masks and maintaining a safe distance. At Senior sites, visitor access has been restricted since the onset of the pandemic. Resident Services staff at each senior 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. Home Delivery clients also received paper surveys with their food deliveries and were asked to return the completed surveys to their volunteer delivery drivers the following week.

Site	Date(s) survey was conducted in-person or distributed	Method	# of clients checked in during this period
Nelson	January 31 – February 5	In-person	1093
Home Delivery	January 31 – February 5	Distributed	112
The Apex	February 9	In-person	50
Arlington Mill	February 7	In-person	70
The Carlin	February 3	Distributed	74
Clarendon UMC	February 12	In-person	37
Claridge House	January 31	Distributed	147
Columbia Hills	February 8	In-person	95
Culpepper Garden	February 5	Distributed	61
Gates of Ballston	February 18	In-person	87
Hunters Park	February 1	Distributed	38
Marbella	February 10	In-person	68
Whitefield	February 9	In-person	54
Woodbury Park	February 10	In-person	88
Woodland Hill	February 1	Distributed	112
		Total	2,186

Surveys were conducted in February 2022 over the course of three weeks. The first week (January 31 - February 5), surveys were conducted at every Nelson distribution. The following week (February 7 - 12), surveys were conducted at the Apex, Arlington Mill Community Center, Clarendon UMC, Columbia Hills/Grove, Culpepper, Marbella, Whitefield, and Woodbury Park. Surveys at Gates of Ballston were conducted on February 18. Surveys were distributed at Senior sites (The Carlin, Claridge House, Culpepper Garden, Hunters Park, and Woodland Hill) and sent to Home Delivery clients during the first week (January 31 - February 5). Completed surveys were collected from these groups over the course of the month.

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, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Survey Questions

To see the 2022 Client Survey, go to the Appendix: [2022 Client Survey Questions](#) (English)

In this year's survey, AFAC clients were asked about their satisfaction of AFAC's services, how often they utilize these services, and how AFAC can improve its services. These questions are asked annually using the same format. For a second year in a row, an open ended question was added to ask clients how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected them. New questions this year asked about vaccination status and any barriers clients faced that might prohibit them from getting to an AFAC food distribution.

The next two questions asked clients how they typically travel and how long their commute is to their AFAC food distribution. This question was omitted on surveys to Home Delivery program participants and clients who live in The Apex and all Senior Sites, as their food distribution centers are in the building where they reside.

The last question was only asked to Nelson clients to find out if they had preferred time windows to pick up their groceries at AFAC's warehouse.

Reporting & Evaluation

Completed paper surveys were collected and sorted by distribution site by AFAC's Client Services Department. For completed surveys at Nelson, they were additionally 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 Thursday night or Saturday.

Volunteers entered survey information and responses through an online Google Form version of the survey. Entries were saved on a corresponding Google Sheet.

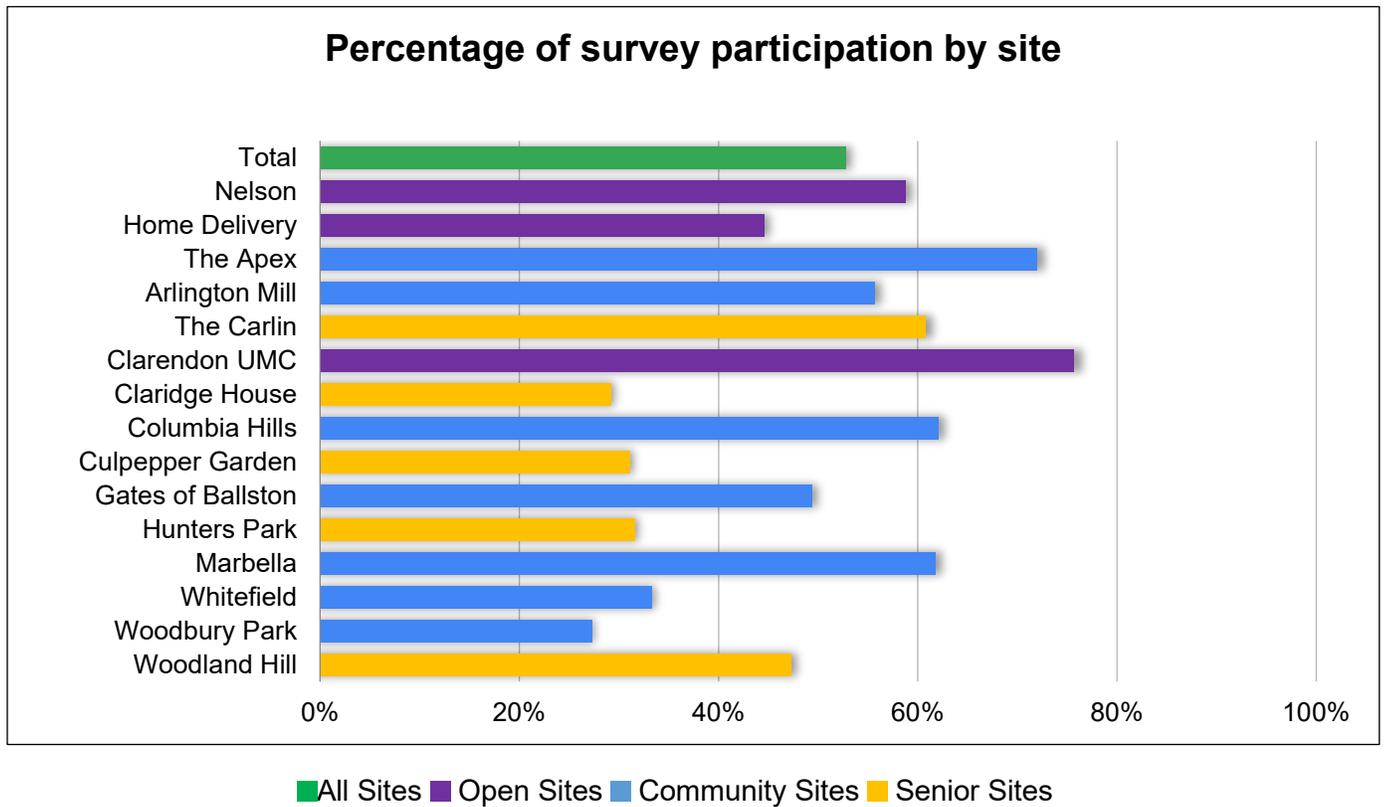
For surveys that were completed in other languages, volunteers and staff who were fluent in those languages translated their answers into English so the responses could be entered into the Google Form.

The answers for questions regarding satisfaction and frequency were assigned point values to fit onto a Likert scale for data analysis. Using a Likert scale allows us to view responses as numerical values so the data can be analyzed quantitatively.

For free response questions, data-entry volunteers tagged categories to go with the responses to help find recurring themes. Volunteers made educated guesses to determine the categories that best fit the clients' responses, which was reviewed by staff. Categories with few responses were disregarded in reporting, while uncategorized answers with recurring themes were added as new categories during the analysis of the data.

Results & Discussion

Survey Participation



For this year’s survey, AFAC had a 52.8% overall participation rate, or 1,154 survey participants out of 2,186 families served with groceries during the survey dissemination period. In 2021, the overall participation rate was 57.6%, a decrease of 4.8%. However, this year’s participation rate of 52.8% is well above the three year average rate between 2018 through 2020 (34.4%).

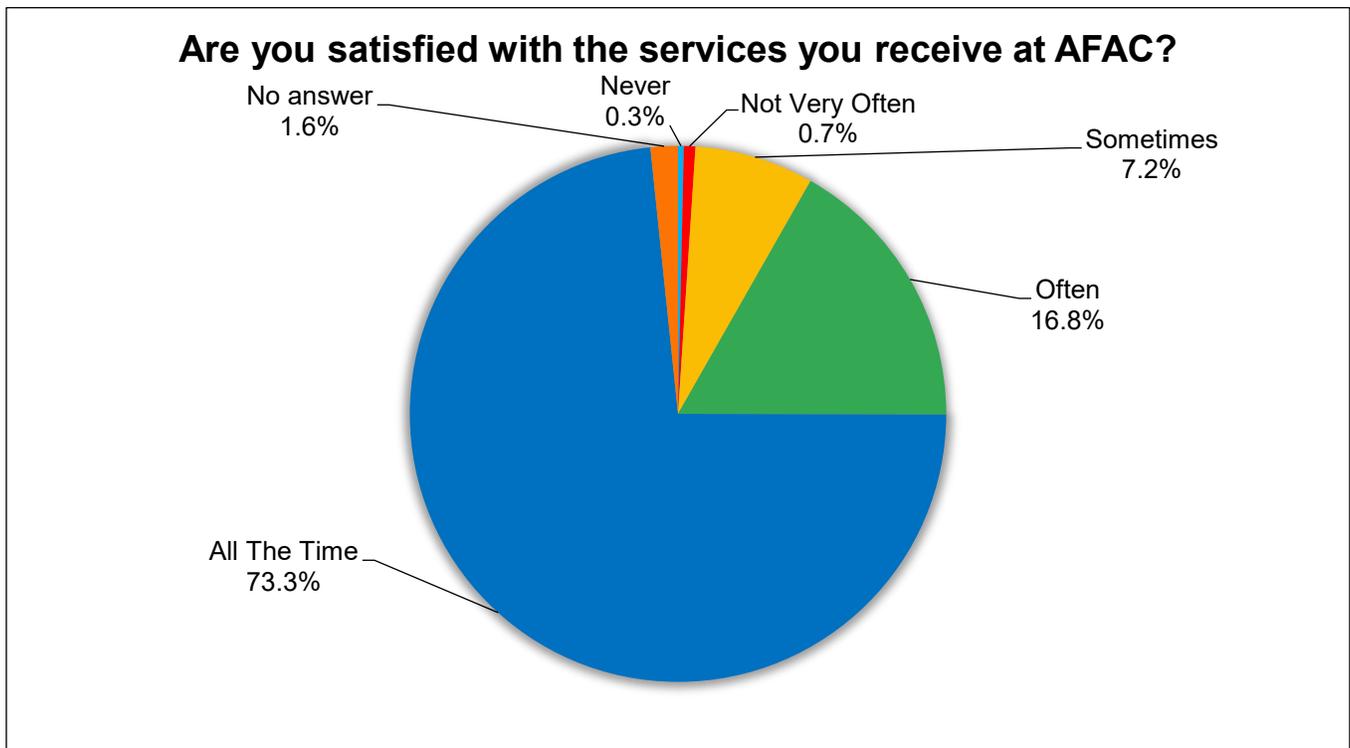
The distribution site with the highest rate of survey responses was Clarendon UMC, with a 75.7% survey participation rate. Other sites with high participation rates include The Apex (72.0%), Columbia Hills (62.1%), Marbella (61.8%), and Nelson (58.8%).

The site with the lowest response rate was Woodbury Park, with only 27.3% of clients participating in this year’s survey. This is a decrease of 31.8% from the previous year at this site. The next three lowest sites were all Senior Sites: Claridge House (29.3%), Culpepper Garden (31.2%), and Hunters Park (31.6%). Overall at Senior Sites, participation was 39.8%, a 10.2% decrease from the previous year.

At Nelson, the response rate was 58.8%. While this is a decrease from the previous year (63.6% in 2021), it is still much higher than the average of the previous three years (33.3% between 2018 and 2020). The high response rate can be attributed to operational changes made due to the pandemic. With the waiting room closed, more people are spaced out standing in line as they wait to be served. This gave volunteers an 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 (57.7%) versus sites where surveys were distributed with the food and had to be returned at the following visit (40.8%). While being able to offer a contactless version of the survey, 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. As long as it is safe to do, we plan to conduct in-person surveys at all sites to increase participation.

Satisfaction



Clients were asked the question, "Are you satisfied with the services you receive at AFAC?" and could select one of the following choices: "Never," "Not Very Often," "Sometimes," "Often," and "All The Time".

90.1% of clients responded with "Often" or "All The Time," which is up 2.5% from 2021. Meanwhile, only 1.0% of clients responded "Not Very Often" or "Never," which is lower from the previous year by 0.2%.

For the Likert scale, the answers were assigned a value between 1 through 5, with 1 being "Never" and 5 being "All The Time." The number of responses were multiplied by their respective values and an average score was obtained.

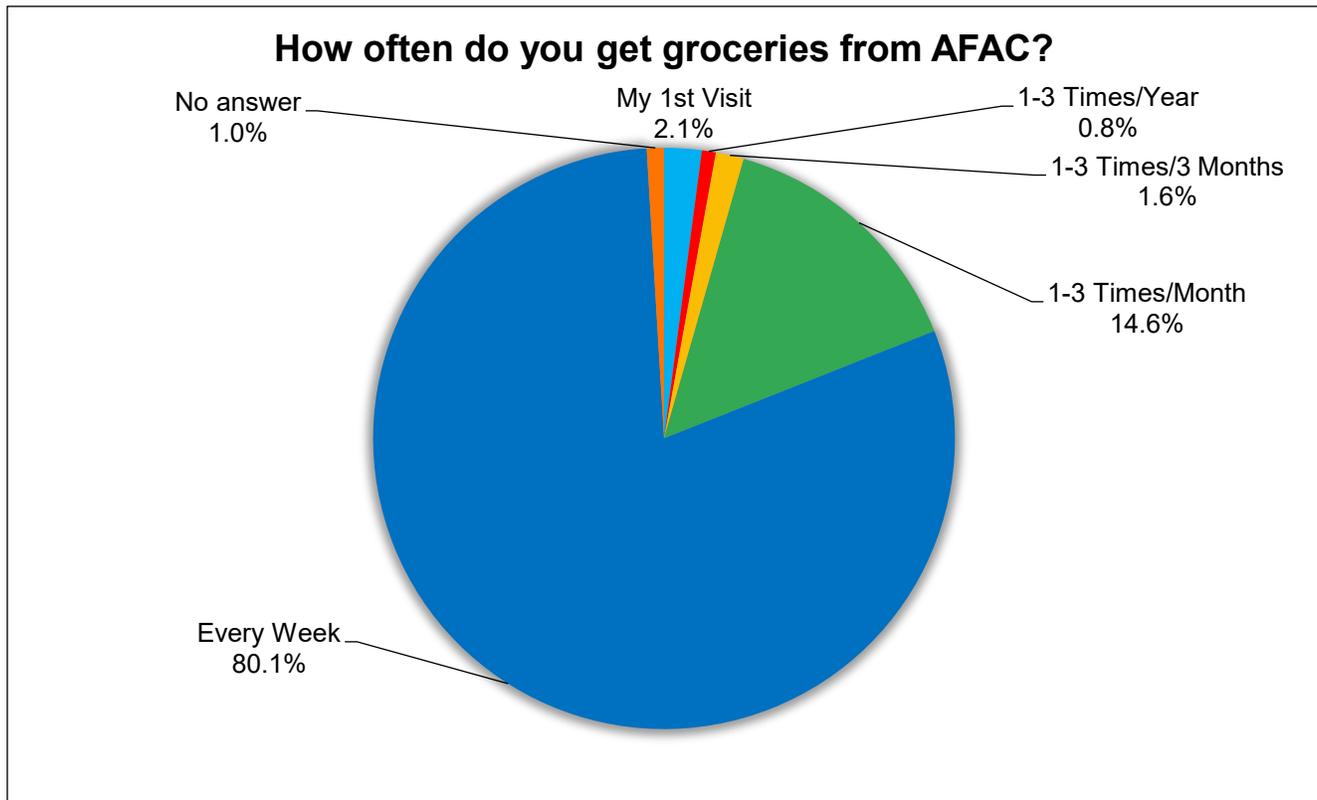
The overall Likert scale value is 4.65 out of a possible 5.00. This is 0.03 higher than the overall Likert score in 2021. The site with the highest average score was Gates of Ballston with a Likert scale rating of 4.93 out of a possible total 5.00, meaning nearly all clients surveyed answered that they are satisfied by the services received at AFAC's food distribution "all the time." This is an increase from the previous year's score of 4.75. The site with the highest score in 2021 was Woodbury Park with a 4.96 score.



The lowest Likert rating was at The Carlin with a 4.38 score out of 5.00. This year’s score is higher than last year’s score of 4.33, which was the lowest score among remaining sites. Although no client answered “Not Very Often” or “Never”, 11% of the clients responded “Sometimes,” while 40% answered “Often.” The food distribution site with the lowest score in 2021 was Green Valley (4.11), where the last food distribution was held in June 2021.

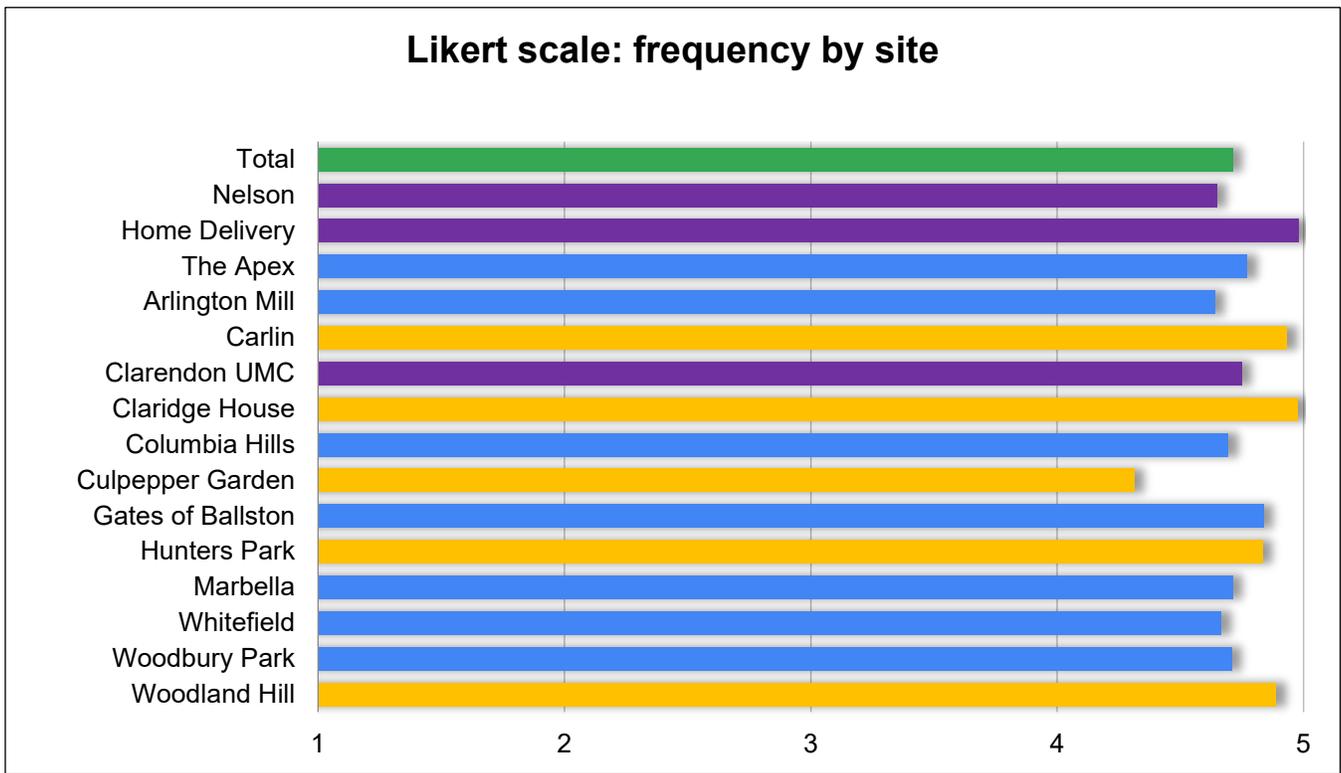
Overall, high satisfaction amongst clients is an indication of the tremendous quality and care performed by AFAC’s staff, partner agency staff, and volunteers to serve families most in need in the Arlington community.

Frequency



Clients were asked the question, "How often do you get groceries from AFAC?" and could select one of the following choices: "This is my first visit," "1-3 times per year," "1-3 times every 3 months," "1-3 times every month," and "Every Week."

The data collected in this year's survey show us that 80.1% of clients self-reported that they utilize AFAC's services for free groceries on a weekly basis. This is very close to the percentages in 2021 (78.0%), 2020 (78.8%), and 2019 (79.0%). The second most popular choice across all sites was "1-3 times per month" with 14.6% of responses. Combining both responses, it shows that 94.7% self-reported that they access AFAC's services at least once a month.



■ All Sites
 ■ Open Sites
 ■ Community Sites
 ■ Senior Sites

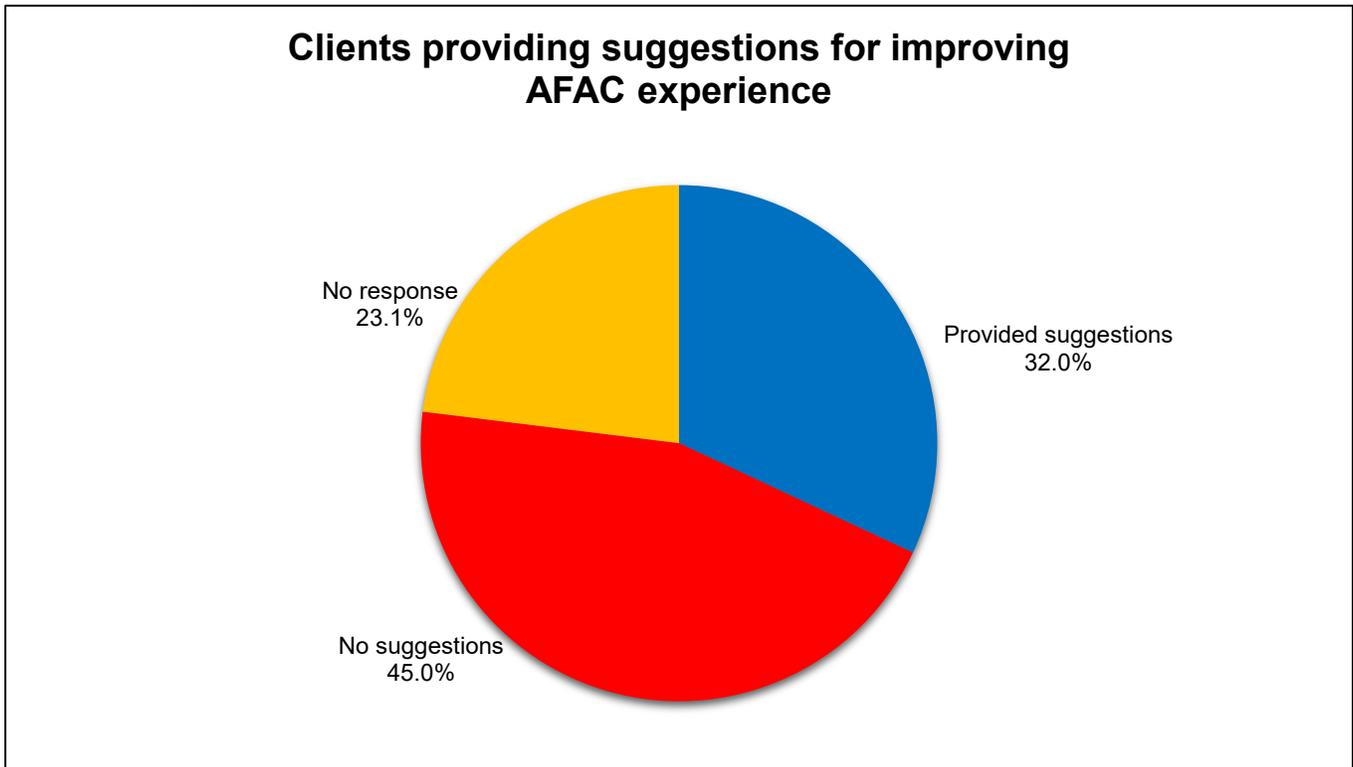
To use a Likert scale, these answers were assigned a value between 1 through 5 with 1 being "This is my first visit" and 5 being "Every Week". The number of responses were multiplied by their respective values and an average score was obtained.

The site with the lowest score was Culpepper Garden with a score of 4.32. As mentioned in the [Methods](#) section, this is the only site where a full distribution does not occur every single week. A “mini-distribution” occurs every other week, where two-thirds of the clients who come to the “full distributions” pick up milk, eggs, and bread.

The highest scores belonged to Home Delivery clients (4.98) and the Senior Sites Claridge House (4.98), The Carlin (4.93), and Woodland Hill (4.89). The common thread amongst all of these is that food is delivered directly to their homes or buildings, where they have easy access to fresh groceries.

All sites other than Culpepper Garden had scores above 4.71. This indicates that across all distribution centers, the majority of AFAC clients receive groceries every week or every other week. This demonstrates that for those clients, AFAC is providing a vital and impactful service.

Improving AFAC Experience



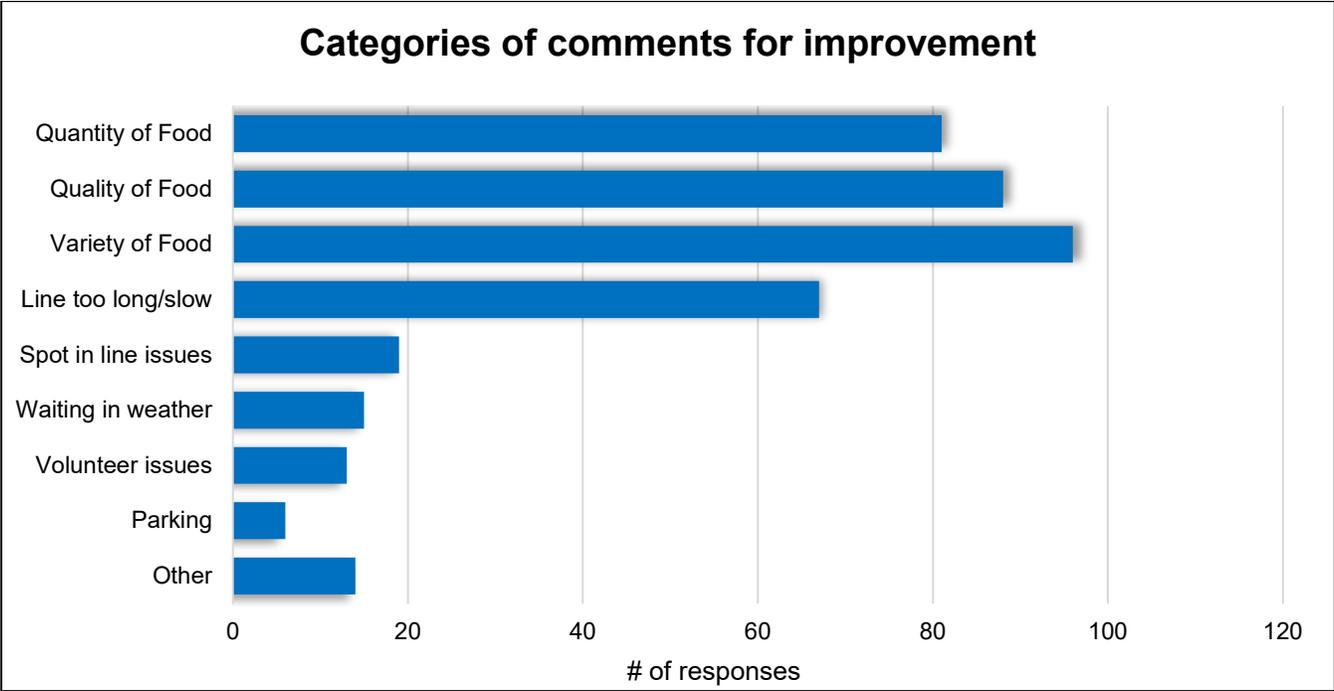
Clients were asked the question, “How can we improve your experience at AFAC?” and were given the chance to provide a free-response answer. AFAC received 369 comments (32.0% of respondents) suggesting various methods for improving food distribution services and experience. The majority of clients (45.0%) left a comment that said they did not have a suggestion or that they were happy with AFAC’s services, but they did not offer any suggestions of improvement. Some of the satisfaction comments include, “AFAC is a big support during this tough time of pandemic. I am very satisfied with the services,” “My opinion always my experience is always the best. Staff and the food is provide is good,” “Everything is good, a very big help,” “no need for improvement,” and “very thankful.” To see the top 100 words used in this response, see [Appendix: Word Cloud: AFAC Experience Improvement Responses](#).

Of the 369 suggestions made, 61.0% (225 responses) came from clients from Nelson, which is close to the percentage of surveys completed by Nelson clients this year (56.4%).

Nearly all the suggestions made by clients from all sites fell into two main categories: the food being given out (235 comments) and distribution procedures (161 comments). In the food category, all the suggestions could be subcategorized as comments about food variety (96 comments), food quality (88 comments), and food quantity (81 comments).

A sample of the feedback regarding food variety include, “more raw meat options,” “provide more variety of foods, especially fruit,” “more snack food,” “more food, oil, meat, and potatoes,” “cereal for kids and kids food,” “would like more variety, especially gluten free”, “choices for halal/Muslim community,” and “vegan options to replace milk (soy/almond/coconut milk).”

Within the past year, AFAC has added more food variety to the distributions. Halal chicken and ground beef are now available as frozen protein options. More culturally favored foods, such as masa, yucca, and tortillas, have also rotated into our food purchases. We will continue to listen to our clients’ food preferences and explore what other options can be made available in the food distribution.



Most of the comments regarding food quality involved food being expired or in less than optimal condition (58 comments), such as, “foods distributed from AFAC, some of them passed the expiration date, especially for breads, wish to check the expiration date,” “some products are not in good condition (salads),” “expiration date within a day or right now,” and “make sure food is not molded and expired.” Other quality comments include, “the ground beef is terrible”, “real beef options,” “unfortunately the type of fish is not good,” and “some more fresh fruits and vegetables instead of cans.”

The food that AFAC distributes is either purchased or donated. Purchased food comes from AFAC’s food budget, is bought through wholesale vendors, and is the same quality found in grocery stores. In the past year, AFAC has made improvements in the quality of food purchased. Eggs have been upgraded from medium to large, the frozen fish option has changed from pollack to cod, and the top grades of fresh fruits and vegetables are being purchased from vendors. Donated food comes from community food drives and local grocery stores. Bread and dessert items are strictly donated and are often past sell-by dates, but are thoroughly inspected for freshness and quality. Even though AFAC is thorough with its inspection of food before it goes to the distribution line, there is room for improvement among staff and volunteers to ensure the food is still of good quality.

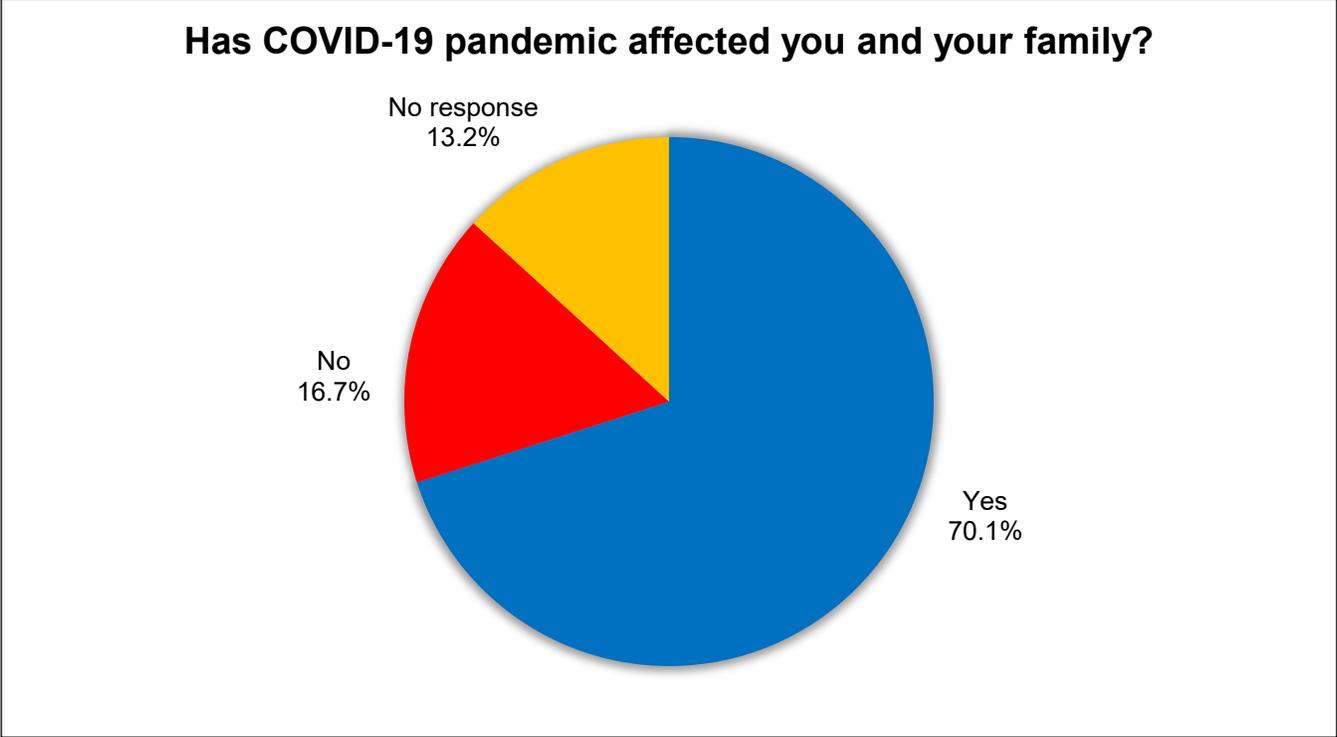
Almost all the comments in the food quantity subcategory include asking for more of a specific category of food item, such as “more vegetables because I am diabetic,” “more onions, vegetables, and fruit,” “more greens,” “more vegetables, more eggs, and more milk”, and “we would appreciate more fresh produce.” Other comments were more general, like “some more groceries” and “more food, the quantity.”

In the past year, the amount of fresh produce given out to each family has increased, however it still leaves clients wanting more. The food AFAC distributes is intended to be supplemental and may not satisfy all of the food needs required to feed a family for an entire week. Slightly more food is given out to larger families, which are quantified as family units of four or more.

Regarding suggestions about AFAC’s food distribution procedures, the largest subcategory dealt with the line at Nelson being too slow or too long (67 comments). Some of the comments include, “the lines are too long to wait,” “people need to move faster when getting food,” “maybe they need more people, it’s very slow,” and “go faster.” There were also 19 comments specifically about spots in the waiting line, like “people putting bags in lines then waiting in cars cutting back in,” “sometimes people don’t respect the line,” “give out tickets to hold your spot in line, especially in the winter so we can wait in the car,” “I wish policies were better enforced. People leave bags and head back home and it’s hard to tell who’s here or not. Doesn’t seem fair should be first come, first service,” and “I used to come on Saturdays and people don’t cooperate in line.” The other line issue commonly mentioned was waiting in line outside (15), which is summed up by one client’s comment “the time spent waiting on line makes it difficult, especially in bad weather.”

Other procedural comments touched on adjusting the distribution hours (31), including “open earlier than 9 am,” “needs to change the distribution time at least 6-8 hours per day,” “stay open later 7-8pm,” and “two days a week at night.” A question regarding [distribution hours at Nelson](#) was asked in this survey and will be discussed later in this report.

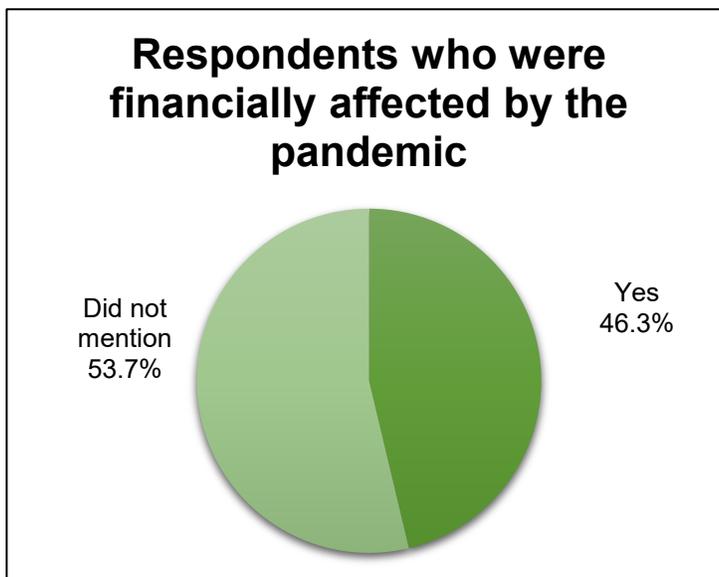
Effect of Pandemic



Clients were asked the question, “How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected you and your family?” and were given the chance to provide a free-response answer. AFAC received 991 comments with 800 of these

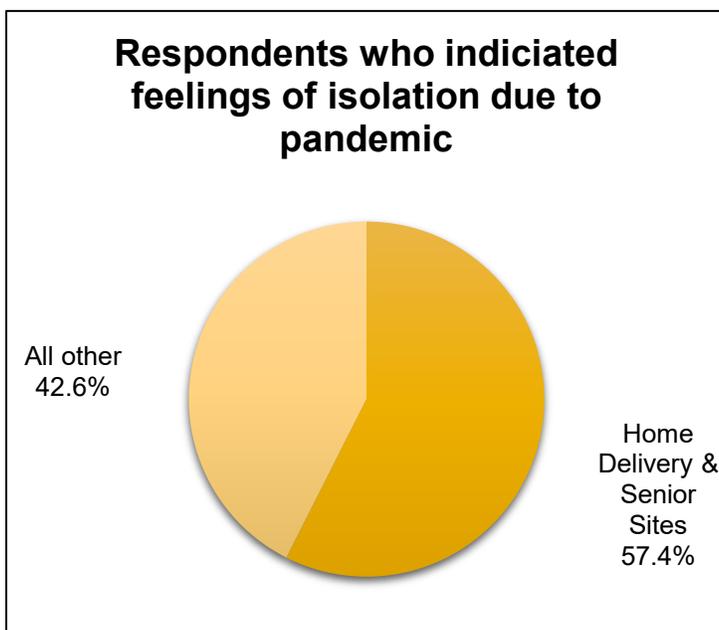
responses (70.1% of all survey participants) indicating the pandemic has affected their family in some way. This percentage is 7.1% lower than when asked the same question in 2021's survey. To see the top 100 words used in this response, see [Appendix: Word Cloud: Pandemic Responses](#).

Just about half of all clients who provided an answer to this question (46.3% or 480 clients) mentioned financial and economic hardship. This number increases to 62.5% when clients of senior sites were extrapolated, as many of clients living at senior sites are retired and were not working before the pandemic. Specifically, 399 clients mentioned job loss or a reduction of hours. "The restaurant I worked at closed," "the pandemic has lowered our weekly hours," and "just working part time now" are a few comments that were left by clients regarding job loss. There were also 128 mentions about difficulty in paying bills or rent, like "without work, I can't afford to pay the rent," "delay in paying bills," and "money is tight." Inflation and the rise in costs at the grocery store was mentioned 18 times as well.



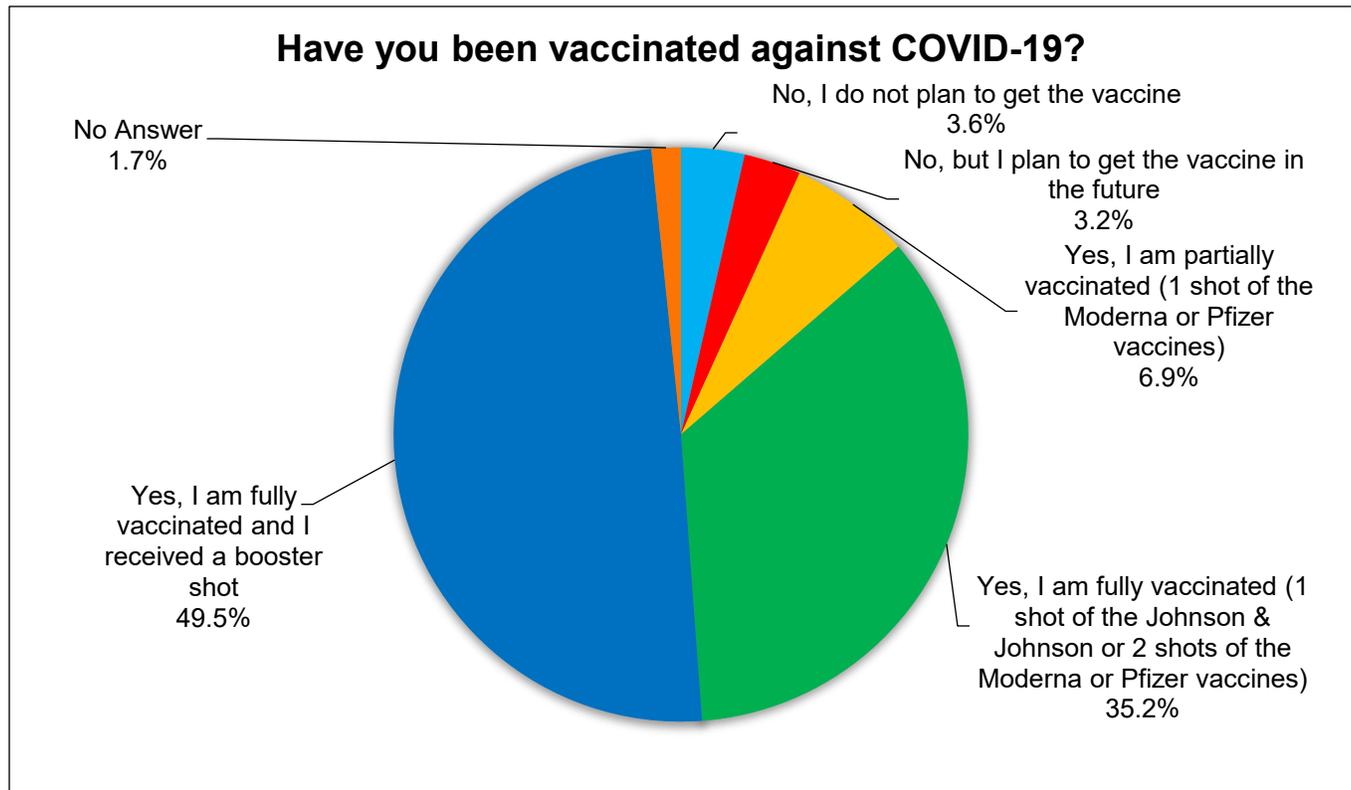
Feelings of loneliness and isolation were reported by 9.89% of all clients who provided an answer (98 comments). Responses include "we don't go out, we can't do stuff with friends," "social life is much less", and "kids are bored and they feel locked up."

When looking exclusively at clients who live at Senior Sites and are Home Delivery clients, 30.9% of these clients who answered this question indicated some feeling of loneliness or isolation. These clients are more likely to be older or at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions. Some clients provided more detailed answers that highlighted their isolation, such as "the COVID-19 has affected our family so much that we can't go to senior centers. Very depressing," "can't go out at all. Basically, if I can't accomplish things I need to do I must innovate or do without. Lifestyle has shrunk, social skills reduced. Contact with nature is completely absent," and "I have stayed pretty much self-quarantined due to COVID attacking the lungs and having COPD."



Other common categories of responses included 95 clients indicating that they or someone in their family had COVID, 48 comments of noting anxiety or emotionally affected by the pandemic, 37 clients saying AFAC has been a big help during this time, and 22 responses mentioning children being affected by school policies (virtual learning, quarantine procedures, and closures).

Vaccination Status

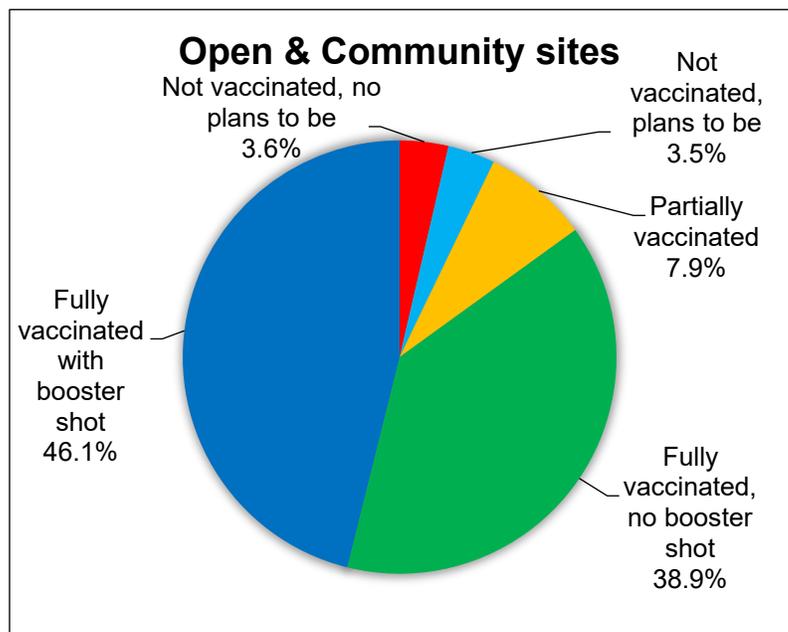
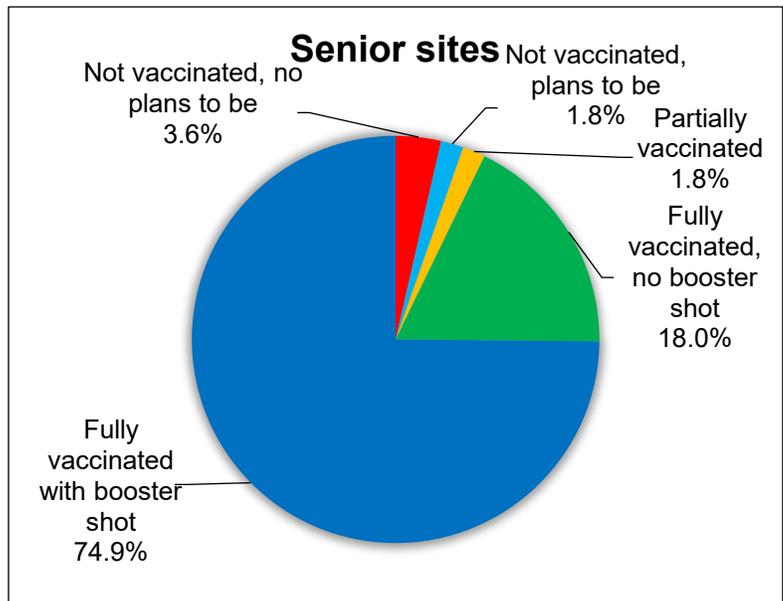


Clients were asked the question, “Have you been vaccinated against COVID-19?” and could select one of the following choices: “Yes, I am fully vaccinated and I received a booster shot,” “Yes, I am fully vaccinated (1 shot of the Johnson & Johnson or 2 shots of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines),” “Yes, I am partially vaccinated (1 shot of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines),” “No, but I plan to get the vaccine in the future,” and “No, I do not plan to get the vaccine.”

Overall, 84.7% of the clients responded they are fully vaccinated: 49.5% indicated they have received a booster shot, while 35.2% said they have not. Another 6.9% replied they are partially vaccinated. Only 6.8% of the clients responded that they weren’t vaccinated – about half said they plan on getting the vaccine in the future, while the other half do not.

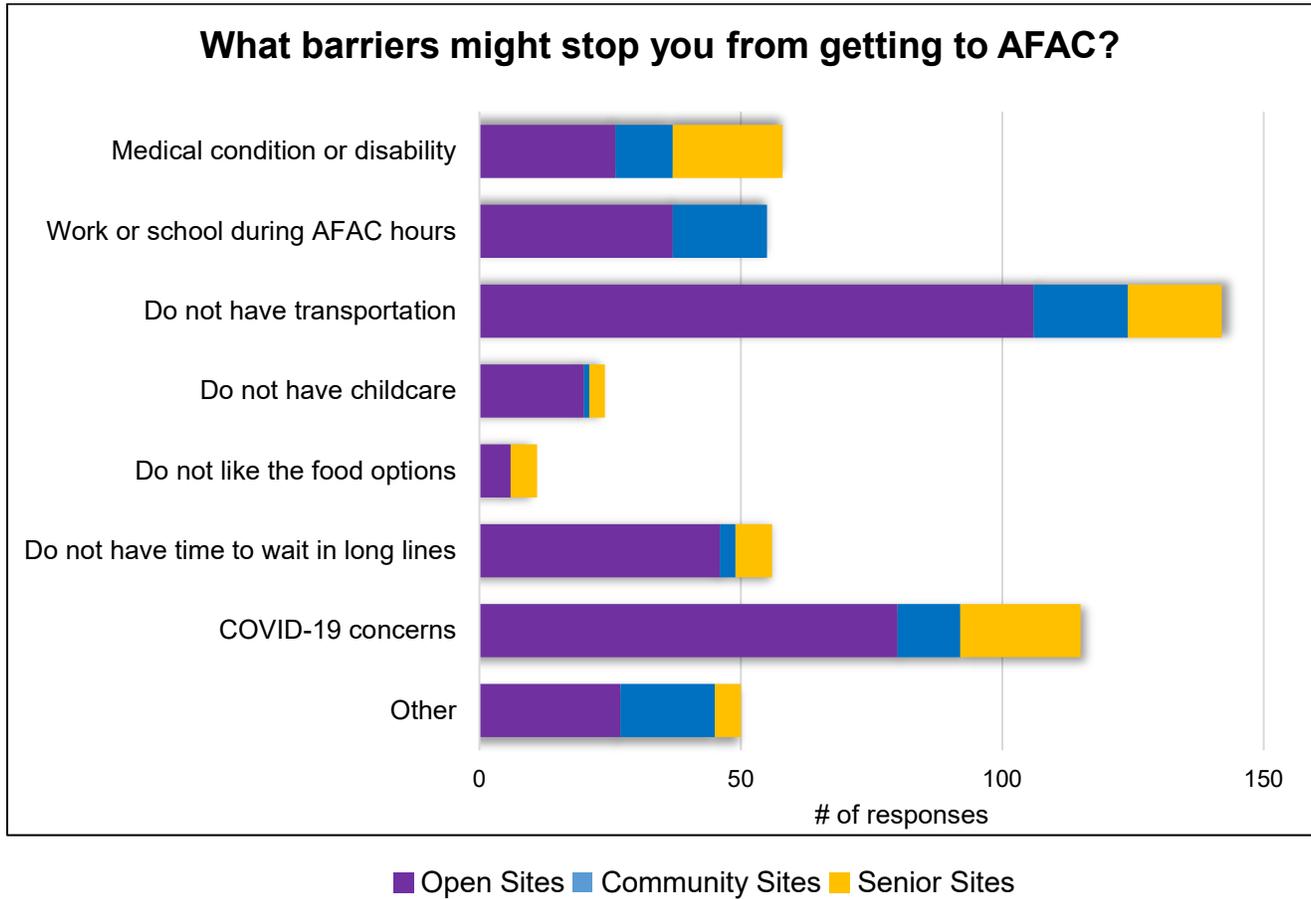
Further analysis reveals a disparity between the clients' responses at Senior Sites and non-Senior Sites (Open & Community Sites). At Senior Sites, 74.9% of clients responded they were fully vaccinated and received the booster shot, whereas only 46.1% of clients at non-Senior Sites answered the same way. When you add together the answers of all fully vaccinated clients, regardless of whether or not they have received the booster shot, Senior Sites clients report they are 92.9% fully vaccinated versus 85.0% for non-Senior Sites. It's encouraging that both of these figures are above the 72.0% vaccination rate in Arlington, VA as of March 1, 2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The very high rate at Senior Sites is not surprising, as persons 65 and older were among the groups eligible for Phase 1 rollout of the vaccines in December 2020. In the previous client survey that was administered in February 2021, a question asked if clients planned to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it would become available to them. For clients at Senior Sites, 50.2% responded that they already received their first vaccination dosage.



Traveling to AFAC Food Distributions

Barriers to Food Access



Clients were asked the question “What barriers might stop you from getting to AFAC?” and could select as many answers that applied between “none, I get to AFAC as often as I need to,” “I have a medical condition or disability that makes it hard to leave the house, wait in line, or carry grocery bags,” “I work or go to school during AFAC hours,” “I do not have transportation,” “I do not have childcare,” “I do not like the food options available,” “I do have time to wait in long lines,” and “Other” with space to write in a response.

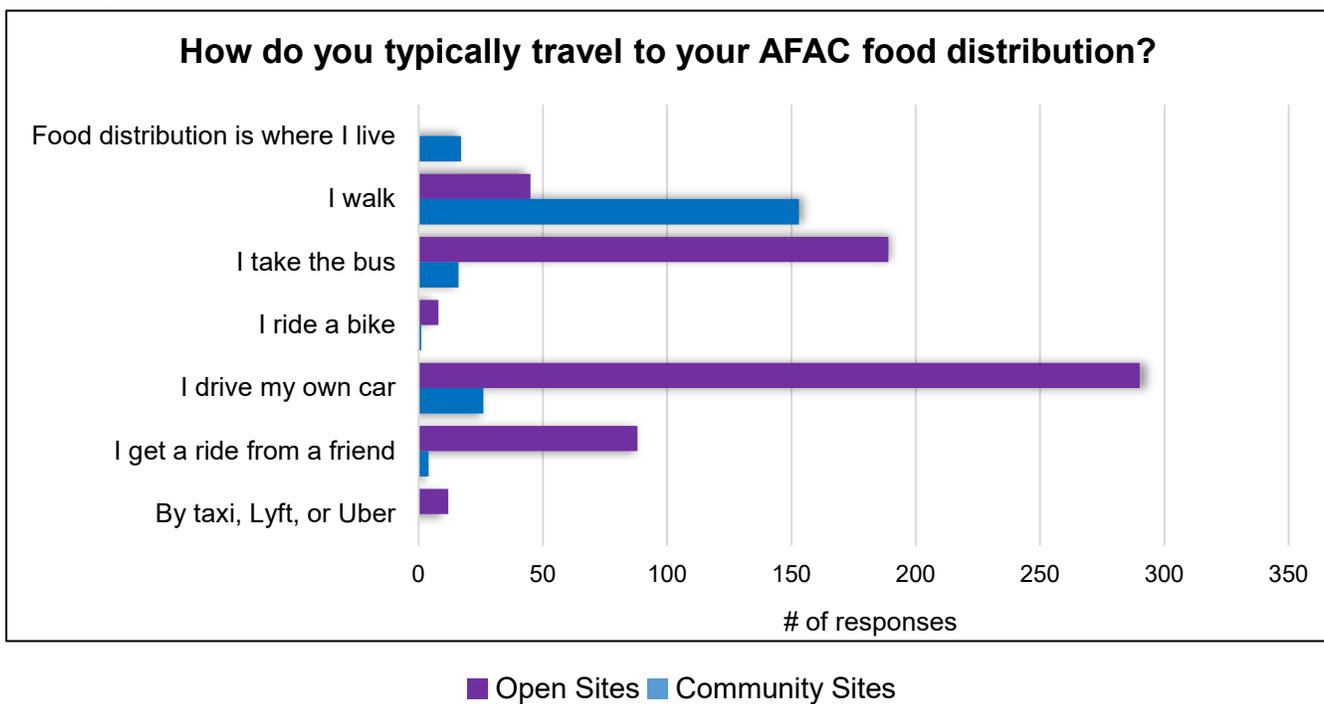
Out of all the clients surveyed, 63.2% said they have no barriers accessing AFAC’s services and come as often as they need to. (72 surveys had no response to this question.) Of the 374 surveys that identified at least one barrier, the most common barrier for a client to accessing AFAC’s services was the lack of transportation with 158 clients choosing this answer. Home Delivery clients selected this answer the most, with 29.2% indicating this barrier. Clients at Senior Sites do not need external transportation to their AFAC food distribution site, as their commute is within their own building. Nevertheless, 18 clients at Senior Sites selected transportation as a barrier, which may be a general barrier for them outside of accessing AFAC groceries.

Home Delivery clients also mentioned a medical condition or disability (68.8%) and concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic (16.7%). This program addresses these barriers for these clients who qualify to have

their groceries delivered directly to their homes. When the pandemic first started, there was grave concern that those who had underlying health conditions and no local support system could lose access to sufficient affordable groceries. Since 97.9% of the Home Delivery clients who participated in this survey indicated they receive groceries from AFAC every week, these answers were most likely selected as to why AFAC’s services are important to them.

Fifty-five entries where clients selected “Other” and left responses. The most common response was related to bad weather, which was mentioned by 28 clients, more than half Nelson clients. At Nelson’s distribution, waiting room capacity is still limited due to COVID concerns, meaning clients have to wait outside before they can enter. When it rains, snows, or is just too hot or cold outside, this can lead to clients feeling uncomfortable in the weather, particularly when the lines are long. The Nelson distribution is the only distribution that is open seven different times during the week. Since clients do not have an assigned day or time for grocery pickups, clients are welcome to come on a day and time that is most convenient and comfortable to them. On days with bad weather, Nelson tends to see fewer clients checked in for that day with longer lines occurring on the following day.

Transportation Methods

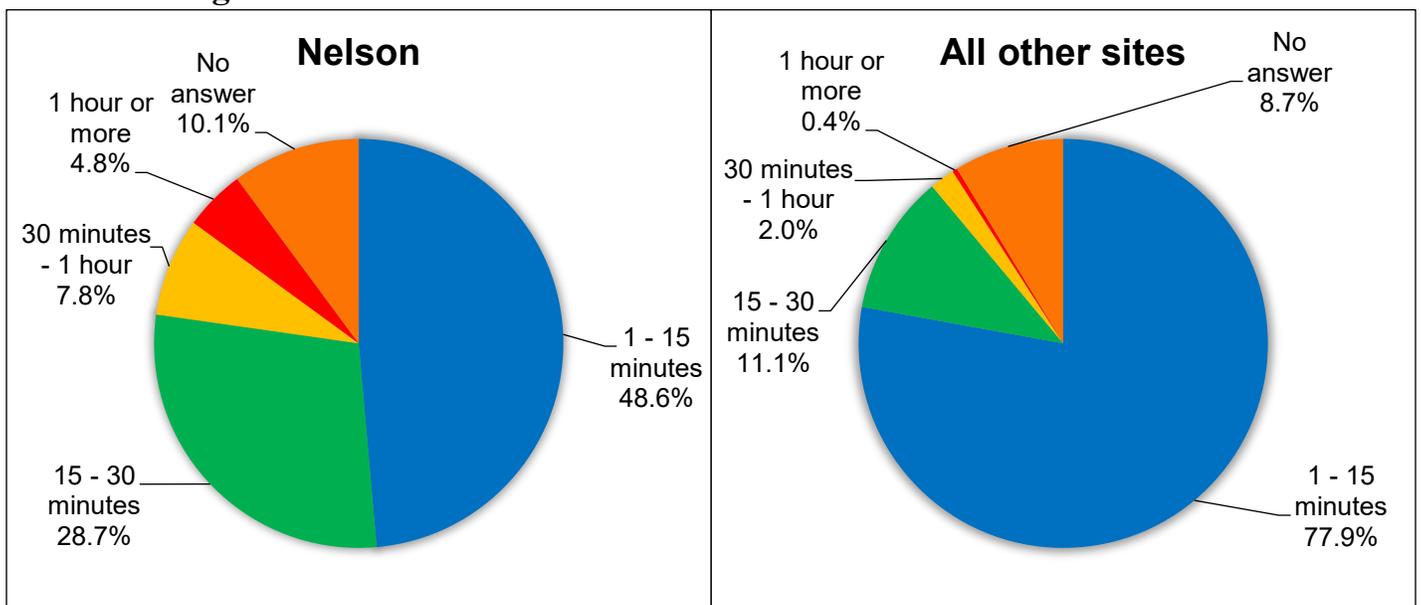


Clients were asked the question “How do you typically travel to your AFAC food distribution?” and could select one of the following answers: “my AFAC food distribution is in my apartment building or complex,” “I walk,” “I take the bus,” “I ride a bike,” “I drive my own car,” “I get a ride from a friend,” “I take a taxi, Lyft, or Uber,” and “Other” with space to write in a response. This question was omitted for Home Delivery clients, residents of The Apex, and all clients at Senior Sites, as their groceries are either delivered to their doors or to an area in their building. Although we asked that one answer was to be selected, several surveys came back with multiple answers for this question.

The majority of clients who visit Open Sites get to an AFAC food distribution by driving their own car (290 responses). The next highest method of transportation to Open Sites is by bus (189 responses), followed by getting a ride from a friend (88 responses). For clients who get their food from Community Sites, most families walk to their food distribution location (153 responses), while much less drive (26 responses) or take the bus (16 responses). In some situations, the food distribution is in the same building where they live (17 responses).

The main purpose of having food distributions at Community Sites is to bring AFAC’s services closer to where people reside. Food distributions at Community Sites operate once a week at each location in a two hour or less window during normal working hours. While the distance is convenient for some, other families may opt to go to Open Sites instead if it fits their schedule better.

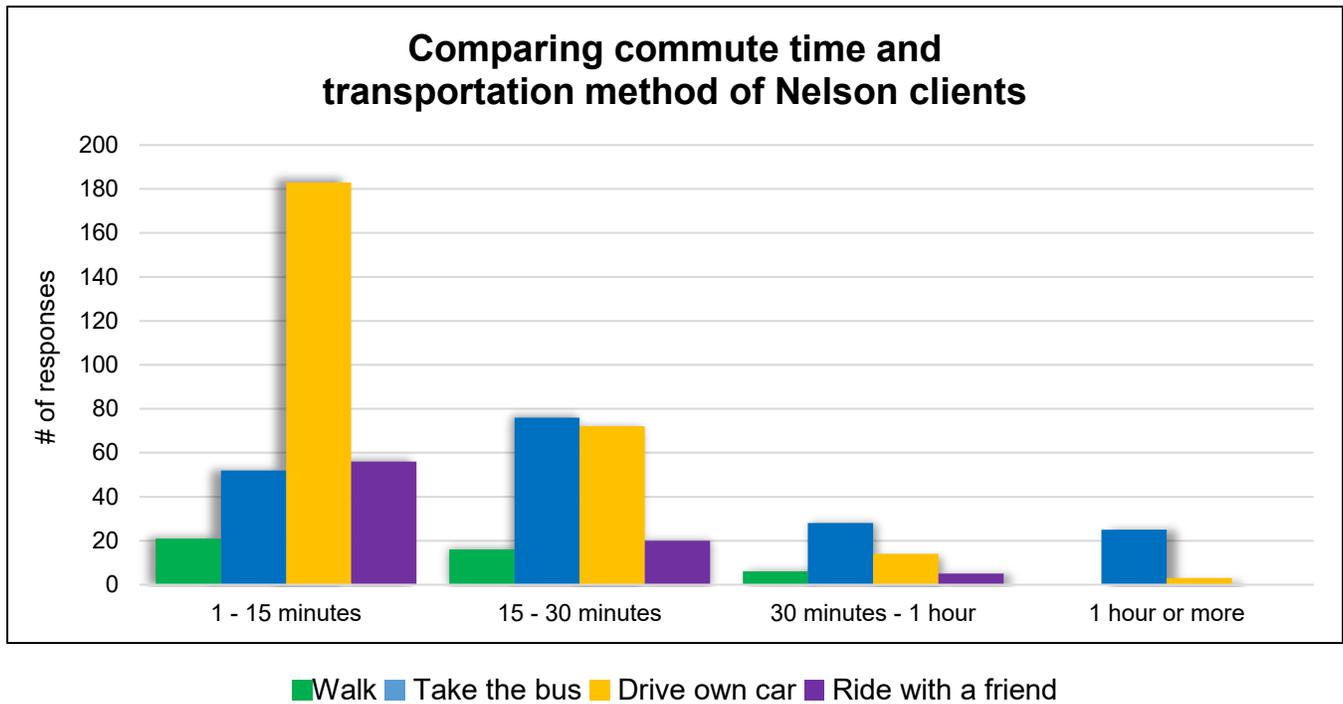
Commuting Time



Clients were asked the question “How long does it typically take you to travel to your AFAC food distribution?” and could select one of the following answers: “1 – 15 minutes,” “15 – 30 minutes,” “30 minutes – 1 hour,” and “1 hour or more.” This question was omitted for Home Delivery clients, residents of The Apex, and all clients at Senior Sites, as their groceries are either delivered to their doors or a food distribution occurs in their building.

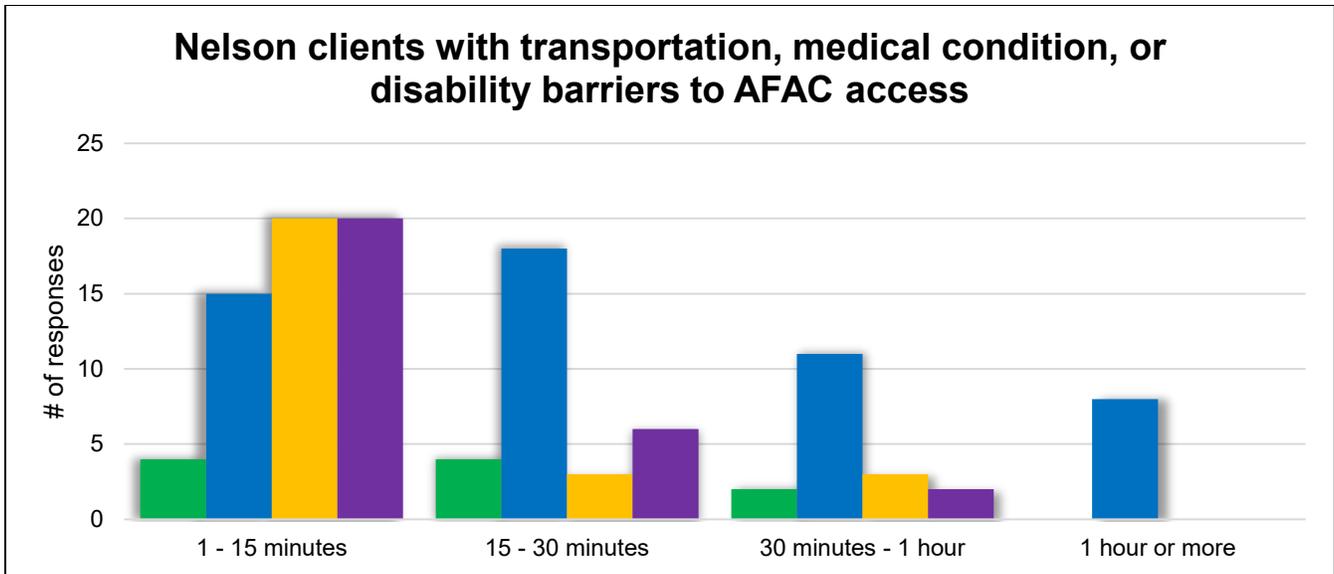
Overall, 56.9% of clients who were asked this question indicated that it takes them 1 – 15 minutes to commute to their AFAC food distribution site. However, there is a notable difference when the data is split between clients going to Nelson and clients who do not. For clients at Nelson, the shortest commute window of 1 – 15 minutes was selected by 48.6% of the surveyed clients, whereas 77.9% of non-Nelson clients indicated they had the same commute time. By design, food distribution locations outside of Nelson were established to bring food access closer to where families in need reside, thus the commute time to their food distribution should be shorter. Clients who go to Nelson’s location can live anywhere in Arlington County, so their commute times vary based on where they live and their mode of transportation.

Nelson: Commuting Time vs. Transportation Method



We wanted to take a closer look at the last two survey questions and how it pertains just to Nelson clients. The food distribution at Nelson has the fewest restrictions and the most flexibility for a client to choose this as their assigned distribution center. There are seven different distribution times throughout the week when a family can choose to come for their one weekly visit and clients can live anywhere in Arlington County. (Community Sites have either residency or program participation qualifications to be able to pick up at those locations.)

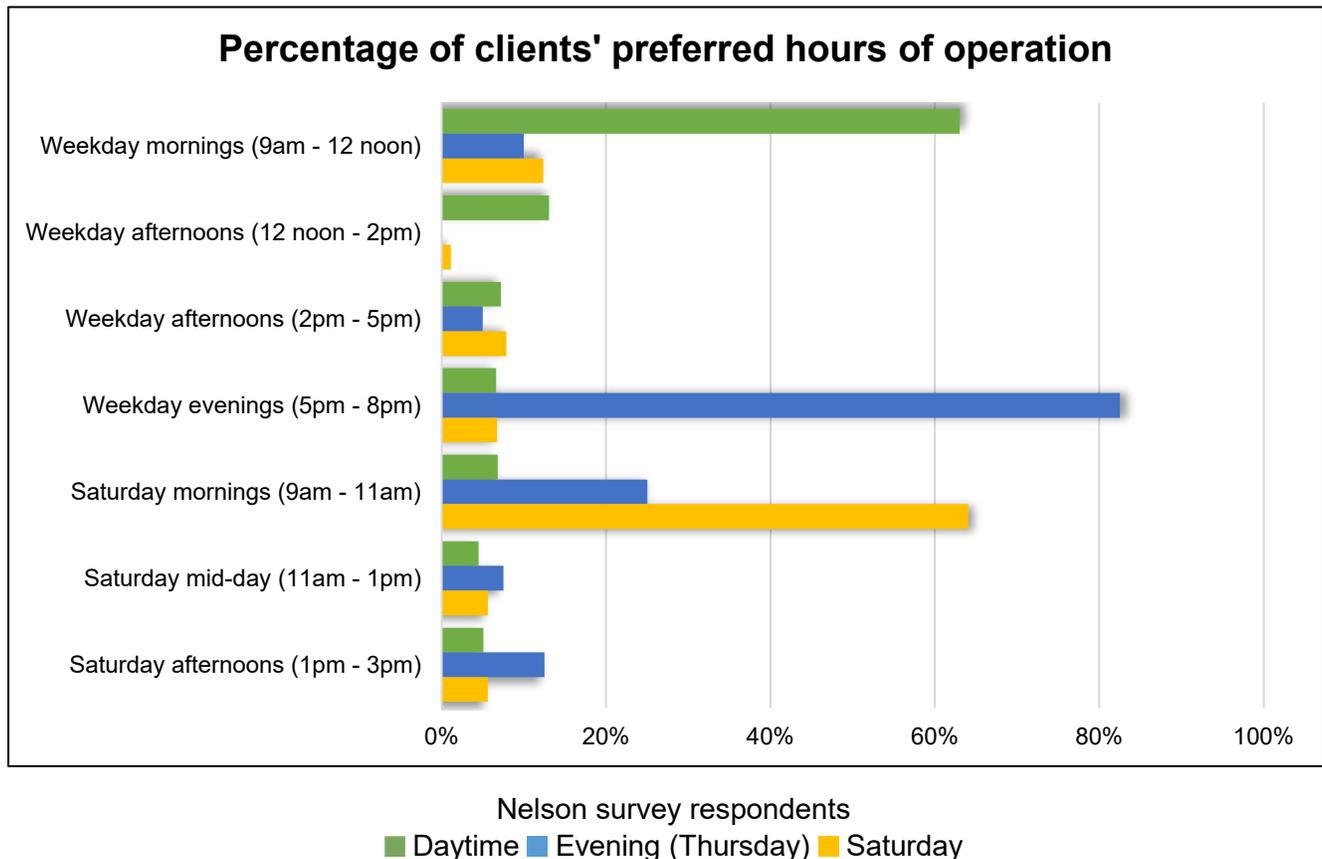
The graph above shows the four most common modes of transportation to Nelson. The majority of clients (47.8%) use their own car to visit this site. For almost two-thirds (183 out of 272 responses) of clients who drive, their commute is shorter than 15 minutes. Those who walk or get a ride from a friend to Nelson also indicate they mostly have a short commute time of under 15 minutes. For those riding a bus to Nelson, the most common answer was a 15 – 30 minute commute (42.0%). These commuters have the least direct and most difficult trip to Nelson, as they have to travel to the nearest bus stop, wait for the bus, possibly transfer to another bus, and travel from the bus stop to Nelson.



■ Walk
 ■ Take the bus
 ■ Drive own car
 ■ Ride with a friend

For those with disabilities, medical conditions, or other hardships, relying on the bus as their primary mode of transportation can make access to food more difficult. In the [barriers](#) section, we asked clients to identify reasons why they could miss or have difficulty getting to a food distribution center. There were two barrier options that dealt with commuting: “I do not have transportation” and “I have a medical condition or disability that makes it hard to leave the house, wait in line, or carry grocery bags.” Of the Nelson clients who identified either of these two barriers, the most common mode of transportation was via bus (52 out of 116, or 44.8%). For 37 of these clients, their commute to Nelson is longer than 15 minutes. While the Home Delivery program has helped reduce these numbers, it shows that there is still a barrier to access for disabled or medically fragile clients who are not homebound and who rely on public transportation.

Nelson Distribution Time Preferences



Only clients who utilize the Nelson food distribution were asked the question “AFAC is reviewing its hours of operations at the Nelson Shirlington location. Which days and times would you prefer to shop for groceries at AFAC?” and could select as many answers that applied between “weekday mornings (9am – 12 noon),” “weekday afternoons (12 noon – 2pm),” “weekday afternoons (2pm – 5pm),” “weekday evenings (5pm – 8pm),” “Saturday mornings (9am – 11am),” “Saturday mid-day (11am – 1pm),” “Saturday afternoons (1pm – 3pm),” and “Other” with space to write in a response.

The flexibility of the schedule allows Nelson clients to visit when it is most convenient for them. This is seen by the clients’ responses, as they mainly favored the times they currently visit. Respondents who come on weekday daytime hours favor weekday daytime hours (76.3%), while respondents who come on Thursday evenings or Saturdays favor distribution hours outside normal working hours (78.3%).

Clients who come on Thursday evening selected more answers and favored hours that occur after the standard working hours, such as weekday evenings, Saturday mornings, and Saturday afternoons.

Before the pandemic, evening distributions occurred on Tuesday and Thursday. When the pandemic started, both evening options were canceled while daytime hours were extended in length. Thursday evening food distributions resumed in September 2021 and has steadily grown to regularly serve more than 100 families. AFAC is addressing the need for more opportunities outside normal working hours and will be reopening Tuesday evenings for food distribution at the end of April 2022.

Appendix

2022 Client Survey Questions (English)

Are you satisfied with the grocery services you receive at AFAC? [Choose one]

- No, never
- No, not very often
- Sometimes
- Yes, often
- Yes, all the time

How often do you get groceries from AFAC? [Choose one]

- This is my first visit
- 1 time every week
- 1 – 3 times every month
- 1 – 3 times every 3 months
- 1 – 3 times every year

How can we improve your experience at AFAC? [free response]

How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected you and your family? [free response]

Have you been vaccinated against COVID-19? [Choose one]

- Yes, I am partially vaccinated (1 shot of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines)
- Yes, I am fully vaccinated (1 shot of the Johnson & Johnson or 2 shots of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines)
- Yes, I am fully vaccinated and I received a booster shot
- No, but I plan to get the vaccine in the future
- No, I do not plan to get the vaccine

What barriers might stop you from getting to AFAC? [Select all that apply]

- None, I get to AFAC as often as I need to
- I have a medical condition or disability that makes it hard to leave the house, wait in line, or carry grocery bags
- I work or go to school during AFAC hours
- I do not have transportation
- I do not have childcare
- I do not like the food options available
- I do have time to wait in long lines
- Other _____

How do you typically travel to your AFAC food distribution? [Choose one]

(question skipped for Home Delivery, The Apex and all Senior Sites)

- My AFAC food distribution is in my apartment building or complex
- I walk
- I take the bus
- I ride a bike
- I drive my own car
- I get a ride from a friend
- I take a taxi, Lyft, or Uber
- Other _____

How long does it typically take you to travel to your AFAC food distribution? [Choose one]

(question skipped for Home Delivery, The Apex and all Senior Sites)

- 1 – 15 minutes
- 15 – 30 minutes
- 30 minutes – 1 hour
- 1 hour or more

AFAC is reviewing its hours of operations at the Nelson Shirlington location. Which days and times would you prefer to shop for groceries at AFAC? [Select all that apply]

(question only asked at Nelson)

- Weekday mornings (9 am – 12 noon)
- Weekday afternoons (12 noon – 2 pm)
- Weekday afternoons (2 – 5 pm)
- Weekday evenings (5 pm – 8 pm)
- Saturday mornings (9 am – 11 am)
- Saturday mid-day (11 am – 1 pm)
- Saturday afternoons (1 – 3 pm)
- Other _____

