

# Consumer Insights Tracker Report March 2022 - March 2023

Area of research interest: [Consumer Interests \(aka Wider Consumer Interests\)](#)

Study duration: 2022-03-01

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## Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 1 Executive Summary

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The purpose of the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Consumer Insights Tracker is to provide frequent monitoring of consumer behaviour and attitudes towards food insecurity, food availability, consumer concerns in relation to food, confidence in the food supply chain and confidence in the FSA. This annual report presents key findings and commentary on data from March 2022 to March 2023, and includes additional analysis of demographic groups of particular interest for the FSA and its audiences on certain measures.

Previous publications can be found on the FSA's website ([The Covid-19 consumer research report](#), [Consumer Insights Tracker report November 2021](#), [Consumer Insights Tracker December 2021 to March 2022](#), [COVID-19 tracker report](#)) and full datasets for each wave are also available via the [FSA data catalogue](#).

### 1.1 Context

Food prices in the UK rose sharply over the course of 2022. One major factor behind the high levels of food inflation has been the rising cost of energy. According to the [Office for National Statistics](#), electricity prices in the UK rose by 67% and gas prices by 130% between March 2022 to March 2023. This had an indirect effect on the price of food and services, causing the cost of living to rise. The impact of high energy prices resulted in reported behaviour changes over winter, with 53% of adults in Great Britain saying they used less fuel in their homes because of [the rising cost of living](#).

The conflict in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has added to food supply chain pressures. A specific example of this was shipments of sunflower oil being interrupted, resulting in supermarkets introducing restrictions on purchases of cooking oil [in April 2022](#). It has also contributed to a shortage of eggs as Ukraine and Russia are major producers of wheat – a key

ingredient [in chicken feed](#). Further, the conflict led to a rise in the cost of fertilisers and limited supplies, adding to supply chain pressures and impacting on food prices.

Between July to November 2022, the UK experienced significant economic and political change against a backdrop of the rising cost of living. This included the introduction of significant government support for millions of households. On 1 October 2022, the government introduced an [Energy Price Guarantee \(EPG\)](#) which was designed to cap the unit costs and standing charges for gas and electricity. Between October 2022 and March 2023, households received £400 through the [Energy Bills Support Scheme \(EBSS\)](#). In addition, millions of households received financial support through the government's cost of living support package (for example, £150 reduction in Council Tax) and Cost of Living Payments made in July 2022 and November 2022 to eligible households in receipt of [specific benefits or tax credits](#).

## 1.2 Key findings

### Food affordability and food prices

Over a third of participants (35%) were worried about food affordability in March 2023. This is significantly higher than the year before (31% in March 2022), and in September 2022 the figure rose to 40%, the highest level since the tracker began in April 2020 (28%).

Demographic data also shows that there are several groups who are significantly more likely to be worried about food affordability in March 2023 than they were a year ago in March 2022:

- people from households with no children present (30% in March 2023 versus 25% in March 2022)
- younger people aged 25-34 (50% in March 2023 versus 42% in March 2022)
- male participants (34% in March 2023 vs. 29% in March 2022)
- people in work (36% in March 2023 vs. 32% in March 2022) and not in work (34% in March 2023 versus 29% in March 2022).

In March 2023, three quarters of participants (76%) reported that their food shopping had 'got more expensive'. This remains unchanged compared to March 2022 (74%), however, the figure peaked at 80% in June 2022.

### Food insecurity

Over the course of the year, many of the measures of food insecurity included in the survey have seen an increase, reaching a high in the autumn of 2022. Since then, there has been a significant decline, although figures are still higher than those reported in March 2022.

More than a quarter of participants (27%) reported cutting down the size of their meals or skipping meals because they could not afford to buy food in March 2023, a significant increase from the year before (22% in March 2022). The proportion of participants taking this action was highest in June 2022 and October 2022 (both 31%).

In March 2023, 13% of participants reported using a food bank or food charity in the last month. Reported usage has risen steadily over time from 8% when tracking began in April 2020, to 15% in March 2022 and 17% in September 2022. In November 2022 reported usage decreased to 11%, rising to 15% in December 2022 but since the end of 2022 the figure has stabilised.

Demographic analysis of March 2023 data indicates that the following groups are significantly more likely to report certain indicators of food insecurity.

- people from households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- younger people (16-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds) compared to older people (55-75-year-olds)
- people in work compared to those not in work
- people with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

Since September 2022, the Consumer Insights Tracker has collected data on several new food insecurity measures (described below). Many of the figures peaked in autumn 2022 and since then have either declined or stabilised.

In March 2023:

- a quarter (26%) reported not being able to afford their essential food shopping. This has remained relatively stable since the question was first asked in September 2022.
- more than a quarter (28%) reported eating food past its use-by-date because they could not afford to buy more food, a significant decline from its peak in October 2022 when a third (33%) reported this behaviour.
- more than three in ten (32%) could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet meal. The proportion reporting this was highest in October 2022 (36%) but since then has significantly declined and has remained at around three in ten between November 2022 and March 2023.
- in March 2023, one in five (20%) reported eating cold food because they could not afford to cook hot food. The proportion reporting this action has gradually declined since the question was first asked in September 2022 (25%) and is now significantly lower at 20%.

From September 2022, the Consumer Insights Tracker has included measures that track behaviours adopted by consumers to reduce energy bills and save money. In March 2023:

- over six in ten (63%) reported using cheaper cooking methods (such as using a microwave, air fryer or slow cooker) to reduce energy bills and save money. The proportion taking this action peaked at 67% in October 2022 but fell to 58% in November 2022 and, since December 2022, the figure has stabilised around this level.
- around a quarter (26%) said they have reduced the length of time they cook their food for. The proportion taking this action was at its highest in October 2022 (30%).
- a quarter (25%) had lowered the cooking temperature of food. This figure also declined significantly from a high of 29% in October 2022.
- around a fifth had changed the settings on their fridge and/or freezer so that food in a fridge and/or freezer is being kept at a warmer temperature (22%) – this figure has declined from September 2022 (27%) when tracking began.
- over one in ten turned off the fridge or freezer that contains food (14%) – this figure declined from September and October 2022 (18%)

Across these new measures related to food insecurity and consumer behaviours, there were several groups who were significantly more likely to be impacted than others:

- households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- younger people (16-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds) compared to older people (55-75-year-olds)
- people in work compared to those not in work
- people with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

In March 2023, three in ten (30%) said they had cut down the size of their meals or skipped meals because they were not well enough to shop or cook food. This figure has remained broadly stable since April 2022.

One in five (22%) said they cut down the size of their meals or skipped meals because they had no means to get to the shop to buy food, significantly higher compared to March 2022 (18%). The proportion of participants taking this action peaked at 27% in October 2022, falling to 20% in November 2022 when it stabilised.

## Concerns around Christmas and New Year

In December 2022, over three quarters (77%) had taken action to save money at Christmas. The most common actions were: swapping to cheaper brands (36%); shopping in multiple stores to get a better deal (36%); buying less food than usual for Christmas (35%); and buying yellow sticker items (29%).

Compared to 2021, concerns about the price of food in the run up to Christmas and the New Year rose significantly, with eight in ten (82%) reporting concern in December 2022 (63% in December 2021). Participants were also more concerned about food availability in 2022 (56% in December 2022 vs. 44% in December 2021).

Concerns about the 'quality of food' (50% in December 2022 vs. 35% in December 2021) and the 'safety of food' (43% in December 2022 vs. 32% in December 2021) for Christmas and New Year also rose significantly in December 2022 compared to the same month the year before.

In December 2022 (not asked in December 2021), half of participants were concerned about the 'healthiness of food' (51%) and the 'sustainability of food' (50%) in relation to Christmas.

## Food availability

Reported concern about food availability has remained broadly stable over the past 12 months - on average a third (34%) of participants worried about this issue – in line with March 2023 (36%). Concern reached a peak of 41% in October 2022, however this declined significantly in November 2022 (33%).

In March 2023, two thirds (65%) reported experiencing unavailable food items. This is the highest figure recorded since the Consumer Insights Tracker began in November 2021, and is also significantly higher compared to March 2022 (46%). In March 2023, the most common items that consumers reported as 'unavailable' were:

- fresh vegetables (36%), vs. 12-month average (20%)
- eggs (35%), vs. 12-month average (21%) - one of the most commonly unavailable items since December 2022
- fresh fruit (24%), vs. 12-month average (18%)
- fresh milk (16%), vs. 12-month average (17%)
- bread (16%), vs. 12-month average (18%)

Frozen foods were one of the top five most common items reported as being unavailable in most waves over the last 12 months.

Most 'over-purchasing' or 'stockpiling' behaviours related to food increased between March 2022 and October 2022 (when they were at their highest), and after falling, they have remained broadly stable from November 2022 until March 2023. Conversely, the proportion of people 'purchasing more fuel than we usually would' has declined (8% in March 2023 vs. 16% in March 2022).

## Concerns about the food industry

Over the past 12 months, out of the issues covered in the survey, 'food prices' have consistently been the top concern for participants. A large majority are concerned about food prices (86% in March 2023), and this has risen significantly from already high levels in March 2022 (81%), reaching a peak in June 2022 (87%).

Concerns about food availability or food shortages are not as common as concerns about food prices, but they have risen steadily since March 2022 (55% compared to 63% in March 2023). Concern in March 2023 is also significantly higher than the 12-month average (59%).

Other concerns monitored in the Consumer Insights Tracker are also significantly higher in March 2023 compared to March 2022:

- sustainability / the impact of food production on the environment (60% vs. 56% March 2022)
- the 'healthiness' of food in my diet (57% vs. 52% March 2022)

Concerns reported about animal welfare in the food industry have remained stable over the past 12 months, with March 2023 in line with the same month the year before (60% vs. 57% March 2022).

Two in five (42%) reported concern about the quality of food produced in the UK in March 2023, a figure that has risen steadily since March 2022 (36%). Significantly more people reported concern about the quality of food imported from outside the UK (52%) although this has remained broadly stable over the past 12 months (50% in March 2022).

In March 2023, more than half (53%) were concerned about the safety of food imported from outside the UK, significantly higher than the levels of concern about food produced inside the UK (38%). The trend over time for these measures is broadly stable, with some fluctuations visible in concerns relating to imported foods.

## Confidence in the food supply chain

Overall confidence in the food supply chain is now at its lowest level since tracking began, from 69% in November 2021 to 63% in March 2023. Since May 2022 this figure has remained stable ranging between 65% and 63%.

More specifically, there has been a decline in confidence that the food supply chain in the UK ensures that there are affordable food options for everyone, falling from 56% in March 2022 to 49% in March 2023. This measure has remained stable between May and March 2023.

In March 2023, more than three quarters of participants (78%) were confident that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK ensure that food is safe to eat. These figures have remained stable over the past 12 months (79% March 2022). Seven in ten (70%) were confident that food is of a high quality in March 2023, significantly lower than March 2022 (75%), although this figure has remained stable since May 2022 (71%).

## Perceptions of the FSA

Since March 2022, there has been a decline in the proportion of participants stating that they trust the FSA to do its job. The figure for March 2023 (59%) is significantly lower than it was in March 2022 (63%) but has remained stable between June 2022 (60%) and March 2023.

Confidence in the FSA to protect the public from food-related risks has also declined significantly over time, from 75% in March 2022 to 72% in March 2023.

There have been no significant changes since March 2022 across other measures and most people continue to feel confident that the FSA:

- is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks (68% March 2023 vs. 69% in March 2022)
- takes appropriate action if a food-related risk is identified (76% in March 2023 and 2022)

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## Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 2

### Background

This publication is a summary of the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Consumer Insights Tracker data, focussing on trends over the past year (March 2022 to March 2023). The Consumer Insights Tracker collects monthly insights to allow for the tracking of consumer attitudes and behaviours in relation to a range of topics, including:

- household food insecurity
- consumer perceptions of food availability
- consumer concerns in relation to food
- consumer confidence in the food supply chain and the FSA

The report draws on the data from the Consumer Insights Tracker survey commissioned by the FSA and administered by Ipsos UK. This survey was established in November 2021 and replaced the COVID-19 consumer tracker survey that ran from April 2020. This annual report provides commentary on data from March 2022 to March 2023. For some measures the report also includes commentary on data collected pre-March 2022.

Although longer term trends can be monitored in FSA's flagship [Food and You 2](#) survey (which offers a more robust methodology), the Consumer Insights Tracker reports monthly and is designed to provide more regular monitoring of key issues that impact people and specific demographic groups. The key differences between these two surveys are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Key differences between Consumer Insights Tracker survey and Food and You 2 survey**

Difference	Food and You 2	Consumer Insights Tracker
Sample size	Approximately 6,000	Approximately 2,000
Sampling approach	Random probability sampling using postal address file (PAF)	Quota sampling from an online panel
Mode	Push-to-web (online, with postal option)	Online only

Frequency	Biannually	Monthly (was fortnightly between November 2021 and January 2022)
Representation	Nationally representative of England, Wales and Northern Ireland with boosted samples in Wales and Northern Ireland	Nationally representative of England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Topics captured	Food safety in the home, food shopping, eating out, food allergy (including intolerance, and other hypersensitivities), food security, concerns about food, and trust in the FSA and food supply chain	Food security, food availability, concerns in relation to food, confidence in the food supply chain and confidence/trust in the FSA
Cognitively tested	Cognitive testing on some survey questions	No cognitive testing
Beginning of timeseries	July 2020 (Fieldwork conducted between July and October 2020)	April 2020 (question dependent)

## Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 3 Methodology

This report draws on data from two key tracking surveys, commissioned by the FSA via Ipsos UK's online omnibus:

1. **COVID-19 consumer tracker survey** – this monthly survey was established in April 2020 to track behaviour and attitudes towards food purchasing and consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collection continued on a monthly cycle until October 2021 (see Annex 1: Fieldwork dates and sample sizes – COVID-19 consumer tracker survey for details for each wave of the survey), and [publication reports](#) are published on the FSA website. From November 2021, some survey questions from the COVID-19 tracker survey were retired whilst others continued in the FSA's new 'Consumer Insights Tracker'. This was established in November 2021 and replaced the COVID-19 consumer tracker survey.
2. **Consumer Insights Tracker** – this survey was established in November 2021, to monitor consumer behaviours and attitudes in relation to food availability, affordability and confidence in the food industry and the FSA (see Annex 2: Fieldwork dates and sample sizes – Consumer Insights Tracker survey for details of each wave). Many of the questions in this tracking survey were previously monitored in the COVID-19 survey (as outlined above), allowing the timeseries to continue (see Annex 4: Questionnaires for the full list of survey questions). The survey questions were developed jointly between FSA's social science team and Ipsos UK. This report summarises findings from 13 waves of the Survey

from March 2022 to March 2023 (including March waves in both years) and where relevant also draws upon data across all waves of the COVID-19 consumer tracker.

The sample size for each wave of the COVID-19 and Consumer Insights Trackers is approximately 2,000 adults (aged 16-75), living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The sampling approach is based on quota sampling from an online panel and data is weighted to be representative of the adult population aged 16-75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on key demographics: age, gender, working status and social grade. An elimination rule is applied to the online omnibus so that participants are not invited to complete consecutive surveys. For example, in a monthly survey, participants would be eliminated from the sample if they had completed the survey in the month prior. The full datasets for each survey, including demographic breaks, are available via the [FSA data catalogue](#).

### 3.1 Data analysis

Several demographic groups of particular interest for the FSA and its audiences were selected for additional analysis. These included:

- households with children present and households with no children
- household size (1, 2, 3 and 4+)
- gender (male and female)
- age (grouped into age bands: 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-75)
- employment status (in work and not in work)
- long-term health conditions and no long-term health conditions

Participants were included in these demographic groups based on the answers given to specific questions in the online survey. In the case of employment status and health conditions, answer options were assigned to a broader category or 'net'. Participants categorised as 'working' were employed or self-employed, those 'not in work' were unemployed, retired, studying or looking after the home and family. Participants with long-term health conditions reported having a physical and/or mental health condition or illness lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more.

To identify any differences between these demographic groups, analysis was conducted using March 2023 data, as well as comparing the responses of these groups in March 2022 and March 2023.

Statistically significant differences at the 5% level were ascertained by the two-sample independent t-test. This testing determines whether a difference is 'real' or if it has occurred by chance because not everyone in the population has been surveyed. Throughout this report, in instances 'significantly' is used, this indicates that a difference is statistically significant at the 5% level.

### 3.2 Note on interpreting the data

Results should be interpreted with care. All surveys are subject to a range of potential limitations including sample imbalances which are not easily identified and corrected through weighting. Surveys are also subject to participants' interpretation of survey questions and response options. The data included within this report relies on participants' self-reported behaviours. Errors could occur due to imperfect recollection, or participants' tendency to over-report behaviours which are perceived as being desirable and under-report undesirable behaviours. Some survey question options were randomised and presented in a different order to help overcome order bias, which is the tendency for survey participants to pick the first option rather than reading all the options and choosing an honest answer.



The project was quality assured by both the FSA's Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS) and the FSA, and Ipsos UK quality assured the research process at key stages. This included reviewing survey wording to ensure questions would be understood by participants, and that questions met the research objectives. The survey script was checked by members of the Ipsos research team to ensure the questions were being asked as agreed. Sampling and data collection were subject to standard quality assurance protocols, including automated checks on completed questionnaires. Finally, data checks were carried out on data tables and reports.

To limit the length of this report, demographic commentary has only been included in the section focusing on household food insecurity. Unless stated otherwise, where comparisons are made in the text between different demographic groups or between survey waves, only those differences found to be statistically significant at the 5% level are reported.

### 3.3 Acknowledgements

Ipsos UK would like to thank the Food Standards Agency's Social science team for their assistance throughout this project and in the writing of this report. We would also like to thank all those who took the time to participate in the survey.

## Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 4 Food affordability and insecurity

### 4.1 Food affordability and food prices

The report includes demographic analysis of the following measures of food affordability and food prices:

- levels of worry about food affordability
- cutting down on the size of meals or skipping meals for financial reasons
- use of food banks and food charities
- not being able to afford essential food shopping in the past month
- eating food past its use-by-date because could not afford to buy more food
- could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet
- eaten cold food as not able to afford to cook hot food

Please note that while this chapter provides a summary of key demographic differences, more comprehensive details (including all significant differences between groups) can be found in the [FSA data catalogue](#).

#### Consumer concerns about food affordability

In March 2023, over a third (35%) of participants reported being worried about food affordability, a significant increase from 31% in March 2022. This is also significantly higher than when tracking began in April 2020 (28%). In September 2022, two in five participants (40%) were worried about food affordability, the highest proportion recorded since tracking began (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Reported levels of worry about food affordability over time (April 2020 – March 2023)**

Data source: COVID-19 Consumer tracker April 2020-October 2021, Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 1 and 2.

### **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to report feeling worried about food affordability:

- participants from households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- younger participants (16-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds) compared to older participants (55-75-year-olds)
- participants with a long-term health condition compared to those without a long-term health condition

Figure 2 summarises these demographic differences for March 2023.

When comparing demographic data from March 2023 to March 2022, there have been some significant changes. The proportion of people without children who are worried about food affordability has risen significantly, from one in four (25%) in March 2022, to three in ten (30%) in March 2023.

Demographic figures from March 2023 show that single person and large households (3+) are significantly more likely to be worried about food affordability, when compared with 2 person households. While a quarter (26%) of 2 person households are concerned about affordability, this increases to a third (35%) for single person households, 39% for 3 person households, and just over four in ten (42%) of those in larger households (4+).

Since March 2022, concern about food affordability has also significantly increased amongst males, rising 5 percentage points to 34% in March 2023 (29% in March 2022). There has been no significant change in concern amongst females.

When looking at changes according to different age groups over the year, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of those aged 25-34 who reported being worried about the affordability of food; 50% in March 2023 compared to 42% in March 2022. This now means that half of those aged 16-24 (51%) and 24-34 (50%) are worried about the affordability of food. There have been no other significant changes across age groups between March 2022 and March 2023.

Both those working and those not working are significantly more worried about food affordability in March 2023 compared to March 2022. There is no significant difference between the two groups.

As was the case in March 2022, figures from March 2023 show that people with a long-term health condition are significantly more likely to be worried about food affordability (41%) than those without a health condition (32%).

**Figure 2: Reported worries about food affordability; key demographic differences (March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

**Consumer perceptions of food prices**

In March 2023, over three quarters (76%) of participants reported that their food shopping had 'got more expensive', in line with March 2022 (74%). The proportion reporting that their food had 'got more expensive' peaked at 80% in June 2022 and since then the proportion reporting this has remained relatively stable at around three quarters each month (excluding a significant drop to 69% in January 2023) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Participants' perceptions of the price of their food shopping over time (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

## **4.2 Food insecurity**

### **Cutting or skipping meals for affordability reasons**

The Consumer Insights Tracker collects data on participants cutting down the size of their meals or skipping meals because they did not have enough money to buy food.

Findings from March 2023 show that over a quarter (27%) reported cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals for financial reasons. This is a significant increase from March 2022 (22%). In April 2020, when tracking began, 18% reported cutting down or skipping meals. Since then, there has been an increase, reaching peaks of 31% cutting down or skipping meals for financial reasons in June 2022 and October 2022 (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Participants who reported cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals ‘at least once’ or more in the month prior because they did not have enough money to buy food (April 2020 – March 2023)**

Data source: COVID-19 Consumer tracker April 2020-October 2021, Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

### **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to report skipping meals or cutting down the size of meals because they could not afford food:

- those from households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- younger participants (16-24-year-olds and 25–34-year-olds) compared to older participants (55-75-year-olds)
- participants with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

Figure 5 summarises these demographic differences for March 2023.

**Figure 5: Demographic breakdown of participants reporting cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals ‘at least once’ or more because they did not have enough money to buy food (March 2022 and March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

People with children were more likely to report skipping or cutting down on the size of meals, compared to those without children, in both March 2022 and March 2023. There has been no significant change over time on this measure for those with children (35% in March 2023 vs. 34% in March 2022). However, participants without children were significantly more likely to report this behaviour in March 2023 (22%) than in March 2022 (16%).

Demographic figures from March 2023 show that single person and larger households (3+) are significantly more likely to report skipping or cutting down on meals, when compared with 2 person households. While 19% of 2 person households reported this behaviour, this increases to 28% for both single person and 3 person households, while a third (33%) of those in large households (4+) reported skipping or cutting down meals because they did not have enough money to buy food. There have been no significant changes when comparing demographic data from March 2022 with March 2023.

In March 2023, males (28% vs. 23% in March 2022) and females (26% vs. 22% in March 2022) were both significantly more likely than a year ago to have skipped or cut down meals because they did not have enough money to buy food.

The proportion of participants aged 55-75 that reported skipping or cutting down on meals in March 2023 has significantly increased compared to the previous year (11% vs. 6% in March 2022). This was also the case for participants aged 35-44 (30% in March 2023 vs. 19% in March 2022). Younger people aged 16-24 (49%) and 25-44 (44%) are still more likely than people aged 55-75 to skip or cut down on meals, as was the case in March 2022 (52% for 16-24 and 37% for 25-44).

There has been a significant increase between March 2022 and March 2023, in both the proportion of working people (24% in March 2022 vs. 28% in March 2023) and the proportion of non-working people skipping or cutting down their meals (19% in March 2022 vs. 25% in March 2023).

Finally, in March 2023, over a third (37%) of people with a long-term health condition reported skipping or cutting down on meals because of affordability, significantly more than those without a health condition (21%). Comparing March 2022 and March 2023, there is not a significant difference among those with a health condition (32% in March 2022) or without a health condition (19% in March 2022).

## **Use of food banks and food charities**

In March 2023, 13% of people reported using a food bank or food charity, in line with the figure from March 2022 (15%). This is not significantly different to the 12-month average (15%) but is significantly higher than when tracking began in April 2020 (8%). Reported usage of a food charity or food bank has risen steadily over time and in May, August and September 2022 reached a figure of 17% (Figure 6).

### **Figure 6: Reported use of food banks or food charities over time (April 2020 – March 2023)**

Data source: COVID-19 consumer tracker April 2020-October 2021, Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

From November 2021 the phrasing of this question changed from 'In the last month, how often, if at all, have you arranged for food to be delivered to your house through a food charity or food bank?' to 'in the last month, how often, if at all, have you used a food charity or food bank?'

## **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to report using a food bank or food charity:

- households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from larger households (3 and 4+) compared to smaller households (up to 2 person households)

- male participants compared to female participants
- younger participants (16-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds) compared to older participants (55-75-year-olds)
- participants in work compared to those not in work
- participants with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

Figure 7 summarises these demographic differences for March 2023.

In March 2023, two in five (20%) participants with children in their household reported using a food bank or food charity, a figure significantly higher than households without children (9%). This difference is smaller than in March 2022 (27% with children vs. 9% without children).

Figures for March 2023 show that the proportion of participants living in a larger household (4+) that reported using a food bank or food charity has significantly decreased since March 2022 (16% in March 2023 vs. 23% in March 2022). However, participants living in larger households (3 and 4+) continue to be significantly more likely to use a food charity or food bank (15% and 16% respectively) compared to those living in two person households (9%) and single person households (9%).

When looking at the demographic data for gender in March 2023, men are significantly more likely than women to use a food bank or food charity (17% of men vs. 9% of women). There has been a significant decrease in the proportion of women using a food bank or food charity since March 2022 (12% vs. 9% in March 2023).

Significantly fewer younger participants (aged 16-24) reported using a food bank or food charity in March 2023 (24%) compared to March 2022 (37%). Participants aged 16-34 were still significantly more likely to report using a food bank or food charity than participants aged 35-75 in both March 2022 and March 2023.

In March 2023, those in work were significantly more likely to have used a food bank or food charity (15%) compared to those not working (8%). However, since March 2022 there has been a significant decline in people who are in work and report using a food charity or food bank (15% compared to 18% in March 2022), whilst the proportion of non-working participants has remained stable.

Data from March 2023 shows that those with a health condition are significantly more likely to have used a food bank or food charity compared to participants without a health condition (17% vs. 10% of those who do not have a health condition).

**Figure 7: Reported use of food banks and food charities by key demographic groups (March 2022 and March 2023)**



Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

### **Unable to afford essential food shopping**

March 2023 findings show that over a quarter (26%) of people reported not being able to afford their essential food shopping in the past month. This figure has remained relatively stable since the question was first asked in September 2022 (28%) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Participants who reported not being able to afford their essential food shopping in the past month (September 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker September 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2.

### **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups (Figure 9) were significantly more likely to report not being able to afford their essential food shopping last month:

- households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households.
- younger participants (16-24 year-olds and 25-34 year-olds) compared to older participants aged 35 or over
- participants with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

### **Figure 9: Participants who reported not being able to afford their essential food shopping in the past month by key demographic groups (March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

### **Eaten food past its use-by date because could not afford to buy more food**

In March 2023, over a quarter of people (28%) reported eating food past its use-by date because they could not afford to buy more food. The proportion of people who reported this behaviour peaked at a third (33%) in October 2022. This declined in November 2022 and has remained stable over recent months (Figure 10).

### **Figure 10: Participants who reported eating food past its use-by-date because they could not afford to buy more food in the past month (September 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker September 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2.

### **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups (Figure 11) were significantly more likely to report eating food past its use-by date because they could not afford to buy more food:

- households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- younger participants (16-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds) compared to older participants aged 35 or over
- participants in work compared to those not in work
- participants with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

**Figure 11: Participants who reported eating food past its use-by-date because they could not afford to buy more food in the past month by key demographic groups (March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

### **Could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet**

In March 2023, around a third (32%) of participants reported that they could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet. The proportion of people reporting this peaked in October 2022 (36%) and since then has remained relatively stable at around three in ten (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Participants who reported they could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet in the past month (September 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker September 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2.

### **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups (Figure 13) were significantly more likely to report not being able to afford to eat a healthy balanced diet:

- households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- younger participants (16-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds) compared to older participants aged 35 or over
- participants with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

**Figure 13: Participants who reported they could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet in the past month by key demographic groups (March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

### **Eaten cold food as not able to afford to cook hot food**

Findings from March 2023 show that one in five (20%) people reported eating cold food in the past month because they could not afford to cook hot food. The figure was highest when the question was first asked in September 2022 (25%). This declined in November 2022 and has remained stable between December 2022 and March 2023, with March 2023 (20%) significantly lower than September 2022 (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Participants who reported they have eaten cold food because they could not afford to cook hot food in the past month (September 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker September 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2.

### **Summary of demographic groups**

In March 2023, the following demographic groups (Figure 15) were significantly more likely to report not being able to afford to cook hot food:

- households with at least one child present compared to households with no children present
- those from single person and larger households (3+) compared to 2 person households
- male participants compared to female participants
- younger participants (16-24 year-olds and 25-34 year-olds) compared to older participants aged 35 or over
- participants in work compared to those not in work
- participants with a health condition compared to those without a health condition

**Figure 15: Participants who reported they have eaten cold food because they could not afford to cook hot food in the past month by demographics (March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

### **Consumer behaviours to reduce energy bills and save money**

A new question was added to the Consumer Insights Tracker in September 2022 to monitor any behaviour changes related to the cooking and storing of food in response to rising energy bills and the [Energy Price Guarantee \(EPG\)](#). The EPG, introduced from 1 October, was designed to set a cap on standing charges and prices per unit of gas and electricity. In addition, the government implemented the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS), giving all households a non-repayable grant of £400 as a credit from their energy supplier to be paid over six months from October 2022 to March 2023. The consumer behaviours included in this new question were based on behaviours reported in media outlets and anecdotal accounts.

The survey did not include questions that measured the direct impact of EPG or EBSS on consumer behaviour and therefore it is not possible to link these findings to any of these specific policies or schemes.

In March 2023, over six in ten (63%) participants reported using cheaper cooking methods (such as a microwave, air fryer or slow cooker) instead of an oven, to reduce energy bills and save money. This peaked at two thirds (67%) in October 2022 and stabilised from November 2022 until March 2023.

In March 2023, around a quarter of participants (26%) reported reducing the length of time they cooked their food and a similar proportion (25%) reported lowering the cooking temperature. Both of these figures are significantly higher compared to when tracking began in September 2022 (29% and 28% respectively) but have remained stable since November 2022.

**Figure 16: Participants who reported: making changes to how they cooked food in the last month (September 2022 to March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker September 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2.

Participants are also asked if they have changed the settings on their fridge and/or freezer so that food is being kept at a warmer temperature – more than one in five (22%) took this action in March 2023. This figure peaked at 27% when the question was first asked in September 2022 but has declined over time and was significantly lower in March 2023 (22%) (Figure 17).

In March 2023, 14% of participants reported turning off a fridge or freezer that contains food. This figure peaked at 18% in September and October 2022, and since then there has been a significant decrease in people taking this action.

**Figure 17: Participants who reported changing how they store food in a fridge or freezer in the last month (September 2022 to March 2023)**



Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker September 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and full sample sizes available in Annex 2.

# Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 5 Other consumer food behaviours

## Cutting or skipping meals for health or access reasons

Alongside the measure reported in subsection 4.2 Food insecurity, the Consumer Insights Tracker asks participants if they have cut down the size of meals or skipped meals for any of the following reasons:

- they (or others in their households) were not well enough to shop or cook food (health reasons).
- they had no means to get to the shop to buy food (limited access to shops).

In March 2023, three in ten (30%) said they cut down the size of their meals or skipped meals because they were not well enough to shop or cook food. This is significantly higher than the figure from March 2022 (24%) (Figure 18).

Over one in five (22%) said they cut down the size of their meals or skipped meals because they had no means to get to the shop to buy food. This is significantly higher than the figure from March 2022 (18%). This peaked at 27% in October 2022, but since November 2022 (20%) has remained more stable (Figure 18).

**Figure 18: Participants who reported cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals: no means to get to the shop, not well enough to shop or cook food (April 2020 – March 2023)**

Data source: COVID-19 Consumer tracker April 2020-October 2021, Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and

sample sizes available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

## Food safety behaviours

Comparing figures from March 2022 to figures from March 2023, there have been no significant changes in the proportion of participants that reported consuming specific food items past its use-by date (Figure 19).

In March 2023:

- more than two in five (46%) reported eating bagged salad past its use-by date (43% in March 2022) – this figure was significantly higher in August 2022 (51%) and February 2023 (49%)
- around two in five (42%) reported eating cooked meat past its use-by date (39% in March 2022) – this figure was highest in August 2022 (46%)
- one in five (22%) reported eating smoked fish past its use-by-date (23% in March 2022)

**Figure 19: Participants who have eaten cooked meats, smoked fish and bagged salads that have gone past its use-by- date (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

In March 2023, 47% of participants reported eating cheese and 40% reported consuming milk past their use-by dates, both in line with figures from March 2022 (44% and 42% respectively) (Figure 20)

**Figure 20: Participants who have eaten cheese and milk past its ‘use-by’ date (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data sources: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults who had eaten the specified food, aged 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

## **Christmas and New Year**

In November and December 2022, the Consumer Insights Tracker collected insights on a range of consumer behaviours and concerns related specifically to Christmas and New Year. Some of these measures were also asked in November and December 2021.

In both 2021 and 2022, the Consumer Insights Tracker included the question 'in the last week have you or anyone in your household purchased additional food in preparation for Christmas?'. In November 2022, the proportion of participants (22%) who reported purchasing additional food was the same as the previous year – (23% in November 2021). However, this figure increased in December 2021 to 37%, and was significantly higher in the same month the following year (41% in 2022). The fieldwork timings in December 2022 (16 - 19 December 2022) were slightly later than the previous year (10 - 14 December 2021) and therefore closer to Christmas, which may partly explain the difference.

In 2022, the Consumer Insights Tracker also collected data on potential actions (if any) taken by participants to save money at Christmas (from a pre-defined list). In December 2022, more than three quarters (77%) had taken at least one action to save money, significantly higher than the proportion that reported doing so in November 2022 (69%). In December 2022, the most common actions taken were: changing to cheaper brands (36%); shopping in multiple stores to get a better deal (36%); buying less food than usual for Christmas (35%); and buying 'yellow sticker' items (29%) (Figure 21).

**Figure 21: Participants who reported taking any action to save money at Christmas (November and December 2022)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker November 2022 – December 2022, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

In the lead-up to Christmas in both 2021 and 2022 (fieldwork dates provided in Annex 1 and 2), participants were asked to ‘think about this Christmas and New Year. How concerned, if at all, are you personally about each of the following when doing your food shopping?’. Data was collected in 2021 and 2022 on four measures:

1. The price of food
2. The availability of food
3. The safety of food
4. The quality of food

Participant concerns were higher across all four of these issues in 2022 compared to 2021. Data for November and December 2022 shows that participants were most concerned about the price of food, compared to the other possible issues, and concerns about food prices were significantly higher compared to the previous year (82% in December 2022 vs. 63% in December 2021). Over half of participants were concerned about the availability of food for Christmas and New Year 2022 (56% in December 2022 vs. 44% in December 2021). Concern about safety and quality of food for Christmas 2022 was lower than for price and availability, but both were significantly higher than in 2021.

An additional two measures were added to the survey in 2022: the ‘healthiness of food’ and ‘sustainability of food’. In November and December 2022 around half of participants reported concern about each of these issues (Figure 22).

**Figure 22: Participants who reported being ‘highly’ or ‘somewhat’ concerned about food issues for Christmas and New Year (November – December 2021 and November – December 2022)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021 – December 2021 and November 2022 – December 2022, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3. In 2021 the survey did not include questions about the healthiness of food and the sustainability of food.

## **Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 6 Food availability**

### **Consumer concerns about food availability**

Over a third of participants (36%) reported feeling worried about food availability in March 2023. This is significantly higher than when data collection began in April 2020 (31%) and the in March 2022 (29%) but not significantly different to the average over the previous 12 months (34%).

As shown in Figure 23, worry about food availability has generally increased from June 2021 (18%), and reached a peak of 41% in October 2022. However, the proportion of participants feeling worried declined significantly in November 2022, falling 8 percentage points to 33%. This measure has remained relatively high over the latest winter period (35% in December 2022 to 36% in March 2023).

**Figure 23: Reported levels of worry about food availability over time (April 2020- March 2023)**

Data source: COVID-19 Consumer tracker April 2020-October 2021, Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

## **Consumer reports of unavailable items**

Participants were asked if any of their preferred food products were unavailable whilst doing their usual food shopping in the last week (from a pre-defined list). The proportion of participants who reported that their preferred food products were unavailable has increased significantly since March 2022 (46%) and is now at its highest recorded level, with data from March 2023 showing that two thirds of participants (65%) had experienced at least one food item being unavailable in the last week (Figure 24).

**Figure 24: Reports of any food items (from pre-defined list) being unavailable (November 2021 - March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

The figure for March 2023 (65%) was significantly higher compared to February 2023 (58%). Over the previous 12 months the average was 55% of participants reporting that items were unavailable. This increase in March 2023 reflected the increase in the proportion of people reporting specific food items as being unavailable: fresh vegetables (36%); eggs (35%) and fresh fruit (24%).

In March 2023, the five most common items (Figure 25) that participants reported as 'unavailable' were:

- fresh vegetables (36%), 12-month average (20%)
- eggs (35%), 12-month average (21%)
- fresh fruit (24%), 12-month average (18%)
- fresh milk (16%), 12-month average (17%)
- bread (16%), 12-month average (18%)

**Figure 25: Reports of the five most common items (from pre-defined list) being unavailable (March 2022- March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

Prior to December 2022, frozen foods were one of the five most common items being unavailable during the 12 months from March 2022.

In December 2022 over a quarter (28%) of participants reported eggs as being 'unavailable', a significant increase compared to November 2022 (15%). This figure has risen steadily over the winter period, reaching a current peak of 35% in March 2023, with 60% of these participants also reporting that they were unable to find a suitable substitute for this item in March 2023. A combination of factors including rising costs for feed and energy, and avian flu have caused a disruption to the supply of eggs, with some supermarkets across the UK placing restrictions on purchases [in November 2022](#).

From April 2022, the Consumer Insights Tracker included 'cooking oils' in the pre-defined list of preferred products that participants could select as unavailable. In May 2022 (21%) and June 2022 (25%) cooking oil was one of the five most common items reported as 'unavailable'. This could be explained by the conflict in Ukraine which interrupted shipments of sunflower oil resulting in supermarkets introducing restrictions on purchases of [cooking oil in April 2022](#).

Each month, participants who reported a food item as 'unavailable' were then asked if they found a suitable substitute for the item. In March 2023, a significantly higher proportion of people were unable to find a suitable substitute for eggs, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit and bread compared with March 2022.

- eggs (19% March 2022 vs. 60% March 2023)
- fresh vegetables (16% March 2022 vs. 35% March 2023)
- fresh fruit (15% March 2022 vs. 30% March 2023)
- bread (9% March 2022 vs. 16% March 2023)
- fresh milk (12% March 2022 vs. 16% March 2023)
- frozen foods (12% March 2022 vs. 17% March 2023)

The full datasets, including all food items included in the questionnaire, are available via the [FSA data catalogue](#).



## Consumer behaviours relating to food availability

Each month, participants are asked how often, if at all, they had done any of the following behaviours, to gain insight into actions related to over-purchasing or stockpiling:

- purchased raw ingredients to make products that they would usually buy pre-packaged
- changed what they usually purchase, for products with a longer shelf-life
- purchased more fresh food than they usually would, and frozen it for later
- purchased more non-perishable food than they usually would
- purchased more fuel than they usually would

Most of these behaviours showed a gradual increase from March 2022 until October 2022 where they peaked. In general, these have decreased and have been more stable from November 2022 until March 2023. However, in February there was a significant increase in the proportion of participants that reported 'purchasing more non-perishable food than they usually would' and 'changing what they usually purchase for products with a longer shelf life' compared to the previous month (Figure 26).

'Purchasing more fuel than we usually would' has followed a different trend from food purchasing behaviours as proportions have continued to decrease from June 2022 (16%) until March 2023 (8%).

**Figure 26: Participants who reported over-purchasing or stockpiling behaviours (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022 - March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

## Cutting or skipping meals for other reasons

The Consumer Insights Tracker tracks the proportion of participants cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals because they were unable to get a delivery of food or obtain food in other ways. (For other reasons for cutting or skipping meals see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).

When tracking first began in April 2020, being unable to get a delivery of food or obtain food in other ways was the most common reason for skipping or cutting down the size of meals (32%). This was at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when public health restrictions and voluntary social distancing measures restricted access to essential shops and consumers shifted to shopping online with some supermarkets struggling to meet the [increase in demand for home delivery](#). This has declined significantly over time and remained steady between September 2020 to April 2022, although the proportion increased significantly in May 2022 (23%). Overall, over the last 12 months, the average figure was 21%, in line with the findings from March 2023 (22%) (Figure 27).

**Figure 27: Participants who reported cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals ‘at least once’ or more in the month prior because they were unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways (April 2020 – March 2023)**

Data source: COVID-19 Consumer tracker April 2020-October 2021, Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021-March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 1 and 2.

## **Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 7**

### **Consumer concerns about the food industry**

#### **Concerns about food quality**

Participants were asked if they were concerned about the quality of food produced in the UK and of food imported from outside the UK (Figure 28). Since tracking began, the proportion of participants concerned about the quality of food imported from outside the UK has been significantly higher than the proportion of participants concerned about the quality of food produced in the UK. In March 2023, over half of participants (52%) reported feeling concerned about the quality of food imported from outside the UK, which is significantly higher than concern about the quality of food produced in the UK (42%). This trend is broadly stable across all waves

for both measures. However, concern about quality of food produced in the UK steadily increased from 36% in March 2022 to 46% in October 2022, although since then the figure has remained broadly stable.

**Figure 28: Participants who reported being ‘highly’ or ‘somewhat’ concerned about the quality of food produced inside the UK or food imported from outside the UK (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022 – March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2, 3.

## **Concerns about food safety**

Participants were asked if they were concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK and of food imported from outside the UK (Figure 29). The findings are very similar to the level of concern about food quality (Figure 28) with higher levels of concern in relation to imported food. In March 2023, over half of participants (53%) reported feeling concerned about the safety of food imported from outside the UK, compared to 38% who say they are concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK. This trend is broadly stable across all waves for both measures, although concerns about the safety of imported food displayed greater variations over time (still sitting within a range of 7 percentage points from 49% to 56%) (Figure 29).

**Figure 29: Participants who reported feeling ‘highly’ or ‘somewhat’ concerned about the safety of food (March 2022 - March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

## **Concerns about food prices and food affordability**

Figures for the last 12 months show that the highest levels of concern (based on questions asked) were reported for 'food prices'. In March 2022, eight in ten (81%) participants reported that they were 'highly' or 'somewhat' concerned about food prices. This proportion rose to a peak of 87% in June 2022. While this significantly decreased the following month (80% in July 2022), it rose again in August 2022 (85%) and has remained high but stable since. The proportion of participants reporting concern about food prices in March 2023 was 86% (Figure 30).

In comparison to the issue of food prices, fewer participants reported concern about 'food shortages' or 'food availability'. However, levels of concern rose steadily between March 2022 (55%) and June 2022 (63%) and have varied more in recent months (Figure 30). Furthermore, the figure for March 2023 is significantly higher than the 12-month average (59%).

**Figure 30: Participants who reported feeling 'highly' or 'somewhat' concerned about the food prices and food availability (March 2022 - March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

## **Other concerns about the food industry**

Figure 31 shows the proportion of participants reporting other concerns about the food industry. In March 2023, three in five participants (60%) report feeling concerned about animal welfare in the food industry (in line with the 12-month average – 60%). Between March 2022 and October 2022 there was a steady increase in the proportion of participants reporting concern about animal welfare. This figure was lower over the following three months (November 2022 to January 2023).

The proportion of participants who reported feeling concerned about sustainability followed a similar trend to concerns related to animal welfare and increased steadily from March 2022 (56%) to a peak of 64% in October 2022. The level of concern significantly decreased in November 2022, but has continued to rise steadily to (60%) in March 2023. The proportion reporting this concern in March 2023 (60%) is in line with the 12-month average (59%) (Figure 31).

Participants' concern about the 'healthiness' of food in their diets has fluctuated. In March 2023, 57% of participants were concerned about this issue, significantly higher than in March 2022 (52%) but in line with the 12-month average (56%) (Figure 31).

**Figure 31: Participants who reported feeling 'highly' or 'somewhat' concerned about issues related to the food industry (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data source: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022 – March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

## **Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 8**

# **Perceptions of the food supply chain and regulation**

### **Confidence in the food supply chain**

In March 2023, 63% of participants felt ‘confident’ in the food supply chain (the supply chain is all the processes involved in bringing food to the table), a significant decline from 69% in March 2022 and since tracking began in November 2021 (69%). This measure has declined gradually between March 2022 and May 2022, and has since remained broadly stable (Figure 32).

**Figure 32: Participants who reported being ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ confident in the food supply chain (November 2021 – March 2023)**

Data sources: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

Participants are also asked about their confidence in the food supply chain to ensure:

- that food is safe to eat
- there is enough food available for people to eat
- there are affordable food options for everyone
- that food is of a high quality

In March 2023, 78% of people were confident that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK ensure that food is safe to eat, in line with March 2022 (79%).

However, between March 2022 and March 2023, there have been significant declines in participant confidence in the food supply chain to ensure:

- there is enough food available for people to eat (63% in March 2023 vs. 70% in March 2022).
- there are affordable food options for everyone (49% in March 2023 vs. 56% in March 2022)
- that food is of a high quality (70% in March 2023 vs. 75% in March 2022).

**Figure 33: Participants who reported being 'very' or 'fairly' confident in the food supply chain with regards to food affordability and food availability (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data sources: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

**Figure 34: Participants who reported being 'very' or 'fairly' confident in the food supply chain with regards to food safety and quality (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data sources: Consumer Insights Tracker March 2022 - March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

## **Perceptions of the FSA**



Participants are asked about their confidence in the FSA. Findings from March 2023 show that most participants felt confident that the FSA:

- can be relied upon to protect the public from food related risks (72%)
- is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks (68%)
- takes appropriate action if a food-related risk is identified (76%)

Although changes have been gradual, there has been a significant decline since March 2022 in confidence that the FSA can be relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks (75% in March 2022 to 72% in March 2023) (Figure 35). The proportion of participants in March 2023 reporting that they are confident that the FSA is committed to communicating openly with the public has remained stable over time and March 2023 is in line with March 2022. This is also the case for the proportion of participants who report being confident that the FSA will take appropriate action.

**Figure 35: Participants who reported being 'very' or 'fairly' confident in the FSA with regards to food related risks (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data sources: Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2.

Participants are also asked how much they trust the FSA to do its job (that is, to 'make sure that food is safe and what it says it is'). Since March 2022, there has been a gradual and significant decline in the proportion of participants stating they trust the FSA, from 63% in March 2022 to 59% in March 2023. However, there have been no significant changes in the proportion of participants saying that they 'distrust' the FSA (Figure 36).

**Figure 36: Participants who trust/distrust the FSA to 'make sure food is safe and is what it says it is' (March 2022 – March 2023)**

Data sources: Consumer Insights Tracker November 2021- March 2023, Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Fieldwork dates and sample sizes available in Annex 2 and 3.

## **Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 9 conclusions**

The following conclusions provide an overview of the main themes and findings discussed in this report.

Over a third of participants (35%) are concerned about the affordability of food in March 2023, significantly higher than March 2022 (31%). Concern peaked in September 2022 (40%). Furthermore, the findings indicate that reported levels of food insecurity, as measured by reports of cutting down or skipping meals and using a food bank or food charity, have significantly increased from March 2022 to March 2023. Reflecting the pattern for food affordability, several measures of food insecurity peaked in Autumn 2022. These figures have since declined, although reported food insecurity is still higher than in March 2022.

Consumers have adopted measures to reduce energy bills and save money linked to food storage and preparation. Trends in these reported behaviours follow a similar pattern to food insecurity generally, having declined or stabilised since Autumn 2022.

Demographic analysis shows higher levels of food insecurity for households with children, larger and single person households, younger people, those in work, and those with health conditions. This general pattern of demographic differences has remained consistent over time.

The demographic analysis also highlights that some groups are more worried about food affordability in March 2023 than they were in March 2022. This includes those from households without children, individuals aged 25-34, males, and people in work.

Concern about food availability remained stable over the past year, with a third (34%) of participants expressing worry in March 2023 (36% in March 2022). In March 2023, 65% of

participants reported experiencing unavailable food items, the highest figure since tracking began. The most commonly reported unavailable food items were fresh vegetables, eggs, fresh fruit, fresh milk, and bread.

Food prices have consistently been the top concern for participants over the past year, with 86% expressing concern in March 2023, an increase from 81% in March 2022. Concerns about availability or shortages have steadily risen since March 2022, with 63% saying they are concerned in March 2023, significantly higher than the 12-month average (59%). Other concerns, such as sustainability, the healthiness of food, and animal welfare have also increased since March 2022.

Confidence in the food supply chain in the UK has declined since the tracker began, reaching its lowest level in March 2023 (63%). More specifically, confidence in the supply chain ensuring affordable food options for everyone has fallen from 56% in March 2022 to 49% in March 2023, and confidence in the quality of food has decreased from 75% in March 2022 to 70% in March 2023. Confidence in the safety of the food supply chain has remained stable over the past 12 months (79% in March 2022 and 78% in March 2023).

There is continued and high public trust in the FSA's commitment to open communication with the public about food-related risks and taking appropriate action when a food-related risk has been identified. While also high, confidence in the FSA's ability to protect the public from food-related risks has fallen slightly, as has trust in the FSA to 'make sure food is safe and is what it says it is'.

## Consumer Insights Tracker: Annexes

### Annex 1: Fieldwork dates and sample sizes - Covid-19 consumer tracker survey

Between April 2020-October 2021, the survey was commissioned monthly. All data tables are available for download via the [FSA data catalogue](#).

Wave	Fieldwork dates	Sample size
1	10-13 April 2020	2,039
2	8-12 May 2020	2,040
3	12-15 June 2020	2,045
4	10-14 July 2020	2,068
5	14-17 August 2020	2,071
6	18-21 September 2020	2,065

7	16-20 October 2020	2,067
8	13-16 November 2020	2,023
9	11-15 December 2020	2,073
10	15-18 January 2021	2,062
11	12-15 February 2021	2,047
12	12-15 March 2021	2,013
13	16-19 April 2021	2,049
14	14-18 May 2021	2,043
15	11-14 June 2021	2,047
16	16-19 July 2021	2,051
17	13-17 August 2021	2,065
18	13-15 September 2021	2,064
19	15-18 October 2021	2,059

## Annex 2: Fieldwork dates and sample sizes - Consumer Insights Tracker survey

Between November 2021-January 2022, the survey was commissioned fortnightly, with some questions commissioned monthly and others commissioned every two weeks. Whilst fortnightly data is not included in this report, all data tables (including fortnightly figures) are available for download via [the FSA data catalogue](#).

From February 2022 onwards the survey was commissioned monthly only.

Wave	Fieldwork dates	Sample size
1	12-16 November 2021	2,046

2	26-30 November 2021 (fortnightly questions only)	2,071
3	10-14 December 2021	2,058
4	17-21 December 2021 (fortnightly questions only)	2,029
5	7-10 January 2022	2,031
6	21-24 January 2022 (fortnightly questions only)	2,068
7	11-14 February 2022	2,094
8	11-14 March 2022	2,016
9	15-18 April 2022	2,044
10	13-16 May 2022	2,055
11	17-21 June 2022	2,015
12	15-20 July 2022	1,917
13	12-15 August 2022	1,970
14	15-20 September 2022	2,049
15	14-17 October 2022	2,032
16	11-15 November 2022	1,949
17	16-19 December 2022	2,030
18	13-15 January 2023	2,045
19	10-13 February 2023	2,019
20	10-14 March 2023	2,047

### **Annex 3: Base sizes for demographic sub-groups**

**Figure 2:**

Indicative base sizes (March 22): households with children (651), households without children (1,365), single person households (391), larger households (4+) (480), male (993), female (1,007), 16-24 (302), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (630), working (1,287), not working (729), health condition (463), no health condition (1,531); (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 3:**

Values may not add to 100% as 'I haven't done any food shopping in the past week' responses are not shown. Data for this question is also available from the CO2 shortages weekly consumer survey 24 Sep-1 Nov 2021 and Consumer Insights Tracker fortnightly fieldwork dates 26-30 November 21, 17-21 December 21 and 21-24 January 22 but is not shown in the graph.

**Figure 4:**

Values shown indicate all affirmative responses to this question (i.e. skipping/cutting down meals happened at least once in the past month, or more often).

**Figure 5:**

Indicative base sizes (March 22): households with children (651), households without children (1,365), single person households (391), larger households (4+) (480), male (993), female (1,007), 16-24 (302), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (630), working (1,287), not working (729), health condition (463), no health condition (1,531); (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 6:**

Food bank use combined affirmative responses. Note: From November 2021 onwards the phrasing of this question changed from 'In the last month, how often, if at all, have you arranged for food to be delivered to your house through a food charity or food bank?' to 'in the last month, how often, if at all, have you used a food charity or food bank?'

**Figure 7:**

Indicative base sizes (March 22): households with children (651), households without children (1,365), single person households (391), larger households (4+) (480), male (993), female (1,007), 16-24 (302), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (630), working (1,287), not working (729), health condition (463), no health condition (1,531); (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 9:**

Indicative base sizes (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 11:**

Indicative base sizes (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 13:**

Indicative base sizes (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 15:**

Indicative base sizes (March 23): households with children (745), households without children (1,302), single person households (390), larger households (4+) (630), male (1,008), female (1,022), 16-24 (308), 25-34 (373), 55-75 (641), working (1,303), not working (744), health condition (725), no health condition (1,275)

**Figure 18:**

Values shown indicate all affirmative responses to this question (i.e. skipping/cutting down meals happened at least once in the past month, or more often).

**Figure 22:**

Data for this question was also collected in the CO2 shortages weekly consumer survey, between 24 September 2021 – 21 December 2021. The full datasets are available via the [FSA data catalogue](#).

**Figure 23:**

Values may not add to 100% as 'don't know' and 'prefer not to answer' responses are not shown.

**Figure 28:**

Between November 2021 and January 2022 data was collected fortnightly, from February 2022 data was collected monthly. Consumer concerns about the quality of food were also captured in the COVID-19 tracker survey (from December 2020 onwards), however this data is not considered comparable to the data in the Consumer Insights Tracker due to changes in question phrasing.

**Figure 36:**

Between November 2021 and January 2022 data was collected fortnightly, from February 2022 data was collected monthly. 'I trust it' figures are calculated by combining 'I trust it' and 'I trust it a lot' responses. 'I distrust it' figures are calculated by combining 'I distrust it' and 'I distrust it a lot' figures.

## **Annex 4: Questionnaires**

### **Covid-19 survey questions**

Q1. Which, if any, of the following applies to you? [Please select all that apply]

- a. I have been advised to self-isolate because I have been contacted via the NHS 'test and trace' scheme or because I have returned from a trip to another country that requires self-isolation on return
- b. I am choosing to self-isolate for another reason
- c. I, or a member of my household, have suspected Covid-19 symptoms
- d. I have physical or mental health condition(s) or illness(es) that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more
- e. None of these
- f. Prefer not to say

Q2. To what extent, if at all, are you worried about there not being enough food available for you/your household to buy in the next month? [Please select one answer only]

- a. Very worried
- b. Somewhat worried
- c. Not very worried
- d. Not at all worried
- e. Don't know
- f. Prefer not to answer

Q3. To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month? [Please select one answer only]

- a. Very worried
- b. Somewhat worried
- c. Not very worried
- d. Not at all worried
- e. Don't know
- f. Prefer not to answer

Q4. In the last month have you cut down the size of your meals or skipped meals for any of the following reasons? [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. You did not have enough money to buy food
- b. You (or others in your household) were not well enough to shop or cook food
- c. You had no means to get to the shops to buy food



d. You were unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways

i. Yes, this happened every week

ii. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week

iii. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month

iv. No, never

v. Don't know/can't remember

vi. Prefer not to answer

Q5 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you done any of the following?

[Please select one answer for each statement]

a. Had an online food delivery from a supermarket

b. Purchased food from a takeaway, either direct or online

c. Purchased food from a local supplier (i.e. farm shops, veg box), either direct or online

d. Had a food delivery from an online food ordering company (e.g. Deliveroo, Just Eat, Uber Eats)

e. Eaten food at a restaurant, pub, bar or cafe

f. Purchased food through an online marketplace such as Facebook marketplace, Etsy, Gumtree, Instagram, Nextdoor etc.

i. Every day

ii. Most days but not every day

iii. 2 to 3 times a week

iv. Every week

v. Some weeks but not every week

vi. I have not done this in the last month

vii. Don't know/can't remember

viii. Prefer not to answer

Q6 Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you did not buy a take-away in the past month? [Please select from the options listed]

a. I prefer to cook at home

b. I prefer to eat more healthily

c. I can't afford take-aways

- d. I am concerned about Covid-19
- e. I want to save money
- f. I am concerned about adequate food hygiene
- g. Other (specify)

Q7 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you arranged for food to be delivered to your house in the following ways? [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. Through a food sharing app (e.g. Olio)
- b. Through a government or local authority scheme
- c. Through a food charity or food bank
- i. Every week
- ii. Some weeks but not every week
- iii. Just one week in the past month
- iv. I have not done this in the last month
- v. Don't know/can't remember
- vi. Prefer not to answer

ASK Q8A IF (Q7 =1,2,3 OPTIONS SELECTED FOR FOOD BANK/CHARITY)

Q8 Which of the following, if any, are reasons you have had food delivered to your house from a food bank or a food charity in the last month? [Please select up to three options]

- a. We did not have enough money to buy food
- b. Someone in the household has been self-isolating because they have Covid-19 symptoms, have been contacted by the NHS 'test and trace' scheme, or have returned from a trip to another country that requires self-isolation on return
- c. There was a delay or problems with benefits payments
- d. Someone in the household lost their job
- e. Someone in the household was on furlough or on a Covid-19 specific Government Job support Scheme
- f. We had difficulties travelling to get food ourselves
- g. Other (please specify)
- h. Prefer not to answer

Q9 In the last month have you or anyone in your family eaten any of the following foods that has gone past its 'use-by' date? [Please select one answer for each]

- a. Cooked meats
- b. Smoked fish
- c. Bagged salads
- d. Cheese
- e. Milk
- i. Yes, this happened every week
- ii. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week
- iii. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month
- iv. No, never
- v. We haven't eaten this in the last month
- vi. Don't know/can't remember
- vii. Prefer not to say

Q10 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you done any of the following? [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. Cooked food from scratch
- b. Cooked to freeze food for later
- c. Wasted or thrown away food
- d. Bought processed food
- e. Eaten together with the family
- f. Snacked on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks
- g. Bought food from local shops
- h. Eaten healthy meals
- i. Eaten meat
- i. Every day
- ii. Most days but not every day
- iii. 2 to 3 times a week
- iv. Every week
- v. Some weeks but not every week

vi. I have not done this in the last month

vii. Don't know/can't remember

viii. Prefer not to answer

Q11 How often, if at all, do you do each of the following?

[Please select one answer for each statement]

a. Cook food until it is steaming hot throughout

b. Follow instructions on food packaging which tells you how long food should be stored once opened

c. Washing raw chicken

d. Use different chopping boards for different foods

e. Check use-by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food

i. Always

ii. Most of the time

iii. Sometimes

iv. Never

v. I don't cook

Q12. Thinking about food in the UK today, how concerned, if at all, do you feel about...? [Please select one answer for each statement]

a. The quality of food produced in the UK

b. The quality of food imported from outside the UK

i. Highly concerned

ii. Somewhat concerned

iii. Not very concerned

iv. Not concerned at all

v. Don't know

Q13 When shopping for food, how often, if at all, do you check?

[Please select one answer for each statement]

a. The country of origin

b. Food assurance scheme logos (e.g Red Tractor, The Lion Mark, RSPCA Assured, Soil Association) [INFO BUTTON: In the UK, food assurance schemes, such as Red Tractor and Lion Eggs, help to provide consumers and businesses with guarantees that food has been produced to specific standards of food safety or animal welfare]

- i. Always
- ii. Most of the time
- iii. About half the time
- iv. Occasionally
- v. Sometimes
- vi. Never
- vii. Don't know

Q14 Thinking generally, do you have any concerns about the food you eat at the moment?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Q15 [Ask if yes at Q14] Which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any?  
[Please select all that apply]

- a. The 'healthiness' of food in my diet (e.g. the number of calories, fat, sugar or salt in the food you eat or the nutritional content of your diet)
- b. Cooking safely at home
- c. Food poisoning (e.g. Salmonella and E. Coli)
- d. Food hygiene when eating out or buying takeaways
- e. Food hygiene and safety practices in the food supply chain. [INFO BUTTON: The food supply chain is everything that goes into bringing food to our plates; from food production, transportation, packaging, storage, sale of produce through to consumption and disposal].
- f. The use of pesticides
- g. The use of additives (e.g. preservatives and colouring)
- h. Chemical contamination from the environment (e.g. lead in food)
- i. Hormones, steroids or antibiotics in food
- j. Genetically Modified (GM) foods
- k. Food prices
- l. Food allergen information (e.g. availability and accuracy)

- m. Food waste
- n. Animal welfare
- o. Food miles (e.g. the distance food travels)
- p. Sustainability / the impact of food production on the environment
- q. Food fraud or crime (e.g. food not being what the label says it is)
- r. The quality of food imported from other countries
- s. Food freshness (e.g. how long it has been stored before reaching your plate)
- t. The impact of Covid-19 on the food supply chain. [INFO BUTTON: The food supply chain is everything that goes into bringing food to our plates; from food production, transportation, packaging, storage, sale of produce through to consumption and disposal].
- u. The impact of Brexit on food import/exports
- v. The ethical treatment of producers and farmers (e.g. Fair Trade)
- w. Other - please specify
- x. None of these
- y. Don't know

### **Consumer Insights Tracker survey questions**

Q1 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more? [Please select one answer only]

(The response options for question 1 were amended from Wave 10 onwards to reflect the self-isolation guidance. Previously the options were as follows:

- a. I am currently self isolating [IF WALES/NORTHERN IRELAND]  
I am choosing to self isolate [IF ENGLAND]
- b. I, or a member of my household, have suspected Covid-19 symptoms
- c. I have physical or mental health condition(s) or illness(es) that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more
- d. None of these
- e. Prefer not to say)
- a. Yes – physical condition
- b. Yes – mental health condition
- c. Yes – both physical and mental health condition
- d. No
- e. Prefer not to say

Q2 To what extent, if at all, are you worried about there not being enough food available for you/your household to buy in the next month?

[Please select one answer only]

- a. Very worried
- b. Somewhat worried
- c. Not very worried
- d. Not at all worried
- e. Don't know
- f. Prefer not to answer

Q3 To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month? [Please select one answer only]

- a. Very worried
- b. Somewhat worried
- c. Not very worried
- d. Not at all worried
- e. Don't know
- f. Prefer not to answer

Q4 In the last month have you cut down the size of your meals or skipped meals for any of the following reasons? [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. You did not have enough money to buy food
- b. You (or others in your household) were not well enough to shop or cook food
- c. You had no means to get to the shops to buy food
- d. You were unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways
- i. Yes, this happened every week
- ii. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week
- iii. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month
- iv. No, never
- v. Don't know/can't remember
- vi. Prefer not to answer

Q5 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you used a food charity or food bank? [Please select one answer only]

- a. Every week
- b. Some weeks but not every week
- c. Just one week in the last month
- d. I have not done this in the last month
- e. Don't know/can't remember
- f. Prefer not to answer

Q6 In the last month have you or anyone in your family eaten any of the following foods that has gone past its 'use-by' date? [Please select one answer for each]

- a. Cooked meats
- b. Smoked fish
- c. Bagged salads
- d. Cheese
- e. Milk
- i. Yes, this happened every week
- ii. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week
- iii. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month
- iv. No, never
- v. We haven't eaten this in the last month
- vi. Don't know/can't remember
- vii. Prefer not to say

Q6\_1 In the last month, which, if any, of the following have applied to you? (Question added from W14 onwards) [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. I could not afford my essential food shopping
- b. I could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet
- c. I have eaten cold food because I could not afford to cook hot food
- d. I have eaten food past its use-by date because I couldn't afford to buy more food
- i. Yes, this happened every week



- ii. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week
- iii. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month
- iv. No, never
- v. Don't know/can't remember
- vi. Prefer not to answer

Q6\_2 In the last month, which, if any, of the following have you done to reduce your energy bills and save money? (Question added from W14 onwards) [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. Used cheaper cooking methods (e.g. using a microwave, air fryer or slow cooker) instead of an oven to heat or cook food
  - b. Reduced the length of time that food is cooked for
  - c. Lowered the cooking temperature for food
  - d. Turned off a fridge and/or freezer that contains food
  - e. Changed the settings so that food in a fridge and/or freezer is being kept at a warmer temperature
- i. Yes, I have done this every week
  - ii. Yes, I have done this some weeks but not every week
  - iii. Yes, I have done this just one week in the last month
  - iv. No, I have not done this in the last month
  - v. Don't know/can't remember
  - vi. Prefer not to answer

Q7 Please think about the food products that you usually prefer to buy. These might be specific types of food or particular brands, or products you prefer for some other reason.??

Thinking about each of the following types of food, in the last week, have any of your preferred products been unavailable where you usually buy them when doing your food shopping? By unavailable, we mean that your usual or preferred product was out of stock. If you have food delivered to your home, this would mean that the product could not be delivered or was substituted. [Please select all that apply]

- a. Raw poultry (for example chicken, turkey, goose and duck)
- b. Raw red meat e.g., beef, lamb, pork
- c. Raw Sausages and Bacon
- d. Fresh fish or seafood (e.g. cod, salmon or prawns)

- e. Pre-cooked meats (for example, ham)
- f. Fresh milk
- g. Cheese
- h. Yoghurts
- i. Eggs
- j. Frozen foods (such as frozen meat, frozen fish, frozen vegetables or frozen chips)
- k. Ready meals
- l. Baby food
- m. Baby formula milk
- n. Bread
- o. A 'free-from' product (such as gluten free, dairy free, wheat free etc)
- p. Fresh vegetables
- q. Fresh fruit
- r. Cooking oils (such as olive oil, sunflower oil, vegetable oil, or rapeseed oil) (Option R was included from Wave 10 onwards)
- s. Other
- t. None of the above

Q8 [Ask those who have experienced food shortages i.e, selected a food item in Q7] Thinking about the following types of food products you said were unavailable, were you able to find a suitable substitute when doing your food shopping? For example, a suitable substitute might be another similar product or a different brand of the same product.

- a. Raw poultry (for example chicken, turkey, goose and duck)
- b. Raw red meat e.g., beef, lamb, pork
- c. Raw Sausages and Bacon
- d. Fresh fish or seafood (e.g. cod, salmon or prawns)
- e. Pre-cooked meats (for example, ham)
- f. Fresh milk
- g. Cheese
- h. Yoghurts
- i. Eggs
- j. Frozen foods (such as frozen meat, frozen fish, frozen vegetables or frozen chips)
- k. Ready meals

l. Baby food

m. Baby formula milk

n. Bread

o. A 'free-from' product (such as gluten free, dairy free, wheat free etc)

p. Fresh vegetables

q. Fresh fruit

r. Cooking oils (such as olive oil, sunflower oil, vegetable oil, or rapeseed oil)

s. Other

i. I was always able to find a suitable substitute??

ii. I was sometimes able to find a suitable substitute??

iii. I was not able to find a suitable substitute?

Q9 In the past week, have you, personally, noticed that the price of your food shopping has changed? [Please select one answer only]

a. It got cheaper

b. It stayed the same

c. It got more expensive

d. Don't know

e. I haven't done any food shopping in the past week

Q10 In the last week, have you or anyone in your household done any of the following? [Please select all that apply]

a. Purchased more non-perishable (store cupboard) food than we usually would

b. Purchased more fresh food than we usually would, and frozen it for later

c. Changed what we usually purchase, for products with a longer shelf-life

d. Purchased raw ingredients to make products that we'd usually buy pre-packaged (e.g. purchasing flour to make bread, rather than pre-packaged bread)

e. Purchased more fuel (petrol/diesel) than we usually would

f. Purchased additional food in preparation for Christmas (Option F only included in Waves 8 -9 and Waves 16 – 17 removed after the Christmas period)

g. None of these

h. Don't know

**[Only asked in Waves 8 - 9 and Waves 16 – 17 before Christmas and New Year]**

Q11\_1 Now I want you to think about this Christmas (2022) and New Year (2023). How concerned, if at all, are you personally about each of the following when doing your food shopping? [Please select one answer only for each statement]

- a. The availability of food
- b. The quality of food
- c. The safety of food
- d. The price of food
- e. The sustainability/environmental impact of food (Option E only included in Waves 16 – 17 removed after the Christmas period)
- f. The healthiness of food (Option F only included in Waves 16 – 17 removed after the Christmas period)
- i. Highly concerned
- ii. Somewhat concerned
- iii. Not very concerned
- iv. Not concerned at all
- v. Not applicable

**[Only asked in Waves 16 – 17 before Christmas and New Year 2022]**

Q11\_2 And thinking specifically about food for Christmas this year (2022), compared to Christmas last year (2021). Which, if any, of the following have you done to save money? [Please select all that apply]

- a. Changed to cheaper brands (e.g. switching to own-branded products or switching to a cheaper product range)
- b. Bought less food than I usually would for Christmas
- c. Bought 'yellow-sticker' reduced food items that are close to their use-by date
- d. Switched to a cheaper supermarket
- e. Waited to buy food items until they were discounted or on offer
- f. Shopped in multiple supermarkets / shops to get a better deal
- g. Bought less fresh food (e.g. fruit, vegetables, meat) and more long-life foods instead (e.g. tinned or frozen products)
- h. Other: I've taken other actions to save money on food for Christmas 2022
- i. I have taken no action to save money on food for Christmas 2022

Q12 At the moment, how concerned, if at all, do you personally feel about each of the following topics? [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. The 'healthiness' of food in my diet (e.g. the number of calories, fat, sugar or salt in the food you eat or the nutritional content of your diet)
  - b. Food availability/food shortages
  - c. Animal welfare in the food industry
  - d. The safety of food produced?in the?UK
  - e. The safety of food imported from?outside the?UK
  - f. The quality of food produced in the UK
  - g. The quality of food imported from outside the UK
  - h. Food prices
  - i. Sustainability / the impact of food production on the environment
- i. Highly concerned
  - ii. Somewhat concerned
  - iii. Not very concerned
  - iv. Not concerned at all
  - v. Don't know
  - vi. I don't know enough to comment

Q13 How confident are you in the food supply chain? That is all the processes involved in bringing food to your table. [Please select one answer only]

- a. Very confident
- b. Fairly confident
- c. Not very confident
- d. Not at all confident
- e. It varies
- f. Don't know

Q14 How confident are you that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK... [Please select one answer for each statement]

- a. Ensure that food is safe to eat

- b. Ensure there is enough food available for people to eat
- c. Ensure there are affordable food options for everyone
- d. Ensure that food is of a high quality
- i. Very confident
- ii. Fairly confident
- iii. Not very confident
- iv. Not at all confident
- v. It varies
- vi. Don't know

Q15 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Government Agency responsible for food safety in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. [Please select one answer for each statement]

How confident are you that the Food Standards Agency...

- a. ...can be relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks (such as food poisoning or allergic reactions from food)?
- b. ...is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks?
- c. ...takes appropriate action if a food-related risk is identified?
- i. Very confident
- ii. Fairly confident
- iii. Not very confident
- iv. Not at all confident
- v. Don't know / Don't know enough to say

Q16 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Government Agency responsible for food safety in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. How much do you trust or distrust the Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is to make sure that food is safe and what it says it is. [Please select one answer only]

- a. I trust it a lot
- b. I trust it
- c. I neither trust nor distrust it
- d. I distrust it
- e. I distrust it a lot
- f. Don't know / Don't know enough to say