

Background

- Food insecurity affects over 50% of college students, with 52% at the University of Oregon and 72% at four HBCUs reporting food shortages (Kashuba, 2017; Duke et al., 2021).
- Minority, first-generation, LGBTQ, and international students are at higher risk of food insecurity, worsening educational disparities (Kashuba, 2017).
- Food insecurity negatively impacts GPA and cognitive function, increasing stress and health issues that hinder academic success.
- UC San Diego's Triton Food Pantry provides free food, but its effect on student academic performance remains largely unstudied.



Objective

To examine the effects of food insecurity on UCSD students' academic performance, specifically its association with GPA and the impact of the Triton Food Pantry.

Methods

- A cross-sectional study using Qualtrics was conducted from January 29 to February 20, 2025.
- Recruitment occurred via on-campus flyers, Reddit, Snapchat, and Instagram.
- The exposure variable was food pantry utilization, and the outcome was cumulative GPA.
- Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS Chi-square tests.

Results

Descriptive Statistics:

- **Sample Size:** 68 students
- **Gender:** 86.8% identified as women
- **Race/Ethnicity:** 51.5% Asian, 26.5% White, 17.6% Other
- **First-Generation Students:** 35.3% of the sample

Food Insecurity VS GPA:

$\chi^2(3)=11.895$, $p = 0.008$
Statistically Significant

Pantry Usage VS GPA:

$\chi^2(3)=0.669$, $p = 0.880$
No Statistical Significance

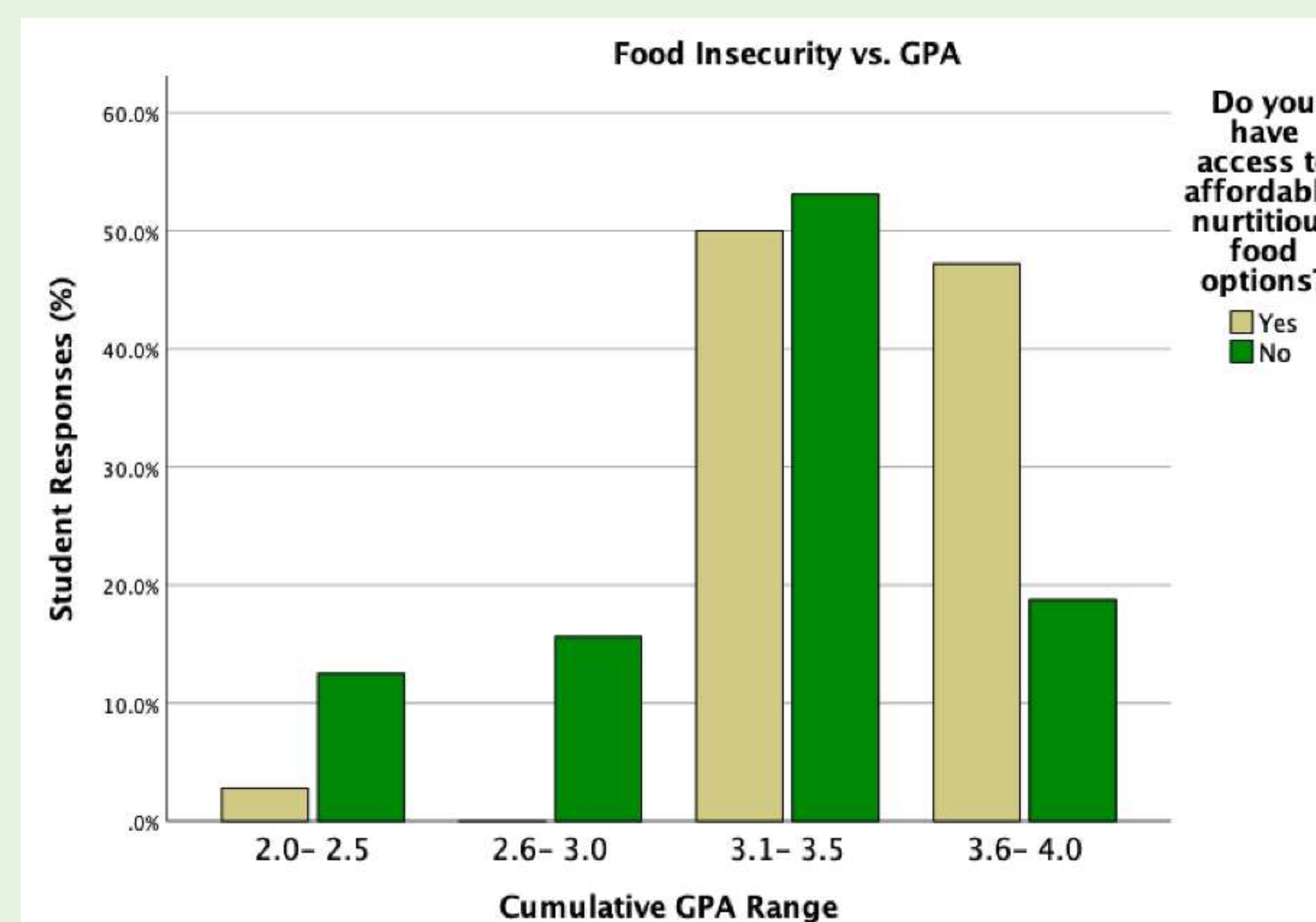
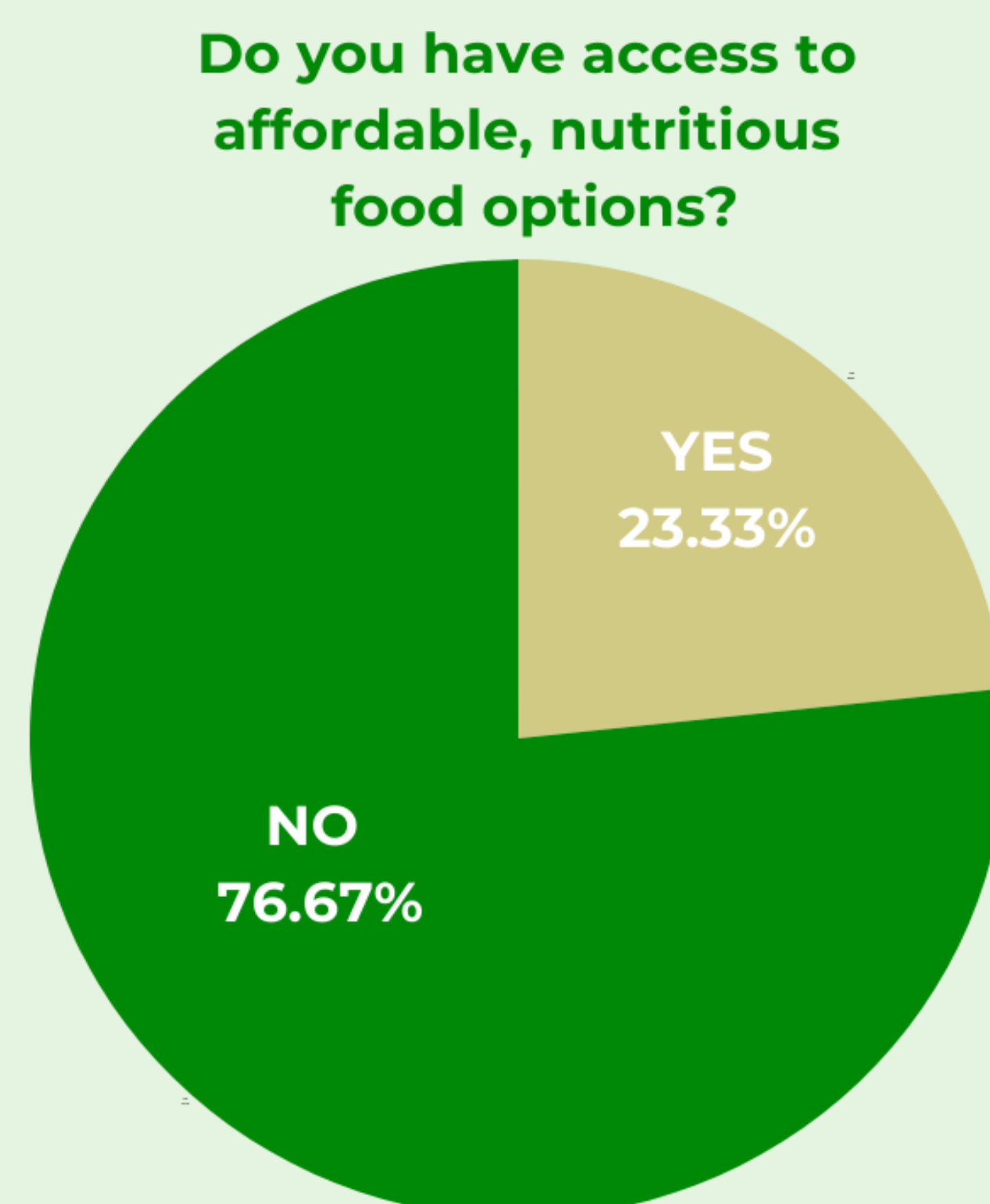


Figure 1: GPA Distribution by Food Security Status – This figure compares the cumulative GPAs of those who reported having access to affordable, nutritious food options and those who do not.

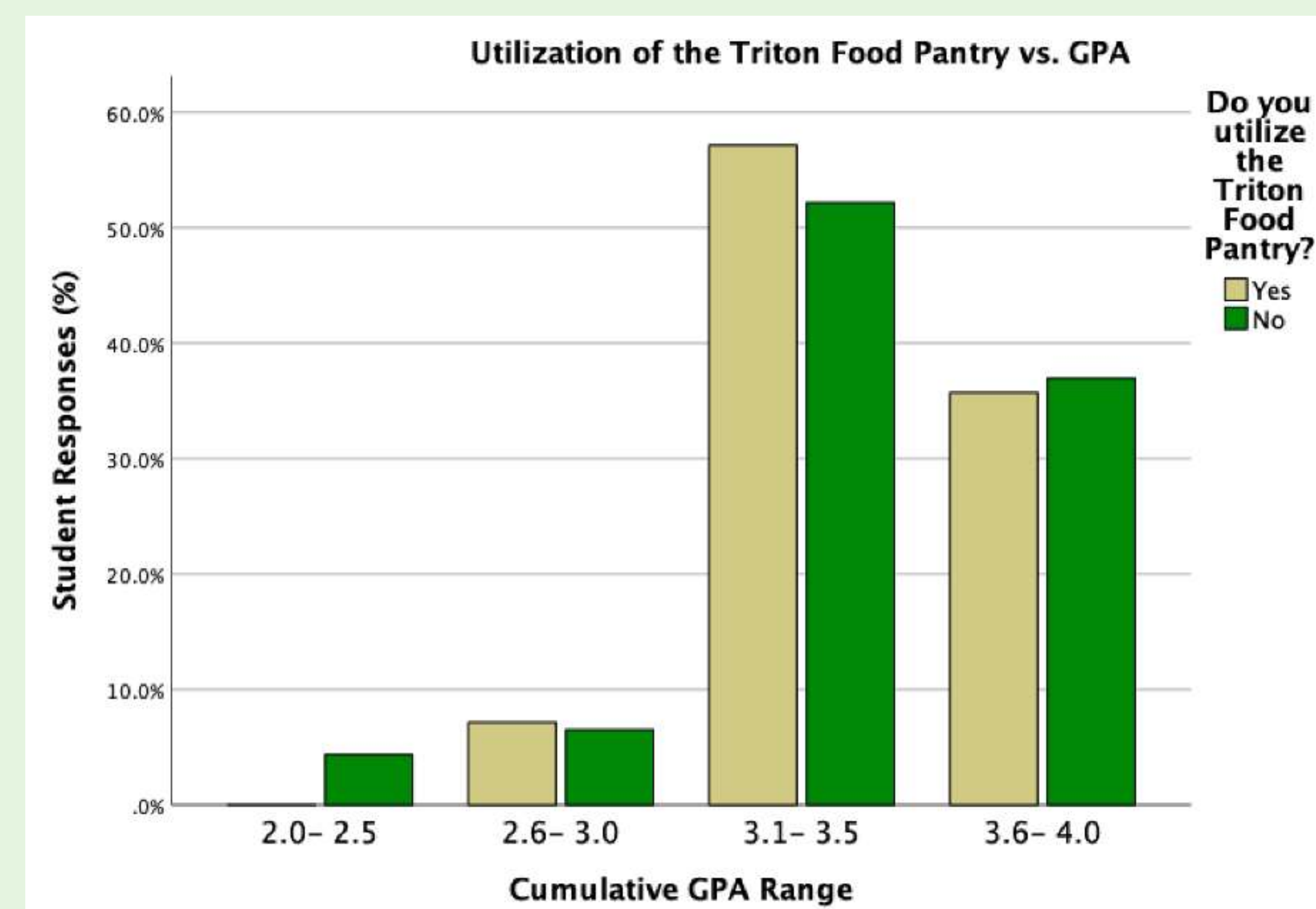
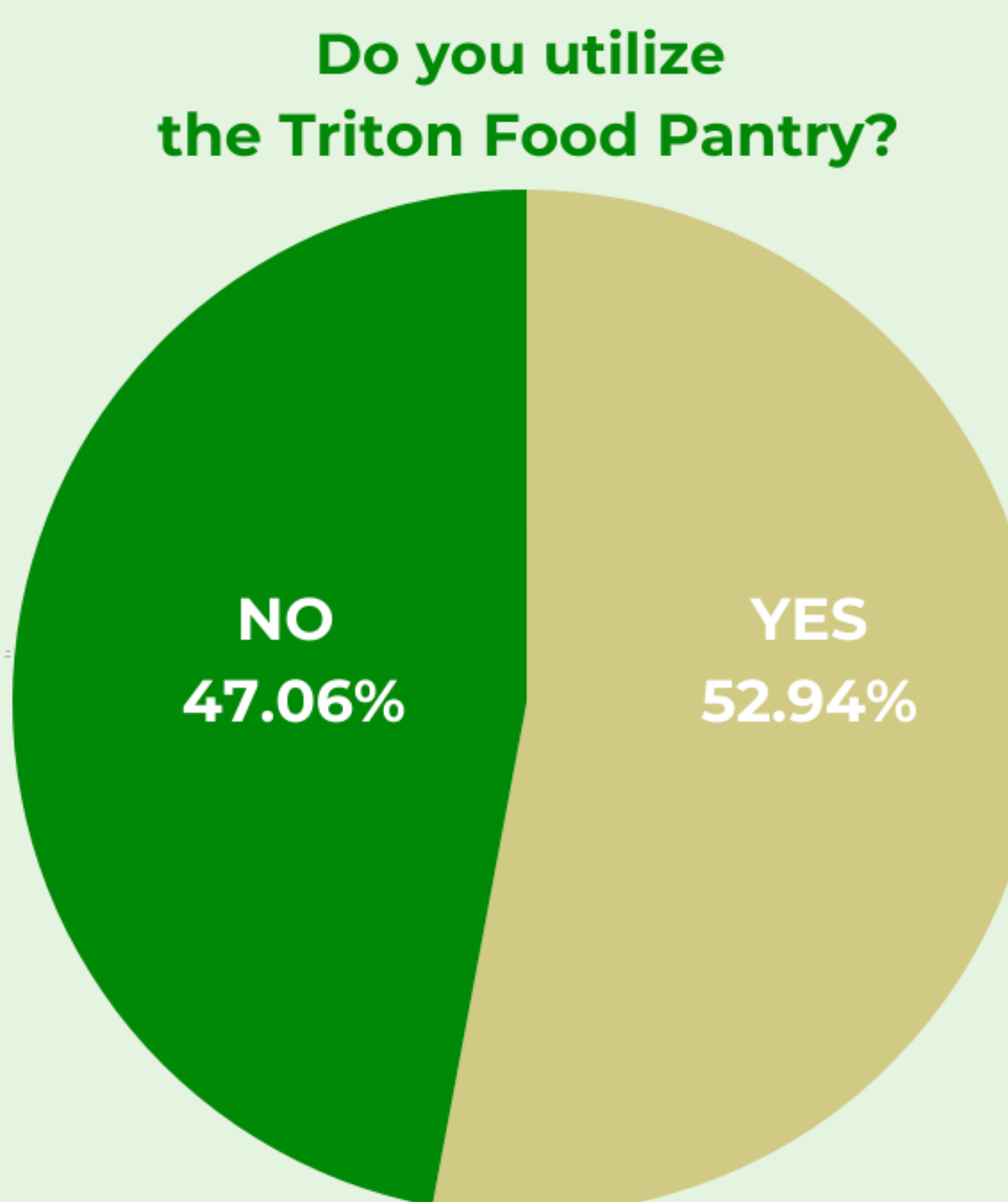


Figure 2: GPA Distribution by Triton Food Pantry Usage – This figure compares the cumulative GPAs of food-insecure students who reported that they have used the Triton Food Pantry versus those who did not.

Policy Implications

Increased awareness and reduced stigma around food insecurity are essential to improving pantry utilization. Institutional measures beyond food pantries may be necessary to enhance academic outcomes for food-insecure students. Future research should better target users of the pantry and seek to improve access to food assistance programs.

Conclusion

Food-insecure students had lower GPAs, compared with only 48.6% in the 3.1-3.5 range to 73.9% of food-secure students. Pantry access alone did not improve GPA, suggesting additional support is needed.

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