

Consumer Insights Tracker – Monthly Bulletin (September 2022)

Background

The Consumer Insights tracker provides up-to-date findings each month on consumer behaviour and attitudes in relation to the following topics:

- Food insecurity (including food affordability)
- Food availability
- Consumer concerns in relation to food
- Confidence in the food supply chain and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) as a regulator

This monthly bulletin summarises the key findings for each of these topics from wave 14 of the survey (conducted 15th-20th September 2022).

Monthly data tables are available to download via the [FSA's data catalogue](#). Tracker bulletins dating back to April 2022 are available to view via the [Consumer Insights tracker webpage](#). More detailed commentary, and timeseries analysis is published periodically on the [Consumer Insights tracker webpage](#).

Methodology

The Consumer Insights tracker survey is conducted online via i:Omnibus (provided by Ipsos UK) with a representative sample of approximately 2,000 adults, aged 16-75, living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The data is weighted to represent this population on the key demographics of age, gender, working status and social grade. Further details on the survey methodology can be found in the [full publication reports](#).

Throughout this bulletin, where 'significantly' is used to describe a change over time, it refers to a statistically significant increase or decrease (at the 95% confidence level).

In September 2022, two new questions were introduced to understand changes to consumer behaviour in relation to food, because of economic pressures and rising energy prices. The findings for these new questions are included in this monthly bulletin. As tracking began in September 2022, these figures cannot be compared to previous months of data.

Key Findings

Food Affordability and Food Insecurity

In September 2022:

- 17% of participants reported that they had used a food bank or food charity in the last month. This is not significantly different to the previous month (17%, August 2022), but is significantly higher than the year prior (10%, September 2021) and significantly higher than when tracking began in April 2020 (8%).
- 30% of participants reported that they had skipped a meal or cut down the size of their meals because they did not have enough money to buy food in the last month. This is not significantly different to the previous month (29%, August 2022) however, it is significantly higher than the year prior (September 2021, 21%) and is significantly higher than when tracking began in April 2020 (18%).
- 40% of participants reported feeling worried about being able to afford food in the next month. This is significantly higher than the previous month (36%, August 2022) and significantly higher than in the year prior (25%, September 2021). This is also significantly higher than when tracking began in April 2020 (28%).
- 85% of participants reported feeling concerned about food prices. This is in line with the previous month (85%, August 2022). There has been a significant increase in consumer concern over food prices since November 2021 when tracking for this question began (71%).
- 76% of participants reported that their shopping had 'got more expensive' in the past week. This is not significantly different to the previous month (76%, August 2022) but is significantly higher than when tracking began in September 2021 (49%).
- As part of a new question for September 2022, participants were asked if any of the following applied to them, at least once, in the last month:
 - 25% of participants reported that they had eaten cold food as they could not afford to cook hot food
 - 28% of participants reported that they could not afford their essential food shopping
 - 32% of participants reported that they had eaten food past its use-by date because they couldn't afford to buy more food
 - 33% of participants reported that they couldn't afford to eat a healthy balanced diet

Food Availability

- In September 2022, 39% of participants reported feeling worried about there not being enough food available for them/their household to buy in the next month. This is significantly higher than the previous month (36%, August 2022), significantly higher than the same month last year (30%, September 2021), and compared to when tracking began in April 2020 (31%).

Food Safety Behaviours to reduce energy bills

As part of a new question for September 2022, participants were asked about a range of food safety related behaviours they carried out (at least once) in the last month to reduce energy bills and save money. In September 2022 to reduce energy bills and save money:

- 18% of participants turned off a fridge and/or freezer containing food
- 27% of participants changed the settings on their fridge and/or freezer so that food is kept at a warmer temperature
- 28% of participants lowered the cooking temperature for food
- 29% of participants reduced the length of time that food is cooked for
- 59% of participants used cheaper cooking methods (e.g., using a microwave, air fryer or slow cooker) instead of an oven to heat or cook food

Concerns about the Food Industry

- 60% of participants reported feeling concerned about the healthiness of the food in their personal diet in September 2022. This is not significantly different from the previous month (57%, August 2022). When tracking began in November 2021, 53% reported feeling concerned about the healthiness of food in their diet.
- 63% of participants reported feeling concerned about animal welfare in the food industry in September 2022. This is not significantly different from the previous month (62%, August 2022). When tracking began in November 2021, 62% reported feeling concerned about animal welfare in the food industry.
- 61% of participants reported feeling concerned about sustainability/the impact of food production on the environment in September 2022. This is not significantly different from the previous month (62%, August 2022). When tracking began in November 2021, 62% reported feeling concerned about the impact of food production on the environment.

In September 2022:

- 42% of participants felt concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK, compared to 55% who felt concerned about the safety of food imported from outside the UK
- 45% of participants felt concerned about the quality of food produced in the UK, compared to 56% who felt concerned about the quality of food imported from outside the UK.

Confidence in the Food Supply Chain

- The proportion of participants who reported that they were 'confident' in the food supply chain was 66% in September 2022. This is significantly lower than when tracking began in October 2021 (74%), but not significantly different to the previous month; 64% (August 2022).

In September 2022:

- 76% of participants felt confident that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK ensure that food is safe to eat. This proportion has significantly decreased since tracking began in November 2021 (80%).
- 69% of participants felt confident that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK ensure food is of a high quality. This proportion has significantly decreased since tracking began in November 2021 (74%).
- 50% of participants felt confident that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK ensure that there are affordable food options for everyone. This proportion has significantly decreased since tracking began in November 2021 (57%).
- 64% felt confident that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK ensure there is enough food available for people to eat. This proportion has significantly decreased since tracking began in November 2021 (70%).

Confidence and Trust in the FSA

61% of participants reported that they trust the FSA to do its job in September 2022. This figure has remained broadly stable since tracking began in November 2021 (61%).

In September 2022, most participants felt confident that the FSA:

- Can be relied upon to protect the public from food-related risks (72%)
- Is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks (68%)
- Takes appropriate action if a food-related risk is identified (74%)

Each of these measures has remained broadly stable since tracking began in November 2021.

If you'd like further information on the data provided in this bulletin, please contact the FSA's Social Science Team at socialscience@food.gov.uk.