



# Harnessing State and Survey Data for Action

---

- **Sara Abelson**, Assistant Professor & Senior Director of Training and Education, The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs
- **Bryan Ashton**, Managing Director, Trellis Strategies
- **Corey Gheesling**, Associate Vice President, SHEEO



# Harnessing Survey Data for State Action

**SHEEO Basic Needs Data Academy**  
October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Sara Abelson, PhD, MPH  
Assistant Professor & Senior Director of Training

# About The Hope Center

We are researchers, scholars, advocates, conveners, and storytellers who envision a world where basic needs insecurity is no longer a barrier to pursuing and completing college. We take a systems-change approach to creating a higher education landscape where educational opportunity is universal and equitable.

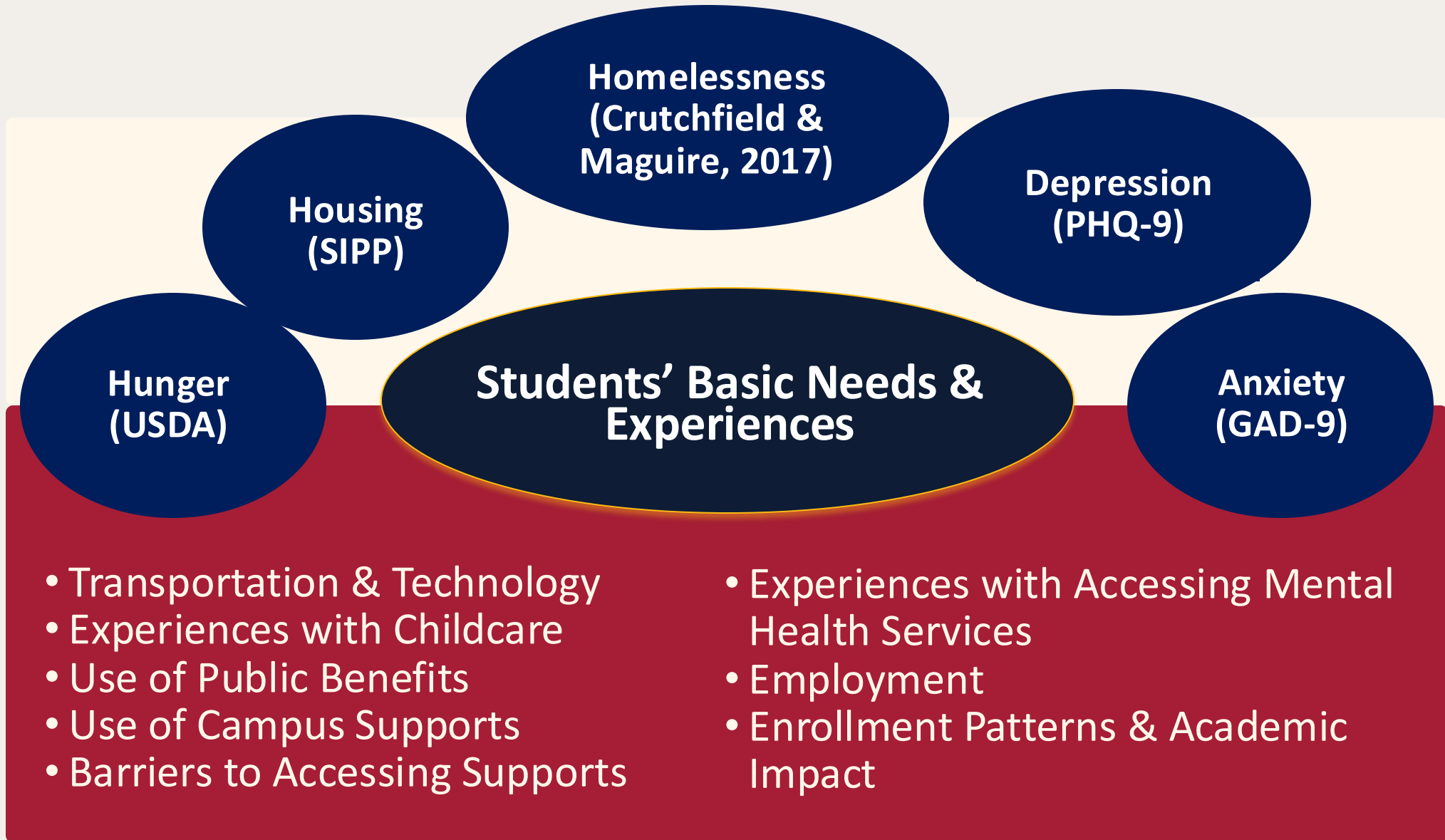


# The Hope Center's Role in Basic Needs Data

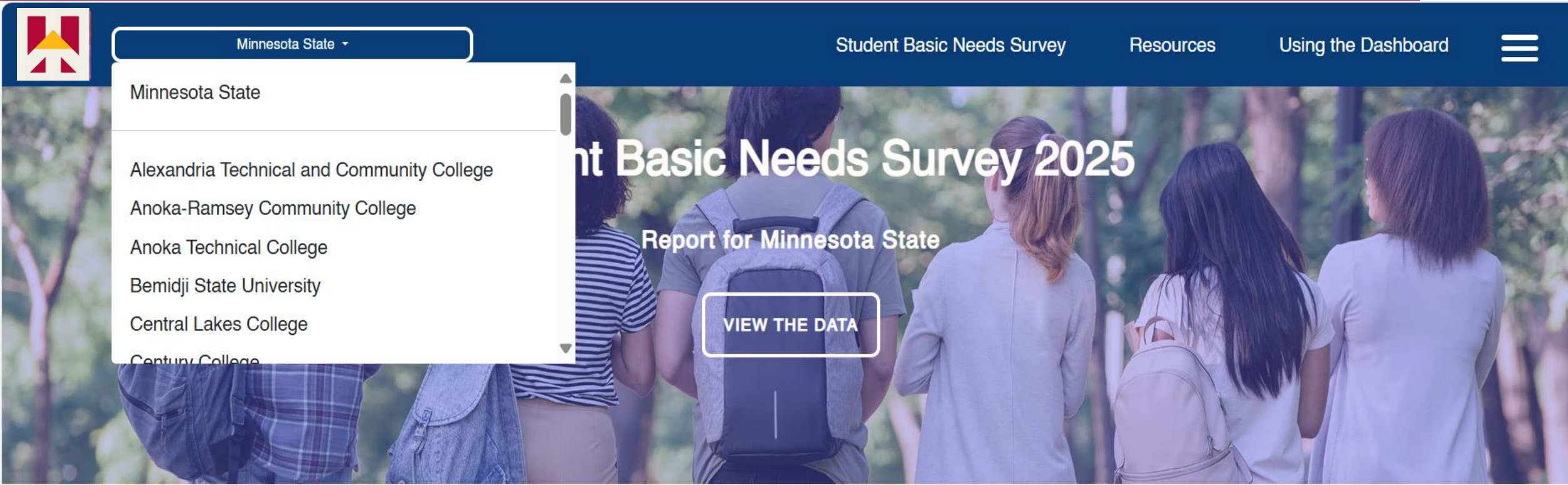
---



# The Hope Center's Student Basic Needs Survey



# The Hope Center's Data Dashboard



## Purpose

The Hope Center Student Basic Needs Survey is the nation's most comprehensive and well-established annual assessment of students' basic needs. The survey is designed to raise awareness about the types and prevalence of student basic needs insecurity on college campuses and to provide actionable data that partners can

# The Hope Center's Data Dashboard

## XI. Barriers to Use of Campus Supports: Minnesota School X

View By

ALL ▶

SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS

SYSTEM AGGREGATE

STATE AGGREGATE

RACE/ETHNICITY

GENDER

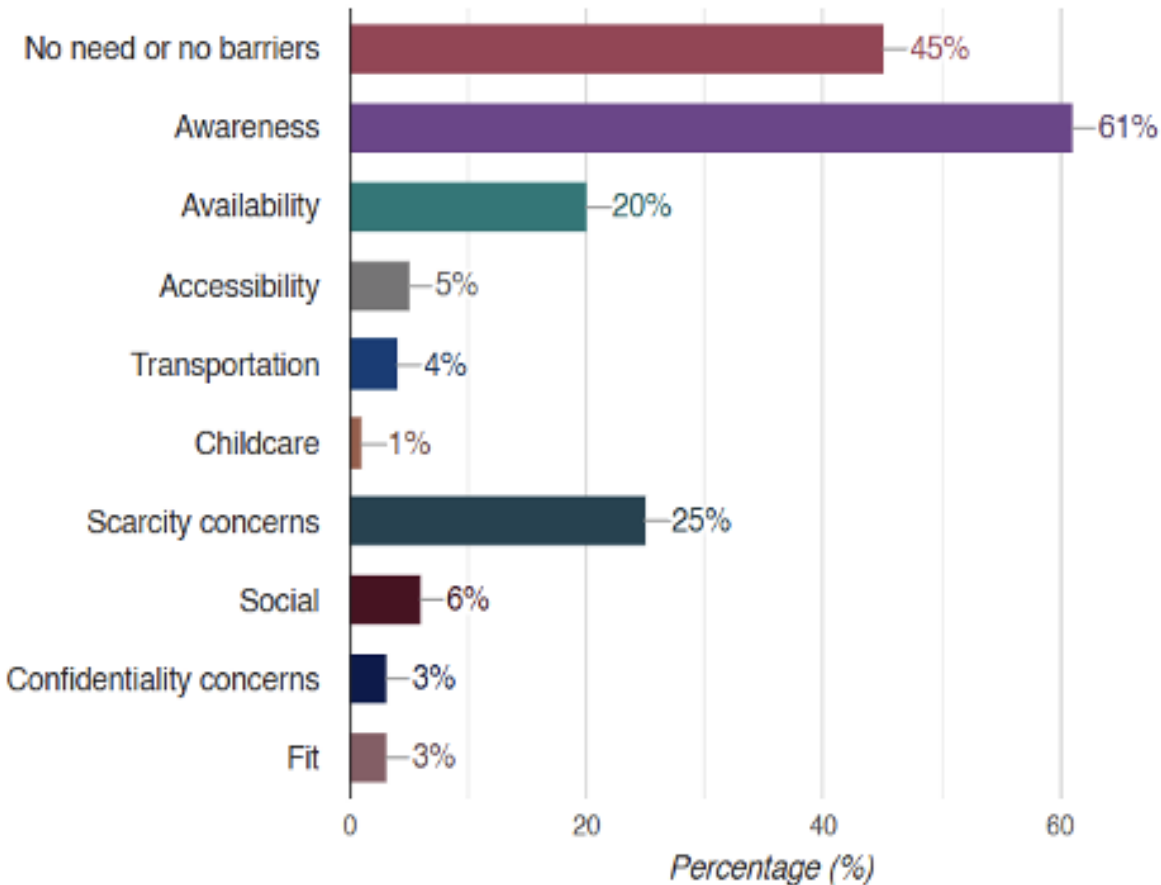
LGBTQIA+

PELL GRANT RECIPIENT

ENROLLMENT STATUS

EXPERIENCING BNI

PARENTING STATUS





# Case Studies

How States have Used Survey Data

# Collecting Student Data to Drive Action

- In HI, survey data was harnessed to develop a UH System Basic Needs Master Plan: A 3-Year Strategy
- Survey data in MN & WA helped lead to & inform state emergency aid programs
- CA harnessed survey data for legislative change, institutionalizing basic needs centers & funding
- In IL, Gov. Pritzker & Mayor Johnson launched "Food Security for Life," an initiative to end hunger among City Colleges students, driven by survey results.

## ***CALIFORNIA: SCALING THROUGH DATA***

California's partnership with the Hope Center led to one of the most robust datasets on basic needs insecurity, which informed legislative and funding strategies. The state also institutionalized basic needs centers across public colleges, creating ongoing infrastructure for student support.

The findings led to:

- Increased funding for basic needs centers,
- Legislative support for sustained investment, and
- Inspiration for other states to adopt similar strategies.

## **Mayor Brandon Johnson, City Colleges And Greater Chicago Food Depository Collaborate To Launch "Food Security For Life," An Initiative That Aims To End Hunger Among City Colleges Students**

In partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, this new City Colleges initiative ensures students and their families have access to nutritious food.

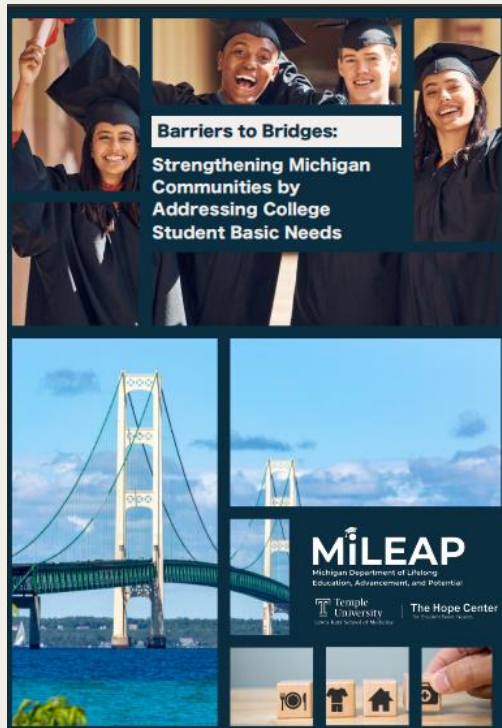


"Food security is about more than meals. It's about dignity, stability, and the ability to fully participate in life and learning. Research consistently tells us that food-insecure students are more likely to miss class, perform poorly, or drop out altogether. By ensuring access to nutritious food, City Colleges is making an essential investment in student retention, academic achievement, and long-term community health," Johnson said.

A 2024 survey of City Colleges student basic needs found that 50% identified as food insecure, the mayor's office said.

# Inventorying Practices to Scale Supports

- The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential used The Hope Center's Inventory of Basic Needs Programs and Services to assess existing practices and scalable solutions to identify policy recommendations to remove basic needs insecurity as a barrier to higher education.



## Create Basic Needs Hubs and Provide Navigators for Campus and Community Resources

**Recommendation:** Fund and require all public postsecondary institutions to create a centralized basic needs resource hub and to hire—and provide training for—one or more full-time (i.e., 1.0 FTE) basic needs navigators to facilitate student access to campus and community resources. Funding and the number of navigators should be scaled to meet the level of student need at each institution (i.e., the number of students experiencing basic needs insecurity).

# Evaluating Efforts

- Assessed familiarity with and impact of Minnesota State 211 Basic Needs Resource Hub
- RCT of transportation intervention in New York

## Free MetroCards and College Retention: New Findings from The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs & CUNY

For many students at the City University of New York (CUNY), getting to class isn't just a matter of time—it's a matter of cost. Community colleges primarily serve low-income and working-class students, many from households earning under \$50,000 a year. While tuition is often subsidized, non-tuition expenses like transportation, textbooks, and childcare remain significant barriers. In a city where the cost of living is high, something as basic as a MetroCard can determine whether a student stays on track for graduation—or drops out.

### Testing the Impact of Free Transportation on Student Success

To better understand how transportation costs affect college persistence, The Hope Center conducted a **randomized controlled trial (RCT)** at two CUNY community colleges—Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) and Queensborough Community College (QCC). From

2024, students in the treatment group were given MetroCards to pick them up. Researchers are now analyzing their experiences.

## METROCARD AND STUDENT SUCCESS

After controlling for key demographic and pre-academic variables, students who picked up their MetroCard at least once have a significantly higher likelihood of:



**Continued enrollment in Spring 2024**



**Continued enrollment in Fall 2024 or graduation in Summer 2024**



ADMISSIONS | CAMPUSES & PROGRAMS | CAREER EXPLORATION | ASK US | 🔍

By Paul Shepherd, Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

October 7, 2024

In August 2022, Minnesota State launched a first-of-its-kind partnership with United Way 211 to create the Minnesota State Basic Needs Resource Hub. The Basic Needs Resource Hub connects all Minnesota State students with a wide range of resources available at their college or university campus and in their local community via text or phone 24/7. The creation of the Basic Needs Resource Hub was prompted by research that revealed over a third of college and university students had recently experienced food insecurity and almost half had experienced housing insecurity within the previous year. Data also showed that basic needs insecurity was disproportionately experienced by Black, Indigenous, and other students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and first-generation college students.

The Basic Needs Resource Hub is recognized as one of the most innovative and largest-in-scope partnerships between higher education and a community-based organization aimed at collaboratively addressing basic needs insecurity experienced by college students. Over 2,000 students have connected with the resource hub since the launch and students who have use the resource hub have reported an extremely positive experience. Our goal in sustaining the Basic Needs Resource Hub is to provide students with equitable and comprehensive support that is easily accessible.

A little more than a year after the launch of the Basic Needs Resource Hub, Minnesota State worked with The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University to assess students' familiarity the Resource Hub and the impact it has made helping students gain access to resources to address their basic needs. The Hope Center research team developed a student survey administered in April of 2024.

# Increase Understanding & Inform Strategy

## How PA Maslow Utilizes the Data

- **Data-Driven Approach:** PA Maslow uses data from The Hope Center surveys to gain a deeper understanding of the specific needs of students in Pennsylvania. 
- **Advocacy and Policy:** The aggregated data helps PA Maslow advocate for policy changes at the state and institutional levels to support student success. 
- **Targeted Support:** Understanding the data allows PA Maslow to work with colleges to develop and implement comprehensive services that address students' basic needs and improve their overall well-being and retention. 



## Unmet Need Dashboard



This dashboard is powered by the Kentucky Center for Statistics and the Council on Postsecondary Education. Those using screen readers may need to click the enter key to select options in filters. If you have any questions regarding accessibility, please contact [kystats@ky.gov](mailto:kystats@ky.gov).

An alternative, accessible format in Excel is available for download here:

[https://kystats.ky.gov/Content/Reports/PublicAccessDataFiles/Unmet\\_Need\\_PAF.xlsx](https://kystats.ky.gov/Content/Reports/PublicAccessDataFiles/Unmet_Need_PAF.xlsx)

Technical documentation can be found in PDF form here:

[https://kystats.ky.gov/Content/Reports/Unmet\\_Need\\_Tech\\_Notes.pdf](https://kystats.ky.gov/Content/Reports/Unmet_Need_Tech_Notes.pdf)

Filter by Academic Year

All

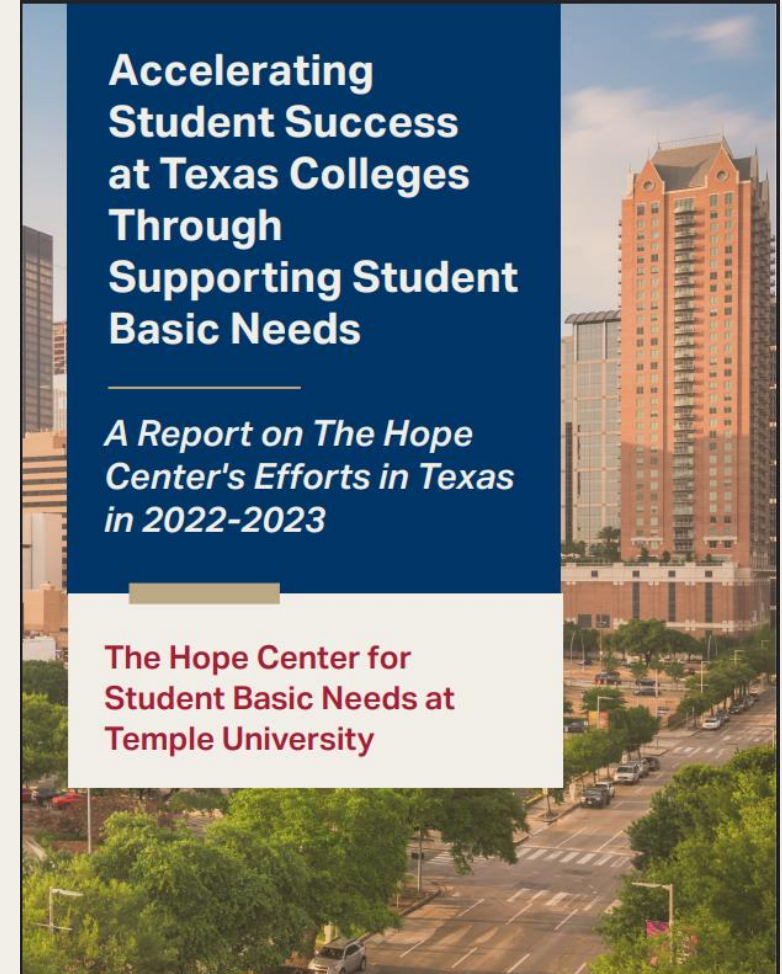
Filter by Characteristic or Institution

All

## Accelerating Student Success at Texas Colleges Through Supporting Student Basic Needs

*A Report on The Hope Center's Efforts in Texas in 2022-2023*

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University





# Lessons Learned

Recommendations & Strategies

# Embedding Surveys into Your Basic Needs Strategy

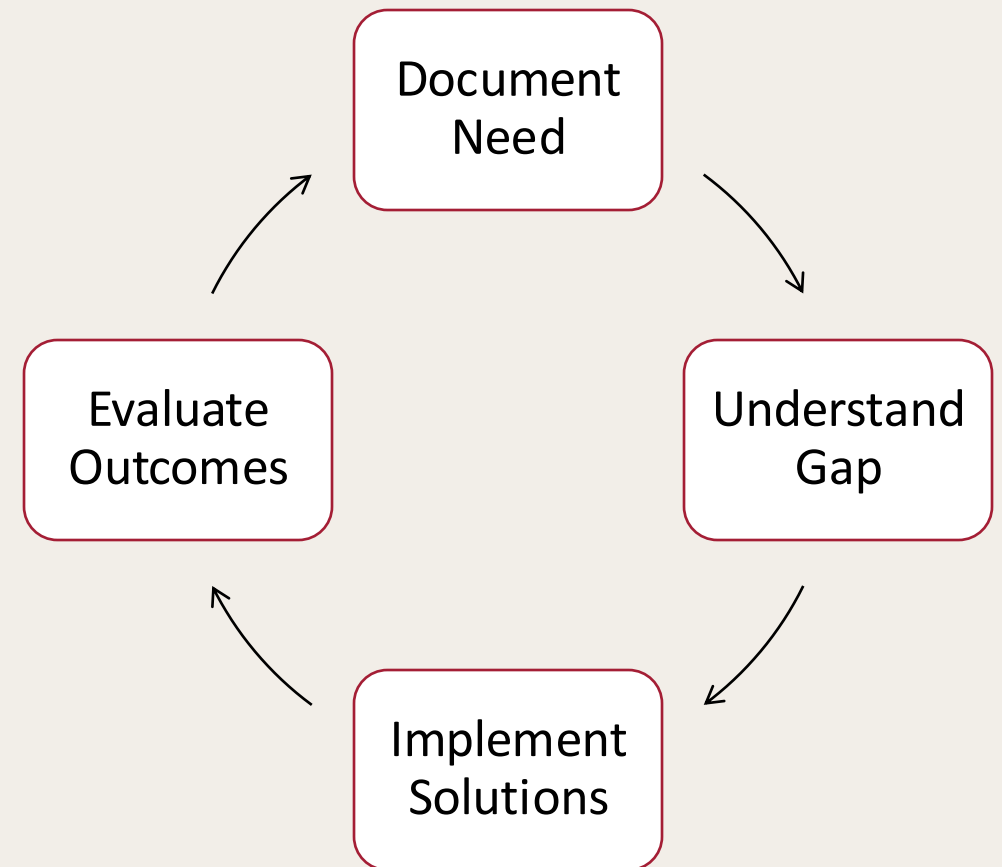
---

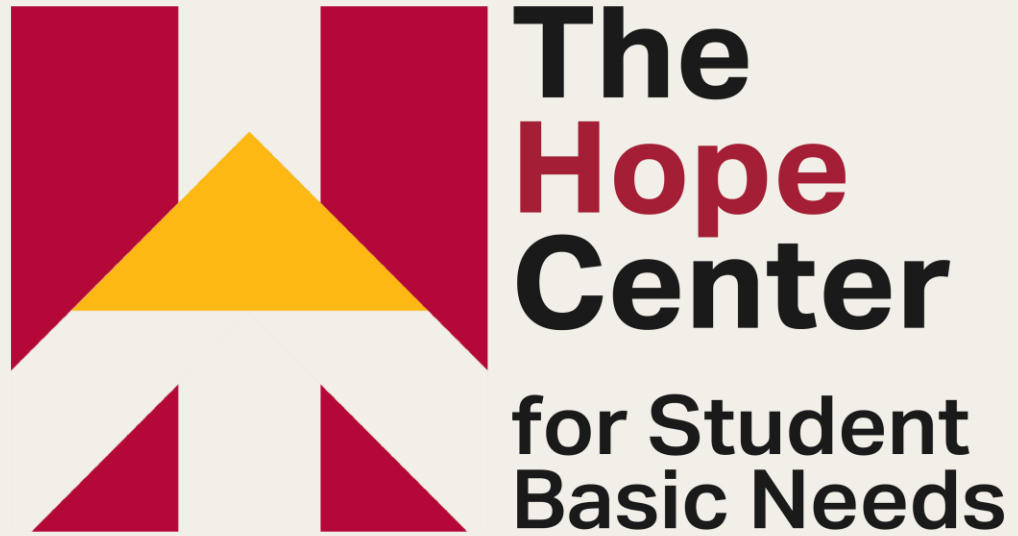
- Surveys are ideal for:
  - Capturing population-level need
  - Comprehensive data across a range of basic needs
  - Collecting institutional-level data (e.g., on current programs and practices)
- Link survey data with outcome data
- Pair surveys with:
  - Objective data
  - Action data & systems

# Strengthening Data Collection and Impact

- **Be clear on goals and aims from the start**
  - That should inform ALL aspects of data collection and implementation
- **Plan for action**
  - Presentation matters, dissemination matters, activation matters
- **Invest in Sustainability**

## Learning Cycle





# Thanks!

---

[hope.temple.edu](https://hope.temple.edu)

Sara Abelson, PhD, MPH:  
Sara.Abelson@Temple.edu

# About Trellis

**Trellis Strategies is an experienced research partner dedicated to advancing education and workforce development.**

With nearly 40 years of expertise, we specialize in qualitative and quantitative research services, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and case studies.

Our proficiency in qualitative research and quantitative analyses enables us to extract insights from extensive datasets, guiding strategic decision-making in areas such as student success and outcomes.

Our expertise extends to diverse fields including data analysis, market research, policy analysis, and more. We address topics such as adult learners, student finances, and institutional effectiveness.

Trellis Strategies offers a collaborative approach to data-driven decisions, contributing to positive transformations in education and workforce development.



**EVALUATION**



**ANALYTICS**



**DATA COLLECTION**



**CUSTOM RESEARCH**

**515**

REPORTS  
IN 2024

**5.3+**

MILLION  
STUDENTS SURVEYED  
SINCE 2018

**30+**

THREE DECADES OF  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

# Modern Learners

---

## Modern Learners

**Non-Linear Pathways**



**Credit Portability and Skill Recognition**



**Affordability and Financing**



**Shorter Term Experiences**



**Student Centered Delivery Model**



**Credential Quality Assurance**



# Student Financial Wellness Survey (SFWS)

## OVERVIEW

Self-reported, online survey that documents the financial well-being and student success indicators of postsecondary students.

## RESULTS

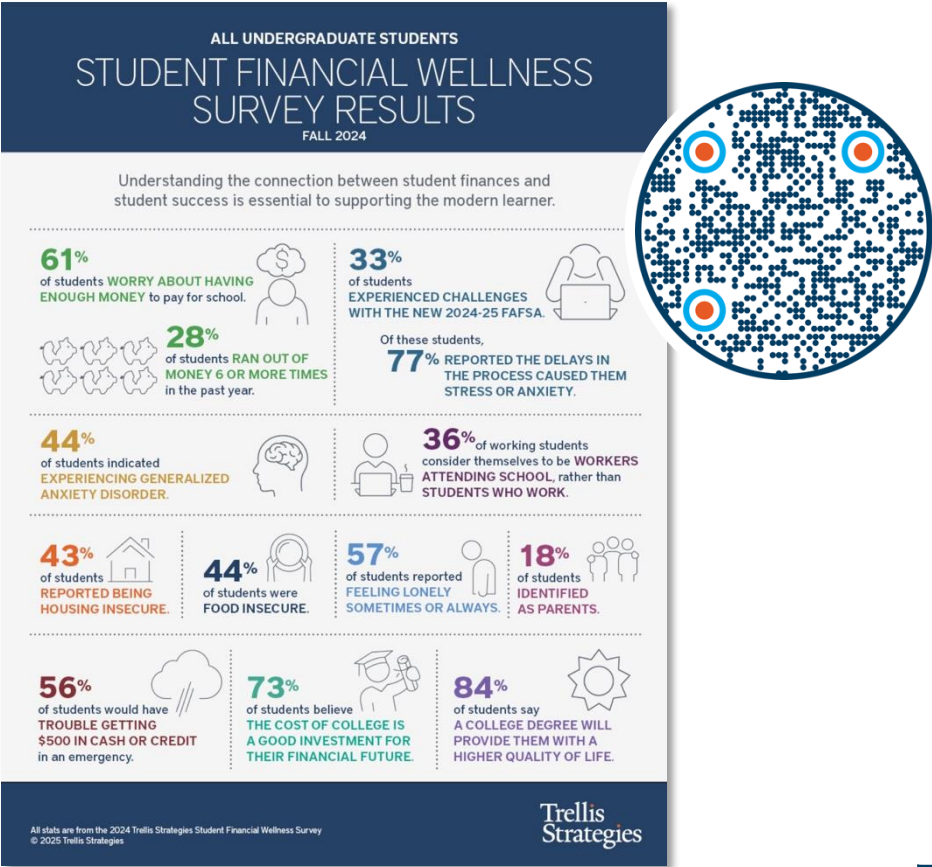
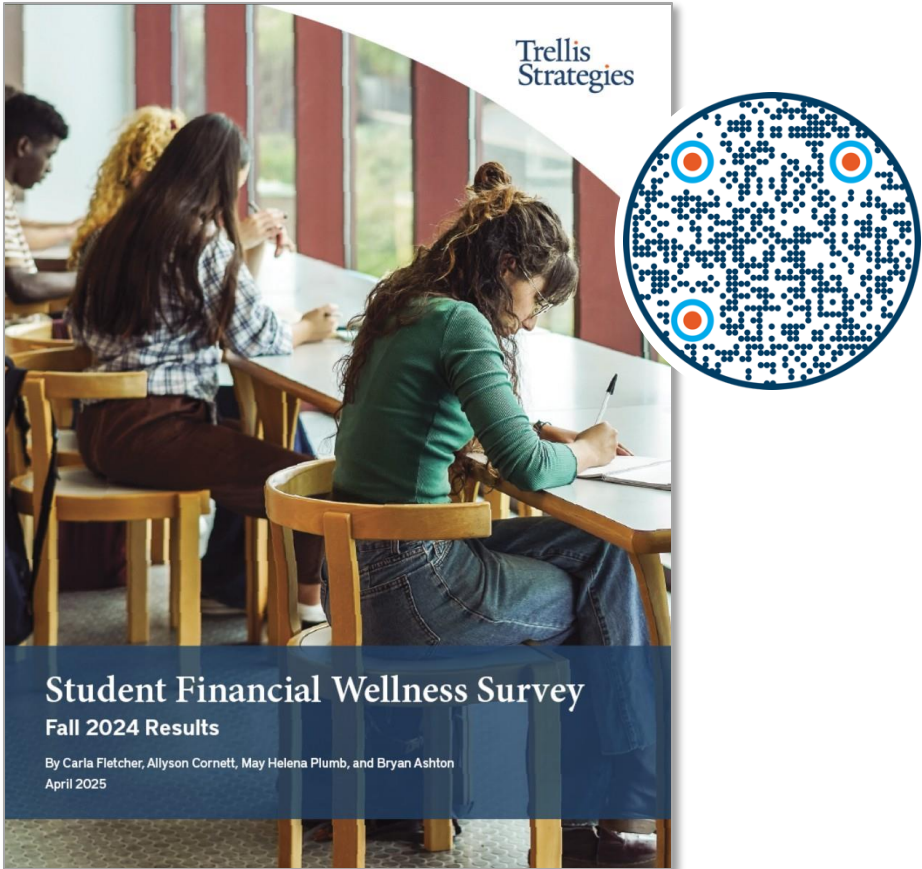
Results used to raise money, develop programs, assess initiatives, and build a culture of caring for students.



# Report and Infographic

## RESEARCH HUB

[www.trellisstrategies.org/insights/research-hub/](http://www.trellisstrategies.org/insights/research-hub/)



# Survey Metrics

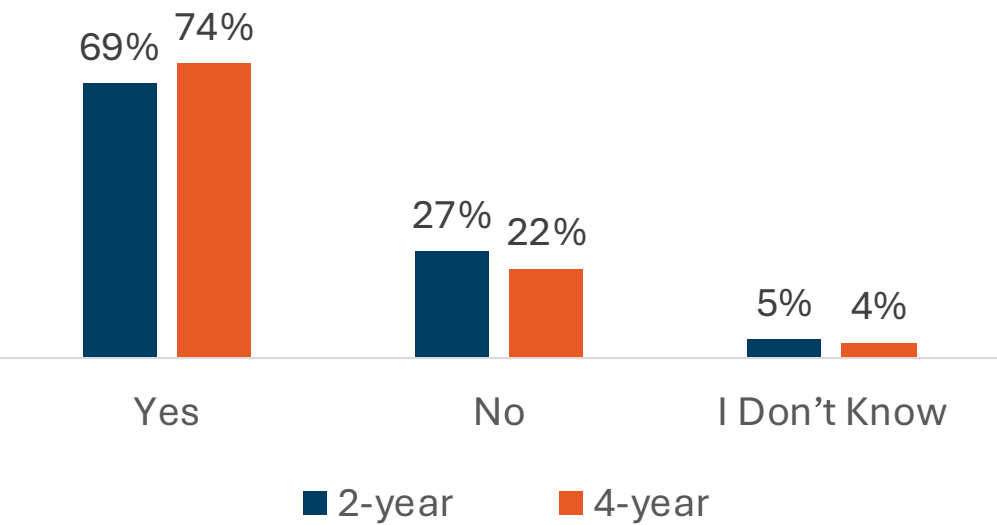
## Fall 2024 Undergraduate Students

|                        | Two-year<br>Institutions | Four-year<br>Institutions | Total            |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Survey Population      | 376,866 students         | 306,080 students          | 682,946 students |
| Responses              | 26,954 students          | 26,204 students           | 53,158 students  |
| Response Rate          | 7.2%                     | 8.6%                      | 7.8%             |
| Completion Rate        | 82%                      | 82%                       | 82%              |
| Median Time Spent      | 14 minutes               | 12 minutes                | 13 minutes       |
| Number of Institutions | 55                       | 49                        | 104              |

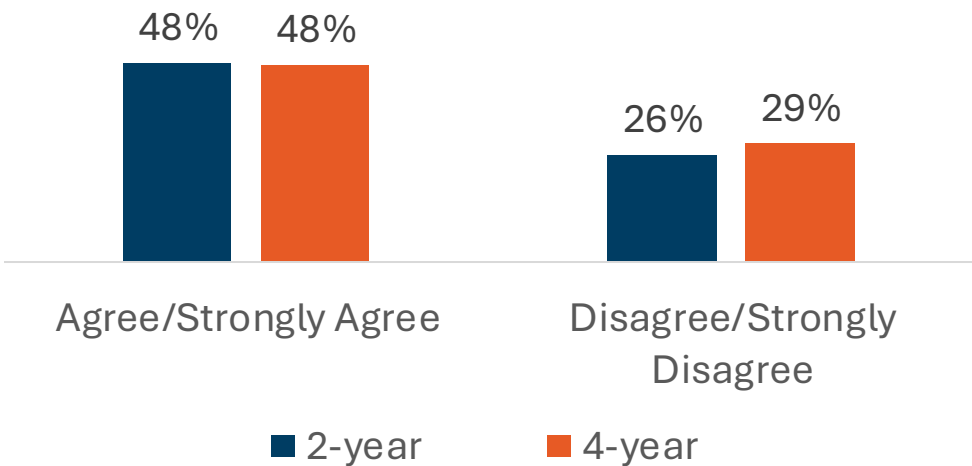
# Student Wellness Findings

# Financial Difficulties

While in college, have you experienced financial difficulties or challenges?



I have difficulty concentrating on my schoolwork because of my financial situation.

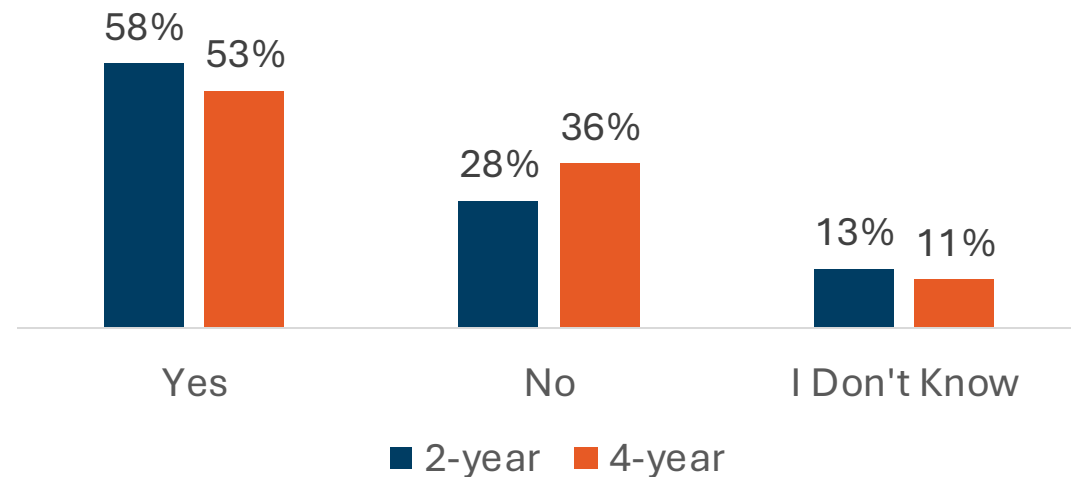


# Emergency Resources



Fifty-six percent of undergraduate students would have trouble getting \$500 in cash or credit to meet an unforeseen expense.

Would you have trouble getting \$500 in cash or credit in order to meet an unexpected need within the next month?

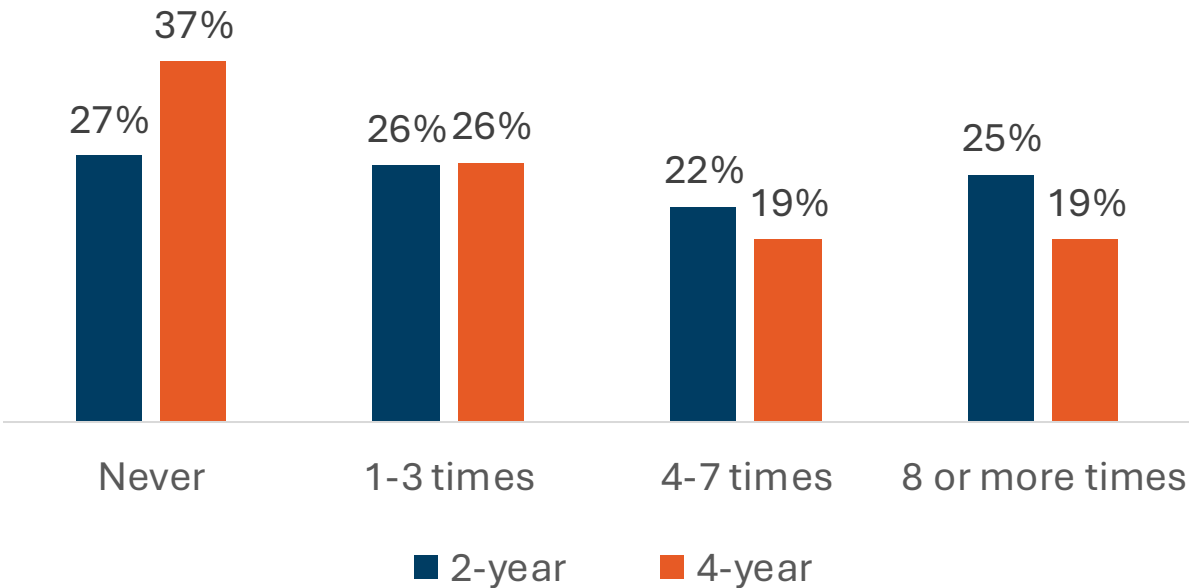


# Running Out of Money



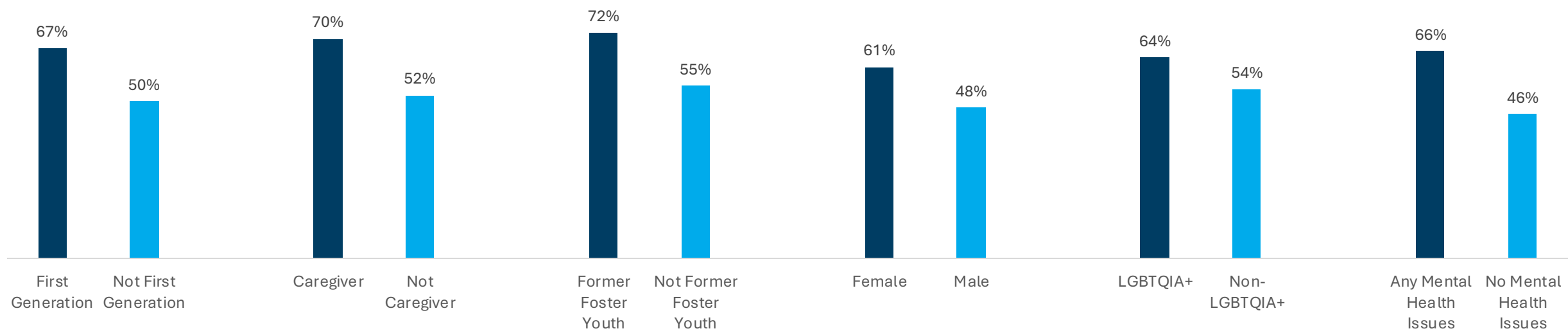
Nearly three-quarters of 2-year students and 63 percent of 4-year students reported running out of money at least once during the year.

Since January 1, 2024, approximately how many times did you run out of money?

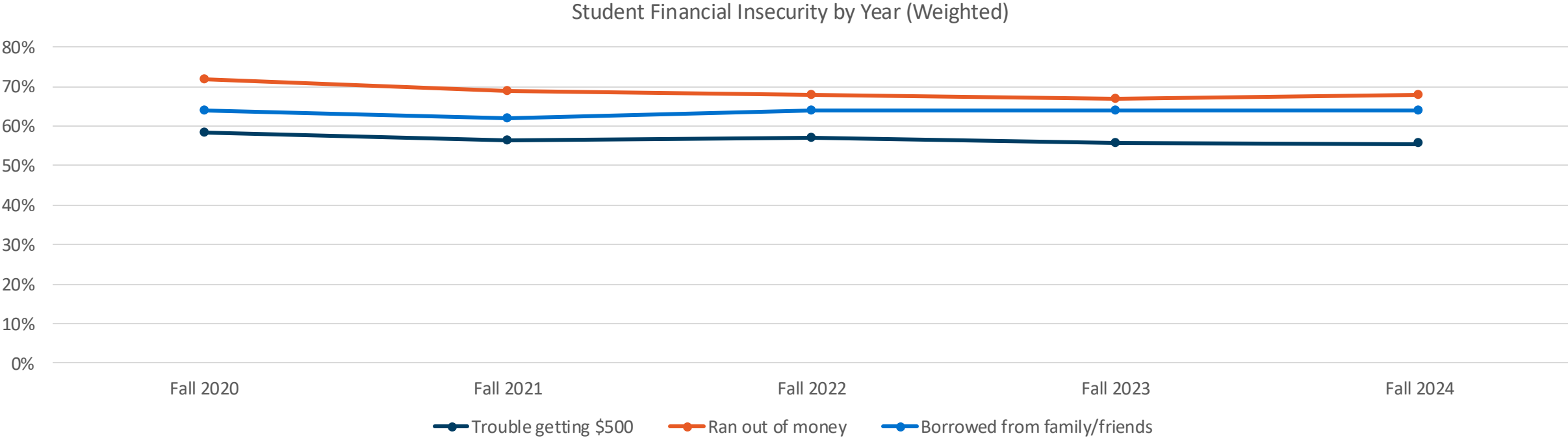


# Trouble Getting \$500 by Group

Would you have trouble getting \$500 in cash or credit in order to meet an unexpected need within the next month?  
Percent answered 'Yes'



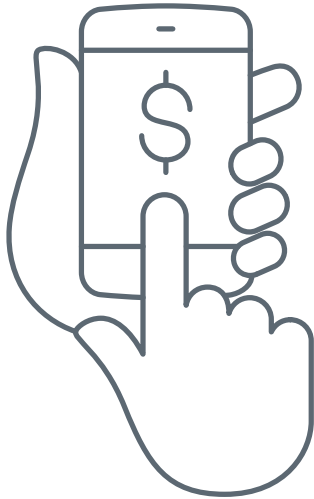
# Financial Insecurities by Year



Financial insecurity measures have largely been stable across the past five years, with slight decreases in "trouble getting \$500" and running out of money at least once.

# Self-Help to Pay for College

---

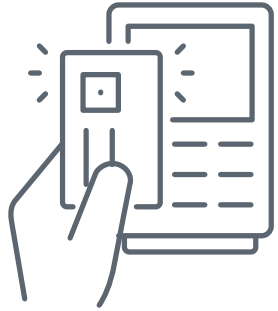


**Only 5%**

**WERE ABLE TO SOLELY RELY  
ON PERSONAL SAVINGS  
AND/OR CURRENT WAGES  
TO PAY FOR SCHOOL.**

# Credit Card Use

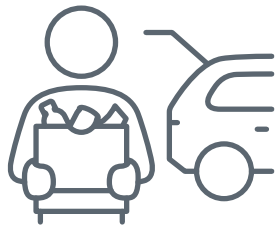
---



**57%**

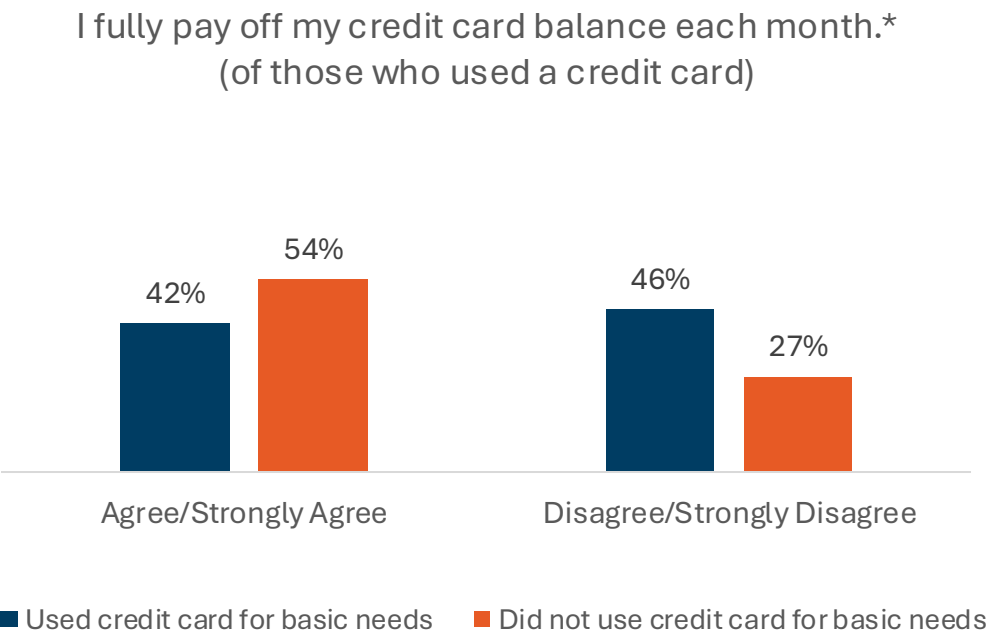
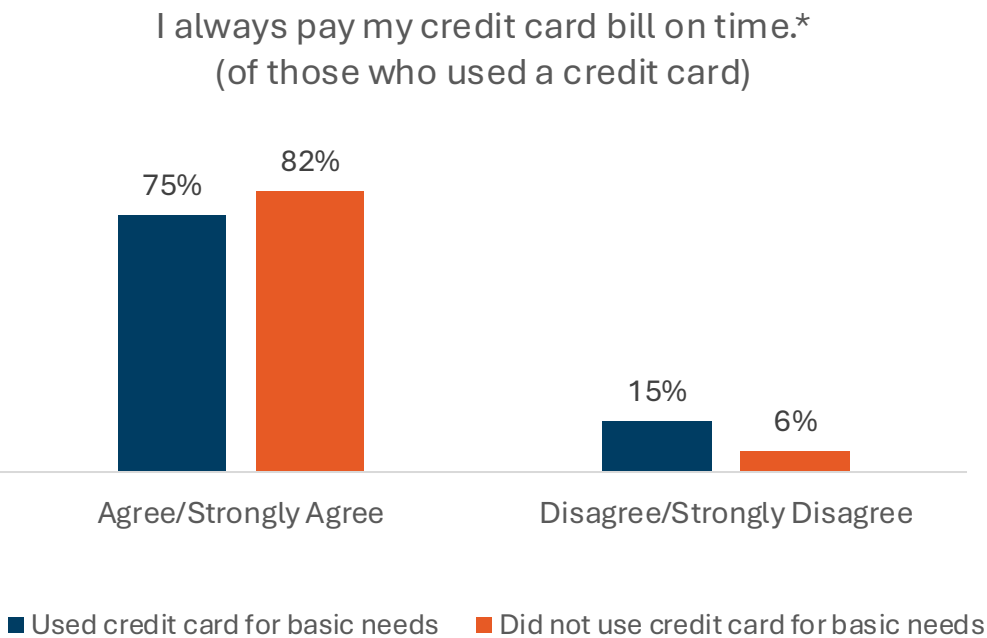
of respondents reported

**USING A CREDIT CARD DURING 2024.**



**89% OF CREDIT CARD USERS HAD USED IT TO PAY FOR BASIC NECESSITIES, SUCH AS FOOD, TRANSPORTATION, OR HOUSING.**

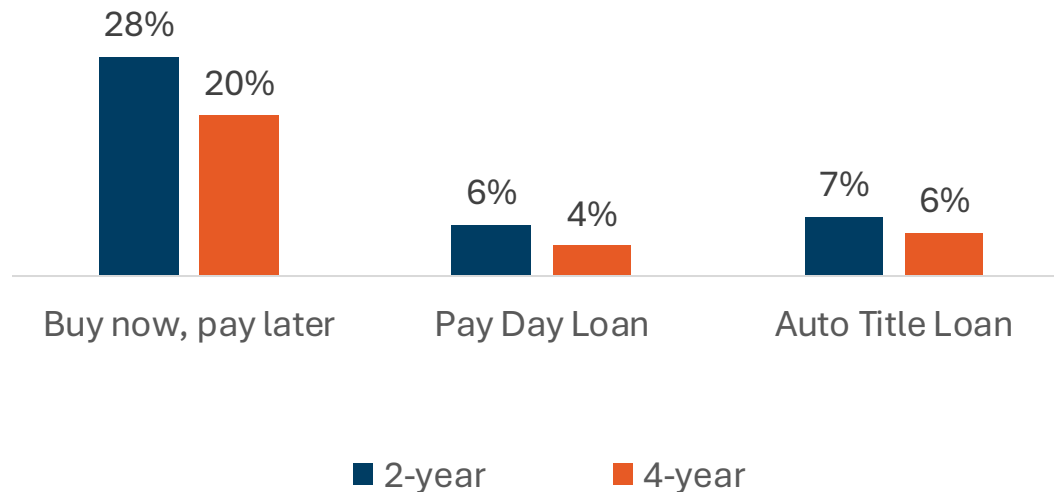
# Credit Card Repayment



\*Responses indicating 'Neutral' are not shown

# Other Borrowing

Q57-60: Since January 1, 2024, have you used the following borrowing sources? Respondents who answered 'Yes'



- Borrowing from these credit sources is somewhat more common among two-year students compared to four-year students.
- Over one quarter of two-year respondents and 20 percent of four-year undergraduates reported using buy now, pay later services.

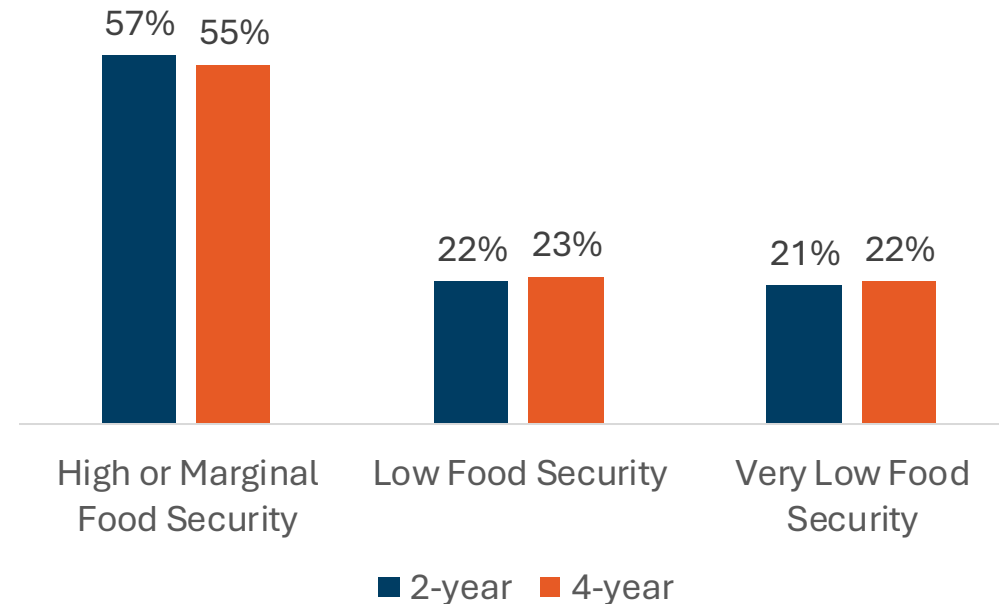
# Food Insecurity



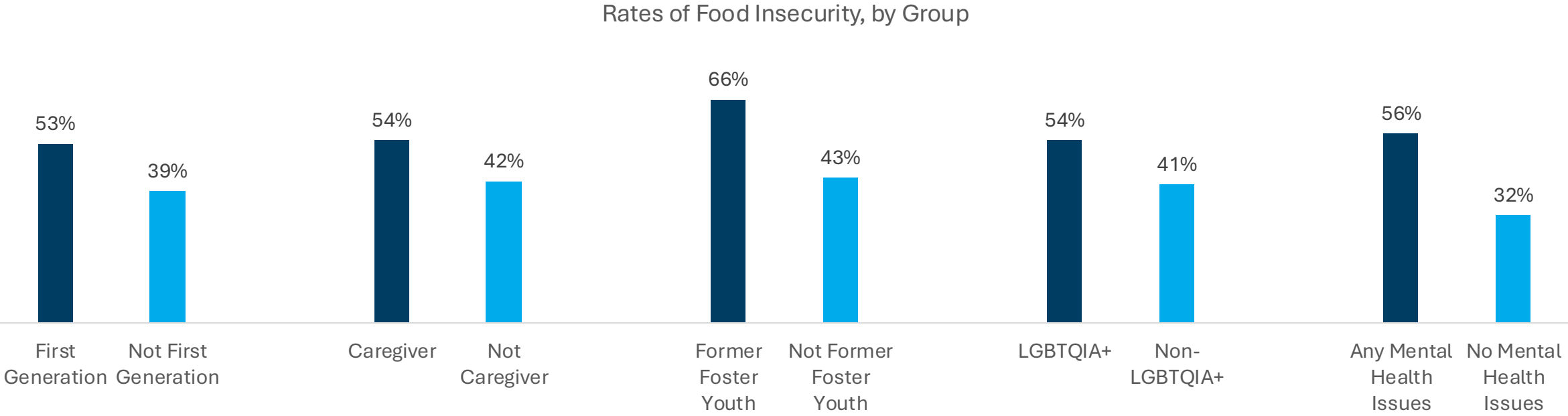
## High Rates of Food Insecurity

- More than two in five students had low (22%) or very low food security (22%).
- Rates were consistent across sectors.

USDA Food Security Scale (30-Day)



# Food Insecurity by Group



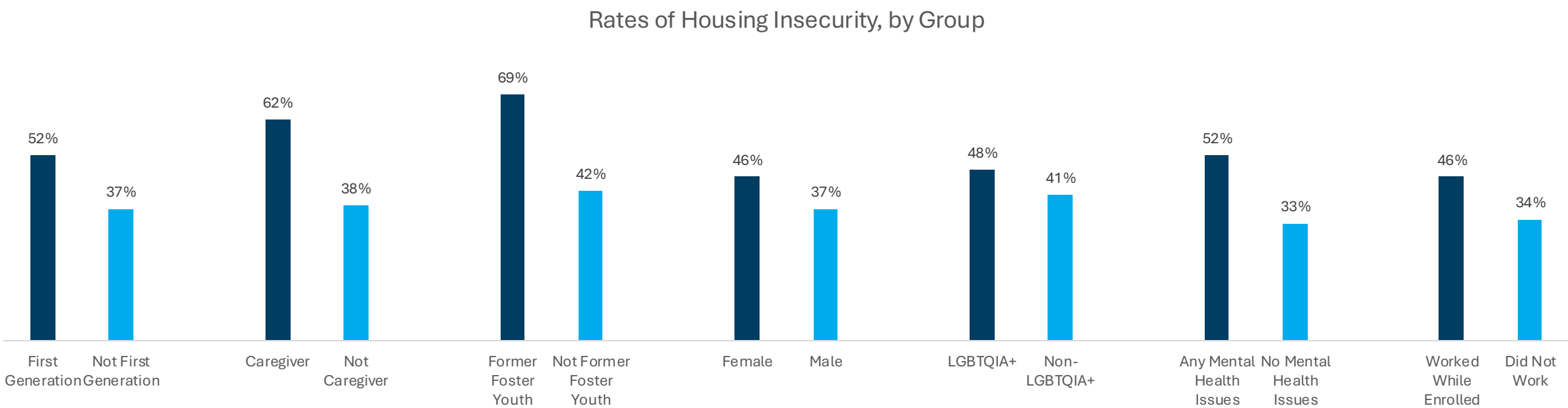
# Housing Security

---

**43%** of students  
**REPORTED HOUSING  
INSECURITY.**



# Housing Insecurity by Group



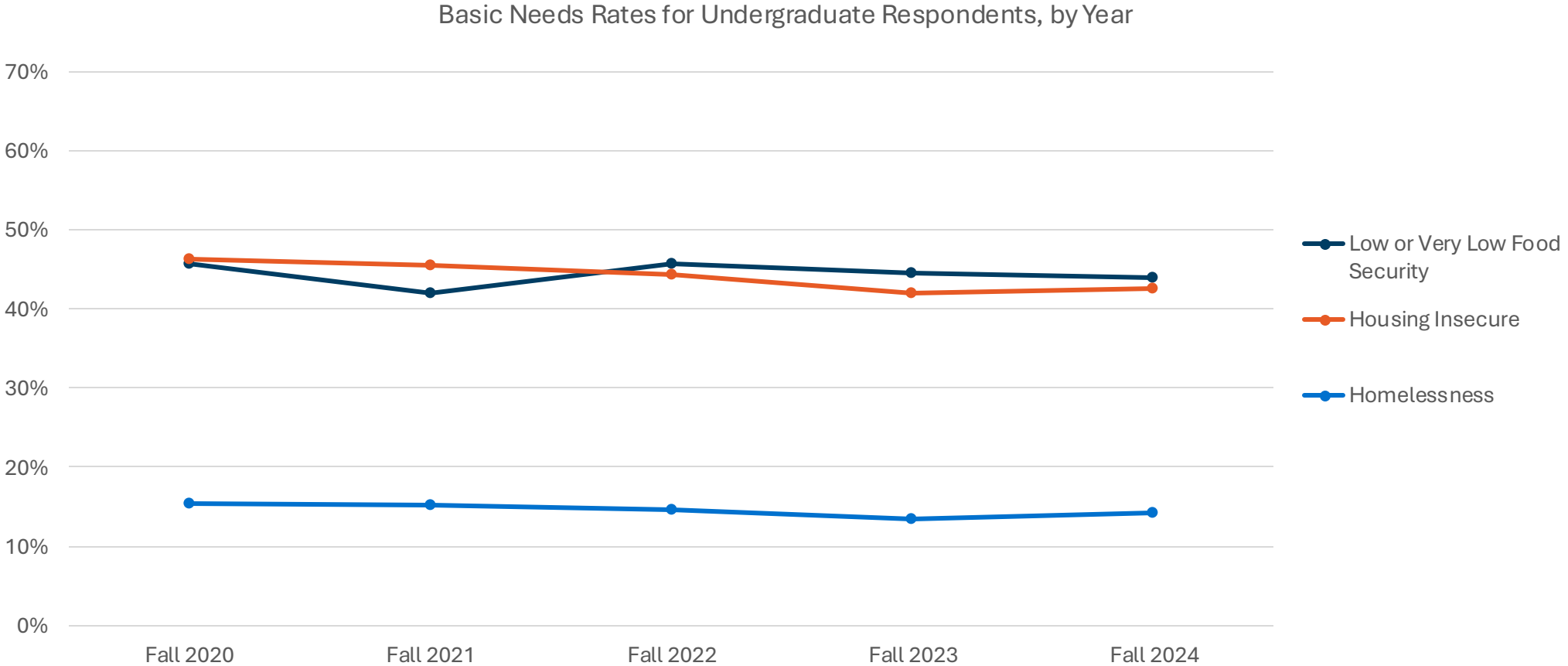
# Overall Basic Needs Insecurity

---



**Nearly three in five** students had experienced food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness in the prior 12 months

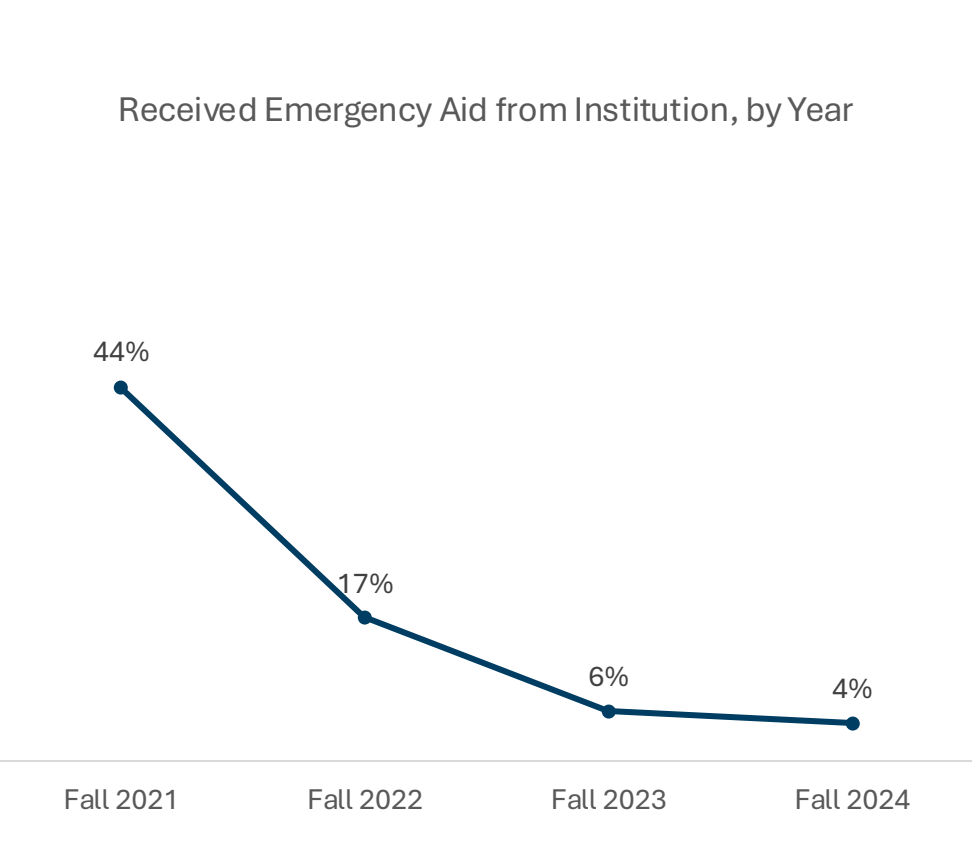
# Basic Needs Insecurity Rates by Year



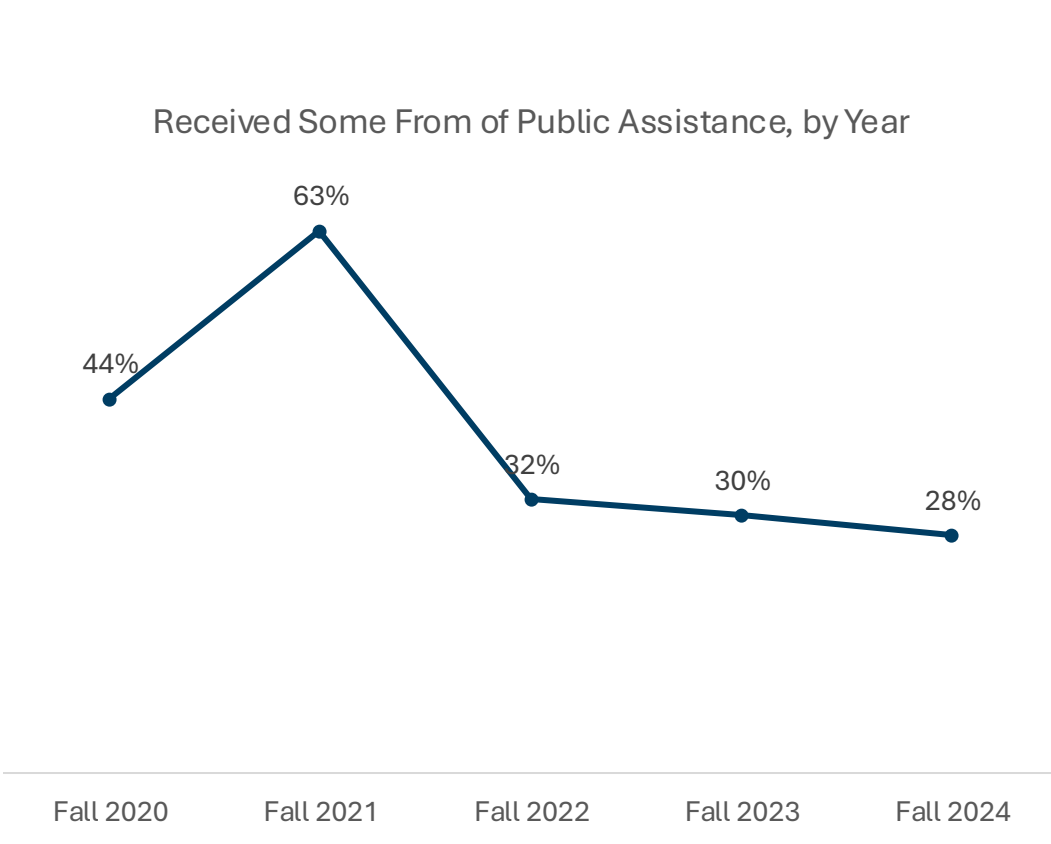
Basic needs rates have been fairly stable over the past five years. There was a small decrease in food insecurity in fall 2021, and data on emergency and public assistance may indicate why.

# Institutional Emergency Aid and Public Assistance by Year

Received Emergency Aid from Institution, by Year

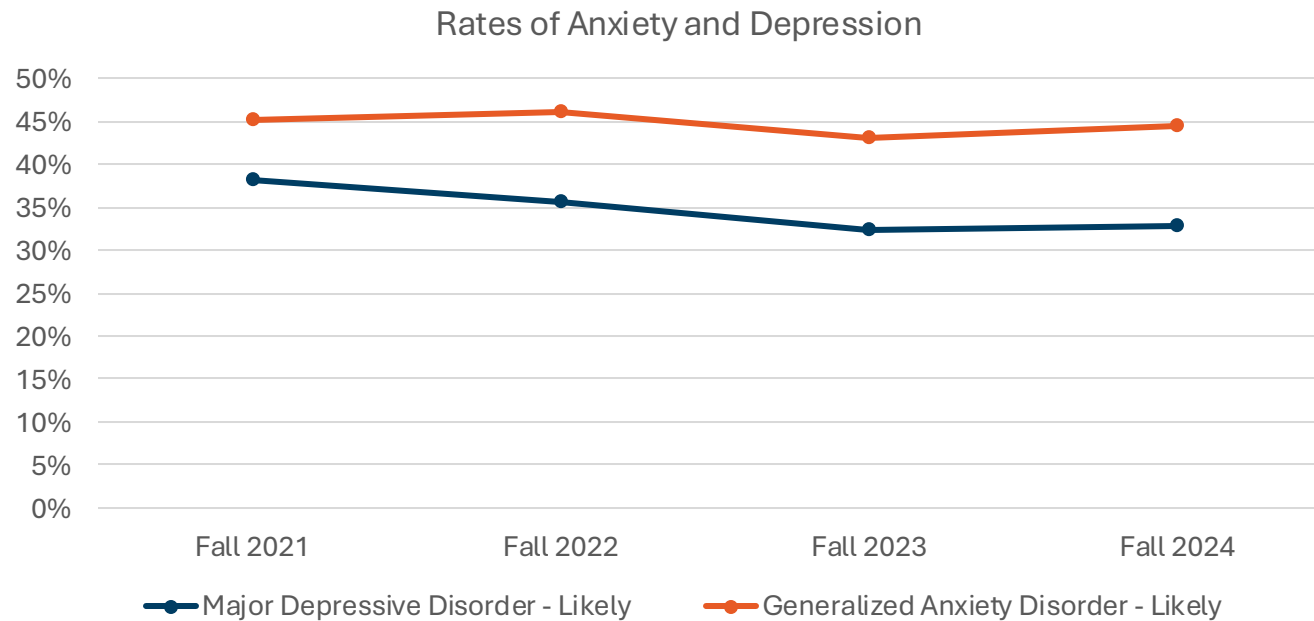


Received Some From of Public Assistance, by Year



Over the past five years, emergency aid receipt and public assistance use were at their peak in fall 2021.  
\*[Note: The emergency aid question was not included until Fall 2021.]

# Anxiety and Depression Rates by Year

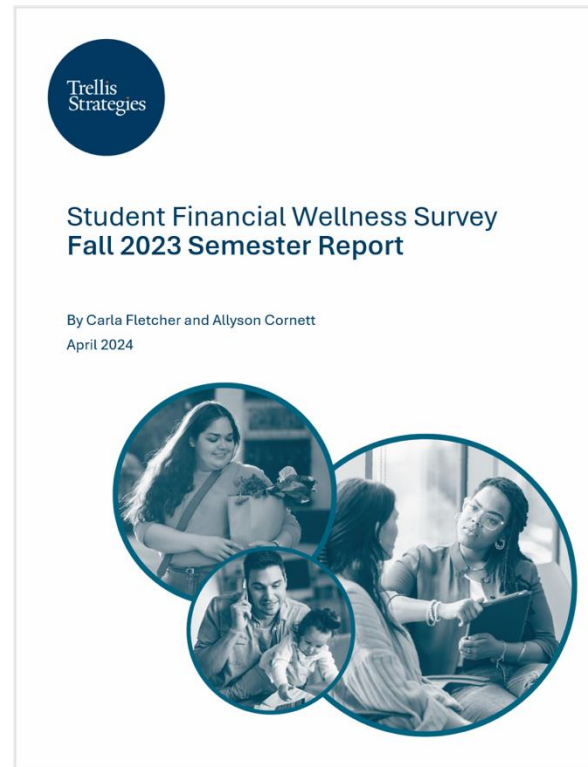


- About two in five students screened positive for likely anxiety since Fall 2021.
- Rates of likely anxiety and depression have declined somewhat since the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, though appear to have leveled out in Fall 2024.

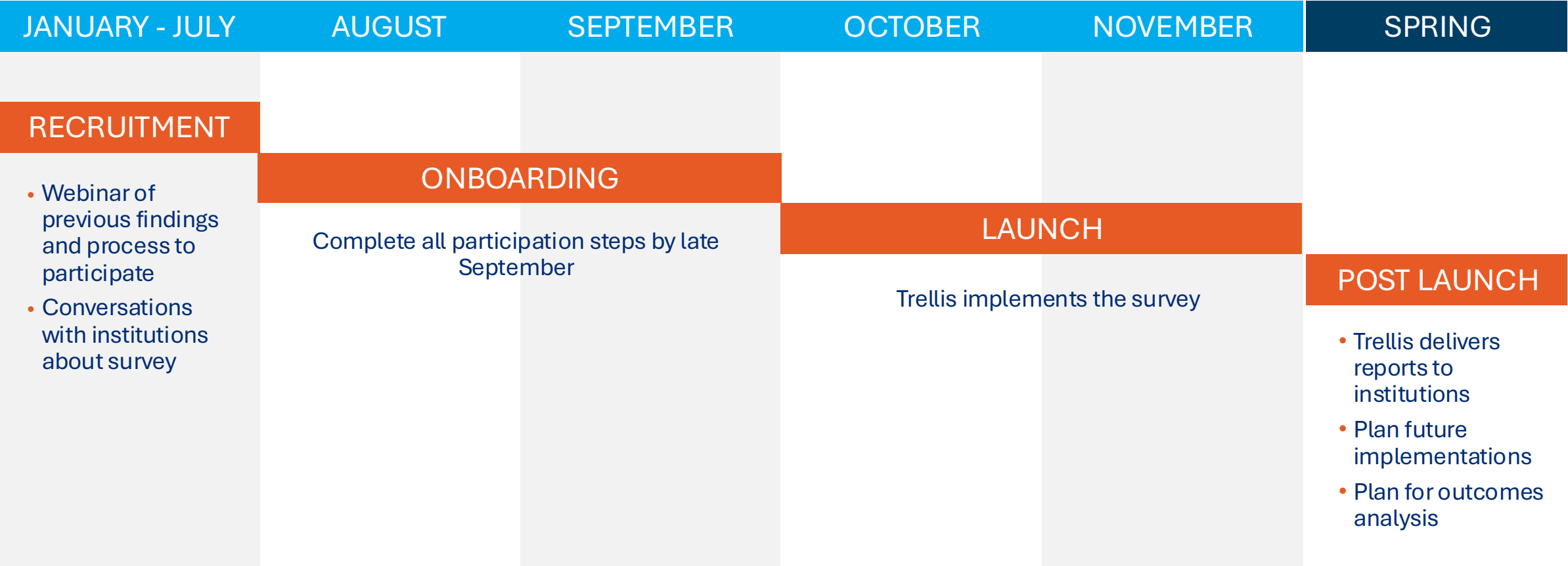
# SFWS Deliverables to Schools

## Each school receives:

- Customized report with peer group comparisons
- 1-page infographic
- Access to additional ad hoc reporting
- Presentation to your campus stakeholders
- Access to aggregate reports and research briefs on specific topics

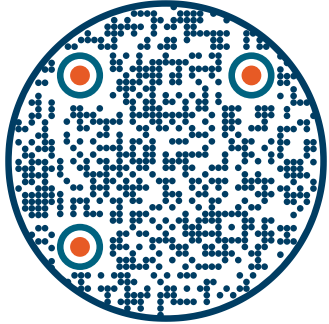


# Fall Survey Recruitment



# Learn More about the SFWS

---

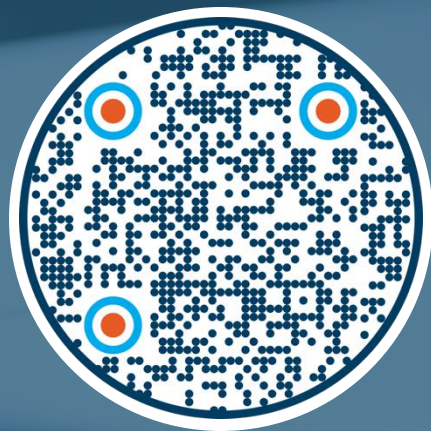


**PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDENT FINANCIAL WELLNESS SURVEY (SFWS)**

Get started at **[www.trellisstrategies.org/sfws](http://www.trellisstrategies.org/sfws)**

Next Survey Launch: October 2026

Research Contact:  
**[surveys@trellisstrategies.org](mailto:surveys@trellisstrategies.org)**



**Join the conversation.**

Scan to access current and past events.

[www.trellisstrategies.org/our-events](http://www.trellisstrategies.org/our-events)

Trellis  
Strategies