

F&Y2 Wave 7-8 NI: 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. Respondents are assigned to one of the following food security status categories:

- **high:** no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations
- **marginal:** 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 on the [USDA Food Security website](#).

This chapter reports the level of food security across Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

Food security in Northern Ireland, England and Wales

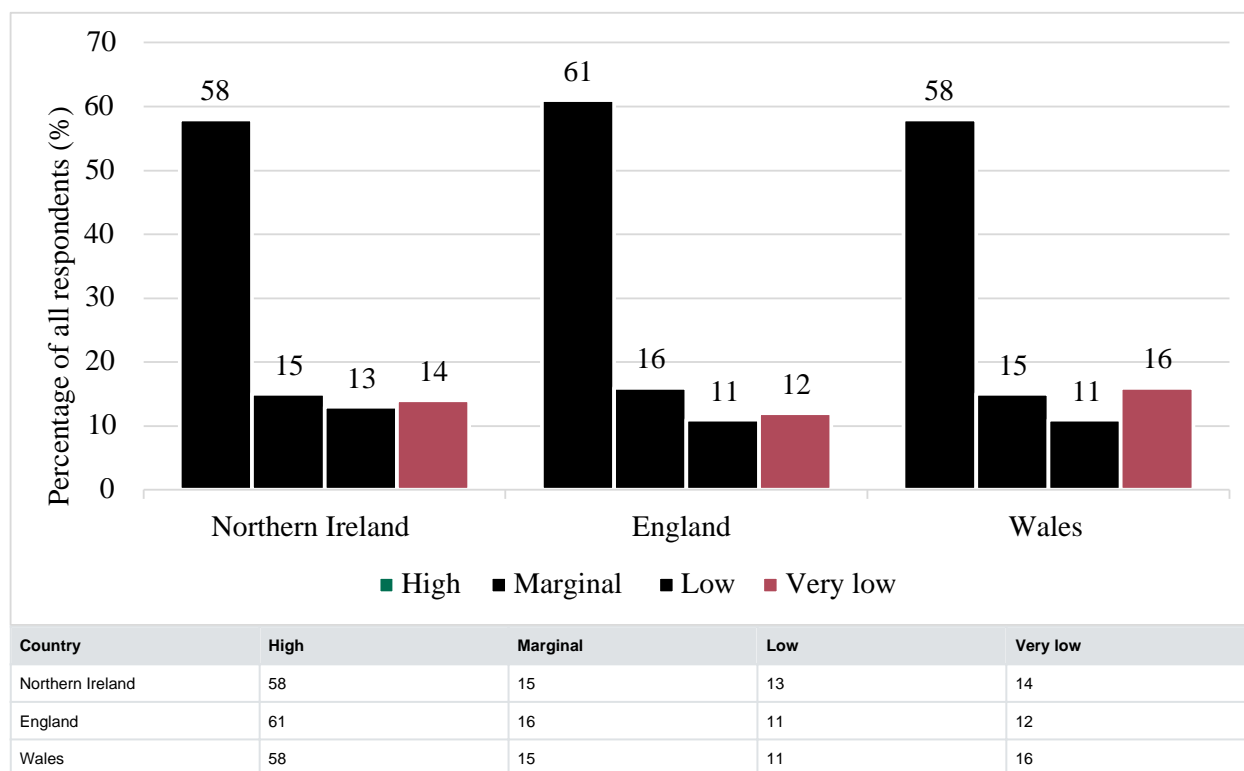
Across Northern Ireland, England and Wales, 76% of respondents were classified as food secure (60% high, 16% marginal) and 24% of respondents were classified as food insecure (11% low, 13% very low). [\(footnote 1\)](#)

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

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

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8

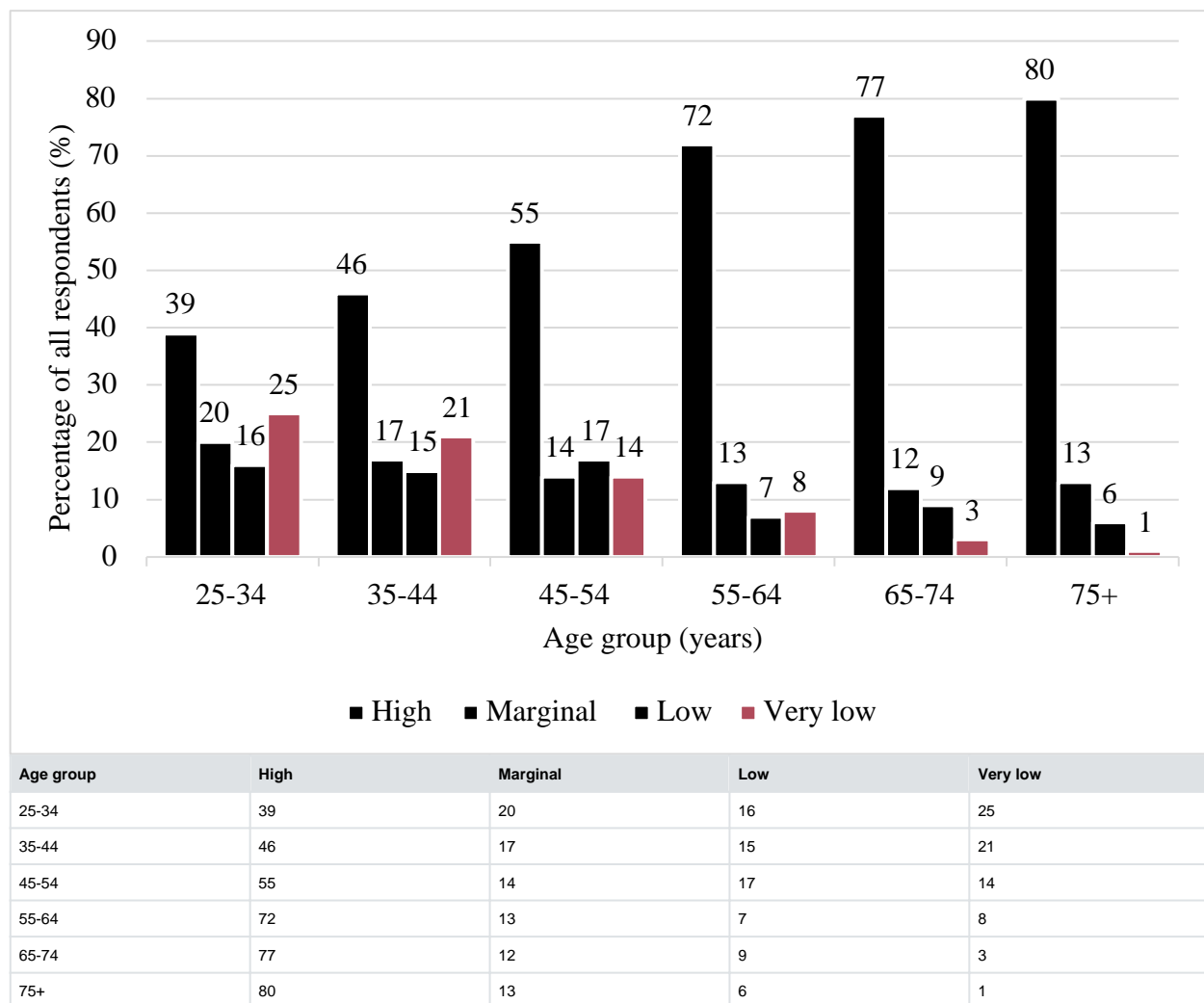
Food security in Northern Ireland

Within Northern Ireland, food security varied by age group with younger adults more likely than older adults to report they were food insecure. For example, 41% of respondents aged 25-34 years were food insecure compared to 6% of those aged 75 years and over (Figure 6). [\(footnote 2\)](#)

Figure 6. Food security by age group.

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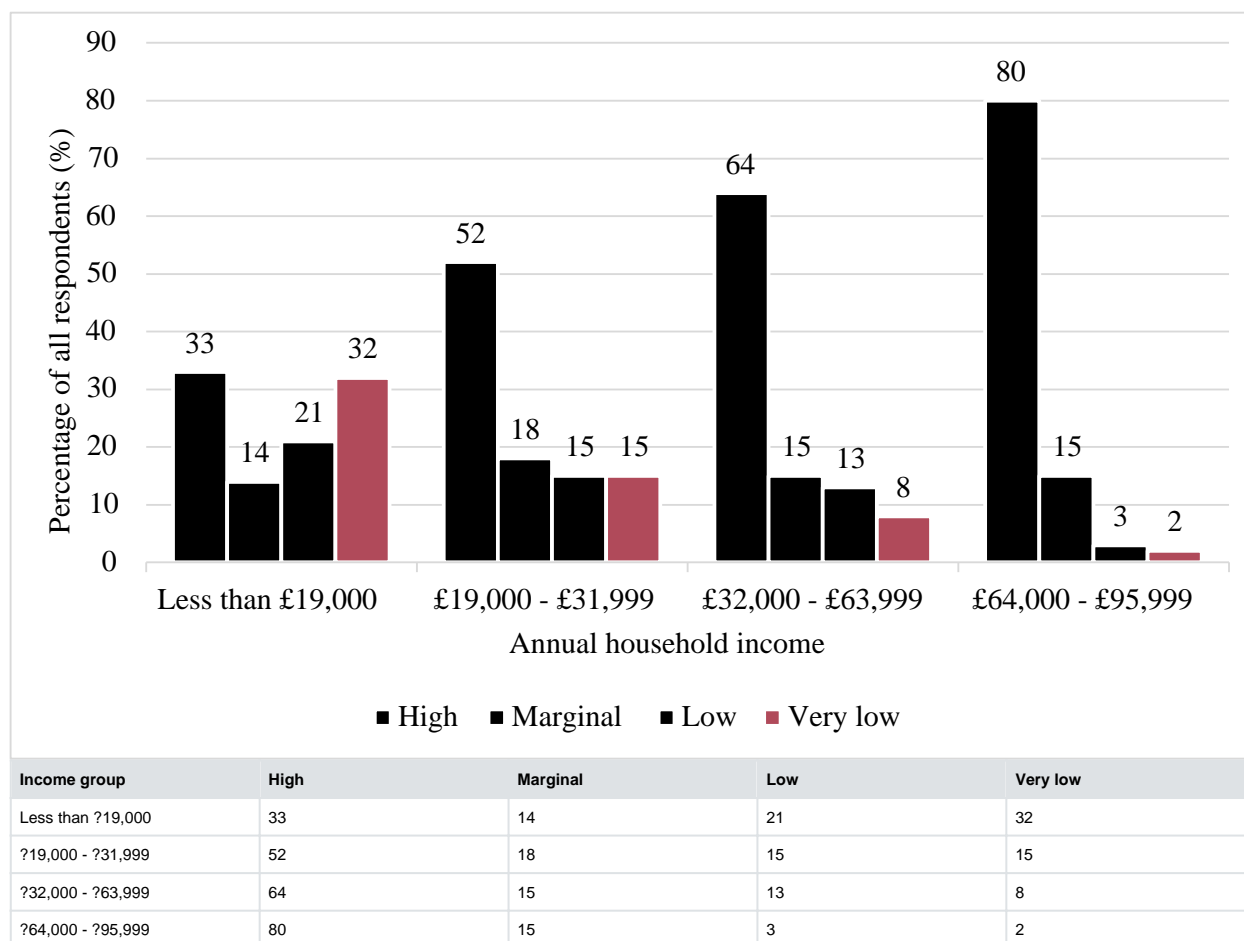
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8

In Northern Ireland, respondents on lower household incomes were more likely to be food insecure than those on higher incomes. For example, 53% of those earning less than £19,000 were food insecure, compared to 5% of those earning between £64,000 and £95,999. (Figure 7). [\(footnote 3\)](#)

Figure 7. Food security by annual household income.

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 8

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

- household size: 2 person households were the least likely to be food insecure (19%) compared to all other household sizes (30%-33%)
- children under 16 in household: 36% of households with children under 16 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 23% of households without children under 16 years
- NS-SEC: semi-routine/routine occupations (35%) and intermediate occupations (32%) were more likely to report being food insecure than managerial, administrative and professional occupations (21%) or small employers/own account workers (18%) ([footnote 4](#))
- long term health condition: respondents who have a long-term health condition (37%) were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those who do not have a long-term health condition (22%)
- NIMDM: respondents who live in the most deprived areas were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those who live in more deprived areas. For example, 41% of those who lived in the most deprived area (NIMDM 1) were food insecure compared to 21% of those who lived in the least deprived area (NIMDM 5)

Changes to food-related behaviour for financial reasons

Respondents who reported eating less of certain types of food in the last 12 months, reported financial reasons (e.g. cost of that type of food or reduced income) as the cause of eating less red meat (40%), processed meat (18%), processed food (17%), dairy and/or eggs (17%). [\(footnote 5\)](#)

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

Free school meals and meal clubs

Respondents with children aged 5-15 years in their household were asked whether these children receive free school meals. 85% with a child(ren) aged 7-15 years in their household reported that the child(ren) do not receive free school meals. 14% reported that their child(ren) receive free school meals. [\(footnote 7\)](#)

Respondents with children aged 5-15 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 (82%) reported that the child(ren) in their household had not attended one of these clubs in the last 12 months. 15% reported that the child(ren) in their household had attended a breakfast club before school, 4% reported that the child(ren) had attended an after-school club where they received a meal, and 4% reported that the child(ren) had attended a lunch and activity club held during the school holidays. [\(footnote 8\)](#)

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see [USDA Food Security guidance](#) and Technical Report. Base = 5,808, all respondents. Wave 8.
2. Data for respondents aged 16-24 years is not reported due to a small number of respondents in this group.
3. Data for those earning over £65,000 is not reported due to a small number of respondents being in this group.

‘Food insecurity’ or ‘food insecure’ refers to low and very low food security combined.

4. Data for long term unemployed and/or had never worked and full-time students were not reported due to small numbers of respondents these groups.
5. Question: You have said that you have eaten less of certain foods in the last 12 months. Which of the following reasons, if any, explain why you chose to make this change?
Response options: For animal welfare reasons; For environmental or sustainability reasons (e.g., impact on climate change); For financial reasons (e.g., cost of meat or reduced income); For health reasons (e.g., to be more healthy or lose weight); For religious reasons; Because of the bad or unpleasant physical reaction eating meat causes me (e.g., food intolerance); Because of concerns about food poisoning; Because other people in my household or my friends have reduced their meat consumption or don't eat meat; Because of advice from friends or family; Because of advice from celebrities or influencers; Because of concerns about where meat comes from; Because I wanted a change; Due to

pregnancy; Other reason; None of these; Prefer not to say. Bases = all online respondents who had eaten less of each type of food in the last 12 months: Red meat = 166, Processed meat = 149, Processed food = 450, Dairy = 103. Please note: poultry and fish are not reported due to small numbers of respondents these groups.

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 = 1,550, all respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
7. Question: Does any child receive free school meals? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base = 277, all respondents who had child(ren) aged 5-15 living in the household in Northern Ireland. Wave 7. The eligibility criteria for free school meals varies between [England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).
8. 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 = 203, all respondents with child(ren) aged 5-15 in the household in Northern Ireland. Wave 7.