

UVM ScholarWorks

Vermont Restaurant Owner & Manager Perspectives on Creating Heart-Healthy Kids Meals

Item Type	Presentation
Authors	Lucas, Elisabeth;LoPiccolo, Mary K.;Haggerty, Lauren;Trivedi, Apoorva;Jacobson, Alex;Trigg, Daniel;Sommer, Taylor;Payne, Carolyn;Zuk, Tina;Tracy, Paula
Download date	2026-06-09 20:51:06
Item License	http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14849/997

Vermont Restaurant Owner & Manager Perspectives on Creating Heart-Healthy Kids Meals

Lucas, E.¹; LoPiccolo, M.K.¹; Haggerty, L.¹; Trivedi, A.¹; Jacobson, A.¹; Trigg, D.¹; Sommer, T.¹; Payne C.¹; Zuk, T.²; Tracy P.¹
¹University of Vermont College of Medicine; ²American Heart Association Vermont

Introduction

The prevalence of sugar sweetened beverages and fried foods combined with a lack of healthy children’s menu options has contributed to the obesity epidemic among young Americans.¹ Recent legislation in New York City and San Francisco instituted strict nutritional requirements on children’s menu items.²

We performed a cross-sectional study that focused on independently owned restaurants with printed children’s menus in Vermont. We investigated the nutritional content of children’s menu items, restaurant owner and manager perspectives on customer ordering habits, and barriers that restaurants would face if they made children’s menu items healthier.

Methods

- Project was reviewed and accepted by the UVM Office of Research Protections as an Instructor’s Assurance.
- 145 Vermont Restaurants with printed children’s menus were identified by online search engine. The restaurants were stratified by county and then contacted randomly by phone to participate in the study. 46 restaurant owner/managers completed the survey.
- The structured questionnaire that was modeled after the *Children’s Menu Assessment* tool³ included a combination of yes/no and Likert scale response questions. The survey data were collected by second year medical students via LimeSurvey™
- Data were compiled and analyzed in Microsoft Excel.

Limitations

- The number of restaurants available on the restaurant review engine was not inclusive;
- Only restaurant owners who use a printed children’s menu for lunch or dinner were interviewed;
- Data collection was limited by the time of day when managers and/or owners were available;
- The highest concentration of respondents represented the most densely populated areas of the state.

Figure 1: Perspectives on Changing the Children’s Menu

Restaurant owners/managers were asked their opinions on changing the children’s menu and the nutritional content of children’s menus.

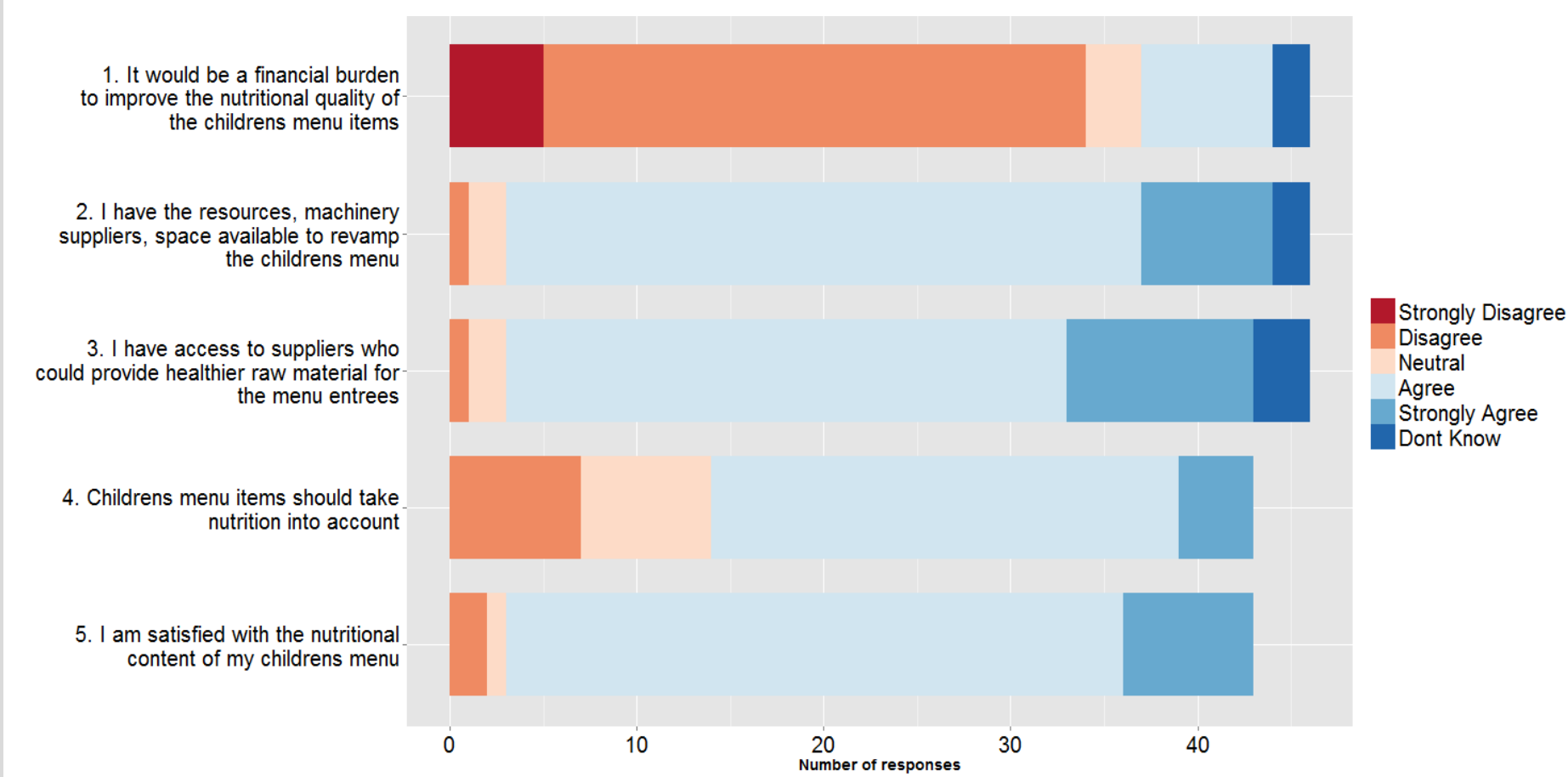


Figure 2: Ease of Changing the Menu

Restaurant owners/managers were asked their opinions on the ease of changing specific aspects of the children’s menu.

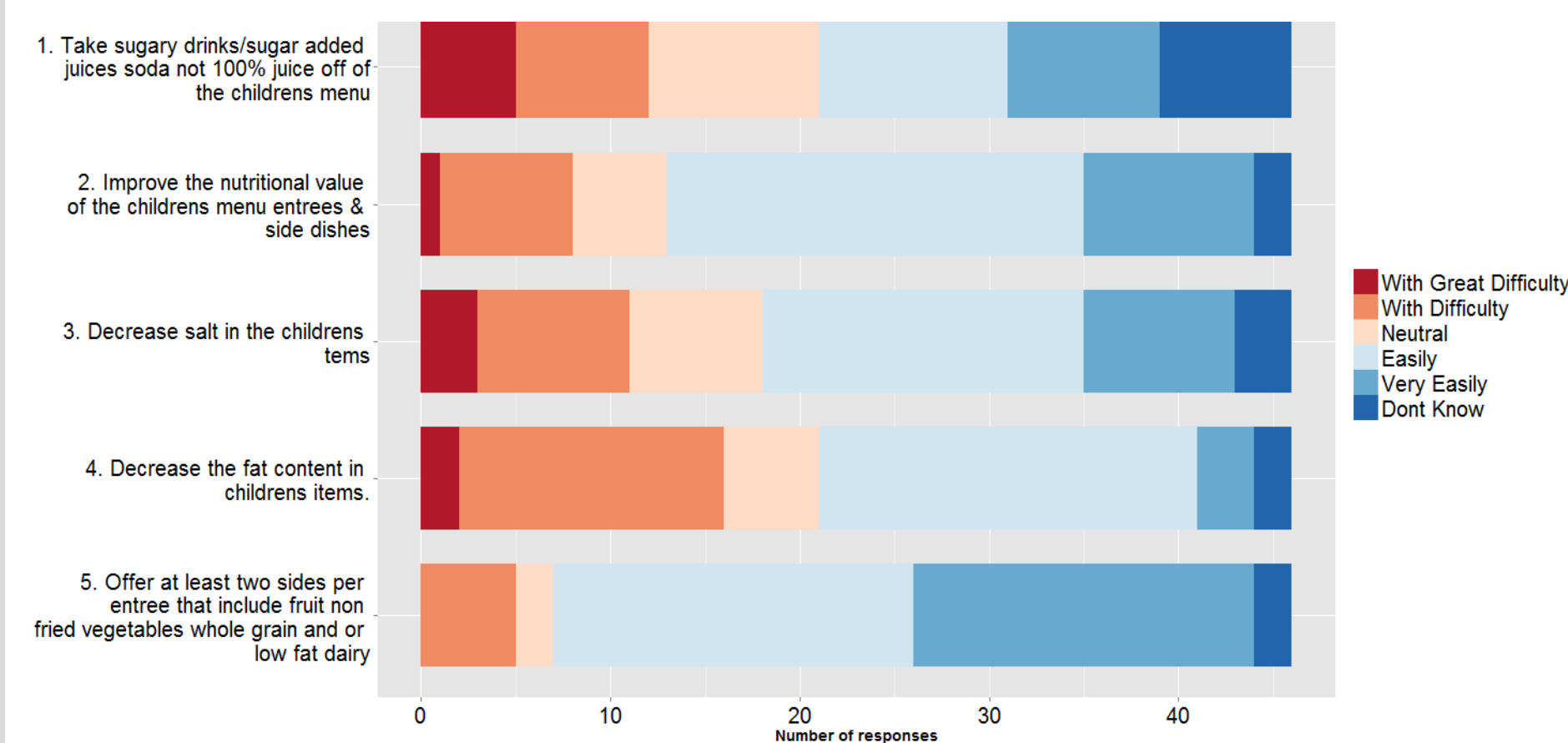


Figure 3: Survey questions regarding children’s menu choices
Questions and restaurant owners/managers answers are shown

Question	Responses		
	Yes	No	Don't Know/ NA
Do you offer healthy entrees?	38 (82.61%)	8 (17.39%)	0
Do you offer pizza, burgers, etc.?	40 (86.96%)	6 (13.04%)	0
Is fruit juice available?	37 (80.43%)	9 (19.57%)	0
If fruit juice is available, are any 100% juice?	35 (76.09%)	2 (4.35%)	9 (19.57%)
Is soda, a beverage choice specifically for children?	25 (54.35%)	21 (45.65%)	0
Are non-fried vegetables, fruits or salads offered as sides?	37 (80.43%)	9 (19.57%)	0

Results

Figure 4: Barriers to Change

Restaurant owners/managers were asked their opinions on barriers to changing their children’s menu.

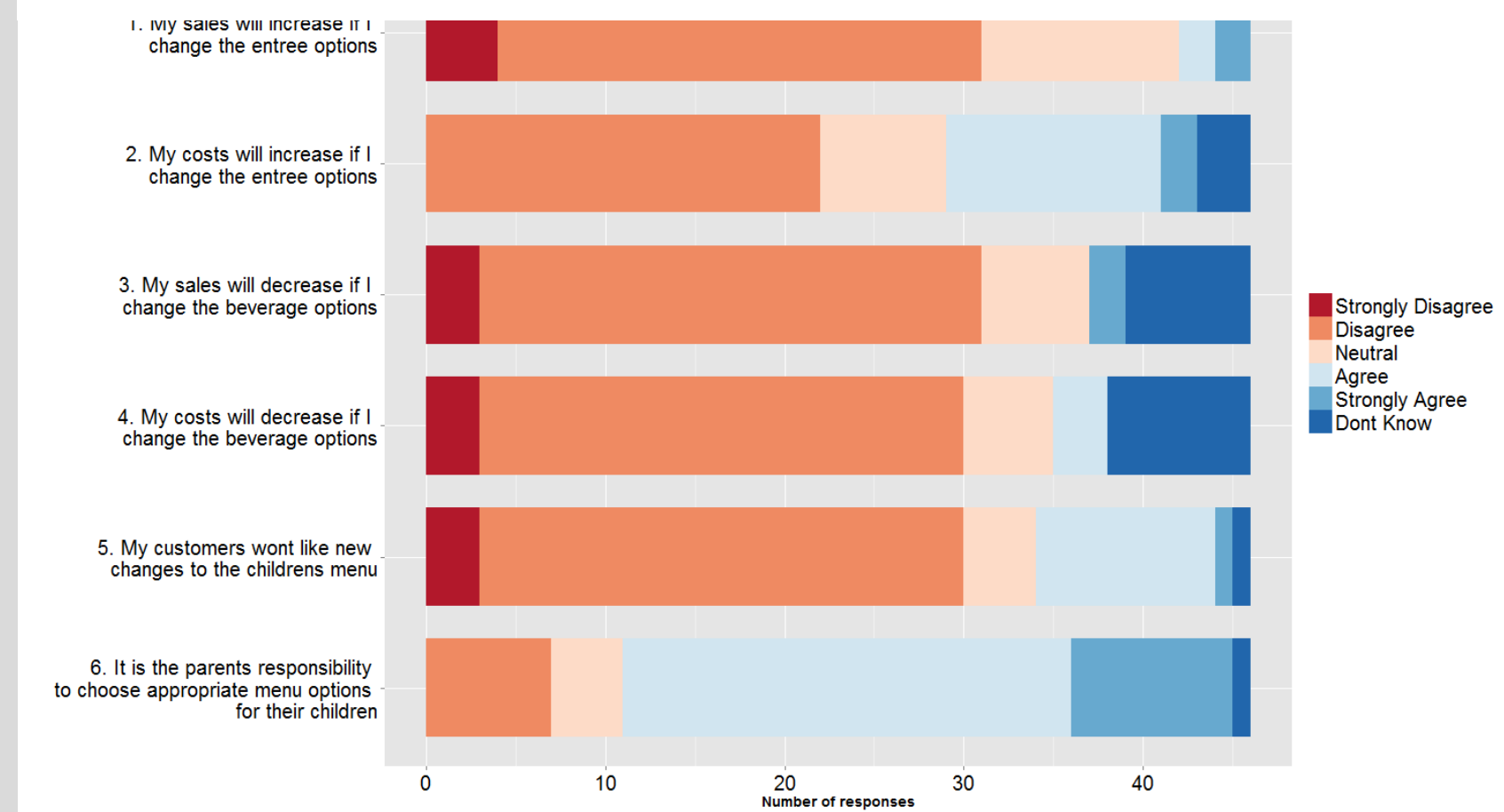
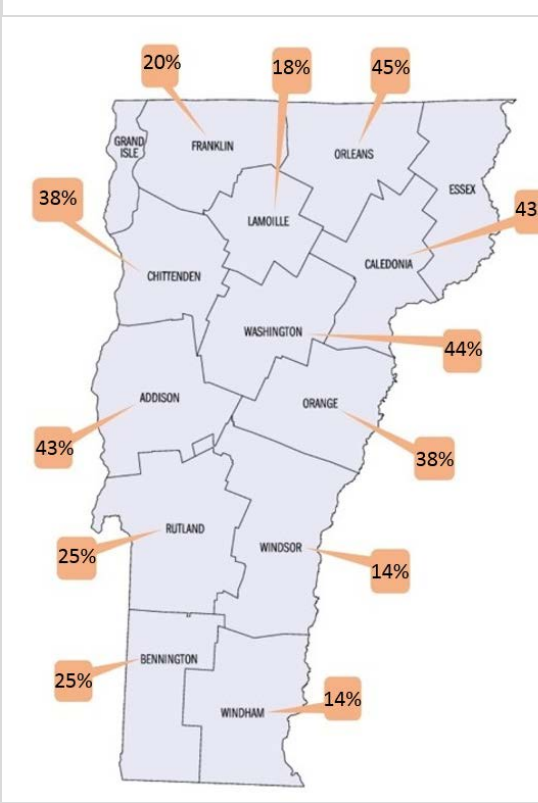


Figure 5: Map of Participants by County
The bubbles indicate the percent of response by county.



Discussion & Conclusion

- Of the restaurants surveyed, > 80% offer healthy entrées, >80% offer healthy sides, and >80% offer unhealthy entrées. Thus, restaurants are providing children a choice for both healthy or unhealthy food options.
- 46% of restaurants DO NOT have soda specifically listed as a beverage choice for children. 100% fruit juice and milk are available at the majority of restaurants. Therefore, nearly half of the restaurants surveyed meet the AHA’s goal of removing a sugar-sweetened beverage option from children’s menus.
- Even with the healthy options, most restaurants have the resources and ability to improve the nutritional quality of their children’s menu without incurring a financial burden, such that their sales and costs will stay the same.
- Interviewees do not believe that customers would dislike menu changes; however, based on current observations, several believe that many children will not choose the healthy options.
- Even though the majority of interviewees believe it is the parent’s responsibility to choose healthy menu items for their children, most agreed that children’s menus should take nutritional content into account. We suggest the best approach will encompass both parental and restaurant support.
- Further research should include customer perspectives to determine if healthy menu options are being chosen.

References

- Elbel B, Mijanovich T, et al. New York City “Healthy Happy Meals” Bill: Potential Impact on Fast Food Purchases (2015). *Am J Prev Med.* 49(4):e45-6. Epub 2015 Aug 31.
- Otten JJ, Saelens BE, Kappahahn KI, et al. Impact of San Francisco’s toy ordinance on restaurants and children’s food purchases, 2011-2012 (2014) *Prev Chronic Dis.* 11:E122
- Krukowski RA, Eddings K, West DS. The children’s menu assessment: development, evaluation, and relevance of a tool for evaluating children’s menus (2011). *J Am Diet Assoc.* 111(6):884-8