

Food and You 2: Technical Report: Introduction

Results available: Results available

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

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Survey Background

The Food and You 2 Survey was commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in September 2019. Fieldwork has been conducted on a biannual basis since July 2020.

Food and You 2 is conducted among a cross-section of adults (aged 16 years or over) living in households in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Adults invited to take part in the survey are selected from a sample of the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF) using a random probability sampling methodology. The survey is conducted using a push-to-web methodology. This is a quantitative data collection method in which participants are contacted using an offline means of contact and asked to complete an online survey. In this survey, participants are contacted by letter, with those who choose not to complete the online survey, after the initial reminder, subsequently sent a postal version. The survey explores participants' food-related knowledge, behaviours and attitudes.

Details about each wave of fieldwork including fieldwork dates and response rates can be found in the accompanying technical report spreadsheet published alongside each wave.

In Wave 8, Scotland was included for the first time, funded by Food Standards Scotland (FSS) ([footnote 1](#)). Unless mentioned separately, all content in this report is applicable to England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

About the Food Standards Agency

The [Food Standards Agency \(FSA\)](#) is an independent Government department working to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in relation to food in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The FSA's overarching mission is "[food you can trust](#)", which means the Agency strives towards a food system in which **food is safe, food is what it says it is and food is healthier and more sustainable**. As such, understanding consumers' attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in relation to food is of vital importance to the FSA.

Food and You 2 is the FSA's principal source of methodologically robust and representative evidence regarding consumers' attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in relation to food. This survey has an important role in measuring the FSA's progress towards its strategic objectives, providing evidence to support its communication campaigns and other activities, and identifying topics for further research or action.

The FSA also monitor consumer behaviour and attitudes in their online, monthly [Consumer Insights tracker](#).

About Food Standards Scotland

[Food Standards Scotland \(FSS\)](#) is the independent government agency responsible for food and feed safety and standards, and healthy eating in Scotland. FSS's vision is for a safe, healthy and sustainable food environment that benefits and protects the health and well-being of everyone in Scotland. FSS aims to use the data and evidence from Scotland to provide assurance and advice that inspires consumer confidence and improve public health.

FSS also monitor consumer behaviour and attitudes in their online [Food in Scotland Consumer tracker survey](#).

History of Food and You

Since its inception in 2000, the FSA has commissioned surveys to collect quantitative data on the public's reported behaviour, attitudes and knowledge relating to food. Between 2000 and 2007 the FSA conducted an annual Consumer Attitudes Survey (CAS). In 2010, this was replaced by the more rigorous 'Food and You', a biennial survey conducted face-to-face. Food and You became the FSA's flagship social survey. In addition, the FSA conducted regular tracking surveys including the biannual Public Attitudes Tracker and annual Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) Consumer Attitudes Tracker. The [FHRS](#) is a scheme that helps consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving clear information about the businesses' hygiene standards. The scheme is run in partnership with local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In 2018, the FSA's [Advisory Committee for Social Science \(ACSS\) \(Opens in a new window\)](#) recommended that Food and You and the Public Attitudes Tracker be replaced with a new 'push-to-web' survey. Food and You 2 was commissioned in 2019 with data collection for Wave 1 commencing in July 2020.

Due to differences in the survey methodologies, comparisons cannot be made between Food and You or the Public Attitudes Tracker and Food and You 2, therefore Wave 1 of Food and You 2 in 2020 represented the start of a new data time series. Data are collected through Food and You 2 on a biannual basis.

Summary of the survey

Design

The research is conducted using a push-to-web methodology, where households who are selected to take part, receive a letter that invites them to complete the Food and You 2 survey online. Up to two adults in each household can take part. Fieldwork for Waves 1 to 4 was conducted while there were restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Waves 5 and 6, all restrictions were removed however some questions asked participants about their behaviour in the 12 months prior to the survey fieldwork when restrictions would have been in place in all countries to some extent. Restrictions may have impacted some participants' behaviours relating to food, and in turn may have impacted how participants answered certain questions.

In this study, the fieldwork is structured around four mailings:

- Mailing 1: Initial invitation letter inviting up to two individuals per household to complete the Food and You 2 survey online
- Mailing 2: Reminder letter
- Mailing 3: Second reminder, which includes up to two versions of a postal questionnaire
- Mailing 4: Final reminder letter

Mailings 2, 3 and 4 are sent only to those who have not completed the survey since the previous mailing, and households where there is a known second participant eligible to take part but who has not yet completed the questionnaire. There is a question which asks for the number of adults in the household. If one person responds in a household and they stated that there was only one adult in their household, they would not be sent a reminder letter. If they stated that more than one adult was present in their household then that household would be sent a reminder, unless both adults had already completed the survey.

Questionnaire

The survey includes an online version of the questionnaire and two postal versions. On both versions there were slight differences between the questionnaires by country, reflecting the different regional government bodies, their roles and responsibilities. For participants in Wales, both the online and postal surveys are offered in Welsh and English. Participants can take part in Food and You 2 via the online survey or using a postal survey.

The online questionnaire is structured as a series of modules covering key areas of interest to the FSA/FSS. Most questions are behavioural, asking participants to state their usual activities or to recall recent actions. A smaller number of questions are attitudinal, asking participants to state their opinions on various subjects, or knowledge-based, for example asking participants what they think the temperature inside their fridge should be. The questionnaire includes demographic questions to allow the FSA to conduct subgroup analysis on the data. When analysing data from Food and You 2, it is important to note that behaviours are self-reported and therefore may not reflect actual behaviour. Measures are taken to minimise the impact of social desirability (for instance, stating that results are reported anonymously) and to increase accuracy (including time frames), but there is likely to be some difference in self-reported and actual observable measures.

Due to the length and complexity of the online questionnaire it is not possible to include all questions in the postal version of the questionnaire. The postal version of the questionnaire needs to be shorter and less complex to encourage a high response rate, so in most waves, two versions are produced for each country. Key modules (e.g. About You, food concerns, food security) are asked in all versions of the postal surveys, with the remaining content divided across the country-specific versions depending on available space. Details of the modules included within Food and You 2 can be found below:

- About You and Your Household (Core)
- Food Concerns (Core)
- Food You Can Trust (Core)
- Household Food Security (Core)
- Eating at Home (Core questions)
- Eating at Home (Full module)
- Food Shopping
- Defra Questions
- Eating Out
- Online Food Platforms
- Food Hypersensitivities (Core questions)
- Food Hypersensitivities (Full module)
- Healthy Eating (Northern Ireland only)

- Emerging issues
- Price Promotions (Northern Ireland only)

Whilst steps are taken to make the online and postal questionnaires as comparable as possible, there are minor differences in the order questions are asked, question wording and the way routing is applied. The online version of each survey can be found in appendices linked to the key findings report.

Further information on the questions asked in each module and questionnaire development can be found in the 'Questionnaire development and cognitive testing' section.

Sampling

At the start of each wave a random sample of addresses is drawn from the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF), a database of all known addresses in the UK. The sample is drawn from the address list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (and Scotland when applicable). The size of the sample from each region is aimed to provide an estimated minimum of 1,000 household responses in each of Wales and Northern Ireland, and 2,000 from England. Wales and Northern Ireland are therefore over-represented in the sample. The samples are drawn in this way to enable effective subgroup analysis on the data. When Scotland is included, the number of addresses sampled aims to provide 1000 household responses.

The sample is further stratified by local authority to ensure even geographical spread across the countries. The local authority classifications used are those that existed when the sample was first selected in July 2020 for Wave 1 and have not been updated to show current boundaries. Within each local authority the sample is stratified by degree of deprivation to ensure a broadly representative sample in terms of income level. In each wave, a reserve sample is also drawn at the same time as the main sample. More details on this can be found in the 'Sampling' section.

In each selected household, up to two adults (aged 16 years or over) are invited to participate in the survey. In the interests of maximising the response rate, no selection criteria (other than being aged 16 years or over) are imposed regarding the selection of individuals within each household.

The sampling strategy for this survey is described in greater detail in the 'Sampling' section.

Weighting

Weighting is a process by which survey estimates are adjusted both to compensate for unequal selection probabilities and to reduce demographic discrepancies between the sample who completed a survey and the desired survey population - in this instance, the populations by country.

Following data collection for each wave, two kinds of weight are applied to the data. Firstly, selection weights are calculated to equalise selection probabilities for individuals across all sampled households. Secondly, these weights are adjusted to ensure achieved sample estimates align with ONS country population totals for selected variables. Following this, additional weights are created for use in combined-country analyses by scaling the country sample sizes to be proportional to their corresponding country population values.

Finally, a 'Wales & Welsh-England' weight is calculated to permit comparisons to be made between England (excluding London) and Wales after controlling for differences in age, gender, ethnic group, household size, and urban-rural mix.

In some waves, additional weights are produced when the mode for a question is different across the countries.

The weighting process is described in greater detail in the 'Weighting' section.

1. Scotland was not included at Wave 9