“Safe School Meals Act”:
Mothers Weigh-In on Main Components of the Bill

Count on Mothers **provides legislators, industry leaders, and policymakers with comprehensive first-hand real-time data to help them make more informed decisions**. Each issue or policy that we examine is selected based on what surveyed mothers have indicated they want to address, reflecting the priorities of mothers from across the country and political spectrum. We survey mothers because they are the largest group charged with the well-being of children. Every mother is welcomed to contribute to our efforts. We do this work because we believe that mothers’ first-hand experiences are a critical source of information, essential to the policymaking process.

This report focuses on information Count on Mothers collected in October 2024 on mothers’ views on the “Safe School Meals Act,” introduced in the Senate in September 2024. It focuses on mothers' firsthand experiences and needs regarding nutritional provisions in school meals and sentiments on the main components of the bill, particularly addressing FDA food safety standards (safe levels of metals, banning pesticide residue), grants for farmers and manufacturers, and safe packaging. In addition, we studied whether demographics influenced their views, and their views on the most important provisions in a school meal. A total of **709** Mothers residing in **48** states and from across the political spectrum provided feedback based on their first-hand knowledge.

Mothers identified politically within the given choice of very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. Count on Mothers tallies political affiliation, states of residence, zip codes, ethnicity, number of children, and level of education in order to ensure a representative sample and to study where mothers agree regardless of ideology. After analyzing mothers’ opinions from the survey, we take this aggregate data and share it with policymakers and the public so they are educated on mothers’ firsthand experiences and views on pressing issues and on the policies that affect children and families that seek to address those issues.

Methodology

Design

This process uses a mixed qualitative-quantitative research design. Cross-sectional surveys were distributed in September 2024.

Instrument

A survey was constructed based on the components of the “Safe School Meals Act.” The instrument measured the sentiment around specific regulations in and of school meals and

levels of trust in the FDA to protect food safety. An open-ended question was used for more nuanced responses, specifically to find out what is most important to mothers regarding school meals. The survey also assessed mothers' political ideology, state/ zip code of residence, ethnicity, number of children, and level of education to better understand the sample demographics.

Statistical Analysis

Open-ended responses were analyzed for content and grouped thematically. For demographic characteristics, we evaluated differences between groups using chi-square tests. The statistical significance level was set at 0.05. This means that if a particular characteristic has a p-value of 0.05 or less, we can be 95% certain that the difference in the groups is not attributed to chance alone. The lower the p-value, the more confident we can be that there are true differences between the groups. JMP®, Version 17.0.0. SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, 1989–2023 was used for data analysis.

Sampling Procedure

Count on Mothers employs both purposive and snowball sampling strategies. Concerted efforts were made to advertise and distribute the survey to and invite participation of as many mothers as possible. For instance, we created Google advertisements, Instagram-based announcements, and posts in mothers' Instagram groups that consist of participants from across the political spectrum. Additionally, mothers who receive the questionnaire are encouraged to distribute the survey to other mothers who they believe would be interested in sharing their perspectives. At the end of the month, we collect additional responses to fulfill the needed distribution.

Sample

709 mothers from **48** states completed the survey focused on the "Safe School Meals Act.". Efforts were made to ensure that survey respondents reflected a range of political ideologies, from very conservative to very liberal. Of the 669 Mothers who identified politically, **12.8%** identified as very conservative, **16.9%** identified as conservative, **38.2%** identified as moderate, **17.6%** identified as liberal, **12.6%** identified as very liberal, and **1.8% i**dentified as other.

While national data on Mothers' political ideologies has not been identified, studies have examined the political ideologies of women, in general. According to a recent Gallup Poll (2021), 32% of women identified as conservative, 37% of women identified as moderate, and 29% of women identified as liberal. Count on Mothers will continue to invite the participation of Mothers across the political spectrum so that our sample closely mirrors these national trends.

65.4% of respondents reported having 1 or 2 children, which is slightly higher than the National average reported in 2014 (Pew Research Center). The race and ethnicity of mothers surveyed were similarly distributed to the U.S. National distributions (2020 US Census). Among mothers

surveyed, 33.85% have a college degree or higher, while 66.15% of mothers reported having some college (but no degree) or less.

Main Takeaways

Quantitative Section

More than 9 out of 10 American mothers agree that the FDA should set safe limits for heavy metals in school meals (Table 2a).

- More than double strongly agree than just agree (Table 2a).
- Political ideology does not statistically impact the strong sentiment among mothers – mothers strongly agree across political lines.

Mothers are split over whether they trust the current FDA standards (Table 7a).

- 36% of mothers trust the current FDA standards, 33% are unsure, and 32% say they do not trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food.
- Interestingly, very liberal moms (52%) and very conservative moms (45%) more often agree/strongly agree that they trust the current FDA standards, while only 30-32% of liberal, moderate, and conservative moms agree (Table 7b).
- College educated mothers were less likely to agree that they trust the current FDA standards and more likely to disagree that they trust the current standards (Table 7e).

Almost 9 out of 10 American mothers agree that pesticide residues should be banned in school meals (Table 3a).

- More than double strongly agree than just agree (Table 3a).
- When broken out by political affiliation, there is very little difference amongst mothers (Table 3b):
    - Almost 88% of very liberal moms and 86% of liberal moms agree/strongly agree, 85% of moderate moms, 86% of conservative moms, and 89% of very conservative moms agree/strongly agree that pesticide residues should be banned in school meals.

Almost 9 out of 10 American mothers feel that PFAS, phthalates, lead, and bisphenols in food packaging should be banned in school meals (Table 4a).

- Again, demographic differences have no statistically significant bearing on their support for this component

9 out of 10 American mothers believe that the FDA should reevaluate food additives, such as food dyes, and ban any additives with known carcinogenic, reproductive, or developmental health harms (Table 5a).

- There is almost no difference in responses when separated by self-reported political affiliation (Table 5b).

Almost 9 out of 10 American mothers believe that grants should be available for manufacturers to switch to toxic-free packaging and for farmers to remediate their soil and water.

- The proportion of moms who agree/strongly agree is mostly consistent across the political spectrum (82%-88%) (Table 6b).

<u>Qualitative Section</u>

Moms were asked to respond to: "Here's the most important thing to me about what should be provided in school lunches"

Almost all moms said that they wanted school lunches to be healthy and nutritious.

An *overwhelming* number of moms also believe that school meals should be free of any potentially harmful ingredients like heavy metals, pesticide residue, hormones, or antibiotics. In fact, over 150 moms out of the 669 responses specifically mentioned concerns over "toxic" or potentially harmful ingredients.

- A very conservative mom from Ohio said, "safe with no hazards is the most important, followed by nutrition."
- Similarly, a liberal mom from Colorado believes that "healthier foods without toxic chemicals" are the most important things that should be provided in school lunches.

Many moms are specifically concerned that school lunches do not contain enough fruits and vegetables, and some moms feel that the produce should be fresh and not canned or frozen. Likewise, other moms feel that school meals should have more whole foods and less processed or ultra-processed ingredients.

- A liberal mom from North Carolina said, "whole foods where possible."

- A conservative mom from Georgia feels that “NO processed foods. Only real whole nutrient dense foods should be in school lunches.”

While most moms state that nutrition is their top concern, other moms (4.5%) feel that ensuring the food tastes good is equally important so that children will actually eat what is provided.

- A liberal mom from Louisiana said, “the food should taste good and be good for them.”
- A moderate mom from Washington said, “something that is actually worth eating.”

Across the political spectrum and across the country, moms want to ensure that their children have healthy, filling, and safe meals at school.

Questions on the "Safe School Meals Act"

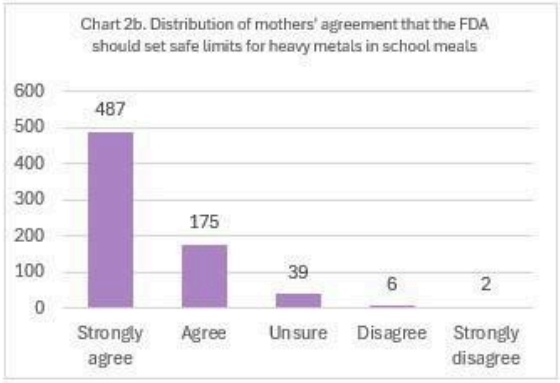
1) The FDA should set safe limits for heavy metals in school meals.

An overwhelming percentage of mothers (93.4%) believe that the FDA should set safe limits for heavy metals in school meals (Table 2a, 2b). The sentiment among mothers is strong, across political affiliation (Table 2c). Mothers were more than twice as likely to say they strongly agree rather than just agree. This is a notable distinction as Count on Mother has not found this resounding strong agreement in any other topic/issue/legislation.

The FDA should set safe limits for heavy metals in school meals.

Table 2a: Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	487	68.69%
Agree	175	24.68%
Unsure	39	5.50%
Disagree	6	0.85%
Strongly disagree	2	0.28%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.00%**



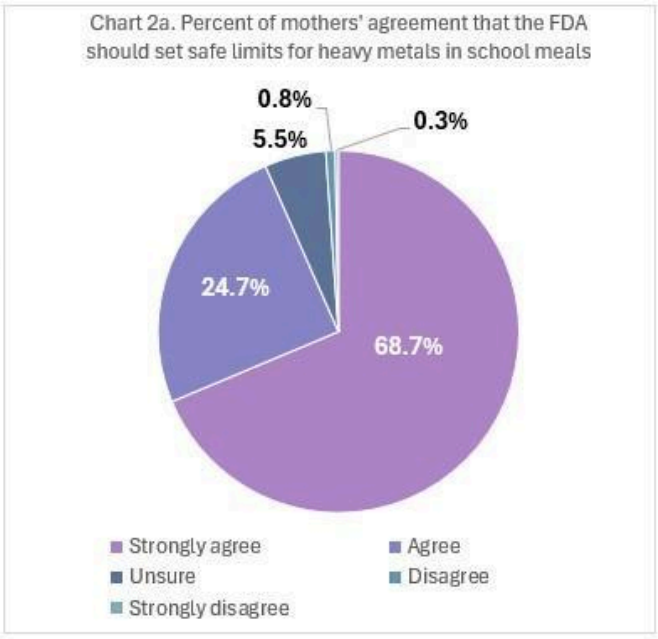


Table 2c: Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Self-Reported Political Affiliation

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	60	67.42%
Agree	28	31.46%
Unsure	1	1.12%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**89**	**100.00%**

Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	78	62.40%
Agree	34	27.20%
Unsure	12	9.60%
Disagree	1	0.80%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**125**	**100.00%**

Moderate	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	202	74.54%
Agree	54	19.93%
Unsure	10	3.69%
Disagree	3	1.11%
Strongly disagree	2	0.74%
Grand Total	**271**	**100.00%**

Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	81	67.50%
Agree	30	25.00%
Unsure	8	6.67%
Disagree	1	0.83%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**120**	**100.00%**

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	57	62.64%
Agree	26	28.57%
Unsure	7	7.69%
Disagree	1	1.10%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**91**	**100.00%**

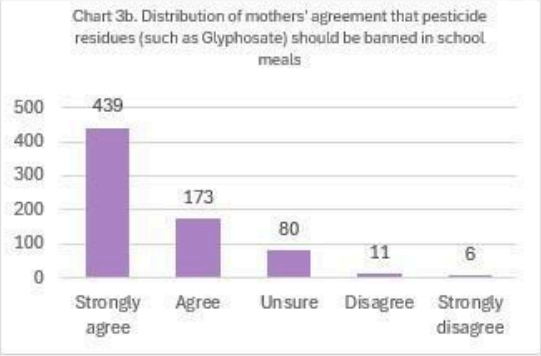
2) Pesticide residues (such as Glyphosate) should be banned in school meals (certified organic farms would automatically meet this requirement).

86.3% of American mothers agree that pesticide residues should be banned in school meals (Table 3a). More than double strongly agree than just agree (Table 3a). When broken out by political affiliation, there is very little difference amongst mothers (Table 3b): Almost 88% of very liberal moms and 86% of liberal moms agree/strongly agree, 85% of moderate moms, 86% of conservative moms, and 89% of very conservative moms agree/strongly agree that pesticide residues should be banned in school meals.

Pesticide residues (such as Glyphosate) should be banned in school meals (certified organic farms would automatically meet this requirement).

Table 3a: Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	439	61.92%
Agree	173	24.40%
Unsure	80	11.28%
Disagree	11	1.55%
Strongly disagree	6	0.85%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.00%**



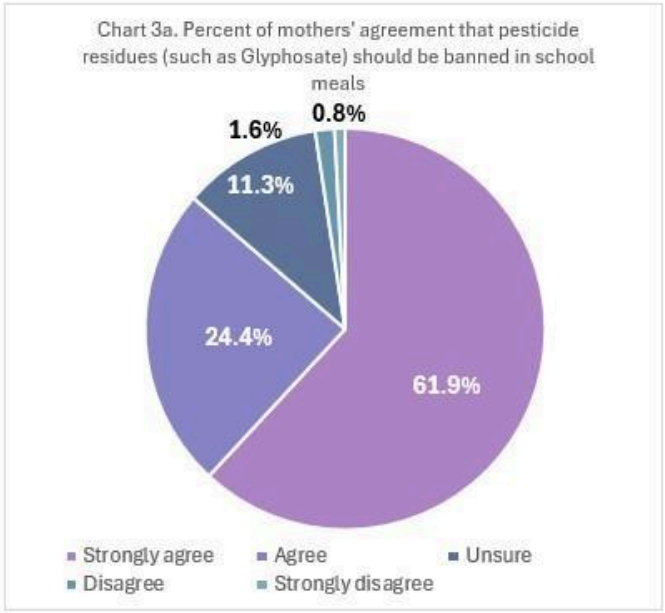


Table 3b: Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Self-Reported Political Affiliation

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	54	60.67%
Agree	24	26.97%
Unsure	8	8.99%
Disagree	2	2.25%
Strongly disagree	1	1.12%
Grand Total	**89**	**100.00%**

Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	67	53.60%
Agree	41	32.80%
Unsure	13	10.40%
Disagree	3	2.40%
Strongly disagree	1	0.80%
Grand Total	**125**	**100.00%**

Moderate	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	171	63.10%
Agree	60	22.14%
Unsure	36	13.28%
Disagree	2	0.74%
Strongly disagree	2	0.74%
Grand Total	**271**	**100.00%**

Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	79	65.83%
Agree	24	20.00%
Unsure	13	10.83%
Disagree	3	2.50%
Strongly disagree	1	0.83%
Grand Total	**120**	**100.00%**

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	60	65.93%
Agree	21	23.08%
Unsure	8	8.79%
Disagree	1	1.10%
Strongly disagree	1	1.10%
Grand Total	**91**	**100.00%**

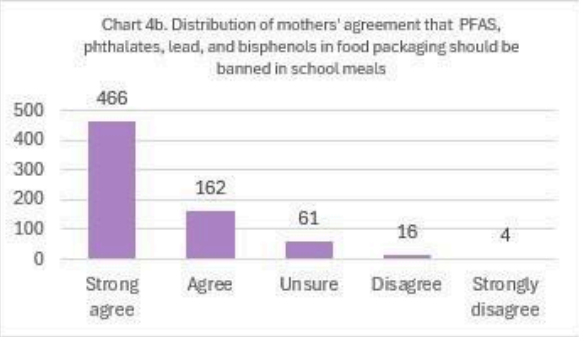
3) PFAS, phthalates, lead, and bisphenols in food packaging should be banned in school meals.

88.6% of American mothers feel that PFAS, phthalates, lead, and bisphenols in food packaging should be banned in school meals (Table 4a). Demographic differences have no statistically significant bearing on their support for this component. However, there is a small difference in agreement when broken out by political affiliation (Table 4b): Approximately 86%-90% of moms who self-report as leaning very liberal, liberal, moderate, and conservative agree/strongly agree PFAS, phthalates, lead, and bisphenols in food packaging should be banned in school meals, while there was a small drop in agree among very conservative mothers (82% agree/strongly agree). In other words, when asked to consider packaging (rather than food), these moms were a little less likely to agree about banning certain chemicals and metals.

PFAS, phthalates, lead, and bisphenols in food packaging should be banned in school meals.

Table 4a: Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	466	65.73%
Agree	162	22.85%
Unsure	61	8.60%
Disagree	16	2.26%
Strongly disagree	4	0.56%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.00%**



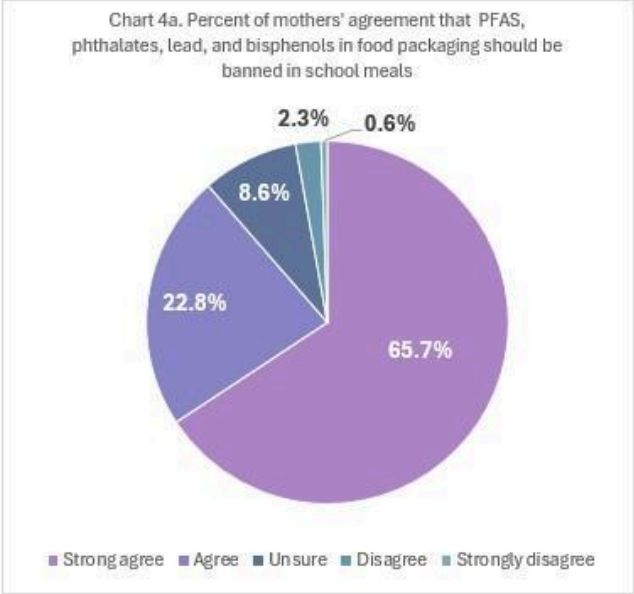


Table 4b: Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Self-Reported Political Affiliation

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	55	61.80%
Agree	23	25.84%
Unsure	8	8.99%
Disagree	3	3.37%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**89**	**100.00%**

Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	81	64.80%
Agree	27	21.60%
Unsure	17	13.60%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**125**	**100.00%**

Moderate	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	189	69.74%
Agree	57	21.03%
Unsure	17	6.27%
Disagree	7	2.58%
Strongly disagree	1	0.37%
Grand Total	**271**	**100.00%**

Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	78	65.00%
Agree	30	25.00%
Unsure	8	6.67%
Disagree	3	2.50%
Strongly disagree	1	0.83%
Grand Total	**120**	**100.00%**

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	54	59.34%
Agree	21	23.08%
Unsure	11	12.09%
Disagree	3	3.30%
Strongly disagree	2	2.20%
Grand Total	**91**	**100.00%**

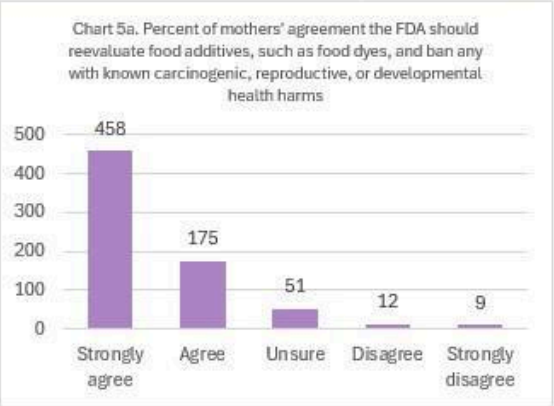
4) The FDA should reevaluate food additives, such as food dyes, and ban any with known carcinogenic, reproductive, or developmental health harms.

89.8% of mothers believe that the FDA should reevaluate food additives, such as food dyes, and ban any additives with known carcinogenic, reproductive, or developmental health harms (Table 5a). There is almost no difference in responses when separated by self-reported political affiliation (Table 5b). The range in agreement that the FDA should reevaluate food additives and ban any additives with known carcinogenic, reproductive, or developmental health harms was only 89% to 91%.

The FDA should reevaluate food additives, such as food dyes, and ban any with known carcinogenic, reproductive, or developmental health harms.

Table 5a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	458	64.96%
Agree	175	24.82%
Unsure	51	7.23%
Disagree	12	1.70%
Strongly disagree	9	1.28%
Grand Total	**705**	**100.00%**



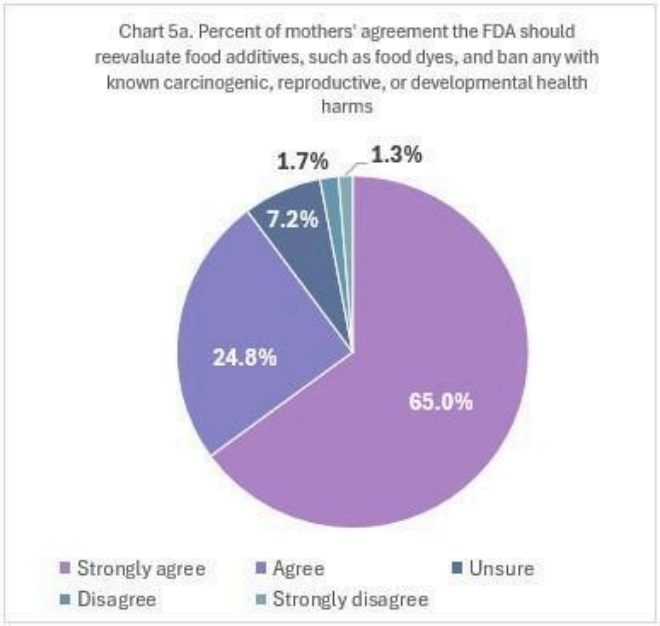


Table 5b. Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Self-Reported Political Affiliation

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	53	60.23%
Agree	26	29.55%
Unsure	7	7.95%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly disagree	2	2.27%
Grand Total	**88**	**100.00%**

Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	78	62.40%
Agree	33	26.40%
Unsure	11	8.80%
Disagree	1	0.80%
Strongly disagree	2	1.60%
Grand Total	**125**	**100.00%**

Moderate	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	179	66.30%
Agree	64	23.70%
Unsure	17	6.30%
Disagree	8	2.96%
Strongly disagree	2	0.74%
Grand Total	**270**	**100.00%**

Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	78	65.55%
Agree	28	23.53%
Unsure	10	8.40%
Disagree	1	0.84%
Strongly disagree	2	1.68%
Grand Total	**119**	**100.00%**

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	60	65.93%
Agree	23	25.27%
Unsure	5	5.49%
Disagree	2	2.20%
Strongly disagree	1	1.10%
Grand Total	**91**	**100.00%**

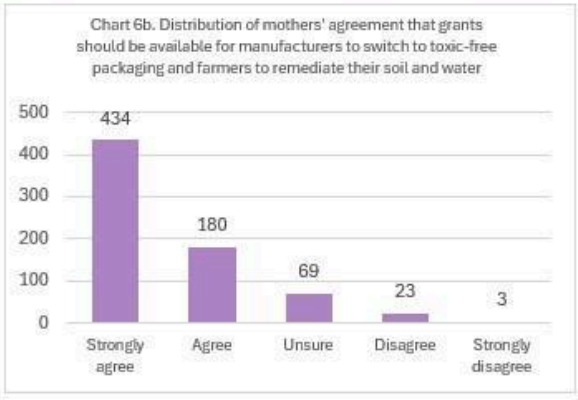
5) Grants should be available for manufacturers to switch to toxic-free packaging and farmers to remediate their soil and water.

The proportion of moms who agree/strongly agree is mostly consistent across the political spectrum (82%-88%) (Table 6b). While every ideological group was more likely to 'strongly agree' than just 'agree,' mothers who identified as conservative were less likely than every other group – very conservative, moderate, liberal, and very liberal – to choose 'strongly agree' over 'agree,' but still with a substantial margin (53.3% vs. 32.5%). Thus, the strong sentiment across components of the bill and across demographics remains.

Grants should be available for manufacturers to switch to toxic-free packaging and farmers to remediate their soil and water.

Table 6a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	434	61.21%
Agree	180	25.39%
Unsure	69	9.73%
Disagree	23	3.24%
Strongly disagree	3	0.42%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.00%**



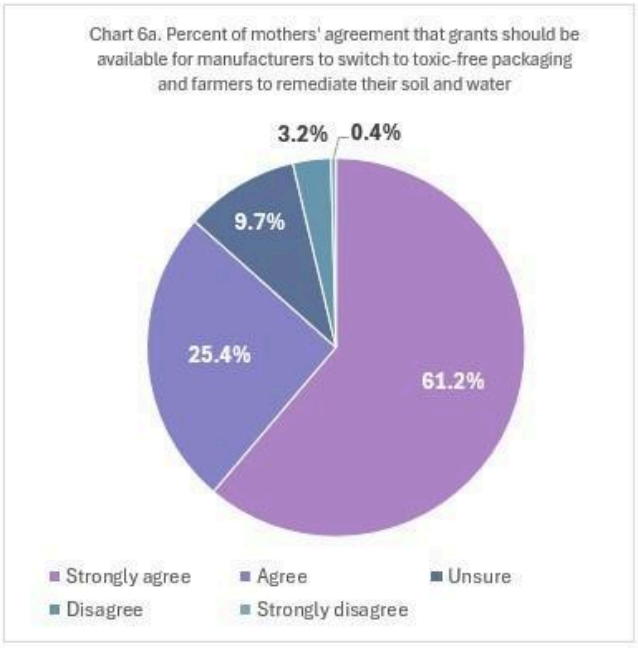


Table 6b. Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Self-Reported Political Affiliation

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	57	64.04%
Agree	19	21.35%
Unsure	8	8.99%
Disagree	5	5.62%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**89**	**100.00%**

Liberal	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	75	60.00%
Agree	34	27.20%
Unsure	13	10.40%
Disagree	3	2.40%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Grand Total	**125**	**100.00%**

Moderate	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	170	62.73%
Agree	69	25.46%
Unsure	25	9.23%
Disagree	6	2.21%
Strongly disagree	1	0.37%
Grand Total	**271**	**100.00%**

Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	64	53.33%
Agree	39	32.50%
Unsure	10	8.33%
Disagree	6	5.00%
Strongly disagree	1	0.83%
Grand Total	**120**	**100.00%**

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	58	63.74%
Agree	17	18.68%
Unsure	12	13.19%
Disagree	3	3.30%
Strongly disagree	1	1.10%
Grand Total	**91**	**100.00%**

6. I trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food.

Mothers are split over whether they trust the current FDA standards (Table 7a). 36% of mothers trust the current FDA standards, 33% are unsure, and 32% say they do not trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food. Political affiliation does not predict whether a mothers trusts the FDA standards. Interestingly, very liberal moms (52%) and very conservative moms (45%) more often agree/strongly agree, while only 30-32% of liberal, moderate, and conservative moms agree (Table 7b).

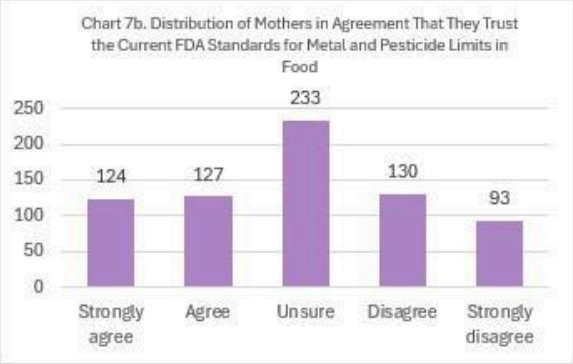
College educated mothers were less likely to agree that they trust the current FDA standards and more likely to disagree that they trust the current standards for safe levels of metals and pesticides than moms who did not receive a bachelors or higher.

In addition, there seems to be a difference in agreement based on geographical region (based on US Census regions and division classifications), however, it is not statistically significant. No moms surveyed from New England agree that they trust the current FDA standards, while almost 42% of moms from the East South Central area reported trusting the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food (Table 7d). (It should be noted that there were only responses from 10 moms from New England, so this may not be a representative sample.) Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if the distribution of moms who trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food is different based on the number of children they have, whether they have young children (aged 0-10 years old), their education level (no college degree vs college degree), race/ethnicity, geographic region, and political affiliation. Political affiliation (p-value 0.0281), education level (p-value 0.0209), and race/ethnicity (p-value 0.0071) are shown to statistically impact moms' agreement that they trust the current FDA standards. The number of children a mother has (p-value 0.5003). if a mother has young children (p-value .3013), geographical area (p-value 0.0617), is not statistically significant.

I trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food.

Table 7a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Strongly agree	124	17.54%
Agree	127	17.96%
Unsure	233	32.96%
Disagree	130	18.39%
Strongly disagree	93	13.15%
(blank)		0.00%
Grand Total	**707**	**100.00%**



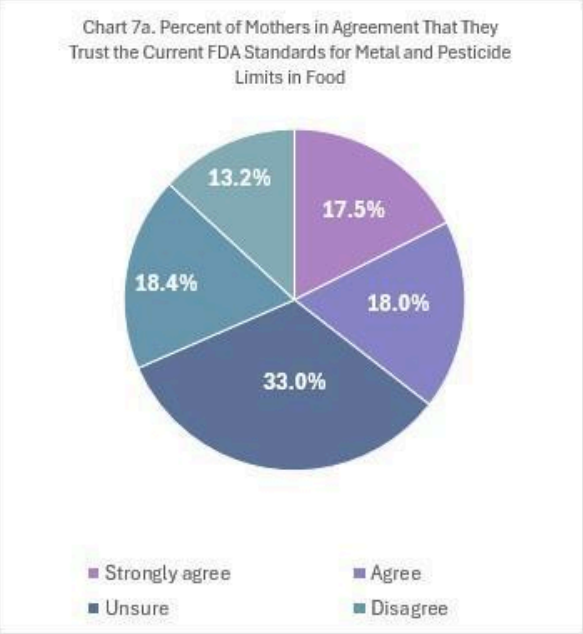


Table 7b. Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Self-Reported Political Affiliation

Very Liberal			**Liberal**		
	# of Respondents	**Percent of Sample**		**# of Respondents**	**Percent of Sample**
Strongly agree	22	24.72%	Strongly agree	18	14.40%
Agree	24	26.97%	Agree	19	15.20%
Unsure	18	20.22%	Unsure	43	34.40%
Disagree	16	17.98%	Disagree	35	28.00%
Strongly disagree	9	10.11%	Strongly disagree	10	8.00%
Grand Total	**89**	**100.00%**	**Grand Total**	**125**	**100.00%**

Moderate			**Conservative**		
	# of Respondents	**Percent of Sample**		**# of Respondents**	**Percent of Sample**
Strongly agree	41	15.19%	Strongly agree	19	15.97%
Agree	46	17.04%	Agree	17	14.29%
Unsure	111	41.11%	Unsure	37	31.09%
Disagree	41	15.19%	Disagree	23	19.33%
Strongly disagree	31	11.48%	Strongly disagree	23	19.33%
Grand Total	**270**	**100.00%**	**Grand Total**	**119**	**100.00%**

Very Conservative		
	# of Respondents	**Percent of Sample**
Strongly agree	21	23.08%
Agree	20	21.98%
Unsure	20	21.98%
Disagree	11	12.09%
Strongly disagree	19	20.88%
Grand Total	**91**	**100.00%**

I trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food.

Table 7c. Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Children's Ages

Have Young Child(ren) (aged 0-10)		Agree/ Strongly Agree	Unsure	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
Yes	# of Respondents	163	140	149	452
	Row %	**36.06%**	**30.97%**	**32.96%**	**100%**
	Total %	23.06%	19.80%	21.07%	63.93%
No	# of Respondents	88	93	74	255
	Row %	**34.51%**	**36.47%**	**29.02%**	**100%**
	Total %	12.45%	13.15%	10.47%	36.07%
TOTAL		**251**	**233**	**223**	**707**

Table 7d. Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by US Census Regions

Census Region		Agree/ Strongly Agree	Unsure	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
East North Central	Count	32	33	45	110
	Row %	**29.1%**	**30.0%**	**40.9%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	4.8%	4.9%	6.7%	16.5%
East South Central	Count	25	18	17	60
	Row %	**41.7%**	**30.0%**	**28.3%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	3.7%	2.7%	2.5%	9.0%
Middle Atlantic	Count	21	30	15	66
	Row %	**31.8%**	**45.5%**	**22.7%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	3.1%	4.5%	2.2%	9.9%
Mountain West	Count	16	14	12	42
	Row %	**38.1%**	**33.3%**	**28.6%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	2.4%	2.1%	1.8%	6.3%
New England	Count	0	6	4	10
	Row %	**0.0%**	**60.0%**	**40.0%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	0.0%	0.9%	0.6%	1.5%
Pacific West	Count	39	33	28	100
	Row %	**39.0%**	**33.0%**	**28.0%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	5.8%	4.9%	4.2%	15.0%
South Atlantic	Count	55	46	37	138
	Row %	**39.9%**	**33.3%**	**26.8%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	8.2%	6.9%	5.5%	20.7%
West North Central	Count	18	22	18	58
	Row %	**31.0%**	**37.9%**	**31.0%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	2.7%	3.3%	2.7%	8.7%
West South Central	Count	25	21	37	83
	Row %	**30.1%**	**25.3%**	**44.6%**	**100.0%**
	Total %	3.7%	3.1%	5.5%	12.4%
TOTAL		**231**	**223**	**213**	**667**

A list of US Census regions and districts can be found here: https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

I trust the current FDA standards for metal and pesticide limits in food.

Table 7e. Distribution of Mothers' Agreement by Education Level

Education Level		Agree/ Strongly Agree	Unsure	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
College degree	# of Respondents	109	111	125	345
	Row %	31.6%	32.2%	36.2%	100.0%
	Total %	15.4%	15.7%	17.7%	48.8%
No college degree	# of Respondents	142	122	98	362
	Row %	39.2%	33.7%	27.1%	100.0%
	Total %	20.8%	17.3%	13.9%	51.9%
TOTAL		251	233	223	707

Qualitative Questions

Moms were asked to respond to: "Here's the most important thing to me about what should be provided in school lunches"

Almost all moms said that they wanted school lunches to be healthy and nutritious.

An *overwhelming* number of moms also believe that school meals should be free of any potentially harmful ingredients like heavy metals, pesticide residue, hormones, or antibiotics. In fact, over 150 moms out of the 669 responses specifically mentioned concerns over "toxic" or potentially harmful ingredients.

- A very conservative mom from Ohio said, "safe with no hazards is the most important, followed by nutrition."
- Similarly, a liberal mom from Colorado believes that "healthier foods without toxic chemicals" are the most important things that should be provided in school lunches.

Many moms are specifically concerned that school lunches do not contain enough fruits and vegetables, and some moms feel that the produce should be fresh and not canned or frozen. Likewise, other moms feel that school meals should have more whole foods and less processed or ultra-processed ingredients.

- A liberal mom from North Carolina said, "whole foods where possible."
- A conservative mom from Georgia feels that "NO processed foods. Only real whole nutrient dense foods should be in school lunches."

While most moms state that nutrition is their top concern, other moms (4.5%) feel that ensuring the food tastes good is equally important so that children will actually eat what is provided.

- A liberal mom from Louisiana said, "the food should taste good and be good for them."
- A moderate mom from Washington said, "something that is actually worth eating."

Across the political spectrum and across the country, moms want to ensure that their children have healthy, filling, and safe meals at school.

Political Ideology

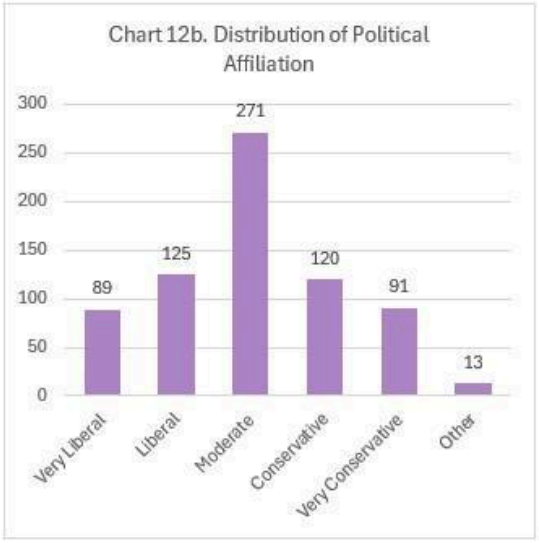
Count on Mothers is committed to representing Mothers of all political ideologies so that policymakers can be informed of mothers' experiences and views regardless of ideology or politics.

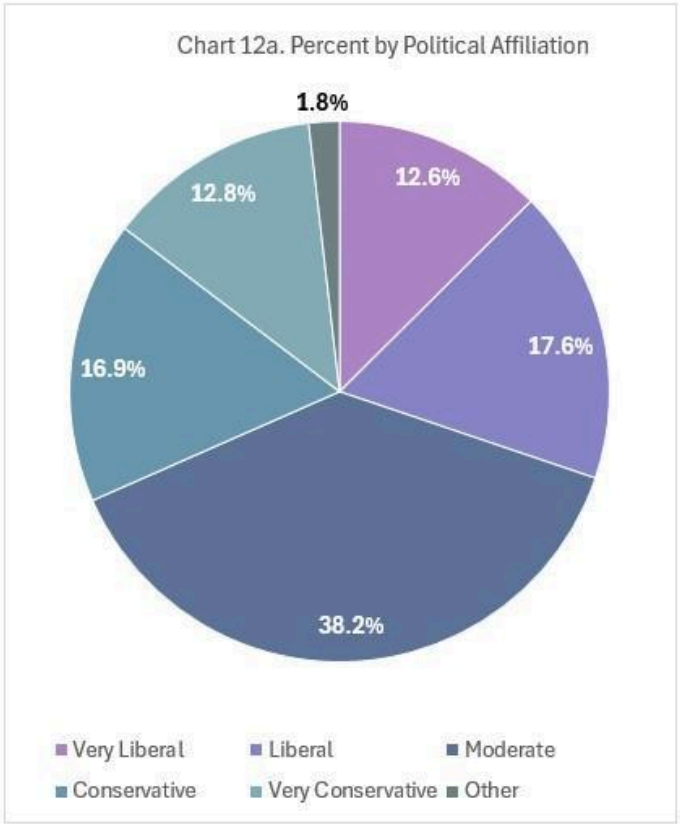
Regarding the political background of the survey respondents, the sample closely reflects the U.S. breakdown of political ideology among women according to Gallup. Of the 669 Mothers who identified politically, **12.8%** identified as very conservative, **16.9%** identified as conservative, **38.2%** identified as moderate, **17.6%** identified as liberal, **12.6%** identified as very liberal, and **1.8% i**dentified as other.

Generally, I identify as

Table 12a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Very Liberal	89	12.6%
Liberal	125	17.6%
Moderate	271	38.2%
Conservative	120	16.9%
Very Conservative	91	12.8%
Other	13	1.8%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.0%**





State of Residence Question

Mothers who responded to the survey and answered the state of residence question resided in **48** states. States were categorized based on US Census regions and divisions (US Census: https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf)

The states with the most representation included: California (10.4%), Texas (7.9%), Florida (6.6%), Ohio (6.3%), Pennsylvania (4.5%), New York (4.1%), Georgia (4.1%), North Carolina (3.9%), Nevada (3.6%), and Michigan (3.4%).

I live in

Table 13a. Distribution of Responses

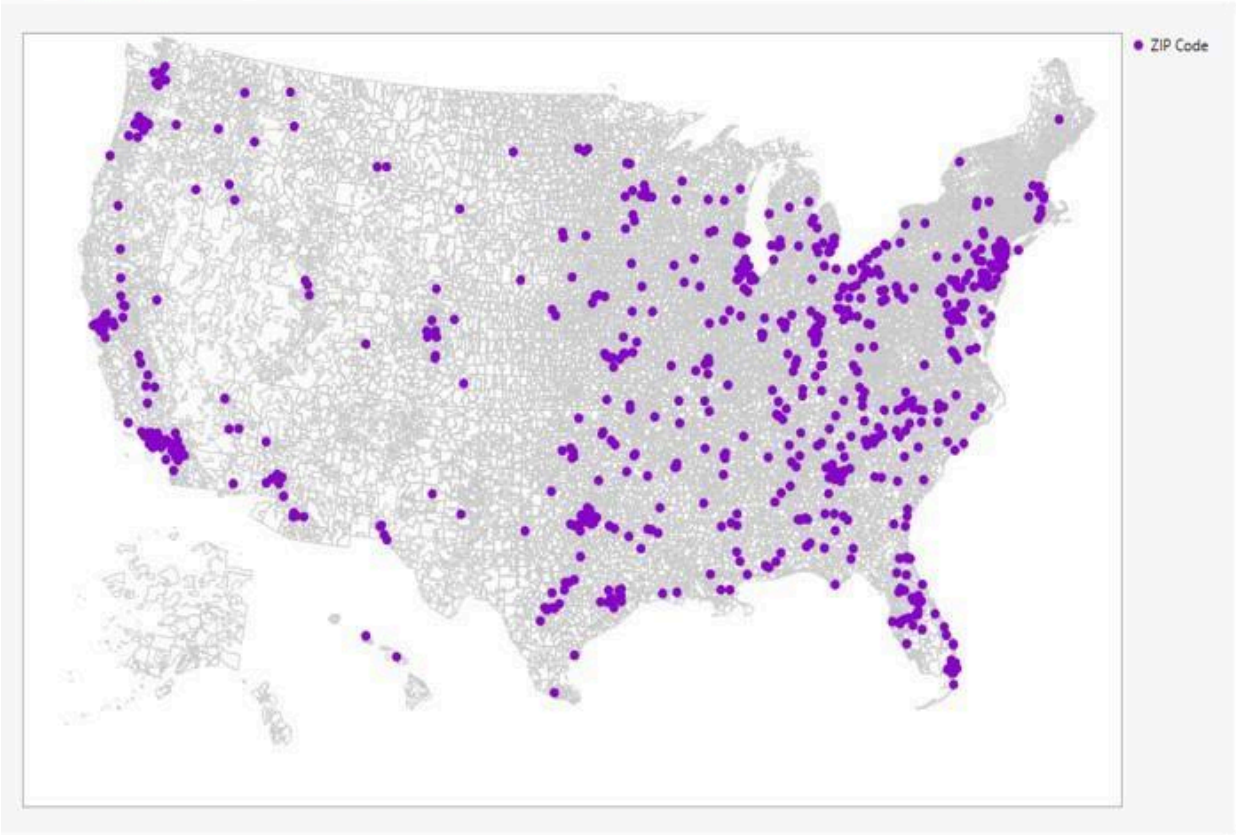
	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample		# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
Alabama	18	2.5%	Nebraska	7	1.0%
Arizona	15	2.1%	Nevada	2	0.3%
Arkansas	9	1.3%	New Hampshire	2	0.3%
California	74	10.4%	New Jersey	12	1.7%
Colorado	13	1.8%	New Mexico	3	0.4%
Connecticut	1	0.1%	New York	29	4.1%
Delaware	2	0.3%	North Carolina	28	3.9%
Florida	47	6.6%	North Dakota	3	0.4%
Georgia	29	4.1%	Ohio	45	6.3%
Hawaii	2	0.3%	Oklahoma	14	2.0%
Idaho	3	0.4%	Oregon	20	2.8%
Illinois	21	3.0%	Pennsylvania	32	4.5%
Indiana	12	1.7%	Rhode Island	2	0.3%
Iowa	7	1.0%	South Carolina	12	1.7%
Kansas	8	1.1%	South Dakota	4	0.6%
Kentucky	17	2.4%	Tennessee	17	2.4%
Louisiana	8	1.1%	Texas	56	7.9%
Maine	2	0.3%	Utah	3	0.4%
Maryland	8	1.1%	Virginia	18	2.5%
Massachusetts	4	0.6%	Washington	12	1.7%
Michigan	24	3.4%	Washington D.C.	1	0.1%
Minnesota	13	1.8%	West Virginia	5	0.7%
Mississippi	10	1.4%	Wisconsin	12	1.7%
Missouri	18	2.5%	Wyoming	1	0.1%
Montana	4	0.6%	**Grand Total**	**709**	**100.0%**

*All states represented except Alaska and Vermont

Map of Respondents Based on Zip Code

My five-digit zip code is

Chart 14. Distribution of Self Reported ZIP Codes



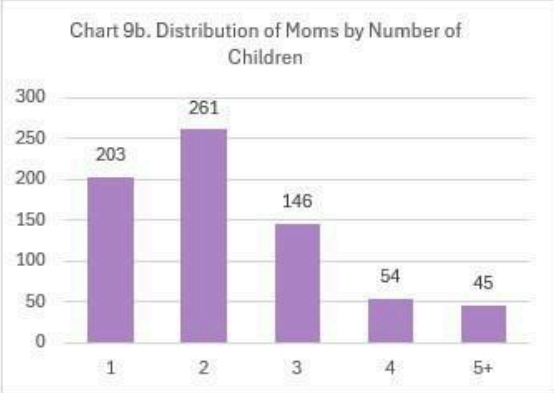
Demographics

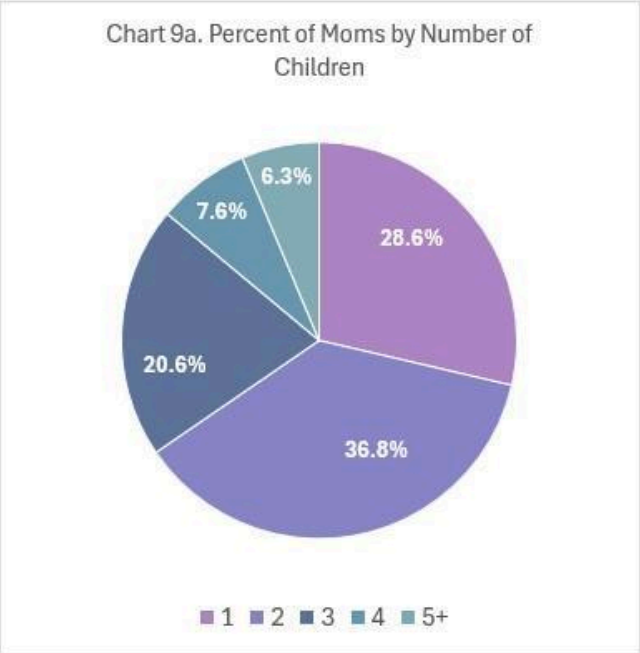
Most mothers surveyed report having 1 or 2 children (65%), which is aligned with national averages (Pew Research Center. Additionally, age ranges of children were well distributed among mothers (Table 9b).

How many children do you have?

Table 9a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
1	203	28.6%
2	261	36.8%
3	146	20.6%
4	54	7.6%
5+	45	6.3%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.0%**

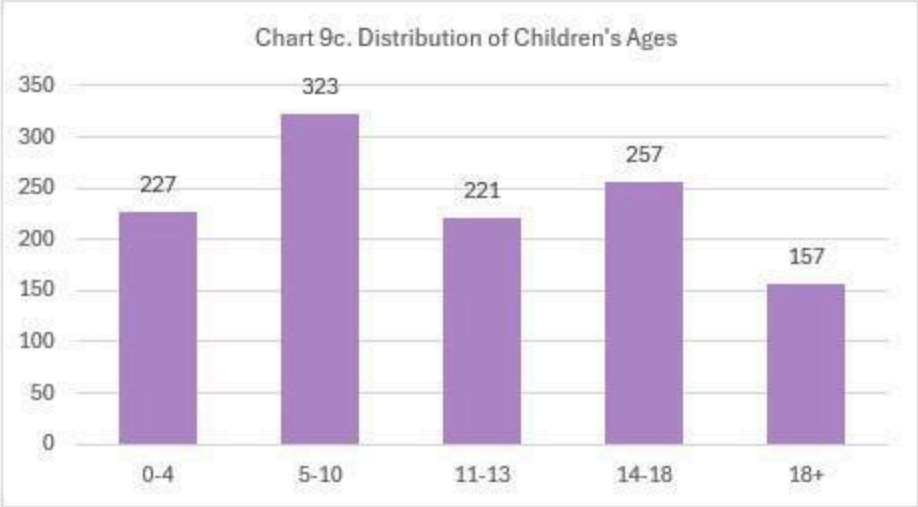




What are their age ranges? (Respondents could select all that apply)

Table 9b. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
0-4	227	32.0%
5-10	323	45.6%
11-13	221	31.2%
14-18	257	36.2%
18+	157	22.1%

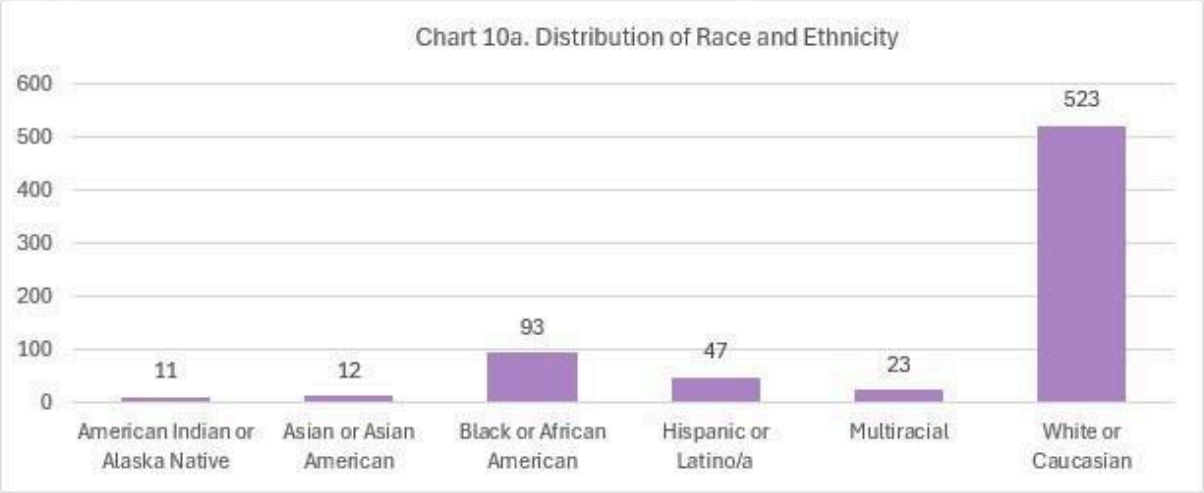


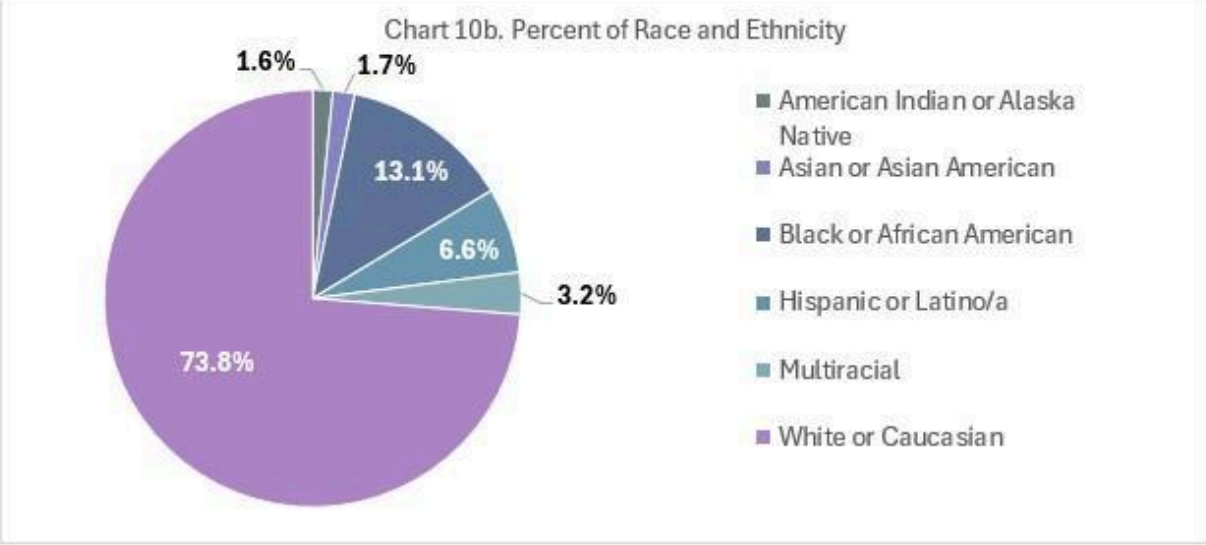
The race and ethnicity of mothers surveyed are also similarly distributed to the US national distributions (2020 US Census).

Your race or ethnicity is best described as:

Table 10a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
American Indian or Alaska Native	11	1.6%
Asian or Asian American	12	1.7%
Black or African American	93	13.1%
Hispanic or Latino/a	47	6.6%
Multiracial	23	3.2%
White or Caucasian	523	73.8%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.0%**





There is a relatively even split between mothers surveyed who have a college degree (n = 346, 49%) and mothers who do not have a college degree (n = 363, 51%).

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Table 11a. Distribution of Responses

	# of Respondents	Percent of Sample
12th grade or less	33	4.65%
Graduated from high school or equivalent (e.g., GED)	151	21.30%
Some college, but no degree	179	25.25%
Associate degree	106	14.95%
Bachelor's degree	158	22.28%
Master's degree	67	9.45%
Doctoral degree	15	2.12%
Grand Total	**709**	**100.00%**