

Monday 26 July 2021

Polling brief: Insecure income and work

Ipsos has been commissioned by Anglicare Australia to run a survey with a representative national sample. Participants were asked: “In the last 12 months, have you had an experience of an insecure income?”

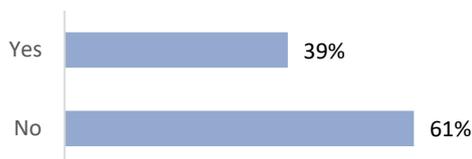
The data collection was conducted from 6 to 9 May 2021, with a total sample of 1,001 Australian respondents. The sample has been weighted to be representative of the Australian population by age, gender and location. The full breakdown is at Table 1.

Table 1. Breakdown of participants by region, state, gender and age

		Unweighted	Weighted
Region	Metro	695	677
	Rural	306	325
State	NSW	288	321
	VIC	281	258
	SA	81	72
	ACT	19	17
	WA	104	105
	TAS	28	21
	NT	4	10
	QLD	196	198
Gender	Male	480	495
	Female	521	506
Age	18 to 29	153	219
	30 to 49	371	354
	50 +	477	428
Total n=		1001	

The results at Figure 1 show that two in five (39 percent) of Australians have experienced income insecurity in the previous year.

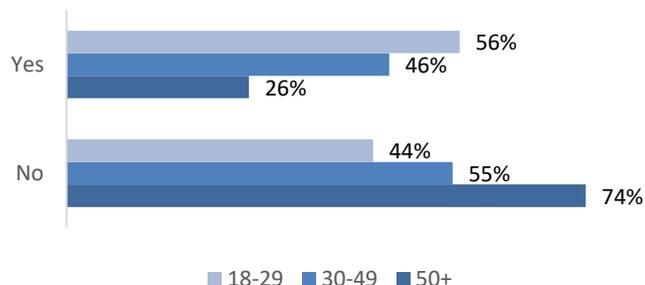
Figure 1. Experiences of income insecurity



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Figure 2 shows income insecurity by age. Young Australians have been most affected by trends surrounding insecure income and work, with more than half (56 percent) of those aged 18-29 experiencing income insecurity in the last 12 months, compared to 45 percent of those 30-49 and 26 percent of those aged over 50.

Figure 2. Income insecurity by age



These worrying trends are likely to be driven by the greater likelihood that young people are working casually or part-time, coupled with the unliveable rate of Youth Allowance payments. With 56 percent of younger respondents to this survey reporting recent experiences of income insecurity, it seems that this is a growing problem which could drive further hardship in the coming years.

There are also real differences in income insecurity by location. Table 2 shows the breakdown of income security by state. Respondents from the ACT and NSW were the most likely to have experienced income insecurity in the previous year (42 percent and 41 percent respectively), followed by South Australia (38 percent), Queensland (38 percent), Tasmania (35 percent), Victoria and Western Australia (32 percent), and finally Northern Territory (25 percent).

Table 2. Income insecurity by state

	NSW	VIC	SA	ACT	WA	TAS	NT	QLD
Yes	41%	32%	38%	42%	32%	35%	25%	38%
No	59%	68%	62%	58%	68%	65%	75%	62%
Total n=	321	258	72	17	105	21	10	198

At the time of Anglicare Australia’s survey in May, employment in Australia had recovered to pre-pandemic levels, although some jurisdictions are known to have taken longer to recover than others over the preceding year. Last year’s national lockdown saw more than 850,000 jobs disappear between March and May, representing 6.6 percent of the workforce. Victoria has so far been the hardest hit by lockdowns, recession, and rates of infection, yet this does not seem to correlate to income insecurity. Their rates of income insecurity are the second-lowest nationally. On the other hand the ACT, which reported the highest rate of income insecurity in the survey, had a modest ‘soft lockdown’ and emerged from the recession relatively unscathed. It seems that these results reflect more permanent trends in casual work and income insecurity, rather than pandemic-specific impacts.

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