

F&Y2 Wave 8: Chapter 3 Food security

Introduction

This chapter reports the level of food security in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and how food security varied between different categories of people.

“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](#).

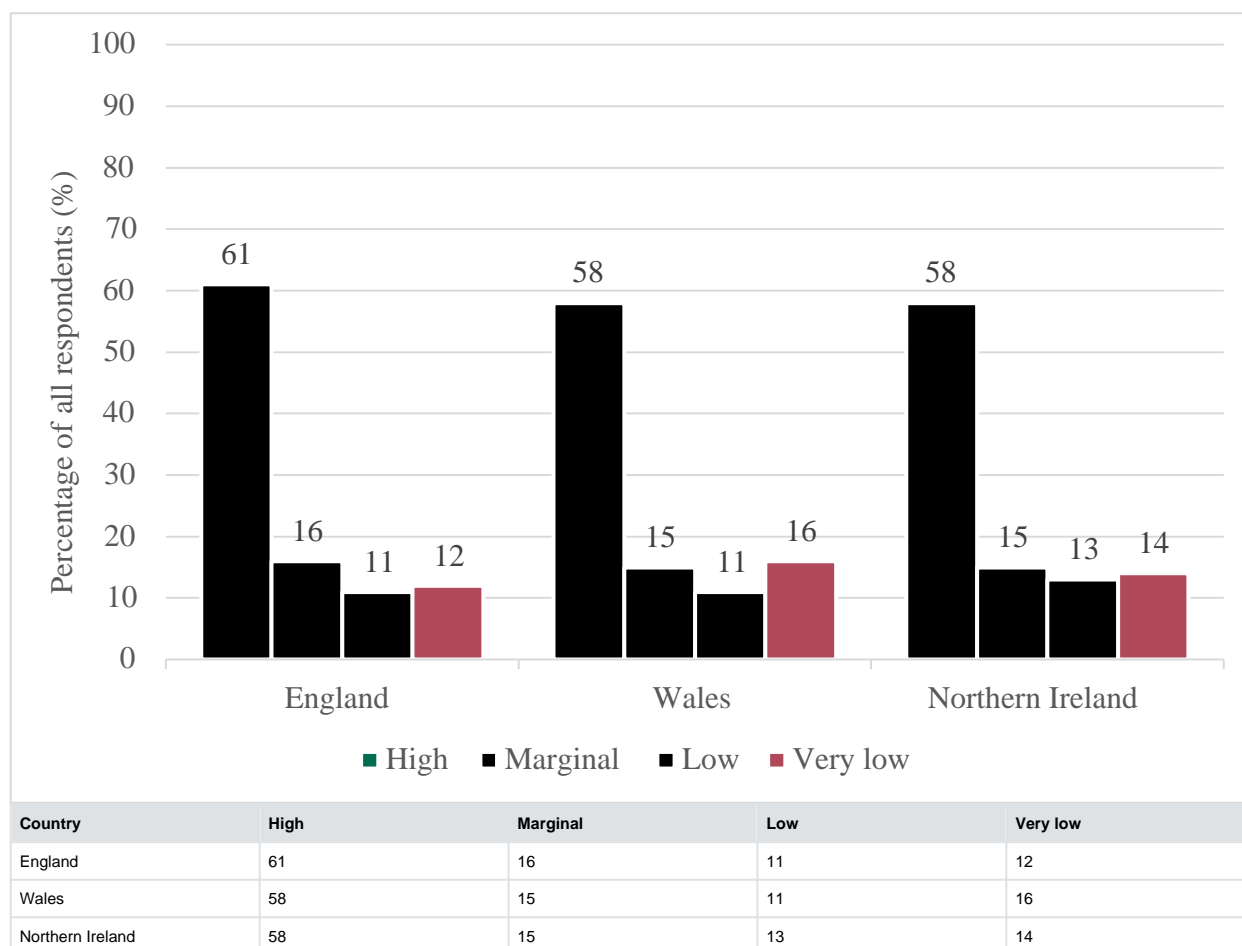
Food security

Across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, 76% of respondents were classified as food secure (60% high, 16% marginal) and 24% of respondents were classified as food insecure (11% low, 13% very low) ([footnote 1](#)).

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

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8

Around three-quarters of respondents were food secure (i.e. had high or marginal food security) in England (77%), Wales (73%) and Northern Ireland (73%). Approximately a quarter of respondents were food insecure (i.e. had low or very low food security) in England (23%), Wales (27%) and Northern Ireland (27%) (Figure 5).

Experiences of food insecurity

Respondents were asked up to ten questions from the US Adult Food Security Survey Module , to determine their food security classification [\(footnote 2\)](#).

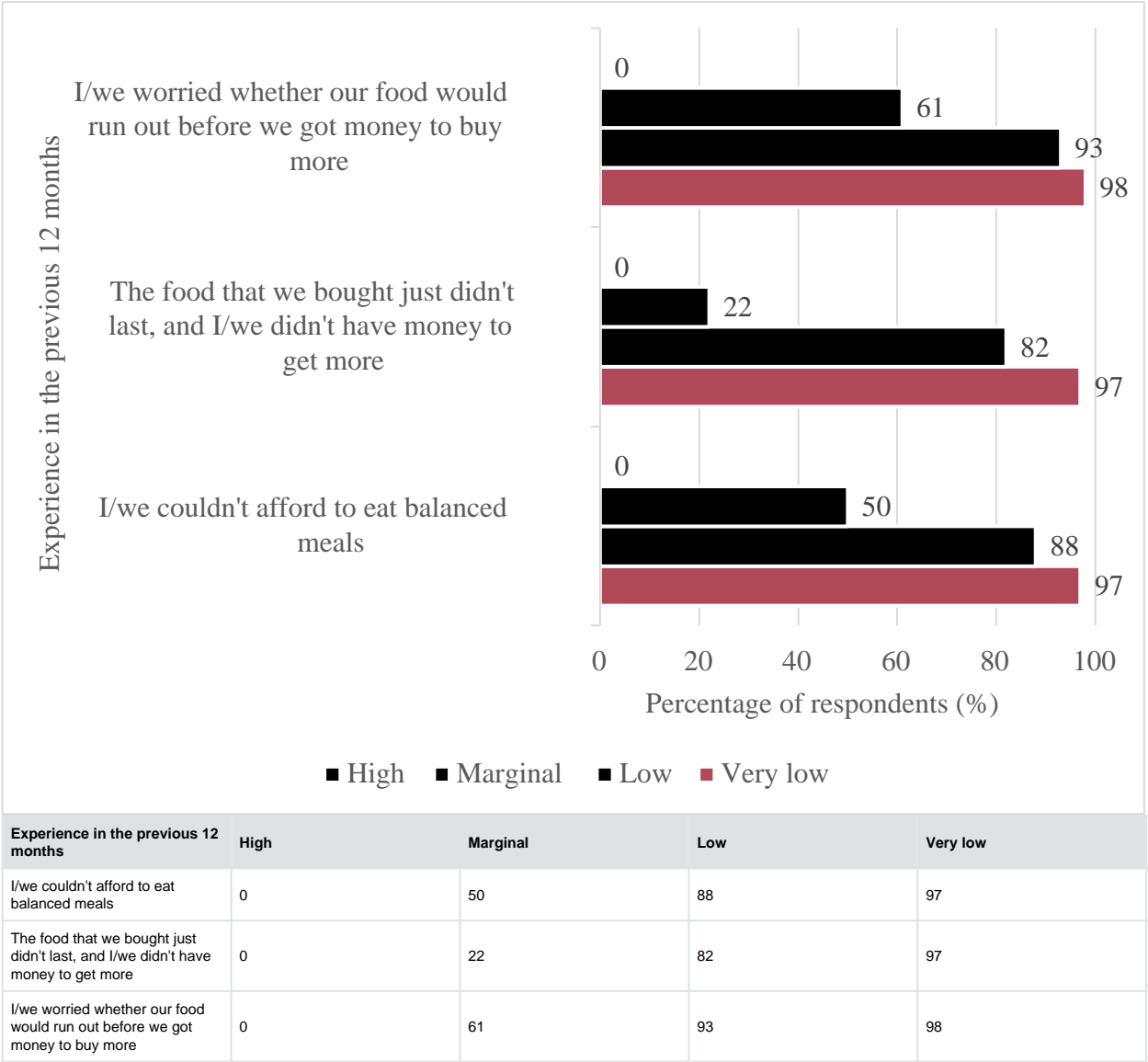
All respondents were asked the first three questions from the food security survey module. Respondents were asked how often, if ever, they had experienced any of the following in the previous 12 months:

- 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

Figure 6. Experiences of food security by food security classification.

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Based on the previous 12 months:

- 98% of those with very low food security, and 93% of those with low food security reported feeling worried whether food would run out before they got money to buy more, whilst 61% of those with marginal food security reported feeling worried about this.
- 97% of those with very low food security, and 82% of those with low food security worried that the food they bought didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more. Less than a

quarter (22%) of those with marginal food security worried about this.

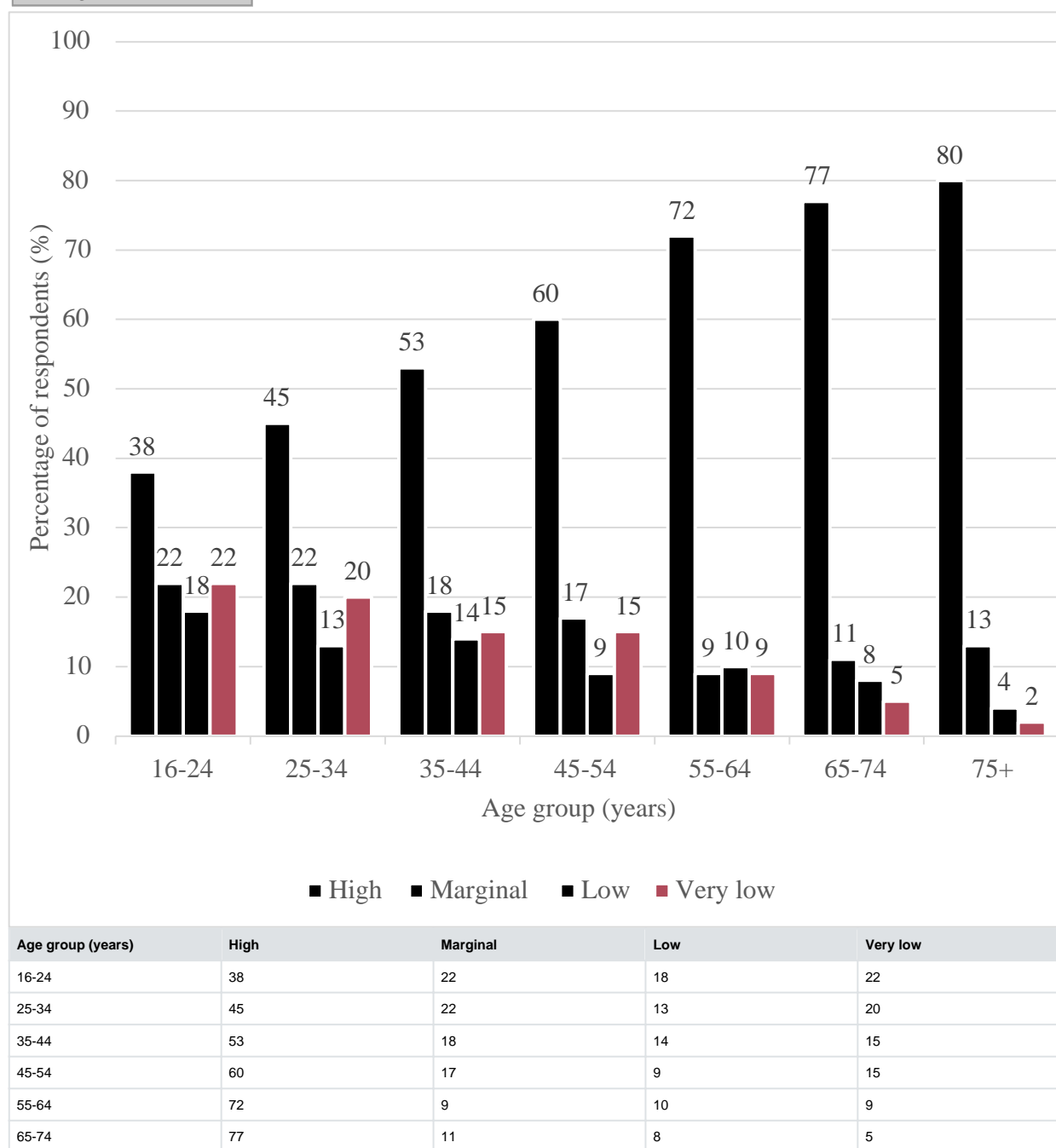
- 97% of those with very low food security, and 88% of those with low food security reported that they couldn't afford to eat balanced meals. Half (50%) of those with marginal food security reported this.
- Respondents with high food security reported that they had not had any of these experiences in the last 12 months (Figure 6).

How food security differs between socio-economic and demographic groups

Figure 7. Food security by age group.

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Age group (years)	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
75+	80	13	4	2

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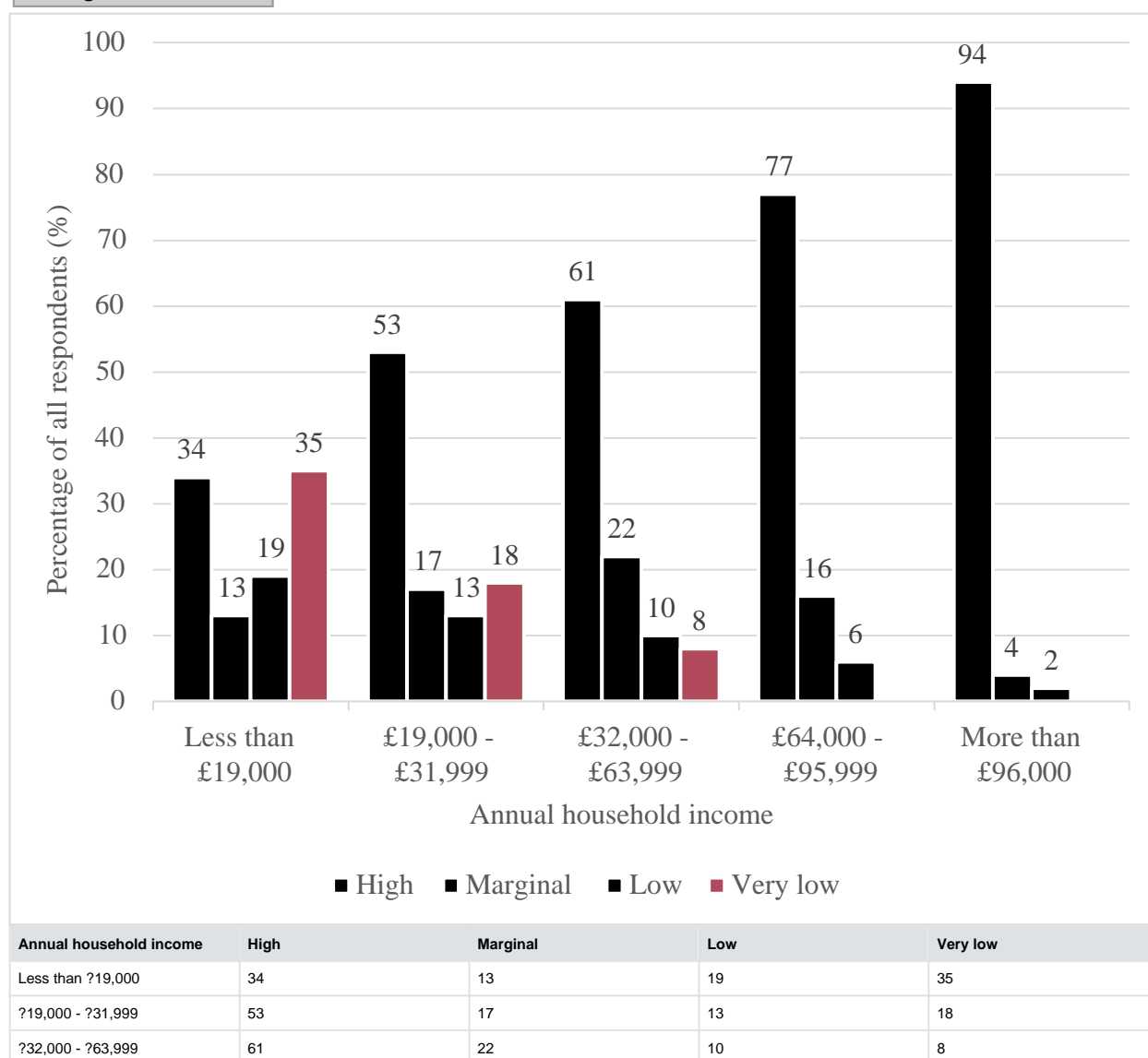
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8

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, 40% of respondents aged 16-24 years were food insecure (18% low, 22% very low security) compared to 6% of those aged 75 years and over (4% low, 2% very low security) (Figure 7).

Figure 8. Food security by annual household income.

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Annual household income	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
£64,000 - £95,999	77	16	6	0
More than £96,000	94	4	2	0

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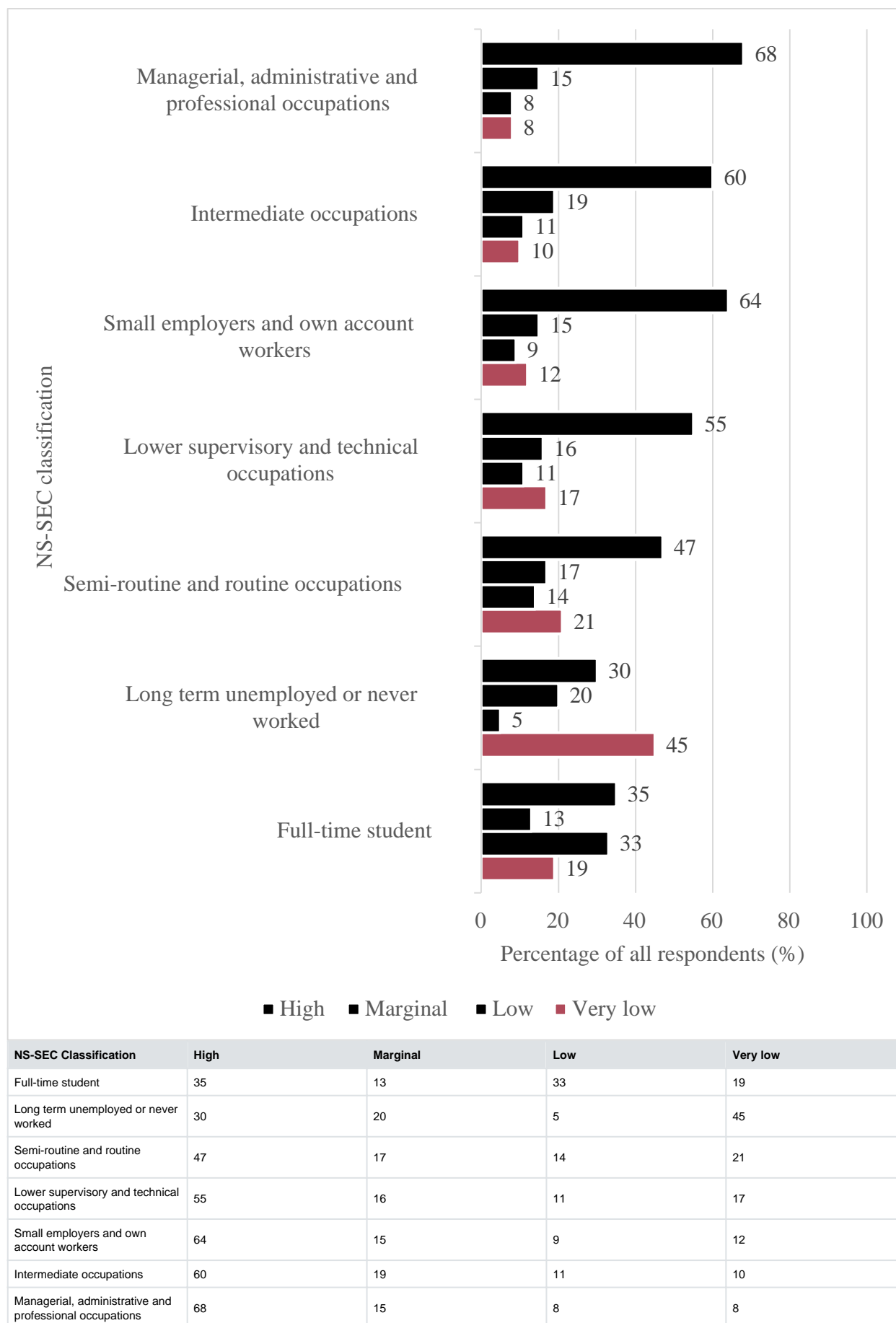
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8

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, 54% of those with an annual household income of less than £19,000 reported food insecurity (low 19%, very low 35%) compared to 7% of those with an income between £64,000 and £95,999 (low 6%, very low; less than 0.5%) (Figure 8).

Figure 9. Food security by socio-economic classification (NS-SEC).

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Respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (50%), full-time students (52%), and those in semi-routine and routine occupations (36%) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to most other occupational groups (for example, 17% of those in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations) (Figure 9) [\(footnote 3\)](#).

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 (34%) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to those in households with 2-people or fewer (19% in 2-person households, 23% in households with 1 person).
- Children under 16 in household: 31% 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: 37% of households with children under 6 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 22% of households without children under 6 years.
- Ethnic group: 33% of Asian or Asian British respondents reported that they were food insecure compared to 21% of respondents white respondents. [\(footnote 4\)](#)
- Long term health condition: respondents with a long-term health condition (33%) were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those without a long-term health condition (19%).
- Region (England) [\(footnote 5\)](#): respondents living in the West Midlands (31%), Yorkshire and the Humber (27%) and North-East England (33%) were more likely to report being food insecure than those in London (17%) and the South-East (18%).

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 [\(footnote 6\)](#).

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see [USDA Food Security guidance](#) and Technical Report. Base= 5808, all respondents. Please note: See Annex A for information about the classifications and definitions of food security levels.
2. See the [USDA Food Security guidance](#) for further information about the survey and classifications.
3. [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.
4. Please note: the figures of other ethnic groups are not reported due to low base / sample size.

5. Regional differences were only considered in England due to the low sample / base size in Wales and Northern Ireland.
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= 5808, all respondents.