

F&Y2 Wave 5-6 NI: Chapter 3: Food security

Introduction

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

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.

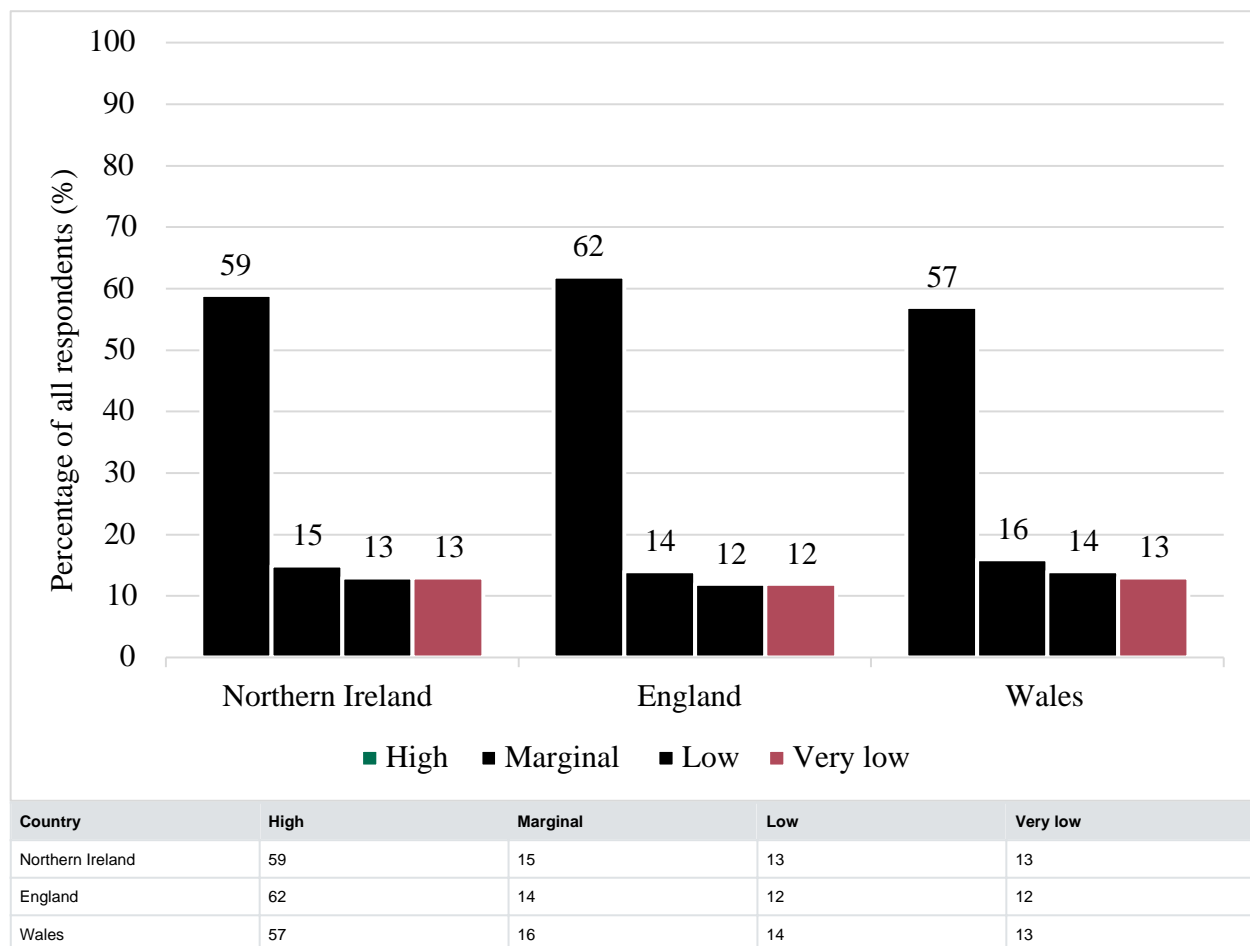
More information on how food security is measured and how classifications are assigned and defined can be found in Annex A and the [USDA Food Security website](#).

Food security in Northern Ireland, England and Wales

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

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

Across Northern Ireland, England and Wales, 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](#)).

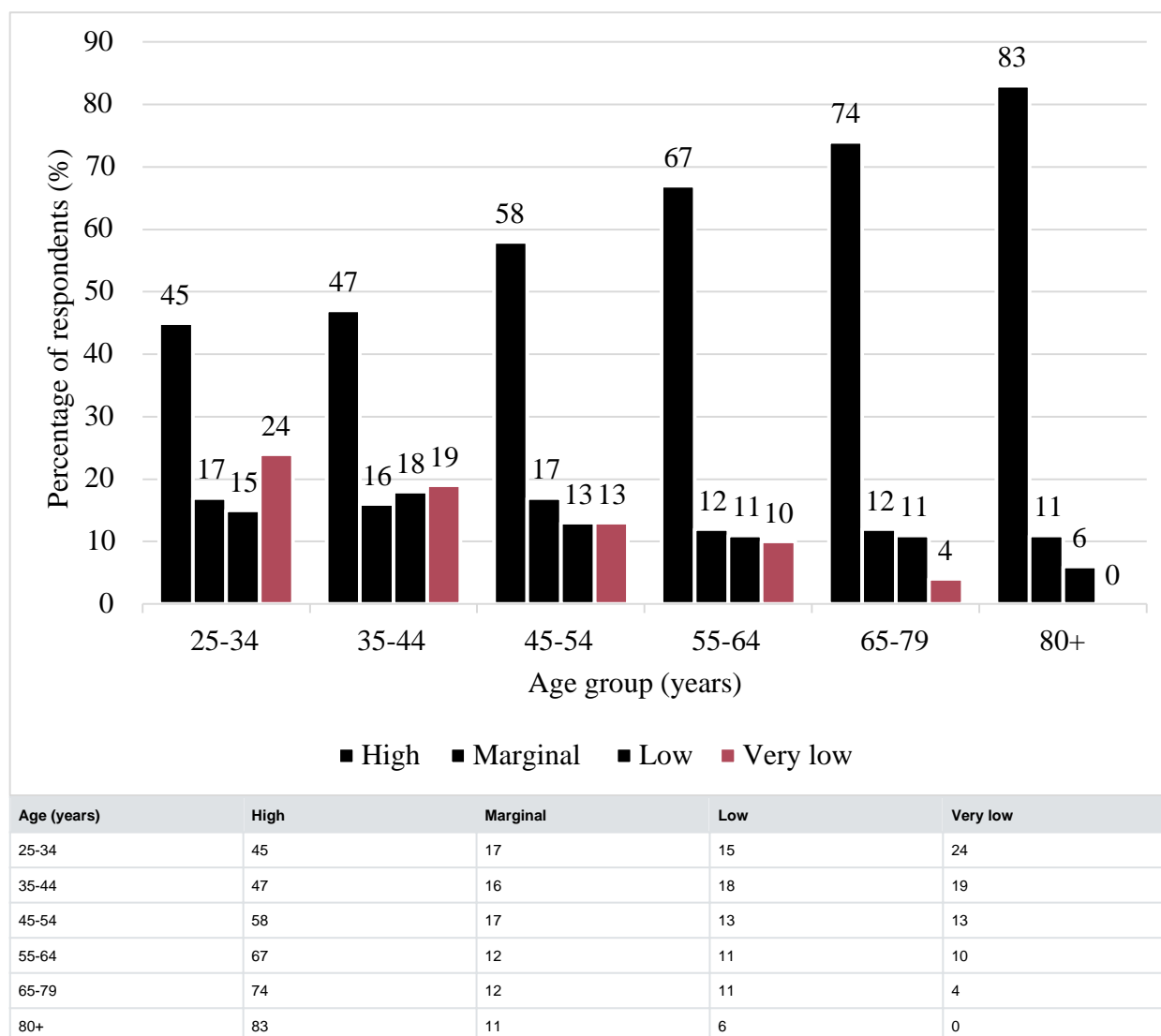
Food security levels were comparable across Northern Ireland, England, and Wales**. Around three quarters of respondents were food secure (i.e. had high or marginal food security) in Northern Ireland (74%), England (76%), and Wales (73%). Approximately 1 in 4 respondents were food insecure (i.e. had low or very low food security) in Northern Ireland (26%), England (24%), and Wales (27%) (Figure 5).

Food security in Northern Ireland

Figure 6. Food security by age group.

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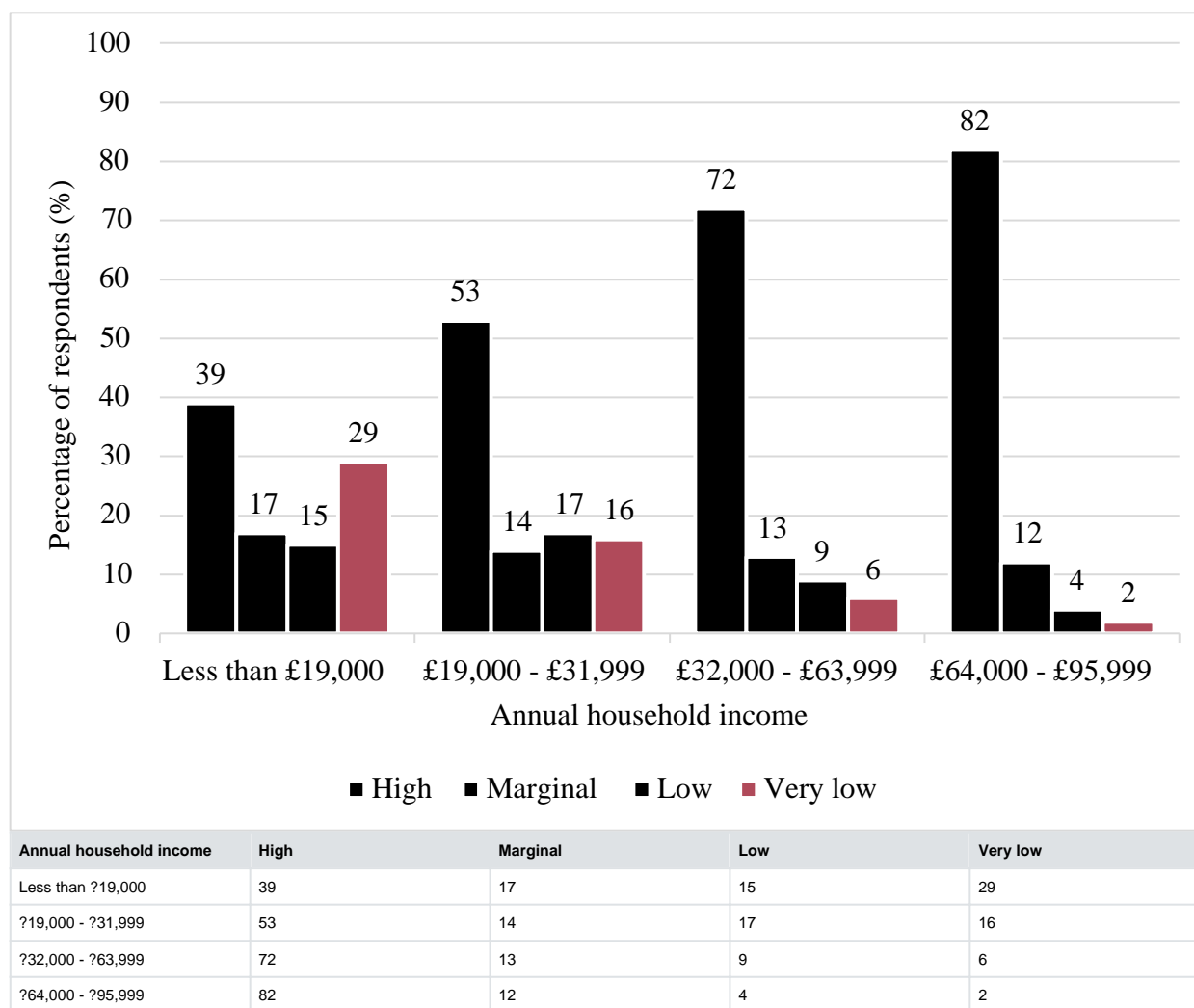
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

Within Northern Ireland, 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, 38% of respondents aged 25 to 34 years were food insecure compared to 15% of those aged 65 to 79 years (Figure 6) ([footnote 2](#)).

Figure 7. Food security by annual household income.

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

In Northern Ireland, food security was associated with household income. Respondents with a higher household income were more likely to report food security than those with a lower income. For example, 82% of respondents with a household income between £64,000 and £95,999 reported high food security, compared to 39% of those with an income below £19,000 (Figure 7) ([footnote 3](#)).

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

- **household size:** two person households (80%) were more likely to report that they were food secure compared to households with 5 or more people (69%).
- **children under 16 in household:** 78% of households without children under 16 years reported that they were food secure compared to 66% of households with children under 16 years.
- **NS-SEC:** food security was more likely to be reported by small employers and own account workers (82%), and respondents in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (79%) compared to those who were in many other occupational groups (for example, 62% of those in semi-routine and routine occupations were food secure) .

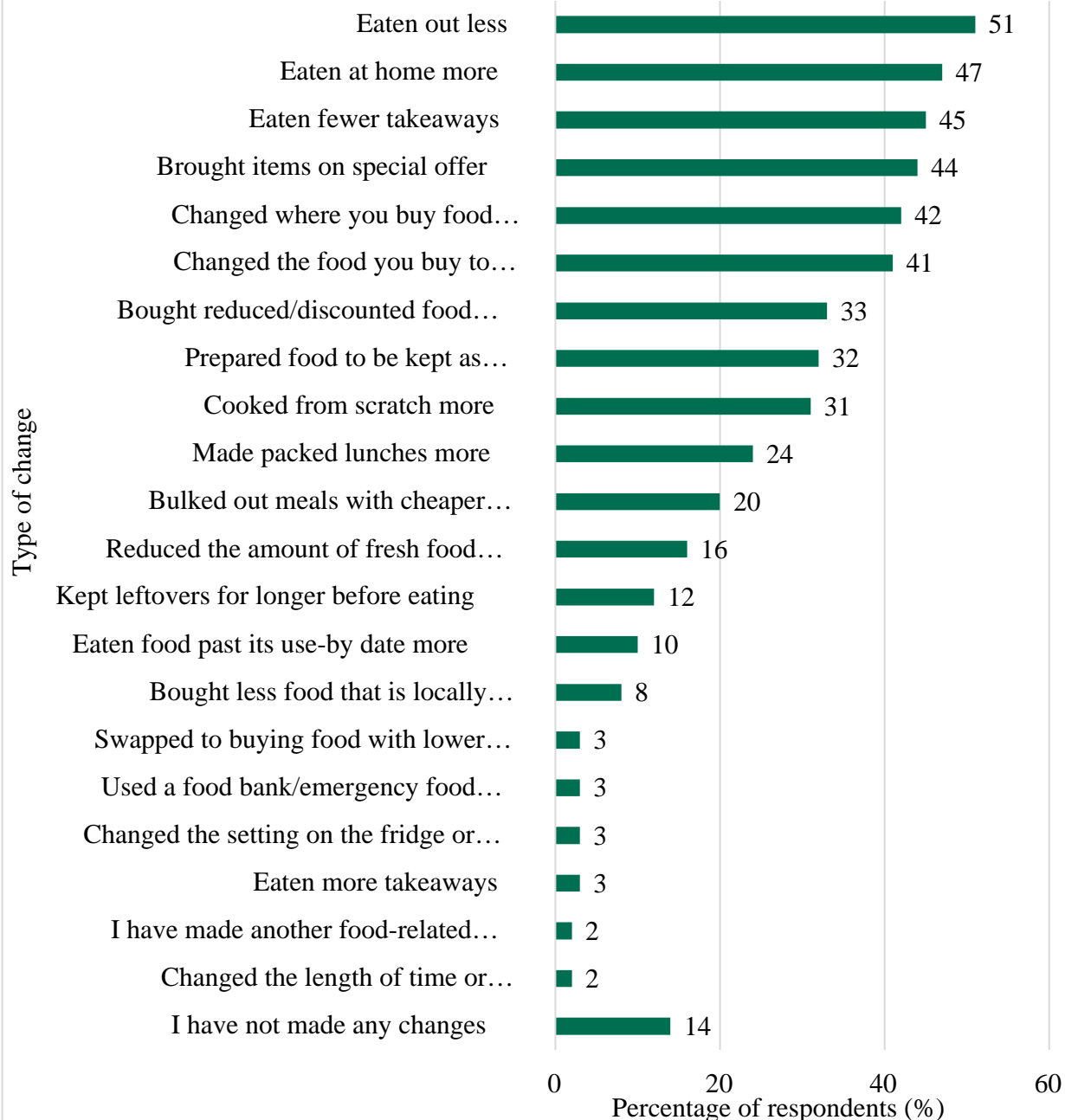
- **long term health condition:** respondents who did not have a long-term health condition (79%) were more likely to report being food secure compared to those who had a long-term health condition (64%).
- **NIMDM:** respondents who lived in less deprived areas were more likely to report being food secure compared to those who lived in more deprived areas. For example, 80% of those who lived in the least deprived area (NIMDM 5) were food secure compared to 67% of those who lived in the most deprived area (NIMDM 1).

Changes to food-related behaviour for financial reasons

Figure 8. Changes in eating habits and food-related behaviours for financial reasons.

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Type of change	Percentage of respondents (%)
I have not made any changes	14
Changed the length of time or temperature food is cooked at	2
I have made another food-related change	2
Eaten more takeaways	3
Changed the setting on the fridge or freezer	3
Used a food bank/emergency food provider	3
Swapped to buying food with lower welfare or environmental standards	3
Bought less food that is locally produced	8
Eaten food past its use-by date more	10
Kept leftovers for longer before eating	12
Reduced the amount of fresh food you buy	16
Bulked out meals with cheaper ingredients more	20
Made packed lunches more	24

Type of change	Percentage of respondents (%)
Cooked from scratch more	31
Prepared food to be kept as leftovers/cooked in batches more	32
Bought reduced/discounted food close to its use-by date more	33
Changed the food you buy for cheaper alternatives	41
Changed where you buy food for cheaper alternatives	42
Brought special offer items	44
Eaten fewer takeaways	45
Eaten at home more	47
Eaten out less	51

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 6

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. In Northern Ireland, most respondents (86%) reported that they had made a change to their eating habits for financial reasons in the previous 12 months. Only 14% of respondents indicated they had made no changes.

The changes the highest proportion of respondents reported making related to what and where respondents ate (51% ate out less, 47% ate at home more, 45% ate fewer takeaways), changes to shopping habits (44% bought items on special offer, 42% changed where they buy food for cheaper alternatives, 41% changed the food they buy for cheaper alternatives, 33% bought reduced/discounted food) and changes to food preparation (32% prepared food that could be kept as leftovers/ cooked in batches more, 24% made more packed lunches).

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. In Northern Ireland, 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 [\(footnote 4\)](#).

Free school meals, meal clubs and Healthy Start vouchers

Respondents with children aged 7-15 years in their household were asked whether these children receive free school meals. In Northern Ireland, most respondents (80%) with a child(ren) reported that the child(ren) do not receive free school meals. Around one in five (19%) respondents reported that the child or children receive free school meals [\(footnote 5\)](#).

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. Around 8 in 10 (83%) reported that the child(ren) in their household had not attended one of these clubs in the last 12 months. One in eight (12%) respondents reported that the child(ren) in their household had attended a breakfast club before school, 3% reported that the child(ren) had attended a lunch and activity club held during the school holidays and 2% reported that the child(ren) had attended an after-school club where they received a meal [\(footnote 6\)](#).

Respondents who had children aged 0-4 years in their household or who were pregnant were asked whether they receive Healthy Start vouchers. In Northern Ireland, most respondents (87%)

reported that they do not receive [Healthy Start](#) vouchers, with 10% of respondents reporting that they do [\(footnote 7\)](#).

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see [USDA Food Security guidance](#) and Technical Report. Base= 5991, all respondents. Wave 6. Please note: See Annex A for information about the classifications and definitions of food security levels.
2. Data for respondents aged 16-24 years and those aged 80 years and over is not reported due to a small number of respondents being in this group.
3. Data for respondents with an annual household income of more than £96,000 is not reported due to a small number of respondents being in this group.
4. 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= 1644, all respondents in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
5. Question: Does any child receive free school meals? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base= 344, all respondents who had child(ren) aged 7 - 15 living in the household in Northern Ireland. Wave 6. The eligibility criteria for free school meals varies between [England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).
6. 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= 271, all respondents with child(ren) aged 5 - 15 in the household in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
7. Question: Do you receive Healthy Start vouchers for yourself or your children? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know, Prefer not to say. Base= 132, all online respondents who are pregnant or have child(ren) aged 0 - 4 in household in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.