

Food & You 2 trends: Executive Summary

Results available: Results available

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Authors: Helen Heard, Alexandra Moore, Rachael Shillitoe, Lucy Murray, Robin Clifford, Matt Jenkins, Dr Daniel Mensah

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PDF

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Food and You 2 is a biannual 'official statistic' survey commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The survey measures consumers' self-reported knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to food safety and other food issues amongst adults in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

This report provides an overview of key trends between Wave 1 (July 2020 to October 2020) and Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024).

Food you can trust

Most measures of consumer confidence in the food system remain high but saw a slight decline in Wave 3 (April 2021 - June 2021), Wave 7 (April 2023 – July 2023) and Wave 8 (October 2023- January 2024). Trust and confidence in the FSA saw a gradual decline over time:

Confidence in food safety and authenticity

- Around 9 in 10 respondents (88% - 93%) reported confidence in food being safe to eat across all waves. This measure declined slightly in Wave 3 (90%), Wave 7 (88%) and Wave 8 (90%).
- Around 8 in 10 respondents (82% - 89%) reported confidence in food labels being accurate across all waves. This measure declined slightly in Wave 3 (83%), Wave 7 (83%) and Wave 8 (82%).

Confidence in the food supply chain

- Around three quarters of respondents (72% - 78%) reported confidence in the food supply chain across most waves, with confidence slightly lower in Waves 3 (73%), Wave 7 (68%) and Wave 8 (72%).

Trust and confidence in the FSA

- Between Wave 2 (November 2020 to January 2021) and Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024) there was a gradual decline in confidence in the FSA being relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks (from 84% in Wave 2 to 79% in Wave 8); being committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks (from 79% in Wave 2 to 72% in Wave 8); and taking appropriate action if a food-related risk is identified (from 84% in Wave 2 to 78% in Wave 8).
- Following a period of stability, there was a notable decline in trust in the FSA between Wave 6 (October 2022 – January 2023) and Wave 7 (April 2023 – July 2023), from 78% to 69%. Distrust in the FSA remained low (1-2%) across all waves.

Concerns about food

- Between Wave 1 (July 2020 to October 2020) and Wave 4 (October 2021 to January 2022) the most common concerns amongst respondents were food waste (58%-61%), the amount of sugar in food (59%-60%), and animal welfare (55-57%).
- Between Wave 5 (April 2022 to July 2022) and Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024) the top concerns for consumers have consistently been food prices (65%-68%), food waste (58%-63%), and the quality of food (56%-61%).
- Concerns about food poisoning have increased over time (from 38% in Wave 1 to 54% in Wave 8), whilst concerns about the amount of calories in food has broadly declined (from 42% in Wave 1 to 29% in Wave 8).

Food security

- The percentage of respondents classified as food insecure increased, from 15% in Wave 3 (April 2021 to 25 June 2021) to 24% in Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024).
- Following a slight decrease, the percentage of respondents using a food bank has remained broadly stable since Wave 3 (3-4%).

Eating out and takeaways

- Awareness and knowledge of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) increased from 47% in Wave 2 (November 2020 to January 2021) to 60% in Wave 4 (October 2021 to January 2022). Since then, reported awareness and knowledge about the scheme has remained broadly stable (58-60%).
- Around 4 in 10 respondents reported they had checked the food hygiene rating of a food business within the last 12 months, with no notable changes across waves.

Food allergies, intolerances and other hypersensitivities

- There was a notable increase in the percentage of respondents who had experienced a food reaction from 42% in Wave 3 (April 2021 to June 2021) to 58% in Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024).
- Around 7 in 10 respondents reported that they felt comfortable asking staff for more allergy information when eating out, with no notable changes over time.

Eating at home

Whilst most food safety behaviours in the home remained stable between Wave 1 (July 2020 to October 2020) and Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024), some changes included:

- A notable decline in those who reported always washing their hands before eating (from 51% in Wave 1 to 41% in Wave 8).
- A slight decline in those who reported 'never' eating chicken or turkey when it is pink or has pink juices between (from 93% in Wave 1 to 90% in Wave 8).
- A slight increase in those who reported that they would eat leftovers after 2 days or more (from 23% in Wave 1 to 29% in Wave 8).
- A slight increase in those who reported that they wash raw chicken at least occasionally (from 35% in Wave 1 to 40% in Wave 8).

Food shopping and labelling

- The percentage of respondents who reported using online food sharing apps increased from 4% in Wave 3 (April 2021 to June 2021) to 14% in Wave 7 (April 2023 to July 2023). The use of other online platforms has not changed.
- Between Wave 5 (April 2022 to July 2022) and Wave 7 (April 2023 to July 2023) there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who reported that it is important to buy meat, eggs and dairy which are produced with high standards of animal welfare (from 90% in Wave 5 to 85% in Wave 7) and to buy food which has a low environmental impact (from 84% in Wave 5 to 74% in Wave 7).