

Lessons from P-EBT to increase SNAP access

A survey of public-school parents in targeted Mass. districts

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This project was sponsored by The Shah Family Foundation

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Survey Background

- Over 10,000 K-12 households in selected school districts in Massachusetts.
 - 14 districts: 9 CEP, 2 mixed, 3 non-CEP.
- Conducted April 9-May 30 via text and email to web survey.
 - Survey available in 8 languages.
 - Email or text invitations were sent with links to the survey by each participating district to K-12 parents.
- This project was sponsored by The Shah Family Foundation.

Key findings

- Food insecurity reached very high levels during the pandemic, with half or more in some Massachusetts school districts reporting food insecurity during the pandemic.
- Between demographic groups, there were major variations in the prevalence of food insecurity.
- Despite this, many who clearly would have benefitted from food assistance did not apply for SNAP.
- SNAP is broadly familiar to parents, though not quite to the level of P-EBT. Familiarity and satisfaction with P-EBT were very broad across districts.

Key findings

- Key hesitations among those who needed SNAP were perceived complexity and concerns over immigration status.
- Lower-income Latino and Asian parents were particularly likely to express concerns about immigration status impacts.
- There is considerable misunderstanding about the details of SNAP; more say they would have applied if they had known about recent changes to the program.

Respondent Demographics

- Over half of respondents have an income under \$50k, Over 40% of respondents have a high education or less, and another 30% have less than a college degree.

<18 - 29	12%
30 - 34	18%
35 - 39	24%
40 - 44	22%
45+	24%
Prefer not to say	1%
Hispanic / Latino	47%
White	41%
African American / Black	5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4%
Middle Eastern / Arab American	1%
Native American or Alaskan Native	1%
Some other race	1%
Prefer not to say	4%

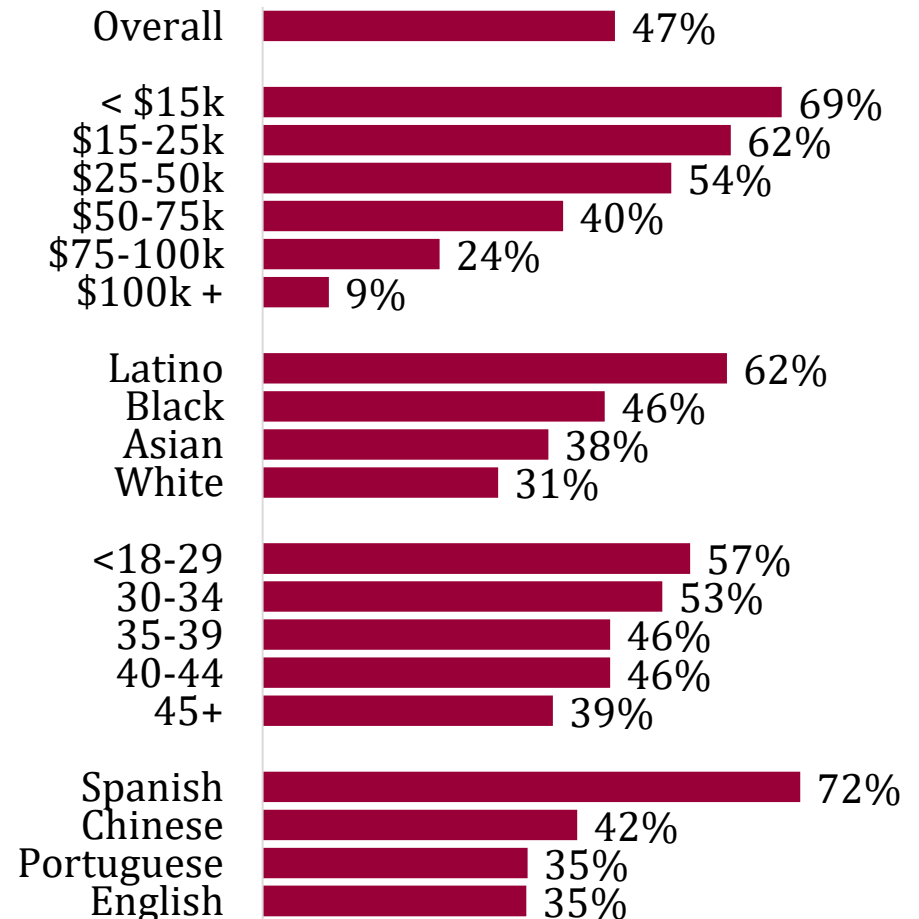
<\$15k	15%
\$15-25k	18%
\$25-50k	23%
\$50-75k	12%
\$75-100k	7%
\$100k+	11%
Prefer not to say	14%
11th grade or less	14%
High school graduate	27%
Less than two years of college	17%
Two years or more / associate degree	13%
College graduate / bachelors degree	14%
Postgrad courses / advanced degree	11%
Prefer not to say	5%

Food insecurity by demographics

- Younger parents, people of color, lower income households, and non-English speakers are far more likely to have been food insecure in the last year.
- In some groups, well over half fall into the low / very low food security categories.
- Food insecurity was measured with questions from USDA U.S. Household Food Security Six-Item Short Form.

The shape of food insecurity

% in each group who fall into the low or very low food security category

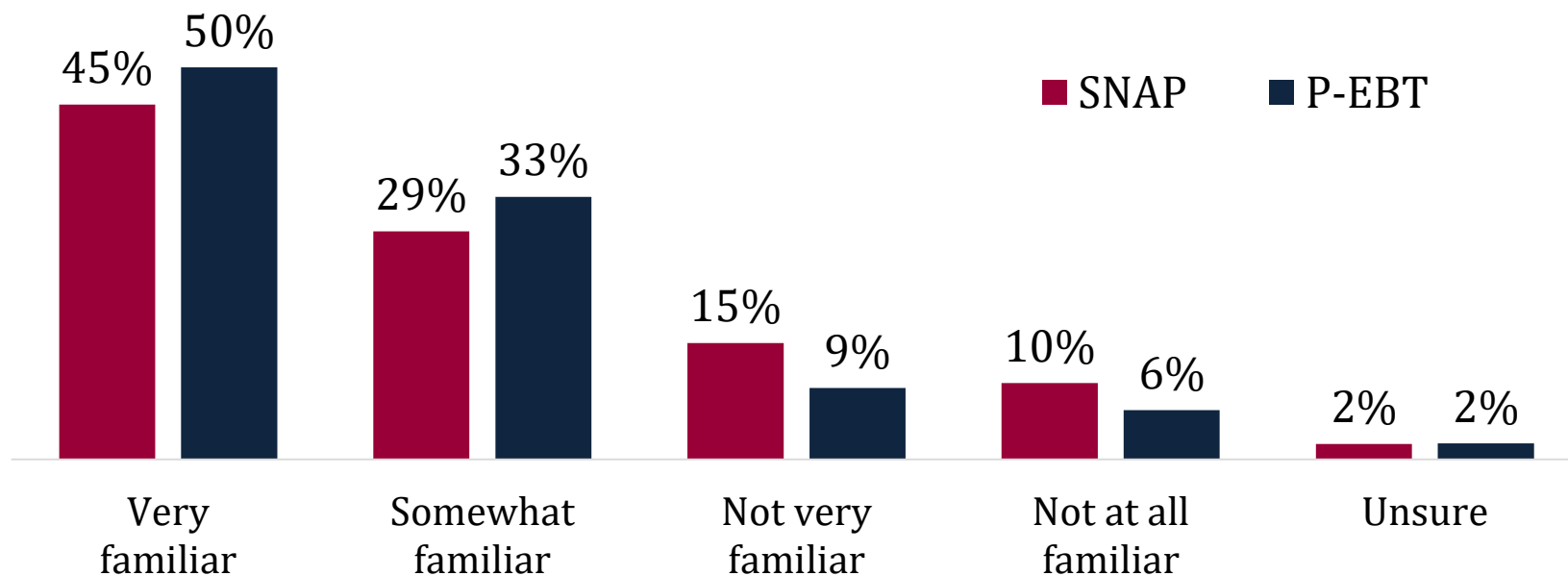


Familiarity with P-EBT and SNAP

- While most are familiar with both SNAP and P-EBT, slightly more (25%) are unfamiliar with SNAP.

Broad awareness of SNAP and P-EBT, though somewhat less for SNAP

% of respondents familiar with P-EBT and SNAP benefits



Those who got P-EBT appreciated it

- Among those who reported receiving P-EBT, nearly all used it and found it to be “very helpful” to their household during the pandemic.

Parents who received P-EBT used it and found it very helpful

% of P-EBT recipients who said they used P-EBT benefits and found them “very helpful”

Used P-EBT to buy food	98%
Found it "very helpful"	94%

How many accessed SNAP?

- Overall, about 1 in 3 parents in these districts say they received SNAP benefits during the pandemic.
- Even among those who reported food insecurity, only 40% said they received SNAP during the pandemic. Less than half making under \$25k report receiving snap during the pandemic.
- Those who used SNAP report high levels of satisfaction.

Despite high levels of food insecurity, many did not receive SNAP benefits during the pandemic

% who say they received SNAP benefits during the pandemic

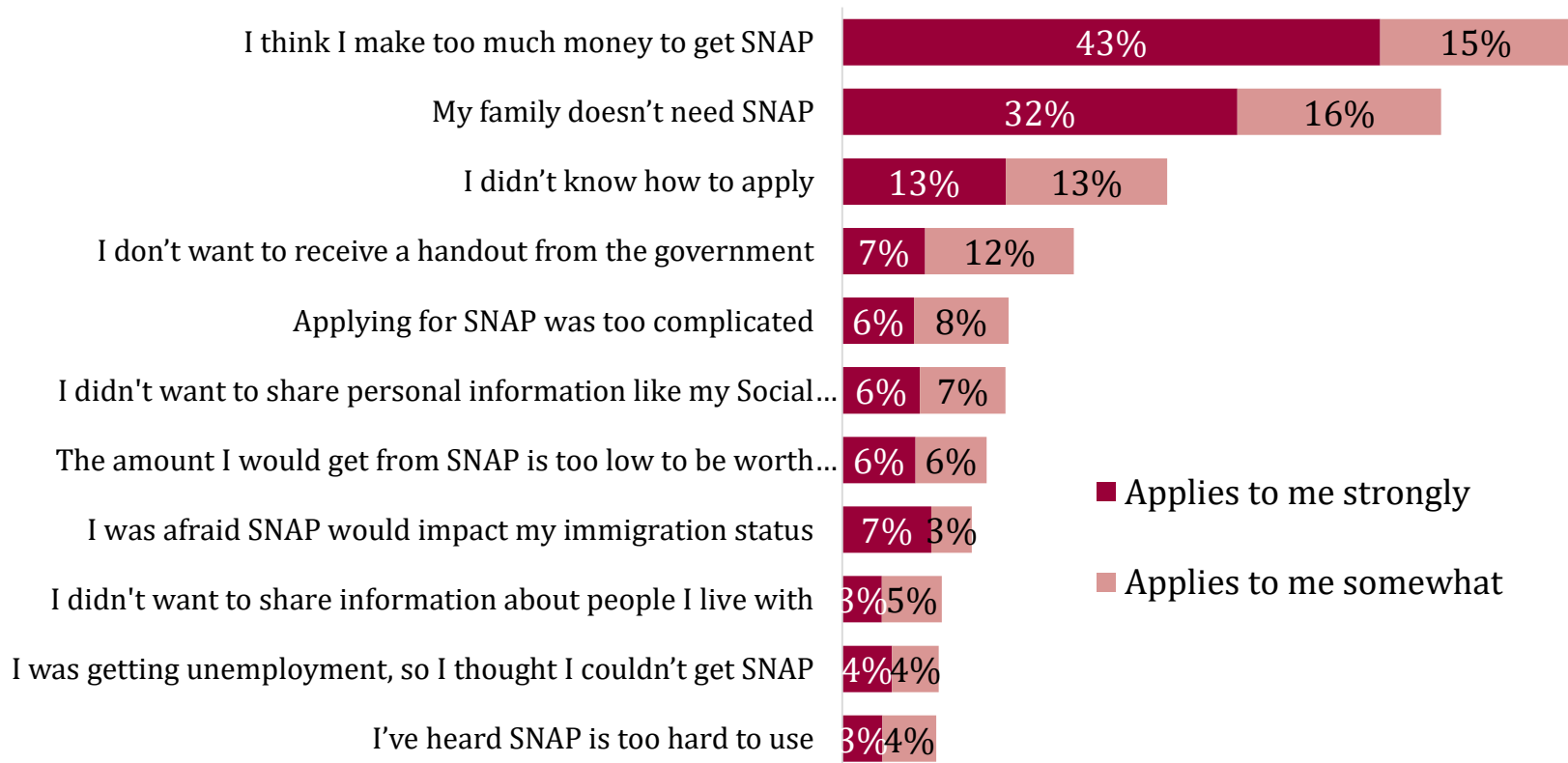
Overall	32%
< \$15k	43%
\$15k to < \$25k	44%
\$25k to < \$50k	39%
High food security	22%
Marginal food security	30%
Low food security	40%
Very low food security	40%

Reasons parents didn't apply for SNAP

- The most common reason to not apply for SNAP was the perception they did not need it or would not be eligible, followed by the complexity of the process.

Perceived need, and complexity, were top reasons people avoided SNAP

% who didn't apply for SNAP who said each reason applied to them strongly or somewhat



Q: How much does each of the following apply to you?

Note: Chelsea parents were asked a different version of this question and are excluded from the numbers above.

SNAP in lower-income households

- Those in lower-income households cite a very different set of reasons, focusing on complexity and immigration status.

Lower income households identified different reasons for not applying for SNAP

% who didn't apply for SNAP who said each reason applied to them either strongly or somewhat

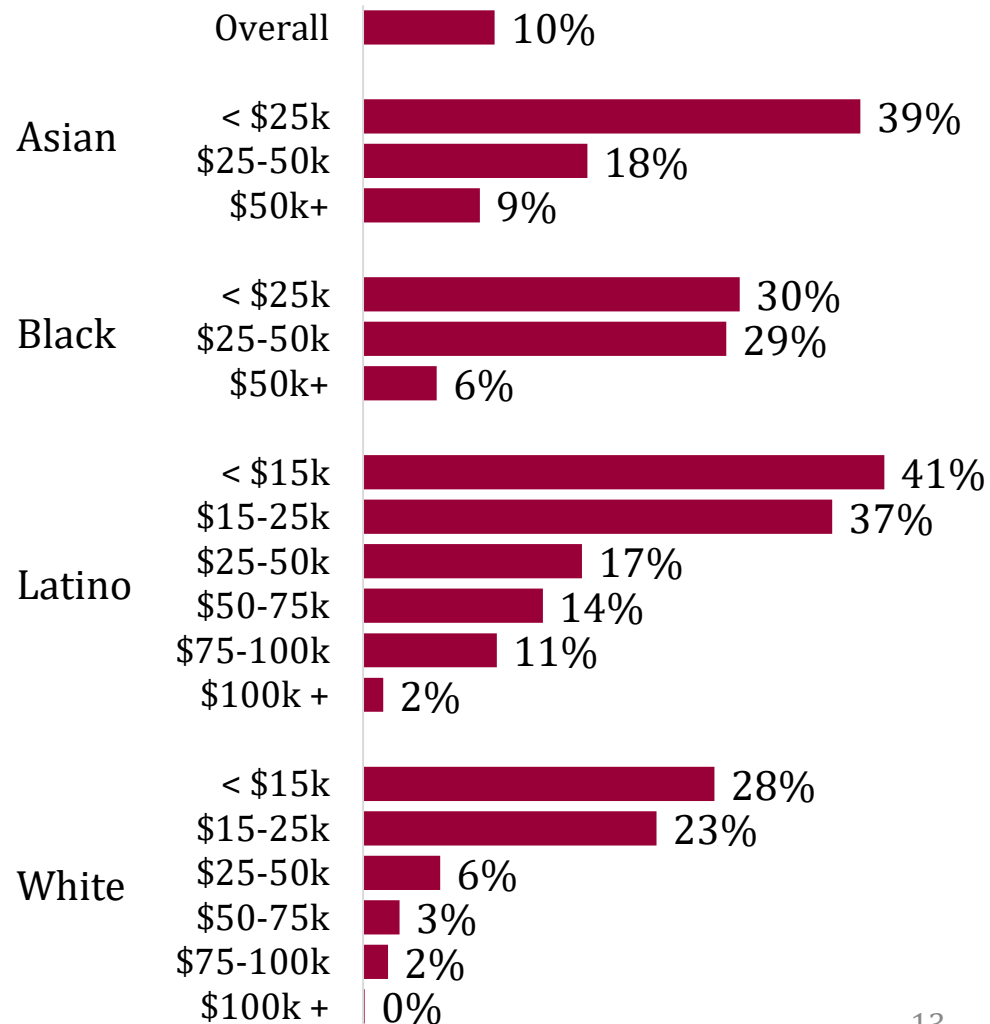
	Overall	< \$15k	\$15-25k	\$25-50k
I didn't know how to apply	26%	53%	43%	36%
I was afraid SNAP would impact my immigration status	10%	38%	32%	15%
Applying for SNAP was too complicated	13%	30%	33%	22%
I don't want to receive a handout from the government	19%	18%	21%	17%
I've heard SNAP is too hard to use	8%	18%	21%	11%
I didn't want to share personal information like my Social Security Number or contact info.	13%	16%	24%	16%
I didn't want to share information about people I live with	8%	16%	15%	11%
The amount I would get from SNAP is too low to be worth applying for	12%	14%	19%	16%
I was getting unemployment, so I thought I couldn't get SNAP	8%	12%	15%	11%
<i>I think I make too much money to get SNAP</i>	<i>58%</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>42%</i>
<i>My family doesn't need SNAP</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>22%</i>

Immigration status and income

- Among lower income parents, immigration status is of particular concern.
- This applies particularly strongly to Latino and Asian parents.

Immigration status as a SNAP concern

% in each group who say immigration concerns apply to them strongly or somewhat

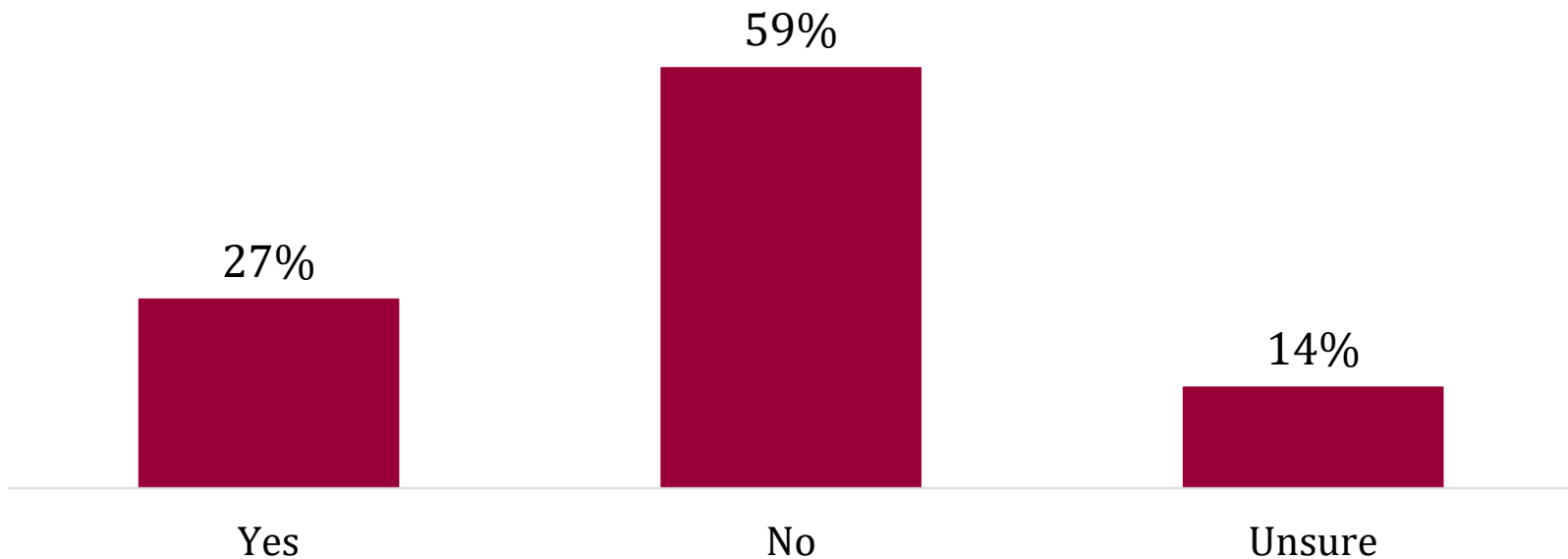


Low awareness of SNAP changes

- When shown changes to Mass. SNAP benefits, eligibility, and application during COVID, 59% of all parents said they were not aware of them.

Most parents didn't know that SNAP rules changed during COVID

% of all respondents who said _____ to whether they knew SNAP had changed during COVID

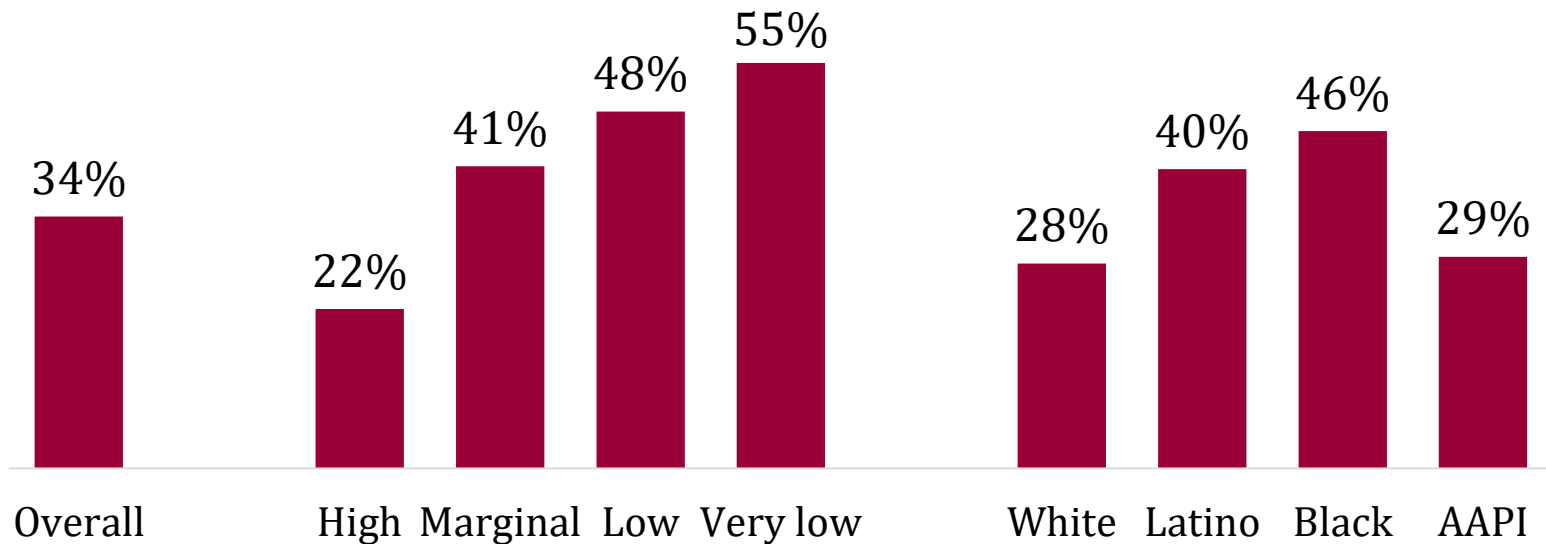


Many unaware would have applied

- If people had known that SNAP benefits were higher during the pandemic and the rules was simpler, 34% would have applied.

Many more say they would have applied if they knew about the changes to SNAP

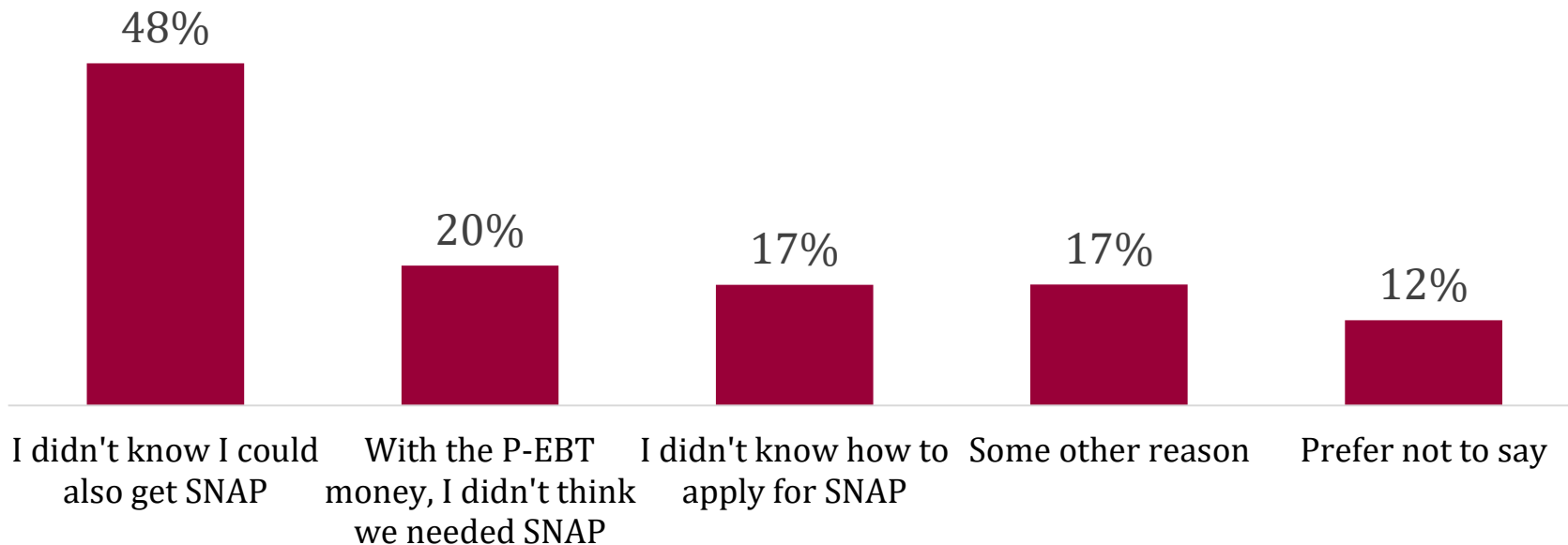
% of SNAP non-applicants unaware of changes who would have applied if they had known



P-EBT and SNAP benefits

- Nearly half of P-EBT recipients who hadn't applied for SNAP didn't know they could get both benefits at the same time.

Many P-EBT recipients who didn't apply for SNAP did not know they could have both
% of P-EBT receiving non-SNAP applicants citing each as a reason for not applying

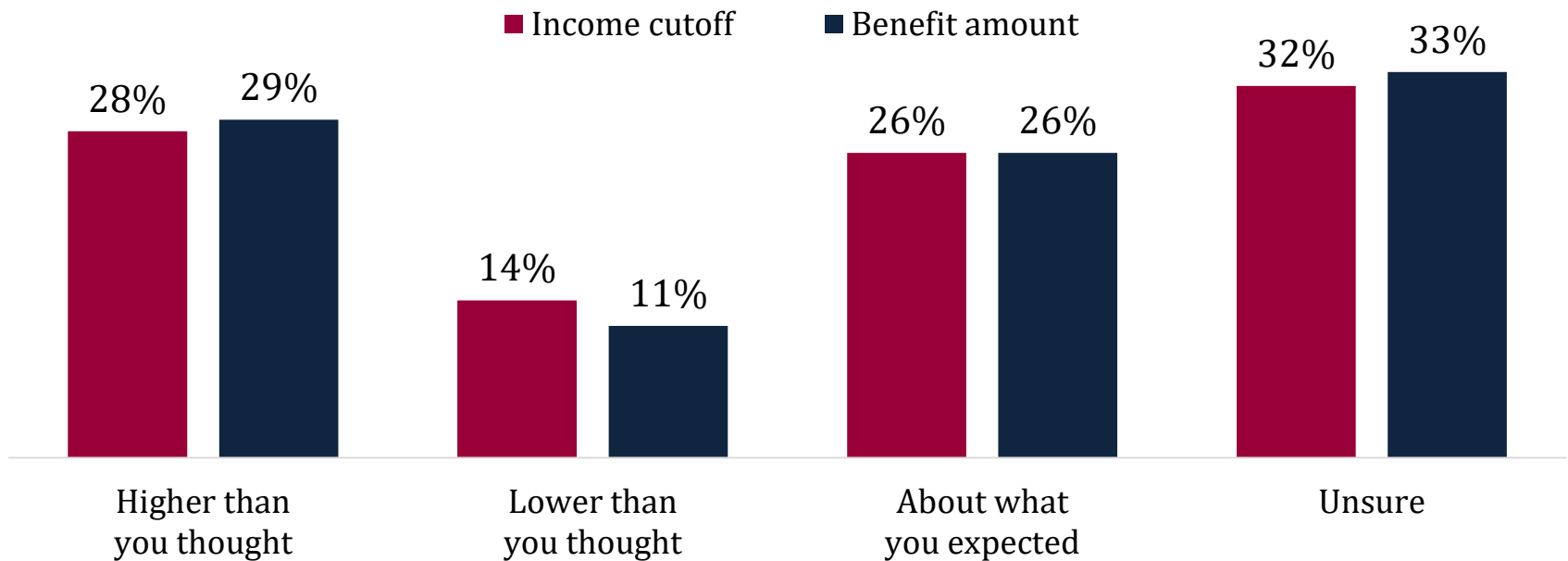


Many surprised by SNAP details

- When shown a table of SNAP eligibility cut-offs and benefit amounts for various household sizes, most say they were either higher than they thought or were unsure of the cutoffs, highlighting a communications opportunity.

Most parents underestimated or were unsure about SNAP cut-offs, benefit amounts

% who thought each item shown was ___ than they thought previously

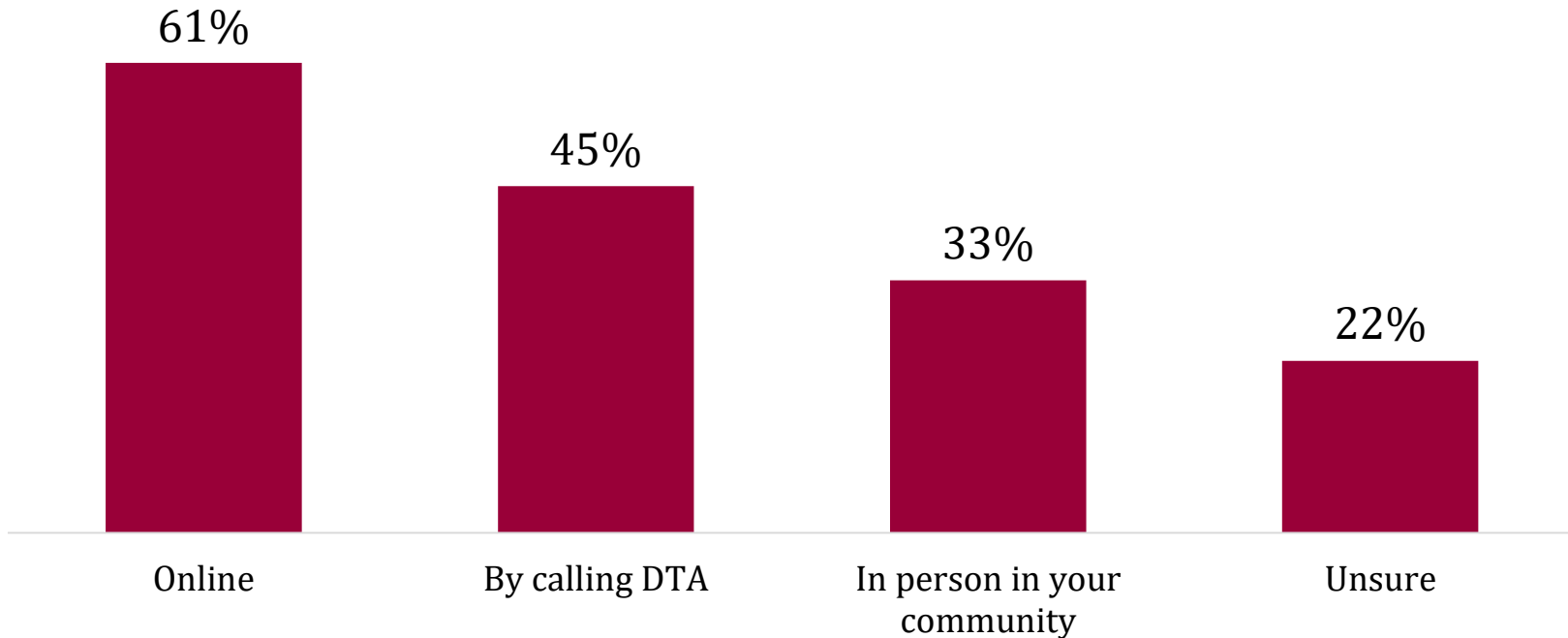


Awareness of how to apply for SNAP

- Few parents in these Massachusetts district knew one can apply for SNAP in various ways including online, via phone and in person.
- Given that difficulties applying were a reason many did not apply, this suggests another opportunity for communication.

Parents lack awareness of details about SNAP application details

% who say you can apply for SNAP in each of the following ways (select all that apply)





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