



# SCHOOL MEAL PARTICIPATION TRACKER

An Analysis of USDA FNS School Breakfast and Lunch Data



## ABSTRACT

An analysis of SY 2022-23 breakfast and lunch average daily participation (ADP) and total meals served.

School Nutrition Association

August 2023

Students load up on fruits and vegetables during school lunch at Mountaineer Middle School in Clarksburg, West Virginia.  
Photo credit: Rick Brady/SNA



## About This Report

This report evaluates the most recently available USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) data on school meal service. The report provides insight on trends in school meal participation, before, during and after the existence of federal pandemic waivers that allowed schools to offer free meals to all students by:

- Comparing average daily participation (ADP) in school lunch and breakfast programs in school year (SY) 2022-23 to SY 2021-22. 'School year' in this usage means September through May. In SY 2021-22 USDA waivers allowed for all school meals to be served for free to all students without an application, whereas in SY 2022-23 school meals were once again for sale or available to students who met reduced or free meal eligibility requirements.
- Placing SY 2022-23 and SY 2021-22 ADP in context with the pre-pandemic school years (SY 2018-19, 2017-18, and 2016-17), when students had to apply for free or reduced price meals or pay full price;
- Comparing ADP between the first full post-pandemic school year (SY 2022-23) and the last full pre-pandemic school year (SY 2018-19);
- Comparing total meals served SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19.

SY 2019-20 and 2020-21 are conspicuously absent – this is because most schools were serving meals through the School Food Service Program (SFSP), and the unit of analysis for data provided during this period was total meals served; no ADP figures were available from that program (SFSP) or time period. Beginning in SY 2021-22, schools were required to return to serving meals within the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), or the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which provide ADP and meals served data and allow for comparison to pre-pandemic data. For further information on pandemic school meal service data and trends, please see SNA's report [\*School Nutrition Meals Served and Reimbursements During the COVID-19 Pandemic\*](#).

The data analyzed are from two sources. First, SY 2022-23 and 2021-22 data are drawn from the National Level Monthly Data breakfast and lunch reports (published August 11, 2023) publicly available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child->



[nutrition-tables](#). Data from pre-pandemic school years are drawn from historical, finalized USDA FNS Keydata reports provided by USDA FNS staff by request.

The SY 2022-23 data are based on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

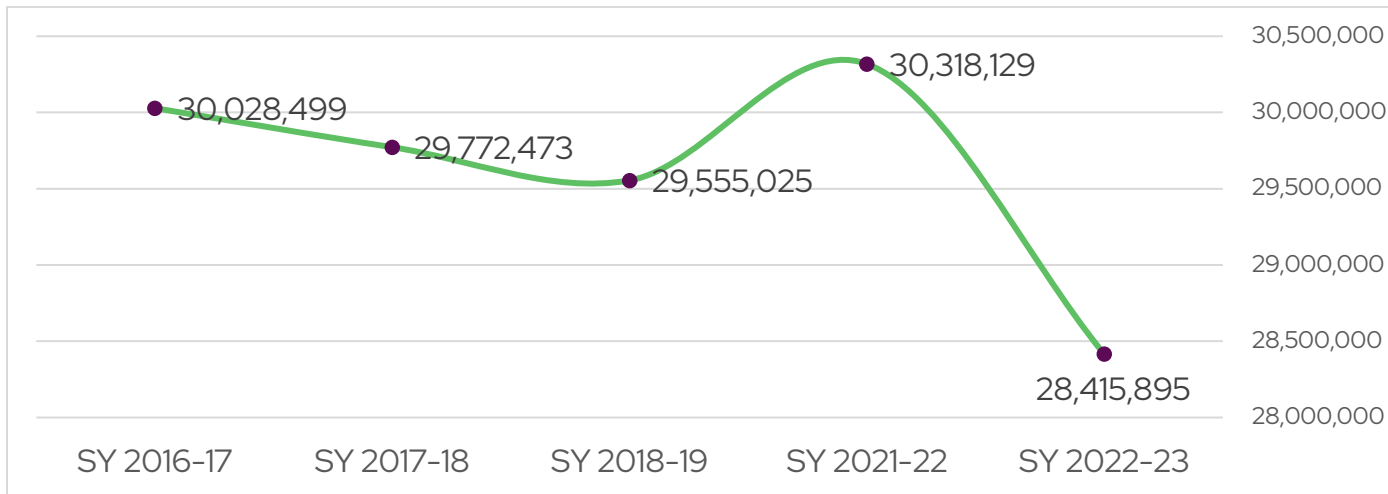
SNA would like to thank the USDA FNS staff for providing data at request and generously providing guidance for this analysis.



## Lunch ADP

Lunch ADP was 28.42 million in SY 2022-23, compared to 30.32 million in SY 2021-22. This is a 6.44% drop in ADP. In SY 2021-22 USDA waivers allowed for all school meals to be served for free, whereas in SY 2022-23 school meals were once again for sale or available to students who met reduced or free lunch eligibility requirements.

### 1. Lunch ADP: SY 2016-17 to SY 2022-23



Note: SY 2021-22 includes NSLP lunches and SSO lunches. All pre-pandemic school years, as well as SY 2022-23, include NSLP lunches only. SY 2019-20 and SY 2020-21 not included because the majority of schools were serving meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the unit of analysis was total meals served; no average daily participation figures were available from that program or time period.

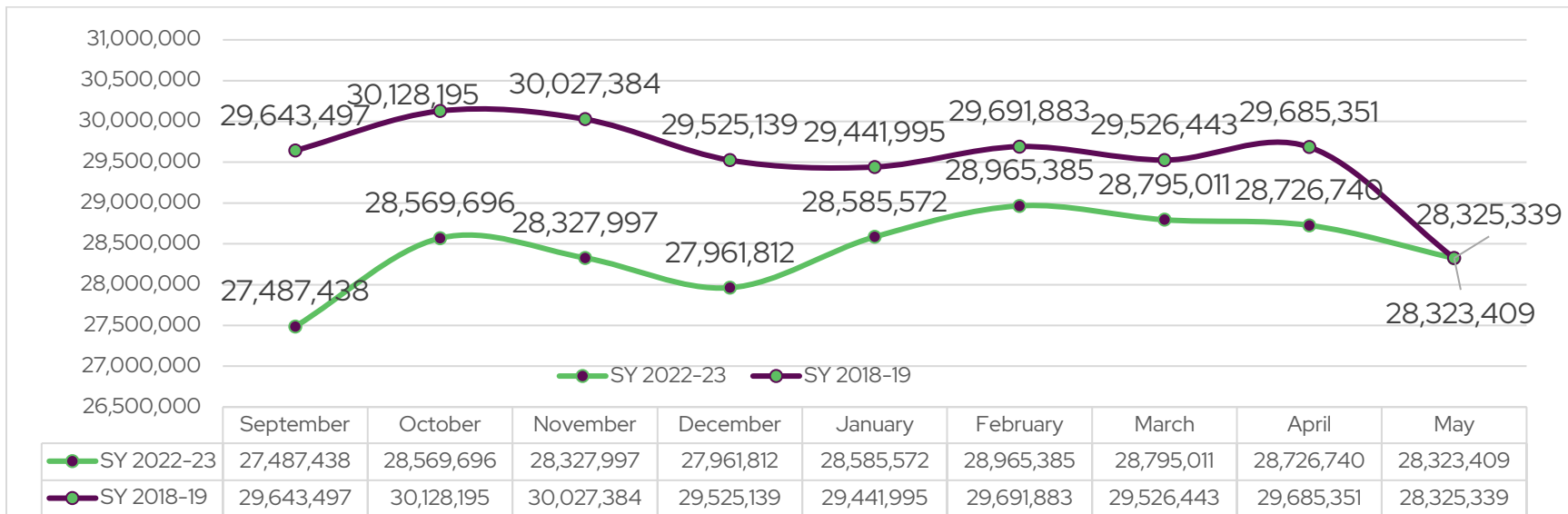
Sources: SY 2022-23 and SY 2021-22: National Level Monthly Data - National School Lunch Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. All other SYs - USDA FNS KeyData Reports.



*Post-Pandemic vs. Pre-Pandemic Comparison: Lunch ADP*

In SY 2022-23, ADP for lunch was 28.42 million students served, compared to SY 2018-19, when ADP was 29.56 million students served. Therefore, lunch ADP was 3.85% lower in SY 2022-23 than it was in SY 2018-19.

2. Monthly Lunch ADP: SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19



Note: This graph is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

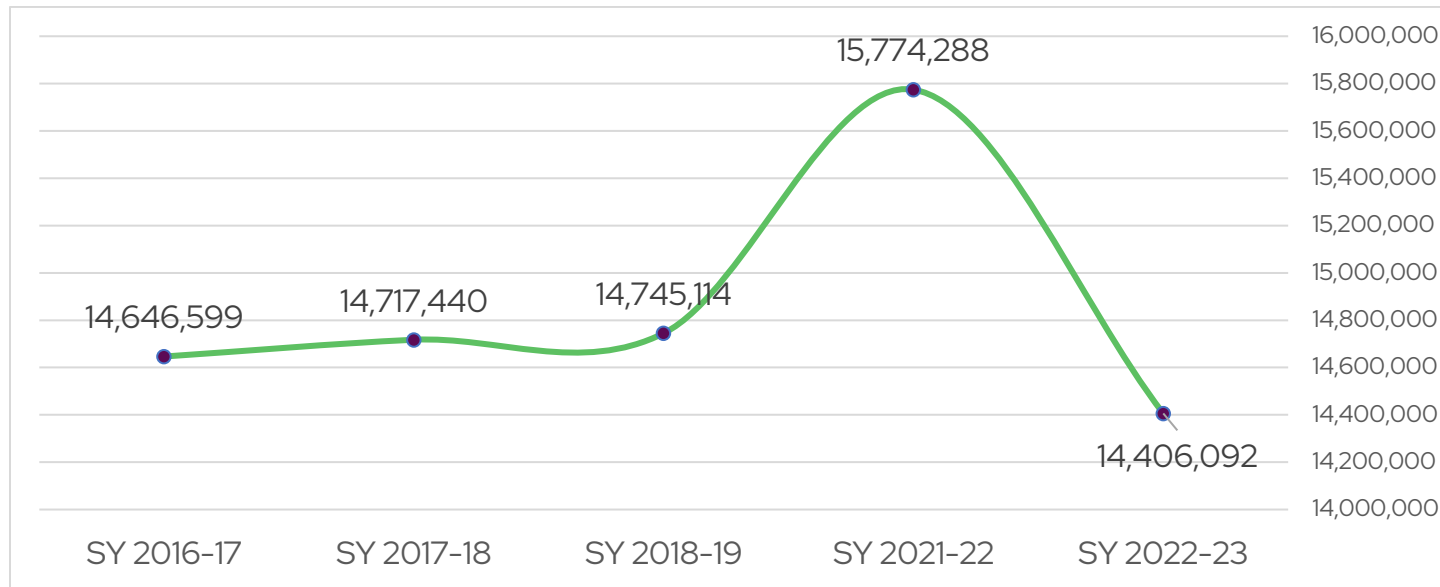
Sources: SY 2022-23: National Level Monthly Data – National School Lunch Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. SY 2018-19: USDA FNS KeyData Reports.



## Breakfast ADP

Breakfast ADP was 14.41 million in SY 2022-23, compared to 15.77 million in SY 2021-22. This is a 8.67% drop in ADP. In SY 2021-22 USDA waivers allowed for all school meals to be served for free, whereas in SY 2022-23 school meals were once again for sale or available to students who met reduced or free lunch eligibility requirements.

### 3. Breakfast ADP: SY 2016-17 to SY 2022-23



Note: SY 2021-22 includes SBP breakfasts and SSO breakfasts. All pre-pandemic school years, as well as SY 2022-23, include SBP breakfasts only. SY 2019-20 and SY 2020-21 not included because the majority of schools were serving meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the unit of analysis was total meals served; no average daily participation figures were available from that program or time period.

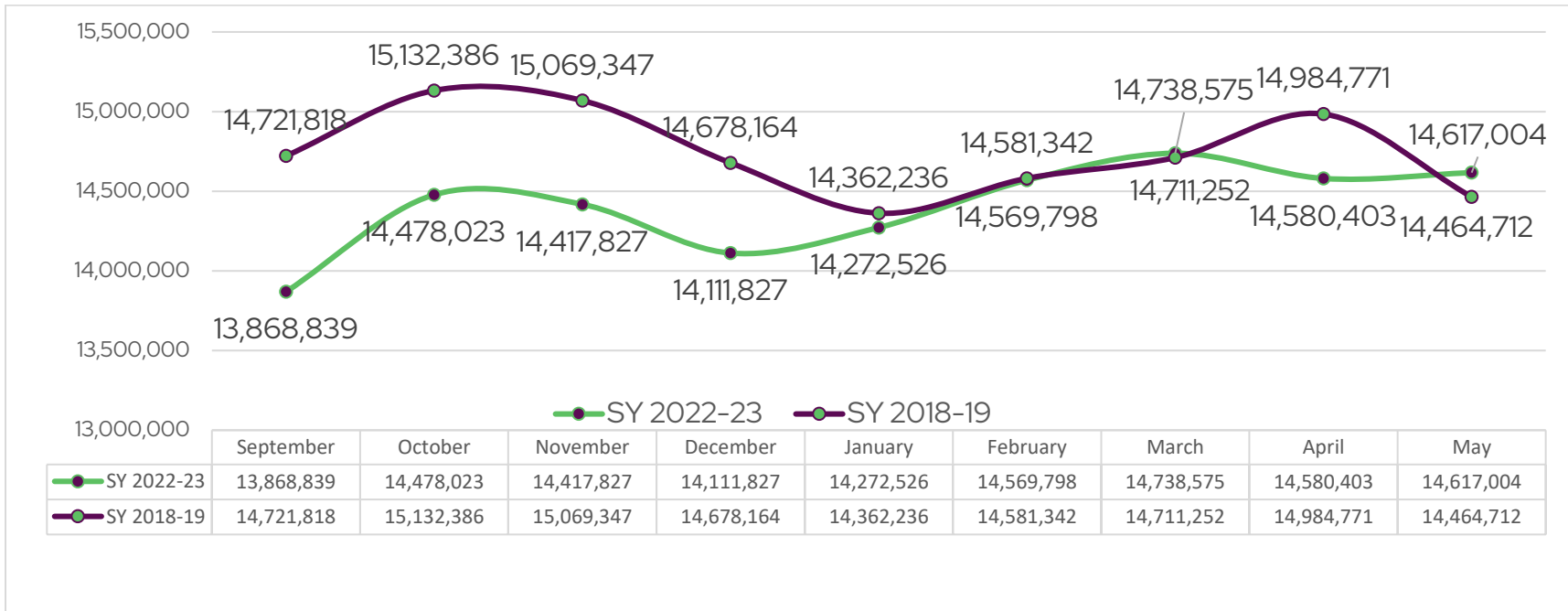
Sources: SY 2021-22 - National Level Monthly Data - School Breakfast Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/childnutrition-tables>. All other SYs - USDA FNS KeyData Reports.



*Post-Pandemic vs. Pre-Pandemic Comparison: Breakfast ADP*

In SY 2022-23, ADP for breakfast was 14.41 million students served, compared to SY 2018-19, when ADP was 14.75 million students served. Therefore, breakfast ADP was 2.30% lower in SY 2022-23 than it was in SY 2018-19.

4. Monthly Breakfast ADP: SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19



Note: This graph is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

Sources: SY 2022 - 23: National Level Monthly Data - School Breakfast Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. SY 2018-19: USDA FNS KeyData Reports.

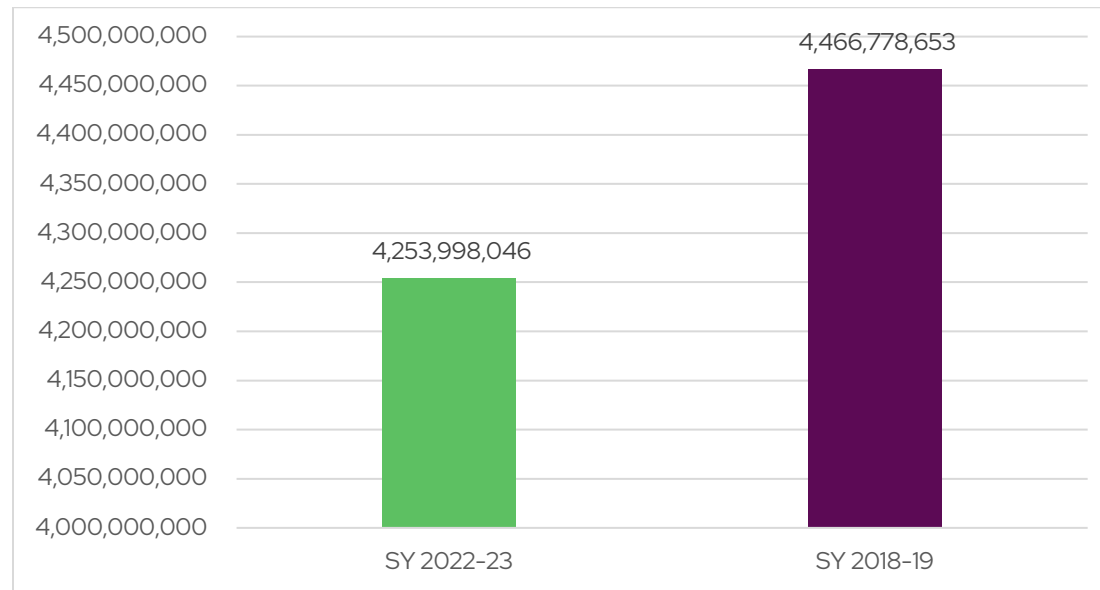


## Post-Pandemic vs. Pre-Pandemic Comparison: Total Meals Served

### Lunch

In SY 2022-23 a total of 4.25 billion lunches were served, compared to 4.47 billion lunches served in SY 2018-19. Therefore, the total lunches served was 4.76% lower in SY 2022-23 than SY 2018-19.

### 5. Total Lunches Served: SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19



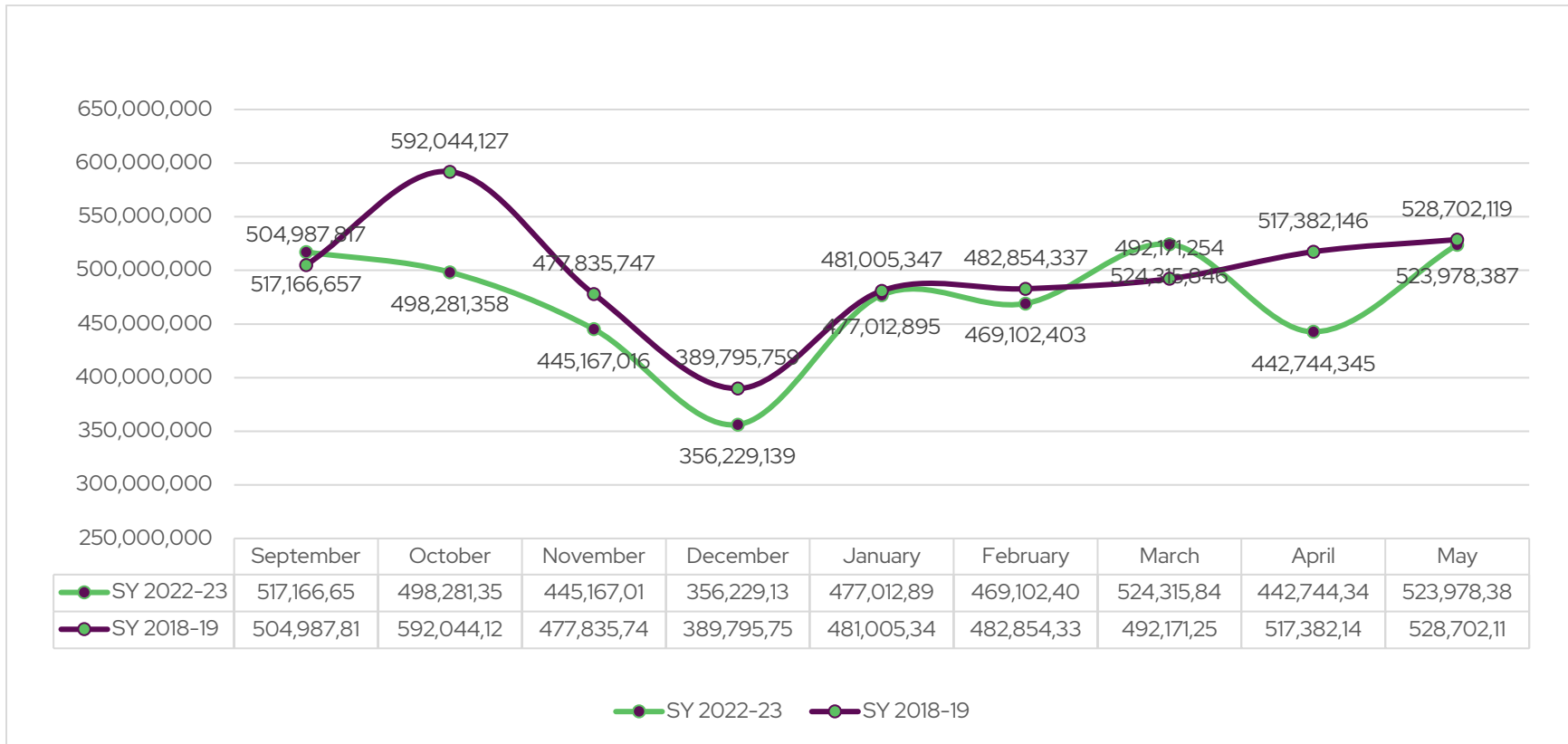
Note: This graph is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

Sources: SY 2022 - 23: National Level Monthly Data - School Breakfast Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. SY 2018-19: USDA FNS KeyData Reports.





### 6. Total Lunches Served Monthly: SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19



Note: This graph is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

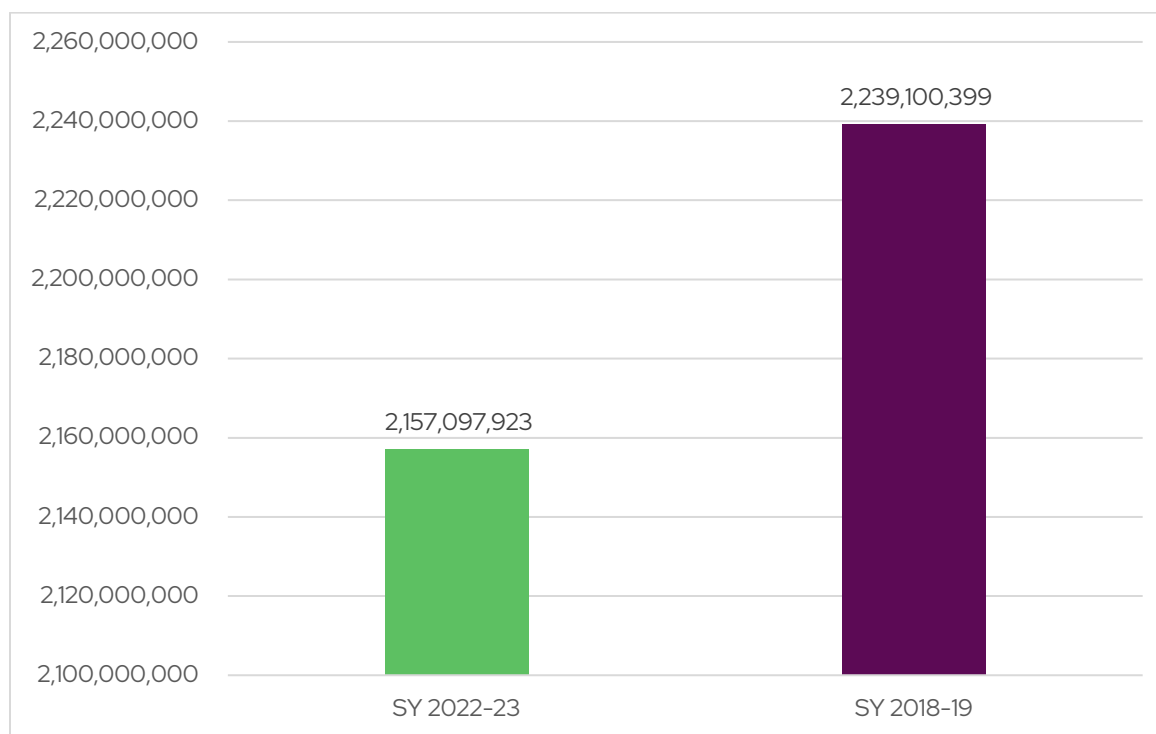
Sources: SY 2022 - 23: National Level Monthly Data - School Breakfast Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. SY 2018-19: USDA FNS KeyData Reports.



## Breakfast

In SY 2022-23 a total of 2.16 billion breakfasts were served, compared to 2.24 billion breakfasts served in SY 2018-19. Therefore, the total number of breakfasts served was 3.66% lower in SY 2022-23 than SY 2018-19.

### 7. Total Breakfasts Served: SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19

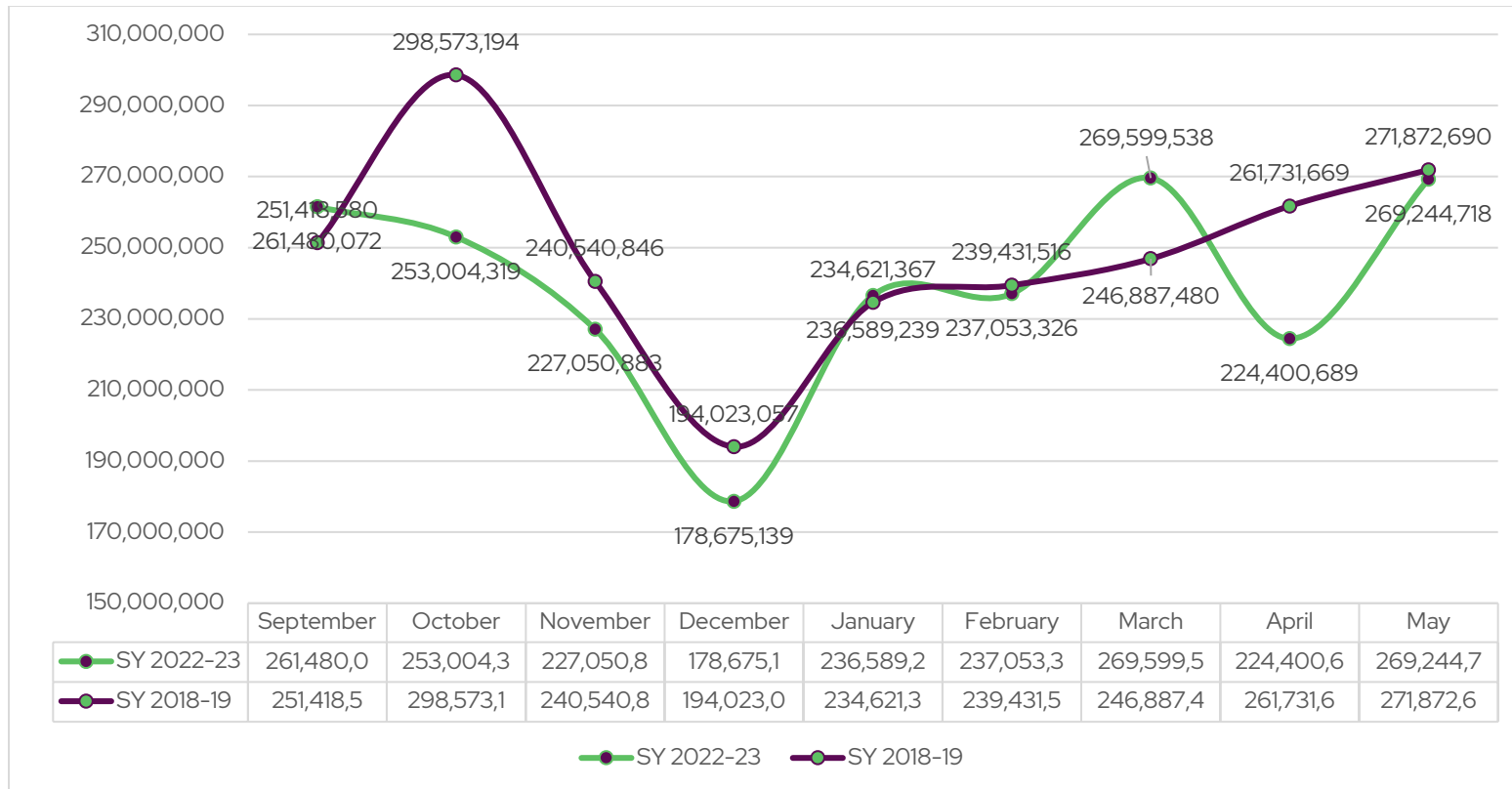


Note: This graph is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

Sources: SY 2022 - 23: National Level Monthly Data - School Breakfast Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. SY 2018-19: USDA FNS KeyData Reports.



### 8. Total Breakfasts Served Monthly: SY 2022-23 vs. SY 2018-19



Note: This graph is based in part on preliminary data submitted by various reporting agencies. Users should anticipate changes in future reports as reporting agencies finalize data.

Sources: SY 2022 - 23: National Level Monthly Data - School Breakfast Program, August 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>. SY 2018-19: USDA FNS KeyData Reports.