

Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students

2024 Washington Student Experience Survey: Executive Summary

In Fall 2024, students at **45 colleges and universities** across Washington State participated in a survey administered by Western Washington University in partnership with the Washington Student Achievement Council. This was a requirement of the Washington Student Basic Needs Act ([2SHB 1559](#)) and marked the second administration of a survey first fielded in Fall 2022. In total, **12,225 students** responded to the 2024 survey, a 25% increase in responses from 2022. Data presented below are for 2024 survey respondents.

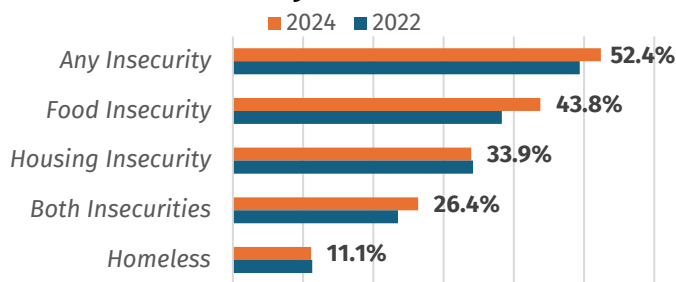
OVER HALF OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCE BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

This represents a 6% increase in the rate reported in 2022, with insecurity rates increasing at both 2-year and 4-year colleges across the state

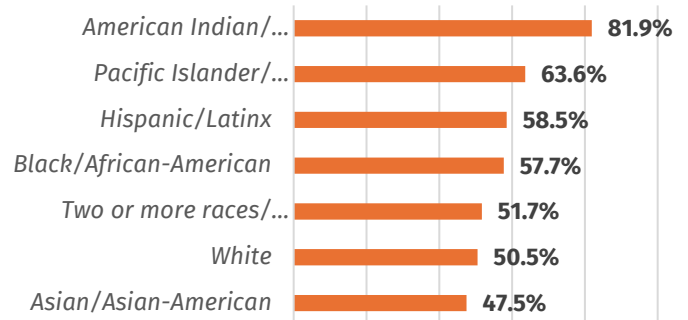
Overall rates of housing insecurity and homelessness remain high, while **the rate of students experiencing food insecurity has increased by 14%**.

Among race/ethnicity groups, **American Indian/Alaska Native and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students** experience the highest rates of basic needs insecurity.

Insecurity Rates Overall



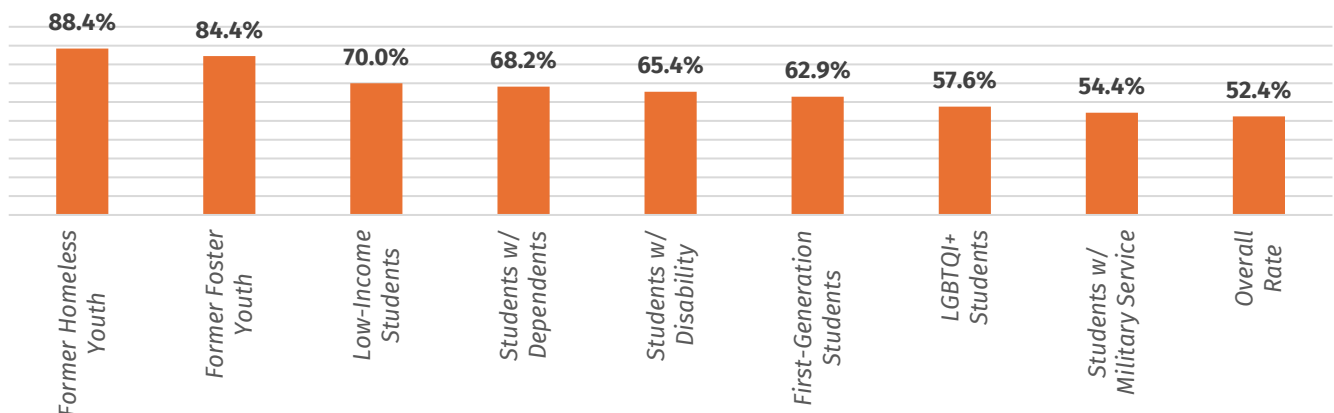
Insecurity Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Former homeless youth and former foster youth experience the highest rates of basic needs insecurity among all subpopulations of students.

Other subpopulations also experience rates of basic needs insecurity significantly higher than the overall rate, including **low-income students, students with children, students with disabilities, first-generation students, LGBTQI+ students, and students with military service.**

Insecurity Rates by Subpopulation



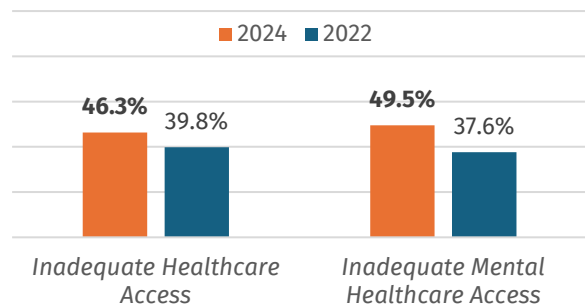
Nearly half of students are unable to access the healthcare services they need.

Since 2022, the rate of students with inadequate access to healthcare services has increased by 16%, while the rate of students with **inadequate access to mental healthcare services has increased by 32%**.

Top reasons for being unable to access needed mental healthcare resources:

- Availability of appointments/providers (39%)
- High cost despite health insurance (33%)
- Unsure how to access services (33%)

Healthcare Access Rates Overall



For students with children, access to affordable childcare is a significant barrier.

Of the 18% of students who reported parenting one or more children, **76% of student parents are unable to afford childcare without worrying about basic needs/levels of debt.**

Half of students experiencing basic needs insecurity are not accessing available resources.

Of students experiencing basic needs insecurity, **only 53% are accessing public basic needs resources and 41% are accessing campus basic needs resources.**

Top reasons for being unable to access public resources:

- Ineligibility for resources (36%)
- Lack of awareness of resources (18%)
- Unsure how to access resources (18%)

“I have a job, a child, and go to school and have to pay for childcare. I’m not making enough to be able to get by like I should. Just because I have a job I don’t qualify for resources. I make too much for help but not enough to survive.”

(Student Comment)

“Pursuing higher education is challenging enough, but dealing with food insecurity and housing instability makes the journey even tougher. These basic needs become constant distractions, making it hard to focus on school. I often find myself sitting in class thinking about how I’m going to make ends meet, whether I’ll have enough money for food, or how I’ll pay rent.”

(Student Comment)

Nearly 600 students provided written comments in addition to their survey responses, and their feedback echoed these findings – the most prevalent themes among student comments were food security (37%), housing security (33%), and mental healthcare access (25%).