

Five Critical Facts

ABOUT MEN OF COLOR AND FOOD INSECURITY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BY J. LUKE WOOD AND FRANK HARRIS III



FIVE CRITICAL FACTS

The **FIVE CRITICAL FACTS** Brief Series is designed to inform practitioners and researchers about emerging findings relevant to the success of men of color in community colleges. Data presented in the Brief Series are derived from CCEAL's assessment tools, including the Community College Success Measure (CCSM), Community College Instructional Development Inventory (CCIDI), Community College Staff Development Inventory (CCSDI), Community College Student Success Inventory (CCSSI), Male Program Assessment for College Excellence (MPACE), and the Community College Insights Protocol (CCIP). This series is sponsored by the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) in support of the National Consortium on College Men of Color (NCCMC) and is inspired by the NASPA "Five Things" Brief Series.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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CCEAL BRIEF SERIES

Among the numerous challenges that students may face (e.g., housing instability, transportation concerns, employment disparities), food insecurity has emerged as a critical factor influencing student success. In response, many colleges and universities across the nation are now building interventions to address food insecurity. Food insecurity refers to the “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods” (Feeding America, 2014, p. 2). Being uncertain about where one’s next meal will come from can have a significant influence on their lives and schooling experiences. For example, food insecurity has been found to lead to greater levels of stress, anxiety, unhealthy eating patterns, and a greater risk of chronic illness (National Research Council, 2006). Moreover, among college students, food insecurity has been found to inhibit students’ sense of belonging, lead to more unwelcoming experiences with faculty, and impede their confidence in their abilities, their perceptions of the importance of their academic pursuits, and their intrinsic interest in school (Wood, Harris III, & Delgado, 2016). Ultimately, these factors limit students’ ability to stay on track in college and to achieve high grades (Maroto, Snelling, & Linck, 2014).

As demonstrated by Wood et al. (2016), men of color—particularly Black men—may be more likely to experience food insecurity than their peers. Therefore, this brief provides critical information on food insecurity that can be used by practitioners and researchers to better understand the nature of this challenge. Data presented herein is derived from the Community College Success Measure (CCSM), an institutional-level needs assessment tool used by community colleges to identify factors that influence the success of underserved students. The instrument has been used at more than 90 community colleges throughout the nation. Data are collected through an in-class distribution of a paper-based survey. The sample is comprised of 6,520 students from seven colleges in three states. Reporting is based on students who indicated they were exposed to the threat of hunger, which we describe as acute food insecurity.

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ABOUT MEN OF COLOR AND FOOD INSECURITY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES



FACT 1

BLACK MEN ARE THE MOST EXPOSED TO ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY

Overall, 11.6% of men in the sample reported being exposed to acute food insecurity. This rate is slightly higher than that of their female counterparts at 9.2%. Data from our analyses revealed the Black men had the highest reported exposure to acute food insecurity. In fact, 17.1% of these men reported facing this challenge, followed by 15.9% of multiethnic men. Acute food insecurity patterns evident among men of color were also apparent among women. As a result, Black and multiethnic women had the highest reported rates of acute food insecurity among women, at 14.6%, and 15.9%, respectively.

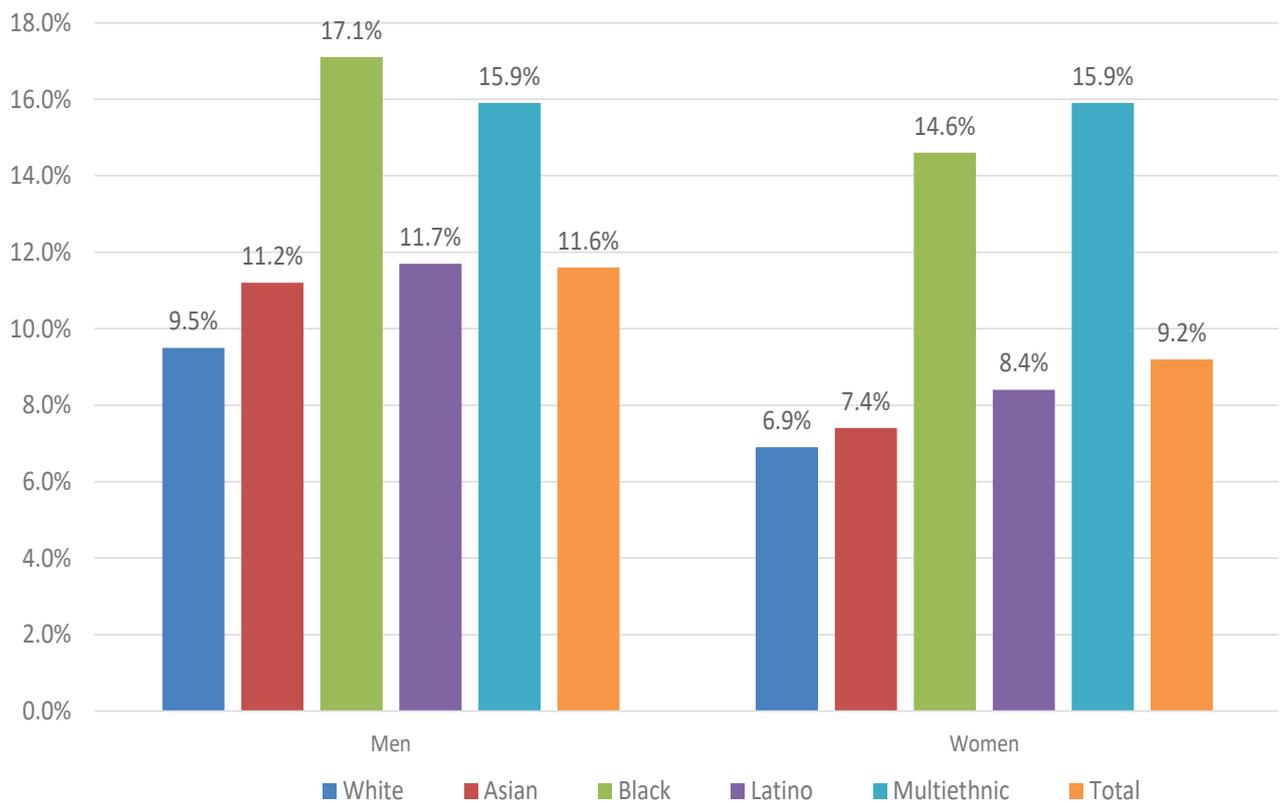


Table 1: Percentage of Students Who Experience Acute Food Insecurity, by Race and Gender

FACT 2

INSECURITY INHIBITS DEGREE PROGRESS

Numerous measures document that food insecurity inhibits success in college. For example, a lower percentage of students who experience food insecurity report being on track to achieve their goals in college (e.g., transfer or earn an associate’s degree/ certificate). Among men who do not experience food insecurity, 81.3% report being on track to achieve their goals in college. In comparison, a lower percentage (75.1%) of men who experience acute food insecurity report being on track to achieve their goals. This pattern is evident for nearly all male racial/ethnic groups, including White, Asian, Black, and multiethnic men. Most startling are the differences between Asian men who experience acute food insecurity and their peers. For Asian men who do not experience food insecurity, 75.6% report being on track to achieve their goals in college. In contrast, only 58.7% of those who experience acute food insecurity reported such progress. This represents nearly a 17% difference between Asian men who do and do not experience food insecurity.

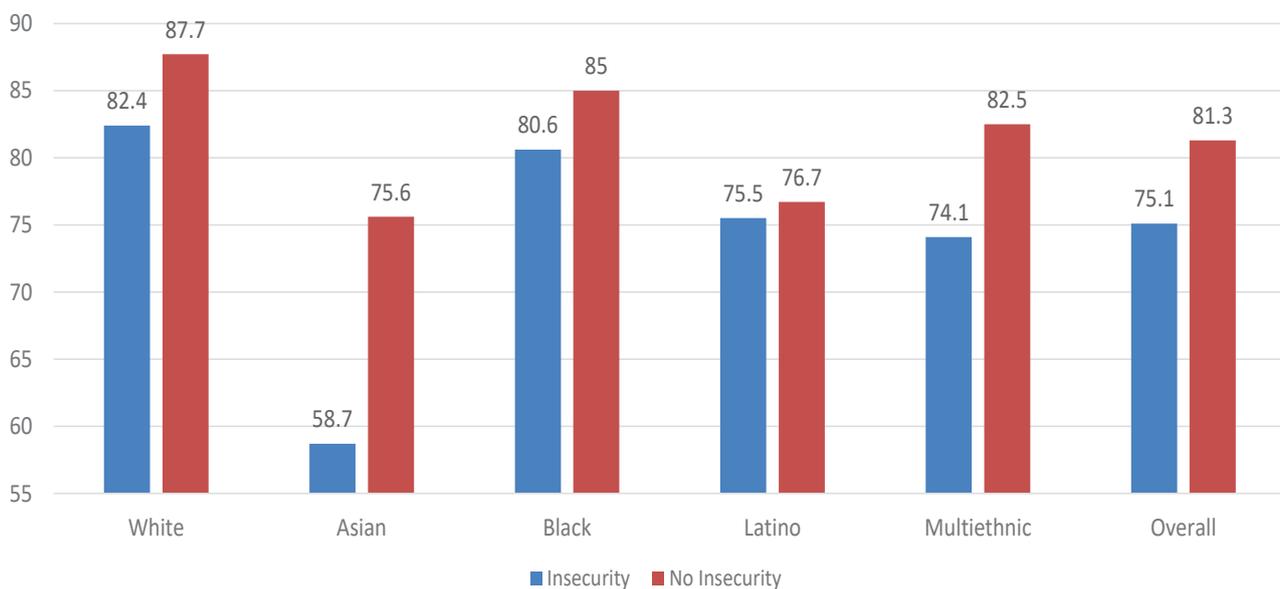


Table 2: Percentage of Students Who Experience Acute Food Insecurity, by Race and Gender

FACT 3

INSECURITY IS A STRESSOR

Students experience food insecurity in different ways and to varying degrees. As a result, some students are more likely to report that food insecurity leads to higher levels of stress than do other types of insecurity. The CCSM asks students who report acute food insecurity to indicate the degree to which this pressure is stressful. Stress is measured on a four-point scale, ranging from "not stressful" to "very stressful." Overall, 18.5% of men reported acute food insecurity as being very stressful. Black and multiethnic men reported the highest levels of those experiencing high stress from food insecurity. For example, 29.5% of Black men reported that their experience with acute food insecurity was "very stressful," followed by that of multiethnic men at 22.2%. When accounting for a more expansive reporting of stress to include men who reported acute food insecurity as being "stressful" or "very stressful," Black men were also the highest group reporting this challenge at 59%.

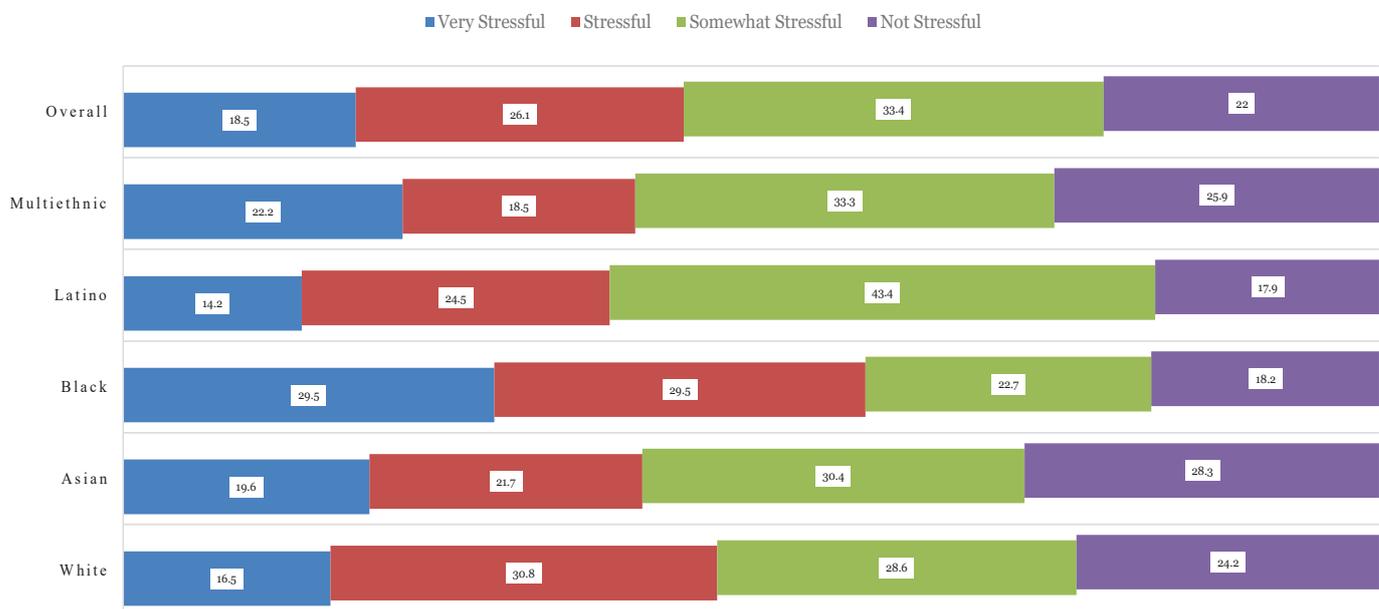


Table 3: Percentage of Men Reporting Stress, by Race

FACT 4

FOOD INSECURITY OCCURS IN TANDEM WITH OTHER INSECURITIES

In the CCSM, other types of insecurities and challenges measured include housing insecurities, health conditions, legal concerns, employment pressures, relationship challenges, and transportation issues. A critical finding from our analyses was that acute food insecurity often occurs in tandem with other insecurities. For instance, 75% of Black men and 70% of Latino men who experienced acute food insecurity also experienced challenges with housing insecurity. This means they may be encountering problems with homelessness, may not have a stable place to live, may be sleeping in a car or on a friend’s couch, or may have another type of unstable living condition. To explore the confluence of insecurities further, we examined the percentage of men who experience food insecurity in tandem with at least three other types of insecurities and challenges. Including food insecurity, this represents a total of four major pressures. Our data revealed that 70.4% of men who experience food insecurity also experienced at least three other stressors. This percentage was highest among White men at 80.2%, followed by Black men (at 72.7%) and Latino men (at 67.9%).

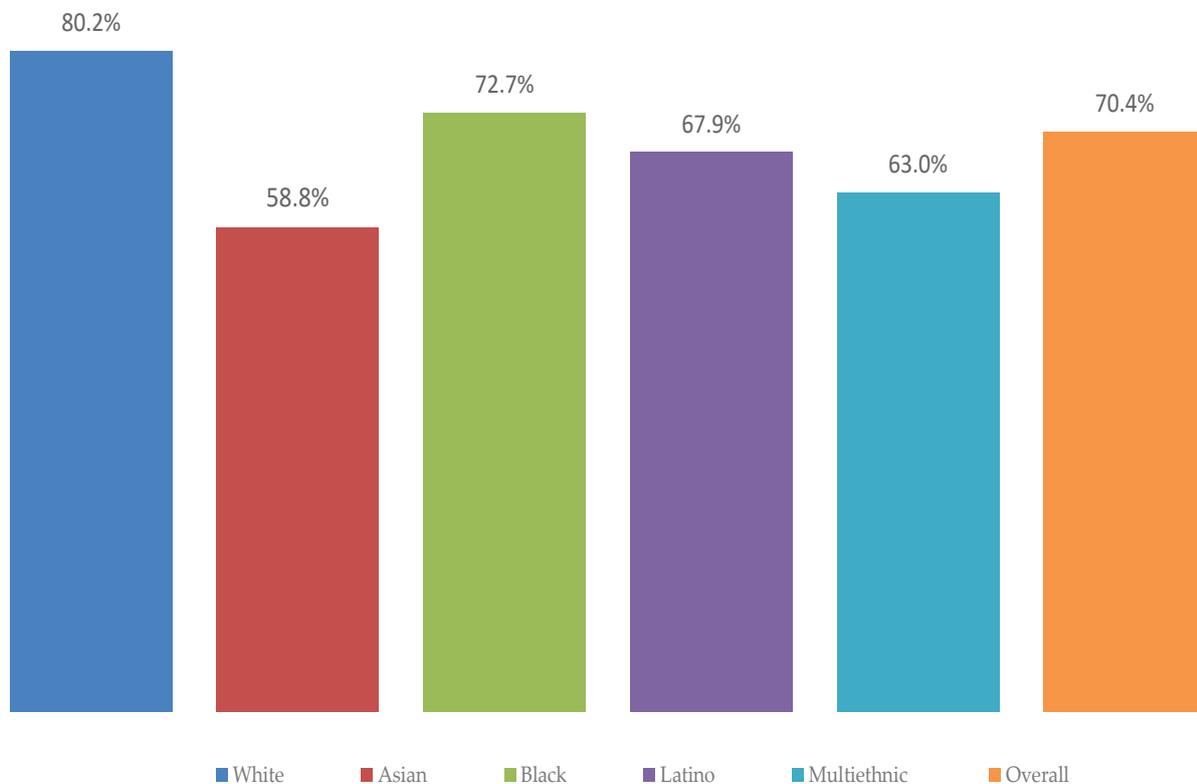


Table 4: Percentage of Men of Color Experiencing Food Insecurity With at Least Three Other Stressors

FACT 5

FOOD INSECURE MEN ARE CONCENTRATED IN DEVELOPMENTAL MATH

Overwhelmingly, men who experience food insecurity are also more likely to be enrolled in developmental education. While this is true for all subjects of developmental education, including reading and writing, overrepresentation in developmental math is most prevalent. For instance, across all male racial/ethnic groups, 65.9% of men who experience acute food insecurity are developmental math students. While this rate is lower for White men (at 56.0%), the majority of men of color are significantly overrepresented in developmental math in comparison to their White male peers. For example, 64.2% of Latino men who experience food insecurity are developmental math students. Even higher rates are evident among Black and multiethnic men, at 79.5% and 77.8%, respectively. Stated differently, more than three-quarters of all Black and multiethnic men who experience acute food insecurity are enrolled in developmental mathematics. These rates, particularly for Black and multiethnic men, are far higher than that of students who do not experience acute food insecurity. For example, Black men with acute food insecurity have a 14.2% higher representation in developmental math than Black men who do not experience food insecurity. This rate is even higher among multiethnic men at a 22.6% higher representation than that of their peers. As such, these students have a longer time to wait to achieve their goals in college, yet they experience greater levels of pressures than their peers while doing so.

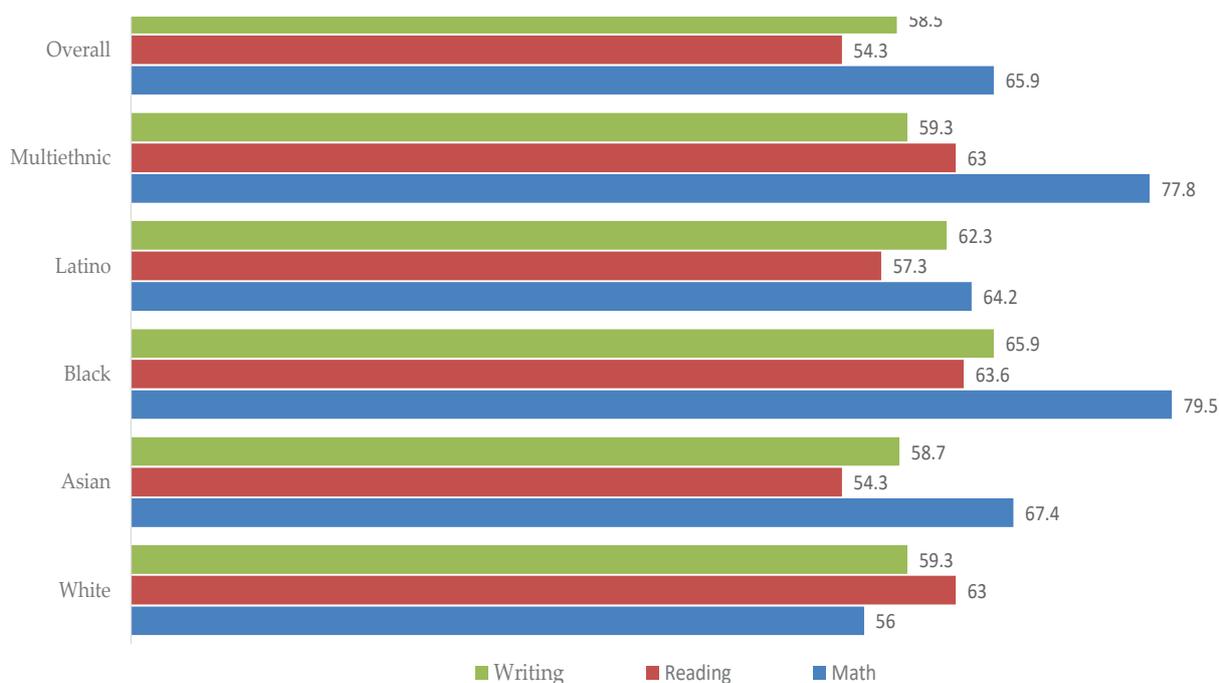


Table 5: Men With Food Insecurity in Developmental Education Table 5

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking. The image is overlaid with a blue tint.

FIVE CRITICAL FACTS

The data presented in this brief demonstrate that food insecurity is a challenge that faces many men of color in community colleges. As a result, it is essential that colleges begin to develop programs, policies, and practices to better address issues with food insecurity faced by these men. In a recent report by Wood et al. (2016), five recommendations for reducing food insecurity were offered. They include: (a) creating awareness of insecurities facing community college students; (b) reducing costs in students' lives that may better allow them to redirect monies to eating; (c) having an organized campus strategy to address food insecurity; (d) employing direct campus-based interventions such as food pantries, second-hand clothing, and making healthy snacks readily accessible in student services locations; and (e) streamlining financial aid processes to reduce the timeframe between submission and aid distribution. While all of these recommendations are critical for serving students who face food insecurity, this brief has sought to advance conversations on this topic by creating a greater awareness of this challenge.



THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE EQUITY ASSESSMENT LAB



LEARN MORE ABOUT FOOD INSECURITY FROM OUR 2016 REPORT:

**STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE - STRIVING TO SUCCEED
FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITIES IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**



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