Food insecurity in Wiltshire

Profile

2023

Public Health Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council

Key summary

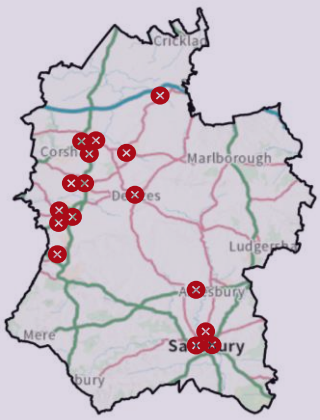
"Everyone should be able to access and afford enough good food to live a healthy life."

~ The Health Foundation, 2023

14%

An estimated 14.1% of households in the region are experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity, for example, eating less or skipping meals even when hungry, because they could not afford or access food

In Wiltshire, this is **30,339** households



16

16 of the 285 small neighbourhoods in Wiltshire are estimated to be among the 20% most vulnerable to food insecurity in England.

This estimate is based on risk factors for food insecurity including income, household composition, educational qualifications and mental ill health

15.7% of pupils in Wiltshire are known to be eligible for free school meals.

This is an **increase** from 14.4% in the previous school year (2021/22)

Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have contributed to recent **increases** in food insecurity.

Food inflation is currently higher than overall inflation (18.4% to 7.9% in May 2023).

The issue

What do we mean by food insecurity?

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) defines food insecurity as: 'Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways [e.g., without resorting to emergency supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies].'

Food insecurity is a wider term than 'food poverty' as it includes those who may be able to afford food but are unable to access or prepare it – for example, the elderly, the housebound or those with disabilities.

What is the impact of food insecurity?

- Food insecurity contributes to poor physical health. As well as hunger, malnutrition and obesity, it is also associated with inequalities in rates of cancer, diabetes and coronary heart disease.
- It negatively impacts mental health, causing stress and anxiety. Food insecure parents worry about the inability to afford sufficient food affecting their children's physical and mental health, and about the impact of the cost of living on their children's health, friendships, social development, and general wellbeing.
- Educational attainment can suffer in children experiencing food insecurity, as hunger harms children's ability to concentrate and regulate their behaviour, and is associated with social exclusion, bullying and stigma.
- It is also important to think about what else households go without when budgets are insufficient. This includes the trade-offs made between buying food and heating, rent and other bills.

Experience in Wiltshire

"People are being forced to use food banks, something no one ever wants to do."

~ Jessica Foster, Head of Church Engagement at the Trussell Trust

59%

Annual increase in the number of food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Wiltshire in Apr-Sept 2022



Who is most at risk of food insecurity in Wiltshire?



Single parent families are over **6x** more likely to experience food insecurity than other household types

27% food insecurity in single parent households, compared with 4% in other household types in the South West (Family Resources Survey 2021/22)



Households in the **social rented sector** are over **8x** more likely to suffer food insecurity than households in other tenures

25% food insecurity in socially renting households, compared with 3% in other tenures in the South West (Family Resources Survey 2021/22)



Food insecurity levels are over **3x** higher in households with an **adult** limited a lot by **disability** than in households with no adults limited by disability

42% food insecurity in households with an adult limited a lot by disability, 13% in households with no adult limited by disability (Food Foundation, Jan 2023, England)



Working age families with children are at higher risk than pensioner households and households without children

10% food insecurity in households with children, 4% without children in the South West; 7% in households headed by an adult of working age, 2% in those headed by a pensioner in the South West (Family Resources Survey 2021/22)



Non-white **ethnic minorities** are at higher risk of food insecurity than white ethnic groups

18.2% white households in food insecurity, 26% mixed/multiple ethnicities. 26.5% black / African / Caribbean, 27.9% Asian / Asian British (Food Foundation, Jan 2023, England)



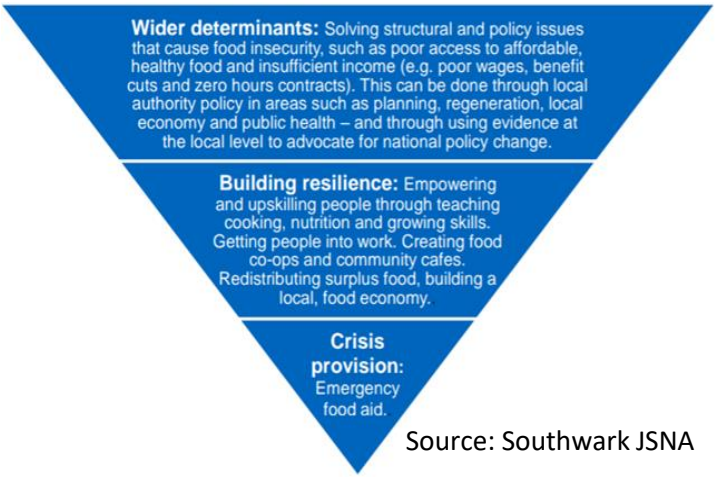
Rural areas or areas where there is a lack of public transport and local food availability increases the risk of food insecurity

Nearly 40% of Wiltshire's neighbourhoods are in the worst 20% in the UK for supermarket accessibility (112 of 285 lower super output areas, Priority Places for Food Index, Supermarket Accessibility domain, Oct 2022)

The issue

What causes food insecurity?

Household food insecurity is caused by many interrelated drivers operating at global, national, local, household and individual levels



Source: Southwark JSNA

Some key risks of crisis are:

- Low or variable income from job making it hard to plan/budget
- Changes in circumstances such as relationship breakdown or illness
- Delays or changes in benefit payments, or unexpected bills e.g. breakdown of car or household appliances
- Struggling with debt e.g. rent arrears, reliance on doorstep lenders
- Parents reliant on free school meals struggling to feed children in the school holidays
- Older people balancing rising fuel and food costs on a low income
- Those with complex needs or those more socially isolated who may be suffering from neglect and less able to care for themselves.

What reduces food insecurity?

The LGA has published case studies detailing action by local government on food insecurity.

These case studies include a broad food system strategy, support for community food hubs, community food kitchens and community fridges, social supermarkets, and the allocation of the Household Support Fund.

See: Cost of living: Food insecurity and poverty | Local Government Association

A review of the evidence on food security interventions by the Health Foundation identified the importance of free school meals, the Holiday Activities and Food Programme and Meals on Wheels, and of increasing the uptake of all available national support.

The Health Foundation also describes a lack of evidence on the impact on food insecurity of interventions such as local debt advice or structural interventions, such as improved transport in an area. Evaluations of such interventions in the future could capture food insecurity as an outcome.

See: Food insecurity – what can local government do?



See the Resources page for more information

Next steps

What are we doing?

- Mapping current community food providers - Microsoft Power BI
- Wiltshire Food Collaborative established
- Household Support Fund used to assist those facing food insecurity - HSF round four - Wiltshire Council
- Co-produced a Worrying about Money interactive leaflet with IFAN - Wiltshire - Worrying about Money?
- Holiday activity and food programme - FUEL programme - Wiltshire Council

Areas for further development

Improve understanding of food insecurity in Wiltshire:

- Produce an accurate picture of food insecurity in Wiltshire via comprehensive needs assessment/University-led research
- Identify groups or households at risk of food insecurity using local intelligence and understanding about risk factors, and target support and preventive action

Collaborate to reduce food insecurity:

- Support the Wiltshire Food Collaborative and develop a food insecurity action plan
- Introduce or continue to advocate for evidence-based actions to reduce food insecurity – these include universal (or extended) access to free school meals, school holiday provision and meals-on-wheels services
- Help eligible residents to access existing nationally funded support, including free school meals and healthy start vouchers
- Connect people affected by food insecurity with services that can help address underlying drivers of poverty and income, as well as provide support to improve mental and physical health
- Consider opportunities for a much wider systems approach to food access and availability that could bring co-benefits to the local economy, the environment and health
    - Establish a Local Food Partnership
    - Support transport schemes and localised food economies
- Learn from action and share knowledge, including seeking to influence national government to improve food security and enable effective local action on this
- Promote the real Living Wage
- Explore a cash first approach to support people facing financial hardship

Resources

- Title: **Hunger in the UK**
Produced by: Trussell Trust
Date: 2023
Link: https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/06/2023-Hunger-in-the-UK-report.pdf

- Title: **Child Poverty and Education: A Survey of the Experiences of NEU Members**
Produced by: Child Poverty Action Group & National Education Union
Date: 2018
Link: Child poverty and education: A survey of the experiences of NEU members | CPAG

- Title: **Food poverty: Households, food banks and free school meals**
Produced by: House of Commons Library
Date: 2023
Link: Food poverty: Households, food banks and free school meals - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)

- Title: **What are sustainable food places**
Produced by: Sustainable Food Places
Date: 2023
Link: What are Sustainable Food Places | Sustainable Food Places

- Title: **The Broken Plate 2023**
Produced by: Food Foundation
Date: 2023
Link: The Broken Plate 2023 | Food Foundation

- Title: **National Food Strategy: The Plan**
Produced by: National Food Strategy
Date: 2023
Link: The National Food Strategy - The Plan

- Title: **Cost of living: food insecurity and poverty – case studies and resources**
Produced by: Local Government Association
Date: 2023
Link: Cost of living: Food insecurity and poverty | Local Government Association

- Title: **Food insecurity – what can local government do?**
Produced by: Health Foundation
Date: 2023
Link: Food insecurity – what can local government do?

- Title: **Cash-First Approaches to Supporting People Facing Financial Hardship Locally: A Literature Review**
Produced by: Trussell Trust
Date: 2022
Link: https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/11/Cash-first-literature-review.pdf . See also: How we're working with local government - The Trussell Trust

Data sources

Section title: Key summary
Reference title: 14% food insecurity in the South West
Data source: Food Foundation Survey, Round 11, Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity in the past month by UK region
Date: September 2022
Link: Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation

Section title: Key summary
Reference title: 16 Wiltshire neighbourhoods in 20% most vulnerable in England
Data source: University of Southampton, Food Security Risk Indices, Compositional Domain. *Smith DM, Rixson L, Grove G, Ziauddeen N, Vassilev I, Taheem R, Roderick P, Alwan NA. (2022) Household food insecurity risk indices for English neighbourhoods: Measures to support local policy decisions. PLoS One. 2022 Dec 9; 17(12): e0267260 (doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0267260. PMID: 36490256; PMCID: PMC9733884).*
Date: December 2022
Link: Household food insecurity risk indices for English neighbourhoods: Measures to support local policy decisions | PLOS ONE

Section title: Key summary
Reference title: Children eligible for free school meals in Wiltshire
Data source: Dept for Education, Schools, pupils and their characteristics
Date: School year 2021/22 & 2022/23
Link: Percentage of all pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Wiltshire | LG Inform

Section title: Key summary
Reference title: Rate of inflation (food and overall)
Data source: Office for National Statistics, Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) annual inflation rates, UK, and Food and non-alcoholic beverages annual CPIH inflation rates, UK
Date: May 2023
Link: Cost of living latest insights - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) and Cost of living insights - Office for National Statistics - Food (ons.gov.uk)

Section title: Key risks
Reference title: All figures from Family Resources Survey
Data source: DWP Stat-Xplore, results for GOR South West
Reference title: All figures from Food Foundation survey
Data source: Food insecurity tracking, results for England
Reference title: All figures from Priority Places for Food Index
Data source: CDRC data portal

Section title: The issue / experience in Wiltshire
Reference title: Quote from Jessica Foster & 58.7% increase in the number of food parcels handed out by the Trussell Trust in Wiltshire in April-Sept 2022 (7,424) from the same period in 2021 (4,678).
Data source: Planet Radio, Salisbury News

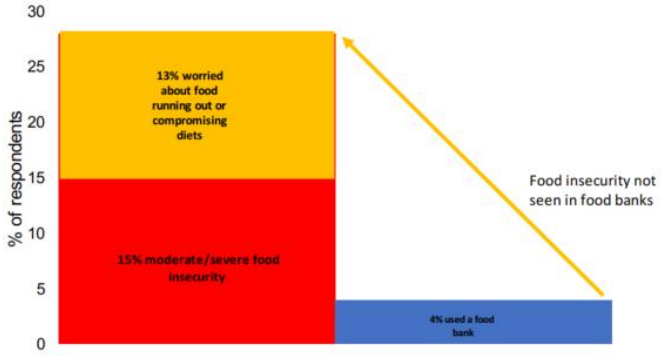
Food insecurity – estimating prevalence in Wiltshire

Measuring food insecurity presents a challenge, with limited national routine data collection systems.

Foodbank data:

Foodbank usage significantly underestimates the wider problem of food insecurity, because many people only seek food aid as a last resort, as shown in the chart below:

Figure 1: Data on food bank use underestimate the problem of food insecurity in the population.



Source: Loopstra, R analysis of Food Standards Agency Food & You 2: Wave 3. Data from April-June 2021. Question asked: "You or any other adults in your household received a free food parcel from a food bank or other emergency provider in past 12 months."

Survey data:

There are two highly-regarded national surveys providing direct evidence of the prevalence of food insecurity at the regional level. Both ask people to report on their experiences of food insecurity.

1. Family Resources Survey (FRS)

This is a large-scale survey conducted annually by the DWP. Since April 2019, the FRS has asked questions on household food security. It measures whether households have sufficient food to facilitate an active and healthy lifestyle. A range of questions are asked, and the combined answers are used to generate a food security score. The focus is on the period immediately before the interview (30 days).

In 2021/22, the FRS estimated that 89% of households in the South West had high food security, while 6% were marginal, and 5% were insecure. In Wiltshire this is equivalent to approx. 13,000 households with marginal security and approx. 12,000 in food insecurity.

2. Food Foundation Surveys

Since March 2020, the Food Foundation has commissioned a series of nationally representative surveys to assess the impact of household food insecurity across the UK. These surveys define 'food insecurity' as respondents answering 'yes' to any of the following questions within (a) the past month and (b) the past six months:

Have you/anyone else in your household:

1. *had smaller meals than usual or skipped meals because you couldn't afford or get access to food?*
2. *ever been hungry but not eaten because you couldn't afford or get access to food?*
3. *not eaten for a whole day because you couldn't afford or get access to food?*

These questions have been validated to determine moderate to severe food insecurity. In September 2022, the survey estimated 14.1% of households in the South West were insecure on the 'past month' measure. In Wiltshire this is equivalent to 30,339 households.

The results of the January 2021 Food Foundation survey have been re-calibrated for local authority outputs by the University of Sheffield and Manchester Metropolitan University in the Adult Food Insecurity at Local Authority Scale

The resulting estimates for Wiltshire are shown below:

	% households experiencing hunger			% households experiencing struggle with food insecurity			% households worried about their food security		
LA Name	Estimate	95% lower bound	95% upper bound	Estimate	95% lower bound	95% upper bound	Estimate	95% lower bound	95% upper bound
Wiltshire	8.47	2.03	14.91	14.15	3.57	24.73	12.50	5.21	19.80

Composite indices:

Alongside survey data, composite indices provide estimates of food insecurity in Wiltshire by combining indicatives measures such as income and the proximity to supermarkets.

1. Consumer Data Research Centre, Priority Places for Food Index

This index combines seven domain measures related to food insecurity, in order to identify the neighbourhoods that are most vulnerable to increases in the cost of living and which have a lack of access to cheap, healthy, and sustainable sources of food.

It identifies 3 small areas (lower super output areas) in Wiltshire that are in the most vulnerable 10% of areas in the UK to food insecurity, and 7 that are in the 20% most vulnerable:

Decile 1	Decile 2
Malmesbury north west	Salisbury Bemerton - south
Warminster East - Boreham	Melksham North - north east
Salisbury Bemerton - west	Salisbury Bemerton – east
	Salisbury Bemerton – north

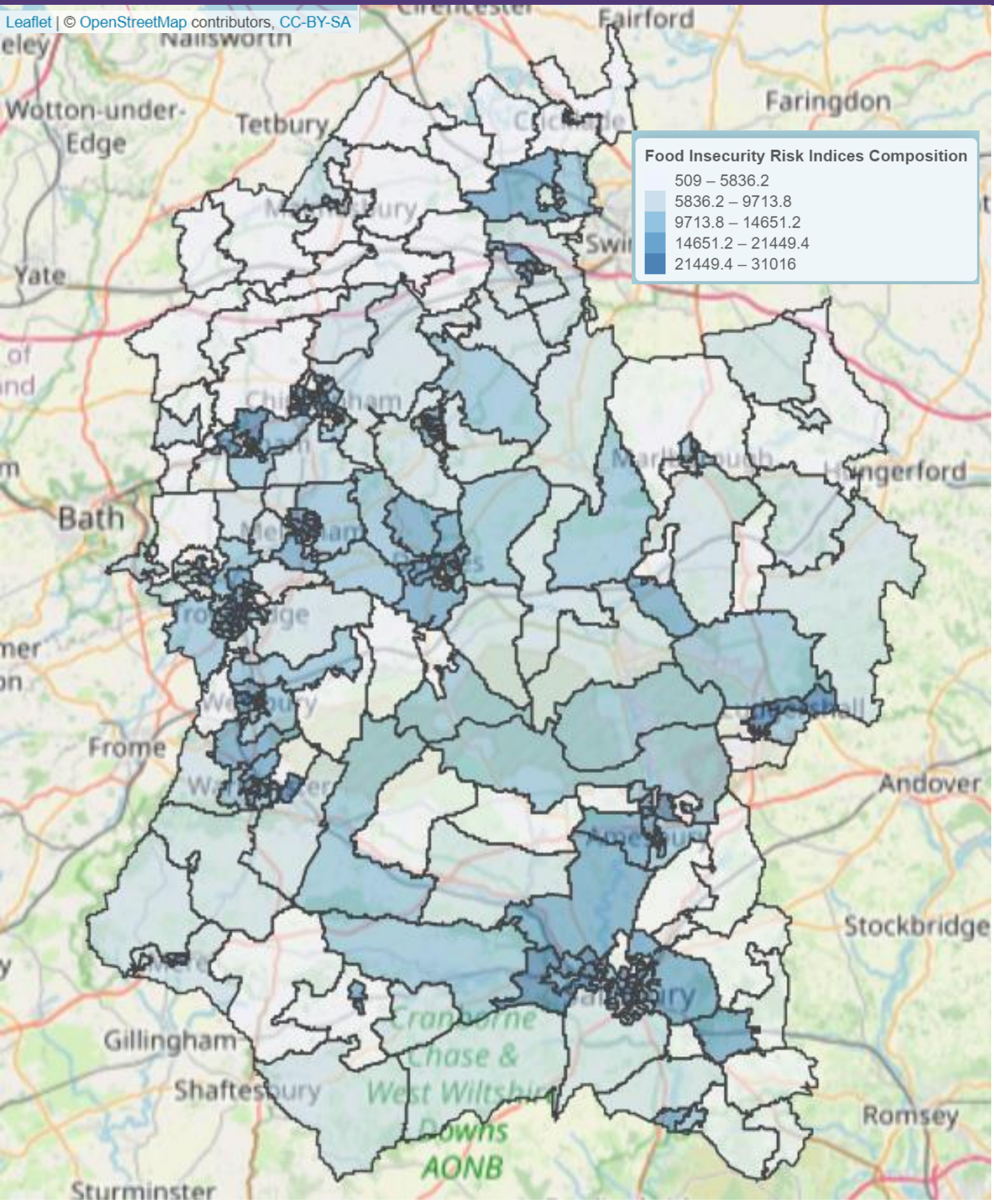
2. University of Southampton, Food Security Risk Indices

This includes 2 domains of food insecurity, one 'compositional' (based on the local population's characteristics) and one 'structural' (based on local factors such as the accessibility of public transport). The authors recommend the use of the Composition Domain to support local policy-making on food insecurity, with the inclusion of the Structural Domain to consider rural areas where locational disadvantage makes it more difficult to access resources.

16 of Wiltshire's 285 LSOAs are described as being in the most vulnerable 20% of neighbourhoods in England on the Composition Domain, and 117 on the Structural Domain. Results are mapped here: mylocalmap.org.uk/iaahealth/ and shown on the next slides. **Both domains should be considered when addressing food insecurity in Wiltshire.**

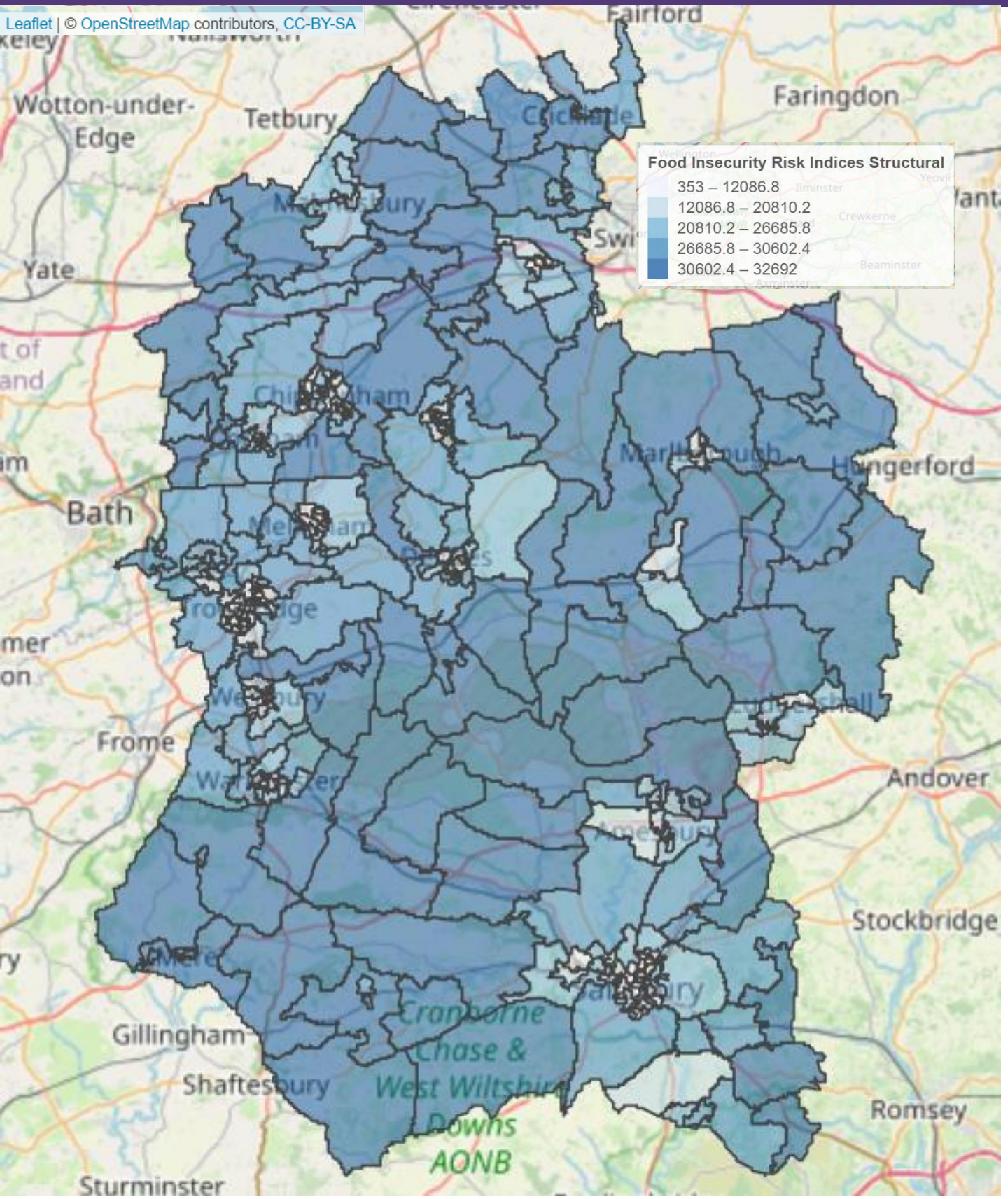
These indices are **recommended** for use in local policy-making on food insecurity in the Health Foundation briefing: Food insecurity – what can local government do?

Appendix – estimating prevalence (4)



University of Southampton, Food Insecurity Risk Indices, Composition Domain (darker blue = higher risk).

Appendix – estimating prevalence (5)



University of Southampton, Food Insecurity Risk Indices, Structural Domain (darker blue = higher risk).

Appendix – estimating prevalence (6)

University of Southampton, Food Insecurity Risk Indices, Composition Domain

16 Wiltshire LSOAs in most vulnerable national 20%, based on population characteristics like income

National decile (1 = most vulnerable)	LSOA (2011) local name	LSOA (2011) ONS name
1	Trowbridge John of Gaunt - Studley Green	Wiltshire 033A
2	Salisbury Bemerton - south	Wiltshire 052D
2	Calne Abberd - south	Wiltshire 015B
2	Salisbury Bemerton - west	Wiltshire 052B
2	Melksham North - south west	Wiltshire 022A
2	Chippenham Queens - east	Wiltshire 011F
2	Devizes North - east	Wiltshire 026B
2	Westbury Ham - west	Wiltshire 040D
2	Salisbury St Martin - central	Wiltshire 059D
2	Wootton Bassett North - central	Wiltshire 006A
2	Chippenham Hill Rise - north west	Wiltshire 009C
2	Amesbury East - north central	Wiltshire 048B
2	Trowbridge Adcroft - Seymour	Wiltshire 031B
2	Melksham North - north east	Wiltshire 020B
2	Chippenham Audley - south	Wiltshire 011A
2	Trowbridge Drynham - Lower Studley	Wiltshire 035B

University of Southampton, Food Insecurity Risk Indices, Structural Domain

20 most vulnerable Wiltshire LSOAs, based on structural factors like lack of access to food shops and public transport. Residents of these areas who also have low incomes and other compositional risk factors face a highly increased risk of food insecurity

National decile (1 = most vulnerable)	LSOA (2011) local name	LSOA (2011) ONS name
1	Horningsham & Deverills south	Wiltshire 047D
1	Zeals (part), Maiden Bradley, Kilmington & Stourton	Wiltshire 050C
1	Minety	Wiltshire 004A
1	Knoyle & Hindon	Wiltshire 050A
1	Shalbourne, Grafton & Chute	Wiltshire 029D
1	Tisbury rural & Ansty	Wiltshire 061B
1	Fovant, Sutton Mandeville & Swallowcliffe	Wiltshire 061D
1	Sherston east, Norton & Easton Grey	Wiltshire 005B
1	Chitterne & Codfords	Wiltshire 047B
1	Chalke Valley	Wiltshire 054A
1	West Overton, Woodborough, Alton & Stanton St Bernard	Wiltshire 024D
1	All Cannings, Chirton, Patney & Marden	Wiltshire 038A
1	Nettleton, Grittleton & North Wraxall	Wiltshire 008C
1	Bremhill, Christian Malford & Langley Burrell	Wiltshire 013A
1	Mere (part) & Zeals (part)	Wiltshire 050B
1	Milton Lilbourne, Easton & Wootton Rivers	Wiltshire 024A
1	Purton south & Braydon	Wiltshire 003C
1	Heytesbury & Mid Wylye south	Wiltshire 047C
1	Avebury, Broad Hinton & Winterbournes	Wiltshire 012E
1	Colerne Southwood/Northwood/Pinewood/Thickwood	Wiltshire 017E

Administrative data:

As well as surveys and composite indices of food insecurity, two key routine administrative datasets can help us to understand the risks of food insecurity faced particularly by children in Wiltshire.

1. Free school meals:

School-age children whose families are in receipt of low-income benefits, or who have "no recourse to public funds", may be eligible for free school meals. This is not a direct measure of food insecurity, but it highlights the numbers of children in Wiltshire who are living in families that receive term-time support. In the school holidays, free places are available on the Holiday Activity and Food programme for children in receipt of free school meals.

The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Wiltshire in 2021/22 was 14.4%, an increase from 13.0% in 2020/21. There was a 3.5 percentage point gap between those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those pupils taking free school meals.

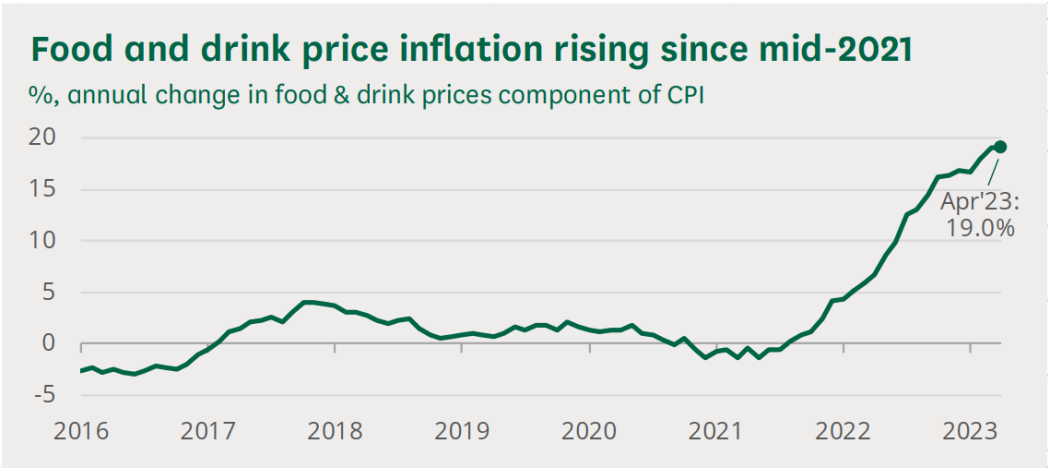
2. Children in low income families (CLIF):

The government produces an annual snapshot of the numbers of children living in families in relative and absolute low income, based on administrative benefits data but calibrated for accuracy against the national Household Below Average Income series. This is not a direct measure of food insecurity, but it produces outputs at very small geographical levels and so highlights areas of Wiltshire where children may be at increased risk of food insecurity.

In 2021, the CLIF measured the number of children aged under 16 living in relative low income families in Wiltshire to be 9,435, or 10%, and in absolute low income to be 7,389 or 7.8% of all children aged under 16. There was considerable variation across the county. The 2022 figures are available on DWP's Stat-Xplore website but are currently still provisional, and, like the 2021 data, 2022 was also affected by the pandemic's impact on the benefits regime. Indications from the 2022 dataset however suggest a significant increase in the levels of child poverty in Wiltshire, potentially increasing the risk of food insecurity among children.

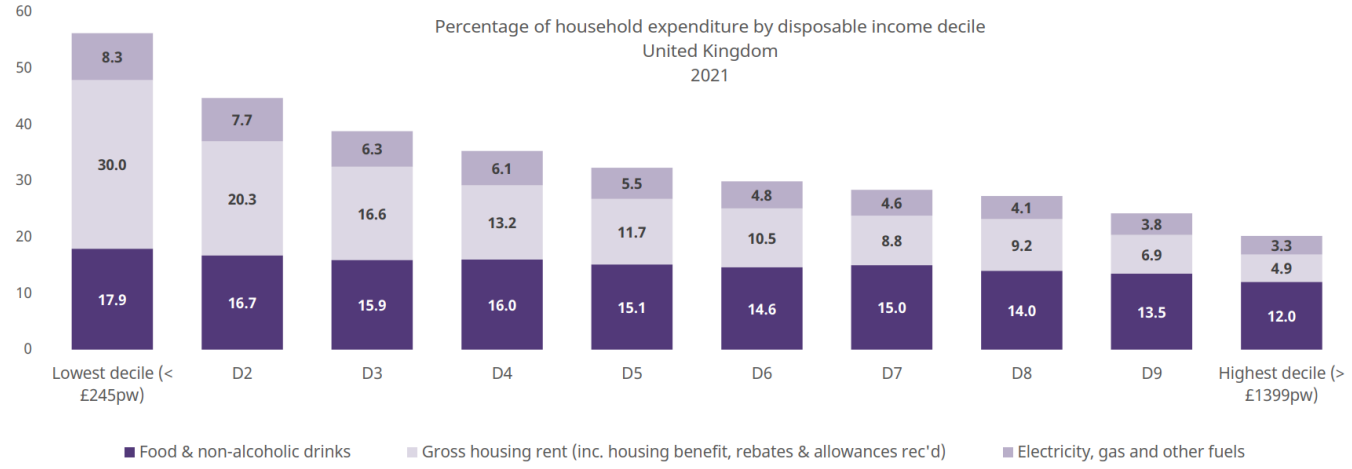
Food inflation:

Increases in levels of food insecurity are closely related to increases in poverty, as food is often one of the first things 'cut back on' when people are struggling. Food prices in the UK have been rising since the second half of 2021. Food and non-alcoholic drink prices were 19.0% higher in the12 months to April 2023 on the official Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation. This was slightly below the 19.1% recorded in March 2023, the highest rate of increase in food prices since 1977 according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).



Source: ONS, Food and non-alcoholic drink component of CPI, series D7G8 (24 May 2023 update)

In 2021, before food prices began to rise, the ONS estimated that 18% of household disposable (net) income in the most deprived decile of areas in England was spent on food and non-alcoholic drinks, compared with 12% in the least deprived decile. As food prices have risen steeply since, this highlights the uneven challenges faced by people on low incomes, as households who were already buying the cheapest food do not have the choice that other households have to switch to cheaper products when faced with rising prices.



Source: Wiltshire Council JSNA using data from Family spending workbook 1: detailed expenditure and trends - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)