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# Survey of consumer practices with respect to coated frozen chicken products

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**Executive summary**

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# Background and methodology

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is investigating a spike in *Salmonella* cases in the UK linked to the consumption of coated frozen chicken products.

In March 2021, FSA, in collaboration with Food Standards Scotland (FSS) commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct an online survey in order to identify consumer behaviours which could increase their risk to foodborne disease. The key research questions were:

- Which consumers are purchasing coated frozen chicken products?
- How do consumers store and cook these products?
- Do consumers follow packaging instructions when cooking and storing these products?
- Are consumers putting themselves at risk of *Salmonella* in the way they, store, cook and handle these products?
- Do consumers take appropriate action to protect themselves from risk by washing their hands, and avoiding cross-contamination when handling these products?
- Do children (aged 12 or under) or teenagers (aged 13-15) handle and cook these products?

Ipsos MORI ran two online surveys in March 2021 using the Ipsos MORI i:Omnibus. In each wave, Ipsos MORI surveyed a representative sample of adults aged 16-75, living in the UK.

1. An online omnibus survey of 2,100 respondents, nationally representative of adults aged 16-75, living in the UK.  
Fieldwork: 8 March 2021

The aim of this survey was to understand how many people eat or cook coated frozen chicken products at home. This finding informed the sample size for the second survey described below.

2. An online omnibus survey of 5,599 respondents, nationally representative of adults aged 16-75, living in the UK.  
Fieldwork: 19-26 March 2021

The survey asked whether participants eat or cook coated frozen chicken products at home. Throughout the survey, participants were reminded of examples of coated frozen chicken products through hover-over information buttons. Example products were:

- frozen chicken nuggets
- frozen chicken goujons
- frozen chicken dippers
- frozen chicken popsters
- frozen breaded or battered chicken fillets

- frozen chicken poppers
- frozen popcorn chicken
- frozen chicken kievs
- frozen chicken-burgers

Those who said they eat or cook these products were asked to complete a survey about their behaviours around handling, storing, and cooking coated frozen chicken products. A total of 3,740 respondents completed the full survey. A key requirement for FSS was the inclusion of a representative sample (at least 200) of respondents living in Scotland in the full survey. The final sample included 478 respondents from Scotland, of which 307 said they eat or cook the products at home and completed the full survey.

Quotas for the overall sample were set on age, gender and working status. The overall sample was weighted to be representative of the UK adult population aged 16-75 on key demographics: age, gender, working status and social grade.

All the differences which have been commented on within this report are statistically significant, unless otherwise stated. The significance tests used are two tailed and are based on a 95% confidence interval. This means that should the samples be drawn 100 times, in 95% of those cases we would find a difference between the two numbers being compared. While statistical theory assumes that samples are drawn using purely random methods, it is standard practice to conduct significance testing on non-probability quota samples and we have employed this here. The statistical test used accounts for overlapping samples. No correction has been applied for multiple testing.

The full dataset of questions and responses is published separately to this executive summary on the [FSA data catalog](#).

This executive summary report only comments on key findings from the survey. Further information, including more detailed demographic analysis is published alongside this report in data tabulations – see Annex 1 for more information on reading these data tables.

### **Note on interpreting the data**

Results should be interpreted with care. All surveys are subject to a range of potential sources of error including sample imbalances which are not easily identified and corrected through weighting and errors in respondents' interpretation of survey questions and response options. The data reported within this report relies on respondents' self-reported behaviours. Errors could occur due to imperfect recollection, or respondents' tendency to overreport behaviours which are perceived as being desirable and underreport undesirable behaviours.

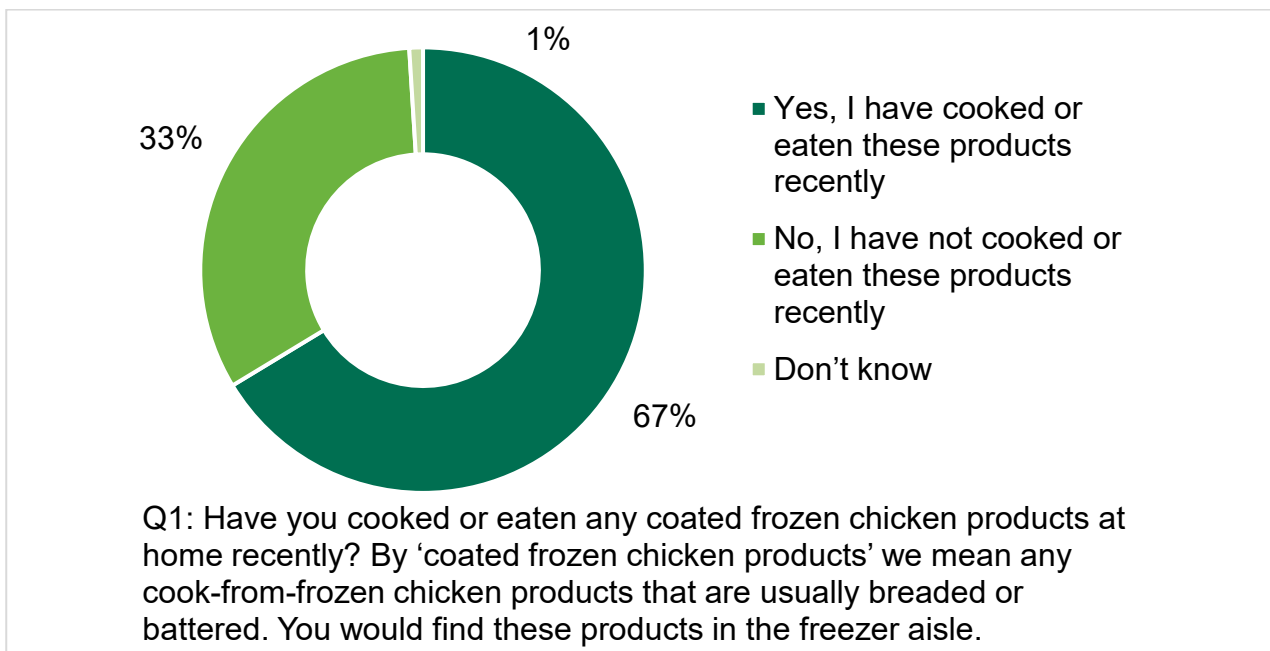
# Executive summary

## Incidence of cooking or eating coated frozen chicken products

Two thirds of adults aged 16-75 (67%) say they have recently cooked or eaten coated frozen chicken products at home (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Incidence of cooking or eating coated frozen chicken products.**

Base: all respondents (5,599). Percentages might not add up to 100% due to rounding.



Younger adults are more likely to report recently cooking or eating coated frozen chicken products at home: 88% of those aged 16-24 and 84% of those aged 25-34, compared with 48% of those aged 55-75. Other groups more likely to say they have recently cooked or eaten these products recently include: those living in Northern Ireland (84%), those in social grades AB (74%), those who are married/in cohabitation (70%) or are in work (71%). People are also more likely than average to say they have recently cooked or eaten these products if they have children aged 15 or under in the household (86%). Larger households are more likely to report having recently eaten or bought products: 50% of 1-person households, 58% of 2-person households, 78% of 3-person households, 84% of households with 4 or more people.

## Behaviours around coated frozen chicken products among those cooking or eating the products

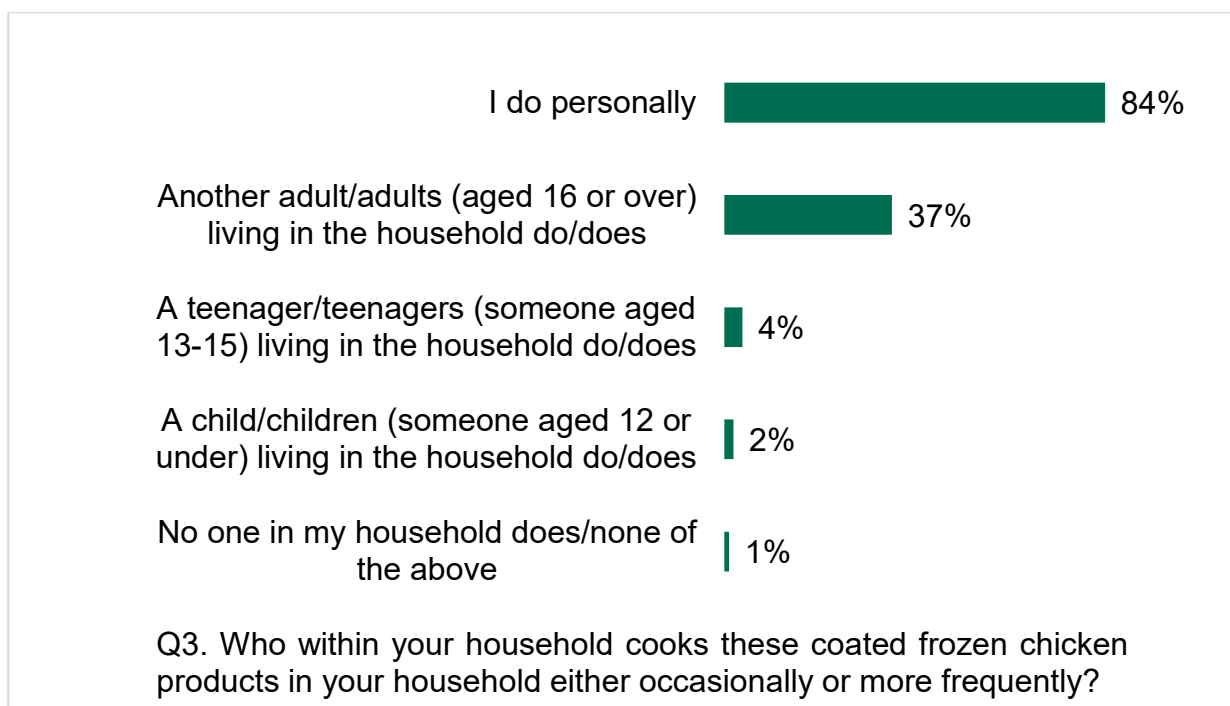
In the remainder of the report, unless stated otherwise, findings are reported among those who say they have recently cooked or eaten coated frozen chicken products.

### Household cooking habits

Among consumers of coated frozen chicken products, 84% say they personally cook them, 37% that another adult aged 16+ in the household does, 4% that a teenager aged 13-15 does, and 2% say a child aged 12 or under cooks them (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Cooking coated frozen chicken products.**

Base: all who have cooked or eaten coated frozen chicken products recently (3,740). Percentages might not add up to 100% as multiple responses could be selected.



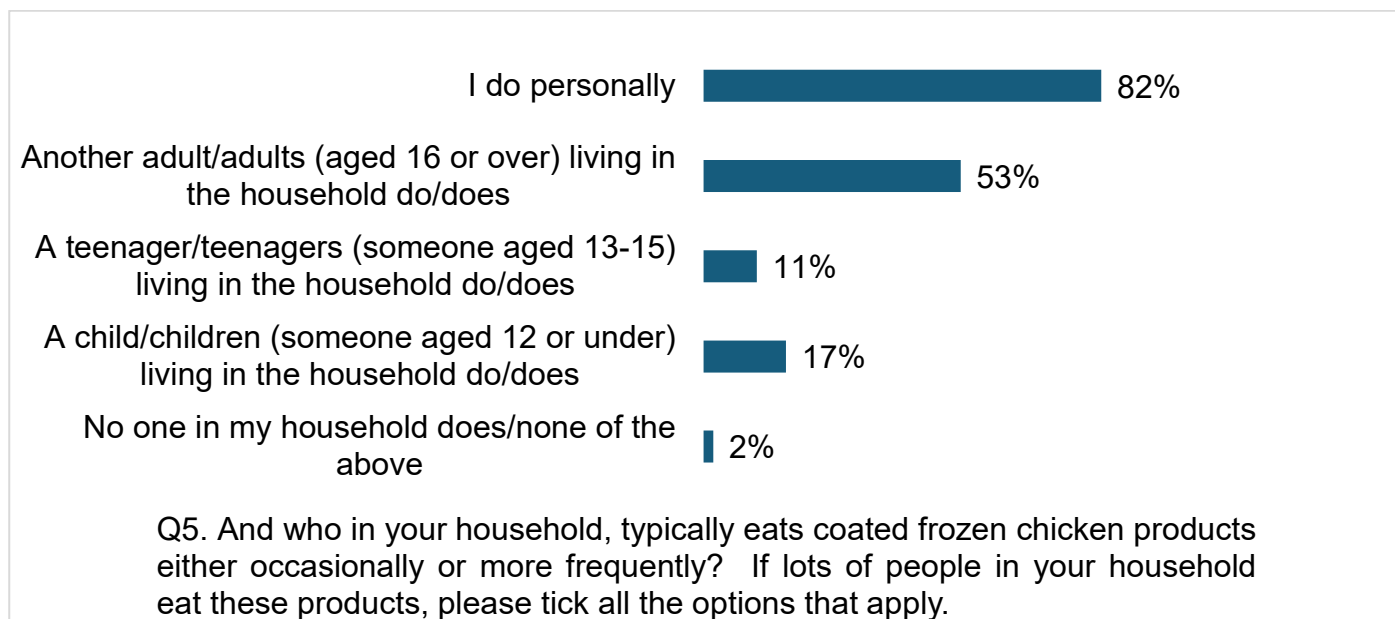
Among those who say a teenager in the household cooks these products, almost two in five (39%) say they receive no help or supervision, 44% that they receive a little help/supervision and 17% that they receive a lot of help/supervision.

## Household consumption preferences

Around eight in ten coated frozen chicken product consumers (82%) say they personally eat them, 53% say that another adult in the household does, 11% that a teenager in the household does and 17% that a child does (Figure 3).

### Figure 3: Eating coated frozen chicken products.

Base: all who have cooked or eaten coated frozen chicken products recently (3,740).  
Values do not add to 100% as multiple responses could be selected.



Among those who personally eat the products, 61% say they eat them at least once a week or more. A third (32%) say they eat them at least once a month or more, but less than weekly, and 7% that they eat them once a year or more, but less than monthly.

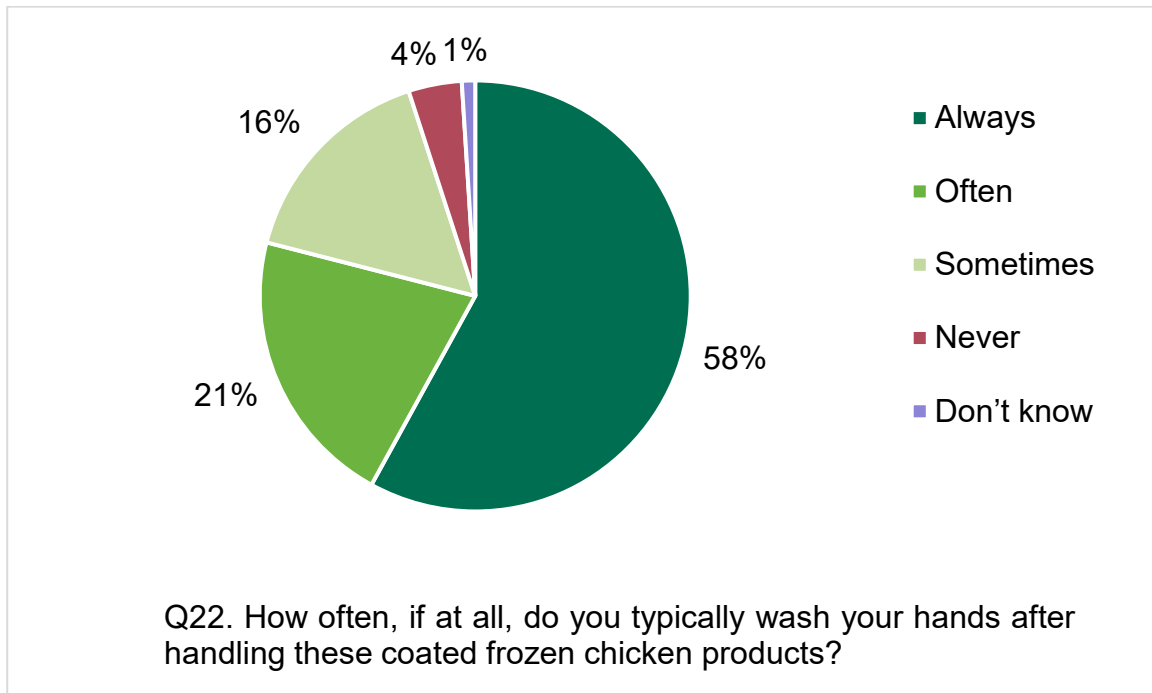
Teenagers and children tend to eat the products more frequently: among those with teenagers in the household (aged 13-15), 73% reported that teenagers eat products at least once a week or more and another 15% two or three times a month. Among those with children in the household (aged 12 or under) 76% said that children eat them weekly and another 14% two or three times a month.

## Handling of coated frozen chicken products

Over half of consumers of coated frozen chicken products (58%) say they always wash their hands when handling coated frozen chicken products, while one in five (21%) say they often wash their hands. One in six (16%), say they only sometimes wash their hands and 4% that they never do (Figure 4). Of those who wash their hands, 85% use soap/handwash, 5% use sanitiser and 9% use only water.

**Figure 4: Washing hands after handling products.**

Base: all who cook coated frozen chicken products (3,159).



One in eight consumers of coated frozen chicken products (12%) say uncooked products always come into contact with other surfaces such as worktops or plates, and another 17% say they often do. A third (34%) say products sometimes come into contact with other surfaces. Over a third say coated frozen chicken products never come into contact with other surfaces (36%).

## Storage

A large majority of consumers of coated frozen chicken products (78%) say that at least sometimes they notice breadcrumbs or coating have fallen out of the packaging: including 15% who say they always notice this, and another 21% often notice it. One in five (20%) say they never notice it.

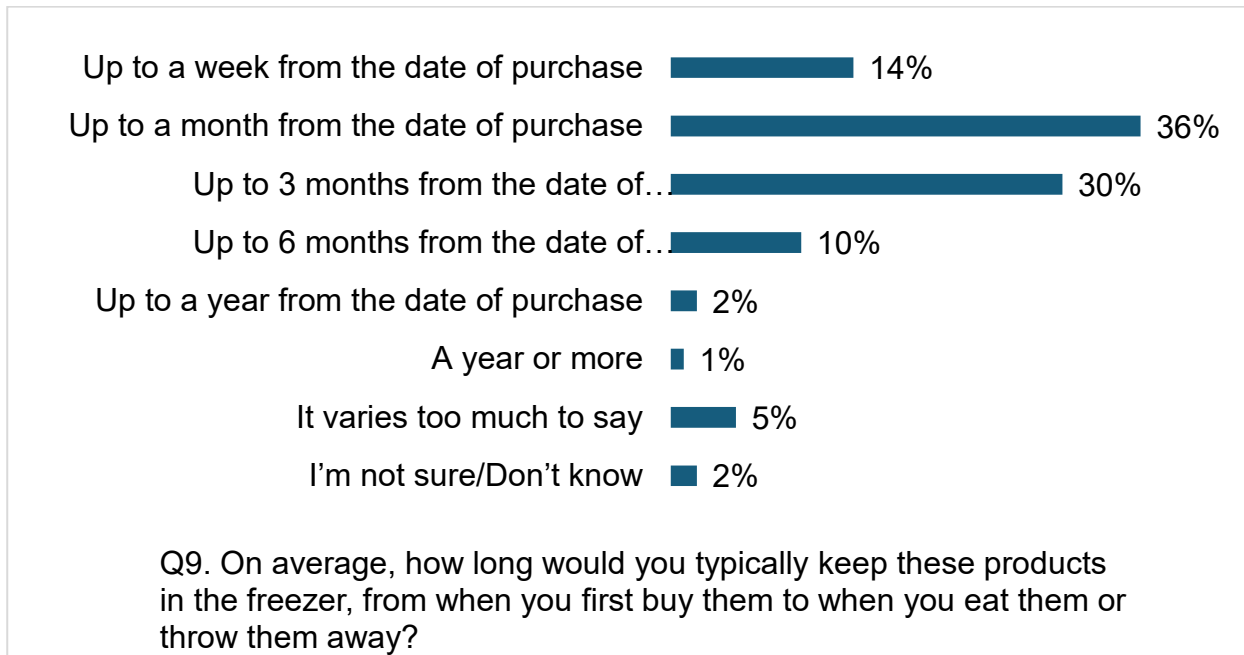
Most consumers of coated frozen chicken products (92%) store uncooked coated frozen chicken products in a freezer and 20% store them in a fridge. Only 2% say they store them at room temperature.

Among those who store coated frozen chicken products in the freezer, 14% say they keep the products for up to a week before eating them or throwing them away. Over a third (36%) keep them for over a week but up to a month, and 30% over a month but up to three months. One in ten (10%) say they keep them for between three and six months, and very few (3%) say they keep them for over six months (Figure 5).



## Figure 5: Keeping products in the freezer.

Base: all who keep coated frozen chicken products in the freezer (3,469)



Among those who store these products in the freezer, three quarters (75%) say they store them in their original packaging. Almost a quarter (23%) say they transfer them to disposable packaging, and 18% transfer them to reusable Tupperware containers. Only 3% say they store them in the freezer without any packaging.

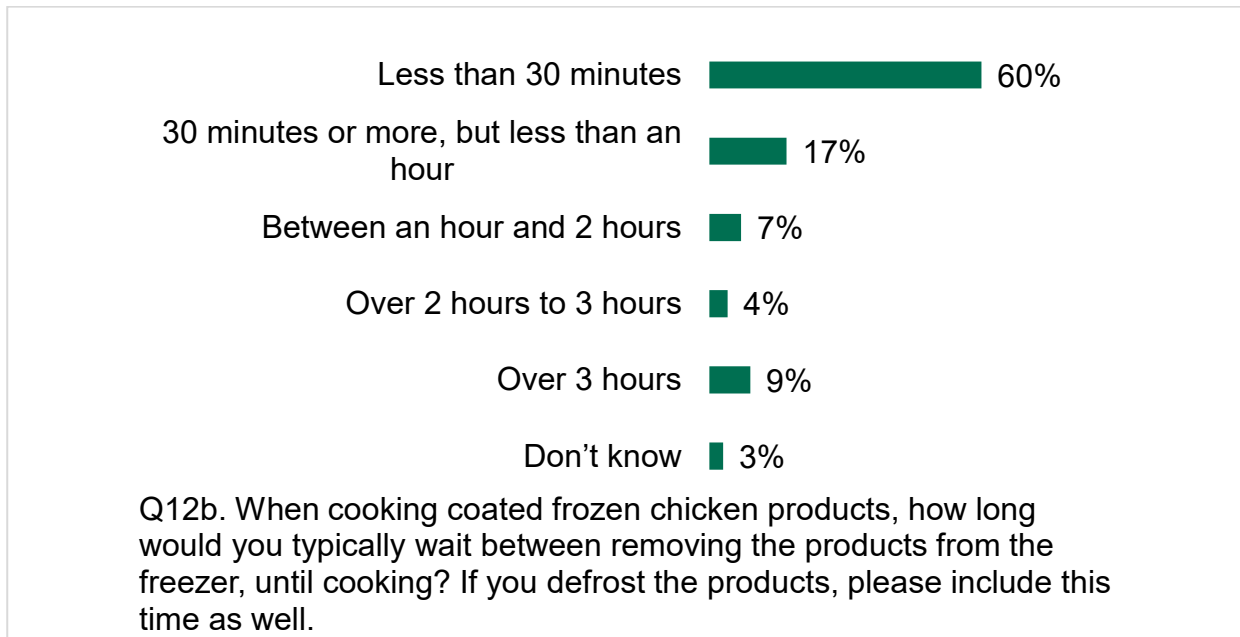
## Defrosting

Almost a quarter of consumers who personally cook products say they defrost them before cooking (23%), 62% say they do not. Among those who defrost products, half say they leave them at room temperature (53%), and 44% that they leave them in the fridge. One in six of those who defrost products (17%) use a microwave to do so and 13% defrost products in water.

Over half (60%) of consumers who personally cook products say they cook them within 30 minutes of taking them out of the freezer. One in six (17%) will wait more than half an hour but less than an hour, 7% between one and two hours, 4% between two and three hours and one in eleven (9%) wait over three hours (Figure 6). This includes defrosting time, where relevant.

**Figure 6: Time between removing products from freezer and cooking.**

Base: all who cook coated frozen chicken products (3,159)

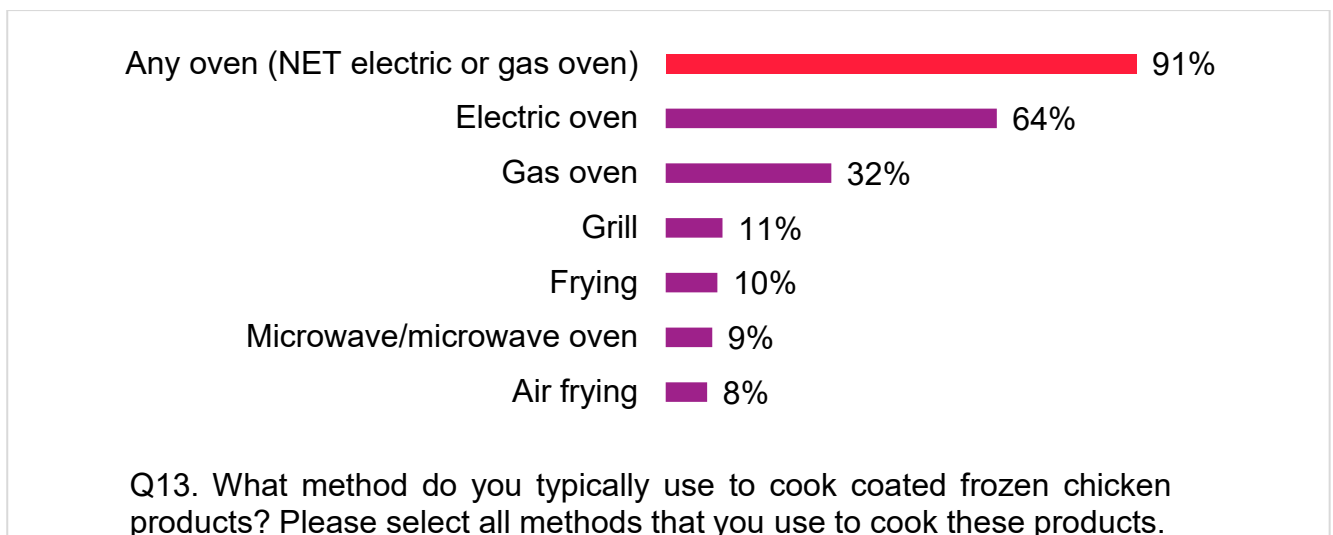


## Cooking

Those who personally cook coated frozen chicken products typically use an oven (91%): 64% use an electric oven and 32% a gas oven (Figure 7). Three quarters of those who personally cook coated frozen chicken products using ovens use a fan-assisted oven (75%). Around one in ten who personally cook coated frozen chicken products use a grill (11%), fry the products (10%), or use a microwave/microwave oven (9%).

**Figure 7: Method used to cook products.**

Base: all who cook coated frozen chicken products (3,159). Values do not add to 100% as multiple responses could be selected.



Of those who report using an oven (either electric or gas), 75% report that they use a fan-assisted oven, whilst 24% report using a conventional oven (not fan-assisted).

Most consumers who use an oven to cook coated frozen chicken products say they sometimes cook them together with other products, such as chips or vegetables (84%). Among this group, 70% say they start by cooking the product that needs to be in the oven for longer and then add other products. Over a third (38%) say they check the instructions and cook for the longest time needed. One in ten (11%) say they remove food as it becomes cooked. Only small minorities say they either look at instructions and cook for the shortest time needed, or that they don't check cooking instructions (both 3%).

When it comes to the cooking temperature, among those who cook coated frozen chicken products together with other products in the oven, 60% say they look at instructions and cook for the higher temperature recommended, 27% cook at the lower temperature, and 10% do not check the temperature instructions.

Over half (54%) of those who cook products say they always check cooking instructions before cooking. Among this group, most (96%) that they find cooking instructions very or fairly clear.

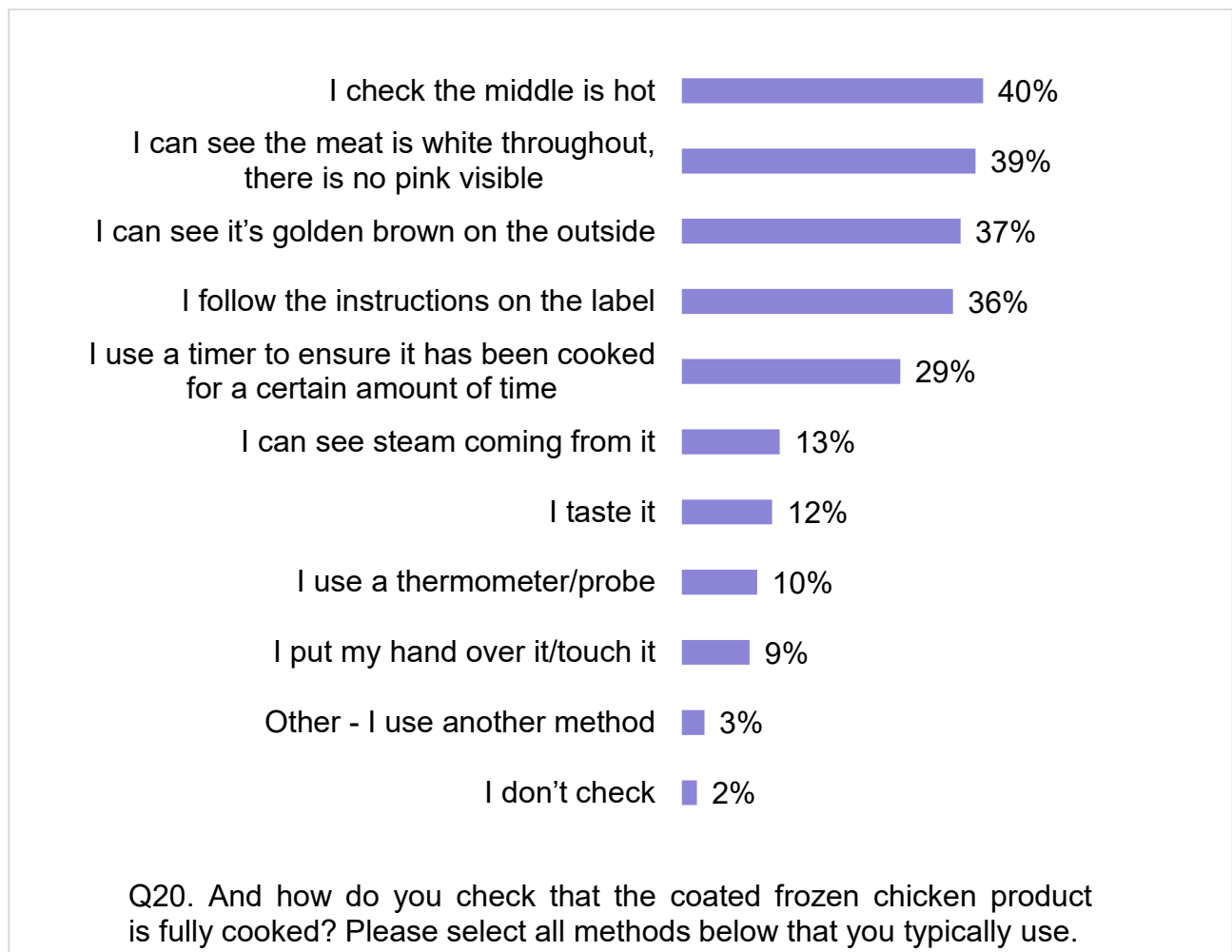
Among those who check cooking instructions, over a third (37%) say they always set an alarm/timer for the recommended cooking time, while a quarter (24%) never do. Almost half (47%) say they never remove products from the oven before the indicated time, almost a third (31%) say they sometimes do, 12% often and 9% say they always do.

Half of those using an oven (49%) say they always pre-heat it to the instructed temperature, while 6% say they never do. Half (52%) say their oven has an indicator light to show the oven is at the correct temperature, while almost a third (31%) say they wait a certain amount of time until they think the oven is hot enough and only then cook the products.

Among those who cook coated frozen chicken products, the most common methods for checking that the products are fully cooked are: checking that the middle is hot (40%), checking that the meat is white throughout (39%), seeing the product is golden brown on the outside (37%), following the instructions on the label (36%) and using a timer (29%). Only 2% say they don't use any method to check the product is cooked (Figure 8).

### Figure 8: Checking the product is fully cooked.

Base: all who cook coated frozen chicken products (3,159). Values do not add to 100% as multiple responses could be selected.



Over a third of those who cook coated frozen chicken products (35%) say they put any leftovers in the fridge, while 26% throw them away. One in seven (14%) say they leave them at room temperature and eat them the same day, and 10% that they leave them at room temperature and eat them the next day. A quarter (24%) say they don't have any leftovers.

# Annex A: Note on reading the data tabulations

Alongside the report, Ipsos MORI also provided data tabulations. Each table includes the following information:

- **Unweighted base size** i.e. the number of respondents who answered each question.
- **Weighted base size** i.e. the number of respondents who answered each question after demographic weights were applied. The weighted base size is used to calculate the shares of respondents in percentage points giving each answer.
- **Significance testing between different groups giving an answer.** Each column, representing a group is assigned a letter. Letters below a percentage point signifies that that percentage point is significantly higher than the corresponding share. E.g. the letter A would indicate that a percentage is significantly higher than the corresponding percentage given by the group labelled A.
- **Small base notices.** The sign (\*) indicates a base size under 100. The sign (\*\*) indicates a base size under 30. Results based on small base sizes should be interpreted with care as they are subject to wider confidence intervals.

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