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BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL WORKFORCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2019, nearly 550 instructional staff members from four community colleges and one university responded to a pilot #RealCollege survey designed specifically for faculty and staff members. This report describes the results of that pilot survey examining basic needs insecurity among educators (i.e., faculty members and instructors) in higher education.

The results indicate:

38%
of instructional staff respondents experienced **some form of basic needs insecurity** over the past year.

17%
of respondents experienced **food insecurity** in the prior 30 days.

33%
of respondents experienced **housing insecurity** in the previous year.

8%
of respondents experienced **homelessness** in the previous year.

Educators of color, LGBTQ educators, younger educators, part-time educators, and those earning relatively low incomes experienced disproportionately high rates of food and housing insecurity.

43%
of part-time educators experiencing basic needs insecurity utilized public benefits.

Educators carrying high debt loads, working more than one job, or working more than 60 hours a week had high rates of basic needs insecurity.

45%
of educators experiencing basic needs insecurity reported at least a moderate level of anxiety.

These are challenges that existed *before* the coronavirus pandemic, which has further increased job insecurity and unemployment rates, destabilized institutional and personal budgets, and threatened the physical and mental well-being of faculty. These crises for faculty and staff undoubtedly affected—and will continue to affect—the education of their students. Any college completion agenda must address the financial uncertainty facing educators.

INTRODUCTION

In the #RealCollege movement, we often say that "students are humans first." Clearly, educators are too. But research has focused primarily on the basic needs insecurity among students, finding that rates of food and housing insecurity, as well as homelessness, are high for elementary and secondary students, and continue to be high once students enter college.[1] Much less attention has been paid to the challenges created by basic needs insecurity of educators—the people who teach and support students.

The instructional workforce is quite different than it is depicted. While the national media tends to focus on gray-haired professors happily enjoying the comforts of full-time work and tenure,[2] almost half of educators work part-time and the vast majority (73%) are not part of the tenure system.[3] More than three-quarters of full-time faculty are white and more than half are male, while minoritized faculty are disproportionately part-time and not on the tenure track.[4] And their lives are often economically precarious.[5]

In spring 2019, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) surveyed its membership and found that 26% of respondents employed as adjunct faculty reported having trouble accessing adequate food or having to reduce the amount of food they ate. In addition, nearly one in four utilized public assistance programs to make ends meet.[6] As an organization focused on access to basic needs, we wanted to expand on AFT's survey, and piloted a new #RealCollege survey at five institutions of higher education during the 2019 fall term.

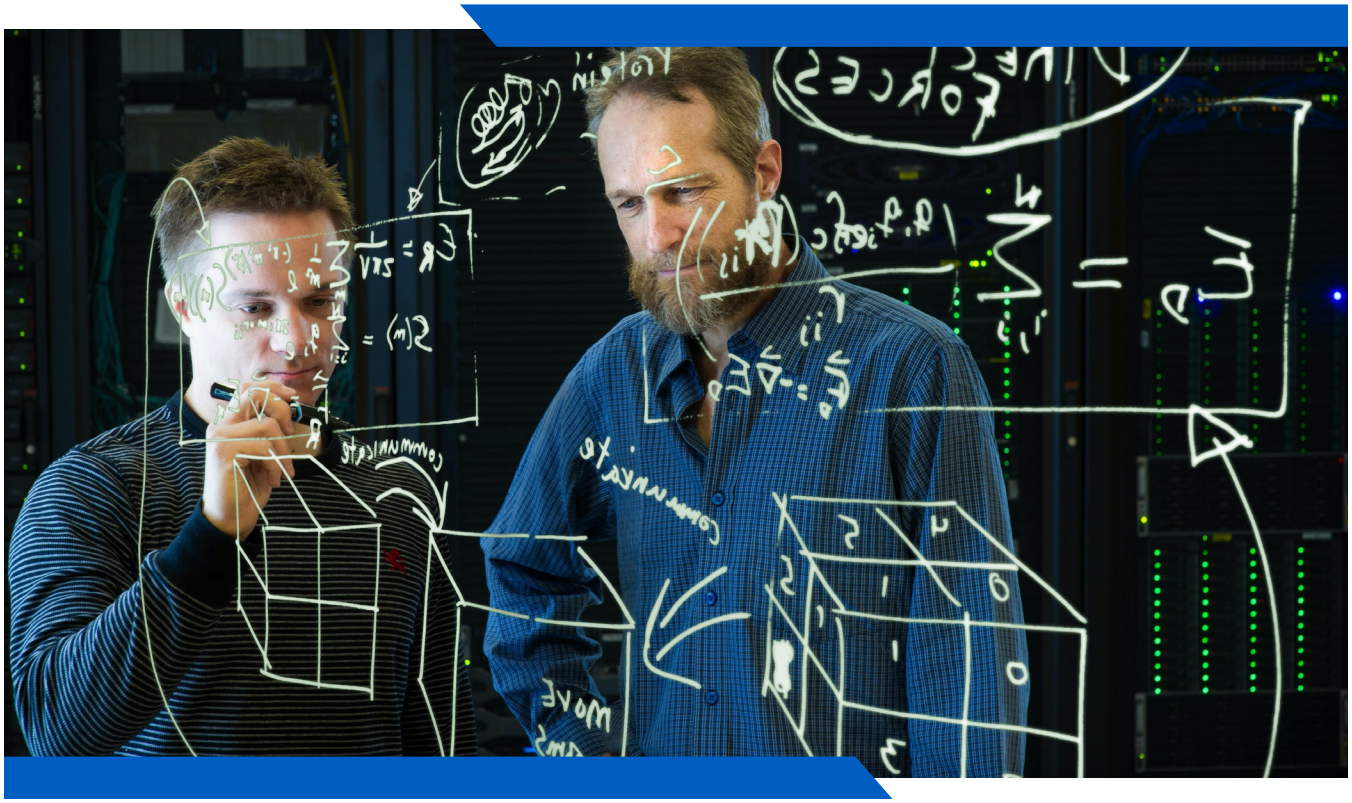
Since that survey was fielded, the coronavirus pandemic has upended the lives of students and educators at colleges and universities nationwide. Our most recent report on students (released in June 2020) suggests that basic needs insecurity is increasing as unemployment rates rise and institutions remain closed or operating at limited capacity due to the pandemic. We strongly suspect that because of institutional budget cuts and household budgetary pressures, the living conditions of teaching staff are declining as well.

But, as with the difficulties facing students, many of the challenges facing instructional staff existed before the pandemic. For decades, the new economics of college have reshaped the higher education workforce. Long-term decreases in state funding contributed to cost-cutting strategies, including the increased use of contingent faculty and reductions in per-student staff support.[7] Student loan debt is skyrocketing, a financial reality often felt by higher education instructional staff, who are usually required to obtain graduate degrees and thus, likely to accrue additional debt.[8] Despite the popular perception of the aforementioned tenured, full-time professors, who account for just 22% of the workforce, wages for many instructional staff have been stagnant or in decline for decades, with some segments even falling into poverty.[9]

The precarious economic situations of instructional staff and students are related.[10] The Delphi Project summarizes several core findings from existing research:[11]

- Poor working conditions inhibit instruction and the ability to advise students, potentially harming their classroom performance and hampering their choice of a major.
- Financial pressure and time constraints, as well as stress, likely cause instructors to offer students lower quality and less frequent opportunities for interaction.
- Instructors with poor working conditions are less likely to use effective practices while teaching or ensure academic rigor in their instruction, and they are more likely to engage in grade inflation.
- A heavier reliance on part-time, non-tenured faculty is associated with lower graduation and retention rates, and lower rates of transfer from community colleges to universities.

This report spotlights the economic challenges facing educators, as evidenced through their basic needs insecurity. It is merely an initial look, considering the instructional workforce at five institutions, and is intended to stimulate greater consideration of the working conditions in higher education. Institutions must pay attention to the basic needs of everyone on campus, not only students. Such attention is critical to diversity, equity, and inclusion—commitments many colleges and universities profess to have made or to believe are essential to their academic missions.



SECTION 1 | PILOTING THE #REALCOLLEGE FACULTY & STAFF SURVEY

INSTRUMENT

In the absence of any federal or state data on the subject, the Hope Center created the #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey to evaluate access to affordable food and housing among faculty, staff, and administrators. The survey consisted of 70 questions on an array of topics, framed as an inquiry into the respondent's life, not as a discussion specifically about hunger or homelessness. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice provided the email invitation language shown below.

> Dear [fill faculty/staff first name]
>
> It's not every day that you get the chance to share what's really happening in your life, with the express goal of improving supports for faculty at [COLLEGE NAME]. This is your chance. You're an expert, and we need to hear from you.
>
> Please share your experiences by taking this short #RealCollege survey. Your name is not being collected, and everything you share will be kept confidential. All staff and faculty at [COLLEGE NAME] are being sent this survey.
>
> Click here to share your story. [SURVEY LINKED HERE]
>
> We truly appreciate you. Participants have a chance to win $500, and notification will happen in late fall.

SAMPLE

Our pilot sample includes instructional staff from institutions that also participated in the fall 2019 #RealCollege Student Survey, as one goal was to compare basic needs insecurity among students and staff at the same location. Five institutions fielded the survey:

- Compton College (California)
- Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (Virginia)
- Massasoit Community College (Massachusetts)
- Metropolitan State University of Denver (Colorado)
- North Lake College (Texas)

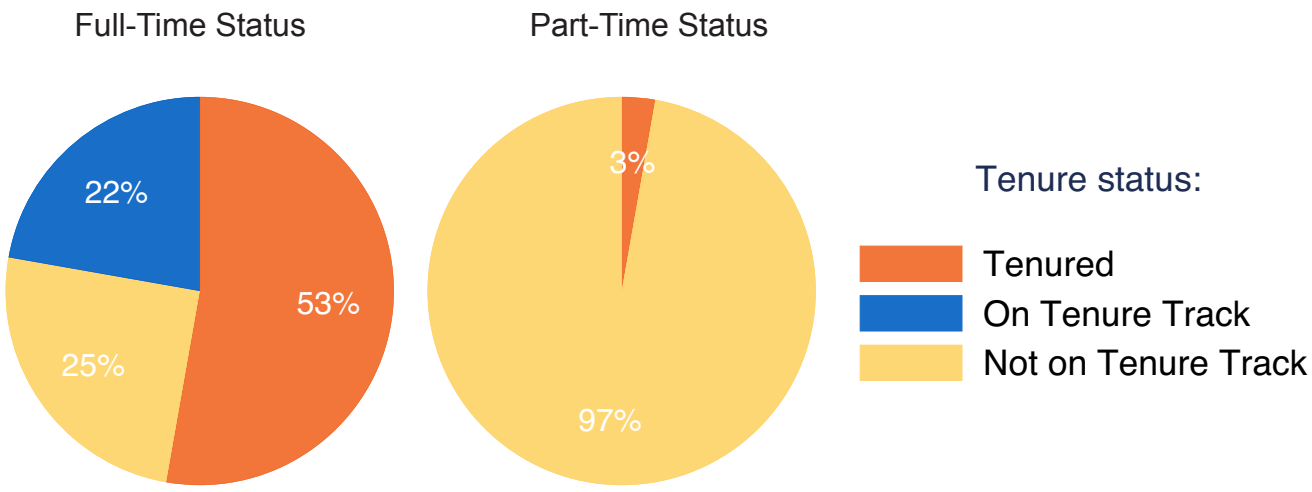
The survey was sent electronically to faculty and staff at these five institutions beginning October 1, 2019, and data collection ended November 25. In this report, we focus on the responses of

instructional staff—that is, those who identified their primary role at the participating institution as faculty member or instructor. In total, 549 instructional staff members responded across the five institutions—a response rate of 19%. Institutional response rates varied from 12% to 25%. The web appendices contain additional methodological details, including information on the use of weighting.

Each respondent was asked to identify their role, their intensity of employment (full-time vs. part-time), and their tenure status (not on tenure track, on tenure track, or tenured). Only one-third of this sample (32%) is full-time and roughly one-quarter (26%) are either tenured or on the tenure track, both of which are lower than the national averages, based on the most recent data.[12]

Among full-time instructional staff, 53% are tenured, 22% are on the tenure track, and 25% are not on the tenure track. Ninety-five percent of part-time instructional staff are classified as either adjunct or contingent faculty and nearly all (97%) are not on the tenure track.

FIGURE 1 | Tenure Status Of Survey Respondents, By Employment Intensity



SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights, refer to the web appendices.

Respondents to the 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey at the five participating colleges do not constitute a representative sample of the national instructional workforce. The overwhelming majority of full-time survey respondents are White (77%), but an even greater proportion of part-time respondents are White (84%). About half of full-time and part-time respondents self-identify as female. Lastly, nearly twice as many Hispanic or Latinx respondents are full-time instructional staff than are part-time, 14% and 8%, respectively.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ARE EMPLOYEES TOO

About one in five instructional staff members in the U.S. are graduate student employees, and they typically serve as teaching assistants.[13] Teaching assistantships play a critical part in training graduate students for careers in academia, but they are often time intensive. Many students receive little to no support or guidance on courses they teach. Moreover, because these teaching assistantships are not always tied to program requirements, they can impede students' time-to-degree if students take on multiple course loads. Yet many graduate students accept assistantships outside of their financial aid packages to help cover rising program costs. Graduate students are included in our 2020 report on student basic needs, #RealCollege 2020: Five Years of Evidence on Basic Needs Insecurity.

SECTION 2 | PREVALENCE OF BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY AMONG INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

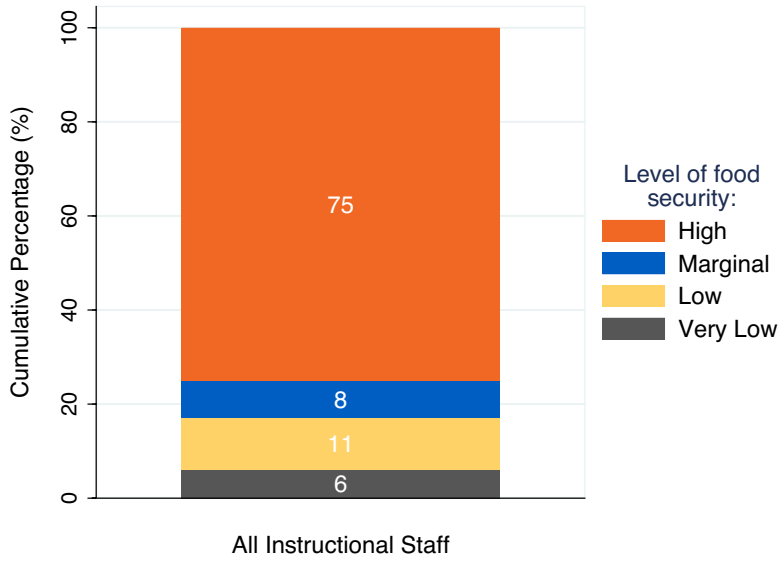
This section examines the prevalence of food insecurity during the month prior to the survey, and the prevalence of housing insecurity and homelessness during the previous year.

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner. The most extreme form is often accompanied by physiological sensations of hunger. The survey assesses food security among instructional staff using the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 18-item set of questions.[14]

During the 30 days preceding the survey, approximately 17% of instructional staff experienced food insecurity, with 11% assessed at the low level and 6% at the very low level of food security (Figure 2). As shown in Figure 3, almost one in five respondents (18%) could not afford to eat balanced meals and 5% of respondents ate less than they should because they did not have enough money for food. These rates correspond to the findings from the AFT survey of contingent faculty, in which 26% of respondents had problems accessing adequate food or opted to reduce the quality of food they ate to get by, and 6% of respondents had to eat less to get by in the previous year.[15]

FIGURE 2 | Food Security Of Survey Respondents



SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | According to the USDA, individuals at either low or very low food security are considered "food insecure." Cumulative percentage may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or the food security module used in this report, refer to the web appendices.

FIGURE 3 | Instructional Staff Responses To Questions On Food Security

I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.	21%
I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.	18%
I cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food.	17%
The food that I bought did not last and I did not have the money to buy more.	16%
I cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food (three or more times).	14%
I ate less than I felt I should because there was not enough money for food.	5%
I was hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money for food.	5%
I lost weight because there was not enough money for food.	2%
I did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food.	1%
I did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food (three or more times).	<1%

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | For more details on the food security module used in this report, refer to the web appendices.

HOUSING INSECURITY AND HOMELESSNESS

Housing insecurity includes a broad set of housing challenges that prevent someone from having a safe, affordable, and consistent place to live. Housing insecurity among educators was assessed with a nine-item set of questions developed by the Hope Center, which looks at factors such as the ability to pay rent or utilities and the need to move frequently.

Thirty-three percent of instructional staff experienced housing insecurity in the past 12 months (Figure 4). The most commonly reported challenge was experiencing a rent or mortgage increase that made it difficult to pay (21%). Three percent of survey respondents left their household because they felt unsafe.

FIGURE 4 | Housing Insecurity Among Survey Respondents

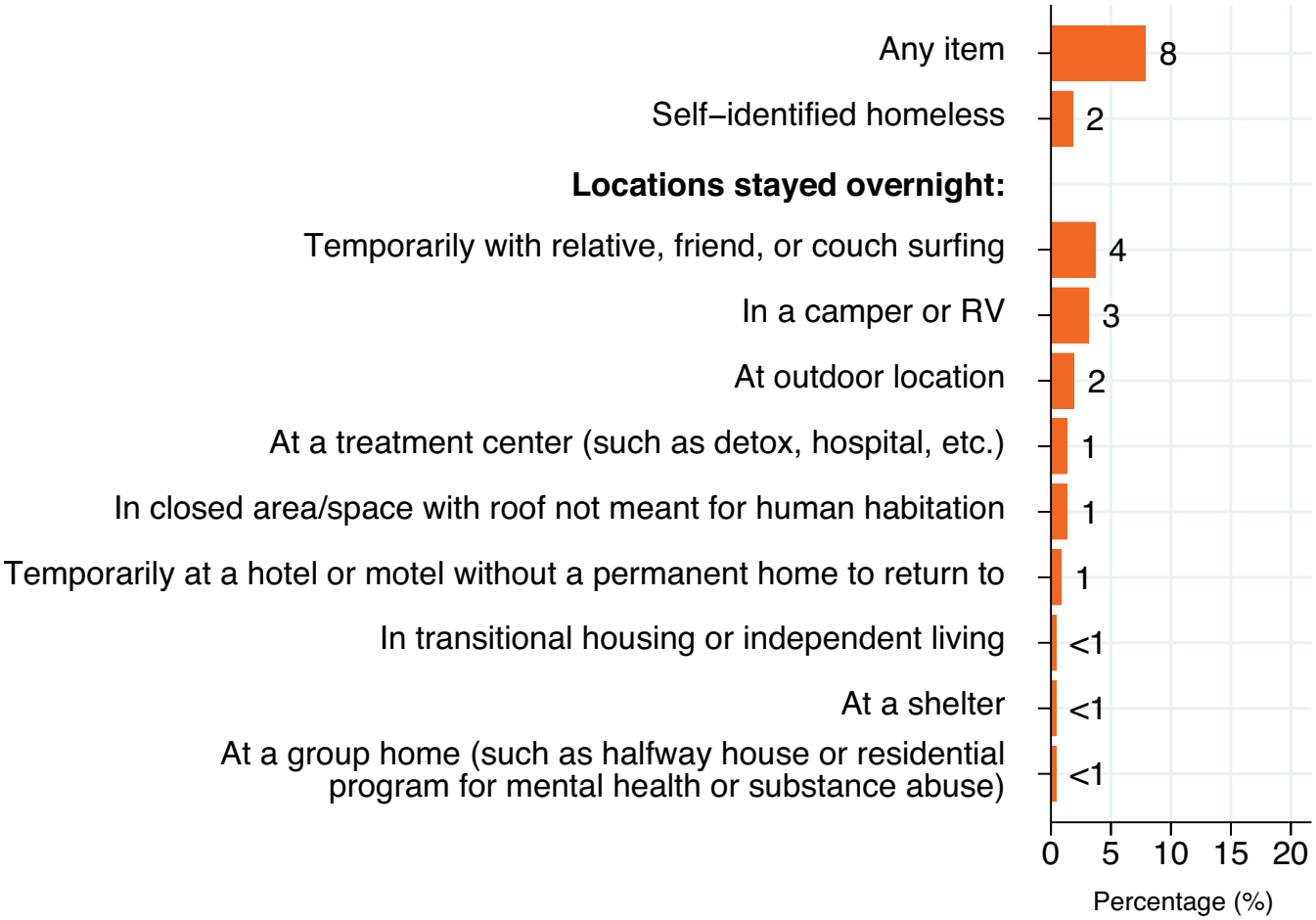
Any item	**33%**
Had a rent or mortgage increase that made it difficult to pay	**21%**
Did not pay full amount of utilities	**12%**
Did not pay full amount of rent or mortgage	**12%**
Had an account default or go into collections	**7%**
Lived with others beyond the expected capacity of the housing	**6%**
Moved in with people due to financial problems	**6%**
Left household because felt unsafe	**3%**
Moved three or more times	**1%**
Received a summons to appear in housing court	**0%**

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or the housing insecurity module used in this report, refer to the web appendices.

Homelessness means that a person does not have a fixed, regular, and adequate place to live. Educators were identified as experiencing homelessness if they responded affirmatively to a question asking if they had been homeless or they identified living conditions that are considered signs of homelessness. California State University researchers developed the tool used in this report to assess homelessness.

Homelessness affected 8% of survey respondents (Figure 5). Two percent of respondents self-identified as homeless; 6% experienced homelessness but did not self-identify as homeless. Most educators who experienced homelessness temporarily stayed with a relative or friend, couch surfed, or slept in a camper or RV.[16]

FIGURE 5 | Homelessness Among Survey Respondents



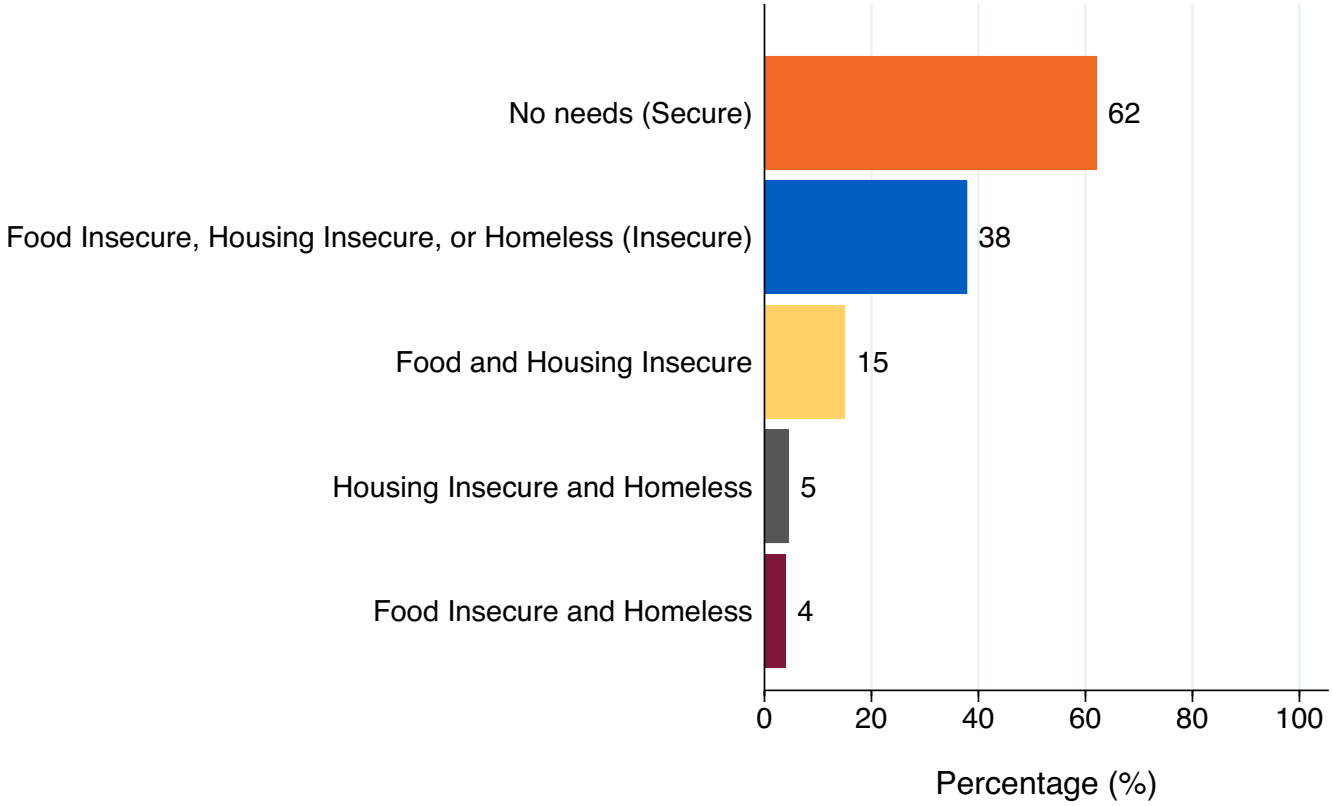
SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or the homelessness module used in this report, refer to the web appendices.

OVERLAPPING CHALLENGES

Individuals and families often experience basic needs insecurity in one or more forms, either simultaneously or over time. Instructional staff are no exception; respondents face overlapping challenges, which demonstrates that basic needs insecurities are fluid and interconnected.

Thirty-eight percent of educators responding to the survey experienced food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness during the previous year (Figure 6). Fifteen percent of respondents experienced both food and housing insecurity in the past year.

FIGURE 6 | Intersections Of Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents



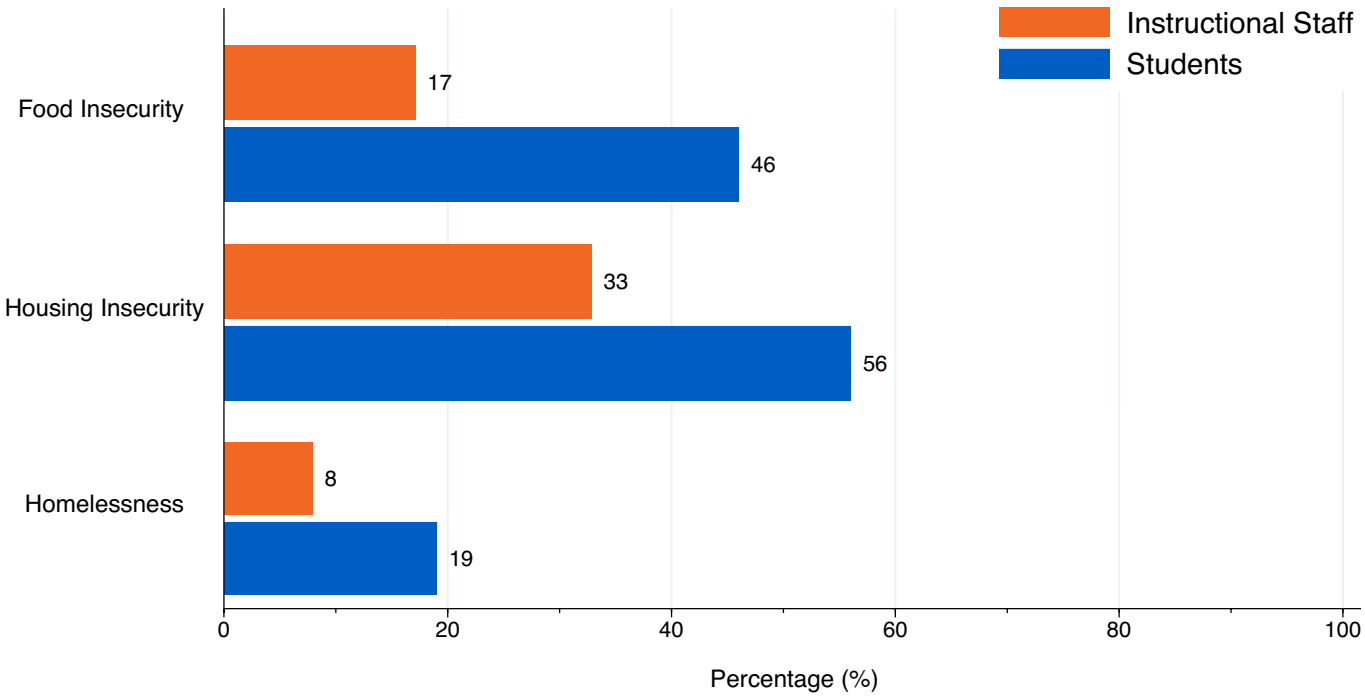
SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

COMPARISONS OF BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY AMONG EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS AT THE SAME INSTITUTION

Next, we compare rates of basic needs insecurity among educators to rates assessed for students. Since students and instructional staff were surveyed at the same time, we make within-institution comparisons.

In general, rates of basic needs insecurity were lower among instructional staff than among students at the same college or university (Figure 7). Seventeen percent of educator respondents experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days, compared to 46% of student respondents at the same colleges. One-third of educators experienced housing insecurity in the previous year while more than half (56%) of students at those colleges did. And 8% of educators experienced homelessness in the previous year, in contrast to 19% of students at those same colleges.

FIGURE 7 | Basic Needs Insecurity Among Educators And Students

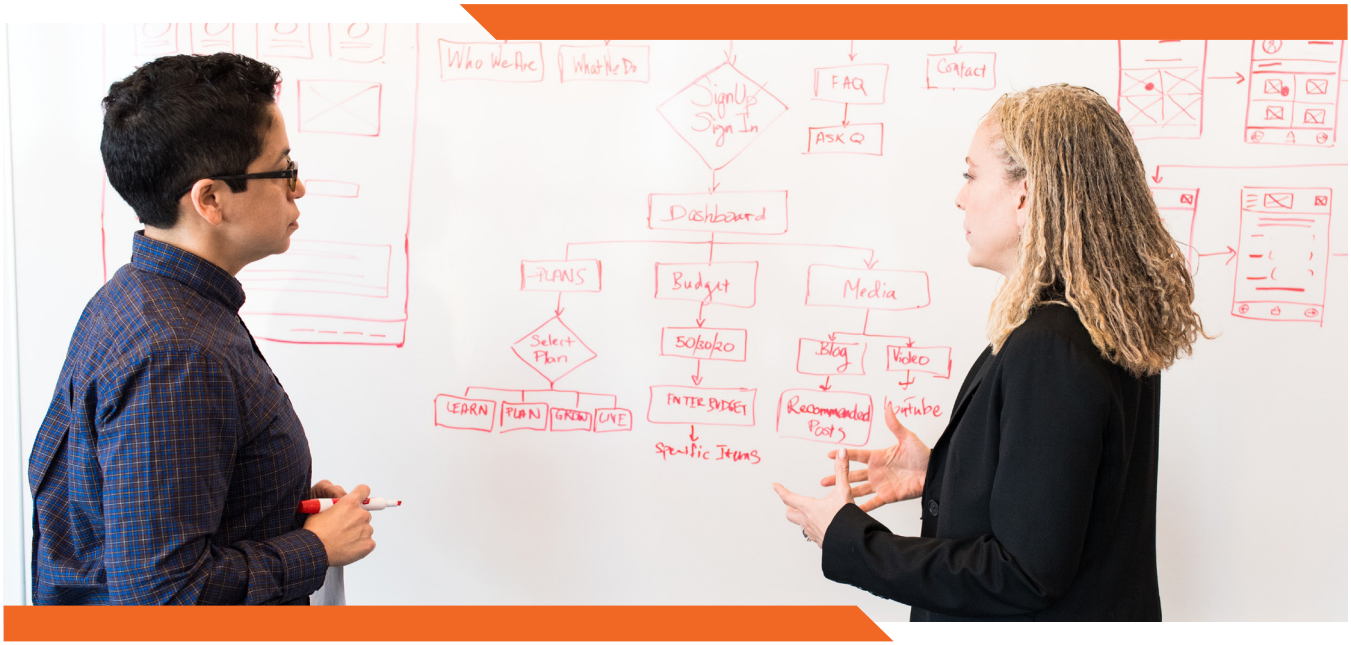


SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey and 2019 #RealCollege Student Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

SECTION 3 | DISPARITIES IN BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

The Hope Center's prior work on college students' access to basic needs has consistently found that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), as well as those facing other and often overlapping forms of oppression (e.g., class, gender identity, sexual orientation), experience a disproportionately high risk of basic needs insecurity.[17] Results from the 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey also reveal that the lived experiences of those working in higher education vary by their employment circumstances. This section highlights disparities in basic needs insecurity among instructional staff by demographic, family, and employment characteristics.

For more on demographic disparities and additional tables with information on survey participants, refer to the web appendices.



Racial and ethnic disparities in basic needs insecurity are evident among college educators (Table 1). Instructional staff who identify as White experienced relatively low rates of food insecurity (16%) compared to respondents who identify as Hispanic or Latinx (22%) or a member of another racial or ethnic group (Other: 41%).

Rates of housing insecurity were generally higher than rates of food insecurity among survey respondents in every racial and ethnic category. Instructional staff who identify as a member of a racial or ethnic group other than White, African American or Black, Hispanic or Latinx, or Asian American or Pacific Islander experienced homelessness the most (Other: 21%), followed by their White colleagues (9%). Rates of homelessness among African American or Black and Asian American or Pacific Islander respondents were the lowest.

TABLE 1 | Disparities In Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Race And Ethnicity

	Number of Instructional Staff	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
Racial or ethnic background				
African American or Black	161	18	46	2
Asian American or Pacific Islander	75	14	49	0
Hispanic or Latinx	246	22	35	7
White	2,031	16	31	9
Other	93	41	52	21

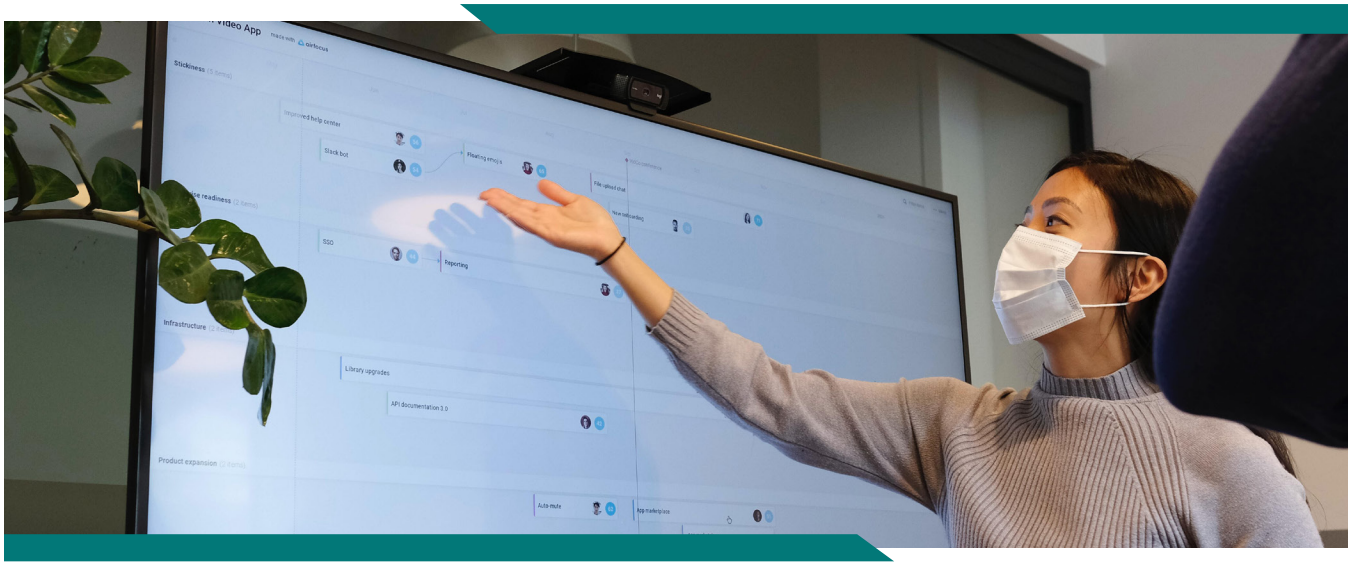
SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. Classifications of racial or ethnic background are not mutually exclusive. Respondents could self-identify with multiple classifications. Those respondents categorized as having an "Other" racial or ethnic background self-identified as Indigenous, American Indian, Alaska Native, Middle Eastern, North African, Arab, Arab American, or provided their own response. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are also related to whether educators experienced basic needs insecurity (Table 2). Rates of food insecurity and homelessness were lower among respondents who identify as female compared to respondents who identify as male. Instructional staff who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or non-binary (LGBTQ) were more likely to experience food insecurity (30%) or housing insecurity (45%) than their non-LGBTQ colleagues (15% and 31%, respectively).

TABLE 2 | Disparities In Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Gender Identity And LGBTQ Identity

	Number of Instructional Staff	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
Gender identity				
Female	1,345	14	31	7
Male	1,088	21	34	9
LGBTQ				
Yes	233	30	45	5
No	2,277	15	31	8

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. Classifications of gender identity are not mutually exclusive. Individuals could self-identify with multiple classifications. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.



Some family characteristics are also associated with a greater-than-average risk of basic needs insecurity (Table 3). For example, educators who were married or in domestic partnerships had lower rates of food and housing insecurity than their counterparts. Moreover, individuals who experienced a divorce or the loss of a spouse were particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity.

Nationally, households with children, particularly those with young children, experience higher rates of food insecurity than households without children.[18] But our results show that educators with children at home experience similar rates of food insecurity as their colleagues without children at home (18% and 17%, respectively). In terms of housing security, 37% of respondents with children at home were housing insecure compared to 30% of respondents without children at home. However, respondents with children experienced slightly lower levels of homelessness (6%) than their colleagues without children (9%).

TABLE 3 | Disparities In Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Family Characteristics

	Number of Instructional Staff	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
Relationship status				
Single	334	24	36	4
In a relationship	219	37	45	24
Married or domestic partnership	1,686	11	28	6
Divorced or widowed	219	24	52	7
Children in the household				
Yes	1,103	18	37	6
No	1,475	17	30	9

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

For more than a decade, multiple studies have warned about the "graying of the professoriate" and how it impedes younger faculty and others aspiring to become professors.[19] Comparing survey participants by their generational status highlights potential lived-experience differences and their basic need outcomes.

Five generations are represented in the 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey:

SILENT
Born before 1946
&
BOOMERS
Born between 1946 and 1964

MAKE UP
42%
OF SAMPLE

GEN X
Born between 1965 and 1980

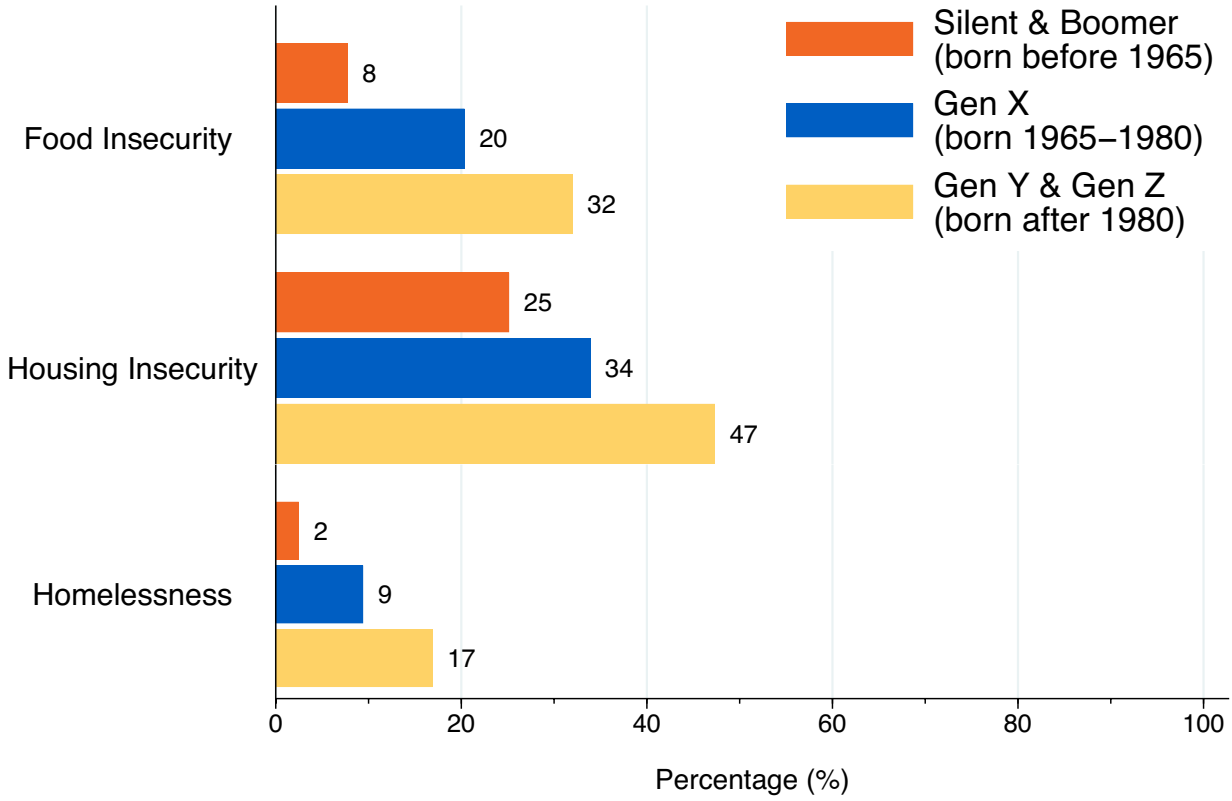
MAKES UP
40%
OF SAMPLE

GEN Y (MILLENIAL)
Born between 1981 and 1996
&
GEN Z
Born after 1996

MAKE UP
19%
OF SAMPLE

As shown in Figure 8, educators from generations Y and Z are more likely to face basic needs insecurity than their older colleagues. For example, nearly one-third of the two youngest generations experienced food insecurity and 47% experienced housing insecurity. Moreover, they were also almost twice as likely as Generation Xers to have experienced homelessness in the previous year. These high rates of basic needs insecurity may put young educators at greater risk of leaving the higher education profession.

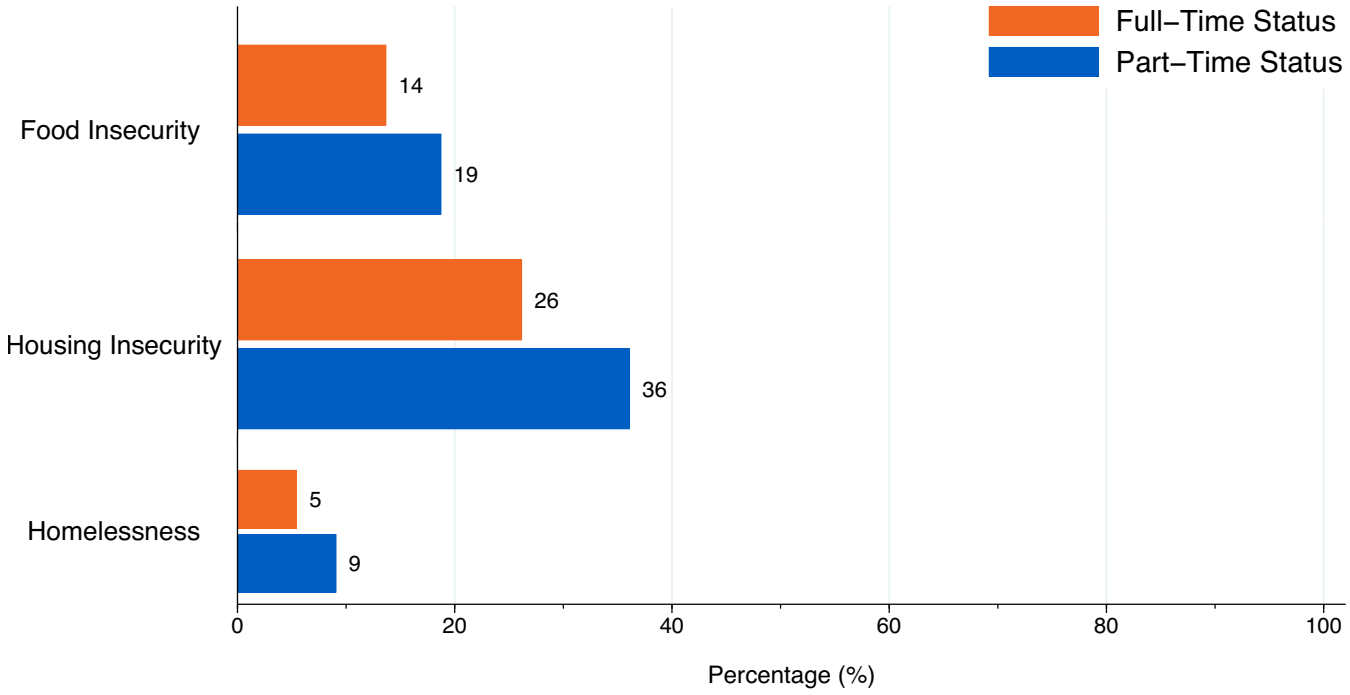
FIGURE 8 | Disparities In Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Generation Status



SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

Rates of basic needs insecurity also differ widely by the employment intensity of instructional staff. For instance, part-time respondents experienced higher rates of food and housing insecurity than full-time respondents (Figure 9). About one-quarter of full-time educators experienced housing insecurity, while more than one-third of part-time educators did.

FIGURE 9 | Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Employment Intensity



SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

Newly hired employees—those who have worked at an institution for less than a year—experienced food insecurity at much higher rates than those who have been at an institution for more than 10 years (30% and 7%, respectively; Table 4). Similarly, those who have worked in higher education for at least two decades have far lower rates of basic needs insecurity than those who have been in higher education for less than five years.

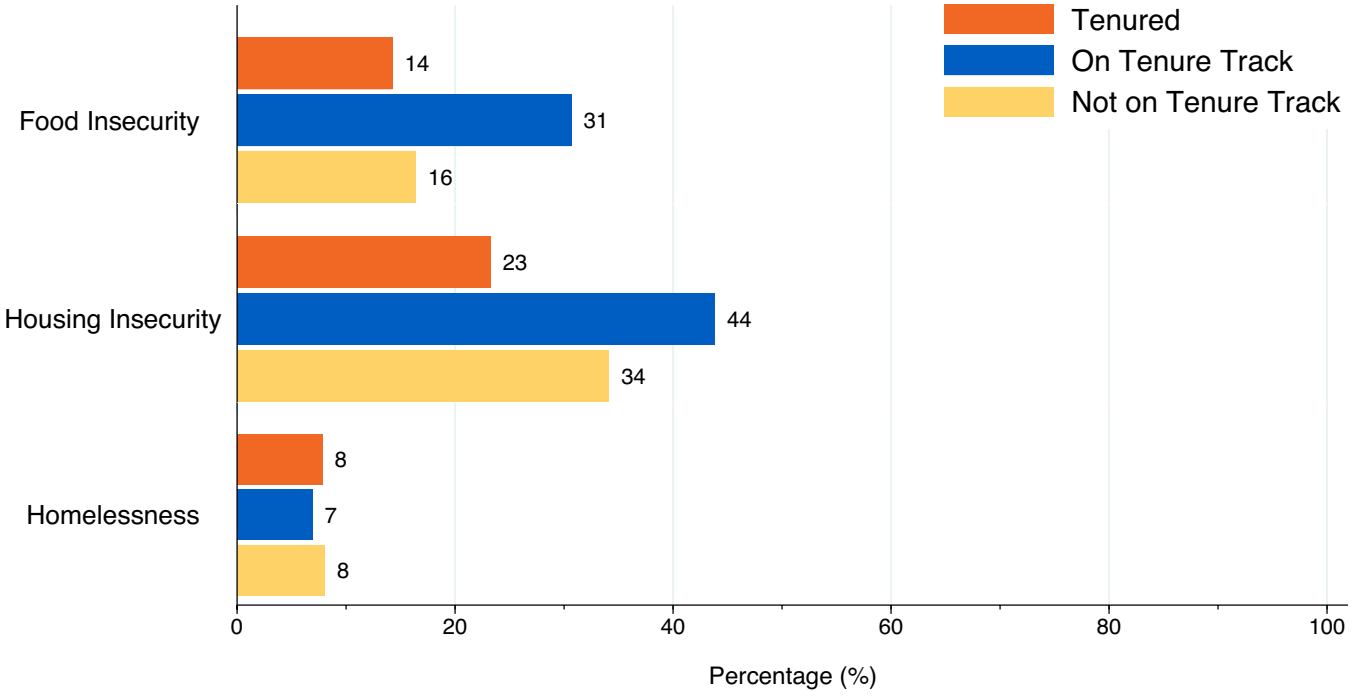
TABLE 4 | Disparities In Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Employment Circumstances

	Number of Instructional Staff	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
Years worked at institution				
Less than 1	270	30	46	15
1 or 2	339	22	41	7
3 to 5	615	21	38	9
6 to 10	508	19	34	6
More than 10	828	7	22	6
Years worked in higher education				
Less than 5	496	27	43	16
5 to 9	510	19	44	4
10 to 14	509	24	37	11
15 to 19	385	13	29	4
20 or more	652	7	18	5

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

Figure 10 shows that survey respondents who identified as being on the tenure track, but not yet tenured, had the highest rates of food insecurity (31%) and housing insecurity (44%), followed by those not on the tenure track (16% food insecure and 34% housing insecure). Rates of homelessness, however, did not vary by tenure status.

FIGURE 10 | Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Tenure Status



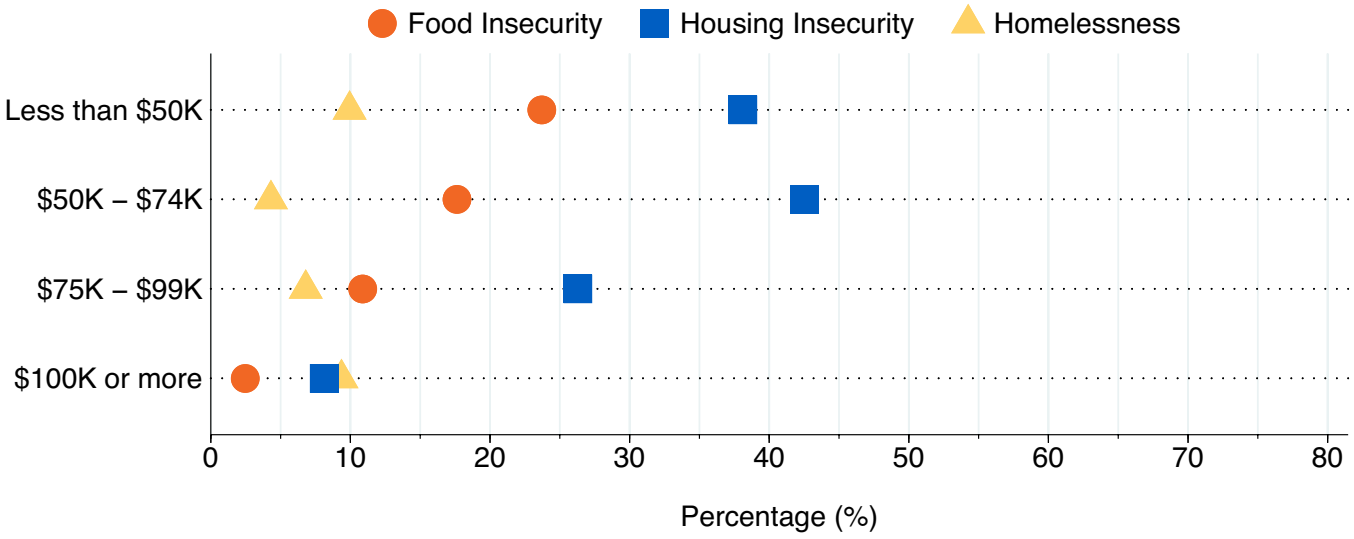
SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

> I'm an adjunct instructor at a well-respected liberal arts university, and I love my job. I really do. I wish I could tell you my name, but I worry that if I did, my contract wouldn't be renewed next semester.
>
> If you asked my friends, most would say that I do alright for myself. But that's not true. I think they would be shocked to know that I have to buy most of my clothing at thrift stores and that I frequent food banks on a regular basis.
>
> Last year, I made a total of just under $20,000. To earn that amount, I taught a total of five classes over the spring and fall terms, and since I wasn't offered summer teaching, and worked at a local non-profit. During the breaks between semesters, I qualified for SNAP (food stamps).
>
> My university does not offer me any health care coverage. Instead, I pay over $100 each month out-of-pocket for my prescriptions, not including what I have to shell out regularly for doctor's visits. Two weeks ago, I had to pay $35 for a flu shot. $35 might not seem like a lot to most people. It's a lot to me.
>
> The Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj did a fantastic piece called "Is College Still Worth It?" I believe it accurately depicted the plight of many adjuncts. Unfortunately, most of the adjunct instructors I know are dealing with those situations too. Yes, college students are struggling, and that's truly horrible. Unfortunately, many of their instructors are, too.

According to the USDA, 32% of those in low-income households—whose income is less than 185% of the poverty threshold—experience food insecurity.[20] In other words, about one-third of all four-person families with an annual income of $47,638 experience food insecurity.[21] Somewhat similarly, those educators who earned less than $50,000 a year experienced food insecurity at higher rates than those who earned $50,000 or more (Figure 10). Since two-thirds of part-time instructional staff earned less than $50,000, compared to only 3% of full-time instructional staff (not shown), part-time respondents are particularly at risk of experiencing food insecurity.

The rate of housing insecurity for those earning at least $75,000 a year was about 10 percentage points lower than the rate for their colleagues earning less than $75,000 a year. In addition, about 10% of instructional staff earning less than $50,000 a year or earning more than $100,000 a year experienced homelessness in the prior year. However, it's important to note that self-reported annual income only reflects individual earnings, not household earnings.

FIGURE 11 | Disparities In Basic Needs Insecurities, By Annual Income Of All Jobs (Before Taxes)



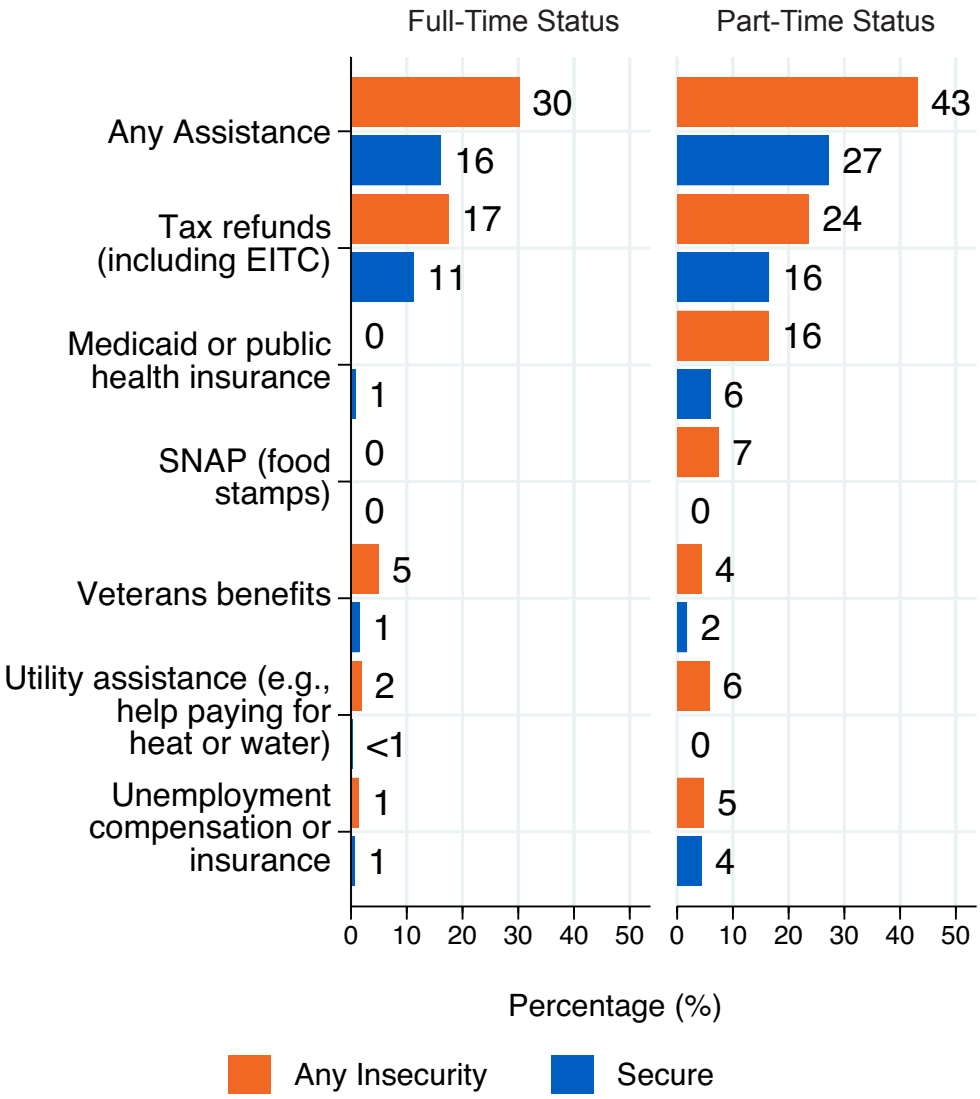
SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights or how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

PUBLIC BENEFITS

According to AFT's recent survey of contingent faculty, one in four subsidized their wages by participating in public assistance programs.[22] Similarly, reporting by the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, indicates 25% of part-time faculty across the nation received public assistance.[23] Our results, however, indicate that about a third of part-time instructional staff, the vast majority of whom (95%) are adjunct or contingent, received public benefits (not shown). Although, as shown in Figure 12, part-time respondents who experienced basic needs insecurity received public benefits at higher rates (43%) than their secure, part-time colleagues did (27%). Figure 12 also shows that part-time respondents received public benefits at higher rates than their full-time colleagues.

The benefits utilized the most include tax refunds, Medicaid or public health insurance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamps. However, the use of benefits by basic needs insecure educators was low compared with national percentages. For example, only 7% of part-time educators who experienced some form of basic needs insecurity reported using SNAP benefits, whereas the USDA reports 44% of food insecure households receive SNAP benefits.[24] Given the income eligibility requirements of many of these public benefits programs, some instructional staff may not have access to these additional supports despite needing them.[25]

FIGURE 12 | Utilization Of Public Benefits Among Survey Respondents, By Basic Needs Security And Employment Intensity



SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | Not all types of public assistance asked about in the survey are included in the figure above. Percentages are based on weighted sample. For more details on survey weights, how basic needs insecurity was constructed, or rates of utilization for other types of public assistance, refer to the web appendices.

SECTION 4 | ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATORS

Faculty in higher education face additional challenges beyond meeting their basic needs. In this section, we examine basic needs insecurity by debt load, working conditions, and mental health.

STUDENT LOAN AND CREDIT CARD DEBT

Holding debt is an all-too-common experience in the United States and likely contributes to the basic needs insecurity status of individuals and families. Student loan debt is particularly relevant to higher education teaching staff because of their high levels of degree attainment and the debt that often accompanies those degrees; this is especially true for those who earned a post-graduate degree within the last two decades.[26] Nationally, 48% of students who recently completed a research doctorate had student loans, as did more than half of post-baccalaureate certificate holders, 60% of those with Master's degrees, and three out of four of those with professional doctorates (e.g., medical or law degree).[27] Not only are more graduate students taking on debt than they did in the past, but the amount of that debt is increasing as well. According to a national study on student debt, students recently completing a professional doctorate accumulate the greatest average student loan debt ($183,200), followed by students completing a research doctorate ($106,400), students completing a post-baccalaureate certificate ($66,500), and students completing a Master's degree ($64,800).[28]

According to the Hope Center's survey results, 23% of educators with student loan or credit card debt experienced food insecurity, 40% experienced housing insecurity, and 8% experienced homelessness (Table 5). In comparison, just 5% of educators without student loan or credit card debt experienced food insecurity and 19% experienced housing insecurity; the percentage who experienced homelessness was the same as for those with debt (8%).

Rates of basic needs insecurity vary by the amount of debt one has, particularly in student loans. For example, 42% of those with at least $75,000 in student loan debt experienced food insecurity, compared to 10% of respondents with less than $5,000 in student loan debt. Similarly, 61% of respondents with $75,000 or more in student loan debt experienced housing insecurity, followed by almost half of those who owe between $5,000 and $20,000 in student loan debt. Rates of homelessness, however, do not appear to be strongly associated with student loan debt.

The differences in rates of basic needs insecurity by credit card debt are similar to, though not as stark as, the patterns seen for student loan debt, but fewer instructional staff have large amounts of credit card debt.

TABLE 5 | Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Type And Level Of Debt

	Number of Instructional Staff	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
Has student loan or credit card debt				
Yes	1,781	23	40	8
No	763	5	19	8
Student loan debt				
None	1,507	10	23	8
$1–$5,000	64	10	33	13
$5,001–$20,000	192	19	49	4
$20,001–$50,000	212	13	30	6
$50,000–$75,000	111	30	39	5
$75,000 or more	458	42	61	11
Credit card debt				
None	1,076	10	22	7
$1–$5,000	640	23	33	8
$5,001–$20,000	550	20	45	6
$20,001–$50,000	164	31	53	17
$50,000–$75,000	66	18	72	7
$75,000 or more	48	31	50	19

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

Like many Americans, instructional staff rely on their income to cover a variety of other necessities.[29] Half of respondents with children paid at least $200 a week for child care (not shown) and 29% of all instructional staff paid at least $25 a week in travel costs (not shown). Moreover, contingent faculty often need to obtain health insurance from somewhere other than their employer.[30] In addition to covering their own basic needs, nearly 60% of educator respondents reported helping others pay for expenses such as loans, education-related costs, and medical bills.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Like many Americans, particularly those working in educational services, healthcare, and the social-assistance industry, instructional staff often take on multiple jobs in order to make ends meet.[31] Instructional staff working more than one job—61% of survey respondents—have higher rates of basic needs insecurity than their colleagues working only one job (Table 6). Twenty-seven percent of respondents working three or more jobs experienced food insecurity, while 8% of respondents working one job did. Moreover, half of those working three or more jobs experienced housing insecurity and 12% experienced homelessness. Similarly, 29% of those working more than 60 hours per week also reported experiencing food insecurity, and 48% reported experiencing housing insecurity; these rates of basic needs insecurity are higher than those for their colleagues working less than 60 hours per week.

Among those who felt they were under-employed (i.e., those who felt they were over-qualified for their current position), 27% experienced food insecurity, 44% experienced housing insecurity, and 12% experienced homelessness. In comparison, among those who did not believe they were under-employed, 13% experienced food insecurity, 27% experienced housing insecurity, and 6% experienced homelessness.

TABLE 6 | Basic Needs Insecurity Among Survey Respondents, By Working Conditions

	Number of Instructional Staff	Food Insecurity (%)	Housing Insecurity (%)	Homelessness (%)
Total number of jobs				
One	975	8	17	7
Two	891	16	34	4
Three or more	665	27	51	12
Total hours worked per week across all jobs				
0–19 hours	289	13	20	7
20–39 hours	441	14	35	6
40–49 hours	567	12	31	8
50–59 hours	571	18	30	6
60 hours or more	548	29	48	12
Under-employed (are you over-qualified for your current position?)				
Yes	783	27	44	12
No	1,790	13	27	6

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of homelessness. The number of survey respondents for our measures of food insecurity and housing insecurity may vary slightly. For more details on how each measure of basic needs insecurity was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

MENTAL HEALTH

As shown in Table 7, more than one in four instructional staff report at least a moderate level of anxiety. Differences in anxiety levels by employment intensity were relatively minor. Not surprisingly, educators experiencing basic needs insecurity also experience higher levels of moderate and severe anxiety than their colleagues whose basic needs are secure. Twenty percent of basic needs insecure instructional staff experience severe anxiety.

TABLE 7 | Level Of Anxiety Among Survey Respondents, By Employment Intensity And Basic Needs Insecurity Status

	Number of Instructional Staff	Minimal Anxiety (%)	Mild Anxiety (%)	Moderate Anxiety (%)	Severe Anxiety (%)
Total	2,519	52	21	15	12
Employment intensity					
Full-time	847	49	26	11	13
Part-time	1,672	54	18	18	11
Basic needs insecurity status					
Insecure	934	30	26	25	20
Secure	1,585	66	17	10	7

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Faculty & Staff Survey
NOTES | The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) was used to measure anxiety. Cumulative percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. The "Number of Instructional Staff" column indicates the weighted number of survey respondents to our measure of anxiety. For more details on how our measure of anxiety was constructed, refer to the web appendices.

CONCLUSION

#RealCollege students are not the only ones at higher education institutions who experience basic needs insecurity. Our pilot study shows that instructional staff—those tasked with educating and supporting students—also experience basic needs insecurity, and at troubling rates. As the cumulative price of a degree continues to increase and salaries fail to keep up with adjusted costs of living, the next generation of educators will likely experience higher rates of basic needs insecurity.

The consequences of their basic needs insecurities may have a trickle-down effect as well, as evidenced by the Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success.[32] Supporting educators who need help will not only allow them to succeed in their profession, but will also help students succeed in their academic careers.

Here are some resources for campus leaders looking to support educators on their campuses:

- The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success at the Pullias Center offers a variety of tools for campus leaders wanting to address current faculty models.
- For tools on how to improve job security and working conditions for contingent faculty, see the One Faculty Campaign from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).
- The American Federation of Teachers (AFT Higher education) provides guidance on model legislation and a collective-bargaining toolkit.
- The Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) provides a campus discussion guide on engaging part-time faculty.

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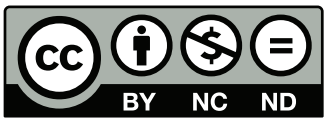

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