

The 2014

FOOD and YOU

Survey

England Bulletin
Executive Summary

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Executive summary

This summary presents the key findings for England from Wave 3 of the Food and You survey, commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA or the Agency). The Food and You survey is used to collect information about reported behaviours, attitudes and knowledge relating to food safety issues. It provides data on people's reports of their food purchasing, storage, preparation, consumption and factors that may affect these, such as eating habits, influences on where respondents choose to eat out and experiences of food poisoning.

Wave 1 of the survey was carried out in 2010, Wave 2 in 2012 and Wave 3 in 2014.

Wave 3 consisted of 3,453 interviews with a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over across the UK. In total 1,951 interviews were conducted in England, on which this report is based.

In addition to this executive summary, descriptive overviews of the key findings for England from Wave 3 have been published in four separate bulletins, one for each of the following main topics:

- Eating, cooking and shopping
- Food safety in the home
- Eating outside the home
- Experience of food poisoning and attitudes towards food safety and food production

Eating, cooking and shopping

Around six in ten respondents (59%) reported that they cooked or prepared food for themselves every day. Women were more likely to report preparing food for themselves (74%) and others (54%) on a daily basis compared with men (44% and 18% respectively). Those aged 16-24 were less likely than older respondents to report cooking for themselves every day (43% compared with 62% of those aged 25 and over). Those aged 16-24 (18%) and 75 and over (24%) were less likely than respondents aged 25-74 (41%) to report cooking for others on a daily basis.

Four per cent of respondents reported that they were allergic to certain food. Of these, 65% said they had seen a doctor about their allergy and 38% said that it was clinically diagnosed. This amounts to two per cent of respondents overall who reported having a clinically diagnosed food allergy. In total 12% of respondents reported living in a household in which someone had a food allergy (not necessarily clinically diagnosed).

Respondents were most likely to report having learnt to cook from a family member (73%) with 56% saying this was the main way they had learnt. Around a quarter (24%) reported that their cooking was mainly self-taught. There was greater variety in the main ways respondents reported having learned about food safety: 35% reported learning about food safety from family and friends, 28% reported being self-taught, 14% learnt at school and 12% on a course.

While respondents were most likely to report currently finding information about food safety from family and friends (38%), food TV shows (34%) and product packaging (30%), they were most likely to say that, in the future, they would use internet search engines to find information on food safety (reported by 49% of respondents). The proportion using internet search engines at present (18%) was higher than at Wave 2 (15%). The proportion of respondents saying they would use a number of sources in the future was lower than at Wave 2, particularly product packaging (13% compared with 21% at Wave 2) and a range of printed media.

Over half of respondents (57%) said their household did a 'main' food shop on a weekly basis and 87% said large supermarkets were used for their household's main shopping trip. Around a quarter (27%) relied solely on large supermarkets for their household's food shopping.

Women were more likely than men to say they were responsible for all or most of their household's food and grocery shopping (67% compared with 32%).

Respondents were most likely to report usually buying raw meat that was fresh (93%) rather than frozen (32%), not specifically free range or organic (72%) and pre-packaged (76%). This was most likely to be from a large supermarket (71%) although 26% reported usually buying meat from an independent butcher.

Overall, 53% of respondents at Wave 3 said that they had made at least one change in their buying or eating arrangements in the last six months for financial reasons, compared with 62% at Wave 2.

Reports of a number of changes in buying or eating arrangements in the previous six months for financial reasons differed between Waves 1 and 2, but these differences were not found between Wave 1 and Wave 3. For example, at Wave 3, 27% of respondents reported that they had bought items on special offer more, similar to the proportion at Wave 1 (29%), compared with 38% at Wave 2.

Respondents at Wave 3 were more likely to report eating at home more (23%) compared with Wave 1 (16%), but similar to the proportion at Wave 2.

Food safety in the home

The extent to which reported food safety practices were in line with Agency recommendations varied depending on the type of practice.

Eight in ten respondents (80%) reported **cleaning** behaviours in line with recommended practices, saying they always washed their hands before starting to prepare or cook food and after handling raw meat, poultry or fish.

Half (50%) of those who reported storing raw meat and poultry in the fridge reported practices in line with those recommended to avoid **cross contamination**. This meant that they reported storing raw meat and poultry separately from ready-to-eat foods and in sealed containers or at the bottom of the fridge. Three quarters (75%) reported keeping certain foods in certain parts of the fridge, and, of these, 76% said this was for reasons of food safety, hygiene, or to stop cross contamination.

Other behaviours that risk cross contamination were also explored. Around half of respondents (49%) said they always used different chopping boards for different types of food. Forty per cent of respondents reported that they never washed raw meat or poultry, excluding chicken, and 35% said they never washed raw chicken.

Just over half of respondents who had a fridge (53%) said the fridge temperature should be between 0°C and 5°C (the recommended temperature). In total, 12% of respondents who had a fridge reported behaviour in line with recommended practice for **chilling** (i.e. checking that their fridge temperature is between 0°C and 5°C, at least monthly, using a thermometer). Almost half of respondents who had a fridge (47%) reported never checking their fridge temperature.

Around half of respondents (48%) reported generally leaving meat or fish to defrost at room temperature, which is not in line with recommended practice for defrosting food.

The majority of respondents reported **cooking** food until it is steaming hot throughout (82%) in line with recommended practice. Ninety-two per cent of respondents reported that they never ate chicken or turkey if the meat was pink or had pink or red juices, compared with 88% at Wave 1. The majority said they would reheat food no more than once (90%), in line with recommended **reheating** practice.

Around three quarters of respondents (73%) reported that they would eat leftover food within two days of cooking it, in line with recommended practice.

Six in ten respondents (60%) reported behaviours in line with FSA recommended practice for **use by dates**, stating that the use by date is an indicator of whether food is safe to eat, and that they checked the date when they were about to cook or prepare food.

As at Waves 1 and 2, women were generally more likely than men to report food safety practices in line with recommended practice. For example, women were more likely to report always washing their hands before preparing food (89%) and after handling raw meat (91%) compared with men (79% and 81% respectively). Women were also more likely to report always cooking food until it is steaming hot throughout (90% compared with 74% of men) and always checking use by dates before cooking or preparing food (69% compared with 60%). Women were, however, more likely than men to report (ever) washing raw chicken (59% compared with 49%) and were less likely to report the fridge temperature should be below 5°C (47% compared with 59%).

Younger respondents (aged 16-24) and the oldest respondents (aged 75 and over) were less likely to report some practices in line with recommended practice compared with the other age groups (e.g. hand washing, food storage, and use of use by dates). Similar findings were observed at previous waves of the survey.

Eating outside the home

As at Wave 2, 75% of respondents reported eating out or buying food to take away in the last week, compared with 68% at Wave 1. Around one in ten respondents (11%) reported eating out six times or more in the last week.

When asked what was important to them when deciding where to eat out, 66% of respondents said that the cleanliness and hygiene of eating establishments was important. Three in ten said a good hygiene rating was important (30%), compared with 24% at Wave 1 and 26% at Wave 2. Good service (57%), recommendations and reviews (49%) and price (49%) were also selected as important factors when deciding where to eat out. Women were more likely than men to say that cleanliness and hygiene were important when deciding where to eat (70% compared with 62% of men).

Forty-five per cent of respondents who ate out said that food was less safe when eating out compared with eating at home.

While 73% of respondents said they were aware of standards of hygiene when eating out, 15% said they were not. Reported awareness of hygiene standards when eating out was lowest among those aged 16-34 (65%), and highest among those aged 65 and over (83%).

Respondents were most likely to report judging the hygiene standards of food establishments from their appearance (55%) and the appearance of their staff (40%). Around two-fifths (43%) said they used a hygiene certificate or sticker to judge hygiene standards, compared with 33% at Wave 1 and 28% at Wave 2. Twenty-three per cent of respondents specifically cited using a sticker at Wave 3, compared with nine per cent at Wave 1 and 13% at Wave 2.

Around three-quarters of respondents (76%) reported having seen the stickers and certificates belonging to different food hygiene rating schemes, compared with 55% at Wave 2. Recognition of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in England and Northern Ireland was higher than at Wave 2, with 65% of respondents in England recognising the scheme compared with 33% at Wave 2. The vast majority of those respondents who recognised the FHRS certificate or sticker said they had seen it in the window or door of a food establishment (91%).

Overall, 20% of respondents reported having used a hygiene rating scheme in the past 12 months to check an establishment's rating before deciding to eat there, compared with 10% at Wave 2. Amongst these respondents using a scheme, 77% said they had used the information in the establishment's door or window, compared with 90% at Wave 2. Twenty-six per cent reported that they had checked the rating on the internet, compared with 15% at Wave 2. Of those who had used a scheme, 90% said they found it helpful.

Food poisoning and attitudes towards food safety and production

As at Waves 1 and 2, two-fifths of respondents (40%) reported experiencing food poisoning in the past. Of those who reported having food poisoning in the past year, 19% said they had visited a doctor or gone to hospital as a result, and 12% said that their food poisoning had been medically diagnosed. As a consequence of having had food poisoning, 33% reported that they had stopped eating at certain food establishments.

Men were more likely than women to report having food poisoning more than once (21% compared with 14%).

Around three-quarters of respondents (77%) agreed with the statement 'I am unlikely to get food poisoning from food prepared in my own home' and this was higher than the proportion at Wave 1 (72%). Twenty-three per cent agreed that 'it is just bad luck if you get food poisoning', compared with 28% at Wave 1. As at previous waves just over four in ten respondents (42%) agreed that 'if you eat out a lot you are more likely to get food poisoning'.

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) agreed with the statement 'restaurants should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene', compared with 82% at Wave 1.

The proportion of respondents saying they always avoid throwing food away was 58% compared with 52% at Wave 2 and 48% at Wave 1.

As at Wave 2, respondents were more likely to express concern about food imported from outside the UK (65%) than about food produced in the UK (43%). Reported concerns about both were higher at Wave 3 than at Wave 2 (when 61% and 35% of respondents reported concern about these issues respectively). Greater concern was reported about meat than about fruit and vegetables: 66% of respondents said they were concerned about imported meat (compared with 62% at Wave 1) and 39% that they were concerned about meat produced in the UK (compared with 34% at Wave 1), while 42% said they were concerned about imported fruit and vegetables and 26% about UK produced fruit and vegetables.