

4CD Research Briefs

Contra Costa Community
College District

6/19/2019

Assessing student food and housing needs

In the Fall semester of 2018 the Contra Costa Community College District participated in the [#RealCollege Survey](#), an instrument developed by the Hope Center for College Community and Justice at Temple University to investigate

indicating that they had episodes of homelessness in the previous year. The survey also discovered that 45% of students struggle to pay for food, with one in five reporting they had experienced prolonged hunger

Costa Community College District students are reporting higher levels of housing insecurity and homelessness compared to last year. However, the prevalence of food insecurity appears to be declining, possibly a consequence of the additional food support service provided by the colleges over the last year.

the prevalence of food and housing insecurity experienced by students attending America's community colleges. The survey was conducted at 123 two- and four-year institutions across the United States. The [findings](#) from the national report generated from roughly 86,000 student, revealed that that 56% of the students surveyed were experiencing some form of housing insecurity, with 17%

within the previous month.

The preliminary findings for our District indicate that our students are experiencing roughly equal levels of housing insecurity relative to the national benchmarks. In our District 60.8% of student respondents (N = 2,283) reported experiencing some form of housing insecurity in the previous year.

Findings Summary



Prevalence of Housing Insecurity in 2017 & 2018:

	2017	2018
CCC:	58.7%	66.1%
DVC:	42.7%	60.0%
LMC:	59.3%	57.9%
4CD:	49.2%	60.8%

Prevalence of Food Insecurity in 2017 & 2018:

	2017	2018
CCC:	64.0%	52.1%
DVC:	50.7%	41.4%
LMC:	58.1%	47.1%
4CD:	54.7%	46.0%

70.3% of respondents districtwide reported experiencing either food or housing insecurity in 2018.

However, this 60.8% value from the 2018 survey represents a statistically significant increase in housing insecurity relative to the 49.2% figure reported in the 2017 study. The Hope Survey defines housing insecurity as having been unable to pay either rent or utilities during 2016, having been forced to move two or more times or being forced to “double up” with friends due to financial challenges. *The prevalence of homeless districtwide increased from 14% in 2017 to 20% in 2018.*

Homelessness was defined as having been evicted from their home, stayed in a shelter, lived in an abandoned building or having “no place to sleep” for at least one night.

The prevalence of housing insecurity reported by students at each college was 66.1% for CCC, 60.0% for DVC, and 57.9% for LMC. The increases in these figures for CCC and DVC are statistically significant while the LMC figure is not statistically different from the 2017 value. It is worth noting that the variation in these figures across the three colleges is much smaller than what was reported in the 2017 study, a consequence of the large increase in the DVC percentage. *The degree of homelessness increased at all three colleges, rising from 16.4% to 22.1% at CCC, from 14.7% to 19.9% at DVC, and from 10.8% to 18.1% at LMC.* Districtwide 20% of respondents (1 in 5

students) reported experiencing some degree of homelessness in 2018.

With regard to levels of food insecurity, 56.0% of 4CD students surveyed experienced “low” or “very low” levels of food security for some period during 2018. *This represents a statistically significant reduction in food insecurity from what was reported in the 2017 study.*

The scaling of this measure was based on an algorithm developed by the USDA derived from responses to six questions related to respondent’s ability to purchase food and exposure to periods of hunger. The corresponding figures for the three colleges are 52.1% for CCC, 41.4% for DVC, and 47.1% for LMC.

The surveys also captured respondent demographic information, revealing some striking variations by student groups. Most striking perhaps is that while food and housing insecurity are more prevalent among female students, homelessness is reported far more frequently by male students. In fact, nearly 1 in 4 male respondents districtwide reported experiencing some period of homelessness in 2018. District-wide African-American students are 45% more likely to meet the conditions for housing insecurity and 70% more likely to have experienced homelessness. Black students are also 40% more likely to experience very

low levels of food security. Students between the ages 21 and 25 are 44% more likely to have been homeless and 30% more likely to experience severe levels of food insecurity. It is worth noting, however, that there are variations in the experiences of these same student ethnicity and age group populations across the three colleges. That information and a more detailed analysis of demographic data is forthcoming.

This survey represent 4CD’s second annual investigation into the housing and nutrition challenges of our students. We need to bear in mind that this national study did not result from a fully randomized survey and therefore we must interpret these findings with some caution and pursue further investigation where such inquiry is warranted. That having been said, the 4CD findings are largely consistent with national and state averages which all suggest that the degree of material hardship experienced by our students is rather severe. Furthermore, research indicates that these hardships directly influence student learning capacity and the effort that they can devote to college course work, compromising their chances to earn a credential or reach their academic goals.