# Food insecurity among CSUF Students: Findings from the UCLA-CSUF Study

During Spring 2024, we surveyed a 25% stratified random sample representative of the CSUF student body. The sample also included an oversample of Black students in order to more accurately capture racial/ethnic differences. 771 students completed the survey. We provide the breakdown by socio-demographic characteristics for groups of students that had at least 10 respondents.

46% students were food insecure

Figure 1. Food security levels reported by CSUF students (n=700)
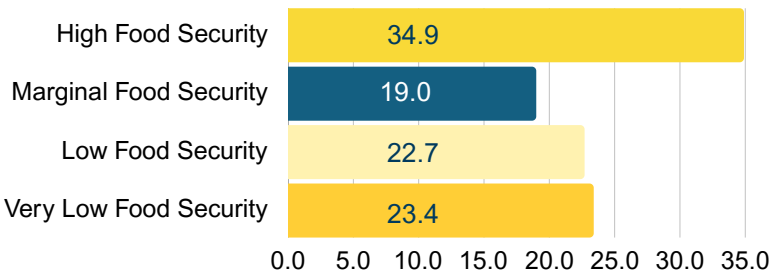
Using the validated USDA household measure, 35% reported having high food security (no difficulty accessing food nor experiencing limitations). 46% reported being food insecure; 23% were low food secure (decreased the quality, variety or desirability of their diet) and 23% were very low food secure (changed their eating patterns and reduced their intake (Figure 1). 19% were marginally food secure (anxious about having enough food but did not change their diet or the amount eaten).

Figure 2. Percentage of food insecure students by race/ethnicity

p-value *<0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001
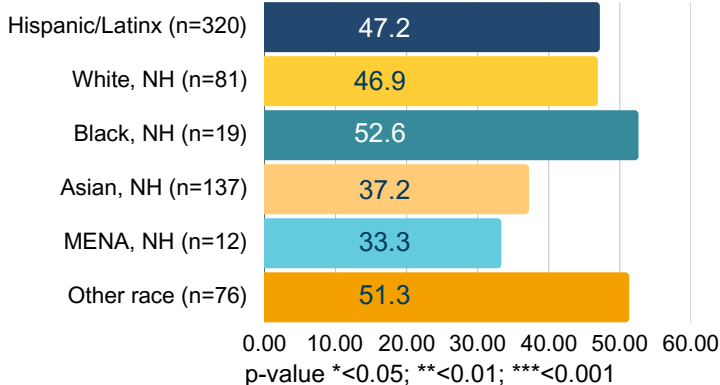
Other race includes American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiple race.
NH = non-Hispanic; MENA = Middle Eastern & North African

High rates of food insecurity existed across student racial and ethnic group. Figure 2 shows that non-Hispanic Black students reported the highest rates of food security followed closely by students of Other race. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

Figure 3. Percentage of food insecure students by student sociodemographic characteristic
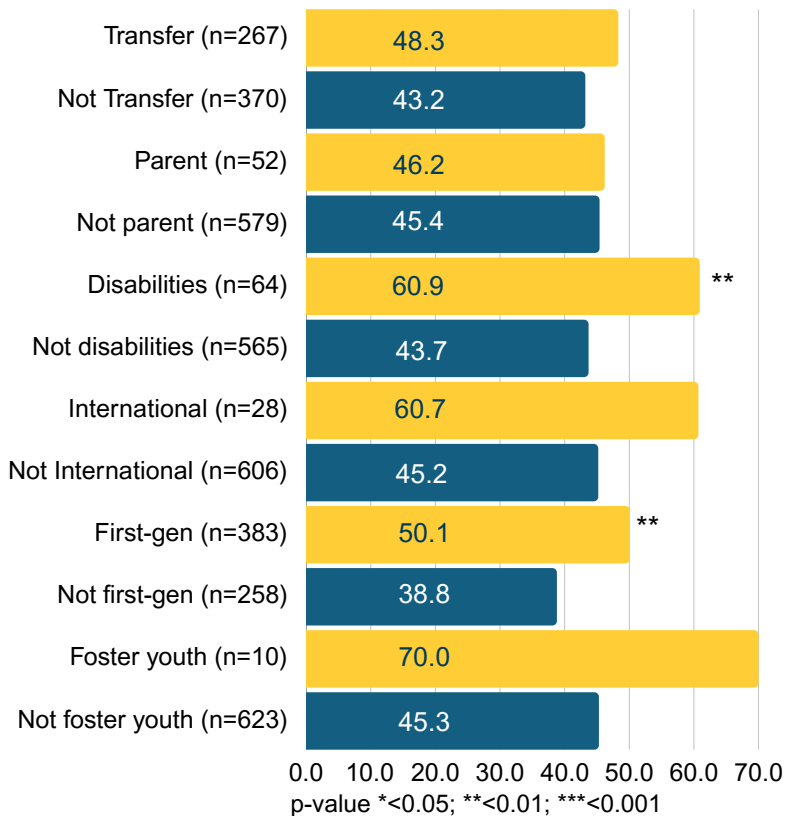

p-value *<0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001

Figure 3 shows that students with disabilities, international students, first-generation college students and students who had been in the foster system reported the highest rates of food insecurity. These differences were only statistically significant for students with disabilities and first-generation college students, possibly due to the relatively few international students and foster youth who participated in the study.

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Figure 4. Use and awareness of food assistance programs by food insecurity status

Campus food pantry

Insecure: 14.9 | 18.1 | 49.2 | 17.8 *

Secure: 11.2 | 10.7 | 57.0 | 21.1

0.0 20.0 40.0 60.0 80.0 100.0

CalFresh

Insecure: 15.6 | 26.3 | 44.8 | 13.3 ***

Secure: 11.0 | 16.5 | 62.1 | 10.4

0.0 20.0 40.0 60.0 80.0 100.0

Campus CalFresh App. Assitance

Insecure: 6.5 | 46.6 | 45.6 ***

Secure: 62.7 | 35.3

0.0 20.0 40.0 60.0 80.0 100.0

Legend: ■ Currently use it ■ Used it ■ Heard of it, but never used ■ Never heard of it
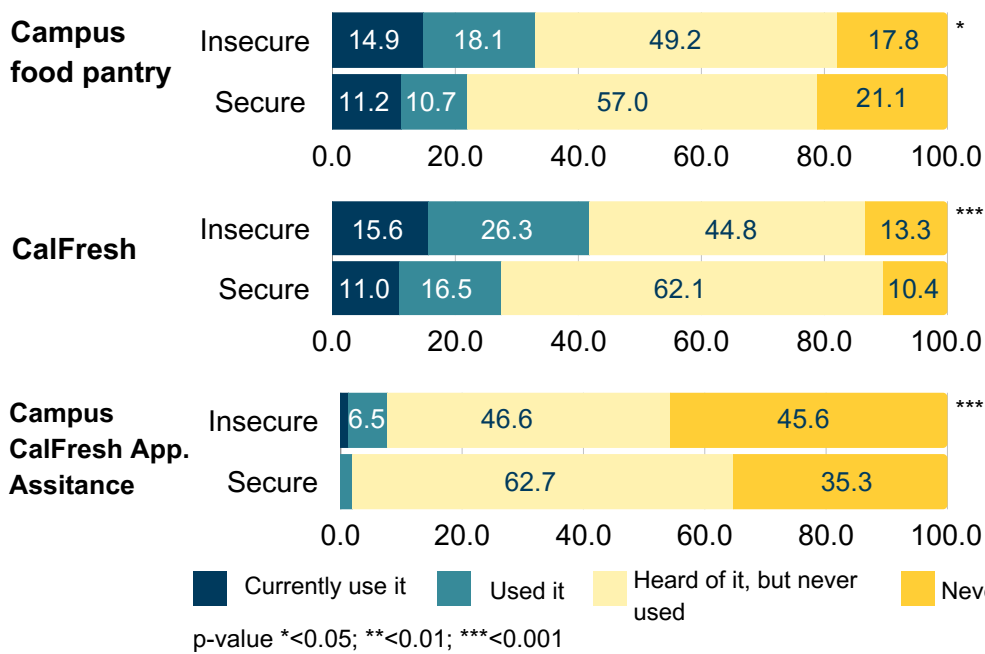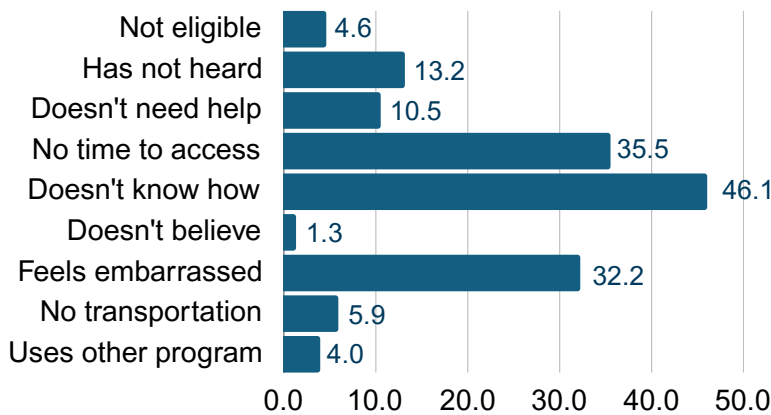
p-value *<0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001

Figure 4 highlights students' use and awareness of the ASI Food Pantry, CalFresh and the campus CalFresh application assistance. CalFresh, federally known as SNAP, provides monthly food benefits. While more food insecure students use the food pantry and are receiving CalFresh benefits than food secure students, close to one in five students do not know that there is a campus food pantry. Over half of the students who are food insecure have also heard of these resources but do not use them.

Figure 5. Reasons why food insecure students do not use the campus food pantry (n=152)

Not eligible: 4.6
Has not heard: 13.2
Doesn't need help: 10.5
No time to access: 35.5
Doesn't know how: 46.1
Doesn't believe: 1.3
Feels embarrassed: 32.2
No transportation: 5.9
Uses other program: 4.0

0.0 10.0 20.0 30.0 40.0 50.0

Suggesting important avenues for interventions, Figure 5 shows reasons why food-insecure students who have heard of the food pantry do not use it, with 46% reporting not knowing how, 35% not having time, and 32% feeling embarrassed accessing this resource.

Figure 6. Reasons why food insecure students do not use CalFresh (n=138)

Not eligible: 39.9
Has not heard: 12.3
Doesn't need help: 7.3
No time to access: 11.6
Doesn't know how: 30.4
Doesn't believe: 0.7
Feels embarrassed: 10.9
No transportation: 2.9
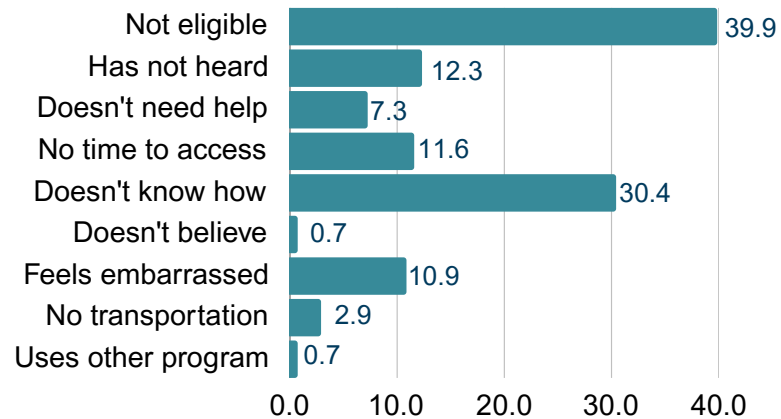Uses other program: 0.7

0.0 10.0 20.0 30.0 40.0

Figure 6 shows reasons why food-insecure students who have heard of CalFresh do not use it. 40% of students reported not being eligible and 30% didn't know how to access it.

Figure 7. Reasons why food insecure students do not use campus CalFresh application assistance (n=144)

Not eligible: 22.2
Has not heard: 15.3
Doesn't need help: 9.7
No time to access: 14.6
Doesn't know how: 27.8
Doesn't believe: 0.0
Feels embarrassed: 4.9
No transportation: 4.2
Uses other program: 3.5

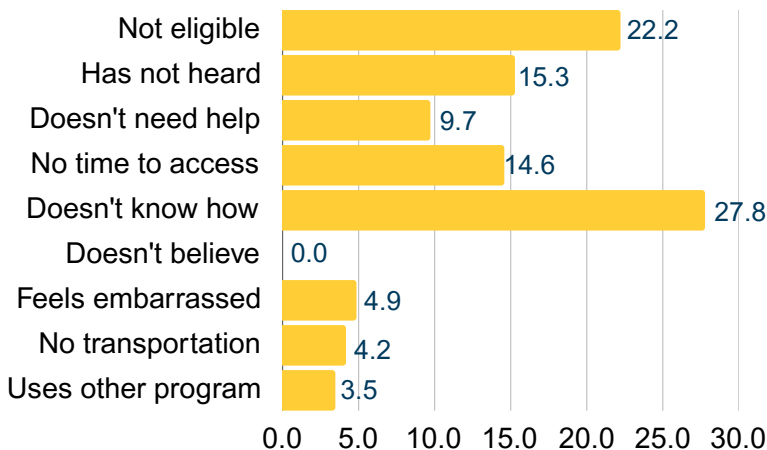0.0 5.0 10.0 15.0 20.0 25.0 30.0

Figure 7 highlights reasons why CSUF students who have heard of the campus CalFresh application assistance do not use it, with 28% not knowing how, 22% not being eligible, and 15% not having the time to access it. These findings indicate opportunities to increase awareness of eligibility criteria and how students can access the assistance.