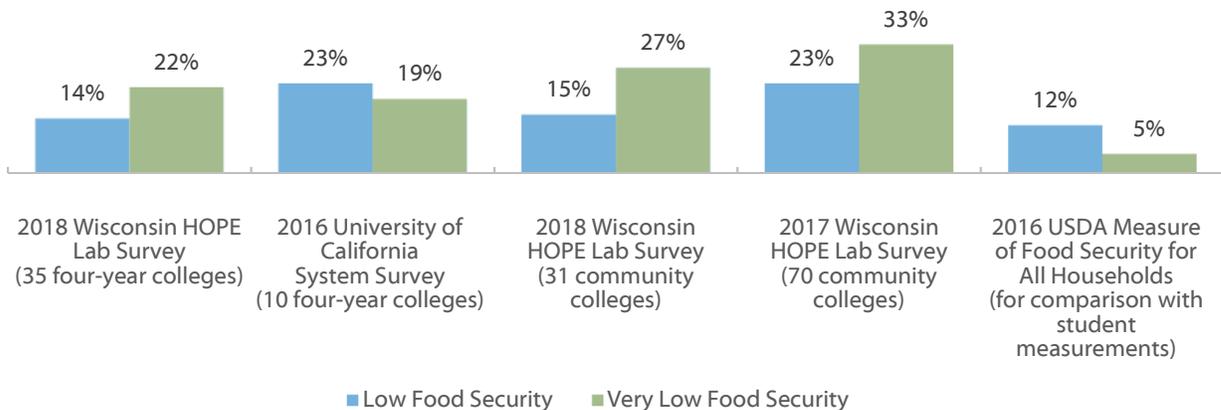


Recent Studies of Food Security Amongst College Students find Similar Results, High Levels of Food Insecurity

Recent Studies of Food Security Amongst College Students Using the U.S. Department of Agriculture Scale



A growing body of research has explored the degree to which postsecondary students are struggling to meet their basic needs, such as housing and food. While more research is needed to explore the extent to which basic needs insecurity affects student success, it is reasonable to assume that students who struggle with hunger, nutrition, and/or finding safe shelter will have a more difficult path to earning a degree. Providing and connecting resources (e.g., food pantries, financial education, emergency aid, transportation vouchers) to these students may affect their success in college.

The measurement tool designed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines low food security as “reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet” and very low food security as “reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.” While no nationally representative research is available for food insecurity among college students, a number of studies have found similar, troubling levels of food insecurity.

The most recent study, a 2018 survey of students attending 66 colleges conducted by the Wisconsin HOPE lab, found that 36 percent of students at four-year colleges, and 42 percent of students at community colleges experience low or very low food security. The survey was open to any college that wanted to participate. The 66 colleges were mostly public, two-year and four-year, and from the Northeast and South regions of the U.S. The results were similar to results from two previous rounds of this survey.

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2017. Definitions of food security. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security/>; Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Schneider, J., Hernandez, A., & Cady, C. (2018). Still Hungry and Homeless in College. Wisconsin HOPE Lab. <http://wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf>; Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. (2017). Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education. Wisconsin HOPE Lab. <http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf>; Martinez, S., Maynard, K., & Ritchie, L. (2016). Student food access and security study. University of California Global Food Initiative. <http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/july16/e1attach.pdf>; Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2017. Household Food Security in the United States in 2016, ERR-237, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err-237.pdf?v=42979>.

