Executive Summary for Food and You 2 Wave 4

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Overview of Food and You 2

The survey measures self-reported consumers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to food safety and other food issues amongst adults in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Fieldwork for Food and You 2: Wave 4 was conducted between 18th October 2021 and 10th January 2022. A total of 5,796 adults from 4,026 households across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland completed the 'push-to-web' survey (see Annex A for more information about the methodology).

The modules presented in this report include 'Food you can trust', 'Concerns about food', 'Food security', 'Eating out and takeaways', 'Food allergies, intolerances and other hypersensitivities', 'Eating at home', 'Food shopping: sustainability and environmental impact' and 'Sustainable diets, meat alternatives and genetic technologies'.

Summary of key findings

Food you can trust

Confidence in food safety and authenticity

- most respondents (92%) reported that they were confident that the food they buy is safe to eat
- more than 8 in 10 (86%) respondents were confident that the information on food labels is accurate.

Confidence in the food supply chain

- around three quarters of respondents (76%) reported that they had confidence in the food supply chain
- respondents were more likely to report confidence in farmers (88%) and shops and supermarkets (85%) than in takeaways (61%), and food delivery services (45%)

Awareness, trust and confidence in the FSA

- most respondents (92%) had heard of the FSA
- around three quarters (77%) of respondents who had at least some knowledge of the FSA reported that they trusted the FSA to make sure 'food is safe and what it says it is'
- over 8 in 10 (85%) respondents reported that they were confident that the FSA (or the government agency responsible for food safety) can be relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks (such as food poisoning or allergic reactions from food), 80% were confident that the FSA is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks, and 83% were confident that the FSA takes appropriate action if a food-related risk is identified

Concerns about food

- most respondents (86%) had no concerns about the food they eat, and only 14% of respondents reported that they had a concern
- respondents with a concern were asked to briefly explain what their concerns were about the food they eat. The most common concerns related to food production methods (31%) and to environmental and ethical concerns (23%)
- respondents were asked to indicate if they had concerns about a number of food-related issues, from a list of options. The most common concerns related to food waste (63%), the amount of sugar in food (59%) and animal welfare (56%)

Food security

- across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, 82% of respondents were classified as food secure (70% high, 12% marginal) and 18% of respondents were classified as food insecure (10% low, 7% very low)
- food security levels were comparable across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

Eating out and takeaways

- around half of respondents had eaten food in a restaurant (53%), from a café, coffee shop or sandwich shop (either to eat in or to take out) (52%) or ordered a takeaway directly from a takeaway shop or restaurant (50%) in the previous 4 weeks
- over a third of respondents had eaten food from a fast-food outlet (either to eat in or take out) (38%) or ordered a takeaway from an online food delivery company (for example, Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats) (35%). Around 1 in 10 (9%) respondents had not eaten at any food from any of the listed food businesses in the previous 4 weeks
- most respondents (89%) reported that they had heard of the FHRS. Over half (59%) of respondents reported that they had heard of the FHRS and had at least a bit of knowledge about it

Food allergies, intolerances and other hypersensitivities

- most respondents (76%) reported that they did not have a food hypersensitivity. Just over 1 in 10 (12%) respondents reported that they had a food intolerance, 4% reported having a

food allergy, and 1% reported having coeliac disease
- of the respondents who reported having a food allergy, the most common foods reported as causing a reaction were peanuts (26%) and fruit (24%)
- of the respondents who reported having a food intolerance, the most common foods reported as causing a reaction were cow’s milk and products made with cow’s milk (41%) and cereals containing gluten (19%)

Eating at home

Use-by dates

- over two thirds (69%) of respondents identified the use-by date as the information which shows that food is no longer safe to eat
- around two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they always check use-by dates before they cook or prepare food
- most respondents reported that they had not eaten shellfish (90%), other fish (82%), smoked fish (76%) or raw meat (71%) past the use-by date in the previous month

Avoiding cross-contamination

- over half of respondents (56%) reported that they never wash raw chicken, whilst 40% of respondents wash raw chicken at least occasionally.

Food shopping: sustainability and environmental impact

- almost a third (30%) of respondents reported buying food which has a low environmental impact always or most of the time. Half of respondents thought that eating less processed food (50%) and 47% thought that minimising food waste contributed most to someone having a sustainable diet
- most (59%) respondents thought that buying locally produced food or food that is in season contributed most to someone making sustainable food shopping choices. However, almost 1 in 10 (9%) respondents reported that they did not know what contributed most to sustainable food shopping choices.

Sustainable diets, meat alternatives and genetic technologies

- the most common changes respondents reported making in the previous 12 months were eating less processed food (40%) and starting to minimise food waste (40%)
- around a third (32%) of respondents reported that they currently eat meat alternatives, 21% of respondents reported that they used to eat meat alternatives but no longer do and 39% of respondents reported that they had never eaten meat alternatives
- respondents reported greater awareness and knowledge of genetically modified (GM) food (9% had never heard of GM food) than gene-edited or genome-edited food (GE) (42% had never heard of GE food).

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