

Hygiene poverty in Australia 2026

A new independent study by Good360 Australia shows a tough reality: 1 in 5 Australians (20% / 5.5 million people) are skipping basic personal care and cleaning items just to pay for everyday essentials like food and rent. The following are just some of the key findings from the most comprehensive assessment of hygiene poverty in Australia - being released in July 2026.



The big picture



20%
are struggling
right now

Millions have gone without hygiene basics over the past year. *Up from 12% in 2025*



1 in 3

Say they have experienced hygiene poverty before



43%

worry they won't be able to afford essentials in the coming year



1 in 10

dipped into hygiene poverty for the first time this year



95%

agree hygiene products are as vital as secure housing

Hard choices at the checkout

When money gets tight, hygiene products are often the first things left behind.

Over the last year, 51% of Australians redirected their hygiene budget to cover other bills:



26%
skipped hygiene
for food

Swapped hygiene spending for groceries. Jumping to 44% for single parents



21%
left hygiene
out to afford
housing

Skipped soap or toothpaste to pay rent or a mortgage



2nd
most left
behind items
are household cleaning
items that people
drop to save money at
the checkout

Who is feeling it most?

While middle income earners are starting to feel the squeeze, specific groups are facing the hardest times. **% who are skipping basic items:**



33%
Single parents



33%
Young adults
(18-24)



33%
First Nations
communities



28%
Renters



26%
People living
with a disability



23%
Women
compared to
16% of men

For more information visit good360.org.au



The knock-on effects



1 in 3

Health on hold

Nearly 1 in 3 people experiencing hygiene poverty for the first time have delayed doctor or dental visits to save money



14%

Missing work

People have skipped work or a job interview because they couldn't access basic hygiene for the first time.



15%

Hidden need

11% of people asked a charity for help this year, but another 15% wanted to ask but didn't due to stigma

Recipient stories, shared by our charity members

The hygiene packs gave me basic things I couldn't afford, but more than that, they gave me dignity during one of the hardest times in my life.

Felicity*, woman rebuilding after family violence

I'd never had my own toothbrush before. Having one of my own made me feel proud and reminded me that someone cared.

Lucas*, child in care

Out here, it's not always easy to get the essentials. Having cleaning and hygiene products ready for the family meant one less burden and helped keep everyone well.

Aunty Lorraine*, community elder

When you're couch surfing, you don't always get to shower or wash your clothes. Getting these basics helped me feel normal again and gave me confidence to show up for work.

Jayden*, experiencing homelessness

These are the kinds of essentials I usually can't afford. Having good products like handwash and such big bottles will last me ages! This has made a big difference to my health, as I have a compromised immune system.

Maria*, living with disability

*These stories are based on real submissions by our members but names and some details have been changed to protect privacy.

Australians want governments and businesses to act to reduce hygiene poverty

79% of Australians believe no one should have to go without the basics. 56% believe governments could do more to reduce hygiene poverty, and 44% say the same for business. **There is strong support for specific measures:**



1. Drop the GST:

61% support reducing or removing GST on essential hygiene items.



2. Crisis support:

51% want hygiene kits automatically included in emergency disaster relief.



3. Free basics in public spaces:

48% support making hygiene products free in schools, TAFEs, and universities.



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