

Consumer Insights Tracker February 2024

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

Project status: Completed

Authors: Food Standards Agency

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PDF

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The Consumer Insights Tracker is an online monthly tracking survey commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). It monitors the behaviour and attitudes of adult consumers aged 16+ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to food.

The survey includes topics such as food availability, food affordability, consumer concerns in relation to food, confidence in the food supply chain and in the FSA as a regulator.

The full data set is published on data.food.gov.uk: [Consumer Insights Tracker July 2023 - present](#)

Key findings for February 2024

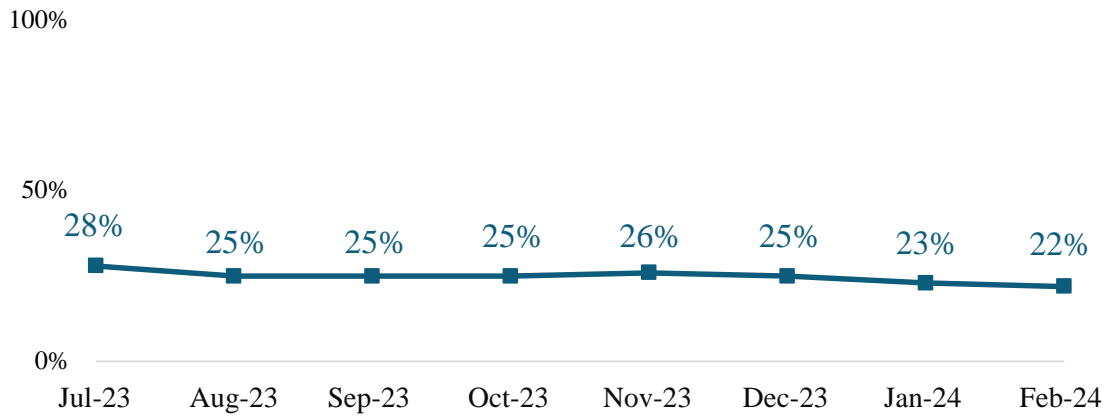
- The top three concerns for consumers remain food prices (88%), food poverty and inequality (76%) and ultra processed, or the over-processing of food (75%). These are the same top concerns as last month, and the proportion of consumers reporting concern about these topics has not changed significantly over recent months.
- There is an emerging downward trend in the proportion of consumers worried that their household will be able to afford food in the next month. 28% were worried in July 2023, dropping to 25% in December 2023 and 22% in February 2024. This decrease is gradual, but statistically significant since the timeseries began in July. We will continue to monitor this closely over the coming months.
- Among those with at least some knowledge of the FSA there has been a small but significant increase in the proportion of consumers that trust the FSA to do its job. This has risen from 56% in January to 63% in February. Small fluctuations in this measure are often observed month to month and more data is needed to confirm whether this increase is sustained.

Food affordability

One in five (22%) are worried about their household not being able to afford food in the next month.

This is starting to show a gradual downward trend over time.

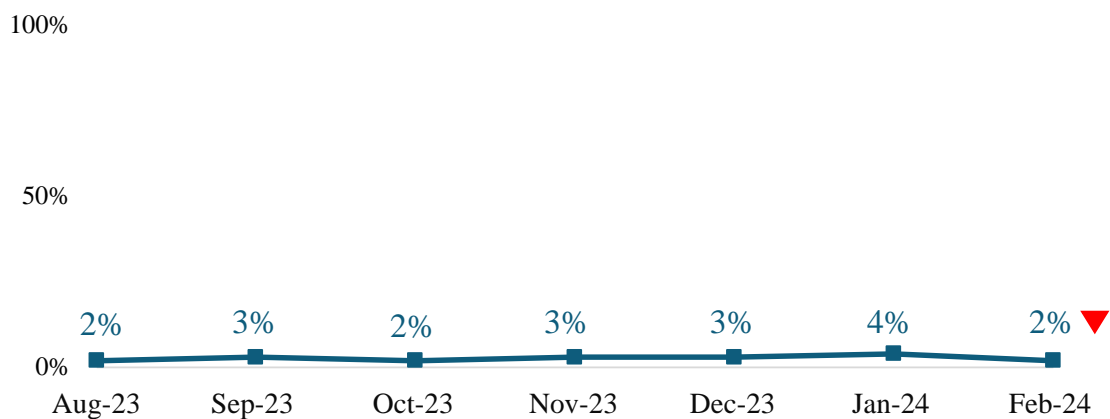
Proportion who reported worrying about their household not being able to afford food in the next month [\(footnote 1\)](#)



2% report that they, or someone in their household, received a free parcel of food from a food bank or other emergency food provider in the last month.

This is statistically significantly lower than the 4% figure recorded in January 2024, but in line with all other months from August 2023.

Proportion who reported receiving a food parcel from a food bank or emergency food provider [\(footnote 2\)](#)

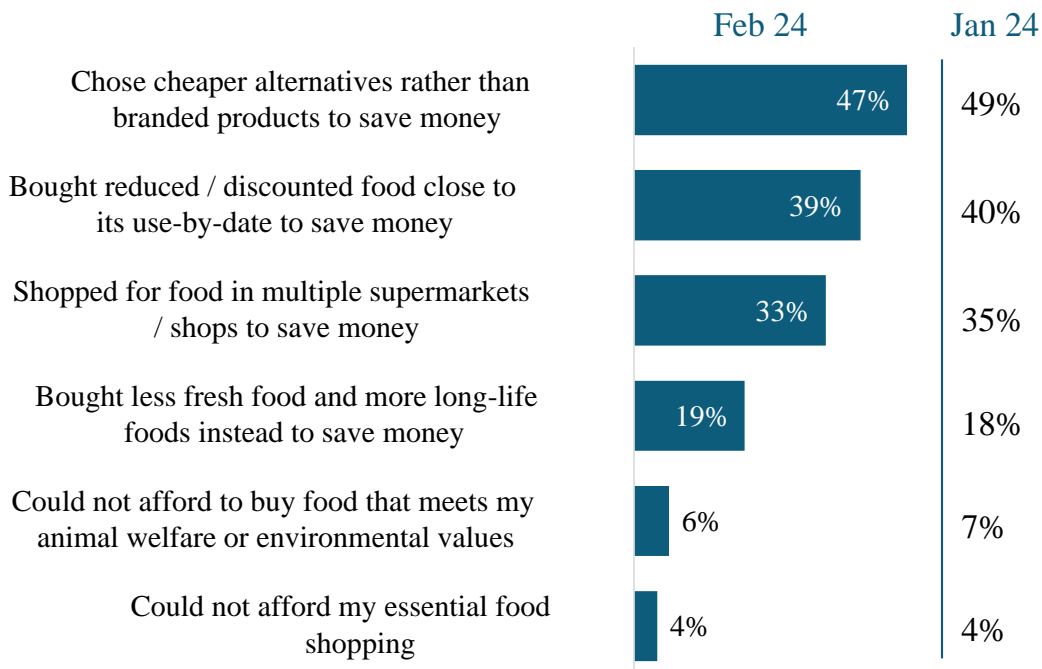


Statistically significant differences compared to January shown with arrows.

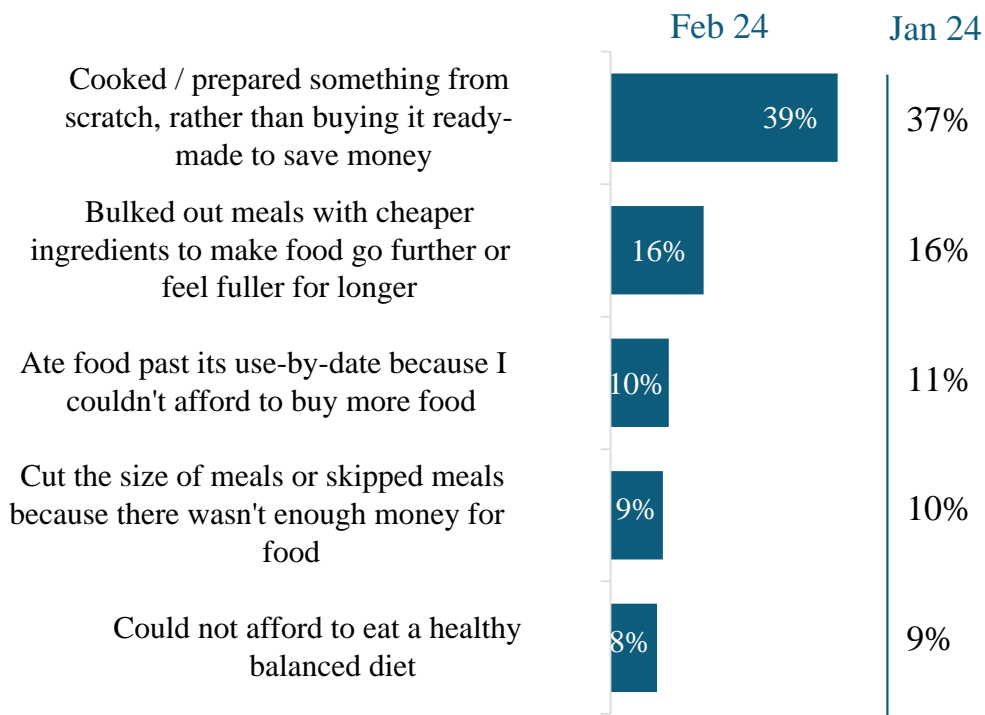
72% report at least one of the following statements applies to them or their household.

This is in line with the proportion reporting this in January (72%).

Reported shopping statements [\(footnote 3\)](#)



Reported cooking and eating statements

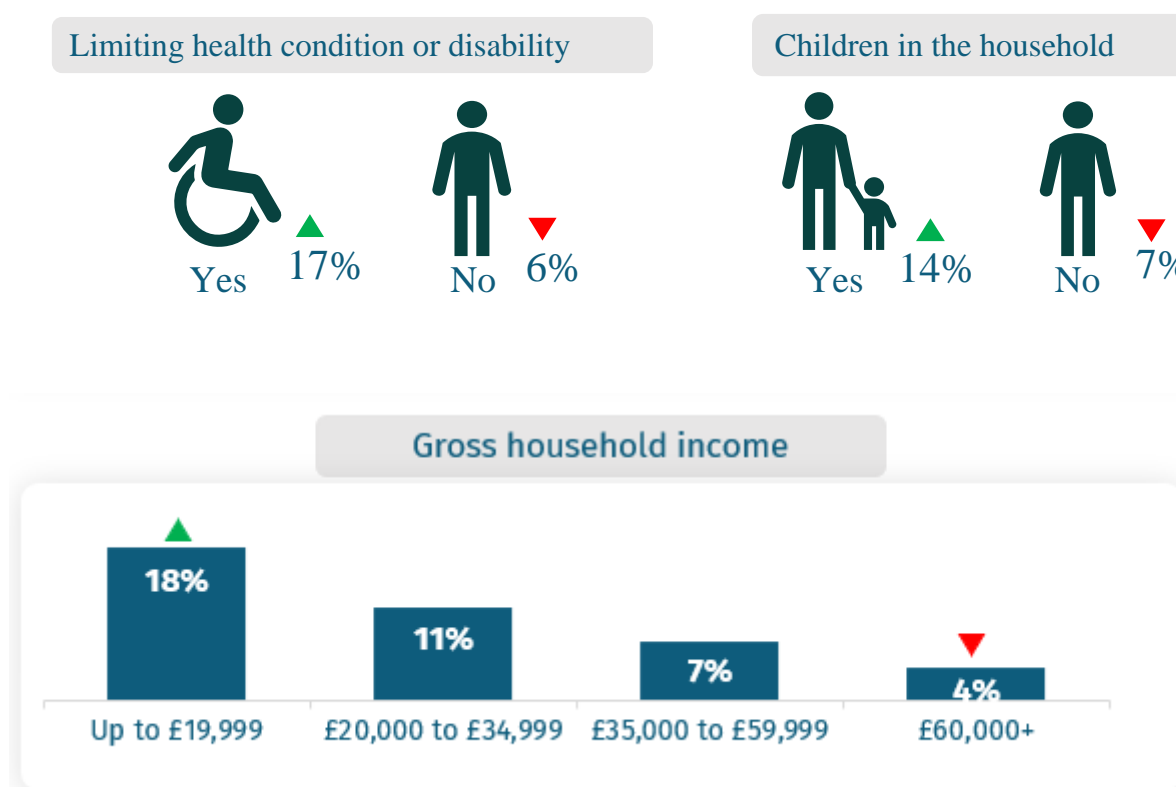


The following households are significantly more likely to report cutting the size of, or skipping, meals because there wasn't enough money for food:

- Participants with a limiting disability/health condition
- Households with children
- Households with <£20,000 income

This has been consistent since August 2023.

Proportion who report cutting the size of meals or skipping meals by demographic group [\(footnote 4\)](#)

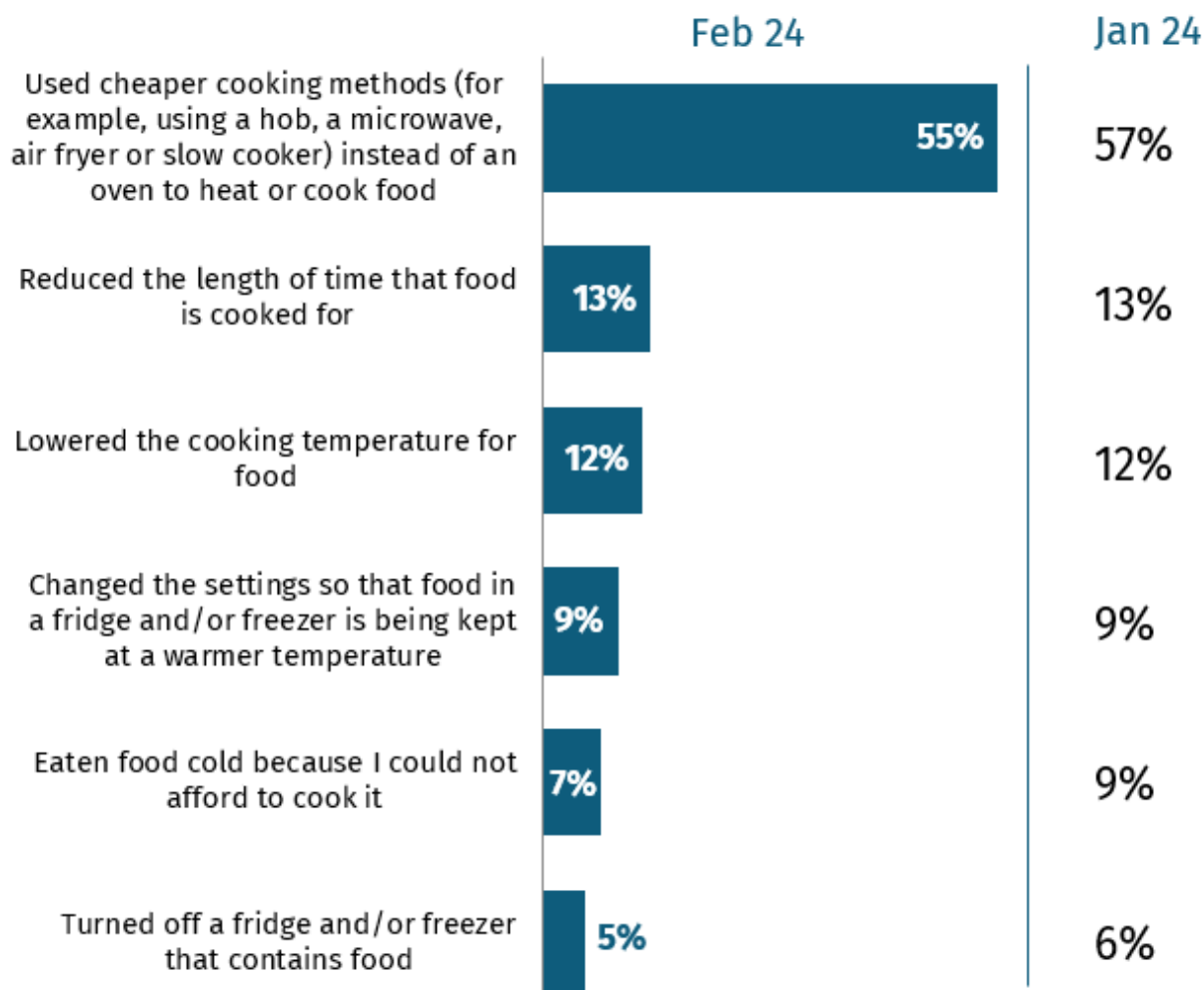


Statistically significant differences against the total shown with arrows.

55% have used cheaper cooking methods instead of an oven to heat or cook food in the last month and 7% have eaten food cold because they couldn't afford to cook it.

These figures are comparable with January 2024.

Proportion who did any of the following to reduce energy bills or save money in the last month [\(footnote 5\)](#)

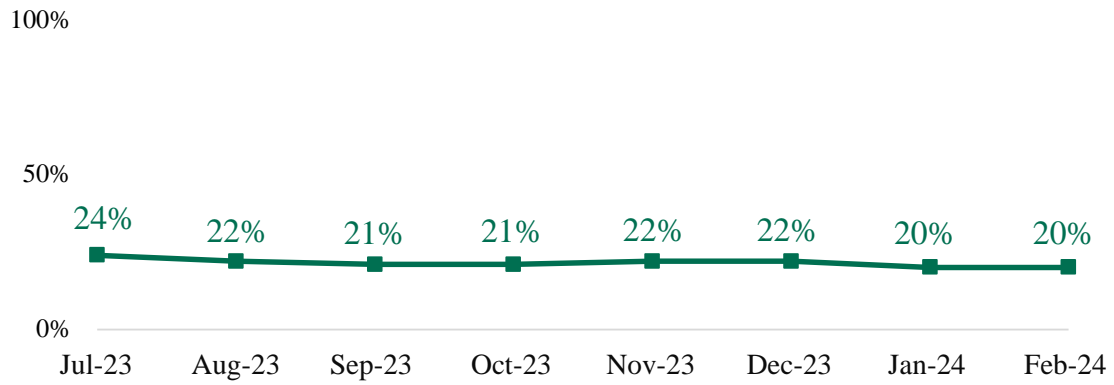


Food availability

One in five (20%) are worried about there not being enough food available for their household in the next month.

This figure is statistically significantly lower than in July 2023, though comparable to all other months.

Proportion who reported worrying about there not being enough food available for their household in the next month [\(footnote 6\)](#)



Food concerns

88% are concerned about food prices, 76% are concerned about food poverty and food inequality.

These figures are comparable with January 2024.

Proportion who reported concern about food by topic [\(footnote 7\)](#)



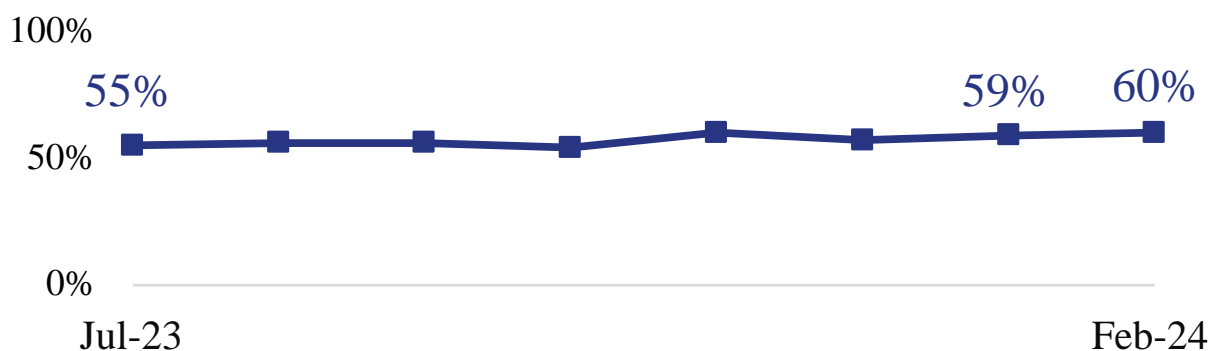
Food supply chain

Overall, 60% are confident in the food supply chain

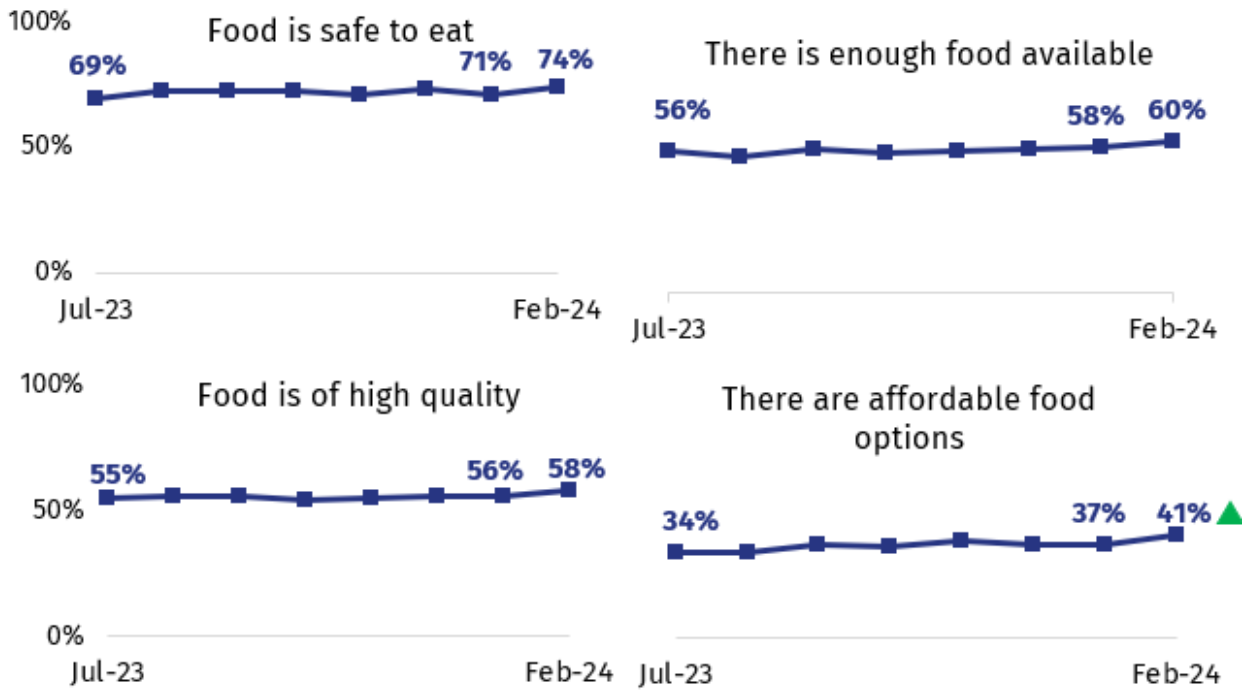
This is comparable to January 2024.

The proportion who report confidence that those involved in the food supply chain ensure there are affordable food options has seen a small, but statistically significant, shift from January to February 2024.

Proportion who reported confidence in the food supply chain [\(footnote 8\)](#)



Proportion who reported confidence that those involved in the food supply chain ensure that... [\(footnote 9\)](#)



Statistically significant differences compared to January shown with arrows.

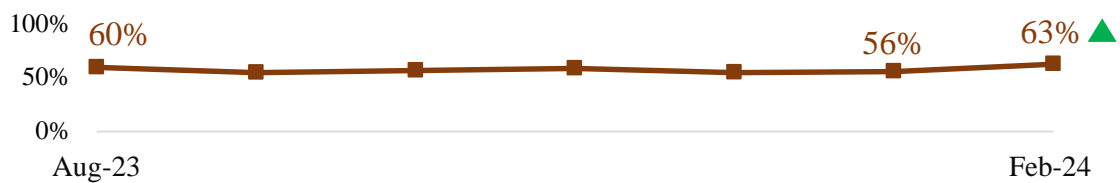
The FSA

63% of those with some knowledge of the FSA trust the FSA to do its job

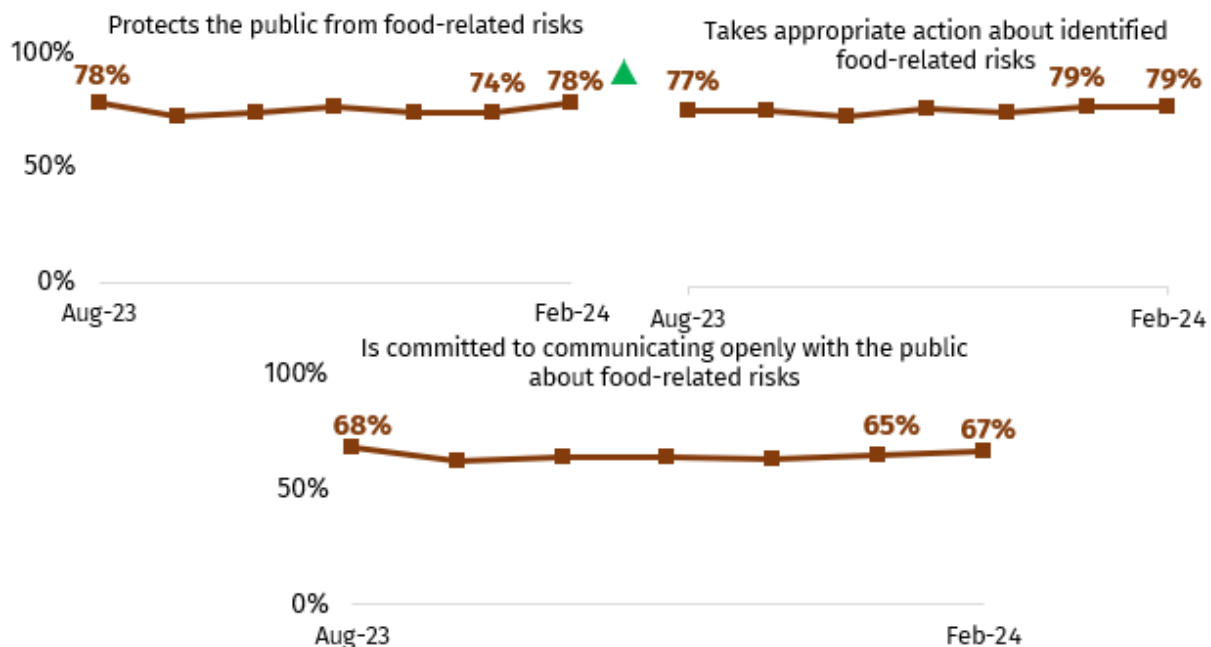
This is statistically significantly higher than in January 2024.

78% are confident that the FSA protects the public from food-related risks, which is also statistically significantly higher than in January.

Proportion that trust the FSA to do its job [\(footnote 10\)](#)



Proportion who reported confidence that the FSA... [\(footnote 11\)](#)



Statistically significant differences compared to January shown with arrows.

Background and methodological information

Changes in approach

Following a [review of the FSA's Consumer Insights Tracker](#) by the FSA's Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS), the project was recommissioned in early 2023.

In July 2023, the Consumer Insights Tracker was transitioned to a new supplier, YouGov. Changing supplier provided the opportunity to make the following methodological changes:

- review the questionnaire content and question wording
- expand the sample to include adults aged 16+ (previously 16-75)
- boost the sample to include a larger number of participants from Northern Ireland
- utilise a panel survey approach (previously an omnibus approach was used to collect the data)

Due to these methodological differences, data captured by YouGov (from July 2023 onwards) should not be directly compared to data captured by the previous supplier (April 2020 – June 2023).

Method

- this research was conducted online using the YouGov panel which gives access to 400,000 active panellists in the UK.
- this report presents findings from February 2024. Where appropriate, comparisons are made to previous waves since July 2023.
- 2,066 adults across England, Wales and Northern Ireland took part in the February survey between 2nd-5th February 2024.
- quotas were set by age, gender, education and region. The data is also weighted to be representative of the population by these demographic variables. All results are based on final weighted data.

Notes for interpretation

- figures may not add up to 100% on graphs due to rounding, or in some questions, respondents were able to select multiple answers.
- significance testing is applied to the data to compare and determine whether a difference is “real”, or if it has occurred by chance (because not everyone in the population has been surveyed).
- any differences between demographic groups and month to month which are reported (with arrows) are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
- if you require further information on the statistical significance testing carried out, please [contact the social science team](#).
- where analysis is conducted by IMD, respondents are categorised within the country where they live, before a combined measure is created for the full sample.

For more information

- visit our [Consumer Insights Tracker webpage](#)
- or please contact the [FSA Social Science Team](#)

1. Q3m. To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month? Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066), January 2024 (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July (n=2,085) 2023
2. Q3. In the last month, have you or anyone else in your household received a free parcel of food from a food bank or other emergency food provider? Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057) and August 2023 (n=2,044)
3. Q6. In the last month, did any of the following apply to you, or someone else in your household? Please tick all that apply. I, or someone in my household... Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066) and January (n=2,038). Please note: Total values do not add to 100% as participants could select multiple responses.
4. Q6. In the last month, did any of the following apply to you, or someone else in your household? Cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food. Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066). Those with a limiting health problem or disability have said that 1) they have either a health problem or disability and 2) it limits their daily life either a lot or a little. Households with children are defined as those who have children aged under 18 living in their household.
5. Q8m. In the last month, which, if any, of the following have you done to reduce your energy bills and save money? Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066) and January (n=2,038)
6. Q2m. 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? Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July (n=2,085) 2023

7. Q12. Thinking about food in the UK in general. At the moment, how concerned, if at all, do you feel about each of the following topics? Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066) and January (n=2,038). Respondents were shown all of the topics listed and asked how concerned, if at all, they felt about each. Figures shown in chart are the proportion 'highly concerned' or 'somewhat concerned'.
8. Q13. How confident are you in the food supply chain? That is all the processes involved in bringing food to your table. Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July 2023 (n=2,085)
9. Q14. How confident are you that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK... Base: All in February 2024 (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July 2023 (n=2,085)
10. Q16. The Food Standards Agency 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. Base: Those who know a little / a lot about the Food Standards Agency in February 2024 (n=1,127) January (n=1,168) December (n=1,134), November (n=1,183), October (n=1,175), September (n=1,161) and August 2023 (n=1,126)
11. Q15. The Food Standards Agency is the Government Agency responsible for food safety in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. How confident are you that the Food Standards Agency... Base: Those who know a little / a lot about the Food Standards Agency in February 2024 (n=1,127) January (n=1,168) December (n=1,134), November (n=1,183), October (n=1,175), September (n=1,161) and August 2023 (n=1,126)