



Report on the cost and availability of a
Minimum Essential Food Basket
August 2022

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Introduction

The Consumer Council is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established through the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. Its principal statutory duty is to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland (NI). The Consumer Council has specific statutory duties in relation to energy, postal services, transport, water and sewerage, financial services and food.

The Consumer Council advocate on behalf of all NI consumers to ensure that consumer rights and issues are at the forefront of policymaking. In order to do that, it is important that the Consumer Council are informed and have the necessary evidence base to influence and shape policy. Under food affordability and accessibility, The NI Order gives the Consumer Council powers to research and report on the issues or barriers NI consumers might face in accessing affordable, good, nutritious and enjoyable food, of a suitable quality and quantity to sustain an acceptable standard of living appropriate for all.

In January 2022, the Consumer Council commissioned Cognisense to undertake a pricing exercise with the overarching objective of gathering data on the cost and availability of a weekly Minimum Essential Food Basket (MEFB) for two household types across a range of settlement areas in both Mid and East Antrim, and Derry City and Strabane.

Specifically, the pricing exercise aimed to answer the following questions:

- How much does it cost to buy the contents of the basket in different retail outlets, and in different settlement areas in Northern Ireland?
- Are there any items from the basket that are not available from any of the outlets at the time of checking?
- Where is it most expensive to purchase the contents of the basket?
- Where is it hardest to access all of the items in the basket?

The items that made up the basket for each household type were influenced by a pilot study conducted by Safefood, in partnership with Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland and the Consumer Council ([The cost of a healthy food basket](#)). The basket contents are detailed in the Appendix of this report. In essence, the contents of the basket of goods are based on weekly meal plans, devised by members of the public who took part in focus groups in three locations in Northern Ireland back in 2015. Participants were asked to decide what different family scenario types should eat in order to meet their physical, psychological and social needs. This was then assessed by a nutritionist and minor adjustments were made to meet with healthy eating guidelines at that time. The meal plans (and the respective food baskets) represent what any person, regardless of their income, should have at a minimum level. It doesn't represent what all people can afford, or necessarily choose to have in their baskets.

The same research informed the two household types that were chosen: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age); and a pensioner living alone. The Safefood research comprised of four household scenarios:

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

Of these household types, the Consumer Council chose the one parent, two children because according to Trussell Trust research¹, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 18% of those referred to their network of foodbanks were single parents. This is more than twice the rate of the general population. The pensioner living alone was selected because some in this category have less access to a private car and can find travelling to a larger supermarket more difficult, depending on the public transport links available in the area. In these cases, shopping can often be restricted to local convenience stores, which may impact price and choice.

Mid and East Antrim, and Derry City and Strabane were the Local Government District (LGD) areas selected as they both contain the range of settlement areas of interest, which are classified by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency as follows:

- Band B: large town, population greater than 18,000 people
- Band C: large town, population greater than 18,000 people
- Band D: medium town, population between 10,000 and 18,000 people
- Band E: small town, population between 5,000 and 9,999 people
- Band F: intermediate settlements, population between 2,500 and 4,999 people
- Band G: village, population between 1,000 and 2,499 people
- Band H: open countryside and small villages with population less than 1,000 people

In order to ensure representation of retail outlets, the sample chosen for the pricing exercise included the following: large national supermarkets, large/medium independent supermarkets, local convenience stores, small chains, and small independent stores.

The following section of the report describes the methodology used for the pricing exercise.

¹ [State of Hunger - The Trussell Trust](#)

Methodology

Prior to commencement of data collection, the Consumer Council secured permission for a total of 43 retail outlets to be included in the pricing exercise. A breakdown of these retail outlets by Local Government District (LGD) area, store type and settlement area is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of retail outlets

LGD	Number of outlets
Mid and East Antrim	19
Derry City and Strabane	24
Store type	
Large national supermarket	3
Large/medium independent supermarket	8
Local convenience	12
Small chain	9
Small independent	11
Settlement area	
Bands B and C	6
Bands D and E	13
Bands F, G and H	24

Throughout February and March, each of these retail outlets was visited by a member of Cognisense’s face-to-face data collection team, all of whom had received training in line with the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (the definitive UK-wide standard for interviewing) and the Market Research Quality Standards Authority. During each visit, the following information was captured (via an electronic data collection device) for the items in the basket for each household type: size, brand, and price. In instances where the required item was unavailable, the same information was collected for a comparable item. If no comparable item was available, this was recorded.

To accommodate the preference for high quality meat products as identified in the aforementioned Safefood research, five butchers in each LGD area were also visited by members of the face-to-face data collection team. The purpose of these visits was to gather information on the cost of certain meat products from the basket (see Appendix). These visits were to obtain prices only – the process to determine item availability mentioned above was not employed as the small number of items for which prices were required were all available at each of the butchers visited.

In addition to the face-to-face data collection at the retail outlets and butchers, an online pricing exercise was conducted for a large national supermarket in each LGD area, bringing the number of retail outlets in the final sample to 45. Given the

tendency for this store type to be located in areas of higher population density, the online audit for Mid and East Antrim was attributed to the 'Band C' settlement type, whilst that for Derry City and Strabane was allocated to 'Band B'. It was necessary to collect information for these retail outlets via an online methodology as permission for an in-person visit was not forthcoming.

Once data collection was complete, the information captured was collated, cleaned and analysed. When considering the appropriate cost for the basket items that typically last longer than a week (such as condiments), the approach detailed in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively in each of the following Safefood research projects was adopted:

- [The cost of a healthy food basket](#)
- [What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2016?](#)

When considering the meat products priced at butchers, the average cost for each item across the respective LGD area was calculated. As information regarding these products was also collected for the retail outlets, the total cost for buying the basket with meat products from a butchers, and the total cost for buying the basket with meat from a retail outlet was calculated.

In cases of product unavailability, the price was determined by the average cost of the item across the various stores within the relevant LGD area in which it was available.

In calculating the proportion of basket items that could not be obtained, only those items for which no comparable substitution could be sourced were considered to be unavailable. However, in order to provide a fuller picture of the process of shopping for the basket, the proportion of items available both with and without substitutions has been included in this report. For the purposes of the meat products priced both in retail outlets and at butchers, only the availability in retail outlets was factored into calculations.

When analysing differences in price by settlement area, certain bands were combined in order to increase the number of retailers from which data was drawn, thereby improving the robustness of the findings. The settlement areas were combined as follows: Bands B and C; Bands D and E; Bands F, G and H. Hereafter, for ease of reference, these bands will be referred to respectively as 'large towns', 'medium and small towns', and 'villages, hamlets and open countryside'.

Throughout the data collection and data analysis processes, all information was treated in a manner that complied fully with GDPR legislation and the Data Protection Act 1998.

The following section of the report details the main findings from the data collected.

Main findings

How much does it cost to buy the contents of the basket in different retail outlets and in different settlement areas in Northern Ireland?

Household: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age)

The average cost for the contents of the basket overall, by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a household with one parent and two children (pre-school and primary school age) is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Average cost of the basket: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age) household

	Basket with meat from a butchers	Basket with meat from a retail outlet
Overall	£105.97	£103.01
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	£107.34	£102.30
Derry City and Strabane	£104.88	£103.58
Store type		
Large national supermarket	£93.80	£91.52
Large/medium independent supermarket	£105.01	£102.01
Local convenience	£107.75	£104.57
Small chain	£107.89	£104.30
Small independent	£108.89	£106.64
Settlement area		
Large towns	£101.90	£99.23
Medium and small towns	£104.88	£102.10
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	£107.92	£104.77

The overall average cost for the basket for this household type was £105.97 if the relevant meat products were from a butchers, and £103.01 if the same products were from a retail outlet.

In terms of LGD, the average cost of the contents of the basket with butcher meat in Mid and East Antrim was £107.34, whilst in Derry City and Strabane it was £104.88. If the basket included meat from a retail outlet instead of meat from a butchers, the average cost in Mid and East Antrim was £102.30, whilst in Derry City and Strabane it was £103.58.

Regarding store type, the average cost of purchasing the basket with butcher meat from a large national supermarket was £93.80, from a large/medium independent supermarket it was £105.01, from a local convenience store it was £107.75, from a small chain it was £107.89, whilst from a small independent it was £108.89.

If meat from a retail outlet was included instead of meat from a butchers, the average cost of the basket from a large national supermarket was £91.52, from a large/medium independent supermarket it was £102.01, from a local convenience store it was £104.57, from a small chain it was £104.30, whilst from a small independent it was £106.64.

Looking at settlement area, the average cost of the basket with butcher meat in large towns was £101.90, in medium and small towns it was £104.88, whilst in villages, hamlets and open countryside it was £107.92. If meat from a retail outlet was included instead of meat from a butchers, the average cost of the basket in large towns was £99.23, in medium and small towns it was £102.10, whilst in villages, hamlets and open countryside it was £104.77.

The categories that made up the basket for this household, their average cost and the percentage of the overall basket for which they accounted are detailed in Table 3 overleaf.

Table 3: Cost and percentage of basket of each food category: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age) household

	Basket with meat from a butchers		Basket with meat from a retail outlet	
	Average cost	Percentage of basket	Average cost	Percentage of basket
Breads and cereals	£13.41	13%	£13.41	13%
Coffee, tea and cocoa	£1.73	2%	£1.73	2%
Condiments	£1.85	2%	£1.85	2%
Dairy and eggs	£14.37	14%	£14.37	14%
Fish	£1.56	1%	£1.56	2%
Frozen	£2.54	2%	£2.54	2%
Fruit	£12.68	12%	£12.68	12%
Meat	£25.70	24%	£22.74	22%
Mineral water, soft drinks and juices	£1.80	2%	£1.80	2%
Oils and fats	£0.78	1%	£0.78	1%
Store cupboard	£6.01	6%	£6.01	6%
Sugar, jams and syrups	£1.65	2%	£1.65	2%
Treats	£8.97	8%	£8.97	9%
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	£12.91	12%	£12.91	13%
Total	£105.97	100%	£103.01	100%

Meat accounted for the largest proportion of the total cost for both the basket that contained butcher meat (24%) and that which included meat from a retail outlet (22%). Meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy and eggs, and breads and cereals accounted for three-quarters of the total for both the basket that contained butcher meat (75%) and that which included meat from a retail outlet (74%).

Household: pensioner living alone

The average cost for the contents of the basket overall, by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a pensioner living alone is shown in Table 4 overleaf.

Table 4: Average cost of the basket: pensioner living alone

	Basket with meat from a butchers	Basket with meat from a retail outlet
Overall	£59.60	£59.18
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	£60.63	£58.38
Derry City and Strabane	£58.77	£59.82
Store type		
Large national supermarket	£50.98	£49.14
Large/medium independent supermarket	£59.75	£59.35
Local convenience	£60.78	£60.27
Small chain	£61.24	£60.75
Small independent	£60.65	£61.24
Settlement area		
Large towns	£55.44	£54.57
Medium and small towns	£59.79	£58.99
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	£60.88	£60.82

The overall average cost for the basket with butcher meat for this household type was £59.60, whilst the average cost for the basket with meat from a retail outlet was £59.18.

Regarding LGD, the average cost of the contents of the basket with butcher meat in Mid and East Antrim was £60.63, whilst in Derry City and Strabane it was £58.77. If meat from a retail outlet was included instead of butcher meat, the average cost of the basket in Mid and East Antrim was £58.38, whilst in Derry City and Strabane it was £59.82.

In terms of store type, the average cost of purchasing the basket with butcher meat from a large national supermarket was £50.98, from a large/medium independent supermarket it was £59.75, from a local convenience store it was £60.78, from a small chain it was £61.24, whilst from a small independent it was £60.65. If meat from a retail outlet was included instead of meat from a butchers, the average cost of buying the basket from a large national supermarket was £49.14, from a large/medium independent supermarket it was £59.35, from a local convenience store it was £60.27, from a small chain it was £60.75, whilst from a small independent it was £61.24.

With regards to settlement area, the average cost of buying the basket with butcher meat in large towns was £55.44, in medium and small towns it was £59.79, whilst in villages, hamlets and open countryside it was £60.88. If meat from a retail outlet was included instead of meat from a butchers, the average cost of the basket in large

towns was £54.57, in medium and small towns it was £58.99, whilst in villages, hamlets and open countryside it was £60.82.

The categories that made up the basket for this household, their average cost and the percentage of the overall basket for which they accounted are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5: Cost and percentage of basket of each food category: pensioner living alone

	Basket with meat from a butchers		Basket with meat from a retail outlet	
	Average cost	Percentage of basket	Average cost	Percentage of basket
Breads and cereals	£2.81	5%	£2.81	5%
Coffee, tea and cocoa	£1.45	2%	£1.45	2%
Condiment	£0.74	1%	£0.74	1%
Dairy and eggs	£5.45	9%	£5.45	9%
Fish	£1.56	3%	£1.56	3%
Frozen	£1.08	2%	£1.08	2%
Fruit	£4.76	8%	£4.76	8%
Meat	£18.34	31%	£17.92	30%
Oils and fats	£0.07	<1%	£0.07	<1%
Store cupboard	£3.38	6%	£3.38	6%
Sugar, jams and syrups	£0.04	<1%	£0.04	<1%
Treats	£8.70	15%	£8.70	15%
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	£11.21	19%	£11.21	19%
Total	£59.60	100%	£59.18	100%

Meat accounted for the largest proportion of the total cost for both the basket that contained butcher meat (31%) and that which included meat from a retail outlet (30%). Meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy and eggs, and breads and cereals accounted for 72% of the basket that contained butcher meat and 71% of that which included meat from a retail outlet.

Are there any items from the basket that are not available from any of the outlets at the time of checking?

Household: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age)

The average proportion of basket items available overall, by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a household with one parent and two children is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Proportion of basket available: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age) household

	Without substitutions	With substitutions
Overall	48%	77%
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	47%	77%
Derry City and Strabane	49%	76%
Store type		
Large national supermarket	72%	95%
Large/medium independent supermarket	50%	77%
Local convenience	49%	79%
Small chain	42%	70%
Small independent	39%	72%
Settlement area		
Large towns	52%	88%
Medium and small towns	49%	72%
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	46%	76%

If only the exact items that made up the basket were sought, the average proportion of products available overall was 48%. When substitutions were considered, the proportion of available items rose to 77%.

Regarding LGD, the average proportion of items available without substitutions was 47% in Mid and East Antrim and 49% in Derry City and Strabane – the proportion of items available increased to 77% and 76% respectively when substitutions were included.

In terms of store type, the average proportion of basket items available without substitutions was 72% in large national supermarkets, 50% in large/medium independent supermarkets, 49% in local convenience stores, 42% in small chains, and 39% in small independents.

With substitutions, the average proportion of available items was 95% in large national supermarkets, 77% in large/medium independent supermarkets, 79% in local convenience stores, 70% in small chains, and 72% in small independents. When looking at settlement area, the average proportion of available items without substitutions was 52% in large towns, 49% in medium and small towns, and 46% in

villages, hamlets and open countryside – the proportions of items available rose to 88%, 72% and 76% respectively when substitutions were included.

Without substitutions, the items from the basket with availability below the overall average are detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Average availability of items without substitutions: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age) household

Item	Brand	Size	Average availability without substitutions
Ham (slices)	Own/Generic	5 pack	47%
Ice-cream	Own/Generic	2kg	47%
Fromage frais	Own/Generic	6 pack	44%
Tuna (tinned)	Own/Generic	160g	44%
Chicken fillets	Own/Generic	4 pack	42%
Bagels	Own/Generic	5 pack	42%
Muffin (blueberry)	Own/Generic	4 pack	42%
Cake (small)	Own/Generic	300g	42%
Orange juice	Own/Generic	1l	42%
Leeks	Own/Generic	Single loose	40%
Pre-packed chicken	Own/Generic	180g	40%
Yoghurts	Own/Generic	6 pack	40%
Mixed herbs	Own/Generic	14g	40%
Rice cakes	Own/Generic	18 pack	40%
Pineapple	Own/Generic	Single loose	38%
Porridge	Own/Generic	1kg	38%
Garlic	Own/Generic	One bulb	36%
Mince meat	Own/Generic	454g	33%
Go-Ahead bars	Go-Ahead	5 pack	33%
Garlic bread (slices)	Own/Generic	10 pack	33%
Wholemeal bread own	Own/Generic	800g	31%
Baps	Own/Generic	6 pack	31%
Rice	Own/Generic	1kg	31%
Stir-fry (fresh)	Own/Generic	320g	29%
Haddock fillets (frozen)	Own/Generic	450g	29%
Egg noodles (dry)	Own/Generic	300g	27%
Bacon rashers	Own/Generic	10 pack	24%
Poppadums plain	Own/Generic	8 pack	24%
Curry powder	Own/Generic	80g	24%
Mayonnaise	Own/Generic	240ml	24%
Olive oil	Own/Generic	1l	24%
Pancakes	Sunblest	8 pack	22%
Tomato puree	Own/Generic	200g	22%

Fromage frais	Own/Generic	4 pack	20%
Tomato ketchup	Heinz	570g	20%
Peas (Frozen)	Own/Generic	1kg	20%
Cheese low fat spread	Own/Generic	250g	18%
Pasta	Own/Generic	1kg	18%
Hot chocolate/cocoa	Own/Generic	500g	18%
Sausages stuffing	Own/Generic	1 pack	13%
Gravy granules	Bisto	500g	13%
Popcorn (microwave)	Butterkist	3 pack	13%
Raisins	Own/Generic	1kg	13%
Steak (stewing)	Own/Generic	454g	9%
Stir-fry sauce	Own/Generic	180g	9%
Cheddar cheese	Own/Generic	450g	7%
Pork pieces	Own/Generic	454g	4%
Milky Way	Milky Way	14 pack	2%
Monkey nuts	Own/Generic	400g	2%

In the majority of cases, it was the specifics of the item (brand, size, cut of meat, etc.) that affected its availability. Store type was the most influential factor regarding availability, with large national supermarkets considerably more likely to have a higher level of availability in most instances.

Household: pensioner living alone

The average proportion of basket items available overall, by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a pensioner living alone is shown in Table 8 overleaf.

Table 8: Proportion of basket available: pensioner living alone

	Without substitutions	With substitutions
Overall	48%	73%
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	46%	73%
Derry City and Strabane	49%	73%
Store type		
Large national supermarket	75%	95%
Large/medium independent supermarket	51%	77%
Local convenience	48%	73%
Small chain	39%	63%
Small independent	39%	69%
Settlement area		
Large towns	51%	83%
Medium and small towns	47%	69%
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	47%	72%

If shopping for the exact items that made up the basket, the average proportion of available items overall was 48%, rising to 73% when substitute items were considered.

In terms of LGD, the average proportion of basket items available without substitutions was 46% in Mid and East Antrim, and 49% in Derry City and Strabane. In both LGDs, the proportion of basket items available increased to 73% when substitute products were considered.

Without including substitute products, the average proportion of basket items available at large national supermarket was 75%, at large/medium independent supermarkets it was 51%, at local convenience stores it was 48%, at small chains it was 39%, and at small independents it was 39%.

When substitute products were considered, the average proportion of basket items available at large national supermarkets was 95%, at large/medium independent supermarkets it was 77%, at local convenience stores it was 73%, at small chains it was 63%, whilst at small independents it was 69%.

Regarding settlement area, the average proportion of available items without including substitute products was 51% in large towns, 47% in medium and small towns, and 47% in villages, hamlets and open countryside. When substitute products were considered, the proportion of available items increased to 83% in large towns,

69% in medium and small towns, and 72% in villages, hamlets and open countryside.

Without substitutions, the items from the basket with availability below the overall average are detailed in Table 9.

Table 9: Average availability of items without substitutions: pensioner living alone

Item	Brand	Size	Average availability without substitutions
Tomato ketchup	Own/Generic	460g	47%
Ice-cream	Own/Generic	2kg	47%
Tuna (tinned)	Own/Generic	160g	44%
Leeks	Own/Generic	Single loose	40%
Yoghurts	Own/Generic	6 pack	40%
Baked beans (tinned)	Heinz	150g	40%
Mixed herbs	Own/Generic	14g	40%
Oven chips (frozen)	Own/Generic	1.5kg	40%
Lentils	Own/Generic	500g	38%
Pears (tinned)	Own/Generic	410g	38%
Red onion	Own/Generic	Single loose	36%
Garlic	Own/Generic	One bulb	36%
Mincemeat	Own/Generic	454g	33%
Cake (small)	Own/Generic	250g	33%
Rice	Own/Generic	1kg	31%
Spaghetti	Napolina	500g	31%
Peppers	Own/Generic	Single loose	27%
Ham (slices)	Own/Generic	125g	27%
Grapefruit	Own/Generic	Single loose	24%
Curry sauce	Own/Generic	500g	24%
Mayonnaise	Own/Generic	240ml	24%
Coffee	Own/Generic	200g	24%
Custard cream	Own/Generic	200g	24%
Porridge	Flahavans	500g	22%
Broccoli (frozen)	Own/Generic	900g	22%
Sweetcorn (frozen)	Own/Generic	1kg	22%
Peas (Frozen)	Own/Generic	1kg	20%
White fish (frozen)	Own/Generic	520g	20%
Hot chocolate/cocoa	Own/Generic	500g	18%
Cheddar cheese	Low Low	160g	16%
Gravy granules	Bisto	500g	13%
Steak (stewing)	Own/Generic	454g	9%
Wholemeal bread	Harvest Pride	400g	9%
Baps	Own/Generic	1 loose	9%

Sugar	Silverspoon	1kg	9%
Mushy peas (frozen)	Lockwoods	1kg	4%

The specifics of the item (brand, size, cut of meat, etc.) affected availability in most cases. Store type was the most influential factor regarding availability, with large national supermarkets significantly more likely to have a higher level of availability in the majority of instances.

Where is the most expensive to purchase the contents of the basket?

Household: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age)

The average cost for the contents of the basket by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a household with one parent and two children (pre-school and primary school age) is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Average cost of the basket: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age) household

	Basket with meat from a butchers	Basket with meat from a retail outlet
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	£107.34	£102.30
Derry City and Strabane	£104.88	£103.58
Store type		
Large national supermarket	£93.80	£91.52
Large/medium independent supermarket	£105.01	£102.01
Local convenience	£107.75	£104.57
Small chain	£107.89	£104.30
Small independent	£108.89	£106.64
Settlement area		
Large towns	£101.90	£99.23
Medium and small towns	£104.88	£102.10
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	£107.92	£104.77

In terms of LGD, it was more expensive to buy the contents of the basket with butcher meat in Mid and East Antrim than in Derry City and Strabane, with respective average prices of £107.34 and £104.88. However, it was slightly cheaper to buy the basket with meat from a retail outlet in Mid and East Antrim (£102.30) than in Derry City and Strabane (£103.58).

The most expensive store type from which to purchase the basket with butcher meat was a small independent (£108.89), followed by a small chain (£107.89), a local convenience store (£107.75), a large/medium independent supermarket (£105.01),

then a large national supermarket (£93.80), which was considerably less expensive than the other store types.

A similar pattern can be observed with regards to the average price of the basket with meat from a retail outlet, with a small independent (£106.64) store being the most expensive, whilst a large national supermarket (£91.52) was the least expensive by a significant margin. The average price from a large/medium independent supermarket, a local convenience store and a small chain was £102.01, £104.57 and £104.30 respectively.

Looking at settlement area, it was more expensive to buy the basket with butcher meat in villages, hamlets and open countryside (£107.92) than it was in medium and small towns (£104.88) and in large towns (£101.90). This was also the case regarding the basket with meat from a retail outlet, with £104.77, £102.10 and £99.23 the respective average prices for villages, hamlets and open countryside, medium and small towns, and large towns.

Household: pensioner living alone

The average price for the contents of the basket by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a pensioner living alone is detailed in Table 11.

Table 11: Average cost of the basket: pensioner living alone

	Basket with meat from a butchers	Basket with meat from a retail outlet
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	£60.63	£58.38
Derry City and Strabane	£58.77	£59.82
Store type		
Large national supermarket	£50.98	£49.14
Large/medium independent supermarket	£59.75	£59.35
Local convenience	£60.78	£60.27
Small chain	£61.24	£60.75
Small independent	£60.65	£61.24
Settlement area		
Large towns	£55.44	£54.57
Medium and small towns	£59.79	£58.99
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	£60.88	£60.82

Regarding LGD, it was more expensive to buy the contents of the basket with butcher meat in Mid and East Antrim (£60.63) than in Derry City and Strabane

(£58.77); however, the cost of the basket with meat from a retail outlet was slightly cheaper in Mid and East Antrim (£58.38) than in Derry City and Strabane (£59.82).

In terms of store type, it was most expensive to purchase the basket with butcher meat at a small chain (£61.24). The next most expensive was a local convenience store (£60.78), then a small independent (£60.65), a large/medium independent supermarket (£59.75), and then a large national supermarket (£50.98), which was markedly cheaper than the other store types.

It was most expensive to purchase the basket with meat from a retail outlet at a small independent (£61.24), followed by a small chain (£60.75), a local convenience store (£60.27), a large/medium independent supermarket (£59.35), then a large national supermarket (£49.14), which was the least expensive by a considerable margin.

With regards to settlement area, it was more expensive to buy the basket with butcher meat in villages, hamlets and open countryside (£60.88) than in medium and small towns (£59.79) and in large towns (£55.44). This was also the case regarding the basket with meat from a retail outlet, with the average cost in villages, hamlets and open countryside (£60.82) more expensive than in medium and small towns (£58.99), and in large towns (£54.57).

Where is it hardest to access all of the items in the basket?

Household: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age)

The average proportion of basket items available by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a household with one parent and two children is shown in Table 12 overleaf.

Table 12: Proportion of basket available: one parent with two children (pre-school and primary school age) household

	Without substitutions	With substitutions
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	47%	77%
Derry City and Strabane	49%	76%
Store type		
Large national supermarket	72%	95%
Large/medium independent supermarket	50%	77%
Local convenience	49%	79%
Small chain	42%	70%
Small independent	39%	72%
Settlement area		
Large towns	52%	88%
Medium and small towns	49%	72%
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	46%	76%

With regards to LGD, there was little difference in the average proportion of basket products available without substitutions, with 47% of items available in Mid and East Antrim, and 49% available in Derry City and Strabane. It was a similar situation when substitutions were considered, with the average proportion of available items 77% and 76% for Mid and East Antrim and Derry City and Strabane respectively.

However, there were notable differences in availability in terms of store type. The hardest places to access the basket items without substitutions were small independents (average availability: 39%) and small chains (average availability: 42%), which were behind local convenience stores (average availability: 49%) and large/medium independent supermarkets (average availability: 50%) – the average proportion of items available at large national supermarkets (72%) was considerably higher than at each of these store types.

A similar pattern emerges when substitutions were considered, with average availability lower at small chains (70%) and small independents (72%) than at large/medium independent supermarkets (77%) and local convenience stores (79%) – each of these store types had an average level of availability much lower than at large national supermarkets, at which the vast majority (95%) of basket items were available.

In terms of settlement area, the average proportion of available basket items without substitutions was slightly lower in villages, hamlets and open countryside (46%), and in small and medium towns (49%) when compared to large towns (52%). The differences were more pronounced when substitutions were considered, with the

average proportion of available items notably higher in large towns (88%) than in villages, hamlets and open countryside (76%), and in medium and small towns (72%).

Household: pensioner living alone

The average proportion of basket items available by LGD area, by store type and by settlement area for a pensioner living alone is detailed in Table 13.

Table 13: Proportion of basket available: pensioner living alone

	Without substitutions	With substitutions
LGD		
Mid and East Antrim	46%	73%
Derry City and Strabane	49%	73%
Store type		
Large national supermarket	75%	95%
Large/medium independent supermarket	51%	77%
Local convenience	48%	73%
Small chain	39%	63%
Small independent	39%	69%
Settlement area		
Large towns	51%	83%
Medium and small towns	47%	69%
Villages, hamlets and open countryside	47%	72%

Looking at LGD, the average proportion of basket items available without substitutions was slightly lower in Mid and East Antrim (46%) than in Derry City and Strabane (49%); however, when substitutions were considered, there was no difference in average availability between the LGDs (both 73%).

In terms of store type, the hardest places to access the basket items without substitutions were small independents (39%) and small chains (39%), where average availability was significantly lower than in local convenience stores (48%) and large/medium independent supermarkets (51%) – the average proportion of available items for each of these store types was much lower than in large national supermarkets (75%).

When substitutions were considered, the average proportion of available basket items was lower in small chains (63%) and small independents (69%) than in local convenience stores (73%) and large/medium independent supermarkets (77%) – the

average proportion of available items was markedly higher in large national supermarkets (95%) than in any other store type.

Regarding settlement area, the average proportion of available basket items without substitutions was lower in villages, hamlets and open countryside (47%), and in medium and small towns (47%) when compared to large towns (51%). The differences in average availability were more obvious when substitutions were considered, with 69% of items available in medium and small towns, 72% in villages, hamlets and open countryside, and 83% in large towns.

The following section of the report details conclusions that can be drawn from the main findings.

Conclusions

- Overall, for a one parent with two children household, the average cost of the basket with meat from a butchers was £105.97, reducing to £103.01 if the meat was purchased from a retail outlet instead.
- The corresponding basket prices for a pensioner living alone were £59.60 and £59.18.
- For both household types, the basket prices at large national supermarkets were significantly cheaper than at any other retail outlet.
- Typically, the cost of the baskets for both household types rose as the size of the retail outlet decreased.
- Location had a bearing on the basket prices for both household types, with the cost increasing as the settlement area became more rural: the costs were cheapest in large towns, followed by medium and small towns, then villages, hamlets and open countryside.
- In terms of availability, 95% of the required basket items for both household types were accessible (with substitutions) at large national supermarkets – considerably higher than at any other retail outlet.
- The availability of basket items for both household types was markedly higher in large towns than in any other settlement area.
- Interestingly, despite being more rural, availability (with substitutions) of the required basket items for both household types was higher in villages, hamlets and open countryside, than in medium and small towns.

Appendix – Minimum Essential Food Basket Items

Contents of the Minimum Essential Food Basket for one parent with two children
(pre-school and primary school age)

Category	Item	Brand	Size	Quantity
Fruit	Bananas	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Fruit	Apples	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Fruit	Pears	Own/Generic	4 pack	1
Fruit	Grapes	Own/Generic	1 pack	1
Fruit	Melon	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Fruit	Pineapple	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Fruit	Salad tomatoes	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Mushrooms	Own/Generic	300g	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Broccoli	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Carrots	Own/Generic	Cost per kg	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	White onions	Own/Generic	Cost per kg	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Garlic	Own/Generic	One bulb	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Leeks	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Celery	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Lettuce	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Cauliflower	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Cucumber	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Potatoes	Own/Generic	2.5kg pack	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Stir-Fry (fresh)	Own/Generic	320g	1
Dairy and eggs	Milk (semi-skimmed)	Own/Generic	2l	2
Dairy and eggs	Cheddar cheese	Own/Generic	450g	1
Dairy and eggs	Cheese low fat spread	Own/Generic	250g	1
Meat	Ham (slices)	Own/Generic	5 pack	1
Meat	Pre-packed chicken	Own/Generic	180g	1

Dairy and eggs	Fromage frais	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Dairy and eggs	Fromage frais	Own/Generic	4 pack	1
Dairy and eggs	Yoghurts	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Dairy and eggs	Flora spread	Flora light	500g	1
Meat	Pork pieces	Own/Generic and Butcher	454g	1
Meat	Chicken fillets	Own/Generic and Butcher	4	1
Meat	Mincemeat	Own/Generic and Butcher	454g	1
Meat	Steak (stewing)	Own/Generic and Butcher	454g	1
Meat	Bacon Rashers	Own/Generic and Butcher	10	1
Meat	Sausages	Own/Generic and Butcher	8	1
Meat	Sausages stuffing	Own/Generic and Butcher	8	1
Dairy and eggs	Eggs	Own/Generic	12 pack	1
Breads and cereals	Wholemeal bread	Kingsmill	800g	1
Breads and cereals	Wholemeal bread own	Own/Generic	800g	1
Breads and cereals	Baps	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Breads and cereals	Bagels	Own/Generic	5 pack	1
Breads and cereals	Pancakes	Sunblest	8 pack	1
Treats	Muffin (blueberry)	Own/Generic	4 pack	1
Treats	Cake (small)	Own/Generic	300g	1
Breads and cereals	Porridge	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Breads and cereals	Weetabix	Weetabix	24 pack	1
Breads and cereals	Cornflakes	Kellogg's	500g	1
Store cupboard	Stir-fry sauce	Own/Generic	180g	1
Store cupboard	Tomatoes (tinned)	Own/Generic	400g	1
Store cupboard	Tomato puree	Own/Generic	200g	1
Store cupboard	Baked beans (tinned)	Own/Generic	415g	1
Fish	Tuna (tinned)	Own/Generic	160g	4
Breads and cereals	Rice	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Breads and cereals	Pasta	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Breads and cereals	Spaghetti	Own/Generic	500g	1
Breads and cereals	Egg noodles (dry)	Own/Generic	300g	1
Store cupboard	Poppadums plain	Own/Generic	8 pack	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Soup Mix	Own/Generic	500g	1
Store cupboard	Gravy granules	Bisto	500g	1
Store cupboard	Stock cubes (beef)	Oxo	12 pack	1
Store cupboard	Stock cubes (chicken)	Oxo	12 pack	1

Store cupboard	Curry powder	Own/Generic	80g	1
Store cupboard	Mixed herbs	Own/Generic	14g	1
Store cupboard	Salt	Own/Generic	750g	1
Store cupboard	Pepper	Own/Generic	25g	1
Condiment	Mayonnaise	Own/Generic	240ml	1
Condiment	Tomato ketchup	Heinz	570g	1
Condiment	Brown sauce	HP	255g	1
Oils and fats	Sunflower oil	Own/Generic	1l	1
Oils and fats	Olive oil	Own/Generic	1l	1
Coffee, tea and cocoa	Tea bags	Punjana	80 pack	1
Coffee, tea and cocoa	Coffee	Nescafe	200g	1
Coffee, tea and cocoa	Hot chocolate/cocoa	Own/Generic	500g	1
Mineral water, soft drinks and juices	Orange squash	Mi Wadi	1l	1
Mineral water, soft drinks and juices	Orange juice	Own/Generic	1l	4
Sugar, jams and syrups	Sugar	Tate & Lyle	1kg	1
Sugar, jams and syrups	Jam (raspberry)	Own/Generic	454g	1
Food products not elsewhere categorised	Peanut butter	Own/Generic	340g	1
Sugar, jams and syrups	Jelly (cube)	Hartley's	1	1
Breads and cereals	Plain flour	Own/Generic	1.5kg	1
Treats	Cream crackers	Own/Generic	300g	1
Treats	Rich Tea	Own/Generic	300g	1
Treats	Milky Way	Milky Way	14 pack	1
Treats	Popcorn (microwave)	Butterkist	3 pack	1
Treats	Rice cakes	Own/Generic	18 pack	1
Treats	Go-Ahead bars	Go-Ahead	5 pack	1
Fruit	Raisins	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Treats	Monkey nuts	Own/Generic	400g	1
Treats	Crisps	Walkers	6 pack	1
Breads and cereals	Garlic bread (slices)	Own/Generic	10 pack	1
Frozen	Peas (Frozen)	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Frozen	Haddock fillets 4 (frozen)	Own/Generic	450g	1
Frozen	Ice-cream	Own/Generic	2kg	1

Contents of the Minimum Essential Food Basket for a pensioner living alone

Category	Item	Brand	Size	Quantity
Fruit	Bananas	Own/Generic	Single loose	3
Fruit	Oranges	Own/Generic	4 pack	1
Fruit	Apples	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Fruit	Grapefruit	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Fruit	Salad tomatoes	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Mushrooms	Own/Generic	250g	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Carrots	Own/Generic	Single loose	7
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Peppers	Own/Generic	Single loose	2
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	White onions	Own/Generic	Single loose	3
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Red onion	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Celery	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Lettuce	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Garlic	Own/Generic	One bulb	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Cabbage	Own/Generic	Single loose	1
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Leeks	Own/Generic	Single loose	4
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Cucumber	Own/Generic	Single loose	0.5
Vegetables, including potatoes and tubers	Potatoes	Own/Generic	2.5kg pack	1
Dairy and eggs	Milk (semi-skimmed)	Own/Generic	2l	1
Dairy and eggs	Cheddar cheese	Low Low	160g	1
Meat	Ham (slices)	Own/Generic	125g	1
Dairy and eggs	Yoghurts	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Dairy and eggs	Flora spread	Flora light	500g	1
Meat	Chicken roast	Own/Generic and Butcher	Small	1
Meat	Pork Chops	Own/Generic and Butcher	1	2
Meat	Mincemeat	Own/Generic and Butcher	454g	1
Meat	Steak (stewing)	Own/Generic and Butcher	454g	1

Meat	Bacon rashers	Own/Generic and Butcher	8	1
Meat	Sausages	Own/Generic and Butcher	8	1
Dairy and eggs	Eggs	Own/Generic	6 pack	1
Breads and cereals	Wholemeal bread own	Harvest Pride	400g	1
Breads and cereals	Baps	Own/Generic	1 loose	1
Treats	Cake (small)	Own/Generic	250g	1
Treats	Apple pie	Own/Generic	1	1
Treats	Bun/pastry	Own/Generic	1	1
Breads and cereals	Porridge	Flahavans	500g	1
Breads and cereals	Weetabix	Weetabix	24 pack	1
Store cupboard	Tomatoes (tinned)	Own/Generic	400g	1
Store cupboard	Baked Beans (tinned)	Heinz	150g	1
Fish	Tuna (tinned)	Own/Generic	160g	1
Breads and cereals	Rice	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Breads and cereals	Spaghetti	Napolina	500g	1
Store cupboard	Curry sauce	Own/Generic	500g	1
Store cupboard	Lentils	Own/Generic	500g	1
Store cupboard	Gravy granules	Bisto	500g	1
Store cupboard	Stock cubes (beef)	Oxo	12 pack	1
Store cupboard	Mixed herbs	Own/Generic	14g	1
Store cupboard	Salt	Own/Generic	750g	1
Store cupboard	Pepper	Own/Generic	25g	1
Condiment	Mayonnaise	Own/Generic	240ml	1
Condiment	Tomato ketchup	Own/Generic	460g	1
Store cupboard	White sauce	Colman's	25g	1
Condiment	Vinegar (brown)	Own/Generic	568ml	1
Oils and fats	Sunflower oil	Own/Generic	1l	1
Coffee, tea and cocoa	Tea bags	Punjana	80 pack	1
Coffee, tea and cocoa	Coffee	Own/Generic	200g	1
Coffee, tea and cocoa	Hot chocolate/cocoa	Own/Generic	500g	1
Treats	Pears (tinned)	Own/Generic	410g	1
Sugar, jams and syrups	Sugar	Silverspoon	1kg	1
Treats	Plain digestives	Own/Generic	400g	1
Treats	Custard cream	Own/Generic	200g	1
Frozen	Oven chips (frozen)	Own/Generic	1.5kg	1
Frozen	Broccoli (frozen)	Own/Generic	900g	1
Frozen	Mushy peas (frozen)	Lockwoods	1kg	1
Frozen	Peas (frozen)	Own/Generic	1kg	1

Frozen	Sweetcorn (frozen)	Own/Generic	1kg	1
Frozen	White fish 4 (frozen)	Own/Generic	520g	1
Frozen	Ice-cream	Own/Generic	2kg	1