

A Crisis within a Crisis: Food Insecurity and Covid-19

Insights from Food Foundation Surveys on how the Pandemic has Affected
Food Access in the UK (March 2020 to January 2021)

Speakers:

Anna Taylor, Food Foundation @Food_Foundation

Dr Maria Bryant, Department of Health Sciences and the Hull York
Medical School, University of York @Bryant73J @HullYorkMed

Paul Gerrard, Campaigns & Public Affairs Director, The Co-op
@paulgerrard1971 @coopuk

Fazilet Hadi, Head of Policy, Disability Rights UK @DisRightsUK

Lindsay Graham, Poverty and Inequality
Commissioner @LindsayGrahamUK



Our Covid-19 Evidence-gathering

- **Seven rounds** of nationally representative UK-wide surveys to monitor levels of food insecurity impacted by Covid-19.
- Surveying was undertaken between **March 2020 and January 2021**.
- Most recent data was from surveys conducted in January 2021 (one with adults and one with children).



How we measure Food Insecurity

We asked people three questions to assess if they were food insecure.

The questions were:

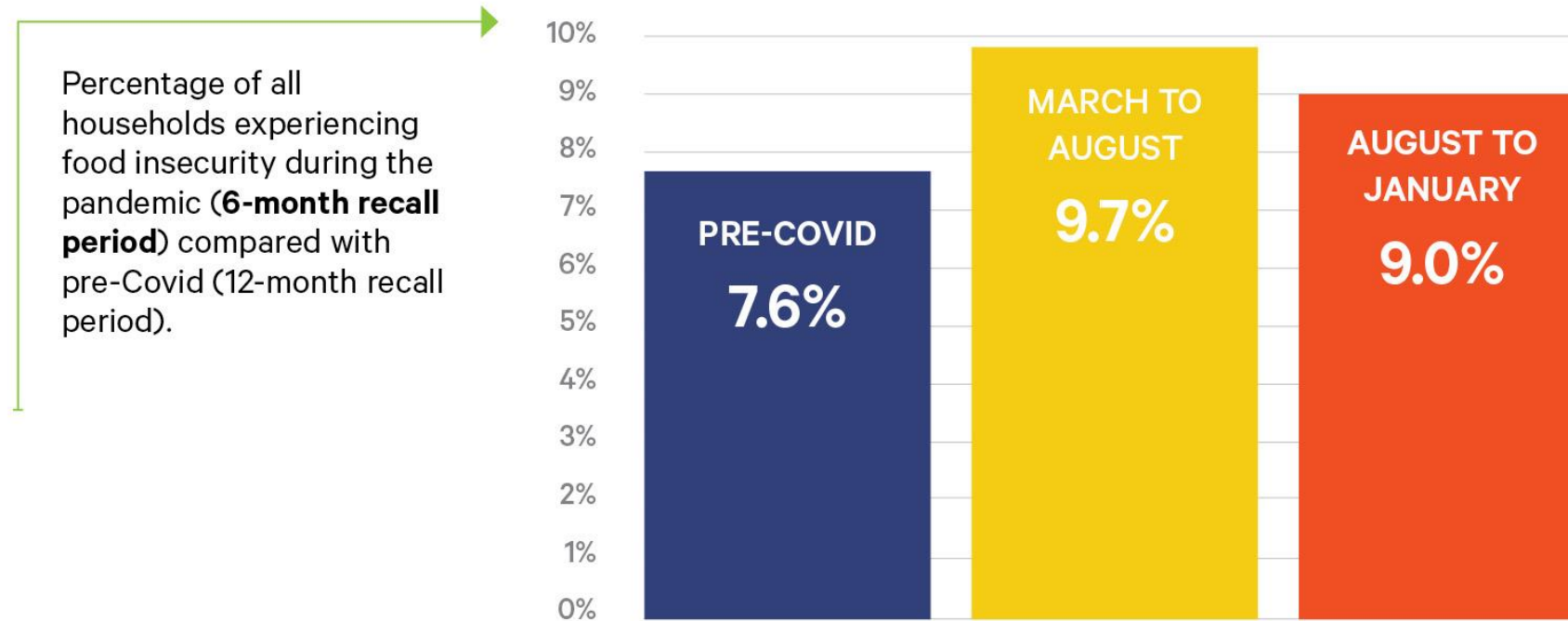
In the past month/six months, did you/anyone else in your household:

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

If they answered yes to any of these three questions they are classified as food insecure.

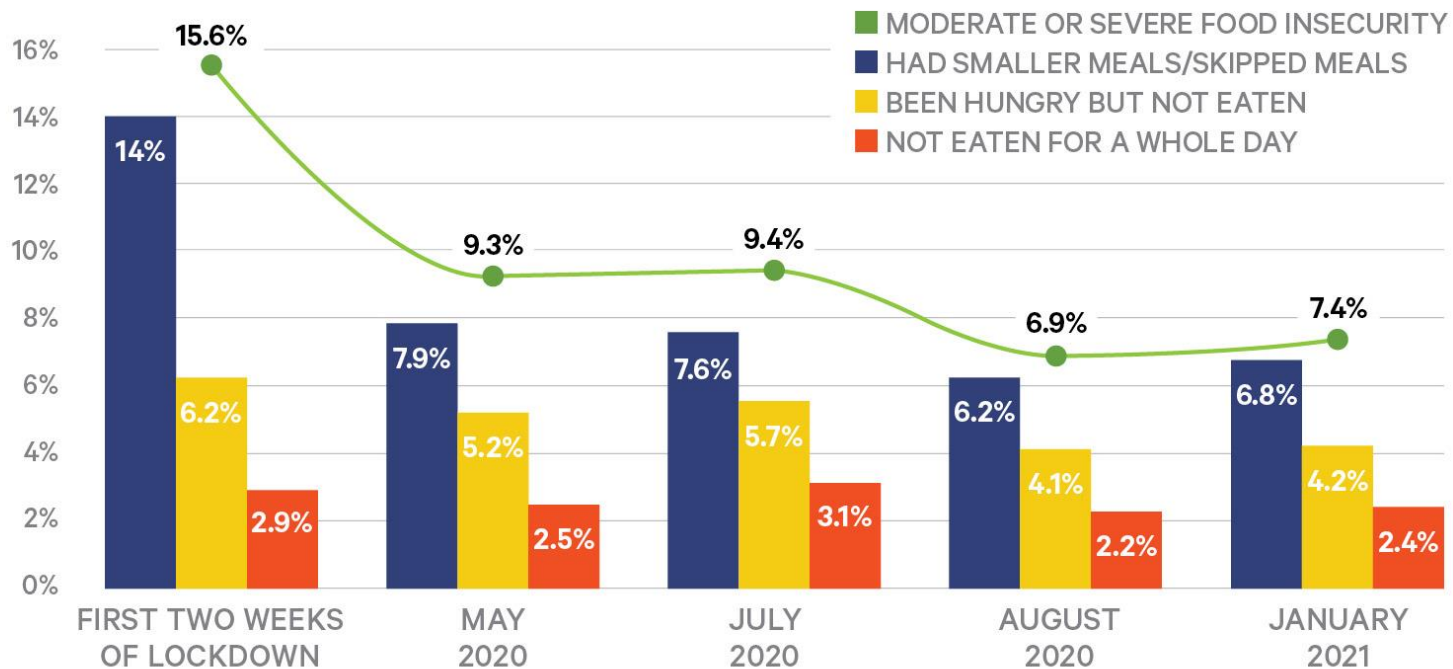
These questions are part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Security Survey module. This is a validated survey tool, used to measure and monitor household food insecurity in many high-income countries, including the UK. These questions capture moderate and severe experiences of food insecurity.

Food insecurity remains consistently higher than pre-Covid levels, affecting 4.7 million adults in last 6 months



A small increase in 1-month food insecurity has been seen in January, now affecting 7.4% of households in the past month

Percentage of all households experiencing food insecurity (**1-month recall period**). Moderate or severe food insecurity indicates answering yes to one or more of having smaller/skipping meals, been hungry but not eaten and/or not eaten for a whole day (see appendix 1 for further details on measuring food insecurity).

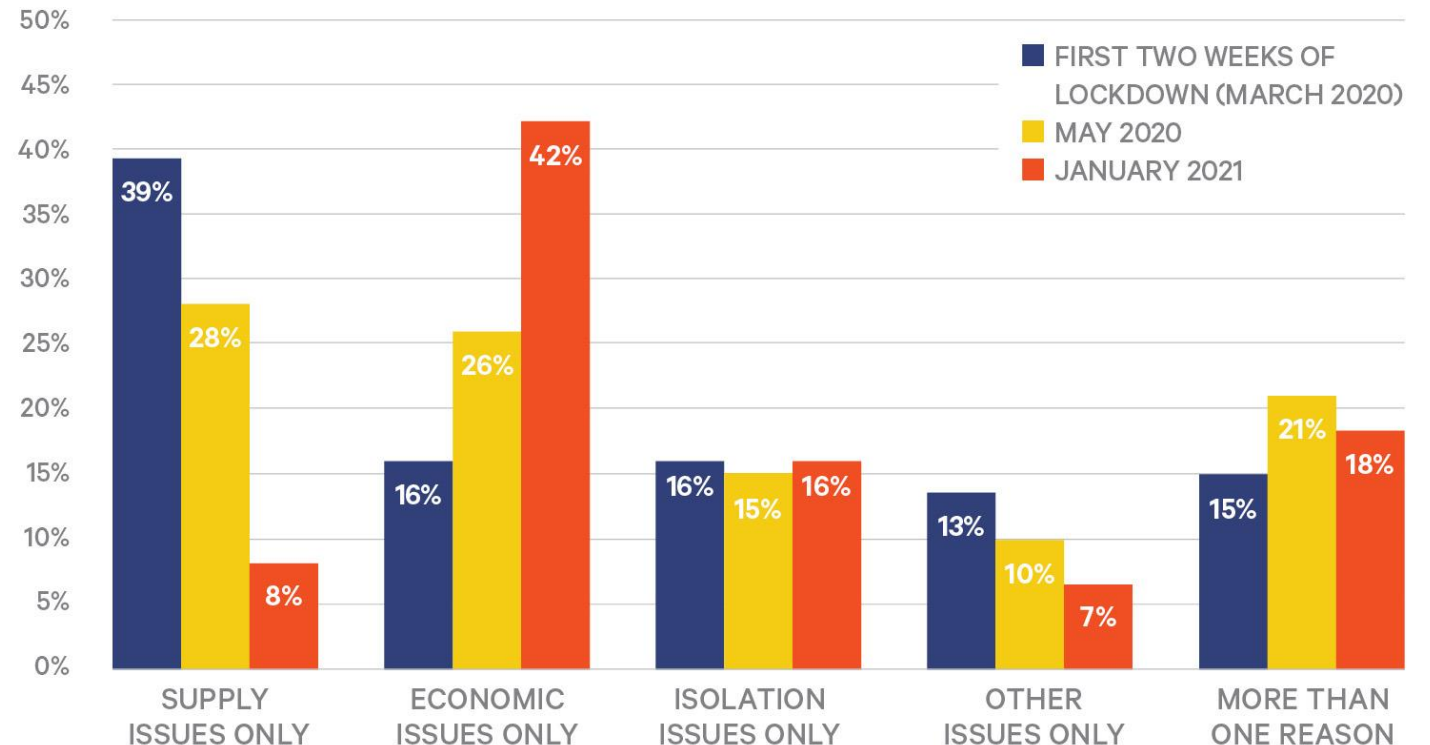


Over the course of the pandemic, while supply problems have improved, economic issues have got worse

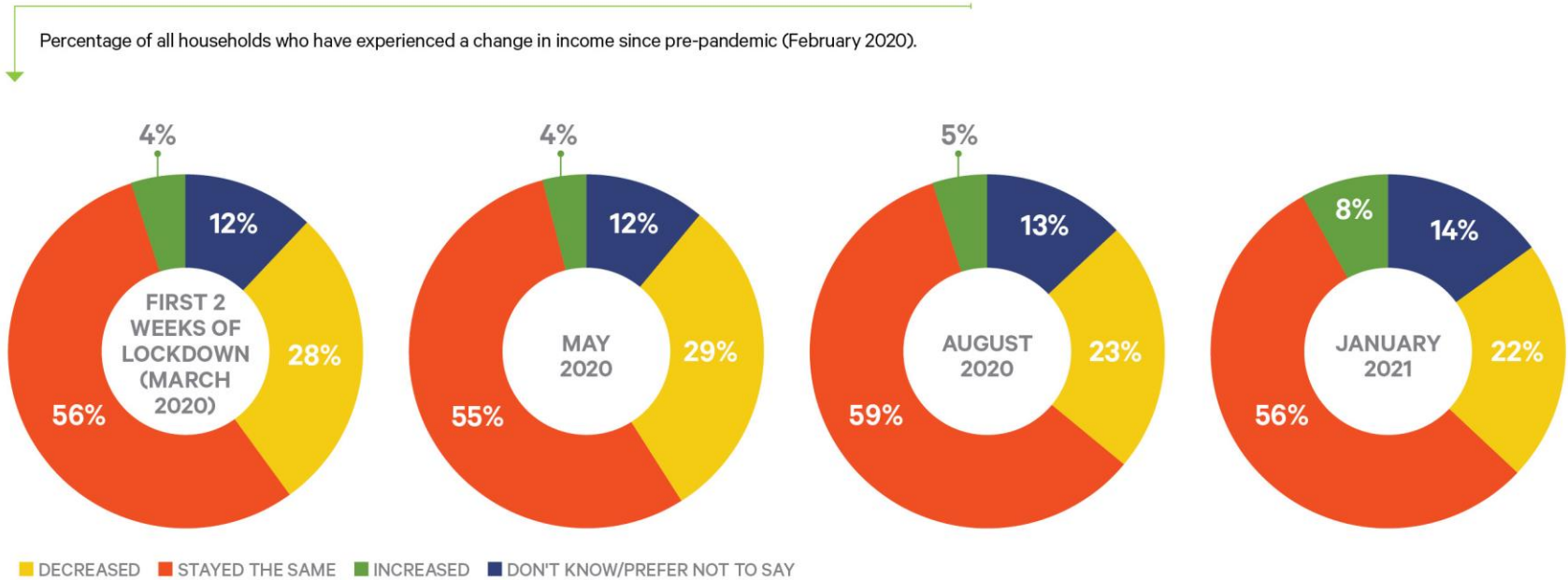
A year ago...



Drivers of food insecurity (1-month recall period); percentage of food insecure adults who have experienced one or more of these drivers.



Over a fifth (22%) have less income now than pre-pandemic, equivalent to 11.6 million adults.
Approximately 900,000 adults (2%) report losing all income.

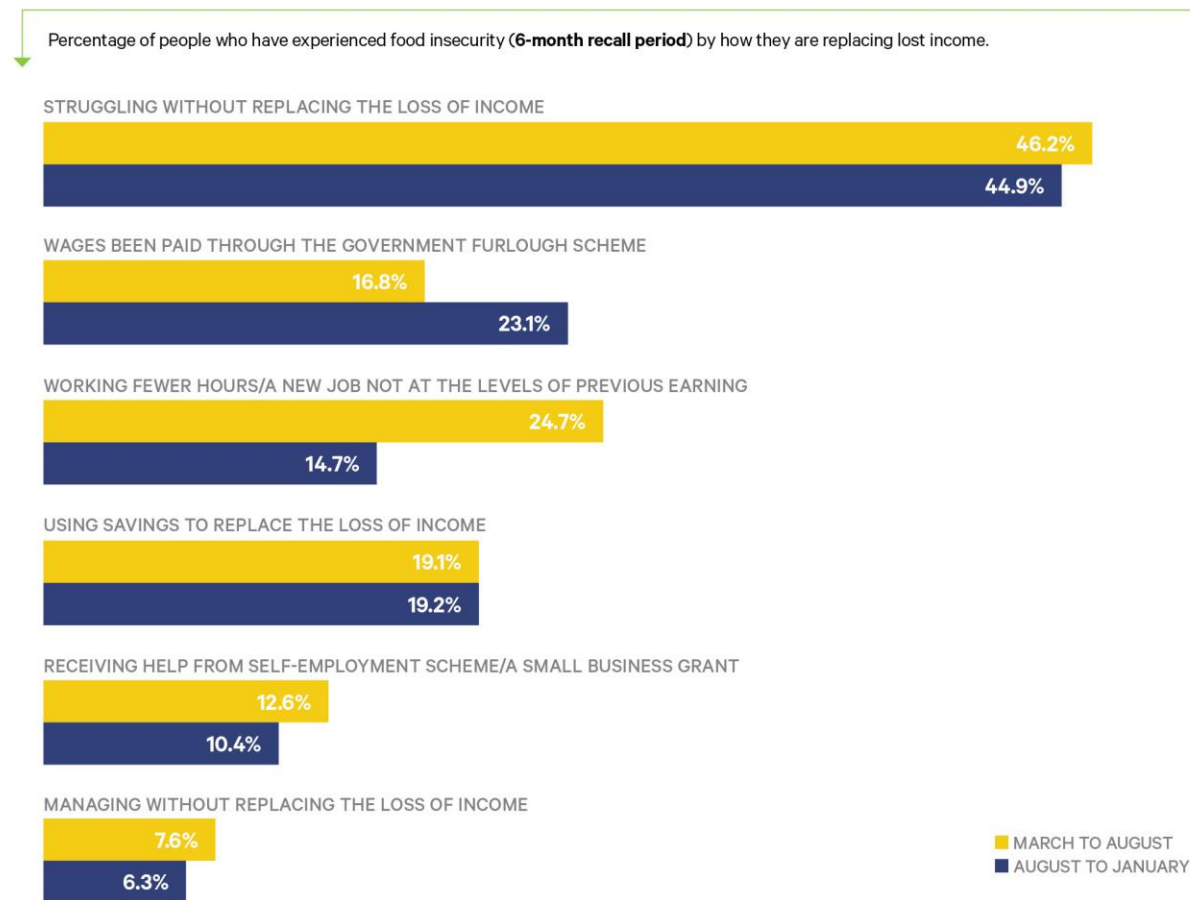


Universal credit: How long will the £20 increase last?

5 days ago



Those who have lost income are more likely to be food insecure. 23% of people on Furlough have experienced food insecurity in the past six months.



An estimated 2.3 million children live in households that have experienced food insecurity in the past 6 months (12% of households with children)

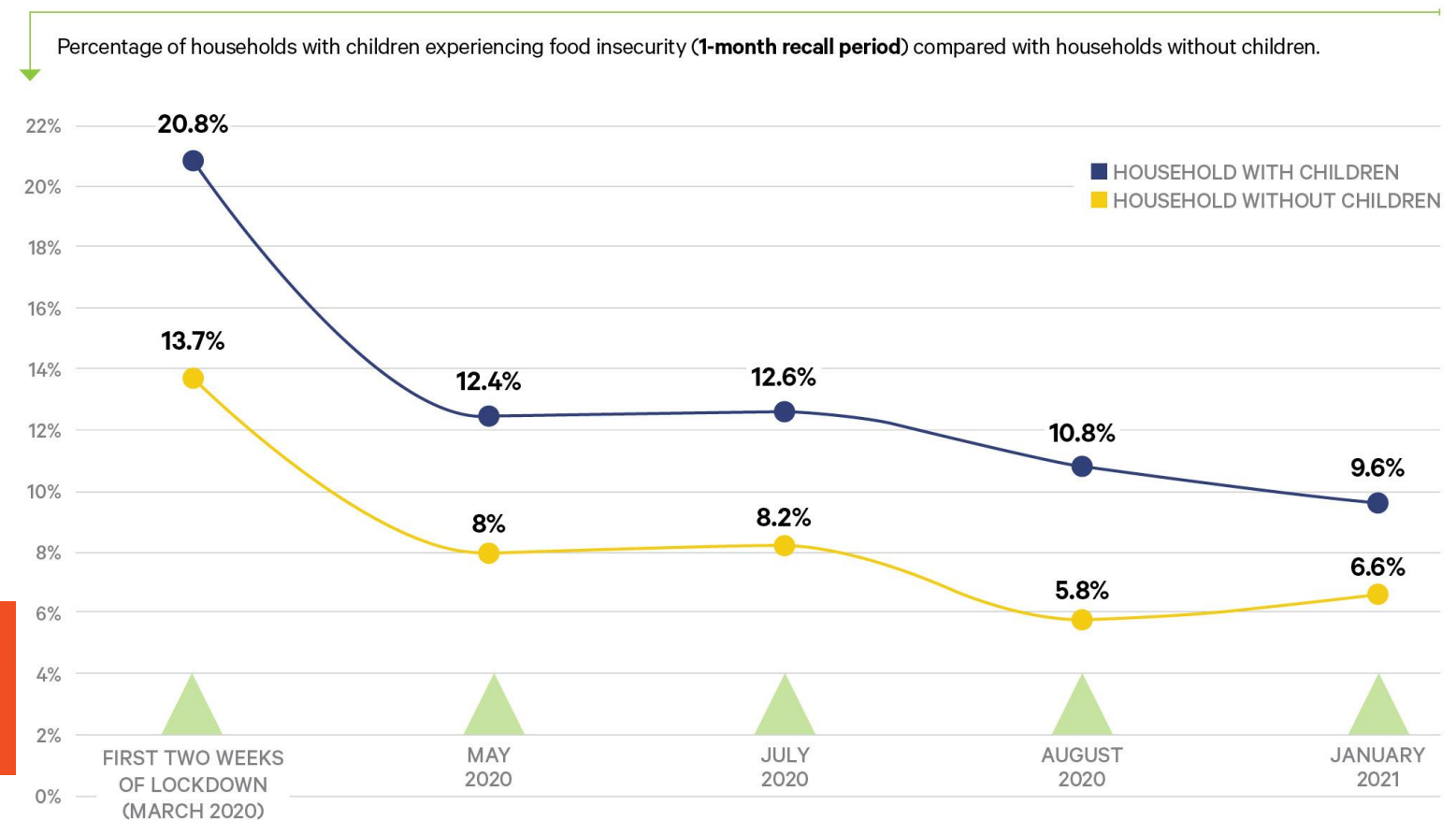
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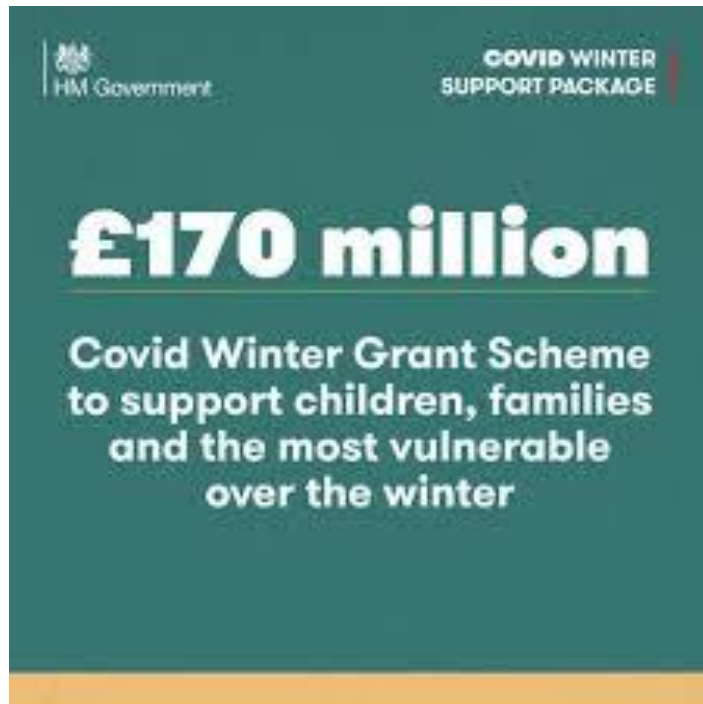
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Free school meal VOUCHERS

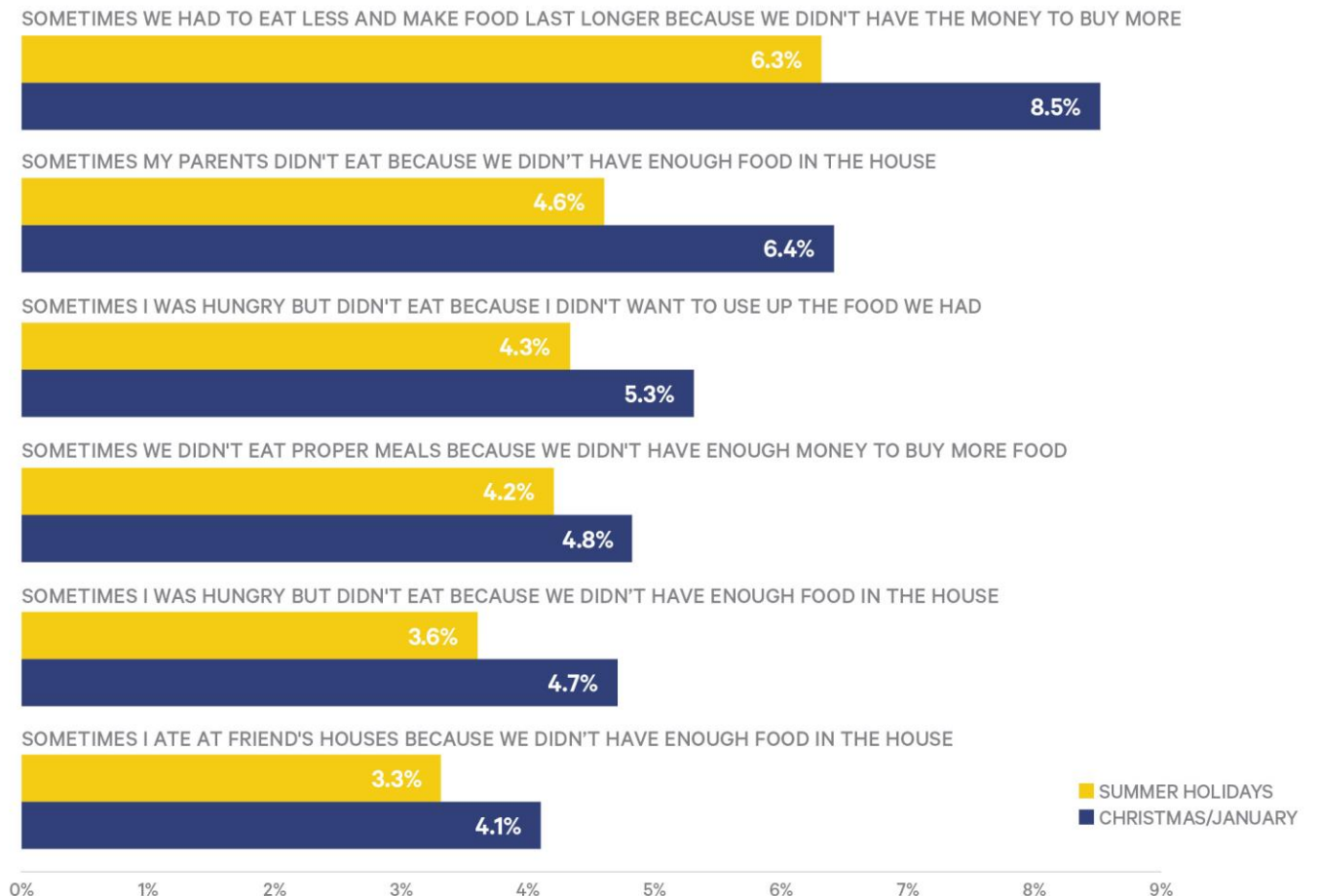
41% of households with children on **Free School Meals** have experienced food insecurity in the past 6 months



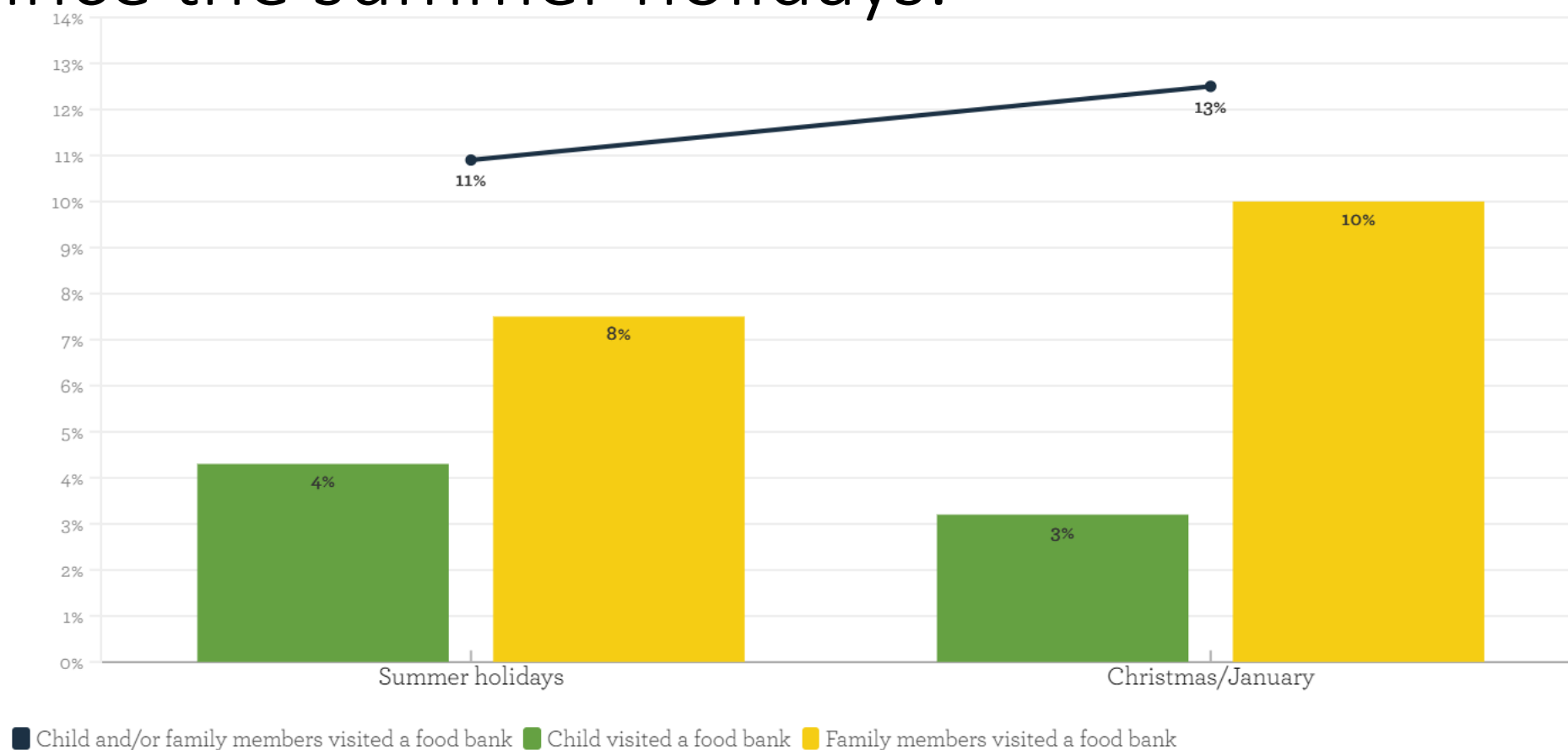
But 1.5 million children (aged 8-17) still reported experiences of food insecurity since Christmas



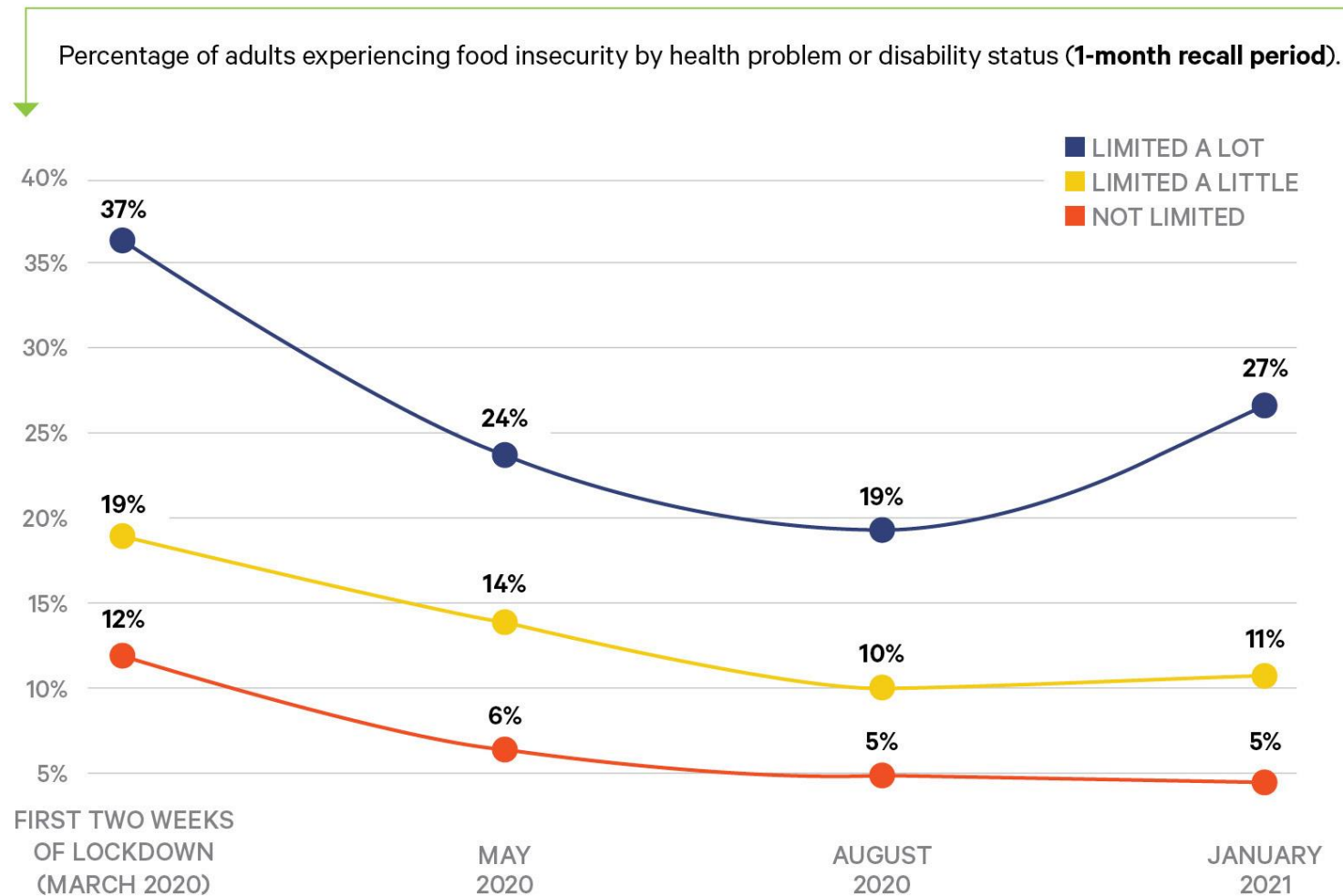
Percentage of children aged 8-17 years old reporting experiences of food insecurity. Answering yes to one or more of the questions classifies a child as experiencing mild/moderate/severe food insecurity.



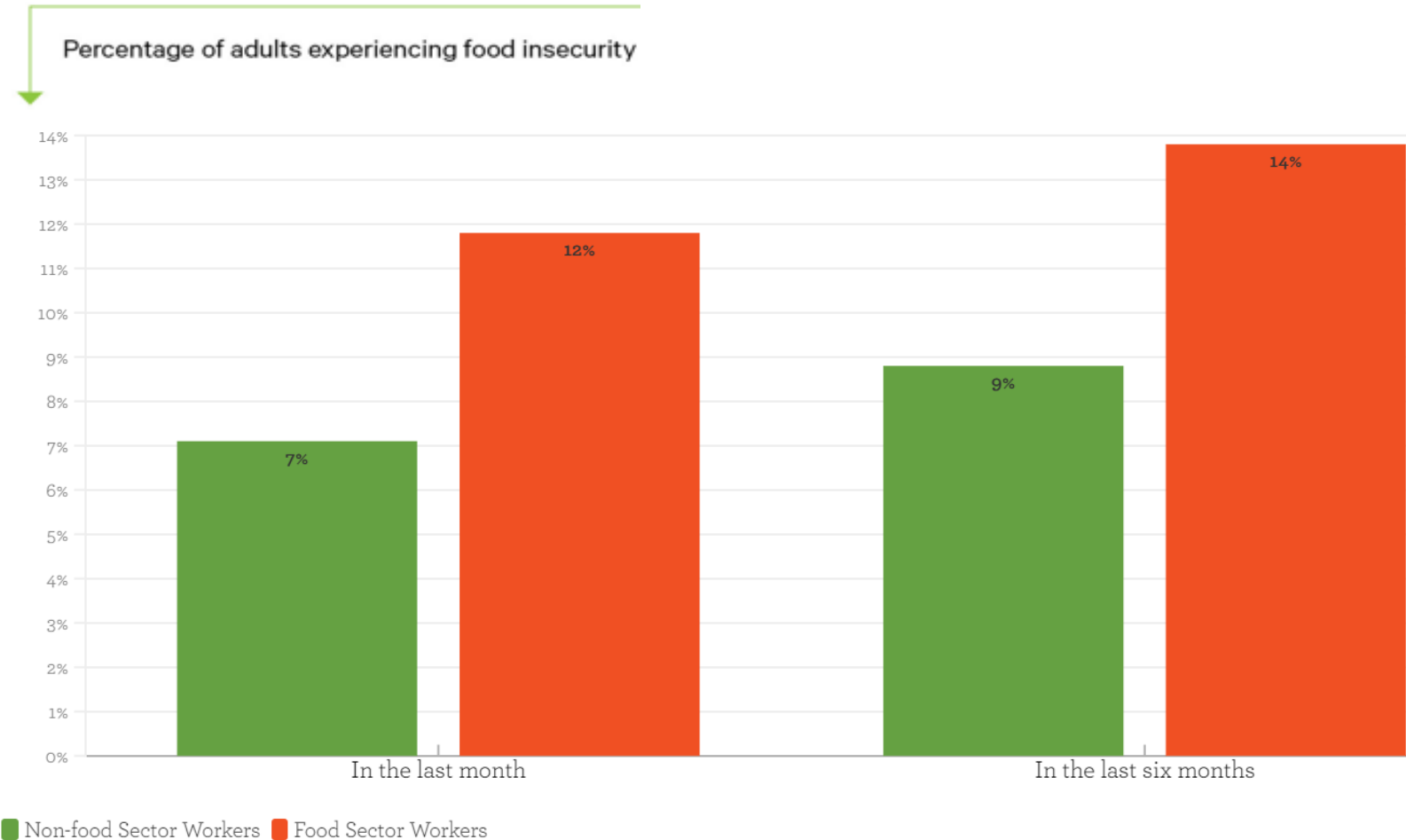
Nearly 1 million children (13%) aged 8-17 years reported that either they or their family had visited a food bank since early December. This has risen by 2% since the summer holidays.



Adults limited a lot by disabilities are now 5 times more likely to be food insecure than those without disabilities



Households with food sector workers have higher rates of food insecurity than non-food sector workers



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Morrisons to be first UK supermarket to pay minimum £10 an hour

By Simon Read
Business reporter

13 January | [Comments](#)



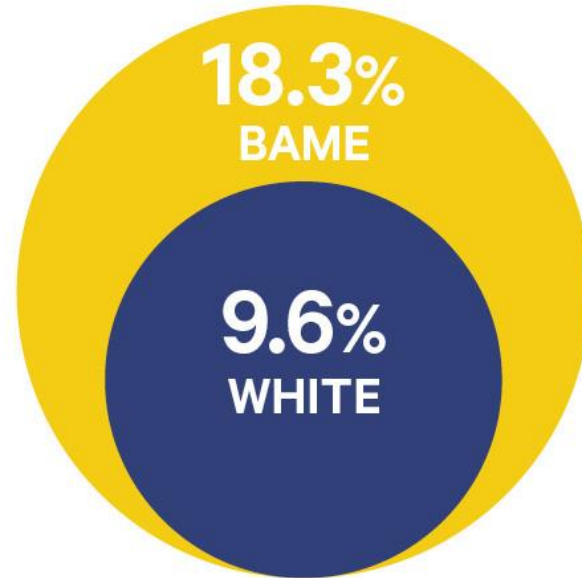
Co-op raises staff pay after lockdown lifts sales

More than half the retailer's 60,000 workers to receive above-inflation increase

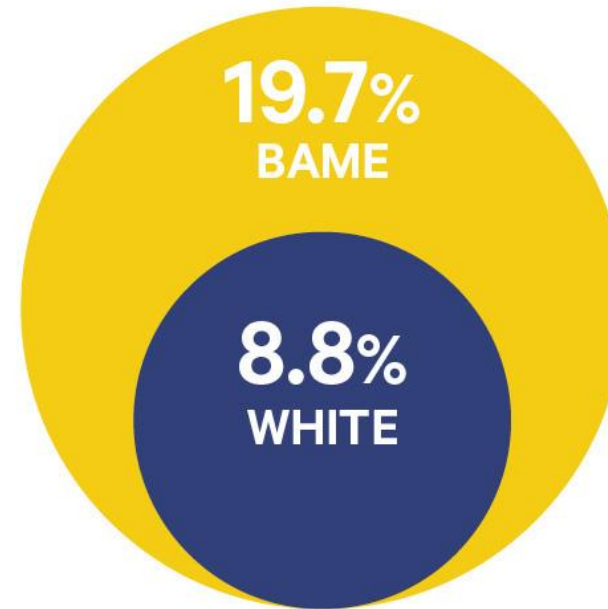


BAME adults are twice as likely to experience food insecurity compared to White British adults

Percentage of adults experiencing food insecurity by ethnic group (6-month recall period).

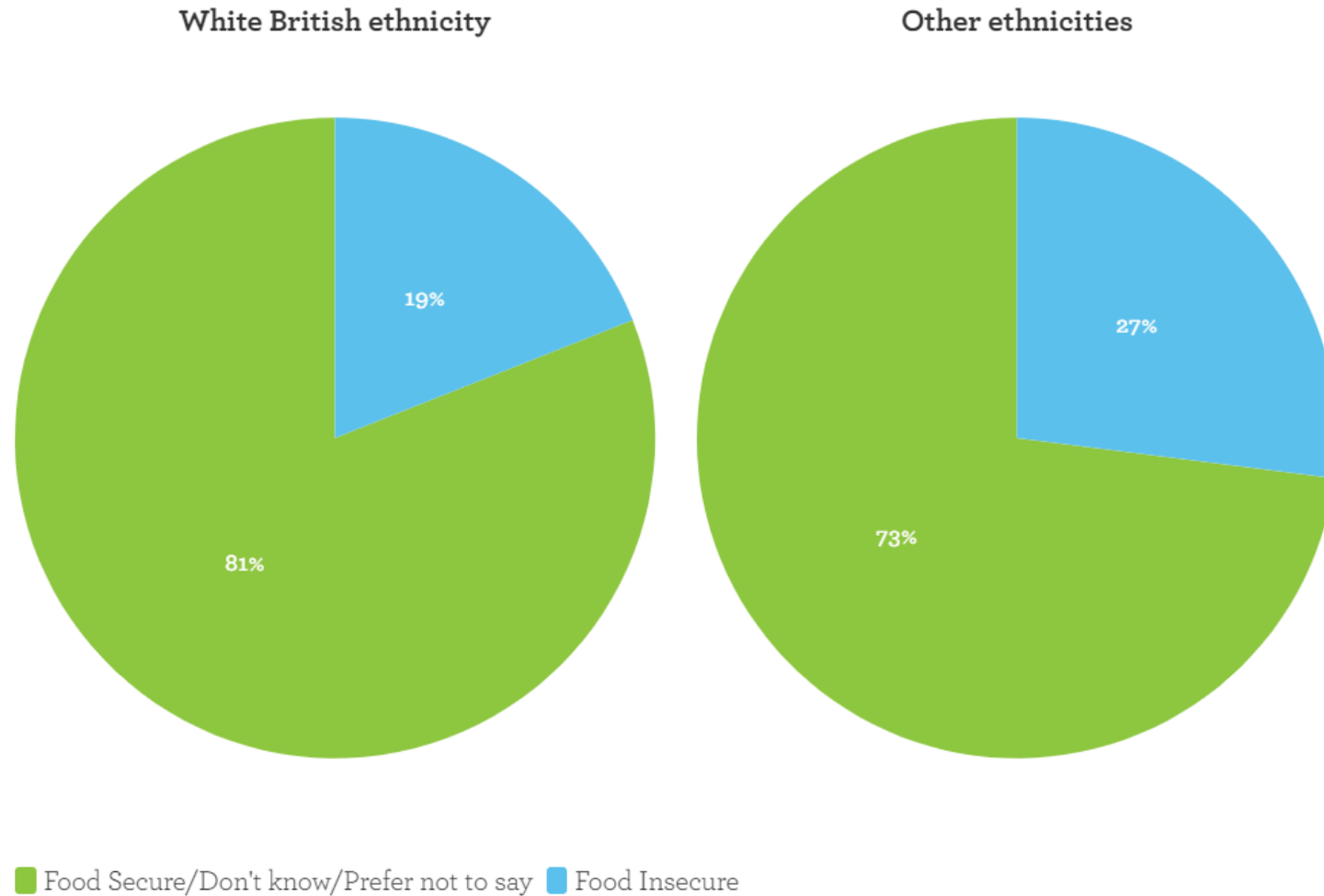


MARCH 2020 TO
AUGUST 2020



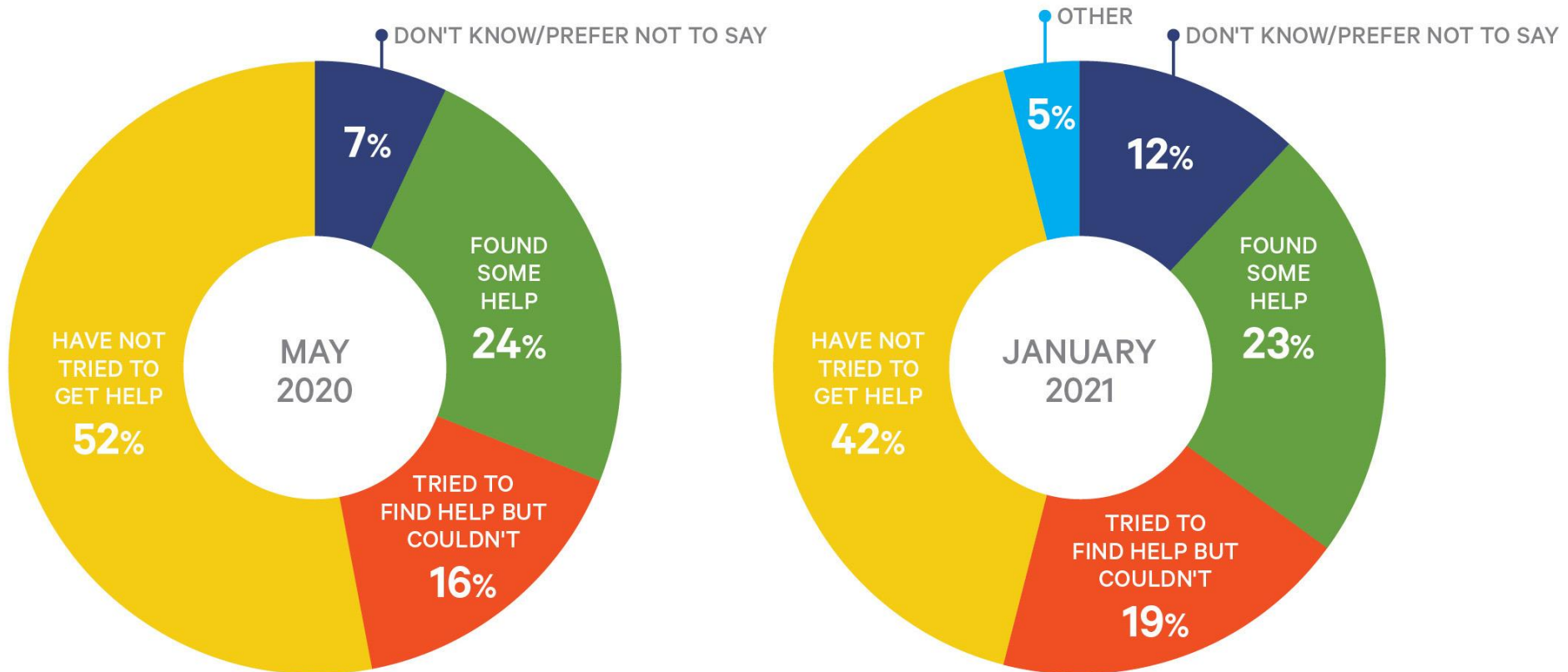
AUGUST 2020 TO
JANUARY 2021

Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected



Large numbers of food insecure people remain unable to find help and this has not improved since last summer

How food insecure households have experienced getting help ("Other" not an option asked in May 2020).



Our Recommendations

Government needs to **make food security a priority** to ensure the long-term health and resilience of the nation in the next phase of recovery.

Need to **move away from short-term solutions**, food banks and emergency food aid, and prioritise policies that will address the underlying causes.

Our 3 key recommendations are:

1 REVIEW FREE SCHOOL MEALS

An urgent review of Free School Meals: priority is to ensure the eligibility threshold does not exclude any disadvantaged children from accessing a healthy meal.

2 MAKE THE £20 UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPLIFT PERMANENT AND PAY AT LEAST THE REAL LIVING WAGE TO ALL WORKERS

Government should make the £20 Universal Credit uplift permanent and Businesses should pay at least the Real Living Wage and the

3 LEADERSHIP AND ACTION TO SOLVE FOOD INSECURITY

Designate an authority in Government to be responsible for monitoring and tackling food insecurity.

Visit our website for the full report: foodfoundation.org.uk/publications

Further info:

office@foodfoundation.org.uk

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