

II. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter presents a statistical picture of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in 2001 that covers the characteristics of the state agencies, sponsors, and sites that operated the program.¹ The chapter also describes SFSP participants and discusses factors that may affect their participation. Many of the discussions compare the SFSP in 2001 with the program as it was 15 years earlier, when the last comprehensive study was undertaken. The highlights of the findings are:

- Half the program was school-sponsored in 2001. School Food Authorities (SFAs—the governing bodies of schools or school districts that operate the National School Lunch Program [NSLP]) comprised roughly half of all sponsors, ran about half of all sites, and served about half of all meals. The number of school sponsors operating in July almost tripled from 1986 to 2001, and their average daily attendance increased by 66 percent.
- Government agencies (usually municipal recreation or social services departments) constituted 14 percent of sponsors, but they were the largest sponsors, on average, and served 31 percent of meals. Residential camp sponsors were about 16 percent of all sponsors but served only 7 percent of meals. Because the number of government and camp sponsors and the number of meals they served had changed little from 1986 to 2001, these sponsor types are, proportionately, smaller parts of the program than in 1986.
- Nonprofit organizations, which have rejoined the program since 1986, represented 18 percent of all sponsors in 2001. However, they generally are restricted in size to no more than 25 sites and served just 10 percent of all meals.
- Sponsors that obtained meals from vendors comprised 18 percent of sponsors, but they operated 36 percent of sites and served 30 percent of meals. SFA vendors provided about one-third of vended meals, and private vendors provided about two-thirds.
- Since 1986, the number of sites that provide breakfast and the number that stay open for longer than 6 weeks have increased. Almost all sites (93 percent) offered activities in addition to meals, and most (61 percent) were open for longer than 6 weeks. About half of all sites served breakfast, and essentially all served lunch.

¹Appendix C provides a qualitative description of the SFSP, through in-depth profiles of nine sites selected to convey the wide variability in the program. Readers who are not familiar with the program may find that this appendix provides a feel for what it looks like on the “ground.”

- As in 1986, 58 percent of children served at SFSP sites were of elementary-school age. About 25 percent of those served were middle- or high-school age children; 17 percent were preschoolers.
- About one-third of sites provided transportation to at least some children.

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF STATE AGENCIES

In 2001, most states (42) administered the SFSP through their state education agency, which also administers the NSLP and the School Breakfast Program. In three cases (Michigan, Virginia, and nonprofit and camp sponsors in New York), the regional offices of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administered the program (Table II.1).² In nine states, a state agency other than the education agency administered the program (including departments of agriculture, health, and social services).³

SFSP state agencies administered programs that varied widely in scale. Eight state agencies had 20 or fewer sponsors, 31 state agencies had from 21 to 100 sponsors, and 15 had more than 100. The number of sites that the state agencies were responsible for monitoring also varied widely. About two-thirds of the states had between 101 and 1,000 sites; a small group (15 percent) had 100 or fewer sites, and 12 states (22 percent) had more than 1,000 sites.

The number of SFSP meals that were served in each state varied widely as well. In 22 states (41 percent), sponsors served 1 million or fewer meals in the summer of 2001. In most of the other states (44 percent), sponsors served between 1 million and 4 million meals. The sponsors in the state-run portion of the New York program (the largest “state”) served more than 12 million meals. On average, 2.4 million SFSP meals were served per state in 2001.

During the late 1970s, as part of efforts to improve program integrity, state agencies were required under federal regulations to register commercial vendors that provided meals to SFSP sponsors; the registration process included training vendors on SFSP rules and inspecting their facilities. The federal requirement was dropped during the late 1990s as part of efforts to simplify program administration. Although no longer mandated by FNS, about one-third of state agencies (17) still require private vendors to register in order to be eligible for SFSP contracts.

²In 1986, in contrast, FNS regional offices administered the SFSP in one-third of the states (Ohls et al. 1988).

³The two New York agencies (the New York State Department of Education, which administers school and government sponsors, and the FNS Northeast Regional Office, which administers camp and nonprofit sponsors) are counted separately. Although Wyoming was not officially a regional-office-administered state in 2001, the FNS regional office assisted the Wyoming Department of Health. For 2002, Wyoming has changed its state agency to the Department of Education.

TABLE II.1
CHARACTERISTICS OF STATE AGENCIES

	Number of State Agencies	Percentage of State Agencies
Type of Agency ^a		
State education agency	42	77.8
Other state agency	9	16.7
FNS regional office	3	5.6
Number of SFSP Sponsors in 2001 ^b		
1 to 20	8	14.8
21 to 50	13	24.1
51 to 100	18	33.3
101 to 150	9	16.7
151 to 200	3	5.6
≥201	3	5.6
Median	69	—
Mean	81	—
Number of SFSP Sites in 2001 ^c		
1 to 50	4	7.4
51 to 100	4	7.4
101 to 250	13	24.1
251 to 500	9	16.7
501 to 750	7	13.0
751 to 1,000	5	9.3
1,001 to 1,500	6	11.1
≥1,500	6	11.1
Median	412	—
Mean	657	—

TABLE II.1 (continued)

	Number of State Agencies	Percentage of State Agencies
Number of SFSP Meals Served in Summer 2001 ^c		
<1 million	22	40.7
1 to 2 million	14	25.9
>2 to 4 million	10	18.5
>4 to 8 million	4	7.4
>8 to 12 million	3	5.6
>12 million	1	1.8
Mean (millions)	2.4	—
Number of States Continuing Vendor Registration ^d		
	17	31.5
Total	54	—

SOURCE: See the footnotes.

^aDerived from state plans submitted to FNS and state contact information.

^bTabulated from SFSP Implementation Study, Sponsor-Site Database (2001).

^cPreliminary estimates provided by the Child Nutrition Division, FNS (January 2002). These data reflect claims reported to FNS by state agencies for the months of May through September.

^dTabulated from SFSP Implementation Study, State Administrator Census (2001).

FNS = Food and Nutrition Service.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONSORS

Several sources of data on the characteristics of SFSP sponsors were collected for this study. The SFSP Sponsor-Site Database, compiled from lists of sponsors submitted by state agencies, provides a census of key characteristics. The information in the database makes it possible to examine the characteristics of each major type of sponsor.⁴ The Sponsor Survey is the source of more-detailed information on sponsors' characteristics.⁵ Data from both sources are presented here in two different ways: (1) to reflect the percentage of sponsors nationally with particular characteristics, and (2) to reflect the percentage of SFSP meals nationally served by sponsors with particular characteristics.⁶

To assess changes in sponsors' characteristics over time, both FNS program data and comparisons of the data from the 2001 Sponsor Survey (or the Sponsor-Site Database) with 1986 data from the report by Ohls et al. (1988) are used. The FNS data are essentially a census of the SFSP; however, they were collected only for SFSP sponsors and sites operating in July, so they understate the size of the overall program. Comparisons of data from the two surveys must be made with caution because of differences in data collection approaches and sample design in the two studies, and because both sets of estimates are subject to statistical sampling error; comparisons of the 1986 survey data and the 2001 census data are more reliable, as only one set of estimates is subject to sampling error.

1. Overview of Sponsors' Characteristics

About half the 2001 SFSP sponsors were SFAs, and they served half the SFSP meals (Table II.2).⁷ Only 14 percent of sponsors were government agencies, but these sponsors served 31 percent of all meals in 2001, indicating that government agencies are larger than the average sponsor. Nonprofit organizations, National Youth Sports Programs (NYSPs), and residential

⁴The database also can be used to examine other subgroups. Appendix D provides tabulations from the database on sponsor characteristics at the state and regional levels. Chapter IV compares new and continuing sponsors.

⁵Appendix D compares the census data from the Sponsor-Site Database and the Sponsor Survey data on key sponsor characteristics. As discussed in greater detail in Appendix D, the survey data were weighted to match key control totals from the Sponsor-Site Database.

⁶Using the census data, the first type of tabulation is based on unweighted tabulations of the data, with each sponsor receiving an equal weight, regardless of size. For the second type of tabulation, each sponsor is weighted by the total number of meals it served, so that larger sponsors are weighted more heavily than are smaller ones. For the survey data, a different set of sampling weights corresponds to each type of tabulation, but the underlying idea is the same. (See Appendix B for additional details on sampling weights.)

⁷According to responses to the Sponsor Survey, about 2 percent of sponsors were private schools. Thus, private school sponsors comprise a small portion of all school sponsors.

TABLE II.2
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONSORS

	Percentage of Sponsors	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Type of Sponsor ^a				
School	48.5	—	50.9	—
Government	14.2	—	31.4	—
Camp/Upward Bound	16.4	—	6.8	—
NYSP	3.5	—	1.4	—
Nonprofit organization	17.5	—	9.5	—
New Sponsor ^a	10.1	—	2.9	—
Number of Years as Sponsor ^b				
First year (new this year)	2	(1.0)	2	(1.0)
2 to 5	41	(5.6)	16	(4.0)
≥6	57	(5.6)	82	(4.2)
Unknown (but >1 year)	0	(0.4)	1	(0.7)
Number of Sites Sponsored ^a				
1	49.6	—	10.8	—
2 to 5	27.1	—	12.4	—
6 to 10	9.1	—	8.0	—
11 to 50	11.6	—	24.2	—
51 to 100	1.5	—	9.3	—
101 to 200	0.8	—	12.4	—
201 to 300	0.2	—	6.9	—
>300	0.1	—	16.0	—
Median	2.0	—	34.0	—
Mean	8.1	—	205.5	—
Average Daily Attendance ^{b,c}				
<100	31	(5.6)	4	(1.0)
100 to 500	54	(5.7)	23	(4.4)
501 to 1,000	7	(1.6)	11	(3.1)
1,001 to 5,000	7	(1.4)	25	(5.8)
>5,000	2	(0.5)	38	(9.2)
Median	145	(20)	2,026	(1,779)
Mean	687	(138)	35,631	(18,459)

TABLE II.2 (continued)

	Percentage of Sponsors	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Total Meals Served During Summer^{a,c}				
<1,000	5.6	—	0.1	—
1,000 to 2,500	14.2	—	0.8	—
2,501 to 5,000	19.2	—	2.3	—
5,001 to 7,500	11.7	—	2.4	—
7,501 to 10,000	8.9	—	2.6	—
10,001 to 20,000	17.5	—	8.3	—
20,001 to 100,000	18.5	—	26.8	—
≥100,001	4.5	—	56.7	—
Median	7,285	—	153,365	—
Mean	29,858	—	1,160,433	—
Duration of Program (Calendar Weeks)^a				
Missing	2.9	—	1.8	—
<2	1.4	—	0.1	—
2 to <4	11.8	—	2.3	—
4 to <6	24.3	—	8.1	—
6 to <8	26.6	—	23.6	—
8 to <10	22.4	—	46.2	—
10 to <12	7.1	—	10.7	—
≥12	3.3	—	7.1	—
Median	6.7	—	8.7	—
Mean	7.5	—	9.9	—
Site Eligibility Status^b				
All open	55	(5.2)	61	(7.4)
All enrolled	11	(3.9)	5	(1.9)
Combination of open and enrolled	13	(2.8)	24	(6.5)
Camp or Upward Bound sites	19	(5.0)	8	(2.4)
NYSP sites	2	(1.2)	2	(1.1)
Presence of Special Sites^b				
Any rural sites	56	(5.6)	30	(5.6)
All rural sites	53	(5.6)	23	(5.1)
Any migrant sites	9	(2.6)	10	(4.9)
Any mobile sites	3	(1.4)	6	(2.4)
Any sites that serve homeless children	8	(2.7)	14	(3.7)

TABLE II.2 (continued)

	Percentage of Sponsors	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Meals Offered at One or More Sites^a				
Breakfast	72.1	—	78.4	—
Lunch	98.4	—	99.7	—
Supper	20.7	—	13.7	—
Any snack	15.2	—	33.0	—
Type of Meal Preparation^b				
Self-preparation on site	63	(4.8)	26	(5.5)
Self-preparation at central kitchen	14	(3.1)	16	(4.0)
Self-preparation on site or at central kitchen	5	(1.7)	28	(9.0)
SFA as vendor	6	(1.9)	10	(3.4)
Private vendor	13	(3.8)	20	(6.1)
Total Sponsors—Sponsor-Site Database	4,372	—	—	—
Sample Size—Sponsor Survey	126	—	—	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Sponsor Survey and Sponsor-Site Database (2001).

^aFrom the Sponsor-Site Database. These data are a census, so they have no standard errors. Sponsors with missing data were omitted from the tabulations.

^bFrom the Sponsor Survey. Tabulations are weighted to be representative of sponsors nationally.

^cAverage daily attendance was reported in the Sponsor Survey. Sponsors that served more than one meal were not instructed in any way on how to calculate average daily attendance, but most seem to have used either attendance at the meal serving the largest number of children or usual attendance for the activity program associated with the meal service. The measure does not adjust for differences in the number of days that programs are open. By contrast, the measure, total meals, counts every meal served during the summer.

NYSP = National Youth Sports Program; SFA = School Food Authority.

camps/Upward Bound programs comprised 37 percent of sponsors but served only 18 percent of the meals.⁸

Sponsors tend to be stable. As reported in the survey, 57 percent of all sponsors had been in the SFSP for longer than 6 years (and these sponsors served 82 percent of all meals). The lists provided by the state agencies indicate that 10 percent of the 2001 SFSP sponsors had not sponsored the SFSP in 2000; some of these sponsors may have offered the program in previous years. Based on the Sponsor Survey, only 2 percent of sponsors were new. Some of the lists of new sponsors that were used to select new sponsors for the survey were incomplete, so it is possible that new sponsors were underrepresented somewhat in the survey. In addition, sponsors that had not operated in 2000 but had operated in the past may not have reported themselves to be “new.”

In 2001, the SFSP had a few very large sponsors, and a large number of very small ones. This breakdown holds whether measured in terms of the number of sites, average daily attendance, or total meals served during the year.

Most SFSP sponsors operated only a few sites. About half the sponsors had only 1 site, and 86 percent had 10 sites or fewer. However, sponsors with 10 sites or fewer served fewer than one-third of all meals. By contrast, only 1 percent of sponsors operated more than 100 sites, but they served 35 percent of all meals.

Another indicator of the wide dispersion in sponsor size is that most sponsors (85 percent) had daily attendance of 500 children or fewer, but sponsors that had more than 500 children attending per day served 74 percent of all meals.⁹ A similar dispersion is evident in the number of meals served during the course of the summer. The majority of sponsors (60 percent) served 10,000 meals or fewer. Although only 5 percent served more than 100,000 meals, these sponsors served 57 percent of all meals served.

Sponsors varied greatly in the duration of their SFSP programs, but the average program operated for 7.5 weeks. About one-quarter of programs were between 4 and 6 weeks in duration, one-quarter were between 6 and 8 weeks in duration, and one-quarter were between 8 and 10 weeks in duration. The small group of sponsors (3 percent) that operated for 12 weeks or longer includes sponsors that operated year-round or almost year-round to serve off-track children in year-round school districts.

⁸Upward Bound programs are federally funded educational programs for disadvantaged youths, which are operated by colleges or universities. Although they may be residential or nonresidential, they are grouped with residential camps in this report, as most state agencies use that classification.

⁹Average daily attendance measures the number of children eating at any time during the day. This measure counts children who receive several meals in a day only once; furthermore, the measure does not adjust for differences in the number of days that programs are open. By contrast, the measure, total meals, counts every meal served during the summer.

More than half (55 percent) of sponsors operated only open sites.¹⁰ About 11 percent ran only enrolled sites, and another 13 percent ran a combination of open sites and enrolled sites. In general, sponsors that operated both types of sites were large; they served 24 percent of all meals. Nineteen percent operated residential camp sites (including Upward Bound sites), but they served only about 8 percent of the meals. These sponsors served a relatively small percentage of meals because they ran fewer sites than did other sponsors (as discussed in Section B.2.a).

The majority (56 percent) of sponsors had at least one rural site, but these sponsors served just 30 percent of all meals. Most sponsors with any rural sites operated only rural sites; 53 percent of all sponsors had only rural sites. Nine percent of sponsors had one or more migrant sites. These sites serve children from migrant worker families and are allowed to serve an extra meal. About 8 percent of sponsors reported having one or more sites that served homeless children. Mobile sites—sites located on a bus or van that moves among several locations—have been developed during the past few years. Three percent of sponsors reported operating at least one mobile site.

Lunch is typically the primary meal at SFSP sites, and 98 percent of sponsors served this meal. Nearly three out of four sponsors (72 percent) had sites that served breakfast, but breakfast was not necessarily served at all these sponsors' sites. About 21 percent of all sponsors had sites that served supper, but these sponsors served only 14 percent of all meals; most sponsors that serve supper are residential camps, which generally have only one site. Fifteen percent of sponsors ran sites that served snacks; these sponsors served about one-third of all meals. Some larger sponsors served snacks at only a few of their sites.

Nearly two-thirds of sponsors (63 percent) prepared all their meals at their sites, but these sponsors served only 26 percent of all meals.¹¹ By contrast, 14 percent of sponsors prepared meals for all their sites at central kitchens, and 5 percent prepared meals at some sites and delivered meals to other sites from a central kitchen. These two groups together served 44 percent of all meals. Thirteen percent of sponsors obtained meals from private vendors, and 6 percent obtained meals from SFAs (acting as vendors rather than as sponsors). Sponsors that used vendors served 30 percent of meals overall.

¹⁰Appendix A describes procedures used for resolving discrepancies between sponsor and site data regarding the open/enrolled status of sites. In general, sponsors' applications were used when these data sources did not agree.

¹¹See Appendix A for a discussion of cleaning of sponsor and site data on meal preparation. In general, discrepancies in sponsors' and site supervisors' reports of meal preparation methods were resolved by consulting sponsors' applications. Note also that some meals prepared in central kitchens may be warmed up or portioned out at the sites; for this study, sponsors that used this approach have been classified as using central kitchen preparation.

2. Characteristics of Different Types of Sponsors

The major types of sponsors—SFAs, government agencies, residential camps, NYSP sponsors, and nonprofit sponsors—offer very different types of programs. The Sponsor-Site Database provides a census of data on sponsors and enables one to consider how each sponsor type differs for a limited set of characteristics. Unfortunately, the survey sample is not sufficient to provide reliable data for each sponsor type. Thus, for some key variables obtained from the survey but not available in the census, comparisons are between school sponsors and nonschool sponsors. Much recent SFSP policy has focused on expanding the role of school sponsors, so these comparisons are also of great interest.

a. Characteristics of Major Types of Sponsors, from the Sponsor Census

In general, different sponsor types served different meals (Table II.3). Other than camps, school sponsors were the most likely group to serve breakfast (75 percent did so), perhaps because many have become accustomed to serving breakfast during the school year. By contrast, government sponsors were the least likely to serve breakfast; 47 percent served this meal. Suppers were largely served at camp sites, but some sponsors in every group served supper. School sponsors were least likely to serve supper; only 3 percent served this meal.

Camp, NYSP, and nonprofit sponsors never operated large numbers of sites. In 2001, about 85 percent of camp sponsors and about the same percentage of NYSP sponsors had one site; about three-quarters of nonprofit sponsors had five or fewer sites (Table II.3). Furthermore, no NYSP sponsor had more than 10 sites, and no camp, Upward Bound, or nonprofit sponsor had more than 50.¹² Despite their small number of sites, however, some of these sponsors served a relatively large number of meals per site: their sites were relatively large, and most camp sponsors served three meals.

Government sponsors generally were the largest sponsors overall, as they ran an average of 21 sites and, on average, served the largest number of meals. (By contrast, schools ran an average of eight sites, nonprofit organizations, five sites, camps, one site, and NYSPs, one site.) School sponsors fell in the middle of the size range, on average; although a substantial fraction (42 percent) operated only one site, some school sponsors were very large.

Camp and NYSP sponsors operated shorter programs, on average, than did other types of sponsors. Camp programs ran for an average of 6.6 weeks, and NYSPs ran for an average of 5.3 weeks. (NYSPs almost always operated for 4 to 6 weeks.) By contrast, nonprofit sponsors operated programs with the longest average duration (8.9 weeks) and were most likely to operate programs that lasted 10 weeks or longer (20 percent did so). The average durations of school-

¹²As noted in Chapter I, although regulations prevent nonprofit organizations from operating more than 25 sites, FNS may grant waivers from these regulations. According to the Sponsor-Site Database, 12 nonprofit sponsors nationally operated between 25 and 50 sites; none operated more than 50 sites.

TABLE II.3

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONSORS, BY TYPE OF SPONSOR
(Percentages)

	School	Government	Camp	NYSP	Nonprofit
Meals Offered					
Breakfast	75.4	47.0	98.3	66.9	59.6
Lunch	98.1	98.6	98.9	95.4	98.0
Supper	3.4	7.1	95.4	15.2	10.5
Any snack	11.9	22.1	8.1	22.5	24.3
Number of Sites					
1	42.3	32.1	84.5	85.4	44.2
2 to 5	32.7	23.4	13.8	13.9	29.6
6 to 10	10.6	11.1	1.1	0.7	12.6
11 to 50	12.0	23.7	0.6	0.0	13.6
51 to 100	1.7	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
101 to 200	0.6	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
201 to 300	0.1	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
>300	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Median	2.0	4.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
Mean	8.2	21.5	1.3	1.2	4.8
Total Meals Served					
<1,000	4.2	3.9	9.6	1.5	7.8
1,000 to 2,500	12.7	11.8	24.0	2.0	13.4
2,501 to 5,000	18.9	14.4	25.1	12.0	19.9
5,001 to 7,500	12.7	8.6	12.2	6.7	12.0
7,501 to 10,000	9.4	7.3	4.9	18.0	10.6
10,001 to 20,000	19.2	13.6	12.7	47.3	14.6
20,001 to 100,000	18.9	28.0	9.3	12.7	19.5
≥100,000	4.1	12.6	2.1	0.0	2.1
Median	7,892	11,664	3,899	11,373	6,783
Mean	31,448	66,256	12,434	12,292	16,420

TABLE II.3 (continued)

	School	Government	Camp	NYSP	Nonprofit
Duration of Program (Calendar Weeks)					
Missing	2.7	0.8	3.8	1.3	4.7
<2	0.8	0.5	4.7	0.7	1.2
2 to <4	20.4	2.7	5.9	0.0	3.2
4 to <6	23.2	18.7	31.7	85.4	13.2
6 to <8	26.9	33.0	24.0	11.3	26.1
8 to <10	17.3	32.2	24.3	1.3	31.2
10 to <12	4.9	9.0	4.6	0.0	15.3
≥12	3.8	3.1	1.1	0.0	5.1
Median	6.6	7.7	6.6	5.1	8.6
Mean	7.3	8.3	6.6	5.3	8.9
New Sponsor	9.9	6.1	5.0	7.3	18.7
Total Sponsors	2,118	621	717	151	763

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Sponsor-Site Database (2001).

NYSP = National Youth Sports Program.

sponsored programs and government-sponsored programs fell in the middle of this range (7.3 weeks and 8.3 weeks, respectively), and both sponsor types included sponsors with a wide range of durations.

Ten percent of all sponsors were new in 2001; fully 19 percent of nonprofit sponsors were new. About 10 percent of school sponsors were new (which is proportionate to sponsors overall). Smaller proportions of government, camp, and NYSP sponsors were new.

b. Comparison of School Sponsors and Nonschool Sponsors, from the Survey Data

Almost all school sponsors (97 percent) prepared their meals themselves; nonschool sponsors were much more likely to rely on vendors (33 percent did so, compared with only 3 percent of school sponsors; see Table II.4).¹³ Sixty-eight percent of school sponsors always prepared meals on site, and 30 percent made some use of central kitchens. Two-thirds of nonschool sponsors prepared their own meals either on site or at a central kitchen. However, 22 percent of nonschool sponsors used private vendors, compared with only 3 percent of school sponsors. Eleven percent of nonschool sponsors used an SFA as a vendor.

School sponsors were substantially more likely than nonschool sponsors to operate any rural sites (71 percent versus 42 percent), to operate only rural sites (68 percent versus 40 percent), and to operate migrant sites (18 percent versus 2 percent). One possible explanation is that, in rural areas, there may be few organizations other than school districts with the ability to serve as sponsors. School and nonschool sponsors did not differ significantly in their use of mobile sites or in whether their sites served homeless children.

Although school sponsors generally were larger than nonschool sponsors, as measured by average daily attendance, the differences were not statistically significant. About one-quarter of school sponsors and about 36 percent of nonschool sponsors had fewer than 100 children attend per day. About half of both school sponsors and nonschool sponsors served 100 to 500 children per day.

3. Changes in Characteristics of Sponsors Since 1986

The last major study of the SFSP was undertaken in 1986 (Ohls et al. 1988), and it seems useful to assess how SFSP sponsorship has changed since then. This section compares the two periods, using FNS administrative data, and compares findings from survey and census data obtained in the current study with findings from survey data collected by Ohls et al.

¹³School sponsors may use private vendors if they do so for the NSLP and are continuing the same contract.

TABLE II.4
 SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONSORS,
 BY SCHOOL/NONSCHOOL SPONSOR
 (Percentage of Sponsors)

	School Sponsor	Standard Error	Nonschool Sponsor	Standard Error
Type of Meal Preparation				
Self-preparation on site	68	(5.7)	58**	(7.6)
Self-preparation at central kitchen	18	(4.9)	10	(4.1)
Self-preparation on site or at central kitchen	11	(3.4)	0	(0.0)
SFA vendor	0	(0.0)	11	(3.7)
Private vendor	3	(2.7)	22	(6.6)
Presence of Special Sites				
Any rural sites	71	(6.9)	42**	(7.8)
All rural sites	68	(7.2)	40*	(7.9)
Any migrant sites	18	(5.0)	2**	(1.5)
Any mobile sites	3	(1.8)	4	(2.5)
Any sites that serve homeless children	6	(3.8)	9	(4.0)
Average Daily Attendance				
<100	26	(8.2)	36	(8.4)
100 to 500	56	(8.6)	52	(7.9)
501 to 1,000	9	(3.1)	5	(2.0)
1,001 to 5,000	8	(2.3)	6	(1.8)
>5,000	2	(0.9)	1	(0.6)
Median	177	(44)	116	(29)
Mean	883	(250)	501	(130)
Sample Size	61	—	64	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Sponsor Survey (2001).

SFA = School Food Authority.

*Significantly different at the .05 level, chi-squared test.

**Significantly different at the .01 level, chi-squared test.

a. Program Growth Overall and Among Sponsors of Different Types

For many years, FNS has collected detailed SFSP program data from state agencies for the month of July, the peak month for the SFSP.¹⁴ The agencies are required to report their total average daily attendance in July (the sum of the average daily attendance at each sponsor), the number of sponsors of each major type, and the number of sites sponsored by sponsors of each major type. In collecting data for this study, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. found that the number of SFSP sponsors and sites operating for the entire summer was substantially larger than the number operating in July.¹⁵ Nonetheless, although the FNS data reflect the program only as it operates in July, they provide the only consistently available measure of trends in program characteristics, by sponsor type.

Between 1986 and 2001, the number of sponsors and sites in the July SFSP program almost doubled, while average daily attendance increased by 40 percent, from 1.5 million to 2.1 million (Table II.5).¹⁶ School sponsors accounted for almost three-quarters of the growth in daily attendance. Nonprofit organizations and NYSP sponsors—categories that did not exist in 1986—provided the rest.¹⁷ The number of government and camp sponsors and the number of meals these sponsor types served were essentially the same in 2001 as they had been 15 years before.

According to the July data, the number of school sponsors almost tripled from 1986 to 2001, from 602 to 1,646. School sponsors as a percentage of all sponsors increased less—by 12 percentage points (from 32 to 44 percent)—because, at the same time as the number of school sponsors grew, many sponsors in new categories (nonprofit organizations and NYSPs) also joined the program. Although the number of school sponsors tripled, average daily attendance at school sponsors increased 66 percent, from about 650,000 to 1.1 million, which implies that

¹⁴These data are collected as part of the “FNS-418” reporting forms submitted by state agencies each month to document meal reimbursements. FNS requires that the agencies provide additional data on their July forms on sponsors, sites, and average daily attendance.

¹⁵See Appendix D for a comparison of data from the Sponsor-Site Database with FNS-418 data.

¹⁶The fact that most new sponsors were relatively small explains this difference. Unless granted a waiver, nonprofit organizations generally are permitted to run no more than 25 sites, and new school sponsors tended to be smaller school districts, because many of the larger school districts already were SFSP participants. Existing sponsors may have increased the number of their sites by adding smaller sites.

¹⁷Some NYSPs participated in 1986 but were counted in other categories, most likely as camps.

TABLE II.5

NUMBER OF SFSP SPONSORS, SITES, AND PARTICIPANTS,
BY TYPE OF SPONSOR, JULY 1986 AND JULY 2001

Type of Sponsor	July 1986				July 2001							
	Number of Sponsors	Percentage	Number of Sites	Percentage	Average Daily Attendance	Percentage	Number of Sponsors	Percentage	Number of Sites	Percentage	Average Daily Attendance	Percentage
School	602	31.6	4,957	30.9	653,142	43.6	1,646	43.9	14,023	44.8	1,082,894	51.7
Government	599	31.5	10,258	63.8	775,661	51.8	610	16.3	13,067	41.7	728,781	34.8
Residential Camp	703	36.9	853	5.3	69,976	4.7	651	17.4	872	2.8	71,044	3.4
NYSP	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	131	3.5	140	0.4	29,679	1.4
Other Nonprofit Organization	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	709	18.9	3,202	10.2	180,263	8.6
Total	1,904	100.0	16,068	100.0	1,498,779	100.0	3,747	100.0	31,304	100.0	2,092,661	100.0

SOURCE: Data for 2001 were provided to Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. by FNS in January 2002. The 1986 data are from Table II.1 in Ohls et al. (1988) and were derived from FNS program data. Both sets of data are from the "FNS-418" reporting forms submitted to FNS by SFSP state agencies.

NOTE: NYSPs were not recognized as an official sponsor category in 1986 but may have been counted in other categories. Nonprofit organizations were not allowed to participate in the SFSP in 1986.

FNS = Food and Nutrition Service; NYSP = National Youth Sports Program.

much of the growth in school sponsors occurred in school districts that operate smaller Summer Food programs (as defined by average daily attendance).¹⁸

The number of government sponsors in July remained relatively constant (at about 600); as a percentage of all sponsors, however, this sponsor type decreased substantially (from 32 percent to 16 percent). Camp sponsors decreased slightly in number and substantially in percentage terms (from 37 percent to 17 percent). Although not permitted to participate in 1986, nonprofit sponsors represented 19 percent of all sponsors in 2001.¹⁹ (However, nonprofit sponsors served only 9 percent of children attending the SFSP on an average July day, another indication of the relatively small size of their programs.) NYSPs, which were not counted separately in 1986, represented 3.5 percent of all sponsors in 2001.

b. Changes in Sponsor Characteristics

Comparison of the 1986 sponsor survey data and the data from either the 2001 survey or the 2001 Sponsor-Site Database reveals patterns of changes in the types of sponsors similar to patterns in the FNS data.²⁰ The data discussed in this section reflect the program as it operated for an entire summer, not as it operated in July only. In 1986, sponsors were almost equally divided among government, school, and residential camp sponsors (Table II.6). In 2001, by contrast, only 14 percent of sponsors were government agencies, and only 20 percent were residential camps, Upward Bound programs, or NYSPs. School sponsors constituted 48 percent of all sponsors in 2001, and nonprofit organizations, 18 percent. The percentage distributions of sponsor types in the 1986 survey and in the 2001 Sponsor-Site Database are thus very similar to those obtained using the July data (compare back to Table II.5).

Sponsors in 2001 were more likely than they were in 1986 to have from two to five sites (27 percent versus 15 percent). The percentage of single-site sponsors decreased from 63 percent to slightly fewer than 50 percent.

¹⁸Based on the data in Table II.5, average daily attendance per school sponsor fell from 1,085 in 1986 to 659 in 2001.

¹⁹As discussed in Chapter I, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 prohibited private nonprofit sponsors (except for private schools and residential camps) from participating in the SFSP. In 1989, nonprofit organizations were again permitted to serve as sponsors SFSP.

²⁰Note that, because the census data are not subject to sampling error, comparisons of 1986 survey data and 2001 census data are much more precise than are comparisons of survey data between the two points in time. Ohls et al. (1988) did not provide standard errors for their estimates, so it was possible only to approximate whether differences observed were statistically significant. Based on an estimated design effect of 2 for the study by Ohls et al., the differences discussed here are likely to be significant at the 95-percent level.

TABLE II.6
CHANGES IN SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONSORS SINCE 1986
(Percentage of Sponsors)

	1986	2001
Type of Sponsor ^a		
School	32	48
Government	31	14
Residential camp/Upward Bound/ NYSP ^b	36	20
Other nonprofit organization ^b	0	18
Number of Sites Sponsored ^a		
1	63	50
2 to 5	15	27
6 to 10	7	9
>10	16	14
Median	1.0	2.0
Average Daily Attendance ^c		
<100	44	31
100 to 500	31	54
501 to 1,000	15	7
>1,000	11	8
Median	145	145

SOURCE: The 2001 data are from the SFSP Implementation Study, Sponsor Survey, or the Sponsor-Site Database (2001). The 1986 data are from Table IV.1 in Ohls et al. (1988); the sample size for 1986 sponsors was 208. Survey data were weighted to be nationally representative.

^aThe 2001 data are from the Sponsor-Site Database, which is a census of 4,372 sponsors.

^bNYSPs were not recognized as an official sponsor category in 1986 but may have been counted in other categories. Nonprofit organizations were not allowed to participate in the SFSP in 1986.

^cThe 2001 data are from the Sponsor Survey (n = 125).

NYSP = National Youth Sports Program.

Average daily attendance was less likely to be very low or very high in 2001. Only 31 percent of sponsors in 2001 had an average daily attendance of fewer than 100 children, a drop from the 44 percent in 1986. Similarly, only 15 percent of sponsors in 2001 had an average daily attendance of more than 500 children, compared with 26 percent in 1986. The percentage with an average daily attendance between 100 and 500 children increased 23 percentage points, to 54 percent in 2001. However, the median number of children served per day was 145 in both years. Thus, although the distribution of average daily attendance has narrowed, the middle of the distribution remained at the same point.

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF SITES

This section describes the SFSP at the site level. It then compares school-sponsored sites with other sites and compares sites in 2001 with sites in 1986. As with the data on sponsors, site data are weighted in two ways: (1) to show the percentage of SFSP sites nationally with particular characteristics, and (2) to show the percentage of meals served nationally by SFSP sites with particular characteristics. Most of the data describing sites were obtained from the interviews with site supervisors; in some instances, however (noted in the tables), the data reflect interviewers' observations.

1. Overview of Sites

In 2001, schools sponsored about half of all SFSP sites (49 percent), and these sites served about half of all meals (Table II.7). Government agencies sponsored another one-third of sites (36 percent), and nonprofit organizations sponsored about one-eighth (12 percent). Residential camps, Upward Bound sites, and NYSP sites comprised about 3 percent of all sites but served 10 percent of all meals; these sites generally were larger than sites run by other sponsor types, and, in the case of residential camps, they served three meals daily.

Most SFSP sites (83 percent) were open sites (serving 79 percent of all meals).²¹ Only 14 percent were enrolled sites, and the remaining 3 percent were either NYSP or residential camp/Upward Bound sites. Sponsors may use enrolled site eligibility to a limited extent because enrollment requires collecting income documentation from children (or obtaining eligibility status for free or reduced-price meals from their schools), and because schools are not permitted to operate enrolled SFSP sites that only serve summer school students. (They must operate the NSLP if they do not wish to open their sites.)

Because many programs are sponsored by schools, it is not surprising that summer feeding most often takes place in public school buildings (usually, in cafeterias). In some areas, public schools may host sites sponsored by other organizations. Conversely, school sponsors sometimes operate sites that are not located in schools. Thirty-nine percent of sites (serving

²¹The site data did not measure whether sites were classified as migrant sites. Any migrant sites are counted as either open or enrolled.

TABLE II.7
SELECTED SITE CHARACTERISTICS

	Percentage of Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Sponsor Type				
School	49	(7.5)	53	(8.1)
Government	36	(7.7)	27	(7.1)
Residential camp/Upward Bound/NYSP	3	(1.2)	10	(4.1)
Other nonprofit organization	12	(3.6)	10	(3.0)
Type of Site				
Open	83	(4.1)	79	(5.8)
Enrolled	14	(3.8)	12	(4.0)
NYSP	>0	(0.2)	1	(0.5)
Camp/Upward Bound	3	(1.2)	9	(4.0)
Site Setting^{a,b}				
Public school	39	(5.4)	46	(6.5)
Playground/park (not at a school)	16	(4.0)	9	(2.4)
Indoor recreational center	13	(4.3)	7	(2.2)
Community center	11	(3.0)	8	(2.5)
Religious organization	9	(2.7)	17	(5.8)
Day camp	7	(2.6)	5	(1.7)
Private school	5	(2.1)	11	(5.6)
Home/apartment	4	(2.6)	3	(1.9)
Playground outside on school grounds	4	(1.9)	4	(2.0)
Private nursery school or day care center	4	(1.6)	3	(1.4)
Native American reservation facility	2	(2.1)	1	(0.5)
Residential camp	2	(1.1)	8	(4.0)
Housing project	2	(1.8)	1	(0.6)
Mental health center	2	(1.9)	1	(0.6)
University/college	2	(0.7)	2	(0.8)
Family service agency	1	(0.5)	1	(0.8)

TABLE II.7 (continued)

	Percentage of Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Number of Years Site Has Offered SFSP (n = 160)				
First year	8	(2.7)	6	(2.0)
2 to 5	49	(4.6)	42	(5.3)
≥6	37	(4.3)	47	(4.9)
Don't know	6	(1.9)	5	(1.7)
Site Location ^a (n = 161)				
Urban	51	(6.9)	47	(7.4)
Suburban	24	(5.1)	27	(5.6)
Rural	25	(4.8)	26	(5.5)
Security Guard on Site	9	(3.4)	13	(5.7)
Meals Served				
Breakfast	49	(5.8)	69	(6.4)
Lunch	100	—	100	—
Supper	5	(1.9)	12	(4.4)
Any snack	19	(5.4)	21	(4.7)
Type of Meal Preparation				
Self-preparation on site	31	(5.2)	49	(5.9)
Self-preparation at central kitchen	33	(6.1)	22	(4.2)
SFA as vendor	10	(3.7)	10	(3.5)
Private vendor	26	(7.7)	20	(6.9)
Average Daily Attendance, Lunch (n = 157)				
1 to 20	7	(3.0)	3	(1.4)
21 to 50	35	(5.1)	18	(3.7)
51 to 100	30	(5.0)	23	(4.6)
101 to 300	20	(4.0)	32	(5.2)
>300	8	(2.8)	24	(6.0)
Median	60	(7.4)	150	(33.5)
Mean	110	(13.5)	229	(43.3)

TABLE II.7 (continued)

	Percentage of Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Activities Offered ^b				
Educational/instructional activities	88	(2.9)	89	(3.1)
Supervised free play	85	(3.2)	89	(3.0)
Organized games or sports	76	(3.6)	79	(3.7)
Arts and crafts	76	(4.8)	74	(5.3)
Off-site field trips	67	(5.5)	72	(4.8)
Swimming	52	(5.3)	55	(5.4)
Supervised child care	49	(5.6)	53	(6.4)
Job training for participants	23	(3.8)	28	(5.8)
Cooking	22	(3.9)	27	(6.3)
Religious activities	18	(4.2)	29	(6.5)
Job training for adults	18	(3.4)	15	(2.9)
Unsupervised free play	12	(3.6)	8	(2.5)
Counseling/therapy	3	(1.9)	1	(0.6)
Performing arts	2	(1.4)	2	(1.1)
Community involvement	2	(1.3)	2	(1.3)
Social skills or cultural training	2	(1.1)	2	(1.3)
Other	6	(3.2)	3	(1.0)
No activities	5	(2.3)	3	(1.6)
Any Activities Other Than Free Play	93	(2.5)	95	(2.2)
Sample Size	162	—	162	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey and Site Observations (2001). All data are from the interview except where noted.

^aInterviewer observation. This measure of rural sites does not necessarily correspond to sites that receive the rural reimbursement rate.

^bMultiple responses allowed.

NYSP = National Youth Sports Program; SFA = School Food Authority.

46 percent of all meals) were located in public schools, and another 4 percent were located on school grounds (in playgrounds). Sites were located in a wide variety of other settings as well, ranging from day camps (7 percent of sites) and residential camps (2 percent) to mental health centers (2 percent) and Native American reservation facilities (2 percent). After public schools, the most common settings were nonschool playgrounds and parks (16 percent). Interestingly, 9 percent of sites, serving 17 percent of all meals, were at religious organizations. The sites may have had faith-based sponsors, or they may have had other types of sponsors that rented space from a religious organization.

Sites, like sponsors, tended to be stable. Most had been in the program for at least 2 years. Thirty-seven percent had served SFSP meals for 6 years or longer.

As judged by interviewers, about half (51 percent) of the sites were located in urban settings, with the remainder evenly split between suburban and rural ones.²² Some rural sites were residential camps and may therefore have served children from urban areas. Nine percent of sites had an on-site security guard, indicating that safety may have been an issue.²³

Nearly all sites (and every site visited) served lunch.²⁴ Sites that offered breakfast—about half of all sites—served 69 percent of all meals. Only 5 percent of sites served supper, but 12 percent of meals were served at these sites. These sites, many of which were residential camps, usually served three meals per day. Nineteen percent of sites served snacks.²⁵

Almost one-third of sites (31 percent) prepared their meals on site; these sites served almost half (49 percent) of all meals. Another 33 percent received food from a central kitchen, but they served only 22 percent of meals. About one-quarter of sites received meals from a private vendor; these sites served 20 percent of all meals. The remaining 10 percent of sites (serving 10 percent of meals) received meals from an SFA vendor. In recent years, FNS has encouraged nonschool sponsors to purchase meals from an SFA whenever possible (7CFR 225.15[b][1]), and nearly one-third of vended meals were provided in this way in 2001. The argument for promoting SFAs as vendors (when they are not sponsors) is that SFAs have both experience with

²²Data on the percentage of sites classified as rural under SFSP rules were not available. However, the study examined the percentage of sites whose sponsors reported operating rural sites. About 23 percent of sites were definitely rural, as their sponsors reported operating only rural sites, and the sponsors of fully 33 percent of sites reported operating some rural sites. The true proportion of rural sites thus lies between these two figures.

²³Sites with security guards had either school or NYSP sponsors.

²⁴Based on the sites on which data were available in the Sponsor-Site Database, 98 percent of SFSP sites served lunch. However, data on meals served was missing for nearly one in five sites.

²⁵Some site supervisors may have reported snacks that were served but were not reimbursed through the SFSP.

USDA meal requirements and the knowledge and facilities to prepare meals for children (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2001).

Although sites served anywhere from a few children to more than 1,000, about two-thirds served lunch to 21 to 100 children on an average day. Twenty percent of sites served lunch to an average of 101 to 300 children, accounting for 32 percent of all meals. Eight percent of sites served more than 300 children on an average day, and they accounted for almost one-quarter of all meals served by the program.

In addition to providing meals, the sites offered a broad array of activities. Even excluding “free play,” nearly all the sites (93 percent) offered activities other than meals, ranging from swimming to counseling.²⁶ Arts and crafts, educational activities, games and/or sports, swimming, and field trips were each available at more than half the sites. However, these activities were not necessarily available to all children attending the site; even at open sites, the activity programs (such as summer school or day camp) may have required formal enrollment. Children who did not enroll in a formal program may have had less incentive to attend a site solely to receive SFSP meals or may have felt uncomfortable doing so. Although some open sites provided activities on a “drop-in” basis, available data do not show which sites’ activities were open to all children.

2. Comparison of Sites with School Sponsors and Sites with Nonschool Sponsors

Sites with school sponsors and sites with nonschool sponsors had substantially different types of locations, types of meals served, and meal preparation methods. School-sponsored sites also were more diverse in size.

Sites with school sponsors were much less likely than those with nonschool sponsors to be located in urban settings; however, these differences are not statistically significant. Almost two-thirds of sites with nonschool sponsors but only 38 percent of sites with school sponsors were in urban settings (Table II.8). Nearly one-third (31 percent) of school sites were in rural settings, compared with 19 percent of nonschool sites.

Sites with school sponsors were far more likely than their nonschool counterparts to offer breakfast (64 percent versus 35 percent). The fact that schools are accustomed to providing breakfast during the school year may explain this difference. Perhaps because they can be reimbursed only for two meals, sites with school sponsors were less likely to serve a snack.

²⁶Site supervisors reported the activities their site offered.

TABLE II.8
 SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SITES,
 BY SCHOOL/NONSCHOOL SPONSOR
 (Percentage of Sites)

	School	Standard Error	Nonschool	Standard Error
Site Location^a				
Urban	38	(10.0)	63	(8.4)
Suburban	31	(7.7)	18	(6.2)
Rural	31	(7.6)	19	(5.4)
Meals Served				
Breakfast	64	(8.2)	35*	(7.0)
Lunch	100	(0.0)	100	(0.0)
Supper	3	(3.2)	6	(2.5)
Any snack	6	(2.7)	32*	(9.0)
Type of Meal Preparation				
Self-preparation on site	44	(6.9)	19**	(5.7)
Self-preparation at central kitchen	56	(6.9)	10	(5.0)
SFA as vendor	0	(0.0)	20	(7.0)
Private vendor	0	(0.0)	51	(10.8)
Average Daily Attendance, Lunch				
1 to 20	12	(5.5)	1**	(1.2)
21 to 50	21	(5.7)	49	(7.1)
51 to 100	20	(5.7)	40	(6.5)
101 to 300	32	(6.5)	8	(2.7)
>300	15	(5.4)	1	(0.7)
Median	94	(28.0)	50 ^b	(5.6)
Mean	154	(24.0)	66**	(5.6)
Sample Size	78	—	84	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey (2001).

^aInterviewer observation. This measure of rural sites does not necessarily correspond to sites that receive the rural reimbursement rate.

^bStatistical test for difference in medians was not available.

SFA = School Food Authority.

*Significantly different at the .05 level, chi-squared test or *t*-test.

**Significantly different at the .01 level, chi-squared test or *t*-test.

School sites prepared their meals on site or received them from a central kitchen.²⁷ (About half used each method.) Only about 30 percent of nonschool sites prepared their own meals; in most cases, their sponsors purchased prepared meals from a private vendor (51 percent) or from an SFA (20 percent).

Sites with school sponsors varied in size much more than did sites with nonschool sponsors; on average, the former also were larger. School sites were more likely than nonschool sites to serve fewer than 20 lunches per day (12 percent versus 1 percent) and were more likely to serve more than 100 lunches per day (47 percent versus 9 percent). On average, school sites served 154 lunches daily; nonschool sites served 66 lunches daily.

3. Changes in Site Characteristics Since 1986

Changes in site characteristics since 1986 suggest that SFSP sites offered more meals in 2001 than in the past. More sites offered breakfast in 2001 than in 1986. Overall, sites also remained open for more weeks.²⁸

Sites were more likely to serve breakfast than in 1986 (49 percent in 2001 versus 34 percent in 1986) and were less likely to serve supper (5 percent versus 16 percent) (Table II.9). The growth in school-sponsored sites since 1986 partly may account for these changes, as school sites were more likely than nonschool sites to serve breakfast. The decline in residential camps as a percentage of total sites may account for the decline in sites serving supper.

Sites were more likely to be located in a school setting in 2001 (44 percent in 2001 versus 33 percent in 1986) and were less likely to be in a camp setting (10 percent versus 16 percent). The percentage of sites that were very small (an average of 20 or fewer in attendance at lunch) declined, whereas the percentage of sites that were medium in size (21 to 100 in attendance at lunch) or extremely large (more than 300 attending) increased. Sites also tended to be open longer. Sixty-one percent of sites were open for longer than 6 weeks in 2001, compared with 42 percent in 1986.²⁹

²⁷A small proportion of school sites had a private vendor on site to prepare the meals; these sites were coded as “vended” at the sponsor level, but as “on-site preparation” at the site level, as questions about delivery, adjusting food orders, and so forth, did not apply. See Appendix A for further discussion of this issue.

²⁸As noted in the discussion on sponsors in Section B.3.b, the report by Ohls et al. (1988) does not provide standard errors. Assuming an approximate design effect of 2 in the 1986 data, the differences discussed in this section would be statistically significant at the 95 percent level or above.

²⁹Data are not available on the average duration of site programs in 1986.

TABLE II.9
 CHANGES IN SELECTED SITE CHARACTERISTICS
 SINCE 1986
 (Percentage of Sites)

	1986	2001
Meals Served		
Breakfast	34	49
Lunch	99	100
Supper	16	5
Any snack	25	19
Site Setting^{a,b}		
School (public or private)	33	44
Playground/park (not at a school)	17	16
Camp (residential or day)	16	10
Indoor recreational center	14	13
Community center	14	11
Religious organization	11	9
Housing project	5	2
Playground outside on school grounds	1	4
Other	8	13
Average Daily Attendance, Lunch^c		
1 to 20	17	7
21 to 50	24	35
51 to 100	30	30
101 to 300	25	20
>300	5	8
Duration of Service (Calendar Weeks)		
<2	4	0
2 to <4	4	10
4 to 6	50	29
>6	42	61
Open/Enrolled Status^d		
Open site	79	83
Enrolled or camp site	21	17
Sample Size	741^e	162

TABLE II.9 (continued)

SOURCE: The 2001 data are from the SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey and Site Observations (2001). All data are from the interview except where noted. The 1986 data are from Table IV.4 and Table V.1 in Ohls et al. (1988).

^aInterviewer observation in 2001; sponsor report in 1986.

^bMultiple responses allowed.

^cn = 157 for 2001 data.

^dn = 535 for 1986 data, because these data were collected only for sites asked about in the sponsor survey.

^eIn the study by Ohls et al. (1988), characteristics of sites were collected in two ways. Sponsors were asked about the characteristics of one to three of their sites. In addition, site supervisors at visited sites were asked the same questions about their sites. Both sets of data were pooled in the analysis, resulting in the sample of 741 sites.

In both 1986 and 2001, about 80 percent of sites qualified as open sites. This is one aspect of the program that has not changed.

D. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Because most SFSP sites are open to all children who wish to attend, the program does not systematically collect any data on the characteristics of participants. To provide an approximate picture of children served by the SFSP in 2001, site supervisors at the visited sites were asked to estimate the age, sex, and racial and ethnic composition of the children attending their sites. Weighting these data to reflect the number of meals that each site's data represents made it possible to estimate the characteristics of children served by SFSP meals.³⁰ These data reflect site supervisors' impressions and should be viewed as approximate. Nonetheless, they provide the best picture available of the characteristics of SFSP participants.

Based on site supervisors' reports, the SFSP serves primarily elementary-age children. In 2001, 58 percent of meals were served to children in this age group; another 20 percent were served to children of middle-school age (Table II.10). About 17 percent of meals were served to preschool-age children, and about 5 percent were served to high-school age children. Boys and girls were equally represented.

Almost 39 percent of meals were served to African American children, 27 percent to Hispanic children, and 29 percent to white (non-Hispanic) children. A small percentage of meals were served to American Indian or Alaskan native children, Asians or Pacific Islanders, and children of other races.

The distributions of SFSP participants in 2001 by age and sex were very similar to those observed in 1986, but the racial/ethnic distributions appear to be quite different.³¹ The percentage of meals served to African American children is estimated to have dropped from 56 percent in 1986 to 39 percent in 2001 (Table II.11). Meanwhile, meals served to Hispanic children increased 7 percentage points, to 27 percent, and meals served to white (non-Hispanic) children increased 12 percentage points, to 29 percent. Although these trends are interesting, it is important to note that they may not be statistically significant; thus, they may represent sampling

³⁰At many sites, some children attended only some of the available meals. The estimates assume that site supervisors were able to estimate the average characteristics of children attending, even with variation from day to day and from meal to meal.

³¹In 1986, data on characteristics of participants at sites were collected from both sponsors (who were asked about three of their sites) and site supervisors (for sites that were visited), but the questions asked were comparable to those asked in this study.

TABLE II.10

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Grade Level/Age		
Preschool	17	(2.2)
Elementary-school age	58	(2.5)
Middle-school or junior high-school age	20	(2.0)
High-school age	5	(0.8)
Sex (n = 159)		
Female	51	(1.9)
Male	49	(1.9)
Race/Ethnicity (n = 161)		
African American or black, not Hispanic	39	(4.8)
White, not Hispanic	29	(6.4)
Hispanic	27	(3.4)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	(0.8)
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	(1.3)
Other	1	(0.5)
Sample Size	162	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey (2001).

NOTE: These data reflect site supervisors' estimates and should be viewed as approximate. At many sites, some children attended only some of the available meals. The estimates assume that site supervisors were able to estimate the average characteristics of children attending, even with variation from day to day and from meal to meal.

TABLE II.11
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS
 IN 1986 AND 2001
 (Percentage of Meals Served)

	1986	2001
Grade Level/Age		
Preschool	18	17
Elementary-school age	58	58
Middle-school or high-school age	23	25
Age ≥ 18	1	—
Sex		
Female	50	51
Male	50	49
Race/Ethnicity		
African American or black, not Hispanic	56	39
White, not Hispanic	17	29
Hispanic	20	27
American Indian or Alaskan Native	5	2
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	3
Other	—	1
Sample Size	741^a	162^b

SOURCE: The 2001 data are from the SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey (2001). The 1986 data are from Table IV.8 in Ohls et al. (1988).

^aIn the study by Ohls et al. (1988), characteristics of participants attending sites were collected in two ways. Sponsors were asked about the characteristics of participants at one to three of their sites. In addition, site supervisors at visited sites were asked the same questions about participant characteristics. Both sets of data were pooled in the analysis, resulting in the sample of 741 sites.

^bBecause of missing data, n = 159 for tabulations for sex, and n = 161 for race/ethnicity.

variability, rather than a true change in the population.³² (Nationally, the percentage of poor children who were Hispanic increased from 1986 to 2000, the percentage who were African American stayed about the same, and the percentage who were white declined [U.S. Census 2002].) However, the SFSP grew substantially between 1986 and 2001; it is possible it expanded more in areas of the country in which most low-income children are white and Hispanic. Additional research to explore this issue may be useful.

E. SITE SCHEDULING AND TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Key factors affecting participation at a site include the number of weeks and number of days per week that the site is open, the regularity with which children attend the site, and the degree of site accessibility via various means of transportation. In 2001, the majority (62 percent) of sites were open for 6 weeks or longer; 32 percent were open for 8 weeks or longer (Table II.12). Only 10 percent of sites were open for fewer than 4 weeks. On average, sites were open just over 7 weeks. Almost all sites (93 percent) were open for at least 5 days per week, including 6 percent of sites (largely those at residential camps) open for 6 or 7 days per week. According to site supervisors, 82 percent of children attended their sites at least five times per week.³³

Many factors can lead to variations in attendance from day to day (Table II.13). The factors most commonly cited by site supervisors were beyond the sites' control; they included parents' plans (62 percent), illness (47 percent), and weather (46 percent). One factor that SFSP sites can influence is transportation. About 24 percent of site supervisors reported that transportation problems influenced day-to-day attendance.

Site supervisors reported that participants used diverse modes of transportation to reach SFSP sites (Table II.14). At about one-third of sites, at least some children were provided with transportation by the program. Supervisors estimated that 36 percent of children arrived via program-provided transportation. At most sites (82 percent), some children were dropped off by car; about 37 percent of children arrived by car. Given that SFSP sites are intended to serve their immediate neighborhoods, it is not surprising that most sites (72 percent) also served some children who walked or rode bicycles to attend; about one-quarter of children used these means to reach their sites. Very few children used public transportation to reach SFSP sites.

³²Because we do not know the standard errors of the estimates from 1986, we cannot conduct a formal statistical test. However, the differences seem unlikely to be statistically significant. The estimates of meals served to African American and white children in 2001 have standard errors of 4.8 and 6.4, respectively. Thus, the 95-percent confidence interval for the percentage of meals served to African American children ranges from 29.1 percent to 47.9 percent; it ranges from 16.3 percent to 41.3 percent for meals served to white (non-Hispanic) children.

³³The estimate weighted by meals served gives the best estimates for the population of participants overall.

TABLE II.12
SITE SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE

	Percentage of Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error
Duration of Program (Calendar Weeks)				
1 to <4 ^a	10	(3.1)	10	(4.5)
4 to <6	28	(4.3)	25	(4.5)
6 to <8	30	(5.7)	29	(5.9)
8 to <10	26	(4.8)	27	(4.9)
10 to <12	3	(1.4)	6	(2.8)
≥12 ^b	3	(1.6)	4	(1.7)
Median	7.4	(0.4)	7.5	(0.5)
Mean	7.1	(0.2)	7.2	(0.3)
Number of Days Open per Week				
1 or 2	>0	(0.3)	>0	(0.1)
3 or 4	7	(2.4)	8	(2.8)
5	87	(3.3)	82	(4.2)
6 or 7	6	(2.7)	10	(4.1)
Mean Percentage of Children Who Attend (Times per Week)				
<1	1	(0.9)	0	(0.2)
1 or 2	4	(1.0)	3	(0.7)
3 or 4	18	(2.6)	14	(2.5)
≥5	77	(3.0)	82	(2.9)
Sample Size	162	—	—	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey (2001).

^aThe sample omitted sites open for less than 1 week.

^bIncludes some year-round sites.

TABLE II.13
FACTORS AFFECTING DAY-TO-DAY VARIATION
IN PARTICIPATION AT SITE

	Percentage of Sites	Standard Error
Parents' Plans/Vacation	62	(4.3)
Illness	47	(4.7)
Weather	46	(4.7)
Transportation Issues	24	(5.2)
Parents' Motivation	19	(3.8)
Whether Beginning, Middle, or End of Program/Summer	14	(2.8)
Menu for the Day	13	(3.0)
Activities Offered	12	(3.2)
Day of the Week	12	(3.5)
Time Commitments	8	(2.5)
Timing of Food Stamps or Other Government Benefits	4	(1.9)
Behavioral Issues ^a	1	(0.8)
Other ^b	9	(3.1)
Nothing	1	(0.6)
Don't Know	5	(3.0)
Sample Size	157	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey (2001).

NOTE: Multiple responses were allowed.

^aIncludes children's motivation and behavioral problems.

^bIncludes holidays, lack of air-conditioning, unsafe neighborhood, children sometimes go to another camp.

TABLE II.14

TRANSPORTATION TO SITE

	Percentage of Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Nonrural Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Rural Sites	Standard Error
Some Participants Used This Form of Transportation to Reach Site						
Transportation provided by program	33	(5.1)	26	(5.5)	55	(8.0)
Dropped off by car	82	(4.9)	80	(6.3)	88	(4.8)
Walked or rode bicycle	72	(4.9)	77	(5.7)	57	(7.9)
Public transportation	20	(5.1)	24	(6.3)	9	(5.1)
Other ^a	4	(2.3)	1	(0.6)	13	(8.2)

	Percentage of Meals Served	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served, Nonrural Sites	Standard Error	Percentage of Meals Served, Rural Sites	Standard Error
Mean Percentage of Meals Served to Participants Who:						
Used transportation provided by program	36	(7.0)	28	(8.5)	60	(7.8)
Were dropped off by car	37	(4.3)	38	(5.6)	30	(6.8)
Walked or rode a bicycle	25	(5.9)	31	(7.4)	9	(2.2)
Used public transportation	2	(0.8)	3	(1.1)	1	(0.3)
Other ^a	0	(0.1)	0	(0.2)	0	(0.2)
Sample Size	155	—	95	—	59	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey and Site Observations (2001).

^aIncludes horses, scooters, and skateboards.

Participants in rural areas were less likely than those in nonrural areas to live within walking distance of their sites and therefore were more likely to need transportation assistance (Table II.14).³⁴ Only 9 percent of meals in rural sites were served to participants who walked or rode bicycles to the sites, compared with 31 percent in nonrural sites. Rural sites were much more likely than nonrural sites to provide transportation to at least some children; 55 percent of rural sites but only 26 percent of nonrural sites offered transportation.

Compared with sites that did not provide transportation, sites that provided transportation were more likely to be school, camp, or NYSP sites and were more likely to offer enrolled or camp programs (Table II.15). This finding makes sense, as larger programs and programs that offer structured activities, such as summer school programs, day camps, or residential camps, are more likely to have the resources to offer transportation. At the same time, two-thirds of the sites that offered transportation to some children were open sites; however, these sites may include school sites that provided transportation only to those enrolled in the summer school program. Sites that offered transportation also were more likely to be in rural locations, as noted; 41 percent of sites that offered transportation were rural, versus 17 percent of those that did not offer transportation.

³⁴For the analyses in Tables II.14 and II.15, sites were classified as rural, urban, or suburban based on interviewers' observations. For purposes of this discussion, both urban sites and suburban sites classified as "nonrural." As discussed earlier, data are not available on whether specific sites qualified for rural SFSP reimbursements. If sites are classified as rural on the basis of their *sponsor* reporting operating any sites that qualify for rural reimbursements, results are very similar.

TABLE II.15

CHARACTERISTICS OF SITES THAT PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION
(Percentage of Sites)

	Provide Transportation	Standard Error	Do Not Provide Transportation	Standard Error
Sponsor Type				
School	62	(8.0)	41**	(9.6)
Government	16	(7.5)	46	(9.7)
Camp/Upward Bound/ NYSP	9	(3.5)	1	(0.5)
Other nonprofit	13	(4.7)	12	(4.8)
Type of Site				
Open	67	(8.0)	90*	(4.2)
Enrolled	24	(7.5)	9	(4.1)
NYSP	1	(0.6)	0	(0.1)
Camp/Upward Bound	8	(3.4)	1	(0.5)
Average Daily Attendance, Lunch				
1 to 20	4	(4.2)	8**	(4.0)
21 to 50	18	(7.3)	44	(5.7)
51 to 100	32	(6.5)	30	(6.6)
101 to 300	26	(5.6)	16	(5.9)
>300	19	(5.5)	3	(2.0)
Site Location				
Urban	31	(8.3)	61**	(8.1)
Suburban	28	(6.9)	23	(6.2)
Rural	41	(7.2)	17	(4.9)
Sample Size	78	—	82	—

SOURCE: SFSP Implementation Study, Site Supervisor Survey and Site Observations (2001).

NYSP = National Youth Sports Program.

*Distributions are significantly different at the .05 level, chi-squared test

**Distributions are significantly different at the .01 level, chi-squared test.