

# Perceptions of Food Insecurity Among On- and Off-Campus UCSD Students

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## Introduction

College students are known to suffer from hunger, poor nutrition and eating habits,<sup>1</sup> and are at high risk for food insecurity,<sup>2-5</sup> defined by uncertain or limited access to sufficient or nutritionally adequate foods.<sup>5</sup>

Food insecurity is associated with increased risk of stress, sleep loss, and poor academic performance.<sup>5</sup>

A recent meta-analysis found a mean prevalence rate of food insecurity of 43.5%, significantly higher than rates of food insecurity among US households of about 13% during the same period.<sup>3</sup>

Another study of 8,705 undergraduate and graduate students at 10 University of California campuses, reported an overall food insecurity prevalence of 42%, after adjustment for age, race, gender, and ethnicity.<sup>4</sup>

Students attending US universities and colleges have been reported to suffer from food insecurity that exceed those of average US households by more than 3-fold<sup>3</sup>.

## Objective

To identify perceptions of food insecurity and knowledge of food assistance programs among UCSD students by on- or off-campus residency.

## Methods

This cross-sectional study used a brief 11-item Google Forms survey distributed to UCSD students to examine the potential associations of living on- or off-campus on perceptions of food insecurity, opinions concerning access to adequate and healthful foods, and knowledge of food assistance programs using questions adapted from standardized survey instruments (5).

## Results

A non-representative sample of UCSD students completed a Google-based survey in April 2022 (n=62).

Table 1. Student Demographics (N=62)	
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	40%
Female	57%
Non Binary	3%
<b>Race</b>	
White	19%
Black	3%
Asian	57%
Other	22%
<b>Hispanic Ethnicity</b>	
1%	
<b>Year in College</b>	
Undergraduate 1st Year	11%
Undergraduate 2nd Year	18%
Undergraduate 3rd Year	26%
Undergraduate 4th Year	39%
Undergraduate 5th Year	3%
Graduate Student	3%
<b>Age Range</b>	
18-20 Years	50%
21-23 Years	44%
24-26 Years	5%
27 Years or Greater	1%

Figure 1. Reported off-campus and on-campus residency. Chi-Sq (1, N = 62) = 11.58, p < 0.05]

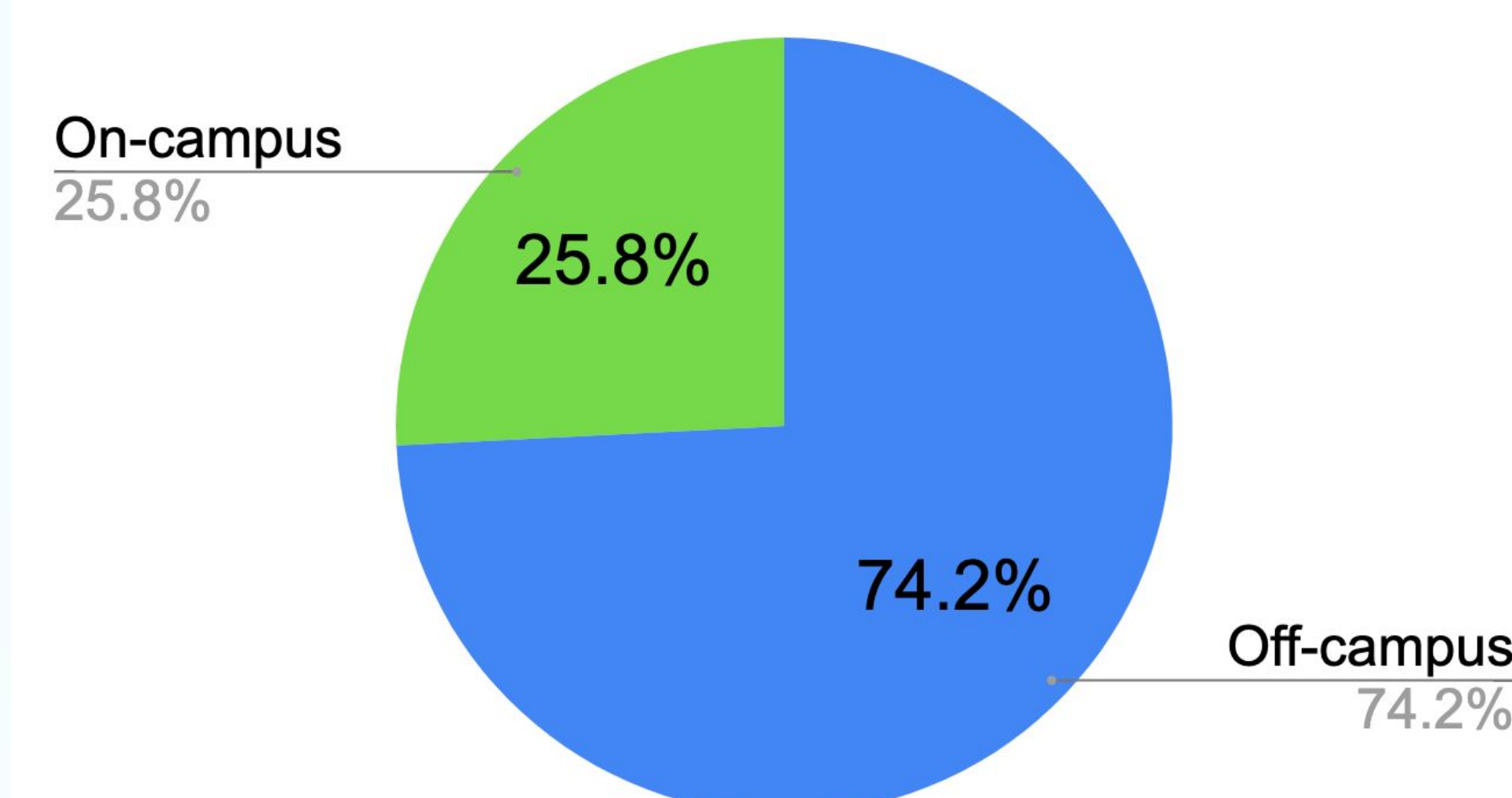


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents believing that on-campus students had better access to food by residency

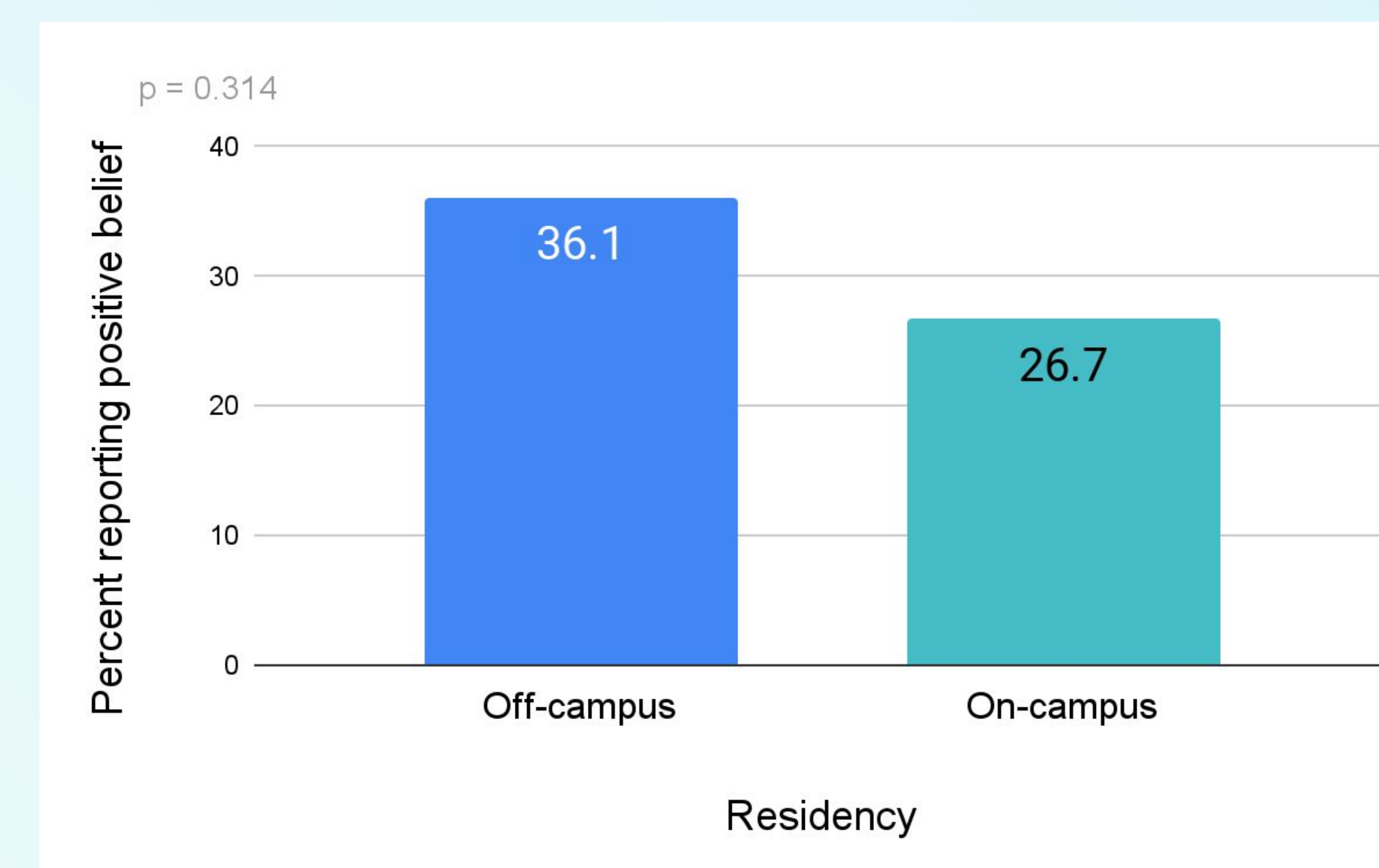
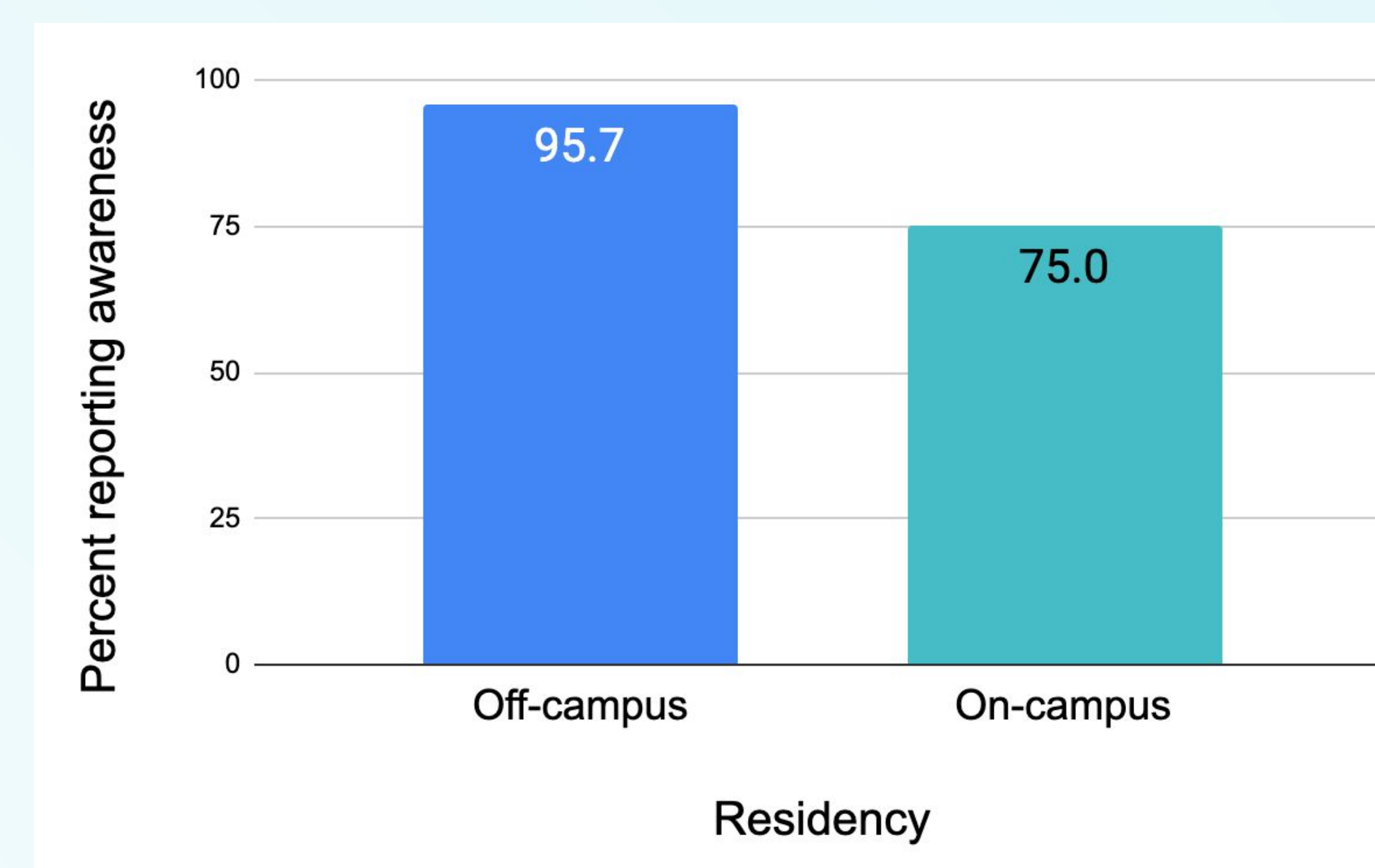


Figure 3. Awareness of food assistance programs by residency [F(1, N = 62) = 0.034, p < 0.05]



## Conclusion

A majority of on-campus residents believed campus residency had no effect on food quality or access. Significantly more off-campus students were aware of food aid programs, suggesting greater food insecurity in this group.

## Policy Implications

Policies to promote food assistance programs, publicize food banks, and establish grocery delivery services should be encouraged, particularly among students living off-campus.

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