

Statement of Statistical Sources for Food and You reports

Statistical end-product

Title of the statistical product derived from an administrative/management source

Food and You (including regional reports for Wales and N Ireland)

Name of the organisation responsible for this statistical end-product

Food Standards Agency

Name/email address of contact point for this product

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Periodicity of release

Every two years (last published April 2019)

Underlying survey

Name/title of the original data source

Food and You survey

The purpose of the survey

The Food and You survey is the FSA's principal source of methodologically robust and representative evidence on consumers' self-reported food-related activities and attitudes. Understanding the UK population's reported behaviour, attitudes and knowledge in relation to food issues is key to measuring the FSA's progress towards its strategic objectives, providing evidence that supports the FSA's communication activities, identifying topics for further research or action and identifying groups for future interventions (e.g. those most at risk or those among whom FSA policies and initiatives are likely to have the greatest impact).

The objectives of the Food and You Survey were to explore public understanding and engagement with food safety; assess knowledge of messages and interventions aimed at raising awareness and changing behaviour; describe public attitudes to food production and the food system; monitor trends in reported behaviour, attitudes and knowledge (compared with data from the previous four waves or from other sources); identify target groups for future interventions (e.g. those most at risk or those among whom FSA policies and initiatives are likely to have the greatest impact); and provide indicators and evidence for tracking the FSA's strategic plans.

Survey Description

A repeated cross-sectional study using a UK representative multi-stage stratified random sample of around 3500 adults per year.

The face-to-face interview covers the following topics, information about household members, eating patterns (including eating out), shopping patterns, food safety attitudes and behaviour, food insecurity, trust in the FSA and food supply chain, self-reported health, healthy eating (Northern Ireland only), demographics.

Name of the organisation responsible for the survey

Food Standards Agency (FSA)

Data supplier

The first three waves of the survey were carried out by TNS BMRB (in 2010, 2012 and 2014 respectively). National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), have been contracted to carry out later waves.

Unit of inquiry (for example, households, individuals, product)

Individuals

Intended coverage of survey

Adults aged 16 years and over living in private households in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (All UK before Wave 4)

Completeness that is actual coverage (for example, take-up rate)

For Wave 5 overall, the response rate was 48.2%; 47.5% in England, 47.9% in Wales and 52% in Northern Ireland.

Geographical coverage of the statistical product

Currently England, Wales and N Ireland (was United Kingdom).

Lowest level of geographical coverage

Government Office Regions

Previous arrangements no longer in place of the current survey

A consortium comprising TNS BMRB, the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and the University of Westminster carried out Waves 1 and 2 of the survey in 2010 and 2012 respectively. Wave 3 was conducted in 2014 by TNS BMRB.

Data definitions used

Households were defined as groups of people who share cooking facilities and a living room, sitting room or dining room.

The 'Household Reference Person' (HRP) was defined as the householder (a person in whose name the property is owned or rented) with the highest income.

Eating out was defined as eating or buying food from a wide range of establishments including: restaurants, pubs, bars, nightclubs, cafés and coffee shops, sandwich bars, fast food outlets, canteens, hotels, stalls as well as takeaway food

Classification systems used

The occupations of HRPs were coded to sub-major groups using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC 2010) and Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (SIC).

The 'Food Security' module was based on the 10-item 'US Household Food Security Survey Module'. The IRP (index of recommended practice) measure is comprised of behaviours around the 4 Cs

Arrangements to publish releasing underlying data and metadata

The UK Data Archive holds the underlying data and extensive metadata. The combined data and the user guide is also available at <https://data.food.gov.uk/catalog>. The data tables, technical and other reports can be found on <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you>.

Data collection process

Periodicity/ timing of fieldwork

Fieldwork takes place every two years in several months in the year before publication). The earliest waves ran from May to September. Wave 5 ran from June to December 2018.

Quality assurance, checks and validation

Questionnaire development included two rounds of cognitive testing to inform development of all new and any significantly altered questions and a pilot study which, alongside identification of practical issues, supported development and final adjustments to questionnaire content and length.

All interviewers working on Food and You received a face-to face briefing before undertaking interviews and were monitored during their assignment. Interviewers were also issued with comprehensive written instructions covering survey procedures. Interviewers were required to make up to four attempts to contact each sampled address. These calls were made on different days of the week, and at different times of day. At least three calls were made on a weekday evening (after 6pm) or at a weekend to maximise the probability of contact with the household members.

Information was collected via face-to-face interviews using a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) method. This automated procedure allows quick and accurate interviewing and data transmission. Checks were built into CAPI programme to allow issues (e.g. unlikely or incorrect answers) to be resolved during the interview where possible. Participants are sent an invite letter in advance informing them of the purpose of the research and all the necessary data protection information, under the new GDPR regulations, as signed off by the Information and Knowledge Management team.

The GSR ethics checklist is adhered to, and the contractor obtains ethical approval from their internal ethics committee. Thank you letters for participants signpost where further information and support are available, in line with the ethics guidelines.

Access arrangements prior to publication

All aspects of coding and data preparation were carried out by specialist staff at NatCen. Personal information was handled securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). In future this will be in line with GDPR. Only FSA staff engaged in the publication of the release, and the selected external peer reviewers, had access to the report or the underlying data prior to publication.

Dissemination procedures

The datasets are available in full via the UK Data Archive and FSA website

Nature of changes to the survey which can impact on the statistics Waves 4 and 5 of the survey were carried out in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; unlike in previous waves Scotland was not included.

While efforts are made to ensure consistency in questions asked at each wave to allow for comparisons over time, there have been several changes made to the questionnaire between waves, reflecting further development of the questionnaire and changing FSA priorities and responsibilities.

Change Process (Procedures for changing definitions, scope, etc)

Before each wave of the survey, the questions are reviewed to determine which should be retained, removed or amended and where new questions needed to be developed to meet new FSA strategic or policy-related interests. Any other changes to the design of the survey would be typically made when reviewing the contract

The subsequent statistical production process

Level of quality required

A high level of quality is required. Data checks are carried out throughout the project and, finally, by the Research Director at NatGen.

Validation procedures (who does what and when to ensure quality)

Collected data are checked during an office edit and coding stage. Data were submitted to a comprehensive edit which checked valid ranges and routing and all interviewer notes opened during the interview were scrutinised. Experienced coders examined several open-ended questions on a question-by-question basis to maximise coding consistency.

After completion of the coding and editing process, quality control checks and data cleaning were undertaken by the Data Manager to ensure the structural integrity and content of the data were intact and as expected. The Data Manager also produced derived variables required for reporting; these were independently checked before being added to the master files.

Weighting was applied to correct for the lower selection probabilities of adults in multi-adult households/dwellings, the overrepresentation of Wales and Northern Ireland relative to England (as a result of the boosted samples in those countries). Weighting was also used to correct for non-response by matching the population profile for each country.

Quality assessment

The design effect caused by the complex sample design and the weighting of the sample was also calculated as 1.39 for the whole dataset.

Potential impact of changes to the survey on the statistics

The exclusion of Scotland from the coverage of Wave 4 onwards means that comparisons over time can no longer be made on a UK basis. The replacement of some questions by those of more recent interest also prevents some comparisons being made over time.

Procedures for mitigating such discontinuities

To allow comparisons to be made across waves on a consistent basis, Scotland was excluded from the data collected in previous waves in the reports for Waves 4 and 5.

User needs and other engagement and collaboration

Identification of users, and uses and decisions that the statistics are used for

Internally, there is a list of policy areas whose interests is linked to survey questions. These groups are regularly consulted during the planning for each wave. There are a few known users of the data, mainly academics, and some light activity related to the Food and You mailbox. The Food and You survey has been cited in multiple academic papers.

Methods of user engagement

Social media (Twitter & Facebook), web news story, blog posts

Outreach and Involvement of policy, methodological and area experts

Key internal and external users are notified when new findings are published. They include (such as Defra, who co-fund the survey, the Office for National Statistics, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and the devolved administrations.) The working group of methodological and subject experts are involved in advising on the methodology and peer reviewing the outputs.

Arrangements to meet disability needs

The outputs meet GSR guidelines for visual outputs