



*CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce Report*

# **REAL COLLEGE CALIFORNIA: BASIC NEEDS AMONG CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN 2025**

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SEPTEMBER 2025



Recommended citation: The RP Group and the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce (2025). *Real College California: Basic Needs Among California Community College Students in 2025*. Community College League of California.

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Cover Photo: Peralta CCD

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ..... 2

Introduction..... 3

Reader’s Guide ..... 4

Methodology ..... 4

Results..... 6

Limitations..... 31

Discussion of Findings and Opportunities ..... 31

Appendix A: Participating Colleges ..... 32

Appendix B: Sample Demographics vs. Statewide..... 34

Acknowledgments ..... 36





# Executive Summary

In spring 2025, The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) partnered with the Community College League of California's CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce to assess trends in food and housing security among California community college (CCC) students. Nearly 77,000 students from 102 colleges responded to the 2025 Real College California survey, revealing that **two-thirds of CCC students face at least one form of basic needs insecurity. Specifically, 46% reported being food insecure, 58% reported being housing insecure, and 20% reported experiencing homelessness.**

Between 2023 and 2025, food insecurity declined slightly from 47% to 46%. Housing insecurity remained unchanged at 58%. However, homelessness indicators showed more notable progress, with the percentage of students experiencing any form of homelessness decreasing from 24% to 20%, and the rate of students self-identifying as homeless decreasing from 9% to 8%. Overall, the proportion of students experiencing at least one form of basic needs insecurity declined slightly from 68% to 67%, indicating a modest shift toward greater overall security.

Despite these improvements, disparities persist. Basic needs insecurities continue to be high among African American/Black and American Indian or Alaskan Native students, students aged 26-30, LGBTQ+ students, independent students, Pell Grant recipients, single parents, former foster youth, and justice-impacted students. While

students identifying as transgender or having served in the military experienced notable reductions in insecurities between 2023 and 2025, significant disparities persist between these groups and their peers.

These insecurities directly impact academic success. Students facing basic needs insecurity are significantly more likely to earn non-passing grades than their food- and housing-secure peers. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach: implementing targeted and culturally responsive interventions for vulnerable populations, improving the accessibility, visibility, and usability of campus and public assistance programs, and advancing systemic policy changes that address root causes such as housing affordability and living wages.

As a key component of California's broader public higher education system, which also includes the University of California and California State University systems, the CCC system plays a vital role in advancing educational equity throughout the state. Tackling basic needs insecurity within the community college context must be understood as part of a systems-level strategy, requiring cross-sector collaboration and alignment across the state's entire higher education ecosystem. Understanding and resolving food and housing insecurities in California's community colleges is vital to building a more equitable and thriving state. Moreover, developing effective strategies to support basic needs in the CCC system can serve as a scalable model for colleges and higher education systems across the country.



Photo Courtesy: Los Angeles City College

# Introduction

Meeting basic needs, such as food, housing, and essential resources, is foundational to student success. Without this stability, college students face significant barriers that can derail their academic progress. Conversely, addressing these needs is a powerful tool for fostering long-term success and equitable student outcomes. Recognizing the need to ensure students' basic needs are being met, the Chief Executive Officers of California Community Colleges (CEOCCC) established the CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce in 2018. The Taskforce provides evidence-based insights and actionable guidance to inform policy and strengthen institutional efforts in supporting students' basic needs and improving college completion rates.

In spring 2023, as part of its ongoing mission to document and address these challenges, the Taskforce partnered with The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) to administer the Real College California survey across the California Community Colleges (CCC) system. In 2025, the survey was administered again to assess progress and identify persistent gaps. This report presents findings from the 2025 survey and, where relevant, compares them to results from 2023, offering insights into trends and opportunities for advancing student equity and success. It is essential to note that the 2023 and 2025 samples are not directly comparable, as the 2025 survey included more colleges and the respondents were not the same students across both years. However, the sample size is quite large and diverse, which mitigates this limitation.



Photo Courtesy: Napa Valley College



# Reader's Guide

This report is a follow-up to the 2023 Real College survey administration, which encompassed findings from 88 CCCs. The results section presents the 2025 findings, along with comparisons to the 2023 results when applicable. The first part of the results section presents the overall rates of basic needs insecurity among all survey respondents, as well as a disaggregation by type of insecurity. The second part further describes rates of basic needs by specific groups of students. The third part details students' work and academic experiences related to insecurity regarding basic needs. Finally, the last section in the results reports the utilization of public assistance and campus-provided basic needs support. Study limitations and a discussion of findings and opportunities follow the results.

## Methodology

The majority of survey questions were drawn directly from the original 2023 Real College Survey to assess changes in basic needs securities over time. Additional demographic questions were added to the 2025 version to enable an even more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with basic needs insecurities among community college students in California. The survey was sent to contact points at each college that indicated their interest in participating in the survey administration. The survey opened on March 3, 2025, and remained open until April 10, 2025. Students who chose to provide their contact information were entered into a drawing to win one of twenty \$250 incentives. Colleges were also able to offer their own incentives for participation. To broaden accessibility, the 2025 survey was provided in both English and Spanish.



Photo Courtesy: San Joaquin Delta College

## SURVEY SAMPLE

Results in this report are presented for 76,978 respondents<sup>1</sup> from 102 California community colleges (CCC) with response totals per college ranging from 15 to 3,896 (median = 552). A total of 3,388 respondents (4.4%) completed the survey in Spanish. Generally speaking, the demographics of the survey sample paralleled those in 2023; however, the overall sample skewed slightly older in 2025 compared to 2023<sup>2</sup>. As can be seen in Table 1:

- The number of survey respondents increased by 10,237 (from 66,741 to 76,978).
- The number of colleges participating increased by 14 (from 88 to 102).
- Representation of women<sup>3</sup> increased by 2%, while representation of men decreased by 4%.
- The proportion of transgender respondents decreased by 2%.
- Hispanic/Latiné representation increased by 3%, and African American/Black representation by 2%, while White/Caucasian representation decreased by 3%.
- Respondents over the age of 30 increased substantially (+6%), while younger groups (ages 18–25) declined by 2% to 3%.

1 The final data file consisted of 97,524 rows of data, among which the following were removed: 2,510 respondents who did not consent to participate; 3,226 respondents identified as duplicates based on the email address given (the response with the greatest number of questions answered was kept while the duplicates were removed); 8,878 respondents who did not answer any questions beyond the consent question; 5,932 respondents who did not answer more than five survey questions.

2 While it is important to note that the student populations surveyed in 2023 and 2025 were not fully overlapping and differences in cohort composition may influence results over time, the data still provide a valuable snapshot of ongoing trends and emerging shifts in basic needs insecurity across California's community colleges.

3 In prior surveys, respondents identified as female and male, whereas in the 2025 survey, the options were woman and man, respectively, and thus these terms are used herein.

**Table 1. Demographics of 2023 vs. 2025 Survey Samples**

Demographics of Survey Sample			
	2023 Survey Sample	2025 Survey Sample	Δ from 2023 to 2025
# of Students Responding	66,741	76,978	10,237
# of Colleges Participating	88	102	14
<b>Gender Orientation</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>%pt Δ</b>
Man	31%	28%	-4
Other Gender Orientation/Other Term	3%	4%	1
Woman	64%	66%	2
<b>Transgender Status</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>%pt Δ</b>
Transgender	5%	3%	-2
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>%pt Δ</b>
Bisexual	10%	10%	0
Gay/Lesbian	4%	4%	0
Heterosexual/Straight	77%	77%	0
Neither Heterosexual, Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual	8%	8%	0
<b>Racial/Ethnic Background</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>%pt Δ</b>
African American/Black	8%	11%	3
American Indian/Alaskan Native	4%	4%	0
Asian-East	6%	5%	-1
Asian-South	3%	2%	-1
Asian-Southeast	6%	6%	0
Asian-Other	3%	3%	0
Hispanic/Latiné	45%	48%	3
Middle Eastern/North African/Arab/Arab American	3%	2%	-1
Other	3%	4%	1
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	2%	2%	0
White/Caucasian	33%	30%	-3
<b>Age</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>% pt Δ</b>
18 to 20	33%	31%	-2
21 to 25	22%	19%	-3
26 to 30	13%	12%	-1
Older than 30	32%	38%	6

# Results

## PREVALENCE OF BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

In 2025, two out of every three California community college students reported facing at least one basic needs insecurity. Across the survey sample, 46% identified as food insecure, 58% as housing insecure, and 20% as homeless in the past year (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Basic Needs Insecurities Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**





The 2025 survey reveals modest improvements in basic needs insecurity among California Community College (CCC) students compared to 2023. Food and housing insecurity rates showed slight declines, while homelessness indicators saw more notable improvements (See Figure 2).

- **Food Insecurity:** Decreased marginally from 46.9% in 2023 to 46.3% in 2025 (-0.6%).
- **Housing Insecurity:** Declined slightly from 58.5% to 57.9% (-0.5%).
- **Homelessness:** The proportion of students experiencing any form of homelessness dropped from 24% to 20% (-4%), while self-identified homelessness decreased from 9% to 8% (-1%).
- **Overall,** the percentage of students experiencing at least one basic needs insecurity fell from 68% to 67% (-1%).

**Figure 2. Basic Needs Insecurities Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025 vs. 2023**

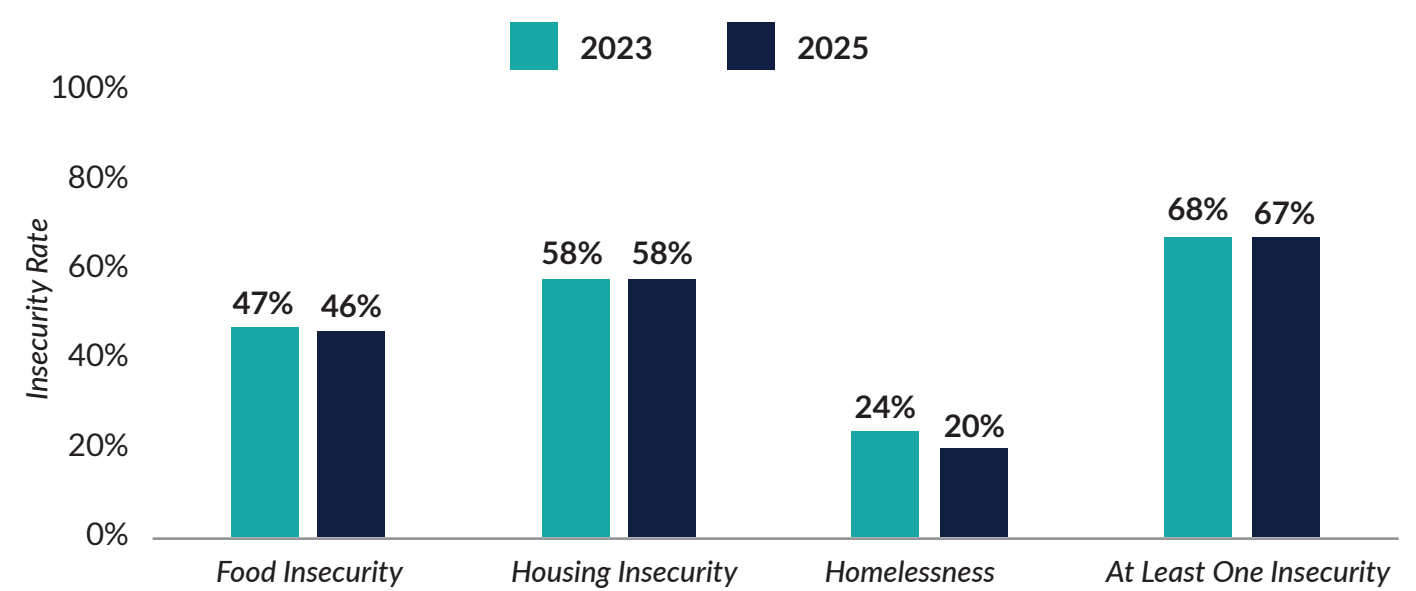


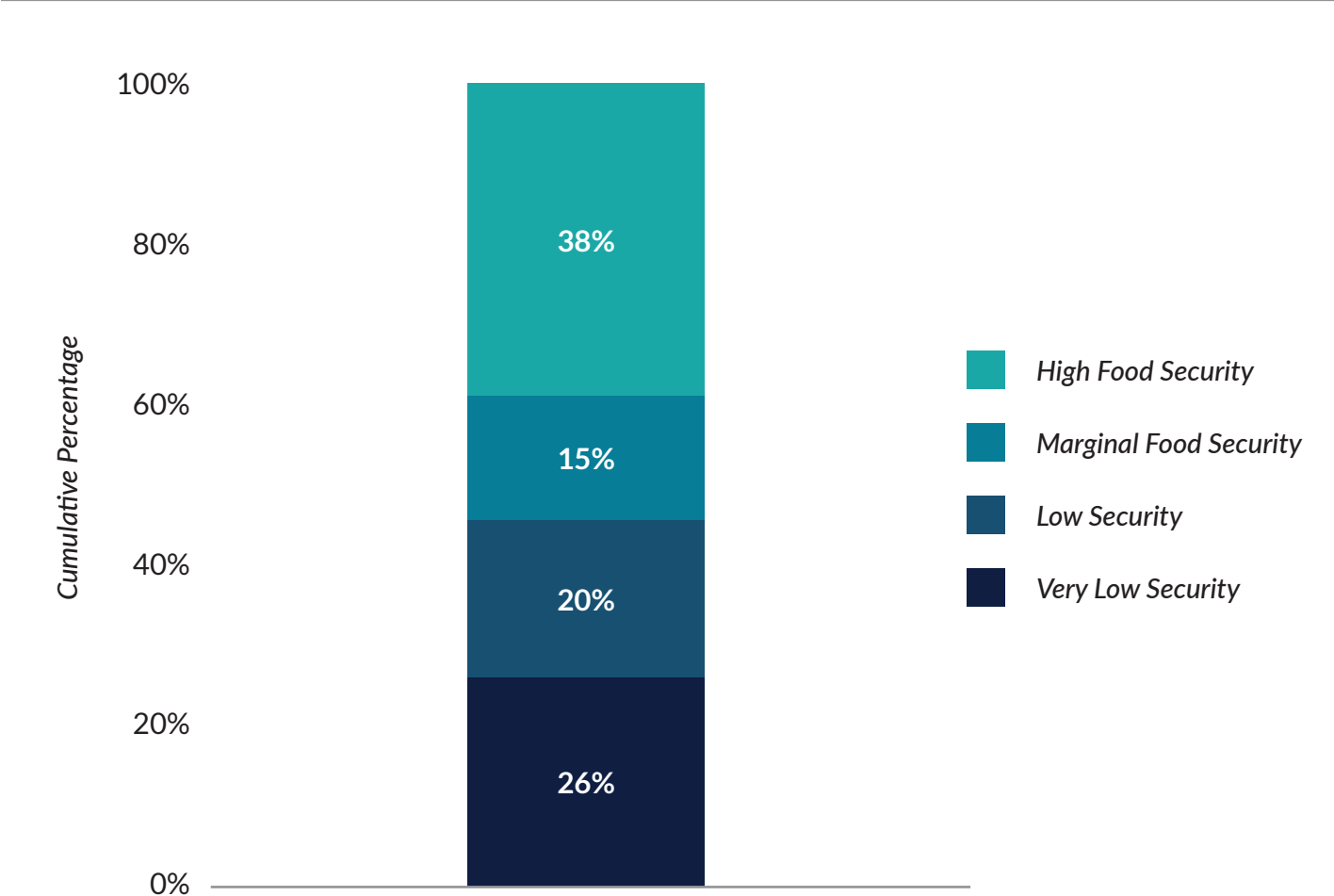
Photo Courtesy: Los Angeles Mission College

The following subsection of the report provides a more detailed breakdown of the prevalence of these three basic needs insecurities.

### FOOD INSECURITY

Hunger profoundly impacts a student’s ability to succeed academically at any age. For many CCC students, the financial strain of higher education forces difficult choices between paying for tuition and their next meal. Food insecurity was measured using 18 items that asked about respondents’ access to food in terms of affordability, consistency, and quality. Results from 2025 revealed that **46% of the California community college students who responded to the survey had experienced food insecurity (either low or very low food security; Figure 3) in the past 30 days**, compared to 47% in 2023.

**Figure 3. Food Security Rates Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**



In 2025, 52% of California community college students reported worrying that their food would run out before they had money to buy more, and 49% couldn't afford to eat balanced meals. Additionally, 45% indicated that the food they purchased did not last and that they lacked the funds to buy more. This financial strain led many students to reduce meal sizes or skip meals altogether, with some eating less than they felt they should because they couldn't afford enough food (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Food Insecurity Issues Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**

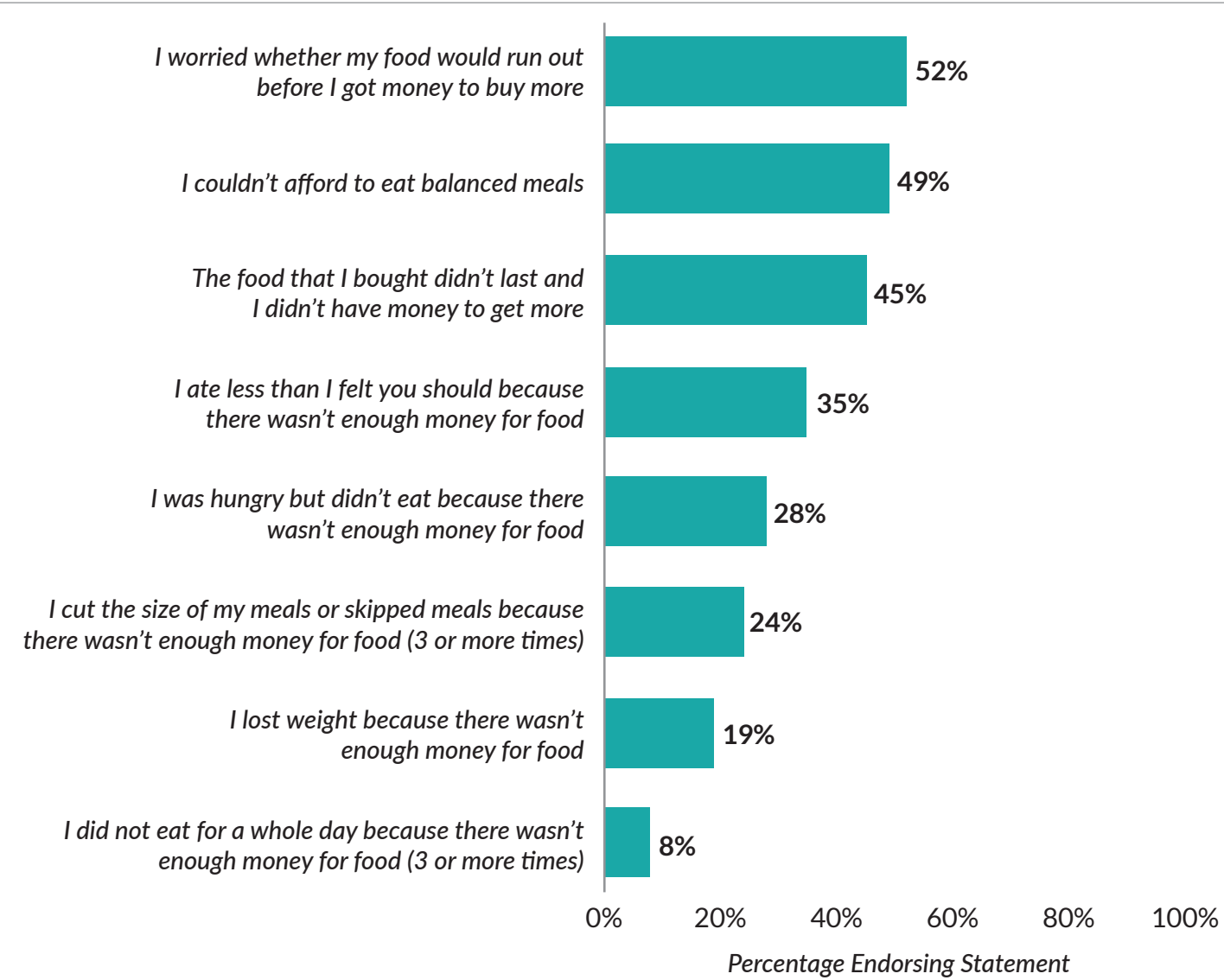
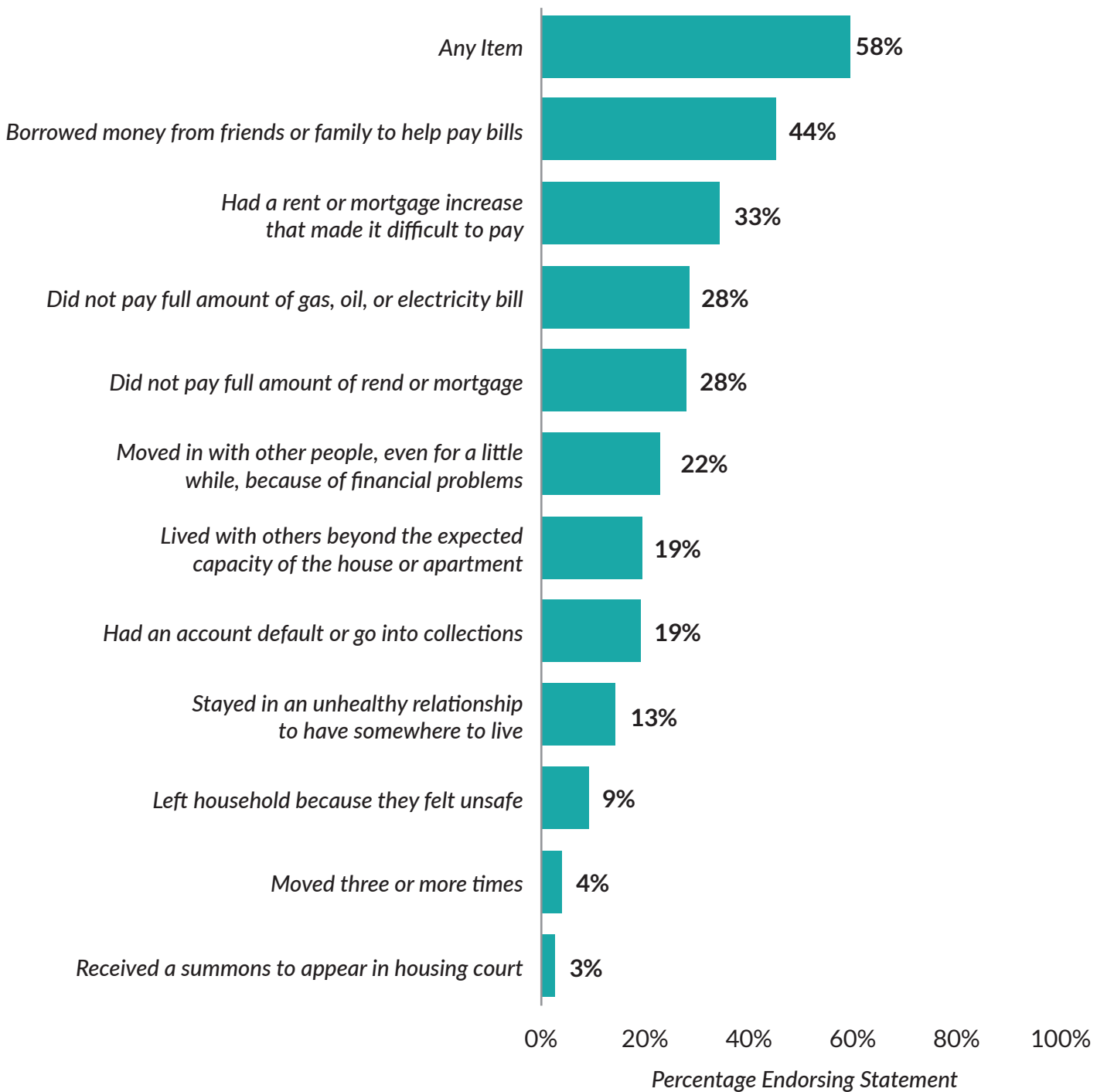


Photo Courtesy: Lemoore College

# HOUSING INSECURITY

Housing insecurity encompasses challenges such as difficulty paying rent or utilities, as well as the need to move frequently. Housing insecurity was assessed using a nine-item survey. When examining all the items, in 2025, **58% of California community college students experienced some form of housing insecurity in the past year**, a proportion unchanged from 2023 (Figure 5). The most commonly reported challenges were experiencing a rent or mortgage increase that made it difficult to pay, not paying the full cost of utilities, and not paying the full amount of their rent or mortgage.

**Figure 5. Housing Insecurity Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**

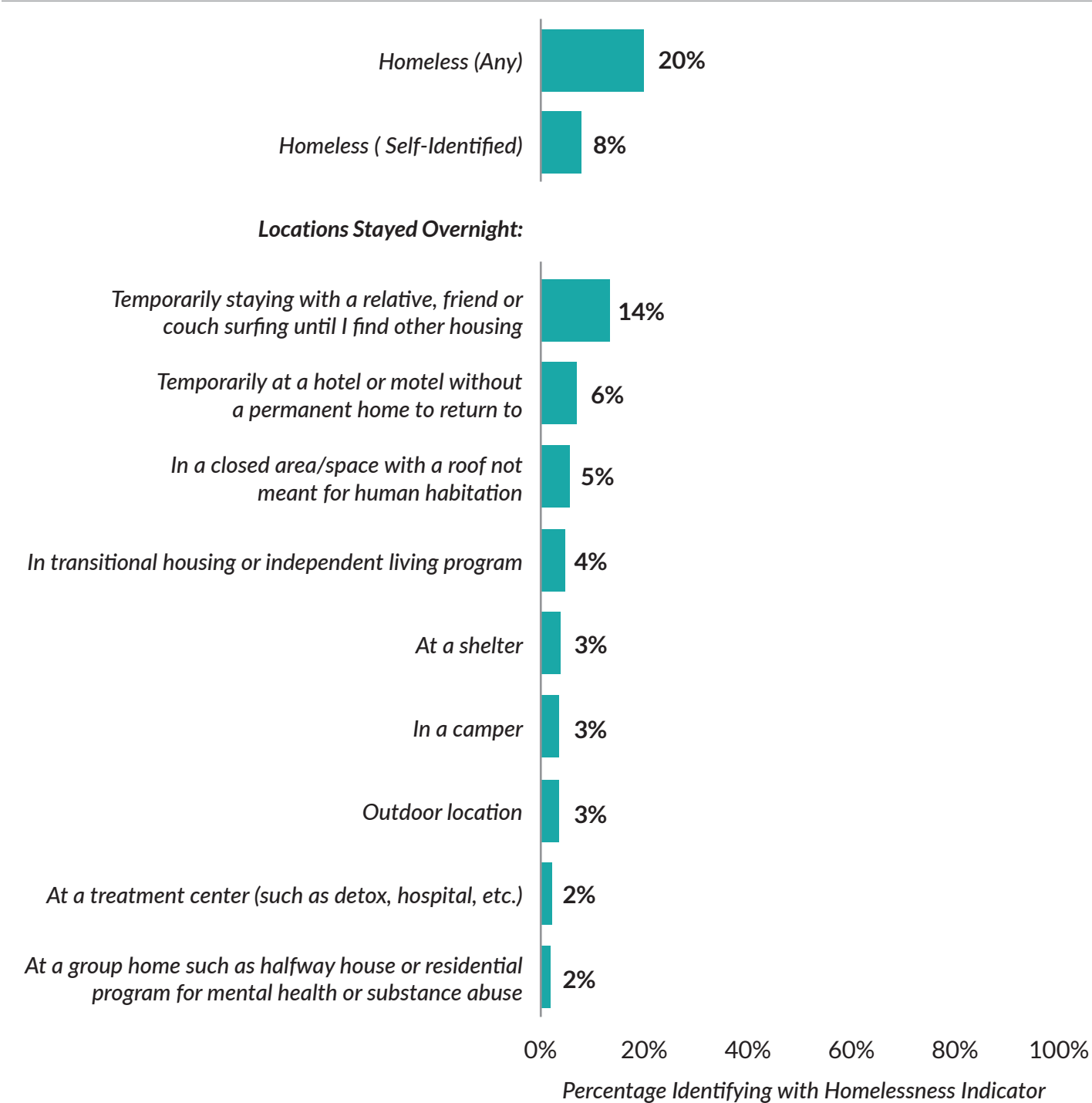




# HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness refers to the lack of a stable place to live. Students were identified as homeless if they reported being homeless or described living conditions indicative of homelessness. In 2025, results revealed that **homelessness affected 20% of California community college survey respondents during the previous year, compared to 24% in 2023** (Figure 6). Eight percent of respondents self-identified as homeless (compared to 9% in 2023). The majority of students who experienced homelessness temporarily stayed with a relative or friend, or couch surfed.

**Figure 6. Homelessness Among 2025 California Community College Survey Respondents**



## VARIATION BY REGION

Basic needs securities were explored as a function of geographic region. Results (also displayed in Table 2) revealed that:

- Rates of **food insecurity** across the CCCs in 2025 ranged from a low of 43% in the North/Far North area to a high of 48% in the Central Valley/Mother Lode and Los Angeles/Orange County regions.
- Rates of **housing insecurity** across the CCCs in 2025 ranged from a low of 55% in the North/Far North and Bay Area to a high of 60% in the Inland Empire/Desert region.
- Rates of **homelessness** across the CCCs in 2025 ranged from a low of 18% in the North/Far North area to a high of 21% in the San Diego/Imperial and Los Angeles/Orange County regions.



**Table 2. Basic Needs Insecurities by Region Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**

Demographics	Food Insecurity	Housing Insecurity	Homelessness
A-North/Far North (Greater Sacramento and Northern Coastal and Inland)	43%	55%	18%
B-Bay Area (East Bay, Mid-Peninsula, North Bay, Santa Cruz/Monterey, and Silicon Valley)	44%	55%	19%
C-Central Valley/Mother Lode	48%	59%	19%
D-South Central Coast	46%	57%	19%
E-San Diego/Imperial Areas	45%	57%	21%
F-Inland Empire and Desert	46%	60%	19%
G-Los Angeles and Orange County	48%	59%	21%

## VARIATION BY INSTITUTION

When examining colleges, significant variation in basic needs insecurity is evident (Table 3).

- Compared to the statewide average **food insecurity** rate of 46%, rates at individual colleges ranged from 24% to 70%.
- Compared to the statewide average **housing insecurity** rate of 58%, rates at individual colleges ranged from 36% to 78%.
- Compared to the statewide average **homelessness** rate of 20%, rates at individual colleges ranged from 9% to 36%.

**Table 3. Variation in Institutional Rates of Basic Needs Insecurities Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**

	Lowest Insecurity	Highest Insecurity	Median	SD
Food Insecurity	24%	70%	46%	8%
Housing Insecurity	36%	78%	58%	8%
Homelessness (Any)	9%	36%	19%	5%

## DISPARITIES IN BASIC NEEDS INSECURITIES

### Basic Needs Disparities by Student Demographics

Disaggregation of basic needs insecurities by student demographic to identify groups of students most in need of basic needs support (Table 4) reveals the following:

- African American/Black students are more likely to report basic needs insecurities than students of other races/ethnicities.
- LGBTQ+ students are more likely to report basic needs insecurities than non-LGBTQ+ students.
- Students aged 26–30 experience the highest rates of basic needs insecurities, while students aged 18–20 experience the lowest rates of basic needs insecurities.



Photo Courtesy: San Bernardino Valley College Student Culinary Program

**Table 4. Insecurity Rates for California Community College Survey Respondents by Student Demographics in 2025**

Demographics	Food Insecurity	Housing Insecurity	Homelessness
All Students	46%	58%	20%
<b>Gender Orientation</b>			
Man	45%	55%	23%
Other Gender Orientation/Other Term	52%	57%	25%
Woman	47%	60%	18%
<b>Transgender Status</b>			
Not Transgender	47%	58%	20%
Transgender	53%	58%	26%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			
Bisexual	50%	59%	22%
Gay/Lesbian	52%	60%	25%
Heterosexual/Straight	46%	58%	19%
Not Sure, or Neither Heterosexual, Gay, Lesbian, nor Bisexual	49%	59%	22%
<b>Age</b>			
18 to 20	33%	38%	13%
21 to 25	50%	60%	21%
26 to 30	58%	73%	26%
Older than 30	53%	69%	22%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Background</b>			
African American/Black	63%	75%	34%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	62%	72%	30%
Asian-East	33%	41%	16%
Asian-South	38%	46%	19%
Asian-Southeast	41%	47%	15%
Asian-Other	47%	56%	16%
Hispanic/Latiné	49%	62%	18%
Middle Eastern/North African/Arab/Arab American	42%	56%	21%
Other	57%	70%	31%
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	53%	64%	29%
White/Caucasian	41%	52%	19%



Additionally, a comparison of insecurity rates from 2023 to 2025, shown in Figures 7a, 7b, and 7c, reveals that rates of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness declined slightly or remained stable across most demographic groups, with some notable improvements.

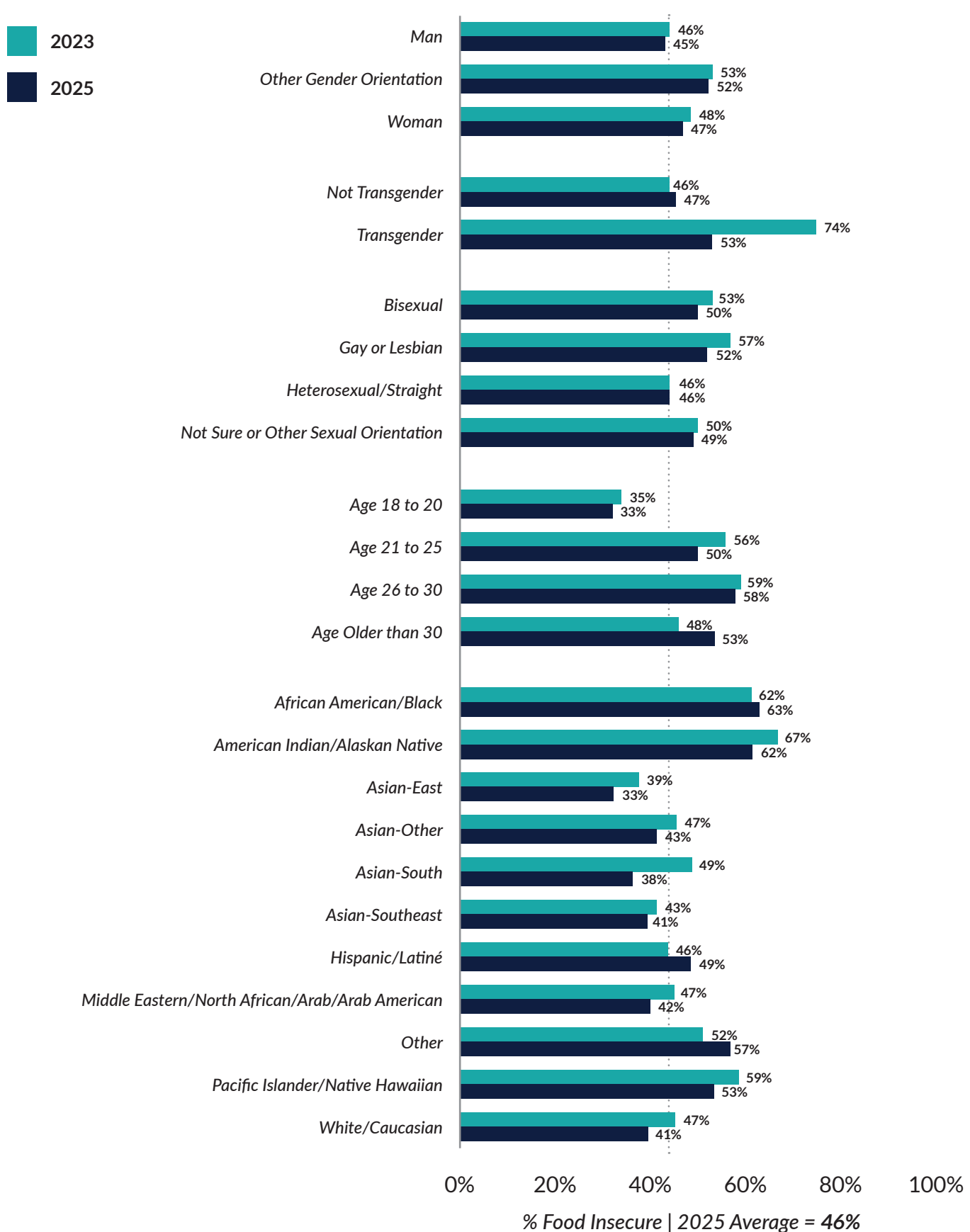
- Transgender students experienced the most significant reductions across all three insecurity indicators, with homelessness dropping sharply from 64% to 26%.
- Sexual orientation disparities narrowed slightly, but LGBTQ+ students still face higher risks compared to their heterosexual peers.
- Younger students (ages 18–20) also saw decreases in all areas, reporting the lowest homelessness rate in 2025 at 13%. Students aged 26–30 remain particularly vulnerable, showing elevated rates of housing insecurity and homelessness.
- African American/Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native students continue to experience higher levels of insecurity across all three areas than their peers.

Overall, while the data suggest progress for several groups, significant equity gaps persist, particularly in terms of race, sexual orientation, and age.

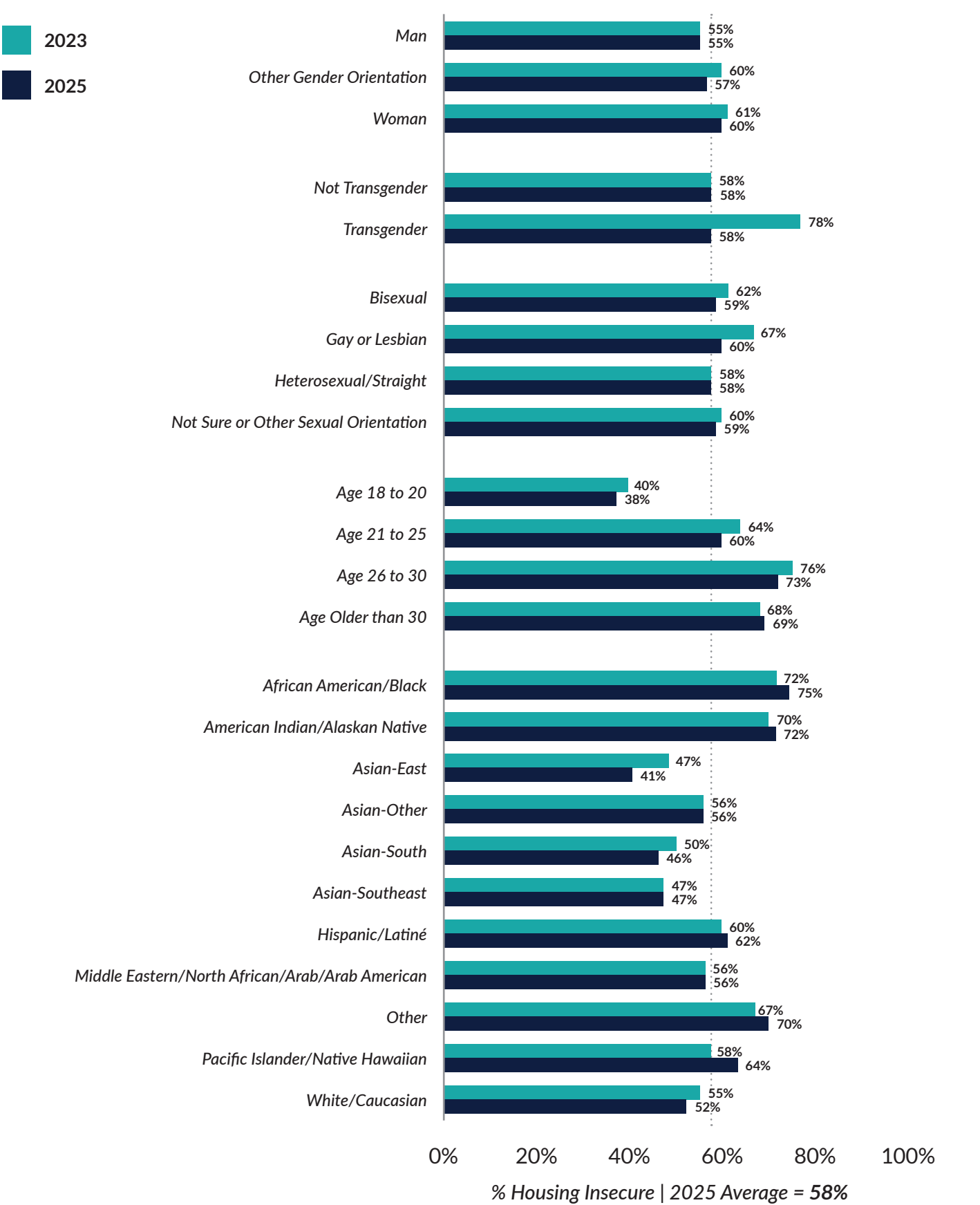
While the survey observed a notable decline in basic needs insecurities among transgender students, it is essential to contextualize this finding. The proportion of students identifying as transgender in the survey decreased significantly between 2023 and 2025. This reduction could be influenced by the current political climate, which may discourage some students from feeling comfortable openly identifying as transgender. As such, the observed trends in basic needs insecurities for this group should be interpreted with caution, as they may not fully capture the experiences of all transgender students.



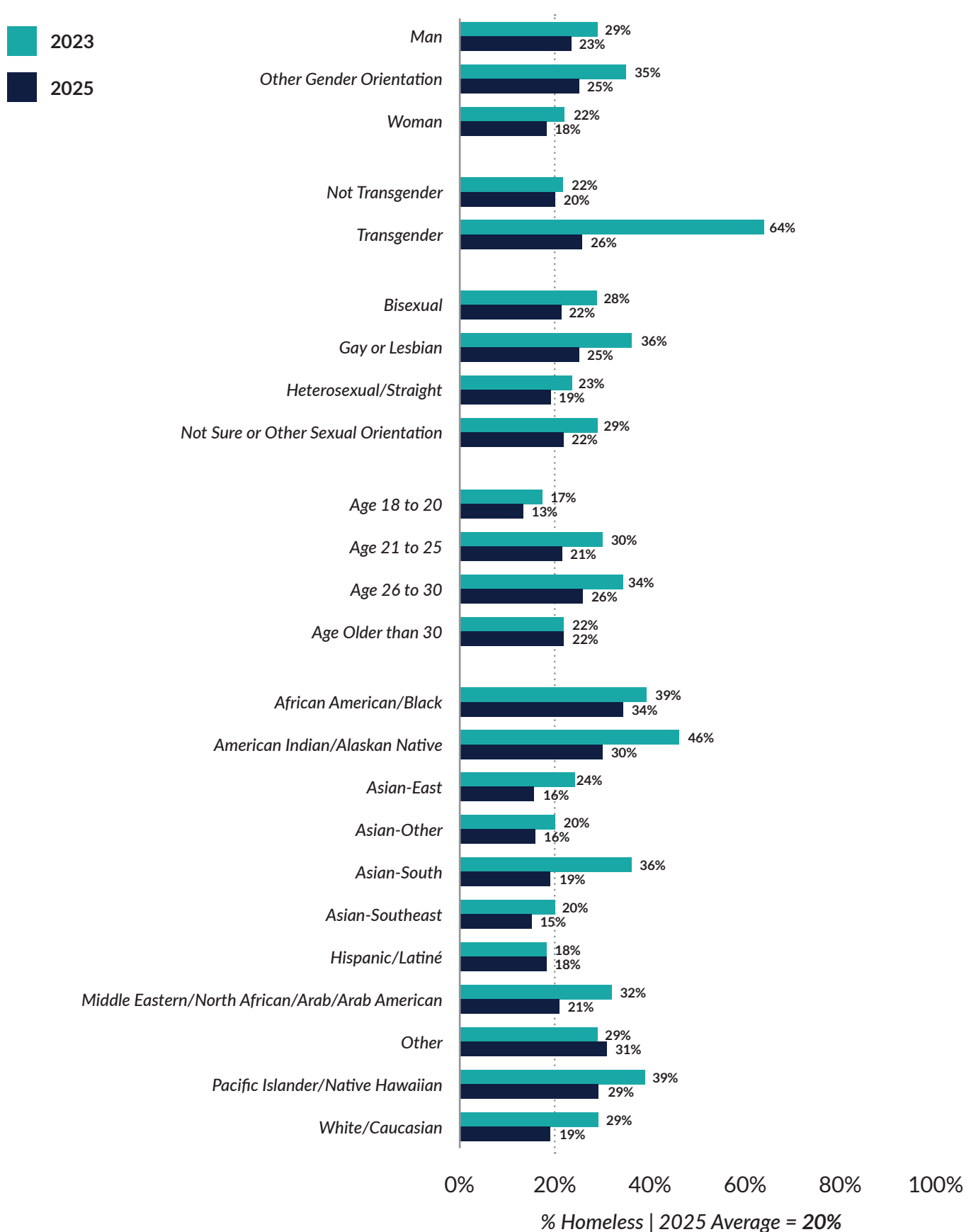
**Figure 7a. Food Insecurity Rates by Demographic Group Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2023 and 2025**



**Figure 7b. Housing Insecurity Rates by Demographic Group Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2023 and 2025**



**Figure 7c. Homelessness Rates by Demographic Group Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2023 and 2025**





## BASIC NEEDS DISPARITIES BY ACADEMIC, ECONOMIC, AND LIFE EXPERIENCES

Further disaggregation of basic needs insecurity rates by student groups reveals key student populations that could benefit most from targeted support and resources (see Table 5). Certain groups, such as independent students, Pell Grant recipients, and single parents, reported higher rates of insecurities related to basic needs, suggesting opportunities for institutions to provide targeted interventions. Former foster youth and justice-impacted students reported the highest rates of need.

**Table 5. Rates of Basic Needs Insecurities Among California Community College Survey Respondents by Student Life Experiences in 2025**

Demographics	Food Insecurity	Housing Insecurity	Homelessness
All Students	46%	58%	20%
<b>College Enrollment Status</b>			
Full-Time (At Least 12 Credits)	47%	57%	21%
Part-Time (Fewer Than 12 Credits)	45%	59%	19%
<b>Dependency Status</b>			
Dependent	36%	42%	13%
Independent	52%	66%	22%
<b>Student receives the Pell Grant</b>			
Yes	54%	66%	23%
No	40%	51%	17%
<b>Student has been in foster care</b>			
Yes	73%	82%	47%
No	45%	57%	18%
<b>Student served in the military</b>			
Yes	47%	63%	29%
No	47%	58%	19%
<b>Student has been justice-impacted</b>			
Yes	71%	85%	53%
No	45%	5%	18%
<b>Student has children</b>			
Yes	56%	71%	20%
No	44%	54%	20%
<b>Single parent status (only among parents)</b>			
Yes (Single Parent)	71%	87%	30%
No (Not Single Parent)	46%	61%	14%

A comparison of insecurity rates from 2023 to 2025 reveals substantial decreases in homelessness and food insecurity among former foster youth. However, rates of basic needs insecurities among former foster youth are still significantly higher than those of non-former foster youth. Similarly, there have been substantial decreases in all three basic needs insecurities among students who have served in the military, with rates of food insecurity among these students now comparable to those of their non-military-serving peers. However, students who have served in the military still struggle with housing more than their non-military-serving peers. Lastly, there have been substantial decreases in homelessness among full-time students (Figures 8a, 8b, 8c).

**Figure 8a. Food Insecurity Rates by Demographic Group Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2023 and 2025**

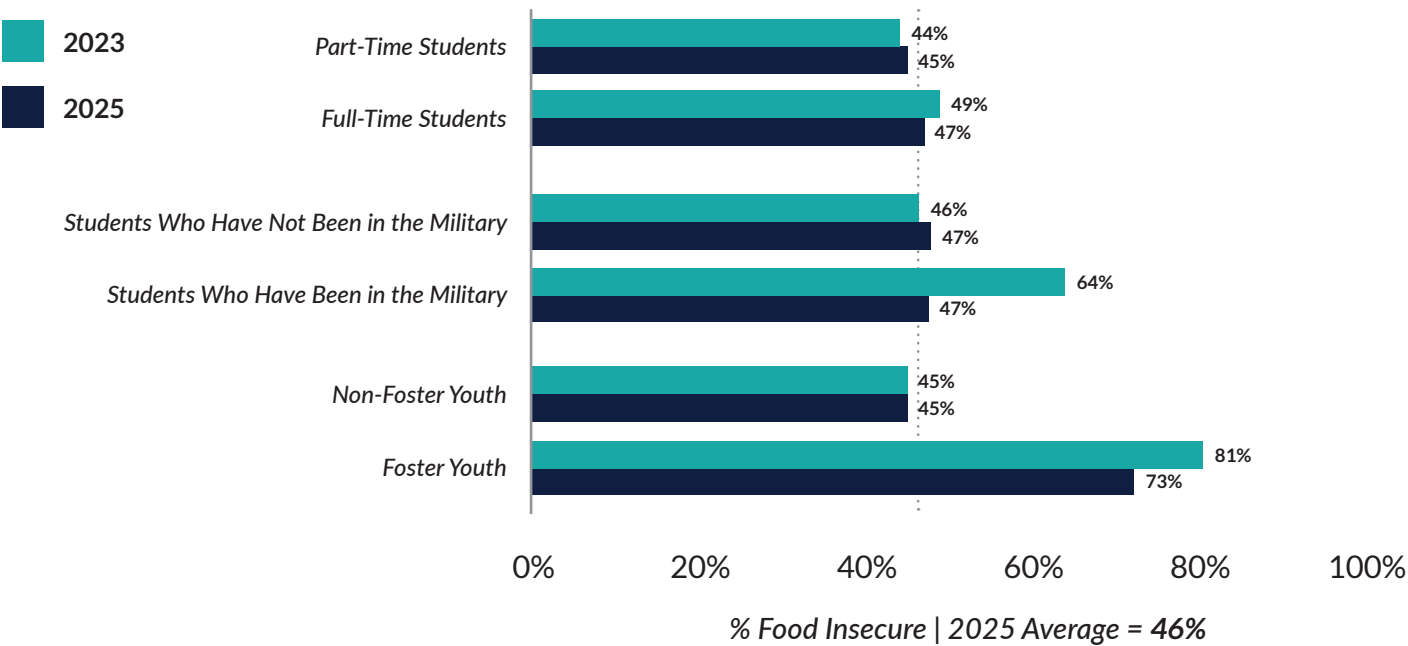
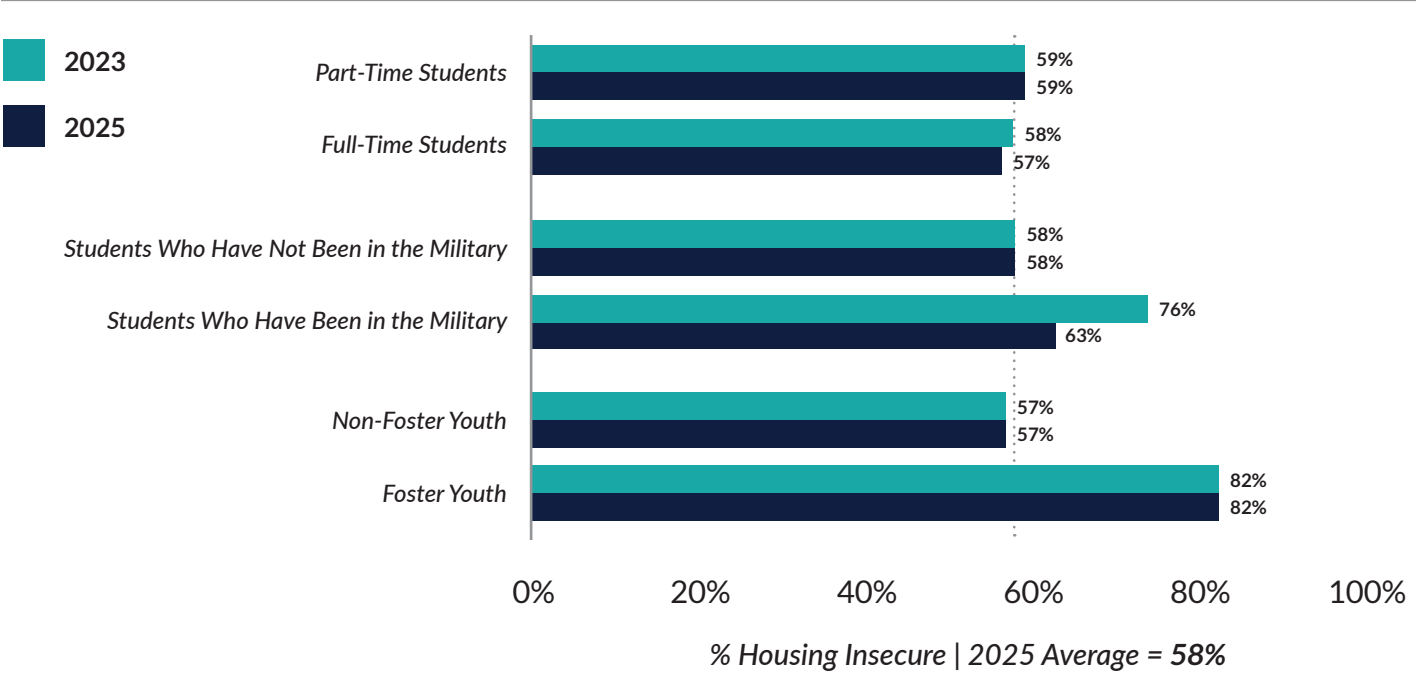
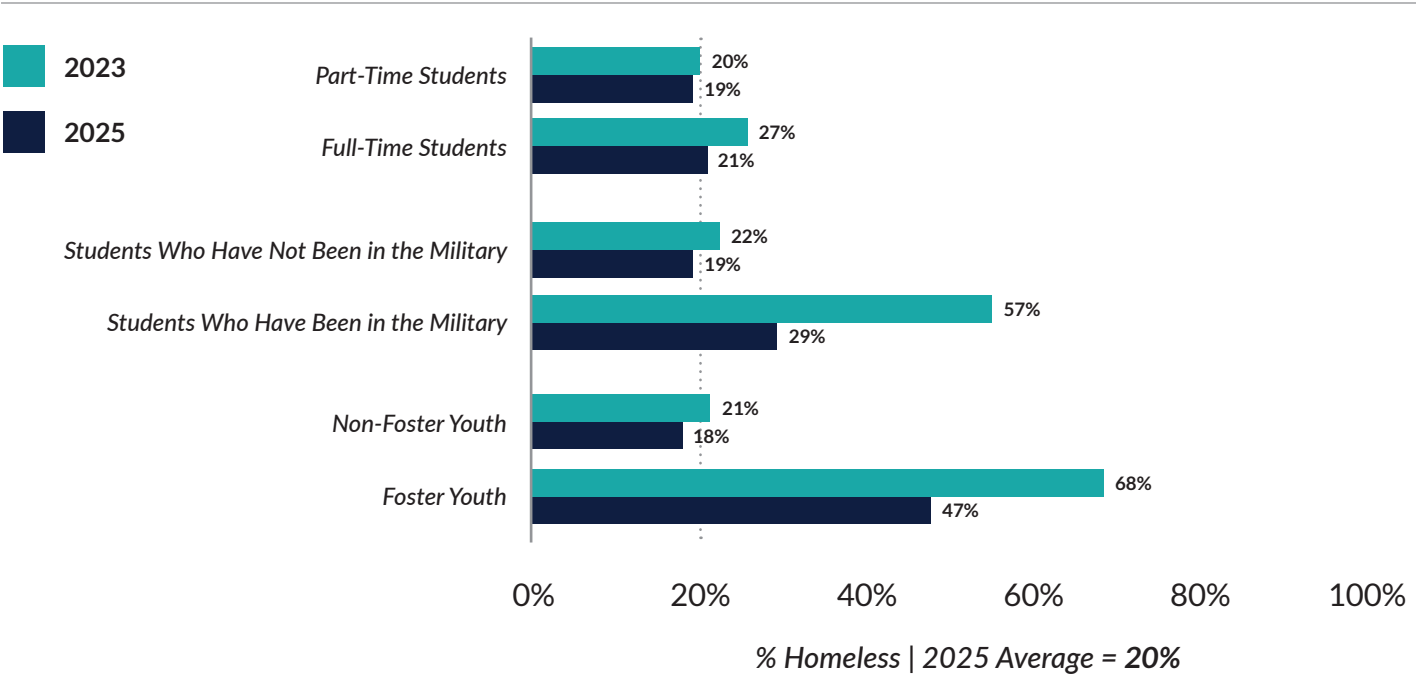


Photo Courtesy: College of Alameda

**Figure 8b. Housing Insecurity Rates by Demographic Group Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2023 and 2025**



**Figure 8c. Homelessness Rates by Demographic Group Among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2023 and 2025**



Students with disabilities are much more likely than those without disabilities to experience basic needs insecurities (Table 6). However, the rates of basic needs insecurities for students with disabilities decreased substantially between 2023 and 2025.

**Table 6. Rates of Basic Needs Insecurities Among California Community College Survey Respondents by Disability or Medical Condition in 2025**

Demographics	Food Insecurity		Housing Insecurity		Homelessness	
	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025
All Students	47%	46%	58%	58%	24%	20%
No Disability or Medical Condition	39%	39%	51%	51%	17%	15%
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	63%	59%	71%	69%	41%	28%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	69%	52%	69%	59%	58%	28%
Chronic Illness	61%	59%	71%	69%	37%	26%
Learning Disability	68%	62%	74%	70%	48%	31%
Physical Disability	66%	61%	73%	70%	47%	32%
Psychological Disorder	58%	58%	69%	68%	31%	27%



Photo Courtesy: San Diego Mesa College



## EMPLOYMENT AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

Students fund their community college education in a wide variety of ways. At least half of the students indicated that they paid for school through grants (either from the federal or state government or their college) or by working (non-work study). As noted previously, over half of the students (52%) indicated receiving Pell Grant funds. Of particular concern is that nearly two in five students use credit cards to pay for their community college education (Table 7).

**Table 7. How California Community College Survey Respondents Pay for School in 2025**

How Students Pay for School	%	
	2023	2025
Grants From Federal or State Government	55%	57%
Non-Work Study Job	54%	51%
Savings	52%	49%
Grants From College	50%	47%
Pell Grant	49%	52%
Credit Cards	40%	37%
Work-Study Job	21%	18%
Student Loans	15%	12%
Stipend or Fellowship	11%	7%
Employer Support	11%	8%

# BASIC NEEDS DISPARITIES BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Eighty-six percent of all students (regardless of their basic needs status) indicated that they were either working (70%) or seeking employment (16%). Among working students, 63% were earning more than California’s minimum wage (currently \$16.50 per hour), while 16% were earning less than the minimum wage. Students working more than thirty hours per week were more likely to make above the minimum wage than those working fewer hours (Table 8).

**Table 8. Wages of Employed California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**

Average Earnings/ Hour	% Among All Employed Students	% Among Students Working 1-20 Hours/Week	% Among Students Working 21-30 Hours/Week	% Among Students Working More Than 30 Hours/Week
Less Than \$7.25/hour	4%	7%	3%	3%
\$7.25/hour	1%	2%	1%	1%
\$7.26 to \$10.00/hour	2%	3%	2%	1%
\$10.01 to \$16.49/hour	9%	12%	9%	5%
\$16.50/hour	20%	26%	22%	13%
More Than \$16.50/ hour	63%	50%	63%	77%



Photo Courtesy: East Los Angeles College

Rates of basic needs insecurity by employment status indicate that **even with employment, students still face basic needs insecurities**, struggling to meet essential needs such as food and housing. Food and housing insecurity rates are higher for students who work than for students who do not work (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Rates of Basic Needs Insecurities by Employment Status in 2025**

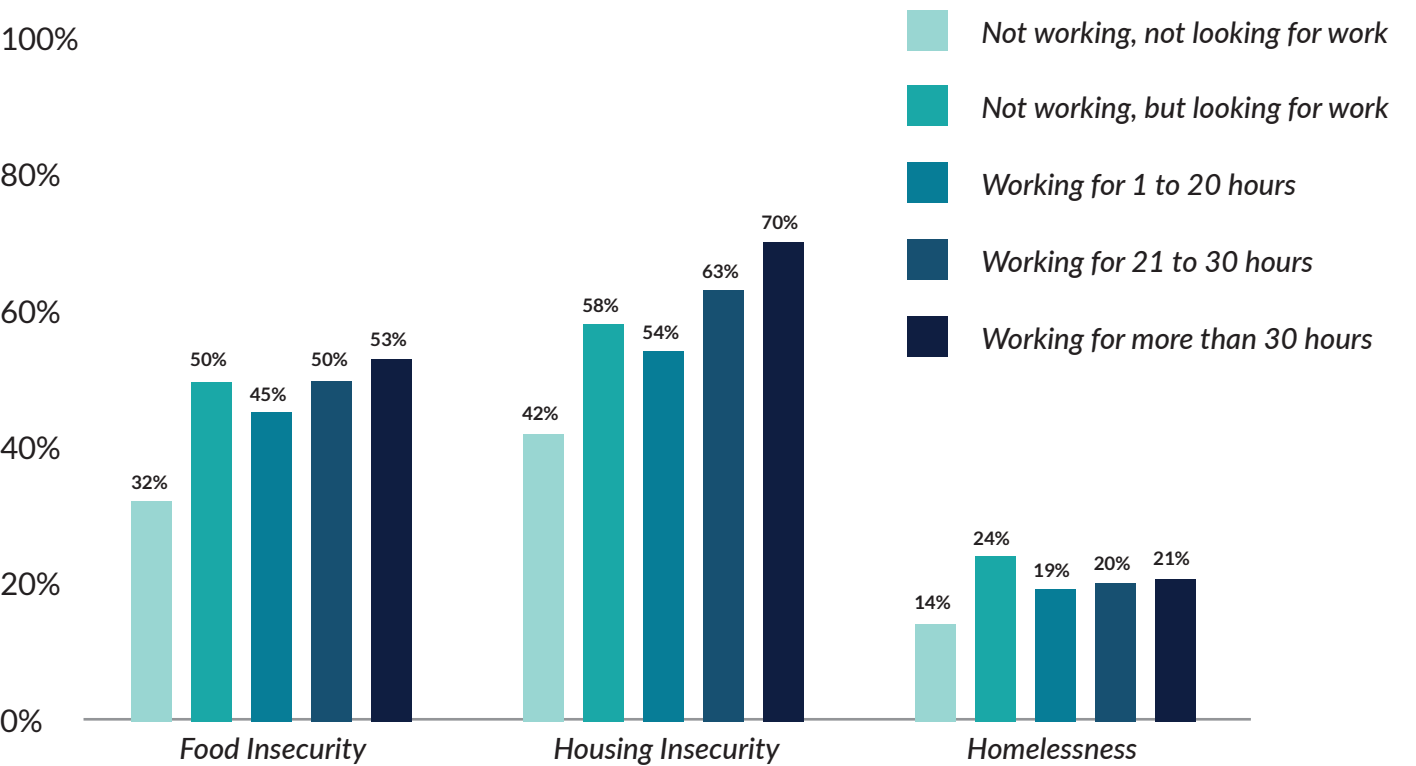


Photo Courtesy: Mendocino College



# BASIC NEEDS DISPARITIES BY ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Students who report lower academic grades are also more likely to report experiencing insecurities related to basic needs. Conversely, students with higher academic grades are more often secure in their basic needs (Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Rates of Basic Needs Insecurities by Self-Reported Grades in 2025**

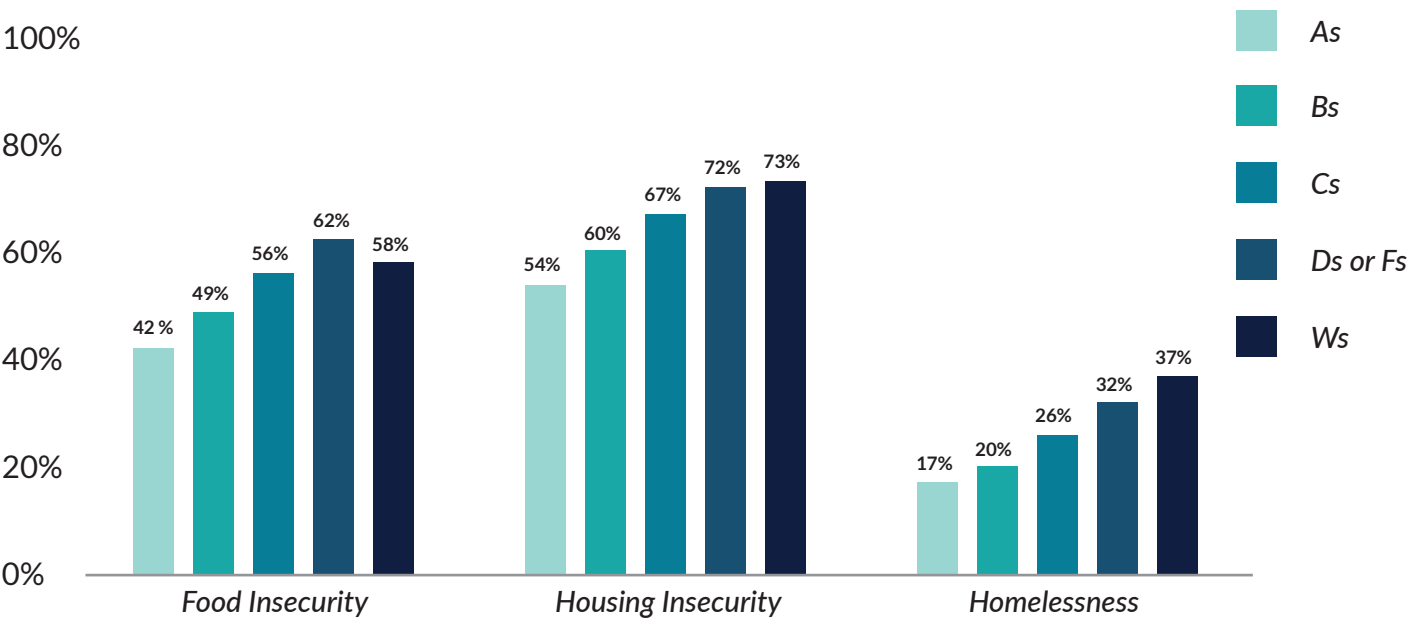


Photo Courtesy: San Diego City College

# UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC AND CAMPUS SUPPORTS

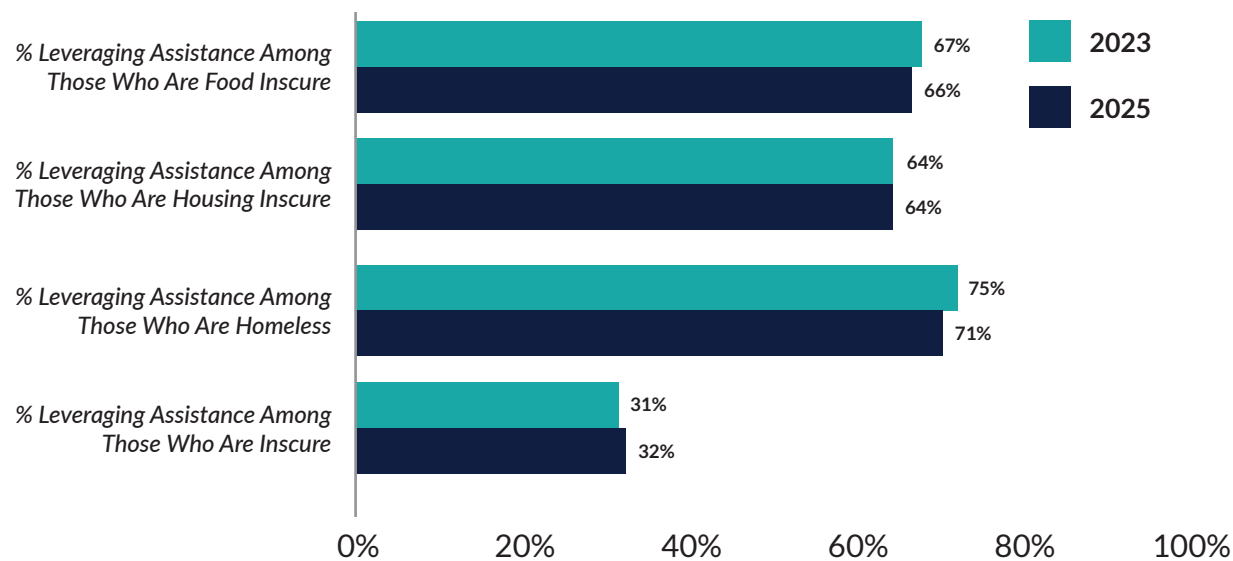
Overall, the majority of students with basic needs insecurities accessed at least one form of public assistance in the past year, with rates similar in 2023 and 2025 (Table 9 and Figure 11).

**Table 9. Rates of Public Assistance Use in the Past Year by Basic Needs Insecurity Status in 2025**

Demographics	Food Insecure	Housing Insecure	Homeless	Secure
Any Assistance	59%	71%	27%	20%
Childcare Assistance	66%	84%	34%	11%
Housing Assistance	74%	85%	45%	8%
Medicaid or Public Health Insurance	59%	72%	27%	20%
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)	65%	77%	33%	15%
Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)	63%	75%	34%	17%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	61%	71%	33%	19%
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	72%	87%	43%	8%
Transportation Assistance	66%	75%	38%	16%
Unemployment Compensation or Insurance	67%	79%	32%	15%
Utility Assistance (e.g., help paying for heat or water)	71%	86%	28%	9%
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	60%	79%	28%	15%



Figure 11. Rates of Public Assistance Use in the Past Year by Basic Needs Insecurity Status



Students were also asked about their awareness and use of basic needs supports provided by their college. When asked, “Are you aware of a Basic Needs Center on your campus and/or ways to access basic needs support?” twenty-five percent (25%) of students indicated that they were both aware of and had used such supports, while 38% were aware but had not utilized them. **Over a third of students reported that they were unaware of the basic needs supports available on their campus.**

As can be seen in Figure 12, students who indicated taking classes in-person at least part of the time were more likely to indicate knowing about the Basic Needs resources available to them relative to students who indicated taking classes entirely online.

Figure 12. Knowledge and Use of Campus Basic Needs Supports by Course Taking Modality

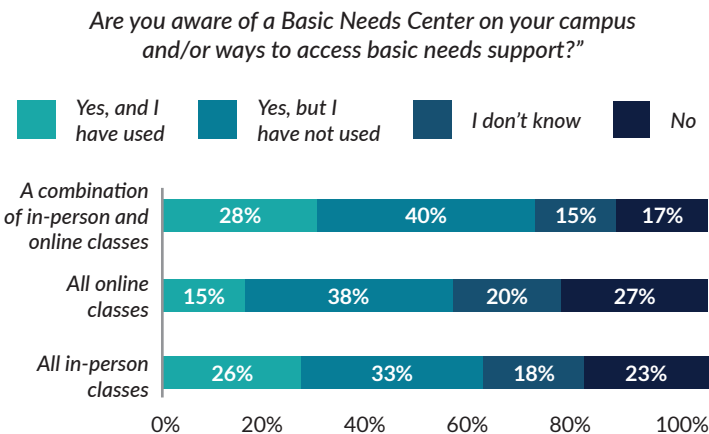
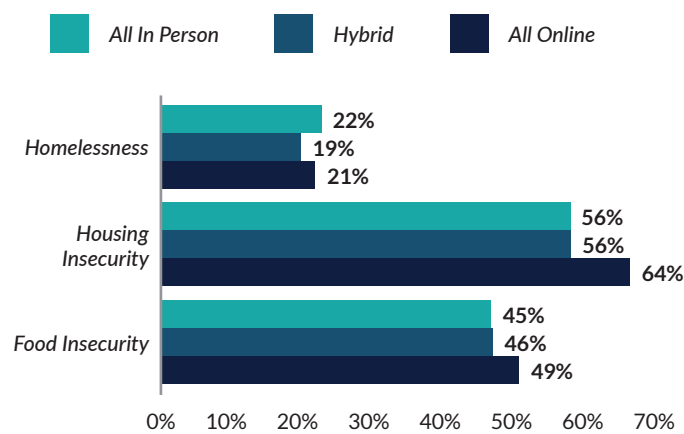


Figure 13. Rates of Basic Needs Insecurity by Course Taking Modality



Of note, the decreased use of on-campus basic needs supports by students taking classes exclusively online was not a function of lower basic needs rates. As can be seen in Figure 13, students taking classes entirely online had higher rates of housing and food insecurity relative to students taking at least a portion of their classes in person.

Among students who were aware of the basic needs support provided at their college, word-of-mouth from friends, staff, and faculty (50%), and the campus website (46%) were the most common sources of how they became aware. In comparison, only 11% indicated that they became aware of such support via social media.

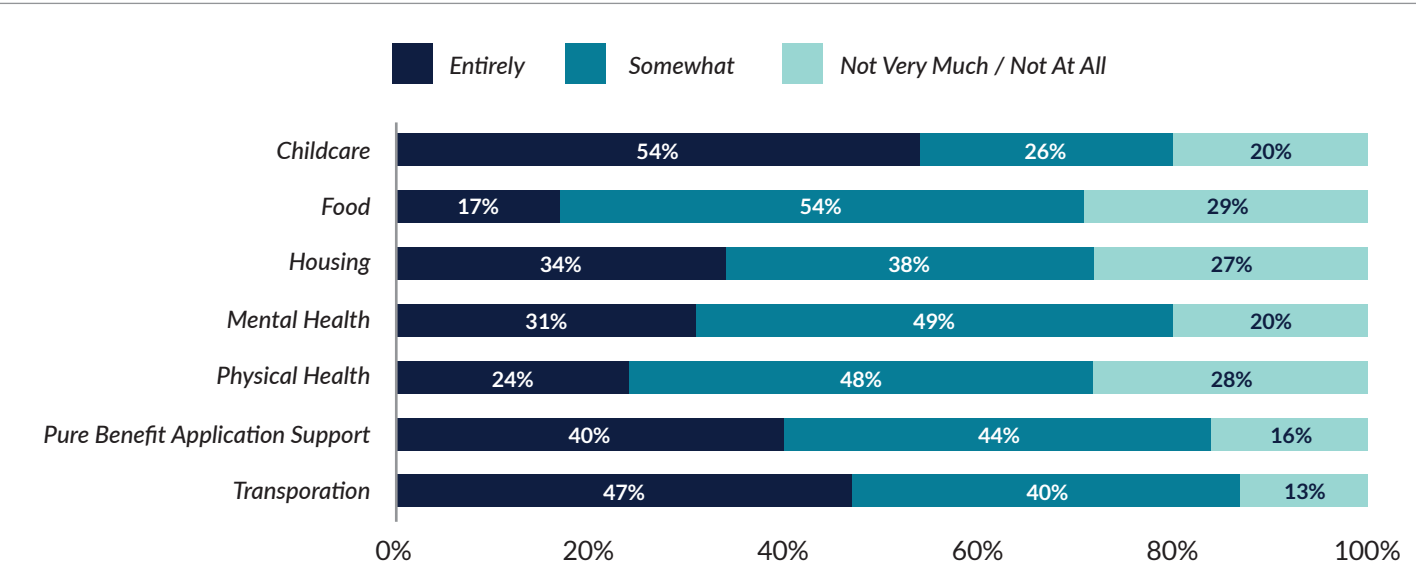
As noted, 25% of students indicated that they leveraged basic needs supports provided by their college. Of the basic needs support services, students were most likely to indicate receiving food support from their college, followed by transportation support and mental health support (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Rates of College-Provided Support Usage in 2025**

College-Provided Basic Needs Supports	% Using Support Among Those Who Indicated Having Used College-Provided Basic Needs Supports	% Using Support Among Full Sample
Childcare	3%	1%
Food	79%	20%
Housing	8%	2%
Mental Health	18%	5%
Physical Health	7%	2%
Public Benefit Application Support	12%	3%
Transportation	25%	6%

Students who had leveraged college-provided supports reported varying levels of reliance on their college for support across different basic needs areas (Figure 14). In general, most students indicated they relied at least somewhat on their college for assistance, though the degree of reliance varied by type of support. However, for essential needs such as childcare, transportation, and public benefits, students tended to rely heavily on the support provided by their institution. In contrast, for food, mental health, and physical health needs, more students reported a mix of partial reliance or limited use of these services.

**Figure 14. Reliance on College-Provided Basic Needs Supports among California Community College Survey Respondents in 2025**



Among students who had not used their college’s Basic Needs Center or resources, nearly half (48%) said they did not need support (see Figure 15). Other common reasons included thinking they were ineligible (27%), uncertainty about how to access resources (22%), and feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable seeking help (20%). Smaller proportions cited inconvenient hours (10%) or lack of awareness of the resources (7%).

**Figure 15. Reasons Students Did Not Use the Basic Needs Center or Access Basic Needs Resources Through Their College**

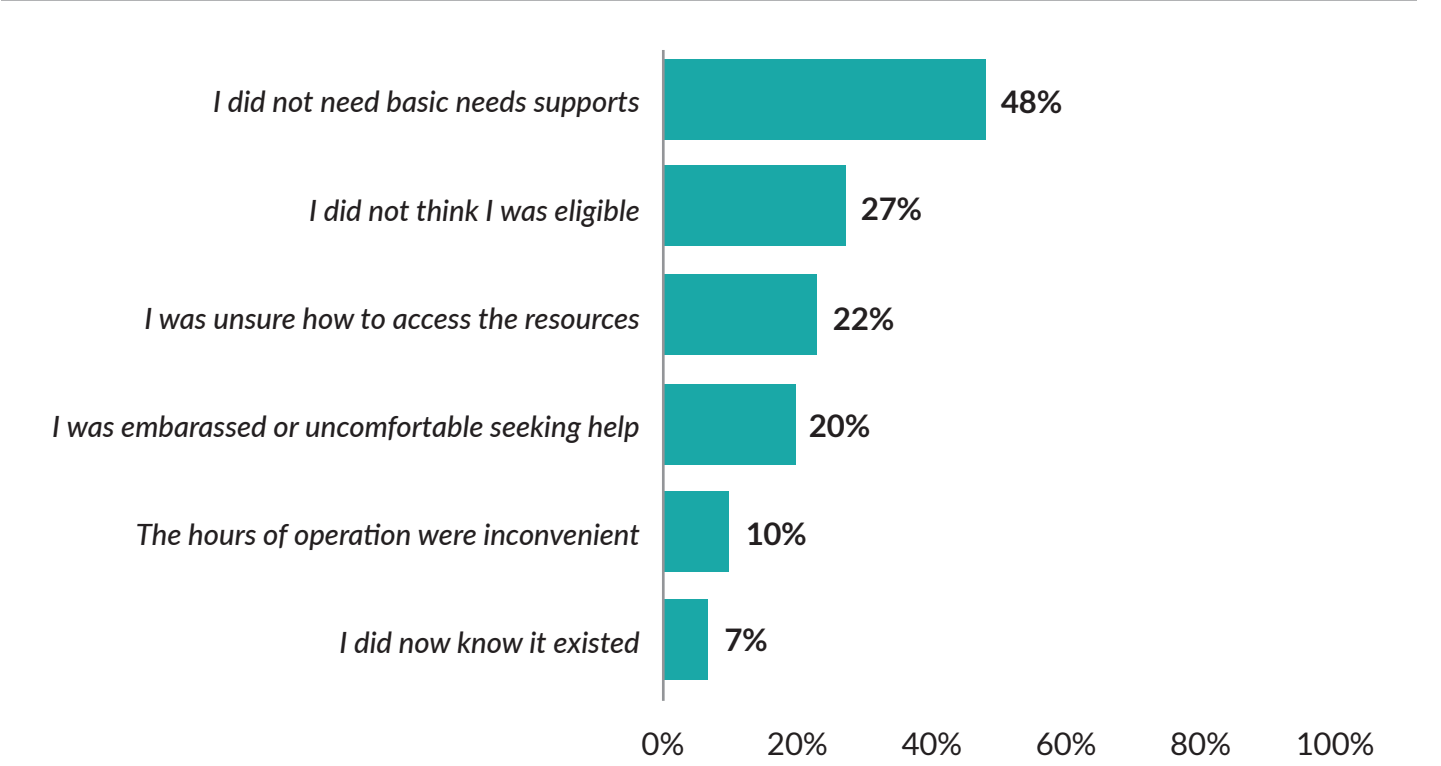


Photo Courtesy: 2024 Basic Needs Summit, Lemoore College

## Limitations

This research is limited in that the survey was emailed to students, and therefore, they required electronic access (i.e., a computer or phone with internet access) to respond. As access to the internet is often seen as a basic need in and of itself, there may be an underreporting of need, given the distribution method. Conversely, however, as is the case with most surveys, a self-selection bias is associated with these types of surveys, as those who volunteer to participate may not be representative of the general population. Looking ahead, efforts to institutionalize systemwide data collection and diversify survey administration methods (e.g., in classrooms, offering paper copies in student centers) would be beneficial in obtaining a more representative sample. Furthermore, it is important to note that the 2023 and 2025 samples are not directly comparable, as the 2025 survey included more colleges, and the respondents may not be the same students across both years.

## Discussion of Findings and Opportunities

The 2025 Real College California survey highlights modest progress in addressing basic needs insecurity among California community college students (with notable progress among certain subgroups of students) and persistent challenges that demand continued attention. While overall insecurity rates show a slight decline, and homelessness indicators demonstrate notable improvement, significant disparities remain across various student demographics. These inequities underscore the need for targeted, comprehensive strategies to ensure all students can meet their basic needs and achieve academic success.

### Opportunity 1: Implement Targeted Interventions for Vulnerable Populations

The data show that certain student groups—including African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, LGBTQ+, students aged 26–30, independent students, Pell

Grant recipients, single parents, former foster youth, and justice-impacted—experience disproportionately high rates of basic needs insecurity. Colleges and policymakers should develop and scale culturally responsive programs and resources specifically designed to address the unique needs of these groups. These efforts could include dedicated outreach, tailored financial aid, housing support, and mental health services. Looking ahead, research should closely examine the practices implemented at colleges that have experienced significant decreases in basic needs insecurities to identify best practices that others can scale.

### Opportunity 2: Enhance Accessibility and Awareness of Campus and Public Supports

Despite the availability of college-provided basic needs supports and public assistance programs, a significant portion of students in need remain unaware of these resources or face barriers to accessing them. Efforts must focus on improving communication about available resources through diverse channels, simplifying application processes, and addressing perceived ineligibility or discomfort in seeking help. Integrating basic needs support directly into academic advising and student success pathways can also increase utilization.

### Opportunity 3: Advocate for Systemic and Policy-Level Changes

The pervasive nature of insecurity related to basic needs among CCC students, even among those working, indicates that individual campus efforts alone are insufficient. Policymakers and advocates should push for broader systemic changes, including increasing funding for basic needs initiatives at the state and federal levels, strengthening the social safety net (e.g., SNAP, housing assistance), and exploring policies that ensure living wages and affordable housing options for students. As rates of basic needs were highest among students working full time, it is clear that employment alone is not a solution. Students need both living wages and lower living costs. Furthermore, continued research and the use of diverse data collection methods are also crucial for better understanding and addressing these complex challenges.

## Appendix A: Participating Colleges

COLLEGE	# OF RESPONSES
Allan Hancock College	1,153
American River College	270
Antelope Valley College	1,084
Bakersfield College	1,605
Barstow College	182
Berkeley City College	1,080
Cabrillo College	692
Cerro Coso College	150
Chabot College	469
Chaffey College	2,075
Citrus College	400
City College of San Francisco	764
Clovis Community College	482
Coalinga College	176
Coastline College	162
College of Alameda	399
College of the Canyons	1,348
College of the Desert	475
College of the Siskiyous	156
Compton College	423
Contra Costa College	795
Copper Mountain College	150
Cosumnes River College	99
Crafton Hills Community College	423
Cuesta College	307
Cuyamaca College	406
Cypress College	608
Diablo Valley College	326
East Los Angeles College	1,665
El Camino College	1,704
Folsom Lake College	478
Foothill College	315
Fresno City College	1,379
Fullerton College	1,169

COLLEGE	# OF RESPONSES
Gavilan College	603
Glendale Community College	1,368
Golden West College	505
Grossmont College	883
Hartnell College	877
Imperial Valley College	805
Irvine Valley College	992
Lake Tahoe Community College	132
Laney College	1,126
Las Positas College	246
Lassen Community College	158
Lemoore College	471
Long Beach City College	3,497
Los Angeles City College	1,502
Los Angeles Harbor College	619
Los Angeles Mission College	678
Los Angeles Pierce College	1,216
Los Angeles Southwest College	521
Los Angeles Trade-Technical College	1,224
Los Angeles Valley College	1,359
Los Medanos College	1,093
Madera Community College	491
Mendocino College	242
Merced College	447
Merritt College	676
Mission College	610
Modesto Junior College	1,848
Monterey Peninsula College	15
Moorpark College	385
Moreno Valley College	471
Mt San Antonio College	3,896
Mt San Jacinto College	486
Napa Valley College	206
Norco College	462



COLLEGE	# OF RESPONSES
North Orange Continuing Education	523
Ohlone College	253
Orange Coast College	931
Oxnard College	311
Palo Verde College	164
Pasadena City College	1,576
Porterville College	76
Reedley College	627
Rio Hondo College	494
Riverside City College	678
Sacramento City College	163
Saddleback College	685
San Bernardino Valley College	1,271
San Diego City College	990
San Diego College of Continuing Education	970
San Diego Mesa College	1,221
San Diego Miramar College	580
San Joaquin Delta College	448
San Jose City College	318
Santa Ana College	1,526
Santa Barbara City College	819
Santa Monica College	37
Santa Rosa Junior College	148
Santiago Canyon College	213
Shasta College	1,646
Sierra College	1,457
Solano Community College	76
Southwestern College	2,266
Taft College	67
Ventura College	343
Victor Valley College	714
West Los Angeles College	730
West Valley College	945
Woodland Community College	226



Photo Courtesy: West Los Angeles College

## Appendix B: Sample Demographics vs. Statewide

Table A1. Demographics of Survey Sample in 2025 Survey Sample vs. Statewide

Gender Orientation	Survey Sample	Statewide
Man	28.0%	43.7%
Other Gender Orientation/Other Term	4.0%	3.5%
Woman	66.5%	52.8%
Racial/Ethnic Background	Survey Sample	Statewide
African American/Black	10.5%	5.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3.5%	<1.0%
Hispanic/Latiné	48.1%	48.7%
Asian (East, South, Southeast, Other)	16.0%	10.5%
Middle Eastern/North African/Arab/Arab American	2.4%	n/a
Other	3.9%	n/a
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	1.5%	0.4%
White/Caucasian	30.4%	23.6%
Multi-Ethnicity	n/a	4.2%
Unknown	n/a	4.8%

Age	Survey Sample	Statewide
18 to 20	30.9%	31.8%
21 to 25	19.2%	25.8%
26 to 30	11.8%	11.2%
Older than 30	38.2%	31.2%

Statewide Source: DataMart Spring 2024

**Note:** Demographic data for the survey sample are only shown for students who chose to self-identify in the survey. Age groups for statewide comparison were slightly different than survey groupings. Statewide groups were: age 19 or less, 20-24, 25-29, and older than 29. Racial groups for the Real College survey sample include a student in a given racial/ethnic group if they identified with that group, regardless of whether they identified with any other group, and thus totals sum to more than 100% and no category of “multi-ethnicity” is included. All Asian subcategories from the survey are combined to be comparable to the statewide data.



Photo Courtesy: 2024 Basic Needs Summit, Lemoore College





Photo Courtesy: Ohlone College

## Acknowledgments

We extend our deepest gratitude to the colleges that generously dedicated their time and resources to support the administration of the survey. We also want to thank the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Michelson 20MM Foundation for their support of the CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce, the Real College California Coalition, and their recognition of the importance of this survey and the resulting report. We offer heartfelt appreciation to the Basic Needs Coordinators across our colleges, whose tireless advocacy and daily efforts ensure students have access to the essential resources they need to succeed. Most importantly, we thank the students who, despite facing significant challenges, voluntarily took the time to share their experiences and insights. Their voices are the foundation of this work.

### **The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group)**

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) is a leader that supports equitable outcomes for minoritized and marginalized students through race-conscious, equity-minded research, planning, and professional development. They uplift student voices and empower researchers and planners to improve institutional effectiveness by dismantling systemic barriers and injustices. Special thanks to the project team for stewarding this research and report.

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**TheRPGroup**  
Research, Planning & Professional Development  
for California Community Colleges

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# CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce

Launched in Spring 2018 by the Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges (CEOCCC), the Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce was established to provide systemwide recommendations to combat the widespread issues of food and housing insecurity facing students. The Taskforce takes a proactive approach, engaging in dialogue and proposing evidence-based interventions informed by research and insights from students, practitioners, and leading scholars on hunger and housing.

To deepen its impact, the Taskforce launched the Real College California Coalition in 2019. This coalition delivers up-to-date research and practical, hands-on guidance to support implementation efforts. It also helps institutions adopt an innovative mindset to enhance effectiveness, foster student success, and strengthen the statewide ecosystem for meeting students' basic needs and advancing college completion.

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