

# My Experience **Basic Needs**

Many members of the Berkeley community face basic needs insecurities. Rates of basic needs insecurity are particularly high among minoritized and marginalized groups (women; LGBTQ+; Southeast Asian; Pacific Islander; Southwest Asian/North African; African American/Black; Chicana/Latina; Native American/Alaska Native; disabled; growing up working class or poor; and not having parents with 4-year degrees). Respondents at the intersections of marginalization have higher rates of basic needs insecurities. Students with dependents; current or former foster youth; and system impacted students are also much more likely to be basic needs insecure.

Findings for basic needs from My Experience align with other surveys of UC Berkeley; University of California; or other colleges/universities. Basic needs insecurities are correlated with each other and with overall health and mental health.

## Food Insecurity

Food security is a derived measure defined using five individual questions per USDA standards [CITATION]. Respondents were categorized as having high, low, or very low food security based on this measure; the low and very low were combined to form the aggregate category of food insecure. Overall, over one in four respondents (27%) were categorized as food insecure. There is wide variation in food insecurity across populations ranging from almost no faculty (1%) to just under two in five (39%) undergraduates along with one in twenty (5%) academic employees, one in six (16%) postdocs and staff, and one in four graduate students (24%). Minoritized and marginalized communities experienced much higher (up to 50% higher) rates of food insecurity. Food insecurity worsens with each added marginalization. Undergraduates with dependents (66%) and current/former foster youth (68%) also faced notably higher rates of food insecurity.

**Table 1. Food Insecurity by Population**

*Percentage of respondents categorized as food insecure*

Group	Undergraduates	Grad Students	Postdocs	Faculty	Academic Staff	Staff	All
Total	39%	24%	16%	1%	5%	16%	27%
0 Marginal Factors	17%	14%	25%	0%	0%	8%	10%
1 Marginal Factors	23%	15%	12%	0%	1%	10%	15%
2 Marginal Factors	27%	24%	3%	2%	7%	12%	21%
3 Marginal Factors	45%	31%	19%	0%	4%	19%	34%
4 Marginal Factors	57%	37%	36%	0%	8%	23%	45%
5 Marginal Factors	73%	53%				35%	62%
6 Marginal Factors	69%					27%	60%

## Housing Insecurity

Housing security is a derived measure defined using six individual questions per the methodology of the Wisconsin Hope Center [CITATION]. Respondents were categorized as housing insecure based on this measure. Overall, over two in five respondents (41%) were categorized as housing insecure. There is wide variation in housing insecurity across populations ranging from one in ten faculty (10%) to over half (54%) of postdocs along with one in three academic employees (31%), two in five (43%) undergraduates and staff, and almost half (48%) of graduate students. Minoritized and marginalized communities experienced much higher (up to 50% higher) rates of housing insecurity. Housing insecurity worsens with each added marginalization. As with food insecurity, undergraduates with dependents also faced notably higher rates of housing insecurity (71%).

**Table 2. Housing Insecurity by Population**

*Percentage of respondents categorized as housing insecure*

Group	Undergraduates	Grad Students	Postdocs	Faculty	Academic Staff	Staff	All
Total	43%	48%	54%	10%	31%	43%	41%
0 Marginal Factors	29%	37%	42%	9%	24%	24%	26%
1 Marginal Factors	34%	39%	42%	8%	24%	32%	32%
2 Marginal Factors	37%	49%	55%	10%	27%	37%	38%
3 Marginal Factors	45%	56%	87%	9%	36%	47%	46%
4 Marginal Factors	52%	63%	64%	8%	42%	53%	53%
5 Marginal Factors	62%	73%				61%	63%
6 Marginal Factors	67%					55%	65%

## Homelessness

Homelessness is a derived measure defined using five individual questions per the methodology of the Wisconsin Hope Center [CITATION]. Respondents were categorized as homelessness based on this measure. Overall, one in twenty respondents (5%) were categorized as homeless. There is variation in homelessness across populations ranging from almost no faculty and academic employees (1%) to one in fourteen (7%) undergraduates and postdocs along with one in thirty (3%) staff and one in twenty (5%) graduate students. Minoritized and marginalized communities experienced much higher (up to three times higher) rates of homelessness. Homelessness rates increase with each added marginalization. As with food and housing insecurity, undergraduates with dependents also faced notably higher rates of homelessness (19%). Current and former foster youth had the highest rates of homelessness with just over one in four (26%) being categorized as homeless.

**Table 3. Homelessness by Population**

*Percentage of respondents categorized as homeless*

Group	Undergraduates	Grad Students	Postdocs	Faculty	Academic Staff	Staff	All
Total	7%	5%	7%	1%	1%	3%	5%
0 Marginal Factors	2%	3%	8%	0%	2%	1%	2%

1 Marginal Factors	5%	3%	3%	1%	1%	4%	4%
2 Marginal Factors	4%	5%	3%	1%	1%	2%	4%
3 Marginal Factors	9%	6%	19%	0%	2%	4%	7%
4 Marginal Factors	12%	8%	9%	0%	4%	5%	9%
5 Marginal Factors	10%	8%				6%	9%
6 Marginal Factors	13%					0%	11%

### Broader Context of Health Findings

Previous studies of basic needs provide context for understanding the My Experience Survey results around basic needs. In 2018, the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) used the same methodology to assess food insecurity for UC undergraduates and found 42% of Berkeley undergraduates were food insecure [CITATION]. The results for My Experience Survey are consistent with previous studies and suggest a possible slight decline in food insecurity at Berkeley from 2018 to 2019 across most racial/ethnic groups available.

**Table 4. Undergraduate Food Insecurity Trends**

*Percentage of undergraduate respondents categorized as food insecure*

Category	2018 [UCUES]	2019 [MES]	Change
All	42%	39%	-3%
African American	65%	58%	-7%
Chicanx/Latinx	64%	61%	-3%
Native American/Alaska Native	58%	62%	+4%
Asian	38%	31%	-7%
White	36%	35%	-1%

Studies from 2018 of food insecurity among California and national college students provide additional context though the measure in that study looked at food insecurity over the previous 30 days opposed to the previous 12 months used on the My Experience Survey and UCUES. One study found that nationally 41% of four-year college students were food insecure in the past 30 days [CITATION] while another study found that 35% of California college students were food insecure in the past 30 days [CITATION].

A 2018 study of national college students found that 48% of them were housing insecure in the past 30 days [CITATION]. This is broadly similar to the 43% of undergraduates found to be housing insecure in the past 12 months. These results are broadly aligned with the results of the My Experience Survey though they are not directly comparable. They also show that the experiences with basic needs at Berkeley are not isolated but part of broader patterns in the experiences at colleges and universities across California and the United States