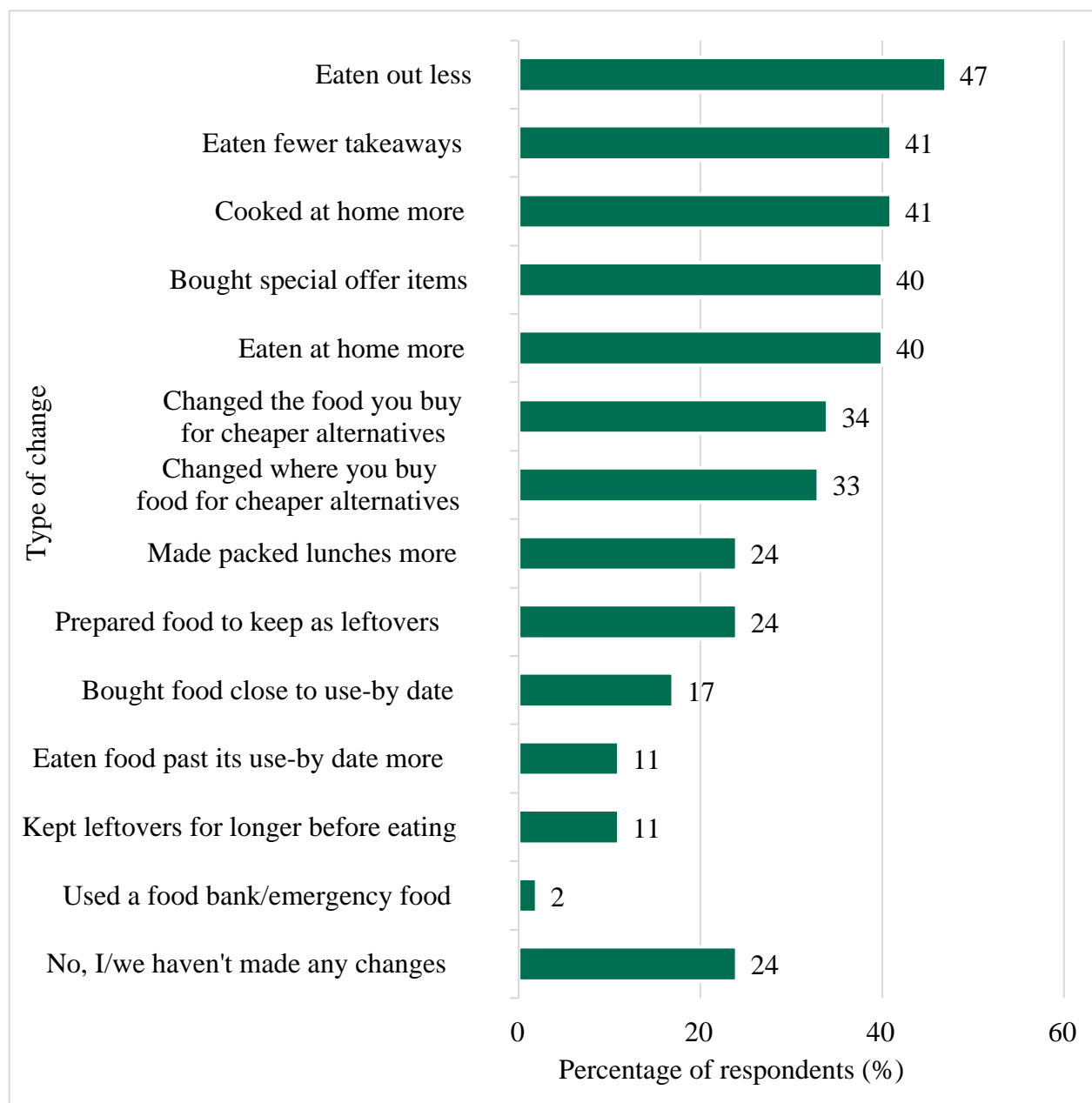


Wave 5: Chapter 7 Food-related behaviours eating habits

Introduction

The FSA is working to protect public health and consumers' wider interests. To monitor a range of food-related behaviours, Food and You 2 asks respondents about their food shopping habits, food safety in the home, whether specific foods are eaten, and if their eating habits have changed.

Figure 23. Changes in eating habits in the last 12 months



Eating habits had changed for most respondents with only 24% of respondents indicating that there had been no change in their eating habits in the last 12 months. The most common changes related to what and where respondents ate (47% ate out less, 41% ate fewer takeaways, 41% cooked more at home, 40% ate at home more), reducing food costs (40% bought items on special offer, 34% changed the food they buy for cheaper alternatives, 33% changed where they buy food for cheaper alternatives) and increased food management behaviours (24% prepared food that could be kept as leftovers, 24% made more packed lunches). In addition, 17% of respondents reported that they had bought food close to its use-by date more, 11% had eaten food past its use-by date more and 11% kept leftovers for longer before eating (Figure 23) .

Respondents who reported a change in their eating habits in the last 12 months were asked to indicate why their eating habits had changed. The main causes of reported changes in eating habits were financial reasons (69%), health reasons (47%), and because of COVID-19 and lockdown (41%). A small proportion of respondents reported changes in eating habits due to food safety reasons (i.e., to avoid food poisoning) (6%) ([footnote 1](#)).

The likelihood changes to eating habits were made due to financial reasons varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- age group: respondents aged between 25 and 54 years (for example, 84% of those aged 25-34 years) were more likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to those aged 16-24 years (63%), and those aged 65-79 years (48%) were least likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons
- annual household income: respondents with a lower income were more likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to those with a higher income. For example, 74% of those with an annual income of less than £19,000 had made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to 55% of those with an annual income of more than £96,000
- NS-SEC: respondents in semi-routine and routine occupations (78%) and lower supervisory and technical occupations (76%) were more likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to those in most other occupational groups. Full-time students (58%) were least likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons
- region (England): the likelihood respondents made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons varied by region. For example, respondents in the South-West of England (79%) and North-West of England (76%) were more likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to those in London (62%) and the West Midlands (63%)
- food security: respondents with very low (97%) or low (82%) food security were more likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to those with marginal food security (71%), and those with high food security (60%) were least likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons
- ethnic group: 71% of white respondents have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to 60% Asian or Asian British respondents.
- responsibility for cooking: respondents who were responsible for cooking (70%) were more likely to have made changes to eating habits due to financial reasons compared to those who do not cook (55%).

1. Question: Thinking about the changes to eating habits that you have made in the last 12 months, why did you make these changes? Responses: financial reasons, health reasons, food safety reasons (i.e. to avoid food poisoning), due to the bad or unpleasant physical reaction that certain foods cause, because of lockdown/covid-19, other, prefer not to say. Base= 3199, all online respondents who have made at least one change to their eating habits in the last 12 months.

