



2019 #RealCollege Survey Report

System Report

June 2020



[HOPE4COLLEGE.COM](https://hope4college.com)

2019 #REALCOLLEGE SURVEY RESULTS

REPORT FOR MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Prepared by
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
at Temple University

June 2020

OVERVIEW

* Invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent by email to approximately 109,900 students from 13 institutions from the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System and 9,978 students participated. Thus, the estimated response rate is 9.1%.

* **Overall Basic Needs Insecurity Rates:**

- 37% of respondents experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days
- 43% of respondents experienced housing insecurity in the previous year
- 17% of respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year

* 56% of students in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System experienced at least one of these forms of basic needs insecurity in the past year.

* There is substantial variation in basic needs insecurity across subgroups.

* 20% of food insecure students utilize SNAP benefits and 9% of homeless students utilize housing benefits.

For more information on the research methodology and survey participants, please refer to the online appendices for the 2019 National #RealCollege Survey report (available at www.hope4college.com).

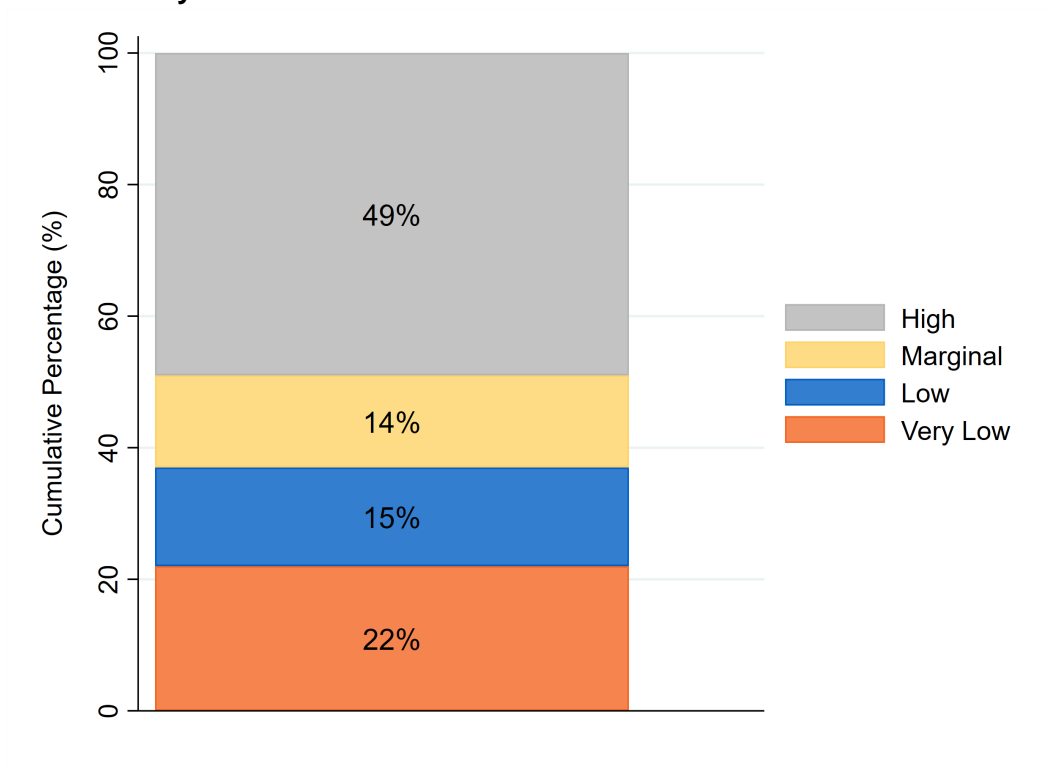
PREVALENCE OF BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner. The most extreme form is often accompanied with physiological sensations of hunger. We assessed food security among students using the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 18-item set of questions.

During the 30 days preceding the survey, approximately 37% of survey respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System experienced low or very low levels of food security (Figure 1). Moreover, 41% of survey respondents cannot afford to eat balanced meals and 40% worry about running out of food before they have money to buy more (Figure 2).

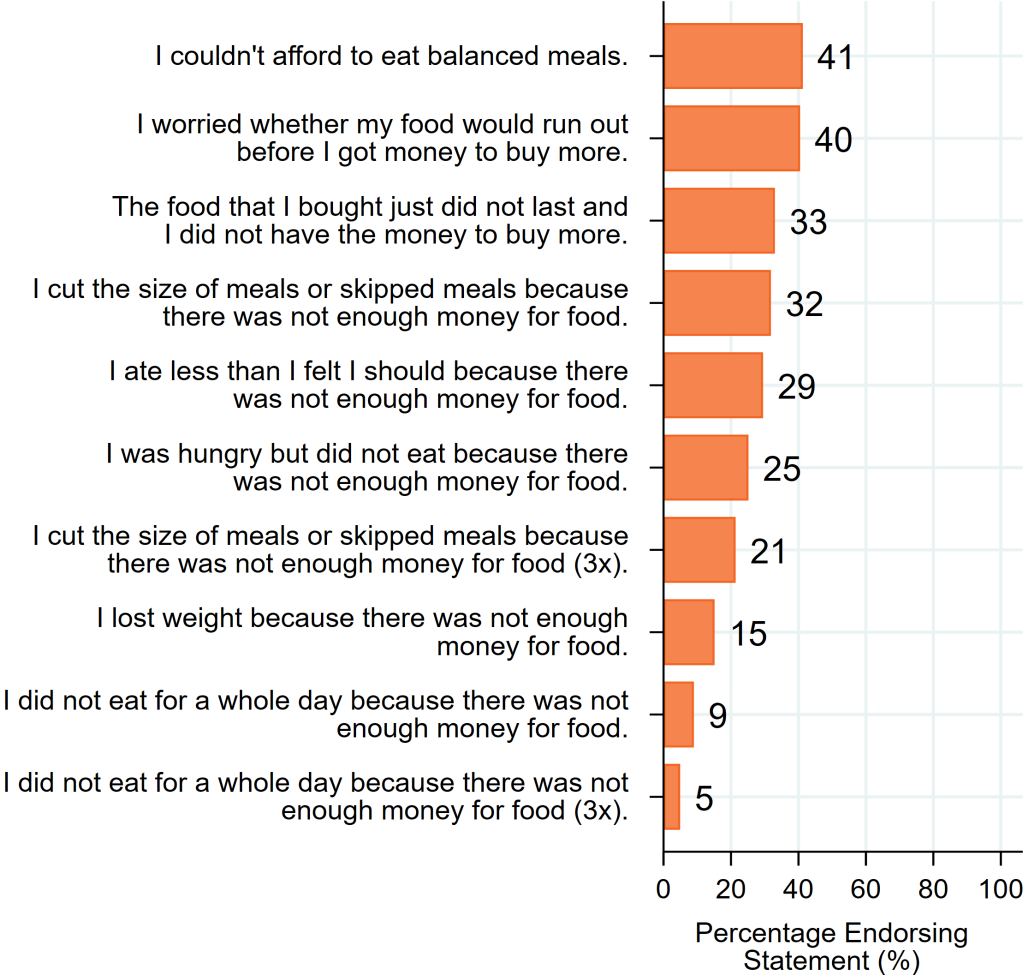
Figure 1. Food Security Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System



Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Notes: According to the USDA, students at either low or very low food security are termed food insecure. For the full list of questions used to measure food security, see our full report available at www.hope4college.com. Cumulative percentage may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

Figure 2. Food Insecurity Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System



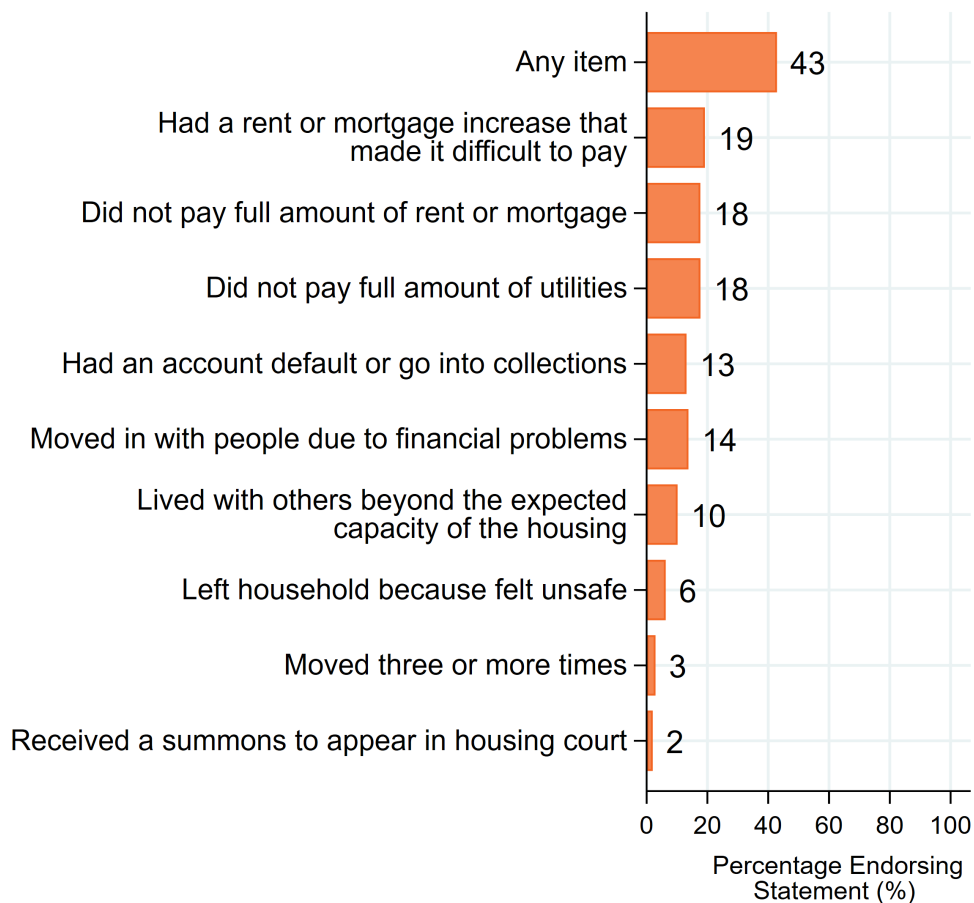
Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity includes a broad set of challenges such as the inability to pay rent or utilities or the need to move frequently. All of these challenges affect students, and results suggest they are more likely to suffer some form of housing insecurity than to have all their needs met during college. Housing insecurity among students was assessed with a nine-item set of questions developed by the Hope Center. Students are classified as housing insecure if they answered affirmatively to experiencing at least one of those items in the previous year.

How prevalent is housing insecurity in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System? As displayed below, 43% of survey respondents are housing insecure (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Housing Insecurity Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System



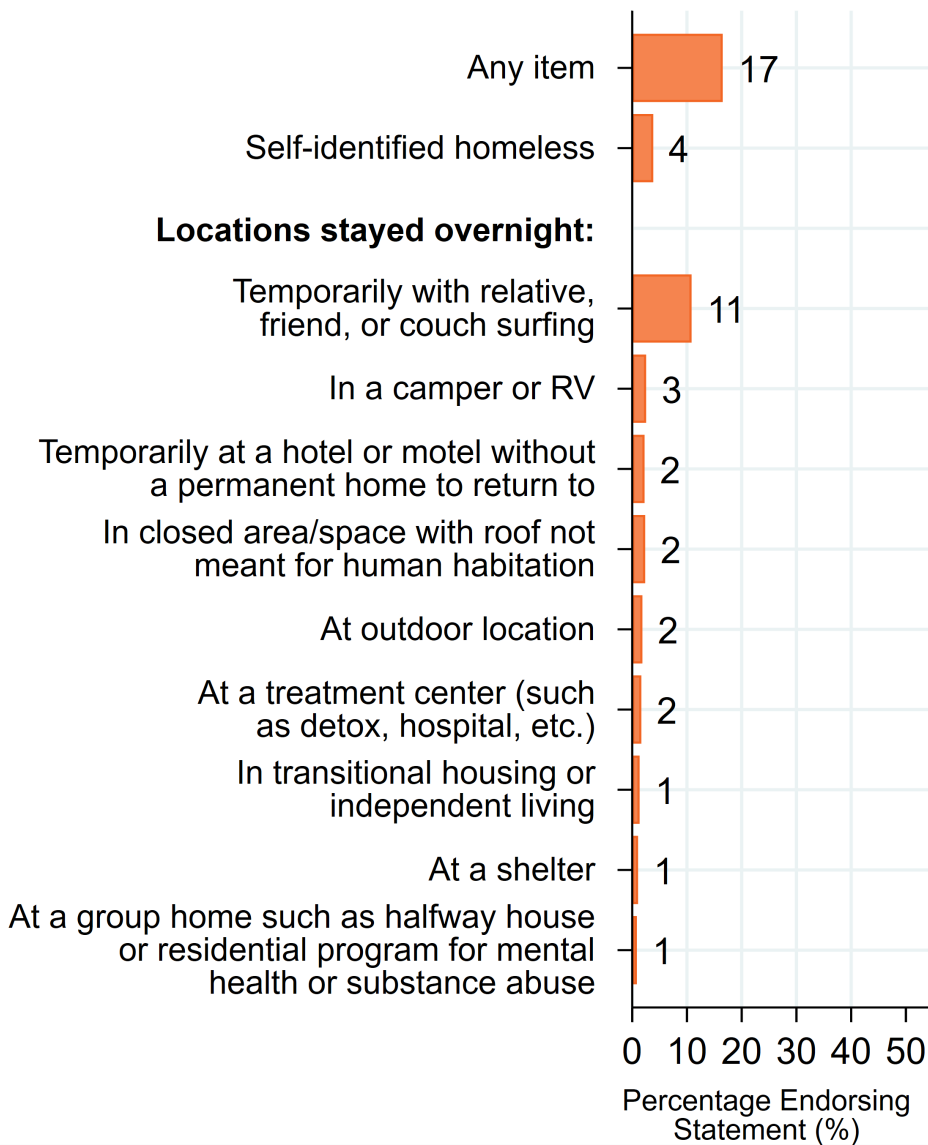
Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Homelessness

Homelessness means that a person does not have a stable place to live. Students were identified as homeless if they responded affirmatively to a question asking if they had been homeless or they experienced living conditions that are considered signs of homelessness in the previous year. Homelessness among students was assessed with a tool developed by California State University researchers.

How prevalent is homelessness in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System? As displayed below, 17% of survey respondents experience homelessness (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Homelessness Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System

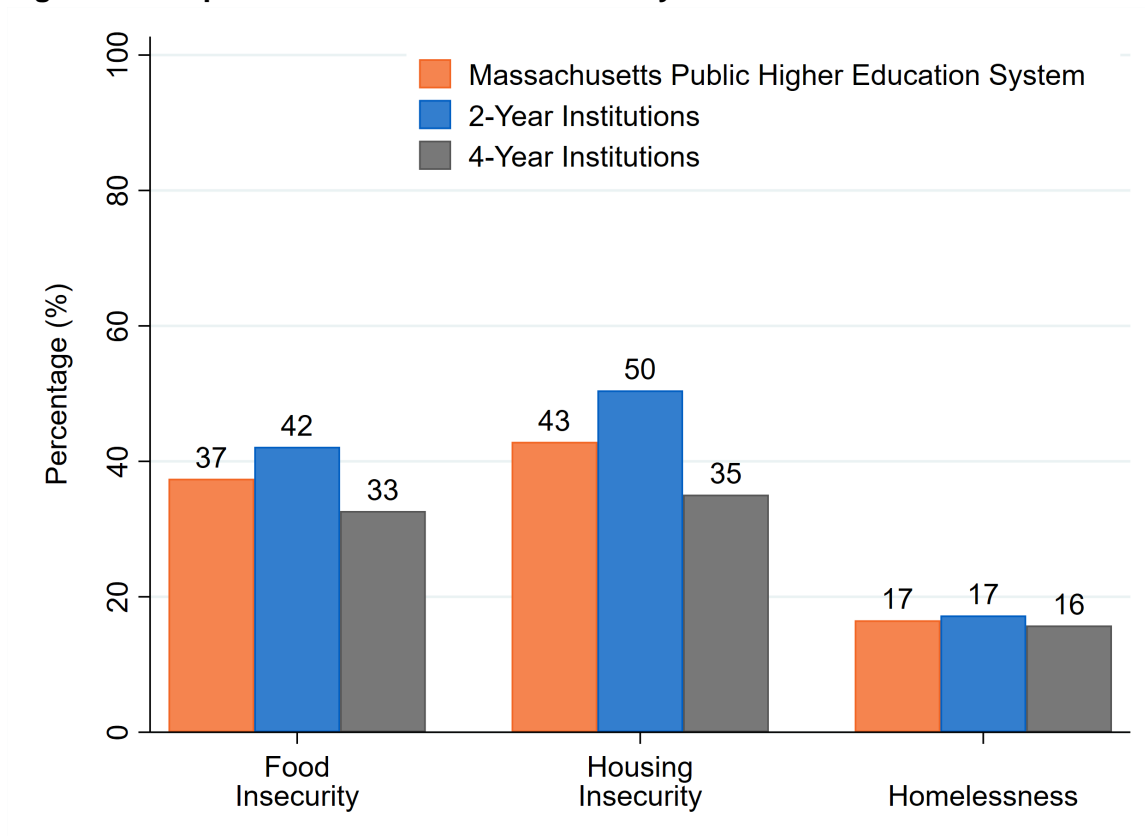


Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

COMPARISON TO SURVEY RESPONDENTS ATTENDING TWO- OR FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

In comparison to the rates for all survey respondents at two-year institutions nationwide in 2019, the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System has a lower rate of food insecurity, a lower rate of housing insecurity, and a similar rate of homelessness (Figure 5). In comparison to the rates for all survey respondents at four-year institutions nationwide in 2019, the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System has a higher rate of food insecurity, a higher rate of housing insecurity, and a higher rate of homelessness.

Figure 5. Comparison of Basic Needs Insecurity Rates

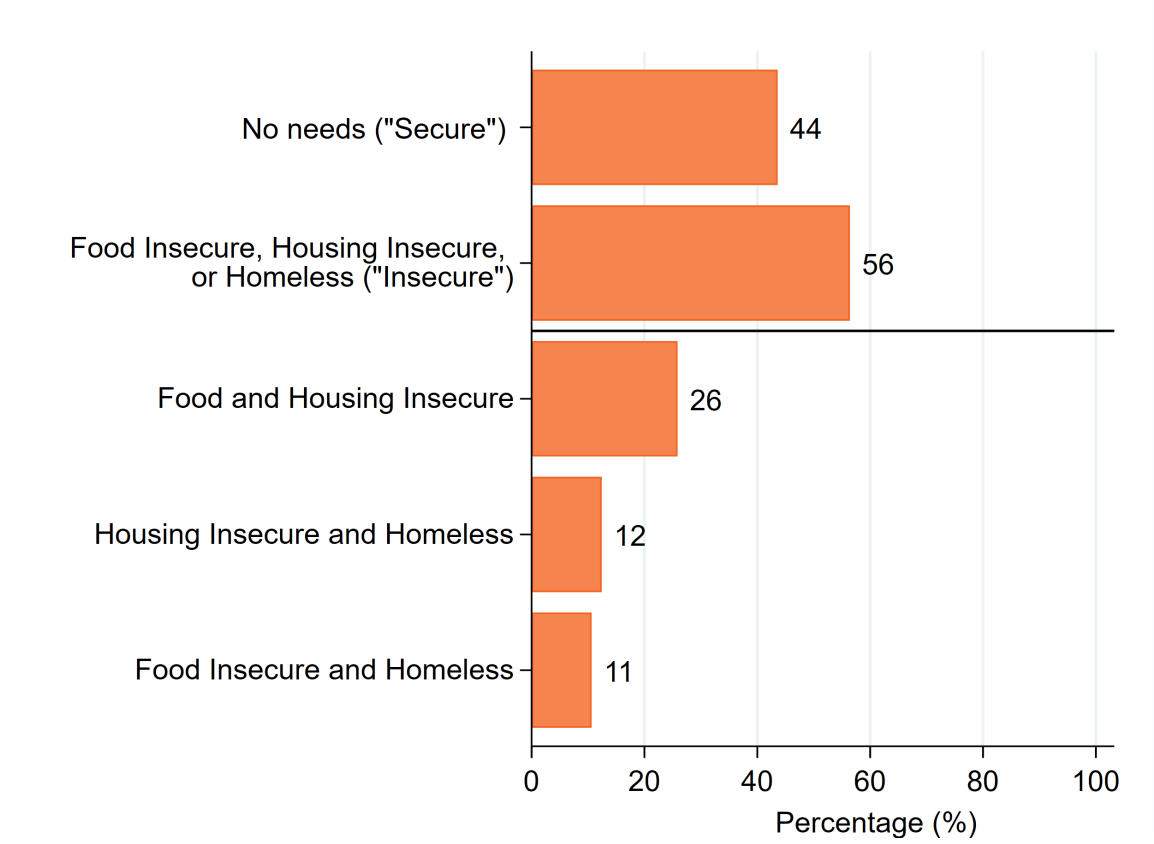


Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

OVERLAPPING CHALLENGES

Food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness are overlapping concerns, with 56% of students in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System experiencing at least one of these forms of basic needs insecurity in the past year (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Intersections of Food Insecurity, Housing Insecurity, and Homelessness Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System



Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

DISPARITIES IN BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

Some students are at higher risk of basic needs insecurity than others. The tables in this section present rates of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness according to students' demographic, academic, and economic circumstances, as well as their life circumstances.

By Demographic Background

Table 1. Demographic Disparities in Rates of Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System

	Number of Students	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
GENDER IDENTITY				
Male	2,150	33	37	19
Female	5,257	39	45	16
Non-Binary/Third gender	140	49	57	28
Prefers to self-describe	41	59	61	51
TRANSGENDER IDENTITY				
Identifies as transgender	157	51	50	30
Does not identify as transgender	7,314	37	43	16
SEXUAL ORIENTATION				
Heterosexual or straight	5,771	36	42	15
Gay or lesbian	292	44	49	24
Bisexual	932	45	48	25
Prefers to self-describe	255	43	46	19
HIGHEST LEVEL OF PARENTAL EDUCATION				
No high school diploma	656	51	59	20
High school diploma	1,483	40	43	15
Some college	2,527	42	50	18
Bachelors degree or higher	2,602	27	32	15
Does not know	232	39	47	18

Table continued on next page.

Table 1 (continued). Demographic Disparities in Rates of Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System

	Number of Students	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
RACIAL OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND				
White or Caucasian	4,983	33	38	16
African American or Black	1,044	52	59	19
Hispanic or Latinx	1,469	47	56	18
American Indian or Alaska Native	164	58	59	30
Indigenous	87	59	61	28
Middle Eastern or North African or Arab or Arab American	208	46	50	20
Southeast Asian	320	39	43	19
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	45	47	62	40
Other Asian or Asian American	416	36	38	18
Other	271	48	55	25
STUDENT IS A U.S. CITIZEN OR PERMANENT RESIDENT				
Yes	7,182	37	43	16
No	324	39	51	23
AGE				
18 to 20	3,327	29	29	15
21 to 25	2,464	43	47	19
26 to 30	706	48	68	22
Older than 30	982	44	64	13
STUDENT IS AN ATHLETE				
Yes	284	31	30	18
No	7,213	38	43	17

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Note: Results from any category with fewer than 10 respondents are not shown in the table. The Number of Students column indicates the number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number respondents to our measures of food and housing insecurity may vary slightly. Classifications of gender and race/ethnicity are not mutually exclusive. Students could self-identify with multiple classifications.

By Student Academic, Economic, and Life Experiences

Table 2. Rates of Basic Needs Insecurity by Student Life Experiences Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System

	Number of Students	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
LEVEL OF STUDY				
Undergraduate	7,242	38	42	17
Graduate	861	36	47	15
Non-degree	378	36	54	16
COLLEGE ENROLLMENT STATUS				
Full-time (at least 12 credits)	6,279	36	38	16
Part-time (fewer than 12 credits)	2,209	41	56	17
YEARS IN COLLEGE				
Less than 1	2,629	32	37	17
1 to 2	2,842	38	43	16
3 or more	3,013	41	48	17
DEPENDENCY STATUS				
Dependent	2,541	34	35	15
Independent	3,088	44	57	19
Does not know	1,824	31	30	16
STUDENT RECEIVES THE PELL GRANT				
Yes	3,386	49	54	19
No	4,008	29	34	15
RELATIONSHIP STATUS				
Single	3,899	35	39	18
In a relationship	2,716	40	43	17
Married or domestic partnership	700	35	58	9
Divorced	90	50	72	19
Widowed

Table continued on next page.

Table 2 (continued). Rates of Basic Needs Insecurity by Student Life Experiences Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System

	Number of Students	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
STUDENT HAS CHILDREN				
Yes	1,020	53	69	16
No	7,207	35	39	17
STUDENT HAS BEEN IN FOSTER CARE				
Yes	273	61	67	37
No	7,214	36	42	16
STUDENT HAS BEEN IN MILITARY				
Yes	203	36	54	20
No	7,313	37	43	17
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Employed	2,578	40	44	17
Not employed, looking for work	456	43	42	18
Not employed, not looking for work	646	23	32	9
STUDENT HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME				
Yes	123	50	67	33
No	7,773	37	43	16
DISABILITY OR MEDICAL CONDITION				
Learning disability	1,420	42	47	23
Physical disability	487	49	53	24
Chronic illness	1,261	48	51	20
Psychological disorder	3,050	45	50	22
Other disability or condition	173	45	52	20
No disability or medical condition	3,425	31	39	13

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Note: Results from any category with fewer than 10 respondents are not shown in the table. The Number of Students column indicates the number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number respondents to our measures of food and housing insecurity may vary slightly. Survey questions about employment status were administered to a subset of randomly selected respondents. Classifications of Disability or Medical Condition are not mutually exclusive. Students could self-identify with multiple classifications.

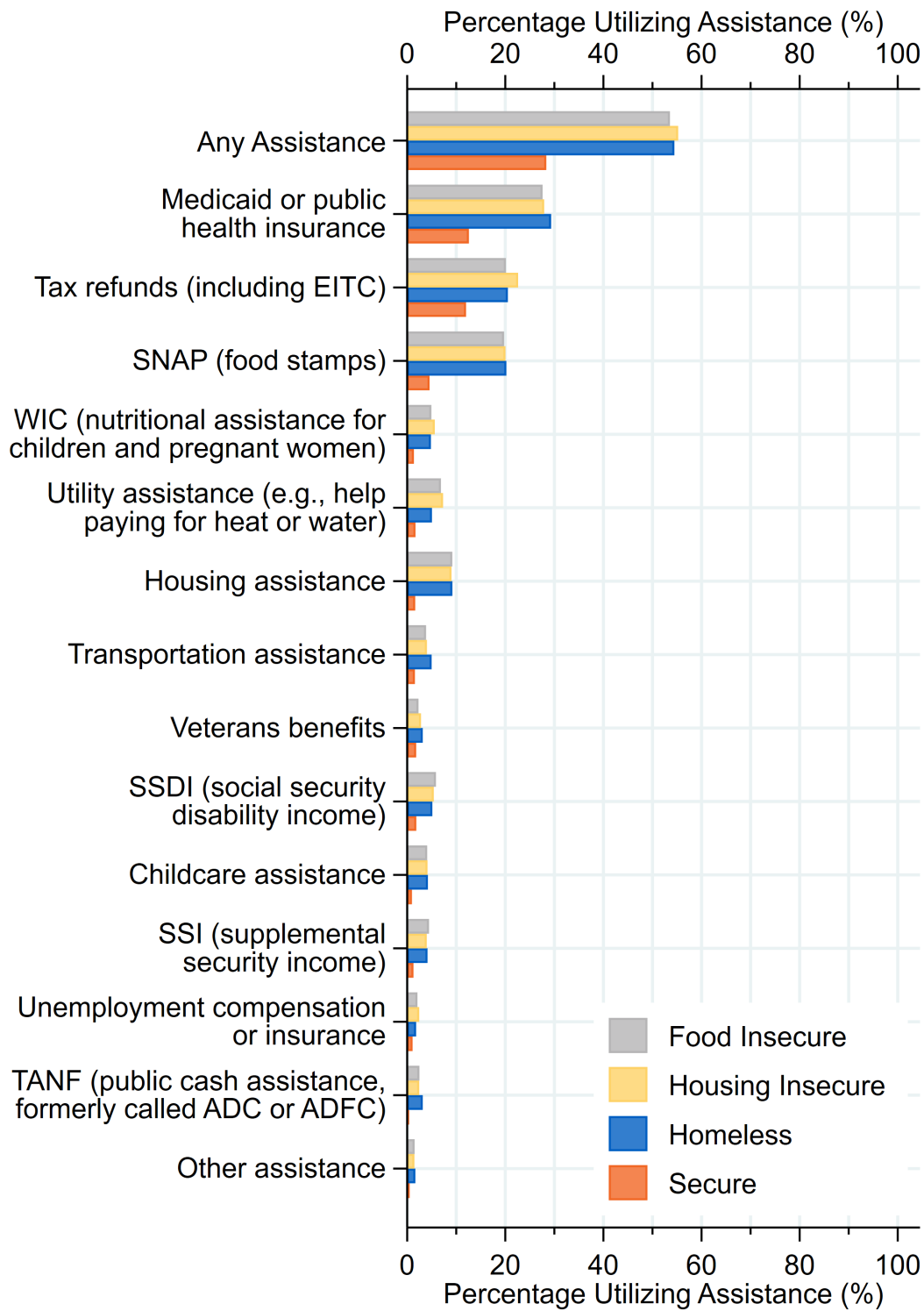
UTILIZATION OF SUPPORTS

Many students in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System who experience basic needs insecurity do not receive public assistance (Figure 7). Among food insecure students, 20% receive SNAP benefits. In addition, 9% of students who experience homelessness receive housing assistance. It is also worth noting that students who are secure in their basic needs are still accessing public benefits, albeit at lower rates (28%) than their peers.

A growing number of on-campus supports are being offered but again, only some students are accessing them (Figure 8). Of the students experiencing basic needs insecurity in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System, only about 36% use on-campus supports.

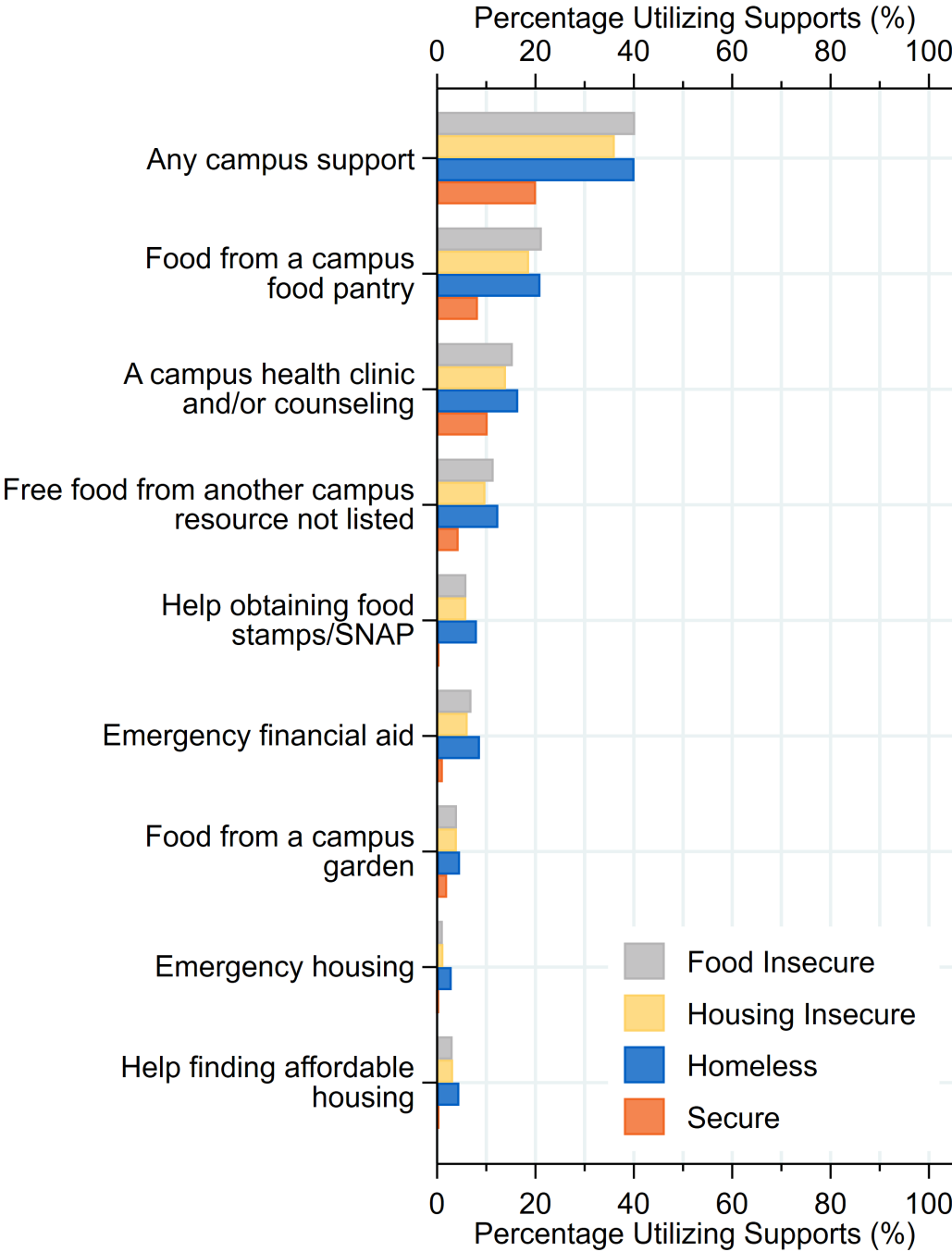


Figure 7. Use of Assistance Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System According to Basic Needs Security



Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Figure 8. Use of Campus Supports Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System According to Basic Needs Security



Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey
 Note: Survey questions about campus supports were administered to a subset of randomly selected respondents.

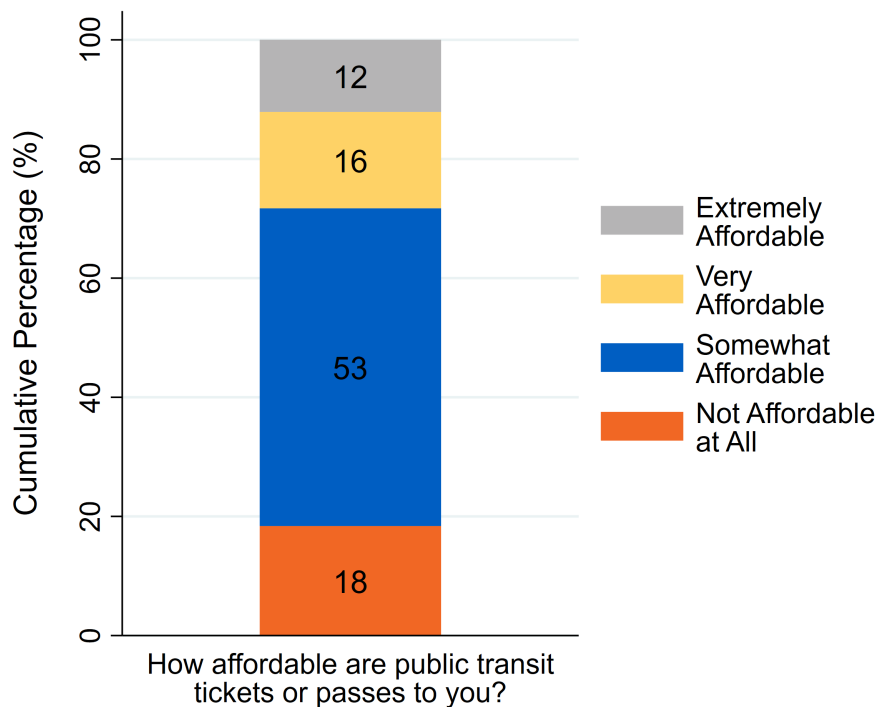
TRANSPORTATION & CHILDCARE

TRANSPORTATION

In order to succeed academically, students need affordable, reliable transportation between home and campus. Currently, the College Board estimates that transportation costs make up approximately 17% of an average postsecondary student's budget who commutes to school. It is therefore critical to ensure that students, especially students who are already making difficult choices about how to spend their money, are able to secure transportation to campus.

Approximately 21% of survey respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System say they use public transit in order to get to their college campus (not shown). When those students were asked about the affordability of public transit tickets or passes, 18% said those transit tickets or passes were unaffordable, and another 53% said they were only somewhat affordable (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Affordability of Public Transit Tickets or Passes Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System



(Among those who take public transit)

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Note: Survey questions about transit use and affordability were administered to a subset of randomly selected respondents.

Paying for public transit is related to students' experiences with basic needs insecurity. About 78% of survey respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System who experience basic needs insecurity and use public transit report that public transit tickets or passes are unaffordable or only somewhat affordable (Table 3).

Table 3. Transit Affordability Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System Who Take Public Transit, by Basic Needs Security

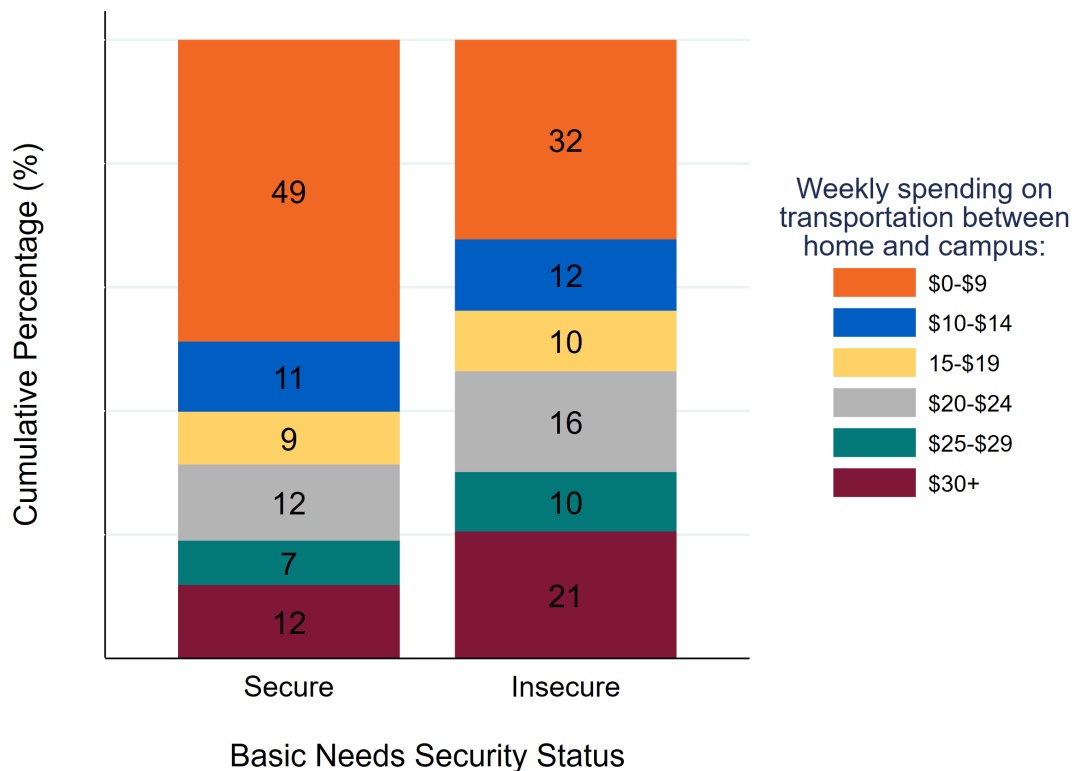
BASIC NEEDS SECURITY STATUS	Number of Students	Not Affordable at All (%)	Somewhat Affordable (%)	Very Affordable (%)	Extremely Affordable (%)
Secure	256	11	50	23	16
Insecure	576	22	56	12	10

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Note: Results with fewer than 10 respondents are not shown in the table above. Survey questions about transit use and affordability were administered to a subset of randomly selected respondents.

High transit costs are a problem for some of these students. About 21% of survey respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System experiencing basic needs insecurity report that they spend at least \$30 per week on transportation to and from college (Figure 10). Conversely, among students whose basic needs are secure, 49% said they spend \$0-9 per week on transportation, but that was true for just 32% of students who are basic needs insecure.

Figure 10. Weekly Amount Spent on Transportation to College By Basic Need Security Among Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System



Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

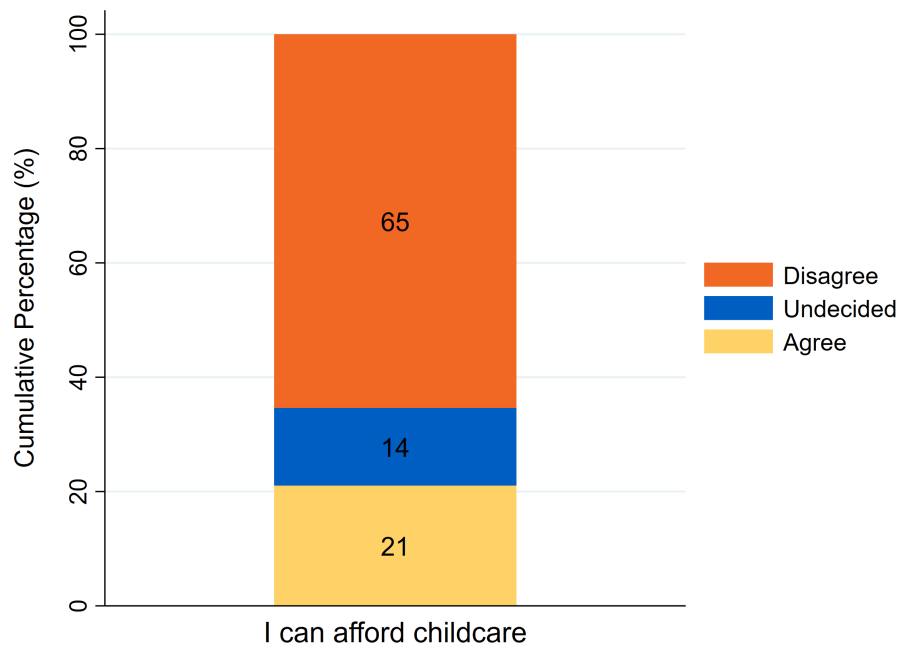
Note: Survey questions on transportation costs were administered to a subset of randomly selected respondents.

CHILDCARE

Supporting the success of #RealCollege students means covering the basic needs of food, housing, and transportation, while also meeting the childcare requirements of parenting students. However, for many parenting students, finding affordable and dependable childcare is challenging.

In the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System, 12% of survey respondents were parenting students and among those parenting students, 38% said that they need, use, or plan to use childcare (not shown). However, just 21% of parenting students who need or use childcare say they can afford the associated costs (Figure 11). Among parenting students who are basic needs insecure, only 16% say that they can afford childcare costs, whereas 48% of parenting students who are food or housing secure do (Table 4).

Figure 11. Childcare Affordability Among Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System Who Need, Use, or Plan to Use Childcare



Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Table 4. Childcare Affordability Among Parenting Survey Respondents in the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System Who Need, Use, or Plan to Use Childcare, by Basic Needs Security

BASIC NEEDS SECURITY STATUS	Number of Students	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)
Secure	54	39	13	48
Insecure	307	70	14	16

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Note: Results with fewer than 10 respondents are not shown in the table above.

CONCLUSION

The #RealCollege survey affirms what has been evident to college administrators, faculty, staff, and students for years: basic needs insecurity is a condition challenging many undergraduates pursuing credentials. The scope of the problem described here is substantial and should be cause for a systemic response.

ABOUT US

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice is redefining what it means to be a student-ready college with a national movement centering #realcollege students' basic needs. In order to advance the necessary systemic changes to support those needs, our work includes four pillars: action research, engagement and communication, advocacy, and sustainability. For more information, visit www.hope4college.com.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about this report, please contact the Hope Center Research Team at hopesrvy@temple.edu.



APPENDIX A. Participating Colleges

Bridgewater State University
Bristol Community College
Bunker Hill Community College
Fitchburg State University
Framingham State University
Holyoke Community College
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Massasoit Community College
Middlesex Community College
Northern Essex Community College
University of Massachusetts Boston
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Westfield State University