

# Study: Over 40% of households that faced food insecurity pre-pandemic better off now

---

Syarafana Shafeeq

---

---

A study this year has found that over 40 per cent of households in Singapore that were struggling to put food on the table pre-pandemic are in a better situation now.

Researchers from Singapore Management University's Lien Centre for Social Innovation studied the impact that the pandemic has had on households that were previously facing food insecurity.

Food insecurity is defined as when a household does not have or is not confident of having access to enough food to be healthy.

The first run of The Hunger Report, published in 2020, found that 10.4 per cent of about 1,200 households surveyed experienced food insecurity at least once a year, while two out of five households faced the issue at least once a month.

Follow-up surveys with 59 of those households in this year's report found that 44.1 per cent saw some form of improvement in their food status, moving up by at least one category, such as from "severely food insecure" to "moderately food insecure".

Twelve of the 59 households, or 20.3 per cent, that were previously food insecure no longer face the issue entirely. The study suggested that the reasons behind the improvement include an increase in the number of Singaporeans seeking aid during the pandemic, and an increase in on-the-ground food support.

Despite improvement in certain households, 45.8 per cent of the respondents reported no change in food insecurity status, while the situation of 10.2 per cent was found to have worsened.

The study was commissioned by The Food Bank Singapore and supported by business-building enterprise Tolaram.

The report found that giving households choices in the way they receive support improved their psychological well-being: 75.8 per cent reported being satisfied with the food support provided after being given the choice to choose between supermarket vouchers or having cooked food.

This is an improvement from the almost 89 per cent in 2020 that had reported being unsatisfied with the food support they received.

Ms Nichol Ng, co-founder of The Food Bank Singapore, said the report findings have proven that people seek comfort in choosing what they eat amid "a time of chaos and crisis".

"Through these times, they still wish to be accorded the respect to be able to make their own choices," she said.

In a panel discussion at the launch of the report yesterday, Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development Eric Chua said food insecurity stems from deeper-rooted issues.

Two groups that are vulnerable to the issue are people living in rental flats and rough sleepers, said Mr Chua.

---

syarafanams@sph.com.sg