



YOUFOODS INSIGHTS

**BENDIGO FOODSHARE YOUTH RESEARCH
OCTOBER 2020**

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WITH THANKS TO YOBENDIGO AND BSA BENDIGO



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the land in which we reside – past, present and emerging.

A thank you to our partners YoBendigo and BSA Bendigo for their help in spreading the word about this research. Without your help, we would not have found the participants we needed – a group notoriously difficult to reach through traditional recruitment methods!



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01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There is a rising need for food in the Central Victorian region, particularly among young people.

Unclear on whether their current model of food distribution was meeting the needs of young people in Central Victoria, Bendigo Foodshare wanted to engage with youth in the region to understand what is happening on the ground and how to evolve the current model to better meet their needs.

This project aimed to understand:

- Local young people's experiences of food (in)security and the impacts that COVID-19 has had on this experience
- Local young people's awareness of available services and where they would go to seek information or support
- The benefits and barriers to obtaining food relief and
- Perceptions on the best approach to help young people overcome these barriers and obtain relief when they need it.

The findings of this project will be shared with existing youth-focused services and support networks in the Greater Bendigo area. The findings will also be used to develop and secure future funding for a project focused on improving youth food security within the Bendigo region. The insights and ideas shared in this report are an important component in the development of this project.



SUMMARY

This report presents insights from a survey conducted from 20 July to 28 August 2020. The survey gathered responses from a total sample of 210-286 young people, primarily located in Central Victoria. The sample size varies throughout the report due to drop out, survey logic and the demographic questions being optional. Participants were incentivised with a competition of skill, with prizes including 5 Spotify vouchers, 20 grocery vouchers and a PlayStation 4.

With respondents representing over 39 suburbs across Central Victoria, this study highlights Central Victorian youth and their experiences of food insecurity.

Survey respondents were more often female (78%), studying (81%) and living in Central Vic (72%). All respondents were between 16 and 24 years.

Throughout the report, we highlight responses from those with lived experience of accessing food relief and juxtapose these against those who do not have lived experience. Comparing these two groups allows valuable insights into the differences of claimed vs actual behaviours (i.e. what we think we will do vs what we actually do, as they are often not the same). While we must be wary of the small sample size of people with lived experience, where there are stark differences these are worth consideration.

The research found that **76% of respondents had experienced some form of food insecurity in the last 2 years**. A large portion of this hardship had been experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic began with many experiencing food insecurity for the first time.

There was **low unprompted awareness of where to access food relief**, with 25% of respondents who had not accessed relief in the last two years not knowing where they would go. Of those that had accessed food relief in the last 2 years, food banks or charities were the most common places to go for assistance.

If they were struggling to put food on the table, respondents would **most likely go to friends or family, education institutions and websites or social media for information or support**.



The **top benefit to receiving relief** were seen to be **feeling less stressed**, while, according to those with lived experience, the **top barrier was thinking that other people might need assistance more than they did**. Those without lived experience believed feeling embarrassed about seeking relief would be the biggest barrier.

Difference between prompted and unprompted recall of food relief options highlights **a potential challenge in the current language used to promote services**.

More information and awareness of services is highlighted as the best way to make it easier for your people to access food relief. In addition to this, normalizing asking for help, involving education institutions and skill development were the next biggest themes.

The report wraps up by highlighting three big picture ideas – two student experiences, the need for new language and the building of brand awareness through channels that people are familiar – and concluding with recommendations.



SAMPLING BIAS

This project used the snowball approach to collecting responses. This included posts on websites and social media by Bendigo Foodshare and other affiliates, email blasts to Bendigo Foodshare's partners, direct mail to contacts in local schools, word of mouth communication and articles in local newspapers. The respondents of this survey are therefore more likely to be affiliated with Bendigo Foodshare or other organisations and schools around Greater Bendigo.



Consequently, we advise readers not to see the data as representative of *all* 16-24 years old in the Greater Bendigo area. As you will see on the following pages, responses were strongly skewed towards students and females. The data is unweighted and the sampling is not reflective of ABS data. As a result, these findings should be interpreted as directional only.

This leaves the voices of perhaps the most vulnerable and most likely to need support unheard in this report – i.e. young people who are not in the education system, already affiliated with organisations that provide relief or don't have access to the internet and who are struggling to meet ends meet, perhaps without the support of their family. More work can and should be done to hear the voices of these young people.

Finally, due to the survey logic some questions had a low base sizes. These must be taken into account when looking at the data.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Case manager or counsellor examples included Headspace, Anglicare or Haven.

Central Victoria included Bendigo and nearby areas such as Castlemaine, Kyneton, Heathcote, Girgarre, Rochester, Echuca, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill, Boort, St Arnaud, Maryborough, Avoca, Beaufort, and other towns in this area.

Community organisation examples included Mad Cow, Yo Bendigo or local neighbourhood houses.

Educational institution examples included school, university or TAFE, Bendigo Student Association (BSA), teacher or school counsellor.

Food insecurity is a person's limited or inconsistent access to food due to social or economic circumstances.

Food relief is being provided with food or cash to purchase food in times of an emergency. For example from a food bank, charity or community organisation, a case manager or counsellor such as at Bendigo Student Association, Mad Cow, Headspace, Anglicare, Haven.

Lived experience refers to the perspectives of those have accessed food relief in the last 2 years or are more broadly food insecure.

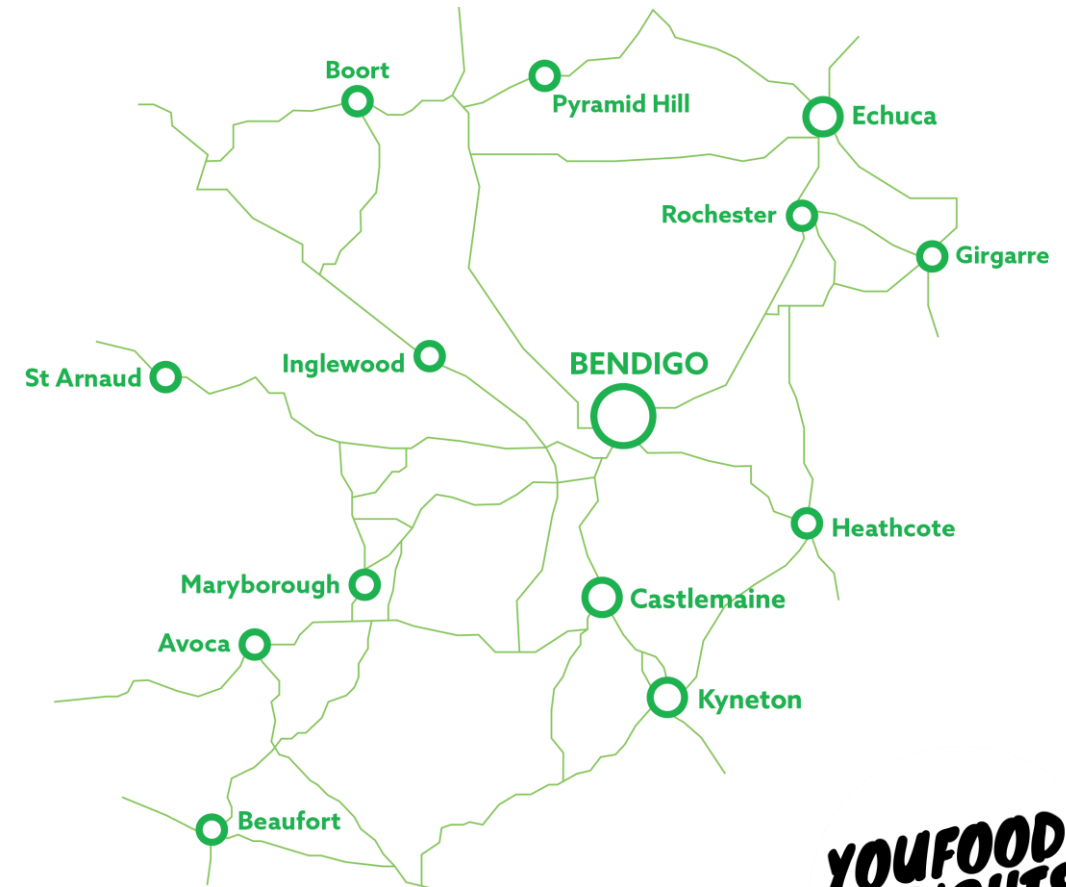


02 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

CONTEXTUALISING THE RESULTS

RESPONSE BREAKDOWN

Location	N	%
In Central Victoria*	151	73%
Bendigo central (city)	13	9%
Flora Hill	11	7%
Strathfieldsaye	11	7%
Strathdale	9	6%
Kennington	8	5%
East Bendigo	7	5%
Golden Square	7	5%
Junortoun	7	5%
Elsewhere in regional / rural Australia (e.g. Ballarat)	41	20%
Metro Australia (e.g. Melbourne)	13	6%
Prefer not to say	0	0%



**YOUFOOD
INSIGHTS**
YOUTH FOOD
POVERTY IN
CENTRAL VIC
SURVEY

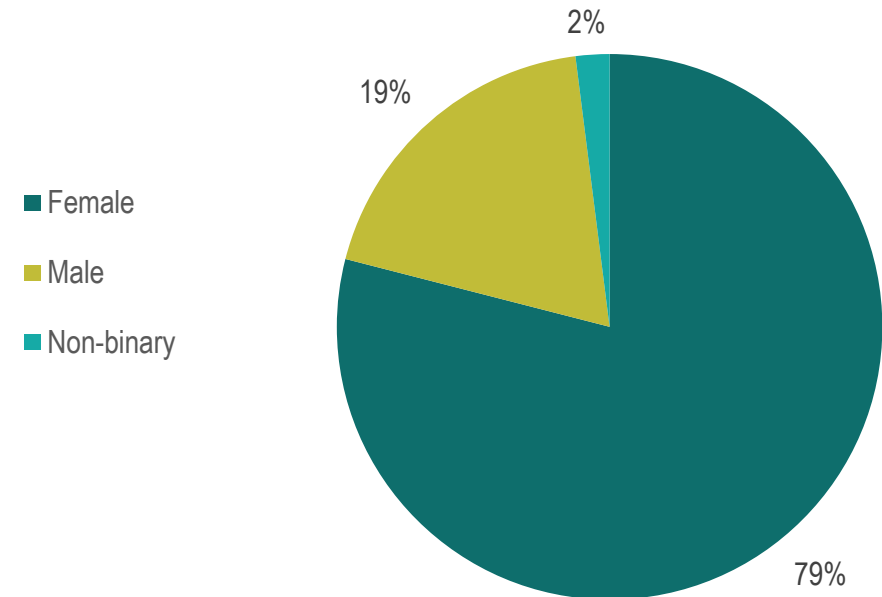
* Over 39 suburbs across Central Victoria were represented, the top 8 have been listed.

RESPONSE BREAKDOWN

Gender	N	%
Female	163	79%
Male	39	19%
Non-binary	5	2%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

Age	N	%
16-18	125	39%
18-21	108	34%
21-24	86	27%

Responses by Gender

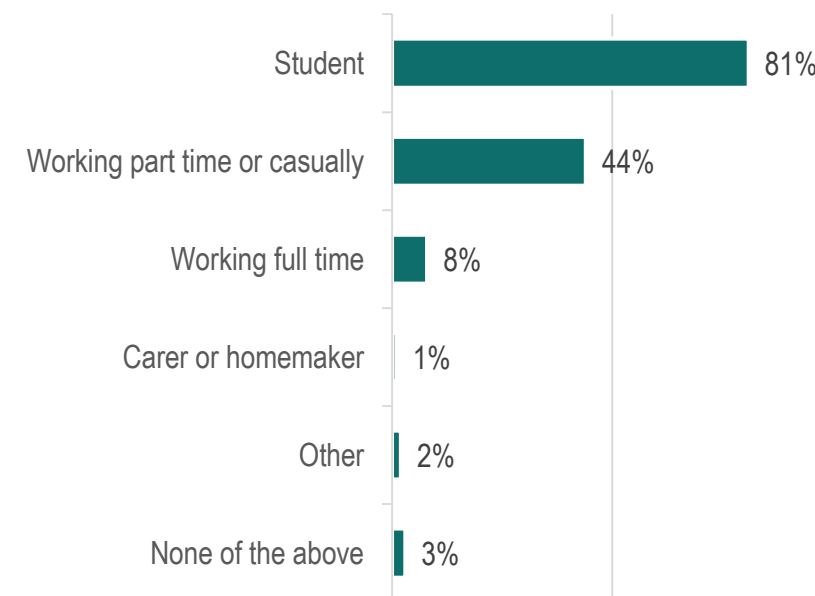


RESPONSE BREAKDOWN

Study and work situation	N	%
I am a student at school, TAFE, university, or another education institution	232	81%
I work part time or casually	125	44%
I work full time	23	8%
I am a carer or a stay-at-home parent or spouse	2	1%
Other	5	2%
None of the above	9	3%

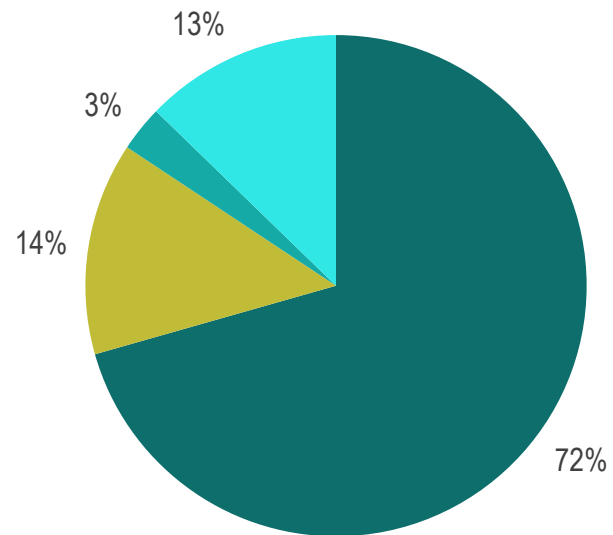
Study location	N	%
University	90	52%
High-school	70	40%
TAFE	9	5%
Short course	3	2%
Online education / Other	3	2%

Responses by Study and work situation



RESPONSE BREAKDOWN

Responses by Residential situation in Central Victoria



- Always lived here (n=107)
- Moved here to study (n=21)
- Moved here to work (n=5)
- Moved here for another reason / Other (n=20)

Residential situation in Central Victoria	N	%
Always lived here	107	72%
Moved here from another place in Australia to study	19	13%
Moved here from another place in Australia to work	5	3%
Moved here from another country to study	2	1%
Moved here from another country to work	0	0%
Moved here for another reason	17	11%
Other	3	2%

03 RESULTS OVERVIEW

TOP LINE DATA FOR ALL SURVEY
QUESTION



EXPERIENCES OF INSECURITY AND RELIEF

EXPERIENCES OF FOOD INSECURITY

Seventy-one per cent of those surveyed had experienced some form of food insecurity over the last two years.

Despite high numbers of food insecurity, only 12% had actually accessed food relief from a food bank or charity in the last two years.

The top 3 forms (for full list, see appendix A) of food insecurity experienced were:

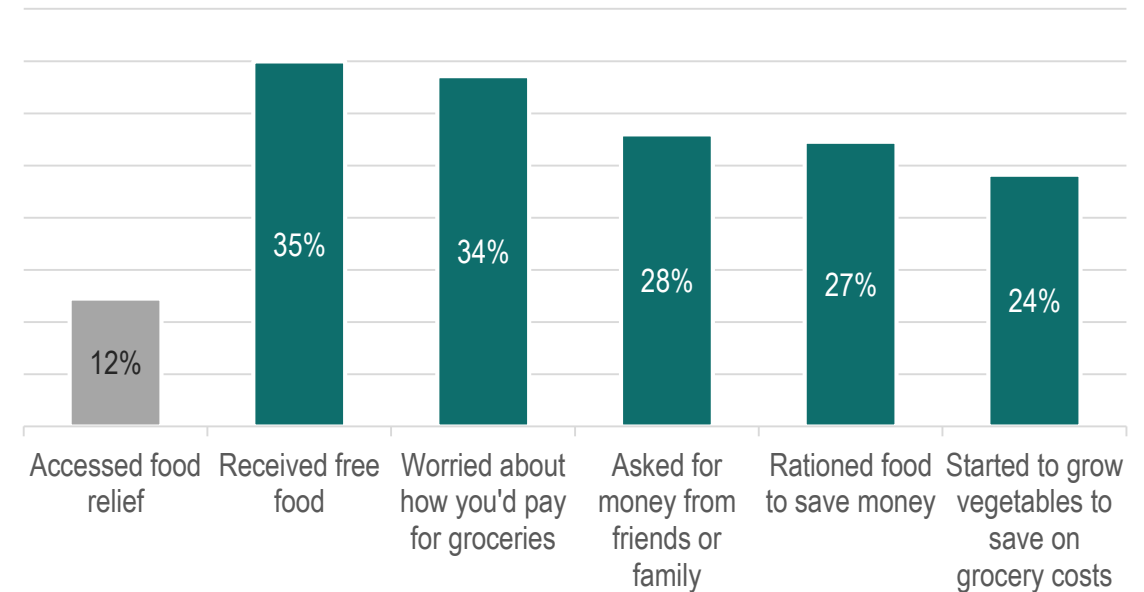
- Receiving free food (35%)
- Worrying about how to pay the groceries (33%) and
- Asking for money from friends or family (27%).

Those who were 21-24 years old were more likely than younger respondents to ration food to save money (39% compared to 22% for 16-21 year olds) and to skip meals (34% compared to 20%).

Uni students were more likely than high schoolers to receive free food (50% compared to 27%), ask for money (31% compared to 13%) and ask for food (20% compared to 4%).

Q3 - In the past two years, have you or anyone in your household done any of the following?
Survey logic: Q3 was asked of everyone; Base n=286; Multiple response

Has anyone in your household done any of the following in the last 2 years?



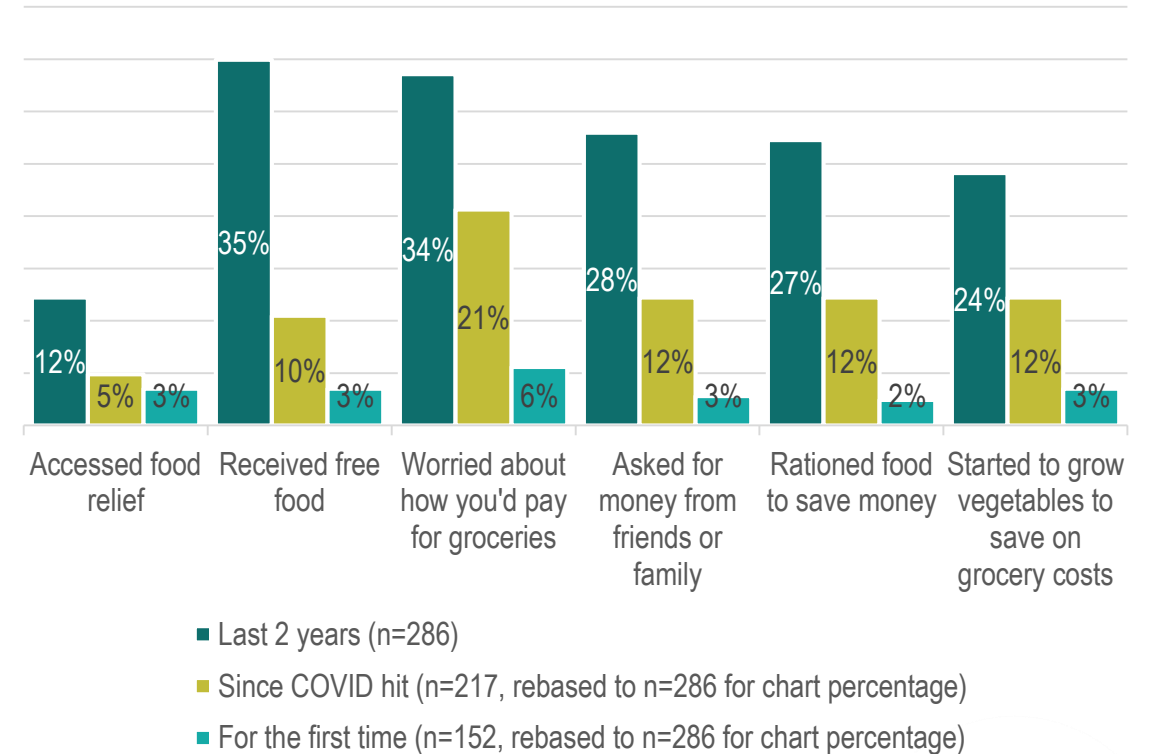
THE IMPACT OF COVID

A large portion of this food insecurity had been experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and many were experiencing these hardships for the first time (see appendix B for summary data).

Percentages in the chart are based off the number of total survey respondents. I.e. Where 34% of the total 286 had worries about how they'd pay for groceries in the last two years, 21% of that same 286 had worried since COVID began and 3% of the total 286 had, for the first time ever, worried about it during the pandemic.

The largest portion of people who were, for the first time ever, experiencing food insecurity were 21-24 year olds. Thirty-four per cent reported experiencing at least one form of food insecurity for the first time since the pandemic began. Starting to grow veggie patches and worrying about how they'd pay for groceries as the top two responses.

Has anyone in your household done any of the following?



Q3 - In the past two years, have you or anyone in your household done any of the following? Q4 - Which of these have you done since COVID-19 pandemic began?

Q5 - Which of these is something you've done for the first time? i.e. is something you have not ever done before?

Survey logic: Q3 was asked of everyone, Q4 and Q5 were asked of those who selected a response for the question before it. Base Q3 n=286 , Q4 n=217, Q5 n=152; Multiple response

AVENUES OF RELIEF



WHERE WOULD YOU GO FOR RELIEF?

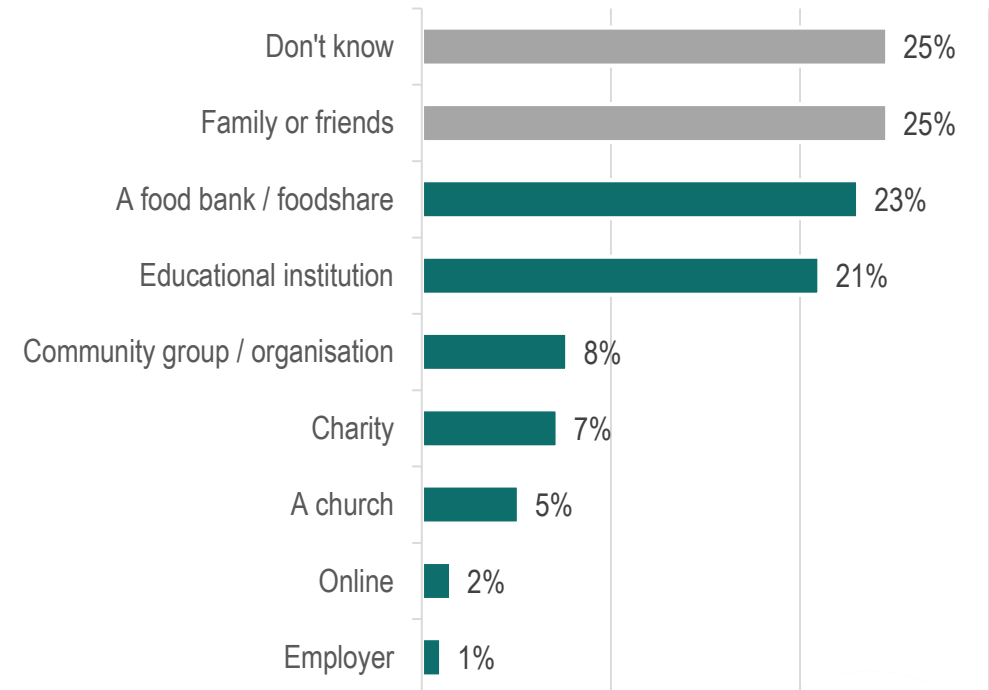
Unprompted, we asked the 195 people whose households *had not* accessed food relief in the last two years, where they would go if they ever needed to access it.

Four strong themes emerged:

- 25% didn't know where they would go
- 25% would go to friends or family
- 23% would go to a local food bank or food share* and
- 21% would go to their educational institution.

Responses differed considerably between those in high school and those at university. High schoolers were more likely to say a food bank or food share (34% for high schoolers and 12% for university students), while university students were more likely to say their educational institution (38% for university students and 11% for high schoolers).

Where would you go, if you ever needed to access food relief?



* Note food bank / food share responses are likely bias due to sampling approach, see page 8 for further explanation.

Q9 - Where would you go to access food relief if you ever needed to?

Survey logic: Q9 was only asked of people who **did not** click 'Accessed food relief' in Q3; Base n = 195; Open comment

WHERE DID YOU GO FOR RELIEF?

Of the twenty-nine people who said someone in their household has accessed food relief in the last two years:

- 18 (62%) went to food banks or charities for assistance
- 15 (52%) went to education institutions
- 9 (31%) went to community organisations and
- 9 (31%) went to friends or family.

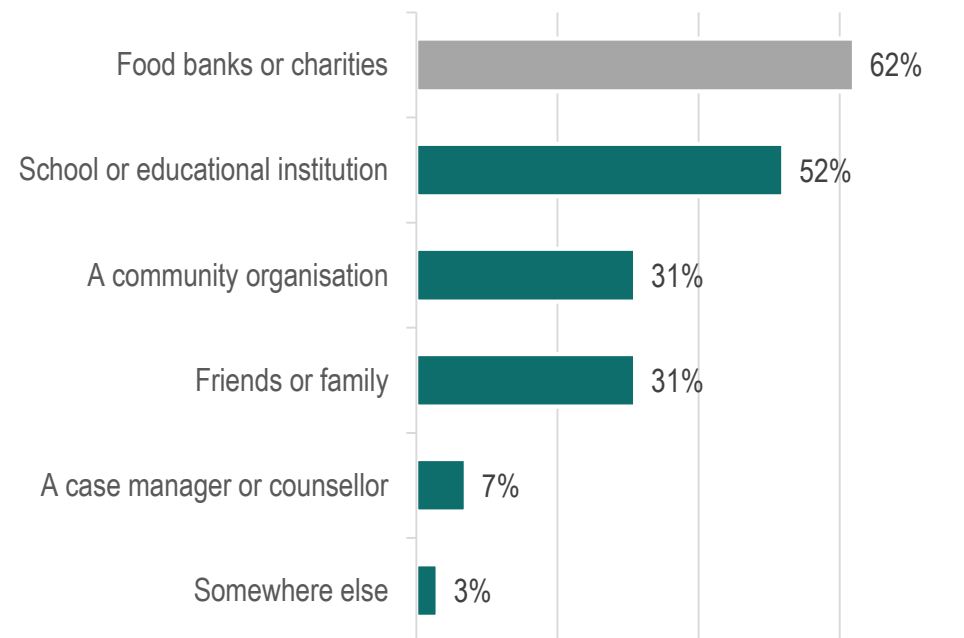
The notable difference between those who had lived experience of accessing food relief in the last two years and those who had not, was the latter believed they would go to family or friends, while in reality those with lived experience were more likely to go to charities or education institutions before family and friends.

The potential bias towards food banks or charities must be noted here, as the survey was promoted by local food relief charities and was more likely to reach individuals who access their services. See page 8 for further discussion on bias.

Q6 - You mentioned that you or someone in your household has accessed food relief. Where did they go for assistance?

Survey logic: Q6-8 were only asked of people who clicked 'Accessed food relief in the last 2 years' in Q3; Base n = 29; Multiple response

Where did you go for assistance?



OBTAINED FROM EDUCATIONAL PROVIDERS

Of the 193 students who were surveyed, 60% had accessed either free meals or food hampers from their educational providers.

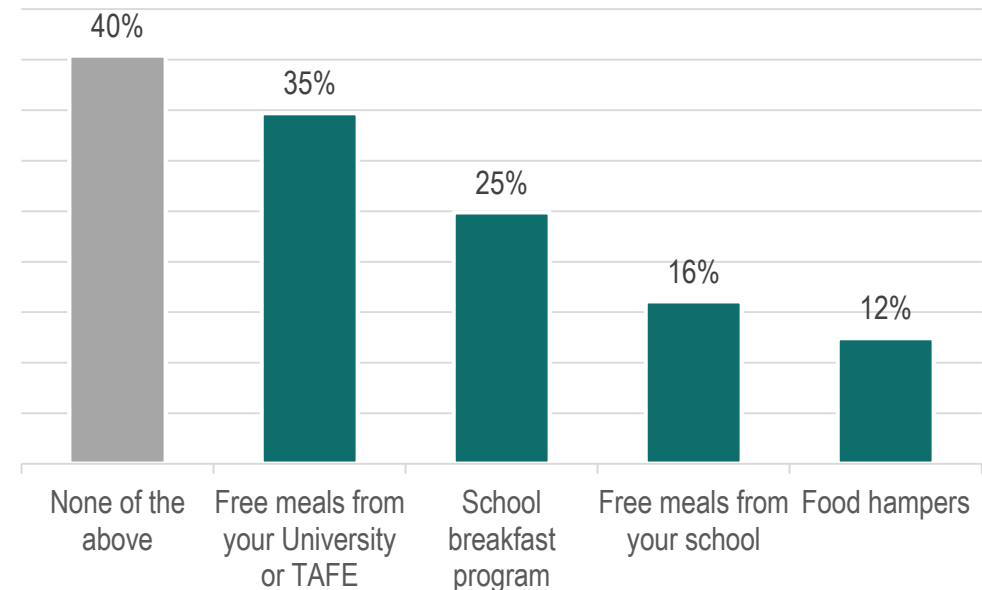
There was a considerable difference between the number of free meals accessed from tertiary providers when compared with secondary (35% compared to 16%), while around 1 in every 4 had taken part in a school breakfast program.

School breakfast program had a higher response rate than free meals from school. While free meals from school was largely selected by high schoolers and free meals from your Uni or TAFE was largely selected by university students, the school breakfast program was selected by both high schoolers and university students.

Keeping in mind the small sample size, those who had moved to Central Vic to study (n=19) were considerably more likely to have received free meals from tertiary providers (68%) compared to those who have always lived in Central Vic (22%). Those who had always lived in Central Vic and those that were in high school were considerably more likely than others to have not accessed any food relief from their education provider (54% and 61% respectively).

Q10 - Which of the following have you accessed from an educational provider, such as your school, TAFE, or university?
Survey logic: Q10 was asked only of students; Base n = 193; Multiple response

Which have you accessed from your educational provider?



INFORMATION TOUCHPOINTS

A top-down view of fresh ingredients on a white marble surface. In the upper right, a brown paper bag is partially open, spilling out several red cherry tomatoes. Next to it is a small pile of ripe strawberries. Sprigs of fresh green herbs, including thyme and parsley, are scattered across the scene. In the lower right, there is a whole dark-skinned avocado and several slices of rustic, crusty bread. The bread slices are arranged in a fan-like pattern, showing their porous interiors. The overall composition is clean and aesthetically pleasing, with the natural textures of the marble and food ingredients highlighted.

WHERE WOULD YOU GO FOR INFO AND SUPPORT?

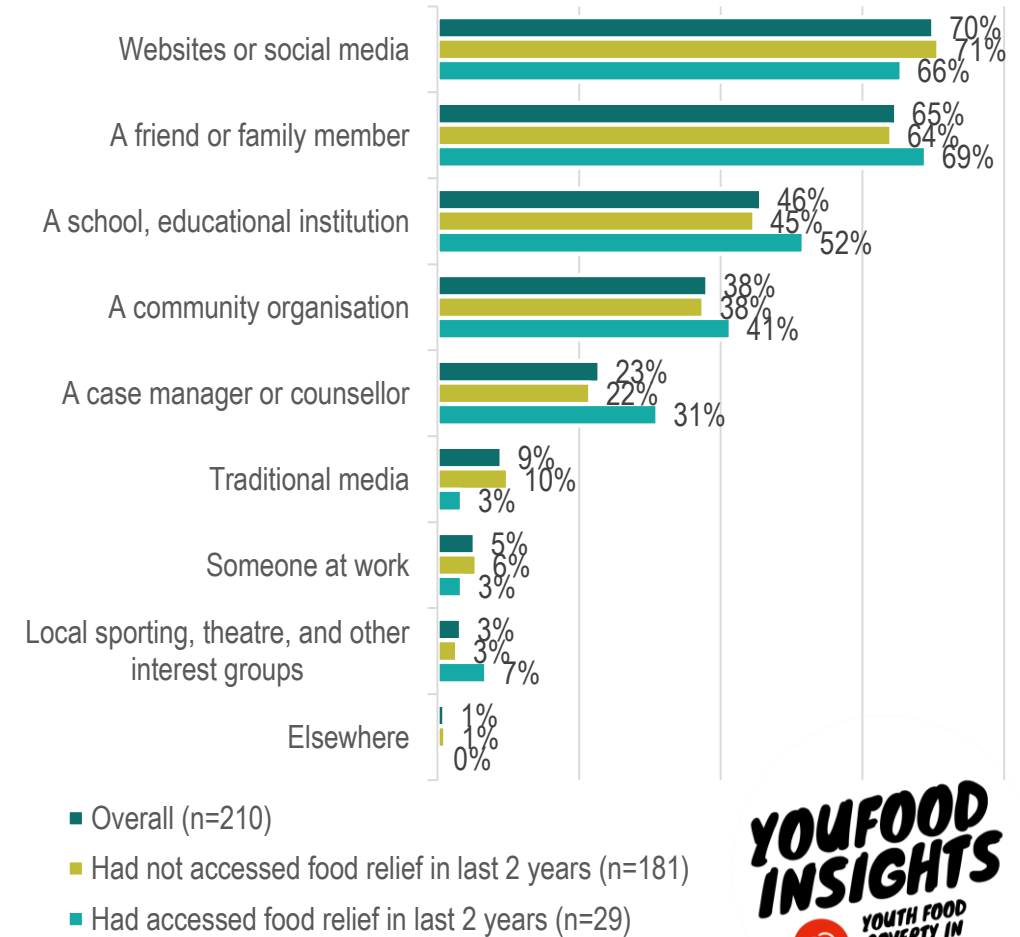
When asked where they would go for information or support if they were struggling to put food on the table or afford the things they needed, the top three touch points were:

- Websites or social media (70% of all respondents)
- A friend or family member (65%) and
- Their educational institution (46%).

There were no notable differences between those who had and had not accessed food relief in the last 2 years.

While we must be wary of small sample sizes, it is worth noting that those who had moved to Central Vic (total n=39) were less likely to go to a friend or family member (54% would go compared to 68% for those who have always lived in Central Vic). This group was more likely to go to an educational institution for info or support (62% compared to 38%) or to a community organization (51% compared to 37%).

Where would you go for information or support?



Q13 - If you were struggling to put food on the table or afford the things you needed, where would you go for information or support?

Survey logic: Q13 was asked of everyone; Base n = 210; Multiple response

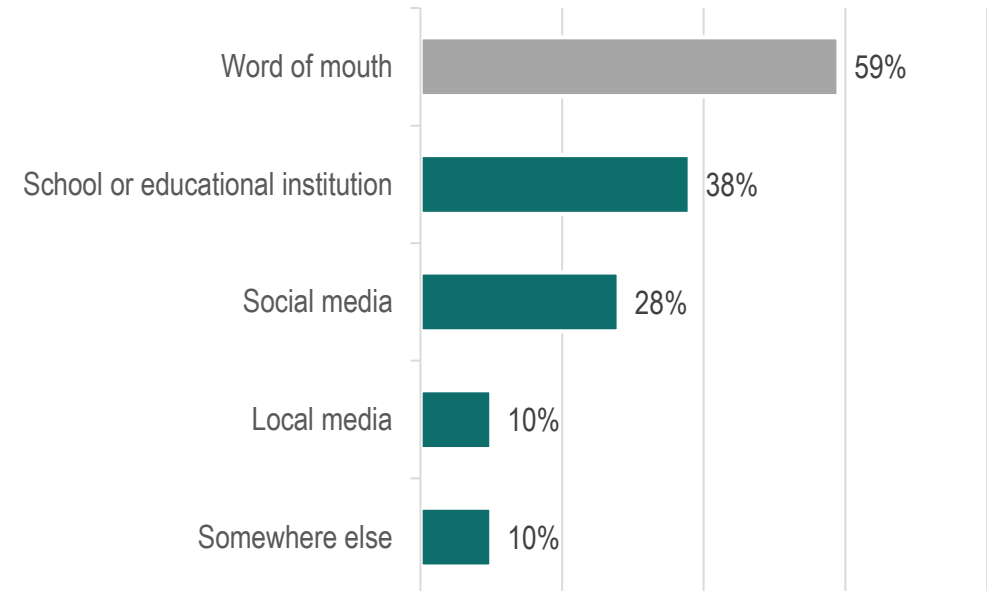
WHERE DID YOU GO FOR INFO AND SUPPORT?

Of the 29 people who said someone in their household has accessed food relief, the three most common avenues for finding out about the service were through:

- Word of mouth (for example, from a friend or family member) (17 people / 59%)
- An education institution (11 people / 38%) and
- Social media (8 people / 28%).

Despite websites and social media coming out on top for where respondents *thought* they would go if they needed information or support, in reality most people who had accessed food relief found out about the service through word of mouth rather than social or local media.

How did the person who accessed food relief find out about the service?



BENEFITS OF RELIEF

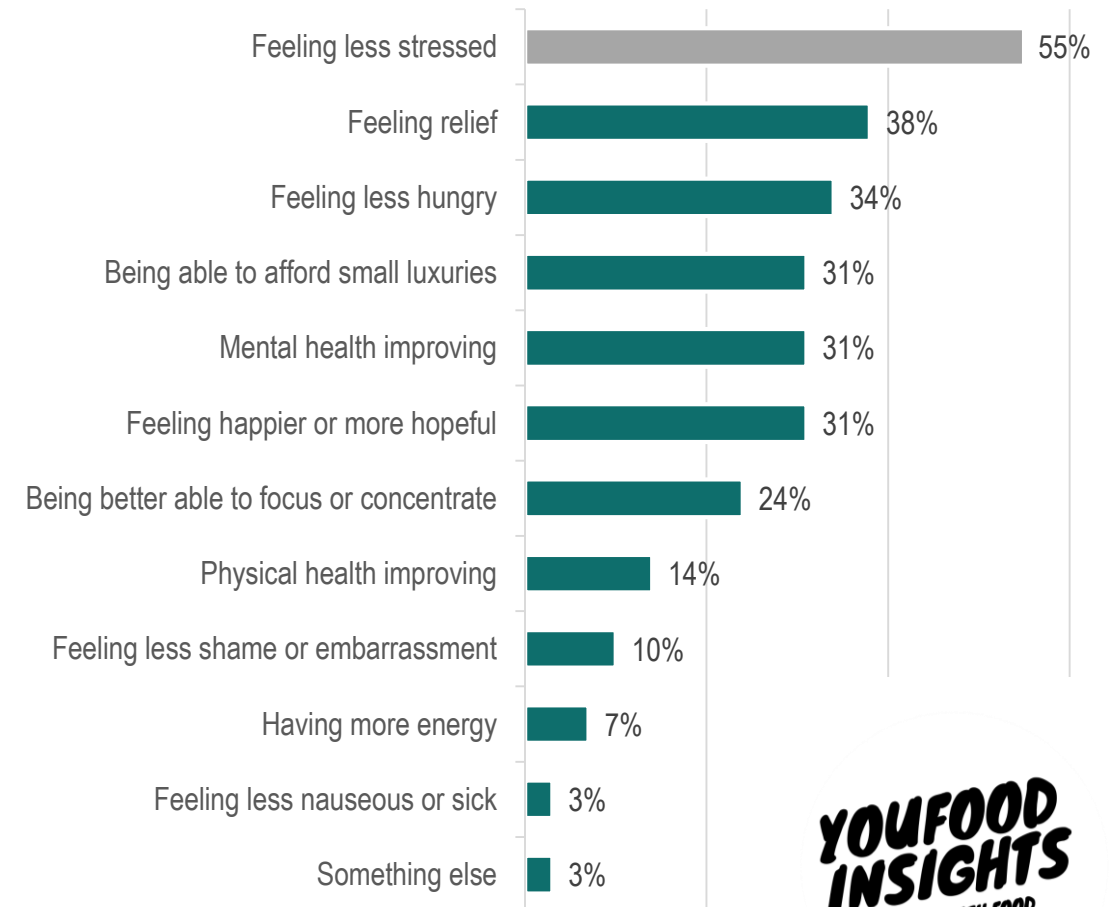


BENEFITS FROM THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

The top benefits to receiving food relief, according to the 29 people whose household had accessed it in the last two years, were:

- Feeling less stressed (16 people / 55%)
- Feeling relief (11 people / 38%) and
- Feeling less hungry (10 people / 34%).

The benefits of food relief



Q8 - When thinking about the benefits of food relief that you've experienced, what are the first three that come to mind?

Survey logic: Q6-8 were only asked of people who clicked 'Accessed food relief in the last 2 years' in Q3; Base n = 29; Up to 3 responses each

BARRIERS TO RELIEF

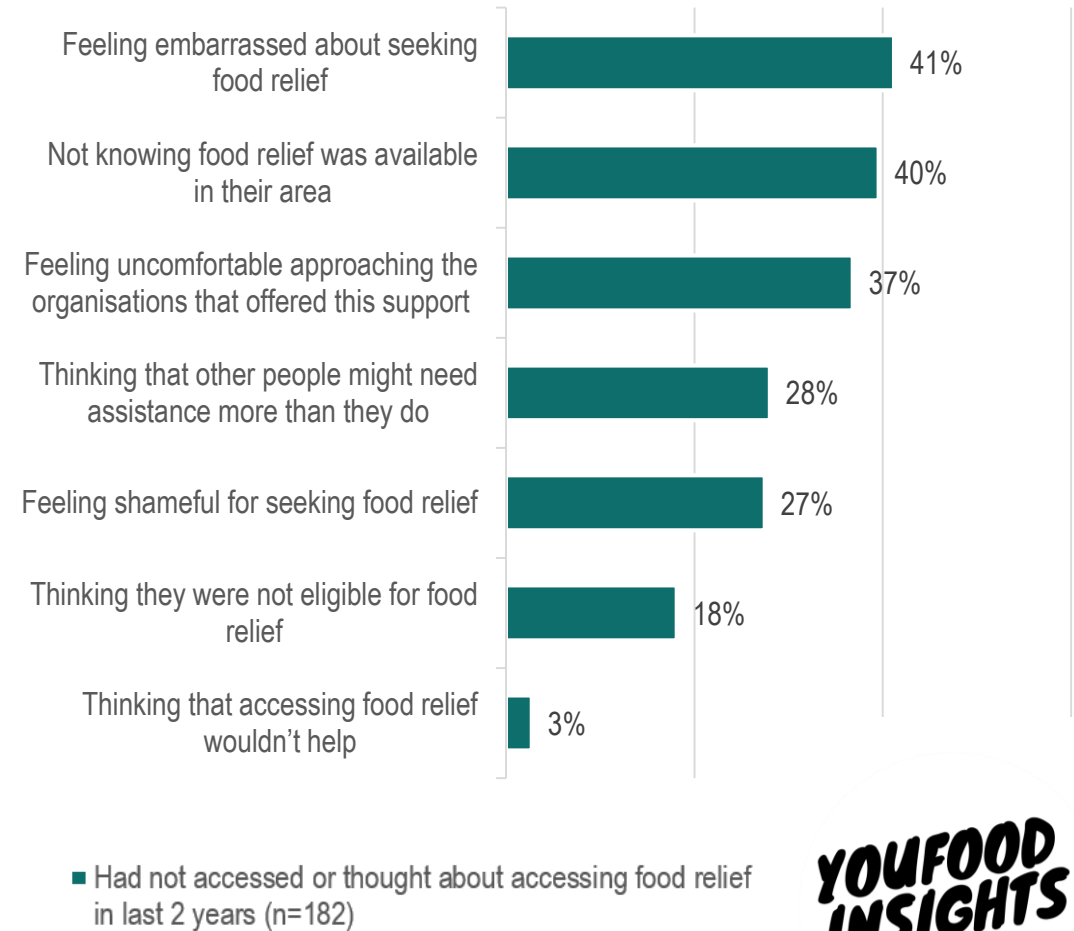


PERCEIVED BARRIERS

When asked to identify the top two reasons why someone wouldn't access food relief when they were struggling with finances, respondents who had not accessed or thought about accessing food relief in the last 2 years highlighted:

- Feeling embarrassed about seeking relief (41%),
- Not knowing relief was available in their area (40%) and
- Feeling uncomfortable approaching the organisations that offered this support as the top three (37%).

Barriers to accessing food relief



Q12 - Why do you think someone would not access food relief when they were struggling with finances?

Survey logic: Q12 was asked of everyone; Base n = 230; Up to 2 responses each

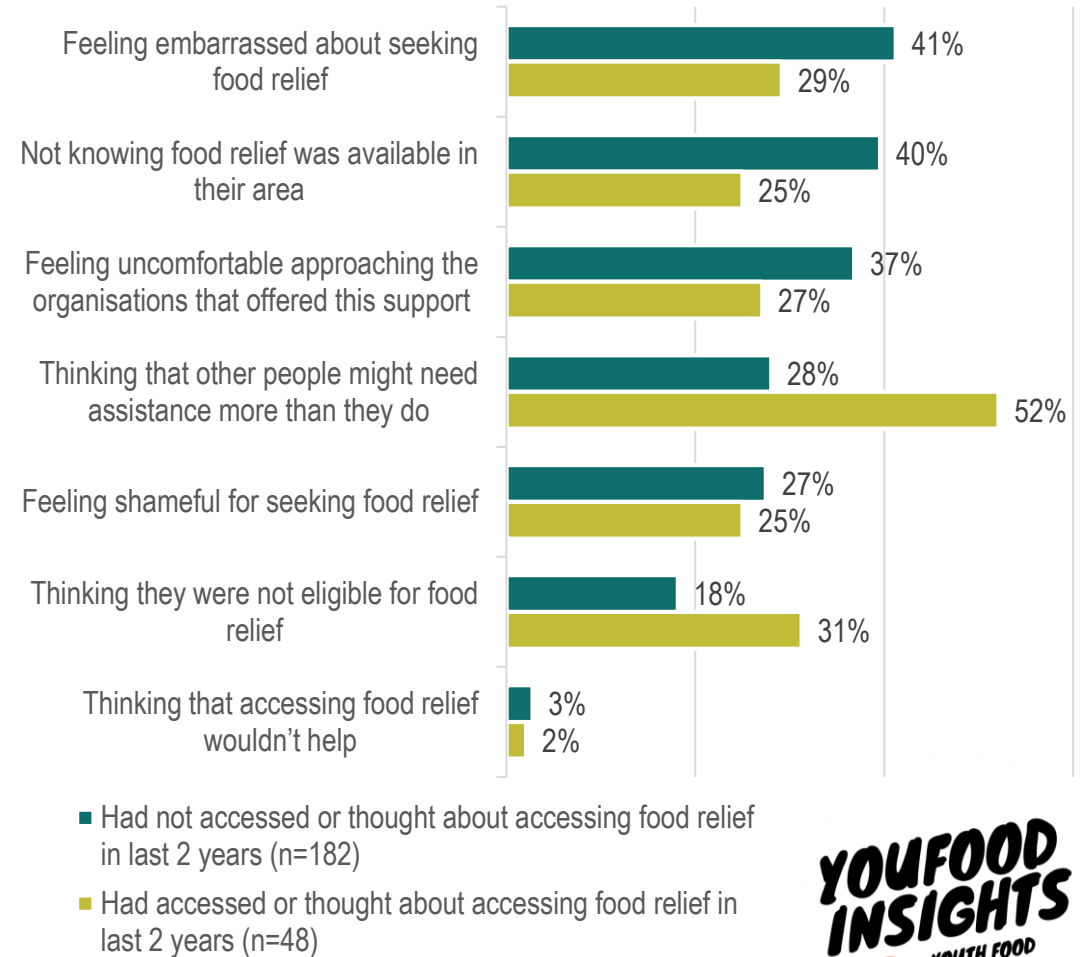
BARRIERS FROM THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

In contrast, those who had accessed or thought about accessing food relief in the last 2 years (n=48) reported very different barriers to those who had not accessed or thought about accessing relief in the last 2 years.

While we must be wary of the smaller sample size, the differences are still notable. For respondents who had accessed or thought about accessing food relief in the last two years, the top three barriers to accessing food relief were:

- Thinking that other people might need assistance more than they did (52%)
- Thinking they were not eligible for food relief (31%) and
- Feeling embarrassed about seeking food relief (29%).

Barriers to accessing food relief



Q12 - Why do you think someone would not access food relief when they were struggling with finances?
 Survey logic: Q12 was asked of everyone; Base n = 230; Up to 2 responses each

CLARIFYING UNDERSTANDING



CLARIFYING UNDERSTANDING

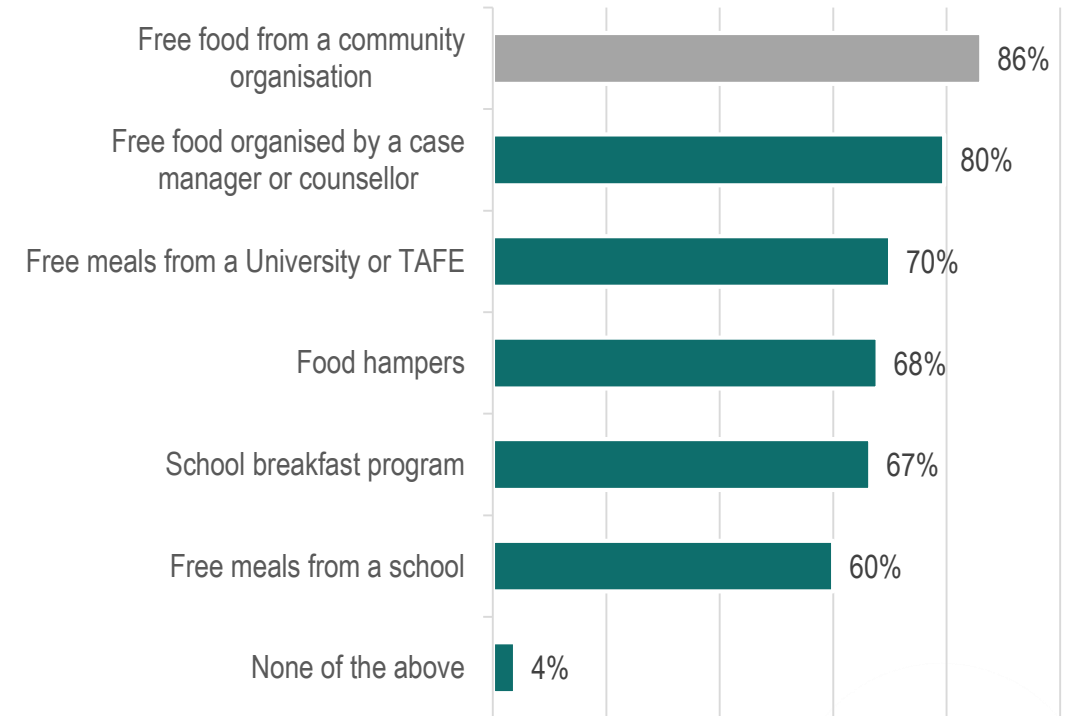
Faced with a selection of options, the majority of respondents agreed that all were examples of food relief services.

These numbers suggest respondents' perceptions of what constitutes food relief aligns with that of the food relief sector. These results however contrast against those on page 20, where 25% of respondents did not know where they would go for food relief. This dissonance poses questions about the difference between prompted and unprompted recall of what constitutes food relief, which we considered further on page 40.

Notably, free meals from schools were only considered to be food relief by 60% of respondents while free meals from universities or TAFE were considered food relief by 70%.

Those who were 16-18 were more likely than those outside this bracket to consider all examples food relief services. The biggest difference being for Free meals from school which was considered to be a food relief service by 70% of 16-18 year olds but only 54% of 18-24 year olds.

Which of these would you consider a food relief service?



Q11 - Which of the following would you consider a food relief service?

Survey logic: Q11 was asked of everyone; Base n = 230; Multiple response

BEST APPROACH



MAKING IT EASIER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

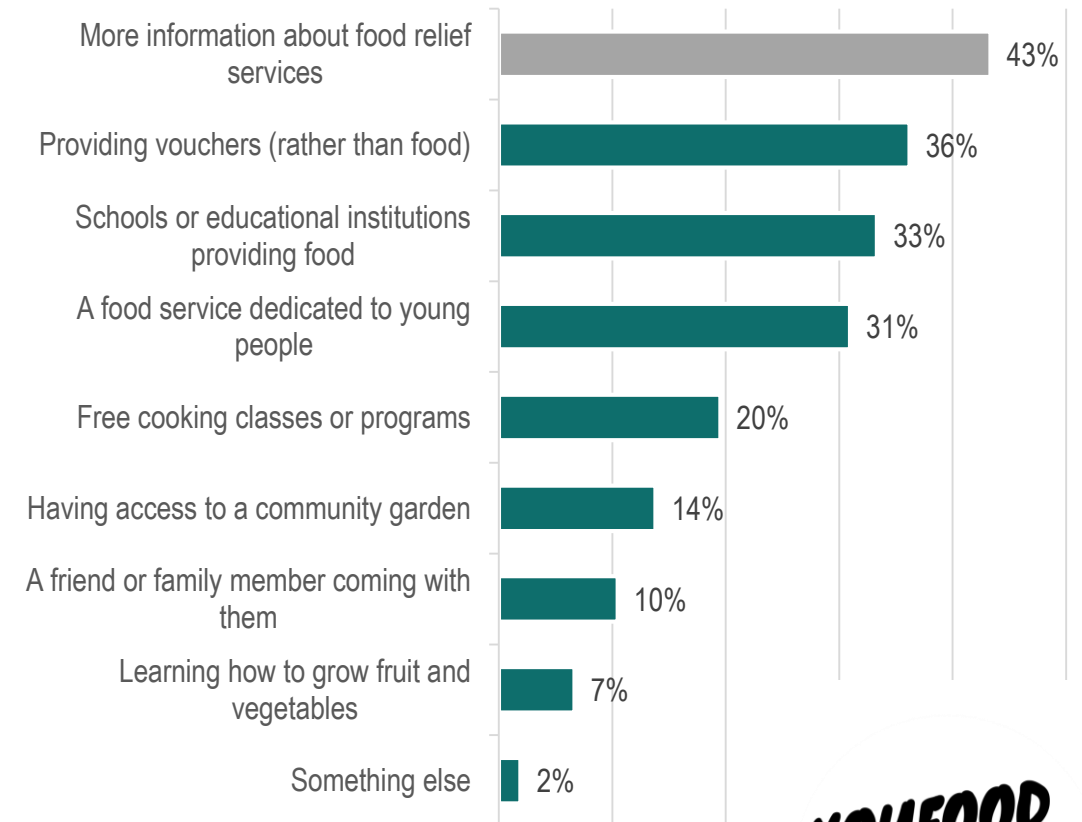
We asked all respondents to identify the best approaches, from the list provided, for making it easier for young people to get food relief. Almost half of respondents put more information about food relief services in their top two (43%).

Providing vouchers (rather than food) was the second most popular approach (36%) and education institutions providing food was the third most popular (33%).

For the 21-24 year olds though, priorities were different, providing vouchers was identified as the best approach (45%). This option was not as popular amongst 16-18 year olds with only 24% choosing this in their top two.

Despite these fluctuations by age, more information, providing vouchers, educational institutions providing food and a food service dedicated to young people were always the top four approaches.

Best approaches to make it easier for young people to get food relief



Q14 - What do you think are the best two ways to make getting food relief easier for young people?
Survey logic: Q14 was asked of everyone; Base n = 210; Up to 2 responses each

YOUR IDEA

The final question was included to begin the process of engaging young people in finding a solution to youth food insecurity.

Respondents were asked for their best idea of how to make it easier for young people *in their community* to get food when they needed it. This question was used to assess the competition winners and was optional.

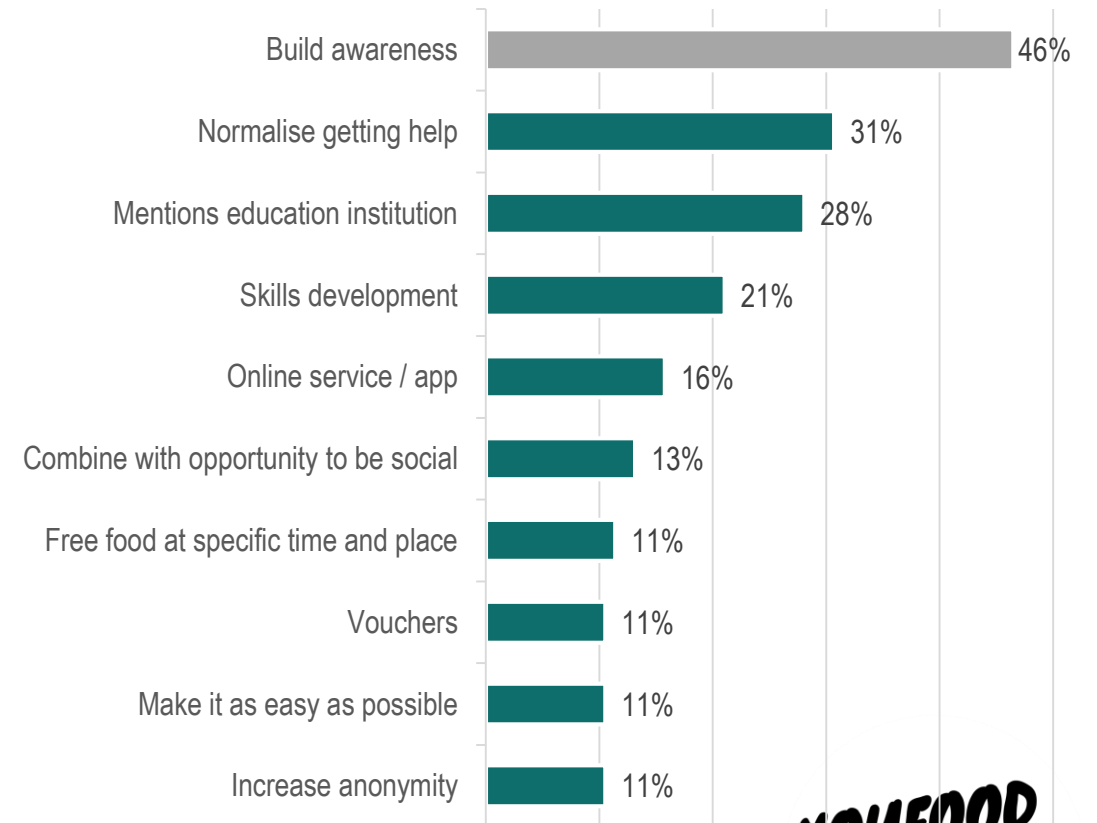
Participants' ideas captured rich insights into the challenges of accessing food relief and how these challenges could be overcome in local settings.

Two key themes carried through the responses; firstly, building awareness of the services available and secondly, managing the shame or stigma attached to accessing relief. We discuss these themes or others in the following pages.

While we must be wary of the small sample size, 21-24 year olds were more likely than younger respondents to advocate for building awareness, but also to mention shame and stigma and suggest approaches that would increase anonymity.

Q20 - In 50 words or less, tell us your best idea for how to make it easier for young people *in your community* to get food when they need it. Survey logic: Q20 was asked only of those who wanted to enter the competition of skill for various prizes; Base n = 114; Open comment

Ideas for making it easier for young people to get food when they need it



YOUR IDEA THEME SUMMARY

Build awareness

Mentioned by 46% (n=53) of respondents

Comments mentioned building awareness of what services were available *and to whom* and ensuring the messaging broke down the negative stereotyping and replaced it with positive education. Specific avenues included social media, email, TV, physical fliers and classrooms.

'Be visiting schools more, promoting what you have to offer and where young people can be accessing help/food. That way they know where and how to find it.' – Female, High school

Normalise getting help

Mentioned by 31% (n=35) of respondents

The second strongest theme acknowledged the way stigma and shame act as a barrier for seeking help and the need for this to be dismantled. Comments were often coupled with ideas of positive awareness building and / or increasing anonymity during service delivery.

'Target the feelings of shame that come with food insecurity. Young people want to be able to be independent and sometimes feel like they "have enough to get by" even when they can't afford meals that are nutritionally beneficial. There is a narrative in the student community that this is just part of the student experience. But it doesn't have to be and it shouldn't be.' – Female, University

Q20 - In 50 words or less, tell us your best idea for how to make it easier for young people *in your community* to get food when they need it.
Survey logic: Q20 was asked only of those who wanted to enter the competition of skill for various prizes; Base n = 114; Open comment

Mentions education institution

Mentioned by 28% (n=32) of respondents

These comments acknowledged the relationship and proximity that exists between students and their educational institutions and how this could be leveraged to educate young people about services and to reach them.

'Universities should have a confidential online survey for students to fill out whenever they need food and cannot get it. Then universities should organise food to be delivered [or picked up].' – Competition Winner – Female, University, Had thought about getting food relief in last 2 years

Skill development

Mentioned by 21% (n=24) of respondents

Comments predominantly mentioned having community gardens to grow and socialize and with information about how to grow, harvest and cook, as well as cooking classes. A small number of comments also talking about other learning practical life lessons like budgeting and mental health.

'Provide free workshops on how to grow and harvest. With a focus on sharing crops among neighbours.' – Non-binary, Had accessed food relief in last 2 years



YOUR IDEA THEME SUMMARY

Online service / app

Mentioned by 16% (n=18) of respondents

Comments mentioned either a website or app that included information on eligibility, closest locations to get food and other relevant support services. Some mentioned online order forms for vouchers or food. This was seen as a hassle free and often anonymous or private way to access food relief.

'A food relief app providing information about local food banks, advertised on social media. Young people already use social media and food apps (e.g. ubereats) a lot.' – Male, University

Combine with opportunity to be social

Mentioned by 13% (n=15) of respondents

Many comments mentioned combining access to food relief with the opportunity to be social. This was seen as both a way to make it more approachable but also a way to reduce stigma. Examples included community gardens or dedicated youth hang out spaces.

'Live acoustic music brought to you by struggling local musicians who have been impacted by COVID. It would feel more welcoming and help to disperse the shame many people feel when they access food support and is also helping one of the hardest hit industries.' – Female, Had accessed food relief in last 2 years

Free food at specific time and place

Mentioned by 11% (n=13) of respondents

Mentions included food trucks or stalls, school pantries, community food hub all that were available at a particular time and place that was well advertised and accessible.

'Once every few days you could have a specific place open possibly in the centre of Bendigo where kids could go if they needed food to eat.' – Female, High school

Vouchers

Mentioned by 11% (n=12) of respondents

These comments made specific mentions of vouchers. Comments made particular mention of people with allergies for whom hampers may not be appropriate, but also for the way this empowers people to buy things for themselves. For a small number of comments, anonymity was also mentioned.

'Food stamps or vouchers could be of better use as people can decide on what to buy rather than have to make do with what is available. Especially to cater to those with dietary restrictions.' – Female, University



Q20 - In 50 words or less, tell us your best idea for how to make it easier for young people *in your community* to get food when they need it.

Survey logic: Q20 was asked only of those who wanted to enter the competition of skill for various prizes; Base n = 114; Open comment

YOUR IDEA THEME SUMMARY

Make it as easy as possible

Mentioned by 11% (n=12) of respondents

These comments talked about having the place for obtaining relief familiar, comfortable and accessible. Specific mention was made to taking the service to places where young people are already present – schools, parks around town – so young people are already comfortable with the space.

'Normalising it and making it easy. Advertising in ways that reach young people - social media, emails etc. And making it possible to do over the internet - take the confrontational part out of it' – Female, University

Increase anonymity

Mentioned by 11% (n=12) of respondents

Anonymity was mentioned in several comments that talked about vouchers, delivery of food to homes or having an online application method.

'Having non-contact ways to pick up food when needed to reduce the stigma of people knowing you need help. May be able to access vouchers regularly without having to talk to someone in person.' – Female, University

Dedicated youth food hub

Mentioned by 6% (n=7) of respondents

Comments talked about having a service or place dedicated to young people. These 'hubs' were often talked about as places where there would be information, cooking classes and free food.

'Having a dedicated youth food relief service, that provided food, vouchers, and workshops on how to grow/cook food just for young people. With the service for specifically youth, they'll feel more comfortable to ask for help when needed, rather than worry if people with families need the assistance more.' – Female, University

Deliver services to people

Mentioned by 5% (n=6) of respondents

Comments made specific mention to food or hampers being delivered directly to people's homes, either by post or in person. This was often coupled with the idea of anonymity.

'A food hamper drop direct to people's houses and for people who can submit an application online for such assistance.' – Male



Q20 - In 50 words or less, tell us your best idea for how to make it easier for young people *in your community* to get food when they need it.
Survey logic: Q20 was asked only of those who wanted to enter the competition of skill for various prizes; Base n = 114; Open comment

04 THE BIG PICTURE

INSIGHTS TO HIGHLIGHT AND EXPLORE

TWO STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Looking at the data, it is clear high school students and university students have differing experiences and perspectives. Comparing their survey results, a narrative emerges around different information touch points and differing relief needs.

When asked what they kinds of free foods they have accessed from their education providers, just 39% of high schoolers had accessed one of the free food examples, this compared to 79% for university students (Q10).

While high schoolers do seem to experience less food insecurity (Q3, 60% had experienced some form of food insecurity in the last two years compared with 77% for university students), the smaller numbers of high schoolers accessing free food from their schools seems to carry through to their perceptions of where they would go to access food or information and support if they were ever struggling. For example:

- While 38% of university students would go to their education institution to access food if they ever needed to, just 11% of high schoolers would go to their education institution (Q9). High schoolers were more likely to go to a food bank / food share (34% compared to 12% for university students).

- 59% of university students would go to their educational institution for information or support if they were struggling, compared to 40% of high schoolers (Q13). High schoolers were again more likely to go to community organisations (43% compared to 34% for university students).

These groups also had differing perspectives on:

- Barriers to accessing food relief, with university students prioritising thinking that others might need assistance more than themselves (Q12, 41% compared to 21% for high schoolers).
- When identifying the best approaches to make it easier for young people to access food relief, university students equal preferred approach was providing vouchers (Q14, 42% agreement compared to 27% for high schoolers), and high schoolers were more likely to recommend educational institutions providing food (36% for high schoolers, also favourable amongst university students with 40%).

To achieve the aim for making it easier for young people to access food relief, it is important to consider these differing perspectives and understand there is not one universal approach.



THE NEED FOR NEW LANGUAGE

Comparing prompted and unprompted responses which speak to recall of food relief options, we see conflicting results. This highlights an opportunity to change the language used to promote services to better resonate with and attract young people.

Unprompted responses to the open response question 'Where would you go if you ever needed to access food relief?' would suggest that young people are unaware of where to access food relief, with one of the highest responses being 'I don't know' (25%; page 20). Yet *prompted* recall – i.e. when respondents were given multiple examples of food relief and asked whether they considered them to be food relief (page 32) or if they had accessed food relief from their education provider (page 22) – suggested high awareness of what food relief was and where to access it.

These conflicting results suggest it is worth further exploring the use of language when promoting food relief.

Despite the high prompted recall, something stops young people from having the options top of mind. This suggests the need to build awareness (as 46% of respondents illustrated on page 35) but also highlights the potential barrier the term 'food relief' puts in place: i.e. "I have no idea where I would go for food relief, but I know a lot of places to go to get free food".

This suggests young people are disassociating with the term and, by extension, any content or resources currently available that reference it. This speaks to a need to refocus the language of food relief to ensure it better resonates with and attracts young people.

When reimagining the terminology, it is important to keep in mind one of the biggest perceived barriers to seeking relief was feeling embarrassed about seeking relief (page 29), and normalising asking for help was identified as a big opportunity area for making it easier for young people to access relief (pages 35-36). This suggests using language that downplays the concept of 'relief' and associating it with ideas, events and places that young people are already familiar with and are not, at first glance, considered food relief.

MEET THEM WHERE THEY'RE AT

Make it easy and attractive for young people to access information and services. If there was information meeting young people where they expect to find it, services were partnered with sources or places that were already trusted and familiar, and feelings of embarrassment and stigma were managed through the choice of setting, both the process of becoming aware of the services and how to access them would be much more accessible.

- Meet people where they expect to find information (i.e. promote and provide the services where they expect it). Two of the top barriers to accessing food relief identified on page 29 were not knowing relief was available in their area (40%) and feeling uncomfortable approaching the organisations that offered this support (37%)
- Partner with trusted sources. Young people are going to sources they trust for food relief– family, friends, school, social media, free meal events run by educational institutions (see pages 21, 22, 24, 25). Respondents still trust "official" food relief sources (such as Bendigo Foodshare) as they're often chosen as a place they would go but young people don't have the familiarity around how they work.
- Meet people where they are already familiar (i.e. promote and provide the services where they are familiar with the setting). Food relief charities need to be build brand awareness through methods that young people are familiar with – events, social media – so that they can learn the practical steps in receiving food relief (possibly with step by step instructions), what it entails and the availability of resources
- Make food relief more attractive by providing it under a guise of something else. As an example, by running free meal events that promote how to receive food relief (without calling it that), food relief organisations would be hiding food relief behind the guise of something else but still achieving the aim of helping young people. This creates anonymity, uses the familiarity with social situation, allows for the observation before participating, familial or friend's support – all factors that add to comfortability of the situation. By doing this, it helps reduce the feelings of embarrassment (41%) identified as a main barrier to accessing food relief and thereby, reduces the stigma felt by young people.



05 CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The research found that 71% of respondents had experienced food insecurity in the last 2 years. Of those, 61% had experienced it since the pandemic began and for 27% this was the first time ever they were experiencing at least one these hardships.

Respondents who had not accessed food relief in the last two years were most likely to say they did not know where to access it or that they would go to friends or family. Yet 60% of the students surveyed had accessed either free meals or food hampers from their educational providers.

Websites / social media or word of mouth were the most likely places people would go for information or support if they were struggling to put food on the table.

The number one benefit to receiving food relief was reported to be feeling less stressed, and the biggest barriers were mixed depending on who you asked. Those who had accessed food relief in the last 2 years believed it was thinking that other people might need assistance more than they did while those had not thought it would be feeling embarrassed about seeking relief.

The best approaches to make it easier for young people to access food relief were identified as building awareness and normalising asking for help.

The report highlights the different experiences of high school and university students, the need for new language and the building of brand awareness through channels that would people are familiar with as key areas to focus to make it easier for young people in Central Victoria to access food relief.



06 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are suggested for improving access to food relief for young people in Central Victoria.

Improve knowledge

Building awareness was identified as one of best ways to make it easier for young people to access food relief.

- Build awareness of who is eligible.
- Build awareness of the process of seeking relief; consider providing step-by-step instructions of the process to relieve the tension and unknown of reaching out.
- Provide information about events in the local area that provide free food, locations of food banks and other support networks (keeping in mind the importance of language choice and audience)
- Build specific content for high schoolers and university students to account for their distinct experiences and perceptions

New language

Young people found it hard to identify places they would go to access food relief, despite understanding what food relief was and most having obtained it from their education providers.

- Reimagine the language used when promoting food relief services in order to increase relatability and recall and reduce stigma.

Youth-focused approach

Having youth-focused events and content helps to break down the thinking that other people may need assistance more than them, identified in this research as one of the biggest barriers to seeking relief.

- Build brand awareness through methods that young people are already familiar with – events, social media.
- Run youth-centred events and use them as an opportunity to give detailed guides on receiving food relief
- Hold events in locations that young people are already familiar with and require as little effort as possible to get to – universities, schools or locations around town.



07 THE TEAM

BENDIGO FOODSHARE

Bendigo Foodshare is a charitable organisation that rescues donated and surplus food to feed more than 12,485 local people each week via food distributions to 93 charities, community groups and schools across Central Victoria.

For more information about Bendigo Foodshare, check out their website: <https://bendigofoodshare.org.au/>

Follow Bendigo Foodshare on:

-  Instagram @bendigofoodshare
-  Facebook @bendigo.foodshare
-  Twitter @BgoFoodshare

Contact Bendigo Foodshare at admin@bendigofoodshare.org.au or at their website: <https://bendigofoodshare.org.au/contact-us/>



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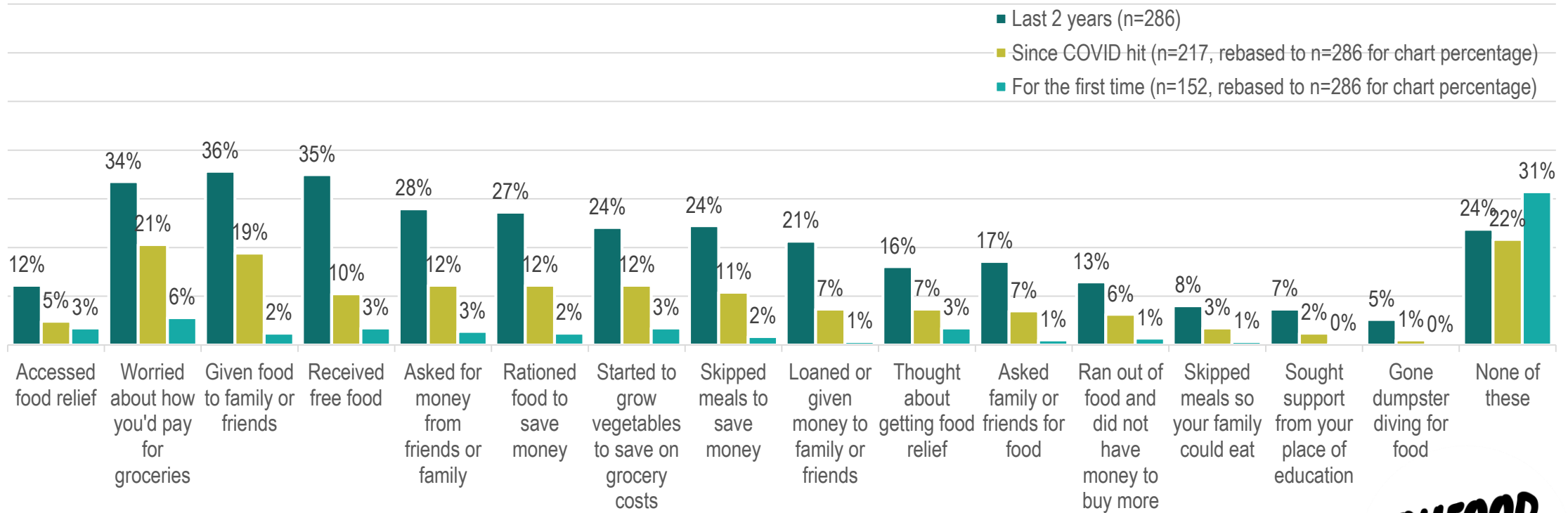
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08 APPENDIX

Q3-5 – All responses: Has anyone in your household done any of the following ... in the last 2 years / since COVID hit / for the first time

Survey logic funnelled respondents from one question to the next only if they did not click 'none of these'. The percentages in the below chart have been re-based off the total responses from Q3. I.e. Where 12% of the total 286 had accessed food relief in the last two years, 5% of that same 286 had accessed it since COVID hit and 3% of the total 286 had, for the first time ever, accessed relief during the pandemic.

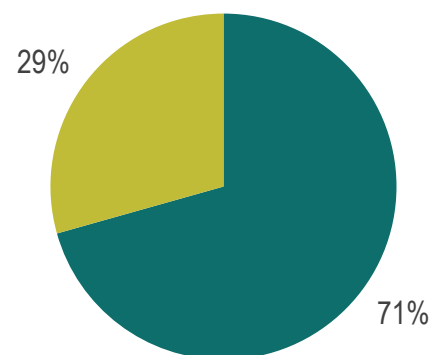


APPENDIX A

Q3-5 – Summary data

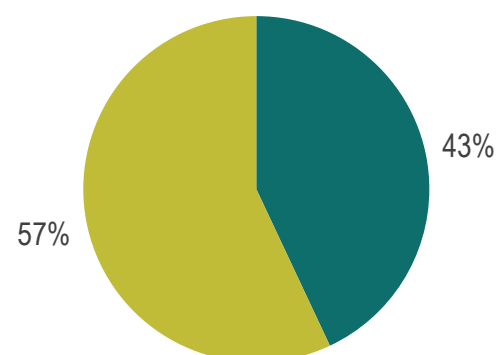
To visualise the number of people who had experienced food insecurity at different stages over the last 2 years and during the pandemic, we have created three sequential pie charts. The sample for each is the total sample (n=286) and the chart percentages are therefore of the total sample. Those who had experienced food insecurity had selected at least one of the codes from appendix A for the relevant question, excluding 'given food', 'loaned' or 'given money' and 'none of these'.

Q3 In the last two years



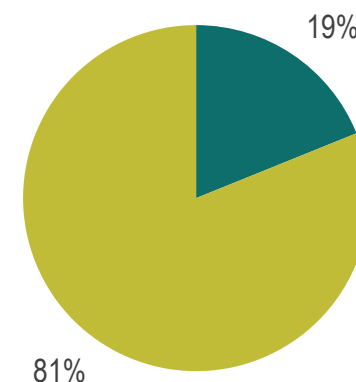
- Had experienced food insecurity
- Had not experienced food insecurity

Q4 Since the COVID-19 pandemic began...



- Had experienced food insecurity
- Had not experienced food insecurity

Q5 Since the pandemic began and for the first time ever...



- Had experienced food insecurity
- Had not experienced food insecurity

APPENDIX B