

School Meals During the COVID-19 Pandemic

School meal programs are one of the most widespread safety nets in the world, operating in a greater number of countries than any other safety net program.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted school schedules around the world, limiting the ability of millions of children to access a daily, nutritious meal.

The Global Survey of School Meal Programs © captured some of the impact.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

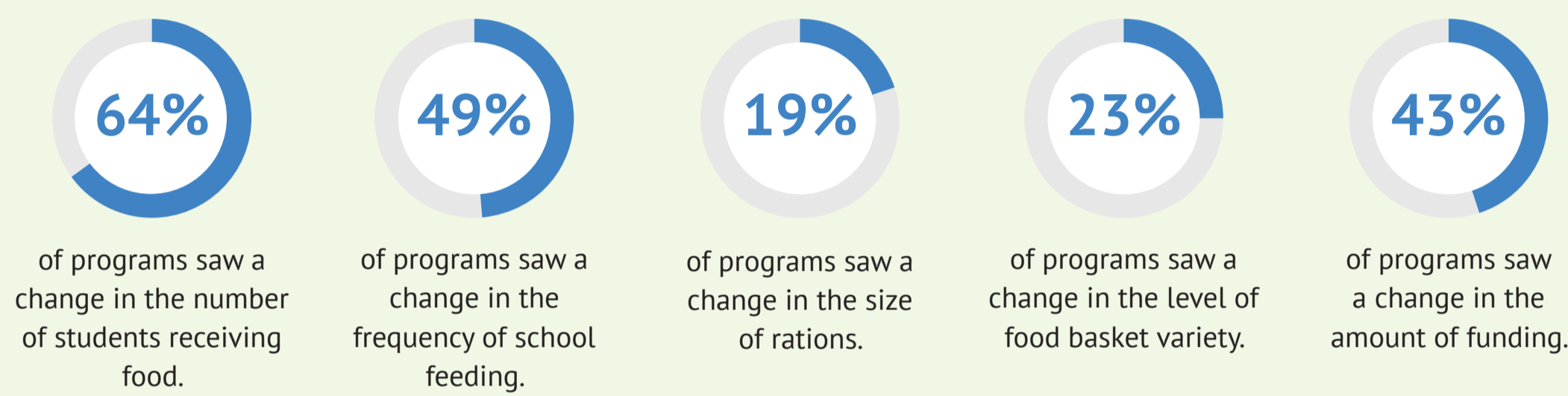
78% of countries indicated that schools were not open for in-person learning for at least one month.

38% of countries indicated that schools were not open for in-person learning for at least 6 months.



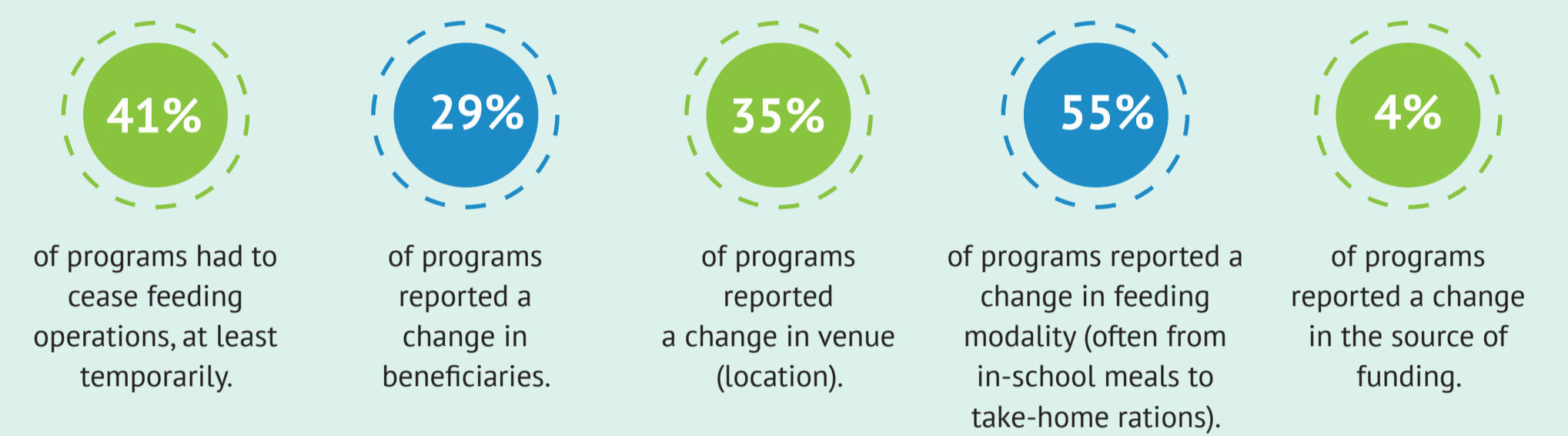
¹ World Bank. 2018. State of Social Safety Nets 2018. World Bank: Washington, DC.

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

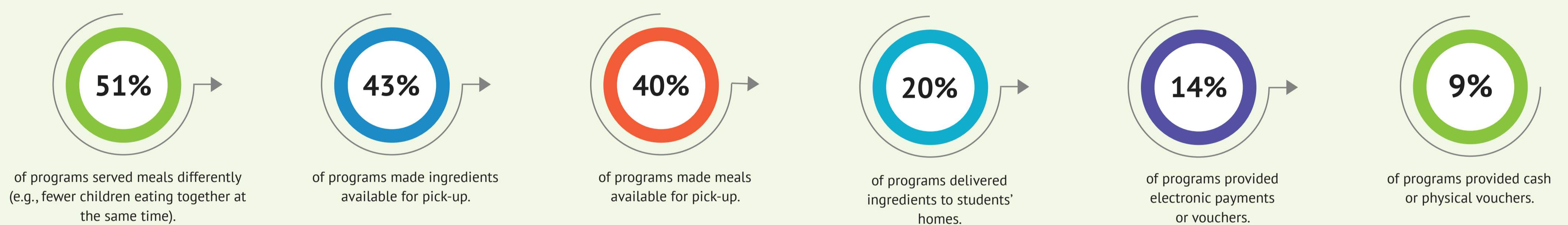


RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(including temporary changes)



CHANGES IN MODALITY OR POINT OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION (among those programs that made any changes)



OTHER EMERGENCIES

COVID-19 was not the only emergency facing countries during the school year that began in 2020; the stress of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic sometimes made it more difficult to respond effectively to other emergencies.

Almost half of the programs, or **45.90%**, reported that their country was affected by at least one other emergency in addition to COVID-19, while **16.40%** of programs reported that their country was affected by at least two other emergencies.

In the **Philippines**, efforts to respond to natural disasters were hindered by the mobility restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and by the limited financial resources available to respond to multiple emergencies at once.

Mozambique was similarly affected by several other emergencies (including natural disasters and conflict) that challenged emergency services and exacerbated the risks associated with COVID-19.

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE OUTCOMES

In **Kiribati, Malaysia and Niger**

Water And Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) compliance in schools improved.

In **Italy**

there is now greater consideration of funding the programs through taxation.

In **Palau**

breakfast has been added to the Food Service Program.

In **Sierra Leone**

take-home rations were provided to households to alleviate food shortages, eliciting greater community interest in the school feeding programs.

Schools In **Namibia**

saw the provision of more eating utensils to avoid sharing utensils, improvements in the provision of water and sanitation facilities, and a strong handwashing campaign.

In **Brazil**

though take-home rations are not typically part of the National School Feeding Program, the relevant legislation was quickly revised at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that meals would be made available to be picked up and eaten at home while in-person classes were suspended.

In **Argentina**

federal funding for school feeding increased, which in turn enabled the School Food Reinforcement (Refuerzo Alimentario Escolar) program to expand its reach.

SCHOOL FEEDING: A PATH TO RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

School meal programs are a priority investment to help countries rebuild after emergencies. Investments in school feeding can incentivize children and adolescents to return to school after a long absence, support the development of human capital, and promote agricultural and economic growth.

