

Chapter 6: Eating at home

Introduction

Since people are responsible for the safe preparation and storage of food in their home, Food and You 2 asks respondents about their food-related behaviours in the home, including whether specific foods are eaten, and knowledge and reported behaviour in relation to five important aspects of food safety: cleaning, cooking, chilling, avoiding cross-contamination and use-by dates. The FSA gives practical guidance and recommendations to consumers on [food safety and hygiene](#) in the home. Food and You 2 also asks respondents about the frequency with which they prepare or consume certain types of food.

Two versions of the 'Eating at home' module have been created, a brief version which includes a limited number of key questions, and a fuller version which includes all related questions. The brief 'Eating at home' module was included in the Wave 4 survey and is reported in this chapter ([footnote 1](#)).

This chapter provides an overview of respondent knowledge, attitudes and behaviours relating to food safety, diet, and other food-related behaviours.

Cleaning

Handwashing in home

The [FSA recommends](#) that everyone should wash their hands before they prepare, cook or eat food and after touching raw food, before handling ready-to-eat food.

The majority (73%) of respondents reported that they always wash their hands before preparing or cooking food. However, 26% of respondents reported that they do not always (for example, most of the time or less often) wash their hands before preparing or cooking food ([footnote 2](#)).

Most respondents (91%) reported that they always wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish. However, 8% of respondents reported that they do not always (for example, most of the time or less often) wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish ([footnote 3](#)).

Handwashing when eating out

Respondents were asked, how often, if at all, they washed their hands or used hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating when they ate outside of their home. Around half (46%) of respondents reported that they always washed their hands, used hand sanitising gel or wipes when they ate outside of their home, 49% did this less often (for example, most of the time or less often) and 4% never did this ([footnote 4](#)).

Chilling

The [FSA provides guidance](#) on how to chill food properly to help stop harmful bacteria growing.

If and how respondents check fridge temperature

When asked what temperature the inside of a fridge should be, 62% of respondents reported that it should be between 0-5 degrees Celsius. Almost 1 in 5 (19%) respondents reported that the temperature should be above 5 degrees, 3% reported that the temperature should be below 0 degrees, and 16% of respondents did not know what temperature the inside of their fridge should be [\(footnote 5\)](#).

Almost half of respondents who have a fridge reported that they monitored the temperature, either manually (47%) or via an internal temperature alarm (10%) [\(footnote 6\)](#). Of the respondents who monitor the temperature of their fridge, 84% reported that they check the temperature of their fridge at least once a month, as recommended by the FSA [\(footnote 7\)](#).

Cooking

The FSA recommends that cooking food at the right temperature and for the correct length of time will ensure that any harmful bacteria are killed. When cooking pork, poultry, and minced meat products the FSA recommends that the meat is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, that none of the meat is pink and that any juices run clear.

The majority (79%) of respondents reported that they always cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, however 21% reported that they do not always do this [\(footnote 8\)](#).

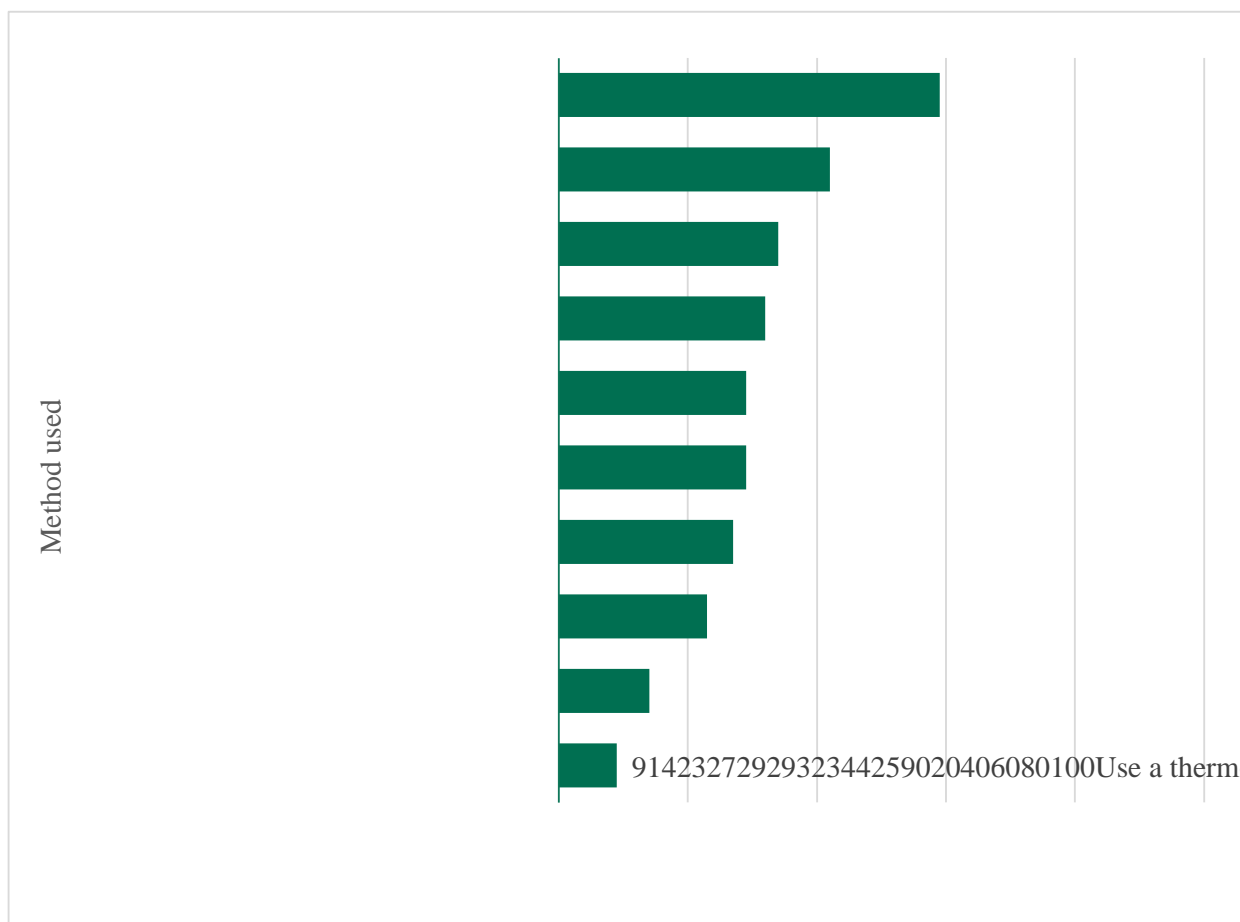
When respondents were asked to indicate how often they eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices, the majority (91%) reported that they never eat chicken or turkey when it is pink or has pink juices [\(footnote 9\)](#). However, 7% of respondents reported eating chicken or turkey at least occasionally when it is pink [\(footnote 10\)](#).

Reheating

Figure 20. Checking that the middle is hot is the most common method to check food is reheated and ready to eat

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Methods used	Percentage of respondents (%)
Use a thermometer / probe	9
Put my hand over / touch it	14
Taste it	23
Check it is an even temperature throughout	27
Stir it	29
Use a timer	29
See steam coming from it	32
See it's bubbling	34
Follow label instructions	42
Check the middle is hot	59

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Source Food and You 2 Wave 4

Respondents were asked to indicate how they check food is ready to eat when they reheat it. The most common method was to check the middle is hot (59%), and the least common method was to use a thermometer or probe (9%) (Figure 20) ([footnote 11](#)).

When respondents were asked how many times they would reheat food, the majority reported that they would only reheat food once (81%), 10% would reheat food twice, and 3% would reheat food more than twice ([footnote 12](#)).

Leftovers

Respondents were asked how long they would keep leftovers in the fridge for. Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 2 days, around a quarter (26%) of respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 3-5 days and only 2% would eat leftovers after 5 days or longer ([footnote 13](#)).

Avoiding cross-contamination

The FSA provides guidelines on [how to avoid cross-contamination](#). The FSA recommends that people [do not wash raw meat](#). Washing raw meat can spread harmful bacteria onto your hands, clothes, utensils, and worktops.

Over half of respondents (56%) reported that they never wash raw chicken, whilst 40% of respondents wash raw chicken at least occasionally (for example, occasionally or more often) ([footnote 14](#)).

How and where respondents store raw meat and poultry in the fridge

The [FSA recommends](#) that refrigerated raw meat and poultry is kept covered, separately from ready-to-eat foods and stored at the bottom of the fridge to avoid cross-contamination.

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a range of responses, how they store meat and poultry in the fridge. Respondents were most likely to report storing raw meat and poultry in its original packaging (67%) or away from cooked foods (49%). A third of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry covered with film/foil (33%) or in a sealed container (34%), with fewer keeping the product on a plate (13%) ([footnote 15](#)).

Two-thirds (66%) of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry at the bottom of the fridge, as [recommended by the FSA](#). However, 2 in 10 (20%) respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry wherever there is space in the fridge, 11% respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in the middle of the fridge, and 5% at the top of the fridge ([footnote 16](#)).

Use-by and best before dates

Respondents were asked about their understanding of the different types of [date labels](#) and instructions on food packaging, as storing food for too long or at the wrong temperature can cause food poisoning. Use-by dates relate to food safety. Best before (BBE) dates relate to food quality.

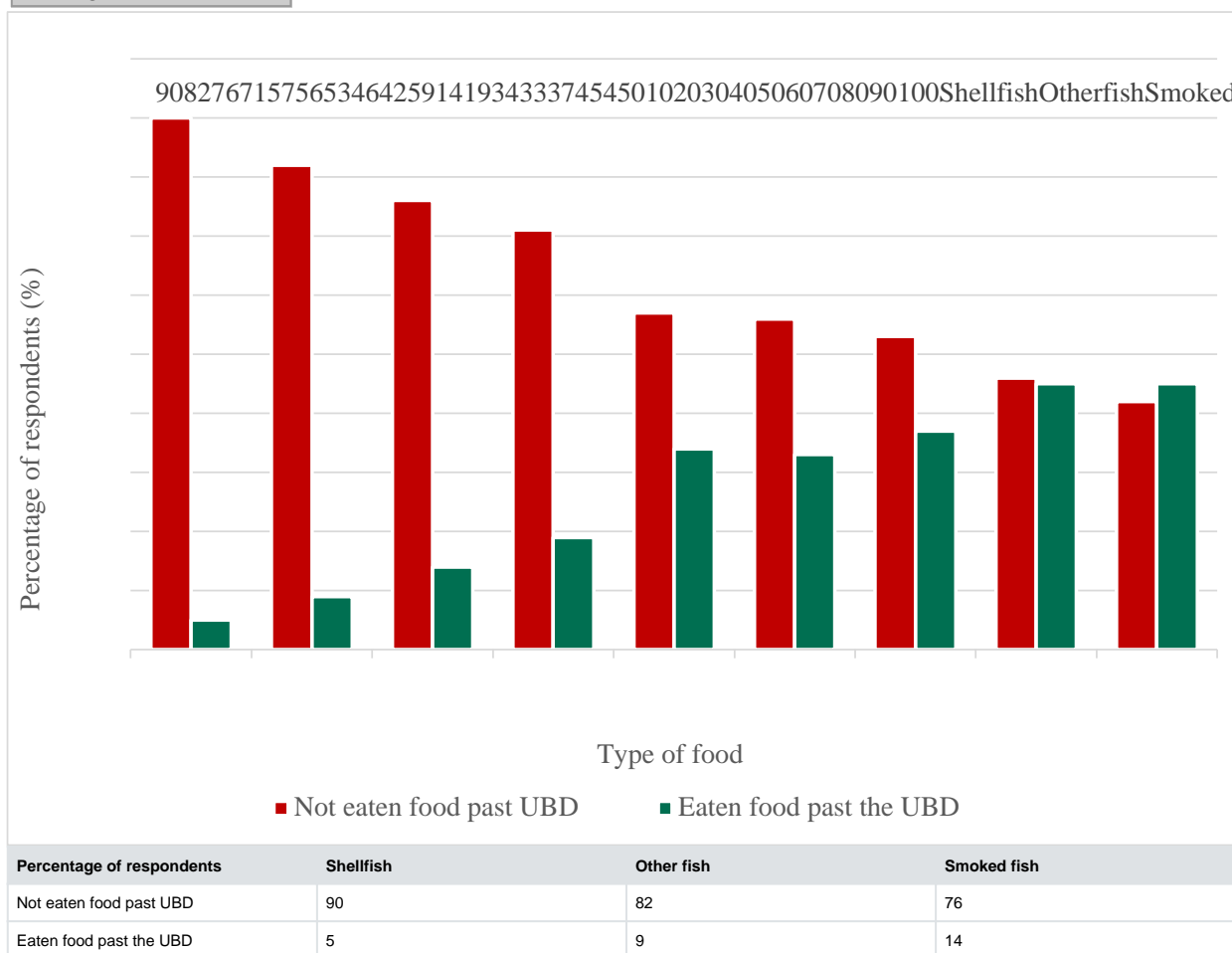
Respondents were asked to indicate which date shows that food is no longer safe to eat. In accordance with [FSA recommendations](#), over two-thirds (69%) of respondents identified the use-by date as the information which shows that food is no longer safe to eat. However, 9% of respondents identified the best before date as the date which shows food is no longer safe to eat ([footnote 17](#)).

Around two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they always check use-by dates before they cook or prepare food and around a quarter (23%) of respondents did this most of the time. Almost 1 in 10 (8%) reported checking use-by less often (for example, about half the time or occasionally), and just 1% reported never checking use-by dates ([footnote 18](#)).

Figure 21: Types of food respondents had eaten after the use by date in the previous month

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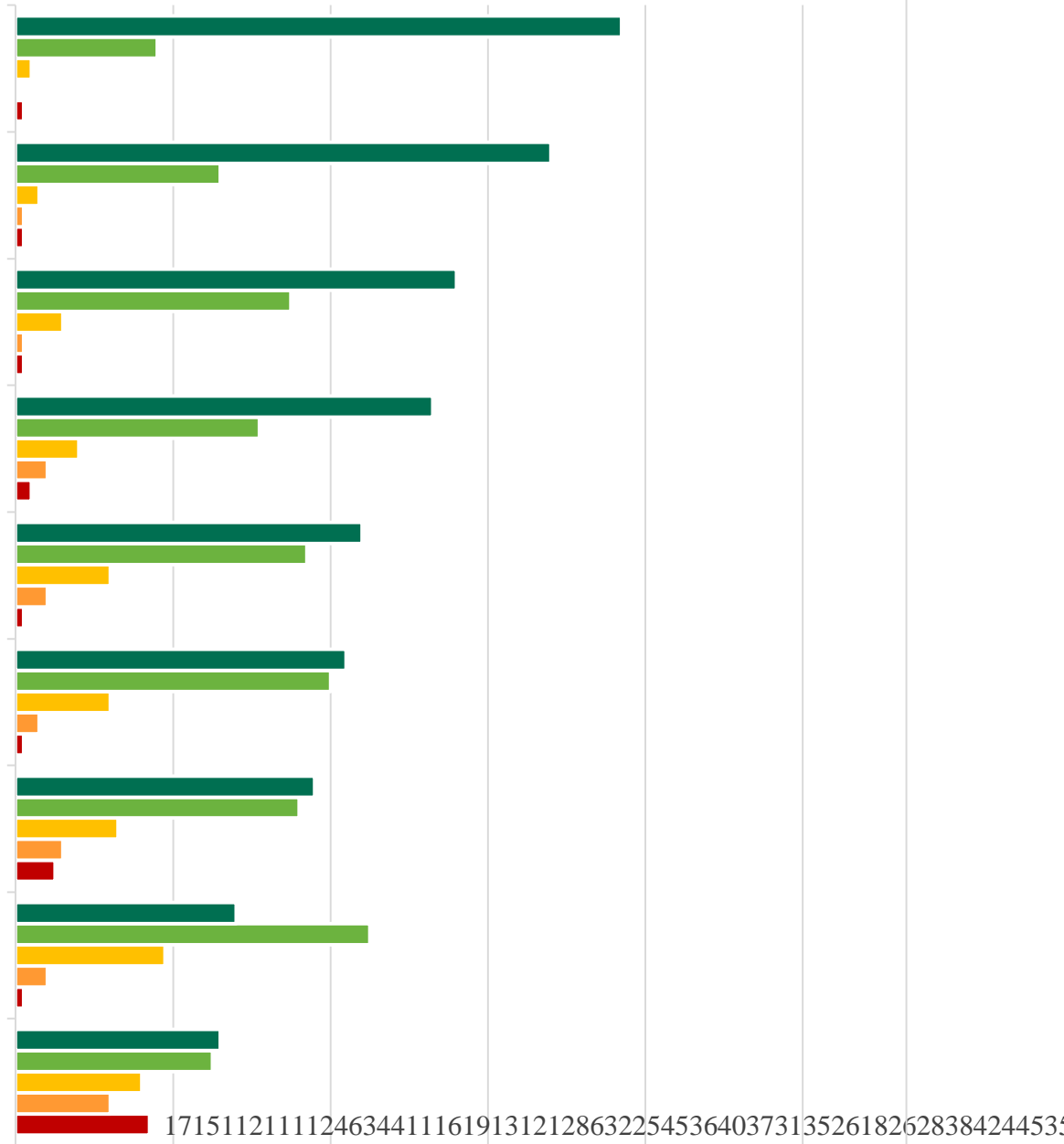
Respondents who had eaten certain foods in the last month were asked to indicate if they had eaten that food past the use-by date. Of these respondents, most reported that they had not eaten shellfish (90%), other fish (82%), smoked fish (76%) or raw meat (such as beef, lamb, pork or poultry) (71%) past the use-by date in the previous month. Whereas over half of respondents had not consumed milk (57%), cooked meat (56%) or yoghurt (53%) past the use-by date in the previous month. Less than half of respondents had eaten bagged salad (46%) or cheese (42%) past the use-by date in the previous month (Figure 21) [\(footnote 19\)](#).

Figure 22: How long after the use-by-date respondents would consume different foods

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Type of food



- Don't eat/drink this after its use-by date
- 1 - 2 days
- 3 - 4 days
- 5 - 6 days
- More than 1 week

Percentage of respondents	Cheese	Bagged salad	Yoghurt	Cooked meat	Milk	Smoked fish
More than 1 week	17	1	5	1	1	2
5 - 6 days	12	4	6	3	4	4
3 - 4 days	16	19	13	12	12	8
1 - 2 days	25	45	36	40	37	31
Don't eat/drink this after its use-by date	26	28	38	42	44	53

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Respondents who eat certain foods were asked when, if at all, is the latest that they would eat the type of food after the use-by date. Of these respondents, most reported that they would not eat shellfish (77%), other fish (68%) past the use-by date. Over half of respondents would not eat raw meat (56%) or smoked fish (53%) past the use-by date. When foods are eaten past the use-by date, they are typically eaten 1-2 days after the use-by date (for example, 45% of respondents would eat bagged salads 1-2 days after the use-by date). Of the specified foods, respondents reported that they would be most likely to eat bagged salad and cheese after the use-by date: around 7 in 10 respondents would eat bagged salad (70%) and cheese (71%) after the use-by date. Almost 2 in 10 (17%) respondents would eat cheese more than 1 week after the use-by date (Figure 22) ([footnote 20](#)).

1. The full 'Eating at home' module was reported in the [Food and You 2: Wave 1 Key Findings report. The full module will be reported again in Wave 5.](#)
2. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands before starting to prepare or cook food. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, I don't cook, Don't know. Base= 4430, all online and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't cook/prepare food'.
3. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands before starting to prepare or cook food. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 4239, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't cook meat'.
4. Question: When eating outside of the home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands, or use hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 4755, all online respondents and those answering the Eating Out postal questionnaire.
5. Question: What do you think the temperature inside your fridge should be? Responses: Less than 0 degrees C (less than 32 degrees F), Between 0 and 5 degrees C (32 to 41 degrees F), More than 5 but less than 8 degrees C (42 to 46 degrees F), 8 to 10 degrees C (47 to 50 degrees F) (2%), More than 10 degrees C (over 50 degrees F), Other, Don't know. Base=4778, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' paper questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge.
6. Question: Do you, or anyone else in your household, ever check your fridge temperature? Responses: Yes, No, I don't need to - it has an alarm if it is too hot or cold, Don't know. Base= 4778, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' paper questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge.

7. Question: How often, if at all, do you or someone else in your household check the temperature of the fridge? Responses: At least daily, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week but more than once a month, Once a month, four times a year, 1-2 times a year, Never, Don't know. Base= 2302, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire where someone in household checks fridge temperature.
8. Question: How often, if at all, do you cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 4420, all online respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal paper questionnaire, excluding 'I don't cook'.
9. Data on the consumption of red meat, duck, beefburgers, sausages and pork when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices is available from [Food and You 2: Wave 1](#) and is expected to be reported in Food and You 2: Wave 5.
10. Question: How often, if at all, do you eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base =4381, all respondents who are not vegan, pescatarian or vegetarian, and who do eat chicken/turkey
11. Question: When reheating food, how do you know when it is ready to eat? Select all that apply. Responses: I check the middle is hot, I follow the instructions on the label, I can see its bubbling, I use a timer to ensure it has been cooked for a certain amount of time, I check it's an even temperature throughout, I can see steam coming from it, I can see steam coming from it, I taste it, I stir it, I put my hand over it/touch it, I use a thermometer/probe, None of the above, I don't check. Base equals 4208, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't reheat food'.
12. Question: How many times would you consider reheating food after it was cooked for the first time? Responses: Not at all, Once, Twice, More than twice, Don't know. Base= 4213, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who reheat food using one of the methods in the previous question.
13. Question: When is the latest you would consume any leftovers stored in the fridge? Responses: The same day, Within 1-2 days, Within 3-5 days, More than 5 days later, It varies too much, Don't know. Base= 4769, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire.
14. Question: How often, if at all, do you do the following? Wash raw chicken. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 4375, all online respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal paper questionnaire, excluding 'I don't cook'.

15. Question: How do you store raw meat and poultry in the fridge? Please select all the apply. Responses: Away from cooked foods, Covered with film/foil, In a sealed container, In its original packaging, On a plate. Base= 4306, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't store raw meat/poultry in the fridge, do not have a fridge or don't know.
16. Question: Where in the fridge do you store raw meat and poultry? Responses: Wherever there is space, At the top of the fridge, In the middle of the fridge, At the bottom of the fridge. Base= 4227, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' paper questionnaire, who store raw meat/poultry in the fridge except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't have a fridge or don't know.
17. Question: Which of these shows when food is no longer safe to eat? Responses: Use-by date, Best before date Sell by date, Display until date, All of these, It depends, None of these, Don't know. Base=4786, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire.
18. Question: How often, if at all, do you check use-by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, It varies too much, Don't know. Base=4421, all online respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, and all those who completed the Eating at Home postal questionnaire, excluding I don't cook/preapre food not stated.
19. Question: In the last month, have you eaten this food past its use by date? A= Cooked meats, B=Smoked fish, C=Bagged salads, D=Cheese, E=Milk, F= Raw meat, G=Shellfish, H=Any other fish, I=Yoghurt. Responses: Yes, this happened every week, Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week, Yes, this happened just one week in the last month, No, never, Don't know/can't remember, Prefer not to say. Base A= 3192, B=2458, C=3172, D=3384, E=3416, F= 3228, G=2421, H=2869, I=3176, all online respondents who had eaten the type of food in the previous month N.B. base description varies by food type, further information is available in the data tables.
20. Question: When, if at all, is the latest you would eat or drink the following items after their use-by date? A= Cooked meats, B=Smoked fish, C=Bagged salads, D=Cheese, E=Milk, F= Raw meat such as beef/pork/lamb/raw poultry, G=Shellfish, H=Any other fish, I=Yoghurt. Responses: 1-2 days after the use-by date, 3-4 days after the use-by date, 5-6 days after the use-by date, 1-2 weeks after the use-by date, more than 2 weeks after the use-by date, I don't eat/drink this after its use-by date, Don't know/I don't ever check the use-by date of this. Base A= 4324, B=3485, C=4398, D=4563, E=4481, F= 4288, G=3151, H=3963, I=4379, all online respondents and those who completed the Eating at Home postal questionnaire, who eat the type of food. Please note: base description varies by food type, further information is available in the data tables. The percentage of respondents who reported eating different foods past the use-by date may vary between data shown in Figure 21 and Figure 22 due to difference in the time frame which the questions refer to.