Food insecurity in the UK:
understanding trends from local to global.
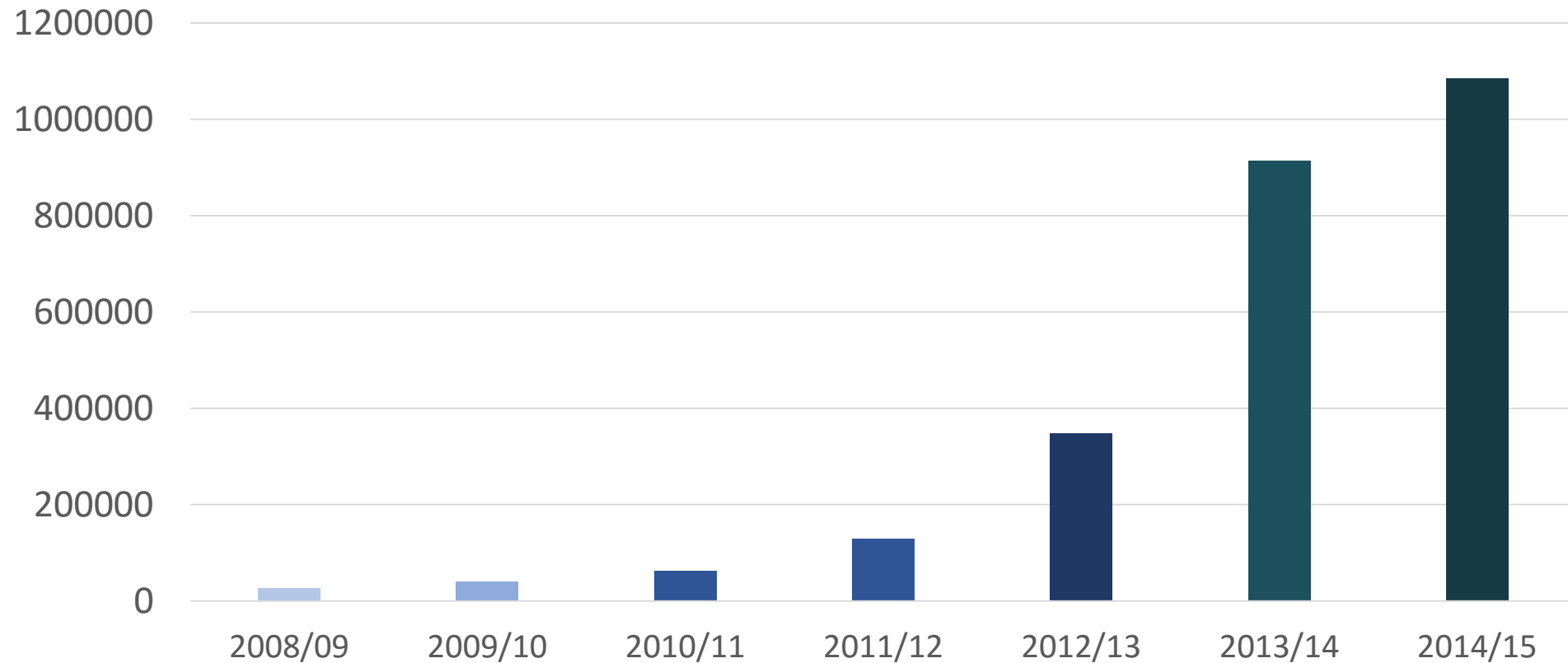
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Division of Diabetes and Nutritional Sciences, King's College London

Numbers fed by emergency food parcels*

* Data from Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, est. 2004. First year systematic data collection in 2008/09 .

What is driving food bank use?

"Food from a food bank—the supply—is a free good, and by definition there is an almost infinite demand for a free good." - Lord Freud, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Welfare Reform

"…no robust evidence linking food bank usage to welfare reform" - Esther McVey, former Minister of State for Employment, June 2014
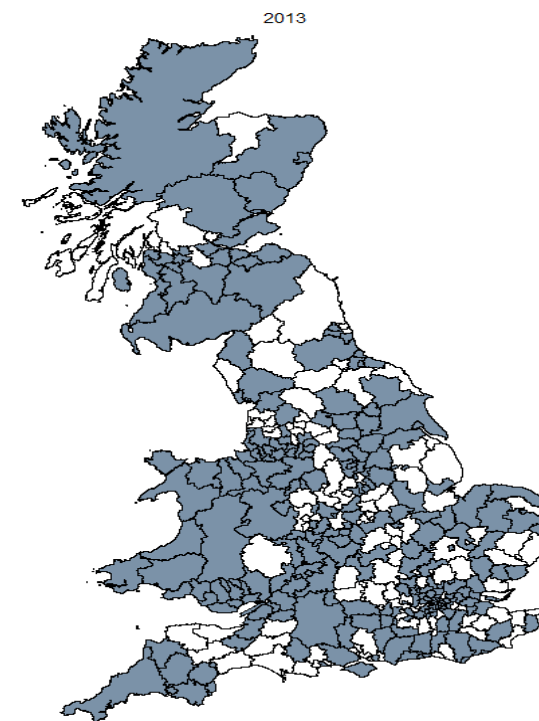
Expansion of Trussell Trust Foodbanks across local authorities
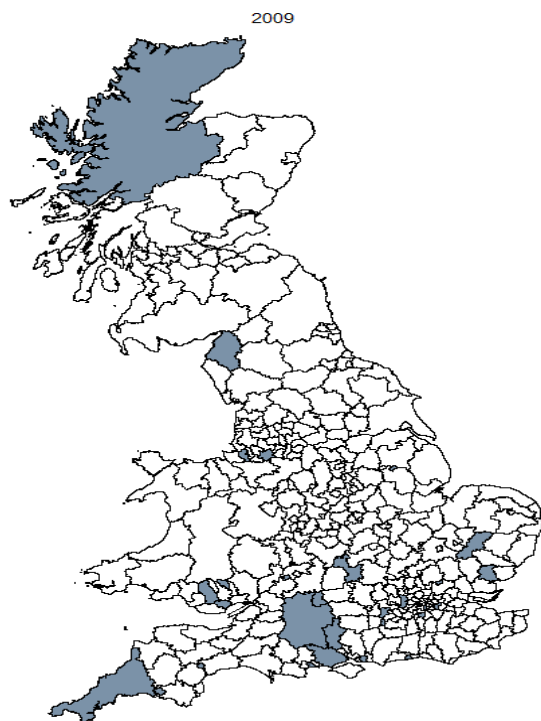
2009
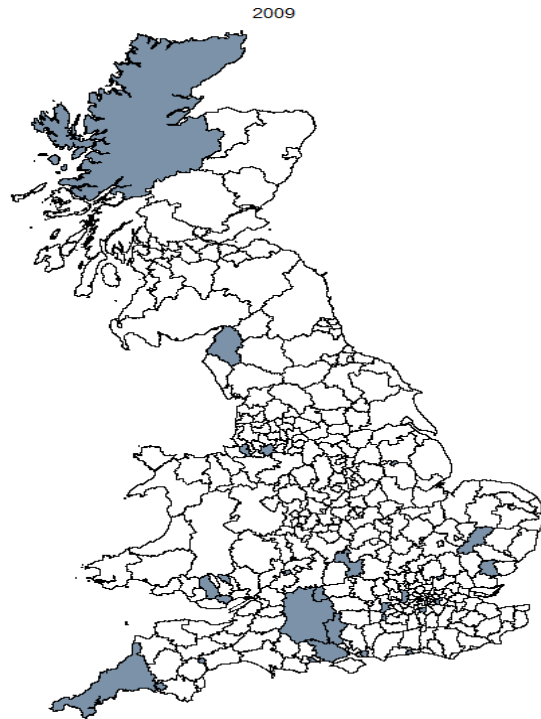Trussell Trust food banks in 29 local authorities

2013
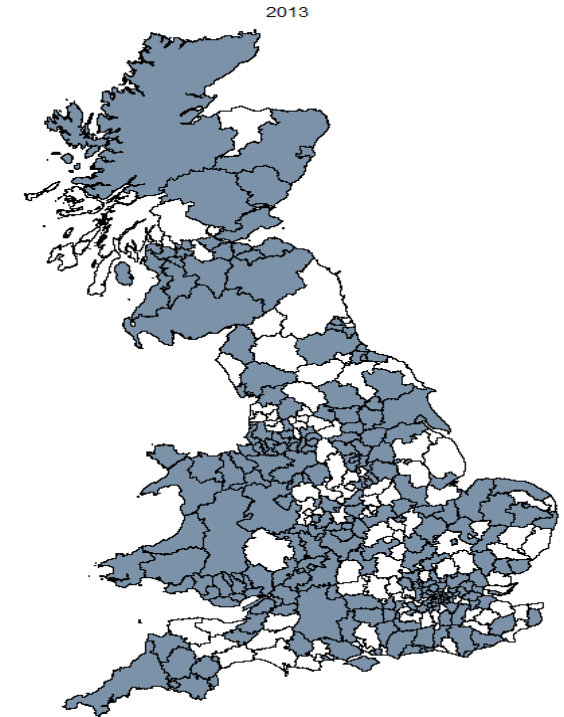Trussell Trust food banks in 251 local authorities

(Loopstra, Reeves et al., *BMJ,* 2015.)

Initiation of Foodbanks linked to economic hardship in local areas:

- Unemployment
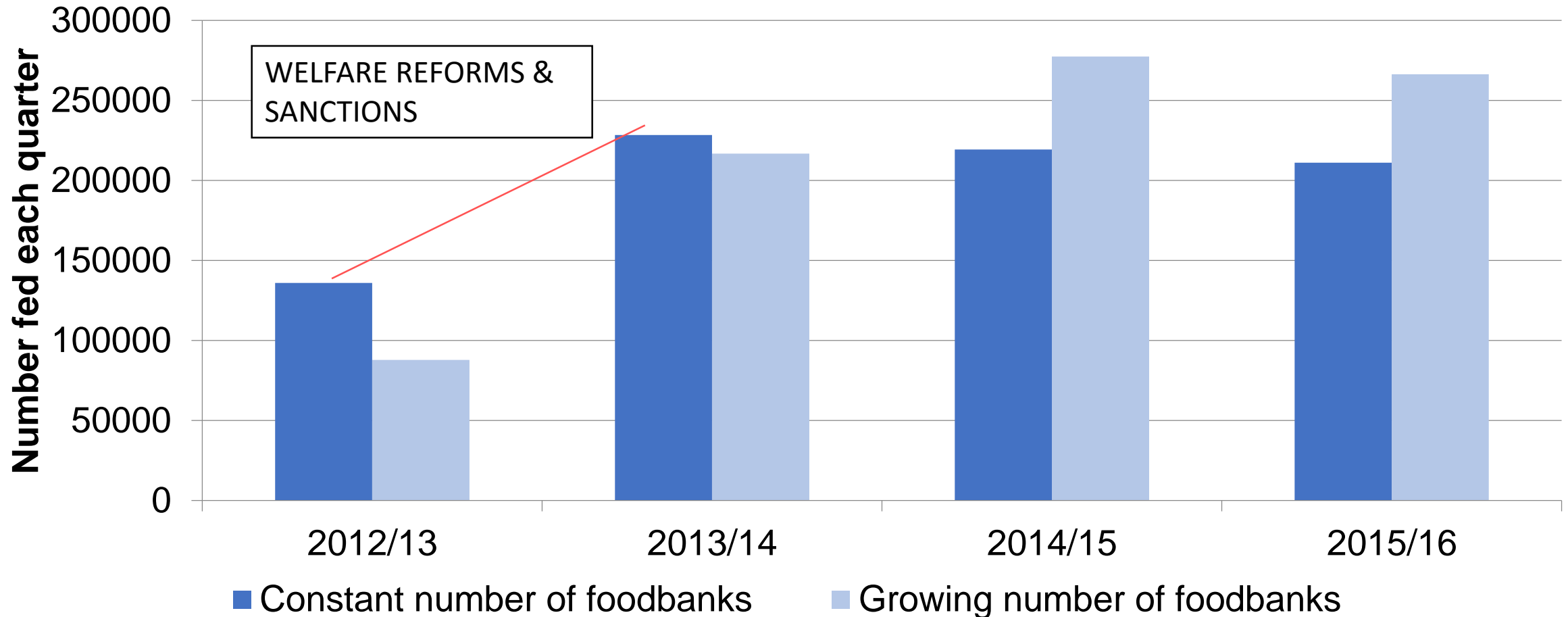- Local authority spending cuts
- Reduced welfare spending

2009
Trussell Trust food banks in 29 local authorities

2013
Trussell Trust food banks in 251 local authorities

(Loopstra, Reeves et al., *BMJ,* 2015.)

Recent trends Trussell Trust feeding in local authorities

WELFARE REFORMS & SANCTIONS

Number fed each quarter (y-axis): 0, 50000, 100000, 150000, 200000, 250000, 300000

x-axis: 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16

■ Constant number of foodbanks   ■ Growing number of foodbanks

Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, UK

Trussell Trust numbers fed in 2012/13 and 2015/16

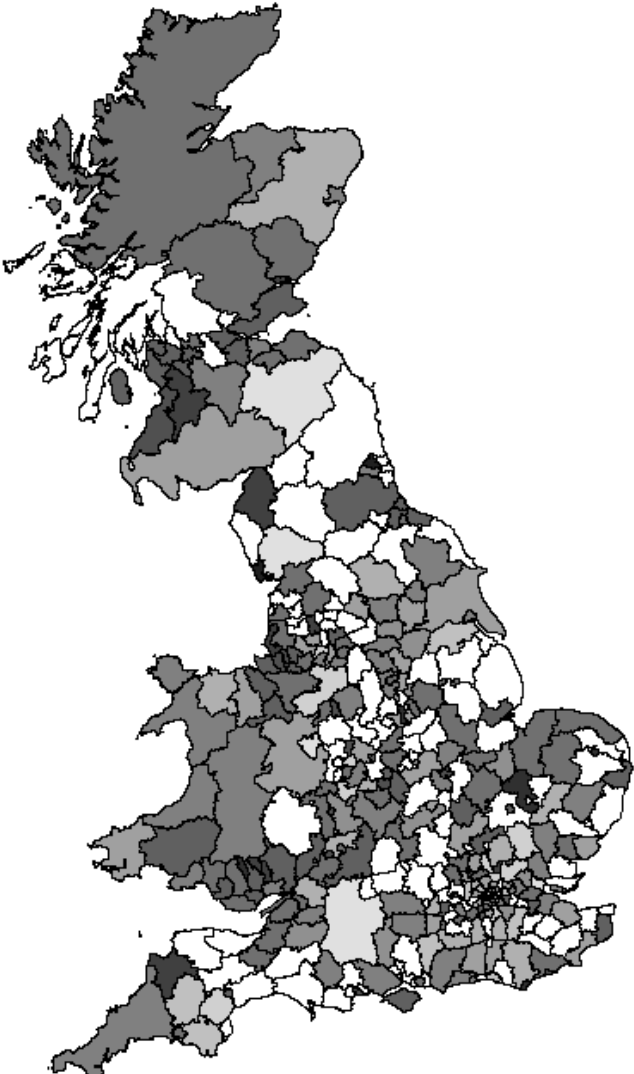Number fed as per cent of population, 2012/13

Number fed as per cent of population, 2015/16
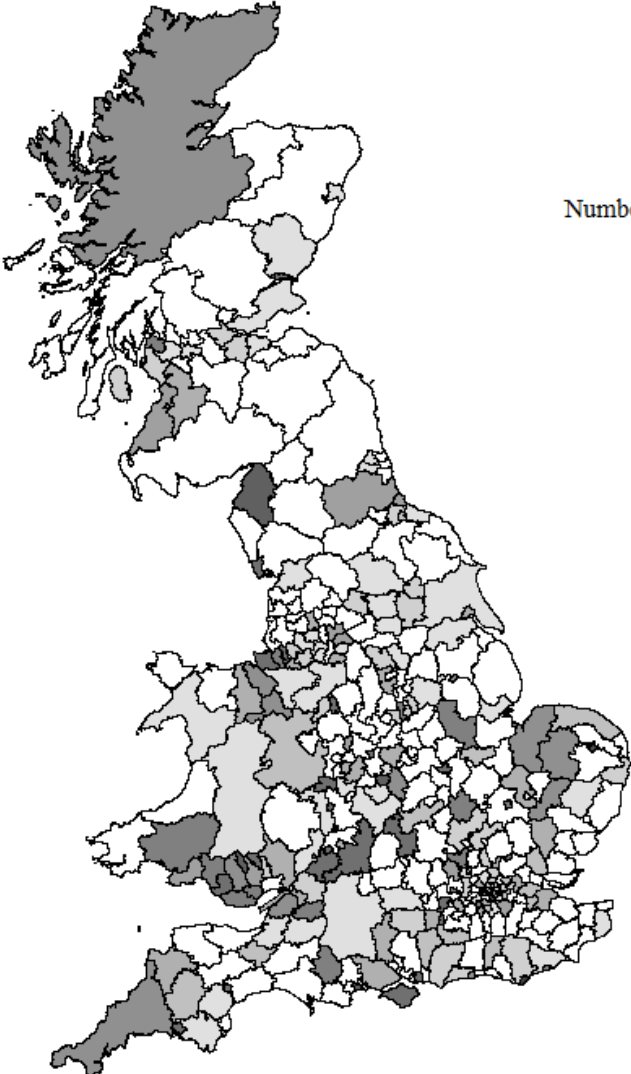
Number fed as % of population
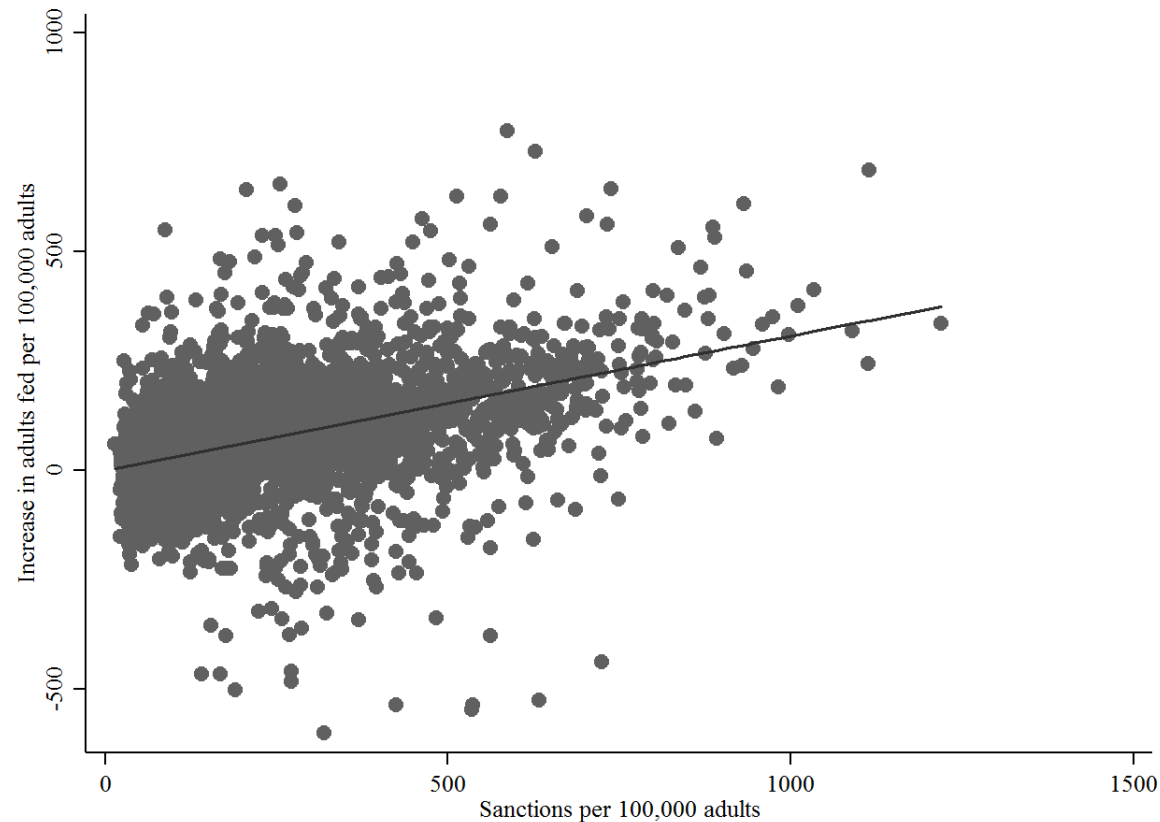- No foodbanks/data
- >0-0.25%
- >0.25-0.5%
- >0.50-0.75%
- >0.75-1.0%
- >1.0-1.25%
- >1.25-1.5%
- >1.5-2.0%
- >2.0-3.0%
- >3.0-4.0%
- >4.0-5.0%
- >6.0-10.0%

Quarterly rates of sanctions applied to Jobseeker's Allowance claimants closely linked to rates of food bank usage.

(Forthcoming: Loopstra et al. 2016.)

* Data from Trussell Trust Foodbanks & DWP.

Unemployment - UK, US, Eurozone
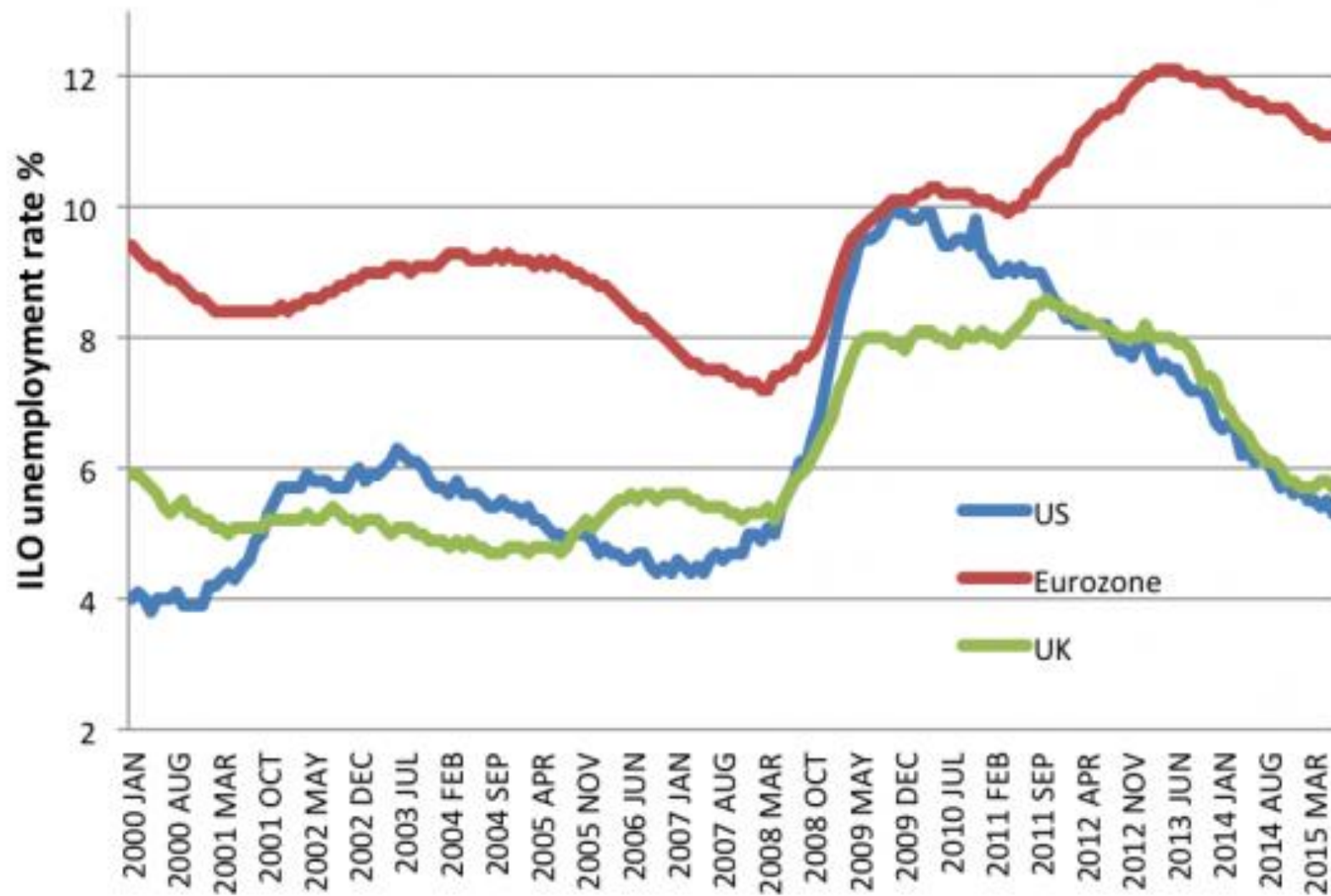
Gap between food price inflation and wage inflation

United Kingdom

2005   2006   2007   2008   2009   2010   2011   2012

——— Food price inflation   – – – – Annual wage inflation
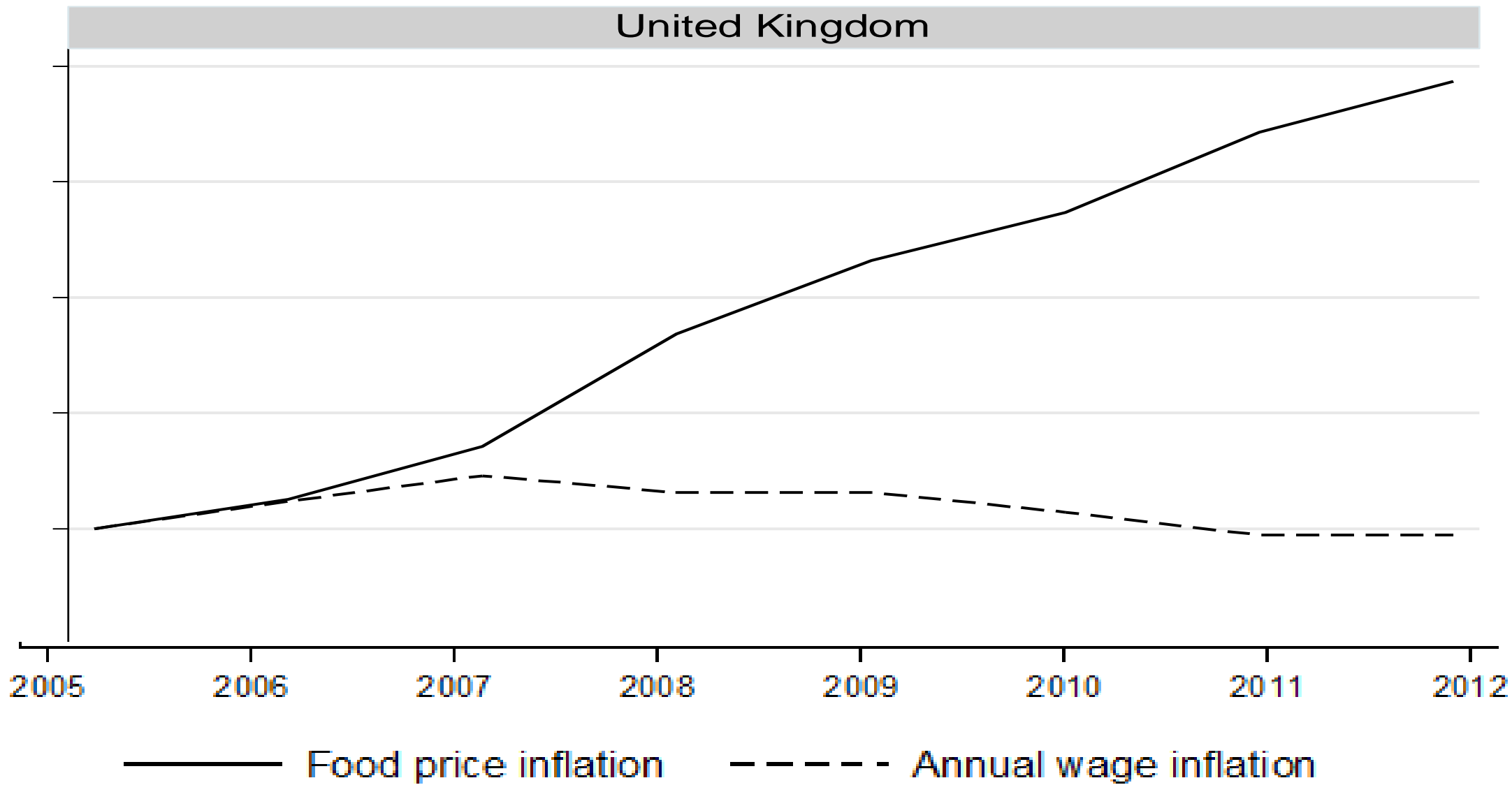
Rising inability to afford food across Europe
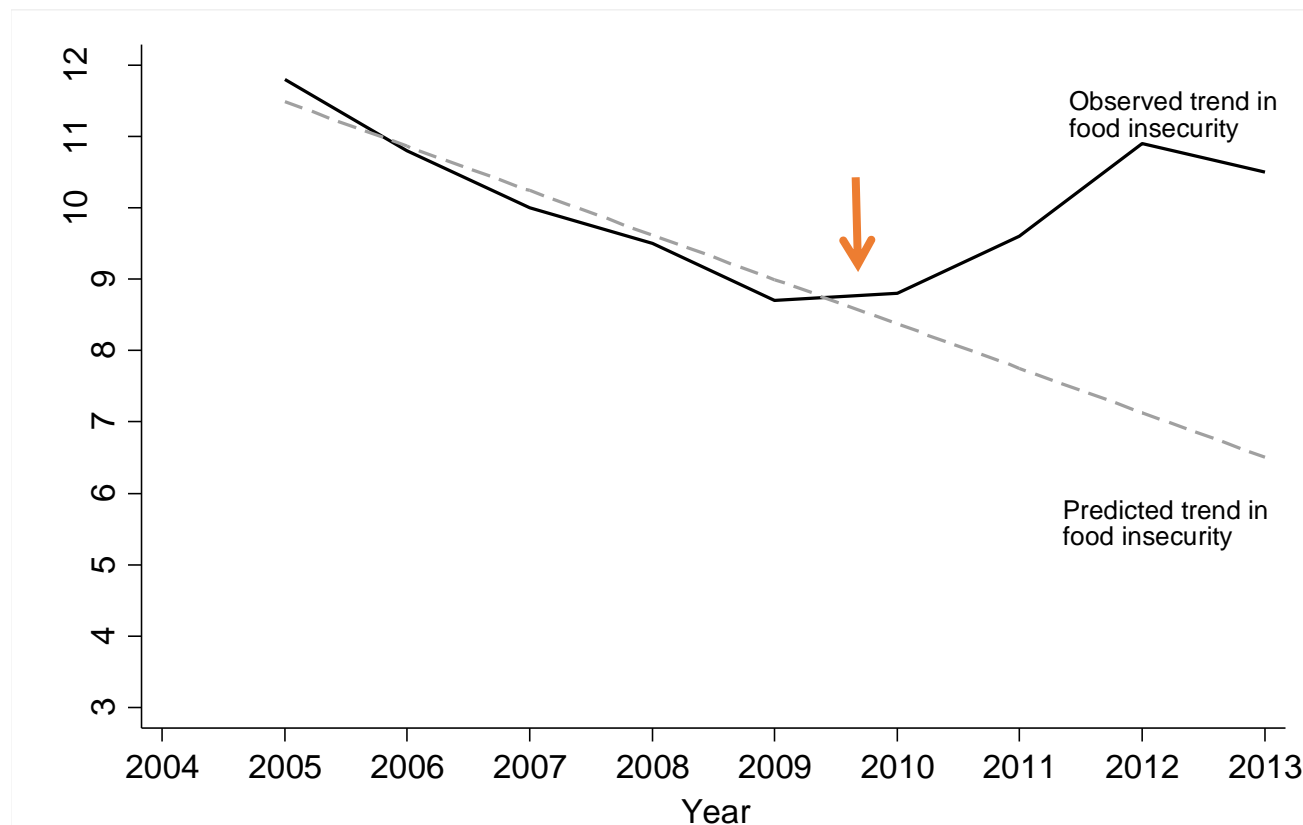
Source: Eurostat. Report of inability to afford meat, chicken, fish, or vegetarian equivalent every other day.

(Loopstra, Reeves, & Stucker. *The Lancet*. 2015.)

Prevalence reporting inability to afford meat or equivalent every second day (2009/2012).
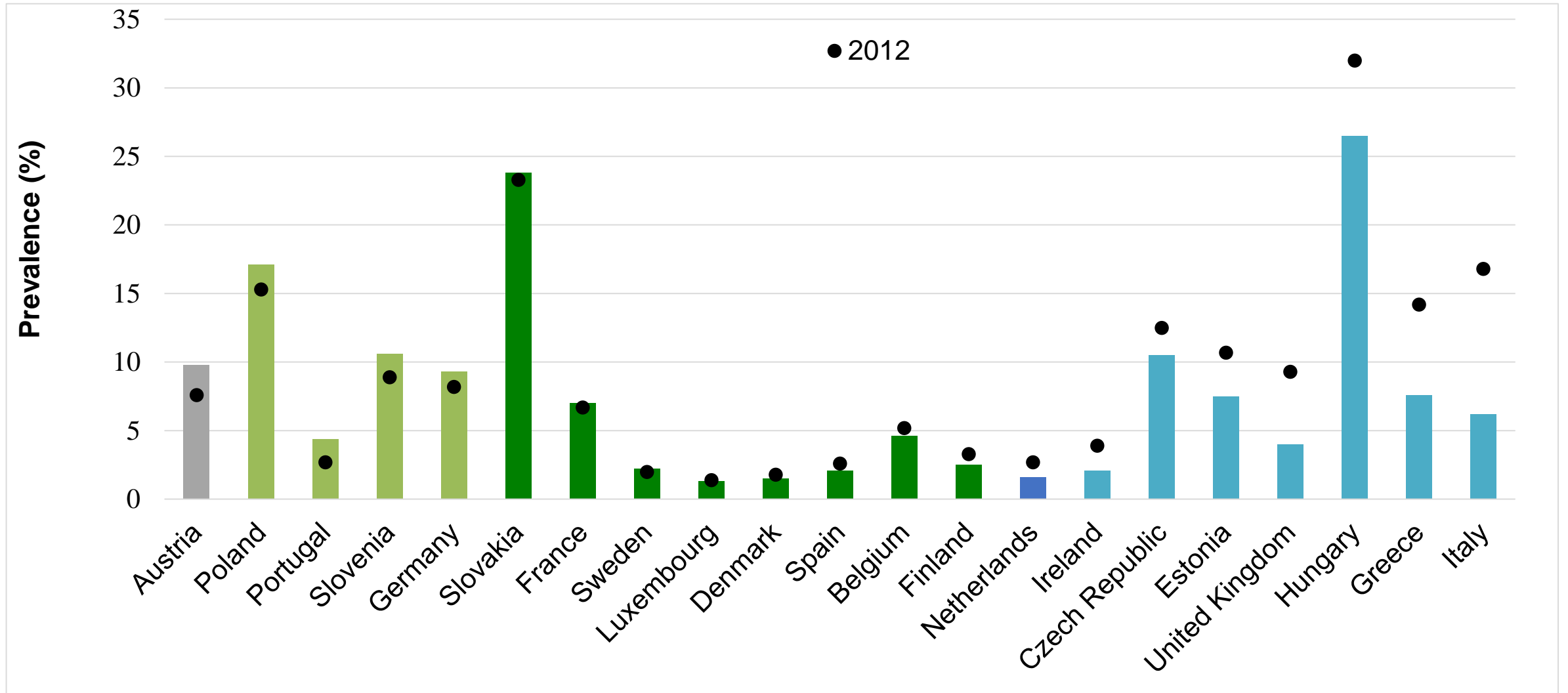
(Loopstra, Reeves et al. *Preventive Medicine.* 2016*)*

Investment in <u>social protection</u> buffers effects of unemployment on food insecurity.

Change in food hardship per 1 percentage point rise in unemployment:
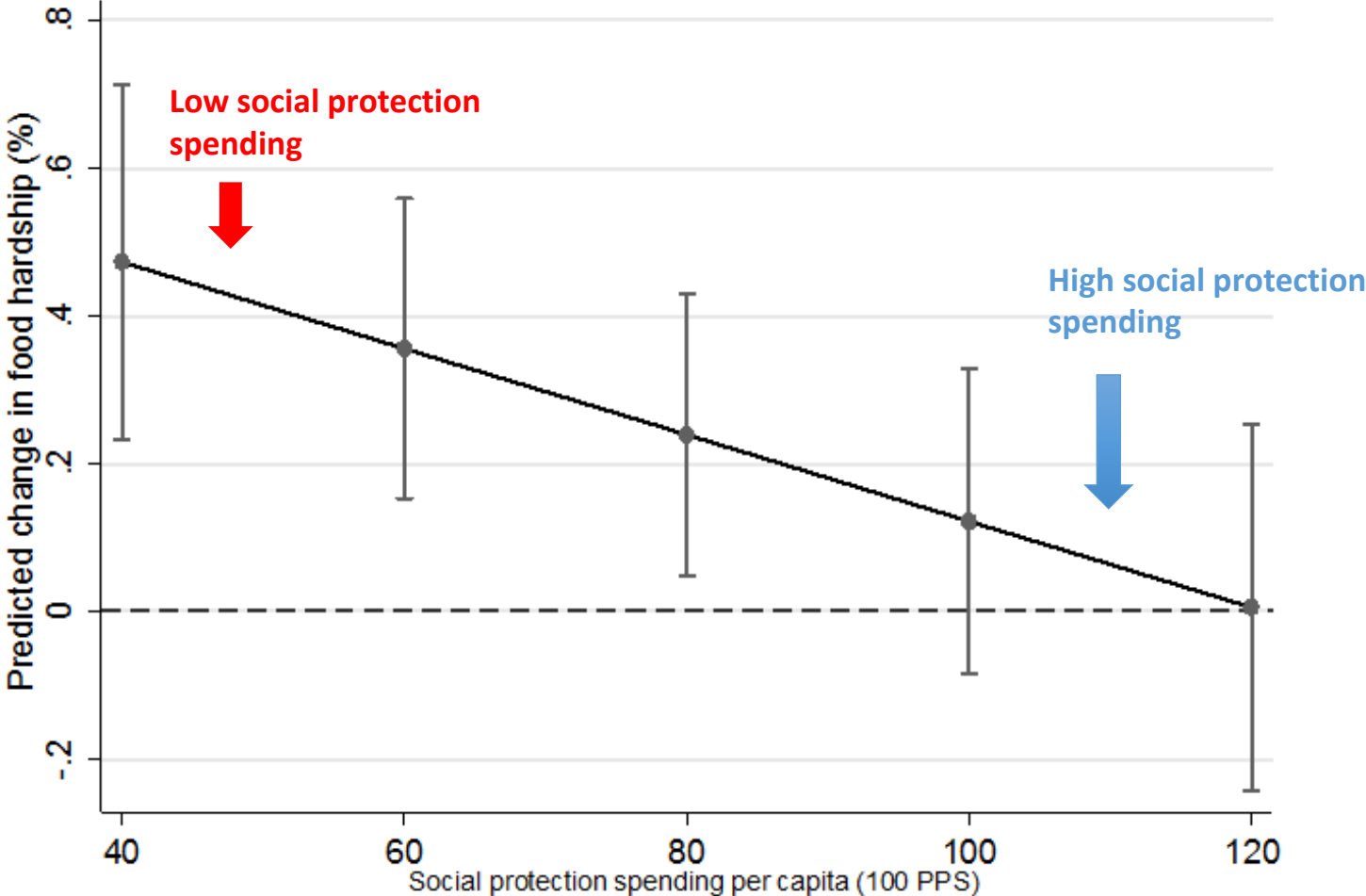
(Loopstra, Reeves et al. *Prev Med.* 2016.)

Investment in social protection also buffers from the effects of falling annual wages.

Change in food hardship per $1000 PPS decrease in annual wages:
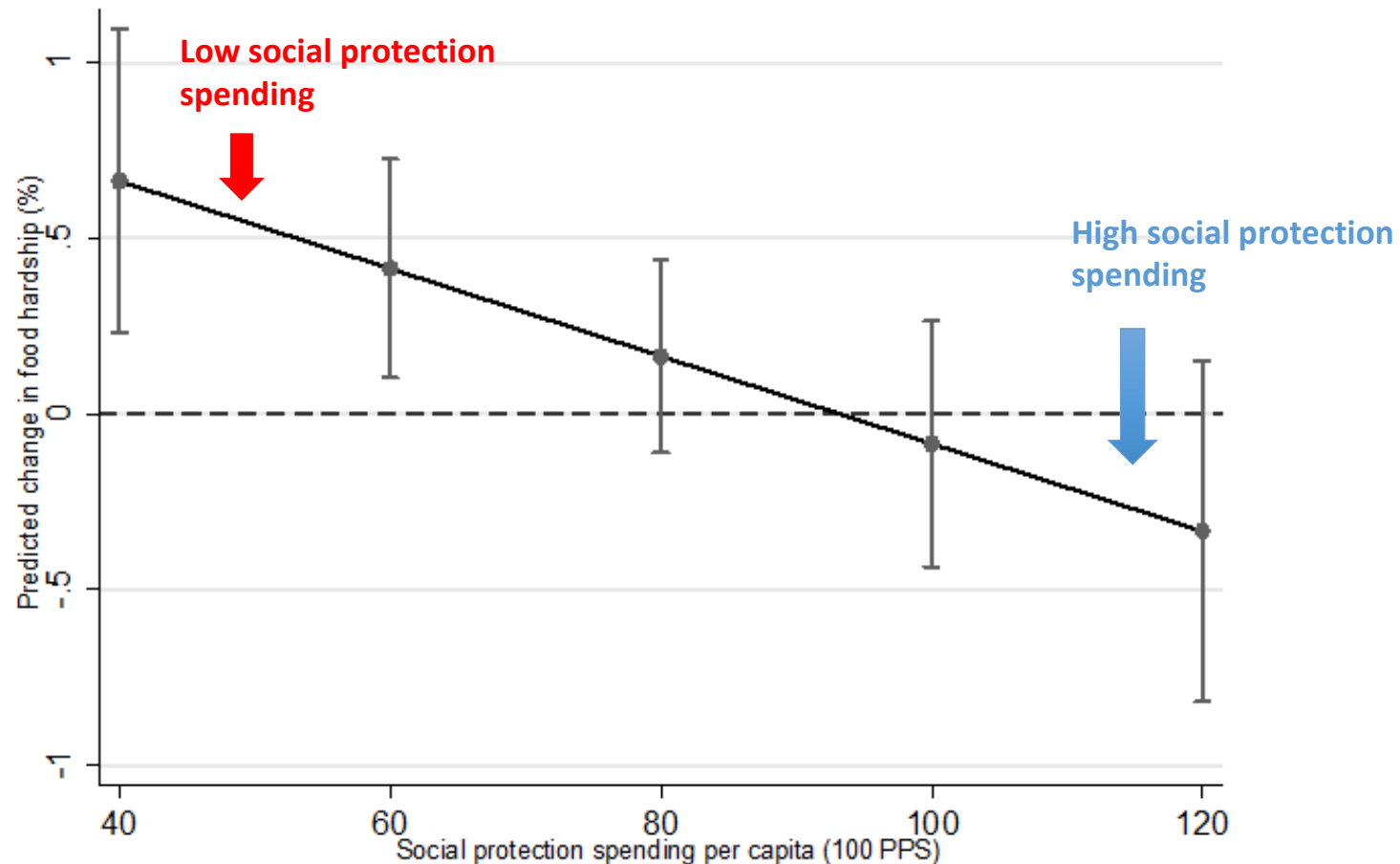
(Loopstra, Reeves et al. *Prev Med.* 2016.)

Household food insecurity: uncertain and insufficient access to food arising from resource constraint*

MILD FOOD INSECURITY	MODERATE FOOD INSECURITY	SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY

worrying about the ability to obtain food

compromising quality and variety of food

reducing quantities, skipping meals

experiencing hunger
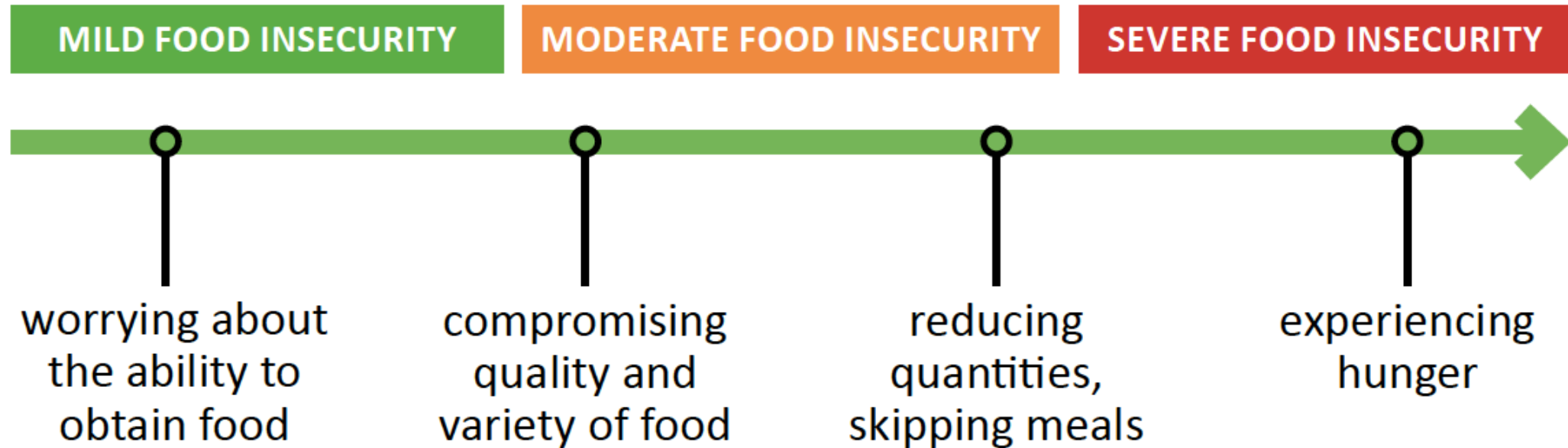
* Operational definition captured by USDA food insecurity measurement tool.

Estimated magnitude of "hidden hunger" in UK

Number fed by foodbanks vs. number of food insecure
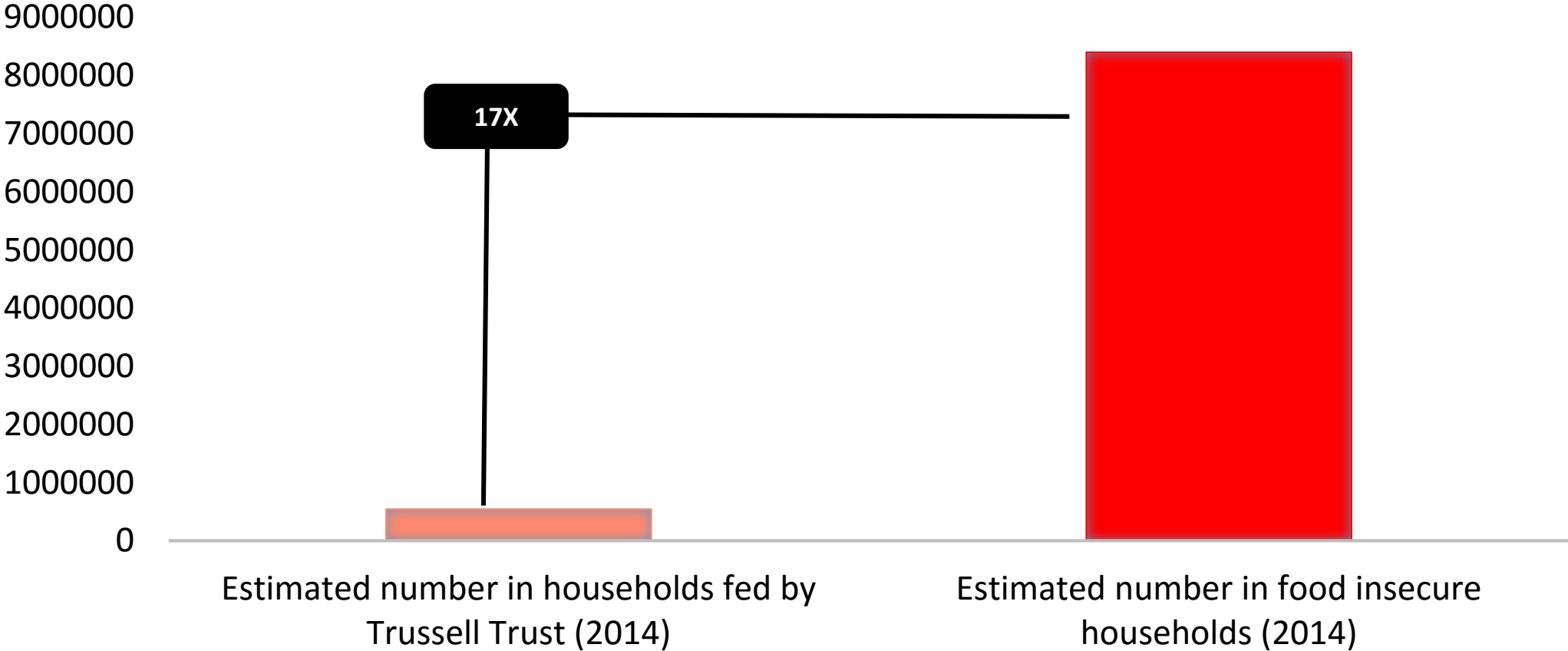
* Food insecurity estimate from Gallup World Poll sample in UK. Validated measure of food insecurity.

Likelihood of using a food bank rises with severity of food insecurity among low-income households in Toronto.

(Loopstra & Tarasuk, *Canadian Public Policy*. 2012; Loopstra & Tarasuk, *Society & Social Policy. 2015.*)

Why do so few food insecure people use food banks?

- Who perceives food banks as an option for help
  - Level of need, real and perceived
    - "I wasn't desperate enough to use a food bank. That would be a last resort."
    - "[Food banks] are for homeless people"

- Inability to use food banks
  - Limited operating hours → difficult for employed households to access
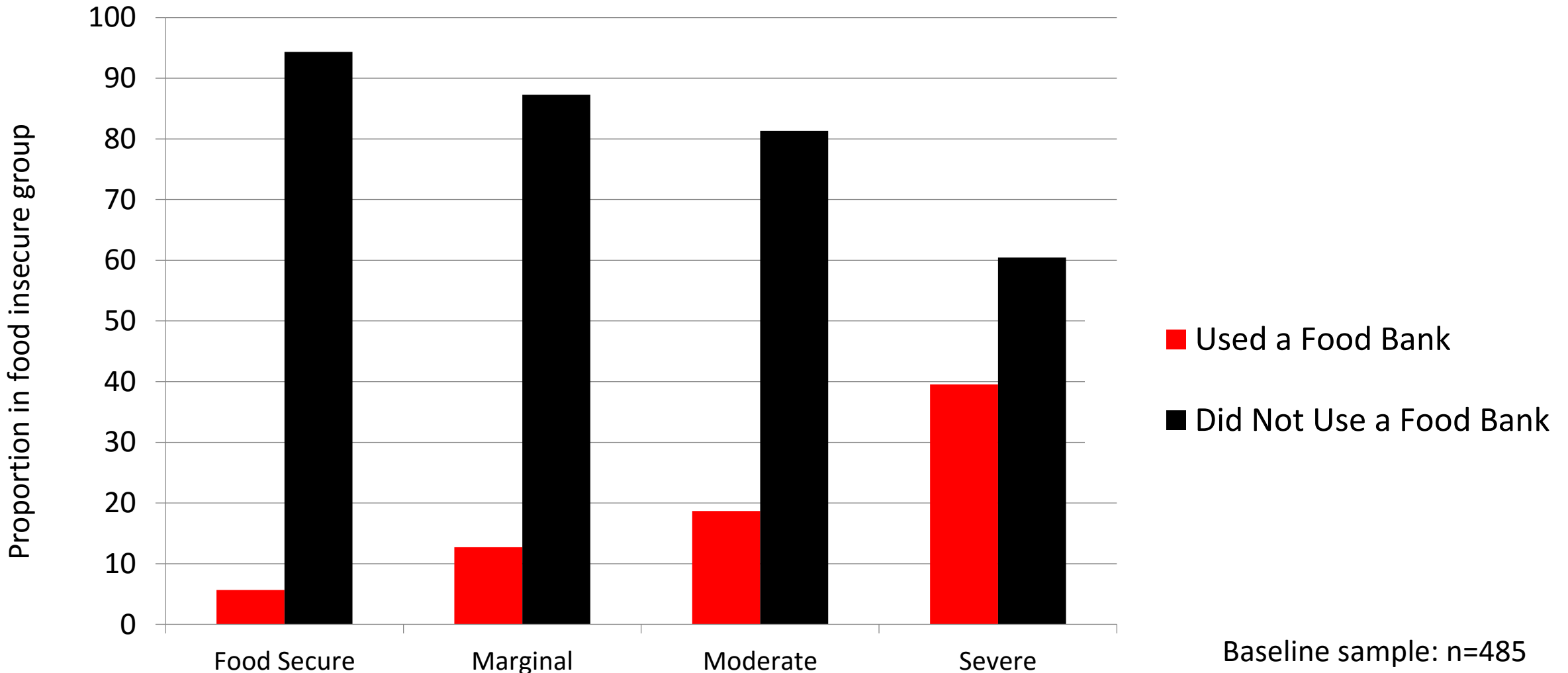 - Food bank closure, unable to reach
  - Turned away because not enough food

- Who food banks are "informally" promoted to
  - Referrals from social workers
  - Eligibility criteria related to income cut-offs, employment
  - No restrictions for individuals on social assistance

(Loopstra & Tarasuk, *Canadian Public Policy.* 2012; Loopstra & Tarasuk, *Society & Social Policy. 2015.*)

Proportion of foodbanks in the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network open on a given day of the week and in the evening on a given day of the week.
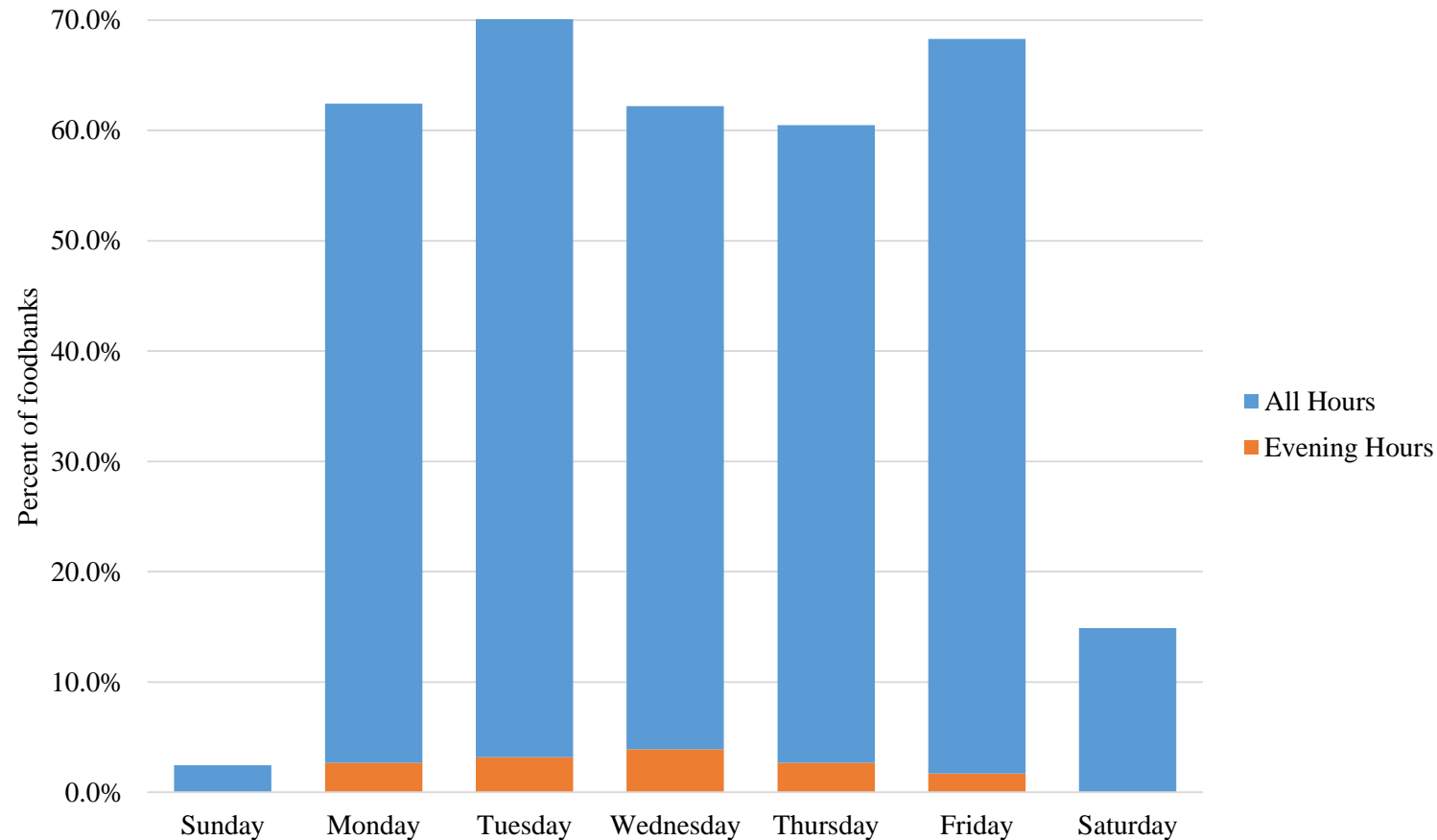
(Loopstra et al. *Forthcoming.*)

Proportion of foodbanks by hours of operation each week.

(Loopstra et al. *Forthcoming.*)
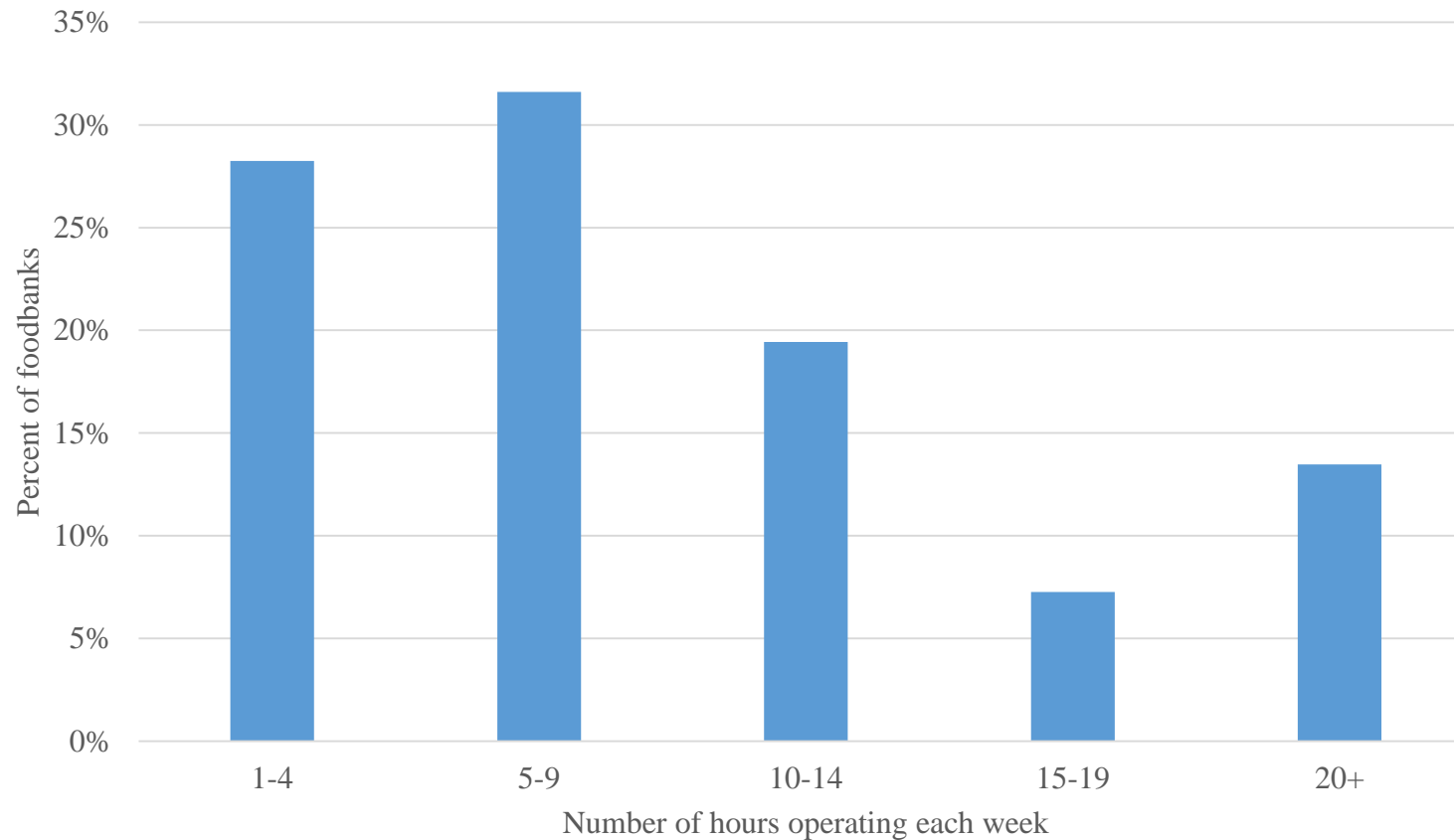
Recommendations: from local to nationwide.

- Understand local actions in context of local needs
    - Local authority monitoring of household food insecurity
    - Evaluate local interventions → food provision *AND* local welfare assistance
        - Appropriateness, effectiveness, reach

- Campaign for upstream actions
    - Social safety net that buffers from economic shocks and that does not cause economic shocks.
    - Living wages AND secure, sufficient income for everyone.

Thank you

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Acknowledgements:

Aaron Reeves, Jasmine Fledderjohan, David Taylor-Robinson, Ben Barr, Martin McKee, David Stuckler

Valerie Tarasuk & PROOF research team

PROOF
Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity

http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/

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Extra slides

Local authority data from 375 Local authorities in England, Scotland, Wales

- Gross Value Added
  - Subregional measure of economic production
- Unemployment
- Annual cut in local authority spending per capita
  - Social care, housing, community etc.
- Annual cut in central welfare benefit spending per capita
  - Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit etc.
- Rate of adverse sanctions applied to Jobseeker's Claimants
- Proportion of local area population identifying as Christian

In the past 12 months, did you/other adults in your household/children:

- Worry that your food would run out before you got money to buy more

- Food bought just didn't last and didn't have money to get more

- Couldn't afford to eat balanced meals

- Skip meals or cut size of meals

- Ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food

- Ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food

- Lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food

- Ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food

Social Protection across Europe

- Social protection benefits are classified according to eight social protection functions (which represent a set of risks or needs):
  - **sickness / healthcare benefits**—including paid sick leave, medical care and the provision of pharmaceutical products;
  - **disability benefits** — including disability pensions and the provision of goods and services (other than medical care) to the disabled;
  - **old age benefits** — including old age pensions and the provision of goods and services (other than medical care) to the elderly;
  - **family / children benefits** — including support (except healthcare) in connection with the costs of pregnancy, childbirth, childbearing and caring for other family members;
  - **unemployment benefits** — including vocational training financed by public agencies;
  - **housing benefits** — including interventions by public authorities to help households meet the cost of housing;
  - **social exclusion benefits** not elsewhere classified — including income support, rehabilitation of alcohol and drug abusers and other miscellaneous benefits (except healthcare).

Profile of food bank users highlight serious vulnerability, but also reflects nature of food bank operations.

Table: Characteristics of food bank users and non-users from study of low income families in Toronto (n=371).

Household characteristics	Did not use food bank (N=287)	Used food bank (N=84)	AOR (95% CI)
Food security status, n (%)			
Food secure	88 (31%)	6 (7%)	1.00
Marginal food insecure	42(15%)	5 (6%)	1.48 (0.3-7.2)
Moderate food insecure	89 (31%)	29 (35%)	3.21 (1.3-8.2)
Severe food insecure	68 (24%)	44 (52%)	**3.75 (1.2-11.9)**
12-month income (mean ± SE)	$28 340 ± 632	$20 843 ± 1181	**1.19 (1.1-1.3)** *per $2000*
Welfare recipient, n (%)			
No	209 (73%)	25 (30%)	1.00
Yes	78 (27%)	59 (70%)	**3.19 (1.5-6.7)**

Rising unemployment and falling wages linked to rising food hardship.

	Percentage point change in food insecurity
Per $100 rise in GDP per capita	0.0098 (0.012)
Per 1 percentage point rise in unemployment	0.42** (0.14)
Per $1000 increase in average annual wages	-0.29* (0.13)
Country-years	166
R^2	0.281

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Notes: All models adjust for a linear time trend and country-specific differences. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.