

Survey of consumer perceptions of alternative, or novel, sources of protein

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

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Background and methodology

The survey was conducted with 1,930 adults aged 16-75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Data was collected between 9th – 11th December 2021 via Ipsos MORI's online omnibus. The data was weighted to be representative of the adult population aged 16 – 75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on key demographics: age, gender, region, working status and social grade.

Results

Respondents were more likely to have heard of plant-based proteins (90%) compared to edible insects (80%) and lab grown meat (78%).

Over three quarters (77%) of respondents perceived plant-based proteins as being safe to eat compared to half (50%) for edible insects and 3 in 10 (30%) for lab grown meat.

Six in ten (60%) respondents were willing to try plant based proteins, compared to around a third (34%) who were willing to try lab grown meat and just over a quarter (26%) who were willing to try edible insects.

Respondents who reported willingness to try any of the alternative proteins tested were shown a list of potential reasons that they were willing to try the protein. The most common reasons for being willing to try plant-based proteins were because they were perceived as safe to eat (44%) and for health reasons (39%), whereas environmental or sustainability reasons were the most common reason for being willing to try lab grown meat (40%) and edible insects (31%).

Respondents were asked how willing or unwilling they would be to try edible insects in different forms. Willingness to try edible insects ground into food for added protein (e.g. bread, burgers, falafel balls etc) was highest, with nearly 2 in 5 (37%) willing to try them in this form.

Whole edible insects were least favoured, with 3 in 5 (60%) reporting unwillingness to try them in this form.

Respondents who reported unwillingness to try any of the alternative proteins tested were shown a list of potential reasons that they were unwilling to try the protein. Respondents most commonly reported unwillingness to try lab grown meat (49%) and edible insects (64%) due to finding it off-putting, whereas the biggest barrier to trying plant-based proteins was that respondents liked to eat traditional meats (36%).

Respondents who were unwilling to try any of the alternative proteins tested were asked whether anything (from a prompted list) would encourage them to try it:

- Two in five (42%) reported that nothing could encourage them to try plant-based proteins, but 1 in 5 (21%) could be persuaded to try this if it looked appetising.
- Two in five (42%) reported that nothing could encourage them to try lab grown meat, but over a quarter (27%) could be persuaded if they knew it was safe to eat and 23% if they could trust that it was properly regulated.
- The majority (67%) reported that nothing could make them try edible insects. One in eight (13%) could be persuaded if they knew it was safe to eat and 11% if they looked appetising.

PDF

[View Alternative Proteins: Consumer Survey Report as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (322.42 KB)

Data tables

The data tables for this survey are available in our [data catalogue](#) and on the [UK Government's open data website](#).