

# Foodbank Hunger Report 2022



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## Executive summary

The aim of the Foodbank Hunger Report 2022 is to help uncover and inform **the extent and severity of experience with food insecurity** among Australian households in the past 12 months.

The research was conducted between 11 and 28 July 2022, through an online survey of 4,024 Australians aged 18 years or older, who were nationally representative by age, gender, state and location (capital city / rest of state). The research leverages the globally recognised United States Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Module to assess and measure the level of food security in households.

In the past 12 months, over 2 million **Australian households** (21%) experienced severe food insecurity, which means they ran out of food because of financial limitations and at worst went entire days without eating. Households with children were even more likely to experience severe food insecurity, with 32% reporting that they were severely food insecure – 1.5 times greater than the national average (21%).

**Food insecurity has been on the rise over the last 12 months**, with 23% of Australian households perceiving that they now struggle financially to access food more often compared with last year. Again, those with dependent children were more likely to have felt the pressure than those without.

The main reasons reported for experiencing severe food insecurity in 2022 were **increased/high living expenses** (64%) and “reduced/low income or government benefits” (42%), in addition to other factors such as a change of household living arrangement (24%) or natural disasters (19%).

**Food insecurity is impacting a diverse range of households. However, some were more susceptible to experiencing food insecurity than others**, such as households with dependent children (52%), those with young adults 18-24 years old (60%), those unemployed/looking for work (52%) or households currently renting (45%). Over half of food insecure households (54%) had someone in paid work and nearly a third of households with mortgages (30%) have experienced food insecurity in the past year. This diversity is likely to increase due to the range of external factors impacting households which may never have experienced food insecurity before. These factors include the increasing cost of living, the frequency and severity of natural disasters and the ongoing challenge of COVID-19.

**There is considerable opportunity to support more food insecure households. Only two in five (38%) households experiencing food insecurity reported having received food relief help from a charity or community organisation** over the last 12 months. There continues to be a variety of barriers that food relief service providers need to address. These range from practical factors such as people being unaware of where to get help and lack of access or eligibility to convenient, local services to psychological barriers such as a sense of shame and lack of entitlement or a desire for more empathetic services.

## Background and aims

**The *Foodbank Hunger Report* series has been released annually since 2012, dedicated to shedding light on the lived experience of food insecure Australians. The *2022 Foodbank Hunger Report* presents the latest results from the research series.**

According to the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organisation, a person is food insecure when they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. This may be due to unavailability of food and/or lack of resources to obtain food. For the purpose of categorising food insecurity in Australia, the *Foodbank Hunger Report 2022* has utilised the validated United States Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM), which assesses food security based on the household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. (Details about the HFSSM measurement of household food security can be found in the 'About this report' section below.)

The annual Foodbank Hunger Report has contributed to growing recognition and understanding of food insecurity by adopting evolving approaches and assessment tools over time. For the first time, the severity of experience of food insecurity at the **household** level in Australia, both nationally and for each state, is shown in the *2022 Foodbank Hunger Report*.

## About Foodbank

**The annual Foodbank Hunger Report is an initiative of Foodbank** which is the largest food relief organisation in Australia. It currently provides support to more than one million vulnerable Australians every month by working with the food and grocery industry including farmers, wholesalers, manufacturers and retailers. Foodbank acts as a bridge between this sector and frontline charities, community organisations and schools which provide critical food relief to people in need.

## About this report

This report presents key findings from the *Foodbank Hunger Report 2022* research. The research was conducted between 11 and 28 July 2022, through an online survey of 4,024 Australians aged 18 years or older. The sample was nationally representative by age, gender and location (capital city / rest of state) in each major state, with stratified quotas to ensure all major states have a robust minimum sample size of n=600 or above. The data was weighted to nationally representative proportion of age, gender, state and location (capital city/ rest of state), as summarised in Table 1 below. The detailed methodology can be found in Appendix A.

**Table 1. Summary of final achieved sample profile by key demographic targets**

		Sample size (n=)	Total weighted (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	1920	49%
	Female	2104	51%
<b>Age</b>	18-24	415	12%
	25-44	1455	37%
	45-54	611	16%
	55-74	1137	26%
	75 or above	406	9%
<b>State</b>	NSW	1053	32%
	VIC	853	27%
	QLD	702	20%
	SA	603	7%
	WA	604	10%
	TAS	134	2%
	NT	15	1%
	ACT	60	2%
<b>Location</b>	Capital city	2776	69%
	Rest of state/territory	1248	31%
<b>Remoteness area*</b>	Major cities of Australia	2845	72%
	Inner regional Australia	774	19%
	Outer regional Australia	283	7%
	Remote Australia	32	1%
	Very remote Australia	16	0%
	Remoteness of area not identifiable by postcode	74	2%

\*Note: remoteness area was natural fall out after weighting the data to location (capital city/ rest of state), but these proportions are very close to ABS population estimates by significant urban area and remoteness area<sup>1</sup>.

All 4,024 Australians answered up to 18 questions in the core HFSSM for measurement of the prevalence of household food security over the 12 months ending July 2022. A total of 1,735 respondents (33%) were identified through the HFSSM as being from moderately and severely food insecure households. This group continued on to answer a deep dive module about their experience living with food insecurity over the last 12 months.

The spectrum of household experience with food security is categorised in the USDA Guide to Measuring Household Security as being in four categories. The definition of each category and HFSSM indicators used for classification can be found in Appendix A (Table 4 and 5).

The measurement of household food security, as per the survey instrument of HFSSM, involves a total of eighteen severity indicators, ranging from whether a household has experienced worry about accessing adequate food due to financial constraints through to the experience of hunger (e.g. not eating for a whole day).

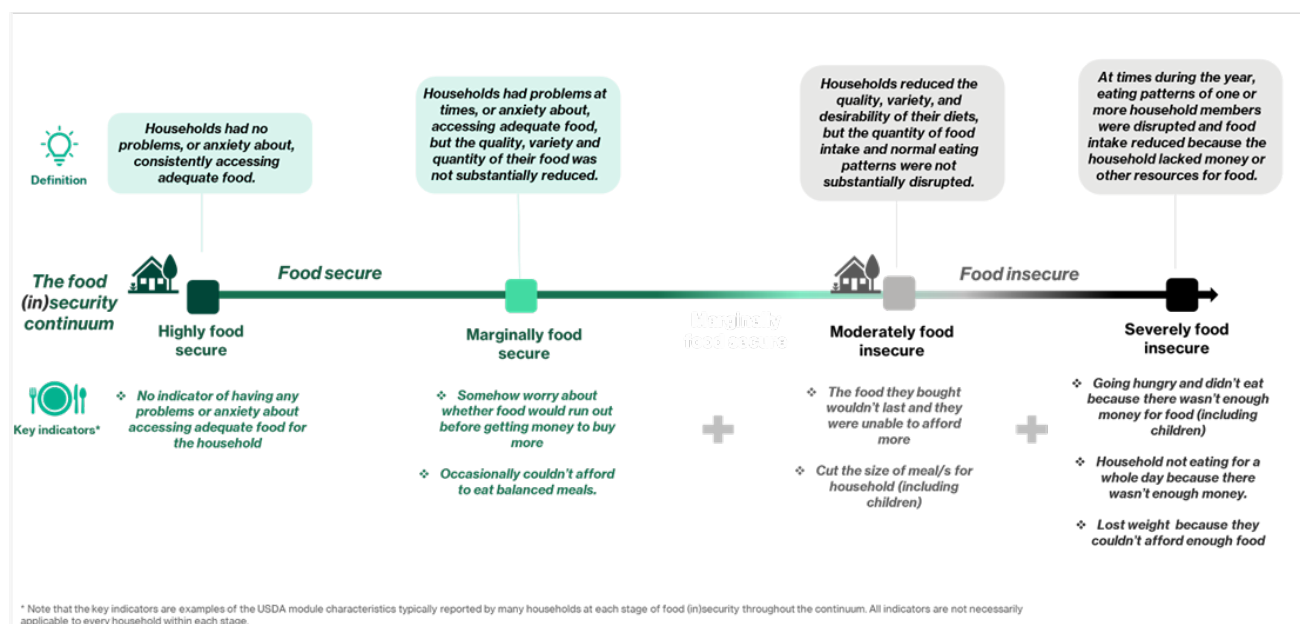
<sup>1</sup> Available from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release>

**As the eighteen severity indicators accumulate within a household, it becomes clear that the different levels of food (in)security are, in fact, a sequence of stages reflecting the intensifying deprivation of food for the household.**

It is a continuum of experience where households can move from the completely food secure, all the way through to the most severely food insecure (i.e. all severity indicators are met), and back to a food secure state if the situation changes.

This continuum of food (in)security is illustrated in Figure 1 below, with typical symptoms detailed for households at each stage. The typical symptoms are summarised based on the eighteen HFSSM severity indicators, and the classified households' likelihood of having met these indicators at different stages across the continuum.

**Figure 1. The continuum of food (in)security<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> Definition from USDA Economic Research Service, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/measurement/>



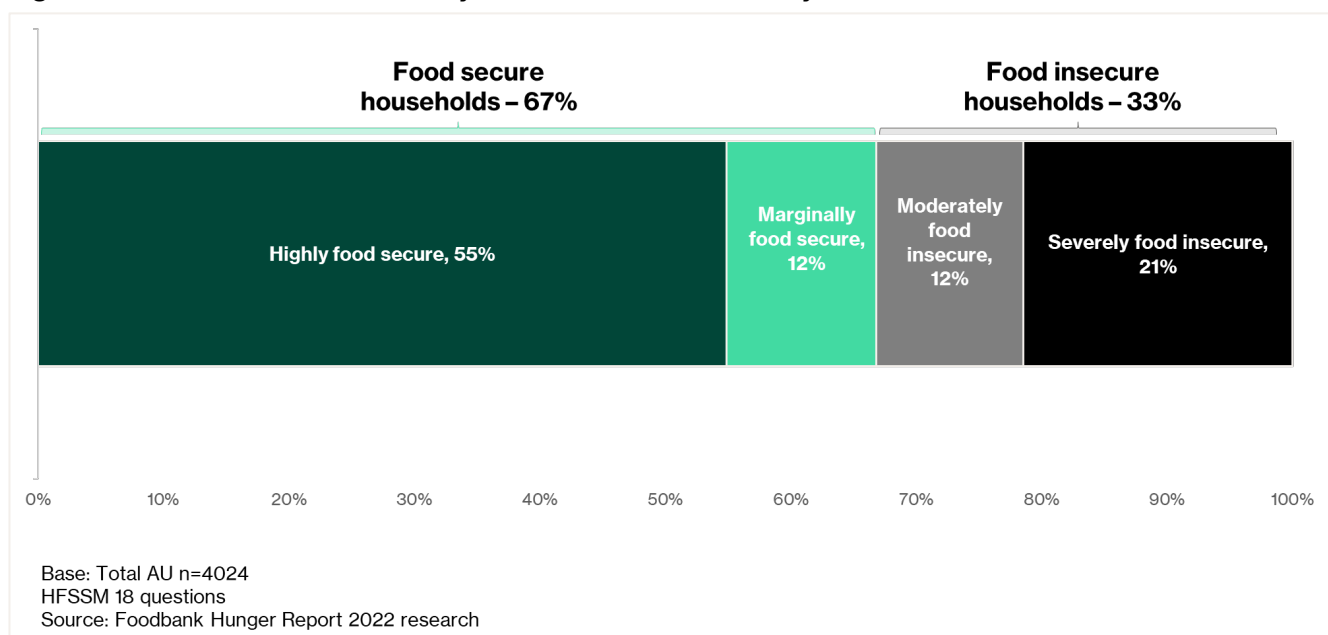
# Over 2 million households in Australia have experienced severe food insecurity in the last 12 months

In the past 12 months, over 2 million Australian households (21%) experienced severe food insecurity, which means they ran out of food because of financial limitations and at worst went entire days without eating.

If this is expanded to also include households experiencing moderate symptoms of food insecurity this increases to a third of surveyed households in Australia (33%), or 3.3 million households, experiencing food insecurity at some point in the last 12 months (Figure 1).

On any given day, over half a million households in Australia are struggling to meet their food needs. For these 520,000 households<sup>3</sup> this means, for example, they and/or their children are having to skip meals, go hungry and/or reduce the size of meals because they couldn't afford to buy food.

Figure 2. Australian households by the level of food security



<sup>3</sup> Note, the 520,000 households experiencing food insecurity in any typical day is an estimate - based on the approximate number of households experiencing different frequencies of food insecurity throughout a year (from daily, a few times a week, once a week, to less often than a couple of times a year). The frequency scale of household food insecurity experience was recoded to the number of days a household was food insecure in a year (e.g. a household is considered to be food insecure for 365 days a year, if it claims to experience food insecurity 'daily' in the last 12 months. In a similar way, a household is considered to be food insecure for 1 day a year, if it experiences food insecurity 'less often than a couple of times a year' in the last 12 months). Thus, the average number of food insecure households on any one day throughout the year is estimated based on the total number of days Australian households were food insecure in a year, divided by 365 days.

**Figure 3. What does being severely food insecure mean for affected Australian households in 2022?**

### **What does being severely food insecure mean in 2022?**

Households that have experienced severe food insecurity (or 'very low food security' as defined in the HFSSM) have suffered reduced or compromised quality, quantity and adequacy of food they have access to due to financial constraints and have experienced mental stress associated with such situations. **Reduced food intake**, as well as disruption to normal eating patterns due to the lack of money and other resources for food in the household, is a defining characteristic (e.g. cutting the size of meals or skipping meals, eating less than one feels they should, or going hungry without eating because there wasn't enough money for food).

**Households without children** categorised as experiencing severe food insecurity were those that had met **six or more such indicators** for any (at least one) adult member of the household, whereas **households with children** classified as experiencing severe food insecurity were those that had met **eight or more household or child-specific food insecurity indicators** across both adult and child-members of the household over the last 12 months.

In 2022, the 21% of households classified as experiencing severe food insecurity represent an estimated 2.1 million households nationwide. Of the respondents in households suffering severe food insecurity:

- 94% **"worried whether food would run out before I/ we got money to buy more"**
- 90% agreed that **"the food that I/ we bought just didn't last, and I/we didn't have money to get more"**
- **84% "couldn't afford to eat balanced meals"**
- 97% had **cut the size of meals/ skipped meals**, and **60% hadn't eaten for a whole day**, because there wasn't enough money for food, for themselves or any other adults in their household.
  - Of those who did experience reduced meal size/ meal skipping, 88% had done so for 3 months or longer over the last 12 months.

Of individuals in households experiencing severe food insecurity:

- 96% had **eaten less than they felt they should** because there wasn't enough money for food
- 88% reported having **gone hungry** without eating
- 74% had **lost weight** because there wasn't enough money for food.

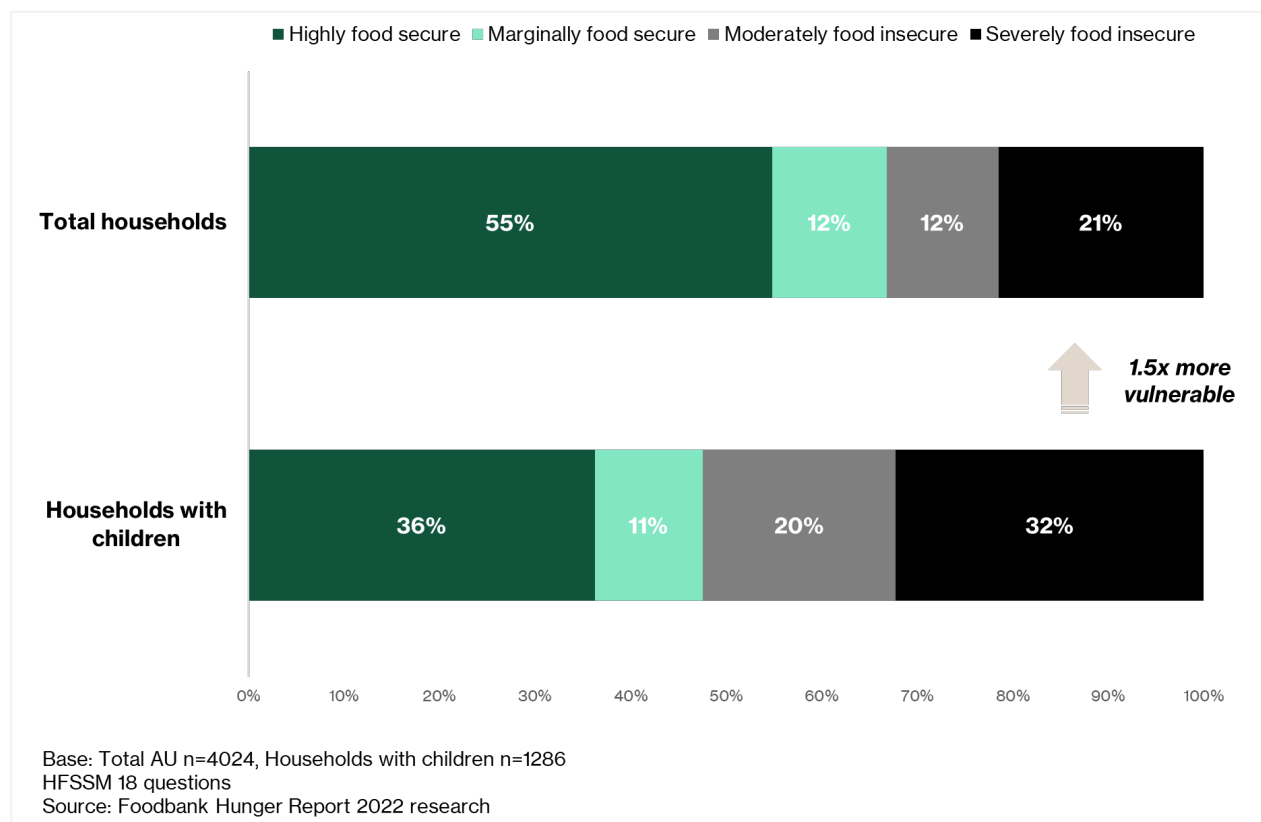
Among households with children experiencing severe food insecurity:

- **93%** stated they **"relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed their child/ren because they ran out of money to buy food"**
- **79%** said they **"couldn't feed their child/ren a balanced meal because they couldn't afford that"**
- 60% said 'their **child/ren was/were not eating enough** because they just couldn't afford enough food'.

## Households with children are some of the hardest hit

A third (32%) of households with children in Australia experienced severe levels of food insecurity in 2022 – 1.5 times greater than the national average (21%).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 4. Levels of food insecurity in households with children under age 18, compared with the general population**



## The daily challenge of having adequate and nutritious food is only increasing

The results indicate that food insecurity has increased in 2022. Nearly one quarter (23%) of those surveyed reported that, compared to last year, their household is now more often in situations where they are unable to afford enough food.

In the survey, respondents were asked “Compared to last year, are you in a situation this year where you cannot afford enough food for yourself and/or your household more or less often”. They could also select ‘about the same’ as last year, or that they haven’t been in that situation in the past few years.

Of all respondents surveyed (representing all Australian households), 23% reported that they are unable to afford food more often this year than last, while only 10% said they were unable to afford food less often, indicating that food affordability is worsening. For some households this may be their first food insecurity experience, whereas other households are moving down the food

<sup>4</sup> For more detail on families with children, see the deep dive at the end of this report.

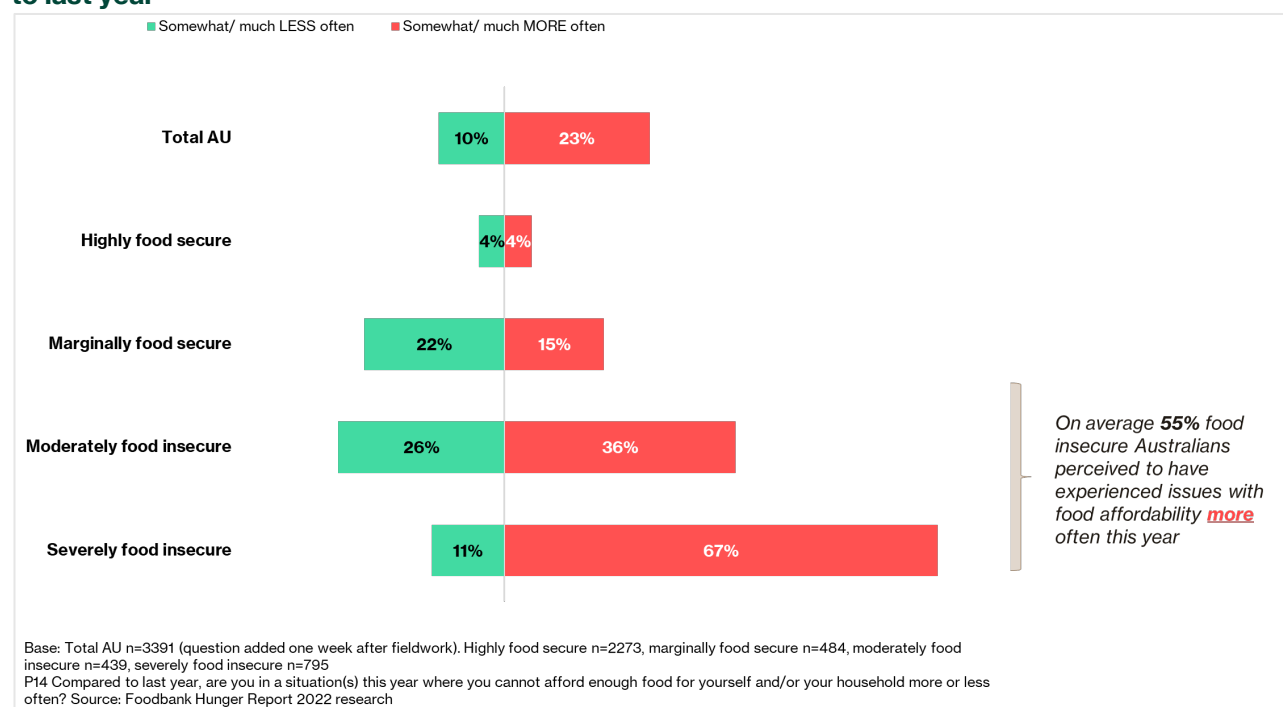
insecurity continuum (from worrying about food, to reducing size of meals, to cutting out meals altogether).

This is especially true for those households experiencing the most severe form of food insecurity. As shown in the figure below, for those experiencing moderate food insecurity, 36% believed that their circumstances are worse this year than last, increasing to 67% for those experiencing severe food insecurity.

*“[The last time when I couldn’t afford food...] I went to a food cooperative for some cheaper supplies. I had \$5 so that was enough to get through until pension day. **Things are getting worse I am scared.**” (Male, 55-65 years old, regional QLD, empty nester, severely food insecure).*

*“[The last time I couldn’t afford food was because] we had exhausted our savings after my husband was made redundant and had just started a new lower paying job. We had an unexpected bill for our car repairs and things got tight.” (Female, 35-44, regional VIC, combined household income of \$130,000-\$200,000 a year, mortgage holder, moderately food insecure).*

**Figure 5. Self-reported experience with household food insecurity due to financial constraints compared to last year**



## Food insecurity impacts a wide range of people

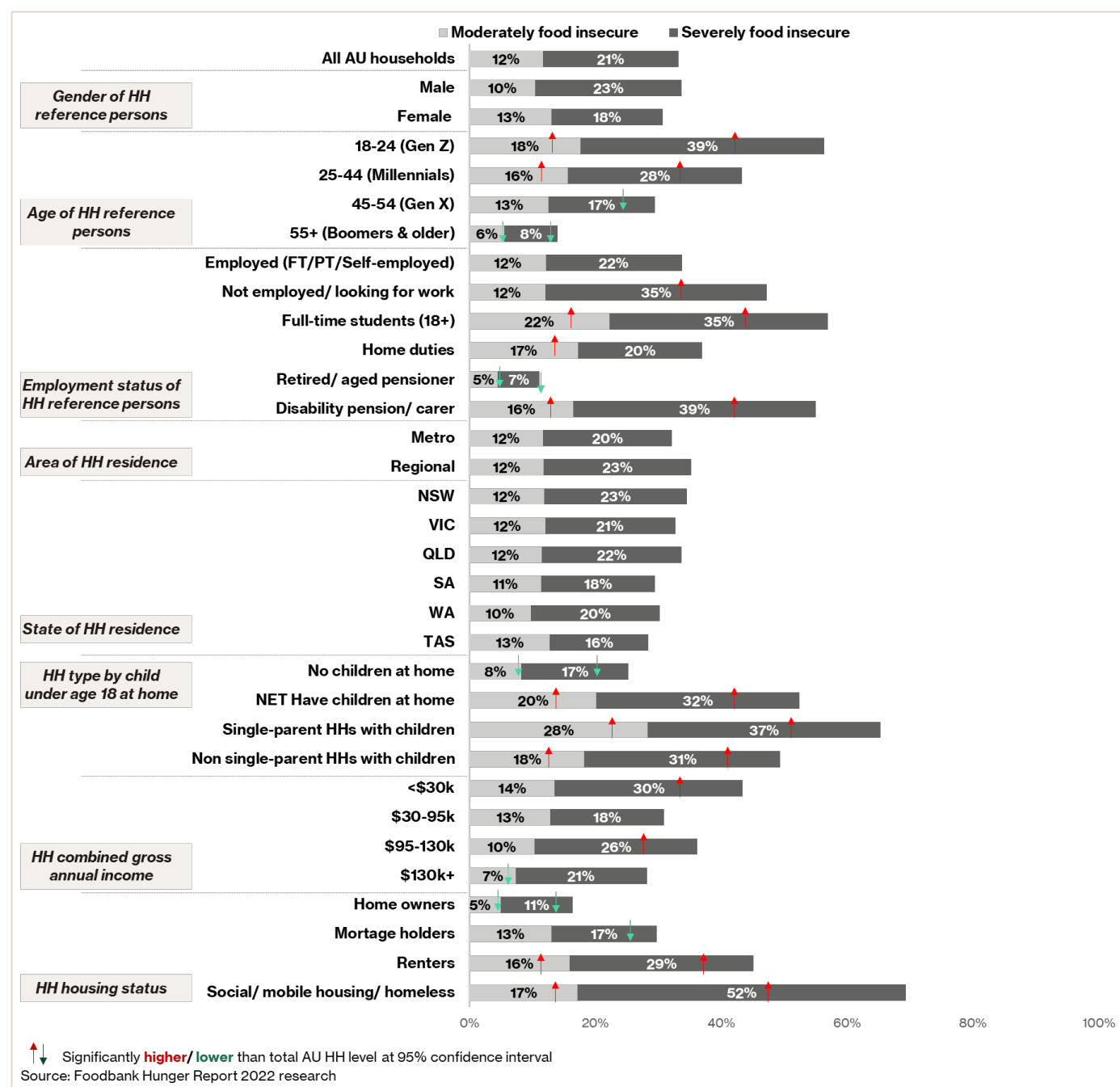
The types of people impacted by food insecurity are diverse with certain groups, such as households with children, particularly those with single parents, being more likely to be affected by food insecurity.

Food insecurity impacts a variety of households across different demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (Figure 6). This diversity is likely to increase due to the range of external factors

impacting food security such as increasing cost of living, the ongoing challenge of COVID-19 and the frequency and severity of natural disasters.

- While certain groups are significantly more prone to food insecurity compared with national average (33%), the impact of food insecurity is also penetrating considerable proportions of households from the typically less vulnerable:
  - Households with dependent children aged under age 18 (52%), both single-parent (65%) and two-parent families (49%).
  - Households currently renting (45%) or living in social/ mobile housing/ in-between homes (69%), but also close to a third (30%) of households with a mortgage.
  - Households with the respondent currently unemployed/ looking for work (52%), over the age of 18 but still a full-time student (61%), and those on a disability support pension and carer payment (57%). The issue is widespread as over half of food insecure households (54%) had someone in paid work.
  - Households with a survey respondent aged 18-24 (60%) or 25-44 years (44%)
  - Households with combined gross annual income of below \$30,000 (43%), but also over a quarter of higher-income households with combined gross annual income of \$130,000 or above (28%).

**Figure 6. Level of household food insecurity by demographics**

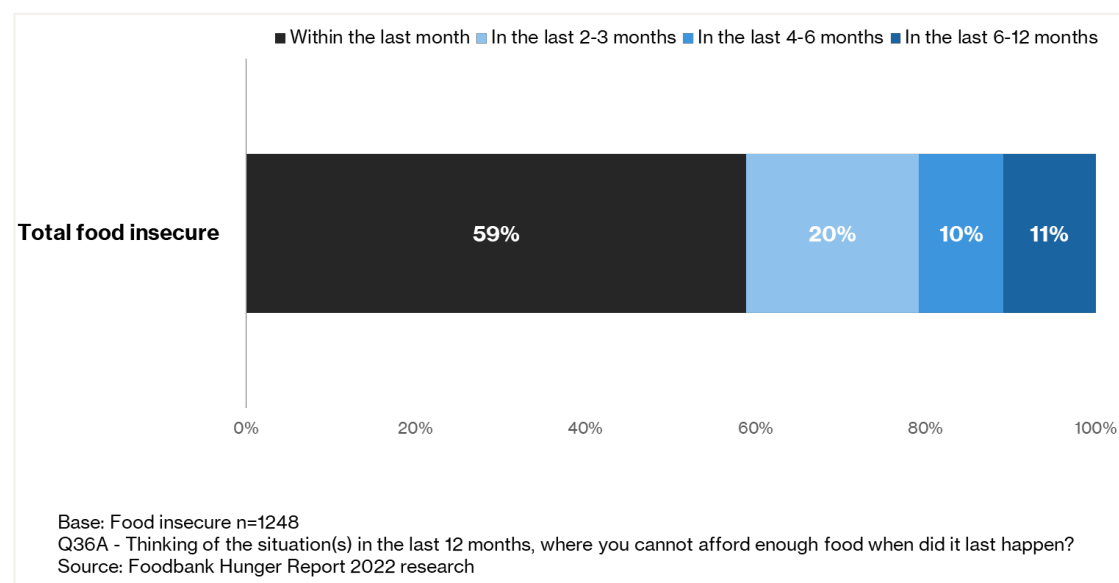


## The reality of food insecurity

The day-to-day reality of food insecurity can differ greatly between households with various factors - in addition to the level of severity as defined in the HFSSM - playing a role in shaping the experience. **Of particular interest are the timings of the food insecurity events, e.g. the duration of the most recent experience and how transient or persistent the experience was. For most, food insecurity is a very recent experience.**

The majority (59%) of food insecure households in 2022 had experienced food insecurity within the last month, rising to 71% for those living with more severe food insecurity.

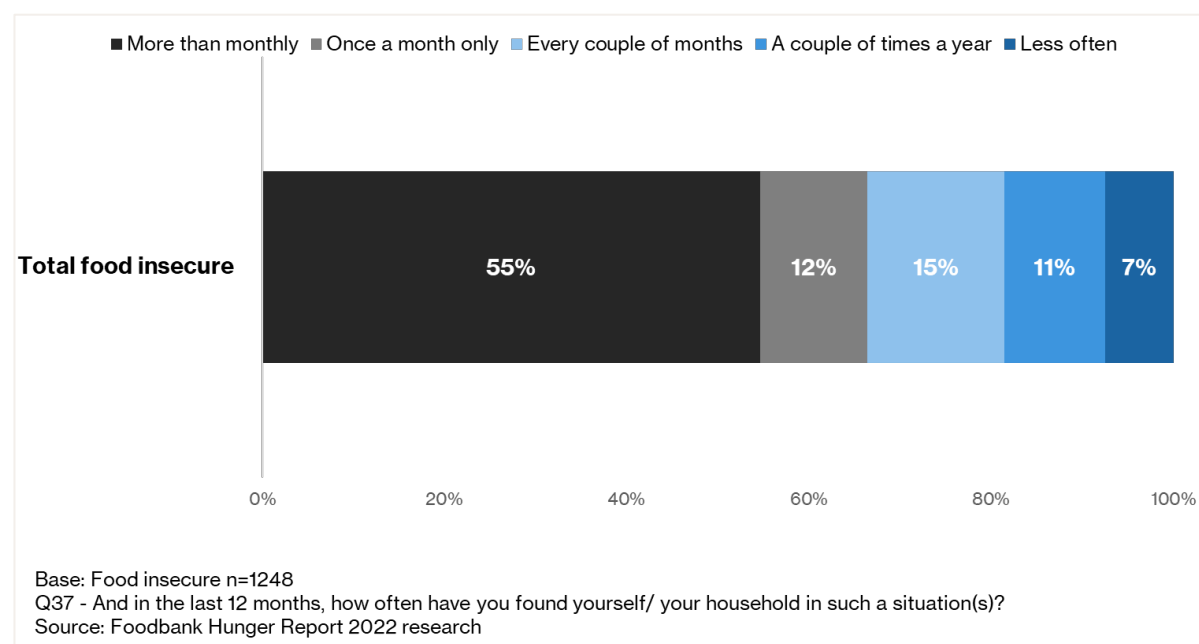
**Figure 7. Recency of household food insecurity**



## For many of those experiencing food security, it is a frequent event ...

Over half (55%) of those living in food insecure households had experienced the situation more than monthly. As the level of food insecurity intensifies, it becomes an even more constant experience – with 70% of severely food insecure households experiencing it at least monthly.

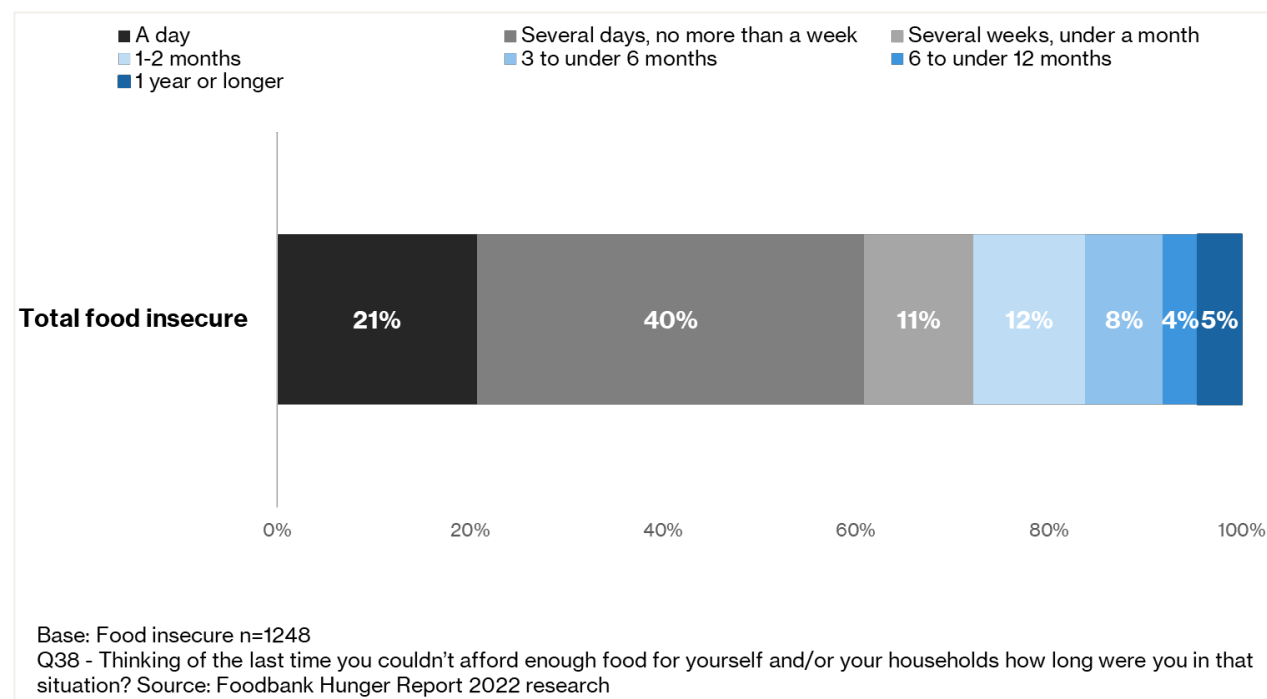
**Figure 8. Frequency of household food insecurity**



## ...but the duration of food insecure episodes is varied

Across those experiencing food insecurity, the most recent experience lasted for less than a week for the majority (61%). For those who didn't or couldn't overcome the situation within the one-week milestone, however, the situation could deepen into a much longer-term experience.

**Figure 9. Duration of household food insecurity**





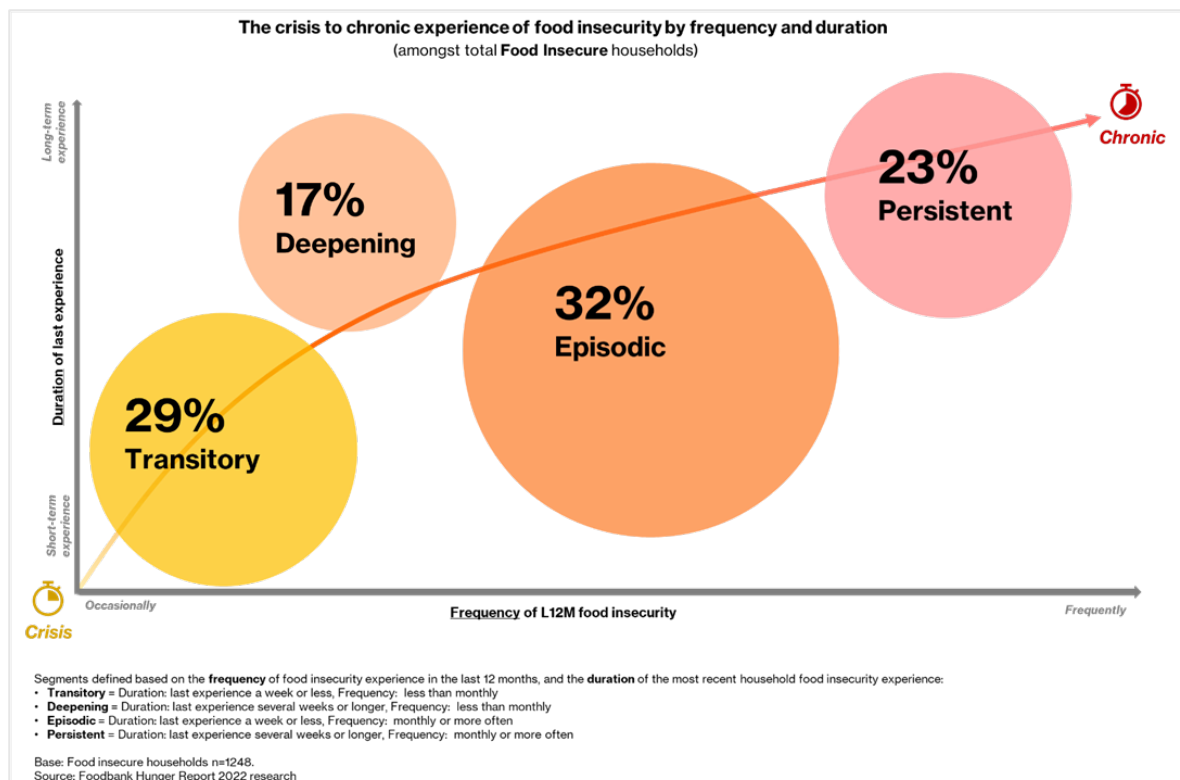
## Crisis to chronic - the reality of household food insecurity

The reality of food insecurity varies according to the different levels of severity. The differences can be described in the form of a continuum from crisis to chronic.

Figure 9 outlines the continuum of experiences amongst food insecure households. Based on the frequency of different households' food insecurity experiences across the last year, and the duration of their most recent experience, they have each been clustered into one of four profiles:

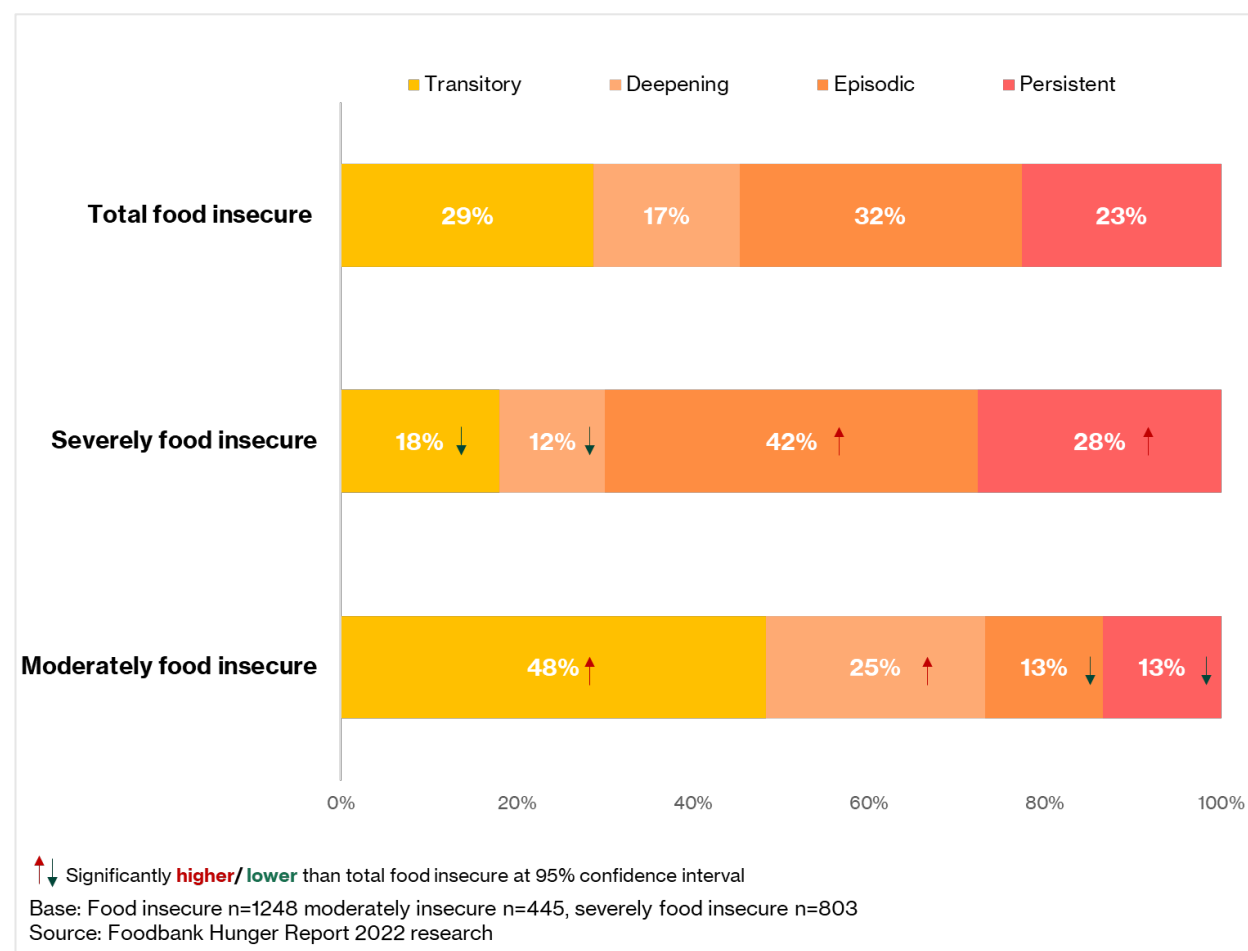
- **Transitory:** 29% of food insecure households, who are going through food insecurity occasionally, but typically are able to recover from these situations within a relative short span of time.
- **Deepening:** 17% of food insecure households, who are also going through food insecurity occasionally, but each time they are hit by food insecurity, they struggle for a longer time than average before being able to recover.
- **Episodic:** 32% of food insecure households, who are typically able to recover from food insecure situations within a relatively short period but get into such situations more frequently than average and are potentially more susceptible to the harm of food insecurity.
- **Persistent:** 23% of food insecure households, who are more frequently experiencing food insecure situations for a longer period of time.

**Figure 10. The crisis to chronic experience of household food insecurity by frequency and duration**



There are substantial differences in the size of these clusters by level of food security. It is not surprising that the more severe the household food insecurity is, the more likely the individuals or families experience longer-term and more persistent cycles of battle and recovery.

**Figure 11. Distribution of food insecure households by level of severity on the experience of crisis to chronic**



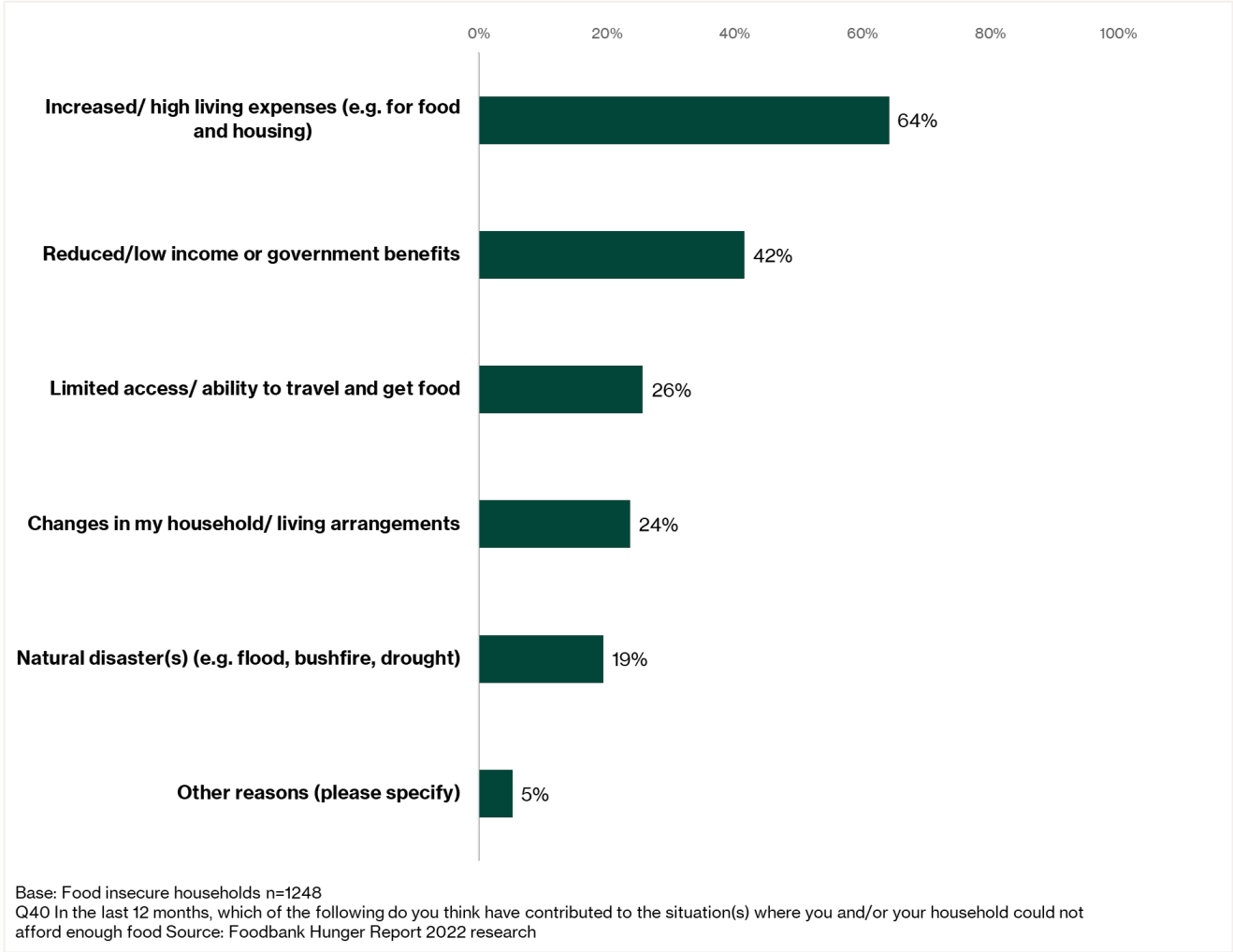
# Reasons for household food insecurity in 2022

The increasing cost of living is the most common reason for food insecurity, followed by reduced or low income

In 2022, increased or high cost of living was the most common reason for food insecurity, affecting 64% of food insecure households. The second most common reason was reduced or low income affecting 42% of food insecure households. This was then followed by limited access or ability to travel to get food (26%), changes in the household or living arrangements (24%) and natural disasters (19%).

For over half (55%) of the food insecure households, their food insecurity wasn't the result of just one reason, but they were affected by compounding factors.

Figure 12. Overall reasons for household food insecurity



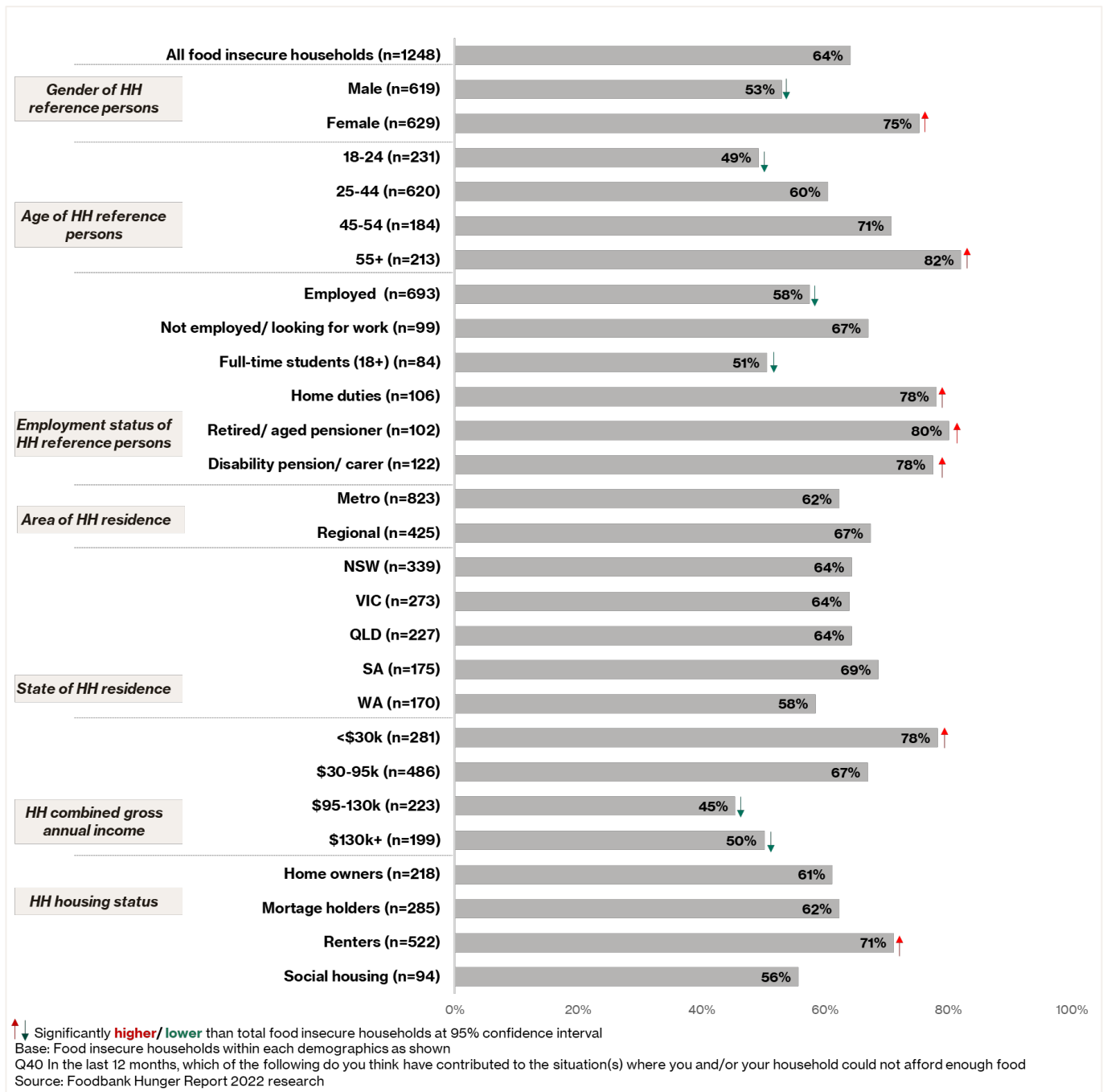
## High cost of living

Increased or high cost of living was rated as a reason for food insecurity by 64% of food insecure households.

The key demographics of those people most vulnerable to the impact of high cost of living were:

- Those aged 55 years or above (82%)
- Women (78%)
- Retired (80%)/ doing home duties (78%) / on a disability pension (78%)
- Households of very low income less than \$30,000 per year (78%)
- Living in rental properties (71%).

**Figure 13. 'Increased/high cost of living' as a reason for food insecurity - by demographics**



To better understand the detail of what the respondents mean by increased or high cost of living expenses, they were shown a range of specific reasons related to high cost of living, as summarised in Figure 13 below.

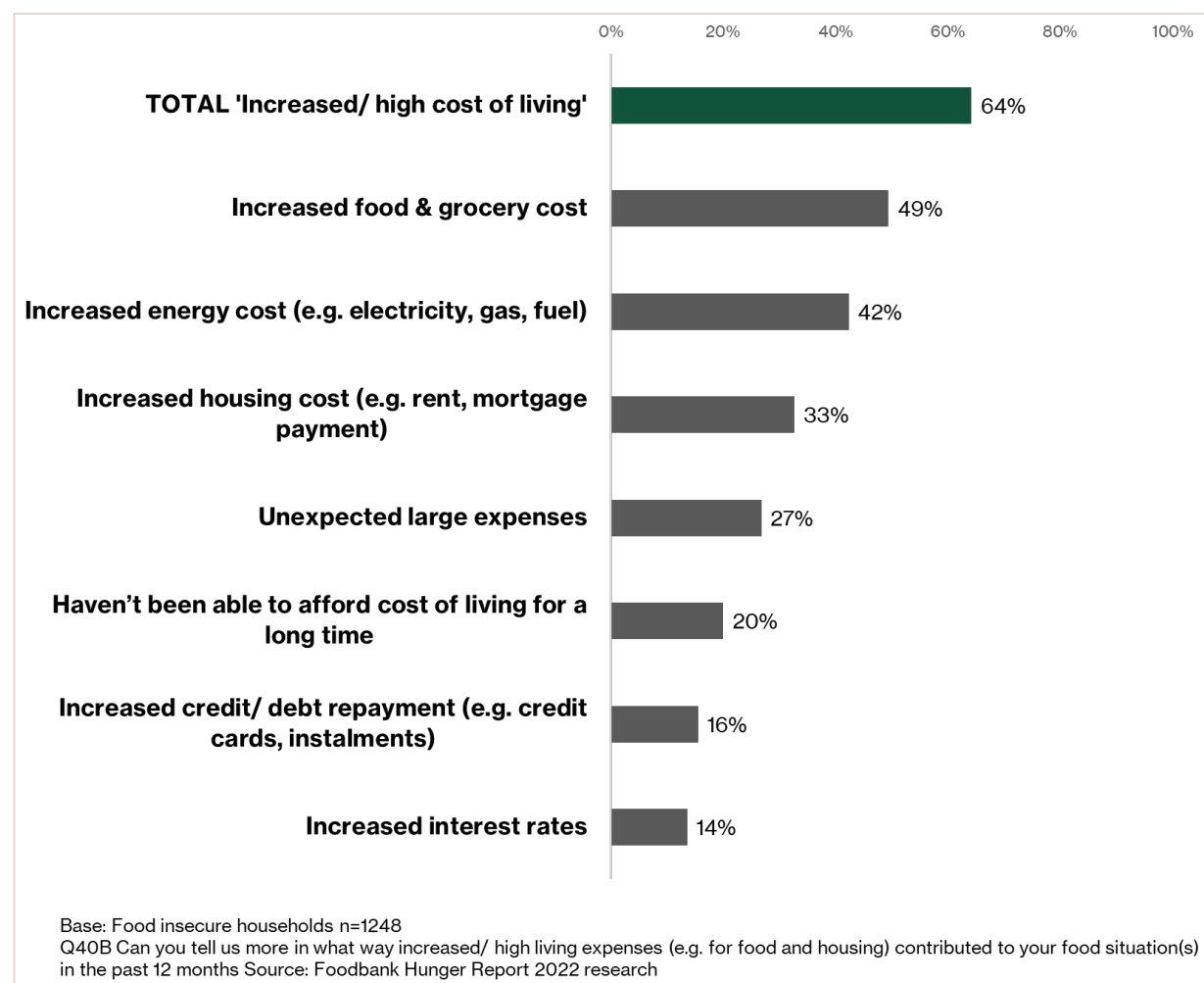
**‘Increased food and grocery cost’** is the main contributor to high cost of living, impacting half (49%) of all food insecure households surveyed. This is followed by **increased energy cost** for 42% of food insecure households. **Increased housing cost**, such as rent or mortgage payments, was also an important factor impacting 33% of food insecure households.

Notably, only 20% of food insecure households mentioned that inability to “**afford the cost of living for a long time**” as an issue for them, indicating that ‘high cost of living’ is a recent challenge for many, potentially shifting new households into food insecurity.

Also of concern is that 16% of food insecure households report difficulties with **increased credit or debt payment** as part of the issue they are struggling with regarding cost of living.

*“We had no money for shopping, so we bought ready meals on an Afterpay plan” (45- to 54-year-old, moderately food insecure woman)*

**Figure 14. Detailed ‘increased/high living expenses’ reasons for household food insecurity**



**For many food insecure Australians and their families, 'cost of living' is shorthand for a diverse range of individual circumstances intensified by compounding macroeconomic trends and factors.**

*"As the fuel prices went up as a casual worker it was not affordable, also the price of veggies and fruits, groceries went up. And the interest rate went high and I had to pay more for the mortgage" (24 to 44 moderately food insecure woman)*

*"I'm supporting my family overseas as well. Sometimes I find it hard to cope due to increasing prices of groceries here and abroad." (Full-time employed 25 to 44 severely food insecure man)*

**Often there is a daily struggle where food, is the immediate, or even only, trade-off available to enable them to cope. For example:**

*"**I only eat once a day** because the cost of groceries have increased and the pension doesn't cover the real cost of living, so I try and cut down on everything, so I can survive on the government pension." (55+ moderately food insecure woman living on an aged pension)*

*"I had to get new glasses as mine broke. **Still cost me 104 dollars at the college of op in Melbourne. So food is down by that much.** I have only eaten 1 vita brit for breakfast, and I make 2 slices of toast for dinner these past 10 days" (45 to 54 severely food insecure woman).*

*"The living cost being too high, **we had to cut off food expenditure money.** So we **had to change the menu for the children** to a basic one so that we could afford more food rather than quality food." (25 to 44 severely food insecure mother)*

*"The sudden sharp increase in groceries has meant **I have had to improvise** with the shopping, we aren't eating as healthy now because it is too expensive. The meals I make are filling, but not healthy long term, because we can't afford to spend more on groceries" (A mortgage holding 25 to 44 moderately food insecure man)*

## **Low income**

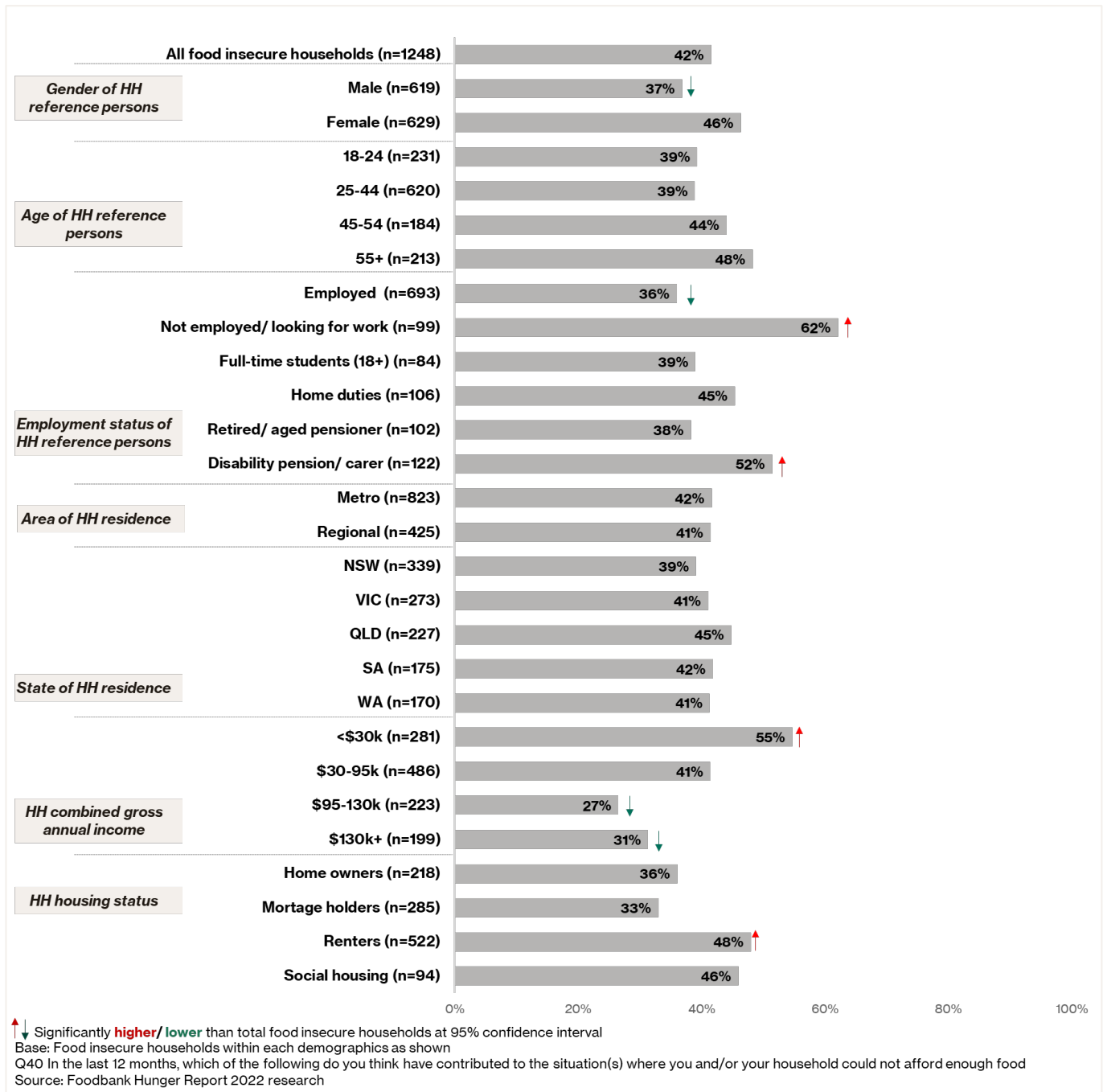
**Reduced or low income or government benefits** was considered a main factor contributing to household food insecurity in the past 12 months for 42% of households experiencing food insecurity.

Not surprisingly, employment status of household members, income and housing status were the key socioeconomic characteristics of these households. Reduced or low income or government benefits was more likely to be a contributing factor to food insecurity for food insecure households:

- with unemployed members looking for work (62%)
- of very low combined annual income of under \$30,000 per year (55%)
- living on disability pension (52%)

- living in rental properties (48%)

**Figure 15. 'Reduced/low income or government benefits' as a reason for food insecurity - by demographics**



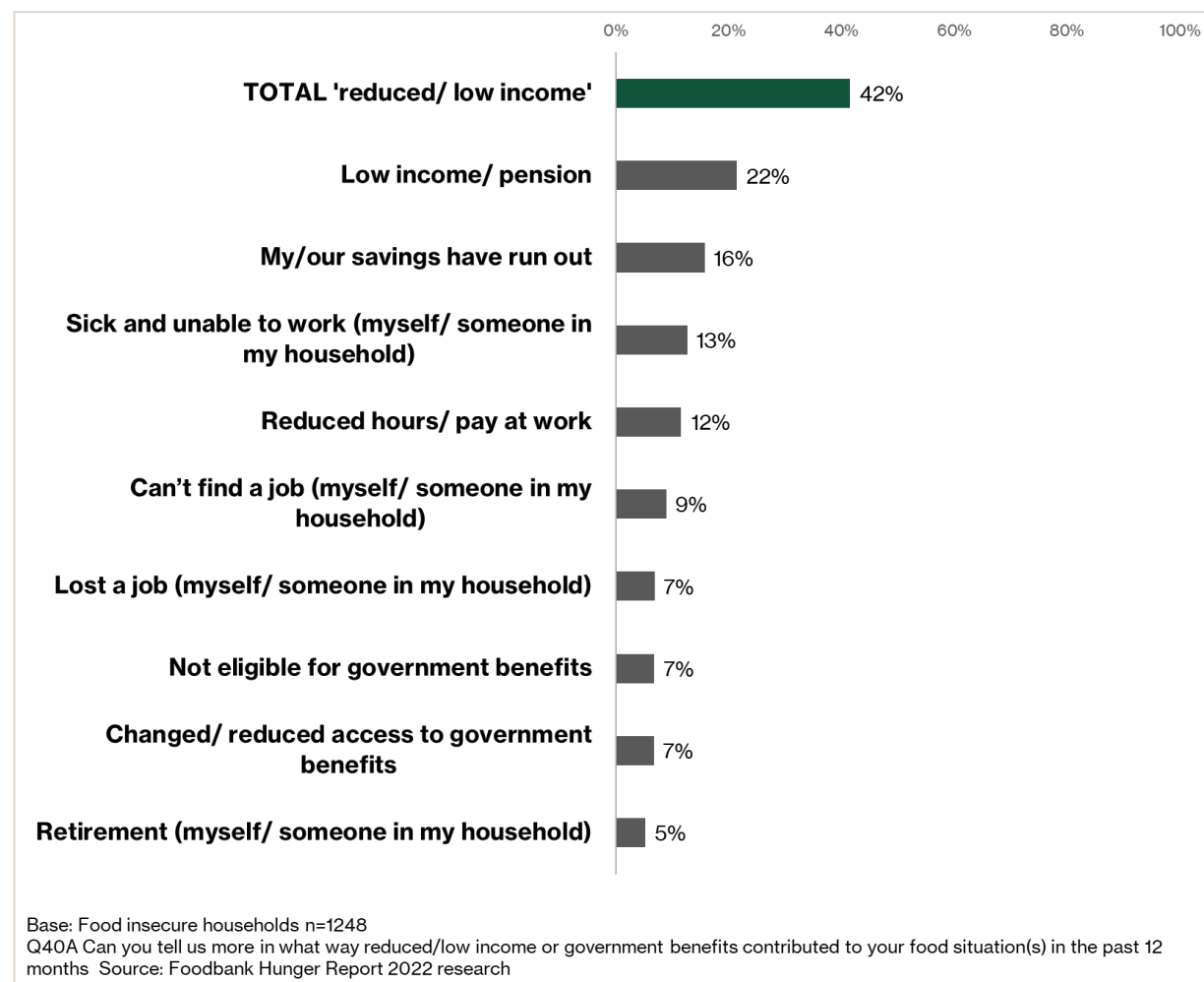
To better understand the detail of what the respondents mean by reduced or low income or government benefits, they were shown a range of more specific reasons related to this as summarised in Figure 15 below.

Apart from the general low income or pension (22%), 16% of food insecure households reported **running out of household savings** as an explanation. This is a concerning indication that recent inflation may be depleting both household savings and future financial resilience.

*“We had exhausted our savings after my husband was made redundant and had just started a new lower paying job. We had an unexpected bill for our car repairs and things got tight for a while” (25 to 44 moderately food insecure mother with children, currently on home duties)*

*“We ran out of savings, power bills need to be paid, phone/ internet bill need to be paid, food prices up so had to have smaller meals” (55+ moderately food insecure regional man, renting and living on a disability pension)*

**Figure 16. Reasons for household food insecurity amongst food insecure households affected by ‘reduced/ low income or government benefits’**



## Change in household living arrangements

Change in household living arrangements was a reason for food insecurity for 24% of food insecure households. For some, conflict in the household was a reason – including ‘family breakdown or separation’ (8%) and violence in the home or relationship (5%). For others, just the expense of moving houses (8%) was a reason for food insecurity.

*“I'm going through divorce, and I was asked to leave my home. I had to pay rent on a new house. My ex-wife still lives in the old house rent free. She was formerly bankrupt, so she doesn't pay any mortgage. I'm forced to pay the mortgage as well as rent. This has been*

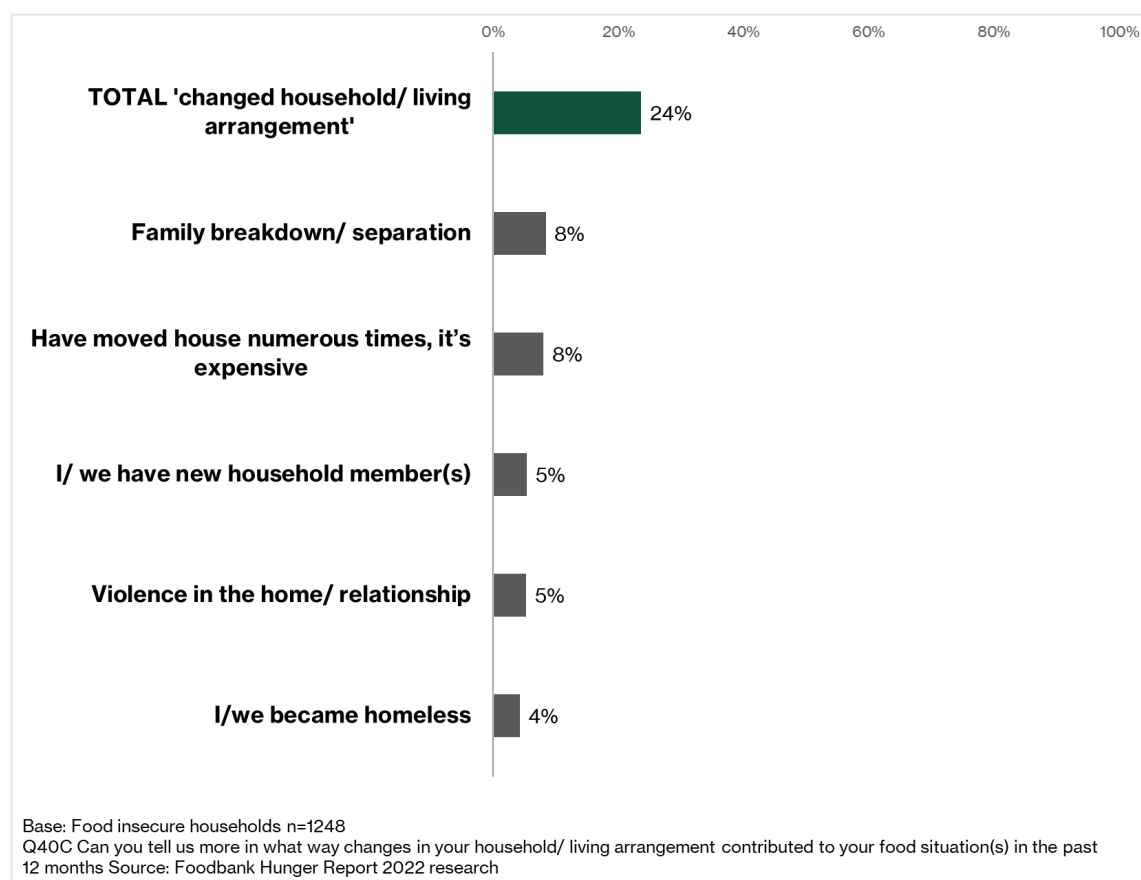


*going on for over a year.” (45 to 54 full-time employed moderately food insecure man on \$95-130k income per year)*

*“I ran out of money as my ex controlled my bank account and when I left him, I couldn’t access my funds.” (25 to 44 full-time employed moderately food insecure woman)*

*“I couldn’t afford food at that time because I have been moving into a new apartment so buying furniture and equipment took a lot of my money. It’s always difficult when you move house.” (45 to 54 full-time employed moderately food insecure man who is renting)*

**Figure 17** ‘Change of household/ living arrangement’ as a reason for food insecurity



## Natural disasters

Extreme weather and disasters have been a critical contributor to national food insecurity. The La Nina weather cycle influencing Australia in 2022 has led to extensive rain, severe storms and widespread flooding in Eastern Australia, with New South Wales being particularly hard hit (e.g. the Northern NSW floods and Hawkesbury floods). This has disrupted domestic food supply, contributing to increased food and grocery prices which have impacted Australians nationally. While for those living in areas directly impacted by the floods, there have been additional pressures on financial security and household wellbeing with aftermaths, such as damaged homes and properties, exacerbated by under insurance, compounding trauma and declining resilience. The threat of floods in Eastern Australia is likely to continue with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology predicting a 3<sup>rd</sup>

La Nina event this summer, “More than 80% chance of above average rainfall” is likely and “the flood risk remains”.<sup>5</sup>

One in five (19%) food insecure households stated that natural disasters (e.g. flood, bushfire, drought) were a reason behind their food insecurity experience in the last 12 months. The impact of the natural disasters on household food security was greater in New South Wales (25%) and Queensland (23%), which is not surprising due to the eastern states being directly hit by severe flooding this year.

Furthermore, households with dependent children to feed (25%), as well as homeowners (26%), were more likely to report that ‘natural disasters’ had played a role in their experience with food insecurity this year

In New South Wales and Queensland, the impact of natural disasters reached wide and across all demographics. As described by one of the food insecure respondents, the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable households could be serial and long lasting:

*“With the February storm and floods my roof was damaged, had water damage in ceiling and my fridge stopped working. Had to buy new fridge and with COVID shortages the cost of everything has gone up and being forced to go to job network appointments spend a lot more on fuel.” (45 to 55 single parent of one dependent child from regional QLD, renting and annual household income lower than \$30,000)*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://media.bom.gov.au/releases/1069/la-nina-event-declared-above-average-rainfall-likely-for-eastern-australia/>  
(Issued 13 September 2022)

**Figure 18. 'Natural disasters (e.g. flood, bushfire, drought)' as a reason for food insecurity - by demographics (AU, NSW, QLD)**



## Engagement with Food Relief support and services

Currently, the food relief sector is delivering support for approximately one million food insecure household in a typical month<sup>6</sup>. However, overall, this is equivalent to just about two in five (38%) food insecure households receiving support from formal food relief services over the last 12 months. Low participation in formal food relief support, was particularly notable amongst women, older people and those living on a lower income.

To understand the level of engagement with food relief services amongst food insecure Australians, respondents were shown a range of formal food relief services available, with example organisations for illustration. They were then asked to rate their awareness of each of these services, as well as any experience of receiving food relief support from them in the last 12 months.

Almost all (92%) food insecure respondents were aware of different types of formal food relief support and services such as charities, community service organisations, churches and dedicated food relief agencies.

Despite strong awareness of food relief organisations and services, however, only 38% of food insecure Australians reported receiving help from these services over the last 12 months.

Moreover, the low level of participation in formal food relief services does not mean these food insecure Australians received help through private connections. Only 37% of food insecure respondents stated that they received help from their families and/or friends over the last 12 months.

In summary, while the vast majority of food insecure Australians are aware of sources of food relief support – privately through families and/or friends or via formal food relief support services – only 58% are getting help.

**Figure 19. Awareness and receipt of food relief in the last 12 months**

Type of food relief services	(%) Aware	(%) Received help in the last 12 months
<b>NETT: Any food relief support (from family/friends or formal food relief services)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>From families and/or friends</b>	100%	37%
<b>NET: Any formal food relief services</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>General charity organisations (e.g. the Salvation Army, Anglicare)</b>	83%	17%

<sup>6</sup> It is estimated that just over 1 million (1,020,000) food insecure households per month received food relief support from formal food relief services in 2022, based on the frequency (and probability) of a household receiving food relief support on any typical month throughout the year. In the survey, we asked respondents who have received formal food relief support over the last 12 months about how often they received such support over the 12-month period. It is assumed that those who received support at least monthly (e.g. daily, a few times a week, to once a month) all have a 100% probability of receiving sector support in any typical month, thus all of the households reporting to receive sector support at least monthly are added to the total estimate of the 1-million figure. For households receiving support less than monthly, only a proportion of them would be added to the total estimate for the typical month. The proportion is estimated based on the same probability as determined by frequency. For example, if a household report receiving support 'every couple of months', the calculation assumes they received food relief support once a month for six months out of a total 12-month period, thus a probability of 50% of these households receiving support 'every couple of months' being added to the total estimate.

Community groups and/or services (e.g. the local community centre)	73%	16%
Food relief agencies and/or services (e.g. Foodbank, OzHarvest,)	82%	14%
Church	73%	14%
Charity supermarket (self-service)/ food pantry	66%	11%

Demographic characteristics, socioeconomics and experience with food insecurity all play a significant role in the likelihood of an individual seeking assistance from formal relief services.

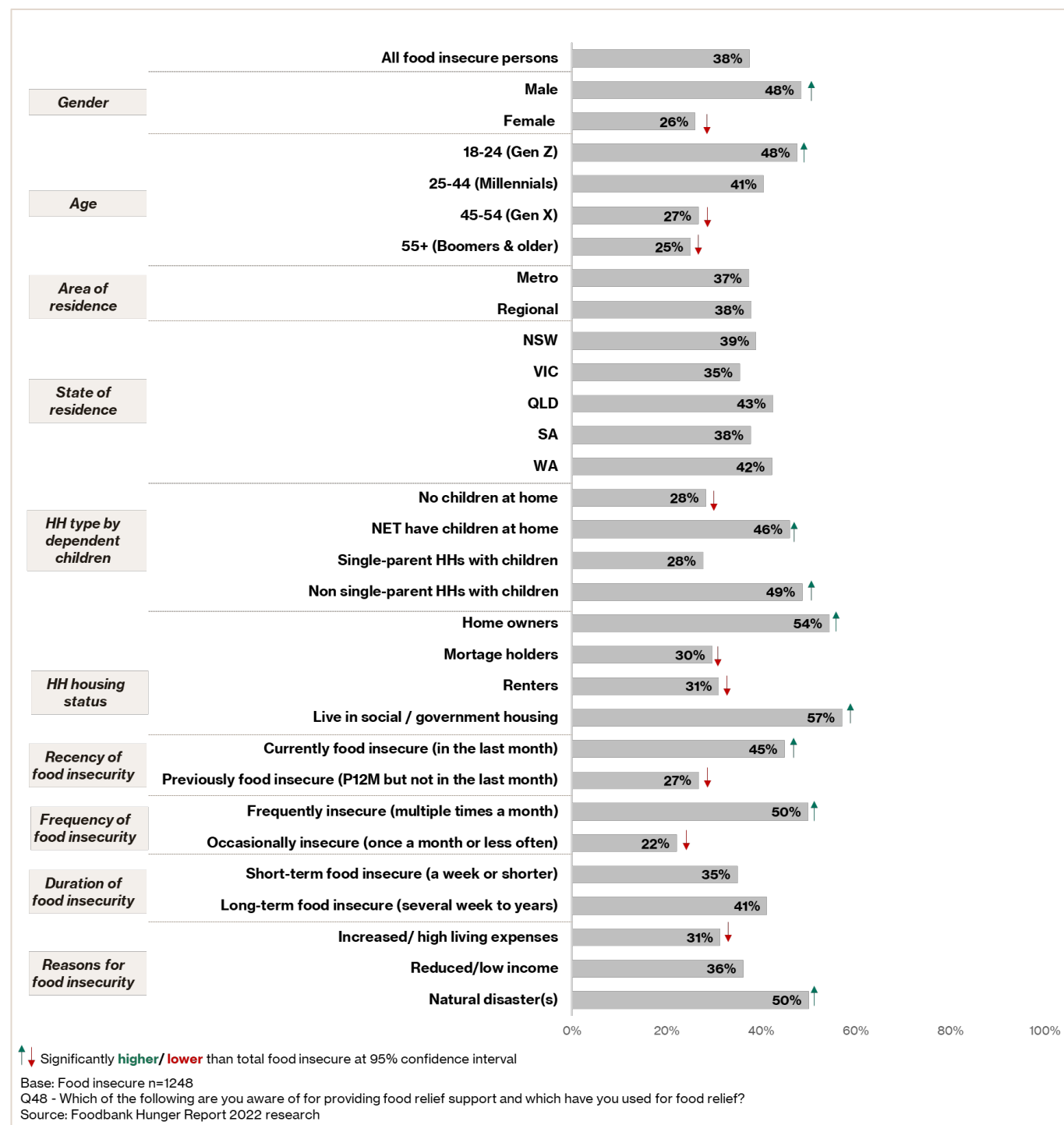
There is a **higher likelihood** of reaching out amongst some food insecure individuals, namely:

- homeowners (54%) and those living in social housing (57%)
- the frequently food insecure (50%), or those who were food insecure this year because of natural disasters (50%).
- men (48%), younger adults aged 18-24 (48%) and those living with dependent children (46%)

However, those living in a food insecure household and significantly **less likely** to seek and receive help from formal food relief services are:

- mortgage holders (30%) and renters (31%)
- those who have experienced food insecurity due to **increased/ high cost of living** (31%).
- people in households **without children** (28%)
- those who experience food insecurity more than a month ago (27%)
- **people aged 45 years or above** (27% amongst the 45-54s and 25% from the 55+ years)
- **women** (26%)
- those who only experience food insecurity **occasionally** ie once a month or less (22%)

**Figure 20. Food insecure % who have received food relief from any formal food relief service (e.g. charities, community service organisations, churches, and dedicated food relief agencies) in the last 12 months - by demographics**



In summary, the more vulnerable demographic or socioeconomic groups are not just under-accessing formal food relief support but are also more likely to have received no help at all, even from families and friends.

## Barriers to engaging with formal food relief support services

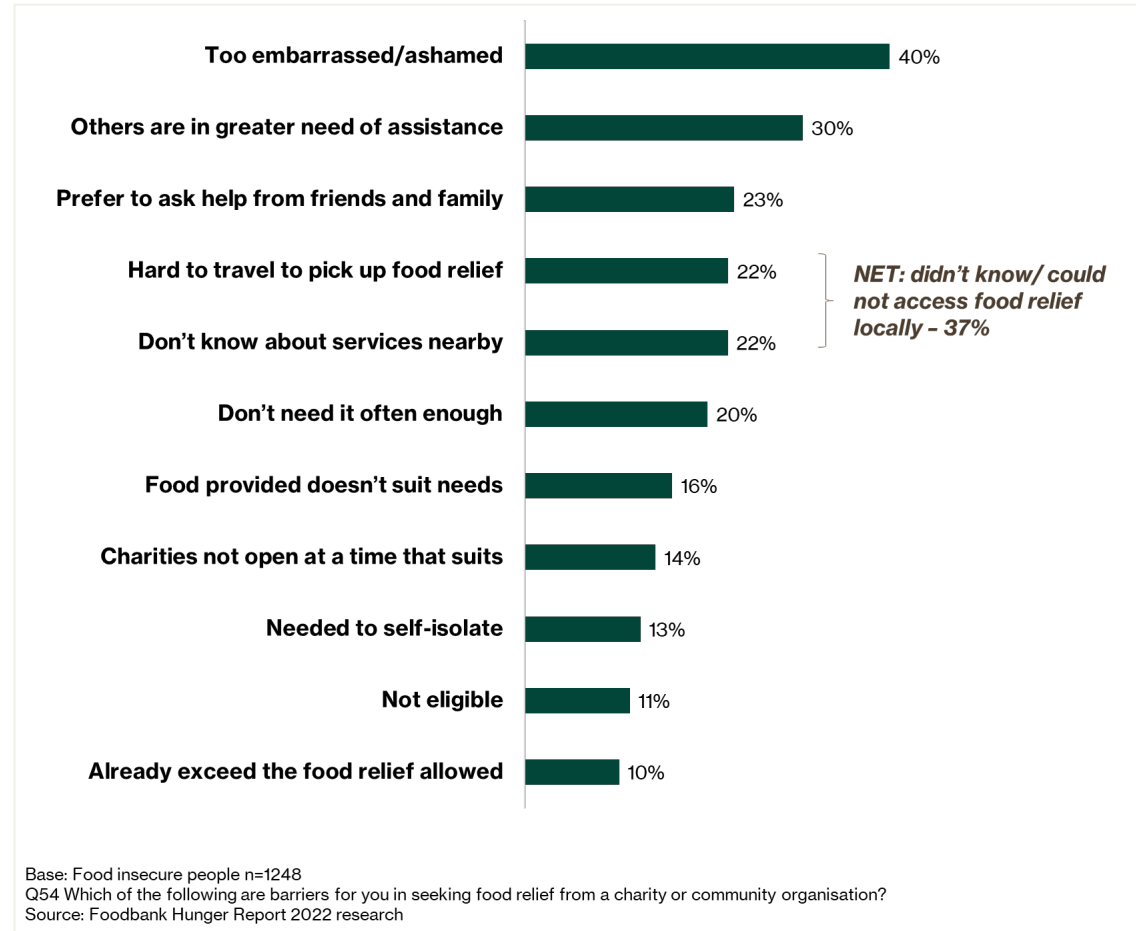
The top two barriers to accessing formal food relief for severely food insecure Australians are perceptual rather than physical – shame or embarrassment as well as the belief that others are in greater need of assistance.

There are immediate opportunities to address some of the more practical barriers such as making food relief support more readily available and accessible and ensuring that eligibility criteria are known to those in need.

Regardless of whether an individual had previously received formal food relief, the research asked those who have been food insecure over the last 12 months about the barriers for them in seeking food relief from a formal service such as a charity or community organisation.

- **‘Too embarrassed or ashamed’** was the leading barrier (40%), indicating that self-stigmatisation is a critical issue for food relief services to address.
- Second was the belief that ‘others are in greater need of assistance’ (30%) suggesting that a greater understanding is needed of the broad eligibility criteria for food relief.
- Then followed some more practical access and awareness barriers such as food insecure individuals finding it **‘hard to travel to pick up food relief’** (22%), or that they **‘don’t know about services nearby’** (22%).
- Other practical barriers were that ‘food provided doesn’t suit needs’ (16%), ‘charities not open at a time that suits’ (14%) and ‘already exceed the food relief allowed’ (10%). All of these represent potential opportunities for food relief services to improve engagement with the food insecure communities and families, through better understanding their needs.

**Figure 21. Barriers to receiving food relief from formal services**





**Figure 22. What food relief services can do for food insecure individuals to make it easier for them to get help when they need it**

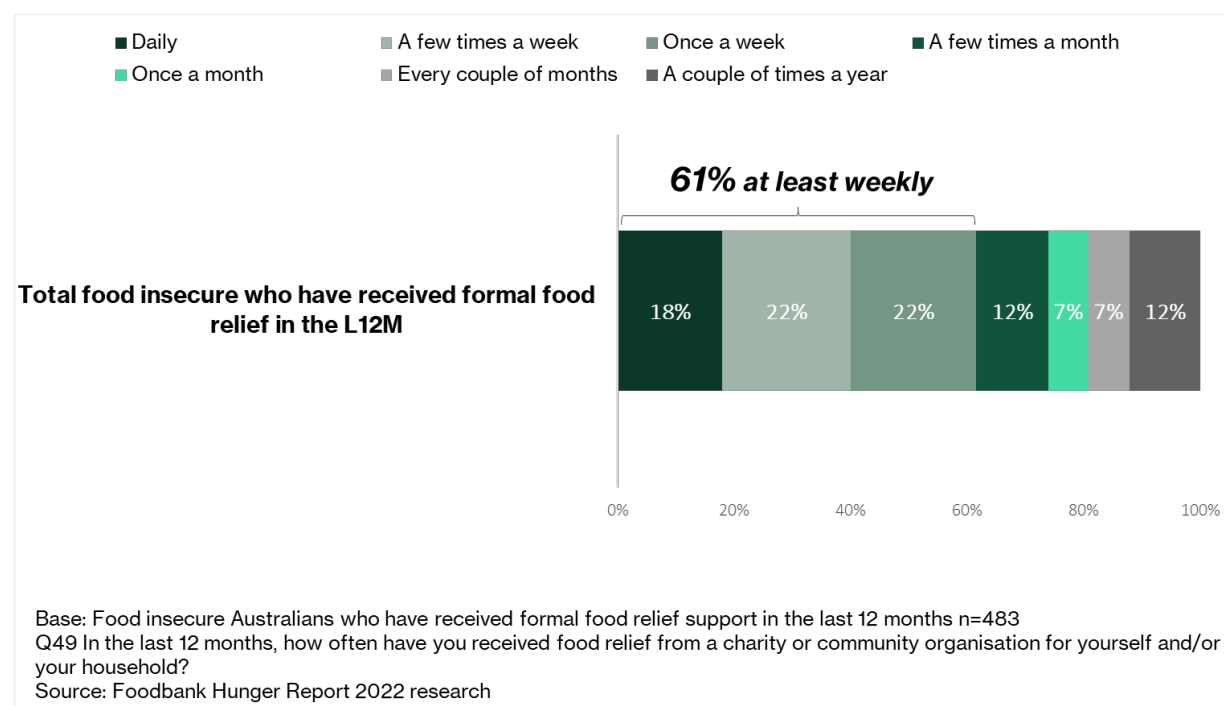
In addition to asking respondents about the barriers to receiving food relief from organisations such as charities and community services, the survey asked them to say, in their own words, what food relief services can do to make it easier to get help when they need it.

- Leverage **anonymity** to help overcome the sense of shame and embarrassment:
  - *"Being anonymous"*
  - *"Community pantry that does not need concession cards"*
  - *"Go on website and ask no questions from them"*
  - *"Privacy, like a telephone number instead of having to go in"*
  - *"I think clearer information on how to access the relief and arrangements so that we can access the relief in more private way".*
- Ensure **accessibility** and **inclusivity** of services to people or families in different circumstances:
  - *"More local, more places available to pick up food. I have to drive quite a distance"*
  - *"Only transport I have is electric wheelchair, if they can do home visit it would be good"*
  - *"I have no idea where to go and it's hard to get to these places with limited transport options"*
  - *"I have many dietary issues and very little help caters for them. It's easier to get money from family and buy what is necessary"*
  - *"If it was accessible for a bigger timeframe and from a more convenient location/as an inclusion with other assistance being received already".*
- Leverage **online servicing** to facilitate access to food relief support based on individual needs and preferences:
  - *"Maybe a website that showed the locations and phone numbers on an interactive map. Probably less church-run ones and more independent ones as the church ones you don't want to commit to a religion just to eat"*
  - *"Online requests with appointed pick-up times"*
  - *"Online ordering"*
  - *"Since I don't drive, it would be a great help if they have online ordering and delivery as well"*
  - *"To apply online or via phone without worries of excess charging for delivery."*
- And above all, to show **empathy** and make them feel respected and understood:
  - *"When I have asked for help in the past, I have been made to feel embarrassed/humiliated for asking for help, it would be nice if there was less judgement as this would make me more likely to ask for help"*
  - *"Less stigma and less judgement"*
  - *"More empathy and supportive attitude from suppliers"*
  - *"Just understanding it's really hard".*

## Relationship with formal food relief support services

For food insecure Australians who receive help from formal food relief services, engagement is frequent, as 61% stated they receive support at least weekly, with little difference between the different sources of help. On average, approximately 306,000<sup>7</sup> food insecure households received food relief support from the sector on any typical day.

**Figure 23. Frequency of receiving food relief support**



Not all food insecure Australians receive food relief and engage with these services at the same frequency, however. People in the below demographic groups are **more likely** to participate in food relief support at least weekly compared with average food insecure Australians:

- young adults aged 18-24 (81%)
- men (72%)
- homeowners (72%)
- families with children (71%)
- the employed (69%)

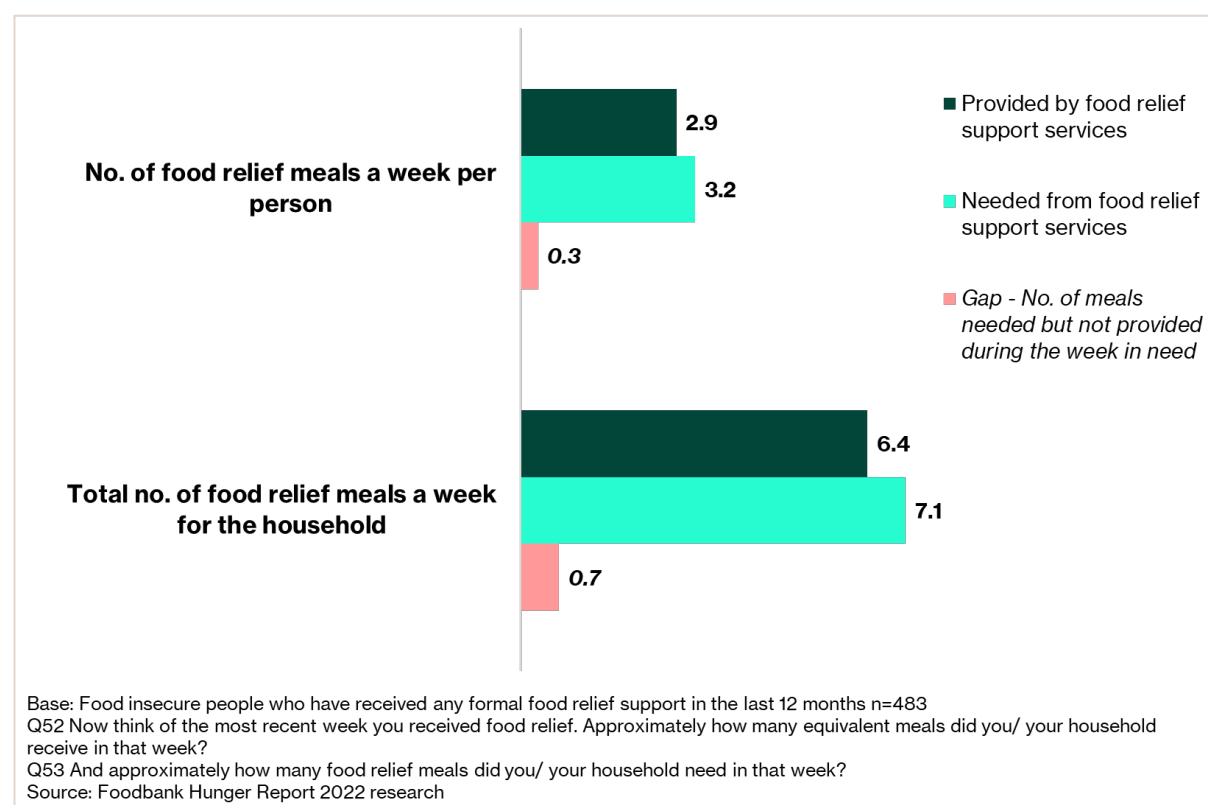
<sup>7</sup> Note, the 306,000 food insecure households receiving food relief support from the sector in any typical day is an estimate - based on the approximate number of households receiving formal food relief support throughout a year (from daily, a few times a week, once a week, to less often than a couple of times a year). The frequency scale of food insecure household receiving sector support was recoded to the number of days a household received food relief support in a year (e.g. a household is considered receive food relief support for 365 days a year, if it claims to receive support 'daily' in the last 12 months. In a similar way, a household is considered to receive support for 1 day in a year, if it received support for 'less often than a couple of times a year' in the last 12 months). Thus, the average number of food insecure households on any one day throughout the year is estimated based on the total number of days food insecure households received support in a year, divided by 365 days.

In comparison, the below people from the below demographic groups are **less likely** than average to participate in food relief support on a weekly basis:

- living in rental properties (45%)
- living in households without children (45%)
- women (40%)
- aged 45 years or above (38%)
- the low income less than \$30,000 per year (34%)

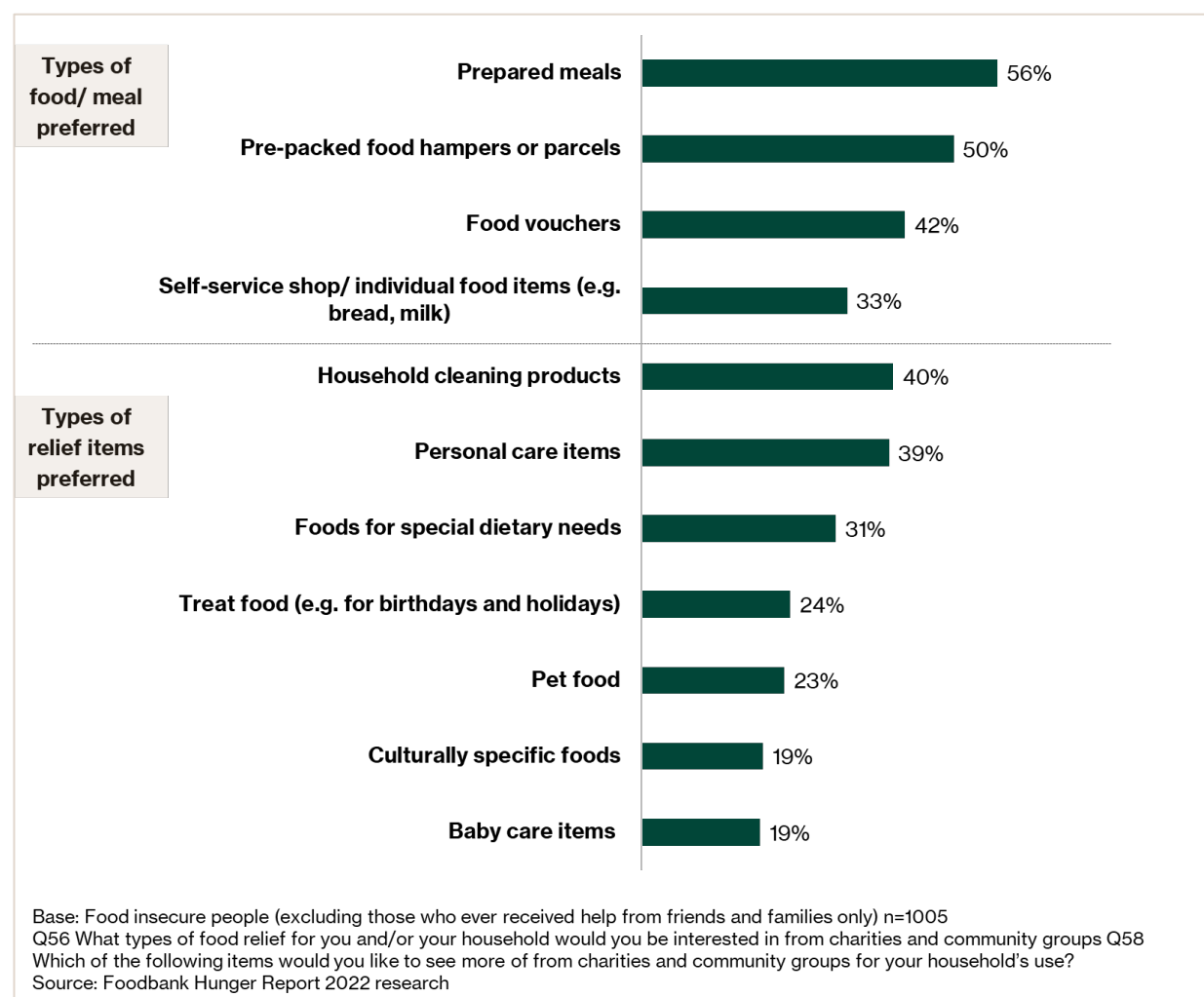
Across food insecure households receiving food relief, the quantity of weekly food relief meals provided by support services (Figure 24) was reported as being closely aligned with need. The food relief meals provided met 90% of the need per person/household during the most recent week food relief had been received.

**Figure 24. No. of food relief meals provided vs. needed in a week (among those receiving food relief)**



Prepared meals (56%) and pre-packaged food hampers (50%) were the most popular types of food relief meals amongst people experiencing food insecurity. And more broadly, there was an indication that household items (40%) and personal care items (39%) are popular.

**Figure 25. Types of food relief meals and items interested in**



# Appendix A. Methodology

## Overview of the approach

The *Foodbank Hunger Report 2022* research comprises an online survey of n=4,024 Australians aged 18 years or above. They are nationally representative by age, gender, state and location (capital city/ rest of state), recruited via a research-only online panel. The average survey length for food secure households was 5.3 minutes, and the average length for food insecure households – as identified during the survey – was 14 minutes.

Quotas were in place with strict demographic targets (age, gender, capital city/ rest of state) within each of the major states based on the ABS Estimated Resident Population (ERP) projections as of Q2 2021. The representative demographic quotas within each major state are outlined in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Summary of interlocking state x demographic quotas by age, gender, and location (capital city/ rest of state).**

Quota		New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tas/NT/ACT (avg. AU proportions)	Australia
<b>Gender</b> (allow flexibility for non-binary)	Male	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%
	Female	51%	51%	51%	51%	51%	51%	51%
<b>Age</b>	18-24	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
	25-34	19%	20%	18%	17%	18%	19%	19%
	35-44	17%	18%	17%	16%	18%	18%	18%
	45-54	16%	16%	17%	16%	17%	16%	16%
	55-64	15%	14%	15%	16%	15%	15%	15%
	65-74	12%	11%	12%	14%	12%	12%	12%
	75+	10%	9%	9%	11%	9%	10%	10%
<b>Location</b>	Cap city	65%	77%	49%	78%	80%	68%	68%
	Rest of state	35%	23%	51%	22%	20%	32%	32%
<b>Total target sample size</b>		1050	850	700	600	600	200	4000

In addition, as larger sample sizes increase statistical power and, therefore, the opportunity to identify differences between subgroups, the state quotas were stratified to ensure all major states (NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, WA) have a robust sample size of minimum n=600 or above (meaning that the minimal margin of error for the results within each major state would be no more than +/- 4%).

Table 3 below provides a summary of the stratified state quotas applied, and the final achieved sample sizes from each state. Note that as will be detailed in the subsequent section on weighting in Appendix A, the stratified state quotas were then weighted back to represent the relative population proportions between states for analysis and reporting.

**Table 3. Stratified minimum quotas vs. final achieved sample by states**

State	Minimum quota by state (sample count)	Final achieved sample by state (sample count)	Final achieved sample by state (sample proportion)	Final achieved sample by state (weighted proportion)	Final achieved fall-out of food insecure households by proportion
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					state (sample count)
New South Wales	1050	1053	26%	32%	339
Victoria	850	853	21%	27%	273
Queensland	700	702	18%	20%	227
South Australia	600	603	15%	7%	175
Western Australia	600	604	15%	10%	170
Tasmania/ ACT/ North Territory	200	209	5%	5%	64
Total	4000	4024	100%	100%	1248

## Survey design and questionnaire development

The survey was designed and developed in consultation with Foodbank.

As part of the consultation process, Foodbank instructed that the introduction and literal execution of the HFSSM module would form the core of the Foodbank Hunger Report 2022 survey. This has been implemented and reflected in the survey design based on thorough review of the official survey instrument and the guide to survey execution and analysis by USDA Economic Research Service (ERS)<sup>8</sup>. Table 4 below provides a summary of definition for each of the food security categories as per ERS instructions.

**Table 4. Definition and terminology used in describing household food security in this report**

	Level of impact	Label as per HFSSM	Definition
<b>Food Secure</b>	Highly food secure	High food security	No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.
	Marginally food secure	Marginal food security	One or two reported indications – typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
<b>Food Insecure</b>	Moderately food insecure	Low food security	Reports of reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake
	Severely food insecure	Very low food security	Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Table 5 below is a summary of all HFSSM indicators used to measure household level of food security. Each indicator, if receiving an affirmative response from the survey respondent, will be coded with a score of one for the relevant respondent. Depending on their levels of household food

<sup>8</sup> The full USDA survey instrument and the guide to implementation can be found available on the website of USDA ERS <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/survey-tools/>

security, and whether there are children in the households, the food insecure households can receive a raw score of minimum three to maximum eighteen for those living with children, and a raw score of minimum three to maximum ten for those without.

**Table 5. HFSSM indicators of household food security**

Referenced household members	Indicators	Definition of affirmative responses for each indicator
<b>Anyone in the household</b>	Agree with the statement that they “worried whether my/our food would run out before I/we got money to buy more”	Sometimes true/ often true
	Agree with the statement that “the food that I/we bought just didn’t last, and I/we didn’t have money to get more”	Sometimes true/ often true
	Agree with the statement that “I/we couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals”	Sometimes true/ often true
<b>Any adult(s) in the household</b>	The respondent, or any other adult in their household, have had experience ever cutting the size of meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food in the last 12 months	Self-reported “yes”
	The frequency of experience cutting the size of meals/ skipping meals because there wasn’t enough money for those who did undergo such situation in the last 12 months	Experience happened <b>more</b> often than ‘only 1 or 2 months’
<b>The adult respondent themselves</b>	Experience in the last 12 months of ever eating less than they felt they should because there wasn’t enough money for food	Self-reported “yes”
	Experience in the last 12 months of ever being hungry but did not eat because there wasn’t enough money for food	Self-reported “yes”
	Experience in the last 12 months of ever losing weight because there wasn’t enough money for food	Self-reported “yes”
<b>Any adult(s) in the household</b>	The respondent, or any other adult in their household, have had experience ever not eating for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food	Self-reported “yes”
	The frequency of experience not eating for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food, for those who did undergo such situation in the last 12 months	Experience happened <b>more</b> often than ‘only 1 or 2 months’
<b>Any children in the household (for households with children)</b>	Agree with the statement that they “relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed the child/ren because of running out of money to buy food”	Sometimes true/ often true
	Agree with the statement that they “couldn’t feed the child/ren a balanced meal, because I/we couldn’t afford that”	Sometimes true/ often true
	Agree with the statement that their child/ren “were not eating enough because I/we just couldn’t afford enough food”	Sometimes true/ often true
	Experience of the respondent ever cutting the size of their child/ren’s meals because there wasn’t enough money for food in the last 12 months	Self-reported “yes”
	Experience of the child/ren ever skipping meals because there wasn’t enough money for food in the last 12 months	Self-reported “yes”
	The frequency of the child/ren’s experience ever skipping meals because there wasn’t enough money for food for those who did in the last 12 months	Experience happened <b>more</b> often than ‘only 1 or 2 months’
	Experience of the child/ren ever being hungry in the last 12 months because the respondent “just couldn’t afford more food”	Self-reported “yes”

	Experience of the child/ren ever not eating for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months	Self-reported "yes"
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To gain insights into the lived experience of food insecurity, and to provide additional context for the interpretation of the HFSSM results, the questionnaire was further developed based on review and assessment of the past survey instruments for the Foodbank Hunger Report research series, incorporating profiling measures consistent with historical years for subgroup analysis, while optimising the existing Foodbank Hunger Report survey questions to reflect the wider socioeconomic shifts Australians lived and witnessed in 2022.

In particular, during the development of the Foodbank Hunger Report 2022 questionnaire, cognitive testing was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the survey instrument in accurately and sensitively eliciting the required information from the target audience. Overall, six cognitive interviews were conducted during the phase of questionnaire development. Each interview comprised an in-depth discussion of 45 minutes in length over telephone with current food relief support recipients from South Australia (as referred to by Foodbank SA). In so doing, the survey design has also ensured that households potentially more vulnerable to food insecurity were involved in the design process.

Once the questionnaire was developed and programmed on the online survey platform, a further pilot phase surveying n=30 Australians from the general population was conducted, to provide reassurance that the survey was appropriate to the general population as well as the potentially more vulnerable audience living with food insecurity over the last twelve months.

## Fieldwork

The survey was piloted from 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022 to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Main fieldwork was conducted between 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

All fieldwork was conducted and managed by Dynata, who recruited respondents and hosted the survey via its secure online platform.

Dynata (previously Research Now/ SSI) is a data and insights organisation who have been a leading provider of online panel services for global organisations conducting research for more than 20 years, with a reach that encompasses 60+ million people globally. It is also Australia's largest online panel comprising over 400,000 members.

For Foodbank, it was important that "... conditional on the quota variables, an individual response is not dependent on their food security status"<sup>9</sup>. One concern could be that people who are more food insecure are not on online panels. However, when looking at the distribution of Dynata panelists across some of the key measures used for the Hunger Map which may indicate food insecurity, we found that there is a broad distribution and good attribution within the lower socio-economic groups.

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<sup>9</sup> Progress in the Spatial Modelling of Food Insecurity in Australia: A Foodbank Australia White Paper, UTS Institute of Sustainable Futures, 15 November 2021



## Weighting

### Creation of person weight by state, age, sex and location

To ensure statistical robustness for national as well as state-based analysis, we have implemented stratified quotas by state (so within the n=4,000 total sample, all major states except NT, TAS and ACT have a sample size of at least 600). Weighting is thus required to account for stratified sampling, matching the weighted sample to the representative national population profile by state, age, sex and location.

Weighting information (age, sex, state, cap city/rest of state) were obtained from all 4,024 survey respondents, representing general Australian population aged 18 years and over.

Weighting cells were defined by State x GCCSA (cap city/ rest of state) x Sex x Age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75+). The variable used to define the weighting cells was S1 self-reported sex/ gender identity, S2 age and S3 postcode as set out below:

S1. Are you...? **SR**

1	Male
2	Female
3	Other (e.g. intersex, non-binary sex)

S2. How old are you? **OE NUM, Allow 1-99**

S3. Where do you live? Please type in the postcode of the suburb you currently live in.

**OE NUM, ASK ALL**

The distribution of the participant sample across these cells is shown in the table below:

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tas/NT/ACT	Total AU 18+
<b>Male</b>	48%	49%	48%	47%	46%	45%	48%
<b>Female</b>	52%	51%	52%	53%	54%	55%	52%
<b>18-24</b>	10%	11%	11%	9%	11%	8%	10%
<b>25-34</b>	19%	20%	18%	17%	19%	19%	19%
<b>35-44</b>	17%	18%	17%	16%	19%	17%	17%
<b>45-54</b>	15%	16%	17%	15%	12%	16%	15%
<b>55-64</b>	15%	14%	16%	17%	16%	16%	15%
<b>65-74</b>	13%	11%	13%	15%	14%	14%	13%
<b>75+</b>	10%	9%	9%	12%	11%	10%	10%
<b>Cap city</b>	64%	77%	50%	81%	79%	65%	69%
<b>Rest of state</b>	36%	23%	50%	19%	21%	35%	31%
<b>Total</b>	26%	21%	17%	15%	15%	5%	100%

## ERP population proportions for weighting cells

The ABS.Stat module (available from <http://stat.data.abs.gov.au>) was used to obtain projections of the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) classified by Age by Sex by the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas for reference period 2020. These population projections, which are based on 2016 census, were published by ABS in August 2021.

The creation of the person weight is to redistribute the proportion of the above participant sample to the representative national profile as outlined below:

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tas/NT/ACT	Total AU 18+
<b>Male</b>	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%
<b>Female</b>	51%	51%	51%	51%	51%	51%	51%
<b>18-24</b>	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
<b>25-34</b>	19%	20%	18%	17%	18%	19%	19%
<b>35-44</b>	17%	18%	17%	16%	18%	18%	18%
<b>45-54</b>	16%	16%	17%	16%	17%	16%	16%
<b>55-64</b>	15%	14%	15%	16%	15%	15%	15%
<b>65-74</b>	12%	11%	12%	14%	12%	12%	12%
<b>75+</b>	10%	9%	9%	11%	9%	10%	10%
<b>Cap city</b>	65%	77%	49%	78%	80%	68%	68%
<b>Rest of state</b>	35%	23%	51%	22%	20%	32%	32%
<b>Total</b>	32%	26%	20%	7%	10%	5%	100%

## Creation of household weight for household and child referenced data

Household is the major unit of analysis for the Foodbank Hunger Report 2022. Once the participant weight at personal level is created, we will further create an additional weight that takes household size and child count into account.

The household weight for a particular household is the inverse of its household selection probability multiplied by representative proportion of the type of household per state in general Australian population (based on ERP Series II projections for year 2022).

The selection probability of a particular household is the equivalent of the number of adults in the household. This was collected in the survey as the computed S5a No. of adults at home, through the combination of two questions S4 HH size and S5 No. of child/ren at home.

### HH size

*S4. Including yourself and any children, how many people currently live in your household? OE NUM, Allow 1-30, ASK ALL*

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### Number of child/ren at home

**ASK IF MORE THAN 1 PERSON AT HOME S4>1**

S5. And how many child/ren **under 18 years**, if any, do you currently have at home? Please type 0 if no one in your household is aged under 18 years. **OE NUM, Allow 0-30 and cannot exceed the answer provided in S4**

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**Programmer note: compute hidden variable**

**S5a. No. of adults at home. NUMERIC S5A=S4-S5**

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The classification of household types was collected in the survey through a detailed living arrangement question S7, which will be re-aggregate during weighting to match classifications available in the ERP projections as below:

S7. Which of the following best describes your current living arrangements? **SR, ASK ALL**

		<b>Re-classify to ERP categorisation</b>
1	Living alone	Lone person households
2	Living in a group household (e.g. with flatmates)	Group households
3	Living with parents/ other relatives	Family households
4	Couple family with no children at home	Family households
5	Couple family with child/ren of any age at home	Family households
6	One-parent family with child/ren of any age at home	Family households
7	Resident of a non-private dwelling (e.g. staff quarters, nursing home/ aged care home)	Lone person households
10	Others (please specify)	Verbatims to be reviewed and back-coded to relevant categories

ERP projection of household types by state for 2022:

	<b>Australia</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>
Family households	70%	71%	70%	71%	67%	72%	65%	73%	68%
Group households	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	3%	6%	5%
Lone person households	25%	24%	25%	24%	29%	24%	31%	21%	27%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

So for example, for a participant from NSW, who was responding for a household of 6 people, of whom 4 are children (i.e. 2 adults at home), and identified themselves as a 'couple family with child/ren of any age at home', the weight for this particular household would be  $\frac{1}{2} \times 71\% = 0.35473856$

Note that while the HFSSM module also measures the level of food security of children at home, the wording and focus of the questions are on food security of 'any children at home' which can range from at least one to all of the children at home. So for the child-referenced data, our unit of analysis remains at weighted household level ('household with children') and will not be able to provide relevant estimates amongst total number of children.