



FIGHTING HUNGER
IN AUSTRALIA



FOODBANK HUNGER REPORT 2020

FOOD INSECURITY
IN THE TIME OF

COVID-19



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE ISSUE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE MIDST OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

This report is unlike any previous *Foodbank Hunger Report* as it presents a picture of food insecurity in the midst of a once-in-100-year crisis. COVID-19 is having a profound effect on every aspect of people's lives, so it is not surprising that it is impacting the food security of Australians. This report looks at how COVID-19, and the responses of governments, businesses and individuals to the pandemic, are affecting the ability of people to have food for themselves and their families.

This report combines insights from both qualitative and quantitative research, bringing together the perspectives of charities and community groups providing front-line food relief as well as individuals experiencing food insecurity.

A survey of individual members of the public gathered responses from 1,001 Australians who have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. The survey was conducted between 25 June and 15 July 2020, three months into the pandemic. This is the

fifth time Foodbank has conducted research amongst those directly affected by food insecurity.

The experiences of charities across Australia were gathered via five 'pulse' surveys conducted amongst organisations registered with Foodbank (averaging 500 respondents per survey). These surveys were conducted monthly between April and September 2020.

Further insights in this report were drawn from nine in-depth interviews conducted with individual Australians experiencing food insecurity and charity representatives. These interviews were conducted on 20 and 21 August 2020.

Survey of Australians experiencing food insecurity written and hosted by McCrindle.

Pulse surveys written and hosted by Foodbank.

In-depth interviews conducted by McCrindle.

Data collation, storytelling and visualisation by McCrindle.



ABOUT FOODBANK

Foodbank is the largest provider of vital food and groceries to food relief charities around Australia. Last year alone it sourced enough food and groceries to provide 210,000 meals a day to people in need. Foodbank distributes its food and groceries to over 2,400 charities nationally, the majority of whom rank Foodbank as their organisation's most important source of food. Foodbank also supplies 2,500 school breakfast programs nationally.

In addition to the day-to-day food relief activities, Foodbank plays a key role in times of community emergency and natural disasters. Every State and Territory Foodbank is involved in disaster relief, providing essential supplies to support the work of first responders and emergency services as well as giving ongoing assistance to affected communities during the months and years it takes to recover. During COVID-19, Foodbank has scaled up and adapted its service to meet the changing needs of the evolving circumstances.

Foodbank works with the entire Australian food and grocery sector including farmers, wholesalers,

manufacturers and retailers. Donated stock includes items that are out of specification, close to expiry or excess to requirements as well as proactive donations of products that are in high demand by charities and emergency services.

Foodbank also collaborates with suppliers, manufacturers and transporters on a program to procure key staple items that don't come in sufficient quantities via rescue or donation channels. These include fresh produce, cereal, milk, rice, pasta, meat and canned foods. This program ensures the consistent availability of foods that provide variety, convenience, nutritional value and cultural appropriateness. In particular, it secures foods for families, people with special health and dietary needs and school children via the school breakfast programs.

To support its food relief activities, Foodbank works closely with the Federal and State Governments as well as corporate Australia and the general public to secure much needed funds and expertise.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEMAND FOR FOOD RELIEF IS UP

COVID-19, and its flow on effects, have changed the face of food insecurity in Australia. The global pandemic has impacted the lives of all Australians, however, those who were already struggling before coronavirus hit felt the effects more quickly and more seriously. Prior to COVID-19, the main groups accessing food relief were families living on a low income, the unemployed, single-parent families, the homeless and people with mental illness. Since March this year, some of these groups have become even more vulnerable and are needing to access food relief more often. Young Australians are much more likely to be doing it tough as a result of COVID-19. With this generation more likely to be working casually, many have lost their source of income or had their income reduced¹.

Many disadvantaged people live week to week and as a result are much less likely to have safeguards against sudden changes in the external environment. Early in the pandemic, when some Australians began panic buying and stockpiling, vulnerable Australians faced increased food insecurity as many of the basics disappeared from the shelves and they did not have

the resources to stockpile themselves or purchase more expensive alternatives.

Charities have seen a significant increase in the frequency of demand for food relief. In 2019, 15% of Australians experiencing food insecurity were seeking food relief at least once a week. In 2020, this has doubled to 31%.

PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY FOR THE FIRST TIME

While COVID-19 has made life even more difficult for already-vulnerable Australians, it has launched others into food insecurity for the first time. Almost a third of Australians experiencing food insecurity in 2020 (28%) had never experienced it before COVID-19.

Charities have seen two newly food insecure groups emerging as a result of the pandemic: the casual workforce and international students. For newly food insecure Australians, COVID-19 has been a catalyst for a chain of negative events of which a shortage of food is just a part. As bills pile up and income dwindles, stress and unmet physical needs are likely to cause a decline in mental health.



GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROVIDES ONLY TEMPORARY RELIEF

Government assistance such as JobKeeper and JobSeeker, has been a means of survival for businesses and individuals. For the most vulnerable people in our communities, however, even with these lifelines, it has been anything but smooth sailing. Of those who are in need of government assistance, only 38% suggest this assistance has helped their situation, whereas 62% are not receiving the help they need (37% needed additional assistance, 21% were ineligible, 4% found it too difficult to apply).

Although government assistance is providing much needed temporary relief, charities and food insecure Australians alike have a sense of unease about the

future as governments plan to withdraw or reduce the additional payments. Almost 35% don't know how they will cope or expect they will not cope well at all when this additional support is no longer available.

SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT SEEKING THE HELP THEY NEED

Three in five Australians experiencing food insecurity (61%) have accessed food relief since the advent of COVID-19. Despite many food insecure Australians being in urgent need of help, 39% have not accessed food relief during the pandemic. The most common barriers to seeking assistance include thinking there might be other people more in need (33%), embarrassment (33%) and shame (30%).



**RISING DEMAND
FOR FOOD RELIEF
AS COVID-19
TURNS LIVES
UPSIDE DOWN**

In March 2020, coronavirus was declared a global pandemic, causing anxiety and uncertainty across Australia². In the months since, the lives of all Australians have been disrupted as the number of cases rise and fall and the full impacts of the virus are revealed. At the same time as the health catastrophe unfolds, its flow on effects are becoming clear. The depths of the hardship that many are experiencing is reflected in the changing face of food security in Australia.

DEMAND FOR FOOD RELIEF IS UP

Although changes in government assistance have alleviated difficulties for many Australians, some groups are in more need than ever before due to COVID-19. Those who were already food insecure prior to the pandemic are going hungry even more frequently now. Currently, 43% of all food insecure Australians are going a whole day without eating at least once a week, compared to 30% in 2019.

Charities have seen a significant increase in the demand for food relief. In 2019, 15% of Australians experiencing food insecurity were seeking food relief at least once a week. In 2020, this has more than doubled to 31%. Although charities are seeing demand for food relief become more erratic and unpredictable, overall numbers are up by an average of 47%.

PROPORTION OF FOOD INSECURE AUSTRALIANS SEEKING FOOD RELIEF AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK



I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE LINE AS LONG AS IT WAS JUST TO COME AND GET SOME FOOD RELIEF...THROUGH FOODBANK, MY ORDERING HAS GONE UP TWOFOLD TO TRY AND KEEP UP WITH THE DEMAND SO IT HAS REALLY INCREASED A LOT FOR US. WE PROBABLY HAD AROUND 100-150 PEOPLE A WEEK BEFORE THE PANDEMIC AND THIS HAS GONE UP TO ABOUT 500 PEOPLE A WEEK.

Maria, founder Survivors R Us, NSW

WE'VE FOUND THAT THROUGHOUT ALL OF COVID UP UNTIL NOW WE HAVE HAD BETWEEN A 20-25% INCREASE IN DEMAND. BUT WE ALSO HELPED ANOTHER CHURCH START A CHARITY TO ASSIST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS. WE WOULD HAVE LITERALLY DOUBLED OUR DEMAND IF WE HAD NOT HELPED THEM SET UP. THE REASON I TELL YOU THAT IS BECAUSE IT'S THE TRUE DEMAND, NOT JUST THE INCREASE WE'VE SEEN BUT A WHOLE NEW CHARITY STARTED FRESH BECAUSE OF COVID.

Peter, Kingborough Family Church, Hobart

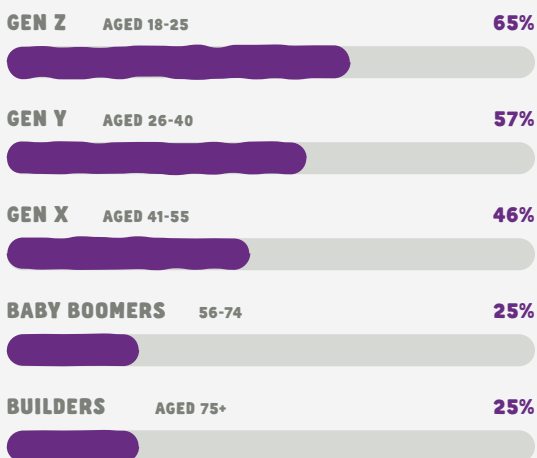


² McCrindle, COVID-19 report, April 2020

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BEARING THE BRUNT

Amongst those whose food insecurity has become more acute, one age group stands out as suffering more than any other. Young Australians are much more likely to be doing it tough as a result of COVID-19. With these generations more likely to be working casually, many have lost their source of income or had their income reduced³. As a result, they are experiencing food insecurity more often than older generations, with 65% of food insecure Gen Zs (aged 18-25) going hungry at least once a week compared to 25% of food insecure Baby Boomers (56-74) and 25% of Builders (75+).

PROPORTION IN EACH GENERATION THAT ARE UNABLE TO AFFORD ENOUGH FOOD AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK:



WE STARTED TO SEE ANOTHER LAYER ON TOP OF OUR REGULAR CLIENTS, OF PEOPLE WHO HADN'T ACCESSED FOOD RELIEF BEFORE AND WERE DOING OKAY BEFORE THE PANDEMIC. SOME HAD TWO WORKING PEOPLE IN THEIR FAMILIES AND THEN THEY NO LONGER HAD JOBS... BECAUSE THEY WERE THROWN INTO THAT SITUATION, THE LEVELS OF ANXIETY AND FEAR ROSE, PEOPLE WERE VERY WORRIED...PEOPLE LIVE TO THEIR INCOME. YOU RENT PLACES YOU CAN AFFORD ON YOUR INCOME SO WHEN YOU HAVE NO INCOME, THE FIRST THING THAT GOES IS FOOD.

Angie, Reservoir Neighbourhood House, Melbourne

³ Australian Government Productivity Commission, Why did young people's incomes decline? July 2020.

PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY FOR THE FIRST TIME

In 2019, the main groups accessing food relief were families living on a low income, the unemployed, single-parent families, the homeless and people with a mental illness. Since March this year, some of these groups have become even more vulnerable needing to access food relief more often. But charities are also seeing groups of Australians who need to access food relief for the first time. Almost three in ten (28%) Australians experiencing food insecurity in 2020 had never experienced not having enough food before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

Charities are seeing groups of Australians who are needing to access food relief for the first time



THREE IN TEN AUSTRALIANS NOW EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY HAD NOT GONE HUNGRY BEFORE THE PANDEMIC



Charities have seen two completely new food insecure groups emerging as a result of the pandemic: the casual workforce and international students.

THE CASUAL WORKFORCE



Australia's employment market has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. Between March and July, the number of employed Australians decreased by 556,800 people and the unemployment rate increased from 5.2% to 7.5%⁴. A study commissioned by Good Shepherd, exploring the experience of working Australians during COVID-19, shows that two in five Australians have experienced negative employment changes since April this year⁵. This includes reduced hours, reduced pay, being temporarily stood down, taking leave to avoid loss of pay and many other changes to employment.

Employment impacts have been particularly felt by the casual workforce. Casuals have often been the first to be impacted when businesses have had to streamline, as they are less likely to have entitlements and do not have guaranteed hours of work. Additionally, the industries that have been hit hardest by COVID-19, such as retail trade and accommodation, account for a large proportion of casual workers across Australia⁶.

For casual workers who have lost their jobs, COVID-19 has been a catalyst for a chain of negative events, of which food insecurity is just a part. Seven in ten charities (69%) have seen an increase in the number of newly unemployed people seeking food relief since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



Due to their visa status, international students are largely ineligible for government assistance even though many in this group depend on the very jobs that were the first to disappear with the onset of the pandemic. Many are in an extremely difficult position, unable to return home and with families who may be struggling themselves and unable to support them. Two in five charities (39%) have seen an increase in the number of international students seeking food relief since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.



IT'S BEEN VERY, VERY HARD TIMES, SINCE MAY THIS YEAR. I WAS DOING MY MASTER'S IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND I'M SPENDING ALMOST \$70,000 ON UNIVERSITY FOR TWO YEARS. I GRADUATED IN MID-JULY, AND HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT SINCE THEN... AND I DON'T KNOW WHO TO ASK OR WHO TO APPROACH, BECAUSE I'M NOT ELIGIBLE FOR ANY KIND OF FUNDING FROM THE GOVERNMENT... MY PARENTS HAVE SUPPORTED ME UNTIL NOW. IT'S REALLY HARD FOR THEM TO SUPPORT ME NOW... THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I'VE HAD TO WORRY ABOUT FOOD. I CAME TO AUSTRALIA IN JULY 2018, AND BEFORE THAT I WAS LIVING IN INDIA WITH MY PARENTS. IT'S A FIRST FOR ME.

International student, recently graduated, VIC

JODIE'S STORY

I was a casual at a motor vehicle repair shop when the whole COVID shutdown was starting to happen. The bosses said, 'nup, we're shutting down' so pretty much anyone who was full time got to keep all of their entitlements but there were three of us casuals who got let go. It was very sudden. I've never had to worry about food before this year... Even though I was a casual, I was still working six times a week. I went from earning \$1,100 a week down to basic carers pension which I'm still a few weeks off being approved for. So, I've dropped my weekly wages around 50% and my partner is exactly the same, he's lost his wages about 50%...aside from losing my job, COVID has impacted on everything. Because both my children are special needs, it has impacted on us as parents, not knowing if the carers are going to show up, and unlike neurotypical children, who sort of understand what's happening, they have no understanding or comprehension of what a pandemic is. So, that weighs very, very heavily. As well as our financial health it has also impacted our mental health. Even though it was us losing our jobs, it has snowballed into everything else. It's influenced our family relationship and our private lives as well.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia

⁵ Good Shepherd, Impact of COVID-19 on Working Australians, August 2020

⁶ Parliament of Australia, COVID-19: Impacts on casual workers in Australia, May 2020



COVID-19 HAS MADE LIFE FOR VULNERABLE AUSTRALIANS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT

While COVID-19 has impacted the lives of all Australians, those who were already vulnerable felt the effects more quickly and more seriously. Many live week to week and, as a result, are much less likely to have safeguards against sudden changes in the external environment. Early in the pandemic, when many Australians began panic buying and stockpiling, vulnerable Australians faced increased food insecurity as many of the basics disappeared from the shelves and they did not have the resources to stockpile or purchase more expensive alternatives.

Cost of living has consistently been the main reason Australians experience food insecurity, with people most likely to cite unexpected expenses or large bills (41%) and rent and mortgage payments (35%) as the most common reasons they are unable to afford enough food. COVID-19 has only exacerbated these challenges as people's lives have become more volatile and unpredictable.



THIS YEAR HAS PROBABLY BEEN THE HARDEST IN MY LIFE. IT'S BEEN A COMBINATION OF A LOT OF FACTORS ALREADY HAPPENING IN MY LIFE BUT COVID HASN'T HELPED.

Kym, NSW

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDING SOME TEMPORARY RELIEF

Government assistance, such as JobKeeper and JobSeeker, has been a lifeline for businesses, individuals and the most vulnerable in our society. Freezes on rent payments and electricity bills have also provided people with temporary relief from pressing financial stressors. According to a survey conducted by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), 80% of people said they were eating better and more regularly due to the additional money in their pockets⁷.

However, this year has been anything but smooth sailing for the most vulnerable people in the community. The waiting period between applying for assistance and receiving it, as well as the sense that payments could change at any time, has meant food insecure Australians have experienced significant uncertainty in their everyday lives. Charities have also experienced volatility in the numbers of people accessing food relief. Four in five charities (81%) say the demand for food relief has become more erratic and unpredictable since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.



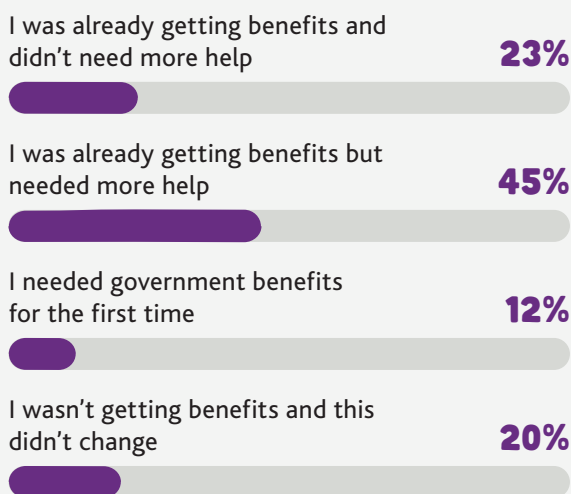
THE DEMAND FOR FOOD RELIEF HAS BEEN VERY UNPREDICTABLE THIS YEAR. WE'VE HAD TO TAKE EACH WEEK AS IT COMES. ONE WEEK WE ACTUALLY ENDED UP GOING STRAIGHT DOWN TO THE SUPERMARKET AND SPENDING \$600 TO GET EXTRA FOOD JUST BECAUSE THE DEMAND THAT WEEK WAS FAR GREATER THAN WE HAD ANTICIPATED. WE HAD 109 FAMILIES COME THROUGH IN THAT WEEK ALONE WHICH WAS 20 MORE THAN WE WERE AVERAGING. WE SAW PEOPLE COMING MORE OFTEN THAN PRE-COVID UNTIL THE JOBSEEKER PAYMENT INCREASE AND JOBKEEPER PAYMENTS CAME. SOME PEOPLE WERE COMING MORE OFTEN AND SOME WERE COMING LESS OFTEN DEPENDENT ON WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DOING AT THE TIME.

Peter, Kingborough Family Church, Hobart

In the period between COVID-19 being declared a global pandemic and the government providing new or additional government assistance, 45% of food insecure Australians were already getting assistance but needed more help. Another 12% needed government assistance for the first time. Of those who are in need of government assistance, 62% are not receiving the help they need. Of these, 37% need additional assistance, 21% are ineligible and 4% find it too difficult to apply.

⁷ ACOSS, Survey of 634 people receiving new rate of JobSeeker income support payments, September 2020

IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN COVID-19 BEING DECLARED A GLOBAL PANDEMIC (12TH MARCH 2020) AND THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDING NEW/ADDITIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS (30TH MARCH 2020), HOW DID YOUR NEED FOR BENEFITS CHANGE?



MY ONLY FEAR IS WHEN (GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE) IS ROLLED BACK - AND THEY ARE GOING TO CHANGE IT BACK - WHEN THEY STOP THOSE PAYMENTS, I THINK WE'LL ACTUALLY INCREASE AGAIN BECAUSE (FOOD INSECURE AUSTRALIANS ARE) NOT GOING TO BE COPING.

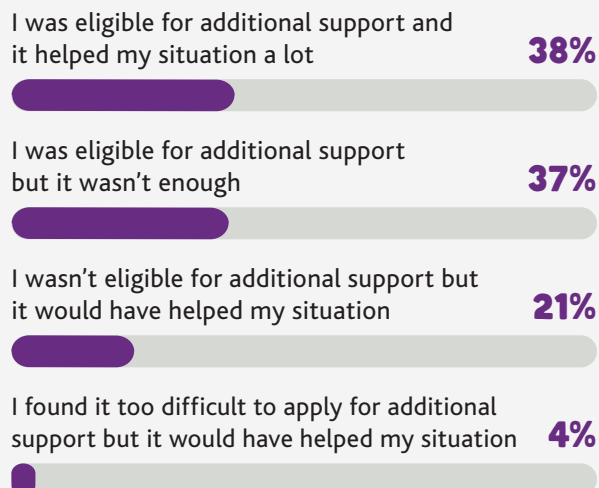
Maria, founder Survivors R Us, NSW

FOOD INSECURE AUSTRALIANS ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO COPE AS PAYMENTS ARE ROLLED BACK

While government assistance has provided much needed temporary relief, charities and food insecure Australians alike have an extreme sense of unease about the future as these measures are rolled back. More than one in three (35%) receiving assistance don't know how they will cope or expect they will not cope well at all. Four in five Australians receiving the JobSeeker payment (80%) expect a \$300 cut to the payment would mean they would definitely have to both skip meals and reduce how much fresh fruit and vegetables they buy⁸.

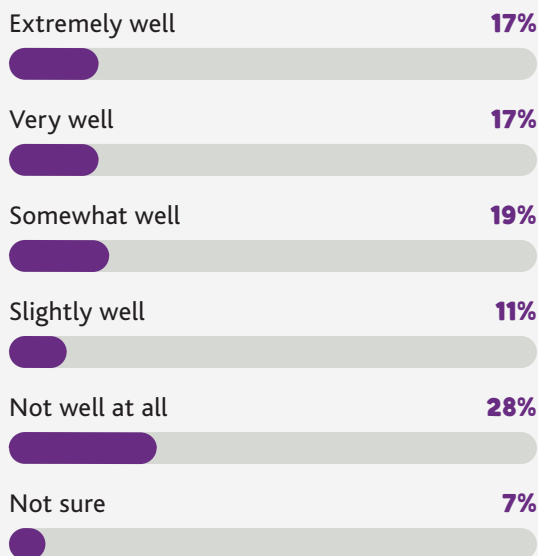
ONCE THE GOVERNMENT STARTED PROVIDING NEW OR INCREASED GOVERNMENT PAYMENTS, WERE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND DID IT HELP?

Food insecure Australians receiving or needing assistance n=799



AS RESTRICTIONS EASE, ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IS LIKELY TO BE WOUND BACK. HOW WELL DO YOU BELIEVE YOU WILL COPE OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS IF THIS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE?

Food insecure Australians receiving or needing assistance
n=799



Optimism around employment is even lower, with 63% of unemployed food insecure Australians indicating they are not at all optimistic about being able to secure a job in the next six months.

THE FUTURE IS UNPREDICTABLE. I KNOW I'VE GOT A JOB, BUT I DON'T KNOW FOR HOW LONG.

Kym, NSW

THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS I RECKON WILL BE EXTREMELY, EXTREMELY TOUGH. THE ISSUE WITH ME IS THAT I HAVE TO BE HONEST WITH MY EMPLOYERS THAT I HAVE TWO AUTISTIC CHILDREN. IF THE CARERS RING, I NEED TO DROP EVERYTHING AND GET HOME. IF I WASN'T HONEST AND SOMETHING HAPPENED, THEN I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FORGIVE MYSELF. SO, I TELL EMPLOYERS, 'I REALLY WANT THIS JOB, BUT I CAN'T COMMIT 100%, EVEN THOUGH I AM EXTREMELY QUALIFIED' BUT EMPLOYERS DON'T WANT TO TAKE THE RISK ON ME.

Jodie, NSW



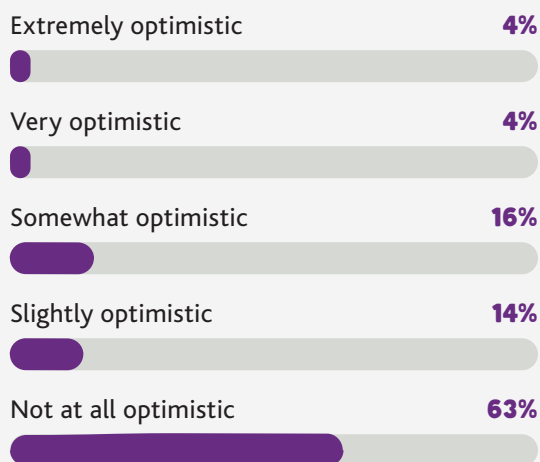
⁸ ACOSS, Survey of 634 people receiving new rate of JobSeeker income support payments, September 2020

WE WILL HAVE A PERIOD OF TIME WHERE IT WILL LOOK LIKE IT'S GONE BACK TO NORMAL BUT THE UNDERCURRENT OF THAT IS THAT THERE WILL BE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE PAST WHAT WE REALISE AND WE SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER AND MAKE SURE PEOPLE ARE CONNECTED AND TAPPED INTO SERVICES.

Angie, Reservoir Neighbourhood House, Melbourne

HOW OPTIMISTIC ARE YOU ABOUT BEING ABLE TO SECURE A JOB IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS?

Food insecure Australians not employed/looking for work
n=104



THE IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

More than half of food insecure Australians (53%) say they have experienced a decline in their mental health since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. This is unsurprising considering the extreme stress these Australians are experiencing in regard to their financial situation and their inability to access basic needs such as food. But beyond the stress, there are other emotions such as anxiety, shame and guilt as people want to contribute to those around them and look after their families. The most common emotions experienced as a result of not having enough food include stress (49%), depression (46%), anxiety (41%) and sadness (39%).



I'VE GOT DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AS IT IS AND (RUNNING OUT OF FOOD) JUST ADDS TO MY STRESS. MUM AND DAD ALWAYS BUY EVERYTHING, THEY'RE ALWAYS CONTRIBUTING. I'VE GOT TO CONTRIBUTE TOO, OTHERWISE I FEEL LIKE A WITCH. SO, I LIKE TO GIVE WHATEVER I CAN GET. THESE VOUCHERS ARE FABULOUS BECAUSE THEN I CAN CONTRIBUTE. AND WHAT I DID WITH THESE LAST FOUR VOUCHERS IS I BUILD THEM UP AND I MADE THEM \$100 AND THEN LAST WEEK, MUM AND I WENT TO WOOLIES AND WE JUST BOUGHT MEAT FOR THE FAMILY, JUST MEAT.

Theodora, VIC



IT MAKES IT VERY STRESSFUL AND I GET VERY WORRIED. IT IMPACTS THE WHOLE FAMILY BECAUSE ONCE MUM GETS WORRIED, THE KIDS GET WORRIED. I SUFFER FROM PTSD AND IT MAKES ME HAVE A LOT OF PANIC ATTACKS. MY PARTNER SAYS THAT I GET REALLY EMOTIONAL.

Single mum of 6, SA

I'M A BIT DEPRESSED ACTUALLY BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THAT KIND OF THING WHEN I WAS LIVING IN SRI LANKA...BUT AFTER COMING HERE I HAD TO THINK A LOT ABOUT IF I CAN SPEND THIS MUCH ON THIS AND, 'IS IT OK IF I CAN EAT OUT AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK?', 'WILL I HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY MY RENT?' IT'S STRESSFUL AND SOMETIMES I FEEL REALLY ASHAMED OF MYSELF, BECAUSE I COULDN'T FIND A JOB AND I HAD TO TRY REALLY HARD. AND IT'S WORSE WITH COVID BECAUSE I ALWAYS STAY INSIDE THE HOUSE AND MY HUSBAND WILL WORK LATE AND I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH PEOPLE TO TALK TO. IT WAS REALLY HARD FOR ME.

Vindya, SA



TOP EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AS A RESULT OF FOOD INSECURITY:



Stress
49%



Depression
46%



Anxiety
41%



Sadness
39%

SOCIAL IMPACTS

COVID-19 has not only caused changes in people's employment situations and emotional states but has also impacted relationships. With social distancing requirements and less ability to interact with people face to face, almost three in five Australians (58%) have experienced an increased feeling of loneliness because of the pandemic⁹.

Charity representatives describe how this has been felt even more by Australians experiencing food insecurity because they tend to be more socially isolated in the first place and the pandemic has removed many of the small opportunities they had for social interaction.



ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WE DID HERE PRE-COVID, WE HAD TEA, BISCUITS, LITTLE CAKES, WE ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO COME IN AND SIT DOWN AND CHAT TO ONE ANOTHER SO THERE WAS THAT SOCIAL INTERACTION. BECAUSE OF COVID THAT TOTALLY CHANGED FOR US...ONE OF THE THINGS THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T REALISE IS WHEN YOU'RE REALLY STRUGGLING TO PROVIDE FOOD, ONE OF THE THINGS YOU SUFFER FROM IS SOCIAL ISOLATION. THE DAMAGE COVID DID ON THE MENTAL SIDE OF THINGS FOR AN ALREADY VULNERABLE SECTOR OF OUR COMMUNITY WAS SIGNIFICANT... A LOT OF THEM DON'T HAVE JOBS, THEY'RE ON SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS. THEY DON'T HAVE THE MONEY TO SPARE ON SPORTING GROUPS OR SOCIAL GROUPS SO THEY'RE GENERALLY SOCIALLY ISOLATED TO START WITH AND WHEN COVID HIT THEY WERE TOTALLY ISOLATED AND THE ONE SOCIAL OUTING THEY HAD IN COMING TO COMMUNITY CARE AND SOCIALISING WITH OTHERS IN THEIR OWN SITUATION WAS TAKEN AWAY.

Peter, Kingborough Family Church, Hobart



FOOD RELIEF IS EVEN MORE CRUCIAL IN TIMES OF CRISIS

SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT SEEKING THE HELP THEY NEED

Just over three in five Australians experiencing food insecurity (61%) have accessed food relief since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic.

Despite many food insecure Australians needing food relief, 39% have not accessed food relief since

COVID-19 was declared. The most common barriers to seeking help are thinking there might be other people who need assistance more than they do (33%), embarrassment (33%) and shame (30%).



(MEN FIND IT EMBARRASSING). WHAT WE ARE SEEING IS THEY CAN'T BE THE BREADWINNER IN THE HOME AND THEY CAN'T FEED THEIR FAMILIES AND THEY FEEL REALLY BAD NOT BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEM. WE HAVE SEEN A LOT MORE COMING IN AND ASKING FOR IT. THEY'RE REALLY EMBARRASSED ABOUT ASKING FOR IT, AND THAT'S REALLY SAD. IT'S REALLY HARD FOR MEN TO COME AND ASK, WOMEN FIND IT EASIER.

Maria, founder Survivors R Us, NSW

I FELT REALLY BAD THAT I'D DONE ONE (ACCESSED FOOD RELIEF) PRIOR BUT (THE CHARITY) TOLD ME NOT TO BE SILLY AND THAT THEY WOULD HELP ME WHENEVER I NEEDED IT. ALTHOUGH THEY DON'T MIND, I'M SURE THERE ARE OTHER FAMILIES IN DESPERATE NEED AS WELL SO YOU FEEL A BIT IFFY.

Kym, NSW

(SOMETIMES I DON'T SEEK FOOD RELIEF EVEN IF WE'VE RUN OUT) BECAUSE IT'S KIND OF EMBARRASSING. I FEEL EMBARRASSED AND LIKE I'M NOT A GOOD ENOUGH PARENT BECAUSE I CAN'T AFFORD FOOD.

Single mum of 6, SA

TOP 5 BARRIERS TO SEEKING FOOD RELIEF FROM A CHARITY



BENEFITS OF FOOD RELIEF

Those who have accessed food relief, however, experience a number of benefits as a result. While food relief may not solve all the problems that are facing food insecure Australians, particularly in this period of COVID-19, it can help to relieve basic physical needs as well as relieving stress. The top benefits of food relief include feeling less hungry (40%) as well as improvements in mental (27%) and physical health (26%). Australians experiencing food insecurity are most likely to feel grateful (44%) as a result of receiving food relief.



(RECEIVING FOOD RELIEF IS) AMAZING. IT'S A WHOLE OTHER STRESS YOU DON'T NEED. EVEN IF IT'S A VARIETY BOX OR WHATEVER YOU'RE GOING TO GET, YOU CAN MAKE DO WITH IT FOR THE WEEK. AND ACTUALLY, THE BENEFITS ARE ONGOING. SINCE I HAD TO GET FOOD RELIEF I FOUND THERE WERE A LOT MORE SERVICES OUT THERE THAT I NEVER KNEW ABOUT. IT INTRODUCES YOU TO A NETWORK OF SUPPORT WHICH YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT UNLESS YOU'RE IN THAT.

Kym, NSW

I'M SO GRATEFUL FOR THEIR GENEROSITY AND ALL THE SWEETHEARTS THAT COME TO THE DOOR AND BRING YOU THINGS. I'M SO GRATEFUL TO THE VOLUNTEERS FOR DONATING ALL THEIR PRECIOUS TIME... IT CHANGES MY LIFE. EVEN IF IT'S JUST A HANDFUL OF VEGGIES, YOU CAN CUT THEM UP AND MAKE A NICE PASTA SAUCE OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. EVERYTHING HELPS, IT REALLY DOES.

Theodora, VIC



METHODOLOGY

SURVEY OF AUSTRALIANS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY

An online survey was conducted with 1,001 Australians aged 18 years and older who had experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months, with an even spread across gender, age and location. The survey was designed and deployed by McCrindle and was in field between 25 June and 15 July 2020.

A single-item measure was used to determine if respondents had experienced food insecurity. Respondents are asked to answer yes or no to the following question: "In the last 12 months, was there any time you or anyone in your household ran out of food and did not have enough money to purchase more?" This is a globally recognised tool for determining food insecurity and is used in a number of studies including the National Health Survey.

GRAPHS AND ROUNDING

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded for simplicity. Some graphs may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculations where two data points have been added are based on raw data (not the rounded data labels on the graph) which have then been rounded once combined.

FOODBANK PULSE SURVEYS

Five pulse surveys were conducted amongst charities registered with Foodbank, averaging 500 respondents per survey. Surveys were conducted monthly between April and September 2020.

IN-DEPTH PHONE INTERVIEWS

Nine phone interviews were conducted with Australians experiencing food insecurity and representatives from Foodbank's charity partners on the 20 and 21 August 2020. Participants were given the choice as to whether they would like to remain anonymous or not. Interview criteria is outlined below:

- Three 30-minute interviews with Australians who had experienced food insecurity before and during the pandemic
- Three 30-minute interviews with Australians who had only experienced food insecurity since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic
- Three 15-minute interviews with representatives from Foodbank's charity partners.

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