

LEARNINGS FROM A MULTI-STATE EVALUATION IN 2020–21 AND 2021–22

# Exploring the reach and impact of basic needs services at postsecondary institutions

**September 6, 2024**

**11:00 a.m. Pacific Standard Time**

**ECMC**  
Foundation

 education  
northwest



# Education Northwest is a research and professional services nonprofit

Our guiding vision is an excellent and equitable education for all.

Our mission is to use evidence to help partners solve educational challenges and improve learning.



# Agenda

1. ECMC Foundation Basic Needs Initiative Overview
2. Study Briefing: *Exploring the reach and impact of basic needs services at postsecondary institutions*
3. Panel





# Speakers

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# ECMC Foundation Basic Needs Initiative



## Mission

Our mission is to improve higher education for career success among underserved populations through evidence-based innovation.

## Vision

Our vision is for all learners to unlock their fullest potential.





## ECMC Foundation's North Star

By 2040, equity gaps in postsecondary completion are eliminated, so that underserved learners have greater opportunity for social and economic mobility.



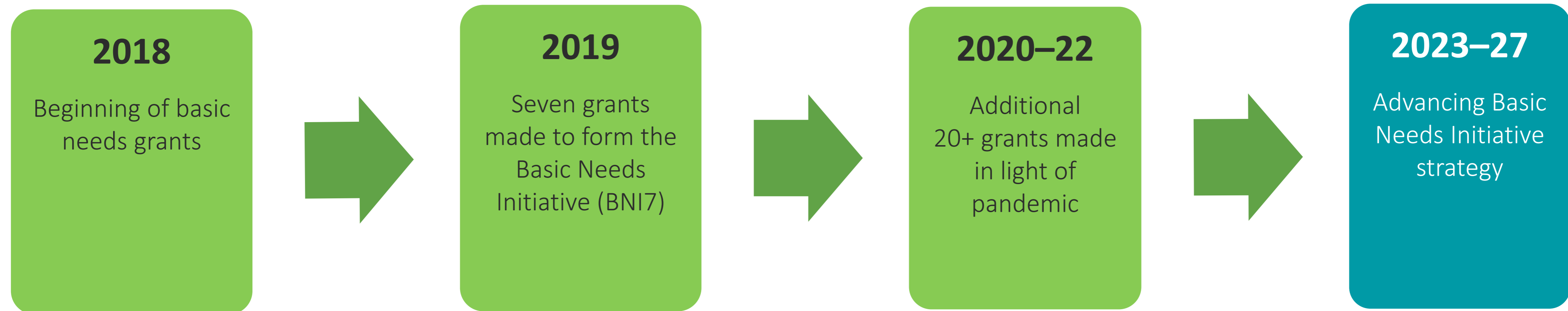


## Definition

ECMC Foundation considers basic needs insecurities to be the lack of resources—or the fear of the lack of resources—that disrupt student learning, persistence and completion in postsecondary education.

These most commonly include food, housing, childcare, transportation and technology, as well as physical and mental health services.

# Basic Needs Initiative Timeline



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Arkansas Community Colleges  
Auburn University's Hunger Solutions Institute  
Ithaca S+R

John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Michigan Community College Association  
United Way of King County  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

# ECMC Foundation Basic Needs Initiative (2023–2027)



Growing data capacity



Scaling effective practices



Informing policy reform





# ECMC Foundation Basic Needs Initiative (BNI) Evaluation (2019–2023)

Over four years, the evaluation:

- Documented the activities and outcomes of seven grantees.
- Collected data from postsecondary institutions supported by the grantees to understand the implementation and impact of basic needs services and resources on college students.



# Evaluation team



**Destiny McLennan**



**Libbie Brey**



**Sam Riggs**



**Christopher Mazzeo**



**Michelle Hodara**





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# *Exploring the reach and impact of basic needs services at postsecondary institutions*

LEARNINGS FROM A MULTI-STATE EVALUATION IN 2020–21 AND 2021–22





# Report data

State	Institutions that shared data	Basic needs services data
Alabama	1 public university	Student use of the <b>food pantry</b> by term.
Arkansas	4 community colleges	Student use of <b>food pantries</b> , which were transforming into Hubs, with their date(s) of service.
California	5 community colleges	Student receipt of services from <b>basic needs centers</b> , with the date of receipt.
Washington	9 community colleges 1 public university	Student receipt of services from <b>Benefits Hubs</b> , with the quarter of receipt and count of services received for that quarter.

# Categorization of basic needs services in our data

Category	What's included	States with institutions providing data
<b>Food assistance</b>	Access to campus food pantries Meal vouchers Financial support to purchase food Food delivered via Door Dash	All
<b>Emergency funds</b>	Emergency financial assistance/grants and gift cards without an explicitly stated use	CA and WA only
<b>Housing assistance</b>	Ongoing and one-time financial support to pay rent and utility bills Hotel/motel vouchers Help applying for Section 8 housing assistance or other subsidized housing Off-campus moving assistance/furnishing	CA and WA only
<b>Financial planning, employment support, or legal assistance</b>		WA only
<b>Access to technology</b>	Financial support to pay internet bills Use of a Wi-Fi hotspot, laptop/tablet Financial support to purchase required course supplies	CA only
<b>Transportation assistance</b>	Financial support to pay for gas and car repairs	CA only
<b>Health care, mental health, and personal care assistance</b>	Mental and physical health services or referrals Receipt of hygiene supplies	CA and WA only
<b>Child care assistance</b>	Financial support to pay for child care services and other related expenses	CA only

## Data limitations

1. While we have complete data on food assistance, we have incomplete data on the other basic needs services.
2. Not all the records on students' use or receipt of basic needs services matched to demographic and academic outcome data, as these data were obtained from different systems or offices.
3. Data reporting across all services likely improved from 2020–21 to 2021–22. In 2020–21, many of the institutions were setting up basic needs centers or hubs for the first time with the support of the BNI grantee.



# Study sample

- Twenty two-year and four-year colleges and universities enrolling more than 260,000 students in 2020–21 and 218,000 students in 2021–22
- More than two-thirds of students identified as students of color
- Twenty-one percent of students received Pell grants
- Forty-five percent of institutions had a Minority-Serving Institution designation
- Ninety percent of institutions were community colleges

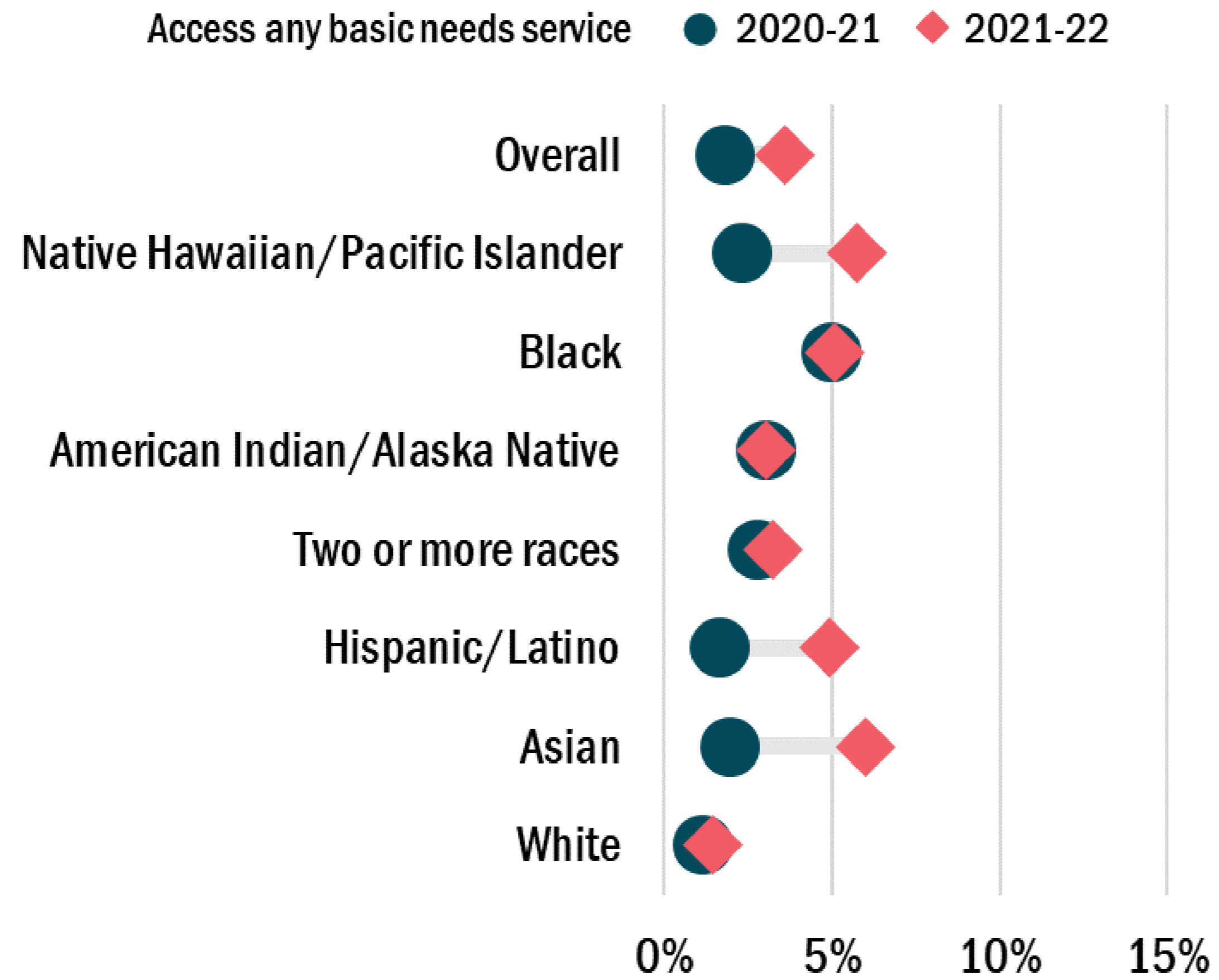
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# Student use of basic needs services



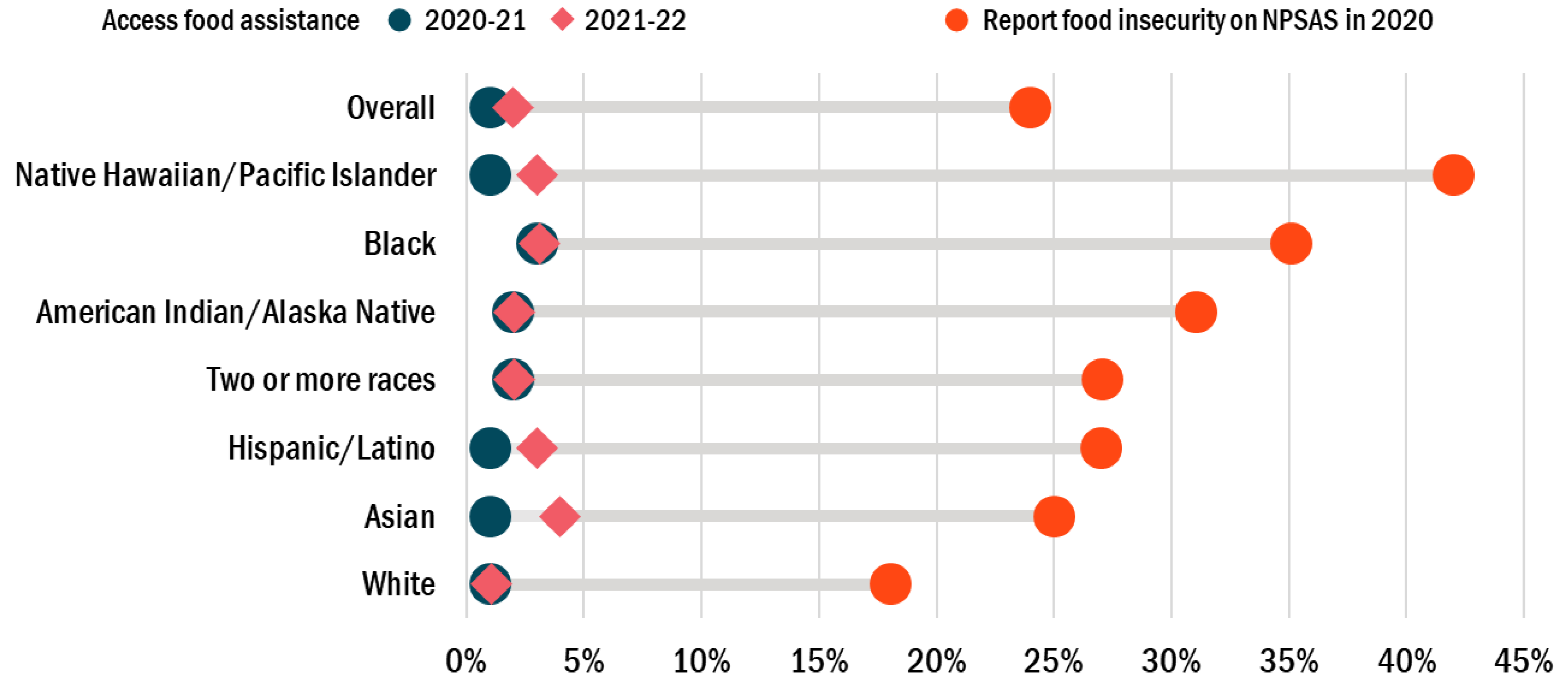


# Student use of basic needs services is low



Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study.

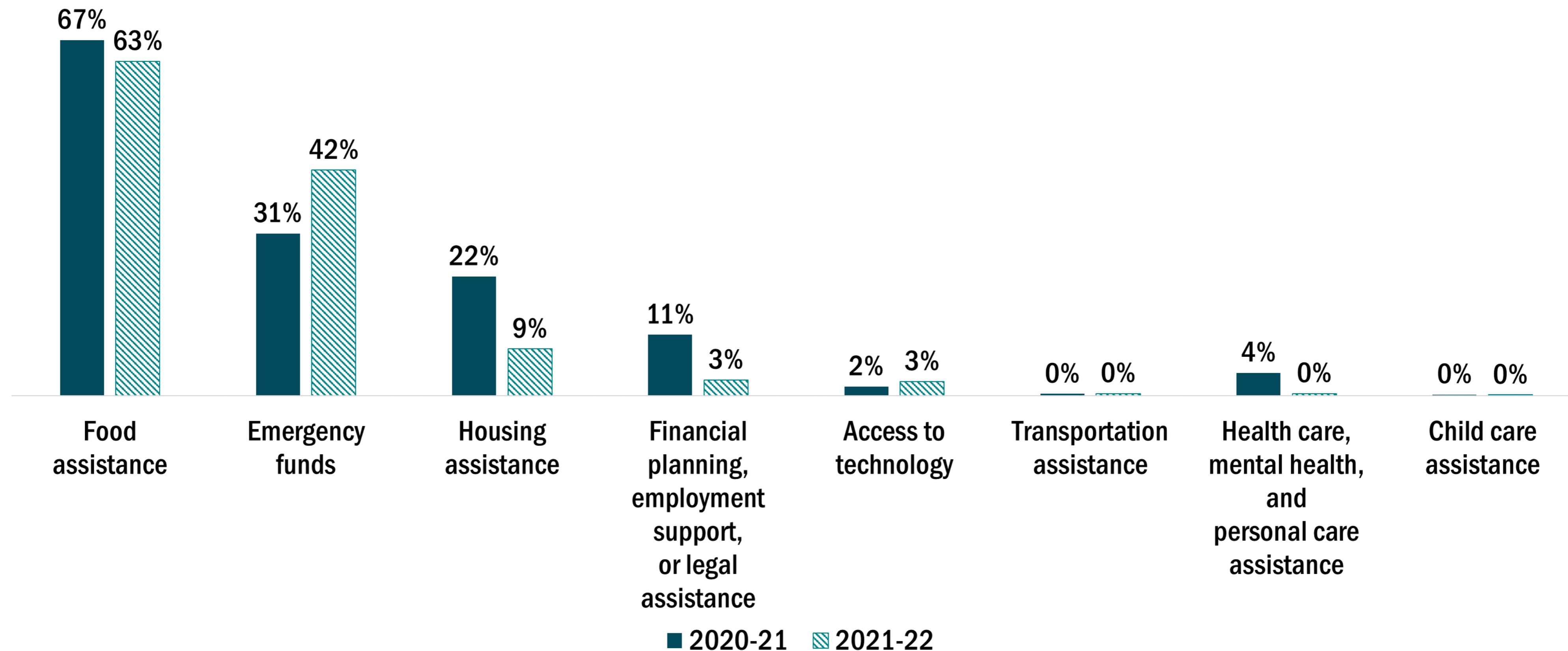
# Student use of food assistance is low and does not match the level of need



Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study and the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2020 Undergraduate Students (NPSAS:UG).

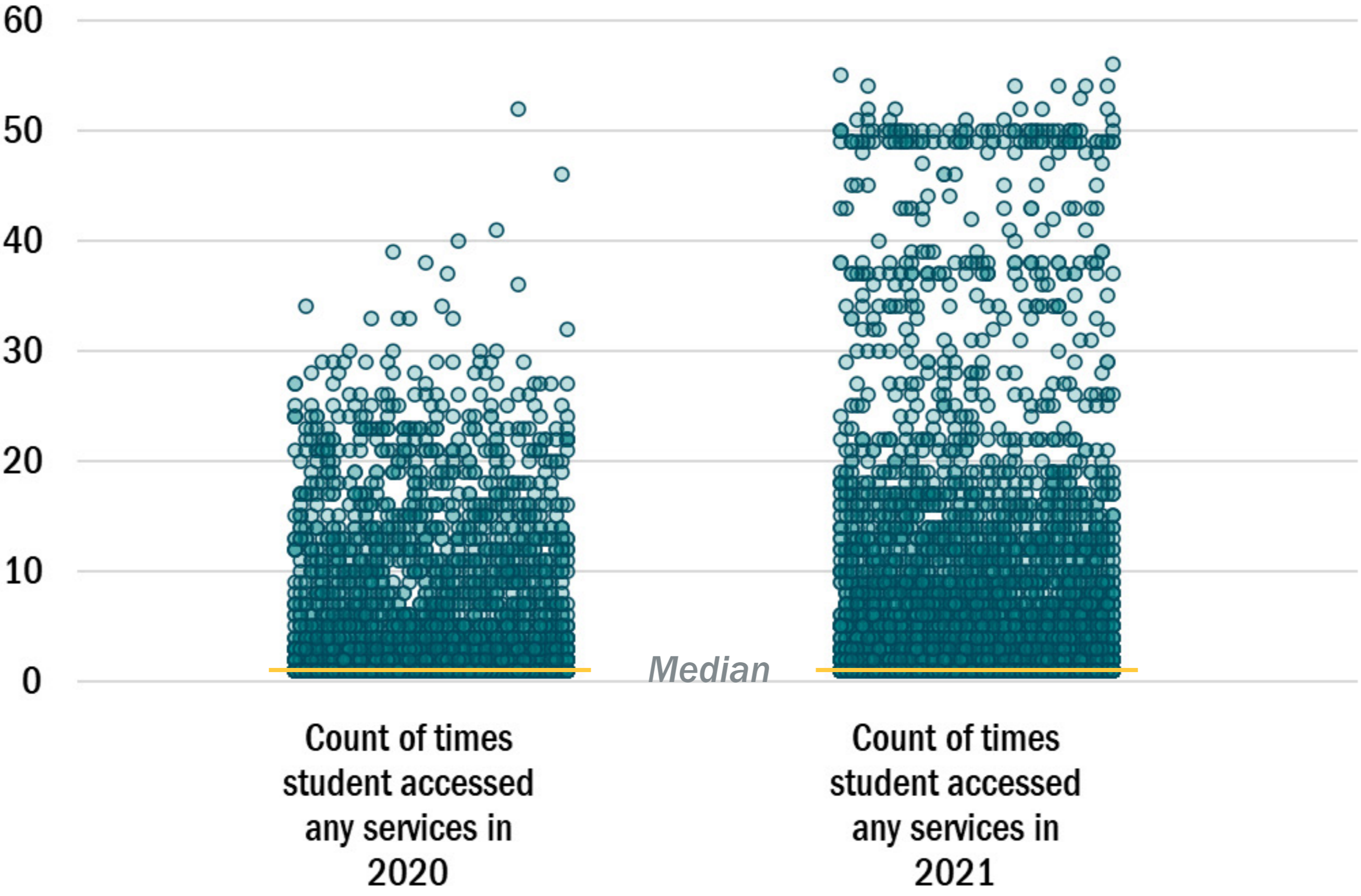


# Among students who accessed basic needs services in 2020–21 and 2021–22, more than half accessed food assistance



*Note: The sum of individual categories can exceed 100 percent as students may access more than one service type per year. The 0 percent values are all greater than 0 but show as 0 due to rounding.  
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study.*

# Most students who access services only do so once or twice per year



**Each dot represents an individual student**

Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study

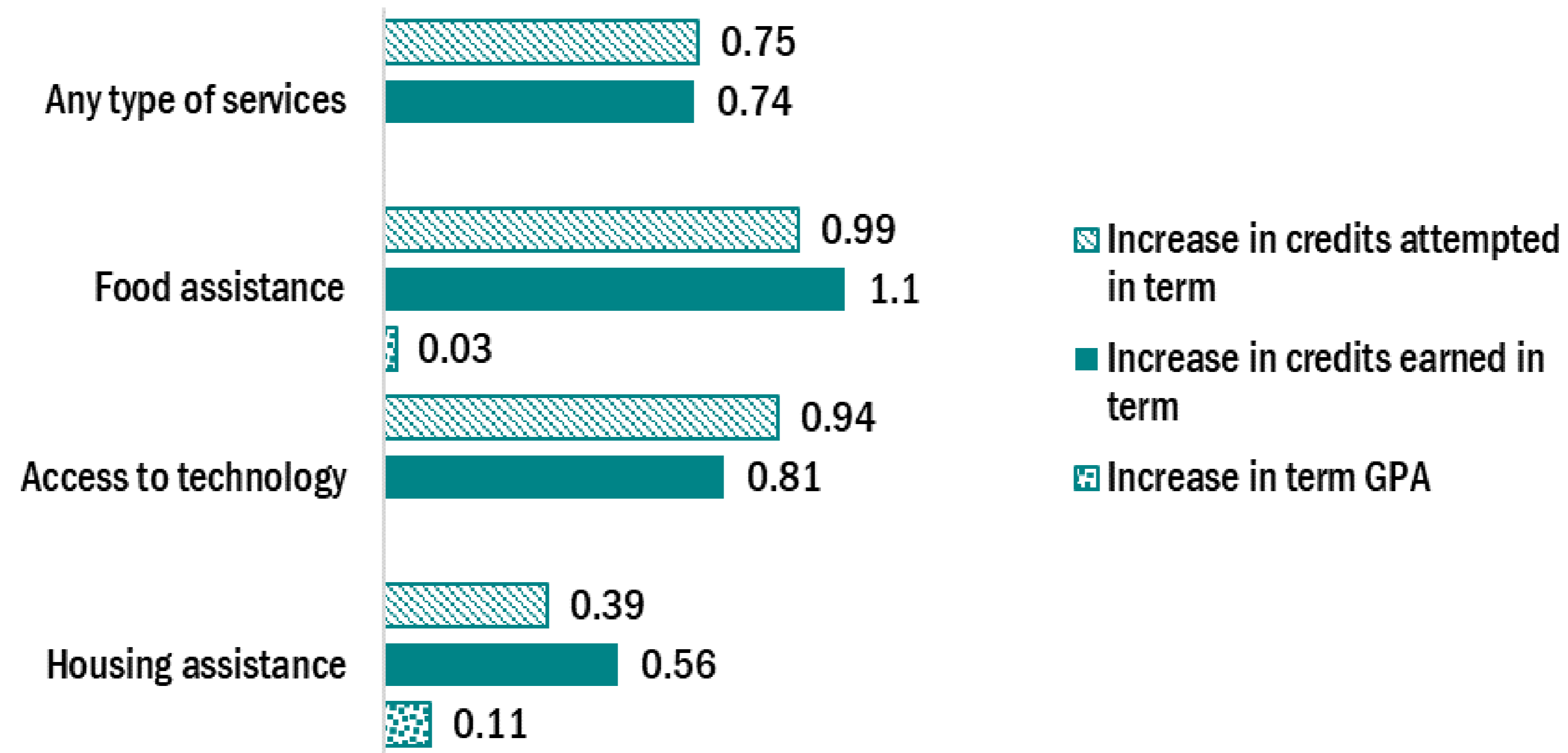


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# Impact of accessing basic needs services on student outcomes



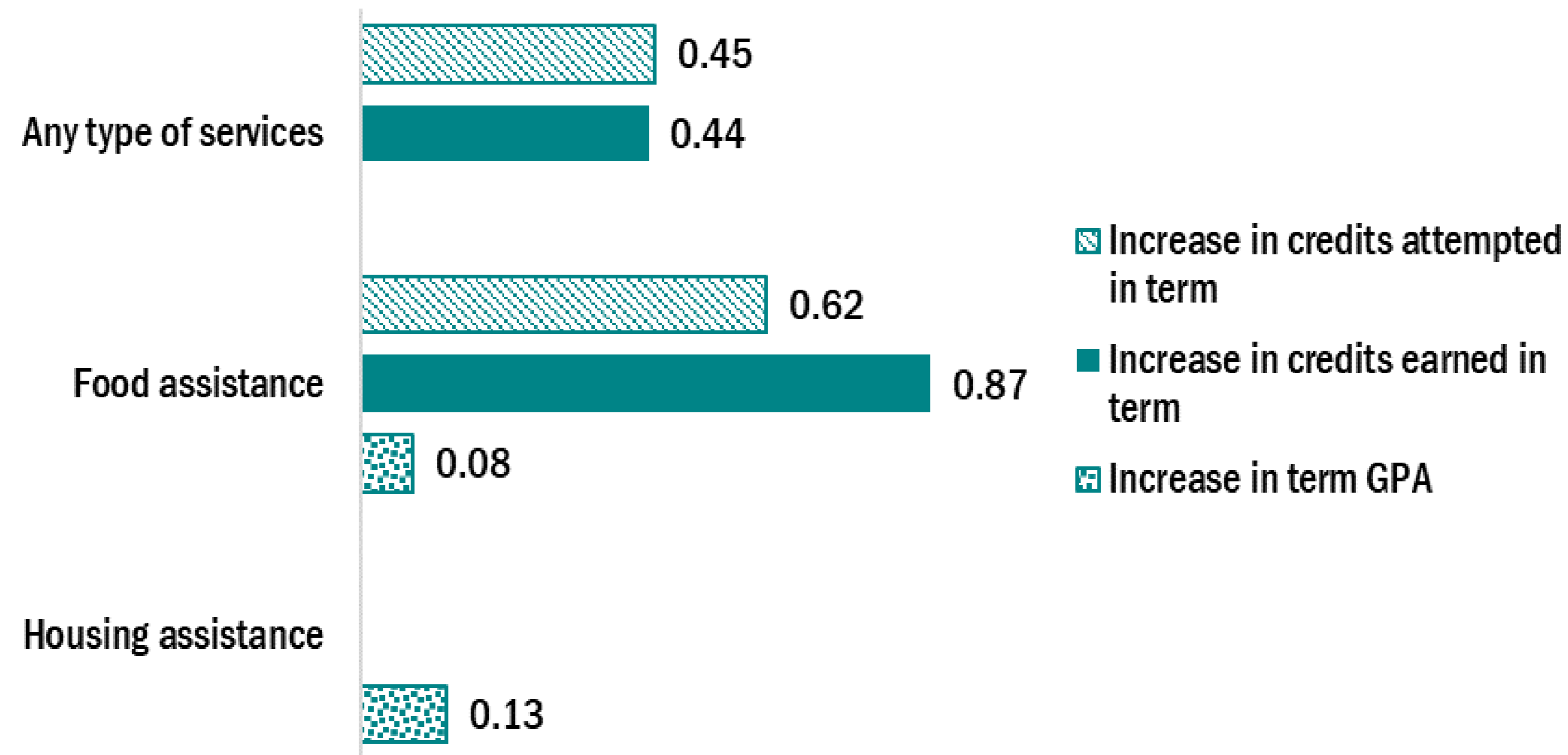
# Students who accessed any type of basic needs services attempted and earned more credits in the same term, and GPAs were higher for students who accessed food or housing assistance



Note: Figure displays coefficients from OLS regression analysis. All coefficients are statistically significant with  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study.

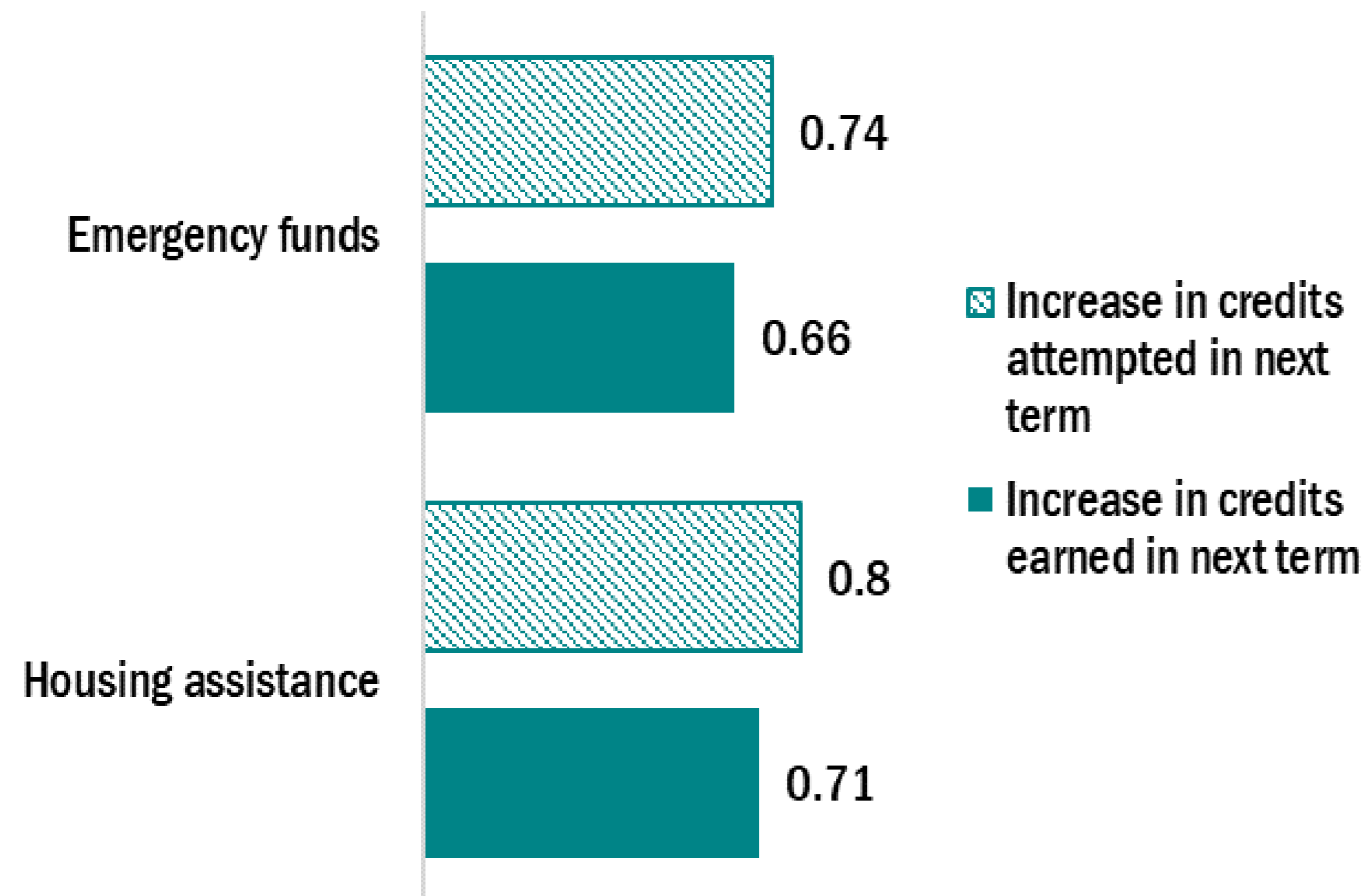


# Pell recipients who accessed any type of basic needs services attempted and earned more credits in the same term, and GPAs were higher for students who accessed food or housing assistance



Note: Figure displays coefficients from OLS regression analysis. All coefficients are statistically significant with  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study

# Accessing housing assistance or emergency funds has a positive impact on academic outcomes in the next term

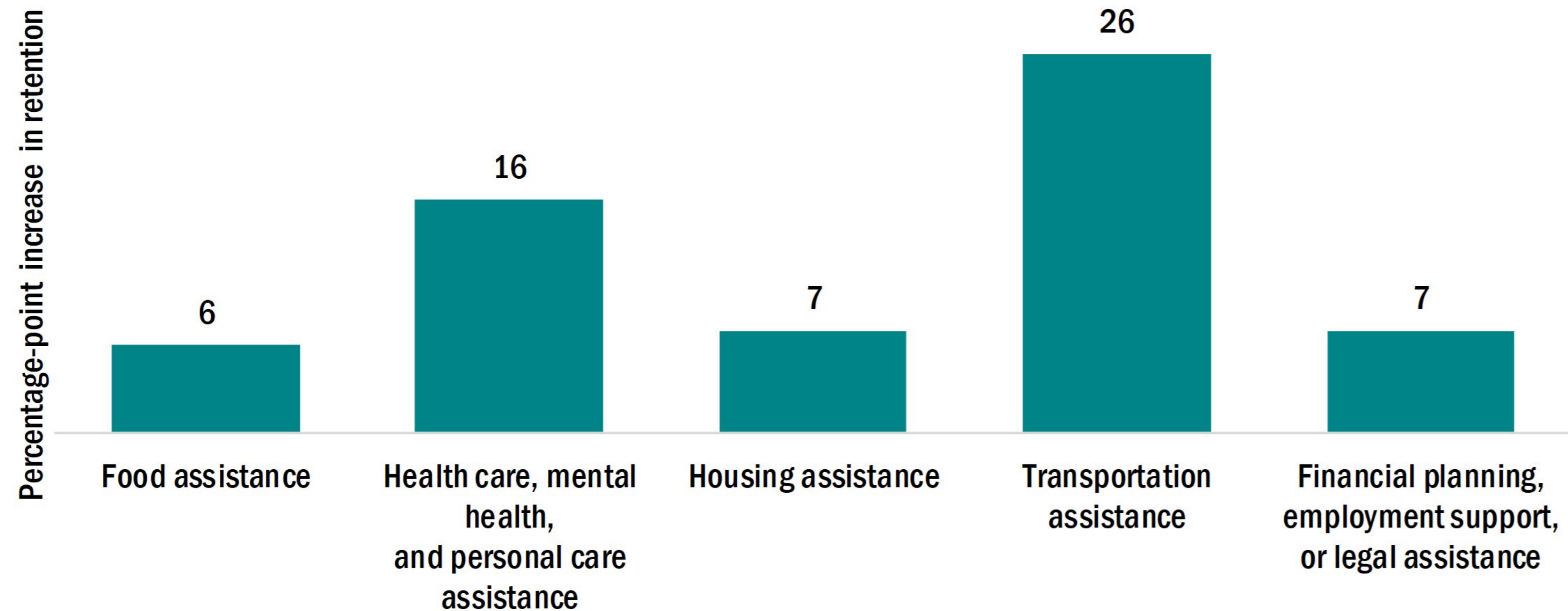


*Accessing either service type has a positive impact on the next term's outcomes, regardless of whether the student accesses the same type of service (or any type) in the following term*

*Note: Figure displays coefficients from OLS regression analysis. All coefficients are statistically significant with  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study*

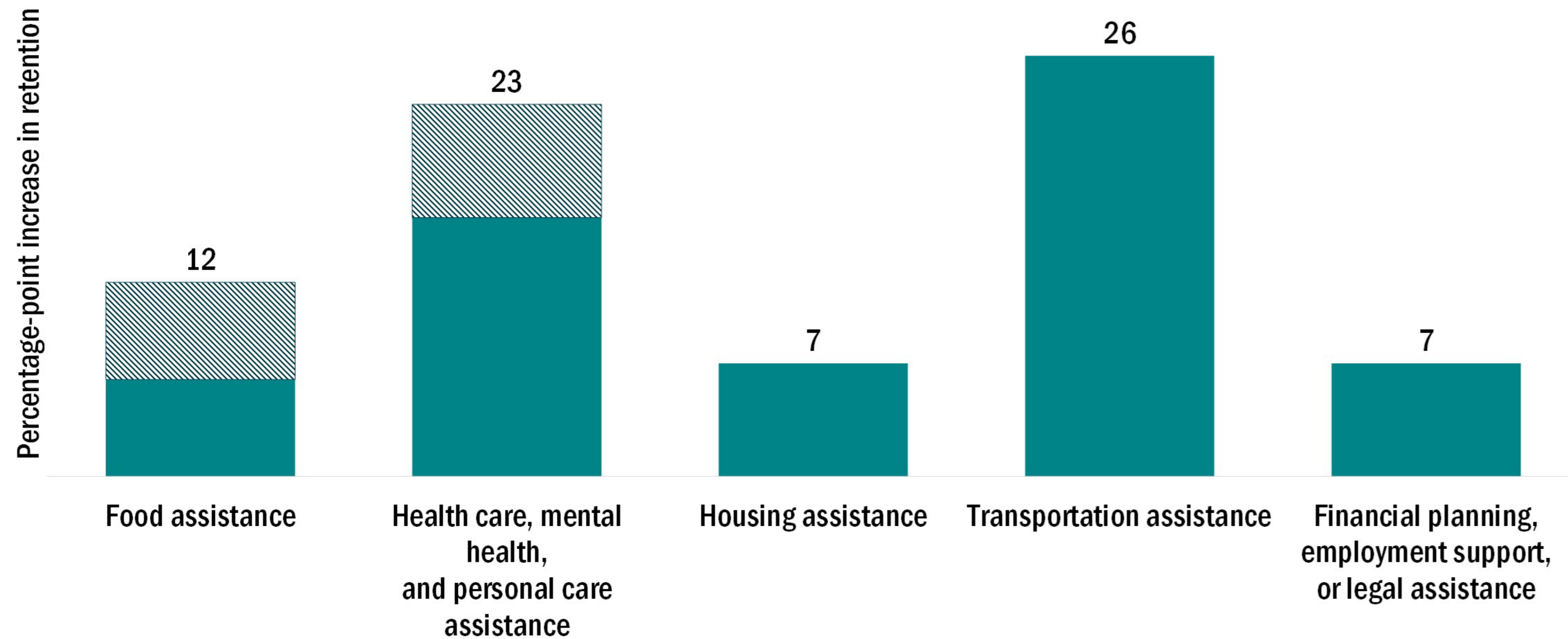


# For *all students*, accessing basic needs services in the fall term has a positive relationship with retention in the winter/spring term



Note: Figure displays coefficients from OLS regression analysis. All coefficients are statistically significant with  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study.

# The increase in retention rates is even greater for *first-time students* who access food assistance or health care, mental health, and personal care assistance



Note: Figure displays coefficients from OLS regression analysis. All coefficients are statistically significant with  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Authors' analysis of data from the 20 institutions in this study.



# Recommendations



# Recommendations

1. Develop integrated data systems to improve the quality of services
2. Increase use of services through a student-centered approach
3. Measure the effectiveness of services using integrated data systems

*“I think the most successful strategy has been to create an identity within the campus of our center [and] really be a part of the ecosystem of the school. And sometimes people will send someone our way. They’ll come to our building and they’ll just say, ‘Oh, somebody just said I should come here.’ That’s music to my ears. They don’t need to know every event we have, all the pilots we have going on, what our hours are for this or that. But if people just know that they can send people our way and that we’ll help them with four out of five things or whatever, then that’s fine because you see a lot of students bringing other students.”*

**– Basic needs center staff member**





# Helping College Students Thrive With Basic Needs Services and Resources





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