



Food and Fuel Insecurity in Devon

Final Report

Prepared for:
Devon County Council

Prepared by:
Transform Research

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Executive Summary

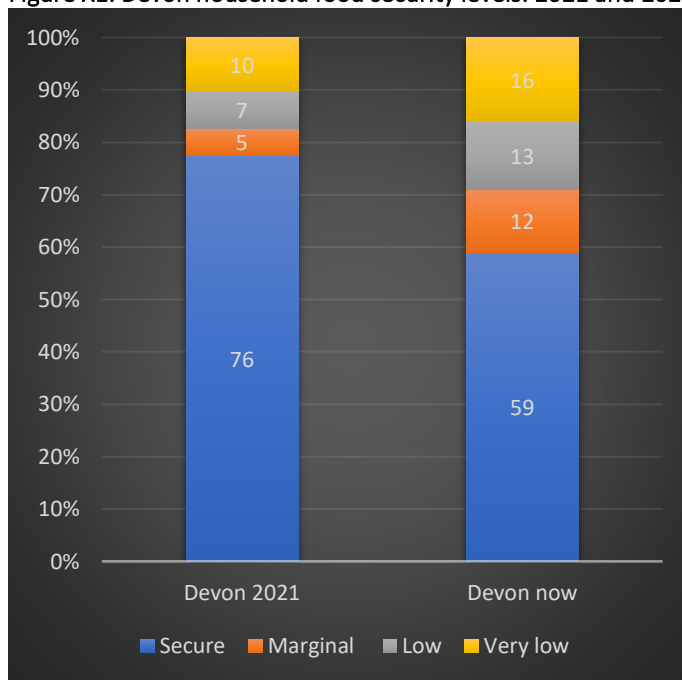
This research was commissioned by Devon County Council (DCC) to investigate the extent and experience of food and fuel insecurity in households across the county. It was designed to provide up-to-date information on food insecurity levels to compare with findings from a baseline study conducted in March and April 2021, as well as enabling an assessment of the current extent of fuel insecurity in households.

The findings are based on interviews with a representative sample of 1,206 households from across Devon conducted in September and October 2022.

Headline findings: Food insecurity has increased markedly

The results show that overall levels of household food insecurity have increased substantially over the last 18 months. 16% of Devon households are now experiencing very low food security compared with 10% in 2021. These households are experiencing substantial disruptions to their eating patterns, such as household members eating less and going hungry. They often reduce food intake because they have insufficient money to pay for enough food.

Figure X1. Devon household food security levels: 2021 and 2022 (%)



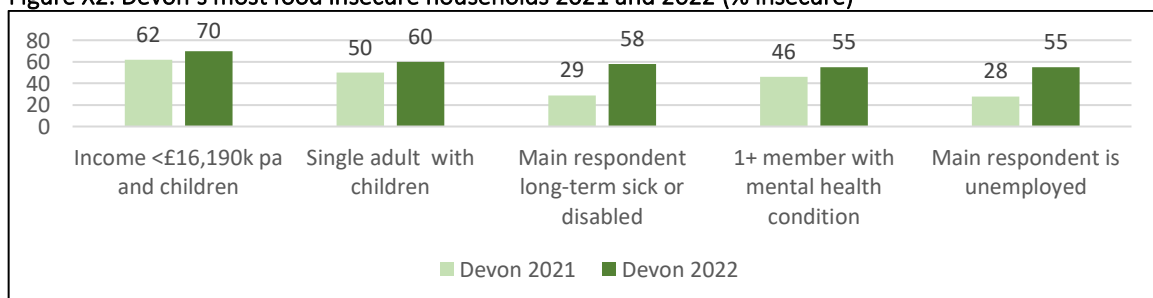
The rate of increase in insecurity is not consistent across all types of households. Significant variations in the levels of food security were found with the presence of children, low-income, receipt of benefits, mental ill-health and being long-term sick or disabled all being key indicators of higher levels of food insecurity.

The research also found extensive evidence of *in-work poverty*. 14% of households where a full-time employee was the respondent had very low food security levels.

These findings were consistent with those being reported by the Food Foundation nationally.

Households experiencing the highest rates of food insecurity are shown below, compared with 2021. It is notable that the households in which insecurity has increased most – doubling – are those dependent upon benefits. The proportion of Devon households who have accessed emergency food support in the past 30 days has increased from 2% in 2021 to 5% now. This increased use of support is focussed on the households shown below.

Figure X2. Devon’s most food insecure households 2021 and 2022 (% insecure)



Headline findings: Fuel insecurity levels are also high

When asked how they would respond to the forthcoming increases in energy/fuel prices, nearly eight out of ten Devon households said they were planning to reduce energy usage this winter (79%). Overall, they planned to reduce consumption in a wide range of ways, including:

- 74% of households by only switching heating on when it is really cold/freezing:
- 73% by reducing other energy use (cooker, kettle, fridge, etc):
- 36% by switching their heating off altogether: and
- 15% by spending time somewhere else to keep warm

In terms of their ability to pay for the forthcoming increases in energy/fuel prices:

- 13% of households said that they would not be able to afford to pay increased energy prices, even with cutbacks and savings: and
- 16% said they would have to borrow to pay/use a credit card for their increased bills

However, the following types of households were significantly more likely to say that they could not afford to pay for the increased energy prices and that they would have to borrow/use a credit card in order to do so. These households were also more likely to be planning to switch their heating off altogether and/or spend time somewhere else away from their home that was warm while the heating was off:

- Single adult with children:
- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children:
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled:
- Households with 1+ member with a mental/physical health condition:
- Households where the main respondent was unemployed: and/or
- Households renting from the council/social housing.

Household food and fuel insecurity correlation

The research found that, in line with many national reports and other contemporary research, there was a very high degree of correlation between those households that had experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days and the households stating they would not be able to afford to pay for their increased fuel bills. These are the households listed above, many of whom will be facing the choice of “*heat or eat*” over the coming winter months. Substantial numbers of them have indicated they will have to turn their heating off altogether.

Given that these households are already among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, the combination of not being able to eat properly and concerns over the impact of reductions in energy use on their home environment (increased cold, damp, etc), gives rise to great concern for the potential negative effects on their health and particularly that of their children.

Consequently, it is on these types of households together with those in work and on low wages that Devon’s future food and fuel support interventions should be focused. These interventions could include:

- General awareness raising of existing food and fuel support initiatives:
- Uptake of free school meals should be prioritised:
- NHS health/GP records should be used as the basis for targeting advice and support for households most likely to be fuel insecure, i.e. those with health conditions, disability, etc: and
- DWP records should be used as the basis for targeting advice and support for households most likely to be food insecure, i.e. those on Universal Credit or legacy benefits.

Consideration should also be given to initiatives that have been undertaken elsewhere in the country to help ameliorate the impact of cold weather on ill-health, such as the Gloucestershire NHS Warm Homes Prescription pilot. Early findings indicate that the savings to the NHS in terms of reduced hospitalisations more than pay for the cost of the scheme.

1. Introduction and background

This report presents the findings of research commissioned by Devon County Council (DCC) to investigate the extent and experience of food and fuel insecurity across Devon. The research was designed to provide up-to-date information on food insecurity to compare with findings from a baseline study conducted in 2021, as well as producing additional data to enable an assessment of the current extent of fuel insecurity in the county.

The research aims to gain a fuller understanding of the extent and experience of food insecurity across Devon and how this has changed since 2021. It is also intended to deepen understanding of fuel insecurity and the factors currently impacting on different levels of fuel security. Crucially it assesses how fuel and food insecurity interact with each other, and the impact of both on Devon households.

Transform Research, an independent research consultancy, was commissioned to conduct the study between August and November 2022. Transform had also completed the previous food insecurity study in March/April 2021.

1.1 Background

In 2021, because the issue of food insecurity and child hunger had been of rising concern in society for some time, Devon County Council (DCC) commissioned research to explore the matter in the county. This was partly because it had been acknowledged by central government that there was insufficient data from government sources, such as the Family Resources Survey (FRS) run by ONS, to fully measure and assess the situation at the local level.

It was also because other work had indicated that there was a specific problem in Devon. The Social Market Foundation had commissioned the *Measuring and Mitigating Child Hunger in the UK¹* study in 2020. This found that three out of the top ten LAs with the highest share of children with very low food security were in Devon: Mid Devon, Teignbridge and North Devon.

These findings presented a dilemma for DCC, as whilst it is possible to calculate the potential risk of food insecurity in a local area using existing indicators (claimant counts, proportion of jobs in insecure sectors, wage levels, etc), little was known about how food insecurity was being experienced in Devon – which households were food insecure and to what extent.

To fill this gap in knowledge, the 2021 *Food Insecurity in Devon* study was commissioned. That informed local interventions, support measures and the associated development of policy to help mitigate the worst impacts of food insecurity after the pandemic. However, since then a cost-of-living crisis and substantial increases in fuel/energy prices have impacted households.

Consequently, DCC have now commissioned this follow-up research: *Food and Fuel Insecurity in Devon*. This will also inform local interventions, support measures and policy development, though it has a broader focus – on both food *and* fuel insecurity – as well as benefiting from being able to measure change in the 18 months period between the conduct of the fieldwork for the 2021 study (March/April) and that for the current one (September and October 2022).

Of course, there have been massive changes across society in this time with the on-going impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, the Ukraine invasion and oil price rises. These and other factors have contributed to the cost-of-living crisis affecting households everywhere.

¹ <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/measuring-child-hunger/>

1.2 Study aims

With this background, the study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of how food and fuel insecurity is currently being experienced in Devon. It was designed to give a granular picture of the experience of different types of households. It has four key objectives:

- To provide robust estimates of the types of households experiencing food insecurity and accessing food from emergency support centres across Devon.
- To provide an assessment of change over the last 18 months, based on a comparison with the findings from the 2021 research.
- To provide robust estimates of the types of households experiencing fuel insecurity, using a range of assessment indicators.
- To provide an understanding of the interrelationship between food and fuel insecurity within the households most negatively impacted by experiencing both.

1.3 Study methodology and survey accuracy

To meet these aims, the study involved the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of a stratified random sample survey of 1,206 households across Devon. The methodology contained six main elements, which are summarised below and detailed in Appendix I:

- Desk research
- Questionnaire design and piloting
- Sample design
- Survey fieldwork
- Analysis
- Reporting, data and presentation

The sample of 1,206 provides results that are representative of all Devon households². For a finding of 50%, we can be 95% confident that the “true” figure lies within +/- 3% for Devon. To produce reliable findings for all of Devon’s local authorities, the smaller districts were oversampled. The data presented in this report is weighted to 1,206 to compensate for this.

1.4 This report

This report presents the findings of the study in the following chapters:

- Chapter 2 describes what is meant by food and fuel insecurity and the measures that are used to assess the status of households in respect of each:
- Chapter 3 details the profiles of Devon households relative to the levels of food insecurity that were associated with their characteristics, comparing these with the 2021 findings:
- Chapter 4 details the profiles of Devon households relative to the levels of fuel insecurity that were associated with their characteristics:
- Chapter 5 examines the interrelationships between those households that were found to be both food *and* fuel insecure: and
- Chapter 6 sets out some concluding comments on the overall study findings and makes suggestions for informing policy development.

As well as the methodological details in Appendix I, the questionnaire used in consultations with households is presented in Appendix II. A full breakdown of responses to the individual food and fuel security questions is provided in Appendix III, while Appendix IV details the bibliography and references used. Appendix V explains survey accuracy.

² The study covers residential households in Devon. This means that it does *not* include the residents of institutions such as care homes, halls of residence, military barracks, prisons, etc. or people who are homeless.

2. Measuring household food and fuel security

To inform the detailed findings that follow, this chapter examines what is meant by food and fuel security and the methods by which they have been measured in this research.

2.1 What is food insecurity?

The Evidence and Network on UK Household Food Insecurity (ENUF) defines it as:

“a lack of the financial resources needed to ensure reliable access to food to meet dietary, nutritional, and social needs. It can be acute, transitory, or chronic, and ranges in severity from worry about not being able to secure enough food to going whole days without eating³”.

ENUF goes on to describe that people and households across the world experience food insecurity in the same ways, including *“running out of food, feeling anxiety about food supplies, relying on low-cost foods, changing diet patterns, skipping meals, and going without food.”* Consequently, these “core” experiences are used in the measurement and monitoring of food insecurity in households and among individuals.

However, ENUF point out that food insecurity can be evident in other ways. For example, households might access charitable sources of food, such as food banks, because they have no money available. For other households, they might miss out on or reduce social activities involving food, such as not having friends over for a meal. These types of events though occur at different rates for different people and at varying levels of severity of food insecurity.

ENUF also highlight that some research suggests children, adolescents, and older people might experience food insecurity in different ways, and that different members of the same household can also experience it different ways.

2.2 Measuring food insecurity

Food insecurity has been measured in different ways by diverse organisations over time. This study draws on the most recognised and reputable main techniques: The Food Insecurity Experience Scale devised by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations⁴ (FAO) and the Food Security Status system used by Office for National Statistics (ONS).⁵

Both the FAO and the ONS studies use a standard set of ten core questions to assess individual or household food security. These ten questions are provided in full in Appendix II and are summarised below. In each case, the household was asked whether during the last 30 days:

- *They were worried their food would run out before they got money to buy more.*
- *The food they had bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more.*
- *They couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.*
- *They had cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food.*
- *At least one person had cut size of meals or skip meals for 3 or more days.*
- *At least one person ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money.*
- *At least one person was hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food.*
- *At least one person had lost weight because there wasn't enough money for food.*
- *At least one person did not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food.*
- *At least one person was not eating for a whole day for 3 or more days.*

³ <https://enuf.org.uk/what-household-food-insecurity>

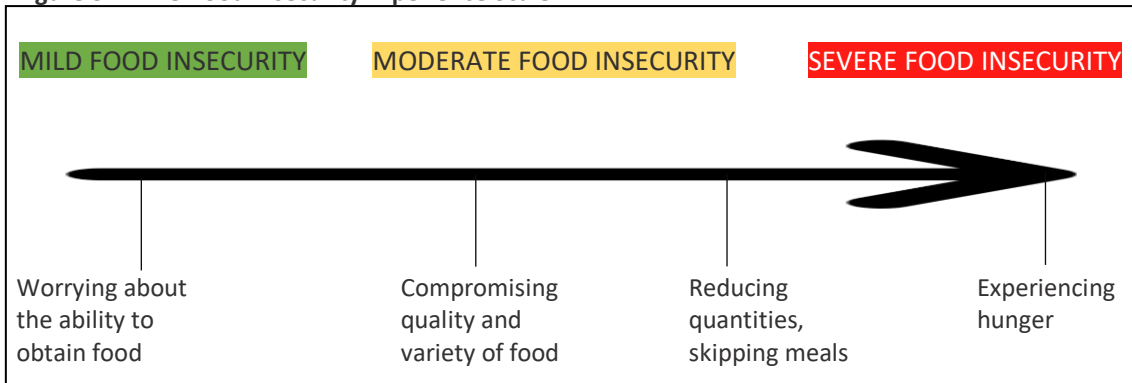
⁴ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/files/en/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020#household-food-security-1>

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale

The FAO devised the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) regarding people’s access to adequate food. The scale uses the same core questions about household’s experiences and classifies them into categories in the manner shown in the figure below:

Figure 3.1: FAO Food Insecurity Experience Scale



Household Food Security Status

Since 2019 ONS have used the same ten experience questions on the Family Resource Survey (FRS) to generate a ten-point household score, from which the household is placed into one of four categories of household food security status:

- **High food security** (score = 0): Household has no problem, or anxiety about, consistently accessing adequate food
- **Marginal food security** (1 or 2): Household had problems at times, or anxiety about, accessing food, but quality, variety and quantity were not substantially reduced
- **Low food security** (3 to 5): Household reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of diets, but quantity and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted
- **Very low food security** (6 to 10): At times during the last 30 days, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced

Households that are in the high and marginal categories (scoring 0 – 2) are “**food secure**”, while those in low or very low (scoring 3 – 10) are “**food insecure**”.

The following chapters describe the food status of Devon households in terms of their position relative to each of the four categories above, as this allows direct comparisons with the findings from the FRS and UK national and regional figures. Reference is also made to the two-point shorthand descriptions of households as being either “secure” and “insecure”, where this is appropriate and helpful.

The status categories above are, of course, a summary score representing all the answers given by each household to the ten individual food experience questions outlined previously. Appendix III contains the percentage responses given by Devon households in aggregate to each of these individual questions, as well as highlighting statistically significant replies that were given by those households experiencing very low food insecurity.

The findings for the food status of Devon households that are presented are based on the total sample of 1,206 interviews conducted September-October 2022. They are compared with the findings from 1,160 household interviews that were conducted March-April 2020. As noted above, findings from the 1,206 interviews were weighted to compensate for the oversampling of smaller local authority districts in the county. The weights produce a representative sample for Devon as a whole, that totals to a base of 1,206.

2.3 What is fuel insecurity?

The most common definition in relation to fuel insecurity relates to **fuel poverty**. It is important to note that fuel poverty is different from fuel insecurity and is measured using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator⁶. Under this indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if they are both:

- Living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below: and
- When they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

The Government’s most recent data on Fuel Poverty Statistics for England (2020)⁷ states that a household’s fuel poverty status depends on the interaction of three key drivers:

- **Energy efficiency** – Improvement in energy efficiency between 2019 and 2020 has brought more low income households up to band C which removes them from fuel poverty.
- **Incomes** – Growth occurred in all income deciles, but the rate of growth was less in lower income deciles when compared with the median income growth.
- **Energy prices** – Between the 2019 and 2020 fuel poverty datasets energy prices fell by 2.6 per cent in real terms as wholesale energy prices fell at the start of the pandemic. Prices for prepayment meter consumers increased by 0.6 per cent in real terms. Lower prices can bring a household’s income after fuel bills above the low-income threshold.

Using this measure, the government estimated that in 2020 c.13.2% of households (3.16 million) were in fuel poverty in England under the Low Income, Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric. However, there is no more up-to-date fuel poverty data available at either the national or local level. Unfortunately, there are several key issues involved in attempting to replicate the government’s methodology, in order to measure fuel poverty in Devon:

- **Use of Energy Surveyors to assess energy efficiency** – The government methodology involves home visits by experts to assess the energy efficiency level of the accommodation.
- **Use of English Household Condition Survey** – The government methodology also uses survey data collected from the EHCS about household expenditure to inform the LILEE assessment.
- **Energy prices have changed very significantly** – The profound changes in energy prices in the last six months means that some of the key assumptions underpinning LILEE are debatable.

Crucially, many academics and experts in the field have argued that the government measure, based on income, energy prices and home energy efficiency, is flawed because: a) it includes a threshold of 10% of net income spent on fuel poverty – which given the huge price increases is no longer realistic⁸ and b) it does not examine the essential role of individual household behaviour in the situation⁹.

Furthermore, the focus of our research is very much on the potential impact of the recent and pending fuel/energy price rises on household financial stability relative to food insecurity. In this light, the governments fuel poverty data is of limited help, as it is based on actual, historic spend on fuel, rather than on anticipated ability to afford to pay for the price increases.

Consequently, this study takes a different approach to that used in measuring fuel poverty and instead assesses a range of the key factors impacting on households’ status in terms of their likelihood of being “fuel insecure.” The following sub-section describes these factors.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1056777/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-lilee-report-2022-2020-data.pdf

⁸ <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/fuel-poverty-updated-estimates-uk>

⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6559261/>

2.4 Assessing fuel insecurity

Household fuel insecurity is assessed by this research study using a range of indicators, which can be broadly classified under the following headings:

- **Characteristics of household accommodation**
 - The type of heating system used in the accommodation:
 - The method of payment used for heating bills: and
 - Tenure.
- **Household anticipated behaviour relative to increased energy prices**
 - Whether the household has plans for reducing energy use this autumn:
 - If so, what the plans are (including improving energy efficiency): and
 - Concerns over the impact of reduced energy use on home (cold, damp, etc).
- **Household anticipated ability to pay for increased energy prices**
 - Ability to pay for increased energy prices:
 - Likelihood of having to borrow to pay for the increased prices: and
 - Priorities for bill payment (covering fuel, food, rent/mortgage, etc).

Each of these indicators is assessed relative to the key characteristic profile of different Devon household types, including:

- **Profile of households**
 - Income and benefit receipt:
 - Size, composition and presence of children:
 - Main respondent activity status:
 - Mental and/or physical health conditions: and
 - Food security status.

Chapter 4 provides the assessment of household fuel insecurity, examining each of the indicator variables listed above, both independently, and where appropriate in conjunction with each other, i.e. ability to pay and concerns over impact of reducing energy use. The chapter also uses a derived variable to provide a summary fuel insecurity status, based on the household's ability to pay for increased energy prices and their likelihood of having to borrow to pay for the increased prices.

Chapter 5 maps out the overlap between the Devon households that have experienced food insecurity over the last 30 days and those that are most likely to be struggling with fuel insecurity in terms of the indicators listed above over the winter. As would be anticipated, there is a very high degree of correlation between the two groups.

This overlap is particularly evident among households that have experienced the highest level of food insecurity (very low food security) in the last 30 days and those that are likely to struggle most with fuel insecurity over the winter. This is both in terms of their ability to pay the increased fuel bills and for whom the negative impacts of reducing their energy use, in terms of cold, damp and ill-health, are likely to be the most severe.

3. Devon households and food security: 2021 and 2022

This chapter examines households with different profiles and their food security status over the last 30 days. It compares all 1,206 Devon households surveyed during September and October 2022 with the 1,160 Devon households surveyed in March and April 2021 in terms of:

- Size, composition and presence of children
- Income and benefit receipt
- Tenure
- Activity status and industrial sector
- Physical and mental health conditions
- Ethnicity
- Accessing emergency food support and free school meals
- Local Authority

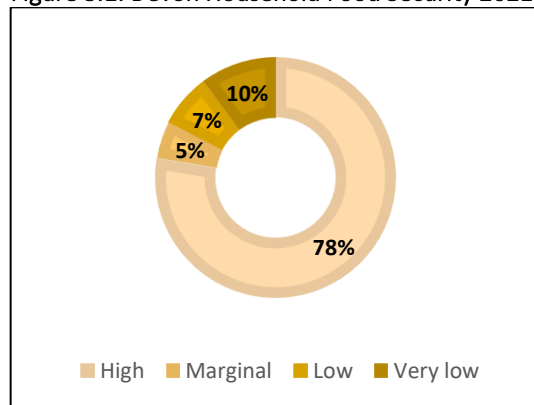
The chapter concludes with a summary of the types of households that were found to be most likely to be “food insecure”, i.e. they were low or very low in food security status.

The previous study in 2021 used results from the Government’s Family Resources Study (FRS) to provide national and regional context to the Devon findings. At that time, the most recently available FRS covered April 2019 to March 2020: which indicated that most households in the UK were food secure, with high food security (87%) or marginal food security (6%). Only a minority were food insecure, with low food security (4%) or very low food security (4%).

It had been hoped to use more up-to-date findings from the FRS as a national yardstick for the 2022 Devon findings. However, due to the lockdowns in 2020-21 and methodological changes adopted by ONS during fieldwork for the FRS, relevant figures are not available. Consequently, the national context is provided by other sources, and these are referred to when appropriate in the chapter. The most important comparisons made are with the 2021 Devon findings.

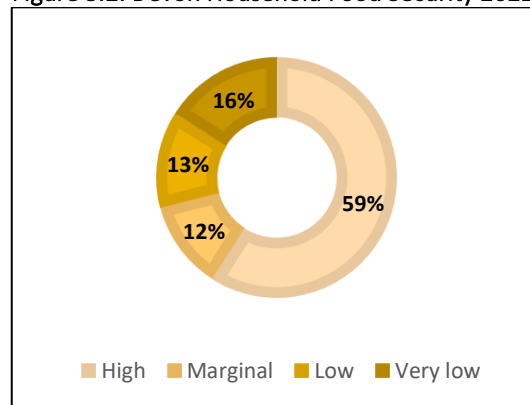
Figure 3.1 shows the overarching situation across Devon in 2021, compared with the situation *currently* in figure 3.2. The difference between the two figures clearly demonstrates the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, with between one in three and one in four Devon households (29%) currently experiencing food insecurity (either low or very low food security), compared with just one in six Devon households (17%) in the spring of 2021.

Figure 3.1: Devon Household Food Security 2021



Weighted base: 1,165 Devon Households

Figure 3.2: Devon Household Food Security 2022



Weighted base: 1,206 Devon Households

Most concerningly, there has been a very marked increase since 2021 in Devon households who have very low food security: increasing from 10% to 16%. Overall, there has been a decline of nearly one in five households who have high food security.

3.1 Household size, composition and presence of children

Historically national surveys such as the Family Resources Survey have identified a close correlation between levels of food security and the numbers and types of people within households. This was found to be the case in Devon in 2021 and this section assesses whether these correlations continued to be evident in 2022 across the county in terms of household:

- Size (the number of adults and children in the household):
- Presence of children (any member aged 18 or under): and
- Composition (the number of children and adults).

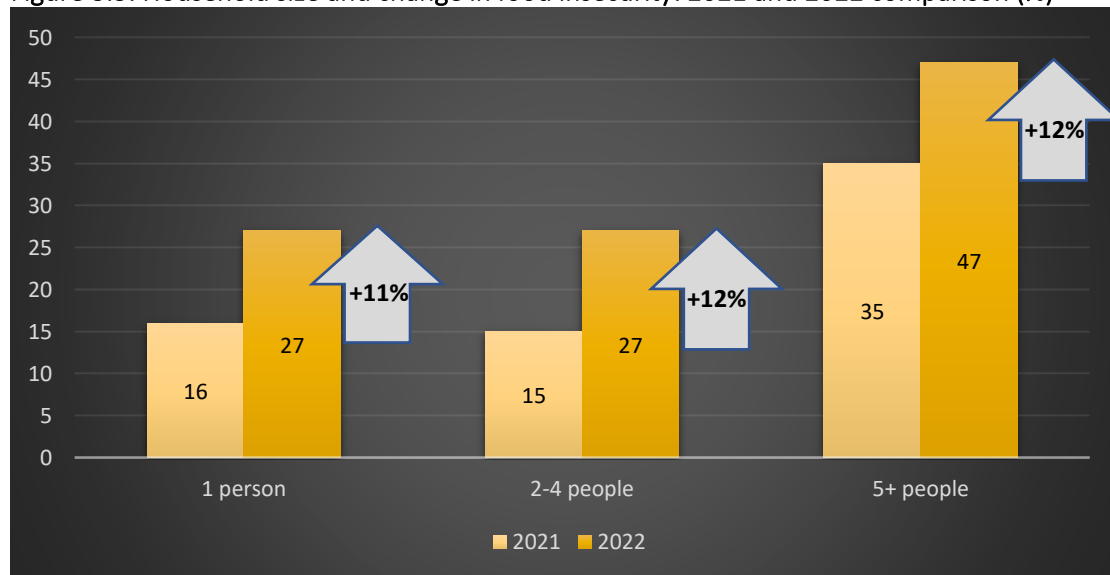
3.1.1 Household size

Table 3.1 below shows that Devon households with 5 or more people were currently markedly more likely to be experiencing food insecurity (47%) than those households with fewer than 5 people (27%). This pattern mirrored that found in 2021, though households of all sizes had experienced an increase of c.12% in the proportions experiencing food insecurity since then. Figure 3.3 illustrates the increases found in each size band.

Table 3.1 Household size and food security: Spring 2021 and Autumn 2022 comparison

Food Security	Devon		1 person		2 – 4 people		5+ people	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	79%	60%	80%	61%	56%	37%
Marginal	6%	13%	5%	13%	6%	12%	9%	16%
Low security	7%	13%	5%	10%	7%	12%	14%	23%
Very low security	10%	16%	11%	17%	8%	15%	21%	24%
Weighted base	1165	1206	179	215	853	888	133	103

Figure 3.3: Household size and change in food insecurity: 2021 and 2022 comparison (%)



The average household size (total number of residents) found among households at each of the four levels of food security (with figures for adults first and children/young people shown second in brackets) are listed below. This pattern also mirrored the findings from 2021, with households having more children present being more likely to be insecure:

- Secure 2.4 (2.0 adults and 0.4 children/young people on average)
- Marginal 2.8 (2.2 adults and 0.7 children/young people on average)
- Low 3.1 (2.3 adults and 0.8 children/young people on average)
- Very low 3.1 (2.3 adults and 0.8 children/young people on average)

3.1.2 Households with children

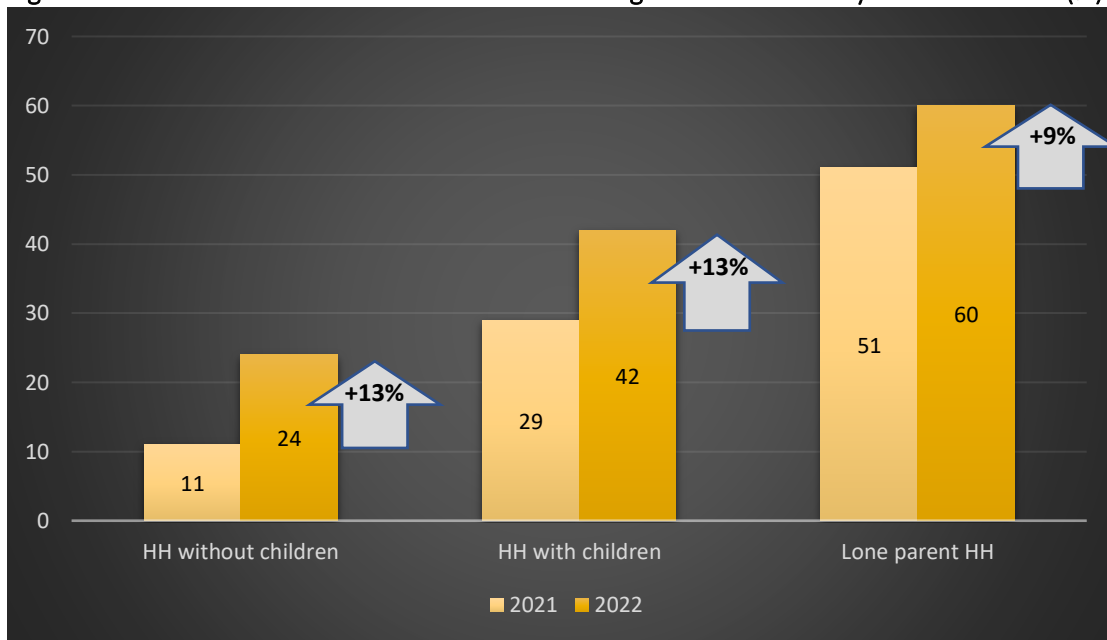
Reflecting the findings for size above, households in Devon with children were markedly more likely to be experiencing food insecurity (42%) than those without children (24%), as shown in table 3.2. Three fifths of lone adult households with children were experiencing insecurity (60%), making them among the most likely of all groups to need food support¹⁰.

Table 3.2 Households with children and food security: Spring 2021 & Autumn 2022 comparison

Food Security	Devon		Households without children		Households with children		Lone adult with children	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	85%	65%	63%	44%	47%	27%
Marginal	6%	13%	5%	12%	8%	14%	2%	13%
Low security	7%	13%	4%	10%	13%	20%	19%	14%
Very low security	10%	16%	7%	14%	16%	22%	32%	46%
Weighted base	1165	1206	785	832	380	374	43	49

Figure 3.4 below illustrates that for all three groups there had been a broadly consistent increase of between c.9-13% since 2021 in the proportions experiencing food insecurity. The slight differences in these increases were all within the bounds of the survey confidence intervals (+/- 3%), so were not significant.

Figure 3.4: Presence of children in household & change in food insecurity: 2021 and 2022 (%)



It is important to highlight that the findings show that two fifths of Devon households *with children* and three fifths of lone parent households are currently experiencing food insecurity. These figures are higher than those being reported nationally by the Food Foundation in its most recent survey (26% for households with children in October 2022). Although this variance is partially explained by different means of measurement¹¹, most of the variance is caused by lower average income levels in Devon, compared with nationally¹².

It should also be noted that the increase in overall food insecurity since 2021 reported by the Food Foundation for households *with children* (of +14%) is almost identical to that found in Devon (of +13%).

¹⁰ These figures have comparatively small bases so should be treated with caution. However, they match national figures.

¹¹ <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking>

¹² Section 3.2 contains a full analysis of household income and benefit receipt.

Consistent with the 2021 findings in terms of children’s ages, a correlation was found between households with **more younger** children (aged 0 – 5 years) and increased food insecurity:

- Secure Average of 0.4 children aged 0-5
- Marginal Average of 0.6 children aged 0-5
- Low Average of 0.8 children aged 0-5
- Very low Average of 0.8 children aged 0-5

This finding was closely related to the cost (and availability) of affordable childcare for pre-school children as well as the associated increased likelihood of parents working part-time.

3.1.3 Household composition

As would be expected given the findings reported above on size and children, those Devon households with *more* children were found to be *more* likely to be experiencing food insecurity both in 2021 and currently. Table 3.3 shows that over half of households with 3+ children (57%) compared with two fifths of those with 1 or 2 children (40%) and a quarter of those without children (24%) are currently food insecure.

Table 3.3 Household composition and food security: Spring 2021 and Autumn 2022 comparison

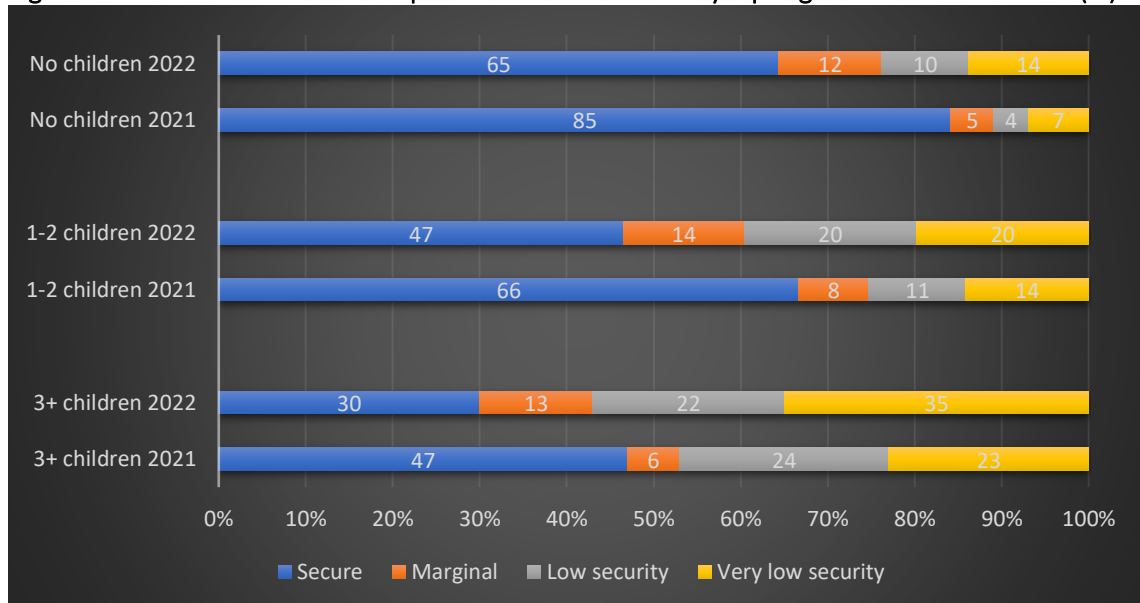
Food Security	Devon		Adults only		1-2 children		3+ children	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	85%	65%	66%	47%	47%	30%
Marginal	6%	13%	5%	12%	8%	14%	6%	13%
Low security	7%	13%	4%	10%	11%	20%	24%	22%
Very low security	10%	16%	7%	14%	14%	20%	23%	35%
Weighted base	1165	1206	785	832	310	321	70	53

Figure 3.5 below illustrates how the increase in levels of food insecurity has again been broadly consistent across each of the household types:

- No children: +13%
- 1 – 2 children: +15%
- 3+ children: +10%

The slight differences in these increases were again all within the bounds of the survey confidence intervals (+/- 3%), so were not significant.

Figure 3.5: Devon Household Composition and Food Security: Spring 2021 & Autumn 2022 (%)



3.2 Household income and receipt of means tested benefits

This section discusses the levels and types of food insecurity that were found in Devon households in terms of their levels of income and the receipt of benefits. It covers:

- Household income:
- Households with and without children and their income: and
- Household receipt of any means tested benefits.

3.2.1 Household income

The households were asked about the total income received by all adults in the household over the last month, after all taxes and deductions were removed. Table 3.2.1 below shows the direct correlation between higher household income and greater food security.

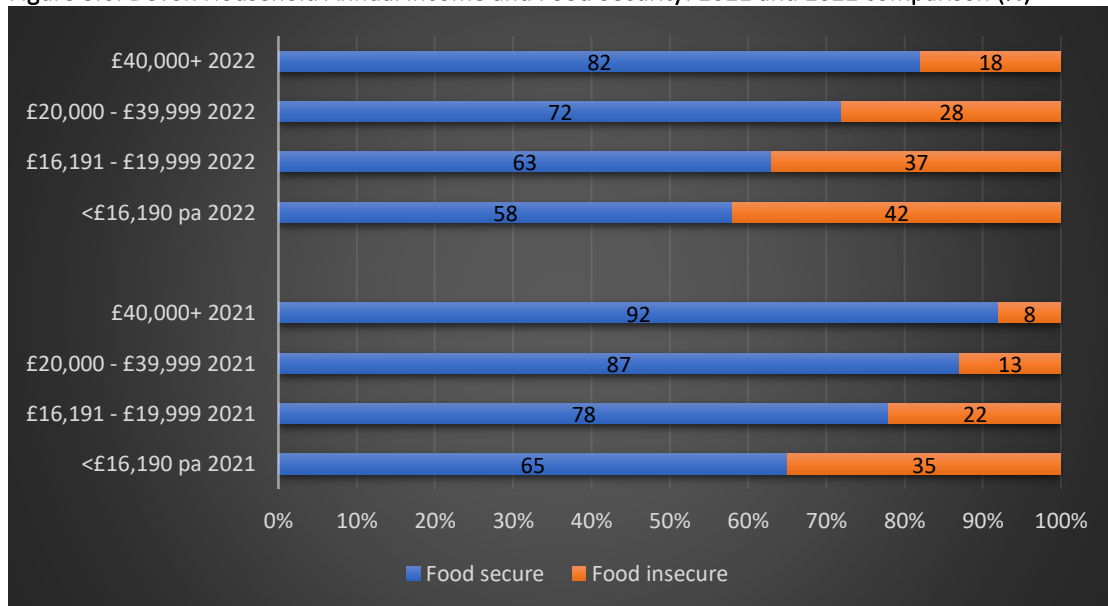
Over two fifths of Devon households (43%) with annual income of less than £16,190 were experiencing food insecurity¹³, compared with a third in 2021 (35%). Nearly two fifths of those with income of between £16,191 and £19,999 (38%) were also experiencing food insecurity, an increase of +16% since 2021 (22%). There had also been a noticeable increase among those households with income between £20,000 and £39,999 (+15%).

Table 3.2.1 Household annual income & food security: Spring 2021 & Autumn 2022 comparison

Food Security	Devon		<£16,190 pa		£16,191 - £19,999		£20,000- £39,999		£40,000+	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	59%	43%	72%	48%	83%	64%	87%	69%
Marginal	6%	13%	6%	15%	6%	15%	4%	8%	4%	13%
Low security	7%	13%	11%	12%	5%	14%	8%	15%	4%	11%
Very low security	10%	16%	24%	30%	17%	24%	5%	13%	4%	7%
Weighted base	1165	1206	227	241	162	198	372	360	211	260

Figure 3.6 below illustrates the direct correlation between higher household income and increasing food security found in Devon households in 2021 and 2022, albeit with significant increases evident across all income bands between the two dates.

Figure 3.6: Devon Household Annual Income and Food Security: 2021 and 2022 comparison (%)



¹³ It is important to note that nearly a third of the food insecure households with income <£16,190 were *experiencing in-work poverty*, with the main respondent being employed either full-time (7%), part-time (12%) or self-employed (12%).

3.2.2 Households with and without children and their income

The two tables below bring together the findings from the previous section on households with children and those about household income, comparing 2021 (table 3.2.2a) with 2022 (table 3.2.2b). They show that seven out of ten Devon households with children and income of less than £16,190 are experiencing food insecurity (70%), compared with two thirds in 2021. Three fifths of households that have children and an income of between £16,191 and £19,999 are now experiencing food insecurity (60%), compared with two fifths in 2021 (44%).

As well as these marked increases in insecurity among low-income households with children, there were also significant increases among households with higher incomes and children: Two fifths of households that have children and an income of between £19,999 and £39,999 are now experiencing food insecurity (39%), compared with one fifth in 2021 (19%). Even among the households with income of £40,000+ and children the proportions experiencing food insecurity had increased to 26% from 16% in 2021.

Table 3.2.2a Household annual income (with and without children) and food security 2021 (%)

Food Security 2021	Devon 2021	<£16,190		£16,191 - £19,999		£20,000- £39,999		£40,000+	
		(with)	(without)	(with)	(without)	(with)	(without)	(with)	(without)
Food secure	78%	25%	72%	50%	84%	76%	87%	77%	93%
Marginal	6%	11%	4%	5%	7%	4%	4%	7%	3%
Low security	7%	27%	5%	7%	4%	13%	5%	8%	2%
Very low security	10%	37%	18%	37%	6%	6%	3%	8%	2%
Weighted base	1165	63	164	56	106	139	233	74	137

Table 3.2.2b Household annual income (with and without children) and food security 2022 (%)

Food Security 2022	Devon 2022	<£16,190		£16,191 - £19,999		£20,000- £39,999		£40,000+	
		(with)	(without)	(with)	(without)	(with)	(without)	(with)	(without)
Food secure	59%	17%	50%	20%	59%	51%	72%	61%	74%
Marginal	13%	14%	15%	19%	13%	11%	7%	13%	13%
Low security	13%	17%	10%	23%	10%	22%	11%	18%	7%
Very low security	16%	53%	24%	37%	18%	17%	10%	8%	6%
Weighted base	1206	50	191	58	140	191	227	103	157

In-work poverty and children

The research also found that sizable proportions of Devon's working households are facing ***in-work poverty***, particularly those with children. Two fifths of households with children and income below £16,190 (40%) and three quarters of those with children and income between £16,191 and £19,999 were in work (full-time, part-time or self-employed). However, table 3.2.2b above shows that 70% and 60% respectively of these groups were nonetheless food insecure. That is, their wages did not allow sufficient food. (Section 3.4 contains more on this).

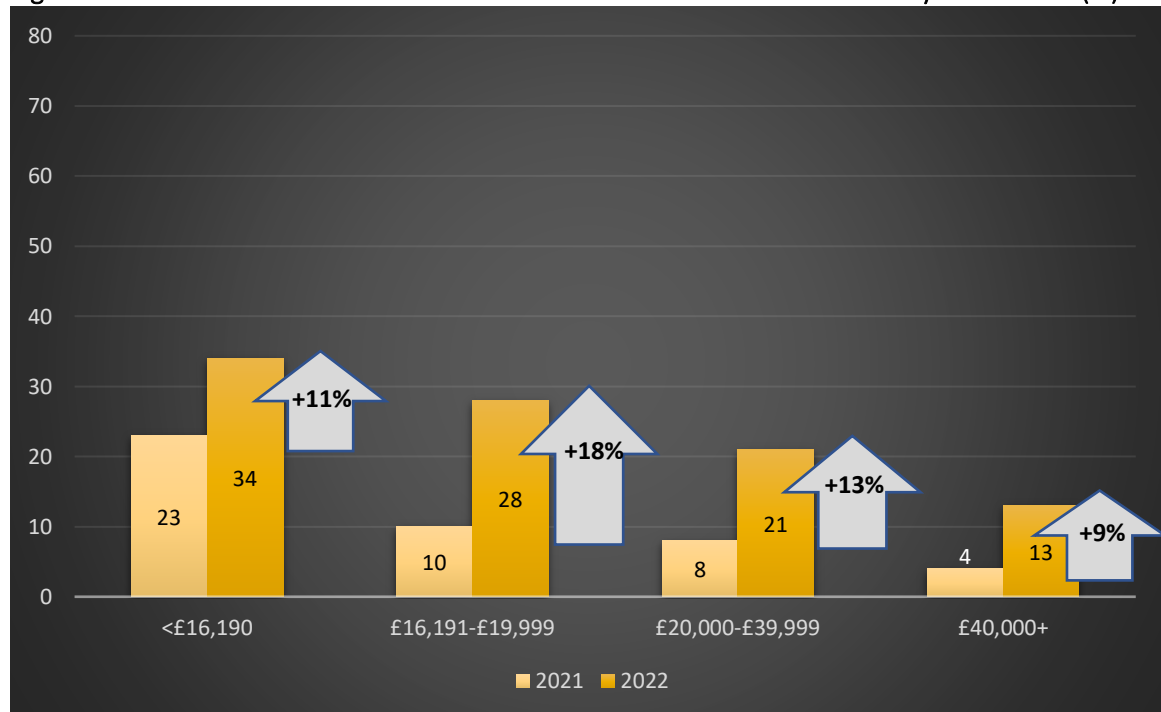
Figures 3.7 (households with children) and 3.8 (households without children) overleaf illustrate the overall patterns of the levels of food insecurity and the changes between 2021 and 2022. They highlight the following key points and trends:

- Households with children were significantly more likely to be food insecure at all income levels, compared with households without children:
- This significant difference amounted to being twice as likely to be insecure (70% compared with 34% at the lowest income level, 60% compared with 28% at the next lowest), etc:
- Households with children and income below £20,000 were the most likely to be food insecure, with around two thirds of them being in this category:
- Households in the £20,000 - £39,999 level with children had experienced the largest increase in levels of food insecurity between 2021 and 2022: and
- Households with income of £40,000+ had also experienced an increase in levels of food insecurity – regardless of the presence of children – though the increase was markedly less than among households at other income levels.

Figure 3.7: Households with children: income & likelihood of food insecurity: 2021-2022 (%)



Figure 3.8: Households without children: income & likelihood of food insecurity: 2021-2022 (%)



The figures above demonstrate that, while the presence of children impacts significantly on food security in households at all income levels, it is most acutely apparent in low-income households, particularly those with annual income <£20,000. As noted, over two thirds of households with children and income <£20,000 are currently experiencing food insecurity.

3.2.3 Households in receipt of means tested benefits

In the light of the findings for income reported above, it was not unexpected that there was a correlation between receipt of means tested benefits and the likelihood of food insecurity. Nearly two thirds of households in receipt of 1+ means tested benefit were food insecure.

Table 3.2.3 contains the details, also showing that the increase in insecurity between 2021 and 2022 was very similar for those in receipt and not in receipt (+9% and +12% respectively).

Table 3.2.3 Household in receipt of means tested benefit(s) and food security

Food Security	Devon		Receiving at least one means tested benefit		Not receiving any means tested benefit	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	63%	50%	87%	66%
Marginal	6%	13%	7%	12%	5%	13%
Low security	7%	13%	11%	14%	4%	12%
Very low security	10%	16%	19%	25%	4%	9%
Weighted base	1165	1206	455	542	709	664

Analysis of the individual types of benefits being received by households revealed the failure of the current state welfare system to support households in the cost-of-living crisis:

- **Universal credit**
More than two fifths (44%) of households in receipt of universal credit were in **very low** food security and two thirds (66%) were food insecure:
- **Job seekers allowance/low-income benefits (JSA, income support, etc)**
More than half (57%) of households in receipt of JSA/income support were in **very low** food security and three quarters (74%) were food insecure:
- **Family benefits (sure start maternity grant, FSM, etc)**
Two fifths (40%) of households in receipt of family benefits were in **very low** food security and over half (53%) were food insecure:
- **Tax credits (working tax credit, child tax credit)**
Nearly a third (30%) of households in receipt of tax credits were in **very low** food security and nearly half (47%) were food insecure:

These findings demonstrate that for many groups of Devon households in receipt of benefits, the amount they receive is insufficient to keep them food secure. It is important to highlight that many of these benefits are intended for households with children. The proportion of households receiving each benefit that are currently food insecure has changed since 2021:

- **Universal credit**
Currently 66% food insecure compared with 46% in 2021, an increase of +20%:
- **Job seekers allowance/low-income benefits (JSA, income support, etc)**
Currently 74% food insecure compared with 40% in 2021, an increase of +34%:
- **Family benefits (sure start maternity grant, FSM, etc)**
Currently 53% food insecure compared with 43% in 2021, an increase of +10%: and
- **Tax credits (working tax credit, child tax credit)**
Currently 47% food insecure compared with 42% in 2021, an increase of +5%.

Universal Credit is being rolled out nationally and will ultimately replace income support, income based JSA, working and child tax credits among others. That two thirds of households currently in receipt of UC are currently food insecure and more than two fifths are in very low food security is deeply concerning. The Food Foundation confirm our findings: *“half of households on Universal Credit (54%) have experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days.”*¹⁴

It should also be highlighted that while the Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced that benefits will rise in line with inflation¹⁵ – the increase will not take place until April 2023. In the meantime, it is evident that many households on Universal Credit are struggling now and that the support will be needed to get them through the forth coming winter.

¹⁴ <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking> (October 2022 page 7)

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-delivers-plan-for-stability-growth-and-public-services#:~:text=Working%20page%20benefits%20will%20rise,Credits%20in%20ine%20with%20inflation.>

The Trussell Trust¹⁶ has detailed the impact of this direct correlation between households on Universal Credit and having high levels of food insecurity in a series of reports including “*The True Cost of Living: The Action Needed to Stem the Rising Tide of Destitution*” (2022) and “*State of Hunger: Year Two Report*” (2021). A key finding from the *True Cost of Living* is:

“This is not just a cost-of-living crisis – it is a crisis of our social security system, which is failing to support people to keep their heads above water.... The true cost-of-living is creating not just difficult decisions, but impossible ones. The result is that households are going without the essentials we all need in life. In its current form, Universal Credit is not making good the Chancellor’s promise that ‘everyone should be able to afford the essentials’ – instead it is driving people into debt.”

3.3 Household tenure

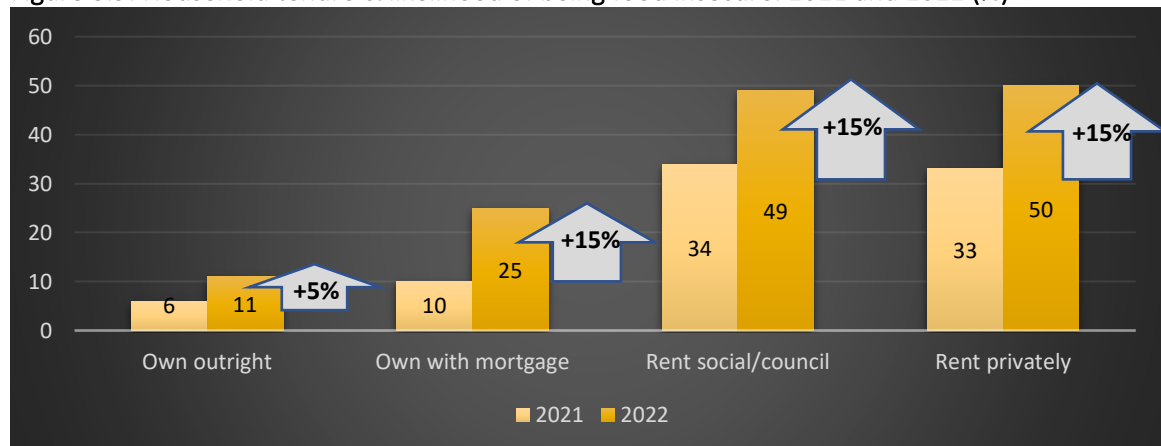
The Devon households were assessed for any relationship between the tenure of their accommodation and their food security status. (Tenure is only an indicator, not a driver of food security). Reflecting their economic circumstances and the cost-of-living crisis, table 3.3.1 below shows that half of households who were renting their accommodation, either from a social/council (49%) or private (50%) landlord were food insecure. This was far higher than among those who owned their home outright (12%) or owned it with a mortgage (25%).

Table 3.3.1 Household tenure and food security: 2021 and 2022 comparison

Food Security	Devon		Own outright		Own with mortgage		Rent social/council		Rent privately	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	91%	79%	83%	63%	61%	38%	57%	33%
Marginal	6%	13%	3%	9%	7%	11%	5%	14%	11%	17%
Low security	7%	13%	3%	7%	5%	13%	11%	15%	15%	22%
Very low security	10%	16%	3%	4%	5%	12%	23%	34%	18%	28%
Weighted base	1165	1206	423	420	313	297	173	201	187	228

Figure 3.9 below shows how the likelihood of being food insecure among Devon households who rent their accommodation – either from a social/council or private landlord – had increased very markedly since 2021, as had those that were buying with a mortgage. Each of these three groups had increased by +15%. Only households that owned their accommodation outright had seen a single digit increase (+5%) in the likelihood of being food insecure

Figure 3.9: Household tenure & likelihood of being food insecure: 2021 and 2022 (%)



¹⁶ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/research-advocacy/>

3.4 Household main respondent activity status and industry sector

This section explores the relationship between the activity status of the main respondent in the Devon households covered by the survey and the food security levels in their households. For those households in which the main respondent was employed (full or part-time) or self-employed, the section also examines the industrial sector in which they worked.

3.4.1 Activity status of main household respondent

Much of the published research in this area has identified the strong link between different types of activity and the level of food security. This is obviously because of the relationship between activity and income levels¹⁷. Households suffering food insecurity have invariably been those in which the activities of the adult members were associated with low incomes, such as being unemployed, long-term sick, or in poorly paid or part-time occupations.

Table 3.4.1a below presents the findings from 2021 for Devon households in terms of the activity status of the main respondent. The table shows that there were some very wide differences in the levels of household food security at that time:

- Nearly all households in which the main respondent was retired were food secure (98%);
- In contrast, between a quarter and a third of some other households were food insecure:
 - Where the main respondent was either long term sick (35%), a student¹⁸ (34%), other (30%), unemployed (28%), or part-time employed (26%).
- Those households in which the main respondent was in full-time or self-employment closely matched the overall Devon future for levels of food security and insecurity.

These differences in food security corresponded to both the different levels of income in the households and also their likely levels of expenditure in terms of mouths to feed. Indeed, those households with the fewest members (the retired – of whom 80% had only one or two household members on average) were the most food secure.

Table 3.4.1a Activity status of main household respondent and food security: 2021

Food Security 2021	Devon 2021	Full Time Emp	Part Time Emp	Self Emp (FT & PT)	Retired	Unemp-loyed	Long term sick	Student	Other
Food secure	78%	79%	70%	83%	97%	55%	63%	46%	60%
Marginal	6%	6%	5%	3%	1%	17%	2%	20%	10%
Low security	7%	6%	13%	7%	1%	10%	9%	14%	11%
Very low security	10%	10%	13%	7%	*%	18%	26%	20%	19%
Weighted base	1165	332	135	133	278	64	54	42	58

Table 3.4.1b shows the current details for 2022, revealing some very significant increases in levels of food insecurity both across the board and focussed on specific activities. The numbers in very low food security have doubled in households where the main respondent is either long-term sick (from 26% to 46%) or unemployed (from 18% to 43%). They have also increased by a similar amount in student households (from 20% to 39%).

Table 3.4.1b Activity status of main household respondent and food security: 2022

Food Security 2022	Devon 2022	Full Time Emp	Part Time Emp	Self Emp (FT & PT)	Retired	Unemp-loyed	Long term sick	Student	Other
Food secure	59%	54%	48%	72%	84%	27%	29%	18%	44%
Marginal	12%	16%	10%	7%	7%	18%	13%	24%	20%
Low security	13%	16%	22%	9%	4%	12%	12%	19%	14%
Very low security	16%	14%	20%	11%	4%	43%	46%	39%	22%
Weighted base	1206	373	169	155	297	53	63	42	51

¹⁷ https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Affordability-of-the-Eatwell-Guide_Final_Web-Version.pdf

¹⁸ It is very important to note that the figures presented for students cover *only* students who are living in private rental accommodation or at home with their parents – they do not include students living in halls of residence.

It is worth briefly commenting on each of the main activity categories:

- Full-time employees**
 As was found in 2021, households in which the main respondent was in this category were no more or less likely to be food insecure than the Devon population as whole. Nonetheless, 14% of this group were experiencing very low food security, that is *in-work poverty*.
- Part-time employees**
 Reflecting the lower wages and often higher levels of transience in these positions, households where the main respondent was a part-time employee were *more likely than average* to be food insecure, with 20% of this group experiencing very low food security, i.e. *in-work poverty*.
- Retired people**
 Households where the main respondent had retired were more likely to be food secure, usually because of their smaller size and more stable pension income.
- Long term sick and those unemployed**
 For many of these households the lack of earned income and dependence on benefits that had not kept pace with inflation, meant they were the most likely to be food insecure.

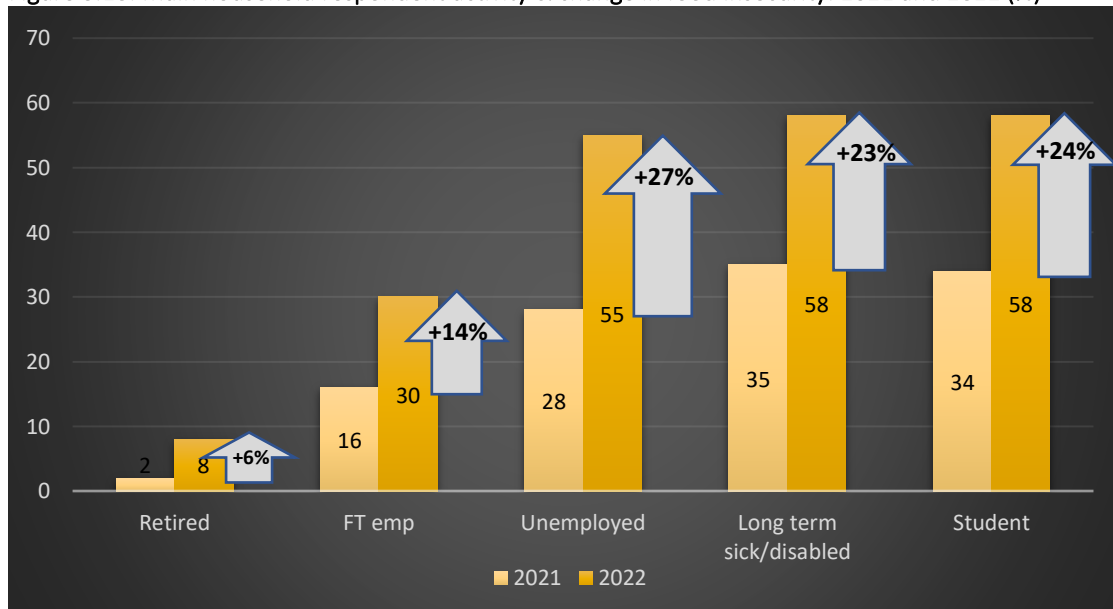
Table 3.4.2 summarises the changes between 2021 and 2022 for each of the different activity categories and food security levels. It illustrates that, as well as the significant increases in food insecurity among households where the main respondent is long-term sick, unemployed or a student, there was also a marked increases in households where the main respondent is part-time employed. There were only comparatively small increases in insecurity among households where the main respondent was retired or self-employed.

Table 3.4.2 Change in food security and activity of main household respondent: 2021-2022

Change in Food Security status 2021-2022	Devon	Full Time Emp	Part Time Emp	Self Emp (FT & PT)	Retired	Unemp-loyed	Long term sick	Student	Other
Food secure	-19%	-25%	-22%	-11%	-13%	-28%	-34%	-28%	-16%
Marginal	+6%	+10%	+5%	+4%	+6%	+1%	+11%	+4%	+10%
Low security	+6%	+10%	+9%	+2%	+3%	+2%	+3%	+5%	+3%
Very low security	+6%	+4%	+7%	+4%	+4%	+25%	+20%	+19%	+3%

The main variations in changes in food insecurity levels between different main respondent activities are illustrated in figure 3.10 below.

Figure 3.10: Main household respondent activity & change in food insecurity: 2021 and 2022 (%)



N.B. “Students” covers only those people who are living in private rental accommodation or at home with their parents – they do not include students living in halls of residence.

3.4.2 Industry sector of main respondents who were working

Details were collected on the industrial sector in which main respondents who had a job or were self-employed were currently working. The SMF report from 2020¹⁹ had highlighted four sectors that had been particularly badly hit by the pandemic – hospitality & leisure, retail, manufacturing and construction – with large increases in the proportions of very low child food security in households where the parents’ worked in one of these. The report noted that:

“Sectors with lower pay and often less consistent and secure contracts, such as hospitality and retail, had higher levels of food insecurity, with around a quarter of parents recalling difficulty feeding their children prior to the pandemic.... these were the sectors in which the highest proportion of respondents said that their incomes had fallen since the pandemic.”

The findings for the Devon households for 2022 mirrored these findings in that households where the main respondent worked in accommodation & food services were still struggling in terms of food insecurity. Furthermore, these households had been joined by those in which it is known that low wages are a major issue in each of them: households in which the main respondent worked in education, health & social work or personal services.

Table 3.4.3 below contains the detail for those main respondents who are employed (full or part-time) in these important sectors, compared with all Devon sectors combined. (It should be noted that between them these four sectors constitute approximately a third of all employment in Devon²⁰). The table illustrates that the likelihood of the household being food insecure is greater when the main respondent is employed in any of these industries:

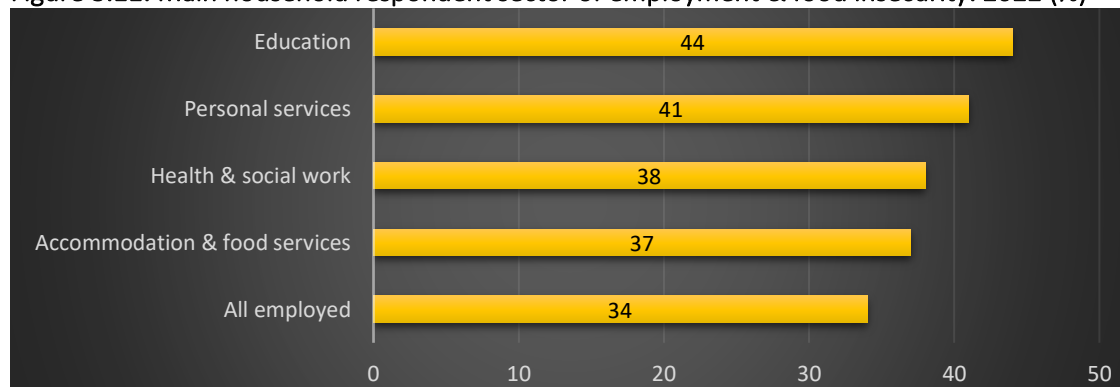
- **Education:** 44% of households were food insecure:
- **Health & social work:** 38% of households were food insecure:
- **Personal services:** 41% of households were food insecure: and
- **Accommodation and food services:** 38% of households were food insecure.

Table 3.4.3 Industry sector of employed main household respondents and food security: 2022

Food Security 2022	Devon 2022	All Employed	Education	Health & social work	Personal services	Accom & food servs
Food secure	59%	52%	48%	48%	47%	46%
Marginal	12%	14%	8%	14%	12%	17%
Low security	13%	18%	30%	19%	21%	16%
Very low security	16%	16%	14%	19%	20%	21%
Weighted base	1206	542	66	146	58	59

Figure 3.11 illustrates these findings for these four sectors, compared with all Devon sectors, showing the increased likelihood of in-work poverty in these sectors:

Figure 3.11: Main household respondent sector of employment & food insecurity: 2022 (%)



¹⁹ <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/measuring-child-hunger/>

²⁰ <https://www.devonomics.info/data/employment/>

3.5 Household physical and mental health conditions

This section discusses the levels and types of food insecurity that were found in different types of households across Devon, relative to the health of household members. The respondents were asked whether they, or anyone else in the household had *any* physical or mental health condition lasting or that was expected to last more than 12 months.

In 2021, it was found that households with at least one person with a health condition were more likely to be experiencing food insecurity (27%) than those without anyone with a condition (8%). This finding was replicated in 2022, although the proportions experiencing food insecurity had increased to 39% and 19% respectively. Table 3.5.1 contains the detail.

Table 3.5.1 Households with and without members with a health condition: 2021 and 2022

Food Security	Devon		At least one member of HH with health condition		No members of HH with health condition	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	67%	50%	87%	68%
Marginal	6%	13%	6%	11%	5%	13%
Low security	7%	13%	10%	15%	4%	10%
Very low security	10%	16%	17%	24%	4%	9%
Weighted base	1165	1206	504	593	640	593

It was also found in 2021 that there were very marked differences between the likelihood of the household experiencing food insecurity, in terms of whether the health condition was physical or mental. At that time, approaching half of households with at least one person with a mental health condition (46%) were experiencing food insecurity, compared with 13% of those with at least one person experiencing a physical health condition.

The 2022 findings again replicated those in 2021, with the proportions experiencing food insecurity increasing to 55% and 27% respectively. Households with at least one person with both a mental and physical health condition were also much more likely than those without any condition to be experiencing food insecurity (56%). Table 3.5.2 contains the details.

Table 3.5.2 Households with different types of health conditions

Food Security	Devon		At least one member of HH with physical health condition		At least one member of HH with mental health condition		At least one member of HH with both mental & physical condition	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Secure	78%	59%	82%	63%	48%	31%	54%	33%
Marginal	6%	13%	5%	10%	6%	15%	8%	11%
Low security	7%	13%	5%	12%	16%	20%	12%	20%
Very low security	10%	16%	8%	15%	30%	35%	26%	36%
Weighted base	1165	1206	265	343	126	122	113	128

It is important to highlight from these findings how closely related health in general is to food insecurity, with mental health in particular being a key element in the situation. Households with no health conditions were half as likely to be food insecure (19%) as those with any health condition (39%) and nearly three times less likely than those with a mental and physical health condition (56%) to be food insecure.

In terms of changes in levels of food insecurity, it was households with at least one person with both a mental and physical health condition that had experienced the biggest increase of +18%, while those with only a physical health condition had increased by +14%. Households with at least one person with a mental health condition had increased by +9%.

3.6 Household ethnicity

As described in chapter 1, in 2019/20 the FRS had a sample size of 19,041 enabling it to conduct analysis of households in terms of the ethnicity of their “head of household” (HoH). That showed some significant variations in the level of food insecurity between households related to ethnicity. For the proportions that were food insecure, these variations were:

- White HoH = 7% insecure
- Indian HoH = 5% insecure
- Pakistani HoH = 10% insecure
- Other Asian HoH = 8% insecure
- Black/African/Caribbean Black British HoH = 19% insecure
- Other ethnic group HoH = 14% insecure

These findings are broadly replicated in the Food Foundation’s much more recent *Food Insecurity Tracking* report (round 11 - October 2022)²¹, which stated that: “*Non-White ethnic groups are more likely to be food insecure than White ethnic groups.*” It also gave a figure for “*Black, Asian and Minority ethnic groups*” households being food insecure of 26.9%. The previous Tracker (Round 10 – April 2022) provided a more detailed breakdown:

- White = 15.7% insecure
- Other = 34.5% insecure
- Mixed/multiple = 23.3% insecure
- Asian/Asian British = 23.9% insecure
- Black/African/Caribbean = 22.9% insecure

These more recent figures show both an overall pattern of non-white ethnic groups having higher levels of food insecurity than white groups and, where comparisons are possible, markedly higher levels than in 2019/20 relative to the figures reported by the FRS. However, there are some marked discrepancies: for Black/African/Caribbean groups and “Other” groups which may be caused by sample size or changes in circumstances.

The 2022 Devon survey had a sample size of 1,206 and the 2011 Census had found that 95% of the county’s population was white. This would indicate that all but c.60-70 of the sample of interviews would be completed with HoHs who were white. In fact, 102 of the 1,206 interviews were conducted with respondents who indicated that at least one member of their household was something other than being white British. This had been anticipated as it was known that the number of people in Devon who were from different ethnic backgrounds had increased since 2011. When published, the 2021 Census results will provide a precise figure on the amount of increase.

While it was not possible to fully analyse the 102 households in terms of their different ethnic backgrounds, as shown above, because of the sample size limitations, it is possible to identify two broad trends in the data:

- Firstly, in line with the national findings shown above, those Devon households in which all members were white were more likely to be food secure than any of the other groups.
- Secondly and also in line with the Food Foundation findings, those Devon households in which there were members who were of “other” backgrounds were more likely to be food insecure.
- N.B. The sample sizes for these findings are small, so they should be treated with caution.

It is understood that further research has been commissioned to confirm and explore these points among the major ethnic groups in Devon.

²¹ <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking>

3.7 Household Local Authority

The 1,206 households interviewed were geographically grouped into their local authority district within Devon. As had been found in 2021, there were some differences in the levels of food security found in each district. This reflected the different profiles of the constituent populations and hence the composition of the households in each district. Table 3.7.1 contains the full details for 2022, while figure 3.12 highlights the overall levels of food insecurity (low and very low food security) that were found in each district.

Table 3.7.1 Household local authority district and food security 2022

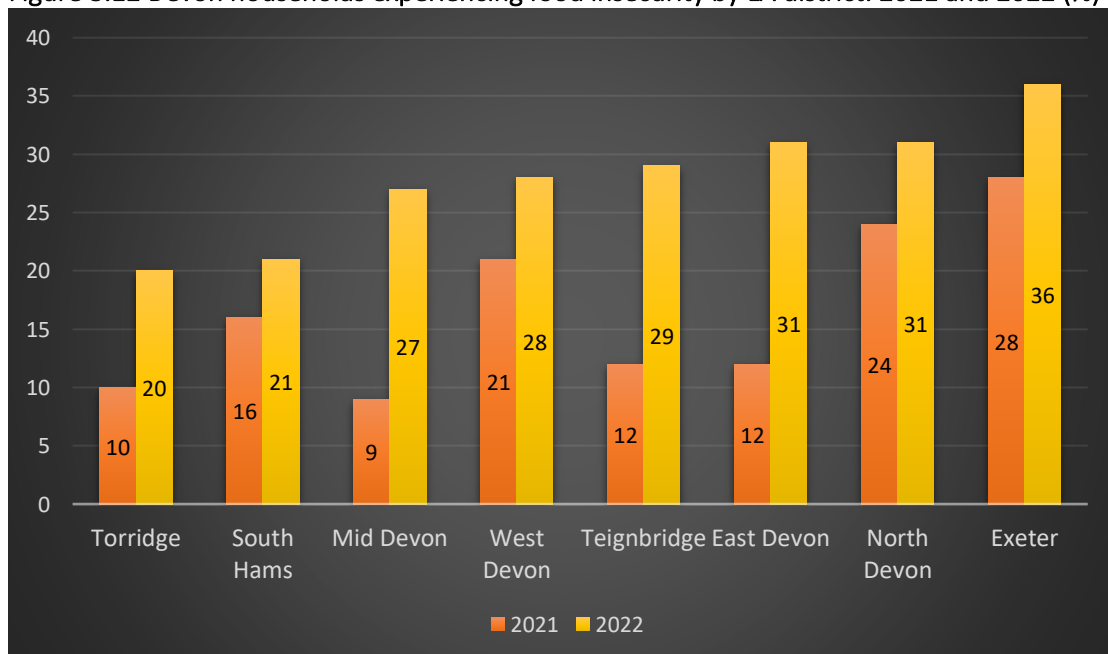
Food Security	Devon	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	North Devon	South Hams	Teign-bridge	Torrige	West Devon
Secure	59%	60%	47%	61%	55%	64%	61%	69%	58%
Marginal	12%	9%	16%	12%	14%	15%	10%	11%	14%
Low security	13%	16%	17%	10%	15%	10%	10%	10%	9%
Very low security	16%	15%	20%	17%	16%	11%	19%	10%	19%
Weighted base	1206	198	205	121	139	121	181	120	121

The differences between districts are the result of a wide range of factors, including average household size and composition (esp. number of children), income, employment status, proportion of retired people, tenure, health conditions, especially mental health and benefits receipt as described earlier. (These are discussed further overleaf).

Figure 3.12 shows that in 2021 the highest levels of food insecurity were found in three districts: Exeter, North Devon and West Devon, in which around a quarter of households were insecure: In contrast, in Mid Devon, Torrige, East Devon and Teignbridge around one in ten households were insecure at that time.

However, by 2022 there had been increases in all districts, with Exeter still having the highest levels of insecurity. Some of these increases were very different in scale: Mid Devon (+18%), Teignbridge (+17%) and East Devon (+19%) were particularly marked. South Hams (+5%) had the smallest increase, while the remaining four districts increased by between 7% and 10%. These increases meant that in six of the districts around c.30% of households are now food insecure. Only in South Hams and Torrige is the figure lower at around c.20%.

Figure 3.12 Devon households experiencing food insecurity by LA district: 2021 and 2022 (%)



As mentioned, the variations in food security levels between the districts are the result of a range of differences in their household profiles. These differences are summarised in table 3.7.2 below for the key indicators of food insecurity such as household size and composition (esp. number of children), income, employment status, proportion of retired people, tenure, health conditions, especially mental health and benefits receipt as described earlier.

For districts with the highest *insecurity* ratings – such as Exeter, North Devon, East Devon and Teignbridge – the table shows that they scored poorly (in terms of levels of food insecurity) on many of the indicators: having comparatively higher numbers of children per household, higher proportions of households with income of less than £20,000 per annum and lower proportions of main respondents who were retired, together with being among the highest proportions of households who were renting (as opposed to owning outright).

For the two districts with the highest *security* ratings – South Hams and Torrridge – the table shows that they scored comparatively strongly across many of the indicators for high food security: smaller households, higher proportions of respondents who were retired, together with higher proportions of households owning their accommodation outright.

It is also worth highlighting that, reflecting the age of their populations and their and retired status, these two districts had significantly more households in receipt of housing and heating benefits, such as cold weather payment, council tax support, etc. It was evident that this support was contributing towards the greater food security found in these districts.

Table 3.7.2 Selected household characteristics by local authority district 2022

Age band	Devon	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	North Devon	South Hams	Teign-bridge	Torrridge	West Devon
Average size (no. of residents)	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.6
Average no. children	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5
Income (%)									
- <£20,000 pa	42%	36%	42%	38%	41%	40%	44%	43%	43%
- £20 - £40,000 pa	34%	35%	30%	38%	36%	32%	37%	36%	32%
- £40,000+ pa	24%	27%	28%	24%	23%	28%	20%	21%	25%
Main respondent activity (%)									
- FTE	31%	33%	38%	36%	30%	21%	30%	19%	35%
- PTE	14%	15%	16%	10%	18%	7%	21%	12%	8%
- Retired	25%	22%	18%	21%	22%	32%	28%	33%	27%
- L-t sick/disabled	5%	6%	4%	5%	6%	6%	4%	8%	4%
Tenure (%)									
- Social/council rent	17%	19%	18%	14%	17%	17%	16%	15%	15%
- Private rent	19%	13%	25%	28%	21%	12%	18%	18%	17%
- Own outright	35%	37%	28%	31%	34%	44%	34%	38%	38%
Health (%)									
- 1+ any condition	50%	55%	47%	52%	51%	50%	50%	49%	45%
- 1+ mental health	10%	10%	11%	12%	9%	10%	9%	12%	9%
Benefit receipt (%)									
- 1+ any benefit	45%	44%	42%	41%	45%	45%	43%	45%	47%
- Universal Credit	15%	18%	16%	16%	14%	12%	15%	16%	9%
- Housing & heating (inc. winter fuel)	23%	21%	18%	18%	23%	31%	22%	33%	30%
Weighted base	1206	198	205	121	139	121	181	120	121

When assessing the findings shown in this section, it is important to remember that all eight districts in Devon contain households that are experiencing very low food security, as shown in table 3.7.1. The overall figures for the levels of food security found in each district are merely a reflection of the composition of the constituent households living there.

3.8 Households accessing emergency food support and/or free school meals

This section examines the use of two key elements of support available in the cost-of-living crisis: accessing emergency food support, such as food banks, food distribution centres, etc.) and, among households with children, the take-up of free school meals.

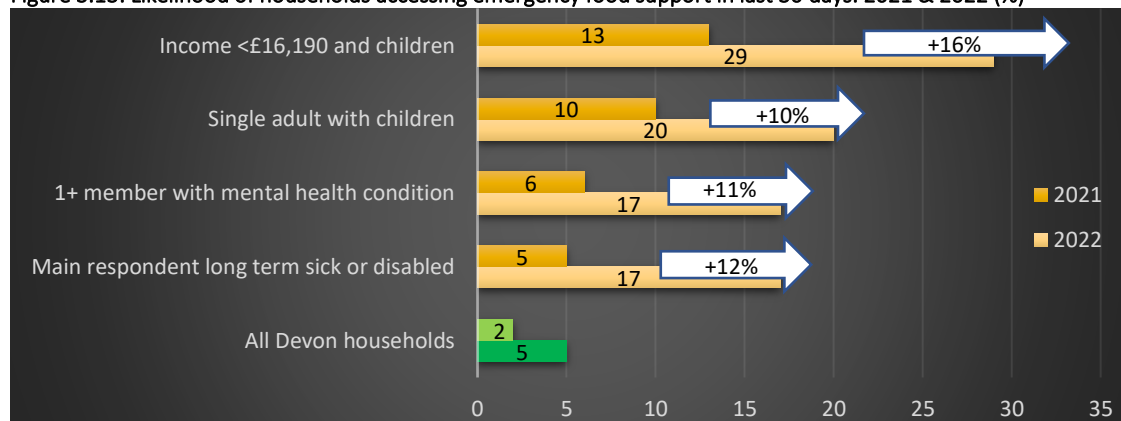
3.8.1 Households accessing emergency food support in last 30 days

The 2021 research found that 2% of Devon households had accessed emergency food support *in the last 30 days*. In line with national reports²² of much greater use of food banks since then, the 2022 study has found the level of use in Devon now stands at 5% of households overall. More worryingly, the level of use among the most vulnerable households is far higher:

- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (29%);
- Single adult households (20%);
- Households with 1+ person with a mental health condition (17%); and
- Households where the main respondent is long-term sick or disabled (17%).

Seven out of ten households who are accessing food support (70%) are currently experiencing very low food security (89% are food insecure). Figure 3.13 shows how the proportion of each of the main types of households accessing emergency food support has increased since March /April 2021. For each type, the number accessing food support has jumped very significantly.

Figure 3.13: Likelihood of households accessing emergency food support in last 30 days: 2021 & 2022 (%)



Recent CAB research on the numbers of households being referred to food banks²³, published on 11th November 2022, provides direct corroboration of these findings. It shows very significant increases in the overall numbers that are being referred since April 2021, with the increases again being particularly marked among the most vulnerable households:

Table 3.8.1 CAB Cost of living dashboard: Number of referrals to food banks nationally

	April 2021	October 2022	Increase (+%)
Household type			
Single person with children	1656	3254	+96%
Couple with children	860	1469	+71%
Disabled or long-term health	4350	8072	+86%
Tenure			
Social housing tenant	3058	5615	+84%
Private tenant	1860	2920	+57%
Monthly income			
<£600	851	1340	+57%
£600-£999	736	1124	+53%
£1000-£1499	577	822	+42%

²² <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/tsunami-need-uks-biggest-food-bank-network-launches-emergency-appeal-2022-10-20/>

²³ <https://public.flourish.studio/story/1634399/>

The CAB report continues by describing the current situation:

“Britain is facing its biggest cost-of-living crisis in decades. At Citizens Advice, we’ve seen more people coming to us for help with crisis support, energy problems and not having enough money to make ends meet than ever before.

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting everyone, but it’s not affecting us all equally. Certain groups of people we’re helping are struggling more with cost-of-living issues. We continue to see more disabled people facing cost of living issues than other issues. We’ve never seen a higher proportion of people in a negative budget.”

To contextualise the scale of the current cost-of-living crisis in Devon and the associated increased use of emergency food support, it is worth noting that the 2021 research found 5% of households in the county had accessed emergency food support over the entire year between the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and being interviewed in March or April 2021. The proportion among households with children was found to be even higher at 8%. It was also far higher among groups of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable households:

- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (19%)
- Single adult households (17%)
- Households with 1+ person with a physical and mental health condition (14%)
- Households receiving means test benefits with children (13%)
- Households where main respondent was unemployed (12%)

Of course, these figures cover accessing support over a *12 month period*. The current study shows the proportion of Devon households accessing emergency food support *in the last 30 days* is now at the same level (5%) as it was in 2020-2021 *for an entire year*. This tells us that not only are more households needing to access this support, but those that do are needing to access it more often. Again, these findings are corroborated by the CAB report:

“Since the start of the cost-of-living crisis, we have referred unprecedented numbers of people for crisis support. We are also helping greater numbers of people for the first time on these issues - more than at any other time on record. This means we are seeing more people in hardship and more people falling deeper into hardship. The number of people we’ve helped with crisis support (in 2022) has already exceeded the rate for 2021, 2020 and 2019 – we’re currently helping 2 people every minute with crisis support.”

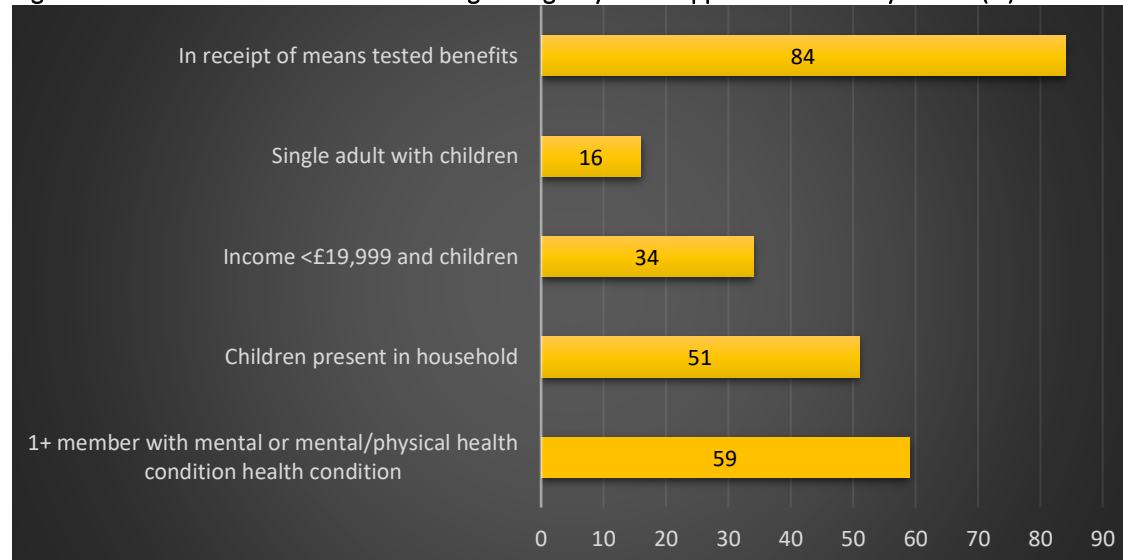
Profile of households accessing emergency food support and the benefits system

As noted above, 5% of the sample of 1,206 Devon households have accessed emergency food support in the last 30 days and of these, seven out of ten (70%) are currently experiencing very low food security (89% are food insecure). It is worth examining the profile of the 61 households that make up the 5% in more detail (Figure 3.14 overleaf details the profiles):

- Three fifths have 1+ member with a mental health (or mental and physical) condition (59%):
- Half of them have children present in the household (51%):
- A third have income <£19,999 pa and children present (34%):
- One in six are single adult households (16%): and
- Over eight out of ten are in receipt of means test benefits (84%).

It is this final point – that *over eight out of ten households currently accessing emergency food support are in receipt of means tested benefits* – that needs emphasising. Section 3.2.3 highlighted how many households in receipt of means tested benefits were food insecure. The failure of Universal Credit to adequately support these types of vulnerable households is particularly concerning: *More than two fifths (44%) of households in receipt of universal credit are in very low food security and two thirds (66%) are food insecure.*

Figure 3.14: Profile of households accessing emergency food support in last 30 days: 2022 (%)



Base: 61 Devon Households accessing emergency food support in last 30 days

This concern over the failure of the Government’s social security system to provide sufficient *security* to vulnerable households that are known to them and in great need has been widely publicised. In March 2022, the Trussell Trust reported²⁴ on households that were in receipt of Universal Credit at that time stating that:

- *More than half of households on Universal Credit (56%) report that they are going without at least one of the absolute essentials we all need to keep warm, fed and clothed.*
- *Half (50%) are either already behind on their bills or are facing a constant struggle to keep up with them.*
- *Two in five (40%) have already fallen into debt following the Universal Credit cut last autumn.*

Their conclusion then was clear: *“The most immediate threat to households is the failure of social security – Universal Credit and legacy benefits – to keep pace with the real cost of living... The Treasury must uprate benefits...by the forecast rate of inflation.”* Of course, the cost-of-living crisis has hit much harder over the intervening months and the Treasury has still not uprated benefits in line with inflation. The outcomes of this political decision are all too evident in the increased use of food banks seen across Devon since then.

Awareness of support and advice on accessing emergency food support

All households, regardless of their food security status were asked:

“If you wanted support and advice about accessing affordable food for your household, such as food parcels, food banks, meal and distribution centres, would you know where to get it?”

Overall, 44% of the sample of 1,206 households said that they would know where to get support and advice, while a further 8% said that they would not want it. Nearly half of the households said either they would not know (39%) or that they were not sure (9%). These proportions were broadly consistent across all household types, with no statistically significant differences being evident.

²⁴ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/The-true-cost-of-living.pdf>

3.8.2 Households in receipt of free school meals

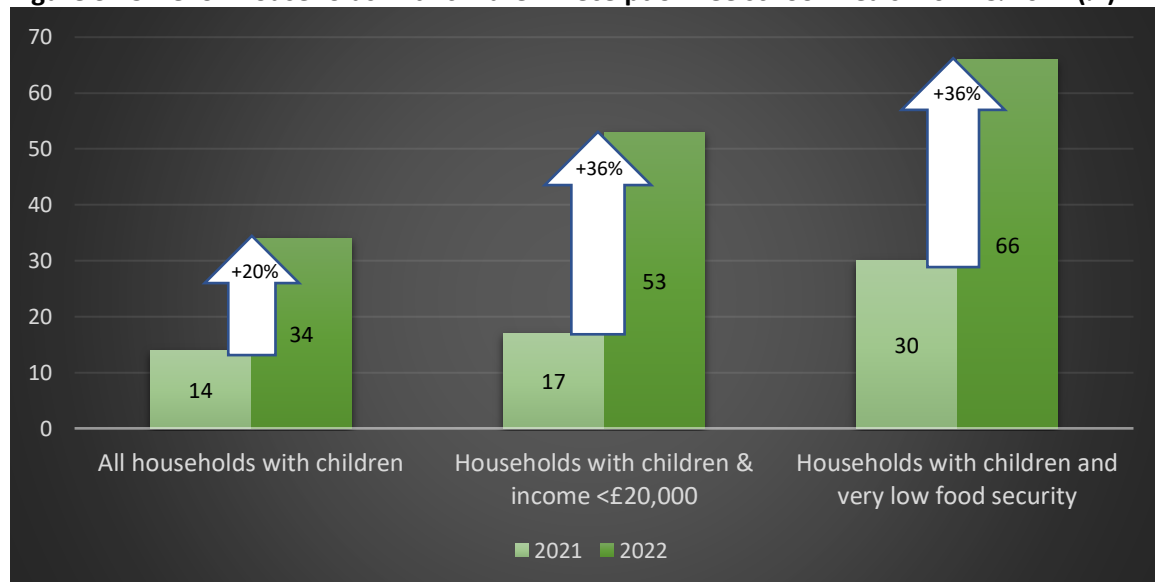
The 2021 research found that 14% of Devon households with children were in receipt of free school meals. However, there has been a significant broadening of the eligibility criteria for receipt and the 2022 study has found that 34% of households with children are now receiving free school meals, marking a very significant increase of +20% overall. The most common characteristics of those households with children who are in receipt of FSMs are (N.B. The categories add to more than 100% because households can be in more than group):

- Income of < £20,000 pa (52%):
- 1+ member with mental health or mental and physical health condition (44%):
- Renting from the council/social landlord (36%): and
- Lone parents (22%).

Furthermore, it is encouraging to report that the research also identified that the broadening of the criteria had not been simply a “scatter-gun” approach, as there was clear evidence that the uptake in receipt of FSM had benefited many of those households most in need. Figure 3.15 below contains the details and shows that the two groups of households in which increased receipt of FSM was highest were:

- Households with children and with very low food security (increasing from 30% in 2021 to 66% now – i.e. more than twice as many of this group of households): and
- Households with children and with income less than £20,000 pa (increasing from 17% in 2021 to 53% now – i.e. more than three times as many of these households).

Figure 3.15 Devon households with children: Receipt of free school meals: 2021 & 2022 (%)

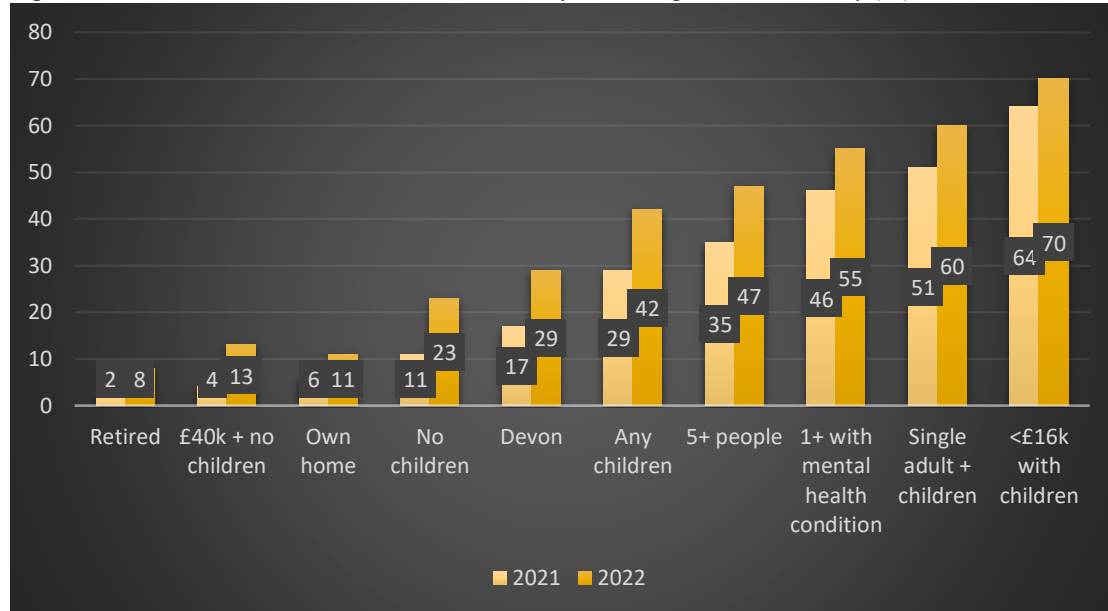


Of course, while the increases shown in figure 3.15 are encouraging, it is important to bear in mind they also demonstrate that a third of households with children and very low food security are *not receiving FSMs*, as are nearly half of households with children and income of <£20,000 pa. This indicates that there is still work to be done to reach these households, either in terms of awareness raising and/or overcoming issues such as embarrassment and cultural background.

3.9 Summary of Devon Households Facing Food Insecurity

Nearly a third (29%) of Devon households in 2022 are “food insecure”, either having low or very low food security. This compares with less than one in five (17%) in 2021 and represents a very significant increase. The 2022 findings show that the likelihood of being food insecure varies significantly between households. Figure 3.16 compares the change between 2021 and 2022 for different households: from those least likely to be food insecure to those most likely:

Figure 3.16 Devon households’ likelihood of experiencing food insecurity (%): 2021 and 2022



In addition to the household types that are shown on the right of the figure, there are several other profiles that were found to be significantly more likely to be food insecure than average:

- Income of between £16,190 - £19,999 and children (60%) (N.B. Three quarters of the main respondents in this group were *in-work*, either full or part-time (59%) or self-employed (17%) as were two fifths of those households with income <£16,190 and children (40%):
- Households where the main respondent was either long term sick/disabled (58%), a student (58%) or unemployed (55%):
- Renting their accommodation from the council/social (49%) or privately (50%): and/or
- Households in receipt of means tested benefits (39%), esp. Universal Credit (66%).

Furthermore, the study also found evidence of *in-work food poverty* among many Devon households on low wages, either in full-time, part-time or self-employment. Also, in line with national research, households in which all members were of a white background were found to be less likely to be food insecure than households with 1+ member from another ethnic background. However, this needs further verification.

What was highlighted by the 2021 research and remains a key point to emphasise is that many households experiencing food insecurity invariably have more than one of the characteristics listed above. For example, they may have annual income <£16,191, children present and be long-term sick or disabled, or they might be a sole parent, seeking work, income <£16,191 and a household member with a mental health condition. Many Devon households struggling with very low food security are facing multiple disadvantages in coping with the cost-of-living crisis.

The proportion of Devon households who have accessed emergency food support in the past 30 days has increased from 2% in 2021 to 5% now. It is of particular concern that, among those households that have accessed emergency food support in the last 30 days: 70% are experiencing very low food security: and 84% are in receipt of means tested benefits.

4. Devon households and fuel security 2022

This chapter assesses fuel security among different types of Devon households. It covers all 1,206 Devon households surveyed during September and October 2022 in terms of:

- The type of heating system in their accommodation:
- The method of payment used for heating bills:
- Any plans they have for reducing energy use this autumn:
- Concerns over the impact of reduced energy use on home environment (cold, damp, etc):
- Ability to pay for increased energy prices and likelihood of having to borrow to pay: and
- Priorities for bill payment.

The chapter also includes a summary of the types of households that are most likely to become “fuel insecure” due to increases in fuel/energy prices. These were assessed as being those that are most concerned over their ability to pay for the increased bills, as well as saying they are likely to have to borrow or use a credit card to pay them. As such, the chapter focuses on households’ situations *over the coming winter*, not in the previous 30 days as in chapter 3.

To contextualise the findings, it is worth noting that the most recent national data from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 24th February 2022²⁵ states:

- In 2020, there were an estimated 13.2 per cent of households (3.16 million) in fuel poverty in England under the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric:
- This was equivalent to an average fuel poverty gap (the reduction in fuel costs needed for a household to not be in fuel poverty) of £223 per household per annum: and
- In Devon the figures were estimated to be between 10.0% and 12.0% in South Hams, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge, and between 12.0% and 14.0% in the remaining areas.

Of course, the figures above were calculated before the huge increases in energy prices took effect earlier this year and were based on a threshold of 10 per cent of net household income being spent on fuel for the household to be classified as being in “fuel poverty”. The University of York and Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)²⁶ have recently published an updated forecast based on the increased prices of energy and fuel, which show that:

- By January 2023, over half of households in the UK (55% or 15 million) will be in fuel poverty – spending over 10 per cent of net income on fuel: and
- This will be equivalent to an average fuel poverty gap (the reduction in fuel costs needed for a household to not be in fuel poverty) of £1,950 per household per annum.

However, these updated figures do not take into account any household behaviour change, i.e. using less energy/fuel or adapting their accommodation to be more energy efficient. On this basis, while these figures are extremely helpful and provide background context, it is very important to emphasise that they are a *different measure* to those that are used in this report.

This research focuses on households’ perceived ability to pay for the increased energy and fuel prices, based on any changes to their energy/fuel usage, together with the likelihood of the household having to borrow money or use credit cards to do so. It also takes account of any plans the households have to make their accommodation (more) energy efficient. Consequently, the figures shown in the following chapters should not be compared directly with the fuel poverty figures. The two sets of figures provide complimentary, but quite different perspectives on the issue.

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2022>

²⁶ <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/fuel-poverty-updated-estimates-uk>

The issue of behaviour change, as well as having the ability to change, are very important in understanding the challenges presented by the increased energy and fuel prices faced by households. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy’s report on “*Research into the Behaviours and Attitudes of the Fuel Poor in England*”²⁷ provides interesting insights that help inform the findings in the rest of this chapter:

Heating their home

“Households with a higher likelihood of being in fuel poverty differed in their heating behaviours and attitudes in a number of ways: being less likely to (have and) use central heating as their main heating source and to have a comfortably heated home... They were also more likely to still be cold with the heating on, suggesting a compounding problem of homes being harder to heat for the higher likelihood households. This was corroborated by the correlation between colder homes and those with problems with their heating systems.”

Paying for their energy

“Households with a higher likelihood of being in fuel poverty reported greater difficulties when budgeting for their energy use and keeping up with their bills, and were more reliant on having to pay upfront for their energy. Higher likelihood households were notably less likely to be paying via a direct debit or standing order and instead, more likely to be pre-paying via a key card or token meter or via a monthly or quarterly bill.”

The Scottish government’s 2020 report “*Research into the lived experience of fuel poverty in Scotland*”²⁸ also provides more useful understanding of the negative impacts of cold and the need for adequate heating in the homes of particularly vulnerable households:

“Those with chronic health conditions and disabilities identified a greater sensitivity to cold and reliance on heating than other participants in the study, with most saying they experienced negative impacts on their physical and mental health when they could not afford to heat their homes adequately.

Some of those in households categorised as being in extreme fuel poverty felt restricted in the extent to which they could reduce their bills. This was either because they lived in a property unsuitable for central heating or because decisions were ultimately out of their control (as tenants) or the cost of improvements meant they could not afford them (owner occupiers).

Most of those on the lowest incomes were regularly limiting their heating use and using the most extreme coping strategies to stay warm. In the worst cases they were cutting back on buying food and other essentials, and a few had to rely on friends & family for food or money.”

The Resolution Foundation’s 2022 Spotlight Paper “*Stressed Out*”²⁹ highlights the important fact that being cold at home is not simply an issue of the amount of money spent on heating: more often than not, the “*energy efficiency of the accommodation is one of the key drivers in whether a household is in fuel stress.*” That is, the households in fuel stress are more likely to live in poorly insulated, adequately heated properties. The Foundation states: “*occupants of the least energy efficient homes will see the highest levels of fuel stress (this year).*”

Lastly in this contextual section, it is worth highlighting that in Devon:

- 26% of Devon’s homes are off-gas-grid, compared to 16% nationally³⁰.
- DCC intelligence shows a higher proportion of off-gas-grid properties and older less energy efficient properties in many rural parts of Devon increasing vulnerability to high fuel prices. In many of these areas pay from employment can also often be low.
- DCC intelligence shows higher than national average proportions of people in private rented accommodation in much of Devon, which often links more closely to those people experiencing food and fuel insecurity.

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-into-the-behaviours-and-attitudes-of-the-fuel-poor-in-england>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/research-lived-experience-fuel-poverty-scotland/pages/3/>

²⁹ <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/stressed-out/>

³⁰ <https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DPT-net-zero-report-v1-140820.pdf>

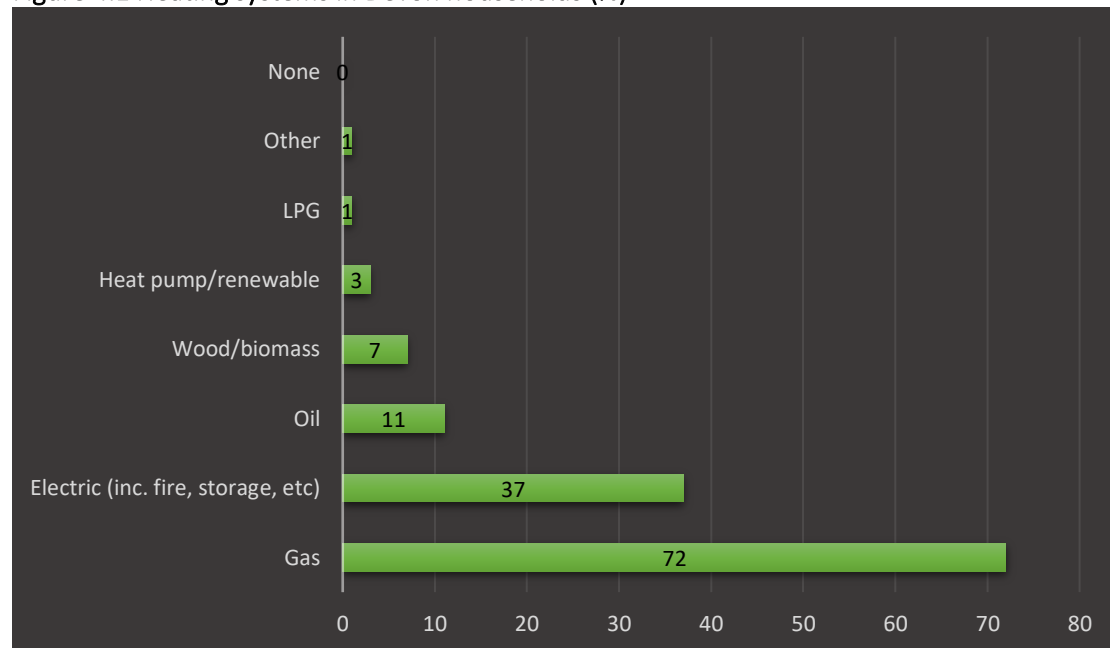
4.1 Types of heating systems used by households

The Devon households were asked about the type(s) of heating system that they had in their accommodation. While most only had one main type of system, some had more than one, which is why the percentages in figure 4.1 add to more than 100. The figure shows that the most common system was gas, with nearly three quarters of households having this as their main source of heating, followed by electric which was used by around a third of households. Smaller proportions used oil, wood/biomass or heat pump/renewable sources.

The Building Research Establishment’s (BRE Trust) report: *The Housing Stock of the United Kingdom* reported very similar findings:

“Around eight in ten homes in the UK use a gas fired central heating system as the primary method for heating. Among those not using this heating method, electric storage heaters or central heating using oil were the most frequent types³¹”

Figure 4.1 Heating systems in Devon households (%)



Base: 1206 Devon households

While the pattern shown in the figure was broadly consistent between different types of households and across the county geographically, there were some notable variations. These reflect the range of accommodation available in each location and its affordability to the households living there:

- **Geography:** In Exeter and Teignbridge, gas was more commonly used (80% in both) and oil less commonly used (3% and 6% respectively). Conversely, in Torrridge and South Hams gas was less commonly used (53% and 62% respectively), while oil (24% in Torrridge and 13% in South Hams) and wood/biomass (14% in Torrridge and 10% in South Hams) were more commonly used.
- **Tenure:** Households living in accommodation that they owned outright were more likely to use oil (14%) and wood/biomass (12%). Households living in privately rented accommodation were more likely to use electric (46%), while those renting from the council/social housing were much less likely to use oil (3%) or wood/biomass (1%).

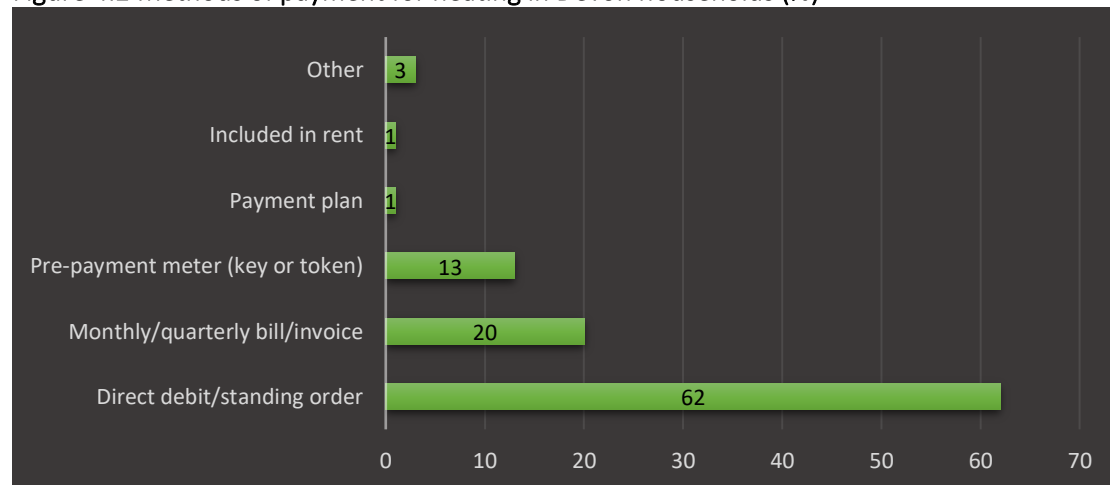
³¹ https://files.bregroup.com/bretrust/The-Housing-Stock-of-the-United-Kingdom_Report_BRE-Trust.pdf

- **Presence of children:** Households with children and single parents were more likely to use gas (78% and 82% respectively), while those without children were more likely to use wood/biomass (10%).
- **Health conditions:** Households with at least one member with a mental health condition were more likely to use electric (51% - NB They were also more likely to rent from a council/housing association) and less likely to use oil (4%).
- **Food security:** Households with low or very low food security levels were more likely to use electric (51% and 55% respectively) and less likely to use oil (5% and 6%). Households with high food security levels were more likely to use oil (14%) or wood/biomass (10%).

4.2 Methods of payment used by households

The households were then asked about the method of payment they used for their heating bills. Figure 4.2 shows that the most common method was by direct debit/standing, used by nearly two thirds of households (62%). Smaller proportions used either monthly/quarterly bills/invoices (20%) or pre-payment meters (13% - In 2017, the latest year for which government data is available on the number of pre-payment meters in Devon, the figure was c.10% (32,500 out of c.330,000 households)³². The total is known to have grown since then).

Figure 4.2 Methods of payment for heating in Devon households (%)



Base: 1206 Devon households

The pattern shown in figure 4.2 above was broadly consistent between different types of households and across the county geographically, though there were again some marked variations. These tended to reflect the types of heating systems, the tenure and the circumstances of the households living in the accommodation:

Direct debit/standing orders were more often used by:

Households buying with a mortgage (76%).
Households who owned their accommodation outright (70%); and
Households where the main respondent was retired (70%).

Monthly/quarterly bills/invoices were more often used by:

Households in Exeter (25%) and the South Hams (31%);
Households renting privately (25%);
Households with 1+ member with a mental health condition (25%); and
Households without children (21%).

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/electric-prepayment-meter-statistics>

Pre-payment meters were more often used by:

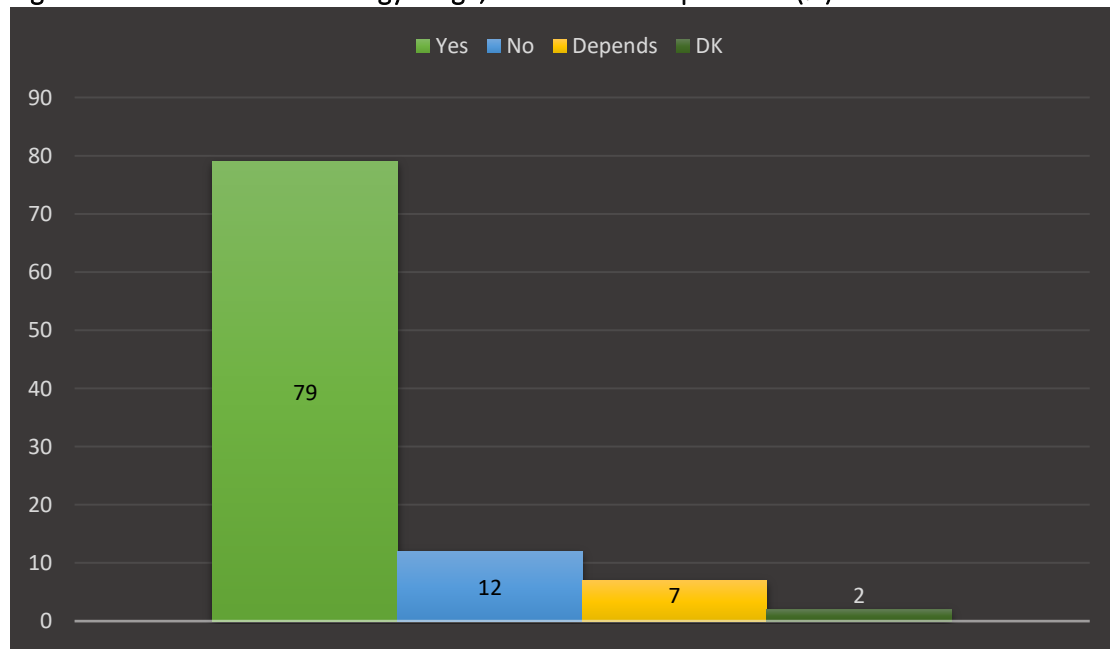
- Households where the main respondent was long term sick or disabled (40%):
- Households living in council/social housing (37%):
- Households where the main respondent was unemployed (30%):
- Single parent households (26%):
- Households with income less than £16,190 pa (23%):
- Households with 1+ member with a mental health condition (21%): and
- Households in receipt of benefits (19%).

It should be noted that, in terms of food security and reflecting the household profiles shown above, households with very low food security were much more likely than average to pay by pre-payment meters (29% compared with 13%) and less likely to pay by direct debit/standing order (46% and 62%). This finding was consistent with that in the *Research into the Behaviours and Attitudes of the Fuel Poor* referenced above.

4.3 Household plans to reduce energy usage, due to October price rise

It was widely publicised that energy prices would rise significantly in October. The households were asked whether they were either already or planning to reduce their energy usage because of the price rise. Figure 4.3 shows that nearly eight out of ten households were planning to reduce their energy usage and a further 9% were unsure.

Figure 4.3 Plans to reduce energy usage, due to October price rise (%)



Base: 1206 Devon households

Some households were more likely to be planning to reduce energy use than others:

- Households where the main respondent was working part-time (91%) compared with households where the main respondent was retired (74%)
- Households with children (83%) and single parent households (84%) compared with households with no children (75%)
- Households buying their accommodation with a mortgage (86%) compared with households who owned their homes outright (75%): and
- Households that are food insecure (84%) compared with households that are food secure (76%).

4.4 How households will reduce their energy usage

The 1,020 households (85% of the total sample) that were either planning to or said that they might reduce the amount of energy they used were asked how they would do this. Most of these households said that they would be changing their behaviour in several ways: on average describing nearly three different ways of how they intended to reduce their usage.

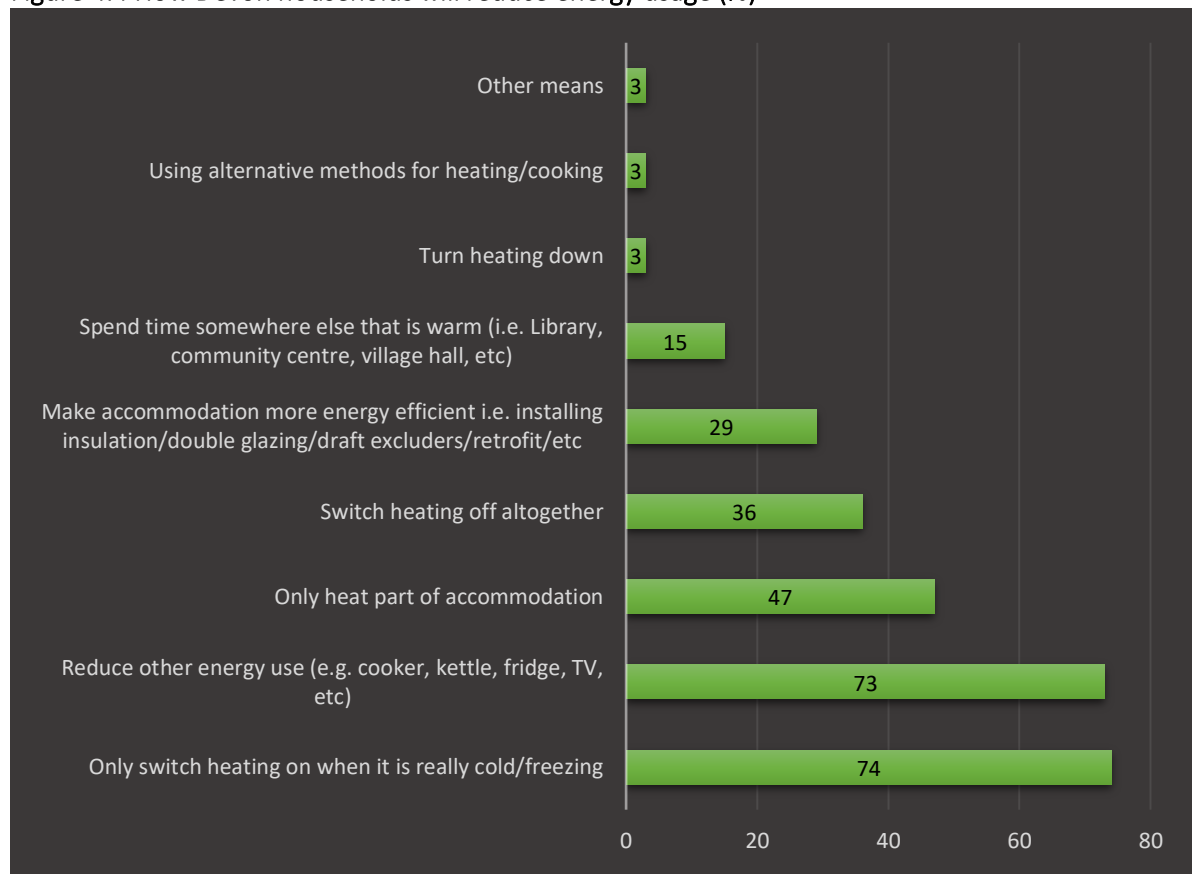
Figure 4.3 below contains the details of the range of replies that were given. It shows that the most common means of reducing energy usage – given by around three quarters of all these households – were either:

- Only switching their heating on when it was really cold/freezing (74%): and /or
- Reducing energy use by using the cooker, kettle, fridge, TV, etc less/not at all (73%).

Smaller proportion of these households said they were planning to only heat part of their accommodation (47%), turn the heating off altogether (36%) or make their accommodation more energy efficient by installing various insulation measures (29%). Around one in seven households said they would have to spend time elsewhere, such as the library, village hall, community centre, etc to keep warm (13%).

The “other” means of reducing usage that were given included: “*dressing warmer/putting more layers on*”, using “*hot water bottles*”, “*going to bed early/staying in bed*”, “*showering in the gym/elsewhere*”, “*using off-peak energy*”, “*batch cooking*”, “*sitting in the car*” and “*handwashing clothes.*”

Figure 4.4 How Devon households will reduce energy usage (%)



Base: 1,020 Devon households either planning to or might reduce energy use

There were several very marked variations to the overarching picture shown in figure 4.4 above, which are of great concern in terms of the health and wellbeing of these households:

Switching heating off altogether was mentioned far more often by:

- Lone parent households (68%):
- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (61%):
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled (57%):
- Households with 1+ member with physical and mental health condition (51%):
- Households where the main respondent was unemployed (47%): and
- Households renting from the council/social housing (47%).

Spending time somewhere that is warm was mentioned far more often by:

- Lone parent households (35%):
- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (34%):
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled (24%):
- Households with income <£19,999 pa (24%): and
- Households renting from the council/social housing (24%).

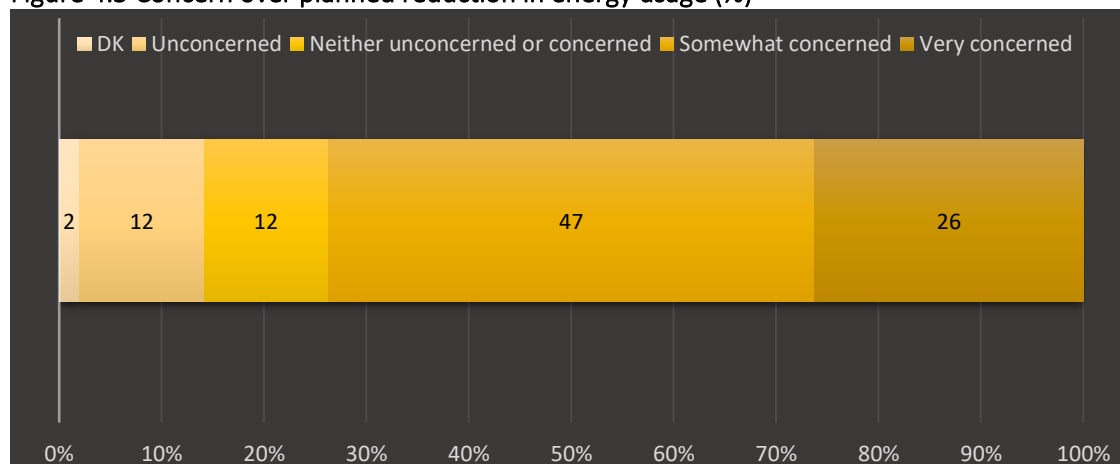
These findings demonstrate that many of the most vulnerable households in Devon – low-income families with children, lone parent households, those who are sick and/or disabled – will be turning off their heating completely this winter because they cannot afford to pay the increased cost of energy. This will force those that can, or who are able, to go somewhere else, such as a library, community centre, village hall, etc in order to keep themselves warm.

The gap between the proportions saying they plan to “switch off altogether” and those saying they will “spend time somewhere else warm” indicates that between 25-30% of these groups will remain at home without heating in the cold. This is deeply worrying for all these groups, particularly those with children, health conditions and/or long-term sickness or disability.

4.5 Concern over the impact of reduced energy usage

The 1,020 households that were either planning to or said that they might reduce the amount of energy they used were then asked: “How concerned are you about the potential impact of this reduction in energy use in terms of your home environment (cold, damp, etc) and health?” Three quarters of these households expressed a degree of concern – either being somewhat concerned (47%) or very concerned (26%). Just 12% were unconcerned. Figure 4.5 below contains the detail.

Figure 4.5 Concern over planned reduction in energy usage (%)



Base: 1,020 Devon households either planning to or might reduce energy use

The analysis showed that there were again several very marked variations to the overarching picture shown in the figure. This demonstrated that, not surprisingly, the households who were most likely to say they would have to “switch off their heating altogether” and/or “spend time somewhere else that is warm” were also those expressing the highest degrees of concern about the impact of reduced energy usage on their home environment/health:

Households that were far more likely to be very concerned:

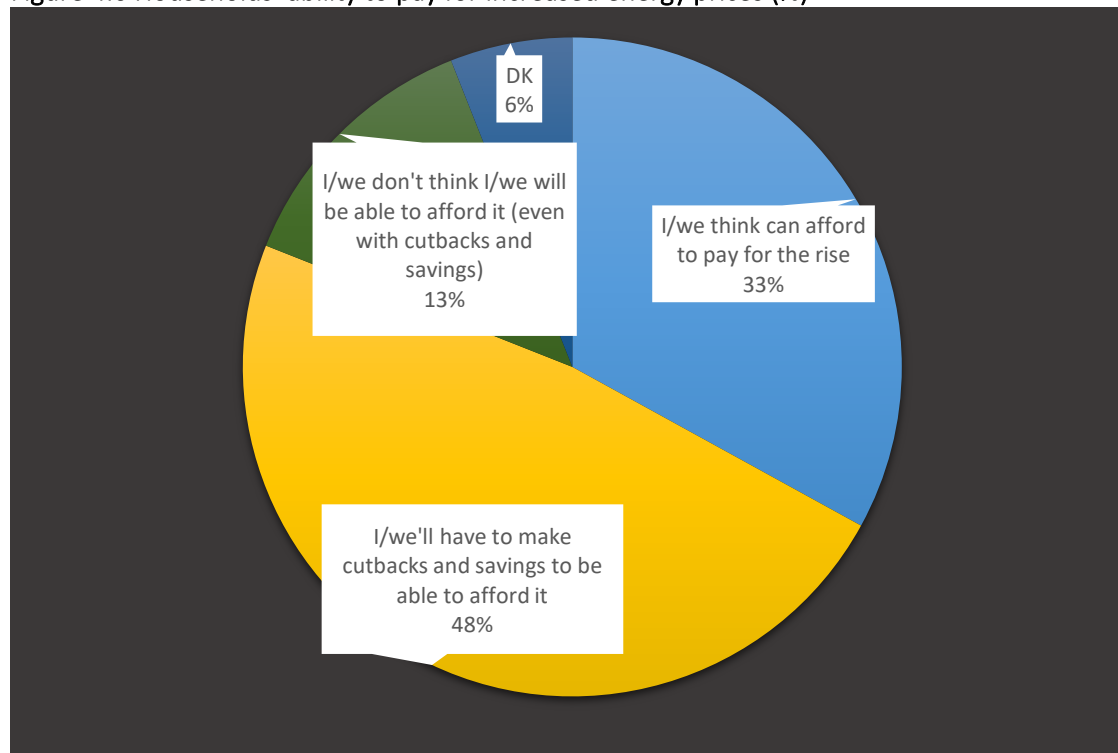
- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (67%):
- Lone parent households (56%):
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled (51%):
- Households with 1+ member with physical and mental health condition (45%): and
- Households renting from the council/social housing (41%).

These findings show again that it is the most vulnerable households that are likely to bear the brunt of the impact of the increased cost of energy prices on their health and welfare.

4.6 Households’ ability to pay for increased energy prices

All the 1,206 households surveyed were asked which of three statements best described their ability to pay for the increased energy prices. Nearly half said that they would have to make cutbacks and savings to be able to pay the increased prices, while a third thought they would be able to afford to pay. One in five said that they either did not think they would be able to afford it or that they did not know yet. Figure 4.6 below contains the detail.

Figure 4.6 Households’ ability to pay for increased energy prices (%)



Base: 1206 Devon households

The proportions responding to each statement again varied significantly between different households. Unfortunately, these differences corresponded exactly with those previously reported: with households that were most likely to not be able to afford to pay the increased prices being the same vulnerable households that had expressed the highest level of concern about the impact of reduced energy usage on their home environment/health:

Households that were most likely to say they could not afford to pay the rise:

- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (47%):
- Lone parent households (42%):
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled (38%):
- Households where the main respondent was unemployed (38%):
- Households with 1+ member with physical and mental health condition (33%): and
- Households renting from the council/social housing (28%).

This group contrasted with those households that said that they thought they would be able to afford to pay the increased prices, who were most likely to be:

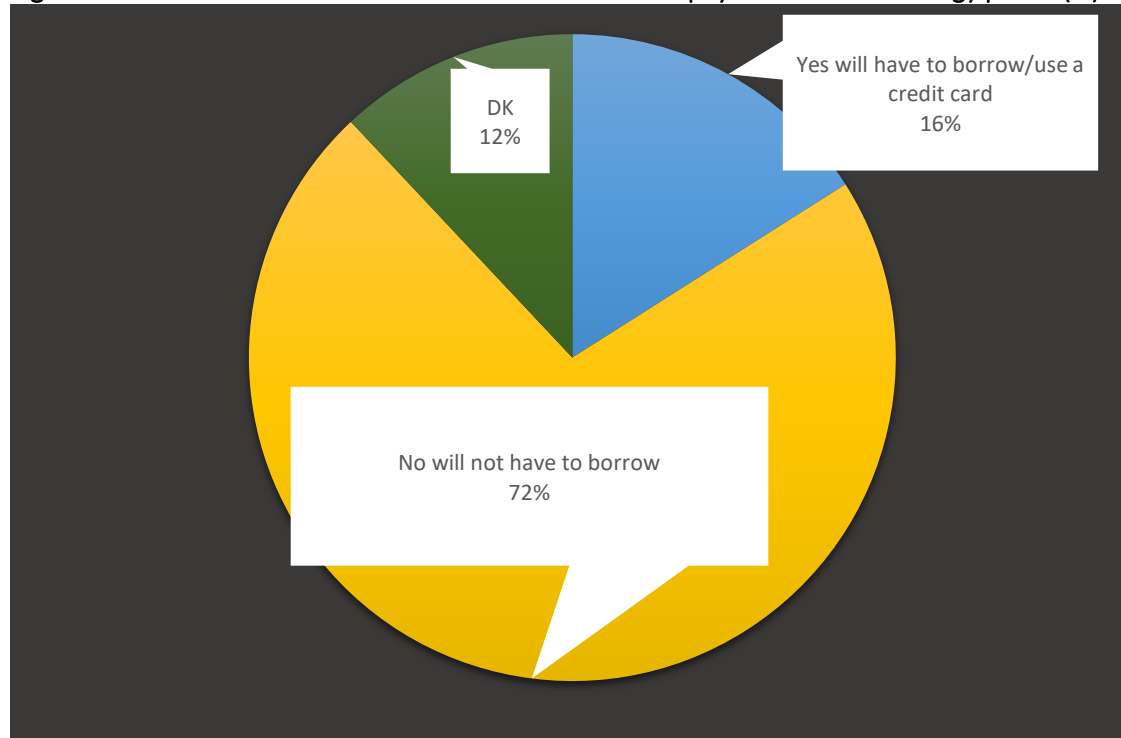
Households that were most likely to say they could afford to pay the rise:

- Households with income of >£40k pa without children (54%):
- Households where the main respondent was retired (50%):
- Households who own their home outright (48%):
- Households with no physical or mental health conditions (43%): and
- Households with no children (39%).

4.7 Whether households might have to borrow to pay for increased energy prices

When the households were asked: “Do you think your household might borrow money and/or use a credit card to pay for the increase (in energy prices)?”, nearly three quarters said that they would not have to borrow or use a credit card. One in six households said that they would have to borrow and/or use a credit card and one in eight that they did not know yet.

Figure 4.7 Whether households would have to borrow to pay for increased energy prices (%)



Base: 1206 Devon households

Once again, the proportions responding to each category varied greatly between household types. The same pattern continued with households that were most likely to say they would have to borrow or use a credit card also being the same vulnerable ones that could not afford to pay the increased prices and who had expressed the highest level of concern about the impact of reduced energy usage on their home environment/health:

Households that were most likely to have to borrow or use a credit card:

- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (54%):
- Lone parent households (40%):
- Households with 1+ member with a mental health condition (34%):
- Households renting from the council/social housing (28%): and
- Households with children (26%):
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled (25%): and
- Households where the main respondent was unemployed (25%).

This group also contrasted with those households that said that they would not have to borrow or use a credit card, who were most likely to be:

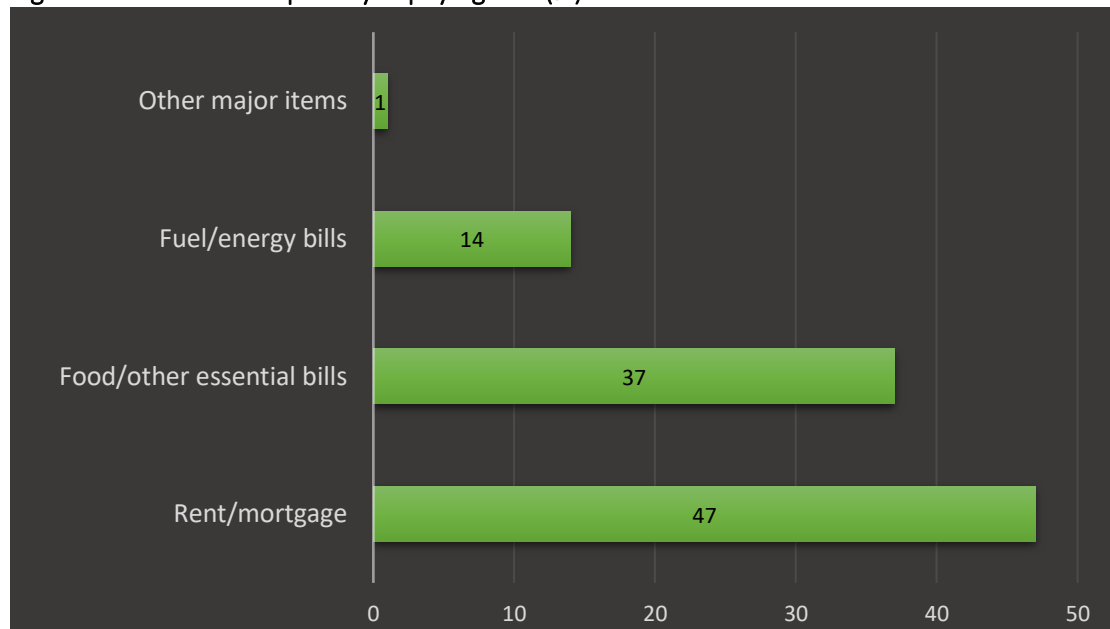
Households that were most likely to say they would not have to borrow:

- Households where the main respondent was retired (92%).
- Households who own their home outright (87%):
- Households with income of >£40k pa without children (84%):
- Households with no physical or mental health conditions (78%): and
- Households with no children (78%).

4.8 How households would prioritise different bills for payment

All 1,206 households were asked: “If your household had to prioritise between paying different bills, in which order would you prioritise the following bills?” A clear of priority emerged, with nearly half saying they would prioritise their rent/mortgage bills and over a third their food/other essential bills. Just one in seven said they would prioritise fuel/energy bills. Figure 4.8 below contains the details.

Figure 4.8 Households’ priority in paying bills (%)



Base: 1206 Devon households

The list of “other” major items of expenditure that were described by households included: “costs of running a vehicle/transport”, “council tax/rates”, “water bills”, “internet/phone costs”, “home maintenance/up-keep/repairs”, “loans/credit cards/HP”, “TV”, “clothes”, “insurance” and “pet expenses”.

As was to be expected, the order of the priorities also varied markedly between different household types. These variations generally reflected their circumstances in terms of housing, household composition, activity status and need to keep warm:

Households that were most likely to prioritise rent/mortgage bills:

Households buying their home with a mortgage (72%);
 Households renting their home privately/from council/social housing (70%);
 Food insecure households (66%);
 Lone parent households (64%);
 Households where the main respondent was FT employed (62%);
 Households with 1+ member with a mental health condition (61%);
 Households with children (58%); and
 Households where the main respondent was PT employed (56%).

Households that were most likely to prioritise food/other essential bills:

Households that owned their homes outright (65%);
 Households where the main respondent was retired (53%); and
 Households with high food security (47%).

Households that were most likely to prioritise fuel/energy bills:

Households where the main respondent was retired (27%); and
 Households that owned their homes outright (25%).

4.9 Household fuel security assessments

As noted in chapter 2, as part of the process of examining fuel insecurity in Devon households, a derived variable was calculated. This was based on the answers to the questions about whether the household could afford to pay for increased energy prices and/or if they would have to borrow to do so. This enabled households to be classified into those that are:

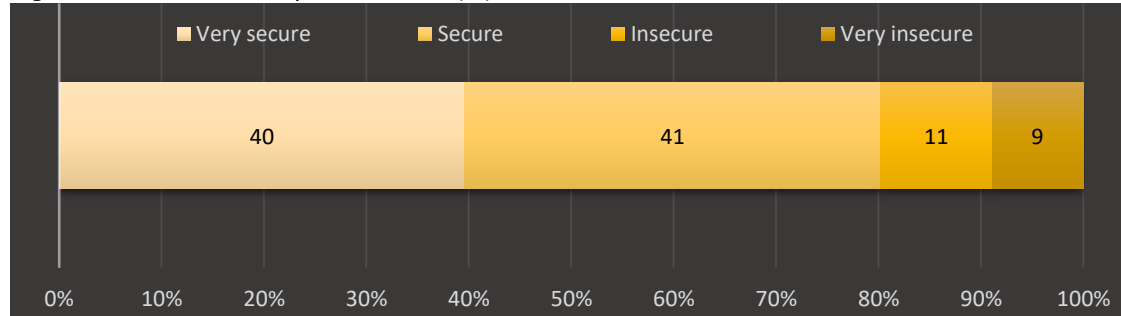
- **Very secure:** Households that can afford to pay (without cutbacks or savings) for the increased prices and will not have to borrow:
- **Secure:** Households that will have to make cutbacks and savings to pay for the rise in prices, but will not have to borrow:
- **Insecure:** Households that will have to make cutbacks and savings, but will still have to borrow to be able to pay as well: and
- **Very insecure:** Households that will not be able to afford to pay for all the increase even with cutbacks/savings and will have to borrow to pay for what they can afford.

It is acknowledged that this is a relatively limited assessment, as it does not take account a range of key factors, such as how energy efficient the accommodation is, the levels of household income and expenditure on fuel/energy or the specific heating needs of the residents. Nonetheless, it does give a helpful overview of the households’ own perspective on their likely situation in terms of their ability to afford the price rises and the resultant impact in terms of an increased debt and borrowing burden on the household.

Using the definitions described above, it was possible to classify 925 of the 1,206 households into one of the four levels. It was not possible to classify the remaining households because they either could not say yet whether they would be able to afford to pay for the price rise (67) or whether they would have to borrow to do so (138). A further 76 households were not classified because they did not have to pay for their fuel/energy bill (included in their rent) or their answers were inconsistent, for example, they could afford to pay, but they would choose to borrow/use a credit card to do so.

The analysis found that around one in five of the total sample of Devon households were fuel insecure using this definition, either being very insecure or insecure. Around four fifths were secure or very secure. Figure 4.9 below contains the details.

Figure 4.9 Fuel insecurity assessment (%)



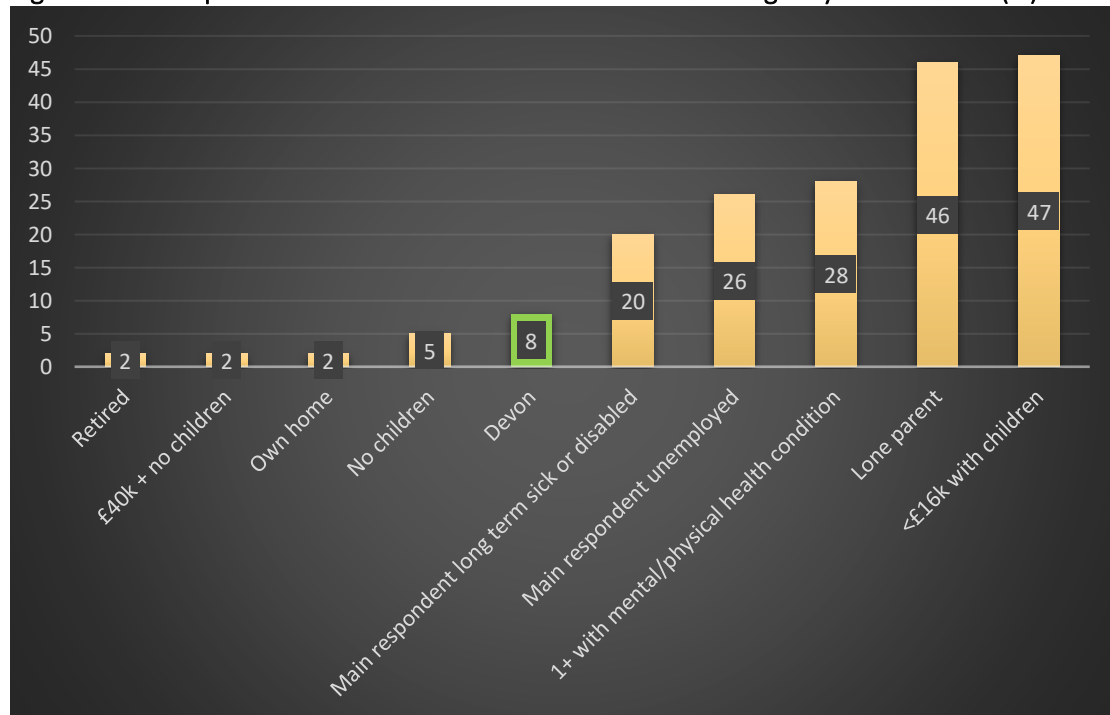
Base: 1,206 Devon households

These overall proportions again differed very markedly among particularly vulnerable households, with the numbers who were very insecure (9% overall) being much higher in:

- Households with income <£16,190 pa and children (47%):
- Lone parent households (46%):
- Households with 1+ member with a mental/physical health condition (28%):
- Households where the main respondent was unemployed (26%):
- Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled (20%): and
- Households renting from the council/social housing (20%).

Figure 4.10 below illustrates the differences in the levels of fuel insecurity between these types of households and those that were found to be far more likely to be fuel secure.

Figure 4.10 Comparison of Devon households’ likelihood of being very fuel insecure (%)



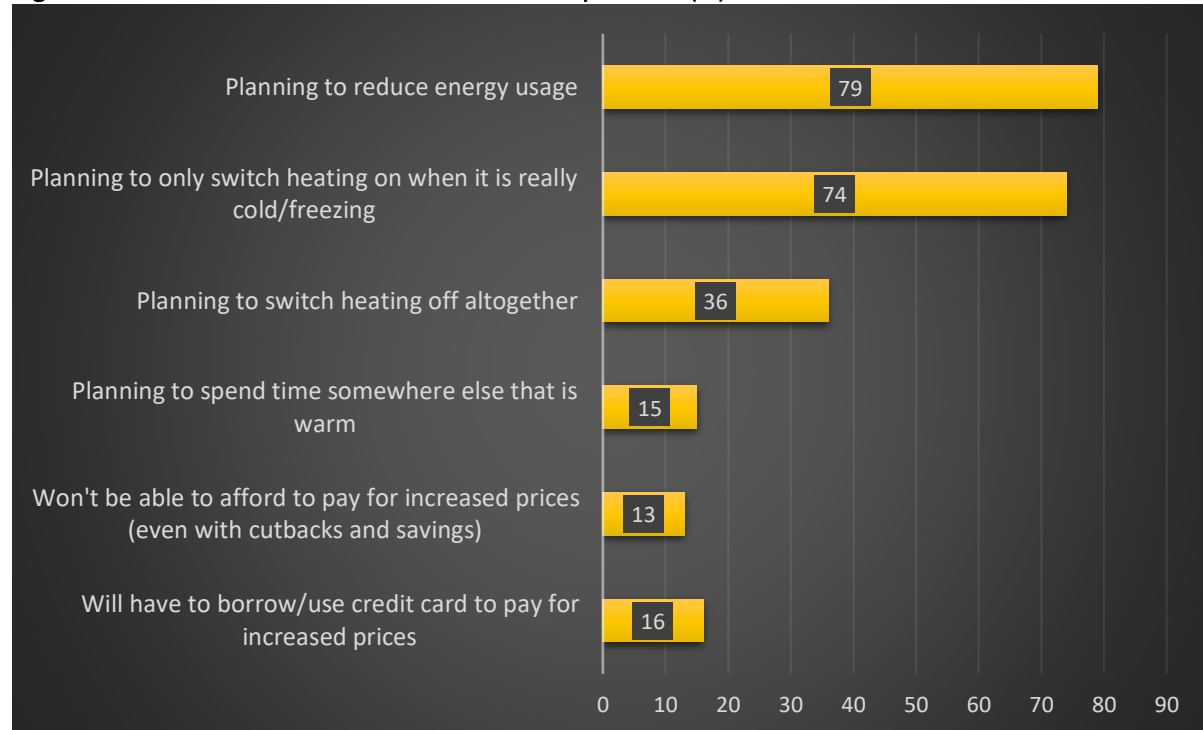
Base: 1,206 Devon households

The types of households who were most likely to be very insecure in terms of fuel and energy, were again those that were most vulnerable in many other ways, such as having low income, ill-health (mental or physical), disability, being lone parents and being unemployed.

4.10 Summary of Devon Households Facing Fuel Insecurity

In summary, the research examined fuel insecurity among Devon households in terms of a range of different key factors. The preceding sections of this chapter have shown how the likelihood of being affected by each of these factors varies greatly between households with different profiles. Figure 4.11 below highlights the findings for each of the main factors for the whole sample of 1,206 Devon households:

Figure 4.11 Devon households and fuel insecurity factors (%): 2022



Base: 1,206 Devon households

However, some households were found to be significantly more likely than the averages shown in the figure above to be facing each of these factors contributing to fuel insecurity. The following types of households were all found to be much more likely to be planning to switch their heating off altogether and/or spend time somewhere else warm. They were also more likely to say that they could not afford to pay for the increased energy prices and that they would have to borrow/use a credit card to do so:

- **Lone parent households**
- **Households with income <£16,190 pa and children**
- **Households where the main respondent was long-term sick or disabled**
- **Households with 1+ member with a mental/physical health condition**
- **Households where the main respondent was unemployed**
- **Households renting from the council/social housing**

These factors combined to produce very high levels of concern in these households about the impact of the reductions in energy use on their home environment (increased cold, damp, etc) and the potential negative affect on their health. Overall, a quarter of Devon households (26%) were very concerned about the impact of reduced energy usage on their home and health – but among some of the households above the figure was as high as two thirds (67%). These findings demonstrated clearly that many of these most vulnerable households are facing an extremely difficult winter of cold, damp, ill-health and increasing debt.

5. Households with food and fuel security issues

This chapter explores the relationship between households that are food insecure and those that are likely to be impacted most severely by the increases in energy prices. The findings reported in the previous two chapters show that across Devon there is a considerable degree of overlap between the types of households in both groups. The chapter examines the degree to which these households are the *same set of households*, facing a winter of food insecurity *and* cold, being unable to pay for their energy bills and having to turn their heating off.

In July of this year, the Guardian³³ highlighted findings from CAB research that showed the increasing numbers of households that were having to choose between “*heating and eating*”:

“The number of people seeking help because they cannot afford both food and energy has risen more than threefold in a year, according to new data that highlights the increasingly tough choices households face between heating and eating.”

In September, National Energy Action (NEA)³⁴ headlined an article on the issue with: “*As energy prices rise again, one quarter of parents have already cut back on the quantity of food to afford essentials.*” They continued by stating:

*“Our survey of 4,000 UK households reveals that one-quarter (24%) of parents have already **cut back on the quantity of food** to afford essentials such as their energy bills since the beginning of the year, while 28% say they have **cut back on quality**. 13% have eaten cold meals or ones that don’t require cooking to save money on energy bills.”*

Together with the Food Foundation, the NEA have also recently published a joint briefing³⁵ on the seriousness of the situation, with particular focus on the negative impact of combined food and fuel insecurity on children’s health:

“As the cost-of-living crisis worsens, many more households are struggling to heat and power their homes and put a warm, nutritious meal on the table. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that, despite parents doing everything they can to protect them from food insecurity and fuel poverty, both issues are having immediate and ongoing impacts on children’s physical and mental health.”

Indeed, CAB Scotland identified in November³⁶ “*a “direct link” between Scots struggling to pay fuel bills and rising food insecurity.*” They state: “*one in 10 of its clients who sought help over soaring energy payments also ask for help with meals - including food bank referrals.*”

In this context, the chapter identifies households in Devon that are both food *and* fuel insecure) and assesses their circumstances and ability to take mitigating action in relation to:

- Knowledge of food support and advice available:
- Accessing emergency food support and free school meals:
- Plans to reduce energy usage:
- Plans to make their accommodation more energy efficient:
- Ability to pay for their energy bills and whether they need to borrow to do so: and
- Their priorities when paying their bills.

The chapter includes further references to recently published relevant research and concludes with some comments on the key findings for these food and fuel insecure households.

³³ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jul/30/food-food-fuel-tripled-citizens-advice-charity-eating-heating>

³⁴ <https://www.nea.org.uk/news/food-foundation/>

³⁵ https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/FF_NEA%20Joint%20Briefing%20Sept%202022%20FINAL_2.pdf

³⁶ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/scots-struggling-pay-fuel-bills-28468580>

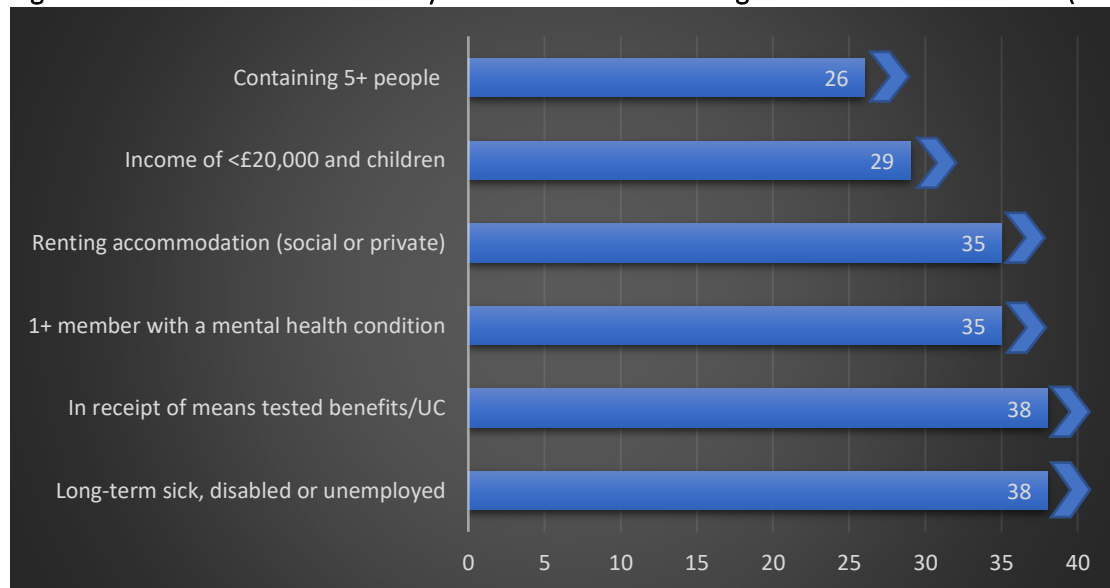
5.1 Profile of households with high food and fuel insecurity

The survey found that over the last 30 days, 29% of Devon households were food insecure (348 out of the 1,206 that were surveyed). This total was made up of 16% (195 of the 1,206) who were experiencing very low food security and 13% low food security (153 of the 1,206). It is worth reiterating that the research found that households with specific characteristics were significantly more likely to be food insecure than the overall figure of 29% of households:

- Income of <£20,000 and children (65% were food insecure):
- In receipt of Universal Credit (65%):
- Where the main respondent was either long term sick (58%) or unemployed (55%):
- 1+ member with a mental health condition (55%):
- Renting their accommodation from the council/social (48%) or privately (49%): and
- Containing 5+ people (47%).

Furthermore, it should also be noted that for each of the six characteristics listed above, the proportions of households categorised as being food insecure now (September/October 2022) had increased very significantly since March/April 2021. This was of the order of around one third for each of these six most insecure household categories, as shown in figure 5.1 below:

Figure 5.1 Increase in food insecurity levels 2021 – 2022 among most insecure households (+%)



When assessing the findings that are presented in the following sections on the key cost-of-living issues that households will be facing, in terms of food, fuel and bill payment, it is important to remember the points made above. It should also be reemphasised that the findings relating to households’ fuel/energy bills relate to their perspectives about their situation over *the coming winter*, while the food insecurity findings are based on their experience over the previous 30 days.

Specifically, the key fact that around one in three of the households in the most vulnerable categories that are now food insecure, are “new” to their predicament. This means that they are less likely to have established support networks, less likely to have experience with coping with such difficulties or knowing where to seek help.

5.2 Issues faced by households with high food and fuel insecurity

This section provides more background and contextual details about the 348 food insecure households, in terms of the food, fuel and bill payment issues that they face. The charts in the sub-sections below compare the situation of the insecure households with that of the 858 households that were found to be food secure, in relation to:

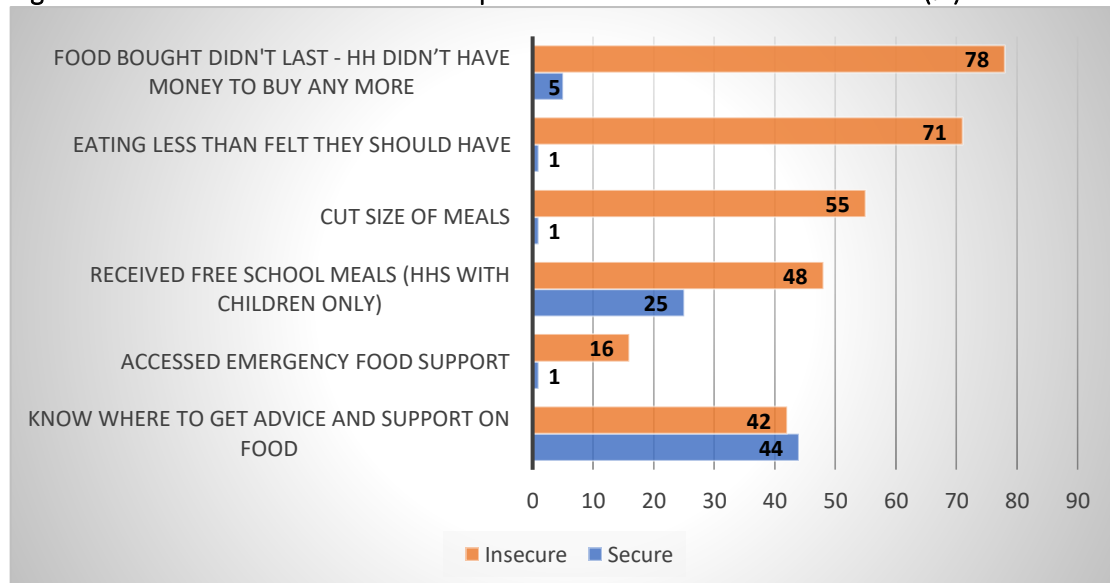
- Key food issues in the last 30 days:**
 Whether the households have experienced not having enough food to last (or money to buy more), had to cut meal sizes or use of emergency food support, as well as the receipt of free school meals and knowledge of where to go for advice & support.
- Heating plans to reduce energy usage:**
 Whether the households have plans to reduce their energy use, intend to switch their heating off altogether, spend time somewhere else warmer, make their accommodation more energy efficient and the level of their concerns over reduced energy use.
- Paying for increased energy bills:**
 The households' ability to pay for their energy bills following the price rises, whether they will need to use a credit card and/or borrow money to pay and their priorities when paying their major bills (between rent/mortgage, food/essentials, energy/fuel bills or something else).

For each of the issues analysed it was evident that most of the 348 food insecure households also face a very great multitude of fuel insecurity issues, both in terms of number and types of challenges that they have to face, compared with the 858 food secure households.

5.2.1 Key food issues in the last 30 days

Figure 5.2 shows how many of Devon's food insecure households had experienced major food issues in the last 30 days compared with food secure households. These issues included not having enough money to buy any more food, when it had run out, eating less than they felt they should have and having to cut the size of meals. Consequently, they were far more likely to have accessed emergency food support. Twice as many had received free school meals.

Figure 5.2 Food secure households compared with food insecure households (%): Food Issues

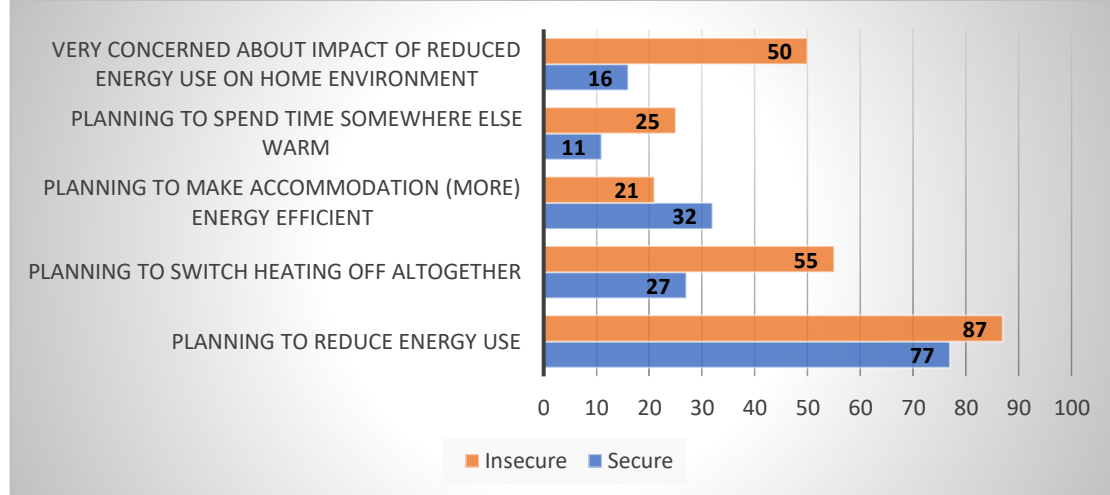


Interestingly, figure 5.1 also shows that Devon's food insecure households were no more or less likely than those that were food secure to know where to get advice and support on food issues. This indicates that more awareness raising should be focussed on the types of households more likely to be food insecure.

5.2.2 Heating plans to reduce energy use

As background information for interpreting figure 5.3, it should be noted that food insecure households were found to use prepayment meters for their energy bills much more often (23%) than food secure households (9%). The figure shows that food insecure households were twice as likely as food secure households to be planning to both switch off their heating altogether as well as to spend time somewhere else warm. Reflecting their income levels and tenure they were less likely to be planning to make their home more energy efficient.

Figure 5.3 Food secure households compared with food insecure households (%): Heating Plans

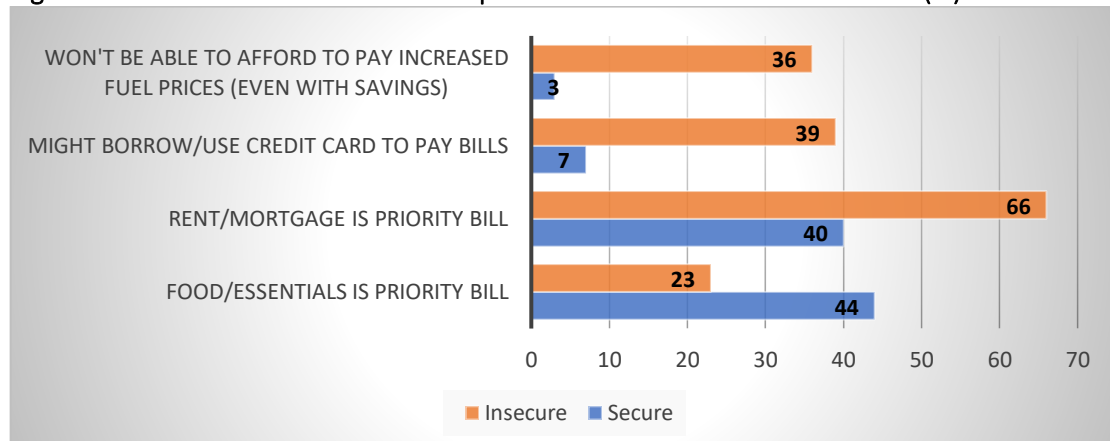


Both food secure (77%) and food insecure (87%) households were highly likely to say that they were planning to reduce their energy use because of the increase in energy prices. However, the combination of the factors identified above led to half (50%) of food insecure households being **very concerned** about the potential impact of reducing their energy use on their home environment, in terms of cold, damp and ill-health. This compared with just 16% of the food secure households.

5.2.3 Paying for fuel bills

Figure 5.4 highlights the key issues associated with the increased fuel bills being faced by households. It clearly demonstrates the direct connection between food and fuel insecurity: 36% of food insecure households say they will not be able to afford to pay for increased fuel prices. This percentage is ten times higher than for food secure households (3%). Similarly, nearly two fifths of food insecure households (39%) say they might have to borrow or use a credit card to pay for their fuel. This compared to 7% of food secure households.

Figure 5.3 Food secure households compared with food insecure households (%): Fuel Bills



It is also worthy of note, and again reflecting their different circumstances particularly around income, tenure, presence of children, etc., that figure 5.3 above shows that, if they have to choose between bills, two thirds of food insecure households (66%) will prioritise their rent/mortgage bill, over food/essentials (23%) or their energy/fuel bills (11%). In contrast, food secure households were split in their priorities between food/essentials (44%) and rent/mortgage (40%). Only 15% of food secure households said they would prioritise fuel/energy bills.

5.3 Key energy/fuel indicators in households that are food and fuel vulnerable

The earlier sections of this chapter and the preceding one have described the characteristics and profile of those households that are most vulnerable to food and fuel insecurity, in terms of their income, benefit receipt, size, composition, presence of children, tenure, health, etc. This short section highlights the key energy/fuel and payment indicators for these households that were found to be most vulnerable, in terms of having very low food security.

These indicators show that in numerous ways this group of households is markedly different from other Devon households and that these indicators can be used to help target support and advice on them over the winter:

- **Type of heating system: Electricity**
Households with very low food security were significantly more likely (55%) than other Devon households (37%) to use electricity (including electric fires, storage heaters, etc) as their main heating system.
- **Method of payment: Pre-payment meter**
Households with very low food security were significantly more likely (29%) than other Devon households (13%) to use pre-payment meters (key or token) and less likely to use direct debit/standing order (46% compared with 62%).
- **Planning to reduce amount of energy use: Switch heating off altogether**
Households with very low food security were significantly more likely (52%) than other Devon households (30%) to be planning to switch off their heating systems altogether in order to reduce their energy use.
- **Planning to reduce amount of energy use: Spending time somewhere else that is warm**
They were also significantly more likely (25%) than other Devon households (13%) to be planning to spend time somewhere else warm (not at home), in order to reduce their energy use.
- **Concern about potential impact of reduced energy use on home environment**
Not surprisingly, half of the households with very low food security were (49%) were very concerned about the impact of this reduced energy use on their home in terms of cold, damp and ill-health. This compared with a fifth of other Devon households (22%).
- **Ability to pay for increased energy/fuel prices**
Approaching half of households with very low food security said they would not be able to afford to pay for the increased energy/fuel prices, even with cutbacks and savings (46%) compared with 12% of other Devon households.
- **Whether household might need to borrow or use a credit card to pay for energy/fuel bill**
A similar proportion of these households with very low food security said they might have to borrow or use a credit card to pay for the increased energy/fuel prices (44%) compared with other Devon households (16%).

For all of the indicators above, the households in very low food security were found to be markedly more vulnerable, in terms of increased risk of cold, damp and ill-health, together with needing to borrow and increase their debts.

5.4 Summary of relationship between high food and fuel insecurity

The preceding sections of this chapter have demonstrated how food insecure households are planning to respond to the fuel/energy price rises in some markedly different ways compared with food secure households. A third of these households will not be able to afford to pay the increased fuel/energy and over half are planning to switch their heating off altogether. Only one in nine (11%) of these households will be prioritising their energy/fuel bill.

This is because these households are predominantly renting (either privately or from the council/social landlord) or buying their home with a mortgage and they have to prioritise their rent/mortgage payments or they will be homeless. Consequently, less of them are prioritising food/essential bills, alongside considering other options, such as borrowing or using credit cards to pay their bills. They are also twice as likely to be planning to spend time somewhere else warm (apart from home). It is no surprise that many of these households are very concerned about the impact of reduced energy use on their home environment, in terms of cold and damp leading to ill-health.

The analysis identified that most of the households in Devon that are food insecure are also fuel insecure, based on the range of indicators used to examine fuel insecurity. It also showed that the households in both these groups are, in terms of their awareness of food support and advice, no more able to take mitigating action to ameliorate their difficult circumstances than food secure households.

There was evidence that among these households, those with children were considerably more likely to be in receipt of free school meals, compared with their food secure counterparts with children. However, this uptake was of the order of approximately half. These food *and* fuel insecure households were unsurprisingly also far more likely to have accessed emergency food support in the last 30 days.

In summary, many of the households identified as being both food and fuel insecure are already among the most vulnerable in society, in terms of their low-income levels (whether in low wage employment or in receipt of benefits), disability, ill-health, long-term sickness, etc. The combination of food insecurity and the impact of reductions in energy use on their home environment (through increased cold, damp, etc), gives rise to great concern for the potential negative effects on their health and that of their children, particularly over the coming cold winter months.

This concern was also reflected in the very high levels of these households who said that they were not going to be able to afford to pay for the increased energy bills this winter (46% of those households that had very low food security compared with 2% of those that had high security) and anticipated that they would have to borrow or use a credit card to do so (44% of these households compared with 5% of those that had high security).

Furthermore, around a third of this group of food insecure households are likely to be particularly vulnerable because they are “new” to these circumstances. They are therefore less likely to be aware of the existing support, advice or help that is available to them. It is apparent that further efforts are needed to increase awareness levels of existing food and fuel support and advice among all these households facing very low food security. In addition, more work is needed in reaching out to those of those households who are not accessing available help such as free school meals, despite being eligible.

6. Concluding comments

This research aims to gain a fuller understanding of the extent and experience of food insecurity across Devon and how this has changed since 2021. It is also intended to deepen understanding of fuel insecurity and the factors currently impacting on different levels of fuel security in the county. Crucially it assesses how fuel and food insecurity interact with each other, and the impact of both on Devon households. It has four key objectives:

- To provide robust estimates of the types of households experiencing food insecurity and accessing food from emergency support centres across Devon.
- To provide an assessment of change over time, based on a comparison with the findings from the 2021 Devon research.
- To provide robust estimates of the types of households experiencing fuel insecurity, using a range of assessment indicators.
- To provide an understanding of the interrelationship between food and fuel insecurity within the households most negatively impacted by experiencing both.

The intention was to provide data that could be used to inform local interventions, support measures and the associated development of policy to help address the current cost-of-living crisis and substantial increases in fuel/energy prices are impacting many households.

6.1 Key findings

The research found that levels of household food insecurity have increased substantially since 2021 in Devon. More than one in six households (16%) across the county have experienced substantial disruptions to their eating patterns, with household members eating less and going hungry over the last 30 days. These households have had to reduce their food intake because they do not have sufficient money or resources to pay for enough food. This compared with one in ten households in 2021 (10%).

In line with the findings in 2021, the levels of food insecurity that were found varied significantly between different types of households. Households with low-income and children were experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity in the county, as well as those with health conditions and/or in receipt of Universal Credit.

The research also found that these same disadvantaged households were also more likely to be facing problems with keeping warm and paying for bills, due to increased energy/fuel prices, over the forthcoming winter:

- More likely to be planning to reduce the amount of energy used by switching heating off altogether:
- More likely to be planning to reduce the amount of energy used by spending time somewhere else warm:
- More concerned about the potential impact of reduced energy use on their home environment:
- Less likely to be able to pay for the increased energy/fuel prices: and
- More worried they might need to borrow or use a credit card to pay for their energy/fuel bill.

The key characteristics of households experiencing food and fuel insecurity are summarised in the box opposite.

DEVON HOUSEHOLDS MOST LIKELY TO BE FOOD AND FUEL INSECURE 2022

- Children present
- Low income
- Single adult
- 1+ member with mental health condition
- Renting from council/ social/ privately
- Main respondent either long term sick, disabled or unemployed
- 5+ household members
- In receipt of Universal Credit

While there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that the increase in food insecurity has happened nationally as well, there is not any up-to-date UK comparator data available unfortunately. Nonetheless, there is strong evidence that Devon may well have been hit harder than other areas. This is primarily based on the proportion of Devon households on low incomes compared to national averages, and/or with adults working in sectors disproportionately affected by seasonality and the economic downturn, such as tourism and retail. Indeed, the research found considerable evidence of in-work food poverty among working households.

Furthermore, it was very evident from the research that Devon households that were food insecure were also the most likely to be facing significant issues with keeping warm and paying increased energy/fuel bills this winter. It is on these vulnerable and disadvantaged households, together with those facing in-work poverty that Devon’s food and fuel support interventions should be targeted. There is also some evidence that other groups might need to be added to these core groups – particularly households with a member with Black/African /Caribbean or other mixed ethnic backgrounds – but further research is needed to verify this.

Further key findings from the research were that:

- General awareness of food and fuel support initiatives needs to be greatly increased:
- Uptake of free school meals should be prioritised:
- NHS health records should be used to target support on households most likely to be fuel insecure, i.e. those with health conditions, disability, etc: and
- DWP records should be used to target support on households most likely to be food insecure, i.e. those on Universal Credit or legacy benefits.

Consideration should also be given to initiatives that have been undertaken elsewhere to help ameliorate the impact of cold weather on ill-health, such as the Gloucestershire NHS Warm Homes Prescription pilot³⁷. In this scheme, GPs are “prescribing” the payment of households’ heating bills for low-income, unwell and/or disabled residents. The NHS pays the heating bill as it has been found this greatly reduces the likelihood of the resident being hospitalised in cold weather, and hence reduces the costs to the NHS “*further down the line*”.

It is understood that similar schemes are being established by the NHS in the Midlands in Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield³⁸ in collaboration with the local authorities there. Some of these schemes involve paying for new boilers and/or energy efficiency measures as well.

6.2 Areas for further research

There are several areas that would benefit from further research and analysis to fully explore the links between food and fuel insecurity. Some of these will require both further quantitative analysis of the survey dataset and qualitative focus group discussions with members of households from each group, while for others it will only be possible to conduct focus groups, due to sample size:

- Ethnicity (examining individual ethnic backgrounds) – this is already underway
- Adult female only households (in addition to lone adult households)
- Households using pre-payment meters
- Households needing to borrow or use a credit card to pay for increased energy bills
- Households in receipt of Universal Credit or legacy benefits
- Households in work and also food/fuel insecure: i.e. experiencing in-work poverty
- Households unaware of support and advice on food and fuel issues.

³⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-63707689>

³⁸ <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/warmhomesonprescription/>

Appendix I: Study methodology

This research was designed to ensure comparability with the household food security findings from the 2021 study, while also involving an assessment of household fuel insecurity. This involved the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of a stratified random sample survey of 1,206 households in Devon. In line with 2021, the methodology contained six main elements:

- **Desk research**
The desk-based research identified and examined other key relevant food and fuel studies and surveys that have taken place, including national work and local work. This was to inform and direct the development of the questionnaire and produce additional evidence for the analysis and reporting stages.
- **Questionnaire design and piloting**
The food security questions were based on those used in the Government’s Family Resources Survey, as used in 2021 to ensure comparability. These questions were supplemented by a range of further questions exploring issues about fuel/ energy use, price increases, anticipated behaviour changes and ability to pay for increased prices. The draft of the questionnaire was successfully piloted with 30 respondents.
- **Stratified random sample design**
Devon has a population of over 800,000 people in total, and a simple random sample of 1,060 drawn in terms of probability proportional to size (PPS) would provide findings with a 95% confidence level and a 3% margin of error. However, the residents are divided unequally between the district authorities. Consequently, the sample was stratified by district, increasing the total achieved number of interviews from 1,060 to 1,206. This allowed robust analysis of each district as well as the whole county with a minimum of 125 interviews being achieved in each district.
- **Survey fieldwork**
The survey fieldwork was conducted using a mixture of computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and an online panel element. The total achieved sample of 1,206 completed interviews was divided between 700 CATI and 506 online interviews. This mixed approach provided three main benefits:
 - Comprehensive coverage: enabling those households with **and without** internet access to be included in the research:
 - Broad comparability with the questionnaire and fieldwork approach used in the ONS Family Resource’s Survey research: and
 - Cost effectiveness and speed: Panel and CATI surveys are known to produce much quicker outcomes at a reduced cost compared with other approaches.
- **Analysis**
The analysis included a review of the quantitative data and qualitative information collected by the primary and secondary research activities. This identified the relevant evidence for each of the study’s objectives. The main analysis was conducted on geographic: county (Devon) and district (eight local authorities) and household characteristics: size, presence of children, income, health, receipt of benefits, etc).
- **Outputs: Reporting, data and presentation**
The outputs of the study were this report, a summary dataset of key headline survey findings (fully anonymised) and a presentation of the findings to the Steering Group.

Appendix II: Survey questionnaire

Devon household survey food and fuel security questionnaire 2022

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning/afternoon, my name is ... and I'm calling on behalf of the Public Health team at Devon County Council. They have commissioned this research to understand households' food and energy circumstances. I would like to ask about the current situation of your household in terms of food, energy, health and employment.

ADD AS NECESSARY:

- The study is being conducted to provide data at a district and county level in Devon:
- The data will be reported in an aggregated form and no households or individuals will be identified in the results:
- It is very important that all the households selected for the research agree to participate so that we can obtain a representative picture of all Devon's population.

Please note that this call is recorded for quality and training purposes and the interview is undertaken under the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. If you need me to repeat any of the questions, please let me know. Are you happy for me to proceed?

A. Household characteristics

The first questions are about your household characteristics. Please answer for everyone living at this address.

ASK ALL

A1 How many people normally live at this address? (INTERVIEWER RECORD No. IN HOUSEHOLD)

- How many adults at the address (ASK: Number of females 18 or older/Number of males 18 or older)?
- And how many children/young people <18 years (ASK: Number of 0-5 years, 6-17 years)?

(NB A person is part of the household if the respondent considers they usually live there. Usually may be taken as being regularly, part of the time but not necessarily the majority of the time.)

ASK ALL

A2 In which of these ways do you occupy this accommodation?

- Own it outright
- Buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan
- Rent it privately
- Rent it from council/local authority/housing association
- Live here rent free (including in a relative's/friend's property)
- Other (Please describe)

ASK ALL

A3 Which of these categories best describes you (the person responding) at present?

- Employee working full-time (30 hours+/week)
- Employee working part-time (less than 30 hours/week)
- Self-employed working full-time (30 hours+/week)
- Self-employed working part-time (less than 30 hours/week)
- Unemployed
- Student (incl. pupil at school, those in training)
- Looking after family home
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Retired from paid work
- Not in paid work for some other reason
- Other (Please describe)

ASK IF EMPLOYEE OR SELF-EMPLOYED AT A3

A4 Which of these best describes the industry you work in? ONE CODE ONLY

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Mining and quarrying
- Manufacture
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning
- Water supply and waste management
- Construction
- Wholesale and retail trade, motor vehicle repair
- Transportation and storage
- Accommodation and food services
- Information and communication
- Finance and insurance
- Real estate
- Professional, scientific and technical
- Administrative and support services
- Public admin and defence
- Education
- Health and social work
- Arts, entertainment & recreation
- Other (Please describe)

B. Food insecurity

The next section is about the food eaten in your household in the **last 30 days**, that is since [date 30 days ago], and whether you were able to afford the food you needed in that time. Here are several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please say whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 30 days, that is since [date 30 days ago].

ASK ALL

B1 *[I/We] worried whether [my/our] food would run out before [I/we] got money to buy more.*

Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for [you/your household] in the last 30 days?

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

ASK ALL

B2 *The food that [I/we] bought just didn't last, and [I/we] didn't have money to get more.*

Was that often, sometimes, or never true for [you/your household] in the last 30 days?

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

ASK ALL

B3 *[I/we] couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.*

Was that often, sometimes, or never true for [you/your household] in the last 30 days?

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

ASK B4a-B7 IF ANY OF B1-B3 ARE 'often' OR 'sometimes'

B4a *In the last 30 days, did (you/your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?*

- Yes, cut size
- Yes, skipped meals
- No (Single code)

IF YES AT B4a

B4b On how many days (or 3 or more, if not sure)?

ASK IF ANY OF B1-B3 ARE 'often' OR 'sometimes'

B5 *In the last 30 days, did (you/anyone in your household) ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?* Yes/No

ASK IF ANY OF B1-B3 ARE 'often' OR 'sometimes'

B6 *In the last 30 days, were (you/anyone in your household) ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?* Yes/No

ASK IF ANY OF B1-B3 ARE 'often' OR 'sometimes'

B7 *In the last 30 days, did (you/anyone in your household) lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?* Yes/No

ASK B8a IF ANY OF B4-B7 ARE "yes"

B8a *In the last 30 days, did (you/anyone in your household) ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?* Yes/No

ASK IF YES AT B8a

B8b On how many days (or 3 or more, if not sure)?

ASK ALL

B9. Can I check, **in the last 30 days** have you or any member of your household...

- Accessed emergency food support (i.e. visited a food bank or other food support help)?
- (Households with 1+ children only) Received free school meals?

ASK ALL

B10. If you wanted support and advice about accessing affordable food for your household, such as food parcels, food banks, meal and distribution centres, would you know where to get it?

Yes/No/Wouldn't want it/Not sure

C. Fuel and energy

ASK ALL

C1. I'd now like to ask about fuel and energy. What type of heating system does this accommodation have?

- a. Gas
- b. Electric (inc. storage heaters, electric fires, etc)
- c. Oil
- d. Heat pump/Renewable source
- e. LPG
- f. Other (please specify....)
- g. (None – GO TO SECTION D)

ASK IF CODES a - f AT C1

C2. What method of payment does this household use for this heating?

- a. Pre-Payment Meter (key or token meter)
- b. Direct Debit/standing order
- c. Monthly/quarterly Bill
- d. Payment plan
- e. Other means of payment (please specify...)
- f. (Included in rent/tenancy price – GO TO SECTION D)

ASK IF CODES a – e at C2

C3. It has recently been announced that energy prices will rise significantly in October. Can I just check, is your household either already or planning to reduce energy usage because of the price rise?
Yes/No/Depends/DK

ASK IF YES OR DEPENDS AT C3

C4. How will/might you reduce the amount you use? DO NOT PROMPT: CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- Switch heating off altogether
- Only switch heating on when it is really cold/freezing
- Only heat part of accommodation
- Make the accommodation more energy efficient such as install insulation/double glazing/draft excluders/retrofit/etc
- Reduce other energy use (e.g. cooker, kettle, fridge, TV, etc)
- Spend time somewhere else that is warm (i.e. Library, community centre, village hall, etc)
- Other (PLEASE SPECIFY _____)

ASK IF YES OR DEPENDS AT C3

C5. How concerned are you about the potential *impact* of this reduction in energy use in terms of your home environment (i.e. cold, damp, etc) and health... ONE CODE ONLY....

- ...Unconcerned,
- Neither unconcerned or concerned
- ...somewhat concerned,
- Or very concerned?
- DK/Can't say yet

ASK IF CODES a – e at C2

C6. Which of these statements best describes your household's situation in terms of being able to pay for the increased energy prices? ONE CODE ONLY...

- ...I/we think can afford to pay for the rise,
- ...I/we'll have to make cutbacks and savings to be able to afford it: or
- ...I/we don't think I/we will be able to afford it (even with cutbacks and savings).
- DK/Can't say yet

ASK IF CODES a – e at C2

C7. Can I just check, do you think your household might borrow money and/or use a credit card to pay for the increase (in energy prices)? Yes/No/DK

ASK IF CODES a - f AT C1

C8. If your household *had to* prioritise between paying different bills, which would you pay for first and which second...

- ...Fuel/energy bill,
- ...Food/other essentials,
- ...Rent/mortgage,
- ...Or other major household expenditure? (Please specify _____)
- DK/Can't say

ASK ALL

C9. And if you wanted support and advice on your fuel/energy issues, such as bills and/or reducing energy use would you know where to get it?
Yes/No/Wouldn't want it/Not sure

D. Health, income, benefits and end

Lastly, to help us understand your household situation, we need to collect some background information about health, finances and benefits.

ASK ALL

D1 Does you or anyone else in the household have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

- Yes – physical condition
- Yes – mental condition
- Yes – both
- No
- Don't know

ASK ALL

D2 Does anyone in this household currently receive any of these *means-tested* (related to your level of income) benefits and support?

- Universal credit
- Tax credits (working tax credit, child tax credit)
- Jobseekers allowance or low-income benefits (JSA, income support, loans)
- Family benefits (sure start maternity grant, free school meals)
- Housing benefit and heating (inc winter fuel payment, cold weather payment, council tax support)
- Other benefits (such as pension credits, funeral payment, etc)
- None of these

ASK ALL

D3 In which of the following bands was your total household income last month? This is the amount of all income received by adults in the household after all taxes and deductions are removed.

- Less than £1,350 per month (less than £16,190/year)
- £1,351 - £1,666 per month (£16,191 - £19,999/year)
- £1,667 - £3,333 per month (£20,000 - £39,999/year)
- £3,334 - £4,999 per month (£40,000 - £59,999/year)
- £5,000 - £8,333 per month (£60,000 - £99,999/year)
- More than £8,334 (more than £100,000/year)
- Don't know

ASK ALL

D4 Which of the following best describes the ethnic groups or backgrounds of the people in this household? INTERVIEWER: PLEASE CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- Any Other White background (please describe)
- Mixed - White and Black Caribbean / Black Asian / Asian
- Any other Mixed multiple ethnic background (please describe)
- Asian or Asian British - Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian/Asian British background (please describe)
- Black or Black British - African / Caribbean
- Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (please describe)
- Arab
- Any other (please describe)

ASK ALL

D5 Thank you for taking part. Once again, my name is ...and you have been interviewed on behalf of Devon County Council's Public Health team. The information you have provided, together with that from all the other people who are taking part in the study will be extremely helpful in building a better understanding of food and health issues in Devon.

If you have any questions about the interview, you can contact Devon County Council, my company (Transform Research) or the Market Research Society who will be able to reassure you about the bona fide nature of this call. Thank you again for taking part.

Appendix III: Item responses to individual food security questions

Tables III.1a (2021) and III.1b (2022) below contain the answers given by households to the ten individual food security questions in each survey. For the main commentary in the report and to allow comparison with between the two, the ten questions were used to score all households into the relevant food categories of: secure, marginal, low and very low security.

Table III.1a shows the replies given by the whole sample of 1,165 Devon households in 2021 and contrasts these with those given by key vulnerable and/or disadvantaged households at that time. The differences between the replies that were given was very stark in many instances. Most of the households in the “very low” food security group were actually in several of the vulnerable disadvantaged categories, for example having income under £16,191 pa, children **and** more than 5 household members, or being a sole adult household with income under £16,191 pa **and** someone with a mental health condition.

Table III.1 Responses to individual food security questions 2021

Household food security questions	All Devon Households	Very low food security	Income < £16,190 pa	Children in HH	1+ with mental health cond/n	5+ people in HH	Sole adult
<i>HH worried about food running out before they got money to buy more</i>	Often – 5% Sometimes – 13% Never – 82%	45% 52% 3%	12% 24% 64%	9% 22% 69%	16% 27% 57%	14% 19% 67%	13% 36% 51%
<i>The food the HH bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more.</i>	Often – 4% Sometimes – 11% Never – 85%	30% 65% 5%	9% 23% 69%	8% 19% 73%	14% 31% 54%	10% 24% 66%	7% 36% 57%
<i>HH couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.</i>	Often – 6% Sometimes – 11% Never – 83%	43% 50% 8%	15% 18% 67%	9% 18% 73%	14% 24% 62%	12% 25% 64%	18% 23% 59%
<i>In the last 30 days, HH had cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	Cut size – 8% Skip meals – 9%	51% 63%	17% 20%	13% 14%	19% 23%	15% 15%	28% 26%
<i>At least one person cutting size of meals or skipping meals for 3 or more days in last 30 days.</i>	7%	47%	15%	9%	21%	17%	12%
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	11%	92%	27%	19%	33%	23%	33%
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH was hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	9%	81%	21%	16%	27%	19%	27%
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH lost weight because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	7%	61%	19%	12%	21%	13%	24%
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH did not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	4%	43%	10%	8%	15%	10%	12%
<i>At least one person in HH not eating for a whole day for 3 or more days in last 30 days.</i>	2%	24%	5%	5%	10%	7%	2%
Weighted base	1165	113	227	380	126	133	43
No. of HHs in base with very low food security (% of base)			54 (24%)	61 (16%)	38 (30%)	28 (21%)	14 (32%)
No. of HHs in base with low food security (% of base)			25 (11%)	49 (13%)	19 (16%)	20 (14%)	8 (19%)
Total insecure (very low plus low)			79 (35%)	110 (29%)	57 (46%)	48 (35%)	22 (51%)

Table III.1b contains the answers to the same questions for the 2022 sample of 1,206 Devon households, contrasting their replies with those from the five vulnerable/disadvantaged groups. Again, the differences shown between the replies of the different household types are very stark in many instances, illustrating how the vulnerable/disadvantaged households are currently struggling with food security issues compared with other Devon households. These differences are most noticeable in the “very low food security” column.

The table also contains a comparison between the 2022 and 2021 figures, indicated by a (+/- %) figure as appropriate. What is most striking is how the percentage increases for the most vulnerable/disadvantaged households demonstrate how the depth of food insecurity has increased over the 18 months. For example, the **doubling** of very low food security households in which at least 1+ member has cut the size or skipped their meals in the last 30 days.

This is indicative of the extent to which these households have had to significantly alter their eating routines because they cannot afford sufficient food. Many of these changes, such as parents skipping or cutting meals, so that their children can eat, are well documented. Others, such as the household not being able to afford to eat *balanced* meals or eating less than they felt they should in the last 30 days are less well reported. The table has the details.

Table III.2 Responses to individual food security questions 2022

Household food security questions	All Devon Households	Very low food security	Income < £16,190 pa	Children in HH	1+ with mental health cond/n	5+ people in HH	Sole adult
<i>HH worried about food running out before they got money to buy more</i>	Often: 12% (+7%) Sometimes: 23% (+10%) Never: 65% (-17%)	54% (+9%) 44% (-8%) 2% (-1%)	22% (+10%) 28% (+4%) 50% (-14%)	21% (+12%) 30% (+8%) 50% (-19%)	27% (+11%) 32% (+5%) 41% (-16%)	28% (+14%) 30% (+11%) 42% (-25%)	34% (+21%) 32% (-4%) 33% (-18%)
<i>The food the HH bought just didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more.</i>	Often: 8% (+4%) Sometimes: 19% (+8%) Never: 74% (-11%)	38% (+8%) 56% (-9%) 6% (+1%)	17% (+8%) 26% (+3%) 57% (-12%)	11% (+3%) 26% (+7%) 63% (-10%)	16% (+2%) 30% (-1%) 54% (0%)	14% (+4%) 29% (+5%) 56% (-10%)	30% (+23%) 21% (-15%) 49% (-8%)
<i>HH couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.</i>	Often: 8% (+2%) Sometimes: 19% (+8%) Never: 72% (-11%)	40% (-3%) 51% (+1%) 9% (+1%)	17% (+2%) 26% (+8%) 57% (-10%)	12% (+3%) 25% (+7%) 63% (-10%)	13% (-1%) 36% (+12%) 51% (-11%)	11% (-1%) 27% (+2%) 62% (-2%)	24% (+6%) 28% (+5%) 48% (-11%)
<i>In the last 30 days, HH had cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	Cut size: 39% (+31%) Skip meals: 35% (+26%)	63% (+12%) 68% (+5%)	40% (+26%) 46% (+26%)	46% (+33%) 35% (+21%)	49% (+30%) 44% (+21%)	44% (+29%) 46% (+31%)	51% (+23%) 54% (+28%)
<i>At least one person cutting size of meals or skipping meals for 3 or more days in last 30 days.</i>	24% (+17%)	98% (+51%)	65% (+50%)	60% (+27%)	49% (+28%)	42% (+25%)	43% (+31%)
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	21% (+10%)	98% (+6%)	32% (+5%)	29% (+10%)	43% (+10%)	37% (+14%)	53% (+20%)
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH was hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	15% (+6%)	79% (-2%)	25% (+4%)	20% (+4%)	33% (+6%)	19% (0%)	44% (+14%)
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH lost weight because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	11% (+4%)	63% (+2%)	24% (+5%)	15% (+3%)	25% (+4%)	16% (+3%)	36% (+12%)
<i>In the last 30 days, at least one person in HH did not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food.</i>	5% (+1%)	44% (+1%)	14% (+4%)	9% (+1%)	16% (+1%)	10% (0%)	14% (+2%)
<i>At least one person in HH not eating for a whole day for 3 or more days in last 30 days.</i>	4% (+2%)	25% (+1%)	9% (+4%)	8% (+3%)	13% (+3%)	9% (+2%)	4% (+2%)
Weighted base	1206	195	241	374	122	103	49
No. of HHs in base with very low food security (% of base)	195 (16%)	195 (100%)	74 (30%)	82 (22%)	44 (35%)	25 (24%)	23 (46%)
No. of HHs in base with low food security (% of base)	153 (13%)	n/a	27 (12%)	73 (20%)	24 (20%)	23 (23%)	7 (14%)
Total insecure (very low plus low)	348 (29%)	n/a	101 (42%)	155 (42%)	68 (55%)	48 (47%)	30 (60%)

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Appendix V: Survey accuracy

The survey was conducted with a stratified random sample of 1,060 Devon households (plus the boost of 146 in three districts to allow reliable analysis in the smaller districts and thereby produce the total of 1,206 interviews) between September and October 2022.

From this sample size it is possible to calculate the accuracy of the results, based on a 95% confidence level. Table V.1 below shows a range of margins of error for different responses, at the 95% confidence level. For example, for an answer of 50%, the sample size provides survey accuracy of +/-3% at the 95% confidence level. That is, we can be 95% confident that the “true” figure lies between 47% and 53%.

Table V.1: Accuracy of survey findings (margins of error at 95% confidence level)

Sample of 1,060 Devon households	
Answer	Margin of error
5% or 95% response	+/- 1.3%
10% or 90% response	+/- 1.8%
20% or 80% response	+/- 2.4%
30% or 70% response	+/- 2.8%
40% or 60% response	+/- 2.9%
50% response	+/- 3.0%

It is worth noting that the margins of error decrease for responses at either end of the scale. For example, if the data shows that 90% of Devon households are found in a specific food security category, then the margin of error decreases to +/-1.8% and we can be 95% confident that the “true” figure actually lies between 88.2% and 91.8%.