



Renters on the Edge. Part 1. Summary

The **Victorian Greens Renters Survey** was completed by almost 700 renters and revealed that many renters are on edge when it comes to financial and housing stability, with young people fairing the worst.

Despite a range of measures being put in place to support renters, including a moratorium on evictions, mediation services and rent relief payment, renters who are on the edge are not getting the support they need.

The survey found that:

- **Around half (48%)** of all respondents had either become unemployed or had a reduction in hours since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- **Over a third (33%) of 18-25-year-olds** became unemployed during the pandemic.
- **Just over 60%** of those that have become unemployed or have had hours reduced are receiving either Jobseeker or Jobkeeper.
- **Over half (57%)** of renters who had their hours reduced or became unemployed and sought a rent reduction were unable to reach an agreement with their landlord.
- **A massive 80%** of renters who had become unemployed and **74%** of renters who had reduced hours and needed rental support did not apply for rental support because they found it too difficult.
- **Only 9%** of renters who had become unemployed and **10%** of renters who had reduced hours and needed for rent relief were able to get a grant.

Longer and stronger protections needed

In response to the alarming failures of the current scheme, the **Victorian Greens** are calling for longer and stronger protections for renters including:

1. Extending the current eviction moratorium beyond the December 31st 2020 cut-off date.
2. Strengthening legislation to prevent landlords unreasonably delaying or refusing to negotiate a rent reduction
3. Increasing rent relief grants and making them easier to access.
4. For the federal government to extend JobKeeper and the JobSeeker COVID-19 supplement.



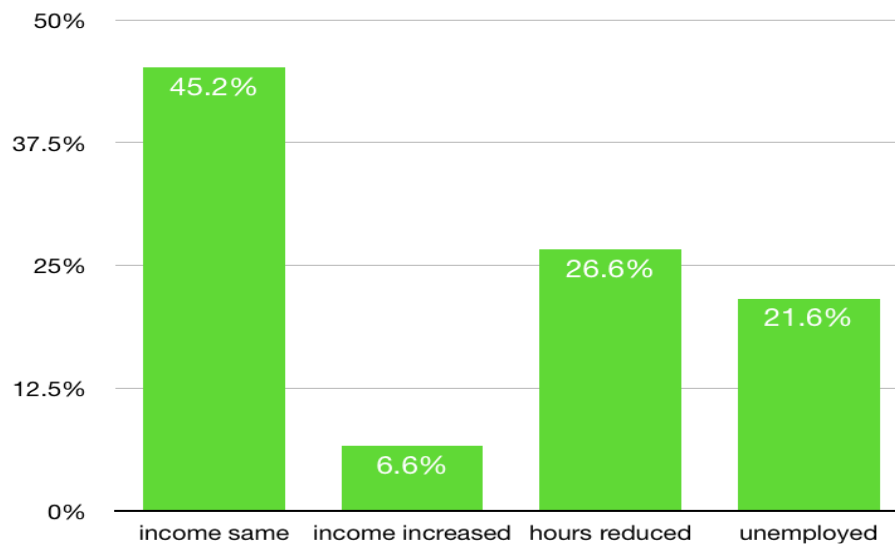
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Results

Employment

The survey of **666 people** found that nearly half (**48.2%**) have become either unemployed or had their hours reduced during the pandemic.

Fig 1. Changes to Employment

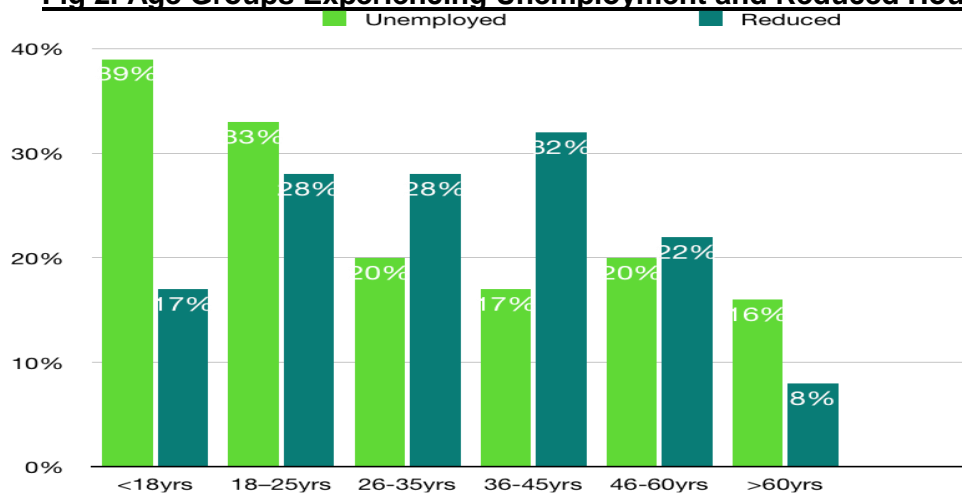


Age and Employment

Covid-19 related unemployment has had the greatest impact on those aged under 25 years with **39%** of those under 18 years and **33.3%** of 18-25-year-olds experiencing Covid-19 related unemployment.

The impact of reduced hours is more evenly experienced across age groups between 18 to 45.

Fig 2. Age Groups Experiencing Unemployment and Reduced Hours



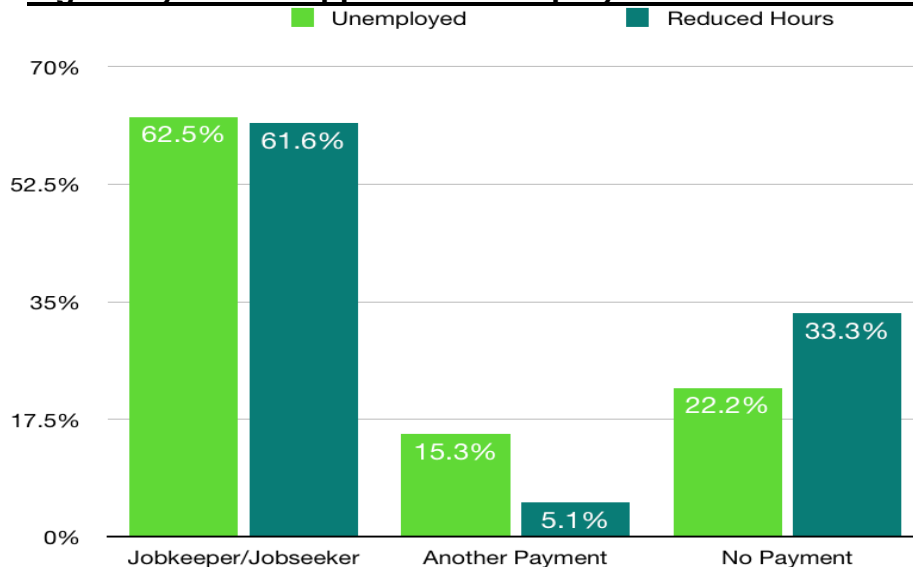


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Government Support Payments

Just over **60%** of those that have become unemployed or have had hours reduced are in receipt of either Jobseeker or Jobseeker.

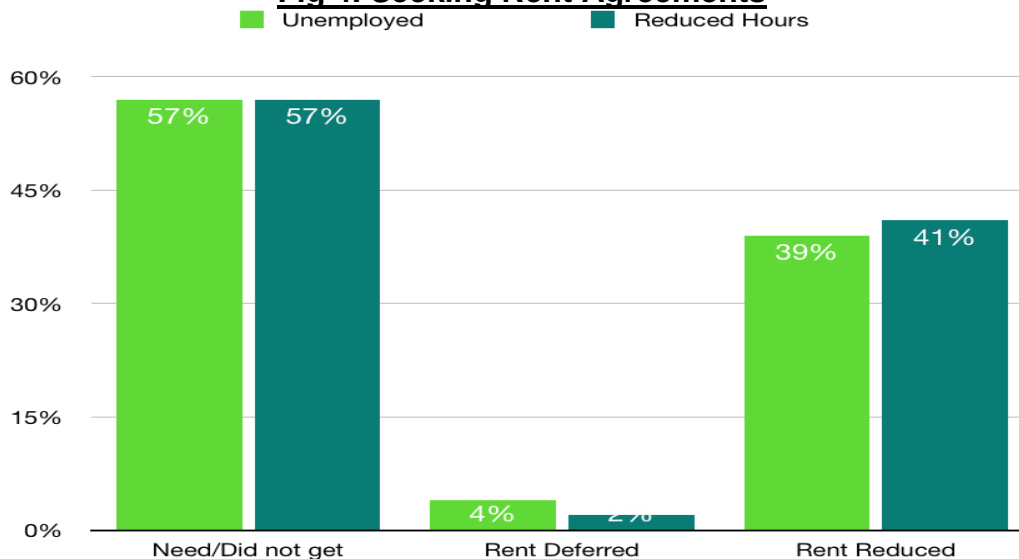
Fig 3. Payments Support for Unemployed and Reduced Hours



Rent reductions

Over half (57%) of all renters who had their hours reduced or became unemployed and needed a rent reduction were unable to reach an agreement with their landlord.

Fig 4. Seeking Rent Agreements



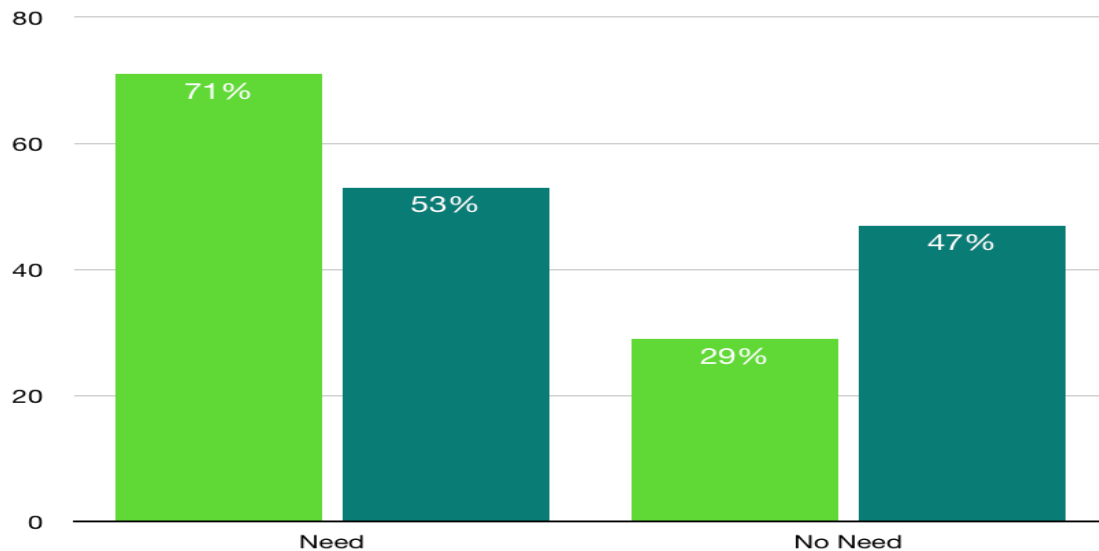


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Needing Rent Relief

71% of those that became unemployed needed a rental relief grant. 53% of those that had their hours reduced needed a rental relief grant.

Fig 5. Needing Rent Relief



Getting Rent Relief

80% of respondents who had become unemployed and needed rent relief found it too complicated to apply. Only 9% received a grant.

74% of respondents with reduced hours found it too complicated to apply for rent relief. Only 10% received a grant.

Fig 6a. Rent Relief Unemployed

● Too Complicated ● Successful ● Unsuccessful

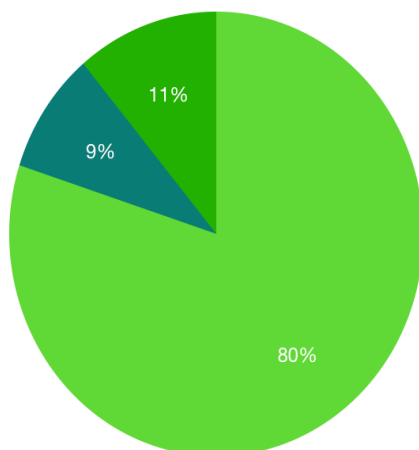
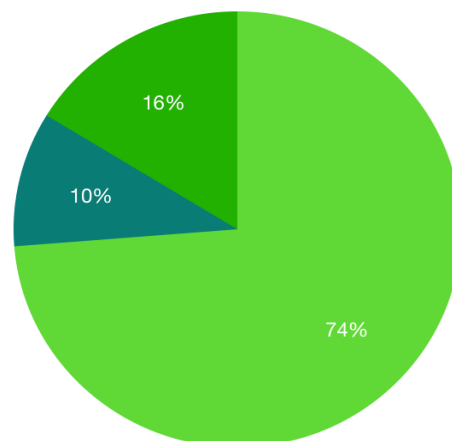


Fig 6b. Rent Relief Reduced Hours

● Too Complicated ● Successful ● Unsuccessful





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Comments

Refusal to offer reduction

- Landlord sent out an email to all residents saying that rent reductions or leeway/ help would NOT be offered to us.
- Our landlord has been inflexible and won't give us an ongoing rent reduction, despite the fact that my housemates both became redundant / had no business and I took a pay cut. We pushed really hard but we've found them to be really unreasonable. Ours is the only landlord I know of that didn't give a rent reduction that I've heard of, except one other.
- I reached out to my agent when I lost my job in March, and I was advised that I should continue to pay rent at full rate, despite there being multiple reports of assistance for owners from the big banks. I went back to my agent in June, still unemployed and under more desperate circumstances having spent all my savings and they refused to enter a written negotiation.
- They offered to reduce our rent by a whopping \$5 a week, and that was what they'd proposed as an increase in the annual new lease sign on so technically no rent reduction in relation to Covid.
- My landlord sent me this email: "This week in particular, we have received numerous calls from distressed tenants expressing concern about their ability to meet their lease commitments. As it currently stands there is an expectation that each and every tenant continues to meet their commitments in regards to rental payments." I felt this was unfair especially as the Jobkeeper payment was not an option for everyone. I felt scared about what would happen if I became sick and lost my job.

Reduction offered.

- I want to thank my landlord - without any prompting in March, they offered to halve our rent for 3 months and to not increase or rent for the duration of our lease (about another 10 months at that time, and now still 6 months away). This was before anyone even really knew how long this would go on for. There are good landlords out there, we're incredibly lucky and have made sure to pass on our good fortune to support local relief efforts

Shared House

- I am the only one in the house who is unemployed as a result of Covid so I am not eligible for a rent reduction because our household earnings are too high. I don't understand why it can't apply to the struggling individual of why rent subsidies aren't increased. I am getting less than half of my usual wage through Jobseeker and it barely covers living even at an increased amount.
- We only had a rent reduction for 2 months as two of our housemates left without warning and failed to fill their room. I feel as though I am the only person in the house struggling to cover rent as the rest are still working. I feel as though applying for another reduction would not be well received as getting the first one was very hard and we had to apply month to month.
- My partner, housemate, and myself have all had a substantial reduction in work and income due to Covid, but we're too scared to negotiate a rental payment decrease in case our landlord or agent doesn't offer us a lease renewal.



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- The rental support payment was only offered to people who have very minimal savings. We don't have much, but still weren't eligible. The savings we had would have been gone in two months of rent.
- I am concerned about maintaining rental payments during and post the pandemic. Ongoing support from government is required including; grants, extensions on moratoriums, plus more legal support for tenants, an inquiry into the handling of rent reductions requests with property managers/agents & landlords and access to affordable rent options to move out of the private sector, into secure housing.

Job Seeker

- Receiving the Jobseeker Coronavirus Supplement in my fortnightly payment has meant, for the first time ever while receiving Centrelink unemployment benefits, the cost of my rent is affordable and means I can afford to also pay utilities bills and eat 3 meals per day. So, in an unexpected side-effect of Covid-19, this economic lifeline has been a silver lining. When the Coronavirus Supplement is reduced (and eventually removed), and if I continue to struggle to find employment, I will struggle to make ends meet again and will most likely have to get extensions on utility bills and have much smaller grocery shops.