

NIQ

Demographics

Food & Beverage

January 13, 2026

“When parents buy products for their children, they’re not just purchasing items—they’re investing in outcomes. These outcomes deliver health, convenience, and peace of mind: protein-fortified kid favorites, beverages that sneak in vegetables, and ready-to-heat meals that save prep time while offering clean ingredients. That’s where the real insight emerges: when nearly half of parents say they’re tired of chasing deals, it’s clear the true currency isn’t price—it’s time. The same desire for better outcomes drives a willingness to pay for productivity, for solutions that reclaim scarce moments in the day. The future of loyalty won’t hinge on discounts; it will be built on time saved, stress reduced, and life simplified.”



Chris Costagli
Vice President,
Thought Leadership
F&B Insights Lead,
NielsenIQ

Parents with children <18 are...

- **3.9x more likely** to skip breakfast because they are too busy with other responsibilities in the morning⁷
- **2.0x more likely** to allow Artificial Intelligence to purchase a product for them on their behalf⁵
- **1.4x more likely** to use third-party mobile scanning apps to research a product’s claims, ingredients, and nutritional profile⁸

NielsenIQ

© 2026 Nielsen Consumer LLC. All Rights Reserved.

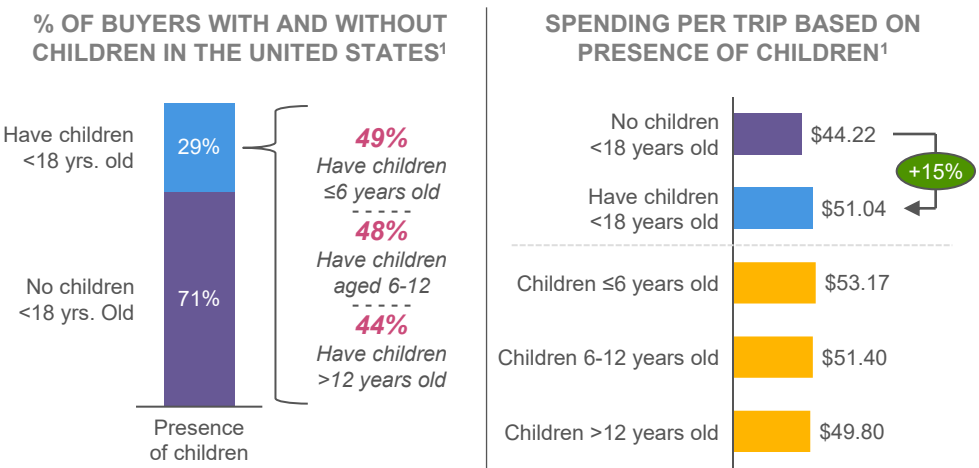


Parents are quietly rewriting the entire FMCG playbook

Households with children under 18 years old

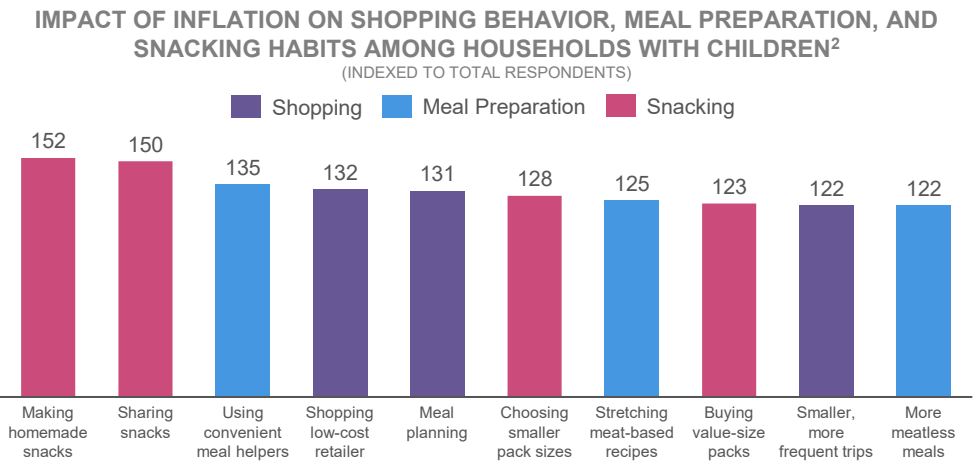
Every child-focused trip is a parent mission in disguise

Households with children aren’t just valuable — they’re a force multiplier: they spend more, buy more units, and shop more often than households without children. Every child-focused trip triggers a secondary “parent mission,” turning the cart into a dual-purpose basket: snacks plus caffeine boosts, lunch fixes plus supplements, team-snacks plus beauty refills. Design for these twin missions and you shift from selling items to capturing entire days.



Choices are intentional, trade-offs are calculated, shortcuts are welcomed

Inflation hasn’t made parents price-driven — it’s made them purpose-driven. With 86% saying grocery prices are up and more than half deeply concerned, the value equation has changed. “Worth it” now means clean ingredients, transparency, and lifestyle alignment. Parents are buying outcomes: nutritional upgrades, hidden-veg wins, heat-and-eat time savers. The currency in the basket isn’t dollars — it’s time, sanity, and perceived payoff.



Industry Analysis Sources: ¹NIQ, Expanded Omnishopper Panel, Total US, Total Outlets, Total Product, 52 Weeks Ending 11/29/2025; ²NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=1,002, December 2025; ³NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=1,005, April 2025; ⁴NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=1,005, September 2025; ⁵NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=1,021, November 2025; ⁶NIQ, Expanded Omnishopper Panel, Powered By Product Insights, Total US, Total Outlets, Food Department, 52 Weeks Ending 11/29/2025; ⁷NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=1,005, June 2025; ⁸NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, n=1,000, May 2025

Notes: *Dotted lines represent the upper and lower limit thresholds for significance.

Authors: Chris Costagli, Vice President, Thought Leadership, Food & Beverage Insights Lead; Maria Camila Garnica, Industry Analyst

NIQ

Demographics

Food & Beverage

The takeaway...

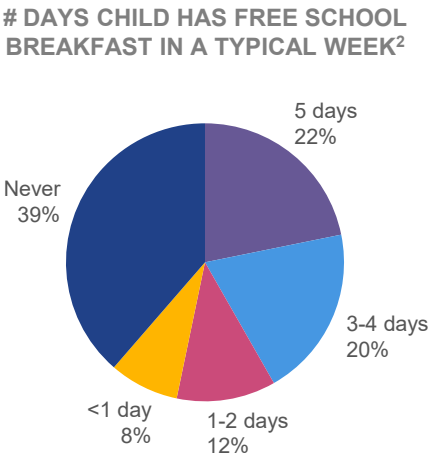
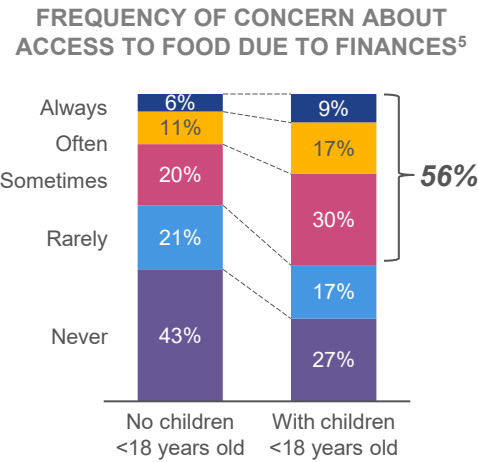
- Parents are carrying more than the weight of the basket. They're shopping while tired, pressured, budget-stretched, and deeply aware that every choice affects their child's — and their own.
- Families are making trade-offs you can't see at the shelf. When food insecurity and rising costs collide, parents quietly shift to channels and formats that offer predictability.
- "Healthy" today is not out of aspiration; it stems from protection. Parents are scanning for allergens, processing cues because they are trying to keep their children safe.

Your next move...

- Build for the parent's whole day, not the trip. Create mission-stacked zones that mirror reality: after-school + fast-fix dinner bundles or team snacks + self-care essential endcaps
- Treat speed, certainty, and clarity as value drivers — badge them everywhere.
- Cost, nutrition, and convenience must coexist. Reformulate for the new baseline and integrate nutrition-forward, budget-friendly options into mainstream aisles — not relegated to discount zones.

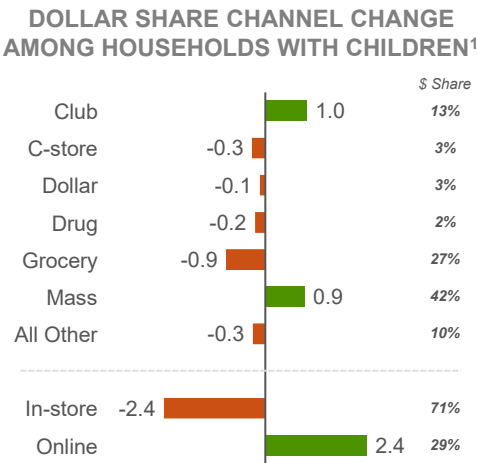
Food insecurity is a growing fault line

For many families, the question isn't which better-for-you snack to choose — it's whether the food will last the week. Over half worry about running out, and more than half rely on school breakfasts weekly. Affordability, nutrition, and accessibility are no longer separate conversations — they're inseparable realities. The industry's mandate is clear: reduce the burden, expand access, and innovate for budgets without compromising health.



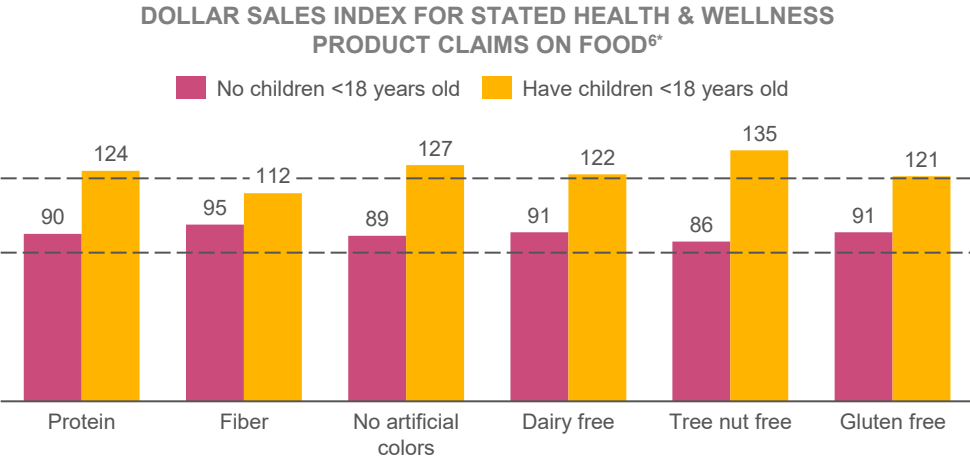
Channel choice decides the basket

Shopper-perceived value goes beyond products—channels and retailers shape the experience. Among households with children, 78% say Club makes it easy to get everything they need, and 86% shop Club at least monthly, with nearly a quarter visiting weekly³. Club delivers volume value and trip efficiency, collapsing multiple missions into one. For brands not on those shelves, the cost isn't just lost sales—it's lost relevance.



Parents are raising the bar

Gen Alpha's parents are redefining what "good" looks like in the food choices they make. In snacking categories for example, they are gravitating towards options made with natural ingredients, boosted with protein, lower in sugar, and free from ultra-processing. They are seeking out clean label certifications and allergen-free formulations. This trend is not a passing preference, it's an emerging parental safeguard rooted in health, safety, and trust.



Questions?

Chris Costagli
VP, F&B Thought Leadership
Chris.Costagli@NielsenIQ.com

In the next decade, today's overloaded parents will become the quiet force reshaping how food is designed, discovered, and delivered—expecting retailers to anticipate needs before they're voiced and manufacturers to build products that collapse nutrition, safety, and convenience into one effortless decision. What begins now with clean labels and school-safe cues will evolve into predictive ecosystems where carts autofill around budgets, health goals, and household rhythms. Retailers who curate friction-free experiences and manufacturers who engineer no-compromise solutions will define the new standard of trust.