COVID-19 consumer tracker survey

Summary report (Waves 1 – 19)

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Context of report

In April 2020 the Food Standards Agency (FSA) commissioned Ipsos MORI to develop its evidence base on issues affecting consumers and businesses, to inform its COVID-19 response in the short to medium term. This monthly tracker survey was intended to understand the attitudes and behaviours of consumers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions. This report provides commentary of 19 months (19 waves) of data collection for this tracking survey (April 2020 to October 2021).This report will be the final publication for our COVID-19 tracker survey, as the tracker has now been replaced with the 'Consumer Insights Tracker'[1] (from November 2021 onwards).

The objectives of the COVID-19 tracker survey were:

- To understand consumers' concerns around food insecurity and their experience of food unavailability
- To understand and observe food behaviours that put consumers health and safety at risk for example, eating foods past the use-by-date
- To understand the pattern and changes in food consumption (for example, meat intake), and purchasing behaviours (for example, the use of takeaways) over the pandemic

Over the course of the data collection period, the restrictions imposed on the public varied because of rising and falling COVID-19 cases. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the changes in restrictions from March 2020 to October 2021, alongside the data collection dates. This contextual information should be considered carefully alongside the findings of this report, although it is not possible to make causal assumptions on the impact of these restrictions upon this data. Some survey questions were altered from one

[1] The Consumer Insights tracker survey will continue to monitor many of the same timeseries trends initially established within the COVID-19 tracker.

wave to the next, to acknowledge the changes in restrictions, and in some instances, this causes a break in the timeseries data available. An example of this is question 1 (see appendix 3 for full list of survey questions) where questions around shielding and travel were altered according to national guidance in place at the time of data collection.

Note on interpreting the data

Results should be interpreted with care. In this survey, the data relies on respondents' self-reported behaviours. Errors could occur due to imperfect recollection, or respondents' tendency to overreport behaviours which are perceived as being desirable, and to underreport undesirable behaviours.

Executive summary

The COVID-19 consumer tracker has now completed its 19th wave, allowing commentary across all 19 months of data (April 2020 – October 2021). The purpose of this report is to summarise the key findings from our COVID-19 tracker from its inception to its final wave in October 2021, allowing for comment on trends spanning the full timeseries and to establish key learnings about consumers' attitudes and behaviours during this time.

Key findings from this report are:

Household food insecurity

- From April 2020 to October 2021 all measures of food insecurity significantly increased apart from concerns around food availability and affordability which ended statistically similar to the start of the tracker.
  - At the start of the tracker (April 2020) 31% of respondents reported being concerned about food availability and 28% reported concern about food affordability. These proportions decreased in August 2020 (16% and 17% respectively) and then rose again. When the tracker ended in October 2021, 32% reported concern about food availability and 27% about food affordability, these proportions were not significantly different to when the tracker started.
  - At the start of the tracker, 18% reported skipping meals or cutting the size of meals because they did not have enough money to buy food. This proportion significantly decreased to 12% in August 2020 and peaked in May 2021 at 22%. At the end of the tracker, 21% reported this behaviour, which was significantly more than at the beginning of the tracker.
  - Consistently across all waves of the tracker, respondents from younger age groups (16-24- and 25–34-year-olds), larger households (4+) and households with at least one child present were significantly more likely to report cutting or skipping meals for financial reasons.
  - At the start of the tracker, 8% reported using a food bank or food charity. When the tracker ended in October 2021, significantly more participants

(11%) reported using a food or charity bank compared to the beginning of the tracker.

Food purchasing behaviours

- Food purchasing trends remained relatively stable over the tracker, with a few purchasing measures steadily increasing for example, purchasing through an online food ordering company.
    - From July 2021 (when monitoring began) there was a significant increase in the proportion of participants who reported eating in restaurants, pubs, bars and cafes at least once a month (54% to 62% in October 2021).
    - From August 2020 (when monitoring began) 58% reported purchasing food from a takeaway (either direct or online) 'at least once a month'. Although this behaviour significantly decreased in January 2021 (52%) and peaked in May 2021 (64%), when the tracker ended in October 2021, it was not significantly different to when it started (61%).
    - For those who did not purchase a takeaway, the main reason was because they 'preferred to cook at home' and 'preferring to eat more healthily' (51% and 35% in October 2021 respectively). These were the two most cited reasons across all available waves.
    - In August 2020, 33% reported ordering food from an online food ordering company (such as Just Eat or Uber eats) 'at least once a month', significantly increasing in March 2021 to 43%. When the tracker ended in October 2021, a significantly higher proportion were ordering food from an online food ordering company compared to the beginning of the tracker (40%)

Food habits at home

- In August 2020, 64% of participants reported cooking food to freeze for later at' 'least once a month'. In February 2021 this significantly increased to a peak of 67% before significantly decreasing to 63% in October 2021.
- In August 2020, 80% reported eating together with the family at 'least once a month', significantly decreasing to 76% in January 2021. In October 2021, 79% reported this behaviour, similar to August 2020.

- In August 2020, 79% of participants reported buying food from local shops ‘at least once a month’, significantly decreasing to 75% in January 2021 and ending at 79% in October 2021.
- In August 2020, 62% of respondents reported wasting or throwing food away ‘at least once a month’, significantly increasing to 66% in July 2021, and ending in October 2021 at 63%, statistically similar to August 2020.
- In October 2021, 35% of respondents reported wasting or throwing food away, 35% reported cooking to freeze food for later, 44% reported eating together as a family and 51% reporting buying from local shops at least once a week.

Nutrition behaviours

- Food nutrition behaviours remained stable across all reported waves (August 2020 to October 2021).
    - For all nutrition behaviours, participants were most likely to report doing them ‘at least once a week’ (but not daily). In October 2021, 71% reported eating healthy meals, 70% reported eating meat, 50% reported eating processed foods, 65% reported cooking food from scratch and 68% reported snacking on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks.
    - During the tracker, the only nutrition behaviours carried out at least once a month that changed significantly were snacking and eating healthy meals (snacking increased from 90% in August 2020 to 92% in October 2021 and eating healthy meals decreased from 94% in August 2020 to 91% in October 2021).
    - Males, 55–75-year-olds and households with a least one child present were significantly more likely to eat meat across most waves.
    - Males and those living in a single household were significantly less likely to eat a healthy meal in the preceding month across most waves.
    - Those living in a larger household (4+), households with at least one child present and 16–44-year-olds were more likely to buy processed foods across most waves.

Food safety and hygiene in the home

- Since the start of the tracker (May 2020) to October 2021, the majority (51% or more) reported practising safe food practices, this remained relatively stable. However, the proportion of those eating specific foods past the use-by date significantly increased (measured from July 2020).
    - At the end of the tracker, 76% of adults who cooked reported that they checked the use-by dates 'always' or 'most of the time' when they are about cook or prepare food. This behaviour did not change significantly from May 2020 (74%). Similarly, all other cooking practices remained stable throughout the tracker except for 'using different chopping boards for different foods' (significantly increased from 51% in May 2020 to 58% in October 2021).
    - From July 2020 to October 2021, there was a significant increase in the proportion of participants who reported eating specific foods past the use by date including: cheese (August 2020, 40% to 50%), bagged salads (37% to 47%), milk (27% to 43%), cooked meat (29% to 42%) and smoked fish (16% to 24%).
    - Respondents that are food insecure (reported skipping meals because they could not afford to buy more food) were significantly more likely to report eating food past the use-by dates. This finding has not changed since the tracker began.

Consumers' food concerns

- From December 2020 to October 2021, the COVID-19 tracker asked respondents about their food concerns.
    - The majority of participants were not very/not at all concerned about the quality of food produced in the UK. From December 2020 those who reported being highly/somewhat concerned significantly increased from 26% to 34% at the end of the tracker.
    - In contrast, a significantly higher proportion of respondents were concerned about the quality of food imported from outside the UK. In December 2020, more than half (52%) reported being highly/somewhat concerned. This

remained relatively stable throughout the tracker, remaining more than half of respondents in October 2021 (54%).

- In October 2021, 24% of participants reported having a concern about the food they eat 'at the moment'. This significantly increased from December 2020 (21%). On average throughout the tracker the **3 biggest concerns** selected by participants were:
  - The 'healthiness' of food in my diet (54%)
  - Concerns around food price (51%)
  - Animal welfare (50%)

Background and Methodology

The COVID-19 tracker was conducted monthly between April 2020 and October 2021 using Ipsos MORI's online i:Omnibus. Foods Standards Scotland (FSS) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) also contributed to the tracker in several waves. Available data for Scotland is published separately via the FSS website. The contents of this report only refers to the survey data commissioned by the FSA, and therefore comments on England, Wales and Northern Ireland data only (not Scotland).

In each wave, Ipsos MORI surveyed a representative[2] sample of approximately 2,000 adults aged 16-75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Table 1 provides a full list of data collection dates and sample sizes (see appendix 2 for a summary of lockdown restrictions in place at the time of each data collection). Weighting is also applied by Ipsos MORI to ensure the sample is representative of this population. The profile was generated from the latest PAMCo data.

Table 1: Data collection dates and sample sizes

Data collection period	Wave and sample size
April 10 -13th 2020	Wave 1 data collection (2,039)
May 8 -12th 2020	Wave 2 data collection (2,040)
June 12 -15th 2020	Wave 3 data collection (2,045)
July 10 -14th 2020	Wave 4 data collection (2,068)
August 14 -17th 2020	Wave 5 data collection (2,071)
September 18 -21st 2020	Wave 6 data collection (2,065)
October 16 -20th 2020	Wave 7 data collection (2,067)
November 13 -16th 2020	Wave 8 data collection (2,023)

[2] Representative according to age, gender, working status, social economic grade and region

Data collection period	Wave and sample size
December 11 -15th 2020	Wave 9 data collection (2,073)
January 15 -18th 2021	Wave 10 data collection (2,062)
February 12 -15th 2021	Wave 11 data collection (2,047)
March 12 -15th 2021	Wave 12 data collection (2,013)
April 16 -19th 2021	Wave 13 data collection (2,049)
May 14 -18th 2021	Wave 14 data collection (2,043)
June 11 -14th 2021	Wave 15 data collection (2,047)
July 16 -19th 2021	Wave 16 data collection (2,051)
August 13 -17th 2021	Wave 17 data collection (2,065)
September 13 -15th 2021	Wave 18 data collection (2,064)
October 15 -18th 2021	Wave 19 data collection (2,059)

Data with demographic breakdowns are published alongside this report via the FSA data catalog. Demographic variables available include age, gender, social grade, region, urban/rural setting, marital status, household size, education level, employment status, household income, presence of children in the household, main shopper, main earner, lone parents, long-term health conditions and COVID-19 related self-isolation. Please note that i:Omnibus does not allow for detailed analysis by ethnicity. Demographic commentary is provided where this additional commentary is of particular interest for the FSA and its audiences. For some sections, demographic commentary has not been included to limit the length of this report.

Some waves of the tracker also include demographic questions about self-isolating and shielding[3] , although these demographics do vary according to restrictions in place at the

[3] The shielding programme was in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide additional guidance to those considered clinically extremely vulnerable.

time of data collection. For example, when shielding was ‘paused’ or ‘ended’, questions on shielding were removed from the survey.

Unless stated otherwise, where comparisons are made in the text between different demographic groups, only those differences found to be statistically significant at the 5% level are reported. In other words, differences reported have no more than a five per cent probability of occurring by chance. The relationship between survey findings and different types of respondents were investigated using chi-square tests of association.

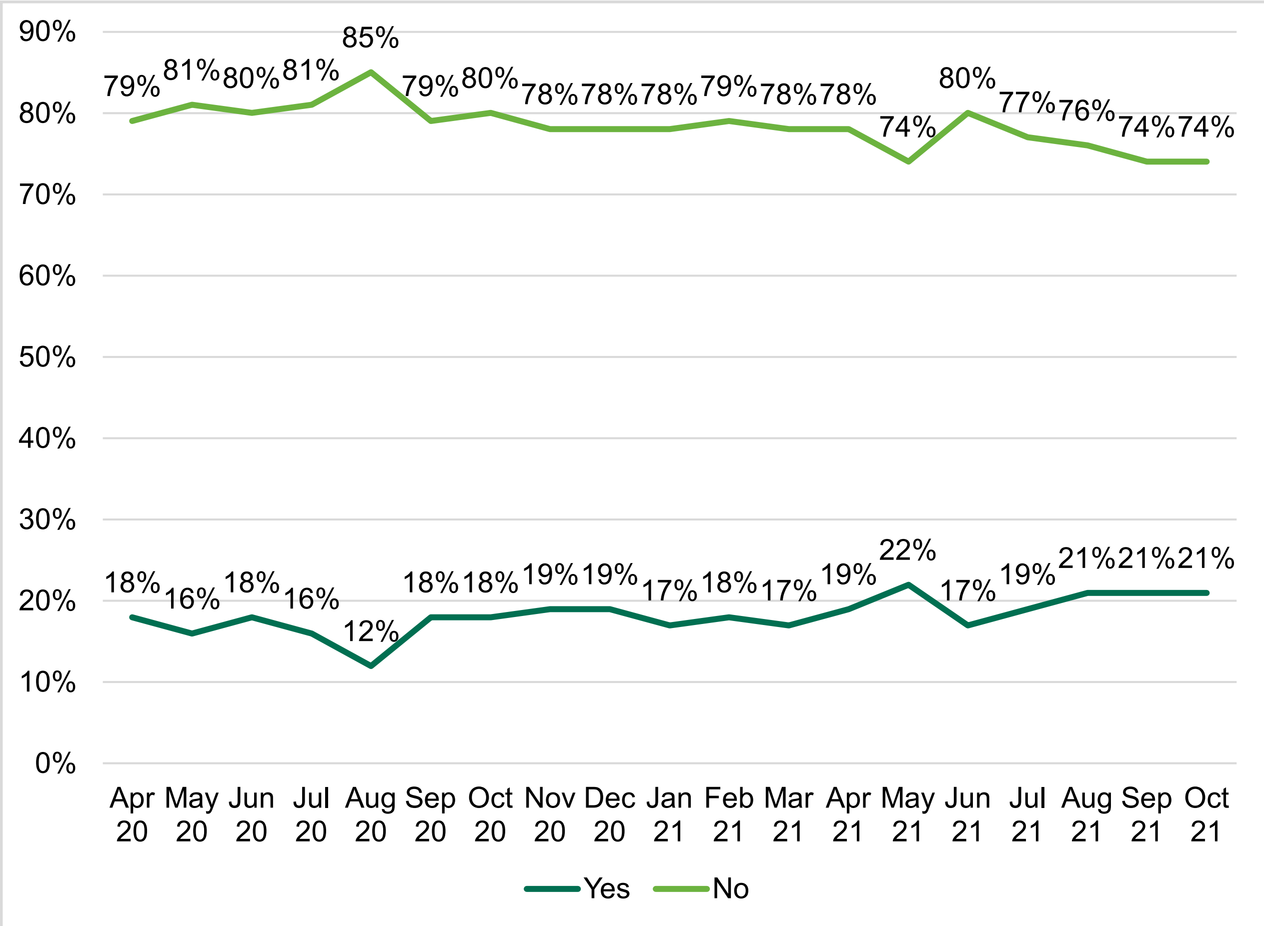
Main findings

Household food insecurity

Cutting down or skipping meals for financial reasons

Each wave, participants were asked whether they had cut down the size of their meals or skipped meals because they could not afford to buy food. When the tracker began in April 2020, 18% of respondents reported cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals for this reason. In August 2020, the proportion of respondents fell significantly to 12% (from 16% in July 2020) and significantly increased to a peak of 22% in May 2021 (from 19% in April 2021). In October 2021, when the tracker ended, 21% of respondents reported cutting down or skipping meals for financial reasons, this was significantly higher than when the tracker began (April 2020, 18%). Throughout the tracker, the majority (over 74%) of respondents did not cut down or skip meals for financial reasons (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Participants who cut down the size of meals, or skipped meals for financial reasons i.e. 'did not have enough money to buy food' (April 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. See annex 2 for sample sizes included in each wave. Values may not add to 100% due to rounding and because 'don't know'/'prefer not to say' responses are not shown. 'Yes' responses combine all affirmative responses.

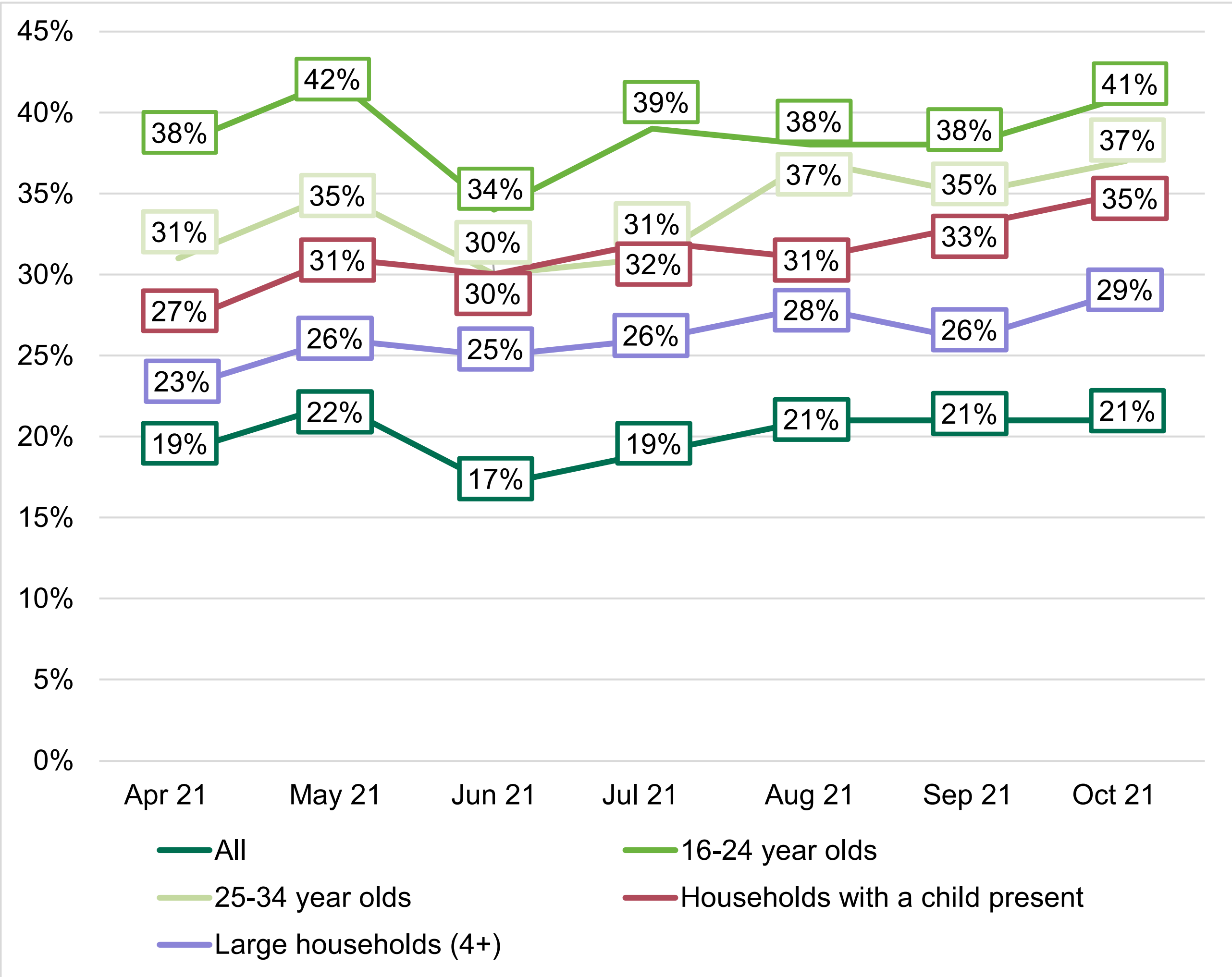
Across most waves, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely than the total population and their comparison group to report skipping meals or cutting down the size of meals because they could not afford food (Figure 2).

- Younger participants (16 -24- and 25–34-year-olds) compared to older participants (35 – 44, 45 -54 and 55-75-year-olds)
- Those from larger households (4+) compared to smaller households (1-2 people)

- Those from households with at least one child present compared to households with no child present

Figure 2 only includes data from April 2021 as demographic data from April 2020 to March 2021 is presented in our previous [COVID-19 tracker report, waves 1 – 12]() (published May 2021) and the pattern continues.

Figure 2: Participants who cut down the size of meals, or skipped meals for financial reasons – demographic breakdown (April 2021 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. See annex 2 for sample sizes included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 16–24-year-olds (324), 25-34-year-olds (388), large households (+4) (506) and households with children (647). 'Yes' responses combine all affirmative responses.

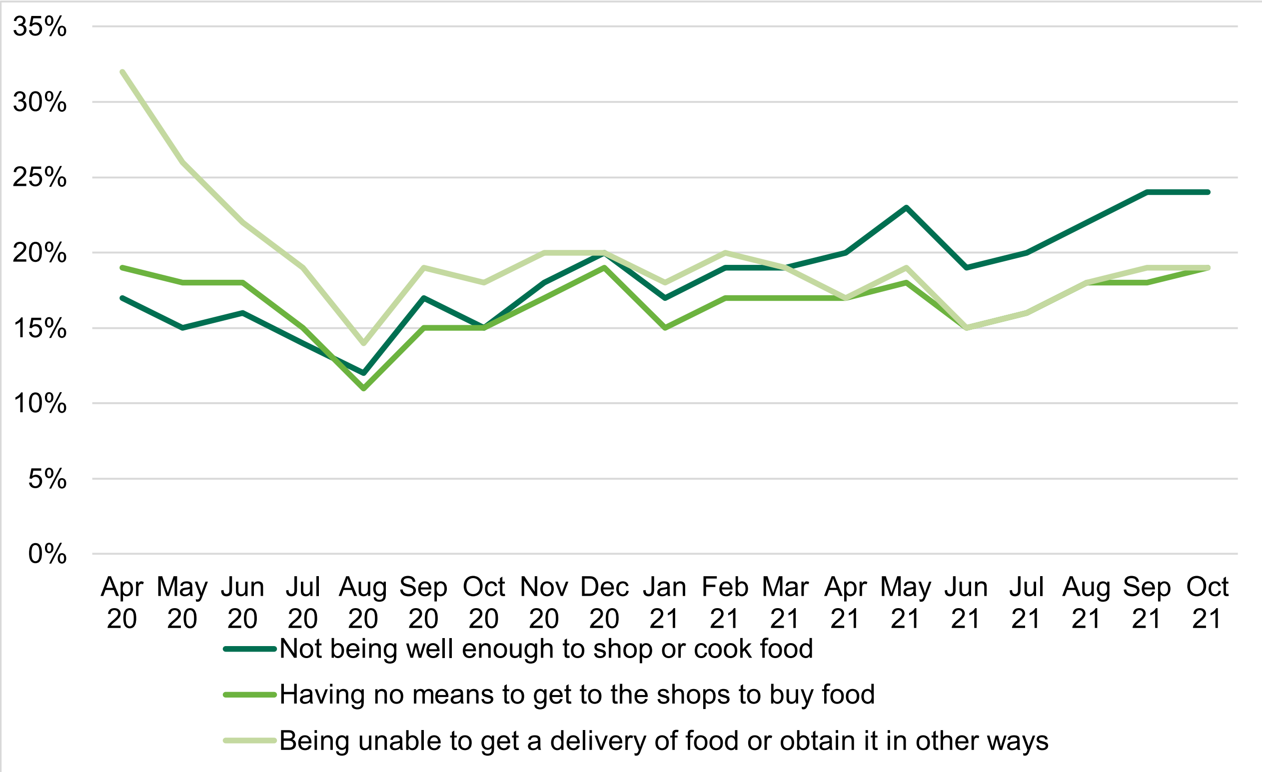
The tracker also monitors other reasons for skipping or cutting down the size of meals including:

- Not being well enough to shop or cook food
- Having no means to get to the shops to buy food
- Being unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways

As illustrated in Figure 3 (data labels in Table 2), the most common reported reasons for skipping meals or cutting down the size of meals across all waves, was being unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways (19% on average reported this as a reason across all the waves). At the beginning of the tracker, this reason peaked at 32% (April 2020) and significantly decreased to 14% in August 2020 (significantly different to the start and end of the tracker). By the end of the tracker in October 2021, 19% reported being unable to get a delivery of food as the reason for skipping meals or cutting down the size of meals. This was significantly higher than when the tracker started (April 2020, 32%).

Other reasons for skipping meals or cutting the size of meals had remained more stable across the waves. At the beginning of the tracker in April 2020, 17% reported not being well enough to shop or cook food, significantly increasing to 24% by October 2021 (also 24% in September 2021, both being peaks). 19% of respondents reported having no means to get to the shops as a reason for skipping or cutting meals at the beginning and end of the tracker (April 2020 and October 2021). In August 2020 this decreased significantly to 11% (from 15% in July 2020) and peaked at 19% in April 2020, December 2020 and October 2021 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Other reasons for skipping meals or cutting down the size of meals (April 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for sample sizes included in each wave. Combined affirmative responses shown.

Table 2: Other reasons for skipping meals or cutting down the size of meals (April 2020 – October 2021)

Survey Wave	Not being well enough to shop or cook food	Having no means to get to the shops to buy food	Being unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways
W1 (Apr 2020)	17%	19%	32%
W2 (May 2020)	15%	18%	26%
W3 (Jun 2020)	16%	18%	22%
W4 (Jul 2020)	14%	15%	19%

Survey Wave	Not being well enough to shop or cook food	Having no means to get to the shops to buy food	Being unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways
W5 (Aug 2020)	12%	11%	14%
W6 (Sep 2020)	17%	15%	19%
W7 (Oct 2020)	15%	15%	18%
W8 (Nov 2020)	18%	17%	20%
W9 (Dec 2020)	20%	19%	20%
W10 (Jan 2021)	17%	15%	18%
W11 (Feb 2021)	19%	17%	20%
W12 (Mar 2021)	19%	17%	19%
W13 (Apr 2021)	20%	17%	17%
W14 (May 2021)	23%	18%	19%
W15 (Jun 2021)	19%	15%	15%
W16 (Jul 2021)	20%	16%	16%
W17 (Aug 2021)	22%	18%	18%
W18 (Sep 2021)	24%	18%	19%
W19 (Oct 2021)	24%	19%	19%

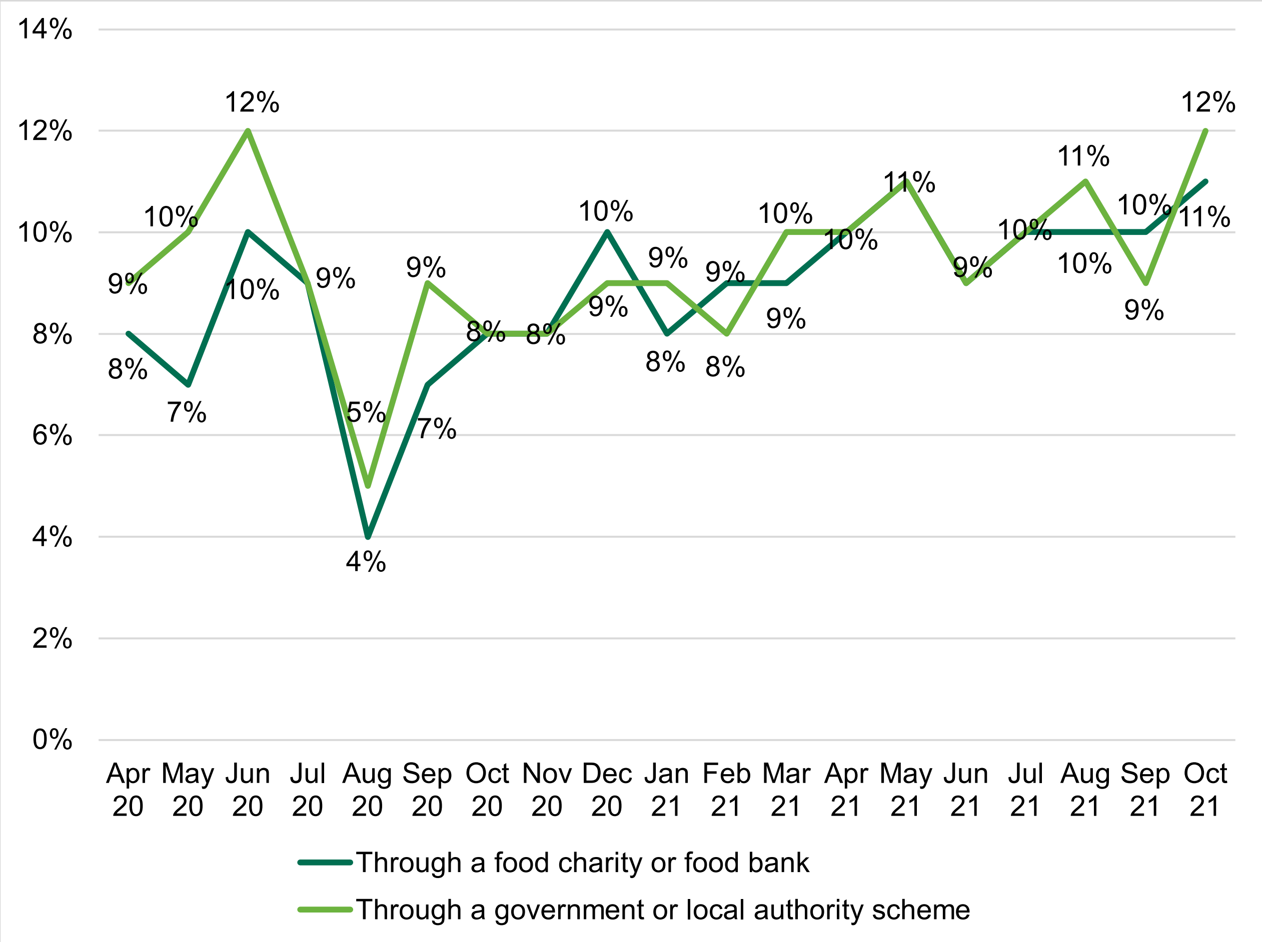
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for sample sizes included in each wave. Combined affirmative responses shown.

Use of emergency food providers

Respondents were asked whether they had used emergency food providers either through food banks/charities or through a government/local authority scheme. As shown in Figure 4, when the tracker started in April 2020, 8% of respondents used food banks/charities. By the end of the tracker in October 2021, this proportion had significantly increased to 11% (which also was the peak, along with May 2021). Throughout the tracker, the proportion of those reporting using food banks/charities was between 7-11%, except for August 2020 when this proportion fell to 4%, significantly less than all the other months in the tracker.

The proportion reporting the use of government or local authority schemes has followed a very similar trend, starting at 9% in April 2020 and significantly increasing by the end of the tracker in October 2021 to 12% (which was the peak, along with June 2020). Throughout the tracker, the proportion of those reporting using government or local authority schemes was between 8-12%, except for August 2020 when the proportion fell to 5%, significantly less than all the other months in the tracker.

Figure 4: Respondents who report using food banks or government or local authority schemes to access food (April 2020 - October 2021)



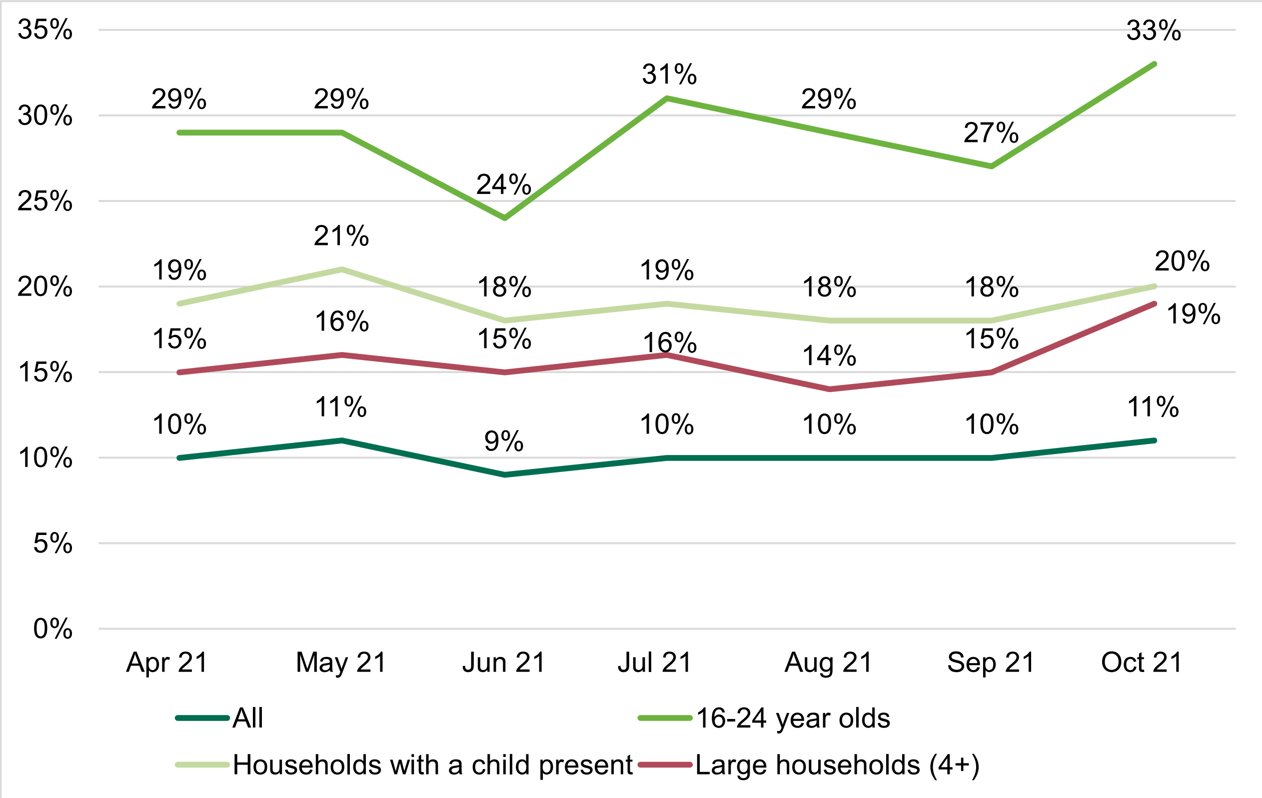
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for participants included in each wave. Combined affirmative responses shown.

Across most waves, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely than the total population and their comparison groups to report the use of food banks/charities (Figure 5):

- Younger participants (16 -24-year-olds) compared to older participants (35 – 44, 45 -54- and 55–75-year-olds)
- Those from larger households (4+) compared to smaller households (1-2 people)
- Those from households with at least one child present compared to households with no child present

Figure 5 only includes data from April 2021 as demographic data from April 2020 to March 2021 is presented in our previous COVID-19 tracker report, waves 1 – 12 (published May 2021) where similar trends are shown.

Figure 5: Use of food banks/food charities by demographic group (April 2021 – October)

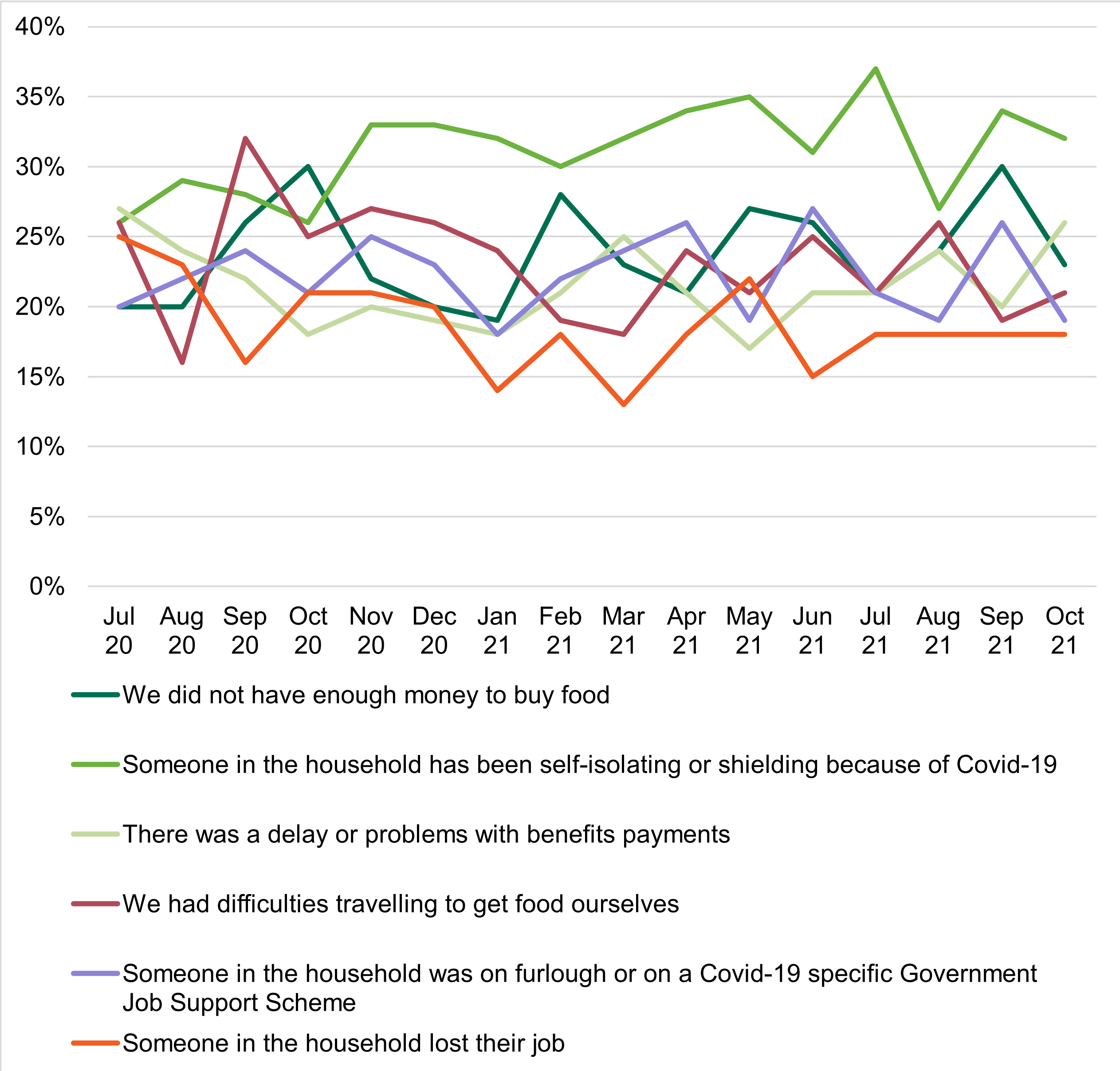


Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see appendix 1 for the number of respondents in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are:16-24 (324), households with children (647), larger households (4+) (506). Combined affirmative responses are shown.

From July 2020, respondents who reported using food banks/food charities were also asked to provide their reasons for doing so. Figure 6 illustrates the most reported reasons supported by the data labels in Table 3. In July 2020, the most common reason reported was 'there was a delay or problem with benefits payments' (27%). By the end of the tracker in October 2021, the proportion who reported a delay or problem with their benefits payment statistically had not changed (26%), but this was no longer the most common reason for foodbank use. From August 2020 to October 2020 the most common reason varied.

Between November 2020 to the end of the tracker in October 2021, the most cited reason for using a food bank/charity was having someone in the household self-isolating or shielding because of COVID-19; at least 3 in 10 respondents (32%) who used food banks in October 2021 reporting this as the reason. Although someone in the household self-isolating or shielding due to COVID-19 was the most common reason at the end of the tracker, it was not significantly different from the inception of this question in July 2020 (26%).

Figure 6: Reasons for having food delivered from a food bank or a food charity (July 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 who used a food bank or food charity. Base sized range from 177 in July 2020 to 244 in October 2021. 'Other' and 'prefer not to answer' options are not included in Figure.

Table 3: Reasons for having food delivered from a food bank or a food charity (July 2020 to October 2021)

Survey wave	We did not have enough money to buy food	Someone in the household has been self-isolating because of COVID-19	There was a delay or problem with benefits payments	We had difficulties travelling to get food ourselves	Someone in the household was on furlough or on a COVID-19 job support scheme	Someone in the household lost their job
W4 (Jul 2020)	20%	26%	27%	26%	20%	25%
W5 (Aug 2020)	20%	29%	24%	16%	22%	23%
W6 (Sep 2020)	26%	28%	22%	32%	24%	16%
W7 (Oct 2020)	30%	26%	18%	25%	21%	21%
W8 (Nov 2020)	22%	33%	20%	27%	25%	21%
W9 (Dec 2020)	20%	33%	19%	26%	23%	20%
W10 (Jan 2021)	16%	31%	18%	25%	20%	13%
W11 (Feb 2021)	28%	30%	21%	19%	22%	18%

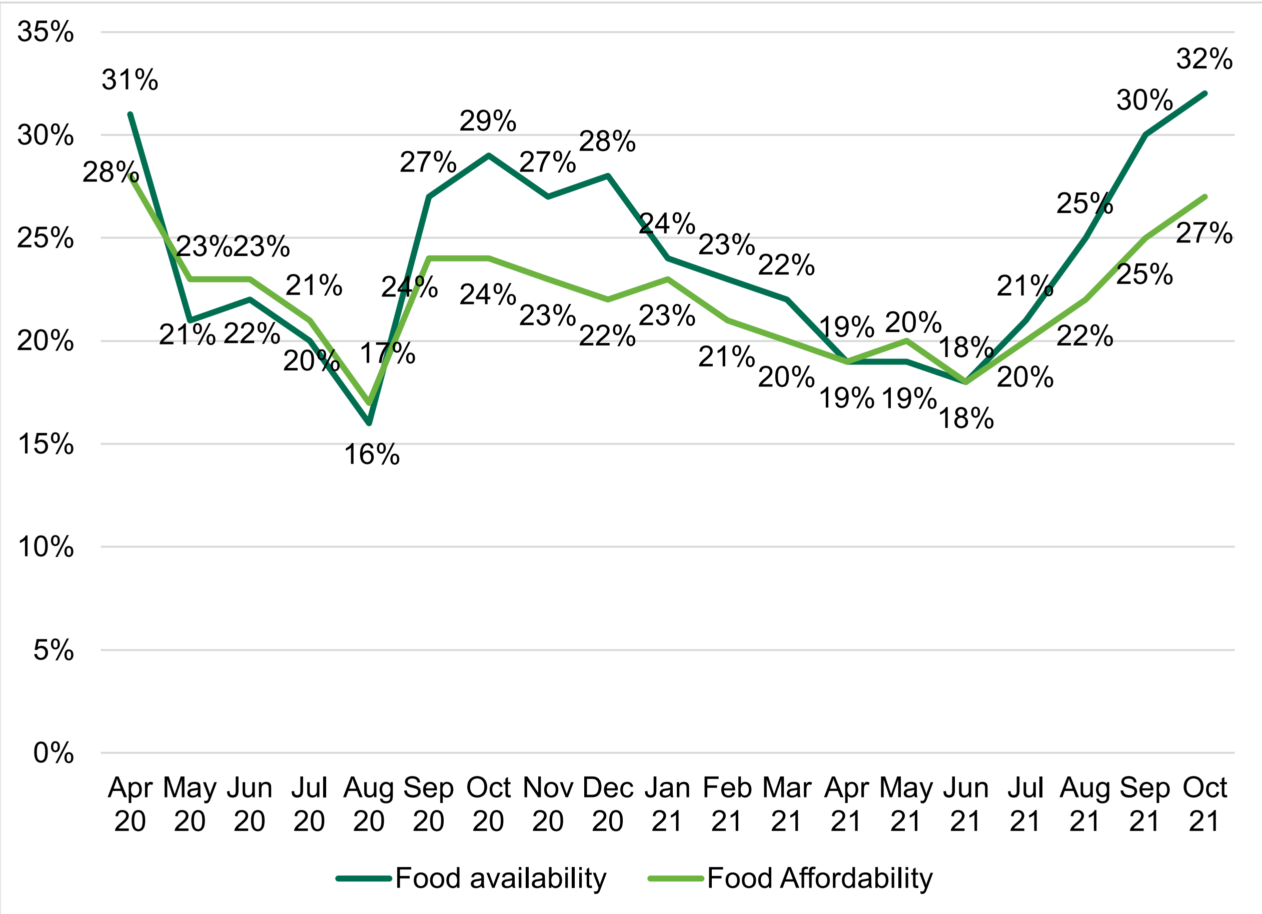
Survey wave	We did not have enough money to buy food	Someone in the household has been self-isolating because of COVID-19	There was a delay or problem with benefits payments	We had difficulties travelling to get food ourselves	Someone in the household was on furlough or on a COVID-19 job support scheme	Someone in the household lost their job
W12 (Mar 2021)	23%	32%	25%	18%	24%	13%
W13 (Apr 2021)	21%	34%	21%	24%	26%	18%
W14 (May 2021)	27%	35%	17%	21%	19%	22%
W15 (Jun 2021)	26%	31%	21%	25%	27%	15%
W16 (Jul 2021)	21%	37%	21%	21%	21%	18%
W17 (Aug 2021)	24%	27%	24%	26%	19%	18%
W18 (Sep 2021)	30%	34%	20%	19%	26%	18%
W19 (Oct 2021)	23%	32%	26%	21%	19%	18%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 who used a food bank or food charity. Base sized range from 177 in July 2020 to 244 in October 2021. Base values won't add up to 100% as respondents could select up to 3 answers and 'other' and 'prefer not to answer' options are not included in Table.

Concerns about food availability and food affordability

Levels of concerns for food availability and affordability followed a similar trend over time to each other. When the tracker started, 31% reported being concerned about food availability and 28% reported being concerned around food affordability. In August 2020 both measures significantly fell to their lowest point (16% for food availability and 17% for food affordability) before reported concerns increased significantly in September 2020 to 27% and 24% respectively. Since then, the figures declined to 18% for both food availability and affordability in June 2021, before increasing again. When the tracker ended in October 2021, 32% reported being concerned about food availability and 27% about food affordability. These proportions were as high in October 2021 as they were in April 2020 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Level of concern about food availability and affordability (April 2020 – October 2021)



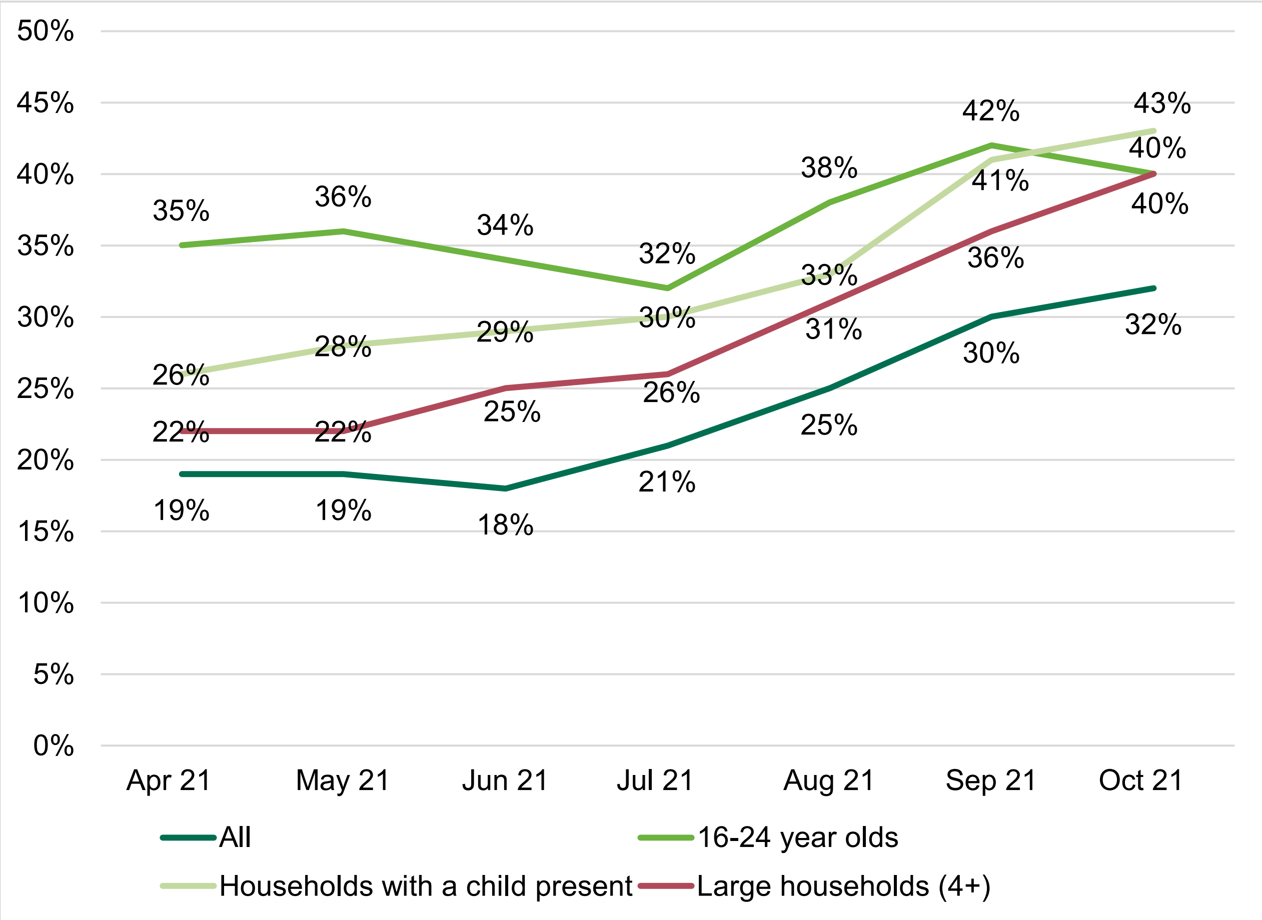
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants included in each wave. Combined affirmative responses shown.

Across most waves, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely than the total population and their comparison groups to report concerns about food availability and affordability (Figure 8 and 9):

- Younger participants (16 -24-year-olds) compared to older participants (35 – 44, 45 -54- and 55–75-year-olds)
- Those from larger households (4+) compared to smaller households (1-2 people)
- Those from households with at least one child present compared to households with no child present

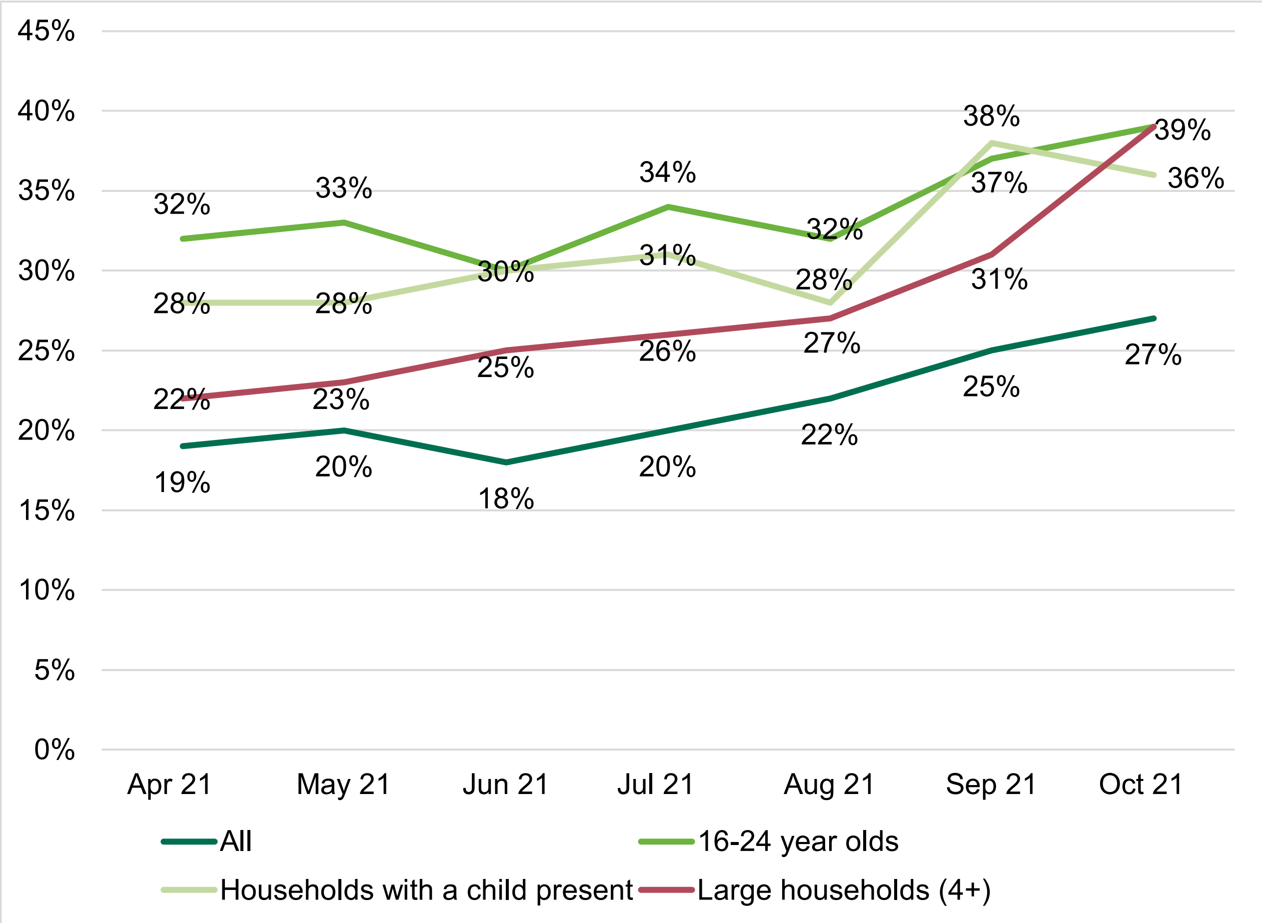
These finding continue from our previous COVID-19 tracker report, waves 1 – 12 (published May 2021) where the data from April 2020 to March 2021 was presented. Therefore, Figures 8 and 9 present data from April 2021 to the end of the tracker (October 2021).

Figure 8: Level of concern about food availability by demographic group (April 2021 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 16 – 24 years old (324), Households with a child present (647), larger households (4+) (506). Combined affirmative responses are shown.

Figure 9: Level of concern about food affordability by demographic group (April 2020 – October 2021)



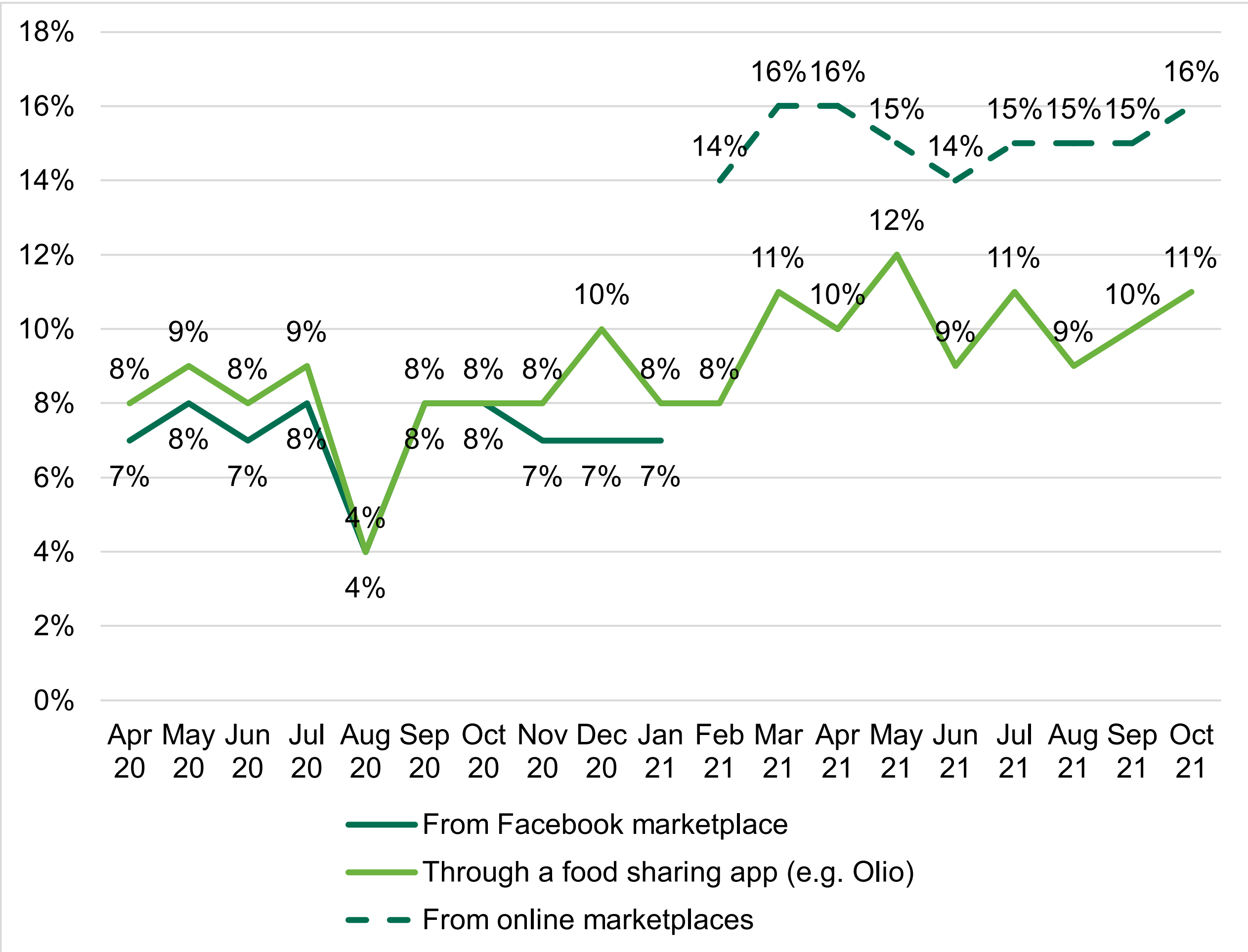
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 16 – 24 years old (324), Households with a child present (647), larger households (4+) (506). Combined affirmative responses are shown.

Food purchasing behaviours

At the start of the tracker in April 2020, participants were asked about purchasing food through Facebook marketplace; fewer than 1 in 10 (7%) reported using Facebook marketplace to purchase food at least once in the preceding month. In August 2020 this significantly decreased to 4% (from 8% in July 2020) before significantly increasing again to 8% in September 2020 and stabilising at 7% from November 2020 to January 2021. In February 2021, the question phrasing altered, and participants were asked if they had purchased food through an online marketplace more generally (examples provided to participants include Facebook Marketplace, Etsy, Gumtree, Instagram and Nextdoor). In February 2021, 14% of participants reported using one of these online marketplaces to purchase food at least once in the preceding month. This figure remained stable (between 14% and 16%) until the end of the tracker in October 2021 (Figure 10).

Figure 10 also illustrates the reported use of food sharing apps (such as Olio) at least once in the preceding month. The use of food sharing apps has followed a similar trend to the reported use of Facebook marketplace; starting at 8% (at least once in the preceding month) at the beginning of the tracker in April 2020, significantly decreasing to 4% in August 2020 (from 9% in July 2020) and then increasing again to 8% in September 2020 where it stabilised until October 2021 (11%, significantly higher than inception).

Figure 10: Reported use of Facebook marketplace, Food sharing apps (Olio) and other online marketplaces



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants in each wave. Combined affirmative responses are shown. Note: From

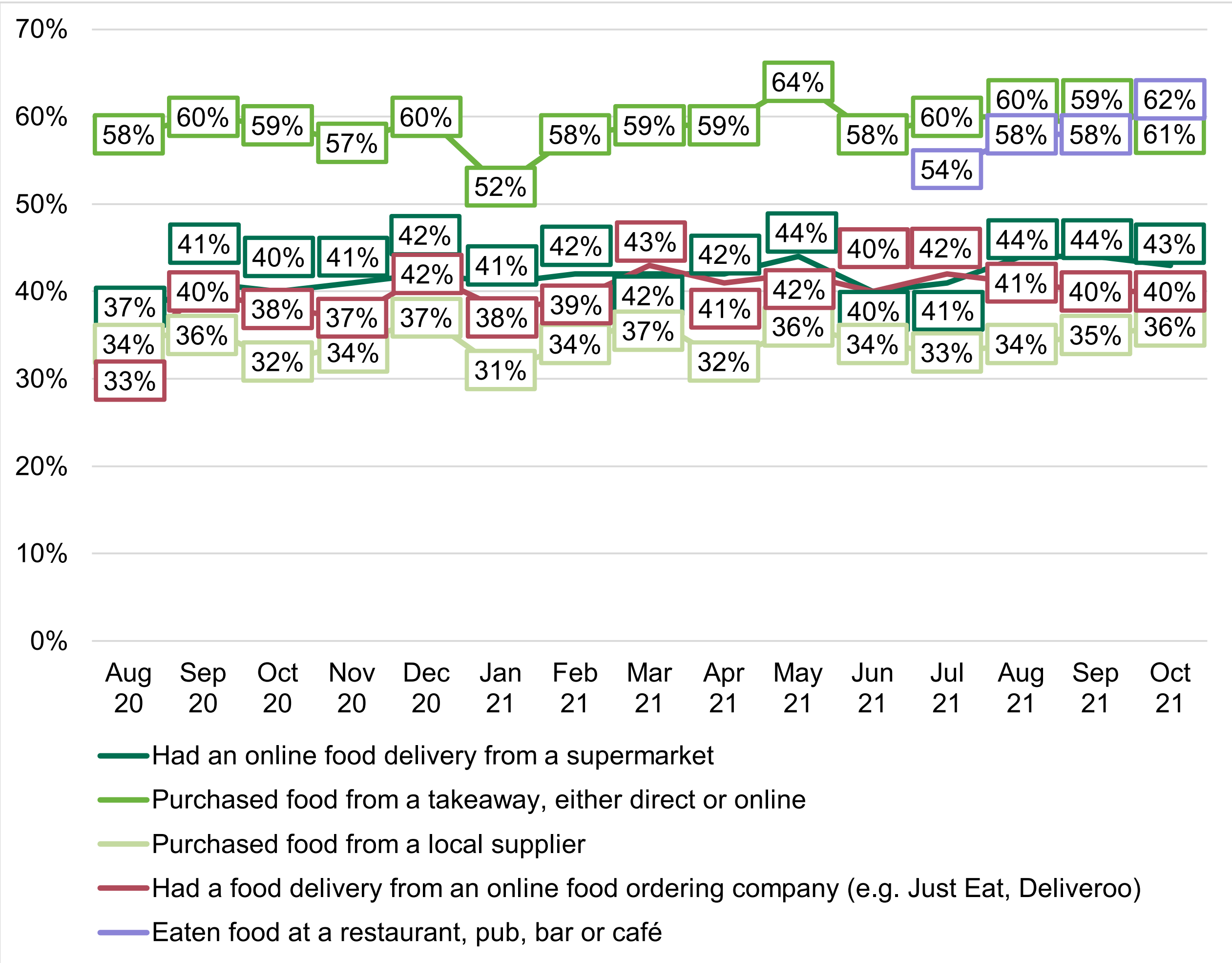
February 2021 onwards the question changed from asking respondents specifically about Facebook marketplace to asking respondents about purchasing food through an online marketplace more generally (examples provided included Facebook marketplace, Etsy, Gumtree, Instagram and Nextdoor).

From August 2020, the COVID-19 tracker monitored other food purchasing habits. As shown in Figure 11, trends in food purchasing behaviours remained relatively stable from August 2020 to the end of the tracker in October 2021. At least 1 in 2 respondents (52% or more) reported purchasing food from a takeaway, either direct or online, at least once in the preceding month throughout the tracker. At the inception of this question, 58% reported this behaviour (August 2020), significantly increasing to a peak at 64% in May 2021 (from 59% in April 2021) before the end of the tracker in October 2021 where 61% reported this behaviour at least once in the preceding month, similar to August 2020. At the inception of this question (August 2020), 15% reported this behaviour at least once every week, significantly increasing to 21% in December 2020 (from 18% in November 2020) before decreasing to 19% in October 2021 (significantly more than inception).

In August 2020, 33% reported purchasing food for delivery from an online food ordering company for example, Just Eat or Deliveroo at least once in the preceding month. At the end of the tracker in October 2021, 2 in 5 respondents (40%) reported this behaviour, a significant increase in proportion from August 2020. At the inception of this question, 1 in 10 of respondents (10%) reported this behaviour (August 2020) at least once every week, significantly increasing to 17% in March 2021 (from inception) and ending at 15% in October 2021 (significantly more than inception).

In July 2021, after the hospitality sector in the UK had re-opened following a national lockdown, the COVID-19 tracker monitored those who had eaten food in a restaurant, bar or café. Since July 2020, over half of respondents (above 54%) reported eating out in one of these settings at least once in the past month; reaching its peak at the end of the tracker in October 2021 (62%, significantly more than July 2020). In July 2021, 15% reported this behaviour at least once a week, similar to October 2021 (17%).

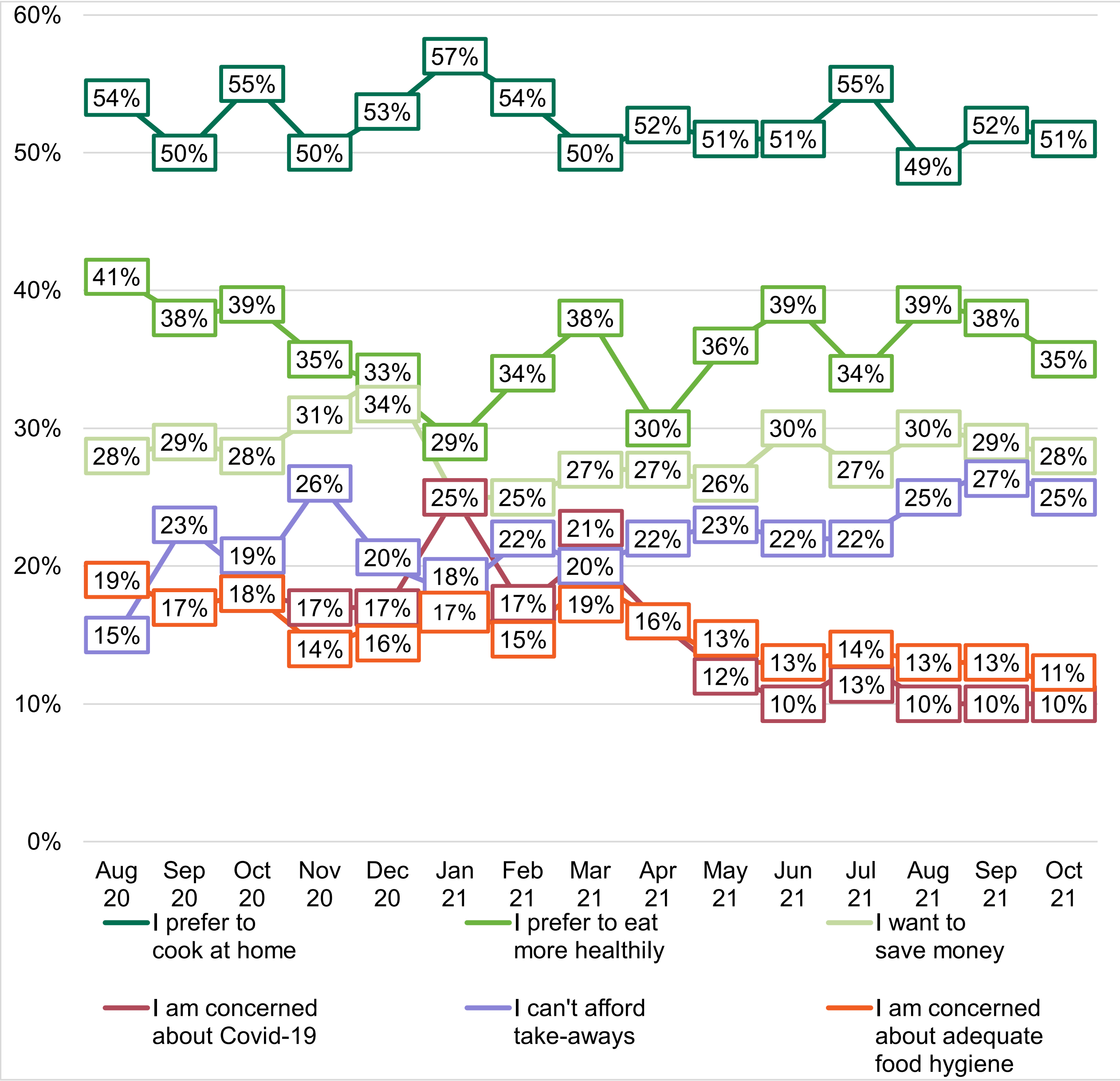
Figure 11: Methods of food purchasing used in the preceding month (affirmative responses) (August 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants in each wave. Combined affirmative responses are shown.

From August 2020, participants who reported not purchasing a take-away in the preceding month were asked for their reasons for not doing so (on average, 35% of respondents). Consistently, across all waves, the most common reason for not purchasing a takeaway was ‘I prefer to cook at home’ with at least half (54%) of those who did not purchase a takeaway reporting this as the reason in August 2020, similar to the end of the tracker in October 2020 (51%). ‘I prefer to eat more healthily’ was the second most common reason for not purchasing a takeaway. At inception 41% (August 2020) reported this reason for not purchasing a takeaway, ending statistically similar in October 2021 at 35%. The third most common reason was ‘I want to save money’, starting and ending at 28% (August 2020 to October 2021). Concerns about COVID-19 were less commonly reported, starting at 19% in August 2020 and significantly decreasing to 10% (1 in 10 respondents) by the end of the tracker in October 2021 (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Reasons or not purchasing a takeaway in the preceding month (August 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 not buying takeaways in the past month – base size ranged from 577 to 815 participants in each wave.

Food habits at home

From August 2020, participants were asked to report the frequency that they had wasted or thrown food away, cooked food to freeze for later, bought food from local shops and eaten together with the family. As illustrated in Figure 13, the trends in these key behaviours (those who reported doing this at least once in the past month) remained broadly stable over time, more than half (at least 59%) of respondents carrying out each behaviour at least once a month.

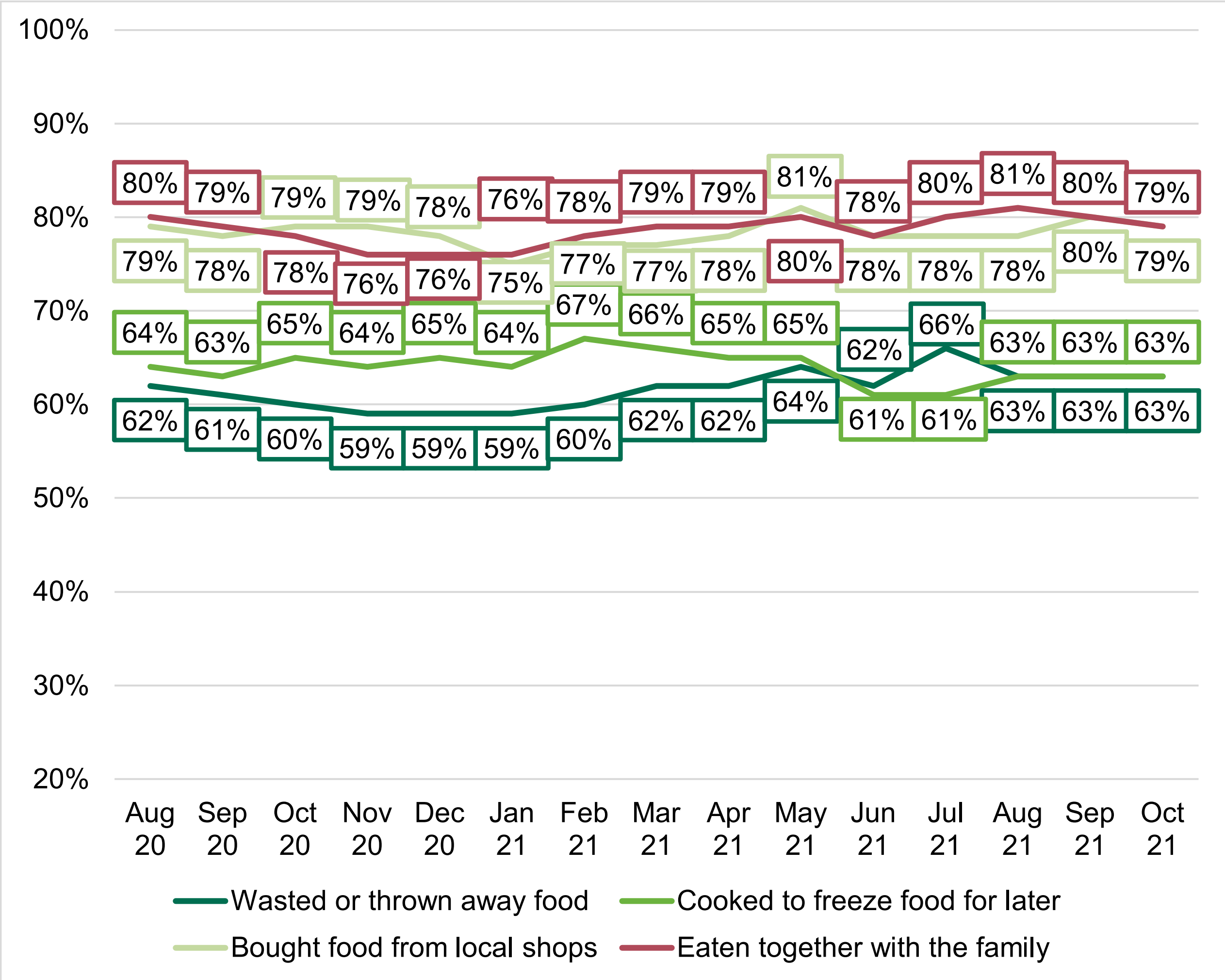
In August 2020, 64% reported cooking to freeze food for later, similar to the end of the tracker in October 2021 (63%). This behaviour significantly increased to a peak in February 2021 at 67% (from 64% in January 2021).

Most people (at least 59%) throughout the tracker wasted or threw food away. In August 2020, 62% reported this behaviour, ending similar in October 2021 with 63% of respondents wasting or throwing food away. This behaviour peaked in July 2021 at 66% (significantly increasing from 62% in June 2021).

Throughout the tracker, most respondents (at least 76%) reported eating together with their family at least once in the past month. In August 2020, 4 out of 5 respondents (80%) reported eating together, ending similar in October 2021 (79%). In January 2021 this decreased to 76% (significantly less than the beginning and end of the tracker).

Similarly, the majority (79%) of respondents bought food from a local shop in August 2020 and at the end of the tracker in October 2021, decreasing to 75% in January 2021 (significantly less from the beginning and end of the tracker).

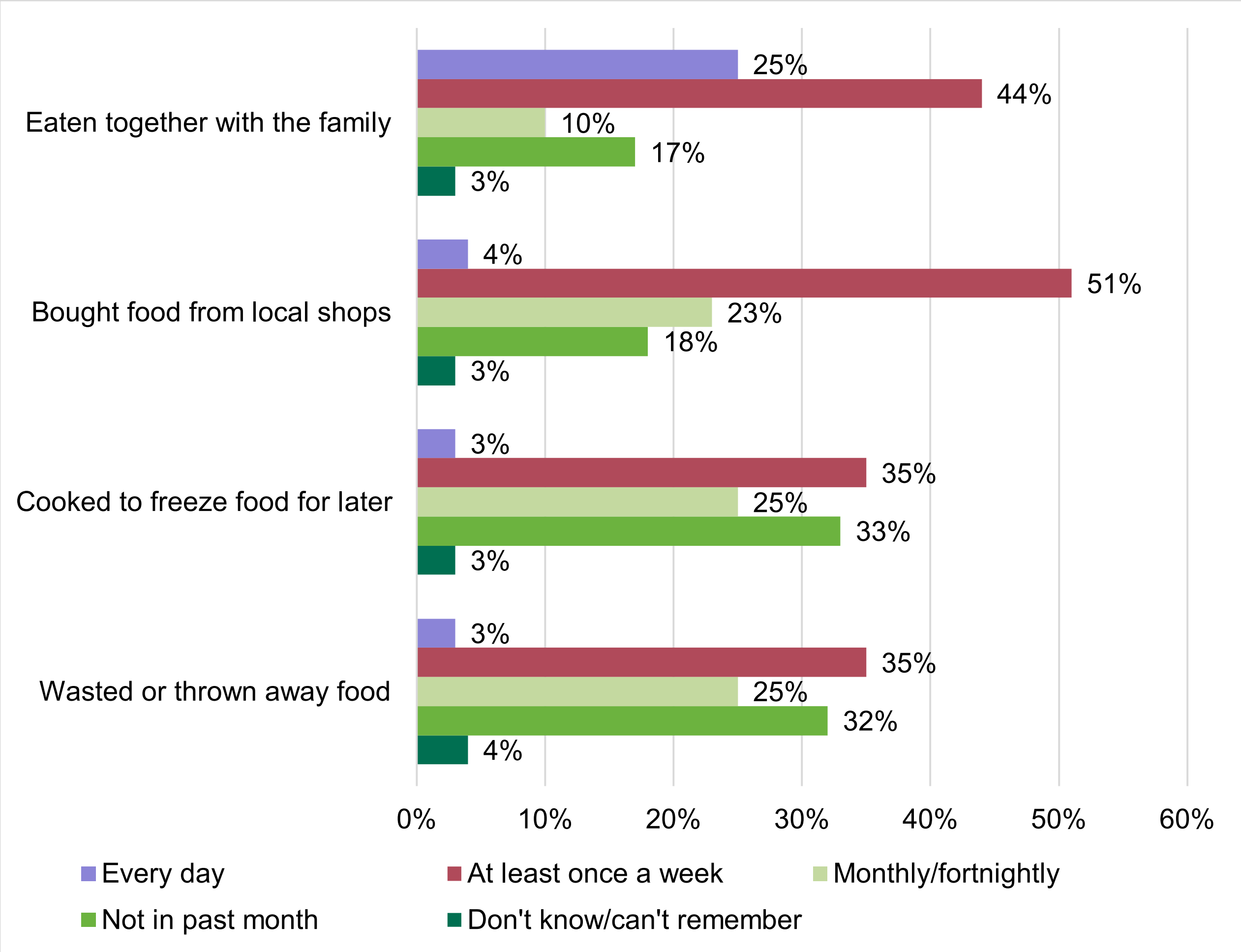
Figure 13: Reported food consumption behaviours (August 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of respondents in each wave. Affirmative responses are combined.

As illustrated in Figure 14, respondents were most likely to report doing these food habits ‘at least once a week’, this finding is consistent across all waves although only October 2021 data is provided for the purpose of visualisation. In October 2021, at least once a week, 2 in 5 respondents (44%) reported eating together as a family, 1 in 2 respondents (51%) reported buying from local shops, 3 in 10 respondents (35%) reported cooking to freeze food for later and 3 in 10 respondents (35%) reported wasting or throwing away food.

Figure 14: Frequency of reported food habits (October 2021)



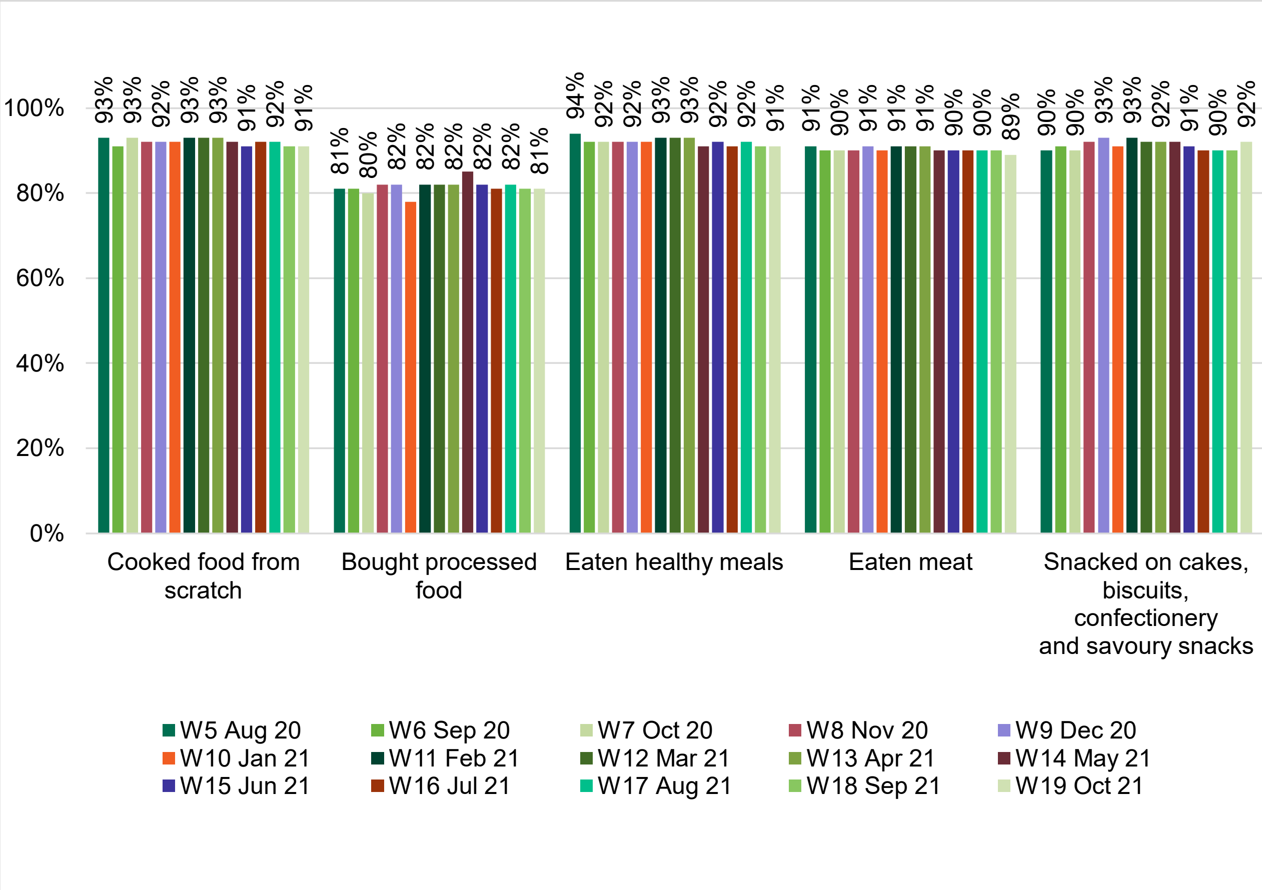
Base: 2,059 Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, 12-15 October 2021. Responses may not total 100 due to rounding, and because 'prefer not to answer' and 'don't know' responses are not shown. At least once a week combines – most days, 2-3 times a week, at least once a week.

Nutrition behaviour

From August 2020, participants were also asked to report various nutrition behaviours such as cooking food from scratch, buying processed foods, eating healthy meals, eating meat and snacking. Figure 15 illustrates the proportion of respondents that reported doing these behaviours at least once in the month prior. Most respondents reported doing these nutrition behaviours and this remained stable throughout the tracker.

On average across all waves, 92% of respondents reported eating healthy meals, 92% reported cooking food from scratch, 91% reported snacking on cakes, biscuits, confectionery or savoury snacks, 90% reported eating meat, 81% reported buying processed food and at least once a month or more.

Figure 15: Proportion of respondents who report these nutrition behaviours in the preceding month (August 2020 – October 2021)



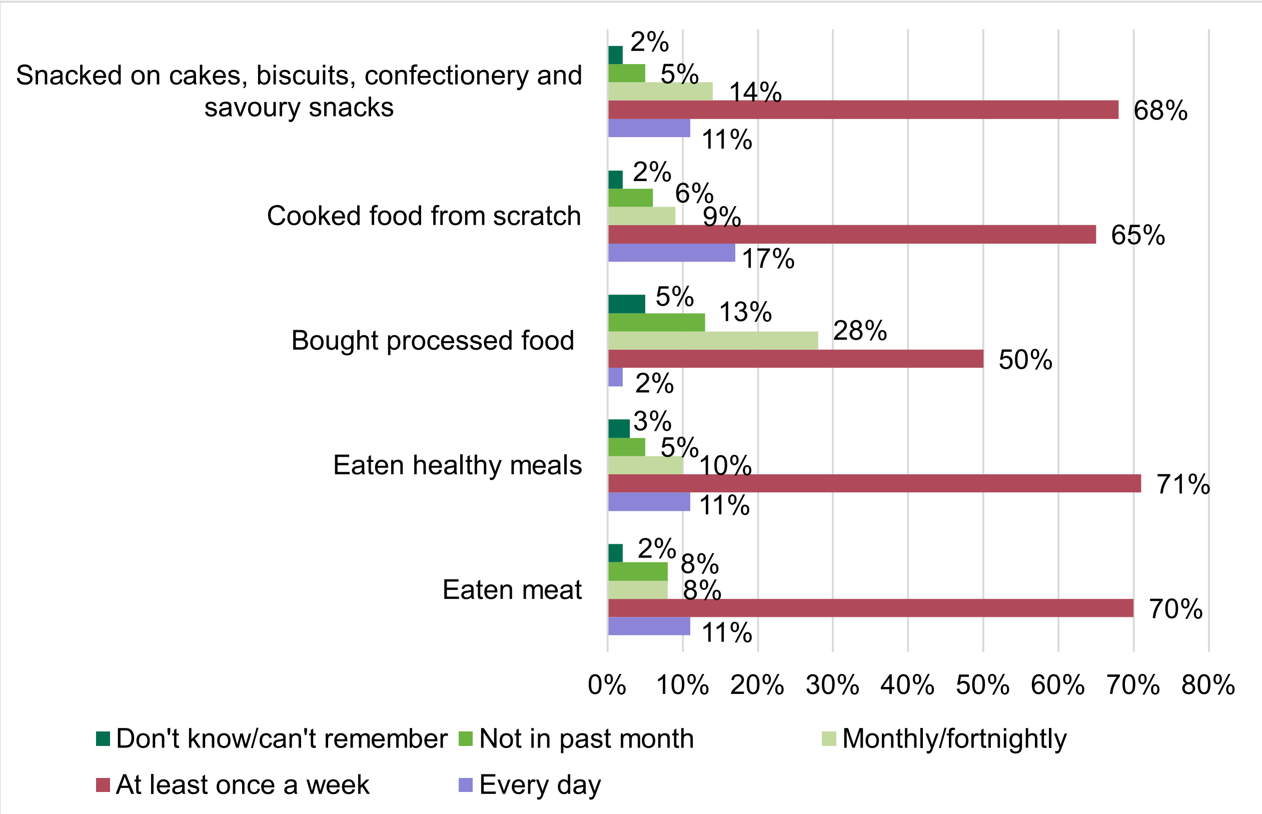
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of respondents in each wave. Affirmative responses are combined. Note: as trends were stable, for legibility reasons only every other data label is present in Figure.

For each of these nutrition behaviours, participants were most likely to report doing them ‘at least once a week’, as displayed in Figure 16 where October 2021 data is provided as an example. These frequencies were consistent across all waves of the tracker. 7 in 10 respondents (71%) reported eating healthy meals ‘at least once a week (but not daily)’ in October 2021 while 1 in 10 respondents (11%) reported eating healthy meals ‘every day’.

Similarly, 7 in 10 (70%) reported eating meat ‘at least once a week (but not daily)’ in October 2021, with 1 in 10 (11%) reporting they did so ‘every day’.

Half of respondents (50%) reported buying processed foods ‘once a week or more’ (with just 2% reported doing this daily), and 65% reported cooking food from scratch ‘once a week or more’; a further 17% reported doing this daily. Most participants (68%) snacked on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks at least once a week, with 11% doing so every day.

Figure 16: Frequency of reported nutrition behaviours (October 2021)



Base: 2,059 Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, October 2021. Responses may not total 100 due to rounding, and because ‘prefer not to answer’ and ‘don’t know’ responses are not shown. At least once a week combines – most days, 2-3 times a week, at least once a week but excludes ‘every day’.

Across most waves, the following demographic groups were significantly less likely to report eating healthy meals in the preceding month than the comparison groups (Table 4 in annex).

- Males compared to females
- Those living in single households compared to larger households (4+)

Across most waves, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to report eating meat in the preceding month than the comparison demographic groups (Table 5 in annex).

- Males compared to females
- Older participants (55 – 75-year-olds) compared to younger participants (16–24-year-olds and 25–34-year-olds)
- Those who live in a house with at least one child present compared to households with no children

Across most waves, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to report buying processed food in the preceding month that the comparison demographic groups (Table 6 and 7).

- 16–44-year-olds compared to older participants (55–75-year-olds)
- Those who live in a house with at least one child present compared to households with no children
- Those living in larger households (4+) compared to single households (1 person)

Food safety and hygiene in the home

Eating food past the use by date

From July 2020, participants were asked the frequency that they eat specific foods past the use-by date. Figure 17 and 18 illustrates the proportion of respondents that reported eating the food past the use-by date at least once in the past month. These figures are based on respondents who reported eating these foods (i.e. those who report not eating these foods in the past month are excluded from the base). For all the food items, there was a significant increase from July 2020 to October 2021.

In August 2020[4], 2 in 5 respondents (40%) who ate cheese, reported eating it past the use-by date. This behaviour significantly increased throughout the tracker. By the end of the tracker in October 2021, half (50%) of respondents who ate cheese in that month reported eating it past the use-by date. Bagged salads followed a similar pattern in which the proportion of people eat it past the use by date significantly increased throughout the tracker from 37% in July 2020, ending at 47% in October 2021 where it peaked again (also 47% in May and September 2021).

In July 2020, 16% of those who ate smoked fish reported eating it past the use-by date, this significantly increased to 25% in September 2021 (from 22% in August 2021) where it peaked before ending at 24% in October 2021.

Cooked meats and milk followed a similar pattern, in July 2020, 29% of those who ate cooked meats and 27% of those who drank milk reported consuming these foods past the use-by dates. These proportions increased significantly throughout the tracker, peaking in October 2021 at 42% and 43% (respectively).

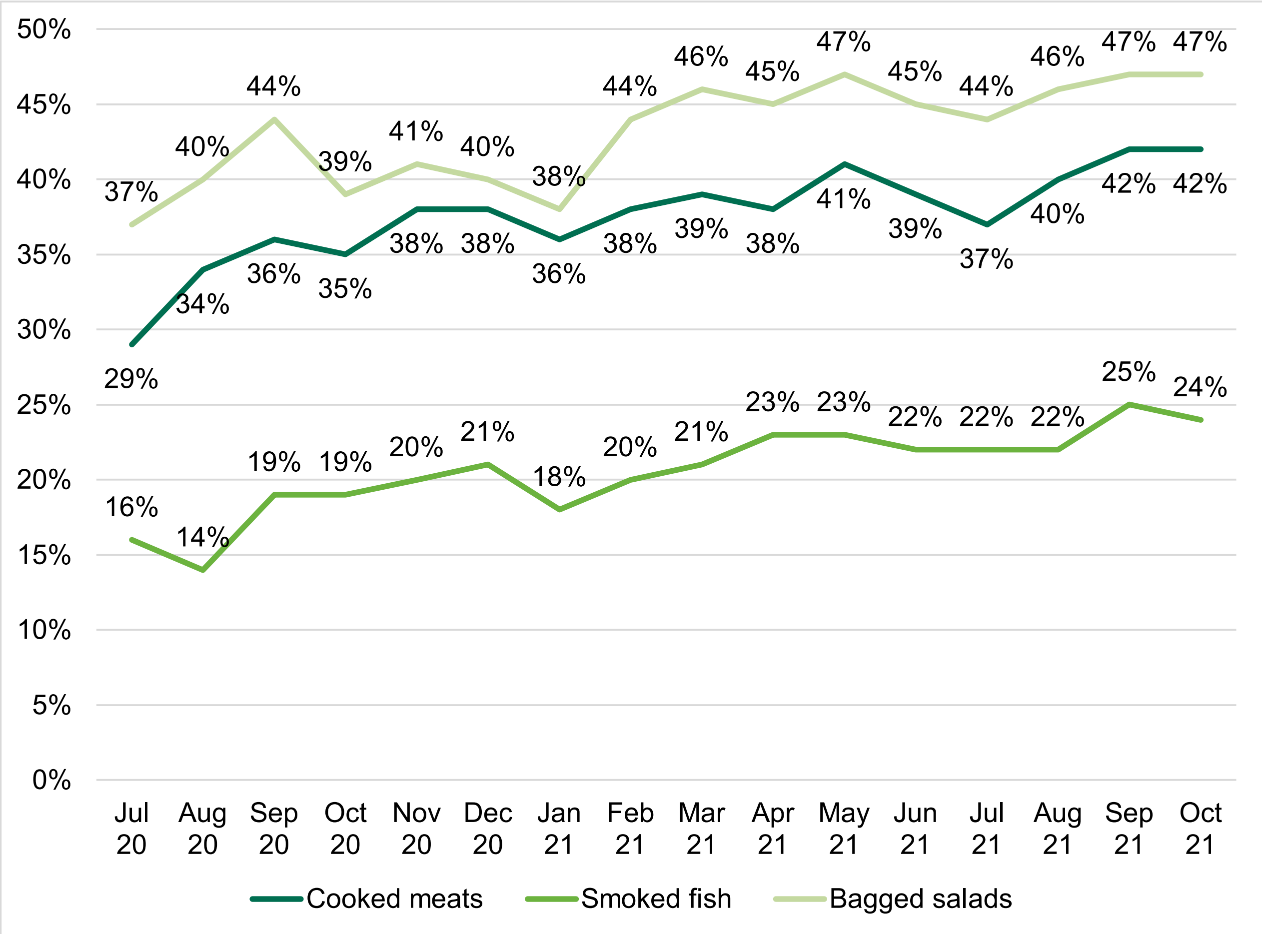
By the end of the tracker in October 2021, the following proportion of respondents who ate the following food, did so past the use-by date.

- Cheese: 1 in 2 of respondents (50%)
- Bagged salad: at least 2 in 5 of respondents (47%)
- Milk: at least 2 in 5 (43%)
- Cooked meats: at least 2 in 5 (42%)
- Smoked fish: at least 1 in 5 of respondents (24%)

The FSA are continuing to monitor adherence to use-by dates in the Consumer Insights Tracker.

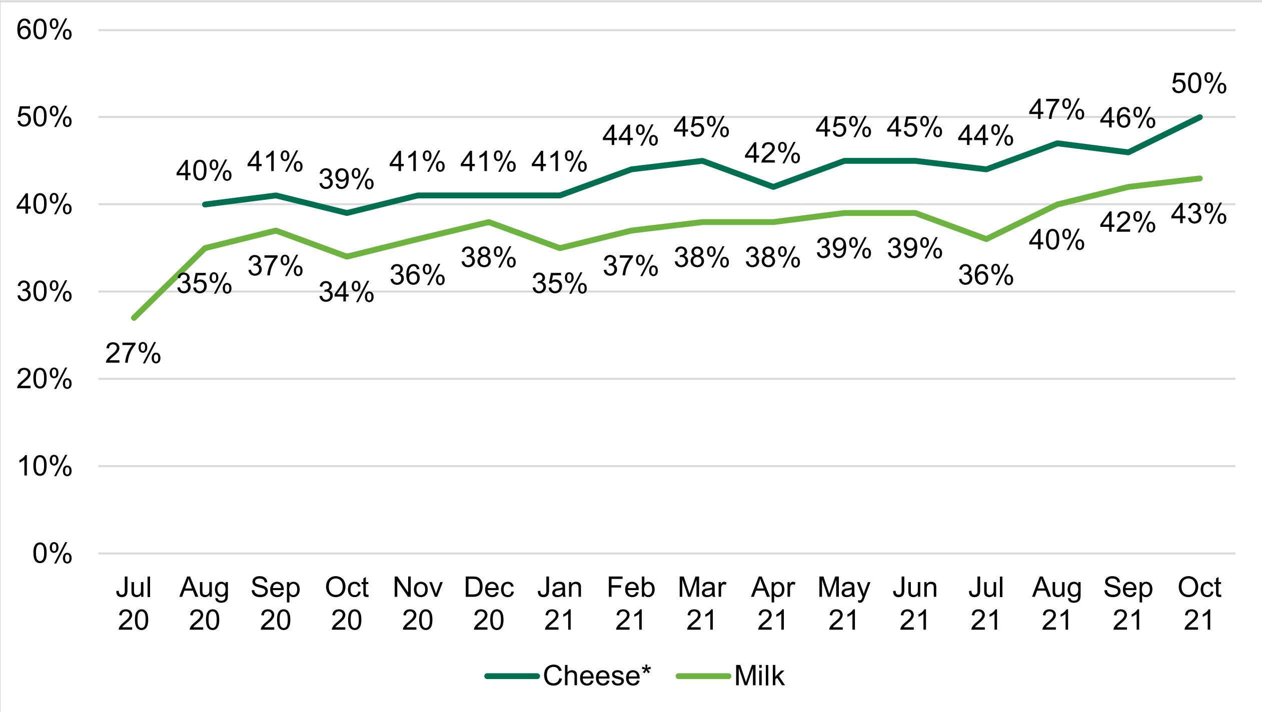
[4] Comparable data for those eating cheese past its use-by date starts in wave 3 (August 2020) due to option change from 'mould ripened cheese' to 'cheese'.

Figure 17: Proportion of respondents who report eating non-dairy food past the use-by date (of those who reported eating these foods during that month) (July 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults who had eaten the specified food (aged 16-75). Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 1,833 (cooked meats), 1,524 (smoked fish), 1,673 (bagged salad). Data shown combines all affirmative responses.

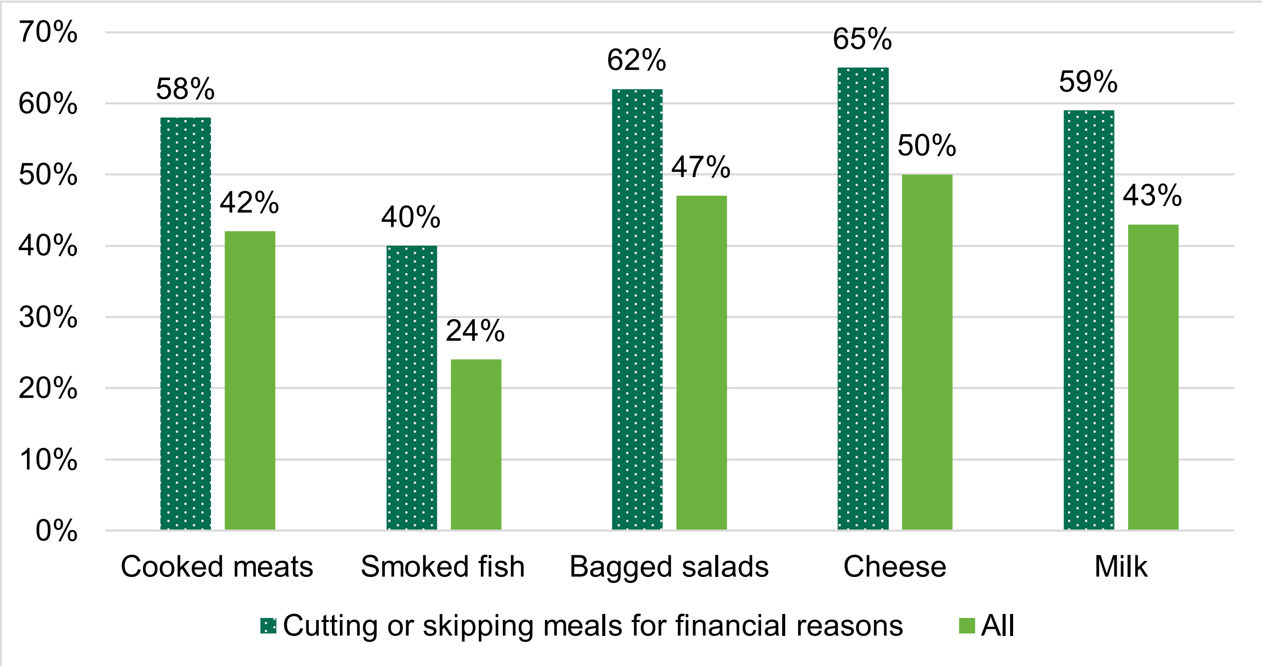
Figure 18: Proportion of respondents who report eating dairy food past the use-by date (of those who reported eating these foods during that month) (July 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults who had eaten the specified food (aged 16-75). Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 1,903 (cheese), 1,908 (milk). Data shown combines all affirmative responses. For cheese, comparable date only starts from W3 as option changed from ‘mould ripened cheese’ to ‘cheese’.

Analysis of wave 19 data (October 2021) also shows that those who report cutting or skipping meals for financial reasons were significantly more likely to report that they or someone in their household had eaten cheese (65%), bagged salad (62%), milk (59%), cooked meats (58%) and smoked fish (40%) past its use by date, compared to the whole sample who reported this behaviour (bagged salad 47%, cheese 50%, cooked meat 42%, milk 43%, smoked fish 24%) (Figure 19). This is a continued trend, similar findings were also evident in analysis conducted on wave 12, wave 8 and wave 4 data (see previous [FSA COVID-19 tracker publications]).

Figure 19: Food insecure respondents who ate food past its Use-by date (October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults who had eaten the specified food (aged 16-75). Indicative base sizes of those who reported cutting on skipping meals for financial reasons in October 2021: cooked meats (678), smoked fish (585), bagged salad (640), cheese (688) and milk (696).

Other food safety behaviours

From May 2020, the COVID-19 tracker also monitored several other key food safety behaviours in the home including the following, which are all recommended by the FSA:

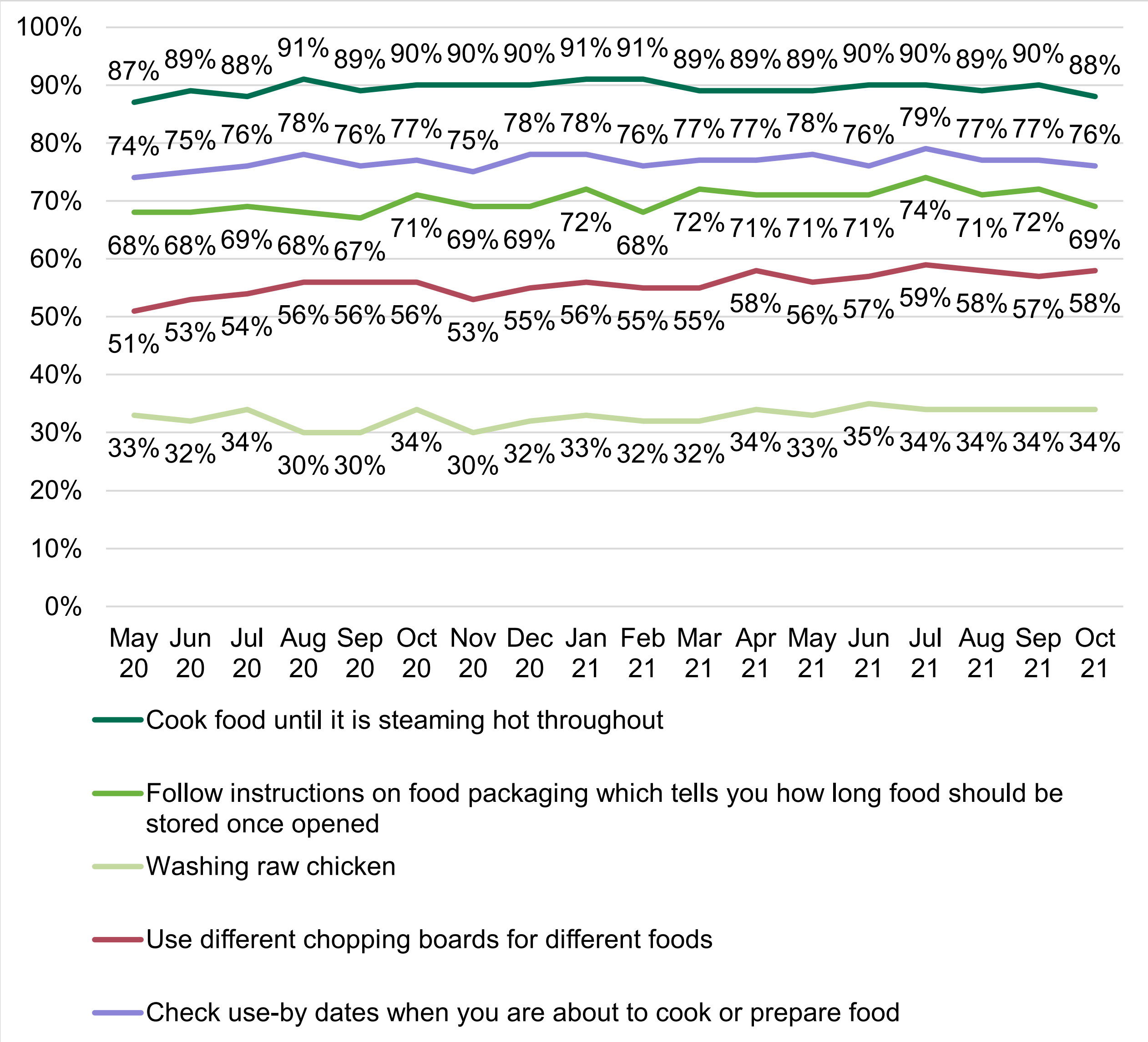
- Cooking food until steaming hot throughout
- Following storage instructions on food packaging (once food is opened)
- Using different chopping boards for different foods
- Checking use-by dates before cooking or preparing food

Although some significant differences did occur from wave to wave, overall trends in these food safety behaviours were consistent overtime and largely stable (Figure 20). On average, 9 in 10 respondents who cook (89%), reported cooking food until steaming hot throughout ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ across the tracker. Just 2% of respondents who cook reported ‘never’ doing this behaviour across the tracker (Figure 21). On average, 7 in 10 respondents who cook (70%), reported following storage instructions on food packaging (once food is opened) ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ across the tracker. 5% of respondents who cook reported ‘never’ doing this behaviour.

On average, 1 in 2 respondents who cook (56%) reported using different chopping boards for different foods ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ across the tracker. On average, 2 in 10 respondents who cook (21%) reported ‘never’ doing this behaviour across the tracker. On average, 7 in 10 respondents who cook (77%) reported checking the use-by dates before cooking or preparing food ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’. On average, 4% of respondents who cook reported ‘never’ doing this behaviour.

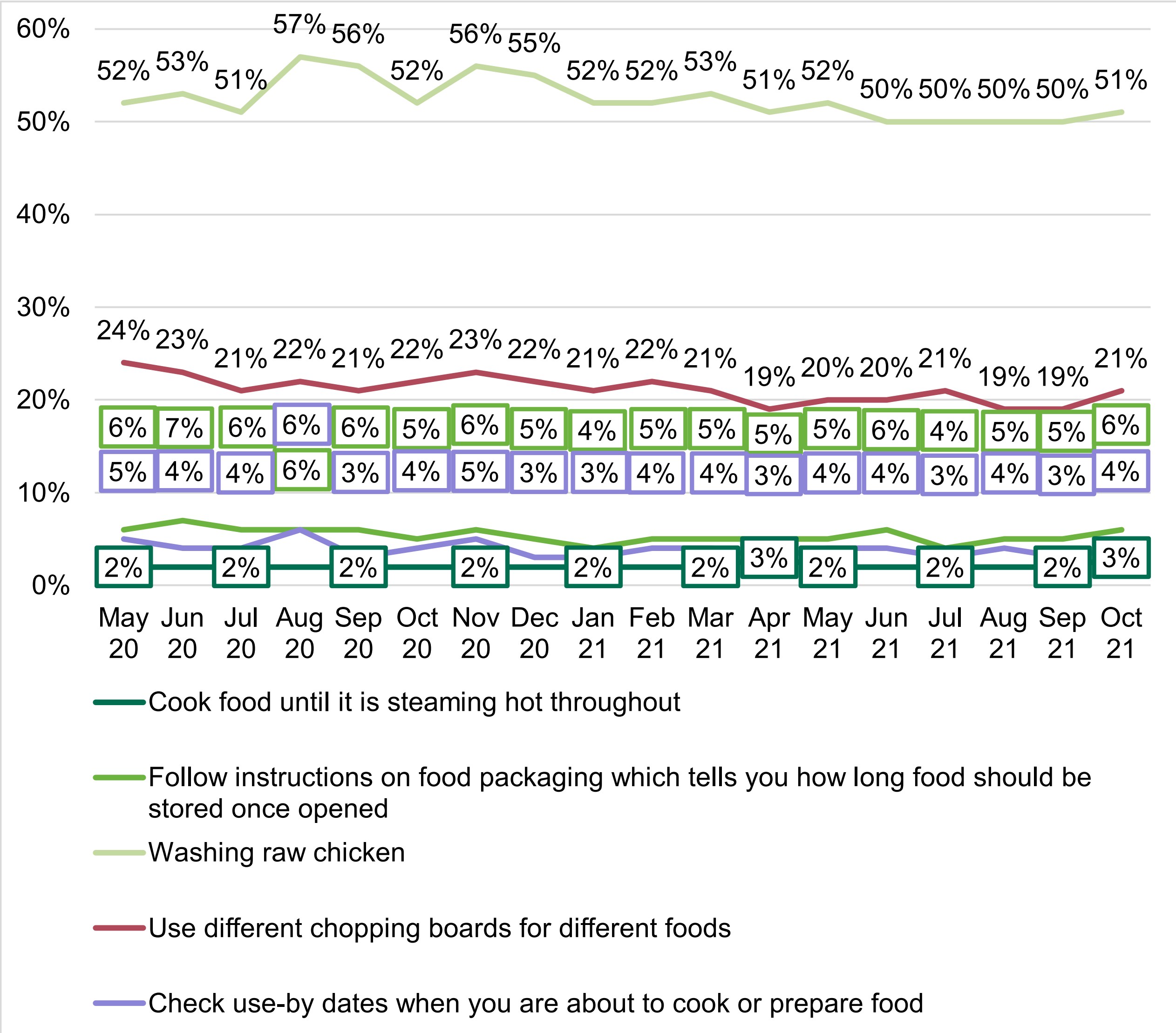
The tracker also monitors participants who report washing raw chicken, a practice not recommended by the FSA. On average, 3 in 10 respondents who cook (33%) reported washing raw chicken ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ across the tracker. On average, at half of the respondents who cook (52%) reported ‘never’ doing this behaviour, in line with the FSA guidelines.

Figure 20: Reported Food Safety behaviours by respondents who cook (that report doing these practises 'always' or 'most of the time')



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, base is 'adults who cook' (aged 16-75). Data shown combines all affirmative responses. Indicative base sizes in October 2021: cook food until it is steaming hot throughout (2006), follow instructions on food packaging which tells you how long food should be stored once opened (2024), washing raw chicken (1905), use different chopping boards for different foods (1995) and check use by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food (2020).

Figure 21: Reported Food Safety behaviours by respondents who cook (that report doing these practises 'never')



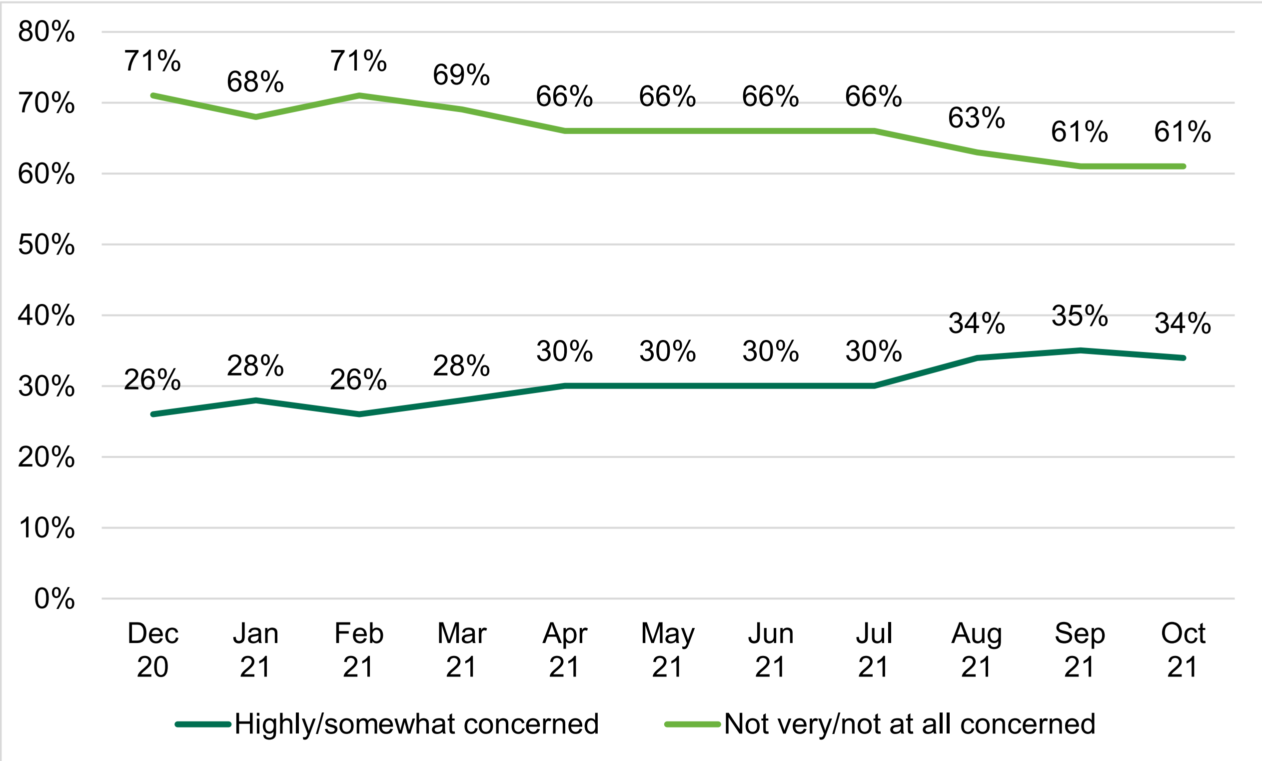
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, base is 'adults who cook' (aged 16-75). Data shown combines all affirmative responses. Indicative base sizes in October 2021: cook food until it is steaming hot throughout (2006), follow instructions on food packaging which tells you how long food should be stored once opened (2024), washing raw chicken (1905), use different chopping boards for different foods (1995) and check use by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food (2020). Note stable data labels of '2%' for 'cook food until it is steaming hot throughout' are not included for legibility reasons.

Consumers' food concerns

From December 2020, participants were also asked to what extent (if any), they were concerned about the quality of food produced in the UK, and the quality of food imported from outside the UK (Figure 22).

In December 2020, 26% of respondents reported being highly/somewhat concerned about the quality of food produced in the UK, this significantly increased to 34% by the end of the tracker in October 2021 (at least 3 in 10 respondents being concerned).

Figure 22: Reported concern about the quality of food produced in the UK (December 2020 – October 2021)

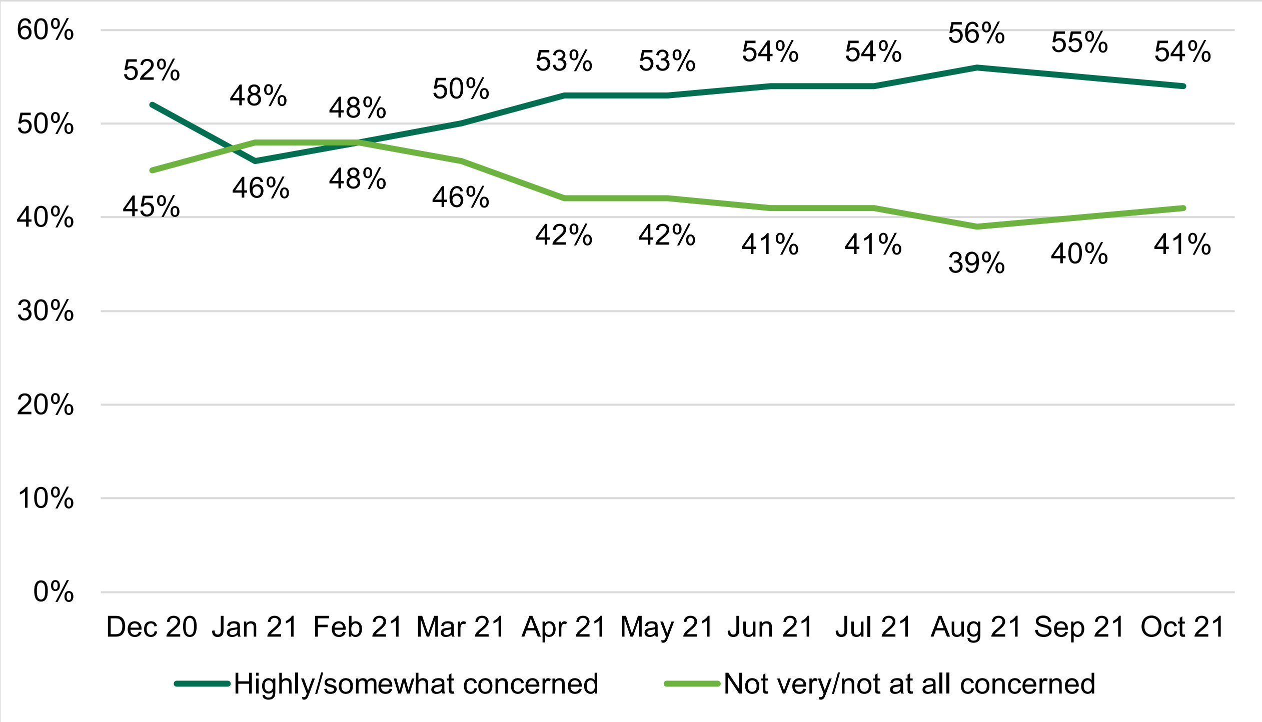


Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Values may not add to 100% as 'don't know' responses not shown. See annex 2 for number of respondents in each wave.

In contrast, in December 2020 at least half (52%) of the respondents reported being highly/somewhat concerned about the quality of food imported from outside the UK (Figure 23). In August 2021 this reached its peak at 56% (significantly higher than

December 2020; 52%) and declined slightly to 54% in October 2021 at the end of the tracker.

Figure 23: Reported concern about the quality of food imported from outside the UK (December 2020 – October 2021)

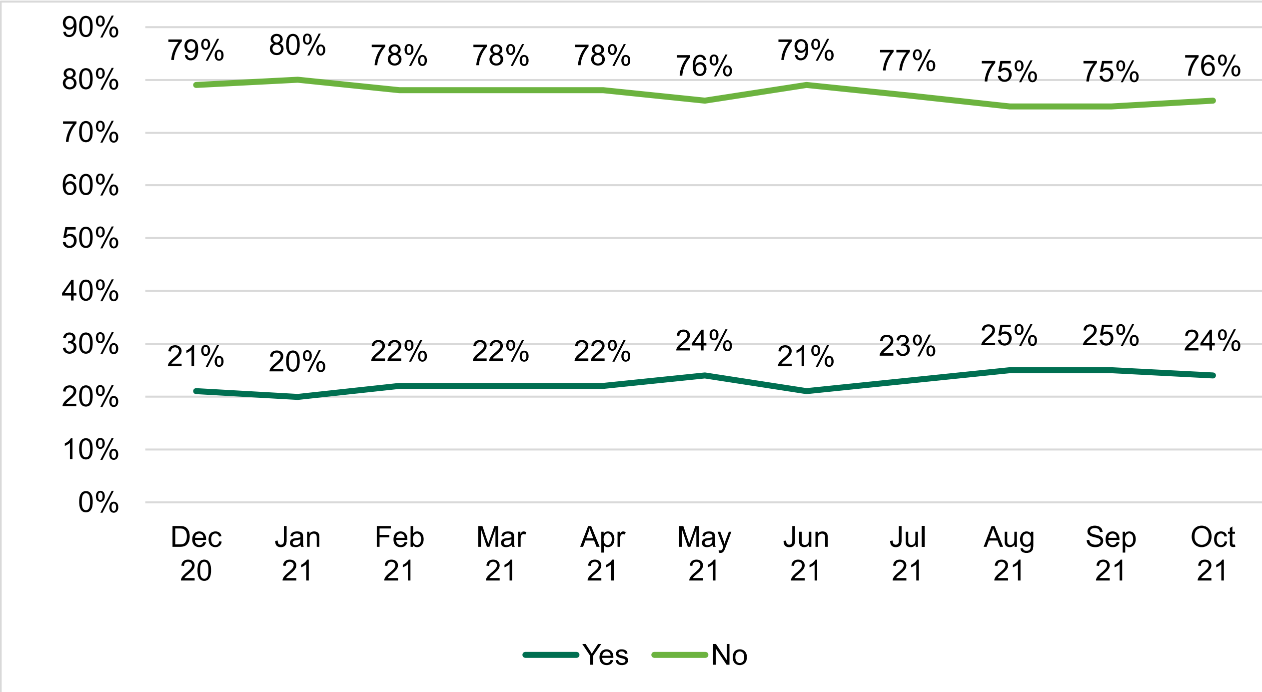


Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Values may not add to 100% as ‘don’t know’ responses not shown. See annex 2 for number of respondents in each wave.

In a separate question, participants were also asked if they had any concerns about the food they eat ‘at the moment’ (Figure 24).

In December 2020, 21% reported a concern about the food they eat, significantly increasing to 25% in August 2021 and September 2021. By the end of the tracker, at least 1 in 5 (24%) respondents reported having a concern, this was significantly more than inception (December 2020, 21%).

Figure 24: Participants who did/did not report they had a concern about the food they eat (December 2020 – October 2021)



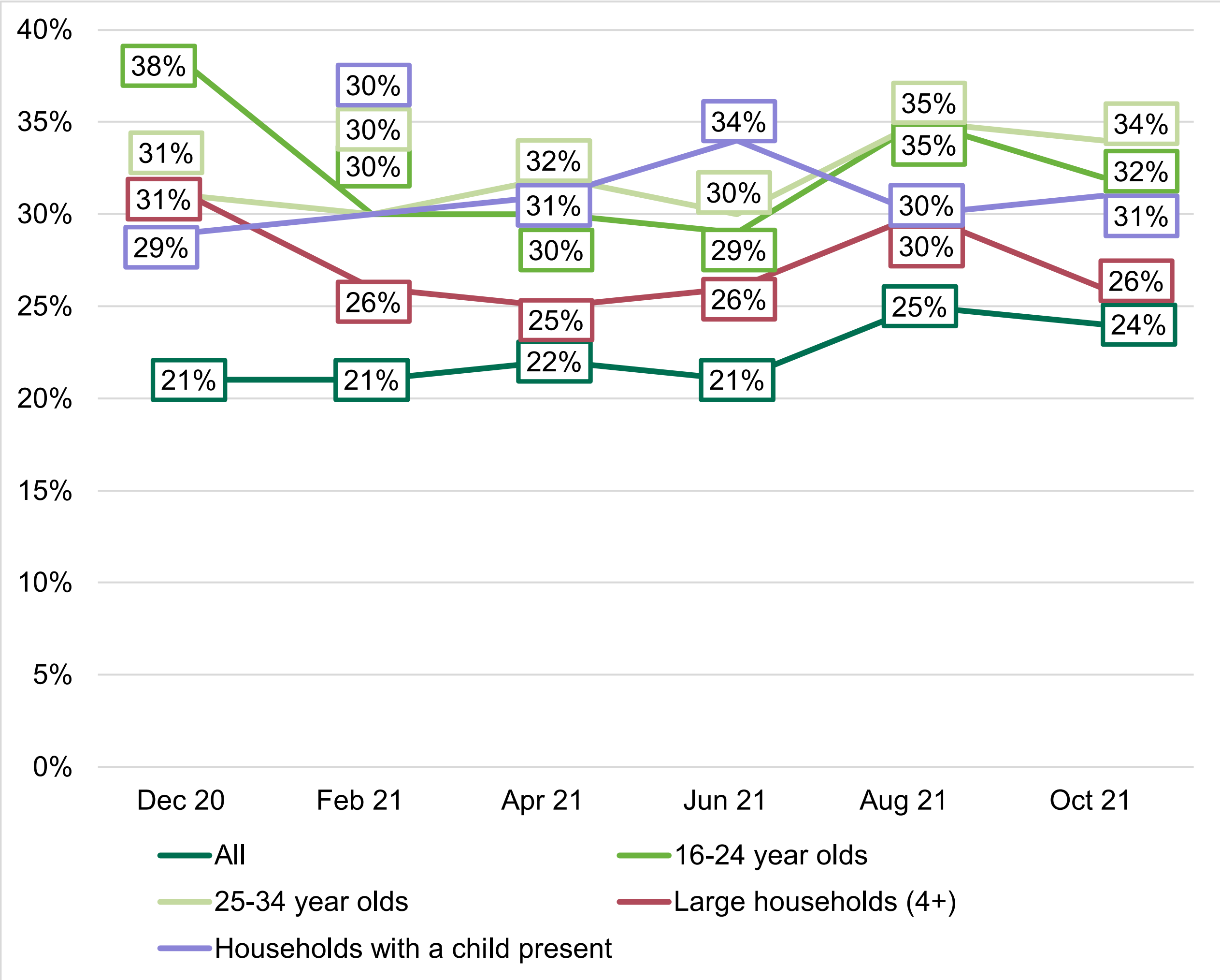
Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, Values may not add to 100% as ‘don’t know’ responses not shown. See annex 2 for the number of respondents per wave.

For most of the waves, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to report having a concern about the food they eat ‘at the moment’ compared to the total population and comparison groups (Figure 25).

- Younger participants (aged 16-24 and 25-34 years old) compared to older participants
- Those living in a larger household (+4) compared to one person households
- Those living in a house with at least one child present compared to households with no children present

As this trend was continuous from December 2020, every other wave has been presented in Figure 25 for legibility purposes.

Figure 25: Participants who did report they had a concern about the food they eat by demographic (December 2020 to October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 16 – 24-year-olds (324), 25 -34-year-olds (388), households with a child present (647) and larger households (4+) (506). Combined affirmative responses shown.

From January 2021 onwards, a preset list was provided as a multi-choice question to respondents who reported a concern 'at the moment' allowing respondents to select multiple issues from a list of concerns (all issues shown in Figure 26). Consistently from January 2021 to the end of the tracker in October 2021, at least 1 in 5 (at least 51%) of respondents who had a concern reported being concerned about 'the healthiness of food in my diet'. From January 2021 (51%) to September 2021 (54%) this was the most commonly reported concern.

Concerns around food prices and animal welfare were also both frequently selected by respondents. Throughout the tracker, at least 2 in 5 (47% and above) of those who were concerned, were concerned about food prices. In January 2021, 48% reported this concern, similar to the end of the tracker in October 2021 (55%). In October 2021, food prices were the most reported concern. Similar to food prices, 2 in 5 (at least 47%) of respondents reported ‘animal welfare’ as a concern. In January 2021, 48% of respondents were concerned about this, similar to the end of the tracker in October 2021 (47%).

Throughout the tracker, at least 3 in 10 (31% and above) respondents had concerns around the impact of COVID-19 on the food supply chain. These concerns were highest in January 2021 (43%), but declined significantly to 36% in October 2021.

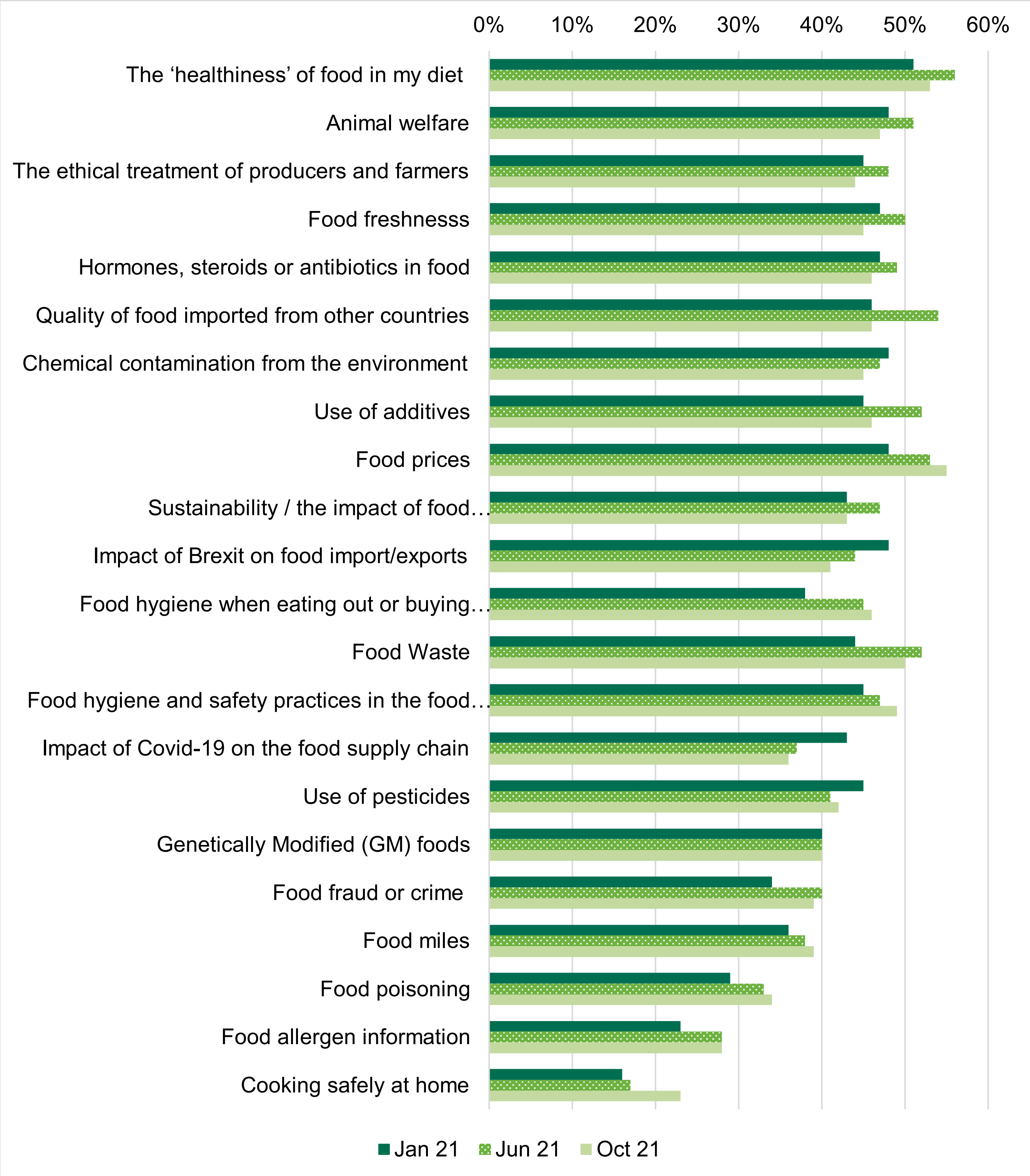
The impact of Brexit on food imports/exports also significantly declined from January 2021 (48%) to October 2021 (41%). Contrastingly, concerns around food hygiene when eating out or buying takeaways increased significantly from 38% in January 2021 to 46% in October 2021.

Throughout monitoring, concerns remained stable with only a few significant changes occurring. Data from January 2021, June 2021 and October 2021 are presented in Figure 26 for legibility (beginning, middle and end of monitoring) with data labels in annex 3.

In the last month of the tracker, October 2021, at least 1 out of 5 respondents who had a concern were concerned about the following:

- Food prices (55%)
- Healthiness of food in their diet (53%)
- Food waste (50%)

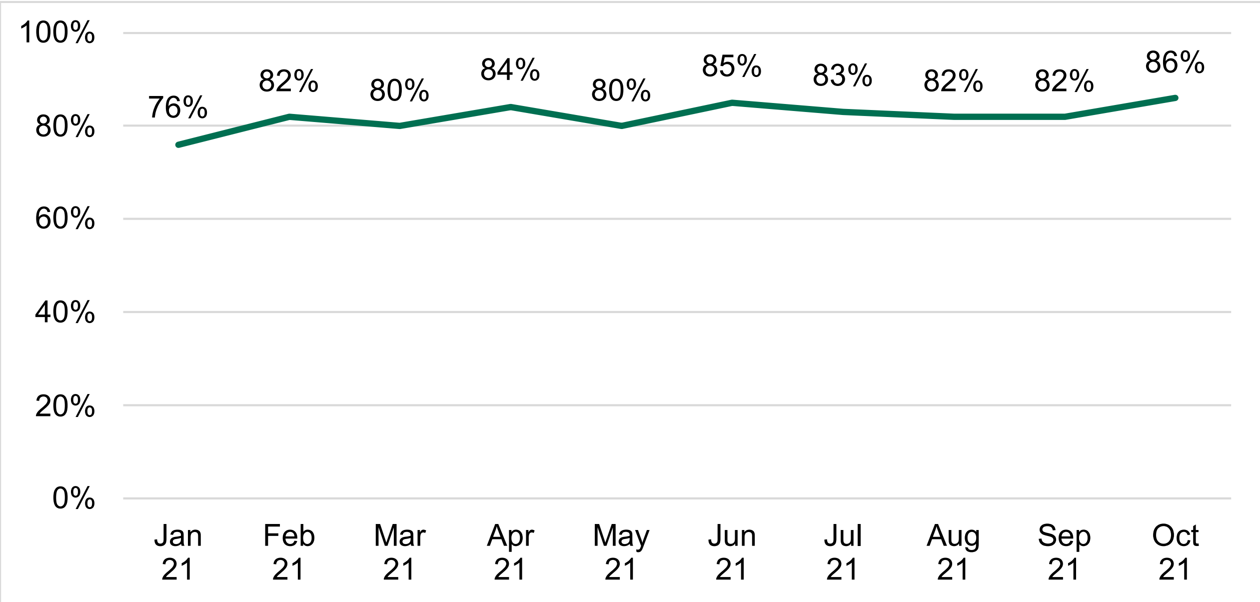
Figure 26: Concerns selected by participants (January 2021, June 2021 and October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 saying they have concerns about food issues. 403 respondents in January 2021, 495 in June 2021 and 509 in October 2021.

Consistently from January 2021 to the end of the tracker the majority (at least 76%) of those who said they had a concern about the food they eat 'at the moment', selected 4 or more from the list provided, which suggests that participants who are concerned, had several concerns. Throughout the tracker, this proportion significantly increased from 76% in January 2021 to 86% in October 2021 (4 out of 5 respondents) (Figure 27).

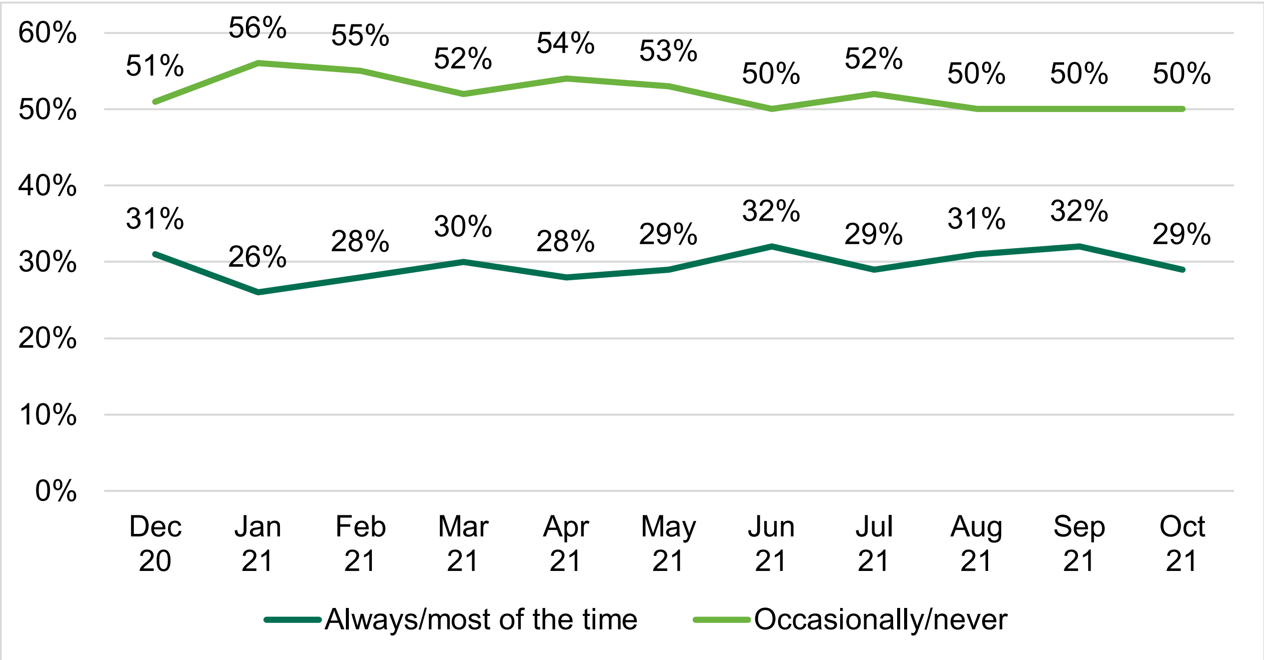
Figure 27: Participants who reported 4 or more concerns (January 2021 – October 2021)



Base: 305 – 432 Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 reporting 4+ concerns about food issues.

In addition to asking about participants concerns, from December 2020, participants were also asked to report how often they check the country of origin on food, and food assurance schemes (such as Red Tractor, The Lion Mark, RSPCA Assured, Soil Association). Figure 28 shows that at least 1 in 2 (at least 50%) respondents occasionally/never check the country of origin on food.

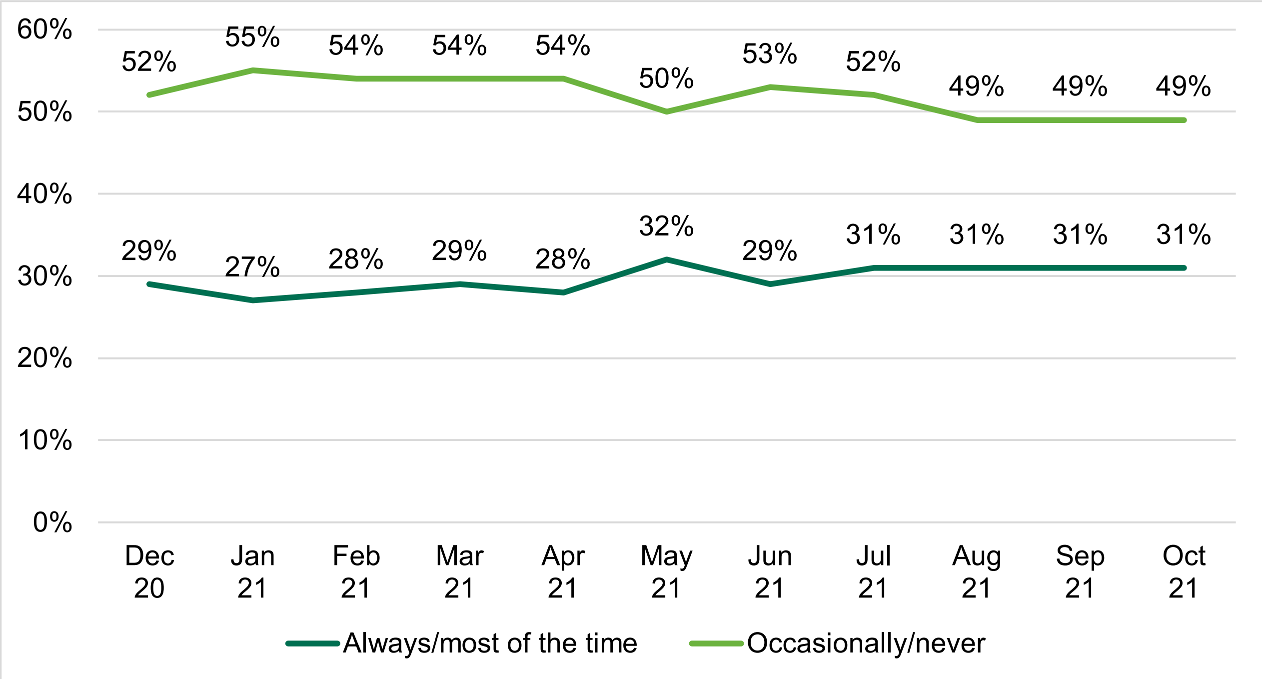
Figure 28: Whether participants check country of origin (December 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Seen annex 2 for number of participants in each wave. May not add up to 100 as 'Don't know' answer not included.

In December 2020, 52% reported occasionally/never checking food assurance scheme labels, significantly reducing to 49% by August 2021 and remaining at 49% until the end of the tracker (October 2021) (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Whether participants check the food assurance scheme logo (December 2020 – October 2021)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Seen annex 2 for number of participants in each wave. May not add up to 100 as 'Don't know' answer not included.

Conclusion

Over 19 months (April 2020 – October 2021), the COVID-19 tracker has collected trends around household food insecurity, food purchasing behaviours, food habits at home, nutrition behaviours, food safety and hygiene in the home and consumers' food concerns.

According to our tracker, the proportion of respondents who reported food insecurity (through cutting or skipping meals for financial reasons, use of food banks or government local authority schemes) had significantly increased from April 2020 to October 2021. Whilst concerns around food affordability and availability remained similar to those recorded at inception of the tracker, the COVID-19 tracker consistently showed that younger age groups, households with children, and larger households were significantly more likely to report measures of food insecurity. Further, those who reported cutting or skipping meals for financial reasons were significantly more likely to eat food (cheese, smoked fish, cooked meat, bagged salad and milk) past the use-by date.

From August 2020 to October 2021, the majority of respondents in our tracker reported positive nutrition behaviours such as frequently cooking from scratch, eating healthy meals and positive food habits at home such as eating together as a family. However, the majority of respondents also reported frequent unhealthy nutrition behaviours such as snacking on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks, buying processed foods and purchasing takeaways. Throughout the COVID-19 tracker, males and those living in single households were significantly less likely to eat healthy meals. 16-44-year-olds, those living in a house with at least once child present and those living in larger households were significantly more likely to buy processed foods. Males, older participants and those with children in the household were significantly more likely to eat meat.

Finally, our tracker found that consumers' food concerns significantly increased from December 2020 to October 2021, including, concerns around the quality of food produced in the UK and concerns about the food they eat. By the end of our tracker, 1 in 5 respondents expressed a food related concern with 'the healthiness of food in my diet', 'the price of food' and 'animal welfare' being the top three concerns. The COVID-19 tracker showed that younger age groups, households with children, and larger households were significantly more likely to report concerns about the food they eat.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Data Tables

This appendix provides detailed sub-group analysis by demographics, linking to the findings from the main results section of the main report.

Note on interpretation: Significant difference is indicated through the use of letters. Each column (demographic group) has a distinctive letter for example ‘Males (A)’, ‘Females (B)’. If a percentage has ‘SH’ (significantly higher)’ and a letter next to it, it means this figure is significantly higher than the corresponding demographic group. Comparisons are only made between related demographic variables within the same row for example,, across the same wave. An example table is provided below as an illustration.

In the example table below, males (11%) were significantly more likely than males (3%) to not eat a healthy meal in wave 1. In wave 2, males (15%) were significantly more likely than females (3%) to not eat a healthy meal. Significance testing has only been conducted for each row of the table against the comparison demographic group/groups. No commentary is provided on significant difference by column i.e., between males in wave 1 and males in wave 2.

Example table: demographic proportion of respondents reported not eating healthy meals in the preceding month by demographic

Tracker wave	**Males (A)**	**Females (B)**
W1 (April 2020)	11% (SH than B)	1%
W2 (May 2020)	15% (SH than B)	3%

Table 4: Demographic proportion of respondents reported not eating healthy meals in the preceding month by demographic (August 2020 – October 2021)

Tracker wave	Males (A)	Females (B)	Households with one person (C)	Larger households (4+) (D)
W5 (Aug 2020)	5% (SH than B)	3%	7% (SH than D)	3%
W6 (Sep 2020)	7% (SH than B)	2%	7% (SH than D)	3%
W7 (Oct 2020)	6% (SH than B)	3%	6% (SH than D)	3%
W8 (Nov 2020)	6% (SH than B)	3%	9% (SH than D)	4%
W9 (Dec 2020)	6%	5%	8% (SH than D)	5%
W10 (Jan 2021)	5% (SH than B)	3%	5%	4%
W11 (Feb 2021)	6% (SH than B)	2%	8% (SH than D)	2%
W12 (Mar 2021)	5% (SH than B)	3%	6% (SH than D)	3%
W13 (Apr 2021)	6% (SH than B)	3%	8% (SH than D)	3%
W14 (May 2021)	6%	5%	9% (SH than D)	5%
W15 (Jun 2021)	6% (SH than B)	3%	8% (SH than D)	4%
W16 (Jul 2021)	6%	4%	9% (SH than D)	3%
W17 (Aug 2021)	4%	3%	8% (SH than D)	2%
W18 (Sep 2021)	6%	4%	9% (SH than D)	4%
W19 (Oct 2021)	7% (SH than B)	3%	9% (SH than D)	5%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the total number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: male (1006), female (1004), households with only one person (418), larger households (4+) (506). Combined affirmative responses shown.

Table 5: Proportion of respondents reported eating meat in the preceding month by demographic (August 2020 – October 2021)

Tracker wave	Males (A)	Females (B)	16 – 24-year-olds (C)	25 – 34-year-olds (D)	55–75-year-olds (E)	Households with no child present (F)	Households with at least one child (G)
W5 (Aug 2020)	93% (SH than B)	88%	88%	88%	93% (SH than C, D)	89%	94% (SH than F)
W6 (Sep 2020)	92% (SH than B)	89%	89%	88%	93% (SH than C, D)	91%	90%
W7 (Oct 2020)	92% (SH than B	88%	91%	87%	91%	90%	92%
W8 (Nov 2020)	93% (SH than B	88%	89%	89%	92% (SH than D)	89%	94% (SH than F)
W9 (Dec 2020)	93% (SH than B)	89%	91%	89%	91%	90%	93% (SH than F)
W10 (Jan 2021)	93% (SH than B)	88%	87%	89%	93% (SH C, D)	89%	92%
W11 (Feb 2021)	93% (SH than B)	88%	87%	89%	95% (SH than C, D	90%	93% (SH than F)
W12 (Mar 2021)	93% (SH than B)	89%	90%	91%	94% (SH than C)	91%	92%

Tracker wave	Males (A)	Females (B)	16 – 24-year-olds (C)	25 – 34-year-olds (D)	55–75-year-olds (E)	Households with no child present (F)	Households with at least one child (G)
W13 (Apr 2021)	94% (SH than B)	90%	89%	92%	95% (SH than C)	90%	93% (SH than F)
W14 (May 2021)	92% (SH than B)	89%	88%	91%	94% (SH than C)	89%	93% (SH than F)
W15 (Jun 2021)	93% (SH than B)	87%	88%	87%	93% (SH than C, D)	89%	92% (SH than F)
W16 (Jul 2021)	92% (SH than B)	88%	89%	87%	92% (SH than C)	89%	92% (SH than F)
W17 (Aug 2021)	92% (SH than B)	87%	90%	91%	90%	88%	93% (SH than F)
W18 (Sep 2021)	91%	89%	91%	88%	89%	88%	93% (SH than F)
W19 (Oct 2021)	92% (SH than B)	87%	87%	88%	92% (SH than C, D)	88%	92% (SH than F)

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the total number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: male (1006), female (1004), 55-75 year olds (610), 16-24 year olds (324), 25-34 year olds (388), households with a child present (647), households with no children (1412). Combined affirmative responses shown.

Table 6: Proportion of respondents reported buying processed food in the preceding month by age (August 2020 – October 2021)

Tracker wave	16 – 24-year-olds (A)	25 – 34-year-olds (B)	35 – 44 years-olds (C)	55-75 years-olds (D)
W5 (Aug 2020)	82%	83% (SH than D)	85% (SH than D)	76%
W6 (Sep 2020)	88% (SH than C, D)	88% (SH than, C, D)	82% (SH than D)	74%
W7 (Oct 2020)	86% (SH than D)	82% (SH than D)	83% (SH than D)	74%
W8 (Nov 2020)	87% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	85% (SH than D)	73%
W9 (Dec 2020)	85% (SH than D)	89% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	74%
W10 (Jan 2021)	82% (SH than D)	84% (SH than D)	81% (SH than D)	69%
W11 (Feb 2021)	85% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	77%
W12 (Mar 2021)	87% (SH than D)	85% (SH than D)	83% (SH than D)	77%
W13 (Apr 2021)	88% (SH than D)	88% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	73%
W14 (May 2021)	88% (SH than D)	89% (SH than D)	84% (SH than D)	79%
W15 (Jun 2021)	85% (SH than D)	85% (SH than D)	80%	76%
W16 (Jul 2021)	85% (SH than D)	85% (SH than D)	84% (SH than D)	74%
W17 (Aug 2021)	87% (SH than D)	88% (SH than D)	84% (SH than D)	76%

Tracker wave	16 – 24-year-olds (A)	25 – 34-year-olds (B)	35 – 44 years-olds (C)	55-75 years-olds (D)
W18 (Sep 2021)	86% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	83% (SH than D)	74%
W19 (Oct 2021)	83% (SH than D)	87% (SH than D)	85% (SH than D)	74%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: 16 – 24-year-olds (324), 25 -34-year-olds (388) and 55-75 years old (610).

Table 7: Proportion of respondents reported buying processed food in the preceding month by demographic (August 2020 – October 2021)

Tracker wave	Household with at least one child (A)	Household with no children (B)	Larger households (4+) (C)	Households with one person (D)
W5 (Aug 2020)	85% (SH than B)	80%	83%	79%
W6 (Sep 2020)	87% (SH than B)	79%	85% (SH than D)	78%
W7 (Oct 2020)	87% (SH than B)	77%	84% (SH than D)	73%
W8 (Nov 2020)	92% (SH than B)	78%	87% (SH than D)	77%
W9 (Dec 2020)	87% (SH than B)	80%	87% (SH than D)	80%
W10 (Jan 2021)	84% (SH than B)	76%	80% (SH than D)	77%
W11 (Feb 2021)	87% (SH than B)	80%	84% (SH than D)	76%

Tracker wave	Household with at least one child (A)	Household with no children (B)	Larger households (4+) (C)	Households with one person (D)
W12 (Mar 2021)	88% (SH than B)	79%	87% (SH than D)	74%
W13 (Apr 2021)	90% (SH than B)	78%	89% (SH than D)	75%
W14 (May 2021)	90% (SH than B)	82%	88% (SH than D)	80%
W15 (Jun 2021)	89% (SH than B)	79%	87% (SH than D)	76%
W16 (Jul 2021)	88% (SH than B)	78%	85% (SH than D)	78%
W17 (Aug 2021)	90% (SH than B)	79%	88% (SH than D)	75%
W18 (Sep 2021)	89% (SH than B)	78%	87% (SH than D)	75%
W19 (Oct 2021)	86% (SH than B)	79%	85% (SH than D)	76%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, see annex 2 for the number of participants included in each wave. Indicative base sizes in October 2021 are: households with a child present (647), households with no children (1412), larger households (4+) (506), households with only one person (418). Combined affirmative responses shown.

Table 8: Concerns selected by participants (January 2021, June 2021 and October 2021) data labels.

Concern	January 2021	June 2021	October 2021
The 'healthiness' of food in my diet	51%	56%	53%
Animal welfare	48%	51%	47%

Concern	January 2021	June 2021	October 2021
The ethical treatment of producers and farmers	45%	48%	44%
Food freshness	48%	50%	45%
Hormones, steroids or antibiotics in food	47%	49%	46%
Quality of food imported from other countries	46%	54%	46%
Chemical contamination from the environment	48%	47%	45%
Use of additives	45%	52%	46%
Food prices	48%	53%	55%
Sustainability / the impact of food production on the environment	43%	47%	43%
Impact of Brexit on food import/exports	48%	44%	41%
Food hygiene when eating out or buying takeaways	38%	45%	46%
Food Waste	44%	52%	50%
Food hygiene and safety practices in the food supply chain	45%	47%	49%
Impact of Covid-19 on the food supply chain	43%	37%	36%
Use of pesticides	45%	41%	42%
Genetically Modified (GM) foods	40%	40%	40%
Food fraud or crime	34%	40%	39%
Food miles	36%	38%	39%
Food poisoning	29%	33%	34%
Food allergen information	23%	28%	28%
Cooking safely at home	16%	17%	23%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 saying they have concerns about food issues. 403 respondents in January 2021, 444 in June 2021 and 509 in October 2021.

Appendix 2: Key changes to lockdown restrictions

Table 9: Information sourced from Institute for Government. All National lockdowns have been included, with the most prominent updates on local restrictions. All lockdown details are available via the Institute for Government.

Date or period	Event
23rd March 2020	Start of first national (UK) lockdown and 'stay at home' order
10-13th April 2020	Wave 1 data collection (2,039)
8-12th May 2020	Wave 2 data collection (2,040)
10th May 2020	PM announces a conditional plan for lifting lockdown, those who cannot work from home return to work.
23rd June 2020	PM says UK's "national hibernation" coming to an end and announces relaxing of restrictions and 2m social distancing rule
12th -15th June 2020	Wave 3 data collection (2,045)
4th July 2020	First localised lockdowns come into force in UK.
10-14th July 2020	Wave 4 data collection (2,068)
3rd August 2020	'Eat out to Help Out' Scheme begins in the UK
14-17th August 2020	Wave 5 data collection (2,071)
18th-21st September 2020	Wave 6 data collection (2,065)
14th October 2020	A new three tier lock down system introduced in England
16 -20th October 2020	Wave 7 data collection (2,067)
5th November 2020	Second national lockdown comes into force in England
9th November 2020	Welsh 17-day 'firebreak' national lockdown comes to an end
13-16th November 2020	Wave 8 data collection (2,023)
27th November 2020	National lockdown comes into force in Northern Ireland

Date or period	Event
2nd December 2020	Second national lockdown ends after four weeks, England returns to three-tier system.
11-15th December 2020	Wave 9 data collection (2,073)
19th December 2020	Tier 4 restrictions announced for London and South East England. Single-day Christmas restrictions announced in England (similar in Wales and Northern Ireland) Lockdown announced for Wales, with single day break for Christmas.
6th January 2021	England enters third national lockdown
8th January 2021	Northern Ireland enters a national lockdown including remote learning for schools.
15-18th January 2021	Wave 10 data collection (2,131)
12th-15th February 2021	Wave 11 data collection (2,047).
8th March 2021	Beginning of 'Roadmap out of lockdown' starts
12th-15th March 2021	Wave 12 data collection (2,013)
15th March 2021	First stages of Welsh lockdown easing
12th April 2021	Outdoor venues, including pubs and restaurants open. Non-essential retail, hairdressers, public buildings open in England. In Wales all students returned to face-to-face education. In Northern Ireland, all school students returned to school and up to 10 people can meet in a garden.
19th -21st April 2021	Wave 13 data collection (2,049)
30th April 2021	In Northern Ireland, non-essential retails opened, outdoor hospitality and curfew removed on takeaways.
3rd May 2021	Wales move to alert 3, this includes the reopening of gyms and leisure centres.

Date or period	Event
14th – 18th May 2021	Wave 14 data collection (2,043). On the 17th May, Indoor venues reopen, including pubs and restaurants in England and Wales. Limit of 30 people allowed to mix outdoors in England.
11th-14th June 2021	Wave 15 data collection (2,047).
16th-19th July 2021	Wave 16 data collection (2,051). On the 19th July, all legal limits on social contact removed and the final closed sectors of the economy reopen in England for example, nightclubs.
7th August 2021	Wales moved to alert level 0, meaning no legal limits on social contact.
13th – 17th August 2021	Wave 17 data collection (2,065)
13th – 15th September 2021	Wave 18 data collection (2,064)
15th – 18th October 2021	Wave 19 data collection (2,059)

Appendix 3: Survey questions

The full list of FSA survey questions for Wave 19 (October 2021) is provided below. Please note that the survey questions vary in some waves. A full list of survey questions for any specific wave can be provided on request.

Q1. Which, if any, of the following applies to you? Please select from the options listed

1. I have been advised to self-isolate because I have been contacted via the NHS 'test and trace' scheme or because I have returned from a trip to another country that requires self-isolation on return
2. I am choosing to self-isolate for another reason
3. I, or a member of my household, have suspected COVID-19 symptoms
4. I have physical or mental health condition(s) or illness(es) that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more
5. None of these
6. Prefer not to say

Q2. To what extent, if at all, are you worried about there not being enough food available for you/your household to buy in the next month? Please select one answer only

1. Very worried
2. Somewhat worried
3. Not very worried
4. Not at all worried
5. Don’t know
6. Prefer not to answer

Q3. To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month? Please select one answer only

1. Very worried
2. Somewhat worried
3. Not very worried
4. Not at all worried
5. Don’t know
6. Prefer not to answer

Q4. In the last month have you cut down the size of your meals or skipped meals for any of the following reasons? Please select one answer for each statement.

1. You did not have enough money to buy food
2. You (or others in your household) were not well enough to shop or cook food
3. You had no means to get to the shops to buy food
4. You were unable to get a delivery of food or obtain it in other ways

1. Yes, this happened every week
2. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week
3. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month
4. No, never
5. Don’t know/can’t remember
6. Prefer not to answer

Q5. In the last month, how often, if at all, have you done any of the following? Please select one answer for each statement.

1. Had an online food delivery from a supermarket
2. Purchased food from a takeaway, either direct or online
3. Purchased food from a local supplier (i.e. farm shops, veg box), either direct or online
4. Had a food delivery from an online food ordering company (for example, Deliveroo, Just Eat, Uber Eats)
5. Eaten food at a restaurant, pub, bar or cafe
6. Purchased food through an online marketplace such as Facebook marketplace, Etsy, Gumtree, Instagram, Nextdoor etc.

1. Every day
2. Most days but not every day
3. 2 to 3 times a week
4. Every week
5. Some weeks but not every week
6. Just one week in the last month
7. I have not done this in the last month
8. Don't know/can't remember
9. Prefer not to answer

Q6. Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you did not buy a take-away in the past month? Please select from the options listed

1. I prefer to cook at home
2. I prefer to eat more healthily
3. I can't afford take-aways
4. I am concerned about COVID-19
5. I want to save money
6. I am concerned about adequate food hygiene
7. Other (specify)

Q7. In the last month, how often, if at all, have you arranged for food to be delivered to your house in the following ways? Please select one answer for each statement.

1. Through a food sharing app (for example, Olio)
2. Through a government or local authority scheme
3. Through a food charity or food bank

1. Every week
2. Some weeks but not every week
3. Just one week in the last month
4. I have not done this in the last month
5. Don't know/can't remember
6. Prefer not to answer

Q8a. Which of the following, if any, are reasons you have had food delivered to your house from a food bank or a food charity in the last month? Please choose up to 3 options.

1. We did not have enough money to buy food
2. Someone in the household has been self-isolating because they have COVID-19 symptoms, have been contacted by the NHS 'test and trace' scheme, or have returned from a trip to another country that requires self-isolation on return
3. There was a delay or problems with benefits payments
4. Someone in the household lost their job
5. Someone in the household was on furlough or on a COVID-19 specific Government Job support Scheme
6. We had difficulties travelling to get food ourselves
7. Other (please specify)
8. Prefer not to answer

Q9. In the last month have you or anyone in your family eaten any of the following foods that has gone past its 'use by' date? Please select one answer for each food.

1. Cooked meats

2. Smoked fish
3. Bagged salads
4. Cheese
5. Milk

1. Yes, this happened every week
2. Yes, this happened some weeks but not every week
3. Yes, this happened just one week in the last month
4. No, never
5. We haven't eaten this in the last month
6. Don't know/can't remember
7. Prefer not to say

Q10 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you done any of the following?

Please select one answer for each statement.

1. Cooked food from scratch
2. Cooked to freeze food for later
3. Wasted or thrown away food
4. Bought processed food
5. Eaten together with the family
6. Snacked on cakes, biscuits, confectionery and savoury snacks
7. Bought food from local shops
8. Eaten healthy meals
9. Eaten meat

1. Every day
2. Most days
3. 2 to 3 times a week
4. At least once a week
5. At least once a fortnight
6. At least once a month
7. I have not done this in the last month

8. Don’t know/can’t remember
9. Prefer not to answer

Q11 How often, if at all, do you do each of the following?

Please select one answer for each statement.

1. Cook food until it is steaming hot throughout
2. Follow instructions on food packaging which tells you how long food should be stored once opened
3. Washing raw chicken
4. Use different chopping boards for different foods
5. Check use-by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food

1. Always
2. Most of the time
3. Sometimes
4. Never
5. I don’t cook

Q12. Thinking about food in the UK today, how concerned, if at all, do you feel about…?

Please select one answer for each statement.

1. The quality of food produced in the UK?
2. The quality of food imported from outside the UK?

1. Highly concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Not very concerned
4. Not concerned at all
5. Don't Know

Q13. When shopping for food, how often, if at all, do you check:

1. The country of origin
2. Food assurance scheme logos (for example, Red Tractor, The Lion Mark, RSPCA Assured, Soil Association) [In the UK, food assurance schemes, such as Red Tractor and Lion Eggs, help to provide consumers and businesses with guarantees that food has been produced to specific standards of food safety or animal welfare]

1. Always
2. Most of the time
3. About half the time
4. Occasionally
5. Never
6. Don’t know

Q14 Thinking generally, do you have any concerns about the food you eat at the moment?

1. Yes
2. No

Q14a Which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. If you have a concern that is not listed, please select ‘other’ and write your answer in a few words.

1. The ‘healthiness’ of food in my diet (for example, the number of calories, fat, sugar or salt in the food you eat or the nutritional content of your diet)
2. Cooking safely at home
3. Food poisoning (for example, Salmonella and E. Coli)
4. Food hygiene when eating out or buying takeaways
5. Food hygiene and safety practices in the food supply chain. [:The food supply chain is everything that goes into bringing food to our plates; from food production, transportation, packaging, storage, sale of produce through to consumption and disposal].
6. The use of pesticides
7. The use of additives (for example, preservatives and colouring)

8. Chemical contamination from the environment (for example, lead in food)
9. Hormones, steroids or antibiotics in food
10. Genetically Modified (GM) foods
11. Food prices
12. Food allergen information (for example, availability and accuracy)
13. Food waste
14. Animal welfare
15. Food miles (for example, the distance food travels)
16. Sustainability / the impact of food production on the environment
17. Food fraud or crime (for example, food not being what the label says it is)
18. The quality of food imported from other countries
19. Food freshness (for example, how long it has been stored before reaching your plate)
20. The impact of COVID-19 on the food supply chain. [The food supply chain is everything that goes into bringing food to our plates; from food production, transportation, packaging, storage, sale of produce through to consumption and disposal].
21. The impact of Brexit on food import/exports
22. The ethical treatment of producers and farmers (for example, Fair Trade)
23. The impact of labour shortages on food supply
24. CO_2 shortages in the food industry
25. Availability of food/food shortages
26. Other - please specify
27. None of these
28. Don’t know

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