

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

Food and You 2 Update

Background

1. Food and You is the FSA's flagship survey measuring the public's self-reported attitudes, behaviour and knowledge regarding food safety and other food-related issues (e.g. concerns about food, trust in food and the FSA, food security, food shopping, eating outside the home). This survey has an important role in measuring the FSA's progress towards its strategic objectives, providing evidence to support policy decision-making and identifying where further action or research may be required.
2. In line with the Government's Digital Transformation programme, in 2019 the FSA's [Advisory Committee for Social Science](#) (ACSS) recommended that Food and You should move from traditional face-to-face interviewing to a push-to-web methodology. The modernised Food and You 2 survey was launched in 2020 and incorporates the Public Attitudes Tracker (2010-2019) and Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) Tracker (2014-2019).
3. Food and You 2 is conducted biannually and employs a push-to-web methodology¹ with unclustered random probability sampling. Moving to this new methodology has enabled the FSA to increase sample sizes, with an overall sample size of 4,000 households (3,000 in Food and You: Wave 5), which includes 1,000 households (500 in Food and You: Wave 5) in Northern Ireland and Wales. Unlike in previous waves, up to two adults in each household are invited to participate and the overall sample size achieved each wave is now approximately 6,000 adults (16 years and over).
4. Although Food and You 2 is an evolution of the original Food and You, due to differences in methodologies, comparisons cannot be made across the different surveys and Food and You 2: Wave 1 (2020) represented the start of a new data time series.

Latest findings

5. Wave 1 of Food and You 2 fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI and took place between July and October 2020. The total achieved sample size was 9,319 (5,140 in England, 2,100 in Wales and 2,079 in Northern Ireland), with a response rate of 30%. The [Food and You 2: Wave 1 Key Findings report](#) was published in March

¹Participants are contacted by post and invited to take part in an online survey. A postal version of the questionnaire is available on request and sent to participants with a reminder letter.

2021. [Combined data and data tables were published](#) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as country specific data and data tables. A [technical](#) report was also published.

6. Wave 2 of Food and You 2 fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI and took place between November 2020 and January 2021. The total achieved sample size was 5,900 (2,968 in England, 1,366 in Wales and 1,566 in Northern Ireland), a response rate of 28%. The [Food and You 2: Wave 2 Key Findings](#) report was published in July 2021. [Combined data and data tables](#) were published for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as country-specific data and data tables. A [technical](#) report was also published.
7. The key findings relating to food safety are presented in Annex A.

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Annex A

Food and You 2 – Key findings on food safety

Cleanliness

- The majority of respondents reported always washing their hands, both before starting to prepare or cook food (77%) and immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish (89%).
- Women were more likely to report always washing their hands than men.

Cooking and reheating food

- 4 in 5 (80%) respondents always cook food until it's steaming hot and cooked all the way through.
- The proportions of respondents who reported that they never ate meat or meat products if the meat was pink or had pink/red juices, in line with recommended practice was 95% for sausages, 93% for pork, 93% for chicken or turkey, 69% for burgers, 67% for duck and 36% for red meat.
- Around a third (34%) of respondents eat beef burgers cooked rare or medium, the same proportion eat raw oysters and 10% drink raw unpasteurised milk. Men were more likely to report eating these foods compared to women.
- The majority of respondents said that they would reheat food no more than once (80%) while 13% reported that they would reheat food twice or more.

Chilling and defrosting food

- Most (60%) respondents thought their fridge should be between 0 and 5°C (the recommended temperature).
- Of respondents who had a fridge, 63% reported that they (or someone else) checked the temperature (or that they have a fridge alarm).
- The most common method used for defrosting meat or fish was leaving it at room temperature (which is not recommended) (46%).

Cross-contamination

- Less than half of respondents (49%) said that they always used different chopping boards for different foods, while 16% said they use the same chopping board.
- Two thirds of respondents store their raw meat at the bottom of the fridge, but approaching 1 in 5 (19%) store raw meat wherever there is space.
- The majority (69%) of respondents store raw meat in its original packaging or away from cooked foods, while 35% cover raw meat with film/foil or store in a sealed container. 1 in 6 keep raw meat on a plate.
- 6 in 10 never wash raw chicken, but 20% reported that they always do. The most common reasons that respondents gave for washing raw chicken were to clean the meat (e.g. to remove slime, juices, or blood) (53%) or for food safety reasons (e.g. to remove or kill bacteria) (30%).

Assessing whether food is safe to eat

- 2 in 3 identified the use-by date as the information that shows food is no longer safe to eat.
- The majority (62%) always check use-by dates when they are about to cook or prepare food, with a further 26% checking most of the time.
- Respondents were asked how they would tell whether different types of foods were safe to eat or use in cooking. Respondents were most likely to say that they assessed the safety of milk and yoghurt (73%) and raw meat (76%) by how they smelt. In assessing whether dried or cured meats (68%), fish (74%) and eggs (62%) were safe to eat, respondents were most likely to rely on the use-by date. Around two thirds (65%) assessed whether cheese was safe to eat by its appearance.
- The majority of respondents had never eaten smoked fish (81%), milk (68%), cooked meats (66%), bagged salad (53%) or cheese (52%) after its use-by date. However, approximately 2 in 5 reported eating bagged salad and cheese after expiration.
- Almost two thirds (63%) had not eaten eggs past the best before date in the last month, but 25% reported they had.

Information sources

- The most common sources of information about food safety were an internet search engine (59%), product packaging (48%), recipes (in books, magazines, or online), and friends and family (28%).