



# Food and Housing Insecurity on Ohio's College Campuses:

Barriers, Strategies, and  
the Unique Impact on  
Collegiate Foster Youth

**2024-2025**



## A Note from the CEO

At Foster Success, we believe that no young person should have to choose between meeting their basic needs and pursuing their education. Yet for many students who have experienced foster care, food and housing insecurity are persistent barriers to completing their education. Over the past year, Foster Success has published two reports examining the gaps in basic needs support for Ohio college students. The first report captured the experiences of Ohio students participating in the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, highlighting the gaps in basic needs support. The second report reflected the insights of campus professionals who are actively working to meet students' basic needs. This publication brings the findings of each of those reports together to offer a compelling and urgent picture of the challenges—and the opportunities—we must address.

This research helps to inform how basic needs insecurity is impacting Ohio's students who have experienced foster care in their higher education journey; however, its implications reach far beyond Ohio state lines. The experiences documented here reflect national trends and highlight the gaps in awareness, access, and support that impact student well-being and educational attainment of those with lived experience. At both the student and campus levels, the data clearly point to a need for more intentional, better funded, and more visible support systems.

We hope these detailed reports, brought together in this publication, serve as a resource for policymakers, institutions, and community partners working to create more equitable outcomes and systems. These findings not only deepen our understanding, they also guide us toward solutions. With thoughtful collaboration and investment, we can reduce the food and housing barriers and support more young people with foster care experience to achieve the futures they envision, and we invite you to collaborate with us.

With gratitude,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Stevens".

**Maggie Stevens Ed.D.**  
President & CEO of Foster Success

## Introduction

**Former foster youth face great risk of food and housing insecurity as college students.** In a national survey of nearly 2,000 students who had experienced foster care, 66% had been food insecure in the last 30 days, and 77% had been housing insecure.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the prevalence and impacts of food and housing insecurity for Ohio students with foster care in their background, Foster Success partnered with Chamberlin/Dunn (C/D) to field a fall 2024 survey of young people who had participated in the [Education and Training Voucher \(ETV\) program](#) in the last three years (n=166 student respondents).

Student survey results are provided in **Part 1. Food + Housing Insecurity for Ohio's Collegiate Foster Youth.**

A companion survey of college campus personnel, in early spring 2025, yielded participation from 28 Ohio colleges and universities. It sought the perspectives of those who work to support students with foster care in their background—the barriers they observe for students and for their own campuses, the resources available on campus, and the gaps and opportunities to improve food and housing supports.

Campus survey results are provided in **Part 2. Food + Housing Insecurity on Ohio College Campuses.**

## Summary of Results

**Food housing insecurity indeed appears to be widespread among Ohio's ETV population.** Among student respondents, 85% reported being either or both types of insecure, 81% were food insecure (FI), and 48% were housing insecure (HI).

**Of the two issues, food insecurity may be the most *urgent* need and appears to be the most *widespread*.** Of FI students, 38% said they were insecure almost every month of the prior year (vs. 23% for HI), and less than a quarter of FI students said they are very or extremely likely to be *secure* in the coming year (vs. 23% for HI).

**Housing insecurity, however, may have a greater impact on persistence + achievement.** FI students tended to report that FI negatively impacts their mental wellness, physical wellness, and ability to pay other bills. HI students most often reported that HI prevents them from re-enrolling from one semester to the next, staying on track to complete education, and attending classes regularly.

**Students are less likely to access housing resources and only moderately likely to access food resources.** Of FI students, 55% reported accessing some type of food-related resource, and just 32% of HI students accessed a housing resource. In both cases, resources were most likely to be accessed off campus (46% FI, 42% HI) or both on- and off-campus (36% FI, 42% HI).

**Students and staff align on the most common reasons students do not access resources,** which were *awareness* of available resources, *knowledge* of where

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<sup>1</sup> Goldrick-Rab S., et al. (2019). College and university basic needs insecurity: A national #realcollege survey report. The Hope Center. [https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/HOPE\\_realcollege\\_National\\_report\\_EMBARGOED%20UNTIL%20APRIL%2030%203%20AM%20EST%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_EMBARGOED%20UNTIL%20APRIL%2030%203%20AM%20EST%20(1).pdf)

and how to access resources, *transportation* to access them, and, for housing only, the *availability* of resources.

**Barriers for campus personnel to provide or connect students to resources were similar:** *identifying* students in need, *raising awareness* of available resources, and having *adequate funding* to meet resource gaps.

**Students would prioritize monetary support—grocery or restaurant gift cards, meal vouchers, emergency relief grants—which seem to be less common on many campuses.** FI students also said they would prioritize additional resources for food pantries on campus, which do seem to be widely available based on campus survey results.

## Conclusions

**Students may benefit from regular, multimodal communication about available resources, and campuses may need to consider how to find and reach students when they are in need.** For both food and housing insecurity, a plurality of students said they were insecure sporadically throughout the year – they may not remember that resources are available when they need them

**Students may need help overcoming barriers to qualification and transportation.** For young people who used food resources but whose needs were not mostly or fully met, the most common barriers to having their needs met were qualifying for help (47%) and having adequate transportation (40%)

**Food insecurity is an on- and off-campus issue that likely requires strong collaboration across both spaces.** Young people are most commonly seeking food and housing support either in the

community or through a combination of on- and off-campus resources (82% either off-campus only or through a combination, for food resources, and 73% for housing resources).

**Additional support to address housing insecurity appears to be limited on campuses and may represent a substantial challenge.** While emergency relief funds are the most widely available housing resource—and the top priority for students—only one-third of campuses identified them as a strong practice. Expanding these programs may be challenging, though, as funding was the most commonly cited barrier to increasing housing-related support.

**A special focus on basic needs support may be required to help students re-enroll after they have stopped out.** Young people who have stopped out are even likelier to be food and housing insecure than students who are currently enrolled or recently completed. An effort to re-engage students in a program like ETV may require concurrent and ongoing basic needs support.

# Contents

## Introduction

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| A Note from the CEO ..... | 1-1 |
| Executive Summary .....   | 1-2 |

## Food + Housing Insecurity for Ohio's Collegiate Foster Youth

|                                      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Introduction .....                   | 2-1  |
| Food Insecurity .....                | 2-1  |
| Prevalence .....                     | 2-1  |
| Impacts .....                        | 2-5  |
| Resources.....                       | 2-5  |
| Housing Insecurity.....              | 2-7  |
| Prevalence .....                     | 2-7  |
| Impacts .....                        | 2-10 |
| Resources.....                       | 2-11 |
| Conclusions and Recommendations..... | 2-13 |
| Appendix A. Survey Demographics..... | 2-15 |

## Food + Housing Insecurity for Ohio's College Campuses: Barriers + Strategies

|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| Introduction .....                           | 3-1 |
| Food Insecurity .....                        | 3-1 |
| On-Campus Practices and Resources .....      | 3-1 |
| Alignment with Student Recommendations ..... | 3-3 |
| Barriers.....                                | 3-3 |
| Student Barriers.....                        | 3-3 |
| Campus Barriers.....                         | 3-4 |
| Housing Insecurity .....                     | 3-5 |
| On-Campus Practices and Resources .....      | 3-5 |
| Alignment with Student Recommendations ..... | 3-6 |
| Barriers.....                                | 3-6 |
| Student Barriers.....                        | 3-6 |
| Campus Barriers.....                         | 3-7 |
| Conclusions and Recommendations.....         | 3-8 |

**Food + Housing Insecurity for  
Ohio's Collegiate Foster Youth**

## Introduction

Food and housing insecurity impacts college students nationwide; nearly half of all students are food insecure, and more than half are housing insecure. Former foster youth face even greater risks of food and housing insecurity. In a national survey of nearly 2,000 students who had been in foster care, 66% had been food insecure in the last 30 days, and 77% had been housing insecure.<sup>2</sup>

To understand food and housing insecurity among former foster youth in Ohio, specifically, Foster Success Education Services (FSES) partnered with Chamberlin/Dunn (C/D) to survey young people who had participated in the [Education and Training Voucher \(ETV\)](#) program over the last three years.

The survey focused on the prevalence of food insecurity and housing insecurity, the impacts on student achievement, the extent to which students accessed resources on and off campus, and the prioritization of investments in on-campus resources and programs. The survey used a pared-down list of USDA descriptors of food insecurity and McKinney-Vento descriptors of homelessness to identify food- and housing-insecure students. In total, 166

young people who had been in foster care participated in the survey in July 2024. They represented a range of campus types (2-year, 4-year, public, and private); education statuses (currently enrolled, recently completed, stopped out); identities (race/ethnicity, gender); and ages (19-26). See Appendix A for survey demographic tables.

Four students were selected from the survey group for additional, one-on-one interviews to collect stories of need and impact.

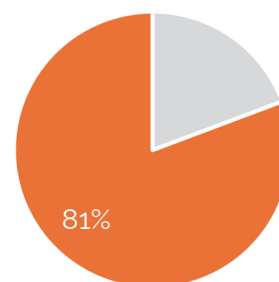
## Food Insecurity

### Prevalence

Among the 166 ETV student who responded to the survey, 81% (n=133) were food insecure at least sometime in the prior 12 months, with the largest portions of food-insecure students saying their food just didn't last (69%), they ate less than needed because there wasn't enough money for food (63%), and/or they couldn't afford to eat balanced, nutritious meals (59%). More than half (55%) of these students also reported being housing insecure in the prior 12 months.

For most students, food insecurity was sporadic, occurring time to time throughout the year (46%) or

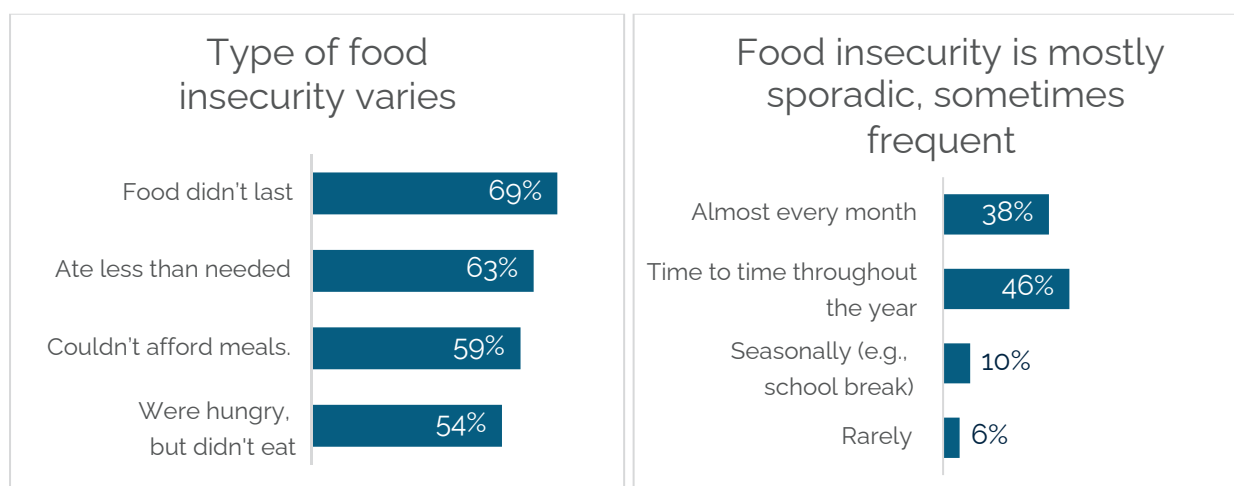
Most ETV recipients  
were food insecure in  
the last year



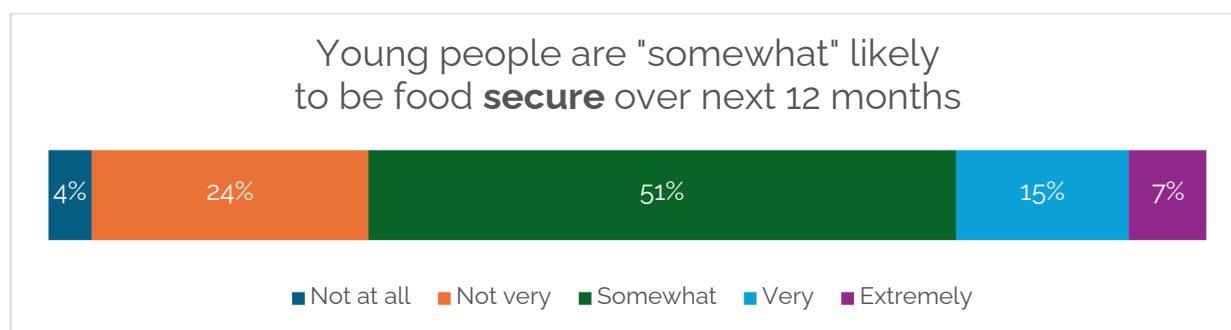
<sup>2</sup> Goldrick-Rab S., et al. (2019). College and university basic needs insecurity: A national #realcollege survey report. The Hope Center. [https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/HOPE\\_realcollege\\_National\\_report\\_EMBARGOED%20UNTIL%20APRIL%2030%203%20AM%20EST%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_EMBARGOED%20UNTIL%20APRIL%2030%203%20AM%20EST%20(1).pdf)

## FOOD + HOUSING INSECURITY FOR OHIO'S COLLEGIATE FOSTER YOUTH

seasonally (10%). Nearly two out of five students who were food insecure, however, said it was the case almost every month (38%). Just 6% said they were food insecure only rarely.



About one in five food-insecure students felt it was likely (very or extremely) that they would have enough food in the coming 12 months (22%). A majority (51%), said it was only somewhat likely that they would have enough nutritious food, and 28% said it was not very likely or not at all likely.



Although food insecurity figures were high for all types of students, certain types of students reported higher rates of food insecurity.

Among White students, 74% were food insecure, compared to 85% of Black or African American students, 80% of students from small sample-size populations,<sup>3</sup> and 79% of Multiracial students.

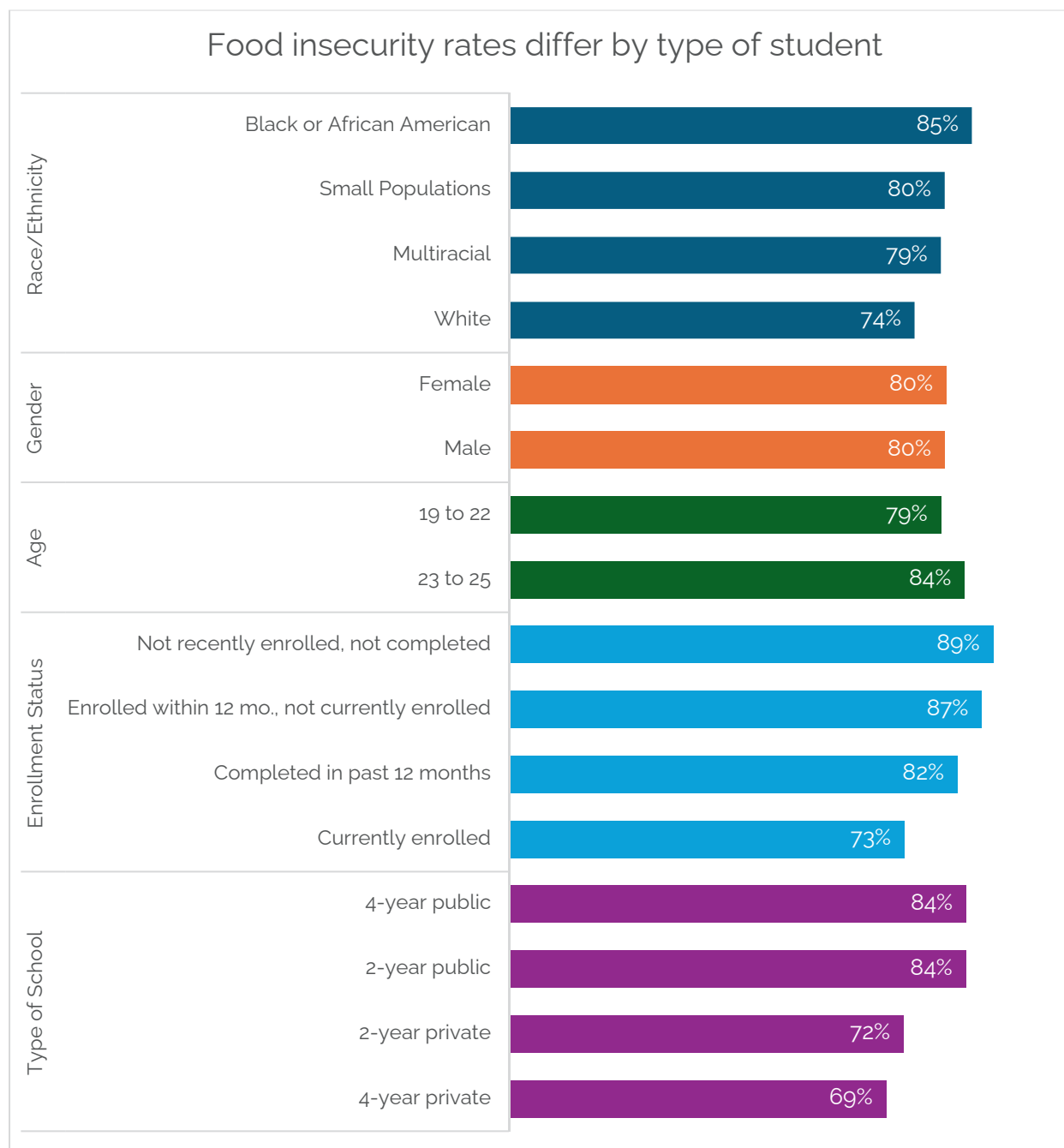
Food insecurity was higher for respondents who most recently attended public 2-year or 4-year colleges (84% at both types of institutions, compared to 69% at 4-year private and 72% at 2-year private schools). Food insecurity was also higher for students who stopped out. Compared to the 73% of currently enrolled students who reported being food insecure, almost nine in 10 students (87%) who were not enrolled and had not completed an education or training program reported being food insecure. Figures were similar for those who had been enrolled in the

<sup>3</sup> Includes students who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native (n=1), Asian (n=1), Hispanic or Latino (n=7), and Another race (n=1).

## FOOD + HOUSING INSECURITY FOR OHIO'S COLLEGIATE FOSTER YOUTH

past 12 months and those who were last enrolled more than 12 months prior (89% and 87% respectively).

Finally, food insecurity was higher for older students, with 84% of students age 23+ reporting food insecurity, compared to 79% of students ages 19 to 22. Among survey respondents, food insecurity impacted male and female students equally.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Sample sizes were insufficient for analysis for students identifying as non-binary or who preferred not to answer.

## Annette

*"We do have a food pantry on campus.  
But with me riding a bus, because I don't drive...  
It's hard for me to go to the food pantry and pick up what we need."*

Annette's journey has been marked by resilience and determination despite facing significant challenges. In foster care from the age of 6, she was emancipated at 18 and found support from her foster mom. Annette's education path has been influenced by personal tragedies, including the loss of her biological mother at a young age.

Despite these hardships, Annette has shown a strong commitment to her education, initially pursuing nursing before switching to culinary arts, a field she is passionate about due to her love for cooking. Financial challenges put Annette at risk of falling behind. She works seasonal jobs at the Ohio State Fair and football games, supplemented by social security due to a learning disability. Annette's limited income and reliance on public assistance make it challenging to afford essentials like food and household supplies. The fear of running out of food and the struggle to access resources like the campus food pantry due to transportation issues add to her stress. Annette's housing situation, living with her mother who is on Section 8, also poses uncertainties about the future. She worries about potential changes in her living arrangements and the possibility of having to navigate housing challenges alone.

These concerns impact her ability to focus on her education and succeed in school, as she grapples with the fear of losing financial aid due to academic setbacks and the pressure of potentially having to find alternative housing solutions.

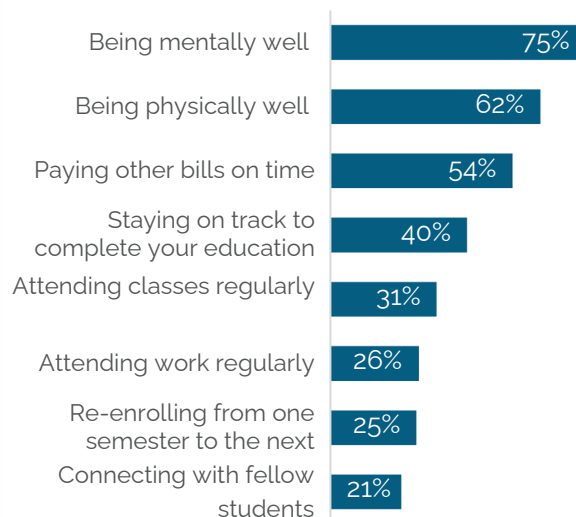
*"They told me to ask for help, so I'm going to ask for help."*

## Impacts

The survey asked about eight ways food insecurity might impact a student. Among students who reported being food insecure, the largest portion said food insecurity negatively impacted their mental health (75%), followed by physical health (62%) and paying other bills on time (54%). At least one-quarter of food-insecure students said food insecurity impacted their ability to stay on track to complete their education (40%), attend classes regularly (31%), attend work regularly (25%), and/or persist from one semester to the next (25%).

Nearly two-thirds of food-insecure students (64%) said food insecurity negatively impacted them in at least three of eight different ways listed in the survey.

### Food insecurity negatively impacts wellbeing



## Resources

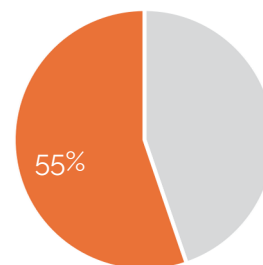
### Use and Barriers to Use

Although more than half of food-insecure students reported using on- and/or off-campus resources to meet food needs (55%), 45% did not. Among those who used resources, a plurality accessed them off campus (46%), 36% used both on- and off-campus resources, and 18% used only on-campus resources.

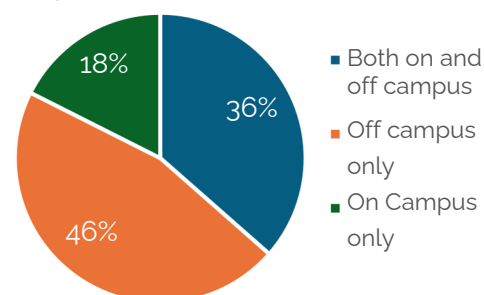
Off-campus use was especially the case for 2-year college students:<sup>5</sup> 51% said they used only off-campus resources, and 41% used a mix of on- and off-campus resources. Just 8% of 2-year students said they used on-campus resources only. Four-year student use was more mixed, with 40% using off-campus resources only, 34% using a mix, and 26% using on-campus resources only. The most common

barrier to access for food-insecure students who did not use resources appears to be awareness: 45% said they were

### More than half of food-insecure used food resources



### Most resources were off-campus or combination



<sup>5</sup> Responses from students from public and private 2-year colleges were combined to reach a sufficient n-size for analysis.

## FOOD + HOUSING INSECURITY FOR OHIO'S COLLEGIATE FOSTER YOUTH

not aware of resources that could help, and 45% said they did not know where to go or how to access services. For students who did use resources but whose needs were only partially, barely, or not met, the two most common barriers were not qualifying for available resources (47%) and lack of transportation (40%).

### Top Barriers: Did Not Use Food Resources



- ☐ 45% Not aware of resources that could help
- ☐ 43% Did not know where to go, how to access resources
- ☐ 37% Did not qualify
- ☐ 32% Did not feel comfortable
- ☐ 30% Did not have transportation

### Top Barriers: Used Resources, Needs Not Met

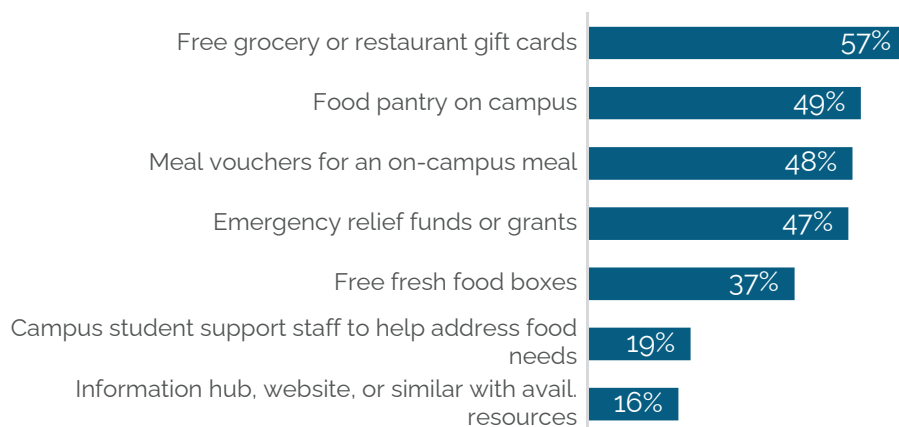


- ☐ 47% Did not qualify
- ☐ 40% Did not have transportation
- ☐ 28% Not aware of (other) resources that could help
- ☐ 26% Did not have time
- ☐ 23% Did not know where to go, how to access / Did not feel comfortable

## Priorities for Campus Support

Students were asked to select the resources and programs they feel would be most impactful for additional investment. Many students responded with some form of monetary support: more than half (57%) said grocery or restaurant gift cards, and nearly half said meal vouchers for an on-campus meal (48%) and/or emergency relief funds or grants (47%). Nearly half (49%) also selected investment in a food pantry on campus.

### Food-insecure students prioritize monetary support, food pantries for campus investment



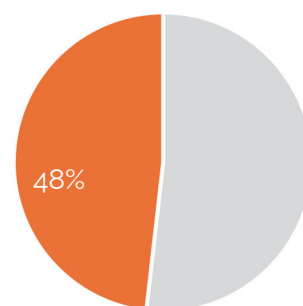
## Housing Insecurity

### Prevalence

Among the 166 students who responded to the survey, 48% indicated they had been housing insecure in the prior 12 months. The largest portion of housing insecure students (79%) were "doubled up," sharing the housing of another person due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. One in five students lived in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or campground (20%) and/or stayed overnight in a place not designed for sleeping (19%). More than nine in 10 housing insecure students also reported being food insecure (91%).

Like food insecurity, housing insecurity tended to be sporadic, occurring from time to time throughout the year (39%) or seasonally (12%). About a quarter of students, however, said they were housing insecure almost every month (23%).

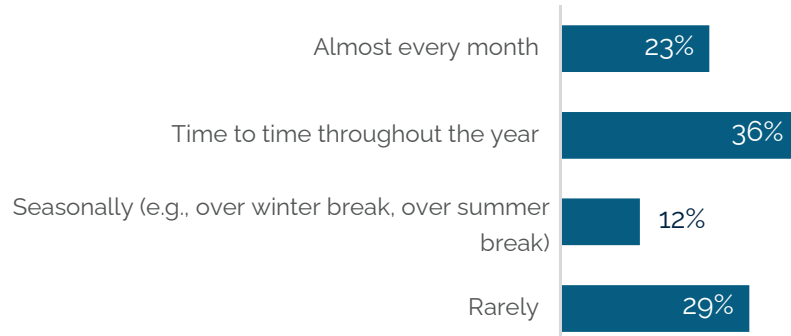
Almost half have been housing insecure in the last year



### Most housing insecurity was in the form of "doubling up"



### Housing insecurity is mostly sporadic but chronic for some



## Maryam

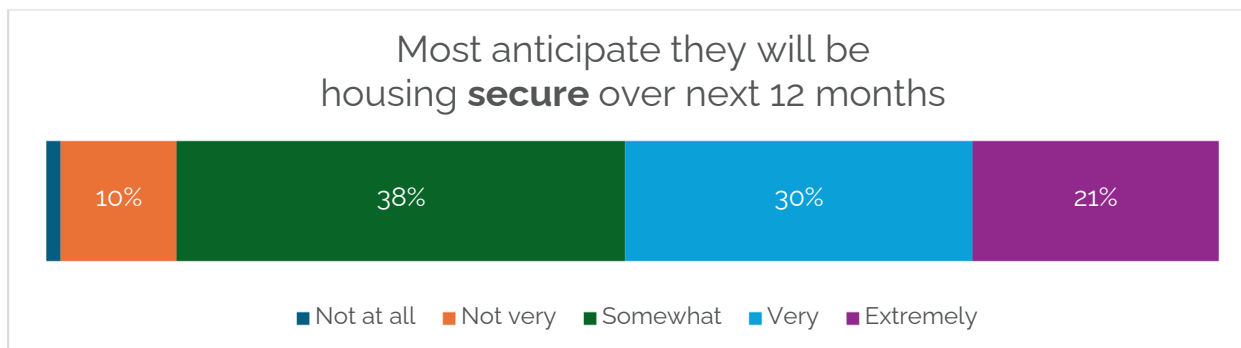
*"At one point my ex [and I] had places together, and then we fell off. We were in the car for a couple of weeks, then we finally got a place... then I was on my own. ...I was working 16-hour shifts when I had got my own place by myself. [For school purposes] I kind of slowed down on working, so that put me in a place where I had to move in with my daughter's father. Then after that, we weren't getting along, then...I'm staying in a shelter. **It was just so many different things.**"*

Maryam attended a community college in Ohio after aging out of foster care. Financial constraints, lack of stable housing, and personal struggles meant she was unable to complete her education. Food insecurity played a significant role in Maryam's academic journey. She sometimes ran out of food and struggled to afford more, resulting in the need to work additional hours instead of focusing on her studies. The lack of stable housing further compounded her challenges. Maryam recounted a tumultuous living situation, moving between different places due to relationship changes and financial instability. The instability in housing led to increased work hours to sustain herself, impacting her ability to attend classes regularly and maintain her mental and physical wellness.

Maryam's housing instability not only affected her daily life but also disrupted her educational pursuits. The constant changes in living arrangements and the absence of a reliable support system left her feeling vulnerable and uncertain about her future. Despite currently having stable housing through a voucher program, she expressed concerns about maintaining stability once the voucher expired, highlighting the ongoing stress and uncertainty she faced regarding her living situation. Maryam is proud of the credits she earned and longs to continue her education; if she had the necessary funds, she said, she would already be back in school. She worries, though, that financial difficulties, such as the need for money to cover expenses like tuition and transportation, as well as external factors like court dates and car issues, would leave her with the same undesirable results the second time around.

Maryam's story reflects the complex interplay between financial struggles, food and housing insecurity, and their profound impact on her educational aspirations. Her experiences underscore the critical need for comprehensive support systems to address the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals like Maryam, who are striving to overcome barriers to education and stability in the face of adversity.

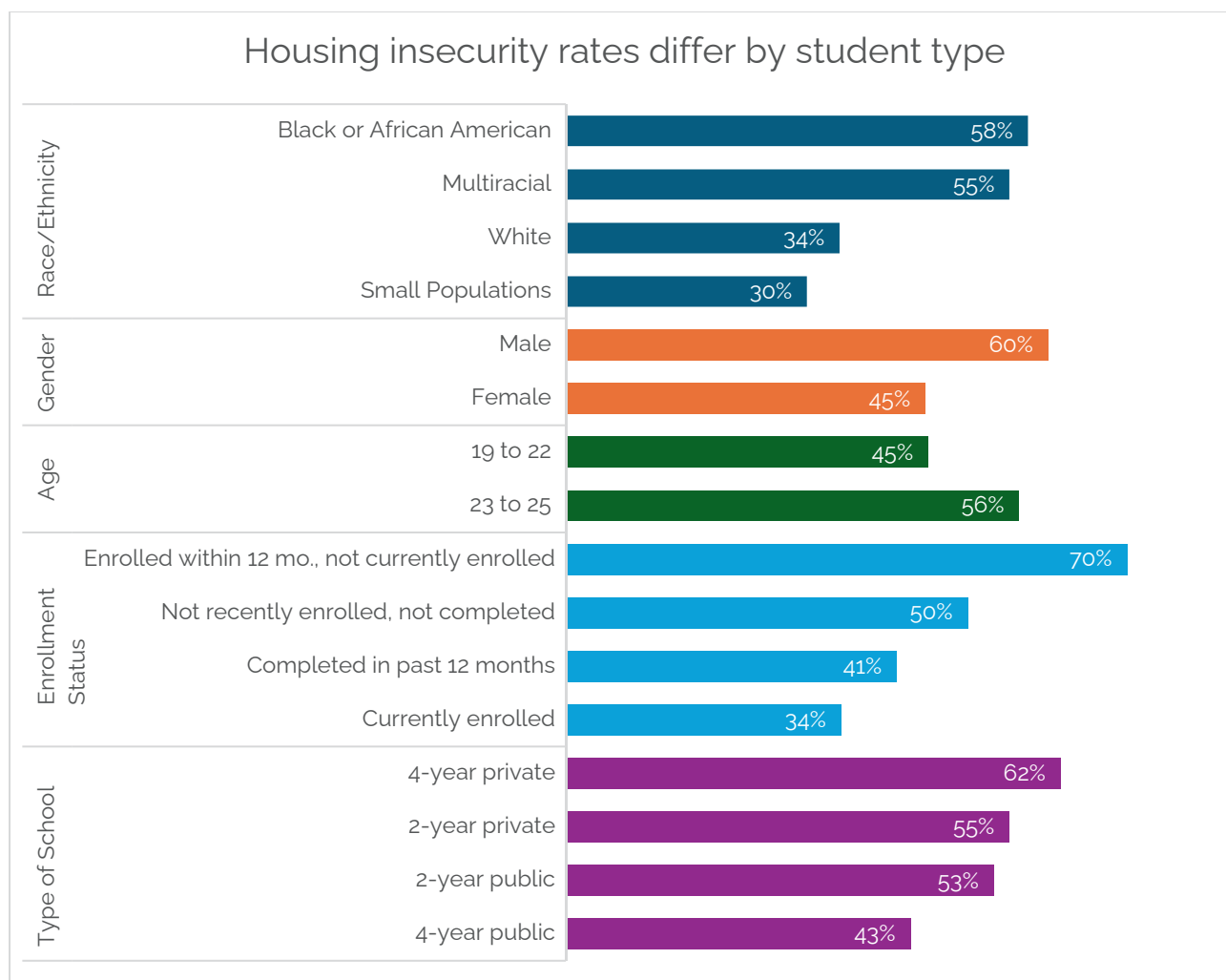
Most housing insecure students report at least medium levels of confidence in their near-term housing stability, with 89% saying it is at least somewhat likely they will always have a safe and secure place to live over the next 12 months (38% somewhat, 30% very, and 21% extremely likely).



As with food insecurity, certain groups of students reported disproportionate levels of housing insecurity. Only about one-third of White students reported being housing insecure (34%), compared to 58% of Black or African American students and 55% of Multiracial students. Housing insecurity was higher for male students (60%) than female students (45%), and it was higher for students 23+ (56%) than students 19 to 22 (45%).

By student type, the highest rates of housing insecurity were for students who stopped out. Compared to the 34% of currently enrolled students who reported being housing insecure, 70% of students who were enrolled more than 12 months ago and 50% of students who were enrolled in the prior 12 months, but not at the time of the survey, reported being housing insecure.

By type of college or university, the highest rates of housing insecurity were reported for students whose most recent enrollment was at a private institution: 62% for students at 4-year private schools and 55% for students at 2-year private schools (including both nonprofit and for-profit schools).



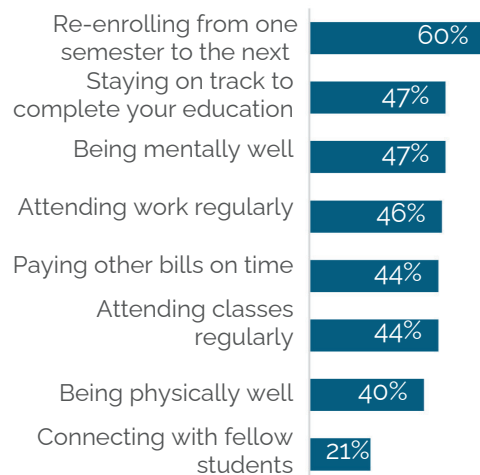
## Impacts

Most students said their housing insecurity impacted their ability to persist in their education (60% of housing-insecure students). Almost half said it prevented them from staying on track to complete their education (47%), from being mentally well (47%), or being physically well (46%).

Other negative impacts were on students' abilities to attend work regularly (46%), attend classes regularly (44%), and/or pay other bills on time (44%).

Almost two-thirds of students (63%) said their housing insecurity negatively impacted them in at least three distinct ways.

## Housing insecurity impacts educational persistence

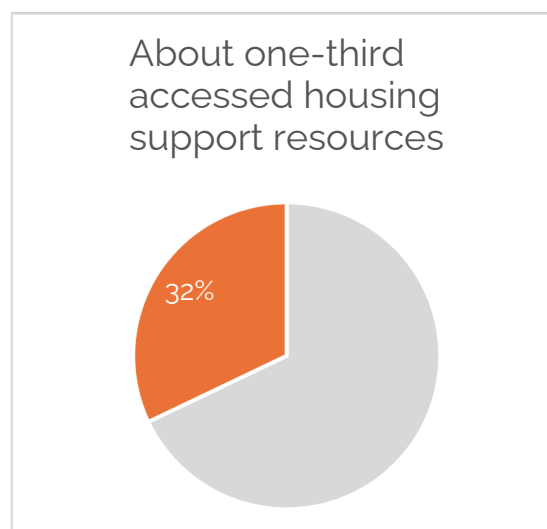


## Resources

### Use and Barriers to Use

Only about one-third of housing-insecure students (32%) reported using any on-campus or community-based resources to meet their housing needs; 68% did not. A plurality of students who accessed housing resources did so off campus only (42%).

Most housing-insecure young people who did not use resources said awareness was a barrier: 51% said they were not aware of resources that can help, and 36% said they did not how to access services. One-third (33%) said transportation was a barrier.



### Priorities for Campus Support

Students were asked to select the housing resources and programs they feel would be most impactful for additional investment. By a wide margin, the most common response was an increase in emergency relief funds or grants to help pay for housing costs (e.g., rent); 68% of housing-insecure young people selected this option.

About two in five students said they would like to see more investment in campus student support staff to help address housing needs (e.g., case manager; 43%), on-campus housing during student breaks (41%), and/or and information hub, website, or similar site listing available resources (40%).

### Top Barriers: Did Not Use Housing Resources



- ☐ 51% Not aware of resources that could help
- ☐ 36% Did not know where to go, how to access resources
- ☐ 33% Did not have transportation
- ☐ 25% Did not qualify
- ☐ 25% Did not have time to access services

<sup>6</sup> The number of housing-insecure students who reported using resources (n=26) is too small for much meaningful disaggregation by campus type.

## Julien

*"For me, it's just some uncontrollable or unexpected circumstances that literally just leave me homeless again. So, I end up right back in the same position I was in three years ago three times in college. Last night I just had to sleep on the streets, and tonight if I don't make money door dashing enough to have another hotel night, then I'm back on the streets."*

Julien's time at a 4-year public university has been tumultuous yet marked by an unwavering determination to earn his degree. As a Public Health major, his passion for understanding health epidemics stemmed from his personal transformation of losing 120 pounds after leaving his final foster care placement at age 17. Financial constraints, though, have forced him to choose between fueling his body with the healthy food he knows it needs and having a safe place to sleep at night.

The chain reaction of housing instability often led to financial insecurity, which in turn impacted his access to food. Despite being a full-time student taking 18 credit hours, Julien had to juggle multiple jobs in the gig economy and efforts to build a personal brand online. His living situation near campus, though not sustainable due to its cost, is a step up from his previous experiences of homelessness.

Julien's challenges with housing were exacerbated by conflicts with landlords over cleanliness and by financial strains with loans and personal debts. These struggles often left him on the brink of homelessness, where each day brought new uncertainties; he would sometimes work a gig economy job just to cover the cost of a hotel room later that night. Despite these hardships, Julien remained resilient, viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth and learning. The impact of his housing and food insecurities on Julien's education was profound yet complex. While his experiences fueled his drive to succeed and pushed him to be more productive, the constant instability has taken a toll on his ability to focus on his studies. Balancing the demands of coursework with the stress of financial uncertainty and housing have kept him from earning the grades he believes he is capable of. He anticipates that the rest of his time at university will be an act of finding enough money day to day to keep going until graduation.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

**Food and/or housing insecurity appears to be widespread among Ohio's ETV population and requires additional attention and investment to combat.** Of the 166 young people who responded to the survey, 85% were either food insecure (69% total), housing insecure (48% total), or both (45% total). Students report that food and housing insecurity takes a toll on their physical and mental health as well as their ability to persist in and achieve their education goals, undermining other public and private investments in postsecondary achievement.

**Of the two issues, food insecurity may be the most urgent need.** Although both issues are prevalent and concerning, a larger portion of young people reported being food insecure than housing insecure, and 38% said they were food insecure almost every month of the prior year. Further, less than a quarter of food-insecure young people say it is very or extremely likely that they will be food *secure* over the next year, while 51% of housing-insecure students say they are likely to be housing *secure* over the next year. Food insecurity may therefore be a more acute and immediate issue than housing for many students.

**Housing insecurity, however, may be more critical to educational achievement.** Half of the young people who responded to the survey said they had been housing insecure, including more than one-third of currently enrolled students. Compared to the impacts of food insecurity, which most students said negatively affected their mental, physical, and financial wellbeing, the largest portion of housing-insecure students said their housing issues affected their ability to persist from semester to semester (60%). Indeed, nearly two-thirds of ETV students who had stopped out reported being housing insecure in the last year.

**Food insecurity is an on- and off-campus issue that likely requires strong collaboration across both spaces.** Young people are most commonly seeking food and housing support either in the community or through a combination of on- and off-campus resources (82% either off-campus only or through a combination, for food resources, and 73% for housing resources). This community-based access may be a reflection of a lack of food pantries on college campuses in Ohio.

**For both food and housing, most students would prioritize investment in programs that directly support their ability to obtain food or pay rent.** More than half of food-insecure students said that grocery or restaurant gift cards should receive additional investment (57%), and nearly half would like to see investment in food pantries on campus (49%) and/or meal vouchers for an on-campus meal (48%). By a wide margin, the largest portion of housing-insecure students would prefer investment in an emergency relief fund or grant that helped pay for housing costs (68%).

**Students would also likely benefit from regular, multimodal communication about available resources.** For both food and housing insecurity, a plurality of students said they were insecure sporadically throughout the year, and the most common barriers to accessing resources related to awareness of those resources. Campus faculty and staff should be well informed of available on- and off-campus resources and trained to proactively look for signs of food and housing insecurity, since students who receive information about available

supportive services at only one point in the year may not recall what is available when crises strike.

**A special focus on basic needs support may be required to help students re-enroll after they have stopped out.** As noted, young people who have stopped out are even likelier to be food and housing insecure than students who are currently enrolled or recently completed. An effort to re-engage students in a program like ETV may require concurrent and ongoing basic needs support.

**Students may need help overcoming barriers to qualification and transportation.** For young people who used food resources but whose needs were not mostly or fully met, the most common barriers to having their needs met were qualifying for help (47%) and having adequate transportation (40%).<sup>7</sup> Although it is not clear why these young people did not qualify, the volume of data on the challenges that former foster youth face as they age out of the system would suggest that nearly half of them should not face qualification barriers for food security resources.

**Further study should focus on the perceptions of student-facing staff on campus, to identify their awareness of community resources and their perceptions of the factors that will both support and hinder providing food and housing resources for students.** A recent national survey has already quantified food security programs, students served, distribution details, funding sources, and wins and challenges of campus food pantries,<sup>8</sup> and current legislation in Ohio, HB590, would provide grants to colleges and universities that want to open or expand their food pantries. The bill allows campuses to provide free meals, provide emergency funds, or establish an on-campus food pantry, and it requires campuses to expand efforts to communicate program availability and eligibility to students.<sup>9</sup> Additional research should complement these efforts and build upon existing information.

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<sup>7</sup> The sample size was not large enough to do this type of disaggregation for housing resources.

<sup>8</sup> Swipe Out Hunger (2024). Campus food pantries: Insights from a 2023 survey. <https://www.swipehunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Campus-Food-Pantries-Insights-From-a-2023-Survey.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> The Ohio Legislature, 135th General Assembly. House Bill 590. <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/hb590>.

## Appendix A. Survey Demographics

|                                                        |              |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Total young people responding</b>                   | <b>166</b>   |                |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>                                  | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native                      | 1            | 1%             |
| Asian                                                  | 1            | 1%             |
| Black or African American                              | 80           | 48%            |
| Hispanic or Latino                                     | 7            | 4%             |
| Multiracial                                            | 29           | 17%            |
| Other                                                  | 1            | 1%             |
| White                                                  | 47           | 28%            |
| <b>Gender</b>                                          | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| Female                                                 | 132          | 80%            |
| Male                                                   | 30           | 18%            |
| Non-Binary                                             | 2            | 1%             |
| Prefer not to answer                                   | 2            | 1%             |
| <b>Age</b>                                             | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| 19                                                     | 3            | 2%             |
| 20                                                     | 30           | 18%            |
| 21                                                     | 36           | 22%            |
| 22                                                     | 42           | 25%            |
| 23                                                     | 27           | 16%            |
| 24                                                     | 21           | 13%            |
| 25                                                     | 7            | 4%             |
| <b>Postsecondary Enrollment Status</b>                 | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| Currently enrolled or enrolled Fall 2024               | 73           | 44%            |
| Was enrolled in the past 12 months but not currently   | 53           | 32%            |
| None of these (i.e., not enrolled, have not completed) | 18           | 11%            |
| Completed in the past 12 months                        | 17           | 10%            |
| Completed more than 12 months ago                      | 5            | 3%             |
| <b>Type of Institution</b>                             | <b>Count</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| 2-year private                                         | 29           | 17%            |
| 2-year public                                          | 62           | 37%            |
| 4-year private                                         | 13           | 8%             |
| 4-year public                                          | 56           | 34%            |
| Unknown                                                | 6            | 4%             |

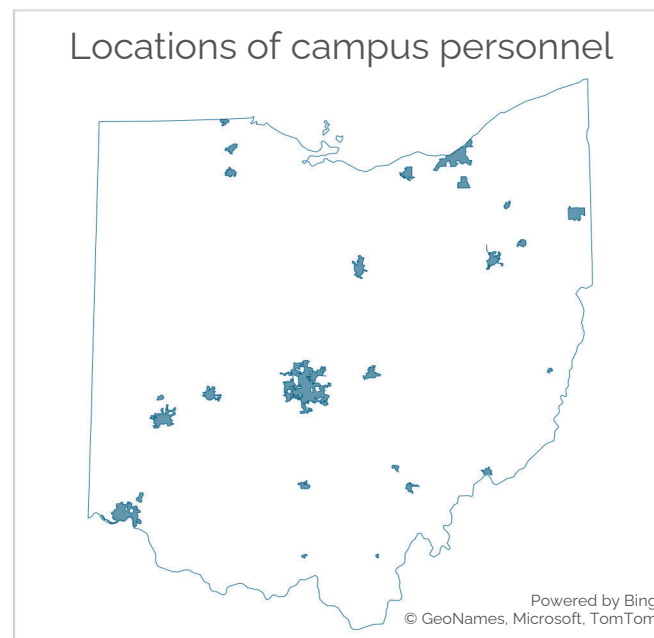
**Food + Housing Insecurity for  
Ohio's College Campuses:  
Barriers + Strategies**

## Introduction

Food and housing insecurity impacts college students nationwide; nearly half of all students are food insecure, and more than half are housing insecure. Former foster youth face even greater risks of food and housing insecurity. In a national survey of nearly 2,000 students who had experienced foster care, 66% had been food insecure in the last 30 days, and 77% had been housing insecure.<sup>10</sup>

To understand food and housing insecurity among former foster youth in Ohio, specifically, in fall 2024 Foster Success partnered with Chamberlin/Dunn (C/D) to survey young people who had participated in the [Education and Training Voucher \(ETV\)](#) program over the last three years. That survey identified the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among responding ETV recipients, the barriers that they felt prevented them from accessing resources to fully meet their food and housing needs, and their recommendations for where postsecondary institutions should focus their efforts and investments to address food and housing insecurity for students.

This report summarizes the results of a companion survey, fielded in spring 2025, of college campus personnel who work to support students with foster care in their background. A total of 31 individuals responded, representing 28 distinct campuses across Ohio.<sup>11</sup>



## Food Insecurity

### On-Campus Practices and Resources

The survey asked campus personnel to identify the food insecurity program, if any, that is strongest on their campus. By far, the most common response was a **campus food pantry** (59%, n=16 of 26 campuses represented in responses<sup>12</sup>).

Three campuses said they provide SNAP enrollment assistance. Personnel on only one campus, each, identified meal voucher programs, emergency financial aid, and free or subsidized meal plans as strong practices on their campus. None of the campus personnel

<sup>10</sup> Goldrick-Rab S., et al. (2019). College and university basic needs insecurity: A national #realcollege survey report. The Hope Center. [https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/HOPE\\_realcollege\\_National\\_report\\_EMBARGOED%20UNTIL%20APRIL%2030%203%20AM%20EST%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_EMBARGOED%20UNTIL%20APRIL%2030%203%20AM%20EST%20(1).pdf)

<sup>11</sup> The map highlights each city where a represented campus is located; the size of the shading does not correspond with the number of responses per city.

<sup>12</sup> For this item, tallies were done at the campus level, rather than respondent level, to account for instances when two individuals from the same campus responded.

said their campus has strong programs in food recovery programs, community partnerships, mobile food distribution, nutrition education and cooking workshops, or campus gardens available to students.

In open-ended descriptions of the programs, campus personnel shared the following:

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bowling Green State University            | <i>"We have several options available to students not just the food pantry, Falcon Dollars, Grab and Go Food Bags - however, I question whether students know they all exist."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Central Ohio Technical College            | <i>"We have an entrance survey that asks every incoming student to identify if they've exhibited any risk behaviors for food insecurity. We also ask outright if they would like information on food services on campus. Any student who indicates food insecurity at any level receives direct outreach from our Student Resource Center that connects them to our Campus Food Pantry, provides information about community services that can help, and provides referrals."</i>                          |
| Cuyahoga Community College                | <i>"We work cross functionally across the institution to address issues of food insecurity."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Malone University                         | <i>"Since we are a small campus we are able to work with the individual student to identify strategies that will be most beneficial to them."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Owens Community College                   | <i>"At Owens we continually re-evaluate our systems and processes to eliminate obstacles for students. This includes obstacles to basic needs resources. Using flyers, social media, email, text messaging and online learning platforms we attempt to reach every student to be sure they are aware of all available campus resources."</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College | <i>"We do a lot to raise awareness such as finals week lunches, we partner with other orgs, recently with student life we had a grocery bingo, our History department is putting on an event regarding food insecurity throughout history, and more. The best we do to identify students is to be sure faculty and staff and students are aware of the pantry so when they meet students in need they know to refer them. We have been here about 5 years and still students seem surprised we exist."</i> |
| Washington State College of Ohio          | <i>"We have received funding from multiple grants and personal donations... We do not ask students to apply, but we can track our recipients with a key card. Only 60% of students are Pell eligible."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

Campus personnel who asked that their campus not be identified, shared the following:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>"...the best approach that has made it possible is advisor-student relationship model."</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><i>"website, flyers, emails sent to campus partners"</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><i>"Our Office of Basic Needs is actively seeking out additional funding opportunities to continue to expand their food pantry options/hours/etc. They will work with students to provide donated meal swipes, give them information about local food banks, and more. This office does a great job at connecting with students to provide them with any resources they can."</i></p> |
| <p><i>"We have a food pantry on campus that is open to all students so they can access as needed."</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Alignment with Student Recommendations

When asked about the programs that students would prioritize for campus-level investment to address food insecurity, nearly half of students (49%) said they would prioritize investment in food pantries on campus. Campuses do appear to be prioritizing food pantries.

Aside from food pantries, students frequently recommended more direct financial support to address food insecurity; more than half (57%) said grocery or restaurant gift cards should be a priority, and nearly half said they would like to see more investment in meal vouchers for an on-campus meal (48%) and/or emergency relief funds or grants (47%). While this campus-level survey was not designed to gather an inventory of *all* available resources on campuses, campus-level responses about their strong programs suggest that these types of supports may not be available widely.

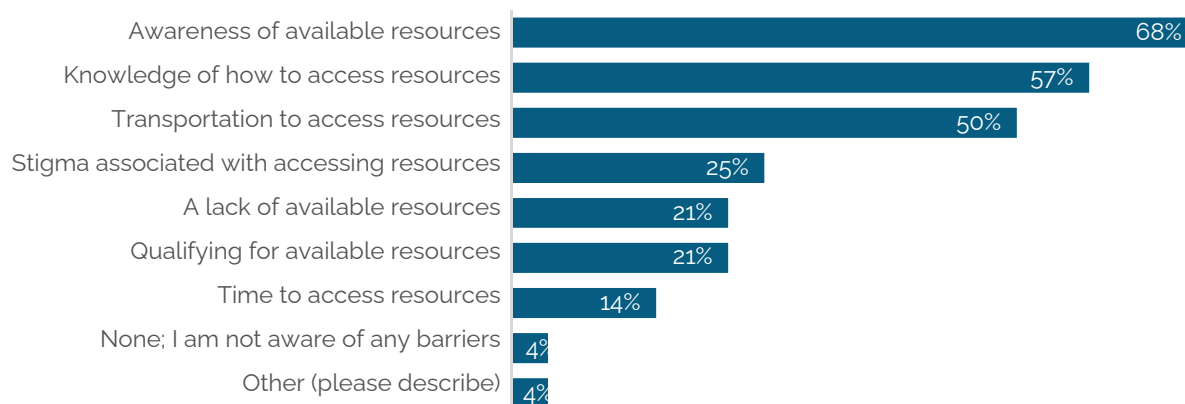
## Barriers

The survey asked campus personnel to provide their perceptions of the top three barriers that prevent students from accessing the food security resources that students need as well as the barriers that prevent institutions from addressing food insecurity on campus.

### Student Barriers

A majority of campus personnel who responded (n=28 for this section) identified **awareness of available resources** (68%, n=19), **knowledge of where to go or how to access resources** (57%, n=16), and **transportation to access resources** (50%, n=14) as the top three barriers that prevent students from accessing the food-related resources they need.

### Campus personnel say that awareness and knowledge are the top barriers to students accessing food resources



These perceptions align with the findings from the student survey. For students who did not use food insecurity resources (“non-users”) and those who used resources but whose needs were not fully met (“unmet needs”), the top barriers for either group were:

- **Awareness of available resources** (#1 for non-users; #3 for those with unmet needs).
- **Knowledge of where to go or how to access resources** (#2 for non-users; #5 for those with unmet needs).
- **Transportation to access resources** (#5 for non-users; #2 for those with unmet needs).

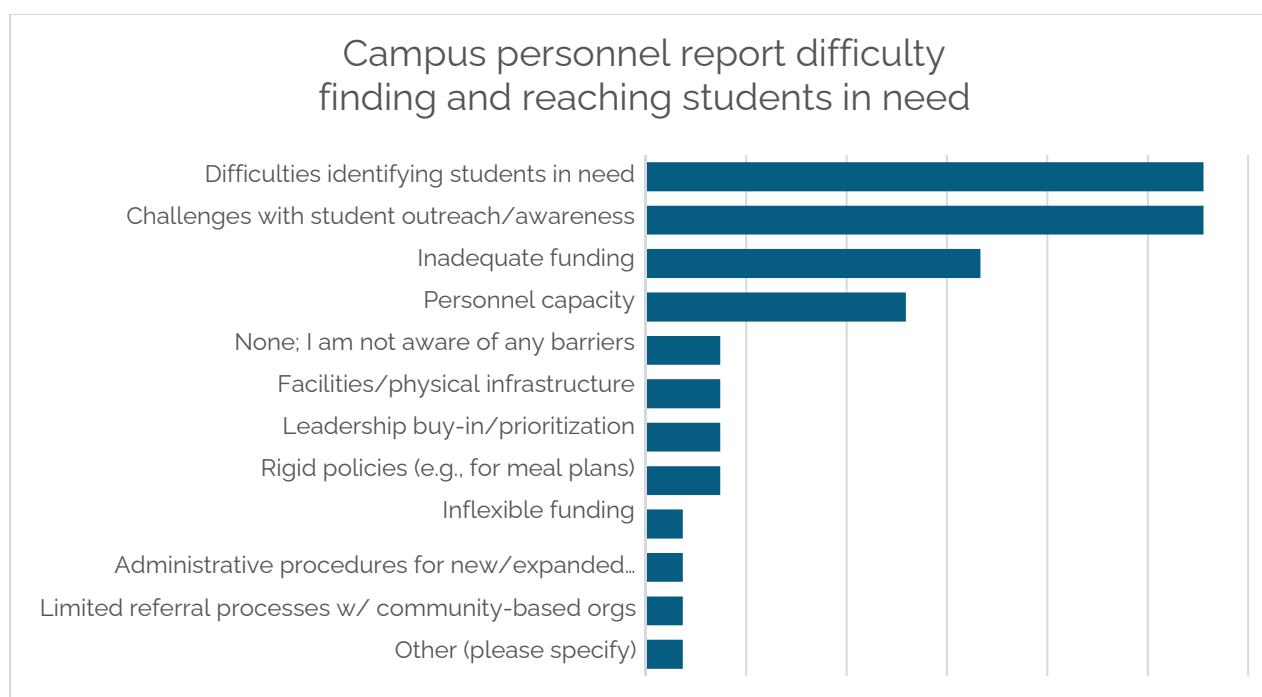
### Campus Barriers

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*“Our group...has trouble identifying students who are independent, former foster youth, homeless or facing homelessness, etc. If we had a better way to identify these students, we could help them take advantage of the resources available to them on our campus.”*

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In line with student-related challenges, more than half of campus personnel identified **difficulties identifying students in need** (56%, n=15 of 27 responding) and **challenges with student outreach/awareness** (56%, n=15) as the most significant barriers to expanding access to programs and resources on their campus that can address food insecurity for students. One-third also identified **inadequate funding** (33%, n=9), and about one-quarter (26%, n=7) identified **personnel capacity** as a significant barrier.



Campus personnel provided additional comments related to their challenges with **identifying and reaching those who might be in need**. As one said, *"Most of our students are non-traditional students and prior to attending school full-time have had jobs or resources in place to meet food insecurity needs. When emergencies happen in the household, unless, it impacts their attendance or academics they do not share the issues they are having."* As another said, *"The biggest challenge is developing ongoing and sustained contact with students in need [because] often times they stop in and stop out, and their contact information changes."*

Another contact mentioned **capacity challenges**: *"We have a food [p]antry that operates on donations. It is very small and limited in items for families. If we had to feed all the families in need, we couldn't last one day."* This person would like to see expanded *"government policies such as SNAP registration for students who need that extra boost for their families."*

## Housing Insecurity

### On-Campus Practices and Resources

The survey asked campus personnel to identify the type of housing program, if any, that is strongest on their campus. Individuals from one-third of responding campuses said their campus provides emergency financial assistance (33%, n=7 of 21 responses). Three each said their campus provides emergency short-term housing and temporary shelters or crisis response. None of the campus personnel identified transitional housing, campus-affiliated affordable housing, off-campus housing support, or housing navigation services as strong practices on their campus.

In open-ended descriptions of the programs, campus personnel shared the following details about how they work to support students with housing issues:

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clark State College        | <i>"Typically, our students are referred to the County Jobs and Family services for assistance with housing. There is a long waiting list. I wish the college had a program through the State that identifies the students and help them get set up with the housing. This...would allow the college to address the issue from a closer view. We know our students well. First line of defense is the people who know them well. They come to us for all their issues, but we are not able to help them."</i> |
| Cuyahoga Community College | <i>"The College seeks to work with community partners to address housing insecurity".</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Hocking College            | <i>"We build a strong safety net for our students. We provide affordable dorms, offer housing over academic breaks to those experiencing homelessness, and ensure summer stability through employment and cost-free housing."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Malone University          | <i>"We have a housing grant program to help students move on campus. We also have emergency funding available."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Owens Community College    | <i>"We are limited to provid[ing] housing resources to students based on our state charter and insurance riders. We rely on off-campus partnerships for housing options for students."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## Alignment with Student Recommendations

When asked about the programs that students would prioritize for campus-level investment to address housing insecurity, the most common response, by a wide margin, was an increase in emergency relief funds or grants to help pay for housing costs (e.g., rent); 68% of housing-insecure young people selected this option. In campus-level responses, emergency relief funds were the most commonly selected strong program; however, personnel from just seven of the 21 responding campuses said they provide these funds.

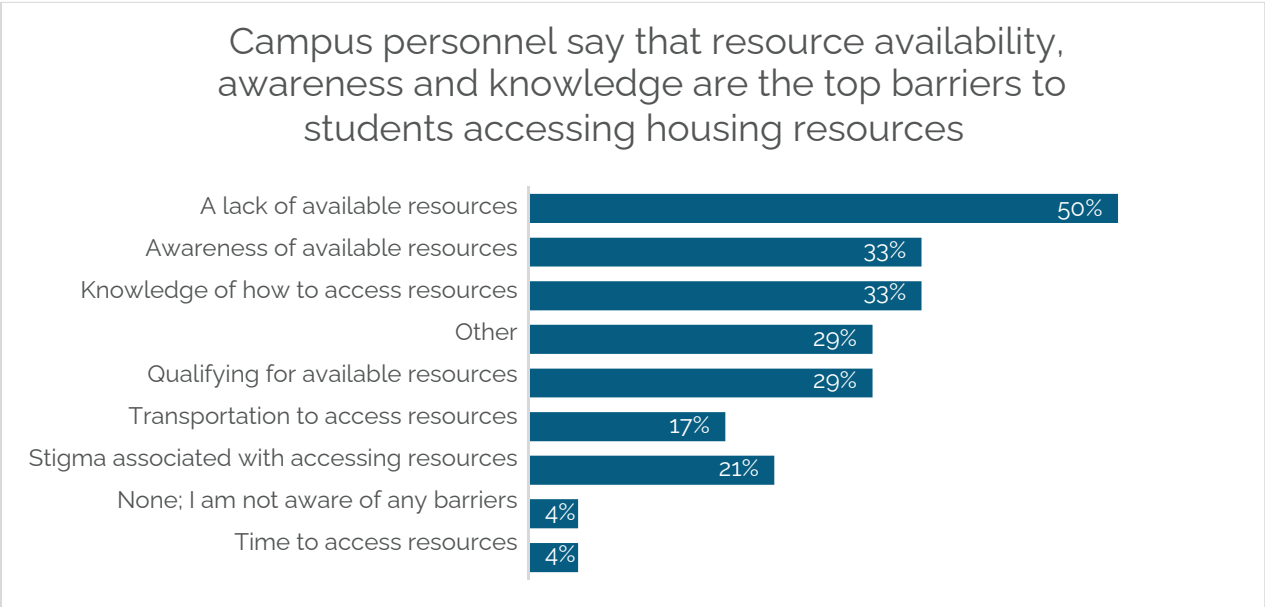
## Barriers

The survey asked campus personnel to provide their perceptions of the top three barriers that prevent students from accessing the housing resources that they need as well as the barriers that prevent institutions from addressing housing insecurity on campus.

### Student Barriers

Compared to food insecurity, twice as many campus personnel said that **availability of resources** was a top barrier (50%, n=12 of 24 responses); it was the most commonly selected

barrier to students accessing housing resources. One-third of campus personnel, each, said that **awareness of available resources** and **knowledge of how to access resources** were also main barriers.



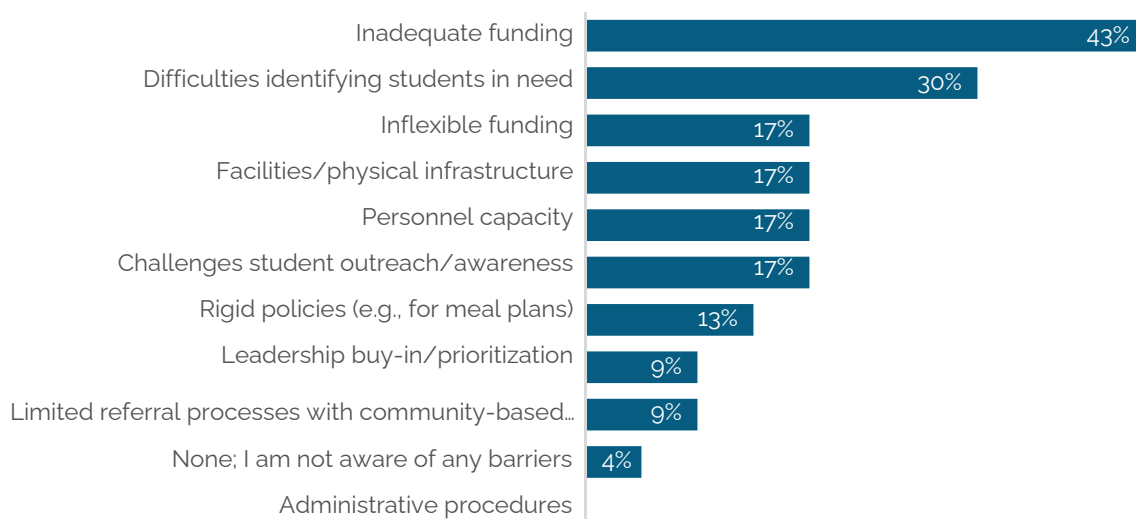
These findings also align with student responses to the fall 2024 food and housing insecurity survey; in that survey, just one-third of housing-insecure students reported accessing any type of resource, and that was most often done **off campus**. For students who did not use any housing resources, the most commonly reported barriers were **awareness of available resources** and **knowledge of how to access resources**.

### Campus Barriers

The factors that limit a campus' ability to expand housing resources for students were more varied than they were for expanding food resources. The most commonly selected barrier was **inadequate funding** (43%, n=10 of 23 respondents). As one person said, "We are often writing grants or seeking donations to assist with funding issues to allow our programs to thrive or to actually be able to implement a program."

Seven individuals (30%) said they have **difficulties identifying students in need** of housing resources. Between two and four respondents selected the other barriers provided, except administrative procedures, which was not identified as a barrier.

### Funding for programs and ability to identify students are the most common barriers to campus housing resources



Campus personnel provided additional comments related to the broader challenges associated with **housing cost and availability in the community**, especially near campus. For example:

- “Our students tell us that they cannot juggle work and school. They have to choose between shelter and education. So not that they want to settle for less education, it's simply too expensive to keep up with housing cost and availability for housing near the college.”
- “As admission numbers rise each year, it is creating a housing issue. There is just not enough housing here.”
- “The funding is not there for housing due to costs. We have [the] same issues with identifying students and no one has housing available. Three year waiting list for area.”

## Conclusions and Recommendations

**Food pantries are the most widely cited strong practice to address food insecurity among students.** While students value food pantries as a resource, they also seek meal vouchers, emergency relief funds, and direct financial assistance. These resources were not cited as strong practices by the responding campus personnel.

**Campus personnel and students identify the same key barriers to accessing food-related resources: lack of awareness, difficulty navigating resources, and transportation challenges.** Most campus personnel who responded (n=28) identified awareness of available resources (68%, n=19), knowledge of where to go or how to access resources (57%, n=16), and transportation to access resources (50%, n=14) as the top three barriers that prevent students from accessing the food-related resources they need. These barriers

appeared among the top three barriers for students who were food insecure but had not used any resources and/or for students who had used resources but whose needs were not fully met.

**The most significant campus-level barriers for food-related programs are identifying students in need and then making them aware of available resources.** More than half of campus personnel cited difficulties in student outreach and awareness as key barriers, limiting the effectiveness of available resources. Without clear systems to proactively identify and engage food-insecure students, many students may go without support, even when resources exist.

**Additional support to address housing insecurity appears to be limited on campuses.**

While emergency relief funds are the most widely available housing resource—and the top priority for students—only one-third of campuses identified them as a strong practice. Expanding these programs may be challenging, as funding was the most commonly cited barrier to increasing housing-related support.

As Foster Success considers the strategies and topics for convening campus personnel around food and housing insecurity, priorities may include:

1. Improving outreach and student identification, understanding the barriers to student data and privacy issues;
2. Expanding emergency housing assistance programs, recognizing the barrier of limited funding; and
3. Enhancing community partnerships and referral networks.