F&Y2 Wave 6: 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 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.

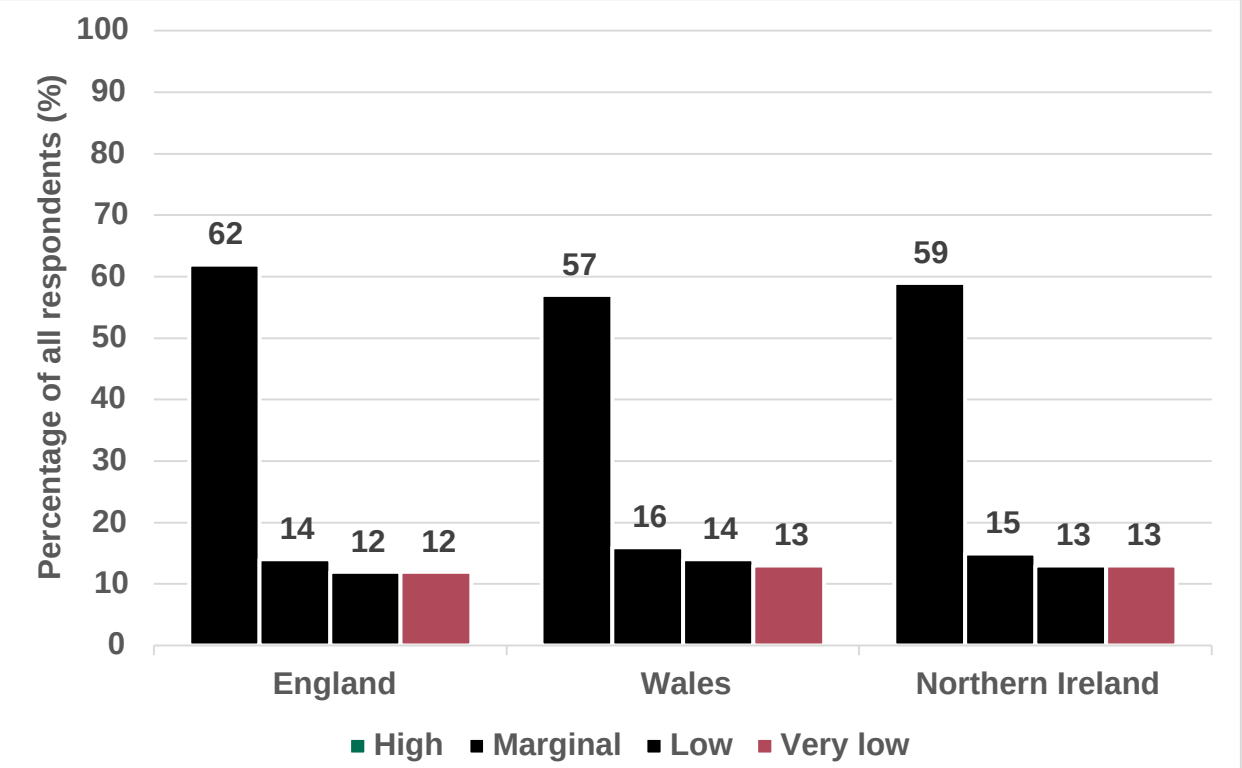
Food Security

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 (12% low, 12% very low) (footnote 1).

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

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Nation	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
England	62	14	12	12
Wales	57	16	14	13
Northern Ireland	59	15	13	13

Download this chart

Image .csv

Source Food and You 2 Wave 6.

Around three-quarters of respondents were food secure (for example, had high or marginal food security) in England (76%), Wales (73%) and Northern Ireland (74%). Approximately a quarter of respondents were food insecure (for example, had low or very low food security) in England (24%), Wales (27%) and Northern Ireland (26%) (Figure 5).

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 (footnote 2).

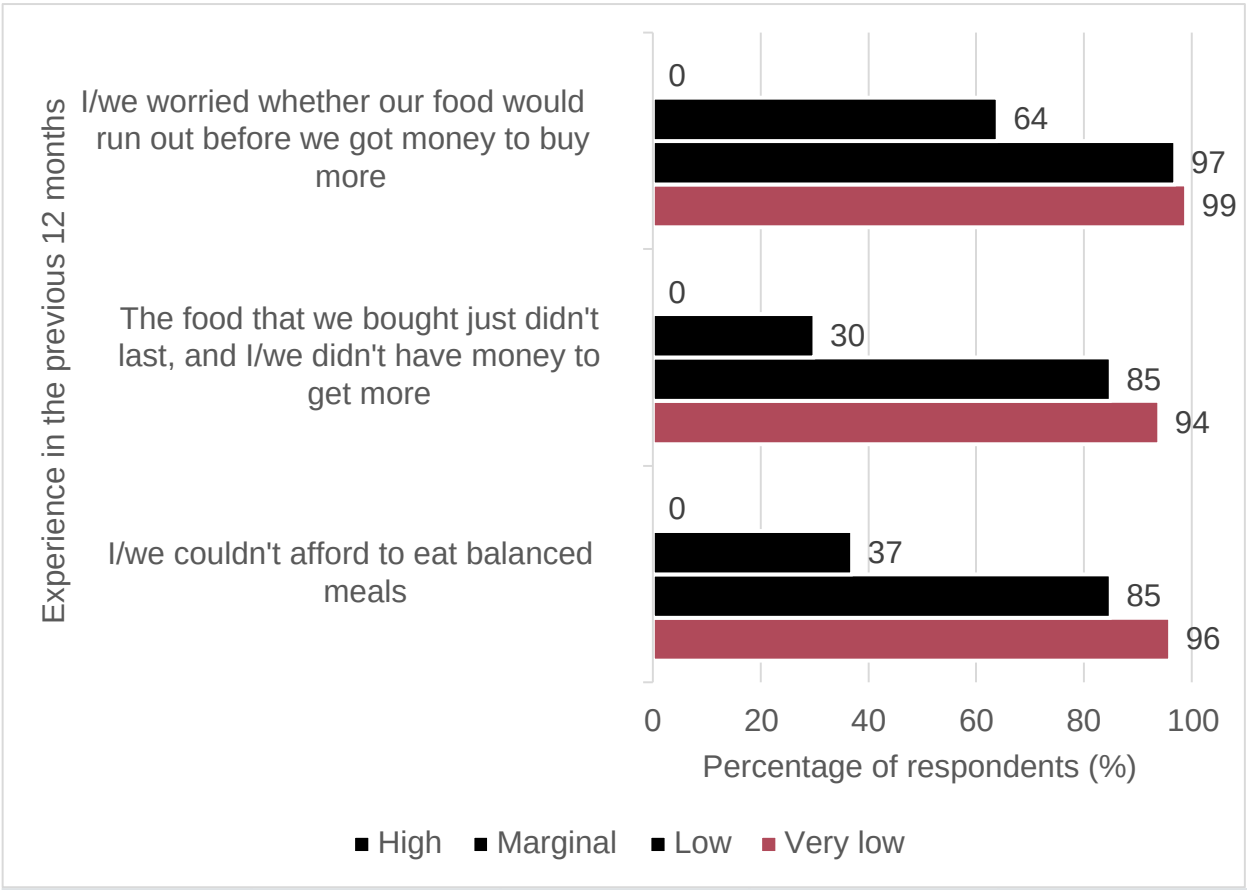
All respondents were asked the first three questions from the food security survey module. Respondents were asked how often, if ever, they had experienced any of the following in the previous 12 months:

- 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 7. Experiences of food security by food security classification

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Experience in the previous 12 months	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
I/we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	0	37	85	96
The food that we bought just didn't last, and I/we didn't have money to get more	0	30	85	94
I/we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more	0	64	97	99

Download this chart

Image .csv

Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

In the previous 12 months, respondents who had very low (99%), or low (97%) food security were more likely to have worried whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more, compared to those with marginal (64%) food security. Respondents who had very low (94%), or low (85%) 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 (30%) food security. Respondents who had very low (96%), or low (85%) food security were more likely to report that they couldn’t afford balanced meals, compared to those with marginal (37%) food security.

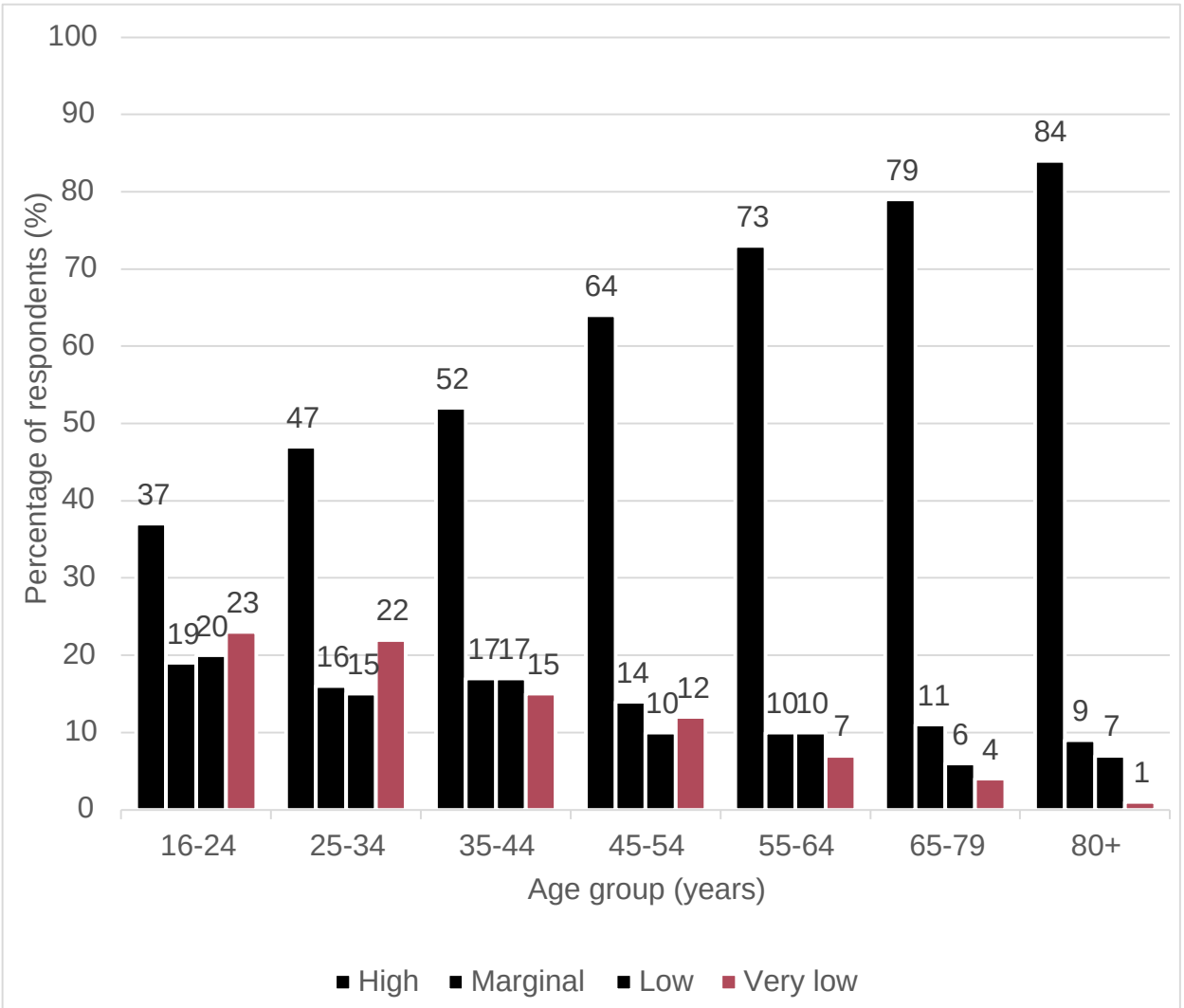
Respondents with high food security reported that they had not had any of these experiences (0% worried whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more, 0% the food that they bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more) in the previous 12 months (Figure 7).

How food security differs between socio-economic and demographic groups

Figure 8. Food security by age group.

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Age group	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
16-24	37	19	20	23
25-34	47	16	15	22
35-44	52	17	17	15
45-54	64	14	10	12
55-64	73	10	10	7
65-79	79	11	6	4

Age group	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
80+	84	9	7	1

Download this chart

Image .csv

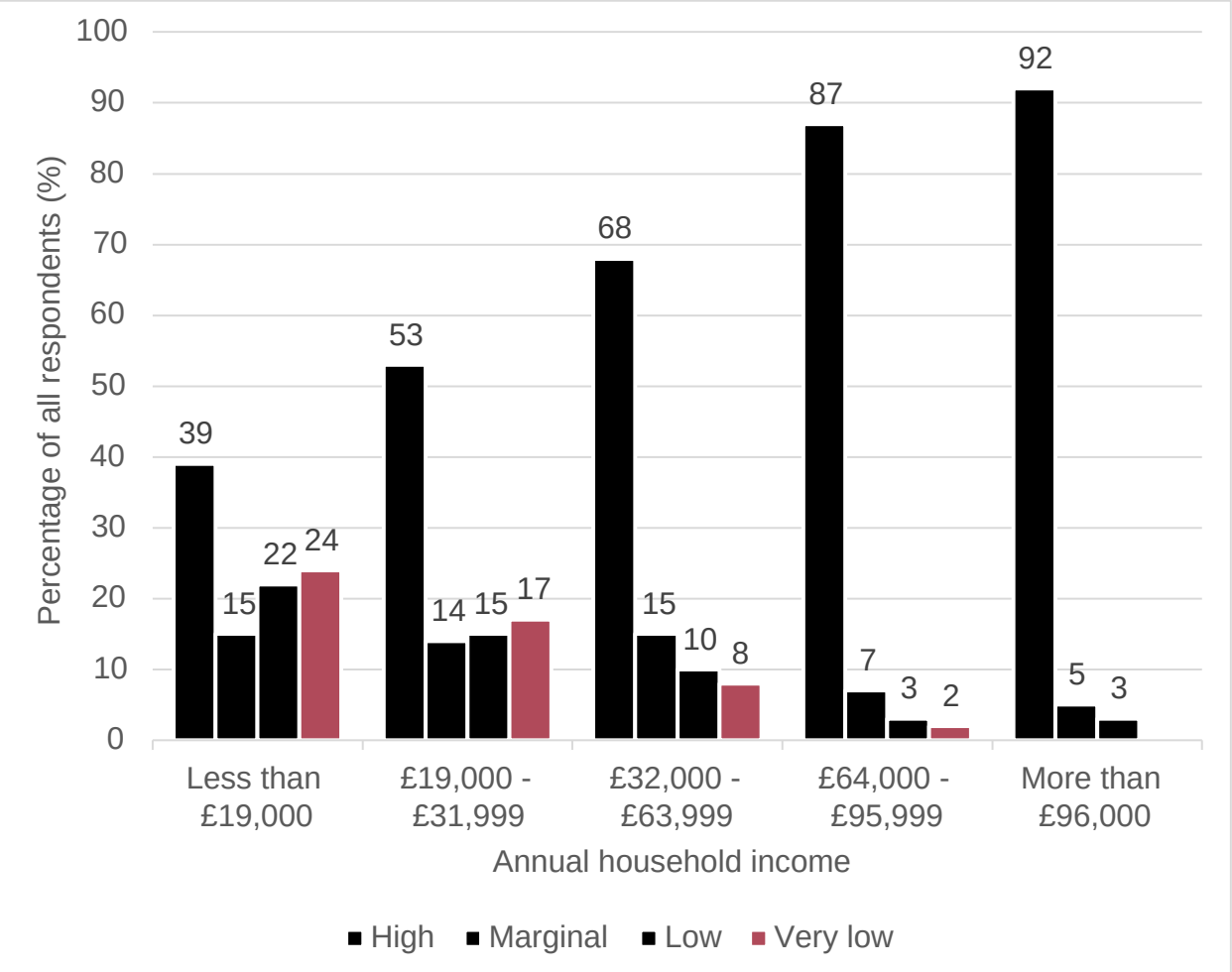
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

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, 44% of respondents aged 16-24 years were food insecure (20% low, 23% very low security) compared to 7% of those aged 80 years and over (7% low, 1% very low security) (Figure 8).

Figure 9. Food security by annual household income.

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Annual household income	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
Less than 19,000	39	15	22	24
19,000 - 31,999	53	14	15	17
32,000 - 63,999	68	15	10	8

Annual household income	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
64,000 - 95,999	87	7	3	2
More than 96,000	92	5	3	

Download this chart

Image .csv

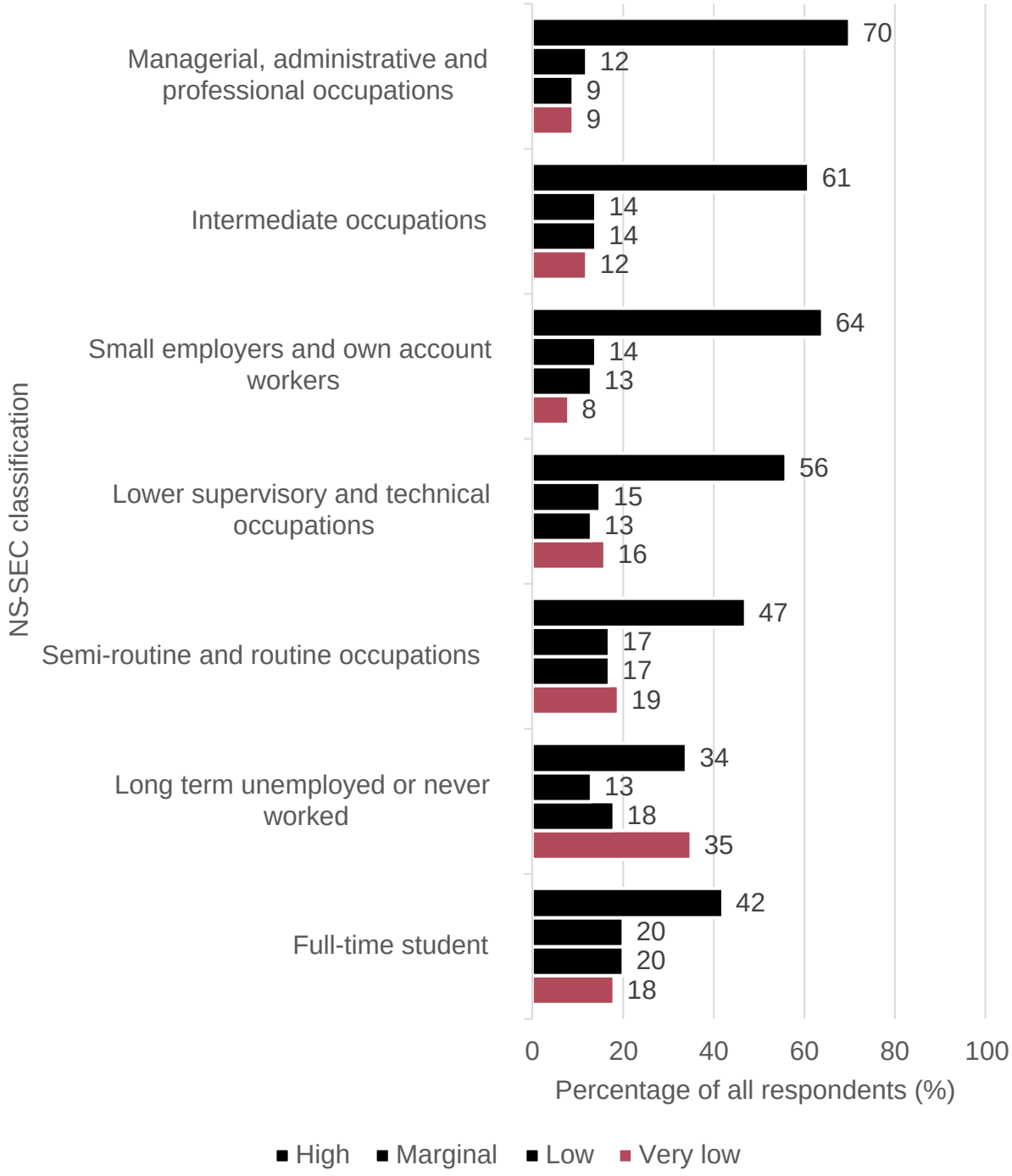
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

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, 46% of those with an annual household income of less than £19,000 reported food insecurity (low 22%, very low 24%) compared to 5% of those with an income between £64,000 and £95,999 (low 3%, very low 2%) (Figure 9).

Figure 10. Food security by socio-economic classification (NS-SEC)

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



NS-SEC classification	High	Marginal	Low	Very low
Full-time student	42	20	20	18
Long term unemployed or never worked	34	13	18	35
Semi-routine and routine occupations	47	17	17	19
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	56	15	13	16
Small employers and own account workers	64	14	13	8
Intermediate occupations	61	14	14	12
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	70	12	9	9

Download this chart

Image .csv

Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

Respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (53%) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to all other occupational groups. Those who were full-time students (38%), and in semi-routine and routine occupations (36%), were more likely to be food insecure than many other occupations groups (for example, 18% of those in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations) (Figure 10) (footnote 3).

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

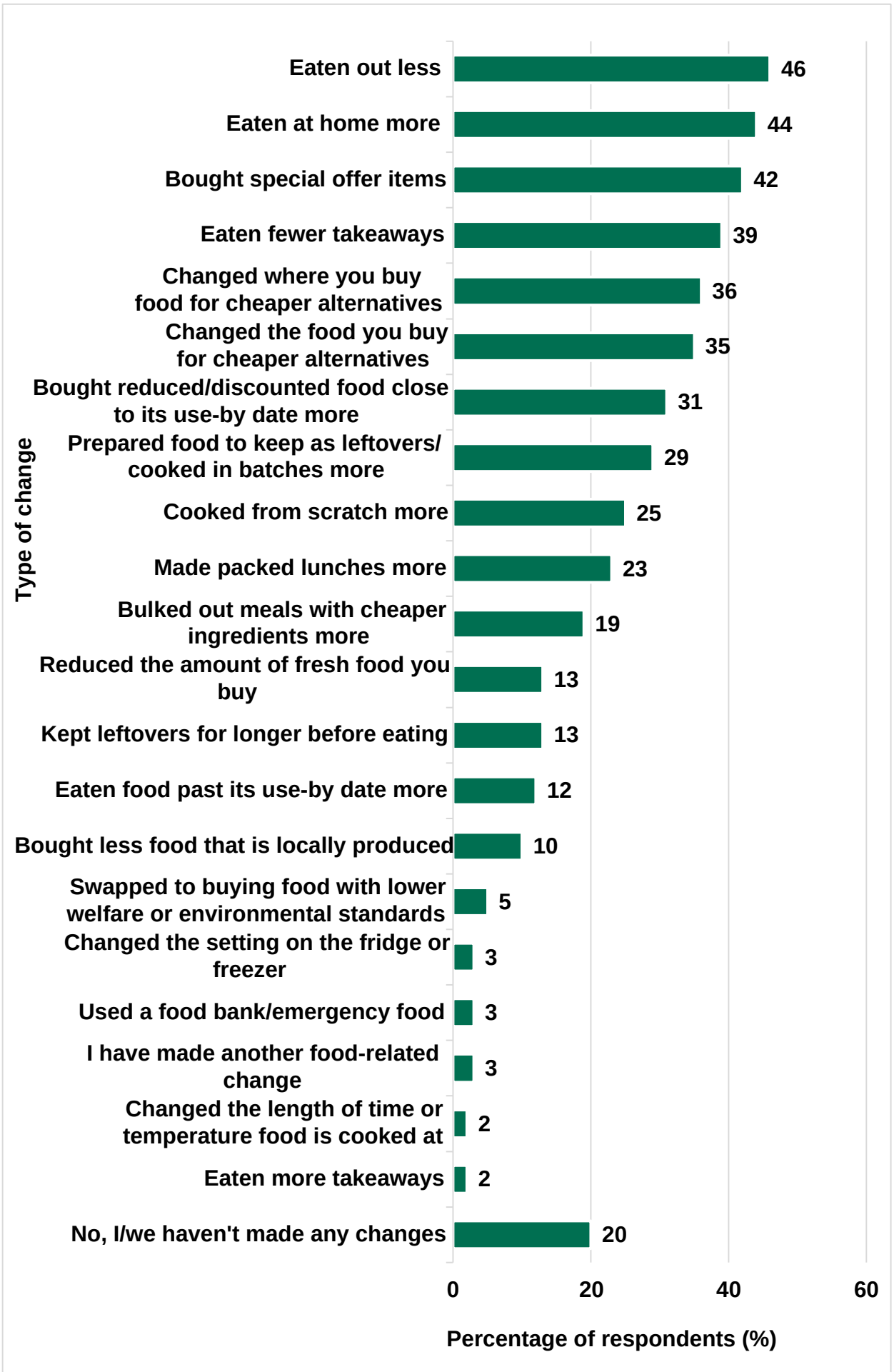
- **household size:** households with 5 people or more (44%) were more likely to report that they were food insecure compared to those in households with 4-persons or fewer (for example, 17% in 2-person households).
- **children under 16 in household:** 36% of households with children under 16 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 20% of households without children under 16 years.
- **children under 6 in household:** 45% of households with children under 6 years reported that they were food insecure compared to 22% 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 16% of respondents living in a rural area.
- **ethnic group:** 34% of Asian or Asian British respondents reported that they were food insecure compared to 22% of respondents white respondents (footnote 4).
- **long term health condition:** respondents with a long-term health condition (32%) were more likely to report being food insecure compared to those without a long-term health condition (20%).

Changes to food-related behaviours

Figure 11. Changes in eating habits and food-related behaviours for financial reasons.

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view


Type of change
Eaten out less
46
Eaten at home more
44
Bought special offer items
42
Eaten fewer takeaways
39
Changed where you buy food for cheaper alternatives
36
Changed the food you buy for cheaper alternatives
35
Bought reduced/discounted food close to its use-by date more
31
Prepared food to keep as leftovers/ cooked in batches more
29
Cooked from scratch more
25
Made packed lunches more
23
Bulked out meals with cheaper ingredients more
19
Reduced the amount of fresh food you buy
13
Kept leftovers for longer before eating
13
Eaten food past its use-by date more
12
Bought less food that is locally produced
10
Swapped to buying food with lower welfare or environmental standards
5
Changed the setting on the fridge or freezer
3
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
2
Eaten more takeaways
2
No, I/we haven't made any changes
20
0
20
40
60
Percentage of respondents (%)

Type of change	Percentage of respondents
No, I/we haven't made any changes	20
Eaten more takeaways	2
Changed the length of time or temperature food is cooked at	2
I have made another food-related change	3
Used a food bank/emergency food	3
Changed the setting on the fridge or freezer	3
Swapped to buying food with lower welfare or environmental standards	5
Bought less food that is locally produced	10
Eaten food past its use-by date more	12
Kept leftovers for longer before eating	13
Reduced the amount of fresh food you buy	13
Bulked out meals with cheaper ingredients more	19
Made packed lunches more	23
Cooked from scratch more	25
Prepared food to keep as leftovers/ cooked in batches more	29
Bought reduced/discounted food close to its use-by date more	31
Changed the food you buy for cheaper alternatives	35
Changed where you buy food for cheaper alternatives	36
Eaten fewer takeaways	39
Bought special offer items	42
Eaten at home more	44
Eaten out less	46
Cooked at home more	-

Download this chart

Image .csv

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 (46% ate out less, 44% ate at home more, 39% ate fewer takeaways), changes to shopping habits (42% bought items on special offer, 36% changed where they buy food for cheaper alternatives, 35% changed the food they buy for cheaper alternatives, 31% bought reduced/discounted food, 19% bulked out meals with cheaper ingredients) and changes to food preparation (29% prepared food that could be kept as leftovers/ cooked in batches more, 23% made more packed lunches).

Around 1 in 10 respondents reported that they had reduced the amount of fresh food they bought (13%) and 10% of respondents had bought less food that is locally produced. Some respondents reported an increase in risky food safety behaviours due to financial reasons (13% kept leftovers for longer before eating, 12% had eaten food past its use-by date more, 3% changed the setting on the fridge / freezer, 2% changed the length of time or temperature food is cooked at) (Figure 11) (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, 37% 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 7% had received a food parcel every month or more often (footnote 7).

Free school meals

Respondents with children aged 7-15 years in their household were asked whether these children receive free school meals. Most respondents (78%) 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 six (17%) respondents reported that the child or children receive free school meals (footnote 8).

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

- **annual household income:** respondents with an income of less than £19,000 (45%) were more likely to report that the child(ren) receive free school meals compared to those with a higher income (for example, 4% of those with an income of £64,000-£95,999).
- **food security:** respondents with low (36%) or very low (34%) food security were more likely to report their child(ren) received free school meals compared to those with a high (5%) or marginal (14%) food security.
- **long-term health condition**: respondents with a long-term health condition (30%) security were more likely to report the child(ren) received free school meals compared to those without a long-term health condition (13%).

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 a 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. Around 1 in 20 (4%) respondents reported that they had used a social supermarket in the last 12 months, whilst 80% of respondents reported that they had not. Only 14% of respondents reported that they had not heard of social supermarkets (footnote 9).

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

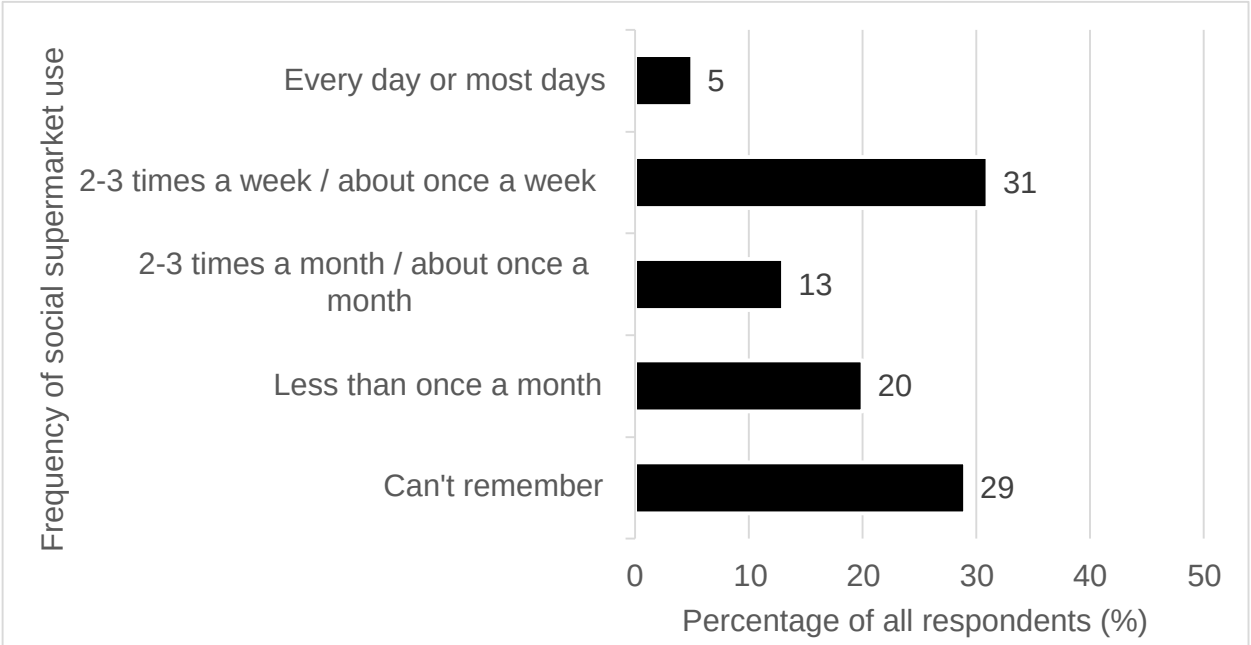
- **annual household income:** respondents with an income of less than £19,000 (9%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those with a higher income (for example, 2% of those with an income between £32,000 and £63,999)**.
- **NS-SEC:** respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (20%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those in other occupational groups (for example, 3% in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations) or full-time students (4%).
- **food security:** respondents with very low food security (14%) were more likely to have used a social supermarket than those with low (7%) or marginal (6%) food security. Those

with high food security (1%) were least likely to have used a social supermarket.

Figure 12. Frequency of social supermarket use

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Frequency of use	Percentage of respondents
Can't remember	29
Less than once a month	20
2-3 times a month / about once a month	13
2-3 times a week / about once a week	31
Every day or most days	5

Download this chart

Image .csv

Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

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, 31% had used a social supermarket 2-3 times a week or about once a week, 13% had used a social supermarket 2-3 times a month or about once a month, and 20% had used a social supermarket less than once a month. However, 29% 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 12) (footnote 10).

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see USDA Food Security guidance and Technical Report. Base= 5991, 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. 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 that were 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 for cheaper alternatives, changed the food you buy to cheaper alternatives, 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 other, 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= 3820, all online 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= 2991, 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= 270, 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: Does any child receive free school meals? Responses: Yes, No, Don’t know, Prefer not to say. Base= 1065, 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.

9. 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= 5991, all respondents.

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= 224, all respondents who have used a social supermarket in the last 12 month.