

lab presents:

HOW TO BE KID*FRIENDLY

THE FAST-FOOD EDITION

Kids are big business for fast food.

A quarter of QSR traffic is from families with kids under 13.

25%

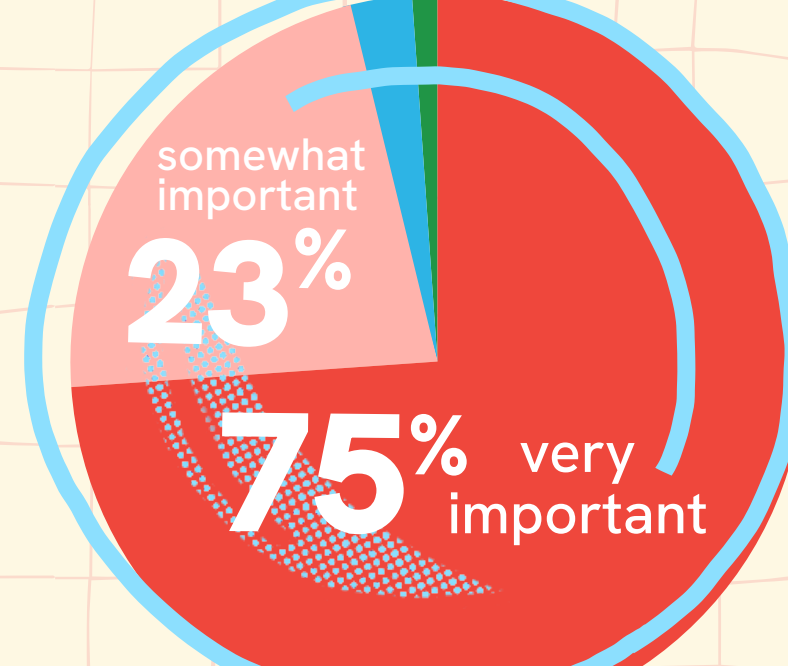
Last year, that totaled

\$54.5 Billion!

Source: Circana, Inc./CREST® Year ending Dec 2025

That's why being kid-friendly pays off.

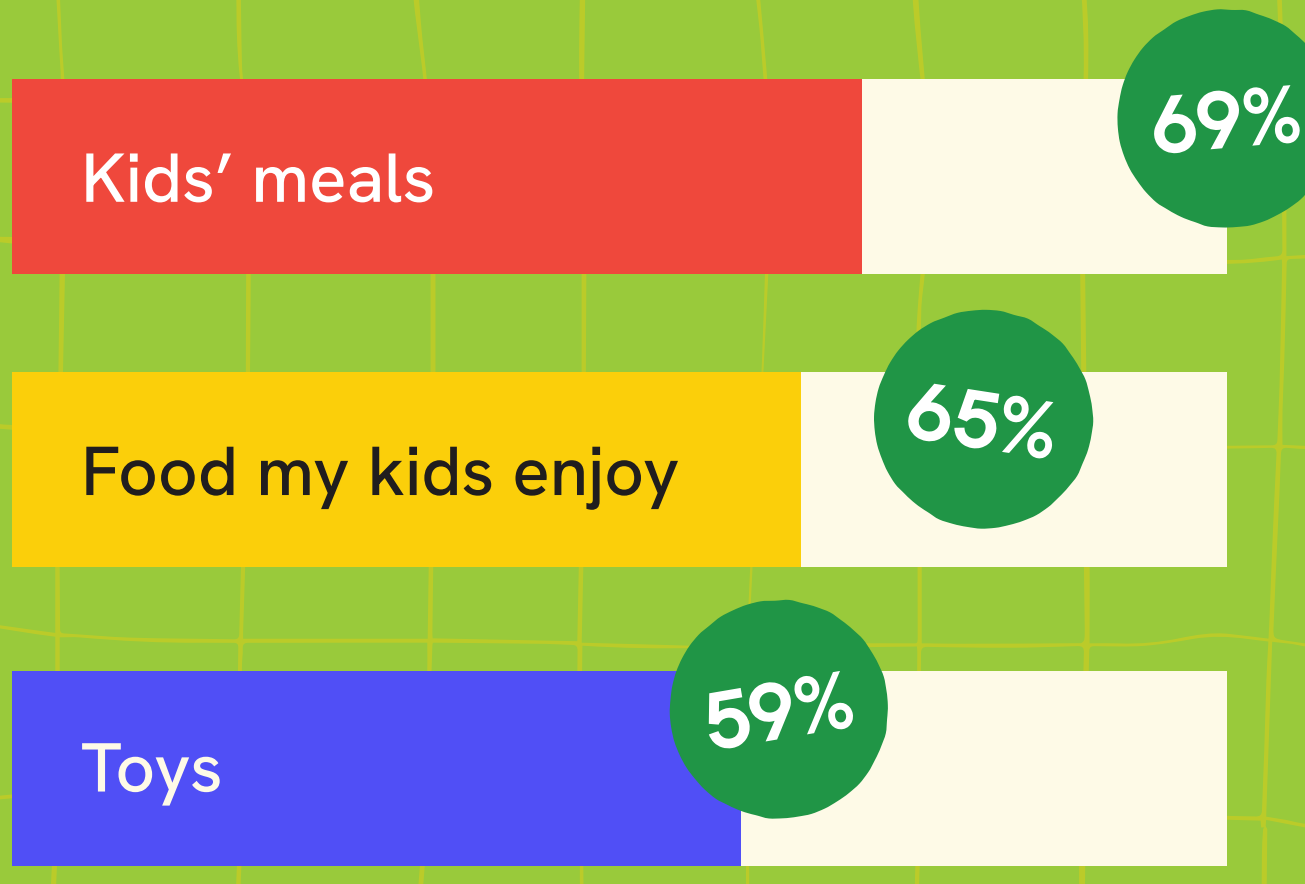
3 in 4 parents say a restaurant's kid-friendliness is VERY important when they're choosing where to eat.



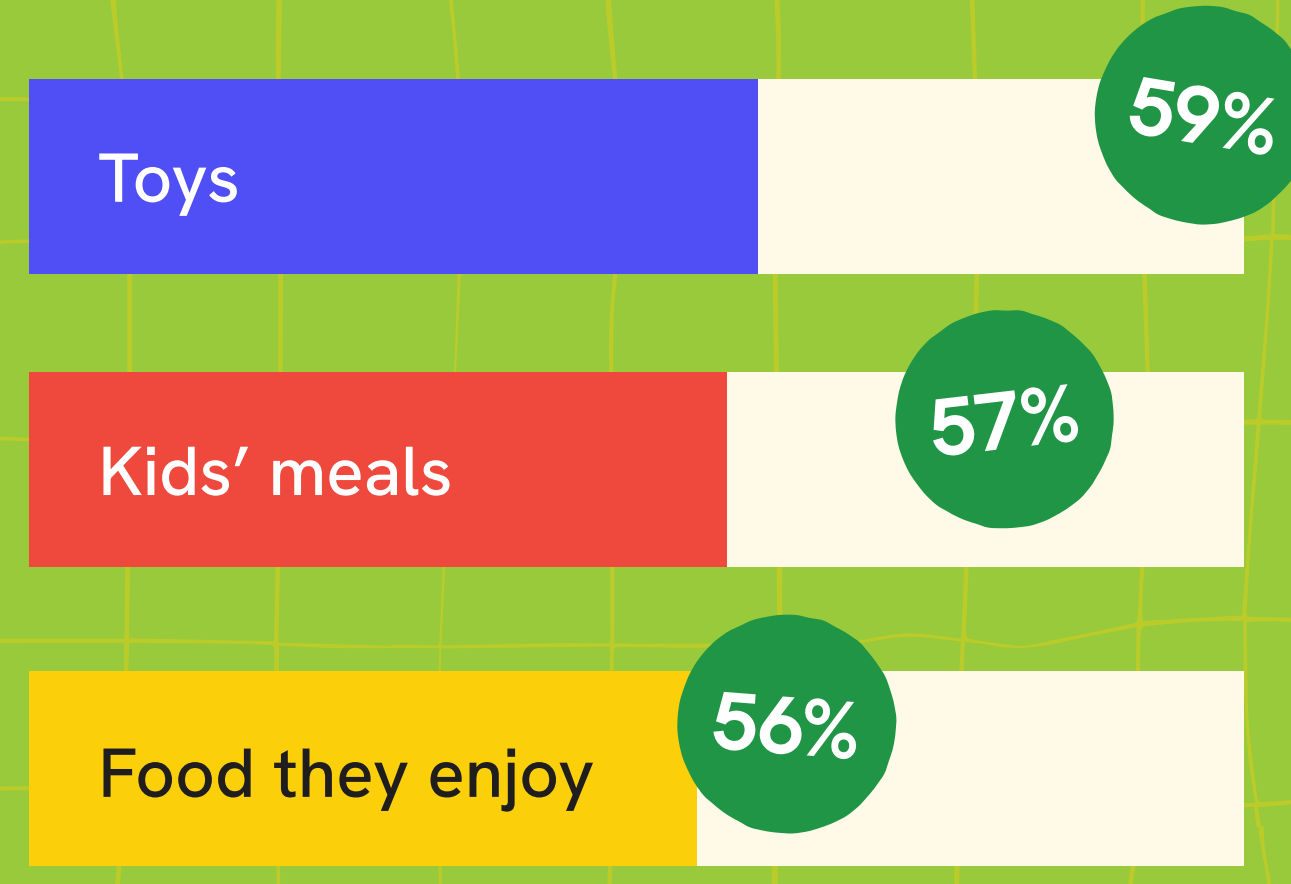
What does it take to be kid-friendly?

Food + Fun!

The top 3 things parents are looking for:



The top 3 things kids are excited about:

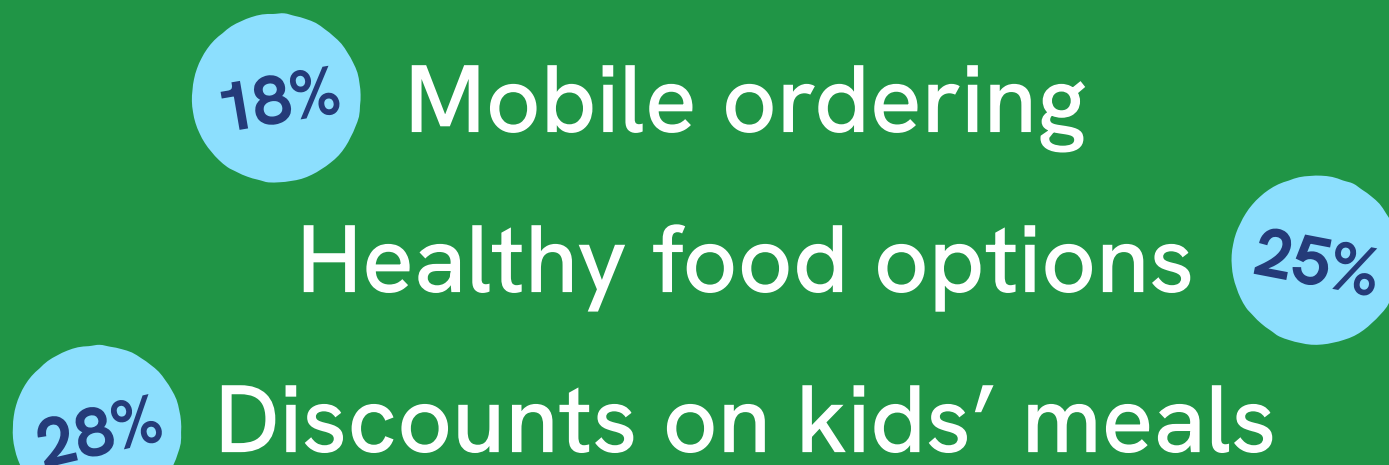


Honorable Mentions

Kid-specific packaging
Kids' play area

Kids' drinks and cups
Brand has characters/mascots kids like

What's at the bottom of the list for kid-friendliness?

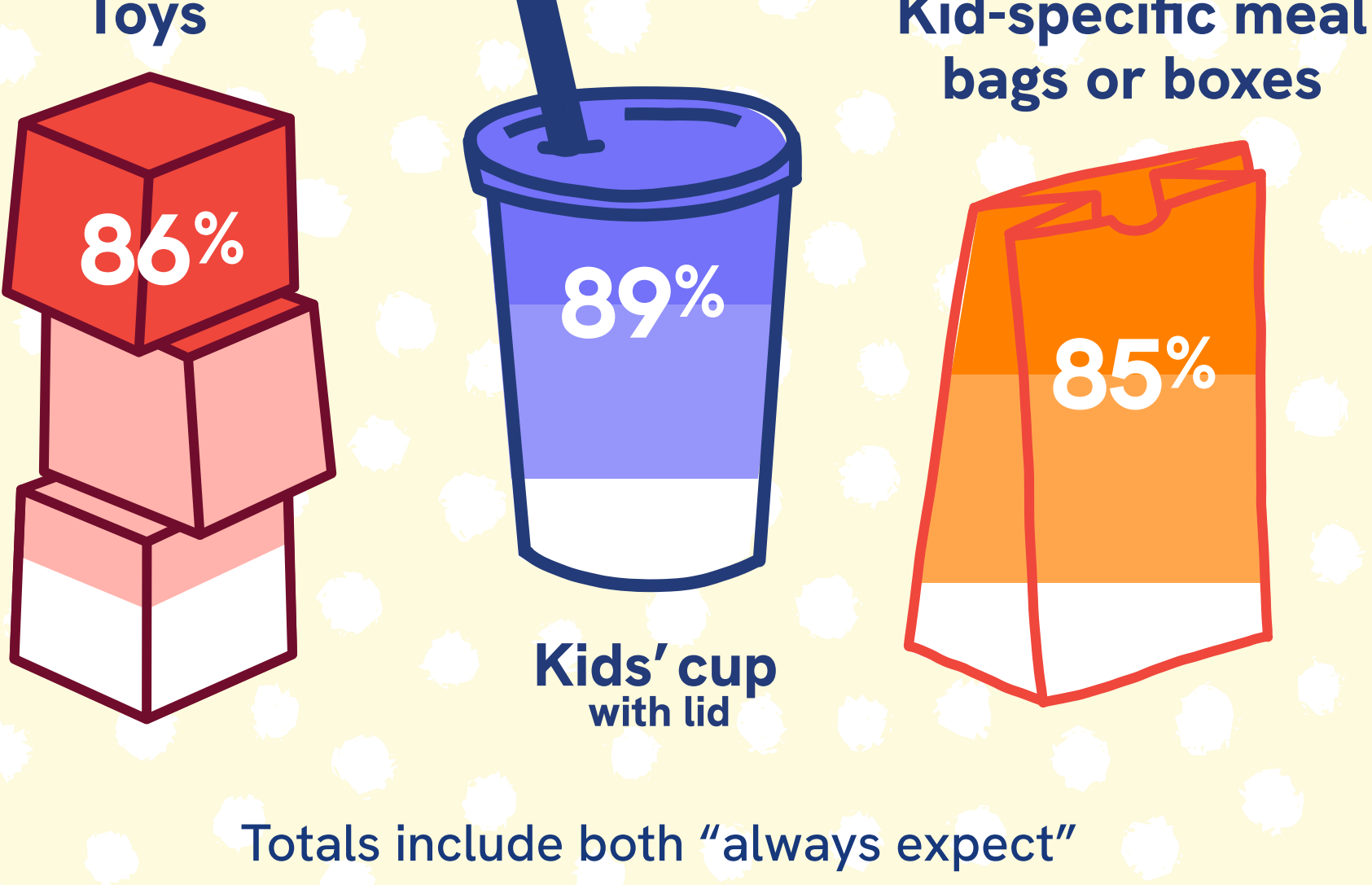


Big expectations

Don't disappoint!

Parents expect a lot from kid-friendly QSRs. Over 8 out of 10 families surveyed expect to receive toys and special kids' meal packaging when they order a kids' meal!

Which of the following do you EXPECT from a kid-friendly fast-food restaurant?



Totals include both "always expect" and "usually expect" responses.

Not only are core kids' meal components expected, they are vital to kids' fast food experience.

How important are each of the following?

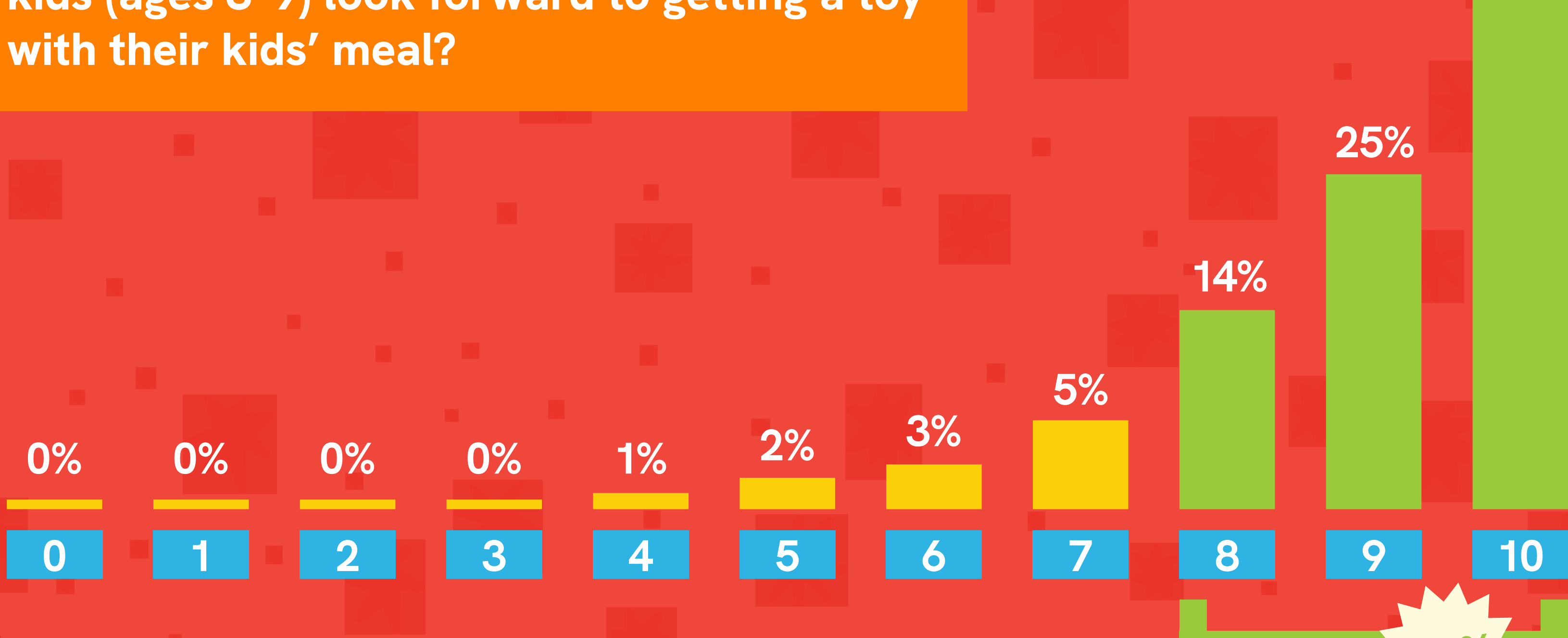


Totals include "important" and "very important" responses.

The story on toys...

Toys build excitement and anticipation!

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do your kids (ages 3-9) look forward to getting a toy with their kids' meal?



89%



Obviously the kids love 'em... But so do 85% of parents!

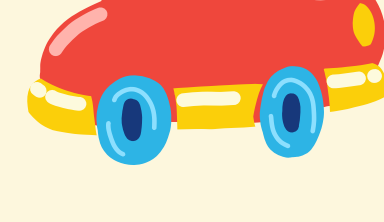
Why do parents love kids' meal toys?

"Kids like getting a surprise toy with their food!"

"Toys in kids meals always make kids excited to go there!"

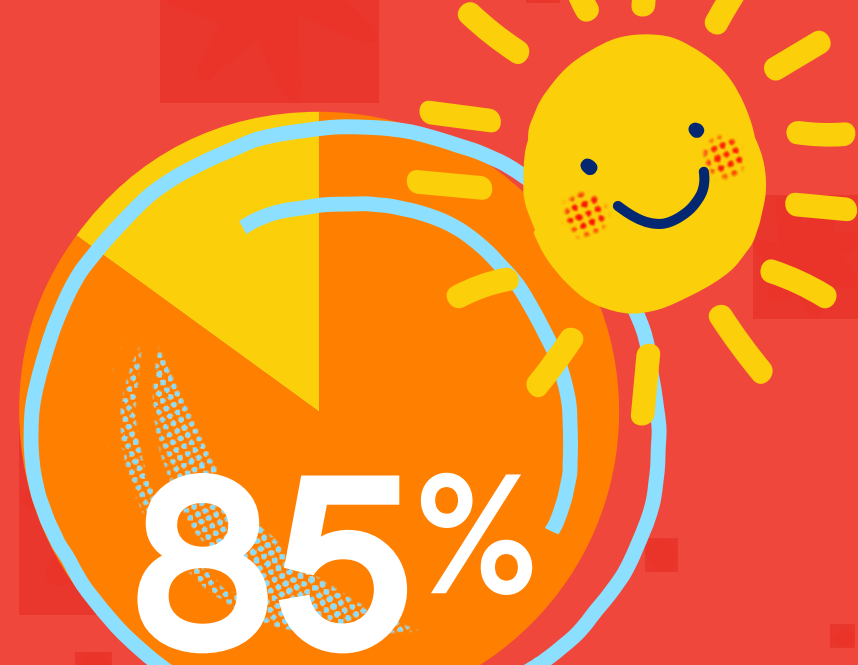
Top 9 benefits of fast food including toys in kids' meals

- Fun for kids
- Exciting surprise for kids
- Gets kids excited about going to that restaurant
- A small gift for kids
- Something to play with while we eat
- Give kids a new toy to play with at home
- Encourages creativity, imagination & pretend play
- An incentive or reward for my kids
- Something to entertain kids while the adults have a conversation

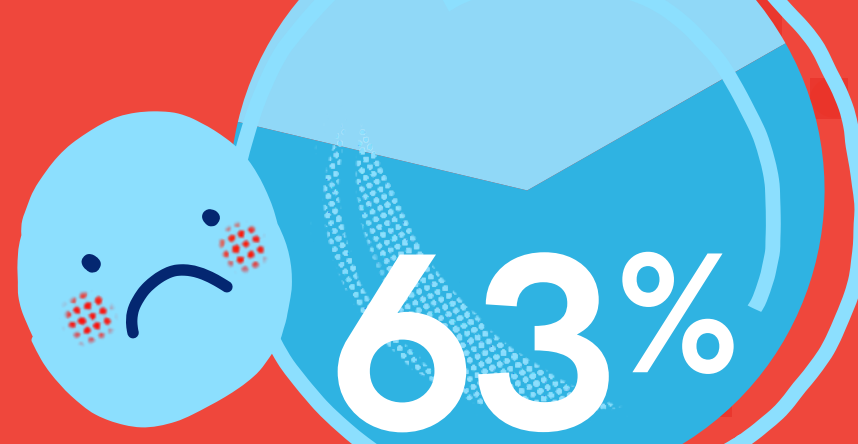


"A small toy or prize makes the meal feel special!"

"Collectible toys in kids meals are something children really enjoy!"



85% of parents feel positively about fast-food restaurants that offer toys in kids' meals



63% of parents say their kid would like a kids' meal less if it came without a toy

The best kids' giveaways

at fast food restaurants

- Is a toy my kids can play with
- Lets my kids get creative
- Is something my kids will keep using or playing with at home
- Inspires my kids to use their imagination or play pretend
- Is something they can easily play with in the car
- Is something my kids can build or put together
- Is silly or makes my kids laugh
- Is a mystery until it's opened, so it's a surprise
- Has a whole set to collect
- Has educational content
- Is something cute or cuddly
- Features characters from the latest popular kids' movie, TV show or video game
- Is something we can do or play together as a family
- Encourages my kids to get active or play outside

Win with families

The fastest way to a family's heart is through the kids. When you make them feel welcome, you win over the whole family—and that's just winning, period.

Wanna learn more about kid-friendliness? We should talk.

Updated July 2026

Source (unless otherwise noted): C3 Kid-Friendly Restaurant Study, March 2026, n=1002 parents of kids 3-9.

If you have questions about families, restaurants or kid customers, drop us a note! If we don't have the answer, we'll figure it out together.

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