

Chapter 3: Food Security

Introduction

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” World Food Summit, 1996.

Food and You 2 uses the [U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module](#) developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to measure consumers' food security.

More information on how food security is measured and how classifications are assigned and defined can be found in Annex A and the [USDA Food Security website](#).

Food security

Across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, 82% of respondents were classified as food secure (70% high, 12% marginal) and 18% of respondents were classified as food insecure (10% low, 7% very low) ([footnote 1](#)).

Figure 6: Food security in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

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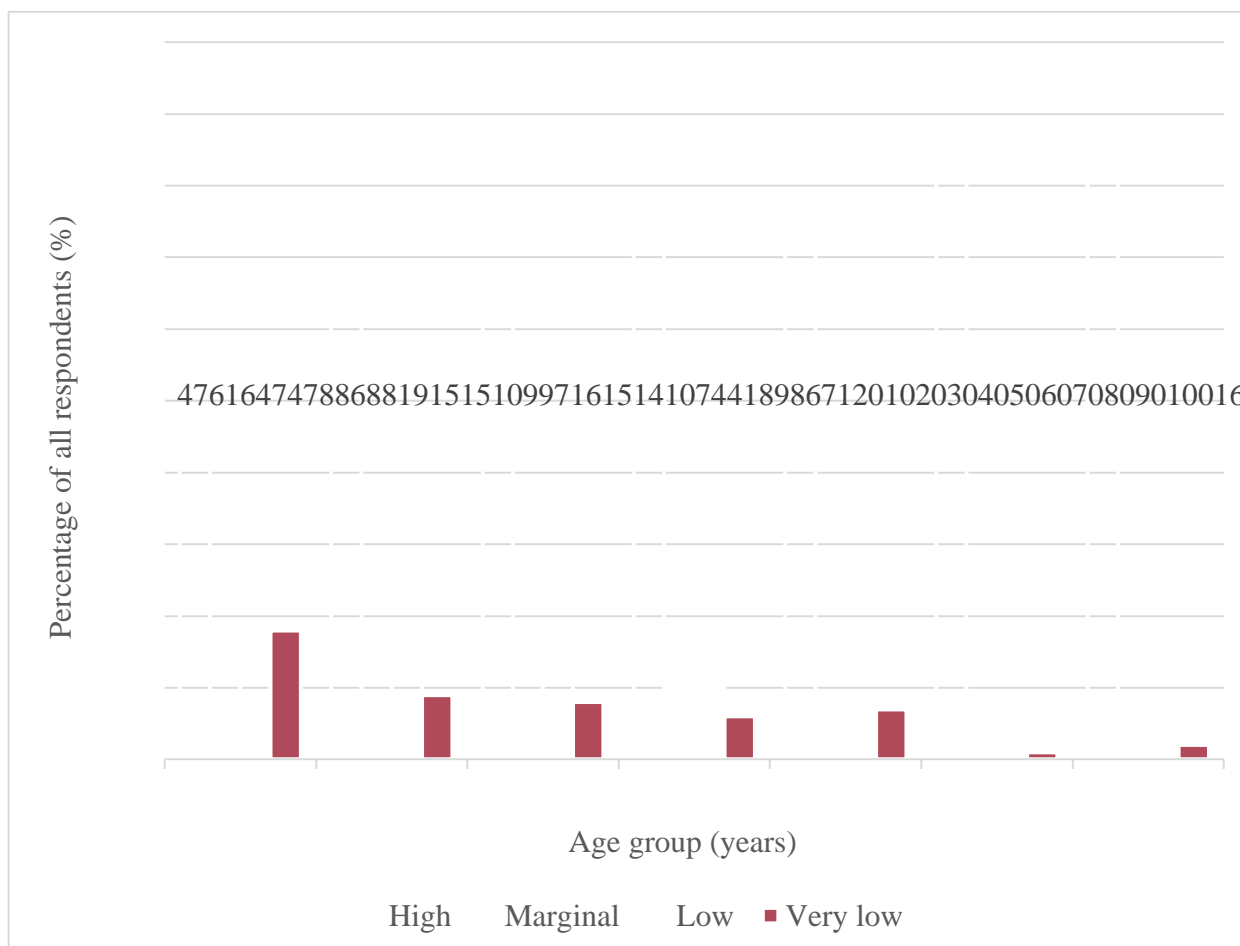
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 4

Food security levels were comparable across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland**. Around 8 in 10 respondents were food secure (for example, had high or marginal food security) in England (82%), Wales (83%) and Northern Ireland (82%). Approximately 1 in 6 respondents were food insecure (for example, had low or very low food security) in England (18%), Wales (17%) and Northern Ireland (18%) (Figure 6).

Figure 7: Food security by age group

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Age group	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
16-24	47	19	16	18
25-34	61	15	15	9
35-44	64	15	14	8
45-54	74	10	10	6
55-64	78	9	7	7
65-74	86	9	4	1
75+	88	7	4	2

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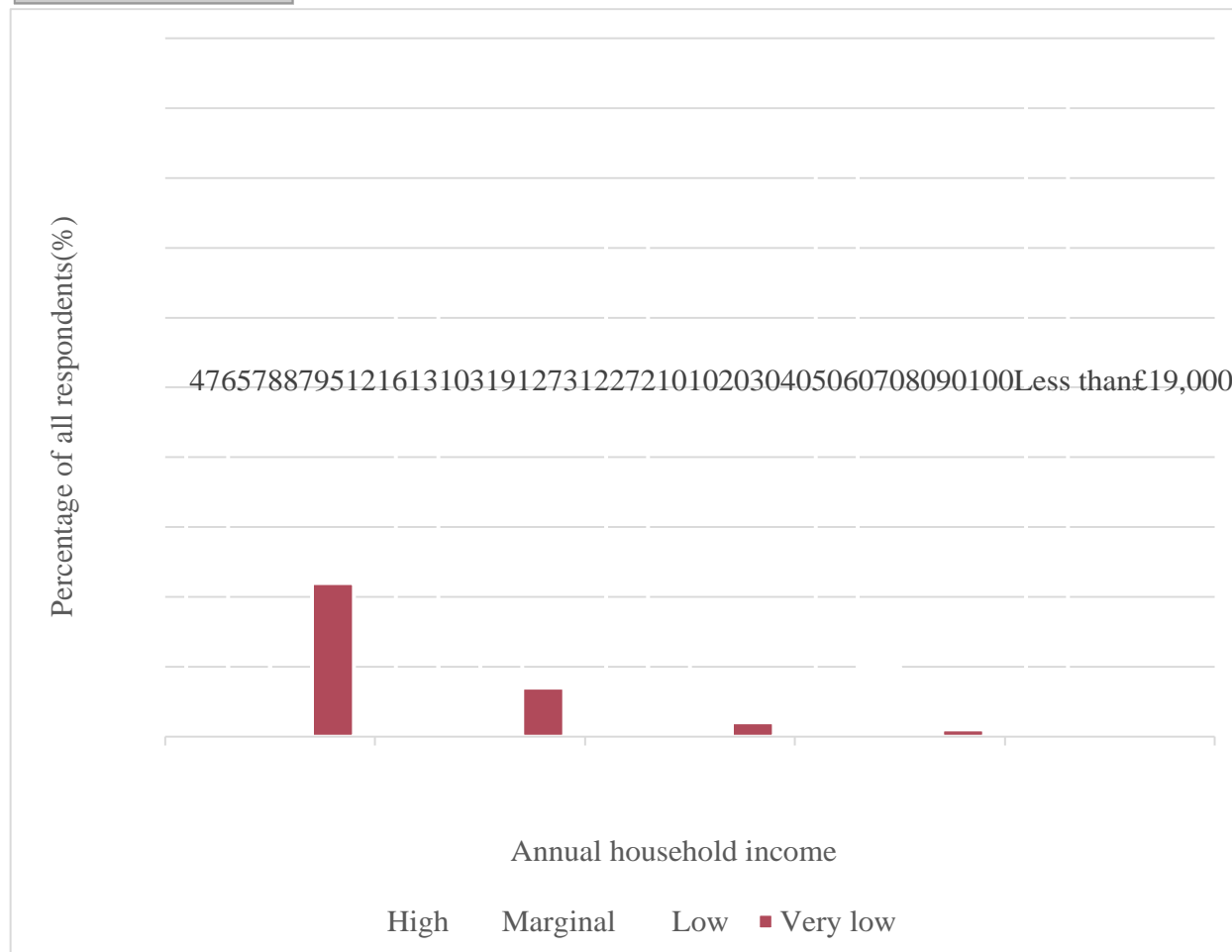
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 4

Food security varied by age group with older adults being more likely to report that they were food secure and less likely to report that they were food insecure than younger adults. For example, 34% (16% low, 18% very low security) of respondents aged 16-24 years were food insecure compared to 5% of those aged 75 years and over (Figure 7).

Figure 8: Food security by annual household income

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Annual household income (in pounds)	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
Less than 19,000	47	12	19	22
19,000 - 31,999	65	16	12	7
32,000 - 63,999	78	13	7	2
64,000 - 95,999	87	10	3	1

Annual household income (in pounds)	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
More than 96,000	95	3	1	

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 4

Food security was associated with household income. Respondents with a higher income were more likely to report food security than those with a lower income. For example, 95% of respondents with an income over £96,000 reported high food security, compared to 47% of those with an income below £19,000 (Figure 8). Four in ten (40%) of those with an annual household income of less than £19,000 reported low or very low food security.

The reported level of food security also varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- household size: smaller households (for example, 86% of single person households) were more likely to report that they were food secure compared to households with more than 5 people (72%)
- children under 16 in household: 85% of households without children under 16 years reported that they were food secure compared to 75% of households with children under 16 years
- NS-SEC: food security was more likely to be reported by respondents in most occupational groups (for example, 88% of those in managerial, administrative and professional occupations) compared to those who were in semi-routine and routine occupations (73%), and full-time students (71%). Those who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (44%) were least likely to be food secure
- ethnic group: white respondents (85%) were more likely to report being food secure compared to Asian or British Asian (66%) respondents
- long term health condition: respondents who did not have a long-term health condition (88%) were more likely to report being food secure compared to those who had a long-term health condition (73%).

Food bank use

Respondents were asked if they or anyone else in their household had received a free parcel of food from a food bank or other emergency food provider in the last 12 months. Most respondents (93%) reported that they had not used a food bank or other emergency food provider in the last 12 months, with 4% of respondents reporting that they had [\(footnote 2\)](#).

Respondents who had received a food parcel from a food bank or other provider were asked to indicate how often they had received this in the last 12 months. Of these respondents, around a third (34%) had received a food parcel on only one occasion in the last 12 months, 51% had received a food parcel on more than one occasion but less often than every month, and 8% had received a food parcel every month or more often [\(footnote 3\)](#).

School meals, meal clubs and Healthy Start vouchers

Respondents with children aged 7-15 years in their household were asked whether these children receive free school meals. Most respondents (80%) with a child(ren) aged 7-15 years in their household reported that the child(ren) do not receive free school meals. Approximately one in five (19%) respondents reported that the child or children receive free school meals ([footnote 4](#)).

Respondents with children aged 7-15 years in their household were asked whether the child(ren) had attended a school club where a meal was provided in the last 12 months. Most respondents (74%) reported that the child(ren) in their household had not attended one of these clubs in the last 12 months. 1 in 7 (15%) respondents reported that the child(ren) in their household had attended a breakfast club before school; 8% reported that the child(ren) had attended an after-school club where they received a meal, and 6% reported that the child(ren) had attended a lunch and activity club held during the school holidays ([footnote 5](#)).

Respondents who had children aged 0-4 years in their household or who were pregnant were asked whether they receive Healthy Start vouchers. Most respondents (88%) reported that they do not receive Healthy Start vouchers, with 6% of respondents reporting that they do ([footnote 6](#)).

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see [USDA Food Security guidance](#) and Technical Report. Base= 5796, all respondents. Please note: See Annex A for information about the classifications and definitions of food security levels.
2. Question: In the last 12 months, have you, or anyone else in your household, received a free parcel of food from a food bank or other emergency food provider? Responses Yes, No, Prefer not to say. Base= 3745, all online respondents.
3. Question: How often in the past 12 months have you, or anyone else in your household, received a free food parcel from a food bank or other emergency food provider?
Responses: Only once in the last year, Two or three times in the last year, Four to six times in the last year, More than six times but not every month, Every month or more often, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base= 123, all respondents where anyone in household has used a food bank or emergency food or received a free food parcel from a food bank or other emergency food provider in the last 12 months.
4. Question: Does any child receive free school meals? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base= 1020, all respondents who had child(ren) aged 7 - 15 living in the household. The eligibility criteria for free school meals varies between [England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).
5. Question: Did your child/any of the children in your household attend any of the following in the past 12 months? Responses: A breakfast club before school, An after-school club where they also received a meal (tea/dinner), A lunch and activity club that ran only during school holidays, None of these, Don't know. Base= 792, all respondents with child(ren) aged 5 - 15 in the household.
6. Question: Do you receive Healthy Start vouchers for yourself or your children? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base= 427, all online respondents who are pregnant or have child(ren) aged 0 - 4 in household, and all those who completed the paper questionnaire and have child(ren) aged 0 - 4 years living in the household.