



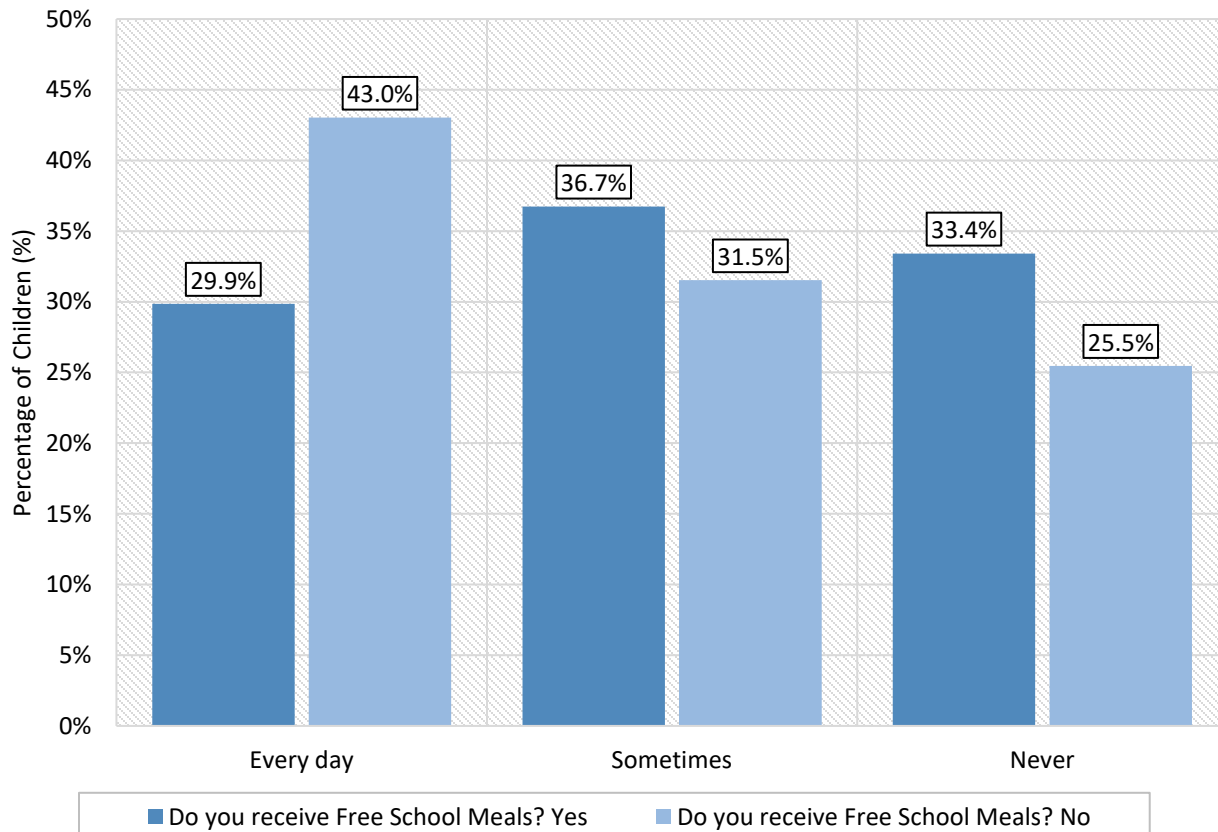
2021 ALS – Secondary-school-age children and their nutrition – focus on Free School Meals (FSM)

# What is the ALS and who took part?

- The Adolescent Lifestyle Survey (ALS) is a survey of school pupils in school years 7 to 11 (ages 11-16) in North East Lincolnshire.
- The ALS is an online survey completed in classrooms in exam style conditions.
- It has been carried out every 3-4 years since 2004; the 2021 ALS was completed in October and each school received their results in November.
- This report focuses on the questions relating to diet and how pupils receiving FSM responded to them, and whether there is a difference between those and the responses of pupils who do not receive FSM. The summary for all respondents can be found [here](#).
- Responses can be broken down as follows:
  - 7,988 secondary-school-age children took part in the survey, providing 7,146 completed responses.
  - 7,094 respondents answered the question on whether they received FSM, giving an 88.8% response-rate.
  - of the 7,094 respondents answering the FSM question, 1,414 answered that they were receiving FSM (19.9%), and 5,680 answered that they were not receiving FSM (80.1%). All questions shown as charts were asked of these populations except for one asking whether school meals have gotten better or worse, which was asked of those that selected 'Have a school meal (this can be from a snack bar/salad bar)' (890 children receiving FSM; 1,814 children not receiving FSM) in the question on respondents' lunch habits, and the one asking how many energy drinks respondents drank in a day, which was only asked of respondents who selected 'Everyday' or 'Most days' (310; 697) in the question on how often respondents' drink energy drinks. Further, the trends on the reasons why respondents [do not] eat breakfast and lunch are also based on two questions that were not put to everyone; the breakfast question was only put to those selecting 'Never' (471; 1,444) when asked how often they ate breakfast, and the lunch question was only put to those who selected 'Don't usually eat anything for lunch' (154; 599) in the question on respondents' lunch habits.

# Secondary-school-age children and breakfast

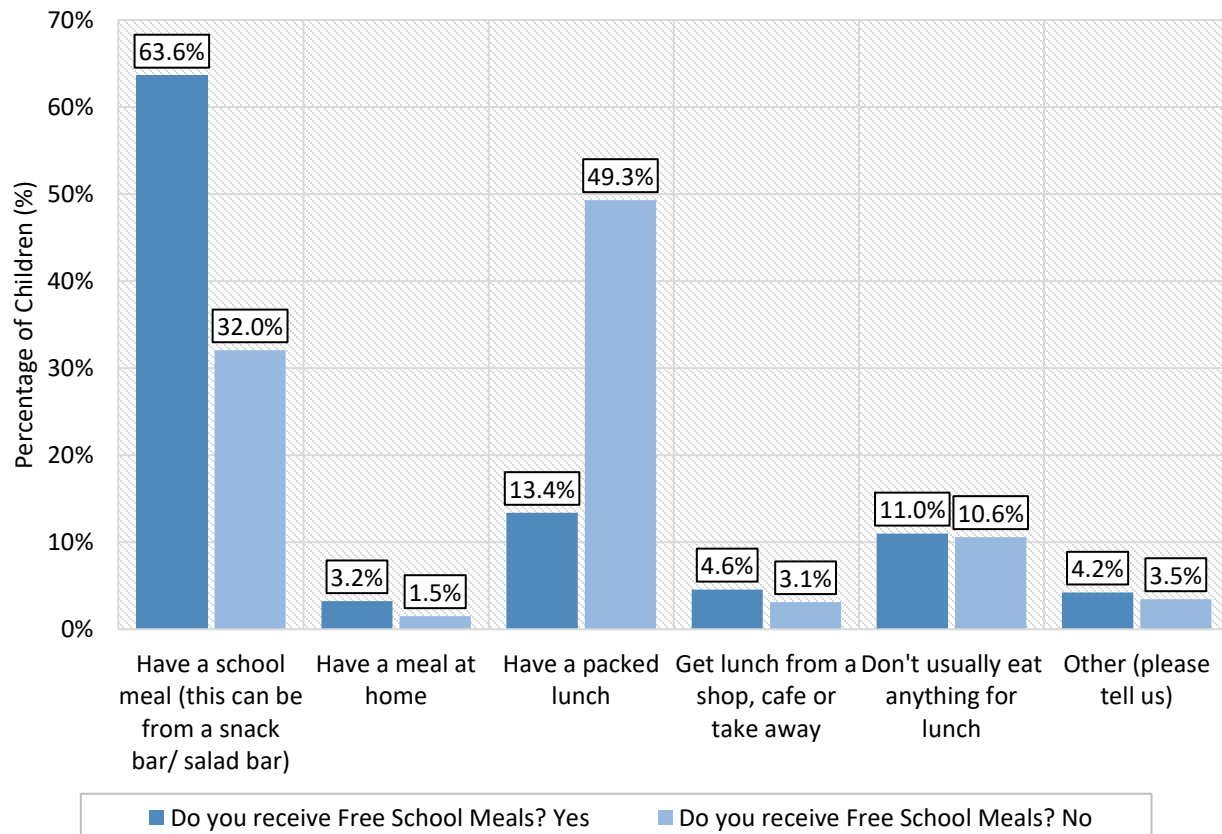
During a normal school week, how often do secondary-school-age children eat breakfast? (NELC, 2021)



- Children who receive FSM eat breakfast much less frequently than those do not receive FSM, with 66.6% of the former eating breakfast at least 'sometimes,' compared to 74.5% among the latter. Broken down further, there is a 7.9% jump from the proportion of children who do not receive FSM who never eat breakfast to that among those receiving FSM. Moreover, the proportion of children not in receipt of FSM eating breakfast every day is almost 1½ times that among children not receiving FSM.
- Reasons why children did not eat breakfast were broadly very similar between both groups. For both groups, 'not hungry' was by far the most popular response, followed by 'don't have enough time,' and then by 'eating breakfast makes me feel sick.' The biggest difference between groups was the slightly larger proportion of those not receiving FSM who selected 'eating breakfast makes me feel sick.'

# Secondary-school-age children and lunch

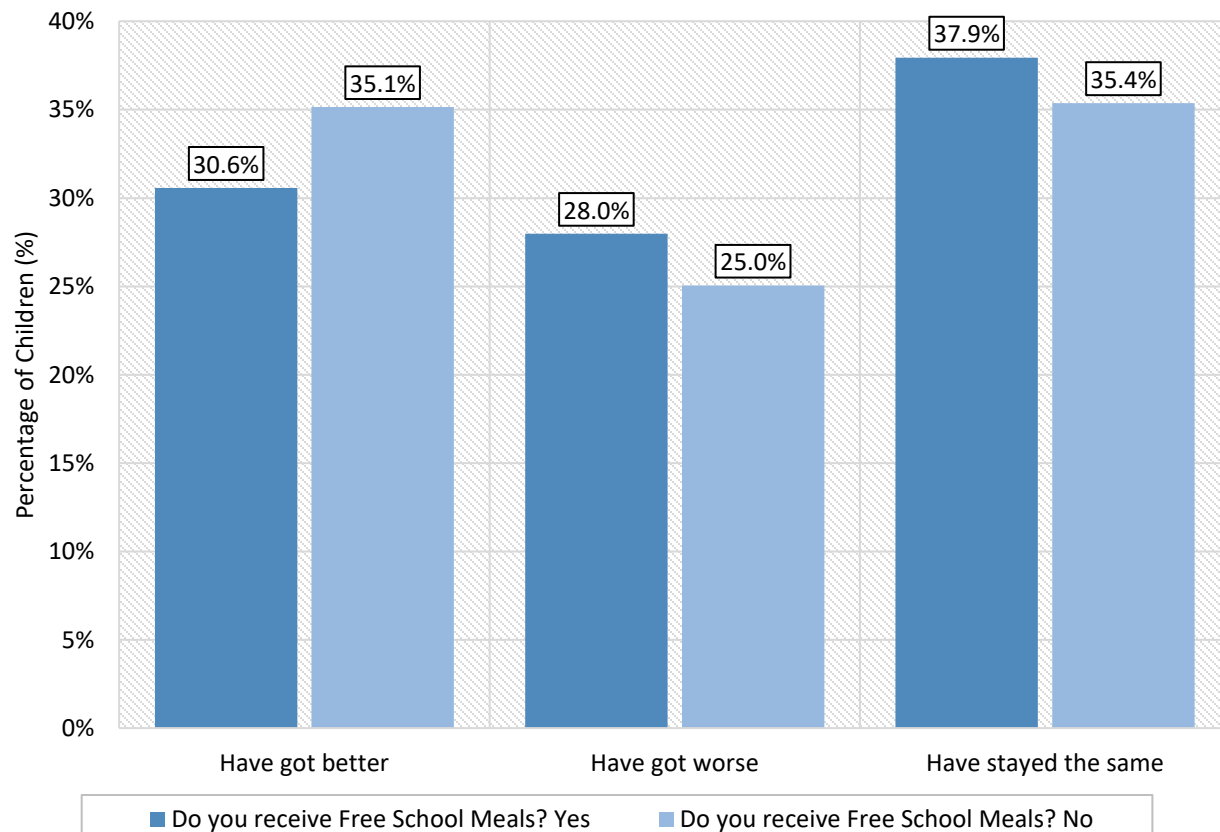
What do secondary-school-age children do for their midday meal on a school day? (NELC, 2021)



- On Lunch, the proportion of children receiving FSM who do not usually eat anything for lunch is still slightly higher than the proportion who do not receive FSM. However, likely as a result of the offer of FSM, the proportion of children receiving FSM who have a school meal is almost twice that among children not receiving FSM. Also, regarding children eating a packed lunch, it is notable that the proportion of children not receiving FSM who eat a packed lunch is more than 3½ times that proportion among children in receipt of FSM.
- Again, there is not a great deal of difference between both groups in terms of why they don't eat lunch, but the difference is greater than was seen in the responses to the same question on breakfast. In both groups, the most popular response was 'I am not hungry at lunch,' then 'I don't like eating in front of people,' and 'because I am unhappy with my weight' was the third-most popular answer. The biggest differences were the [relatively] large proportions of children receiving FSM who answered that they 'don't like school food' and that 'school food is too expensive.'

# Have school dinners improved

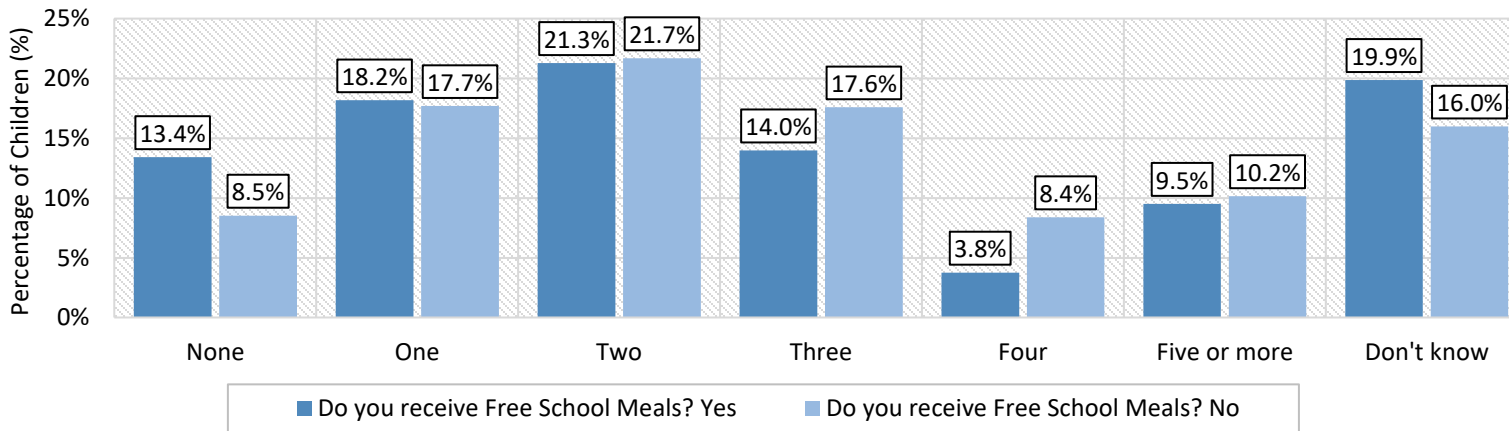
In the last year, do you think school dinners have got better or worse? (NELC, 2021)



- As this question was only asked of children who 'have a school meal' for their midday meal, it captures a picture of children's opinions on school dinners that is as current [at the time of the 2021 ALS] as possible.
- The responses to this question indicate the majority of children in both groups think that school meals have neither got better nor worse. Similarly, the second-most popular option for both groups was 'have got better,' followed by 'have got worse.' But there is a much larger disparity between those saying school meals have gotten better and those saying school meals have gotten worse in those not receiving FSM, compared to those in receipt of FSM – the gap of 10.1% in the former falls to 2.6% in the latter. This has arisen out of a relatively large proportion of children receiving FSM who think school meals have got worse.

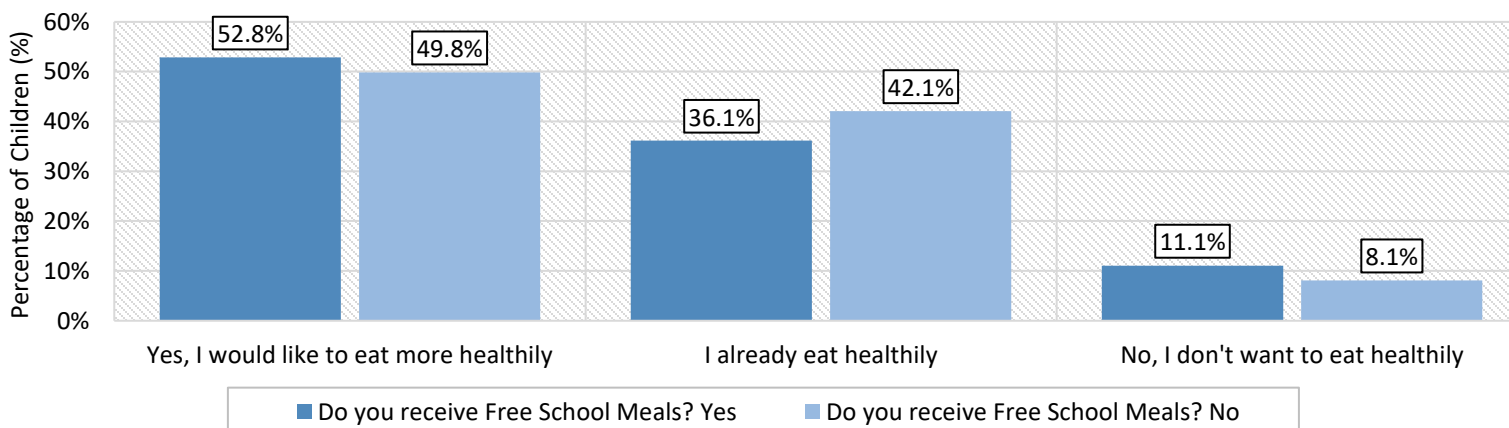
# Secondary-school-age children and a five-a-day

How many portions of fruit and vegetables do you usually eat a day? (NELC, 2021)



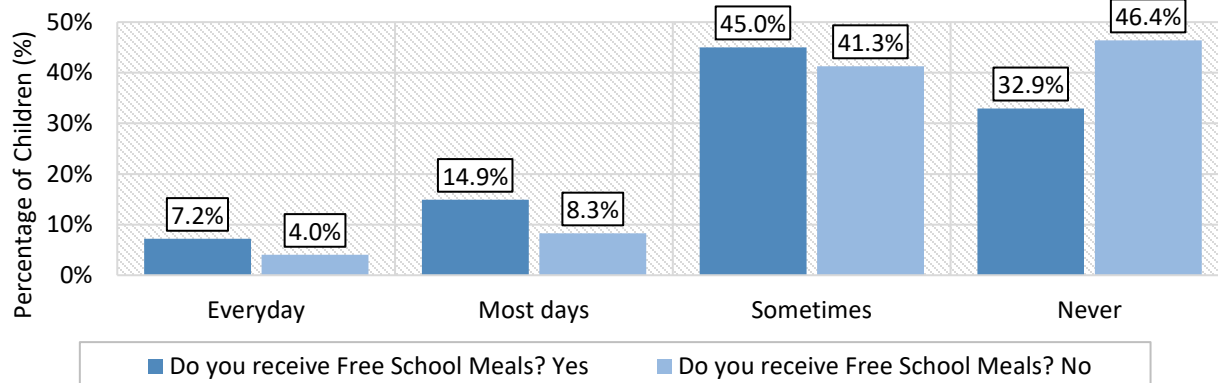
- This chart shows that children receiving FSM generally eat less fruit and veg' in a day than those not receiving FSM; the proportion of children receiving FSM who eat no portions in a day is 4.9% higher than in those not receiving FSM, and this trend exists – but is less pronounced – in those eating one portion too. The trend reverses after that, with a greater proportion of children not receiving FSM eat two portions, compared to those receiving FSM. And this continues up to 'five or more' portions, with a gap that widens from 0.4% in 'two' to 4.6% in 'four'.
- It is also interesting that almost a fifth of FSM recipients don't know whether they eat 5-a-day – 3.9% higher than among those not receiving FSM.
- Below this, the second chart shows a higher proportion of children receiving FSM want to eat more healthily, as compared to those not receiving FSM. Furthermore, a lower proportion of those receiving FSM say they already eat healthily, and a higher proportion say they don't want to eat healthily; the gap is biggest in the 'I already eat healthily' response, with a 6% increase from those receiving FSM to those not receiving FSM.

Would secondary-school-age children like to eat more healthily? (NELC, 2021)

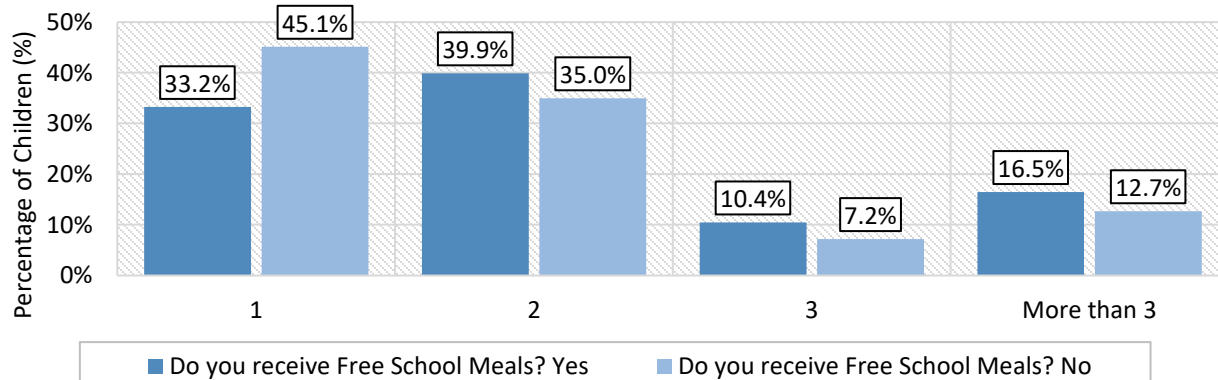


# Secondary-school-age children and energy drinks

How often do secondary-school-age children drink energy drinks?  
e.g. Monster, Red bull, rockstar, etc. (NELC, 2021)



When secondary-school-age children have energy drinks, how many do you usually drink in a day? (NELC, 2021)



- These charts further highlight the impact of deprivation on lifestyle behaviours, as the first one highlights 67.1% of children receiving FSM drink energy drinks, as compared to 53.6% in those not in receipt of FSM. Also, at 22.1%, the proportion of children receiving FSM who drink energy drinks regularly is almost double that among the children not receiving FSM (12.3%).
- Regarding children's reasons to drink energy drinks, the differences between both groups are relatively small. The most popular response for both was 'taste,' then 'thirsty,' and 'tired' was next in terms of popularity. The largest difference was the slightly larger number of responses from among FSM recipients indicating they bought energy drinks because they were 'thirsty'.
- In the lower graph, the proportions for those responding that they have '1' energy drink a day [as opposed to a larger number] contrast with those for the remaining options – the proportion of those not receiving FSM who drink one per day is almost 1½ times that of those receiving FSM, but they are overrepresented under the 'more than 3' option, and to a lesser extent the '3' option. Overall, of those drinking energy drinks either 'most days' or 'everyday,' 66.8% of FSM recipients drink 2+ energy drinks per day, compared to 54.9% of those not receiving FSM.



Thank you.