

August
2024

Graduate Student
Association

**GSA Food Insecurity
Survey – Factsheet
for University of
Melbourne
stakeholders**



About this factsheet

This factsheet aims to complement GSA's submission to the Victorian State Government's inquiry into food security in Victoria (by providing additional information and recommendations relevant to a University of Melbourne stakeholder audience).

For more information about the drivers of food insecurity among graduate students, the impacts of food insecurity on their studies and the barriers they face when accessing support, please refer to GSA's submission (attached).

GSA Food Insecurity Survey – Key figures

The survey received 554 responses.

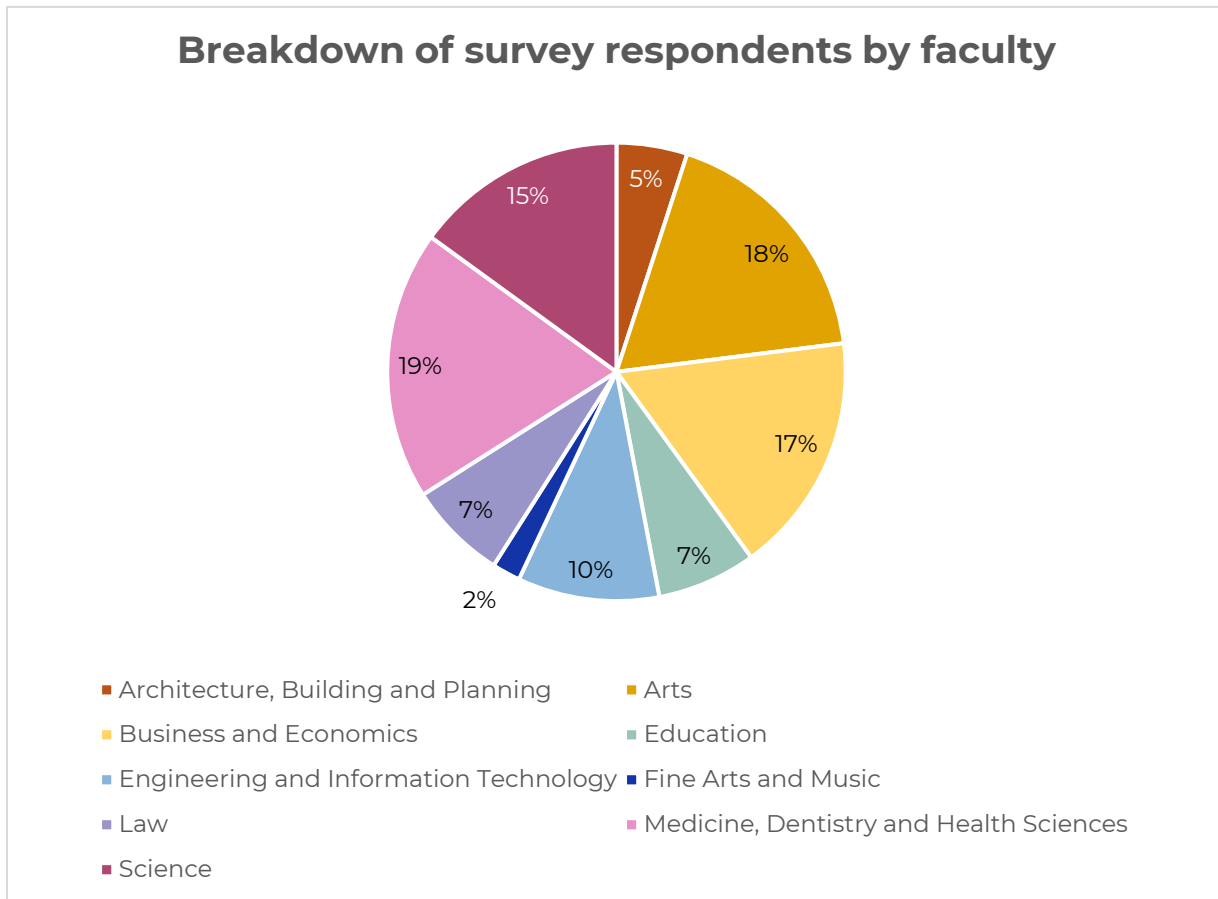
Of these responses, 82% were from international students (456 participants) and 18% were from domestic students (98 participants). 79% of respondents were coursework students (437 participants) and 21% were research students (117 participants).

The survey received responses from students across all faculties. A breakdown of respondents by faculty is shown in Graph 1.

In the past 12 months:

- **44%** of graduate students report that they have struggled to eat balanced meals due to their financial circumstances frequently or very frequently.
- **27%** of graduate students report that they worried they would not be able to eat enough frequently or very frequently.
- **44%** of graduate students report that they use University-run food relief services (food banks, free food programs, etc) frequently or very frequently.

- **30%** of graduate students report that they use GSA's food provision programs (Breakfast Club, Lunch Social) frequently or very frequently.



Graph 1 – Breakdown of survey respondents by faculty

Graduate students' experiences with food provision on campus

Graduate students show support for the continuation of existing University-run food relief programs. Survey respondents note that they are grateful that the frozen meal program is available. Some graduate students suggest that the program could benefit from increased promotion and awareness. Graduate students also frequently suggest that there could be a greater variety of food provided, for example more vegetarian options. Graduate students also suggest that food relief could be expanded to include fresh food boxes with

fruits and vegetables. A similar program was previously run during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period.

Eating on campus was also found to be expensive for most survey respondents. 59% of survey respondents selected 'Somewhat disagree', 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree' when asked to rank their agreement with the statement 'the food options on campus are affordable'. Survey respondents suggested that a University-run cafeteria be established to provide subsidised and affordable meals to students.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised both in this factsheet and in GSA's submission to the Victorian State Government's inquiry into food security in Victoria, GSA calls on the University to:

1. Expand on existing food relief programs to address food insecurity among vulnerable students.
 - a. Ensure vulnerable students can access fresh, nutritious food/groceries through food relief programs.
2. Promote existing food relief programs to ensure vulnerable students are aware of services that may benefit them.
3. Explore the development of subsidised student cafeterias and food pantries on campus (similar to the Food Co-Op, previously located in Union House).
4. Ensure students have access to a variety of affordable, healthy food providers on campus.
5. Ensure student-facing organisations – like GSA – are adequately resourced to deliver food provision programs.