

Homeless Australians eat only two meals a day

14 April 2016, by Laura Soderlind



Homeless Australians eat only 14 meals per week on average according to a University of Melbourne report about homelessness and access to food.

Homeless men have more difficulty accessing [food](#) and suffer more food hardships than housed men, found the report, Food Insecurity and Homelessness in the Journeys Home Survey. However, homeless women's food access did not differ much from similarly disadvantaged, but housed women's.

The report authors, Prof David Ribar and Dr Nicolas Héroult, based in the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, used data from the Journey's Home Survey, a three-year longitudinal study that followed nearly 1,700 disadvantaged Australians who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

"We see about one in three homeless men using emergency food services, like a soup kitchen. Fewer homeless women, about one in six, use these services," said Prof Ribar.

"Other research shows that the lack of nutrition

associated with poor access to food creates increased health problems including obesity, chronic illnesses, hospitalisation and emergency room treatment for [homeless people](#)," he said.

Women surveyed tend to experience shorter periods of homelessness and had better access to shelters, possibly explaining the less severe impacts on food access for them.

"One of the unfortunate patterns we see in these data is that both homeless people and disadvantaged housed people struggle with access to food," said Prof Ribar.

"In particular, we found that people who were disadvantaged and at risk of homelessness but were living in a home, ate an average of only 15 meals per week," said Prof Ribar.

"There are a lot of factors behind the connection between homelessness and reduced access to food, including things like not having a kitchen and food storage facilities," said Prof Ribar.

The research found that people who had less contact with their families experienced more food problems.

The Journeys Home Survey defines homelessness broadly to include people living without any accommodation at all; people living temporarily rent-free with friends or family; and people staying in boarding houses, caravans or emergency shelters. In this very disadvantaged sample, 97% of the people have been [homeless](#) at some point in their lives.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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