

2023 FOOD AND HOUSING SURVEY SPOTLIGHT

MAJORITY OF STUDENTS FACE BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

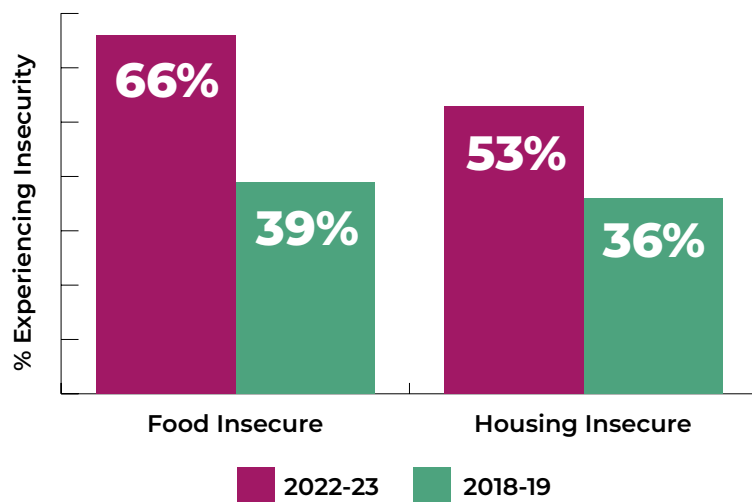


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New survey results show students' food and housing insecurity are rising. The California Student Aid Commission administered a survey in the 2022-23 academic year to measure the level of food and housing security among 24,000 college students across all segments who applied for financial aid. The survey showed levels of food and housing insecurity are unprecedented: Over two thirds of students surveyed were identified as food insecure while over one half were identified as housing insecure.

Previously, in the 2018-19 Student Expenses and Resources Survey (SEARS), the Commission found that 39% of financial aid applicants had either low or very low food security and 36% of students were housing insecure.

Since that time, economic inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic have posed new and worsening challenges to students' ability to meet their housing and food needs.



The Food and Housing Survey and the 2018-19 SEARS both used question modules from the USDA and US Census to determine basic needs insecurity. The time scale for the food and housing questions in this basic needs survey was 12 months instead of 30 days.

Low Income, Students of Color, and Older Students Struggle the Most with Food and Housing Insecurity

Students most likely to be found food and housing insecure are:

- **Over 24 years of age**
- **Parents or primary caretakers of a child**
- **Attending a California community college or private for-profit institution**
- **Eligible for Zero Expected Family Contribution (EFC*)**
- **Female**
- **African American or Latino/Hispanic**

Other insights include:

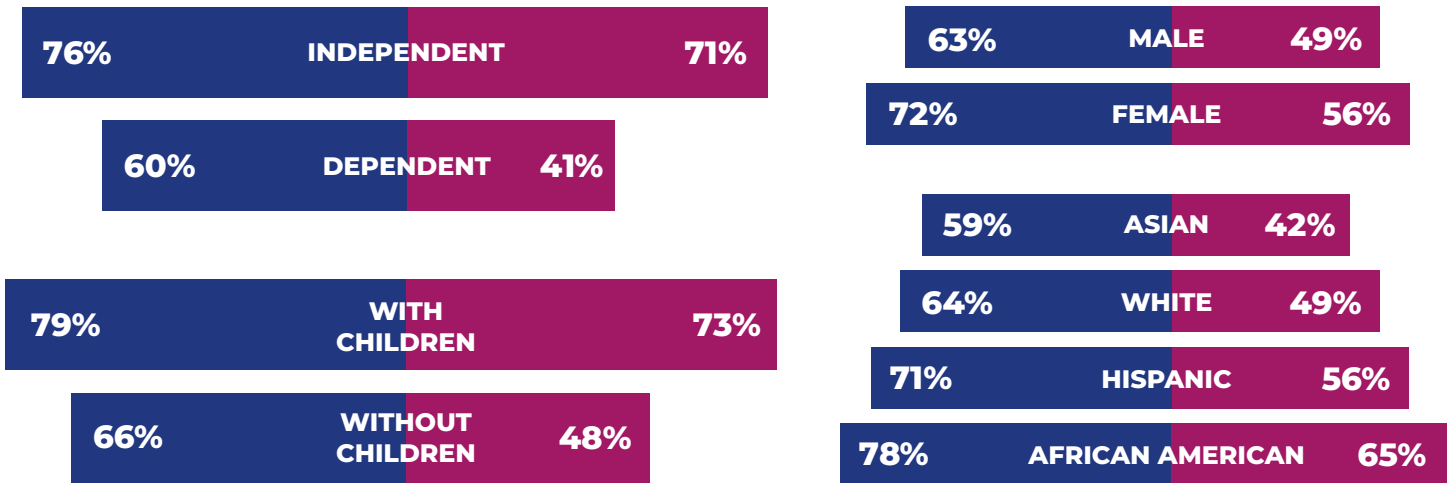
- Many food and housing insecure students do not receive key sources of financial aid due to existing eligibility restrictions.
 - » Only **26% of food insecure students utilize CalFresh** following the reversal of pandemic-era eligibility expansions.
- For most aid recipients, the amount they receive is not enough to prevent them from experiencing basic needs insecurity. Approximately **one third of students use credit cards to cover costs.**
- Having a job does not protect students from experiencing basic needs insecurity. **72% of employed students experienced food insecurity and 58% experienced housing insecurity.**

*EFC refers to Expected Family Contribution, which is an income-based calculation of how much an institution of higher education expects a student's parents or guardians to be able to contribute to their education.



Percent of Students Who Were...

■ Food Insecure ■ Housing Insecure



Students who are at least 24 years old are considered independent and their parents' finances do not impact their application for student aid.

Low-income students:

- **73%** of students with an EFC* of 0 are food insecure
- **62%** of students with an EFC* of 0 are housing insecure

"Even though I work, I am behind in rent for two months, my electric bill is over \$800, my gas bill is unpaid, and I have twenty thousand dollars in credit card debt. But I want to be the first in my family to graduate college."

How have these challenges impacted students' decisions regarding enrollment persistence? Most students remain committed to their educational goals despite struggling financially to cover food, housing, and other basic needs. However, among students who did not enroll, educational and living costs were cited as primary challenges to enrollment. For students who did enroll in the 2022-23 school year, difficulty covering the cost of housing and/or food caused 8% to withdraw from college and 13% to reduce courses.

The results make it clear that students' food and housing insecurity continue to rise while existing resources are not keeping up with costs. **A persistent focus on student-centered, equity-focused financial aid and basic needs supports that meet students' needs is required to turn these glaring statistics and personal stories around.** To tackle the issue of student food and housing insecurity the Commission will maintain its focus on advancing college affordability for all, while ensuring that our neediest students are able to access the resources they need to survive and thrive.



SCAN TO READ FULL REPORT

<https://www.csac.ca.gov/food-and-housing-survey>



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