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Participation in the USDA National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Elementary School Survey

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Food and Fitness Elementary School Survey

- 2007-8
- Sampled from all schools with a 3rd grade
- Response rates: 70.6% (748 schools) for public schools and 84.4% (336 schools) for private schools.
- Funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

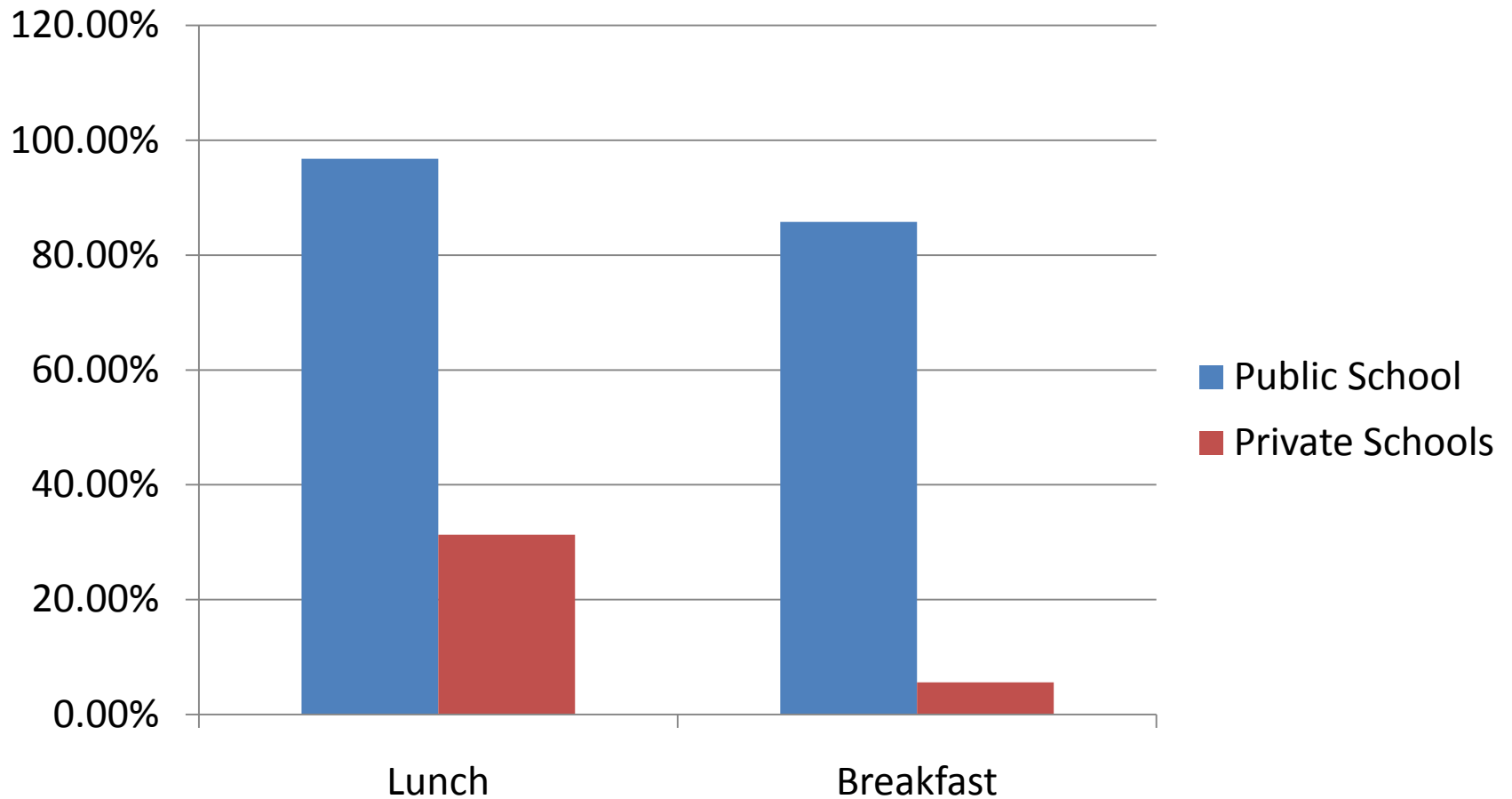
Objectives

- Measure school participation rates for public and private schools
- Elicit reasons for school non-participation
- Measure student participation rates for public and private schools
- Identify determinants of student participation rates

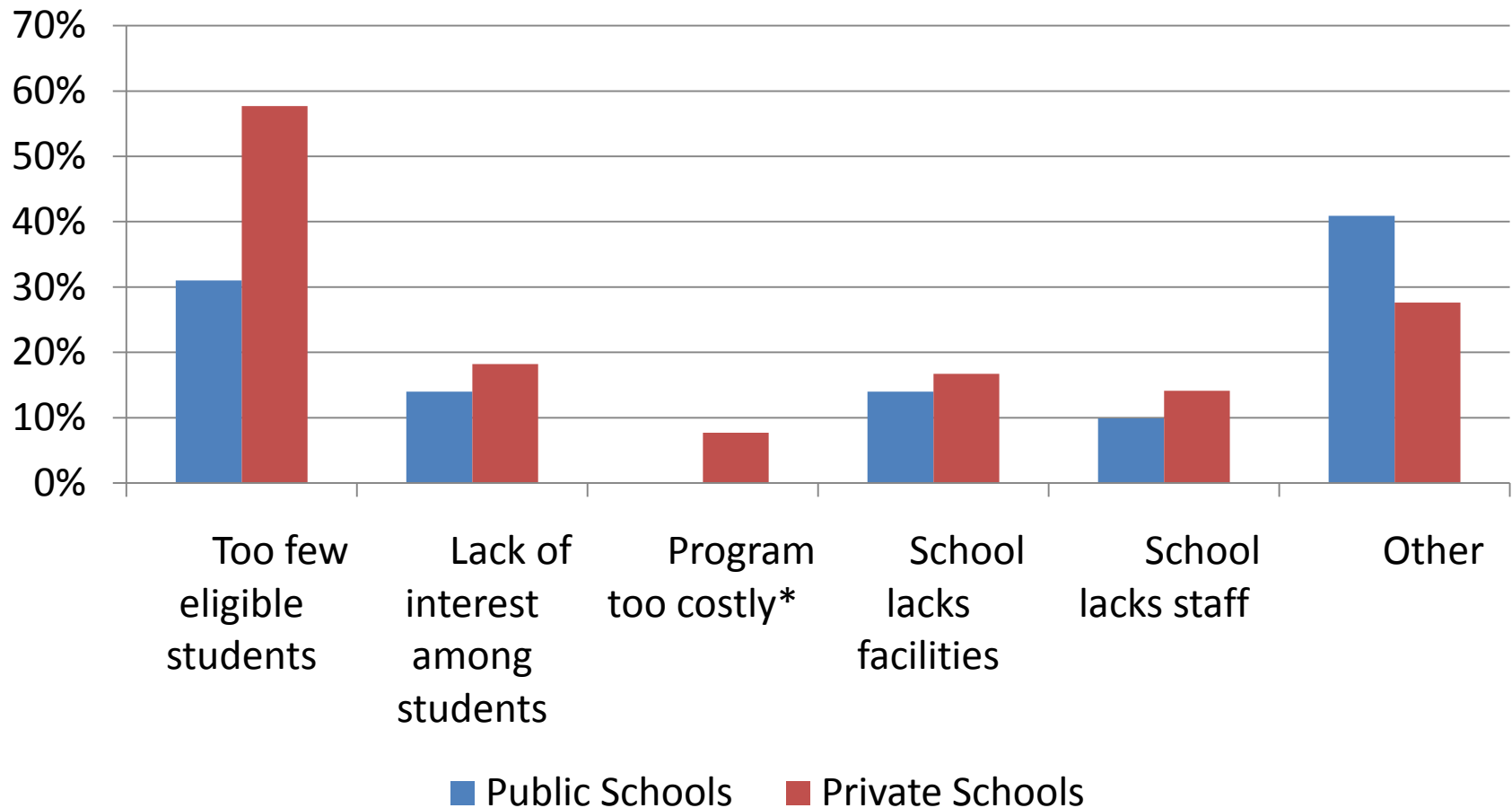
USDA School Meals at a Glance

- Lunches and Breakfasts meet nutritional and standards
- Free meals for students in households below 130% of poverty, reduced price meals for those at 130-185% poverty
- USDA reimbursements school districts \$2.72 per free lunch served, \$2.32 per reduced-price lunch, \$0.26 per full-price lunch.
- Breakfast reimbursement: \$1.48, \$1.18, \$0.26

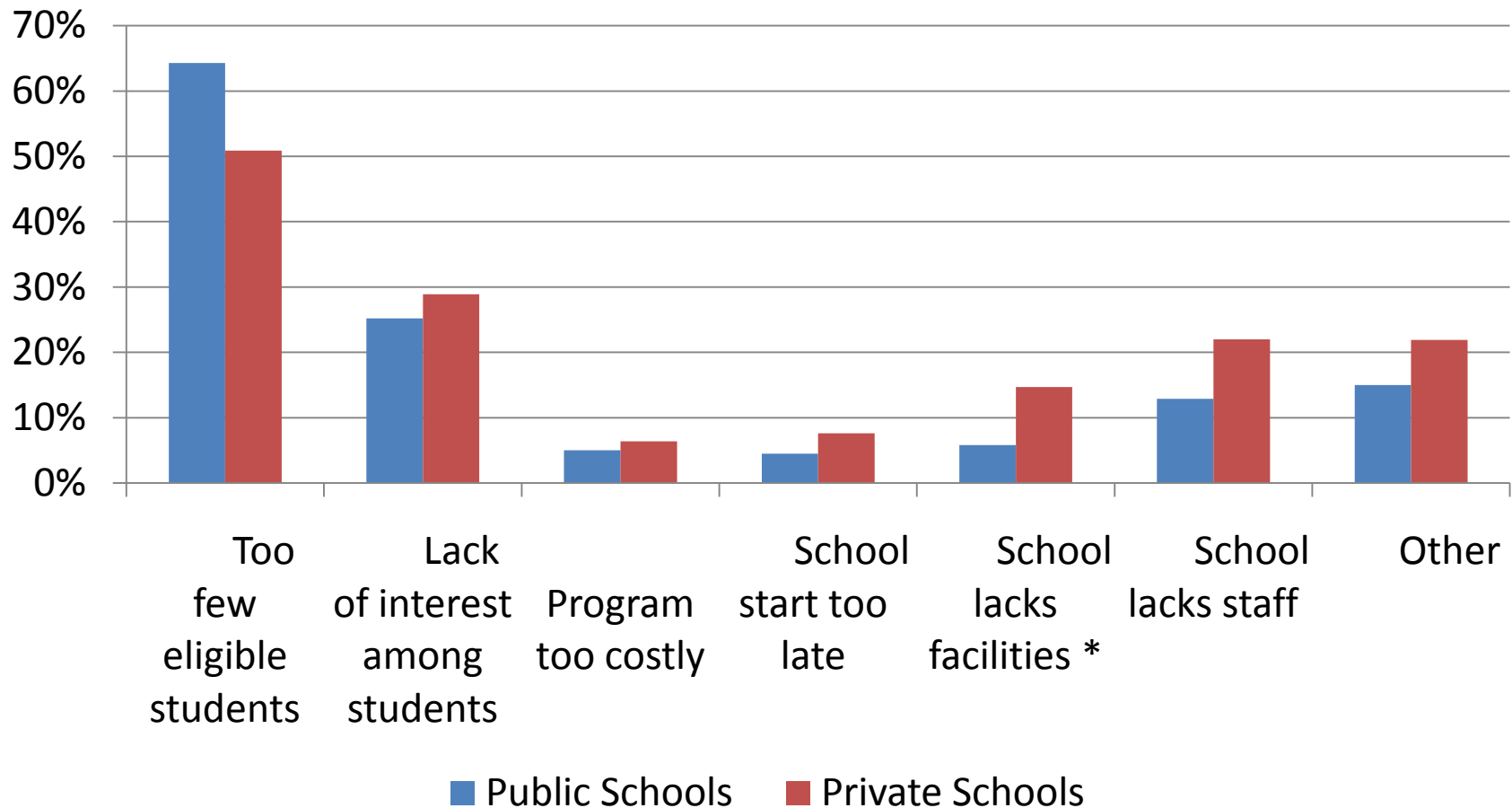
School Participation in USDA School Meals



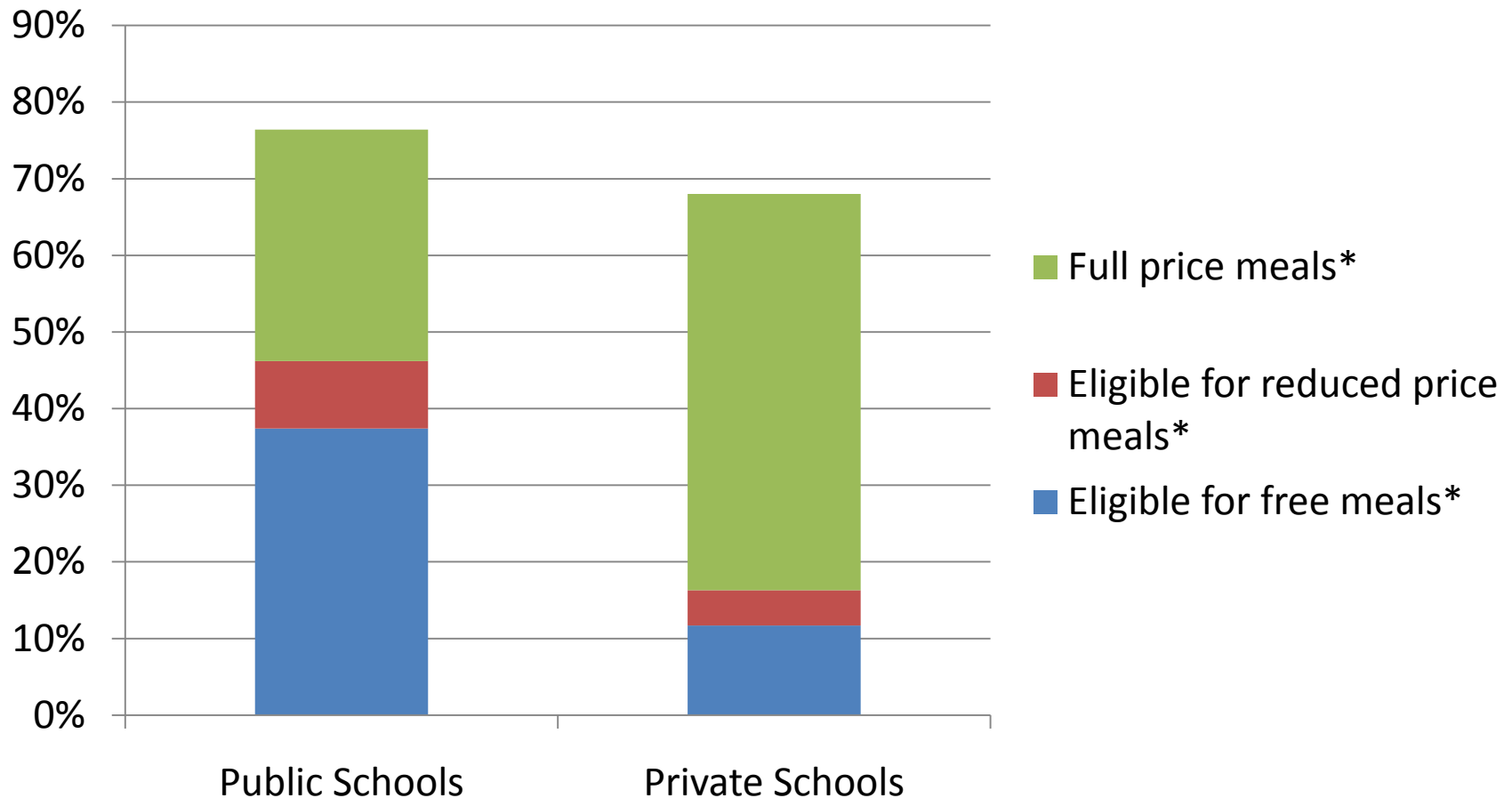
Schools' Reasons for Not Participating in USDA Lunch



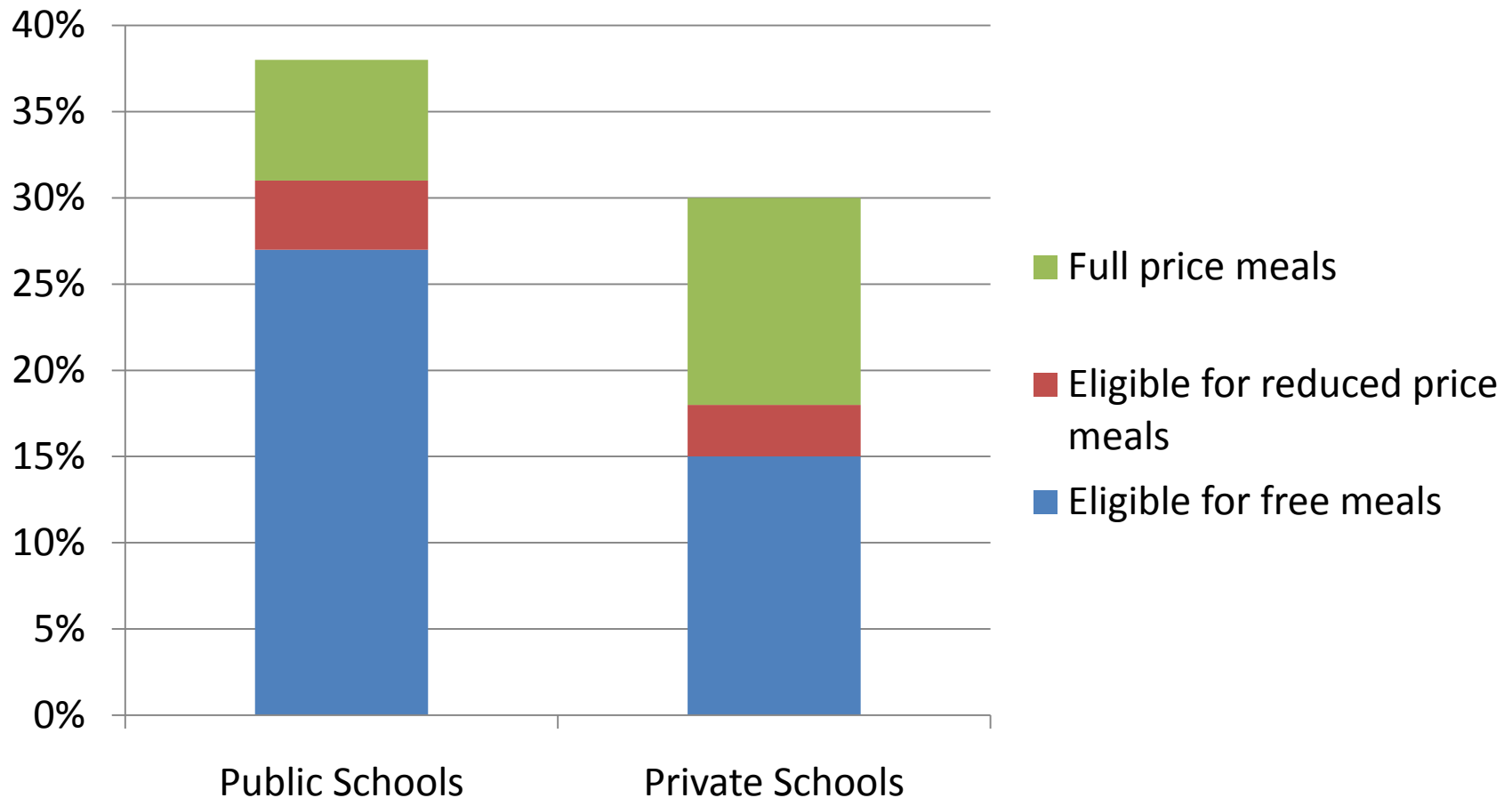
Schools' Reasons for Not Participating in USDA Breakfast



Students' Participation in the National School Lunch Program



Students' Participation in the School Breakfast Program



Determinants of USDA School Meal Free/Reduced price Take-up Rates

	Breakfast	Lunch
Reduced breakfast/lunch price at no cost	0.1510***	0.0284
Public school	0.1848*	0.0767*
Percentage of black students	0.1403*	0.1405***
Percentage of Hispanic students	-0.1806**	0.0571
Commercial food available	-0.0384	0.0127
Food information provided	0.0163	-0.0067
Nutritionist available at school	0.0865***	0.0052
Other breakfast/lunch option	-0.0171	-0.0218
Eligibility rate	0.1866	-0.0329
Household income	-0.0121	-0.0050
Observations	299	436
R-squared	0.1931	0.0487

Determinants of USDA School Meal Full-price Take-up Rates

	Breakfast	Lunch
Full breakfast/lunch price	-0.1138*	-0.0499
Public school	-0.1315	-0.0640
Percentage of black students	-0.0357	-0.0365
Percentage of Hispanic students	-0.2640***	-0.1324*
Commercial food available	-0.0644**	-0.0969***
Food information provided	0.0060	-0.0183
Nutritionist available at school	0.0329	0.0177
Other breakfast/lunch option	-0.0352	-0.0013
Eligibility rate	0.4341***	0.2038**
Household income	0.0066	-0.0117
Observations	269	465
R-squared	0.1855	0.1102

Student Participation Findings

- Higher eligibility rate associated with higher participation of full-price students, not free/reduced
- Presence of commercial food associated with lower participation of full-price students, not free/reduced
- Higher price associated with lower breakfast participation for full-price students ($p < 0.05$)
- Weak price effect on lunch ($p = 0.17$)