

# Wave 5: 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.

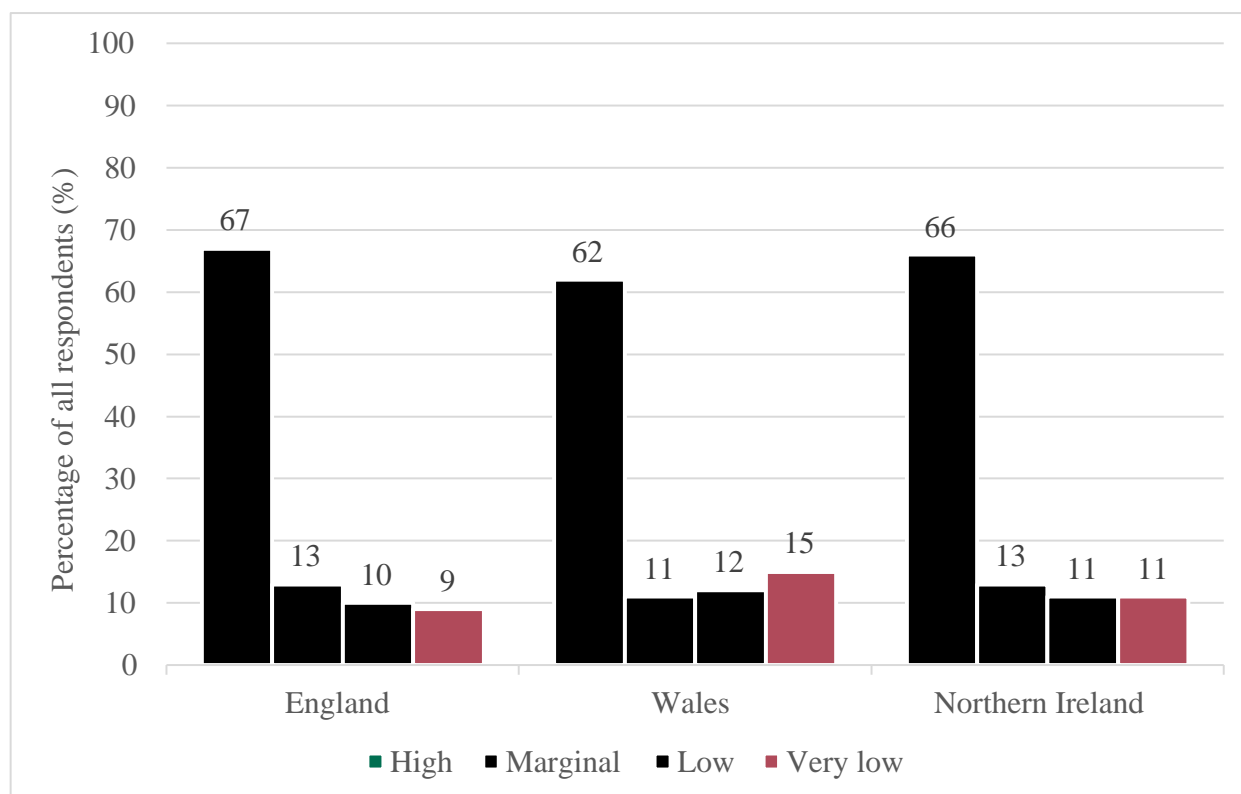
Food and You 2 uses the [U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module](#) developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to measure consumers' food security.

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, 80% of respondents were classified as food secure (67% high, 13% marginal) and 20% of respondents were classified as food insecure (10% low, 10% very low) ([footnote 1](#)).

**Figure 5. Food security in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**

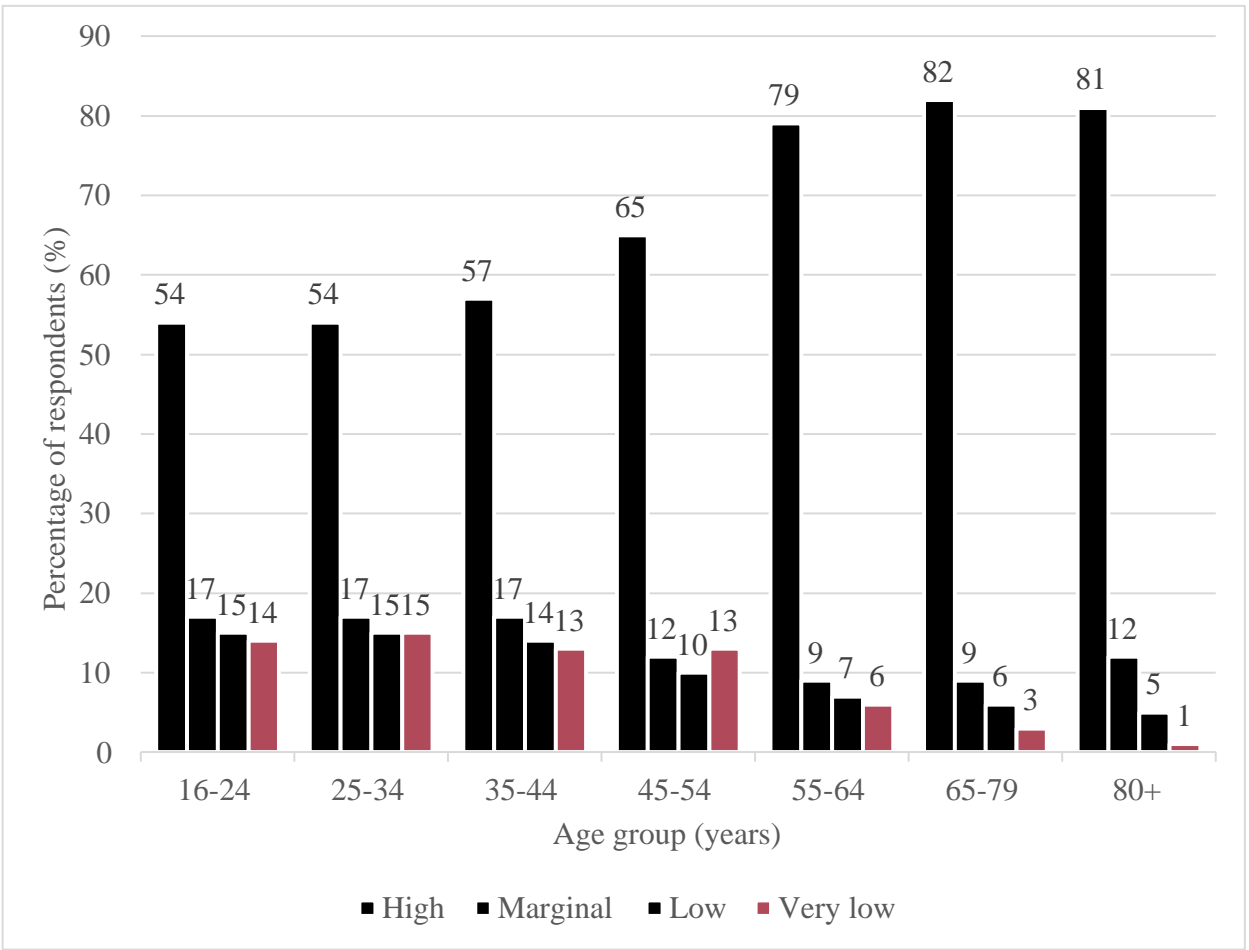


Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Around 8 in 10 respondents were food secure (i.e. had high or marginal food security) in England (80%) and Northern Ireland (78%), and 74% of respondents were food secure in Wales.

Approximately 2 in 10 respondents were food insecure (for example, had low or very low food security) in England (20%) and Northern Ireland (22%), and 26% of respondents were food insecure in Wales (Figure 5).

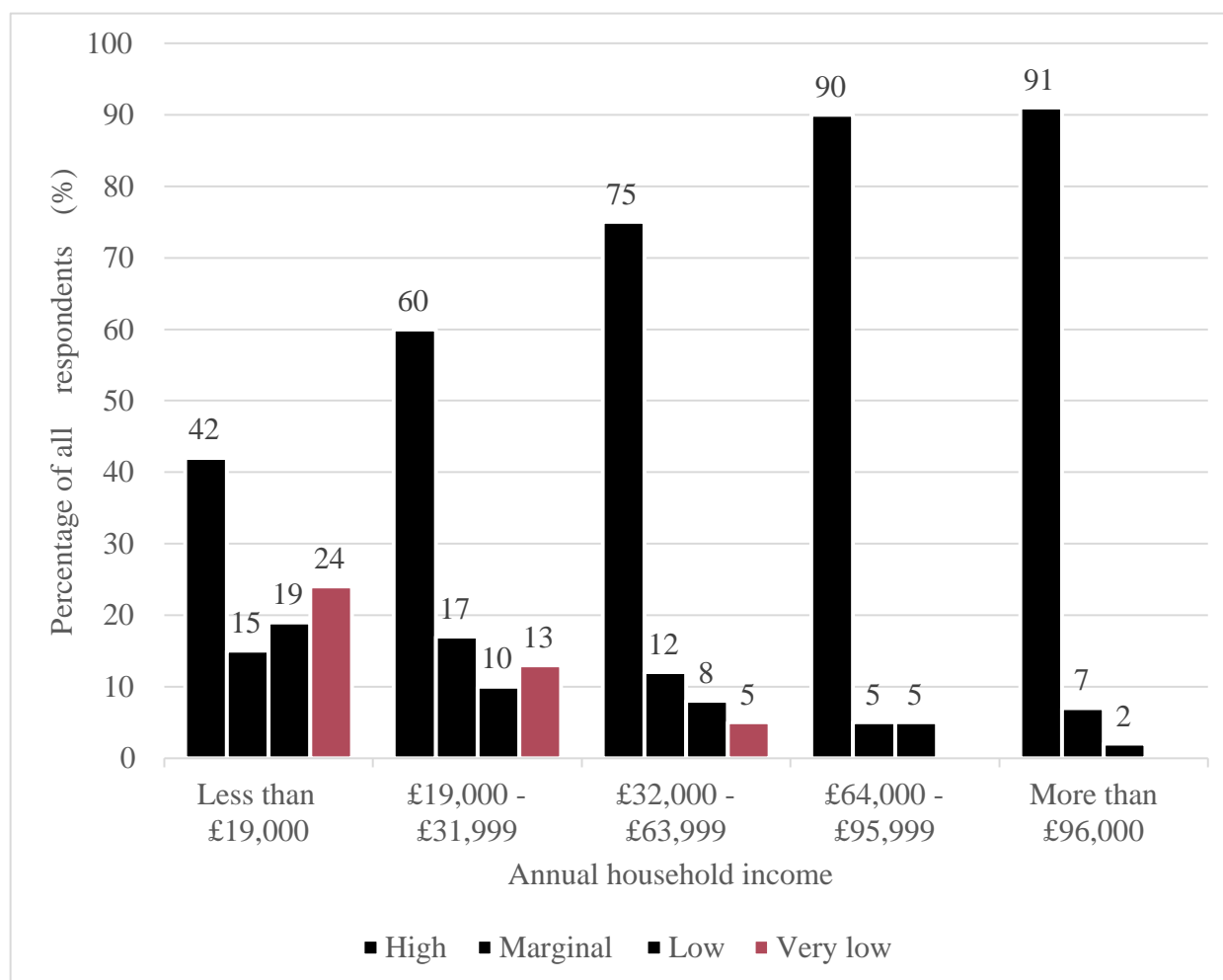
**Figure 6. Food security by age group**



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

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, 29% (15% low, 14% very low security) of respondents aged 16-24 years were food insecure compared to 6% (5% low, 1% very low security) of those aged 80 years and over (Figure 6).

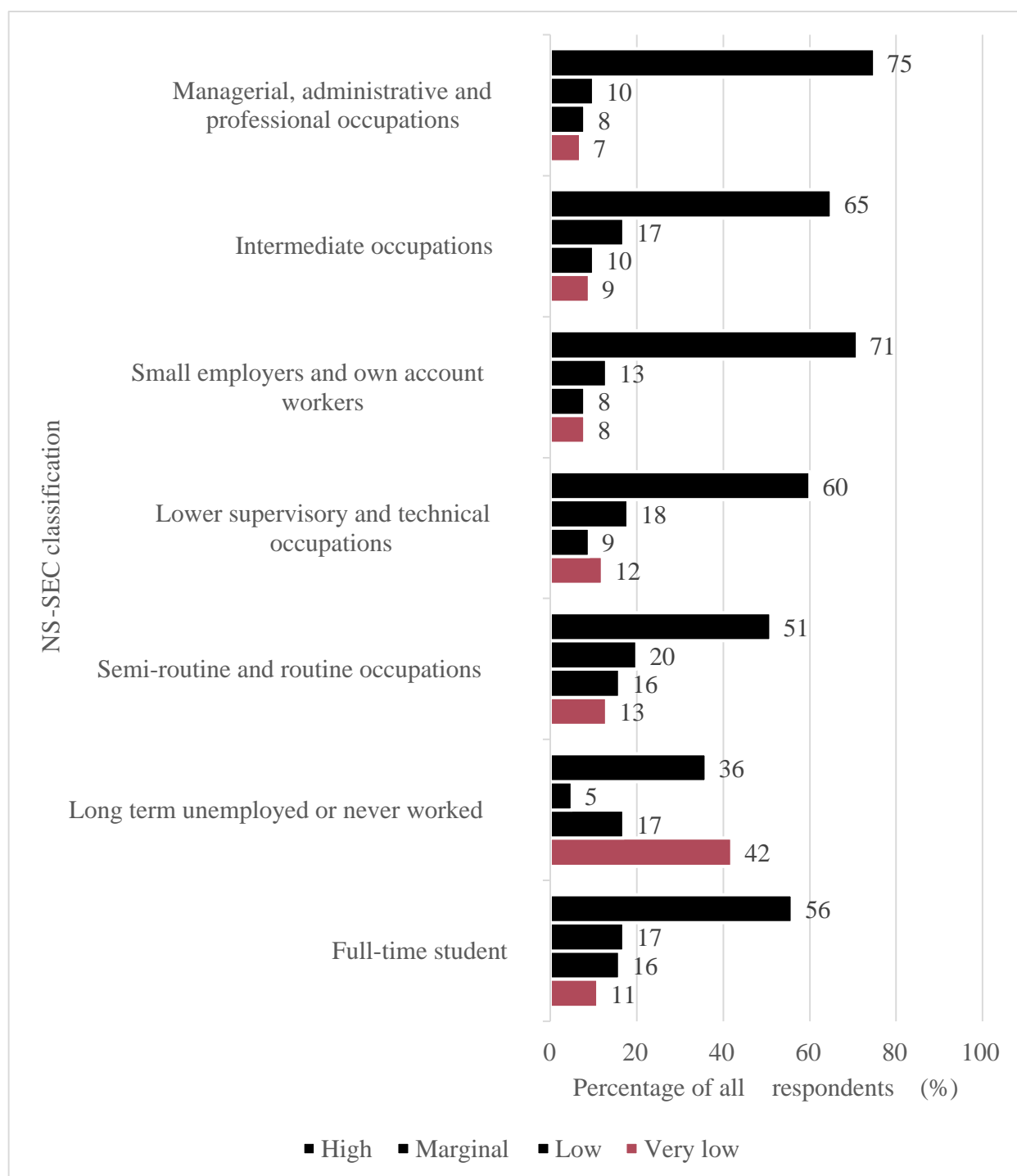
**Figure 7. Food security by annual household income**



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Food security was associated with household income. Respondents with a lower income were more likely to report being food insecure than those with a higher income. For example, 43% of those with an annual household income of less than £19,000 reported food insecurity (low 19%, very low 24%) compared to 2% (low 2%, very low 0%) of those with an income of £96,000 or more (Figure 7).

**Figure 8. Food security by NS-SEC classification**



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (59%) were most likely to report that they were food insecure compared to all other occupational groups. Those who were in semi-routine and routine occupations (29%), and full-time students (27%) were more likely to be food insecure than many other occupations groups (for example, 15% of those in managerial, administrative and professional occupations) (Figure 8).

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

- household size: households with 5 people or more (29%) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to those in 1-person (19%) or 2-person (15%) households.

- children under 16 in household: 29% of households with children under 16 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 17% of households without children under 16 years.
- region (England): food insecurity varied by region in England. For example, respondents who lived in the North-West of England (25%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (25%) were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those who lived in the South-East (13%) and South-West (15%) of England.
- long term health condition: respondents with a long-term health condition (29%) were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those without a long-term health condition (16%).

## 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 (95%) reported that they had not used a food bank or other emergency food provider in the last 12 months, with 3% 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, 34% had received a food parcel on only one occasion in the last 12 months, 40% had received a food parcel on more than one occasion but less often than every month, and 5% had received a food parcel every month or more often [\(footnote 3\)](#).

## Free school meals

Respondents with children aged 7-15 years in their household were asked whether these children receive free school meals. Most respondents (74%) 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 four (24%) respondents reported that the child or children receive free school meals [\(footnote 4\)](#).

The reported uptake of free school meals also varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- annual household income: respondents with a lower income were more likely to report the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to those with a higher income. For example, 47% of respondents with an income of less than £19,000 reported that the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to 9% of those with an income of £32,000-£63,000
- food security: respondents with low (37%) or very low (45%) food security were more likely to report the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to those with a high (16%) or marginal (17%) food security.

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see [USDA Food Security guidance](#) and Technical Report. Base= 6770, 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= 6770, all 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= 269, 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= 1220, 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](#).