



SCHOOL NUTRITION MEALS SERVED AND REIMBURSEMENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Photo Credit: Laurens County School District 56 Child Nutrition, Clinton, SC



ABSTRACT

An analysis of USDA FNS data comparing number of meals served and reimbursements in the year prior to the pandemic (March 2019 to February 2020) to the first full year of the pandemic (March 2020 – February 2021).

5/25/2021



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report compares reimbursements and meals served in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in the pre-pandemic year of March 2019 – February 2020 to the pandemic year of March 2020 – February 2021. The focus on these specific time periods is to determine some of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on school nutrition program participation and finances.

The data used is publicly available USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) data from the [February 2021](#) and [September 2020](#) Keydata Reports (see footer for references). The USDA summary pages of the Keydata reports note that, “This report data is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. User should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.”

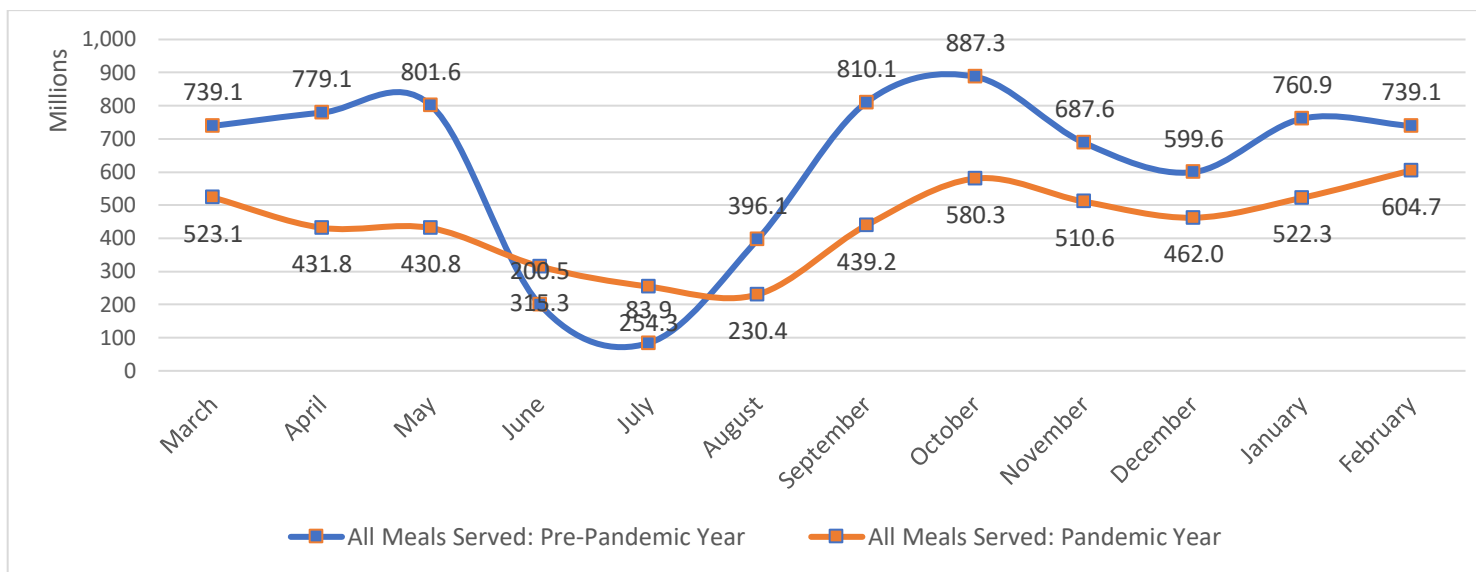
Sources: USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) February 2021 Keydata Report published May 16, 2021. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/february-2021-keydata-report>. USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) September 2020 Keydata Report, published January 27, 2021. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/january-keydata-report-september-2020-data> 1

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Meals Served

There were **2,180,254,533 fewer meals (breakfasts and lunches)** served in the first full year of the pandemic, as compared to the year preceding the pandemic. This amounts to a **29.13% loss** in meals served.

Figure 1. Total Meals Served (NSLP Lunches, SBP breakfasts, and SFSP Meals): Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year



Note: Pre-Pandemic period is March 2019 - February 2020, Pandemic period is March 2020 - February 2021.

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The number of total lunches served in the first full year of the pandemic (including NSLP lunches and SFSP lunches) was **down 39.55%** compared to the year preceding the pandemic. The number of total breakfasts served in the first full year of the pandemic (including SBP Breakfasts and SFSP breakfasts) was **down 8.66%** compared to the year preceding the pandemic.

Table 1. Total Meals Served (NSLP Lunches, SBP breakfasts, and SFSP Meals): Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year

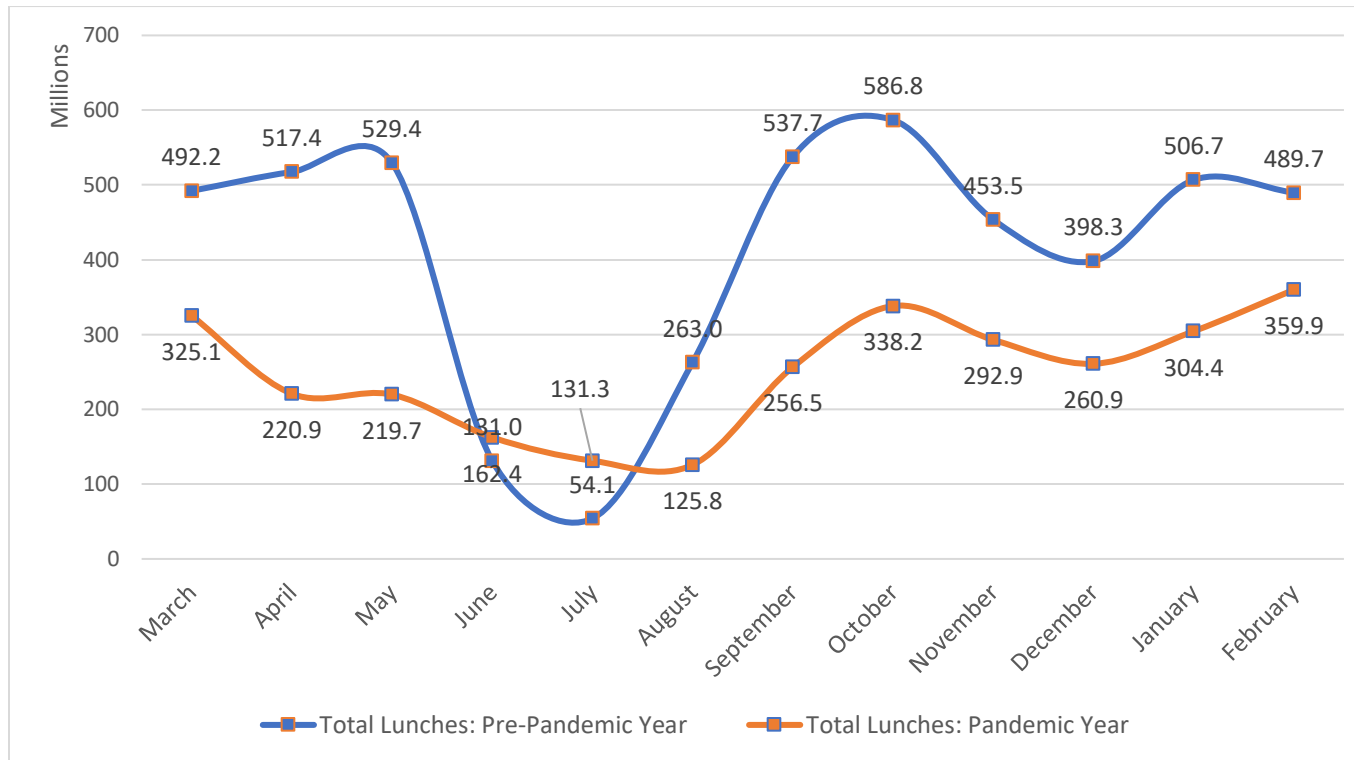
Month	Total Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year	Total Lunches: Pandemic Year	Difference in Total Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year vs. Pandemic Year	% Difference in Total Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year vs. Pandemic Year	Total Bfst: Pre-Pandemic Year	Total Bfst: Pandemic Year	Difference in Total Bfst: Pre-Pandemic Year vs. Pandemic Year	% Difference in Total Bfst: Pre-Pandemic Year vs. Pandemic Year	All Meals Served: Pre-Pandemic Year	All Meals Served: Pandemic Year	Difference in Total Meals Served	% Difference in Total Meals Served
March	492,186,297	325,133,167	-167,053,130	-33.94	246,897,577	197,922,060	-48,975,517	-19.84	739,083,874	523,055,227	-216,028,647	-29.23
April	517,376,398	220,852,227	-296,524,171	-57.31	261,730,843	210,916,143	-50,814,700	-19.41	779,107,241	431,768,370	-347,338,871	-44.58
May	529,357,466	219,667,278	-309,690,188	-58.50	272,211,386	211,159,188	-61,052,198	-22.43	801,568,852	430,826,466	-370,742,386	-46.25
June	131,007,665	162,442,465	31,434,800	23.99	69,537,304	152,886,333	83,349,029	119.86	200,544,969	315,328,798	114,783,829	57.24
July	54,088,413	131,341,925	77,253,512	142.83	29,782,021	122,984,700	93,202,679	312.95	83,870,434	254,326,625	170,456,191	203.24
August	262,976,039	125,835,329	-137,140,710	-52.15	133,108,918	104,549,576	-28,559,342	-21.46	396,084,957	230,384,905	-165,700,052	-41.83
September	537,708,383	256,529,356	-281,179,027	-52.29	272,438,914	182,648,910	-89,790,004	-32.96	810,147,297	439,178,266	-370,969,031	-45.79
October	586,764,982	338,193,313	-248,571,669	-42.36	300,545,679	242,108,509	-58,437,170	-19.44	887,310,661	580,301,822	-307,008,839	-34.60
November	453,536,846	292,897,396	-160,639,450	-35.42	234,099,841	217,701,307	-16,398,534	-7.00	687,636,687	510,598,703	-177,037,984	-25.75
December	398,251,213	260,891,942	-137,359,271	-34.49	201,363,948	201,132,587	-231,361	-0.11	599,615,161	462,024,529	-137,590,632	-22.95
January	506,735,392	304,414,937	-202,320,455	-39.93	254,208,717	217,856,272	-36,352,445	-14.30	760,944,109	522,271,209	-238,672,900	-31.37
February	489,723,604	359,887,481	-129,836,123	-26.51	249,398,786	244,829,698	-4,569,088	-1.83	739,122,390	604,717,179	-134,405,211	-18.18
Total	4,959,712,698	2,998,086,816	-1,961,625,882	-39.55	2,525,323,934	2,306,695,283	-218,628,651	-8.66	7,485,036,632	5,304,782,099	-2,180,254,533	-29.13
	Note: Includes NSLP Lunches and SFSP Lunches				Note: Includes SBP Breakfasts and SFSP Breakfasts				Note: Includes NSLP Lunches, SFSP Lunches, SBP breakfasts, and SFSP breakfasts			

Note: Pre-Pandemic period is March 2019 - February 2020, Pandemic period is March 2020 - February 2021.

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Figure 2. Total Lunches Served: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year

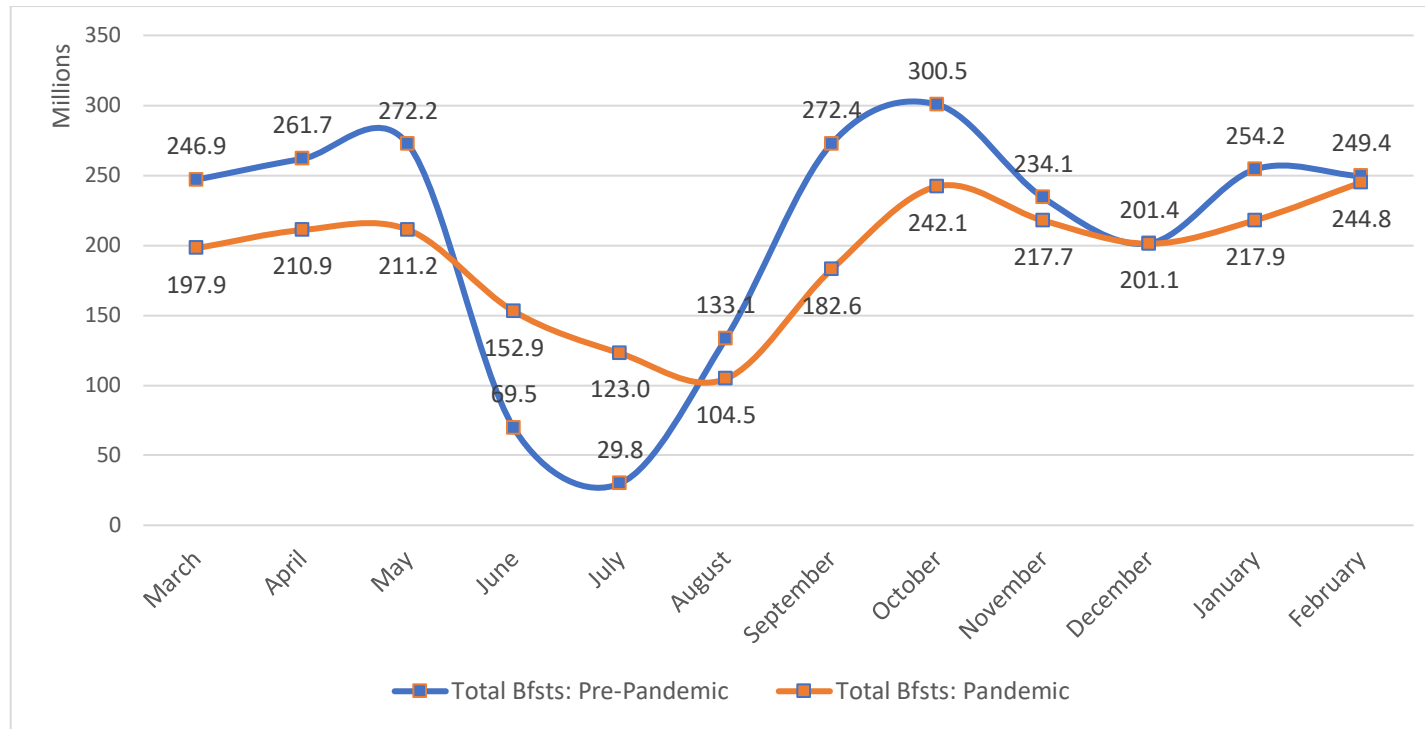


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Figure 3. Total Breakfasts Served: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year



Note: Pre-Pandemic period is March 2019 - February 2020, Pandemic period is March 2020 - February 2021.

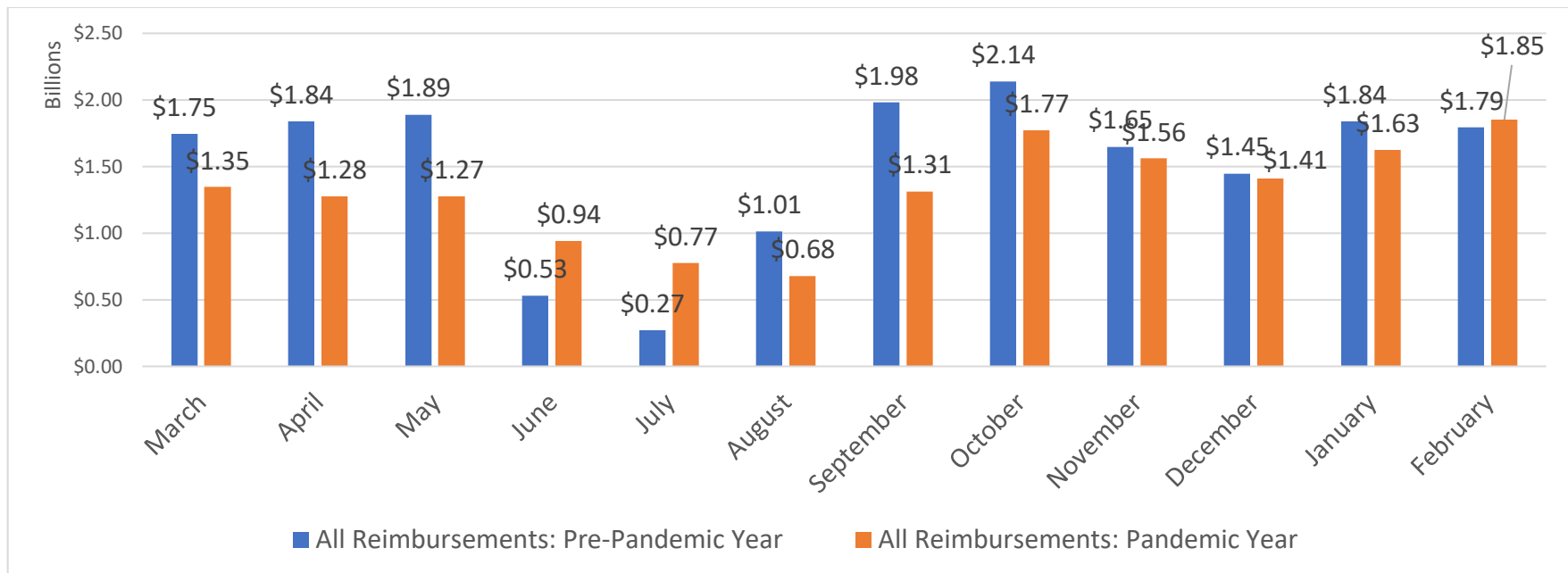
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Reimbursement

Total reimbursements for NSLP lunches, SBP breakfasts, and SFSP meals in the first full year of the pandemic were **\$2,313,642,684 less** than the same time period in 2019, a **12.76% loss** in reimbursements.

Figure 4. Total NSLP, SBP, and SFSP Lunch and Breakfast Reimbursements (\$): Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year



Note: Pre-Pandemic period is March 2019 - February 2020, Pandemic period is March 2020 - February 2021.

Sources: USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) February 2021 Keydata Report published May 16, 2021. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/february-2021-keydata-report>. USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) September 2020 Keydata Report, published January 27, 2021. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/january-keydata-report-september-2020-data>

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Spring of 2020 brought significant drops in reimbursements. Expanded summer feeding programs in June and July fueled an increase in reimbursements, as compared to the prior year. August – October of 2020 were characterized by significant drops in reimbursements. However, beginning in the winter of 2020, it appears that the rate of loss is lessening.

Table 2. Total Reimbursements for NSLP Lunches, SBP breakfasts, and SFSP Meals (\$): Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year

Month	Total Cash - NSLP Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year	Total Cash - NSLP Lunches: Pandemic Year	Difference in Total Monthly NSLP Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year	% Difference in Total Monthly NSLP Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year	Total Program Costs - SBP Bkfst: Pre-Pandemic Year	Total Program Costs - SBP Bkfst: Pandemic Year	Difference in Total Monthly SBP Meals: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year	% Difference in Total Monthly SBP Meals: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year	Meal Cost - SFSP Meals: Pre-Pandemic Year	Meal Cost - SFSP Meals: Pandemic Year	Difference in Total Monthly SFSP Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year	% Difference in Total Monthly SFSP Lunches: Pre-Pandemic Year vs Pandemic Year	All Reimbursements: Pre-Pandemic Year	All Reimbursements: Pandemic Year	Difference in All Reimbursements	% Difference in All Reimbursements
March	\$1,292,007,452.15	\$805,728,733.80	-\$486,278,718.35	-37.64	\$455,096,844.54	\$314,130,320.96	-\$140,966,523.58	-30.98	\$114,727.26	\$225,992,850.40	\$225,878,123.14	196882.70	\$1,747,219,023.95	\$1,345,851,905.16	-\$401,367,118.79	-22.97
April	\$1,355,920,908.41	\$354,092,700.84	-\$1,001,828,207.57	-73.89	\$481,302,164.61	\$207,778,261.79	-\$273,523,902.82	-56.83	\$32,208.99	\$714,287,829.63	\$714,255,620.64	2217566.03	\$1,837,255,282.01	\$1,276,158,792.26	-\$561,096,489.75	-30.54
May	\$1,385,418,654.10	\$335,046,635.65	-\$1,050,372,018.45	-75.82	\$501,283,948.03	\$199,595,152.53	-\$301,688,795.50	-60.18	\$3,568,887.60	\$739,764,129.92	\$736,195,242.32	20628.14	\$1,890,271,489.73	\$1,274,405,918.10	-\$615,865,571.63	-32.58
June	\$278,578,799.00	\$220,560,969.63	-\$58,017,829.37	-20.83	\$103,391,571.83	\$132,113,438.13	\$28,721,866.30	27.78	\$148,476,165.08	\$587,564,285.49	\$439,088,120.41	295.73	\$530,446,535.91	\$940,238,693.25	\$409,792,157.34	77.25
July	\$48,391,600.27	\$134,254,585.04	\$85,862,984.77	177.43	\$19,379,078.15	\$79,313,043.38	\$59,933,965.23	309.27	\$204,516,668.09	\$561,045,528.40	\$356,528,860.31	174.33	\$272,287,346.51	\$774,613,156.82	\$502,325,810.31	184.48
August	\$708,668,385.51	\$181,653,771.09	-\$527,014,614.42	-74.37	\$244,244,997.43	\$88,982,575.04	-\$155,262,422.39	-63.57	\$60,597,140.12	\$406,021,507.25	\$345,424,367.13	570.03	\$1,013,510,523.06	\$676,657,853.38	-\$336,852,669.68	-33.24
September	\$1,464,240,075.47	\$451,401,141.57	-\$1,012,838,933.90	-69.17	\$516,895,690.73	\$194,403,402.36	-\$322,492,288.37	-62.39	\$141,878.86	\$668,521,195.01	\$668,379,316.15	471091.55	\$1,981,277,645.06	\$1,314,325,738.94	-\$666,951,906.12	-33.66
October	\$1,573,388,446.81	\$559,328,772.63	-\$1,014,059,674.18	-64.45	\$563,407,463.12	\$240,255,331.79	-\$323,152,131.33	-57.36	\$519,768.84	\$971,566,756.11	\$971,046,987.27	186822.86	\$2,137,315,678.77	\$1,771,150,860.53	-\$366,164,818.24	-17.13
November	\$1,209,964,118.60	\$489,271,691.87	-\$720,692,426.73	-59.56	\$438,590,249.39	\$216,944,228.17	-\$221,646,021.22	-50.54	\$9,976.99	\$853,969,497.91	\$853,959,520.92	8559290.14	\$1,648,564,344.98	\$1,560,185,417.95	-\$88,378,927.03	-5.36
December	\$1,068,144,912.92	\$426,947,260.25	-\$641,197,652.67	-60.03	\$379,130,344.77	\$194,269,061.98	-\$184,861,282.79	-48.76	\$38,312.95	\$788,019,638.37	\$787,981,325.42	2056697.08	\$1,447,313,570.64	\$1,409,235,960.60	-\$38,077,610.04	-2.63
January	\$1,359,242,694.56	\$532,481,801.80	-\$826,760,892.76	-60.83	\$478,105,340.40	\$228,574,943.75	-\$249,530,396.65	-52.19	\$43,761.70	\$865,873,922.36	\$865,830,160.66	1978511.26	\$1,837,391,796.66	\$1,626,930,667.91	-\$210,461,128.75	-11.45
February	\$1,322,762,635.71	\$641,473,744.60	-\$681,288,891.11	-51.50	\$470,327,085.56	\$264,618,825.90	-\$205,708,259.66	-43.74	\$6,973.29	\$946,459,712.90	\$946,452,739.61	13572542.37	\$1,793,096,694.56	\$1,852,552,283.40	\$59,455,588.84	3.32
Total	\$13,066,728,683.51	\$5,132,241,808.77	-\$7,934,486,874.74	-60.72	\$4,651,154,778.56	\$2,360,978,585.78	-\$2,290,176,192.78	-49.24	\$418,066,469.77	\$8,329,086,853.75	\$7,911,020,383.98	1892.29	\$18,135,949,931.84	\$15,822,307,248.30	-\$2,313,642,683.54	-12.76
	Source: Tab NSLP - \$, column I, 'Total Cash', FY 2019 & FY 2020				Source: Tab SBP - \$, column I, 'Total Program Costs', FY 2019 & FY 2020				Source: Tab SFSP - \$, 'Meal Cost', column B, FY 2019 & FY 2020				Includes all reimbursements for NSLP Lunches, SBP Breakfasts, and SFSP Meal cost reimbursements			

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