



/ AUGUST 2024

T H E M C K E L L I N S T I T U T E

# Immediate Aid, Measurable Impact

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS  
OF EMERGENCY RELIEF



The McKell Institute is an independent, not-for-profit research organisation dedicated to advancing practical policy solutions to contemporary issues.

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#### About this project

This project has been commissioned by **The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW** to examine the effectiveness of their Emergency Relief program that sits within the Financial Wellbeing and Capability program. It is the first of two papers, this one examines emergency relief in terms of early intervention and crisis prevention, while the second (forthcoming) explores the broader trends and changing nature and face of poverty.

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#### Acknowledgement of country

This report was written on the lands of the Darug and the Eora Nations, and on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. The McKell Institute acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to both their land and seas.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the McKell Institute's members, sponsors, affiliates, individual board members or research committee members.



IMAGES SUPPLIED BY ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW - VOLUNTEERS, MEMBERS, STAFF AND ASSISTED PEOPLE IN REDFERN AND CAMPBELLTOWN.

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# One Page Brief

## CONTEXT

The cost of living crisis has seen a growing number of people seeking emergency financial, food, clothing and housing assistance. This report considers the efficacy of one such program, administered by the St Vincent De Paul Society NSW, and is informed by 900 respondents to a survey examining the efficacy of a key emergency relief program in New South Wales.

## THE POLICY PROBLEM

Australia’s cost of living crisis has seen more people enter acute poverty. This has prompted a surge in individuals and families seeking emergency relief services to avoid falling into deeper crises caused by acute poverty, including groups within society that were previously shielded from such severe financial hardship. This dynamic has led to a growing demand for support from organisations such as St. Vincent de Paul Society NSW (**The Society NSW**), which provide emergency relief in the form of direct financial assistance, food and clothing assistance, and other types of support. This growing dynamic is placing pressure on non-profit emergency relief programs such as that examined in this report.

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# Foreword

As Australia's cost of living crisis continues, many thousands of Australians and non-citizen residents of Australia are experiencing acute poverty, often for the first time their lives. The combined phenomena of housing unaffordability, precarious work and modest wages growth, as well as the rising cost of essential household items are pushing more households to the brink.

Increasingly, individuals and families are turning to emergency relief programs administered by charities as a last resort. This report considers the efficacy of one such program administered by the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (hereafter, *The Society NSW*).

This report first explores the rise of emergency relief programs, before evaluating the efficacy of a major program administered by *The Society NSW*. Through a survey of 900 individuals in receipt of emergency relief through *The Society NSW*, the importance and effectiveness of these programs is demonstrated.

Emergency relief services offer lifelines to individuals facing immediate financial crises, and provide essential support when resources are inadequate to meet basic needs. They also act as entry points to a continuum of support, connecting individuals with comprehensive resources that promote long-term stability and resilience.

Emergency relief programs are an essential component of the Australian safety net.

This report is Part 1 of a two-part series examining the changing nature of poverty in NSW that The McKell Institute is undertaking in partnership with *The Society NSW* — twin projects that work to offer an understanding of the evolving nature of poverty in Australia, while articulating the levers governments have at their disposal to address its immediate impacts.



**ED CAVANOUGH**  
CEO, THE MCKELL INSTITUTE

# Executive Summary

Emergency relief services, such as those provided by various charities and community organisations like The Society NSW, play an essential role in the early intervention space and alleviating poverty, especially during cost of living crises such as that being felt by millions of Australians today. Emergency relief services offer a crucial 'hand up' rather than a 'hand out', reaching people at their most vulnerable points and providing immediate support to prevent deeper crises.

These services include critical provisions such as food, furniture, utility bill assistance, and clothing, specifically targeting individuals facing acute disadvantage and lacking immediate resources.

This report examines the efficacy of one emergency relief program provided by the St Vincent De Paul Society of NSW, which assists over 95,000 residents experiencing poverty across New South Wales.

The report is informed by quantitative **survey data of 900 individuals**, and qualitative insights gathered from interviews conducted between June and July 2024. Its findings are further informed by analysis of The Society NSW's Client Assistance Management System (**CAMS**) metadata regarding emergency relief over previous years.

The report reveals the efficacy of emergency relief programs for a wide range of individuals across various demographics and geographies. Those reliant on these services are not concentrated to any one cohort but are instead representative of the broadening pool of individuals and families throughout society that are experiencing poverty.

It tells a story of growing demand for these services. Between January 2023 to December 2023, emergency relief services experienced increased demand, and many instances of individuals seeking assistance for the first time.

And it also reveals how critical these support services are for those experiencing poverty. Many individuals surveyed noted how the support provided by The Society NSW offered a crucial lifeline during a perilous time in their

life, despite the quantum of the support often being relatively modest, either coming in the form of modest financial assistance or other direct, temporary assistance.

This report begins by briefly exploring the nature of poverty and the rise of emergency assistance programs in Australia, before focusing primarily on understanding the results of the survey undertaken for the purpose of this research.

**Part 1** examines the rising demand for assistance driven by economic pressures such as escalating living costs and stagnant wages.

**Part 2** focuses on The Society NSW's emergency relief program, detailing its comprehensive support offerings, and overall effectiveness.

**Part 3** presents the survey data collected, offering the results in a straightforward manner.

**Part 4** analyses survey results more deeply, highlighting utilisation trends, effectiveness of services provided, and noteworthy shifts compared to previous periods.

Finally, the **Conclusion** synthesises key findings, emphasising the benefits of early intervention and the increased need for wrap-around emergency relief services.

The report is complemented by a detailed Appendix describing the research methodology.

# Key Findings

900 individuals responded to a survey examining the efficacy of the emergency relief program administered by The Society NSW.

**The results include:**

## KEY FINDING 1

**An overwhelming majority of clients felt positively about The Society NSW's emergency relief program**

80.4 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all survey prompts related to the efficacy of the program, demonstrating broad satisfaction with the nature of assistance rendered.

## KEY FINDING 2

**The Society NSW is making headway in the early intervention space**

A significant majority of respondents (78.1 per cent) feel that support from The Society NSW has been instrumental in their progress towards stability and self-sufficiency. This indicates that the program effectively addresses needs before they escalate into more severe crises.

## KEY FINDING 3

**The Society NSW plays a critical role for those in crisis**

91.7 per cent of respondents agreed that The Society NSW provided crucial assistance during crises, with 48.7 per cent strongly agreeing, underscoring the organisation's reliability in urgent situations.

## KEY FINDING 4

**Recipients of emergency aid are satisfied with immediate assistance**

88.5 per cent of respondents expressed satisfaction with The Society NSW's emergency relief program, highlighting its effectiveness in addressing immediate needs and preventing further escalation of crises.

## KEY FINDING 5

**The Society NSW's emergency relief is effective in prevention of specific crises, including eviction and severe hunger**

The Society NSW's support is acknowledged by 82.2 per cent of respondents as playing a key role in averting severe issues such as eviction or severe hunger, demonstrating its proactive approach to crisis prevention.

## KEY FINDING 6

**Regional Australians were highly satisfied with the program**

While all respondent cohorts reported overall satisfaction, regional Australians consistently reported even higher satisfaction with The Society NSW's services compared to the general sample. They showed greater agreement that The Society NSW's support helps with food security, living expenses, and housing stability. This indicates that local links and community integration enhance the effectiveness of support services, particularly in addressing regional challenges where other services may be sparse and the importance of fostering a more tailored and responsive approach.

## KEY FINDING 7

**The survey reveals high demand and satisfaction among disabled recipients with The Society NSW's support**

The survey revealed that 25.8 per cent of The Society NSW's clientele rely on the Disability Support Pension (DSP), compared to 3.7 per cent of the general population. DSP recipients reported higher satisfaction, with 70.1 per cent agreeing that The Society NSW's support helped cover living expenses, compared to 65 per cent of the general sample.

## KEY FINDING 8

**The Society NSW's efforts significantly enhance client well-being**

89.1 per cent of respondents reported that receiving support from The Society NSW positively impacted their stress levels and overall well-being, indicating the program's success in addressing both immediate and emotional needs.

## KEY FINDING 9

**Long-term stability is linked to extended engagement**

Extended engagement with The Society NSW is associated with higher satisfaction levels and better outcomes. This suggests that ongoing support is crucial for building self-sufficiency and preventing deeper crises.

## KEY FINDING 10

**Higher financial assistance correlates with better experiences**

Respondents receiving higher levels of financial assistance reported better experiences and higher satisfaction, highlighting the importance of adequate support in improving well-being and mitigating severe hardships.



# Part One: Understanding The Society NSW's Emergency Relief Program

## KEY POINTS

- 1** Rising living costs and slow wages growth in Australia have led to more people seeking food and emergency aid due to increased food insecurity and material poverty.
- 2** Emergency relief services help those experiencing hardships with tailored support, including short-term accommodation, food aid, essential items, healthcare assistance, transport aid, and utility bill payments.
- 3** The Society NSW's emergency relief services provide immediate crisis assistance and act as gateways to additional support like legal aid, mental health services, and domestic violence assistance.

## AUSTRALIA'S COST OF LIVING CRISIS IS LEAVING MANY STRUGGLING

The rising cost of living and a decade of slow or stagnant wage growth in Australia has led to an increase in food insecurity and material poverty, resulting in more people seeking food and emergency aid.<sup>1</sup> Many families are struggling to make ends meet as their incomes fail to keep pace with the escalating prices of basic necessities such as housing, utilities, and groceries. This economic strain has forced individuals and households to turn to emergency and food relief services in greater numbers than ever before.

Emergency relief services aid individuals facing financial distress or hardship who, at that moment, possess insufficient resources to mitigate their financial crisis.<sup>2</sup> Service providers, the recipients of these services (often described as clients), and the Department of Social Services understand that emergency relief services do not aim to fully resolve a client's financial crisis on their own. Instead, they serve as the primary response or initial point of contact, often acting as a gateway to comprehensive support services.<sup>3</sup>

These services collaborate with individuals to address immediate needs and work towards long-term financial stability, alongside other forms of support like legal aid, mental health services, and assistance for domestic violence survivors, provided by various organisations.<sup>4</sup> Emergency and food relief are crucial components of Australia's comprehensive safety net, providing a lifeline for those in crisis. These services offer financial and material assistance, emergency relief for utility bills, household items, food parcels, and referrals for additional support.

## EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAMS VARY IN THEIR NATURE AND TARGETED SUPPORT

Individuals in need of emergency relief and/or food aid usually self-refer to charities, which then use diverse and localised criteria to manage access to their services.<sup>5</sup> A report by Hall and Partners, commissioned by the Department of Social Services, found that various situations can drive an individual to seek emergency and food relief.

These circumstances include:

- **One-off financial hardship:** Clients may face an unexpected financial crisis that creates a temporary need for assistance. In these cases, their immediate and basic needs can be resolved over a short and focused period, allowing them to regain stability quickly.
- **Infrequent financial hardship:** Some clients experience financial difficulties that recur occasionally. While these individuals might seek emergency relief services multiple times, their needs do not qualify as ongoing. They encounter sporadic setbacks that necessitate intermittent support but do not require constant aid.
- **Chronic financial hardship:** There are clients whose financial struggles are frequent and persistent. These individuals face ongoing economic challenges that necessitate continuous support. Their financial instability is long-term, making them regular users of emergency relief services as they cope with sustained hardship.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these primary categories, there are other factors that can lead individuals



to seek emergency and food relief. These include sudden job loss, medical emergencies, unexpected household repairs, or significant life changes such as divorce, illness, or death in the family. Each situation requires a tailored response to address the unique needs of the individual, ensuring they receive the appropriate level of support to overcome their specific challenges.

## THE SOCIETY NSW'S EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM PROVIDES IMMEDIATE AID WITH MEASURABLE IMPACT

Nationally, The St Vincent de Paul Society is organised around a network of locally based groups, known as *conferences*, which are central to its emergency relief program. Each conference, comprised of dedicated volunteers from the community, provides essential emergency assistance tailored to the needs of its specific suburb or town. This local structure ensures that support is both relevant and accessible, addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals within their own neighbourhoods.

For The Society NSW specifically, emergency relief assistance can take both material and non-material forms. Material assistance involves providing physical goods or financial support to help with expenses, while non-material assistance encompasses offering advice, information, or referrals to additional services either within The Society NSW or through external organisations.

Examples of the types of items and assistance they provide are below:

- **Short-term Accommodation:** This includes temporary housing solutions for individuals such as victims of domestic violence, people at risk of becoming homeless, or those who are already homeless.

- **Food Support:** This may be in the form of food parcels, store gift cards, and food vouchers to ensure individuals and families have access to necessary nutrition.
- **Health Care Assistance:** This support includes the payment of medical bills and providing chemist vouchers to help cover the cost of medications.
- **Transport Assistance:** The Society NSW offers aid such as bus and train tickets, as well as fuel vouchers, to ensure individuals can travel for essential purposes like medical appointments or job interviews.
- **Material Goods:** Beyond food, The Society NSW supplies essential non-food items such as clothing, bedding, and various household goods to help individuals manage their daily lives.
- **Utility Bills:** Assistance in this category includes helping with payments for essential services like gas cylinder refills and water bills, ensuring that households can maintain basic utilities.

By providing these diverse forms of support, they aim to address the immediate needs of individuals in crisis and help them stabilise each of their respective situations as quickly as possible.

## EMERGENCY SUPPORT CAN SERVE AS A GATEWAY TO OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE

Emergency relief services play a crucial dual role by offering immediate crisis assistance and serving as gateways to a broader network of support services. The work of The Society NSW's conferences is particularly vital in this regard. Individuals often seek help with immediate needs, such as groceries, but through their interactions, they frequently receive referrals to additional services that

they might not have been aware of or accessed otherwise. These can include both "soft referrals," such as information and advice about available resources, and "hard referrals," which involve direct connections to specific services like housing support, healthcare, counselling, and job training programs. By addressing immediate needs and facilitating connections to longer-term support, emergency relief services help individuals stabilise their situations and move towards sustained self-sufficiency. This comprehensive approach not only mitigates the immediate crisis but also supports individuals in overcoming broader challenges, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and well-supported community.

A key aspect of this support system is the robust referral pathways established by The Society NSW. These pathways ensure that individuals are not just receiving temporary relief but are also being directed towards additional services that can address the root causes of their crises. For example, someone who comes in for food assistance might be referred to financial counselling services to help manage debt, or to housing services if they are at risk of homelessness. These referrals are integral to The Society NSW's holistic approach, ensuring that individuals receive comprehensive support tailored to their unique needs.

By creating a seamless connection between immediate relief and long-term support services, The Society NSW maximises the impact of its interventions, both through early intervention and then further crisis prevention. This network of referrals is essential in providing a continuum of care that helps individuals not only recover from immediate crises but also build a foundation for future stability and self-sufficiency. The strength of these referral pathways underscores the importance of integrated service delivery and the need for ongoing collaboration between

different support organisations to effectively meet the complex needs of those in crisis.

## THE SOCIETY NSW'S RELIEF PROGRAMS CAN PREVENT FURTHER CRISIS

As this report will further evidence, many individuals who engaged with The Society NSW had few interactions. This data reveals The Society NSW's effectiveness in early intervention. Nearly half of those surveyed (44.4 per cent) needed help 2-5 times. This suggests The Society NSW caters to those facing occasional but significant challenges. By providing assistance during these critical moments, The Society NSW can prevent these challenges from escalating into deeper crises.

While many only require a number of interactions, almost half of those surveyed had more than 5 interactions. This emphasises The Society NSW's ability to provide ongoing support for those navigating complex situations. This repeated assistance allows individuals to address their problems systematically and work towards long-term stability.

However, it is crucial to recognise that emergency relief and immediate assistance do not necessarily mean a 'one-and-done' solution. Effective support often requires multiple interactions to build trust and nurture individuals on their journey towards stability. The Society NSW's program acts as a safety net, intervening early to prevent the escalation of problems. By preventing people from falling into deeper crises, early intervention saves the government money by mitigating high social and economic costs. Even occasional support can be crucial in helping individuals weather challenges. For many, these moments of intervention are stepping stones towards lasting stability and independence.

Building trust is a fundamental component of this process. Each interaction provides an opportunity to better understand the individual's unique circumstances and to tailor support accordingly. This ongoing relationship fosters a sense of security and reliability, encouraging individuals to seek help proactively rather than reactively. The Society NSW's approach is not just about addressing immediate needs but also about nurturing individuals, guiding them through their crises, and helping them build resilience for the future. This comprehensive and compassionate strategy ensures that emergency relief serves as a bridge to sustained stability, rather than a temporary fix.

### THE SOCIETY NSW'S EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM ASSISTED OVER 95,000 PEOPLE IN 2023

Drawing on The Society NSW's metadata, we see that between January 2023 to December 2023, The Society NSW's emergency relief services in NSW assisted a total of 43,703 primary individuals and 51,743 additional people. 26 per cent – or 1 in 4 – primary individuals assisted identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, underscoring The Society NSW's outreach efforts to and heightened demand from Indigenous communities.

Among primary recipients, women were more likely to seek assistance than men, with 25,955 women seeking help compared to 17,586 men, representing 59 per cent and 40 per cent of the assisted population, respectively, while a minimal proportion preferred not to say or identified as non-binary.

91 per cent of the people assisted by The Society NSW spoke English as a first

language. While this is of course most people assisted, it does still underscore the necessity of accessible multilingual and/or translation services for the remaining 9 per cent.

The Society NSW's interactions with individuals seeking assistance are broadly distributed across different age groups, reflecting a diverse range of client needs and life stages. Young adults aged 18-29 account for 15 per cent of the interactions. The representation of 30-39-year-olds at 23 per cent of interactions suggests a cohort balancing career advancement, family responsibilities, and potential mid-life financial pressures. Individuals aged 40-49 constitute the largest share at 26 per cent, indicating a significant demographic in need of assistance. Similarly, those aged 50-59, representing 21 per cent of interactions, are often navigating pre-retirement years, dealing with career transitions, health challenges, and other late-career issues.

Between 2022 and 2023 both primary and additional people assisted increased notably, with primary assistance rising by 18.7 per cent and additional assistance by 21.3 per cent. This indicates an increasing demand for emergency relief services.

A sharp rise of 32.5 per cent in people assisted for the first time suggests new challenges or deteriorating circumstances that drive more individuals to seek help.

## Part Two: Who Was Surveyed, And the Nature of the Support They Received

### KEY POINTS

- 1** The McKell Institute and The Society NSW surveyed over 900 clients of The Society NSW's program, all of whom had been assisted within the 12 months prior to June 2024. Respondents were asked to respond to 15 prompts on the continuum of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree.
- 2** The survey was representative of those assisted by The Society NSW, with respondents from across all regions of NSW.
- 3** Respondents and interviewees indicated that The Society NSW's Emergency Relief program has benefited their lives in both the long and short term.

## OVER 900 EMERGENCY RELIEF RECIPIENTS PARTICIPATED IN A VERBAL SURVEY

Between the 3rd-18th of June 2024, McKell and The Society NSW surveyed 902 people.

Both metropolitan and regional recipients were surveyed, with interviewees for semi-structured interviews selected based on The Society NSW’s employees’ recommendations. Three follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The survey data was drawn from The Society NSW’s Client Assistance Management System (CAMS), with a sample of 5,000 randomly selected participants from those assisted over the past 12 months, ensuring a diverse representation of regions, genders, ages, ethnicities, and social backgrounds.

The McKell Institute designed the survey in consultation with The Society NSW, addressing biases and sampling errors. Participants were contacted via telephone over a two-week period.

### RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED TO RESPOND TO 15 PROMPTS

The 902 participants were presented with 15 questions or statements, to which they were prompted to agree or disagree along a five point scale. (Note – in the survey, The Society NSW is referred to as ‘Vinnies’, a more colloquial term for the provider that its clients are most familiar with).

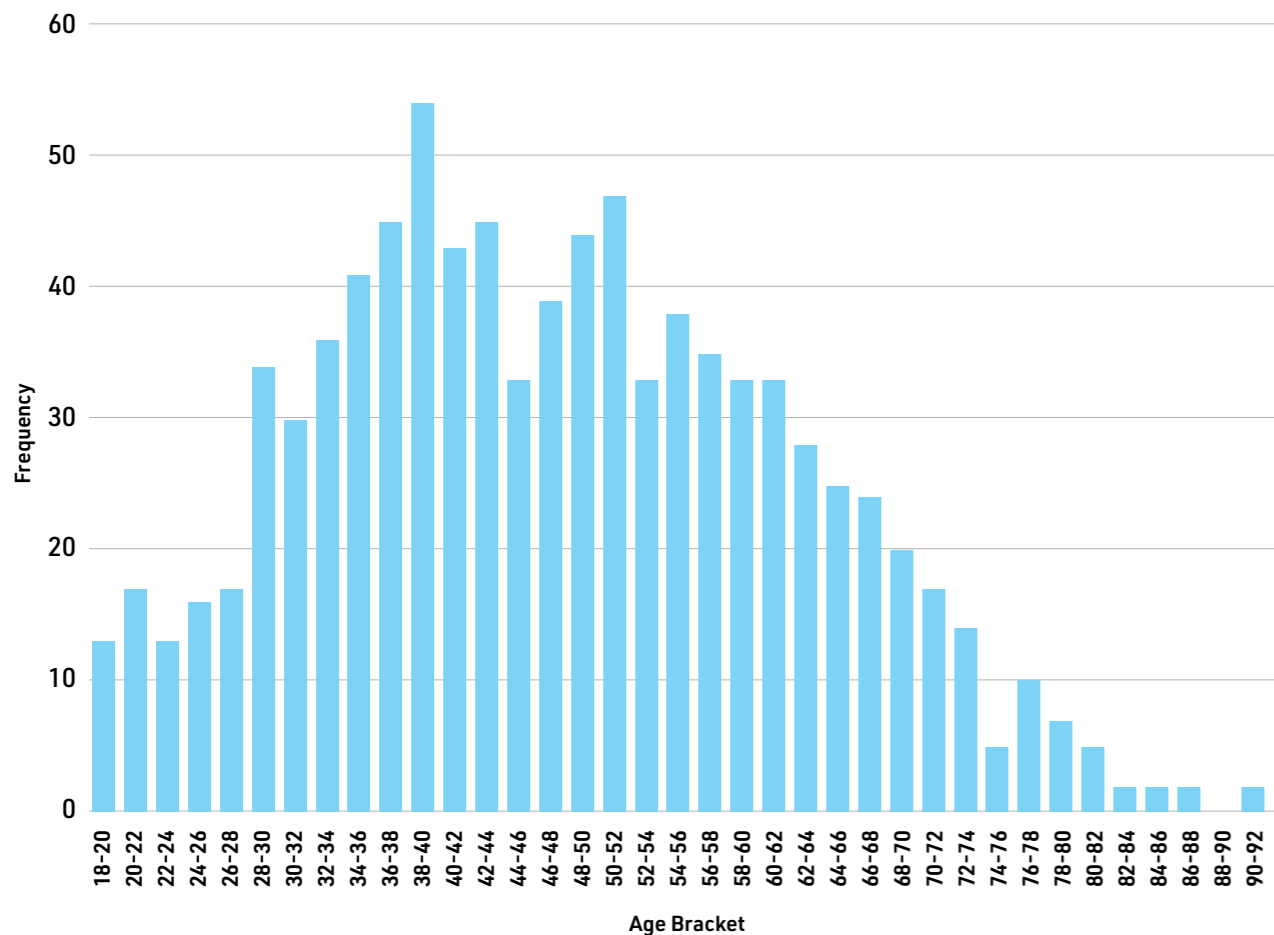


#	PROMPT PRESENTED TO THE RESPONDENT
1	It was easy to access support from Vinnies
2	The assistance provided by Vinnies met my immediate needs
3	The support from Vinnies helped keep food on the table for me/me and my family
4	The support from Vinnies helped me cover the cost of essential household bills, like energy or water
5	The support from Vinnies allowed me to cover my living expenses/helped keep me in housing/in a home
6	Receiving help from Vinnies reduced my stress and improved my overall well-being
7	In addition to immediate assistance, Vinnies connected me with other support services to help my situation (e.g., counselling, referrals to other local services, information about other places I could get help)
8	I felt listened-to and supported in addressing the root causes (whole problem/main issues) of my crisis, not just the immediate problem
9	Support from Vinnies has helped me to move towards stability and self-sufficiency
10	Vinnies provided assistance when I needed it the most during a crisis
11	Without support from Vinnies, I would not have had another place to turn to for the help I needed
12	The support provided by Vinnies helped me to avoid a more severe crisis (e.g., eviction from accommodation, severe hunger, energy being cut off)
13	The support from Vinnies made a significant difference in my ability to recover from financial hardship
14	Overall, I am satisfied with the help I received from Vinnies
15	I would recommend Vinnies to others in need

## WHO RECEIVES EMERGENCY RELIEF THROUGH THE SOCIETY NSW?

Those surveyed reflected the demographic diversity of The Society NSW’s clients, in terms of age, regional status, primary income source, and the type, duration, and frequency of interactions with The Society NSW.

**FIGURE 1** AGE HISTOGRAM OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



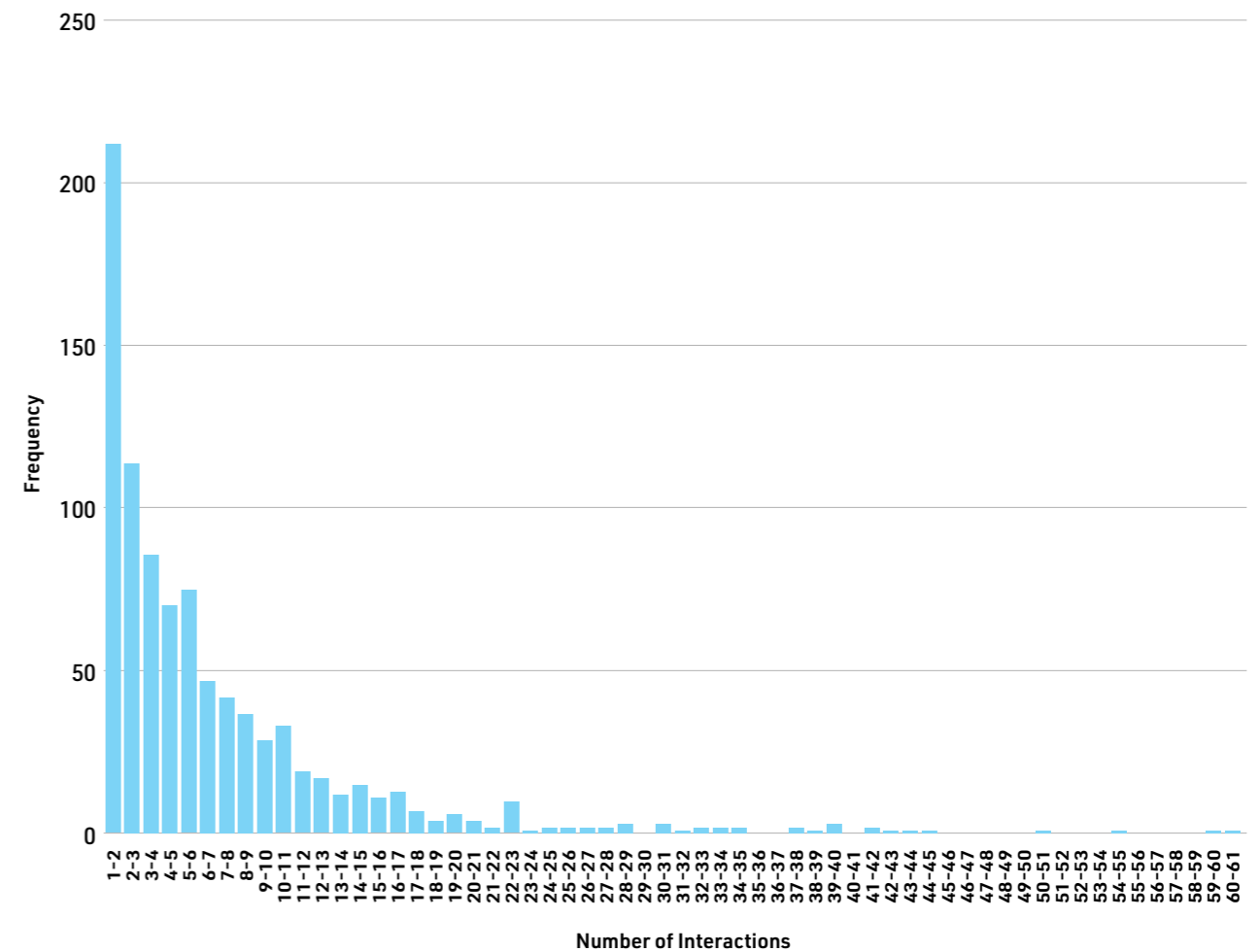
Those surveyed had a median age of 47 and a mean age of 48. Ages of respondents varied from 18 to 92. The age distribution is largely symmetrical with a slight positive skew.

Over 80 per cent of those assisted were between the age of 25 and 64. Approximately 15 per cent were above 65, and only 4.8 per cent were under 25. Most respondents were thus working-aged adults, with an appreciable cohort of elderly individuals seeking assistance.

The under-representation of young adults is striking but may be a function of the fact that many people between 18 and 25 remain at home and may instead receive support as a secondary person assisted. Children could also constitute a significant portion of those receiving secondary assistance, although they were not directly surveyed due to ethical considerations regarding contacting minors. It may, however, equally underscore barriers to entry or reticence in seeking assistance among this demographic.

## HOW FREQUENTLY DO USERS ACCESS SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SOCIETY NSW?

**FIGURE 2** NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS HISTOGRAM OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Most of those who interacted with The Society NSW had very few interactions. The mean number of interactions was only 5, with the median being 7.5. The strong positive skew underscored the fact that a few individuals had very many interactions and in turn dragged up the mean.\*

Nearly half of the respondents (44.4 per cent) had between 2 and 5 interactions. This suggests that occasional but not infrequent assistance is common.

An equally significant proportion (46.6 per cent) had more than 5 interactions, indicating a substantial number of respondents requiring repeated assistance.

Only 9.1 per cent of respondents had just one interaction. This suggests that once individuals seek help from The Society NSW, they are likely to return for further assistance. The high proportion of respondents with multiple interactions suggests that The Society NSW is a valuable resource for ongoing support, and that those assisted by The Society NSW feel comfortable and encouraged in returning.

\* Some of The Society NSW’s centres provide spaces for showers and washing clothes. Those small number of respondents with many instances of assistance are most likely utilising these services.

## THE NATURE OF ASSISTANCE VARIED, BUT WAS DOMINATED BY FOOD ASSISTANCE

Respondents were asked to categorise their interactions with The Society NSW based on a predefined list of options. Due to the extensive variety of assistance types, these were grouped into several categories: administrative, advocacy, and social assistance; financial assistance; non-financial material assistance; food assistance; transport assistance; and medical assistance.

Individuals often obtained more than one type of assistance, and often these types of assistance traversed multiple categories.

Of the 902 respondents, food assistance had the highest proportion (92.2 per cent), indicating that a vast majority of respondents sought help from The Society NSW for immediate food-related needs. This demonstrates the critical role The Society NSW plays in addressing food insecurity.

Non-financial material assistance (43.2 per cent) and financial assistance (33.5 per cent) were the next most prominent categories, highlighting that many respondents require support beyond food, including material goods and financial aid.

Administrative, advocacy, and social assistance (28.7 per cent) and medical assistance (6.3 per cent) were less frequently reported but still represented important support services provided by The Society NSW.

70.4 per cent of respondents reported needing more than one category of assistance from The Society NSW. This suggests that multifaceted support is often necessary to meet the complex needs of individuals seeking help. Conversely, 29.6 per cent of respondents reported needing only one type of assistance.

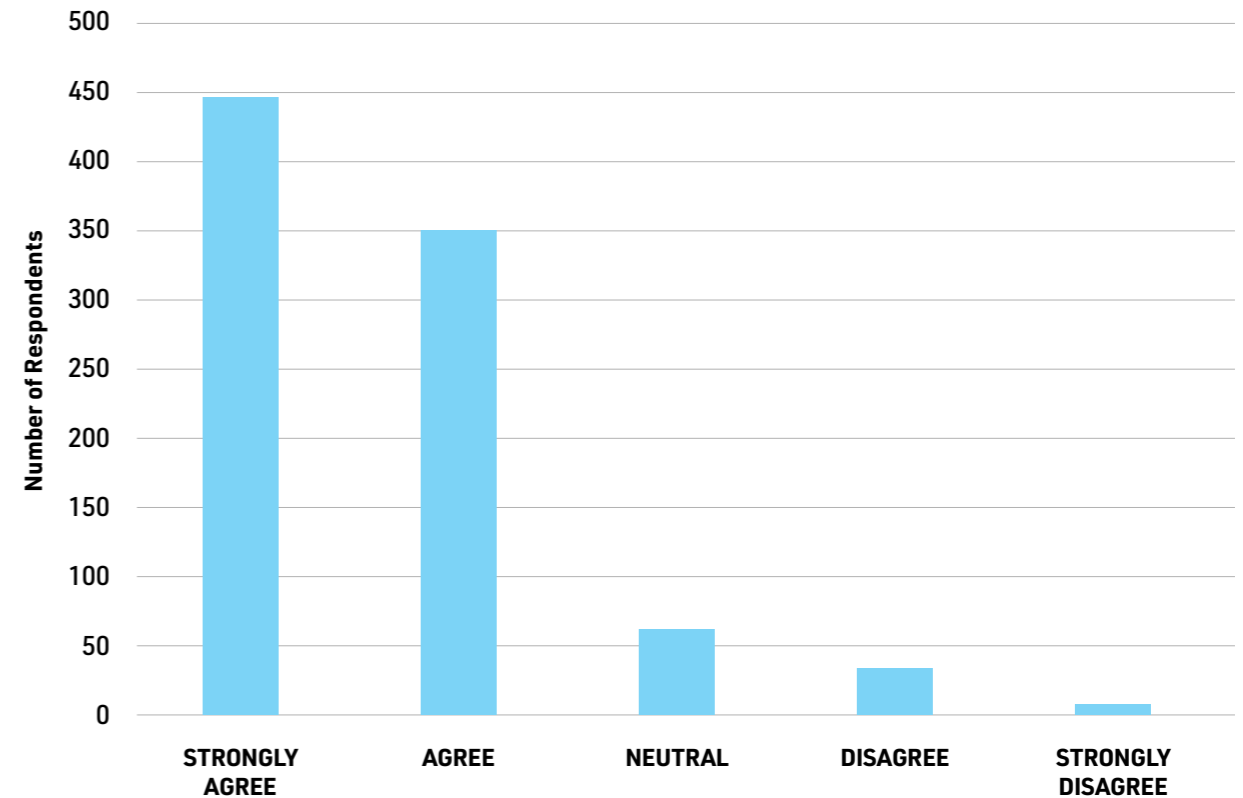
The high percentage of respondents requiring more than one type of assistance emphasises the multifaceted challenges often faced by those seeking help from The Society NSW. This demonstrates the need for an integrated 'wrap around' approach to service delivery to address diverse needs effectively.



# Part Three: Survey Results in Totality

## Q1 It was easy to access support from Vinnies

FIGURE 3 QUESTION 1 RESPONSE COUNT

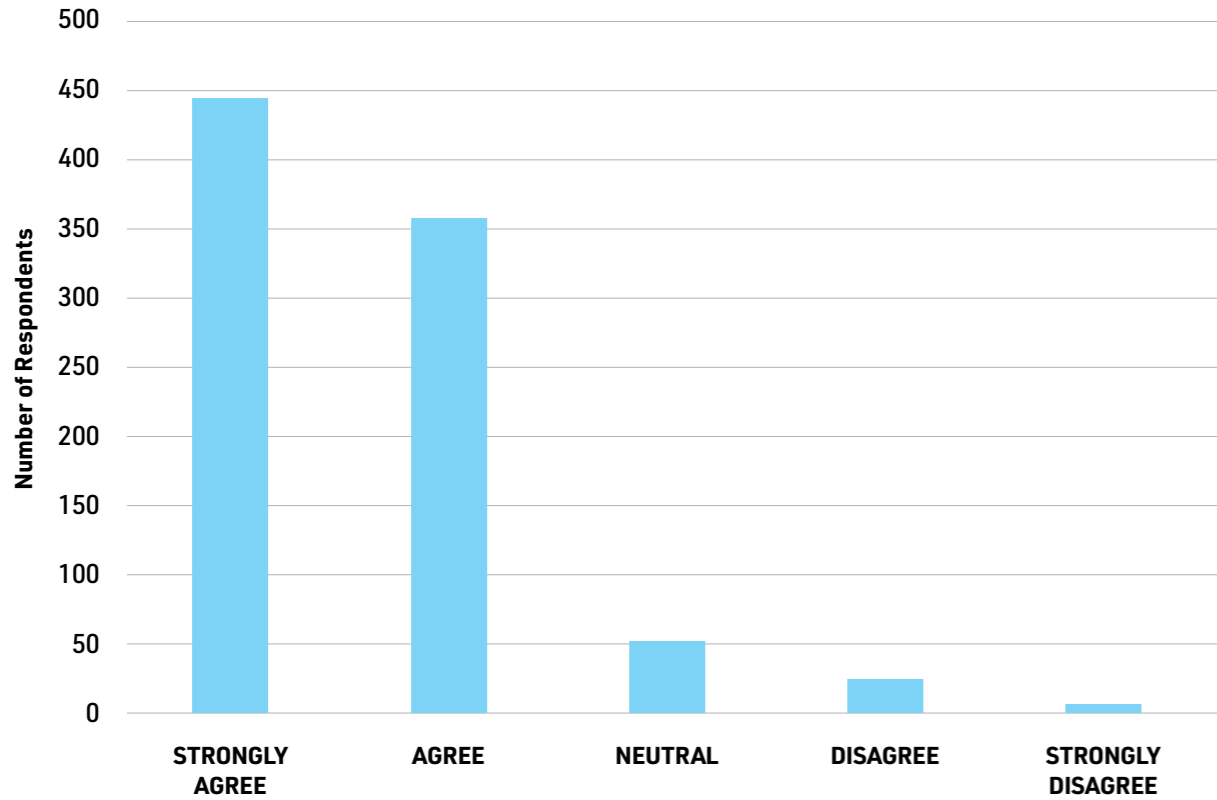


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	447	351	62	34	8	0	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	49.56%	38.91%	6.87%	3.77%	0.89%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	88.47%	6.87%	4.65%

**Q2 The assistance provided by Vinnies met by immediate needs**

**FIGURE 4** QUESTION 2 RESPONSE COUNT

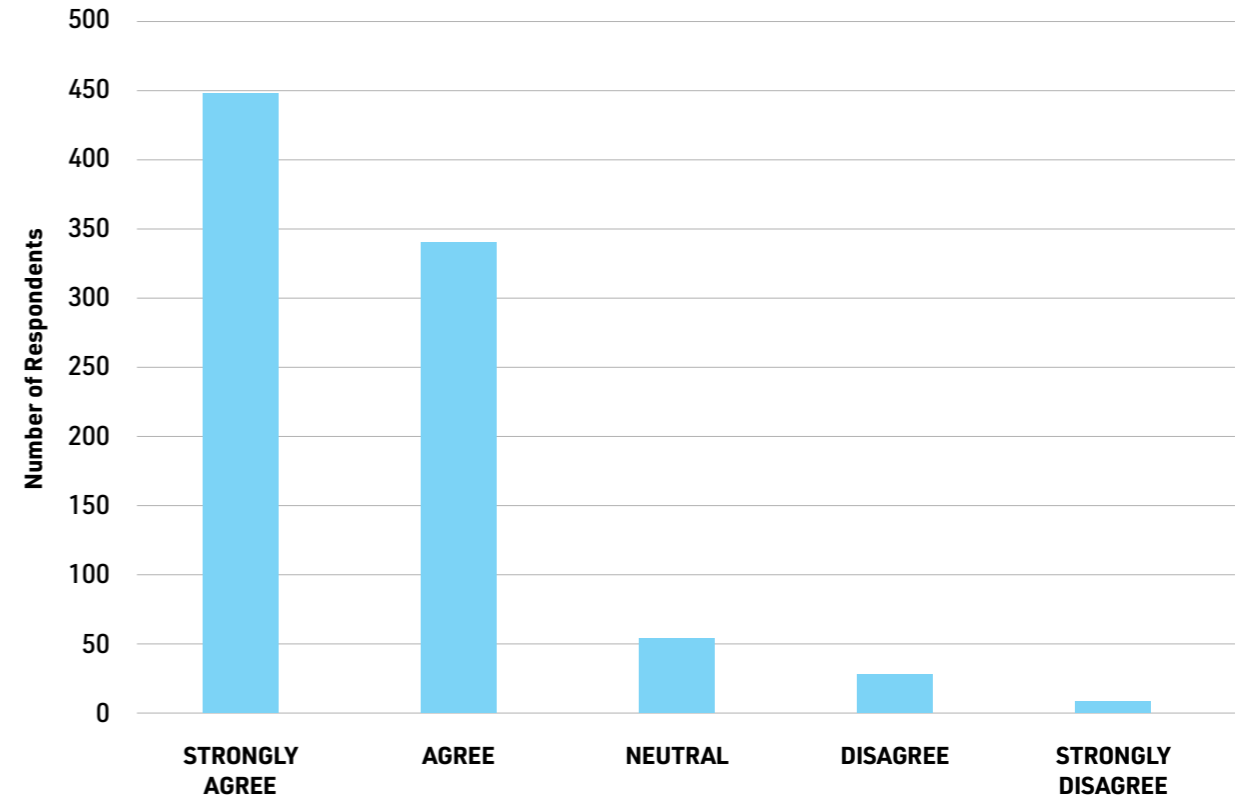


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	445	358	52	25	7	15	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	50.17%	40.36%	5.86%	2.82%	0.79%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	88.47%	6.87%	4.66%

**Q3 The support from Vinnies helped keep food on the table for me / me and my family**

**FIGURE 5** QUESTION 3 RESPONSE COUNT



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	449	341	54	28	9	21	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	50.96%	38.71%	6.13%	3.18%	1.02%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	89.67%	6.13%	4.20%

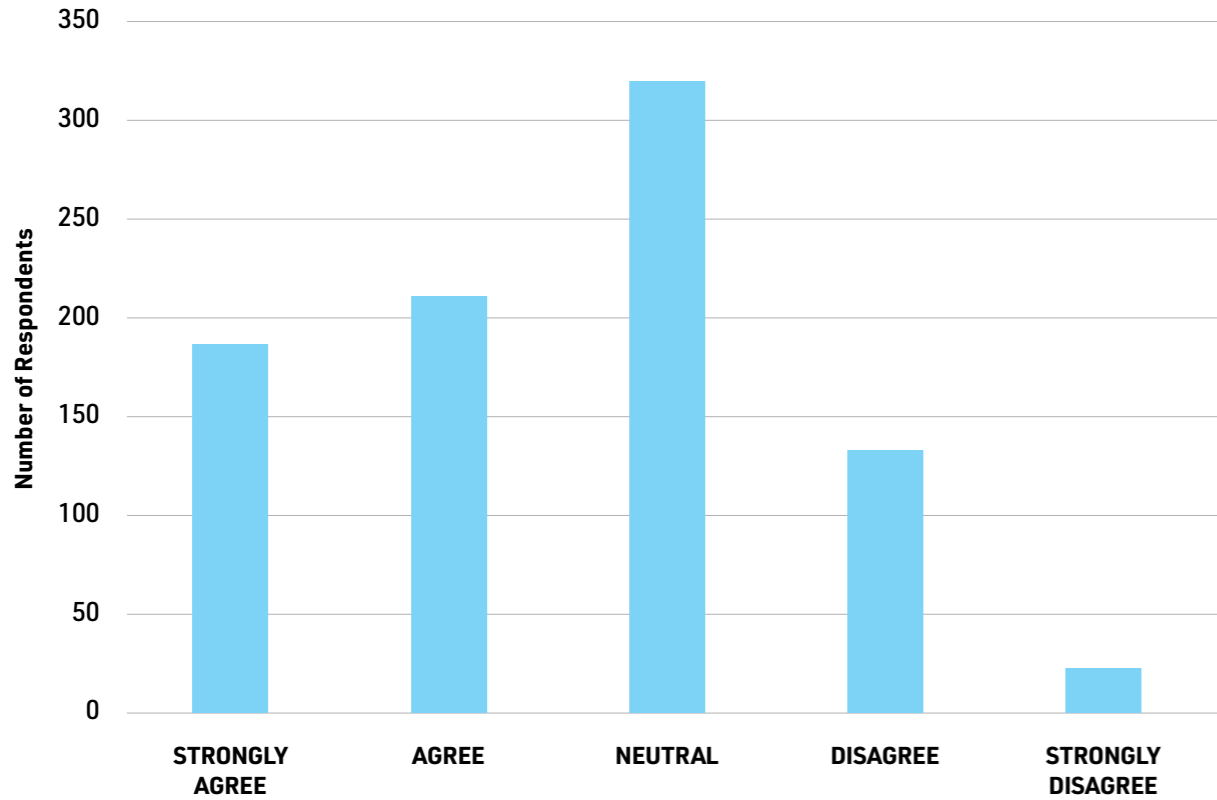






**Q4 The support from Vinnies helped me cover the cost of essential household bills, like energy or water**

**FIGURE 6** QUESTION 4 RESPONSE COUNT

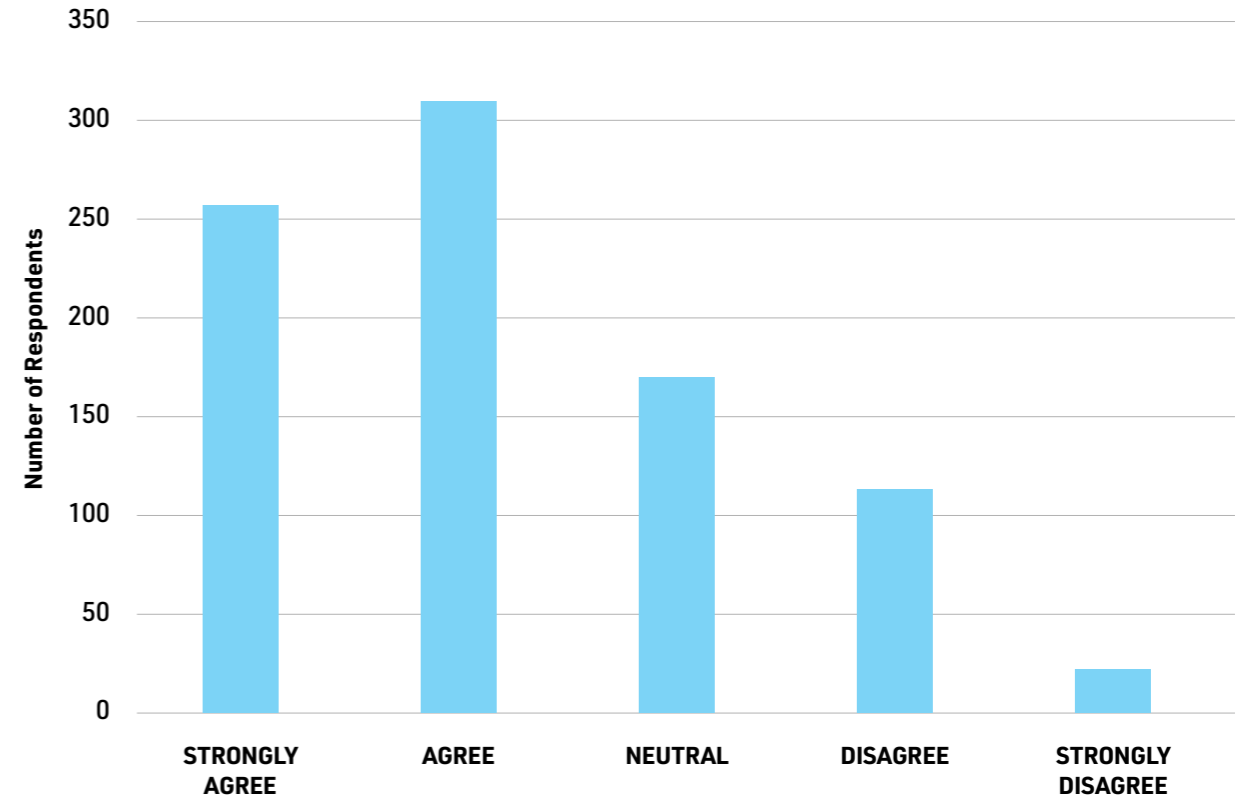


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	187	211	320	133	23	28	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	21.40%	24.14%	36.61%	15.22%	2.63%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	45.54%	36.61%	17.85%

**Q5 The support from Vinnies allowed me to cover my living expenses/ helped keep me in housing/in a home**

**FIGURE 7** QUESTION 5 RESPONSE COUNT



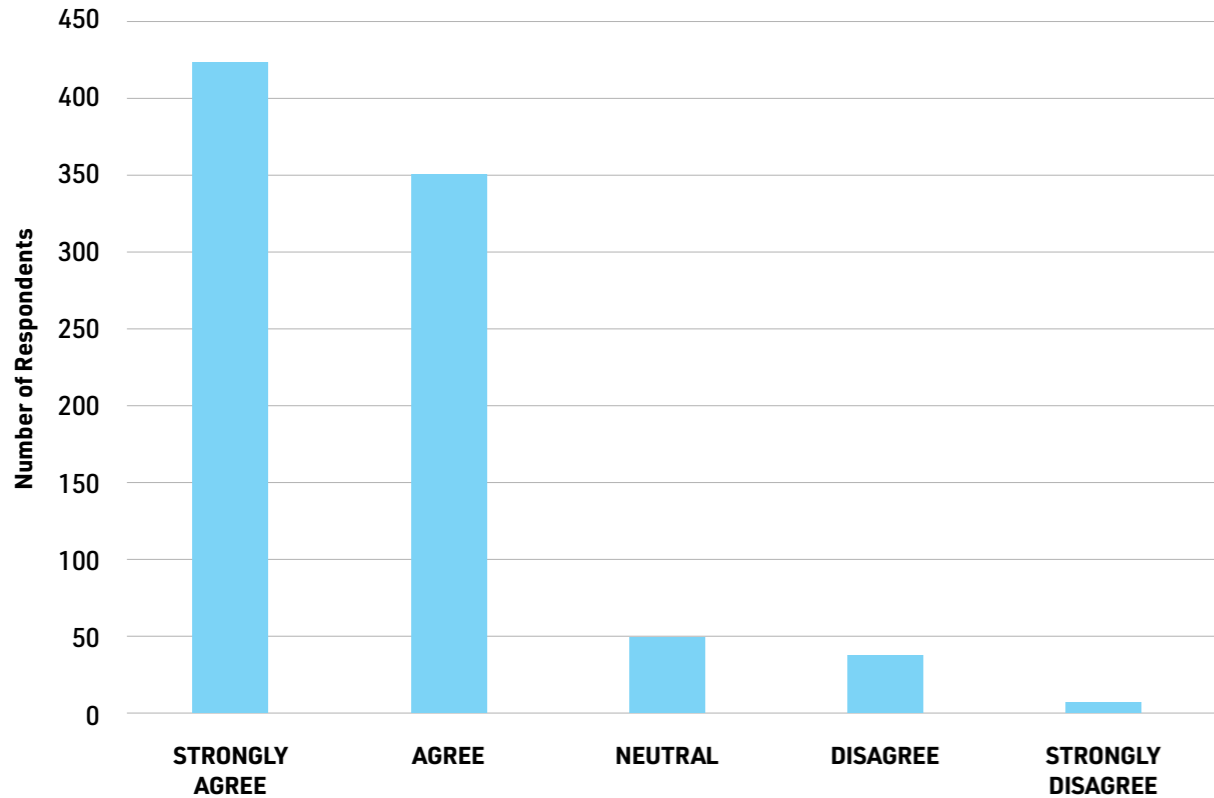
	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	257	310	170	114	22	29	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	29.44%	35.51%	19.47%	13.06%	2.52%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	64.95%	19.47%	15.58%



**Q6 Receiving help from Vinnies reduced by stress and improved my overall well-being**

**FIGURE 8** QUESTION 6 RESPONSE COUNT

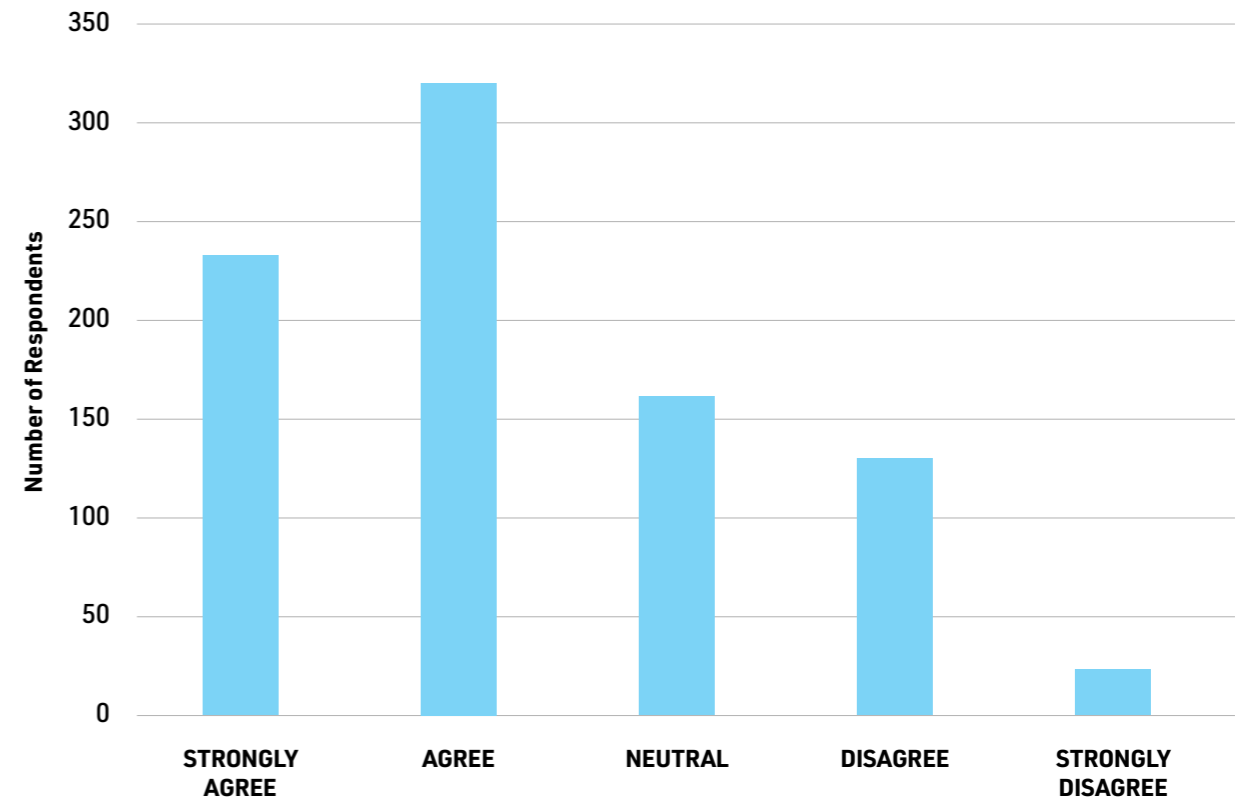


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	424	351	50	38	7	32	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	48.74%	40.34%	5.75%	4.37%	0.80%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	89.08%	5.75%	5.17%

**Q7 In addition to immediate assistance, Vinnies connected me with other support services to help my situation (e.g. counselling, referrals to other local services, information about other places I could get help)**

**FIGURE 9** QUESTION 7 RESPONSE COUNT

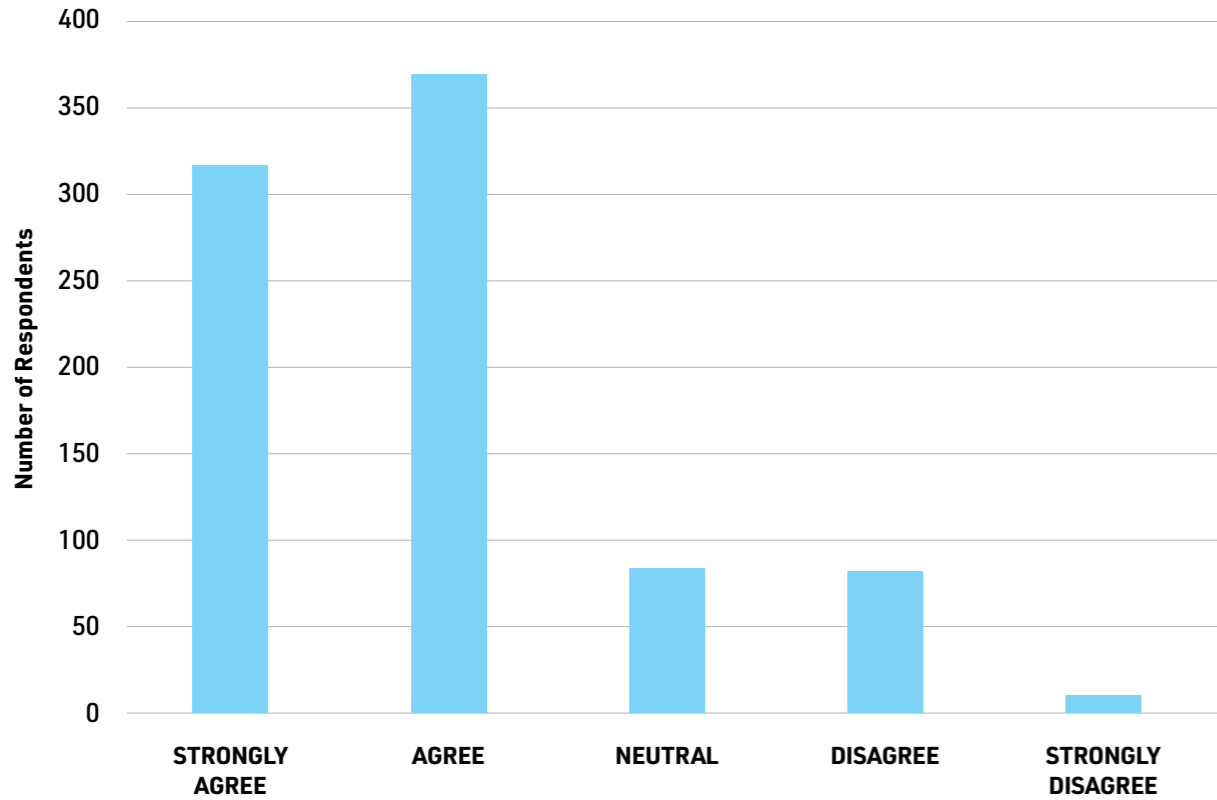


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	232	320	161	130	23	36	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	26.79%	36.95%	18.59%	15.01%	2.66%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	63.74%	18.59%	17.67%

**Q8 I felt listened to and supported in addressing the root cause (whole problem/main issues) of my crisis, not just the immediate problem**

**FIGURE 10** QUESTION 8 RESPONSE COUNT

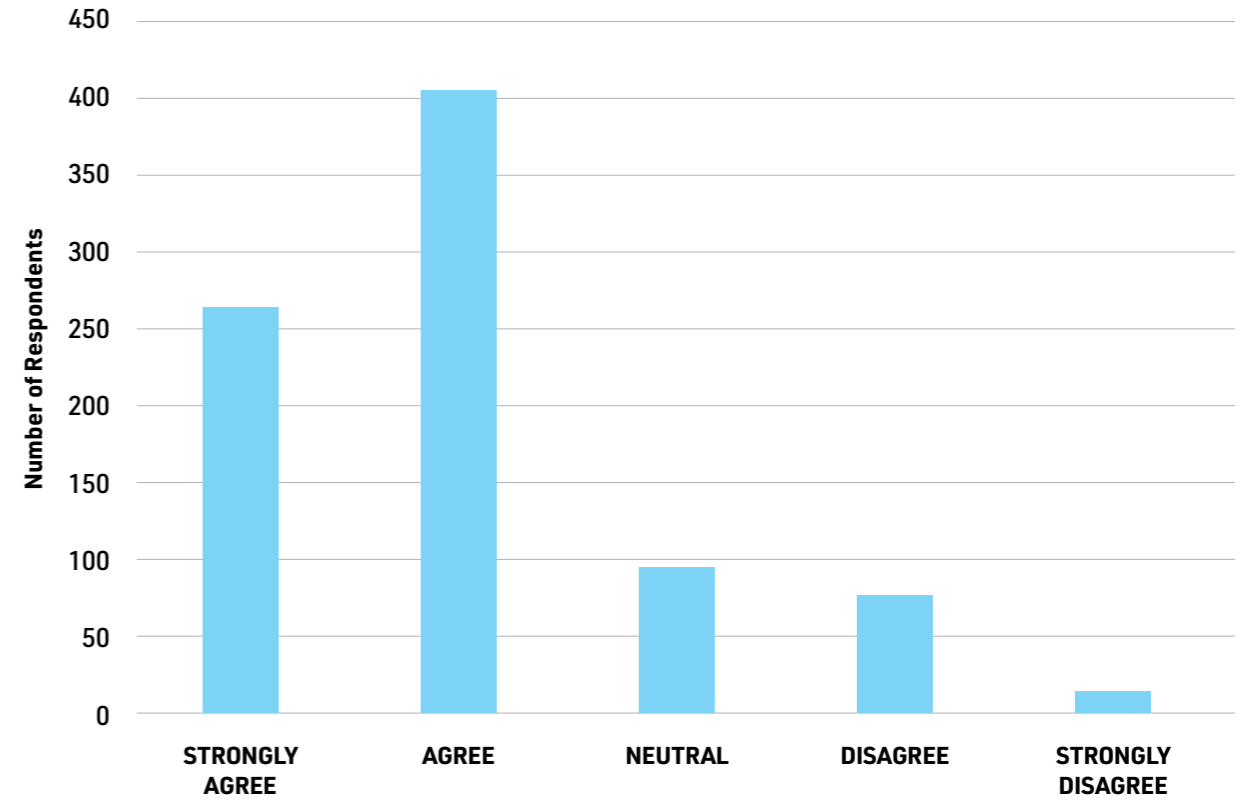


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	317	370	84	82	11	38	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	36.69%	42.82%	9.72%	9.49%	1.27%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	79.51%	9.72%	10.76%

**Q9 Support from Vinnies has helped me to move towards stability and self-sufficiency**

**FIGURE 11** QUESTION 9 RESPONSE COUNT

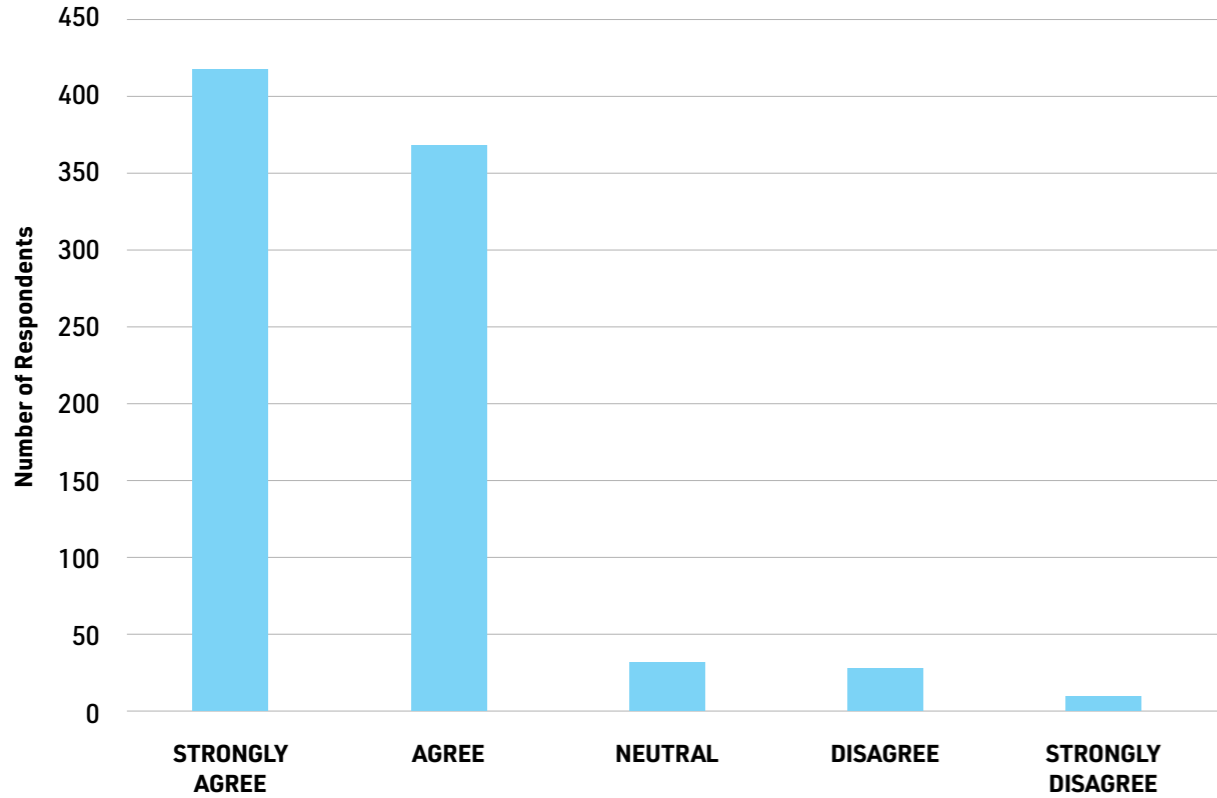


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	265	406	96	77	15	43	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	30.85%	47.26%	11.18%	8.96%	1.75%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	78.11%	11.18%	10.71%

**Q10 Vinnies provided assistance when I needed it the most during a crisis**

**FIGURE 12** QUESTION 10 RESPONSE COUNT

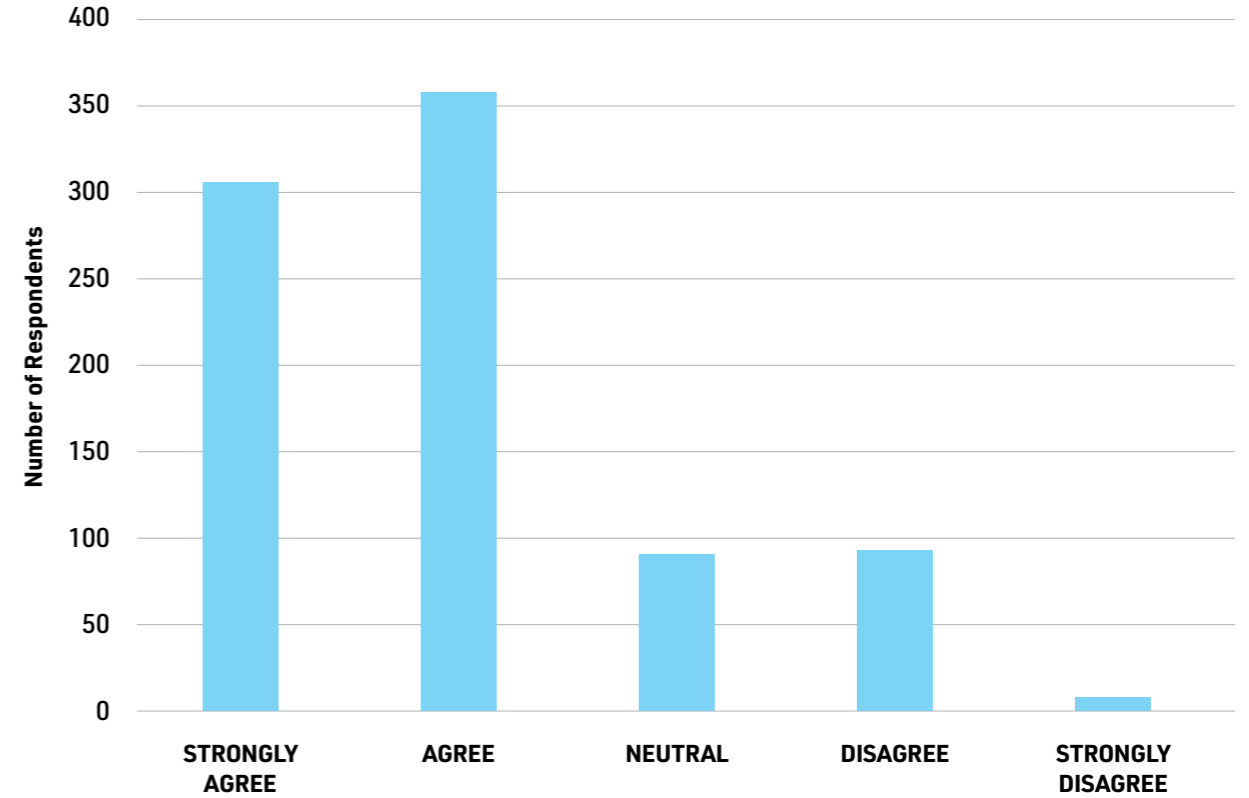


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	418	369	32	29	10	44	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	48.72%	43.01%	3.73%	3.38%	1.17%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	91.72%	3.73%	4.55%

**Q11 Without support from Vinnies, I would not have had another place to turn to for the help I needed**

**FIGURE 13** QUESTION 11 RESPONSE COUNT



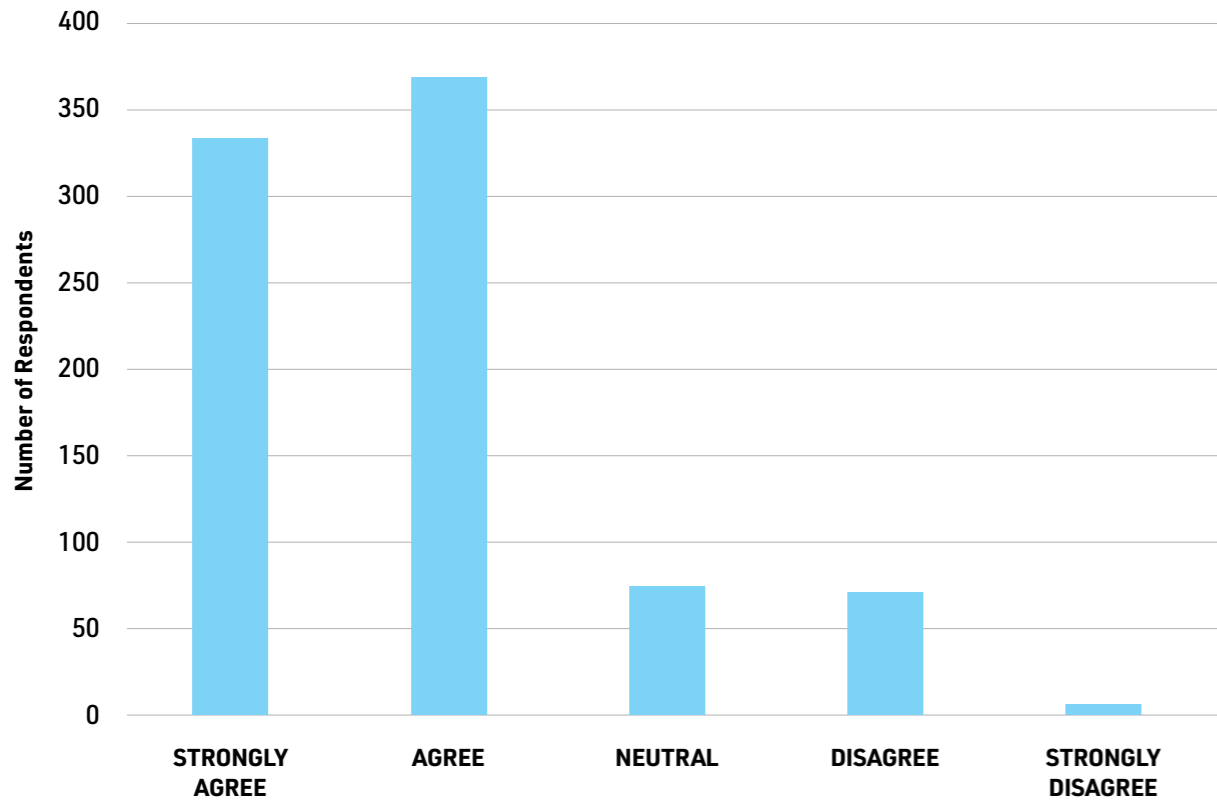
	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	306	358	91	94	8	45	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	35.71%	41.77%	10.62%	10.97%	0.92%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	77.48%	10.62%	11.90%



**Q12 The support provided by Vinnies helped me to avoid a more severe crisis (e.g. eviction from accommodation, severe hunger, energy being cut off)**

**FIGURE 14** QUESTION 12 RESPONSE COUNT

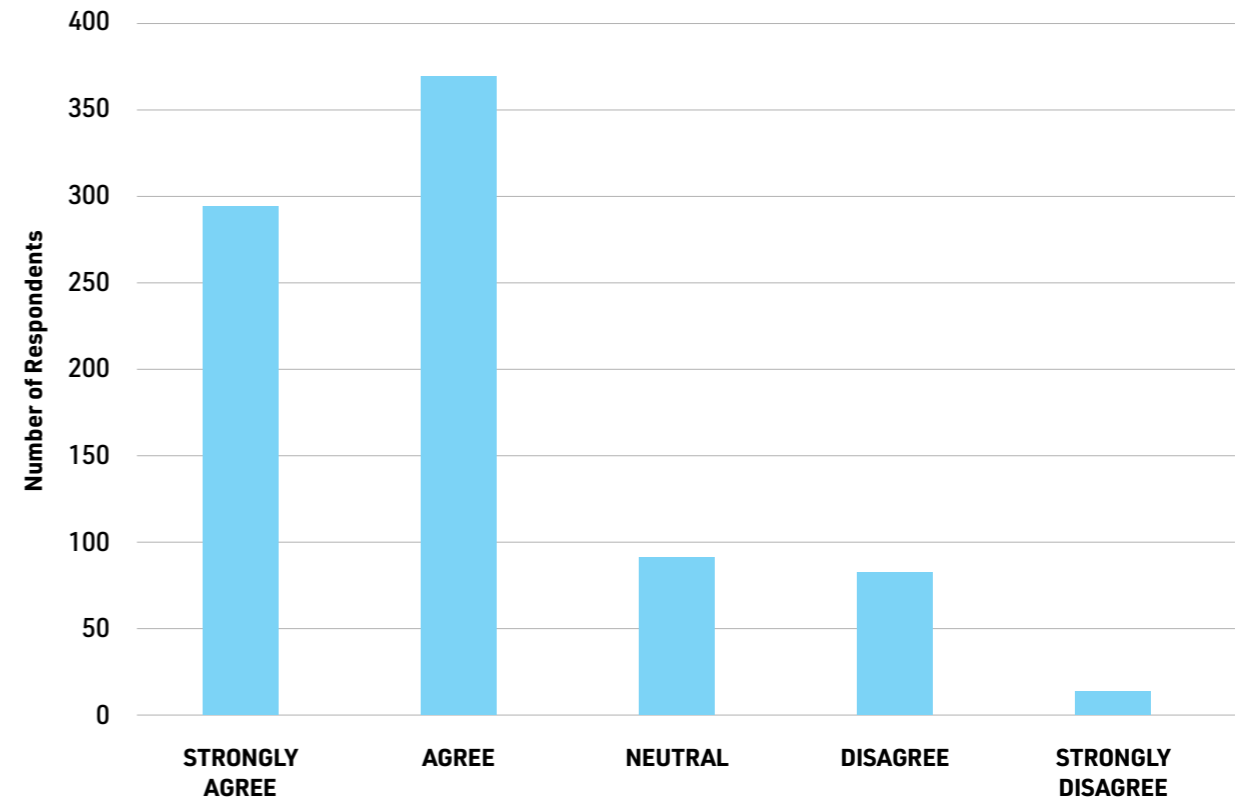


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	335	369	75	71	6	46	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	39.14%	43.11%	8.76%	8.29%	0.70%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	82.24%	8.76%	9.00%

**Q13 The support from Vinnies made a significant difference in my ability to recover from financial hardship**

**FIGURE 15** QUESTION 13 RESPONSE COUNT

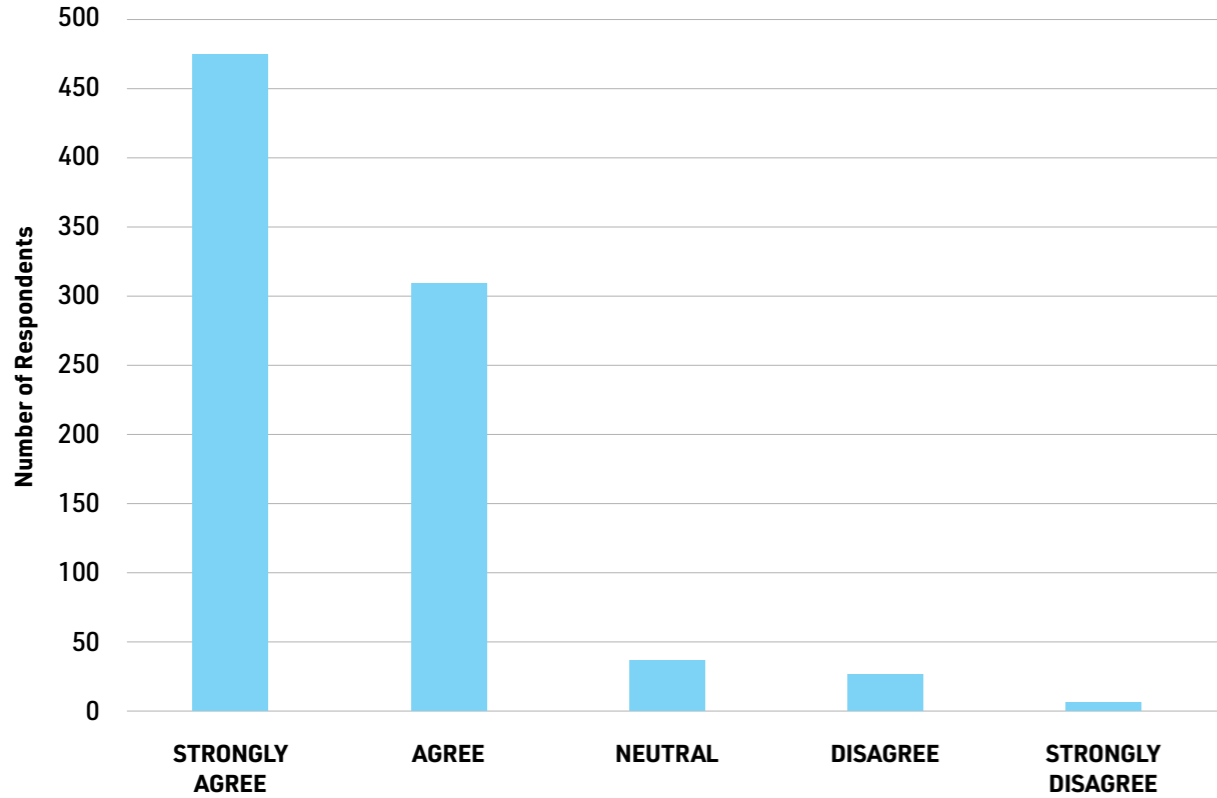


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	295	370	92	83	14	48	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	34.54%	43.33%	10.77%	9.72%	1.64%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	77.87%	10.77%	11.36%

**Q14 Overall, I am satisfied with the help I received from Vinnies**

**FIGURE 16** QUESTION 14 RESPONSE COUNT

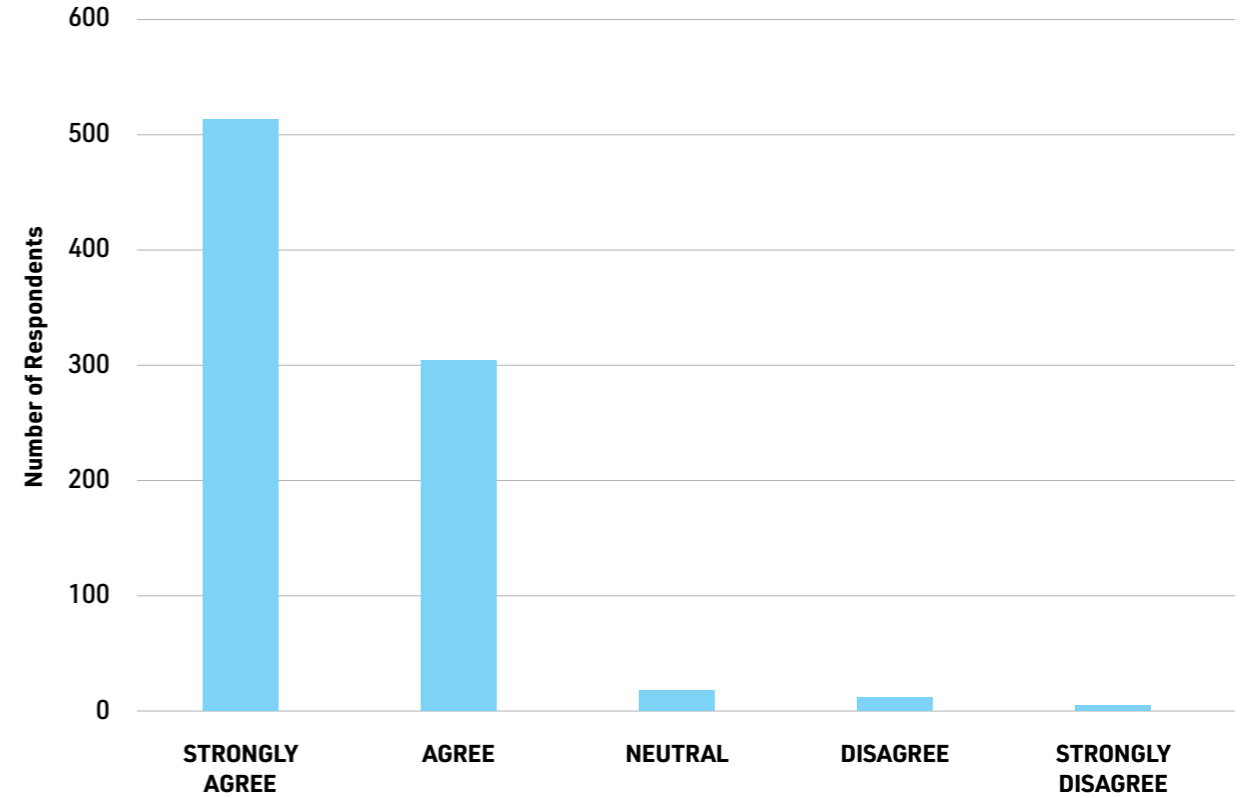


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	476	310	37	27	7	45	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	55.54%	36.17%	4.32%	3.15%	0.82%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	91.72%	4.32%	3.97%

**Q15 I would recommend Vinnies to others in need**

**FIGURE 17** QUESTION 15 RESPONSE COUNT



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
<b>Count</b>	513	305	19	12	6	47	902
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	60.00%	35.67%	2.22%	1.40%	0.70%		100%

	STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE	NEUTRAL	STRONGLY DISAGREE OR DISAGREE
<b>Proportion (of Respondents)</b>	95.67%	2.22%	2.11%

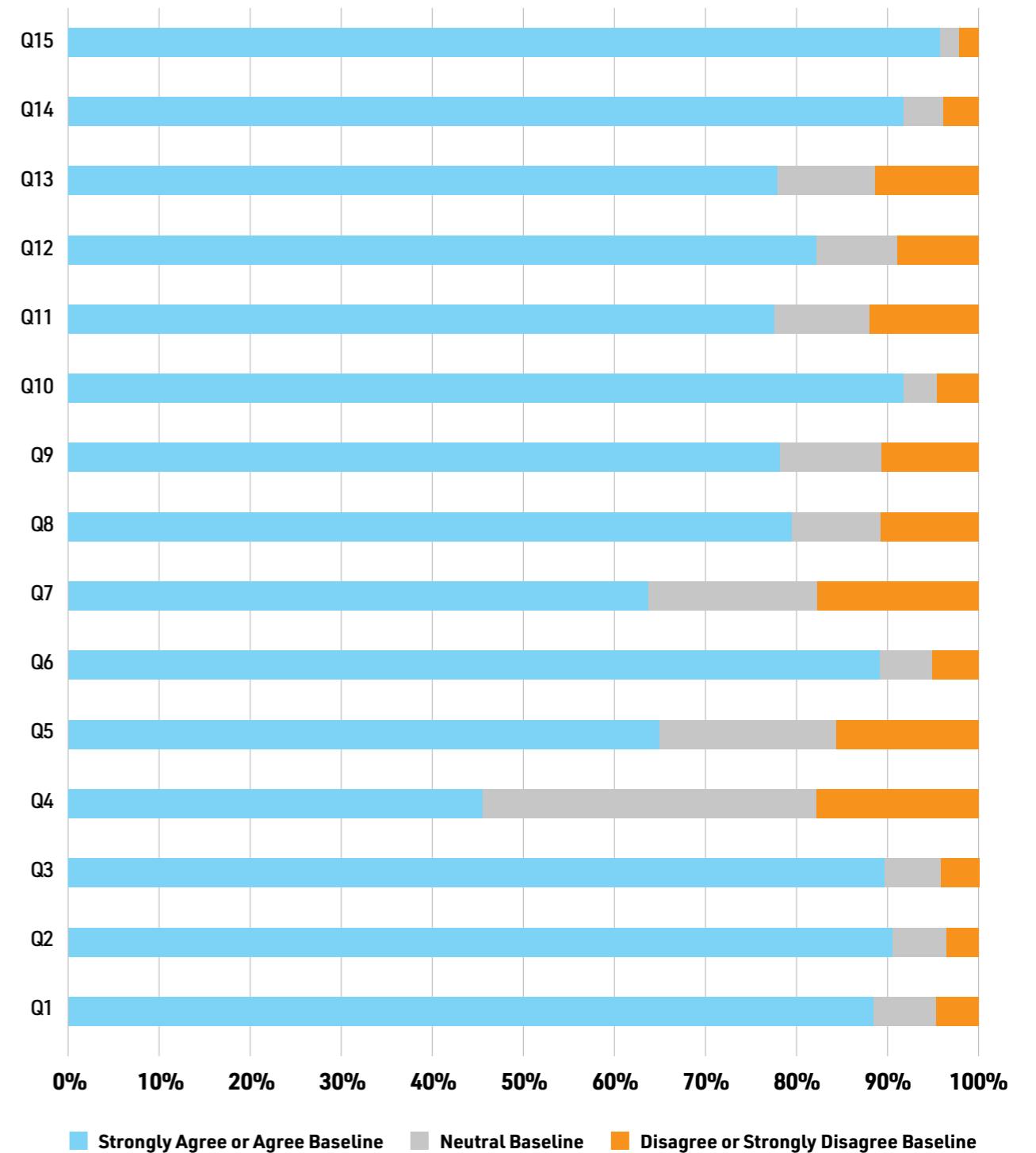
# Part Four: Discussion – Interpreting the Survey Results

## KEY POINTS

- 1** A broad range of demographics responded favourably to the program and demonstrated its efficacy across ages, genders, geographies, ethnicities, and other key demographic indicators.
- 2** While there was overwhelming support for the program, some noted a handful of logistical and administrative barriers to their support.
- 3** The efficacy of a 'wrap around' services model is evident in the findings.

## OVERALL, RECIPIENTS OF THE SOCIETY NSW'S EMERGENCY RELIEF WERE GREATLY SATISFIED

FIGURE 18 SURVEY RESPONSE BREAKDOWN FOR ALL QUESTIONS







**The survey elicited predominantly favourable responses to all 15 prompts.**

On average, across all the questions, 80.4 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the prompt.

The Society NSW’s emergency relief program demonstrates remarkable effectiveness in early intervention and crisis prevention. A substantial majority of respondents (78.1 per cent) feel that the support provided by The Society NSW has significantly aided their progress toward stability and self-sufficiency, indicating the program’s success in addressing needs before they escalate into more severe crises.

This positive feedback highlights The Society NSW’s role in offering timely and relevant assistance that not only alleviates immediate

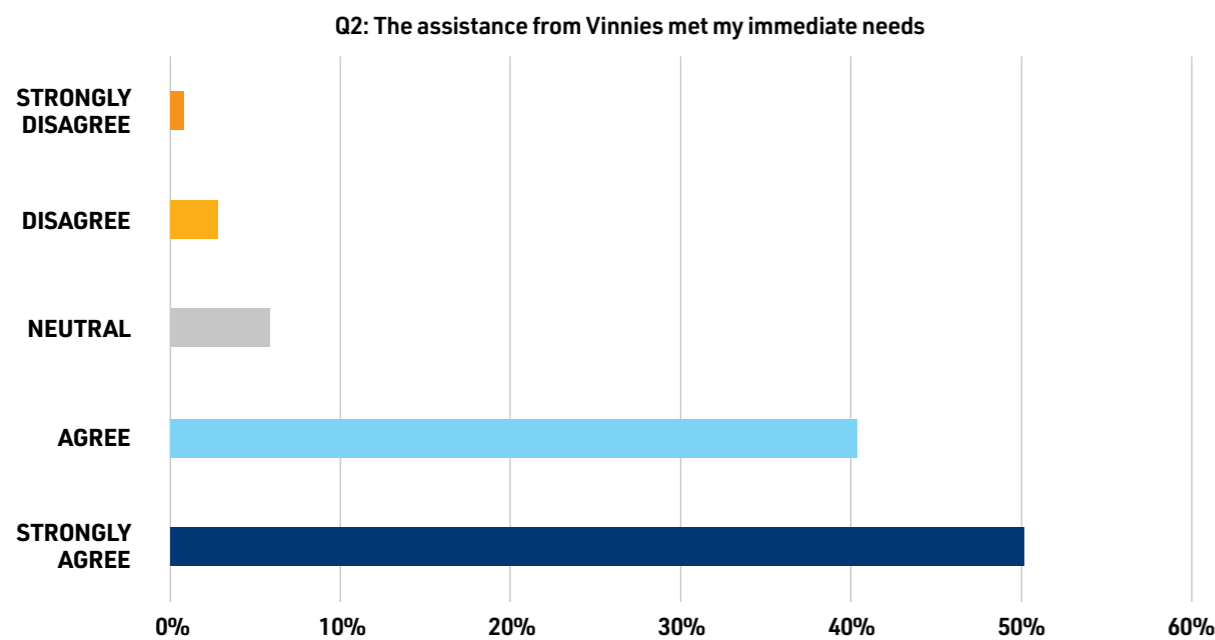
hardships but also fosters long-term resilience. The program’s impact is further underscored by the high levels of satisfaction reported, suggesting that its interventions effectively mitigate the risk of deeper crises and support individuals in navigating challenging situations, thereby enhancing overall community well-being.

“They helped me with moving costs...and provided removalists. Just having them to lean on was a huge help”

- RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 46 YEAR OLD WOMAN

**THE SOCIETY NSW ASSISTANCE SUCCESSFULLY MET IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS**

FIGURE 19 QUESTION 2 RESPONSE PROPORTIONS



The overwhelming majority of respondents expressing satisfaction (i.e. agreement or strong agreement) (88.5 per cent) suggests that The Society NSW is generally effective in addressing the immediate needs of its clientele. **The positive feedback affirms The Society NSW’s effectiveness in meeting immediate needs, reinforcing its reputation as a reliable support provider.** This underscores The Society NSW’s critical role in providing timely and essential support to individuals facing hardship or crisis situations.

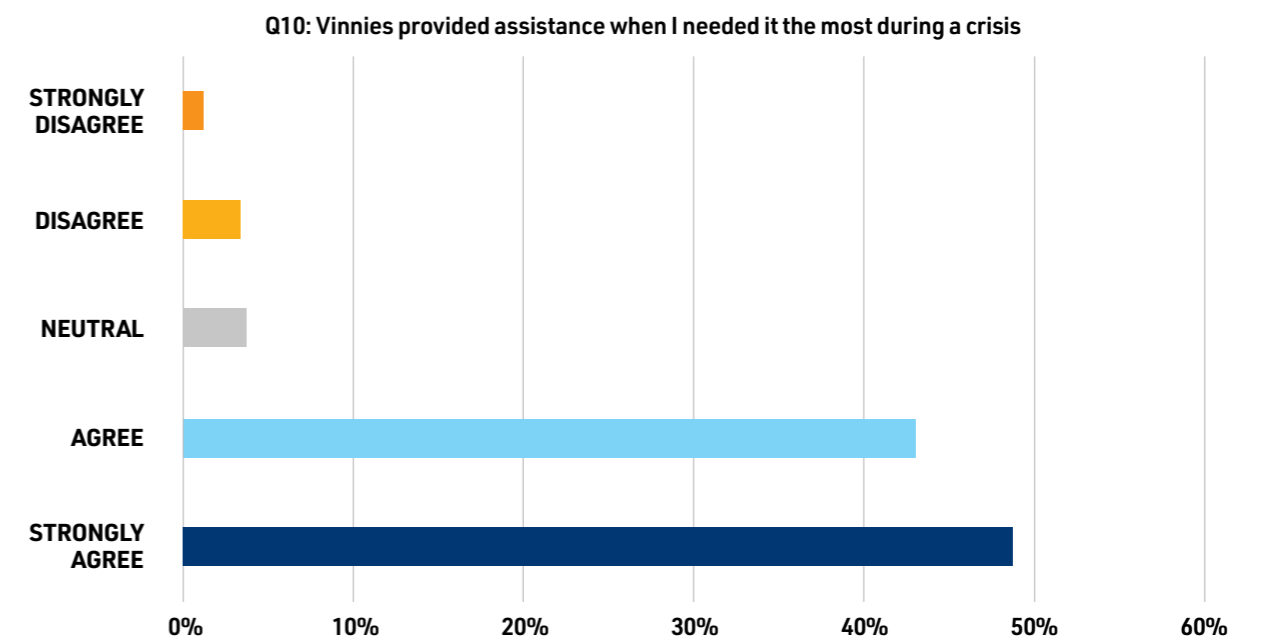
“Every single number I rang, **nobody helped except Vinnies.** So, it was just really overwhelming because, you know, people just think it’s so easy to get support, and it wasn’t...”

- RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 46 YEAR OLD WOMAN

While satisfaction levels are high, specifically addressing concerns from those who expressed neutral or negative sentiments (11.5 per cent combined) may be necessary for continuous improvement. This includes understanding reasons for dissatisfaction or neutrality and implementing strategies to enhance service delivery and responsiveness.

**THE SOCIETY NSW PROVIDES CRUCIAL ASSISTANCE DURING CRISES**

FIGURE 20 QUESTION 10 RESPONSE PROPORTIONS





The survey results indicate that a substantial majority of respondents (91.7 per cent) either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that The Society NSW provided assistance when they needed it the most during a crisis. Specifically, 48.7 per cent of respondents strongly agreed and 43 per cent agreed. A small proportion of respondents (3.7 per cent) were neutral, while 4.6 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

The data highlights The Society NSW’s critical role in offering timely support to individuals facing crises. It is evident that The Society NSW’s is perceived as a reliable source of aid during urgent times. This overwhelming positive response underscores the organisation’s effectiveness in crisis intervention, providing essential support when it is most needed.

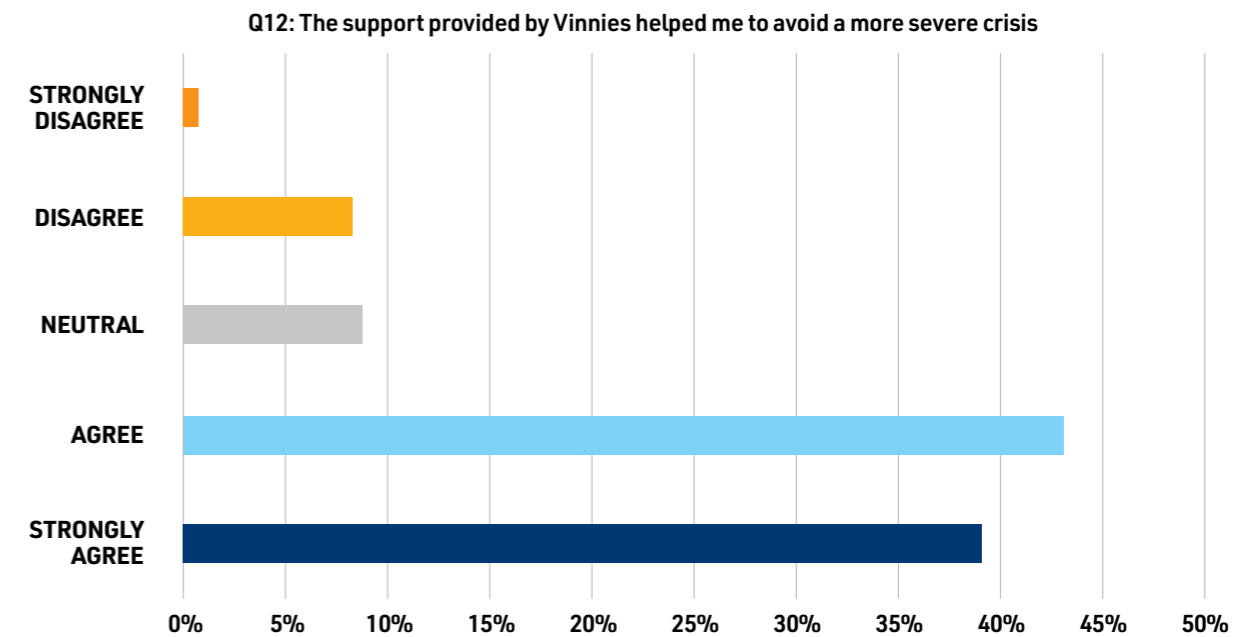
The data suggests that The Society NSW is successful in reaching people at their most vulnerable moments and providing them with the assistance needed to navigate through their crises. This success not only alleviates immediate hardships but also helps prevent further deterioration of the individuals’ situations, which could lead to more severe social and economic issues.

“The people from Vinnies have helped me stay alive. I can’t say that anymore clearly. They’ve helped me to stay alive with some sustenance for basic things, some help when a few bills got totally on top of me.”

– RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 67 YEAR OLD MAN

## THE SOCIETY NSW’S SUPPORT PREVENTS CRISES FROM GETTING WORSE THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

FIGURE 21 QUESTION 12 RESPONSE PROPORTIONS



The overwhelming majority of respondents (82.2 per cent) attest that assistance from **The Society NSW has been pivotal in averting serious crises like eviction or severe hunger, highlighting the organisation’s profound impact in providing stability for vulnerable individuals and families.**

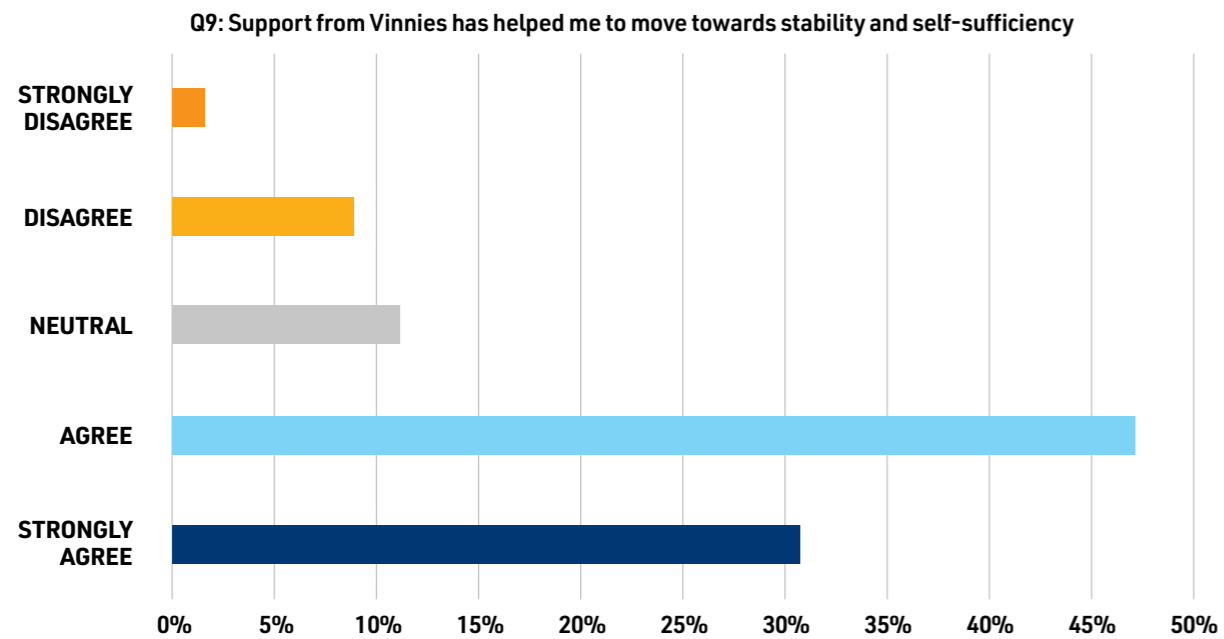
This data underscores the critical importance of The Society NSW’s emergency relief program in early intervention and being able to prevent dire circumstances from getting worse. By intervening early, The Society NSW not only addresses immediate needs but also plays a crucial role in stabilising households and preventing the escalation of crises. This proactive approach not only alleviates immediate pressures but also fosters long-term resilience among beneficiaries, enabling them to navigate challenges more effectively.

The positive feedback from respondents and interviewees shows that The Society NSW has significant community impact and serves as compelling evidence for advocating continued support and resources for its emergency relief initiatives. **Investing in early intervention through The Society NSW can lead to substantial savings in social and economic costs associated with deeper crises, benefiting both individuals and the broader community.**

The Society NSW’s proactive crisis prevention measures not only stabilise individuals and families but also contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities. Advocating for sustained support and recognition of The Society NSW’s early intervention efforts is vital in ensuring continued success in preventing and alleviating hardships for those most in need.

## SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIETY NSW HELPS ACHIEVE STABILITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

FIGURE 22 QUESTION 9 RESPONSE PROPORTIONS



The survey results show that a significant majority of respondents (78.1 per cent) feel that support from The Society NSW has been instrumental in helping them move towards stability and self-sufficiency. Specifically, 30.9 per cent of respondents "Strongly Agree" with this statement, and 47.3 per cent "Agree." In contrast, 11.2 per cent of respondents were neutral, while 10.7 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. This distribution indicates that The Society NSW's support is widely regarded as effective in fostering progress towards stability and self-sufficiency for those in need.

The high proportion of respondents who strongly agree or agree suggests that The Society NSW's support is making a meaningful impact on individuals' journeys towards stability and self-sufficiency. The substantial percentage of those who feel positively about the support indicates that The Society NSW's interventions are well-aligned with the needs of the individuals it serves. The 11.1 per cent who were neutral may represent individuals who, while benefiting from the support,

have not yet reached a point of full stability or self-sufficiency, possibly due to ongoing challenges or barriers in their situations.

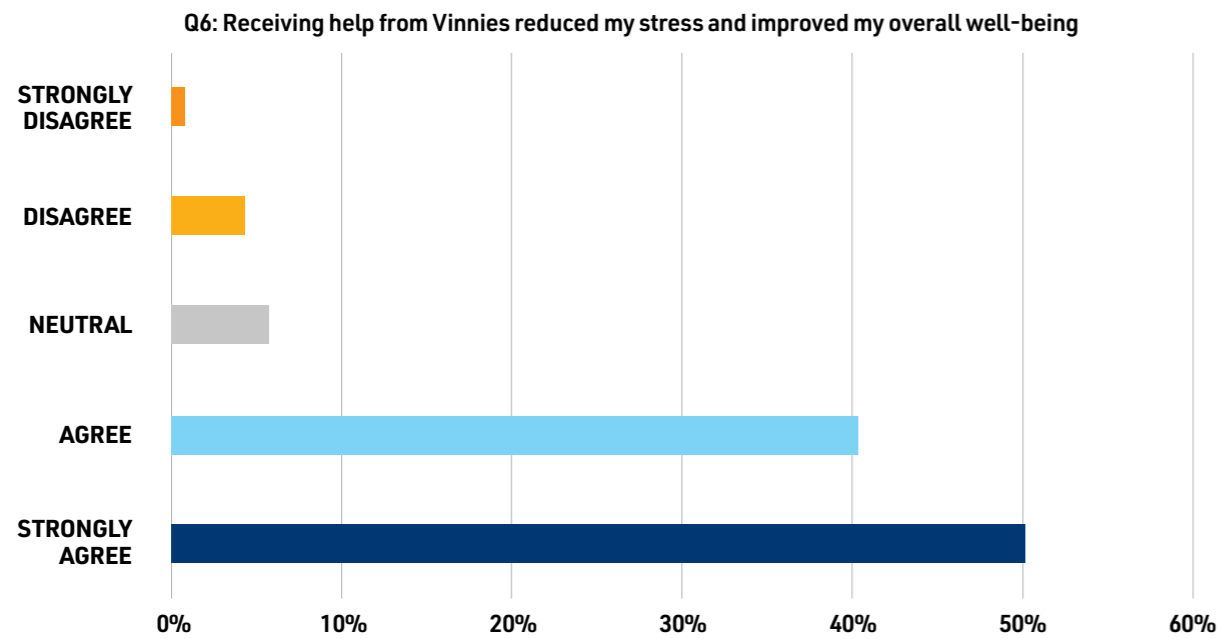
The Society NSW needs continued funding to better support those in need and provide a road toward stability. The 10.7 per cent of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed might have faced issues with the adequacy or relevance of the support provided, highlighting the need for additional resources to enhance and tailor the assistance offered. Increased funding would allow The Society NSW to address these gaps, expand its services, and ensure more comprehensive and effective support for individuals striving for stability and self-sufficiency.

The Society NSW's program is effectively contributing to positive outcomes for many individuals. This success not only aids individuals in overcoming immediate difficulties but also fosters long-term stability and independence, which can have broader social and economic benefits.



## THE SOCIETY NSW'S ASSISTANCE REDUCES STRESS AND ENHANCES WELL-BEING

FIGURE 23 QUESTION 6 RESPONSE PROPORTIONS



The majority of respondents (89.1 per cent) acknowledge that receiving assistance from The Society NSW has positively impacted their stress levels and overall well-being, demonstrating The Society NSW's effectiveness in addressing not only immediate material needs but also the emotional and mental health of its beneficiaries.

While a small portion of respondents expressed neutral (5.8 per cent) or negative sentiments (5.2 per cent), these responses highlight opportunities for The Society NSW to enhance its support services and communication strategies to better meet the holistic needs of beneficiaries. Understanding the underlying reasons behind these perspectives is crucial for The Society NSW to tailor its programs and support mechanisms accordingly.

Continual evaluation and adaptation of services based on feedback are essential for The Society NSW to maintain effectiveness and relevance in addressing the evolving needs of its beneficiaries. This adaptive approach ensures that The Society

NSW remains responsive to the diverse challenges faced by vulnerable populations.

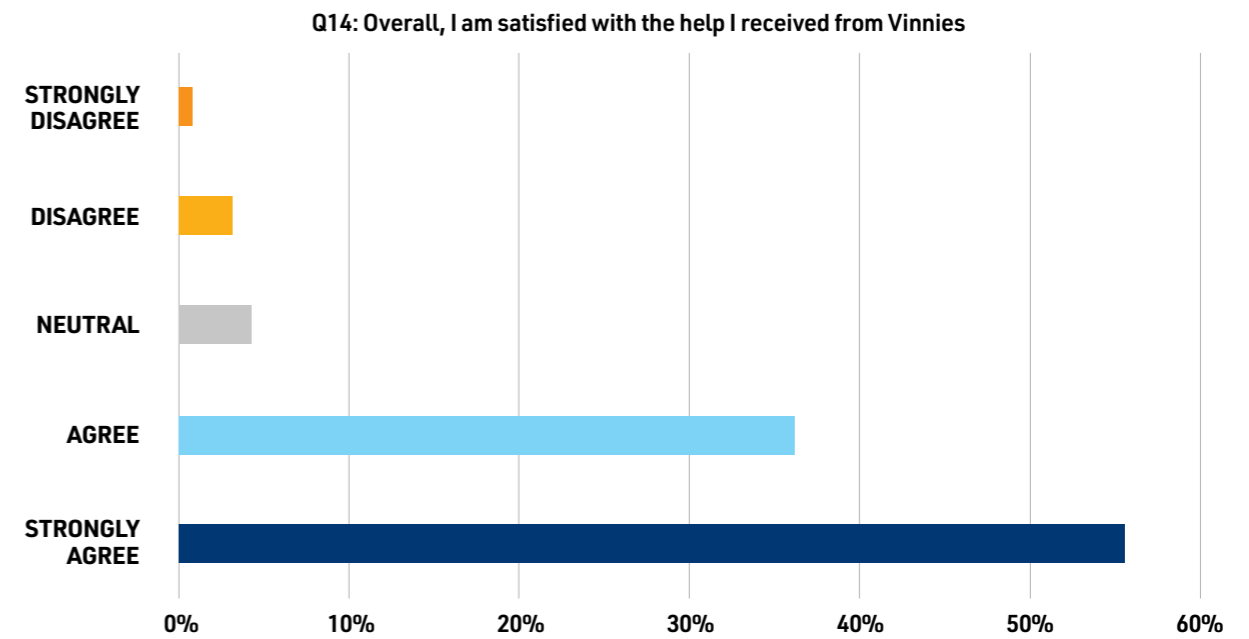
**The data affirms The Society NSW's success in positively influencing the stress levels and overall well-being of its beneficiaries,** highlighting both its strengths and areas for further development. Emphasising holistic support is crucial in effectively addressing the multifaceted needs of individuals and families experiencing hardship.

“When I was sick and couldn't walk after surgery, Vinnies helped with meals. They can't be your hands and feet, but **having their support makes a difference.**”

- RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 46 YEAR OLD WOMAN

## RESPONDENTS WERE OVERWHELMINGLY SATISFIED WITH THE HELP THEY RECEIVED FROM THE SOCIETY NSW

FIGURE 24 QUESTION 14 RESPONSE PROPORTIONS



The overwhelming majority of respondents (91.7 per cent) express satisfaction with the assistance provided by The Society NSW, underscoring the organisation's effectiveness in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of its beneficiaries. This high satisfaction rate serves as compelling evidence of The Society NSW's capability to deliver impactful support, fostering stability and resilience among vulnerable individuals and families.

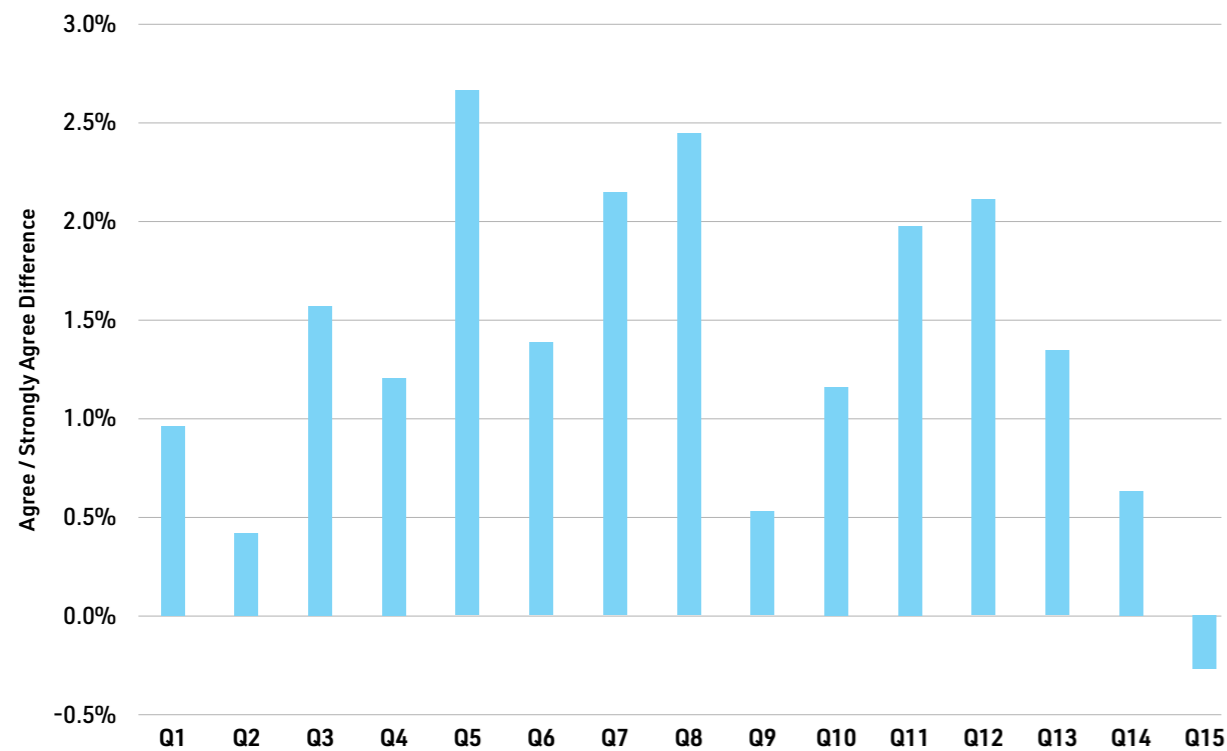
By intervening early, The Society NSW not only addresses immediate crises but also plays a pivotal role in preventing further hardships such as eviction, severe hunger, or utility cutoffs. This proactive approach not only alleviates immediate pressures but also contributes to long-term stability and well-being among its beneficiaries.

**The high satisfaction levels among beneficiaries highlight the program's success in meeting immediate needs and fostering positive outcomes.**

- **Early Intervention:** By addressing needs early, The Society NSW mitigates the escalation of crises, reducing social and economic costs associated with deeper hardships.
- **Community Impact:** Positive feedback reinforces The Society NSW's significant community impact, encouraging continued support and engagement from stakeholders.
- **Resilience Building:** Support from The Society NSW not only stabilises individuals and families but also promotes resilience, enabling beneficiaries to overcome challenges and thrive.

## REGIONAL AUSTRALIANS' POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH THE SOCIETY NSW

FIGURE 25 REGIONAL RESPONDENTS AGREE / STRONGLY AGREE DIFFERENCE FROM BASELINE



The survey results indicate that regional Australians consistently show higher agreement rates compared to the general sample across various questions related to The Society NSW's support services.

Regional Australians demonstrate a stronger agreement (+1.21 per cent) that The Society NSW's support helps keep food on the table for themselves and their families. This reflects the organisation's effective role in addressing food insecurity specifically in regional communities, where economic challenges may be more pronounced. Regional respondents also show a higher agreement (+1.39 per cent) that The Society NSW's support aids in covering living expenses and

maintaining housing stability. This highlights the organisation's success in preventing homelessness and supporting housing security among regional beneficiaries.

Regional Australians' higher agreement rates likely stem from several factors specific to their communities:

- **Community Integration:** The Society NSW's embeddedness in regional communities facilitates greater trust and understanding of local needs, enhancing service accessibility and relevance.
- **Comprehensive Support:** The organisation's ability to provide wrap-around services,



es, including referrals and counselling (Q7), and addressing root causes of crises (Q8), resonates more profoundly in regional contexts where resources may be scarcer.

- **Crisis Prevention:** The Society NSW's proactive crisis response (Q10 and Q12) appears more effective in regional areas, helping individuals avoid severe crises like eviction or utility cutoffs, thus stabilising households and fostering resilience.

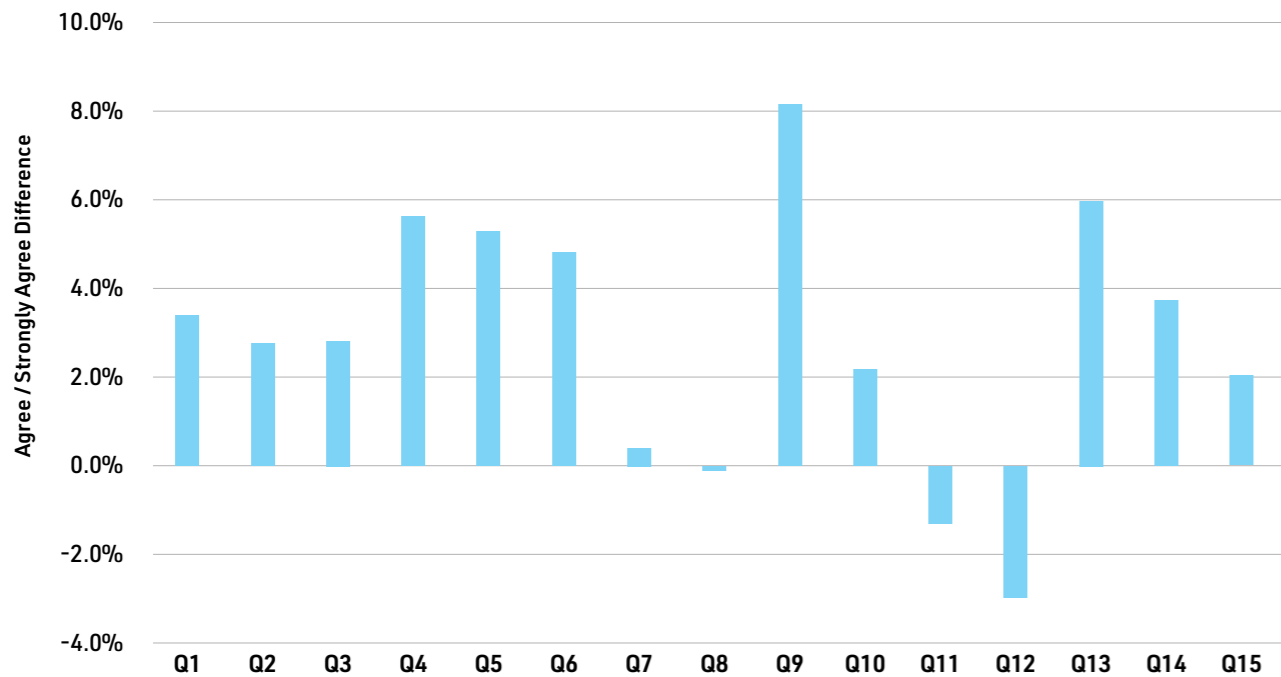
First Nations Australians, who are disproportionately represented in regional communities, may benefit from tailored outreach and support strategies similar to those highlighted for regional Australians.

Their inclusion in regional analyses provides insights into culturally appropriate service delivery and support mechanisms.

The positive deviations in agreement rates among regional Australians show The Society NSW's effective support strategies tailored to regional contexts. Continued investment in localised service delivery and comprehensive support programs is crucial to maintaining high satisfaction levels and addressing unique challenges faced by regional and First Nations communities. The Society NSW's success in enhancing well-being, preventing crises, and fostering community resilience highlights its integral role in Australia's social support landscape.

## OLDER RESPONDENTS WERE PARTICULARLY SATISFIED WITH THE ASSISTANCE THEY RECEIVED

FIGURE 26 RESPONDENTS AGED 64-92 AGREE / STRONGLY AGREE DIFFERENCE FROM BASELINE



The data presented indicates a high level of satisfaction among The Society NSW's beneficiaries, with a particularly positive experience noted among older Australians aged 65-92. This analysis aims to highlight the overall effectiveness of The Society NSW's services and advocate for continued and enhanced support for their Emergency Relief program, linking these results to early intervention and crisis prevention strategies.

Older Australians found accessing support from The Society NSW slightly easier, with a 3.38 per cent higher rate of Strongly Agree/Agree responses compared to the general sample.

Older Australians report a higher satisfaction with The Society NSW's immediate assistance, particularly in helping with essential needs like food, bills, and housing. This indicates that The Society NSW's services are particularly

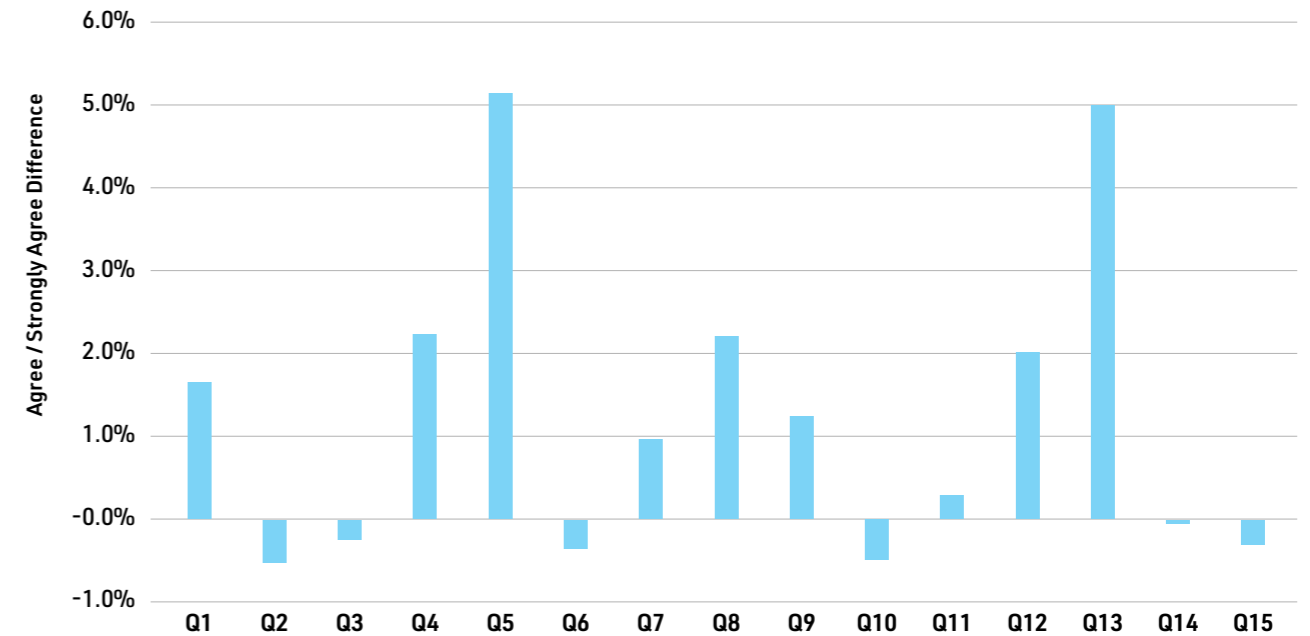
effective for this demographic in providing essential support.

The significant positive differences in stress reduction and overall well-being highlight the broader impact of The Society NSW's services on older Australians. Although the connection to other support services shows minimal difference, the substantial improvement in stability and self-sufficiency demonstrates The Society NSW's role in providing holistic support.

The data indicates that older Australians particularly value The Society NSW's crisis intervention services. Despite slight negative differences in Q11 and Q12, the overall positive impact on avoiding severe crises and recovering from financial hardship highlights The Society NSW's critical role in crisis prevention and intervention for older Australians.

## THOSE WITH DISABILITIES ARE TOP BENEFICIARIES OF THE SOCIETY NSW'S IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

FIGURE 27 RESPONDENTS ON DISABILITY SUPPORT PENSION AGREE / STRONGLY AGREE DIFFERENCE FROM BASELINE



The survey results revealed that disabled Australians were disproportionately represented among The Society NSW's clientele. Of the 902 respondents, 233 (25.8 per cent) reported the Disability Support Pension (DSP) as their primary income source. This compares with only 3.7 per cent of the general Australian population aged 16 and over and underscores both the hardship and heightened demand from the disability community, but equally also the crucial role that The Society NSW play in supporting this vulnerable community.

While respondents on the DSP reported greater levels of satisfaction across most of the 15 survey questions, their high levels of satisfaction across Questions 5 and 13 particularly stand out.

65.0 per cent of the general sample expressed agreement or strong agreement with Question 5, namely that the support from The Society NSW 'allowed me to cover my living expenses/helped keep me in a home'. Conversely, 70.1 per cent of

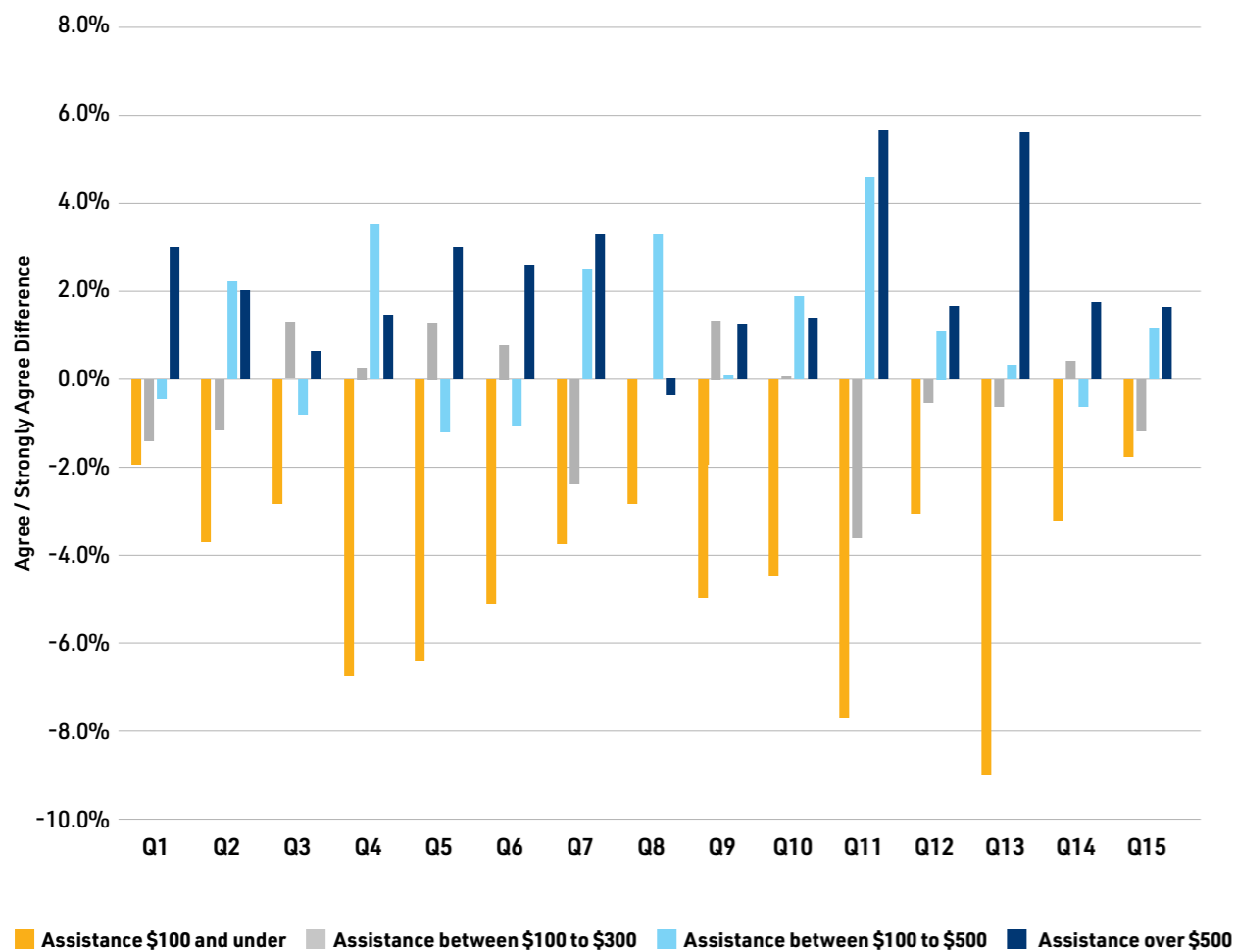
respondents on the DSP expressed agreement or strong agreement—a differential of over five per cent.

Similarly, 77.9 per cent of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with Question 13, that the support from Vinnies made a significant difference in my ability to recover from financial hardship. DSP recipients an agreement or strong agreement of almost 82.9 per cent—a differential of exactly five per cent.

The disproportionate satisfaction with these two questions reveals a particularly noteworthy finding: that respondents on the DSP disproportionately and strongly felt that assistance from the Society NSW helped improve and/or stabilise their situation. As disabled Australians have much lower rates of labour force participation and are much more likely to be in or at risk of poverty, the value of The Society NSW's steadying influence truly cannot be overstated.

## LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCES EXPERIENCE WITH THE SOCIETY NSW

**FIGURE 28** INCREASING VALUE OF ASSISTANCE, AGREE / STRONGLY AGREE DIFFERENCE FROM BASELINE FROM \$100 TO OVER \$500



One of the most significant findings of this analysis is the positive correlation between the total value of assistance received and the overall experience with The Society NSW. The data reveals an almost linear relationship, indicating that as the amount of assistance increases, so does the likelihood of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the survey questions.

Although this finding may appear straightforward and predictable, it highlights the critical importance of The Society NSW's support. It also shows that individuals are experiencing substantial hardship and that increased assistance from The Society NSW directly enhances their experience. Consequently, it is worth emphasising that the more support The Society NSW provides, the greater the positive impact on those in need.



To better understand the impact of different levels of financial assistance on respondents' experiences with The Society NSW it is illustrative to compare the two extremes: \$100 and under and assistance over \$500.

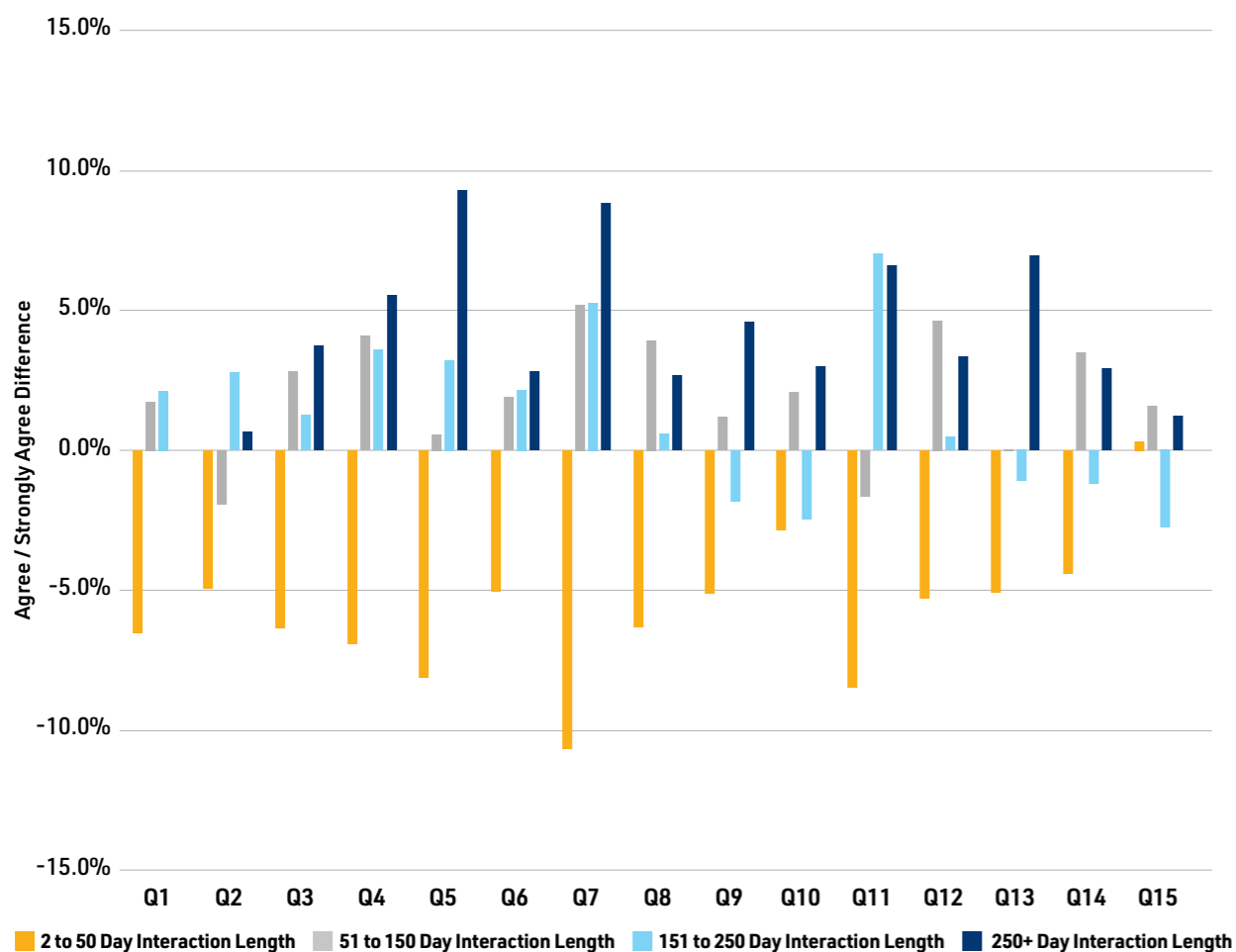
The analysis of the agree / strongly agree proportions between these groups indicates a stark contrast between the experiences of those who received minimal assistance and those who received more substantial assistance. Those receiving \$100 and under exhibit consistently negative differences across all questions, suggesting lesser degrees of satisfaction. In contrast, those receiving over

\$500 show positive differences, indicating a better experience.

This pattern highlights a significant finding: higher levels of financial assistance are associated with better experiences and higher satisfaction levels among recipients. This correlation supports the hypothesis that increased assistance from The Society NSW can substantially improve the well-being of individuals in need. This finding is not only predictable but also fundamentally important in demonstrating the tangible benefits of greater support.

## EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SOCIETY NSW RESULTS IN MORE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

**FIGURE 29** INCREASING LENGTH OF INTERACTION, AGREE / STRONGLY AGREE DIFFERENCE FROM BASELINE FROM 2 TO 50 DAY INTERACTION LENGTH TO 250+ DAY INTERACTION LENGTH



The data highlights the relationship between longer interactions and increased satisfaction levels. While potential self-selection bias exists—where individuals with positive experiences are more likely to continue their engagement with The Society NSW—the overall trend remains clear: longer interactions correlate with higher agreement levels.

This sub-section will focus on three specific questions to provide a more detailed analysis:

➤ **Question 5 (Q5):** ‘The support from The Society NSW allowed me to cover my living expenses/helped keep me in housing/ in a home.’

➤ **Question 6 (Q6):** ‘Receiving help from The Society NSW reduced my stress and improved my overall well-being.’

➤ **Question 7 (Q7):** In addition to immediate assistance, The Society NSW connected me with other support services to help my situation (e.g., counselling, referrals to other local services, information about other places I could get help).

For 2-50 day interactions, For Q5 to Q7, the average difference is -7.97 per cent, indicating a significantly lower satisfaction level compared to the general sample. For 250+ days, the average difference is 7.67 per cent, showing a significantly higher satisfaction level compared to the general sample. This demonstrates that longer interactions with The Society NSW are associated with a higher propensity to strongly agree or agree with statements regarding the assistance received. This trend is particularly evident in the responses to questions about financial support, stress reduction, and connection to other services.

This also indicates that intervening in a crisis is often not a “one and done” activity. Trust builds over time and with additional interactions, allowing The Society NSW to better assist people toward stability. As clients continue to receive support, they become more comfortable and confident in the services provided, which facilitates a deeper level of engagement and a stronger rapport. Longer periods of engagement enable The Society NSW to provide more tailored and comprehensive support, addressing not just immediate needs but also underlying issues. This sustained involvement significantly enhances the likelihood of achieving long-term positive outcomes, helping individuals move from crisis to stability and independence.

It is important to consider the potential for self-selection bias. Individuals who have positive experiences with The Society NSW are more likely to continue their interactions, resulting in a higher proportion of satisfied respondents in the longer interaction cohort. Conversely, those with negative experiences might discontinue their engagement early, which could explain the lower satisfaction levels in the 2-50 day interaction group. The omission of the 1-day interaction cohort, where single interactions might not fully represent the quality of The Society NSW’s support, helps to strengthen the observed relationship.

The analysis reinforces the notion that extended interactions with The Society NSW lead to more positive outcomes and higher satisfaction levels among recipients. Specifically, substantial increases in agreement with statements related to covering living expenses, reducing stress, and connecting to other support services underscore the value of prolonged support. By emphasising the importance of continuous support, The Society NSW can better address the needs of individuals facing hardship, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful assistance.



# Conclusion

## KEY POINTS

- 1 Sustained support leads to higher satisfaction, showing that trust builds over longer periods of engagement, allowing The Society NSW to understand clients' needs more deeply and provide personalised, effective assistance that fosters stability and self-sufficiency.**
- 2 Logistical and Administrative Barriers Exist. Some clients face logistical and administrative obstacles, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure, resource allocation, and continued investment in The Society NSW.**
- 3 The wrap-around service model is crucial for addressing immediate needs and fostering long-term stability and well-being, enhancing the overall impact of The Society NSW's programs.**

## EARLY INTERVENTION HAS CLEAR BENEFITS

The findings of this study emphasise the significant impact of The Society NSW's emergency relief programs on individuals facing hardship. The data consistently shows that longer interactions with The Society NSW lead to more favourable responses, highlighting the critical role of sustained support. Recipients who engage with The Society NSW for extended periods report higher satisfaction levels, particularly in areas such as financial assistance, stress reduction, and connection to additional support services.

## SOME RESPONDENTS CITED LOGISTICAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS TO PROMPT SUPPORT

However, some logistical and administrative obstacles, as well as limited funding and resources, occasionally hinder the full alleviation of clients' immediate emergency relief needs. These challenges highlight the necessity for continued investment and improvement in The Society NSW's infrastructure and resource allocation to ensure comprehensive support for all clients.

## THE USE OF 'WRAP AROUND SERVICES' IS CRITICAL

The research emphasises the importance of The Society NSW's wrap-around service model. By offering comprehensive and continuous support, The Society NSW not only addresses immediate needs but also facilitates longer-term stability and well-being for those they assist. The dual role of

The Society NSW's program as both an early intervention and a crisis response mechanism further enhances its effectiveness. It provides timely aid during critical moments while also offering ongoing support that fosters resilience and self-sufficiency.

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“They'll go with you to appointments, take you to doctor's appointments... they even did shopping for me when I broke my leg...When you get into a situation like that, you end up getting depression, anxiety, stress, especially when I had children...They were great with that.”

- RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 50 YEAR OLD WOMAN

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The evidence suggests that increasing the duration and depth of engagement with The Society NSW can significantly enhance the positive outcomes for recipients. It is imperative that The Society NSW continues to develop and expand its wrap-around services, ensuring that individuals receive the necessary support to navigate crises and build a more stable future. By doing so, The Society NSW can amplify its impact and contribute to the overall well-being of the communities it serves.

# Appendix One: Methodology & Survey Design

This report draws on data collected using mixed methods, including surveys, semi-structured interviews, desktop research, and database analysis. For this project, consultations were held with The Society NSW, whose extensive experience running the program and ongoing relationship with their clients facilitated effective engagement with respondents, utilising an appropriate tone and vocabulary.

## CODE OF ETHICS

In adherence to the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research 2018, the Mckell Institute ensured rigorous ethical standards were observed throughout the research process.

Our commitment to ethical research encompasses several fundamental principles and responsibilities that guide our practices and conduct.

We uphold integrity by presenting information truthfully and accurately throughout all stages of research, from proposal to reporting. Our research is grounded in meticulous attention to detail and robust methodology, aimed at minimising biases and ensuring reliable outcomes. We promote openness and accountability by openly sharing research methodology, data, and findings, and by managing conflicts of interest responsibly.

We treat fellow researchers and all involved parties with fairness, respect, and acknowledgement of their contributions. Proper referencing and crediting of others' work is integral to our research ethics. We strive to minimise any adverse impacts of our research activities.

We recognise and respect the unique cultural heritage, knowledge, and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Engagement with these communities is conducted with sensitivity, ensuring their informed consent and involvement in research processes. We adhere to relevant legislation, policies, and guidelines, ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources and considering the implications of our research prior to dissemination.

We actively promote a culture of responsible research conduct, fostering an environment that supports ethical practices and continuous learning. Our institutional practices support these principles by establishing and maintaining governance frameworks that ensure compliance with ethical standards and legal requirements. Researchers uphold ethical standards by actively supporting a culture of integrity and responsibility within their institutions and fields.

Through these principles and responsibilities, we affirm our commitment to conducting research that is ethical, transparent, and beneficial to society at large.

## SURVEY RESEARCH

Survey research describes and interprets current conditions, relationships, practices, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, influences, and emerging trends. It focuses on what exists and what we aim to achieve, determining the present status and the relationships between variables. According to Kerlinger,<sup>7</sup> survey research examines both large and small populations by selecting and studying samples from these populations to uncover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables. In social research, surveys typically use samples from a specified target population to shed light on important social issues.<sup>8</sup>

Critics of surveys often draw on the same issues, such as: people interpret questions in various ways, respondents might feel compelled to give responses that seem unnatural to them, lack the opportunity to clarify their answers or explain their opinions in detail, and/or might think they've already addressed the question when the interviewer asks additional related questions.<sup>9</sup> Despite these issues, standardised questionnaires are indispensable for large-scale surveys. Without consistent wording, order of questions, and uniform instructions for interviewers, researchers wouldn't be able to measure or control response effects, would face an unacceptable number of unclassifiable responses, and would be overwhelmed by the volume of unique responses. Therefore, the researcher

faces the challenge of designing a standardised instrument that not only meets data requirements but is also clear and accessible so that every respondent understands the intent of each question and is willing and able to answer.<sup>10</sup>

## ADDRESSING SURVEY RESEARCH CHALLENGES

Dealing with these issues involves considering the population, ensuring an updated and accurate list, selecting an appropriate sampling method, choosing the sample, ensuring the sample's accessibility, and understanding sub-issues like literacy, language, cooperation, and geographic restrictions related to the sample for effective survey application.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, researchers must also account for the natural human instinct to hold certain beliefs about an issue or event. These beliefs can introduce biases and prejudices into the research. It is essential to exercise caution to keep the research free from personal bias and to avoid revealing these biases, either directly or indirectly, to the study subjects.<sup>12</sup>

To ensure consistent interpretation of rating scales, we labelled all options with words instead of numbers and ensured that the range of options covered all points on the underlying continuum. To optimally measure unipolar constructs, we used five-point response scales. When selecting words, we chose those that are frequently used in popular discourse, have few letters and syllables, have a single primary definition, and are easy to pronounce.

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In the semi-structured interviews conducted, participants engaged in discussions guided by a flexible script or interview guide that covered various topics. This format allows interviewees ample freedom to introduce and pursue their own perspectives and narratives. They were at liberty to articulate their experiences in their own words without being constrained by a strict set of questions posed by the interviewer.

## SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Both metropolitan and regional recipients were surveyed, with the interviewees selected based on the recommendations of The Society NSW employees involved with the program. In total, over 900 emergency relief recipients were surveyed, and three follow up semi-interviews were conducted.

The data for the survey will be drawn from The Society NSW's database, CAMS. Of the 35,000 individuals The Society NSW assisted over the past 12 months, a sample of 5,000 participants was selected. These participants have previously provided their details and given consent to be contacted by The Society NSW for future research purposes. The sample was drawn at random and covered a diverse mix of regions, genders, ages, ethnicities, and social backgrounds to ensure the representativeness sample.

The McKell Institute designed the survey to be distributed to program participants. The formation of the survey questions considered various biases and sampling error issues, with efforts made to mitigate them as much as possible. The questions were developed in close consultation with The Society NSW. The survey began with a request for the participant to participate. If the individual chose not to participate, they were thanked for their time, and their decision was not recorded on their CAMS profile.

The Society NSW then contacted the participants over a two-week period, asking a series of standardised questions. The responses were recorded in a password-protected, encrypted spreadsheet, hosted on a local secure server. The Society NSW ceased calling once at least 900 responses were secured. If during the interview The Society NSW personnel identified that the participant was at risk, they offered greater assistance to the individual at the end of the interview.

## DATA HANDLING AND ANALYSIS

The de-identified metadata was then securely transferred to the McKell Institute in a password-protected, encrypted file. McKell will store the metadata on a secure server hosted in Australia for a period of 12 months. Using qualitative and quantitative analytical tools, McKell then assessed the data gathered through the survey and the findings are discussed below.

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