



I'm  
hungry

## Understanding the Lived Experience of Food Insecurity amongst Adults in Scotland over time

### Methods:

Three Rounds of Qualitative Interview with Adults in Scotland recruited through the Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) and independent foodbanks.

- Round 1 – April to November 2019 – 55 Adults (18+) – SHeS (n=23) and Foodbanks (n=32)
  - Interview schedule designed to explore the causes and consequences of food insecurity, the relationship between FI and health, coping strategies, pathways out of food insecurity. Included administering the FIES in full.
- Round 2 - February to August 2020 - 38 of 55 participants continued - SHeS (n=17) and Foodbanks (n=22)
  - Interview schedule designed to explore the lived experience of food insecurity between their first and second interview and to continue to explore the relationship between FI and health and also stress. FIES also administered
- Round 3 - July to November 2021 – 27 of 38 participants continued – SHeS (n=16) and Foodbanks (n=11)
  - Interview schedule designed to explore the lived experience of food insecurity between their second and third interview and to continue to explore the relationship between FI and stress. In addition to administering the FIES. The Perceived Stress Scale was administered

### Key findings

- Participants recruited through the SHeS appear to represent a different demographic and to experience FI differently than those recruited through foodbanks.
  - It started, well, I left off-shore industries in 2014, when I was sick, and then I was put on to Universal Credit.... from signing on to getting the pay, it took nearly eight weeks, left me with no money.... .. It was a frightening experience. I had nothing, I couldn't go to my family ...It really was frightening. (Steve, Aberdeen, foodbank participant)
  - I suppose I worry most about just making sure that you were getting proper healthy food and you weren't relying on stuff that you shouldn't – well, not stuff that you shouldn't be eating, but lesser quality stuff....Yeah, so probably quality rather than quantity. (Roger, Lerwick, Scottish Health Survey Participant)
- The relationship between health and FI appears to be complex with poor health being both a cause and consequence of FI but also in some cases a pathway out of food insecurity when those deemed sufficiently unwell may qualified for enhanced benefits.
  - Since I lost my husband. I just slipped into depression...My husband worked but after he died I went onto benefits and the money went down and I could not afford enough food [Morna, Glasgow, Scottish Health Survey Participant]
- There was mental health issues, which contributed to my food insecurity, but obviously they were aggravated by the situation, as well. It was a horrible, horrible set of... anxiety ridden cycle, which just exasperates everything [Graham, Aberdeen, Foodbank Participant]
- I'm lucky, I get a decent amount of money now. Just because of my mental health issues. I get Employment Seekers Allowance and I get Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as well. So it's much better [Anthony, Elgin, Foodbank participant]
- Stress caused by FI appears to intensify food insecurity which points to a limitation of FIES. Our research suggests that whilst the FIES may measure access to food and its utilisation, it does not appear to capture the felt-ness of food insecurity – the levels of worry and stress surround FI.
  - I don't buy so much food that I like because the loneliness is terrible as well. Because I have to put more money into the central heating to keep myself warm...during the Christmas period, the food quantity and quality is reduced? Yes. It depends on the money that I've got left on what to buy to last me... there's a higher level of worrying during that period. Yes. [Kara, Scottish Health Survey,
  - That's what food insecurity seems to me. It's like worrying about where your next meal is coming from. That's kind of what it means to me, but I don't know because I don't have that worry as such: I don't worry where my next meal is coming... Because I've only got half a stomach, I can go two, three days, four days without actually eating anything at all. [Carl, Foodbank participant, Oban]
- Whilst our research confirms that access to financial capital is key to achieving food insecurity, it also points to the importance of social capital via personal and professional social networks and cultural capital via shopping, cooking and budgeting skills. We argue that a three capitals approach is needed to address food insecurity
  - I needed the support but nobody is listening to me... that I was brought to this position because of domestic abuse, but computer doesn't see it. And nobody listens, it's just computer, "You are not entitled to that". I completely depend on foodbanks. It keeps me alive...otherwise I would have no food at all... I would starve to death. I don't have anything. I'm so isolated. [Petra, Foodbank participant, Elgin]
  - I actually invested in a chest freezer so I do a monthly freezer shop now, I never used to do that before. And it has made a difference Yes I do think so. I do prepare... I like a variety of meals and I don't rely as much on convenience shops to get bits and bobs because I can store a lot more... buy more in bulk and it reduces the amount of money that I spend on food. [Rita, Scottish Health Survey]