

# Technical notes

Emergency food parcel distribution in the United Kingdom,  
April 2024 – March 2025

21 May 2025

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# Introduction

These statistics cover the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 inclusive and are comparable to the equivalent periods from April 2014 onwards. Data was collected up until 13 April 2025.

Each year our statistics are recalculated to account for updated data provided by food banks, and for additional data processing. Data relating to previous financial years – in this case, 2014/15 through to 2023/24 – may therefore have changed since their original publication. As of May 2025, this release provides the most up to date snapshot of emergency food parcel distribution by the Trussell community of food banks over the last ten years.

## Number of individual locations distributing support

Between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, food parcels were distributed from 1,711 individual locations across the UK. Individual locations are not counted at one given point in time. They are instead counted if they have distributed food parcels at any stage during the time period. Some will have opened, and some will have closed during this period. Most locations can be classed as food bank centres, but some operate as delivery warehouses and are not open to the public.

## Data collection

Data from food banks in the Trussell community is collected via vouchers issued by referral partners, such as health visitors, schools, social workers, and organisations such as Citizens Advice. Referral partners assess people for financial hardship before referring them to a food bank. This means that the overwhelming majority of people receiving support via a food bank in the Trussell community do so because they are experiencing financial hardship.<sup>1</sup>

This voucher contains information such as the age of the person being referred to the food bank and how many adults and children are contained within their household, allowing the food bank to package up the number of parcels suitable for the household size. Each voucher therefore supports not only the referred person but all the people in their household.

For reporting purposes if a single voucher records two adults and two children in a household this would be described as the food bank providing four parcels and fulfilling one voucher. If that household were to return to the food bank again that would be recorded as the food bank providing eight parcels to a single household and fulfilling two vouchers.

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<sup>1</sup> Weekes, T et al, (2023), *Hunger in the UK*, Trussell, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/publications/hunger-in-the-uk>

Most vouchers are digital, ensuring data processing is complete as soon as the voucher is fulfilled. However, a minority of vouchers (under 10%) continue to be issued on paper. These vouchers must be manually uploaded by food bank staff. This can often lead to significant lags in the data collection.

Following a period to allow food banks to complete their data entry, the data sent out as part of this release acts as a census of the total number of parcels distributed in the Trussell community during the stated period. Food banks are included regardless of whether they have confirmed their data is up to date, or whether they closed for periods during the previous year. Food banks that left the Trussell community during the year are also included in these statistics.

Due to the significant need many food banks have experienced in the last year, it has not been possible for all food banks to input their data in time for this statistical release. In some areas, therefore, the number of emergency food parcels distributed is not up to date. If there are significant drops in the number of parcels in a certain area, this therefore needs to be viewed with caution.

Once food banks have inputted this data it will be included in the relevant year's numbers in subsequent releases i.e. if a voucher is fulfilled in March 2025 but not added to the system until May 2025 in a subsequent release that data will be included in the number of parcels distributed in March 2025.

## Data at regional, local authority and constituency level

We would recommend not comparing directly between local authority or UK parliamentary constituency statistics. There are significant issues with looking at differences in percentage changes since previous years, and with calculating a number of parcels distributed per head of population at the local level.

Primarily this is because the Trussell community is just one part of the picture of local delivery of emergency food aid, and this changes over time. This means that – depending on how many additional food aid providers open or close in areas – the Trussell community could be fulfilling a different proportion of overall need in an area year-on-year.

Beyond this there are other factors that could drive variations in the data such as the local economic climate, the policies of local government, and the opening or closing of individual locations by food banks. These factors make comparisons, and the identification of drivers of change and difference between areas, difficult.

Data at the local level has been analysed based on the location from which the parcel was collected or delivered, rather than where the household receiving each parcel is living. This means that there might be some changes to local authority statistics that are heavily influenced by the opening or closing, or other operational changes of the individual locations based in those local authorities.

Individual locations are matched to local authorities using postcodes provided by the food bank which are cross-referenced to the national statistic postal lookup file (NSPL).

Note that some food banks provide emergency food boxes. These are pre-prepared food parcels that are given to frontline organisations such as fire and police services to give immediately to people in need. Where these have been provided, they are linked to the food bank's primary address and counted accordingly.

## Parcel size statistics

Trussell has previously reported parcels as “three-day emergency food parcels”. In response to the operational challenges that many food banks were facing, particularly over the pandemic, some took the decision to distribute larger seven-day parcels. As has been the case in other recent releases, Trussell has simply combined numbers of three-day and seven-day parcels to report the total number of emergency food parcels that were distributed, without further adjustment.

## Number of individuals supported by food banks for the first time

As part of this release of data, Trussell has reported on the number of people supported by food banks in the Trussell community. Because of its data collection system, where people are provided with a unique identification code, Trussell can record when a particular individual first needs support from a food bank in the community. This allows food banks to understand how many times that person is referred to their food bank so they can offer further support if needed.

This unique identifier can be tracked to the first use of a food bank in the Trussell community. The total number of people first supported then calculated by selecting the unique identifiers that first appeared over the period in question and looking at the size of the household.<sup>2</sup> If for example, the first time someone was referred to a food bank, they reported that there were four adults and four children in the household we would report that as eight people used a food bank in the Trussell community for the first time, including four adults and four children.

## Contact details

If you want support in using these data please contact: [research@trussell.org.uk](mailto:research@trussell.org.uk).

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<sup>2</sup> It is not possible to track whether someone who has been referred for the first time has already received an emergency food parcel via someone else in their household who has been referred previously. We therefore use a random 95% sample to adjust for where multiple referrals may have been made to people from the same household.

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