

Introduction

- According to the USDA, in 2015 food insecurity impacted roughly 17% of the population with higher rates reported in the college population.
- The objective of this study was to measure the prevalence and characteristics of food insecure students attending West Virginia University.

Methods

- Surveys were emailed to 1191 professors at WVU to reach students during Fall 2016 semester.
- A 56-item tool, developed by an Appalachian Multistate Collaborative, assessed food insecurity in college students.
- Food security was classified using the USDA Household Food Security Module which separated individuals into 4 categories (high, marginal, low, and very low food security).

Results

- The 692 students who responded were predominately white (87.3%), single (94.3%), females (71.0%) with an average age 21.3 ± 4.0 SD. Students were spread across all academic years with the majority being full time (97.5%), freshman (23.7%) or seniors (23.5%) with an average GPA of 3.4 ± 0.5. Of the population, 36.6% (n=253) reported food insecurity.
- Investigation of food secure and insecure students for sociodemographic variables showed significant associations between food security status and academic year, self-reported health status, and housing (all p < 0.05), as seen in Figure 1.
- Food insecure students had higher weight (161.1 ± 39.8 lb) compared to food secure students (155.8 ± 35.4 lb) with a higher proportion categorized as obese that trended towards significance (p=0.06).

Results

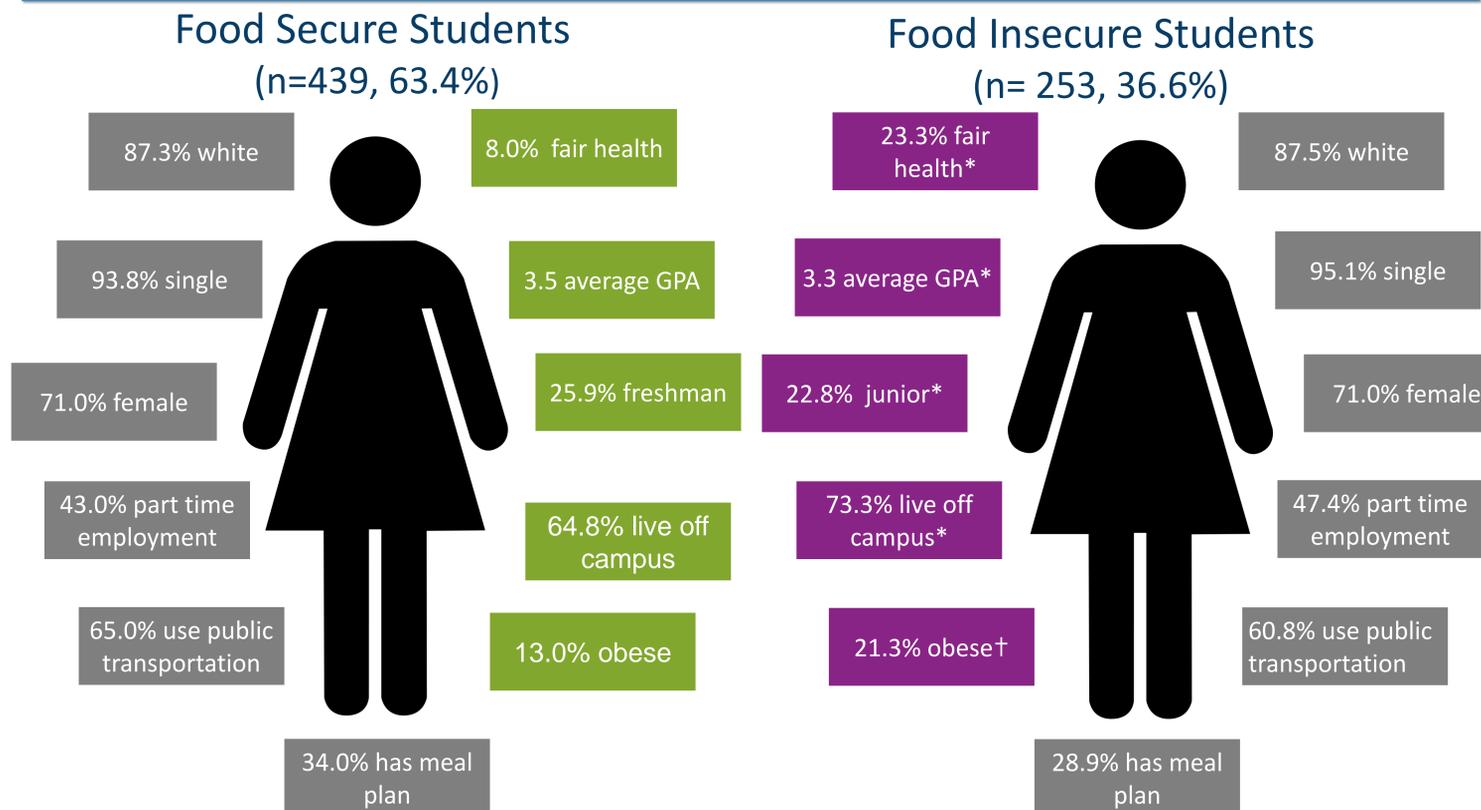


Figure 1: Comparison of Food Secure and Insecure Student Characteristics

* Significant differences p<0.05; †Trending toward significance p<0.07

Food Insecurity by Region

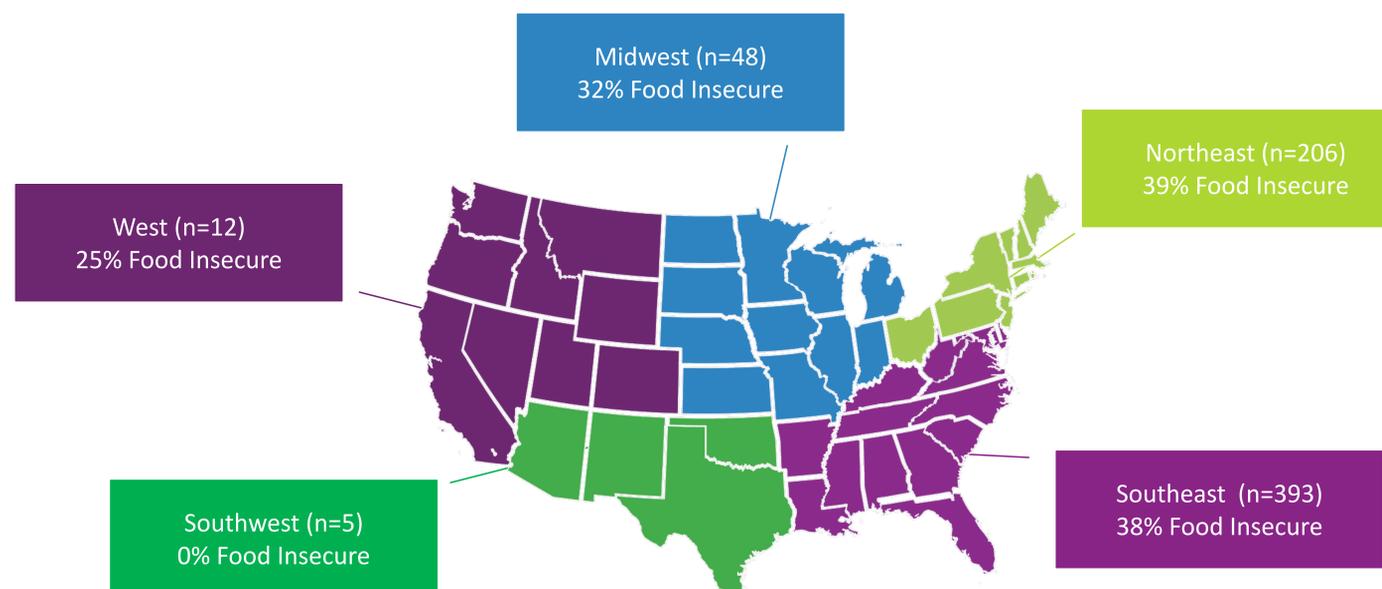


Figure 2: Food Insecurity Prevalence by Region

Discussion

- This study reports that over 1/3 of students surveyed at West Virginia University were food insecure.
- A majority of the food insecure population came from the Northeast and Southeast regions.
- Food insecurity had increased association with students after their freshman year and those who lived off campus.
- Food insecure students had worse health and academic outcomes and more likely to be categorized as obese compared to food secure students.
- To promote wellbeing of all students, institutions must investigate the impact of these differences on the quality of life and academic success of food insecure students.
- Interventions to improve food security status for all students should be developed for those most at risk, including students after freshman year and those living off campus.

Conclusion

- These results represent a sample of food insecure and food secure college students in Appalachia.
- Results suggest that food insecurity may attribute to poor academic outcomes in students.

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Acknowledgement:
NIH NIGMS grant T32
GM081741