

Consumer Insights Tracker Report July 2023 - March 2024: Executive Summary

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Executive summary

The Consumer Insights Tracker is the FSA's online monthly tracking survey. It monitors the behaviour and attitudes of consumers aged 16+ in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in relation to a range of food-related topics.

This report presents findings from July 2023 – March 2024. Key findings show that:

Consumer concerns about food

- When prompted with a number of different issues related to food in the UK, the issue the highest number of consumers were concerned about was food prices (87% in March 2024), followed by ultra-processed, or the over-processing, of food (77%) and food poverty and inequality (75%). Concerns about food-related issues have stayed relatively stable since July 2023 when tracking began.

Household food affordability

- The proportion saying that they were worried ([footnote 1](#)) about their household's ability to afford food in the next month has declined gradually across the tracking period, falling from a peak of 28% in July 2023 to a low of 22% in February and March 2024.
- Worries about food affordability were highest among those limited by a disability or long-term health condition, those aged under 55, those in the most deprived IMD deciles, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those living in Northern Ireland.
- Large proportions said that they had taken action when shopping, cooking and eating in order to save money. In March 2024, the most common ways of saving money when shopping were choosing cheaper alternatives to branded products (47%), buying discounted food close to its use-by date (37%) and shopping around in multiple supermarkets/ shops (34%).
- Overall, in March 2024 one in four (25%) of those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland said they had done at least one 'risky' food behaviour in the last month to save money, such as reducing the length of time food is cooked for or turning off a fridge/freezer that contains food.
- Those who were worried about food affordability (58%) were significantly more likely to report practicing these kinds of risky behaviours. Incidence of risky food behaviours was also higher among those from an ethnic minority background (39%), those limited by a

health condition or disability (35%), those in the most deprived IMD deciles (33%) and those aged under 35 (30%).

- The proportion who reported that they or someone in their household had received a free parcel of food from a food bank or emergency food provider has remained stable across the 9-month tracking period, with the reported figure ranging from 2-4%.

Food availability

- One in five (20%) said that they were worried about there not being enough food available for them (or their household) to buy in the next month. Worry about food availability has remained broadly comparable over time.

Confidence in the food supply chain

- Overall confidence in the food supply chain has increased gradually from 55% in July 2023 to 60% in March 2024. Those with lower levels of confidence in the food supply chain report higher levels of concern about all food-related issues asked about in the survey.

Trust and confidence in the FSA

- Among those with some knowledge of the FSA and what it does, the proportion that trust the FSA to do its job has fluctuated slightly across the tracking period, increasing from 55% in December 2023 to now stand at 61% as of March 2024. The proportion with confidence in the FSA's ability to carry out its functions was slightly higher than this. For example, two in three (66%) were confident that the FSA is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks in March 2024.
- Those with confidence in the FSA and those who trust the FSA were generally less likely to be concerned about all food-related issues asked about. For example, 36% of those who trusted the FSA were concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK vs 69% of those that distrusted the FSA.

1. Throughout the report, 'worried' includes those who were either 'very' or 'somewhat' worried