



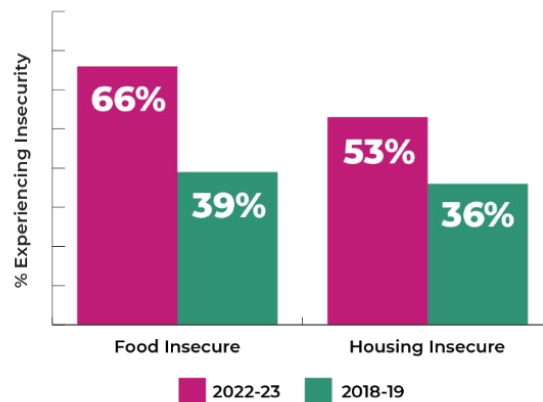
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**Contact:**  
**Shelveen Ratnam**  
**916 201-3405**  
[Shelveen.ratnam@csac.ca.gov](mailto:Shelveen.ratnam@csac.ca.gov)

**California Students are Experiencing Increasing Levels of Food and Housing Insecurity, Survey Reveals**

*Basic needs costs have risen steadily for all students since 2018-19*

**Sacramento, Calif., November 16, 2023** - The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) [released survey results \(linked\)](#) showing an alarming increase in food and housing insecurity among college students in California. The findings illuminate the prevailing issue of basic needs insecurities that students grapple with as they work to get a higher education, with more than two-thirds of those surveyed identifying as food insecure and more than half as housing insecure.



*The Food and Housing Survey and the 2018-19 SEARS both used question modules from the USDA and US Census to determine basic needs insecurity. The time scale for the food and housing questions in these basic needs survey was 12 months instead of 30 days.*

The results demonstrate how this escalating issue disproportionately impacts California college students in lower-income brackets, students of color, and adult learners, all of whom reported heightened challenges with housing and food security. The survey revealed that students who were susceptible to experiencing housing and food insecurity were:

- 24 years or older
- Parents or primary caretakers of a child
- Attending a California community college or private for-profit institution
- Eligible for Zero Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
- Female
- African American or Latino/Hispanic

“Basic needs among students represents an often-unseen crisis that demands our attention,” said **Marlene Garica, Executive Director of the Commission**. “California must unite to address this issue urgently and prioritize solutions rooted in equity, ensuring that every student, irrespective of their background, can navigate the process and access aid to reach their higher education aspirations.”

Students report difficulties covering education and living costs as they navigate coordinating the complex eligibility requirements of public assistance programs while adjusting to the end of pandemic assistance and CalFresh eligibility exemptions. To cover costs, students surveyed reported using a combination of credit cards, loans, scholarships, grants, money earned working full or part time, and family contributions. Despite a myriad of funding sources, students still report experiencing basic needs insecurities:

- Approximately **one third** of students use credit cards to cover costs.
- **76%** of students who experience food insecurity receive a Pell Grant or a Cal Grant
- Of all working students, **72%** experience food insecurity and **57%** experience housing insecurity.

The survey made it possible to collect student voices from across the state, including the following comments which underscore the struggles students face: “We should not have to go hungry, pickup additional shifts at work or take out loans to receive an education,” and “I spend more time worrying about how I am going to pay rent and how far I can stretch my groceries than I do about my schoolwork, a situation one day I hope won’t be the standard among college students in California.”

The California Student Aid Commission sent the survey to a sample of 500,000 students who completed a FAFSA or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for the 2022-23 academic year. The survey was distributed in May 2023, and 28,855 recipients responded (reflecting a response rate of 6%).

The Commission remains committed to carrying out its mission and working collaboratively with decision makers to make financial aid accessible for all students. To learn more about basic needs insecurities among California’s college students, [read the full report here \(linked\)](#).

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*The California Student Aid Commission currently serves over 400,000 students and administers the state's \$3 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the Cal Grant, the Middle Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing a higher education. Visit our website at [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov) or follow us on social media by clicking on our [Link Tree](#).*