



# Foodbank Hunger Report 2021

The reality of the food crisis facing Australia

## Message from Foodbank Australia CEO

The issue of food insecurity in Australia has never been more prominent than it is right now. The global pandemic has put a spotlight on the crisis that for too long has flown under society's radar.

For a decade, the annual *Foodbank Hunger Report* has been describing the growing prevalence of food insecurity in Australia. The first report in 2012 was met with disbelief that there were people going hungry in 'the lucky country'. Year-on-year the awareness of the issue has grown, but so too has the problem. What has become clearer since this report was first published is the diversity of people touched by the issue. Food relief is not only being sought out by those who are homeless and unemployed, but working families, refugees, single parents, school leavers, First Nations People and many more.

When the global pandemic hit, it radically transformed our day-to-day reality, bringing unexpected challenges and suffering and exacerbating existing societal issues. Those already struggling have been hit even harder, while others find themselves fighting to pay the bills, feed their family and keep the lights on for the first time in their lives.

Every day brings a new set of challenges, but Foodbank is determined to continue doing what we do best, not just during the crisis phase, but well into recovery, on top of our better-known role of providing food relief to those struggling with poverty and inequality in 'normal' times.

One positive we can draw from the current situation is that the reality of food insecurity is no longer hidden. The fallout of the pandemic has driven home to all of us how easy it is for people to become vulnerable. We have seen firsthand people who have lost their jobs and income or have been caught in a hard lockdown unable to access the food they need for their families and this is leading to a welcome sense of empathy towards those who are vulnerable for any number of reasons.

It will be a long road to recovery, but we must not forget the new perspective we have gained through this pandemic. The circumstances that put people into food insecurity before the virus – poverty, family and domestic violence, under-employment and housing affordability to name a few – will still be with us and food relief will remain a critically important part of the solution.

The key findings in this report are indeed confronting, but we cannot fix a problem we don't understand or even acknowledge.

Brianna Casey

# About this report

The Foodbank Hunger Report is an annual spotlight on food insecurity in Australia bringing together Foodbank's research and on-the-ground information and observations.

The Foodbank Hunger Report provides a snapshot of the prevalence and depth of the issue of food insecurity, as well as insights into the day-to-day experience of people living with this fundamental vulnerability. Whilst there are many contributors to food insecurity in Australia, COVID-19 has continued to rage during the past 12 months so, as it was last year, it is a major theme of this report.

Much of the report is informed by a national survey conducted between 1 and 28 July 2021 involving more than 2,877 Australians representing the Australian population, more than 1,000 of whom had experienced food insecurity at some point in the last 12 months. The detailed methodology of this survey can be found [here](#).

Additional insights have been drawn from analysis informing the Foodbank Hunger Segments. These segments have been developed using a broad range of demographic, psychographic and geographic population-level data to determine the key variables influencing food insecurity. More details on this can be found [here](#).

Records of requests for food relief via Infoxchange's national [Ask Izzy](#) website were also analysed both before and during the reporting period, along with Foodbank's own food and grocery distribution statistics and operational intelligence.

Embargo

# One in six Australian adults haven't had enough to eat in the last year. On top of this, 1.2 million children have gone hungry during the same period

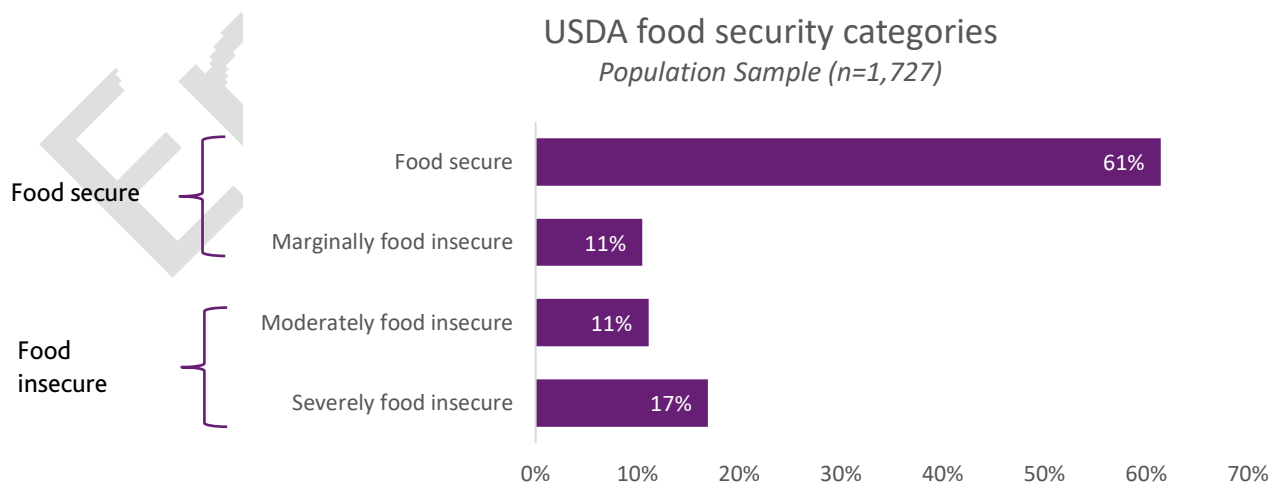
If a person is food secure, they have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life<sup>1</sup>. More than one in six Australian adults can be categorised as severely food insecure which means they experience multiple disruptions to their eating patterns and often have to reduce their food intake. On top of this, 1.2 million children are experiencing severe food insecurity, sometimes going whole days without eating.

Food insecurity is a spectrum of experience which ranges from having to reduce the quality, variety or desirability of your diet (moderately food insecure) to having multiple disruptions to your eating patterns and reduced food intake (severely food insecure).

On this basis, a quarter of Australian adults (28%) can be categorised as food insecure according to a globally recognised [United States Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Survey Module](#).

One in six Australians (17%) can be categorised as being severely food insecure which means they have multiple disruptions to their eating patterns and are forced to reduce their food intake. These individuals and families are often forced to eat smaller meals to make the food last longer or skip meals altogether. More than seven in ten severely food insecure Australians cut down on the size of their meals (73%) or skip a meal (76%) at least once a week. More than half (57%) go a whole day without eating at least once a week.

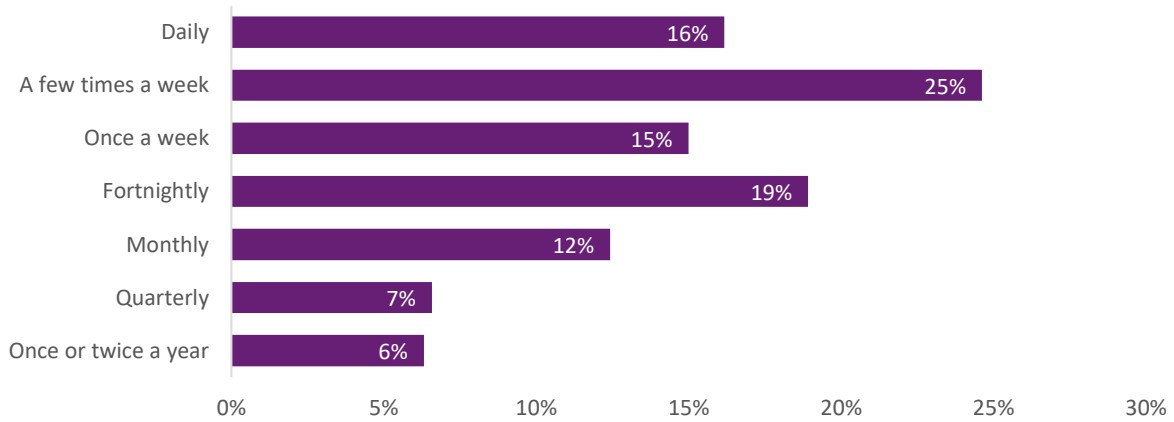
In addition to the one in six adults who are severely food insecure in Australia, 1.2 million children are living in food insecure households. More than two in five severely food insecure parents (45%) say their children go an entire day without eating fresh fruit and vegetables at least once a week. A similar proportion (43%) of severely food insecure parents say their children go a whole day without eating at least once a week.



<sup>1</sup> United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation

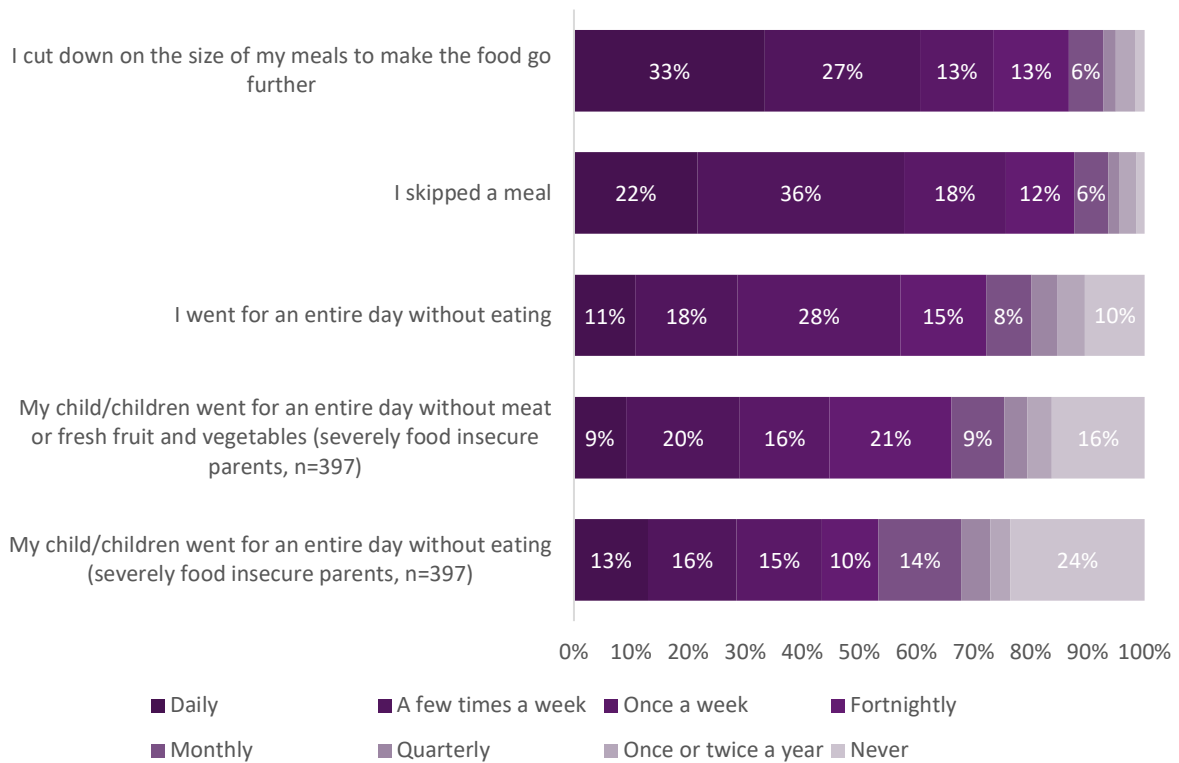
## How often are you in the situation where you do not have enough food for yourself or other family members and you cannot afford to buy more food?

Severely food insecure Australians (n=671)



## In the last 12 months, how often have the following occurred?

Severely food insecure Australians (n=671)



# Food insecurity affects a broad spectrum of Australians from diverse backgrounds

Food insecurity is not restricted to the obviously vulnerable groups in the community such as homeless people and the unemployed. A demographic summary of food insecure Australians shows that it affects men and women of every age, living alone, in families and in groups. It affects people in the cities, regional and remote areas and it affects more people in some form of employment than those who have none.

The most common reasons why people report experiencing food insecurity are unexpected expenses or bill shock (35%) or overall low incomes (30%).

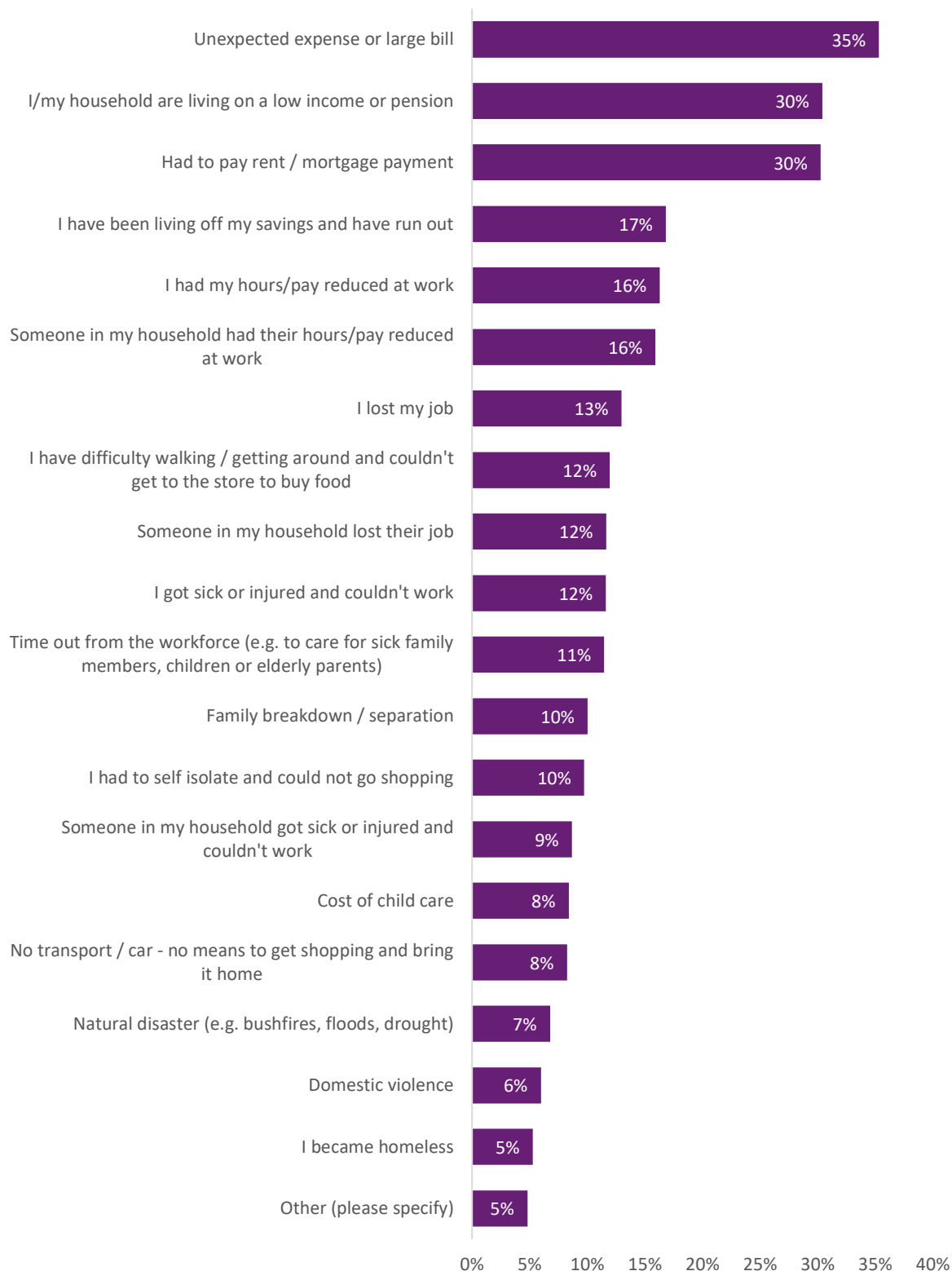
However, there are often multiple factors working together to cause an individual or family unit to experience food insecurity. Many of these characteristics are common to a variety of people who share other traits enabling them to be grouped in terms of who they are and how they are impacted by food insecurity. Foodbank has developed ten [Hunger Segments](#) using demographic, psychographic and geographic information.

Embargoed

## Which of the following are reasons why you did not have enough food for yourself or other family members and could not afford to buy more?

Please select all that apply.



Food insecure Australians (n=1,150)





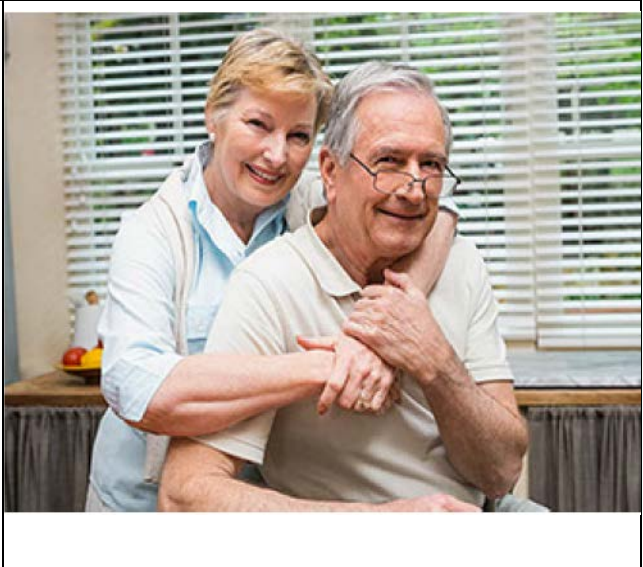
# Demographic Summary of Food Insecure Australians


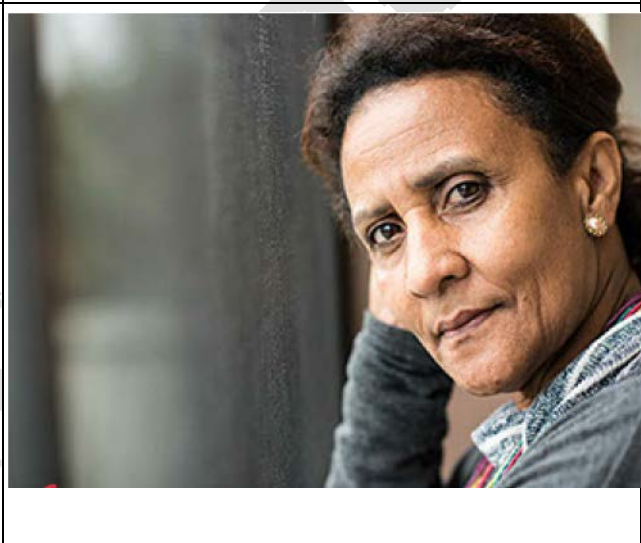

Gender	Female	52%
	Male	47%
	Other	1%
Generation/Age	Gen Z (18 – 26)	22%
	Gen Y (27 – 41)	39%
	Gen X (42 – 54)	28%
	Baby Boomers (55 – 75)	10%
	Builders (76+)	1%
Location	Major Cities	69%
	Inner Regional	20%
	Outer Regional	10%
	Remote Australia	1%
Household	Couples with children	37%
	Couples without children	19%
	Lone person household	19%
	One parent with children	15%
	Group household	10%
Employment Status	Full time employed	37%
	Part time/casual employed	19%
	Not employed/looking for work	13%
	Home duties	10%
	Disability pensioner/carer	9%
	Retired/aged pensioner	5%
	Full time student	4%
	Self employed	3%
Income (per week)	Less than \$385	12%
	\$386 to \$699	20%
	\$700 to \$1,199	21%
	\$1,200 to \$1,999	22%
	\$2,000 to \$2,999	16%
	\$3,000 or more	9%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent	Yes	17%
	No	83%



# The Hunger Segments

Segment	Total number of food insecure people in this segment	Description	Proportion of this segment experiencing food insecurity	
<a href="#">Professional Couples</a>	1,071,083	Couples and young families with higher education and above average incomes contending with short-term financial shocks and cash flow issues	1 in 4	
<a href="#">Young Working Families</a>	920,638	Young urban families with blue collar or low-income jobs coping with the increasing costs of children's schooling and other activities	1 in 3	



<p><a href="#">Established Country Homeowners</a></p>	<p>709,268</p>	<p>Established regional households thinking about their retirement and the challenge of maintaining quality of life</p>	<p>1 in 4</p>	
<p><a href="#">Established City Homeowners</a></p>	<p>630,046</p>	<p>Established families with higher asset wealth, some of whom own their own businesses and many with older children still at home contending with financial shocks and cash flow issues</p>	<p>1 in 5</p>	
<p><a href="#">Empty Nesters</a></p>	<p>570,918</p>	<p>Retirees and Empty Nesters living in regional communities struggling to manage increasing costs on fixed incomes</p>	<p>1 in 3</p>	

<a href="#">Battling Families</a>	439,471	<p>Low-income urban families and single parents who are regularly reliant on government assistance to make ends meet</p>	1 in 3	
<a href="#">Low Income Country Retirees</a>	448,415	<p>Older couples and families living in regional communities on low household incomes with already extremely modest lifestyles</p>	1 in 4	
<a href="#">Low Income City Retirees</a>	468,085	<p>Older recently, or soon to be, retired empty nesters facing increasing costs on low fixed incomes</p>	1 in 4	

<a href="#">Home Leavers</a>	278,039	Well educated home leavers at the beginning of their careers struggling with the high cost of independent living on entry level incomes	1 in 3	
<a href="#">Regional Indigenous</a>	25,852	Young First Nations families (77%) living in regional and remote communities on very low incomes in overcrowded households	1 in 2	

Embed

## Professional Couples

AGE	
Median age	35.7
Over indexed age	35 - 44 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	1.2%↓
Born in Australia	63.6%
Born elsewhere	36.4%
Speak English at home	70.4%
Speak other language at home	29.6%

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	White collar, office based, clerical
Education	Bachelor Degree / Graduate Diploma
SEIFA IEO*	1052↑

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Pension Concession Card	

For definitions click [here](#)

DWELLING STATUS	
Owned apartment or house with mortgage	
Average household size	2.7
Average per bedroom	0.87

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago	17.8%
Different address 5 years ago	46.5%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$802↑
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,805↑
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$2,029↑
Average rent p.w.*	\$397↑
SEIFA IER*	1026↑
SEIFA IRSD*	1044↑

## Young Working Families

AGE	
Median age*	34.4↓
Over indexed age	0 - 14 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population	1.8%
Born in Australia*	61.1%↓
Born elsewhere*	38.9%↑
Speak English at home*	62.5%↓
Speak other language at home*	37.5%↑

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Blue collar skilled and unskilled, clerical
Education	Advanced Diploma / Certificate
SEIFA IEO*	952↓

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Low Income Card	Family Tax Benefit A & B
Parenting Payment	

DWELLING STATUS	
Owned separate houses with mortgage	
Average household size*	2.9↑
Average per bedroom	0.9

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago	16.1%
Different address 5 years ago	38.9%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$620↓
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,447↓
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$1,781↓
Average rent p.w.*	\$346↓
SEIFA IER	989
SEIFA IRSD	972

For definitions click [here](#)

## Established Country Homeowners

AGE	
Median age	40.2
Over indexed age	34 - 54 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population	4.9%
Born in Australia*	85.3%↓
Born elsewhere*	14.7%↑
Speak English at home	92.9%
Speak other language at home	7.1%

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Tradies, Clerical, Machine Operators
Education	Bachelor / Postgraduate
SEIFA IEO	980↑

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Nill	

DWELLING STATUS	
Separate housing owned outright or with mortgage	
Average household size	2.6
Average per bedroom	0.81

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago*	16.0%↑
Different address 5 years ago*	42.2%↑

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$732↑
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,515↑
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$1,648↑
Average rent p.w.*	\$264↑
SEIFA IER*	1017↑
SEIFA IRSD*	1007↑

For definitions click [here](#)

## Established City Homeowners

AGE	
Median age*	40.8↑
Over indexed age	45 - 64 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	0.6%↓
Born in Australia*	67.3%↑
Born elsewhere*	32.7%↓
Speak English at home*	76.2%↑
Speak other language at home*	23.8%↓

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	White collar, office based managers and professionals
Education	Bachelor Degree / Post Graduate / Graduate Diploma
SEIFA IEO*	1112↑

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Commonwealth Seniors Health Card	

DWELLING STATUS	
Separate housing & apartments owned outright	
Average household size	2.7
Average per bedroom*	0.83↓

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago*	15.0%↓
Different address 5 years ago*	40.7%↓

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$875↑
Average household income p.w.*	\$2,040↑
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$2,332↑
Average rent p.w.*	\$876↑
SEIFA IER*	1069↑
SEIFA IRSD*	1085↑

For definitions click [here](#)

## Empty Nesters

AGE	
Median age*	45.7↑
Over indexed age	55+ year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	2.8%↓
Born in Australia	87.6%
Born elsewhere	12.4%
Speak English at home*	95.1%↑
Speak other language at home*	4.9%↓

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Managers
Education	Graduate Diploma / Advanced Diploma
SEIFA IEO	962↑

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Age Pension	Commonwealth Seniors Card
Low Income Card	Partner Allowance
Pension Concession	Widow Allowance

DWELLING STATUS	
Separate house owned outright	
Average household size*	2.3↓
Average per bedroom*	0.78↓

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago	13.9%
Different address 5 years ago	37.4%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.	\$574
Average household income p.w.	\$1,127
Average mortgage p.m.	\$1,335
Average rent p.w.	\$223
SEIFA IER*	991↑
SEIFA IRSD*	976↑

For definitions click [here](#)



## Battling Families

AGE	
Median age	35.2
Over indexed age	0 - 19 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	2.9%↑
Born in Australia*	61.9%↓
Born elsewhere*	38.1%↑
Speak English at home*	58.5%↓
Speak other language at home*	41.5%↑

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Blue collar skilled & unskilled tradies, machine operators, labourers
Education	Advanced Diploma / Certificate
SEIFA IEO*	855↓

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
ABSTUDY	Family Tax Benefit A & B
Carer Allowance & Payment	Disability Support Pensions
Youth Allowance	JobSeeker
Widow Allowance	Health Care Card
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Parent Payment
Pension Concession	

DWELLING STATUS	
Housing authority homes and rentals	
Average household size*	2.8↑
Average per bedroom*	0.91

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago	15.9%
Different address 5 years ago	41.6%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$512↓
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,144↓
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$1,598↓
Average rent p.w.*	\$308↓
SEIFA IER*	922↓
SEIFA IRSD*	880↓

For definitions click [here](#)

## Low Income Country Retirees

AGE	
Median age*	42.6↑
Over indexed age	65+ year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population	6.7%
Born in Australia	86.5%
Born elsewhere	13.5%
Speak English at home	92.9%
Speak other language at home	7.1%

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Blue collar unskilled labourer, machine operator, sales
Education	Certificate
SEIFA IEO	916

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Age Pension	Austudy
Carer Allowance	Carer Payment
Pension Concession	Commonwealth Rental Assistance

DWELLING STATUS	
Separate / Semi-detached apartment, mix of rent and own (outright or with mortgage)	
Average household size*	2.3↓
Average per bedroom*	0.78↓

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago	16.0%
Different address 5 years ago	42.3%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.	\$550
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,004↓
Average mortgage p.m.	\$1,296
Average rent p.w.	\$235
SEIFA IER*	894↓
SEIFA IRSD*	879↓

For definitions click [here](#)

## Low Income City Retirees

AGE	
Median age*	42.8↑
Over indexed age	55 - 85+ year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	2.3%↑
Born in Australia*	76.5%↑
Born elsewhere*	23.5%↓
Speak English at home*	86.6%↑
Speak other language at home*	13.4%↓

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Skilled trade and sales
Education	Advanced Diploma / Certificate
SEIFA IEO	981

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
Age Pension	Commonwealth Seniors Health Card
Disability Support Pension	Pension Concession Card

DWELLING STATUS	
Owned outright / Sep-semi detached	
Average household size*	2.4↓
Average per bedroom*	0.79↓

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago	16.4%
Different address 5 years ago	43.3%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$623↓
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,266↓
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$1,755↓
Average rent p.w.*	\$340↓
SEIFA IER	985
SEIFA IRSD	990

For definitions click [here](#)

## Home Leavers

AGE	
Median age	32↓
Over indexed age	20 - 34 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	1.0%↓
Born in Australia*	61.3%↓
Born elsewhere*	38.7%↑
Speak English at home	69.0%
Speak other language at home	31.0%

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	White collar professionals
Education	Bachelor / Post Grad / Graduate Diploma
SEIFA IEO*	1111↑

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
ABSTUDY	Austudy
Youth Allowance	

DWELLING STATUS	
2 - 3 bedroom rental apartments in high density	
Average household size*	2.2↓
Average per bedroom*	0.95↑

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago*	28.6%↑
Different address 5 years ago*	60.7%↑

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$766↑
Average household income p.w.	\$1,603
Average mortgage p.m.	\$1,986
Average rent p.w.	\$382
SEIFA IER	916
SEIFA IRSD	1010

For definitions click [here](#)

## Regional Indigenous

AGE	
Median age*	28.5↓
Over indexed age	0 - 44 year olds

BIRTHPLACE / LANGUAGES	
Indigenous population*	77.6%↑
Born in Australia*	95.1%↑
Born elsewhere*	4.9%↓
Speak English at home*	37.3%↓
Speak other language at home*	62.7%↑

OCCUPATION / EDUCATION	
Occupations	Labourers
Education	Certificate
SEIFA IEO	874↓

DSS INDICATORS (over-indexed factors)	
ABSTUDY	Disability Support
Family Tax Benefit A & B	Health Care Card
Parenting Payment	Youth Allowance

DWELLING STATUS	
Rental or housing authority	
Average household size*	3.8↑
Average per bedroom*	1.4↑

MOBILITY	
Different address 1 year ago*	11.7%↓
Different address 5 years ago*	23.0%↓

HOUSEHOLD INCOME / PAYMENTS	
Average personal income p.w.*	\$423↓
Average household income p.w.*	\$1,262
Average mortgage p.m.*	\$596↓
Average rent p.w.*	\$89↓
SEIFA IER*	638↓
SEIFA IRSD*	609↓

For definitions click [here](#)

# COVID-19 continues to impact food security in Australia

Eighteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, life for Australia's most vulnerable has not gotten easier. In fact, the combination of multiple lockdowns, further job losses and rollback of government assistance has made things more difficult than ever.

While food insecurity is a long-term experience for many, COVID-19 has caused others to experience it for the first time. In fact, more than one in three food insecure Australians (38%) during the last year had never experienced food insecurity prior to COVID-19.

## Food insecure Australians are not coping since government assistance has been wound back

Government assistance, particularly the JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments, has been important in providing a safety net for vulnerable people in the midst of the pandemic. Between March 2020 and March 2021, 54% of food insecure Australians were accessing government assistance. Among those categorised as severely food insecure, the proportion is even higher (64%).

In June 2020, 13%\* of Australians answered yes to the question "In the last 12 months, was there any time when you or anyone in your household ran out of food and did not have enough money to purchase more?". This represented an average in a year that saw dramatic highs and lows in response to the ever-changing impacts of COVID-19. That said, this was a significant decline from the previous year, when 21% of Australians answered yes to the same question. It was an indication that, when vulnerable people have more money at their disposal, their food security immediately improves. A year on, however, with assistance having been dramatically wound back, food insecure Australians are once again finding it hard to cope with the number of people answering yes to the question back up to 18%, equal to pre-pandemic levels.

Three in five food insecure Australians (60%) are finding it more challenging to make ends meet than this time last year while 40% are finding it less challenging. Of those who accessed JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments during the period between March 2020 and March 2021, almost half (48%) say they are not coping well at all since these payments have been wound back.

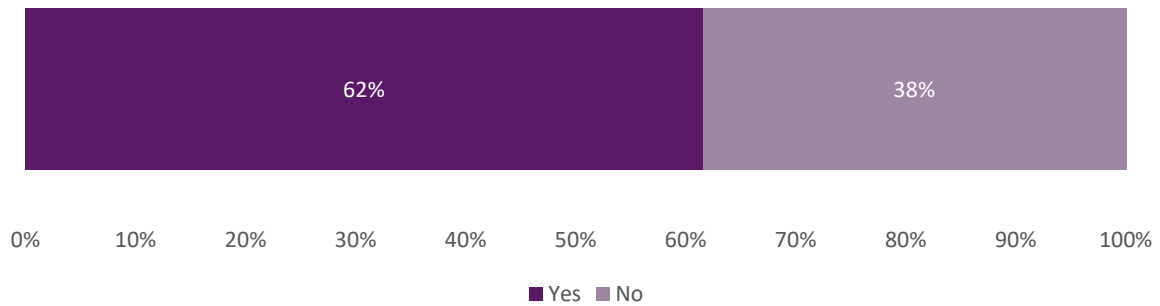
Centrelink searches on the Infolink Ask Izzy website increased significantly in March 2020 as Australians started to experience the effects of the pandemic. In March 2021, however, online searches for financial assistance other than Centrelink were much higher than last year, indicating that many Australians are still in need of help.

---

\*In order to present longitudinal comparisons, the percentages reported in relation to the question "In the last 12 months, was there any time when you or anyone in your household ran out of food and did not have enough money to purchase more?" are based on raw survey results. Unlike other statistics presented in this report, these figures have not been weighted according to age group, segment and USDA category and should, therefore, not be compared to other results in this report.

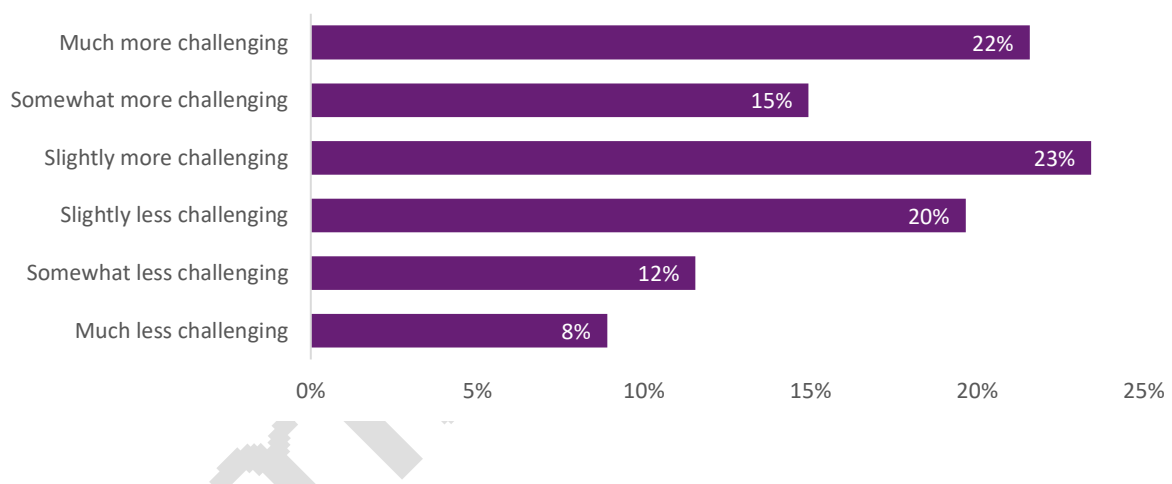
Before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, had you ever experienced not having enough food for yourself or other family members and not being able to afford more?

*Food insecure Australians (n=1,150)*



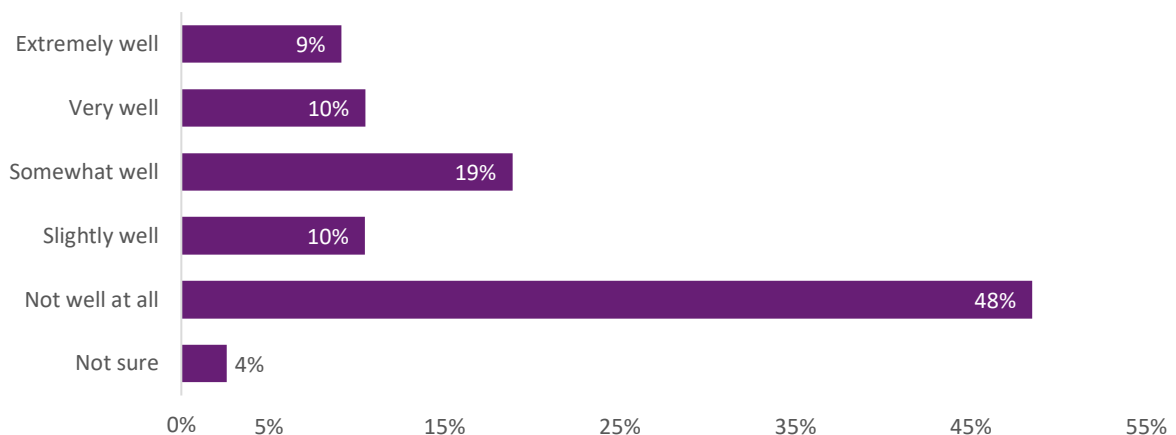
Thinking about this time last year, are you finding it more or less challenging to make ends meet?

*Food insecure Australians (n=1,150)*

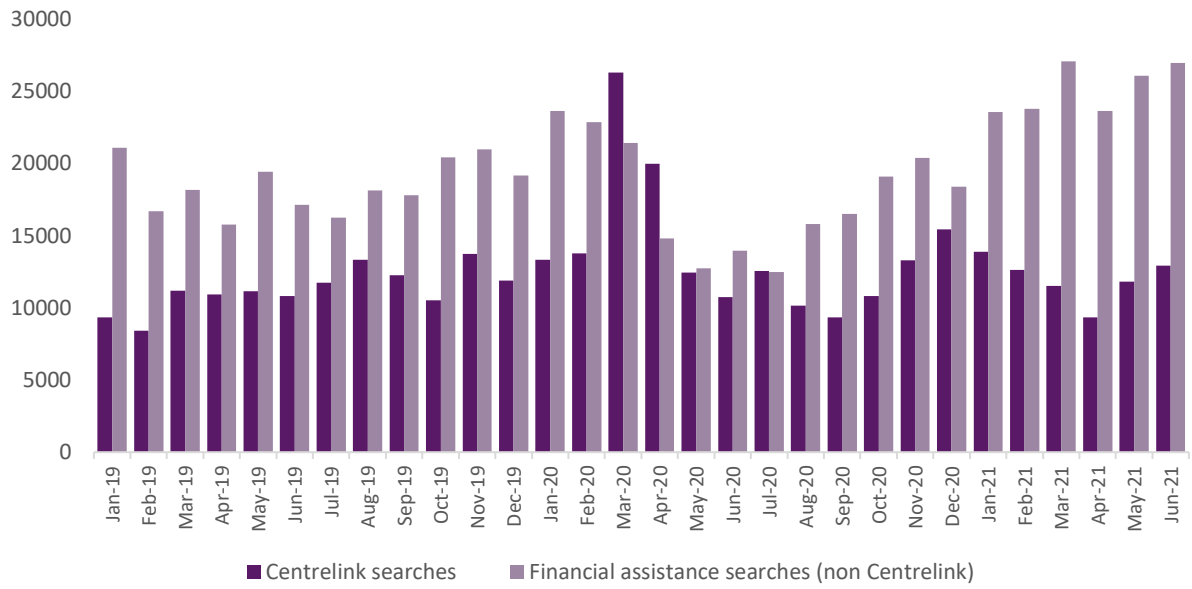


How well are you coping since the JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments have been wound back?

*Food insecure Australians who accessed JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments  
n=243*



## Ask Izzy online searches for assistance





# In spite of best efforts, food relief is still not reaching many Australians who need it

Two thirds of food insecure Australians are seeking food relief with more than half of them saying they are seeking it more often than last year. Social stigma and lack of accessibility are the largest barriers to those who are not seeking help.

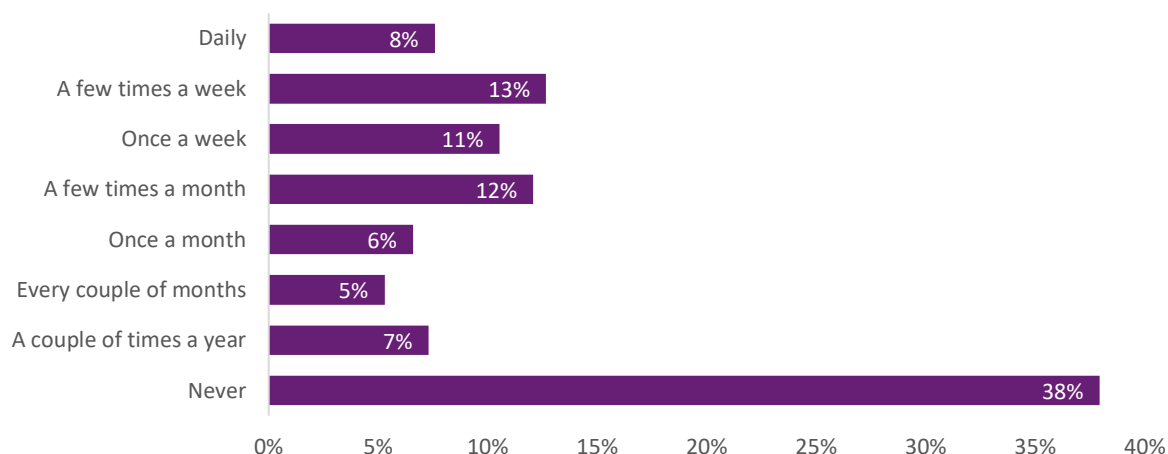
More than three in five food insecure Australians (62%) access food relief up from 59% pre COVID-19. Three in ten food insecure people (31%) are seeking food relief at least once a week. With so many finding it difficult to make ends meet in 2021, it's unsurprising that more than half of those seeking food relief (58%) say they are seeking relief more often than last year with a further 26% seeking it just as often. Reflecting this demand, last financial year Foodbank provided food relief to over 1 million people per month.

More than one in three food insecure Australians (38%), however, are not seeking food relief. Social stigma and lack of accessibility are the largest barriers to them getting the assistance that they need. More than one in three food insecure Australians (35%) are hesitant to seek food relief because they believe there might be people who need assistance more than they do. Embarrassment (32%) and shame (28%) can also cause food insecure Australians not to ask for help.

There are also practical barriers to seeking food relief such as not knowing of any charities close by (13%) or being unable to travel to a charity (12%). More than one in ten food insecure Australians (13%) do not seek food relief because they have already accessed all they are allowed to from a charity, highlighting the fact that there is more demand than charities and community groups are able to meet in some communities.

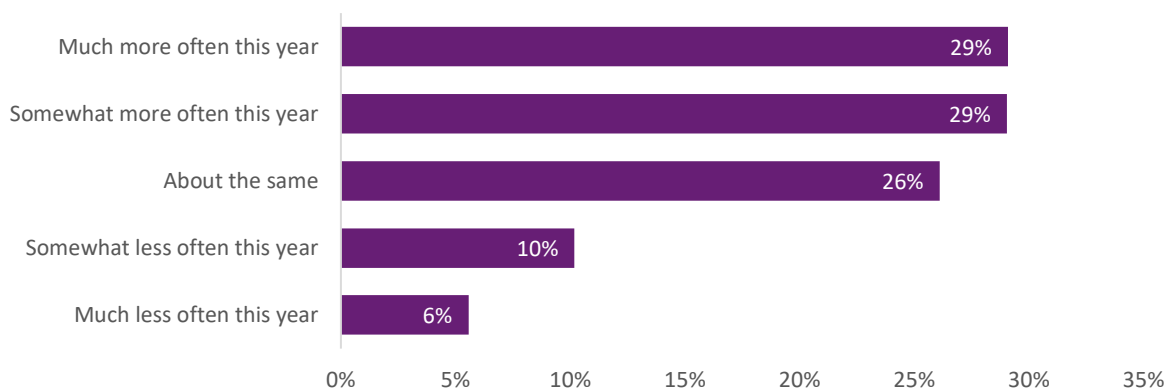
## How often do you seek food relief from a charity or community organisation?

Food insecure Australians (n=1,150)



## If you compare this year to last year, are you seeking food relief more or less often?

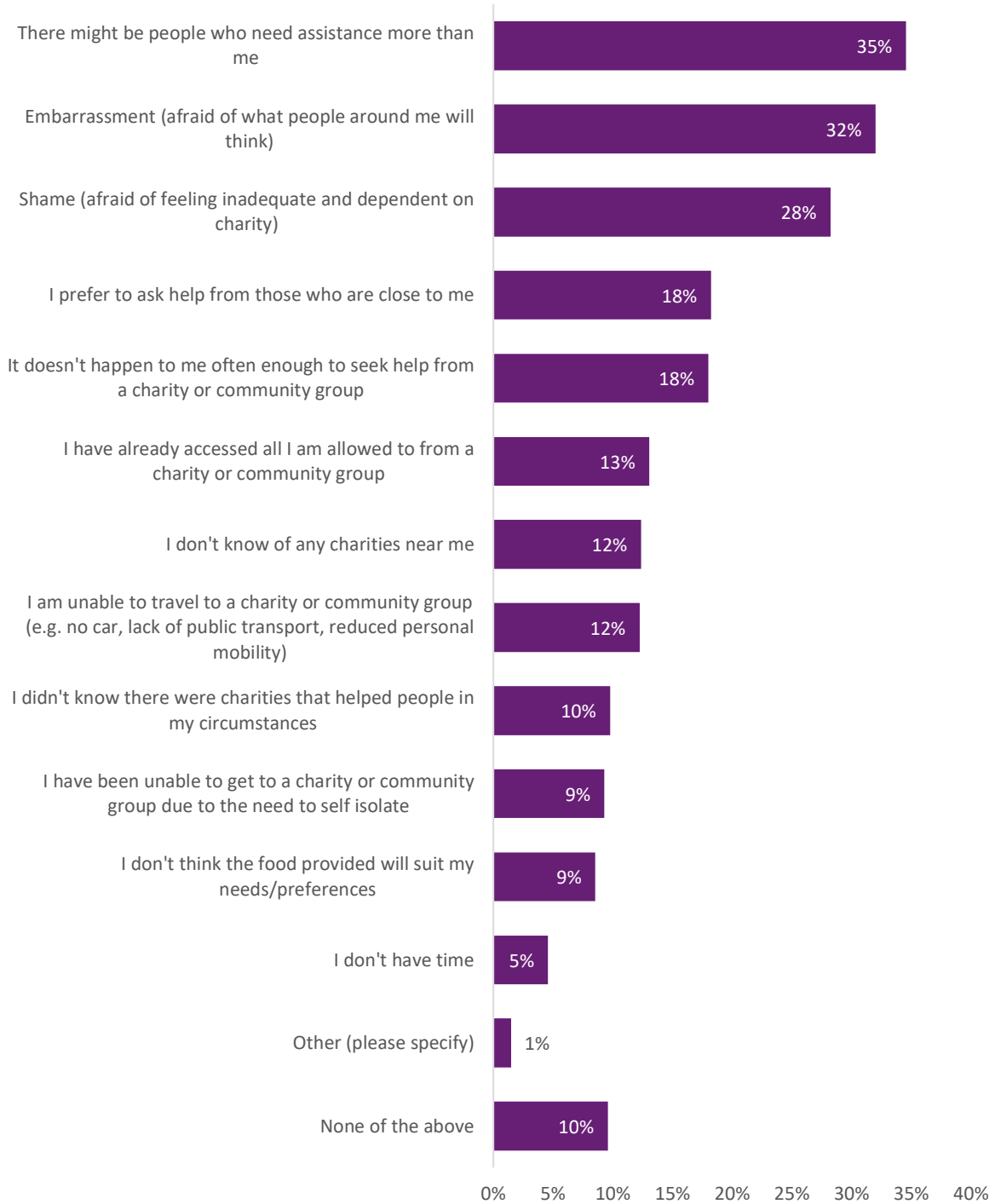
Food insecure Australians seeking food relief (n=683)



## Which of the following are barriers for you in seeking food relief from a charity or community organisation?

Please select all that apply.

Food insecure Australians (n=1,150)



# Even those seeking food relief are not getting the full help they need

Demand for food relief is not currently being met, with more than two in five food insecure Australians (46%) requiring more than they currently receive to meet their household's needs.

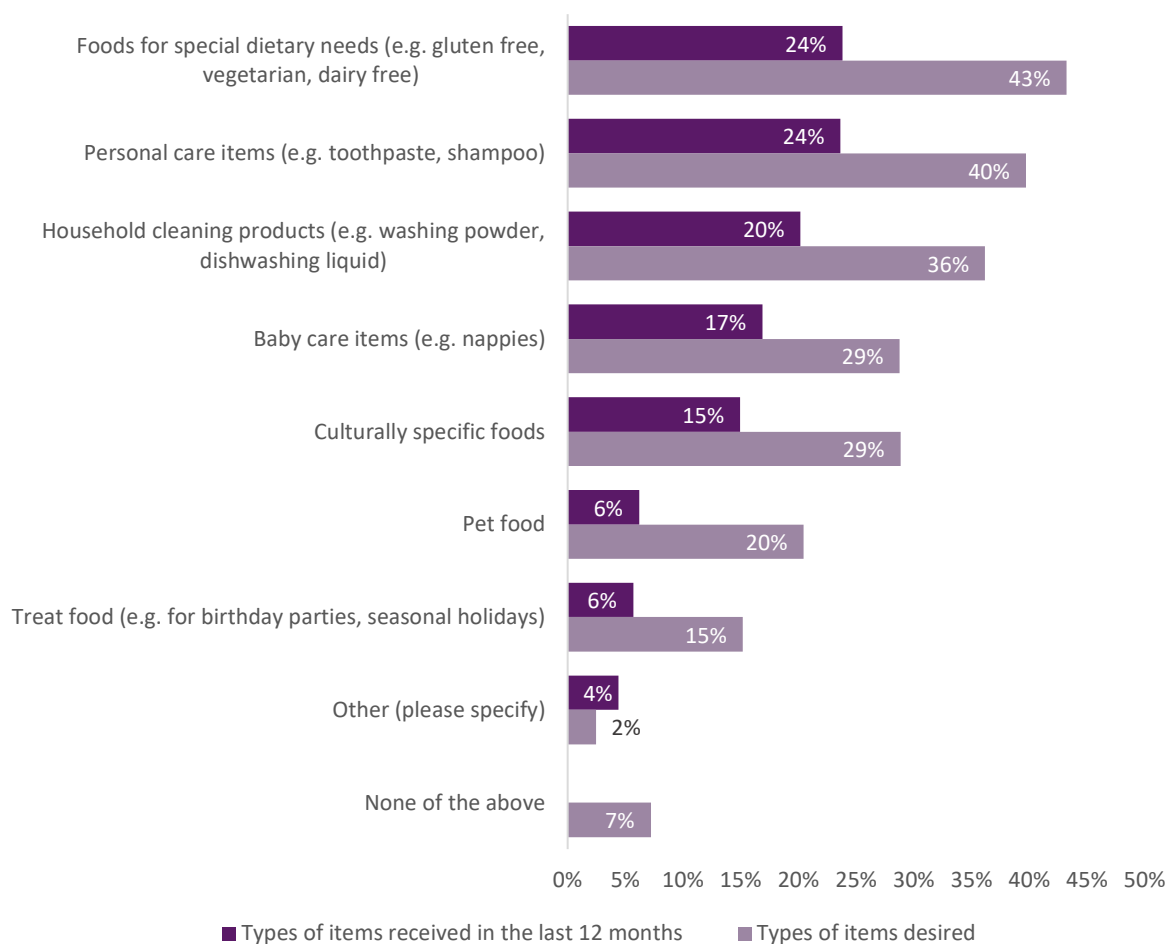
Food relief provides many Australians with the assistance they need to get back on their feet. The average household receives enough food to make 7.8 meals per week but for 46% of them, there is still a gap between what they receive and what they require to meet their needs.

There are also some differences between the types of food and groceries provided by charities and community groups and what food relief recipients would like to see offered. The items that food insecure Australians would like to see charities and community groups provide more of include foods for special dietary needs (43%), personal care items (40%) and household cleaning products (36%).

## Items received compared to items desired from charities and community groups.

Please select all that apply.

Those seeking food relief (n=683)



## Quotes

"I was the only one that went without some meals. My husband and son always have food. They don't know I have been going without." – Gen X Mum, QLD

"I have always found a way to have enough food on the table. However, the quality of food is not great." – Gen X Single Dad, QLD

"I left a domestic violence marriage about 8 years ago... and I find that with minimal formal education and my age I am only eligible for casual low paying jobs...I take as many extra hours as I can get but I feel as though I'm always going backwards - I have zero savings and I'm behind in my electric and gas bills and when a bigger bill comes in the only thing I can do is cut down on eating because there's nothing else I can cut down on."

GEN X Single Mum, QLD

"I lost my job because of COVID, got my super paid out and used all my savings to survive. After getting a new job months into the pandemic, I got my new wages but have no savings left for unexpected or bigger bills. I now have no job or income because of the current lockdown either." – Gen Z Woman, NSW

"Cost of food just keeps going up, as well as other living costs. JobSeeker increases just don't keep up." – Gen X Woman Living Alone, SA

"We had more than enough with the corona supplement but since they stopped, it is so hard again." – Gen Z Dad, QLD

# Methodology

## Survey of Australians experiencing food insecurity

An online survey was conducted with Australians aged 18 years and older to understand the prevalence and experience of food insecurity in Australia. The survey was designed and deployed by McCrindle and was in field between 1 and 28 July 2021. The survey was conducted in four stages, gathering a total of 2,877 responses.

- Stage 1: A panel of 1,005 Australians (nationally representative by state, age and gender) were asked a set of questions to determine whether they had experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. These questions were taken from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 18 question Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). Any respondents who were categorised as being 'food secure' were screened out of the survey. 274 Australians were categorised as being moderately or severely food insecure.
- Stage 2: Following stage 1, the survey was re-launched to top up responses in certain states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia) to a minimum of 380 each, ensuring an even spread across gender and age groups. Data for each state (collected in stages 1 and 2) was used to inform statistics about the prevalence of food insecurity in each state.
- Stage 3: The survey was re-launched a third time to top up the sample of Australians experiencing food insecurity. A total of 674 Australians (including those from stages 1 and 2), were then asked about their experience of food insecurity.
- Stage 4: The survey was re-launched a fourth time to gather additional responses from Australians experiencing food insecurity living in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. A total of at least 380 responses was gathered from each of these states in order to ensure robust results for these states.

Fieldwork stage	Purpose	Total responses	Moderately or severely food insecure	Responses used in final food insecure sample
Stage 1	Determine prevalence of food insecurity in Australia	1,005	274	223
Stage 2	Top up responses in NSW, VIC, QLD & SA to determine prevalence of food insecurity in each state	722	189	187
Stage 3	Top up sample of food insecure Australians to understand experience of food insecurity in Australia	445	264	264
Stage 4	Top up responses from food insecure Australians in NSW, VIC, QLD & SA to understand experience of food insecurity in each state	705	476	476
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,877</b>	<b>1,203</b>	<b>1,150</b>

NB: In stages 3 and 4, responses were gathered from Australians experiencing marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity. Those who are considered as food secure or marginally food insecure have not been counted in the

final sample of food insecure Australians which accounts for the difference between total response numbers (n=2,877) and those used in the final food insecure sample (n=1,150). The difference between the number of Australians who are moderately or severely food insecure (n=1,203) and the numbers used in the final sample of food insecure Australians (n=1,150) are due to respondents not completing the survey. Only completed responses have been used in the final sample.

### Data weighting

In order to maximise the responses gathered throughout the fieldwork process, and to ensure data is representative of the Australian population, data from different fieldwork stages has been combined and weighted using the following methodology:

Data has been weighted to the 2021 forecasted adult population in each segment, by age group and USDA category. The following population figures were used to weight the data:

2021 population estimates in each segment by age group						
Segment	Under 34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Low Income City Retirees	401,006	291,629	264,641	263,927	463,981	1,685,183
Young Working Families	857,966	532,770	418,699	354,334	431,312	2,595,080
Battling Families	405,921	235,400	195,789	171,942	230,039	1,239,091
Professional Couples	1,541,949	912,942	733,004	587,276	733,839	4,509,010
Established City Homeowners	787,394	543,340	556,503	479,418	729,562	3,096,218
Home Leavers	403,269	152,101	105,698	86,788	109,284	857,140
Established Country Homeowners	596,532	430,853	441,910	425,283	561,192	2,455,770
Low Income Country Retirees	419,970	263,358	266,017	300,462	506,021	1,755,828
Empty Nesters	304,785	218,197	255,436	293,047	473,404	1,544,869
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>19,738,189</b>

## Measuring food insecurity

There are many ways to measure food security, with each approach varying in reliability<sup>2</sup> and survey time. The single item measure, which asks “In the last 12 months was there any time you or anyone in your household has run out of food and not been able to purchase more?”, is often used in population level surveys, including the National Health Survey and has been used to inform the prevalence of food insecurity in previous Foodbank Hunger Reports. This measure has, however, been criticised for its potential to underestimate the prevalence of food insecurity in Australia<sup>3</sup> compared to other, more comprehensive measures.

The most commonly used measure of food security is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 18 question Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM)<sup>3</sup>. Although this measure takes longer for respondents to complete, it is more comprehensive, and is generally considered to be more reliable<sup>2</sup>. Rather than just separating respondents into food secure and food insecure, the USDA module also allows for more nuance, grouping respondents into four categories:

- Food Secure: no limitations to accessing food
- Marginal food insecurity: anxiety over food sufficiency or shortages but little to no changes in diet or food intake
- Moderate food insecurity: reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet but little to no reduction in food intake
- Severe food insecurity: multiple disruptions to eating patterns and reduced food intake<sup>4</sup>

For the first time, the Foodbank Hunger Report’s prevalence of food insecurity is based on the USDA 18 question module, rather than the single item measure.

## Foodbank’s Hunger Segments

The Foodbank Hunger Segments have been developed by The Art of More. A wide number of data sources were analysed to understand the diversity of demand indicators, the main sources being the 2016 Census, DSS Support Services and The Vulnerable Australia Model (developed by The Art of More) which assesses and integrates over 70 data sources to develop an understanding of vulnerable communities.

A number of modelling techniques were undertaken on the data sources to identify and forecast food insecurity across Australia by location, volume and an estimate of impacted Australians. A gravity model was used to allocate Foodbank’s supply data geographically. Decision tree analysis (CHAID) was employed to then identify the key variables driving the demand allocated by the gravity model.

K Means Cluster Analysis was then applied to define ‘hunger segments’ - the unique relationships between different demographics of food insecure people and the key variables shown to influence demand (i.e. the demand drivers) to provide a more nuanced view. With this understanding, the segments were mapped to provide a view of the volume and degree of food insecurity across Australia.

Ten core segments were identified (six x metro and four x rural). Each segment has its own distinct set of influences on food demand. The segments allowed each group to be described (i.e. contextualised/humanised) along with the key demand drivers specific to that segment, and in turn effectively communicate them both for internal and external purposes.

---

<sup>2</sup> McKay, Haines & Dunn, *Measuring and Understanding Food Insecurity in Australia: A Systematic Review*, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> McKechnie, Turrell, Giskes & Gallegos, Single-item measure of food insecurity used in the National Health Survey may underestimate prevalence in Australia, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, *Definitions of Food Security*

## Hunger Segment Demographic Definitions

↑	Over indexed
↓	Under indexed
*	Key factors
SEIFA	<a href="#">ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas</a>
IEO	<a href="#">ABS Index of Education and Occupation</a>
IER	<a href="#">ABS Index of Economic Resources</a>
IRSD	<a href="#">ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage</a>

For more details, or if you have questions regarding any aspect of the methodology, contact [Sarah Pennell](#)

## Acknowledgements

Foodbank Australia would like to thank the following, without whom the Foodbank Hunger Report would not be possible:

The individuals who shared their lived experience, providing insights into the challenges they face in meeting their daily food needs.

The hard working charities and community groups who are always prepared to take time from their vital work to respond to our requests for feedback and on-the-ground intelligence and observations.

[McCrimble](#) for undertaking the national survey of Australians and providing detailed analysis of this and other sources of data to provide the basis for this report.

[The Art of More](#) for developing The Hunger Segments and also providing additional analysis to inform the demographic summaries in the report.

[Russell Moverley](#) for the design of the report.

Foodbank Australia Limited  
ABN 58 073 579 254  
PO Box 52, North Ryde NSW 1670  
P +61 2 9887 4144  
E [admin@foodbank.org.au](mailto:admin@foodbank.org.au)  
W [www.foodbank.org.au](http://www.foodbank.org.au)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FoodbankAus>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FoodbankAus>

LinkedIn: <https://au.linkedin.com/company/foodbank-australia>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/foodbankaus>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/FoodbankAustralia>