



2023-2024

**FOOD EQUITY & BASIC NEEDS
SURVEY DATA &
RECOMMENDATIONS**

PREPARED BY THE
**FOOD EQUITY
TASKFORCE**

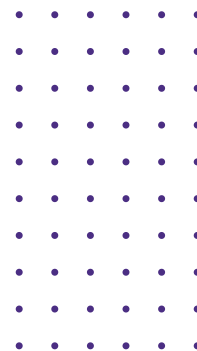


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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from the Food Equity & Basic Needs Survey conducted by the Associated Students of UW Tacoma (ASUWT) Food Equity Taskforce. The survey was open for participation from **January 1st, 2023 to January 31st, 2024** and was advertised with the incentive to win a 2019 MacBook Pro and other UW Tacoma merchandise.

During this period of the university's existence, there has been a strong emphasis to increase on-campus engagement as a part administration's efforts to increase student recruitment and retention. Despite these efforts, enrollment figures have remained flat, indicating that there may be potential areas for improvement in student satisfaction and campus life. Recognizing this, ASUWT has acknowledged food equity among students and basic needs issues to be a significant concern among the student body. This survey was created with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of student's needs

The recommendations presented in this report have been developed by the Food Equity Taskforce who carefully analyzed the survey data to ensure that their advice was firmly rooted in the evidence collected.





A WORD FROM THE TASKFORCE CHAIR

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each member of this taskforce for their unwavering commitment, hard work and setting the high standards for other student run taskforces to follow. Buruk Yimesgen, Cesia Amaya, Jason Tran, and Isaiah Garcia, your dedication to supporting student basic needs is inspiring, and has motivate many to make addressing food equity a priority while on campus.

I also want to express my appreciation to UW Tacoma Student Affairs and the UW Tacoma Bookstore for their generous support in providing prizes for the giveaway incentive.

On behalf of the entire taskforce, I hope that the data presented in this report will serve as a powerful tool in advocating for the student experience. This data will not only assist ASUWT in its future advocacy efforts, but we hope to empower the broader campus community to promote the needs and interests of UW Tacoma Students as well.

Holly Wetzel

**ASUWT PRESIDENT
2023-2024**

Survey Dissemination Information

The survey was conducted through DUBNET, UW Tacoma's student engagement platform, using the integrated survey feature. The decision to use this platform was strategically chosen over other platforms (ex. Qualtrics) to ensure easy accessibility for the UW Tacoma student body to use a platform they were already used to. Students could only access the survey using their UW NetID, ensuring that only students were completing the surveys. To maximize student participation, our promotional campaign combined several approaches to ensure all students were aware of the survey. Bi-weekly email blasts were sent through the PREZ-LINE to ensure regular, direct communication with students. On campus, daily tabling sessions during the survey period took place to offer students a face-to-face opportunity to engage with ASUWT and learn about the survey. To meet students where they were, ASUWT also conducted classroom and Registered Student Organization Presentations. Finally, a social media marketing campaign was implemented to increase the survey's visibility among students.

The UW Tacoma Office of Institutional Research has confirmed that this survey's findings are generalizable to the current UW Tacoma student population.

Survey Demographics (n = 585)

Age

65.3% (382)	Aged 18 - 24
22.91% (134)	Aged 25 - 34
8.03% (47)	Aged 35 - 44
2.91% (17)	Aged 45 - 54
0.68% (4)	Aged 55 - 64
0.17% (1)	Aged 65+

Class Standing

11.45% (67)	Freshman
10.94% (64)	Sophomore
32.99% (193)	Junior
31.79% (186)	Senior
12.82% (75)	Graduate

Ethnicity

34.02% (199)	Caucasian
23.93% (140)	Asian
15.56% (91)	Latino/Hispanic
9.74% (57)	Two or More
8.55% (50)	African American
2.74% (16)	Prefer Not To Say
2.39% (14)	Native American
1.54% (9)	NH/PI
1.54% (9)	Other/Unknown

Gender Identity

56.41% (330)	Female
37.78% (221)	Male
3.42% (20)	Nonbinary
1.37% (8)	PNTS
0.68% (4)	Other
0.34% (2)	Transgender

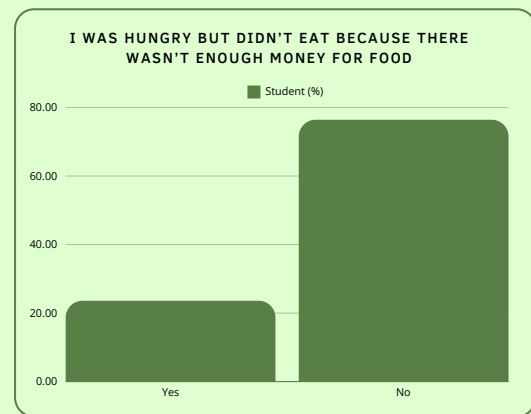
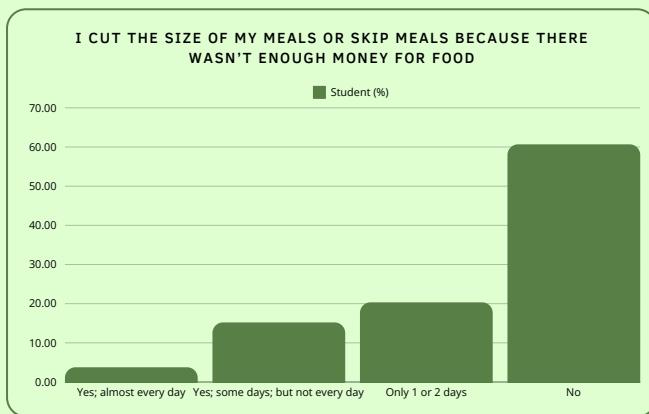
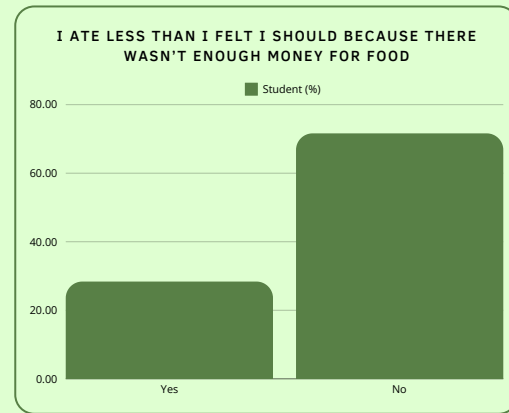
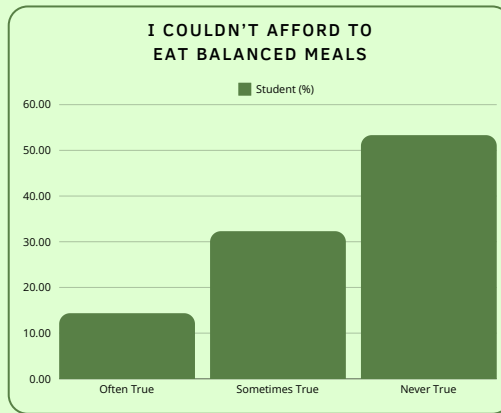
Identify As Veteran

9.74% (57)	Yes
90.26% (528)	No

Identify As First Gen

55.04% (332)	Yes
44.96% (263)	No

IN THE LAST 30 DAYS, UW TACOMA STUDENTS REPORTED: USDA SIX-ITEM FOOD SECURITY MODULE



Supplemental Information For Further Consideration

Our findings that 44% of the UW Tacoma Student Body experience low/very low food security supports previous campus research in students, showing that this has been a problem on the campus for many years. Using the same USDA Six-Item Food Security Module, the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) conducted by UW Tacoma Student Health in Spring 2023 showed that 46% of UW Tacoma students have low/very low food security. UW Tacoma Nursing & Healthcare Leadership Faculty Dr. Christine Stevens has also used the USDA Six-Item Food Security Module in her biannual research in UW Tacoma students since 2016 and has found similar findings as well as the increasing trend of food insecure students. In 2016, 36% of students had low/very low food security. In 2018, 42% of students had low/very low food security. In 2022, 48% of students had low/very low food security.

UW TACOMA STUDENT FOOD INSECURITY*
*BASED ON USDA SCALE - SEE APPENDIX FOR MORE INFORMATION

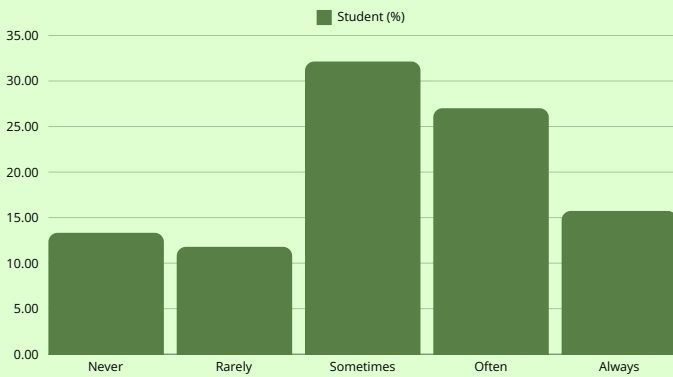
56.1% have high/marginal food security

44.0% have low/very low food security

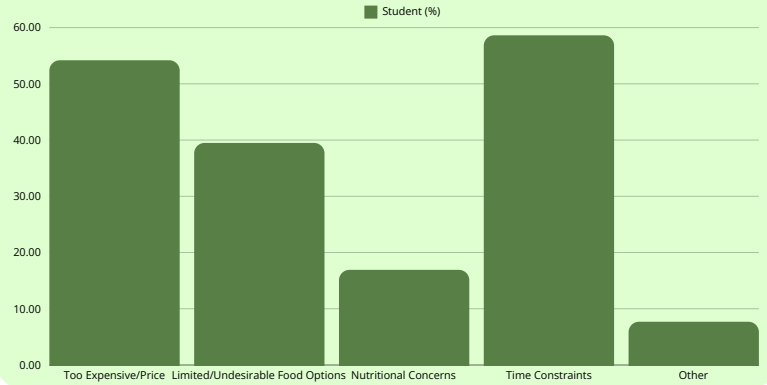
Nationally, only 23% of undergraduate students experience food insecurity (*National Center for Education Statistics, 2020*), putting UW Tacoma ~21% above average.

SKIPPING MEALS WHILE ON CAMPUS

DO YOU SKIP MEALS WHILE ON CAMPUS?



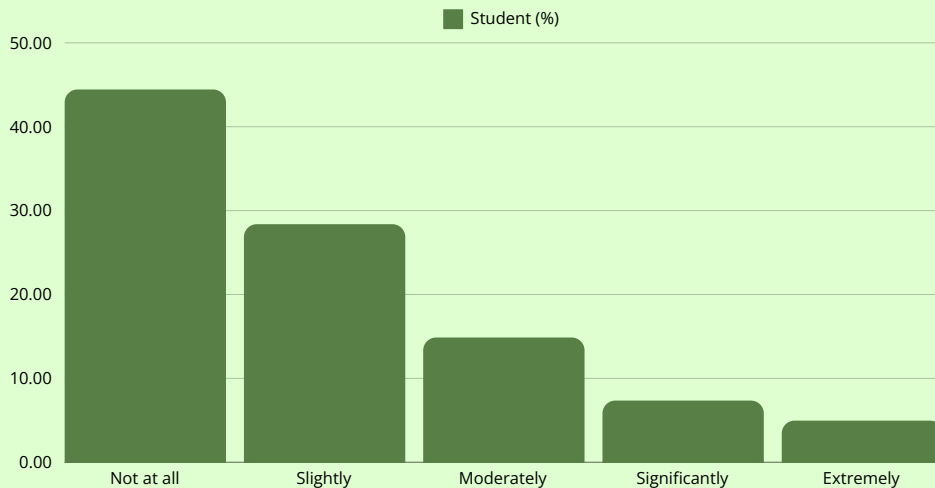
SELECT ALL THAT APPLY: WHAT ARE YOUR PRIMARY REASONS FOR SKIPPING MEALS WHILE ON CAMPUS*



*ASKED ONLY TO THOSE WHO REPORTED SKIPPING MEALS WHILE ON CAMPUS

PERCEIVED STIGMA IMPACTS

DOES PERCEIVED STIGMA OR SOCIAL JUDGEMENT AFFECT YOUR WILLINGNESS TO UTILIZE FREE FOOD RESOURCES PROVIDED BY UW TACOMA

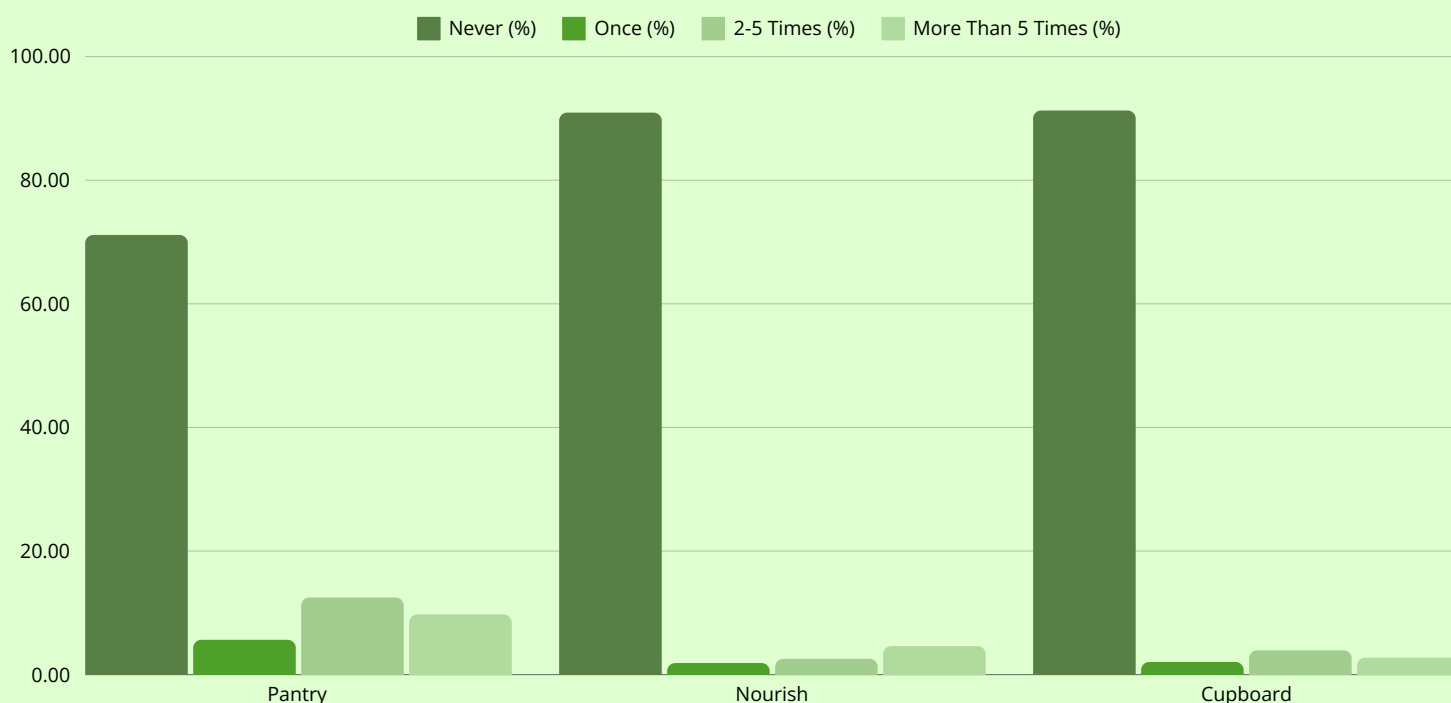


STIGMA

55.6% of students experience some form of stigma that affects their willingness to utilize free food resources at UW Tacoma.

CAMPUS FOOD RESOURCE USAGE REPORTED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU USED A FREE FOOD RESOURCE?



Supplemental Information For Further Consideration

When interpreting this data, it's important to remember that at this time in UW Tacoma's history, the Food Pantry has been a long-established free food resource on campus whereas the Nourish Food Truck and the Food Cupboard have been recent additions to the campus; both existing for <1 year at the time of the survey. This longevity could be contributing to greater awareness and utilization of the Food Pantry compared to the Nourish Food Truck and Food Cupboard.

Additionally, further data analysis is necessary to better understand why only 9% to 29% of the student body report using a free food resource while on campus when 44% of the UW Tacoma student body experiences low/very low food security. This disparity suggests that there may be potential barriers to access that prevent students from taking advantage of these support resources.

Qualitative Data Processing Methodology

Survey Questions

Students who identified as being users of a campus free food resources (Food Pantry, Nourish Food Truck, and/or Food Cupboard) were asked a set of supplemental free-response questions to better understand their experiences at each resource:

- What has your experience been while utilizing the [RESOURCE]?
- What would you like to see changed about the [RESOURCE]?
- Did you find what you were looking for? If not, please specify what you were looking for and why you believe it wasn't there.
- Did you feel welcome and comfortable in the [RESOURCE]? If not, please describe your experience.

Preprocessing of Responses

Before formal analysis, responses underwent several preprocessing steps:

- Normalization of Text: This involved converting all text to a consistent format to ensure it was easily readable by the software.
- Removal of Irrelevant Responses: Any responses marked as "N/A" were excluded from the analysis to ensure data quality and relevance.

Natural Language Processing (NLP)

The preprocessed data was then analyzed using Natural Language Processing using Python tools Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) and TextBlob to do the following:

- Sentiment Analysis: Assessed the sentiments expressed in the text, categorizing them as positive, negative, or neutral.
- Keyword Extraction: Identified key words in the text that were commonly used across the responses.

Categorization Based on Themes

Finally, the responses were categorized based on common themes detected through the Natural Language Processing that created actionable categories based on the survey question and responses.

UW Tacoma Food Pantry (n = 163)

What has your experience been when utilizing the pantry?*

*Asked only to those who reported using the pantry

Mixed Experiences with Suggestions (60.5%)

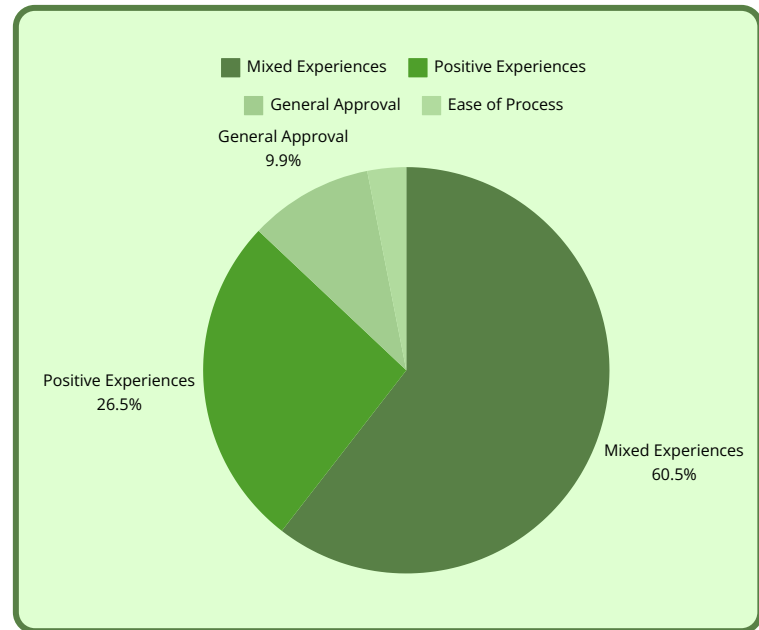
- **Long Wait Times:** Students commented about their experiences with long wait times during and in-between restocks and the challenges it creates when trying to access food in-between class.
- **Low Availability:** Students commented about their experiences going to the pantry and there was low/no stock, leaving disappointed.
- **Staff Attitudes:** Students commented about how some members of the pantry staff had negative attitudes, resulting in them not feeling welcome in the space.

Positive Experience with Suggestions (26.5%)

- **Increased Food Selection:** Students expressed that the space needed a broader selection of food items.

Ease of Process (3.1%)

- **Appreciation of Process:** Students expressed that their experience in the pantry was simple and easy to access and get food.



General Approval (9.9%)

- **Non-specific Positive Feedback:** Student feedback that was straightforward and positive, such as “Good”.

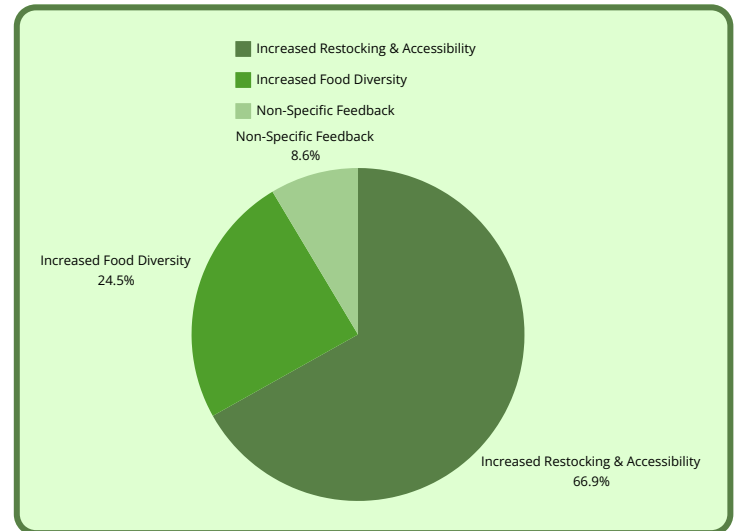
UW Tacoma Food Pantry ($n = 163$)

What would you like to see changed?*

*Asked only to those who reported using the pantry

Restocking & Accessibility (66.9%)

- **Frequency of Restocking:** Students requested more consistent and frequent restocking to avoid finding the pantry empty.
- **Physical Space & Accessibility:** Students would like the pantry to be in a larger space to allow for more food stock and an improved shopping experience. Suggestions for better signage were made as well.
- **Operating Hours:** Students request extended operating hours to accommodate varied schedules, especially for those with classes that prohibit them from going to the pantry in existing operating hours.



More Options & Diversity in Food (24.5%)

- **Broader Food Selection:** Students are asking for a wider variety of food options to cater to their dietary preferences/needs, such as including fresh produce, meats, and culturally diverse foods.
- **Packaged & Ready-To-Eat Meals:** Many students requested for there to be more ready-made meals or snacks to grab on the go.

Non-Specific Feedback (8.6%)

- **Non-specific Feedback:** Students expressed either general satisfaction, indifferent or unsure about potential changes, or expressed that no change should be made.

UW Tacoma Food Pantry (n = 163)

Did you find what you were looking for? If not, please specify what you were looking for and why you believe it wasn't there.*

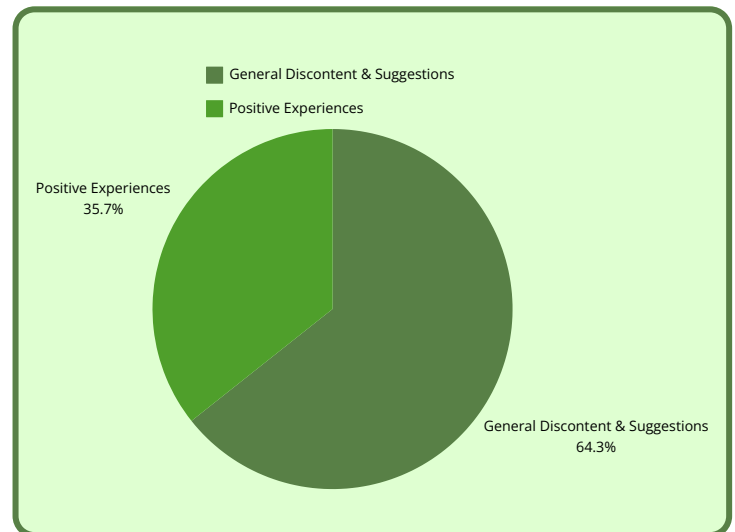
*Asked only to those who reported using the pantry

General Discontent & Suggestions (64.3%)

- **Did Not Find Desired Item:** Students expressed that many items they were looking for were not found. These items include: fresh produce, eggs, dairy, certain canned goods, frozen vegetables & fruits, and snack foods. Reasons why students suspected these items were unavailable was due to equipment failure (e.g. broken fridges) and stock shortages.

Positive Experiences with Items (35.7%)

- **Students Found What They Were Looking For:** Students expressed that they found what they were looking for.



UW Tacoma Food Pantry (n = 163)

Did you feel welcome and comfortable in the pantry? If not, please describe your experience.*

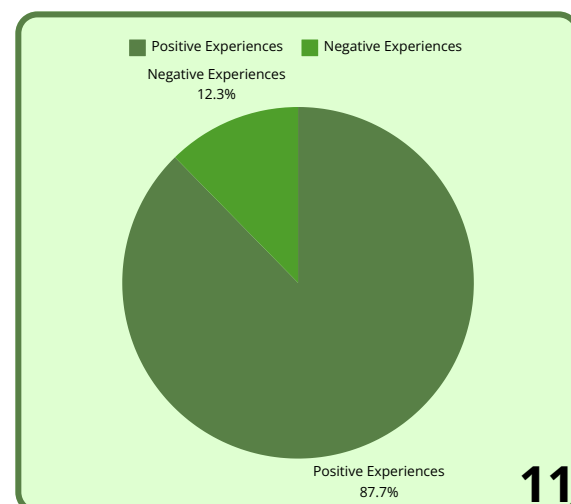
*Asked only to those who reported using the pantry

Positive Experience (87.7%)

- **Welcoming Experience:** Students overwhelmingly expressed that they felt welcome and comfortable in the pantry.

Negative Experience (12.3%)

- **Poor Experiences:** Students expressed that they did not feel welcome or comfortable in the pantry. Some students noted that going there is inconsistent in terms of quality, unmet expectations related to stock, and negative experiences with staff.



Nourish Food Truck (*n* = 53)

What has your experience been when utilizing Nourish?*

*Asked only to those who reported using Nourish Food Truck

General Approval with Concerns (56.6%)

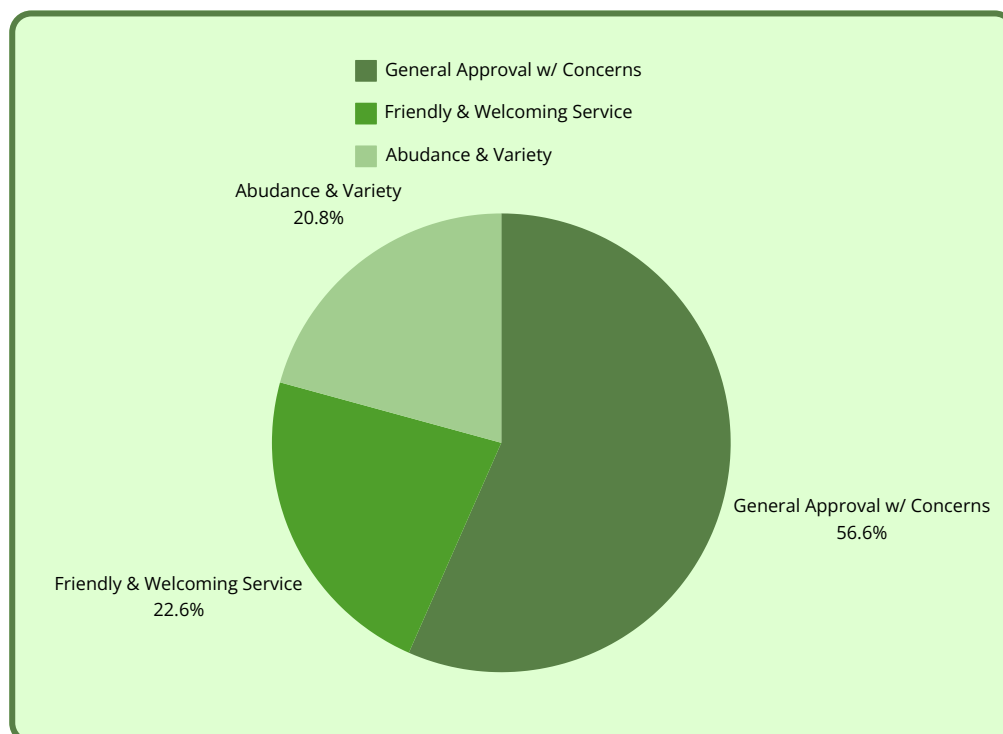
- **Positive Experience with Minor Concerns:** Students commented positively about their experience with the Nourish Food Truck, however many mentioned concerns regarding long waiting times and small selection of food options.

Friendly & Welcoming Service (22.6%)

- **Positive Interactions with Staff:** Students mentioned how the staff at Nourish were friendly and welcoming.

Abundance & Variety (20.8%)

- **Varying Food Options:** Student mentioned how they were grateful for the abundance of diverse food options in the food truck.



Nourish Food Truck ($n = 53$)

What would you like to see changed?*

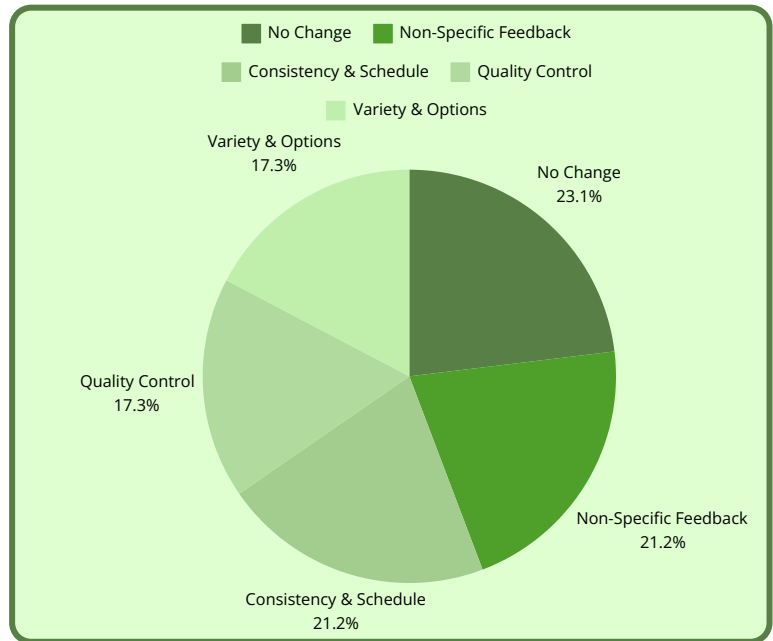
*Asked only to those who reported using the Nourish Food Truck

No Change (23.1%)

- **No change needed:** Students expressed that no change was necessary to the food truck. Some students appreciated the fact that the resource was accessible and free

Non-Specific Feedback/Miscellaneous (21.2%)

- **Non-specific Feedback:** Students expressed either general satisfaction, indifferent or unsure about potential changes, or expressed changes such as speeding up the intake process for new and returning students.



Consistency & Schedule (21.2%)

- **Scheduling Issues:** Students request for the truck to come by campus more days throughout the week or at different times to accommodate schedule constraints.

Quality Control (17.3%)

- **Spoiled Food:** Students mention that there needs to be an increase in quality control as they have reported receiving spoiled food. Some examples include eggs with mold in them and expired bread.

Variety & Options (17.3%)

- **Food Diversity:** Students expressed wanting a broader selection of foods, such as more fruits, greenery, vegetarian options, and meat.

Nourish Food Truck (n = 53)

Did you find what you were looking for? If not, please specify what you were looking for and why you believe it wasn't there.*

*Asked only to those who reported using the Nourish Food Truck

Positive Experiences with Items (60.4%)

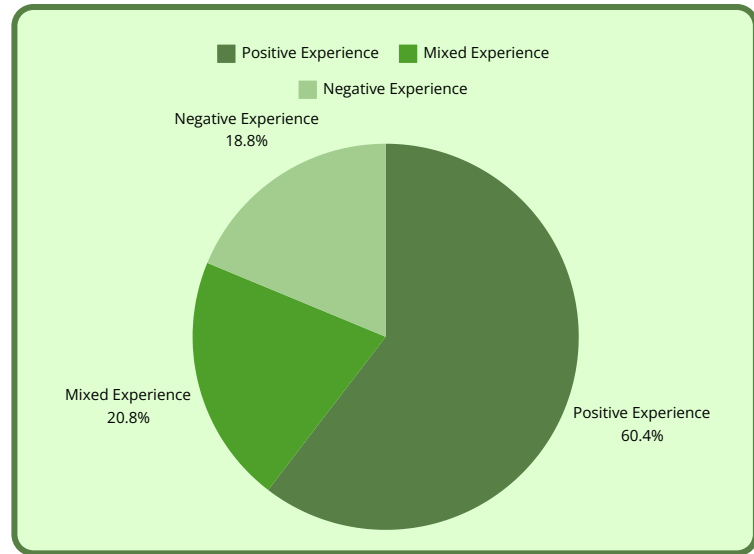
- **Students Found What They Were Looking For:** Students expressed that they found what they were looking for.

Mixed Experiences with Items (20.8%)

- **Students Sometimes Found Items:** Students sometimes found what they were looking for.

Negative Experiences with Items (18.8%)

- **Students Did Not Find What They Were Looking For:** Students expressed that they did not find they were looking for. Examples included eggs, milk, meats, and produce.



Nourish Food Truck (n = 53)

Did you feel welcome and comfortable in the Nourish Food Truck? If not, please describe your experience.*

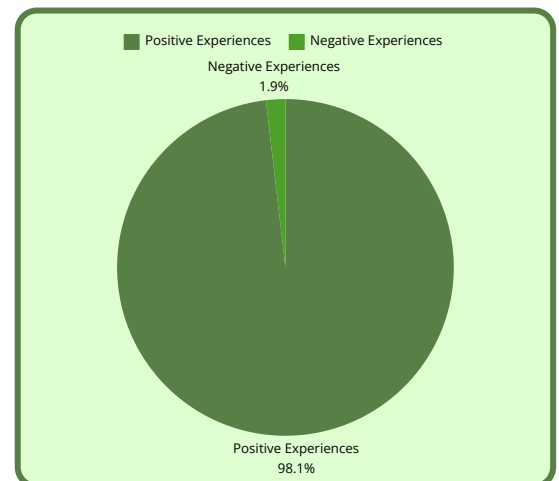
*Asked only to those who reported using the Nourish Food Truck

Positive Experience (98.1%)

- **Welcoming Experience:** Students overwhelmingly expressed that they felt welcome and comfortable in the Nourish Food Truck.

Negative Experience (1.9%)

- **Poor Experiences:** One student expressed that they did not feel welcome or comfortable due to the long wait times to access the truck.



Food Cupboard (n = 51)

What has your experience been when utilizing the Food Cupboard?*

*Asked only to those who reported using the Food Cupboard

Positive Feedback (64.6%)

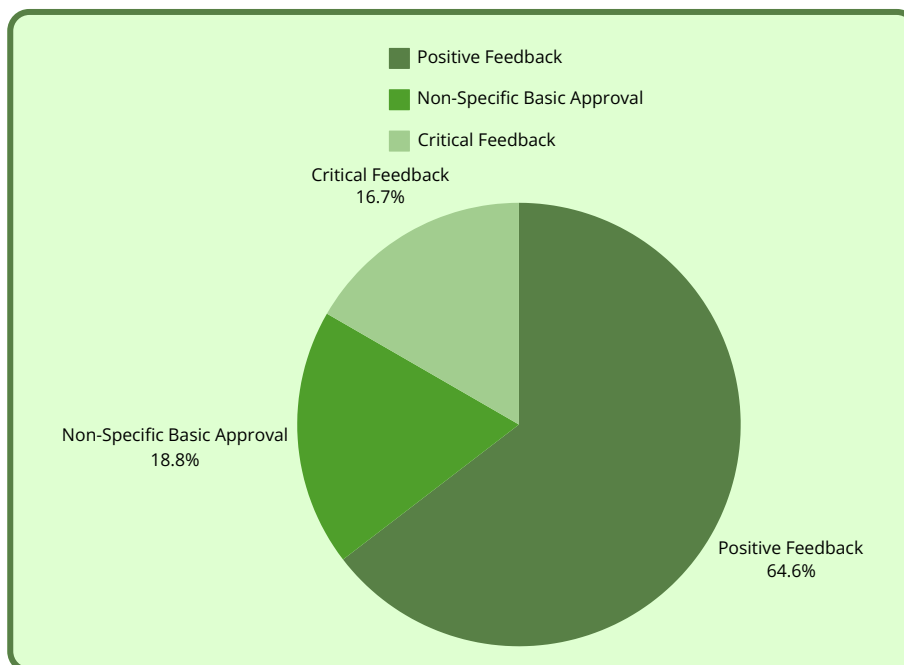
- **Positive Experiences:** Students were appreciative of the availability of ready-to-eat meals and the selection of food in the space.

Non-Specific Basic Approval (18.8%)

- **Non-Specific Positive Responses:** Students responded with straightforward minimalistic responses such as “Good” and “Fine”.

Critical Feedback (16.7%)

- **Low Stock:** Student mentioned how there were issues surrounding availability and concerns regarding low-stock.
- **Negative Staff Interactions:** A few students mentioned having interactions with staff that made them feel uncomfortable to be in the space.



Food Cupboard (n = 51)

What would you like to see changed?*

*Asked only to those who reported using the Food Cupboard

No Change (39.2%)

- **No change needed:** Students expressed that no change was necessary to the food cupboard. Some students appreciated the fact that the resource was accessible and free.

Food Variety & Options (23.5%)

- **Inclusive Food Options:** Students request for there to be more diverse food options, specifically naming: vegan and plant-based options, yogurts, drinks such as milk and soda, vegetables, condiments, and ready to eat Indian food.

More Food Quantity (21.6%)

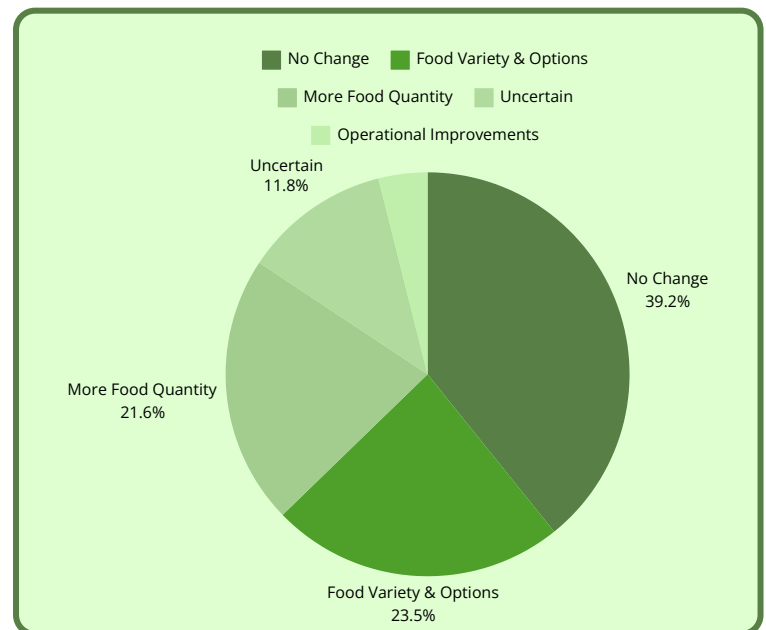
- **More Food:** Students expressed wanting more food quantities to be available, and better management to ensure that food is distributed evenly throughout the week.

Uncertain (11.8%)

- **Uncertain Regarding Changes:** Students were uncertain about whether they had any changes to recommend.

Operational Improvements (3.9%)

- **Visibility:** Students request there to be better advertising for the resource.
- **Operation Hours:** Students request for the cupboard to be open later to account for schedules



Food Cupboard (n = 51)

Did you find what you were looking for? If not, please specify what you were looking for and why you believe it wasn't there.*

*Asked only to those who reported using the Food Cupboard

Positive Experiences with Items (48.3%)

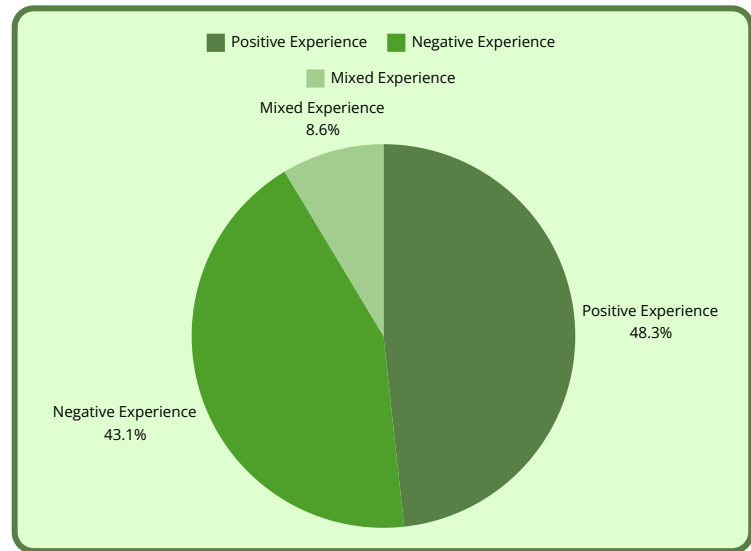
- **Students Found What They Were Looking For:** Students expressed that they found what they were looking for.

Negative Experiences with Items (43.1%)

- **Students Did Not Find What They Were Looking For:** Students expressed that they did not find they were looking for. Examples included breakfast items, nutritional drinks, sandwiches, and ready to eat cultural foods.

Mixed Experiences with Items (8.6%)

- **Students Sometimes Found Items:** Students sometimes found what they were looking for.



Food Cupboard (n = 51)

Did you feel welcome and comfortable in the Food Cupboard? If not, please describe your experience.*

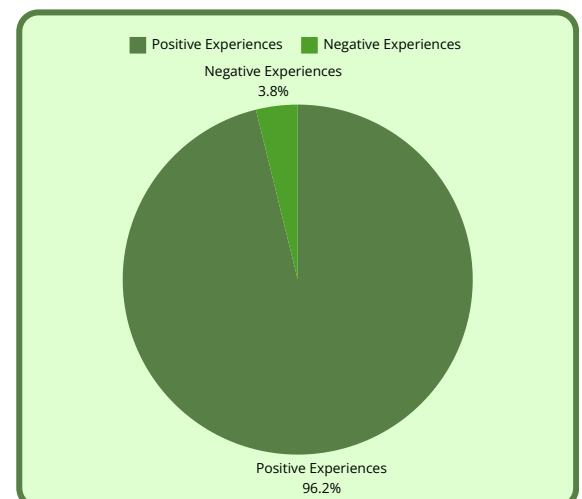
*Asked only to those who reported using the Food Cupboard

Positive Experience (96.2%)

- **Welcoming Experience:** Students overwhelmingly expressed that they felt welcome and comfortable in the food cupboard

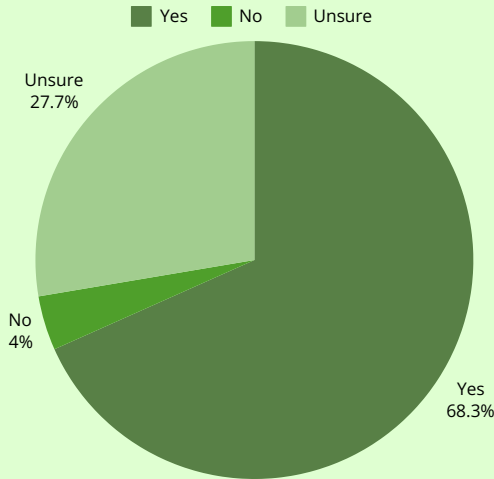
Negative Experience (3.8%)

- **Poor Experiences:** Two students expressed that they did not feel welcome or comfortable due to interactions with staff and the food insecurity statistics on the walls of the space.

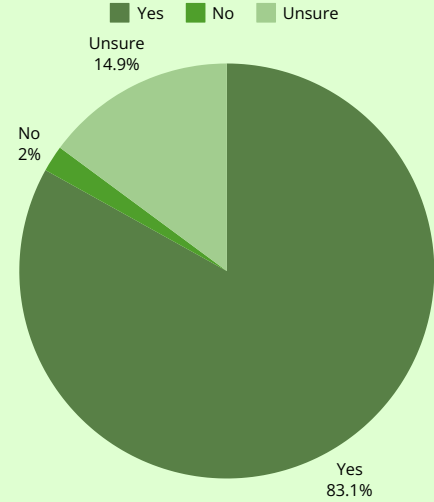


SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS REGARDING FOOD PANTRY

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE UWT FOOD PANTRY SHOULD HAVE A STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD TO HELP INCLUDE AND IMPLEMENT STUDENT FEEDBACK IN THE PANTRY'S OPERATIONS, MAKING SURE THAT ITS MANAGEMENT IS ALIGNED WITH STUDENT NEEDS?



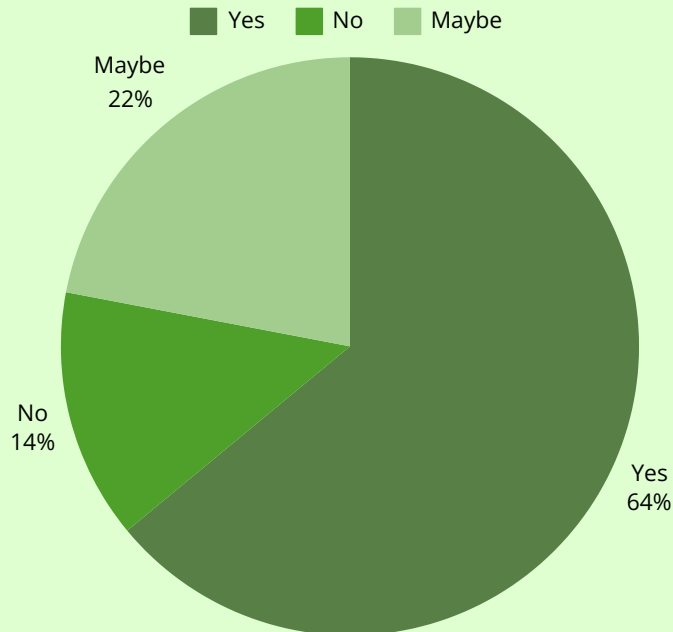
ASUWT HAS FREQUENTLY HEARD FROM STUDENTS THAT THE UWT FOOD PANTRY HAS A DIFFICULT TIME STAYING STOCKED CONSISTENTLY. WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE RELOCATION OF THE UWT FOOD PANTRY TO A CAMPUS DEPARTMENT THAT COULD POTENTIALLY PROVIDE BETTER RESOURCES, ENABLING IT TO EXPAND ITS SERVICES AND OFFER MORE FOOD TO STUDENTS?



COURT 17 RESIDENTS ONLY (N = 50)

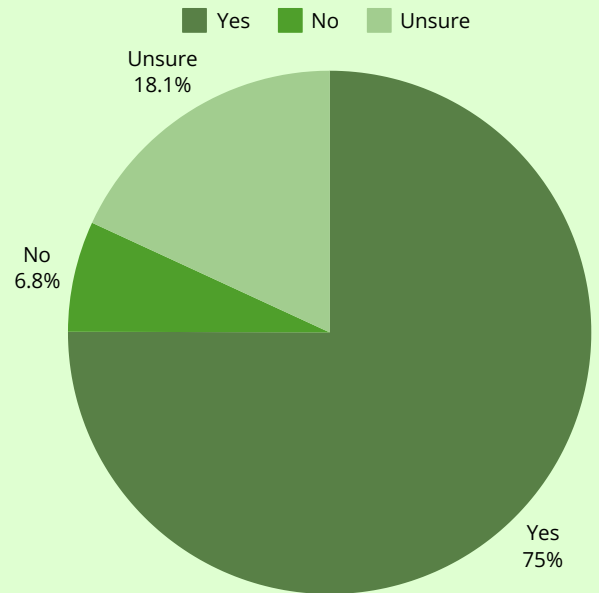
WOULD YOU UTILIZE A SHUTTLE SERVICE FROM COURT 17 TO A GROCERY STORE?

COURT 17 RESIDENTS ONLY: WOULD YOU UTILIZE A SHUTTLE SERVICE FROM COURT 17 TO A GROCERY STORE?

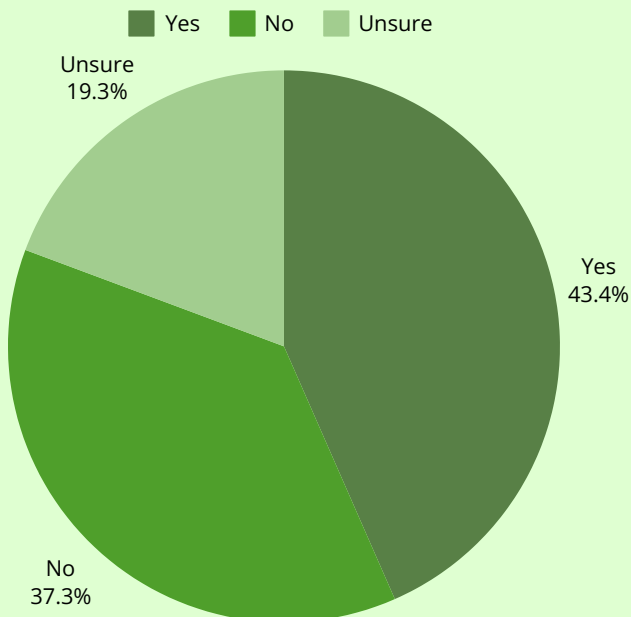


DINING HALL AND BELONGING ON CAMPUS

WOULD YOU FEEL A STRONGER SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE UW TACOMA IF THERE WAS A DINING HALL, SIMILAR TO WHAT UW SEATTLE AND UW BOTHELL HAS ON THEIR CAMPUSES? (DINING HALL WOULD INCLUDE MEAL PLANS, MULTIPLE DINING OPTIONS UNDER ONE ROOF, ETC).



ON-CAMPUS HOUSING AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR



IF THERE WERE MORE ON-CAMPUS HOUSING OPTIONS (DORMS), WOULD YOU BE MORE INCLINED TO LIVE ON-CAMPUS?