

Topic Area: Food Security

Abstract Title:

Student food insecurity at Memorial University

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Objectives: Our study compared the prevalence of food insecurity among three population subgroups of students attending Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN): International, Canadian out-of-province (OOP), and Newfoundland and Labrador residents (NL). Factors potentially associated with a higher risk of food insecurity were also investigated, such as living arrangement and primary income source.

Methods: Data was collected via an online survey of an estimated 10,400 returning MUN students registered at a campus in St. John's. Respondents were recruited through e-mails, posters, and social media. Demographic data was collected and respondents were asked 10 questions from the Canadian Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) to assess food security status (adult scale). Logistic regression was used to compare rates of food insecurity between the three population subgroups.

Results: 971 of 1,486 participating students were deemed eligible. 39.9% of students were food insecure (moderate or severe). After controlling for program type, parental status, living arrangement, and primary income source, OOP and international students were 1.63 (95%CI = 1.11-2.40) and 3.04 (95%CI = 1.89-4.88) times more likely, respectively, to be food insecure than NL students.

Conclusion: Approximately 40% of MUN students experienced food insecurity, a higher proportion than reported for the overall provincial population. High risk groups include international students, students with children, and those relying on government funding as their primary income. Future research should further investigate why these particular groups are at a higher risk.

Significance to the field of dietetics: Food security remains an issue for many Canadians, including post-secondary students. Dietitians can play an important role in supporting community food programs and collaborating with other stakeholders on actions that help to alleviate food insecurity, including supports for post-secondary students.