

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

## Food Insecurity

### Summary points

- Around 1 in 23 (4.3%) households in Bristol experienced severe food insecurity in 2023/24, and 1 in 12 (8.3%) experienced moderate to severe food insecurity. Of approximately 200,000 households in Bristol, this equates to nearly 16,600 households which are estimated to be experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity, and more than 8,600 from severe food insecurity.
- It is estimated that more than 4,200 households experienced occasions in 2023/24 when they were unable to buy the food they needed to keep themselves and their family healthy, and received emergency food and/or groceries.
- Hartcliffe and Withywood is the most acutely affected part of the city with 1 in 7 (14.7%) households reporting severe food insecurity and more than 1 in 5 (19.4%) reporting moderate or severe food insecurity.
- Approximately 1 in 12 (8.3%) households in Hartcliffe & Withywood and 1 in 15 (6.8%) households in Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston 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 2022-23, finding that 'households on any income-related benefit were more likely to be food insecure (12% low; 18% very low) compared with all households (5% low; 5%

very low)'. households receiving Universal Credit and those receiving Income Support were equally the least likely to be food secure, at 69%<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 2022-23 'the proportion of food-secure households decreased from 92% in 2019 to 2020, to 90% in 2022 to 2023, a decrease of two percent. Households having a low household food security increased from 5% from 3% the previous year, or very low household food security also increasing from 5% from 3% the previous year.. However, there may be regional differences with 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.

A House of Commons research briefing (Aug 2023<sup>2</sup>) looked at how the rising cost of living is affecting food insecurity. It reported that food prices have been rising since the second half of 2021. Food and non-alcoholic drink prices were 19.1% higher in the 12 months to March 2023, the highest since 1977 and in July 2023, food inflation was 14.8%.

In July and August 2023, 56% of adults in Great Britain reported an increase in their cost of living compared with the month before according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Of these, 97% saw the price of their food shopping go up, and 47% had started spending less on essentials including food.

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 1,300 food bank centres in the UK) reported that 'between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK wide network distributed close to 3 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis. This is an increase of 37% compared to the same period in 2021/22. One million of these parcels went to children'<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

<sup>1</sup> Department of work and Pensions (2024), *Family Resources Survey; financial year 2022 to 2023*. Published online 21/03/24, available at [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/family-resources-survey)

<sup>2</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9209/CBP-9209.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Trussell Trust. End of Year Stats 2023. Available at. [End of Year Stats - The Trussell Trust](https://www.trusselltrust.org/end-of-year-stats)

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

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.

**Food insecurity and emergency food use by ward**

Based on responses to the 2023/24 Bristol QoL Survey, an estimated 8.3% of households in Bristol have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in the past 12 months (Figure 1), a slight increase on the previous year (8.1%). The percentage of people who have experienced severe food insecurity increased to 4.3% in 2023/24, from 3.6% in 2022/23. 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 Hartcliffe and Withywood (19.4%), followed by Filwood (12.2%) and Ashley (11.2%). By sub locality, Inner City (10.6%) and South Bristol (9.5%) reported the highest levels of food insecurity and North and West (Inner) the lowest (4.7%). Respondents from all wards experienced some moderate to severe food insecurity.

Hartcliffe & Withywood also reported the highest levels of severe food insecurity (14.7%), followed by Central (7.4%), Henbury & Brentry (7.2%) and Lawrence Hill (6.9%).

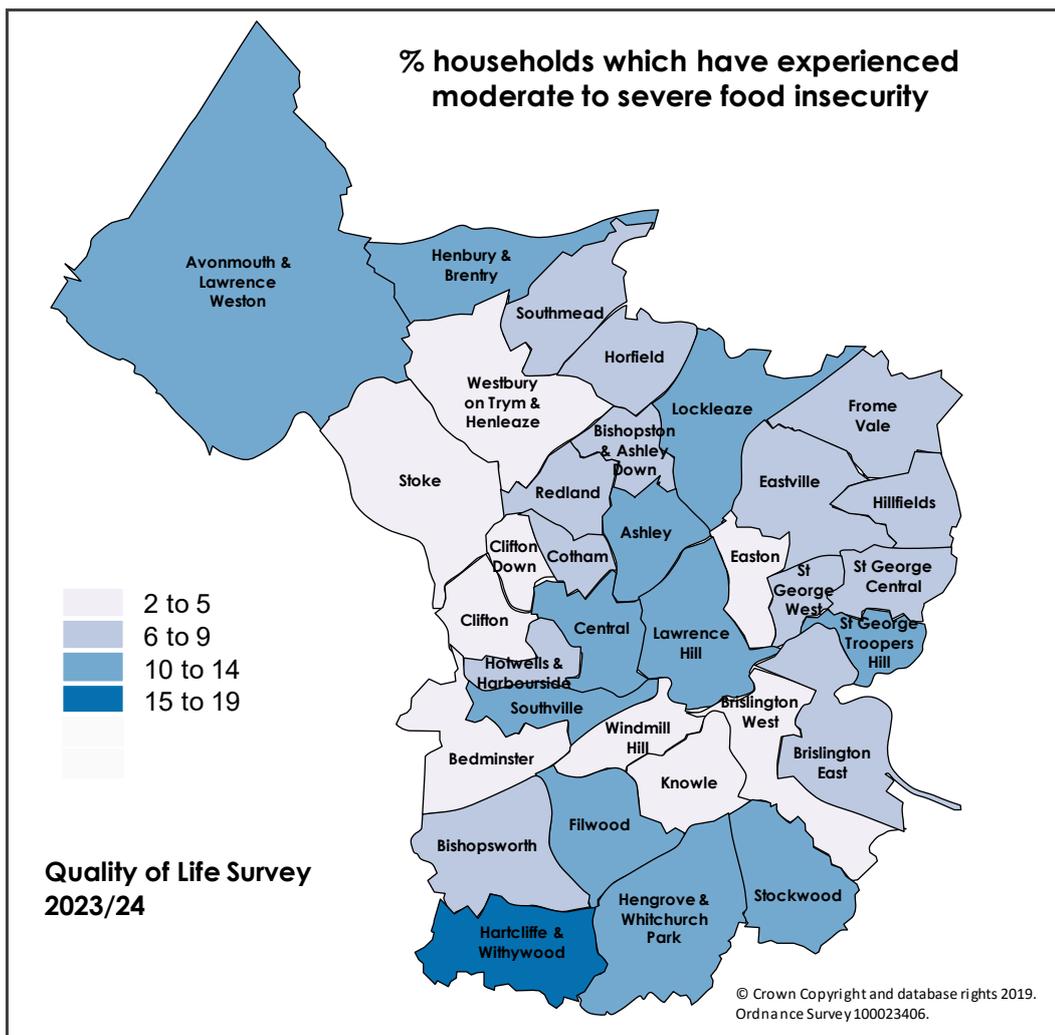


Figure 1: % of households which have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity (QoL survey 2023/24)

Overall, eighteen of Bristol's wards were above the city average of 8.3% experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, and sixteen were below. This is an increase on the previous year when 17 wards were above the city average, and 17 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 2023/24 survey, 2.1% of Bristol households responded that they had received emergency food and/or groceries within the previous 12 months. This compares to 1.9% in the previous year, and 1.8% in both 2021/22 and 2020/21. The wards with the highest level of emergency food use in the last 12 months was Hartcliffe & Withywood (8.3%), Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston (6.8%) and Lawrence Hill (4.9%). Respondents in 24 of Bristol's 34 wards reported less use of emergency food services than the Bristol average which is in keeping with the data above and reinforces the picture of certain areas of the city experiencing higher levels of food insecurity.

### 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 (18.9%) and the 10% least deprived areas (5.2%).

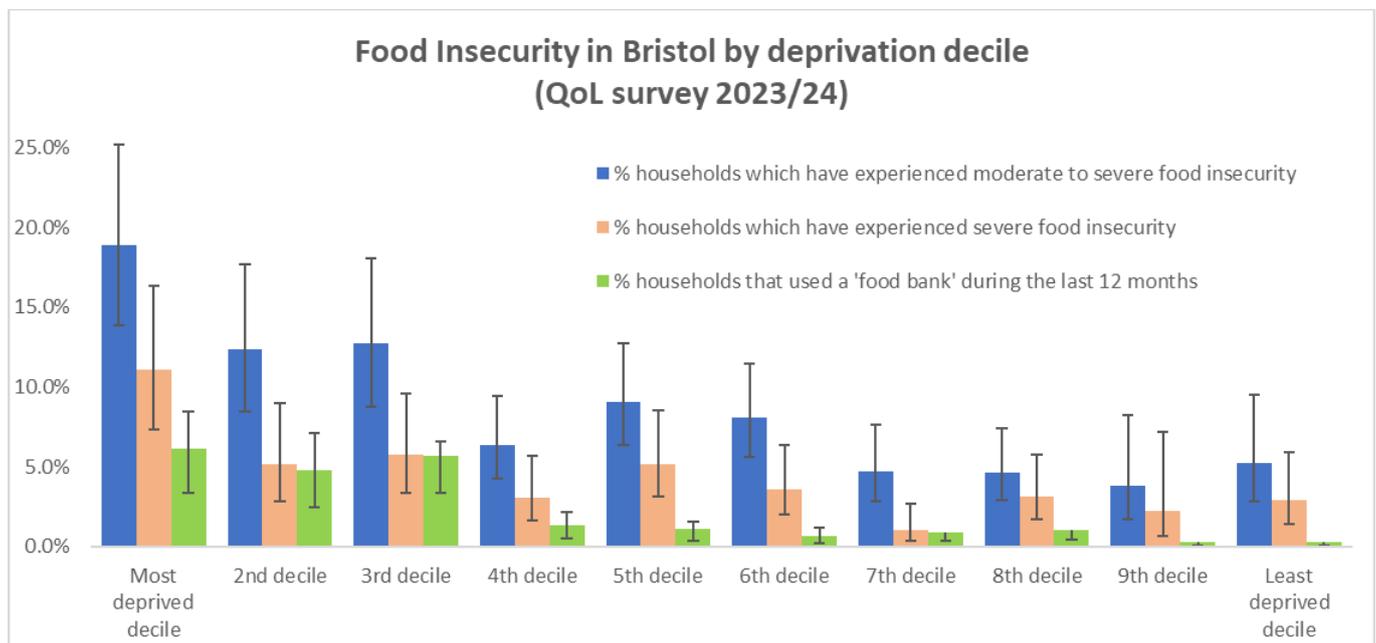


Figure 2: Food insecurity according to deprivation level in Bristol. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals (QoL Survey 2023/24).

Emergency food use was also higher among those living in more deprived areas, with those in the most deprived 10% nearly three times more likely (6.1%) to receive emergency food services compared to the Bristol average (2.1%).

### Food insecurity, emergency food use and equality

**Single parents** experienced significantly higher rates of food insecurity compared to the Bristol average, with 29.7% 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 8.3% (Figure 3). Single parents were also more likely to receive emergency food and groceries, with 6.4% of single parents reporting they had received emergency food and/or groceries during the last 12 months, nearly three times more than the Bristol average of 2.1%.

**Disabled people** are at significantly higher risk of food insecurity in Bristol, with 20.5% of disabled people reporting moderate to severe food insecurity in the last 12 months. 10.7% of disabled people reported severe food insecurity, more than double the Bristol average of 4.3%. Disabled people 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 2.1%).

**People from black and minority ethnic groups (BAME)** were twice as likely to experience moderate to severe food insecurity than the Bristol average (16.2% v 8.3%) and more likely to experience severe food insecurity, with 11.4% of BAME households reporting severe food insecurity compared to the Bristol average of 4.3%. People who identified as BAME were also much more likely to be in receipt of emergency food and/or groceries than the average Bristol household (5.5% compared to 2.1%).

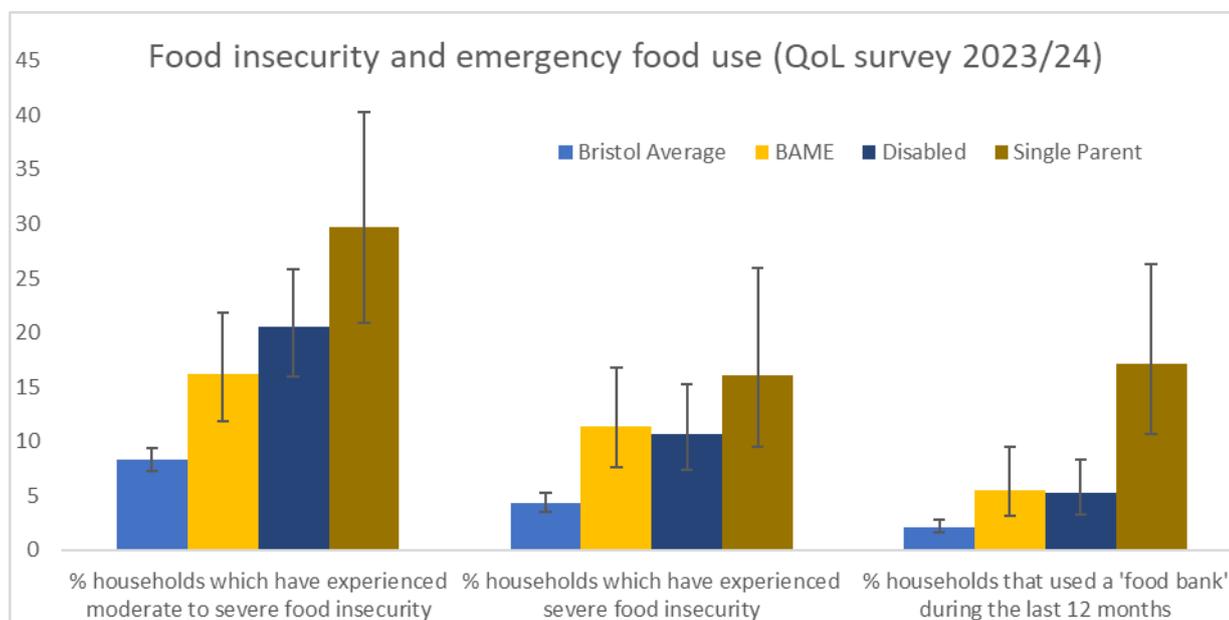


Figure 3: Food insecurity and emergency food use rates among QoL Survey respondents who identified as BAME, disabled or single parents, compared to the Bristol average (QoL survey 2023/24).

**Younger people** are more likely to experience food insecurity than older age groups. People aged 16-24 were at least twice as likely to be affected by food insecurity compared to those aged 50 and above, with 16.5% of people aged 16-24 years reporting that they had experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in the past year, compared to 6.5% of people aged 50 years and older, and 4.3% of people aged 65 and over. A similar trend was seen for usage of emergency food services, with 3.1% of people aged 16-24 reporting they had received

emergency food and/or groceries during the last 12 months, compared to 1.3% of people aged 50 and over, and 0.5% of people aged 65 and over (Bristol average: 2.1%).

**Carers** are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than the Bristol average. 12.7% of Carers experienced moderate or severe food insecurity (Bristol average 8.3%) and 8.5% of Carers experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 4.3%). In addition, 3.9% 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. 18.1% of LGB people and 37.7% of Trans people experienced moderate or severe food insecurity (Bristol average 8.3%) and 10.1% of LGB people and 30.2% of Trans people experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 4.3%).

No significant differences in food insecurity and emergency food receipt were observed between the Bristol average and those who identified as male or female. This does not necessarily mean that differences associated with these characteristics do not exist, but we were unable to determine they do or do not with the results available from the 2023/24 QoL survey.

### **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 and 2023 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 (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 2023/24 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 two years.

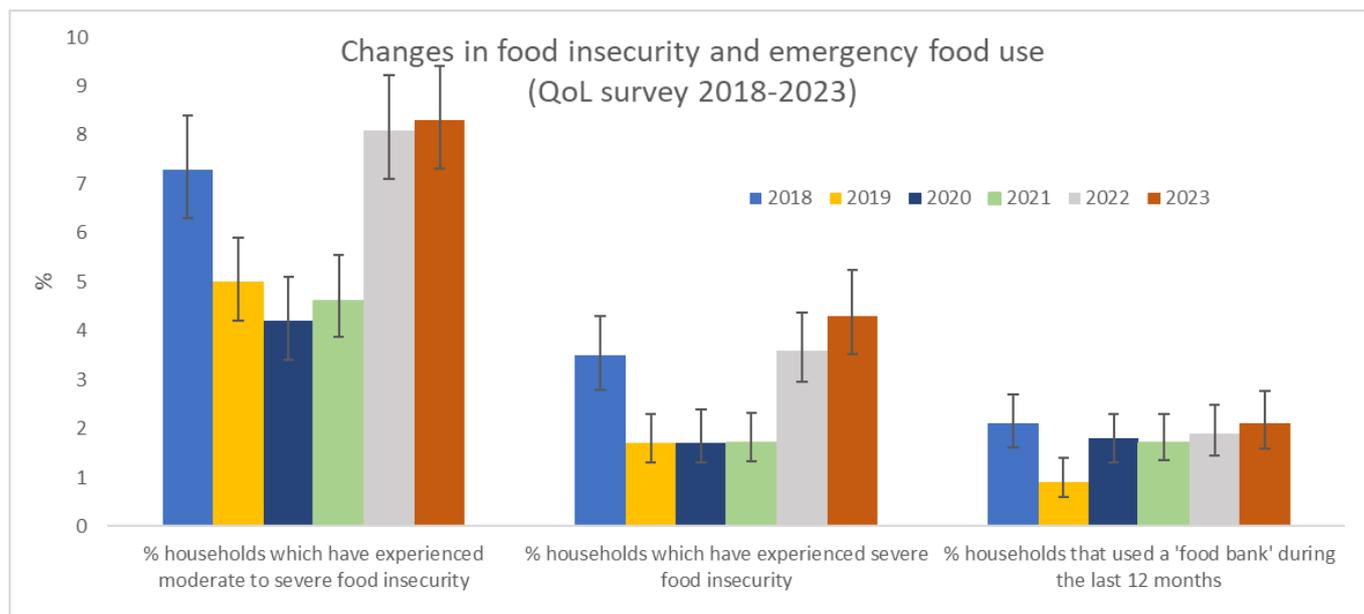


Figure 4: Changes in food poverty between 2018 and 2023. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

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

Food insecurity in Bristol has increased compared to the previous year which increased significantly compared with the previous three years 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 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, and the One Climate Strategy. It also contributes to Bristol Good Food 2030 under the Food Justice theme.

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.

The Strategy and Action plan have a Steering group which meeting 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](#)
- Online interactive map that gives visibility to what food is offered in the city. Map can be viewed here <http://bcc.maps.arcgis.com/>
- Feeding Bristol [Website](#)
- Bristol Good Food 2030 . [Home - Bristol Good Food 2030](#)
- [The National Food Strategy - The Plan](#) – an independent review and plan commissioned by government with recommendations to reshape our food system.
- [Shaping Places for Healthier Lives: about the programme | Local Government Association](#)

**Date updated:** March 2024

**Next update due:** March 2025

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