

Wave 5: Chapter 5 Online platforms

Introduction

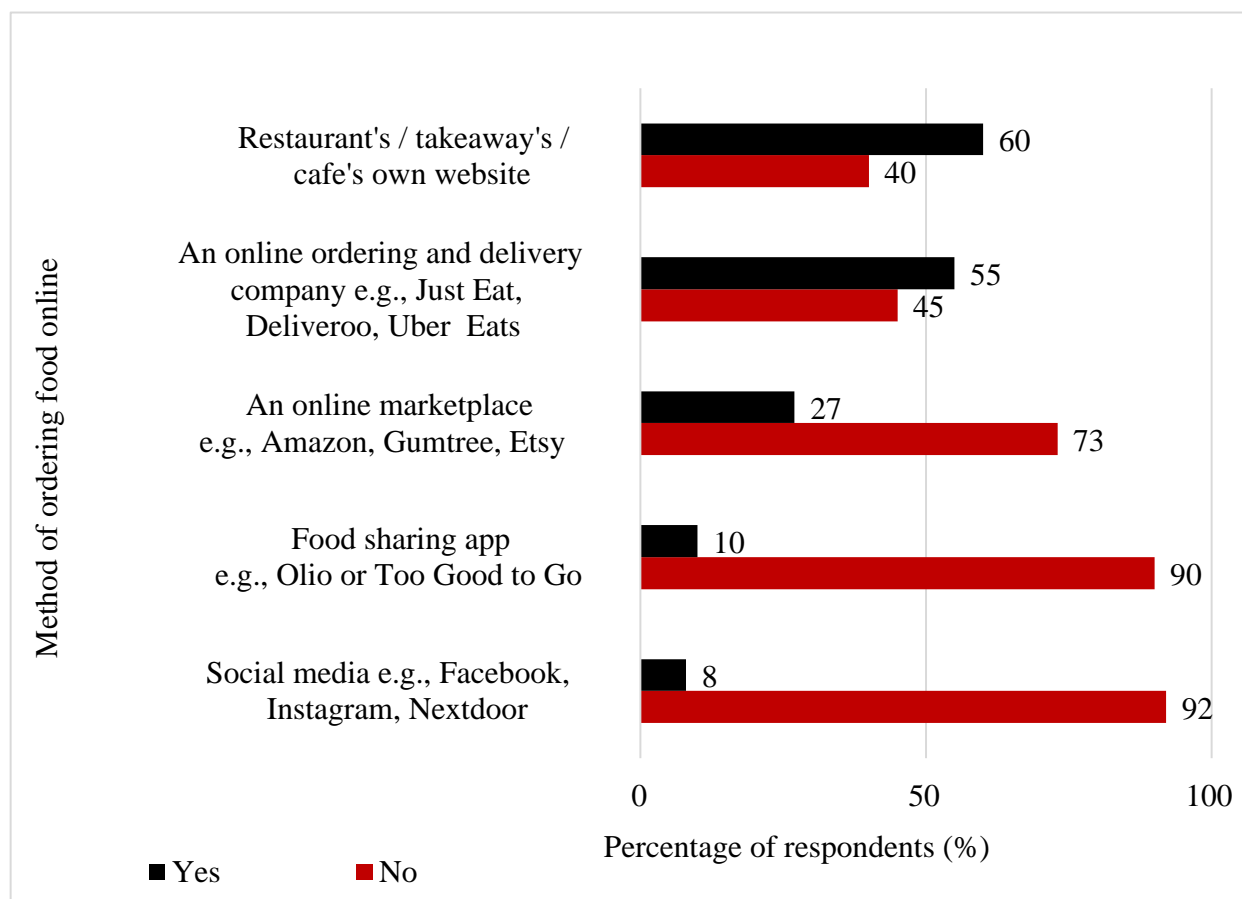
An online food platform is a technology business that facilitates the exchange of food between vendor(s) and consumer(s). Any business selling food online, including food delivery businesses, must be registered as a food business ([footnote 1](#)). The FSA provides guidance for food businesses, which use online platforms ([footnote 2](#)). A food safety officer from the local authority will inspect a business to check that it follows food hygiene law so that the food is safe to eat.

Food and You 2 asked respondents about their use and experiences with different types of online platforms which enable transactions involving food. A range of online platforms were asked about including food business and delivery websites, food sharing apps and social media marketplaces.

This chapter provides an overview of respondents' use of online platforms, including how frequently people use online platforms to buy food or drink, and the types of food and drink people order through these platforms. It also provides information on people's awareness and use of food hygiene ratings and allergen information on online platforms.

Which online platforms are used to order food or drink online?

Figure 13. Where respondents order food or drink from online



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

Respondents were asked to indicate if they have ever ordered food or drink online from a number of different platforms. Over half of respondents reported that they had ordered food or drink from the websites of a restaurant, takeaway or café (60%) or from an online ordering and delivery company (for example, Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats) (55%). Around a quarter (27%) of respondents had ordered via an online marketplace (for example Amazon, Gumtree, Etsy) and around 1 in 10 had ordered food or drink through a food sharing app (for example Olio, Too Good To Go) (10%) or social media platforms (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor) (8%) (Figure 13) [\(footnote 3\)](#).

Use of online marketplaces to order food or drink varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- age group: younger adults were more likely to have ordered food or drink from an online marketplace compared to older adults. For example, 40% of those aged 16-24 years had ordered food or drink from an online marketplace compared to 11% of those aged 65-79 years
- household size: respondents who lived in households with 3 or more people (for example, 32% of those in 3-person households) were more likely to have ordered food or drink from an online marketplace than those living in 1-person households (20%)
- food security: respondents with low (42%) or very low (44%) food security were more likely to have ordered food or drink from an online marketplace than those with marginal (30%), or high (21%) food security
- responsibility for cooking: those who cook (28%) were more likely to have ordered food or drink from an online marketplace than those who never cook (16%).

Use of social media to order food or drink varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

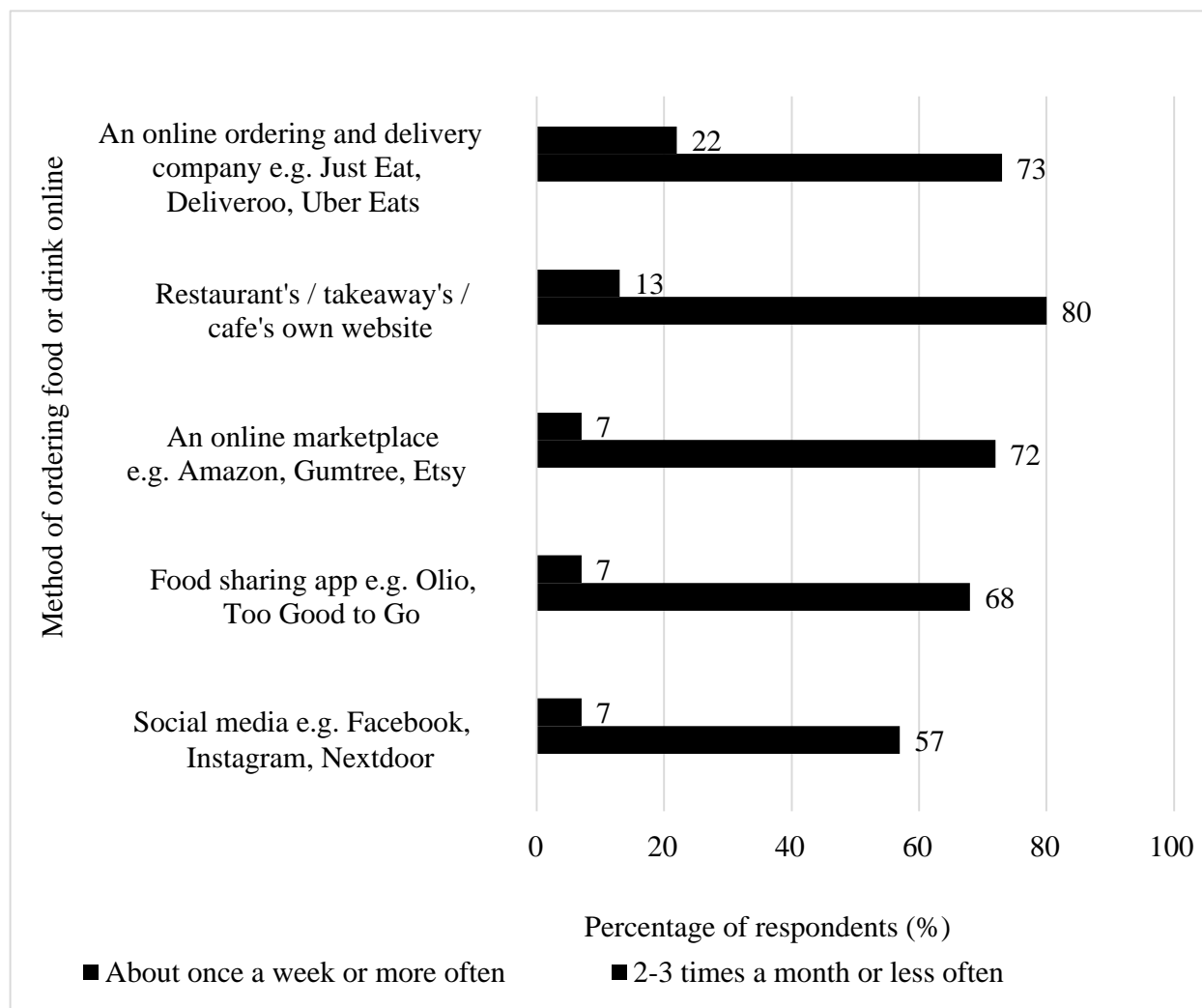
- age group: adults aged 54 years or under (for example, 15% of those aged 25-34 years) were more likely to have ordered food or drink from social media than those aged 55 years or over (for example, 1% of those aged 65-79 years or over)
- food security: respondents with low (15%) or very low (18%) food security were more likely to have ordered food or drink from social media than those with marginal (6%) or high (5%) food security.

Use of food sharing apps to order food or drink varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- age group: younger adults were more likely to have ordered food or drink from a food sharing app than older adults. For example, 21% of adults aged 25-34 had ordered food or drink from a food sharing app compared to 1% of those aged 65-79 years
- NS-SEC: full-time students (22%) were more likely to have ordered food or drink from a food sharing app than those in other occupational groups (for example, 4% of those in lower supervisory and technical occupations)
- food security: respondents with very low (17%), low (16%) and marginal (16%) food security were more likely to have ordered food or drink from a food sharing app than those with high (7%) food security**.

How often do respondents order food and drink through online platforms?

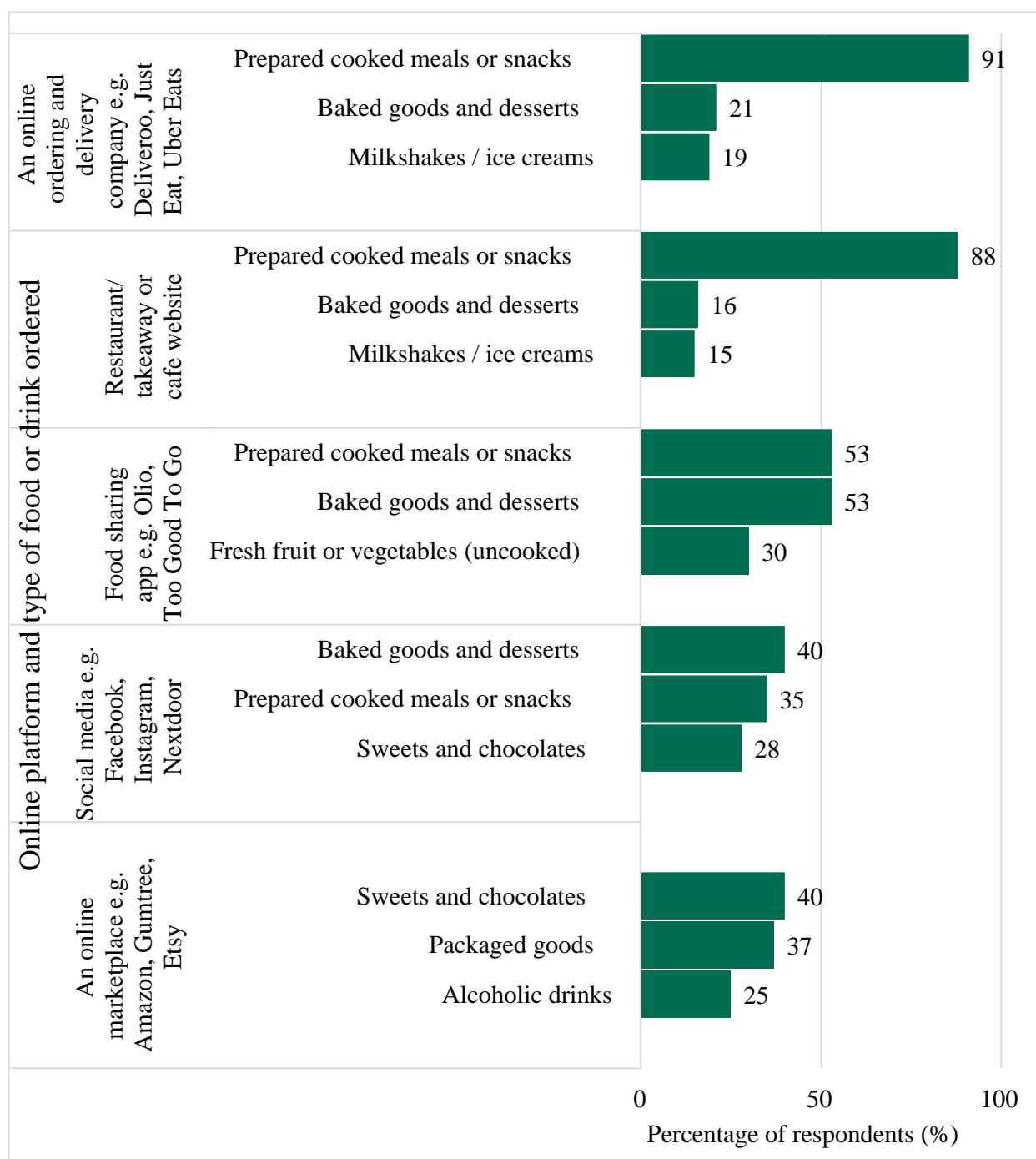
Figure 14. How often respondents order food or drink from different online platforms



Respondents who had ordered food or drink from a range of online platforms were asked how frequently they ordered food or drink from that platform. Most respondents ordered food or drink from each type of online platforms 2-3 times a month or less often, with a minority using these types of platforms at least once a week. For example, 22% of respondents ordered food or drink from an online ordering and delivery company (for example, Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats) about once a week or more often, 73% of respondents did this 2-3 times a month or less often (Figure 14) ([footnote 4](#)).

What types of food and drink do respondents order through different online platforms?

Figure 15. The type of food or drink ordered by online platform



Respondents who completed the survey online and had ordered food or drink from a range of online platforms were asked what food or drink they had ordered from the platform(s). The most common type of food or drink ordered varied by the platform. Prepared cooked meals or snacks and baked goods and desserts were the products most commonly ordered through online ordering and delivery companies (for example, Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats), restaurant, takeaway or café websites, food sharing apps (for example, Olio, Too Good To Go), and social media (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor). However, sweets and chocolates, and packaged goods were most commonly ordered via online marketplaces (for example, Amazon, Gumtree, Etsy) (Figure 15) [\(footnote 5\)](#).

Use of FHRs on online platforms

[The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme \(FHRs\)](#) helps people make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food by giving clear information about the businesses' hygiene standards. Businesses are given a rating from 0 to 5. A rating of 5 indicates that hygiene standards are very good and a rating of 0 indicates that urgent improvement is required. The FSA runs the scheme in partnership with local authorities in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Respondents who had ordered food or drink through an online platform and had heard of the FHRs were asked how frequently they checked for FHRs ratings when ordering food and drink online. Almost half (46%) of respondents often (for example, always or most of the time) check the FHRs ratings, 31% of respondents did this on an occasional basis (for example, about half of the time or occasionally), and 22% of respondents never checked the FHRs rating [\(footnote 6\)](#).

Respondents who reported looking for FHRs ratings when ordering food or drink online were asked how often the ratings were easy to find. Almost half (48%) of respondents reported that the ratings were often (for example, always or most of the time) easy to find, 40% reported that the ratings were occasionally (for example, about half of the time or occasionally) easy to find and 3% reported that the ratings were never easy to find [\(footnote 7\)](#).

Hypersensitivities and use of online platforms

Food hypersensitivity is a term that refers to a bad or unpleasant physical reaction which occurs as a result of consuming a specific food. There are different types of food hypersensitivity including, food allergy, food intolerance and coeliac disease [\(footnote 8\)](#).

The FSA provides guidance for food businesses on providing allergen information to their customers. By law [\(footnote 9\)](#), food businesses in the UK must inform customers if they use any of the 14 most potent and prevalent allergens in the food and drink they provide [\(footnote 10\)](#). The allergen labelling required differs depending on how food is being sold and the type of food being sold. If food is sold online allergen information should be available to a customer before the purchase of the food is completed and when the food is delivered, [Allergen guidance for food businesses, FSA](#).

Respondents who have a hypersensitivity, or live with someone who has a hypersensitivity, were asked how often they look for information which allows them to identify food that may cause a bad or unpleasant reaction when ordering food or drink online. A fifth (20%) of respondents always looked for information that would allow them to identify food that might cause them a bad or unpleasant reaction, and 38% of respondents looked for this information less often (i.e., most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally). However, around 4 in 10 (37%) respondents never looked for information that would allow them to identify food that might cause a bad or unpleasant reaction when ordering food or drink online [\(footnote 11\)](#).

1. [Advice to businesses selling food online, FSA. Regulation \(EC\) no 178/2002 of the European parliament and of the council of 28 January 2002.](#)
2. [Distance selling, mail order and delivery, FSA. Food safety for food delivery, FSA.](#)
3. Question: Have you ever ordered food or drink online through...? a) a restaurant's, cafe's or takeaway's own website. b) an online ordering and delivery company for example, Just Eat, Deliveroo or Uber Eats, etc. c) an online marketplace, for example, Amazon, Gumtree, Etsy, etc. d) social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, etc. e) a food sharing app, for example, Olio or Too Good To Go, etc. Responses: yes, no. Base= 4041, all online respondents.
4. Question: How often do you order food or drink online...? A) a restaurant's, cafe's or takeaway's own website. b) an online ordering and delivery company e.g. Just Eat, Deliveroo or Uber Eats, etc. C) an online marketplace, e.g. Amazon, Gumtree, Etsy, etc. d) social media, e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, etc. e) a food sharing app, e.g. Olio or Too Good to Go, etc. Responses: every day, most days, 2-3 times a week, about once a week, 2-3 times a month, about once a month, less than once a month, never, can't remember. Base A= 2984, B= 2443, C= 1536, D= 678, E= 670, all online respondents and those who completed version A postal questionnaire who have ever ordered food or drink through A/B/C/D/E.
5. Question: In the last 12 months, what food or drink have you ordered online...? a) directly through a restaurant's, cafe's or takeaway's own website. b) through an online ordering and delivery company e.g. Just Eat, Deliveroo or Uber Eats, etc. c) an online marketplace, e.g. Amazon, Gumtree, Etsy, etc. d) through social media, e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, etc. e) through a food sharing app, e.g. Olio or Too Good to Go, etc. Responses: prepared cooked meals or snacks, baked goods and desserts, such as cheesecakes, cakes, biscuits, breads etc or dough/mixes to make these, milkshakes / ice creams, protein shakes, fresh fruit or vegetables (uncooked), dairy products, such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter etc, alcoholic drinks, such as beer, wine, spirits, cocktails, non-alcoholic drinks, other (please specify). Base A= 2165, B= 1808, C= 855, D= 199, E= 266, all online respondents who have ever ordered food or drink online through...A/B/C/D/E.
6. Question: When you order food and drink online, how often do you look for Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) ratings? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base= 2642, all respondents who have ordered food and drink online and have heard of the Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS).
7. Question: When you look for FHRS ratings when ordering food and drink online, how often are they easy to find? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base= 2039, all online respondents who look for Food Hygiene Rating Scheme ratings when ordering food or drink online.
8. [FSA Explains: Food hypersensitivities. Overview: Food Allergy, NHS. Food Intolerance, NHS. Overview: Coeliac disease, NHS.](#)

9. [42 Regulation \(EU\) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011.](#)
10. Allergens: celery, cereals containing gluten (such as barley and oats), crustaceans (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), eggs, fish, lupin, milk, molluscs (such as mussels and oysters), mustard, peanuts, sesame, soybeans, sulphur dioxide and sulphites and tree nuts (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).
11. Question: When you order food and drink online, how often do you look for information that allows you to identify food that might cause you or another member of your household a bad or unpleasant physical reaction? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, don't know, i don't order food and drink online. Base= 2476, all respondents who have ordered food or drink online and who suffer from a bad or unpleasant physical reaction after consuming certain foods or avoid certain foods because of the bad or unpleasant physical reaction they might cause, and/or live with at least one other adult or child in their household.