



Project 1: Ultra-processed foods and health inequalities: a data-driven approach to understanding socioeconomic disparities in diet

Project 2: Poverty and financial wellbeing in the UK: an intersectional approach

Project 3: Low wage work in the education system: food banks and food insecurity



**BPI Seedcorn
Fund Projects
2024-25 Showcase**

26th June, 14:00 – 16:00

Introducing the Bristol Poverty Institute

- The BPI was established in 2017
- Designed to address SDG1: *End poverty in all its forms everywhere*
- Growing, developing and supporting the poverty and poverty-relevant research community at the University of Bristol and beyond
- Translating research into evidence-informed policy and practice
- More information on the **BPI website**.

bristol.ac.uk/poverty-institute



BPI Seedcorn Fund 2024-25

- Fund designed to explore emerging research areas
- Awards of around £3000 - £6000 per project
- All projects must be poverty and social justice relevant
- Projects must be interdisciplinary (across at least two different Schools from any Faculty)
- We funded 3 projects this round
- Not accepting new applications currently unfortunately
- Contact: joe.jezewski@bristol.ac.uk



BPI Seedcorn Fund

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Agenda	
13:45-14:00	<i>Doors open, grab a refreshment (tea, coffee, cake)</i>
14:00-14:15	Welcome and Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Jezewski, Development Associate, Bristol Poverty Institute
14:15-14:35	Presentation (15 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Alisha Suhag - 'Ultra-Processed Foods and Health Inequalities: A data-driven approach to understanding socioeconomic disparities in diet' (Co-Investigator: Professor Jeff Brunstrom, Co-Investigator: Dr Anya Skatova) • Q&A 5 mins
14:35-14:55	Presentation (15 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Marii Paskov - 'Poverty and financial wellbeing in the UK: an intersectional approach' (Co-Investigator: Mrs Katie Cross, Co-Investigator: Mr Jamie Evans) • Q&A 5 mins
14:55-15:15	Presentation (15 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr William Baker - 'Low wage work in the education system: food banks and food insecurity' (Co-Investigator: Dr Sarah McLaughlin) • Q&A 5 mins
15:15-15:30	General Q&A followed by closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For any general Seedcorn Fund questions or further project questions
15:30-16:00	Space available until 16:00 for mingling/discussion over a coffee/cake



Low wage work in the education system: food banks in schools and food insecurity

Dr Will Baker, Associate Professor of Sociology and Education.
School of Education, University of Bristol

Will.baker@Bristol.ac.uk

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, FOCUS AND APPROACH?

I'm investigating the rise of charitable food aid in school and *food banks* in schools and consider its broader educational, social and political significance. Drawing together data from multiple projects over the last 4-5 years:

Gathering rich qualitative data from those involved in organising, running, using and providing food aid in schools/educational settings

1. School staff who use food banks or access food support (UNISON)
2. In-depth semi-structured interviews with teachers and relevant school staff who organise food support/aid/charity (n=50)
3. Quantitative data on the number and distribution of food banks in schools in England
4. Parents who use food banks or access food support
5. Builds on earlier work on Food Clubs in Children's Centres

Significant focus on Bristol but also gathering data in other parts of the country (e.g. London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leicester). Typically, schools that serve working class and low-income families. Mixture of primary and secondary schools. Different perspectives; shared experiences.

CHILD FOOD INSECURITY & FOOD AID IN SCHOOLS

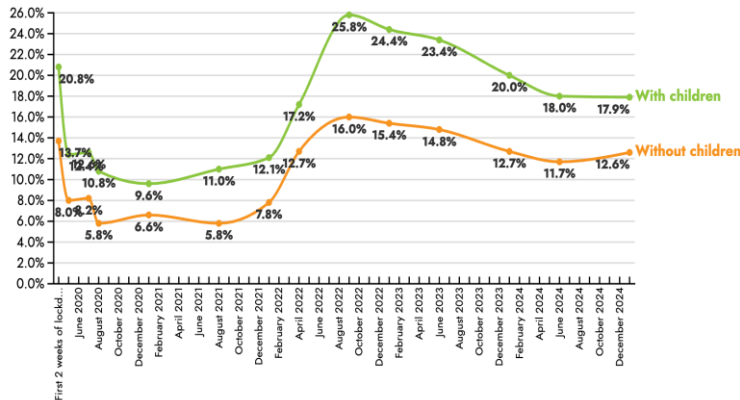
- 1) 3+ million children living in food insecure* households in the UK.
- 2) 'Food insecurity is toxic for our children and a threat to the future of our next generation' (Viner 2021).

3) If 20% of schools in England have a food bank that's over 4000 schools.

4) That means **there are now more foodbanks *inside* of schools than *outside* of schools.**

17.9% of households with children reported experiencing food insecurity compared with 12.6% of households without children

Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity*:



Does your school currently run a food bank?

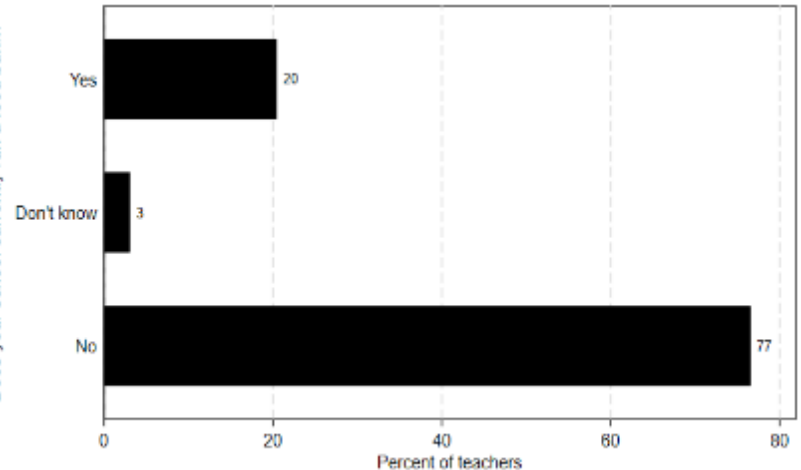
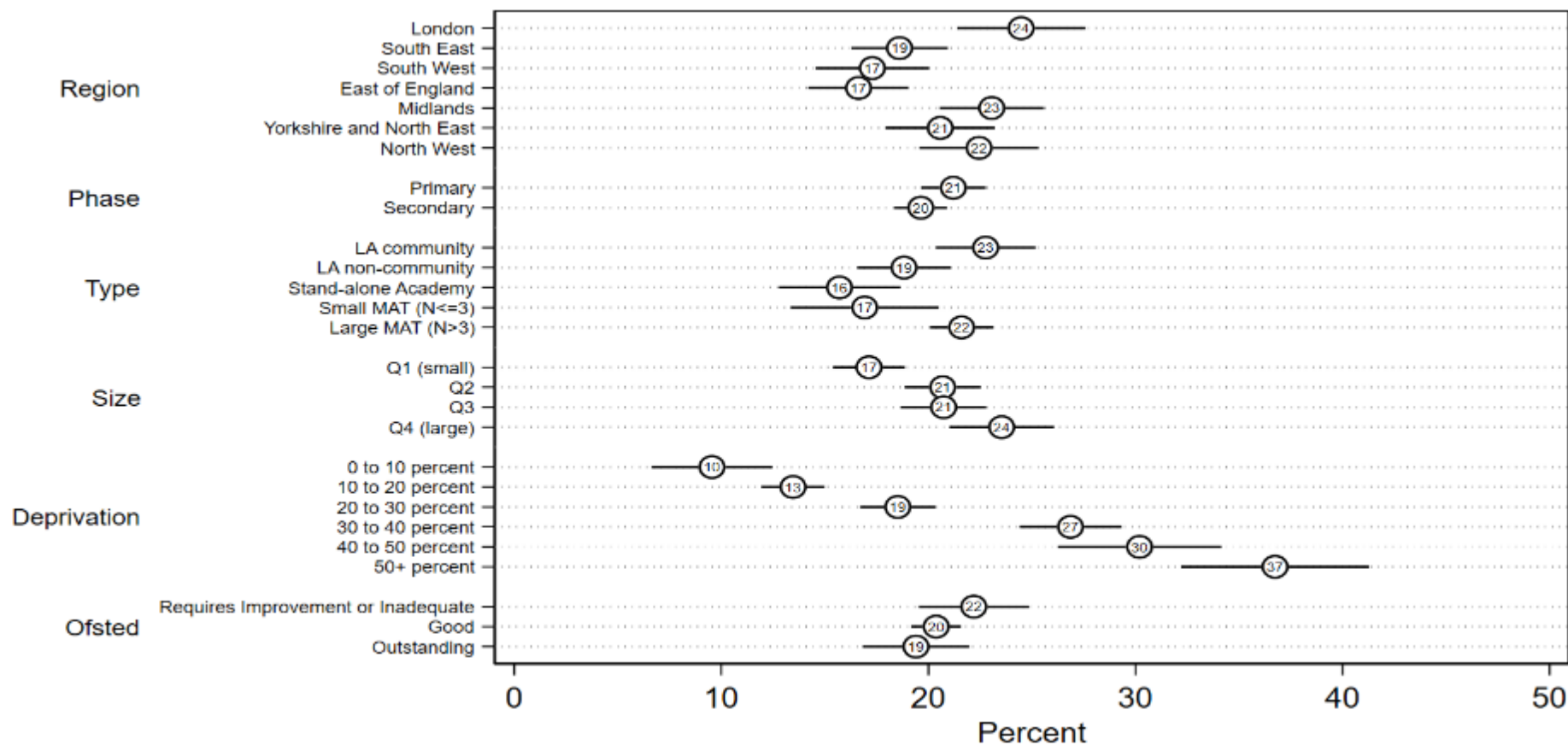


FIGURE 2. PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS WHO SAY THEIR SCHOOL RUNS A FOOD BANK WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL, BY SCHOOL CHARACTERISTIC.



LOW WAGE WORK IN EDUCATION

Teaching assistants

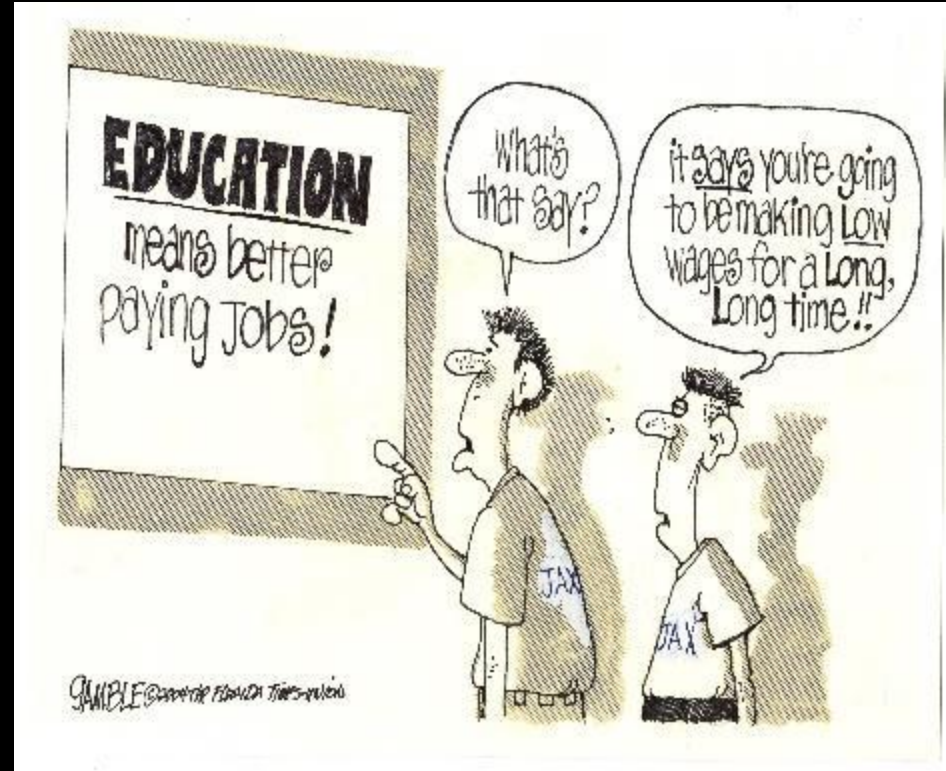
Family support workers

Reception/admin staff

Cooks, cleaners etc

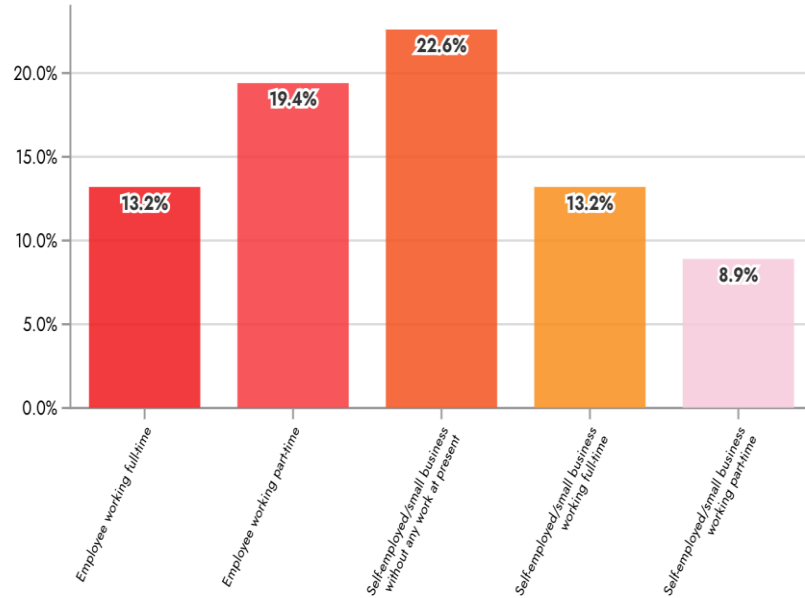
There are almost 1 million education staff,
only 50% are teachers. Highly gender

Segregated workforce.



14.5% of workers in some kind of employment reported experiencing food insecurity

Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity* by employment type:

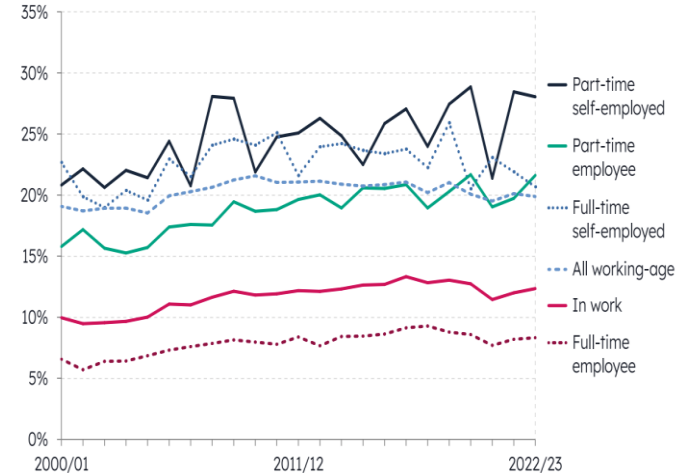


* 1-month recall period



Figure 27: The in-work poverty rate has climbed by 2 percentage points since 2000/01, with particularly large increases in poverty rates for those working part-time

Poverty rate, working-age adults by employment types



Source: Households Below Average Income, 2022/23, DWP

Almost 7 in 10 (68%) working-age adults in poverty are in a household where at least one adult is in work;



FOCUS OF THIS STRAND

1. Interviewing 20+ people who are UNISON members
2. Responded to survey indicating that a) their school had a food bank and b) they or staff they know used it.
3. Data collection is on-going.

KEY THEMES

1. From COVID-19 to the cost-of-living crisis.
2. When work now longer pays (enough).
In-work poverty and insecure jobs



KEY THEMES

1. Low pay (see crisis in TA recruitment)
2. Term time only work
3. Often last to be recruited and first to be let go.
4. Universal Credit and 2 Child Benefit Cap creating challenges



THANKS AND PLEASE GET IN TOUCH!

- Baker, W., Knight, K., and Leckie, G. (2024). Feeding Hungry Families: Food banks in schools in England. Bristol Working Papers in Education DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10879984
- Baker, W. (2023). Schools and food charity in England. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(6), p. 1387-1402.
- Baker, W. (2024). 'They don't have enough' - schools in England are running food banks for families. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/they-dont-have-enough-schools-in-england-are-running-food-banks-for-families-218752>

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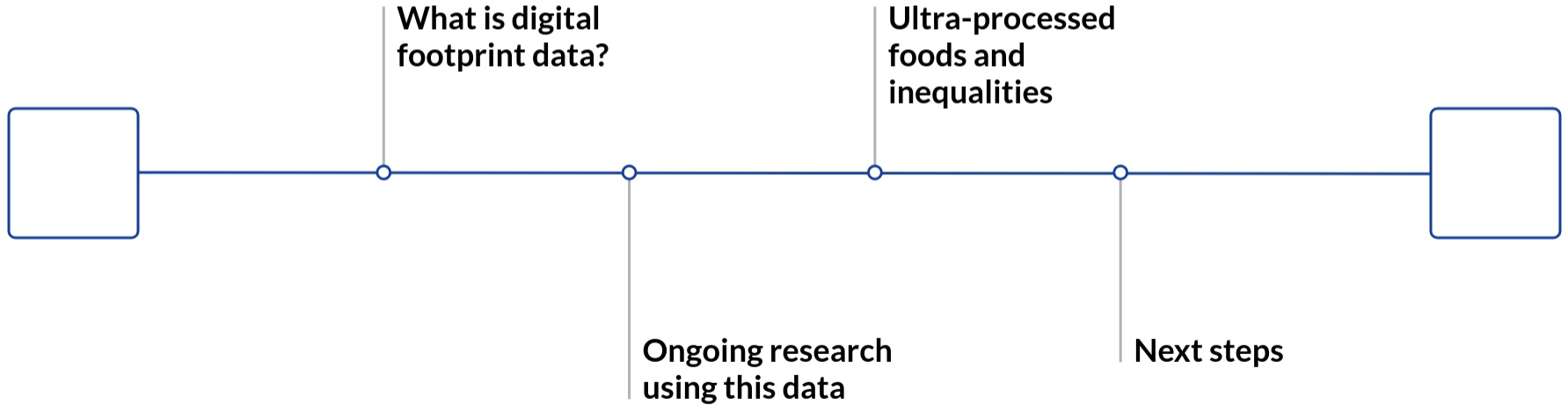
Ultra-Processed Foods and Health Inequalities: A data-driven approach to understanding socioeconomic disparities in diet

Dr Anya Skatova,
Associate Professor,
Digital Footprints Lab
Bristol Medical School

Dr Alisha Suhag
Senior Research Associate
Digital Footprints Lab
Bristol Medical School

Professor Jeff Brunstrom,
Nutrition and Behaviour Unit
School of Psychological Science

Overview





Novel digital footprint data

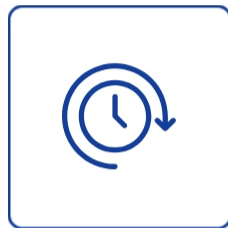


Advantages



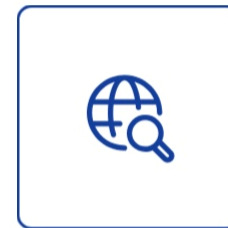
Scale

Millions of individuals, billions of entries



Dynamic

Multiple measures per person at close to continuous time scales; highly granular



Real-world behaviours

Not self-reported or lab-based



Low participant burden

Data collection requires little to no effort from participants



Representative

Close to representative samples at sufficient scale

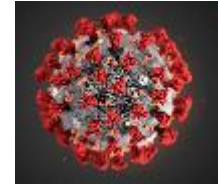


Impact

Can change the way policy effectiveness is evaluated

Our Projects

- Reproductive health
 - Diet
 - Chronic pain
 - Alcohol consumption
- Social inequalities
 - Data linkage
 - Public acceptability
 - COVID and respiratory illness



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Ultra-Processed Foods and Health Inequalities

- **Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)**

are "industrially formulated products made primarily from substances extracted or derived from foods, often combined with additives like flavour enhancers, emulsifiers, and colorants."

- **Health implications**

High UPF intake associated with increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, depression, cardiovascular diseases, and all-cause mortality (up to 31% higher among top consumers).

- **Socioeconomic patterns**

UPF consumption is disproportionately high among low-income and less-educated populations.



Research Objectives



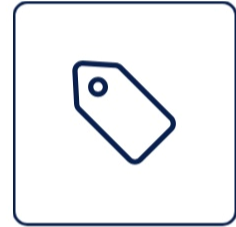
Socioeconomic Patterns

Assess how UPF purchases vary by income, education, employment, and food insecurity



Health Associations

Assess how the ratio of UPFs purchased (as proxy for dietary quality) links to BMI, chronic conditions, digestive symptoms, and health-related quality of life



Label Use & Moderation

Explore how nutrition label awareness and use influence UPF purchases across SES

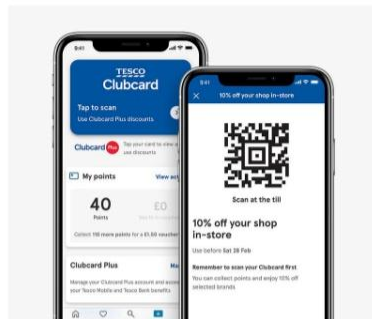
Online Survey

Sample

n= 700

English-speaking UK residents

Tesco Clubcard for min. 1 year



Tesco clubcard data

Purchase data

- Item name, brand and weight
- Transaction timing and date
- Basket-level details (total spend, online vs offline purchase, store details)



Self-report questionnaire

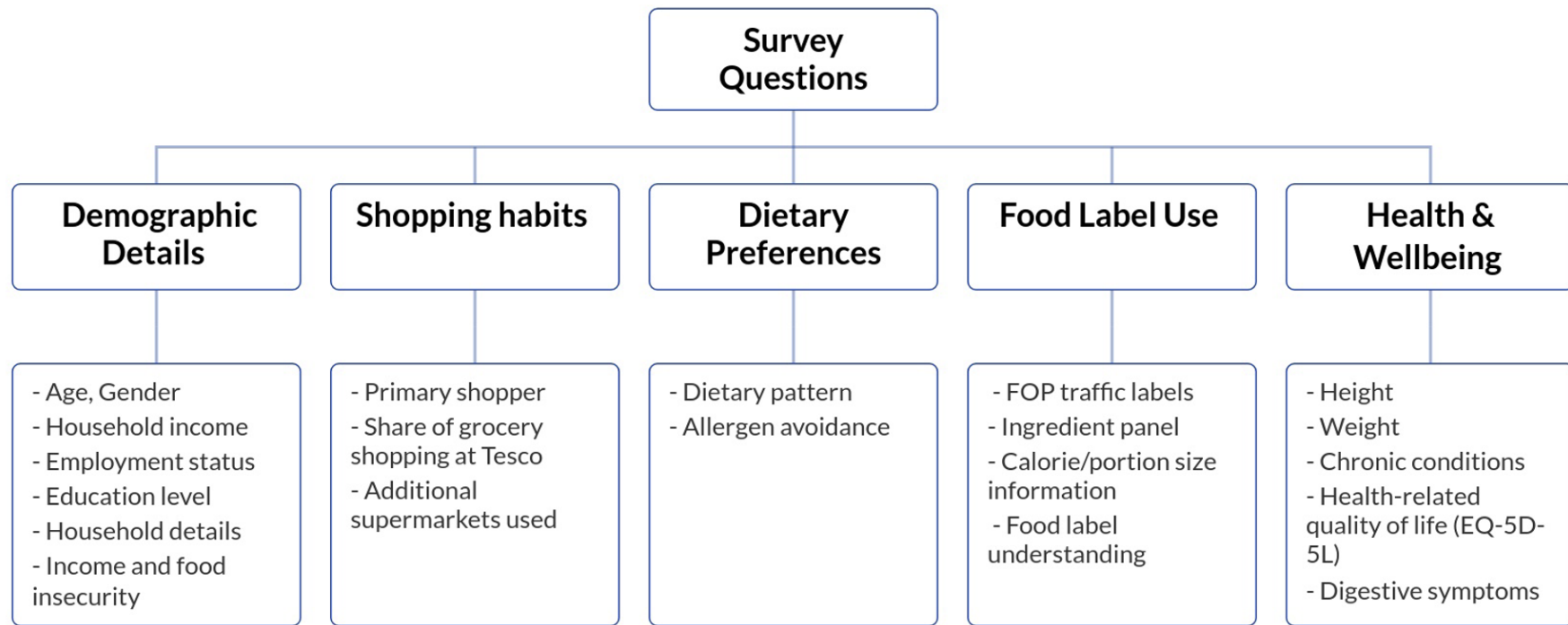
Sociodemographic details

Shopping habits

Dietary preferences

Food label use

Health and wellbeing



Project Pipeline

Platform & Panel Coordination

Select survey platform

Recruitment panels

Negotiation and data agreements

Survey design

Survey design

Ethics approval

Survey roll-out

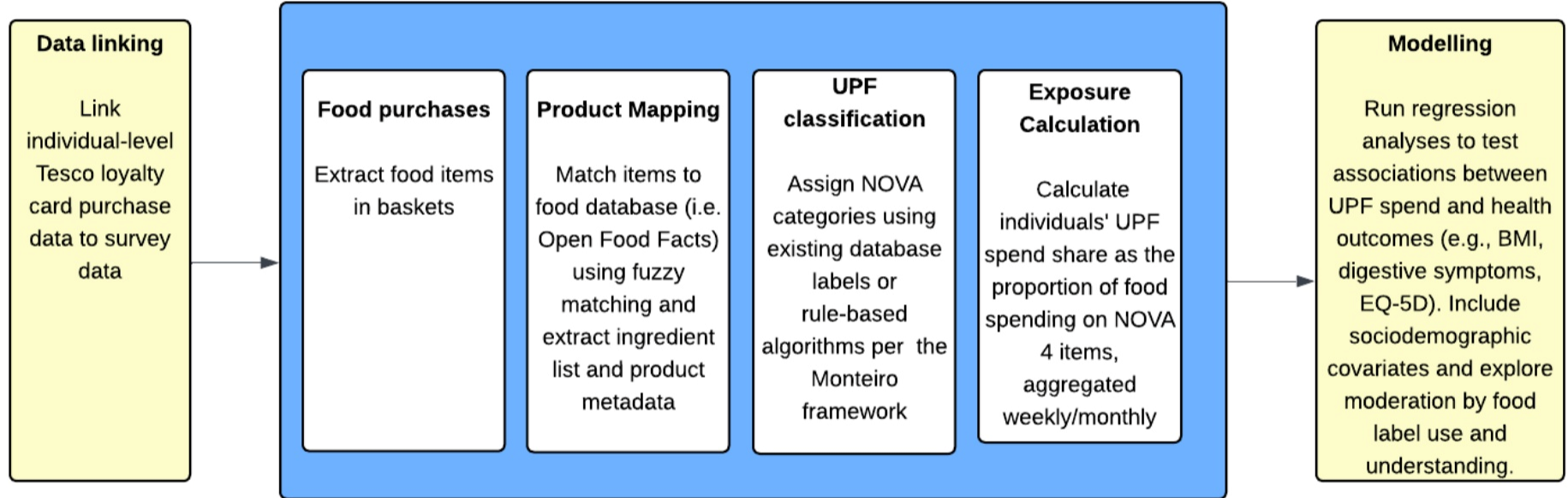
Data processing

Data anonymisation

Pre-processing

Analysis

Analysis workflow



Next steps

Complete analysis and disseminate findings

Diversify the sample and expand the database

Refine linkage methodology for scalability

Develop proposals for longitudinal studies informed by initial findings

POVERTY AND FINANCIAL WELLBEING IN THE UK

Marii Paskov, Katie Cross, Jamie Evans

School for Policy Studies & School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol

BPI Seedcorn Fund Projects Showcase 2025

bristol.ac.uk



Motivation

- **Poverty is a persistent challenge** in the UK with around 20% living in relative income poverty (DWP, 2024)
- **Poverty has severe consequences** on individuals and families, including heightened financial stress, health problems, and stigma (Thomson, Kopasker, Leyland, Pearce, & Katikireddi, 2023; Walker, 2014)
- However, **populations with similar exposure to poverty can demonstrate varying outcomes** (Bradshaw and Finch, 2003; Evans et al., 2025; Whynes, 2009)

Study Focus:

Does financial wellbeing vary among individuals living in poverty and if so, why?

What is financial wellbeing?

- No single definition, but broadly understood as: a) **Feeling secure and in control of your finances**, b) **Meeting current needs and planning for the future**, c) **Having financial freedom to enjoy life**
- Financial Conduct Authority (FCA, 2020) definition: *“A state of being where one can meet financial obligations, absorb shocks, feel secure, and make choices that allow enjoyment of life.”*
- Includes **objective dimensions** and **subjective dimensions**
- Conceptual Continuum: from chronic **financial stress** → to high **financial wellbeing**

Why might financial wellbeing vary among the poor?

- **Intersectional inequalities:** having multiple vulnerabilities (e.g. being both disabled and female, or disabled and a single parent) creates distinct patterns of disadvantage (Bedük, 2020)
- **Access to support systems:** formal (e.g., advice services) and informal (e.g., family) support systems (Simcock et al., 2023; Reeves, 2016)
- **Variation in financial literacy:** skills to manage finances (Reaños et al., 2024; Askar et al., 2020)

Research questions

1. How much variation exists in financial wellbeing among the poor?
2. How do other dimensions of inequality – gender, age, and ethnic-racial background, health – intersect with poverty to shape experiences of financial wellbeing?
3. What explains the varying financial wellbeing experiences among the poor?

Data

- Data on financial wellbeing is limited
- We combine evidence from three unique data sources:
 1. **The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) Financial Wellbeing Survey (2021) (sample size – 10,306)**
 2. The abrdn Financial Fairness Survey (Nov 2023, May 2024, Oct 2024) (sample size – 16,847),
 3. The Financial Conduct Authority's Financial Lives Survey (2022) (sample size – 19,145)
- Selected MaPS Sample: working-age population (N=8,321)

Measuring financial wellbeing

Objective dimensions

- Could pay unexpected bill of £300 from spare money
- Struggling or falling behind on credit commitments & bills
- Use credit for everyday expenses or bills
- Able to last 3 months or more without borrowing if lost income
- Save every month or most months
- Keeping up with bills/credit commitments is a burden
- Missed/behind 3 or more payments in last 6 months

Subjective dimensions

- Satisfaction with financial circumstances
- Agree that thinking about my financial situation makes me anxious
- Confident managing money

Measuring poverty

- MaPS (2021) survey item on income: *Which band from the grid below does your household's total gross income from all sources fall into?*

	Per Week	Per Month	Per Year
1. A	Up to £86	Up to £374	Under £4,500
2. B	£87 - £124	£375 - £541	£4,500 - £6,499
3. C	£125 - £143	£542 - £624	£6,500 - £7,499
4. D	£144 - £182	£625 - £791	£7,500 - £9,499
5. E	£183 - £220	£792 - £957	£9,500 - £11,499
6. F	£221 - £259	£958 - £1,124	£11,500 - £13,499
7. G	£260 - £297	£1,125 - £1,291	£13,500 - £15,499
8. H	£298 - £336	£1,292 - £1,457	£15,500 - £17,499
9. I	£337 - £384	£1,458 - £1,666	£17,500 - £19,999
10. J	£385 - £480	£1,667 - £2,082	£20,000 - £24,999
11. K	£481 - £576	£2,083 - £2,499	£25,000 - £29,999
12. L	£577 - £672	£2,500 - £2,916	£30,000 - £34,999
13. M	£673 - £768	£2,917 - £3,332	£35,000 - £39,999
14. N	£769 - £961	£3,333 - £4,166	£40,000 - £49,999
15. O	£962 - £1,441	£4,167 - £6,249	£50,000 - £74,999
16. P	£1,442 - £1,922	£6,250 - £8,332	£75,000 - £99,999
17. Q	£1,923+	£8,333+	£100,000+

18. Don't know

19. Prefer not to say

Poverty defined as **bottom fifth (quintile one)** OR **bottom tenth (decile one)** of equivalised household incomes

Results

Research questions

- 1. How much variation exists in financial wellbeing among the poor?**
2. How do other dimensions of inequality – gender, age, and ethnic-racial background, health – intersect with poverty to shape experiences of financial wellbeing?
3. What explains the varying financial wellbeing experiences among the poor?

Income and financial wellbeing

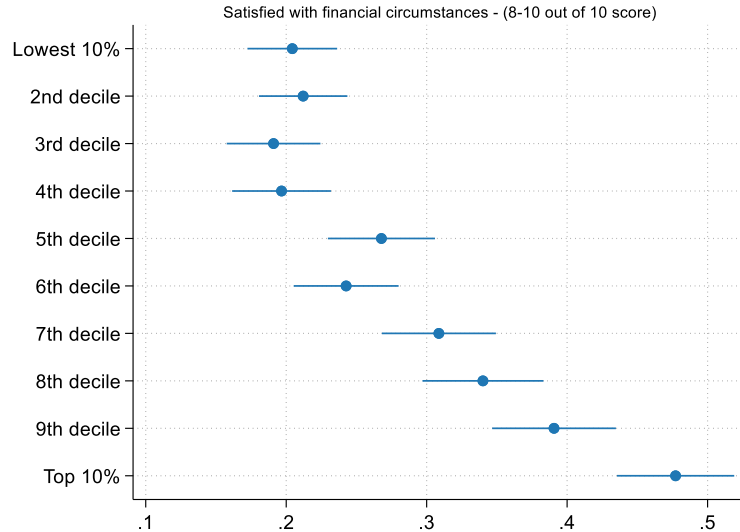


Figure 1. Income decile and FWB, MaPS (2021) data

Income and financial wellbeing

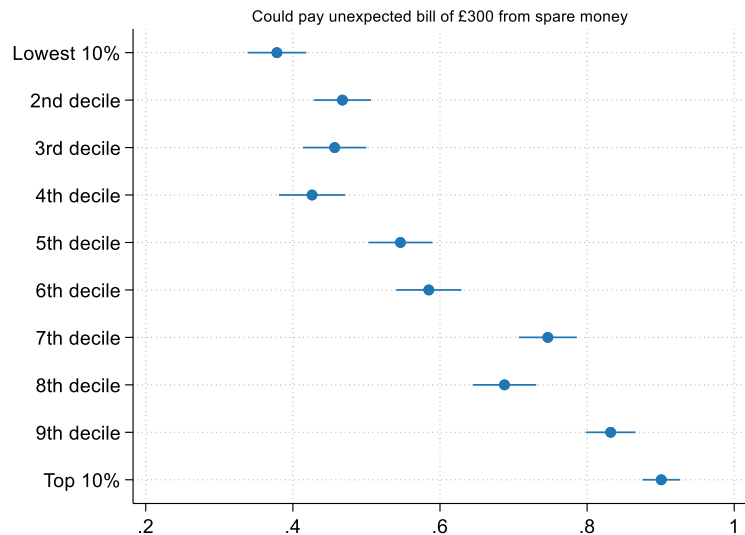
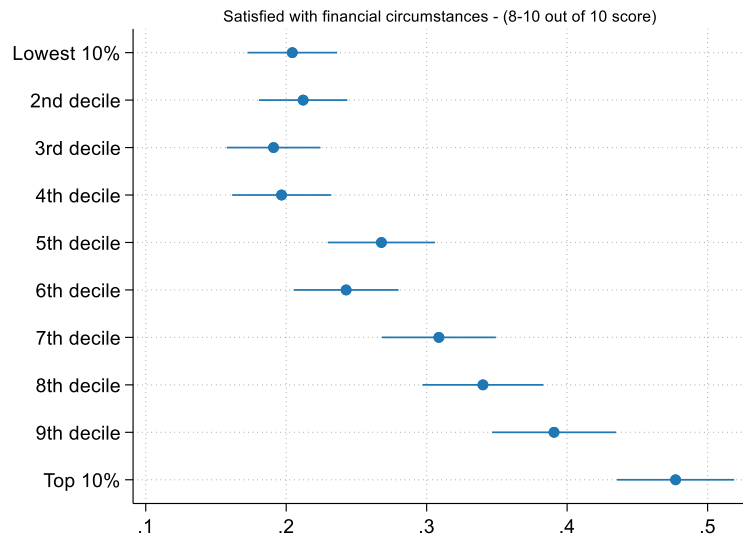


Figure 1. Income decile and FWB, MaPS (2021) data

Varying financial wellbeing among the lowest income group

Financial Wellbeing in Income Decile 1

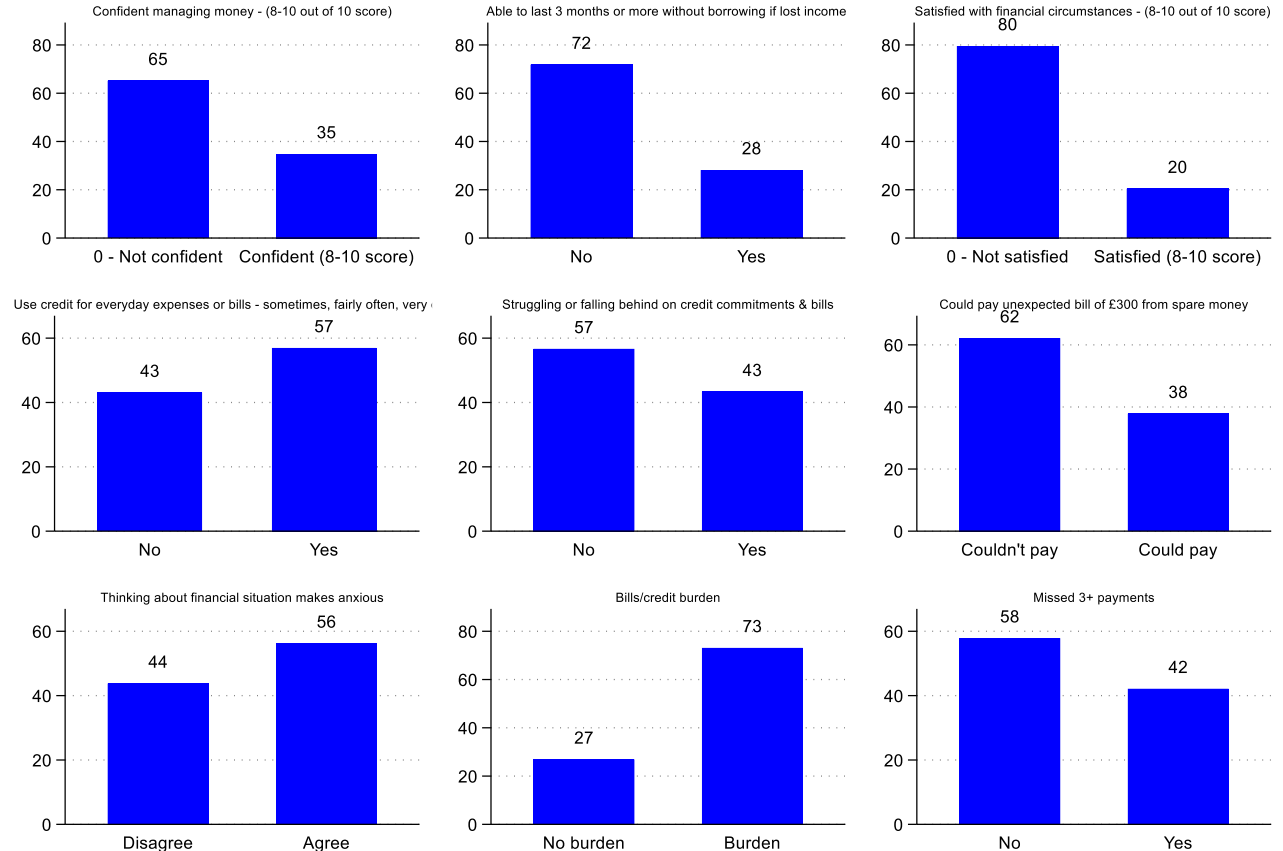


Figure 2. FWB among the poor (decile 1), MaPS (2021) data

Extent of variation in financial satisfaction across income deciles

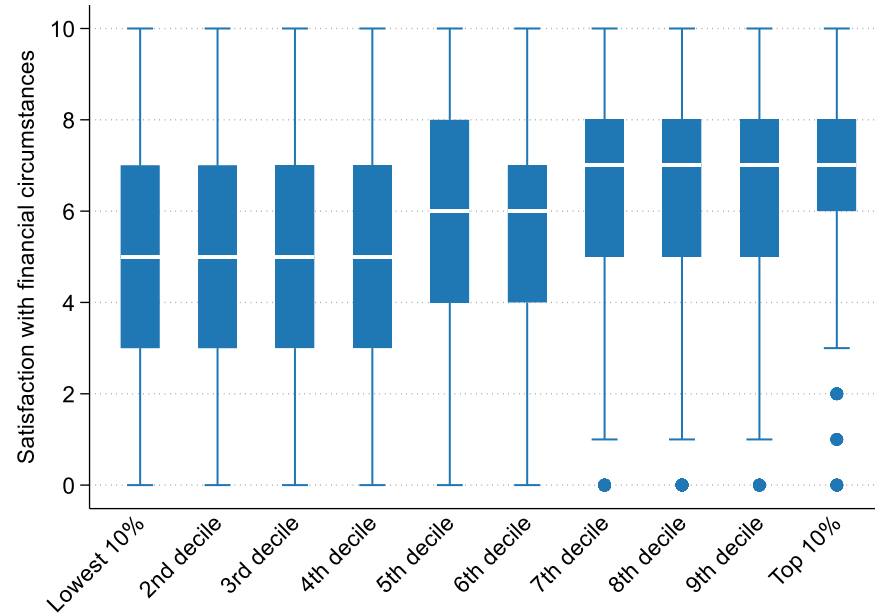


Figure 3. Income decile and variation in satisfaction with financial circumstances, MaPS (2021) data

Research questions

1. How much variation exists in financial wellbeing among the poor?
- 2. How do other dimensions of inequality – gender, age, and ethnic-racial background, health – intersect with poverty to shape experiences of financial wellbeing?**
3. What explains the varying financial wellbeing experiences among the poor?

Intersectional inequalities and FWB among the poor: the role of disability and gender

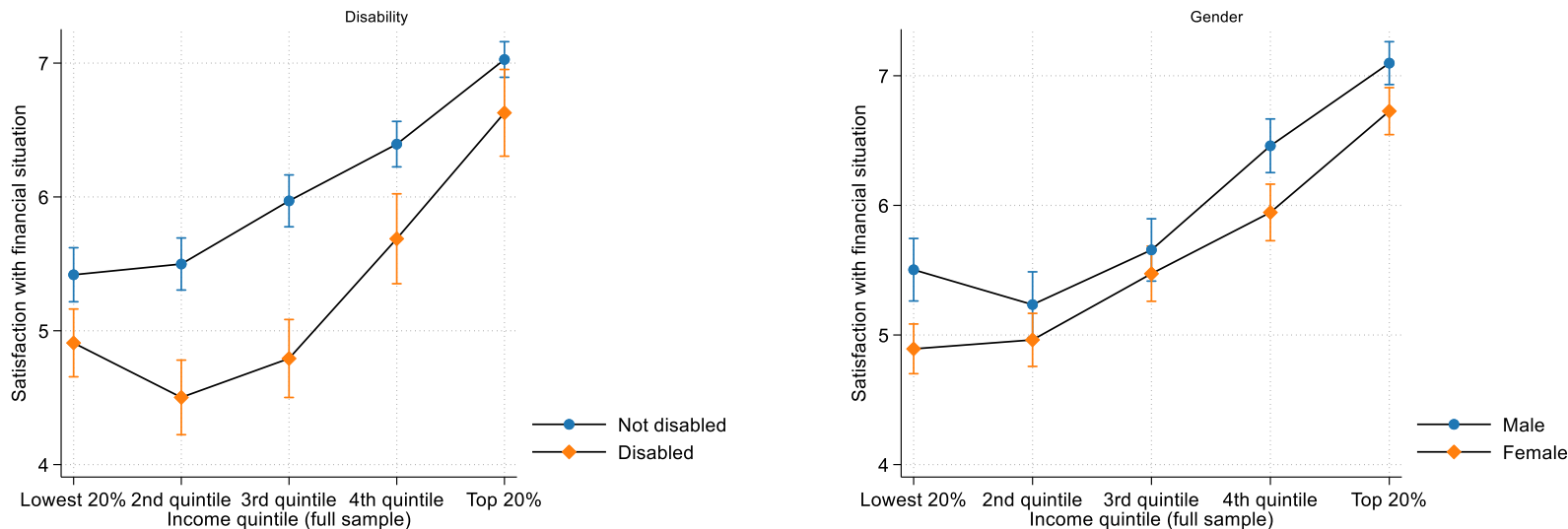


Figure 4. Income quintile and variation in satisfaction with financial circumstances, by disability and gender, MaPS (2021) data

Relative importance of factors influencing financial satisfaction among the poor (quintile 1)



Figure 5. OLS regression of determinants of satisfaction with financial circumstances, MaPS (2021) data

Next steps

- Answer RQ3: **What explains the varying financial wellbeing experiences** among the poor?
- **Replicate analysis** with the abrdn Financial Fairness Survey and the Financial Conduct Authority's Financial Lives Survey (including bigger samples)
- Create an **overall wellbeing score** for each dataset

Appendix

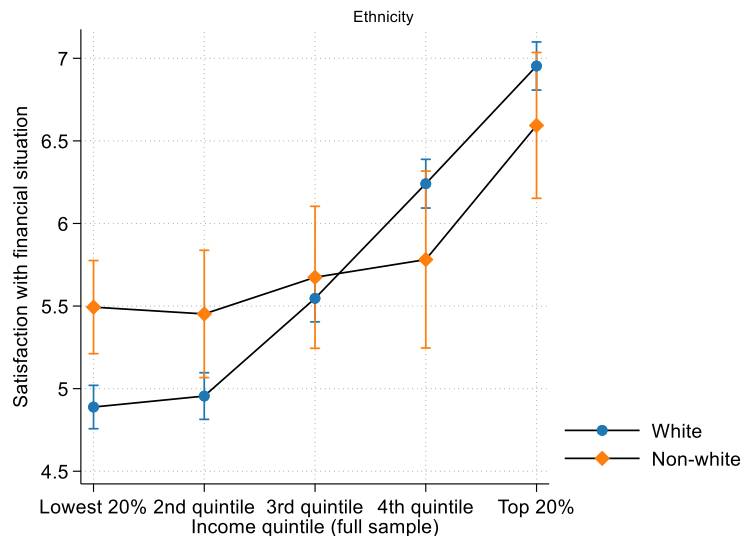
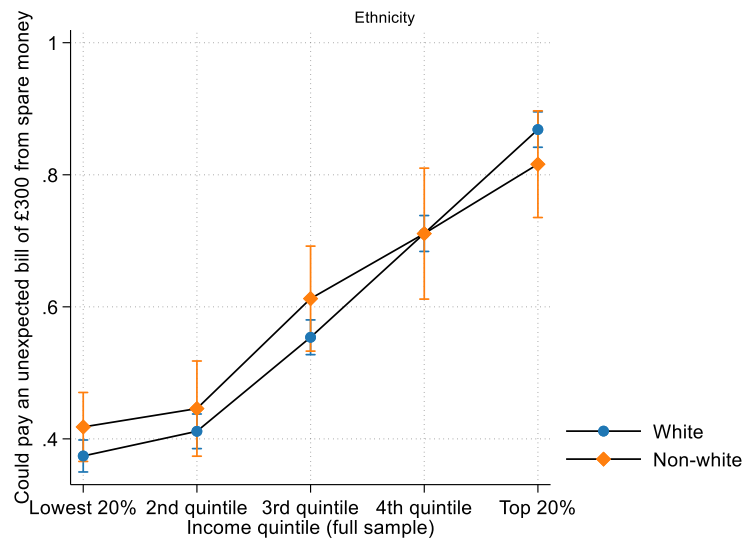
Poverty and financial wellbeing as related but distinct constructs

- Conceptually, poverty and financial wellbeing (FWB) are related, capturing ability to meet needs and live up to societal standards (e.g., Townsend, 1979)
- But FWB is a broader concept, capturing ***financial security, control, freedom***
- Households in income poverty (e.g., below 60% of median household income) could experience varying levels of FWB

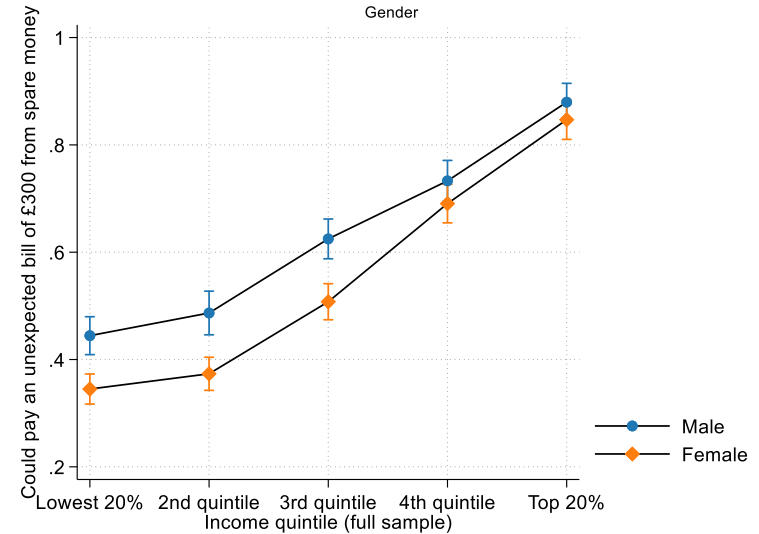
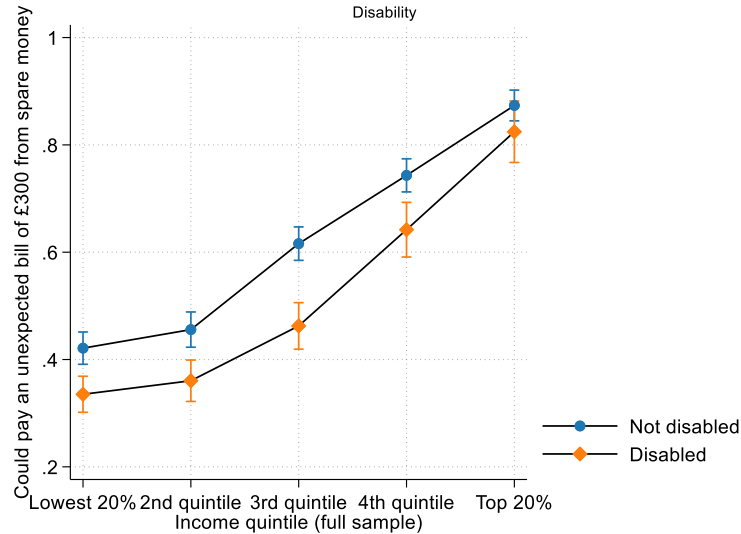
Other variables

- **Intersectional inequality variables:** gender, age, race/ethnicity, health
- **Support system variables:** financial literacy, reliance on formal or informal support
- **Controls:** geographic region, household structure, work/economic activity status

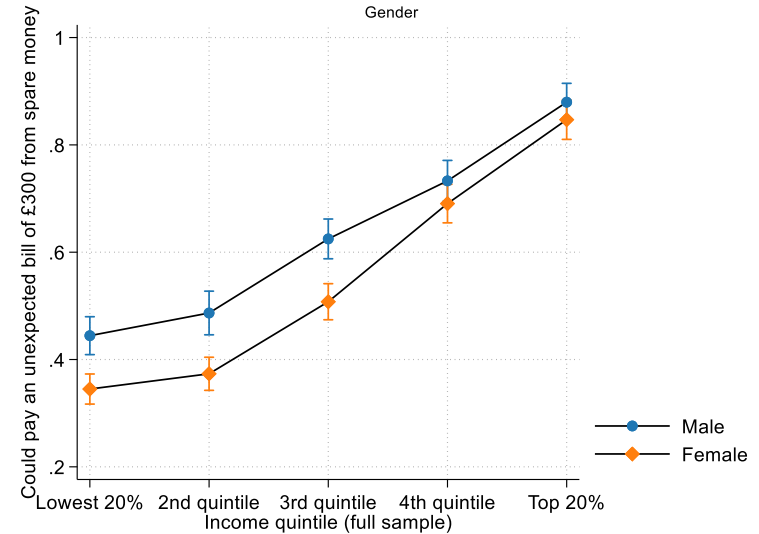
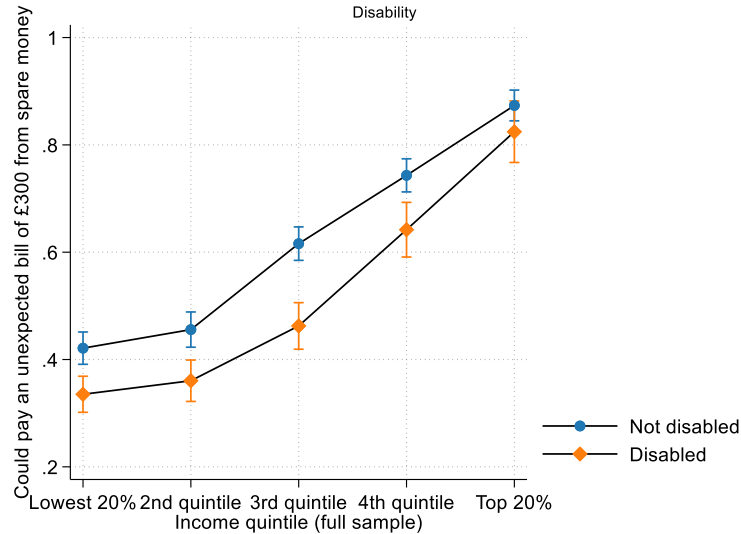
Race/ethnicity and FWB (objective vs subjective indicators)



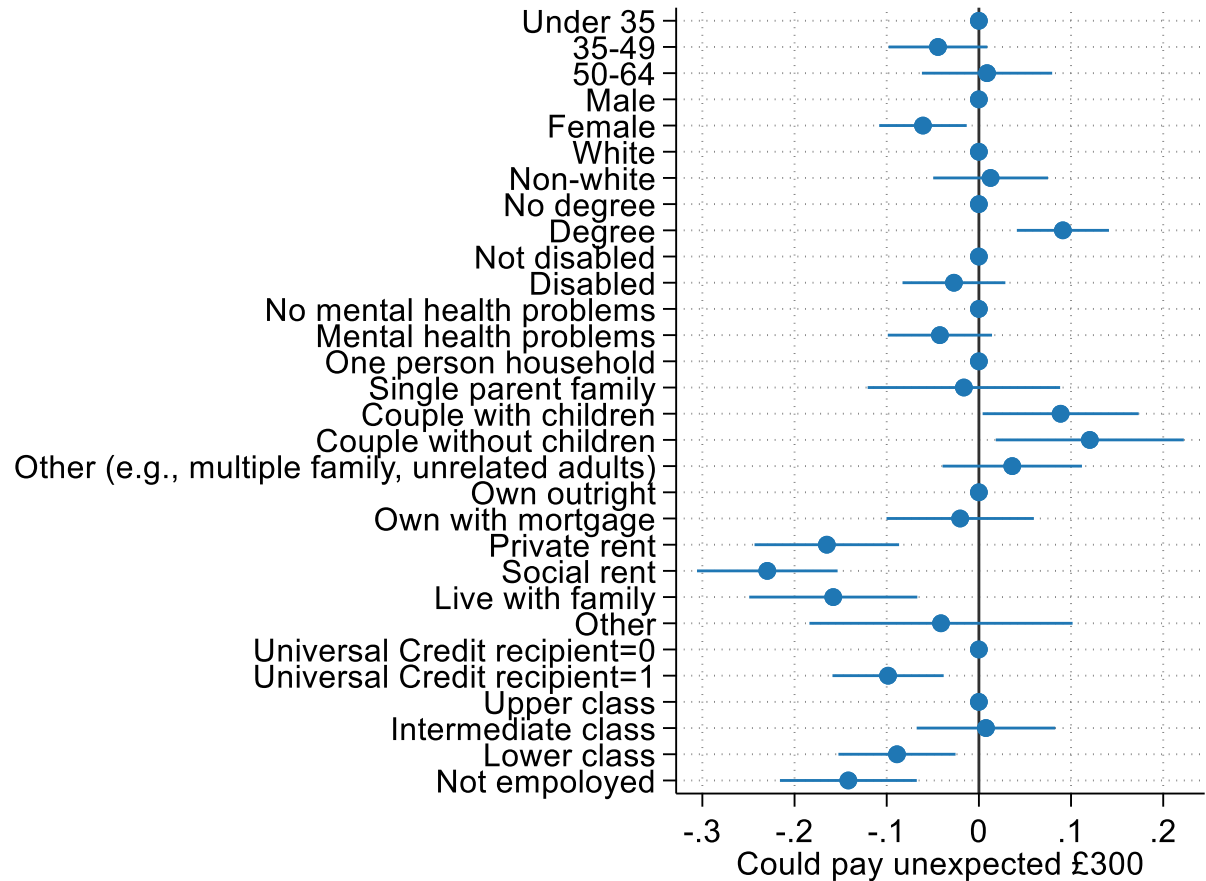
Intersectional inequalities and FWB among the poor (objective FWB indicator = ability to pay £300 as unexpected bill)



Intersectional inequalities and FWB among the poor (objective FWB indicator = ability to pay £300 as unexpected bill)



Relative importance of different factors influencing FWB (ability to afford unexpected £300) among the poor (quintile 1)



Does FWB among the poor vary and why?

- **Prior evidence suggests variation in the experiences of the poor**

- Evans, Cross, and Collard (2025) report that 65% of those in the bottom income quintile in the UK are categorised either as 'struggling' or 'in serious difficulties' on financial wellbeing, which suggests that the remaining 35% of those in the low-income category are not struggling or in serious difficulties
- Bradshaw and Finch (2003) show that individuals who are classified as income-poor have different experiences of their economic life with some experiencing more financial stress than others

- **Causes of varying experiences**

- Intersectional inequalities: having multiple vulnerabilities (e.g. being both disabled and female, or disabled and a single parent) creates distinct patterns of disadvantage
- Access to formal and informal support systems
- Financial literacy

Alternative ideas for measuring poverty

- Mid-point approach to transform gross annual income categories into numerical £ values
- Calculate net income from gross income (crude formula)
- Equivalise net household income: 1st adult=0.67, Nth adult=0.33, (dependent) children under 17=0.2
- Calculate poverty threshold (60% of median £31,385 for 2021 is 18,831, so poverty threshold is £18,831)
- Calculate households in poverty (i.e., where net equivalised household income is $< £18,831$)
- 43% of the MaPS sample is in relative poverty, while according to official statistics 22% of the population is in relative poverty

Contributions of this study

1. **Assess the extent of variation in financial wellbeing amongst the poor.** *How much variation exists in financial wellbeing among the poor?*
2. **Establish how specific dimensions of inequality – gender, age, and ethnic-racial background, and health – intersect with poverty to shape experiences of financial wellbeing.** *Are there sub-sections amongst the poor that are particularly vulnerable?*
3. **Identify the factors that explain the varying financial wellbeing experiences among the poor, including the role of financial capability and availability of support systems like family or advice services**