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Food Insecurity Among University of California Employees

Frequently Asked Questions

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In October 2016, Occidental College's Urban & Environmental Policy Institute released a report, *Food Insecurity Among University of California Employees*. It found that more than two-thirds (70 percent) of UC's clerical, administrative, and support workers struggle to put adequate food on the table, which is considered food insecure according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture definition.

Journalists, elected officials, and others asked the coauthors of the report – Peter Dreier, Megan Bomba, and Rosa Romero – many questions about the report. Some of them dealt with the study's methodology. Below we have listed some of the most frequently asked questions and provided answers to them.

Did the Teamsters union pay Occidental College to conduct the survey and write this report?

No. The only role the Teamsters played was to email the survey to every member of the administrative, clerical, and support workers unit. The authors did the report pro bono.

How did the report come to be written?

Professor Peter Dreier of Occidental College and Teresa Conrow of the Teamsters union were speaking about the UC survey about food insecurity among UC students. They decided it would be interesting to compare that study to food insecurity among administrative support workers. Occidental College's Urban & Environmental Policy Institute developed the survey using the same questions included in the survey of UC students. The researchers asked the Teamsters union to send the survey to its approximately 14,000 members of Local 2010, which represents administrative, clerical and support workers. The Occidental College researchers then conducted the data analysis and authored the report.

Can we apply these findings to all 200,000 University of California employees?

No. As stated in the report, the survey was only sent to, and findings only apply to, the nearly 14,000 administrative, clerical, and support workers who are members of the Teamsters Local 2010 (CX-Unit).

Was there “self-selection” of the sample by the researchers, or did the Teamsters union only ask specific workers to respond to the survey?

No. The survey was emailed to all workers in the CX unit. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Select groups were not targeted for response.

How can we be sure the results of the sample are representative of the whole population – in this case, the nearly 14,000 administrative, clerical and support employees in the CX unit?

We can look at the demographic characteristics of the whole group, and compare them to the demographics of the respondent group. Beginning on page 10, the report documents how closely the respondent group’s characteristics compare to the whole population. For example, the UC knows that 81% of CX-Unit workers are female – the survey respondents were 81.5% female.

What was the response rate for the CX-Unit workers and how did it compare to the UC’s Student response rate, and what is typical?

The Occidental College survey achieved a response rate of 21.2%. The UC’s Student survey, administered as part of the National College Health Assessment II (NCHA) survey, achieved a 13.5% response rate. The typical NCHA response rate is between 10% and 35%.

Doesn’t the USDA recommend using an 18-question survey, not the 6-question survey used by Occidental College?

The USDA does have an 18-item and a 10-item survey, but when response burden is seen as a potential issue, the 6-item survey is an acceptable substitute.

How many questions were in the University of California’s Student Food Insecurity survey?

That study used a USDA 6-question survey. The Occidental College researchers used the same 6 questions when surveying the employee group.

How did the UC conduct their Student survey?

At each campus, randomly selected students were sent an email containing an informed consent letter and an online link to the survey. Participating students were entered into a lottery to win prizes.