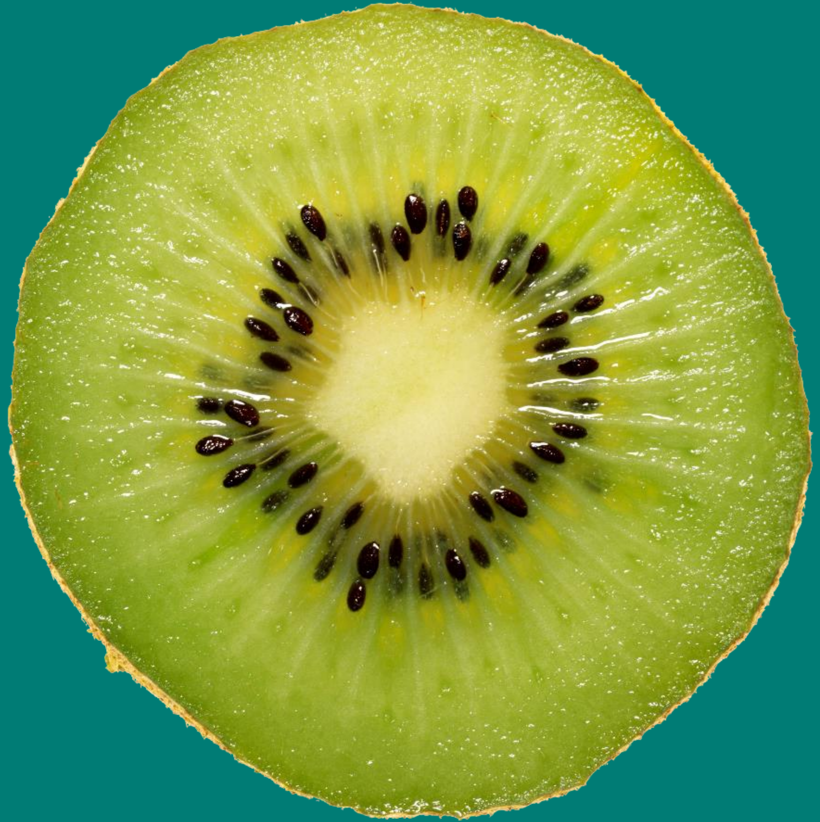
Consumer Insights Tracker

July - September 2024

The Consumer Insights Tracker is an online monthly tracking survey commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). It monitors the behaviour and attitudes of adult consumers aged 16+ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to food.

This report presents findings for topics we track regularly including consumer concerns in relation to food, food affordability, and confidence in the FSA as a regulator.

Sometimes we include other topics on an ad-hoc basis. These findings are available in the accompanying data tables.

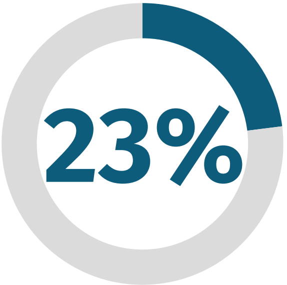


Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Key findings for July-September 2024

Please click the headings to be directed to the specific section of the report

Food affordability



In September, 23% were worried about their household being able to afford food in the next month. This proportion has been broadly stable since February 2024, with some fluctuations. This follows a previous downward trend from July 2023 (28%).

Food affordability

Looking at the data from July-September 2024 combined, the following groups are less likely to be worried about food affordability than for the same quarter in 2023:

- White respondents (21% vs 25%)
- Those in the middle IMD deciles (4-7; 22% vs 25%).

Food affordability

Over the past 3 months, those in the most deprived IMD deciles are more likely than those in the least deprived IMD deciles to report that they or someone else in their household:

- Ate food past its use-by-date (12% vs 7%)
- Could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet (11% vs 7%)
- Cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money (12% vs 5%).

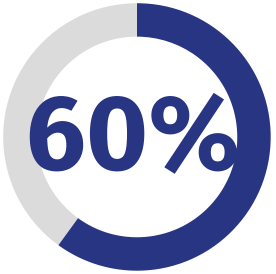
Key findings for July-September 2024 continued

Please click the headings to be directed to the specific section of the report

Food concerns

The top concerns in September 2024 are food prices (87%), ultra-processed food (76%), the 'healthiness' of people's diets (75%) and food poverty and inequality (74%). These have consistently been among the top consumer concerns about food in the UK across all waves of the survey.

Food supply chain



Following a slight increase in July and August, 60% are confident in the food supply chain in September 2024. Confidence has remained broadly stable since it rose to 60% in November 2023, having averaged 55% in the period July-October 2023.

The FSA

Similarly, among those with some knowledge of the FSA, the proportion who have trust in the FSA to do its job rose from 57% in June 2024 to 65% in July, before declining to more typical levels in August (62%) and September (56%).

Between July and September 2024, the proportion saying they were worried about their household not being able to afford food in the next month fluctuated slightly

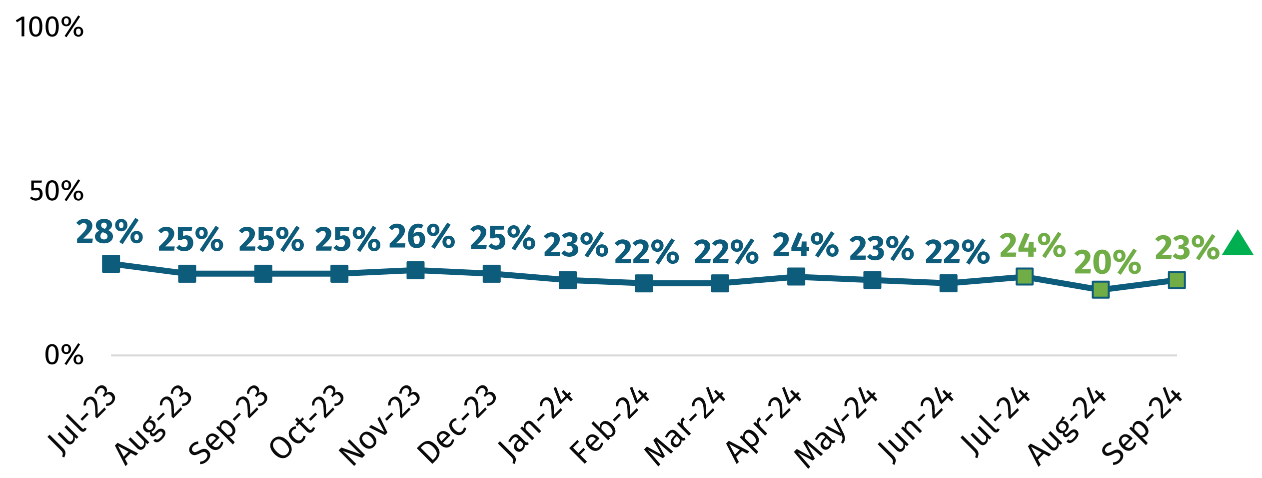
There was a slight dip in the proportion feeling worried in August 2024, however this has since returned to previous levels in September.

Q3m. To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month?

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August (n=2,008), July (n=2,070), June (n=2,056), May (n=2,067), April (n=2,061), March (n=2,015), February (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July 2023 (n=2,085)

The new data points (from July to September) are shown in a different colour

Proportion who reported worrying about their household not being able to afford food in the next month



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

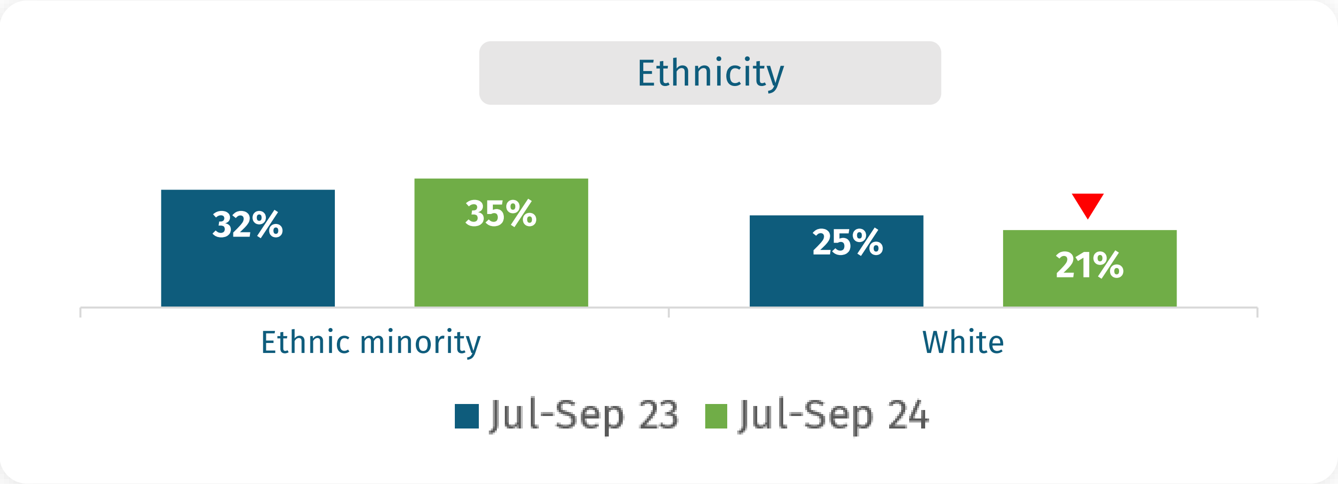
Compared to this time last year, worry about household food affordability has declined for some groups more than others. For example, white respondents and those in the middle IMD deciles (4-7) are statistically significantly less likely to report being worried compared to this time last year

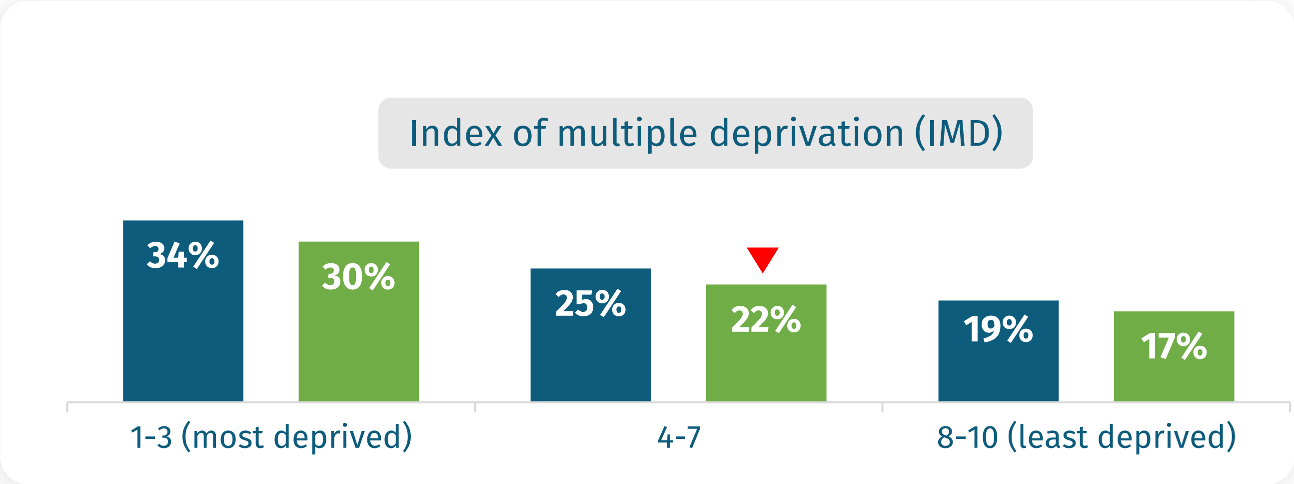
Q3m. To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month?

Base: All in July-September 2024 (n=6,092) and July-September 2023 (n=6,186). For demographic analysis, data for the last quarter has been rolled up to give larger base sizes.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure of deprivation calculated based off postcode, which takes into account income, employment, education, skills and training, health, crime, housing and the living environment of an area.

Proportion who reported worrying about their household not being able to afford food in the next month by demographic group





Statistically significant differences compared to July-September 2023 shown with arrows

Between July and September 2024, the proportion of respondents who reported that they or another member of their household received a free parcel of food from a food bank or other emergency food provider remained broadly stable

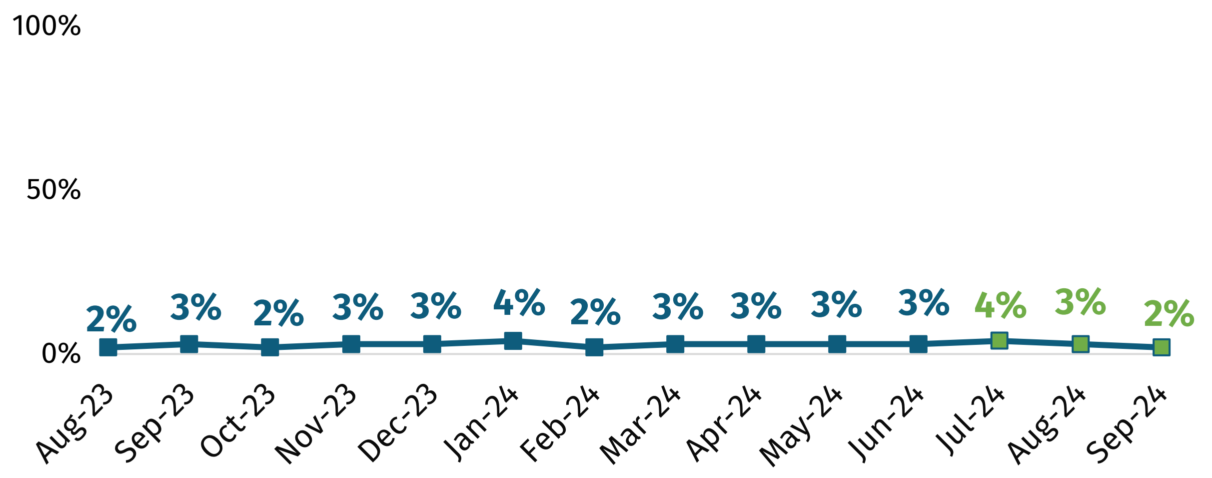
This has remained comparable since tracking began.

Q3. In the last month, have you or anyone else in your household received a free parcel of food from a food bank or other emergency food provider?

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August (n=2,008), July (n=2,070), June (n=2,056), May (n=2,067), April (n=2,061), March (n=2,015), February (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July 2023 (n=2,085)

The new data points (from July to September) are shown in a different colour

Proportion who reported receiving a food parcel from a food bank or emergency food provider

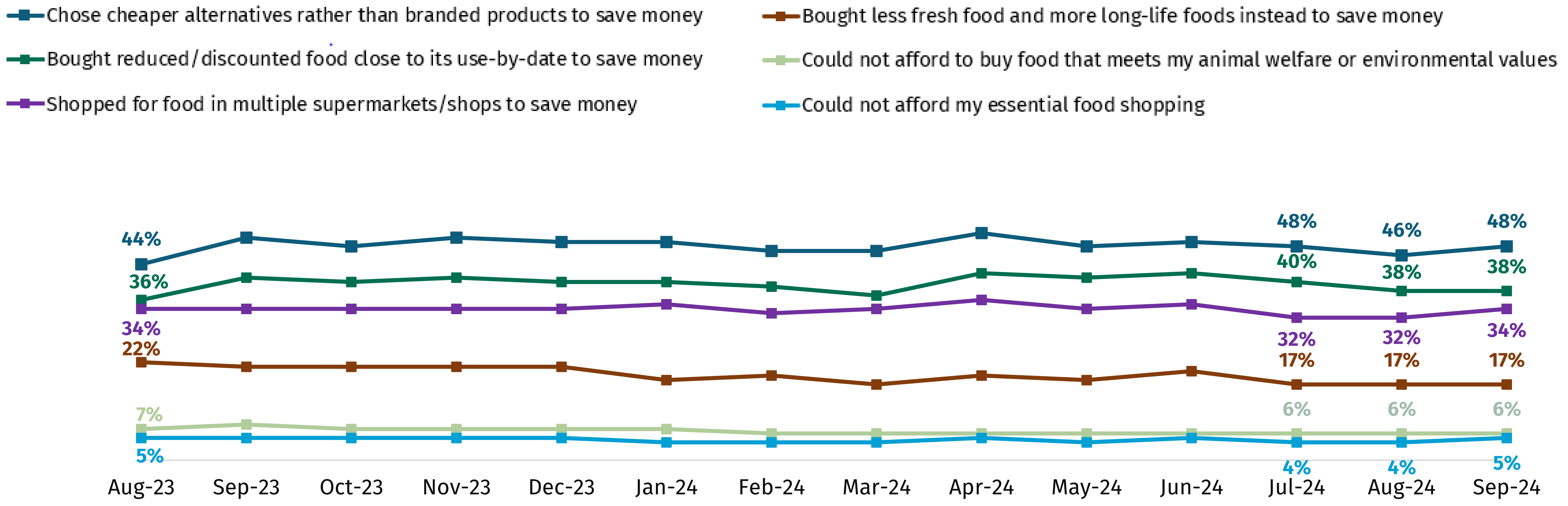


Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

The proportion reporting that at least one of the following statements applies to them or their household has remained relatively stable over time, at around two in three

The figures for each month during the quarter were 66% in July 2024, 65% in August 2024 and 65% in September 2024

Shopping statements

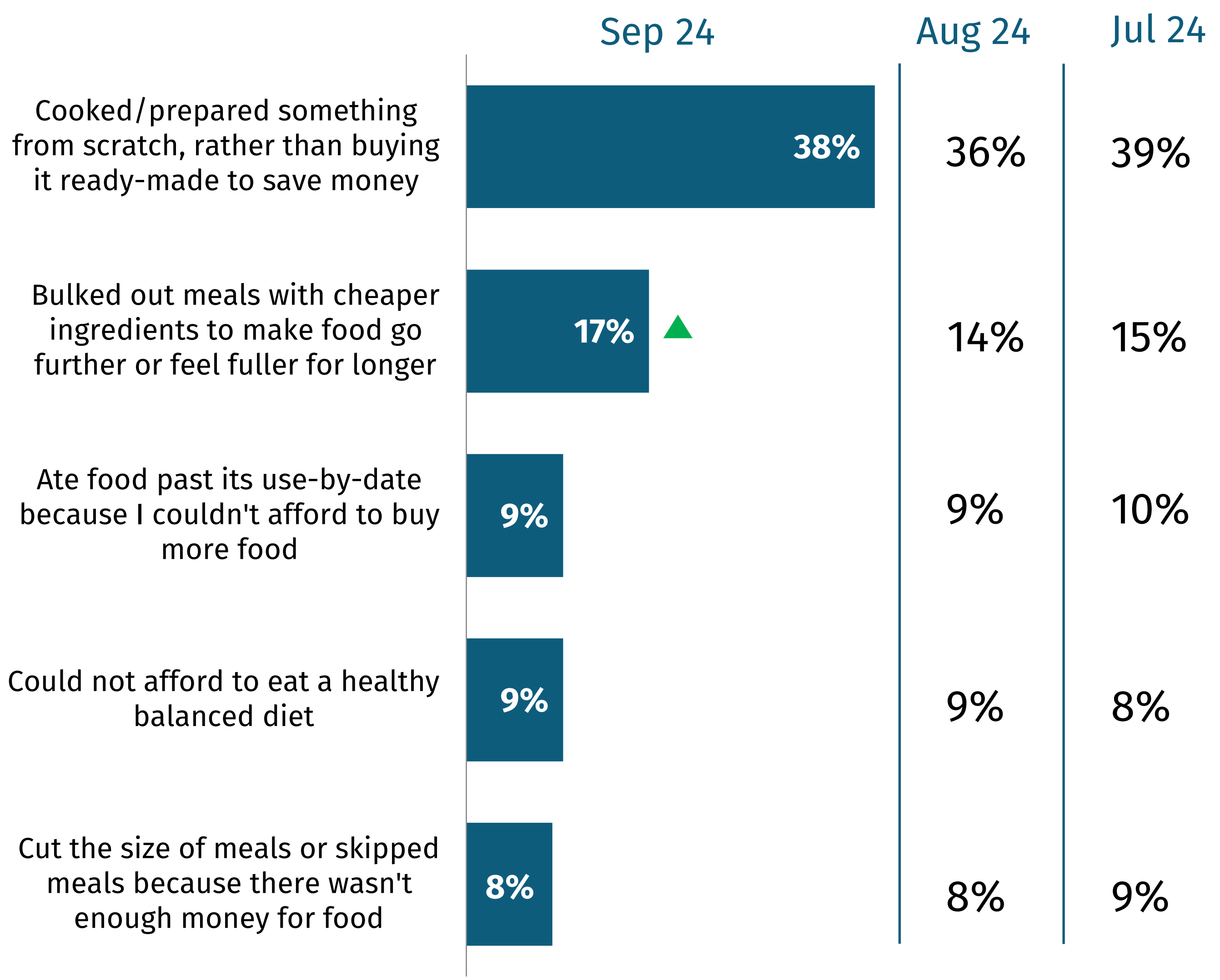


Q6. In the last month, did any of the following apply to you, or someone else in your household? Please tick all that apply. I, or someone in my household…
Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August (n=2,008), July (n=2,070), June (n=2,056), May (n=2,067), April (n=2,061), March (n=2,015), February (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057) and August 2023 (n=2,044). Please note: Total values do not add to 100% as participants could select multiple responses.

Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

Between July and September 2024, the proportion reporting these cooking and eating statements applied to them or someone else in their household remained broadly stable

Proportion who had the following apply to them or someone else in their household



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

Q6. In the last month, did any of the following apply to you, or someone else in your household? Please tick all that apply. I, or someone in my household…

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August 2024 (n=2,008) and July 2024 (n=2,070)

Looking at data from July-September 2024 combined, those in the most deprived IMD deciles are more likely than average to report that they or someone else in their household:

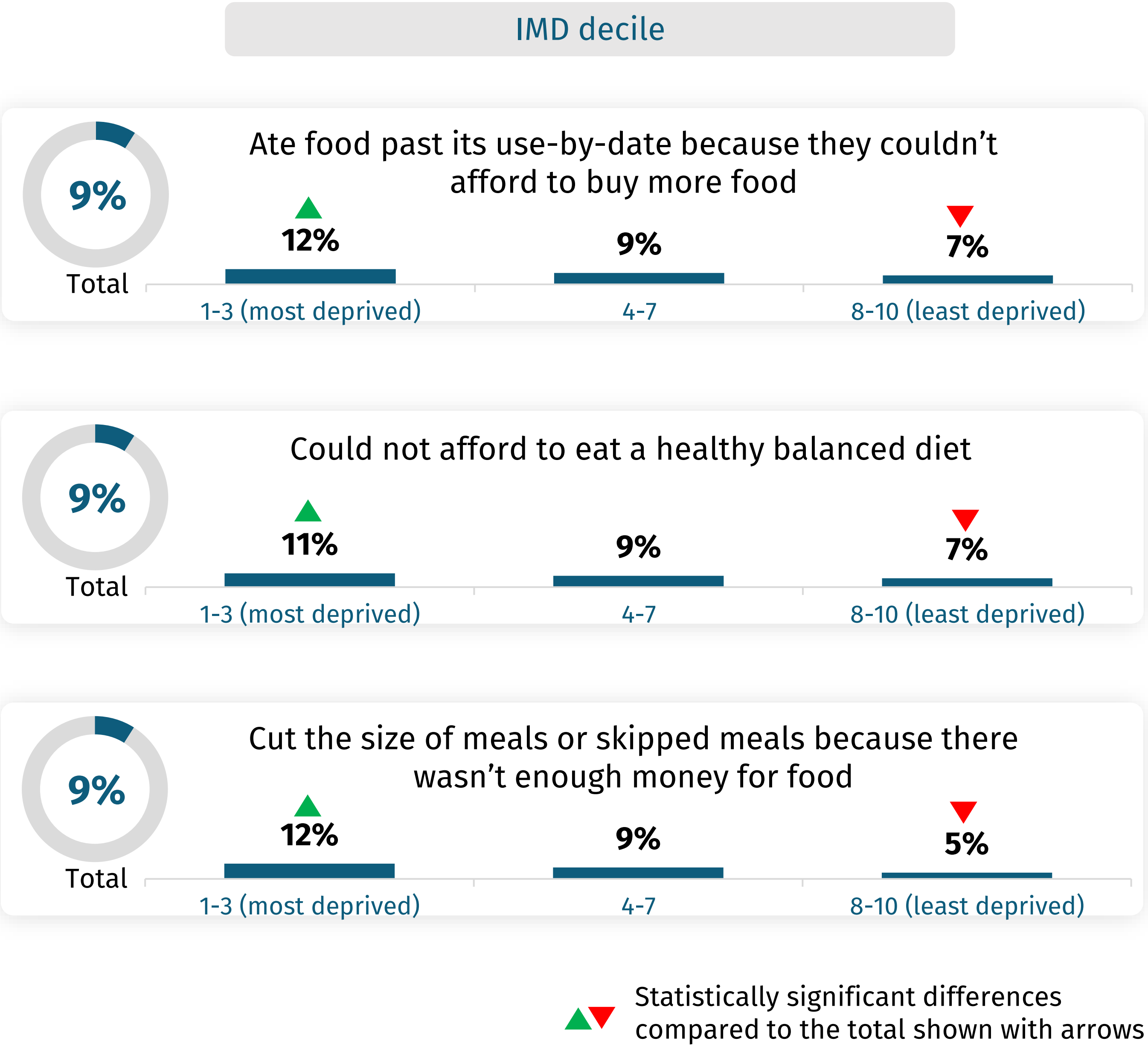
- Ate food past its use-by-date because they couldn't afford to buy more food
- Could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet
- Cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food

Q6. In the last month, did any of the following apply to you, or someone else in your household? Please tick all that apply. I, or someone in my household…

Base: All in the most deprived (1-3) (n=1,622), middle (4-7) (n=2,484) and least deprived (8-10) (n=1,986) IMD deciles in the period July-September 2024. For demographic analysis, data for the last quarter has been rolled up to give larger base sizes.

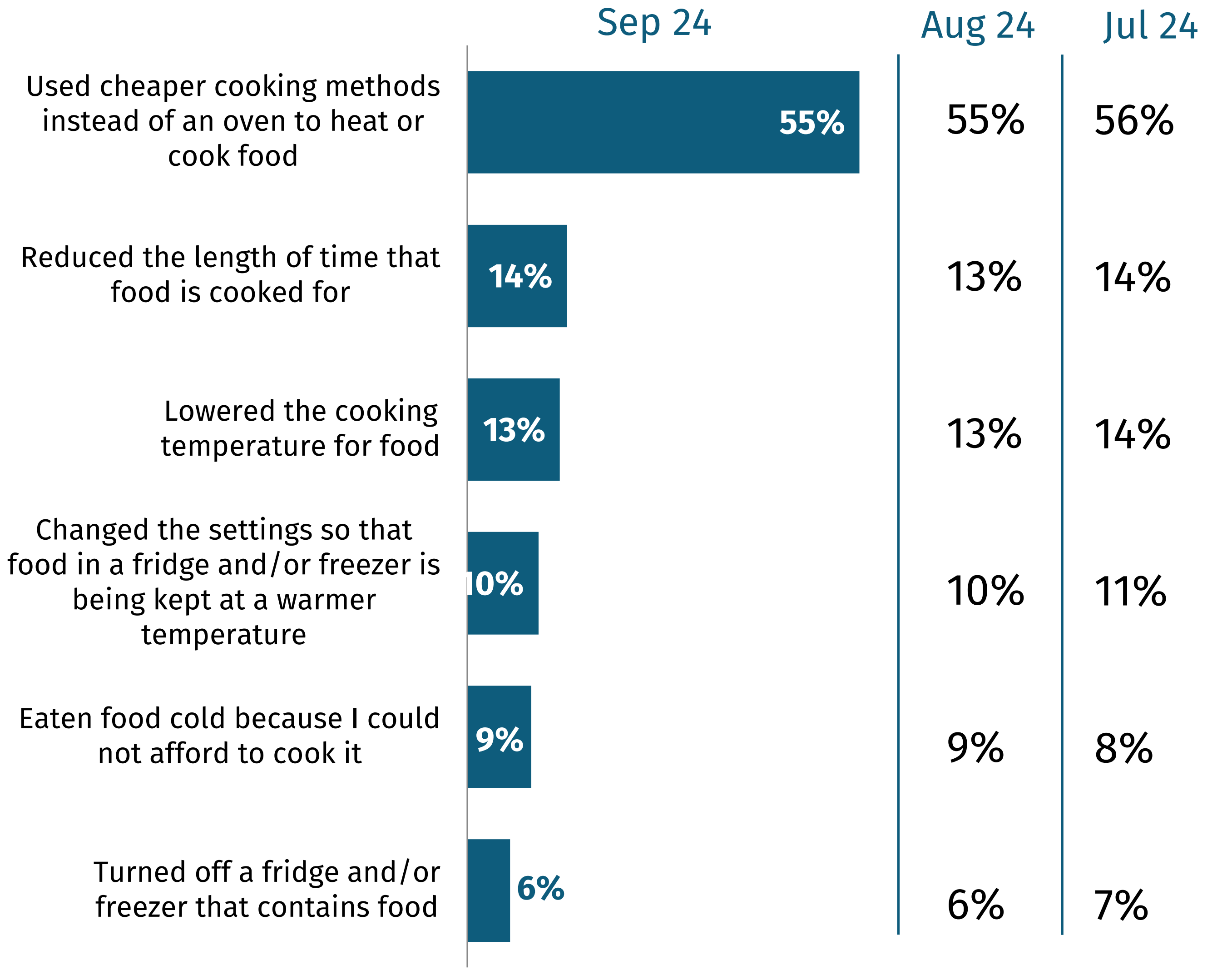
The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure of deprivation calculated based off postcode, which takes into account income, employment, education, skills and training, health, crime, housing and the living environment of an area.

Proportion who had the following apply to them or someone else in their household



From July-September 2024, over half (55%) of respondents continue to use cheaper cooking methods instead of an oven to cook food

Proportion who did any of the following to reduce energy bills or save money in the last month



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

Q8m. In the last month, which, if any, of the following have you done to reduce your energy bills and save money?

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August 2024 (n=2,008) and July 2024 (n=2,070)

From July-September 2024, the proportion reporting they are worried about there not being enough food available for their household in the next month remained broadly stable

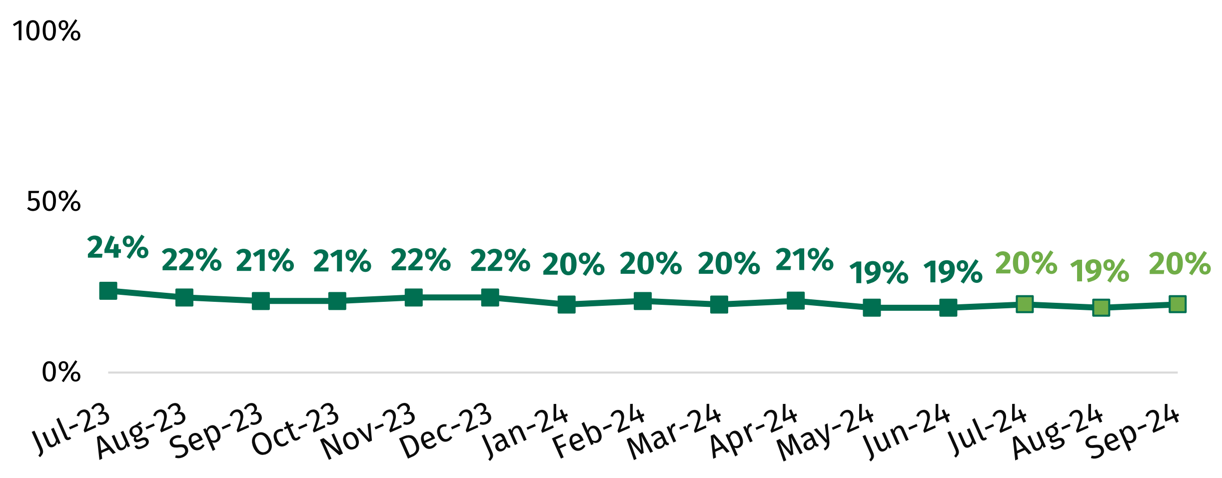
In all three months, this figure is around one in five. This has remained broadly comparable since January this year.

Q2m. 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?

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August (n=2,008), July (n=2,070), June (n=2,056), May (n=2,067), April (n=2,061), March (n=2,015), February (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July 2023 (n=2,085)

The new data points (from July to September) are shown in a different colour

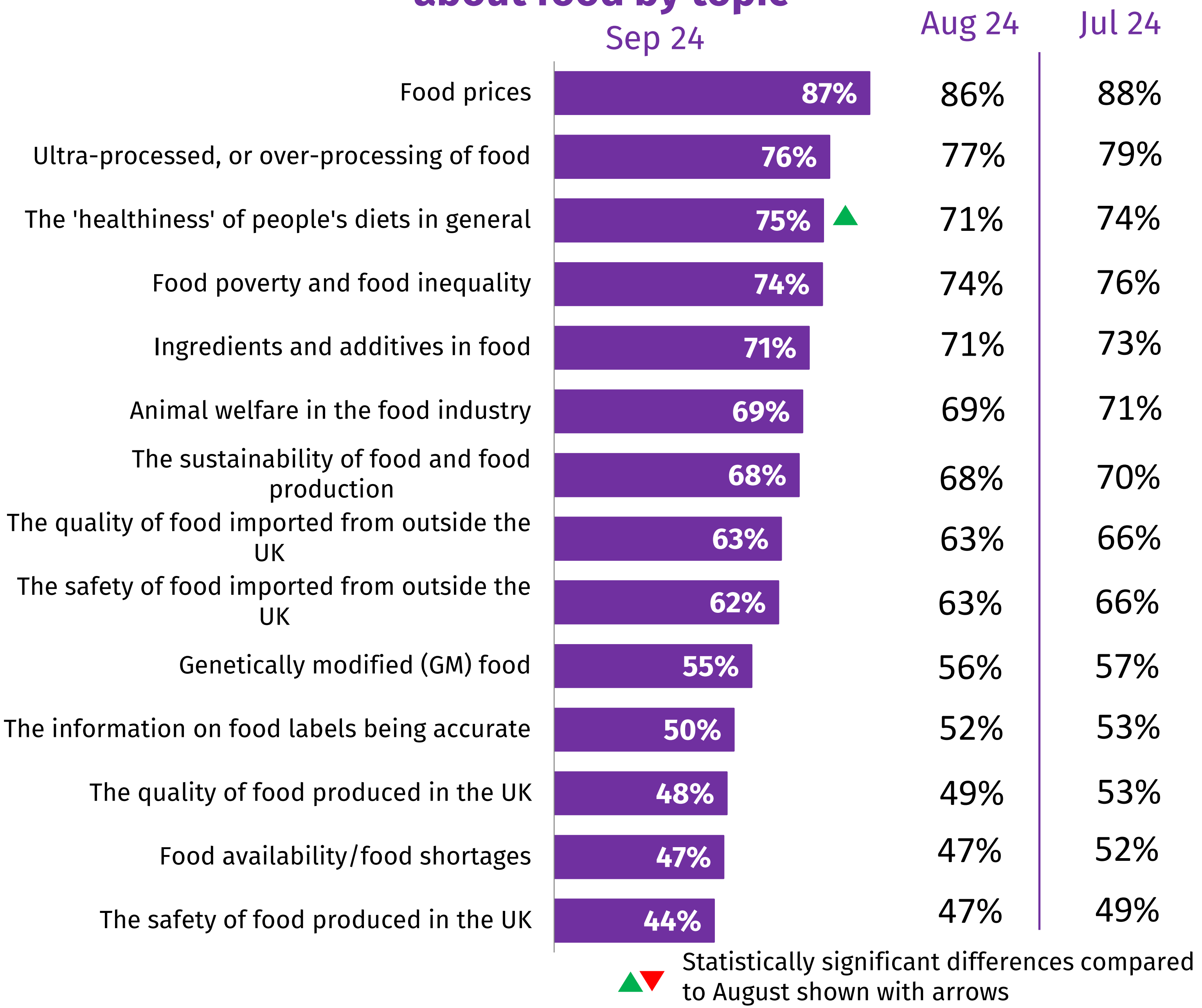
Proportion who reported worrying about there not being enough food available for their household in the next month



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

In September, the top concerns were food prices, ultra-processed, or over-processing of food, and the ‘healthiness’ of people’s diets in general

Proportion who reported concern about food by topic



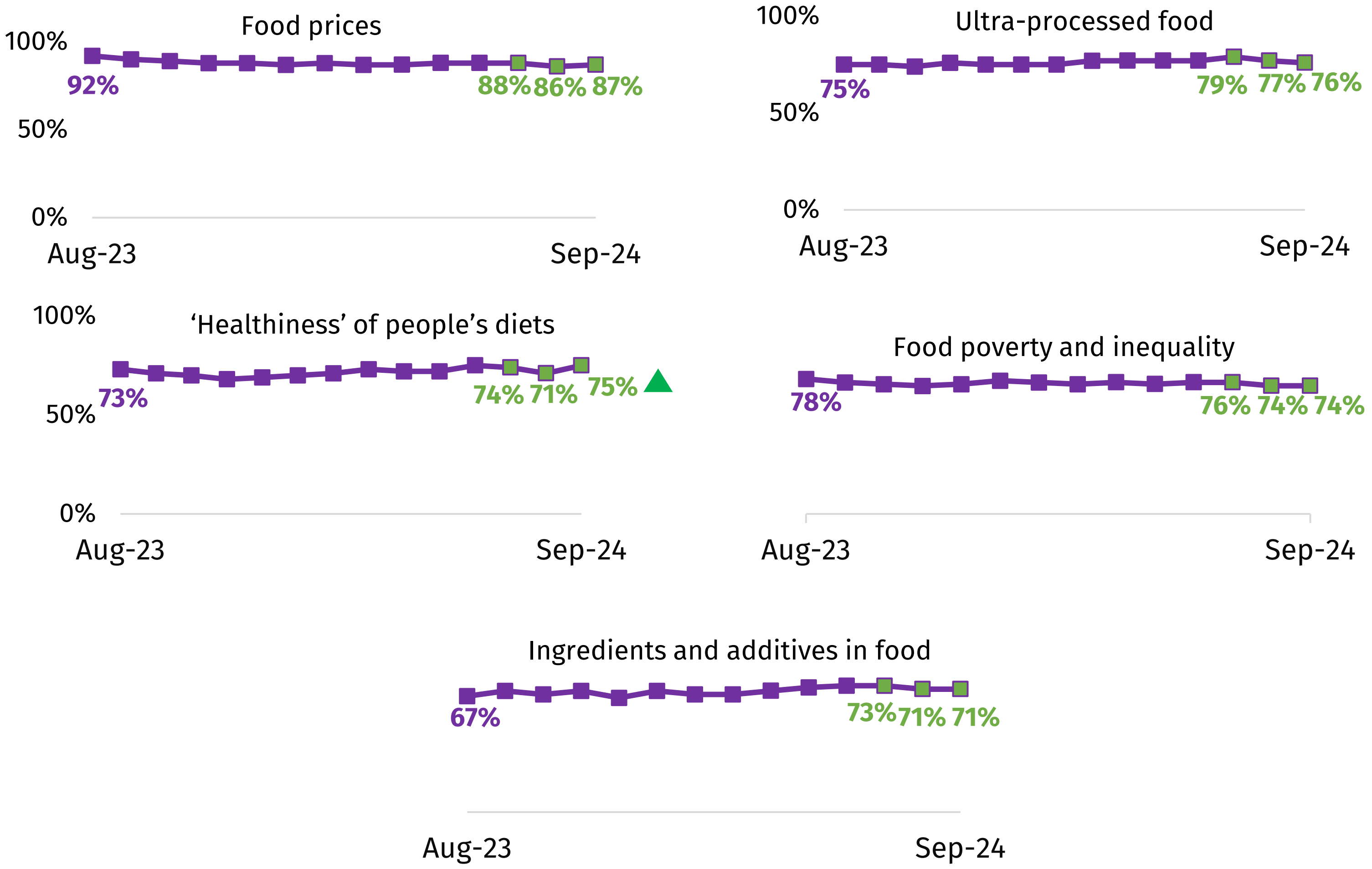
Q12. Thinking about food in the UK in general. At the moment, how concerned, if at all, do you feel about each of the following topics?

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August 2024 (n=2,008) and July 2024 (n=2,070)
Respondents were shown all of the topics listed and asked how concerned, if at all, they felt about each. Figures shown in chart are the proportion ‘highly concerned’ or ‘somewhat concerned’.

Concern about the top 5 issues has remained broadly stable across July-September 2024

The new data points (from August to September) are shown in a different colour

Proportion who reported concern about food by topic



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

Q12. Thinking about food in the UK in general. At the moment, how concerned, if at all, do you feel about each of the following topics? (Top 5 concerns shown)

Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August (n=2,008), July (n=2,070), June (n=2,056), May (n=2,067), April (n=2,061), March (n=2,015), February (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057) and August 2023 (n=2,044)

Respondents were shown all of the topics listed and asked how concerned, if at all, they felt about each. Figures shown in chart are the proportion 'highly concerned' or 'somewhat concerned'.

The proportion reporting confidence in the food supply chain in September (60%) decreased back to comparable levels recorded since November-23

This follows a slight increase in July and August 2024.

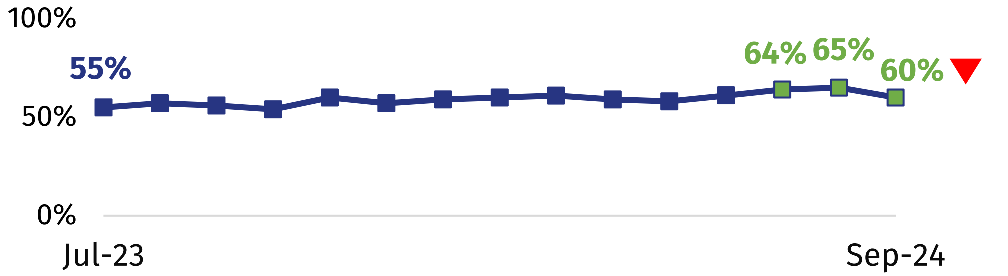
Q13. How confident are you in the food supply chain? That is all the processes involved in bringing food to your table.

Q14. How confident are you that those involved in the food supply chain in the UK…

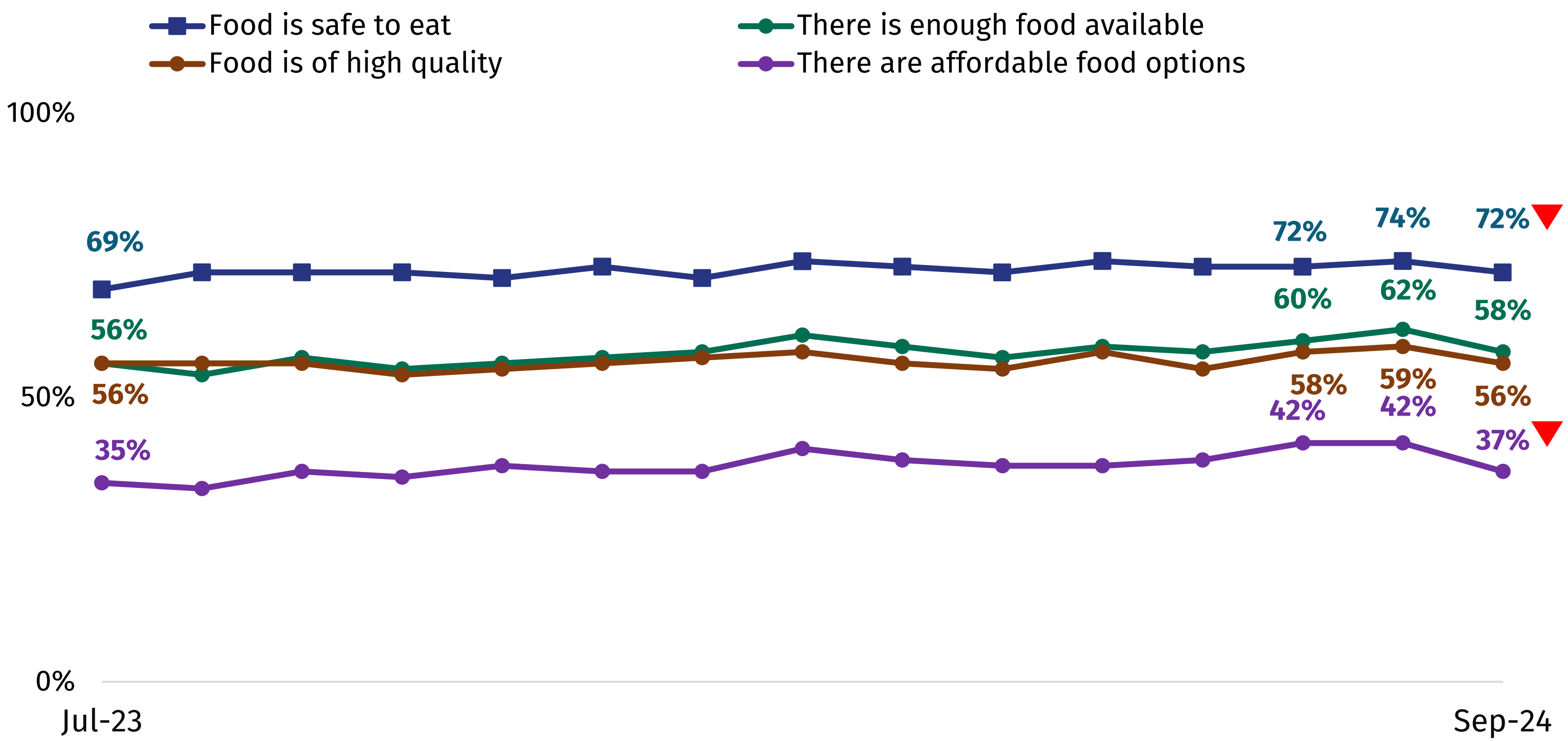
Base: All in September 2024 (n=2,014), August (n=2,008), July (n=2,070), June (n=2,056), May (n=2,067), April (n=2,061), March (n=2,015), February (n=2,066), January (n=2,038), December (n=2,026), November (n=2,064), October (n=2,062), September (n=2,057), August (n=2,044) and July 2023 (n=2,085)

The new data points (from July to September) are shown in a different colour

Proportion who reported confidence in the food supply chain



Proportion who reported confidence that those involved in the food supply chain ensure that…



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

Having risen in July, trust in the FSA returned back to 56% in September 2024, comparable to June

Confidence in the FSA to perform its functions has fluctuated slightly month to month but remains comparable to when tracking began in August 2023.

Q16. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Government Agency responsible for food safety in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. How much do you trust or distrust the Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is to make sure that food is safe and what it says it is.

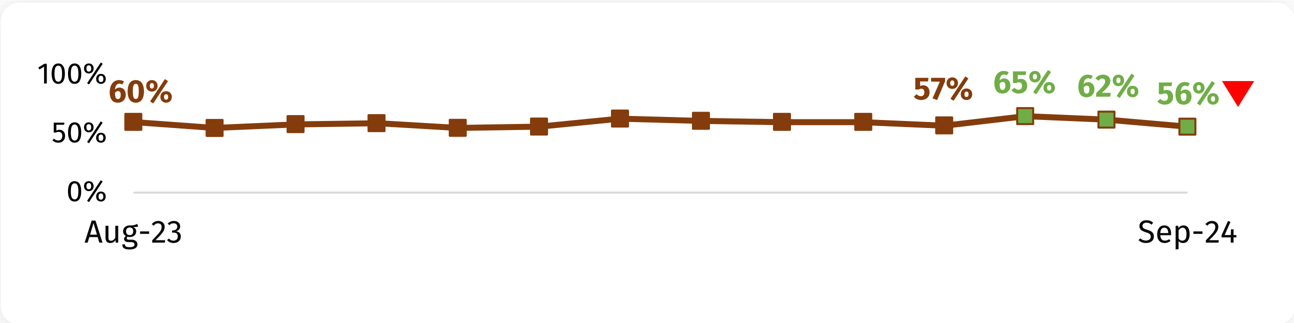
Q15. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Government Agency responsible for food safety in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. How confident are you that the Food Standards Agency…

Base: Those who know a little / a lot about the FSA in September 2024 (n=1,063), August (n=1,109), July (n=1,140), June (n=1,163), May (n=1,161), April (n=1,137), March (n=1,137), February (n=1,127) January (n=1,168) December (n=1,134), November (n=1,183), October (n=1,175), September (n=1,161) and August 2023 (n=1,126)

The new data points (from July to September) are shown in a different colour

Proportion who trust the FSA to do its job

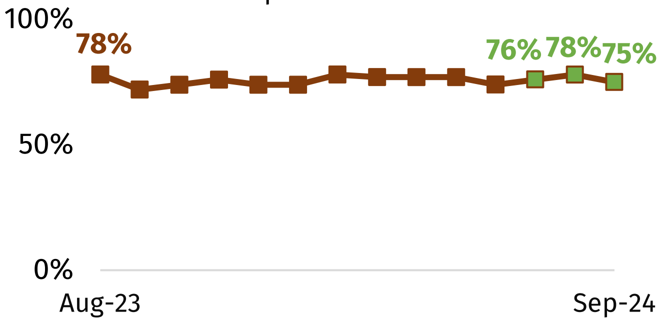
(among those with knowledge of the FSA)



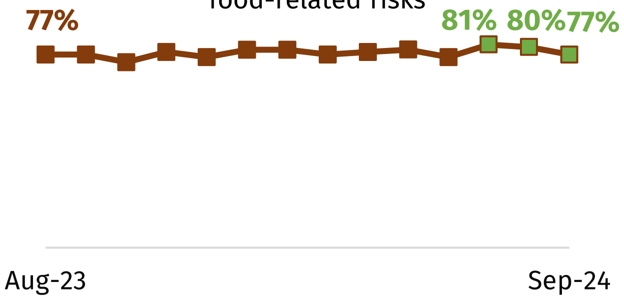
Proportion who reported confidence that the FSA…

(among those with knowledge of the FSA)

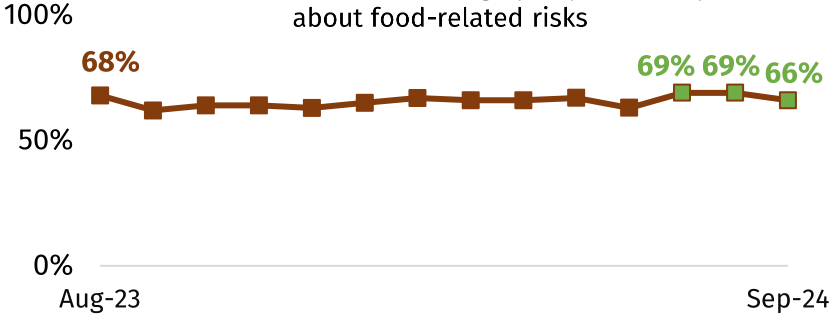
Protects the public from food-related risks



Takes appropriate action about identified food-related risks



Is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks



Statistically significant differences compared to August shown with arrows

Background and methodological information

Changes in approach

Following a review of the FSA's Consumer Insights Tracker by the FSA's Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS), the Consumer Insights Tracker was transitioned to a new supplier, YouGov in July 2023. Changing supplier provided the opportunity to make some methodological changes.

Due to these methodological differences, data captured by YouGov (from July 2023 onwards) should not be directly compared to data captured by the previous supplier (April 2020 – June 2023). For details on these changes please see the technical report.

Topics

This report presents findings for the core topics of food availability, food affordability, consumer concerns in relation to food, confidence in the food supply chain and in the FSA as a regulator.

Between July and September 2024 questions were also asked about school food standards, precision breeding and consumer views on food regulations. Data for these questions can be found in the accompanying data tables.

Method

- This research was conducted online using the YouGov panel which gives access to 400,000 active panellists in the UK.
- This report presents findings from the months July-September 2024. Where appropriate, comparisons are made to previous waves since July 2023.
- For demographic analysis, data for the last quarter has been combined to give larger base sizes.
- Across England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2,070 took part in the survey in July 2024 (5th-9th), 2,008 in August 2024 (2nd-5th) and 2,014 in September 2024 (6th-9th).
- Quotas were set by age, gender, education and region. The data is also weighted to be representative of the population by these demographic variables. All results are based on final weighted data.

Notes for interpretation

- Figures may not add up to 100% on graphs due to rounding, or in some questions, respondents were able to select multiple answers.
- Significance testing is applied to the data to compare and determine whether a difference is "real", or if it has occurred by chance (because not everyone in the population has been surveyed).
- Any differences between demographic groups and month to month which are reported (with arrows) are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
- Where analysis is conducted by IMD, respondents are categorised within the country where they live, before a combined measure is created for the full sample.
- Further information on the statistical significance testing can be found in the technical report.

For more information:

Visit our Consumer Insights Tracker Webpage

View the Consumer Insights Tracker data tables

Or please contact the FSA Social Science team (analysis@food.gov.uk)