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Independent Food Bank Use in Scotland *February to April 2019/2020*ⁱ

IFAN Scotland June 2020 data release

The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) connects, supports and advocates on behalf of a range of over 300 frontline food aid providers and envisions a society without the need for food banks. Across the UK, the network's membership includes 259 organisations operating 346 independent food banks regularly distributing emergency food parcels at least once a weekⁱⁱ. Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, independent food banks have seen a large increase in need for emergency food parcels.ⁱⁱⁱ

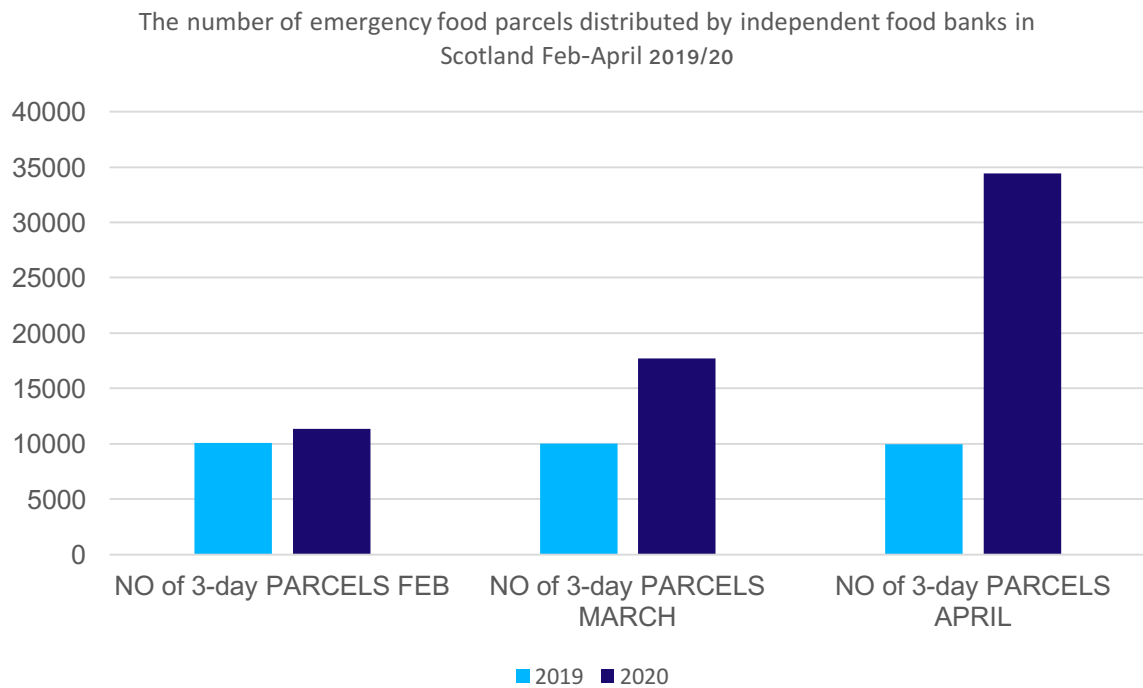
Huge increase in the number of emergency food parcels distributed by independent food banks in Scotland:

In Scotland, we analysed data for February to April 2019 and February to April 2020 contributed by 34 organisations¹ operating 65 independent food banks^{iv} located in 19 local authorities.^v Figures² for April 2020 as compared to April 2019 show a 246% percentage rise in the number of emergency food parcels distributed.^{vi} From March 2019 to March 2020 they show a 76% rise. In comparison, excluding the COVID-19 crisis, from February 2019 to February 2020 the rise was 12%.

¹ Only IFAN member organisations and participants in the IFAN parcel projects were invited to participate totalling 95 independent food banks in Scotland. Organisations opted-in to the survey and were not randomly selected. We were able to analyse data from 38 organisations running 70 independent food banks but our main focus is on data contributed for both February to April 2019 and February to April 2020.

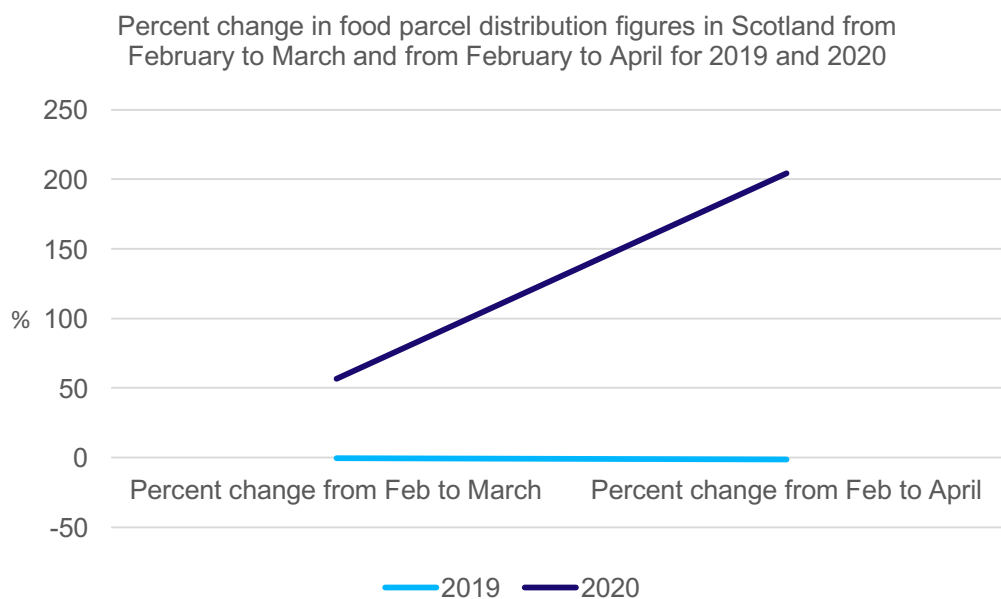
² Data collated from 6 of the 34 organisations was estimated by their teams while 11 organisations provided data regarding the number of referrals rather than people so these figures are likely to underestimated in terms of the number of people supported and the number of 3-day parcels.

Fig 1: Number of 3-day emergency food parcels distributed by independent food banks in Scotland February to April in 2019 and 2020



As shown in figure 2, from February 2020 to March 2020 the number of 3-day emergency food parcels distributed rose by 56% while from February to April 2020, there was a 204% increase in the number of parcels were distributed.

Fig 2: Percent change in food parcel distribution figures in Scotland from February to March and from February to April for 2019 and 2020



Unit of measurement used:

Like the Trussell Trust's statistics, the number of parcels we have recorded is based on the number of people, both children and adults who have been provided with one 3-day supply of food per person. Some independent food banks have provided more than 3 days' worth of food per person, so to enable comparison with Trussell Trust data, collated information has been converted into a shared unit of measurement.

Table 1: Number of 3-day parcels distributed by 34 organisations running 65 independent food banks operating in 19 local authorities in Scotland

Month 2019/2020	Numbers of 3-days food parcels distributed
February 2019	10,057
February 2020	11,323
March 2019	10,024
March 2020	17,714
April 2019	9,941
April 2020	34,447

Increase in the size of emergency food parcels:

It's important to note that because of social distancing and needing to reduce the number of visits or deliveries as well as because of increasing need, 21 of the 34 organisations providing data have increased the size of their usual parcel. 2 of the 34 organisations in the sample reported decreasing the size of their parcels to balance supply with need. In Scotland more organisations made this increase in provision since the outbreak of COVID-19 than in the rest of the UK - **61% of organisations in Scotland have increased the size of their food parcels as compared to 24% of organisations reporting this change in the rest of the UK.**

Number of people or referrals supported February-April 2019/2020:

In order to better understand the significance of the increase in food parcel distribution figures we analysed the number of people or referrals supported by independent food banks contributing to both time periods.³

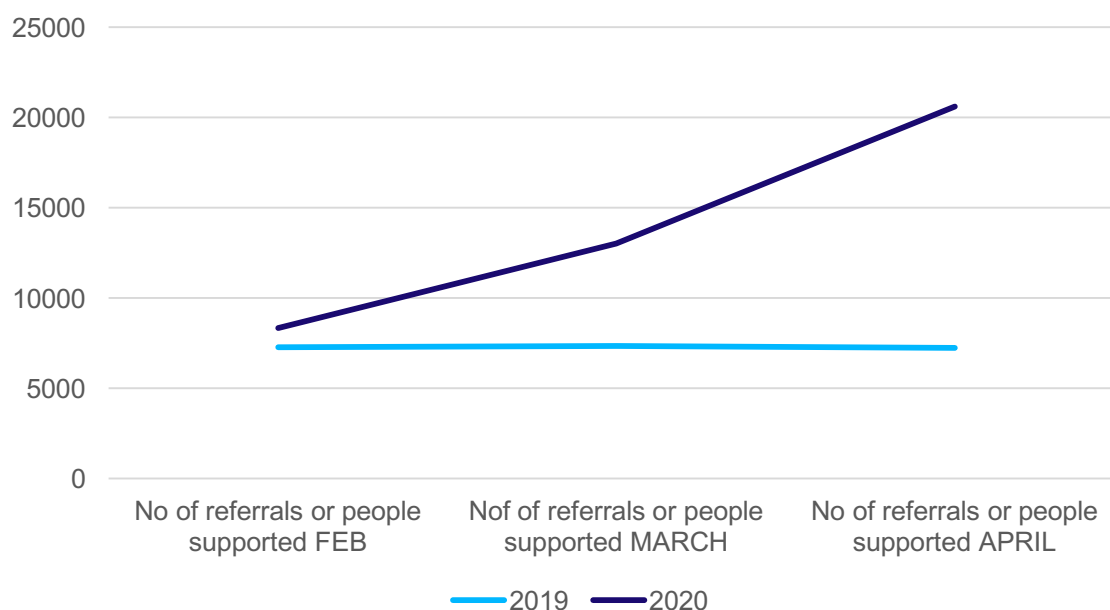
³ 11 organisations provided data regarding the number of referrals rather than people so these figures are likely to underestimated in terms of the number of people supported.

Table 2: The number of people or referrals supported by independent food banks in Scotland in February-April 2019 and February-April 2020

Month 2019/2020	Numbers of people or referrals supported
February 2019	7,279
February 2020	8,329
March 2019	7,358
March 2020	13,024
April 2019	7,253
April 2020	20,604

Figures for April 2020 as compared to April 2019 show a 184% percentage rise in the number of people and referrals supported. From March 2019 to March 2020 they show a 77% rise and from February 2019 to February 2020 the increase was 14%.

Fig 3: Number of people or referrals supported by independent food banks in Scotland in February, March, April 2019 and 2020.



Referral or self-referral:

Of the 34 organisations, 22 used a mixture of referral and self-referral in normal times, three ran on a self-referral only basis and nine reported only accepting referrals from agencies. Five organisations reported starting to accept self-referrals or seeing more self-referrals since the outbreak of COVID-19. Many referral systems have been compromised as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and telephone and internet-based systems that have been used to replace some services are not

necessarily accessible to people living with no or low income because of the costs involved. This could partly account for the large rise in numbers seeking support from independent food banks which are increasingly accepting self-referrals. However, 14% of organisations in Scotland have been accepting more self-referrals than usual with 28% of organisations seeing such a rise in the rest of the UK.

Operational capacity:

Across the UK, 52% of independent food bank organisations⁴ are now running larger operations involving more volunteers and additional venues. For others, around 4%, the pandemic has made it difficult to operate at full capacity, and they have run a reduced service. In Scotland, 36% of organisations are now running larger operations while 10% are running a reduced service.⁵

Reasons for food bank use:

22 organisations running 41 independent food banks in Scotland, or 64% of the food banks contributing food parcel data, reported on the reasons for use (this data relates to the two analysed time frames). Organisations could choose multiple options for reasons for use and these figures were not broken down by frequency or time period.

Table 2: The reasons for food bank use as reported by 22 Scottish organisations operating 41 food banks. Organisations could choose multiple options and reported on both 2019 and 2020.

Reasons for Use	Organisations reporting
Newly unemployed and waiting for first universal credit payment	19
Current benefits insufficient to be able to afford food	19
Income is insufficient to be able to afford food	18
Cannot access voucher scheme to replace free school meals	18
Benefit changes causing payment delay	17
Self-isolating/shielded but can afford to buy food	17
Self-employed but waiting for income support	17
Voucher scheme for free school meals insufficient to cover food costs	16
Sanctions	14
Self-employed but ineligible for income support	12
Other	6

⁴ This data is based on analysis of our wider set of data from 132 organisations.

⁵ This data is based on analysis of our wider set of data from Scotland contributed by 38 organisations.

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Acknowledgements:

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ⁱ In partnership with A Menu for Change, IFAN has published two sets of figures collated from independent food banks in Scotland in March 2019 and January 2020. This data almost doubled previously known Trussell Trust figures – www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/food-bank-data-in-scotland

ⁱⁱ The Independent Food Aid Network has identified at least 859 independent food banks operating across the UK – www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/independent-food-banks-map.

ⁱⁱⁱ IFAN previously published data on how food bank usage changed in food banks over February to March 2020, comparing figures to the same time period in 2019. These figures are not comparable to the figures reported here as they focused on within-food bank changes in the distribution of parcels or referrals, and a common metric of 3-day food parcel distribution was not totalled across all sites. In contrast, this new data set consists of a summation of the total number of 3-day food parcels distributed across all food banks in the sample, reports the percent change for the total number of food parcels distributed between time points and looks at the number of people and referrals supported. In addition, different IFAN organisations contributed data to this report.

^{iv} IFAN has identified at least 105 independent food banks and food parcel distributors operating across Scotland. This number is likely to have increased in recent months and does not include food banks running from schools or universities. The Salvation Army also runs a number of centres which distribute emergency food parcels across Scotland. The Scottish Government recently identified 744 community food organisations to be operating across the whole of Scotland. The 2018 Scottish Health Survey found that 9% of adults in Scotland worried about running out of money for food.

^v Contributing independent food banks were based in Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow City, Highland, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders and Stirling.

^{vi} IFAN previously published data on how food bank usage changed in food banks over February to March 2020, comparing figures to the same time period in 2019. These figures are not comparable to the figures reported here as they focused on within-food bank changes in the distribution of parcels or referrals, and a common metric of 3-day food parcel distribution was not totalled across all sites. In contrast, this new data set consists of a summation of the total number of 3-day food parcels distributed across all food banks in the sample, reports the percent change for the total number of food parcels distributed between time points and looks at the number of people and referrals supported. In addition, different IFAN organisations contributed data to this report.