



## Addressing Food and Housing Insecurity Among UMD Juniors and Seniors

July 2024

This report, written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subgroup, looks at juniors' and seniors' reported experiences facing food and housing insecurity. According to the 2020 National Center for Education Statistics,<sup>1</sup> **23% of undergraduates experienced food insecurity and 8% of undergraduates experienced homelessness at the time of the study.** Housing and food insecurity can impact student success; for example, UMD's Counseling Center Research Unit found that **food-insecure students were almost 13 times more likely to miss class** because they were not able to afford food.<sup>2</sup>

This report analyzes data from the 2024 University of Maryland Student Survey, using the U.S. Department of Agriculture's U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module, to assess (1) students' ability to meet these essential needs and (2) how those results compare to previous research at UMD and national trends. The results from this report can help identify how the University could further support students.

### About the University of Maryland Student Survey

The 2024 University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS24) was administered online from March 4 - March 15, 2024 to juniors and seniors enrolled in Professional Writing courses. In March 2024, 1,350 students completed the survey (36% of all students enrolled in Professional Writing courses).<sup>3</sup>

### About the U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module

The UMSS24 used the U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short-Form.<sup>4</sup> This module provides a standardized set of six items from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service. The questions ask respondents to think about their or their household's ability to afford food and eat balanced meals. Respondents are then assigned a food security status based on their responses. Every affirmative response<sup>5</sup> is coded as 1 point and all other responses are coded as 0 points. The points are then summed to determine each respondent's food security status.<sup>6</sup> These statuses are:

High or Marginal Food Security (0 - 1 score)	Low Food Security (2 - 4 score)	Very Low Food Security (5 - 6 score)
Households had no problems or anxiety about accessing adequate food OR had problems/anxiety about accessing adequate food, but the quality, variety, and quantity of their food intake were not substantially reduced.	Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.	At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food.

The full distribution of responses on the UMSS24 will be available on [reports.umd.edu](https://reports.umd.edu) in late 2024.

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics: [National Postsecondary Student Aid Study \(NPSAS\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> Source: Wang, Y.-W., Cruz, T. E., & Bush, L. (2019). [UMD food access & student well-being study](#). College Park, MD: University of Maryland Counseling Center Research Unit.

<sup>3</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. The distribution of respondents by race/ethnicity was similar to that of the UMD population of juniors and seniors. Females were slightly overrepresented in the survey sample (54%) compared to 48% of all juniors and seniors, and 46% of respondents were male, compared to 52% of the population. The distribution of respondents by first generation status was similar to that of the UMD population of juniors and seniors.

<sup>4</sup> The module was taken from the [Economic Research Service](#) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

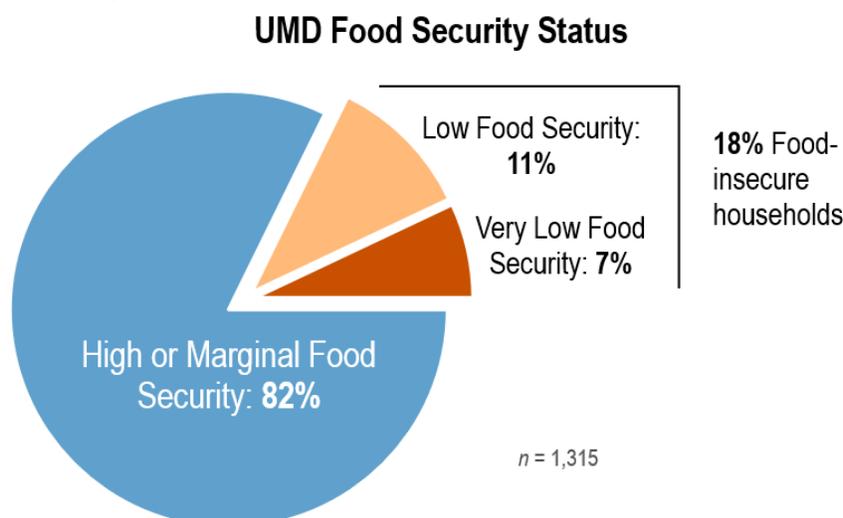
<sup>5</sup> Affirmative response options are "yes," "sometimes true," "often true," "some months but not every month," and "almost every month."

<sup>6</sup> Food security status definitions are from the USDA Economic Research Service, [Food Security in the U.S.: Measurement](#).

## Food Security Status

### About 1 in 5 respondents experienced low food security in the past year.

- Eighteen percent of respondents belong to food-insecure households, eleven percent experienced low food security, and 7% experienced very low food security. The remaining 82% of respondents had high or marginal food security.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of respondents by food security status, UMSS24.

#### Did You Know?

- The UMSS24 also asked respondents about their awareness of campus resources, including the Campus Pantry. Twenty-one percent of respondents said they have not heard of the Campus Pantry. About 8% said they have already used the Campus Pantry and another 10% said they plan to use it in the future.
- In 2023, the Campus Pantry had 2,143 visitors, leading to over 18,000 visits.<sup>7</sup> This includes undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff.

### Food security scores significantly differed across student demographics.

- Statistical tests<sup>8</sup> were conducted to determine whether food security scores (0-6, with higher scores representing lower food security) differed by gender, first-generation status, entry enrollment type, and race/ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> View all mean food security scores in figure 3.
  - **Gender:** Female respondents had significantly higher food insecurity than males.
  - **First-Generation Status:** First-generation respondents had significantly higher food insecurity than non-first-generation respondents.
  - **Entry Enrollment:** Respondents who entered UMD as new transfer students had significantly higher food insecurity than new freshmen and new other undergraduates (e.g. Freshman Connection students).<sup>10</sup>
  - **Race/Ethnicity:** Hispanic/Latino students had statistically significantly higher food insecurity than both Asian and white students.

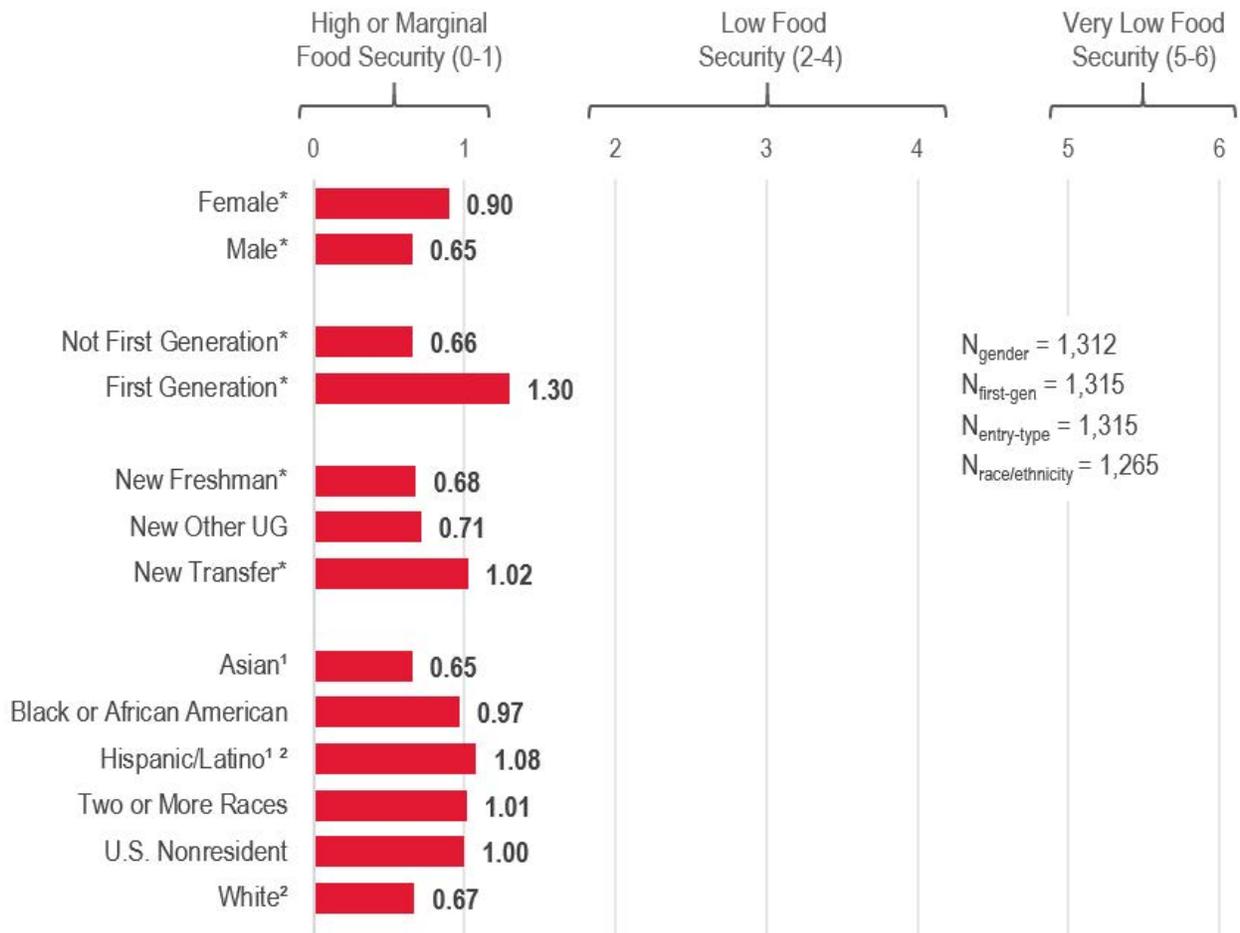
<sup>7</sup> Tjaden, A., Tumlin, L., & Jordan, H. (2024). *Campus Pantry Utilization: 2014-2023*. University of Maryland Dining Services.

<sup>8</sup> The Kruskal-Wallis rank test was used instead of a typical analysis of variance (ANOVA) test because the samples were not normally distributed. This is a non-parametric test to assess whether two or more groups are significantly different from one another. If statistical significance was found, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to find where the statistically significant differences were.

<sup>9</sup> The following variables were excluded from the analysis due to small cell sizes: non-binary (gender), American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Unknown (race/ethnicity).

<sup>10</sup> The UMD data warehouse defines "new transfer students" as students whose first semester at UMD was as a transfer student from another institution, "new freshmen" as students who applied and were admitted as first-time students into the typical freshman class, and "new other undergraduates" as students whose class standing is Freshman Connection.

### Average Food Security Scores by Gender, First Generation Status, Entry Enrollment Type, and Race/Ethnicity



Note: \* indicates a significant difference between the two variables within their respective demographic. <sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> differentiate the two statistically significant differences within the race/ethnicity demographic.

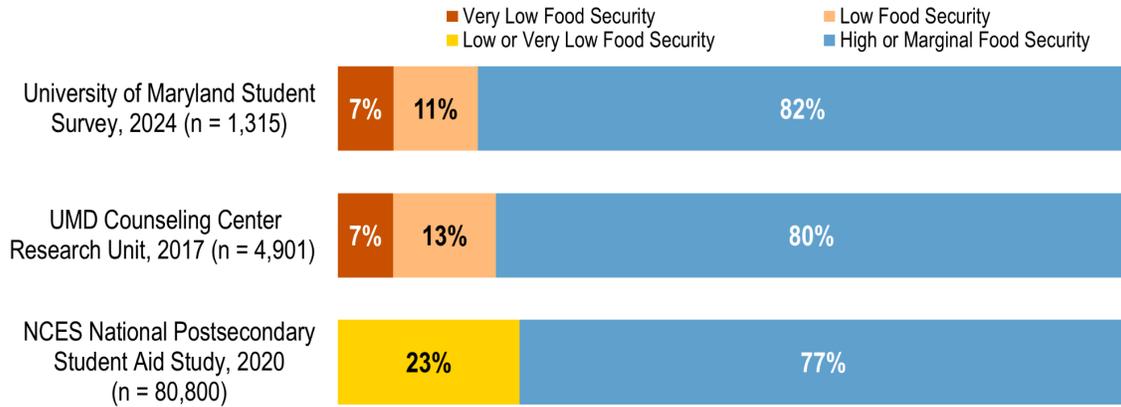
**Figure 3.** Average food security scores by gender, first-generation status, entry enrollment type, and race/ethnicity, UMSS24.

#### Food insecurity rates are similar to previous UMD research and national rates.

- The UMSS24 results were similar to those of a 2017 study conducted by UMD’s Counseling Center. The 2017 study found that 80% of respondents had a high or marginal food security status and 20% of respondents were food-insecure.
- The UMSS24 data are also in line with national data from the 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), in which 23% of undergraduate students indicated they experienced low or very low food security in the past month.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> McKibben, B., Wu, J., & Abelson, S. (2023). [New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant - and Unacceptable - Basic Needs Insecurity](#). Temple University: The Hope Center.

## Food Security Status Comparisons



Note: The National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20) combined “low food security” and “very low food security.” Comparisons should be interpreted with caution.

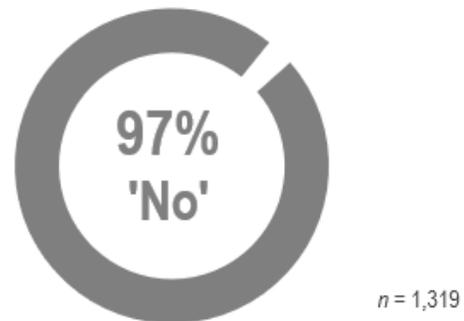
**Figure 4.** Distribution of food security levels across different populations, UMSS24, 2017 Food Access & Student Well-Being Survey,<sup>12</sup> and the 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.<sup>13</sup>

## Housing Security

**About 3% of respondents indicated they were without permanent housing within the past 12 months.**

- Respondents were asked if they had ever been without housing in the past 12 months, including staying with friends or family, staying at a hotel, or sleeping in a shelter. While the overwhelming majority of respondents did not indicate experiencing housing insecurity, 34 students said they had experienced housing insecurity in the past year.
- The 2020 NPSAS reported that, nationally, 8% of undergraduate students experienced homelessness in the past 30 days.

**During the last 12 months, were you ever **without housing** (e.g., staying with friends/family or at a motel/hotel temporarily without a permanent home to return to, sleeping in a shelter, in transitional housing, outdoors, in a car, or other place not meant for sleeping)?**



**Figure 5.** Percentage of respondents who indicated that they did not experience housing insecurity, UMSS24.

<sup>12</sup> Read more about the findings from the Food Access and Student Well-Being Survey here: [https://studentaffairs.umd.edu/Report\\_September.pdf](https://studentaffairs.umd.edu/Report_September.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Read more about the findings from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study here: <https://hope.temple.edu/npsas>

### Questions to Consider

- This survey asked respondents to think about themselves and their household. How might students have defined their “household” (e.g., to include roommates) and how might that have affected their responses?
- Not all students live on their own or in university housing year-round. Many might move to a different location for the summer and winter breaks. How might students’ perceptions of their food and housing situations differ if they live in multiple places in a year?
- The stigma around being food- or housing-insecure might hinder individuals from discussing their circumstances. Could this stigma have resulted in some students not indicating that they are unable to meet their basic needs?

## Conclusion

The data presented here provide an overview of food and housing insecurity reported by UMD juniors and seniors in March 2024. The food security data are consistent with findings from other surveys, with about 20% of respondents struggling to afford food and eat regularly. Housing security data show that fewer students struggle with housing insecurity than the national rate for college students.

UMD offers several resources to aid students and employees experiencing financial difficulties. Current students and employees can visit the Campus Pantry and apply for the Student Crisis Fund or Faculty/Staff Assistance Program Emergency Fund. If you or someone you know at UMD is experiencing food and/or housing insecurity, visit the [Essential Needs Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more about the resources UMD offers.

### Questions to Consider

- How can UMD faculty and staff create affirming spaces so that students feel comfortable disclosing their circumstances?
- Are you aware of all the resources UMD offers to students, faculty, and staff who are experiencing food and housing insecurity? If you are an instructor, have you included the [basic needs security statement](#) in your syllabus?
- What can you do in your role on campus to support students experiencing housing and food insecurity?

### About ACES

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subgroup: Julie Kromkowski, Chair, Division of Administration Office of the VP; Jess Wojton, Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (IRPA); Shannon Buenaflor, A. James Clark School of Engineering; Stephanie Chang, Office of Diversity & Inclusion; Robert E. Crane, College of Arts & Humanities; Jonathan Engelberg, Division of Information Technology; Danielle Glazer, IRPA; Pearl Lo, Adele H. Stamp Student Union; Scott Moses, Department of English; Chad Nazworth, Academic Affairs; Sharon Ousman, Career Center; Charlene Ploetz Savoy, College of Information Studies; Alan Socha, IRPA; Ronald Zeigler, Nyumburu Cultural Center. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.