



Evaluation of free school meals for reception children

““owt for nowt”

Elaine Long
Bolton Council – Community Services

The Offer

- Options for a pilot – who, what and how long?
- Funding a healthy eating/school meals pilot – One Pot risk
 - forecasting - % uptake, part /full
 - including all costs
- Consider all factors – intake, religious, self – m'd schools
- Political Interface
- Other “players” – schools, media
- Evaluation and reporting

Reception Free Meal Pilot

- Reception paid customers only
- Original pot - £140k – final pot - £393k (growth potential)
- Full academic year – 2 x terms free and 1 x term at £1
- Cross party ownership
- Strong community profile – ticks strategic boxes
- High percent uptakes and excellent evaluation outcomes
- Planned for next academic year

Statistics to date

- 84% sustained meal uptake over two terms
- 130,000 more reception meals from free promotion
- Average 32-35% increase in the meals for this year group
- 5.8% contribution to NI52 data
- 70% uptake on the £1 pilot - ongoing
- Reported 2.2% increase in stat. free meal claims ??
- Saving to individual families £210 for 2 free terms and ~£51 – term 3 at £1 = £261 over the full year.



Objectives

- To measure the impact of trialling school meals to more customers
- To find out the main reasons for child NOT having a school meal
- To find out the main reasons for child having a school meal
- To find out the child's favourite and least favourite meal
- To investigate the perceived health benefits of school meals

The Results will be used to ...

- Evaluate the free school meal initiative
- Investigate menu suggestions
- Use information to encourage higher take-up of school meals

Fieldwork

- Self completion questionnaire :
 - posted to home addresses of all parents of reception class children
- Sent out – week commencing 24 November 2008
- Return date – Friday 5 December 2008
- Sent out 3,395 questionnaires and received 1025 completed returns
 - return rate of 30%
- Confidence interval of +/- 2.56%

This means we can be 95% certain that the **true** results (had all 3,395 parents answered the questions) would be + or – 2.56% of the survey results. i.e. had 50% of respondents said “yes” – the **real** answer would probably be between 47.44% and 52.56%
- Analysis has been undertaken by gender (52% males / 48% females) and by inside a neighbourhood renewal target areas (NRTA) (31%) and outside (69%)

Response by school (1)

School	Response rate	School	Response Rate	School	Response Rate
St Maxentius	60%	Green Fold	43%	St Matthews	33%
Beaumont	57%	St James Daisy Hill	43%	Horwich Parish	33%
Walmsley	55%	Claypool	43%	St Michael	33%
Markland Hill	53%	St Thomas, Cheq	43%	Ladybridge	33%
St Georges	51%	Egerton	41%	Pikes Lane	33%
St Brendans	50%	Thomasson Memorial	40%	Mytham	33%
St Peters, Smithills	50%	Plodder Lane	40%	High Lawn	33%
Eagley Infants	50%	Sharples	40%	St Johns, Turton	33%
St Thomas of Canterbury	49%	Highfield	39%	Blackrod C P school	33%
Westhoughton Parochial	48%	Sunning Hill	39%	St Andrews	33%
The Oaks	47%	St Mary's Horwich	37%	Lever Edge	32%
St Saviours	45%	Clarendon	36%	Harwood Meadows	30%
St Bernards	44%	Blackrod Church	35%	Our Lady of Lourdes	30%
Heathfield	43%	St Peter & Pauls	34%	Chorley New Road	30%
Lostock	43%	Blackshaw	33%	St Ethelberts	30%
Eatock	43%	Holy Infants	33%	St Teresa's	30%

Response by school (2)

School	No. Received	School	No. Received	School	No. Received
Brandwood	30%	St Bede	23%	St Catherine's	17%
Hardy Mill	30%	Bishop Bridgeman	22%	Ladywood	17%
Bowness	29%	Kearsley West	21%	Lord Street	17%
St Peter's Farnworth	28%	St Stevens & All Martrys	21%	Brownlow Fold	17%
St Thomas, Halliwell	28%	The Valley	20%	Haslam Park	17%
Queensbridge	27%	Devonshire Road	20%	Top O'th Brow	17%
Red Lane	27%	Moorgate	20%	SS Osmand & Andrew	16%
Leverhulme	27%	St Gregorys	20%	Masefield	15%
William of York	27%	St Matthews Bolton	20%	Gilnow	14%
St Stephens Kearsley	27%	Tonge Moor	20%	Church Road	13%
Spindle Point	26%	Washacre	20%	Cherry Tree	11%
The Gates	26%	SS Simon & Judes	20%	St Columba's	11%
Sacred Heart	24%	Oxford Grove	20%	All Saints	10%
Johnson Fold	23%	St Josephs	19%	St Mary's Deane	10%
Gaskell	23%	St Johns Kearsley	19%	St James (Farnworth)	9%
St Pauls	23%	Bolton Parish Church	18%	Castle Hill	3%
Prestolee	23%				



Free school meal trial

Free school meal trial

Are you aware that the school your child attends is currently providing free school meals for reception children? (Base - 1014)



Does your child currently have ... (Base - 1013)

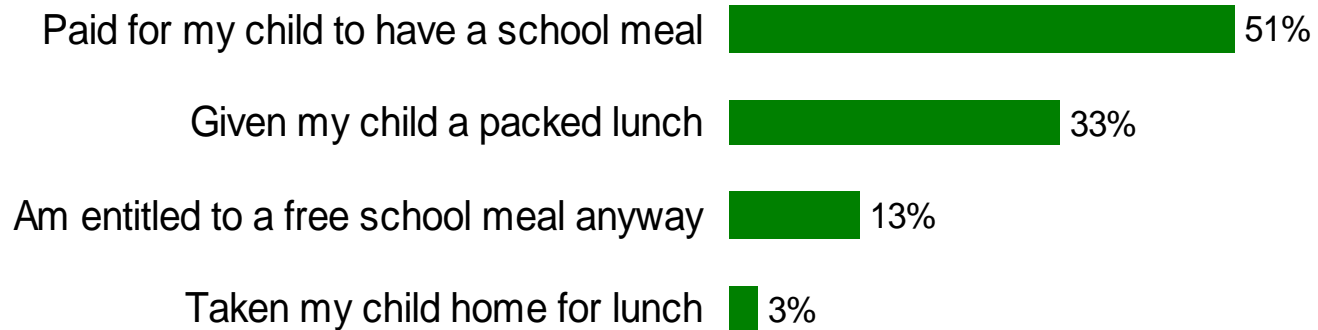


During the trial period has your child had a school meal? (Base - 1018)

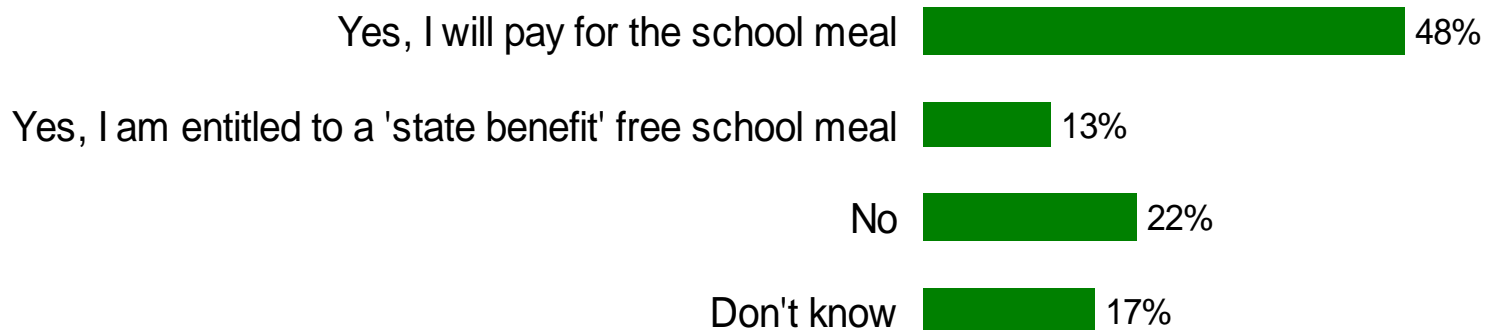


Free school meal trial

If your child had not been offered a FREE school meal, what would you have done? (Base = 938)



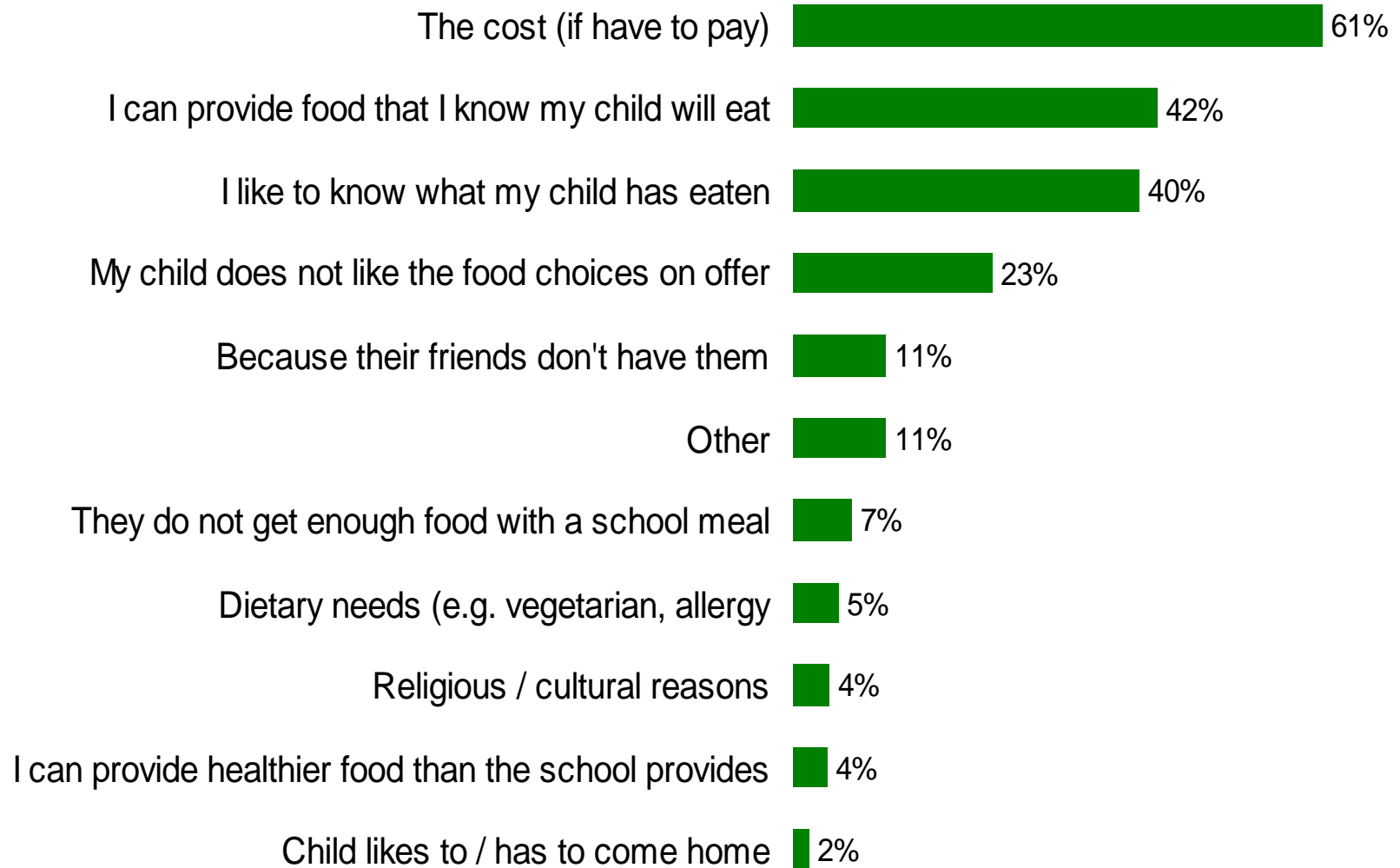
Will your child have school meals after the free trial has ended? (Base = 1005)





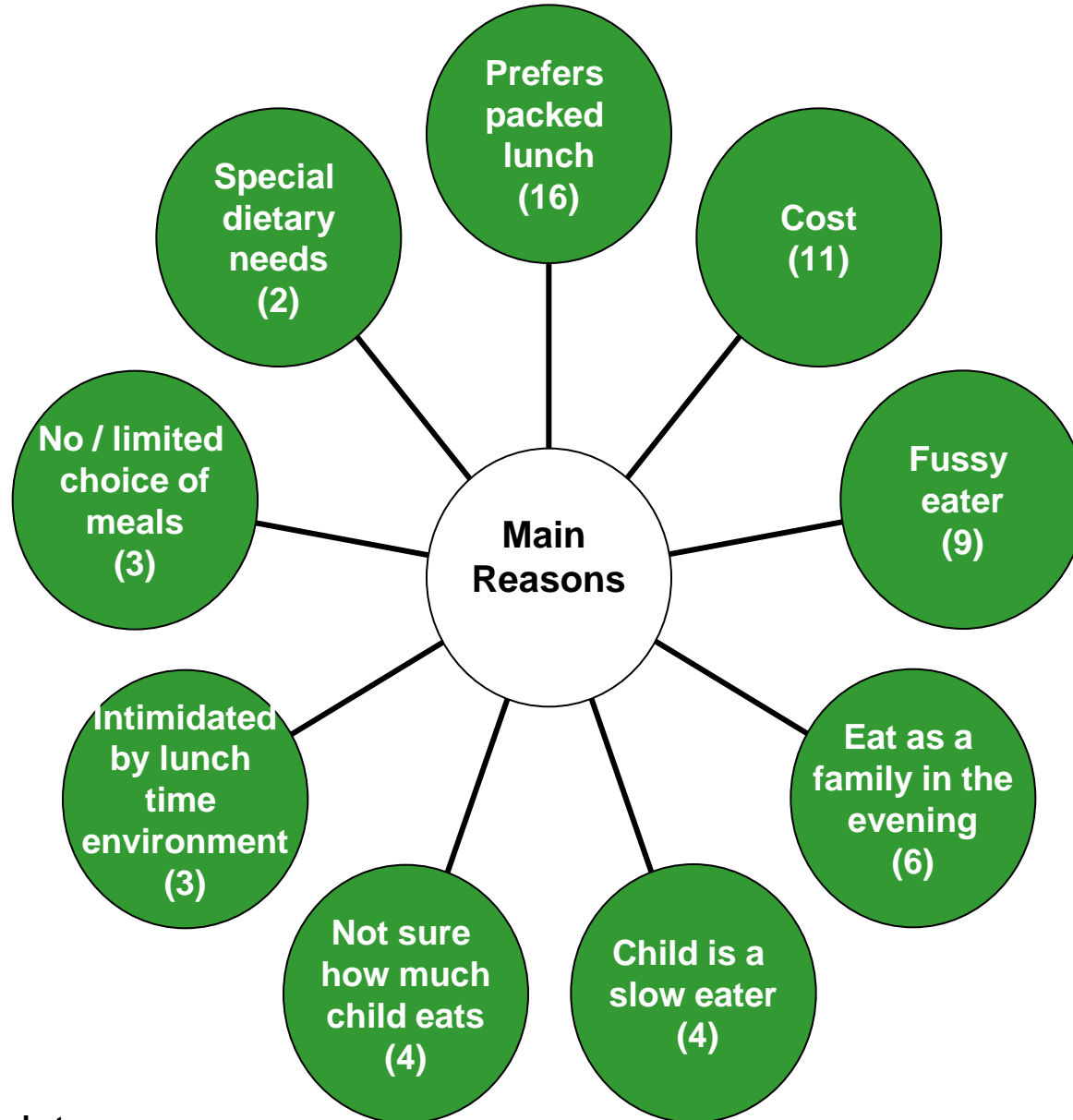
Why choose not to have school meals

What are the MAIN reasons for your child NOT having a school meal?



Base: 362 – respondents could tick more than one option, so the results do not add up to 100%

Other reasons not to have a school meal?



Number of responses in brackets

Comments – reasons why my child does NOT have a school meal

We eat a cooked main meal at home in the evening together

My child does not say how much he has eaten so I am not sure what he's had

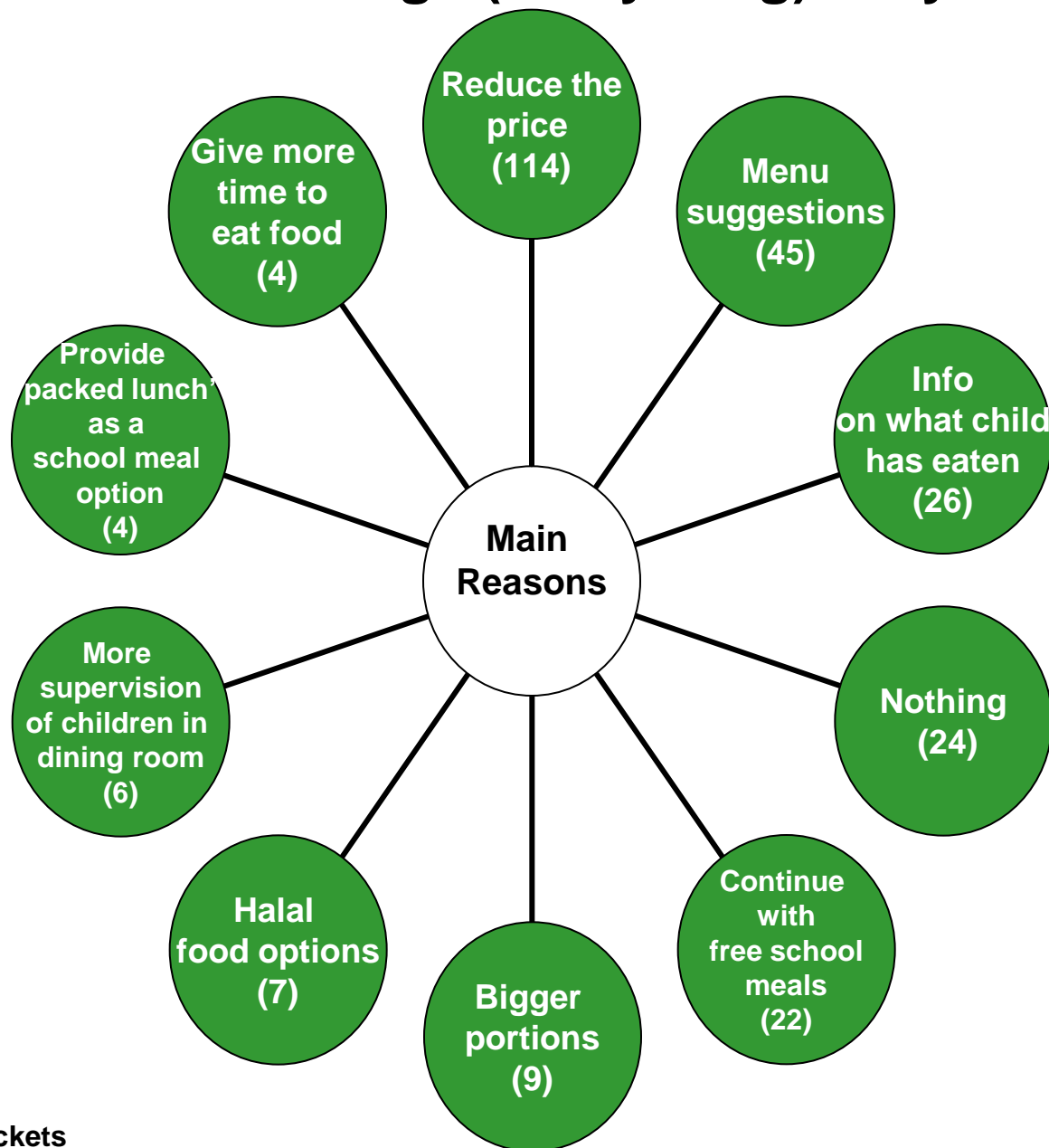
For three children it is very expensive

My child is a very fussy eater

On packed lunches I can monitor what my child has eaten

My child finds it difficult to cope with the busy, noisy, environment of the school canteen

What would we need to change (if anything) for your child to have a school meal?

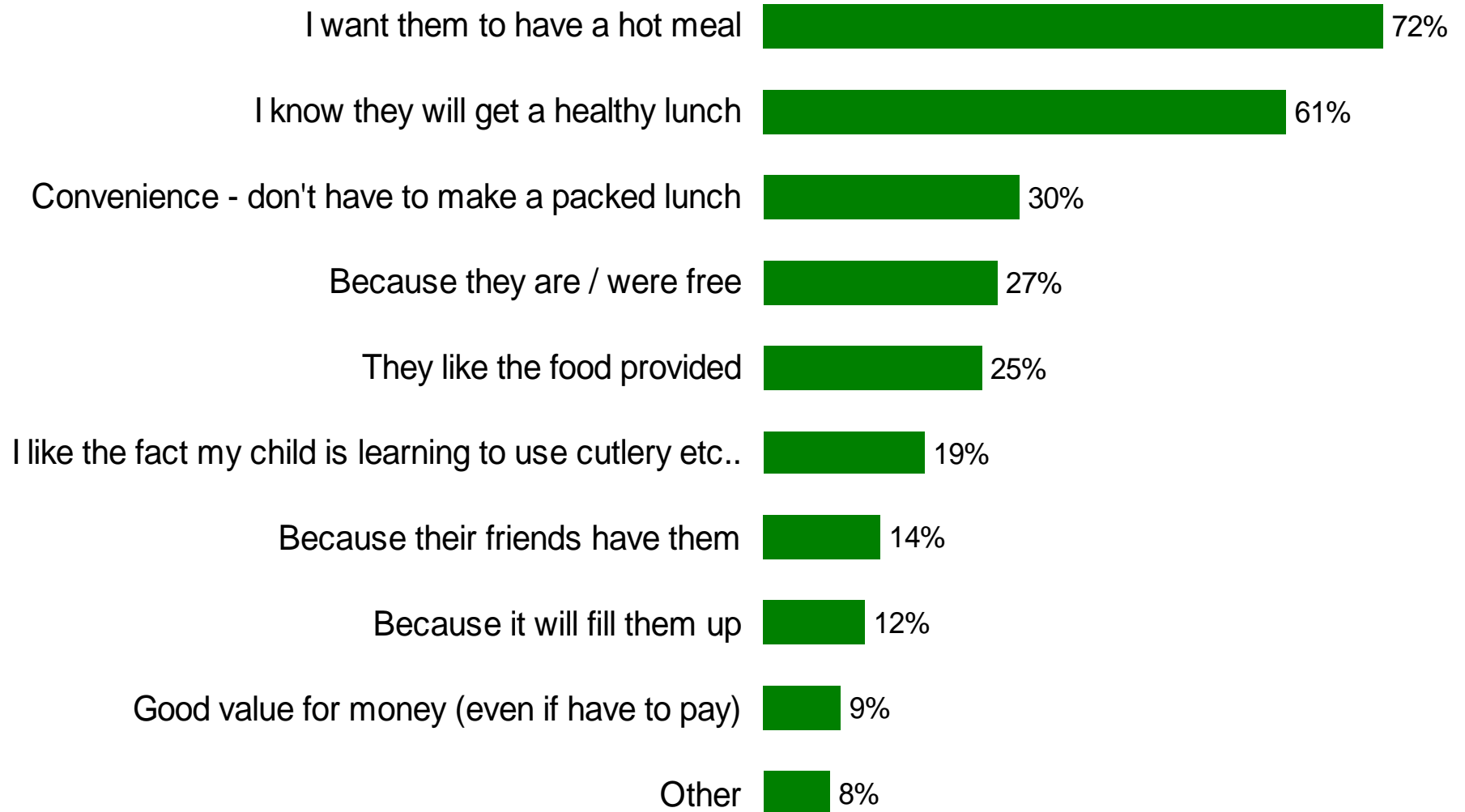


Number of responses in brackets



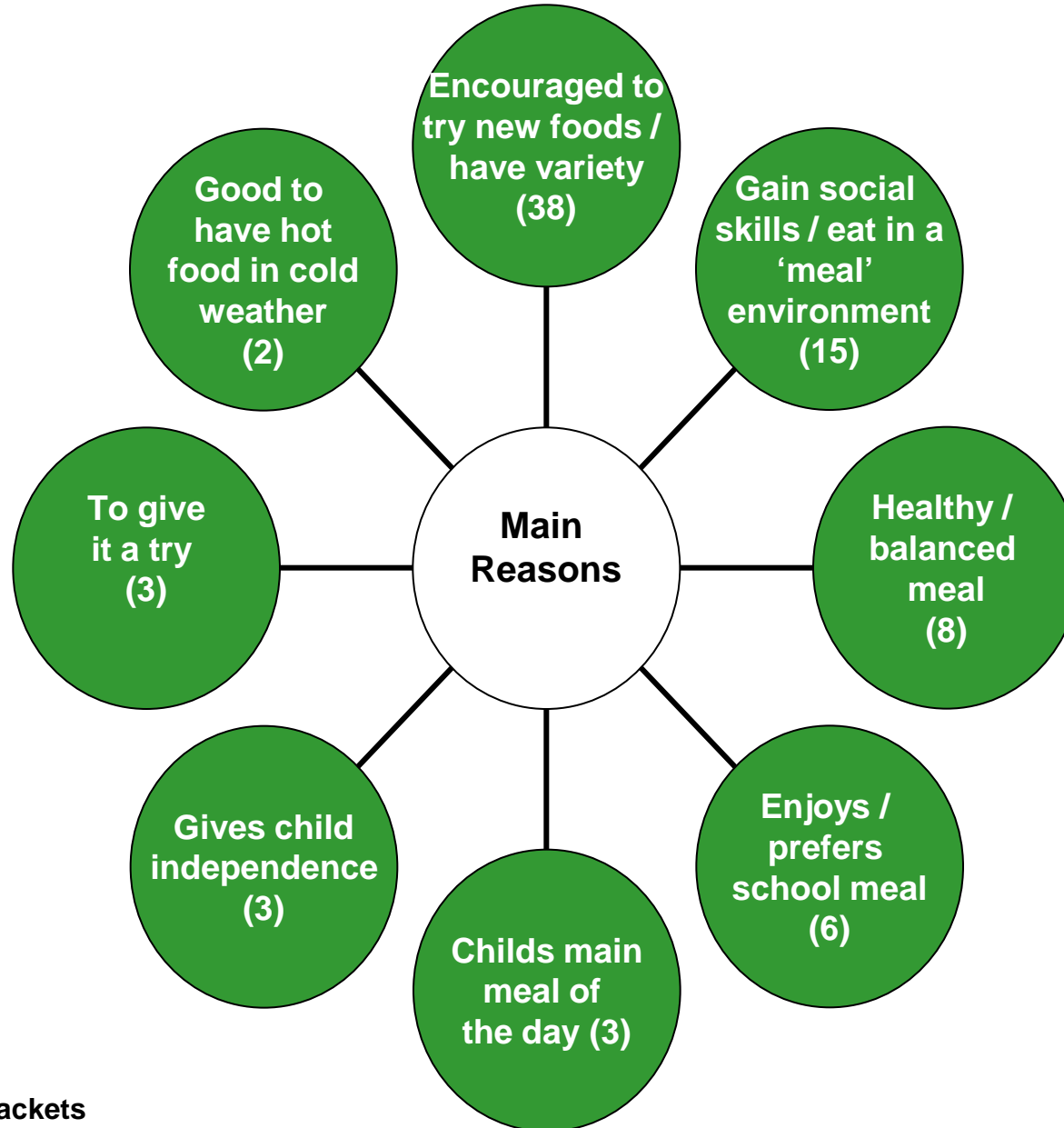
Impact of having school meals

What are the MAIN reasons for your child having a school meal?



Base: 853 – respondents could tick more than one option, so the results do not add up to 100%

Other reasons to have a school meal?



Number of responses in brackets

Comments – reasons why my child has a school meal

It encourages my child to try different foods

Full range of dietary essentials – cannot be matched by a packed lunch

They learn social skills while they eat

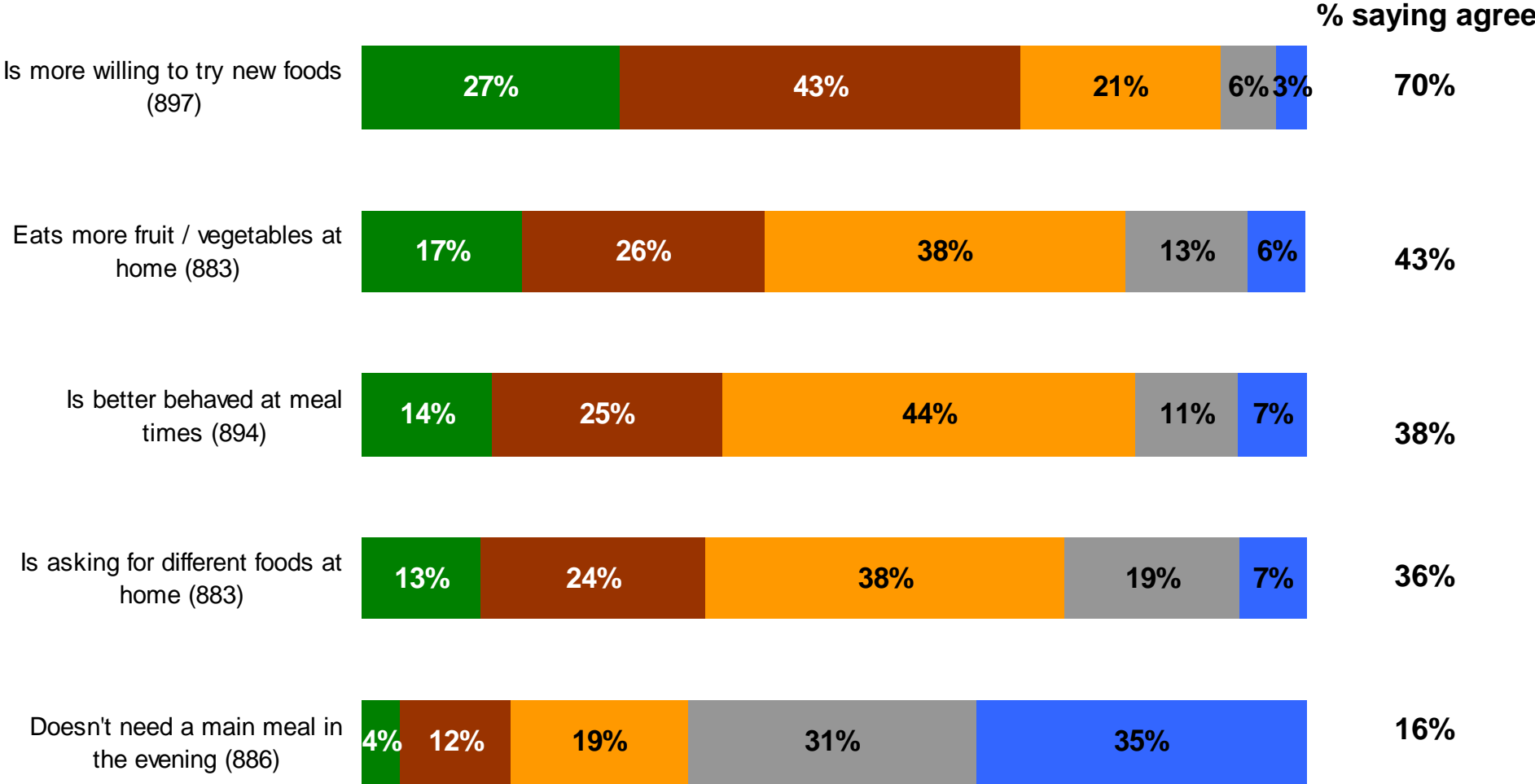
Variety – kids don't want to eat sandwiches every day

My child goes to after-school club so lunch is his main meal of the day

The food is freshly prepared whereas packed lunches are made hours (or even night) before

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your child having school meals has meant YOUR child

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Tend to agree
 ■ Neither agree or disagree
 ■ Tend to disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

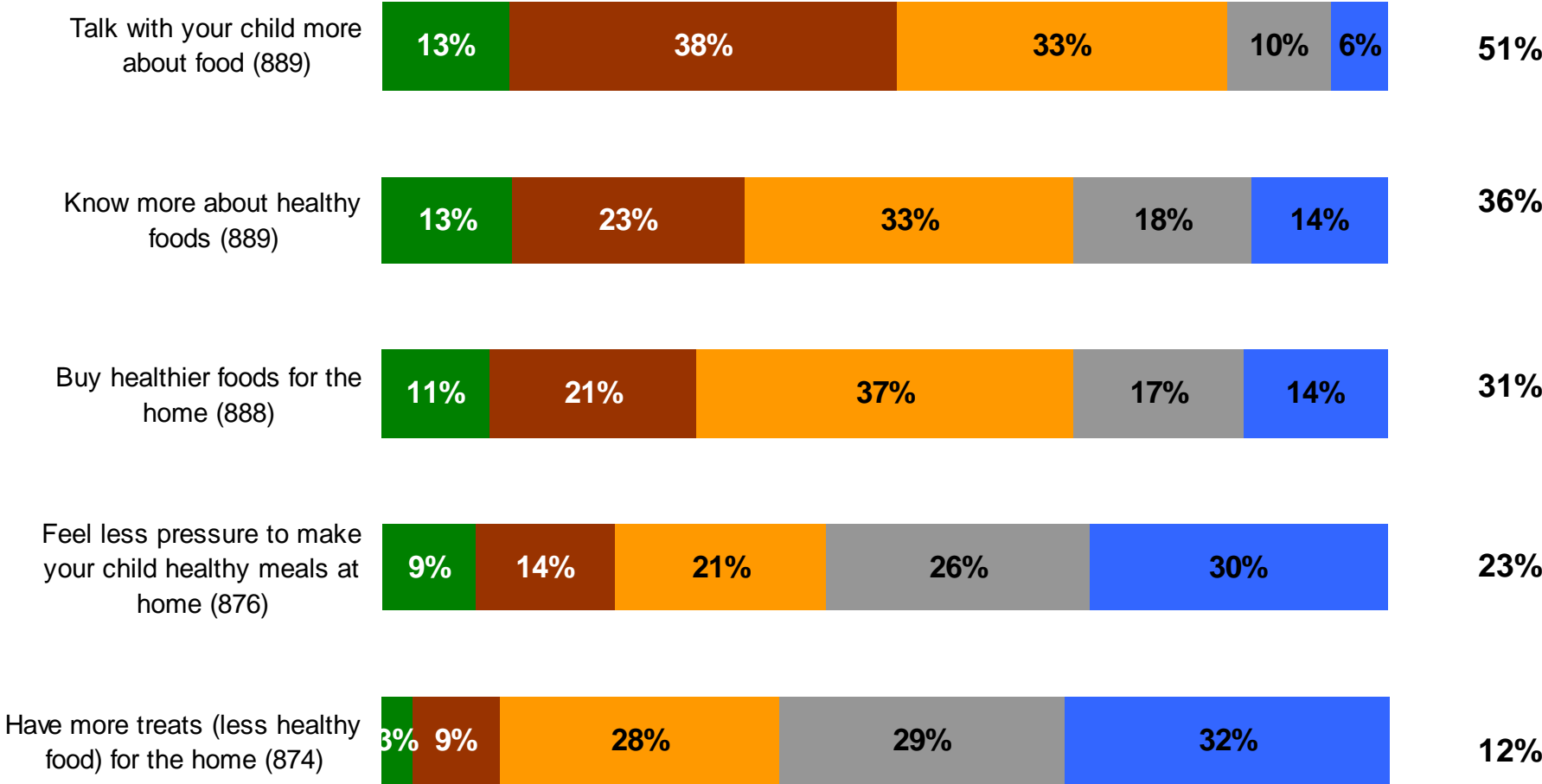


Base: (in brackets)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your child having school meals has meant YOU

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Tend to agree
 ■ Neither agree or disagree
 ■ Tend to disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

% saying agree



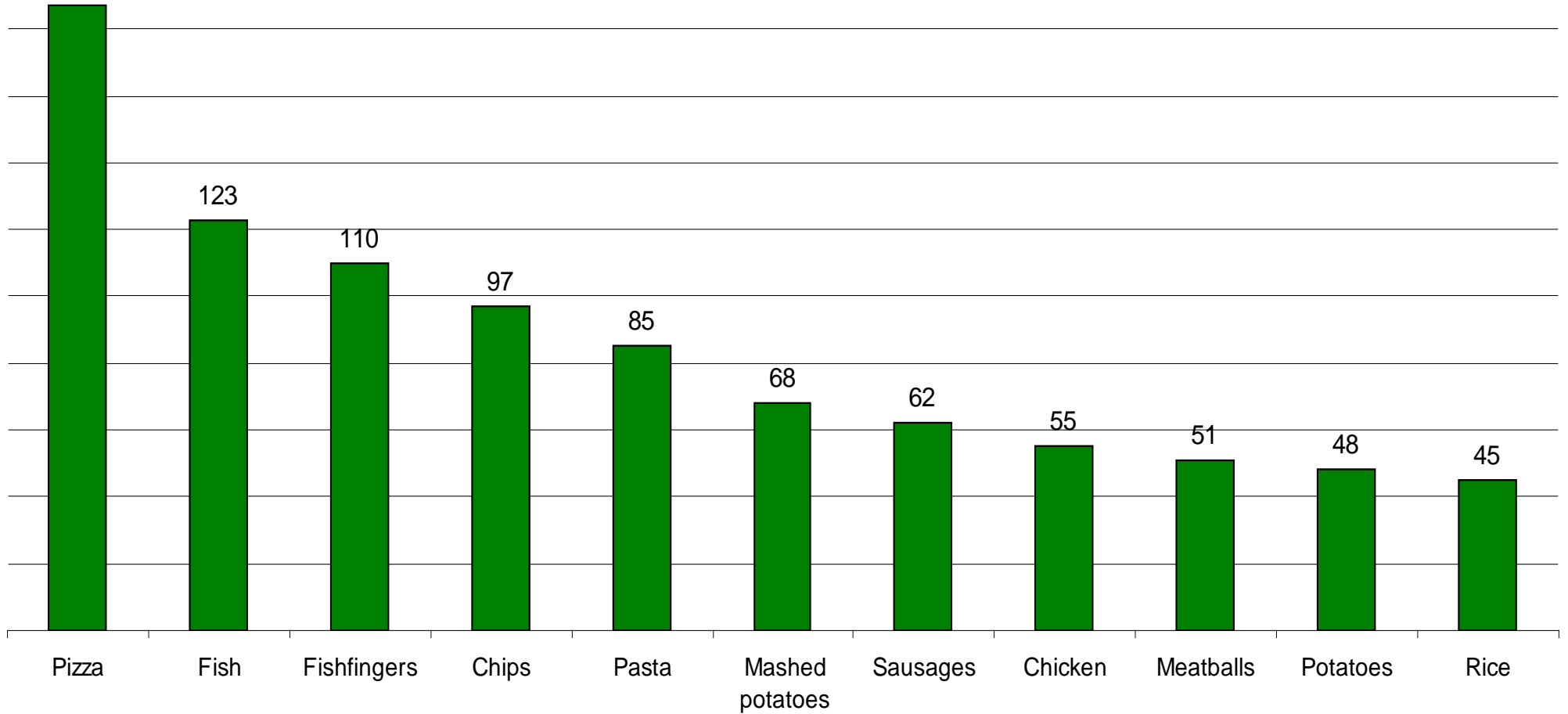
Base: (in brackets)

What school meal does your child like the MOST?

Most mentioned food



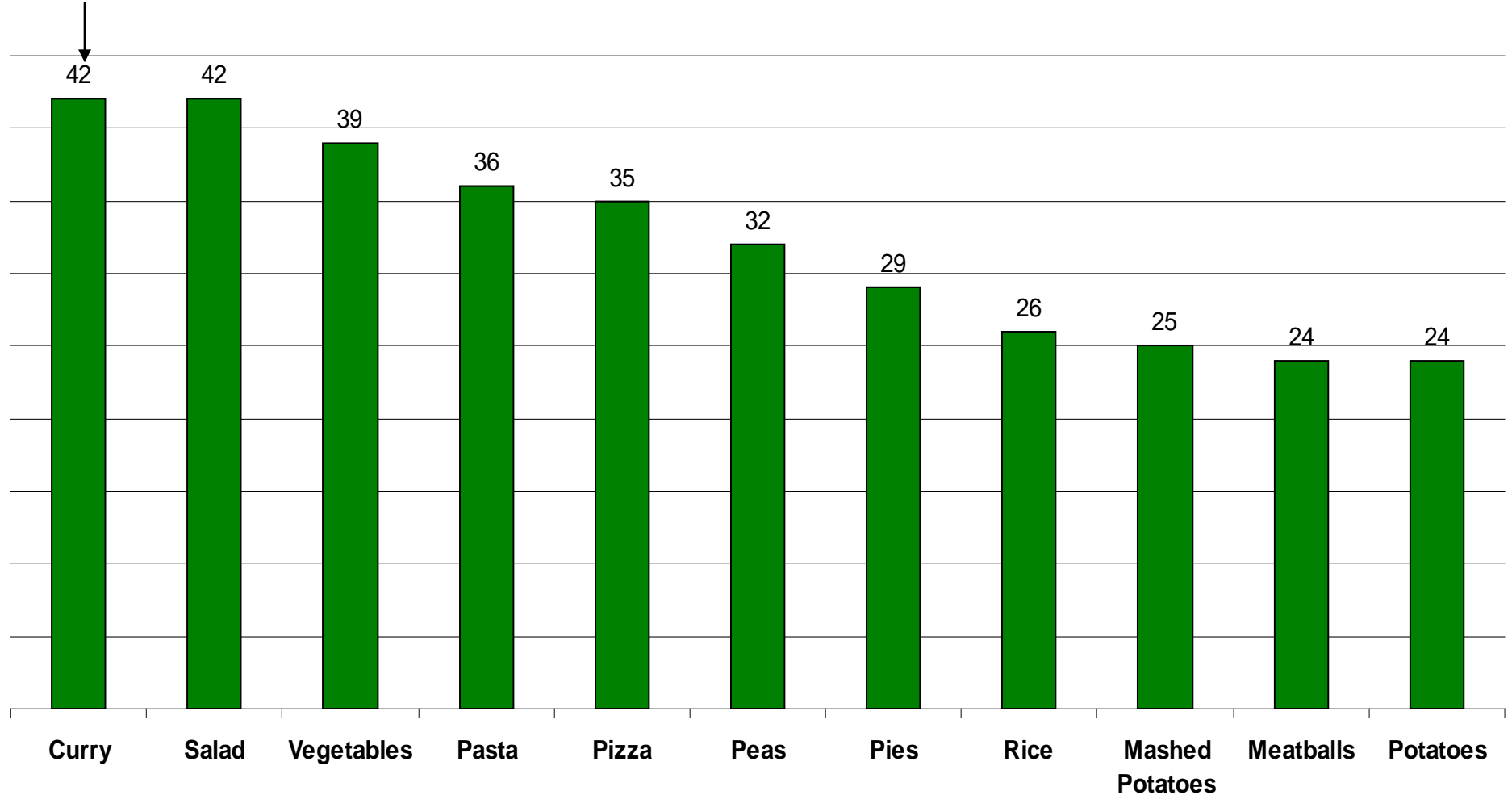
187



The chart only includes the top 11 most mentioned foods

What school meal does your child like the LEAST?

Most mentioned food

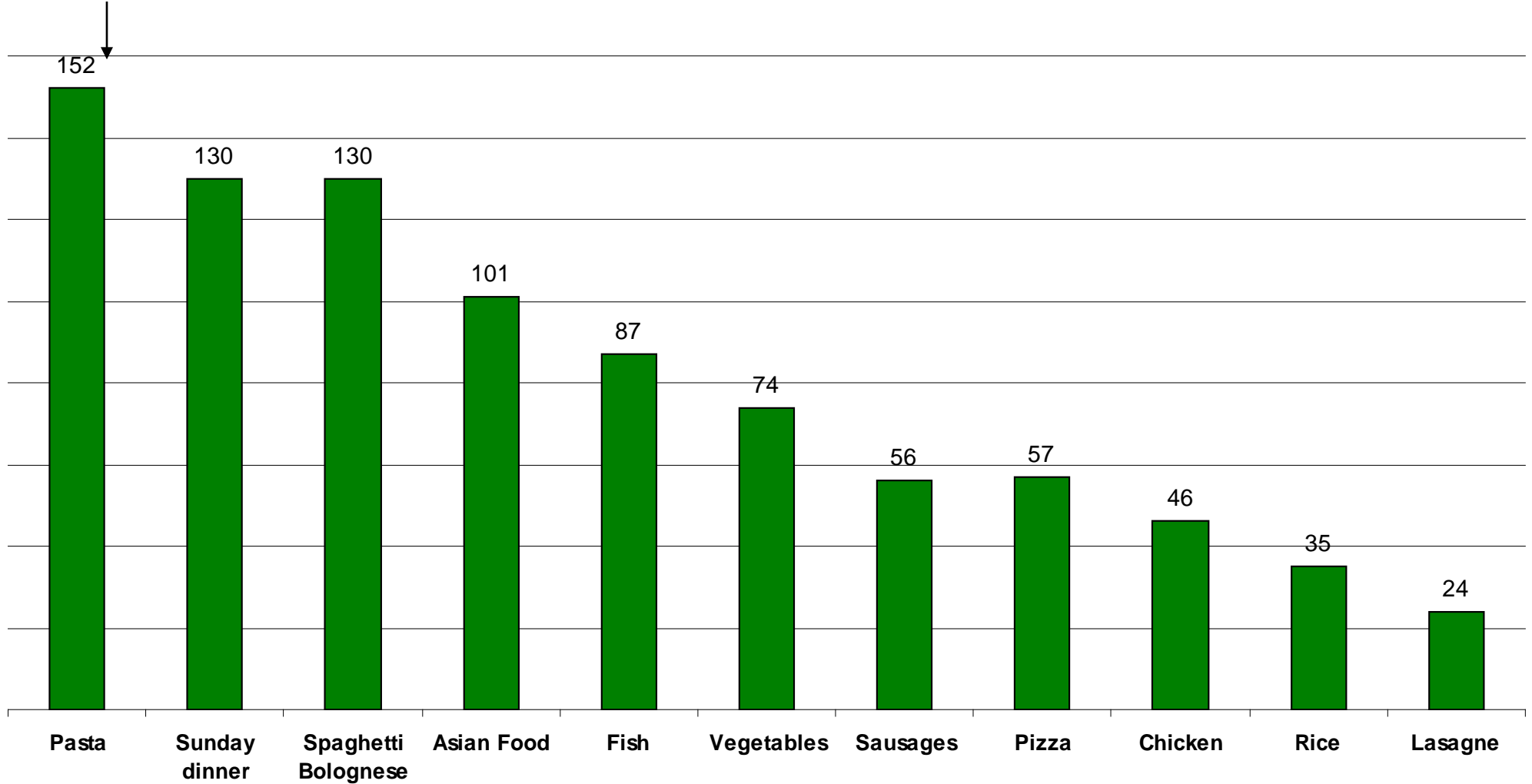


Additionally, out of 723 respondents, 57 stated that their child **did not dislike** any school meals, and several respondents added that their children enjoyed all school meals.

The chart only includes the top 11 most mentioned foods

What is your child's favourite meal at home?

Most mentioned food



The chart only includes the top 11 most mentioned foods



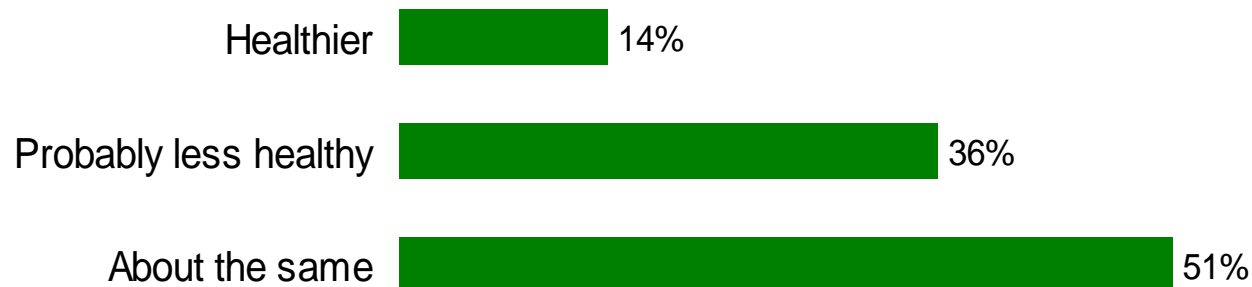
Health impacts of school meals

Health impacts (1)

Do you think the school meal is healthy? (Base = 1000)

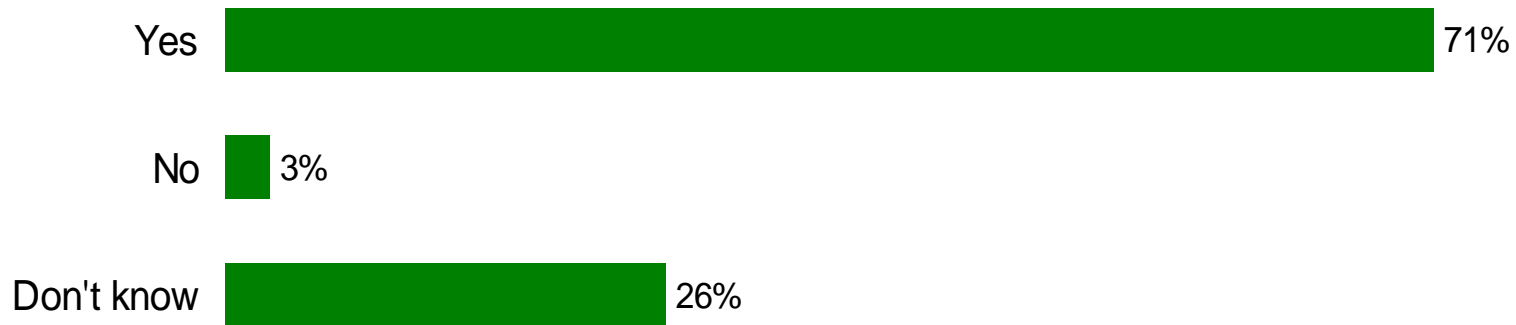


Do you think the alternative packed lunch you would give them would be....?
(Base = 995)



Health impacts (2)

Does your child attend a school which is part of the “Healthy Schools Programme”? (Base = 1003)



Are you aware that there is a government legislation regulating healthy school meals? (Base = 1001)



Is there anything else you would like to say about the effect of free school meals on your child, you or your family?

Positive Comments

Changing Alfie to school dinners instead of pack lunches is the best thing I did... he's a fussy eater and I was worried he wouldn't enjoy them – but he looks forward to lunch time and will now try new foods at home – Thanks!

Excellent, can assess if your child will enjoy school dinners without the cost and then make a decision based on how well they have adapted to school dinners

Jasmine has enjoyed eating school dinners and her appetite and food choices have increased since starting school

Super idea! encourages healthy eating, choice and friendships, manners and social skills

My child gets a hot meal and stays with her friends, gives her courage / confidence and to be

A fantastic start to the school year, helped us save money, be organised in the mornings and my child is eating a range of different healthy foods – thank you!

Is there anything else you would like to say about the effect of free school meals on your child, you or your family?

Negative Comments

Child too young to even remember what he's had for lunch today ...therefore I've no feedback as to what he's eaten and how healthy it was

Children having a packed lunch eat in their classroom so my daughter wants a packed lunch ...to be with her friends

My son tells me he has a desert / cake every day ... this should be limited

Healthy school meals is a fantastic idea ... but unfortunately my 5 year old will not eat foods such as curry, lasagne, wraps etc..

Harry enjoyed the meals – but was starving when I picked him up from school ... so he's now on packed lunch

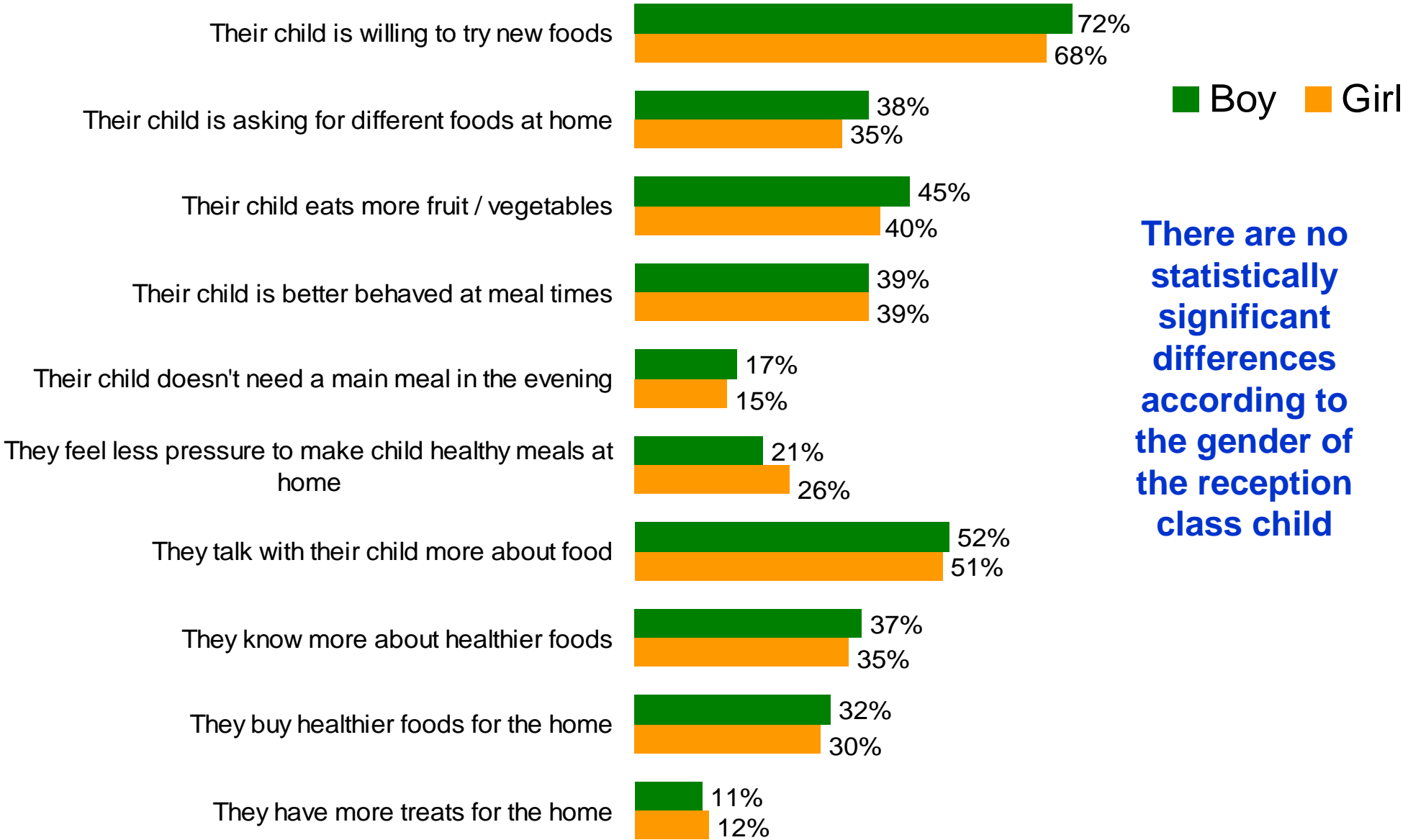
I think they are too young be given so much choice of food...I would love my child to continue with school meals but simply can't afford them



Extra analysis

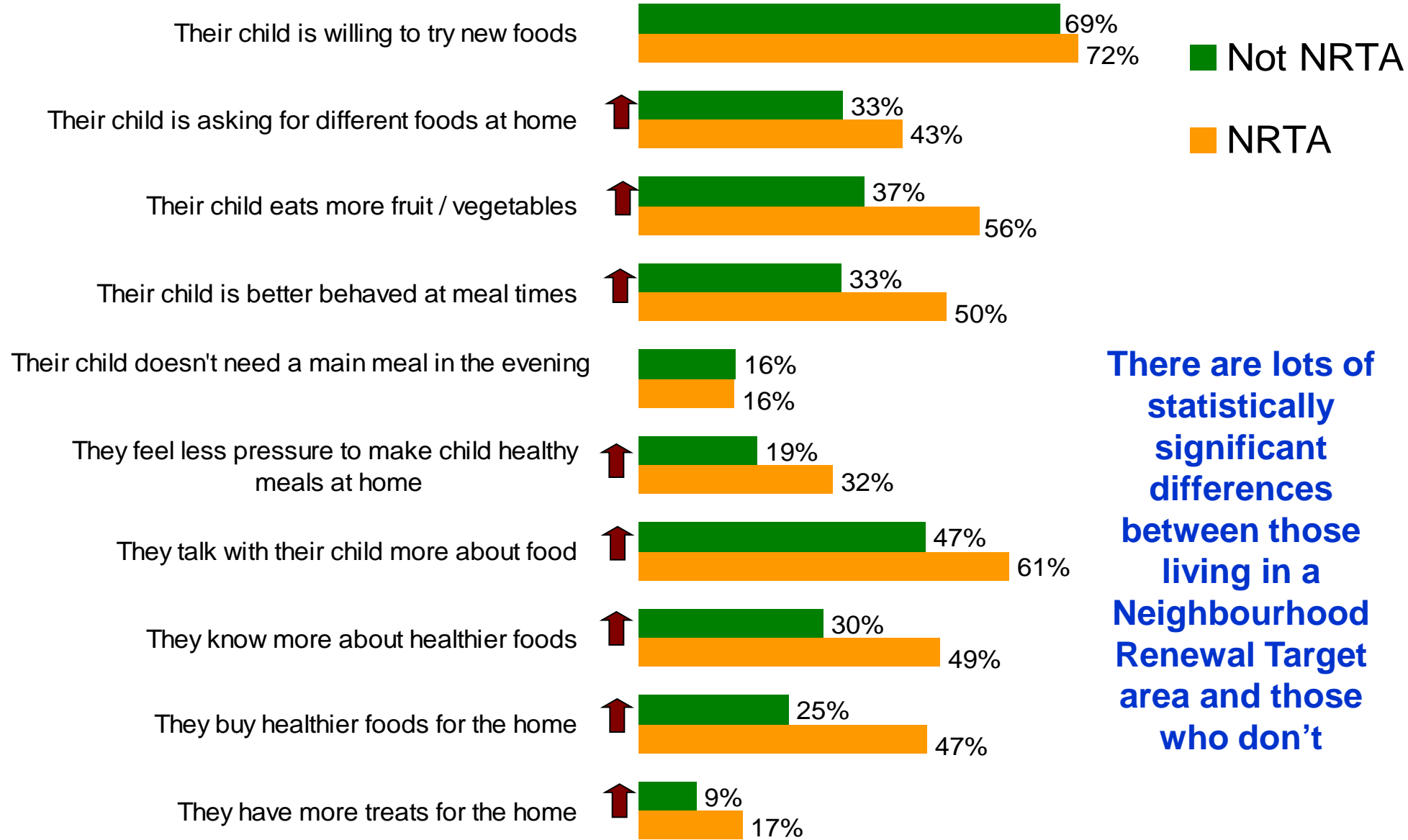
**By gender of child and whether inside or
outside of Neighbourhood Renewal Target
Area (NRTA)**

% of respondents who agree that school meals has meant.....



There are no statistically significant differences according to the gender of the reception class child

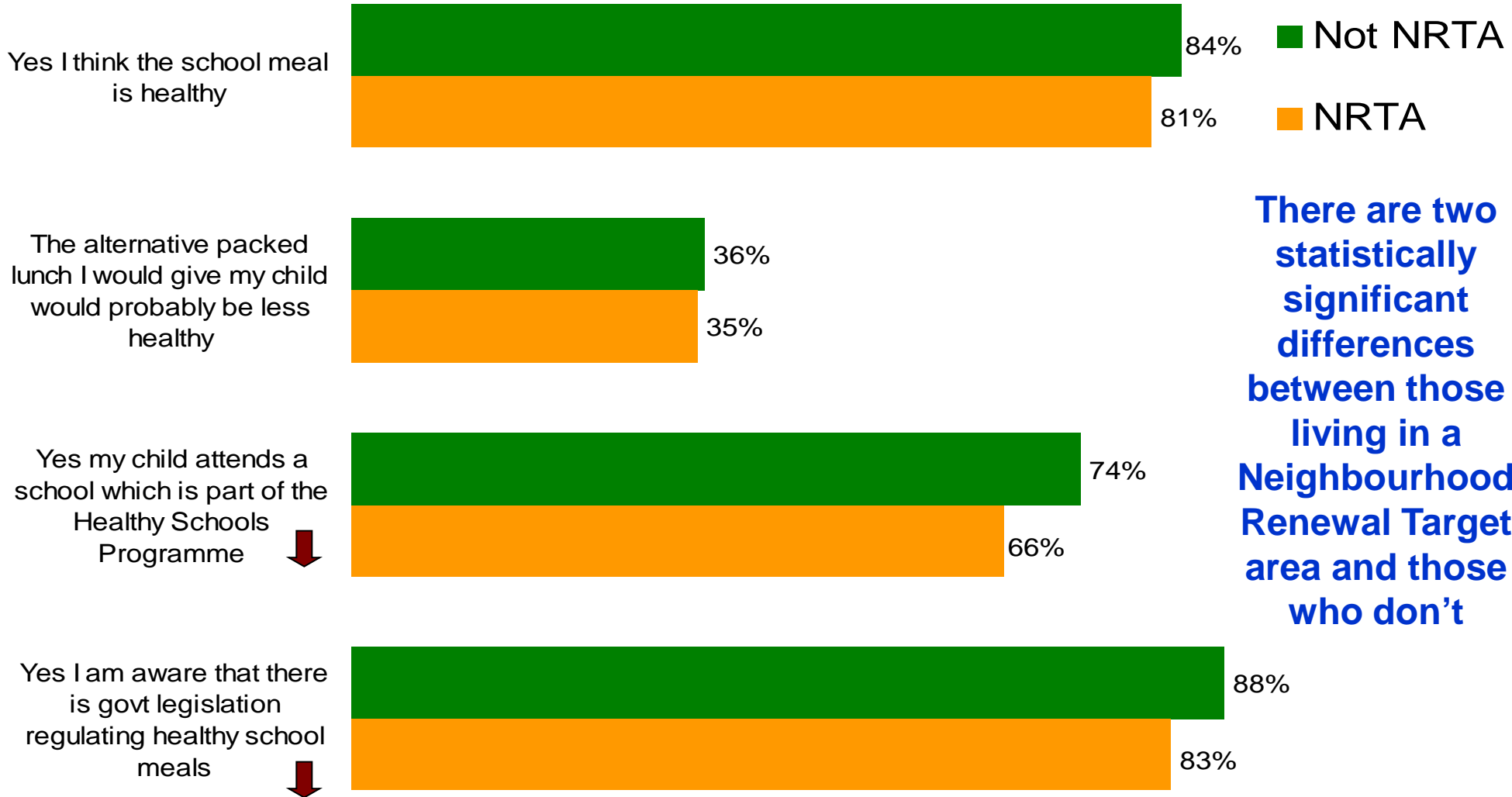
% of respondents who agree that school meals has meant.....



There are lots of statistically significant differences between those living in a Neighbourhood Renewal Target area and those who don't

↑ NRTA – significantly higher

Health impacts of school meals



↓ NRTA – significantly lower



Conclusions

Conclusions

- Good response rate to survey – 30%
- High awareness (99%) of free school meal trial –
- High take-up (87%) of free school meals
- If free school meals had not been available:
 - 51% would have paid to have school meal
 - 33% would have given their child a packed lunch
- Main reasons for child **NOT** having school meal:
 - 61% said it was the cost
 - 42% said they can provide food that know their child would eat
 - 40% said they like to know what their child has eaten
- Main reasons for child **HAVING** school meal:
 - 72% want their child to have a hot meal
 - 61% said they know their child will get a healthy lunch

Conclusions

- 70% agree that having school meals has meant their child is more **willing to try new foods**
- 43% agree that having school meals has meant their child eats **more fruit and vegetables** at home
- 51% agree that school meals has meant they **talk more** with their child about food
- 83% think the school meal is **healthy**
- 36% say the alternative packed lunch they would give them would probably be **less healthy**
- There is high awareness (71%) of the **healthy schools** programme
- There is high awareness (86%) that there is **government legislation** regulating healthy school meals
- There are some statistically significant differences between the answers from those who live in a NRTA and those who don't

Next steps

- **Phone calls** with school secretaries to ask about 'environmental' factors which may influence school meal take-up e.g. whether packed lunch and school meals children sit together, whether teacher sits with children etc.
- **Wider survey** (value for money survey) with a sample of parents of primary school children (except reception) and secondary school pupils to investigate what would encourage take-up of school meals
- **Discussion with reception class teachers** to explore any behavioural impacts of the free-school meal trial (would suggest leaving this until the end of the trial to see if teachers notice a deterioration in the behaviour of the children)



Going Forward

- Next Year
- Hindsight and reflection

Thank you for Listening