

Food Insecurity in the San Fernando Valley

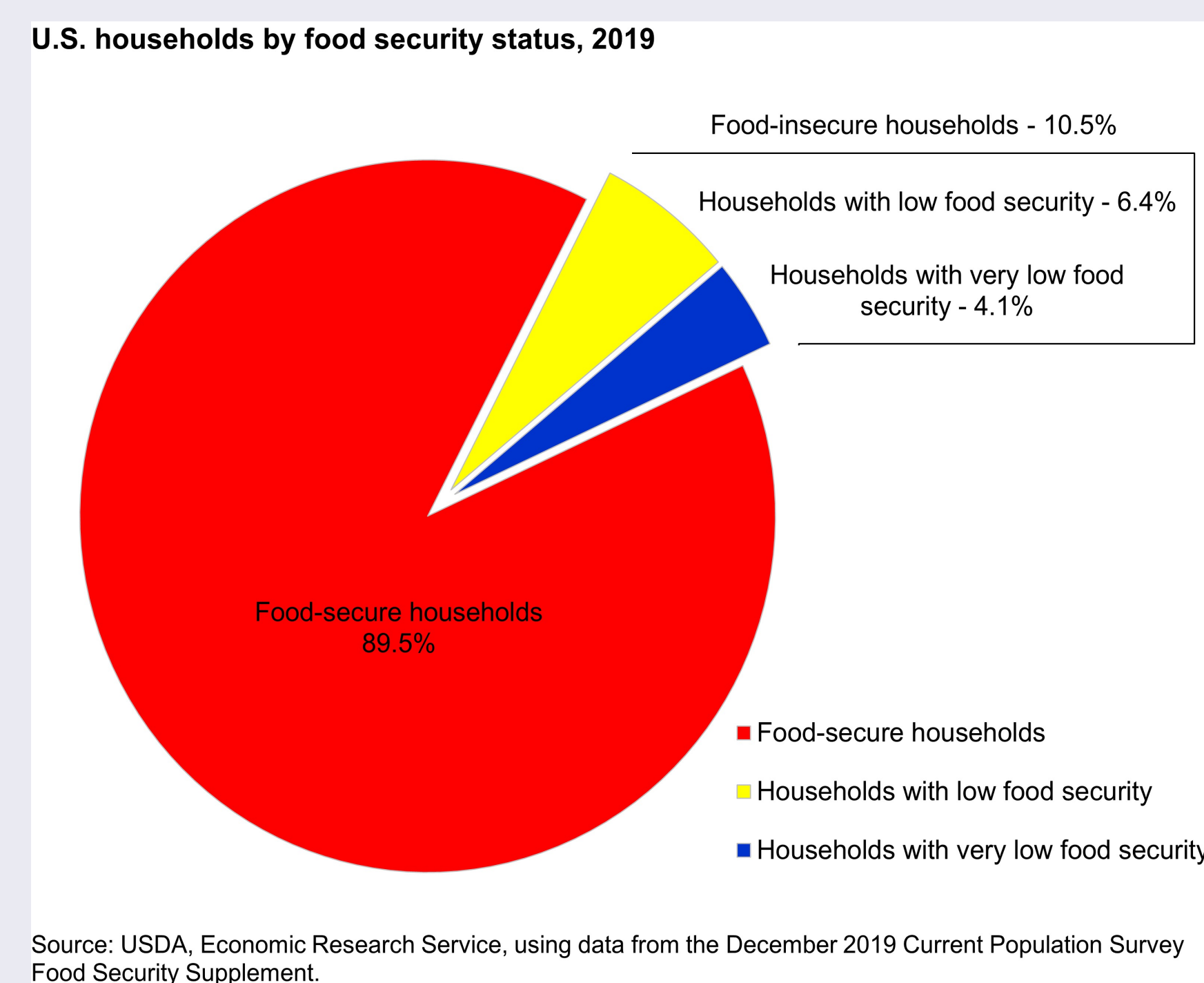
Introduction

What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity (FI) is a lack of access to sufficient nutritional food in both quantity and quality.

What is the significance of food insecurity?

FI has been shown to be associated with psychological distress, cardiovascular risk factors such as hypertension and hyperlipidemia, and severe self-reported chronic diseases and obesity in young adulthood.



What is the prevalence of food insecurity?

According to the USDA's Food Security Status of U.S. Households, more than 13 million U.S. households were food insecure at some time during 2019. In 2019, 37.4% of our patients at the Mid-Valley Family Medicine Clinic screened positive for food insecurity.

Hypothesis

We aim to improve access to food resources utilizing various modalities in order to apply innovative methods to reduce barriers to access for those with food insecurity. By improving access to food resources, we aim to ultimately reduce the number of patients screening positive for food insecurity.

Methods

Our method has two components:

1. Target patients directly

Hunger vital sign, a validated screening tool for food insecurity, was implemented during clinic visits.



Patients who screened positive are:

- Provided with handouts with maps of various food banks.
- Option to connect with our CalFresh Coordinator who assists in the enrollment process for SNAP/CalFresh.

2. Target patients indirectly

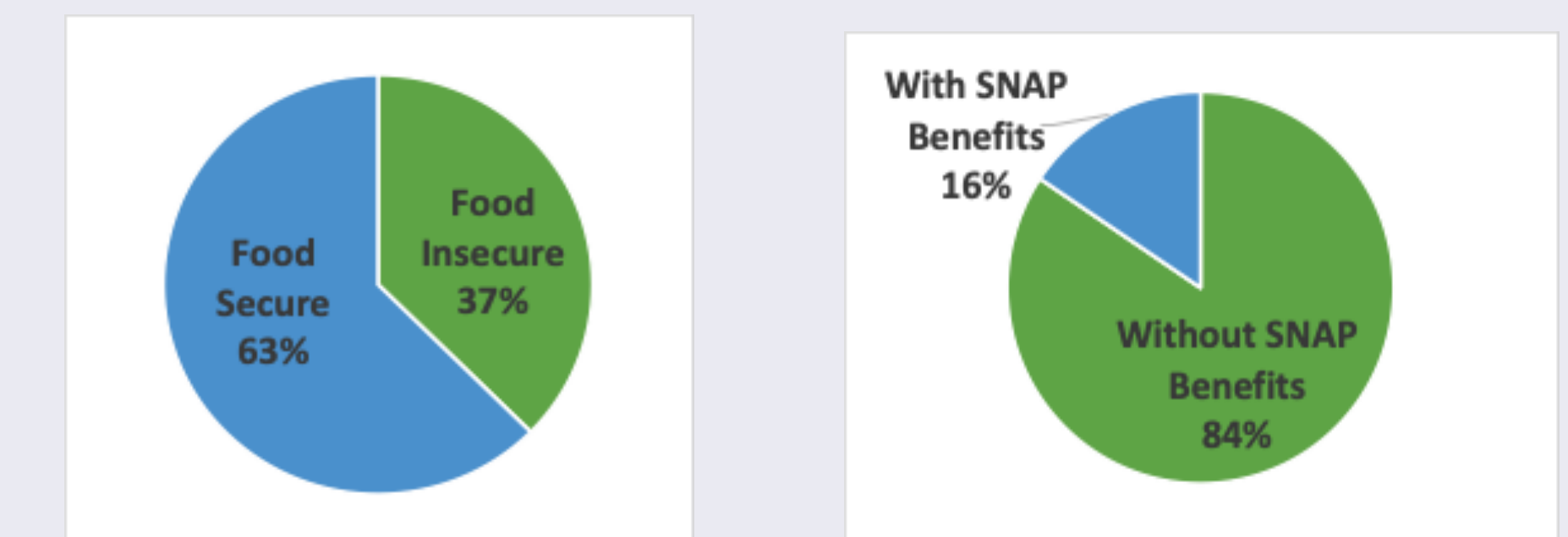
Provide availability of patient-centered QR codes that directly link to maps of various food banks as well as instructions on how to sign up for SNAP/CalFresh benefits.



Ultimately, surveys will be provided to evaluate patient satisfaction with these methods and to assess for future areas of improvement.

Results

- A sample size of 91 patients.
- 37.4% of patients screened positive for food insecurity.



- 84.4% do not have SNAP/CalFresh Benefits
- 90% had positive experience w/ the SNAP/CalFresh applications.
- 70% were below California's Poverty Line
- 6 of 10 patients interviewed were able to obtain benefits after applying with our CalFresh Coordinator.

Discussion

There is a significant number of patients at Mid-Valley Family Medicine Clinic who are food insecure and who do not have SNAP/CalFresh Benefits. Providing assistance in the enrollment process for SNAP/CalFresh has shown relative success in increasing individuals with these benefits. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, distribution of QR code-based resources has been placed on hold in the Winter surge. Implementation is planned for Spring 2021. We are hopeful to see how QR code-based resources will help our patient population.

References

- USDA. (2020, September 9). *USDA ESR – Key Statistics & Graphics*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#foodsecure>
- Nagata, J.M., Palar, K., Gooding, H.C., Garber, A.K., Bibbins-Domingo, K., Weiser, S.D. (2019). Food Insecurity and Chronic Disease in US Young Adults: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health. *J Gen Intern Med*, 34(12), 2756-2762. Doi:10.1007/s11606-019-05317-8.
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