

# FY2 Wave 3-4 NI: Chapter 6 Eating at home

The FSA is responsible for protecting the public from foodborne diseases. This involves working with farmers, food producers and processors, and the retail and hospitality sectors to ensure that the food people buy is safe.

Since people are responsible for the safe preparation and storage of food in their home, Food and You 2 asks respondents about their food-related behaviours in the home, including whether specific foods are eaten past their use-by date, and knowledge and reported behaviour in relation to five important aspects of food safety: cleaning, cooking, chilling, avoiding cross-contamination and use-by dates. The FSA gives practical guidance and recommendations to consumers on [food safety and hygiene](#) in the home. Food and You 2 also asks respondents about the frequency with which they prepare or consume certain types of food.

Two versions of the 'Eating at home' module have been created, a brief version which includes a limited number of key questions, and a full version which includes all related questions. The brief 'Eating at home' module was included in the Wave 4 survey and is reported in this chapter ([footnote](#)).

## Cleaning

### Handwashing in the home

The [FSA recommends](#) that everyone should wash their hands before they prepare, cook or eat food and after touching raw food, before handling ready-to-eat food.

The majority (73%) of respondents who cook reported that they always wash their hands before preparing or cooking food. However, 26% of respondents reported that they do not always (i.e., most of the time or less often) wash their hands before preparing or cooking food ([footnote](#)).

Most respondents (91%) who cook meat, poultry or fish reported that they always wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish. However, 9% of respondents reported that they do not always (i.e., most of the time or less often) wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish ([footnote](#)).

### Handwashing when eating out

Respondents were asked, how often, if at all, they washed their hands or used hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating when they ate outside of their home. Over half (55%) of respondents reported that they always washed their hands, used hand sanitising gel or wipes when they ate outside of their home, 41% did this less often (i.e., most of the time or less often) and 4% never did this ([footnote](#)).

## Chilling

The FSA provides [guidance](#) on how to chill food properly to help stop harmful bacteria growing.

## If and how respondents check fridge temperature

When asked what temperature the inside of a fridge should be, 64% of respondents reported that it should be between 0-5 degrees Celsius. Around 1 in 6 (17%) respondents reported that the temperature should be above 5 degrees, 4% reported that the temperature should be below 0 degrees, and 14% of respondents did not know what temperature the inside of their fridge should be [\(footnote\)](#).

Almost half of respondents who have a fridge reported that they monitored the temperature, either manually (49%) or via an internal temperature alarm (8%) [\(footnote\)](#). Of the respondents who manually check the temperature of their fridge, 81% reported that they check the temperature of their fridge at least once a month, [as recommended by the FSA \(footnote\)](#).

## Cooking

The FSA [recommends](#) that cooking food at the right temperature and for the correct length of time will ensure that any harmful bacteria are killed. When cooking pork, poultry, and minced meat products the FSA [recommends](#) that the meat is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, that none of the meat is pink and that any juices run clear.

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through. The majority (83%) of respondents who cook reported that they always cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, however 17% reported that they do not always do this [\(footnote\)](#).

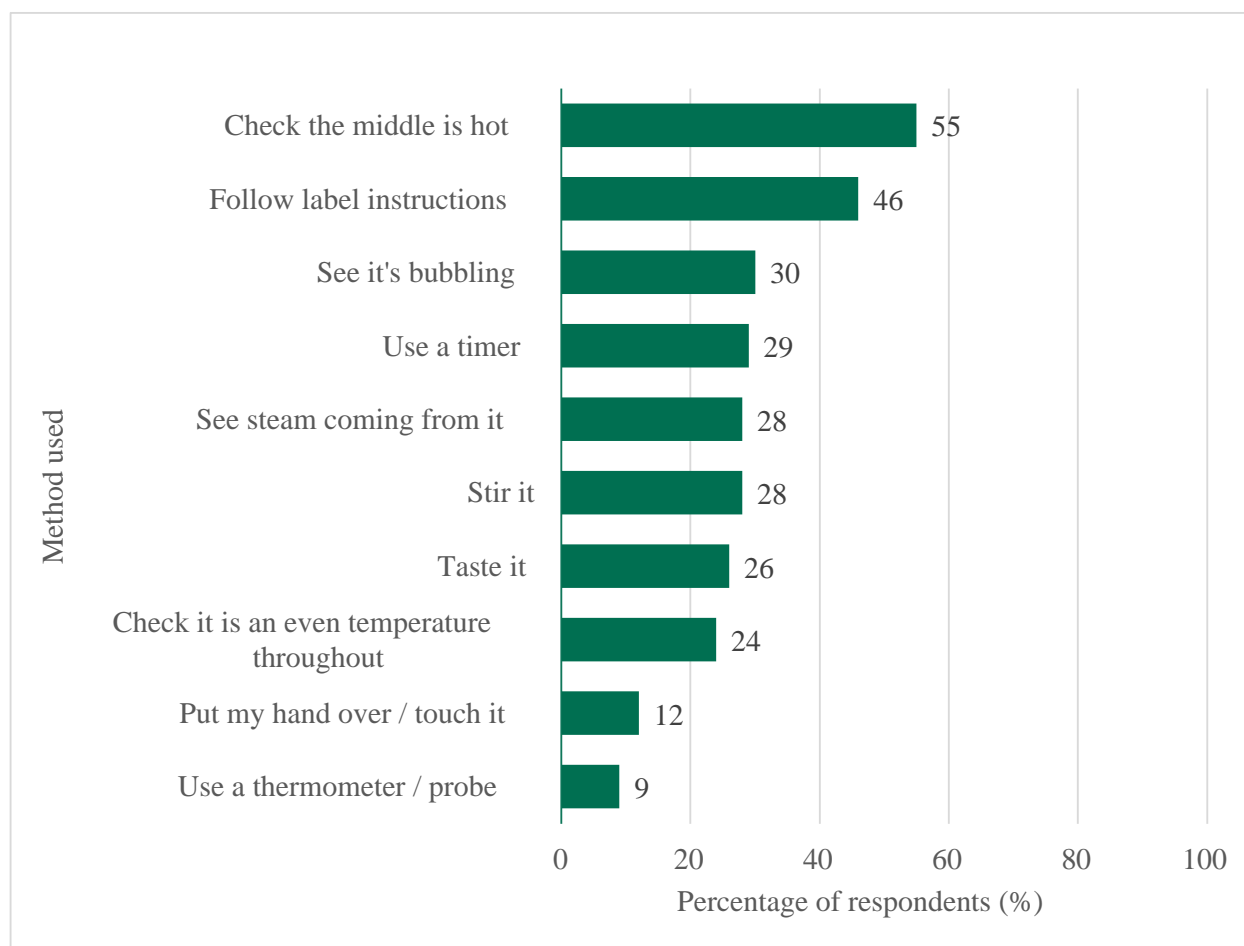
When respondents were asked to indicate how often they eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices [\(footnote\)](#), the majority (92%) reported that they never eat chicken or turkey when it is pink or has pink juices. However, 7% of respondents reported eating chicken or turkey at least occasionally when it is pink [\(footnote\)](#).

## Reheating

### Figure 15 Methods used when reheating food to check it's ready to eat

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Change to chart view



Method	Percentage of respondents
Use a thermometer / probe	9
Put my hand over / touch it	12
Check it is an even temperature throughout	24
Taste it	26
Stir it	28
See steam coming from it	28
Use a timer	29
See it's bubbling	30

Method	Percentage of respondents
Follow label instructions	46
Check the middle is hot	55

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Source: Food & You 2: Wave 4

Respondents were asked to indicate how they check food is ready to eat when they reheat it. The most common method was to check if the middle was hot (55%), and the least common method was to use a thermometer or probe (9%) (Figure 15) ([footnote](#))

When respondents were asked how many times they would reheat food, the majority reported that they would only reheat food once (82%), 9% would reheat food twice, and 2% would reheat food more than twice ([footnote](#)).

## Leftovers

Respondents were asked how long they would keep leftovers in the fridge for. Over two-thirds (77%) of respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 2 days, 18% of respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 3-5 days and only 1% would eat leftovers after 5 days or longer ([footnote](#)).

## Avoiding cross-contamination

The FSA provides [guidelines on how to avoid cross-contamination](#). The FSA recommends that people [do not wash raw meat](#). Washing raw meat can spread harmful bacteria onto your hands, clothes, utensils, and worktops.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents reported that they never wash raw chicken, whilst 35% of respondents wash raw chicken at least occasionally (i.e. occasionally or more often) ([footnote](#)).

## How and where respondents store raw meat and poultry in the fridge

The FSA [recommends](#) that refrigerated raw meat and poultry is kept covered, separately from ready-to-eat foods and stored at the bottom of the fridge to avoid cross-contamination.

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a range of responses, how they store meat and poultry in the fridge. Respondents were most likely to report storing raw meat and poultry in its original packaging (64%) or away from cooked foods (58%). Over a third of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in a sealed container (38%), with a lower proportion covering it with film/foil (27%) or storing it on a plate (12%) ([footnote](#)).

Over two-thirds (70%) of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry at the bottom of the fridge, as [recommended](#) by the FSA. However, 14% of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry wherever there is space in the fridge, 10% of respondents reported storing raw meat

and poultry in the middle of the fridge, and 7% at the top of the fridge ([footnote](#)).

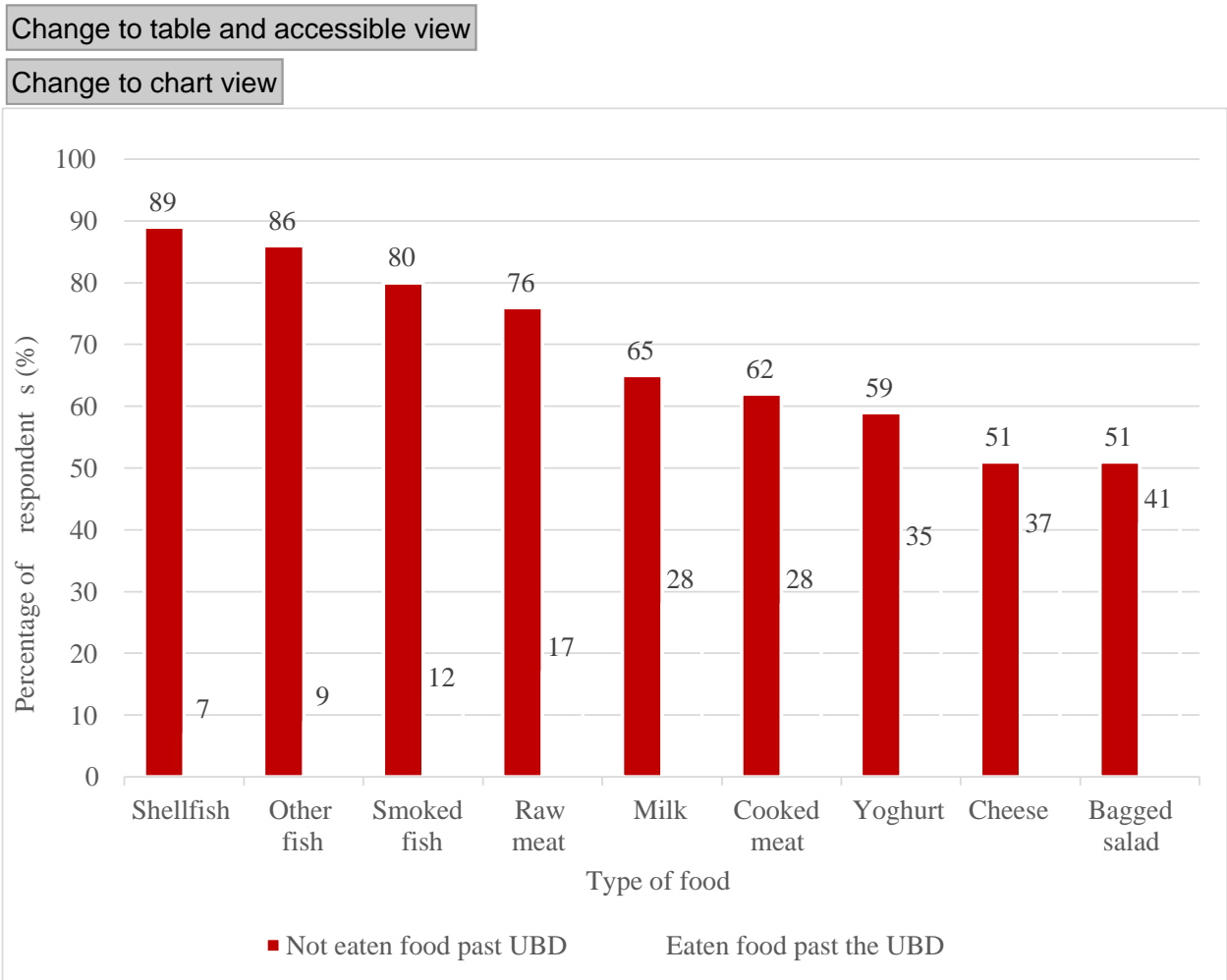
### Use-by and best before dates

Respondents were asked about their understanding of the different types of [date labels](#) and instructions on food packaging, as storing food for too long or at the wrong temperature can cause food poisoning. Use-by dates relate to food safety. Best before (BBE) dates relate to food quality, not safety.

Respondents were asked to indicate which date shows that food is no longer safe to eat. In accordance with [FSA recommendations](#), over two-thirds (69%) of respondents identified the use-by date as the information which shows that food is no longer safe to eat. However, 10% of respondents identified the best before date as the date which shows food is no longer safe to eat ([footnote](#)).

Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents reported that they always check use-by dates before they cook or prepare food and 22% of respondents did this 3Tmost of the time, 6% reported checking use-by less often (i.e. about half the time or occasionally), and just 1% reported never checking use-by dates ([footnote](#)).

**Figure 16 Types of food which respondents had eaten past the use by date in the previous month**



% WHO HAVE	Shellfish	Other fish	Smoked fish	Raw meat	Milk	Cooked meat	Yoghurt	Cheese	B
Not eaten food past UBD	89	86	80	76	65	62	59	51	5
Eaten food past the UBD	7	9	12	17	28	28	35	37	4

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Source: Food & You 2: Wave 4

Respondents who had eaten certain foods in the last month were asked to indicate if they had eaten that food past the use-by date. Of these respondents, most reported that they had not eaten shellfish (89%), other fish (86%), or smoked fish (80%) past the use-by date in the previous month (Figure 16) ([footnote](#)).