

Elevating the Resident Voice:

Insights from OARC's Food Services Survey

Land Acknowledgement

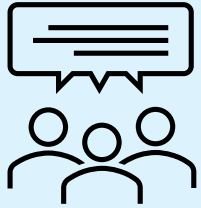
Together, let us now pause as we acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today, from wherever we are virtually participating in today's meeting. Let us take a moment to acknowledge the importance of the land we each call home.

We do this to affirm our commitment and responsibility to improving relationships between nations, and to improving our own understanding of local Indigenous Peoples and their cultures.

We acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people who call this nation home.

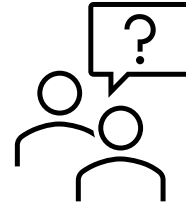
Let us now join in a moment of reflection to acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and to consider how each of us, in our own way, can move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

Webinar Housekeeping



Chat Box

The Chat feature is **disabled** during this session.



Question Box

Type questions in the Q&A box. We will answer as many as possible during the presentation.



Recording

A recorded version of this webinar will be available on OARC's website.
www.ontarc.com



Evaluation

After the webinar, a pop-up screen asking you to complete a survey will appear. Your feedback and suggestions are appreciated.

Resident Experts



Jennifer
Toronto



Ann
Toronto



Gale
Ottawa



La Vern
Brockville

OARC – Who we are, what we do

- 45 year-old non-profit association, formed by residents in 1981
- Funded by Ministry of Long-Term Care
- Empower Residents' Councils that exist in every LTC home



Vision: Every Resident shapes the place they call home

Importance of Food Quality & Mealtimes



Food Services Survey for Residents

Purpose: Provide an opportunity for residents to share their personal experiences with food services in long-term care.

Identify strengths, challenges and opportunities

Inform advocacy and policy

Ensure resident voices guide improvements

Approach:

- 19-question survey developed with residents.
- Questions prompted “yes” or “no” responses
- Option to add comments allow for additional context.

Food Services Survey for Residents

Roll-out:

- Launched in September 2025. Closed in November 2025.
- Paper surveys or online using Survey Monkey
- Completed independently by residents or with assistance
- Promoted in OARC and partner communications, social media



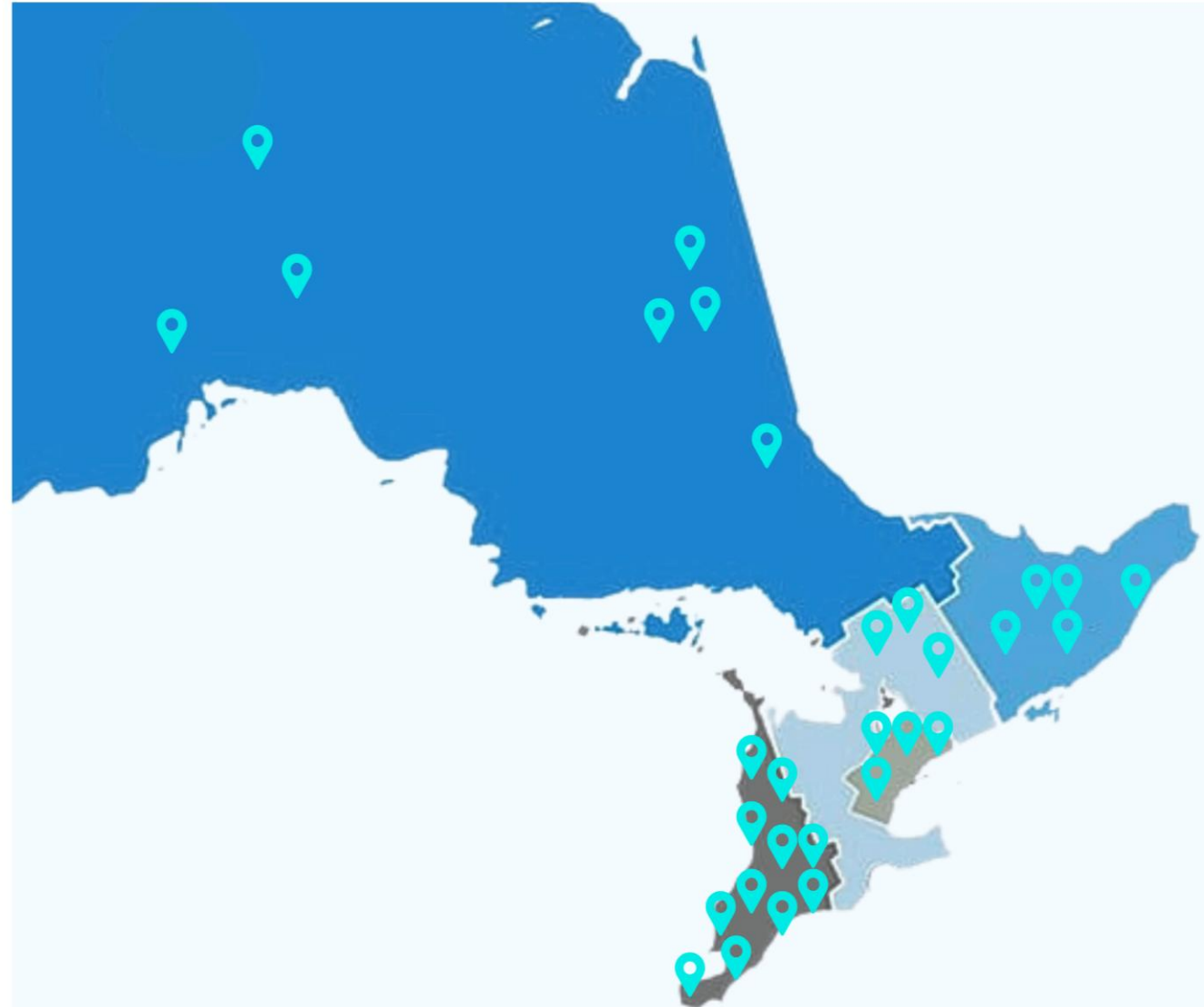
Food Services Survey for Residents



Response rate:

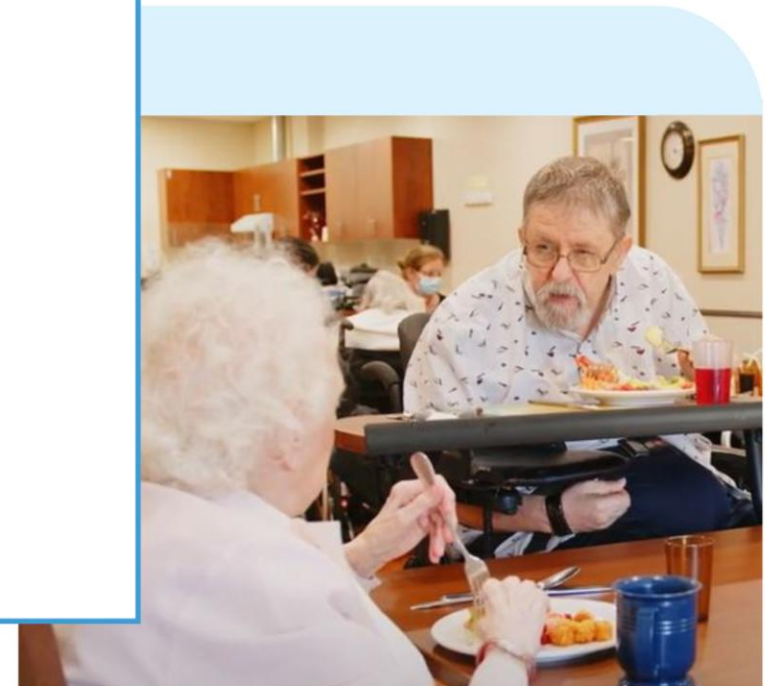
1400 resident responses

Responses were received from all six Ontario Health regions.



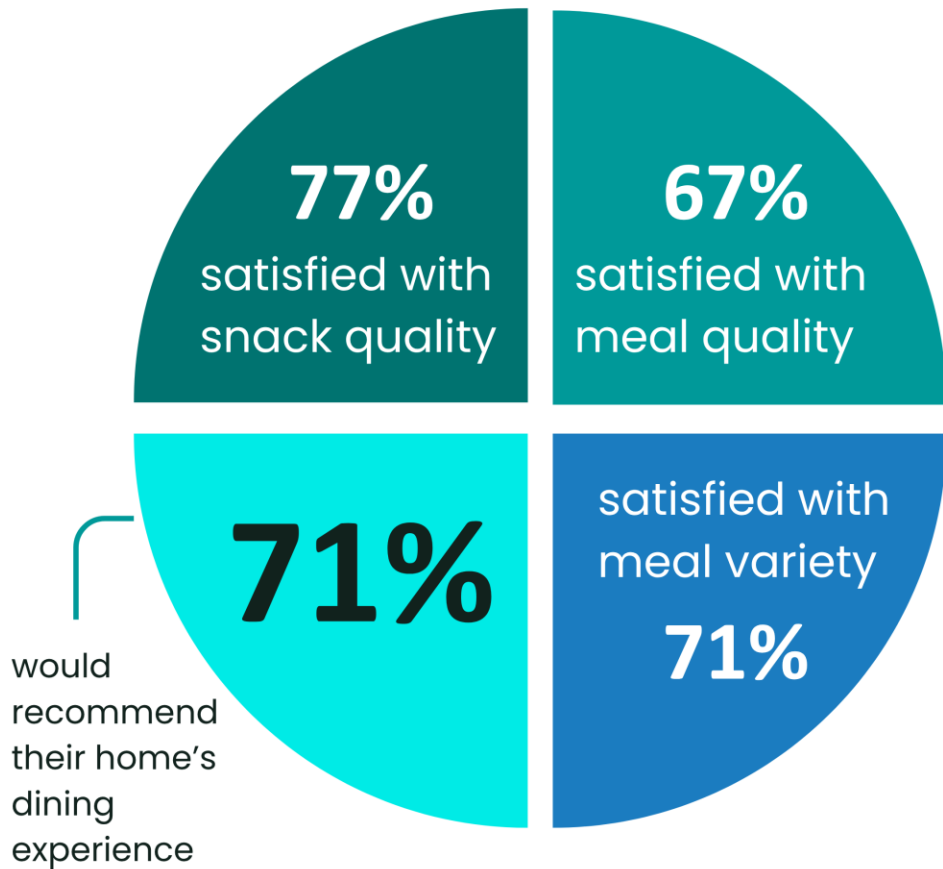
Survey Topics Covered

- Satisfaction with meal and snack quality and variety
- Residents' views on menus meeting various needs and personal preferences
- Mealtime experiences (food temperatures, meal timing, pacing, availability of assistance)
- Interactions with team members (staff)
- Support for increased resources (HR, Budget)
- Perceived influence of Residents' Councils



Survey Highlights – What’s working well

Overall satisfaction...?



Staff Effort & Responsiveness

"Staff do their best,"
"Dietary staff are helpful,"
"They try to accommodate"

Adequate Variety

"Enough choice,"
"Menu is acceptable,"
"Some variety"

Enjoyment of Food

"Food tastes good,"
"Enjoy most meals,"
"Well seasoned"

Consistency

"Mostly good,"
"Depends on the day but generally okay"

% numbers represent survey participants only

Yes, but... Survey results

- Learnings and limitations of survey
 - Survey responses limited to yes or no
- No respondents still represent **several hundred residents.**



Resident Satisfaction: Reading between the lines

Trend of "Yes, but" responses

Comments under both the Satisfied, Dissatisfied response categories point to INCONSISTENT menu and mealtime experiences

Suggest some degree of acceptance and apathy



Residents report that:

Sometimes their personal and cultural preferences are accommodated

Sometimes they receive timely support and assistance

Sometimes their food is served at the correct temperature

Sometimes they feel their Councils can influence changes

Survey Highlights - Enhancements needed

Where the greatest dissatisfaction comes from:

Inconsistencies

Inconsistent meal quality from day to day. Includes temperature, textures, ingredients.

Inadequate Variety

Menus seen as repetitive with limited variety.

Limited Accommodation

Due to limited resourcing, resident personal preferences cannot always be met.

Staff responsiveness

Staffing shortages and busy staff result in meals feeling rushed, or residents needing to wait for assistance.



on the menu

on the plate



Menu Changes and Diet Accommodations

27% said diet-specific needs are not met, including limitations related to diabetic or other medical diets.

21% called for fresher food options, with fewer frozen or canned items.

15% raised concerns about texture or preparation affecting their ability to eat safely or comfortably.

9% expressed there is little point in asking for changes.

24% felt meals do not support their health needs, citing a **reliance on processed foods**.

18% reported a lack of consultation - preferences & needs not discussed.

9% said **they supplement meals themselves** by bringing in food.



Poll Question: Do you buy or bring in food to supplement or replace meals or snacks?

- YES
- NO

Poll Question: If yes, how do you supplement your meals or snacks?

- A. Purchase own groceries
- B. Rely of family or friends to bring in food items
- C. Utilize meal delivery services
- D. Combination of the above options

Perceptions of Residents' Council influence



73%

of residents agreed
that their RC can
influence the
mealtime experience

small changes only?

Perceptions of Residents' Council Influence



75%

of residents agreed that their RC can influence menus at their home

Residents' Councils must be involved in decisions about meals and snacks

Long-term care home menus **must be reviewed by the Residents' Council**

Menus include **meals and snacks** (regular, therapeutic, and texture-modified diets)

Ontario Regulation 246/22 (General), s. 77(1)(b) and 77(1)(f), under the Fixing Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2021

Resident Support for Increased Funding

Support for hiring more staff

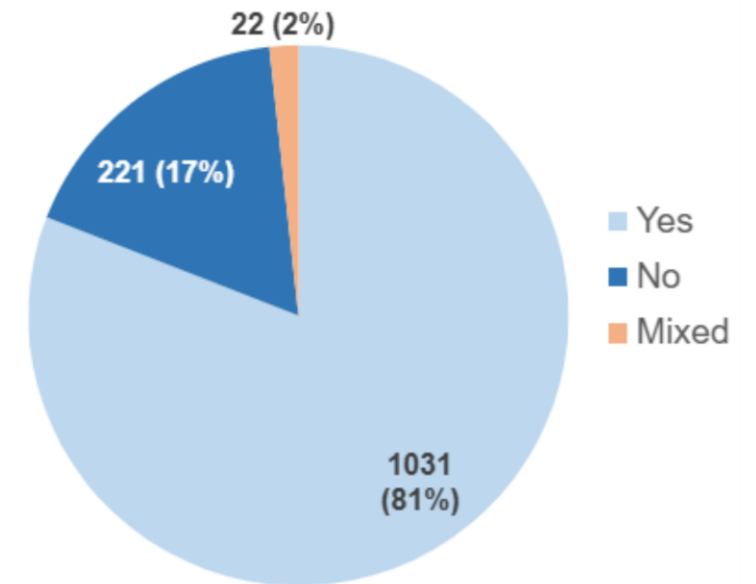
39% directly identified a clear need for more Food Service Staff, explicitly calling for additional hires.

24% pointed to staff being rushed or overworked, noting that this limits the quality of meal service.

22% felt that additional staff would improve the overall dining experience, including more timely service.

16% emphasized the importance of clear role separation, stating that PSWs and nurses should focus on care while dietary staff manage meal service.

Residents' Support for Hiring More Food Service Staff



“ Need more staff; Hire more people. Staff are rushed. PSWs should focus on care.”

Resident Support for Increased Funding

Support for larger food budget

67% said the current \$13.44 per-resident food budget is too low to provide quality meals.

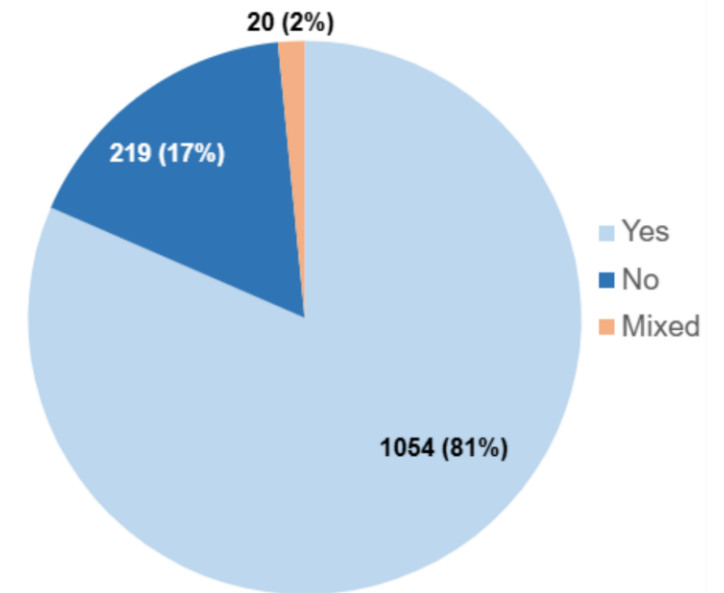
53% emphasized the need for more fresh and nutritious foods.

45% raised concerns about protein quantity & quality.

37% noted that special diets require more funding.

24% framed food quality as an issue of dignity, respect, and quality of life.

Residents' Responses About the Need for a Larger Food Budget



“

Not enough protein.

Better ingredients needed;
Food quality would improve.

Resident Reflections

What changes could make the biggest impact ?

■ At the Ministry/
Government Level?

■ At the long-term care
home level?



On the Menu



On the Plate

What is OARC doing to influence change?

Bi-monthly meetings with Ministry of Long-Term Care

Partnership with the Ontario Seniors Nutrition and Advocacy Committee (OSNAC) and other sector partners

- Education and Resource development
- Joint advocacy, letter-writing etc
- Conference presentations



Resident Perspectives – Key Takeaways

We're talking about dollars and cents.
We're forgetting about the human element.

Resident and staff connection

Flexibility and choice

Small improvements matter



“

It's so much more than the food on the plate, it's really about an all over experience and connection with others.

Devora Greenspon, Resident Leader


Food for Thought – Last Word


- Connect with your Residents' Council or host a discussion group on food services in your home
- Is there something you learned through this webinar that you would like to know more about?
- Are there one or two focus areas related to the dining experience that your council can work towards improving?


Involving home leadership


Invite your dietary manager to your next residents' council meeting to learn more about their role, what areas of improvement they're working on, how they see residents being involved.

Ask how your home leadership team can support education for residents (**knowledge is power**).

 4261 Highway 7 East, Suite #A14-
360 Markham, ON L3R 9W6

 905-731-3710

 800-532-0201

 905-731-1755


 info@ontarc.com

Thank you for participating
- stay in touch!

FOLLOW US ON SOCIALS

 @OARCnews

 @OARCnews

 Ontario Association of
Residents' Councils (OARC)

 Ontario Association of
Residents' Councils



www.ontarc.com