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Cultural Food Accomodations in South New Jersey

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Cultural Food Accommodations in South New Jersey

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Background

NJ is a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities, each bringing their own unique customs and traditions. Of these traditions, diet and food are one of the most renowned distinctions and some of the most celebrated.

According to the Arab American Institute¹, in 2003 New Jersey ranked 5th among Arab American population centers, with concentrations in Hudson, Bergen, and Passaic counties. Additionally, New Jersey has the third-highest percentage of Bangladeshi Americans, with concentrations in Atlantic City and Paterson City.

New Jersey Jewish Virtual Library² also estimates the largest concentrations of Jewish communities within NJ reside in Bergen County (83,700), Essex County (76,200), and Monmouth County (65,000).

In response, several Public School districts have made halal and kosher food reforms to accommodate the rise in the Muslim and Jewish student body.

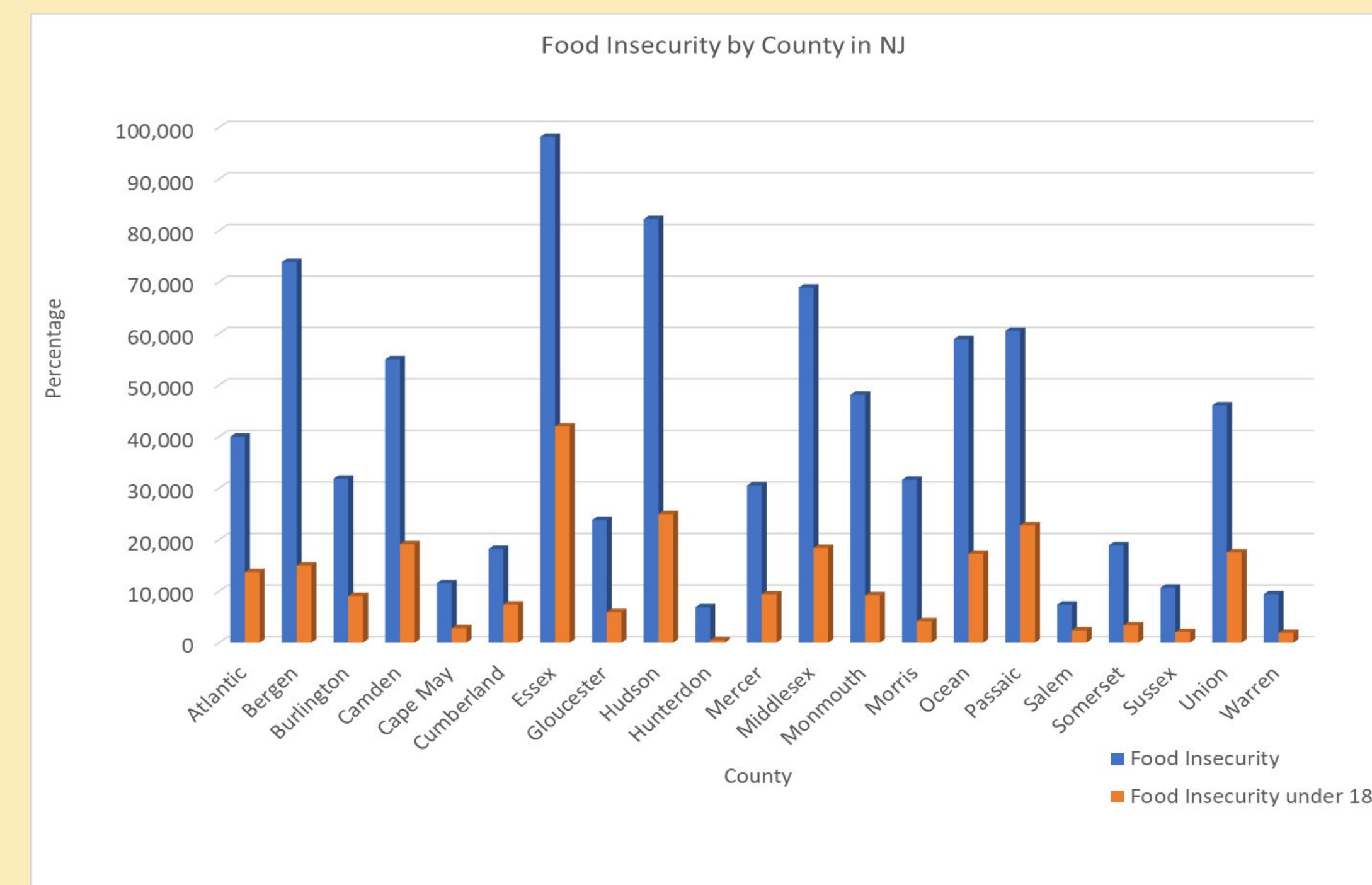
These menu accommodations were made in response to concerns about a lack of halal food options, which negatively impacted Muslim and Jewish students' health and mental well-being and can be recognized as a health disparity disadvantaging Muslim American student bodies.

Methods

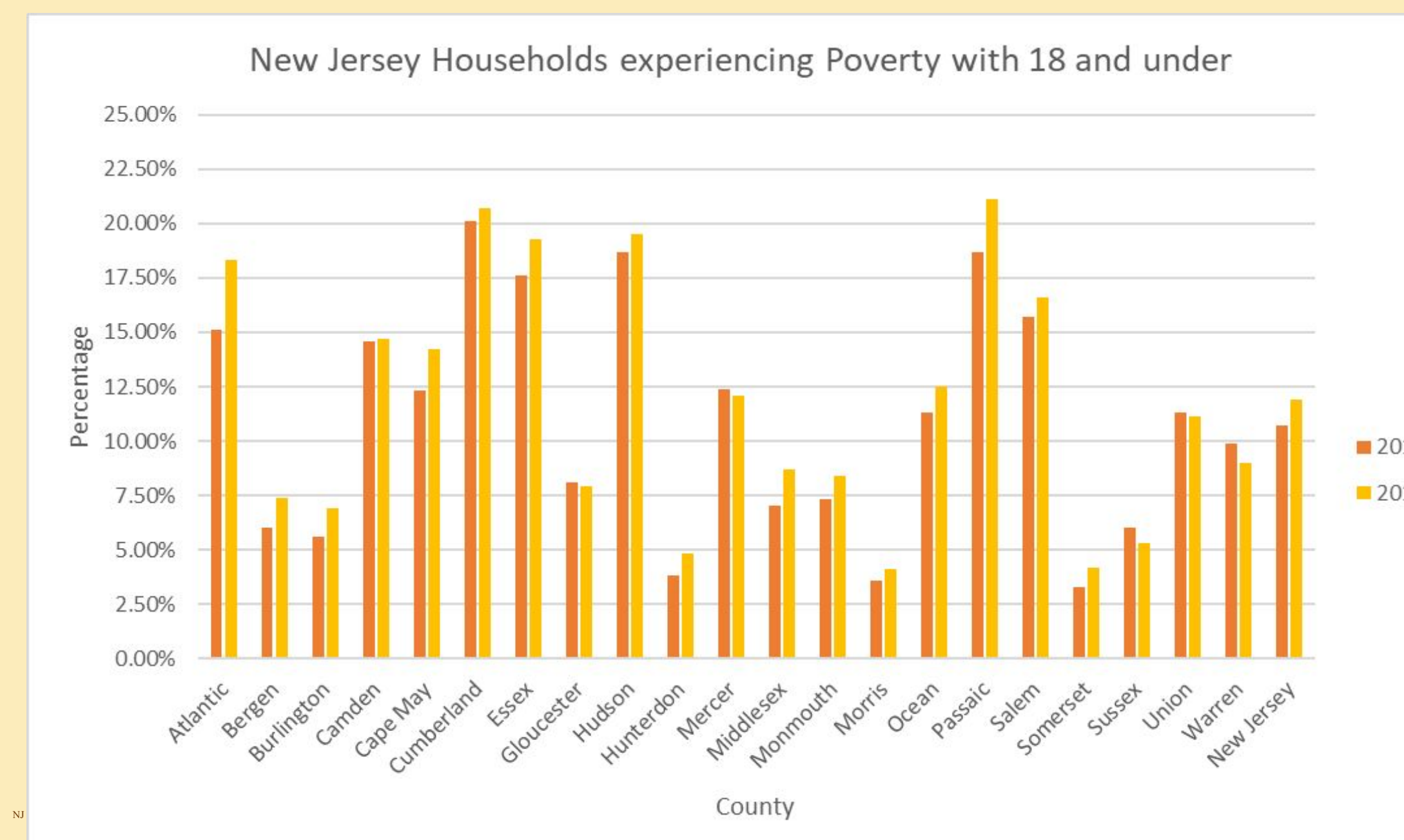
Through collaboration with the Food Bank of South Jersey, a proposed intervention plan comprises of:

- Creating a Rowan-campus wide survey in collaboration with the Food Bank of South Jersey to find population census on food insecurity within college students.
- Establishing a connection between the Food Bank of South Jersey and Rowan Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine
- Creating informational brochures on local sources of Kosher and Halal food.
- Creating an email list for potential volunteers to sign up at Food Bank of South Jersey.
- Recipe testing for provided food.

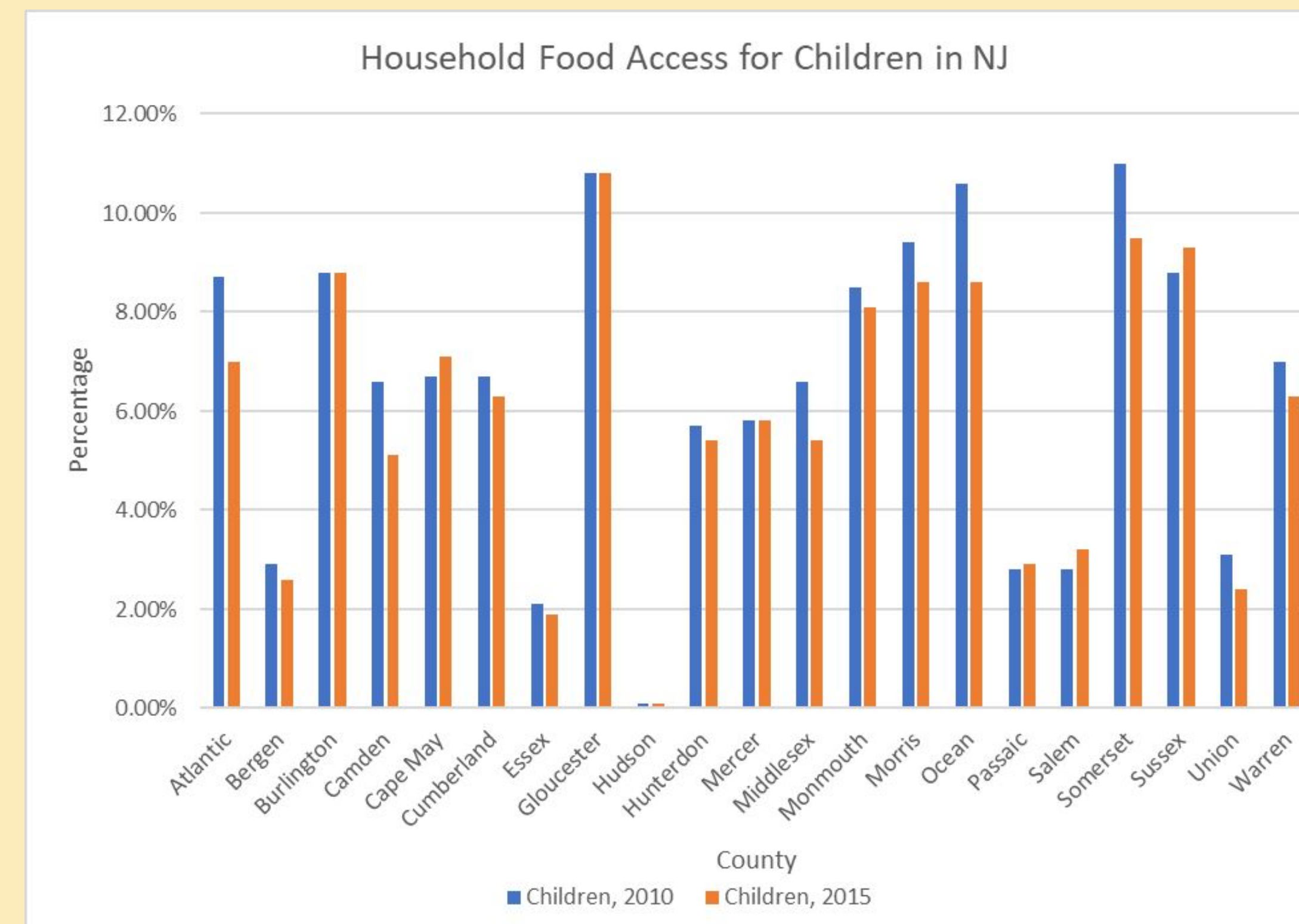
Results



Sources from the NJSHAD report the Food Insecurity rates state by state and how many are represented by youth under 18 (Figure 1.)



A poverty comparison based on SNAP state food program between 2011 and 2018 (Figure 2.) *Notice increase in poverty rates*



USDA ERS data on Household food access for children depicted between 2010 and 2015 (Figure 3.) *Notice decrease in access*

*Teaneck Public School District in Bergen County,
Hudson County Schools of Technology in Hudson County
Highland Regional High School in Camden County
Atlantic City School Districts in Atlantic County
Paterson Public School District in Passaic County*

NJ Public High schools who have implemented Kosher and Halal food

Conclusion

To combat food insecurity in South Jersey we have partnered with the Food Bank of South Jersey to join several projects the food bank is conducting. Our goal is to partner the Food Bank of South Jersey with Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine in order to have continuous support of student volunteers.

Through this we can conduct surveys of the local community to gauge what food resources the community needs and connect the food bank with local high schools to schedule recurring food drives.

Throughout NJ, there are many trends pointing toward food insecurity. We hope to battle these insecurities through research and advocacy. By connecting stakeholders to food vendors we are able to act as a bridge for communities who may be unable to find resources.

By tackling this niche and connecting stakeholders, we are able to have a significant impact on a community in high need of culturally-responsive interventions

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3. Food Security in New Jersey. Accessed April 24, 2023. <https://www.montclair.edu/hunger-free/food-security-in-new-jersey/>
4. Pew Research Center. Jewish Americans in 2020. Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. Published May 11, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>
- 5.1. NJSHAD - Health Indicator Report - Food Insecurity. www-doh.state.nj.us. <https://www-doh.state.nj.us/doh-shad/indicator/view/FoodInsecurity.CoAll.html>