


# Food insecurity and older people

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## Healthy Ageing Tasmania

 [health.tas.gov.au/healthy-ageing](https://health.tas.gov.au/healthy-ageing)

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*Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.  
Visit the Department of Health website ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)) for more information.*

The Healthy Ageing Tasmania Team acknowledge the palawa/pakana people as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of Lutruwita (Tasmania).

We recognise the strength and resilience of all First Nations people and their care and protection of country and community for thousands of years. Aboriginal people demonstrate deep respect and value for their elders and their communities. First Nations people have been story telling for more than 65,000 years, and we proudly pay tribute to their culture when we share stories and connect with our ageing community.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I extend my respect to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and Elders past and present and acknowledge that their land was never ceded.



# Today's session

- Food insecurity – what is it?
- Who is at risk
- Food insecurity for older people
- The lived experience
- Challenging stigma and guilt
- Practical tips for CHSP services
- Where to find support for clients



# Food security

“When all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation  
(FAO) 1996



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# How common is it?

- In Australia, food security is not measured at a population level regularly or consistently.
- Estimates from 2020 suggest that between 4% and 13% of the general population were food insecure. Since then... pandemic and cost of living crisis!
- Reasons for food insecurity include:
  - material hardship
  - inadequate financial resources
  - difficulty accessing affordable healthy food (eg financially or geographically)
  - limited food and nutrition literacy (eg knowing how to purchase and prepare ingredients).

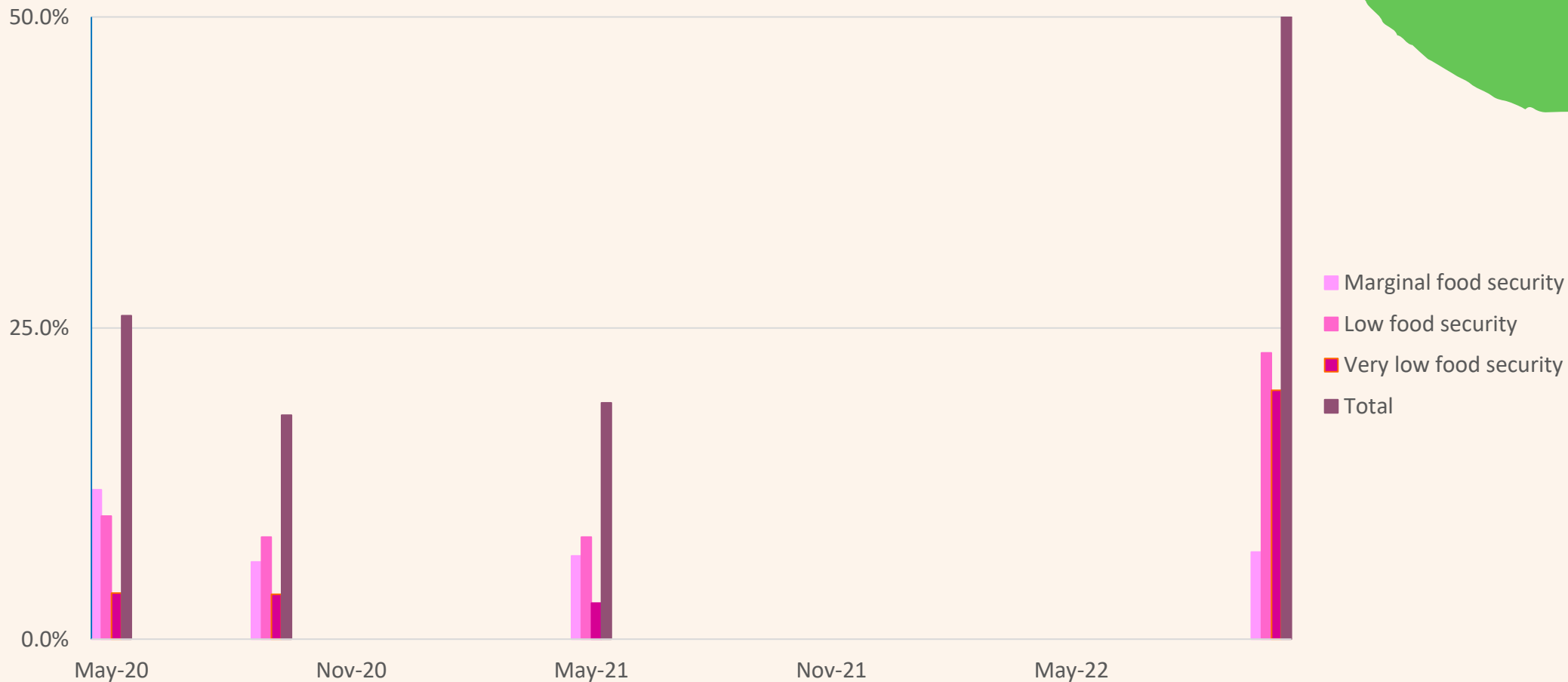
Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies, understanding food insecurity in Australia.



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# How common is it in Tasmania?



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# Who is at risk in Tasmania?

- Temporary residents (84%)
- People with a disability (76%)
- Tasmanian Aboriginal people (76%)
- Over 65 years (27%)

Source: UTAS [Tasmania Project](#) 2022.



# What do people tell us about their experience?

“I’m eating less protein than I should be because it is expensive”

“I eat a lot of cheap carbohydrates, specials, loaves of bread for free from Vinnies”

“We cannot afford to eat red meat”

“The cost of vegetables has skyrocketed”





# Health effects of food insecurity

- Increased risk of chronic illness.
- Difficulty managing chronic illness.
- Increased risk of malnutrition.
- Anxiety, depression and mood disorders.
- Poorer oral health.
- Lack of cultural foods.



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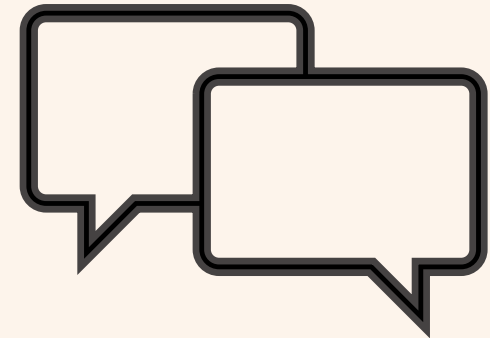
# Food insecurity and older people

- Reduced ability to follow health advice.
- Decreased participation in community and social activities.
- Increased risk of hospitalization.
- Increased stigma and guilt.



# Talking about food insecurity

1. Ask about and acknowledge the problem.
2. Talk openly and without judgement.
3. Understand before giving advice.
4. Link the person to resources if appropriate.



# Conversation starters

“What does home look like for you at the moment? Who is there? Do you have access to a kitchen?”

“What does a typical meal look like for you at the moment?”

“Where do you usually get your food from?”

“Are you limiting or changing what you buy because of cost? Can you tell me more about that?”

“Is there anything making it hard for you to prepare a meal or snack at the moment?”



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Healthy Eating on a budget	Assumptions	Alternative
Check what food you already have in your pantry		
Make a weekly meal plan		
Make and stick to a shopping list		
Buy fruits and vegetables in season		
Choose home brand products		
Buy canned or frozen fruits and vegetables		
Cook at home / cook from scratch		
Buy in bulk		

Healthy Eating on a budget	Assumptions	Alternative
<b>Check what food you already have in your pantry</b>	Presumes food at home, presumes a home.	
<b>Make a weekly meal plan</b>	This requires capacity and a secure food supply.	
<b>Make and stick to a shopping list</b>	This reduces flexibility in looking for what is available and on sale.	
<b>Buy fruits and vegetables in season</b>	Sound advice but aware costs vary and needs cooking skills.	
<b>Choose home brand products</b>	Sound advice but people know this – check whether they already use before suggesting!	
<b>Buy canned or frozen fruits and vegetables</b>	Sound advice but does require storage and could rise in cost.	
<b>Cook at home / cook from scratch</b>	Requires capacity, equipment, skills etc.	
<b>Buy in bulk</b>	Presumes more funds available to purchase, and storage available.	

Healthy Eating on a budget	Assumptions	Alternative
<b>Check what food you already have in your pantry</b>	Presumes food at home, presumes a home.	What does home look like for you? Can you tell me what food you have on hand?
<b>Make a weekly meal plan</b>	This requires capacity and a secure food supply.	Sometimes it can be helpful to make a rough plan of what you are planning to eat over next few days.
<b>Make and stick to a shopping list</b>	This reduces flexibility in looking for what is available and on sale.	Have an idea of what is on sale before you go shopping – check catalogues (or online if suitable).
<b>Buy fruits and vegetables in season</b>	Sound advice but aware costs vary and need cooking skills.	Look for community options eg food relief, fresh produce sales locally.
<b>Choose home brand products</b>	Sound advice but people know this – check whether they already use before suggesting!	Home branded products are often more affordable and similar in quality for most lines.
<b>Buy canned or frozen fruits and vegetables</b>	Sound advice but does require storage and could rise in cost.	How much storage do you have? Do you have a freezer?
<b>Cook at home / cook from scratch</b>	Requires capacity, equipment, skills etc.	What foods have you been able to prepare at home? What appliances do you have that you are comfortable using?
<b>Buy in bulk</b>	Presumes available money to purchase large quantities, and storage facilities.	Not recommended as general approach as requires money and storage.

# Reassessment

A client can be reassessed at any time.

- Initial assessment will be based on needs that the person had at the time.
- Peoples' needs change!
- If food security status has changed, your clients' needs have also changed.



# Food relief services

Community can access support through:

- [Ask Izzy](#)
- [TASCROSS emergency service providers](#)
- [Find Help Tas](#)
- [Neighbourhood houses](#)
- Smaller local charities and services – eg food vans.
- Large charitable organisations.



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# What can you do?

- Get comfortable asking about food insecurity.
- Problem-solve with clients – proactively where possible!
- Assist clients to be reassessed and receive extra services if needed.
- Link clients to local services.



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# More resources

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[Department of Health Food Security](#)

[Dishing up the facts - busting myths about food insecurity](#)

[Food-relief-to-food-resilience-tasmanian-food-security-strategy-2021-2024](#)

[Healthy Food Access website](#)

[Poverty in Australia \(2018 report\)](#)


[Poverty and inequality ACOSS](#)

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/communities-and-vulnerable-people/programs-services/emergency-relief>



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