

Waged Poverty and Telecommunications Affordability

We surveyed 500 waged poor households and conducted 24 in-depth interviews on telecommunications affordability and found:



Waged poor households face the same issues as others in poverty, including **struggling to pay bills** and having to go without or delay important expenditures.



Over half of waged poor households rate **telecommunications expenses** as one of the biggest factors in their household budget.



Half of the households with smart phones and just under half with NBN or other home broadband **“sometimes, usually or always”** have trouble paying for those services. Around a third usually or always have trouble paying.



Around half of waged poor households would approach their telco retailer if they were having problems paying a bill – **only 7% say they would seek help from charities.**



Waged poor households are likely to **prioritise paying their bills** – especially when their phone or internet is necessary for work.



There are **barriers to seeking help** including lack of knowledge of support services, feeling like it is not ok to ask for help or that others are more needy.



THE NEED TO BE ONLINE: THREE BIG ISSUES



PUBLIC WIFI

Many waged poor households use public wifi, but they find it can be slow, unreliable, difficult to access and sometimes pose security issues.

1



WORK USE

Over 70% of waged poor workers use their devices and services for work

eg checking rosters, navigating when driving, making calls, doing research and remote work. In some cases it is core to business model (Uber for example). No interviewees were reimbursed for calls, data or a share of their telco plan

2



CHILDREN

Many waged poor households are families with kids, which means more devices and extra telecommunications use for school and for entertainment (and therefore extra cost).

3



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Waged poor households need to be taken into account by regulators, telecommunications companies and community groups when looking at telecommunications affordability
- Governments need to provide greater access to fast, reliable public wifi - in outer suburbs, not just city centres.
- Where it is not already available, governments should provide basic computer equipment and support (including data) for all school students.
- Employees who are out-of-pocket, should have a right to reimbursement of telecommunications costs (including part-costs of monthly phone and/or internet plans).
- Waged poor households should have access to telecommunications concessions and supports
- Telecommunications retailers and community organisations need to ensure that they have services that meet the needs of waged poor households and that these are easy to find/access