NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF

HIGHER EDUCATION

# Hunger-Free Campus Grant Survey: Spring 2026 Results


**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

OCTOBER 13, 2026

JOSEFINA M. EWINS, POLICY ANALYST

# Agenda

- What is the Hunger-Free Survey?
- Who are our Students?
- Food Security by Demographics

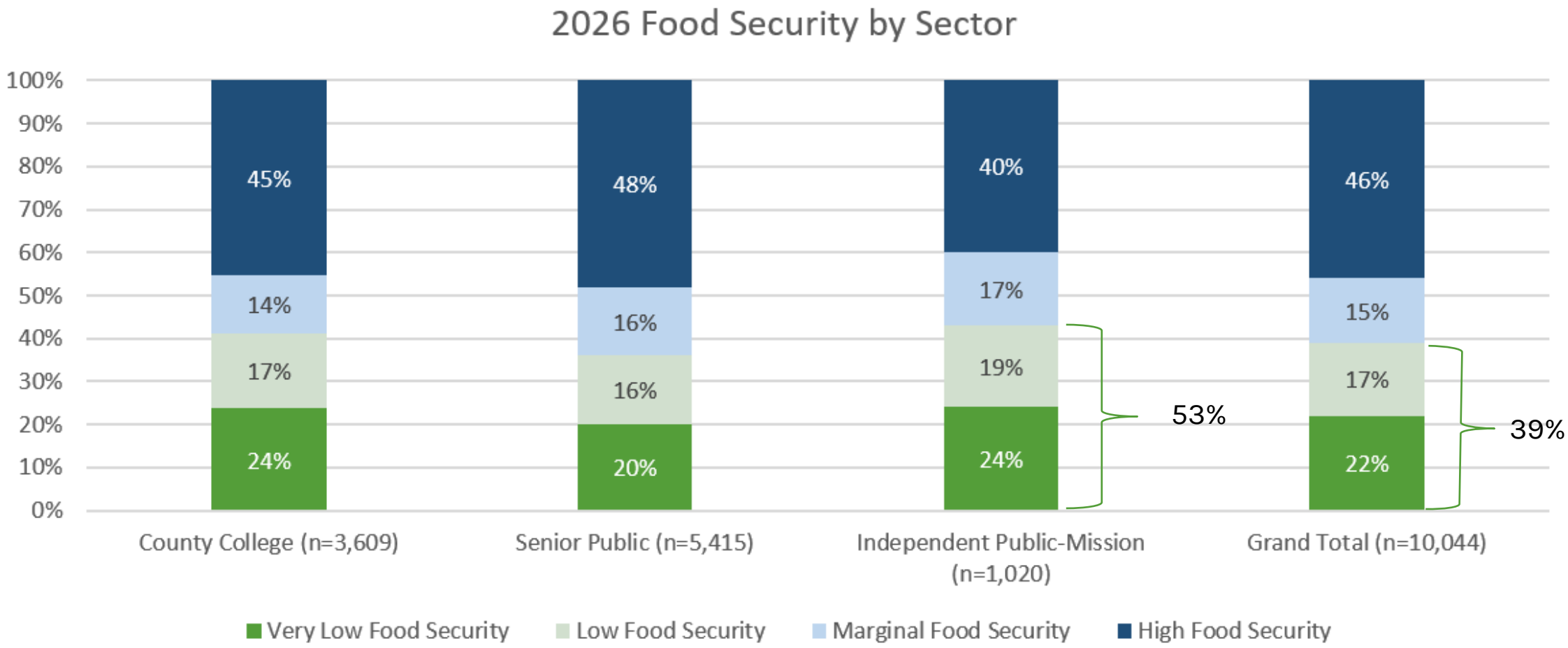
# What is the Hunger-Free Survey?

(P.L. 2019, C.89)

NOTE: THE SURVEY UTILIZES THE USDA HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY SURVEY MODULE, SUPPLEMENTED WITH ADDITIONAL STATE-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS.

# 2026 Survey Sample Size and Response Rates

| Institutional Sector | # of Institutions with Food Security Survey Data | Total 2026 Responses | Response Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| County College | 16 | 3,609 | 3.4% |
| Senior Public | 10 | 5,415 | 3.1% |
| Independent, Public-mission | 8 | 1,020 | 2.9% |
| **Grand Totals** | **34** | **10,044** | **3.2%** |


2026 Food Security by Sector
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
45%
14%
17%
24%
48%
16%
16%
20%
40%
17%
19%
24%
46%
15%
17%
22%
53%
39%
County College (n=3,609)
Senior Public (n=5,415)
Independent Public-Mission (n=1,020)
Grand Total (n=10,044)
Very Low Food Security
Low Food Security
Marginal Food Security
High Food Security

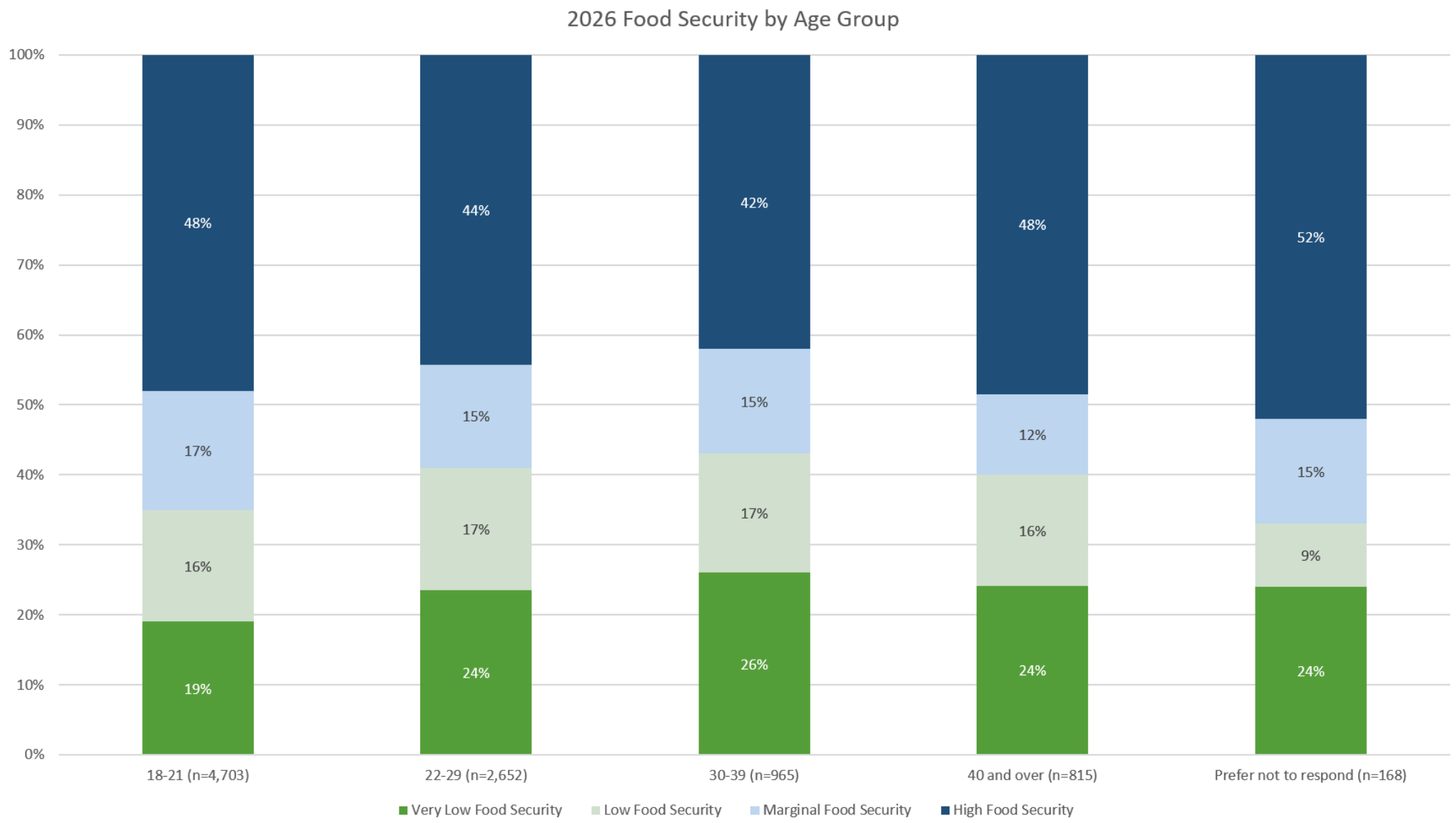
# Survey Instrument and Scoring

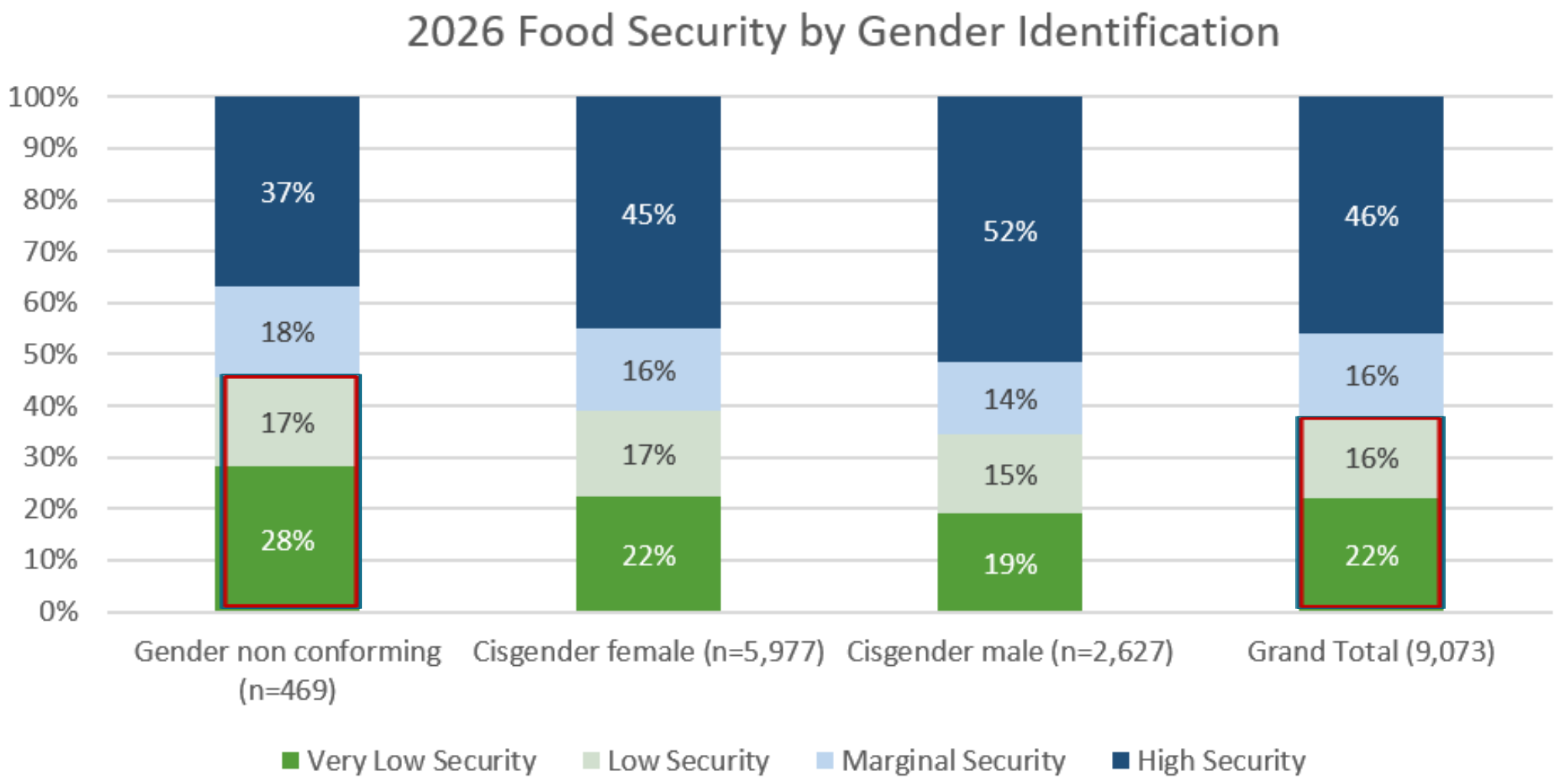
| | Food Security Level | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Food Secure | High | No food access problems |
| | Marginal | Some concern over food sufficiency, but little to no change in diet/food intake |
| Food Insecure | Low | Reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet, but little to no change in food intake |
| | Very Low | Multiple indicators of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake |

** LEVELS BASED ON USDA FOOD SECURITY MODULE**

# Who are our students?

MORE THAN JUST TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS


2026 Food Security by Age Group
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
48%
17%
16%
19%
44%
15%
17%
24%
42%
15%
17%
26%
48%
12%
16%
24%
52%
15%
9%
24%
18-21 (n=4,703)
22-29 (n=2,652)
30-39 (n=965)
40 and over (n=815)
Prefer not to respond (n=168)
Very Low Food Security
Low Food Security
Marginal Food Security
High Food Security


2026 Food Security by Gender Identification
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
37%
18%
17%
28%
45%
16%
17%
22%
52%
14%
15%
19%
46%
16%
16%
22%
Gender non conforming (n=469)
Cisgender female (n=5,977)
Cisgender male (n=2,627)
Grand Total (9,073)
Very Low Security
Low Security
Marginal Security
High Security

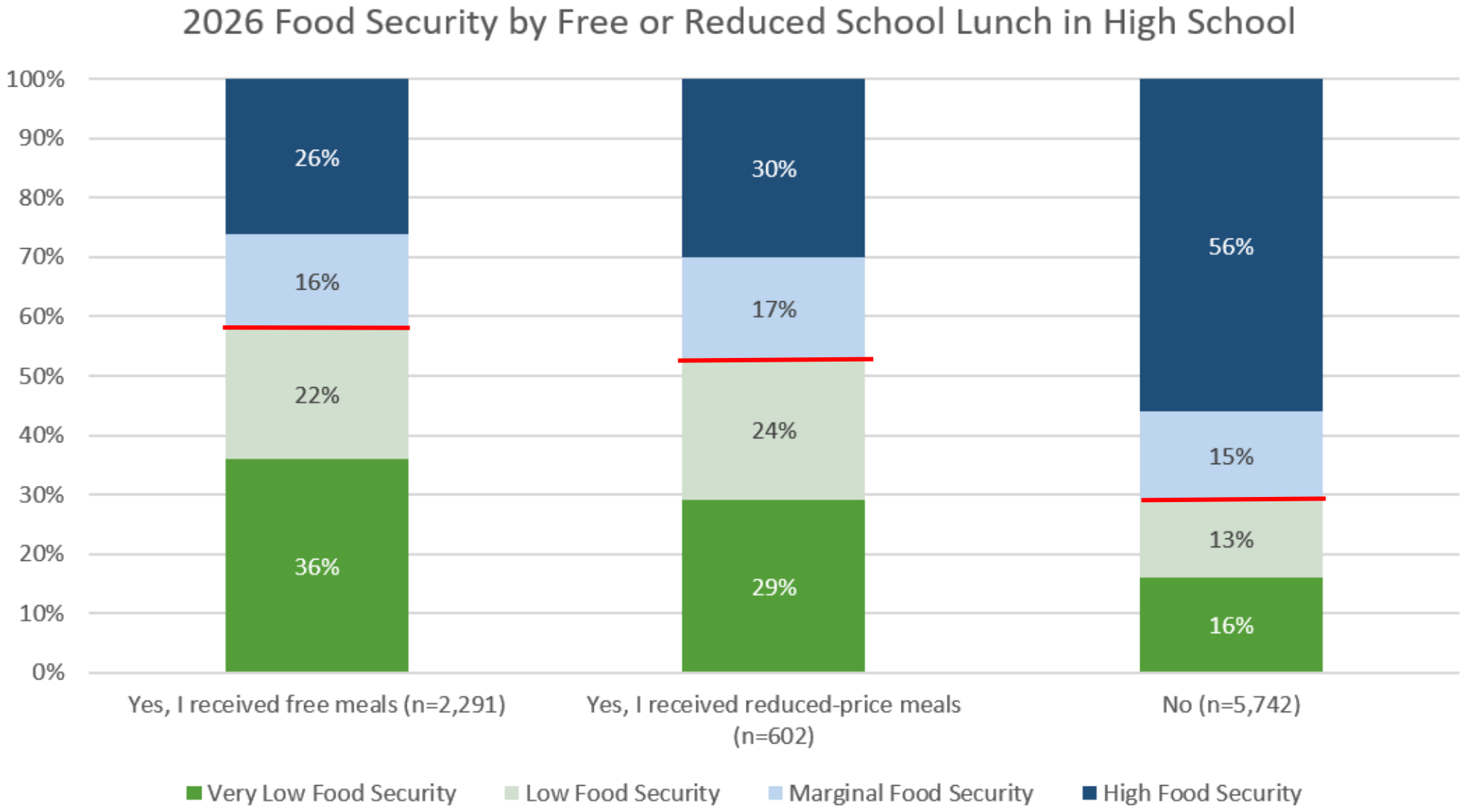
# What is the "Hunger Free Campus" designation?

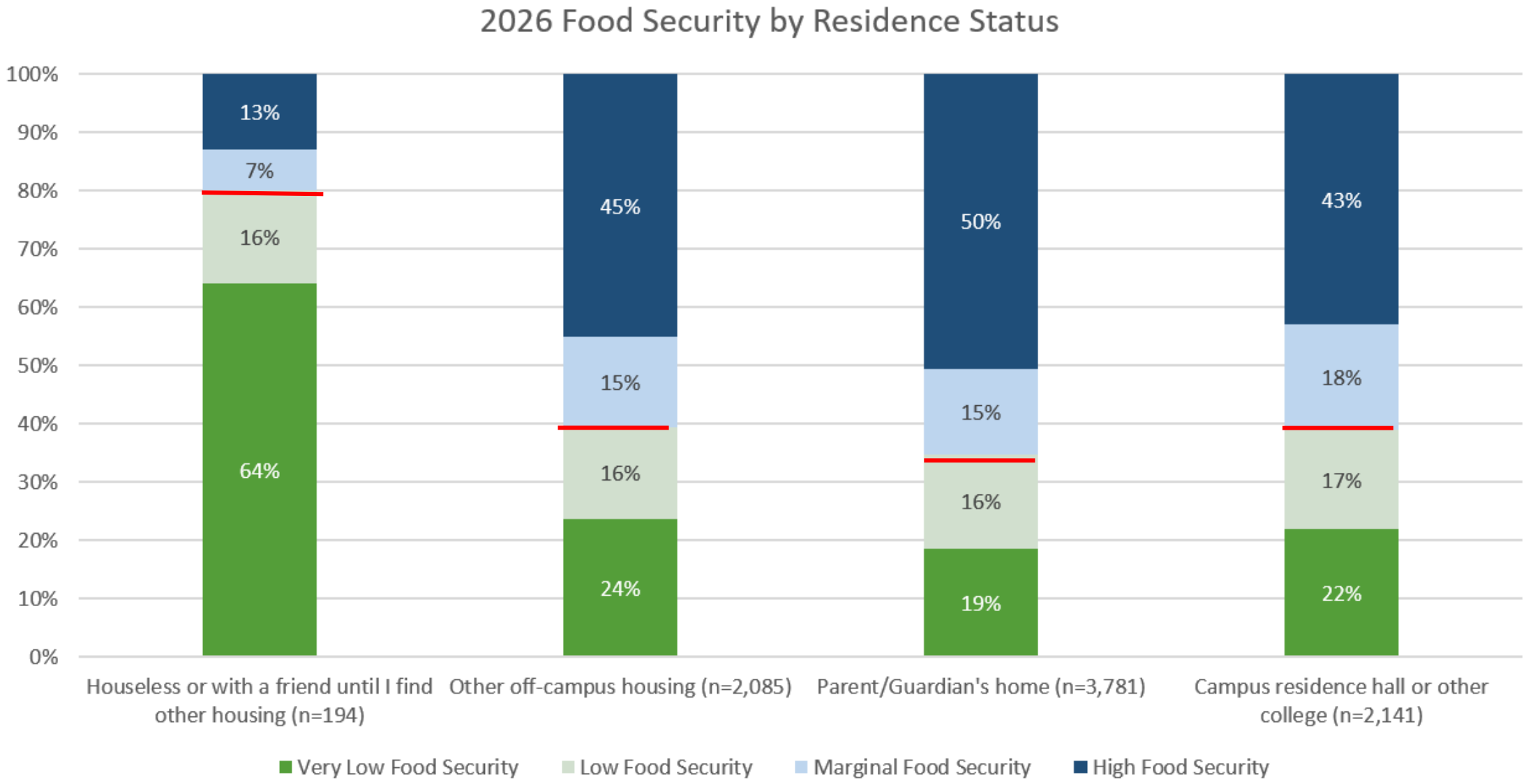
Institutions can be designated as a hunger free campus by:

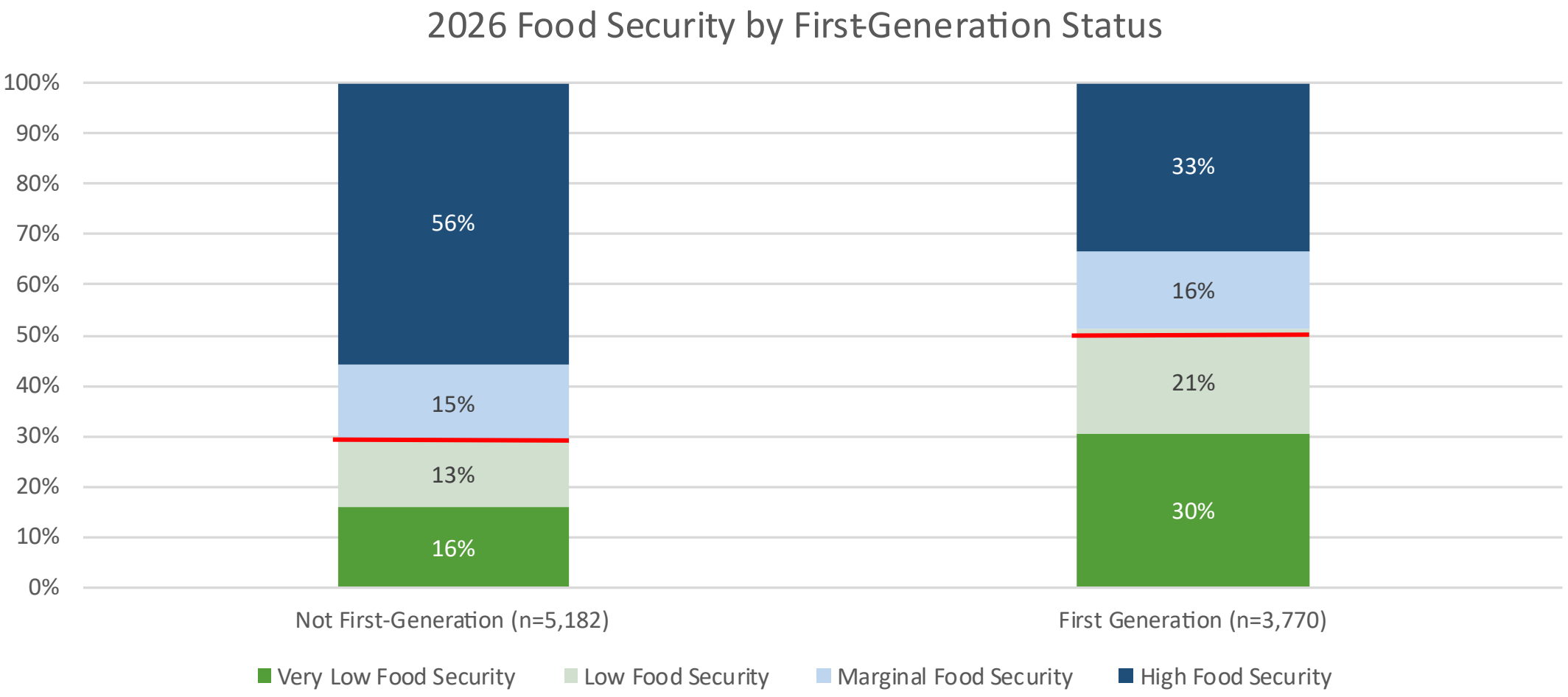
1) Establishing a Campus Hunger Task Force that meets at least three times a year
2) Designating a staff member to assist students with SNAP enrollment
3) Providing options for students to utilize SNAP benefits at campus stores
4) Participating in an awareness day campaign activity and plan a campus awareness event during the National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week
5) Providing at least one physical food pantry on campus, or an accessible stigma-free arrangement for food
6) Developing a "Swipe Out Hunger" student meal credit sharing program, or designate a certain amount of funds for free meal vouchers
7) Conducting the annual OSHE survey on hunger and submit to the Secretary

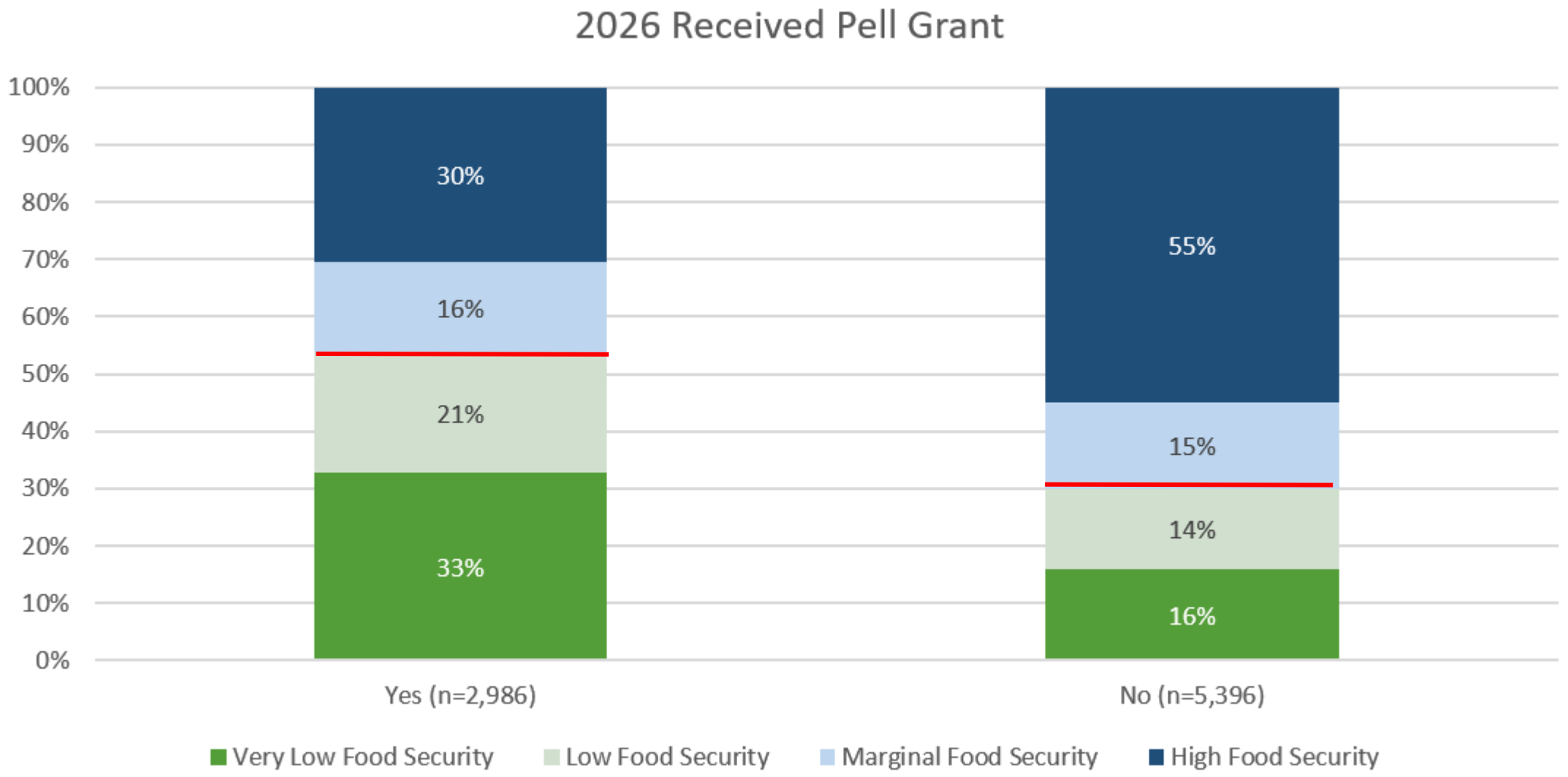
# Food Security by Demographics

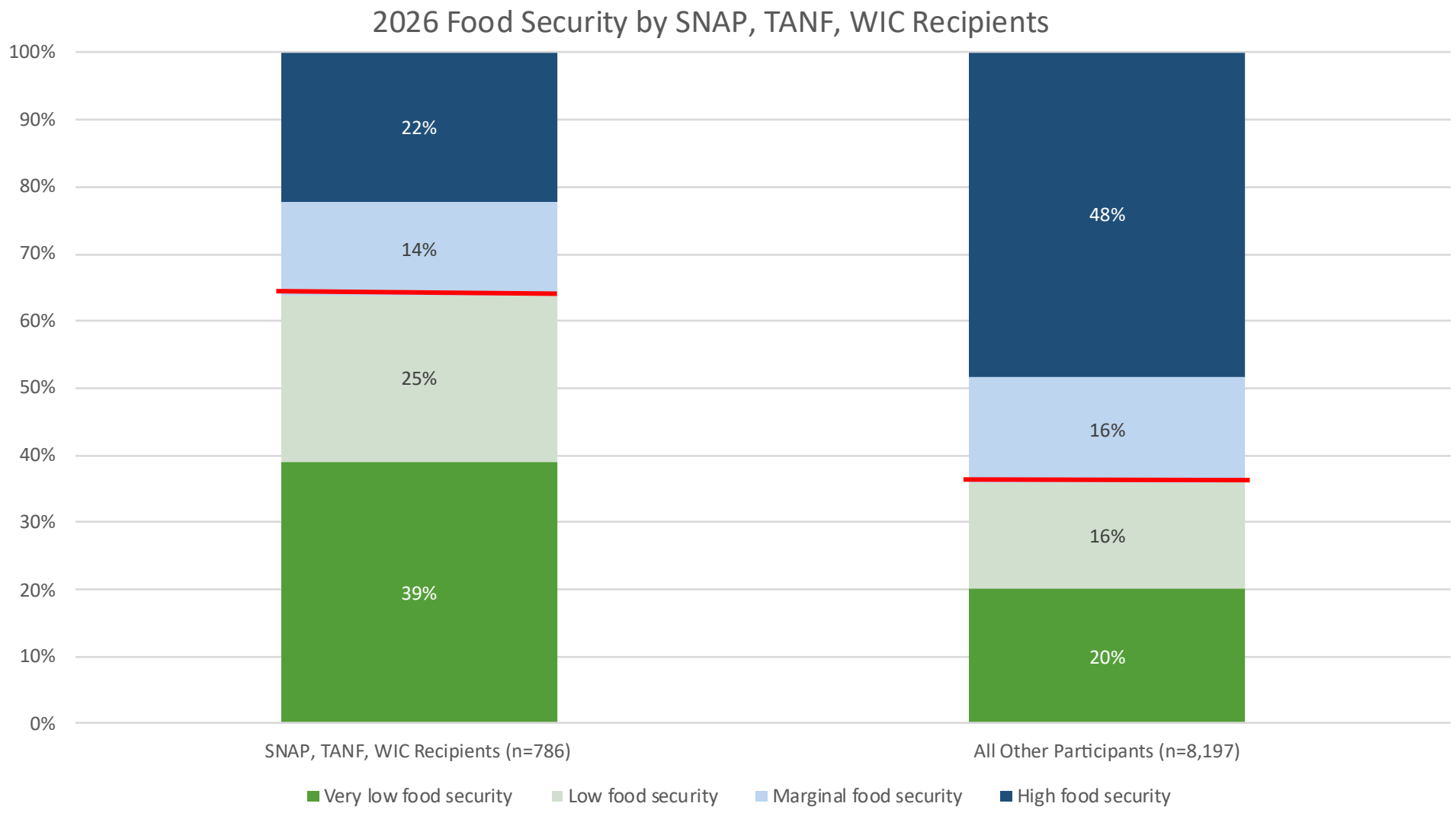
OVERALL AND BY STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS


2026 Food Security by Free or Reduced School Lunch in High School
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
26%
16%
22%
36%
30%
17%
24%
29%
56%
15%
13%
16%
Yes, I received free meals (n=2,291)
Yes, I received reduced-price meals (n=602)
No (n=5,742)
Very Low Food Security
Low Food Security
Marginal Food Security
High Food Security


2026 Food Security by Residence Status
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
13%
7%
16%
64%
45%
15%
16%
24%
50%
15%
16%
19%
43%
18%
17%
22%
Houseless or with a friend until I find other housing (n=194)
Other off-campus housing (n=2,085)
Parent/Guardian's home (n=3,781)
Campus residence hall or other college (n=2,141)
Very Low Food Security
Low Food Security
Marginal Food Security
High Food Security


2026 Food Security by First-Generation Status
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
56%
15%
13%
16%
33%
16%
21%
30%
Not First-Generation (n=5,182)
First Generation (n=3,770)
Very Low Food Security
Low Food Security
Marginal Food Security
High Food Security


2026 Received Pell Grant
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
30%
16%
21%
33%
55%
15%
14%
16%
Yes (n=2,986)
No (n=5,396)
Very Low Food Security
Low Food Security
Marginal Food Security
High Food Security


2026 Food Security by SNAP, TANF, WIC Recipients
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
22%
14%
25%
39%
48%
16%
16%
20%
SNAP, TANF, WIC Recipients (n=786)
All Other Participants (n=8,197)
Very low food security
Low food security
Marginal food security
High food security

# What does it all mean?

# Key Takeaways

- 38% of student respondents scored as food insecure
- Students from historically marginalized backgrounds and non-traditional students have higher levels of food insecurity
- Food insecurity is present at all institutions, calling for unique approaches based on student populations
- There is a strong correlation between low socioeconomic status (SES) and food insecurity

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# HIGHER EDUCATION

*Questions?*

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**nj.gov/highereducation**

**@NJHigherEd**

October 13, 2026

# Community Care Coordinator

The role of the Community Care Coordinator is to manage basic care needs among the student population. Basic need assistance is the first step in ensuring student success in the classroom and in life.
The hope is that food and housing insecurity, technology inequity, lack of basic care goods, and clothing insecurity are not things students' feel they have to deal with alone.

This role has been specifically designed to work with both our Social Work team and our Wellness Center Staff. We all work from a holistic perspective and from Maslow Hierarchy of Needs.

- Cougar Pantry
- Basic Care Service
- Indoor/Outdoor Garden
- Career Closet
- Emergency Housing
- Food Drives
- On and off campus referrals and resources

- **Cougar Connection Center of Social Work:** crisis management & stabilization, support groups, workshops, economic resources, career readiness, housing and food support

- **Kean Wellness Center:** Student Health Services, Counseling, Accessibility services, alcohol and other drug services

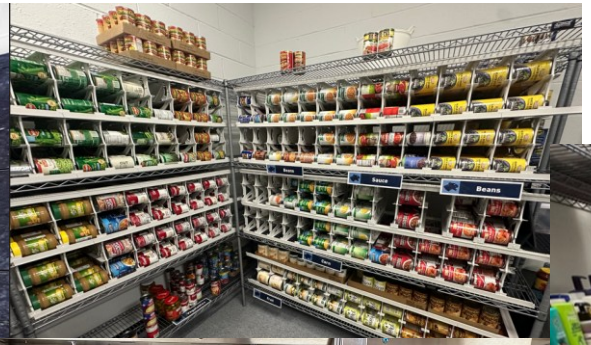
COUGAR PANTRY

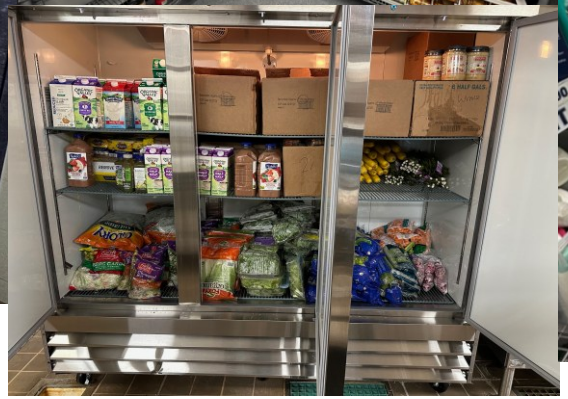
Garden State Conference on Food Security

Office of the Food Security Advocate

# The Basics

Non-perishables, perishables, basic care, gardens, lockers & online ordering, & Little Cougar Pantry Boxes





Garden State Conference on Food Security

Office of the Food Security Advocate

# Beyond The Basics!

Food Recovery, Swipe Out Hunger, Community Foodbank Of NJ, On campus Partners with drives and events & Spreading Visibility on campus

Garden State Conference on Food Security

Office of the Food Security Advocate

## COUGAR PANTRY L.I.N.K.S.

## SWIPE OUT HUNGER

**STUDENT HUNGER IS REAL. WE CAN HELP END IT.**

*SWIPE OUT HUNGER IS THE LEADING NONPROFIT ADDRESSING HUNGER AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS.*

**DONATE UP TO 2 OF YOUR MEAL SWIPES TO A FELLOW COUGAR TODAY.**

**MAX OF 2 SWIPES PER SEMESTER CAN BE DONATED**

### HOW IT WORKS:

1. Students donate meal swipes from their current meal plan (excludes the unlimited plan).
2. Donated meal swipes are collected and managed by the Cougar Pantry.
3. Students facing food insecurity who meet eligibility requirements will be allocated swipes by the Cougar Pantry.
4. Eligible students can utilize these allocated swipes to dine at Keanu's Kitchen.

*FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:*

COUGARPANTRY@KEAN.EDU

*TO UTILIZE THE PANTRY, PLEASE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT AT:*

KEAN.STUDENTHEALTHPORTAL.COM

SWIPE OUT HUNGER · GOURMET DINING KEAN UNIVERSITY · KEAN wellness center

# Monmouth University
# The Nest Food Pantry

From September 2025 to April 2026, the Nest Food Pantry distributed approximately 650 pounds of food and nearly 1,000 items to approximately 100 unique students.

**Monmouth University's Student Government Association won the Outstanding Student Government Rising to the Challenge award at COSGA 2026 for presenting their work on the Nest and other initiatives.**

SALEM
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Basic Needs Support: Driven by Strategic Goals, Grounded in Caring Campus Culture

- Hunger and Basic Needs Task Force
- Oak Essentials Pantry
- Grab & Go Boxes
- Lockers
- Wellness Center
- Events
- Pop-Up Farm Stands

Caring Campus
Salem Community College

" Last year the farm stands were very helpful. I actually frequently checked the SCC Facebook page to see when there would be one. It has helped feed my family on two different occasions. I'm a nontraditional student with two kids under two.

Please continue to do them. They really help those of us who really need it. Thank you all for putting this together for us. "

"One of my goals as a small organic farmer is to help get local food to people who need it the most. I really enjoyed seeing the fresh locally grown produce going to students and to see them try things for the first time like organic garlic and kiwi berries! "

*David Watts, Watts Organic Farm*

SALEM
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Community Partnerships:
# It Takes a Village

- Farm Stands
- Philanthropy
- Community Events on Campus
- Outreach into the County

# Thank You!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