

F&Y2 Wave 5-6 NI: Chapter 6: Eating at home

Introduction

The FSA is responsible for protecting the public from foodborne diseases. This involves working with farmers, food producers and processors, and the retail and hospitality sectors to ensure that the food people buy is safe.

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

Two versions of the 'Eating at home' module have been created; the brief module which includes a limited number of key questions which are fielded annually, and a full version which includes additional questions and is fielded every 2 years. The brief 'Eating at home' module is reported in this chapter ([footnote 1](#)).

Cleaning

Handwashing in the home

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

The majority (78%) of respondents who cook reported that they always wash their hands before preparing or cooking food. However, 21% of respondents reported that they do not always (i.e., most of the time or less often) wash their hands before preparing or cooking food ([footnote 2](#)).

Most respondents (90%) who cook meat, poultry or fish reported that they always wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish. However, 9% of respondents reported that they do not always (i.e., most of the time or less often) wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish ([footnote 3](#)).

Handwashing when eating out

Respondents were asked, how often, if at all, they washed their hands or used hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating when they ate outside of their home. Around a third (35%) of respondents reported that they always washed their hands, used hand sanitising gel or wipes when they ate outside of their home, 56% did this less often (i.e., most of the time or less often) and 8% never did this ([footnote 4](#)).

Chilling

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

If and how respondents check fridge temperature

When asked what temperature the inside of a fridge should be, 69% of respondents reported that it should be between 0-5 degrees Celsius. Around 1 in 7 (14%) respondents reported that the temperature should be above 5 degrees, 3% reported that the temperature should be below 0 degrees, and 13% of respondents did not know what temperature the inside of their fridge should be [\(footnote 5\)](#).

Six in ten (60%) respondents who have a fridge reported that they monitored the temperature, either manually (51%) or via an internal temperature alarm (10%) [\(footnote 6\)](#). Of the respondents who manually check the temperature of their fridge, 79% reported that they check the temperature of their fridge at least once a month, as [recommended by the FSA \(footnote 7\)](#).

Respondents with very low food security (89%) were more likely to report that they checked the temperature of their fridge at least once a month than those with high food security (75%).

Cooking

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

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through. The majority (81%) of respondents who cook reported that they always cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, however 18% reported that they do not always do this [\(footnote 8\)](#).

When respondents were asked to indicate how often they eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices, the majority (91%) reported that they never did this. However, 8% of respondents reported eating chicken or turkey at least occasionally when it is pink [\(footnote 9\)](#).

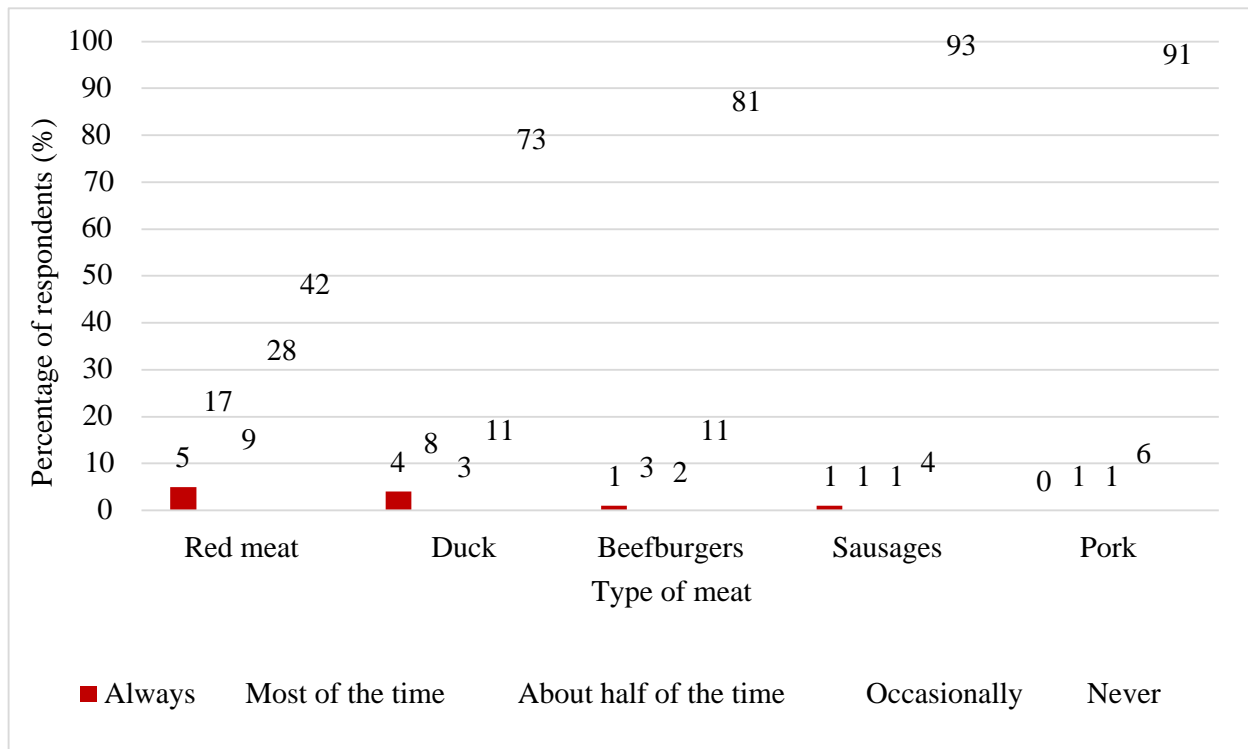
The prevalence of eating chicken or turkey pink varied between different categories of people in the following ways:

- **food security:** Those with high food security (94%) were more likely to report never eating chicken or turkey when it is pink or has pink or red juices compared to those with very low food security (84%).

Figure 16: Proportion of respondents who eat meat pink or with pink juices

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Type of meat	Always	Most of the time	About half of the time	Occasionally	Never
Red meat	5	17	9	28	42
Duck	4	8	3	11	73
Beefburgers	1	3	2	11	81
Sausages	1	1	1	4	93
Pork	0	1	1	6	91

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 5

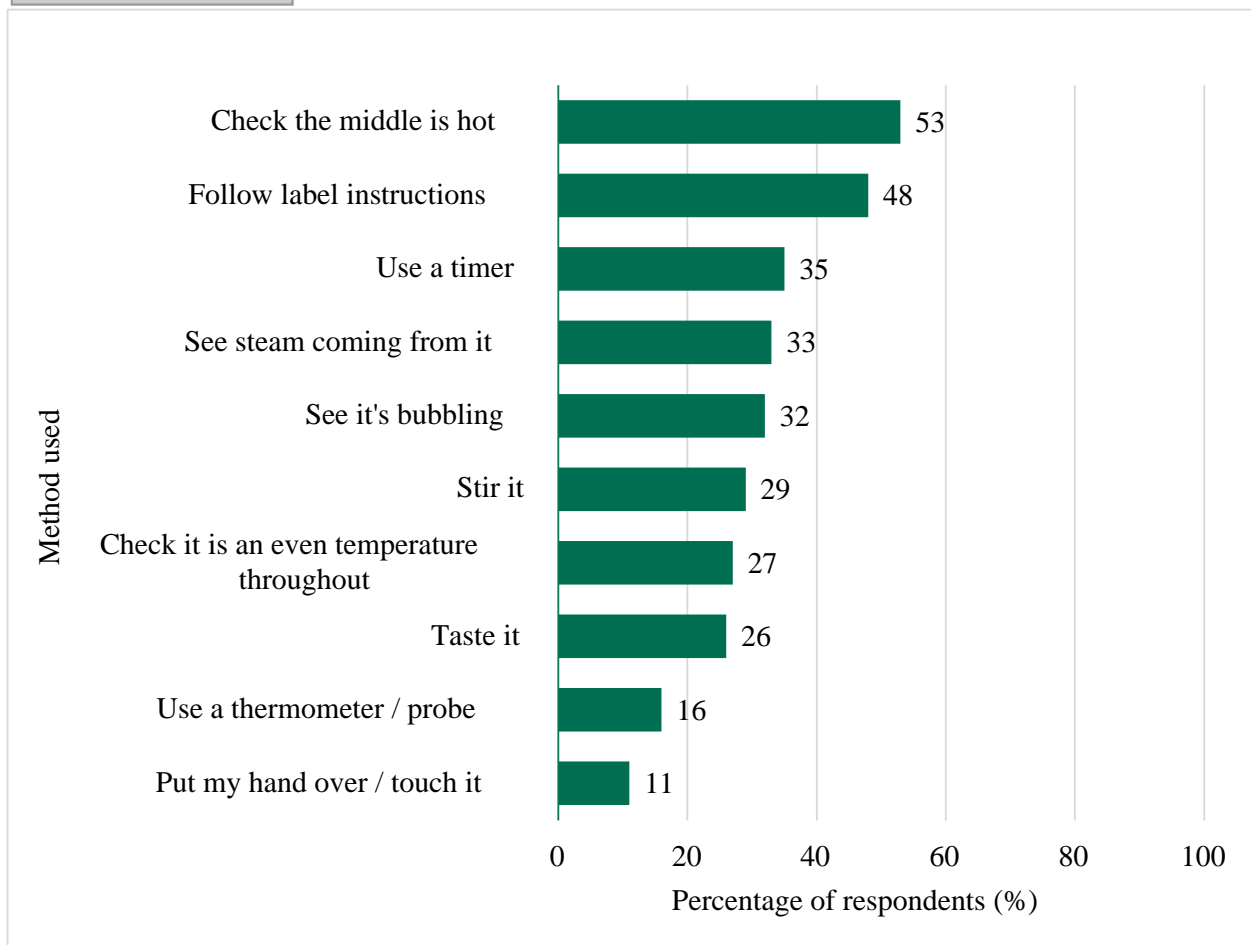
In Wave 5, respondents were also asked how often they eat red meat, duck beefburgers, sausages or whole cuts or pork chops when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices. The majority reported that they never eat sausages (93%) or pork (91%) when the meat is pink. However, more respondents reported eating red meat (at least occasionally) when it is pink (58%) than those who never eat red meat when it is pink (42%) (Figure 16) [\(footnote 10\)](#).

Reheating

Figure 17. Methods used when reheating food to check it's ready to eat.

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Method used	Percentage of respondents (%)
Put my hand over / touch it	11
Use a thermometer / probe	16
Taste it	26
Check it is an even temperature throughout	27
Stir it	29
See it's bubbling	32

Method used	Percentage of respondents (%)
See steam coming from it	33
Use a timer	35
Follow label instructions	48
Check the middle is hot	53

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Source: Food & You 2: Wave 6

Respondents were asked to indicate how they check food is ready to eat when they reheat it. The most common method was to check if the middle was hot (53%), and the least common method was to put their hand over it or touch the food (11%) (Figure 17) [\(footnote 11\)](#).

When respondents were asked how many times they would reheat food, the majority reported that they would only reheat food once (85%), 7% would reheat food twice, 4% would reheat more than twice and 3% reported that they would not reheat food at all [\(footnote 12\)](#).

Leftovers

Respondents were asked how long they would keep leftovers in the fridge for. Over 7 in 10 (73%) respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 2 days, 21% of respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 3-5 days and only 2% would eat leftovers after 5 days or longer [\(footnote 13\)](#).

Avoiding cross-contamination

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

Around two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they never wash raw chicken, whilst 30% of respondents wash raw chicken at least occasionally (i.e. occasionally or more often) [\(footnote 14\)](#).

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

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

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a range of responses, how they store meat and poultry in the fridge. Respondents were most likely to report storing raw meat and poultry in its original packaging (66%) or away from cooked foods (59%). Over a third of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in a sealed container (39%), covering it with film/foil (33%), or with a lower proportion storing it on a plate (9%) [\(footnote 15\)](#).

Over 7 in 10 (72%) respondents reported only storing raw meat and poultry at the bottom of the fridge, as recommended by the FSA. However, 14% of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry wherever there is space in the fridge, 9% of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in the middle of the fridge, and 5% at the top of the fridge ([footnote 16](#)).

Use-by and best before dates

Respondents were asked about their understanding of the different types of [date labels](#) and instructions on food packaging, as storing food for too long or at the wrong temperature can cause food poisoning. Use-by dates relate to food safety. Best before (BBE) dates relate to food quality, not safety.

Respondents were asked to indicate which date shows that food is no longer safe to eat. In accordance with [FSA recommendations](#), 71% of respondents identified the use-by date as the information which shows that food is no longer safe to eat. However, 10% of respondents identified the best before date as the date which shows food is no longer safe to eat ([footnote 17](#)).

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported that they always check use-by dates before they cook or prepare food and 20% of respondents did this most of the time, 4% reported checking use-by dates less often (i.e. about half the time or occasionally), and just 1% reported never checking use-by dates ([footnote 18](#)).

The proportion of people who reported always checking the use-by date varied by groups of people:

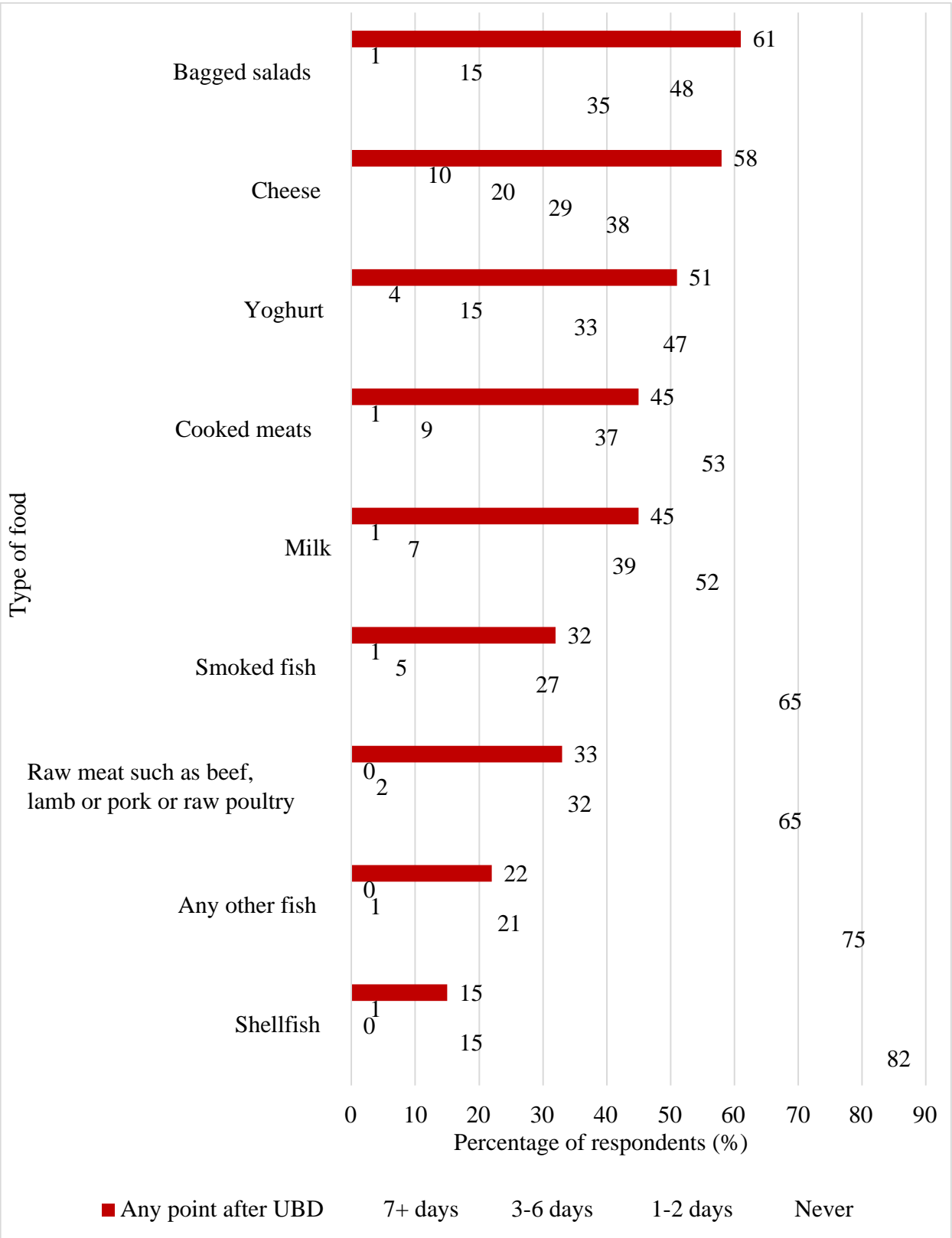
- **age:** those aged 25 to 34 years (83%) were more likely to always check the use-by date than older adults (for example, 73% of those aged 65 to 79 years)
- **NS-SEC:** those in semi-routine and routine occupations (84%) were more likely to always check the use-by date compared to those in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (73%).

Figure 18. How long after the use-by date respondents would consume different foods.

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Type of food



Type of food	Any point after UBD	7+ days	3-6 days	1-2 days	Never
Shellfish	15	1	0	15	82

Type of food	Any point after UBD	7+ days	3-6 days	1-2 days	Never
Any other fish	22	0	1	21	75
Raw meat such as beef, lamb or pork or raw poultry	33	0	2	32	65
Smoked fish	32	1	5	27	65
Milk	45	1	7	39	52
Cooked meats	45	1	9	37	53
Yoghurt	51	4	15	33	47
Cheese	58	10	20	29	38
Bagged salads	61	1	15	48	35

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Source: Food & You 2: Wave 6

Respondents who eat certain foods were asked when, if at all, is the latest that they would eat the type of food after the use-by date. Most reported that they would not eat shellfish (82%), other fish (75%), raw meat (65%) or smoked fish (65%) past the use-by date. Bagged salad (63%) and cheese (59%) were the foods respondents were most likely to report eating at any point after the use-by date. Around two-thirds of respondents would eat yoghurt (52%), cooked meats (46%) and milk (46%) at any point after the use-by date (Figure 18) ([footnote 19](#)).

1. The full 'Eating at home' module was last reported in the [Food and You 2: Wave 5 Key Findings report](#).
2. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands before starting to prepare or cook food. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, I don't cook, Don't know. Base= 1219, all online and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't cook/prepare food' in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
- 3.

Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands do you wash your hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1198, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't cook meat', in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.

4. Question: When eating outside of the home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands, or use hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1327, all online respondents and those answering the Eating Out postal questionnaire in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
5. Question: What do you think the temperature inside your fridge should be? Responses: Less than 0 degrees C (less than 32 degrees F), Between 0 and 5 degrees C (32 to 41 degrees F), More than 5 but less than 8 degrees C (42 to 46 degrees F), 8 to 10 degrees C (47 to 50 degrees F), More than 10 degrees C (over 50 degrees F), Other, Don't know. Base= 1324, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' paper questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge, in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
6. Question: Do you, or anyone else in your household, ever check your fridge temperature? Responses: Yes, No, I don't need to - it has an alarm if it is too hot or cold, Don't know. Base= 1323, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' paper questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge, in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
7. Question: How often, if at all, do you or someone else in your household check the temperature of the fridge? Responses: At least daily, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week but more than once a month, Once a month, four times a year, 1-2 times a year, Never, Don't know. Base= 676, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire where someone in household checks fridge temperature in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
8. Question: How often, if at all, do you cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1219, all online respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal paper questionnaire, who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
9. Question: How often, if at all, do you eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base =1265, all respondents who are not vegan, pescatarian or vegetarian, and who do eat chicken/turkey in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
10. Question: How often, if at all, do you do the following? Eat... A) red meat, B) duck, C) beefburgers, D) sausages, E) whole cuts or pork chops ...when it is pink or has pink or red juices. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base A=947, B=724, C=918, D= 924, E= 861, all online who are not vegan/ pescatarian/ vegetarian who eat this type of meat.

11.

Question: When reheating food, how do you know when it is ready to eat? (Select all that apply). Responses: I check the middle is hot, I follow the instructions on the label, I can see its bubbling, I use a timer to ensure it has been cooked for a certain amount of time, I check it's an even temperature throughout, I can see steam coming from it, I can see steam coming from it, I taste it, I stir it, I put my hand over it/touch it, I use a thermometer/probe, None of the above, I don't check. Base= 1171, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't reheat food', in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.

12. Question: How many times would you consider reheating food after it was cooked for the first time? Responses: Not at all, Once, Twice, More than twice, Don't know. Base= 1173, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who reheat food using one of the methods in the previous question in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
13. Question: When is the latest you would consume any leftovers stored in the fridge? Responses: The same day, Within 1-2 days, Within 3-5 days, More than 5 days later, It varies too much, Don't know. Base= 1327, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
14. Question: How often, if at all, do you do the following? Wash raw chicken. Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1219, all online respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal paper questionnaire, who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
15. Question: How do you store raw meat and poultry in the fridge? Please select all the apply. Responses: Away from cooked foods, Covered with film/foil, In a sealed container, In its original packaging, On a plate. Base= 1247, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't store raw meat/poultry in the fridge, do not have a fridge or don't know, in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
16. Question: Where in the fridge do you store raw meat and poultry? Responses: Wherever there is space, At the top of the fridge, In the middle of the fridge, At the bottom of the fridge. Base= 1227, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' paper questionnaire, who store raw meat/poultry in the fridge except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't have a fridge or don't know, in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
17. Question: Which of these shows when food is no longer safe to eat? Responses: Use-by date, Best before date Sell by date, Display until date, All of these, It depends, None of these, Don't know. Base= 1327, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.
18. Question: How often, if at all, do you check use-by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, It varies too much, Don't know. Base=1219, all online respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, and all those who completed the

Eating at Home postal questionnaire, excluding I don't cook / prepare food and not stated in Northern Ireland. Wave 6.

19. Question: When, if at all, is the latest you would eat or drink the following items after their use-by date? a= cooked meats, b=smoked fish, c=bagged salads, d=cheese, e=milk, f= raw meat such as beef/pork/lamb/raw poultry, g=shellfish, h=any other fish, i=yoghurt. Responses: 1-2 days after the use-by date, 3-4 days after the use-by date, 5-6 days after the use-by date, 1-2 weeks after the use-by date, more than 2 weeks after the use-by date, I don't eat/drink this after its use-by date, don't know/I don't ever check the use-by date of this. Base A= 1252, B=985, C=1238, D=1274, E=1263, F= 1239, G=847, H=1070, I=1230, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, who eat A/B/C/D/F/F/G/H/I. Please note: the figures shown do not add up to 100% as not all responses are shown.