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# BASIC NEEDS SECURITY AT SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

A Report Prepared by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab

March 30, 2018

## Overview

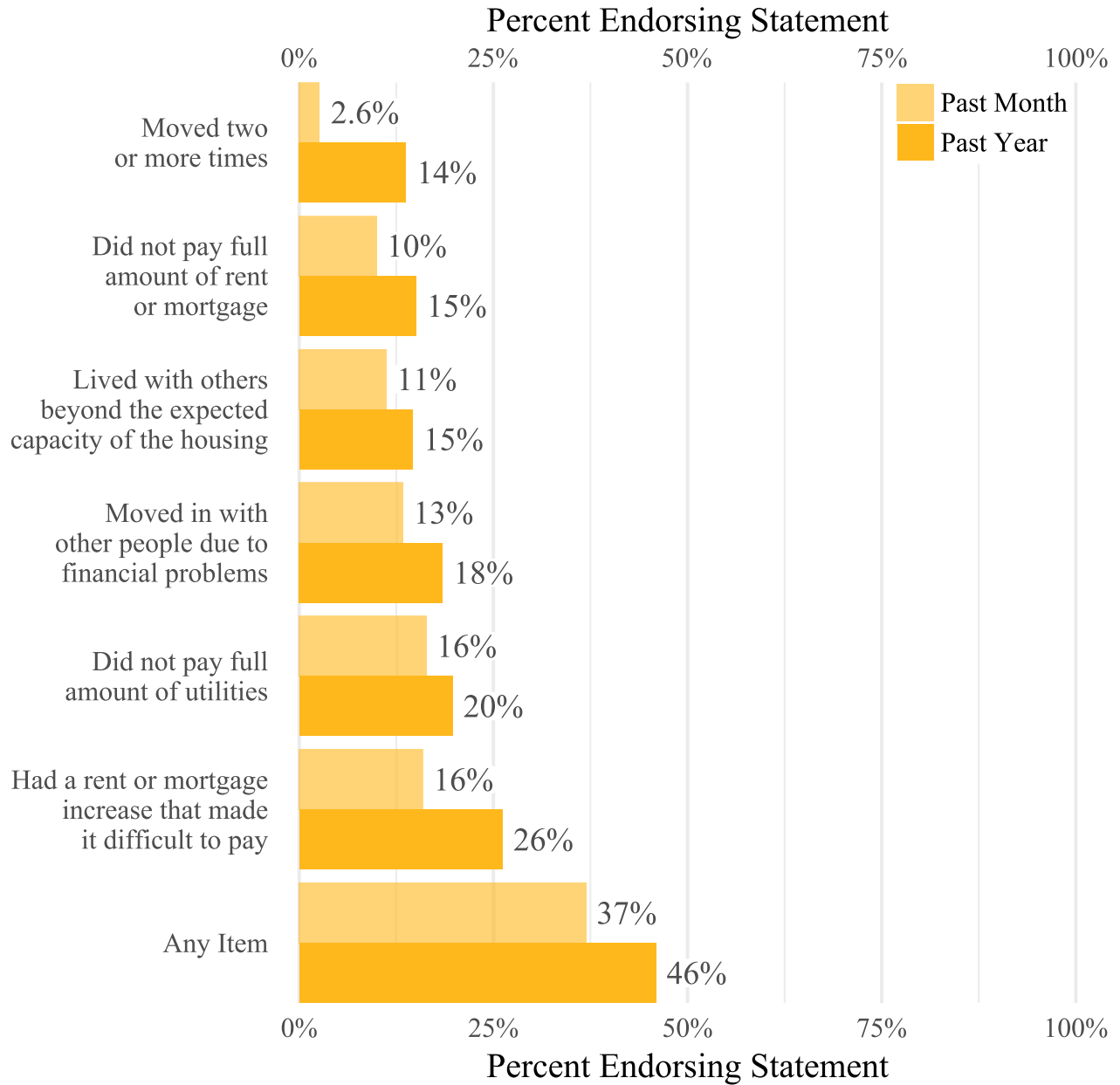
- Invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent by email to 3300 students from San Diego Mesa College, and 226 students completed it. Thus, the response rate was about 6.8%
- In the last year, about 12% of students experienced some form of homelessness, 46% were housing insecure, and 44% had low or very low food security.
- About 60% of students at San Diego Mesa College experienced at least one of these forms of basic needs insecurity in the past year. About 8.0% experienced all three forms of basic needs insecurity.
- The prevalence of basic needs insecurity are presented for several demographic subgroups.

## Basic Needs for All Students

### Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity can involve unaffordable housing, poor housing quality, crowding, and frequent moves (Cutts et al., 2011 (<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300139>)). The survey instrument included six items to assess whether a student has experienced housing insecurity in the past thirty days and in the past twelve months. Students are classified as **housing insecure** if they answered affirmatively to at least one of those items for the time period in question.

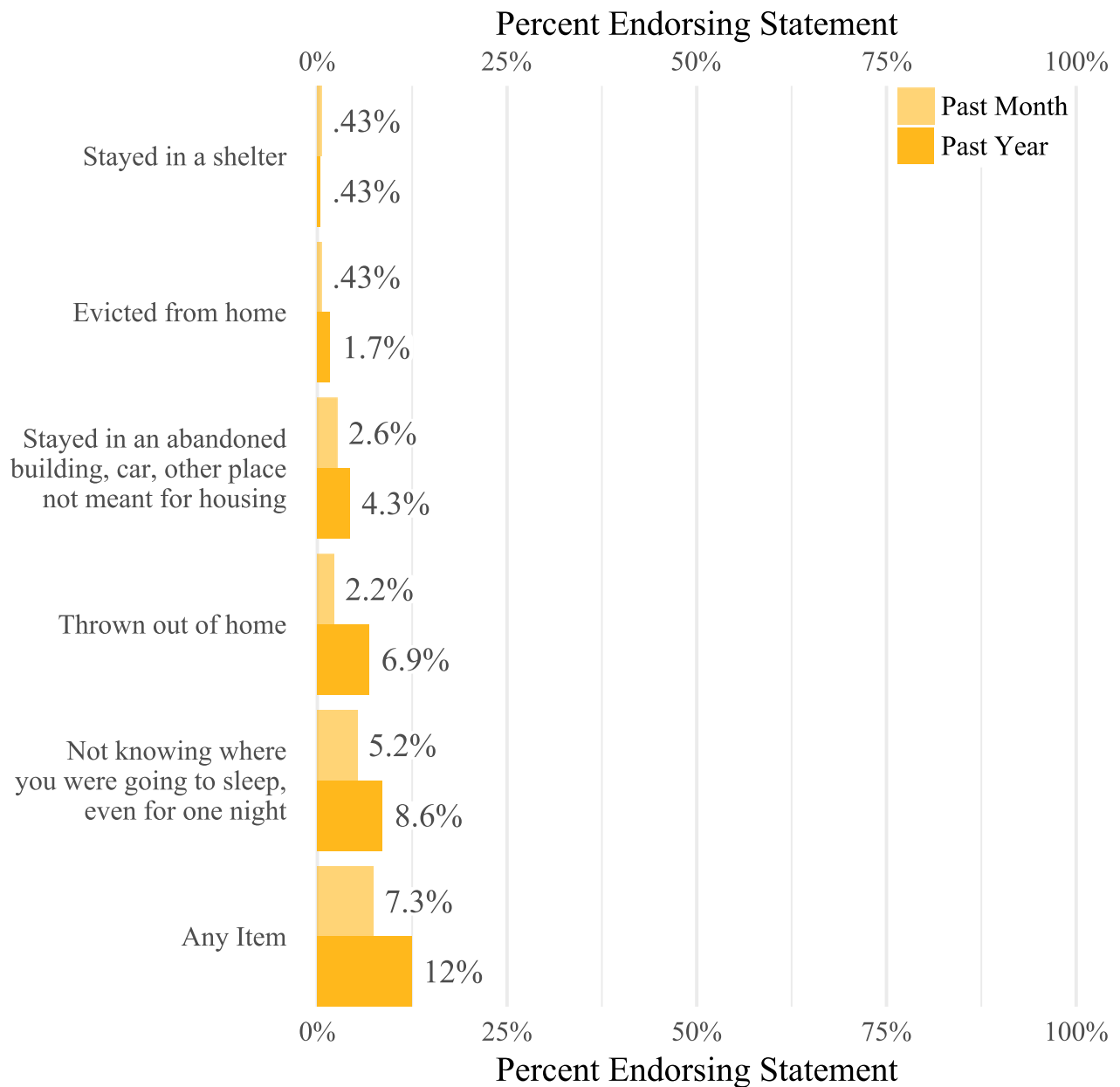
How prevalent is housing insecurity at San Diego Mesa College? As can be seen in the plot below, 37% were housing insecure in the month they were surveyed and 46% were housing insecure in the previous year.



## Homelessness

Homelessness indicates that a person is without a place to live, often residing in a shelter, automobile, an abandoned building, or outside. The survey included five items to determine whether students have been homeless in the past thirty days and in the past twelve months. Students are considered **homeless** if they answered affirmatively to at least one of five items for the time period in question. Note that it is possible for students to have experienced both homelessness and housing insecurity at different times during the previous month or year.

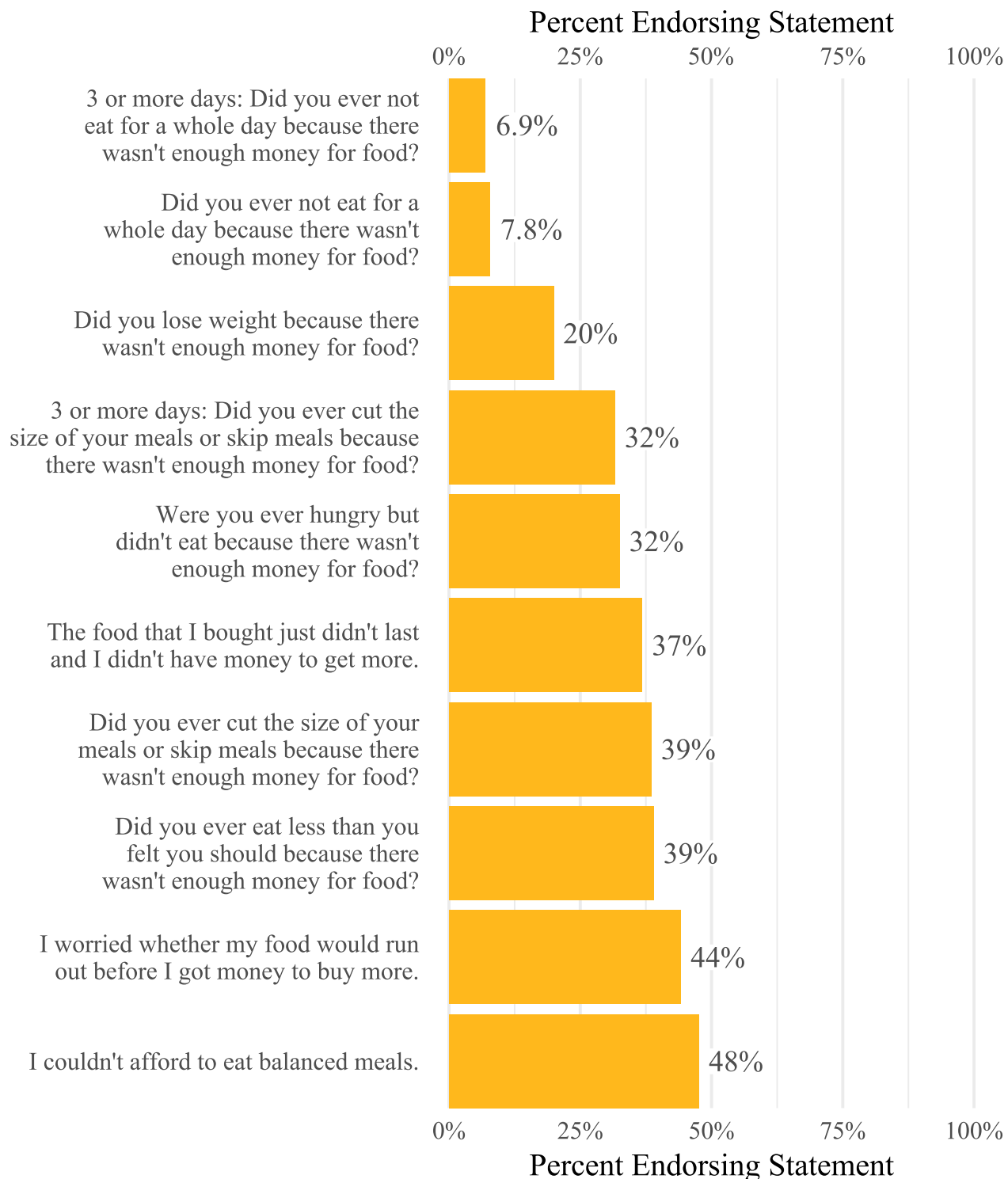
How prevalent is homelessness at San Diego Mesa College? As can be seen in the plot below, 7.3% were homeless in the month they were surveyed and 12% were homeless at some point in the previous year.



## Food Security

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner (Anderson, 1990 ([https://doi.org/10.1093/jn/120.suppl\\_11.1555](https://doi.org/10.1093/jn/120.suppl_11.1555))). To assess food insecurity among students, the survey instrument included the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 10-item U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module (FSSM) (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8279/ad2012.pdf>). The module asks students about their experiences in the past thirty days.

What percentage of students at San Diego Mesa College endorsed each food insecurity item?

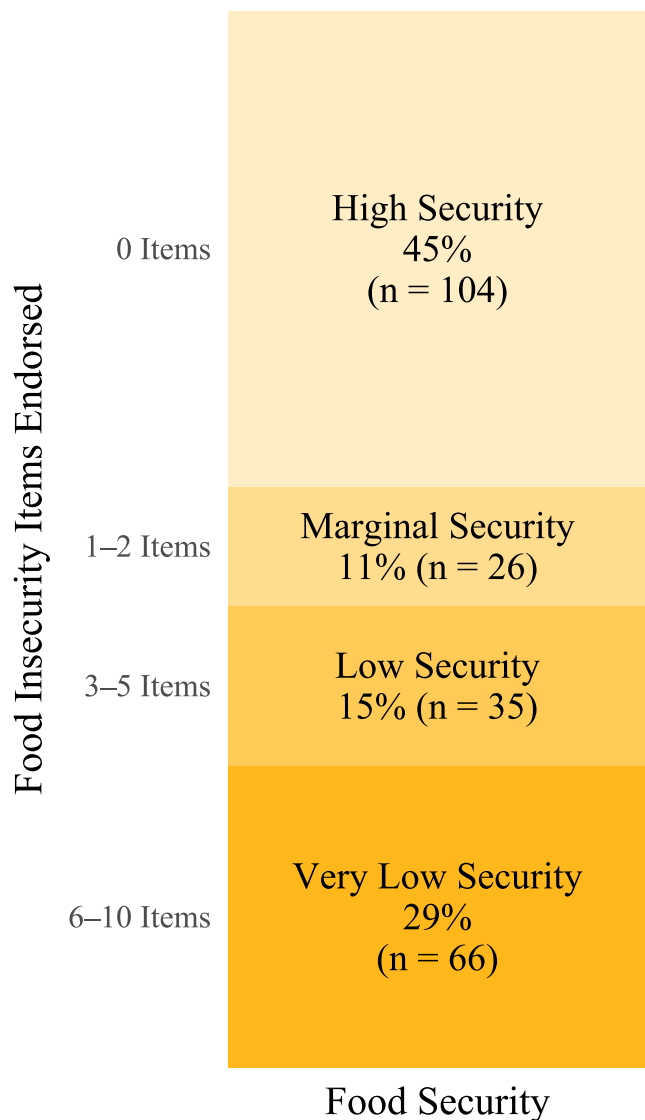


The USDA recommends assigning each respondent a score based on the total number of affirmative answers on the 10-item instrument. That score determines a person's food security status via a four category scale, where a score of zero corresponds to high food security, one to marginal food security, two to four translate to low food security, and scores of five or six indicate very low food security. Taken together, people who report low and very low food security can be referred to as **food insecure**.

### Food Security Categories

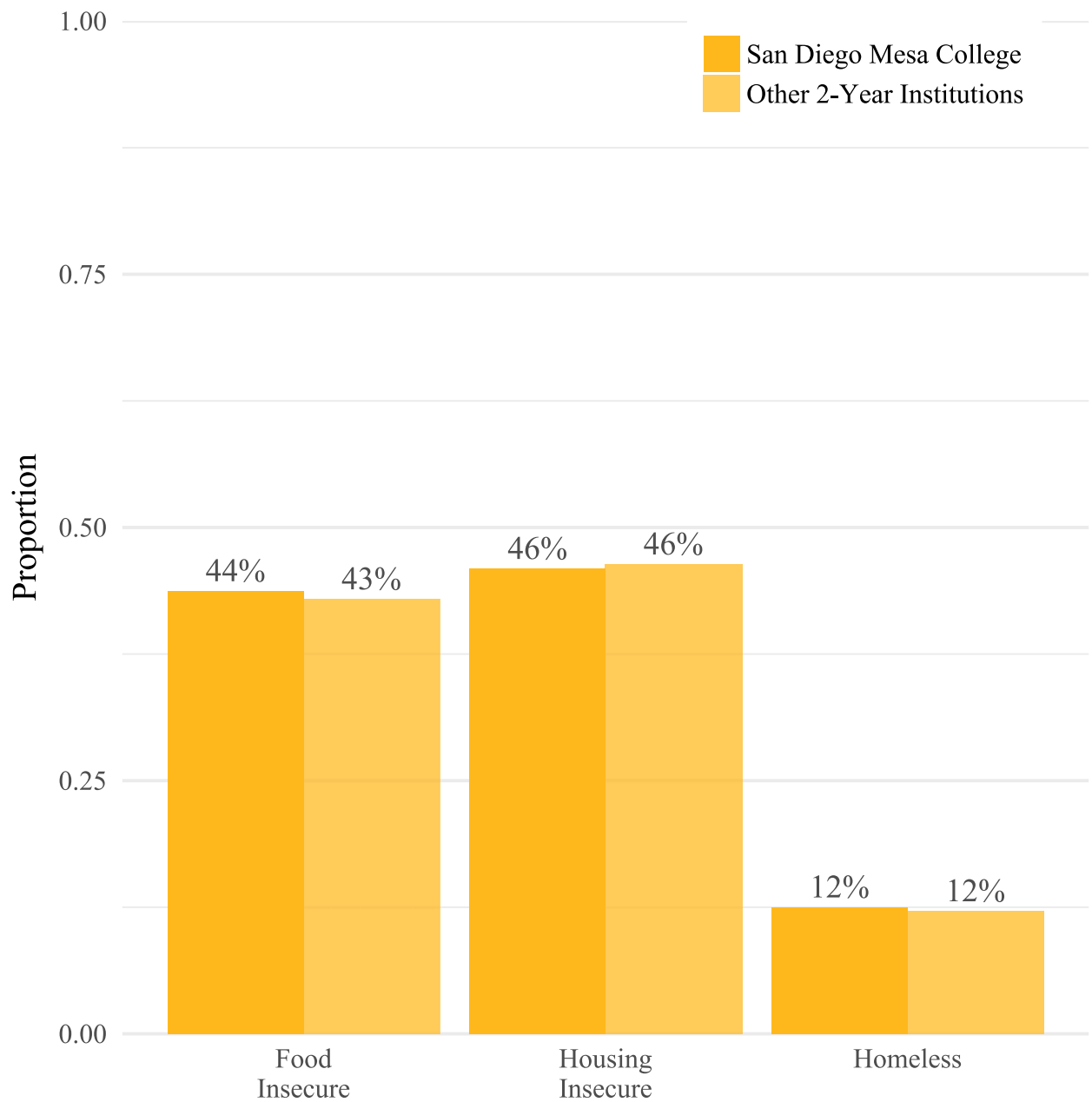
Items Endorsed	Food Security Level	Classification
0	High	Food Secure
1-2	Marginal	
3-4	Low	Food Insecure
6-10	Very Low	

How prevalent is food insecurity at San Diego Mesa College? As seen in the plot below, 44% of students were food insecure (i.e., had low or very low food insecurity).



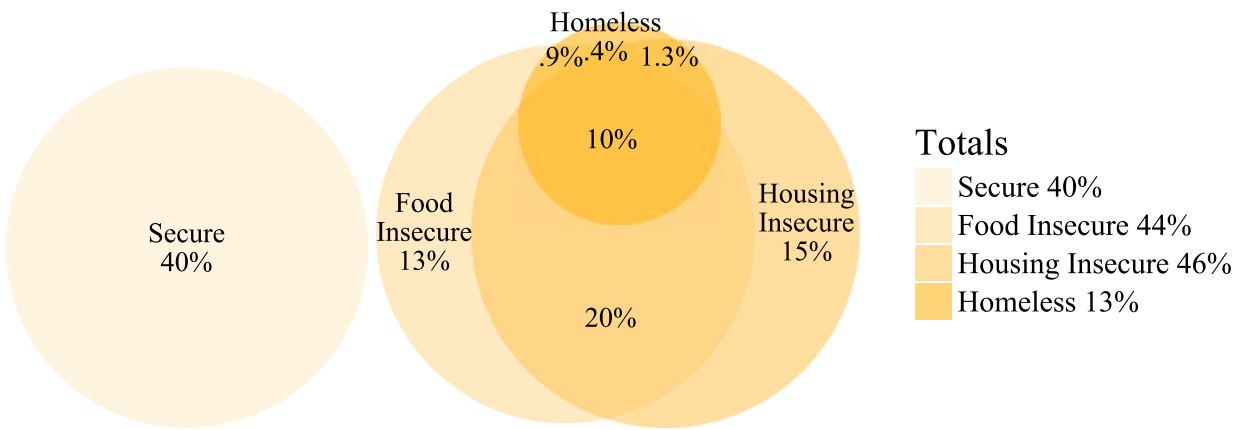
## Comparisons with Other Schools

In the fall of 2017, the Wisconsin HOPE Lab collected data from 13,631 students attending 33 different two-year community colleges.



## Basic Needs Insecurity Overlap

Homelessness, Housing Insecurity, and Food Insecurity are overlapping concerns, with about 60% of students at San Diego Mesa College experiencing at least one of these forms of basic needs insecurity in the past year.



*Note* This plot only used cases in which participants provided complete data for the food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness. Thus, because some participants did not answer all of the questions on the questionnaire, percentages in this plot may differ slightly from other estimates when only one variable was considered at a time.

## Basic Needs by Subgroups

The tables and figures in this section present measures of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness for various demographic groups. In this section, any category with fewer than 25 participants was removed from any plots in which it might otherwise have appeared.

### Gender

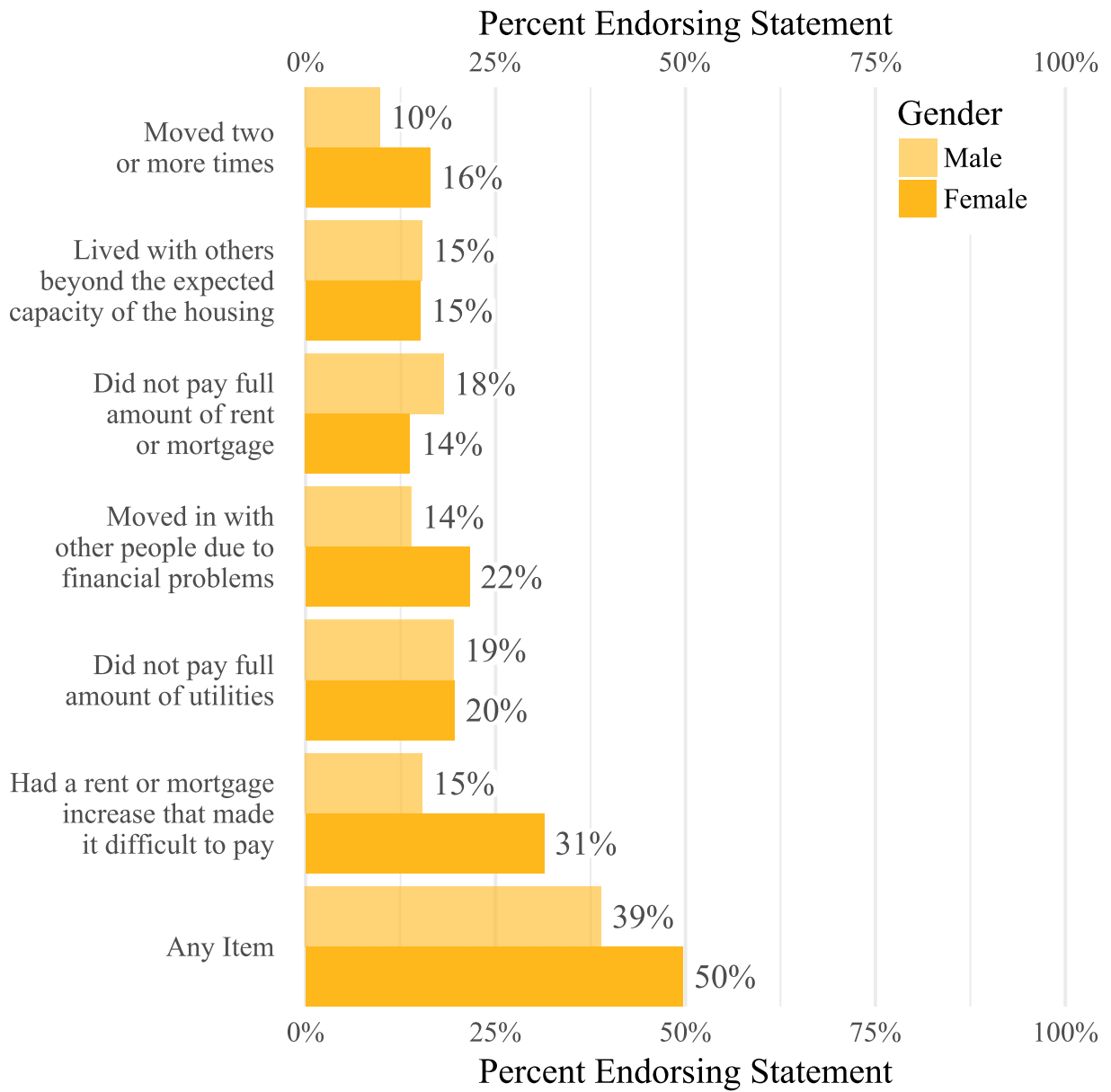
How does each student self-identify?

*Note:* The term *Non-Binary* is used here to refer to a wide range of gender identities including transsexual, gender fluid, third gender, and many others.

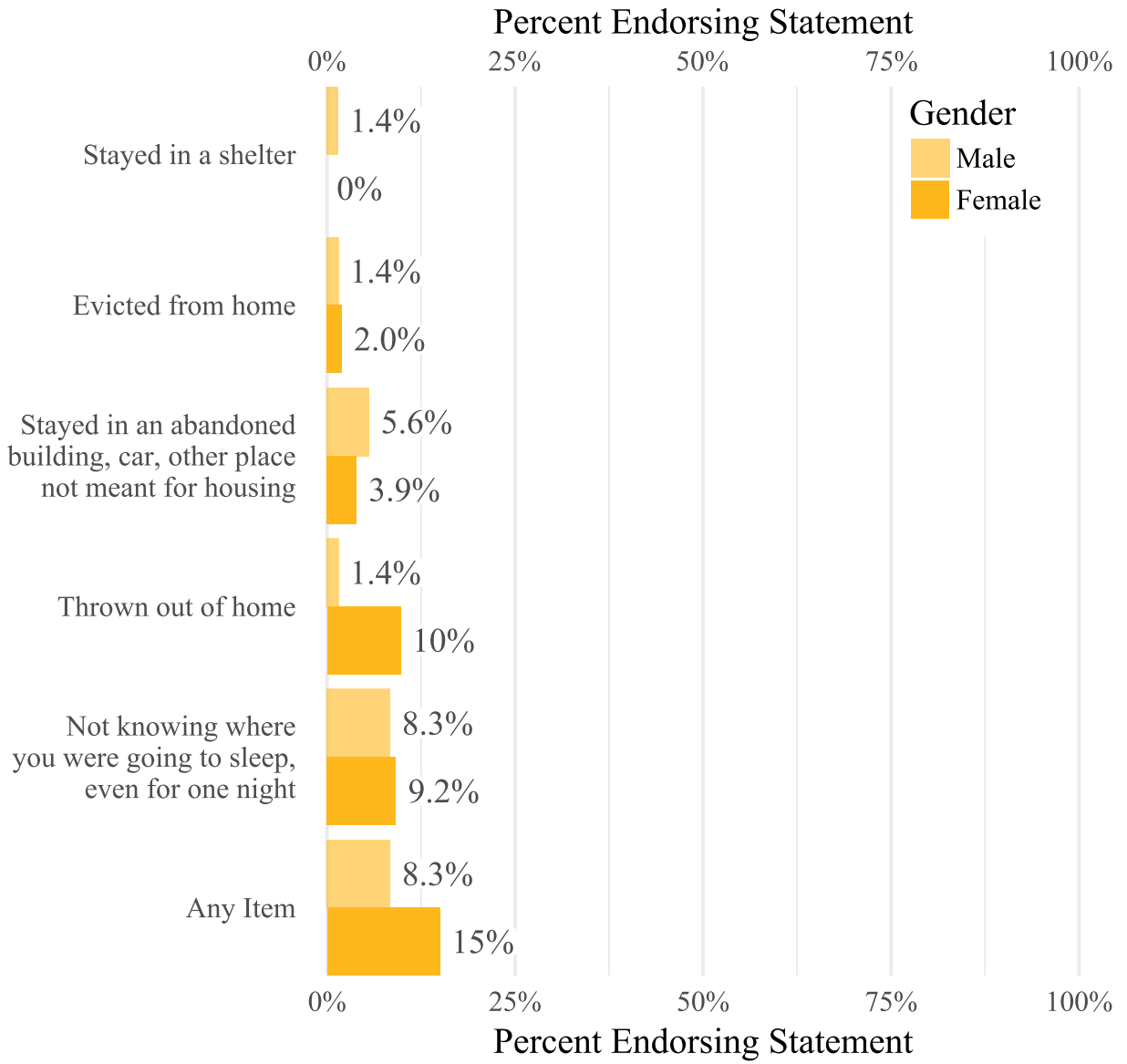
Gender	<i>n</i>	Percent
Male	72	31.9%
Female	154	68.1%
Non-Binary	0	0.0%

### Housing Insecurity by Gender



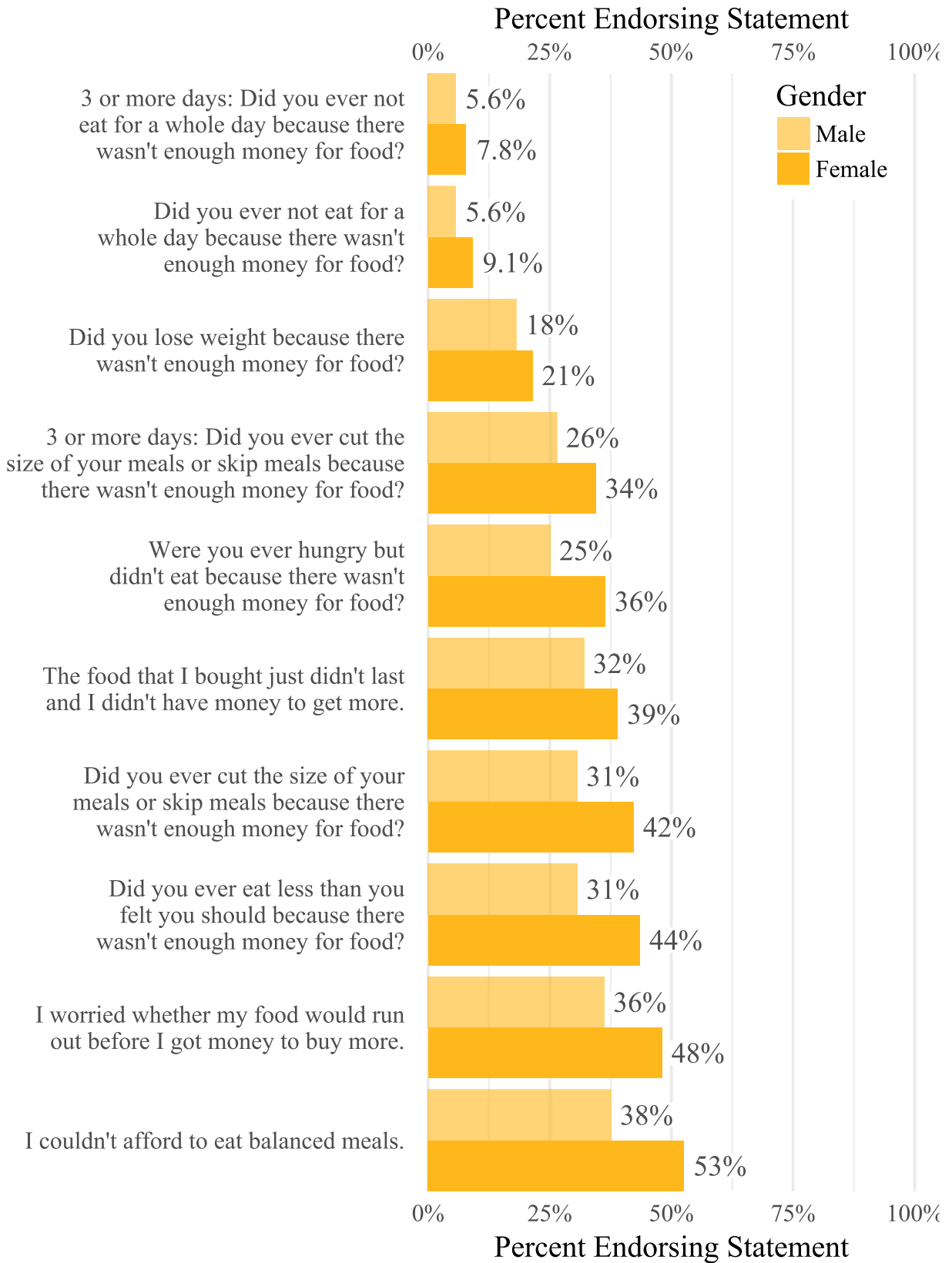


## Homelessness by Gender

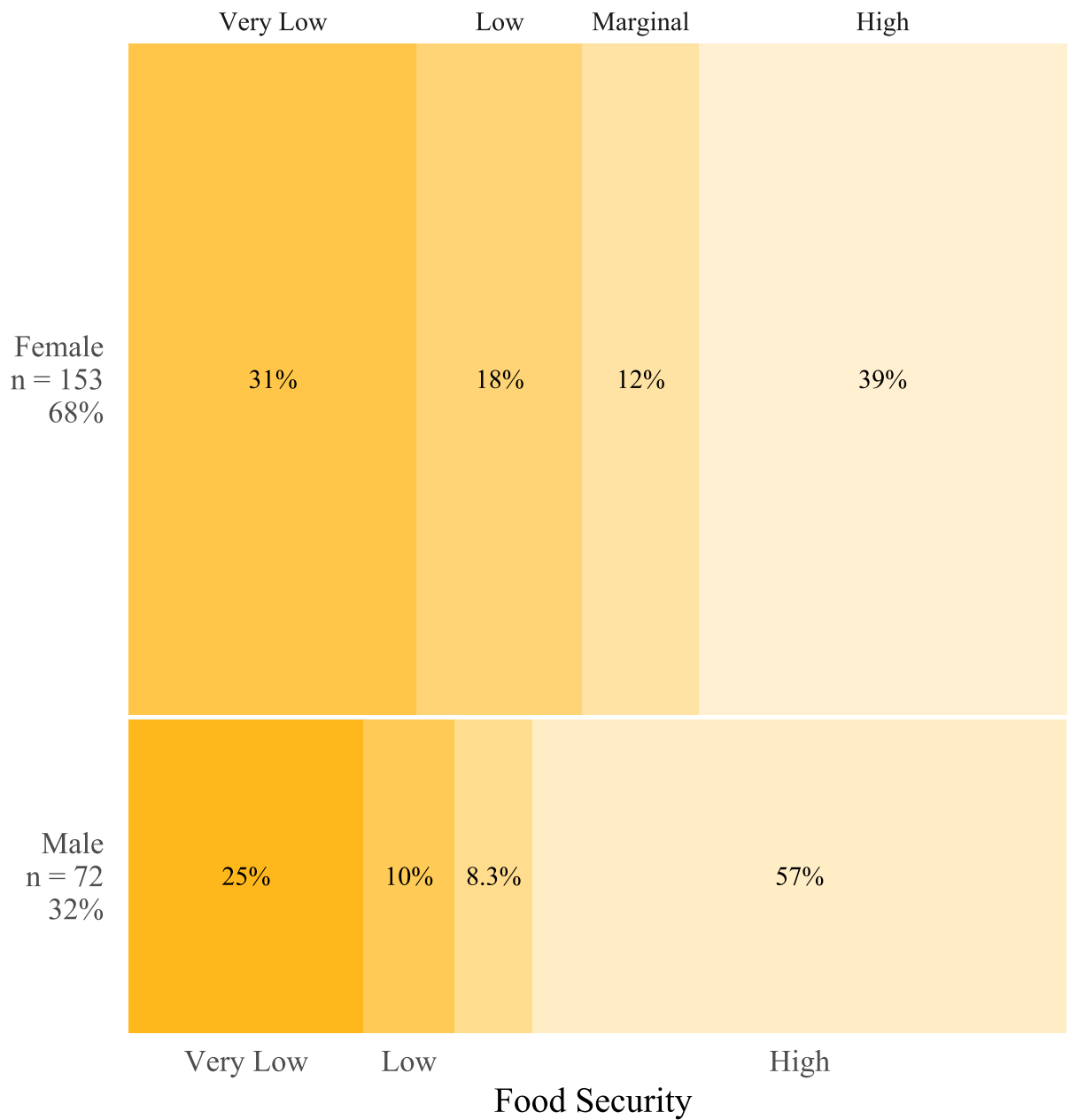


## Food Insecurity by Gender

Food Security Questions



**Food Insecurity Categories**



## Race/Ethnicity

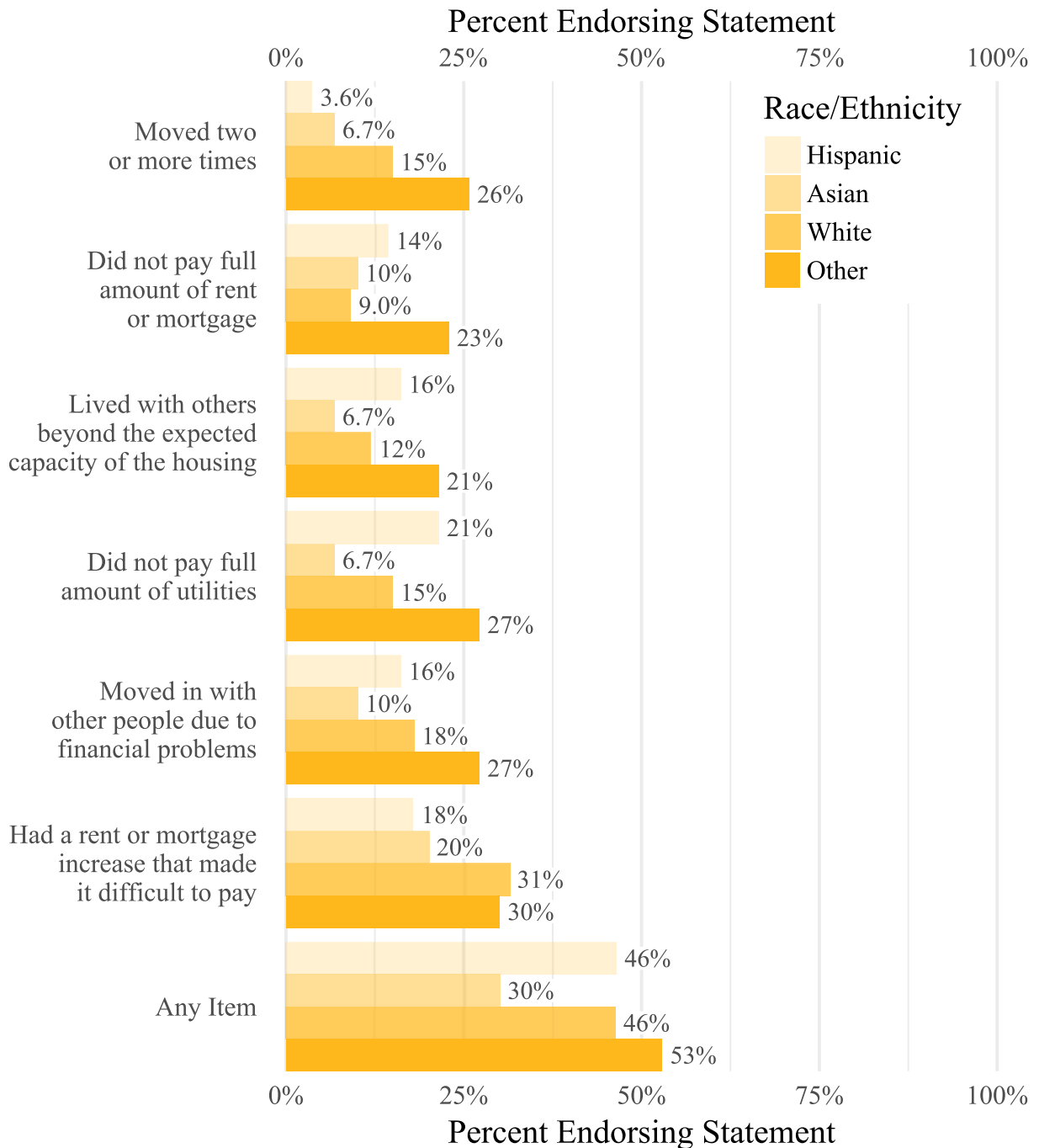
How does each student self-identify?

*Note:* All groups with fewer than 25 participants were combined into the *Other* category, which also includes individuals who identified as belonging to more than one racial/ethnic group.

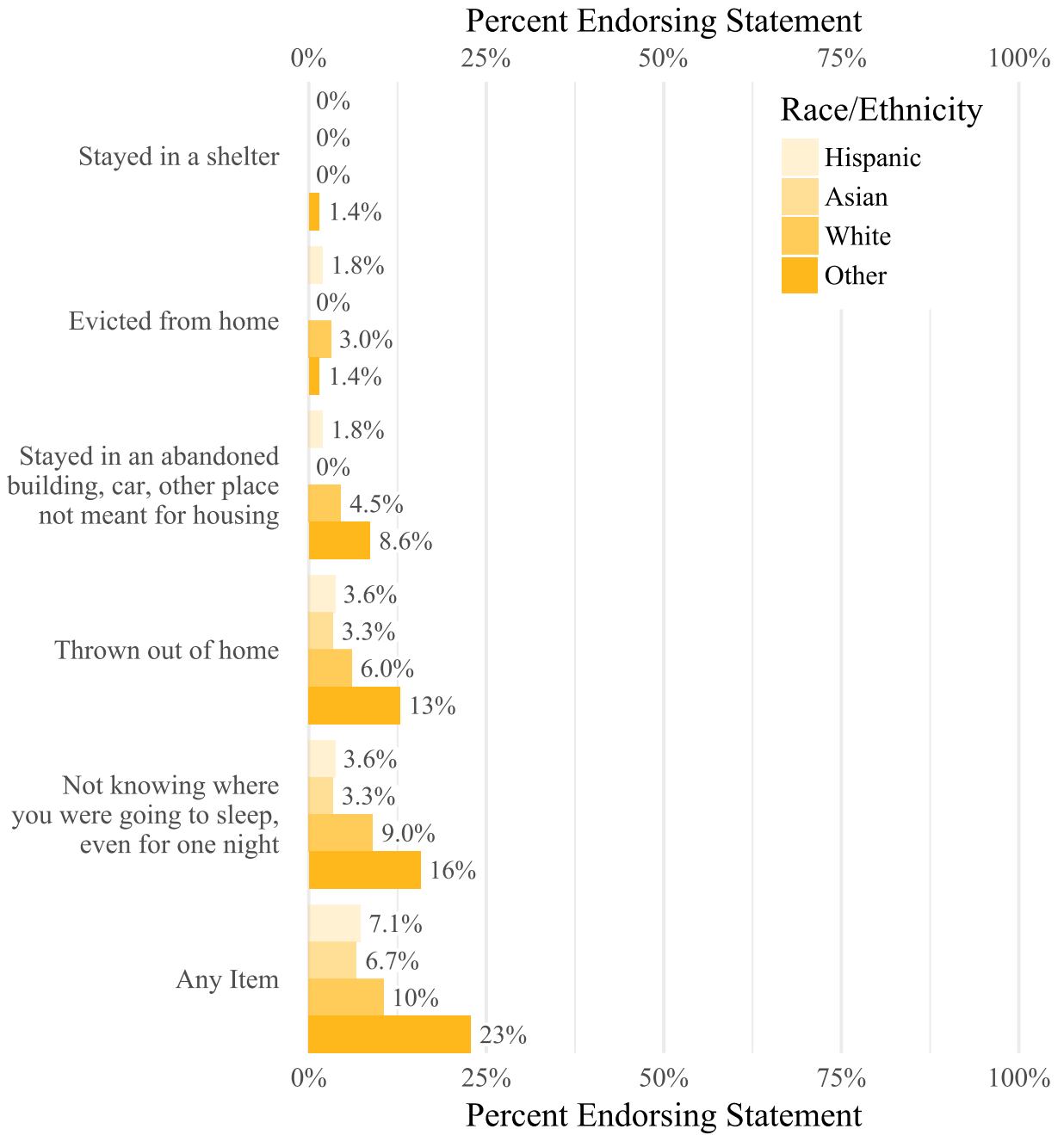
Race/Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	Percent
Black	7	3.1%
Native American	0	0.0%
Hispanic	56	25.0%

Race/Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	Percent
Middle-Eastern/Arab	2	0.9%
Asian	30	13.4%
White	68	30.4%
Mixed/Other	61	27.2%

## Housing Insecurity by Race/Ethnicity

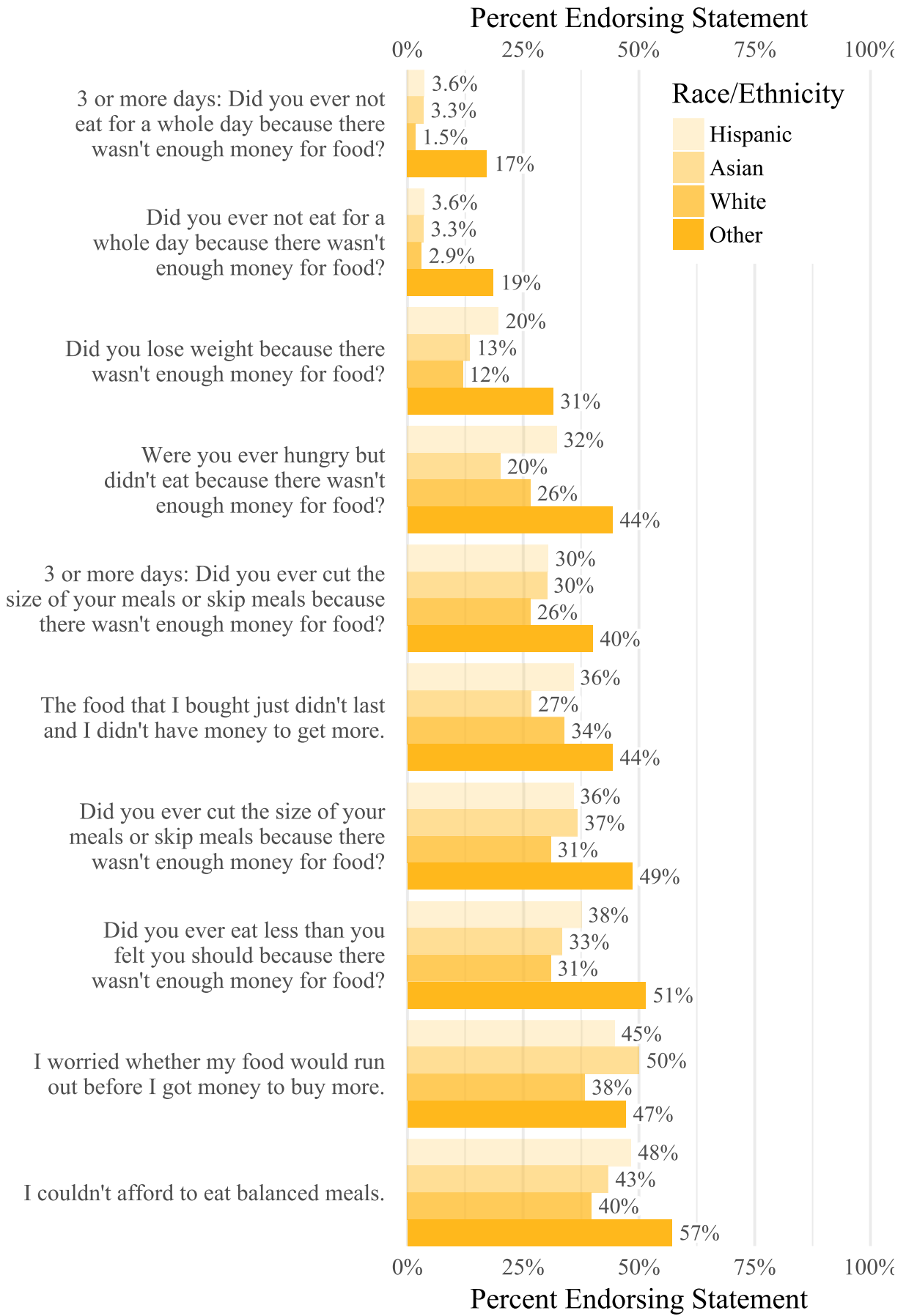


## Homelessness by Race/Ethnicity

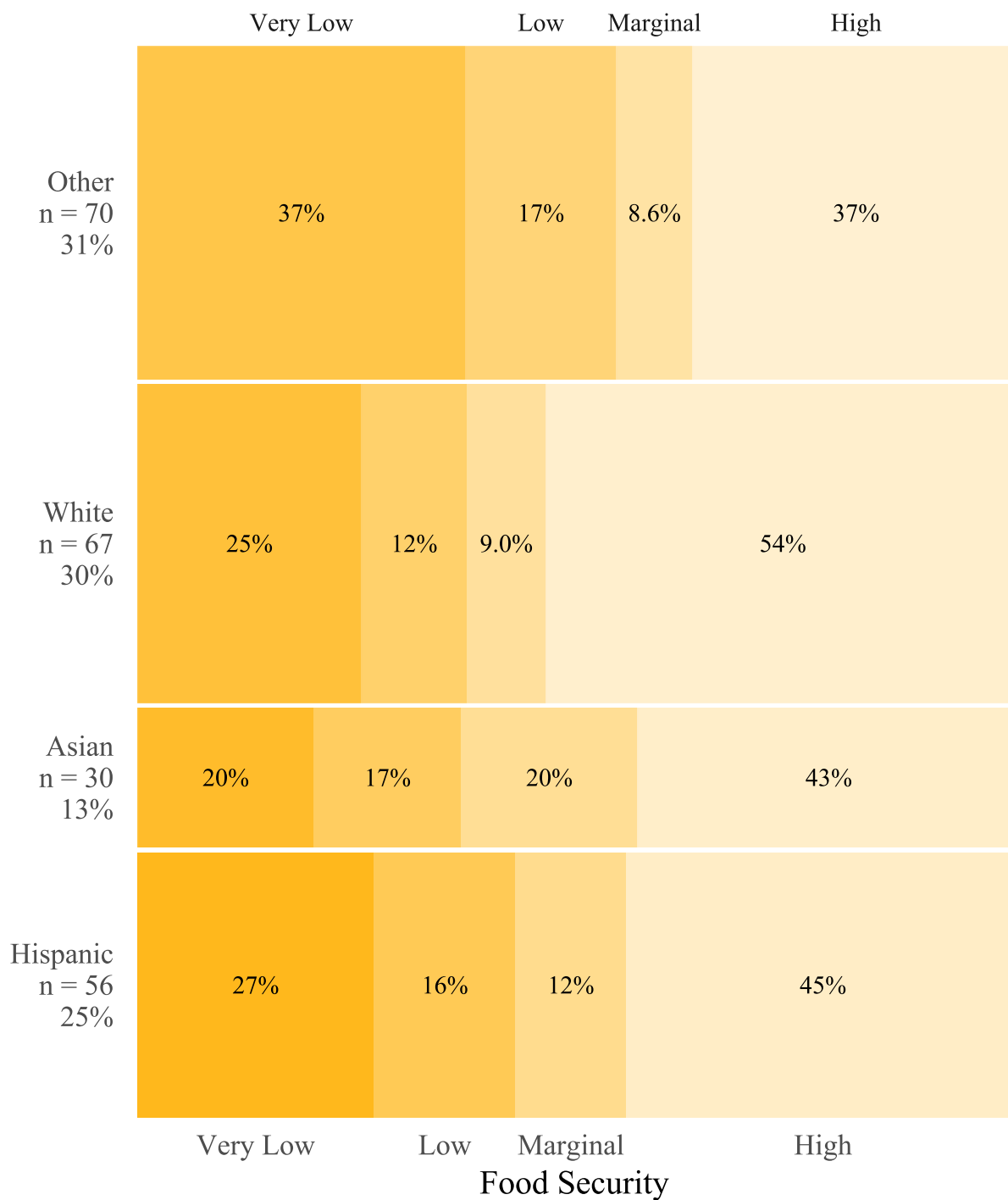


## Food Insecurity by Race/Ethnicity

Food Security Questions



Food Insecurity Categories



## Age

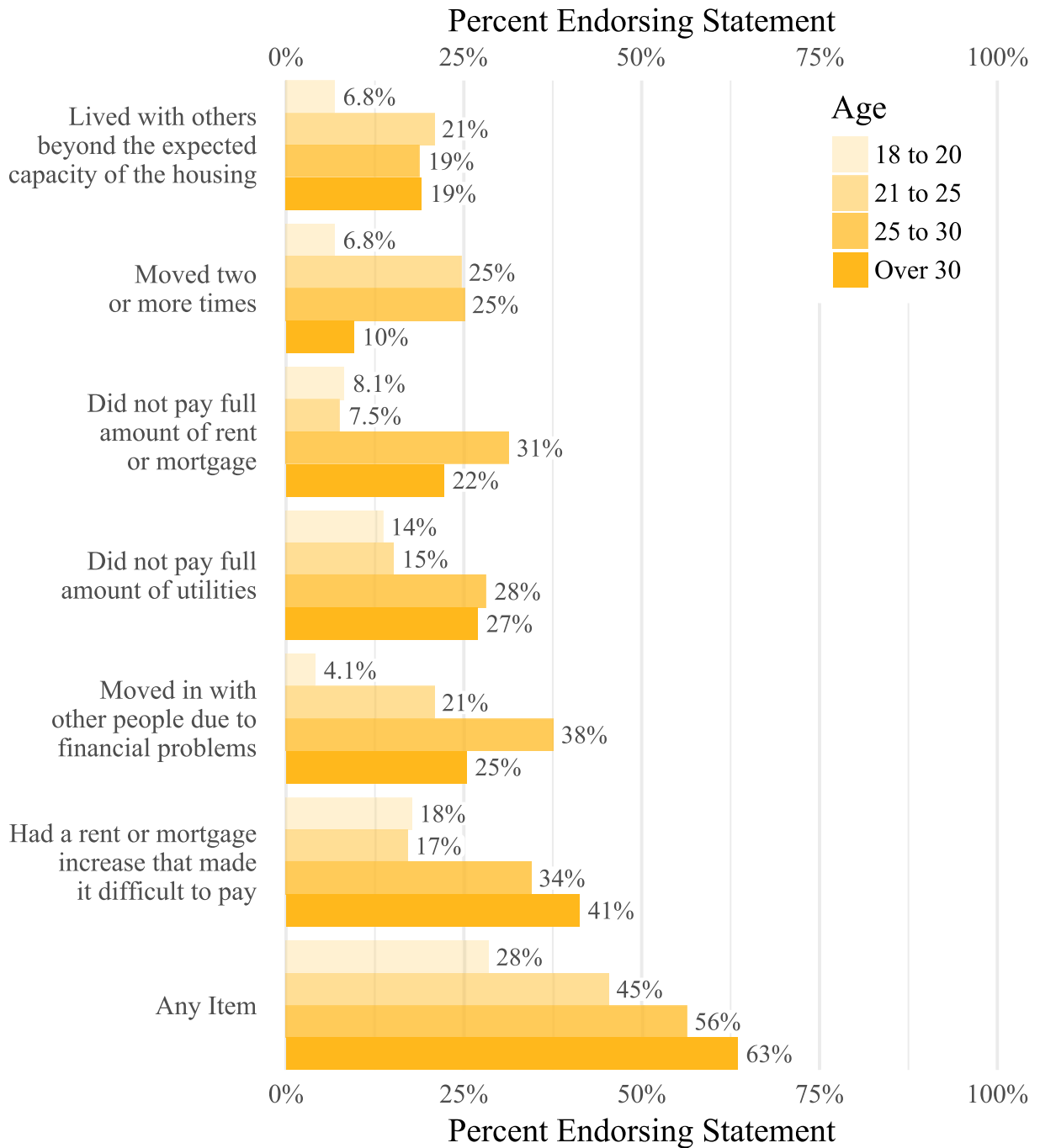
Age in Fall 2017

Age	<i>n</i>	Percent
18 to 20	74	33.3%
21 to 25	53	23.9%
25 to 30	32	14.4%

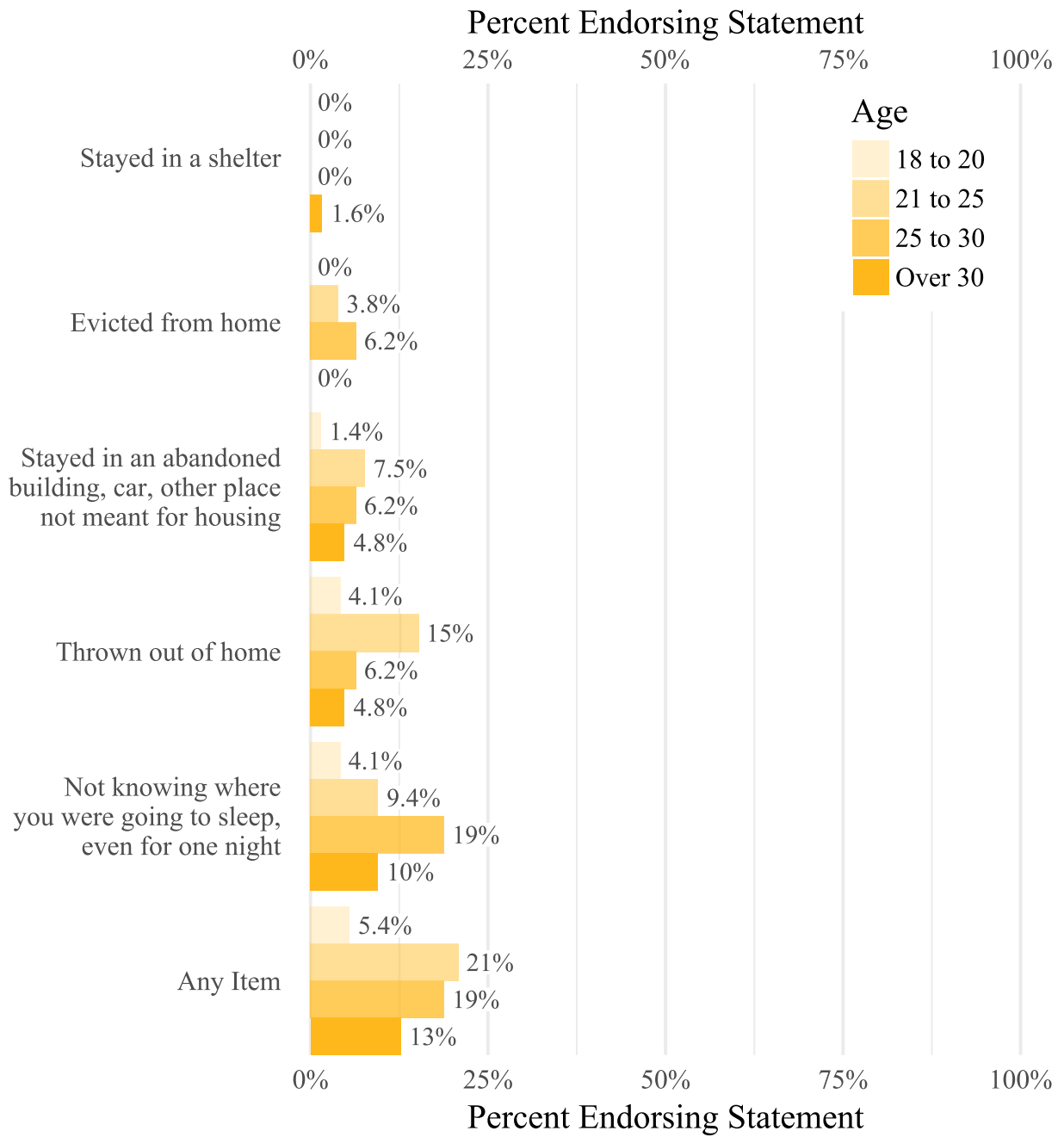


Age	<i>n</i>	Percent
Over 30	63	28.4%

## Housing Insecurity by Age

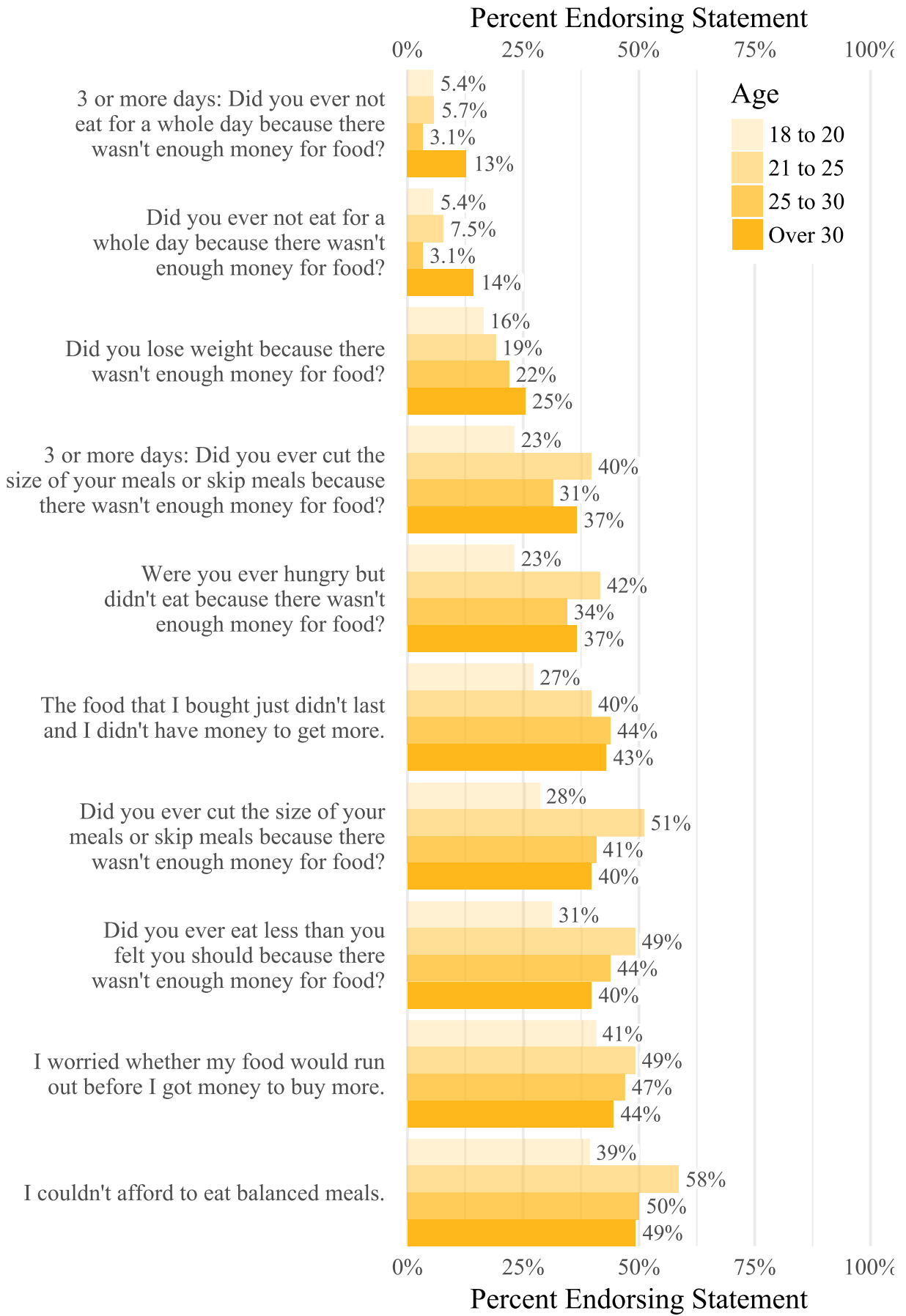


## Homelessness by Age

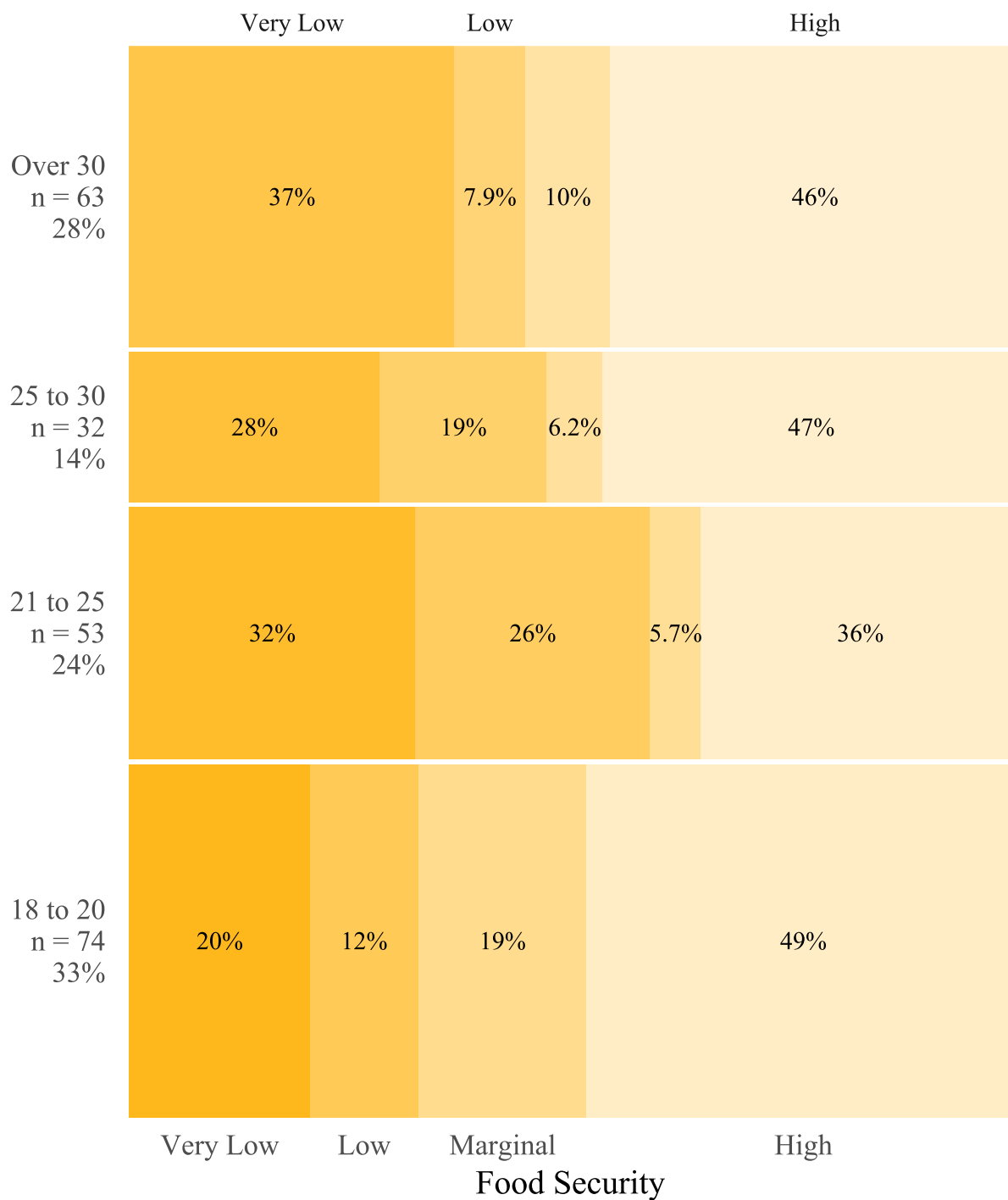


## Food Insecurity by Age

Food Security Questions



Food Insecurity Categories

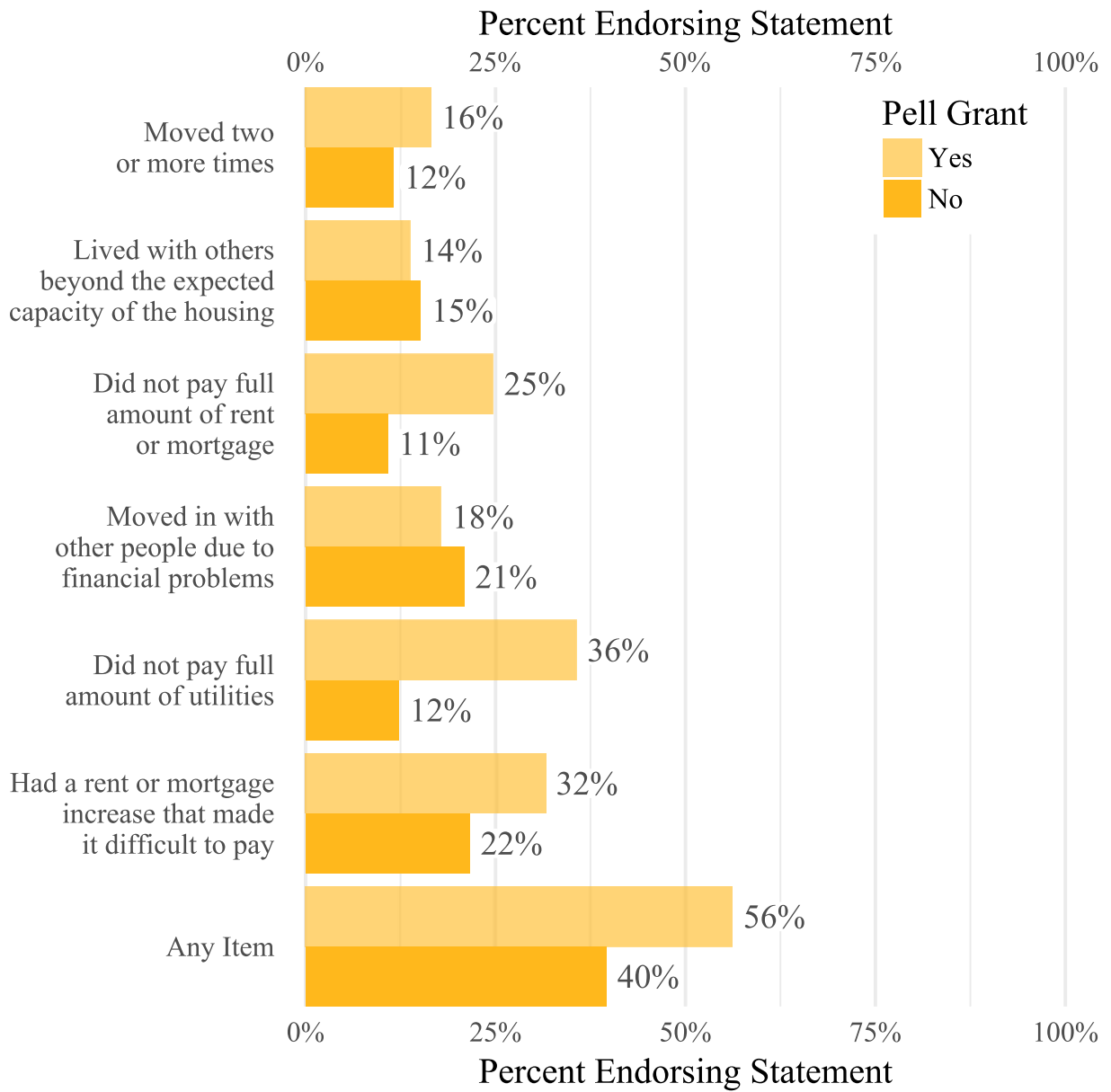


## Pell Grant

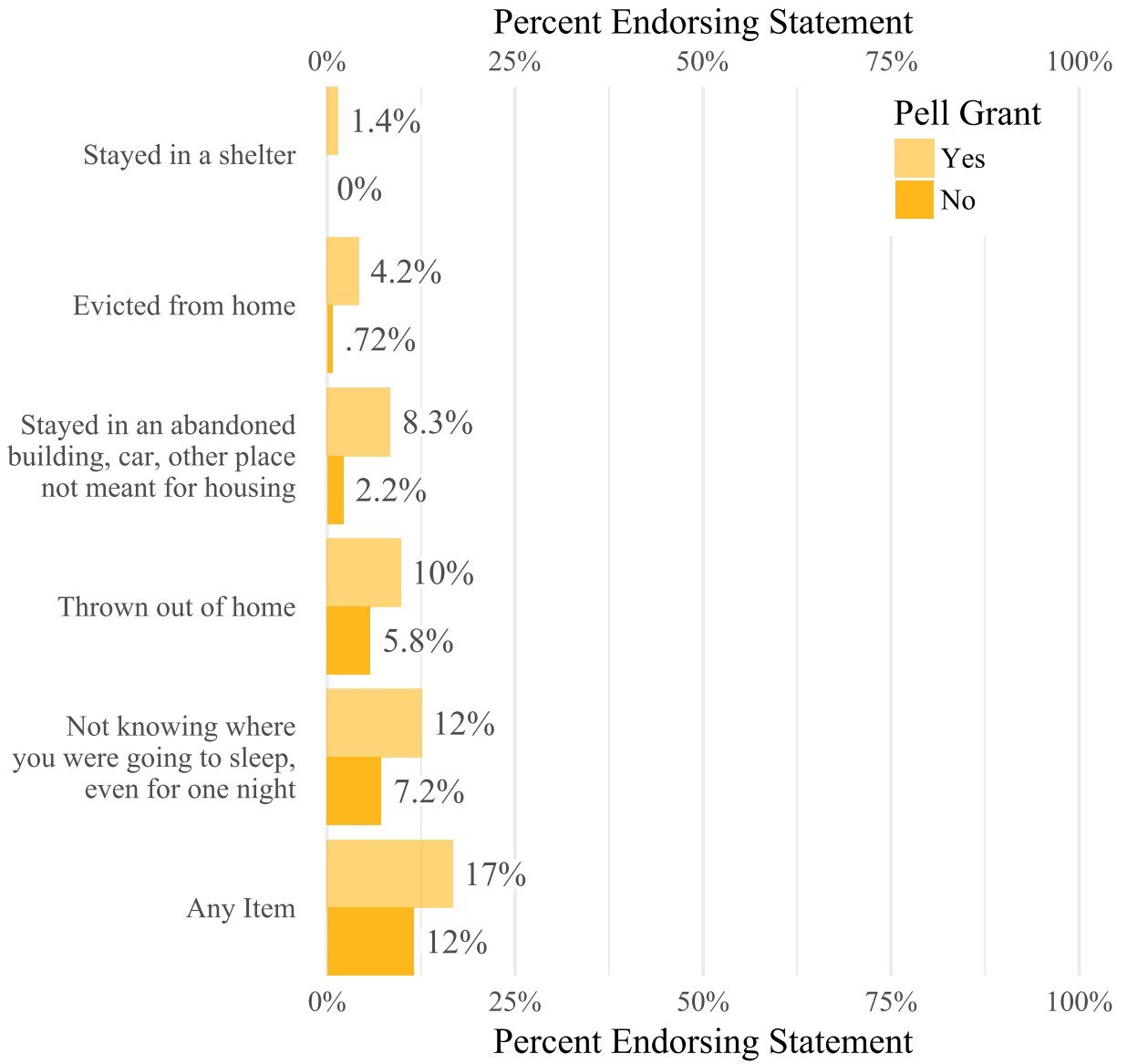
Student reports receiving Pell Grant support.

Pell Grant	<i>n</i>	Percent
Yes	88	34.4%
No	168	65.6%

## Housing Insecurity by Pell Grant

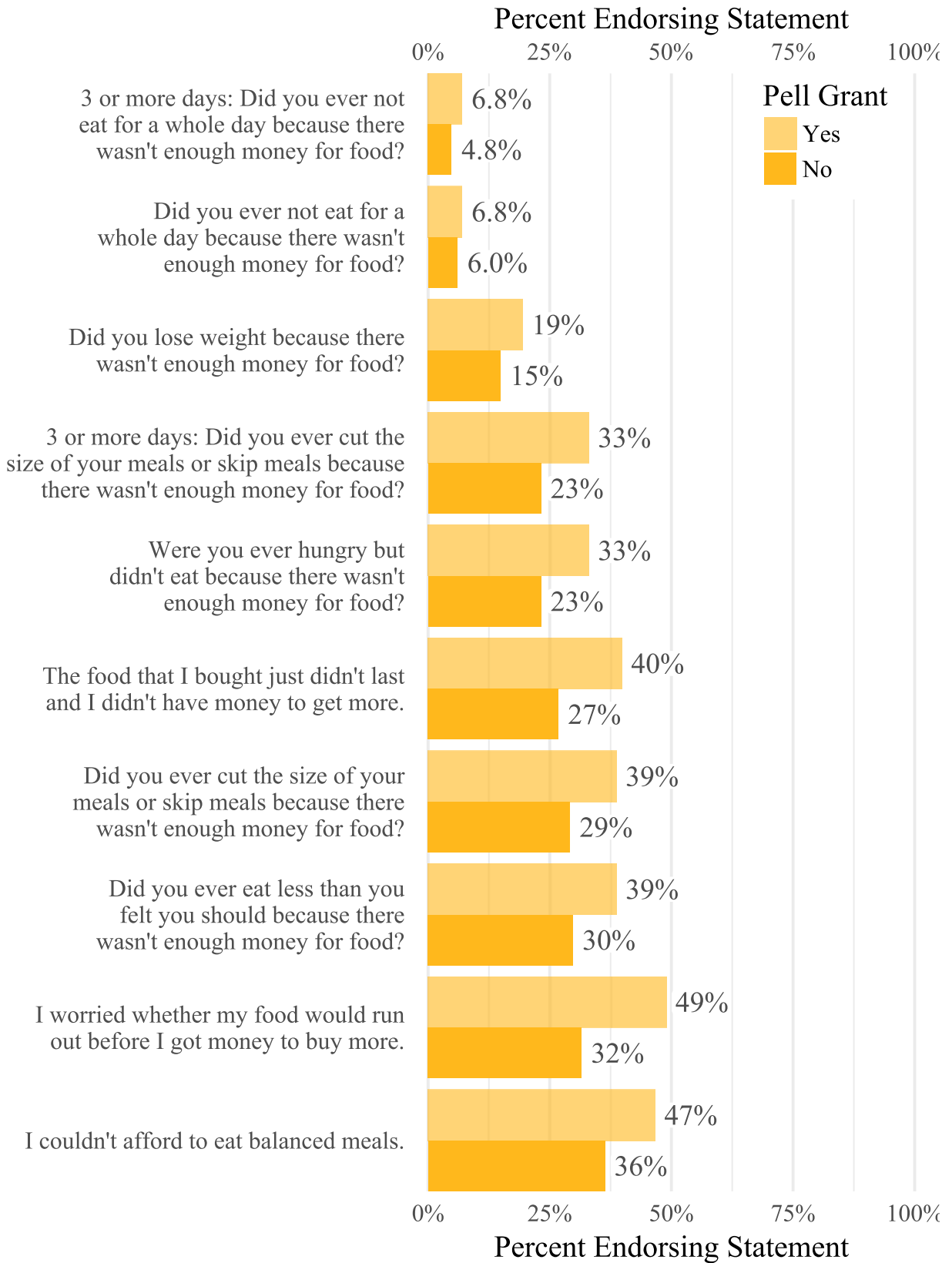


## Homelessness by Pell Grant

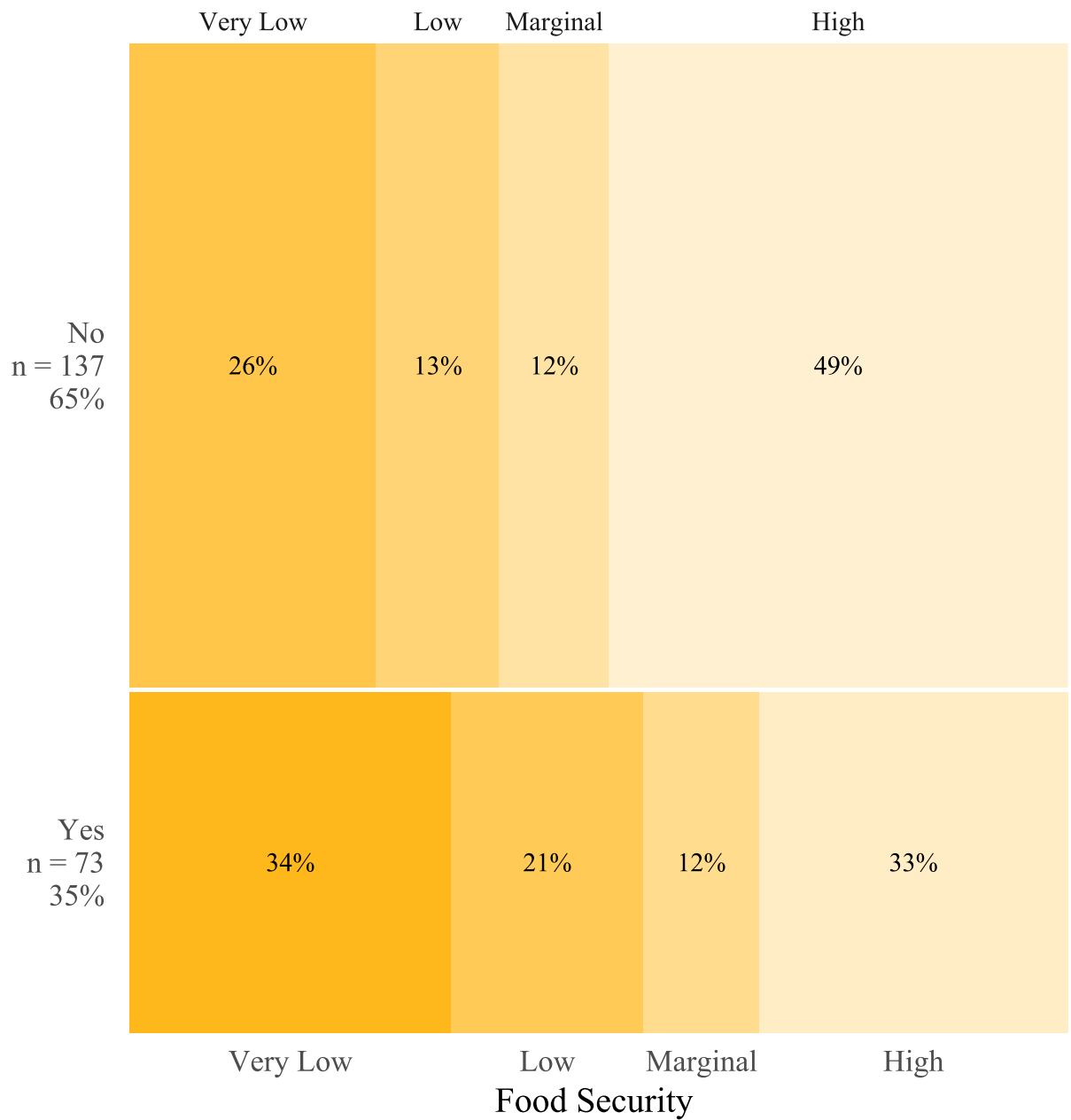


## Food Insecurity by Pell Grant

Food Security Questions



Food Insecurity Categories



## Work

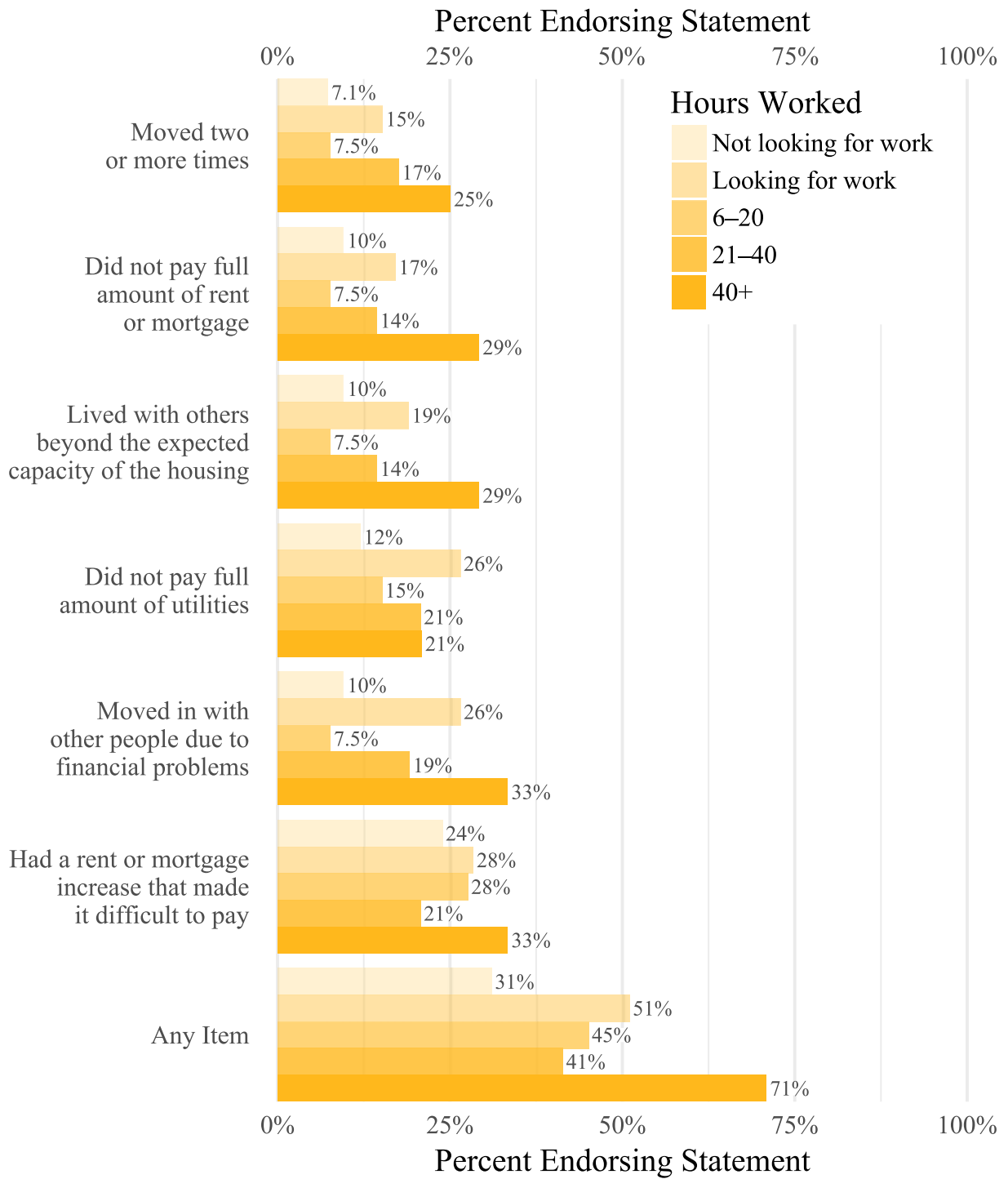
Number of hours worked per week

Hours Worked	<i>n</i>	Percent
Not looking for work	53	19.6%
Looking for work	62	23.0%
1-5	11	4.1%
6-20	45	16.7%
21-40	72	26.7%
40+	27	10.0%

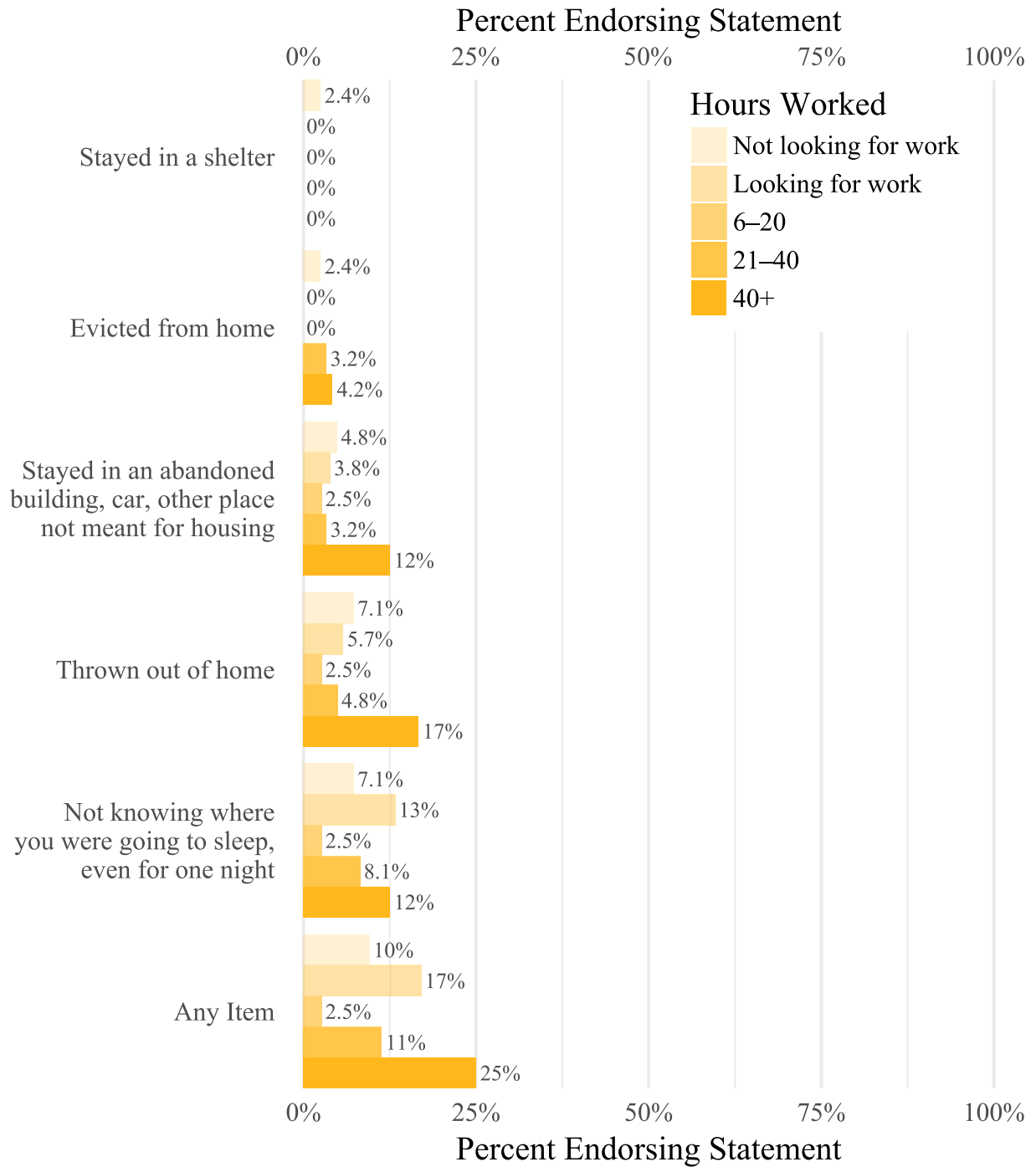


On average, students who were employed worked 28.4 hours per week.

## Housing Insecurity by Hours Worked



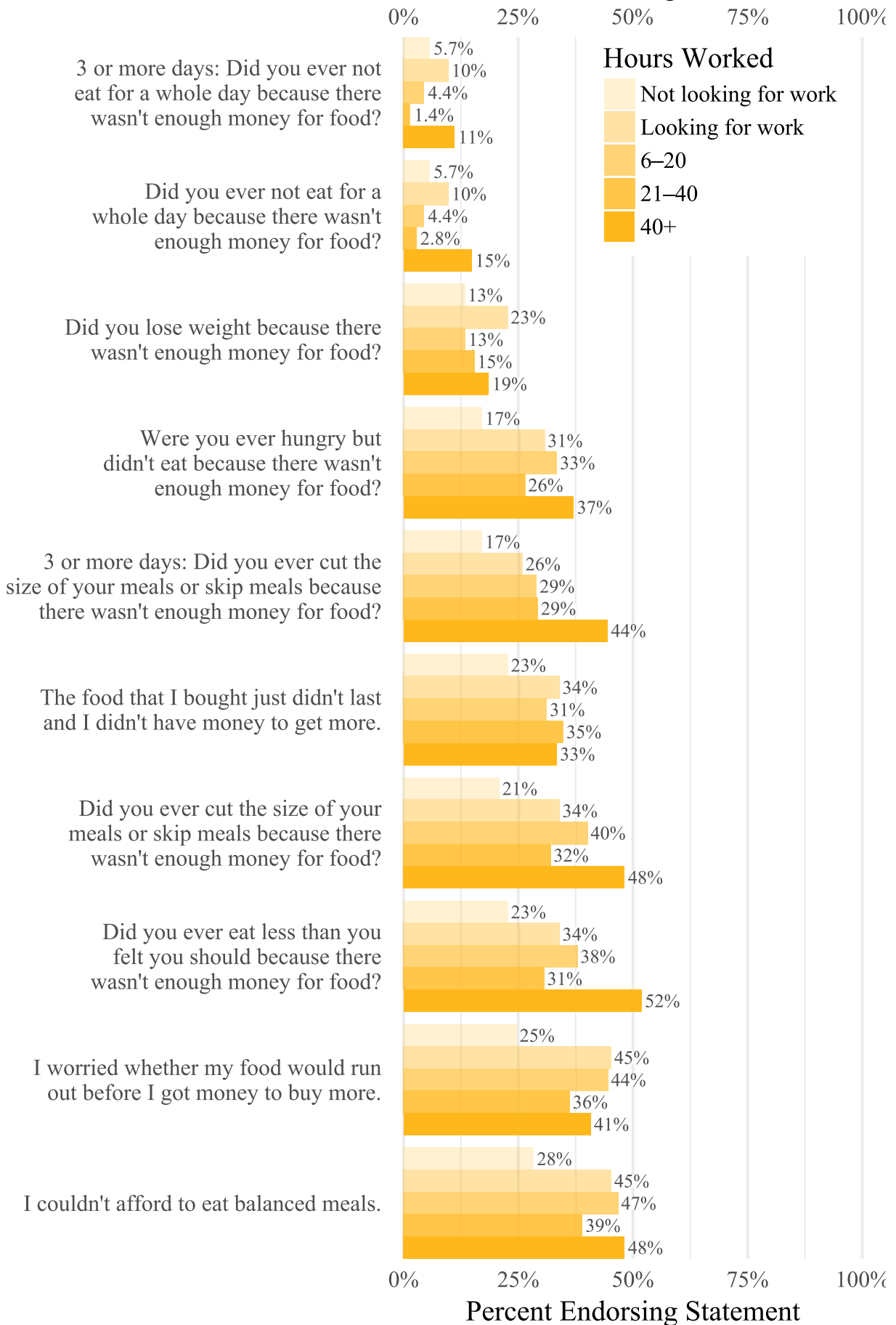
## Homelessness by Hours Worked



## Food Insecurity by Hours Worked

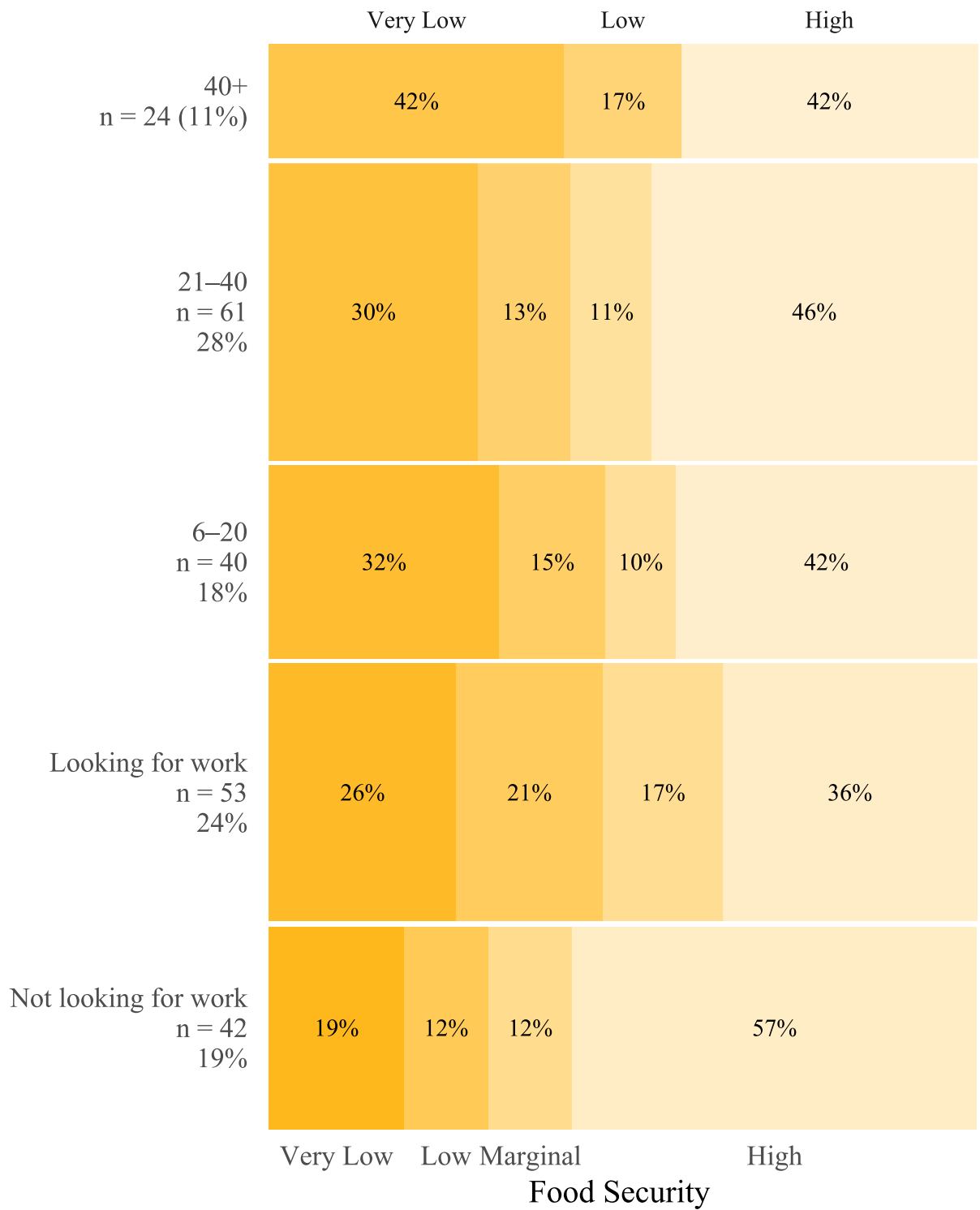
Food Security Questions

## Percent Endorsing Statement



Percent Endorsing Statement

## Food Insecurity Categories



## Full Time/Part Time Status

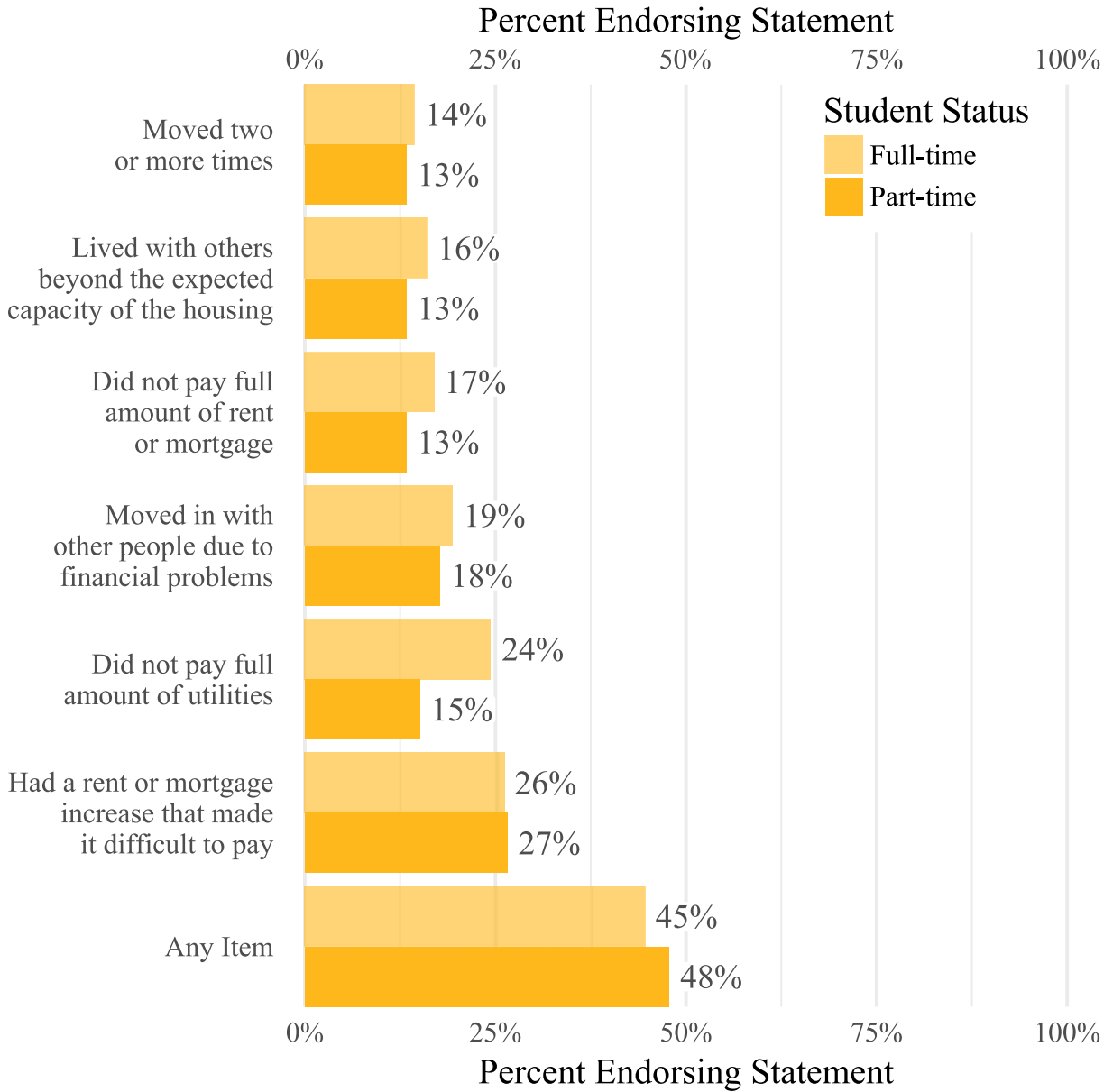
Does the student attend school full time or part time?

Student Status	<i>n</i>	Percent
Full-time	148	51.6%

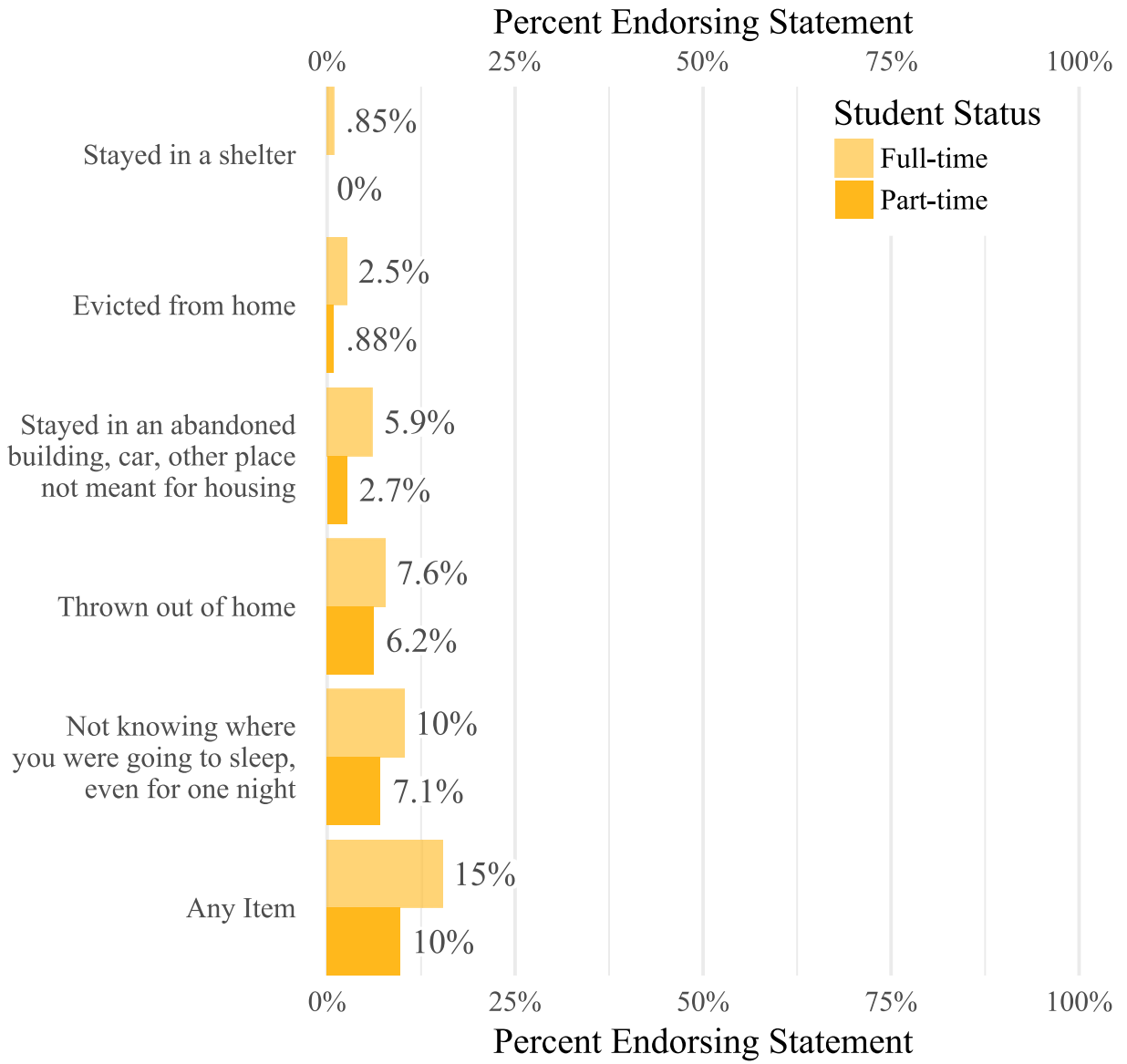
**Student Status** ***n*** **Percent**

Part-time 139 48.4%

**Housing Insecurity by Student Status**

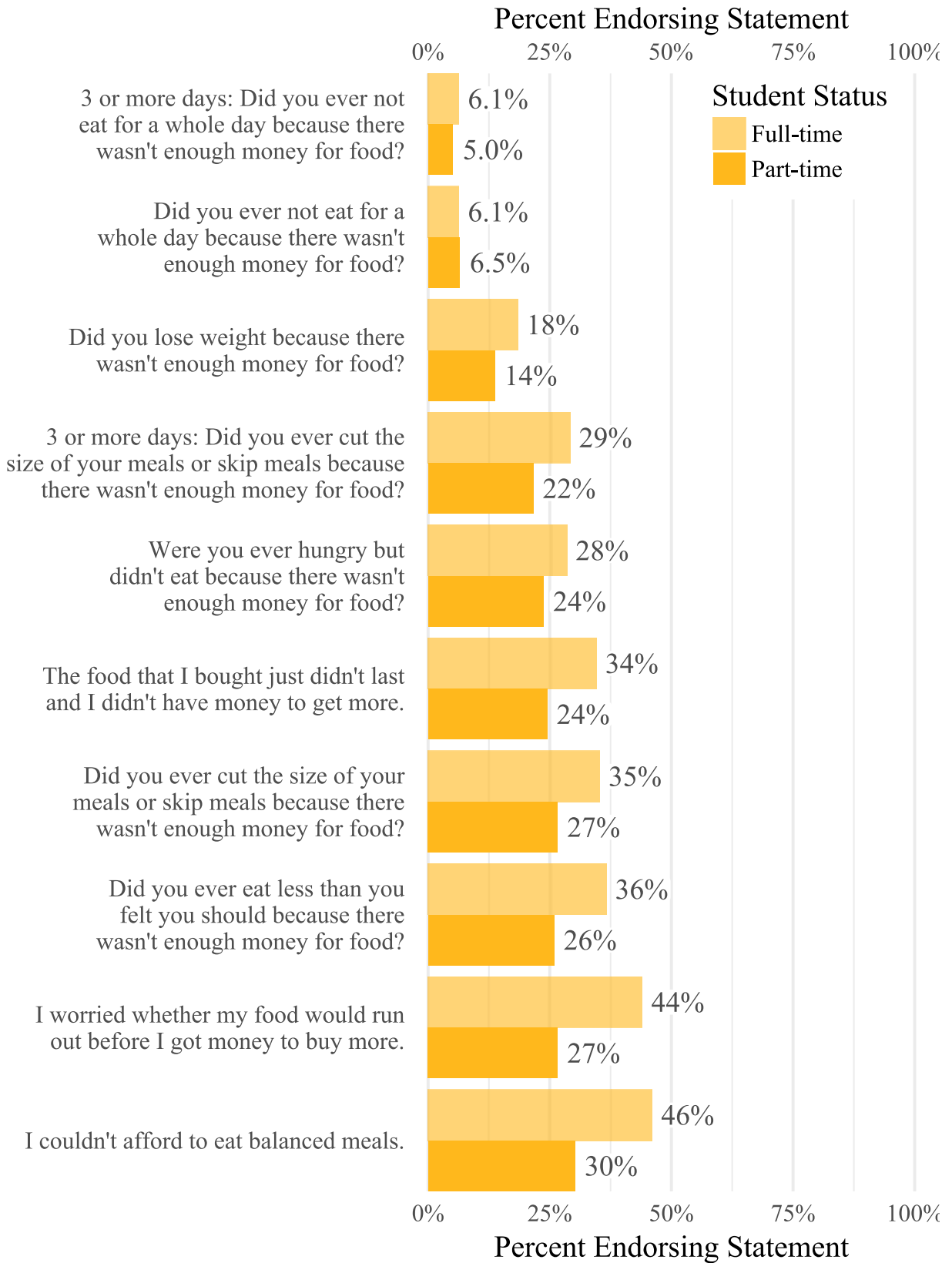


**Homelessness by Student Status**

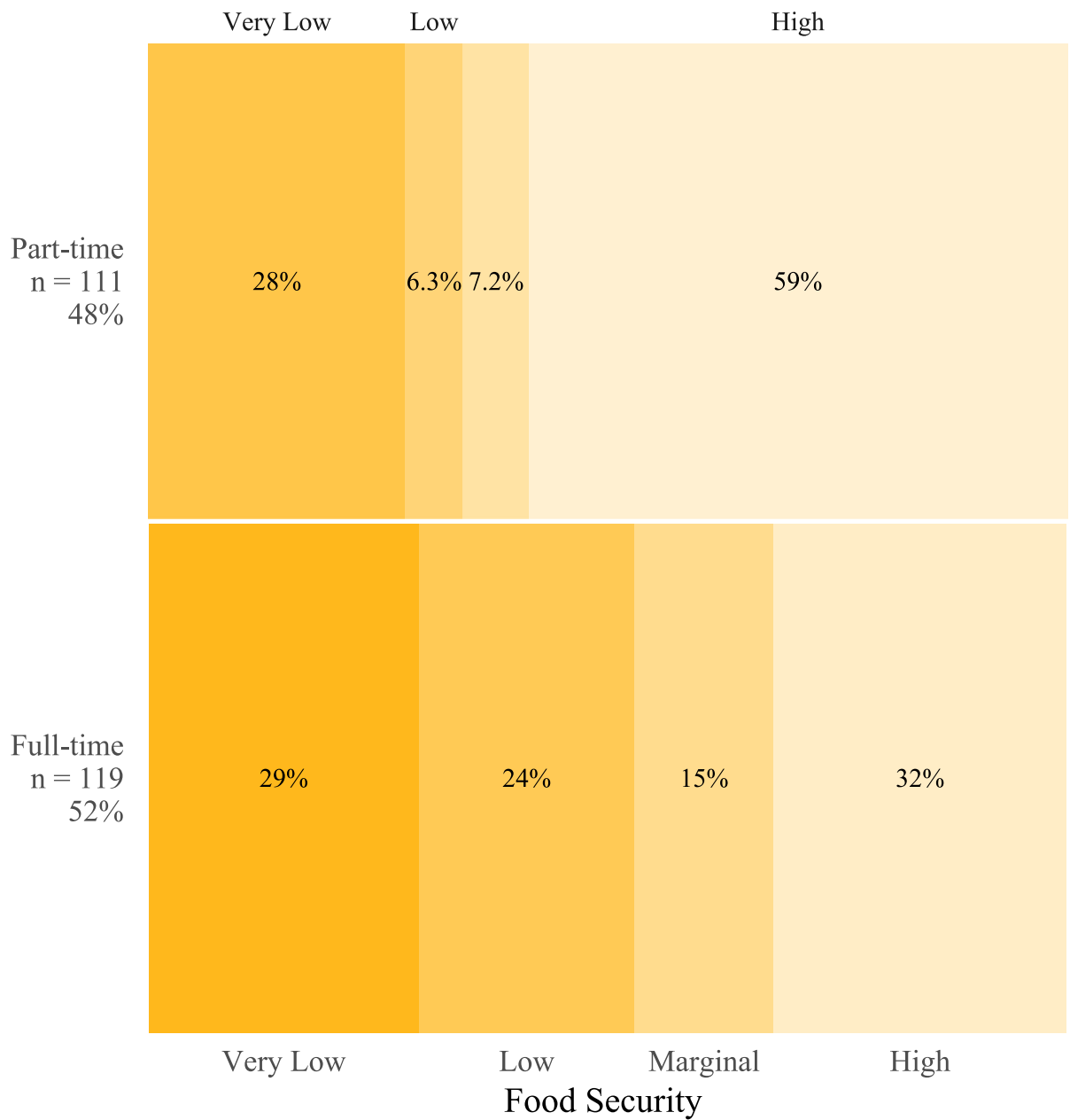


## Food Insecurity by Student Status

Food Security Questions



**Food Insecurity Categories**



## Parent Citizenship

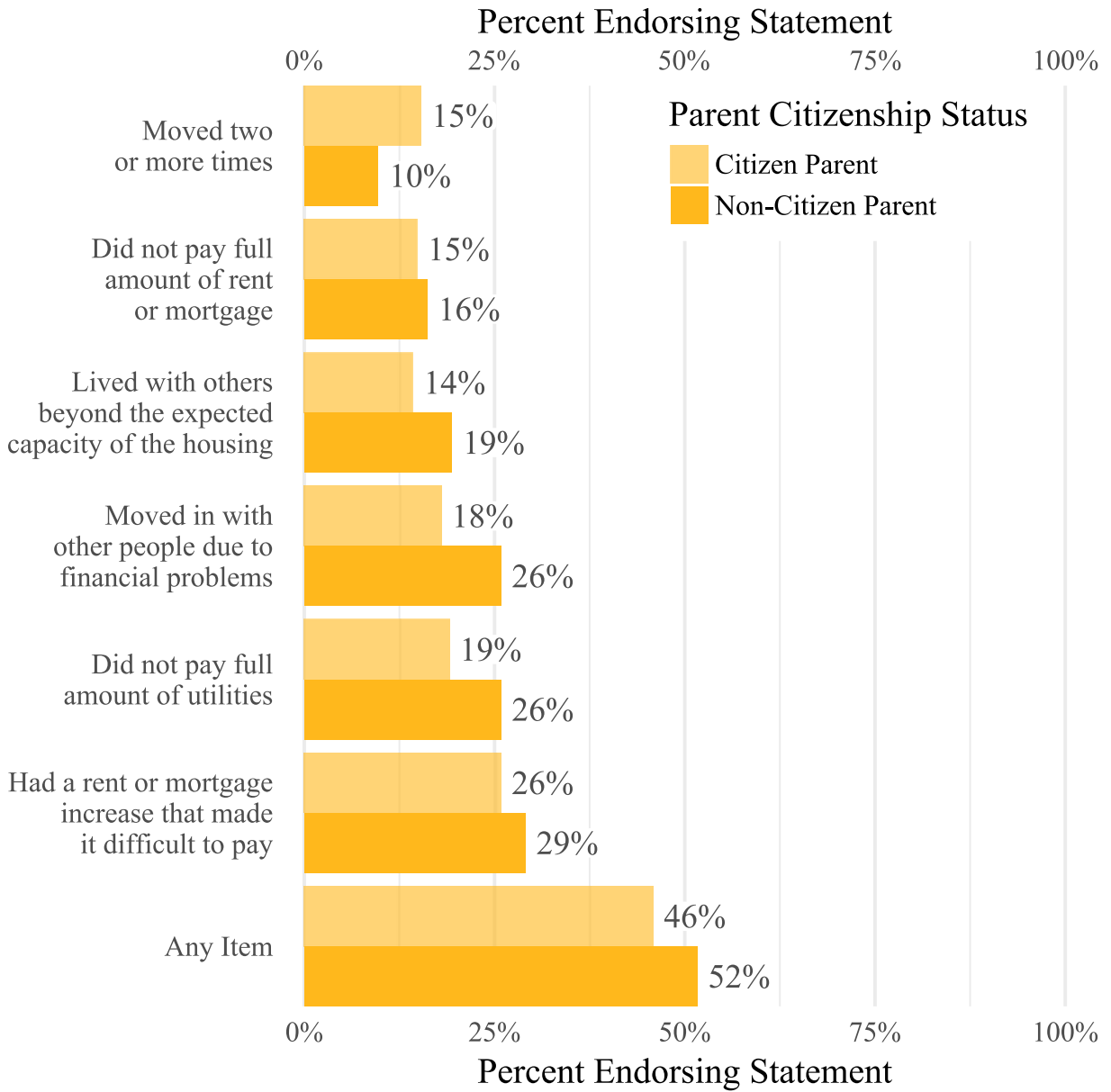
Is either parent a U.S. Citizen/Permanent Resident?

### Parent Citizenship

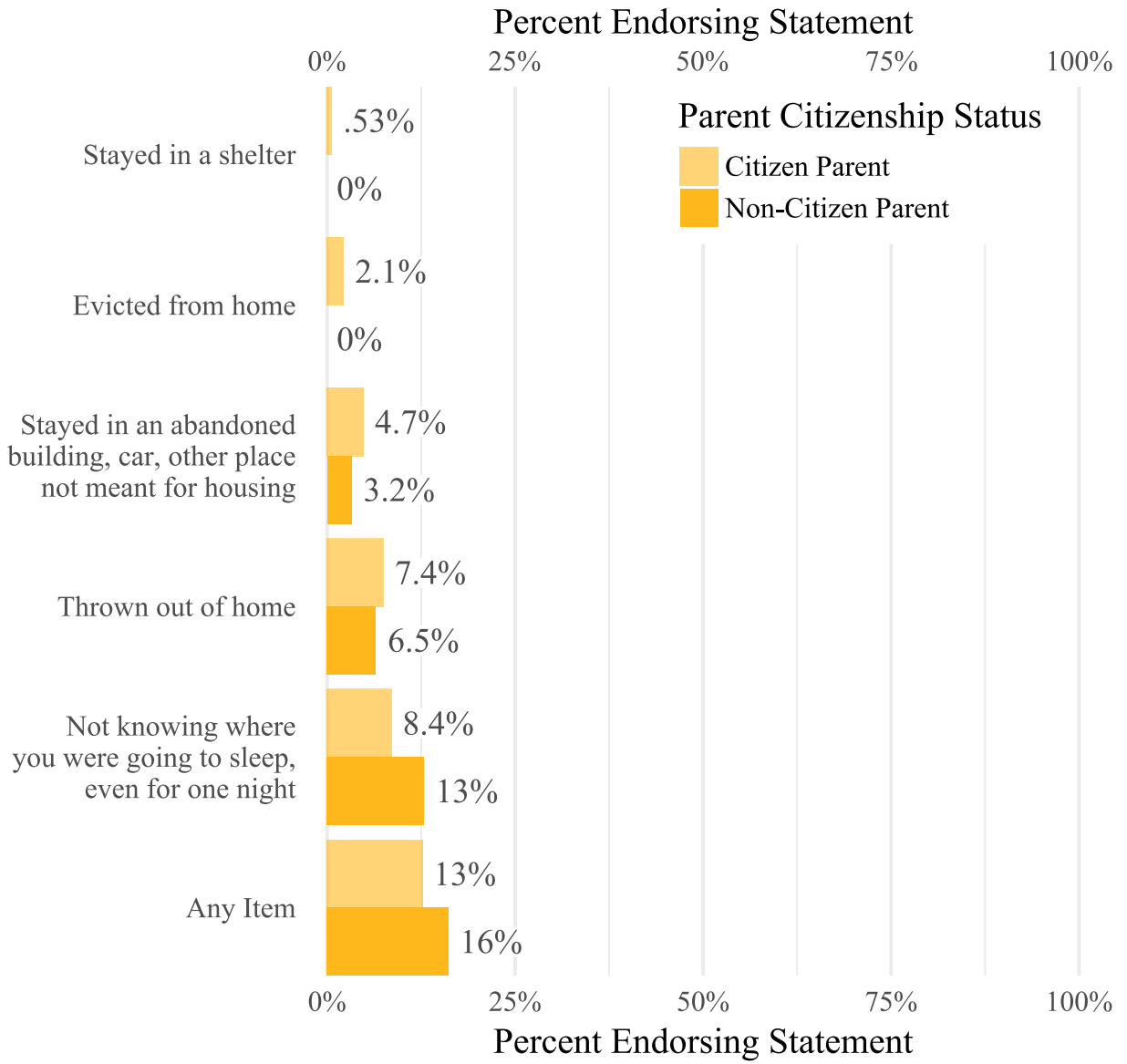
Status	<i>n</i>	Percent
Citizen Parent	190	86.0%
Non-Citizen Parent	31	14.0%

## Housing Insecurity by Parent Citizenship Status



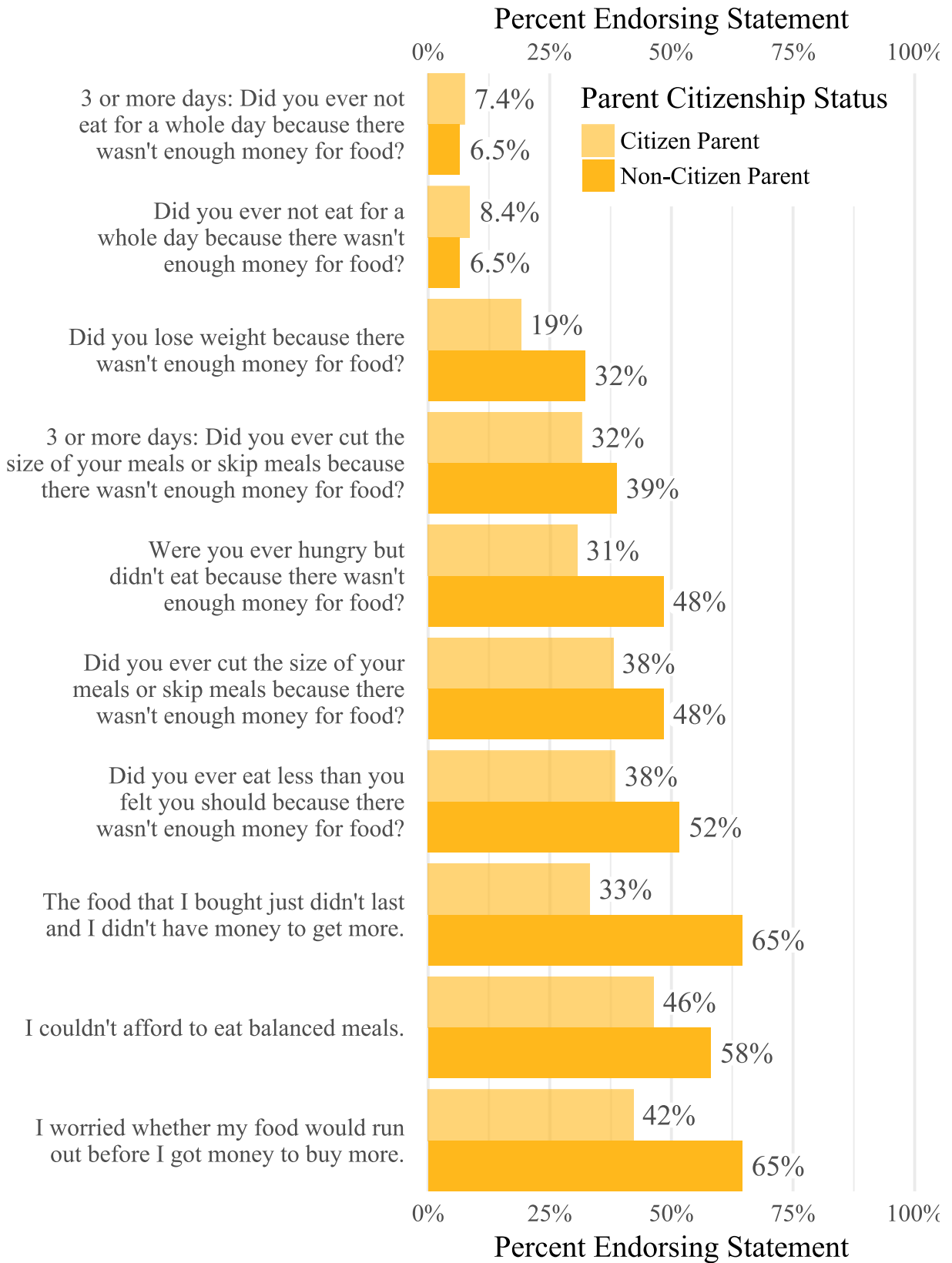


## Homelessness by Parent Citizenship Status

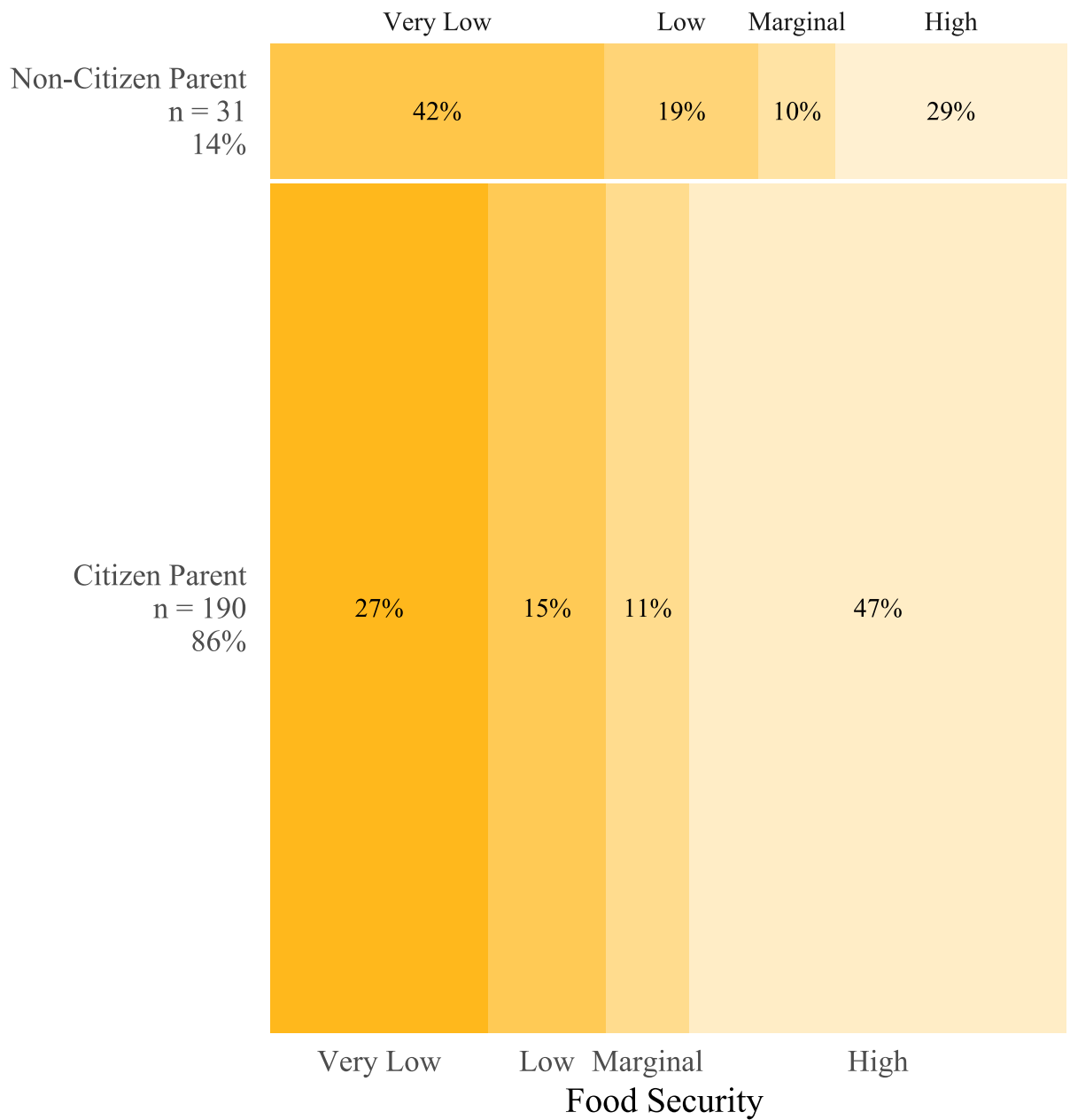


## Food Insecurity by Parent Citizenship Status

Food Security Questions



Food Insecurity Categories

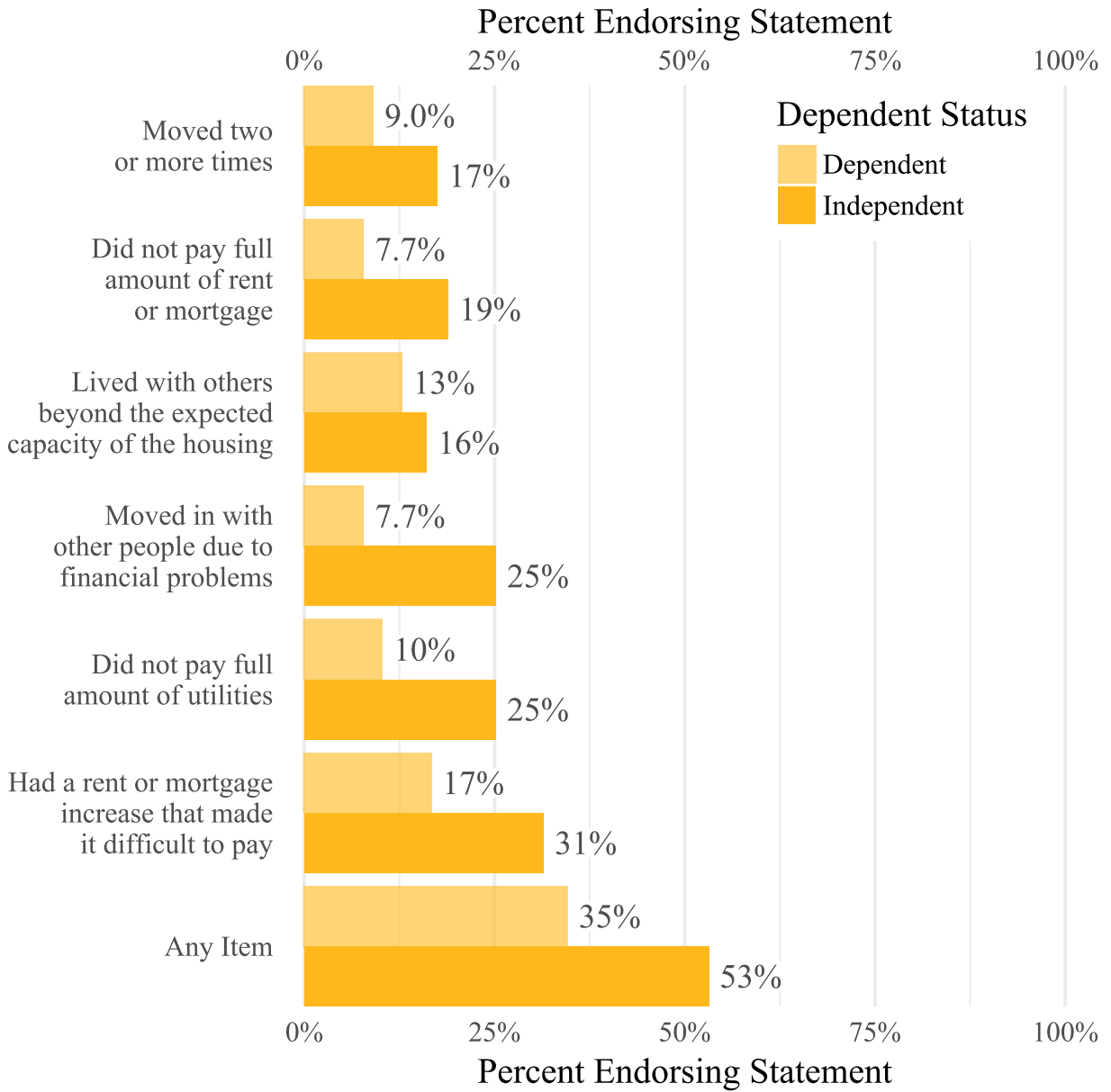


## Dependant Status

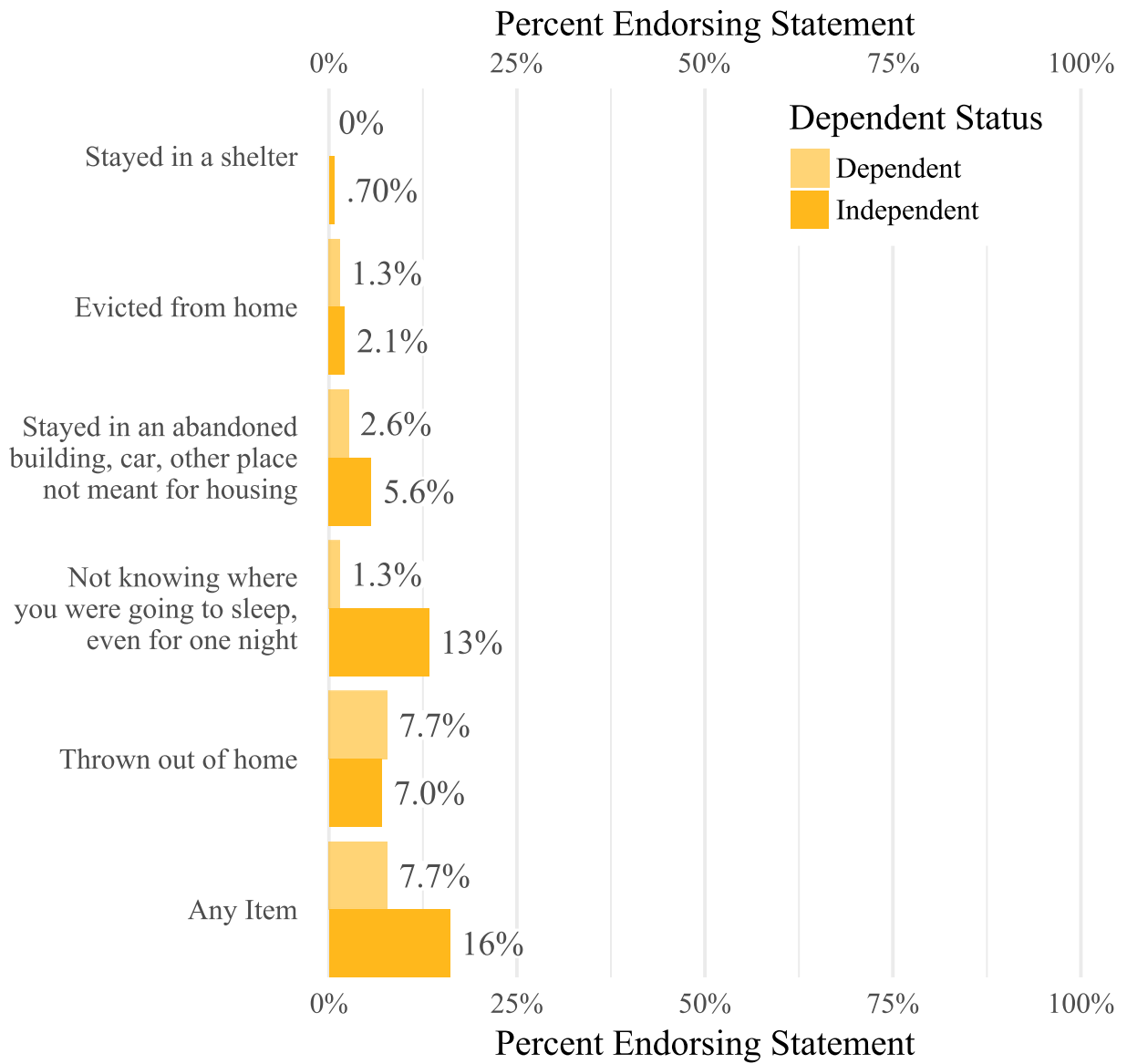
For tax purposes, is the student claimed by a parent as a dependent, or is the student independent?

Dependent Status	<i>n</i>	Percent
Dependent	78	35.3%
Independent	143	64.7%

## Housing Insecurity by Dependent Status

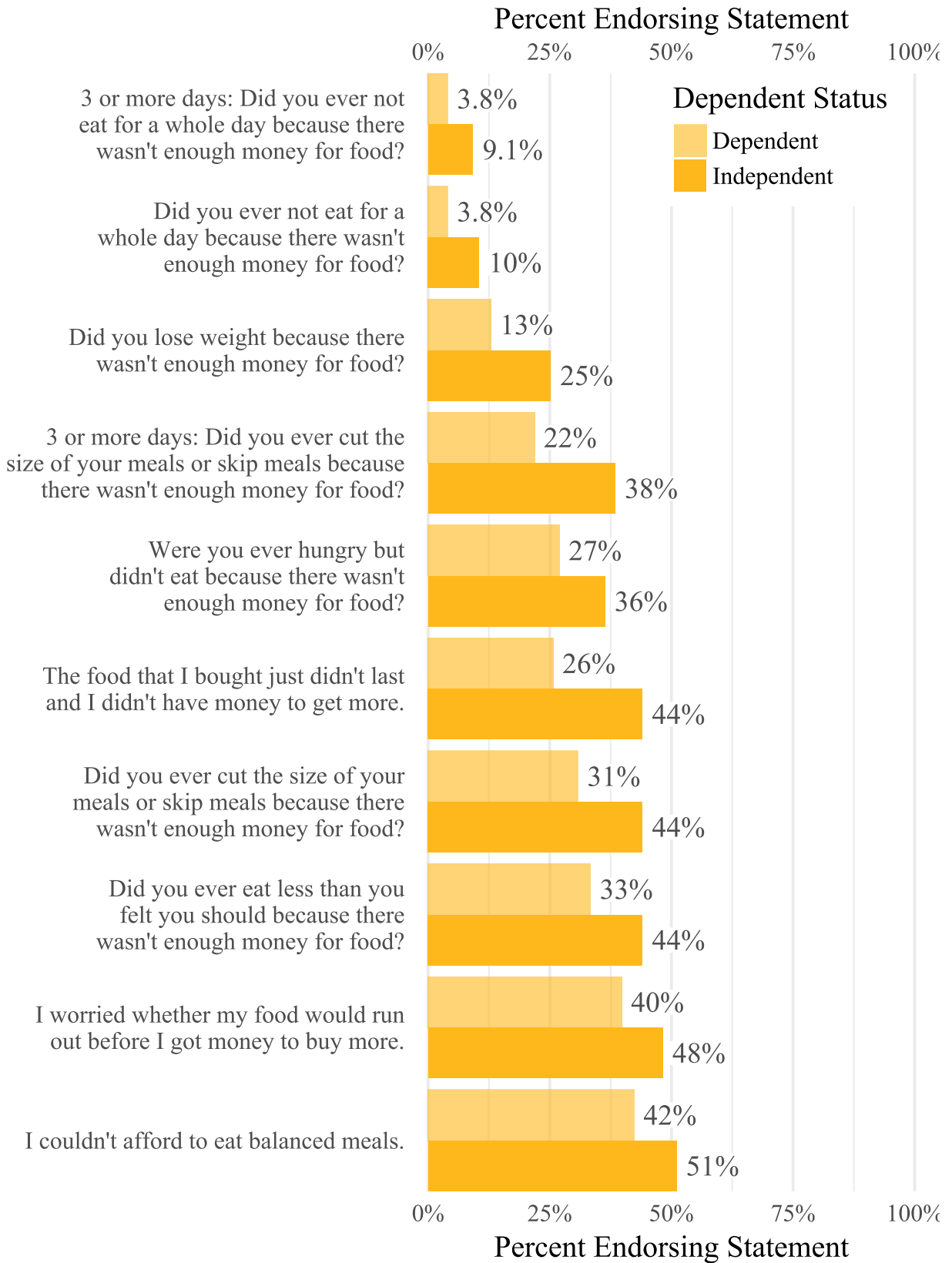


## Homelessness by Dependent Status

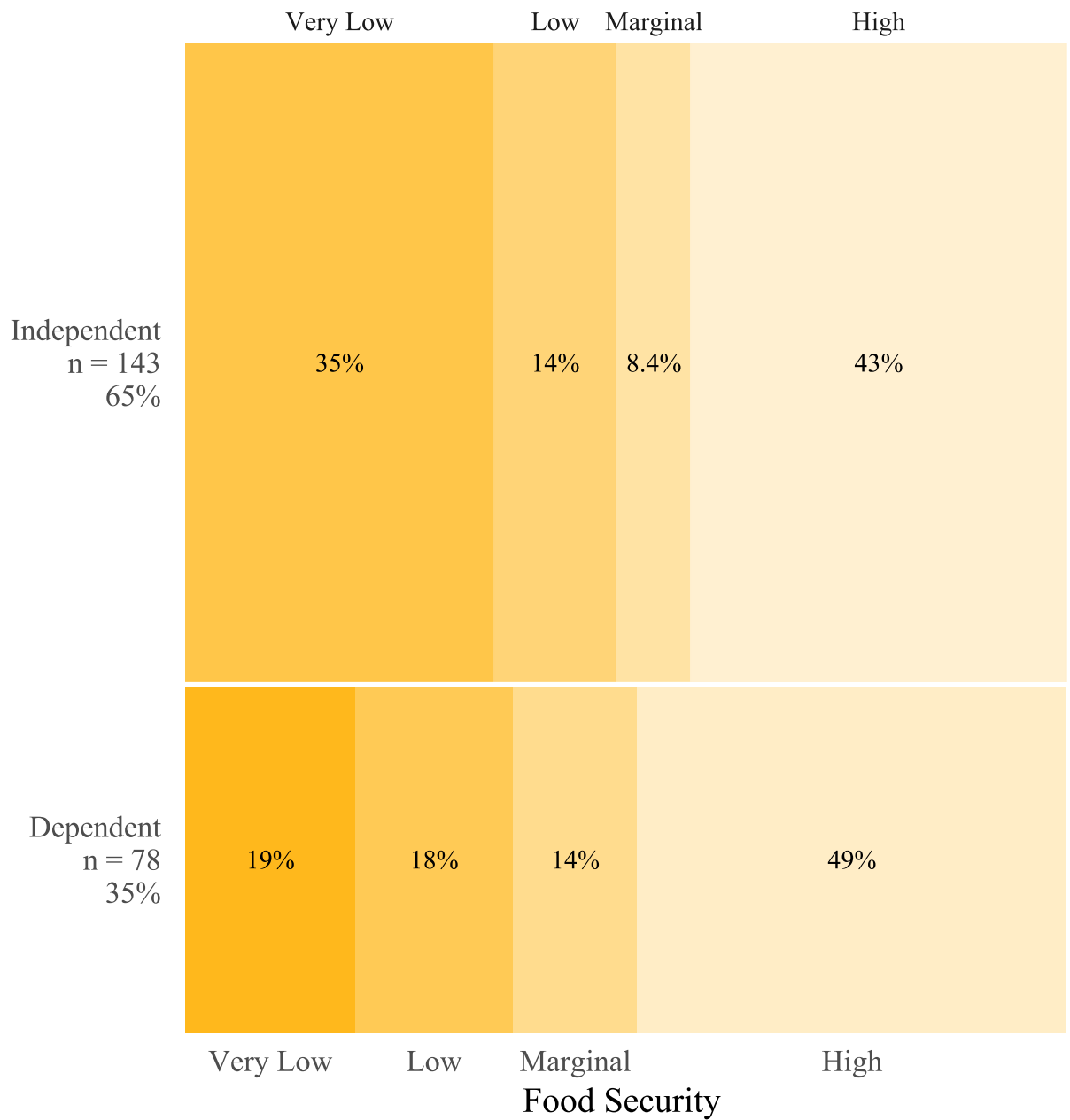


## Food Insecurity by Dependent Status

Food Security Questions



**Food Insecurity Categories**



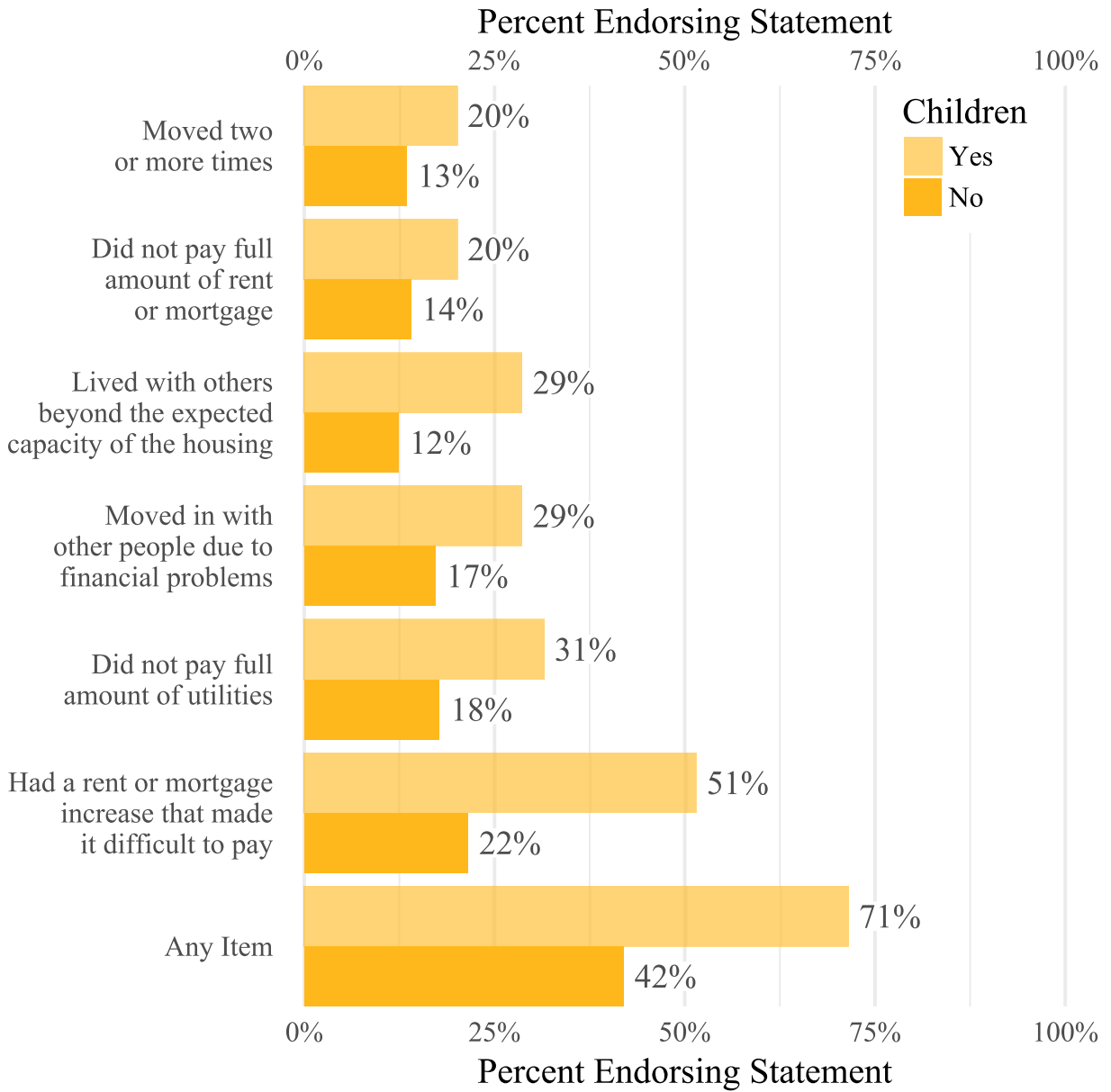
## Children

Does the student have children?

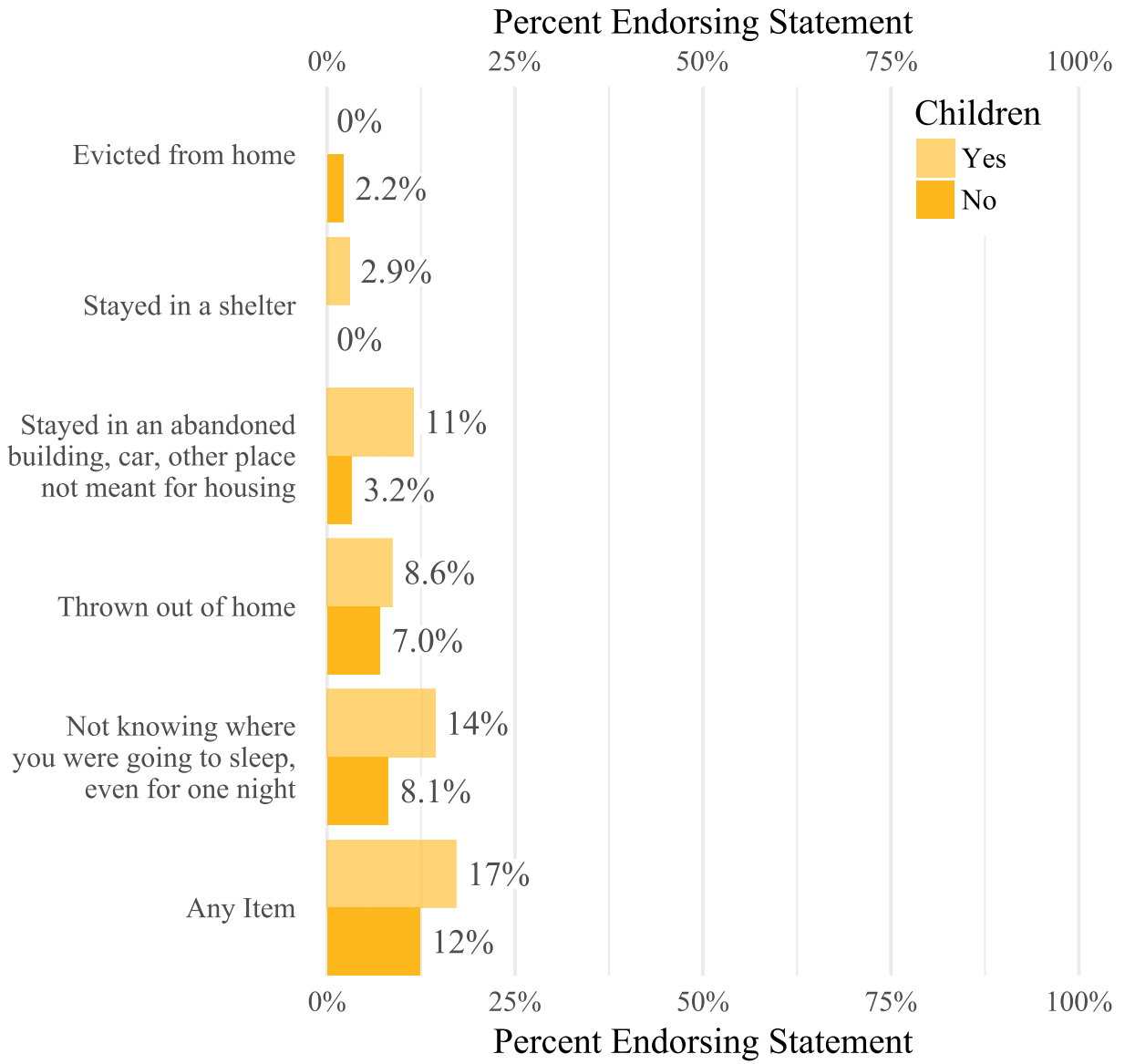
Children	<i>n</i>	Percent
Yes	35	15.8%
No	186	84.2%

## Housing Insecurity by Children



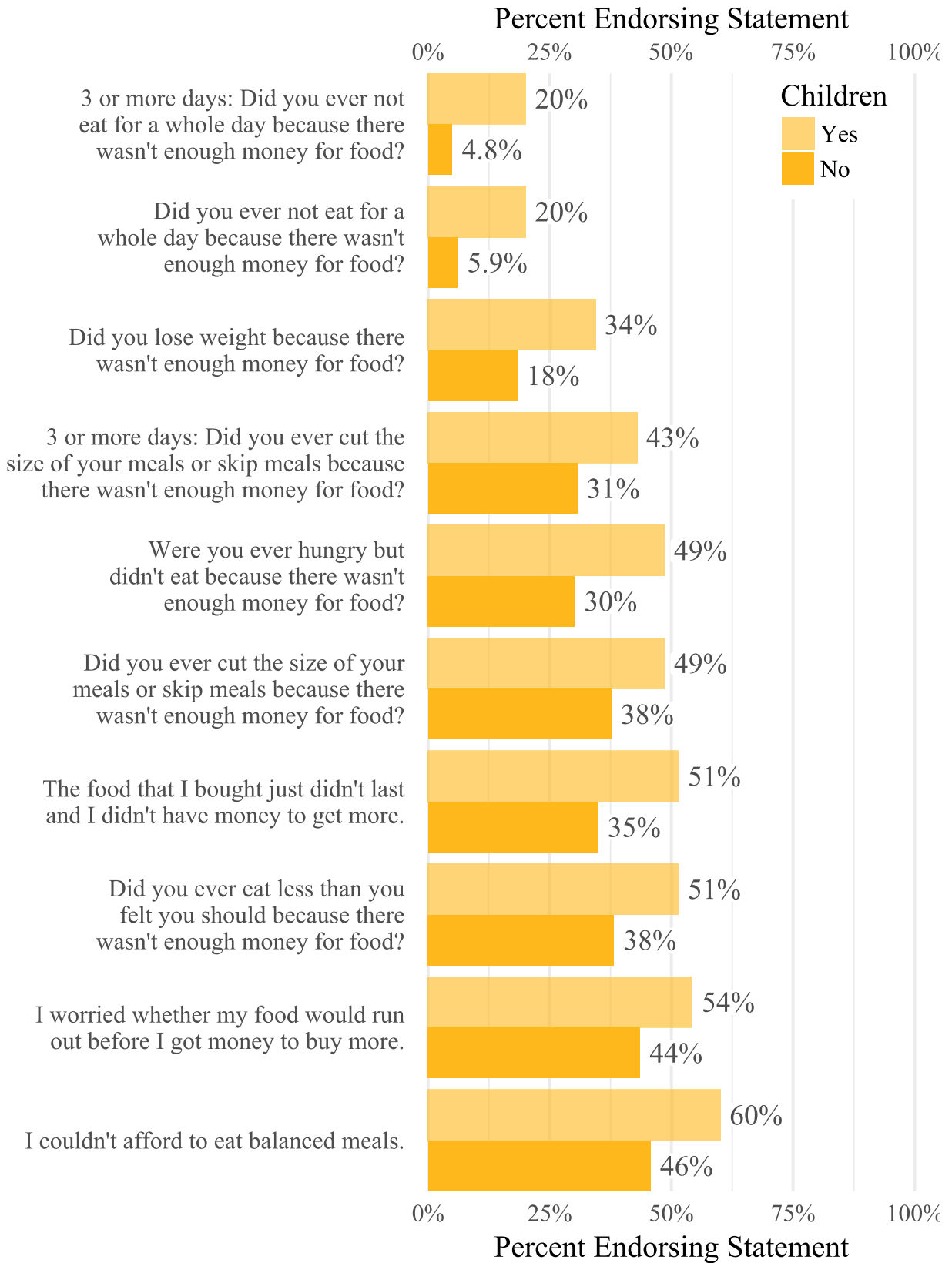


## Homelessness by Children

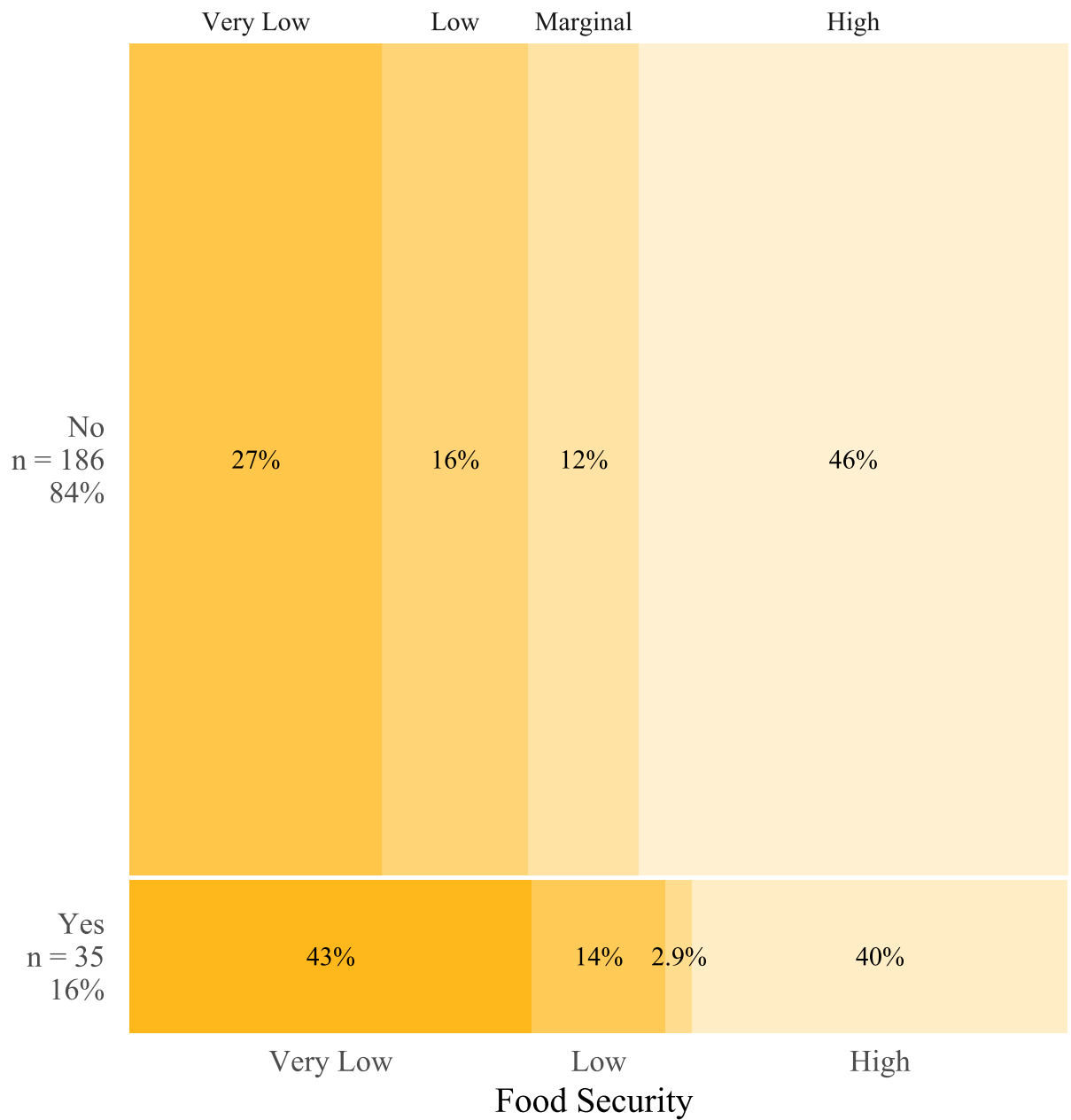


## Food Insecurity by Children

Food Security Questions



**Food Insecurity Categories**

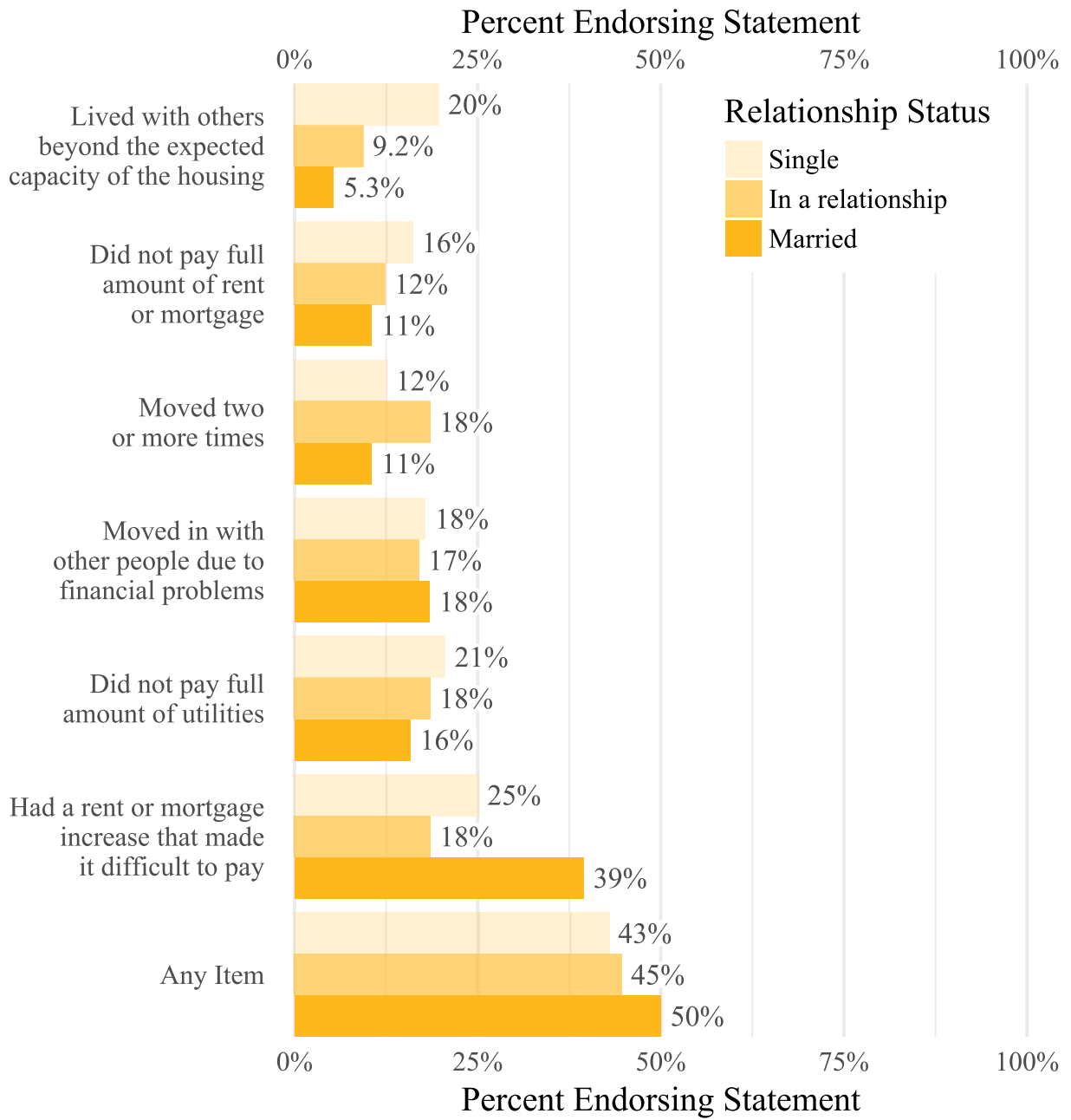


## Relationship Status

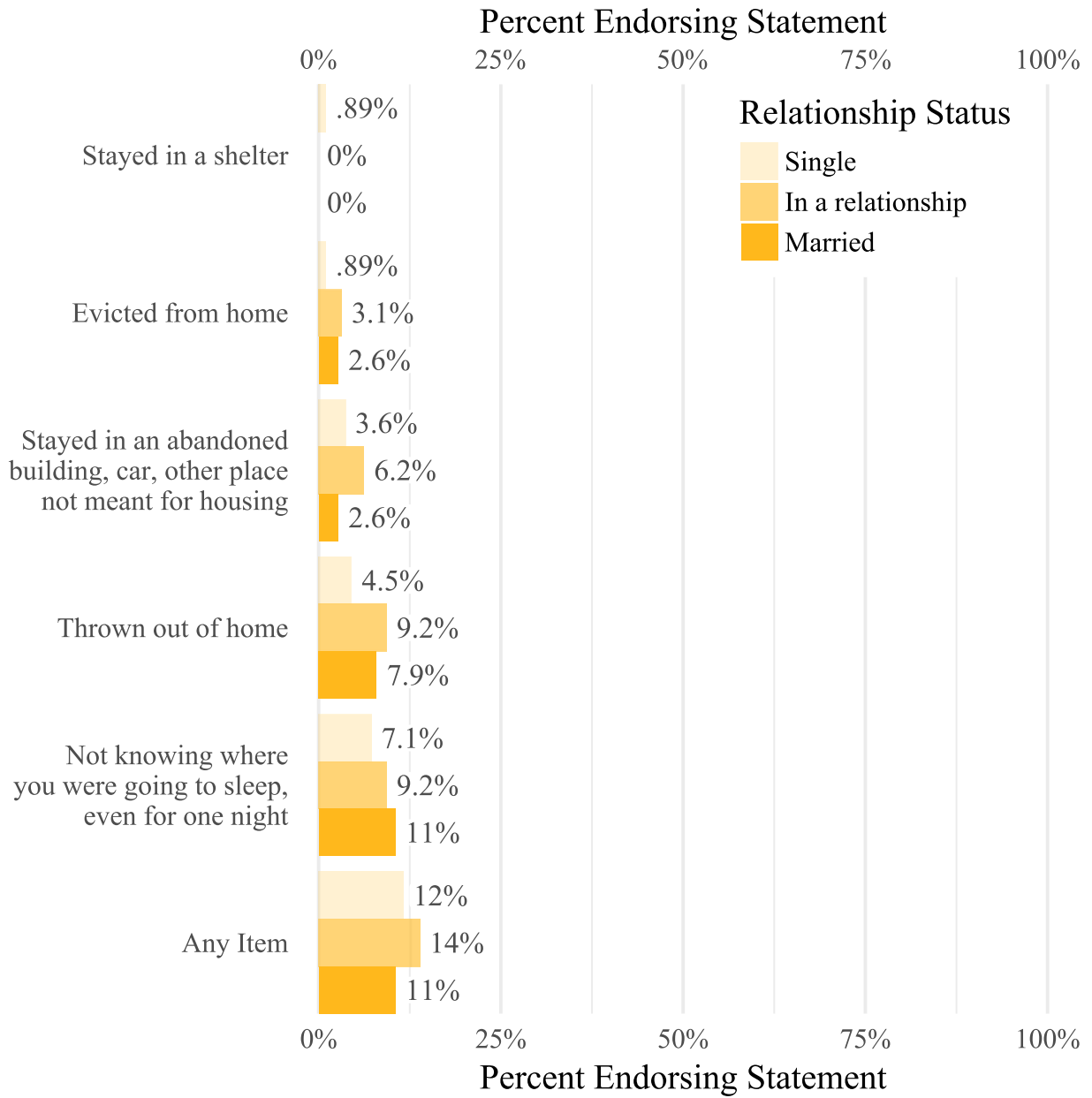
Student's relationship status

Relationship Status	<i>n</i>	Percent
Single	112	50.2%
In a relationship	65	29.1%
Married	38	17.0%
Divorced	5	2.2%
Widowed	3	1.3%

## Housing Insecurity by Relationship Status

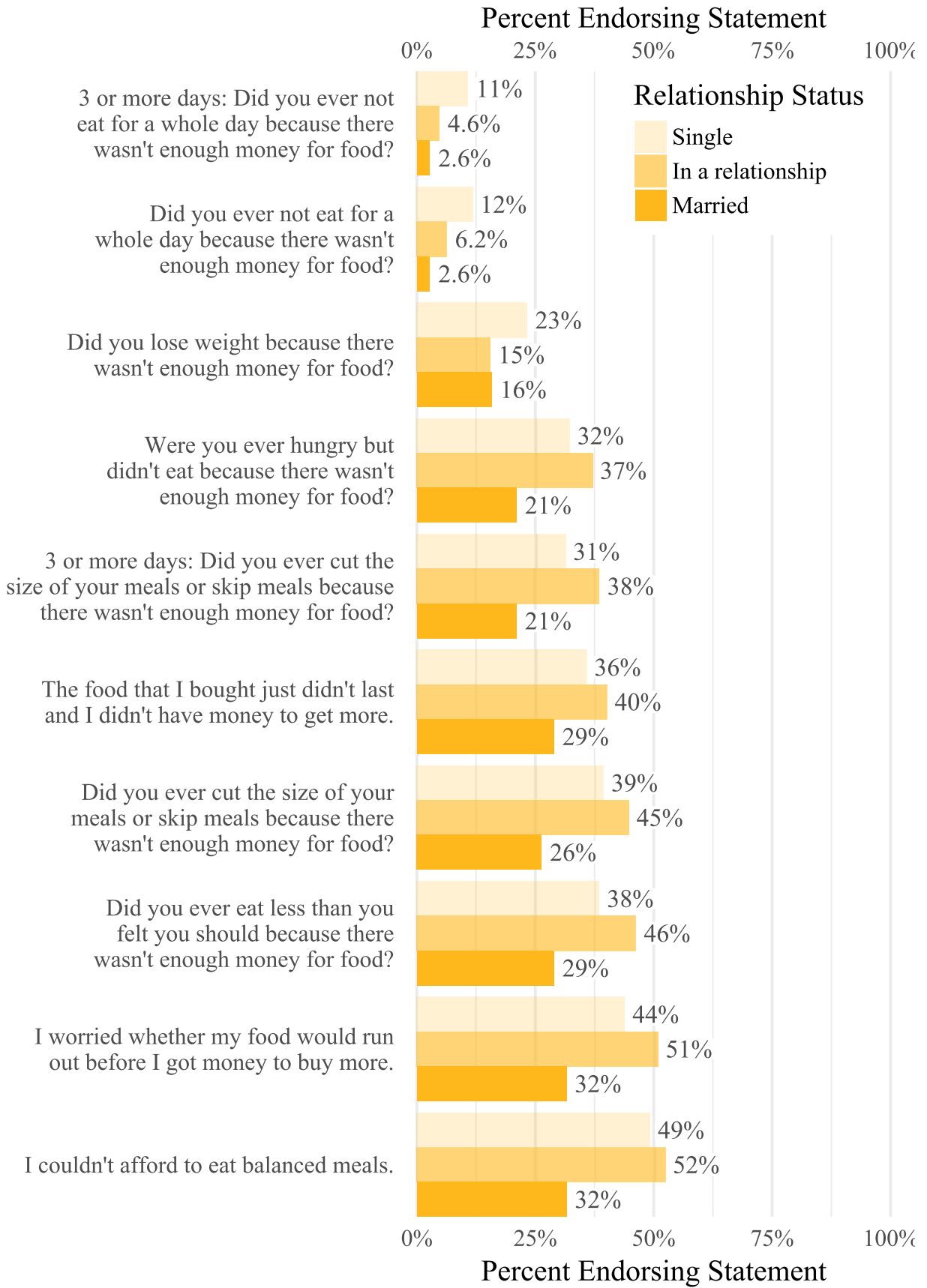


## Homelessness by Relationship Status

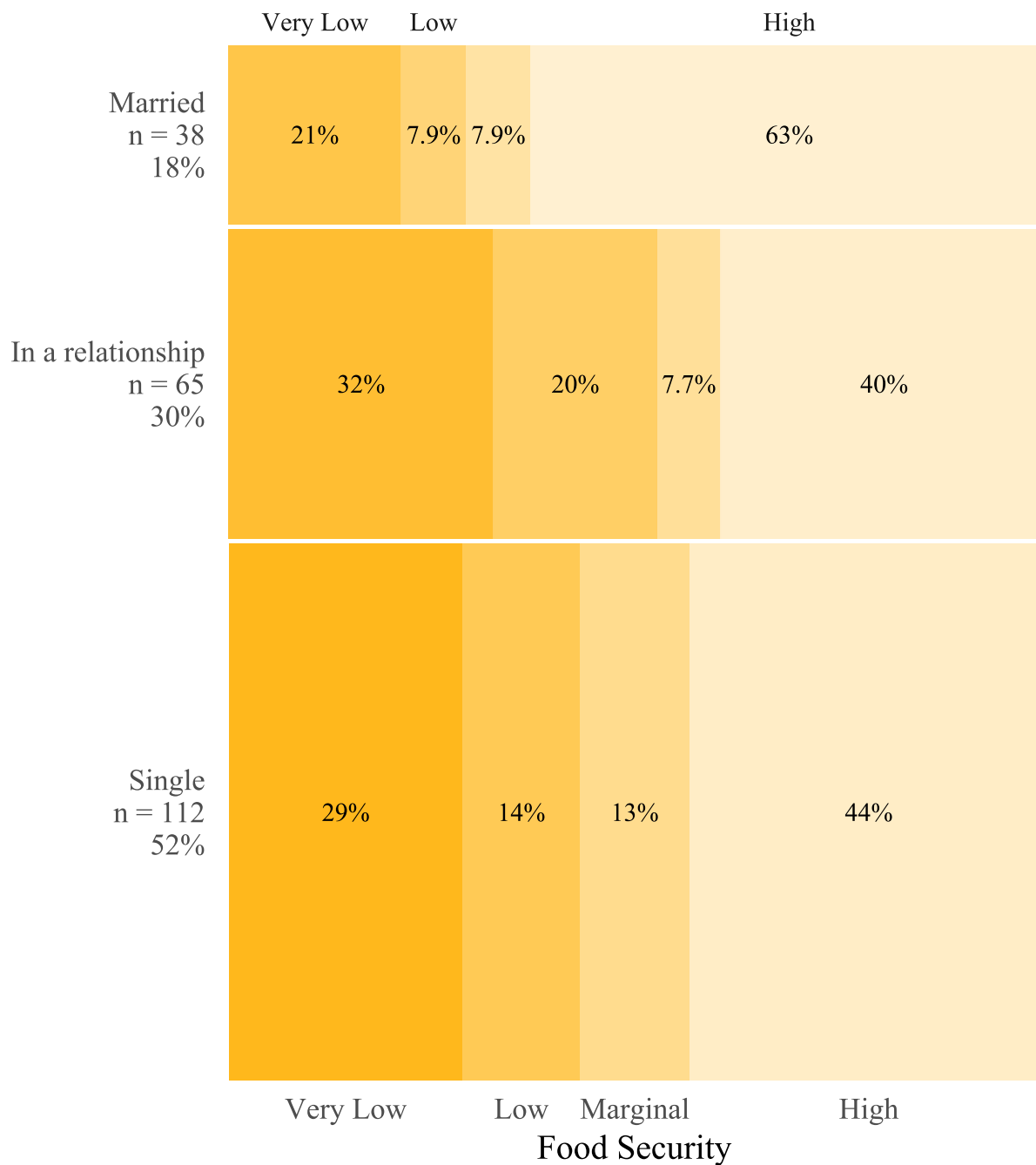


## Food Insecurity by Relationship Status

Food Security Questions



Food Insecurity Categories



## Subgroups Summary Table

Variable	<i>n</i>	Basic Needs Insecurity		
		Food	Housing	Homelessness
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	72	34.7%	38.9%	8.3%
Female	154	48.4%	49.7%	15.0%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>				



Variable	<i>n</i>	Basic Needs Insecurity		
		Food	Housing	Homelessness
Heterosexual	176	43.2%	46.6%	12.5%
Homosexual	10	60.0%	60.0%	10.0%
Bisexual	22	45.5%	45.5%	22.7%
None	13	46.2%	38.5%	7.7%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Black	7	57.1%	57.1%	14.3%
Hispanic	56	42.9%	46.4%	7.1%
Middle-Eastern/Arab	2	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Asian	30	36.7%	30.0%	6.7%
White	68	37.3%	46.3%	10.4%
Mixed/Other	61	54.1%	52.5%	23.0%
<b>Age</b>				
18 to 20	74	32.4%	28.4%	5.4%
21 to 25	53	58.5%	45.3%	20.8%
25 to 30	32	46.9%	56.2%	18.8%
Over 30	63	44.4%	63.5%	12.7%
<b>Pell Grant</b>				
Yes	88	54.8%	56.2%	16.7%
No	168	39.4%	39.6%	11.5%
<b>Hours Worked</b>				
Not looking for work	53	31.0%	31.0%	9.5%
Looking for work	62	47.2%	50.9%	17.0%
1–5	11	22.2%	44.4%	22.2%

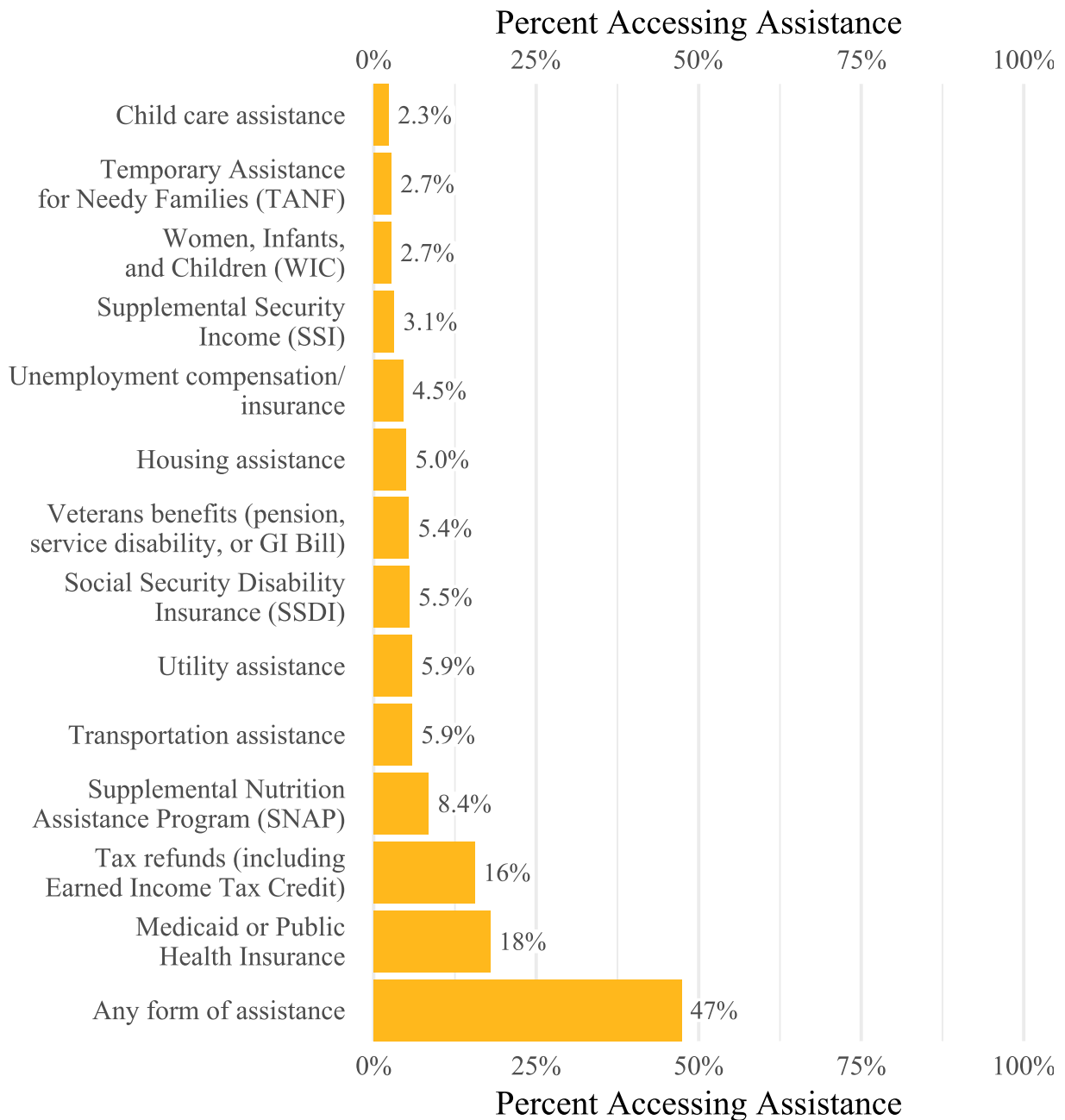
Variable	<i>n</i>	Basic Needs Insecurity		
		Food	Housing	Homelessness
6–20	45	47.5%	45.0%	2.5%
21–40	72	42.6%	41.3%	11.3%
40+	27	58.3%	70.8%	25.0%
<b>Student Status</b>				
Full-time	148	52.9%	44.5%	15.3%
Part-time	139	34.2%	47.8%	9.7%
<b>Housing Location</b>				
On-Campus	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Off-Campus	231	43.7%	46.3%	12.7%
<b>Meal Plan</b>				
Yes	3	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%
No	227	43.4%	46.0%	12.9%
<b>Military Service</b>				
Yes	20	40.0%	40.0%	15.0%
No	202	45.0%	47.0%	12.9%
<b>Citizenship Status</b>				
Citizen	213	45.1%	47.4%	13.1%
Non-Citizen	8	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%
<b>Parent Citizenship Status</b>				
Citizen Parent	190	42.1%	45.8%	12.6%
Non-Citizen Parent	31	61.3%	51.6%	16.1%
<b>Dependent Status</b>				
Dependent	78	37.2%	34.6%	7.7%

Variable	n	Basic Needs Insecurity		
		Food	Housing	Homelessness
Independent	143	49.0%	53.1%	16.1%
<b>Foster Care</b>				
Yes	9	55.6%	77.8%	22.2%
No	214	43.9%	44.9%	12.6%
<b>Children</b>				
Yes	35	57.1%	71.4%	17.1%
No	186	42.5%	41.9%	12.4%
<b>Relationship Status</b>				
Single	112	42.9%	42.9%	11.6%
In a relationship	65	52.3%	44.6%	13.8%
Married	38	28.9%	50.0%	10.5%
Divorced	5	100.0%	100.0%	40.0%
Widowed	3	33.3%	66.7%	33.3%

*Note:* Students with low or very low food security are considered *food insecure*.

## Accessing Public Assistance

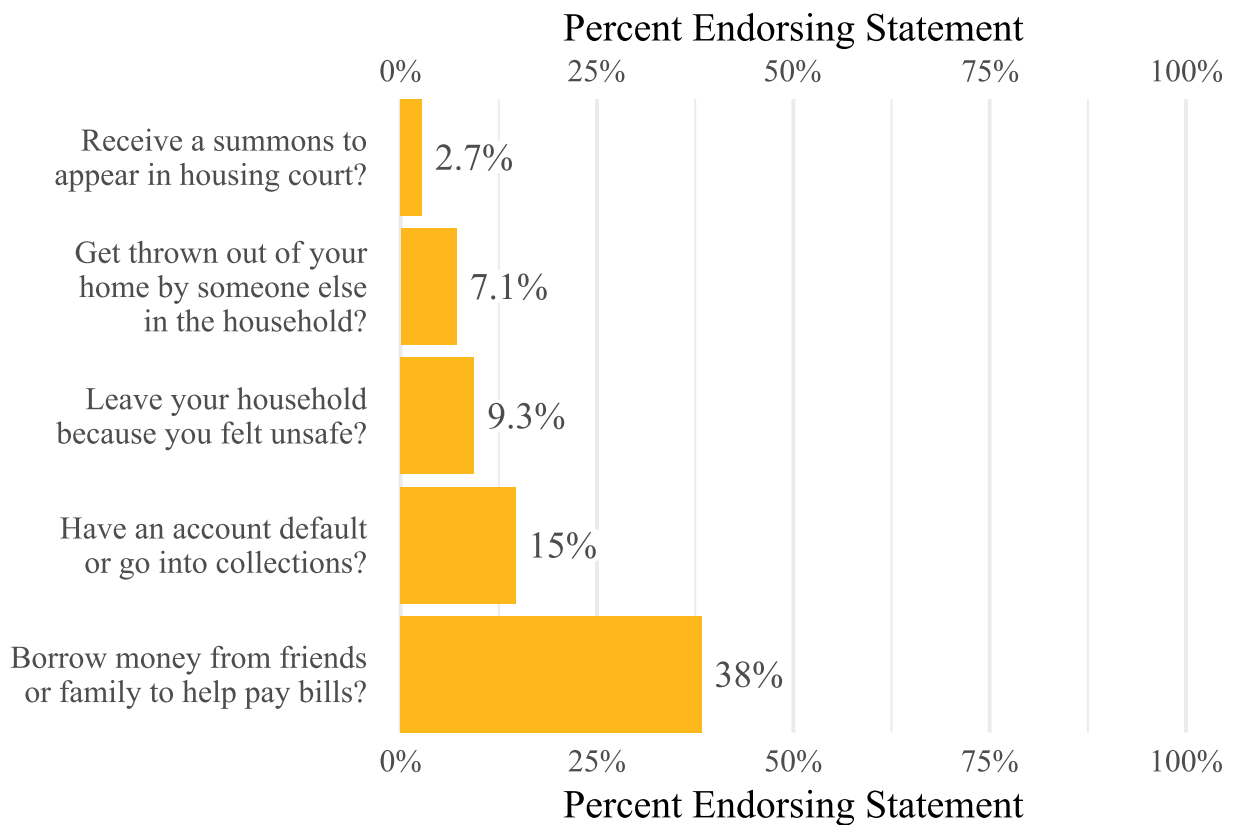
In addition to measuring basic needs insecurity, the survey included multiple items to characterize food insecure and housing insecure students' strategies for addressing the shortfalls they experience. Students were asked whether they had received assistance from a variety of social programs during the past year. Undergraduates may be eligible for multiple social programs to assist with food, housing, child care, transportation, health care, and other expenses. However, program restrictions often prevent students from receiving assistance. For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) requires undergraduates without children to work at least twenty hours per week. Due to shortages in subsidized housing, eligibility for housing assistance does not guarantee participation.



## Other Concerns

Along with the measures of basic needs security described above, the survey included several related items about students' experiences in the past year. These items included measures of students' legal troubles, home environments, and financial decisions stemming from a lack of resources.

In the past year, did you...



## Contact Information

### About Us

**The Wisconsin HOPE Lab – Food and Housing Resources for Students and Institutions** was established in 2013 on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus to engage in translational research aimed at improving equitable outcomes in postsecondary education. For more information on material need among college students, and for helpful food and housing resources for those seeking to help struggling students, visit the Wisconsin HOPE Lab webpage (<http://www.wihopelab.com/events/realcollege.html>).

### Questions

If you have any questions about this report or food and housing resources, please contact Wisconsin HOPE Lab Acting Director Jed Richardson by email at [jed.richardson@wisc.edu](mailto:jed.richardson@wisc.edu) (<mailto:jed.richardson@wisc.edu>) or by phone at (608) 890-2946.