

# 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?](#)