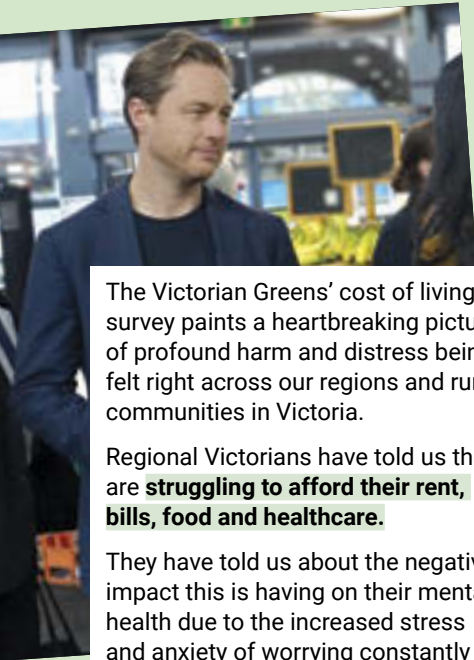




HELP!

**The Victorian Greens
Regional Cost of Living Survey Results**

SEPTEMBER 2023



The Victorian Greens' cost of living survey paints a heartbreaking picture of profound harm and distress being felt right across our regions and rural communities in Victoria.

Regional Victorians have told us they are **struggling to afford their rent, bills, food and healthcare.**

They have told us about the negative impact this is having on their mental health due to the increased stress and anxiety of worrying constantly about paying rent and bills.

When sharing the experiences of hardship, many told us about the impossible decisions they are being forced to make: choosing between putting a roof over their heads, putting food on the table or accessing healthcare for themselves and their families.

Importantly, people have made it clear they want to see direct government action to stop unfair increases in rents, bills and food.

Rents continue to skyrocket, energy bills are climbing and the cost of food is increasing by staggering amounts.

At the same time, profiteering corporations like the supermarket duopoly are posting record profits

PEOPLE NEED HELP!

and increasing their profit margins off the back of struggling Victorians, fueling inflation and making life harder for everyone.

Yet the government is missing in action.

The Victorian Labor Government has the power to stop the major supermarkets from ripping people off - but right now they're choosing not to use it. Instead, they're choosing to side with corporations at the expense of everyday people.

The Greens want to see action now that will put people over profit, and lower the cost of living for everyone.

Sam Hibbins MP
*Victorian Greens Economic
Justice Spokesperson*

Dr Sarah Mansfield MP
*Rural and Regional Communities
Spokesperson
MLC for Western Victoria*

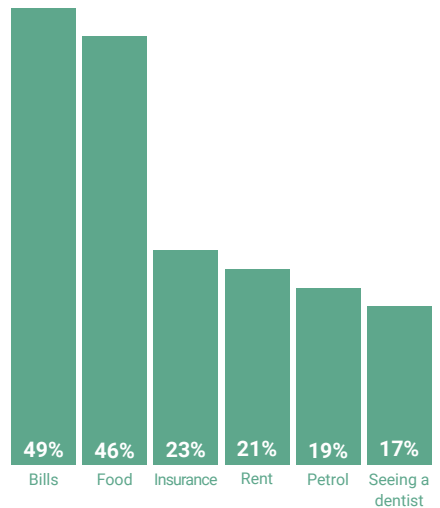
250+
respondents

100
locations

What costs are people struggling with?

Our survey of over 250 people from more than 100 regional locations across Victoria asked a range of questions relating to the effects of the cost of living crisis. Respondents were also asked to share their experiences and give feedback on possible solutions.

Energy bills were the most significant contributor to cost of living pressures at 49 % followed closely by cost of food at 46 %. Insurance and rent costs also ranked highly at 23 % and 21 % respectively. Difficulty affording healthcare of all kinds proved a consistent stressor, with 17 % of respondents reporting that seeing a mental health professional or seeing a dentist is a cost they struggle with.



The rising cost of living has made it hard to eat properly. I've got 3 children and it's difficult to give them a proper diet because healthy food is so expensive.

Tamarra, Mildura

How have people been affected?

The cost of living crisis is having far reaching effects - significantly impacting people's mental health and quality of life.

For many, the situation is so dire they are unable to afford food or are having to forgo essentials.

60% of respondents reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted by cost of living pressures and this figure was even higher - a staggering 85% - for those in the 18-34 year-old age group, and for women overall.

In addition to worrying about finances, people describe being unable to visit family or friends or participate in social activities. Amongst respondents there was a resounding theme of anxiety, isolation and hopelessness.



I have had to turn off my refrigerator.

Marita, Colac-Otway

A quarter of respondents aged 18-24 had been forced to access emergency relief for food and other essentials in the past year and three-quarters said they'd had to dip into their savings to cover everyday living costs.



As a pensioner having reduced my spending as much as possible, I still can't quite make ends meet.

John, Ballarat



I feel worried about my loved ones - especially my mother who is nearing retirement age but has to keep increasing her work hours to afford daily expenses.

Jess, Moorabool

80%

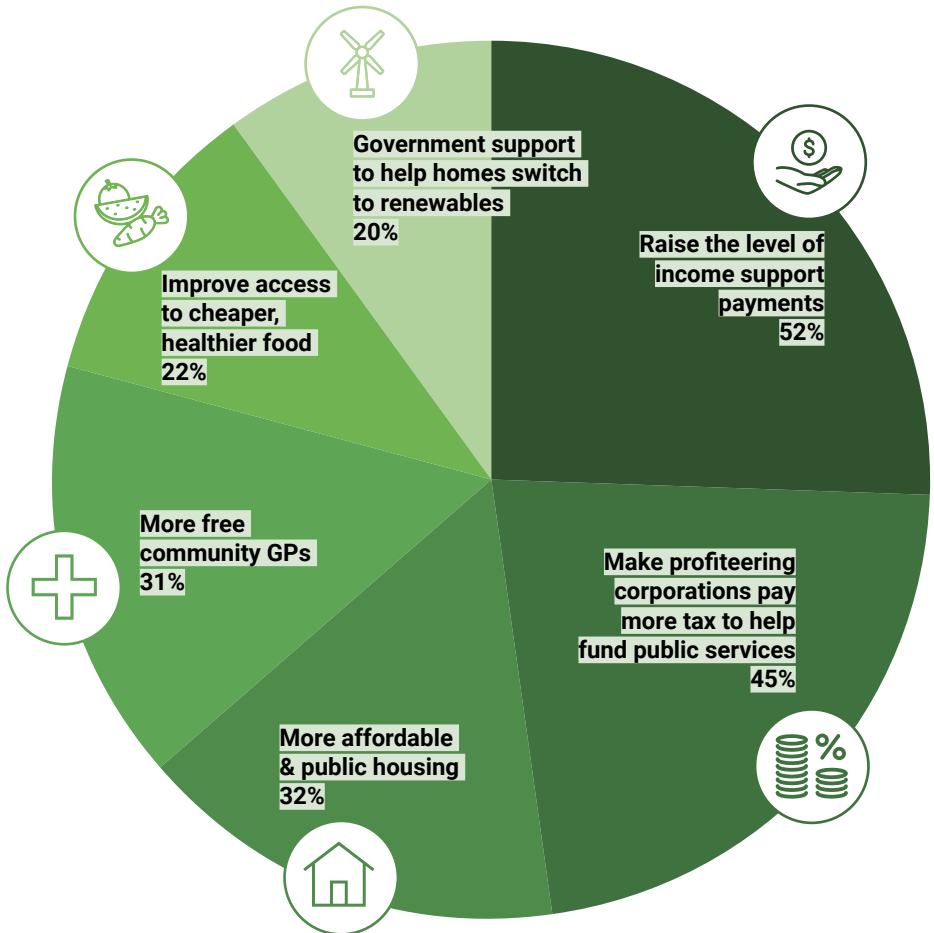
of regional respondents aged 25-34 yrs old have had to dip into their savings to pay for essentials.

One third of 18-24 yr olds have been forced to access emergency relief for food and other essentials in the past year.

Solutions

When asked what the government should do to tackle the cost of living crisis, the two most common solutions respondents proposed were raising the level of income support payments and making profiteering corporations pay more tax to help fund public services. Almost a third (31%) of respondents also want to see more free community GPs and 22 % want to see the Government improve access to cheaper, healthier food.

How should the Government help?



Please note, respondents were able to choose more than one solution.

Make corporations & the wealthy pay their fair share

Respondents told us they wanted to see measures taken that would see profiteering corporations and the wealthy be made to pay their fair share of tax.



” Set up a much fairer (and more appropriate) tax system so that those who earn the most money (both company and personal) pay the most tax.

John, Ballarat

” Urgently need to close the wealth gap. We cannot become a nation of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’.

Stephen, Geelong

Better access to healthcare

Respondents confirmed that healthcare takes a backseat when your main focus has to be paying rent and bills and getting food on the table. 51% of respondents told us they have put off accessing healthcare because they simply can not afford it. The results paint an even bleaker picture for younger people in the regions, with 77 % of respondents aged 18-25 putting their health needs aside due to cost of living pressures.



” Have had to choose who gets dental or mental health care between myself and my partner.

Anneke, Geelong West resident

” I’ve not been able to look after myself or my mental health in so long. I can’t afford to get a haircut or other basic self-care needs as I am struggling just to pay for healthcare professionals.

Jordan, Ballarat resident

Increase wages and income support

Respondents highlighted the need for better support for people on low incomes, with 52% of respondents calling on the government to increase income support payments such as Jobseeker, the Disability Support Pension, Carers Payment, Youth Allowance etc, above the poverty line.



” Trying to pick up shifts when I already work 6 or 7 days a week is stressful.

Sallee, Melton

” Especially single mothers of children with disabilities. We have been absolutely abandoned.

Jaqui, Greater Geelong

” “EVERYTHING has gone up except our wages, we cannot justify these rises anymore.”

Lisa, Melton/Moorabool

Housing people can afford

Respondents listed a range of measures they want the Government to take to fix the state’s housing system, including more public and affordable housing, rent caps or freezes, regulation of the short stay industry and government intervention on mortgage rate increases.

It’s not surprising housing was a priority area given that 45% of regional renters said rent was contributing to cost of living stress and 39% have had to choose between mortgage/rent/bills and other essentials such as healthcare and food.



” The housing market needs a massive shakeup. The idea that people can make profits off an essential survival need for shelter is disgusting. I am so angry that landlords are not subject to the same kind of scrutiny as other business owners.

Jess, Moorabool

STOP SUPERMARKET PRICE GOUGING!

Victorians are desperate for the government to take action to stop unfair price hikes. They need the government to HELP!

That's why the Greens are pushing the Labor Government to take on the supermarket duopoly to cut the cost of food for everyone.

The Victorian Labor Government has the power to stop supermarkets from ripping people off, but right now they're choosing not to use it.

Instead, they're continuing to side with profiteering corporations at the expense of everyday people.

Let's make sure the government knows we won't stand for their inaction.

Add your name to the petition to tell Labor to stop the greedy supermarket duopoly from ripping people off.

Together, we'll keep fighting to make food affordable for everyone.

SIGN THE PETITION

greens.org.au/vic/stoppricehikes