



**Fair for You's  
first decade  
of fair credit:**  
transforming  
lives across  
the UK

**DAMON GIBBONS &  
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# About us

The Centre for Responsible Credit ('CfRC') is a charity working to develop better support and solutions for people who are struggling with debt; to influence the regulation of credit markets, and to improve the way that credit is provided. We are primarily concerned with the impacts of credit and debt for lower income households.

We undertake research, evaluation, and provide consultancy services, and are committed to promoting greater equity and social justice; to inclusivity and the celebration of diversity, and to empowering lower income people and communities who are in debt to exercise greater autonomy in their lives. For further information, please visit [responsible-credit.org.uk](https://responsible-credit.org.uk)

# About the Authors

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## Foreword by Howard Bell, Chair of Board



Ten years ago, Fair for You set out with a simple but radical idea — that access to essential household items should never depend on the kind of credit that exploits or traps people into debt.

A decade later, that belief has been proven beyond doubt. Behind the hugely impressive figures for lending and social impact are many tens of thousands of families who now have the security, comfort and dignity that comes with having a working appliance, a bed for their child, or food on the table without the fear of spiralling costs.

This report tells that story — not just of growth, but of impact. It shows how a social enterprise can succeed where traditional finance has failed, by putting people first and having fairness at its heart. It captures the resilience of our customers who have faced some of the toughest economic conditions in a generation and the dedication of our team, partners, investors and supporters who have made this mission possible.

As we look ahead to our next decade, the need for fair and affordable credit has never been greater. Millions of people across the UK still struggle to access essential domestic items and services without turning to harmful or unregulated forms of borrowing. Our role now is to build on the strong foundation of our first ten years, scale our impact, strengthen partnerships and ensure that fair credit becomes the norm, not the exception.

To everyone who has been part of this journey — our customers, colleagues, investors and partners — thank you. Together we have demonstrated that ethical and responsible finance can be a force for good creating a fairer, healthier, more equal society.

# Executive Summary

This report marks the tenth anniversary of Fair for You, a Community Interest Company dedicated to providing affordable and responsible credit to low-income households across the UK, and owned by the Fair Credit Charity. Over the past decade, Fair for You has transformed the landscape of ethical lending, offering a dignified alternative to high-cost credit and supporting tens of thousands of families to access essential goods, improve their financial wellbeing, and enhance their quality of life.

## Purpose and Scope

The report evaluates Fair for You's social impact from 2015 to 2025, drawing on management data for more than 87,000 customers and survey responses from nearly 3,000 borrowers. It updates previous evaluations, quantifies the breadth of social value created, and highlights Fair for You's evolving offer, customer base, and role in addressing financial vulnerability during a period of acute economic pressure for lower income households.

## Key Achievements

**Scale and Reach:** By July 2025, Fair for You had served more than 87,650 customers and advanced nearly £100 million in credit. Since the start of the evaluation and following a recent campaign publicising the Iceland Food Club (also known simply as 'Food Club'), the organisation has now surpassed 100,000 customers.

**Product Innovation:** Fair for You's Core Loan product, designed as a responsible alternative to high-cost credit, has been complemented by the launch of the Food Club (interest-free credit for groceries) and the Shopping Card (flexible credit for a wider range of retailers). These innovations have enabled the organisation to respond to changing customer needs and the evolving credit market. Fair for You has also recently revised its underwriting processes to include Open Banking data, ensuring that its loans remain affordable in the ongoing cost-of-living crisis being experienced by many households.

**Improvements in Financial Circumstances:** After using Fair for You:

- **40% of customers** reduced their reliance on other forms of credit (29,450 people).
- The number of customers saving regularly increased by **more than half, with more than 11,700 additional households** putting money aside.
- **Rent and mortgage arrears dropped by more than half**, with more than 9,600 households moving out of arrears.
- **A quarter of all customers (22,000)** are now better able to pay household bills.

- The proportion of **customers finding their financial situation “difficult”** more than halved, from 23% to 10%.
- **Those experiencing a “heavy” debt burden** fell from 22% to just 3%.
- **The share of customers whose debts are “no problem”** almost doubled, from one third to over three fifths.

### Wellbeing and Health:

- **15% of customers** would have had worse physical health, and **38%** would have suffered from worse mental health without Fair for You.
- **The number of customers describing their health as “excellent”** almost doubled, while those rating their health as “poor” fell by more than 15,000.
- **The number of customers saying they did not feel unhappy or depressed at all** rose by more than 12,000, while those reporting they felt depressed much more than usual fell by nearly 18,400.

### Diet and Nutrition:

- The Food Club has had a particularly strong impact, with the number of customers eating fruit every day more than tripling (from a little more than 10,000 before to more than 35,000 after).
- Those who said they never ate fruit fell by almost 17,000.
- These changes were heavily concentrated among Food Club participants, underlining the direct impact of affordable, interest-free food credit on diet.
- Marked reductions in food bank use, rent arrears, and informal borrowing were also observed.

### Access and Inclusion:

- 7% of customers (around 6,100 people) reported that they would not have been able to access the internet in their homes if it had not been for Fair for You.
- The same percentage reported that without the items obtained from Fair for You, their children’s education would have suffered—affecting households with a total of 11,800 children.

## Social Value and Return on Investment

**Nearly £800 million in social value** has been generated over the past decade, with a social return of approximately **£8 for every £1 lent**. Relief from depression and anxiety is the single largest contributor to social value, accounting for **£267.7 million** of the total. This includes £68 million in reduced costs for the NHS.

Due to the recycling of capital through ongoing loan repayments, the **social return on capital employed is approximately £46 for every £1 invested** — a powerful demonstration of the efficiency and impact of Fair for You's model.

Impacts extend beyond financial savings to encompass significant gains in mental and physical health, dietary quality, emotional wellbeing, and educational opportunities for children. Case studies included in the report — Rebecca, Leela, and Alex — illustrate how access to affordable credit can restore dignity, independence, and hope.

## Lessons Learned

**Targeting and Reach:** The customer base remains predominantly White and concentrated in the North, Midlands and Scotland, with limited penetration in London and among minority ethnic communities. There is a clear opportunity — and need — for Fair for You to expand its reach into more diverse markets, particularly in London, where financial exclusion remains acute.

**Affordability and Underwriting:** The introduction of Open Banking checks has strengthened affordability assessments but has also led to some existing customers being declined for further loans. This reflects the broader challenge of declining real incomes and rising financial vulnerability among low-income households. The capacity of both Fair for You and the wider affordable credit sector to serve many households is now highly contingent on a wider improvement in their financial situation. Achieving this is likely to require a strengthening of the social security system and/or a reduction in their living costs.

**Missed Payments:** While missed payments are common, Fair for You's compassionate approach — eschewing punitive charges and working with customers to adjust payment plans — is highly valued. Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand the structural causes of missed payments and to develop more flexible support mechanisms.

**Measurement and Evaluation:** The report underscores the importance of rigorous, weighted survey methodologies and the need for sector-wide consistency in social impact measurement. There is a pressing need for social investors and affordable credit providers to collaborate on best practice standards for impact assessment.

## Recommendations

- 1. Expand Reach and Inclusion:** Support Fair for You to extend its services into under-served regions and communities, particularly London and minority ethnic groups, through partnerships with local authorities, social landlords, and community organisations.
- 2. Strengthen Sector Collaboration:** Convene a working group of social investors to develop consistent standards for social impact measurement, enhancing transparency, comparability, and advocacy for the sector.
- 3. Innovate for Affordability:** Continue product innovation to meet the evolving needs of low-income households, including new forms of interest-free or low-cost credit and flexible repayment options.
- 4. Advocate for Policy Change:** While product innovation can help some, affordability pressures are shrinking the viable, responsible, credit market. There is therefore a need to use the evidence of Fair for You's impact but also its missed payments and decline data to inform policy debates on financial inclusion, credit regulation, and support for vulnerable households.
- 5. Deepen Customer Engagement:** Maintain ongoing dialogue with customers to ensure products and services remain responsive, accessible, and empowering. For example, some customers have requested higher Food Club limits to reflect the rising cost of groceries.

Fair for You's journey over the past decade is a testament to the power of responsible micro-lending to transform lives. By centring the needs and voices of low-income households, and by combining financial innovation with compassion and integrity, Fair for You has set a benchmark for the sector. As economic pressures continue to mount, the need for affordable, ethical credit remains clear. However, those same pressures also place limits on who can continue to be safely served. The lessons and achievements documented in this report provide a roadmap for the next decade — not only for Fair for You, but for all those committed to building a fairer, more inclusive financial system.



# 1 Introduction

This report evaluates the social impact that has been generated by Fair for You over its ten years of operation. Drawing on methods used across prior evaluations, it updates our understanding of Fair for You's evolving offer, customer base, product usage patterns, and impacts. It also quantifies the breadth of social value created — for customers and the public purse — and highlights Fair for You's role in addressing financial vulnerability during a period of acute and increasing pressure for lower income households.

The report highlights the power of responsible, micro-lending and encourages further investment into both Fair for You and the wider sector. It also calls for Fair for You to be assisted to reach further into the diverse London market, and for a robust sector-wide social impact framework to be developed and implemented by social investors. However, the report also recognises that affordability pressures are now shrinking the viable, responsible, credit market and that policymakers urgently need to address the underlying problem of declining real incomes for many of our poorest households.

## The Evolution of Fair for You

Fair for You is a Community Interest Company owned by the Fair Credit Charity, providing affordable credit to households in the lower half of the UK income distribution. Its core lending offer, launched in 2015, was designed as a responsible alternative to high-cost credit — including door-to-door lending, rent-to-own, and payday loans — with a focus on enabling access to essential household goods such as large appliances and furniture. These items have a direct bearing on living costs, health, and dignity.

From the outset, Fair for You differentiated itself through:

- **Robust, accurate, and affordability checks** and tailored lending terms.
- **Flexible repayment options** (weekly, fortnightly, four-weekly, or monthly).
- **Free delivery**, no hidden fees, and no late-payment charges, and
- **No re-lending to customers in arrears.**

Between 2015 and 2020, Fair for You served approximately 33,000 customers — predominantly low-income women with children, many living in social housing. Together, they entered into 77,500 unsecured loan agreements, three-quarters of which were for just four essentials: washing machines and dryers, fridge-freezers, cookers, and beds or mattresses. Typical loan amounts were around £350, with most repaid within 52 weeks. The average interest paid on those loans was just £61. Compared with the high-cost credit options customers said they would otherwise have used, each loan was approximately £270 cheaper. Combined

with Fair for You's policy of eschewing late payment charges, this delivered an estimated £9 million in direct cash savings to customers during its first five years.

## Beyond Cash Savings: Early Social Value

Our **2020 evaluation** found that these savings represented only a fraction of the broader social value generated. Customers also gained timely access to essential items they would otherwise have gone without, avoiding higher day-to-day costs such as takeaway meals, laundrette use, and smaller-quantity food shopping. These avoided costs were conservatively estimated at £38 million.

In addition, improved physical and mental health — linked to both financial relief and access to essential goods — was associated with:

- Fewer GP visits,
- Reduced use of community mental health services, and
- Lower prescription rates.

Together, these outcomes generated an estimated £2.2 million in NHS savings. Customers also reported non-monetised benefits including improved child welfare, greater control over household finances, and stronger family relationships.

## Responding to Crisis: Product Innovation and Expansion

Fair for You's importance grew during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis. Household incomes fell and financial insecurity deepened, while the exit of high-cost lenders narrowed the credit landscape — removing exploitative options but also reducing access to credit for some. In their place, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) has expanded, but this currently lies outside of the Financial Conduct Authority's regulatory perimeter and concerns have been raised by consumer groups about its suitability for lower income households.<sup>1</sup>

In response to changes in the wider lending environment, Fair for You evolved its offer by:

- Creating a Good Payers Club. Customers who have fully repaid their first loan or made timely payments for six months can access a broader product range, including electricals.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **StepChange has previously reported** that half of those with a BNPL loan found it difficult to keep up with bills and credit repayments. 17% of borrowers fell in to "severe financial difficulty". 40% had fallen behind on housing payments or utility bills to keep up with repayments and 39% reported that credit had a negative impact on their health, relationships or work.

<sup>2</sup> Membership is suspended if an account falls into arrears but can be reactivated once payments are back on track.

- Launching two new products supported by Nesta, Fair4All Finance, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation:
  - *Food Club*: small-sum, interest-free credit for grocery shopping at Iceland Foods and its sister store The Food Warehouse, and
  - *Shopping Card*: flexible credit for a wider range of retailers. Initially only available to customers with strong repayment histories, access to this product has recently expanded further.

Our **2022 evaluation** of the trials for both these products found that they:

- Improved food security and household budgeting.
- Reduced reliance on high-cost credit and informal borrowing.
- Lowered arrears on rent and Council Tax.
- Reduced food bank use, and
- Delivered knock-on benefits for nutrition, stress, and family wellbeing.

Responding to our previous surveys, many customers called the Food Club a “lifeline” and we recommended national rollout and deeper partnerships with councils and social landlords to boost uptake.

## Scaling Impact: Food Club Rollout

The national rollout of the Food Club took place in 2022. By October the following year, the Food Club had reached more than 27,000 households, providing £7.1 million in interest-free credit. Our follow-up evaluation at that time found:

- Marked reductions in food bank use, rent arrears, and informal borrowing.
- Improvements in diet, stress levels, and household budgeting.
- Physical health benefits reported by nearly a quarter of customers, and
- Positive impacts for more than 24,000 children.

## Current product range and lending volumes

The current product range therefore consists of core unsecured loans used to purchase household goods directly from suppliers, the Shopping Card product and Food Club. A summary of the key terms of these products, together with the total value of credit advanced through each over the past ten years is provided in Table one, below.

**Table 1: Product range and lending volumes, as at July 2025**

Product	Overview	Charges	Total credit advanced
Core Loans	Unsecured loans for household items purchased from Fair for You's online high street and ordered direct from suppliers. Typical loan value £350.	Interest Rate 51% per annum fixed, Equivalent to 64.8% APR	£70.8 million
Food Club with Iceland	Prepaid Mastercard	Introduced in 2020 – small interest charge	£13 million
	Initial top up of £25–£75. Further top ups of £100 provided for in specific 'windows' timed, for example around school holidays.	National roll-out in August 2022–interest-free	
Shopping Card	Initially available to existing customers only (Good Payers Club) but available to all customers from May 2025 onwards	Initially at an interest rate of 36% per annum fixed, and since increased to 51% (equivalent to 64.8% APR as at the time of the report).	£16 million
	Prepaid Mastercard Initial top up of £50–£350		
<b>Total</b>			<b>£99.8 million</b>

In addition to evolving its loan products, Fair for You has also recently adapted its underwriting procedures in response to the wider economic environment. With declining real incomes, many low-income households can no longer afford to take out credit. Earlier this year, the debt charity StepChange estimated that although forty percent of UK adults would need to borrow for an unexpected £1,000 expense, nearly half (40%) would be unable to afford any repayments.<sup>3</sup> A further thirty percent cannot afford to repay more than £50 a month. Many households are also already over-indebted, with people needing debt advice much more likely to be on low incomes (defined as gross income under £17,500) and living in rented accommodation than the general population.<sup>4</sup> Responding to these challenges, and to better assess affordability, Fair for You therefore introduced Open Banking as a mandatory check in its loan application processes from September 2024

<sup>3</sup> Butler, A. (6th June 2025). 'People struggling to make ends meet need somewhere safe to turn to cope with unexpected costs'.

<sup>4</sup> Gibbons, D. (2024). [The need for debt advice and the challenges ahead: analysis of the MaPS Debt Need Survey 2023](#). Centre for Responsible Credit.

onwards. This has led to some existing customers being declined for further loans due to signs of financial distress that were not previously surfaced (e.g. gambling, overdraft usage).

## About This Report

This report brings our evaluation activities up to July 2025. It covers all three of Fair for You's product offerings, which, at that point, had together served **87,650 customers** and advanced **£99.8 million**. Since starting work on the evaluation, Fair for You has further expanded and has now surpassed the milestone of 100,000 customers. This has been achieved following a new Food Club campaign over the summer undertaken in partnership with Iceland Foods and its PR agency. The current social value of Fair for You is therefore likely to be even higher than this report suggests.

The report draws on:

- Management information for 87,650 customers, and
- Survey responses from 2,933 customers. Responses have been weighted to reflect the overall customer base with respect to gender, age, loan product use, number of loans, and whether customers experienced any difficulties repaying.

The report is structured as follows:

**Section 2** profiles customer demographics, both overall and according to the type of loan product used. It also explores what items customers purchased and provides an overview of typical borrowing patterns.

**Section 3** contains our Impact and Social value assessment. This is based on the weighted survey responses extrapolated back to total customer numbers. It explores the financial circumstances of customers both before and after using Fair for You and investigates the impact of Fair for You on credit use, and the social value being created. This includes wider well-being impacts, for example regarding health and relief from emotional stress. We also illustrate these impacts with three case studies obtained from in-depth qualitative interviews with customers of Fair for You's three loan products.

Finally, **Section 4** provides our conclusions and recommendations, both with respect to Fair for You, for future social impact assessments and for wider policymaking in the financial inclusion space.

## 2 Customer Profile, Loan Uses and Borrowing Patterns

This section first provides details of customer demographics, both overall and according to the type of loan product used. It then explores what items customers purchased and provides an overview of typical borrowing patterns, including with respect to the prevalence of missed payments.

### Demographics

Management information indicates that the overall customer base is typically female (83%), aged between 25 and 44 (67%) and with annual incomes of less than £30,000 per year (53%). Nearly two thirds (63%) of customers have children living with them, and eighty percent of customers receive some form of state benefit other than child benefit.

However, customer age and income profiles vary across loan products, as shown in the two figures below.

**Figure 1: Customer age groups, by loan product**



**Figure 2: Income groups, by loan product**

**Core Loan users** are predominantly aged 25 to 34, although nearly one in five (17%) are aged over 65. Most (58%) have annual incomes over £45,000 and the income profile of this group appears to have shifted slightly upwards since 2021. Prior to that year, Core Loan customers had a mean average annual income of just under £30,000, but this has increased to around £38,000 in the years since.

In contrast, both **Food Club and Shopping Card** users are most frequently aged 35 to 44, with the majority falling within the £15,000 to £30,000 income range.

Our survey also highlighted further differences in the demographics of the different customer subgroups:

- Overall (55%) of customers are single, and two-thirds are single parents. However, this rises to three-quarters of Food Club and Shopping Card users.<sup>5</sup>
- Only a quarter of all customers are in full-time employment, although a further sixteen percent work part-time and around three percent are self-employed. More than half (55%) are not in employment, and this rises to fifty-seven percent and sixty-two percent for Food Club users and Shopping Card customers respectively.
- In over a third (38%) of couple households, neither the customer nor their partner is in employment, and this rises to over forty-two percent for both Food Club and Shopping Card customers.

<sup>5</sup> Recent survey results suggest that the proportion of single parent customers using the Food Club has increased since our last evaluation. In October 2023, about half of Food Club users were single parents. Other demographic factors—such as employment status and the prevalence of long-term health conditions or disabilities—have remained consistent between the two surveys.

Low employment rates are particularly prevalent amongst households containing someone with a long-term health condition and/or disability. Nearly half (44%) of all survey respondents told us their daily activities were severely limited by these, and a further quarter (28%) reported some limitation. Among households without employment, nearly all (93%) have health issues and/or disabilities, with over two-thirds facing significant daily restrictions.

Finally, our survey also asked customers for details of their housing tenure and ethnicity, and we also used management information to assess Fair for You's geographic footprint.

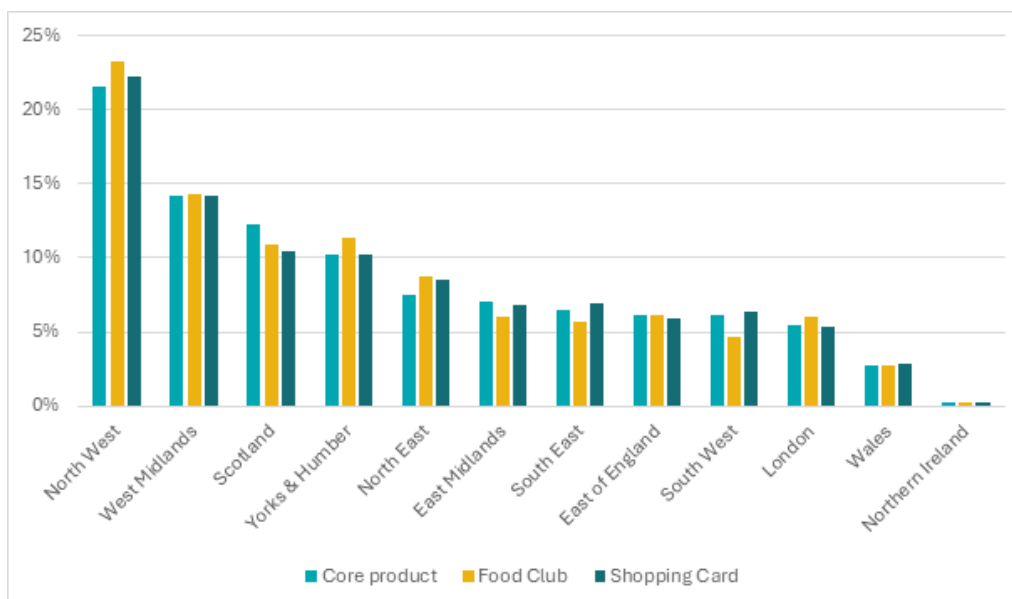
- Nearly all (93%) Fair for You customers are renters, with thirty-nine percent living in council housing, thirty percent renting from housing associations, and nearly a quarter renting in the private sector. Only six percent are buying with a mortgage or own their home outright. A very small percentage of customers (<1%) are living in temporary accommodation.
- Customers also overwhelmingly (95%) identify themselves as White. This appears to be influenced by Fair for You's geographical footprint (Figure 3, below). Fair for You's customers are concentrated in the North West (20% of core product users and 23% of Food Club members), with significant numbers also in the West Midlands (14%), Scotland (11%), Yorkshire & Humber (10%), and the North East (8%). Other English regions, including London, have smaller shares — London itself accounts for just 5% of customers. Wales (2.7%) and Northern Ireland (0.2%) are the smallest segments. The introduction of different loan products has had minimal impact on this overall regional distribution, which remains focused on the North and Midlands. While the 2021 Census found<sup>6</sup> that around eighty-two percent of the population in England and Wales identified as White, this proportion is much higher in Fair for You's core regions — reaching over ninety percent in the North East. In contrast, London, where only thirty-seven percent identify as White, represents a small part of the customer base. The ethnic profile of Fair for You's customers therefore appears to reflect the local populations of its main markets, rather than the national average.

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<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics (2022). Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021  
The ethnic groups of usual residents and household ethnic composition in England and Wales, Census 2021 data.



**Figure 3: Geographic distribution, percentages of customers by lending product**



## Borrowing Patterns

While most customers have used only one of the three Fair for You loan products, just over a quarter (29%) have used more than one. It should, however, be noted that these customers use different products at different times rather than concurrently. Table 2, below, shows the breakdown of all unique customers by each combination.

**Table 2: Product usage, including combinations**

	Percentage of unique customers	Customer numbers
Core product only	43%	37,690
Food Club only	19%	16,654
Core product plus Shopping Card	16%	14,287
Shopping Card only	9%	7,889
Core product plus Food Club	5%	4,383
Food Club plus Shopping Card	5%	4,120
Customers who have used all three products	3%	2,630
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>87,650</b>

Most customers who have used more than one type of loan product have used Core Loans and the Shopping Card. This is due to the fact eligibility for the Shopping Card was, until recently, restricted to users of the core product with good repayment records. However, the Shopping Card now appears to be proving popular with customers who initially used the Food Club. Around 4,300 Food Club users have gone on to use the Card, and a further 2,600 customers have now used all three of the different products that Fair for You offers.

## What do customers purchase?

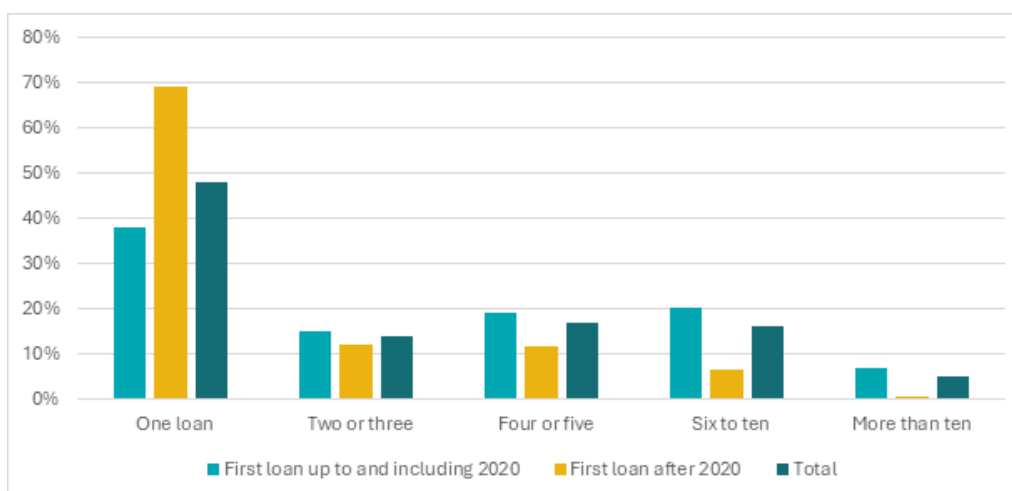
All uses of the Food Club take place within Iceland Food stores, with loans spent on groceries and other household essentials such as toiletries and cleaning products. The types of items being bought using the core product and Shopping Card are more varied.

- Core Loans are mainly used (53%) to purchase household appliances (washing machines and dryers, cookers, and fridge/ freezers). However, seventeen percent of loans are used to obtain beds and bedding and fourteen percent fund the purchase of electricals, including mobile phones and laptops. Others uses include buying items for babies and children (7%) and furniture (4%).
- The Shopping Card appears to be primarily used with Iceland Foods. This accounted for two thirds (67%) of all Card transactions in March 2025. This may be explained by the fact that the Food Club only offers top ups at specific times of the year (e.g., to coincide with school holidays). Outside of these top-up windows it appears that some Food Club customers are willing to take out the Shopping Card for use in Iceland, even though the latter product involves interest charges whereas the Food Club is interest-free.
- A further twenty-seven percent of Shopping Card transactions involved the purchase of items from Argos, while Dunelm — which offers a wide range of furniture and furnishings — accounted for five percent. However, it is not possible to track the specific items bought from these suppliers.

## Repeat borrowing and loan amounts

Our 2020 evaluation of the core product highlighted a significant level of customer loyalty and repeat use. At that time, a fifth of customers had taken out two loans, and just under a third had taken out at least three. Refreshing this with the current management information indicates (Figure 4, below) that around half of the 57,775 customers that have used the core product have taken only one loan to date, but that around fifteen percent have taken out two or three, and over a third have taken out more than four. The number of loans taken out is, as may be expected, higher amongst longer-standing customers (those that took out their first loan prior to 2020). Amongst that subgroup, more than a quarter (27%) have taken out at least six loans.

**Figure 4: Number of Core Loans, by date started using Fair for You**



Repeat business impacts Fair for You's overall lending volumes. Customers who have taken out four or more loans account for over a third (38%) of all lending through the core product. While new core product customers typically borrow around £350, the median borrowing across all customers rises to £786 and the mean average is £1,274.

### **Food Club & Shopping Card**

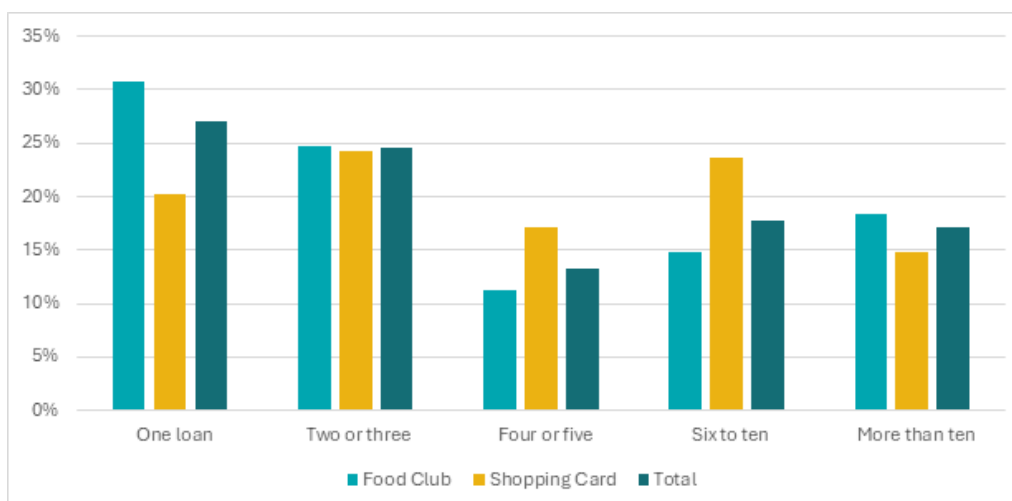
Although often used for the same types of purchases in Iceland, the data (see Figure 5, below) reveals some variations in how Food Club and Shopping Card customers engage in repeat borrowing.

- **Food Club customers** are more likely to be one-time borrowers, with nearly a third (31%) taking only a single loan, compared to just a fifth of Shopping Card customers. This suggests Food Club attracts more occasional users.
- **Shopping Card customers** are more likely to be moderate repeat borrowers. This likely reflects the fact that many accessed this product as members of the 'Good Payers Club'. A higher proportion of Shopping Card users take four to ten loans (17.1% for four or five loans, and 23.6% for six to ten loans) than Food Club users (11.3% and 14.8% respectively). This indicates Shopping Card lending is more frequently used by customers who return for multiple loans but not necessarily at the highest frequency.
- At the highest level of repeat borrowing — more than ten loans — the difference between the two groups is modest: eighteen percent for Food Club and fifteen percent for Shopping Card. Both segments have a significant minority of highly frequent borrowers.

Food Club lending is therefore characterised by a larger share of one-time borrowers and a slightly higher proportion of very frequent repeat borrowers.

Shopping Card lending, meanwhile, sees more customers in the moderate repeat borrowing range, with a smaller share of one-time users and a similar proportion of very frequent borrowers.

**Figure 5: Repeat borrowing patterns, Food Club & Shopping Card**



Repeat borrowing through the Food Club and Shopping Card has a notable effect on lending volumes. For the Food Club, the median loan is £75, with about a quarter of customers borrowing the minimum amount of £25; frequent users have, however, borrowed more than £500. The Shopping Card also exhibits varied borrowing patterns: while a quarter of its users take out smaller loans around £50, the median loan value is £435, and a quarter have accessed more than £1,100.

## Missed Payments

Around half (52%) of all Fair for You customers are late with one or more payments at some point. Fifty-eight percent of Food Club customers miss payments, but this is lower for those using the core product (50%) and Shopping Card (46%). Our 2024 evaluation of the Food Club highlighted that missed payments were often caused by structural issues, such as rising living costs, low incomes – even for those working full-time – and problems with benefit administration. Missed payments then prevented customers from topping up their Food Club cards and reduced the likelihood of positive impacts from the scheme. The report therefore recommended further research into the causes of missed payments and suggested that Fair for You could consider more flexible top-up options for those facing temporary income disruptions due to benefit problems, with the findings also potentially informing future policy and practice.

We reiterate this recommendation in this report. However, it is also important to note that our previous evaluations recognised Fair for You's compassionate and flexible support to customers who miss occasional payments. The company does not impose late payment charges or pressure customers to pay more than they can afford. Instead, Fair for You works with customers to adjust payment plans when circumstances change. This approach is highly valued by customers. Our 2020 evaluation of core product customers found that most (86%) of those reporting repayment problems said they were able to get back on track after talking to Fair for You. Most described the company as understanding and patient, contrasting it with the punitive practices of other lenders.

We again found high customer satisfaction levels amongst those with experiences of missing payments in the survey conducted for this report. Of these, the overwhelming majority (96%) would nevertheless recommend Fair for You to a friend, and half (51%) left very positive open comment responses when asked if there was anything Fair for You could do to improve its services. These frequently described the service as "great," "excellent," "life saver," or "fantastic help". Only eight percent expressed any negative views, with these typically focused on having been declined for subsequent loan applications: likely a product of the tighter underwriting processes that have recently been introduced.

### 3 Impact and Social Value Assessment

This section evaluates the impact of Fair for You by first presenting survey findings on customers' **financial pressures** in the 12 months preceding their use of Fair for You's loan products and in the period since. The section is informed by responses to our customer survey, which focused on several key indicators of financial strain including:

- Capacity to save on a regular basis.
- Difficulties in meeting housing costs and household bills.
- Reductions in discretionary spending.
- Reliance on alternative borrowing sources, and
- Debt repayment burdens.

The survey also asked for details of credit use prior to and after using Fair for You, and about details of any problems that this was causing. Finally, the survey obtained information concerning the extent to which people were able to obtain household items, and the extent to which borrowing from Fair for You had generated savings for its customers compared to their other available options.

We then extend the analysis to **broader wellbeing outcomes** associated with Fair for You usage, including changes in:

- Physical and mental health.
- Quality of diets.
- Access to internet services, and
- Educational support for children.

As with the customer profile, results are reported for the full customer base, with significant subgroup variations highlighted by product type to surface differential impacts.

Finally, we estimate the **social value** generated by these outcomes. We do this by assessing the cash savings that customers report having made by using Fair for You compared to other lenders that they would otherwise have resorted to; by reporting the effects of having access to cookers, fridges, and washing machines on household budgets, and by obtaining monetary valuations with respect to wellbeing and exchequer effects using the HACT Social Value Bank.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The HACT impact measurement methodology to measure the social value of services is based on wellbeing valuation and is compliant with HM Treasury's Green Book. Further details of the methodology can be found below.

## Financial pressures before and after using Fair for You

In the year before using Fair for You, most customers were under significant financial pressure. Fewer than one in six were saving regularly, and more than 64,000 were not saving at all. Nearly a quarter of households had fallen into arrears on rent or mortgage payments, and fewer than one in twelve described their circumstances as “comfortable.” A third said they were “doing alright,” but almost four in ten were “just about getting by,” while nearly one in four were struggling — fifteen percent found things “quite difficult” and eight percent “very difficult.” Debt weighed heavily too: almost half said their debts were “somewhat a burden,” and more than one in five described them as a “heavy burden.”

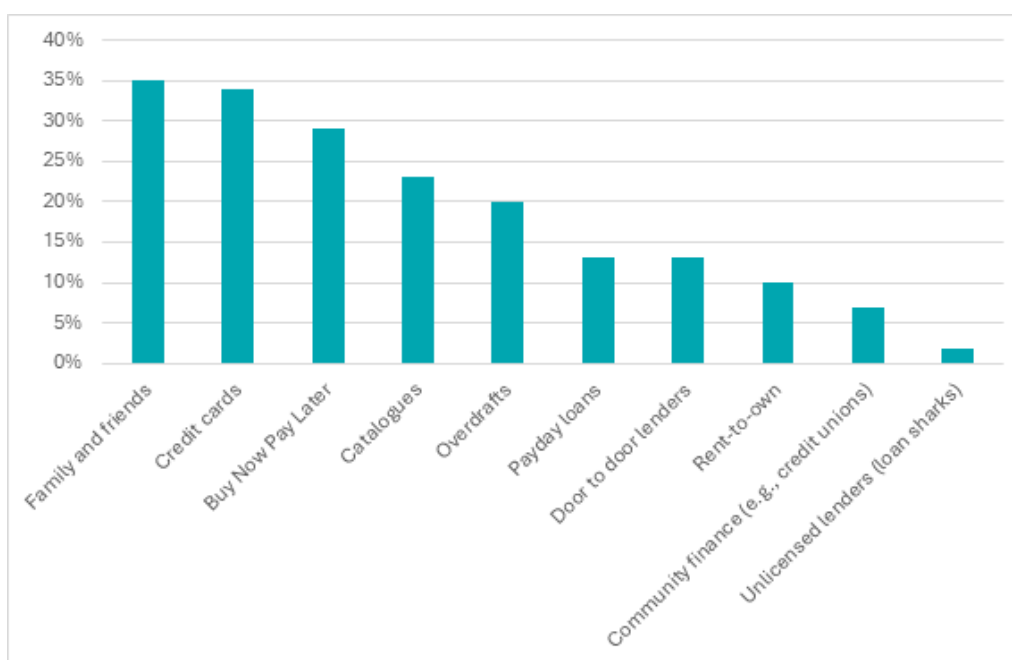
## Uses, and experiences of, credit

Before turning to Fair for You, reliance on other sources of credit was the norm. More than eight in ten customers (84%) reported using at least one form of borrowing, with only fifteen percent saying they had not used credit at all. Both informal and mainstream sources were common: over a third (35%) had borrowed from family or friends but a similar proportion (34%) had used credit cards, and nearly three in ten (29%) had relied on Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL). Catalogue credit (23%) and overdrafts (20%) were also widely used. Alongside these, a sizeable minority had turned to high-cost or risky forms of borrowing: around one in eight had taken out payday loans (13%) or used door-to-door lenders (13%), while one in ten had used rent-to-own. A small but concerning group (1.8%) reported borrowing from unlicensed lenders (‘loan sharks’). By contrast, lower-cost community finance options such as credit unions were relatively rare, used by fewer than seven percent of customers.

### Illegal lending and ‘family and friends’

A 2023 Fair4All Finance report<sup>8</sup> suggests some survey respondents may claim to borrow from friends or family when they are using loan sharks, since many loan sharks are acquaintances. However, our survey clearly defined family and friends as individuals who did not charge interest, and illegal lenders as individuals who did. We therefore find no evidence that reported borrowing from family and friends is disguising higher rates of loan shark use.

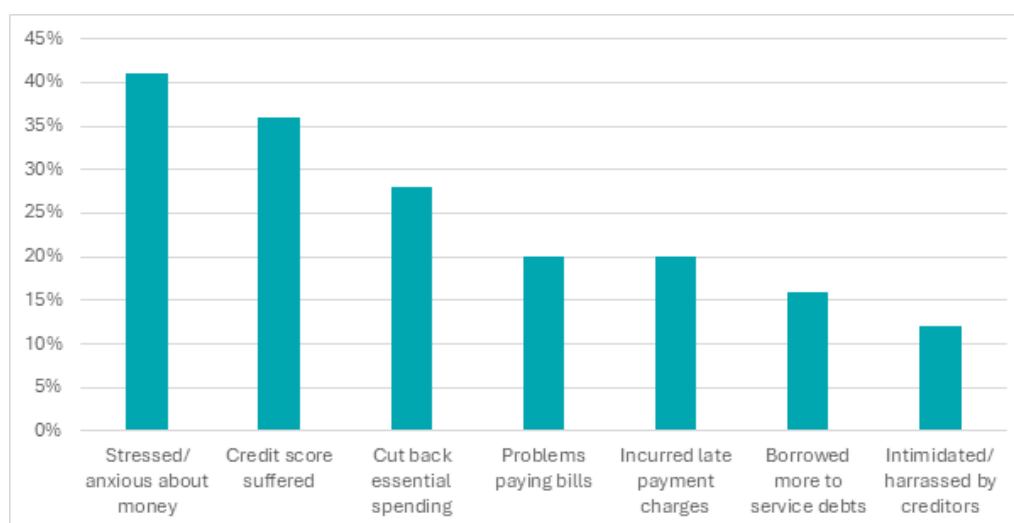
<sup>8</sup> Fair4All Finance (2023, p.11). ‘As one door closes: Experiences of illegal moneylending during an emerging cost of living crisis’.

**Figure 6: Borrowing sources prior to using Fair for You<sup>9</sup>**

The consequences of this borrowing were stark. Four in five customers experienced problems with their credit use. The most common issue was the emotional toll: forty-one percent said they had become stressed or anxious about money. More than a third (36%) saw their credit score suffer, and over a quarter (28%) had to cut back on essentials to keep up with repayments. One in five reported problems paying bills or being hit with late payment charges, while sixteen percent had to borrow more just to service existing debts. A smaller but still concerning group — nearly twelve percent — reported feeling intimidated or harassed by lenders.

<sup>9</sup> Percentages shown are for customers who have borrowed from at least one source.



**Figure 7: Problems experienced due to prior borrowing<sup>10</sup>**

Taken together, the picture is of households juggling multiple forms of credit, often combining mainstream or informal borrowing with high-cost products, and in the process experiencing significant financial and emotional strain.

### ***Food Club customers before Fair for You***

Customers who later became Food Club members were particularly likely to have been active credit users before using Fair for You. Only twelve percent had avoided using credit altogether. They were especially reliant on borrowing from family and friends (45% vs 30% for other product users), BNPL (35% vs 26%), and overdrafts (23% vs 18%). However, they were also more likely to have used credit unions or community lenders (12% vs 5%), pointing to a greater openness to alternative finance.

Seemingly paradoxically, Food Club users were nevertheless less exposed to the highest-cost or riskiest forms of credit. They were less likely to have used payday loans (10% vs 15%), door-to-door lenders (11% vs 15%), rent-to-own (4% vs 13%), or illegal lenders (1% vs 2%). This likely reflects both customer behaviour and wider market changes. The Food Club launched in 2020, after the collapse of major payday lenders such as Wonga and the tighter regulation of the rent-to-own market. By the time of its national roll out in 2022, major door to door lenders had also closed their operations following surging complaints to the Financial Ombudsman regarding poor lending practice. Our [previous research](#) concerning the drivers of illegal moneylending<sup>11</sup> has shown that use of high-cost legal credit products—especially payday loans and door-to-door lenders—is one of the strongest predictors of subsequent illegal lending use. In this context, the lower exposure of Food Club users to these lenders likely reduced their vulnerability to loan sharks.

<sup>10</sup> Percentages shown are for customers who have borrowed from at least one source.

<sup>11</sup> Gibbons, D. (2023). 'What is driving the use of illegal moneylenders?'. Centre for Responsible Credit

Nevertheless, before joining Fair for You, Food Club customers were not only more likely to be using credit, but also more likely to experience serious problems as a result. Half reported becoming stressed or anxious about money, compared with just over a third of non-Food Club customers. More than a third had to cut back on essentials to keep up with repayments, and more than a quarter had to borrow further simply to service existing debts—both rates far higher than among other customers. They were also more likely to fall behind on bills, incur late payment charges, and see their credit scores suffer.

In short, Food Club users entered Fair for You from a position of greater financial strain and vulnerability. Their borrowing was more likely to be unsustainable, forcing trade-offs on essentials and creating cycles of debt. This helps explain both the strong demand for the Food Club and the scale of the improvements in wellbeing and diet we later observe: the product is reaching households under the greatest pressure.

## Improving finances

After engaging with Fair for You, the picture improved markedly. Forty percent of customers no longer need to use other sources of credit as much, and we estimate that the number of customers saving regularly has increased by more than half, with more than 11,700 additional households putting money aside. Rent and mortgage arrears have dropped by more than half, with more than 9,600 households moving out of arrears, and a quarter of all customers (22,000) are now better able to pay other household bills. Customers' overall sense of financial comfort also improved: those living comfortably or doing alright rose by nearly 15,000, while the share finding it difficult more than halved. We estimate that debt burdens have eased dramatically — those whose debts are a heavy burden appear to have collapsed from twenty two percent to just three percent, while the proportion whose debts are "no problem" has almost doubled, from one-third to over three-fifths.

**Table 3: Fair for You's impact on credit use and financial difficulties**

Impact Area	Positive Change
Use of Other Credit Sources	40% of customers previously borrowing from other sources reduced their reliance on these – 29,450 people.
Regular Saving	13% of customers – 11,700 people – started saving regularly.
Rent/Mortgage Arrears	11% of customers – 9,600 people – moved out of arrears; arrears dropped by more than half.
Household Bill Payments	25% of customers – 22,000 people – are better able to pay household bills
Financial Comfort	Nearly 17% of customers – 15,000 people – now feel financially comfortable or “doing alright”
Financial Difficulty	Share of customers finding it difficult more than halved. From 23% of customers (20,150 people) to 10% (8,765 people).
Debt Burden (Heavy)	Dropped from 22% of those previously borrowing from other sources – to just 3%: from 16,200 people to 2,200 people.
Debt Burden (“No Problem”)	Increased from one third of those previously borrowing from other sources to over three fifths: from 24,300 to 44,200 people.

In most cases, these improvements are directly associated with Fair for You. Only one quarter of customers indicated that their circumstances improved due to other factors (such as gaining employment) after using Fair for You. Excluding these customers from the analysis makes a minimal difference to the overall results: for instance, it lowers the proportion able to save by two percentage points and the proportion in arrears with housing costs by one percentage point. This suggests that while some customers' circumstances have changed for the better, the degree of improvement for most has been extremely limited.

### Variations by Lending Product

Improvements in financial circumstances were visible across all customer groups, but the scale of change differed depending on which credit products households used.

- Customers relying only on the core product – the largest group at forty-three percent of the base – saw steady gains in saving, arrears, and financial comfort, but broadly in line with their size. Shopping Card-only users, who made up nine percent of the base, tended to contribute less than their share to the overall improvements.

- In contrast, the Food Club played a more prominent role. Food Club-only users represented nineteen percent of the customer base, but they accounted for around thirty four percent of the overall reduction in rent and mortgage arrears and about eighteen percent of the increase in regular saving. This reflects the worse starting point of many Food Club customers, and points to the way that, and interest-free, food support can ease pressure on household budgets and free up capacity for other essentials. The Core + Food Club group, though small at five percent of the base, also performed slightly above their size, reinforcing the value of food support.
- The Core and Shopping Card combination also made a positive contribution. At sixteen percent of the base, this group accounted for around twenty percent of the increase in regular saving and a similar share of the uplift in customers reporting they were “living comfortably.” Their impact was therefore somewhat larger than their size in the base would predict, underlining the benefit of the Shopping Card as a follow-on product for many Core Loan customers.
- Finally, the smallest group — households who have used all three products, just three percent of the base — also contributed above their weight, particularly in reducing arrears and lifting households out of severe difficulty.

Taken together, these results suggest that while all products deliver benefits, the most pronounced improvements come where customers can move between the different product offers to meet their needs.

### ***How much money do customers save compared to the alternatives?***

While the high-cost credit market has shrunk in recent years, over a third (35%) of customers report that they would nevertheless have had to borrow money at higher cost if they had not been able to access Fair for You. This group were asked to estimate the total amounts they have saved by using Fair for You (including all interest, fees and charges). Around eighty percent of customers in this group were able to put a figure on this, resulting in the identification of close to £13 million in direct cash savings. Table 4, below, breaks this down by the combinations of Fair for You products used.

**Table 4: Customer estimations of cash savings by avoiding higher cost lending**

Customer numbers by lending product	Number who would have borrowed at higher cost	% of sub-group who would have borrowed at higher cost	Mean amount saved	Total savings
Core only	36,934.00	30	£437	£4,842,047
Food club only	16,398.00	29	£222	£1,055,703
Shopping card only	7835	38	£207	£616,301
Core + Shopping Card	14119	43	£629	£3,818,766
Core + Food Club	4329	47	£504	£1,025,454
Food Club + Shopping Card	4066	58	£347	£818,323
All three products	2734	53	£541	£783,920
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,415</b>			<b>£12,960,514</b>

The data shows that customers who have used more than one product tend to report both higher average savings and a greater likelihood that they would have otherwise borrowed from more expensive sources. For example, customers that have used both core and Shopping Card products report an average saving of £629, with forty-three percent indicating they would have turned to higher-cost lenders if Fair for You had not been available. Similarly, those who have used all three products estimate average savings of £541, with over half (53%) stating they would have borrowed elsewhere at a higher cost.

Single-product users, while still benefiting, report lower average savings and a smaller proportion would also have used higher-cost credit. For instance, Food Club-only customers estimate average savings of £222, with twenty-nine percent saying they would have borrowed from a higher-cost lender, while Shopping Card-only customers report £207 in average savings and thirty-eight percent were at risk of using more expensive credit. These findings highlight the significant impact Fair for You has on reducing financial pressure for its customers, particularly for those who engage with multiple lending products, and underscore the organisation's role in providing an affordable alternative to higher-cost credit.

## Case Study: Rebecca's<sup>12</sup> Story – Stability and Empowerment through Fair for You

Rebecca, a full-time employed woman in her late 30s and a single parent, has been a loyal Fair for You customer for nearly a decade. Working in a modestly paid job, Rebecca found managing household expenses a constant challenge. Before discovering Fair for You, she often relied on high-interest loans, sometimes paying back double what she borrowed and falling deeper into debt.

Fair for You marked a turning point in Rebecca's life. With access to affordable credit and transparent payment plans, she was able to furnish her home with essentials – a fridge, freezer, washing machine, laptop, and even a PlayStation for her son. The low interest rates and flexible repayments not only helped her avoid further debt but also allowed her to start paying off existing loans.

The impact went beyond finances. Rebecca described feeling “stress free, no worries,” a stark contrast to the depression and anxiety she experienced before. Her son, once socially isolated, was able to join his peers online, boosting his confidence and sociability. Rebecca values the simplicity and accessibility of Fair for You's platform, especially as someone with dyslexia, appreciating the clarity of information and the ability to manage her account independently. Now a member of the Good Payers Club, she enjoys access to a wider range of products and continues to recommend Fair for You to friends and colleagues.

For Rebecca, Fair for You is more than a lender – it's a source of stability, dignity, and empowerment. As she puts it, “It says it in the name – Fair for You.”

## Going without essential items

Just under half (45%) of all customers told us that, if Fair for You had not been available, they would have had to go without essential items for several weeks rather than borrow from higher-cost credit sources. Among these customers, nearly half (48%) used Fair for You to purchase washing machines or dryers. Around one in five used the service to obtain cookers, and a similar proportion acquired fridges or freezers. Slightly fewer (18%) purchased beds and bedding, while one in ten gained access to laptops or computers.

In our 2020 evaluation of Fair for You's core product, we used findings from the Turn 2 Us report “Living Without: the scale and impact of appliance poverty” (January 2020), which estimated the extra weekly living costs for families without essential appliances as follows:

<sup>12</sup> All names for the case studies in this report have been changed.

- £42 per week for a family of four living without a cooker or oven,
- £26.26 per week for living without a fridge-freezer,
- £20 per week for using a launderette instead of owning a washing machine.

After adjusting these costs for smaller households, we estimated that Fair for You customers saved approximately £38.2 million at that time, with an average saving of £30 per week, assuming customers would otherwise go without these items for 78 weeks – the typical duration of rent-to-own agreements.

However, more recent research has questioned this approach. In 2023, the Association of Charitable Organisations commissioned Pro Bono Economics to analyse the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCFS) to see if going without essential items increased household spending for lower-income families. Their analysis found “no significant difference”: the data did not show that household and food expenditure was higher without appliances. Pro Bono Economics suggested this may be because:

- People without washing machines may handwash, restrict washing, or use friends’ or relatives’ machines.
- Those without cookers may not cook from scratch even if they acquire one, due to time, ability, or preference, and
- People without fridges/freezers may reduce their food intake rather than spend more on takeaways or ready meals.

This raises questions about how many Fair for You customers save money by purchasing essential items, and how many benefit in other ways, such as time savings, improved diets, or reduced stress. Our survey provides some insight: among those who bought essential items from Fair for You and would otherwise have gone without for several weeks, the proportion reporting money savings was:

- 41% for washing machines and dryers.
- 33% for fridges and freezers, and
- 21% for cookers or ovens.

Further research is, however, needed to determine the actual savings and the period over which these accrue. Pending this, we have adopted an alternative approach – also used by Pro Bono Economics – which focuses on the wellbeing effects of having access to essential items.

Pro Bono Economics found a clear, positive link between life satisfaction and having both a washing machine and a fridge at home. People with these appliances report life satisfaction scores 0.44 points higher than those without, even after accounting

for other factors such as sex, employment, relationship status, and health. This result is reasonably robust, with over a ninety percent probability that it is not due to chance. According to Treasury guidance, the estimated value of this increase in life satisfaction over one year is £7,200, if someone gains both appliances and all else remains equal.

Access to these household appliances is therefore highly valuable and likely contributes to broader wellbeing, including financial comfort, diet quality, and overall health. Our survey therefore used questions from the HACT Social Value Bank to assess these aspects of wellbeing and to place a monetary value on Fair for You's activities.

### Case Study: Leela's Experience — Dignity and Independence through Fair for You

Leela, a woman in her late 40s of Asian background, has used Fair for You more than fifteen times over the past decade to address essential household requirements. She is not currently employed due to her caring responsibilities for a daughter with additional support needs. Leela initially learned about Fair for You from a leaflet when she required a table and chairs but was unable to afford the upfront payment. The option to pay weekly allowed her to make the purchase, which started a longstanding association with the organisation.

Since then, Leela has used Fair for You to furnish her home with beds, a washing machine, a cooker, and even a phone — each item playing a vital role in her daily life. When her phone broke, she was especially grateful for the support, explaining, "My phone's quite important because I've got a daughter with additional needs. I was quite happy with Fair for You when I got my phone." Without Fair for You, she would have had to save for months, risking missed appointments and communication gaps.

Previously, Leela relied on the rent-to-own company BrightHouse but found Fair for You more affordable and understanding. The impact on her family has been profound: her daughter now has a chest of drawers to store sensory items, helping keep her room tidy and organised. Leela also uses the Shopping Card for birthdays and Christmas, recently buying an electric scooter for her daughter from Argos — something she could not have done all at once.

Leela remains a strong advocate for Fair for You, recommending them to her daughters, who now use it regularly. "They love it," she said. "It's brilliant." For Leela, Fair for You has meant more than just access to goods — it has provided dignity, independence, and the ability to care for her family without financial strain.



## Wider Well-Being Outcomes

In our survey we used questions from HACT's Social Value Bank to determine the extent to which levels of wellbeing had changed since they started using Fair for You. These revealed that:

- **General health** improved across the customer base. Overall, the survey indicates that, had it not been for Fair for You, fifteen percent of customers would have had worse physical health, and thirty-eight percent would have suffered from worse mental health. The proportion describing their health as excellent following their use of Fair for You almost doubled, from around 3,000 before to more than 5,800 after, while those rating their health as poor fell by more than 15,000. These gains were most evident among Food Club users, who were more likely than average to report an uplift in their health status, suggesting that easing food insecurity had knock-on benefits for wellbeing.
- **Emotional wellbeing** also showed marked gains. The number of customers saying they did not feel unhappy or depressed at all rose by more than 12,000, while those reporting they felt depressed much more than usual fell by nearly 18,400. Here again, Food Club users – both on their own and in combination with the Core product – were over-represented in the improvements.
- **Dietary outcomes** were the most striking. The number of customers eating fruit every day more than tripled, rising from a little more than 10,000 before to more than 35,000 after, while those who said they never ate fruit fell by almost 17,000. These changes were heavily concentrated among Food Club participants, underlining the direct impact of affordable, interest-free, food credit on diet. Core + Food Club households, though only 5% of the base, contributed above their weight to these dietary improvements.
- Seven percent of customers – equating to around 6,100 people – also told us that they would not have been able to **access the internet** in their homes if it had not been for Fair for You, while the same percentage reported that without the items obtained from Fair for You their **children's education would have suffered**. We estimate that this applies to households containing a total of 11,800 children.

Taken together, these results show that Fair for You's impact extends well beyond financial stability. Customers not only report fewer arrears and greater savings, but also describe themselves as healthier, less depressed, and eating better. Many have also gained access to the internet, and the items they have purchased, including laptops and computers have assisted with their children's education. The evidence suggests that expanding affordable credit has a considerable ripple effect across multiple dimensions of wellbeing.

## Case Study: Alex's Story – A Little Help, A Healthier Life

Alex, a woman in her late 50s, lives on a low income and is currently not in employment. Like many others, she found herself struggling financially, especially in the middle of the month when her money would no longer stretch far enough. Before discovering Fair for You's Food Club, Alex often had to rely on borrowing from friends and family – who themselves were not well off. This not only added financial pressure but also emotional strain and embarrassment.

About a year and a half ago, Alex came across the Food Club and found it to be a lifeline. The simplicity of the system – interest-free repayments of £10 a week and automatic deductions from her bank account – made it easy to manage. "You don't miss it like that," she said, appreciating the stress-free setup.

Since joining, Alex has noticed a significant shift in her diet and overall wellbeing. She now opts for healthier food options, including low-calorie tins and frozen vegetables from Iceland's healthy range. "I've lost a bit of weight," she shared, attributing it to the ability to make better food choices. The change has not only improved her physical health but also her mental health. "I just feel happier about life in general," she reflected.

Alex has recommended the Food Club to her sister and neighbour but despite her positive experience she also sees room for improvement and suggests increasing the credit limit from £100 to £150 to better cope with rising food costs. "Everything's so expensive," she said, highlighting the ongoing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.

For Alex, Fair for You has been more than just a financial tool – it's been a source of dignity, health, and peace of mind. "I'm just so glad it's there," she concluded. "It helps me so much."

## Social Value Assessment

HACT's Social Value Bank provides a method for **monetising the wellbeing impacts** reported through our customer survey. This compares the change in wellbeing achieved across each of the outcomes with an equivalent change in wellbeing that could be achieved by increasing incomes.<sup>13</sup> The value of the outcome is then calculated as the marginal rate of substitution (MRS) between income and the outcome itself, expressed in monetary terms. In this way, wellbeing valuations in the UK Social Value Bank provide a £ proxy equivalent value for the observed uplift in wellbeing.

<sup>13</sup> More technical detail about the wellbeing valuation approach can be found in the [wellbeing values methodology guidance notes](#).

In addition to this, HACT are also able to calculate an **Exchequer value**<sup>14</sup>, which captures and quantifies the indirect impact of achieving an outcome from the Social Value Bank on the public purse in terms of the net fiscal benefits to the Government. For example, these could be achieved by delivering savings due to improvements in health and a reduction in demands on the NHS.

It should be noted that **'deadweight'** has been applied to both wellbeing and exchequer values. This is the probability that outcomes would have happened anyway and is applied to social value calculations as a percentage.<sup>15</sup>

**Total Social Value** is the Wellbeing value and Exchequer value combined (and adjusted for deadweight). Adding wellbeing and exchequer values together gives us a combined monetary value reflecting personal wellbeing improvements and net savings to the public purse.

Table 5, below, now provides the calculated social values for Fair for You.

**Table 5: Overall social value generated by Fair for You, 2015 – 2025**

Outcome	Wellbeing value	Exchequer value	Total Social Value
Relief from depression/ anxiety *	£199,180,029	£68,568,703	£267,748,732
Financial comfort *	£162,242,754	£1,667,195	£163,909,949
Diets	£152,574,860	£2,169,613	£154,744,473
Good overall health *	£135,373,859	£4,093,879	£139,467,738
Able to save regularly *	£38,035,920	£387,713	£38,423,633
Able to pay for housing *	£19,379,281	£7,559,096	£26,938,377
Internet access	£5,740,651	£0	£5,740,651
<b>Total</b>			<b>£796,973,553</b>

**In total, we estimate that Fair for You has delivered nearly £800 million of social value for its customers over the past ten years.**

It should be noted that some outcomes overlap in terms of their well-being impacts. This applies to the outcomes marked with an asterisk in the table above. For example, it is possible for someone whose health has generally improved to also have been

<sup>14</sup> More technical detail about the exchequer valuation approach can be found in the [exchequer values methodology guidance notes](#).

<sup>15</sup> More detailed notes concerning the methodology behind HACT's calculation of deadweight can be found [here](#).

provided with relief from depression/ anxiety. Similarly, someone who now reports “living comfortably” may also now be able to save regularly and be better able to pay their housing costs than previously. To prevent double-counting, in cases where customers achieve more than one of these overlapping outcomes, HACT includes them in the calculation for the outcome with the highest value only.

Relief from depression and anxiety is the largest contributor to Fair for You’s social value, accounting for around one third of the total. Improved levels of financial comfort and better diets follow, with around a fifth of the social value each. Improvement to overall health adds a further seventeen percent, while social values relating to the ability to save regularly and pay for housing costs add around five percent and three percent respectively.

The contributions made to social value by the different loan products and their usage can be found in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Social Value contributions by loan product use**

Outcome	Products used						
	Core only	Food Club only	Shopping card only	Core + Food Club	Core + Shopping	Food + Shopping	All three products
Relief from depression/ anxiety	42.9	17.5	3.2	8.0	16.6	5.0	6.8
Financial comfort	43.8	17.2	7.6	4.2	18.9	5.1	3.2
Diets	33.6	22.6	8.1	5.7	20.6	3.9	5.5
Good overall health	48.1	20.8	8.3	1.7	14.6	4.6	1.9
Able to save regularly	54.4	17.9	9.1	1.0	15.6	0.3	1.7
Able to pay for housing	25.4	41.0	6.7	3.6	16.3	4.1	2.9
Internet access	36.4	6.4	12.2	3.0	27.9	1.9	12.2
<b>Average across all outcomes</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Product users share of total base	43.0	19.0	9	5	16	5	3

About forty percent of total social value is delivered to customers who have used the core product only, closely matching the forty-three percent of customers who borrow this way. However, the core product has an especially strong impact on regular saving, with over half of the social value from that outcome attributed to these users. Other notable differences include:

- Food Club-only customers, who provide forty-one percent of the social value accruing from an improvement in the ability to pay for housing costs but make up just nineteen percent of the customer base. This reflects the fact that many Food Club customers are not included in the financial comfort calculation (i.e., they are not 'living comfortably' or 'doing alright', but nevertheless report being better able to meet their housing costs.)
- Those who have used both the core product and Shopping Card, provide twenty-eight percent of the social value for improved internet access despite being only sixteen percent of customers. This reflects the fact that the Shopping Card provides access to a greater range of household goods, including electricals, than the Core Loan product.

## Social Return on Capital Employed

£797 million in social value has been generated from £99.8 million in lending, yielding a social return of roughly £8 for every £1 lent. However, the required capital is lower due to recycling through ongoing loan repayments. In total, Fair for You report having received around £17 million, indicating that each £1 of investment has recycled around 5.8 times since being received. The social return by Fair for You to date is therefore approximately £46 for every £1 invested.

## Comparison with prior evaluations

The methods used to assess and monetise Fair for You's impact have changed over time.

- In 2020, our analysis included estimating direct customer savings by comparing Fair for You's credit costs with those of high-cost lenders, calculating savings for customers who otherwise may not have accessed essential items, and collecting feedback on GP service usage and the effects of Fair for You. This resulted in an estimated £50.5 million of social value and a return on capital employed of £38.40 for every £1 invested.
- In 2022, our evaluation of the Food Club and Shopping Card trials examined the effects of these products on financial pressures (such as challenges in paying housing costs), food bank use, dietary habits, and broader well-being, including health-related aspects. However, we did not provide an estimate of the social value being generated from the trials. Changes in the wider consumer credit market—notably the exit of several major high-cost lenders—also rendered estimates of direct cash savings particularly problematic at this time, as these were less likely to have been used as alternative sources of borrowing.

- In January 2023, the Financial Inclusion Centre evaluated the impact of Fair for You's lending with respect to its operations in 2021 and 2022, using HACT's Social Value Bank questions concerning relief from stress, anxiety and depression and the extent to which customers felt in "control of daily life." This resulted in an estimated social value of £226.1 million for this two-year period alone: a return of around £16 for every £1 lent.
- In 2024, our evaluation of the Food Club utilised the HACT Social Value Bank with respect to improved diets, ability to meet housing costs, financial comfort and ability to heat the household. This resulted in a social value estimate of £134 million; a return of £19 for every £1 lent, and a social return on every £ of capital employed of £58.26

Our current estimate of the return on capital employed is therefore mid-way between our 2020 estimate based on the core product only and our 2024 estimate, which was focused entirely on the Food Club product. However, these used very different methodologies. Our estimate of the social return at £8 per every £1 lent is also significantly lower than that estimated by the Financial Inclusion Centre in 2023, and by ourselves — albeit with respect to the Food Club only — in 2024. There are several reasons for this.

## The importance of weighting survey responses

Our estimates are based on survey responses weighted to reflect the broader customer base with respect to gender, age, loan product use, number of loans, and whether customers experienced any difficulties repaying. The final three of these are particularly important because there is considerable survey response bias. As this evaluation has highlighted, the type of loan product that customers use has considerable implications for the social value being generated. Customers who are most engaged with Fair for You (i.e., have used them more often) and who have not experienced any payment difficulties are also more likely to respond to the survey. For example, in our raw data fewer than one in ten respondents had experienced any payment difficulties while management information indicates that more than half of all customers will miss at least one payment at some time during their credit agreements. Weighting strategies can, however, vary and different approaches can have a significant impact on the final social values.

## Changes to the HACT Social Value Bank

There have also been several changes to the HACT Social Value Bank questions and methods over time. Notably, the "control of daily living" question used by the Financial Inclusion Centre in 2023 is no longer contained in the current bank of questions, and HACT has also now taken steps to avoid the double-counting of outcomes by, for example, only calculating the value of either an improvement in "financial comfort" or being able to pay for housing costs. Our 2024 evaluation of the Food Bank took place prior to this change and included several questions that

overlapped, including financial comfort and the ability to meet housing costs and to heat homes.

## Uncertainty concerning the amount of direct cash savings

While some customers would clearly have borrowed from other sources if they had not been able to obtain credit from Fair for You, those other sources vary considerably with respect to their costs of credit. This makes it impossible to accurately calculate the direct cash savings that are being delivered to Fair for You customers.

Some other social impact evaluations assume that all customers would have taken a loan from door-to-door lenders and estimate the savings based on the cost of credit differences in relation to these. For example, Leeds Credit Union report<sup>16</sup> achieving a social impact of £11.3 million being achieved in 2023 on this basis. This is despite the same report indicating that nearly half of their customers (43.5%) reported that they would have “gone without” if they had not got a loan from the Credit Union. Only 14.5% would have used a payday lender and just 5.3% would have used a door-to-door lender. In our view, this approach – which was also combined with the use of unweighted survey responses – overstates the direct cash savings being made.

For this report, we therefore asked those customers who said that they would have borrowed elsewhere to estimate the level of savings that they have made by using Fair for You. This resulted in a total estimate of £13 million over ten years of lending. This is likely an underestimate, given that around one quarter of this group of customers were unable to put a figure on the savings they had made.

Following the previously referenced 2023 Pro Bono Economics report, significant uncertainty also remains regarding the extent of cash savings realised by customers purchasing essential household items that they might otherwise have gone without for several weeks. Consequently, additional research is required to develop appropriate benchmarks for use in future evaluations on this matter.

## The need for sector-wide consistency

We therefore advise social investors in the affordable credit sector to form a working group to establish best practice standards for evaluating social impact. Consistent survey design, response weighting, and calculation methods are needed for reliable comparisons across lenders and informed capital allocation. These improvements will also help agencies advocate for increased funding by enabling clear, sector-wide assessments of affordable lending’s social value.

<sup>16</sup> Leeds Credit Union (2024). ‘Social Impact Report, January 2024’ available [here](#).



## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

Over the past ten years, Fair for You has established itself as a pioneering force in the provision of affordable, responsible credit to low-income households across the UK. The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that Fair for You's model — rooted in robust and accurate affordability checks, flexible repayment options, and a compassionate approach to customer support — has delivered not only substantial financial savings but also profound improvements in wellbeing, health, and social inclusion for tens of thousands of families.

From its inception, Fair for You set out to challenge the exploitative practices of high-cost lenders, and the tendency of most mainstream providers to misunderstand the circumstances of low-income families, and to instead offer a dignified alternative for those excluded from mainstream credit. The organisation's evolution — from its core product focused on essential household goods to the innovative Food Club and Shopping Card — reflects a deep responsiveness to the changing needs of its customer base and the wider economic environment. The national rollout of the Food Club has particularly been a lifeline for many during the cost-of-living crisis, providing interest-free credit for groceries and helping to reduce food insecurity, reliance on food banks, and arrears on rent and council tax.

### Social Value and Wellbeing Gains

The quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered for this report is unequivocal: Fair for You has generated nearly £800 million in social value over the past decade, with a social return of approximately £8 for every £1 lent, and an even higher return on capital employed due to the recycling of investment through loan repayments. These outcomes are not merely financial; they encompass significant gains in mental and physical health, dietary quality, emotional wellbeing, and educational opportunities for children.

Key findings include:

- **Financial Relief:** Customers report marked reductions in debt burdens, arrears, and reliance on high-cost credit. Many are now able to save regularly and meet essential household bills, with the proportion of those finding their financial situation “difficult” more than halved.
- **Wellbeing and Health:** Relief from depression and anxiety is the single largest contributor to social value, followed by improvements in financial comfort and diet. Customers describe feeling less stressed, more in control of their daily life, and better able to provide for their families.
- **Diet and Nutrition:** The Food Club has had a particularly strong impact on dietary outcomes, with the number of customers eating fruit daily more than tripling, and significant reductions in food bank use.



- **Access and Inclusion:** Fair for You has enabled thousands of households to access the internet and support their children's education, addressing digital exclusion and supporting social mobility.

The case studies included in the report — Rebecca, Leela, and Alex — bring these statistics to life, illustrating how access to affordable credit can restore dignity, independence, and hope.

## Lessons Learned

While the achievements of Fair for You are substantial, the report also highlights important lessons and areas for further development:

- **Targeting and Reach:** The customer base remains predominantly White and concentrated in the North and Midlands, with limited penetration in London and among minority ethnic communities. There is a clear opportunity — and need — for Fair for You to expand its reach into more diverse markets, particularly in London, where financial exclusion remains acute.
- **Affordability and Underwriting:** The introduction of Open Banking checks has strengthened affordability assessments but has also led to some existing customers being declined for further loans. This reflects the broader challenge of declining real incomes and rising financial vulnerability among low-income households. Continued vigilance and innovation are needed to ensure that credit remains accessible to those who need it most, without exposing them to undue risk. More broadly, policymakers need to urgently address the underlying pressures faced by many households, which are causing the viable market for affordable and responsible credit to shrink.
- **Missed Payments:** While missed payments are common, Fair for You's compassionate approach — eschewing punitive charges and working with customers to adjust payment plans — is highly valued. Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand the structural causes of missed payments, particularly among Food Club users, and to develop more flexible support mechanisms for those facing temporary income disruptions. There are likely implications for wider policy here too, because problems with benefit administration appear to create additional arrears management costs for affordable credit providers.
- **Measurement and Evaluation:** The report underscores the importance of rigorous, weighted survey methodologies and the need for sector-wide consistency in social impact measurement. Differences in evaluation methods, survey response biases, and changes in the HACT Social Value Bank have all influenced the estimation of social value over time. There is a pressing need for social investors and affordable credit providers to collaborate on best practice standards for impact assessment, enabling more reliable comparisons and informed capital allocation.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, we make the following recommendations:

1. **Expand Reach and Inclusion:** Fair for You should be supported to extend its services into under-served regions and communities, particularly London and minority ethnic groups. Partnerships with local authorities, social landlords, and community organisations will be key to achieving this.
2. **Strengthen Sector Collaboration:** Social investors should convene a working group to develop consistent standards for social impact measurement, including survey design, response weighting, and valuation methods. This will enhance transparency, comparability, and advocacy for the sector as a whole.
3. **Innovate for Affordability:** Continued product innovation is essential to meet the evolving needs of low-income households. This includes exploring new forms of interest-free or low-cost credit, flexible repayment options, and support for those facing temporary financial shocks.
4. **Advocate for Policy Change:** Findings on Fair for You's impact should inform both future investments and policy discussions on financial inclusion and credit regulation. However, as affordability challenges contribute to a contracting market, it is crucial to incorporate insights from missed payments and loan declines into wider policy debates. This would ensure that outcome evidence, alongside payment data, shapes more effective strategies to address poverty and promote social justice.
5. **Deepen Customer Engagement:** Ongoing dialogue with customers — through surveys, focus groups, and co-design processes — will ensure that products and services remain responsive, accessible, and empowering. For example, some customers have requested higher Food Club limits to reflect the rising cost of groceries.

Fair for You's journey over the past decade is a testament to the power of responsible micro-lending to transform lives. By centring the needs and voices of low-income households, and by combining financial innovation with compassion and integrity, Fair for You has set a benchmark for the sector. As economic pressures continue to mount, the need for affordable, ethical credit remains clear. However, those same pressures also place limits on who can continue to be safely served. The lessons and achievements documented in this report provide a roadmap for the next decade — not only for Fair for You, but for all those committed to building a fairer, more inclusive financial system.



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