Food and You 2 trends: 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.

This chapter reports how food security and food bank use changed between Wave 1 (July 2020 to October 2020) and Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024).

Food security

Following a period of stability between Wave 1 (July 2020 to October 2020) and Wave 3 (April 2021 to June 2021), the percentage of respondents classified as food secure (i.e., high or marginal food security) notably decreased, from 85% in Wave 3 to 76% in Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024). Conversely, the percentage of respondents classified as food insecure (i.e., low or very low food security) increased, from 15% in Wave 3 to 24% in Wave 8 (Figure 11) (footnote 1).

Figure 11. Food security in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

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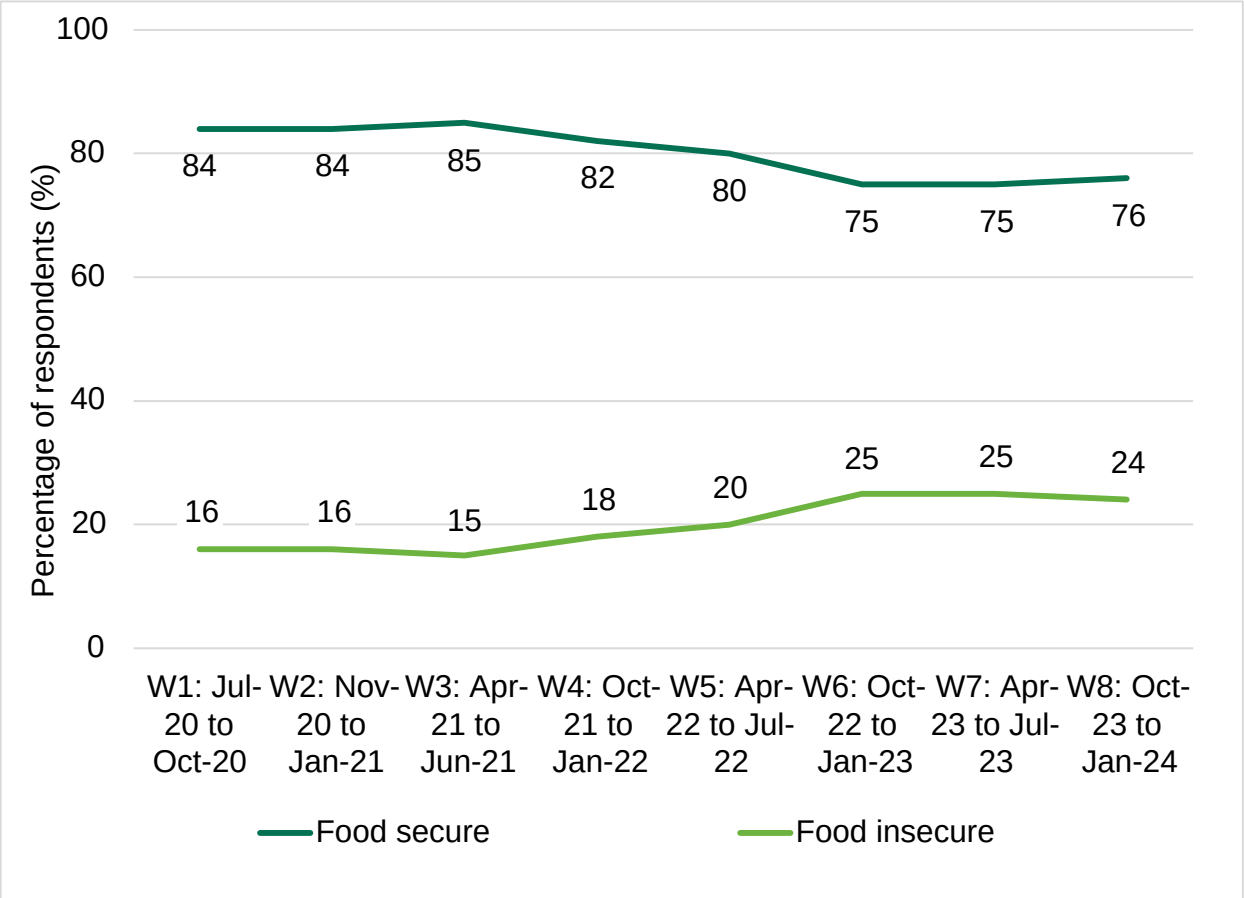

Wave	Food secure (%)	Food insecure (%)
W1: Jul-20 to Oct-20	84	16
W2: Nov-20 to Jan-21	84	16
W3: Apr-21 to Jun-21	85	15
W4: Oct-21 to Jan-22	82	18
W5: Apr-22 to Jul-22	80	20
W6: Oct-22 to Jan-23	75	25
W7: Apr-23 to Jul-23	75	25
W8: Oct-23 to Jan-24	76	24

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Food and You 2: Wave 1-8

Food bank use

The percentage of respondents reporting that they had received a free parcel from a food bank or other emergency food provider in the previous 12 months slightly decreased from 6% in Wave 2 (November 2020 to June 2021) to 4% in Wave 3 (April 2021 to June 2021)**. Since then, the percentage using a food bank has remained broadly stable at between 3 and 4% (Figure 12) (footnote 2).

Figure 12. Use of food banks and/or other emergency food providers.

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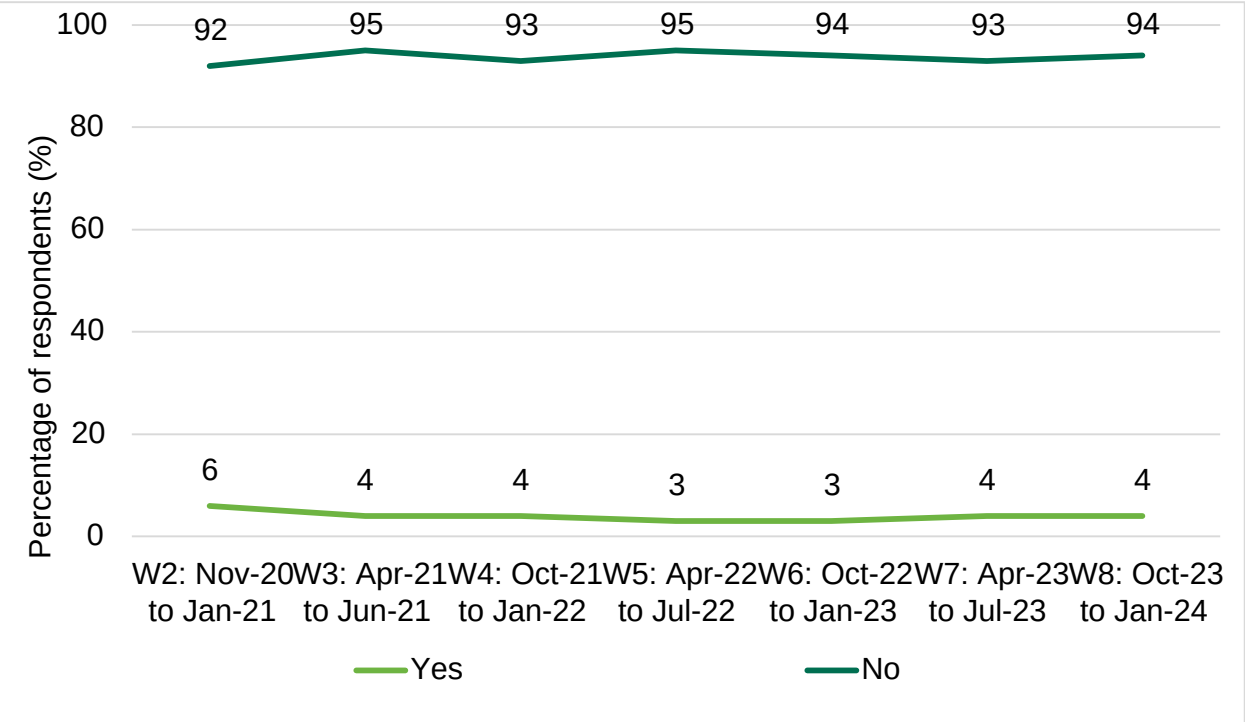

Wave	Yes (%)	No (%)
W2: Nov-20 to Jan-21	6	92
W3: Apr-21 to Jun-21	4	95
W4: Oct-21 to Jan-22	4	93
W5: Apr-22 to Jul-22	3	95
W6: Oct-22 to Jan-23	3	94
W7: Apr-23 to Jul-23	4	93
W8: Oct-23 to Jan-24	4	94

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Food and You 2: Wave 2-8

1. Question/Responses: Derived variable, see USDA Food Security guidance and Technical Report. Total base across waves 1-8 = 51,659 (range between 5,796 in Wave 3 and 9,319 in Wave 1), all respondents. Please note: 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.

2. 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. Total base across waves 2-8= 27,228 (range between 3617in Wave 7 and 4,326 in Wave 2) all online respondents. Please note: this question was not included in Wave 1. Please note: in 2020, a government-led scheme delivered boxes of emergency food to clinically vulnerable people across the UK. This was a large scale scheme, for

example, over one million boxes were delivered to clinically vulnerable people in England.