



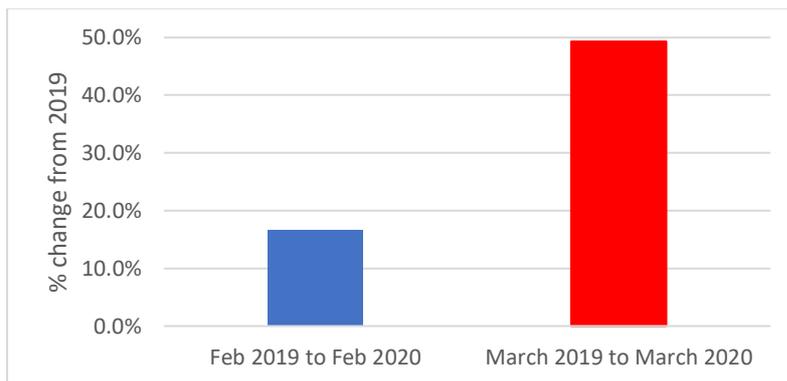
April 2020 - EMBARGOED 00:01am Friday 1st of May 2020

The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) connects, supports and advocates on behalf of a range of over 300 independent frontline food aid organisations. Its membership includes 252 organisations operating 320 independent food banks regularly distributing emergency food parcels at least once a week. Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK and subsequent lockdown, IFAN ran a survey among its member organisations to track how food parcel distribution has changed since 2019. Data were collected for February and March 2019 and February and March 2020 from 85 organisations¹ running 147 independent food banks.

IFAN independent food banks operating across the UK have seen a major rise in emergency food parcel distribution since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Almost a third of organisations experienced rises of 100% or more comparing figures for the months of March 2019 and March 2020 while 7% saw a rise of 300% or more.

In February 2020, before the COVID-19 crisis struck, food parcel distribution was, on average, 16.7% higher than in February 2019 (Figure 2). However, in March 2020, which included the start of lockdown, food parcel distribution was 49.3% higher than in March 2019.

Figure 2 Percent change in food parcel distribution from previous year for February and March.

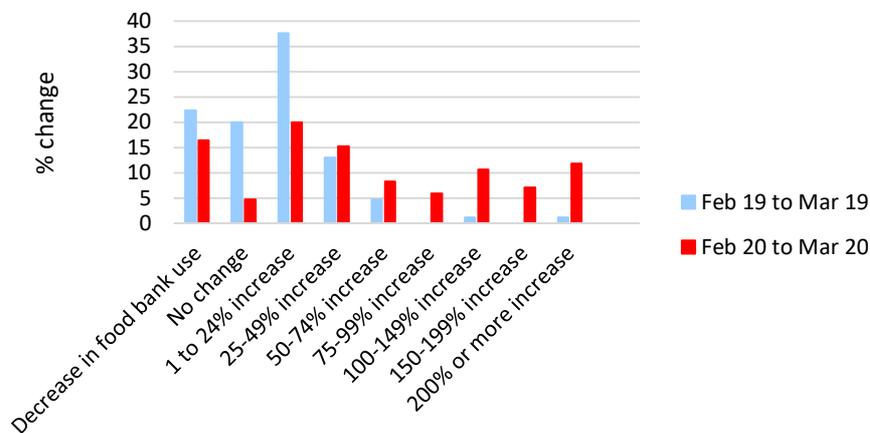


We compared the month to month increase from February to March in 2019 with the month to month rise from February to March 2020. In 2019, the average monthly rise in food bank use from February to March was just 3.41%; in 2020, the average monthly rise

¹ We received a total of 100 responses, but complete data were only available for 85 food banks. We did not include organisations newly operating in 2020 as their rate of change could be greater.

was over 17 times higher at 59.3%. As shown in figure 1, more food banks experienced an increase in need over February to March in 2020 than in February to March 2019, and rises were more extreme, with over 11% of food banks experiencing a rise of 200% or more.

Figure 1 Monthly change in food parcel distribution from February to March.



Some independent food banks have been running reduced services due to limited volunteer cohorts and access to venues. When we exclude these food banks from our figures, as these food banks experienced decreases in food parcel distribution on account of not being able to operate at full capacity, the average percent change from February to March was higher, at 67.2%. The average percent change also appeared to be higher in both Scotland and London at 68% analysed from the broader cohort of organisations.

Further information:

Our data showed increases in need for emergency food parcel provision and average increase from February to March of this year across all contributing organisations of 59.3%:

All organisations (n=85, 147 food banks)

Average % change from Feb 19 to Mar 19: 3.41%

Average % change from Feb 20 to Mar 20: 59.3%

This average percentage change increased to 68% in both Scotland and London:

Scottish organisations (n=23, 39 food banks)

Average % change from Feb 19 to Mar 19: 18.65%

Average % change from Feb 20 to Mar 20: 68.65 %

London organisations (n=11, 21 food banks)

Average % change from Feb 19 to Mar 19: 2.18%

Average % change from Feb 20 to Mar 20: 68.18%

Some independent food banks have been running reduced services due to limited volunteer cohorts and access to venues:

If only include organisations without a reduced service (n=72, 124 food banks)

Average % change from Feb 19 to Mar 19: 3.31%

Average % change from Feb 20 to Mar 20: 67.2%

If figures collated for 86 organisations for March 2019 and March 2020 are compared the average increase was 49.3% while 30% of organisations saw an increase of 100% or more and 7% saw an increase of 300% or more:

Data from 86 organisations contributing data for both March 2019 and March 2020:

50% of organisations had an increase of 50% or more.

30% had an increase of 100% or more.

7% of organisations had an increase of 300% or more.

Further notes:

The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) has been responsible for identifying at least [842 independent food banks](#) operating across the UK. We know as a result that at least 40% of UK food banks operate independently of the Trussell Trust's network of over 1,200 food banks.

In March 2019 and January 2020, IFAN published food parcel distribution figures alongside *A Menu for Change* collated from independent food banks in Scotland. [Data from independent food banks](#) almost doubled Trussell Trust figures and has been used to extrapolate a joint figure for independent and Trussell Trust food parcel distribution in the UK - an estimated 3 million emergency food parcels were distributed between April 2018 and March 2019.

In December 2019, IFAN published the first report of a study led by Dr Rachel Loopstra on independent food banks operating outside of the Trussell Trust network in England. You can read *A survey of food banks operating outside of The Trussell Trust food bank network* [here](#).

During the COVID-19 crisis IFAN has been supporting its members in particular as they struggle to source food while trying to support increasing numbers of people in need. IFAN has also been calling for the Government to introduce measures involving a "cash first" approach to urgently address economic vulnerability that would see the footfall to food banks reduced.

We are very grateful to Dr Rachel Loopstra of King's College London for her analysis of our figures and for the contribution of all our member organisations at an exceptionally busy time.

For further information on our or on the [Independent Food Aid Network](#) please contact Sabine Goodwin: sabinegoodwin@gmail.com Telephone: 07971-010-991

