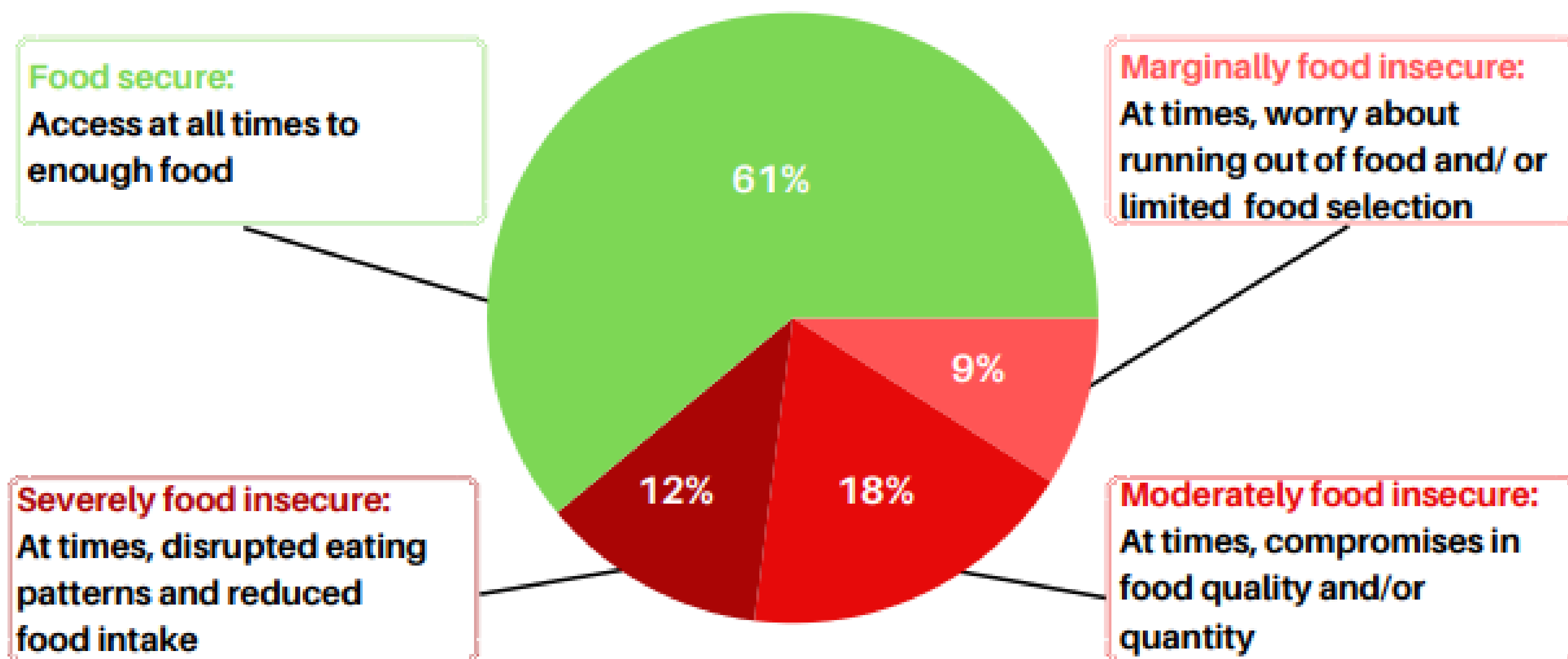


# A snapshot of **food insecurity and health** among University of Waterloo undergraduate students

## Food insecurity at the University of Waterloo

- Household food insecurity refers to **compromised food access due to financial constraints**.
- A 2019 study of 256 undergraduate students found that **four in ten (39%) lived in households that experienced some level of food insecurity** in the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup>



- Given disruptions associated with the pandemic and increases in food and housing costs, the prevalence of food insecurity among undergraduate students may now be higher.

## Food insecurity and self-reported indicators of health

- The **odds of poor health were significantly higher among students who had experienced any level of food insecurity** over the past 12 months versus those who had not.

**2.0x↑**  
Likely to report quite a bit or extreme stress



**2.2x↑**  
Likely to report poor or fair mental health



**2.2x↑**  
Likely to report poor or fair physical health



Odds ratios were adjusted for gender identity, financial insufficiency, racial/ethnic identity, residency status, co-op enrollment, and year of study.<sup>1,2</sup>

# Calls to action to support food security among students



Raise awareness about the extent, causes, and consequences of food insecurity among postsecondary students.



Advocate for policies such as universal basic income to improve financial security among students.



Vote for representatives committed to addressing the root causes of food insecurity.



Provide affordable, healthy food on campus.



Adequately fund on-campus services to support food and financial security.

What students  
can do

What the university  
can do

## Study methods

- Students were recruited using on-campus posters, the LEARN online learning platform, internal student Facebook pages, Reddit, and announcements during lectures.
- A web-based survey collected information on household food insecurity using the Household Food Security Survey Module, which captures inability to access adequate food due to limited financial resources.<sup>3</sup> The survey included self-reported indicators of stress, mental health, and physical health status.
- Students also provided sociodemographic information, such as gender identity and financial sufficiency.
- Although the study drew upon a convenience sample that may not be fully generalizable to all undergraduate students at the University, students from all six Faculties were included: Art (20%), Health (19%), Science (19%), Engineering (18%), Math (15%), and Environment (9%).
- Seven in ten participants identified as women and three in ten identified as men.
- Nine in ten participants were domestic students.

Data collection was conducted as part of Mona Qutub's undergraduate thesis. Analyses were conducted by Alexandra Pepetone, and the infographic was compiled by Lesley Andrade, Sanaa Hussain, Alexandra Pepetone, Mona Qutub, and Sharon Kirkpatrick of the School of Public Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo. We are grateful to the study participants and to Kirsten Lee, Carolyn Minnick, and Amanda Raffoul for their involvement in the study. The study was funded by an Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation Early Researcher Award held by Sharon Kirkpatrick. All images are part of Canva's free licensing agreement. **Contact:** sharon.kirkpatrick@uwaterloo.ca

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