

NCLFC UNSERVED PREPARED FOOD RECOVERY FOLLOW-UP

SURVEY OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Carolina Local Food Councils Food Recovery workgroup sought to better understand how the pandemic affected unserved prepared food recovery for local food councils and food bank systems in North Carolina. Unserved prepared food is defined as dishes and food items that have been prepared for consumption by a restaurant, grocery store, school, or other institution (as opposed to raw meats or produce), but has not been served. Recovery of these prepared foods, primarily by food banks, seeks to address the intersectional issues of food waste and nutritional food access. Following up from an initial prepared food recovery survey conducted in early 2020, the workgroup surveyed previous respondents on the state of food recovery in July 2020.

Responses were collected from July 6th through July 31st.

The survey had a total of 23 respondents from 16 counties and North Carolina at large (Fig. 1). Respondents represented 15 different food councils and food banks.

Survey questions gauged changes in prepared food recovery since the start of the pandemic, concerns of virus transmission, successes and challenges in food recovery, and ways that the NCLFC organization could provide support.

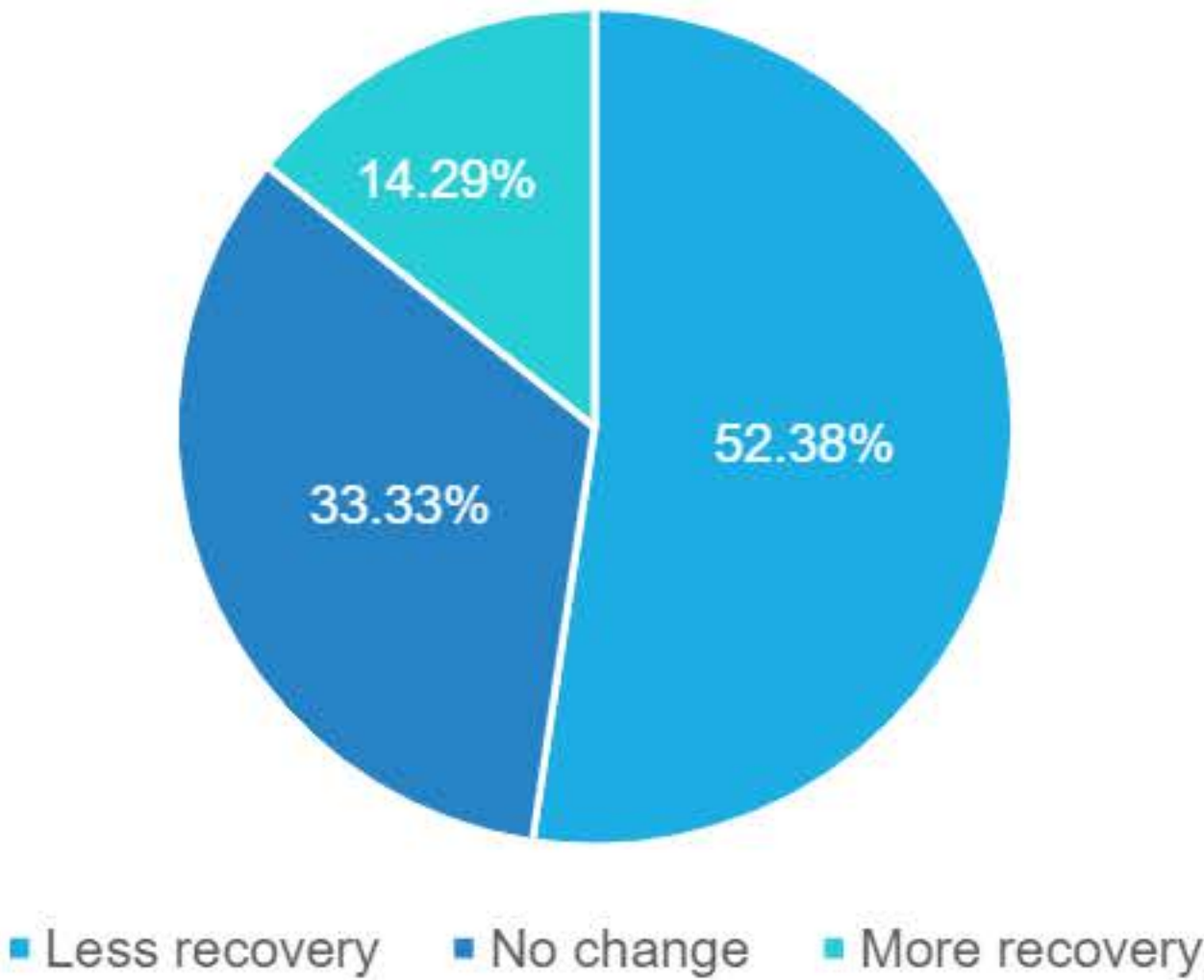


Figure 1. Map of North Carolina with respondent counties highlighted in blue.

CHANGE IN VOLUME OF RECOVERED FOOD

When asked how prepared food recovery had changed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a majority (52.38%) of respondents reported that less prepared food was being recovered compared to before the pandemic. 33.33% of respondents reported no change in recovery volume and 14.29% reported an increase in prepared food recovery. N=21.

Change in Prepared Food Recovery Since Beginning of Pandemic

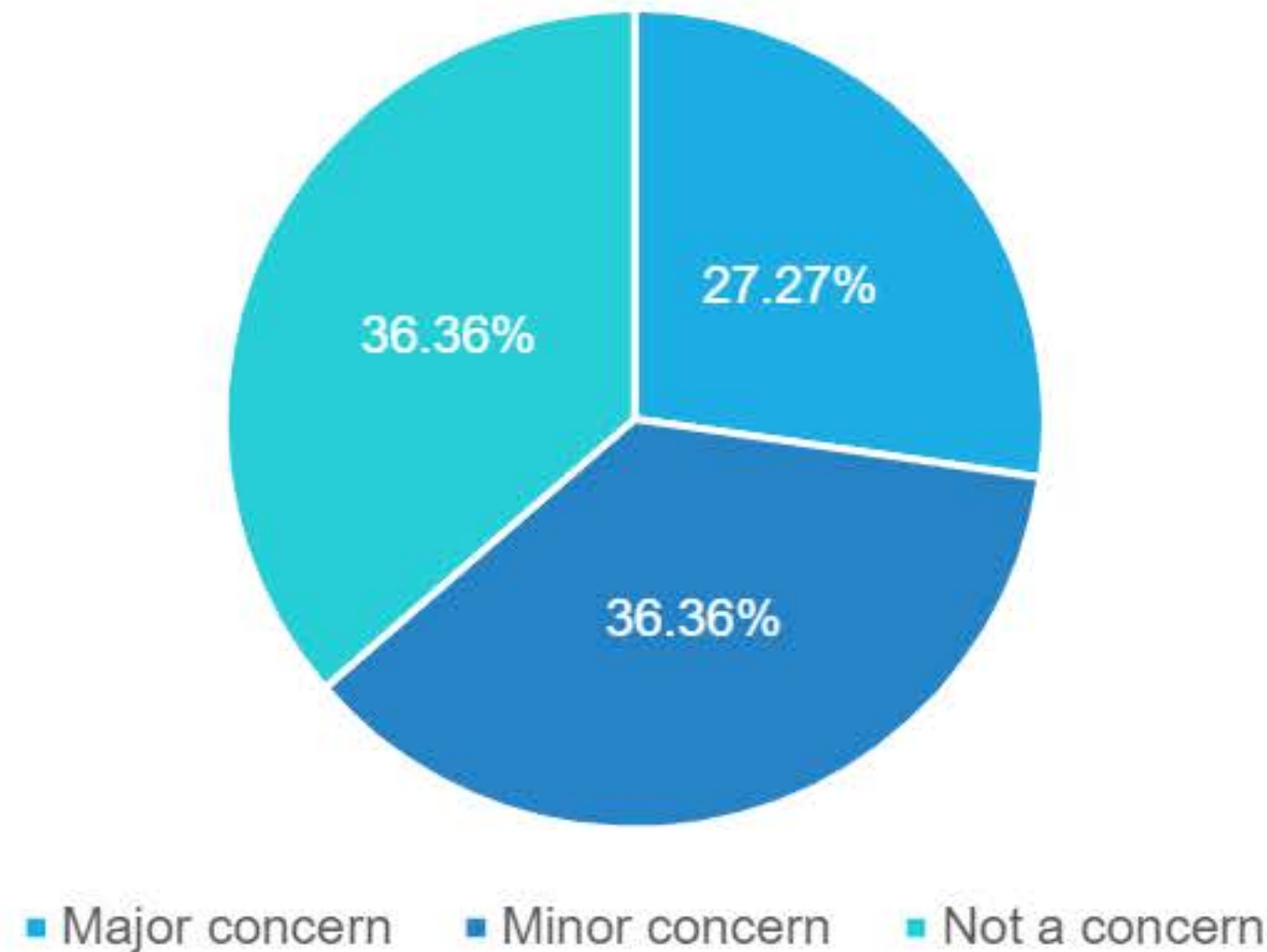


Qualitative explanations of selected responses followed a general theme of locally-based restaurants decreasing donation volumes due to closures and some national chains increasing donation due to a decrease in restaurant-goers. Grocery store donations were reported to remain relatively constant, although were reported to have decreased in some areas.

CONCERN FOR VIRUS TRANSMISSION DUE TO FOOD RECOVERY

With regard to concern for COVID-19 transmission due to prepared food recovery, respondents were fairly evenly split between considering virus exposure a major concern (27.27%), a minor concern (36.36%), or not a concern (36.36%). N = 22.

Concern Over COVID-19 Transmission Due to Prepared Food Recovery



Qualitative explanations from respondents showed a high level of understanding of CDC and FDA guidelines around the general safety of food and packaging as non-vectors for COVID-19 transmission. Respondents tended to cite in-person interaction between volunteers, employees, and food recipients as the source of major concerns for preventing infection.

PREPARED FOOD RECOVERY SUCCESSES

Respondents were asked to report any observed successes in unserved prepared food recovery during the pandemic. Qualitative responses were coded into three (3) categories: increased awareness, increased food donations, and greater financial & community support. N = 20.



Awareness



Donation



Support

PREPARED FOOD RECOVERY CHALLENGES

Similar to the successes question, respondents were asked to report any observed challenges in unserved prepared food recovery since the start of the pandemic. Qualitative responses were coded into four (4) categories: reduced volunteers, staff and recipient safety, increased need for low-cost food & no new reported challenges. N = 21.



Volunteers



Health & Safety



Demand



No Challenges

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