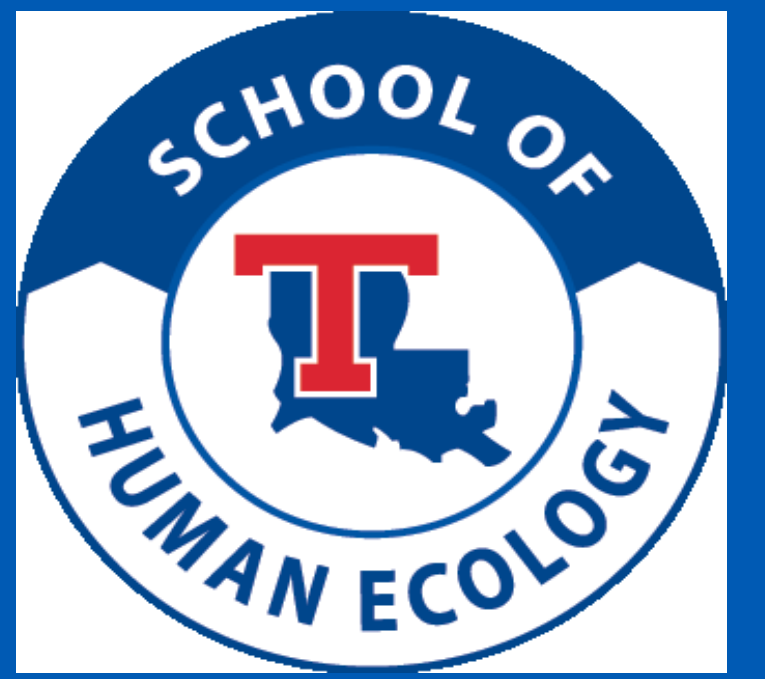


Changes in Meals Consumed by U.S. University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic



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BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread economic disruption, affecting the supply and demand for food. University students became financially stressed causing food security issues. Meal size reduction or meal skipping during this time may impact academic performance as GPA declines with food insecurity in university students.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to observe the changes in meals consumed by U.S. university students that had occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

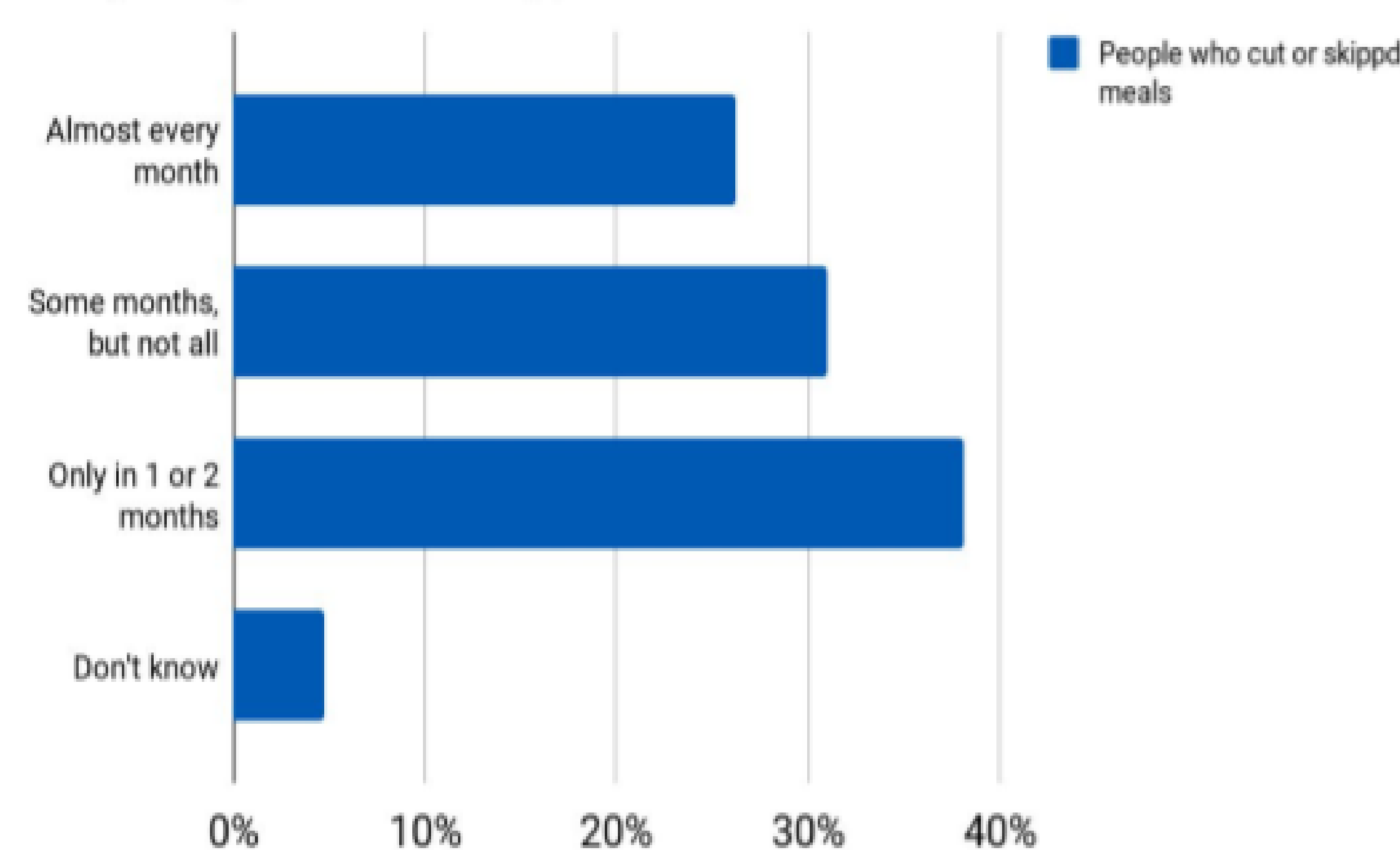
METHOD

An anonymous, cross sectional online survey of university students was conducted. The questionnaire consisted of 89 items, of which a subset was used for this analysis. Sampling followed the snowball technique.

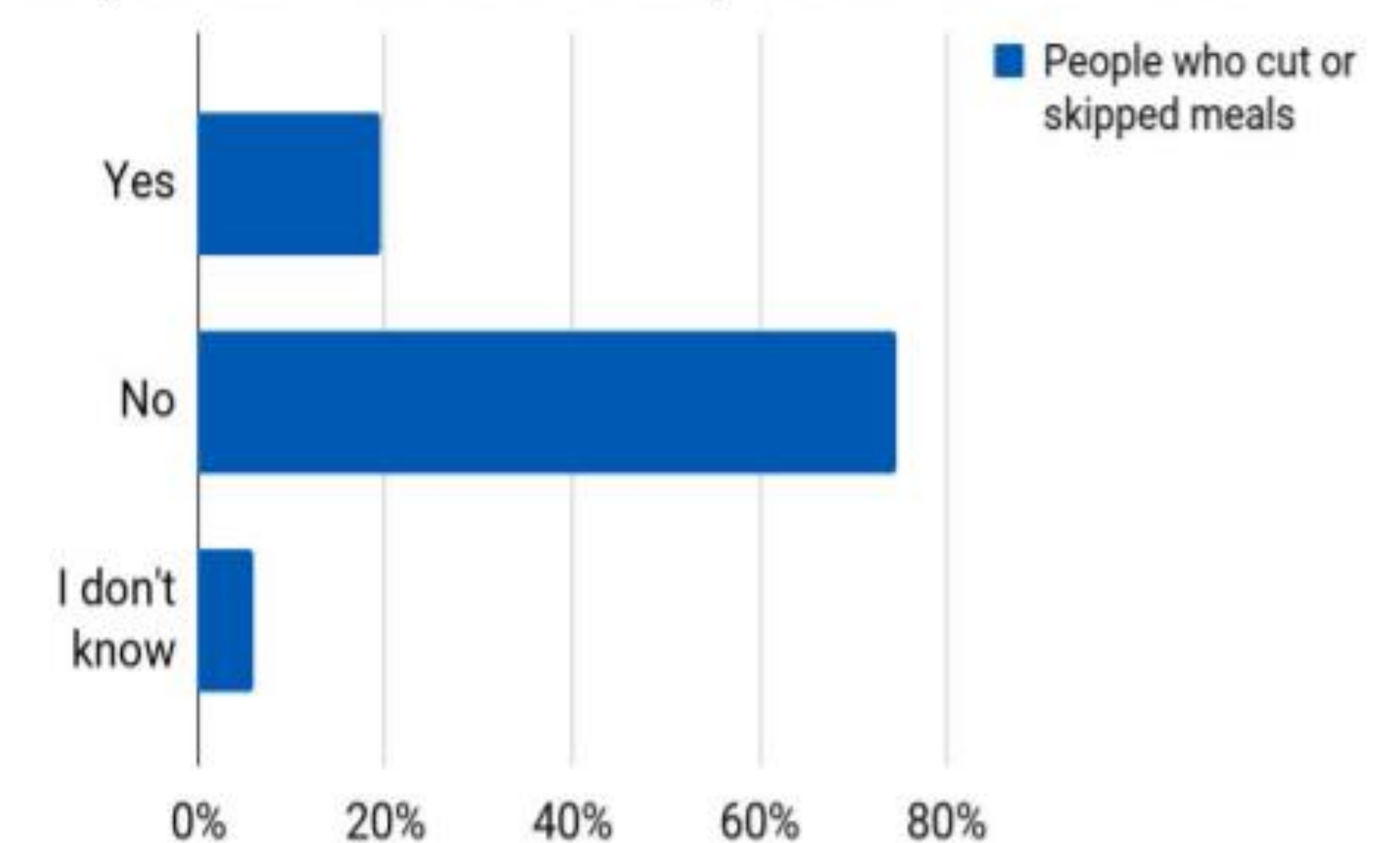
RESULTS

Of 282 participants, 20% reported needing to cut the size of their meals or skip meals during the early pandemic period. Fifty-five percent cut meal size or skipped meals and 20% ate less than they should to save money in the past year. Thirty-three percent experienced not having enough money to buy food when their supply did not last in the past year. Of those, 56.7% experienced inadequate funds during the pandemic. Approximately 56% of the total reported always being able to afford a balanced meal.

Frequency of cut or skipped meals



"Did you cut meal size or skip meals due to COVID-19?"



CONCLUSIONS

Although food insecurity throughout the year has been identified in college student ranging from 11-52%, this data indicates that it may be more prevalent during the quarantine months of the early COVID-19 experience. University support for food insecure students is critical during disruptive events and requires services to adapt to student needs.