

F&Y2 Wave 7: 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 10-item [U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module](#) developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to measure consumers’ food security status.

Respondents are assigned to one of the following food security status categories:

- High: no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.
- Marginal food security: one or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
- Low: reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.
- Very low: reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Those with high or marginal food security are referred to as food secure. Those with low or very low food security are referred to as food insecure.

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

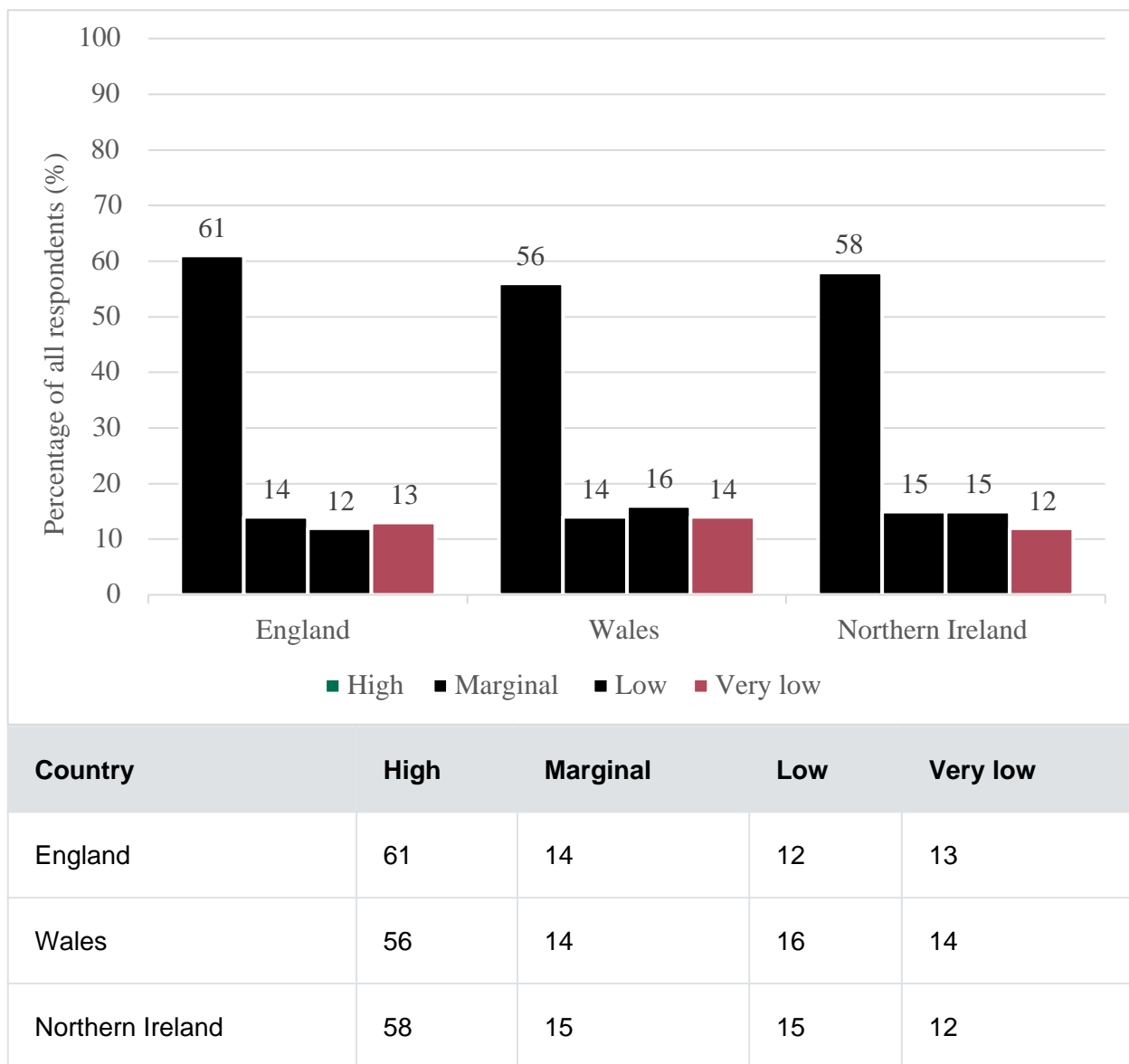
Food security

Across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, 75% of respondents were classified as food secure (61% high, 14% marginal) and 25% of respondents were classified as food insecure (13% low, 13% very low) ([footnote 1](#)).

Figure 7. Food security in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

Around three-quarters of respondents were food secure (i.e. had high or marginal food security) in England (75%) and Northern Ireland (74%), and 70% of respondents were food secure in Wales. Approximately a quarter of respondents were food insecure (i.e. had low or very low food security) in England (25%) and Northern Ireland (26%), and 30% of respondents were food insecure in Wales (Figure 7).

Experiences of food insecurity

To establish a food security classification, respondents were asked up to ten questions from the US Adult Food Security Survey Module . All respondents were asked the first three questions from the food security survey module. The first three questions asked respondents how often, if ever, they had experienced any of the following in the previous 12 months:

- I/we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more

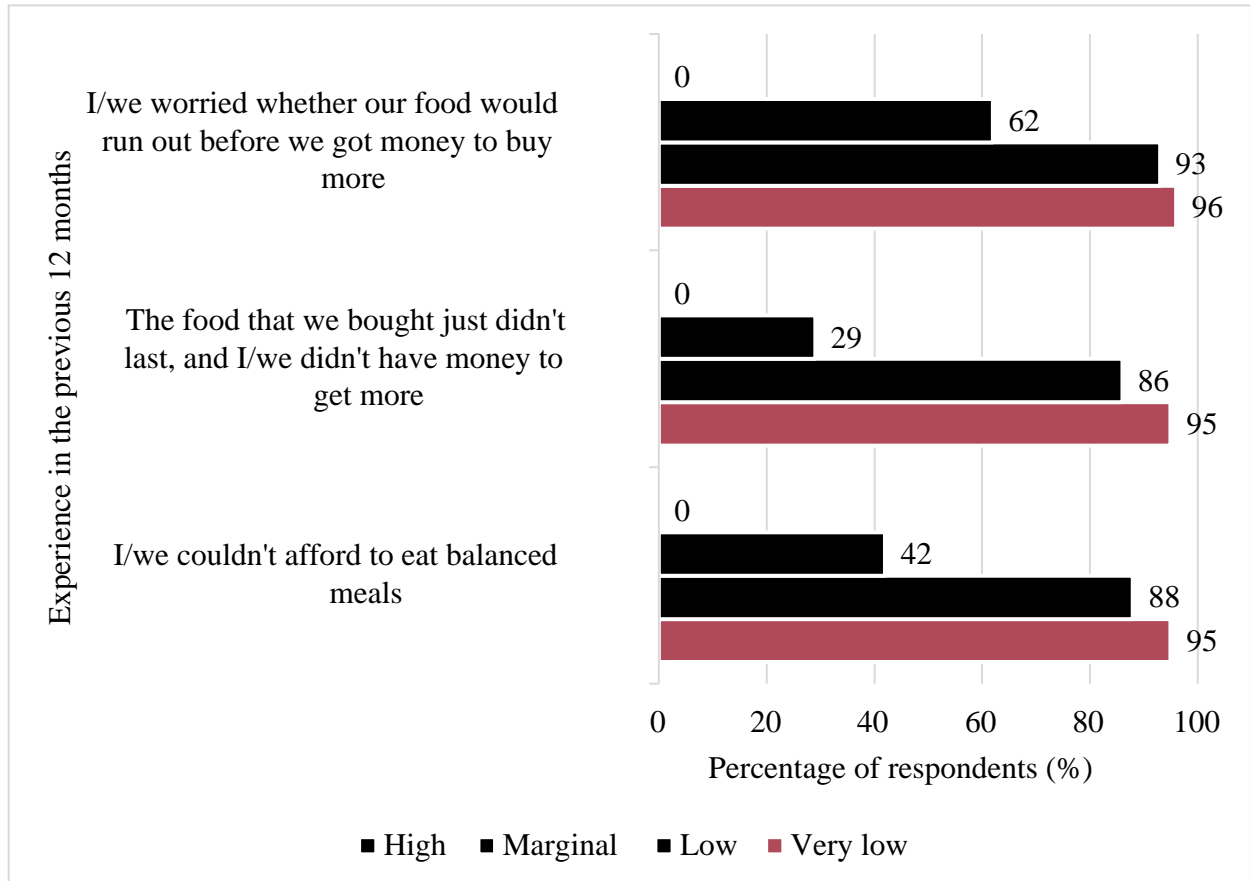
- The food that we bought just didn't last, and I/we didn't have money to get more
- I/we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals

If respondents reported any of the experiences, they were asked subsequent questions in the module.

Figure 8. Experiences of food security by food security classification.

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| Experience in the previous 12 months | High | Marginal | Low | Very low |
|--|------|----------|-----|----------|
| I/we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals | 0 | 42 | 88 | 95 |
| The food that we bought just didn't last, and I/we didn't have money to get more | 0 | 29 | 86 | 95 |
| I/we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more | 0 | 62 | 93 | 96 |

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In the previous 12 months, respondents who had very low (96%), or low (93%) food security were more likely to have worried whether their food would run out before they had money to buy more, compared to those with marginal (62%) food security. Respondents who had very low (95%), or low (86%) food security were more likely to report that the food that they bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more, compared to those with marginal (29%) food security. Respondents who had very low (95%), or low (88%) food security were more likely to report that they couldn't afford balanced meals, compared to those with marginal (42%) food security.

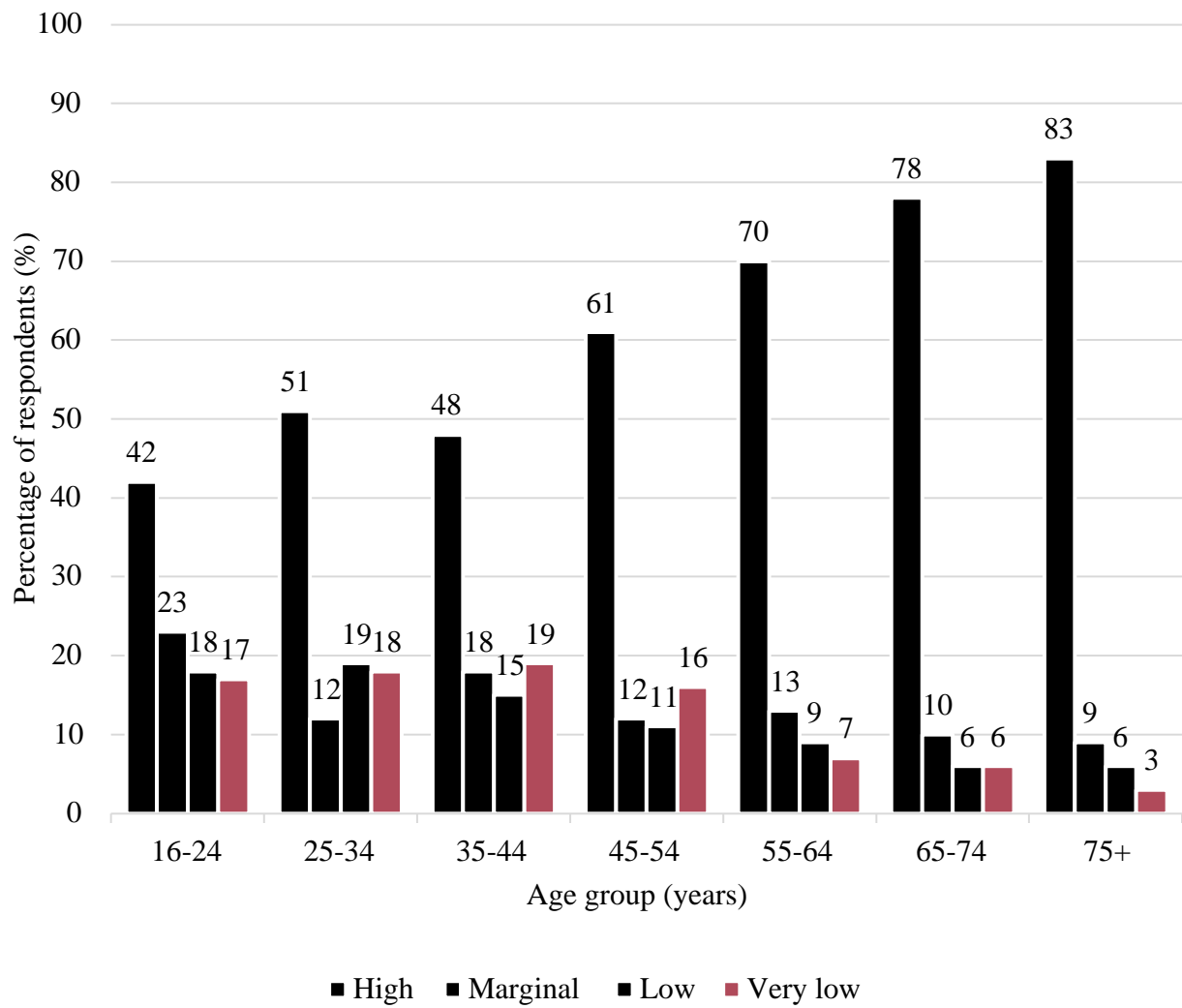
Respondents with high food security reported that they had not had any of these experiences (0% worried whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more, 0% the food that they bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more) in the previous 12 months (Figure 8).

How food security differs between socio-economic and demographic groups

Figure 9. Food security by age group.

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| Age group | High | Marginal | Low | Very low |
|-----------|------|----------|-----|----------|
| 16-24 | 42 | 23 | 18 | 17 |
| 25-34 | 51 | 12 | 19 | 18 |
| 35-44 | 48 | 18 | 15 | 19 |
| 45-54 | 61 | 12 | 11 | 16 |
| 55-64 | 70 | 13 | 9 | 7 |
| 65-74 | 78 | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| 75+ | 83 | 9 | 6 | 3 |

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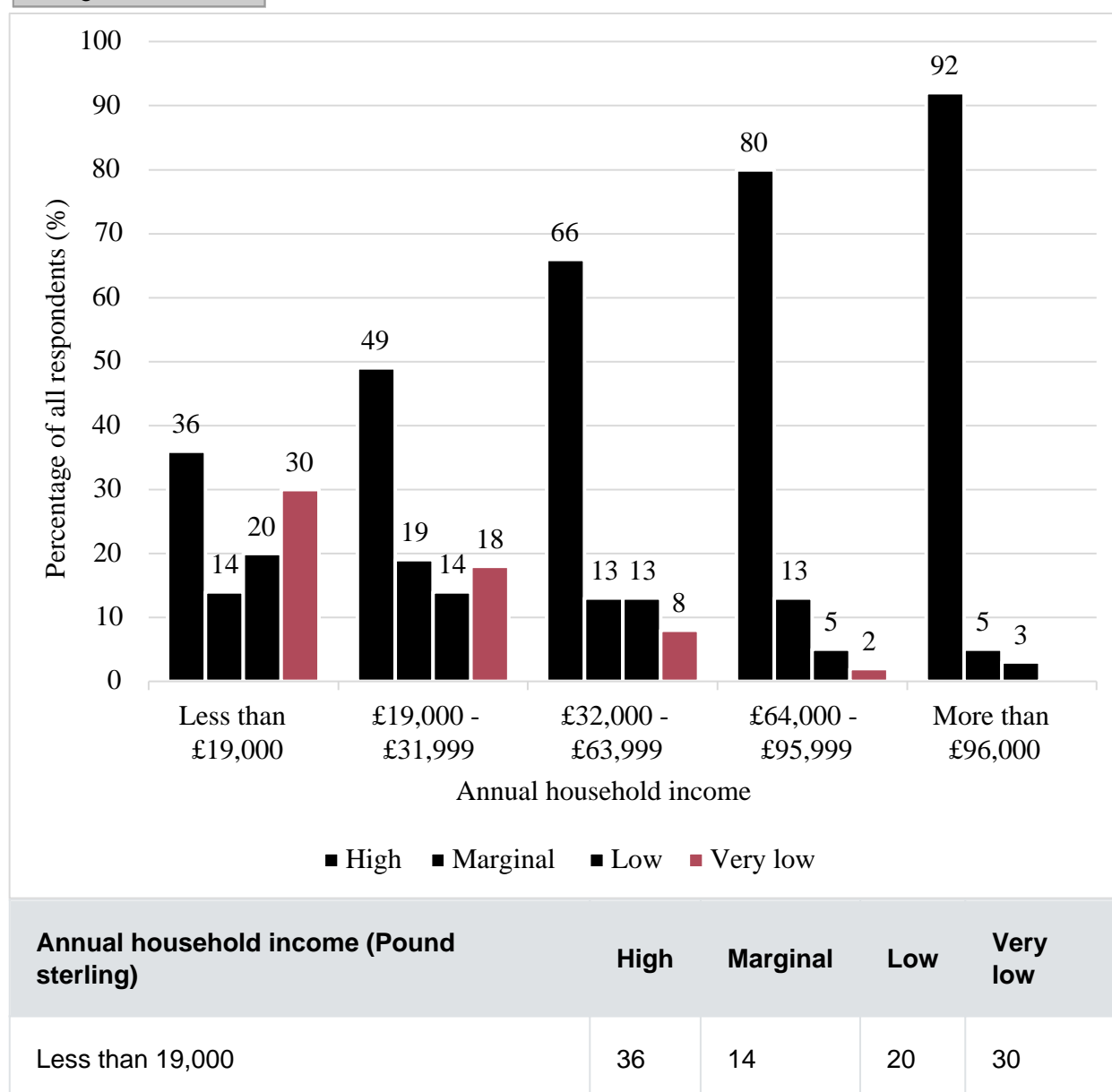
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

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, 35% of respondents aged 16-24 years were food insecure (18% low, 17% very low food security) compared to 8% of those aged 75 years and over (6% low, 3% very low food security) (Figure 9).

Figure 10. Food security by annual household income.

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| Annual household income (Poundsterling) | High | Marginal | Low | Verylow |
|---|------|----------|-----|---------|
| 19,000 - 31,999 | 49 | 19 | 14 | 18 |
| 32,000 - 63,999 | 66 | 13 | 13 | 8 |
| 64,000 - 95,999 | 80 | 13 | 5 | 2 |
| More than 96,000 | 92 | 5 | 3 | |

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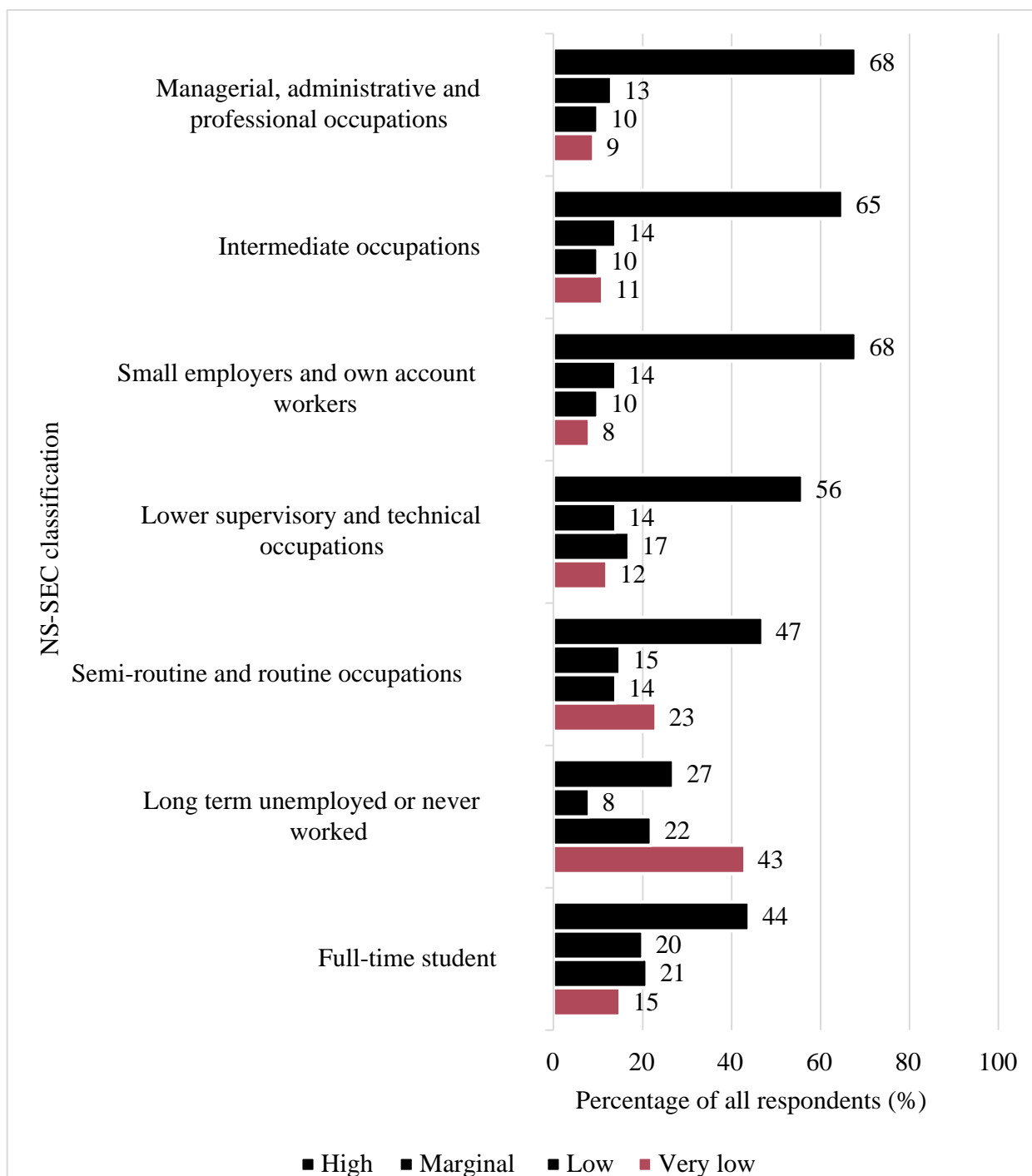
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

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, 50% of those with an annual household income of less than £19,000 reported food insecurity (low 20%, very low 30%) compared to 7% of those with an income between £64,000 and £95,999 (low 5%, very low 2%) (Figure 10).

Figure 11. Food security by socio-economic classification (NS-SEC).

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| NS-SEC classification | High | Marginal | Low | Very low |
|--------------------------------------|------|----------|-----|----------|
| Full-time student | 44 | 20 | 21 | 15 |
| Long term unemployed or never worked | 27 | 8 | 22 | 43 |
| Semi-routine and routine occupations | 47 | 15 | 14 | 23 |

| NS-SEC classification | High | Marginal | Low | Very low |
|---|------|----------|-----|----------|
| Lower supervisory and technical occupations | 56 | 14 | 17 | 12 |
| Small employers and own account workers | 68 | 14 | 10 | 8 |
| Intermediate occupations | 65 | 14 | 10 | 11 |
| Managerial, administrative and professional occupations | 68 | 13 | 10 | 9 |

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 7

Respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (66%) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to all other occupational groups. Those who were full-time students (36%), and in semi-routine and routine occupations (38%), were more likely to be food insecure than many other occupations groups (for example, 18% of small employers and own account workers) (Figure 11) ([footnote 2](#)).

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

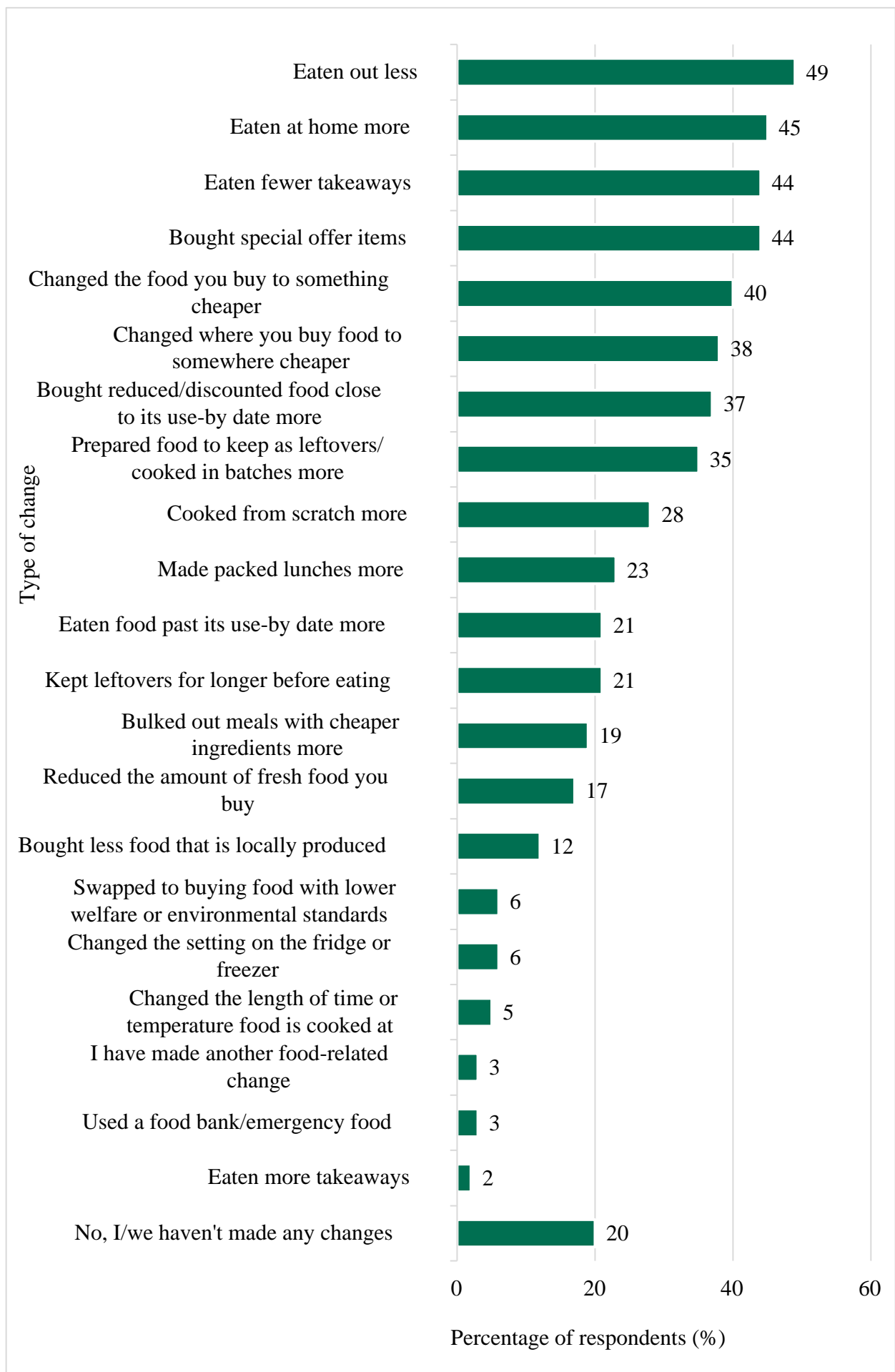
- Household size: households with 1 person (26%) or 3 or more people (for example, 34% of households with 5 people or more people) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to 2-person households (18%)**.
- Children under 16 in household: 34% of households with children under 16 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 21% of households without children under 16 years.
- Children under 6 in household: 40% of households with children under 6 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 23% of households without children under 6 years.
- Urban vs rural: 27% of respondents living in an urban area reported that they were food insecure compared to 17% of respondents living in a rural area.
- Region (England) ([footnote 3](#)): levels of food insecurity varied by region in England. For example, respondents who live in the North-East of England (36%) and West-Midlands (32%) were more likely to be food insecure compared to those who live in the East of England (19%) or South-East of England (21%).
- Ethnic group: 40% of Asian or Asian British respondents reported that they were food insecure compared to 23% of white respondents ([footnote 4](#)).
- Long term health condition: respondents with a long-term health condition (39%) were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those without a long-term health condition (20%).

Changes to food-related behaviours

Figure 12. Changes in eating habits and food-related behaviours for financial reasons.

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| Type of change | Percentage of respondents (%) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| No, I/we haven't made any changes | 20 |
| Eaten more takeaways | 2 |
| Used a food bank/emergency food | 3 |
| I have made another food-related change | 3 |
| Changed the length of time or temperature food is cooked at | 5 |
| Changed the setting on the fridge or freezer | 6 |
| Swapped to buying food with lower welfare or environmental standards | 6 |
| Bought less food that is locally produced | 12 |
| Reduced the amount of fresh food you buy | 17 |
| Bulked out meals with cheaper ingredients more | 19 |
| Kept leftovers for longer before eating | 21 |
| Eaten food past its use-by date more | 21 |
| Made packed lunches more | 23 |
| Cooked from scratch more | 28 |
| Prepared food to keep as leftovers/ cooked in batches more | 35 |
| Bought reduced/discounted food close to its use-by date more | 37 |
| Changed where you buy food to somewhere cheaper | 38 |

| Type of change | Percentage of respondents (%) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Changed the food you buy to something cheaper | 40 |
| Bought special offer items | 44 |
| Eaten fewer takeaways | 44 |
| Eaten at home more | 45 |
| Eaten out less | 49 |

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Respondents were asked what changes, if any, they had made to their eating habits and food-related behaviours in the previous 12 months for financial reasons. Most respondents (80%) reported that they had made a change to their eating habits for financial reasons in the previous 12 months, with only 20% of respondents indicating that they had made no changes.

Common changes related to what and where respondents ate (49% ate out less, 45% ate at home more, 44% ate fewer takeaways), changes to shopping habits (44% bought items on special offer, 40% changed the food they buy to something cheaper, 38% changed where they buy food to somewhere cheaper, 37% bought reduced/discounted food) and changes to food preparation (35% prepared food that could be kept as leftovers/cooked in batches more, 28% cooked from scratch more, 23% made packed lunches more). Some respondents reported an increase in risky food safety behaviours due to financial reasons (21% kept leftovers for longer before eating, 21% had eaten food past its use-by date more, 6% changed the setting on the fridge / freezer) (Figure 12) ([footnote 5](#)).

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 (94%) 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 6](#)).

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, 15% had received a food parcel on only one occasion in the last 12 months, 59% 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 7](#)).

Social supermarkets

Social supermarkets, food clubs and community pantries/larders allow people to buy food items at a heavily discounted price, or as part of membership. These are generally community organisations and may offer additional services such as referral services and volunteering opportunities. Some or all of the food is surplus from the food supply chain.

Awareness and use of social supermarkets

Respondents were asked if they or anyone else in their household had used a social supermarket in the last 12 months. One in 20 (5%) respondents reported that they had used a social supermarket in the last 12 months and 79% of respondents reported that they had not used a social supermarket in the last 12 months. Around 1 in 10 (14%) respondents reported that they had not heard of social supermarkets ([footnote 8](#)).

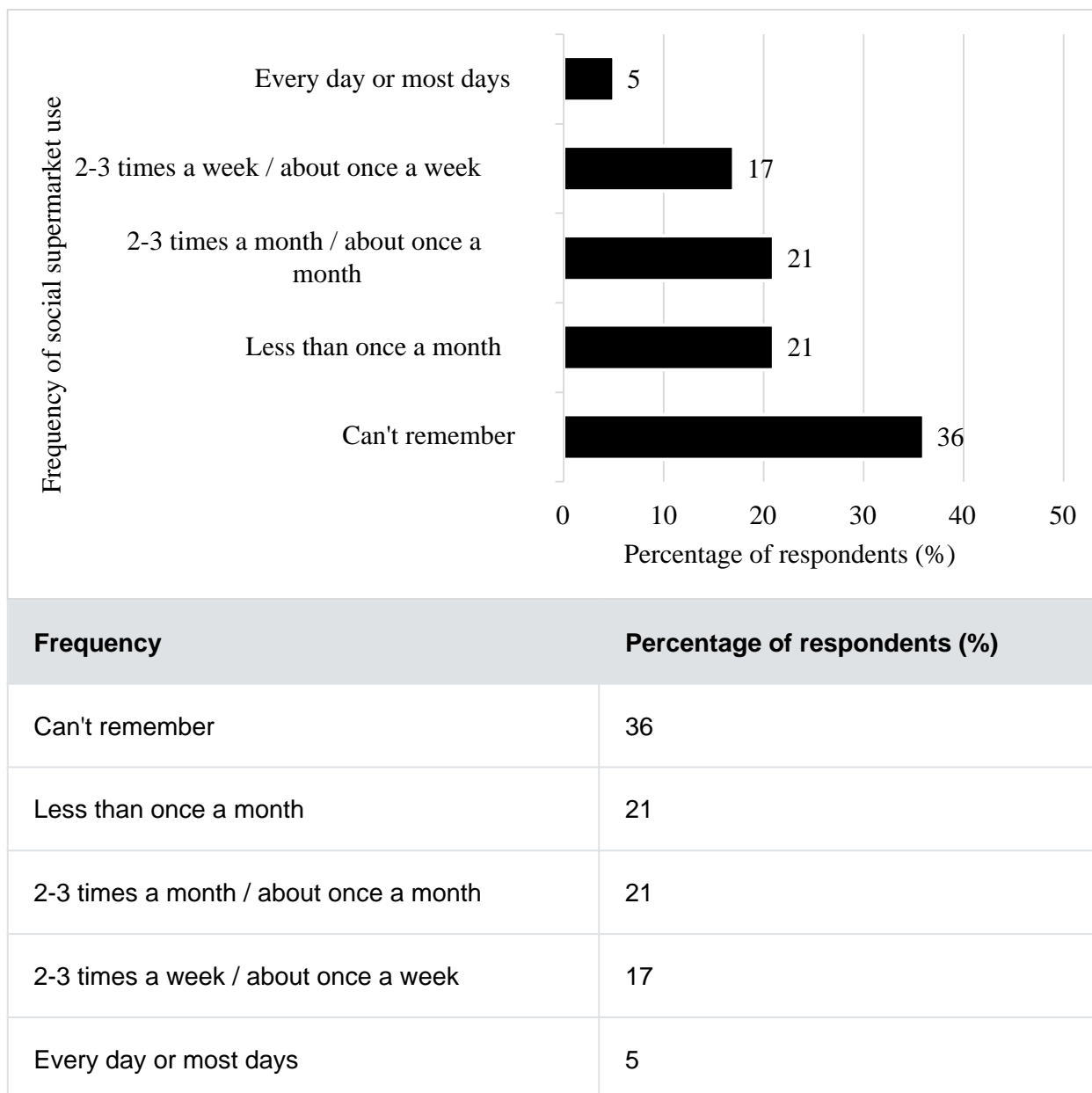
The use of social supermarkets varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- Annual household income: respondents with an income of less than £19,000 (12%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those with a higher income (for example, 3% of those with an income of £32,000 or over)**.
- Children under 16 in household: households with children under 16 years (8%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket compared to households without children under 16 years (4%)**.
- NS-SEC: respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (14%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those in other occupational groups (for example, 4% in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations) or full-time students (6%)**.
- Region (England) ([footnote 9](#)): levels of social supermarket use varied by region in England. For example, respondents who live in the North-West of England (10%), Greater London (7%), and the North-East of England (7%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those who live in the East of England (1%)**.
- Food security: respondents with very low food security (17%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those with low (7%) or marginal (6%) food security. Those with high food security (3%) were least likely to have used a social supermarket.

Figure 13. Frequency of social supermarket use among social supermarket users.

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Respondents who had used a social supermarket were asked to indicate how often they had used this in the last 12 months. Of these respondents, 5% had used a social supermarket every day or most days, 17% had used a social supermarket 2-3 times a week or about once a week, 21% had used a social supermarket 2-3 times a month or about once a month, and 21% had used a social supermarket less than once a month. However, 36% of respondents who had used a social supermarket reported that they could not remember how often they had used a social supermarket in the last 12 months (Figure 13) [\(footnote 10\)](#).

Free school meals

Respondents with children aged 7-15 years in their household were asked whether the 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. A quarter (25%) of respondents reported that the child or children receive free school meals ([footnote 11](#)).

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

- Annual household income: respondents with a lower income were more likely to report that the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to those with a higher income. For example, 64% of respondents with an income of less than £19,000 reported that the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to 7% of those with an income of £64,000-£95,999.
- Country: 31% of respondents in Wales and 25% of those in England reported that the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to 14% of respondents in Northern Ireland.
- Food security: respondents with low (32%) or very low (52%) food security were more likely to report their child(ren) receive free school meals compared to those with high (13%) or marginal (27%) food security.
- Long-term health condition: respondents with a long-term health condition (43%) were more likely to report the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to those without a long-term health condition (20%).

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see [USDA Food Security guidance](#) and Technical Report. Base= 5812, all respondents. Please note: See Annex A for information about the classifications and definitions of food security levels.
2. [NS-SEC](#) (The National Statistics Socio-economic classification) is a classification system which provides an indication of socio-economic position based on occupation and employment status.
3. Regional differences were only considered in England due to the low sample / base size in Wales and Northern Ireland.
4. Please note: the figures of other ethnic groups are not reported due to low base / sample size.
5. Question: In the last 12 months, have you made any of these changes for financial reasons? Responses: eaten out less, eaten at home more, cooked at home more, eaten fewer takeaways, bought items on special offer more (for example, 3 for 2), prepared food to be kept as leftovers/cooked in batches more, changed where you buy food to somewhere cheaper, changed the food you buy to something cheaper, made packed lunches more, bought reduced/discounted food close to its use-by date more, eaten food past its use-by date more, kept leftovers for longer before eating, started using a food bank/emergency food provider, reduced the amount of fresh food you buy, swapped to buying food with lower welfare or environmental standards, bought less food that is locally produced, changed the length of time or temperature food is cooked at, changed the setting on the fridge or freezer, I have made another food-related change, I have not made any changes. Base= 5812, all respondents.

6. 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= 5812, all respondents.

7. 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= 232, 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.

8. Question: In the last 12 months, have you, or anyone else in your household, used a social supermarket (also known as a food club/hub or community pantry)? Responses: Yes, No, Prefer not to say, I had not heard of a social supermarket, food club/hub or community pantry before today. Base= 5812, all respondents.

9. Regional differences were only considered in England due to the low sample / base size in Wales and Northern Ireland.

10. Question: How often in the last 12 months have you, or anyone else in your household, used a social supermarket (also known as a food club/hub or community pantry)? Responses: Every day, Most days, 2-3 times a week, About once a week, About once a month, Less than once a month, Can't remember. Base= 278, all respondents who have used a social supermarket in the last 12 month.

11. Question: Does any child receive free school meals? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base= 1023, 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](#).