



The Food
Foundation

Kids Food Guarantee Update Wholegrains, Fruit, and Vegetables – August 2024

The cost of buying a week's worth of low cost fruit and veg has increased this year, disproportionately impacting low income families, although the price of low cost wholegrain carbohydrates has seen a welcome fall in price.

DATE: August 2024

The Food Foundation

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The Kid's Food Guarantee

The [Kid's Food Guarantee](#) is a set of actions which we think supermarkets should have in place as a minimum if we are to effectively tackle rising levels of food insecurity. These are actions that citizens have told us they are eager to see, and which align with existing areas of focus for food retailers.

Why fruit and veg and wholegrains?

Fruit, vegetables and wholegrains are a key component of a healthy diet. In the UK, the Eatwell Guide recommends consuming at least five portions of fruit and veg daily and basing meals around starchy carbohydrates, preferably wholegrain due to their higher fibre content. However, despite these recommendations 95% of adults are not eating enough wholegrains, only a third of adults are getting their 5-a-day and just 9% of us are eating enough fibre. Additionally, there are significant dietary inequalities between income groups in fruit and veg consumption, with only 55% of low-income households meeting the 5-a-day recommendation compared to 85% of high-income households.

What did we do?

To monitor these Guarantee areas we worked with Questionmark Foundation, an international non-profit think tank. For fruit and veg we looked at 1) the price of fruit and veg across UK retailers 2) how easily accessible the ten most competitively priced fruit and veg for each of the seven retailers assessed was 3) the availability of wholegrain products in four key carbohydrate categories across UK retailers and 4) whether wholegrain, whole wheat, brown and 50:50 staple carbohydrates were available at the same price or at a lower cost to the white equivalent.

We looked at seven major UK retailers; Aldi, ASDA, Morrisons, Iceland, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Co-op. Data was collected between 4th-6th March 2024 and compared to baseline data collected between 21st – 25th November 2023.

For this report we updated our methodology to exclude very large packages of fruit and veg (anything over 5kg or containing more than 30 portions of fruit and veg) as these come with a higher upfront cost to consumers that can be a barrier for low income households." See our [technical report](#) for more details on our methodology and our full list of inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Fruit and Veg

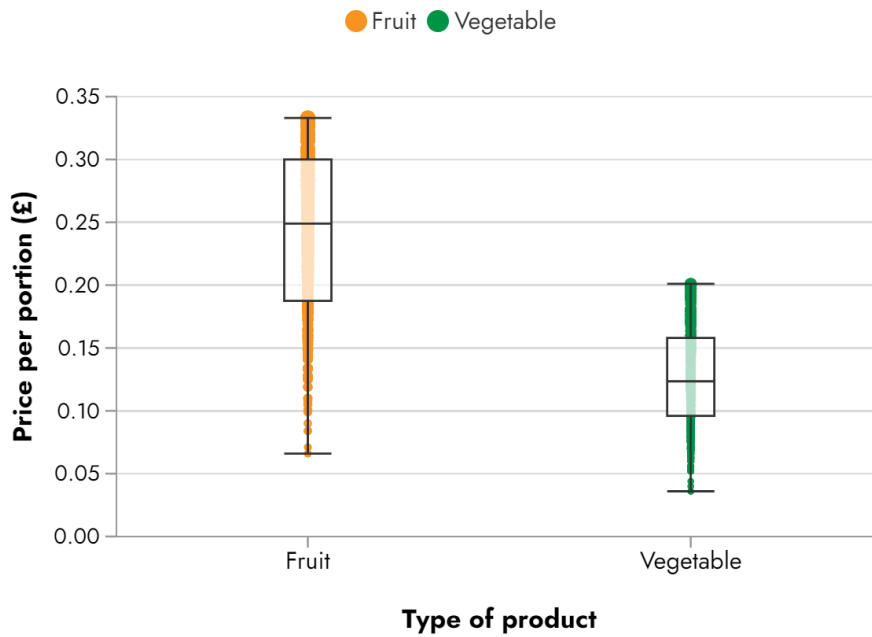
What's changed since November 2023?

The ten lowest priced fruit and veg products for each retailer

Looking at the lowest ten fruit and veg items available online from each retailer, where none have added salt and/or sugar, it is still possible to purchase a week's worth of fruit and veg for one person (35 portions) for less than £5 which is positive. Fruit on average costs twice as much as vegetables, at 25p per portion compared to an average of 12p for a portion of veg. The price of fruit also has a much wider range than vegetables.

However, despite food price inflation continuing to fall in 2024, the median price of the low cost fruit and veg we analysed has actually increased since November 2023, with an increase of 8p per portion of fruit and 3p per portion of vegetables.

The median cost of fruit and vegetables for the lowest priced fruits and vegetables across all 7 retailers: March 2024



Data was collected between 4th-6th March 2024
Products analysed across retailers in scope for 25% cheapest available fruits and vegetables.



Price of a week's worth of 5 A Day per individual: November 2023 vs. March 2024



Price has been calculated from average price per portion.



Given that families will buy for their entire household, we also looked at the price of buying the ten lowest cost fruit and veg identified for each retailer as they are sold, to reflect that many types of fruit and veg are not usually bought on an individual portion basis but are purchased by the bag or tin. For example, you would buy a bunch of bananas or a tin of beans, both of which contain multiple portions of fruit and veg. Encouragingly, the range between the cheapest and most expensive baskets has reduced compared since November 2023; from £8.67 at Sainsbury's to £13.24 at Morrisons in November 2023, compared to March 2024 where the lowest basket price can be found £9.35 at Tesco and the highest price at Iceland (£12.66)

However, although the range of basket prices seen across the major seven retailers has reduced, the average price of buying a week's worth of low cost fruit and veg that as a minimum would cover at least one person's 5-a-day has increased by 68p.

Price of a basket with a week's worth of 5 A Day: November 2023 vs. March 2024



Price has been calculated from average price per portion.



This is likely to be impacting the most on lower income households. Between November 2023 and March 2024, the cost for the poorest 10% of households to afford a week's worth of 5-a-day increased by 3%. As a proportion of average weekly expenditure on food the cost of 5-a-day increased from 34-52% of one person's average food budget in November 2023 to 37-51% for the poorest 10% of households in March 2024, while the cost for the wealthiest 10% of families remained relatively stable (17-26% of weekly expenditure to 18-25% in March 2024).

Accessibility of the lowest priced fruit and veg at each retailer?

In June and July 2024 we visited 27 stores across Portadown, Cardiff, Liverpool and London to see how available the ten lowest priced fruit and veg identified in our retailer baskets were. Stores were chosen based on their proximity to the Food Foundation's ambassador and staff's local areas, with a mix of different store sizes visited (standard, super stores and local/express formats). All seven retailers in scope were visited.

We found just one store, a standard-sized Asda in Portadown, had all low cost ten fruit and veg products available but there was a large amount of variation in availability across the stores visited. In another store visited, a Sainsbury's Local in London, we were unable to find any of the ten low cost fruit and veg items. Encouragingly the number of supermarkets with five or less items in stock has increased slightly from 60% to 63% since November 2023.

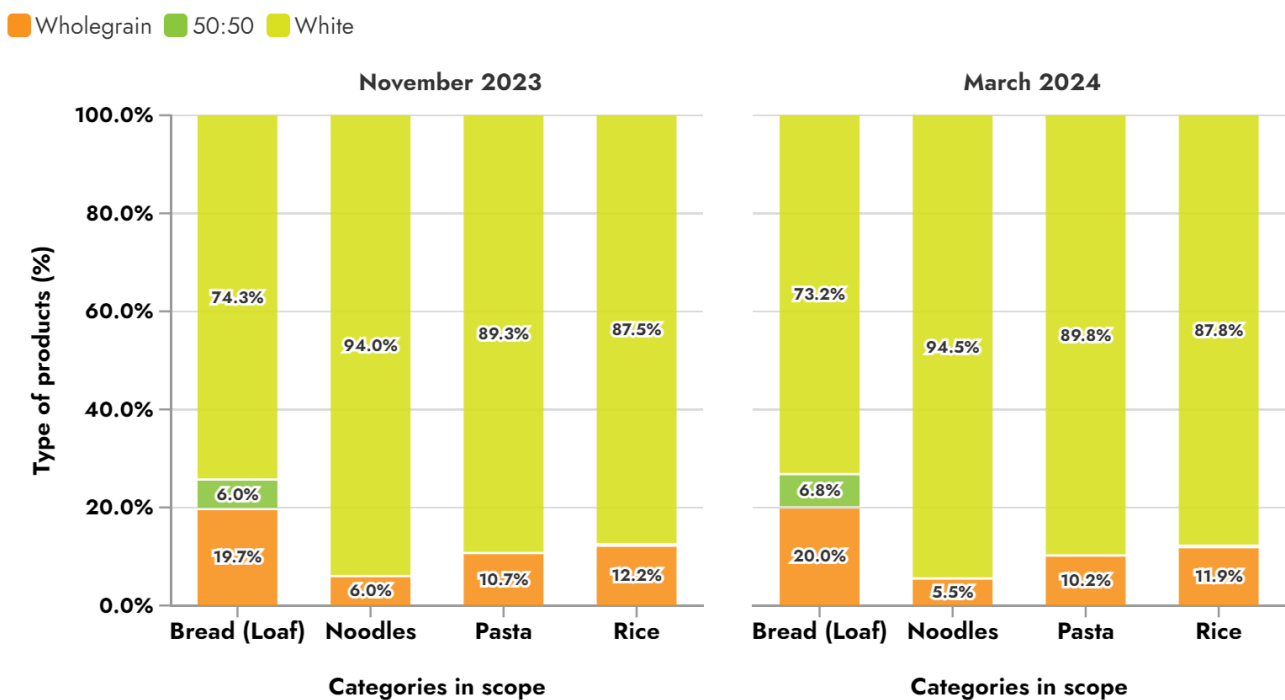
Wholegrains

What's changed since November 2023?

What is the availability of wholegrain products?

Across all four categories analysed (bread, noodles, pasta and rice) the majority of available options remain white, refined products, with just 16% of available staple carbohydrates wholegrain, brown or 50:50. Differences between November 2023 and March 2024 are marginal although it is positive to see that the availability of 50:50 and wholegrain bread has increased by 1.1%. Conversely, wholegrain availability in the noodle, pasta and rice categories decreased slightly across the board.

Type of available products under four selected categories across retailers in scope: November 2023 vs. March 2024



The 0.3% of 50:50 products within the Rice category refer to mixes of wholegrain and white rice (not shown inside the graph).



Across the seven major retailers there is once again a notable difference in how available wholegrain options are across different retailers. Iceland, Aldi and Co-op once again have the smallest proportion of wholegrain options and Sainsbury's, Asda and Tesco the largest. The largest increase in availability of wholegrains is seen at Morrisons (an increase of 1.4%) and the largest decrease in wholegrain availability is seen at Tesco (1.1%).

Price of a week's worth of 5 A Day per individual: November 2023 vs. March 2024

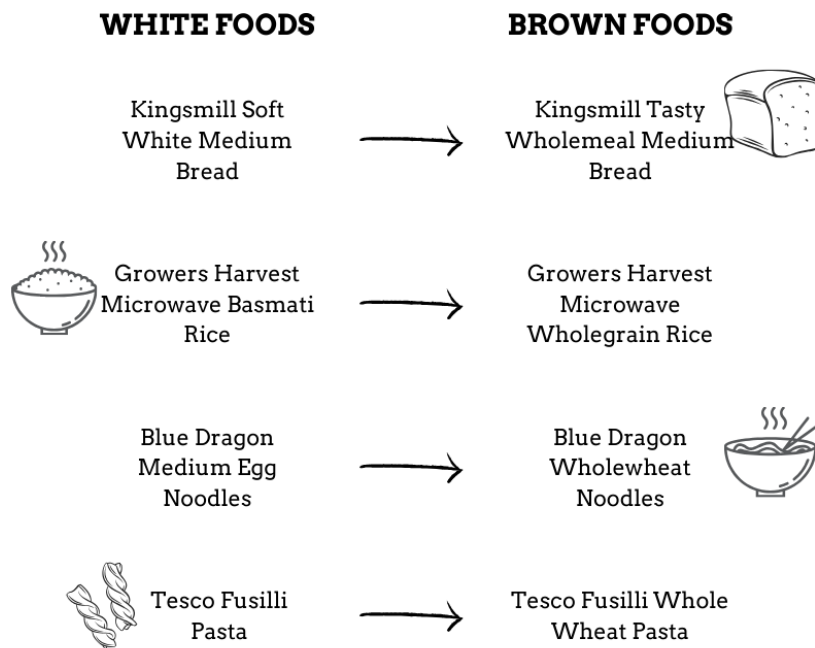


Price has been calculated from average price per portion.



How affordable are wholegrain products?

To understand how affordable wholegrain options are relative to more refined, white options, we first selected the 10 cheapest white products available in each category for each retailer. We then looked for a wholegrain or brown equivalent product of a similar size from the same brand (where applicable) and calculated the price per 100g for both products. For example, the price of Kingsmill's medium sliced wholemeal bread (800g) as sold in Sainsbury's was compared to the price of Sainsbury's Kingsmill's soft white medium sliced bread (800g).



Across all four categories, the average price of wholegrain and brown products remains higher than their white, refined equivalents. However, since November 2023 there has been an encouraging decrease in the price of wholegrain bread, noodle and pasta products compared to their white equivalent, narrowing the price difference. Rice is a notable exception, with the average price difference increasing by 6p. Rice still has the highest average price difference between white and wholegrain equivalents at 77p. Although the average price difference between whole wheat and white noodles has decreased by a considerable amount, this is skewed by certain noodle products no longer being available to purchase online, which has had a notable impact on the price difference due to the very small number of whole wheat noodles available to buy.

Change in average price difference per 100g between wholegrain and white equivalents in November 2023 and March 2024

Category	Price difference (November)	Price difference (March)	Price change since November
Bread (loaf)	0.09	£0.03	-£0.06
Noodles	0.72	£0.37	-£0.35
Pasta	0.24	£0.21	-£0.03
Rice	0.77	£0.83	+£0.06

Interpretation: For example, wholegrain rice equivalent is on average 83p more expensive than the white variety. Price is taken here as price per unit (per 100g). Wholegrain products here include whole meal, brown and 50:50 products. Data was collected between 4th-6th March 2024.



At an individual retailer level, we compared the prices of the ten cheapest products at each of the seven retailers for white products to their wholegrain equivalents across our four categories. It is encouraging to see that the price of wholegrain bread is now less expensive than the equivalent white products in four of the seven retailers, indicating that the best options for citizens to purchase wholegrain products are in the bread category. Asda, Iceland and Sainsbury's have shifted from offering price parity to now offering cheaper wholegrain bread options, while Morrisons wholegrain options were previously more expensive than white equivalents.

However, when we look at the other three categories (noodles, rice and pasta) white, refined products remain generally more affordable than the wholegrain equivalent, and in the noodle category, most retailers do not even offer whole wheat products.

Price comparison of white products and wholegrain equivalents across retailers in scope: March 2024

Category	Aldi	Asda	Co-op	Iceland	Morrisons	Sainsbury's	Tesco
Bread (loaf)	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Noodles	⊘	✗	✗	⊘	⊘	✗	⊘
Pasta	✗	✗	⚖️	⊘	✗	✗	✗
Rice	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

Data was collected between 4th-6th March 2024.

Wholegrain products here include whole meal, brown and 50:50 products. Red cross signifies where the wholegrain equivalent is more expensive than the white ones. Green tick signifies when the wholegrain equivalent is less expensive than white ones. N/A signifies where the wholegrain equivalent product is not available. Balance icon signifies where the price of wholegrain equivalent is same as the white product.



Conclusion

Retailers are still offering competitively priced fruit and veg but lower income citizens are likely to be struggling to afford enough fruit and veg, particularly when feeding families. Additionally, as we found in our first report, the very lowest priced products often contain added salt and/or sugar (18% of March's sample) and are not always readily available in stores. Action is needed from both retailers and government: our first fruit and veg report recommends several actions. [click here to read.](#)

While it's promising to see the cost of wholegrain products coming down in the noodle, pasta and bread categories compared to the white, refined carbohydrate equivalent, retailers and manufactures ought to increase the availability of wholegrain options across all categories. Detailed recommendations for both government and retailers can be found in our first wholegrain report, [click here to read.](#)



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