

COVID-19 Consumer Tracker waves three and four report published

The monthly tracker monitors attitudes, experience and behaviours of consumers in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key findings from the COVID-19 Consumer Tracker

Eating out

When asked about what would reassure respondents that it is safe to return to eat in restaurants, 31% in July said they would not do so for the foreseeable future. This is up from 25% in June. Older people were more likely than young people to say they would not be returning to eat out for the foreseeable future.

Eating food past use-by dates

The number of people who reported eating more risky food past its use-by date remained relatively consistent across waves, in July the percentages ranged from 16% for smoked fish to 37% for bagged salad. Those experiencing food insecurity or those who were worried about food affordability were more likely to eat those foods past their use-by dates.

Food availability/ affordability

There was a significant increase in foodbank usage between May (7%) and June (10%), remaining consistent in July (9%). As in previous waves, foodbank usage remained higher for younger people, households with children (and larger households), those with a physical or mental health condition and those who are shielding or had COVID-19 symptoms.

Reasons for foodbank usage in July primarily reflected economic hardship, with 25% reporting it was because they had lost their job, 20% reporting it was because they were on furlough, 27% reporting a delay or problems with benefits and 20% stating it was simply due to not having enough money. Respondents also reported using foodbanks due to self-isolation or shielding (26%) or difficulties travelling to get food (26%).

Emily Miles, Chief Executive at the Food Standards Agency, said:

‘Our research shows that our food habits changed rapidly in lockdown and that food insecurity has become an issue for many people. These findings have implications for many aspects of Government policy such as food safety, nutrition, welfare, health and education.

'We continue to work with governments, the private sector and civil society in the consumer interest so that we can all have food we can trust.'

We have also published the following reports today:

- Two reports from our qualitative research that helped us understand the lived experience of people living in food insecurity during COVID-19 and the impact on consumers' engagement with the food system
- A report of our social media listening which offered real time data on what consumers were thinking and feeling
- A report of the inputs of the FSA COVID-19 Expert Panel who worked with us to validate hypotheses and exposed unknown unknowns

Read the research

[COVID-19 consumer research](#)