



# FOOD BANK



**Food needs of the  
general population**

Athens, November 2024

# 2024

# Introduction

**The key function** of the Food Bank is the redistribution of food to cover food needs, while at the same time limiting food waste, which is at high levels in Greece. Food that, while suitable for consumption, cannot be absorbed by the market, together with food purchased through specific-purpose donations, is offered free of charge to soup kitchens and institutions.

As part of our mission, for the last four years we have been recording the profile of the people who turn to soup kitchens, the characteristics of the needs of these people, but also of the soup kitchens themselves. The data are very useful for our daily operations. As there are few similar studies, these data can be a source of information for other stakeholders. Issues of previous surveys are available on the Foundation's website.

In this issue, you will find the key highlights of the 2024 survey organized **into three sections**.

**Eurostat** figures show the official, macroscopic picture. They indicate the position of Greece compared to other countries in Europe, and the correlation of food insecurity with household composition and the poverty line.

**The second section** presents the demographic profile of the people who go to soup kitchens, based on the graduate thesis by Eva Stouraiti. Eva has been working at the Food Bank since 2022 and the thesis was prepared for the master's programme "Analysis and Implementation of Social Policy" at Panteion University, in 2024. Of particular interest in the paper are the quantitative and qualitative data that emerged from interviews she conducted, talking directly to people in need at soup kitchens assisted by the Food Bank. The entire thesis is posted in the Panteion library.

**Lastly**, some selected data from the Food Bank's survey of last summer are presented. In total, 66 fully answered questionnaires were collected from representatives of soup kitchens in regions outside Attica. As the responses presented a strong relation to the 2023 survey, we have chosen to present some key points in a more concise form.

I must also thank Elefthera Dominiki who has been working at the Food Bank for the last year, and has played an important role in this project.

- Are there people asking for food? Do we still need soup kitchens to this day?- Undoubtedly—and unfortunately—yes.

The average level of food insecurity in Greece converges with the European average at 10%. However, food insecurity among people below the poverty line shoots up to 38%, almost four times higher. By approaching these people, we can see the extent to which they are deprived of meals, the problems they face, the lack of support networks and their personal stories.

Following the example of other countries in Europe, on our initiative, food banks are operating in six other regions of Greece. These are different legal entities, which apply the same model in the region in which they are located, having a better knowledge of local needs and exploiting local production surpluses. The Food Banks form a network headed by the non-profit Food Bank - Institution to Fight Hunger, based in Attica, which is responsible for guiding, supporting and representing the network.

For example, in 2023 we managed to move 2,148 tonnes of products for more than 110,000 people across Greece, with the support of 149 companies and in cooperation with 333 soup kitchens and other charities. In relation to the problems, our capacity is limited, but the results of our efforts are – I think – significant.

**Dimitris Nentas**  
General Manager

# According to Eurostat,

According to Eurostat, food insecurity is defined as the inability to include chicken, meat, fish, or vegetables of equivalent nutritional value in one's diet every other day, and is a sub-set of the material deprivation indicator.

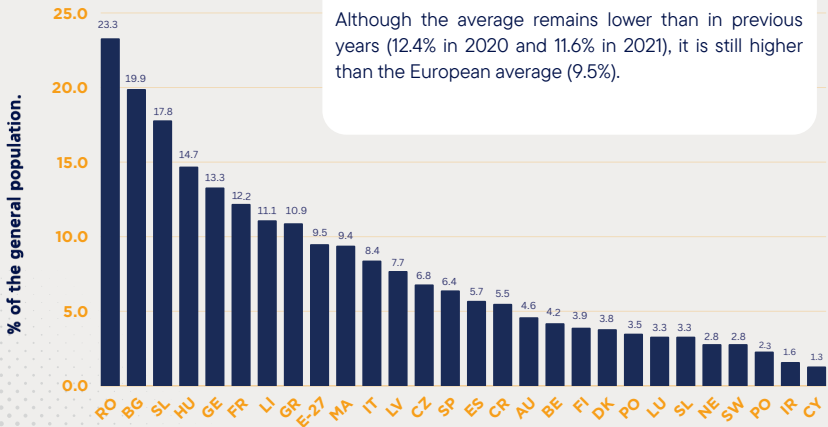
A person is considered food-insecure when they have no assured access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious foods. In developed countries, we do not see many cases of extreme hunger or starvation; however, food insecurity can have significant negative impacts, since "...it can cause mental and physical development problems, affect children's school performance and lead to obesity", (Prolepsis, 2016).

Rates higher than Greece's are seen in Romania (23.3%), Bulgaria (19.9%), Slovakia (17.8%), Hungary (14.7%), Germany (13.3%), France (12.2%) and Lithuania (11.1%).

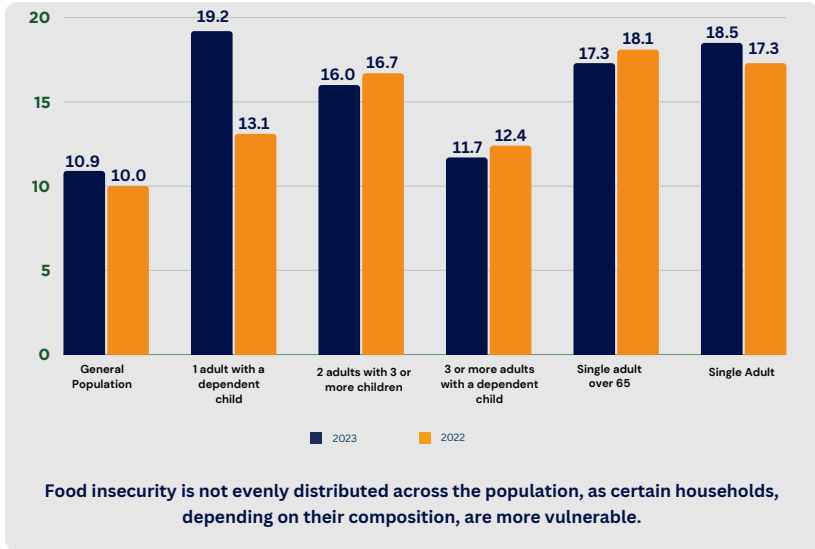
**In 2023, food insecurity in Europe was - on average - 9.5%, compared to 8.3% in 2022 and 7.3% in 2021.**

Greece has the **8th highest rate** for 2023, with a food insecurity rate of **10.9%**, compared to **10%** in 2022.

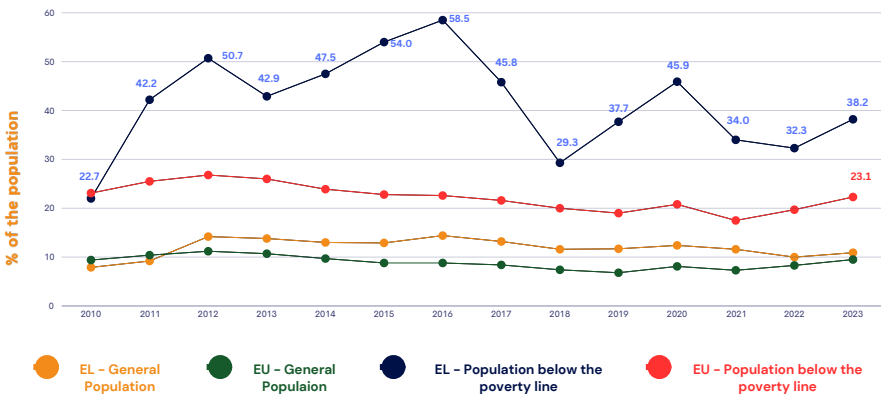
Although the average remains lower than in previous years (12.4% in 2020 and 11.6% in 2021), it is still higher than the European average (9.5%).



## Food insecurity for 2022 & 2023 by family type



## The evolution of food insecurity, Greece - Europe



In 2023, 38.2% of the population living below the poverty line was food insecure, compared to 32.3% in 2022. The corresponding European average was 23.1%.

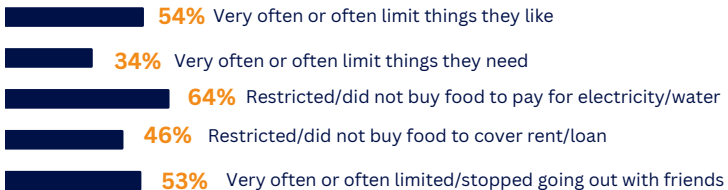
# Investigation of the social and demographic profile of soup kitchen beneficiaries

Data from the thesis of Eva Stouraiti for the postgraduate programme “Analysis and Implementation of Social Policy” at Panteion University.

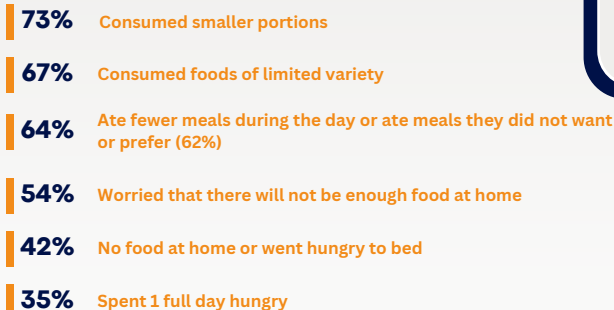
As part of the thesis, **52 interviews** were conducted using a questionnaire with beneficiaries of food bank soup kitchens in Attica to determine the intensity and nature of their need. Methodologically, the sample is considered sufficient to draw broader conclusions, using IBM SPSS Statistics software.

## » Personal Restrictions

Prioritizing the expenses of people who go to soup kitchens.



## » Food Insecurity



## » Conditions that increase the risk of food insecurity:



**Very low income** – severe cases of poverty & material deprivation



**Age + Lack of qualifications:** Significant risk factor



**Weak or non-existent support networks**

## » Testimonials

"I usually don't have enough money to buy food. When I pay less for electricity or water, I might have 10-20 euros left for the supermarket, but generally, I don't go because I don't have anything."

– Testimony of a person at a facility in the center of Athens

"I eat whatever I can find. I have no preferences—I can't afford to! If I find something to eat, I'm happy. If I don't, I sleep hungry. I don't often go without any food because I get it here."

– Testimony of a person in a shelter in Patisia

"I prefer to be alone so I don't burden other people. I don't want to trouble them with my problems. The woman who gives me food at the church sometimes invites me to dinner, but I don't want to go because I don't want to talk to her about my problems."

– Testimony of a person at a facility in the center of Athens

"It's the child I'm worried about. Because of the child, I might not eat the food I prefer so the child isn't deprived of anything. The baby needs special nutrition, and it's not easy to provide that. Towards the end of the month, when the aid food runs out, I eat less."

– Testimony of a person at a facility in Nikaia

"Lately, with the help of the soup kitchen, there is variety. The help from the grocery store is specific, rice, pasta, you can't live on that alone, and from the soup kitchen we get meat or minced meat or deli meats for the children's toasted sandwich. Different foods, cereal bars, snacks, help us to provide variety. When they run out of food towards the end of the month, the children go through the drawers."

– Testimony of a man in a shelter in Ag.Paraskevi

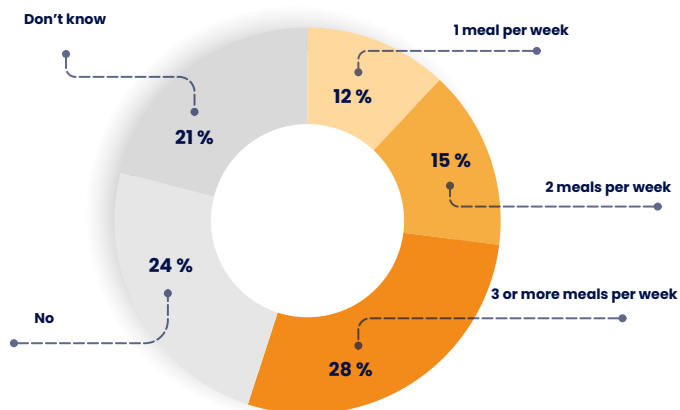
# Food needs outside Attica: Food Bank Survey

Responses to the questionnaires were collected between June 11 and July 9, 2024. The questionnaire was set up with Google Forms and completed electronically.

In total, 66 fully completed questionnaires were collected from soup kitchen representatives. Although in previous years, the sample came from soup kitchens mainly in Attica, this time responses were collected only from those located in other regions of Greece (Macedonia, Thessaly, Crete, Epirus, Western Greece).

The sample of soup kitchens was derived from those the Food Bank supports. These soup kitchens distribute cooked food or provide food items so that families can cook at home. Primarily, they are church-run soup kitchens, and secondarily civil society organisations and municipal social pantries.

» Are there cases of severe hunger, i.e. not being able to cover:





Soup kitchens are facilities which offer food to people who turn to them for assistance.

They operate at “neighbourhood” level; they may know the people who need help personally and, aside from providing food, usually support them in other ways as well (clothing, other material assistance, psycho-social support, etc.).

In most cases, particularly after the economic crisis, they maintain records on beneficiaries, their family and economic status, any health problems they may have, and so on. This does not apply to soup kitchens which support a large number of homeless or substance-dependent individuals, usually in areas in the centre of Athens.

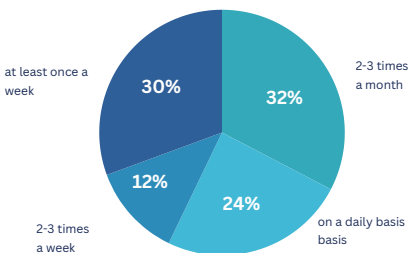
The number of people each soup kitchen supports depends on its capacity and a review of people’s needs.

It is important that there are no across-the-board criteria, such as in cases of state aid, but the overall needs of each person are assessed individually.

As a result, a three-member family with a child with disabilities may have a greater need for assistance than a couple, even if that family’s income is higher.

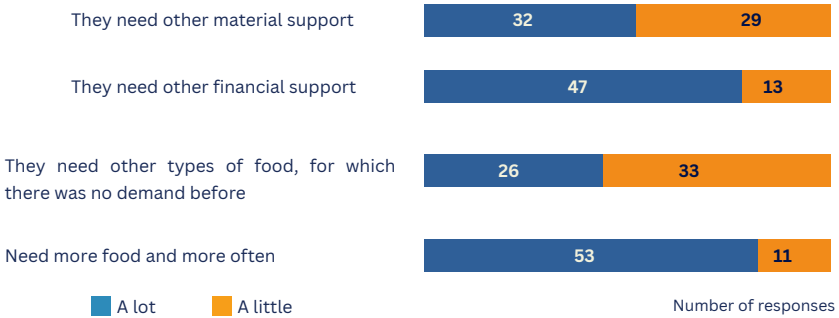
Similarly, someone who owns property (e.g. a house in a village) but zero income, is excluded from official state welfare programmes even though they have a real need for food.

## » The people you help need food:



**People who turn to soup kitchens have a serious problem of food insecurity. Most of them need the help of the soup kitchen on a regular basis, while the percentage who do not need regular help is also higher.**

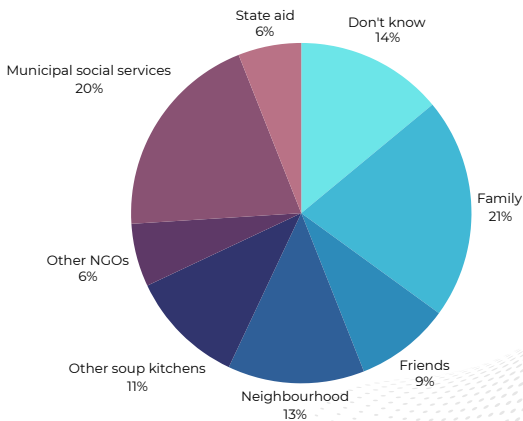
## » In the last year, how have the needs of the people you help evolved?



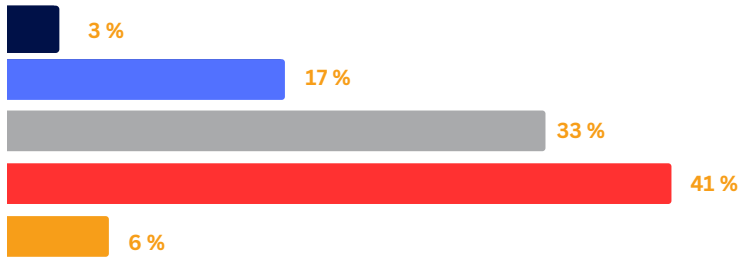
- The majority of soup kitchens (53/66) responded that people they were already supporting need more food and more often.
- More than half (47/66) say that they themselves to a great extent need additional financial support, while several need other material support as well (32/66 responses).

At the same time, in an attempt to meet their diverse needs, people turn to other sources of support, other than soup kitchens.

## » What other sources of support do the people you help have?



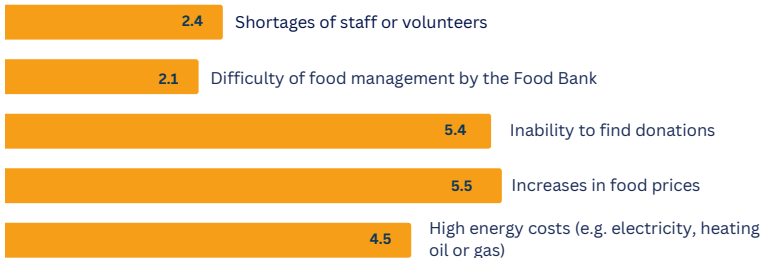
» To what extent can your soup kitchen (or the distribution of the packages you make) meet the food needs of the people you help?



- Easily:** The food we provide **satisfactorily** meets their needs.
- Sufficiently:** The food we provide meets **more than half** of their needs.
- Moderately:** The food we provide covers **half** of their needs.
- Slightly:** The food we provide covers **some** of their needs.
- With difficulty:** The food we provide is **insufficient** to meet their needs.

» To what extent do the following problems make it difficult for you to help your people:

Average number of answers / Difficulty level: 1 = not at all...7 = very much



# FOOD BANK

member of

