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UK Bulletin

Food and You 2014: UK Bulletin

Executive summary

Authors:

Gillian Prior, TNS BMRB
Rachel Phillips, TNS BMRB
Catherine O'Driscoll, TNS BMRB

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This document has been revised to correct an error in the original publication. The Wave 2 and Wave 1 percentages on page 7 relating to the proportion of respondents who reported using a hygiene certificate or sticker to judge hygiene standards were previously reported the wrong way around. This error has now been corrected.

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Executive summary

This summary presents the key findings 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 addition to this executive summary, descriptive overviews of the key findings 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

Six in ten respondents (60%) reported that they cooked or prepared food for themselves every day. Women were more likely to report preparing food for themselves (74%) and others (55%) on a daily basis compared with men (45% and 19% respectively). Those aged 16-24 were less likely than older respondents to report cooking for themselves every day (45% compared with 62% of those aged 25 and over). Those aged 16-24 (19%) and 75 and over (25%) were less likely than respondents aged 25-74 (42%) to report cooking for others on a daily basis.

Four per cent of respondents reported that they were allergic to certain food. Of these, 66% said they had seen a doctor about their allergy and 40% 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 11% of respondents reported living in a household in which someone has a food allergy (not necessarily clinically diagnosed).

Respondents were most likely to report having learnt to cook from a family member (73%) with 57% 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 (37%), food TV shows (34%) and product packaging (29%), they were most likely to say that, in the future, they would use internet search engines to find information on food safety (reported by 48% 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' shop on a weekly basis and 87% said large supermarkets were used for their household's main shopping trip. Almost three in ten (28%) relied solely on large supermarkets for their household 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 (68% compared with 32%).

Respondents were most likely to report buying raw meat that was fresh (93%) rather than frozen (32%), not specifically free range or organic (73%) and pre-packaged (76%). This was most likely to be from a large supermarket (70%) although 28% reported buying meat from an independent butcher.

Overall, 52% 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; this is lower than the proportion at Wave 2 (60%).

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, 26% of respondents reported that they had bought items on special offer more, similar to the proportion at Wave 1 (29%), compared with 37% at Wave 2.

Respondents at Wave 3 were more likely to report eating at home more (22%) compared with Wave 1 (16%), and this was 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 out of 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.

Around half (51%) 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, 77% 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-two per cent of respondents reported that they never washed raw meat or poultry, excluding chicken. Fewer respondents said that they never washed raw chicken specifically (36%).

Just over half of respondents who had a fridge (53%) said the fridge temperature should be between 0 and 5 °C (the recommended temperature). In total, 11% 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 and 5 °C, at least monthly, using a thermometer). Almost half of respondents who had a fridge (47%) reported never checking their fridge temperature.

The majority of respondents reported **cooking** food until it is steaming hot throughout (82%) in line with recommended practice. Ninety-one 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.

Three quarters of respondents (75%) reported that they would eat leftover food within two days of cooking it, in line with recommended practice.

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 hands before preparing food (89%) and after handling raw meat (91%) compared with men (78% and 81% respectively). Women were also more likely to report always cooking food until it is steaming hot throughout (90% compared with 75% of men) and always checking use by dates before cooking or preparing food (70% compared with 61%). Women were, however, more likely than men to report (ever) washing raw chicken (57% compared with 48%) and were less likely to report the fridge temperature should be below 5°C (48% compared with 58%).

Younger respondents (aged 16-24) and the oldest respondents (aged 75+) 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 69% at Wave 1. One in ten respondents (10%) reported eating out six times or more in the last week.

When asked what was important to them when deciding where to eat out, 65% 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. Good service (56%), recommendations and reviews (49%) and price (48%) 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 61% of men) and that a good hygiene rating was important (32% compared with 28% 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, 14% said they were not. Reported awareness of hygiene standards when eating out was lowest among those aged 16-24 (65%), and highest among those aged 75 and over (84%).

Respondents were most likely to report judging the hygiene standards of food establishments from their appearance (55%) or the appearance of their staff (40%). Around two-fifths (42%) said they used a hygiene certificate or sticker to judge hygiene standards, compared with 29% at Wave 2 and 32% at Wave 1. 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 56% 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, and 83% in Northern Ireland compared with 66% at Wave 2. Recognition of the FHRS in Wales was reported by 72% of respondents living in Wales. Recognition of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) for Scotland was reported by 59% of respondents in Scotland, compared with 44% at Wave 2. The vast majority of those in each country who recognised the certificate or sticker from each scheme said they had seen it in the window or door of a food establishment (ranging from 88% to 98% for each scheme).

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, 79% said they had used the information in the establishment's door or window, compared with 89% at Wave 2. Twenty five per cent reported that they had checked the rating on the internet, compared with 17% at Wave 2. Of those who had used a scheme, 91% said they found it helpful.

Food poisoning and attitudes towards food safety and production

As at Waves 1 and 2, around two-fifths of respondents (39%) 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 13% 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 (20% compared with 13%), and women were more likely than men to say that they had gone to see a doctor if they had had food poisoning in the last year (28% of women who said that they had experienced food poisoning in the last year went to see a doctor or went to hospital because of it compared with 11% of men).

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'. 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' and this was lower than 82% at Wave 1.

The proportion of respondents saying they always avoid throwing food away was higher at 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 (42%). Levels of concern 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 38% that they were concerned about meat produced in the UK (compared with 33% at Wave 1), while 42% said they were concerned about imported fruit and vegetables and 25% about UK produced fruit and vegetables.