

Food and You - Wave Four

Area of research interest: [Food and You](#)

The Food and You consumer survey collects information about the public's reported behaviours, attitudes and knowledge relating to food safety and food issues. This involves food purchasing, storage, preparation, consumption and factors that may affect these.

The survey provides data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since 2014, results from Food and You have been published as an Official Statistic, reflecting the robust methodology of the survey.

You can [read our secondary analysis from waves 1-4](#).

Objectives

The specific objectives of Food and You Wave 4 were to:

- explore public understanding of, and engagement with, the FSA's aim of improving food safety
- identify specific target groups for future interventions (e.g. those most at risk or those among whom FSA policies and initiatives are likely to have the greatest impact)
- describe the public attitudes towards food production and the food system
- monitor changes over time (compared with data from Waves 1-3 or from other sources) of reported attitudes and behaviour
- broaden the evidence base and develop indicators to assess progress in fulfilling the FSA's strategic plans, aims and targets

Wave 4 (2016), consisted of 3118 interviews across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, conducted from May to September 2016, among a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over in the combined country report. Individual reports have been produced for Wales and Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland report also includes a section on healthy eating. This Wave, the final chapter of the report on food provenance has been co-funded by DEFRA.

Main findings

Key findings for Wave 4 combined England, Wales and NI report include:

- women were more likely than men to report all or most of the responsibility for cooking or preparing food in the home (67% compared with 30%). Women were also more likely to report all or most of the responsibility for household food shopping (68% compared with 31%).
- to get an overall picture of people's food safety behaviour, we use the Index of Recommended Practice (IRP), a composite measure of food hygiene knowledge and behaviours within the home. In this wave there was increase in average IRP score from 64 in Wave 1 to 67 in Wave 4, indicating a small overall improvement in food safety practices.
- we recommend that people wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before cooking and after touching the bin, going to the toilet, handling pets or handling raw food

(particularly raw meat). Overall 86% of respondents reported always washing their hands before starting to prepare or cook food.

- when asked what respondents thought the temperature inside the fridge should be, the majority (48%) said it should be between 0 and 5°C (the recommended temperature). This was similar to the proportion in Wave 1 (46%) but lower than the proportion in Waves 2 and 3 (both 53%).
- the proportion of respondents citing the 'use by' date as the best indicator of whether food is safe to eat, in line with FSA recommend practice, has increased since Wave 1. Three quarters (75%) cited 'use by' dates as an indicator of whether food was safe to eat. While similar to the proportions in Wave 2 and Wave 3, this was higher than the proportion in Wave 1 (62%).
- when asked which methods they used to defrost meat or fish, the method reported by the highest proportion of respondents (58%) was leaving meat or fish at room temperature, which is not recommended.
- when shown a list of factors which might influence their decision on where to eat out, 72% of respondents reported that the cleanliness and hygiene of the establishment was important to them; overall a third (30%) of respondents who ate out considered this the most important factor.
- overall, 44% of respondents reported having had food poisoning, in line with previous waves. As with previous waves, men (47%) were more likely than women (43%) to report having had food poisoning.

New questions gave some important insights, for example:

- of those who reported an adverse reaction or avoided certain foods, the most common foods that people reported having an adverse reaction to were cows' milk and cows' milk products (22%), cereals containing gluten (13%) and molluscs, for example, mussels, oysters (11%).
- overall, 43% of respondents reported making at least one change in their buying or eating arrangements in the last 12 months for financial reasons - including 20% who bought items on special offer more, 18% who had changed where they shopped for cheaper alternatives and 17% who said they ate out less
- one third (34%) of respondents reported that they always felt confident that food is what it says it is on the label or the menu and around half (52%) felt confident most of the time. Just 3% said they rarely or never felt confident.

The individual findings for Wales and Northern Ireland are available to view in the Wales and Northern Ireland specific executive summaries and reports.

Research reports

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Executive Summary as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (289.05 KB)

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Combined Report as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (2.76 MB)

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Technical Report as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (2.29 MB)

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Development report as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (554.76 KB)

Wales

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Wales as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (1.14 MB)

Wales

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Wales Executive summary as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (514.39 KB)

Northern Ireland

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Northern Ireland as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (6.72 MB)

Northern Ireland

PDF

[View Food and You - Wave 4 - Northern Ireland - Executive summary as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (522.57 KB)

Combined report - results tables

EXCEL

[View Wave 4 - Combined Report - Chapter 1 as Excel\(Open in a new window\)](#) (629.23 KB)

EXCEL

[View Wave 4 - Combined Report - Chapter 2 as Excel\(Open in a new window\)](#) (851.85 KB)

EXCEL

[View Wave 4 - Combined Report - Chapter 3 as Excel\(Open in a new window\)](#) (165.92 KB)

EXCEL

[View Wave 4 - Combined Report - Chapter 4 as Excel\(Open in a new window\)](#) (119.83 KB)

EXCEL

[View Wave 4 - Combined Report - Chapter 5 as Excel\(Open in a new window\)](#) (285.05 KB)

Team Contacts

Food and You team

foodandyou@food.gov.uk