

# F&Y2 Wave 6: Chapter 6 Eating at home

## Introduction

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. The FSA gives practical guidance and recommendations to consumers on [food safety and hygiene in the home](#).

Since people are responsible for the safe preparation and storage of food in their home, the Food and You 2 survey asks respondents about their food-related behaviours in the home, including whether specific foods are eaten, and knowledge and reported behaviour in relation to five important aspects of food safety: cleaning, cooking, chilling, avoiding cross-contamination and use-by dates. Food and You 2 also asks respondents about the frequency they prepare or consume certain types of food.

Two versions of the 'Eating at home' module have been created; the brief module which includes a limited number of key questions which are fielded annually, and a full version which includes additional questions and is fielded every 2 years. The brief 'Eating at home' module is reported in this chapter ([footnote 1](#)).

This chapter provides an overview of respondents' knowledge and reported behaviours relating to food safety and other food-related behaviours.

## Cleaning

### Handwashing in the home

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

Almost half (46%) of respondents reported that they always wash their hands before eating, 51% of respondents reported doing this most of the time or less often and 3% reported never washing their hands before eating ([footnote 2](#)).

Around 7 in 10 (72%) respondents reported that they always wash their hands before preparing or cooking food, and 27% of respondents reported that they do not always (for example, most of the time or less often) do this ([footnote 3](#)).

Most respondents (91%) reported that they always wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish, and 8% of respondents reported that they do not always (for example, most of the time or less often) do this ([footnote 4](#)).

### 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. A third (33%) of respondents reported that they always washed their hands, used hand sanitising gel or wipes when they ate outside of their home, 58% did this most of the time or less often and 8% never did this ([footnote 5](#)).

## 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, 62% of respondents reported that it [should be between 0-5 degrees Celsius, as recommended by the FSA](#). A fifth (20%) of respondents reported that the temperature should be above 5 degrees, 2% reported that the temperature should be below 0 degrees, and 15% of respondents did not know what temperature the inside of their fridge should be ([footnote 6](#)).

Around 6 in 10 (61%) respondents who have a fridge reported that they monitored the temperature; either manually (49%) or via an internal temperature alarm (11%) ([footnote 7](#)). Of the respondents who monitor the temperature of their fridge, 82% reported that they [check the temperature of their fridge at least once a month, as recommended by the FSA](#) ([footnote 8](#)).

## 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.

Around three quarters (76%) of respondents reported that they always cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, however 23% reported that they do not always do this ([footnote 9](#)).

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices ([footnote 10](#)). Around 9 in 10 (89%) respondents reported that they never eat chicken or turkey when it is pink or has pink juices. However, 9% of respondents reported eating chicken or turkey at least occasionally when it is pink or has pink juices ([footnote 11](#)).

Eating chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices (for example, at least occasionally) varied between different types of people in the following ways:

- **age group:** respondents aged between 16 and 24 years (19%) were more likely to report that they had eaten chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices compared to those aged 35 years or over (for example, 5% of those aged between 55 and 64 years).
- **household size:** respondents who lived in households with 5 or more people (20%) were more likely to report that they had eaten chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices compared to those who lived in smaller households (for example, 5% of those who lived in 4-person households).
- **NS-SEC ([footnote 12](#)):** full-time students (23%) and respondents who were long term unemployed and/or had never worked (22%) were more likely to report that they had eaten chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices compared to those in other occupational groups (for example, 5% of those in intermediate routine occupations).
- **food security:** respondents with marginal (14%)\*, low (15%) and very low (16%) food security were more likely to report that they had eaten chicken or turkey when the meat is

pink or has pink juices compared to those with high (5%) food security.

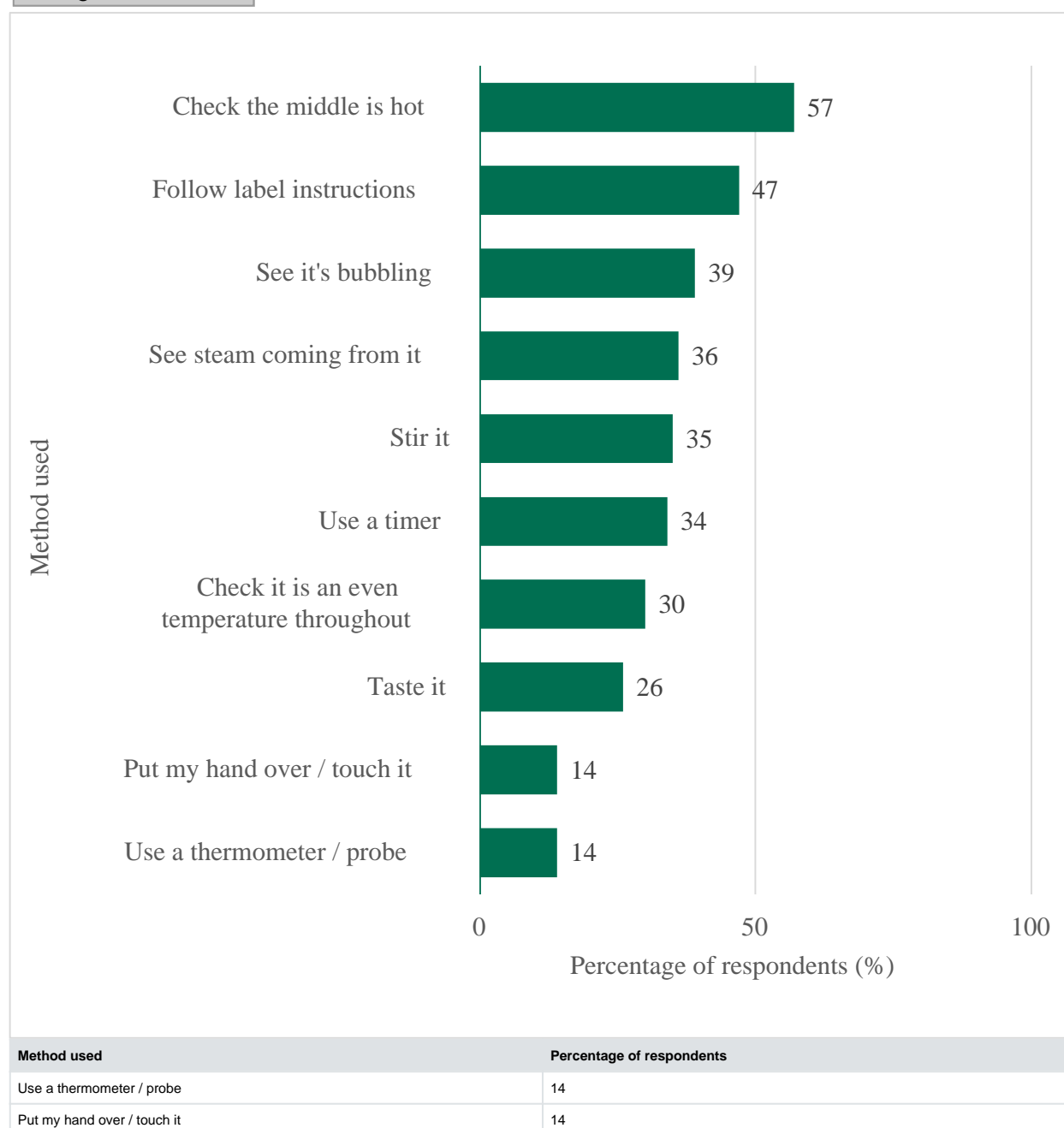
- **ethnic group:** Asian or Asian British (25%) respondents were more likely to report that they had eaten chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices compared to white (7%) respondents ([footnote 13](#)).

## Reheating

**Figure 27. How respondents check whether reheated food is ready to eat**

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view



Method used	Percentage of respondents
Taste it	26
Check it is an even temperature throughout	30
Use a timer	34
Stir it	35
See steam coming from it	36
See it's bubbling	39
Follow label instructions	47
Check the middle is hot	57

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Source: Food and You 2 Wave 6

Respondents were asked to indicate how they check food is ready to eat when they reheat it. The most common method was to check the middle is hot (57%), and the least common methods were to put a hand over the food or touch the food (14%) or use a thermometer or probe (14%) (Figure 27) [\(footnote 14\)](#).

[The FSA recommends](#) that food is only reheated once. 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 4% would reheat food more than twice [\(footnote 15\)](#).

## Leftovers

Respondents were asked how long they would keep leftovers in the fridge for. Around 6 in 10 (62%) respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 2 days, 28% of respondents reported that they would eat leftovers within 3-5 days and 3% would eat leftovers after 5 days or longer [\(footnote 16\)](#).

Eating leftovers after 3 days or more varied between different types of people in the following ways:

- **annual household income:** respondents with a higher income were more likely to report that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more compared to those with a lower income. For example, 47% of respondents with an income between £64,000 and £95,999 would eat leftovers after 3 days or more compared to 22% of those with an income of less than £19,000.
- **NS-SEC:** respondents in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (37%) and full-time students (34%) were more likely to report that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more compared to those in many occupational groups (for example, 22% of those in semi-routine and routine occupations) and those who were long term unemployed and / or had never worked (15%).
- **country:** respondents in England (32%) were more likely to report that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more compared to those in Northern Ireland (22%). A quarter (25%) of those in Wales reported that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more.
- **regions (England):** respondents in London (40%), East of England (35%), and South-East England (35%) were more likely to report that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more compared to those in the West Midlands (23%) and North-West of England (25%).
- **food security:** respondents with high food security (35%) were more likely to report that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more compared to those with very low food security (20%). Around a quarter of those with marginal (26%) and low food (28%) security reported

that they would eat leftovers after 3 days or more.

## 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.

Respondents were asked how often, if at all, they washed raw chicken. Over half (56%) of respondents reported that they never wash raw chicken, however, 40% of respondents reported that they do this at least occasionally ([footnote 17](#)).

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

[The FSA recommends](#) that refrigerated raw meat and poultry are 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 (70%) or away from cooked foods (53%). Around 4 in 10 respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in a sealed container (41%) and covered raw meat and poultry with film/foil (36%), with 15% keeping the product on a plate ([footnote 18](#)).

Most respondents (64%) reported storing raw meat and poultry at the bottom of the fridge, [as recommended by the FSA](#). However, 21% of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry wherever there is space in the fridge, 11% of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in the middle of the fridge, and 6% at the top of the fridge ([footnote 19](#)).

## 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.

Respondents were asked to indicate which date shows that food is no longer safe to eat. Around two-thirds (65%) of respondents correctly identified the use-by date as the information which shows that food is no longer safe to eat. However, some respondents identified the best before date (9%) as the date which shows food is no longer safe to eat ([footnote 20](#)).

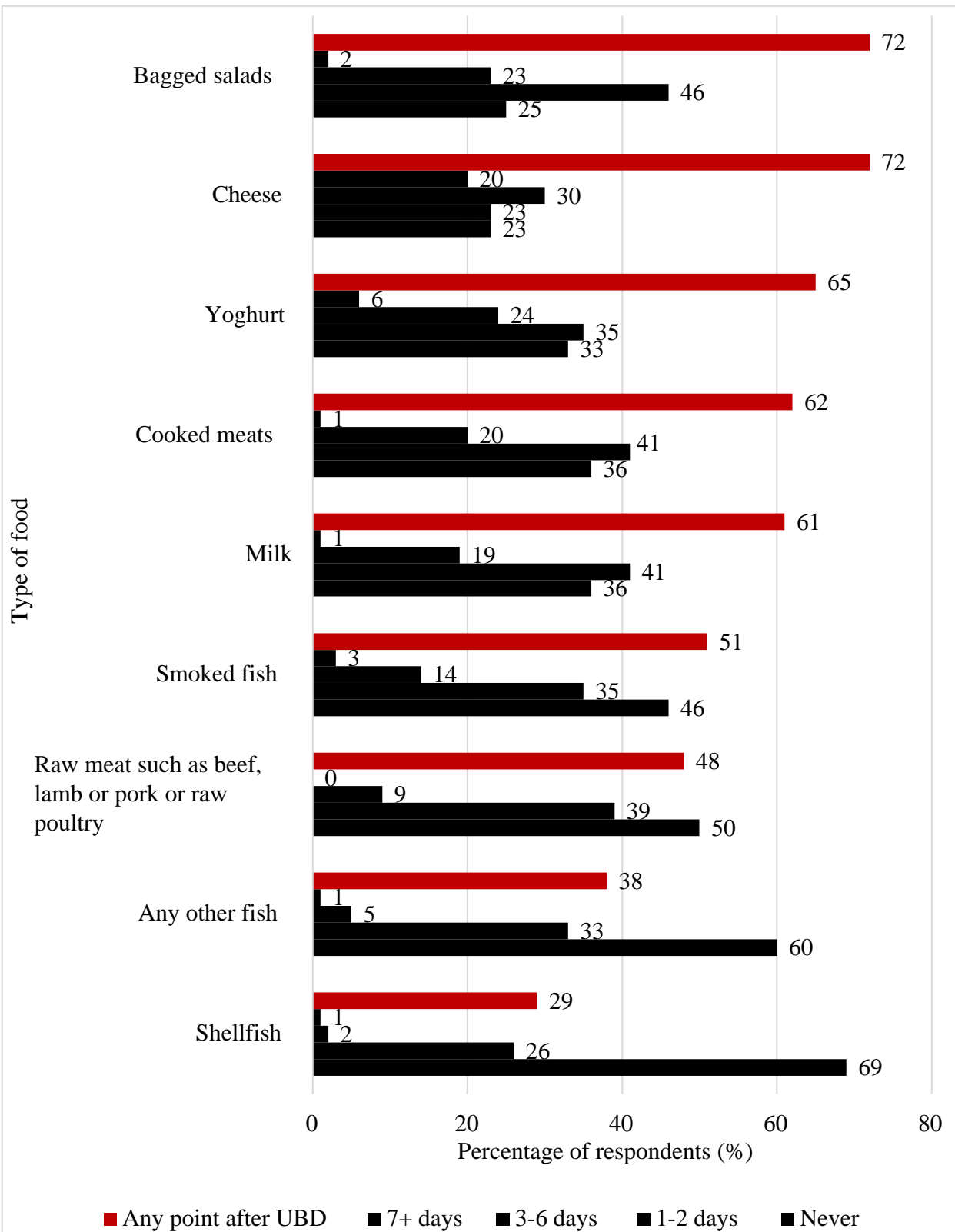
Around two-thirds (64%) of respondents reported that they always check use-by dates before they cook or prepare food, 34% of respondents reported checking use-by most of the time or less often, and just 1% reported never checking use-by dates ([footnote 21](#)).

## Figure 28. How long after the use-by date respondents would consume different foods.

Change to table and accessible view

Change to chart view

Type of food



Type of food	Any point after UBD	7+ days	3-6 days	1-2 days	Never
Shellfish	29	1	2	26	69
Any other fish	38	1	5	33	60
Raw meat such as beef, lamb or pork or raw poultry	48	0	9	39	50
Smoked fish	51	3	14	35	46
Milk	61	1	19	41	36

Type of food	Any point after UBD	7+ days	3-6 days	1-2 days	Never
Cooked meats	62	1	20	41	36
Yoghurt	65	6	24	35	33
Cheese	72	20	30	23	23
Bagged salads	72	2	23	46	25

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[Image .csv](#)

Source: Food & You 2: Wave 6

Respondents who eat certain foods were asked when, if at all, is the latest that they would eat the type of food after the use-by date. Most reported that they would not eat shellfish (69%), or other fish (60%) past the use-by date. Around half of respondents would not eat raw meat (50%) or smoked fish (46%) past the use-by date. Bagged salad (72%) and cheese (72%) were the foods respondents were most likely to report eating at any point after the use-by date. Around 6 in 10 respondents would eat yoghurt (65%), milk (61%) and cooked meats (62%) at any point after the use-by date. A fifth (20%) of respondents would eat cheese 1 week or more after the use-by date (Figure 28) [\(footnote 22\)](#).

1. The full 'Eating at home' module was last reported in the [Food and You 2: Wave 5 Key Findings report](#). The brief module was last reported in the [Food and You 2: Wave 4 Key Findings report](#).
2. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands before eating. Responses: always, most of the time, about half the time, occasionally, never, I don't cook, don't know. Base= 4893, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire.
3. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands before starting to prepare or cook food. Responses: always, most of the time, about half the time, occasionally, never, I don't cook, don't know. Base= 4561, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household.
4. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish. Responses: always, most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, I don't cook meat, poultry or fish, Don't know. Base= 4420, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't cook meat, poultry or fish' and 'not stated'.
5. Question: When eating outside of the home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands, or use hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating? Responses: always, most of the time, about half the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base= 4893, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire.

6. Question: What do you think the temperature inside your fridge should be? Responses: less than 0 degrees C (less than 32 degrees F), between 0 and 5 degrees C (32 to 41 degrees F), more than 5 but less than 8 degrees C (42 to 46 degrees F), 8 to 10 degrees C (47 to 50 degrees F), more than 10 degrees C (over 50 degrees F), other, don't know. Base=4879, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge.
7. Question: Do you, or anyone else in your household, ever check your fridge temperature? Responses: yes, no, I don't need to - it has an alarm if it is too hot or cold, don't know. Base= 4880, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge.
8. Question: How often, if at all, do you or someone else in your household check the temperature of the fridge? Responses: at least daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, less than once a week but more than once a month, once a month, four times a year, 1-2 times a year, never/less often, don't know. Base= 2431, all online respondent and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' questionnaire where someone in household checks fridge temperature.
9. Question: How often, if at all, do you cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base= 4561, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household.
10. Data on the consumption of red meat, duck, beefburgers, sausages and pork when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices is available from [Food and You 2: Wave 5](#).
11. Question: How often, if at all, do you eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base = 4539, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, who are not vegan, pescatarian or vegetarian, and who do eat chicken/turkey.
12. [NS-SEC](#) (The National Statistics Socio-economic classification) is a classification system which provides an indication of socio-economic position based on occupation and employment status.
13. Please note: the figures of other ethnic groups are not reported due to low base / sample size.
14. Question: When reheating food, how do you know when it is ready to eat? Select all that apply, responses: I check the middle is hot, I follow the instructions on the label, I can see its bubbling, I use a timer to ensure it has been cooked for a certain amount of time, I check it has an even temperature throughout, I can see steam coming from it, I taste it, I stir it, I put my hand over it/touch it, I use a thermometer/probe, none of the above and I don't check. Base 4330, all online respondents and all those who completed the Eating at Home questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household,



excludingI don't reheat food and not stated.

15. Question: How many times would you consider reheating food after it was cooked for the first time? Responses: not at all, once, twice, more than twice, don't know. Base= 4338, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' questionnaire who reheat food using one of the methods in the previous question.
16. Question: When is the latest you would consume any leftovers stored in the fridge? Responses: the same day, within 1-2 days, within 3-5 days, more than 5 days later, it varies too much, don't know. Base= 4893, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire.
17. Question: How often, if at all, do you wash raw chicken? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, don't know. Base = 4561, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household.
18. Question: How do you store raw meat and poultry in the fridge? Please select all that apply. Responses: away from cooked foods, covered with film/foil, in a sealed container, in its original packaging, on a plate. Base= 4470, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't store raw meat/poultry in the fridge, do not have a fridge or don't know.
19. Question: Where in the fridge do you store raw meat and poultry? Responses: wherever there is space, at the top of the fridge, in the middle of the fridge, at the bottom of the fridge. Base= 4385, all online respondent and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who store raw meat/poultry in the fridge except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't have a fridge, or don't know.
20. Question: Which of these shows when food is no longer safe to eat? Responses: use-by date, best before date, sell by date, display until date, all of these, it depends, none of these, don't know. Base= 4893, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire.
21. Question: How often, if at all, do you check use-by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food? Responses: always, most of the time, about half of the time, occasionally, never, it varies too much to say, don't know. Base= 4561, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household.
22. Question: When, if at all, is the latest you would eat or drink the following items after their use-by date? a= cooked meats, b=smoked fish, c=bagged salads, d=cheese, e=milk, f= raw meat such as beef/pork/lamb/raw poultry, g=shellfish, h=any other fish, i=yoghurt. Responses: 1-2 days after the use-by date, 3-4 days after the use-by date, 5-6 days after the use-by date, 1-2 weeks after the use-by date, more than 2 weeks after the use-by date, I don't eat/drink this after its use-by date, don't know/I don't ever check the use-by date of this. Base A= 4501, B=3687, C=4500, D=4684, E=4624, F= 4437, G=3299, H=4049, I=4507, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, who eat A/B/C/D/F/F/G/H/I. Please note: the figures shown do not add up to

100% as not all responses are shown.