

Summary of Key Findings From Surveying People in Food Poverty in Brighton & Hove

August 2020

Introduction

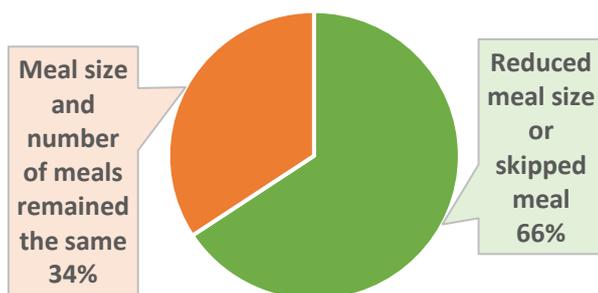
At the height of lock-down in Brighton & Hove, 3001 food parcels were being given out per week and 3966 meals. This has since reduced to 1991 weekly parcels.

For at least the past 7 years, food parcel distribution in Brighton & Hove has been **increasing**, with a **374% increase** between July 2019 and July 2020.

We surveyed people who have been accessing food banks (161 people) as well as those who consider themselves struggling to afford food (65 people). We also surveyed the 42 providers of Emergency food (increased from 21 the year before).

Brighton Residents Go Hungry

Since lockdown began on the 23rd March, **76%** (171) of respondents said they (or someone in their household) had **reduced the size of their meals or skipped meals** because they couldn't afford enough food.



*“Their help is the **lifeline** I needed during these **hard times**. I used to go days without food but now I eat regularly.”*

Who in Brighton & Hove is Struggling to Afford Food?

78% of respondents said that their **day to day activities were limited** because of a **health problem** or **disability** which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months (37% affected a lot, 41% affected a little). This is in comparison to 16.3% of residents in Brighton & Hove from 2011 census.

Of the people who then specified a type of impairment, over two thirds (**68%**) said a **mental health** condition, half (**50%**) said a **long-standing illness**, and two fifths (**42%**) said a **physical impairment**.

Only 17% of the people who are struggling to afford food are **unemployed and looking for work**. **22%** are **already in work** (5% full time, 6% part-time, 3% self-employed, 8% furloughed). This suggests that the **multiple issues with poverty** are as a **direct result of low pay and benefit levels being too low**, as well as living costs such as **rent and bills being high**, especially with regard to long-term ill health and disability.

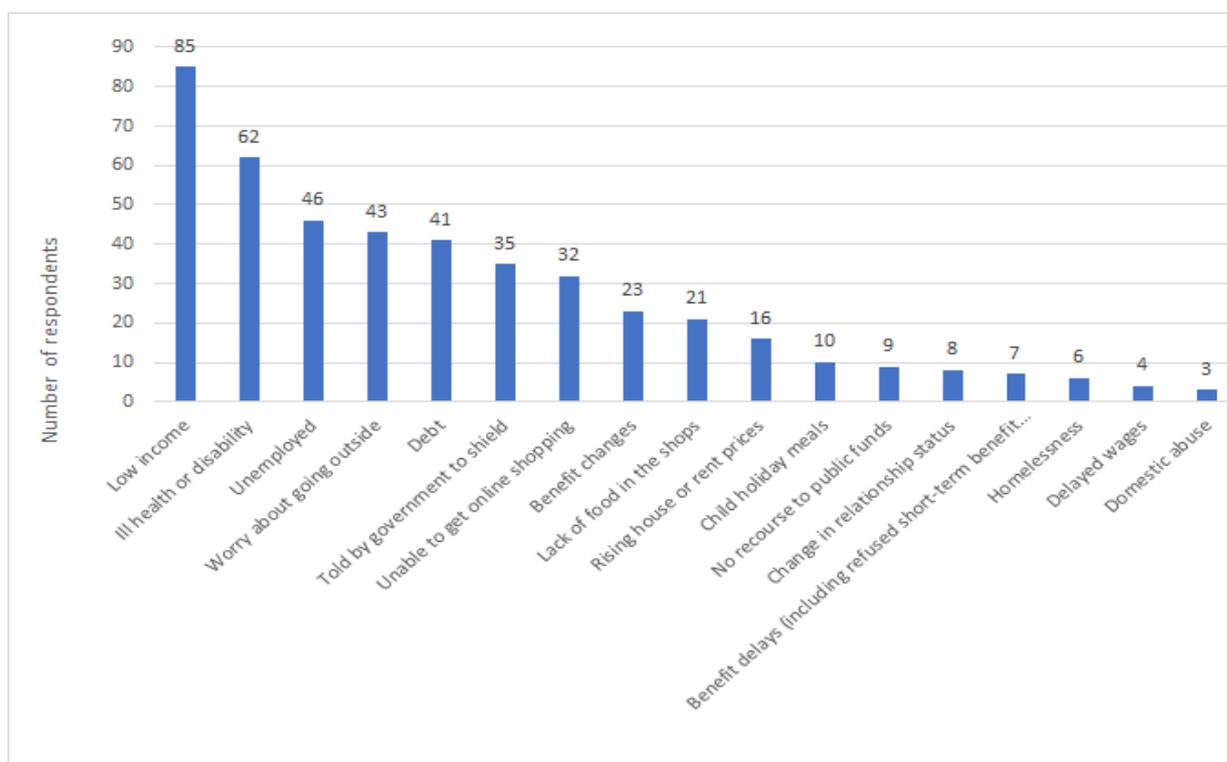
There is a **slightly higher** number of people from **BAME** backgrounds (specifically Asian, Black and Arab communities) **struggling to afford food**, which we would expect from national data.

31.4% of survey respondents had children as dependents. This is in comparison to the average statistic of 24.5% of Brighton & Hove households with dependent children. This suggests that the additional costs of caring for children impact whether someone struggles to afford food.

“I was so hungry some days till I received help I’m disabled vulnerable person I don’t go out my mum used to get me some food with friends each week but she is unwell too.”

Why Are People Struggling to Afford Food?

In both surveys ‘low income’ was cited as the main reason people needed to access emergency food, followed by ‘ill health and disability’, followed by ‘unemployment’. Participants commonly selected multiple factors, showing that there are many reasons why someone would be in poverty.



“Having to wait ten weeks for my first Universal Credit payment due to the way the system has been designed to calculate eligibility for payment based on the date in the month when employer files details to HMRC, not the last day of work/first day of unemployment, plunged me into food poverty.”

Household Food Budget

People without kids had an average weekly food budget of £16.66 per person, with an average household budget of £25.60 a week. Households with children have an average weekly food budget of £8.53 per person, but a household budget of £36 per week. With today’s prices you can see why this budget simply wouldn’t buy enough food to cover all the household’s needs.