



# **Arlington Food Assistance Center Annual Client Survey 2025 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. This year's survey topics included satisfaction, canned food preferences, method of travel and travel time to AFAC distribution sites.

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 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 food distribution model has been 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 \$10.3 million in FY24. AFAC does not receive any federal or state funding. AFAC receives \$706,606 from Arlington County Government, which is approximately 7% 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. During FY24, AFAC spent \$2.6 million dollars on food alone, which was \$1.1 million more than budgeted.

Arlington families accessed AFAC services in record numbers. In FY24, AFAC recorded 183,558 family visits, consisting of 19,446 individuals from 7,996 families. One-third of the individuals served were children and 12% were seniors on a fixed income. Eight percent of all individuals were disabled. More than 3 million pounds of food were distributed to families in need last year.

With many pandemic-era safety net programs coming to a close in the last two years and increased food prices, AFAC is now serving more families than ever before. In FY24, AFAC served 31% more family visits than the previous year and 70% more than in FY20.

## Food Distribution Sites

AFAC has 19 distribution sites in Arlington and one in Alexandria. 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.

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 week. The Nelson site accounts for approximately 54% of all AFAC families served and can see up to 2,500 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 40 – 200 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.

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.

<b>Site</b>	<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Site Category</b>	<b>Distribution Days</b>
Nelson	AFAC Headquarters	Open	Monday through Saturday
Home Delivery	Clients' Homes throughout Arlington	Special Program	Tuesday through Friday
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
Green Valley	Apartment Community	Community	Thursday
Hunters Park	Senior Apartments	Senior	Tuesday
Queens Court	Apartment Community	Community	Thursday
The Shell	Apartment Community	Community	Monday
The Springs	Apartment Community	Community	Wednesday
The Waypoint	Apartment Community	Alexandria	Wednesday
Woodbury Park	Apartment Community	Community	Thursday
Woodland Hill	Senior Apartments	Senior	Tuesday

# Methods

## Dissemination of Surveys

AFAC volunteers and staff conducted in-person surveys at all Open, Community, and Senior 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.

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 how frequently their dietary needs change and how often they are in touch with the caseworker who enrolled them in the home delivery program. 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.

With the exception of home delivery phone surveys, surveys were conducted from January to February 2025, over the course of three and a half weeks. The first week (January 27 - February 1), surveys were conducted at every Nelson distribution. The following two weeks and half weeks (February 3 - 19), surveys were conducted at the remaining sites. Phone surveys were made to Home Delivery clients from February 15 to March 7.

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 2025 Client Survey, go to the Appendix: [2025 Client Survey Questions](#) (English), and [2025 Home Delivery Client Survey Questions](#) (English)*

As was the case last year, the 2025 client survey included questions about how welcome people feel when they pick up groceries from AFAC, how often they feel people of all backgrounds are treated equally at AFAC, and how often they are satisfied with the amount of food they receive at AFAC. This year's survey asked



about canned food preferences and commuting to AFAC. Clients were offered the opportunity to share additional thoughts in an open-ended question at the end of the survey. People were also asked if they would be willing to share their experiences with an AFAC staff member in the future. When clients agreed, they were offered a quarter sheet of paper to provide contact information. These papers were stored separately from surveys to maintain the confidentiality of surveys.

## **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 or transcribed responses on paper, which were then entered into the 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.

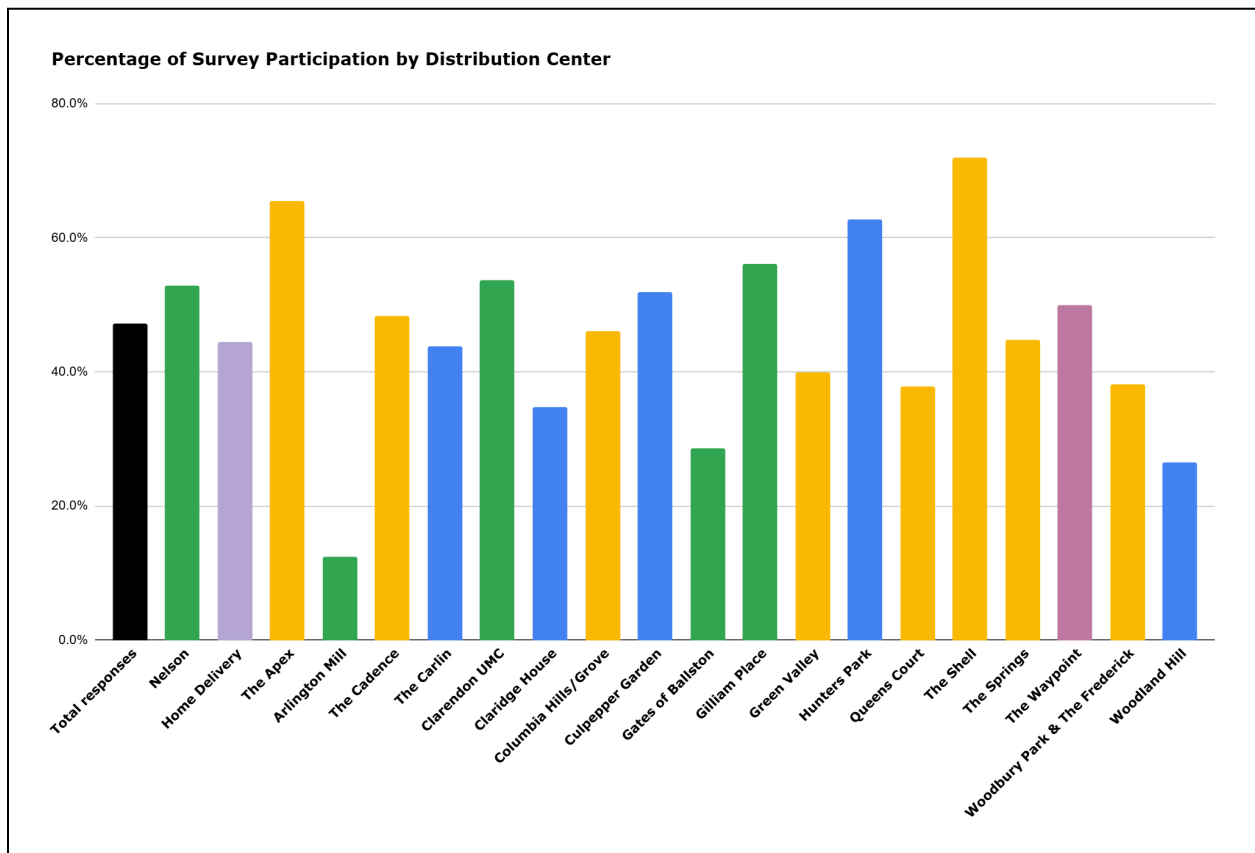
For free response questions, data entry volunteers sorted responses into categories to identify recurring themes. Categories with few responses were considered uncategorized, while answers with recurring themes were added as new categories during the analysis of the data.

# Results & Discussion

## Survey Participation

AFAC had a 47.1% overall survey participation rate, or 1,962 survey participants out of 4,162 families served with groceries during the survey dissemination period this year. This is a 7.3% increase from 2024, when the overall participation rate was 39.8% with 1,518 responses.

The distribution site with the highest rate of survey responses was The Shell, with 72.0% of clients participating in the survey. Other sites with high participation rates include The Apex (65.5%) and Hunters Park (62.8%). Compared to last year, survey participation was up at Open Sites (+5.9%), Community Sites (+17.1%), and Senior sites (+3.1%).



The site with the lowest response rate was Arlington Mill with only 12.4% of clients participating in this year's survey. This is more than a 10% decrease from the previous year at this site. The sites with the next three lowest survey response rates were: Woodland Hill (26.5%), Gates of Ballston (28.6%), and Claridge House (34.7%). Overall survey participation was down amongst home delivery clients,

decreasing by 6.4%. At Nelson, the response rate was 52.9%, an increase of 7.0% 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. This year's survey was shorter, just 8 questions, compared to 29 questions last year, which contributed to an increase in the response rate.

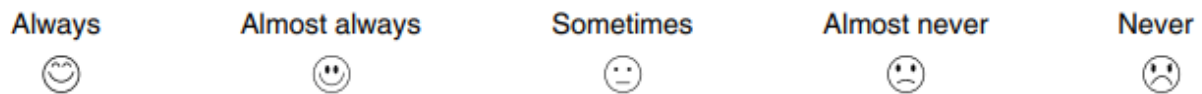
### Survey Participation Rates by Distribution Site

Distribution Site	Date of Survey	# of survey participants	# of clients served	Response Rate	Change in Response Rate from Last Year
<b>Total responses</b>		<b>1,962</b>	<b>4,162</b>	<b>47.1%</b>	7.3%
Nelson	Jan 27 - Feb 1	1,211	2,290	52.9%	7.0%
Home Delivery	Feb 15 - Mar 7	96	216	44.4%	-2.4%
The Apex	Feb 5	36	55	65.5%	17.4%
Arlington Mill	Feb 3	17	137	12.4%	-12.4%
The Cadence	Feb 19	60	124	48.4%	17.4%
The Carlin	Feb 13	35	80	43.8%	9.6%
Clarendon UMC	Feb 8	22	41	53.7%	-17.7%
Claridge House	Feb 10	58	167	34.7%	18.9%
Columbia Hills/Grove	Feb 4	58	126	46.0%	24.2%
Culpepper Garden	Feb 14	53	102	52.0%	17.3%
Gates of Ballston	Feb 7	53	185	28.6%	3.3%
Gilliam Place	Feb 10	32	57	56.1%	21.3%
Green Valley	Feb 13	10	25	40.0%	18.1%
Hunters Park	Feb 4	27	43	62.8%	-34.3%
Queens Court	Feb 6	48	127	37.8%	16.0%
The Shell	Feb 10	18	25	72.0%	43.4%
The Springs	Feb 5	17	38	44.7%	-13.3%
The Waypoint	Feb 19	19	38	50.0%	20.6%
Woodbury Park & The Frederick	Feb 13	53	139	38.1%	16.6%
Woodland Hill	Feb 18	39	147	26.5%	-19.8%

\*Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green.

# Welcome

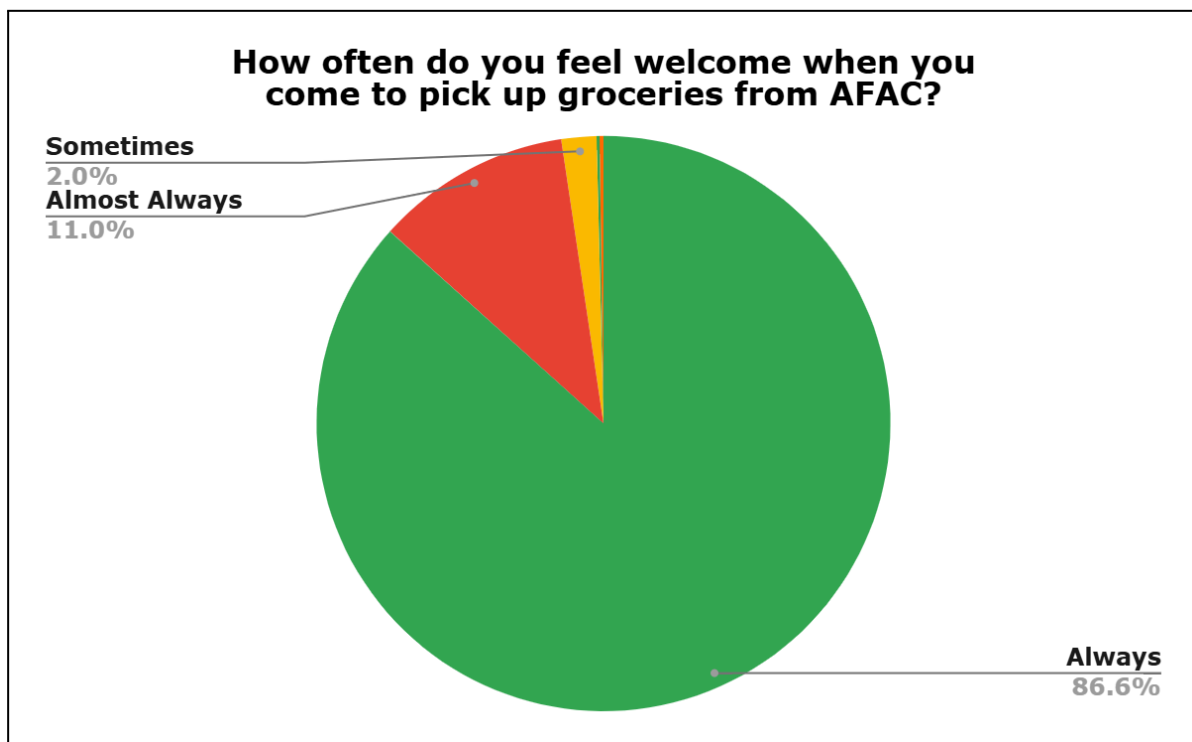
Clients were asked the question, **"How often do you feel welcome when you come to pick up groceries from AFAC?"** and could select "Always," "Almost Always," "Sometimes," "Almost Never," or "Never." These selections were accompanied by visual prompts:



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

Almost ninety-eight percent (97.6%) of clients responded with "Always" or "Almost Always." This is a 1.1% increase from last year. Of the 0.4% (7 respondents) who indicated that they almost never or never feel welcome when they pick up groceries from AFAC, none included comments elaborating.

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.



**How often do you feel welcome when you come to pick up groceries from AFAC?**

Distribution Site	Responses	Always		Almost Always		Sometimes		Almost Never		Never	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>1,820</b>	<b>1,577</b>	<b>86.6%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
Nelson	1,185	1,029	86.8%	132	11.1%	21	1.8%	1	0.1%	2	0.2%
The Apex	36	34	94.4%	1	2.8%	1	2.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Arlington Mill	17	17	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Cadence	56	51	91.1%	3	5.4%	2	3.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Carlin	33	30	90.9%	3	9.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Clarendon UMC	22	17	77.3%	5	22.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Claridge House	56	45	80.4%	8	14.3%	2	3.6%	0	0.0%	1	1.8%
Columbia Hills/Grove	56	43	76.8%	11	19.6%	1	1.8%	1	1.8%	0	0.0%
Culpepper Garden	51	46	90.2%	3	5.9%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	1	2.0%
Gates of Ballston	53	46	86.8%	6	11.3%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Gilliam Place	31	29	93.5%	1	3.2%	1	3.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Green Valley	9	8	88.9%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hunters Park	26	22	84.6%	4	15.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Queens Court	48	42	87.5%	4	8.3%	2	4.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Shell	18	16	88.9%	1	5.6%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Springs	16	12	75.0%	3	18.8%	1	6.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Waypoint	19	18	94.7%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Woodbury Park & The Frederick	51	46	90.2%	5	9.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Woodland Hill	37	26	70.3%	8	21.6%	3	8.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

\*Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green. Those between 75% and 89% are in medium green, and those greater than or equal to 90% are dark green.

## Equal Treatment

Clients were asked the question, **"How often do you believe that clients of all backgrounds are treated equally at AFAC?"** and could select "Always," "Almost Always," "Sometimes," "Almost Never," or "Never." These selections were accompanied by visual prompts:

Always



Almost always



Sometimes



Almost never



Never



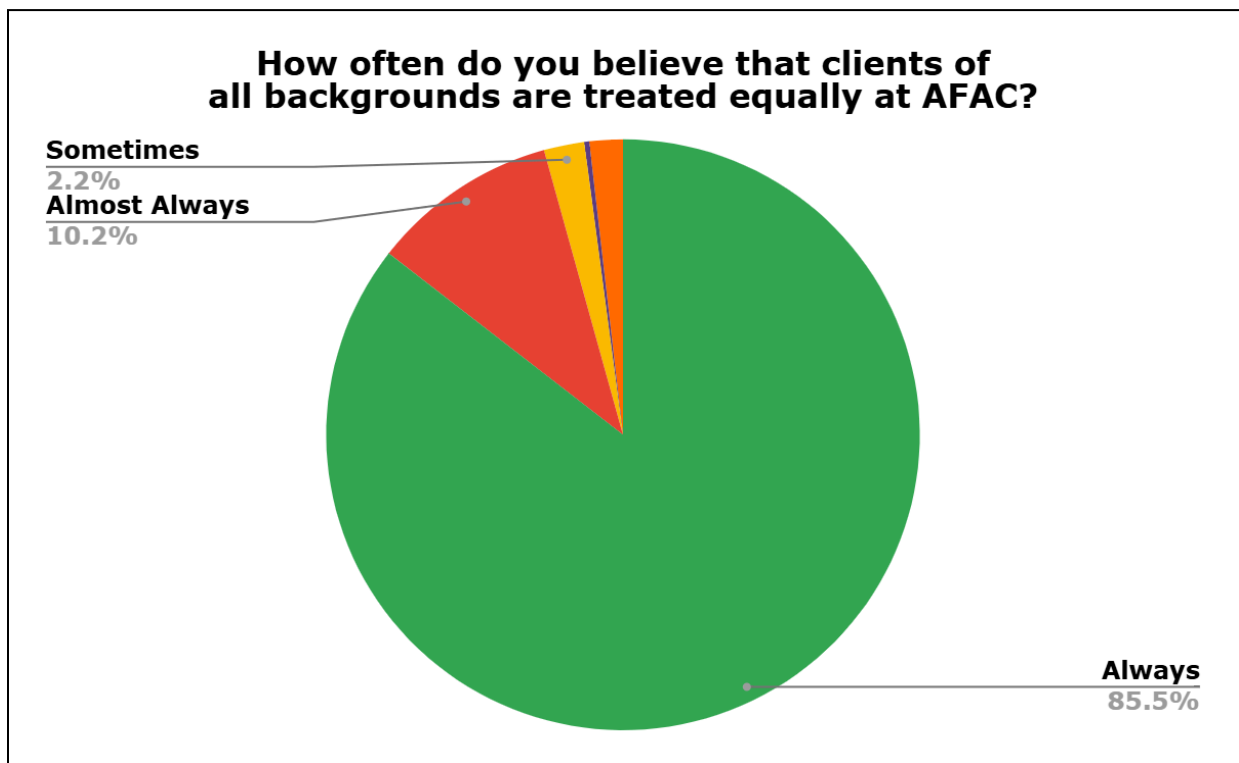
Home Delivery clients were not asked this question, as their weekly groceries are delivered directly to their doors.

Of the 1,817 respondents to this question, more than 95% of people reported that they believe people of all backgrounds are "always" or "almost always" treated equally. Of the 2.1% (38 individuals) who feel that people of all backgrounds are "almost never" or "never" treated equally, comments included:

- "Add South Asian & Central Asian food items. Too many Spanish/Latin foods."
- "Add ADA doors - auto open/close."
- "More Halal options. The turkey giveaways each winter exclude my family because they aren't halal."
- "They do not give Hispanics the choice."

Equitable treatment of all clients is a core value of AFAC's. Among other statements, the AFAC Client Bill of Rights says "As an AFAC client, you have the right to:

- *be treated with dignity and respect at all times by AFAC staff members, volunteers, and by other clients;*
- *be served without discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, first language, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, immigration status, age, or disability;*
- *refuse any food items that do not meet your dietary or religious standards."*



**How often do you believe that clients of all backgrounds are treated equally at AFAC?**

Distribution Site	Responses	Always		Almost Always		Sometimes		Almost Never		Never	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>1,817</b>	<b>1,554</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
Nelson	1,184	1,018	86.0%	111	9.4%	22	1.9%	2	0.2%	31	2.6%
The Apex	36	33	91.7%	3	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Arlington Mill	15	14	93.3%	1	6.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Cadence	59	54	91.5%	4	6.8%	1	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Carlin	32	24	75.0%	5	15.6%	2	6.3%	0	0.0%	1	3.1%
Clarendon UMC	21	18	85.7%	3	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Claridge House	56	46	82.1%	9	16.1%	1	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Columbia Hills/Grove	57	42	73.7%	11	19.3%	4	7.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Culpepper Garden	51	44	86.3%	3	5.9%	2	3.9%	1	2.0%	1	2.0%
Gates of Ballston	52	47	90.4%	3	5.8%	2	3.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Gilliam Place	30	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Green Valley	9	6	66.7%	2	22.2%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hunters Park	26	20	76.9%	4	15.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	0	0.0%
Queens Court	48	42	87.5%	6	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Shell	18	16	88.9%	0	0.0%	2	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Springs	17	14	82.4%	3	17.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Waypoint	19	19	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Woodbury Park & The Frederick	51	46	90.2%	5	9.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Woodland Hill	36	21	58.3%	12	33.3%	2	5.6%	1	2.8%	0	0.0%

\*Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green. Those between 75% and 89% are in medium green, and those greater than or equal to 90% are dark green.

## Quantity of Food

Clients were asked the question, **"How often are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?"** and could select "Always," "Almost Always," "Sometimes," "Almost Never," or "Never." These selections were accompanied by visual prompts:



Always



Almost always



Sometimes



Almost never



Never

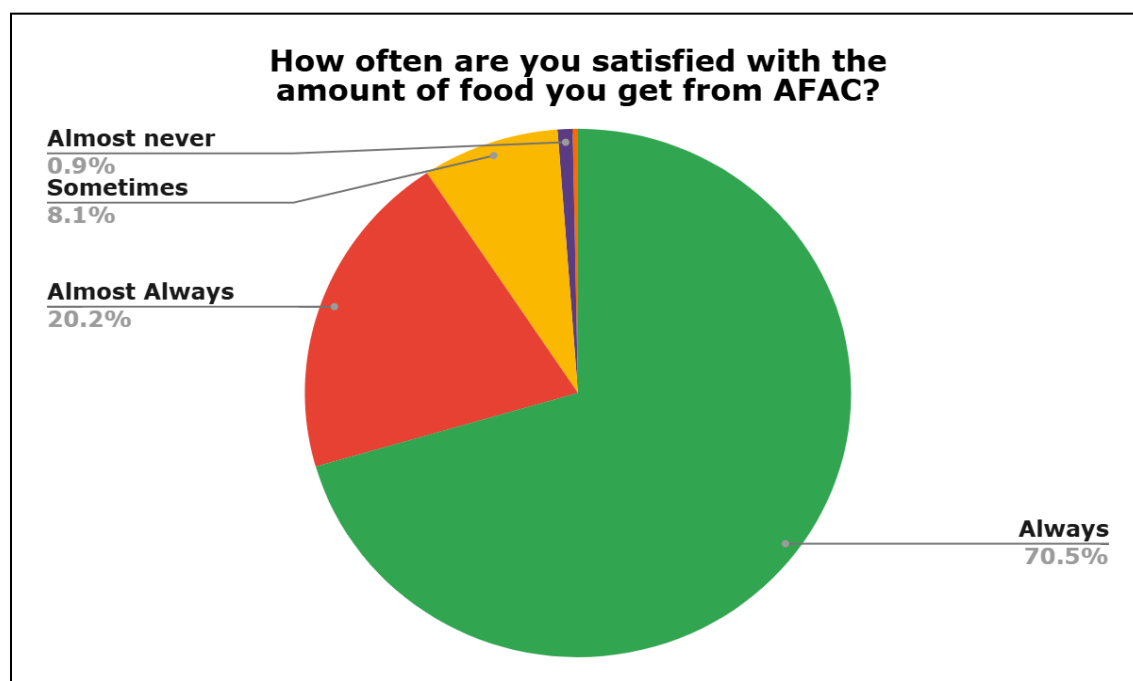


Overall, 90.7% (1,919 families) of respondents indicated that they are “always” or “almost always” satisfied with the amount of food they get at AFAC. This is an increase of 4.4% from the previous year. The highest rates of satisfaction were among clients at The Apex, Gilliam Place, Hunters Park, and Woodland Hill, where 100% of respondents reported that they are always or almost always satisfied with the amount of food they get at AFAC.

Of the 23 (1.2%) who reported that they were almost never or never satisfied with the amount, comments about needing more food included:

- “The food only lasts for 3-4 days for a large family. I would like more than 1 dozen eggs.”
- “Better portions”
- “Very little food”

The sites with the lowest rates of satisfaction in terms of the amount of food provided by AFAC were Arlington Mill and Green Valley, with 12.5% (2 respondents) and 10% (1 respondent) of clients, respectively, reporting that they are almost never or never satisfied with the amount of food they get from AFAC. AFAC staff share up-to-date information about other food resources in Arlington with distribution site coordinators and home delivery clients.



### How often are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?

Distribution Site	Responses	Always		Almost Always		Sometimes		Almost Never		Never	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>70.5%</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>20.2%</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
Nelson	<b>1,186</b>	826	69.6%	242	20.4%	105	8.9%	10	0.8%	3	0.3%
Home Delivery	<b>96</b>	70	72.9%	18	18.8%	8	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Apex	<b>36</b>	31	86.1%	5	13.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Arlington Mill	<b>16</b>	13	81.3%	1	6.3%	0	0.0%	1	6.3%	1	6.3%
The Cadence	<b>59</b>	48	81.4%	9	15.3%	2	3.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Carlin	<b>34</b>	23	67.6%	6	17.6%	4	11.8%	0	0.0%	1	2.9%
Clarendon UMC	<b>22</b>	14	63.6%	4	18.2%	4	18.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Claridge House	<b>55</b>	35	63.6%	13	23.6%	6	10.9%	1	1.8%	0	0.0%
Columbia Hills/Grove	<b>55</b>	39	70.9%	12	21.8%	4	7.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Culpepper Garden	<b>51</b>	34	66.7%	10	19.6%	6	11.8%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%
Gates of Ballston	<b>52</b>	37	71.2%	7	13.5%	5	9.6%	3	5.8%	0	0.0%
Gilliam Place	<b>31</b>	25	80.6%	6	19.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Green Valley	<b>10</b>	7	70.0%	1	10.0%	1	10.0%	1	10.0%	0	0.0%
Hunters Park	<b>26</b>	15	57.7%	11	42.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Queens Court	<b>48</b>	36	75.0%	11	22.9%	1	2.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Shell	<b>18</b>	12	66.7%	3	16.7%	3	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Springs	<b>17</b>	11	64.7%	5	29.4%	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The Waypoint	<b>19</b>	13	68.4%	2	10.5%	3	15.8%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%
Woodbury Park & The Frederick	<b>50</b>	39	78.0%	8	16.0%	3	6.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Woodland Hill	<b>38</b>	25	65.8%	13	34.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

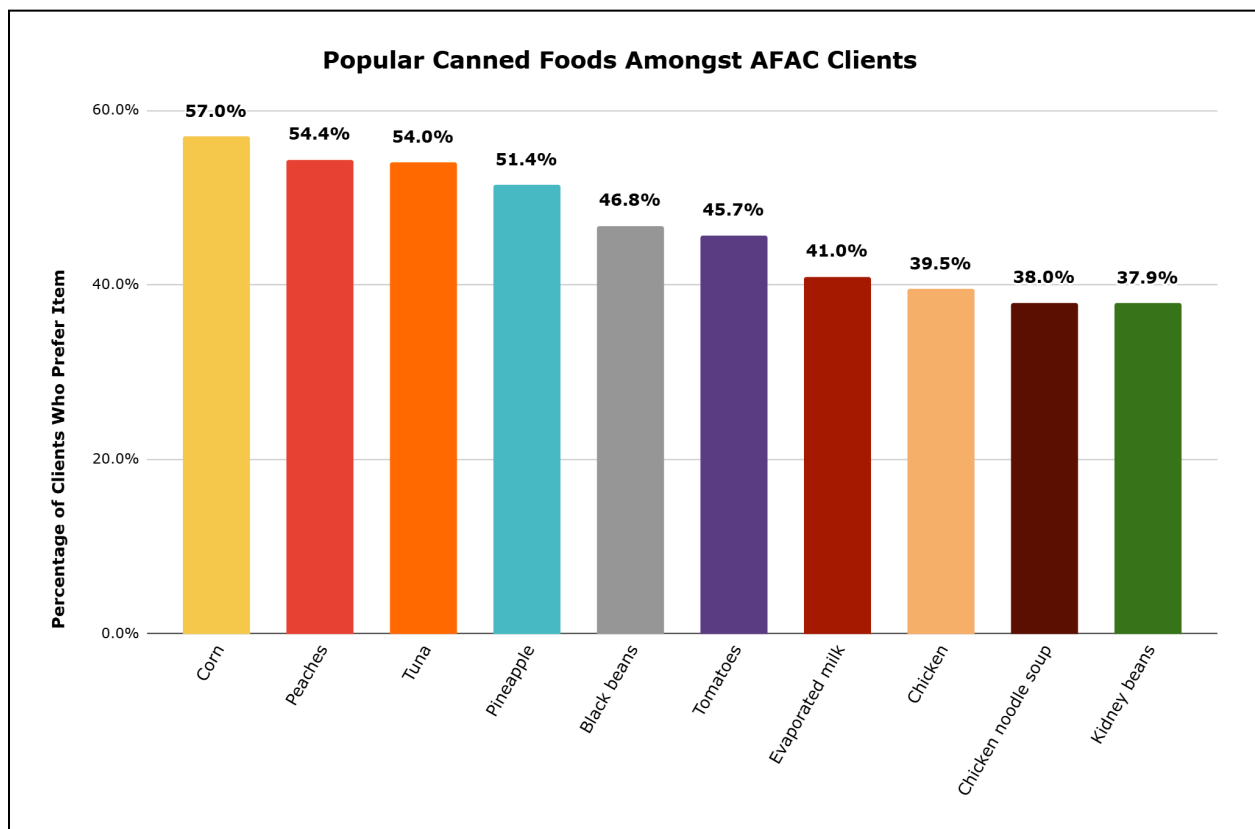
\*Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green. Those greater than or equal to 75% are dark green.

# Canned Food Preferences

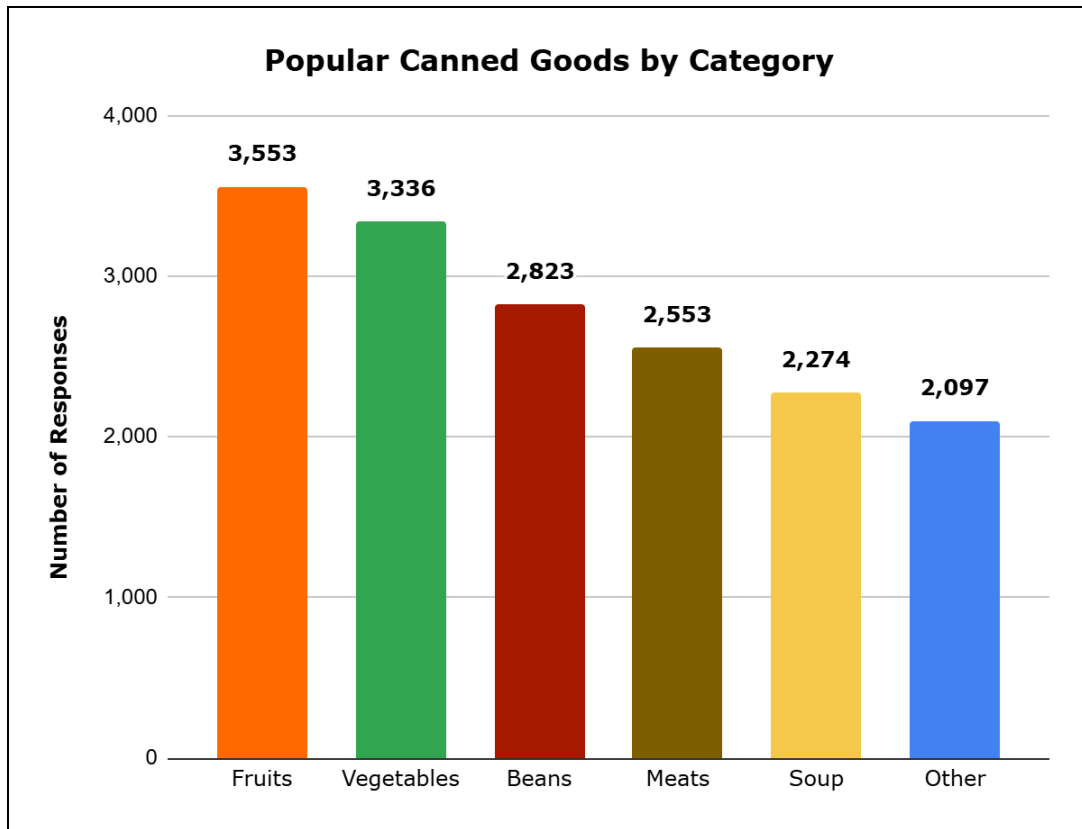
Clients were asked the question **"Sometimes, AFAC buys canned goods. Which canned foods do you like? (Select all that apply)."** Canned foods were grouped into six sections, meat, beans, soup, vegetables, fruit, and other. Each section listed four canned foods and contained a line for other preferences.

The most popular canned foods were:

- Corn
- Peaches
- Tuna
- Pineapple
- Black beans
- Tomatoes
- Evaporated milk
- Chicken
- Chicken noodle soup
- Kidney beans



Canned foods were categorized by type, and results showed that more canned fruits were mentioned than other types. Canned fruits were followed by vegetables, beans, meats, soup, and others. Some of the common write-in responses were Halal meats, carrots, peas, baked beans, pinto beans, oranges, mushroom soup, and condensed milk.



When analyzing how many people at each site selected at least one type of canned food, responses show that there are many popular canned foods across all distribution sites. The following table shows that more than half of survey respondents reported liking canned goods, with many types of canned food being preferred by more than 75% of respondents.

Distribution Site	Total Respondents	Vegetables		Meat		Fruit		Beans		Soup		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,962</b>	<b>1,582</b>	<b>80.6%</b>	<b>1,480</b>	<b>75.4%</b>	<b>1,454</b>	<b>74.1%</b>	<b>1,432</b>	<b>73.0%</b>	<b>1,158</b>	<b>59.0%</b>	<b>1,235</b>	<b>62.9%</b>
Nelson	1,211	1,023	84.5%	928	76.6%	923	76.2%	923	76.2%	700	57.8%	774	63.9%
The Apex	36	32	88.9%	29	80.6%	29	80.6%	27	75.0%	22	61.1%	17	47.2%
Arlington Mill	17	15	88.2%	10	58.8%	9	52.9%	10	58.8%	7	41.2%	4	23.5%
The Cadence	60	55	91.7%	52	86.7%	52	86.7%	54	90.0%	43	71.7%	49	81.7%
The Carlin	35	25	71.4%	33	94.3%	25	71.4%	24	68.6%	23	65.7%	25	71.4%
Clarendon UMC	22	20	90.9%	22	100.0%	20	90.9%	19	86.4%	15	68.2%	18	81.8%
Claridge House	58	55	94.8%	55	94.8%	47	81.0%	46	79.3%	42	72.4%	46	79.3%
Columbia Hills/Grove	58	52	89.7%	55	94.8%	50	86.2%	49	84.5%	42	72.4%	43	74.1%
Culpepper Garden	53	45	84.9%	44	83.0%	44	83.0%	45	84.9%	48	90.6%	42	79.2%
Gates of Ballston	53	41	77.4%	38	71.7%	39	73.6%	31	58.5%	29	54.7%	33	62.3%
Gilliam Place	32	25	78.1%	23	71.9%	25	78.1%	22	68.8%	17	53.1%	19	59.4%
Green Valley	10	7	70.0%	8	80.0%	7	70.0%	5	50.0%	6	60.0%	8	80.0%
Hunters Park	27	18	66.7%	21	77.8%	22	81.5%	15	55.6%	20	74.1%	17	63.0%
Queens Court	48	42	87.5%	37	77.1%	37	77.1%	39	81.3%	34	70.8%	29	60.4%
The Shell	18	16	88.9%	16	88.9%	15	83.3%	14	77.8%	13	72.2%	15	83.3%
The Springs	17	15	88.2%	14	82.4%	14	82.4%	12	70.6%	12	70.6%	11	64.7%
The Waypoint	19	16	84.2%	16	84.2%	14	73.7%	16	84.2%	14	73.7%	15	78.9%
Woodbury Park & The Frederick	53	48	90.6%	47	88.7%	48	90.6%	47	88.7%	39	73.6%	41	77.4%
Woodland Hill	39	32	82.1%	32	82.1%	34	87.2%	34	87.2%	32	82.1%	29	74.4%

\*Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green. Those between 75% and 89% are in medium green, and those greater than or equal to 90% are dark green.

## Commuting to AFAC

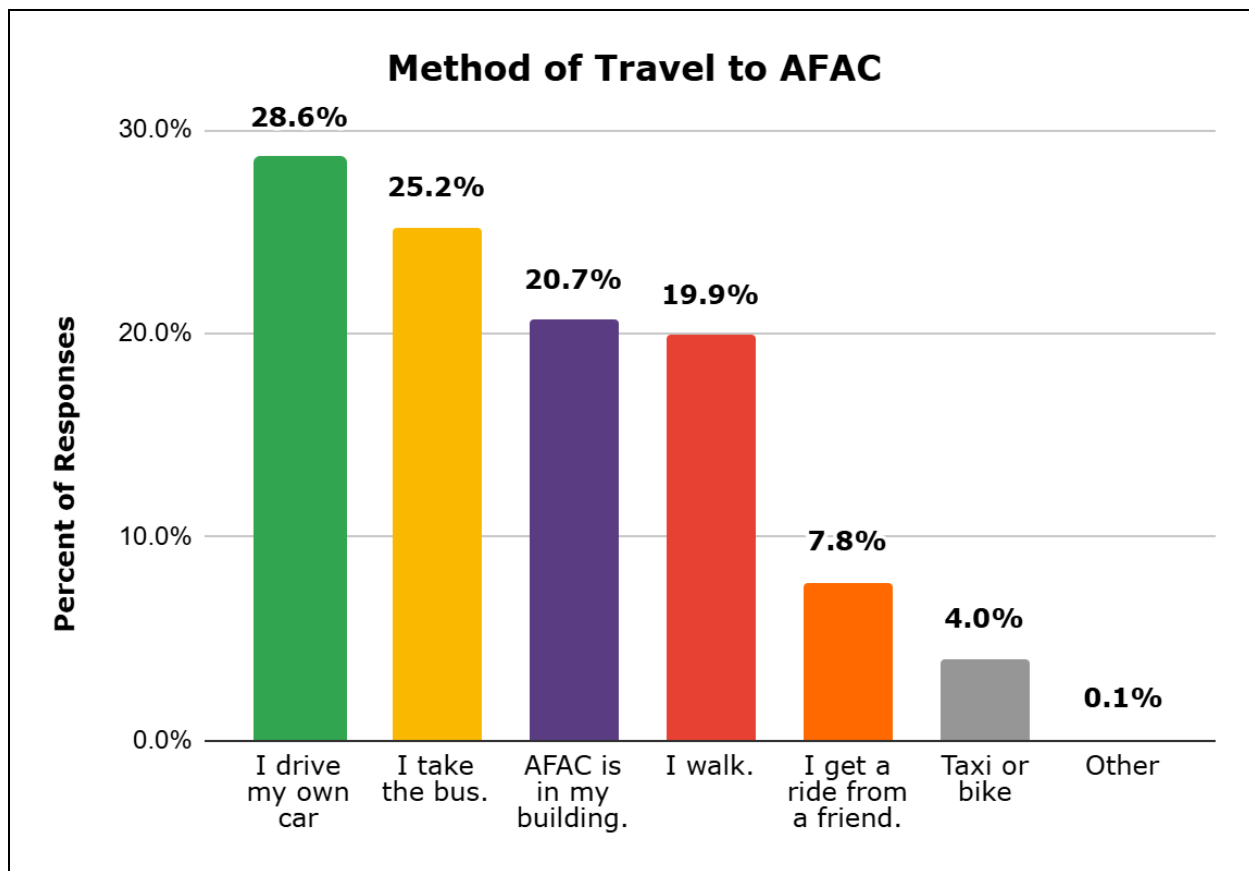
### Transportation Methods

Clients were asked the question **"How do you usually 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, retiro, or Uber," and "Other" with space to write in a response.

This question was last asked of AFAC clients in 2022, when home delivery recipients, residents of Senior Sites, and those who pick up AFAC groceries at The Apex were not included. This year, only home delivery recipients were excluded from this question, as their groceries are delivered to their doors. Although survey respondents were asked to provide only one answer, several surveys were returned with multiple responses for this question.

Overall, the most common methods of travel to AFAC were by driving one's own car (28.6%) and taking the bus (25.3%). More than 20% of clients reported that their AFAC food distribution is in their building or apartment complex. The purpose of having food distributions at Community Sites and Senior Sites is to bring AFAC's services closer to where people reside, either in the same building or a very short

walk away. Food distributions at Community Sites and Senior Sites operate once a week at each location in a two hour or less window. While the distance is convenient for some, other families may opt to go to Open Sites instead if it fits their schedule better.



The majority of clients who visit Open Sites get to an AFAC food distribution by driving their own car (39.4%) or taking the bus (34.4%). Almost 17% of those visiting an Open Site report walking to get AFAC groceries. Nearly all (96.1%) of those picking up food at Senior Sites report that the distribution is in the building where they live. Others (3.9%) report walking, and one individual reported taking the bus. There are a few Senior Sites that welcome residents' health aides who live in Arlington to pick up groceries for their own families at those locations. Among clients who get their food from Community Sites, most families walk to their food distribution location (47.2%) or have the distribution in their building or apartment complex (42.9%). Many fewer, 16 families, take the bus (5.0%) or drive (3.2%) to those locations.

Site Categories	Respondents	Total Responses	I drive my own car		I take the bus.		AFAC is in my building or complex.		I walk.		Other	
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All Arlington Sites*	1,718	1,826	497	28.9%	438	25.5%	340	19.8%	346	20.1%	205	11.9%
Open Sites	1,229	1,332	488	39.7%	423	34.4%	20	1.6%	205	16.7%	196	15.9%
Senior Sites	207	208	0	0.0%	1	0.5%	199	96.1%	8	3.9%	0	0.0%
Community Sites	282	286	9	3.2%	14	5.0%	121	42.9%	133	47.2%	9	3.2%

\*This does not include Home Delivery Clients, who were not asked this question. Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green. Those between 75% and 89% are in medium green, and those greater than or equal to 90% are dark green.

## 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.

Overall, 64.1% of clients reported that it takes them less than 15 minutes to get to their AFAC distribution. Almost all clients who pick up groceries from Senior Sites (96.0%) and Community Sites (91.8%) reported a commuting time of less than 15 minutes. 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 less than 15 minutes was selected by 49.7% of the surveyed clients, whereas 91.2% 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 reside, thus the commute time to their food distribution should be shorter. As one of AFAC's five Open Sites, 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.

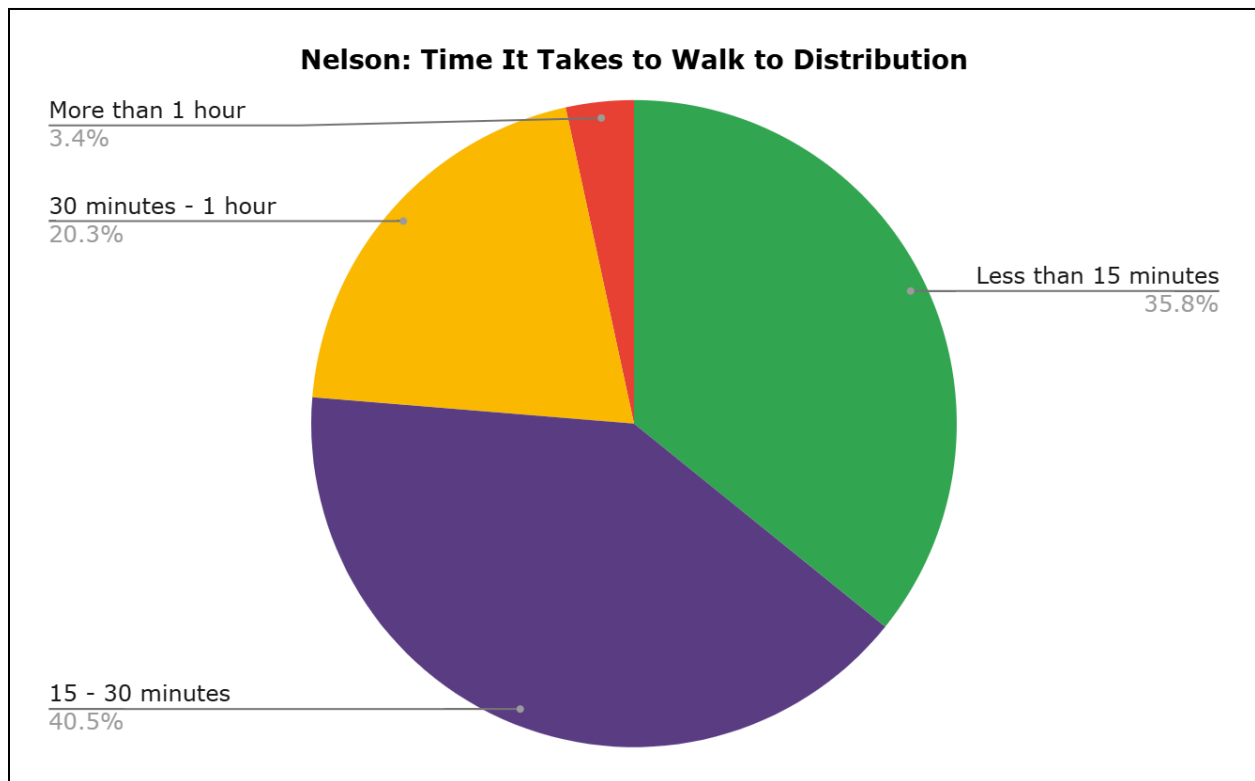
Site Categories	Total Respondents	Total Responses	Less than 15 minutes		15 - 30 minutes		30 minutes - 1 hour		More than 1 hour	
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All Arlington Sites*	1,708	1,717	1,095	64.1%	455	26.6%	138	8.1%	29	1.7%
Open Sites	1,231	1,238	649	52.7%	428	34.8%	134	10.9%	27	2.2%
Senior Sites	198	198	190	96.0%	7	3.5%	1	0.5%	0	0.0%
Community Sites	279	281	256	91.8%	20	7.2%	3	1.1%	2	0.7%

\*This does not include Home Delivery Clients, who were not asked this question. Percentages of respondents between 50% and 74% are highlighted in tables by light green. Those between 75% and 89% are in medium green, and those greater than or equal to 90% are dark green.

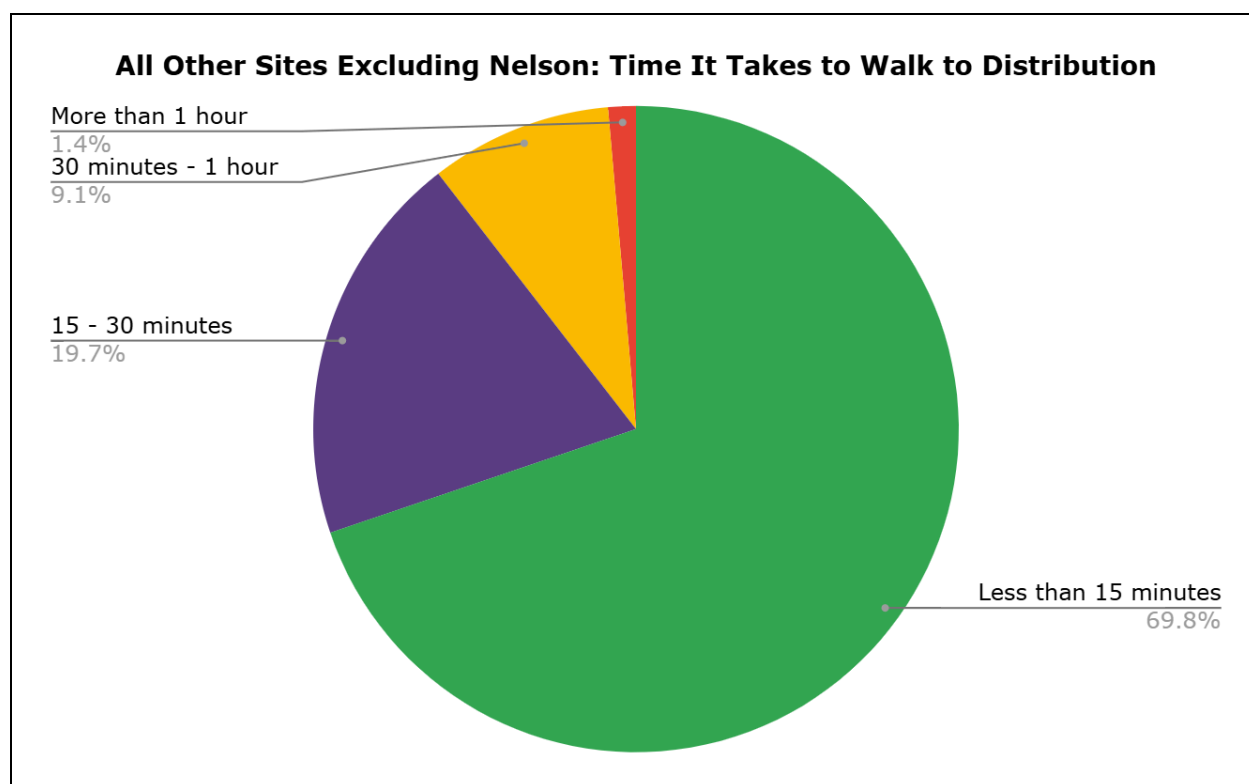
Comparing the transportation information among clients at Nelson and other sites shows a difference in clients' travel experiences. The food distribution at Nelson has the fewest restrictions and the most flexibility for a client to choose this as their assigned distribution center. There are eight different 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. Approximately half of AFAC clients pick up their weekly groceries from the Nelson location.

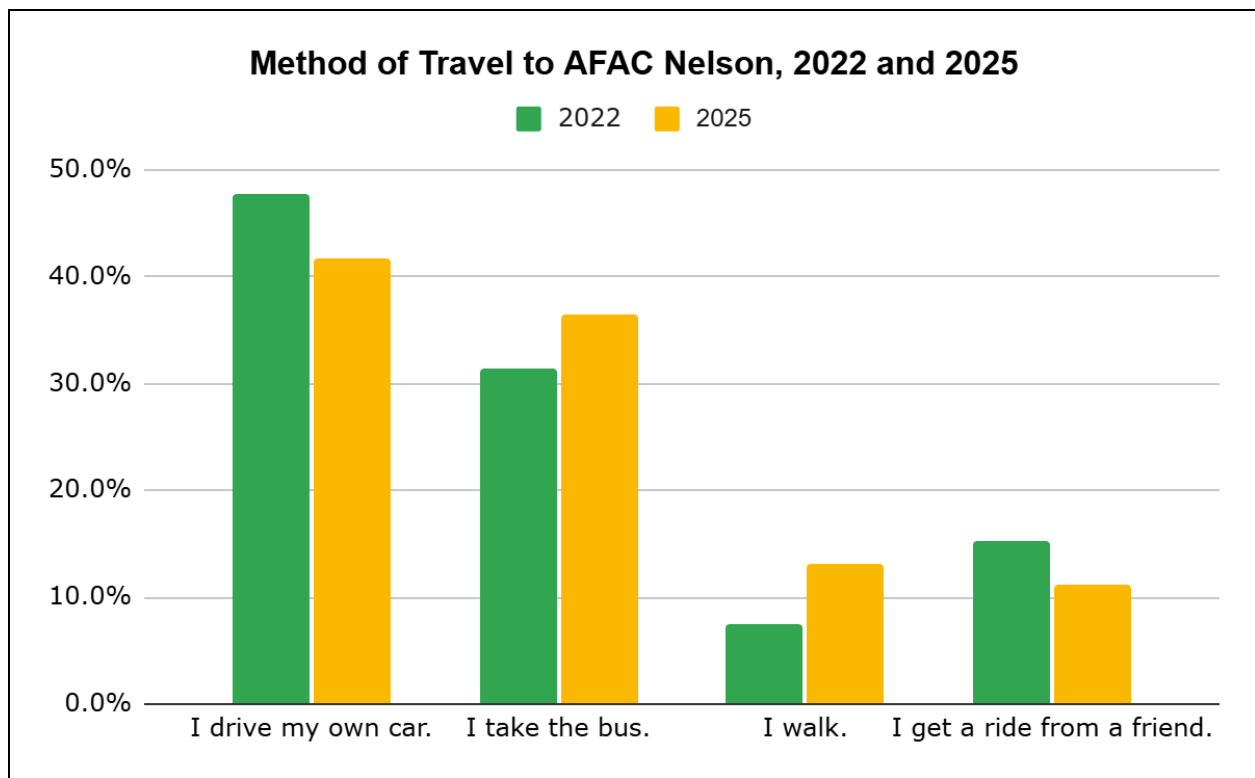
Among clients who walk to pick up their AFAC groceries, a greater proportion take a longer time to get to Nelson than to all other sites combined. It typically takes 64.2% of clients who walk to Nelson more than 15 minutes to get to the site, compared to 30.2% of walkers at all other sites. Of those who drive their own cars and take the bus, there are no differences in the time it takes to get to the food distribution when comparing Nelson to all other sites.







When comparing methods of commuting to Nelson from 2022 and 2025, there have been changes over time. While driving is still the most common way to get to the grocery distribution at Nelson, a smaller percentage of people are driving or getting a ride from a friend (down 6.2% and 4.0% respectively). A greater percentage of people report taking the bus and walking to Nelson (up 5.1% and 5.8% respectively).



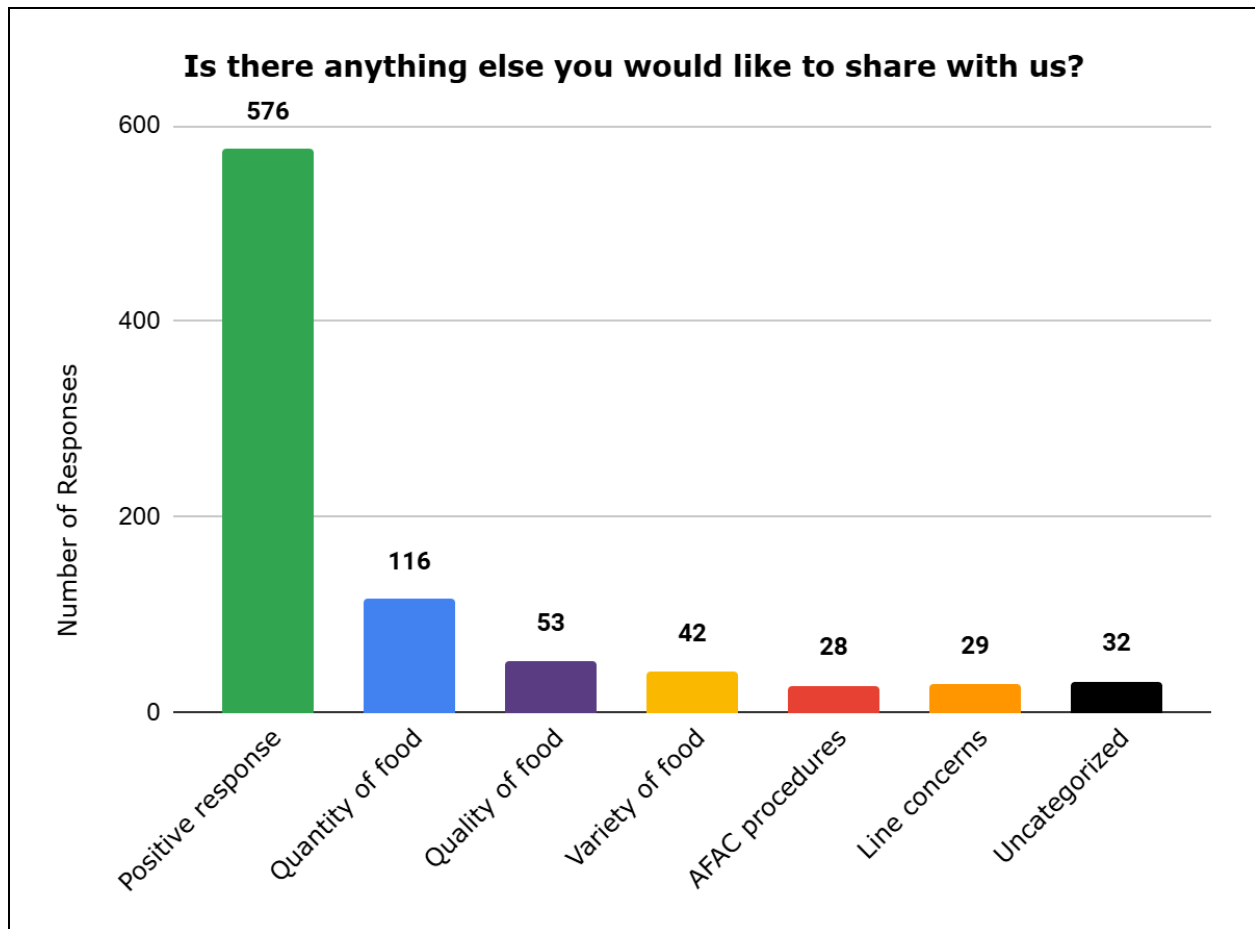
## Future Feedback

Clients were asked **"AFAC is always looking for ways to improve its services and raise awareness in the community. Your experiences are important to AFAC. Would you be willing to share your thoughts with an AFAC staff member?"** AFAC encourages clients to share feedback so as to learn from their lived experience. This provides staff with a deeper understanding of clients' specific needs and preferences, leading to the highest quality services for all. More than 300 survey participants indicated that they were willing to share their experiences with AFAC staff at a future time. Nearly 53% of those are clients who pick up groceries from Nelson. Approximately two-thirds of those who reported willingness to share their experiences indicated that their primary language is Spanish.

## Open Ended Comments

Clients were asked **"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."



## Positive Responses

The majority of comments (75.8% or 576 comments) included a positive response. Some of the positive comments include:

- "I feel very grateful to all the AFAC volunteers, they are very nice, generous, kind and I always receive the best service. Thank you."
- "All the food is good since it helps us with our personal nutrition." and
- "AFAC's home delivery program has allowed me to survive while on a severely limited budget as my medical expenses have increased. Because of AFAC, I am eating more vegetables than before."

## Quantity of Food

In terms of the quantity of food available for families at AFAC, clients' comments (15.3%) included:

- "I noticed that small and large families get the same, but extra milk. I have four kids and this won't last more than a few days."
- "Maybe bigger portions for clients that receive home deliveries, please" and
- "More quantity and variety of vegetables."

## Quality of Food

Comments that were categorized as Quality of Food (7.0%) included

- "The food is high quality,"
- "Sometimes the fresh fruit and vegetables go bad quickly," and
- "There are times when I get expired food."

## Variety of Food

Comments that were coded as Variety of Food (5.5%, down from 20.0% last year) included

- "I want the different choices at Nelson over here at my apartment building,"
- "Everything is good. Only on occasion, there is not much variety of food," and
- "Would like to switch milk with another food option since individuals do not drink that much milk (e.g. switch for beans)."

## AFAC Procedures

Comments about AFAC Procedures (3.7%) and Concerns about the Line (4.4%, mainly at the Nelson Street location) were separated during coding. Comments about AFAC procedures unrelated to the line included

- "Please add ADA doors - auto open/close at Nelson location,"
- "Sometimes, the chicken doesn't have an expiration date," and
- "I work weekdays so I come on Saturdays and the line is too long sometimes I feel I don't want to come 'cause the line is there a way you guys add more evenings or another location like this for pick up?"

## Line Concerns

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,

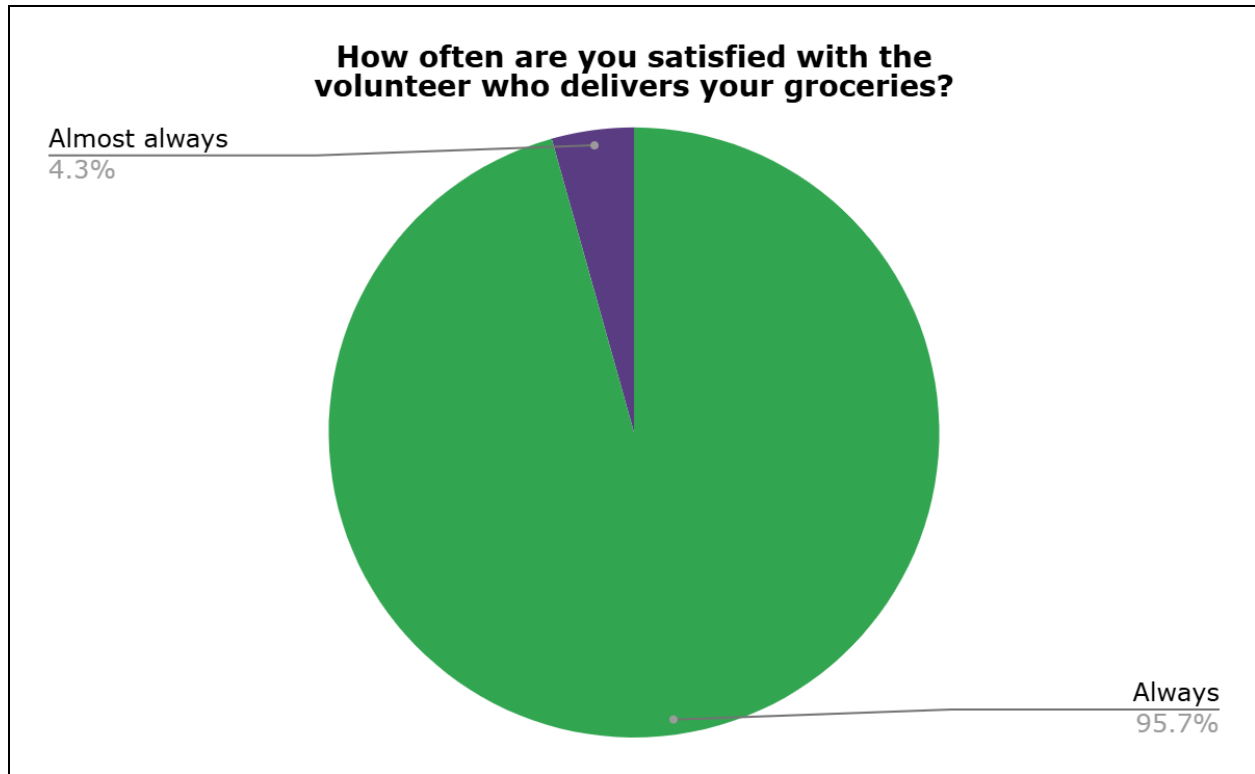
- "Sometimes there is disorder in the line and people cut in line. It would be good to maintain order in line,"
- "There should be a time of day for seniors and disabled people. Sometimes the line takes forever," and
- "The line and waiting period is orderly and well organized."

## Home Delivery Questions

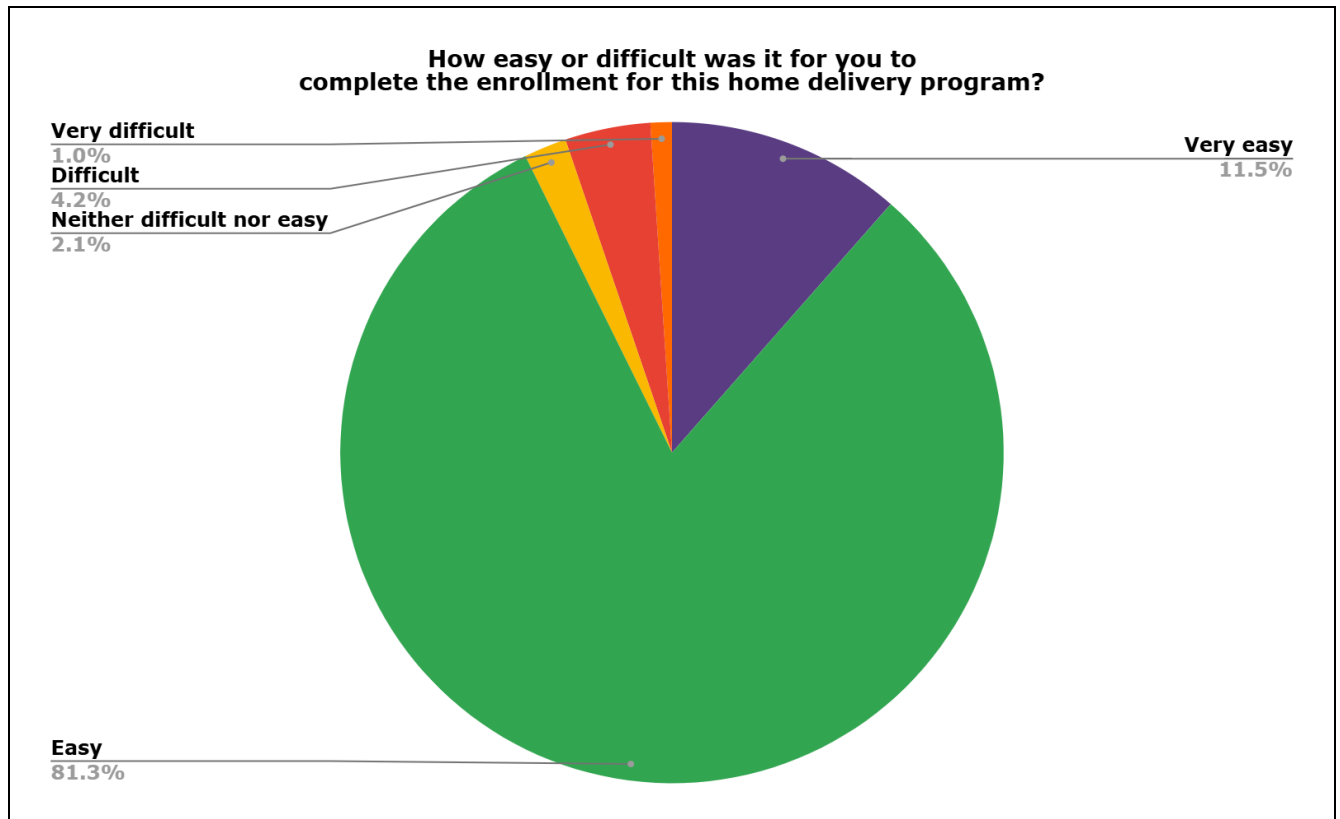
While there was some overlap of questions asked of clients who pick up groceries in-person and home delivery clients, some questions were specific to home delivery. As a uniquely vulnerable population, it is critical to assess home delivery clients' experience by phone and in-depth. At any given time, approximately 150 people receive deliveries from the Nelson location. Seven other sites conduct home deliveries to clients who cannot pick up groceries on their own. The other sites that conduct home deliveries are: The Carlin, Columbia Hills and Grove, Gilliam Place, Green Valley, The Shell, The Waypoint, and Woodbury Park & The Frederick.

Site Categories	# of survey participants	# of clients checked in	Response Rate
<b>All Home Delivery</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>40.4%</b>
Nelson	69	152	45.4%
The Carlin	4	13	30.8%
Columbia Hills/Grove	5	25	20.0%
Gilliam Place	3	5	60.0%
Green Valley	2	8	25.0%
The Shell	8	21	38.1%
The Waypoint	2	6	33.3%
Woodbury Park & The Frederick	3	6	50.0%

Home Delivery clients were asked **"How often are you satisfied with the volunteer who delivers your groceries?"** Of the 96 clients who answered this question, all of them were satisfied with the volunteer, 95.7% of them always being satisfied.

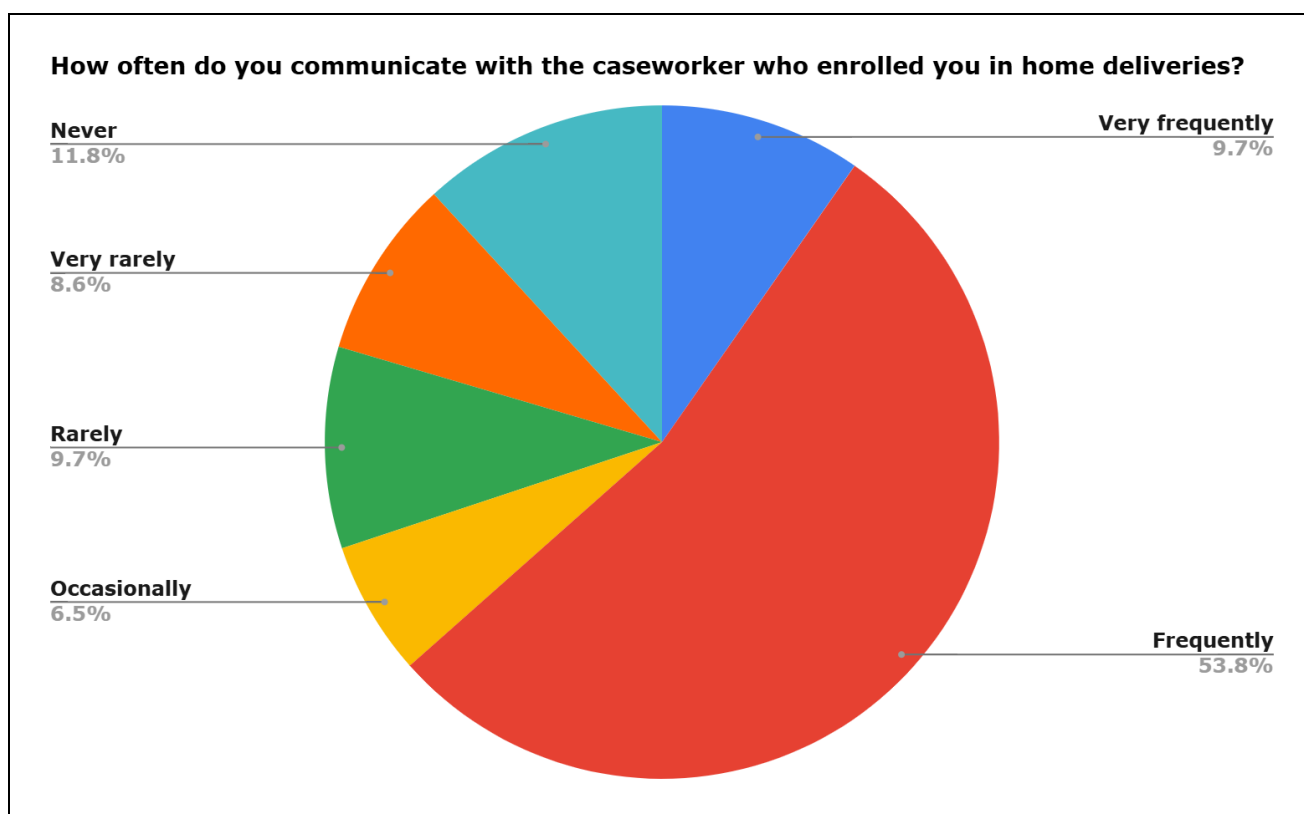


Home Delivery clients were asked **"How easy or difficult was it for you to complete the enrollment for this home delivery program?"** While 11.5% found it Very Easy, the majority of clients (81.3%) reported that it is easy.



Clients were asked, **“How often do you communicate with the caseworker who enrolled you in home deliveries?”** This was an open-ended question, which resulted in a wide variety of responses. Responses were categorized into “Very frequently,” “Frequently,” “Occasionally,” “Rarely,” “Very rarely,” and “Never.” Very frequently included people who communicated with their caseworker on a weekly basis. Frequently included those who reported communicating with their caseworker twice a month or monthly.

More than half of home delivery clients reported communicating with their caseworker at least monthly (9.7% very frequently and 53.8% frequently).



Home delivery clients were asked, **“Have your dietary needs changed within the last year?”** Of the 93 clients who responded, 66 (71.0%) reported that there were no changes in their dietary needs. Twenty-seven (29.0%) indicated that their dietary needs had changed during the last year. These dietary changes will be implemented in close collaboration with AFAC’s Client Services Program Manager.

## 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 has reported preliminary data with clients, stakeholders at each distribution site, and the Arlington County Food Security Coalition. The full survey report will also be published and shared 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 2025 Client Survey Infographic, go to the Appendix.*

Responses from the survey give AFAC an opportunity to reflect on how to improve the free grocery program. A few overarching themes stand out based on the survey analysis.



***While most clients prefer fresh fruits and vegetables, there are many who like some canned foods.*** Each year, clients provide feedback about canned goods, some indicating that they would like more fresh food and fewer canned items. AFAC staff have begun providing easy-to-make recipes using canned goods, which include information about the value of using canned goods when cooking. Including a question specifically about canned food gives staff valuable information that can guide canned food purchasing and guidance to people holding food drives.

***Transportation to AFAC distributions vary.*** AFAC's clients who pick up groceries from Senior Sites and Community Sites benefit from the groceries being delivered to the neighborhoods where they live, many of them only needing to take a short walk to get their groceries. Community sites, in particular, were opened strategically with equitable access to AFAC's groceries in mind. While it takes most clients a short time to get to their AFAC distribution, it is concerning that 23.7% of people who walk to Nelson take more than 30 minutes to arrive. This is an opportunity to encourage clients to use the bus and to advocate for free transportation to local food pantries.

***Many AFAC clients are willing to share their experiences with staff members.*** AFAC staff will reach out to clients via text message to thank clients for their interest in sharing their experiences with staff. Clients will be asked to complete a Google Form with questions about their comfort level speaking with AFAC staff, speaking with the press (anonymously or not), participating in a focus group, and being photographed for AFAC's fundraising materials.

***There are new opportunities to impact the experience of home delivery clients.*** AFAC requires that home delivery clients be recertified for home delivery twice a year, so it is surprising to know that some home delivery clients report never communicating with their caseworkers. AFAC staff can reach out to referring caseworkers regarding the recertification and can encourage home delivery clients to communicate with caseworkers if their needs change. Because almost one-third of home delivery clients had changes in their dietary needs, AFAC staff has already developed a menu request form to be completed twice a year.

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.

# Appendix

## 2025 Client Survey Questions (English)



### AFAC CLIENT FEEDBACK SURVEY 2025

The Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) needs your help to better serve our community!  
This survey is voluntary and anonymous. Your answers will not affect your ability to receive AFAC groceries.

1. How often do you feel welcome at AFAC? **\*Circle one.**

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never

2. How often do you believe that clients of all backgrounds are treated equally at AFAC? **\*Circle one.**

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never

3. How often are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC? **\*Circle one.**

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never

4. Sometimes, AFAC buys canned goods. Which canned foods do you like? **\*Check all that apply.**

i. Canned meat

- ☐ Tuna
- ☐ Chicken
- ☐ Vienna sausage
- ☐ Spam
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

iv. Canned vegetables

- ☐ Corn
- ☐ Green beans
- ☐ Mixed vegetables
- ☐ Tomatoes (diced, stewed, sauce, etc.)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

ii. Canned beans

- ☐ Black beans
- ☐ Kidney beans
- ☐ Garbanzo beans/chickpeas
- ☐ Northern beans
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

v. Canned fruit

- ☐ Peaches
- ☐ Pineapple
- ☐ Pears
- ☐ Fruit cocktail/Mixed fruit
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Canned soup

- ☐ Chicken noodle
- ☐ Vegetable soup
- ☐ Tomato soup
- ☐ Beef stew
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

vi. Other

- ☐ Broth
- ☐ Chili
- ☐ Chef Boyardee (ravioli, Spaghetti O's)
- ☐ Evaporated milk
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



5. How do you usually travel to this AFAC food distribution? **\*Choose one.**

- ☐ 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, retiro, Lyft, or Uber.
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. How long does it usually take you to travel to your AFAC food distribution? **\*Choose one.**

- ☐ less than 15 minutes
- ☐ 15 - 30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes - 1 hour
- ☐ more than 1 hour

7. AFAC is always looking for ways to improve its services and raise awareness in the community. Your experiences are important to AFAC. Would you be willing to share your thoughts with an AFAC staff member?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

*If yes, the survey volunteer has a small paper for you to complete, so that a staff member can contact you. Your survey responses will remain anonymous and your contact information will remain confidential.*

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

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*Thank You*



I want to share my experience  
with an AFAC staff member.

First and Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

AFAC Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# 2025 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. Please do not leave a callback number. If the client is not home on the second try, please do not leave a voicemail.

**Thank you for helping us better serve our community.**

1. What language was the survey in?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish

2. From which site is the delivery made?

- ☐ Nelson
- ☐ Cadence
- ☐ Carlin
- ☐ Columbia Hills & Columbia Grove
- ☐ Culpepper Garden
- ☐ Gilliam Place
- ☐ Green Valley
- ☐ Shell
- ☐ Springs
- ☐ Waypoint
- ☐ Woodbury Park & The Frederick

**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 (only after first call attempt):** *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.*

3. Client's Name \_\_\_\_\_

4. How often are you satisfied with the amount of food you get from AFAC?

- ☐ A. Always
- ☐ B. Almost Always
- ☐ C. Sometimes
- ☐ D. Almost Never
- ☐ E. Never

5. How often are you satisfied with the volunteer who regularly delivers your groceries?

- ☐ A. Always
- ☐ B. Almost Always
- ☐ C. Sometimes
- ☐ D. Almost Never
- ☐ E. Never

6. How easy or difficult was it for you to complete the enrollment for this home delivery program?

7. How often do you communicate with the caseworker who enrolled you in home deliveries?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Volunteer - Please add any additional information here:

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Have your dietary needs changed within the last year?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Volunteer - Please add any additional information here:

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What impact has AFAC's home delivery program had on your life?

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**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.*

# 2025 Survey Infographic

## AFAC 2025 Client Survey Results



# AFAC

1,962 AFAC clients participated (47.1% response rate)

### SATISFACTION

**97.6%** feel welcome at AFAC.  
↑ 1.1% from 2024

**95.7%** feel that clients of all backgrounds  
are treated equally at AFAC.  
↑ 0.7% from 2024

**90.7%** are satisfied with the amount  
of food they get from AFAC.  
↑ 4.4% from 2024

*I would like  
more variety.*

*Dear AFAC team,  
You do an incredible  
job! Thank you for  
helping us to survive.*

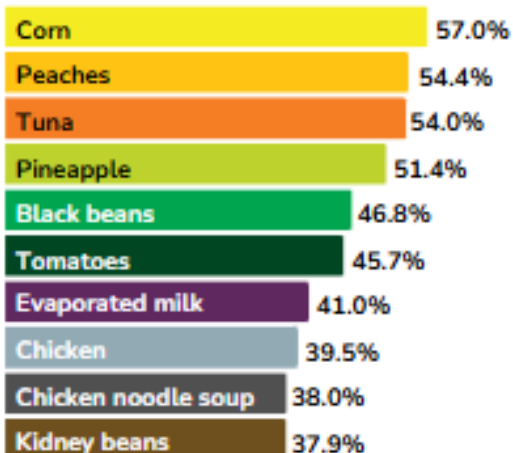
*I appreciate  
the volunteers.*

*Thank you!*

*The AFAC delivery program has a big  
impact on my life as I am able to secure  
nutritious meals while recovering from  
my kidney transplant.*

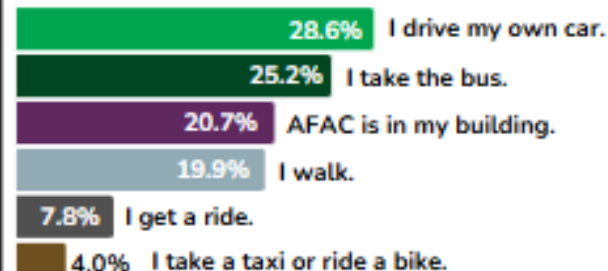
### PREFERENCE

Customers were asked about their  
favorite canned foods:



### CONVENIENCE

Customers were asked how they get to AFAC:



Customers were  
asked how long it  
takes them to get  
to their AFAC  
distribution:

