

FareShare's work: Context, Facts, and Statistics

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Notes For Use

This document is a summary of the latest facts and statistics in the areas of policy and research that relate to FareShare's work. The statements in this document are the evidenced outcomes of research by experts in their fields.

These documents are released quarterly. As some statistics are likely to change, please check that you have the most up to date copy.

Triple Bottom Line Summary

FareShare strengthens communities through food that would otherwise go to waste. By combating the environmental problem of food waste, we create positive economic and social outcomes for charities, enabling them to reach more people and have a greater impact on those they serve.

Economic Context and Impacts

As of 2021/22, 1 in 5 people in the UK were in relative poverty.¹ Food prices have risen dramatically during the cost of living crisis, with the average food bill now £1,000 higher than in 2021.²

93% of the organisations FareShare supplies food to report their food service users are able to save money to spend on other essentials.

Research by the University of Hertfordshire found that FareShare's work creates a net social and economic value of £225 million.³

Read more about [poverty](#), the [cost of living crisis](#), and what the [government has been doing](#).

Social Context and Impacts

As of January 2024, nearly 1 in 6 people in the UK are facing food insecurity.⁴ Inability to access food has negative impacts on overall mental health and wellbeing, including increased stress, poor mental health, isolation, anxiety, and depression.^{5,6} These effects have been worsened by the pandemic⁷ and now the cost of living crisis.⁸

By working with FareShare, community organisations improve their food provision, capacity, and their impact on the community. 88% of organisations we supply food to provide wraparound care services to address the long-term causes and effects of poverty.

The majority of charities we supply report that their food service users experience improvements to their mental health (81%) and reduced social isolation (88%).

Read more about [food insecurity](#) and [how FareShare is helping meet the need for support](#).

Environmental Context and Impacts

Growing, processing, transporting, and storing food takes a lot of resources. Worldwide, wasted food accounts for up to 10% of greenhouse gas emissions.⁹

The vast majority of the food FareShare distributes is surplus that would otherwise go to waste, 91% in 2022-23. With every tonne of surplus food FareShare redistributes, we stop 2 tonnes of CO2e emissions from being wasted.

Read more about [food waste](#), its [environmental effects](#), and [FareShare's impact](#).

More about FareShare's impact can be found on our [website](#).



1. House of Commons Library (2023). [Poverty in the UK: Statistics](#).
2. The Resolution Foundation (2023). [From Merry Christmas to Messy New Year](#).
3. Nicholas, C., T. Patakos, and A. Rughoo (2023). [Waste Britain: An evaluation of the economic & social impact of FareShare's contribution to fighting hunger and tackling food waste](#).
4. The Food Foundation (2023). [Food Insecurity Tracking: Round 13](#).
5. Yau, A. et al. (2019). 'Socio-demographic characteristics, diet and health among food insecure UK adults', Public Health Nutrition.
6. Purdam, K. et al. (2015). 'Hungry? Food Insecurity, Social Stigma and Embarrassment in the UK.'
7. Connors et al. (2020). [The lived experience of food insecurity under Covid-19](#).
8. Mental Health Foundation. (2023). [Mental Health and the Cost-of-Living Crisis: Another pandemic in the making?](#)
9. WWF (2021), [Driven To Waste: The Global Impact Of Food Loss And Waste On Farms](#).

Food Insecurity

A total of 11 million people (an estimated 8 million adults and 3 million children) experienced food insecurity in January 2024. This represents 16% of the UK's population, nearly **one in six** people.¹⁰

Households with children are disproportionately affected, with one in five (20%) experiencing food insecurity. For households with younger children (under four years old), that number rises to nearly one in four.¹¹

Food insecure households are far more likely to have to cut back on buying healthy foods: 60% have cut back on fruit and 44% on vegetables.¹²

The poorest fifth of households would have to spend 50% of their disposable income to afford a Government recommended healthy diet, compared to just 11% of the income of the richest households.¹³

Food insecurity is linked to negative effects on overall wellbeing and mental health, including isolation, depression, shame, and anxiety.^{14,15}

The following groups are disproportionately affected by food insecurity:^{16,17,18}

- Disabled people
- People from minority ethnic groups
- Households w/ 5+ members
- Households w/ children (esp. lone parents)
- People receiving benefits/carers allowance
- Households w/ lower educational attainment
- Renters
- People experiencing homelessness
- Asylum seekers.

Poverty

According to the latest government figures, 2021-2022, 14.4 million people (22%) in the UK are living in relative poverty, of which 4.2m are children (29% of children).¹⁹

The ONS reports that average household disposable income fell by 0.6% from 2021 to 2022. For the poorest fifth of the population, the decline was six times the average, at 3.8%.²⁰

Further reading: [Poverty in the UK: statistics.](#)

Cost of Living Crisis

In the year to February 2024, inflation (CPI) was 3.4%. Food and drink inflation was at 5%.²¹

Though prices for food and utilities are beginning to stabilise, wages have not caught up to the meteoric rise in living costs over the past two years.

"Politicians must stop conflating falling inflation with increasing living standards. We know that in the real world, the cost of essentials is still unbearably high, incomes have barely moved in real terms for years and families are looking to the future with a deep feeling of insecurity."
– **Stop the Squeeze**²²

By the time voters return to the polls, it is expected that incomes will be lower in real terms than they were at the last general election, the first time this has happened on record.²³



10. The Food Foundation (2023). [Food Insecurity Tracking: Round 14.](#)

11. The Food Foundation (2023). [Food Insecurity Tracking: Round 14.](#)

12. The Food Foundation (2023). [Food Insecurity Tracking: Round 14.](#)

13. The Food Foundation (2023). [The Broken Plate Report.](#)

14. Yau, A. et al. (2019). 'Socio-demographic characteristics, diet and health among food insecure UK adults', Public Health Nutrition.

15. Purdam, K. et al. (2015). 'Hungry? Food Insecurity, Social Stigma and Embarrassment in the UK.' Sociology.

16. UWS Oxfam Partnership (2021). [Food insecurity in times of Covid-19 – an insight into a deepening crisis,](#)

17. Trussell Trust (2021). [State of Hunger,](#)

18. Department for Work and Pensions (2023). [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022,](#)

19. Department for Work and Pensions (2023). [Households below average income: for financial years 1995-2022.](#)

20. Office for National Statistics (2023). [Average household income, UK: Financial year ending 2022.](#)

21. Office for National Statistics (2023), [Consumer price inflation, UK: November 2023.](#)

22. The Big Issue (2024). [When will the cost of living crisis end and will prices in the UK ever go down?.](#)

23. The Resolution Foundation (2024). [Back for more? Putting the 2024 Spring Budget in context.](#)

Government Activity

In February 2024, PM Sunak announced £15 million in funding to help farmers redistribute surplus food, fulfilling a long-time campaign ask of FareShare and its network partners.²⁴

The 2024 Spring Budget saw the Chancellor commit to extending the Household Support Fund until September 2024.²⁵ This fund is designed to offer support to people struggling to afford essentials such as utility bills and food.

Other announcements included:

- Raising the income threshold for households to receive full child benefits.
- Reducing the National Insurance tax for employees and self-employed people.

A general election is expected to be called this year, and must be held no later than 28 January 2025.

How FareShare is responding to need

In 2023, FareShare surveyed over 2,600 people who access food services we supply.²⁶ When asked how food support had impacted them:

- 81% felt better about their overall wellbeing.
- 2 in 3 feel healthier.
- 83% felt closer to their community.
- 3 in 4 skip fewer meals.
- 84% eat more fruit & veg

The evaluation showed the key role of food as a gateway to a broader range of positive impacts, with the majority (77%) of people first accessing support for the food offer and most (84%) continuing to attend largely because of the food.

Surplus food was also a spark for conversation, helping people connect and combating the stigma sometimes linked to getting help.

9 in 10 charities surveyed in February 2023 expect demand to continue to rise and most (85%) are worried they will not be able to keep up. Over half (51%) worry they will have to close down their services. One in 4 (24%) say that without FareShare they would likely have to close their food services.²⁷

88% of the organisations we supply provide vital wraparound care services as well as food. These services include support with mental health, unemployment, and childcare.

57% of the organisations we supply operate in the most deprived 30% of areas in the UK.

"It's not just food; it's family, and I feel cared for in this country - no longer alone!"

- Food service user, East Anglia

Analysis of FareShare's socio-economic impact found that our work creates a social value of £205 per individual reached, for a total of £108m in savings to individuals and £118m in savings to the state. This is thanks to the long-term costs we avoid by enabling charities to reduce the food affordability burden, improve diets, and reach more people (among other outcomes).²⁸

More information on our impact can be [found here](#).

Read more about FareShare's £25m [ask to government](#).



24. FareShare (2024). [PM Announces £15M Fund For Food Surplus Redistribution](#).

25. The Prime Ministers Office (2024). [The Spring Budget 2024: What you need to know](#).

26. Figures taken from the [2023 Impact on Individuals evaluation](#) conducted by Rocket Science & NCVO. These statistics are given as a net score, full response data is available in the [report appendix](#).

27. Statistics taken from FareShare's 2022-23 Annual Impact Survey. A summary can be found in FareShare's [2022-23 Impact Report](#).

28. Nicholas, C., T. Patakos, and A. Rughoo (2023). [Waste Britain: An evaluation of the economic & social impact of FareShare's contribution to fighting hunger and tackling food waste](#).

How much food is wasted?

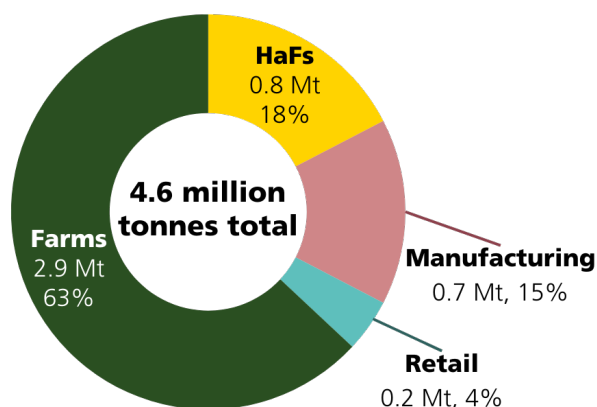
Worldwide, 1.3 billion tonnes of food goes to waste, or 33% of all food produced for human consumption.²⁹

In the UK, over **4 million tonnes** of good-to-eat food goes to waste in the supply chain every year, enough for **10 billion meals**. The majority of this goes to waste on farms.³⁰

UK food waste by sector (excl. household)

Sector	Mt edible	Mt inedible	Mt total
HaFs	0.8	0.3	1.1
Manufacturing	0.7	0.7	1.4
Retail	0.2	0	0.2
Farms	2.9	0.4	3.3
TOTAL	4.6	1.4	6.0

Where is edible food going to waste in the UK supply chain?



Household food waste adds another 6.6 million tonnes, for a total of over 12 million.

An estimated 500,000 tonnes of surplus food across the supply chain is thought to be suitable for redistribution.³¹

Food Waste: An Environmental Problem

Over 33% of all human made climate emissions arise from food production.³²

If food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gas in the world.³³ Food waste accounts for up to 10% of all global carbon emissions³⁴, that's more than four times the amount of CO2e emissions produced by the world's aviation industry.³⁵

In the UK, food production creates 35% of total greenhouse gas emissions.³⁶ Over a quarter of all the food grown in the UK is never eaten. This wasted harvest accounts for between 6-7% of our country's greenhouse gas emissions.³⁷

In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, it is 17 times better to get surplus food to people than the next best option, use it for animal feed.³⁸

In 2023, COP28 saw the UK join over 150 countries in signing a landmark declaration to bring food systems in line with climate targets.³⁹

FareShare's Environmental Impact

In 2022/23, FareShare prevented over 95,000 tonnes of CO2e emissions and 124 billion litres of water from going to waste.^{40,41}

For every tonne of surplus food FareShare redistributes, we prevent the waste of 2 tonnes of CO2e emissions and 2.66 million litres of water.

The amount of embedded CO2e FareShare saved from waste in 2022/23 is 4.5 times greater than the CO2e emitted in the running of its operations.

29. UN FAO (2011). [Global food losses and food waste - Extent, causes and prevention](#).

30. Edible food waste figures for primary production (farms) are from WWF (2022) [Hidden Waste: The Scale and Impact of Food Waste in Primary Production](#). Edible food waste figures for hospitality and food services (HaFs), manufacturing, and retail are from WRAP (2023), [UK Food Waste & Food Surplus - Key Facts](#). Meal equivalents are estimated using 420g as standard meal size, which is the method recommended by WRAP based on FSA data.

31. WRAP (2022), [Surplus food redistribution in the UK 2015 to 2021](#).

32. UN FAO (2011). [Global food losses and food waste - Extent, causes and prevention](#).

33. United Nations FAO (2013), [Food wastage footprint, impacts on natural resources](#).

34. WWF (2021), [Driven To Waste: The Global Impact Of Food Loss And Waste On Farms](#).

35. Global Carbon Project (2019), [Supplemental data of Global Carbon Budget 2019](#).

36. WRAP (2021). [Pathway 2030: Delivering A 50% Reduction In The GHG Footprint Of UK Food And Drink](#).

37. Dimpleby, H. (2021). [National Food Strategy](#).

38. J.A. Moul, et al. (2018). 'Greenhouse gas emissions of food waste disposal options for UK retailers', Food Policy.

39. COP28 (2023). [UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action](#).

40. Carbon Trust (2023), [FareShare Footprint Methodology Report](#), Available [here](#).

41. NOTE: These figures have been independently calculated by the Carbon Trust using 2022/23 data from FareShare network warehouses. This work was then applied to data from FareShare Go.



