

FRAC's Summer Food Participation Methodology Frequently Asked Questions

How does FRAC measure participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)?

For its 2005 report on summer nutrition programs, *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation*, FRAC developed a new methodology for measuring SFSP participation. FRAC calculates each state's average daily lunch attendance in the SFSP by dividing the total number of SFSP lunches served by the total number of weekdays (excluding the Independence Day holiday) in July. USDA provides FRAC with the number of SFSP lunches served in each state.

What was FRAC's methodology in previous years?

In previous reports (those published in 2004 or earlier), FRAC relied on the average daily participation numbers that states report to USDA.

Why are FRAC's SFSP participation numbers different from the numbers that states provide to USDA?

USDA asks states to report the average daily participation in their states for July. There is some disagreement among the states about the correct way to calculate average daily participation. Some calculate it as the total number of lunches served by each sponsor divided by the number of days each sponsor was in operation. Some calculate it as the total number of meals (breakfasts, lunches, snacks, etc.) served by each sponsor divided by operating days. Others divide the number of lunches or meals served statewide by an average number of operating days across the state. As a result of these different approaches, it is difficult to compare the state-reported average daily participation numbers in a fair manner.

Why did FRAC change its methodology?

FRAC developed the new methodology to allow consistent comparisons from state to state and year to year. The new measure also is consistent with the USDA methodology for calculating average daily lunch attendance in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Why does FRAC focus on July data?

USDA does not report the number of sponsors or sites for June or August – only for July. In addition, calculating average daily lunch attendance in June or August is complicated by the fact that many schools are still in session in June, or begin the new school year in August. This makes it difficult to compare average daily attendance in June or August from state to state, or even from district to district. In addition, USDA does not collect average daily participation data from the states for June or August.

What is the difference between Summer Food participation and summer nutrition participation?

Summer nutrition participation includes both participation in the SFSP and summertime participation in the NSLP. FRAC makes this distinction because many schools continue to offer meals in the summertime through the NSLP instead of applying to sponsor the SFSP.

For more information on the Summer Food Service Program, contact Alexis Bylander (abylander@frac.org) or Crystal FitzSimons (cfitzsimons@frac.org) at 202-986-2200.