

Understanding Society User Support - Support #2311

Food Insecurity Experience Scale scoring

01/12/2026 10:49 AM - Akansha Naraindas

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| Status: | Feedback | Start date: | 01/12/2026 |
| Priority: | Normal | % Done: | 50% |
| Assignee: | Understanding Society User Support Team | | |
| Category: | Data documentation | | |
| Description | | | |
| Hi, I am trying to understand the best way to score the 8-item Food Insecurity Experience Scale used in the Understanding Society survey. I have noticed that different papers appear to score the scale in different ways, and some also apply weighting in line with global prevalence estimates. As my work focuses on food insecurity in the UK in relation to eating-disorder behaviours specifically in the UK, I am unsure whether using global weighting is appropriate for this context. I have also been unable to find clear scoring recommendations on the Understanding Society website. I would be very grateful for any guidance on the recommended scoring approach (and whether any weighting adjustments are advised for UK-based analyses). Thanks Akansha | | | |

History

#1 - 01/12/2026 03:43 PM - Understanding Society User Support Team

- Category changed from Questionnaire content to Data documentation
- Status changed from New to Feedback
- % Done changed from 0 to 50
- Private changed from Yes to No

Hello Akansha,

Understanding Society includes all eight items of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES): ateless, fewfdtyp, hungry, lacknutr, noeatday, ranoutfd, skipmeal, and wrynofood. However, the Study does not provide a predefined FIES score. Users are therefore required to construct food insecurity measures following the official methodology.

In practice, responses to the eight items are coded as binary indicators and summed to generate a raw score ranging from 0 (food secure) to 8 (most severe food insecurity).

For international comparability and official prevalence estimates, the FAO applies Rasch modelling with global calibration. For country-specific analyses, you might use the raw summed score without applying global calibration. However, the choice of approach depends on the research question and analytical context.

As the FIES is designed to capture food insecurity severity along a continuous scale, it is also recommended to use all eight items jointly rather than analysing individual questions separately.

The following official references may be useful:

1. Ballard, T.J., Kepple, A.W. & Cafiero, C. 2013. The food insecurity experience scale: developing a global standard for monitoring hunger worldwide. Technical Paper. Rome, FAO. <http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/voices/en/>
2. Cafiero, C., Viviani, S., and Nord, M. (2018). Food security measurement in a global context: The food insecurity experience scale. Measurement, 116:146–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.measurement.2017.10.065>
3. FAO. 2016. Methods for estimating comparable rates of food insecurity experienced by adults throughout the world. Rome, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/c-i4830e.pdf>

I hope this information is helpful

Best wishes,
Roberto Cavazos
Understanding Society User Support Team