

Perceived Effects of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity Among College Students in Southern California

Briana Torres, Gizelle Avitia Mojica, Julieta Ornelas, Kristin Kim, & Sandra Nguyen
University of California, San Diego

Background

- College students experience food insecurity at higher rates due to their vulnerability in accessing food¹
- Studies have found that up to 23% of college students self-reported food insecurity²
- The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted 8.4 million California residents³, disturbing their access to quality and nutritious food

Objective

- To identify the perceived effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food insecurity among college students in Southern California.

Methods

- Between April-May 2022, a total of 93 students participated in a cross-sectional survey to observe the perceived effects of COVID-19 on food insecurity.
- The survey was posted on various social media platforms
- Qualtrics software was utilized to record sociodemographic characteristics and food insecurity was measured by utilizing the United States Department of Agriculture's, "Six-Item Short Form Food Security Survey Module."⁴
- Data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics to compare responses from before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Age	# of Students	% of Students
18-20	39	41.94%
21-25	48	51.61%
26-35	4	4.30%
Prefer Not To Answer	2	2.15%
Gender	# of Students	% of Students
Female	60	64.52%
Male	31	33.33%
Non-binary	2	2.15%
Race/Ethnicity	# of Students	% of Students
Asian or Asian American	52	55.91%
Hispanic or Latino	18	19.35%
White or Caucasian	12	12.90%
Two or more races	9	9.68%
Other	2	2.15%
Attending College	# of Students	% of Students
UC San Diego	74	79.57%
CSULB	5	5.38%
CSU San Marcos	4	4.30%
SDSU	3	3.23%
UC Los Angeles	2	2.15%
UC Irvine	2	2.15%
University of Redlands	1	1.08%
San Diego Community College District	1	1.08%
Prefer Not To Answer	1	1.08%
Year in College	# of Students	% of Students
4th year	35	37.63%
3rd year	26	27.96%
2nd year	15	16.13%
1st year	10	10.75%
5th Year	5	5.38%
Prefer Not To Answer	2	2.15%

Figure 1: How often do you believe college students would buy food that didn't last and could not afford to buy more?

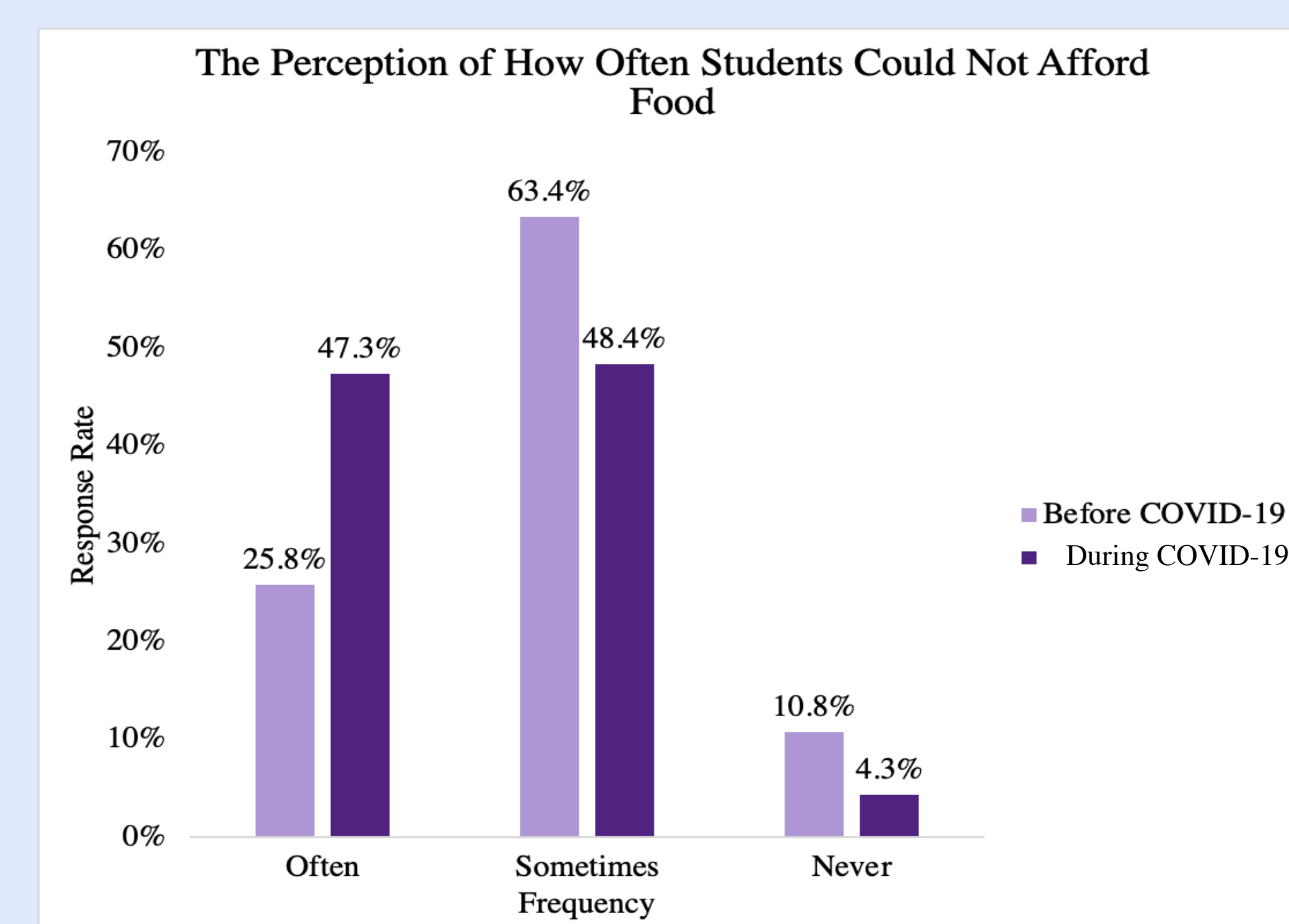


Figure 2: How often do you believe college students skip/cut the size of their meals?

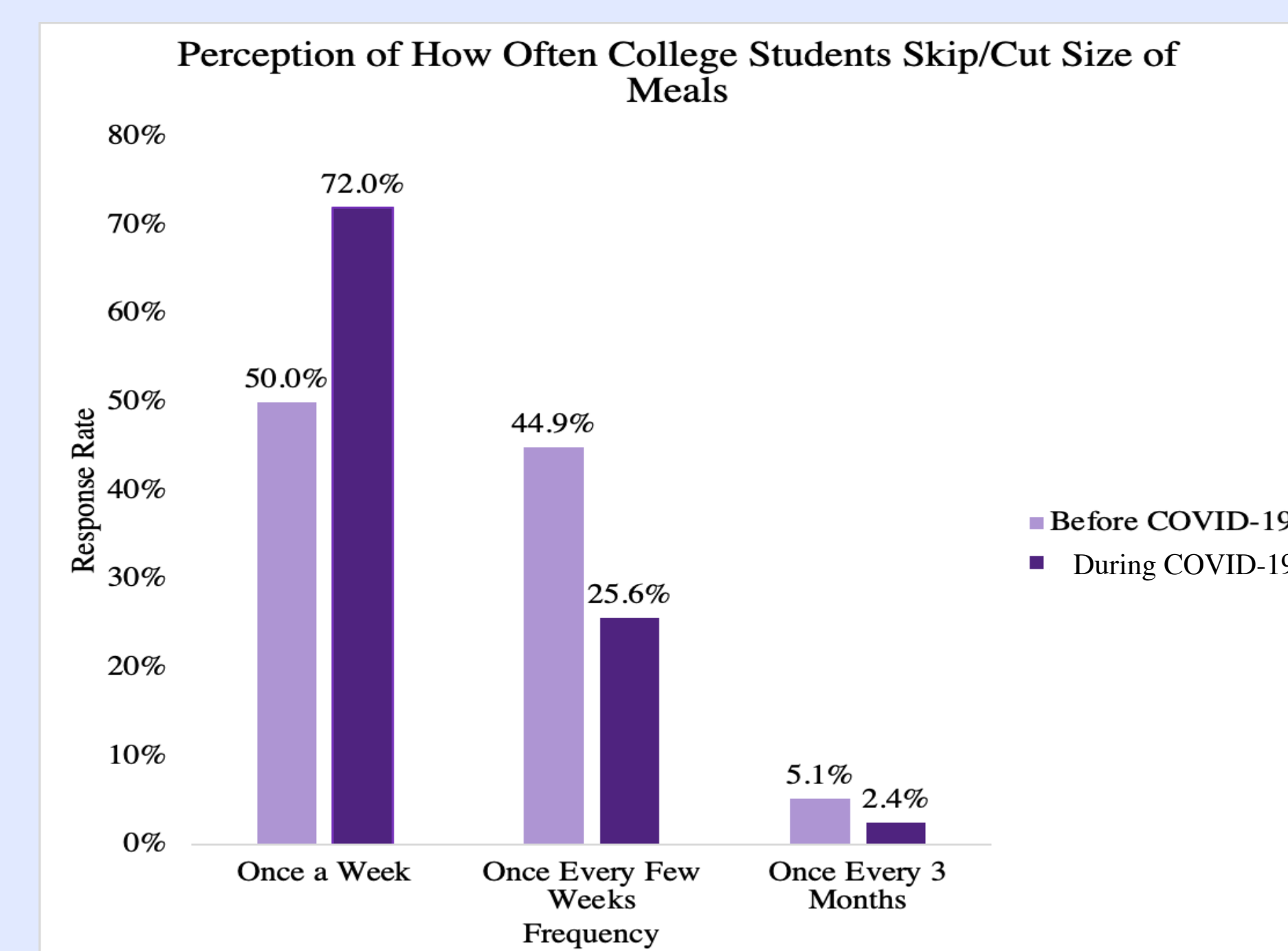


Figure 3: Do you believe college students had access to enough quality food for an active, healthy lifestyle?

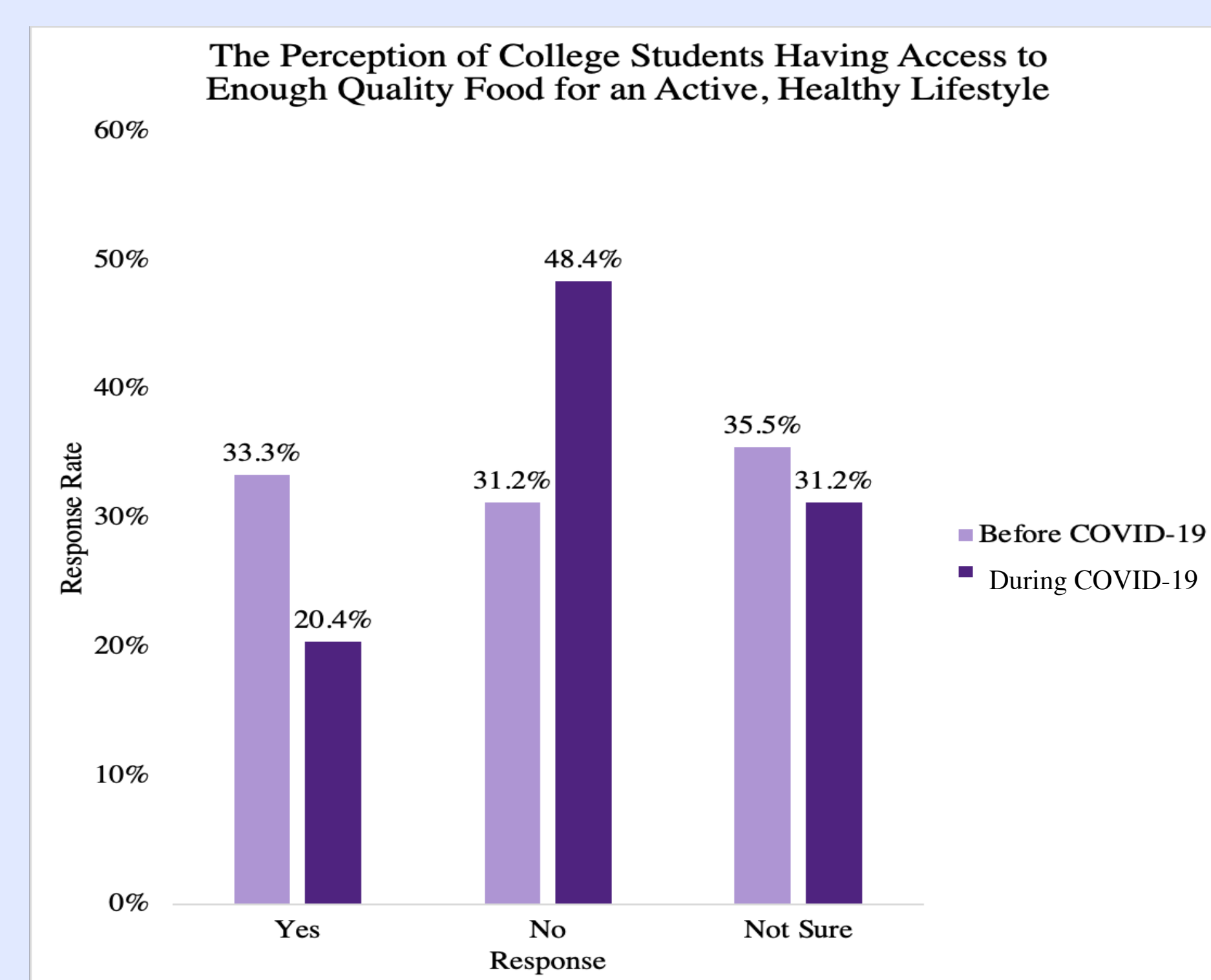
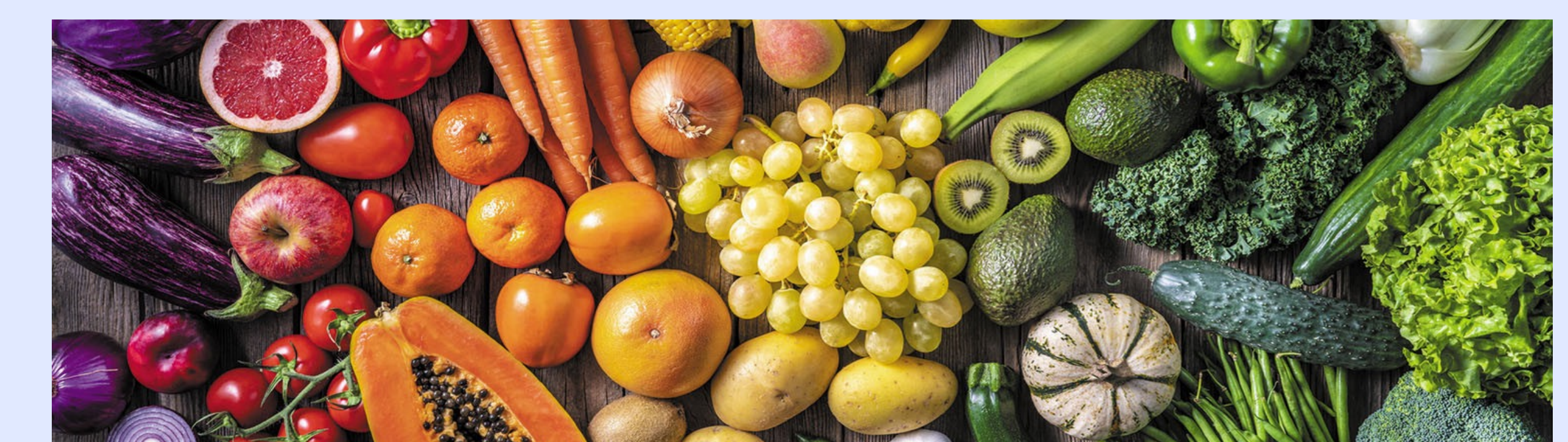


Figure 4: Survey College Distribution in Southern California



Conclusion

- Findings suggest students perceived there was an increase in food insecurity in terms of accessibility, cost and availability during COVID-19 amongst southern California college students.
- Though our research did not directly ask college students about their personal experiences with food insecurity, we can infer, from our results, about the perceived effects COVID-19 had on food insecurity that survey responses are perhaps based on their own experiences. The increase in perceived food insecurity points to the need for resources for college students.



Policy Implications

- Expansion of federal food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/CALFresh, local gardens, and food banks may be a resource needed for college students.

References

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3. State of California. (2022). Tracking COVID-19 in California. <https://covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard/>
4. "Six-Item Short Form Food Security Survey Module - USDA ERS." *Economic Research Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE*, ERS, Sept. 2012, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8282/short2012.pdf>.