

Understanding barriers to healthy eating in people experiencing food insecurity

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Some researchers from the University of Aberdeen, University of Stirling and University of West England conducted a study to understand barriers to healthy eating in people experiencing food insecurity. This study combined photos with interviews. This is a summary of that research.

1. What did this study look at?

- Food insecurity is when someone struggles to regularly access enough safe and nutritious food to sustain a healthy lifestyle
- Food insecurity is a growing issue in Scotland, with around 1 in 4 children living without enough food
- People living with food insecurity are more likely to have unhealthy diets, with a higher risk of being overweight/obese and developing diet-related diseases like cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes
- Photo elicitation is a research method that uses photos in interviews to communicate about the environment.

2. Who took part in this study?

- The study involved people living in areas of high deprivation in Aberdeen, Scotland.
- 9 people living with food insecurity took part in this study (1 person started but dropped out)
- Participants were adults of different ages, genders, employment statuses and experiences of food insecurity.
- Participants took photos of their foods and shared them with the researchers, then spoke about them in the interview



Who sponsored this study?

This study was funded by the Rural Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS), part of the Scottish Government.

3. What were the findings?

- Most people knew what a healthy diet looked like, but many found it difficult to eat healthily because of things outside their control.
- Rising food and energy prices made it harder to buy, store, and cook healthy meals.
- Participants described how food insecurity affected more than just what they ate. It also affected their stress levels, mental wellbeing, and everyday lives.
- Participants showed great resilience and creativity in managing limited money and resources.
- Taking photographs helped people share their experiences in ways that would have been difficult using words alone.
- The findings were used to help design the Cook Healthy, Eat Well (CHEW) intervention, ensuring it reflected the real experiences and needs of people living with food insecurity.

4. Main conclusions?

- Barriers like stigma, inconsistent food bank provision and food prices prevented people eating a healthy diet, despite wanting to do so
- Future food support services should be away of the high cost of food and energy
- Using photos as a way to communicate about food insecurity was useful and meaningful

5. Any plans for further studies?

The findings from this study were used to help create a toolkit, called CHEW, of resources to help adults living in deprivation.

Further Information:

The full title of this article is: Exploring the Lived Experience of Food Insecurity Through the Camera Lens: A Photo Elicitation Study

You can access more information for free using this link:

DOI: [10.17605/OSF.IO/E5T7E](https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/E5T7E)

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