

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025/26

## Food Insecurity

### Summary points

- Around 1 in 31 (3.2%) households in Bristol experienced severe food insecurity in 2024/25, and 1 in 12 (7.9%) experienced moderate to severe food insecurity. Of approximately 200,000 households in Bristol, this equates to nearly 15,800 households which are estimated to be experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity, and more than 6,400 from severe food insecurity.
- It is estimated that more than 4,600 households experienced occasions in 2024/25 when they were unable to buy the food they needed to keep themselves and their family healthy, and received emergency food and/or groceries.
- Lawrence Hill is the most acutely affected part of the city with 1 in 10 (10.0%) households reporting severe food insecurity and more than 1 in 5 (20.7%) reporting moderate or severe food insecurity.
- Approximately 1 in 12 (7.9%) households in Filwood and 1 in 16 (6.2%) households in Eastville reported having used an emergency food service (such as a food bank) during the same 12-month period due to food insecurity.
- Certain groups were more likely to experience food insecurity and require emergency food provision compared to the Bristol average. This includes respondents with a disability, those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, single parents, carers, those who identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) and people aged 16-24.

### Food insecurity – definition and measurement

The terms food poverty and food insecurity are often used interchangeably. There is no universally accepted definition, but it is generally interpreted as being unable to consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food for health, in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.

The causes of food insecurity are complex. These include:

**Financial environment** - Relating to income (amount and consistency), price and affordability of locally available food

**Social environment** - Relating to cultural norms, food and cooking skills, social networks, and the impact of marketing of unhealthy foods

**Physical environment** - Cooking facilities, access to shops and cafes selling affordable healthy food, and/or transport required to access these facilities

Notably, many of the root causes relate to broader social and economic inequality, and in particular poverty and economic disadvantage. This is exemplified in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) '*Family Resources Survey*', which reported on food insecurity figures in the UK between 2023-24, finding that 'households on any income-related benefit were more likely to be food insecure (13% low; 17% very low) compared with all households (5% low; 5%

very low)'. Households receiving Income Support were the least likely to be food secure, at 57%<sup>1</sup>.

### National picture

Measuring food insecurity is difficult as it encompasses such a broad range of causes, circumstances and outcomes. The lack of consistent recording and reporting of this data makes meaningful regional or national comparison difficult. In April 2019, the Department for Work and Pensions began a national measurement of household food insecurity. This showed that nationally for 2023-24 'the proportion of food-secure households decreased from 92% in 2019/20 to 90% in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, a decrease of two percent. Households experiencing low food security remained at 5% (as per the previous year), as did households experiencing very low food security (5%). However, there may be regional differences which may hide significant inequality and variation.

Similarly, it is difficult to get a true measure of impact the COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost of Living Crisis has had nationally on food insecurity. The indications are that it has both exposed and exacerbated underlying food insecurity risks in our society in areas particularly at risk of health inequalities already.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) food and non-alcoholic beverage prices rose by 3.6% in the year to January 2026, compared to 7% in January 2024 and 4.5% in the 12 months up to December 2025.<sup>2</sup>

Food bank use and the data collected from them give a useful indication of poverty and can indicate a clear correlation to food insecurity. The Trussell Trust (a network of more than 1,711 locations in the UK) reported that 'between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK wide network distributed 2.9 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis, of which 1 million parcels were distributed to children, for the third year in a row'<sup>3</sup>.

### Food insecurity in Bristol

In 2018, Bristol City Council included additional questions concerning food insecurity into the Quality of Life (QoL) Survey to establish benchmarks for future comparisons and to permit some analysis of variation across the city. These questions are based on the United Nations Food Insecurity Experience Survey module<sup>4</sup> and focus on self-reported food-related behaviours and experiences associated with increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints. It enables a score to be calculated for all responding households that can be used to identify households suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity.

<sup>1</sup> Department of work and Pensions (2025), *Family Resources Survey; financial year 2023 to 2024*. Published online 27/03/25, available at [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Consumer price inflation UK: Office for National Statistics](#)

<sup>3</sup> The Trussell Trust. End of Year Stats 2025 [Microsoft Word - EYS Factsheet UK 2024-25 - FINAL](#)

<sup>4</sup> The Food Insecurity Experience Scale: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/fies/en/>

### Food insecurity and emergency food use by ward

Based on responses to the 2024/25 Bristol QoL Survey, an estimated 7.9% of households in Bristol have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in the past 12 months (Figure 1), a slight decrease on the previous year (8.3%). The percentage of people who have experienced severe food insecurity decreased to 3.2% in 2024/25, from 4.3% in 2023/24. However, there is considerable variation across the city, associated largely with income deprivation.

The highest percentage of QoL respondents reporting moderate to severe food insecurity was in Lawrence Hill (20.7%) followed by Central (13.5%) and Hartcliffe and Withywood (13.2%). By sub locality, Inner City (13.6%) and South Bristol (9.3%) reported the highest levels of food insecurity and North and West (Inner) the lowest (3.1%). Respondents from all wards experienced some moderate to severe food insecurity.

Lawrence Hill also reported the highest levels of severe food insecurity (10.0%), followed by Filwood (7.0%), Hengrove & Whitchurch Park (6.7%) and Central (5.7%).

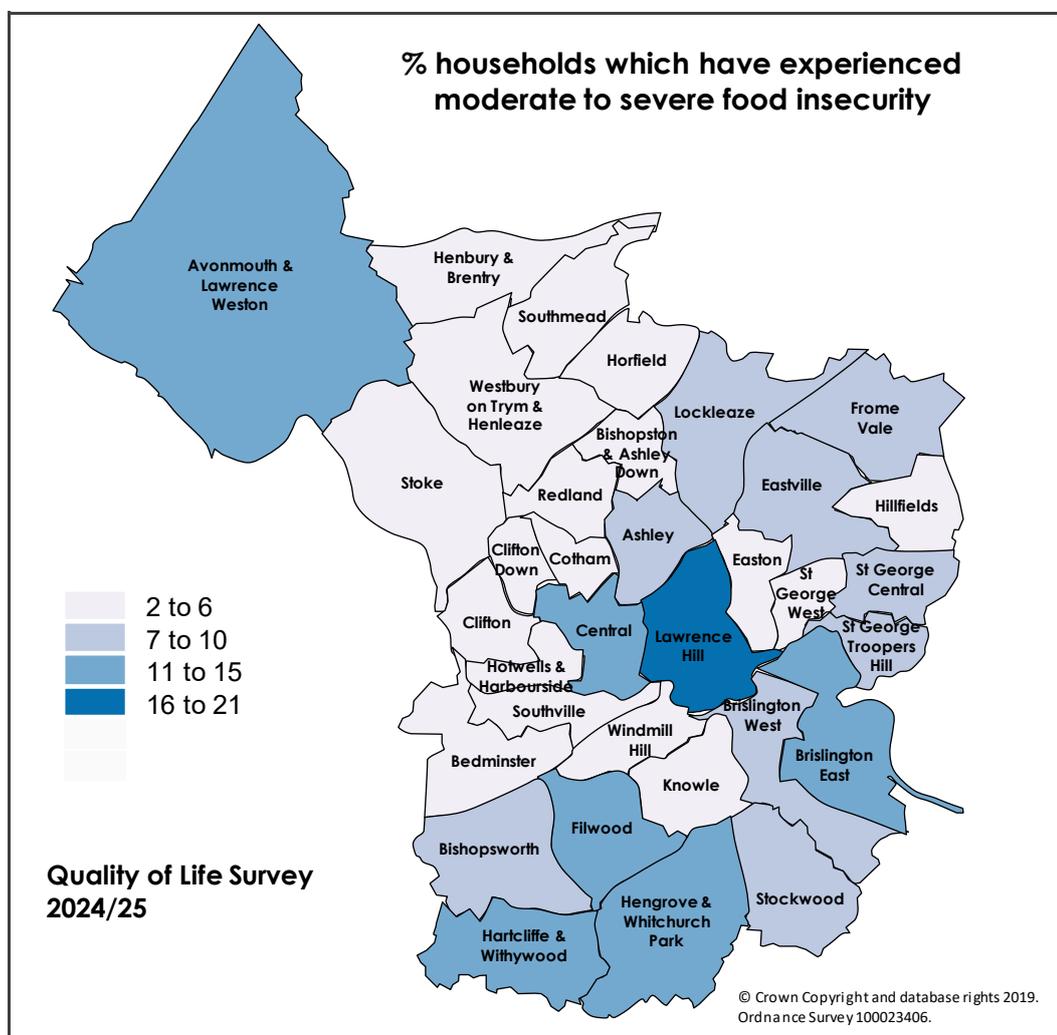


Figure 1: % of households which have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity (QoL survey 2024/25)

Overall, fourteen of Bristol's wards were above the city average of 7.9% experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, and twenty were below. This is a decrease on the previous year when 18 wards were above the city average, and 16 wards were below.

As another measure of food insecurity, the Bristol QoL Survey includes questions on the use of emergency food services (e.g. food banks). In the 2024/25 survey, 2.3% of Bristol households responded that they had received emergency food and/or groceries within the previous 12 months and is at its highest ever recorded proportion from the last seven years. This compares to 2.1% in the previous year, and 1.9% in 2022/23. The wards with the highest level of emergency food use in the last 12 months was Filwood (7.9%), Eastville (6.2%) and Lawrence Hill (6.1%).

### Food insecurity and emergency food use by deprivation decile

We analysed food insecurity according to deprivation decile of Bristol households. The data indicates that there is an association between deprivation as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score for the lower super output area (LSOA) of residence of the respondent and both the likelihood of reporting severe and moderate/severe food insecurity and accessing emergency food services (Figure 2). The prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity shows a significant deprivation gap between the prevalence in the 10% most deprived areas (16.3%) and the 10% least deprived areas (2.1%). There is also a significant deprivation gap for households experiencing severe food insecurity from 8.7% in the 10% most deprived areas to 1.3% in the 10% least deprived areas.

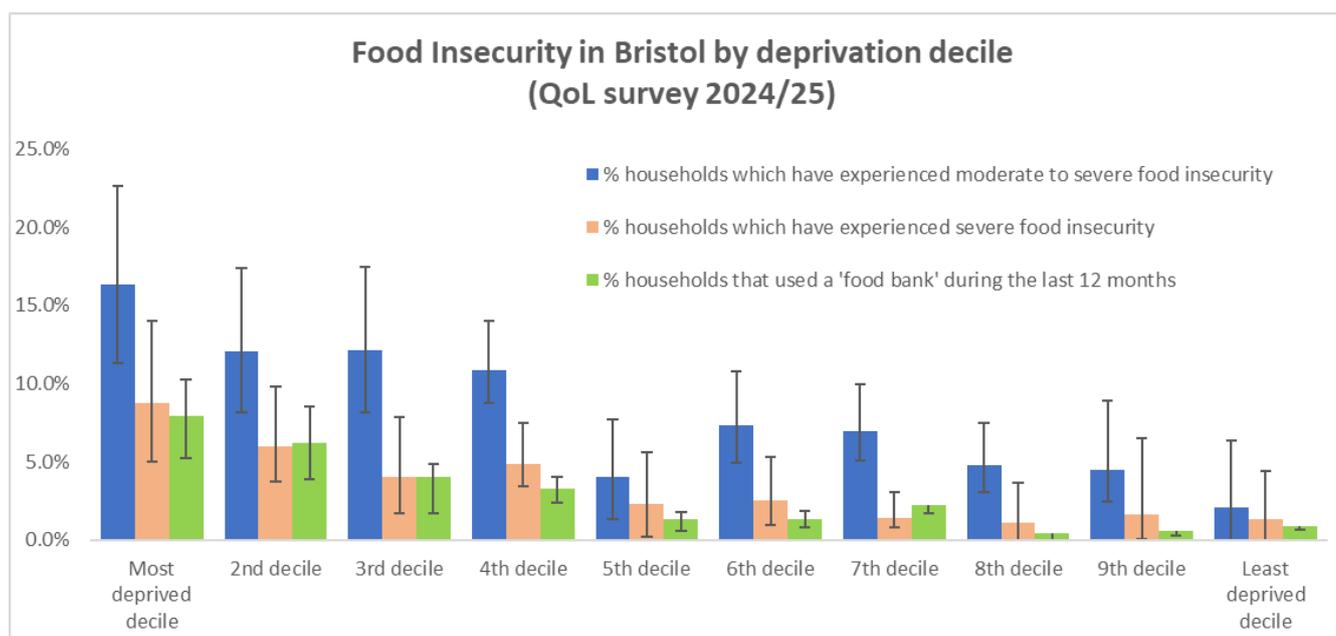


Figure 2: Food insecurity according to deprivation level in Bristol. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals (QoL Survey 2024/25).

Emergency food use was also higher among those living in more deprived areas, with those in the most deprived 10% over three times more likely (8.0%) to receive emergency food services compared to the Bristol average (2.3%).

### Food insecurity, emergency food use and equality

**Single parents** experienced significantly higher rates of food insecurity compared to the Bristol average, with 29.4% of single parent households reporting that they had experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in the last 12 months, compared to the Bristol average of 7.9% (Figure 3). Single parents were also more likely to receive emergency food and groceries, with 11.6% of single parents reporting they had received emergency food and/or groceries during the last 12 months, nearly double the proportion in the previous year and over five times more than the Bristol average of 2.3%.

**Disabled people** are at significantly higher risk of food insecurity in Bristol, with 22.9% of disabled people reporting moderate to severe food insecurity in the last 12 months. 9.1% of disabled people reported severe food insecurity, nearly three times higher than the Bristol average of 3.2%. Disabled people were also more than three times as likely to be in receipt of emergency food and/or groceries than the average Bristol household (8.6% compared to 2.3%).

**People from black and minority ethnic groups (BAME)** were more likely to experience moderate to severe food insecurity than the Bristol average (12.3% v 7.9%) and nearly twice as likely to experience severe food insecurity, with 6.1% of BAME households reporting severe food insecurity compared to the Bristol average of 3.2%. People who identified as from black and minority ethnic groups were also more than twice as likely to be in receipt of emergency food and/or groceries than the average Bristol household (5.2% compared to 2.3%).

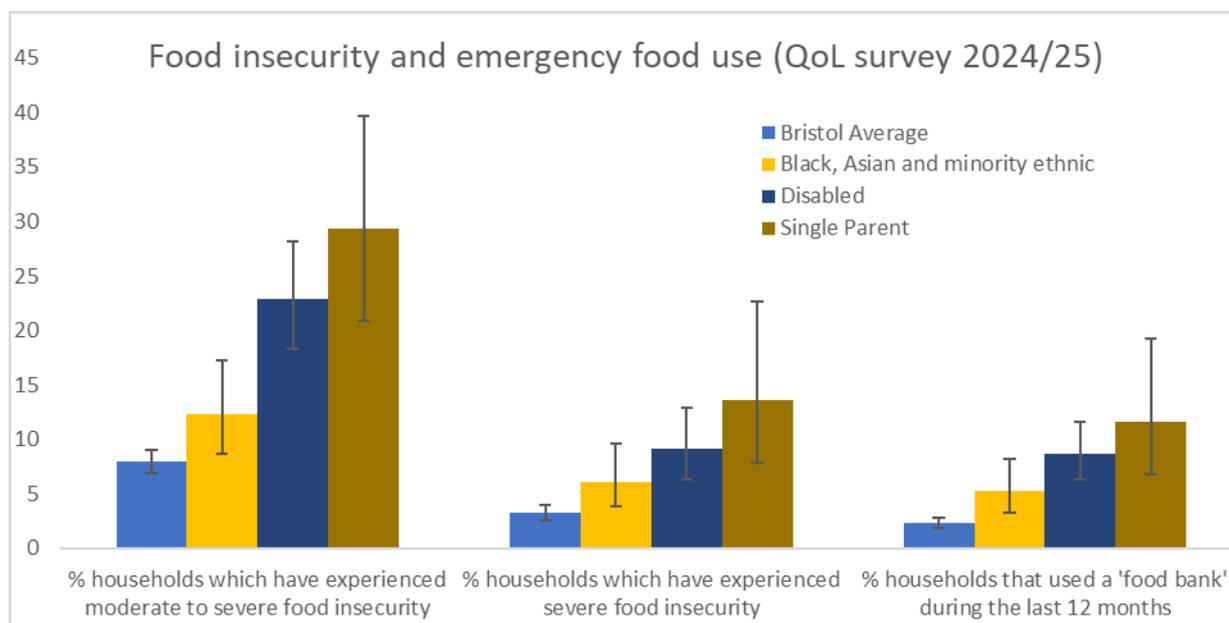


Figure 3: Food insecurity and emergency food use rates among QoL Survey respondents who identified as BAME, disabled or single parents, compared to the Bristol average (QoL survey 2024/25).

**Younger people** are more likely to experience food insecurity than older age groups. People aged 16-24 were nearly three times more likely to be affected by food insecurity compared to those aged 50 and above. 14.6% of people aged 16-24 years reporting that they had experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in the past year, compared to 5.1% of people aged 50 years and older, and 3.2% of people aged 65 and over. The same proportion of young

people aged 16-24 to last year, reported they had received emergency food and/or groceries during the last 12 months (3.0%), whilst usage increased from 1.3% of people aged 50 and over to 2.4%, and from 0.5% of people aged 65 and over to 1.2% (Bristol average: 2.1%).

**Carers** are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than the Bristol average. 12.0% of Carers experienced moderate or severe food insecurity (Bristol average 7.9%) and 6.5% of Carers experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 3.2%). In addition, 4.1% of Carers used emergency food services, nearly twice the Bristol average.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) and Trans** are also significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than the Bristol average. 16.1% of LGB people and 27.6% of Trans people experienced moderate or severe food insecurity (Bristol average 7.9%) and 6.8% of LGB people and 10.4% of Trans people experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 3.2%).

Females were more likely to experience food insecurity and emergency food receipt than males although there were no statistically significant differences.

### **Food insecurity and emergency food use: time trends**

Levels of food insecurity and emergency food receipt appeared to have been falling, or stabilising, in Bristol between 2018 and 2021, but the data from the 2022 to 2024 QoL surveys has shown significant increases in households who have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity and severe food insecurity. Food bank usage has also increased compared with the previous year and is now the highest recorded (Figure 4). It should be noted that fluctuations in these numbers are to be expected because they are based on small numbers of responses each year, and how truly representative of the Bristol average the survey response is each year, changes also – refer to the Methodology appendix of the [Quality of Life 2024/25 Priority Indicators: Briefing Report](#) for further information on the response rate. The surveys from 2020 and 2021 will have captured the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and whilst food insecurity doesn't appear to have increased as might have been expected, the way in which emergency food support was delivered during COVID also means comparison may be difficult. However, it is clear that the cost of living has had a significant impact in the last three years.

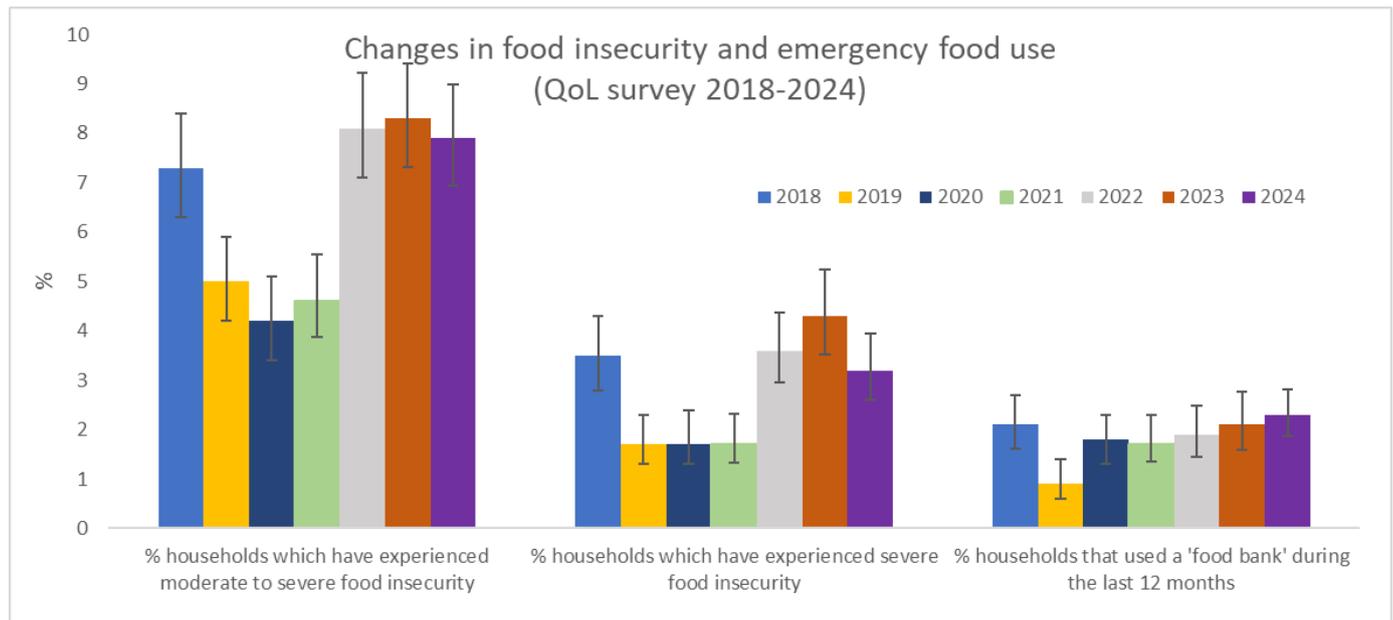


Figure 4: Changes in food poverty between 2018 and 2024. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

### Summary of findings from the Quality of Life survey

Emergency food usage is at its highest recorded rate from the last seven years. The proportion of households experiencing moderate to severe or severe food insecurity in Bristol has improved on the previous year but remains significantly higher than before 2022 and is likely to be associated with the current cost of living crisis. The small and fluctuant numbers and representation of respondents to the QoL survey means it needs to be considered alongside other data sources to establish the true picture of food insecurity in the city. The survey does however provide useful insight into stark inequalities experienced by certain groups.

### How are we addressing Food Insecurity?

#### One City Food Equality Strategy for Bristol 2022-2032

Feeding Bristol and the Public Health Team in Bristol City Council have worked in collaboration, with input from a wide range of stakeholders, a series of community conversations, and a public consultation to produce a *One City Food Equality Strategy for Bristol*.

The strategy sets the ambitious aim to strive for food equality for all residents in the city of Bristol and was launched in June 2023.

It builds on work and research that has been carried out over the last two decades and aligns with many city priorities and initiatives, including the One City Plan 2050, the Bristol Corporate Strategy, Thrive Bristol, the Bristol City Council’s Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and the Food Growing and Allotments Growing Strategy and the One Climate Strategy. It also delivers the Food Justice theme in the Bristol Good Food 2030 framework.

The One City Food Equality Action plan is the first three-year action plan that sets out the steps that need to be taken by stakeholders in various sectors to help achieve food equality in Bristol. It includes actions that have already started and are ready to be expanded, actions that we know must be taken by 2026 and new actions and projects that will be piloted before 2026. A progress report is produced every year. The second three-year action plan (2026-29) is currently in development.

The Strategy and Action plan have a Steering group which meets quarterly and reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Covid-19 impact:**

The impact is referred to throughout the report, please see above.

**Further data / links / consultations:**

- [One-City-Food-Equality-Strategy-2022-2032.pdf \(bristolonecity.com\)](#)
- [A One City Food Equality Action Plan for Bristol \(bristolonecity.com\)](#)
- [Bristol Food Provision Report 2018](#). Feeding Bristol commissioned research to focus on the most deprived wards of Bristol.
- Feeding Bristol: [Bristol's Covid-19 Community Food Response](#). A high-level summary of the food provided to the economically vulnerable in the first two months of lockdown, published 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020.
- Feeding Bristol [Healthy Holidays : food provision during a pandemic Impact report 2020](#)
- Feeding Bristol [Healthy Holidays Impact report 2019](#)
- JSNA Healthy Eating [JSNA Data Profiles - bristol.gov.uk](#)
- Feeding Bristol [Website](#)
- Bristol Good Food 2030 . [Home - Bristol Good Food 2030](#)
- Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and Food Growing Allotment Strategy: [Parks and Green Spaces Strategy](#)
- [The National Food Strategy - The Plan](#) – an independent review and plan commissioned by government with recommendations to reshape our food system.

**Date updated:** February 2026

**Next update due:** February 2027

**Contact details:** Communities and Public Health Division, Bristol City Council.