



FIGHTING HUNGER  
IN AUSTRALIA

# FOODBANK HUNGER REPORT 2018



mccrindle



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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

## **THE FOODBANK HUNGER REPORT PROVIDES AN ANNUAL SNAPSHOT OF FOOD INSECURITY IN AUSTRALIA**

This report combines insights from two surveys, bringing together the perspectives of charities providing front-line food relief as well as individuals experiencing food insecurity.

The Foodbank Charity Partner Survey was deployed to charities across Australia and gathered information about each organisation's food relief activities and beneficiaries. In its sixth year, this survey gathered 1,710 responses between December 2017 and April 2018.

The second survey was deployed to Australians who have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. This is the third time Foodbank has conducted research amongst those directly affected by food insecurity. The survey explored the prevalence of food insecurity in Australia as well as the experiences of those living with food insecurity. This survey was conducted in three stages between 25 July and 6 August 2018 and gathered responses from a core sample of 767 food insecure Australians.



# ABOUT FOODBANK

## **FOODBANK IS BY FAR THE LARGEST HUNGER RELIEF ORGANISATION IN AUSTRALIA, PROVIDING FOOD FOR OVER 67 MILLION MEALS LAST YEAR ALONE**

Foodbank is a non-profit organisation that partners with the entire Australian food and grocery industry. This includes working with farmers, wholesalers, manufacturers and retailers to source fresh and manufactured foods as well as personal and household care items for those in need. Donations include stock that doesn't meet industry specifications, is close to expiry or excess to requirements. Companies also make donations as part of their corporate social responsibility commitments and cause-related marketing campaigns.

Foodbank provides food for more than 2,600 charities around Australia which work to feed the hungry. In addition to providing food to charities, Foodbank provides regular breakfasts to over 100,000 students in 1,750 schools across the country.

As a not-for-profit organisation, Foodbank works with governments, individuals, organisations, community groups and thousands of volunteers to fight hunger in Australia.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Foodbank’s activities in Australia play a key role in delivering on a number of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals which are aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all. Foodbank’s operations are strongly aligned to the following five of the 17 goals:



### ZERO HUNGER

Everyone in Australia should have enough safe and nutritious food to thrive. A country with zero hunger can positively impact our economy, health, education, equality and social development. Achieving zero hunger is fundamental to building a better future for everyone.

### NO POVERTY & REDUCED INEQUALITIES

By providing essential food relief, Foodbank assists front-line charities to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations. Overcoming inequality will help drive economic growth and is critical to achieving social cohesion, and decreasing political and social tensions.

### RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption and production is key to reducing future economic, environmental and social costs and strengthening economic competitiveness. Foodbank plays a critically important role in assisting the Australian Government to achieve this goal through its food rescue activities and partnering with stakeholders along the supply chain to reduce food waste and food loss.

### PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The Foodbank model engenders multi-stakeholder partnerships throughout the entire food and grocery supply chain. These partnerships mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources to deliver outcomes.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **MORE THAN FOUR MILLION AUSSIES HAVE EXPERIENCED FOOD INSECURITY IN THE LAST YEAR**

All around Australia there are people who don't know where their next meal is coming from. In fact, in the last 12 months, more than four million Australians (18% of the population) have been in a situation where they have run out of food and have been unable to buy more. Of these, more than three in four (76%) are categorised as having very low food security.

The charities and community groups that work with Foodbank provide food relief to over 710,000 Australians every month, 26% of whom are under the age of 19.

Despite this, these organisations are struggling to keep up with demand as 49% of charities report the number of people seeking food relief continues to increase year on year. In the last 12 months, the proportion of food insecure Australians seeking food relief has increased from 46% to 51%, the equivalent of 384,000 people. With their current resources, charities are having to turn away 7% of the individuals seeking food relief every month. Only 36% of charities feel they are meeting the full needs of the people they do assist.



## **AUSTRALIANS LIVING IN REGIONAL OR REMOTE AREAS ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY**

Australians in regional and remote areas are 33% more likely to experience food insecurity than those living in major and capital cities (22% compared to 17% respectively). This means more than 1.5 million country Australians have experienced food insecurity in the last year.

Living in a regional or remote area often means it is harder to access food. One in six people living in the country (17%) suggest they don't have easy access to food shops compared to one in 10 (10%) in the city. Those experiencing food insecurity in the country are also more likely to feel socially isolated compared to those living in the city. Only a third of Australians in the country (34%) feel they can talk to their friends and family when they cannot afford to buy enough food (compared to 43% of those living in major and capital cities).

## **LIVING WITH FOOD INSECURITY MEANS FOOD BECOMES A DISCRETIONARY ITEM**

Three in 10 Australians experiencing food insecurity (30%) attribute living on a low income or pension as the main reason they are unable to afford enough food. Almost three in five Australians living with food insecurity (58%) spend more than 20% of their total household income on food. This is more than double the proportion the average Australian household spends (9.8%)<sup>1</sup>. Despite spending such a large portion of their income on food, many Australians experiencing food insecurity are forced to either cut down on the size of their meals (56%) or skip a meal (54%) at least once a week to make the food last longer. One in four (26%) go an entire day without eating at least once a week.

## **FOOD INSECURITY IS DIMINISHING QUALITY OF LIFE**

Food insecurity has a significant impact on quality of life with half of those experiencing it feeling tired or lethargic (52%) when they don't have enough to eat. Lack of food can also result in a decline in mental health (44%) and a reduced ability to concentrate (38%). Australians struggling with food insecurity say they feel stressed (57%), depressed (52%) and sad (47%) during times when they are unable to buy enough food.

## **FOOD RELIEF CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF AUSTRALIANS**

The top three benefits of food relief, according to Australians who have received assistance in the last year, include feeling less hungry (49%), being better able to concentrate (32%) and being able to afford small luxuries (30%) such as toiletries, tea or coffee. These benefits have made a tangible difference in the lives of many Australians, with more than four out of five recipients of food relief (83%) saying these benefits made a difference in their lives for a week or more.

<sup>1</sup>World Economic Forum, 2016

# A SNAPSHOT OF FOOD INSECURITY IN AUSTRALIA



More than 4 million Australians (18%)  
have experienced food insecurity in  
the last 12 months



Three in four (76%) are categorised  
as having 'very low food security'<sup>2</sup>



Children represent 22% of food  
insecure Australians<sup>3</sup>

## THE CRISIS IN THE COUNTRY

Australians living in the country are **33% MORE LIKELY** to have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months than those living in cities.

**MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION** Australians in regional and remote areas have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months.

**33% MORE LIKELY**



**22%**

**VS**



**17%**

## HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING FOOD RELIEF?

**FOODBANK PROVIDES RELIEF TO OVER**

**710,000**  
AUSTRALIANS EVERY MONTH\*



**26%**  
OF WHOM ARE UNDER  
THE AGE OF 19



### AGE BREAKDOWN OF AUSTRALIANS RECEIVING FOOD RELIEF



## CHARITIES ARE STRUGGLING TO MEET THE RISING NEED FOR FOOD RELIEF



**49%** of charities reported an increase in the number of individuals seeking food relief over the last 12 months



Charities are unable to assist **7%** of people seeking food relief each month



Only **36%** of charities are currently meeting the full needs of the people they assist

\*Not including School Breakfast Programs

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Security Survey Module

<sup>3</sup> Foodbank, Rumbling Tummies: Child Hunger in Australia, 2018

# DEFINING FOOD INSECURITY

## **FOOD INSECURITY IS...**

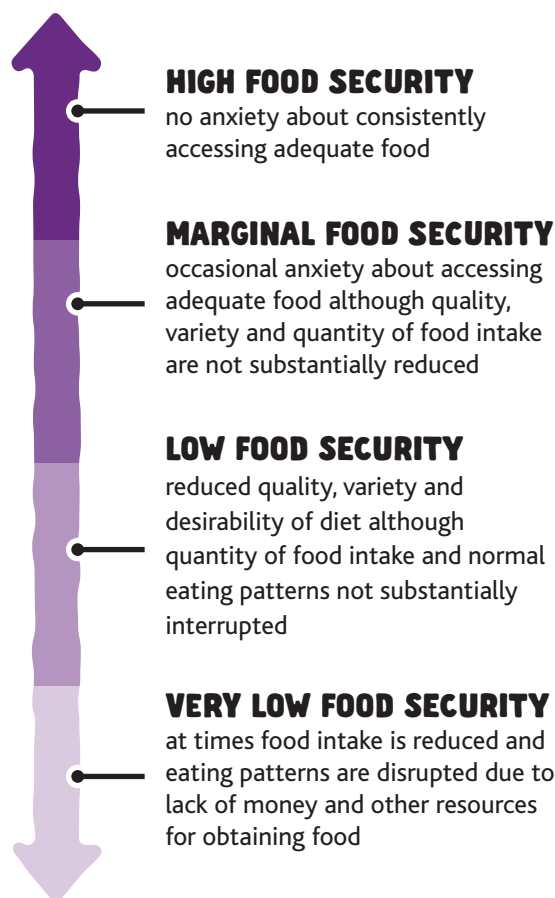
**'A SITUATION THAT EXISTS  
WHEN PEOPLE LACK SECURE  
ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT  
AMOUNTS OF SAFE AND  
NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR  
NORMAL GROWTH AND  
DEVELOPMENT AND AN  
ACTIVE AND HEALTHY LIFE.'**

## WHAT IS FOOD INSECURITY?

Food insecurity defines a spectrum of circumstances that ranges from occasional anxiety over accessing food to going without food altogether. Food insecurity is defined as 'a situation that exists when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life.'<sup>4</sup>

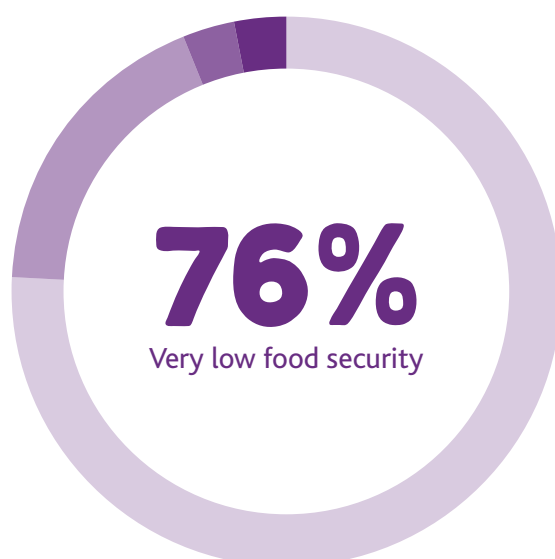
## MEASURING FOOD INSECURITY

The Food Security Core Survey module, developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is a globally-recognised tool for measuring food insecurity and hunger in a community. This module (right) categorises people into four stages of food security.



## THE SEVERITY OF FOOD INSECURITY IN AUSTRALIA

More than four million Australians (18%) have experienced food insecurity in the last year\*. Of these, three in four (76%) are categorised as having very low food security, according to the USDA scale. This means these people (14% of all Australians) are eating less food than they need because they lack the money or other resources to obtain food.



<sup>4</sup>Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

\*Answered yes to the question "In the last 12 months, was there any time when you or anyone in your household ran out of food and did not have enough money to purchase more?"

# WHO EXPERIENCES FOOD INSECURITY IN AUSTRALIA?

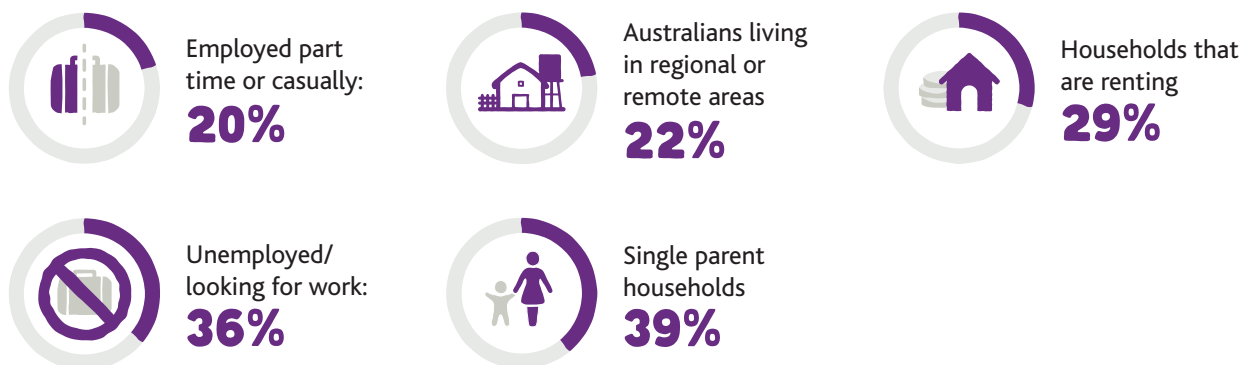
**WHILE FOOD INSECURITY IMPACTS AUSTRALIANS IN MANY DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE ARE CERTAIN GROUPS IN OUR SOCIETY WHO ARE MORE VULNERABLE. THE RATE OF FOOD INSECURITY AMONGST THESE DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS IS HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL RATE**



**18%**

National food insecurity rate

## PROPORTION OF DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY

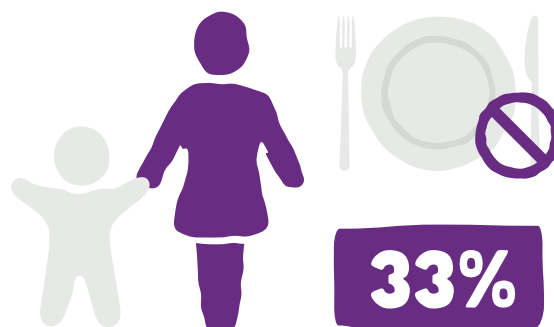


## THE VULNERABILITY OF SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

Two in five single parent households (39%) have experienced food insecurity in the last year. This proportion is much higher than in other household types, with lone person households (23%) the next most likely to experience food insecurity followed by couple families with dependent children (22%).

Single parents often make personal sacrifices to ensure their children can eat. Three in five single parents experiencing food insecurity (61%) skip a meal at least once a week to make sure there is enough food for their family. One in three (33%) go a whole day without eating at least once a week. Food is a significant expense for these families, with two in three (66%) spending more than 20% of their household income just on food.

**AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK, ONE IN THREE (33%) OF FOOD INSECURE SINGLE PARENTS GO A WHOLE DAY WITHOUT EATING.**



**THEY'RE USED TO HEARING, 'I'M OK, I ATE WHILE I WAS COOKING'.** — Single mum from Melbourne

# THE CRISIS IN THE COUNTRY

## AUSTRALIANS LIVING IN REGIONAL AND REMOTE AREAS ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY

More than one in five Australians living in regional or remote areas (22%) have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months (compared to 17% in capital and major cities). Australians living in the country, therefore, are 33% more likely to have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months than those living in cities.

The most common reason regional and remote Australians go hungry is because they are living on a low income (53% compared to 37% in capital and major cities). This is unsurprising considering three in five (60%) are living on a gross household income of less than \$700 per week (compared to just two in five (43%) living in our cities). The most common reason Australians living in cities experience food insecurity is due to an unexpected expense or large bill (47%).

**IT IS SHAMING WALKING INTO A  
SUPERMARKET LOOKING AT PRICES  
AND REALISING YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH  
MONEY TO PAY FOR ITEMS YOU NEED.** ””

– 55-64 year old man from regional NSW



# COPING WITH FOOD INSECURITY CAN BE TOUGHER IN THE COUNTRY

Not only are Australians in the country more likely to experience food insecurity, but they are also more likely to have difficulty coping with these circumstances. Almost two in three Australians in regional and remote areas (65%) feel stressed as a result of not having enough food, compared to just over half (54%) of those living in major and capital cities. Aussies living in the country are also more likely to feel depressed (60% compared to 48% in cities), embarrassed (52% compared to 39% in cities) and sad (51% compared to 44% in cities) as a result of food insecurity.

Living in the country often means that shops are further away, with one in six (17%) suggesting they cannot easily access food shops from where they live compared to one in 10 (10%) in the city. Individuals and families experiencing food insecurity in the country also feel more socially isolated than those in the city. When faced with not having enough food and being unable to afford to buy more, only a third of Australians living in the country (34%) feel like they can talk to their friends and family about it, compared to 43% of those living major and capital cities.

**WE MADE A DECISION TO BASICALLY LIVE ON CEREAL AND BREAD, SO WE HAD OUR FOOD MONEY FOR DROUGHT-STRICKEN FARM ANIMALS** – Farmer, ACT



## WHICH OF THESE FEELINGS DID YOU EXPERIENCE AS A RESULT OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH FOOD?

AUSSIES LIVING IN REGIONAL AND REMOTE AREAS:



**65%**  
Stressed



**60%**  
Depressed



**52%**  
Embarrassed

AUSSIES LIVING IN MAJOR AND CAPITAL CITIES:



**54%**  
Stressed



**48%**  
Depressed



**39%**  
Embarrassed

# THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF FOOD INSECURITY

## LOW INCOMES COUPLED WITH THE HIGH COST OF LIVING ARE KEY DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY

Almost half of Australians who have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months (49%) have gone hungry due to an unexpected expense or large bill. The high cost of living in Australia is a strong driver of food insecurity as people are often forced to choose between paying

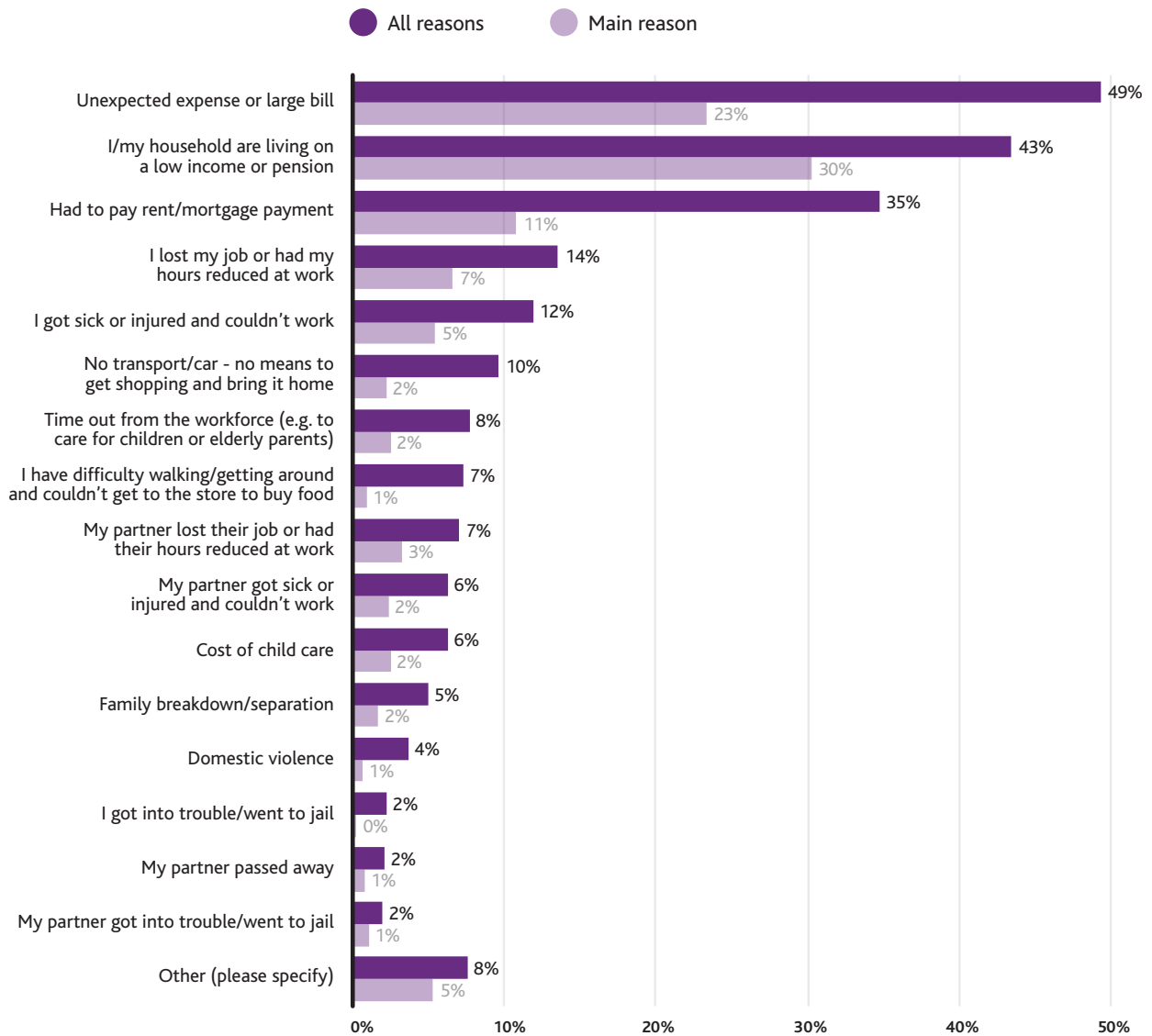
their bills or feeding themselves and their families. Most commonly cited as the main reason why people can't afford enough food, however, is simply living on a low income or pension in the first place.

**IT'S NOT EASY WHEN YOU HAVE TO ASK FOR HELP, YOU LOSE YOUR DIGNITY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY THE CASE WHEN YOU WORK SO HARD FOR INSUFFICIENT REWARDS.**

”

– Full time student from Perth

# REASONS FOR NOT HAVING ENOUGH FOOD



Females are **31% MORE LIKELY** than men to experience food insecurity as a result of living on a low income or pension.



Crises, such as domestic violence, family breakdown or the death of a spouse/partner, is the **MAIN REASON 5% OF FOOD INSECURE AUSTRALIANS** are unable to afford food. This is more likely to be the main cause of food insecurity amongst single parent families (8%).



# FOOD BECOMES A DISCRETIONARY ITEM IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Living with food insecurity means that food is a significant household expense. Almost three in five Australians living with food insecurity (58%) spend more than 20% of their household income on food. This is more than double the proportion the average Australian household spends

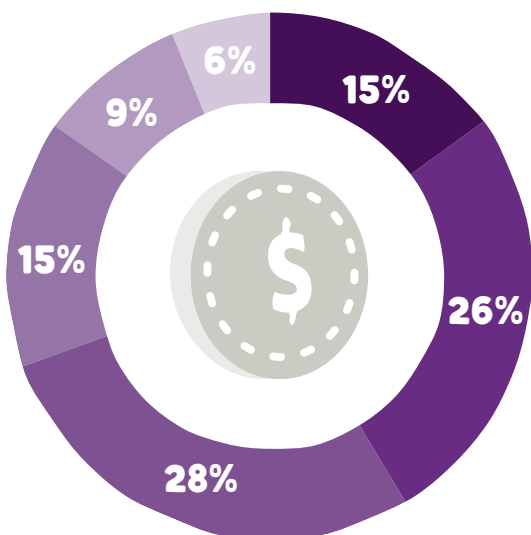
(9.8%)<sup>1</sup>. Despite spending such a large portion of income on food, many are forced to either cut down on the size of their meals (56%) or skip a meal (54%) at least once a week to make the food last longer. One in four (26%) go for an entire day without eating at least once a week.

**“ THE MORTGAGE PAYMENT COMES OUT AND THERE ISN'T MUCH LEFT AFTER ALL THE DIRECT DEBITS COME OUT. FOOD IS ALWAYS A LUXURY EXPENSE.**



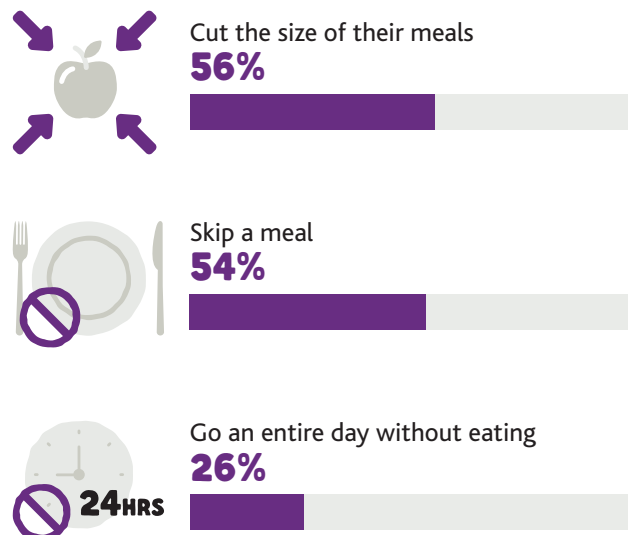
– 35-44 year old woman from regional Victoria

## PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON FOOD



- 10% or less
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- More than 50%

## PROPORTION OF FOOD INSECURE AUSTRALIANS WHO AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK...



## BEING UNABLE TO AFFORD FOOD IS BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DIFFICULT

Being unable to afford enough food can have many damaging effects on an individual's quality of life. Lack of food can often result in feeling tired or lethargic (52%), a decline in mental health (44%) and a loss of confidence (38%). Many Australians struggling with food insecurity say they feel stressed (57%), depressed

(52%) and sad (47%) when they are unable to buy enough food. These emotions are the result of individuals feeling frustrated with their situation, combined with a sense of shame at being unable to meet a basic need for themselves or their household.

**I FELT WORTHLESS, WHICH WAS EXACERBATED WHEN I SCAVENGED FOOD FROM THE RUBBISH BIN AT A LOCAL FAST FOOD PLACE. IT ENABLED ME TO EAT, BUT I WAS ABUSED BY PASSERS-BY.**



– 55-64 year old man from Adelaide

Many Australians experiencing food insecurity feel they are unable to talk about their situation to people around them. Two in five (43%) feel embarrassed as a result of being unable to afford food and almost as many (37%) say they are unable to invite friends or family over in

these times. Only 45% feel they have a community they can trust to help them in times of need and even less (40%) feel they can talk to their friends and family about their situation.

**HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? I'M INFURIATED THAT I AND SO MANY OTHERS FIND OURSELVES IN SITUATIONS OUT OF OUR CONTROL. HELP IS NOT AVAILABLE. I FEEL WORTHLESS, NOT BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE AND NOT BEING ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. IT'S A HORRIBLE CYCLE OF NO JOB, NO CHILD CARE, NO WAY OUT.**



– Single mother from metro Queensland

**ONLY TWO IN FIVE (40%) FEEL THEY CAN TALK TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHEN THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FOOD FOR THEMSELVES OR OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS**

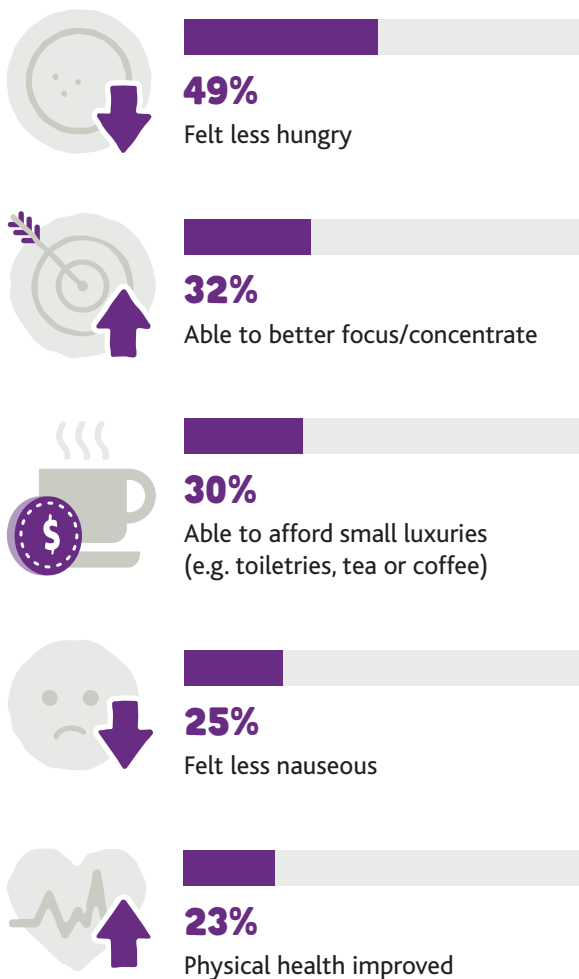


# IMPACTS OF FOOD RELIEF





## THE TOP 5 BENEFITS OF RECEIVING FOOD RELIEF



## EMBARRASSMENT AND SHAME CAN HOLD PEOPLE BACK FROM RECEIVING THE HELP THEY NEED

Australians who have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months expect food relief to provide a number of benefits such as feeling less hungry (56%), improving mental health (42%) and improving physical health (40%). Despite this, only one in two (52%) have sought assistance from a charity. The main reasons individuals have not sought assistance is the belief that other people might need assistance more than they do (37%) as well as a sense of embarrassment (35%) and shame (33%).

## FOOD RELIEF CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF AUSTRALIANS

The top three benefits of food relief, according to Australians who have received assistance in the last year, include feeling less hungry (49%), being better able to focus/concentrate (32%) and being able to afford small luxuries such as toiletries, tea or coffee (30%). These individuals felt relieved (46%), less stressed (35%) and more hopeful (31%) as a direct result of receiving assistance from a charity. More than four out of five recipients of food relief (83%) say the benefits of food assistance made a difference in their lives for a week or more.

FOODBANK WORKS  
WITH OVER  
**2,600**  
CHARITIES  
ACROSS AUSTRALIA...

**NT**



134



31,000



40%



87%

**WA**



481



508,000



39%



28%

# FOODBANK ACRO

**SA**



551



387,000



51%



28%



Number of Foodbank agencies



Meals per month



Proportion of charities that report an increase in the number of people seeking food relief



Additional food that would be required to meet total demand



AND PROVIDES MORE THAN  
**710,000**  
**PEOPLE**  
WITH FOOD RELIEF  
EVERY MONTH.

**QLD**



281



1.9 MILLION



51%



37%

# ACROSS AUSTRALIA

**NSW & ACT**



518



1.7 MILLION



48%



34%

**VIC**



459



945,000



57%



35%

**TAS**



213



65,000



58%



37%

# METHODOLOGY

## FOODBANK CHARITY PARTNER SURVEY

Foodbank Australia conducted the Charity Partner Survey from December 2017 to April 2018 with agencies registered with all state and territory Foodbanks to receive food and groceries. Respondents were asked to answer questions based on their current operating performance, clientele and needs. The survey received 1,710 responses which represented 71% of all registered agencies across Australia that had received food from Foodbank in the last 12 months.

Data collated in the survey was cleaned to ensure a robust analysis including filtering of results to only include organisations that provided food relief and verifying any outliers to ensure these responses did not inappropriately alter the overall results.

The total number of people receiving assistance from Foodbank's agencies was calculated by finding the average number of people assisted by agencies for each state and multiplying this by the number of agencies in each state that had received food from Foodbank in the last 12 months. This is the same method used in the 2017 report but differs from the method used in earlier iterations. The same calculation was used to find the number of people unable to be assisted by Foodbank's agencies.

The section titled 'Foodbank across Australia' reports the total number of agencies registered with Foodbank (n=2,740). Calculations for the number of people assisted, however, are based on the number of agencies that received food from Foodbank in the last 12 months (n=2,558).

## USDA FOOD SECURITY CORE SURVEY MODULE

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Security Core Survey module was used to determine the scale of food insecurity in Australia. Questions from the 'Household food security survey module: three stage design' were replicated in the survey of Australians experiencing food insecurity to categorise the food security status of Australians. The responses were coded according to the USDA model making the results in this report comparable to other deployments of this survey tool.

## SURVEY OF AUSTRALIANS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY

An online survey was conducted with Australians aged 18 years and older who had experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. The survey was designed and deployed by McCrindle and was conducted in three stages:

Stage 1: A panel of 1,009 Australians (nationally representative by state, age and gender) were asked whether they had experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. Data from this question was used to inform statistics about the prevalence of food insecurity in Australia.

To determine if respondents had experienced food insecurity, they were asked to answer yes or no to the following question: "In the last 12 months, was there any time when you or anyone in your household ran out of food and did not have enough money to purchase more?" 184 Australians were found to have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months.

Stage 2: Following stage 1, the survey was re-launched to gather a larger sample of Australians experiencing food insecurity. A total of 767 Australians (including the 184 from stage 1), were then asked about their experience of food insecurity.

Stage 3: The survey was re-launched a third time to gather additional responses from Australians living in regional and remote areas. A total of 384 responses was gathered from Australians living in these areas in order to make robust comparisons between regional/remote and urban areas.

## GRAPHS AND ROUNDING

Data labels on the graphs and visuals in this report have been rounded for simplicity. Some graphs may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. The bars and columns in each graph reflect the raw data. Any calculations are based on raw data (not the rounded data labels) which have then been rounded once combined.

# CONTACTS

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**FIGHTING HUNGER  
IN AUSTRALIA**

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