

# Food Insecurity at Cornell University

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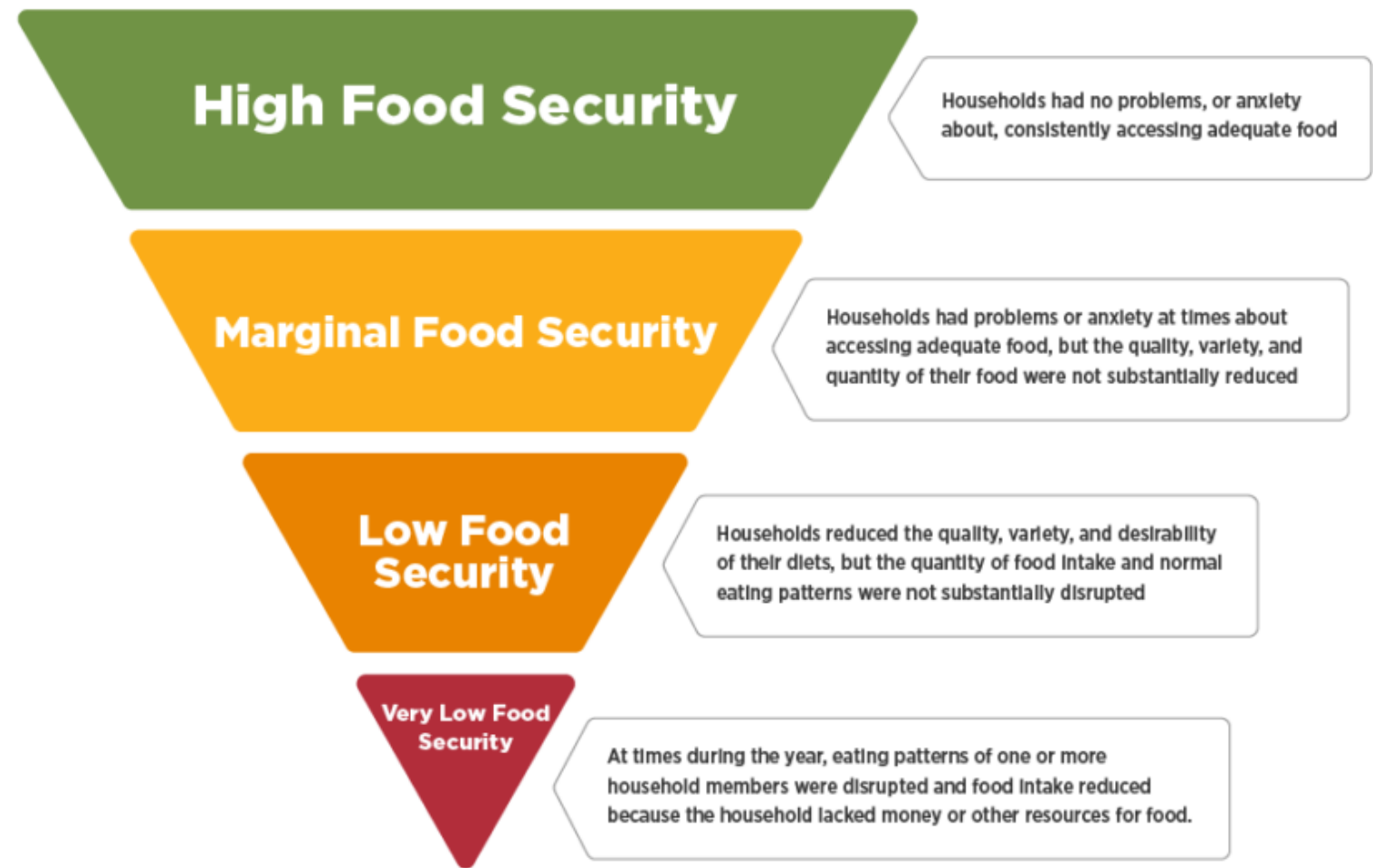
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# Definition

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner.



Source: Adapted from the USDA Economic Research Service

Scale from USDA

# Prevalence

The U.S.D.A estimates that **one out of every seven households** in the U.S. is food insecure (low and very low food security).

2015-17 studies estimate rates for **college students** range from **20 to 40 percent**, with higher rates reported in California and among community college students.

# Cornell PULSE Survey

## Frequency: Skipped meals or had not had enough to eat because of financial constraints

**2015: n = 4,419**

**22% of respondents indicated they skipped meals to save money (occasionally, often, very often)**

23% of Juniors (n= 1,116)

24% of Seniors (n= 1,088)

36% of Native American students (n =14)

29% of Black students (n= 191)

28% of Hispanic students (n=484)

27% of Multiracial students (n=141)

25% of International students (n=310)

**2017: n = 4,616**

**28% of respondents indicated they skipped meals to save money (occasionally, often, very often)**

30% of Juniors (n=1,051)

29% of Seniors (n=1,091)

**73% of Native American students (n=11)**

**47% of Black students (n=230)**

**35% of Hispanic students (n=505)**

**47% of Multiracial students (n=97)**

28% of International students (n=412)

**50% of “another gender” (not male or female) students (n=129)**

# Cornell PULSE Survey

## Skipped meals or had not had enough to eat because of financial constraints

**2015: n = 4,419**

**22% of respondents indicated they skipped meals to save money**

23% of CALS students (n=1,005)

**31% of AA&P students (n= 101)**

24% of Hotel students (n=198)

23% of HumEc students (n=401)

**29% of ILR students (n=288)**

18% of Engineering students (n=1,067)

**2017: n = 4,616**

**28% of respondents indicated they skipped meals to save money**

**33% of CALS students (n=943)**

**39% of AA&P students (n=114)**

**33% of Hotel students (n=224)**

30% of HumEc students (n=386)

31% of ILR students (n=305)

21% of Engineering students (n=1,018)

30% of Dyson students (n=170)

# Since Financial Aid covers the cost of a meal plan, why does this problem exist?

Students may be opting out of meal plans to cover other costs, i.e., off-campus housing, books, transportation, mandatory health insurance.

- Graphic from 2017 study of Massachusetts Public Universities and Colleges (Wisconsin Hope Lab)

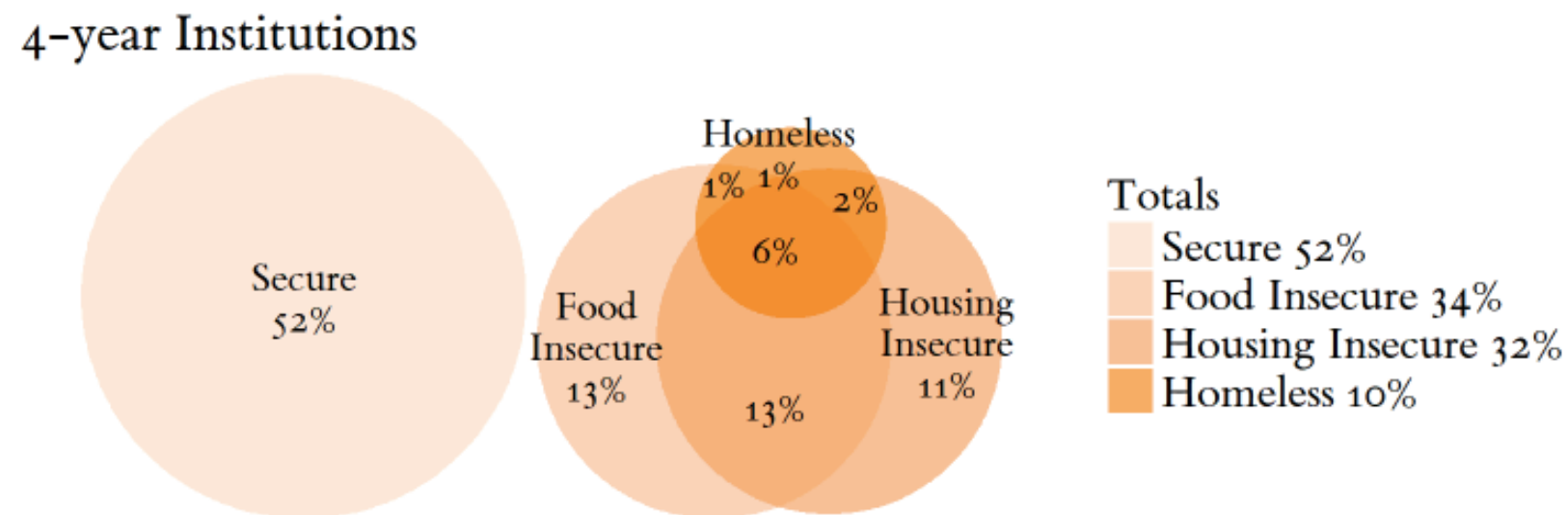
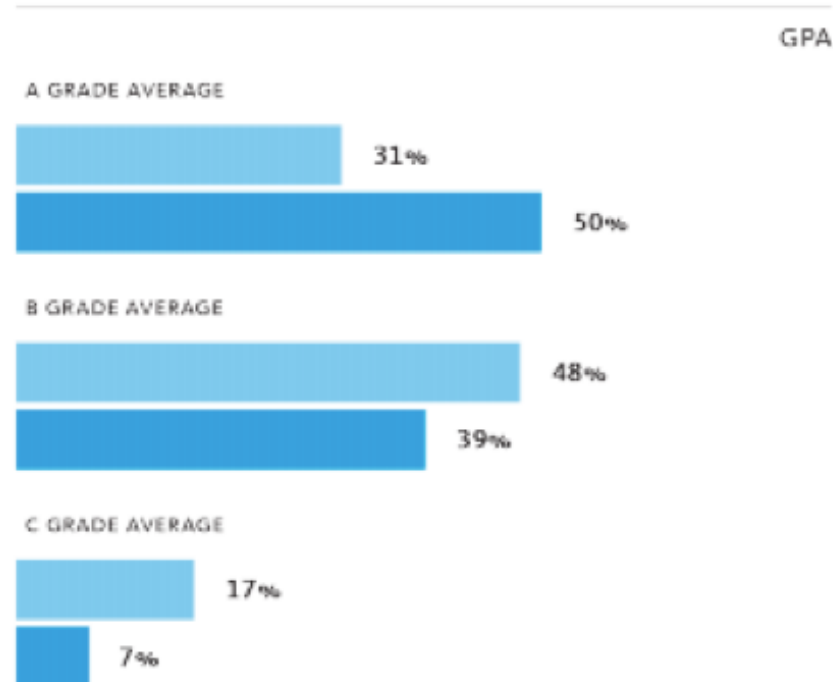


Figure 5. Intersections of Food Security, Housing Insecurity, and Homelessness

# Ramifications

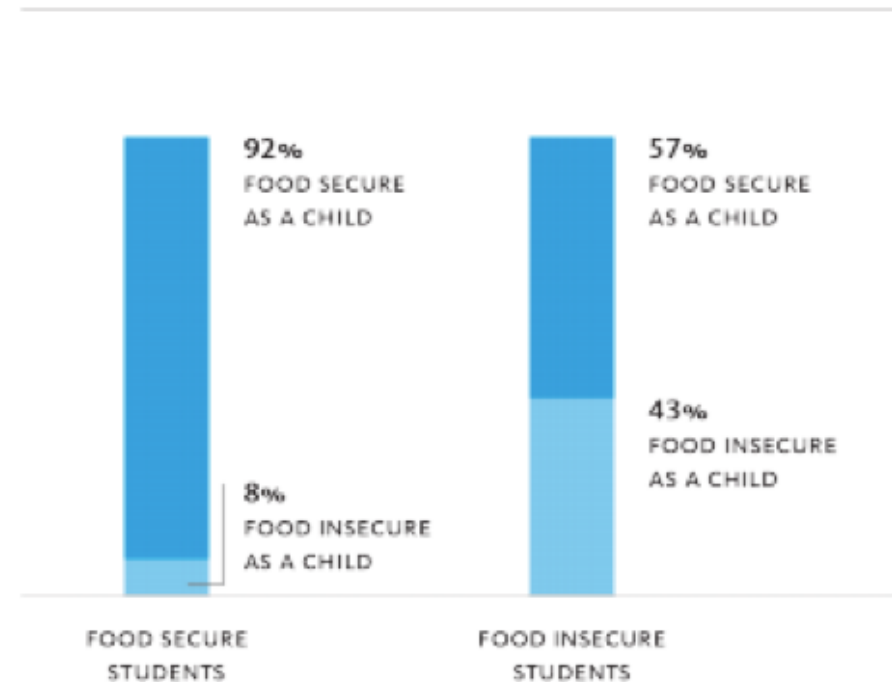
2016 University of California study showed food insecure students (light blue) more likely to have lower grades.

FIGURE 6



The 2016 UC study showed that 57% of food insecure students were food secure as a child.

FIGURE 4



Prevalence of childhood history of family food insecurity among food secure and food insecure students, including those experiencing reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet, UC systemwide.

# Remedies

## Cornell

- **Guest Meal Passes** for students in urgent need (by referral)
- Dining is considering a **meal swipe sharing option**
- New **Mobile Food Pantry** at Big Red Barn, *organized by the Health Student Alliance led by graduate student, Gloria Coicou*
- **Cornell Free Food GroupMe** sends message to students when food is left over at campus events (*student organized*)
- **Anabel's Grocery** aims to provide affordable and nutritious food for sale

## Nationally

- **National Swipe Out Hunger** campaign has 50 partners (including UPenn & Ithaca College)
- **College and University Food Bank Alliance** has 641 members (including Columbia, Brown, NYU & Georgetown)
- UC's **multi-pronged approach** increases Meal Swipe Program, Food Pantries & access to CalFresh; expands awareness; enhances financial aid communication about cost of housing and food; includes food prep and food storage in new campus housing



# What can faculty do?

- Be aware that student food insecurity exists at Cornell; pay attention to signs
- Consider the cost to all students of text books
- Consider the cost of printing readings and assignments
- Consider the cost of presentation materials
- Support efforts to collect data on food insecurity at Cornell and develop a more systemic approach to addressing this problem

# Campus Partners

- Shakima Clency, Associate Dean of Students for Student Empowerment & Director of First-Generation & Low-Income Student Support: [shakima.clency@cornell.edu](mailto:shakima.clency@cornell.edu)
- Pat Wynn, Executive Director, Campus Life Enterprise Services: [paw223@cornell.edu](mailto:paw223@cornell.edu)
- Jennifer Wickham, Senior Assistant Director of Financial Aid and Admissions: [jfw74@cornell.edu](mailto:jfw74@cornell.edu)