



Hungry Minds: San Diego Public University Student Perceptions of Food Insecurity

UC San Diego
Herbert Wertheim
School of Public Health
and Human Longevity
Science

Taylor DeOcampo, Farangiz Malikova, Keala Macias, Kaz Nuckowski, and Theresa Simon

Background

Food insecurity (FI): insufficient access to nutritious food¹

- FI affects 10% of the US population² and **34.1% of undergraduates**³
- At **UC San Diego (UCSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU)**, rates are **even higher**, at **40.5%** and **55%** respectively^{4,5,6}
- FI is **linked to academic struggles** and **long-term health risks**^{1,7,9,10}
- Programs like CalFresh (SNAP) have limited enrollment, with an estimated **2 million eligible college students not receiving benefits**^{5,11,12}
- Lack of focus on obstacles to FI resources among San Diego public university students

Objectives

- Identify whether **perceptions of FI and FI resources vary based on campus residency and/or campus affiliation** (UCSD and SDSU)
- Determine whether perceptions of FI and FI resources are **associated with willingness to use food security resources**

Methods

- An **anonymous 11 item survey** was distributed to UCSD and SDSU undergraduates through email and social media (Instagram, Reddit, Discord)
- We assessed **understanding of food insecurity**, scoring responses by comprehensiveness (correct, partially correct, or incorrect)
- We assessed degree of familiarity with **4 food security resources** (2 community based and 2 university specific). Responses were scored by degree of familiarity (not, somewhat, very, extremely)
- To assess support of said resources, we asked if **participants would use or recommend the resource**. Respondents were prompted to select a reason if they answered no.

Results

Figure 1: Percent of Students Who Would Utilize or Recommend University FI Resources

Campus	Resource	Recommend	No Response
SDSU (n=32)	AS Food Pantry	53%	38%
	Economic Crisis Response Team	16%	75%
UCSD (n=67)	Triton Food Pantry	97%	0%
	Food Recovery Network	72%	0%

Figure 2: Percent of Students Who Would Utilize or Recommend Non-University FI Resources

Resource	All (n=99)	UCSD (n=67)	SDSU (n=32)	On campus (n=32)	Off campus (n=67)
SNAP/ CalFresh	94%	94%	75%	84%	93%
		p = 0.52		p = 0.07	
SD Food Bank	73%	81%	69%	65%	75%
		p = 0.10		p = 0.26	

Demographics

- Over 40% of respondents were **21-22 years old** and **4th years**.
- Majority of respondents identified as **Latine** (29%), **Asian American / Pacific Islander** (28%), or **White** (22%)

Qualitative Data Summary

UCSD students cited **insufficient knowledge on how to access resources** and **eligibility concerns** as reasons they would not recommend or utilize the Triton Food Pantry and San Diego Food Bank. Data on SDSU and other resources was inconclusive.

Figure 3: Independent T-test Comparison of On- vs. Off-Campus and UCSD vs. SDSU Students

FI Definition	Mean		Standard Deviation		P-value
	On-campus	Off-campus	On-campus	Off-campus	
Resource Familiarity	On-campus = 1.47	Off-campus = 1.59	On-campus = 0.52	Off-campus = 0.73	p = 0.16
	SDSU = 1.40	UCSD = 1.62	SDSU = 0.65	UCSD = 0.67	p = 0.06



Figure 5: UCSD Student Familiarity with Food Security Resources

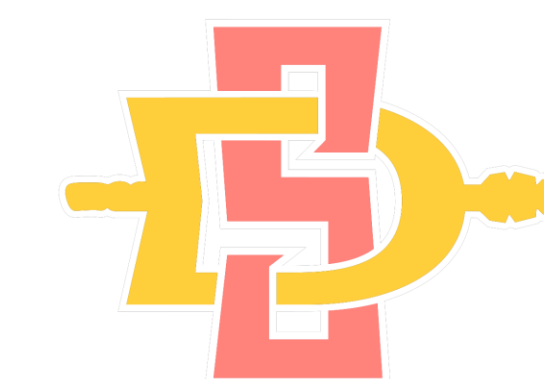
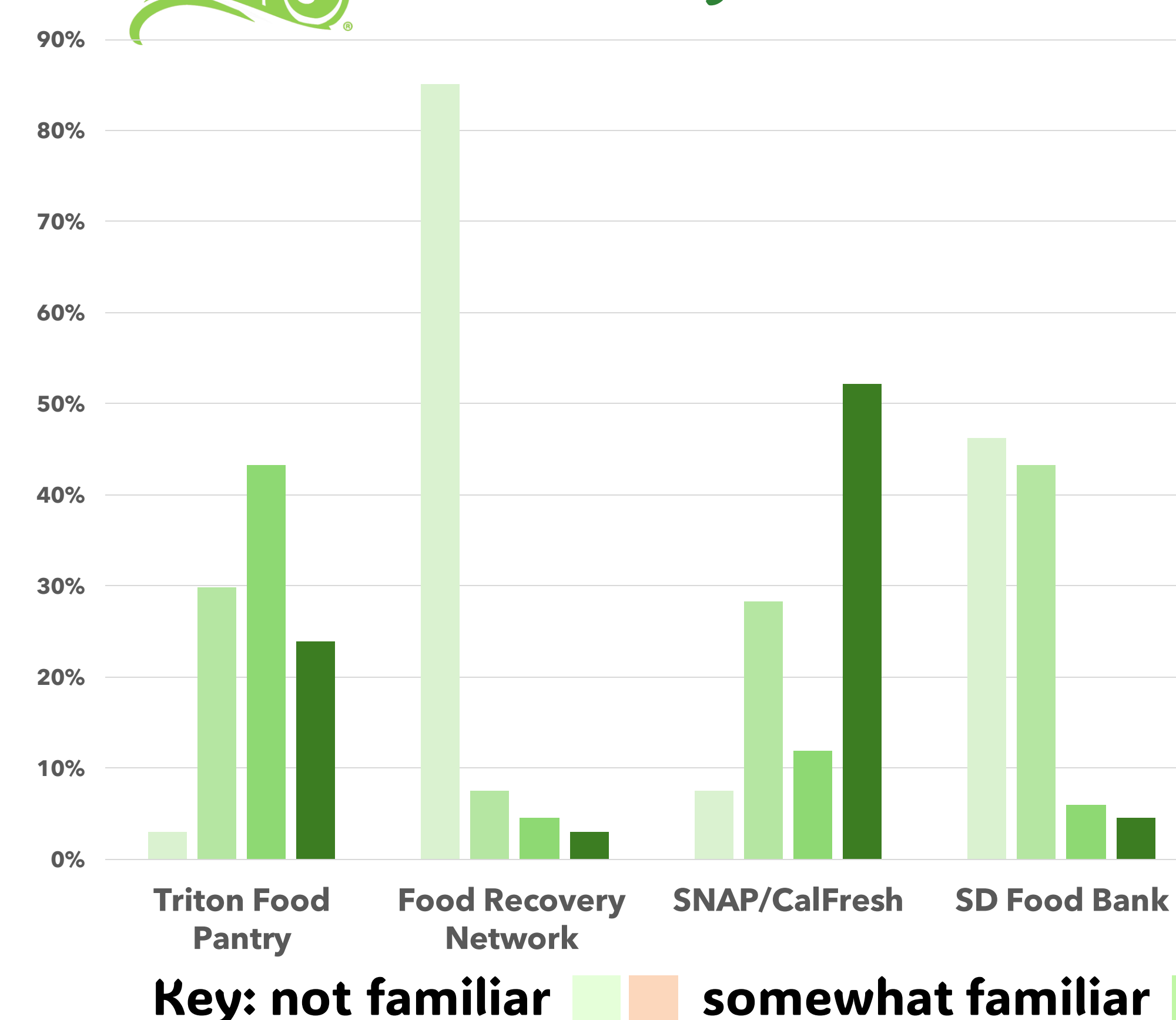
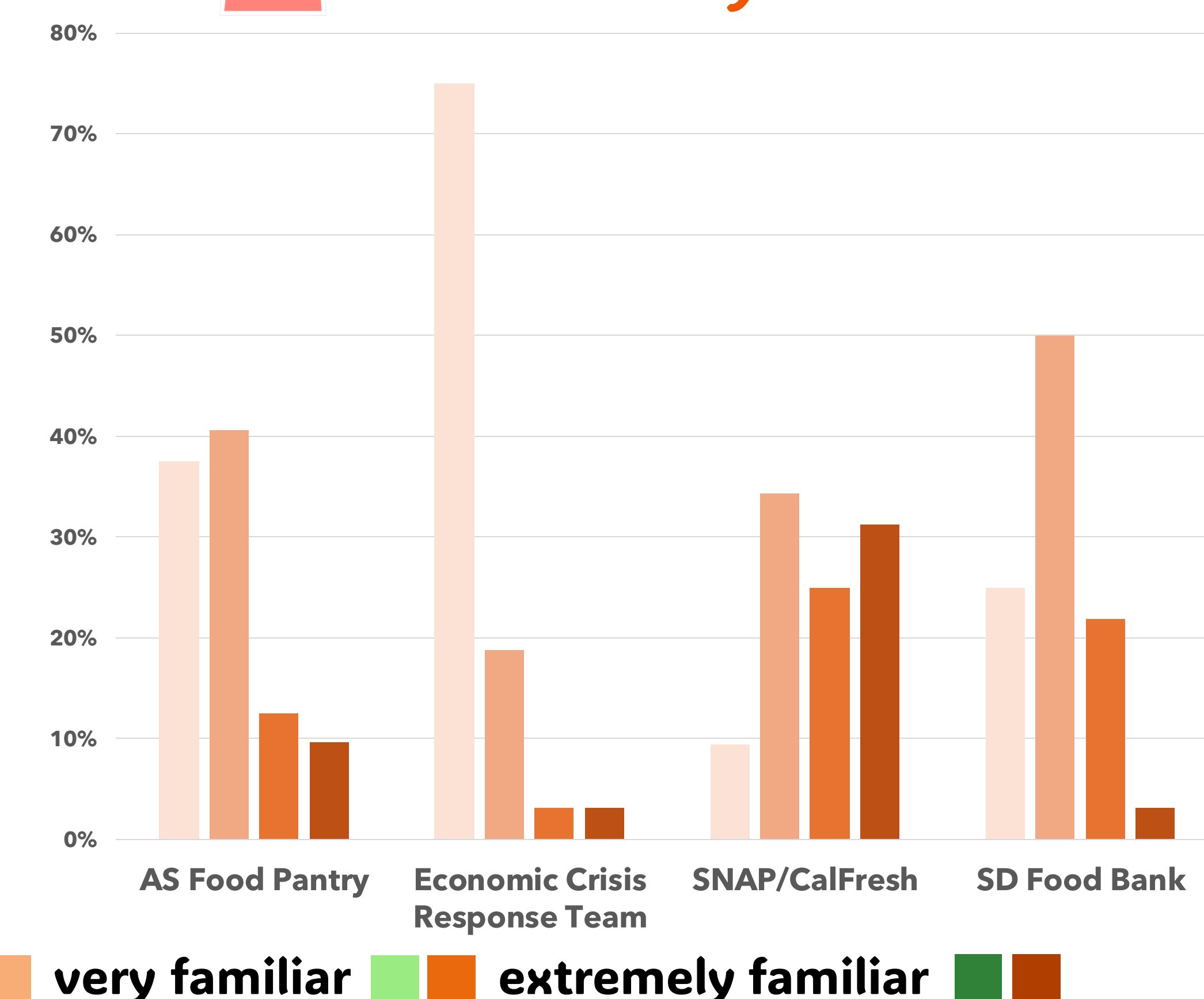


Figure 6: SDSU Student Familiarity with Food Security Resources



Conclusions

- Our data suggest that one's **likelihood to utilize or recommend food security resources may be altered by their campus affiliation or residency status** (Fig. 2), but our study did not achieve statistical significance (Fig. 3).
- **A significant portion of SDSU respondents did not rate their university's resources** (Fig. 1).
- Average resource familiarity and FI knowledge scores suggest San Diego public university students are **somewhat familiar with food insecurity** (Figs. 3 and 4)

Policy Implications

- The positive correlation between residency and recommending FI resources suggests it may be beneficial to **better educate all students on FI resources, but especially on campus students**.
- Similarity of on- and off-campus student knowledge of FI suggests that **regardless of housing status all students should be receiving information about FI and the food security resources** available to them

Acknowledgements

Our team would like to acknowledge the help and support of **Dr. Britta Larsen, Alana Lopez, Dr. Michel Estefan, and Dr. Julia Rogers**.

References

Scan here!

