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Center for State Health Policy

New Jersey Childhood Obesity Survey

*Chartbook | New Brunswick
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About Rutgers Center for State Health Policy

Rutgers Center for State Health Policy (CSHP) is a policy research center dedicated to helping leaders and decision-makers examine complex state health policy issues and solutions. The Center, established in 1999, is an initiative within Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, and its mission is to inform, support, and stimulate sound and creative state health policy in New Jersey and around the nation.

The Center's current research focus includes:

- Access to care and coverage,
- Health systems performance improvement,
- Long-term care & support services,
- Health & long-term care workforce,
- Obesity prevention.

In order to accomplish its mission, CSHP marshals the expert resources of a major public research university to:

- Identify and analyze emerging state health policy issues,
- Conduct rigorous, impartial research on health policy issues,
- Provide objective, practical, and timely evaluation of programs and policy choices,
- Convene the health policy community in a neutral forum to promote an active exchange of ideas on critical issues,
- Educate current and future health policy makers, researchers, and administrators,
- Promote the practical application of scholarship in health policy,
- Foster wide understanding of health policy choices.

CSHP was established with a major grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center is also supported by grants and contracts from other foundations, public agencies and the private sector. A selection of these funders includes: the Commonwealth Fund, the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, the NJ Department of Human Services, the NJ Department of Health & Senior Services, and the NJ Department of Banking & Insurance.

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Executive Summary

The New Jersey Childhood Obesity Study was designed to provide vital information for planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions aimed at preventing childhood obesity in five New Jersey municipalities: Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, and Vineland. These five communities are being supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids program to plan and implement policy and environmental change strategies to prevent childhood obesity.

Effective interventions for addressing childhood obesity require community-specific information on who is most at risk and on contributing factors that can be addressed through tailored interventions that meet the needs of the community. Based on comprehensive research, a series of reports are being prepared for each community to assist in planning effective interventions. The main components of the study were:

- A household telephone survey of 1700 families with 3–18 year old children,
- De-identified heights and weights measured at public schools,
- Assessment of the food and physical activity environments using objective data.

This report presents the results from the household survey. Reports based on school body mass index (BMI) data and food and physical activity environment data are available at www.cshp.rutgers.edu/childhoodobesity.htm.

The survey respondent was an adult most knowledgeable about food shopping for the household. Questions were asked from the following five domains:

1. Weight and height of a randomly selected child,
2. Perceptions about the food and physical activity environments around their homes,
3. Barriers related to access to healthy food and physical activity facilities,
4. Food and physical activity behaviors of the index child,
5. Demographic information.

Major findings from the survey are presented in four sections of the chartbook: child food behaviors, food environment, child physical activity behaviors, and physical activity environment. Also included are charts describing demographic characteristics of the sample and presenting BMI estimates for the city based on school-measured heights and weights. Key findings presented include:

SCHOOL BMI: New Brunswick children are more likely to be overweight or obese compared to their national counterparts. The rates for obesity are highest among males, younger children, and Hispanic children. The largest differences between New Brunswick public school children and national estimates are seen among the youngest children (48% in New Brunswick vs. 21% nationally for overweight and obese).

FOOD BEHAVIORS: Almost all of New Brunswick children (88%) do not meet recommendations for vegetable consumption. Non-Hispanic black children also frequently consume energy-dense foods such as fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages.

FOOD ENVIRONMENT: Although most parents shop at supermarkets and superstores, nearly one-quarter of Hispanic parents shop at corner stores or bodegas for most of their food shopping. About half report limited availability of fresh produce and low-fat items at their main food shopping store. 40% of families do not food-shop in their neighborhood. Cost is the main reason for choice of food store.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEHAVIORS: Almost all children do not meet the guidelines for being physically active for 60 minutes each day. In addition, a large proportion of non-Hispanic black children spend more than 2 hours watching television, using the computer, and playing video games. The majority of children do not walk or bike to school and some do not use the sidewalks, parks, and exercise facilities available in their neighborhoods. Almost half do not live near exercise facilities and many do not have parks nearby.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT: Although many neighborhoods have sidewalks and some have parks and exercise facilities, a fair number of parents report that their children do not use these facilities to be active. Traffic, crime level, pleasantness of neighborhoods and parks, and condition of sidewalks are the most commonly reported barriers.

Effective interventions will require changes in the neighborhood environment by creating new opportunities, improving existing features, and addressing barriers associated with practicing healthy behaviors. Efforts are also needed to raise awareness about the issue of childhood obesity and associated behaviors among parents and caregivers.

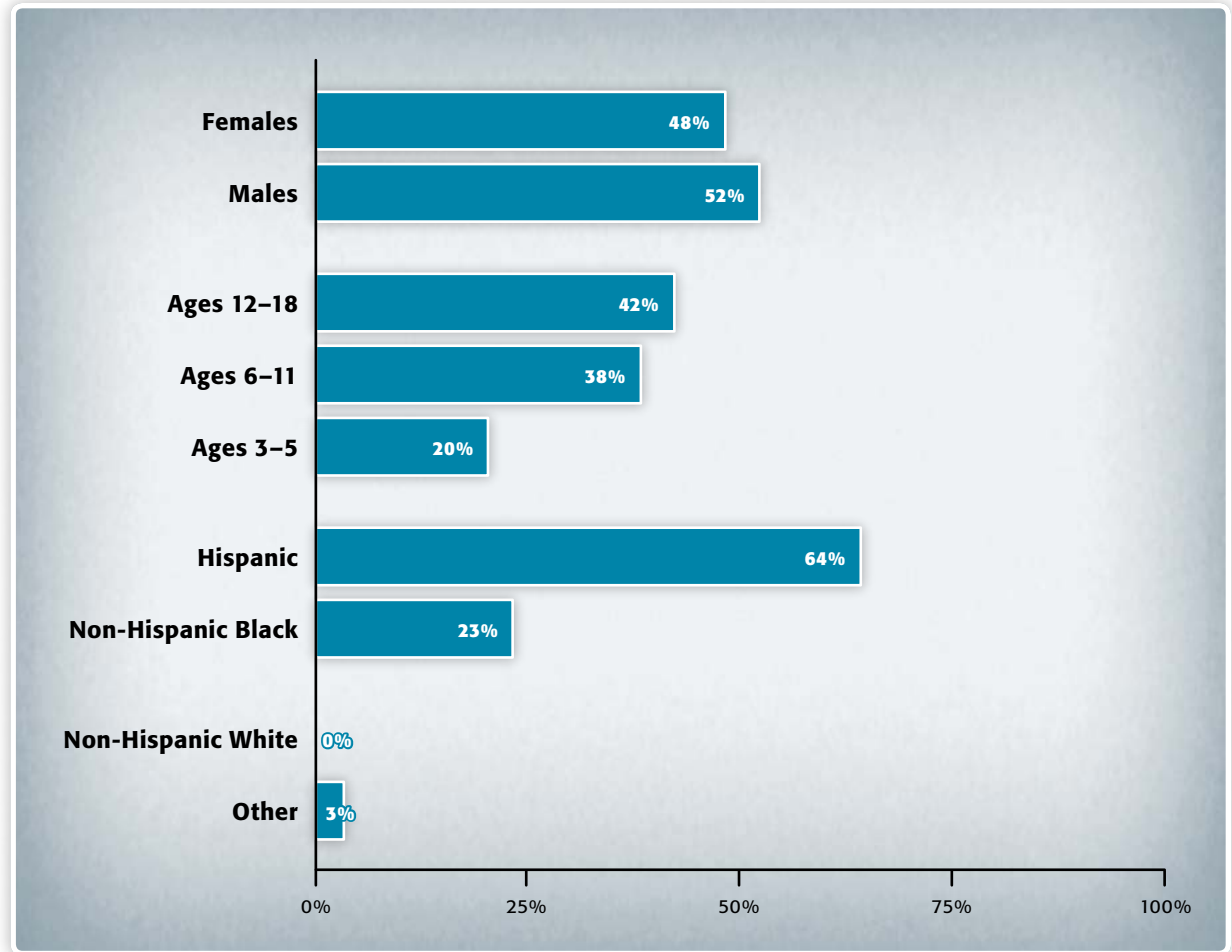
Survey Methods

- A random-digit-dial landline telephone sample of 208 households from New Brunswick was surveyed (as were samples from Camden, Newark, Trenton, and Vineland).
- A household was eligible if it was within city limits and had at least one child in the age range 3–18 years.
- Fieldwork was conducted between June 2009 and March 2010.
- Average survey length was 36 minutes.
- Worksheets and tape measures were mailed to each home to weigh and measure 3–18 year old children and the respondent.
- Overall response rate was 49%.
- The study was conducted by the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy (survey fieldwork by Abt-SRBI) and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Definitions and Notes

- A **family** is defined as all people living in the household related by blood, marriage, or living as married and includes adopted, guardianship, and foster children.
- The survey **respondent** is the person 18 years or older who lives in the household and makes most of the decisions about food shopping for the household (usually the parent). In 94% of the families, this person was either the parent or grandparent of the randomly selected “**index child**”. Hereafter, this person shall be referred to as “**the parent**”.
- The **index child** was randomly selected from each household.
- Body mass index (**BMI**) categories are defined by comparing heights and weights data to growth charts specific to age and gender:
 - Not overweight: <85th percentile,
 - Overweight: 85th percentile to <95th percentile,
 - Obese: 95th percentile and up.
- The **neighborhood** was defined for the respondent as the area within a 20 minute walk, a 5 minute drive, or about 1 mile in all directions around the respondent’s home.
- **Food consumption recall time frame** was the past month, with frequency of consumption reported on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Responses were used to calculate frequency of consumption per day. **Physical activity recall time frame** was the past 7 days (active 30 minutes/day, 60 minutes/day) or a typical weekday or weekend day during the school year (TV/computer/video game time).
- All charts present survey data from New Brunswick, with the exception of the BMI charts which use data measured (and provided) by public schools in New Brunswick.

Demographics of New Brunswick Index Children in the Household Survey Sample (N=208)



NOTE: Due to sample size limitations, separate estimates for Non-Hispanic White and Other race/ethnicity groups and for age groups are not provided in this chartbook. However, all children are included in estimates by gender and citywide.



Children's Weight Status

Charts in this section present data obtained from New Brunswick public schools.

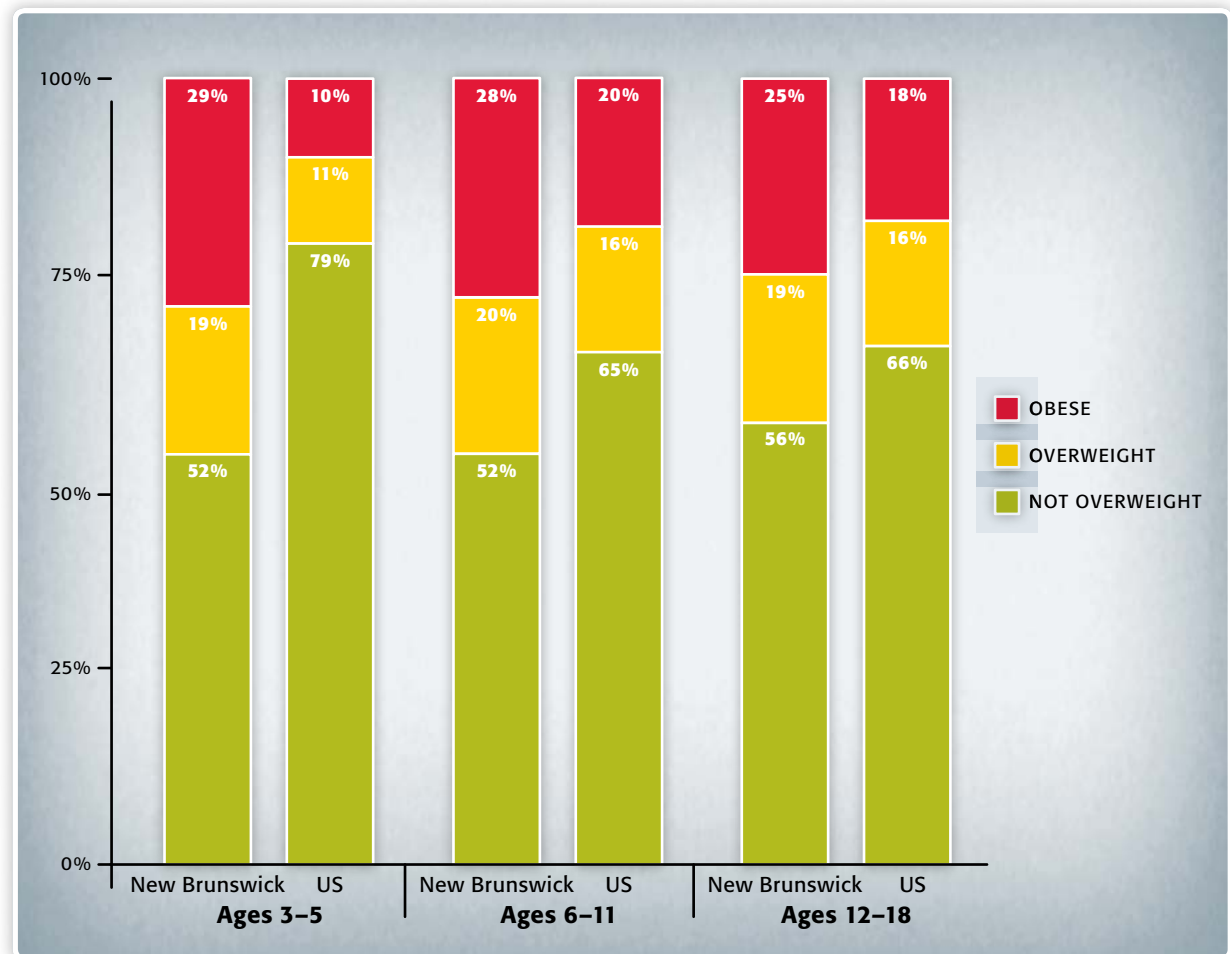
De-identified data on students' heights and weights, measured by school nurses, are used to compute body mass index (BMI).

BMI data by age, gender, and race/ethnicity are compared to national US data obtained from the 2007–2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

The last chart in this section presents parental perceptions of child weight status obtained from the household survey.

Childhood weight status by age: New Brunswick public schools vs. US

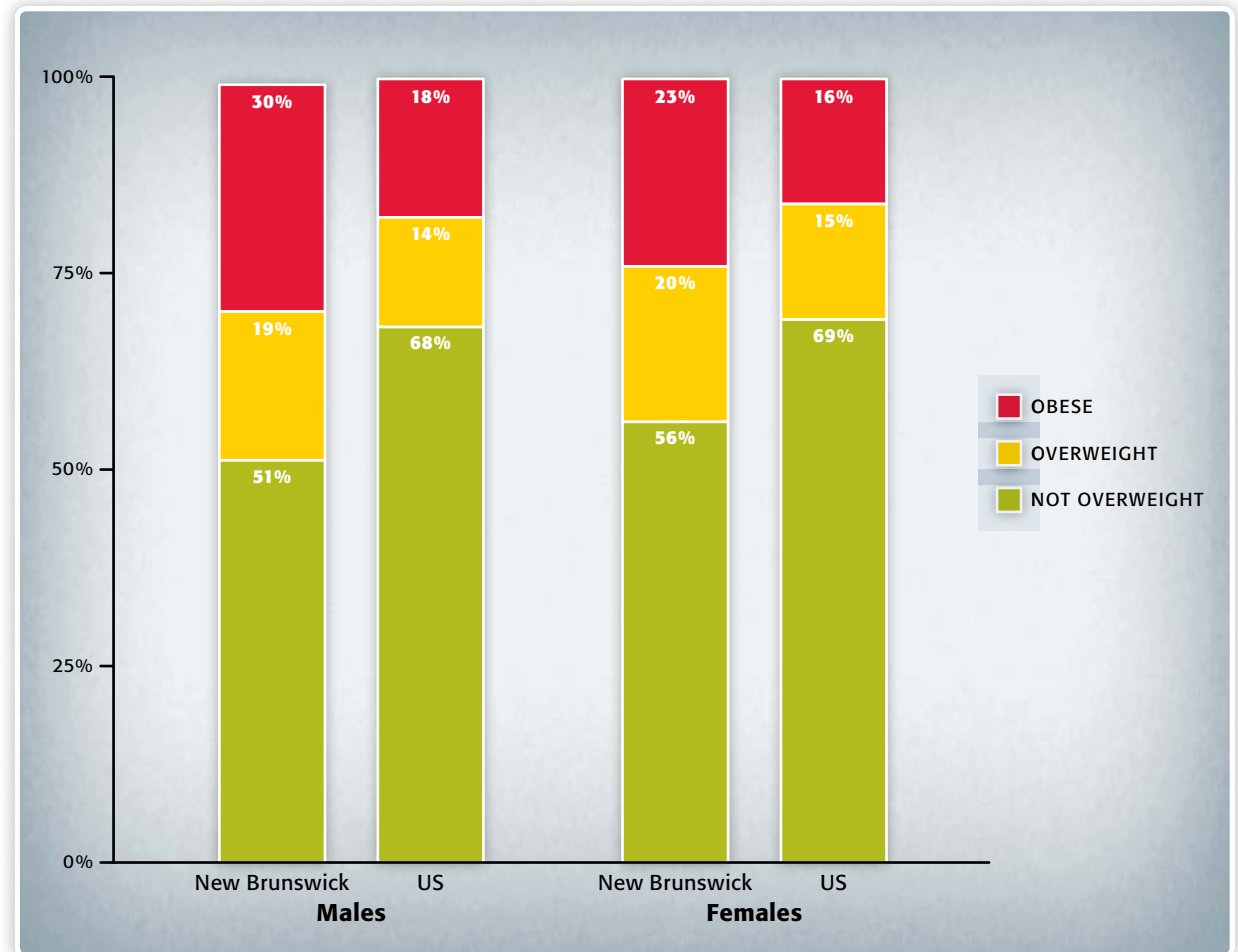
- Compared to the national data, a higher percentage of New Brunswick public school children in all age categories are overweight or obese.
- The largest differences between New Brunswick public school children and national estimates are seen among the youngest children (48% in New Brunswick vs. 21% nationally for overweight and obese). Further, the youngest children are almost three times more likely to be obese than their national counterparts.



NOTE: This chart presents data from New Brunswick public schools (2008–2009), NOT survey data. National data (NHANES, 2007–2008) are based on 2–5 year-olds, while the New Brunswick data are based on 3–5 year-olds. Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Childhood weight status by gender: New Brunswick public schools vs. US

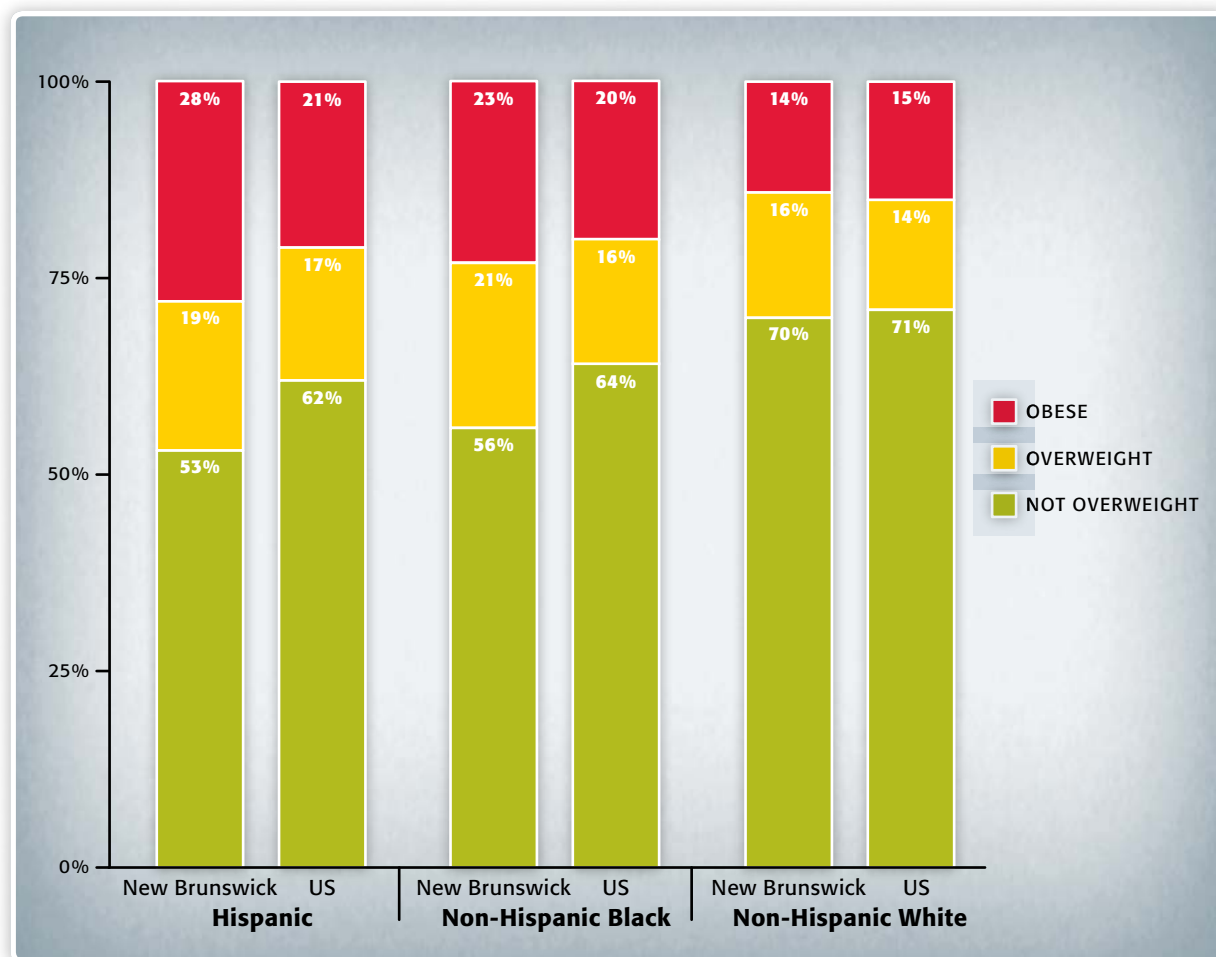
- Compared to the national data, a higher percentage of both boys and girls in New Brunswick are overweight or obese.
- 49% of New Brunswick boys and 44% of New Brunswick girls are either overweight or obese compared to 32% boys and 31% girls nationally.



NOTE: This chart presents data from New Brunswick public schools (2008–2009), NOT survey data. National data (NHANES, 2007–2008) are based on 2–18 year-olds, while the New Brunswick data are based on 3–18 year-olds. Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Childhood weight status by race/ethnicity: New Brunswick public schools vs. US

- Compared to the national data, a higher percentage of Hispanic children in New Brunswick are obese (28% vs. 21%), although the rates of overweight children are somewhat similar to national data.
- The rates of overweight and obesity for non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick are about 8 percentage points higher than national rates.
- Non-Hispanic white children are roughly comparable to their national counterparts with regard to weight status.



NOTE: This chart presents data from New Brunswick public schools (2008–2009), NOT survey data. National data (NHANES, 2007–2008) are based on 2–18 year-olds, while the New Brunswick data are based on 3–18 year-olds. Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Parent's perception of child's weight status (based on survey data)

- Despite the high prevalence of overweight and obesity among children attending New Brunswick public schools, when asked about their child's weight status on the survey, a vast majority of parents of New Brunswick children do not think their children are overweight or obese. This chart (and the remainder of the chartbook) is based on survey data.



NOTE: Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. This chart (and the remainder of the chartbook) are based on survey data.

Key findings from data on children's weight status

- Based on measured heights and weights data obtained from public schools in the city, New Brunswick children have high rates of overweight and obesity. Compared to the national data, the rates are particularly high among children in the middle (6–11 years) and the youngest (3–5 years) age groups. National data for the youngest age group are based on 2–5 year olds while the New Brunswick data include only 3–5 year olds.
- Despite these high rates of overweight and obesity among children, the vast majority of parents of children ages 3–18 in New Brunswick think that their children are not overweight.



Food Behaviors

Parents were asked to report on the food behaviors of the randomly selected index child.

Respondents were asked to think about the past month and report frequency of consumption of specific types of foods on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

Consumption data are compared to established recommendations, where available.

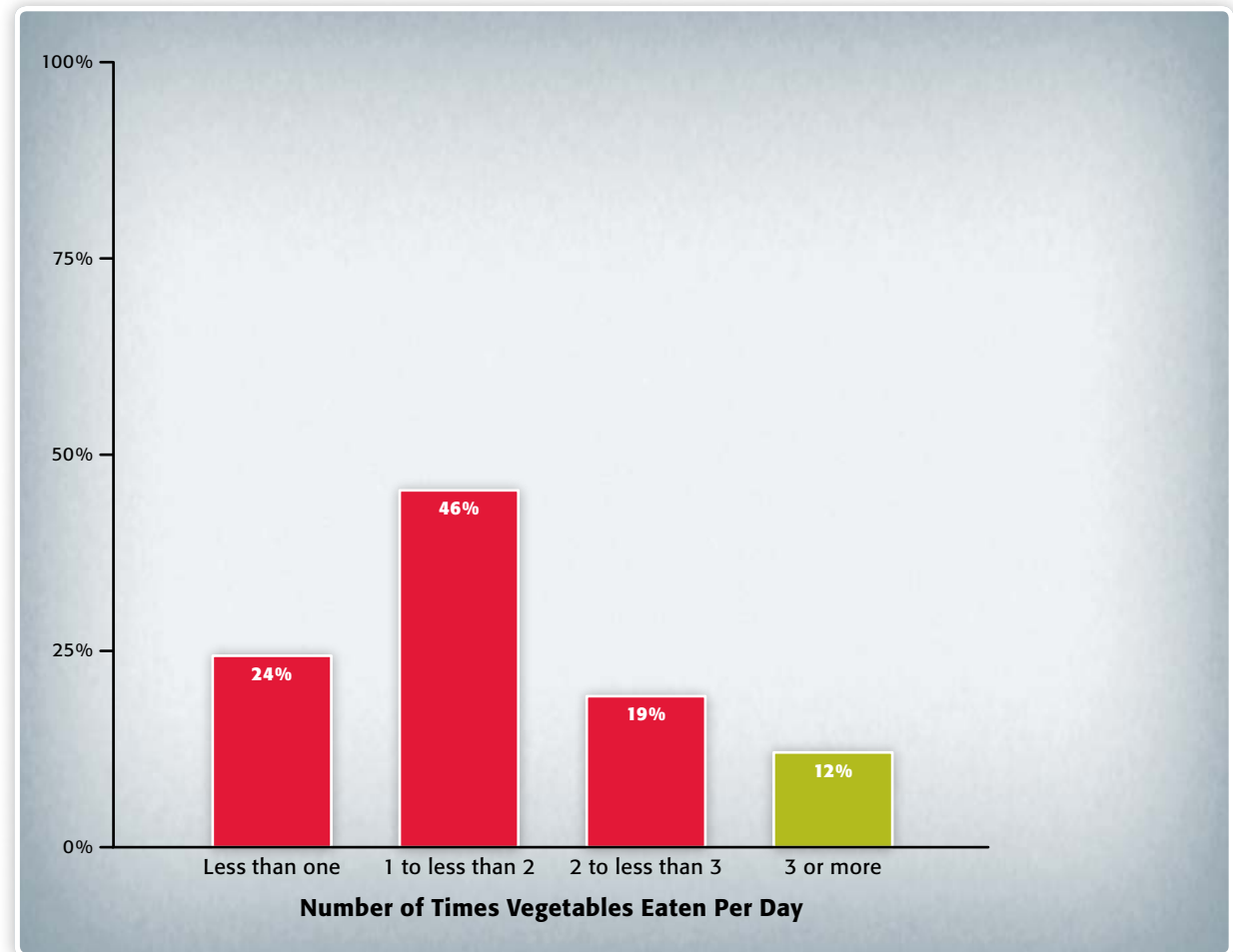
Number of times vegetables eaten per day*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 objectives state that individuals 2 years and older should eat vegetables at least 3 times a day.

In New Brunswick

- Only 12% of the children meet the Healthy People 2010 recommendation.
- 24% of the children eat vegetables **LESS THAN ONE** time per day.

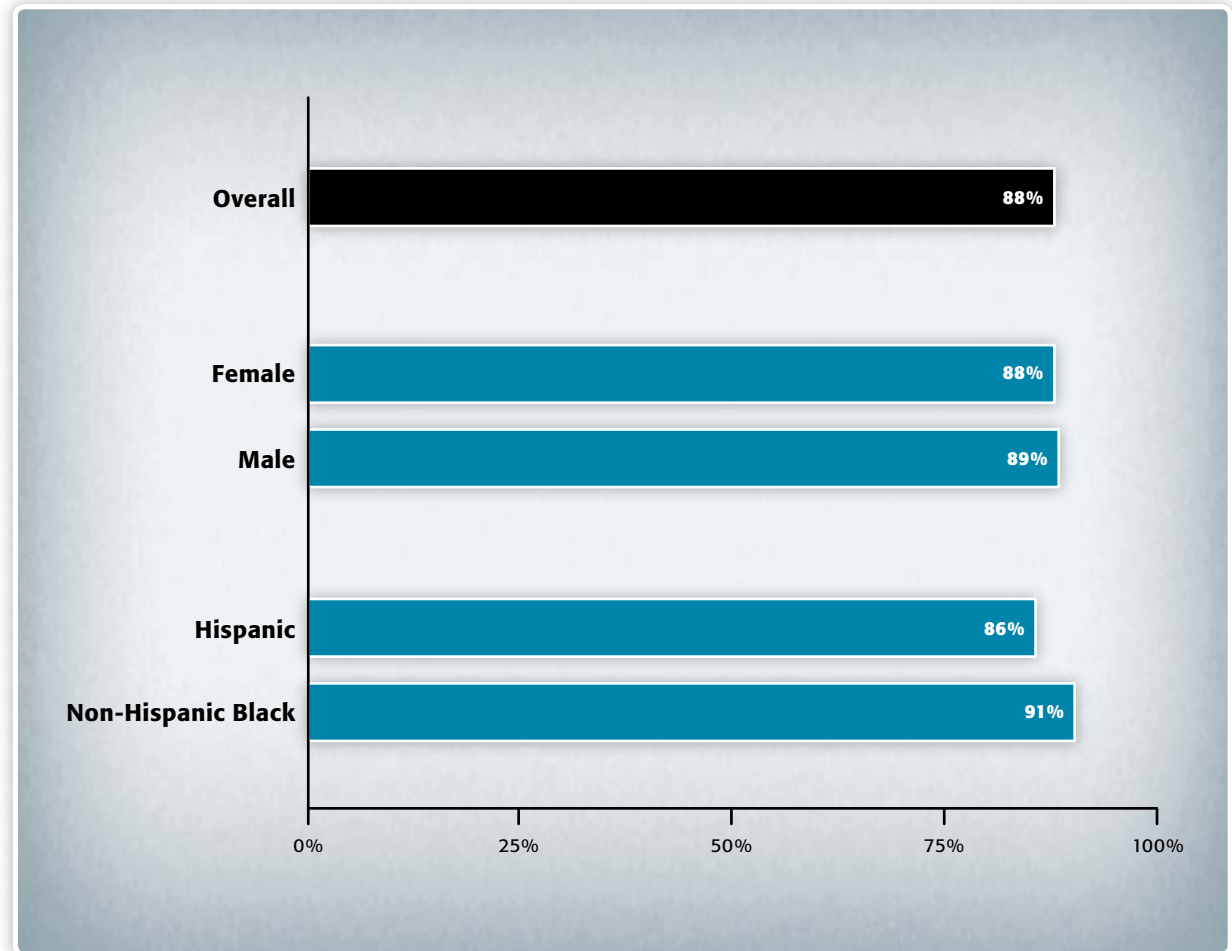
* Includes green leafy or lettuce salad, potatoes (baked, boiled, mashed), cooked or canned dried beans, other vegetables (e.g., tomatoes, green beans, carrots, corn, cooked greens, sweet potatoes, broccoli). Excludes french fries, potato chips, tater tots, or other fried potatoes.



Almost all New Brunswick children eat vegetables less than 3 times a day*

- The vast majority (88%) of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick do not eat vegetables 3 times a day, as recommended by DHSS.
- This behavior varies little by gender or race/ethnicity.

* Includes green leafy or lettuce salad, potatoes (baked, boiled, mashed), cooked or canned dried beans, other vegetables (e.g., tomatoes, green beans, carrots, corn, cooked greens, sweet potatoes, broccoli). Excludes french fries, potato chips, tater tots, or other fried potatoes.



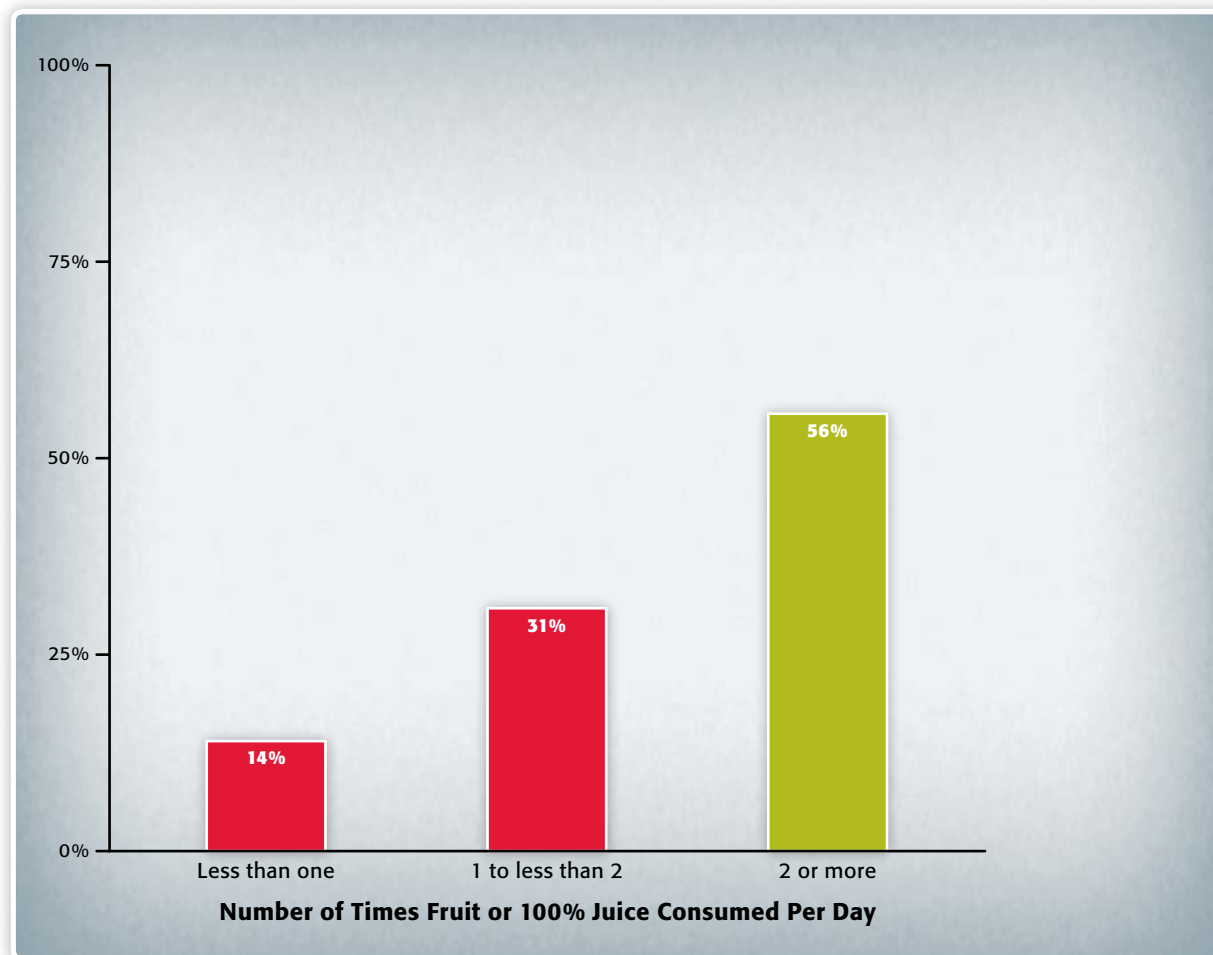
Number of times fruit or 100% juice consumed per day*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 objectives state that individuals 2 years and older should eat fruit or 100% juice at least two times per day.

In New Brunswick

- 56% of children meet this recommendation.
- 14% of children consume fruit or 100% juice less than once per day.
- Fruit juice comprises a larger proportion of the total as overall fruit (fruit + 100% fruit juice) consumption increases (not shown in chart).

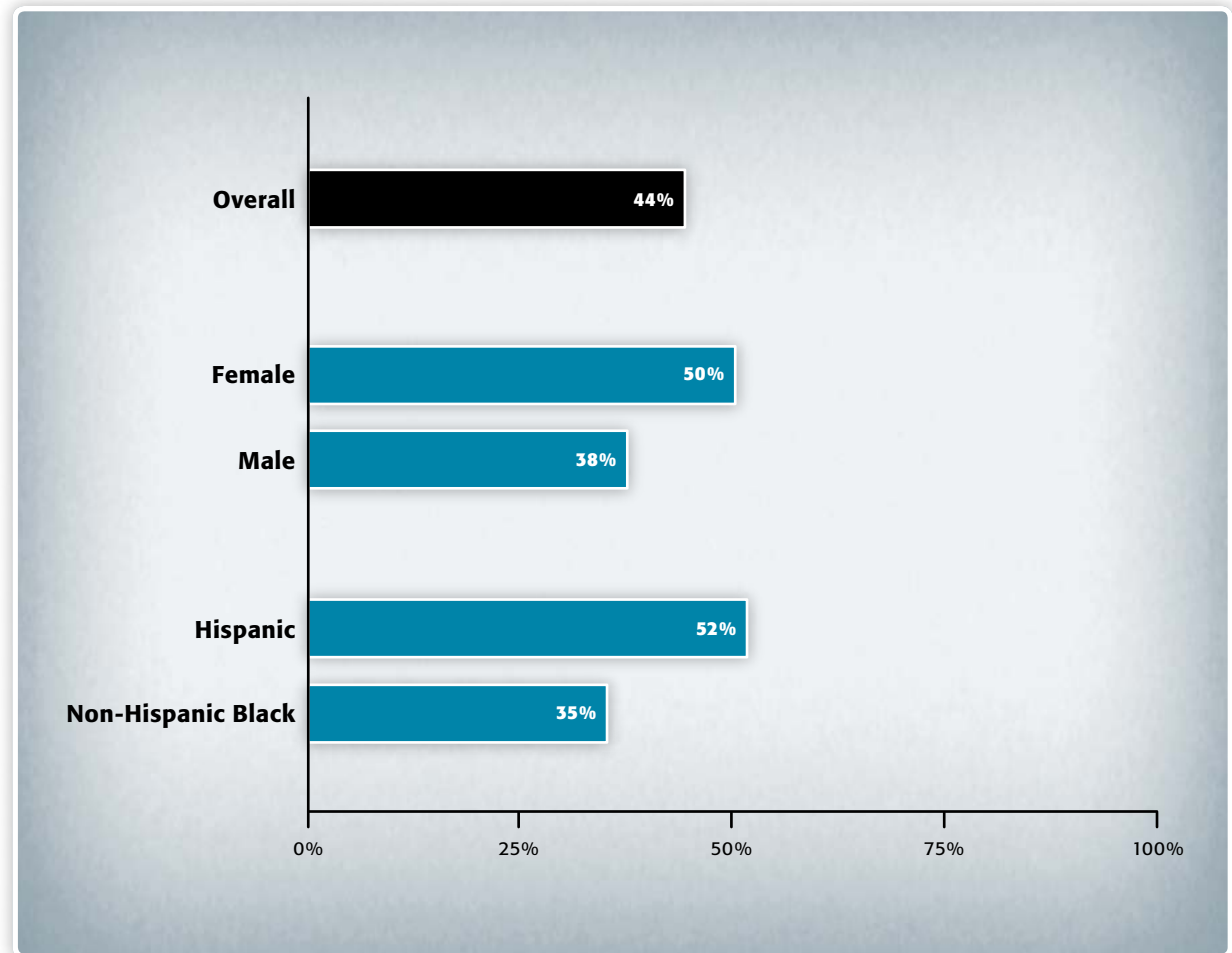
* Includes fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and 100% fruit juice such as orange, apple, or grape juice. Excludes fruit-flavored drinks with added sugar like Hi-C, Gatorade, or fruit punch.



Percentage who do not consume fruit or 100% juice at least 2 times a day*

- Overall, 44% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick consume less than the recommendation of fruit or 100% juice.
- Half of New Brunswick girls do not consume fruit or 100% juice two times a day, compared to 38% of boys.
- 52% of Hispanic children in New Brunswick do not consume fruit or 100% juice two times a day, compared to 35% of non-Hispanic black children.

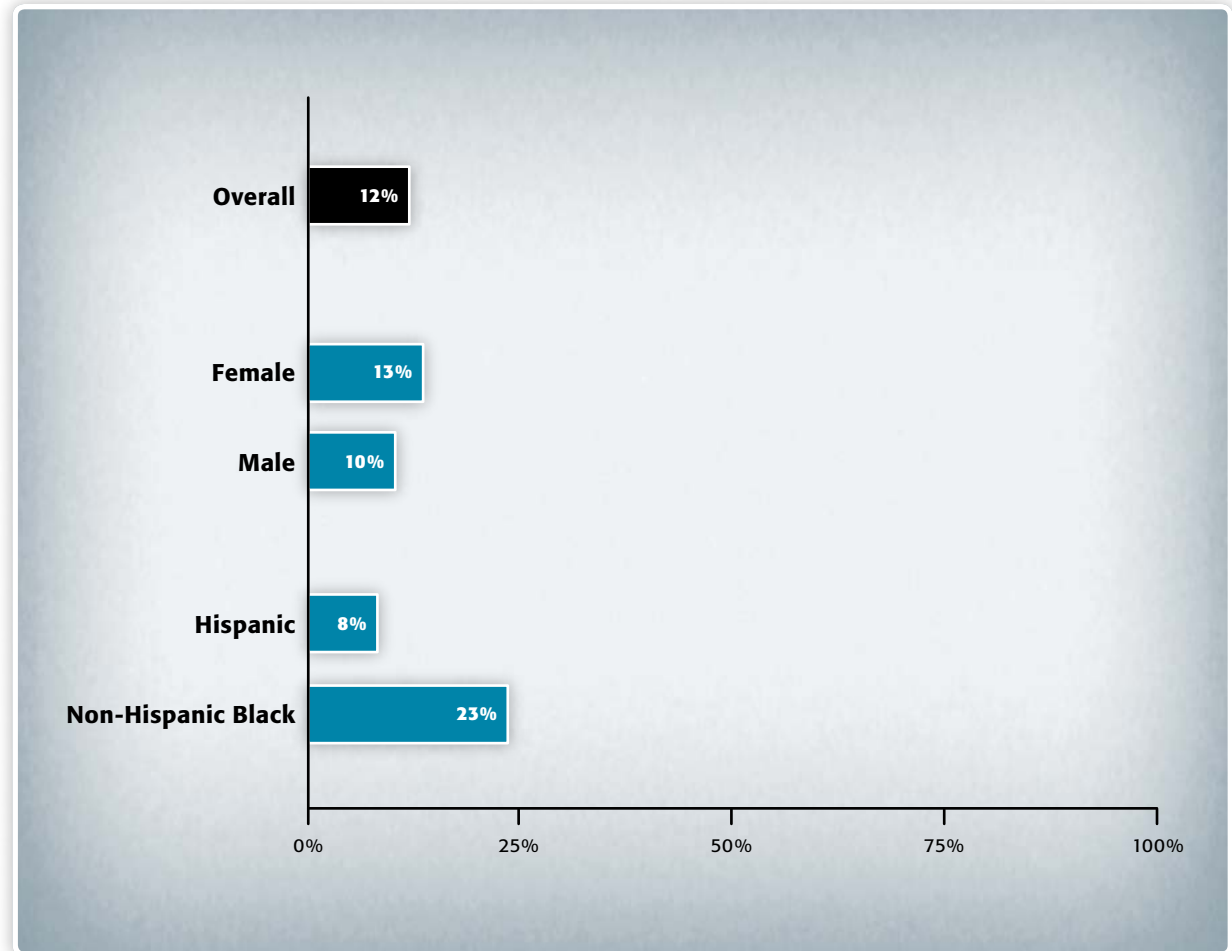
* Includes fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and 100% fruit juice such as orange, apple, or grape juice. Excludes fruit-flavored drinks with added sugar like Hi-C, Gatorade, or fruit punch.



Percentage with two or more fast-food visits per week*

- Overall, 12% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick eat at fast-food restaurants 2 or more times a week.
- 23% of non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick eat at fast-food restaurants 2 or more times a week, compared to 8% of Hispanic children.
- This behavior varies little by gender.

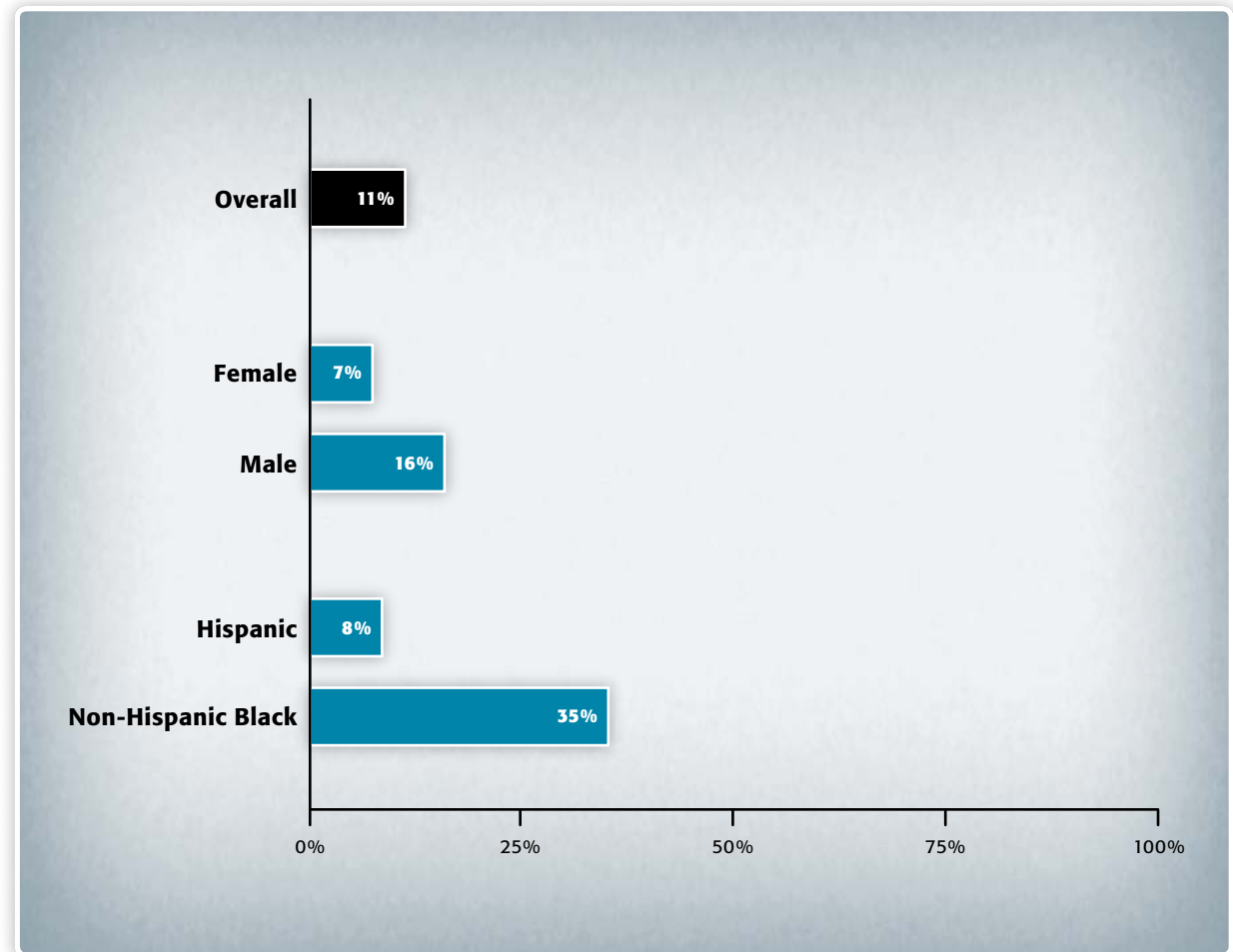
* Includes any fast food restaurant, deli, or pizza, burger, taco, or chicken place where you pay before you eat.



Percentage who drink two or more sugar-sweetened beverages* per day

- Overall, 11% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick drink 2 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day.
- More than twice as many boys (16%) drink 2 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day compared to girls (7%).
- 35% of non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick drink 2 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per day, compared to 8% of Hispanic children.

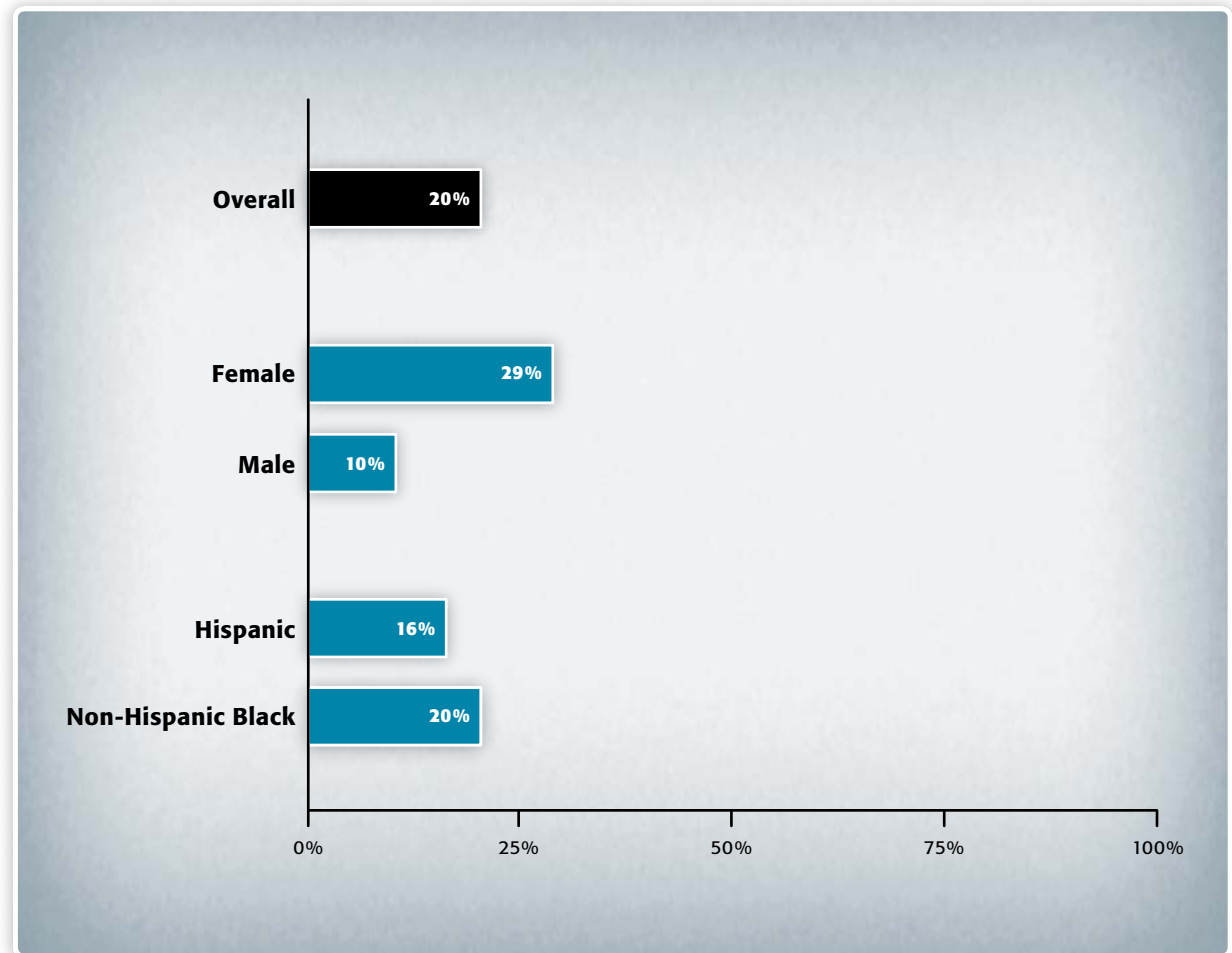
* Includes fruit-flavored drinks (e.g., lemonade, Sunny Delight, Kool-aid, Gatorade, sweet iced teas) or sweetened soft drinks (e.g., Coke, Pepsi, 7-up). Excludes diet drinks.



Percentage who eat energy-dense **sweet*** snacks daily

- Overall, 20% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick eat energy-dense sweet snacks daily.
- Girls in New Brunswick are nearly three times more likely to eat energy-dense sweet snacks daily compared to boys (29% vs. 10%).
- This behavior varies little by race/ethnicity.

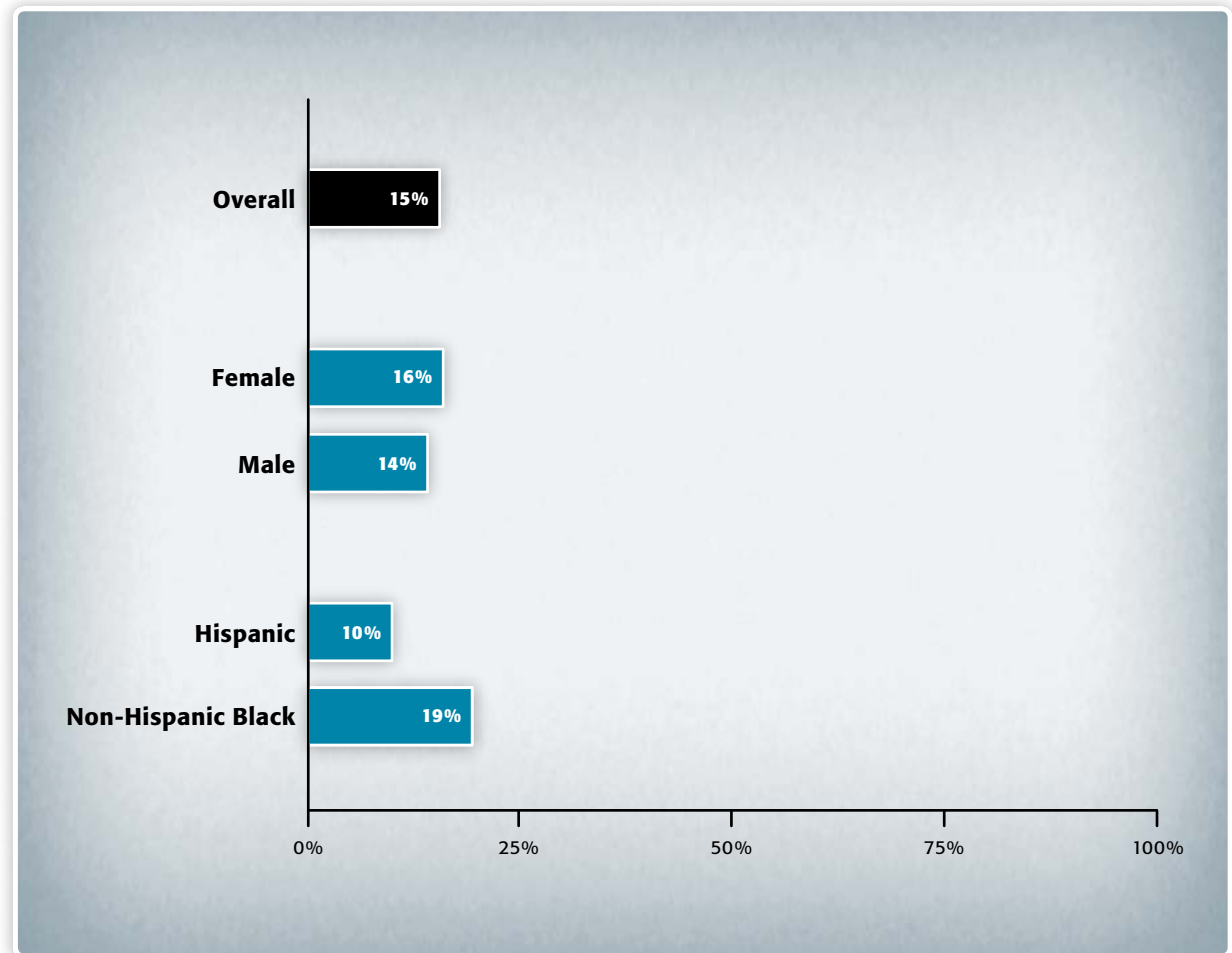
* Includes any sweets such as cookies, cakes, candy, or pies.



Percentage who eat energy-dense **salty*** snacks daily

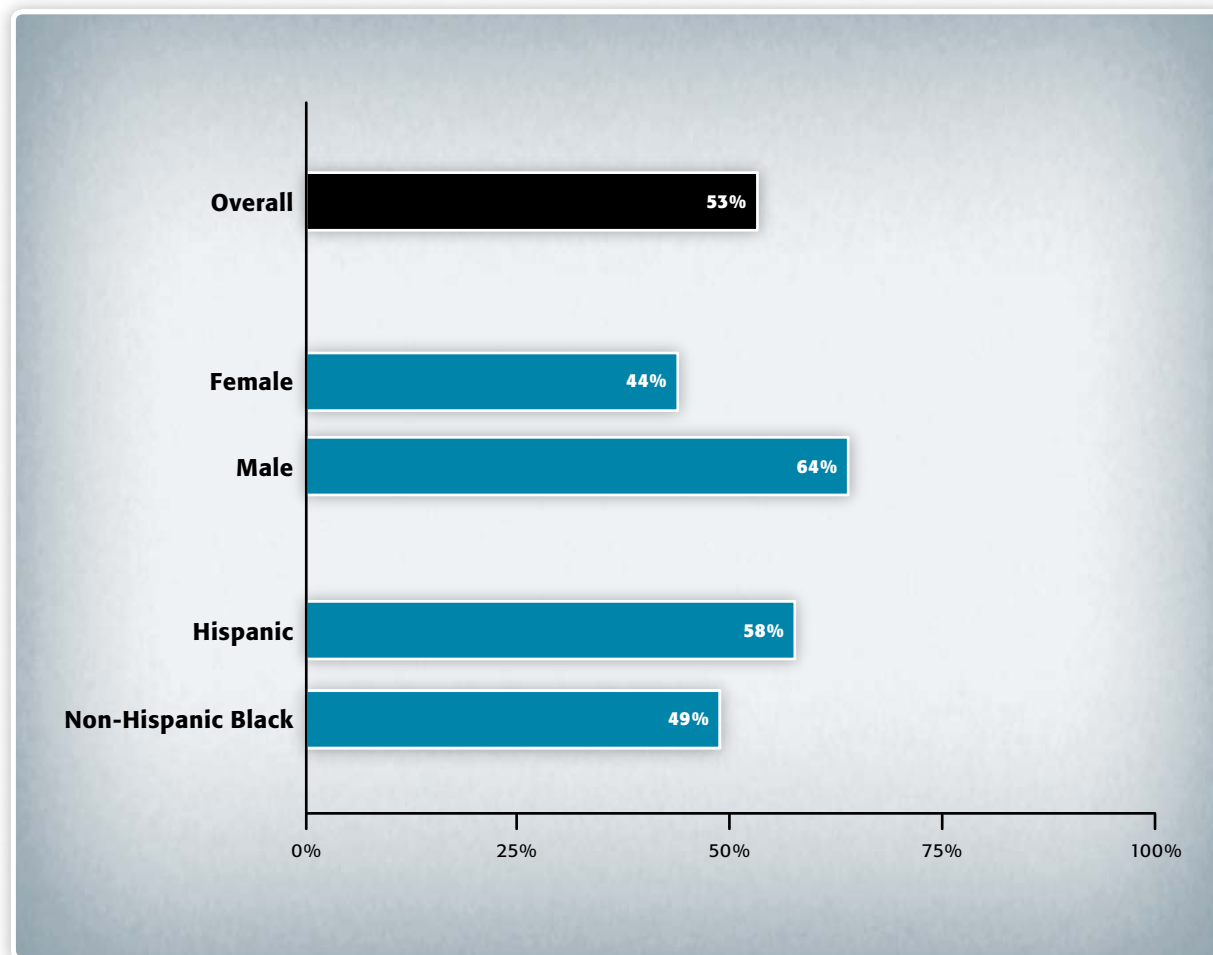
- Overall, 15% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick eat energy-dense salty snacks daily.
- Nearly twice as many non-Hispanic black children eat energy-dense salty snacks daily as Hispanic children.

* Includes any salty snacks such as chips, Doritos, or nachos.



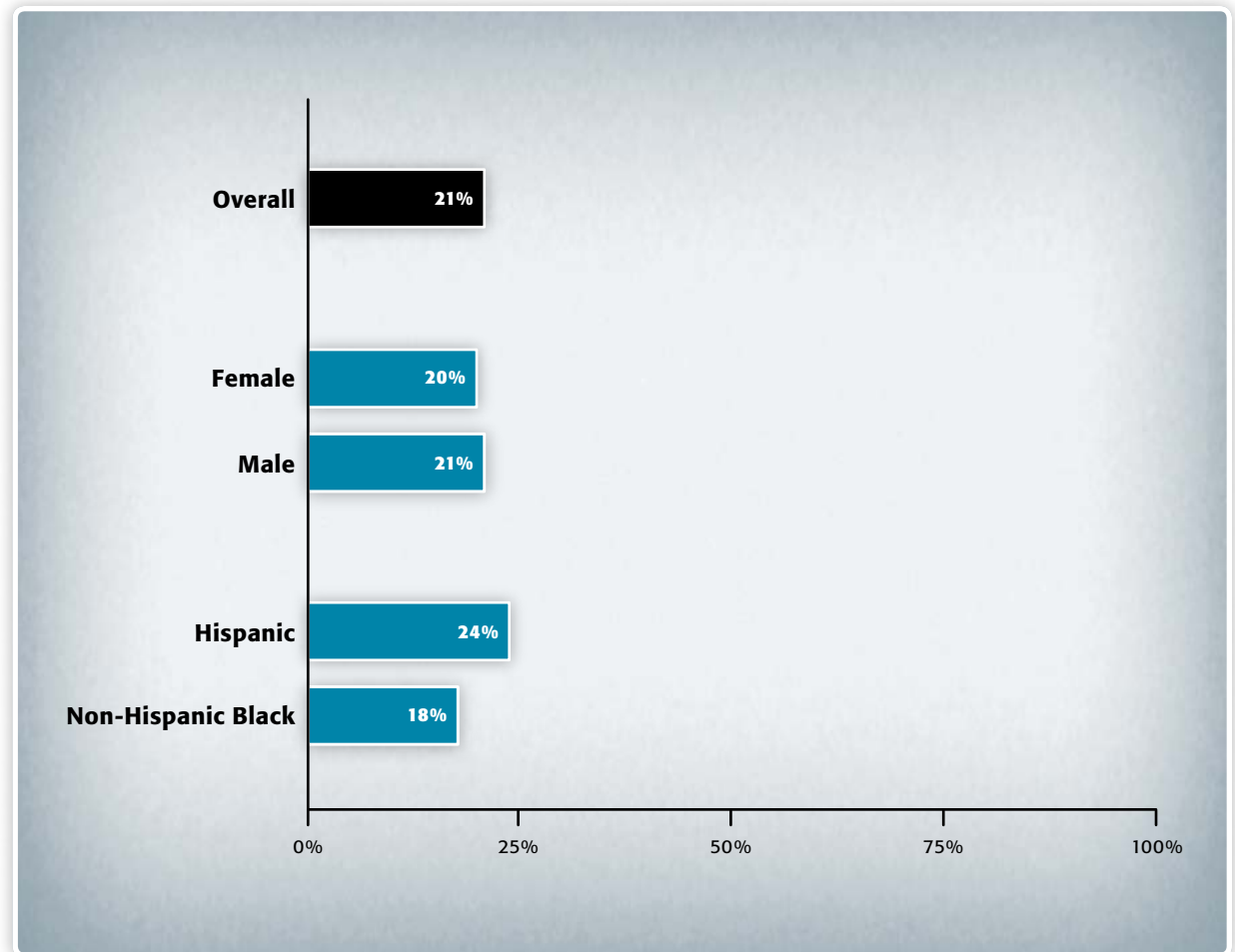
Percentage who do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily

- Overall, 53% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily.
- Boys in New Brunswick are more likely to not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily compared to girls (64% vs. 44%).
- 58% of Hispanic children in New Brunswick do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily, compared to 49% of non-Hispanic black children.



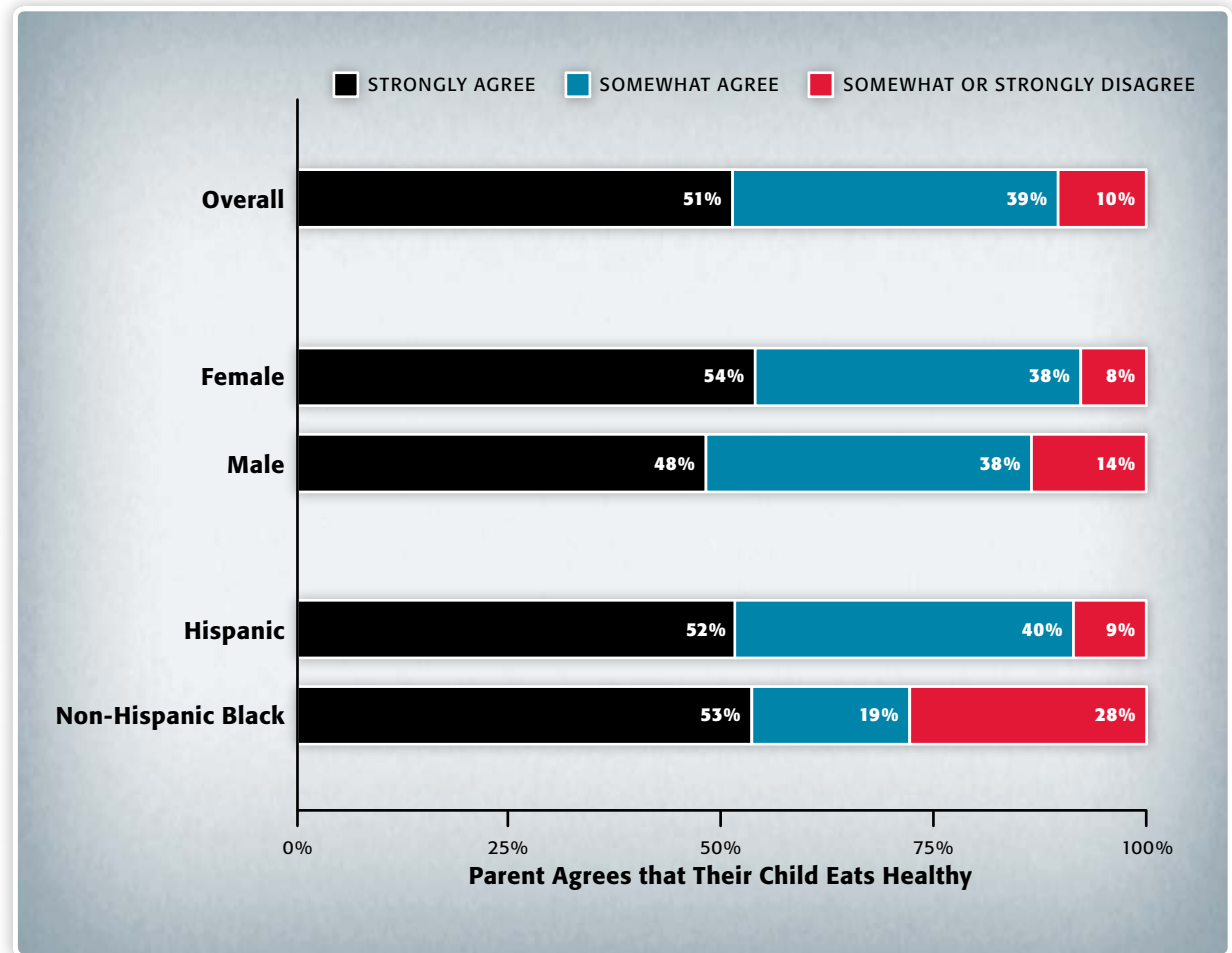
Percentage who do not eat breakfast daily

- Overall, 21% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick do not eat breakfast daily.
- This behavior varies little by gender or race/ethnicity.



Despite what the previous charts show, parents think their children eat healthy

- Overall, 87% of parents strongly agree or somewhat agree that, in general, their child eats healthy.
- This finding is consistent across gender and race/ethnicity.
- Parents of boys are less likely to think that their children eat healthy.



NOTE: Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Key findings from food behavior section

- Only 12% of the children meet the Healthy People 2010 recommendations for eating vegetables three times per day. While 56% of the children meet the recommendations for fruit, the consumption of 100% juice, a more concentrated source of calories, is higher among those who consume more total fruit (fruit + 100% juice).
- Consumption of energy-dense foods such as sugar-sweetened beverages and sweet and salty snacks is particularly prevalent among non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick.
- Consumption of sweet snacks is more prevalent among girls, while consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is more prevalent among boys.
- Overall, about half the children do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks on a daily basis and even a larger number of males (64%) and Hispanic children (58%) do not eat fruits and vegetables as snacks daily.
- Despite these findings, almost all parents (90%) in New Brunswick think that their children eat healthy.



Food Environment

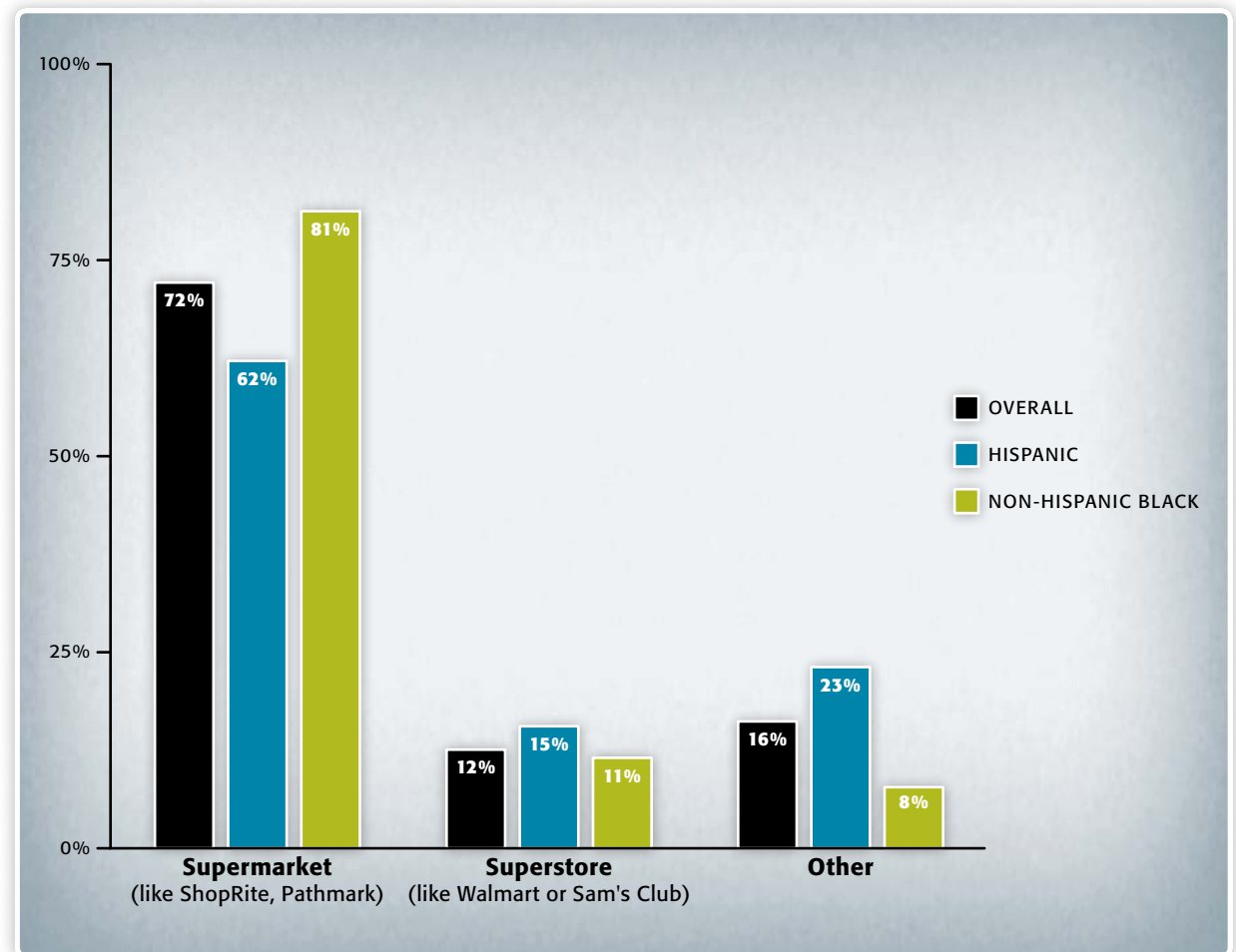
Charts in this section describe parents' perceptions of the food environment as well as reported barriers to accessing healthy foods in their neighborhood.

Neighborhood is defined as the area within a 20 minute walk, a 5 minute drive, or about 1 mile in all directions around the respondent's home.

Food shopping practices and preferences are presented, including desirable features of the food store where parents do most of their food shopping.

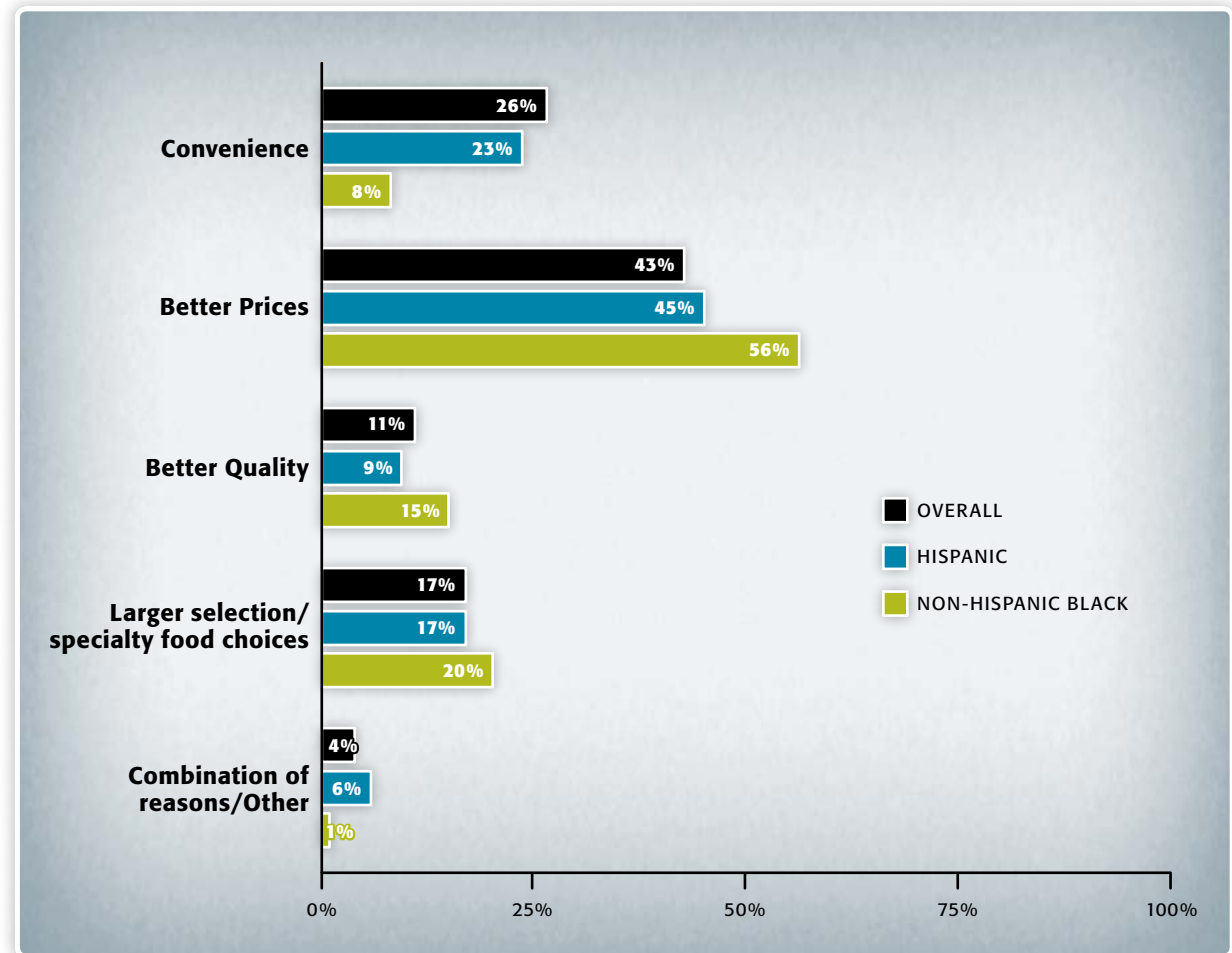
Parents do most of their food shopping at supermarkets and superstores

- Overall, 72% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 do most of their food shopping at supermarkets (like ShopRite, Stop & Shop, Pathmark), and 12% food-shop at superstores (like Walmart or Sam’s Club).
- Parents of Hispanic children are less likely to shop at supermarkets (62%), compared to non-Hispanic black parents (81%).
- Nearly a fourth of the parents of Hispanic children (23%) shop at corner stores or bodegas for most of their food shopping.



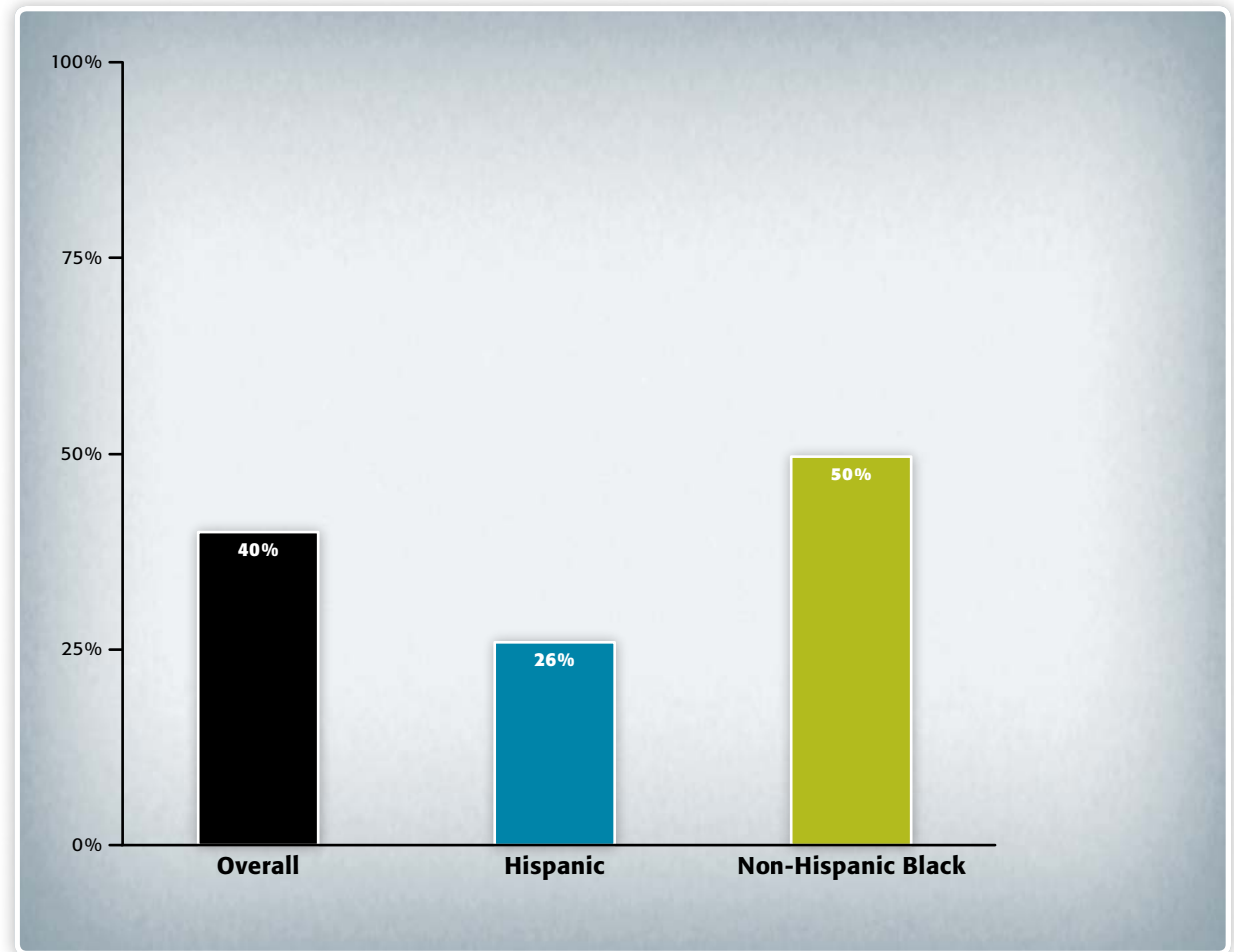
Important considerations in choosing main food stores reported by parents

- In New Brunswick, parents are most likely to say they choose their food store because of better prices, followed by convenience.



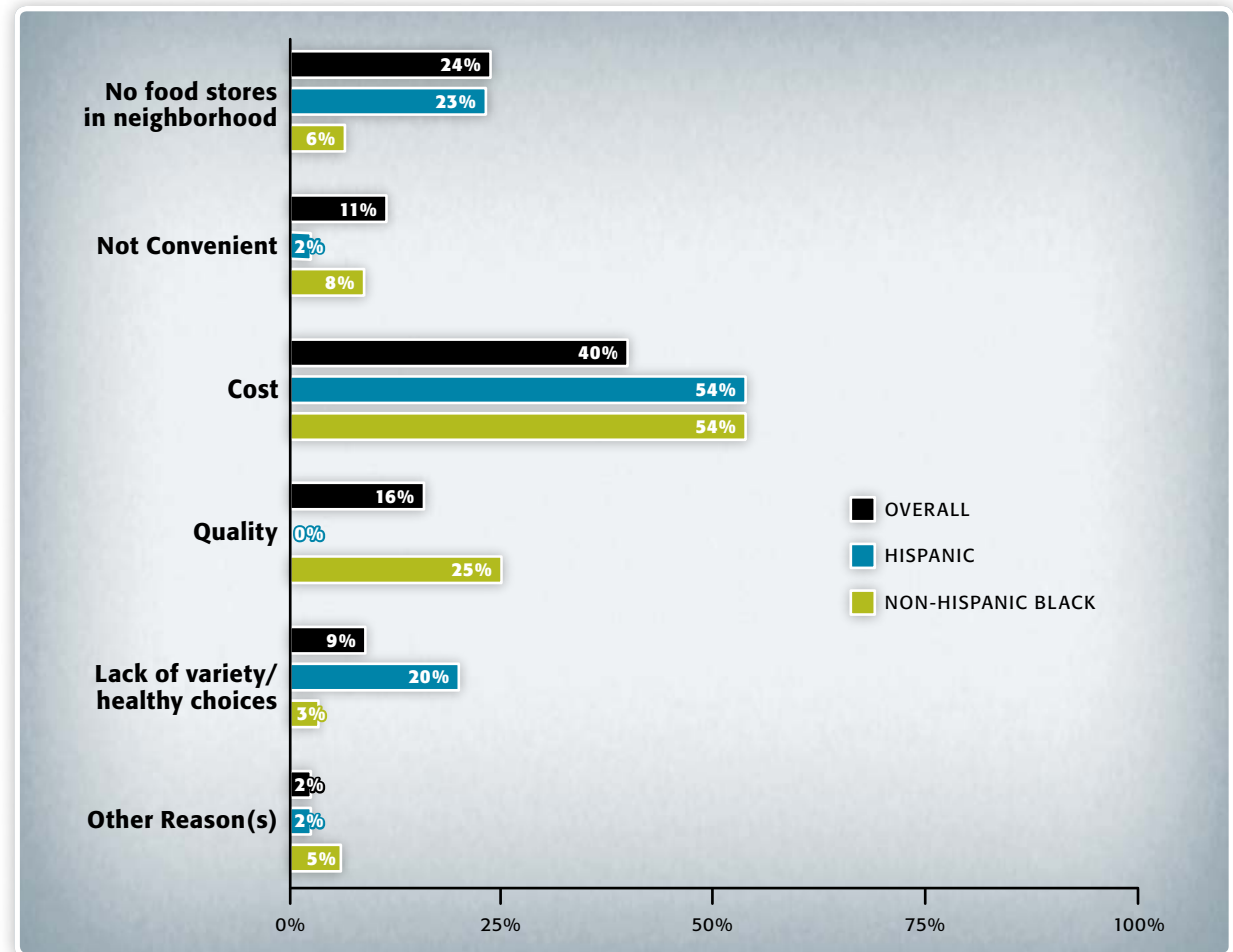
Percentage who do most food shopping outside their neighborhood

- Overall, 40% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 do most of their food-shopping outside their neighborhood.
- 50% of parents of non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick do most of their food-shopping outside their neighborhood compared to 26% of parents of Hispanic children.



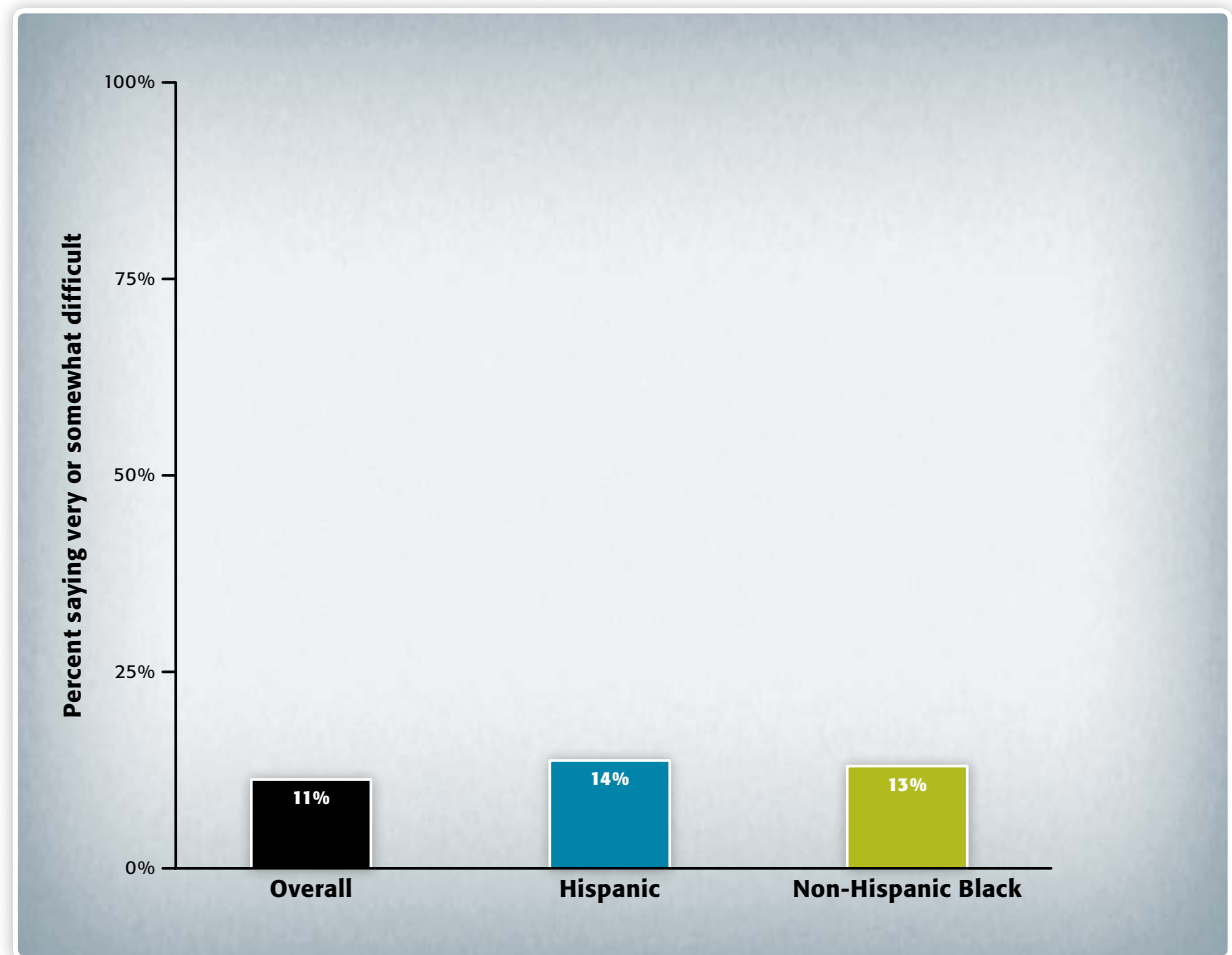
Main reasons for shopping for food outside of neighborhood

- Parents of Hispanic children in New Brunswick most frequently cite cost as the reason they food-shop outside of their neighborhood (54%), followed by no food stores in neighborhood (23%).
- Parents of non-Hispanic black children most frequently cite cost as the reason they food-shop outside of their neighborhood (54%), followed by quality (25%).



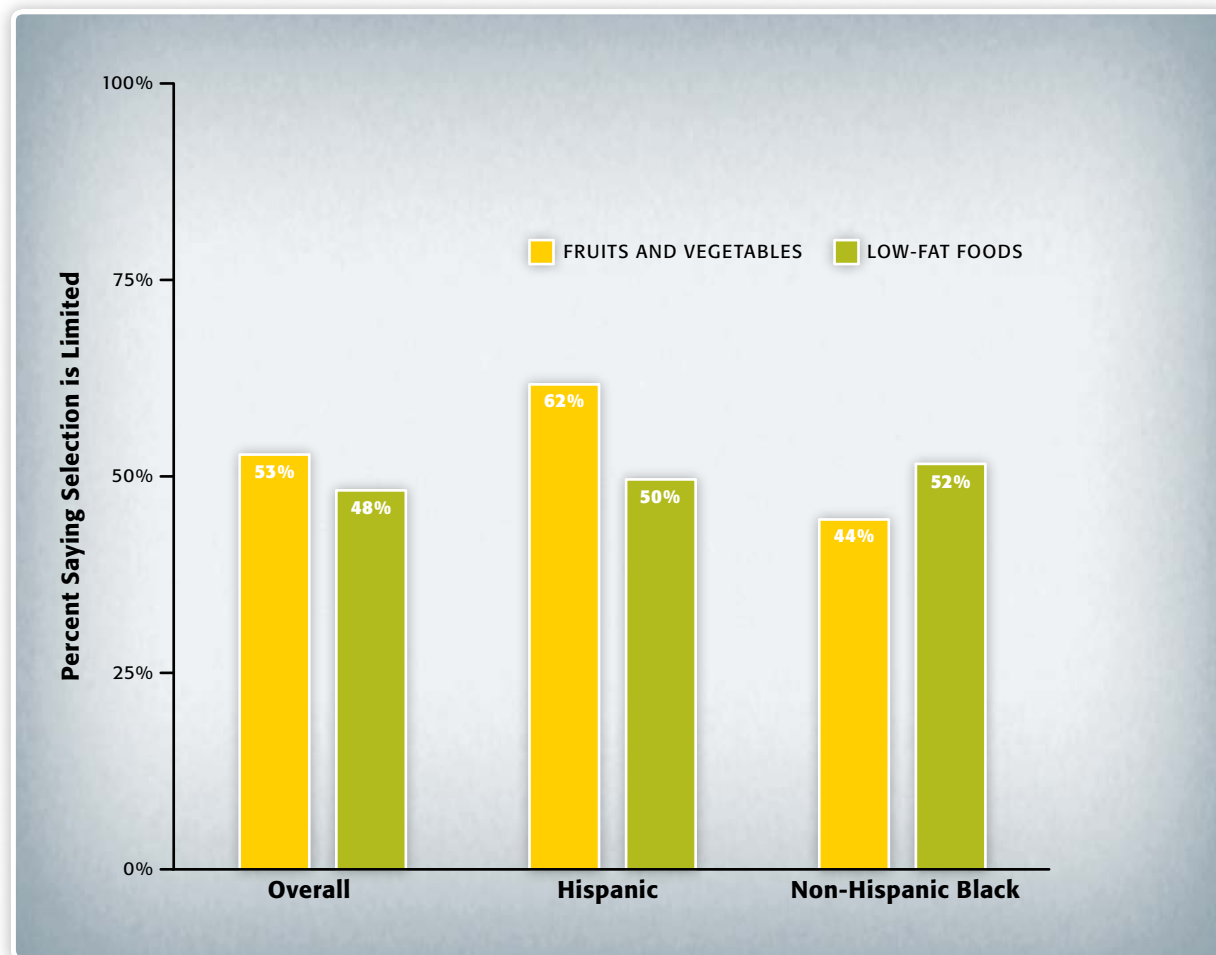
Percentage who say it is difficult to get to store where most of food shopping is done

- 14% of Hispanic parents in New Brunswick and 13% of non-Hispanic black parents say it is difficult to get to the store where they do most of their food shopping.



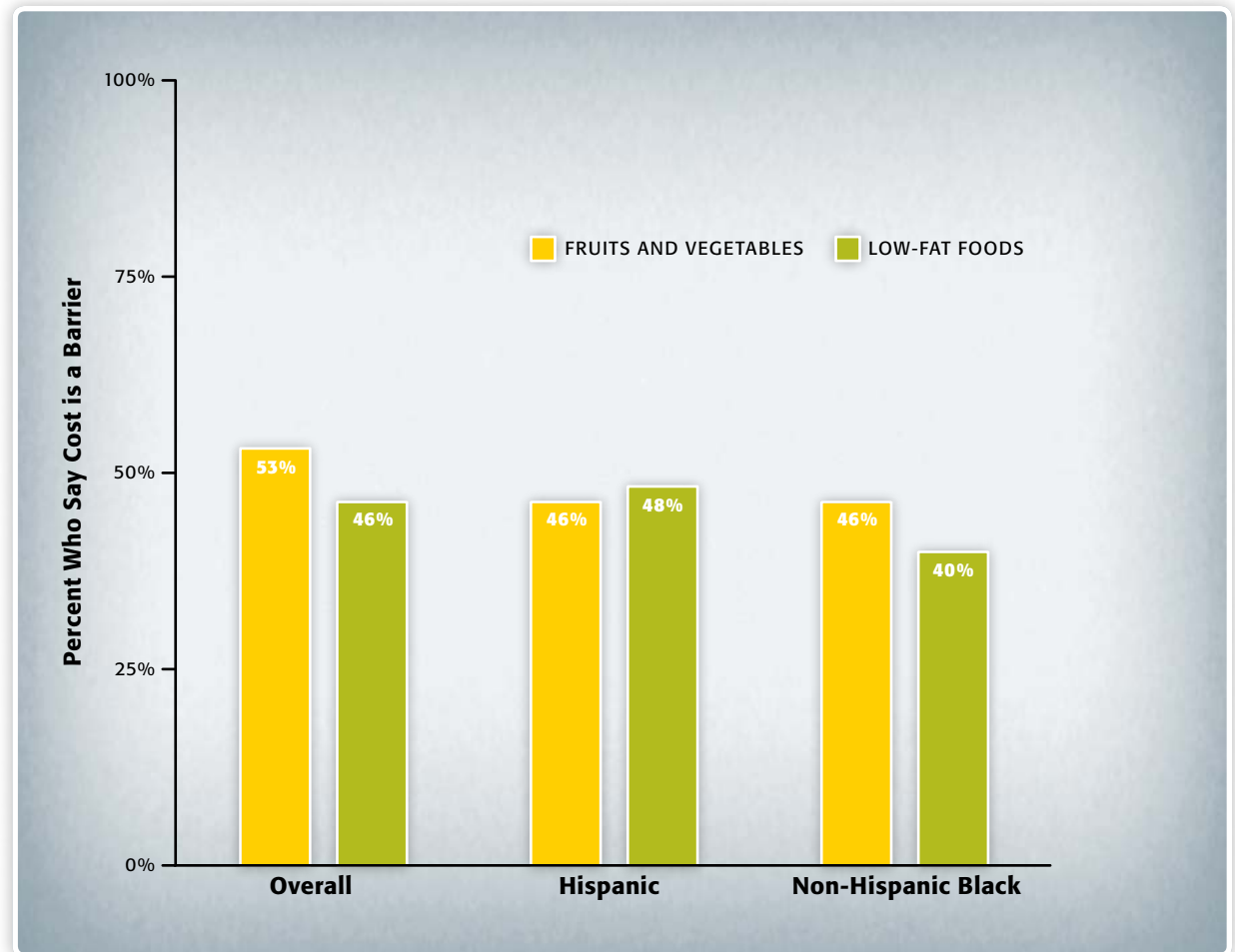
Percentage who do not have a very large selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables or low-fat foods at main food store

- Overall, 53% of parents in New Brunswick with children ages 3–18 say their main food store does not carry a very large selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables, and 48% state that it does not carry a very large selection of low-fat foods.
- 62% of parents of Hispanic children say their main food store does not have a very large selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables, compared to 44% of parents of non-Hispanic black children.
- The selection of low-fat foods varies little by race/ethnicity.



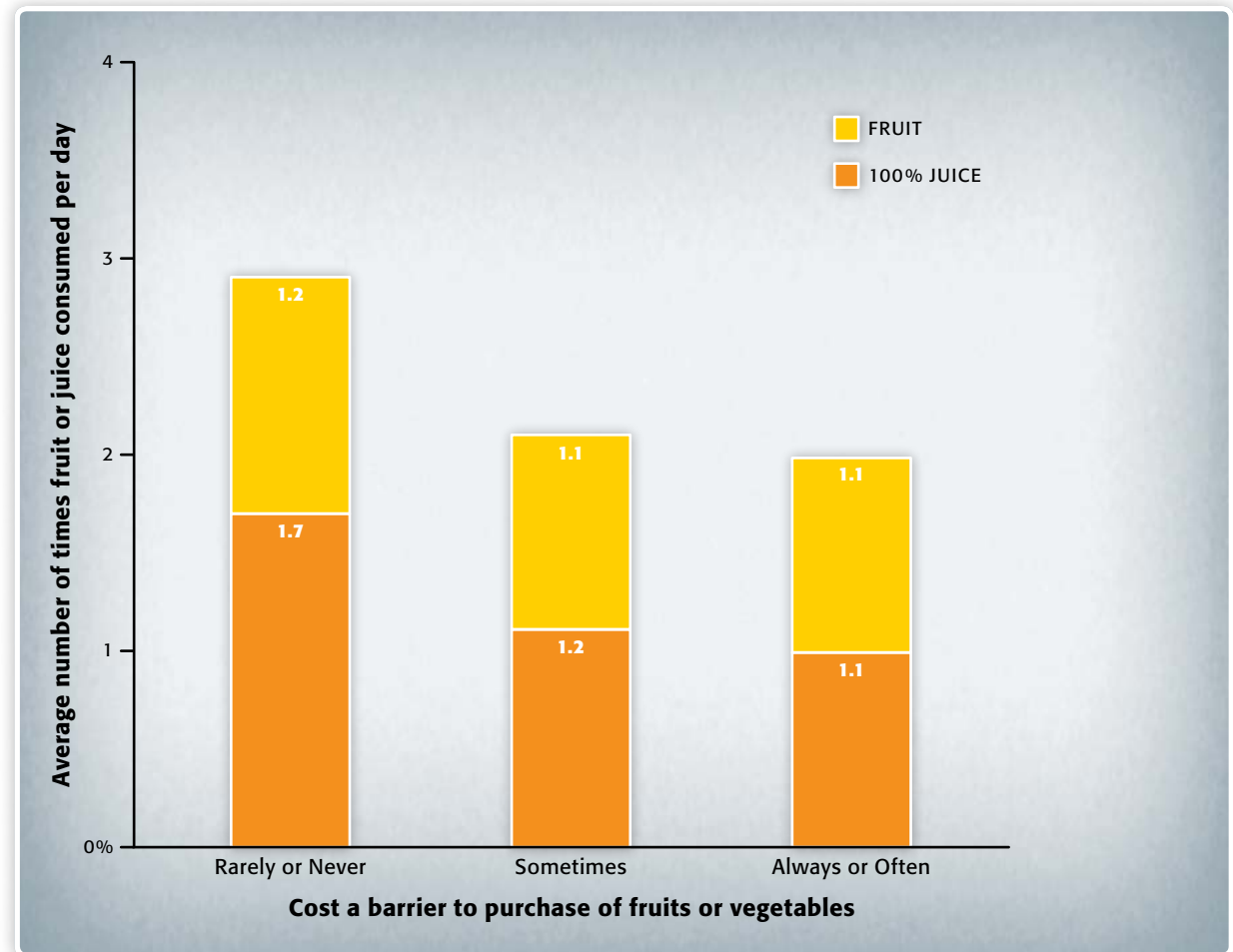
Percentage who say cost is a barrier to purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables and low-fat foods at main food store

- 46% of New Brunswick parents with Hispanic or non-Hispanic black children ages 3–18 say that cost is a barrier to the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at their main food store.
- Cost is reported as a barrier to purchasing low-fat foods at their main store for 48% of Hispanic and 40% of non-Hispanic black parents.



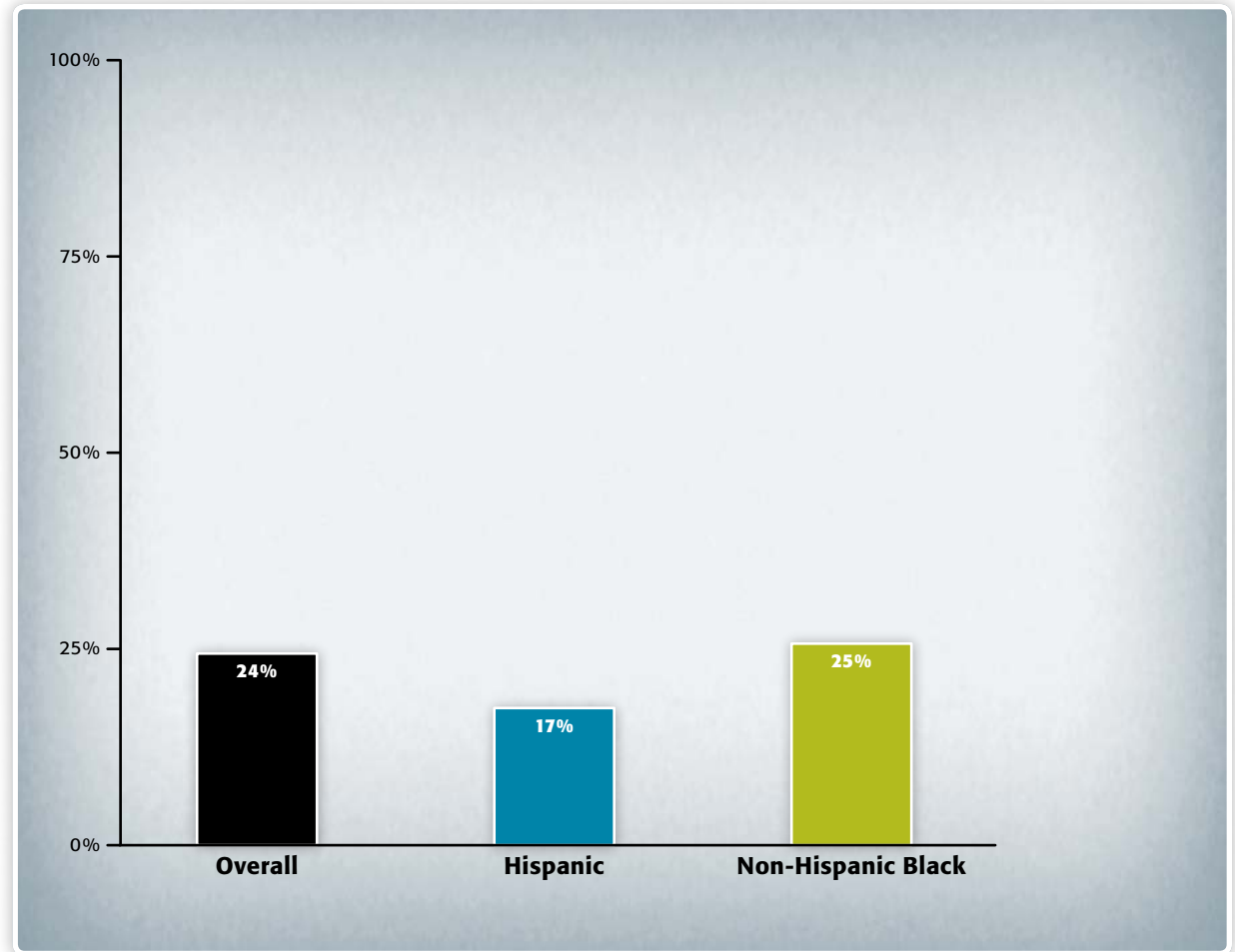
Average fruit/juice consumption decreases among those who report cost is more often a barrier to the purchase of fruits/vegetables

- If cost is not a barrier, fruit + 100% juice is consumed 2.9 times per day; but if cost is always or often a barrier, fruit + 100% juice is consumed 2.2 times per day.



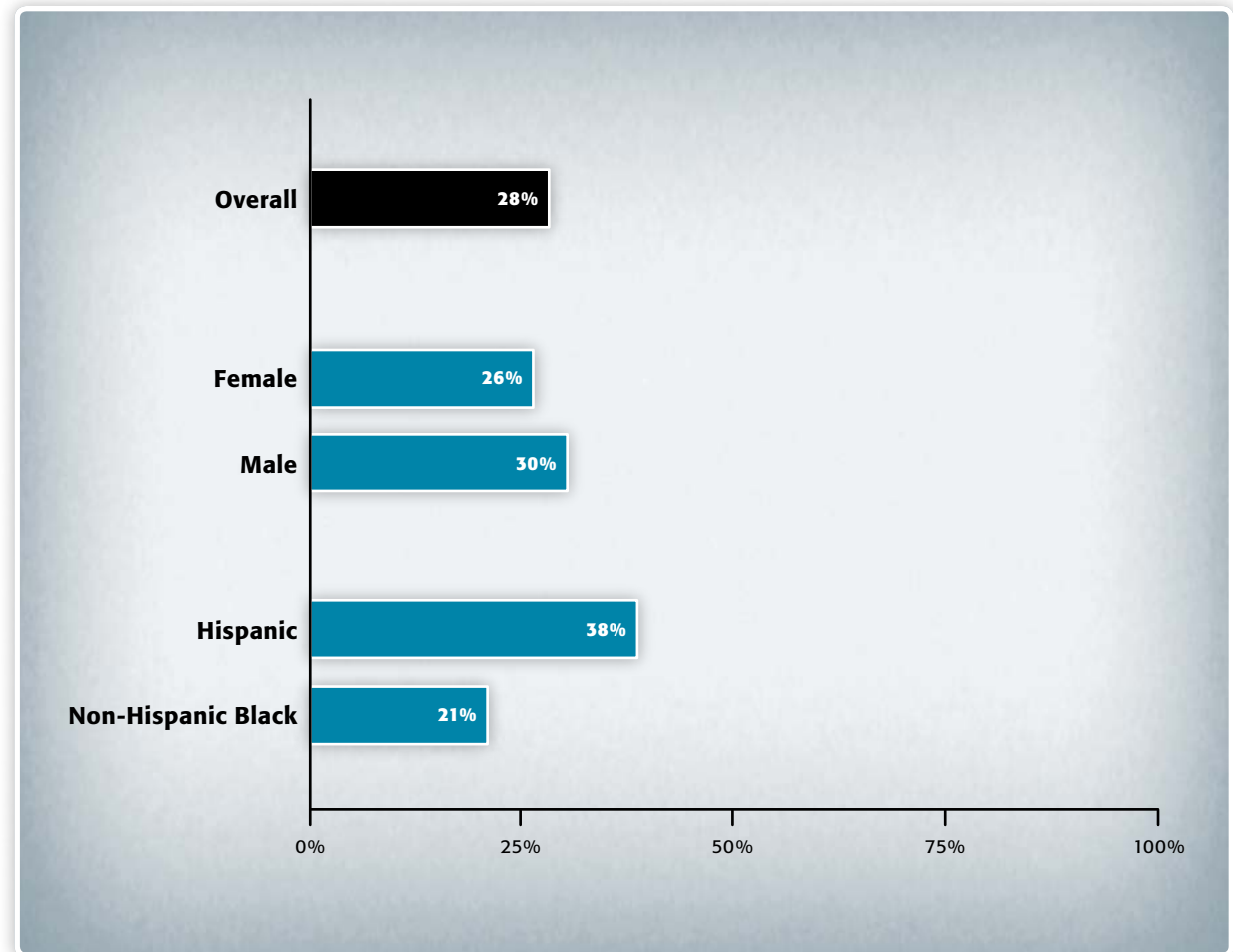
Percentage who have a special store for buying fruits and vegetables

- Overall, 24% of parents in New Brunswick with children ages 3–18 say that they buy most of their fresh fruits and vegetables somewhere other than at their main food store.



*Food Insecurity:
One-fourth of New
Brunswick families report
that they sometimes
or often do not have
enough food to eat*

- Overall, 28% of New Brunswick parents with children ages 3–18 report that they sometimes or often do not have enough food at home to eat. According to US Department of Agriculture estimates, 15% of households in the country are food insecure.
- Parents of Hispanic children are nearly twice as likely as parents of non-Hispanic black children to report that they sometimes or often do not have enough food at home to eat (39% vs. 21%).



Key findings from food environment section

- A vast majority of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 go to supermarkets and superstores to do most of their food shopping, although nearly a fourth of Hispanic parents shop at corner stores or bodegas for most of their food shopping. Price is most often cited as the reason parents choose a particular food store.
- 40% of the parents do not shop for most of their food in their neighborhood. Cost is the most prominent reason cited for not shopping in the neighborhood, followed by quality and lack of food stores.
- About half of the parents surveyed report having a limited selection of fruits and vegetables and low-fat foods at the store where they shop. Cost is a barrier for purchasing these items for about half of the parents.
- Over a quarter of the New Brunswick households with children 3–18 years are food insecure. Hispanic households are more likely to be food insecure (39%) compared to non-Hispanic black households (21%).



Physical Activity Behaviors

Parents were asked to report on the physical activity and sedentary behaviors of the randomly selected index child.

Respondents were asked to think about the past 7 days and report frequency of their child being active for 30 minutes and 60 minutes per day.

Sedentary behavior was assessed by asking the parent to report on the usual number of hours spent watching television and playing computer or video games on weekdays and weekends during the school year.

Physical activity and sedentary activity data are compared to established recommendations, where available.

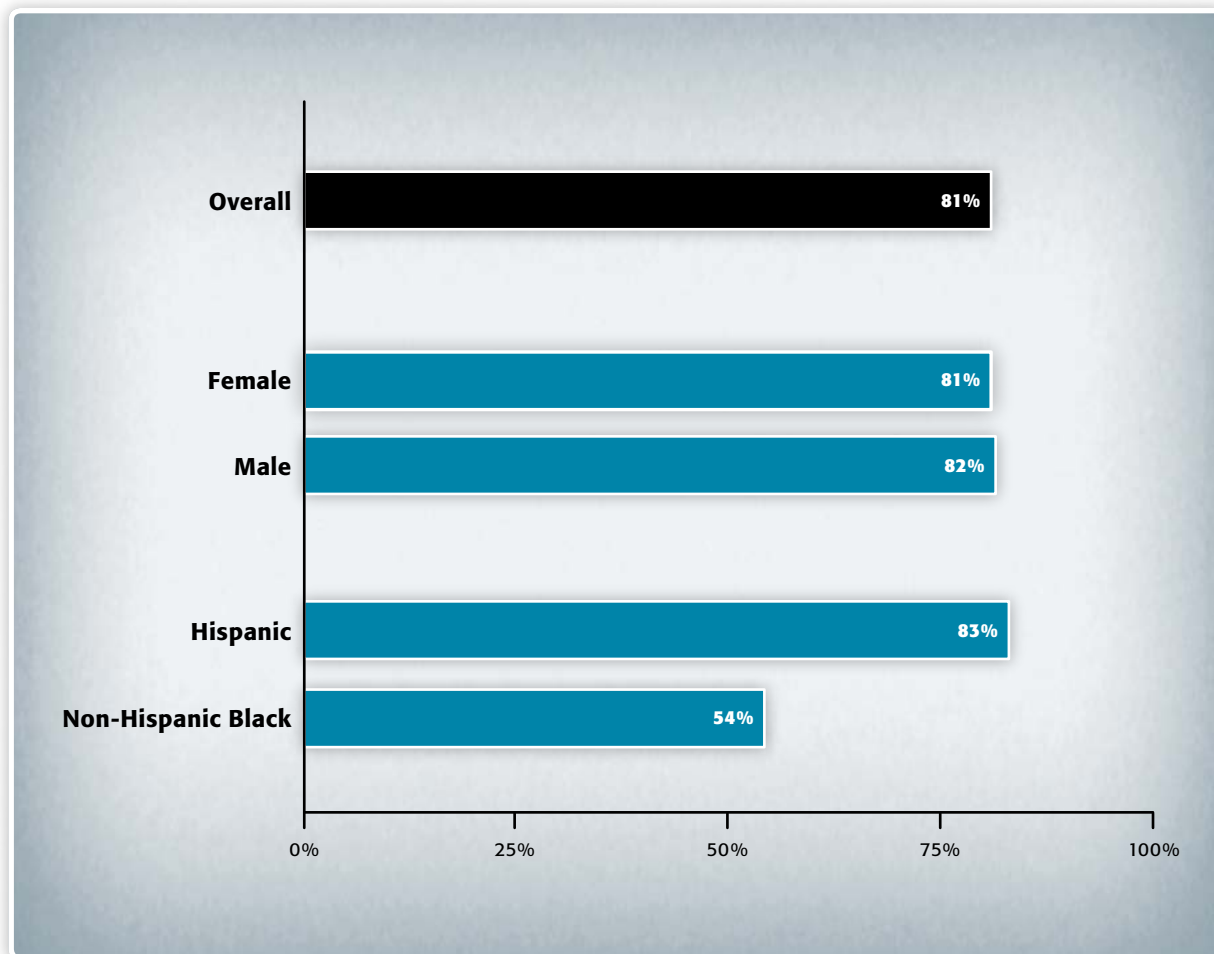
Percentage not active at least **60 minutes a day*** 6–7 days a week

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day.

In New Brunswick

- 81% of 3–18 year olds do not meet this recommendation.
- 83% of Hispanic children are not active at least 60 minutes a day 6–7 days a week, compared to 54% of non-Hispanic black children.
- There is little variation by gender.

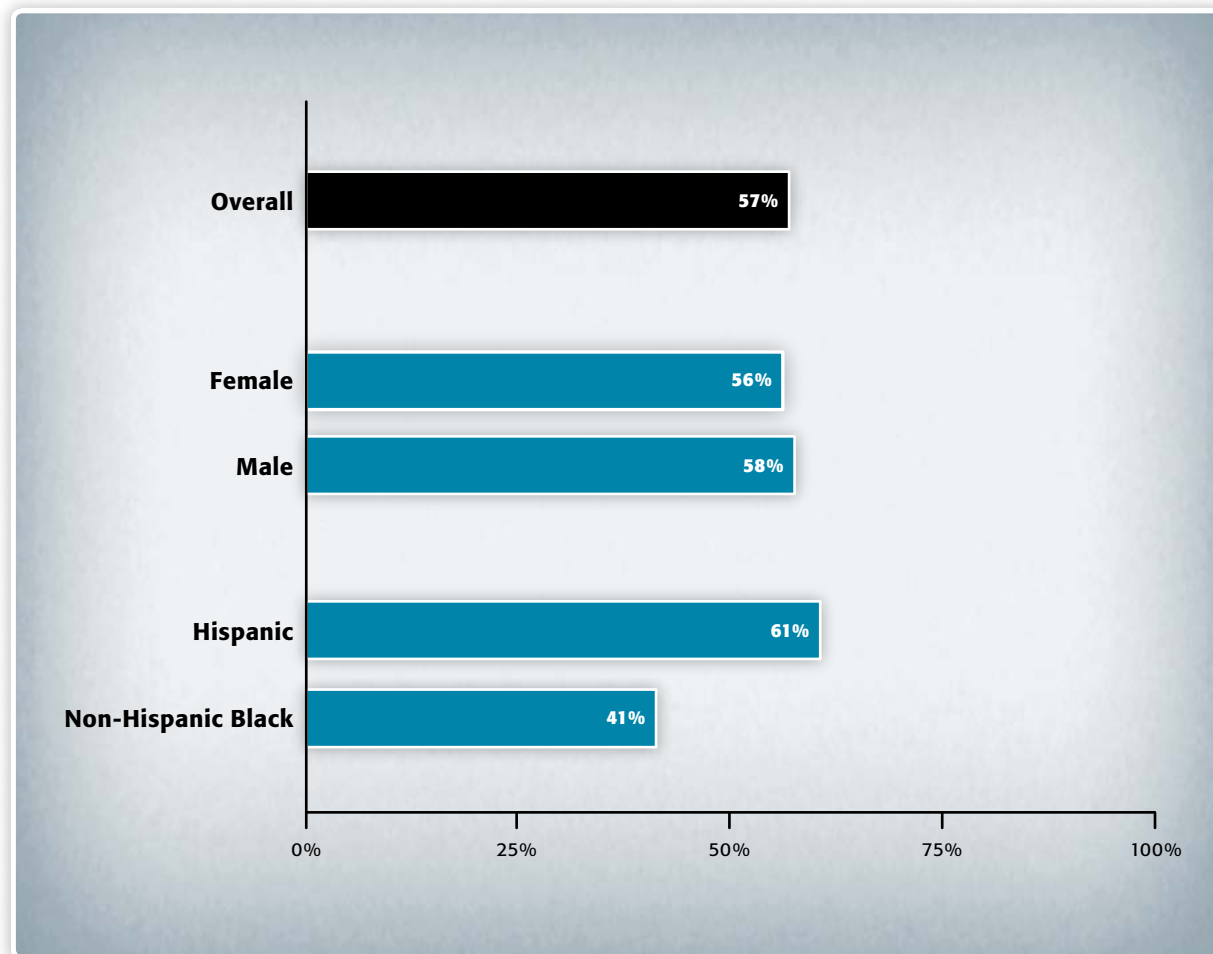
* Includes adding up all of the times child spent in any kind of physical activity that increased heart rate and made child breathe hard.



*Percentage not active at least **30 minutes a day*** 6–7 days a week*

- Overall, 57% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick are not active at least 30 minutes a day 6–7 days a week.
- 61% of Hispanic children are not active at least 30 minutes a day 6–7 days a week, compared to 41% of non-Hispanic black children.
- There is little variation by gender.

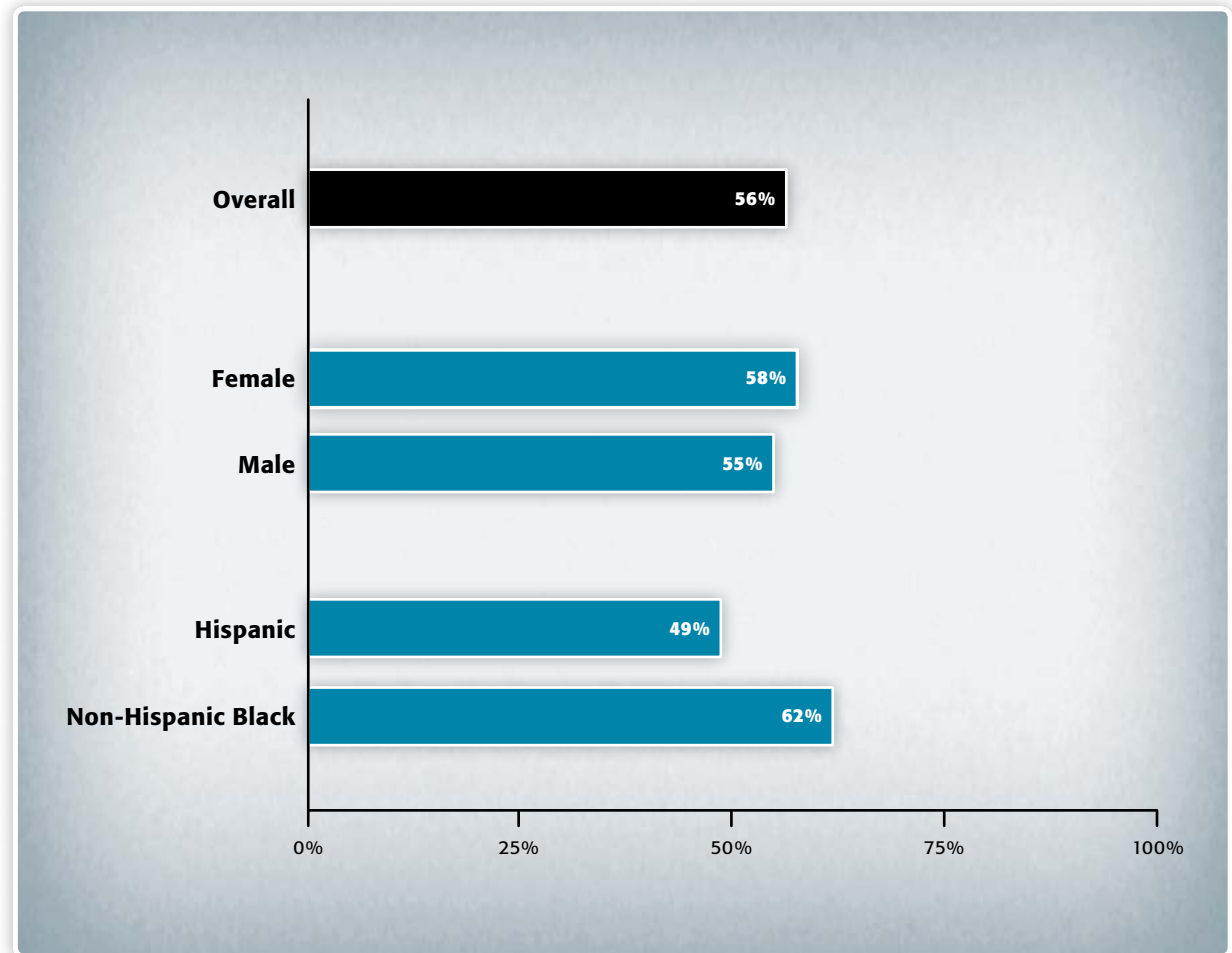
* Includes adding up all the times child spent in any kind of physical activity that increased heart rate and made child breathe hard.



Percentage who never walk, bike, or skateboard to school*

- Overall, 56% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick never walk, bike, or skateboard to school.
- 62% of non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick never walk, bike, or skateboard to school, compared to 49% of Hispanic children.
- There is little variation by gender.

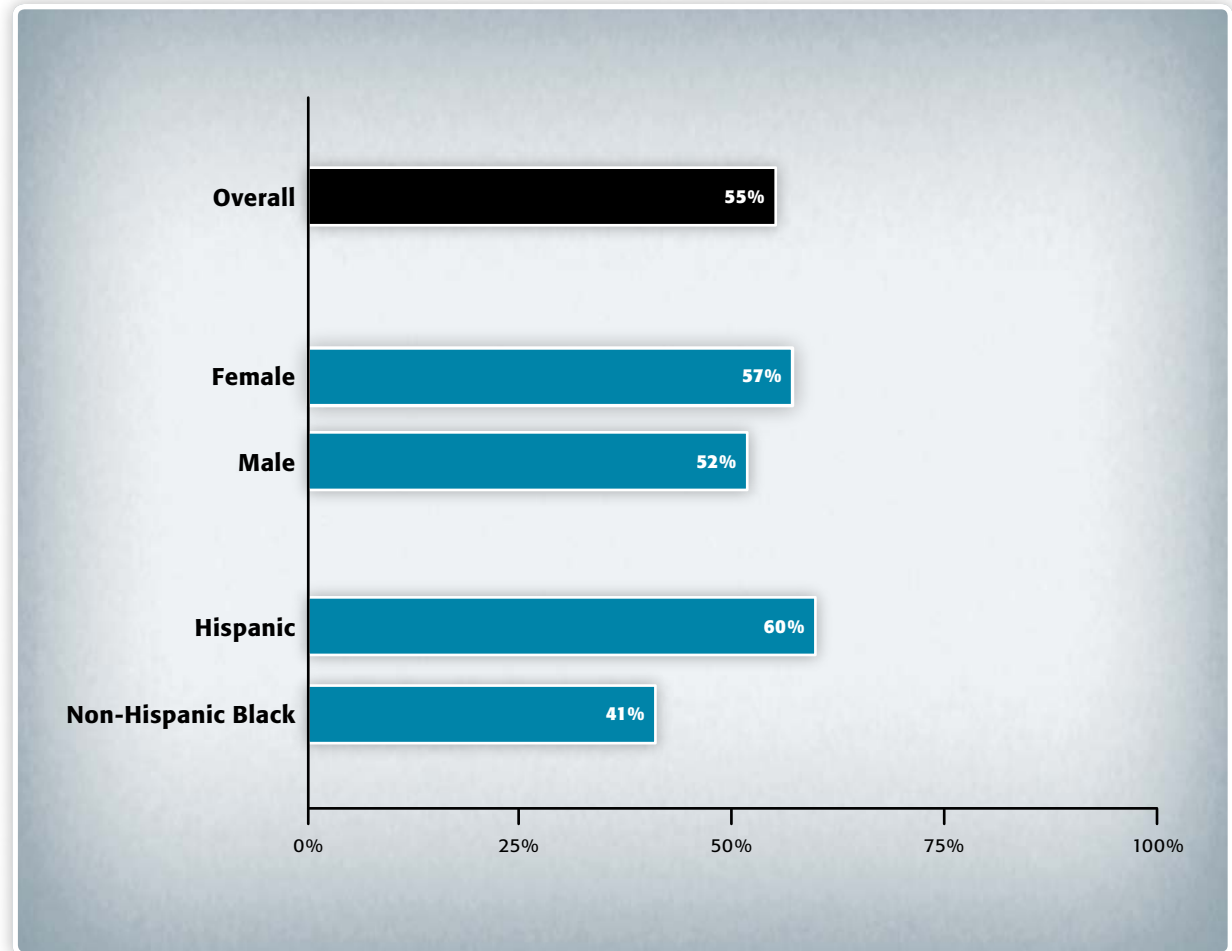
* Does not include motor scooters. School refers to school, kindergarten, pre-school, or day-care.



Percentage who get physical activity at school 2 or fewer days per week*

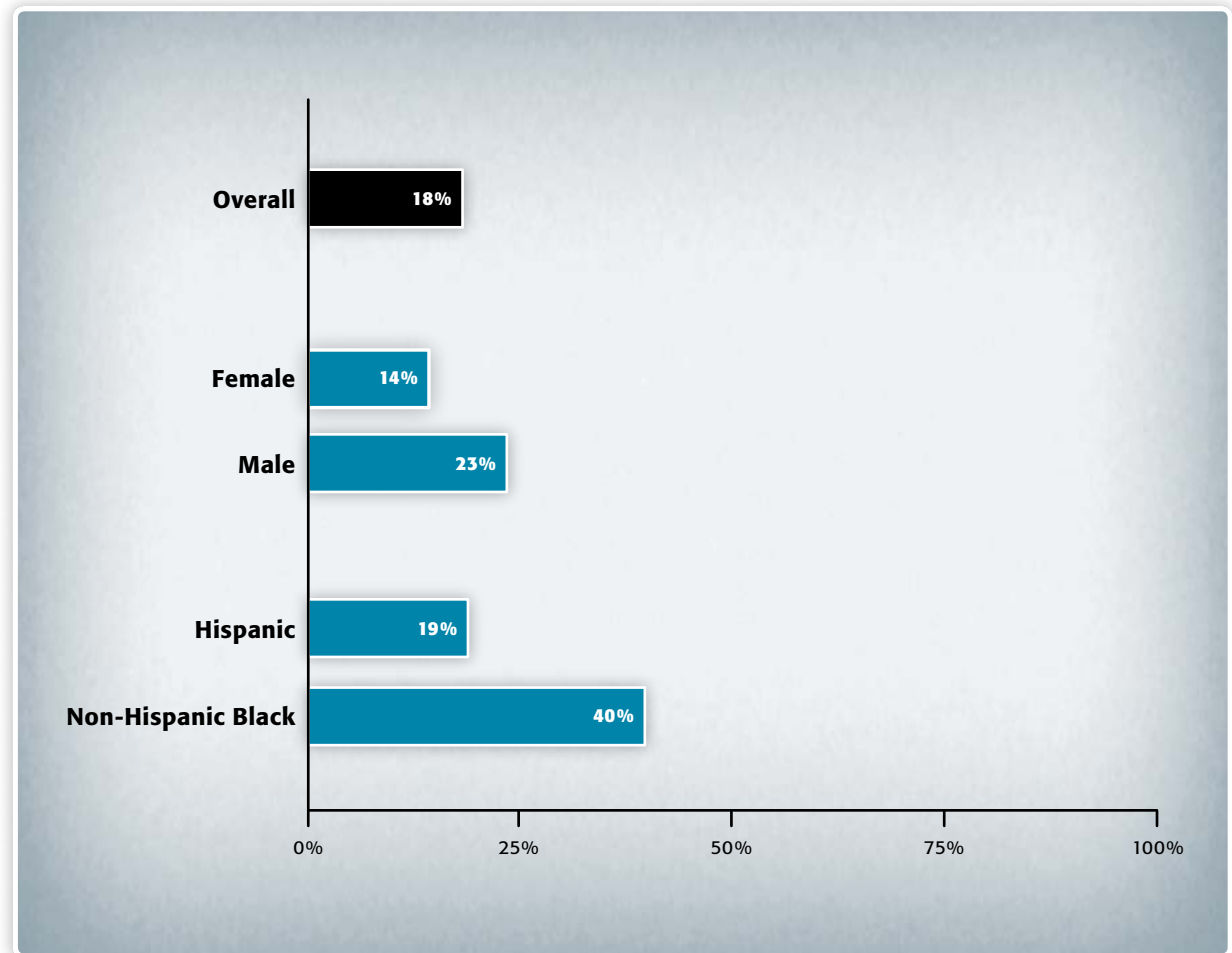
- Overall, 55% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick have only 2 or fewer days of some type of physical activity per week at school.
- Hispanic children get less physical activity at school than non-Hispanic black children (60% vs. 41%).
- Physical activity at school varies little by gender.

* Includes any type of physical activity or exercise at school (e.g., PE class, recess). School refers to school, kindergarten, pre-school, or day-care.



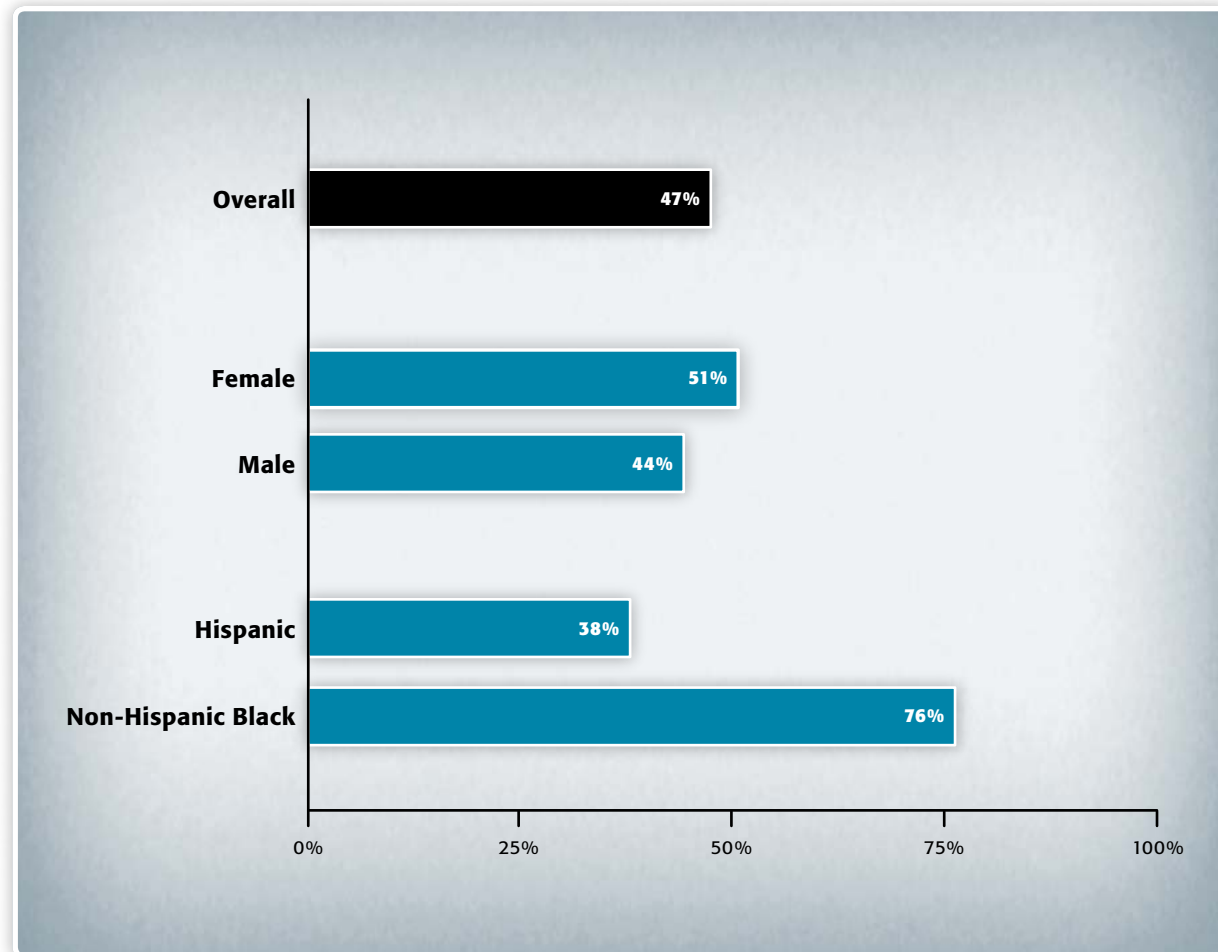
*Percentage who spend more than 2 hours a day on **weekdays** on TV, computer, or video games*

- Overall, 18% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays outside of school watching TV, being on the computer (not including doing schoolwork), or playing video games.
- 40% of non-Hispanic black children spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays watching TV, being on the computer, or playing video games, compared to 19% of Hispanic children.



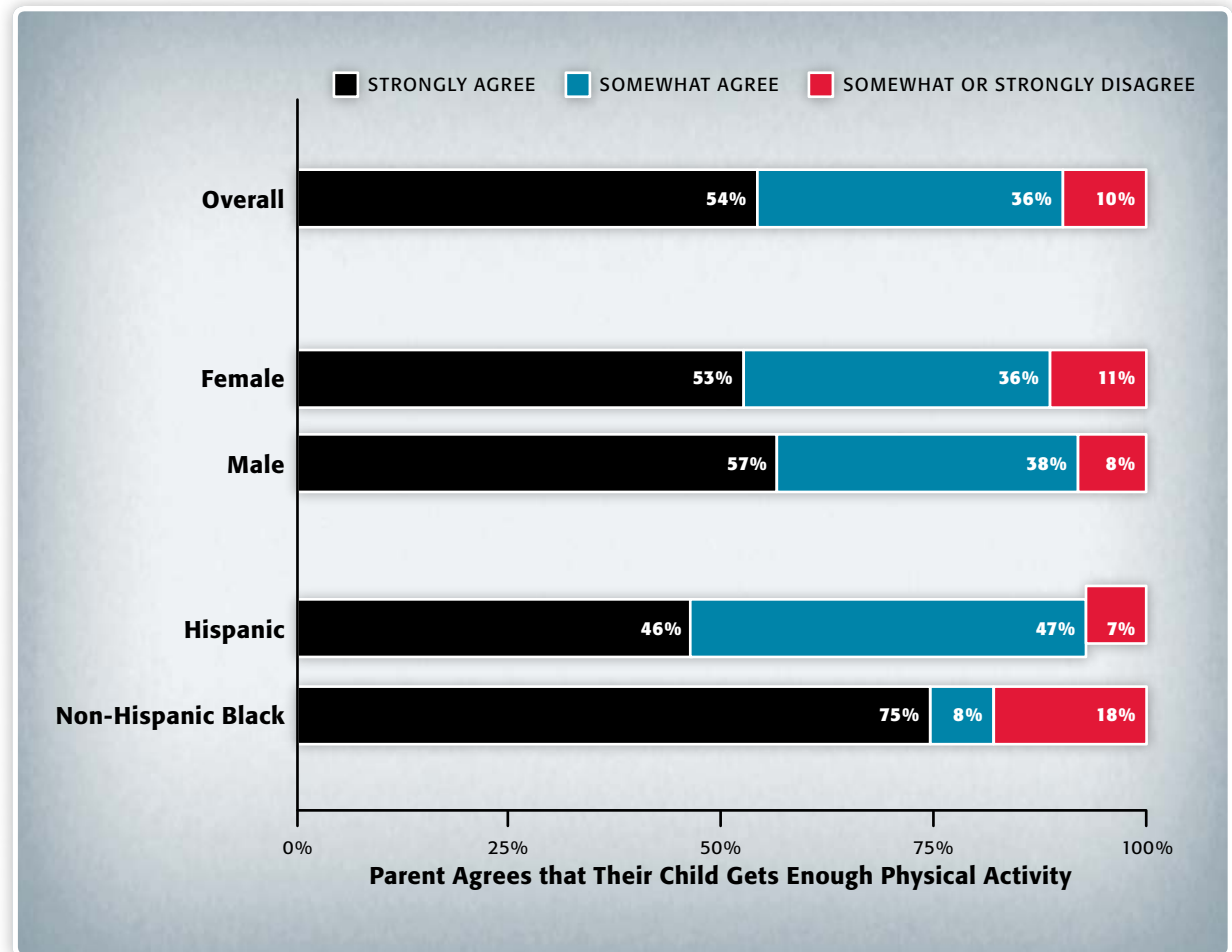
*Percentage who spend more than 2 hours a day on **weekend days** on TV, computer, or video games*

- Overall, 47% of 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick spend more than 2 hours a day on weekend days watching TV, being on the computer (not including doing schoolwork), or playing video games.
- 76% of non-Hispanic black children spend more than 2 hours a day on weekdays watching TV, being on the computer, or playing video games, compared to 38% of Hispanic children.



Even though only 19% of New Brunswick children meet the recommended level of physical activity, 90% of parents think their children get enough physical activity

- Overall, 90% of parents strongly agree or somewhat agree that, on the whole, their child gets enough physical activity.
- 93% of parents of Hispanic children strongly agree that their children get enough physical activity, compared to 82% of parents of non-Hispanic black children.
- There is little variation by gender.



NOTE: Bar totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Key findings from physical activity behavior section

- Only 19% of the New Brunswick children ages 3–18 meet the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Hispanic children are even less likely to meet these recommendations. However, 90% of parents think that their children get enough physical activity.
- Non-Hispanic black children are less likely to walk, bike, etc., to school, but Hispanic children are less likely to get physical activity at school.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children spend no more than two hours per day on entertainment media like television, computers, and video games. 18% of the children ages 3–18 years in New Brunswick spend more than two hours per day watching TV, and playing video or computer games during weekdays, and 47% do so on weekend days. This is more common among non-Hispanic black children.



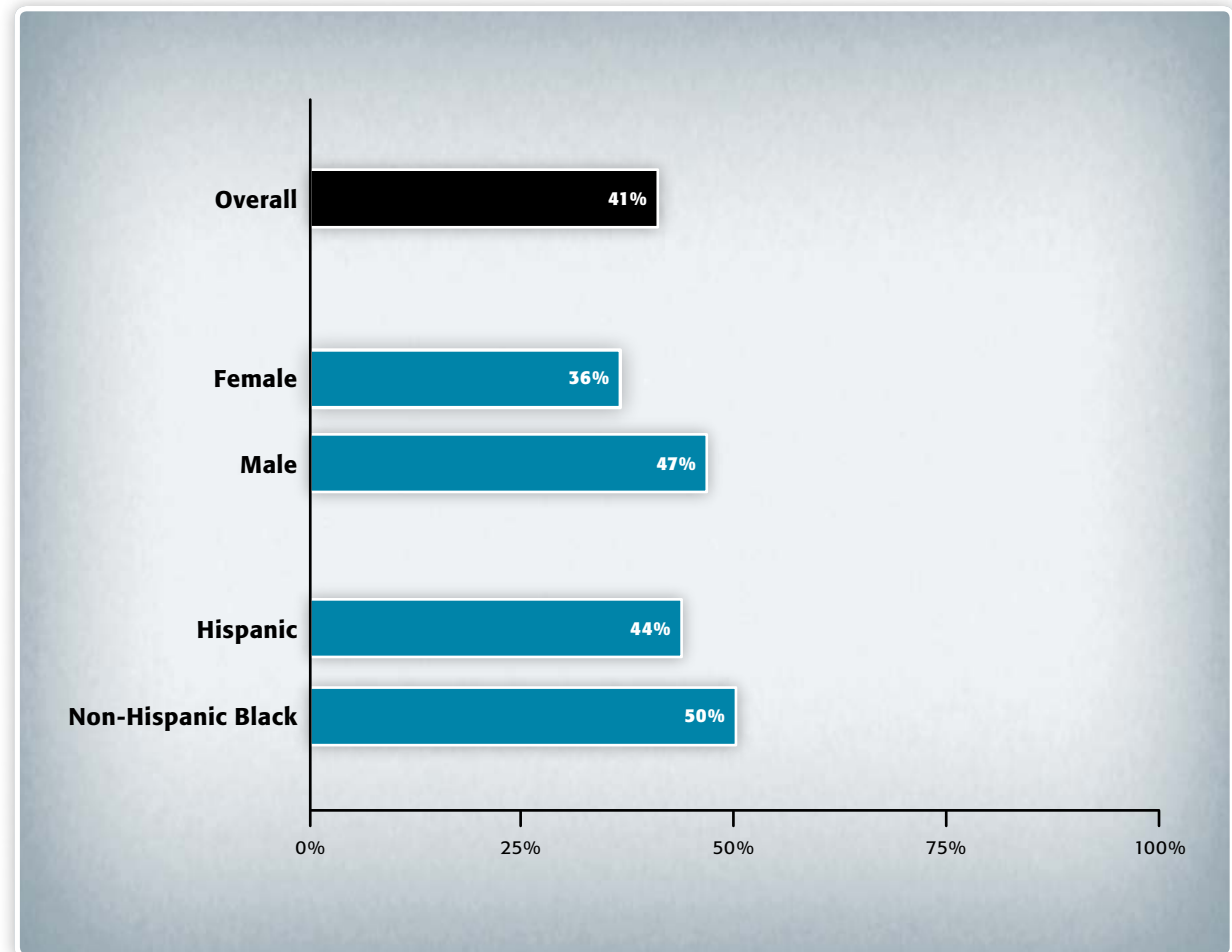
Physical Activity Environment

Charts in this section describe parents' perceptions of the physical activity environment as well as aspects that may serve as barriers to accessing opportunities for physical activity in their neighborhood.

Neighborhood is defined as the area within a 20 minute walk, a 5 minute drive, or about 1 mile in all directions around the respondent's home.

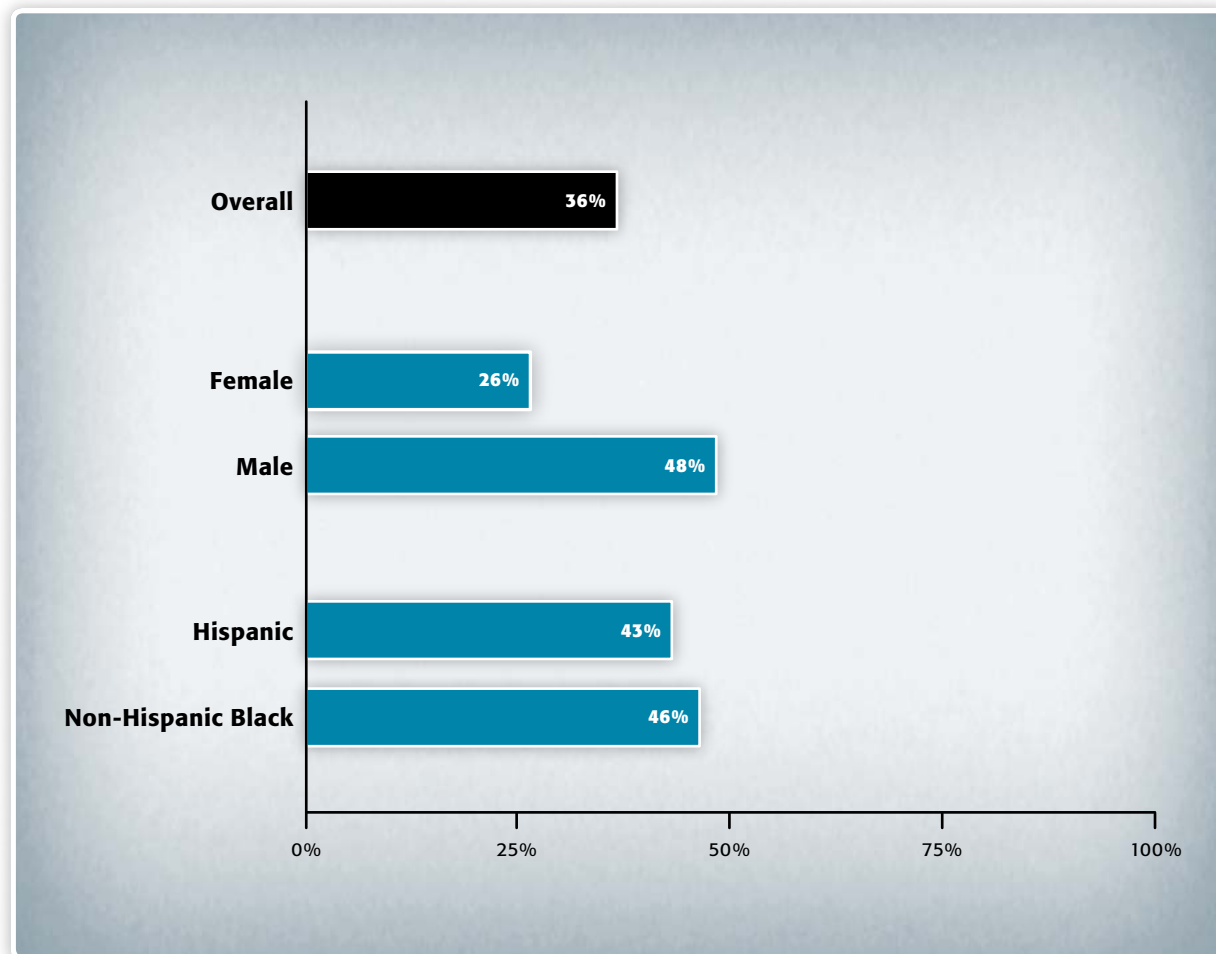
Percentage who say neighborhood is unsafe due to **traffic**

- Overall, 41% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 think their neighborhoods are somewhat or very unsafe due to traffic.
- 47% of parents of New Brunswick boys think their neighborhoods are unsafe due to traffic, compared to 36% of parents of girls.
- There is little variation by race/ethnicity.



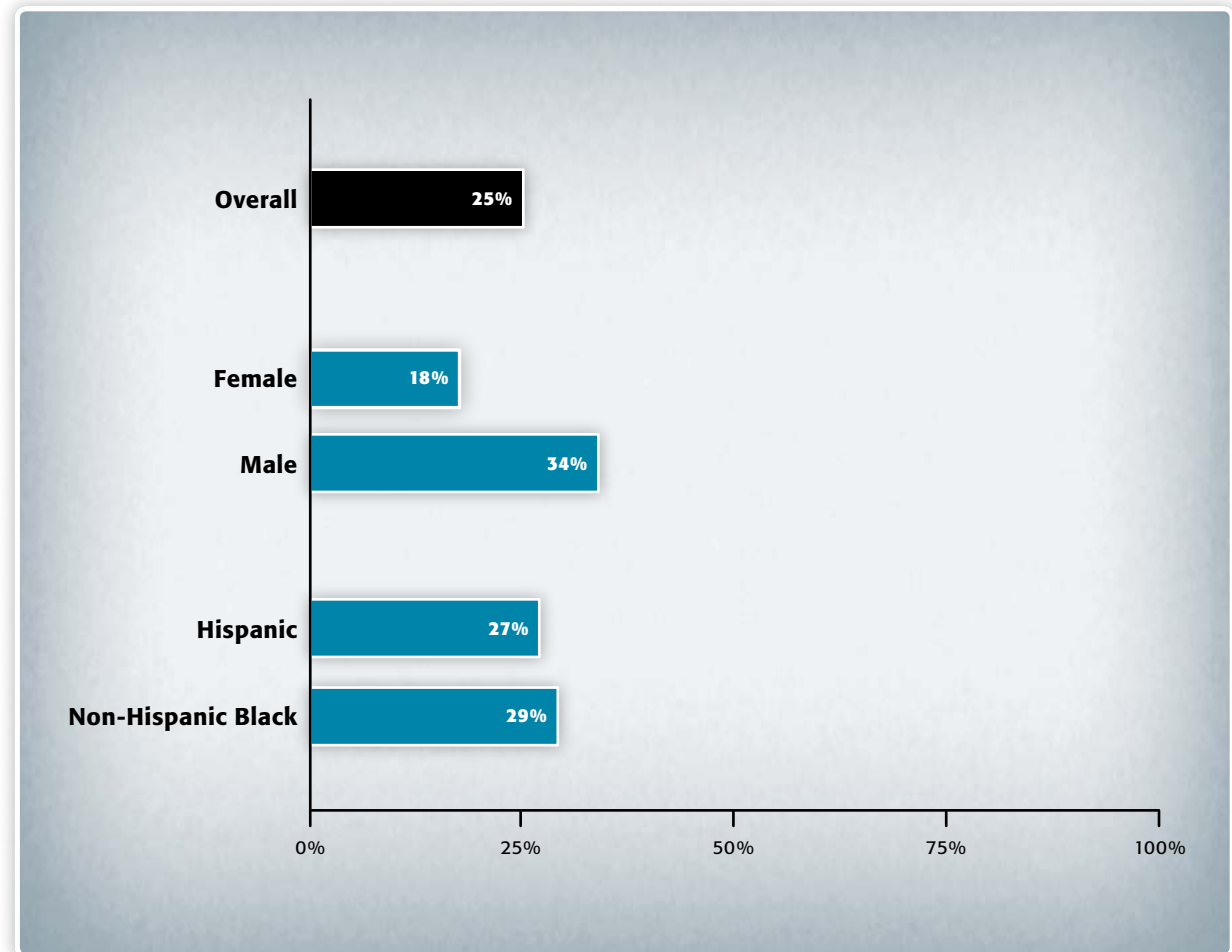
Percentage who say neighborhood is unsafe due to **criminal activity**

- Overall, 36% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 think their neighborhoods are somewhat or very unsafe due to criminal activity.
- 48% of parents of New Brunswick boys think their neighborhoods are unsafe due to criminal activity, compared to 26% of parents of girls.
- There is little variation by race/ethnicity.



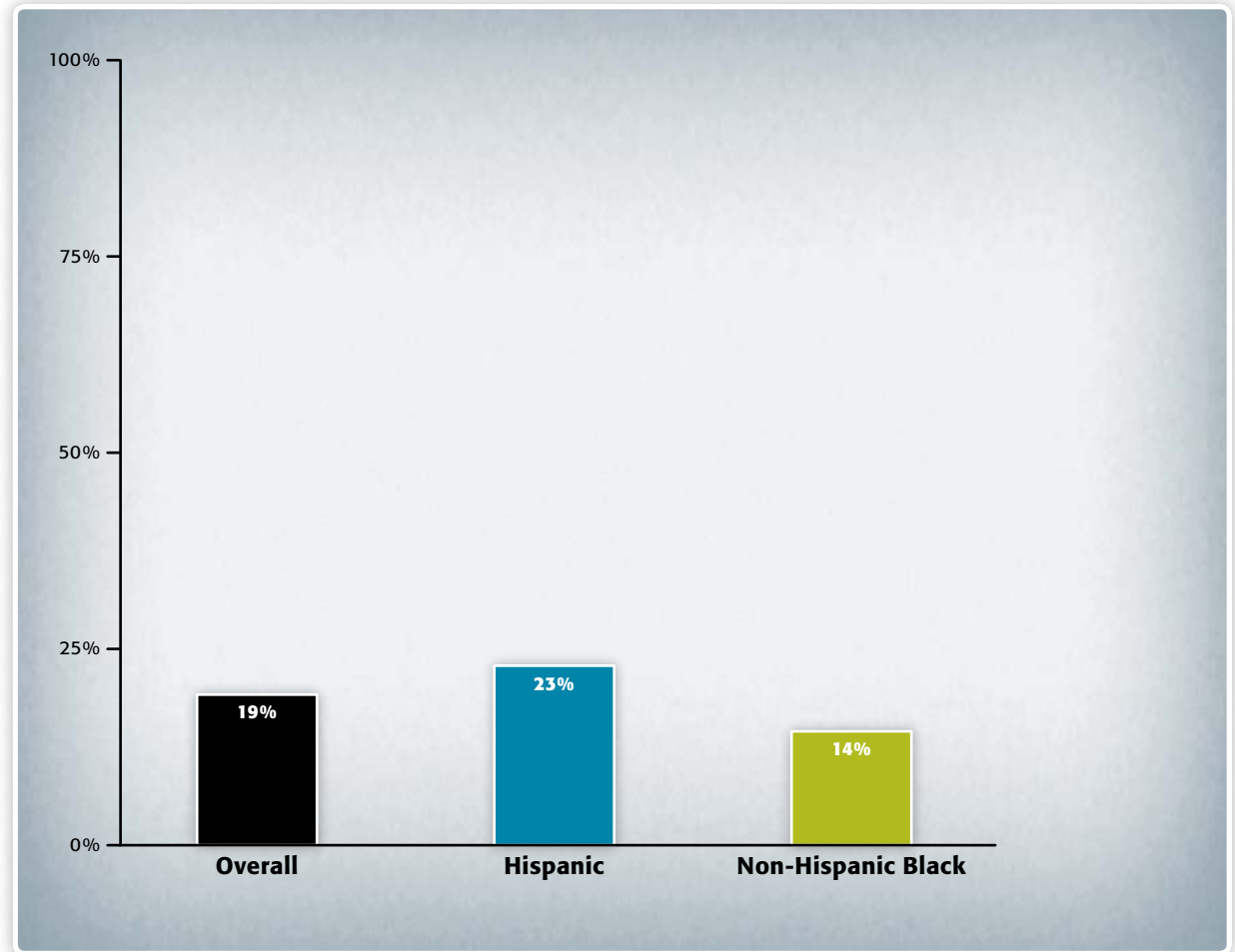
Percentage who say neighborhood is unpleasant for walking, running, biking, or playing

- Overall, 25% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 think their neighborhoods are somewhat or very unpleasant for walking, playing, etc.
- 34% of parents of New Brunswick boys think their neighborhoods are unpleasant, compared to 18% of parents of girls.
- There is little variation by race/ethnicity.



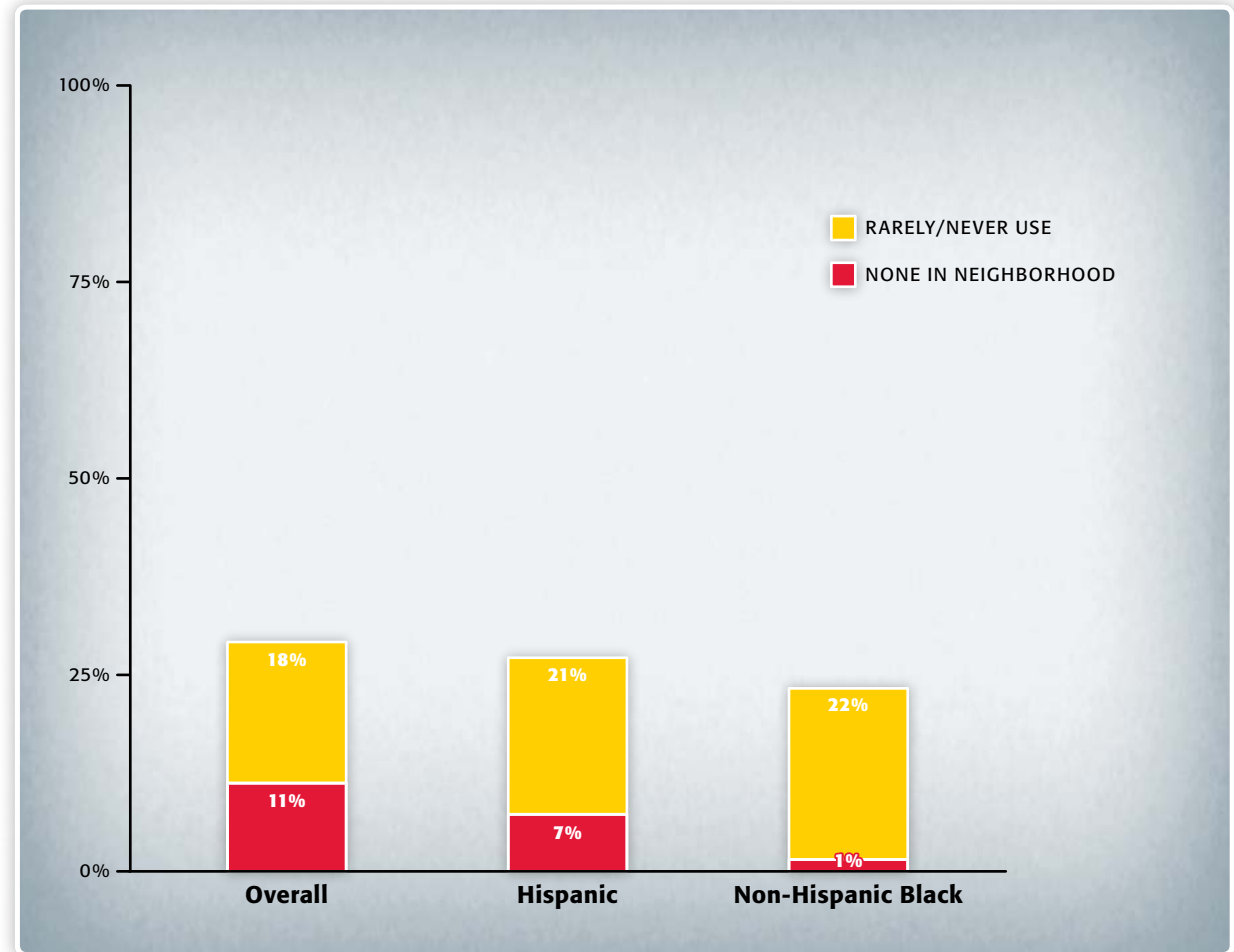
Percentage who have no working street lights in most of neighborhood

- Overall, 19% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that they do not have working street lights in most of their neighborhood.



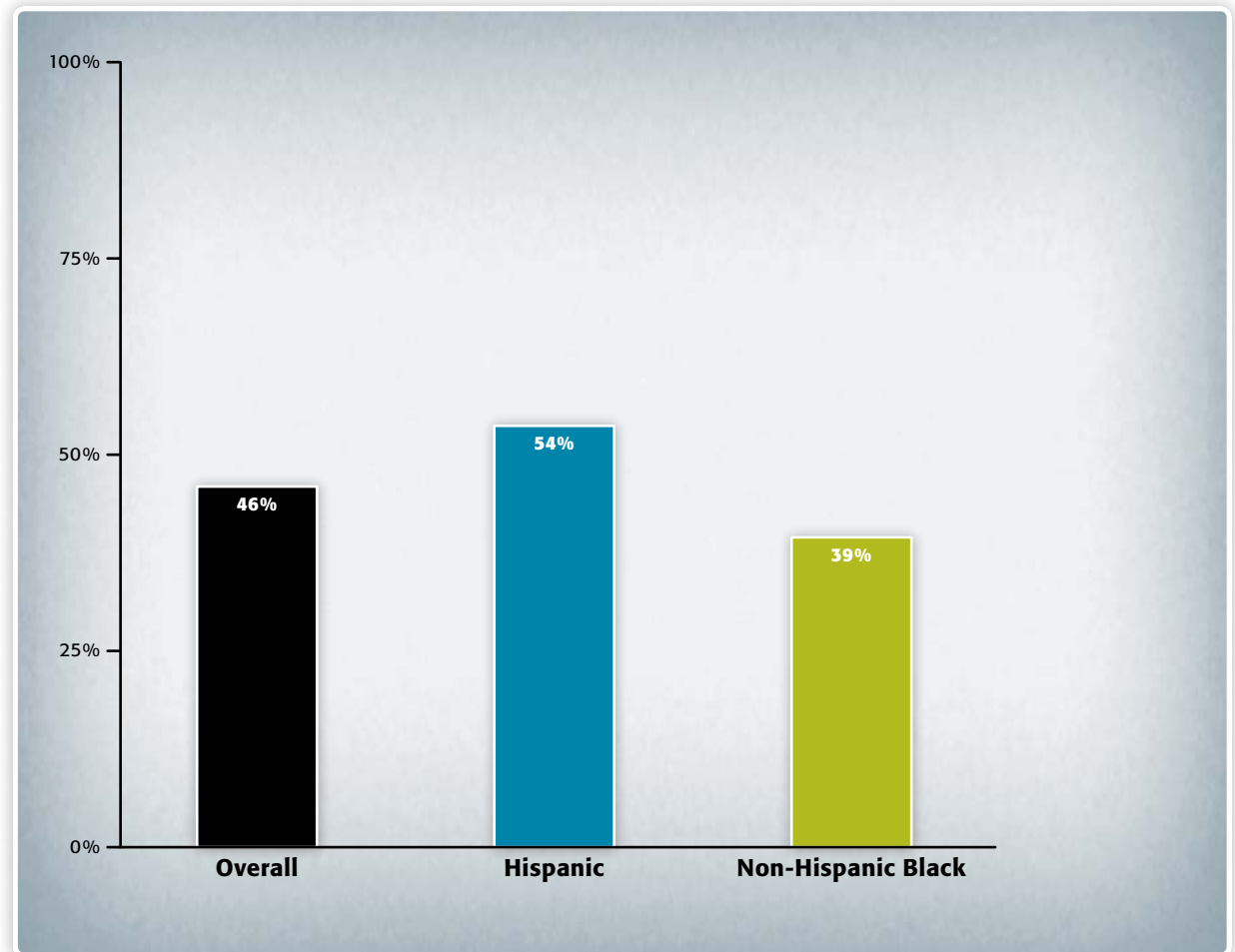
*Percentage of children with no **sidewalks** in neighborhood or who rarely/never use sidewalks in neighborhood to walk, run, bike, or play*

- Most 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick live in neighborhoods with sidewalks, but about a fifth of the children rarely or never use sidewalks in their neighborhood to run, bike, or play.
- This varies little by race/ethnicity.



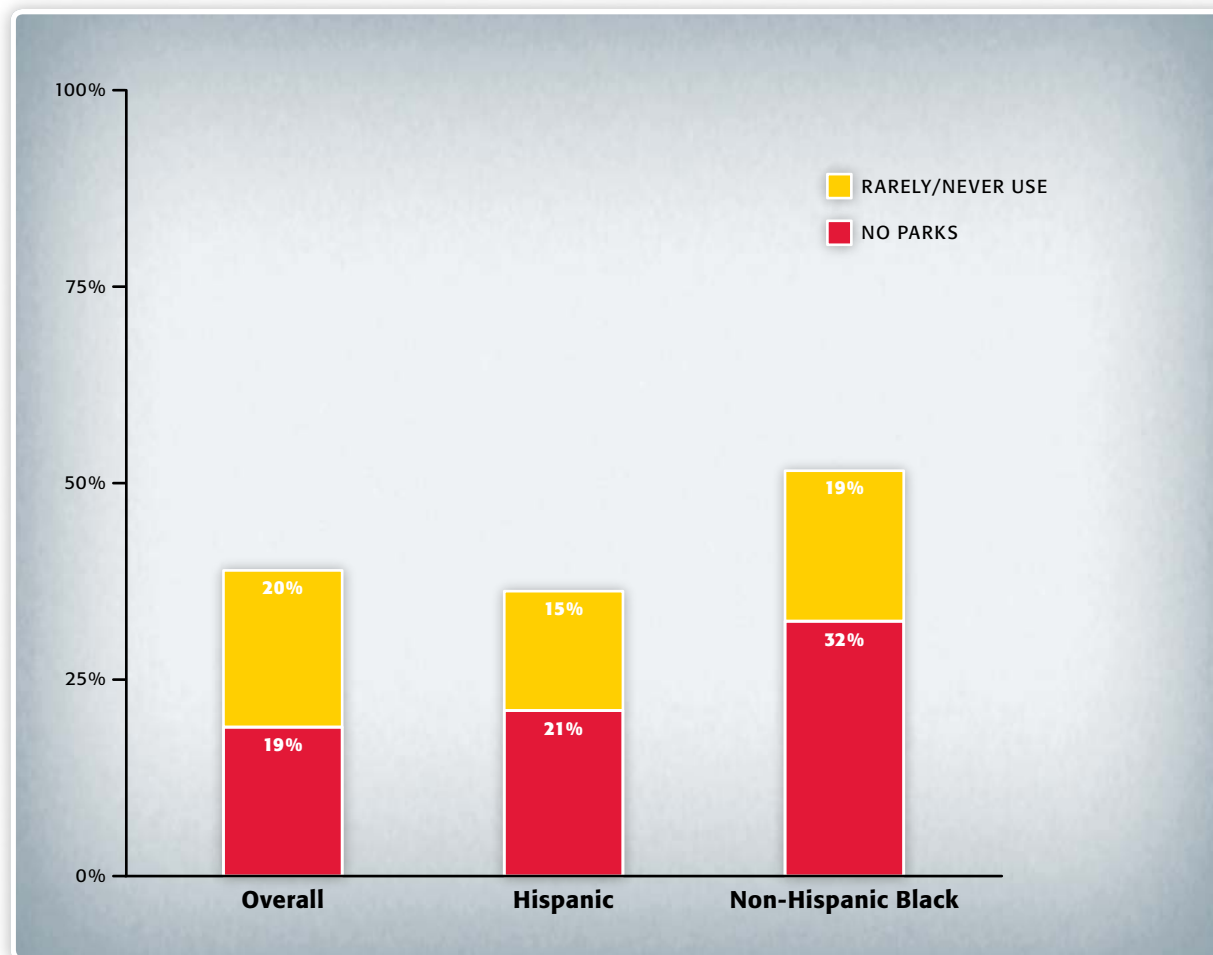
Percentage whose neighborhood sidewalks are in poor condition

- Overall, 46% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the sidewalks in their neighborhood are not in good condition.
- Parents of Hispanic children are more likely to report that the sidewalks in their neighborhood are not in good condition (54%), compared to parents of non-Hispanic black children (39%).



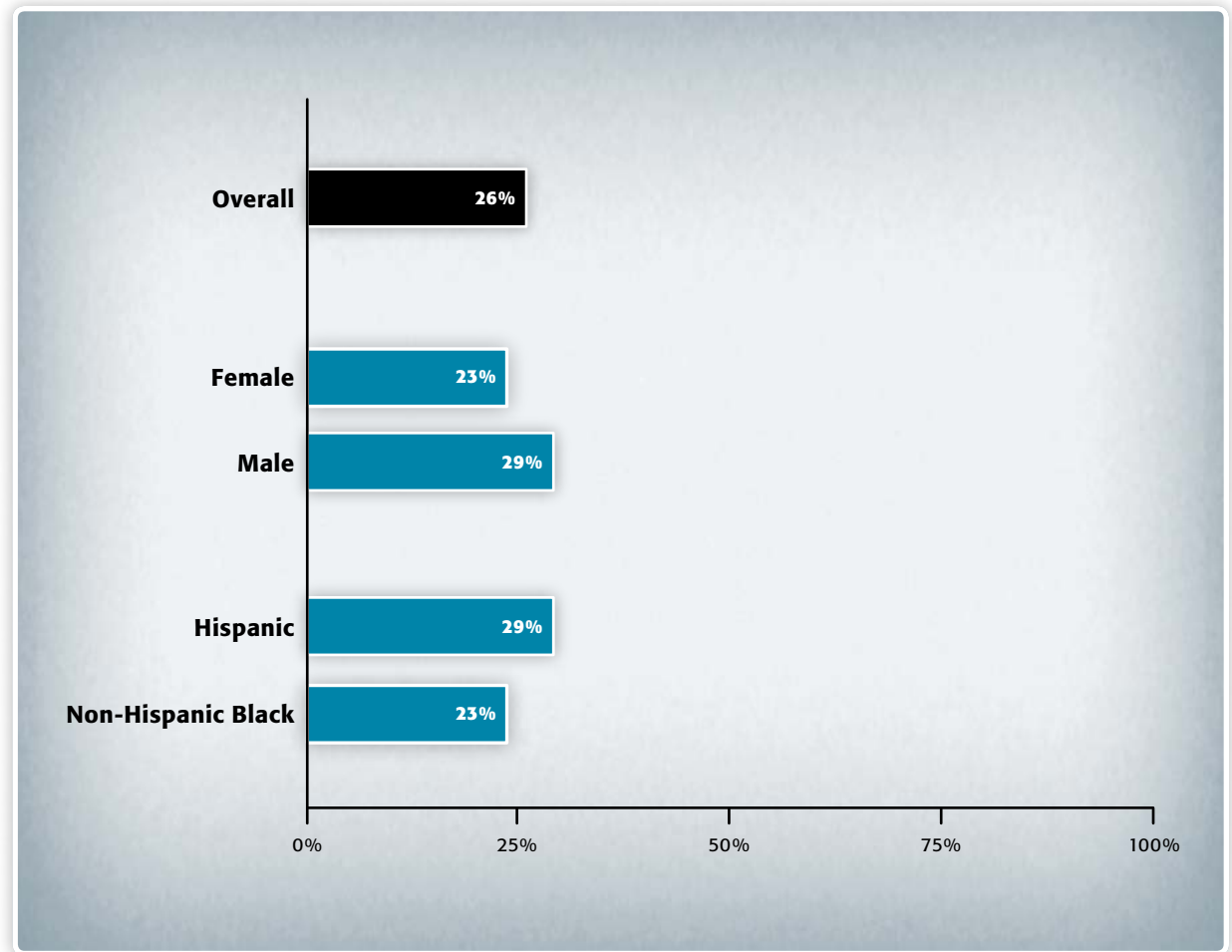
*Percentage of children with no **parks** in neighborhood or who rarely/never use parks to walk, run, bike, or play*

- 32% of non-Hispanic black children live in neighborhoods without parks, compared to 21% of Hispanic children.
- Use of parks varies little by race/ethnicity.



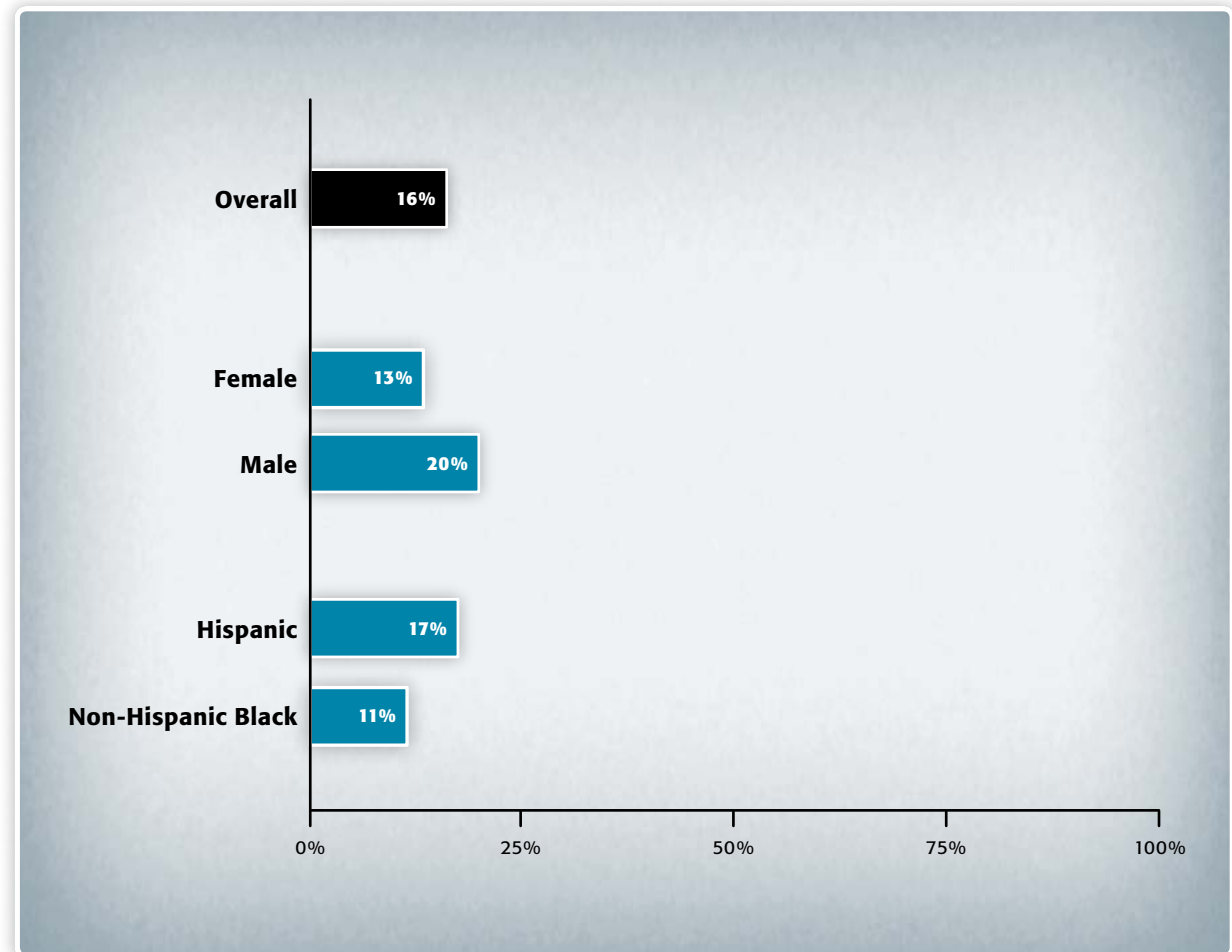
Percentage who report neighborhood parks are unsafe due to criminal activity

- Overall, 26% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the parks in their neighborhood are unsafe due to criminal activity.
- There is little variation by gender or race/ethnicity.



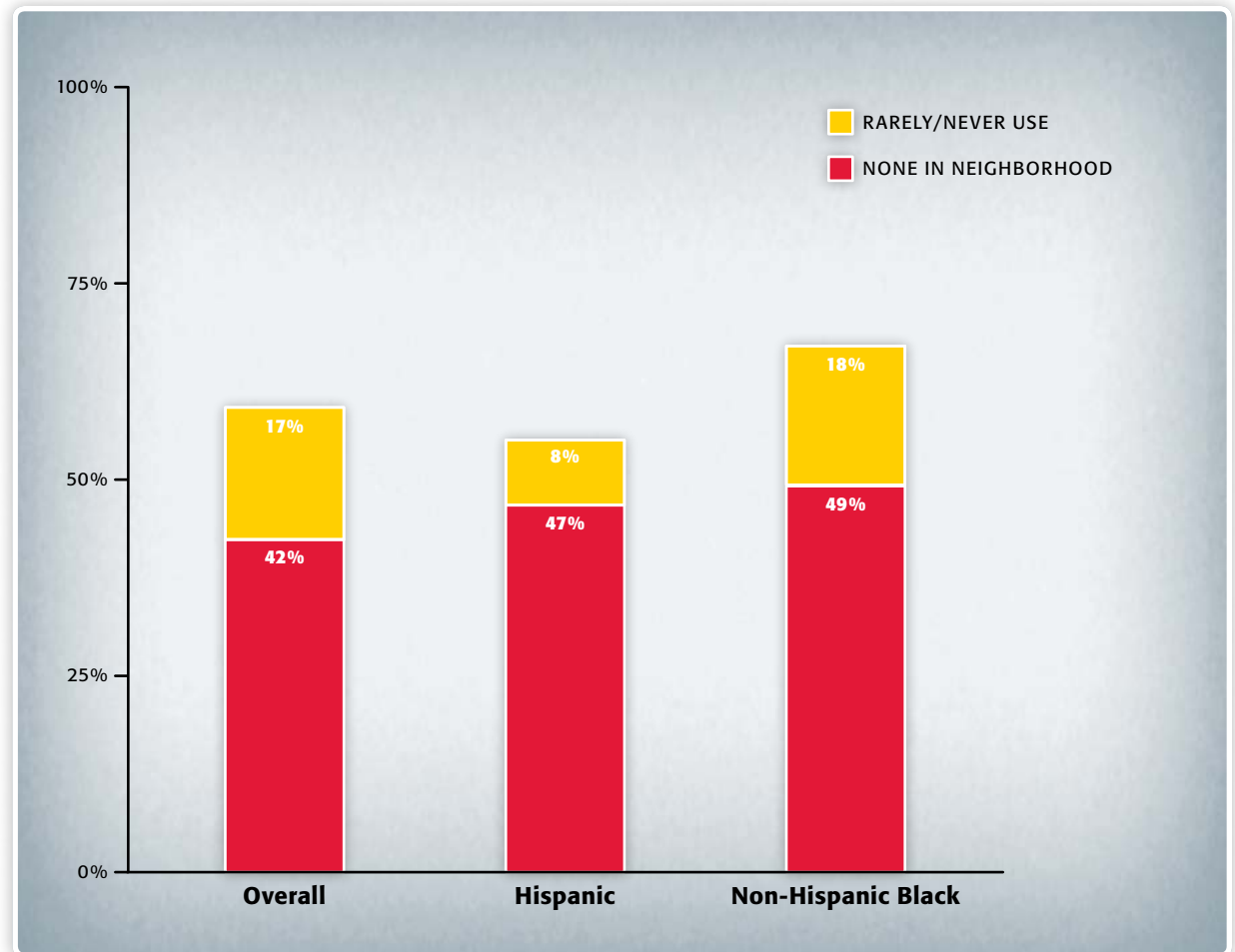
Percentage who say neighborhood parks are unpleasant

- Overall, 16% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the parks in their neighborhood are unpleasant.
- There is little variation by race/ethnicity.



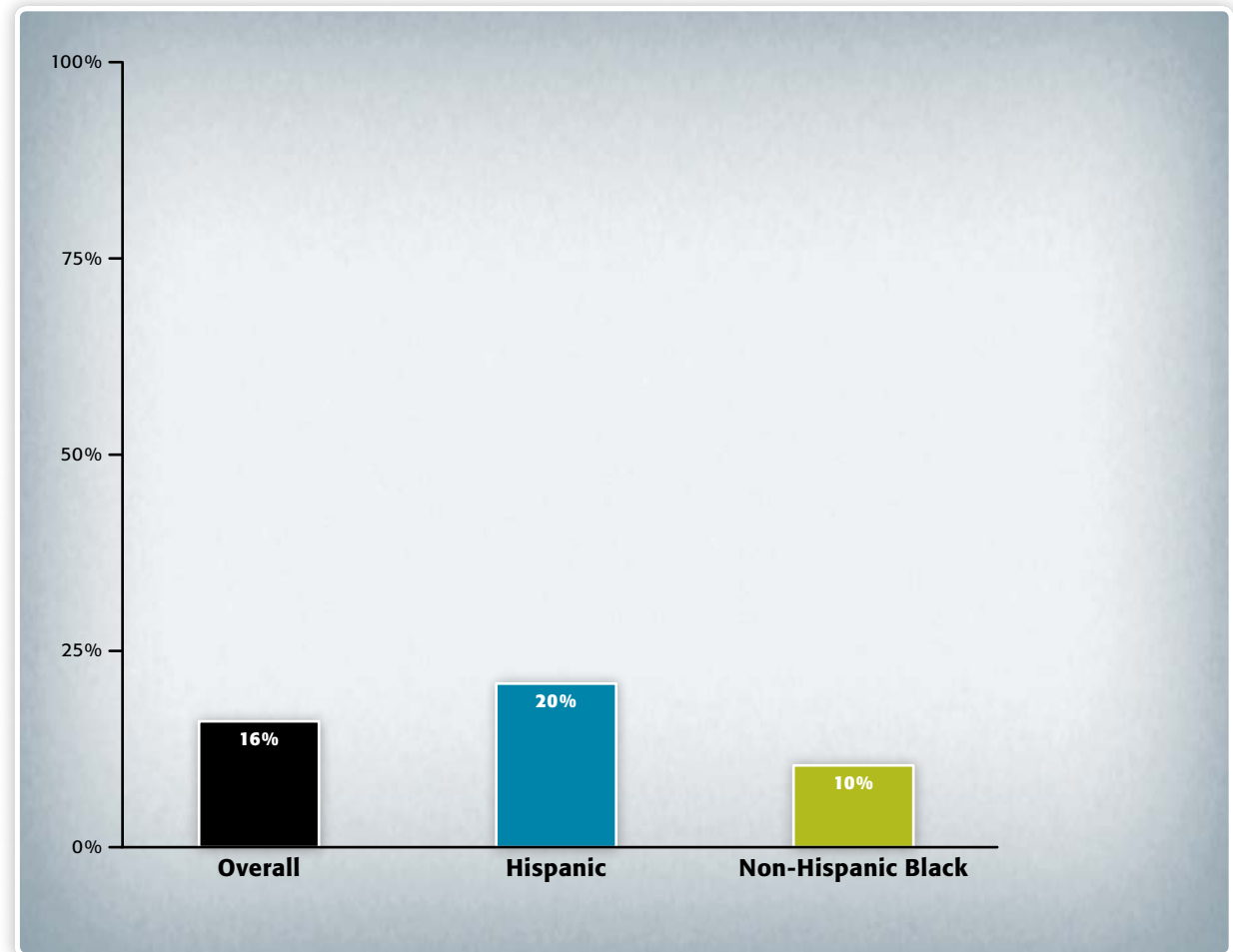
*Percentage of children with no **exercise facilities** in neighborhood or who rarely/never use exercise facilities*

- Almost half of Hispanic and non-Hispanic black 3–18 year old children in New Brunswick live in neighborhoods without indoor or outdoor exercise facilities.
- Non-Hispanic black children are less likely to use neighborhood exercise facilities than Hispanic children.



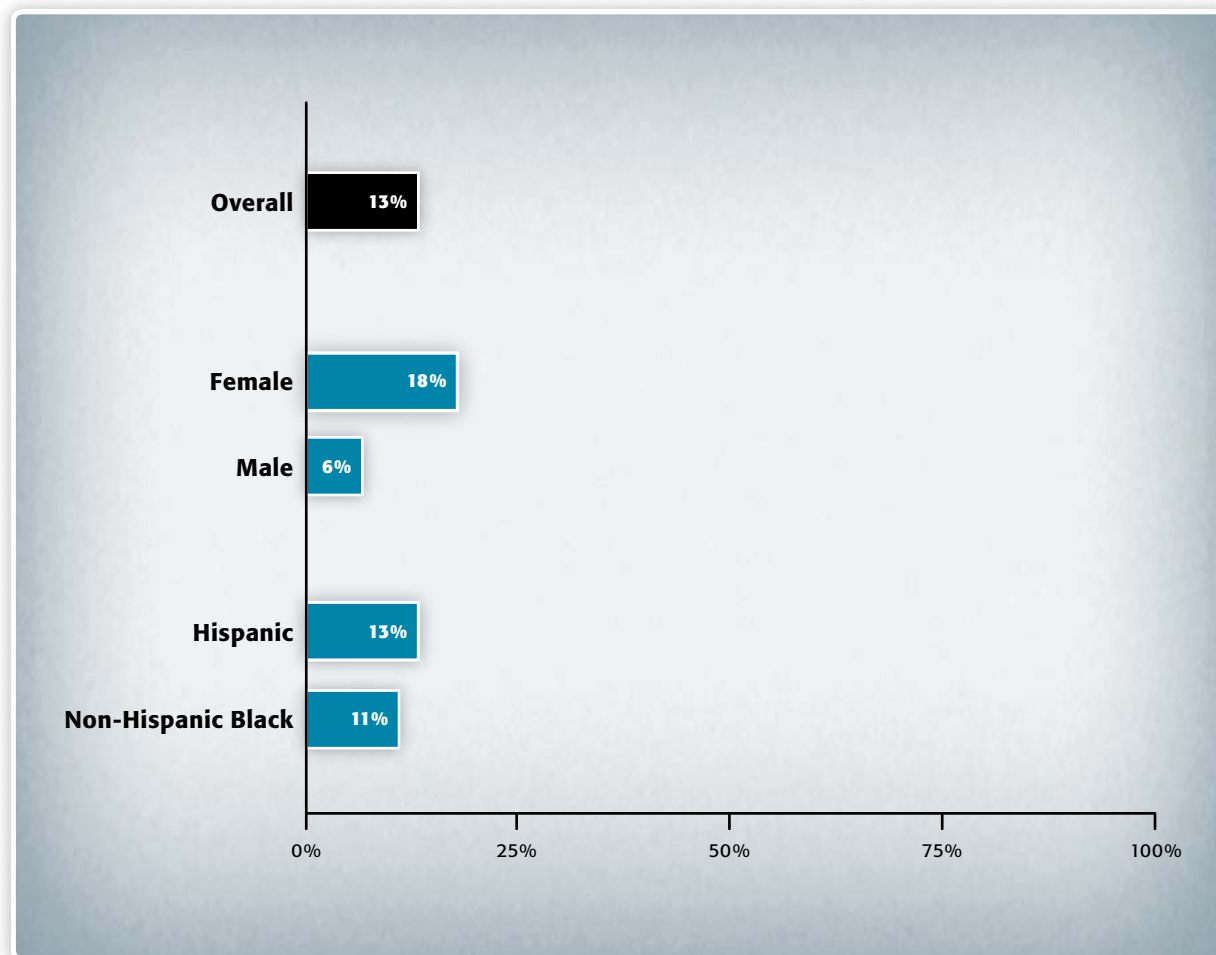
Percentage who say indoor/ outdoor exercise facilities in neighborhood have inconvenient hours

- Overall, 16% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood do not have convenient hours of operation.
- Parents of Hispanic children are twice as likely to report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood do not have convenient hours of operation, compared to parents of non-Hispanic black children.



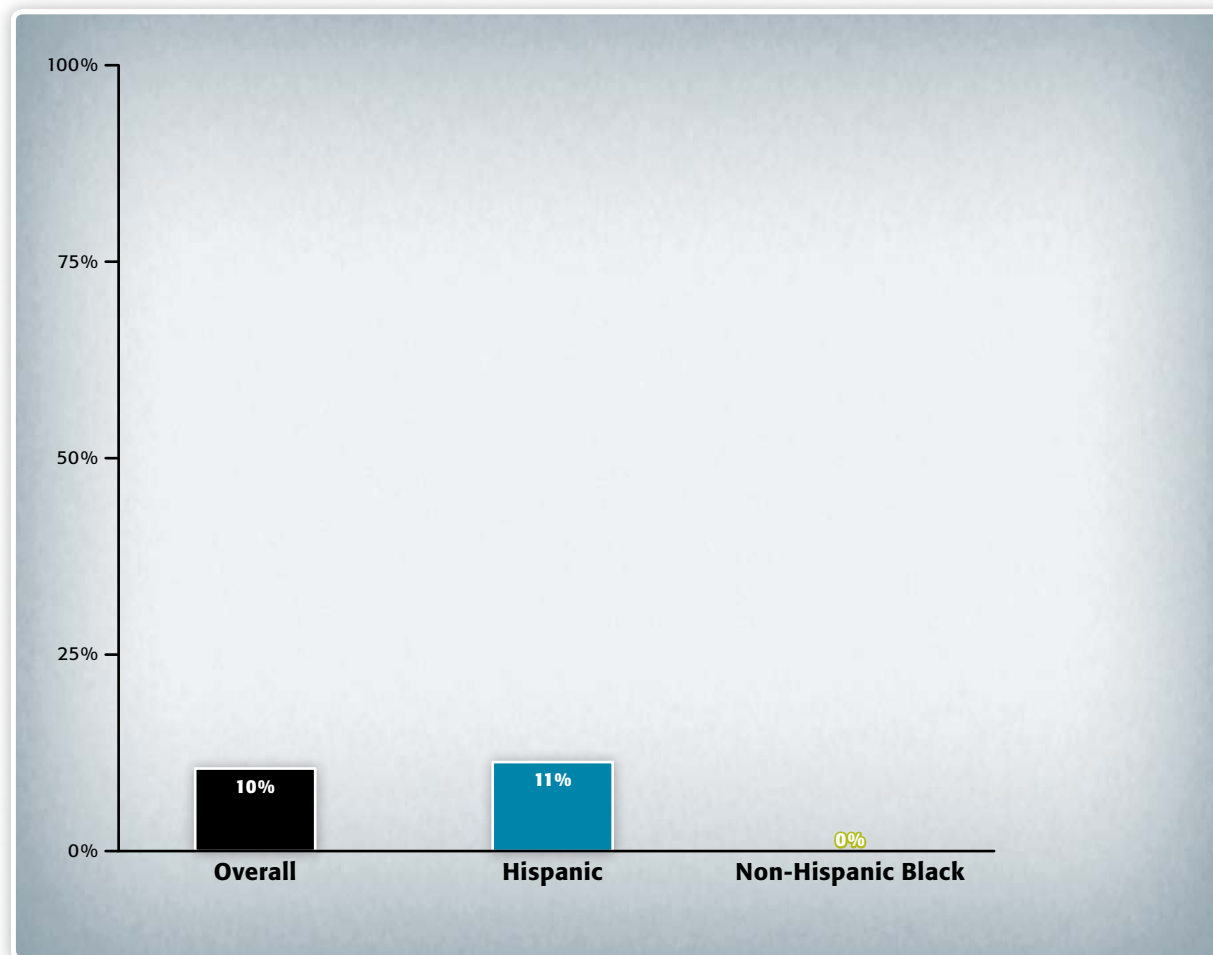
Percentage who report neighborhood exercise facilities are unsafe due to criminal activity

- Overall, 13% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are unsafe due to criminal activity.
- Parents of girls in New Brunswick are more likely to report unsafe indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood (18%), compared to parents of boys (6%).
- This varies little by race/ethnicity.



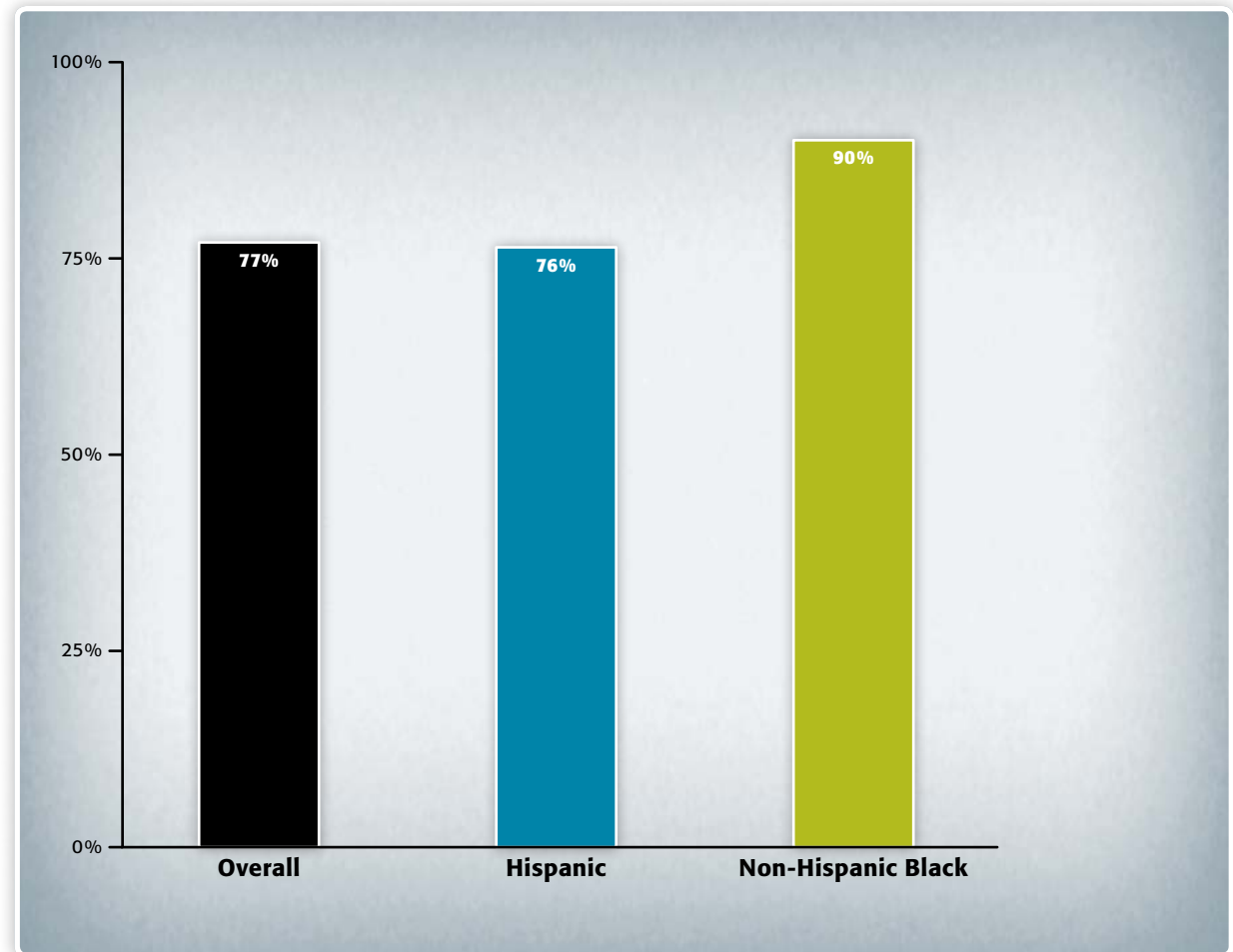
Percentage who say exercise facilities in neighborhood are in poor condition

- Overall, 10% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are in poor condition.
- None of the parents of non-Hispanic black children report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are in poor condition compared to 11% of the parents of Hispanic children.



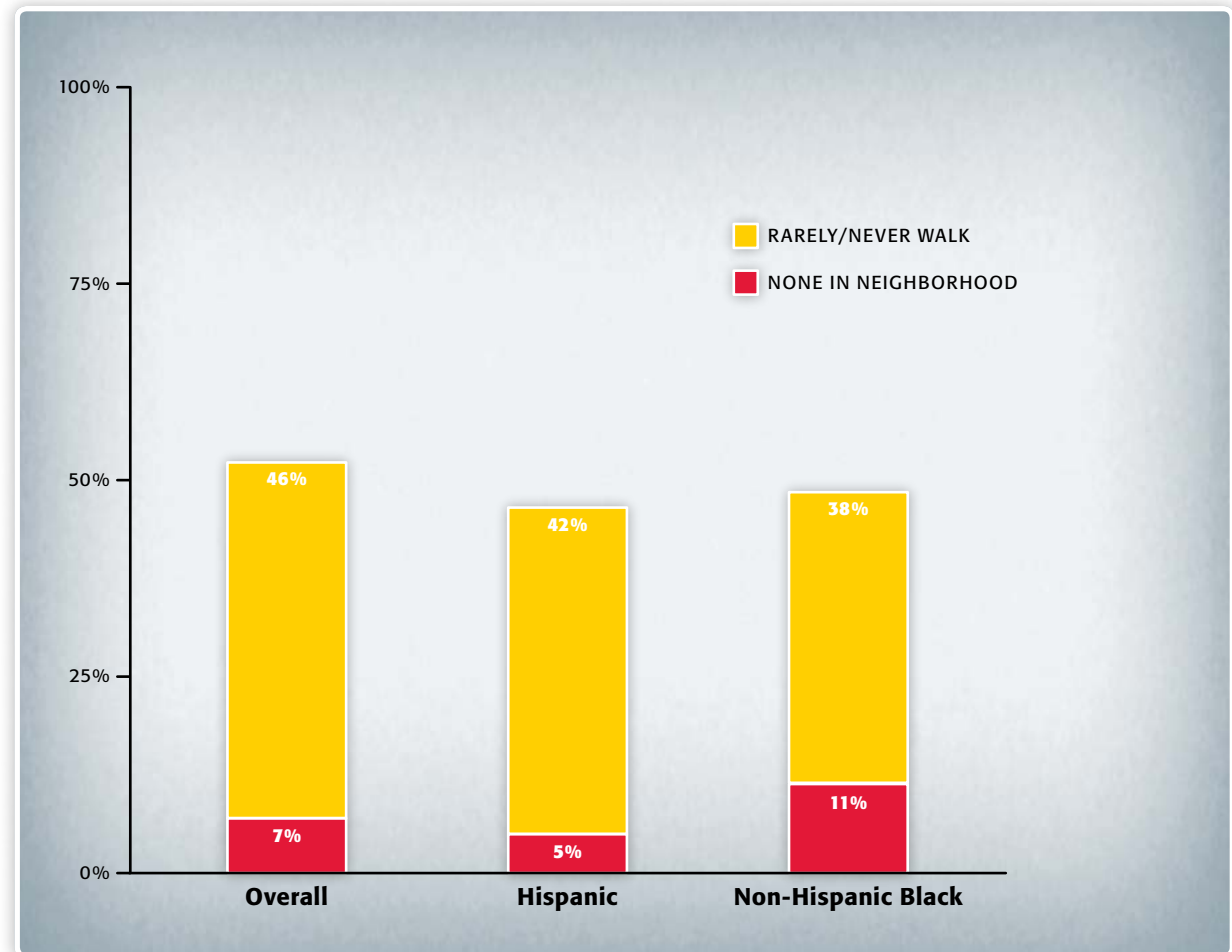
Percentage who say exercise facilities are free

- Overall, 77% of New Brunswick parents of children ages 3–18 report that the indoor or outdoor exercise facilities in their neighborhood are free.
- Non-Hispanic black children are more likely to live in neighborhood with free exercise facilities (90%) compared to Hispanic children (76%).



Percentage reporting presence and use of walking destinations in neighborhood

- Though most New Brunswick children ages 3–18 live in neighborhoods that have places such as libraries, stores, or recreational facilities within walking distance, 46% of them rarely or never walk to these places, and this varies little by race/ethnicity.



NOTE: Includes walking alone or with someone else.

Key findings from physical activity environment section

- Large percentages of parents reported that criminal activity and traffic render several venues unsafe for physical activity, considerations that may limit their use by children.
- While most families live in neighborhoods with sidewalks, almost half feel that the sidewalks are in poor condition and almost one-fifth report that their children do not use sidewalks to walk, run, bike or play.
- 19%–32% of the parents report living in neighborhoods with no parks. In neighborhoods that have parks, one-fourth of parents feel that the parks are unsafe. About one-fifth report that their children do not use neighborhood parks for any type of physical activity.
- Nearly half of New Brunswick children ages 3–18 live in neighborhoods with no exercise facilities.
- In spite of living in neighborhoods that have walking destinations, about 40% of Hispanic and non-Hispanic black children in New Brunswick do not walk to such places.

Conclusions

Unhealthy diet and inadequate physical activity are widespread among New Brunswick children, calling for interventions that create environments and policies which help children improve their diets and level of physical activity. Most New Brunswick children do not meet the recommendations for vegetable consumption and those for physical activity. They are likely to frequently eat unhealthy foods (e.g., fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages), especially among non-Hispanic black children, and eat healthy foods less often (e.g., fruits and vegetables as snacks), especially among Hispanic children. They spend more time in sedentary activities and are less likely to walk or bike to school (particularly non-Hispanic black children) or be physically active at school (particularly Hispanic children).

Parental perceptions of food and physical activity environments suggest that interventions are needed to create additional opportunities for healthy food and physical activity in the neighborhoods and also to address barriers related to existing options. While a majority of parents shop at supermarkets or superstores, nearly a fourth of Hispanic parents shop at corner stores or bodegas for most of their food shopping. About half the parents report limited availability of fresh produce and low-fat items, and cost remains a major barrier for purchasing these items. Cost was the main reason why almost 40% of the parents surveyed do not shop in their neighborhood. Although many neighborhoods have sidewalks and some have parks and exercise facilities, a fair number of parents report that their children do not use these facilities to be active. Traffic, crime level, unpleasantness of neighborhoods and parks, and poor condition of sidewalks are reported by substantial numbers of parents as barriers to physical activity.

Effective interventions will require changes in the neighborhood environment by creating new opportunities, improving existing features, and addressing barriers associated with practicing healthy behaviors. Efforts are also needed to raise awareness about the issue of childhood obesity and associated behaviors among parents and caregivers.

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