

# ADVANCING FOOD INSECURITY RESEARCH IN THE UK: ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN FOOD INSECURITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND DISORDERED EATING IN PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

## BACKGROUND

- Food insecurity (FI), limited access to food, affects 7 million people in the UK
- 47% of households in the UK with CYP under 16 experience FI
- Growing evidence of the relationship between FI & disordered eating (DE)
- FI individuals are at an increased risk for developing psychological distress (PD)
- Psychological distress (PD) may mediate the relationship between FI & DE, however this is underexplored

## HYPOTHESES

- H1: **Parents experiencing FI** will have **higher** levels of **body dissatisfaction** in comparison to food secure parents.
- H2: **Parents experiencing FI** will have **higher** levels of **restrictive eating** in comparison to food secure parents.
- H3: **Parents experiencing FI** will have **higher** levels of **binge eating** in comparison to food secure parents.
- H4: **Parents experiencing FI** will have **higher** levels of **psychological distress** in comparison to food secure parents.
- H5: The effect of FI on binge eating, restrictive eating and body dissatisfaction in parents of young children are **mediated** by psychological distress.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

- Quantitative cross sectional design
- Online questionnaire via Qualtrics
- Participants: parents/caregivers with CYP between 3-12 in the UK
- Analytic sample (n=203)

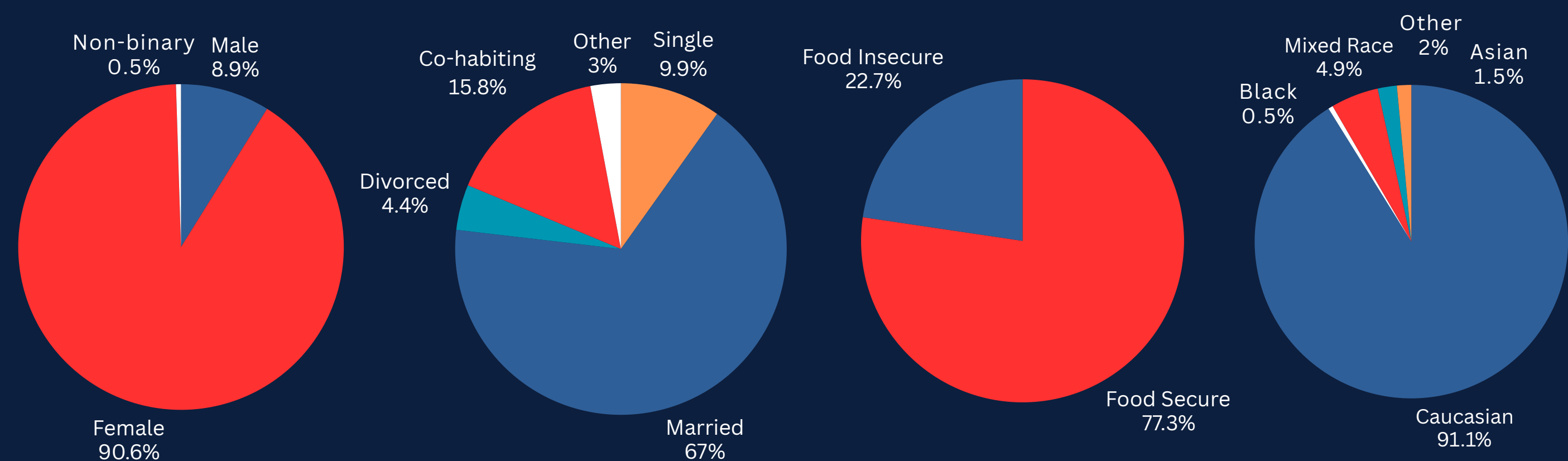
### Measures

- Psychological distress: DASS (21 items)
- Food insecurity: USDA (18 items)
- Disordered eating: EPSI (45 items)
- Demographics questionnaire

### Statistical Analyses

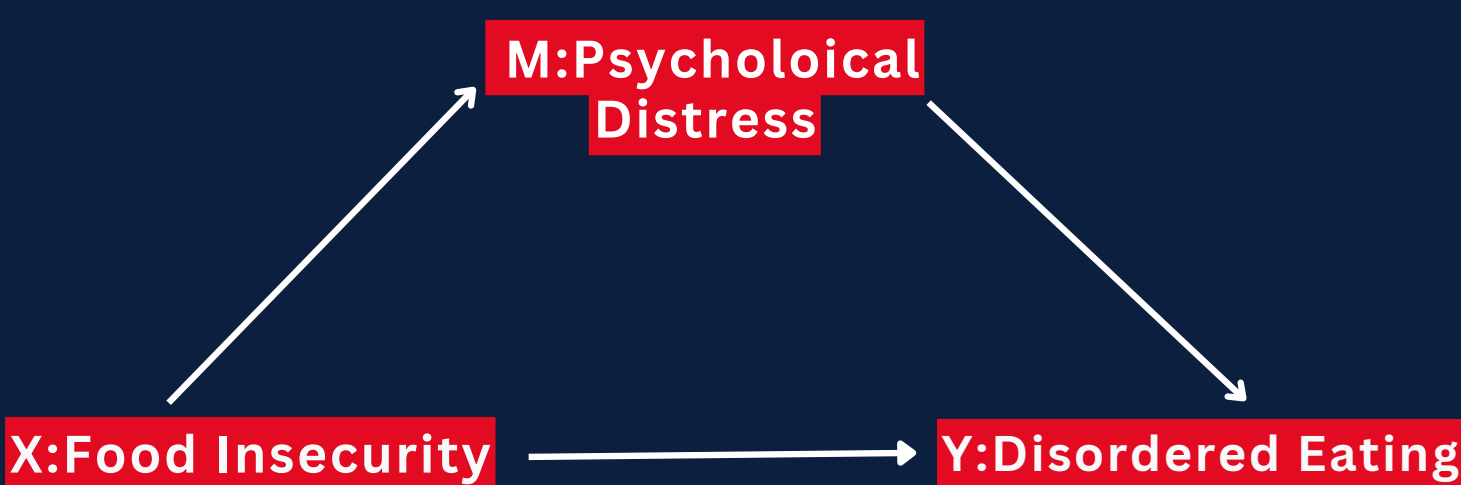
- Hierarchical Linear Regressions
- Mediation Analyses
- Controlled variables: Gender, ethnicity & marital status

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



## RESULTS

- H1: No significant** differences in **body dissatisfaction** were found between FI and food secure parents.
  - Gender** was a **significant** predictor of body dissatisfaction, with females scoring significantly higher than non-females ( $\beta = -5.85, p < .001$ )
- H2: Significant** differences in **restrictive eating** between FI and food secure parents ( $\beta = 4.28, p < .001$ ).
- H3: No significant** differences in binge eating were found between FI and food secure parents.
- H4: Significant** differences in **psychological distress** levels between FI and food secure parents ( $\beta = 23.02, p < .001$ ).
- H5:** The relationships between FI, body dissatisfaction and binge eating are **significantly mediated** by psychological distress. FI and restrictive eating is partially mediated by psychological distress.



## CONCLUSIONS

- Psychological distress mediated the relationship between FI and disordered eating subscales in UK parents
- To our knowledge, this is the first study in the UK to investigate the relationship between FI & disordered eating
- Targeting psychological distress may be a key component for interventions addressing FI & disordered eating.
- Austerity policies in the UK may influence FI and foodbank use.
- Future research is needed on more diverse populations and marginalised groups experiencing FI

## REFERENCES

- Hooper et al. (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.11.026>
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