

The cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2018

Area of research interest: [Consumer Interests \(aka Wider Consumer Interests\)](#)

Study duration: 2016-03-31

Conducted by: Safefood and Food Standards Agency

Background

This is the third study to establish the cost of a food basket that meets the Minimal Essential Standard of Living (MESL) in NI. The FSA has a role in monitoring food poverty in NI, of which this research forms an important part.

Research approach

The MESL research applies a methodology known as 'Consensual Budget Standards'.

This approach is consumer-led rather than expert-led. Food menus meeting the MESL, while also meeting nutritional needs, were developed by engaging with consumers through multiple, deliberative focus groups and iterative in-depth discussions. These discussions resulted in a negotiated agreement on what people regard as essential for a socially acceptable minimum standard of living.

An MESL is based on needs, not wants. It is a standard of living which people should not be expected to live below.

This report presents the cost of the minimum essential food basket for four low-income household types, adjusted to reflect food costs in 2018. The baskets (first established for 2014 and 2016) are adjusted to 2018 prices using the United Kingdom Consumer Price Index.

Key findings

The research shows:

- the cost of the minimum essential food basket increased by between 4.2% and 4.6% for households from 2016 to 2018
- in NI, the cost of the minimum essential food basket ranged from 26% to 46% of take-home pay with those dependent solely on state benefits needing to spend the greatest proportion of their income on food

Report and summary

[What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2018?](#)