

# Food insecurity in Australia? More than 1 in 5 Aussies have not had enough to eat in the last year



*Food insecurity is a growing social crisis in Australia despite being one of the world's wealthiest countries. More than 1 in 5 Australians (21%) have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months, meaning they ran out of food and were unable to buy more.*

Since 2017, McCrindle has been partnering with Foodbank Australia to deliver the Hunger Report, Australia's only national publication bringing together the perspectives of service providers and Australians who access food relief services.

[The 2019 Foodbank Hunger Report](#) combines insights from two surveys, bringing together the perspectives of 2,000 charities and community groups providing front-line food relief as

well as 1,000 individuals experiencing food insecurity. The report provides a snapshot of Australia's growing food insecurity problem and is considered the definitive source of insights into food insecurity in Australia.

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation, food insecurity is defined as individuals or households having limited or uncertain physical, social or economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally relevant food.

At least once a week, Food insecure Australians

- skip a meal (55%)
- cut down on the size of their meals to make their food go further (50%)
- go a whole day without eating (30%).

## **Key findings**

1. More than 5 million Australians experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months.
2. It is more likely for a child to be food insecure than an adult with more than 1 in 5 children (22%) experiencing food insecurity in the last 12 months.
3. The number of Australians seeking relief from charities has increased by 22%.
4. Women are at greater risk of food insecurity with more than one in four women (27%) experiencing food insecurity in the last 12 months, compared to 18% of men.
5. People with food insecurity are five times more likely to experience psychological distress than the average Australian.
6. Women may be more vulnerable to food insecurity as they are more likely than men to have experienced domestic violence, financial abuse or raising children on their own for an extended period at some point in their lifetime.
7. Single parent households are most likely to experience food insecurity (47%).

## **What causes food insecurity?**

The cost of living is a key cause of food insecurity in Australia, especially for those living on a low income, which can be broken down into three immediate causes:

1. Unexpected bill or expense (49%)
2. Living on a low income or pension (42%)
3. Had to pay rent/mortgage (34%).

Australians with a history of personal hardship are more vulnerable to food insecurity. For example, 7 in 10 Australians experiencing food insecurity have faced being unable to find a

job for an extended period at some point in their lives, while 2 in 5 have experienced domestic violence.

### **Barriers to seeking assistance**

Australians experiencing food insecurity put off seeking assistance because they

- think there might be people who need assistance more than they do (41%),
- feel embarrassment (40%),
- shame (39%).

### **Charities are struggling to meet the rising need of food relief**

Foodbank provides food relief to more than 815,000 Australians every month and distributes food and groceries to over 2,400 charities nationally. Yet only 37% of their charities report meeting the full needs of the people they assist. As a not-for-profit organisation, Foodbank relies on governments, individuals, organisations, community groups and thousands of volunteers to fight hunger.

[You can read the full 2019 Foodbank Hunger Report here.](#)

### **For more information**

If you found this article interesting, download our free Australian Communities Report and Infographic for more information on the trends impacting the future of the not-for-profit sector.

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