

Food Insecurity Among College Student-Athletes

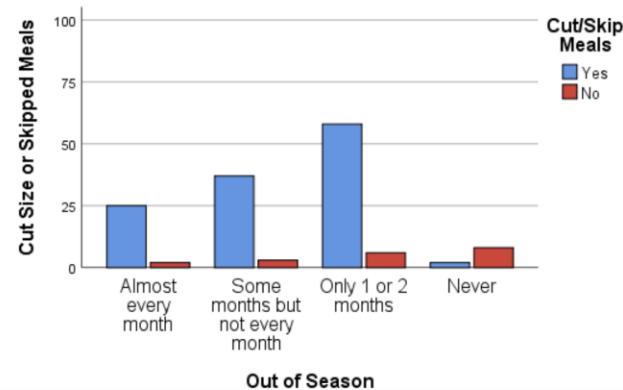
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June, 2023

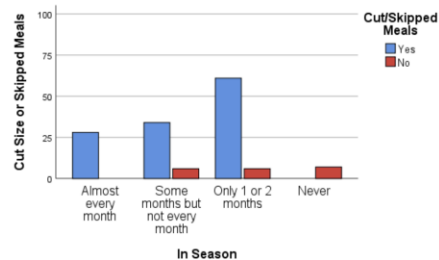
Reported prevalence of food insecurity

- 42% of college students reported being food insecure
- 60% of college student-athletes reported being food insecure
- 51% reported eating less often than they felt they should be due to the lack of access to enough food
- 73% reported not eating for an entire day due to the lack of access to enough food for one or two months during the academic year

Athlete Cut or Skipped Meals Out of Season



Athlete Cut or Skipped Meals In Season



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9655568/#B9-nutrients-14-04703>

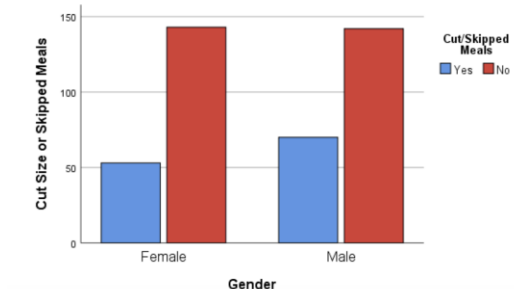
Athlete Cut Size of or Skipped Meal

Gender	Yes	%	No
Female	53	26.9	142
Male	70	32.4	141

$\chi^2(6, N=424) = 25.52, p = .000$

Figure 4

Athlete Cut Size of or Skipped Meal by Gender



Reported examples of food security challenges

- Not getting enough food to consume a balanced diet
- Worrying about food running out
- Food running out before acquiring the funds to replace it

Table 14

Athlete Ala Carte Food Court Dollars Ran Out, (N=424)

Food Court	<i>f</i>	Rel <i>f</i>	<i>cf</i>	Percentile
Never	187	0.44	424	100.00
Often	115	0.27	237	55.90
Sometimes	108	0.25	122	28.77
No Response	14	0.03	14	3.30

Note. Reference Survey Question 2 (Appendix B)

Table 9 shows that 91 student-athletes, or 21.5%, reported being hungry but unable to eat in the last year because there was not enough money for food.

Table 9

Athlete 12 Month Hungry, (N = 424)

Hungry 12 mo	<i>f</i>	Rel <i>f</i>	<i>cf</i>	Percentile
No	326	0.77	424	100.00
Yes	91	0.21	98	23.11
No Response	6	0.01	7	1.65
3.00	1	0.00	1	0.24

Note. Reference Survey Question 7 (Appendix B)

Food Insecurity/Hunger by Sport/Team, (N = 224)

Sport/Team	<i>f</i>	# on Team	Percentage
Men's Football	30	59	51%
Women's Basketball	9	17	53%
Women's Cross Country	12	15	80%
Women's Field Hockey	2	13	15%
Women's Field (Throwers)	1	4	25%
Women's Golf	1	10	10%
Women's Lacrosse	2	17	12%
Women's Soccer	5	23	22%
Women's Softball	5	15	33%
Women's Swim & Dive	7	27	26%
Women's Tennis	4	16	25%
Women's Track	0	16	0%
Women's Volleyball	5	17	29%
Men's Baseball	3	36	8%
Men's Basketball	6	15	40%
Men's Cross Country	5	11	45%
Men's Field	2	3	67%
Men's Golf	3	10	30%
Men's Lacrosse	1	14	7%
Men's Soccer	6	29	21%
Men's Swim & Dive	6	20	30%
Men's Tennis	7	14	50%
Men's Track	2	10	20%

Do meal plans help?

- A lower percentage of student-athletes with meal plans are food insecure compared to those without

TABLE 4. Food Insecurity Among Student-Athletes By Meal Plan

	Food Insecurity Rate Among Students with a Meal Plan (%)	Food Insecurity Rate Among Students Without a Meal Plan (%)
Division I	21	28
Division II	17	34
Division III	17	34
Two-Year Colleges	35	40
Overall	21	37

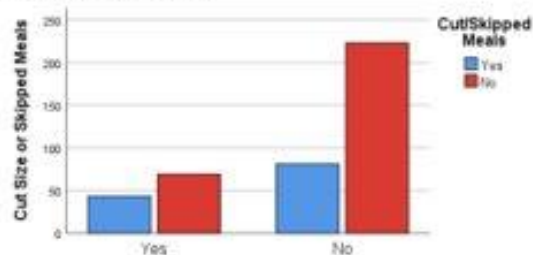
Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Why meal plans aren't always enough

- From 2019–2022, rent costs rose 28%
- Where allowed, some student-athletes choose between food or housing and request that a larger portion of their scholarship funds be allocated to housing and less toward meal plans
- Division I athletes must meet both academic and degree progression requirements while training and competing which often results in busier schedules that interfere with mealtimes
 - 45% stated that practice times conflicted with dining room hours
 - 22% with competition schedules

Figure 12

Athlete Receives Other Grants from their College, Cut Size of or Skipped Meals
 $\chi^2 (6, N=424) = 125.67, p = .000$



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9655568/#B9-nutrients-14-04703>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34469260/>

Figures 10, 11, and 12 look at the associations or relationships between student-athletes who cut the size of their meals or skipped meals, entirely, and cases where the student-athletes also receive different kinds of grant monies.

Figure 10

Athlete Receives Pell Grant, Cut Size of or Skipped Meals
 $\chi^2 (4, N=424) = 125.51, p = .000$

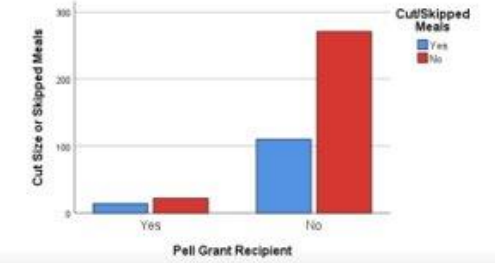
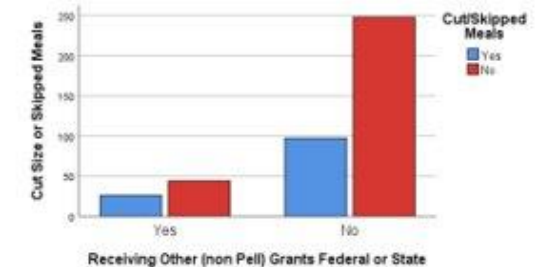


Figure 11

Athlete Receives Other Federal or State Grants, Cut Size of or Skipped Meals
 $\chi^2 (6, N=424) = 123.16, p = .000$



Working athletes

- Many student-athletes are prohibited from working while their sports are in-season, leaving them with less money for food when dining halls are closed
- Busy schedules interfere with
 - Working enough hours
 - Finding jobs flexible enough to accommodate their busy schedules

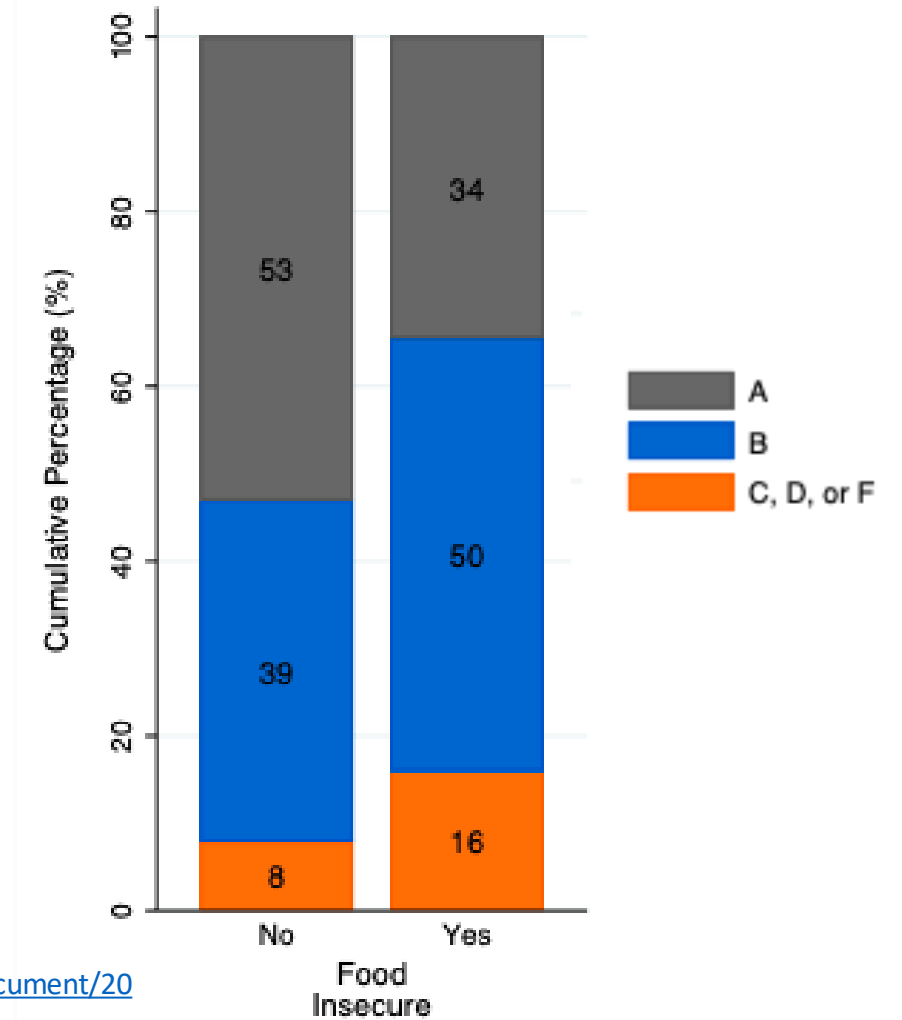
TABLE 2. Employment Status by Athlete Status and Division

	Athletes				Non-Athletes
	Division I (%)	Division II (%)	Division III (%)	Two-Year Colleges (%)	(%)
Not in Labor Force	37	30	24	26	21
Unemployed	16	11	11	14	14
Working 20 Hours or Less	39	48	55	42	33
Working 21 to 30 Hours	4	7	5	9	14
Working More Than 30 Hours	5	4	5	9	17

Source: 2019 #RealCollege Survey

Self-reported grades by Food Insecurity Status Among Student-Athletes

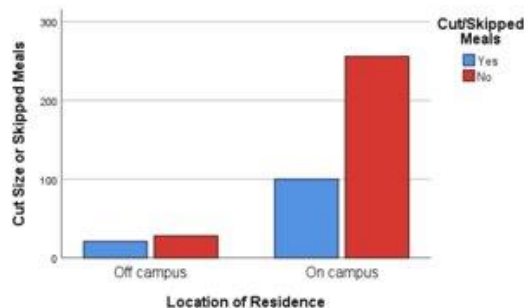
- NCAA rules require student-athletes in Division I and II to meet and maintain specific academic requirements to continue playing throughout college
- Academic performance suffers in response to food insecurity



Why the problem is bigger than hunger

- Every day many student-athletes must pick between housing, food, athletic performance, and academic performance
- Some may experience Relative Energy Deficiency in Sports (RED-S)
 - The lack of access to enough food to meet one's basic needs may cause student-athletes to experience impaired physical and psychological functioning caused by inadequate dietary intake
- The restrictions student-athletes face due to the demands of their time and resources may cause a never-ending cycle of inadequate food intake and poor performance in areas they are expected to excel

Athlete Resides On or Off Campus, Cut or Skipped Meals
 $\chi^2(4, N=424) = 19.42, p = .001$



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9655568/#B9-nutrients-14-04703>