

LACA

the school food people

COST OF LIVING & SUPPLY CHAIN SURVEY

Catering

MAY 2022



WHAT ARE SCHOOL CATERERS TELLING US?

Colleagues will know that over the last year or so we have undertaken a number of snapshot surveys in relation to the supply chain and the effect on the school food provision across the country.

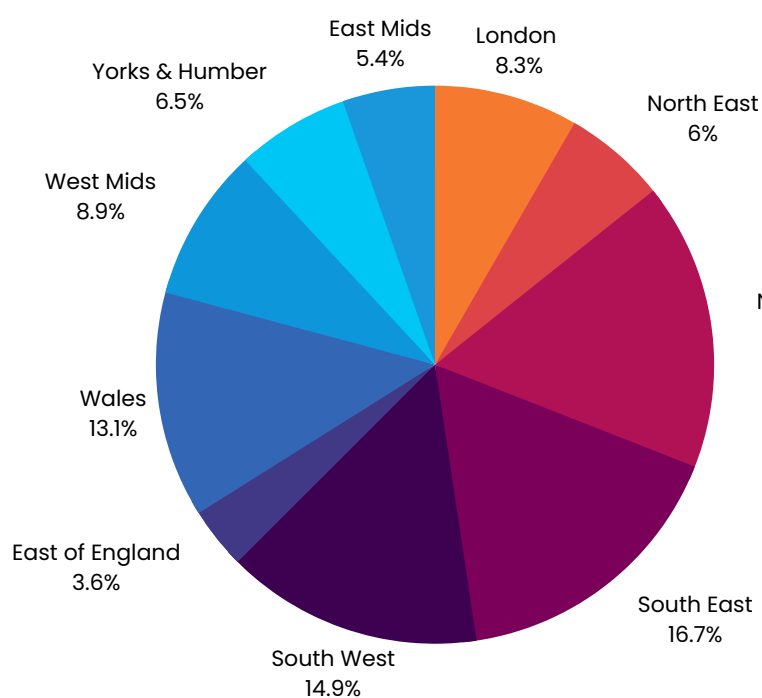
We promised to undertake a further survey to reassess the situation, and this has proved even more vital now post-COVID and with the current cost of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine further affecting supply and prices.

LACA, the School Food People, are here to support members and the results of this survey will support our campaign to highlight the issues being experienced by all school food providers and schools and inform Governments about actions needed to protect the industry, feeding children and the jobs of the school food workforce and wider supply chain.

Our colleagues in ASSIST FM have also undertaken this survey in Scotland.

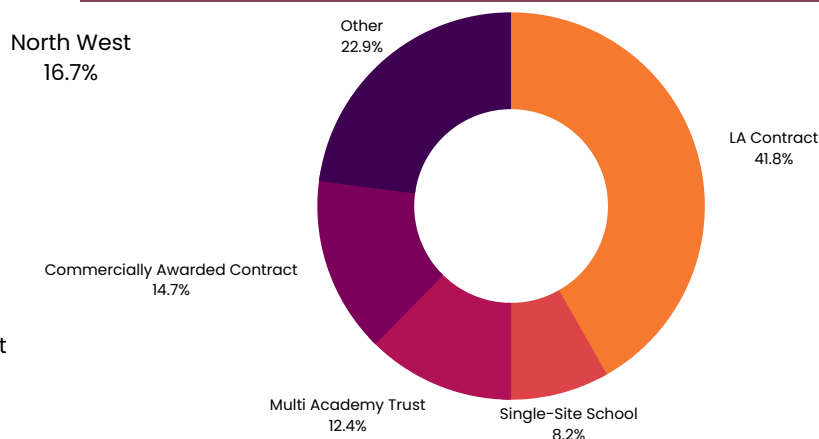
The results of this survey have been shared with the BBC.

All returns have been treated as anonymous and confidential, and any data shared has been anonymised.



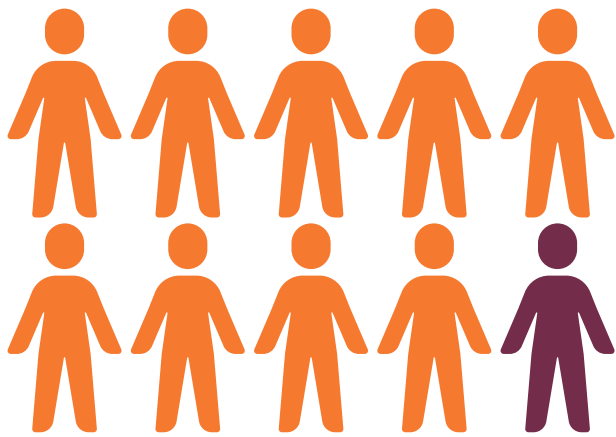
168 respondents completed the survey across England and Wales from a variety of provider types and sizes.

16 of these providers provided additional detail to tell us that collectively they cover 2,632 schools and 722,000 pupils daily.

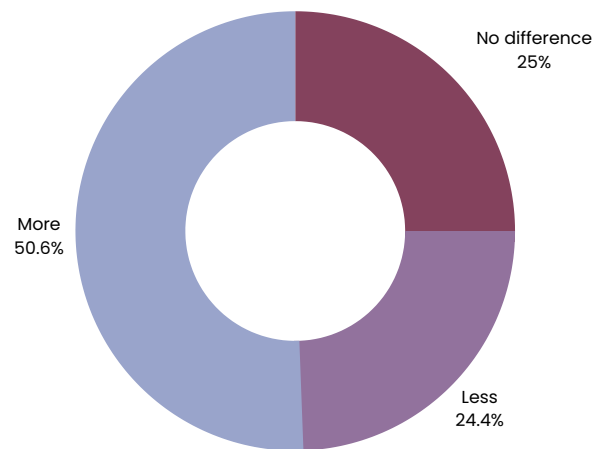


THE DETAIL

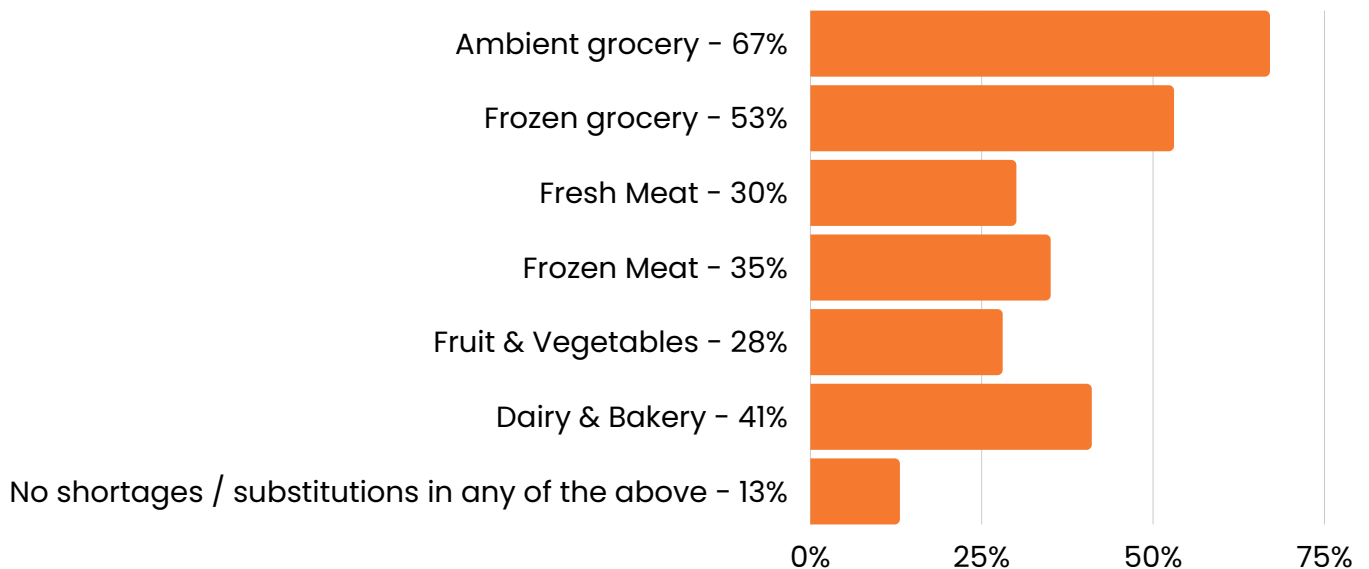
90% of survey respondents reported they were experiencing food shortages and substitutions from their supply chain.



We asked how this compared to January 2022 with over **50%** of respondents saying the situation had worsened:



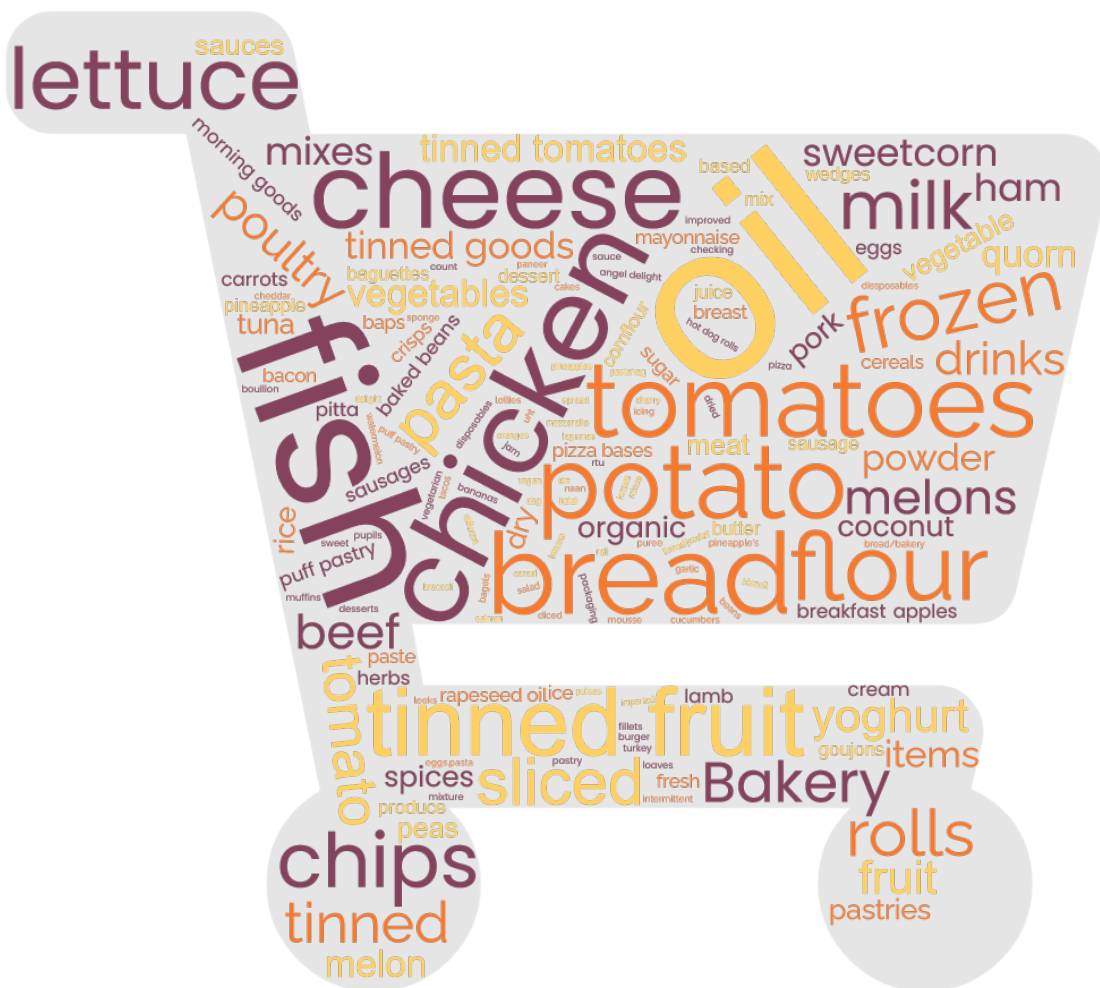
We asked which food categories have been most affected:



PRODUCT SHORTAGES

We asked respondents to provide details of the the items most affected in each category where they were experiencing shortages and/or substitution were experienced.

More than 200 individual items were identified making it hard to identify patterns, however there were some key commonalities.

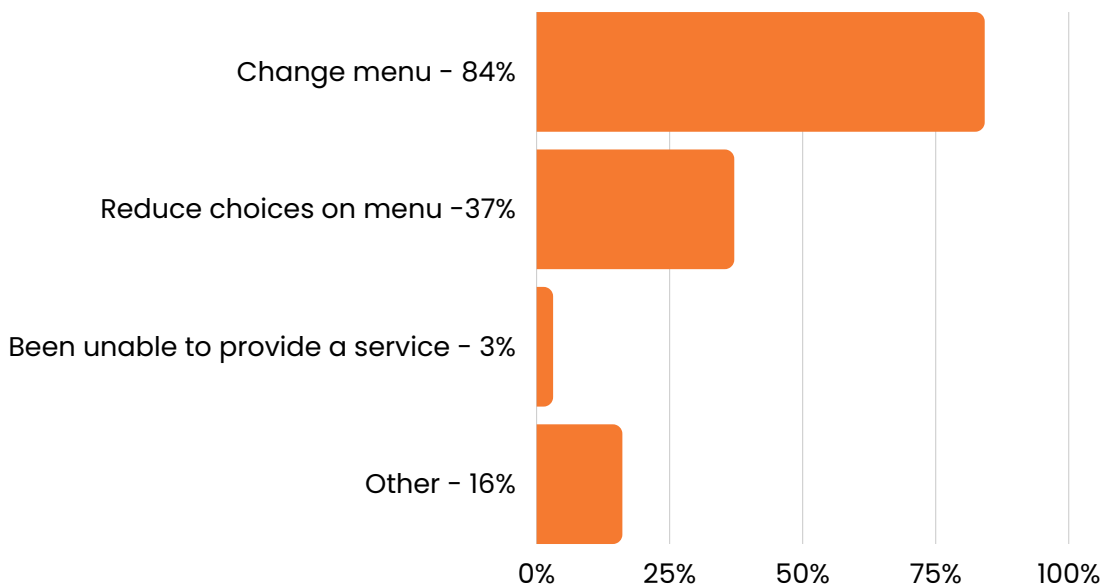


Chicken, bread and oil were the items mentioned most frequently.

SUPPLY CHAIN

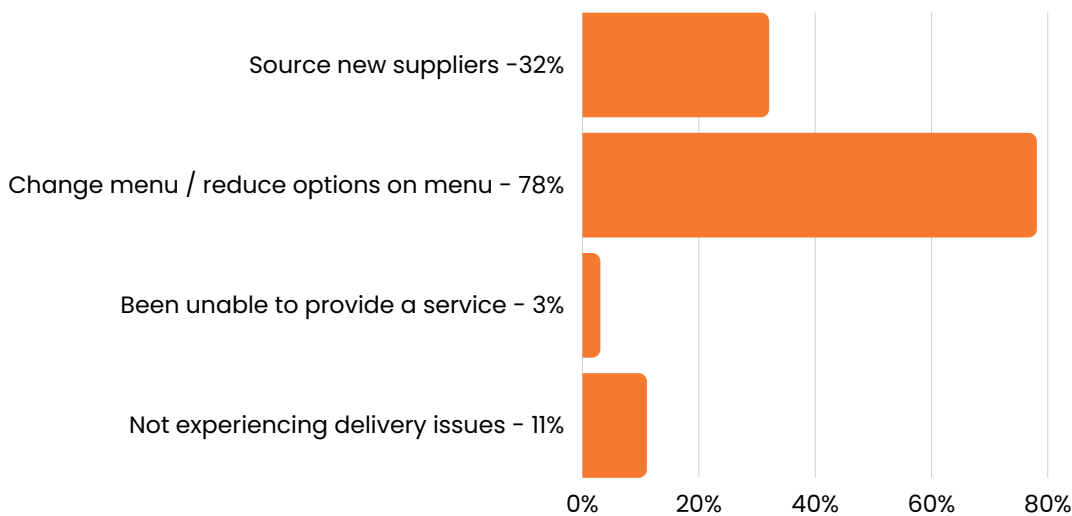
We then asked respondents:

How have the food shortages/substitutions have impacted your operation and what changes have you had to make?



Other responses included concern around special diets and having to change allergy information due to substitutions.

Have you had to make any of the following changes as a result of delivery issues?

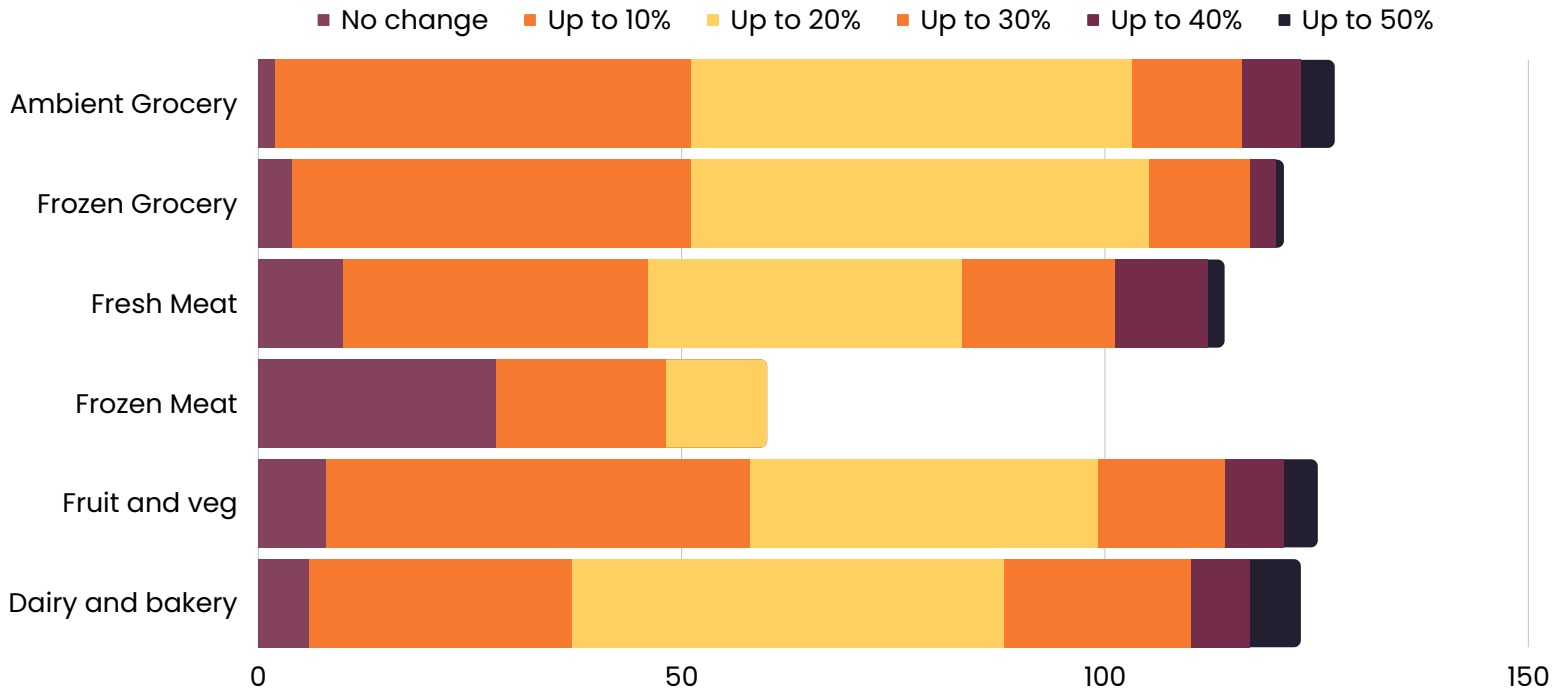


Other responses included concerns that minimum delivery value has increased and that there are longer lead times, and caterers are having to carry more stock.

SUPPLY CHAIN – PRICES

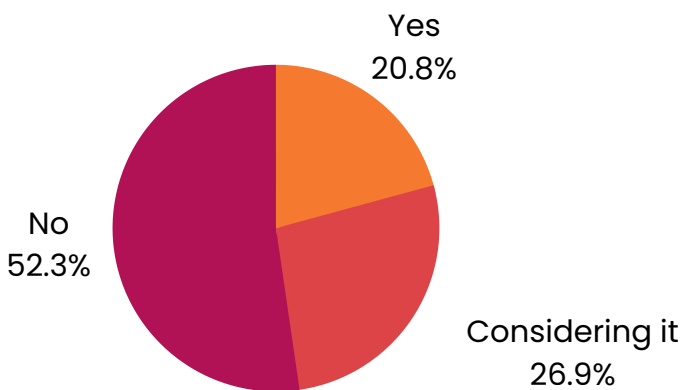
We know that prices have increased significantly over recent months and the cost-of-living crisis is well-publicised a major concern for everyone.

We asked our respondents how food prices have increased since April 2020 for the key commodity categories.

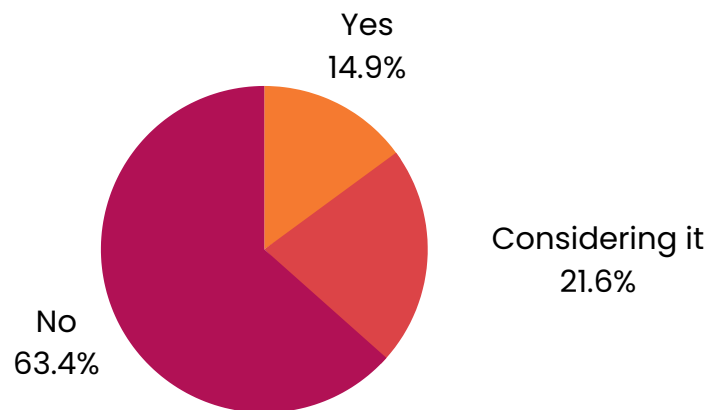


For those experiencing increased prices for fresh and frozen meat, we asked if this has led to:

Switching from British meat to meat from abroad:



Reducing cost through the quality of meat purchased:

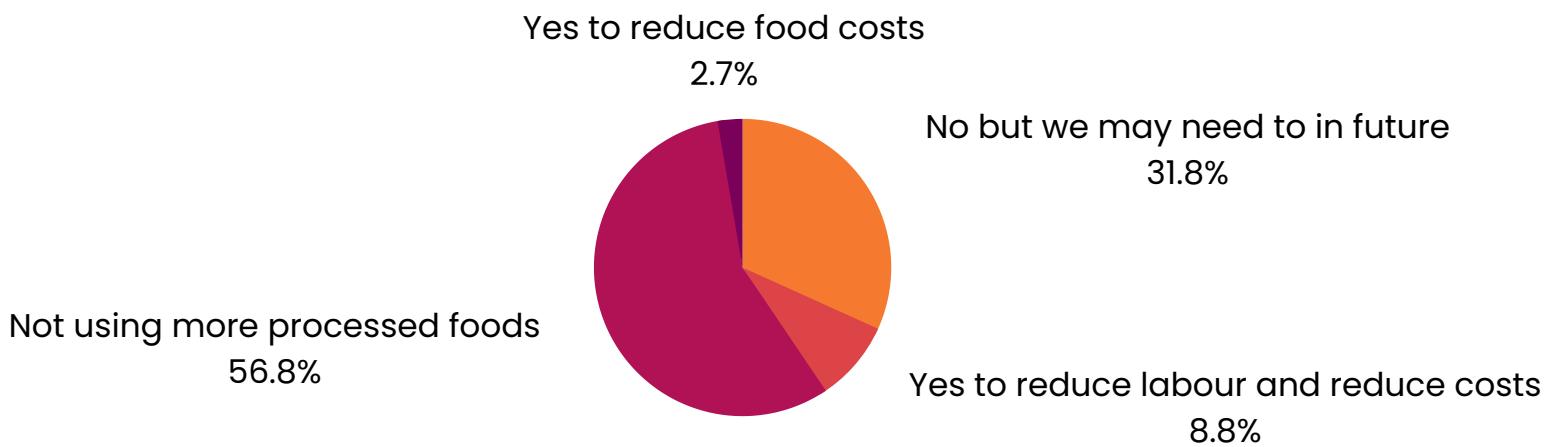


SUPPLY CHAIN – PRICES

We asked our respondents what they thought the reasons were behind the current price volatility around fresh/frozen meat, responses included:

Covid	War in Ukraine	Brexit
Fuel & Transport Prices	Labour – costs & shortages	Increased animal feed costs/lack of availability
Avian Flu	Cost of Living impacts	Energy prices

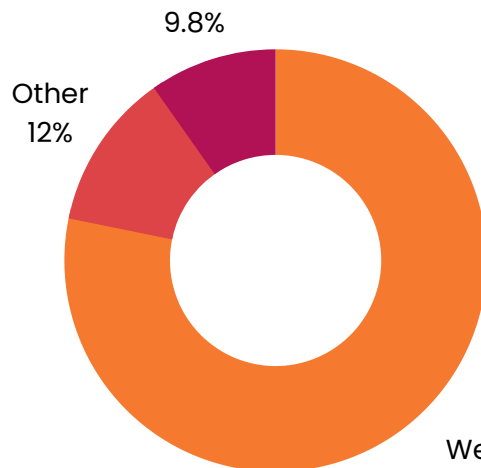
We asked if the rising cost of raw ingredients had caused caterers to increase the use of processed foods, such as packet mixes?



SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS

How has the rising cost of food affected your ability to meet the mandatory School Food Standards?

We have had to reduce the number of standards that we meet



We can continue to meet them

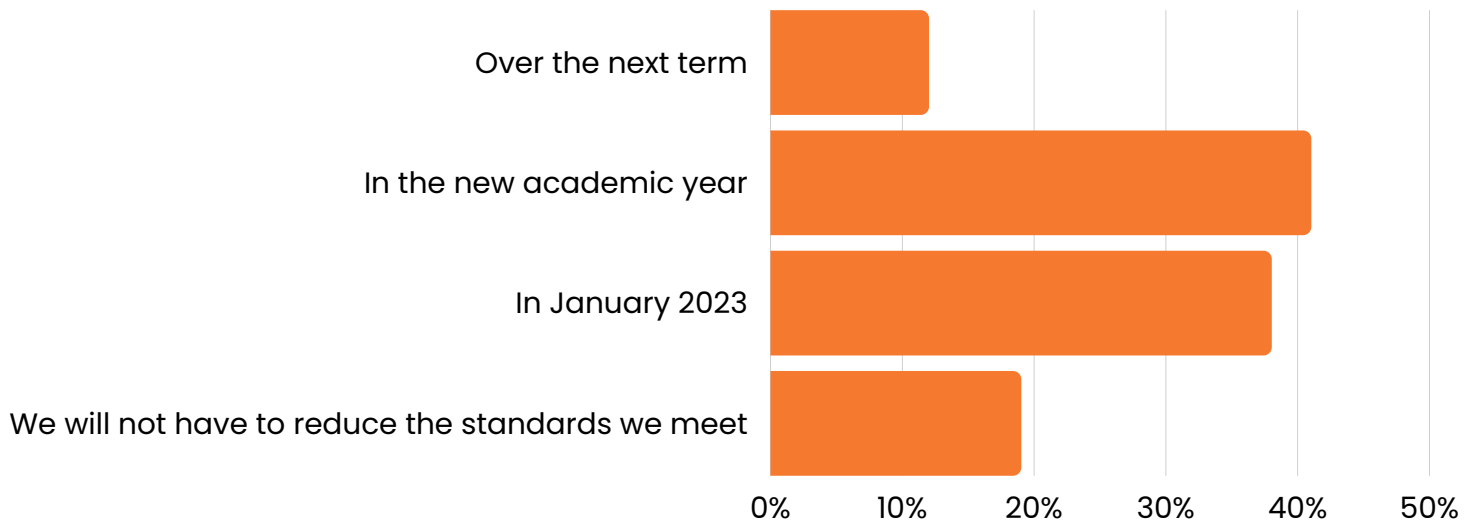
78.2%

Comments:

- We are considering reducing the number of standards due to the increased cost of certain food products that are aligned with food standards
- We continue to meet them but we are met with more backlash from schools due to wanting higher plate coverage, and also from us changing the menu due to shortages
- We are still maintaining at the moment, but are extremely concerned about the future
- Mainly still complying, but where items on the current menu are unavailable (e.g. non fried potato wedges), we will make the substitution that does not impact allergen change rather than the one that necessarily complies with standards. Allergens matching has to take priority over meeting standards
- We are currently meeting the SFS but it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure all sites are producing all the requirements. Any missed items from their deliveries could mean at any time the units will not be able to produce the whole menu meaning for that kitchen their offer will no longer be compliant. The rising costs of certain items is making planning future compliant menus hard.
- We are just meeting SFS but without ideas of ingredients to comply we may have to assess our level of compliance.

SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS

Are you concerned you will have to reduce the standards you meet?



Over **60%** of respondents expressed concerns that they may have to consider reducing the standards they meet over the coming months

Comments:

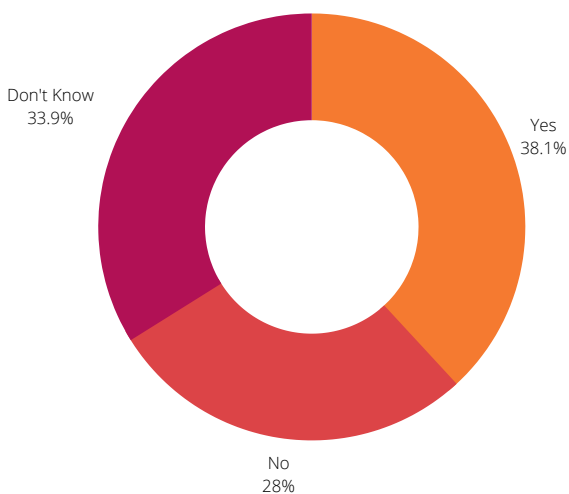
- No. Food safety comes first. If there is a product substitution, no change in allergens is more important than impact on standards.
- Change from Gold to Silver FFL
- May have to drop from FFL silver to Bronze or have no FFL accreditation
- I'll do my best to maintain standards
- MAT has agreed to cover the increase in cost as quality of food and compliance is of extreme importance to the Trust
- Won't drop standards but will have to increase meal price
- Depends on how and if the market recovers and how long it takes for the supply chain elements to recover from Brexit, Covid 19 and the Ukraine War
- Surely it is our job to meet them

FUNDING

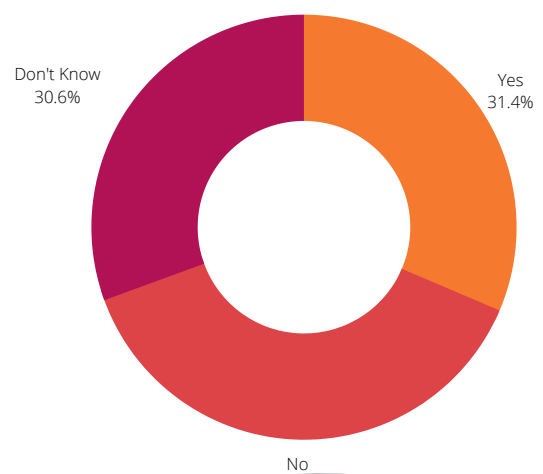
The funded rate of the Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM) in England was increased for the first time in 7 years last autumn from £2.30 to £2.34**. From April 2022 the, funded rate to schools for a benefit-based Free School Meal (FSM) is £2.47

Do you receive the full funding for either category of meal?

UIFSM



Benefit based FSM



The survey shows that **38%** of respondents reported they are receiving less than* the full funding amount for FSM and **28%** receiving less than* the full funding amount UIFSM (in England)."

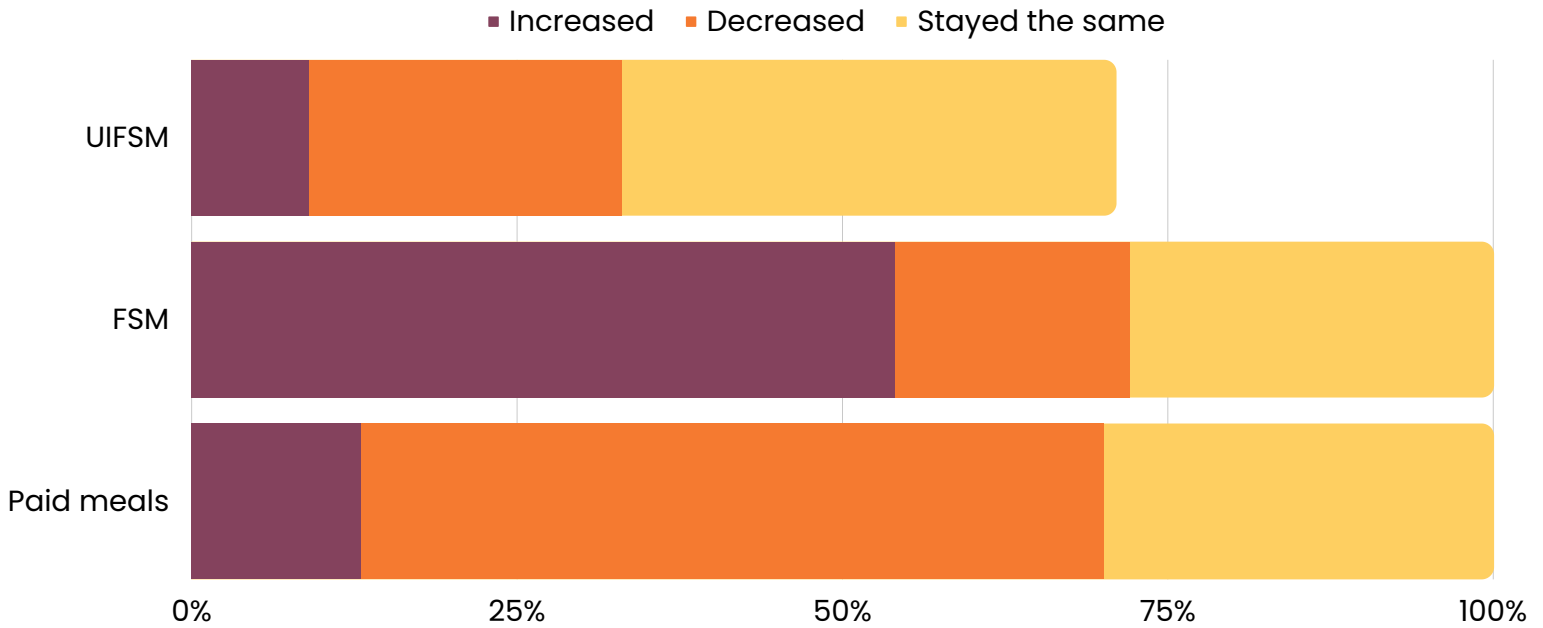
* Note: On average, the shortfall in funding received was between 5-20%

** Since our survey this rate has been increased by 2.9% to £2.41

MEAL UPTAKE



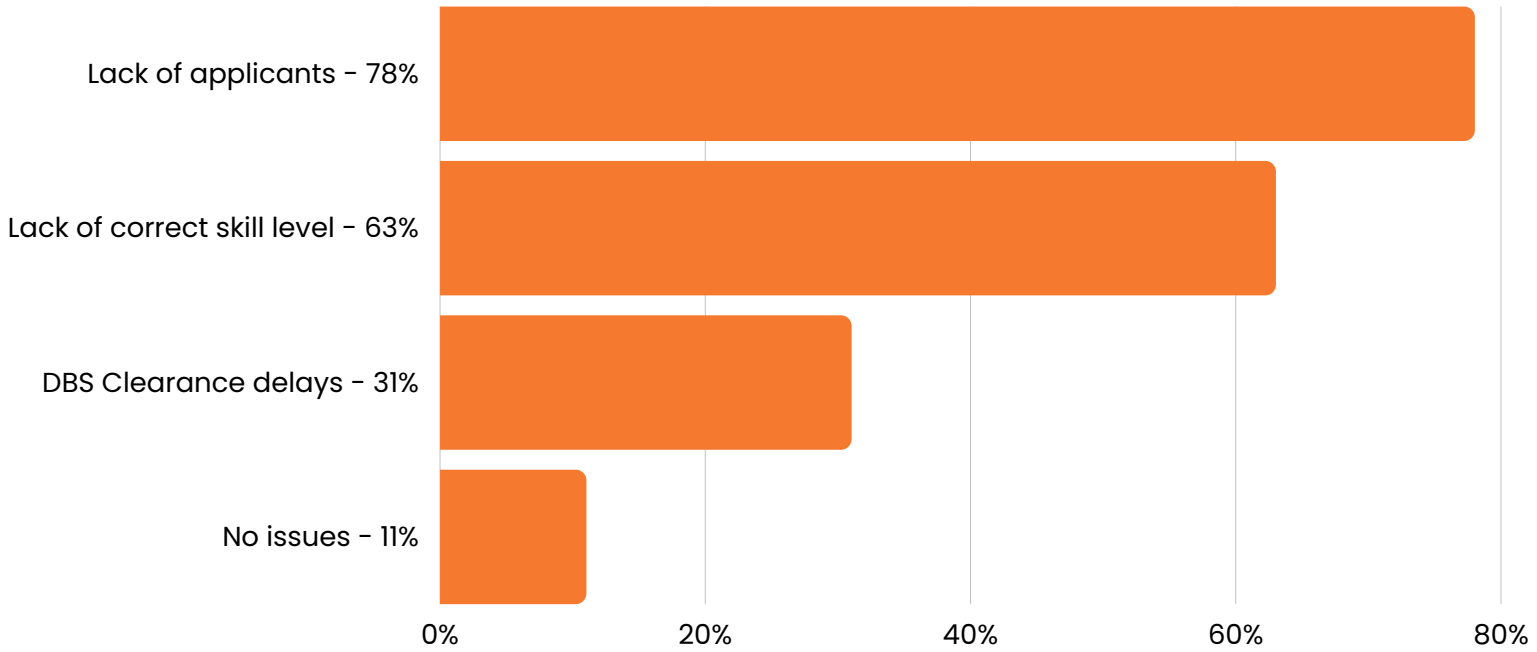
When comparing meal take-up in March 2020 (or the month immediately prior to the first lockdown) to April / May 2022 have you seen a change in the number of pupils opting for school meals?



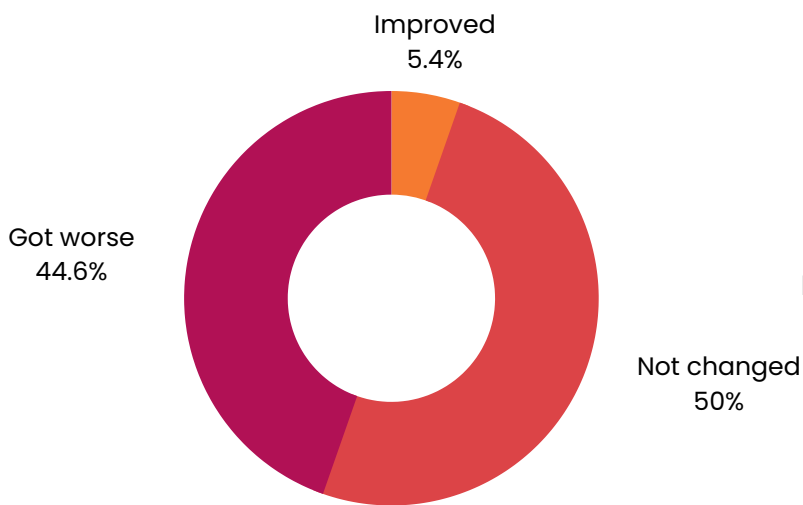
54% of respondents have seen an increase in the numbers of pupils opting for benefit-based free school meals since the start of the pandemic.

RECRUITMENT

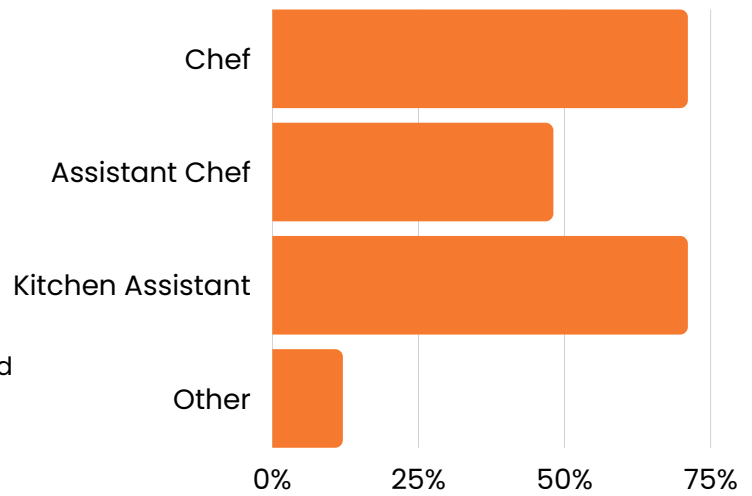
Post-COVID, what recruitment challenges are you experiencing?



Compared to January 2022 has the situation:



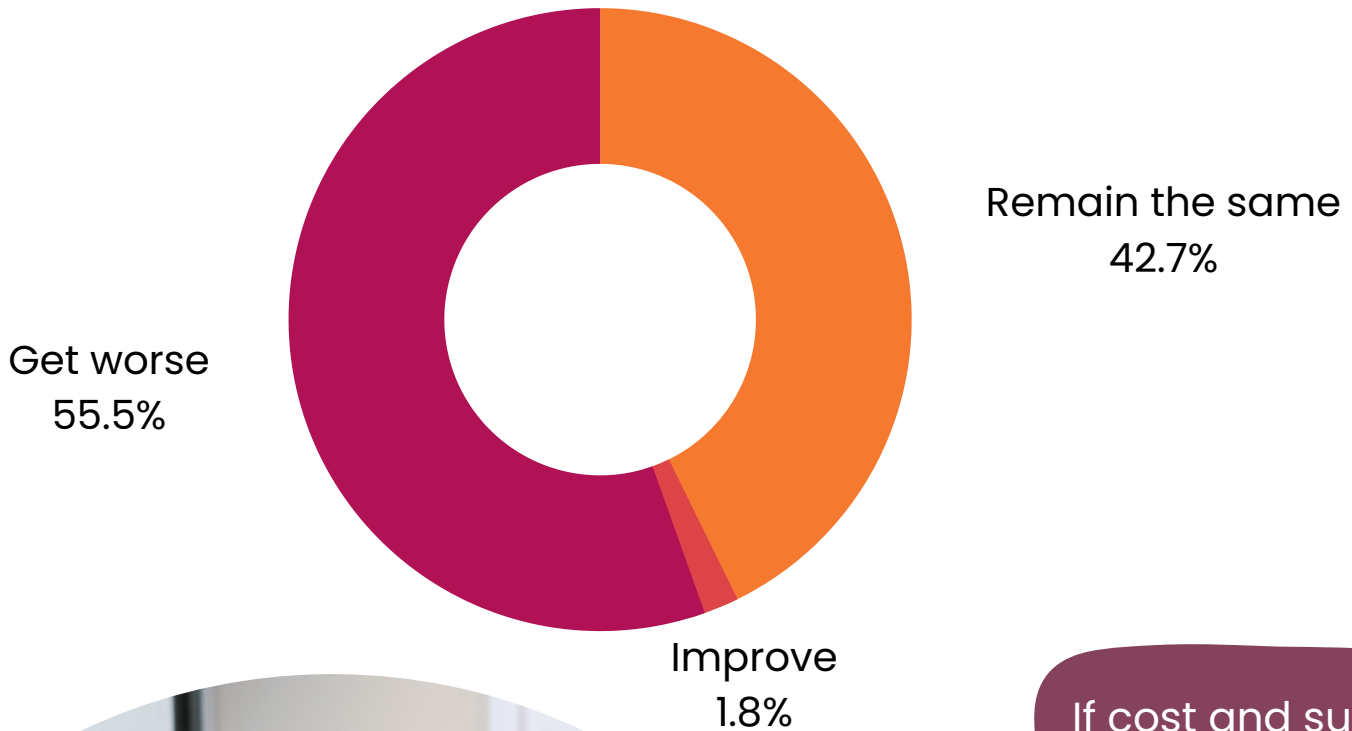
Which roles have been challenging to fill?



QUALITY



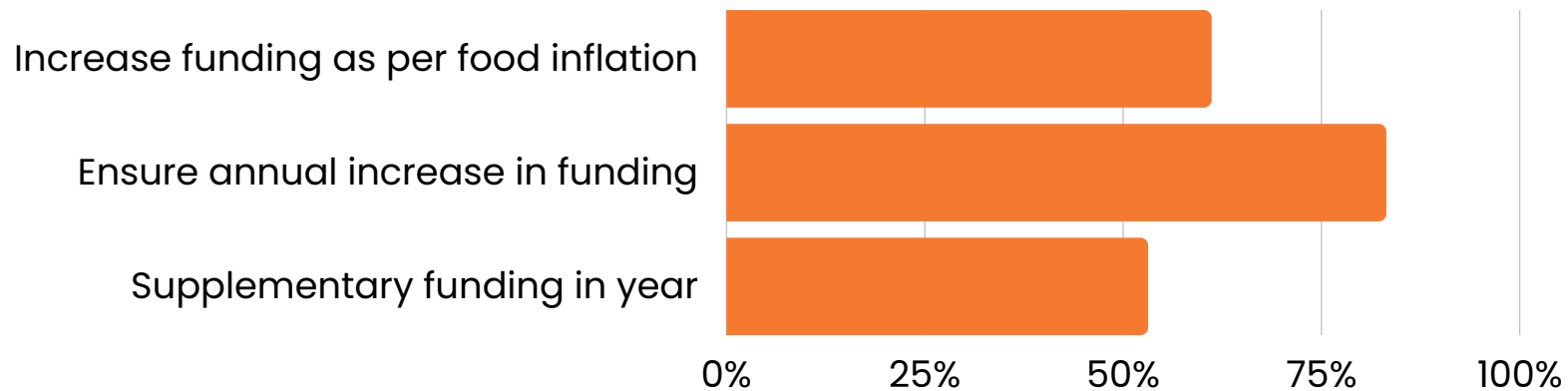
If the supply and cost issues you have described do not change, do you expect school food quality to:



If cost and supply chain issues do not begin to improve, **55%** of respondents expect a decline in school food quality.

SOLUTIONS

What would be your solution to the current crisis in school food provision?



Comments:

- Extend UIFSM to KS2 pupils
- Make all primary meals free -with a realistic cost-all children to eat a school meal
- Advocate that schools pass 100% funding to caterer for FSM
- Ring fence the funding to make more money available to those that increase uptake as opposed to census day non compliant menus to entice pupils through to just increase the schools budget
- Ensure the funding is ring fenced for meal provision
- Funding has in reality dropped against costs so need a boost and then an increase based on food and living wage increase

This report presents the findings as reported by LACA members during the survey period 18th May - 25th May 2022



Further information

For further information about this report or LACA, the School Food People, please contact us at:

admin@laca.co.uk
T: 0333 005 0226

Thank you for your support,

Jacquie Blake,
National Chair, LACA Ltd.
jacquieblakelaca@outlook.com

Brad Pearce,
National Vice Chair, LACA Ltd.
bradpearcelaca@outlook.com



LACA Ltd. is a limited company registered in England and Wales. Registration Number: 6795804
Registered Office: Merlin Place, Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 0DP

T. 0333 005 0226
admin@laca.co.uk

LACA Ltd. is a VAT registered company, number 689 2384 79

WWW.LACA.CO.UK