

Covid-19 Consumer Tracker waves one and two report published

The monthly tracker monitors attitudes, experience and behaviours of consumers in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key findings

Buying locally

Findings highlight a distinct move towards more 'local' food purchasing behaviour (35% said they had done so more often, 11% less often); people similarly reported buying from local suppliers (such as farm shops, veg box schemes) more often.

Food waste

People reported wasting or throwing away food less often (35% reported they had done so less often, 8% less often).

Food availability/ affordability

The number of people who have skipped meals or cut down on meal sizes due to not having enough money remained stable between April (18%) and May (16%). Age, having a physical or mental health condition, and the presence of a child in the household are significant factors. The number of people who used emergency food providers to access food remained stable between April (8%) and May (7%). This data helps us to understand the impact of concerns or experience of food unavailability or food insecurity on consumer food safety behaviours.

Eating food past use-by dates

The numbers of people reporting eating food that had gone past its use-by date varied by food type, ranging from 17% for smoked fish to 36% for bagged salads.

Heather Hancock, Chair at the Food Standards Agency, said:

'The Covid-19 Consumer Tracker is helping us understand people's food concerns during these difficult times. This knowledge has already helped to inform the work of the Ministerial Taskforce on Vulnerabilities and will continue to do so.

'I would like to say thank you to the voluntary sector and local authorities, who are working hard to find a variety of routes to address the challenges created by Covid-19 alongside the governments in the UK. We will continue to play our part in responding to this global pandemic and ensuring food is safe and what it says it is.'

Other findings

Buying takeaways

People are buying fewer takeaways overall when compared to before lockdown; people reported this was due to financial reasons, cooking more at home, less availability, and concerns over food safety and hygiene.

Using food-sharing apps

Purchasing from sources such as vendors on Facebook Marketplace (7% April, 8% May) and food-sharing apps (8% April, 9% May) remained stable, with buyers more highly represented in younger groups and among those with no formal qualifications.

About the survey

The Food Standards Agency commissioned Ipsos MORI to develop its evidence base on issues affecting consumers and businesses in order to inform its Covid-19 response in the short to medium term.

Interviews for Wave 1 were conducted online in April 2020 and Wave 2 fieldwork took place online in May 2020. Ipsos MORI surveyed a representative sample of 2,039 adults in Wave 1 and 2,040 adults in Wave 2. Participants were aged 16-75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Subsequent waves of research will run during June and July 2020 and results will be published in due course.

Read the report

[Covid-19 Consumer Tracker](#)