Ref #07: UoMQStep 2020 FSA – Working Towards a Cross-Government National Measurement of Household Food Insecurity

Organisation Profile

Food Standards Agency

Analytics Unit

Clive House, 70 Petty France, Westminister, London, SW11 9EX

Selection Method

Written CV & cover letter followed by an interview with the FSA team via phone.

Project Outline

Food security exists when people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) was set up to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. In 2016 the FSA started collecting data on household food security through the Food and You Survey.

In April 2019, the Department for Work and Pensions also started to collect data on household food insecurity as part of its Family Resources Survey (FRS). Both surveys have adopted the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 10-item Food Security Module however they use different time reference periods; Food and You asks respondents to reflect on the last 12 months,

whereas the FRS asks respondents about the last 30 days. The surveys also use different survey methodologies. Whilst waves 1–5 of Food and You were administered using a face-to-face the survey will be moving to an online survey methodology in summer 2020. The FRS continues to use a face-to-face methodology.

Using the USDA measure, households are categorised as having high, marginal, low or very low food security. These measures feed into the Sustainable Development Goals published by ONS.

There are number of research questions this project would interrogate:

- Questions are coded differently in different countries. Analysing the UK data from Food and You, what are the differences seen between the two different coding structures?
- There has been an ongoing literature which debates whether those classified as in 'marginal' food security should be considered food secure, or food insecure. Analysing Food and You data, what are the distinctions that can be drawn between the different categories?
- What are the key demographic characteristics (including geographic data) of those that fall into each category of food security based on the UK data?
- Are we able or not to assert that marginally secure households in the UK are impacted by food shortages in the same way as those who are in low or very low food insecurity – for instance by corroborating available food supplies, food purchasing behaviours, coping mechanisms and diet qualities and quantities?
- To what extent does food insecurity act as a driver for other indicators within Food and You (for instance, food hygiene, food safety practices, shopping)?

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- Is there data available that can reliably inform of the likely measurement differences when employing a 30 day time reference period against a 12 month time reference period?
- To what extent is social desirability bias a factor when asking questions around food insecurity – and to what extent does the methodology employed minimise social desirability bias?

Useful Links

- https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/National-measurement-of-food-insecurity-release.pdf
- https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Household-Food-Insecurity-in-Canada-A-Guide-to-Measurement-and-Interpretation.pdf
- https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Food-Poverty-workshop-report-1-05-04-16.pdf
- https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FF-Food-insecurity-4pp-V3.pdf

Key Words

Data visualisation   Food insecurity

Data analysis   Infographic   Quantitative

Measurement   Regression

Application Criteria

Essential
- Experience of data analysis in Excel, SPSS or R

Desirable
- Some familiarity with the concept of regression models
- Experience of creating engaging data visualisations and infographics.
- Good communication skills.

Supporting Information

- FSA would expect the successful applicant to be located at FSA Offices at Clive House in London or alternatively at Foss House in York.
- The project is on a high-profile are that has significant cross-governmental interest. FSA will provide ongoing professional support through its analytical function, primarily its team of social researchers and statisticians. The successful applicant will be supervised by a social researcher who is located at their chosen venue. We will look to involve and engage the successful applicant in our social science team for the duration of the project, and by doing so we aim to maximise the experience for the applicants.
- FSA would provide support to enable the successful applicant to travel between offices, when required.