

Food Security in Tasmania

Results from the 2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey

Introduction

The 2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey (TPHS) was conducted as a telephone survey of over 6,000 Tasmanian adults aged 18 years and over during November-December 2009. The survey was conducted as an extension of the Victorian Population Health Survey which has been conducted annually since 1999. Tasmanians without access to a landline telephone were not included in this survey.

A summary report of the findings has been prepared by the Menzies Research Institute. The *2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey, Selected Findings* reports extensively on state-wide results for behavioural risk factors and chronic conditions among other health and social indicators. The report is available at: <http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/pophealth/epidemiology>

This brief report presents TPHS survey data relevant to food security issues in Tasmania as evidence of the extent of insufficient or poor quality food consumption state-wide and by region.

Statistical methods and interpretation

The Tasmanian Population Health Survey was undertaken using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) and used the 'list assisted' form of Random Digit Dialling (RDD) as the sample frame. The target population was defined as all non-institutionalised Tasmanian residents aged 18 years and over with access to a landline telephone. The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network approved the survey method and questionnaire content. The survey was managed by the Menzies Research Institute on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services. The fieldwork data collection was outsourced to The Social Research Centre.

The survey sample included a total of 6,300 respondents, stratified into sub-samples of 2,100 in each of the three regions; North, North West and South. This sample allocation allowed for an oversampling of the North West region to ensure sufficient accuracy of data estimates produced for this region.

Percentages and the corresponding confidence intervals in this paper are weighted to the Tasmanian population, based on the stratified sampling design of the survey. Each respondent represents multiple persons based on their age, sex and geographical statistical area.

Trends and patterns in the data that are discussed are not necessarily statistically significant trends or patterns, unless indicated. Confidence intervals are provided to assist the reader in interpreting statistically significant results. Statistically significant differences between estimates are deemed to exist where confidence intervals do not overlap.

Food Security in Tasmania

Results from the 2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey

Food Security Questions

Food security represents social inclusion and is focussed on wide and reliable access to safe and nutritious food. According to the Tasmanian Food Security Council, food security is the “...ability of individuals, households and communities to acquire food that is sufficient, reliable, nutritious, safe, acceptable and sustainable.” *

The TPHS included several questions useful in establishing the presence of food insecurity, including: *In the last 12 months were there any times that you ran out of food, and couldn't afford to buy more?* A 'yes' response was followed by an additional question *How often did this happen?*

Other questions probing food security and reasons for inadequate nutrition included:

There are many reasons why people don't always have the quality or variety of food they want. Can you please tell me whether the following situations apply to you with a yes or no.....

I don't always have the type of food I want because.....

Some foods are too expensive, in particular fresh fruit and vegetables

I can't get food of the right quality

I can't get a variety of food, for example a mixture of meat, vegetables, fruit, dairy, bread and pasta

Culturally appropriate foods are not available

Inadequate and unreliable public transport makes it difficult for me to get to the shops.

This was followed by an additional question for respondents who reported *not* to experience problems with public transport:

Do you find it easy or difficult to get to and from shops to buy food using your normal mode of transport?

Results

I. Food Security

A key question determining food security at a population level is to ask respondents about food affordability. Overall, one in 20 Tasmanian adults (5%) experienced food insecurity during the preceding 12 months. Further analysis using a key financial security question “*Are you able to raise \$2,000 in an emergency*” showed that the proportion of Tasmanians reporting financial insecurity (11.1%) is more than twice that of those reporting food insecurity.

In the last 12 months were there any times that you ran out of food and couldn't afford to buy more

	95% CI	
Response	lb	ub
5%	4.3	5.7

Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2009

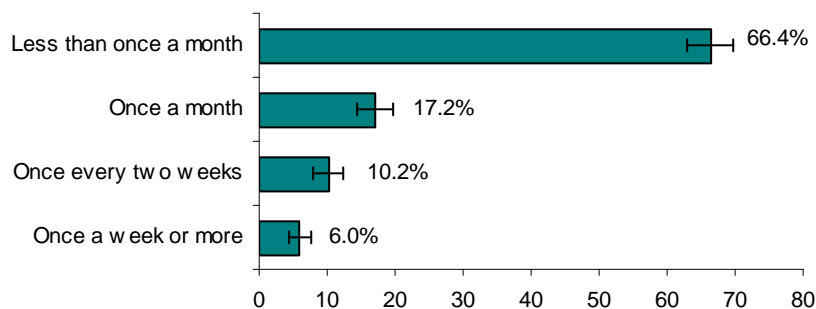
* http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu/committees/tasmania_food_security_council

Food Security in Tasmania

Results from the 2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey

The majority of Tasmanians reporting food insecurity experienced it less often than monthly (66.4%). Relatively small proportions of Tasmanians experience this situation weekly or more frequently (6%).

Frequency of running out of food, 18 Years and over, Tasmania 2009



Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2009

2. Food Quality and Affordability

Almost half of Tasmania’s adult population reported to be unable to always get the food they want (47.4%), with 51.9% of Tasmanians reporting no problems at all.

Of the 47.4% of Tasmanian adults unable to always get the food they want, many cited more than one reason. The most common reasons were quality (61.5%) and high cost (60.9%).

Reasons for not always having the type of food wanted, Tasmanian adults, 2009

	%	95% Confidence Interval	
Quality	61.5%	59.2%	63.8%
Expensive	60.9%	58.6%	63.2%
Variety	25.8%	23.8%	27.9%
Lack of culturally appropriate food	16.6%	14.9%	18.5%
Transport difficulties	16.4%	14.7%	18.3%

Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2009

There were some differences across regions in the reasons cited for not always having the type of food wanted. These regional differences were not statistically significant. Tasmanians in the North-West and North were more likely to report issues with the high cost of food than Tasmanians in the South. Residents in the North West were somewhat less concerned with the quality of food than residents in the North and South, and Tasmanians in the South were slightly more likely to cite public transport problems as a reason for not always having the type of food wanted. (see table below)



Food Security in Tasmania

Results from the 2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey

Reasons for not always having type of food wanted, Tasmanian adults, Tasmanian Health Regions, 2009

Region	Reason	95% Confidence Interval	
		lb	ub
	Expensive		
North	62.4%	58.7%	65.9%
North-West	66.8%	63.1%	70.3%
South	57.6%	53.7%	61.4%
	Quality		
North	64.7%	61.0%	68.1%
North-West	57.5%	53.6%	61.3%
South	61.4%	57.5%	65.2%
	Variety		
North	24.9%	21.9%	28.1%
North_West	26.3%	23.2%	29.7%
South	26.1%	22.9%	29.6%
	Lack of culturally appropriate food		
North	16.0%	13.4%	18.9%
North-West	17.4%	14.9%	20.3%
South	16.7%	13.8%	20.0%
	Public transport difficulties		
North	16.0%	13.4%	18.9%
North-West	13.5%	11.1%	16.2%
South	18.0%	15.2%	21.2%

Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2009

Of those Tasmanians who reported *no problems* with public transport in obtaining the type of food they wanted, 96.8% reported easy access to shops using their usual mode of transport. Only 2.8% of Tasmanians reported difficulties with their normal mode of transport in accessing shops.

Level of difficulty in travelling to shops using usual transport, Tasmanian adults 2009

	%	95% CI	
		lb	ub
Easy	96.8%	96.2%	97.2%
Difficult	2.8%	2.4%	3.3%

Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2009

Food Security in Tasmania

Results from the 2009 Tasmanian Population Health Survey

An analysis by urban-rural area shows that rural Tasmanians experience more problems accessing shops with their usual mode of transport than urban Tasmanians. This difference is statistically significant.

Of all Tasmanians living in urban areas and reporting no problems with public transport in accessing shops, 2.3% report to experience difficulty in accessing shops with their usual mode of transport. This proportion was much higher for Tasmanians in rural areas, with 4% finding it difficult to travel to shops using their usual mode of transport.

Difficult to travel to shops using usual transport by urban-rural areas, Tasmanian adults, 2009

		95% CI	
	%	lb	ub
Urban	2.3%	1.8%	2.9%
Rural	4.0%	3.1%	5.1%

Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2009