



Joint Media Release

Ten per cent of Singaporean households experienced food insecurity at least once in the last 12 months

SMU's Lien Centre for Social Innovation takes an in-depth look at food insecurity in Singapore through "The Hunger Report 2019".

Singapore, 16 September 2020 (Wednesday) - Food insecurity is defined as a state when a household does not have, or is not confident of having, economic and physical access to sufficient, acceptable food for a healthy life. The [Singapore Management University](#) (SMU)'s [Lien Centre for Social Innovation](#) (LCSI) recently completed the first nationally representative study on food insecurity in Singapore.

Commissioned by [The Food Bank Singapore](#), the study follows a 2018 report, "*Hunger in a Food Lover's Paradise: Understanding Food Insecurity in Singapore*"—a smaller-scale investigation that focused on 236 low socio-economic status (SES) households. *The Hunger Report 2019* is a nationally representative study involving customised random samples bought from the Department of Statistics. A total of 1,206 usable surveys were collected from Singaporean households between July and December 2019, and the report looked into the prevalence, causes and consequences of food insecurity in Singapore.

Despite Singapore being ranked by the Economist Intelligence Unit as the most food-secure nation in the world on the Global Food Security Index in 2019, this study reveals a paradox. Singapore has done well in terms of achieving sufficiency of food supply through a strategic diversification of food sources; however, this progress has not prevented certain sections of the country's population from reporting food insecurity. 10.4% of Singaporean households (citizens and/or permanent residents) surveyed experienced food insecurity at least once in the last 12 months, out of which two out of five of these households experienced food insecurity at least once a month.

According to **Nichol Ng, co-founder of the Food Bank Singapore**, "Food insecurity is a concern even in an affluent society such as Singapore. The COVID-19 pandemic has escalated this problem exponentially with people suffering from pay cuts and job losses. The Food Bank Singapore sees food as the defining denominator when gauging how severe someone's situation is. We must do all that we can to ensure that food insecurity becomes history and that no one goes hungry in our country."

Key findings of survey

- 1) Food-insecure households were more likely to reside in 1- and 2-room HDB homes compared to food-secure households.
- 2) Food-insecure families tended to have heads of households with lower educational qualifications (much less likely to have a university-level education) than food-secure families.
- 3) Only 22% of food-insecure households were currently receiving food support. A substantial percentage of food-insecure participants did not seek food support, citing embarrassment, being unaware of available food support and the belief that others need it more than themselves.
- 4) Food insecurity was associated with both physical and mental health detriments. Food-insecure participants were more likely to be in the high-risk BMI category compared to food-secure participants. Food-insecure individuals reported a slew of negative emotions demonstrating the psychological impact of food insecurity.
- 5) Food-secure households had significantly fewer affiliations with food-insecure households compared to those who were food-insecure.

Report recommendations

1) Tackle misalignment of food support

Geographical mapping of areas where vulnerable households reside can aid in identifying food-insecure neighbourhoods and informing food aid organisations. At the national level, more strategic coordination of food support should involve multi-sector partnerships that encompass the relevant and diverse stakeholders in the food support ecosystem. These include the government, and non-profit and private sectors.

2) Increase the level of awareness about food insecurity in Singapore

The lack of awareness about food insecurity in Singapore, especially among food-secure households, warrants attention and action. Information and education on food insecurity is required in order to cultivate empathy and awareness that this is a pertinent issue in Singapore.

3) Prioritise nutritious and healthy eating among Singapore households

Rigorous national campaigns to encourage healthy eating should continue and be further amplified. As cost was listed as a major deterrent to choosing healthier food options, this aspect should be further explored. If healthier food options do not necessarily mean higher costs, this message should be incorporated into healthy eating campaigns.

The researchers of this study note that some of the report's recommendations are being addressed through the ongoing efforts of the Charity Food Workgroup, which was convened by the Ministry of Social and Family Development in 2019. The multi-sector Workgroup – comprising food aid organisations, volunteers, corporates, and government agencies – seeks to improve coordination and efficiency within the charity food sector. This allows households in need to receive food support that suits their requirements, thereby also reducing wastage.

The full report can be downloaded from [here](#).

About [The Food Bank Singapore Ltd](#)

Established in 2012, The Food Bank Singapore (www.foodbank.sg) is Singapore's first food bank and aims to be the prevailing centralised coordinating organisation for all food donations in Singapore. Driven by its mission to eradicate food insecurity of all forms in Singapore by 2025, the registered charity bridges potential donors and member beneficiaries by collecting and redistributing donated food. Its members are registered charity organisations or special organisations with a designated meal programme for low income and underprivileged individuals and families. Through a network of more than 360 such organisations of all sizes, the food bank serves more than 100,000 families and over 300,000 people with all kinds of food—from fresh to cooked.

About [SMU Lien Centre for Social Innovation](#)

The Lien Centre of Social Innovation at the Singapore Management University was established in 2006. It is on a mission to drive social consciousness and enable partnership-driven innovation, because when socially conscious people work together, a vibrant, just and inclusive society becomes possible. The Centre seeks to be a thought leader and catalyst for positive social change in Singapore, Asia and beyond. Offering thought leadership, evidence-to-action translational research, and capacity-building programmes, it amplifies impact by giving voice, empowering and enabling socially conscious individuals and organisations to learn, ideate and collaborate.

About [Singapore Management University \(SMU\)](#)

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and to produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning.

Home to over 10,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU is comprised of six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a

wide range of bachelors', masters' and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in interdisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU has an emphasis on generating rigorous, high-impact, and relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU's faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities from USA, Europe, China and India, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

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