

# Revealed: How much supermarkets' cheapest food is rising in price

Prices of the cheapest food items in supermarkets have surged in the past year, with campaigners warning that the poorest families are being disproportionately hit by the cost of living crisis.

According to data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the lowest priced goods are rising in cost at around the same rate as food overall – up by an average of 6-7% from April 2021 to April 2022.

For low income families already squeezed by inflation, the increasing cost of lower-priced items means a larger proportion of their budget is now being spent on food.

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Looking at a selection of 30 items, the ONS found that the prices of five items had shot up by 15% or more. The cheapest pasta products have soared by more than 50% since the start of the year.

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The price of the cheapest 500 gram packet of pasta was 53p last month, compared to 36p a year ago, while an 800 gram loaf of bread rose by 16% to 54p.

In cash terms, the biggest increase was in the cost of 500 grams of minced beef, which rose by 32 pence to £2.34.

The price of the lowest-cost fruit juice was up 14% on this time last year – although it is down slightly from its peak in October, when it was 22% higher than April 2022.

While the ONS discovered “considerable variation” among the 30 items it looked at, with potatoes having actually gone down in price by 14% on last year, anti-poverty activists warned the overall picture was troubling.

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Living on £5 food shop per week

**‘It’s far more expensive to be poor’**

Activist Jack Monroe warned MPs in March that prices of essential items were increasing, while some supermarket value ranges had disappeared from shelves, meaning the true cost of

living hasn't been reflected in inflation figures.

She said: "That then makes it difficult to identify that a £20 a week food shop a few years ago gets probably about two thirds of what you'd be able to get for that £20 now."

## **Rising prices for cheapest food may be in line with inflation – but will still hit Britain's poorest hard**



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The ONS has found that overall, the cheapest versions of these 30 everyday items are rising roughly in line with inflation across all food and non-alcoholic drink products, up by 6% in the 12 months to April, compared with 6.7% across the board.

But look below the surface and there are some real disparities. Ten items, in fact, have risen by over 10% – pasta, for example, has gone up a whopping 50%, while potatoes are down 14% and cheese has fallen by 7%.

But the data also offers clues about how careful shoppers are needing to be. It found, for example, that the difference between the lowest-cost version of an item and the next lowest-cost version is often large; regularly as much as 20% or more.

While it may be a relief that the poorest are not facing worse food inflation, the fact still remains that these rates will hit the poorest households harder.

Indeed, the IFS has calculated that the bottom 10% of the population in terms of income faced an inflation rate of 10.9%, which was three percentage points higher than the inflation rate of the richest 10%.

Larger proportions of the incomes of these households are needed for basic food and energy essentials. Times are certainly still tough.