



# Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives:

Fourth annual progress report (2020)

## Food Insecurity: A public health concern.

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### What is Food Poverty?

Food insecurity (also known as food poverty) is defined as a lack of consistent access to a sufficient quantity of inexpensive, nutritious food needed to maintain good health and wellbeing.

The year 2020/21 has been unprecedented, and the pandemic has directly contributed to an increase in housing, education, and employment inequalities in various ways. The advent of remote working, for example, is expected to exacerbate neighbourhood inequality, as employers in affluent neighbourhoods benefit disproportionately from wealthier people who are more likely to be able to work from home.

<https://theconversation.com/five-charts-that-reveal-how-remote-working-could-change-the-uk-154418>.

### It is noteworthy that,

**In May 2020, there were nearly 5 million people in the UK experiencing food insecurity, including 1.7 million children;** this represents a 250% increase over levels seen before the Covid-19 outbreak [www.yhphnetwork.co.uk/links-and-resources/healthier-resilient-food-systems](http://www.yhphnetwork.co.uk/links-and-resources/healthier-resilient-food-systems).

In this respect, results from the Family Resources Survey (FRS) for the financial year 2019 to 2020, providing information on income and circumstances of UK households shows that most people lived in households with high household food security (87%) or marginal household food security (6%). A minority of households were food insecure, with low household food security (4%) or very low household food security (4%).

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020).

### Do you know,

**In the past year, 14.2% of the UK adult population reported suffering some form of food insecurity.** Severe food insecurity was reported by 3.0% of the sample, a 66.7% increase over prior similar data from the Gallup World Poll (pooled data from 2016 to 2019). Food insecurity was linked to income (food insecurity was more common among those with lower incomes), age (those in older age groups were less likely to report experiencing food insecurity), and house ownership status (people renting their homes were more likely to have experienced food insecurity than people who owned their homes).

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8083270](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8083270).



## Even more recently,

**In January 2021, over 4% of adults across the UK reported to have been hungry the previous month and were unable to eat at least once a day.** In some areas, the problem is far worse, with roughly one out of every ten adults being hungry. In Yorkshire and the Humber, nearly half of local areas had very high numbers of people who were starving in January. In one out of every six local authorities, rates of hunger are more than 150 per cent (one and a half times) the national average. Surprisingly, **the rate is nearly twice in one out of every ten local authorities.**



[New map shows where millions of UK residents struggle to access food | News | The University of Sheffield](#)



**Social Inequalities:** There is evidence that socioeconomic inequalities such as gender, ethnicity increase people's risks during food crises and famines, particularly by exposing them to security dangers and restricting their access to key services and humanitarian aid. The gender gap is a key finding in the research, with women being more at risk of food insecurity than males.

<https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/16735>

## Health implications of Food Insecurity

- Food insecurity has a negative impact on one's physical and mental health, as well as their social and emotional well-being.
- Poor nutrition in women and girls means they are more likely to suffer from anemia, increasing their risk of bleeding and death during and after childbirth.
- More than a third of all children who die before reaching the age of five are malnourished. They don't get enough nutrient-dense food, as well as critical vitamins and minerals, to grow, develop, and fight disease.

[www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2048-food-insecurity-health-impacts-and-mitigation/24905](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2048-food-insecurity-health-impacts-and-mitigation/24905)

## Brief focus on North Yorkshire County during Covid-19

Early in the pandemic pop-up pantries sprang up to address food insecurity in the rural north of Craven. Although Skipton Foodbank, despite its name, does try to cover the whole of Craven, it was apparent that very local knowledge and relationships were key to getting food to people who would not have approached or know about the food bank.

**For example** members of faith communities with strong local roots knew of struggling families, and primary schools were approached so leaflets could go into book bags. They have been an expression of social action in communities.

**Note:** 16% of people have skipped meals/cut meal sizes for financial reasons, by June 2020 one in four young people under 25 years were experiencing food insecurity.

Food Standards Agency conducted qualitative research with 20 UK citizens to understand how people are experiencing food insecurity under Covid-19 and what the impacts of food insecurity under Covid-19 are. The study reports that Income loss has rapidly exacerbated existing insecurity and vulnerabilities. The results of this study also indicated changes in behaviour like stretching expiry dates of food products, thereby putting themselves at risk of food poisoning. People with food intolerances were unable to afford foods to maintain their health (i.e. gluten free products).

[www.nypartnerships.org.uk/healthyweight](http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/healthyweight)



**Age UK North Craven, the Community Support Organization for North Craven** through the pandemic, has been a lynchpin, enabling the pantries to receive **grant funding** by applying on their behalf and holding the grant money for them, as well as providing advice and support.

**Stronger Communities** has supported these four pantries with **£18,000 through DEFRA funding that has purchased food supplies and provided equipment** e.g. fridges, and shelving. The numbers of people using the pantries remain steady, and so the emphasis now is on supporting people out of food insecurity through the provision of advice and support.

A 'Cash First' leaflet is being developed, and volunteers are being trained to help people take action to address the issues that have caused them to need emergency food support in the first place.

### What has been done,

- **Before Covid-19 Pandemic;** Prior to the emergence of the Covid-19 epidemic, around 2.5 percent of all UK households – 700,000 people – used a food bank in 2019/20.
- **During Covid-19 Pandemic;** This is clear from food bank statistics for April 2020: an 89% increase in food parcels distributed by Trussell Trust food banks, and a 175% increase at the Independent Food Aid Network, when compared with the same month in 2019.

Since the onset of the Covid pandemic, The Food Foundation has commissioned a series of nationally representative studies to measure the impact of household food insecurity across the UK. Report on people's food insecurity experiences are noted, with a special focus on vulnerable groups such families, BAME and ethnic communities, persons with disabilities, and children on Free School Meals.

<https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking>



## Interventions aimed at addressing Food Insecurity

As seen above, food banks offer some relief of food insecurity, but they don't eliminate the problem. Hence, there is a need to evaluate the root causes of food poverty.

- Evaluations of local and regional food programmes in terms of accessibility and inclusion, with a focus on long-term, long-lasting effects on food insecurity.
- Evaluations of social interventions aimed at improving inclusion, reducing inequalities, and alleviating poverty on a societal level, as well as their potential impact on food insecurity.
- Evaluations of anti-poverty policies undertaken at the population or community level with the goal of increasing the income of those living in poverty and their influence on food insecurity.
- Evaluations of non-emergency, long-term policy interventions that give free or subsidized meals, free or subsidized fruit and vegetables, or food vouchers.
- Assessments of social and environmental impacts on food insecurity, as well as their impact on food choices, dietary intake, nutrition, and health and health risks among the various populations impacted.

[www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2048-food-insecurity-health-impacts-and-mitigation/24905](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2048-food-insecurity-health-impacts-and-mitigation/24905)



## Summary/Conclusion

### Know it,

The effects of poor access to resources on diet and health are represented by a spectrum of severity. Where an individual or household has limited resources, this limits access to a healthy diet (e.g. as represented by the Eatwell plate).

Access may be limited due to the immediate food environment and due to the affordability of healthier foods within that environment. For example, more disadvantaged areas tend to have an excess of fast-food takeaways selling unhealthy foods and poorer people are exposed to more advertisements for unhealthy foods in a range of environments. In such circumstances, diets become more limited with an excess of cheap, low nutrient but energy dense foods with an excess of calories, which can contribute to increasing levels of obesity.

It is important to therefore give a helping hand to the more vulnerable group of people; by facilitating and evaluating measures to achieve an inclusive community free from food insecurity disparities.



### For more information on Food Insecurity and available services to combat the impact of food poverty, visit

[www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/05/State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf](http://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/05/State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf)

[www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2048-food-insecurity-health-impacts-and-mitigation/24905](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/2048-food-insecurity-health-impacts-and-mitigation/24905)

[www.yhphnetwork.co.uk/links-and-resources/healthier-resilient-food-systems](http://www.yhphnetwork.co.uk/links-and-resources/healthier-resilient-food-systems)

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-10841-6>

<https://theconversation.com/five-charts-that-reveal-how-remote-working-could-change-the-uk-154418>

[www.nypartnerships.org.uk/sites/default/files/Partnership%20files/Health%20and%20wellbeing/Public%20health/Healthy%20weight/83291%20Healthy%20Weight%2C%20Healthy%20Lives%20Strategy%20annual%20report%20\(2020\)%20Final%2014.7.21.pdf](http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/sites/default/files/Partnership%20files/Health%20and%20wellbeing/Public%20health/Healthy%20weight/83291%20Healthy%20Weight%2C%20Healthy%20Lives%20Strategy%20annual%20report%20(2020)%20Final%2014.7.21.pdf)

[www.healthpovertyaction.org/how-poverty-is-created/essentials-for-health/food-and-nutrition/?gclid=CjwKCAiAp8iMBhAqEiwAJb94z\\_kSRu7gSIbS55pIjwOyqCn9K6XOAcnipdXe\\_TH9cBdjB7pMd7-AhoCmOsQAvD\\_BwE](http://www.healthpovertyaction.org/how-poverty-is-created/essentials-for-health/food-and-nutrition/?gclid=CjwKCAiAp8iMBhAqEiwAJb94z_kSRu7gSIbS55pIjwOyqCn9K6XOAcnipdXe_TH9cBdjB7pMd7-AhoCmOsQAvD_BwE)