

Food insecurity & access among UC San Diego students in 2025

UC San Diego

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Objective

To assess the prevalence of food insecurity among UC San Diego undergraduate students in 2025.

Introduction

Food Insecurity refers to **limited or uncertain access to sufficient and nutritionally adequate food**, and results from a multitude of factors, primarily **economic or employment instability, transportation barriers**, and proximity to grocery stores ⁴. In 2023, nearly **10.2% of US households were food insecure** ². The ever-increasing cost of living, combined with the sky-rocketing cost of tuition makes food insecurity particularly prevalent amongst **college students**, with an estimated **23%** of this demographic experiencing food insecurity in 2020 ³. Our study aimed to assess the level of food insecurity experienced among UC San Diego college students, and to identify if there were any notable associations between exposures and outcomes in our survey data.

Methodology

- **Cross-sectional** study utilizing survey data to assess food security amongst UCSD college students in 2025. Participants were recruited to complete an online survey developed using Qualtrics. The survey was distributed on social media platforms and by word of mouth.
- Participants (**n=204**) reported their demographics food insecurity behaviors, awareness and use of food assistance programs, and SNAP participation.
- **Exposure:** Attending UC San Diego
- **Outcome:** food insecurity
- **Inclusion criteria:**
 - Enrollment at UC San Diego
 - age 18 or older
- **Exclusion criteria:**
 - Under the age of 18
 - Attended a college other than UCSD
 - Did not complete the full survey
- Statistical analysis: Chi-Squared, Fisher's exact, and Logistic regression

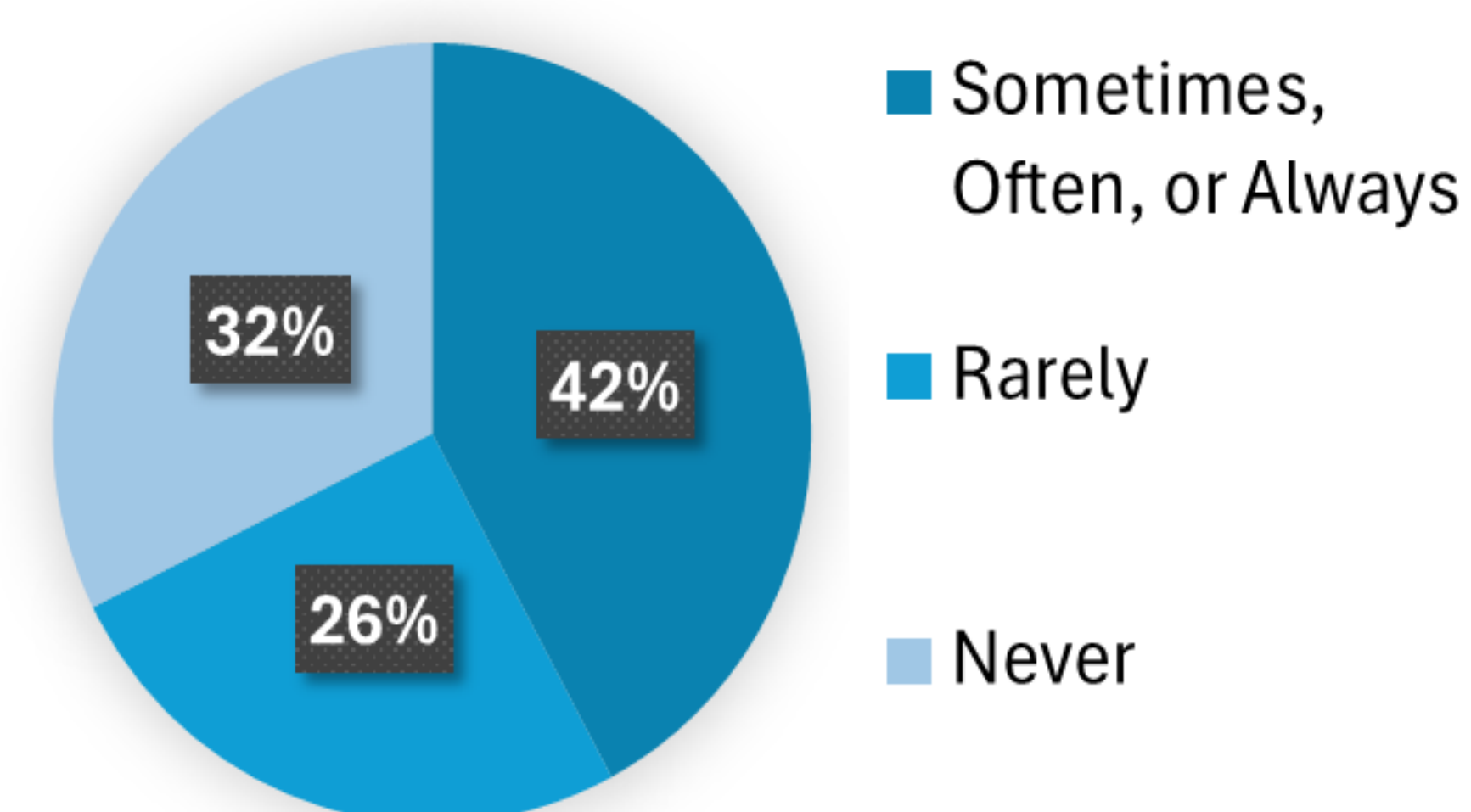
Results

2025 Demographics Table, N = 204

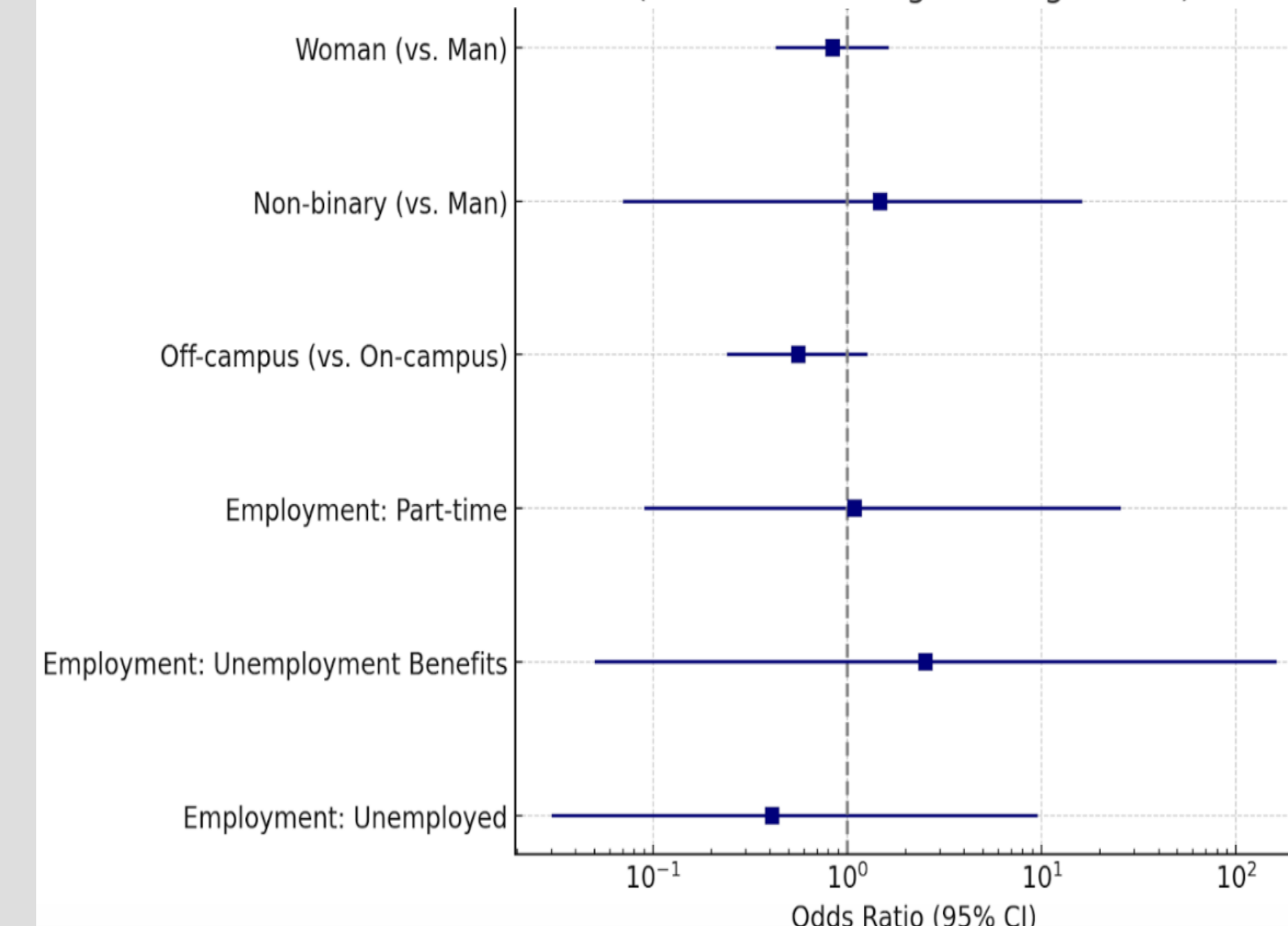
Demographic Variable	Value	Percent
Gender	Man	39%
	Woman	60%
	Non-binary / Third gender	1%
Age	18 - 20	52%
	21 - 24	43%
	25 or older	5%
Race/ Ethnicity	Asian	65%
	Hispanic / Latinx	16%
	White	17%
	Middle Eastern / North African	7%
	Black / African American	3%
	Other	3%
Housing	On-campus	48%
	Off-campus	45%
	With family	7%
Employment	Full-time	1%
	Part-time	37%
	Receive Unemployment	1%
	Unemployed	61%

Responses to: "In the **past 3 months**, have you ever **felt concerned** about paying for **groceries**?"

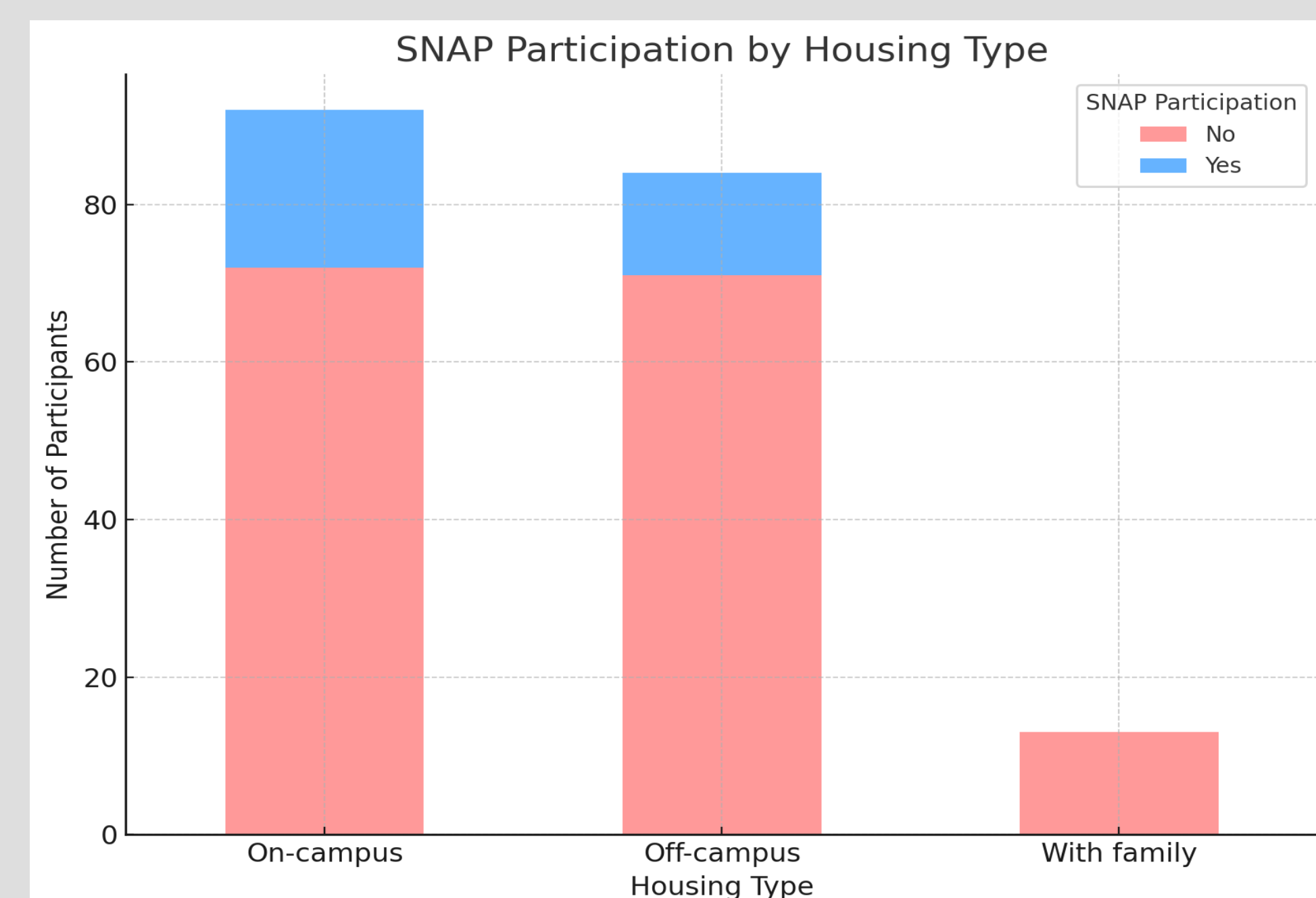
2025 Survey



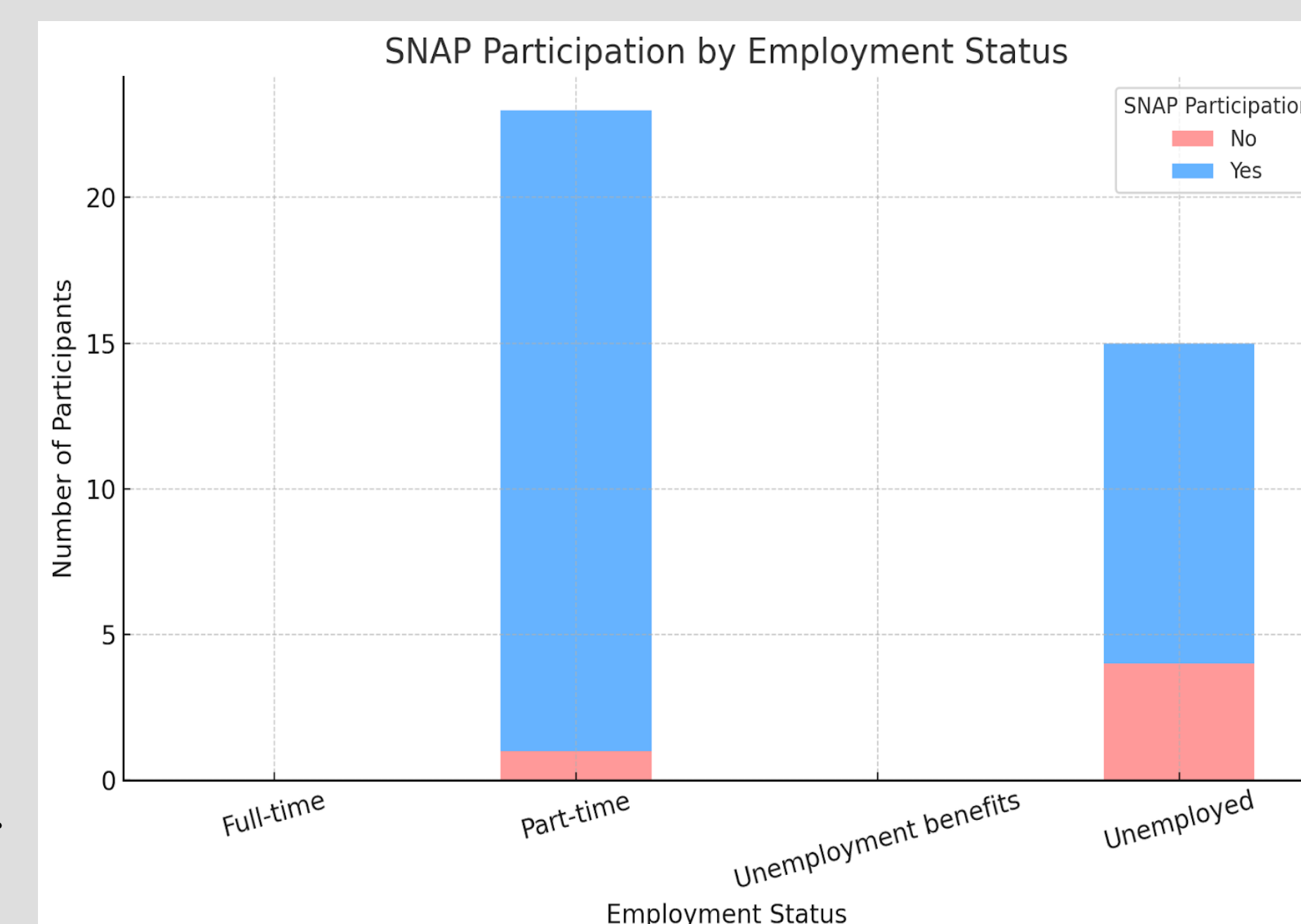
Adjusted Odds Ratios for SNAP Participation (Multivariable Logistic Regression)



There were **no significant predictors of SNAP participation based on gender, housing, or employment** in the multivariable logistic regression model.



No significant association between housing status and SNAP participation. Chi-square: $p = 0.0415$ was significant; Fisher's test : $p = 0.1536$ showed no significance



No statistical association between SNAP participation and employment status. Chi-square: $p = 0.0002$; Fisher's exact: $p = 0.0019$

Conclusion

Although our statistical analysis found **no significant associations** between housing status, SNAP participation, gender, or racial demographics, food insecurity at UC San Diego remained comparable to the 2024 UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)⁶. The UCUES food insecurity data found that **51% of participants** experienced some level of food insecurity at UC San Diego, while our 2025 data revealed that about **69%** of participants experienced food insecurity⁶. Because we did **not** run any statistical analysis on this comparison, we are unable to make a **definitive** assumption about whether food insecurity at UCSD has increased, decreased, or remained the same. However, it's clear that food insecurity continues to be a significant cause for concern on campus, and there need to be appropriate policy changes implemented in the future that can address these needs. Improving **accessibility**, implementation of **screening processes**, and increasing the **campus services budget** are all ways in which UCSD can begin to reduce food insecurity on campus.

Policy Implications

- Implement screenings to assess students' food insecurity risk at the beginning of each quarter
- Increase funding for the Triton Food Pantry
- Add food pantry locations in Seventh College and Pepper Canyon to improve accessibility

Acknowledgements and

