

food needs

in the general population

**SURVEY ON THE NEEDS OF SOUP KITCHENS
SUPPORTED BY THE ATHENS FOOD BANK**



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Athens, January 2021

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Foreword

Food Bank's work brings it into constant contact with grassroots organisations at the base of social care. They rely on the initiative of private citizens who give something of themselves to help the less fortunate. Many of the organisations are small and almost invisible, but both large and small make up an extensive web that fills in gaps government welfare programmes cannot get to. Because of their closeness to the problems of society, these organisations have direct knowledge of current needs and can assist those in need more efficiently, without excessive bureaucratic formalities. However, although elsewhere, private charity is officially recognised and rewarded, in Greece, the state, instead of encouraging such activities, it often treats them with suspicion. This is one of the reasons we decided to look more systematically into the matter, and we are starting with a survey of an area with which we are familiar - soup kitchens. Who organises them? Who do they help? What are their food needs? Where do they get food and from whom? Simple questions. The 46 soup kitchens we selected are all located in the Attica region and regularly feed 16,916 persons. They are just a sample of the hundreds operating in Greece.

One significant finding of the survey was that, due to the crisis and pandemic, the number of those seeking food support is steadily growing, as are individual needs. Another is that soup kitchens receive practically no help from central government. The second holds true even though the Government has access to programmes such as the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which manages hundreds of millions of euros provided by the EU specifically to fight hunger, but of which Greece utilises a very small portion of its allocation.

We believe that the building of trust and a closer working relationship between the central government and the network of private charity organisations, would have a positive impact on the whole of society.

Panagis Vourloumis
President

1 Introduction

On 6 November 2020, the Hellenic Statistical Authority published a report on “Living Conditions in Greece”. A few days later, on 23 November, the European Statistical Service (Eurostat) released its own updated data. The findings of both organisations tend to agree. The data refer to a number of factors that affect a country’s living conditions. These include the level of poverty in the population, the characteristics linked to poverty and the prevalence of food insecurity. It is a changing social condition which, particularly in Greece, has been worsening in the last 10 years.

The first part of this publication presents official statistics on food insecurity. It is not a detailed report. For more information, we refer to the IOBE survey, “Food Bank: Instrument for addressing food insecurity and food waste in Greece”, posted on the Food Bank website. According to Eurostat, 11.7% of the population was experiencing food insecurity in 2019. Since that time, the pandemic has exacerbated the problem.

That percentage of the population (11.7%) represents more than 1 million people from diverse social groups with wide geographical distribution. Our survey is based on data collected from soup kitchens we work with in Attica and it addresses two areas. One attempts to formulate a profile of people with food insecurity who are members of the general population. In other words, those who do not fall into a particular social group, such as persons with disabilities. Such people have fewer options for access to special assistance programmes and form the core of cases who turn to soup kitchens. The other arm of the survey examines the sources of food supplies that soup kitchens rely on to enable them to provide meals. The aim of the survey is to more effectively manage and direct resources available to fight hunger. We hope our conclusions will prove useful to other organisations, foundations and other bodies involved in social policy.

Dimitris Nentas

2 Official statistics

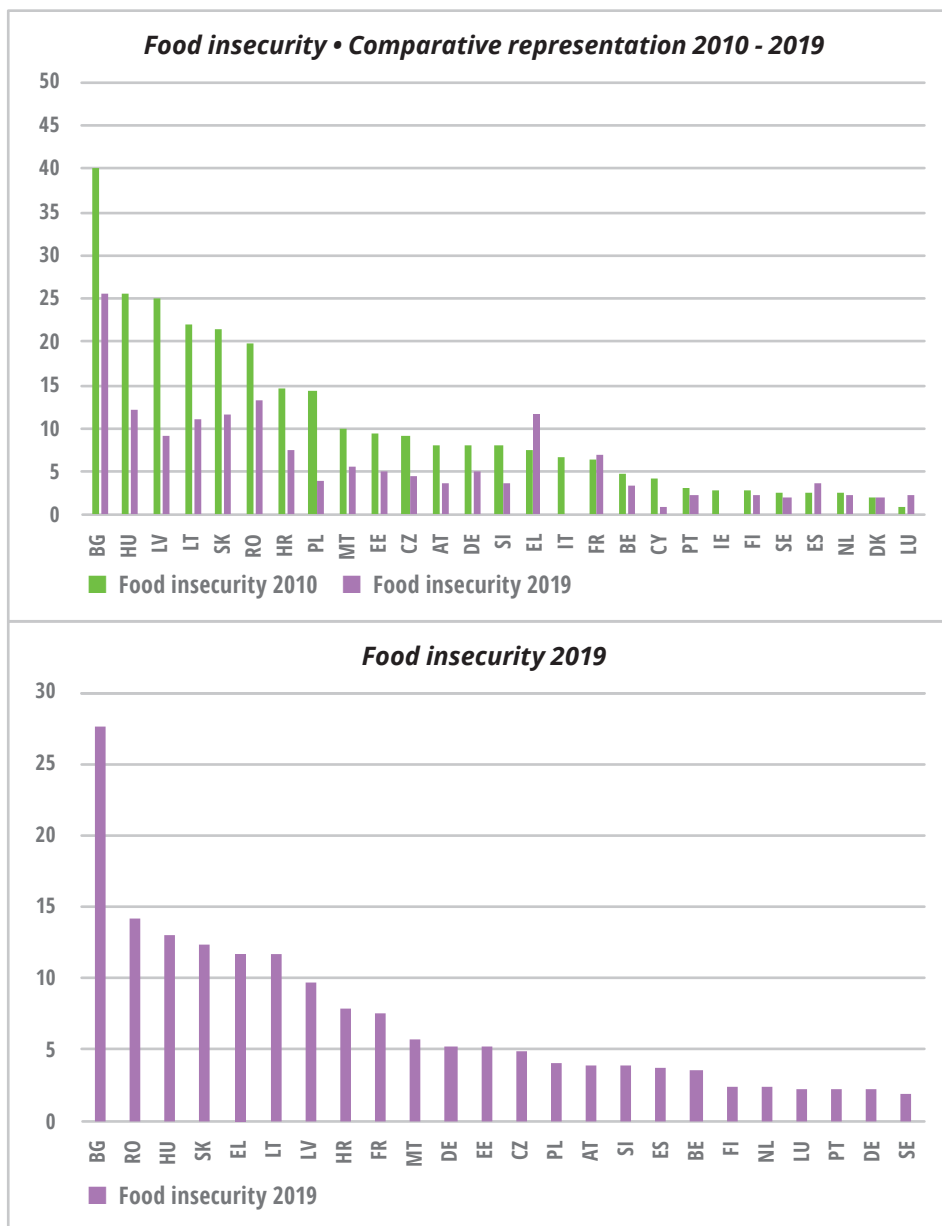
According to Eurostat, food insecurity is measured as the inability of a person to include chicken, meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent in their diet every second day, and is a sub-set of the material deprivation indicator.

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 of food insecurity in the general population | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|----|------|------|-------------|
| Countries | | 2010 | 2019 | change |
| Bulgaria | BG | 43,2 | 27,6 | -36% |
| Hungary | HU | 27,6 | 13,0 | -53% |
| Latvia | LV | 26,8 | 9,8 | -63% |
| Lithuania | LT | 23,5 | 11,7 | -50% |
| Slovakia | SK | 23,0 | 12,3 | -47% |
| Romania | RO | 21,4 | 14,2 | -34% |
| Croatia | HR | 15,7 | 7,9 | -50% |
| Poland | PL | 15,5 | 4,1 | -74% |
| Malta | MT | 10,8 | 5,8 | -46% |
| Estonia | EE | 10,1 | 5,3 | -48% |
| Czechia | CZ | 9,7 | 4,9 | -49% |
| Austria | AT | 8,7 | 3,9 | -55% |
| Germany | DE | 8,6 | 5,3 | -38% |
| Slovenia | SI | 8,5 | 3,9 | -54% |
| Greece | EL | 7,9 | 11,7 | 48% |
| Italy | IT | 7,0 | : | |
| France | FR | 6,9 | 7,5 | 9% |
| Belgium | BE | 5,0 | 3,6 | -28% |
| Cyprus | CY | 4,4 | 0,8 | -82% |
| Portugal | PT | 3,3 | 2,3 | -30% |
| Ireland | IE | 3,0 | : | |
| Finland | FI | 2,9 | 2,5 | -14% |
| Sweden | SE | 2,7 | 2,0 | -26% |
| Spain | ES | 2,6 | 3,8 | 46% |
| Netherlands | NL | 2,6 | 2,4 | -8% |
| Denmark | DK | 2,1 | 2,2 | 5% |
| Luxembourg | LU | 0,9 | 2,3 | 156% |

Data in Figure 1

Figure 1: Food insecurity in European countries



Source: Eurostat • Processed by: Food Bank

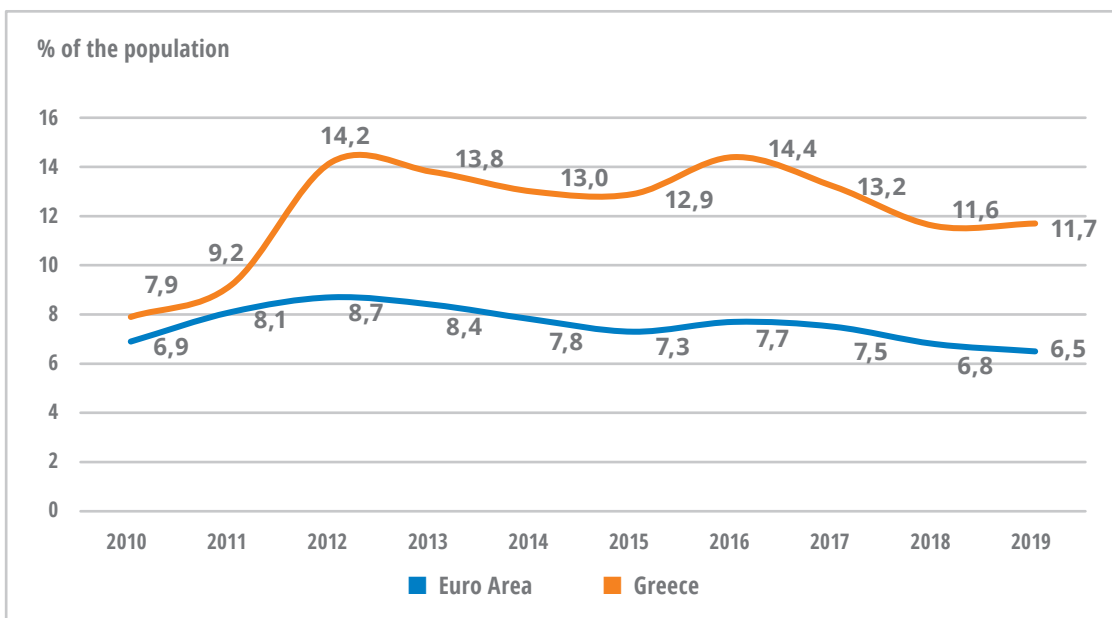
Comparing data from 2019 and 2010:

- In 2010, rates ranged from 43.2% (Bulgaria) to 0.9% (Luxembourg). In 2019, Bulgaria continued to have the highest rate of food insecurity at 27.6%, while the lowest rate is 0.8% for Cyprus. Though the lowest rate remained relatively stable, the highest rate was down by 15.6 percentage points (-36%).

- From 2010 to 2019, 20 countries reduced the rates of food insecurity in their population, while 8 of those have managed to contain food insecurity to less than half as compared to 2010 (HU, LV, LT, HR, PL, AT, SI, CY). The greatest reductions were seen in Cyprus (-82%), Poland (-74%) and Latvia (-63%). Conversely, 5 countries noted an increase in the rate of food insecurity (EL, FR, ES, DK, LU). Luxembourg had the highest percentage increase (+156%), though figures remain very low (2.6%, compared to 0.9%).

- **Greece** had the second-highest increase (+48%) after Luxembourg. Though in 2010 it was in 15th place, in 2019 it was in 5th place amongst all countries. It is interesting to note that the 4 countries with rates higher than Greece (BG, RO, HU, SK), unlike Greece, improved their position, registering much lower rates of food insecurity than in 2010.

Figure 2: Change in food insecurity in Greece and the Euro Area



Source: Eurostat • Processed by: Food Bank

It is interesting to note the deviation of the two curves depicting food insecurity in Greece and the Euro Area. Food insecurity in Europe ranges from 6.9% to 6.5%, with two separate “shallow waves”. In contrast to overall European performance, the curve for Greece shows sharp fluctuations and a substantial worsening between 2010 and 2019.

3 Survey

3.1 Introduction

The Food Bank mainly accepts donations of food from companies whose products are then offered free of charge to soup kitchens and institutions throughout Attica. Part of its activity is to review the bodies it supports and to be knowledgeable about their needs.

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 (material assistance, psycho-social support). 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 the city centre.

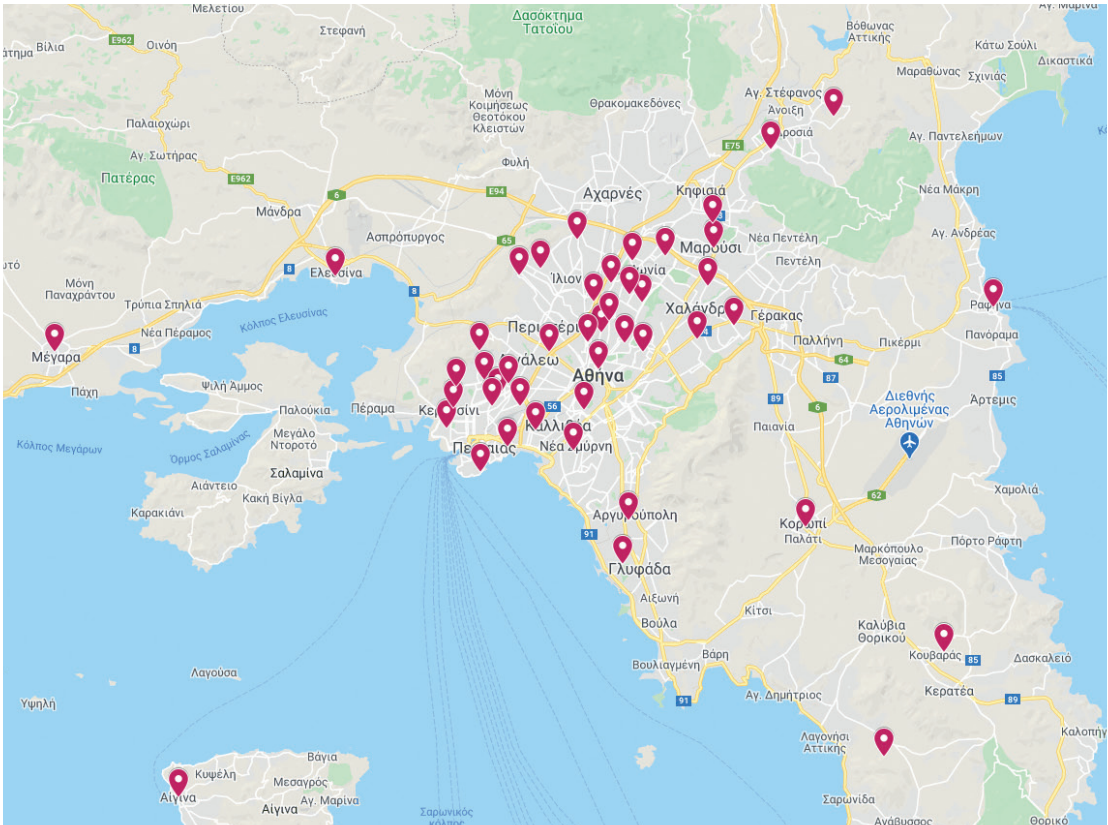
The number of people each soup kitchen supports depends on its capacity and a review of people's needs. It is important that there are no across-the-board criteria, but the needs of each person are assessed individually. As a result, a three-member family with a child with disabilities may have a greater need for assistance than a couple, even if that family's income is proportionately higher. Similarly, someone with real property (e.g. a house in a village) but zero income is excluded from official state welfare programmes, though they have a real need for food.

Soup kitchens are not part of a unified and organised network, nor is it possible to obtain an overall record of how many soup kitchens there are. Most are run by church parishes, various organisations or unofficial social groups. They endeavour to find food donations from donors in the area in which they work, while also buying food with their own funds (membership fees, fund-raising bazaars and events, etc.).

The Food Bank maintains a strict principle of supplying only soup kitchens with official legal status and a Tax Registration Number. Goods are distributed with packing slips with appropriate codes for the soup kitchens and products provided by special software. This makes it easier to handle products and ensure food traceability, while making it possible to keep complete statistical records.

To better understand people's need for food, we collected information with a questionnaire filled out during telephone interviews with those in charge of soup kitchens. The answers to the questionnaires were collected during the period 23 November through 8 December 2020, with supplementary ones collected from 18 to 20 January 2021. The questionnaire was designed exclusively for soup kitchens serving the general population. The Food Bank also supplies institutions (nursing homes, orphanages, centres for people with disabilities, drug rehabilitation facilities and others) who serve social groups with diverse but unique characteristics.

In total, complete responses were received from 46 soup kitchens. Their geographic distribution is shown on the map. The sample of soup kitchens was derived from a total of 90 that the Food Bank supports. These soup kitchens distribute cooked food or offer food items so that families can cook at home. The specific sample of 46 soup kitchens support a total of 16,916 people, 3,808 of whom are minors and 3,804 are over the age of 65. Of the 46 soup kitchens, 31 are run by church parishes (67% of the sample), 11 by civil society organisations (24%) and 4 are municipal social food pantries (9%).



3.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was structured in a way that reflects the problems soup kitchens face, their efforts to support people who seek their assistance and the characteristics of those people. It also included questions to assess the impact of the pandemic on the work of soup kitchens.

All answers collected from the questionnaires refer to people who need and seek out food, according to the soup kitchens themselves.

1. Select one of the four choices for each question:

| | Yes | Probably yes | Probably no | No |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you think the unemployed people you help will be able to find work in the next 2 years? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Has it been more difficult to find food since March, with the appearance of Covid-19 and its subsequent impact on the economy? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Have you seen an increase in people's need for food since March, with the appearance of Covid-19 and its subsequent impact on the economy? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is it possible that, due to the problems you face, you might close in the next 2 years? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

2. What percentage of people you help face the problems below?

| | 0 - 20% | 20 - 40% | 40 - 60% | 60 - 80% | 80 - 100% |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Health problems in the family | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Psychological/mental health problems in the family | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Unemployment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lack own home (rent) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Multiple children | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Owe money to banks, the government, and elsewhere | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Low pensions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3. Estimate the magnitude of each of the needs below that most of the people you help are facing:

| | 0 - 20% | 20 - 40% | 40 - 60% | 60 - 80% | 80 - 100% |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Clothing - shoes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Food | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Medical care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Housing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Household items | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. What problems have you faced due to the pandemic?

- Insufficient food
- Insufficient volunteers
- Increase in people seeking help
- Other: _____
- Difficulty in delivering/receiving food
- People's fear to come and pick up food

5. What problem or problems present the greatest challenge?

- Insufficient food
- Insufficient volunteers
- Increase in people seeking help
- Other: _____
- Difficulty in delivering/receiving food
- People's fear to come and pick up food

6. Which problem or problems remain unresolved?

- Insufficient food
- Insufficient volunteers
- Increase in people seeking help
- Other: _____
- Difficulty in delivering/receiving food
- People's fear to come and pick up food

**7. How do you see the needs of the people you support changing
(A) Over the last 5 years? (B) Today?**

8. Do you have anything else to add? any notes/observations?

Supplementary questionnaire

1. Indicate which of the following are sources for your food:

- Ministry (Central Government)
- Municipality (Local Government)
- Region (Local Government)
- Metropolitan church
- Other: _____
- Food companies
- Small shops near the soup kitchen
- Private donations
- Purchases made with own funds

2. If you get food from more than one source, please note the quantity as a percentage (e.g. the Municipality gives us 30%, the Food Bank gives us 20%, we buy 30% with our own funds, 20% is from private donations).

3.3 Responses - Regarding soup kitchens

Figure 3: Has it been more difficult to find food since March, with the appearance of Covid-19 and its subsequent impact on the economy?

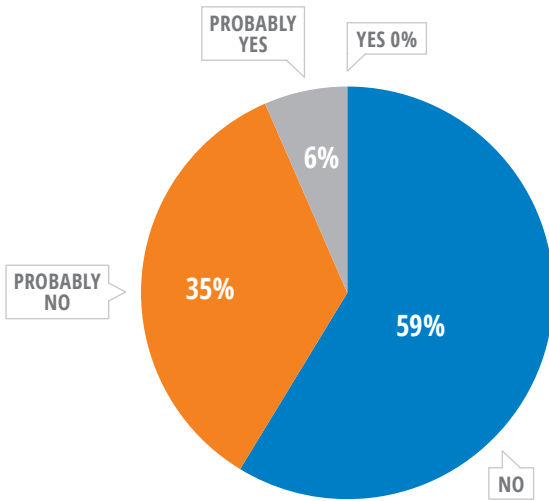
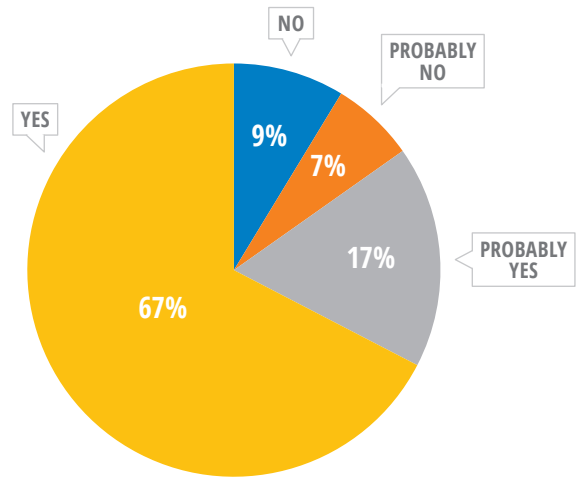
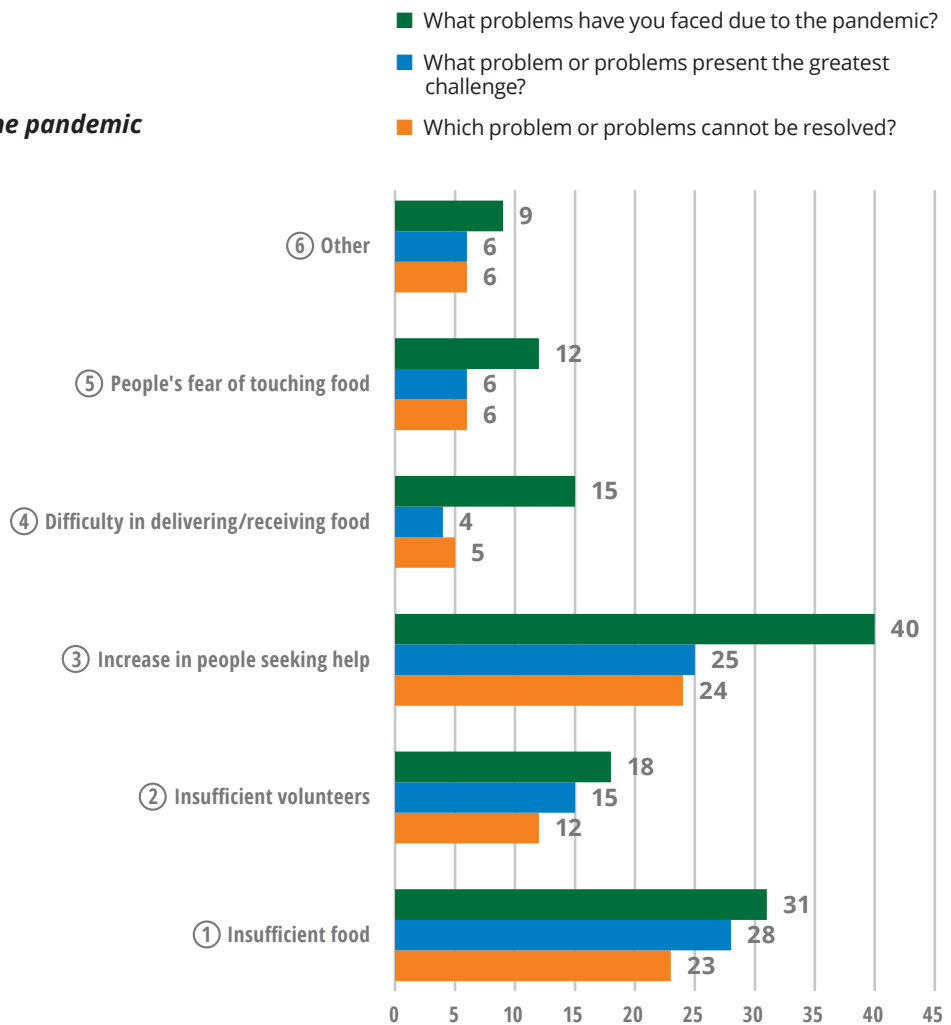


Figure 4: Is it possible that, due to the problems you face, you might close in the next 2 years?

Although 78% of soup kitchens stated that they meet part of their needs for food, adequate supply remains a major problem, with 84% stating that this difficulty has become more acute. It is encouraging that 94% of the soup kitchens responded positively as to continuing to operate for the next two years.

Figure 5:
Impacts of the pandemic



From the diagram above:

- 40 of the 46 soup kitchens (87%) reported an increase in the number of people requesting food (question 3). At 24 of the 46 (52%), it appears the increase in the number of people being served is the largest problem they face to date.
- 31 of the 46 soup kitchens (67%) reported that they had a problem with food sufficiency (question 1), with 23 of them (50%) stating that it is a problem that remains unresolved.
- The problem of insufficient volunteers (question 2) is apparently less acute. Regardless of the general problems with “volunteerism”, most soup kitchens rely on older volunteers, who had to stop their activities due to the pandemic.
- To a lesser extent, practical difficulties arose in delivery, receiving and distributing food to people partly due to lockdowns (questions 4, 5). Nevertheless, the responses indicate that most of these issues have been resolved.
- Under “other” problems, there were 5 responses that mentioned economic problems the soup kitchens face in covering their operating costs, the need for medical supplies and psychological support.

3.4 Responses - Regarding beneficiaries

Figure 6: Have you seen people's need for food increase since March, with the appearance of Covid-19 and its subsequent impact on the economy?

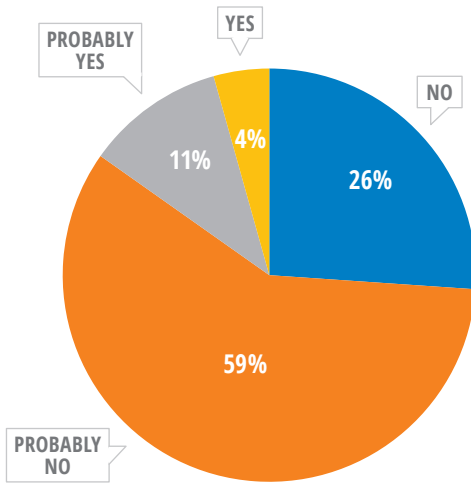
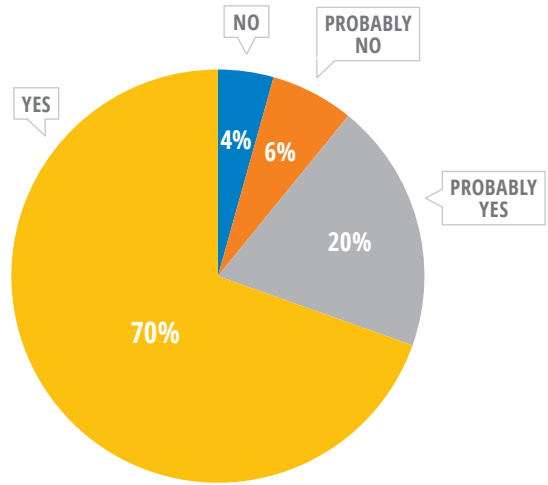


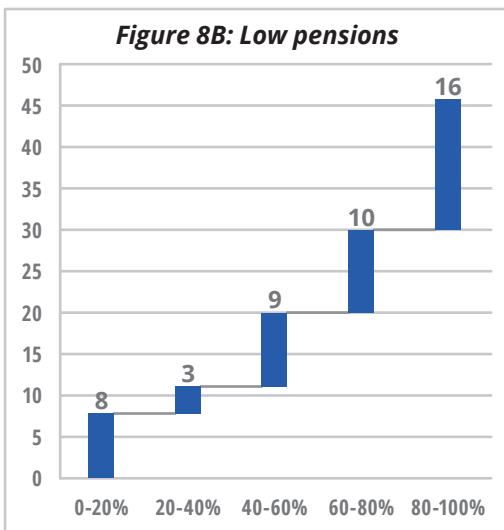
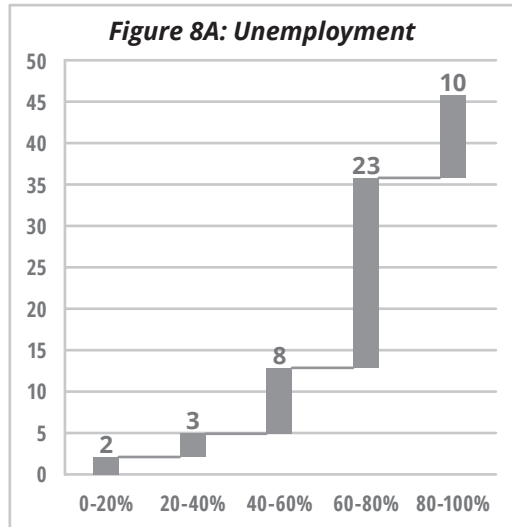
Figure 7: Do you think the unemployed people you help will be able to find work in the next 2 years?

From the diagrams above:

- There are three aspects to the food problem: (a) the number of people in need is growing - figure 5, question 3; (b) people's needs are growing, i.e. people who needed support before the pandemic now need even more help - figure 6; (c) a greater insufficiency of food has been noted - figure 5, question 1.
- 39 of the 46 soup kitchens (85%) stated that the unemployed people they help will not be able to find work in the next 2 years.
- This reflects a pessimistic outlook, which nevertheless coincides with the Food Bank's experience. More information on the problems that people who need food are facing is presented below.

Figure 8: What percentage of people you help face the problems below?

- 33 of the 46 soup kitchens (72%) stated that more than 60% of people who need food have a problem with unemployment in their family.
- The responses agree with official statistics (for more information, see the ELSTAT survey). The graphic depiction of the responses indicates this is the greatest problem.



- 26 of the 46 soup kitchens (59%) stated that more than 60% of the elderly who receive food have low pensions that are not enough to cover their basic needs.
- The distribution of responses is similar to the problem of “unemployment”, but not to the same intensity.

- 14 soup kitchens reported that 60-80% of families seeking assistance are dealing with health problems. Similarly, 9 responses reported 40-60% of families are.
- These are cases involving people with disabilities or others with serious health problems which require significant amounts of money for treatment, and often make it difficult to work.

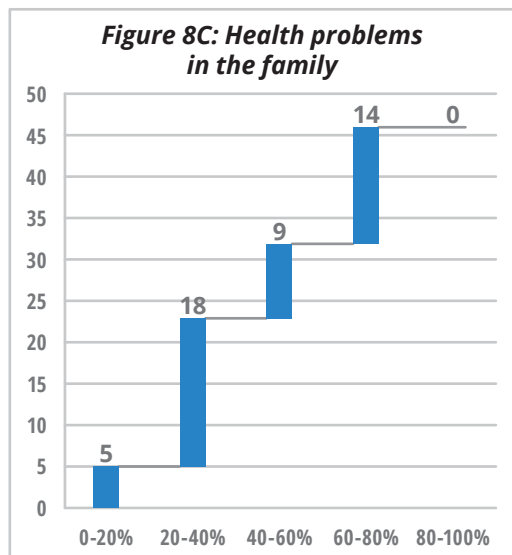
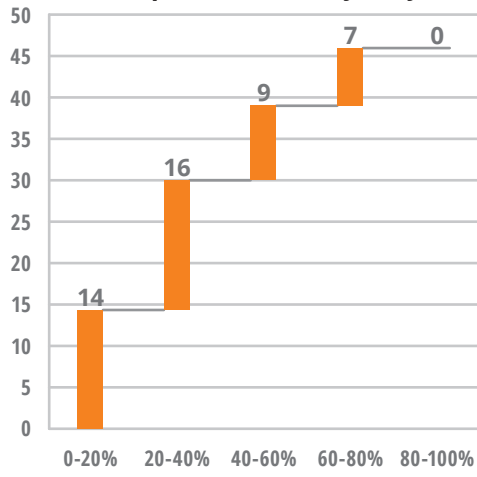


Figure 8D: Psychological / mental health problems in the family



- 32 of the 46 soup kitchens (72%) stated that families needing assistance with food face mental health problems at a rate ranging from 20% to 80%.

- The distribution of responses presents a similar curve to that for “health problems in the family”, but to a lesser intensity.

- Though these problems appear at medium intensity, by their nature they are difficult to reverse and do not bode well for the future of these people.

- 25 of the 46 soup kitchens (56%) reported that 40% to 80% of families receiving food live in a rented home.

- In general, the problem is not acute, and it applies mostly to the centre of Athens, areas in Western Attica and near Piraeus.

Figure 8E: Lack own home (rent)

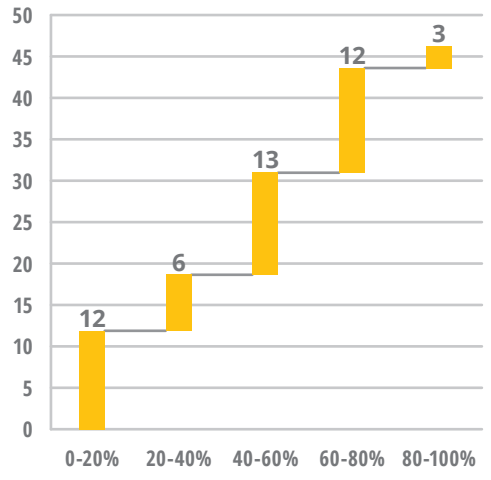
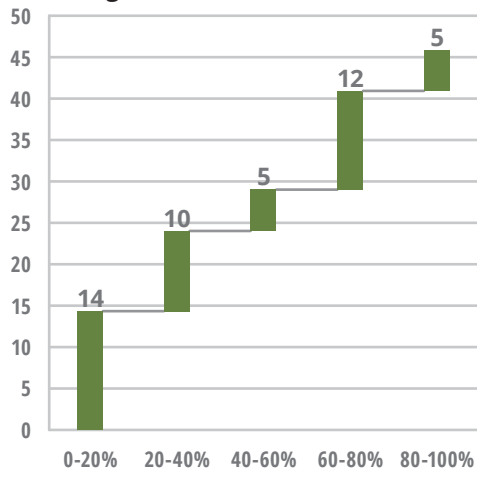


Figure 8F: Owe money to banks, the government and elsewhere



- 17 of the 46 soup kitchens (39%) reported that more than 60% of families who receive food have outstanding debts.

- 17 of the 46 soup kitchens (37%) reported that 20-40% of families receiving food have multiple children.
- 7 of the 46 soup kitchens (15%) reported that 40-60% of families receiving food have multiple children.
- Overall, it is an issue reported on a limited scale, though it should be viewed in light of the low birth rate in the general population.

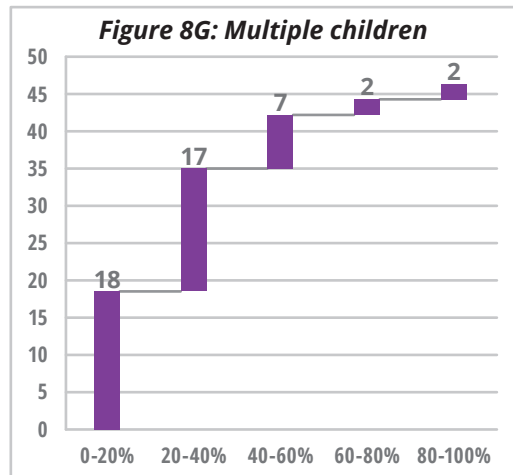
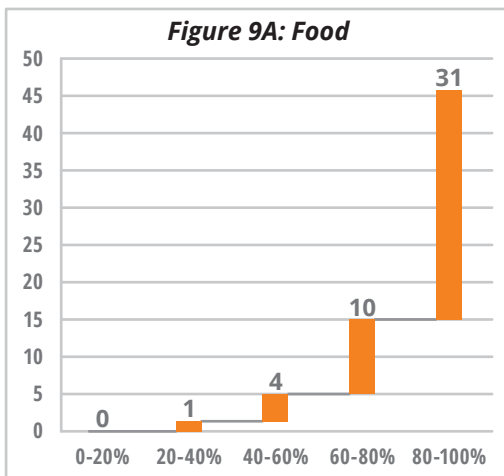
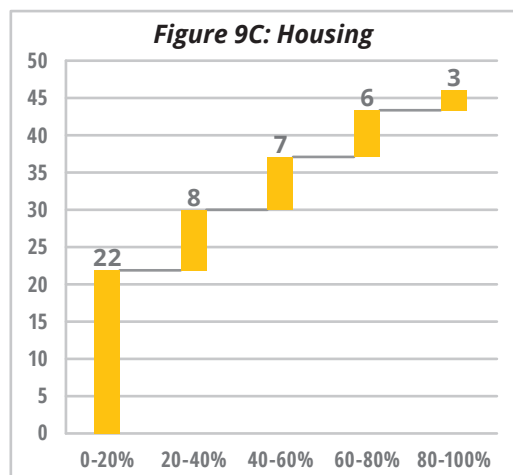
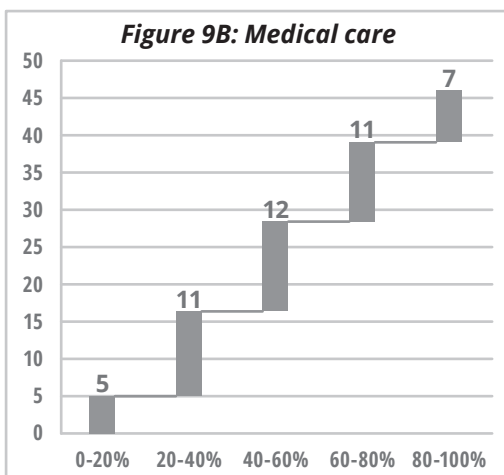


Figure 9: Estimate the magnitude of each of the needs below that most of the people you help are facing



- 41 of the 46 soup kitchens (91%) reported that the need for food is particularly acute. People are not going to soup kitchens for limited, supplementary assistance, but because they are facing serious problems with food access.
- On the other hand, the issue of medical care and housing concerns them to a lesser extent.
- Of even lesser urgency are needs for clothing and household items, which are less compelling.



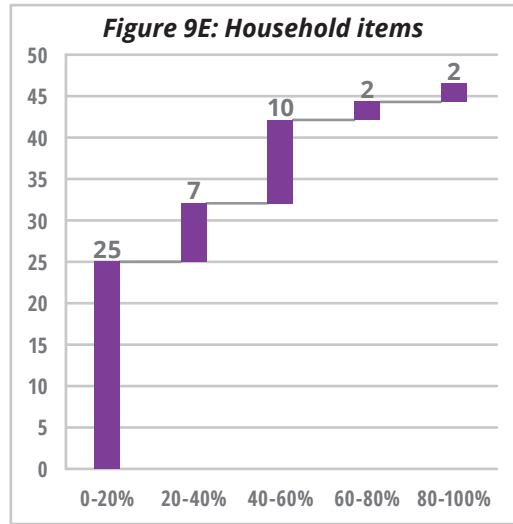
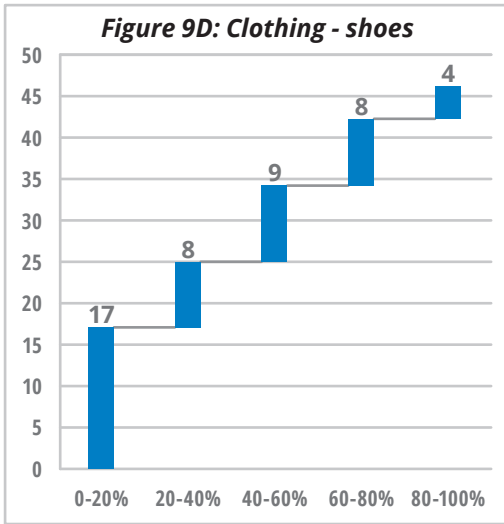
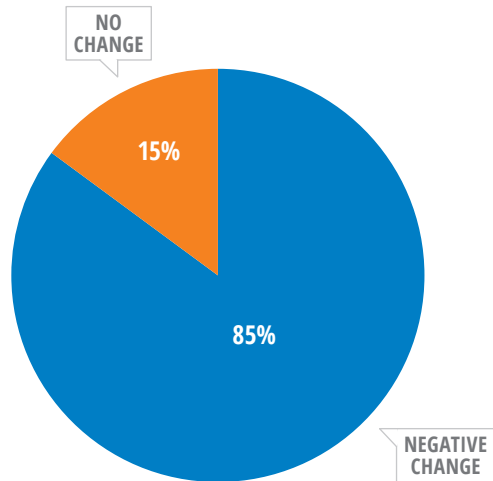


Figure 10: How do you see the needs of the people you support changing?

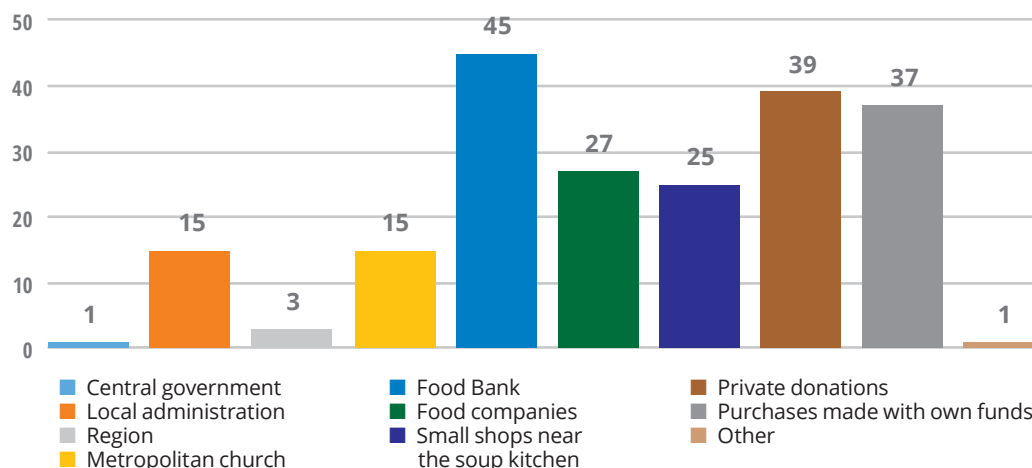
- From the recorded responses, 85% predict the situation will worsen, while the other 15% believe the same number of people will continue to be in need in future.
- It was interesting that 11 responses (24%) commented on the need for psychological support.



3.5 Responses - Regarding food

The supplementary questionnaire was filled out by 45 of the 46 soup kitchens taking part in the survey; the results are presented below.

Figure 11: Indicate which of the following are sources for your food



| | positive responses | percentages |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Central government | 1 | 2% |
| Local administration | 15 | 33% |
| Region | 3 | 7% |
| Metropolitan church* | 15 | 33% |
| Food Bank | 45 | 100% |
| Food companies | 27 | 60% |
| Small shops near the soup kitchen | 25 | 56% |
| Private donations | 39 | 87% |
| Purchases made with own funds | 37 | 82% |
| Other | 1 | 2% |

**Definition: church region overseen by a metropolitan church official. Administratively, church parishes fall under the geographical area overseen by the metropolitan church.*

The diagram above shows the positive responses of soup kitchens for each one of the potential sources of food. The figures also appear on the table, along with the corresponding percentages of positive responses.

The data show the contribution of food sources, **regardless of the size of the contribution**. The responses of soup kitchens showing the size of the contribution from each source, in relation to the food offered by the soup kitchens to the people they support, are shown below.

Figure 12: Food sources - size of contribution

- 13 soup kitchens said they get food from the local municipality, ranging from 1% to 20% of the food provided to people.

Of these 13 responses:

- 6 reported rates of 1-5%
- 6 reported rates of 10%
- 1 a rate of 20%

- Of the 4 social pantries taking part in the survey, 2 stated that 50% of their food comes from the municipality.

- The average rate of responses was 13%.

- 13 soup kitchens said they get food from the metropolitan church in their area, corresponding to up 20% of the food provided to people.

Of these 13 responses,

- 4 reported rates of 1-5%
- 5 reported rates of 10%
- 4 reported rates of 20%

- All 15 soup kitchens that responded positively are parish soup kitchens.

- The average rate of responses was 15%.

Figure 12A: Local administration

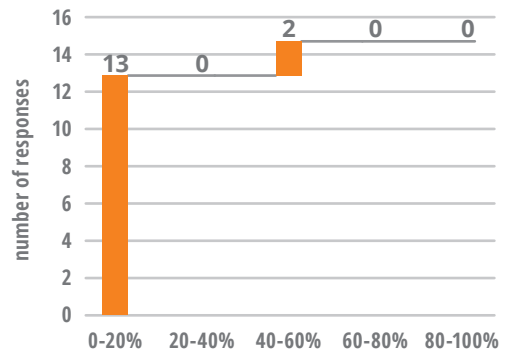


Figure 12B: Metropolitan church

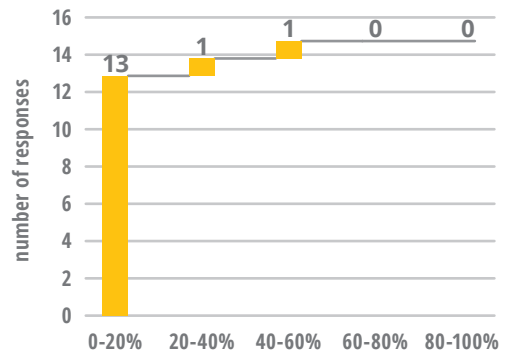
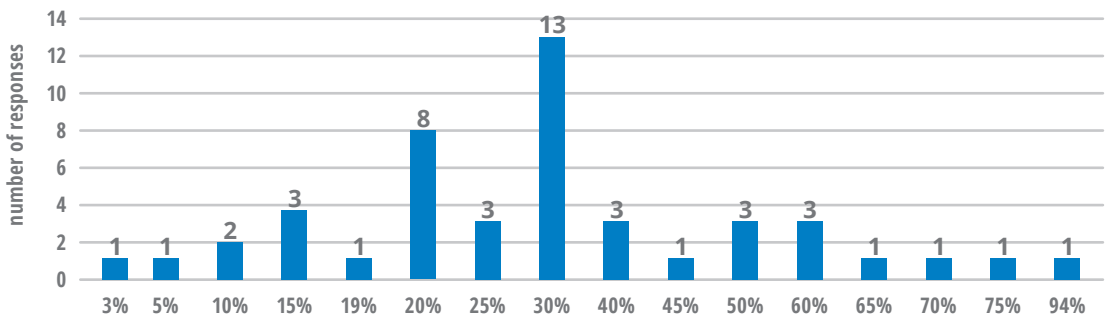


Figure 12C: Food Bank



- Obviously, all 45 soup kitchens responded that they receive food from the Food Bank. The diagram presents the precise answers from soup kitchens (number of responses for each percentage listed).

- The average rate is 33%.

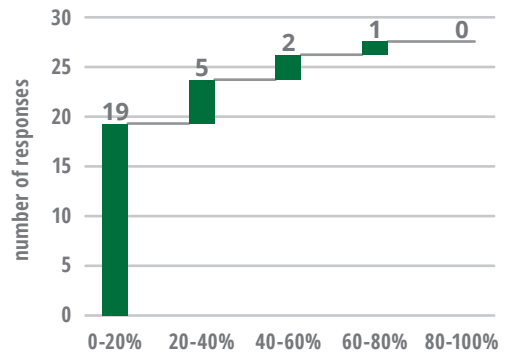
- The distribution of responses is intriguing, with the lowest rate at 3% and the highest at 94%. In any event, 28 of the 45 responses (i.e. more than half) are between 19% and 40%.

- 19 soup kitchens said they get food from food company donations, up to 20% of the food provided to people.

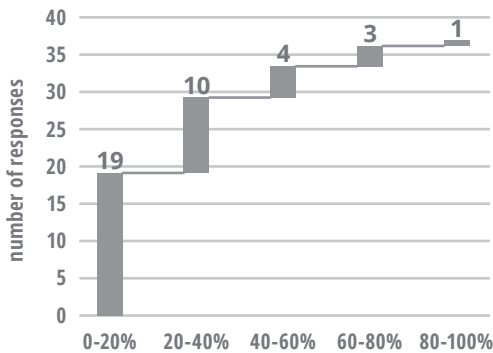
Of these 19 responses:

- 5 reported rates of up to 5%
- 11 reported rates of 5-10%
- The average rate of responses was 19%.

**Figure 12D:
Food companies**



**Figure 12E:
Purchases made with own funds**



- 37 of the 45 soup kitchens said they purchase food with their own funds.

- 19 soup kitchens said they buy up to 20% of the food provided to people.

Of these 19 responses, only 5 reported rates of 5-10%, while the rest had higher rates.

- The average rate of responses was 29%.

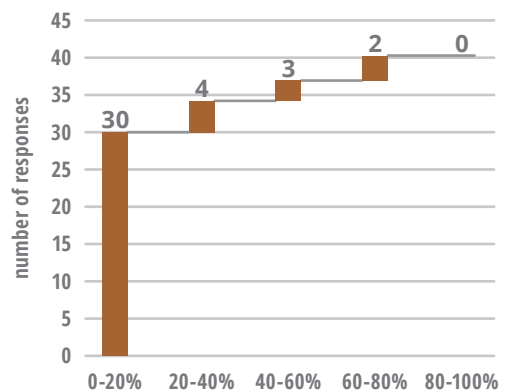
- 39 of the 45 soup kitchens get food from private donations.

- 30 soup kitchens said they get food from private donations for up to 20% of the food provided to people.

Of these 30 responses, 1 reported rates of 2%, 19 reported rates of 5-10%, and the rest receive higher amounts.

- The average rate of the responses was 20%.

**Figure 12F:
Private donations**



- **Central government:** There was only 1 response, with a contribution rate of 5%.

- **Region:** There were 3 responses, with an average contribution rate of 8%.

- **Small shops near the soup kitchen:** A total of 25 positive responses were given, with an average contribution rate of 9%.

In general,

- On average, a soup kitchen receives supplies from 4.5 different sources.
- Food sources of an institutional nature (central government, municipalities, region, metropolitan church) contribute a small share.
- Soup kitchens mostly rely on food purchased with their own funds, contributions from private citizens and businesses (food companies, small shops near the soup kitchen).
- According to their responses, soup kitchens included in the Food Bank network receive an average of 30% of their needs.

3.6 Beneficiary examples

As a side-line to the survey, we asked some of the soup kitchens in our sample to share with us some examples of the people they support, while protecting any personal data that could expose someone's identity. Through this process, we collected 943 family descriptions. We will not go into great detail with the descriptions, which tend to support the above data.

Some representative descriptions are included below.

M.N., a resident of Lives with her son and is a house cleaner. Rent €200. She has a Social Solidarity Income (SSI) card for €230 and a rent subsidy of €140. Annual income €1,220.

M.M. and M.R., residents of They live with their 14-year-old daughter, a student, and their 28-year-old son, who has a severe vision problem. The young man needs hospitalisation and special lenses which are very expensive. The family cannot afford it. Income €4,900. The father is a house painter and the mother a cleaner. Their rent is €300.

S.P., resident of Aged 61. Officially unemployed. She is caretaker of the elderly, with a variable income. Declared income on tax returns, €1,184.30. She has a SSI card. Rent €200.

K.V. and K.G., residents of The husband has back trouble. They have two children, aged 16 and 13. A 65-year-old grandmother lives with them. The husband works occasionally. Income €6,737.11. Rent €200.

A.C. is 48 years old, a resident of Mrs C is divorced, with one child, 28-year-old S.F., has cancer and cannot work.

M.M. is 58 years old, a resident of Divorced with one child, 14-year-old T.A., and she works occasionally, with an annual income of €4,488.

M.A. is 59 years old, a resident of He is married to V.A. and they have two daughters, M.E., 24, and M.K., 17. Both parents are unemployed. Mr A has been unemployed for many years and cannot find a job due to his age.

M.A. is 47 years old and his wife, G, is 45. They have four children under the age of 18. Only the father works and they are paying off a loan for the house they live in. Their annual income is too low for a large family.

G.T. is 58 years old, he does not work and is being put up by his nephew, 37. They have no income.

S.M. is 47 years old, unemployed, and lives with his mother in a house they own. Annual income from a pension €4,355.

I.S. is 64 and a pensioner. He lives with his unemployed son, who is 35. He has health problems. Annual income €1,568.

K.A., 57, is a foreign national and lives with his unemployed wife and their underage child in a house they own in He works occasionally for day's wages.

V.V., 45, from ..., lives with his wife and two underage children in a rented home. Only his wife works, €6,000 annually.

T.A., 58, lives in the ... area with her husband in a house they own, with their three children who are at university. Both parents are unemployed, with no monthly income.

M.S. is 24. She is married, but her husband, C, is in prison. She has a 14-month-old son. She lives in a house her father owns. She receives SSI and a child benefit. Their total income is €3,420 annually. She cannot work because of the child.

S.M. is 56 and unmarried. His annual income is €2,400 and he lives in a flat he owns with his sister, who has health problems, and his nephew, who is disabled.

R.E., 41, lives in a house for free in the ... area, together with her underage child. She is unemployed and has many problems in her relationship with her adolescent child.

C.P. is 14 and lives in Her mother is mentally disabled. She got pregnant but was unable to provide information about the child's father, who never appeared. Because she was incapable of raising the child, her aunt took responsibility. When the child was 10 years old, the aunt died of cancer. Her responsibility was assumed by her son and his wife, raising the child along with their own three children. C. is a good student and loves to read.

A.P. is 47, she does not work and her partner has abandoned her. She lives at her eldest daughter's house with two underage children, 12 and 6. She receives a large family benefit of €280 every two months.

F.P. is 49, a single mother. She has a 17-year-old daughter. She lives in her own home. There are health problems. She is bipolar and is on medication. Her annual income comes to €6,220. She cannot work due to a disability of 67%.

M.T. is 65 and divorced. He lives in his own home, which is dilapidated and without electricity. He has no income. He finds occasional day work when he can.

4 Conclusions - Concerns

The survey found that food insecurity continues to increase, as verified by Eurostat:

- The number of people who are in need is growing, while the full impact of the pandemic has not yet been felt;
- Needs are growing, i.e. someone who already needed support before the pandemic now needs even more assistance;
- The difficulty of finding food which could meet these needs is growing.

the people

The main problem families face is low income. However, this problem co-exists with other issues (lack of housing, health problems, psychological problems) which further burden the family budget.

unemployed over the age of 55

It is very hard to re-train unemployed individuals over the age of 55 so they can return to the job market. In most cases, they continue with their lives with the support of various subsidies, the help of local soup kitchens and organisations, and supplementing their income with unreported work, when they can find it. The pension they will be eligible for in about 10 years, when they reach 65, will be so low that they will continue to need food, while their problems will have worsened. Existing psychological problems, along with the ongoing state of acute deprivation in which these people find themselves, reinforce their marginalisation. This is a segment of the country's population with a considerable size already and growing that becomes permanently marginalised and will continue to expect assistance over the next two to three decades. A large portion of this group has no access to government support programs.

soup kitchens

Soup kitchens cannot solve the problem of food insecurity but their contribution to its mitigation is substantial, as is their effect on social binding. Their activities cannot be taken for granted as they depend on volunteer work. This implies available time, resources and psychological stamina.

In Greece, soup kitchens make up an unofficial network. Locally, they often work together, discussing their problems and exchanging experiences. They know the people they help personally and often provide other types of assistance, in addition to food. In contrast with other countries in Europe, they receive minimal support from official sources, even though funds for this purpose exist and such aid would be extremely beneficial for society as a whole.

the food There is significant uncertainty concerning the continuation of availability of food for soup kitchens in the near future. Food provided by soup kitchens depends on the private sector (food purchased with soup kitchen resources, donations by companies, private citizens, small shops), as well as food the Food Bank collects through its own activities. The pandemic has already significantly curtailed the soup kitchens' own resources, while economic pressure on the private sector is already being felt. While food donations at the start of the pandemic saw a sharp rise, the rate has fallen off.

social cohesion Food insecurity is an indicator of the larger problems at play. Certainly these problems are not easily solved, and it may be impossible to solve them fully. However, food is a fundamental need, and it should be fulfilled as a priority that helps to safeguard social cohesion. Soup kitchens are a method that works.

the Food Bank experience Through our experience in Greece and that of other food banks in Europe, we know first-hand that there is tremendous food waste. It is confirmed by official statistics that estimate 33% of food production ultimately goes to waste. The problem is less one of sufficiency and more of management. Food Banks play a main role in rescuing food which would otherwise be wasted. They could be described as logistics centres helping to address the problem more effectively.

So far Athens Food Bank has helped to create three more Food Bank's in Greece - Thessaloniki, Thessaly, and Drama. A large area still has to be covered and we will continue our efforts looking forward to productive cooperation with other institutions, private or public.

Food Bank

A charity organisation, since 1995, aiming to stop hunger and food waste. It works with food production and trading companies, with the Federation of Hellenic Food Industries (SEVT) and other public benefit organisations so that food not absorbed by the market can be provided free to soup kitchens and institutions.

It is a member of the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA - www.eurofoodbank.org) along with over 430 food banks in 29 European countries. We work in accordance with its principles, we take part in training seminars on actions that take place in Greece and other EU Member States, and we closely monitor EU policies on issues of concern.

The Athens Food Bank has helped to establish food banks in Thessaloniki (1998), Thessaly (2018) and Drama (2019). In 2020 overall, more than 2,300 tonnes of products were distributed, and nearly 24,000 tonnes have been distributed over the 25 years of their operation. They receive no funding from the state and their operation relies solely on private initiative.

Our goal is to establish more food banks that will save even greater quantities of food and form a cohesive network of social solidarity.



FOOD BANK

member of the European Food Banks Federation

Foundation against hunger and food waste

124, Krioneriou Aven. • GR 14568 Krioneri - Attica, Greece
tel: (+30) 210 622 0059 • e-mail: info@foodbank.gr • www.foodbank.gr

