

What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2016?

Low-income households:

Eat less well



Higher level of diet-related disease



Research to find out the cost of a food basket that is:

Realistic and acceptable

Nutritionally adequate

Household type

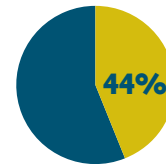
Total basket cost

% of take home income

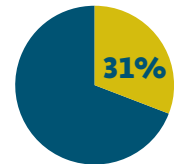


**Two-parent
Two-child**

Primary and secondary school



Dependent on State Benefits

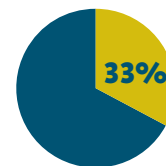


One adult employed (earning the National Minimum Wage)

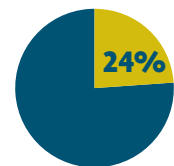


**Two-parent
Two-child**

Pre-school and primary school



Dependent on State Benefits

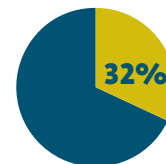


One adult employed (earning the National Minimum Wage)

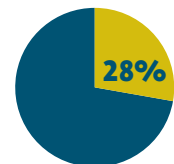


**One-parent
Two-child**

Pre-school and primary school



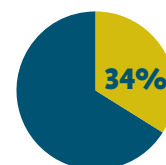
Dependent on State Benefits



Adult employed (earning the National Minimum Wage)



**Pensioner
Living alone**



Dependent on State Pension

Cost of healthy food basket



Objectives

To estimate the cost of a minimum essential food basket that meets the physical, psychological and social needs of four household types in Northern Ireland, using two different approaches:

1. To establish the cost of the basket using consensual budgetary standards, for:

- Two-parent and Two-child (primary and secondary school)
- One-parent and Two-child (pre-school and primary school)

2. To update the cost of a minimum essential food basket previously determined in 2014, for:

- Two-parent, Two-child (pre-school and primary school)
- Pensioner living alone

Methodology

A methodology known as the 'Consensual Budget Standards' was used. This approach is consumer-led rather than being expert-led.

Food menus that met a minimal acceptable standard of living while meeting nutritional needs were developed by consumers. For each household three focus groups were used to include both urban and rural households and a social class mix.

The 2014 basket costs were updated by applying the United Kingdom Consumer Price Index.

Results

Household type	Total basket cost	Income scenarios	Take home income	Proportion of take home income
Two-parent, Two-child (primary and secondary school)	£153	State benefits	£350	44%
		One adult employed earning the National Minimum Wage	£488	31%
One-parent, Two-child (pre-school and primary School)	£99	State benefits	£308	32%
		Adult Working and Earning the National Minimum Wage	£359	28%
Two-parent, Two-child (pre-school and primary school)	£115	State benefits	£350	33%
		One adult earning the National Minimum Wage	£488	24%
Pensioner living alone	£57	State pension	£169	34%

£=STG

Key conclusions

- Low-income households need to spend approximately one third of their take-home income to buy a minimum essential food basket.
- The cost of the food basket depends on household composition; food for an adolescent is similar to that for an adult.
- Food is regarded as a flexible aspect of the household budget.
- The social and cultural aspects of food, such as spending on takeaways and extras visitors and Christmas, are an important part of the food basket.
- The 2016 weekly cost of the basket for a two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary school) is £115, £4 less than 2014.
- The 2016 weekly cost of the basket for a pensioner living alone is £57, £2 less than 2014.
- This research highlights the challenges when trying to balance buying this food basket with other weekly household expenses.

“You would be living on stuff that you wouldn’t necessarily want to give the kids but it’s the only way you can do it until you are stable again.”
(Two parent household)

“Clothes, gas and electricity are quite high for somebody who is a single parent.”
(One parent household)

“The first thing you do when someone comes to your house is offer them tea or coffee.”
(One parent household)



To download a copy of the full report and infographic visit www.safefood.eu or www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland