



University of
New Hampshire

Does food insecurity prevalence differ between first-generation and non-first-generation college students?

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Introduction

- College students are a uniquely vulnerable population that face higher rates of food insecurity.¹
- Food insecurity** is defined as having limited availability or access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods.²
- Studies indicate **first-generation (FG)** students are more likely to be food insecure.^{3,4}
- Recent data regarding this at-risk population is limited at a northeastern university.

Objective

To assess differences in food insecurity prevalence between FG and non-FG college students at a public, northeastern university.

Methods

- Data were collected between Fall 2018-Spring 2021 from the College Health and Nutrition Assessment Survey, an ongoing, cross-sectional study conducted at a public northeastern university (UNH IRB #5524).
- Participants (ages 18-24) were recruited from an introductory nutrition course and completed an online questionnaire (Qualtrics).
- Food insecurity status was measured using the USDA Six-Item Short Form Food Security Survey.⁵
- A total food security score was calculated and used to categorize participants as high food security, marginal food security, low food security, or very low food security.⁵
- Participants were then classified overall as either food secure or food insecure.⁵
- FG status was self-reported and defined as neither parent completing 4 years of university.
- Differences in food security between FG and non-FG students were assessed using chi-square test ($p < .05$) (SPSS, v28).

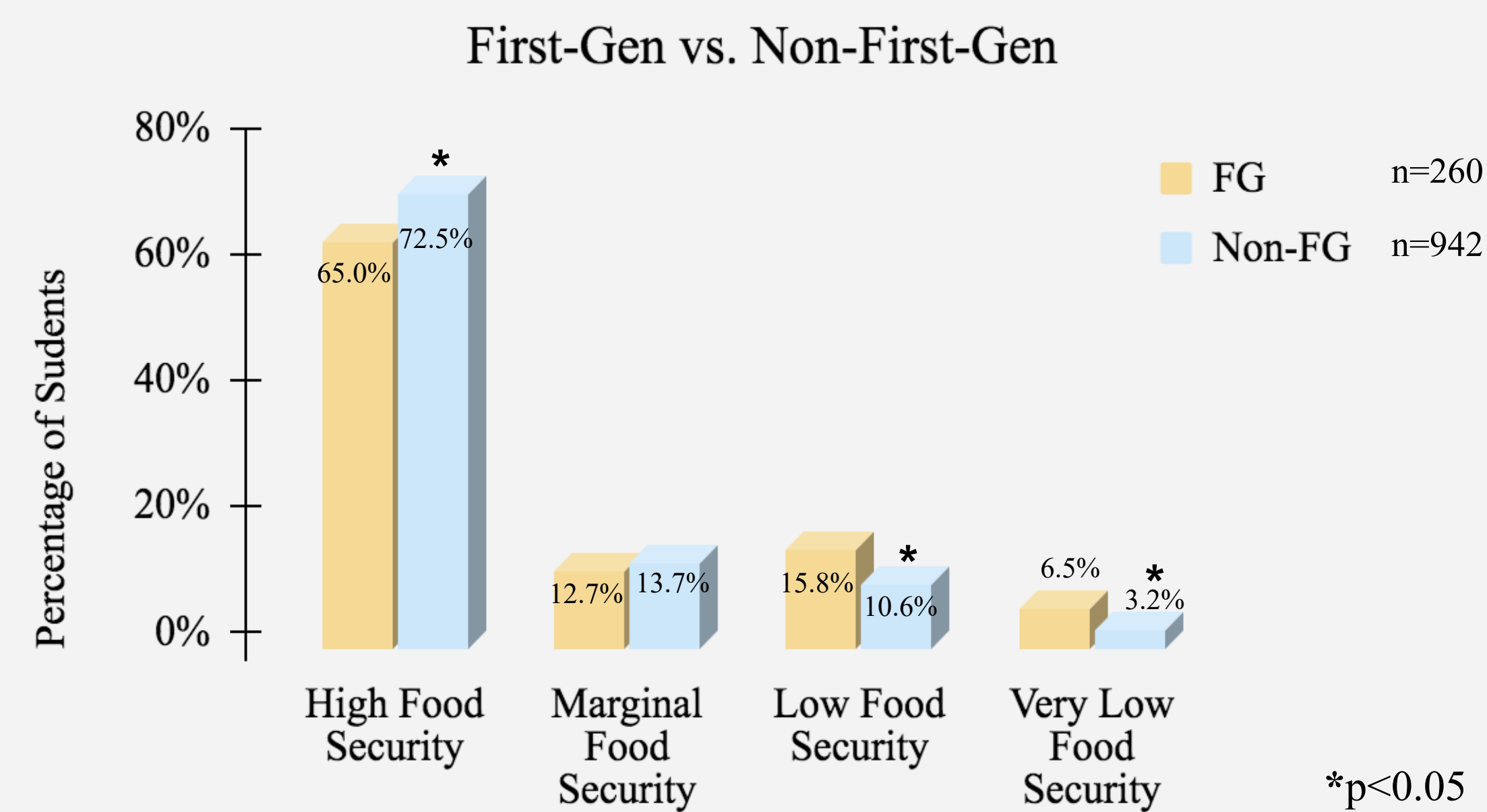
Subject Characteristics

	FG (n, %)	Non-FG (n, %)
Gender		
Female	182, 63.2%	630, 60.8%
Male	106, 36.8%	406, 39.2%
Race		
White	257, 90.5%	960, 94.2%
Other races	27, 9.5%	59, 5.8%
Pell grant status		
Yes	95, 40.9%	155, 19.1%
No	137, 59.1%	657, 80.9%
Financial Aid		
Yes	221, 82.5%	598, 62.9%
No	47, 17.5%	352, 37.1%

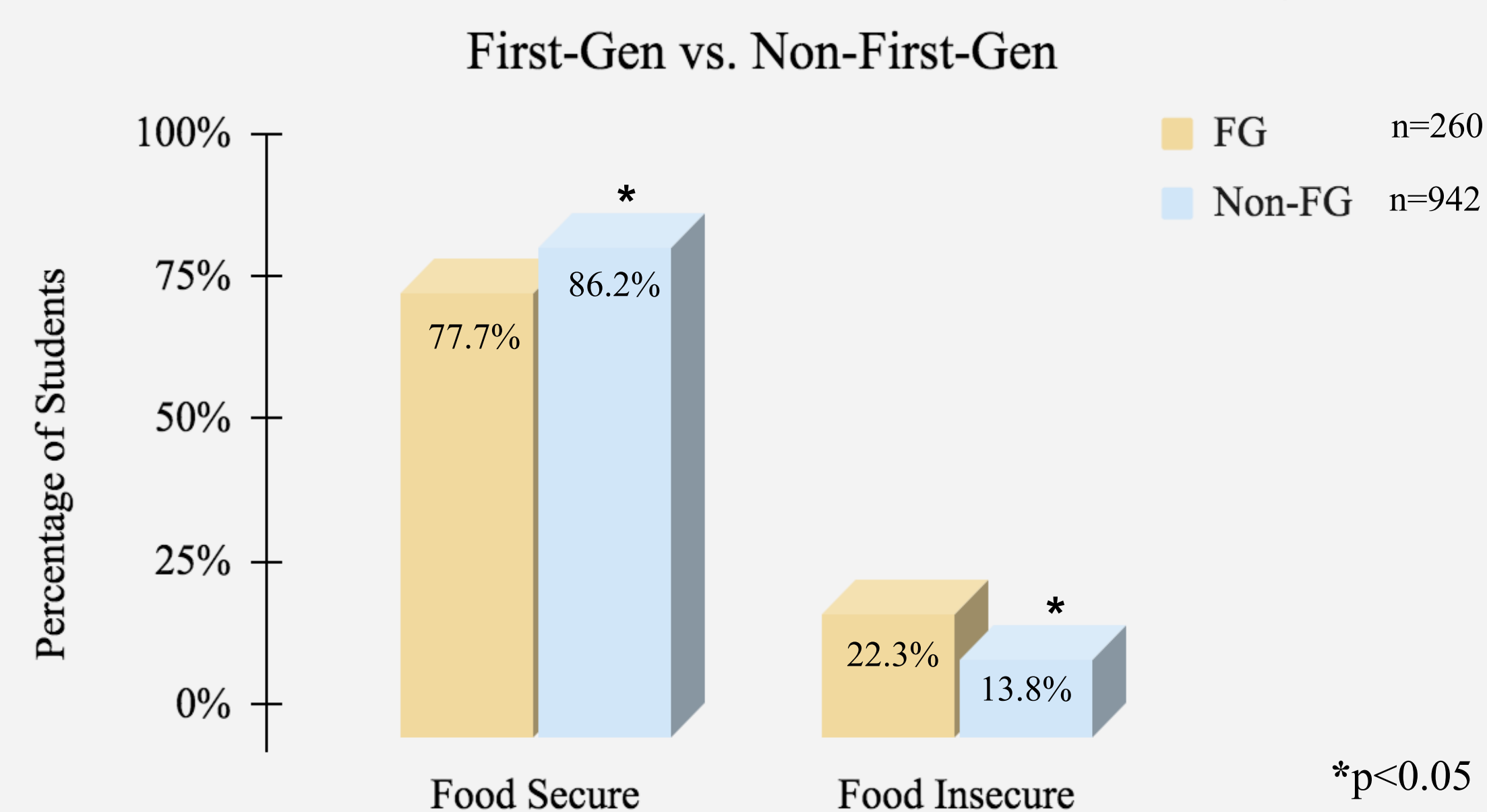
Results

- Among all students (n=1202), 21.6% were classified as FG.
- Among FG students, 77.7% reported high or marginal food security, while 22.3% reported low or very low food security.
- Among non-FG students, 86.2% reported high or marginal food security, while 13.8% reported low or very low food security.
- There were significantly less FG than non-FG students in the high food security category.
- There were significantly more FG than non-FG students in the low food security and very low food security categories.
- Food insecurity was significantly higher among FG than non-FG students (22.3% vs. 13.8%, $p < 0.001$).

Food Security Level by USDA 6-Item Scale



Comparison of Student Food Security



Conclusion

- Approximately one in five FG students reported food insecurity.**
- Prevalence of low food security and very low food security status was significantly higher among FG students than non-FG students.
- Future research related to use and perception of food access resources should target at-risk students including those who are FG status.

Acknowledgements

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