

What is the Cost of a Healthy Food Basket in Northern Ireland in 2024?

Area of research interest: [Food insecurity](#)

Project status: Completed

Conducted by: Safefood, Food Standards Agency, Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

Date published: 30 September 2025

Foreword

To decide what should be included in a minimum essential healthy food basket, researchers worked with members of the public who took part in deliberative focus groups. These groups discussed and agreed on what is needed for a minimum yet nutritionally adequate and socially acceptable food basket.

The research used the Consensual Budget Standards method to establish the minimum food needs for 4 household types. This basket does not reflect what people currently eat. Food basket research in Northern Ireland began in 2014, with updates published in 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022.

Unlike previous reports, the 2024 food costs were based on the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) research series, developed by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at the University of Loughborough in England. In 2024, the MIS was fully rebased. This means there was a complete review and update of the types and amounts of foods included in a standard food basket, along with their costs. This update ensures that current eating habits, prices and nutritional needs are more accurately reflected.

This process also included a series of deliberative focus groups, bringing together members of the public to determine what is required for an acceptable minimum standard of living and to reprice the items ([footnote 1](#)).

As a result of rebasing the food baskets and adopting the MIS research carried out by the CRSP at the University of Loughborough, the findings from the 2024 report cannot be directly compared with previous reports on the cost of a minimum healthy food basket in Northern Ireland.

Key findings

Table 1 presents the costs of an acceptable and healthy food basket for 4 low-income households. The data is presented as an actual cost in pounds sterling (£) and as a proportion of take-home income.

Key findings from the 2024 analysis include:

- The cost of a minimum essential healthy food basket for the 4 household types ranged from £71 to £276

- The minimum food costs for the 2-parent household with 3 children in pre-school, primary school and secondary school required the highest proportion of household income, accounting for over half (63.3%) of their state benefit income in 2024
- For households with children, an average of just under two-thirds(64%) of the minimum food costs came from meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, bread and cereals

Table 1: Minimum essential healthy food basket 2024: Summary of results

Household	2024 Food Cost (£ per week)	Income Scenario	Net Income (£ per week)	Food as a % of net income
2 parents with 2 children in pre-school and primary school	£212	State benefits	£420	51%
		One adult employed, earning the National Living Wage	£623	34%
2 parents with 3 children in pre-school, primary and secondary school	£276	State benefits	£436	63%
		One adult employed, earning the National Living Wage	£640	43%
One parent with 2 children in pre-school and primary school	£151	State benefits	£368	41%
		One adult employed, earning the National Living Wage	£488	31%
Pensioner, living alone	£71	State pension	£235	30%

Research Report

Northern Ireland

PDF

[View What is the Cost of a Healthy Food Basket in Northern Ireland in 2024 as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (2.27 MB)

Northern Ireland

PDF

[View What is the Cost of a Healthy Food Basket in Northern Ireland in 2024 Infographic as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (183.19 KB)

1. Two parents with 3 children in pre-school, primary school and secondary school is a new household included in the 2024 food basket research. This household replaced the 2 parents with 2 children in primary and secondary school household, which had been included in all previous iterations of the food basket reports.