

Emergency food access research project Brighton and Hove: Food access needs of Black and Racially Minoritised communities and Refugee and Asylum seekers.



Bridging Change



In partnership with





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Executive summary

Thanks to everyone involved in researching and writing this excellent report, in particular Bridging Change.

It is heartening to see the great work that is already happening in the city to provide inclusive, warm and welcoming spaces and we would like to thank Jollof Café, BMECP, Voices in Exile, Hollingdean Food Bank for all their incredible work and taking part in this research.

However, due to the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and existing inequalities and barriers, there are multiple reasons why Black and Racially Minoritised communities and refugee and asylum seekers are more likely to need to access emergency food.

The local context

Whilst the predominant reason people surveyed, are seeking emergency food is '**low income**' at 64 per cent, it is interesting that **rising house and rent prices** are the second reason at 34 per cent. This is something that is a particular problem for Brighton and Hove as our house prices are higher than the national average.

It is also interesting that '**transport**' is a significant barrier to accessing food for 30 per cent of respondents and the **cost of public transport** and **distance to affordable shops** being a sizeable factor.

77 per cent of respondents were '**unaware**' of other food services. The difficult and confusing landscape of getting **advice, support or a referral**, plus **digital exclusion**, was especially challenging for people where English was a second language.

Additionally, there are **students** (28 per cent of respondents) who need help and people who are **not allowed to work because of their immigration status** (30 per cent).

Hotels for asylum seekers

The research highlights the **ongoing issue** with the **quality and type of food** provided in the hotels for asylum seekers. The current offering is inadequate, both for food and toiletries, which is **severely impacting both the physical and mental health** of the residents housed. The voluntary sector organisations are having to pick up the pieces and are inundated with people asking for food support, which is compromising their ability to provide support for everyone who contacts them. This is forcing some providers to make tough decisions about who they can serve.



Ukrainian emergency food access

It is estimated, by Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, in September 2022, that 110 Ukrainian families were reaching out for emergency food support in Brighton and Hove. Some were **waiting to receive universal credit** or had started a job but had not been paid yet. However, it also appears that for some people, there had been a misunderstanding about when it is appropriate to access food banks.

Taking recommendations forward

There are sixteen recommendations in this report, which shows that there is a lot of work still to be done to support Black and Racially Minoritised communities in the city and the organisations who support them.

Brighton and Hove City Council, Bridging Change and Brighton and Hove Food Partnership will work together to find practical ways forward to action the recommendations, where possible, in partnership with community providers of emergency food.

Helen Starr-Kedde
Project Manager

Vic Borrill
Director



Introduction

Bridging Change was awarded a grant by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) in partnership with the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) to research the use of emergency food by Black and Racially Minoritised communities including refugees and asylum seekers in Brighton and Hove.

Bridging Change used a combination of research methods including: surveys, focus groups and interviews. It was noted that food practices of Racially Minoritised individuals are not homogenous and vary across and within Black and Racially Minoritised groups, but also by generation, geographic origin, age and religion.

This study describes experiences of a small cohort of Black and Racially Minoritised people in Brighton and Hove who are accessing food provision in city. The authors acknowledge that Black and Racially Minoritised people are diverse amongst themselves and this report represents a snapshot of experience. Whilst this paper recognises the importance of intersecting identities within Black and Racially Minoritised people, including: social; cultural; gender and socio-economic have an effect on food choice, timing of meals and portion sizes; this paper has not explored the impact of intersectional identities.

The team

The research was undertaken by the directors of Bridging Change, Nora Mzaoui and Dr Anusree Biswas Sasidharan providing independent research. The team also was assisted by Kiran Sasidharan who provided some data collection, inputting and assisting the directors with focus groups.

The team included Helen Starr-Kedde, Project Manager and Vic Borrill, Director at Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, providing links to organisations working on emergency food, previous research and advice.

Methodology

The significant research involved working with Black Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP), Voices In Exile (VIE), Jollof Café and conversations with Stand for Ukraine. There were surveys and focus groups with people who used emergency food provision (55 people) and interviews and conversations with staff and volunteers running the provision. In addition to the organisations mentioned, Bridging Change spoke to numerous helpful organisations and foodbanks in Brighton and Hove that helped provide information, context and grow understanding. There were numerous others that despite several attempts were unable to engage, most often down to capacity and some organisations were now no longer running food access programmes. Individuals and organisations were recompensed for their time.

Bridging Change throughout the process were in contact with the BHCC Food Policy Coordinators who were able to review progress and discuss emerging issues and were an invaluable soundboard and support in this work. The authors were especially pleased with the engagement of the recommendations in the report and a genuine attempt to address



issues around food access and the experience of Black and Racially Minoritised communities including refugees and asylum seekers in Brighton and Hove. The Brighton and Hove Food Partnership also provided Bridging Change the benefit of their expertise, data and knowledge. Their ability to mobilise swiftly on issues to enable unblocking of barriers was particularly appreciated.

Overview

The project was to research the needs of Black and Racially Minoritised communities and refugee and asylum seekers and make recommendations to suggest best practice approaches with providers and strengthening organisations providing support. The project also aims to build understanding about the experience of Black and Racially Minoritised communities and refugee and asylum seekers to reduce inequality and address immediate concerns about malnutrition, health and wellbeing.



Essential foods selected by respondents: tinned food, snacks, onions, tinned tomatoes and water



Essential foods selected by respondents: cereal, Mallow (tall field flower), spaghetti, various types of flour including chapatti flour, Coca Cola)



The enquiry

This project asked respondents about themselves and questions in regard to their experience of food access provision. The food related questions asked:

1. What is your current employment status? Please tick all that apply.
2. After you have paid all your bills, including your rent, approximately how much money do you have each week to buy food? Please tick the box next to your answer.
3. In the last two years has there been anything (apart from lack of money) that has made it hard for you to get food? Please tick all that apply.
4. Which of the following are essential to you when accessing food? Please tick all that apply.
5. What five essential food and drink items that you could not do without each week?
6. How did you get to the foodbank today?
7. Was it easy to get here today?
8. Why do you use this foodbank?
9. Do you know of any other foodbanks?
10. Do you access any other foodbanks? If yes, which ones.
11. Do you get support from other organisations or services in Brighton and Hove? If yes, please name:
12. Did you use any food banks or food hubs before the COVID pandemic?
13. Would you be willing to pay a small amount for food if the food was more varied?
14. Do you (or anyone in your household) ever reduce the size of your meals or skip meals because you couldn't afford enough food?
15. If the provider of your food parcel was no longer providing food, do you know how you would access an alternative?
16. In the food parcels you received from food banks (not from the government shielding scheme), did you generally receive more food than you needed, about the right amount of food, or too little food? Please tick one box.
17. Was there any food in your parcel that you did not use? Please specify what it was:
18. What would you consider to be the reasons that you have needed emergency food? Please tick all that apply.



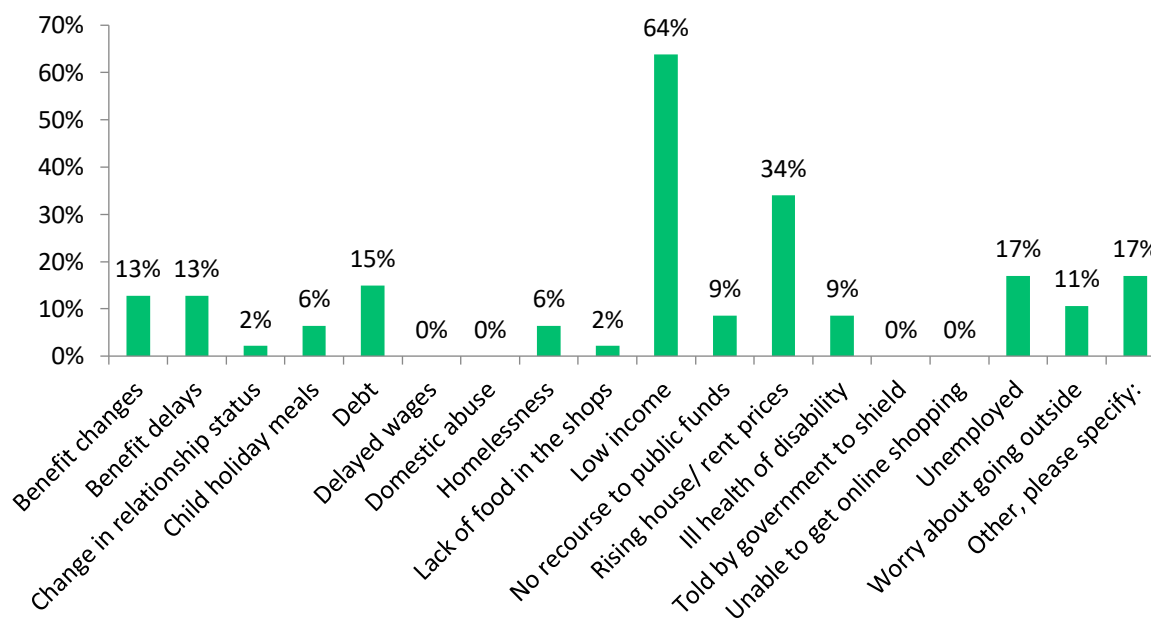
Findings

The need for food provision

This project began as the 'cost of living crisis' (the fall in 'real' disposable incomes, adjusted for inflation) was beginning to set in, in late 2021. This would have compounded the experiences of the respondents we spoke to since we spoke to them at the beginning of the project.

The findings strongly confirmed the strong correlation between the poverty and economic insecurity with food poverty which has been well established.¹ The research captured the consequences and vulnerability of people facing rising costs, low incomes, cost of rent, debt, changes in benefits, etc.; **69 per cent of respondents stated that they or someone in their household skipped meals** because of the increased expense of food and general costs of living. When asked why respondents were using food banks the 64 per cent said that low income was a factor, followed by rising rent/house prices.

What would you consider to be the reasons that you have needed emergency food? Please tick all that apply.



People were able to select multiple factors that were impacting their need for emergency food provision.

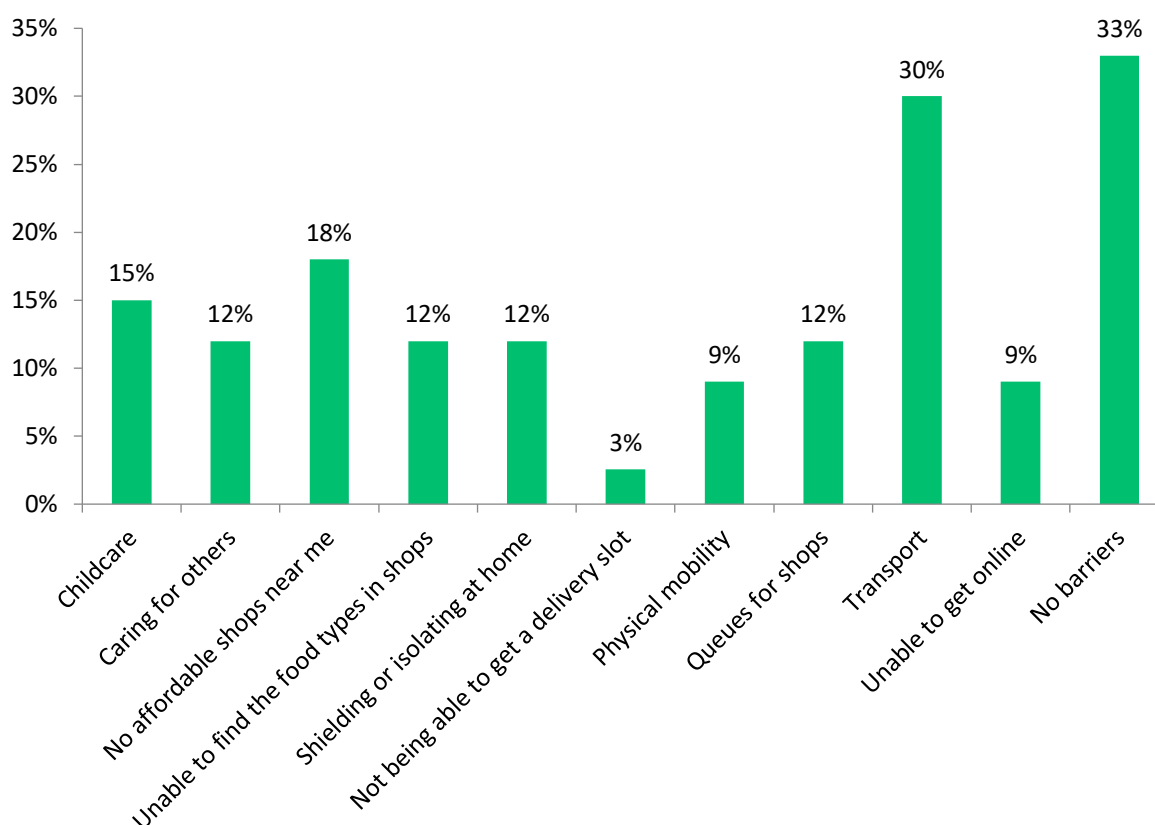
¹ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty (2014) Feeding Britain. A strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. [food-poverty-feeding-britain-final.pdf](https://www.food-poverty-feeding-britain-final.pdf) ([wordpress.com](https://www.wordpress.com))



Additional barriers

Apart from affordability, the majority of respondents faced multiple barriers to finding nutritious and/or culturally appropriate food.

In the last two years has there been anything (apart from lack of money) that has made it hard for you to get food? Please tick all that apply.



Of the people who responded to the question, 67 per cent of Black and Racially Minoritised people that used food banks, stated that they had additional barriers to accessing food in the last two years. The most significant barrier to people was **transport** (the cost of travel made it particularly prohibitive) with 30 per cent finding it difficult to get to shops. This is concerning when 18 per cent said that there were **no affordable shops near** them which compounded the issues of accessing affordable food. Other areas of significance were **childcare** and **caring responsibilities** which were barriers to 13 per cent and 12 per cent of people respectively. For 9 per cent of people **physical mobility** was a barrier to accessing food and 9 per cent of people mentioned being **digitally excluded** (unable to get online) as a barrier to accessing food. Additionally economic insecurity, can also be through finding money for debt repayment, falling wages and/or increased job insecurity, increased utility bills which are often accumulative and result in multiple pressure points for an individual or household resulting in food insecurity. This means the experience of many of the



respondents is that they can only afford unhealthy food, lacking nutrition, as a consequence widening health inequalities further.

Unaware of services

It is significant that 77 per cent of respondents were not aware of other food provision available in the city. When asked if their current food provision stopped, 86 per cent of respondents said that they would now know what to do. When asked how they had heard of the BMECP, Jollof Café and VIE they had usually heard through “word of mouth” from friends and wider community groups, churches and a few from agencies.

These concerning high figures create a picture of isolation from services that could support them. The respondents had very little by way of contact with statutory and voluntary services, beyond the food provision organisation, only 5 mentioned Care 4 Calais, 1 mentioned refugee radio and 1 respondent mentioned Brighton and Hove Council who had provided emergency provision. This picture provides some evidence of Black and Racially Minoritised people, as well as asylum seekers and refugees being more likely to be socially excluded (or socially isolated) which limits the options open to the respondents and makes them particularly constrained in their choices.

Many people facing food insecurity were not aware of other food provision beyond the services they were using. One of the locations during this research saw their funding dramatically cut and many of the recipients were unaware of alternative food provision or services that would be able to offer support. Often those accessing provisions that was specifically aimed at ethnically diverse people were unable to navigate a complex benefit system and/or service provision. One of the respondents from BMECP described a need for further support,

“It is so confusing, I don’t know where to get services or other places to access food, it is easier here, we are not having to fill in forms and give our life stories. It is humiliating going through the process of saying why you can’t afford food. You feel judged, I don’t feel judged here, it is such a nice system, I do not know what I would do if this service stopped. I wish we could get help with other issues to fill in forms and understand letters and know more about what is out there, it is confusing.”

The respondent was describing something resembling a ‘Foodbank Plus’, a space where individuals could receive additional support, such as form filling, understanding letters, money advice, signposting to services and advocacy, etc. ‘Word of mouth’ was the way that many people had discovered provisions such as Jollof Café, BMECP and Voices in Exile. Others heard of BMECP because they were referred to by other organisations such as Women’s Centre or the University of Sussex African Society (predominantly students). A significant proportion of the participants did not access other foodbanks due to lack of awareness, others felt that they would be judged in other spaces.



New migrants, foreign students, but also those who do not speak English as a first language are less likely to know how to navigate or have an awareness of the UK statutory and voluntary sector. They may also be less likely to have wider support (from family, friends or communities) which compounds a sense of isolation but is the reality to circumnavigate services.

Recommendation 1

Consider targeted additional support at a foodbank, a 'Foodbank Plus', which provides support and advice on finances, housing and benefits for example. Also support with form filling, understanding letters, signposting to services, advocacy, etc. would make for a more comprehensive service.

Recommendation 2

Ensure that there are translations of what services (signposting materials as referred to in recommendation 10) are offered by foodbanks/ Affordable Food Projects /cafes in the main languages used in Brighton and Hove – a single document that can be shared across all services with additional information for specific organisations.



Essential foods selected by respondents: Twarog (Polish white cheese), fruit and vegetables, yam and beans

86 per cent of participants *did not use a foodbank or food hub before the pandemic*



Asylum seekers and the hotels

This research identified specific issues concerning asylum seekers, particularly those living in hotels in Brighton and Hove. This cohort were living in very troubling living conditions having an impact on people's mental and physical health. Additionally, the food offered to this group was of particular poor quality, often inappropriate with little to no choice, cold, small portions and often culturally clumsy or totally inappropriate. People were unable to heat food up when it was cold or get more food when portions were inadequate. There was very little agency in the food people received, which furthered the lack of agency in their lives. Respondents said that there was a need to have access to appropriate food for children and themselves. Snacks for children was mentioned alongside some level of choice and sense of agency in their lives. Asylum seekers residing in hotels were not allowed to have microwaves in their rooms nor make use of the kitchen.



Hotel food given to asylum seekers, sometimes cold, often unfamiliar tastes, small portions and causing people to feel unwell.

Comments from some of the asylum seekers living in a hotel in Brighton and Hove:

“The problem is that the food is not good, and they give it cold and many of us get sick in our stomachs.

“As [redacted] [country of origin] we are not used to this kind of food and condiments, and they hurt us.”

“There are several times we don’t eat because we don’t want to eat that food because we get sick with our stomachs.”

“We have met [with people at the hotel] several times but they say that the food can’t be changed.”

“We can’t use the microwave is no allowed, no kitchen instrument”

“We are not used to eating this food and our stomach either in preparation and flavour because if we eat chicken we prepare it totally differently.”



Jollof café, provided an elegant response to the needs of asylum seekers in the hotels by once a week providing some respite from their everyday lives, creating a space where people could eat for free (or low cost) and take turns to cook a dish (as the space had a kitchen where they could cook meals). Often, they made their favourite vegetarian dish, and this was gratefully received. It was a safe space where people could socialise, away from the hotel and taste healthy and tasty food. Money was given so they could buy the food required for the meal. This space was deeply appreciated by those who attended.

Jollof Café – a safe space for asylum seekers and refugees

The Jollof Café is a project of Sussex refugees and migrants' self-support group, running since 2017, based in central Brighton. The café is open every Wednesday afternoon and aims to be a safe, welcoming and supportive space for friendships and solidarity, a welcoming group to be an equal participant as a volunteer in a collective, to not just be a recipient but an active member of the community.

Hot meals and drinks are offered and some signposting and support accessing T4K and other services that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers might require.

Jollof Café does not receive any funding from other organisations but do hold occasional crowd funders, usually once a year.

People that attend the Wednesday sessions are offered a freshly cooked meal and can take any leftovers home. Meals are free and those who can afford it can pay the suggested donation of £5. This provision is particularly welcome as the asylum seekers in the hotel have no cooking facilities and the food is very poor.

Jollof Café, like many of the food providers, is challenged by lack of funding. They are currently making a loss because the costs of ingredients for the food and venue hire, which is higher than the donations coming in. Jollof Café is aware it needs funding, storage facility and more volunteers to run the project.

There are a wide range of barriers and difficulties that asylum seekers and refugees face including lack of legal advice, and of advice generally, around poverty, destitution, homelessness and poor housing amongst other issues.

Hotel residents face a lack of kitchen facilities severely limiting access to nutritious and culturally familiar and comforting food.



Recommendation 3

Food provision needs to be able to cater for those who do not have cooking facilities, such as the large number of asylum seekers staying in local hotels who have to abide by strict rules. Helpful food stuff that does not require a microwave, cooker, fridge or freezer. Also snacks, particularly for children – snack bars, crisps, etc and food such as instant soups and snacks for adults.

Recommendation 4

Consider enabling/opening cooking spaces for those people who are unable to cook in their accommodation. Which could also sell at low cost/free snacks.

*Of the respondents who had access to food banks, **30** per cent were not permitted to work and **28** per cent were students*

Voices in Exile - asylum seekers and refugees

Voices in Exile works with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) in Surrey, East and West Sussex. They were established in 2005 and offer practical and legal support including generalist advice and specialist immigration casework (up to OISC Level 2) for those who would otherwise be unable to access justice. They offer practical support including a weekly food and toiletries bank for those who are destitute. Since the pandemic the foodbank changed into a delivery service, all clients received their food parcel on Friday. Due to refurbishment work happening in the office building, the foodbank was temporarily rehoused, although delivery of food parcels continued.

VIE is offering food vouchers that can be spent in a supermarket, rather than offering a food parcel. All participants preferred this new method.



Essential foods selected by respondents: Oil, bread and rice



A welcoming space

BMECP, Voices in Exile foodbanks and Jollof Café were universally described in terms of their “welcoming and inclusive” environment by those respondents who used them. They were considered safe and non-judgement spaces which were specifically aimed at minoritised ethnic people and/or asylum seekers. Many spoke about how they felt about BMECP:

“BMECP is helping my situation, I was told about BMECP from someone I know, it is familiar, another place would make me feel anxious.”

“I use BMECP food bank because it provides living support to me in a consistent, dignified manner and it is friendly socialising.”

“I use BMECP for cultural and financial reasons.”

“It help me feed myself as I’m unemployed and have no recourse to public funds.”

“BMECP was around and a welcoming and safe space.”

Recommendation 5

When people come to the foodbank without a referral/where self-referral is not accepted, (and are not able to access food) to then to provide clear signposting for where people can go for food and other types of support.

Recommendation 6

Processes for all food banks could benefit from some of the approaches that organisations such as Jollof Café, Voices in Exile and BMECP take such as:

- Making the process more accessible and less restrictive.
- The need for organisations to consider being more culturally sensitive to other communities, who feel unable to access services.
- The need for additional support such as a phone call reminder which increased rapport and understanding of changing circumstances.
- There is more culturally appropriate food.
- Speaking with people to find out if the food that they had was suitable/appropriate and
- People felt able to ask for much needed additional help such as form filling.



Recommendation 7

It is important to recognise the importance of ethnically inclusive foodbanks spaces that provide a place of sanctuary.

Recommendation 8

Consider how foodbank spaces can double up as warm spaces where there is a low-cost café, activities, support services, etc.

BMECP profile

Black Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP) has been a welcoming space for the Black and Racially Minoritised community for many years. The centre offers venue and office space hire as well as running activities such as IT sessions and, since the pandemic, a foodbank as well. The BMECP foodbank runs every Friday and currently has a waiting list due to their limited financial capacity, the number of people wanting the culturally sensitive produce and the welcoming space.

The BMECP foodbank has always had a focus on Black and Racially Minoritised communities in Brighton and Hove and does not restrict who it opens its doors to. BMECP has the widest range of ethnic groups accessing their food banks, including refugees, asylum seekers, foreign students, various religious groups and more established migrant groups.

People who access BMECP food provision have spoken warmly about the accessibility, friendly non-judgemental approach that supports people in a dignified manner. The manager and volunteers try to respond to the wide range of ethnic groups that use the provision and try to ensure the food is as close to culturally familiar as possible. They have also grown their knowledge around needs around religious periods and specific requirements.

BMECP were reaching a wide number of people prior to funding coming to an end in the autumn of 2022, their beneficiaries included 48 single people; 7 couples, 32 families and 70 children and this has reduced to 24 single people, 3 couples, 27 families, 50 children.

People using BMECP: 60 per cent Asian, 30 per cent African, 8 per cent European and 2 per cent other ethnic groups.

Culturally appropriate food provision

Organisations had different relationships with the recipients of food provision. For example, BMECP and Voices in Exile had a more interactive, responsive and personalised approach to people using their foodbanks. This included contacting recipients the day before to remind



them about the foodbank, having conversation about food needs or items that were inappropriate or unpopular. There was a learning process, in foodbanks that were not specifically set up for minoritised ethnic groups and individuals. Hollingdean foodbank tried to adjust their offer, to respond to what people who were newer to the country might want.

Recommendation 9

Consider introducing an Affordable Food Project element in existing food banks which enables individuals to purchase food at low cost and also to be able to buy fresh food.

Recommendation 10

Consider how as a city ethnically diverse food items can be sourced (e.g., yam, cassava, plantain, vegetables, halal food, beans, chapatti flour) and proportionately shared. Which may logistically be problematic.

Recommendation 11

Foodbanks and Affordable Food Projects capture data that identifies a breakdown of ethnicity, at the point of registration and also asks about five staple foods as an indication of preference. To ensure that foodbanks and Affordable Food Projects are more inclusive.



Essential foods selected by respondents: meat, cheese, potatoes, lactose free milk, soap and shampoo

73 per cent of participants stated that *healthy food* was very important to them in accessing food



Hollingdean Foodbank: an inclusive approach

The Hollingdean foodbank, a member of the Trussell Trust, opened in February 2021. The foodbank, which is run by the church has made a conscious effort to embed an anti-racist approach in everything they do, including at the foodbank. The people who use the foodbank come through referrals and word of mouth. Hollingdean foodbank has seen an increase in use by Black and Racially Minoritised communities, which currently make up about 30 to 40 per cent of people who use the foodbank. They receive a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers and trafficked people from referrals from The Salvation Army and St John of God. Their current Black and Racially Minoritised foodbank users are from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Africa, India and are mainly single men (often young), mature students.

They offer additional support through CAB services and community counselling (one-to-one) that people can refer into.

Initially food was not culturally sensitive to minoritised ethnic people. People were asking for items such as atta flour (chapatti flour) coconut milk, lentils, chickpeas and cooking oil. As Hollingdean foodbank started to become aware of the need for more culturally sensitive food items they started to source these items through donations from community members, shops and financial donations. This also included items such as washing powder, onions, potatoes and carrots which are now staple monthly items. On peak days the Hollingdean foodbank provides about 50 food vouchers.

In 2022, they issued 220 vouchers, which fed 286 adult refugees (including Ukrainians), asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants and foreign students.

The foodbank coordinator identifies as Black and Racially Minoritised and has helped grow a foodbank that is more inclusive and accessible. She is keen to see volunteers from minoritised ethnic backgrounds.

Recommendation 12

Consider giving vouchers to people so that they have the freedom to buy items that they want and ensure the shop chosen is accessible, close by to people's place of residence. This would also reduce the need for organisations to source food items.

Recommendation 13

Food banks and provision need to encourage a more ethnically diverse workforce both paid and voluntary roles which may make for more inclusive services and provision.



Ukrainian emergency food access – Stand for Ukraine Brighton and Hove

Stand for Ukraine Brighton and Hove was set up to support the Ukrainian people, who arrived in Brighton and Hove in 2022. It was estimated by the group that there were between 600-700 Ukrainians in Brighton and Hove. As the Ukrainian refugees arrived, there was a steady increase of Ukrainian usage of foodbanks, estimated at 110 families in Sept 2022. Although many newly arrived families and individuals were receiving government support, individuals and families began to frequent foodbanks. Foodbanks were a new concept to this cohort, and many were unaware that they were required by those who were struggling and that foodbanks were often under-resourced. Although significantly, some of the Ukrainians who were accessing emergency food were waiting to receive universal credit or waiting to have started a job but had not been paid yet.

Stand for Ukraine Brighton and Hove support group helps new arrivals who need support to communicate in English and need extra support to find their way around in Brighton and Hove, understand the benefits system, housing, etc. The group have a Saturday drop in at All Saints Church. They also have the Ukrainian Hub that runs weekly from the Jubilee library. They also receive some support from Trust for Developing Communities and The Network of International Women.

There has been a growing array of housing arrangements within the Ukrainian refugee cohort, some are renting particularly those in employment. Others are housed under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme which has provided them with challenges including with the host families around food choices.



Essential foods selected by respondents: noodles, fish, okra, tomato, halal, wheat-free bread



Travel

The cost of travel impacted the ability for some participants to be able to pay for food, even when it was from a foodbank. One participant described her journey and why she came to BMECP:

I walked across town to come here [BMECP]. I walk everywhere, it takes me time to walk to get food, but it saves me money as it is so expensive taking the bus, I walked for an hour to get here, I carry the food in my ruck sack and a bag, but I cannot take too much as if it too heavy I would not been able to carry it. I am saving my money by walking. I like coming here because I feel welcome, I like the diversity of this place, it is friendly.

When asked about how people got to the food provision, 70 per cent of people who answered the question (23) arrived by bus or public transport (most likely a bus). Bus tickets would be a helpful way for people to access food banks and cafes but also places of coming together – providing safe spaces for Black and Racially Minoritised communities including asylum seekers and refugees.

There were multiple push factors towards accessing food banks, the most prominent being low income, 64 per cent stating it as the reason for accessing food banks, with just over half (34 per cent) stating rising house/rent prices were a reason (although a significant number of people were housed by the home office in this survey, where housing costs were not applicable). For others debt, benefit changes and delays were also reasons for respondents accessing food banks.

People who were accessing food provision through BMECP, Jollof Café and VIE were not only not aware of other food provision but also of other supportive organisations.

Recommendation 14

[When people are isolated and need to access food from a more culturally sensitive organisation, consider the offer of bus tickets.](#)

Pressure from referring organisations

There were issues with some referring agencies and organisations who did not support legitimate food bank users who were Black and Racially Minoritised people. Rather than supporting Black and Racially Minoritised people, they would refer them to BMECP or VIE foodbanks, assuming it was more culturally appropriate, which resulted in putting more pressure on already oversubscribed provision without allowing for more resource.

“No children, no food”

Single people and couples reported that some foodbanks refused to give them food as they had no children. It is unclear whether this was related to ‘cost of living crises or restriction of funding. Food banks have reported having to be more restrict who was able to access their



services and support. This is where food banks have had too many people trying to access their services and have attempted to try to restrict their food offer to cope with the demand. One food bank was being overwhelmed with residents from the hotels for asylum seekers, and had restricted their service to only families, for a short period of time.

Newer migrants and asylum seekers

The majority of respondents spoken to were relatively new to the country, some here only a matter of months and others were here for a few years. Whilst there were some longer established individuals the majority were new to the UK. There were more established groups were accessing BMECP, which is better known in Brighton and Hove by those who have lived here for some time. If time allowed it would have been interesting to explore how more established communities were navigating food poverty, if not accessing BMECP.

Students

There was a significant number of university foreign students who were experiencing food insecurity in the light of increasing cost of living expenses. BMECP and Hollingdean foodbanks in particular identified a high number of foreign students experiencing food insecurity. Having spoken to the students themselves, they expressed the heavy burden of university foreign fees on top of increased living costs. The University of Sussex African Society had signposted some of their students to BMECP.

Recommendation 15

Consider working with universities to address food support for foreign students who are increasingly struggling with higher costs of living in the UK, with additional burdens of high university fees and increased cost of accommodation.

Recommendation 16

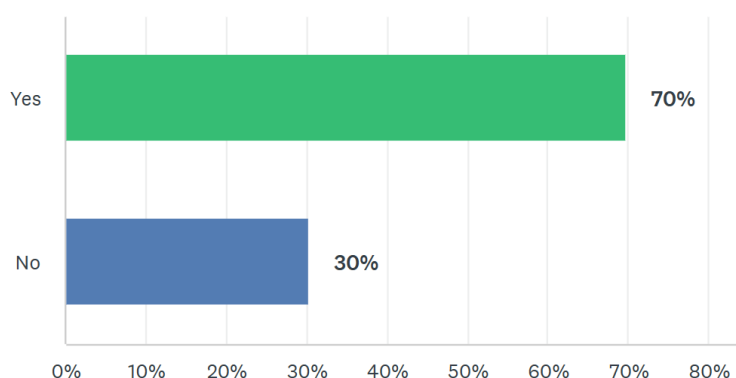
Consider a foodbank or Affordable Food Project style set-up on campus where students can access low cost/free surplus food.

69 per cent of participants had to reduce the size of their meals or skip meals



Growing resilience⁵

Bridging Change spoke to Hollingdean foodbank who was a more established and better resourced foodbank. Bridging Change asked if they could share some of their learning with Black and Racially Minoritised food provision providers. The Hollingdean foodbank food lead, a person who identified as a Black and Racially Minoritised person was keen to develop a relationship with BMECP, where both organisations could learn from each other. Both organisations have agreed develop this relationship.



When asked 70 per cent of people of all respondents were happy to pay between £0.50 and £5.00 to get a food parcel that included more culturally suitable food items.



Essential foods selected by respondents: Salad sugar, pasta, fruit juice, water, coffee



Essential foods selected by respondents: Eggs, baby formula, plantain, pitta bread and milk



Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Consider targeted additional support at a foodbank, a 'Foodbank Plus', where support and advice on finances, housing and benefits for example. Also support with form filling, understanding letters, signposting to services, advocacy, etc. would make for a more comprehensive service.

Recommendation 2

Ensure that there are translations of what services (signposting materials as referred to in recommendation 10) are offered by foodbanks/Affordable Food Project/cafes in the main languages used in Brighton and Hove – a single document that can be shared across all services with additional information for specific organisations.

Recommendation 3

Food provision need to be able to cater for those who do not have cooking facilities, such as the large number of asylum seekers staying in local hotels who have to abide by strict rules. Helpful food stuff that does not require microwave, cooker, fridge or freezer. Also snacks, particularly for children – snack bars, crisps, etc and food such as instant soups and snacks for adults.

Recommendation 4

Consider enabling/opening cooking spaces for those people who are unable to cook in their accommodation. Which could also sell at low cost/free snacks.

Recommendation 5

When people come to the foodbank without a referral/where self-referral is not accepted, (and are not able to access food) to then to provide clear signposting for where people can go for food and other types of support.

Recommendation 6

Processes for all food banks could benefit from some of the approaches that organisations such as Jollof Café, Voices in Exile and BMECP take such as:

- Making the process more accessible and less restrictive.
- The need for organisations to consider being more culturally sensitive to other communities, who feel unable to access services.
- The need for additional support such as a phone call reminder which increased rapport and understanding of changing circumstances.
- There was more culturally appropriate food.
- Speaking with people to find out if the food that they had was suitable/appropriate and
- People felt able to ask for much needed additional help such as form filling.



Recommendation 7

It is important to recognise the importance of ethnically inclusive foodbanks spaces that provide a place of sanctuary.

Recommendation 8

Consider how foodbank spaces can double up as warm spaces where there is a low-cost café, activities, support services, etc.

Recommendation 9

Consider introducing an Affordable Food Project element in existing food banks which enables individuals to purchase food at low cost and also to be able to buy fresh food.

Recommendation 10

Consider how as a city ethnically diverse food items can be sourced (e.g., yam, cassava, plantain, vegetables, halal food, beans, chapatti flour) and proportionately shared. Which may logistically be problematic.

Recommendation 11

Foodbanks and Affordable Food Projects need to capture data that identifies a breakdown of ethnicity, at the point of registration and also five staple foods as an indication of preference. To ensure that foodbanks and Affordable Food Projects are more inclusive.

Recommendation 12

Consider giving vouchers to people who can have the freedom to buy items that they want and ensure the shop chosen is accessible, close by to people place of residence. This would also reduce the need for organisations to source food items.

Recommendation 13

Food banks and provision need to encourage a more ethnically diverse workforce both paid and voluntary roles which may make for more inclusive services and provision.

Recommendation 14

When people are isolated and need to access food from a more culturally sensitive organisation, consider the offer of bus tickets.

Recommendation 15

Consider working with universities to address food support for foreign students who are increasingly struggling with higher costs of living in the UK, with additional burdens of high university fees and increased cost of accommodation.

Recommendation 16

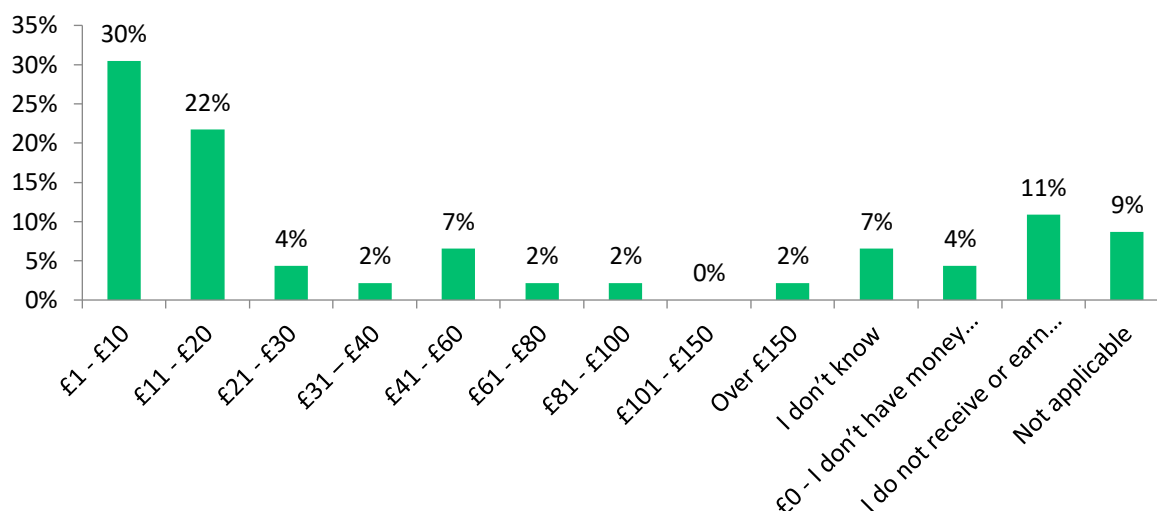
Consider a foodbank or Affordable Food Project style set-up on campus where students can access low cost/free surplus food.



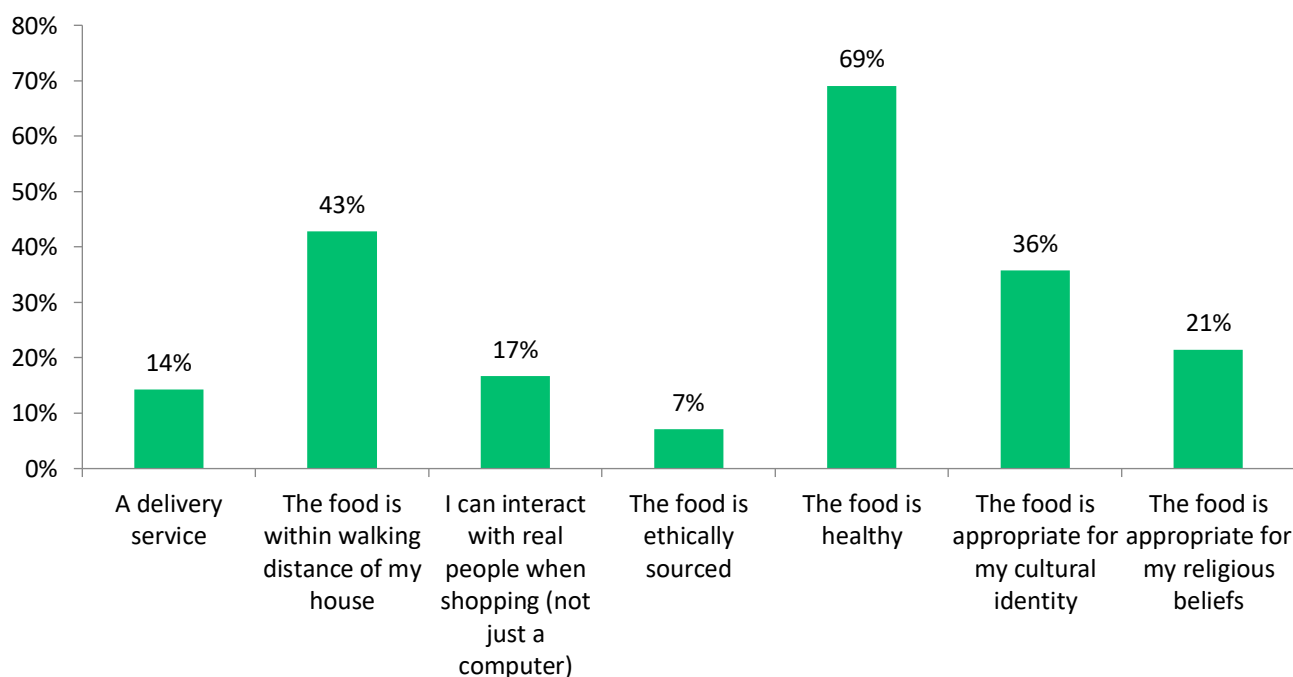
Appendix



After you have paid all your bills, including your rent, approximately how much money do you have each week to buy food? Please tick the box next to your answer.

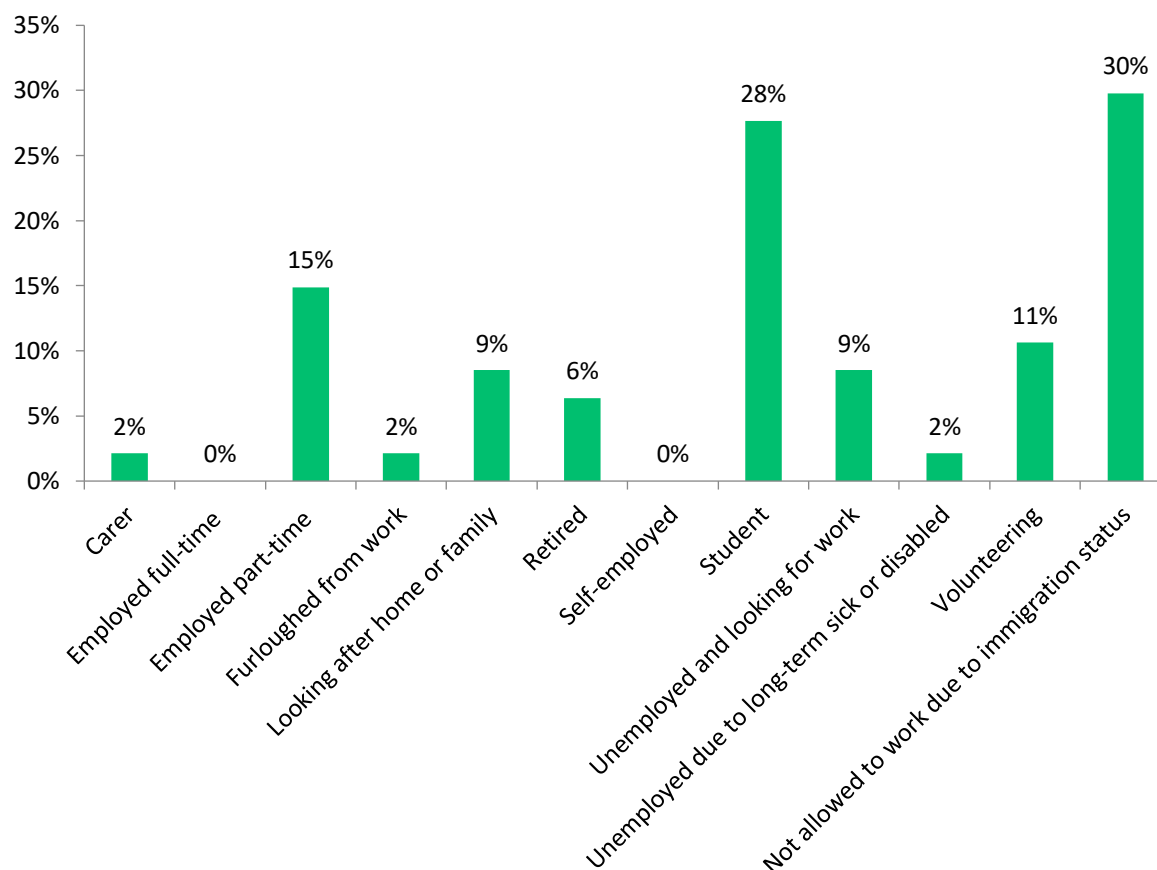


Which of the following are essential to you when accessing food? Please tick all that apply.

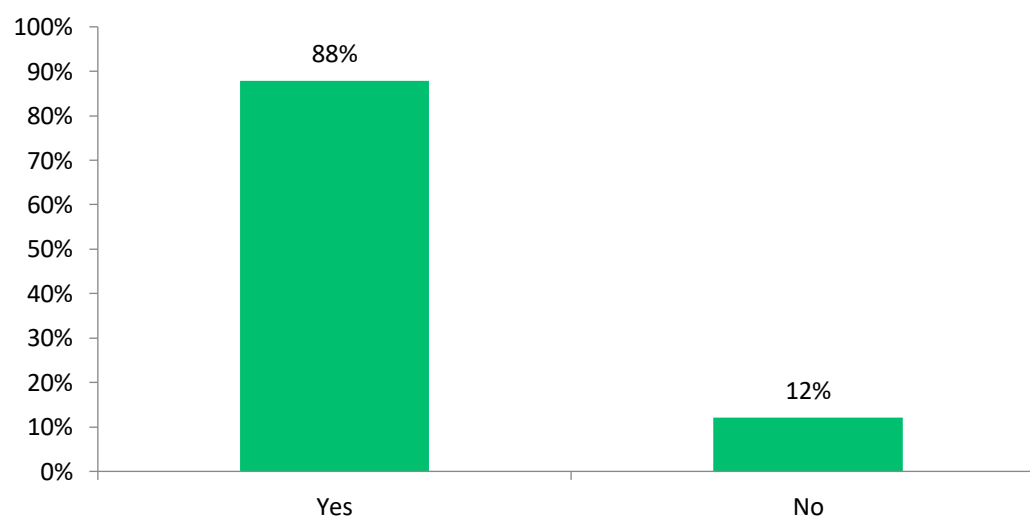




What is your current employment status?

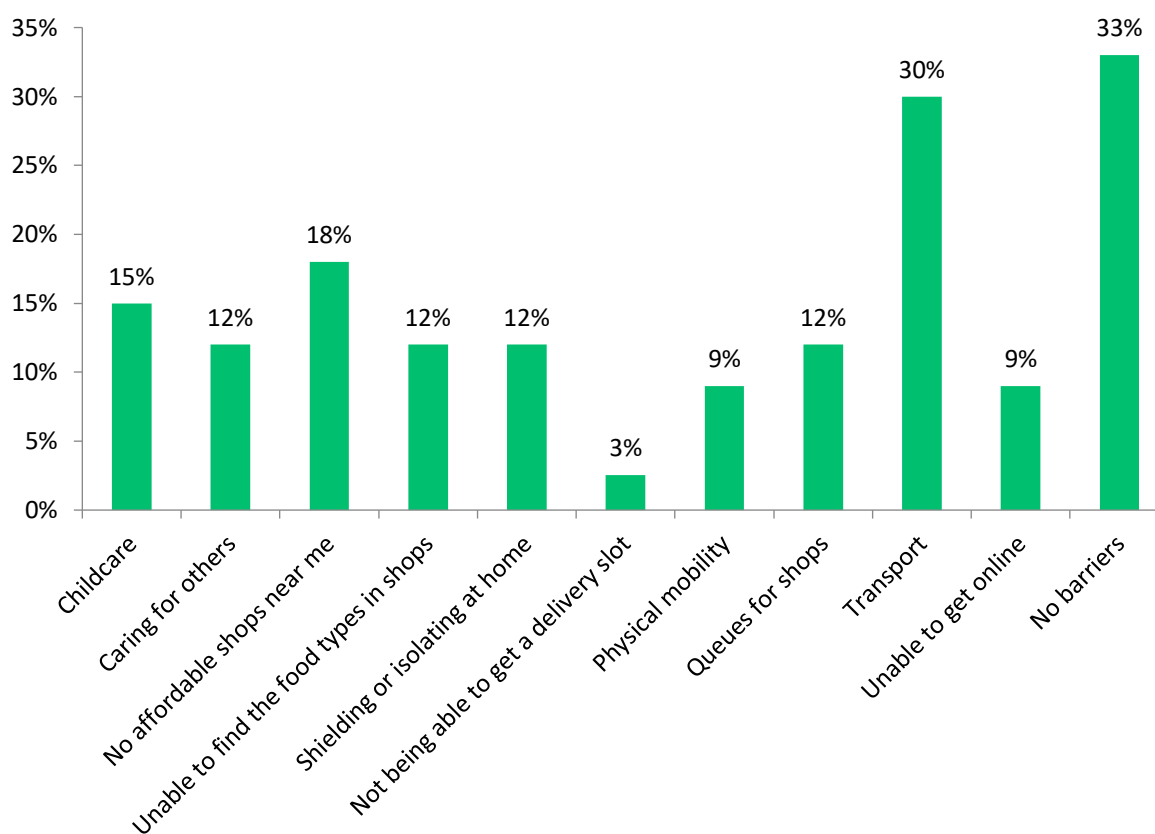


Was it easy to get to here today?



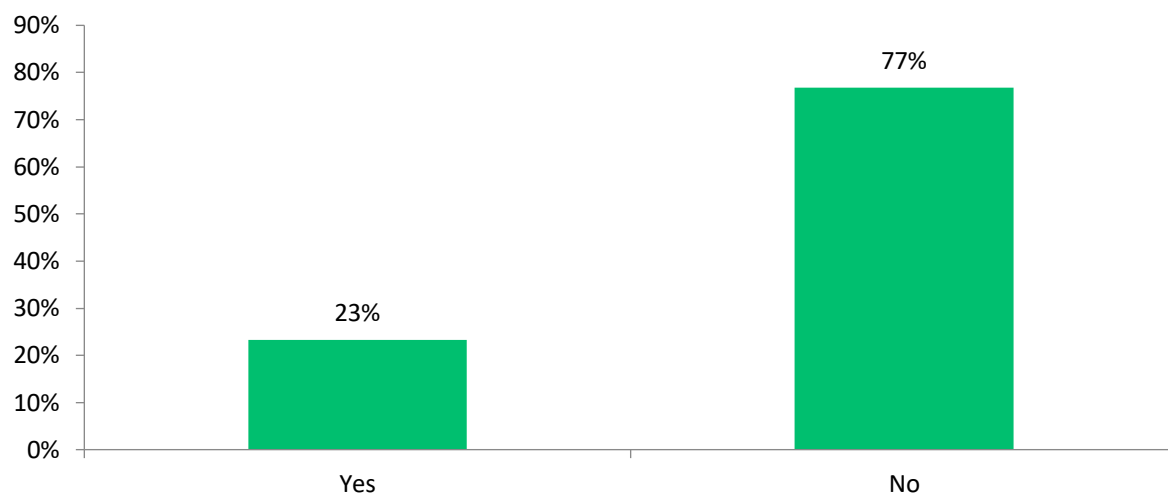


In the last two years has there been anything (apart from lack of money) that has made it hard for you to get food? Please tick all that apply.

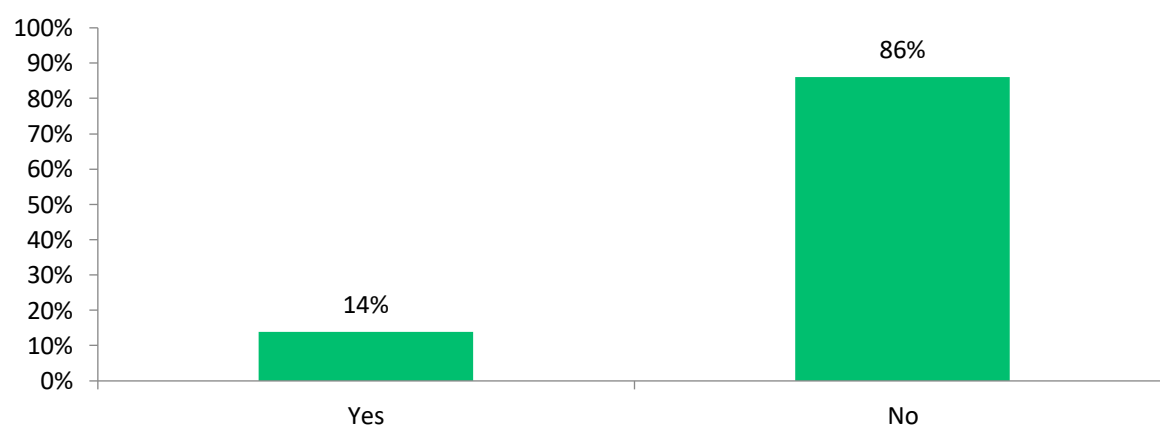




Do you know of any other food provision?

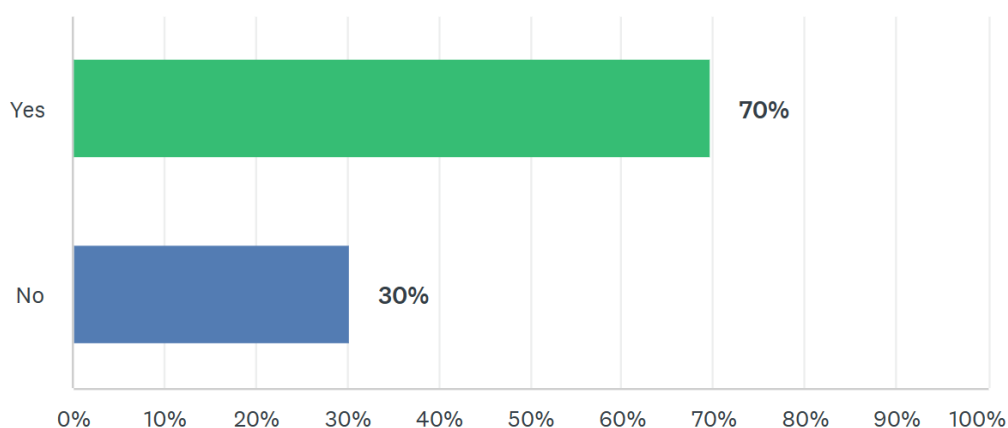


If you no longer received your current food provision do you know of alternative provision?

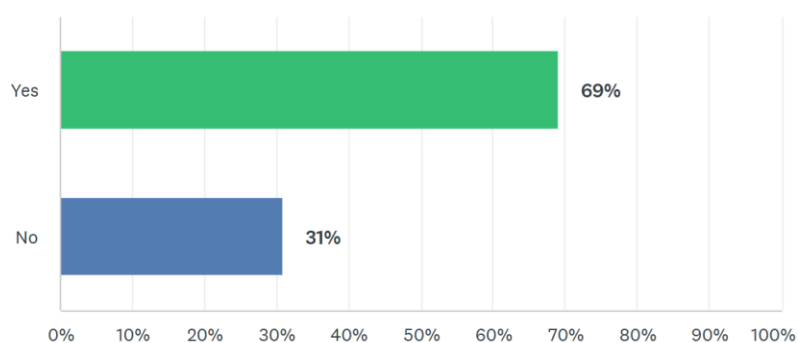




Would you be willing to pay a small amount for food, if the food was more varied?

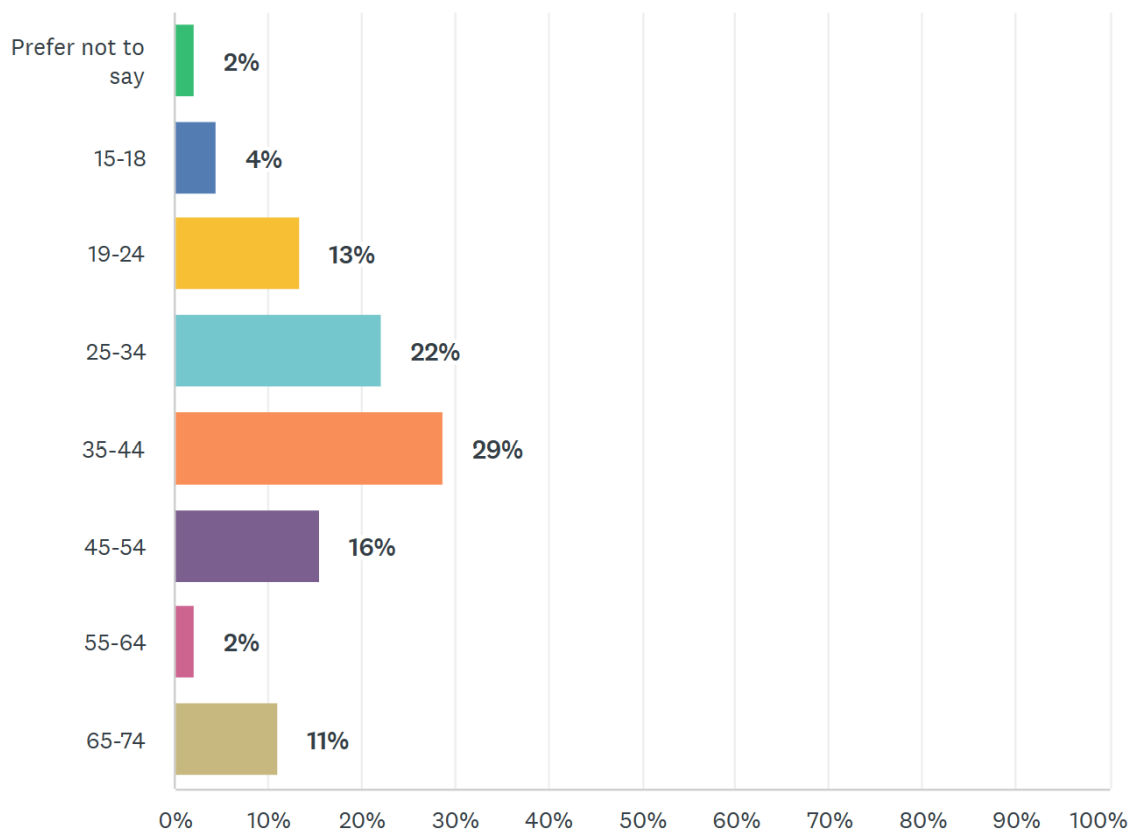


Do you (or anyone in your household) every reduce the size of your meals or skip meals because you couldn't afford enough food?



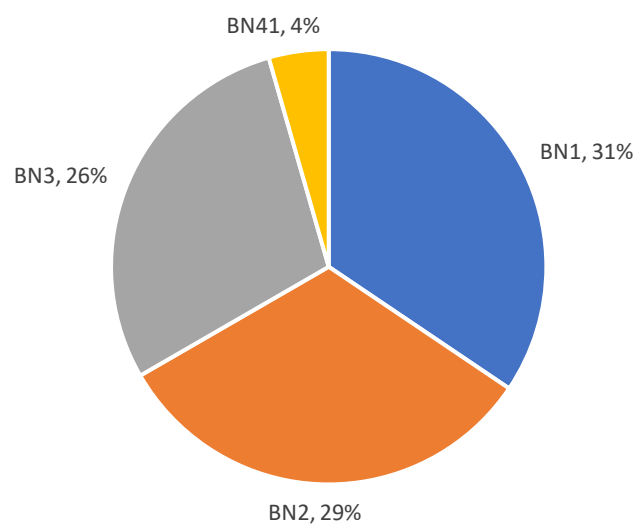


Age of respondents

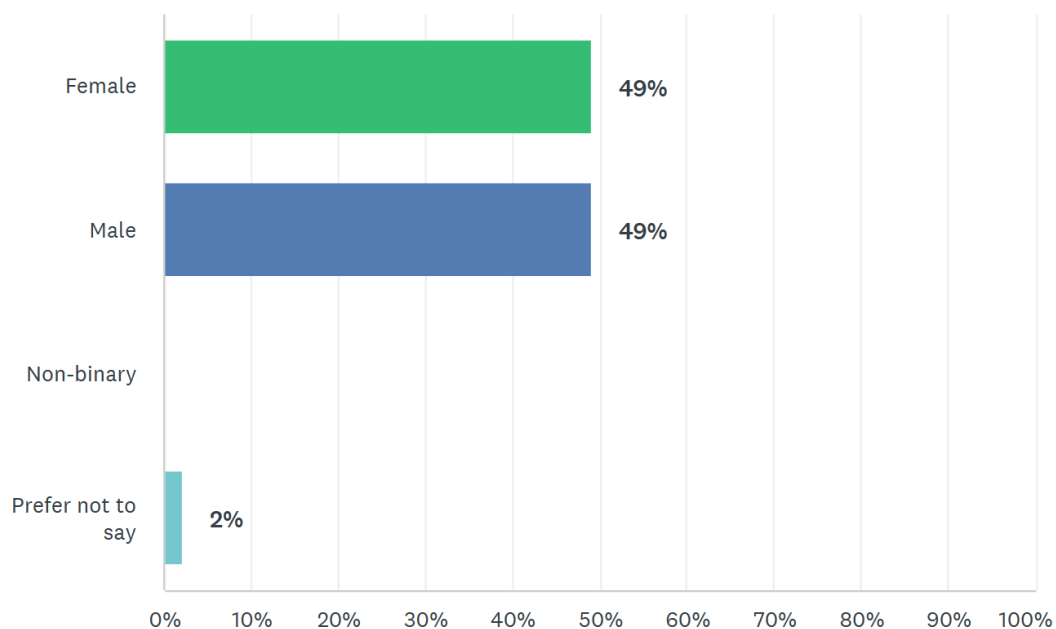




Location of respondents residence

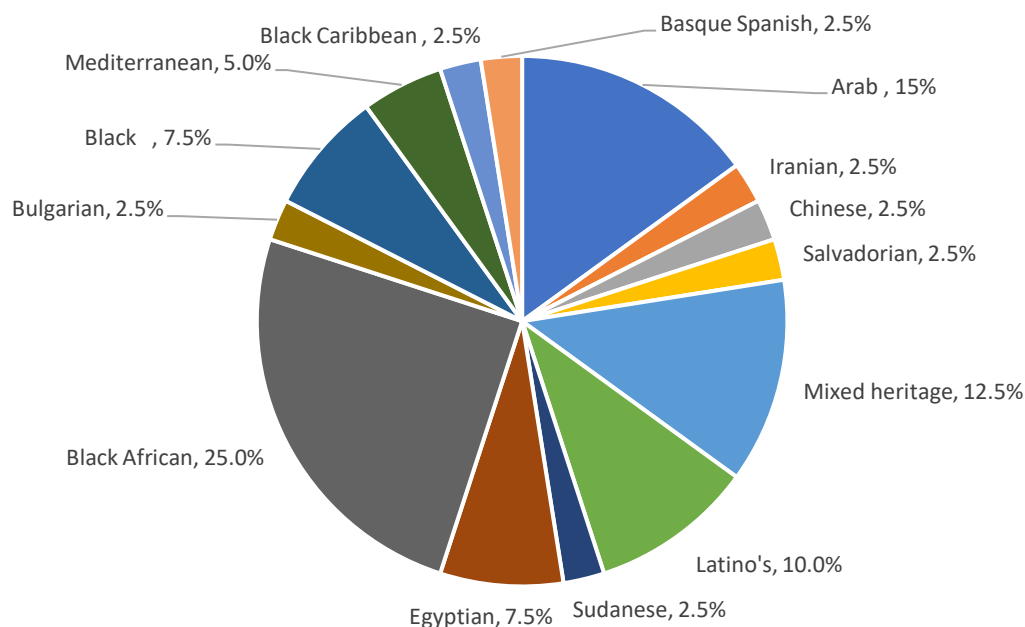


What best describes your gender?

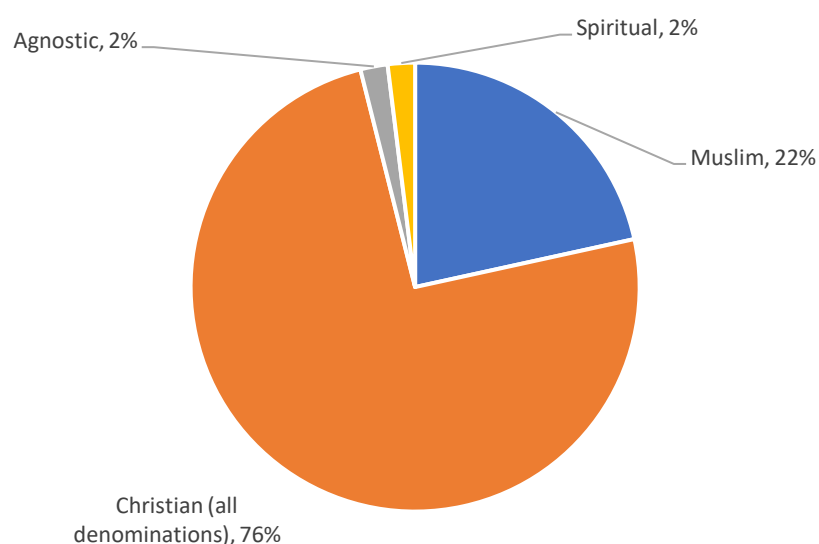




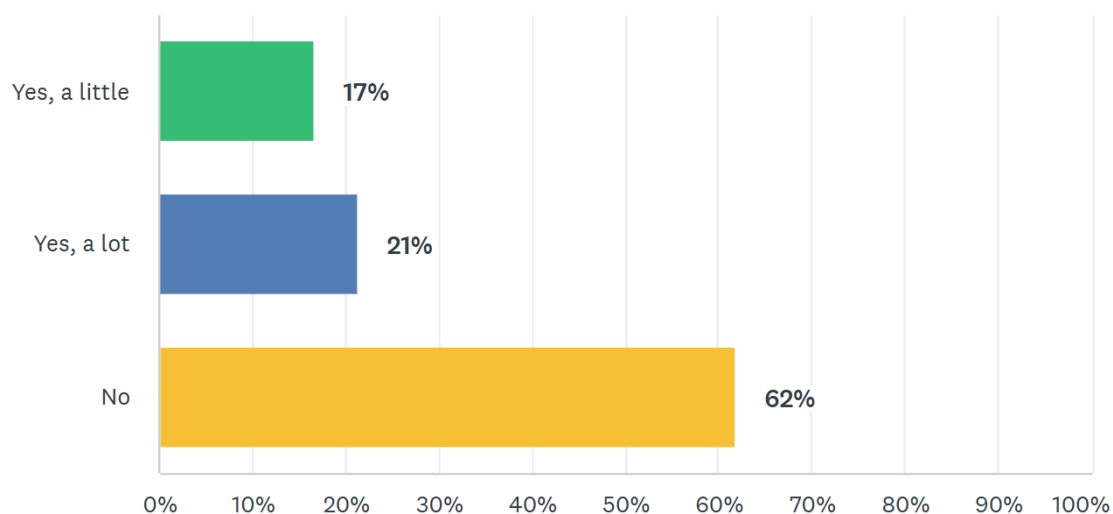
Ethnic group (self identified description)



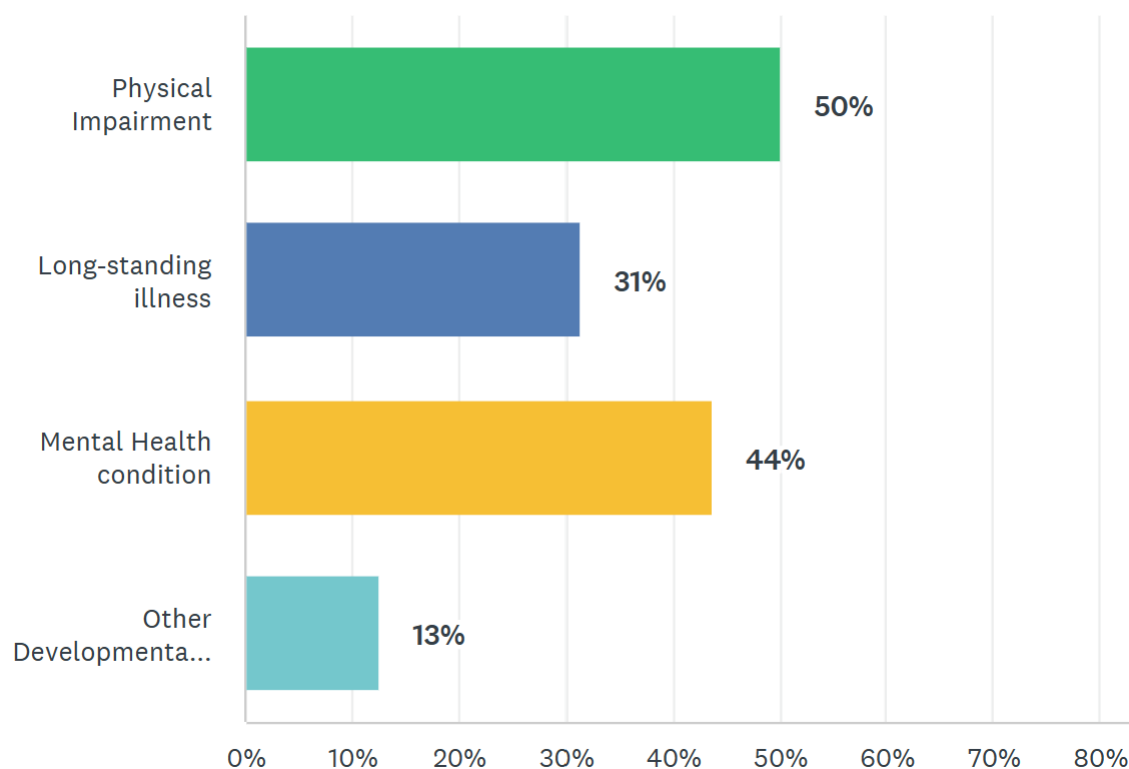
Religious affiliation/belief



Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

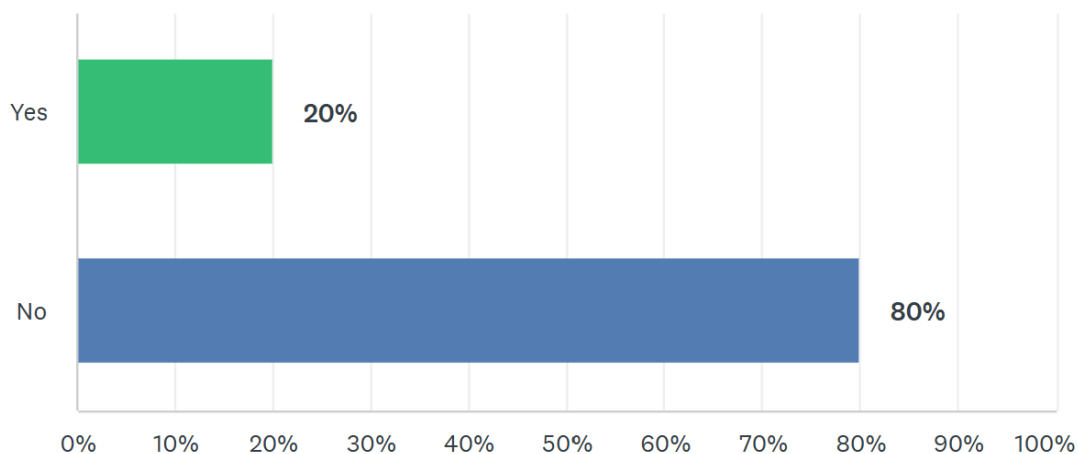


Results from the 16 people who disclosed they had a health condition or disability and chose to share further information.





Are you an unpaid carer?



If you are a carer, who do you care for?

