Covid-19 Consumer Tracker Waves 5 – 8

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With thanks to Vicky Mullis and Daniel Cameron at Ipsos MORI, and to Rebecca Gillespie and Helen Heard at Food Standards Agency.

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1. Key findings

- Covid-19 has changed how consumers access food. Restaurants, cafés and sandwich shops were closed from 23 March 2020; whilst some re-opened during lockdown to provide takeaways, restaurants reopened on 4 July 2020. Local lockdown measures led to further restrictions in some areas from mid-September, and a second national lockdown began in early November. As restrictions change, and continue to change, so do purchasing, consumption, nutrition, cooking and eating behaviours.

- Levels of household food insecurity dipped in August (to 12%) but increased significantly in September (to 18%) and have remained steady since. In November 1 in 5 respondents (19%) reported cutting down on meals for financial reasons.

- Food insecurity is a particular issue for younger age groups, being experienced by 38% of 16-24 year olds in November, a significant increase since the late summer (22% in August). Those who have been advised to self-isolate, households with a child, and those who have a physical or mental health condition, are also more likely to be experiencing food insecurity.

- The number of people who reported accessing food through a food bank or charity dipped in August (to 4%, from 9% in July) but had increased again to the level of previous waves by November (8%).

- There continues to be a particularly steep age differential in reported food bank or food charity usage, with 26% of 16-24 year olds reporting accessing food in this way in November but only 3% of those aged 45-54. The 16-24 year age group has seen a 3 fold increase since August (9%).

- Reasons for accessing food banks are largely related to economic hardship, however in November, the most commonly reported reasons related to safe access to food, with 33% reporting that someone in the household was *self isolating* and 27% reporting they had *difficulties travelling to get food*.

- Between August and September concerns about both food affordability and food availability increased significantly. Concerns have remained relatively stable since then but stay higher than the levels reported in the summer months of 2020. In November 23% of respondents reported being very/somewhat worried about food affordability, and 27% reported being very/somewhat worried about food availability, representing around 1 in 4 people.

- Prior to the second national lockdown, a tenth of respondents said they felt it was safe to eat out in October, continuing a slow but significant upward trend seen since early summer (e.g. July 6%). Around 1 in 5 (21%) reported that they did not intend to eat out in the foreseeable future. This figure was stable across the previous 3 months, following a significant drop in August (to 20%, from 31% in July).

- A sizeable minority of people continue to eat more risky foods past their use by date; in November, this ranged from 20% to 38% among those who had eaten the food in question. Food insecurity is a factor in this behaviour with those who reported cutting the size of their meals or skipping meals due to financial concerns being more likely to report eating food past their use by date.

- During the first national lockdown there was a sustained shift towards more localised food purchasing, with just under a third buying food from local shops more often. In November over half (56%) reported using local shops at least once a week.

- There was also a sustained shift towards people buying fewer takeaways during lockdown, with around a third doing so less often. In November almost 6 in 10 (57%) reported having a takeaway in the last month.

- Food consumption and nutrition behaviours changed during the first national lockdown, with people reporting cooking from scratch and eating healthy meals more often, while buying processed food less often. Frequencies of these behaviours are stable across the last 4 waves. In November, the proportions doing so at least once a week were: around three quarters eating healthy meals (72%), two thirds reported cooking from scratch (66%) and half (50%) buying processed food.

2. Background and methodology

Background and objectives

In April 2020 the Food Standards Agency (FSA) commissioned Ipsos MORI to develop its evidence base on issues affecting consumers and businesses in order to inform its Covid-19 response in the short to medium term. This monthly tracker survey is intended to understand the experience and behaviour of consumers as England, Wales and Northern Ireland experienced the pandemic and adapted to lockdown restrictions.

The project objectives were:

- to understand the impact of concerns or experience of food unavailability, heath restrictions or household food insecurity on consumer food safety behaviours;
- to understand potential new food safety risks, for instance changes in reported adherence to FSA food hygiene guidelines;
- to understand shifts in food consumption or purchasing behaviours, for instance, increased online shopping or use of takeaways.

Methodology

Eight waves of research were conducted between April and November 2020 using Ipsos MORI's online i:Omnibus. The fieldwork dates and sample size for each wave are shown in Table 1 below, alongside key changes to lockdown restrictions.

Table 1: Fieldwork dates, sample size and key changes to lockdown restrictions

Date or Period	Event
March 23rd	Start of first national lockdown
April 10-13th	**Wave 1 data collection (2,039)**
May 8-12th	**Wave 2 data collection (2,040)**
May 10th	First national lockdown easing
June 12th-15th	Wave 3 data collection (2,045)
July 4th	Pubs and restaurants reopen
July 10-14th	**Wave 4 data collection (2,068)**
July 17th	First local lockdown
August 14th-17th	**Wave 5 data collection (2,071)**
September 14th	Rule of 6 introduced in England and Wales
September 18th	Almost 2m people under local lockdown restrictions in NE England
September 18th-21st	**Wave 6 data collection (2,065)**
October 12th	3 tier lock down system introduced in England
October 16th-20th	**Wave 7 data collection (2,067)**
November 5th	Start of second national lockdown
November 13th-16th	**Wave 8 data collection (2,023)**

In each wave, Ipsos MORI surveyed a representative sample of approximately 2,000 adults aged 16-75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The data was weighted to best reflect the demographic profile of the adult population sampled. The questionnaire was expanded and edited to incorporate new areas of interest. Accordingly, time trends are not available for all measures. The questionnaires and sample profiles can be found in Appendix A and B.

Data tables and dataset

This analysis focuses on findings from wave 5-8 (August to November), with data from previous waves reported where relevant. The data tables for each wave are published alongside this publication – the SPSS dataset is available upon request. This enables the reader to see the data broken down by gender, age, social grade, region, urban/rural, marital status, household size, education, employment status, income, the presence of a child (17 or under) in the household, main shopper, and main earner. Please note that i:Omnibus does not allow for detailed analysis by ethnicity.

From May, we also asked questions around respondents' shielding status, whether or not they have Covid-19 symptoms, are self-isolating, whether they have a physical or mental health condition that has lasted or is expected to last for longer than 12 months or more, and finally whether respondents were fasting during this period (only in May 2020).

Unless stated otherwise, where comparisons are made in the text between different population groups or variables, only those differences found to be statistically significant at the 5% level are reported. In other words, differences as large as those 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.

In terms of weighting, we applied these based on the overall profile of England, Wales and NI with weights for region/nation, gender, age, social grade and working status. The profile was generated from the latest PAMCo data.

Tables of weighted results were treated as if they were the product of simple random sampling. This does not completely account for the effect of the survey design but provides a straightforward way of highlighting the strongest relationships.

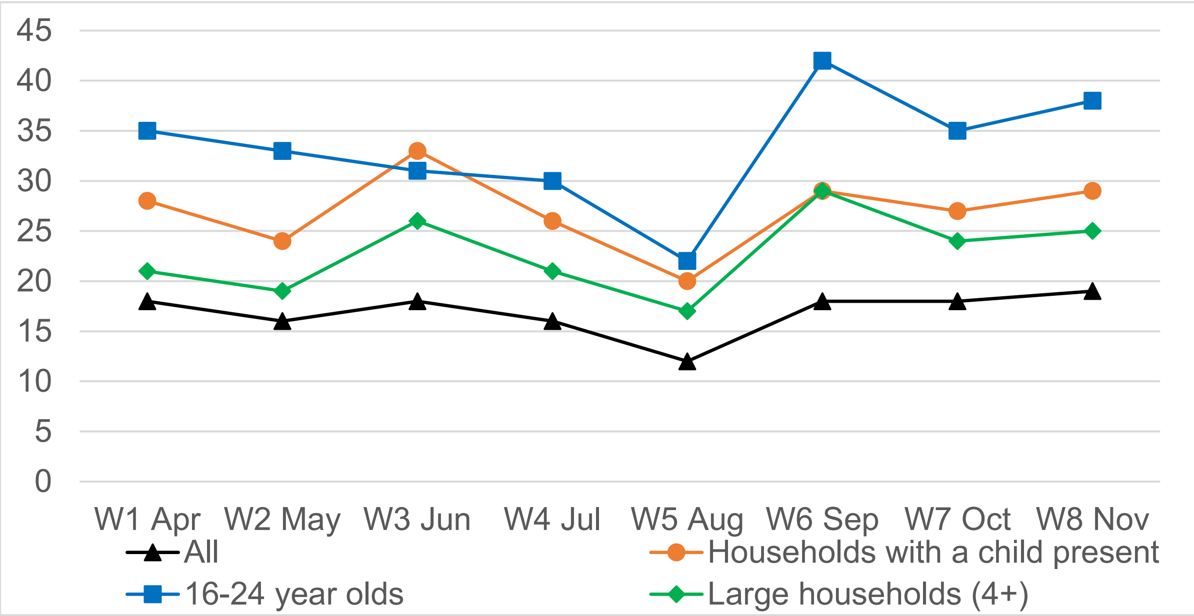
Throughout all waves, some questions asked respondents if they had changed their behaviour in the last month, whilst other questions asked around their behaviour compared to pre-lockdown. As a result, it may be that for the former type of question, respondents have compared their behaviour to pre-lockdown.

3. Main findings

Household food insecurity

At each wave, respondents were asked whether they had cut down meal sizes or indeed skipped meals during the last month, due to financial reasons.[1] This is one way of measuring food insecurity adapted from other FSA surveys (e.g. Food and You).[2] The percentage reporting household food insecurity was relatively stable between April and July (16-18%) but fell in August (to 12%). It then increased in the following month and subsequently remained relatively stable at the current level of 19% for November (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage reporting household food insecurity by demographic group (Apr-Nov 2020)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75.

The August dip might reflect the easing of lockdown restrictions in the previous month, and a consequent drop in financial concerns amongst respondents. Conversely the rise in September is potentially related to the introduction of numerous local lockdown measures in mid-September (during the data collection period of this wave) and financial concerns resurfacing. In support of this, those living in areas under local lockdown restrictions reported a peak in September with almost 1 in 3 (29%) reporting food insecurity (compared to 17% in August).

Table 2 shows that age remains an important factor, with around 4 in 10 (38%) of 16-24-year-olds reporting food insecurity, a slight decrease from the September peak of 42%. Figure 2 clearly shows that this age group experienced the September peak to

[1] In the last month, have you cut down the size of your meals or skipped meals for any of these reasons …

[2] The Food Standards Agency collects detailed data in this area as part of its [Food and You series]

a greater extent that other groups, with almost a two-fold increase (from 22% in August). This is perhaps attributable to the new cohort of 2020 first year university students, and the fact that under 25s are more likely to work in the industries most effected by lockdown (e.g. accommodation and food, travel, and leisure)[3], and therefore are more likely to have been financially impacted by the introduction of lockdown measures in September.

Across all months, households with a child were more likely to report food insecurity than those without a child. The largest difference between these groups is reported in September (29% and 14% respectively). Larger households (4+ individuals) were also more likely than smaller households to report cutting meal sizes or skipping meals due to not having enough money, with 1 in 4 (25%) reporting doing so in November.

Table 2: Levels of household food insecurity (August -November 2020)

Group	Aug Wave 5	Sept Wave 6	Oct Wave 7	Nov Wave 8
All respondents	**12%**	**18%**	**18%**	**19%**
16-24-year olds	22%	42%	35%	38%
25-34-year olds	18%	29%	29%	30%
35-44-year olds	16%	17%	21%	19%
45-54-year olds	10%	11%	13%	13%
55-75-year olds	3%	5%	3%	7%
Households with a child present	20%	29%	27%	29%
Households with no child present	9%	14%	14%	16%
Household size 4+	17%	29%	24%	25%
Physical / health condition lasting 12 months+	17%	24%	23%	26%
Households with someone advised to self isolate.	45%*	60%	62%*	56%
Households with suspected Covid-19 symptoms	44%*	40%*	47%*	49%*
Households in areas under local lockdown	17%	29%	19%	N/A

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75.
*Base size of less than 100.
n/a means that the data is not available for this wave

From August (Wave 5) respondents were asked whether they had been asked to self isolate – either following an alert on the NHS track and trace app or following a trip abroad. Sample sizes are small but the data suggests that food insecurity is being experienced by around half of this group. Likewise, although small sample sizes,

[3] For example, see COVID-19 and Inequalities* - Blundell - 2020 - Fiscal Studies - Wiley Online.

those households with a member experiencing suspected symptoms of Covid-19 are also reporting similar high levels of food insecurity.

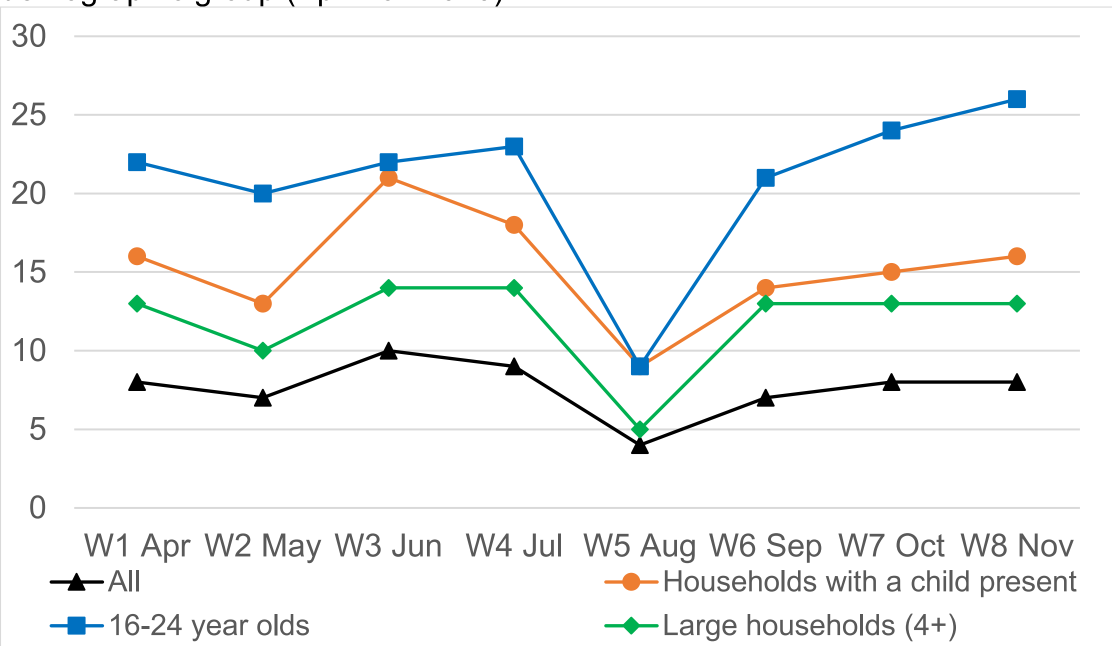
There are other factors that influence whether people cut down on meal sizes or skip meals. Between August and November, the proportion of households reporting skipping meals or cutting down the size of their meals for each of these reasons increased:

- not being well enough to shop for, or cook, food (18%, up from 12% in August);
- having no means to get to the shops (17%, up from 11% in August);
- being unable to get a delivery (20%, up from 14% in August).

Use of emergency food providers

Respondents were asked about their usage of emergency food providers.[4] The percentage of people reporting using food banks or food charities (either for themselves or their household) has been on a slight upwards trend since the late summer. In November, 8% reported accessing food through food banks or food charities, whilst a small net increase of 4%, this represents a twofold rise compared to the rate in August (4%).

Figure 2: Percentage reporting the use of emergency food providers by demographic group (Apr-Nov 2020)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75.

As per the findings for food insecurity it is likely that this August fall reflected a consequent drop in financial concerns amongst respondents following the easing of lockdown restrictions, which perhaps resurfaced in September with the introduction of numerous local lockdown measures and the 'rule of 6' (during the data collection period of this wave).

[4] In the last month, how often, if at all, have you arranged for food to be delivered to your house in the following ways? – Through a food charity or food bank.

As with food insecurity, younger people continued to be more likely to report having accessed food through food banks or food charities. Figure 3 shows that 1 in 4 (26%) of this group reported doing so in November, close to a threefold increase of the August rate of 9%. Households with a child, as well as large households, were also more likely to have used food banks or food charities than the total surveyed population each month. These groups have similarly seen an increase in usage since a fall in August, but not of the magnitude seen in the 16-24 year old group.

Since July, respondents were asked about the reasons why they had accessed food through food banks or food charities in the last month[5]. Figure 3 shows that whilst access is often triggered by economic hardship, other factors play a prominent role. For example, the most common reported reason in November (33%) was that someone in the household was *self isolating*. The was the highest level of this reason across the 5 waves and likely reflects the peak in Covid-19 cases leading to the second national lockdown. September saw the largest proportion of people (32%) stating that they were accessing food in this way due to *difficulties in travelling* to access food themselves. Those accessing food through food banks and food charities due to lack of money, was highest in October with around a third (30%) reporting this reason.

[5] 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?

Figure 3: Reported reasons for using emergency food providers (Jul-Nov 2020)

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, who had accessed emergency food providers.

Concerns about food availability and food affordability

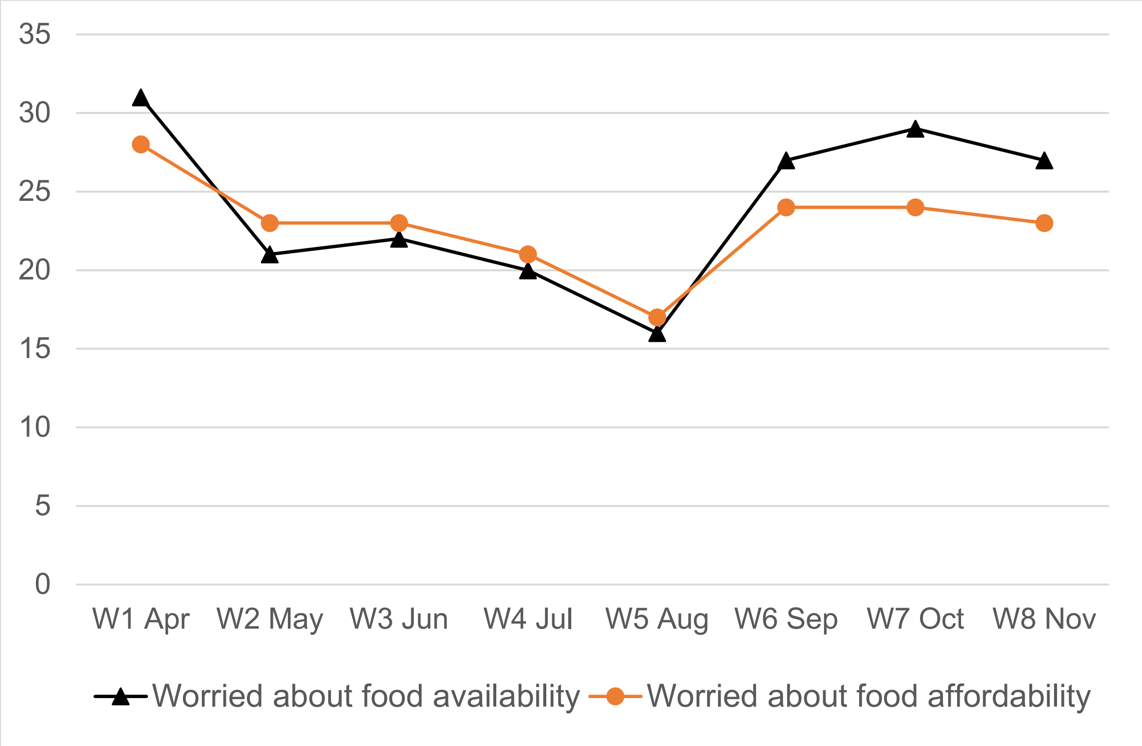
Concerns about both food affordability and food availability have followed a similar pattern across the 8 waves (Figure 4). Concerns peaked in April at the beginning of the first lockdown (28% and 31% respectively) and then fell steadily until a significant increase in September, when concerns about food affordability increased from 17% in August to 24%, and concerns about food availability increased from 16% in August to 27%. Levels of concern appear to have stabilised since. In November 23% of respondents reported being very/somewhat worried about food affordability, and 27% being very/somewhat worried about food availability, representing around 1 in 4 people.

Concern around both food availability and affordability remains higher for younger age groups and for those with a child in their household.

In November, for example, concern around food affordability for 16-24 year-olds (38%) was more than 3 times that of 55-75 year-olds (11%), and households with a child were more likely to be concerned than households without (35% and 19% respectively).

Concerns about food availability follow a similar pattern in November, with almost half (48%) of 16-24 year olds being concerned about there being enough food to buy, compared to 14% of 55-75 year olds, and 39% of households with a child being concerned compared to 22% of households without.

Figure 4: Levels of concern about food availability and affordability (Apr-Nov 2020)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75.

Food purchasing behaviours

Shopping online

In previous waves, 1 in 4 respondents reported ordering online from supermarkets more often since lockdown. Between August and November, the proportion doing so in that month increased from 37% to 41% (Table 3). In November those more likely than the average to have had an online supermarket delivery in the month include:

- those self-isolating, whether advised or otherwise (74%);
- those aged between 16-24 years (58%); and
- households with children present (51%).

Buying locally

In previous waves around a third of respondents (e.g. 31% in July) reporting buying food from local shops more often than in the previous month. Table 3 shows that purchasing from local shops has been relatively stable across the last 4 waves, with around 8 in 10 reporting doing so in the last month (79%), and over half reporting doing so at least once a week in November (56%). The proportion of those buying from local suppliers (such as farm shops and vegetable boxes) also remains stable, with 34% of respondents reporting doing so in the last month.

In November, both types of local purchasing behaviour were more common amongst those who were working, younger age groups (under 34), households with a child, larger households (four or more people) and those living in rural areas.

Table 3: Frequency of food purchasing behaviour (August -November 2020)

Behaviour	Frequency	Aug Wave 5	Sept Wave 6	Oct Wave 7	Nov Wave 8
Had an online food delivery from a supermarket	At least once a week	16%	20%	19%	18%
	At least once this month but not every week	20%	22%	21%	23%
	Net: In the last month	**37%**	**41%**	**40%**	**41%**
	Not in the last month	**61%**	**55%**	**56%**	**55%**
	Don't know/Not stated	2%	4%	4%	4%
Purchased food from a takeaway, either direct or online	At least once a week	15%	18%	17%	18%
	At least once this month but not every week	43%	42%	42%	39%
	Net: In the last month	**58%**	**60%**	**59%**	**57%**
	Not in the last month	**39%**	**38%**	**38%**	**41%**
	Don't know/Not stated	2%	2%	3%	3%
Purchased food from a local supplier, either direct or online	At least once a week	14%	16%	16%	15%
	At least once this month but not every week	20%	19%	16%	19%
	Net: In the last month	**34%**	**36%**	**32%**	**34%**
	Not in the last month	**63%**	**59%**	**61%**	**60%**
	Don't know/Not stated	3%	2%	7%	6%
Had a delivery from an online food ordering company	At least once a week	10%	14%	14%	13%
	At least once this month but not every week	23%	26%	24%	24%
	Net: In the last month	**33%**	**40%**	**38%**	**37%**
	Not in the last month	**64%**	**57%**	**58%**	**59%**
	Don't know/Not stated	3%	5%	4%	4%
Bought food from local shop	At least once a week	57%	54%	57%	56%
	At least once this month but not every week	22%	22%	22%	23%
	Net: In the last month	**79%**	**78%**	**79%**	**79%**
	Not in the last month	**19%**	**19%**	**18%**	**18%**
	Don't know/Not stated	3%	2%	3%	2%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
*Base size of less than 100.

Takeaways

During the summer months, there was a move away from buying food from takeaways with around a third of respondents (e.g. 32% in July) doing this *less* often than before lockdown. Younger respondents on the other hand reported eating takeaways *more* often than before lockdown (e.g. 38% of 16-24 year olds in July).

Over half (57%) of respondents in November reported ordering a takeaway (either direct or online) in the last month. This was more common amongst:

- larger households (of 3, 66%, or 4, 71%);
- younger age groups (e.g. 16-24 year olds, 77%,); and
- households with a child (72%, compared to 51% of those without).

When those who had not had a takeaway in the last month were asked their reasons for not doing so[6], the most common reason related to the expenditure with 26% stating they could not afford a takeaway and 31% stating that they'd prefer to save the money. Other key reasons were a preference for home cooking (50%), and a desire to eat healthily (35%). Concerns around Covid-19 were mentioned by almost a fifth (17%). The proportion of respondents reporting this as a factor has been stable across the last 4 waves, following a significant drop to 19% in August from 36% in July.

Other methods of accessing food

The number of respondents accessing food from Facebook Marketplace and through food sharing apps, such as Olio, remained stable across the 8 waves (7-9%), with the exception of a dip in August before returning to previous levels in September. Those more likely to access food in these ways continue to be male, younger (under 35), and from London.

Checking use by dates

From May, respondents who cook[7] were asked how often they check use by dates before preparing or cooking food. Across the 7 waves of data proportions remain fairly stable, with around 4 in 10 reporting *always* checking dates in November (see Table 4).

Table 4: Frequency of checking use by dates (May-Nov 2020)

Frequency	May Wave 2	June Wave 3	July Wave 4	Aug Wave 5	Sep Wave 6	Oct Wave 7	Nov Wave 8
Always	**42%**	**43%**	**46%**	**46%**	**45%**	**45%**	**45%**
Most of the time	32%	32%	30%	32%	31%	32%	30%
Sometimes	21%	21%	20%	19%	20%	19%	20%
Never	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%
Net: Not always	**58%**	**57%**	**54%**	**54%**	**55%**	**55%**	**55%**

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 who cook: 1,993 (W2), 2,012 (W3), 2,016 (W4), 2,046 (W5), 2,034 (W6), 2,035 (W7), 1,980 (W8). Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

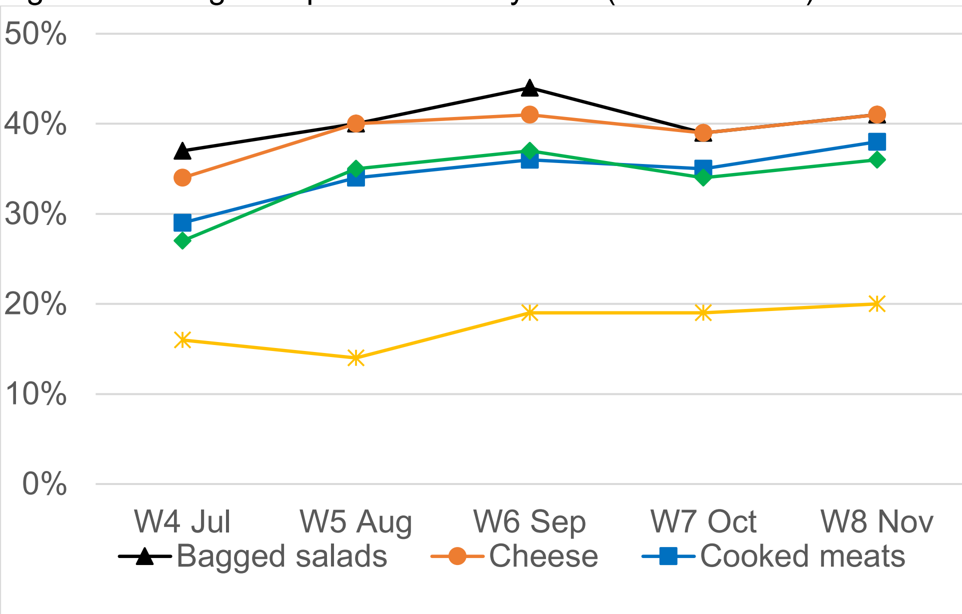
[6] Which, if any of the following, are reasons why you are buying food from a take-away less often compared to the period before lockdown?
[7] Between 97-98% of respondents in each wave.

Respondents who reported cutting the size of their meals or skipping meals at least once in the last month because they didn't have enough money for food[8] were less likely to report always checking use by dates in November (37%) than those who hadn't cut the size of, or skipped, meals (48%).

Eating food past its use by date

In April, 58% of respondents indicated that they (or someone in their family) had eaten food that had gone past its use by date[9]. In July, the question was amended to ask specifically about different foods (5 foods deemed by FSA microbiologists to pose risk if eaten past their use by date). Figure 5 shows levels of reported consumption of these foods, when past their use by date, amongst those who had eaten this food during the month. Respondents are more likely to report consuming out of date cheese (41%), bagged salad (41%) cooked meat (38%), and milk (36%), than smoked fish (20%), and this is consistent across the waves.

Figure 5: Eating food past the use-by date (Jul-Nov 2020)



Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75 who have eaten these foods.

Table 5 presents the characteristics of households for which consumption of out-of-date food was more common. In November, across all 4 food types, those households with a child present were more likely to have eaten out of date food. Compared to the average, households in the East Midlands were more likely to eat cooked meats that had gone out of date (46% vs 38%), whilst households in London were more likely to eat out of date smoked fish (26% vs 20%).

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8 In the last month have you cut down the size of your meals or skipped meals because you did not have enough money to buy food?

9 In the last month have you or anyone in your family eaten food that has gone past its 'use by' date?

Table 5: Household differences in eating food past the use by date (Nov 2020)

Food type	Base	All	4+ Household	Child present	Regions
Bagged salads	**1,632**	**41%**	46%	48%	-
Cheese	**1,861**	**41%**	-	48%	-
Cooked meats	**1,811**	**38%**	-	43%	East Midlands 46%
Milk	**1,878**	**36%**	-	41%	-
Smoked fish	**1,485**	**20%**	25%	26%	London 26%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75, who had eaten that food type in the last month.

Those who reported cutting or skipping meals for financial reasons were also more likely to report that they or someone in their household had eaten cheese (66%), cooked meat (65%), bagged salad (63%), milk (62%) and smoked fish (49%) past its use by date in the last month, compared to those who hadn't (35%, 30%, 36%, 30%, 13% respectively).

Eating in restaurants

Between June and October, respondents were asked about what most reassures them that it is safe to eat out[10]. Several options were provided, and respondents were able to choose up to three in their response. The question was amended in July to reflect the fact that restaurants had reopened and a further response option was added ('I feel it is already safe to eat out').

In October, 1 in 10 respondents said they already felt it was safe to eat out, continuing an upward trend seen since early summer. In the same month, the factors that most commonly reassured respondents that it was safe to eat out were:

- Appropriate social distancing measures (38%);
- Good hygiene and safety measures (31%);
- Visible and regular cleaning (27%); and
- Good handwashing facilities, including provision of hand sanitiser (26%).

These reflect the most commonly selected factors across the 5 waves (table 6).

Around 1 in 5 (21%) reported that they did not intend to eat out in the foreseeable future. This figure has remained stable across the last 3 months following a significant drop in August (from 31% in July).

[10] Now I want you to think about when restaurants re-open after lockdown. Which, if any, of the following would most reassure you that it is safe to return to eating out? In July, the first part of the question was amended to reflect the fact that restaurants had re-opened.

Table 6: Factors reassuring respondents that it is safe to eat out, June-October 2020

Factor	Jun Wave 3	Jul Wave 4	Aug Wave 5	Sep Wave 6	Oct Wave 7
Appropriate social distancing measures	**36%**	**32%**	**42%**	**40%**	**38%**
Good hygiene and safety measures	**35%**	**28%**	**35%**	**33%**	**31%**
Visible and regular cleaning	**24%**	**22%**	**29%**	**27%**	**27%**
Good handwashing facilities, including provision of hand sanitiser	**30%**	**26%**	**28%**	**26%**	**26%**
Local Covid-19 infection rate is low	26%	20%	21%	21%	23%
The option to eat outdoors	20%	16%	22%	17%	12%
Good food hygiene ratings on display	14%	11%	13%	14%	15%
Government guidance suggests there is low risk of infection nationally	17%	8%	7%	8%	9%
Other (specify)	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
I feel it's already safe to eat out	N/A	6%	8%	9%	10%
I won't do this for the foreseeable future	25%	31%	20%	21%	21%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75.

In October, groups more likely to not intend eating out in the foreseeable future include those respondents:

- with a health condition (32%);
- in the 35-44 year (27%) or 55-75 year age groups (30%);
- living in the West Midlands (27%), East of England (27%) or Rural areas (26%);
- in smaller households of 1 (27%) or 2 (25%); and
- in households without children (24%).

Consumption at home

From August (wave 5) respondents were asked how often they engaged in certain consumption practices at home[11], prior to this they were asked whether they engaged in such behaviours more or less in the last month.

On the whole, consumption behaviours have remained stable between August and November with around:

- 1 in 6 respondents reporting wasting or throwing away food, with around a third doing so every week (data from previous waves suggests that around a third were doing so 'less' in May-July than in previous months);
- 1 in 6 respondents reporting cooking food to freeze for later (data from previous waves suggests that around a quarter were doing so 'less' in May-July than in previous months);

[11] How often, if at all, do you do each of the following?

- 1 in 8 respondents reporting eating together with the family (data from previous waves suggests that around a quarter were doing so ‘more’ in May-July than in previous months).

In November, the groups most likely to report throwing away or wasting food (compared to the total of 59%) were those:

- Under the age of 45: 16-24 years (77%), 25-34 years (70%), 35-44 years (68%);
- In households of more than 2: household of 3 (64%), households of 4 or more (70%)
- In work (64%); and
- In a household with child (74%)

The trends for younger people to be more likely to report wasting food more is at contrast with the finding that 16-24 year olds show greater levels of concern about food affordability. However, it is important to note we do not have baseline levels of food waste to be able to compare absolute levels of waste between age groups. The same point applies to other groups.

Table 7: Frequency of food consumption behaviours (Aug-Nov 2020)

Behaviour	Frequency	Aug Wave 1	Sept Wave 2	Oct Wave 3	Nov Wave 4
Wasted or thrown away food	Every day	2%	1%	2%	2%
	At least once a week	33%	33%	31%	31%
	Monthly/fortnightly	28%	27%	27%	26%
	Net: In the last month	**62%**	**61%**	**60%**	**59%**
	Not in past month	**35%**	**35%**	**36%**	**37%**
	Don't know/Not stated	4%	4%	4%	3%
Cooked to freeze food for later	Every day	2%	2%	2%	2%
	At least once a week	35%	38%	38%	38%
	Monthly/fortnightly	26%	24%	25%	24%
	Net: In the last month	**64%**	**63%**	**65%**	**64%**
	Not in past month	**34%**	**34%**	**32%**	**33%**
	Don't know/Not stated	2%	3%	3%	3%
Eaten with the family	Every day	29%	25%	26%	27%
	At least once a week	43%	44%	44%	42%
	Monthly/fortnightly	8%	9%	8%	7%
	Net: In the last month	**80%**	**79%**	**78%**	**76%**
	Not in past month	**17%**	**17%**	**18%**	**20%**
	Don't know/Not stated	3%	4%	4%	4%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Nutrition behaviour

From August (wave 5) respondents were asked how often they engaged in certain nutrition behaviours[12], prior to this they were asked whether they engaged in such behaviours more or less in the last month.

Table 8: Frequency of nutrition behaviours (Aug-Nov 2020)

Behaviour	Frequency	Aug Wave 5	Sept Wave 6	Oct Wave 7	Nov Wave 8
Cooked food from scratch	Every day	20%	16%	19%	17%
	At least once a week	66%	66%	65%	66%
	Monthly/fortnightly	7%	9%	9%	9%
	Net: In the last month	**93%**	**91%**	**93%**	**92%**
	Not in past month	**6%**	**7%**	**5%**	**6%**
	Don't know/Not stated	1%	2%	2%	2%
Bought processed food	Every day	1%	1%	2%	2%
	At least once a week	49%	50%	49%	50%
	Monthly/fortnightly	31%	30%	29%	30%
	Net: In the last month	**81%**	**81%**	**80%**	**82%**
	Not in past month	**15%**	**15%**	**16%**	**14%**
	Don't know/Not stated	4%	4%	4%	4%
Eaten healthy meals	Every day	11%	10%	11%	10%
	At least once a week	75%	72%	72%	72%
	Monthly/fortnightly	8%	10%	9%	10%
	Net: In the last month	**94%**	**92%**	**92%**	**92%**
	Not in past month	**4%**	**4%**	**4%**	**5%**
	Don't know/Not stated	2%	3%	3%	3%
Eaten meat	Every day	10%	10%	10%	10%
	At least once a week	74%	74%	73%	74%
	Monthly/fortnightly	7%	7%	7%	6%
	Net: In the last month	**91%**	**90%**	**90%**	**90%**
	Not in past month	**8%**	**8%**	**8%**	**8%**
	Don't know/Not stated	1%	1%	2%	2%
Snacked on cakes, biscuits and confectionary	Every day	9%	9%	9%	12%
	At least once a week	67%	68%	69%	68%
	Monthly/fortnightly	13%	13%	12%	12%
	Net: In the last month	**90%**	**91%**	**90%**	**92%**
	Not in past month	**9%**	**7%**	**8%**	**7%**
	Don't know/Not stated	1%	2%	2%	2%

Base: Online, England, Wales and NI, adults 16-75. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

On the whole, nutrition behaviours remained stable between August and November (see table 8) with around:

[12] How often, if at all, do you do each of the following?

- 9 in 10 respondents cooking from scratch in the last month (with two thirds doing so at least once a week);
- 8 in 10 respondents eating processed food in the last month (around half doing so once a week);
- 9 in 10 eating healthy meals in the last month (around three quarters doing so at least once a week);
- 9 in 10 eating meat in the last month (around three quarters doing so at least once a week); and,
- 9 in 10 snacking on cakes, biscuits and confectionary in the last month (around two thirds doing so at least once a week

Food safety and hygiene at home

The Food Standards Agency recommends certain food safety and hygiene practices. A question around these practices was introduced in May[13]. Food safety behaviour in the home has remained relatively stable between May and July (see Table 9).

Table 9: Frequency of food safety practices (May-Nov 2020)

Practice	Frequency	May Wave 2	Jun Wave 3	Jul Wave 4	Aug Wave 5	Sep Wave 6	Oct Wave 7	Nov Wave 8
Cook food until it is steaming hot throughout	**Always**	**62%**	**65%**	**64%**	**68%**	**65%**	**67%**	**69%**
	Mostly	24%	24%	24%	23%	24%	23%	21%
	Sometimes	11%	9%	9%	7%	9%	8%	8%
	Never	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
	Not always	**38%**	**35%**	**36%**	**32%**	**35%**	**33%**	**31%**
Follow instruction s re storage of opened food	**Always**	**30%**	**28%**	**32%**	**30%**	**30%**	**33%**	**32%**
	Mostly	38%	39%	37%	38%	37%	38%	37%
	Sometimes	26%	26%	26%	26%	27%	24%	25%
	Never	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	6%
	Not always	**70%**	**72%**	**68%**	**70%**	**70%**	**67%**	**68%**
Washing raw chicken	Always	24%	22%	24%	21%	20%	22%	20%
	Mostly	9%	11%	11%	8%	10%	12%	10%
	Sometimes	15%	15%	15%	13%	15%	15%	14%
	Never	52%	53%	51%	57%	56%	52%	56%
	At least sometimes	**48%**	**47%**	**49%**	**43%**	**45%**	**48%**	**44%**
Use different chopping boards	**Always**	**30%**	**31%**	**31%**	**34%**	**31%**	**32%**	**29%**
	Mostly	22%	22%	23%	22%	25%	23%	24%
	Sometimes	25%	24%	24%	22%	22%	23%	23%
	Never	24%	23%	21%	22%	21%	22%	23%
	Not always	**70%**	**69%**	**69%**	**66%**	**69%**	**68%**	**71%**

Base: Online; England, Wales and NI; adults 16-75 who cook (between 97-99% of each wave). Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

[13] How often, if at all, do you do each of the following?

Most respondents report ‘always’ cooking food until it is steaming hot throughout, in line with recommended practice. However, the majority do not always follow instructions on packaging which tells consumers how long food should be stored once opened. Similarly, the majority of respondents do not always report using different chopping boards for different foods. Almost a half of respondents report washing raw chicken at least sometimes, which is not recommended.

For some food safety behaviours in the home, there are demographic differences. For instance, in November, older age groups were more likely to report cooking food until hot throughout, always or most of the time (e.g. 95% of 35-44 year olds compared to 77% of 16-24 year olds). Whilst younger age groups were more likely to report washing chicken, always or most of the time (e.g. 43% of 16-24 year olds compared to 23% of 35-44 year olds). This practice was also more commonly reported by males (37%, compared to 25% of females) and London and Greater London (both 41%, compared to 29% in the North of England).

4. Appendix

Appendix A: Wave 8 (Nov 2020) Questionnaire[14]

ASK ALL

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

MULTICODE -1-4, RANDOMISE 1-4

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 **[EXCLUSIVE, FIX]**
6. Prefer not to say **[EXCLUSIVE, FIX]**

ASK THOSE WHO RESPOND 1 - 3 IN Q1

Q2 In the last week, have you left your home to buy food, or for any other reason? *Please select from the options listed*

MULTICODE 1-2

1. Yes, to buy food
2. Yes, for another reason
3. No

ASK THOSE WHO RESPOND 1 in Q2

Q3 Which of the following, if any, are reasons why you left home to buy food? *Please select from the options listed*

MULTICODE

1. I went before I became aware that I should not leave home
2. I was unable to get food in other ways
3. I had other ways of getting food (e.g. online delivery, family member), but I prefer to shop in person

[14] Please note that the questionnaire has changed slightly each wave. Changes are noted where relevant throughout the report

4. None of these **[EXCLUSIVE, FIX]**
5. Prefer not to say **[EXCLUSIVE, FIX]**

ASK ALL

Q4. 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*

SINGLE CODE, FORWARD/REVERSE CODES

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

ASK ALL

Q5. 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*

SINGLE CODE, FORWARD/REVERSE CODES

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

ASK ALL

Q6. 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.*

RANDOMISE ROWS 1-4. PROGRESSIVE GRID, SINGLE CODE PER ROW

ROWS

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

COLUMNS
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

ASK ALL

Q7. In the last month, how often, if at all, have you done any of the following? *Please select one answer for each statement.*

SINGLE CODE PER ROW. RANDOMISE ROWS. PROGRESSIVE GRID. FORWARD/REVERSE COLUMNS 1-8

ROWS

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 (e.g. Deliveroo, Just Eat, Uber Eats)

COLUMNS

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

ASK IF CODES 7 AT Q7 (HAVE NOT DONE THIS IN PAST MONTH)

Q8. 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*

RANDOMISE, MULTICODE 1-8

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) **FIX**

ASK ALL

Q9. 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.*

SINGLE CODE PER ROW. PROGRESSIVE GRID. RANDOMISE ROWS 1-8

ROWS

1. From Facebook Marketplace
2. Through a food sharing app (e.g. Olio)
3. Through a government or local authority scheme
4. Through a food charity or food bank

COLUMNS

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

ASK Q9A IF (Q9 =1,2,3 OPTIONS SELECTED FOR FOOD BANK/CHARITY)

Q9a. 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.

RANDOMISE.MULTICODE UP TO 3.

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

ASK ALL

Q10 To what extent, if at all, are you aware of supermarket schemes introduced in response to Covid-19 to prioritise grocery deliveries to vulnerable customers? *Please select from the options listed*

REVERSE, SINGLE CODE

1. Yes – fully aware of these schemes
2. Yes – aware of them but not in detail
3. No – not aware of them
4. Don't know

ASK IF Q10 = 1-2

Q11 Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, have you used a supermarket scheme that prioritises grocery deliveries to vulnerable customers?

MULTICODE 1-2

1. Yes – for myself
2. Yes – on behalf of someone else
3. No

ASK Q12 IF Q11 = 1 OR 2 (USED SUPERMARKET SCHEME)

Q12 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you used one of these supermarket schemes?

SINGLE CODE

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

ASK IF Q11 = 3 (NOT USED THE SCHEME)

Q13 Are any of these reasons why you have not used the supermarket delivery scheme?

MULTI CODE, RANDOMISE

1. I'm not eligible for the scheme
2. I did not need it
3. It is not available in my area
4. I cannot afford grocery deliveries
5. The supermarket I use did not offer the scheme
6. I did not know how to apply for the scheme
7. I was not able to get a delivery slot
8. Other **(FIX)**
9. Prefer not to say **[EXCLUSIVE, FIX]**

ASK IF Q12 = 1,2,3 (USED THE SCHEME)

Q14 Which of these did you use to access the supermarket delivery scheme?

SINGLE CODE

1. Directly through the supermarket
2. Through my local authority
3. Through a charity
4. Through another route
5. Don't know/can't remember **(FIX)**
6. Other **(FIX)**
7. Prefer not to say **(FIX)**

ASK ALL

Q15. 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.*

SINGLE CODE PER ROW. RANDOMISE ROWS. PROGRESSIVE GRID.

ROWS

1. Cooked meats
2. Smoked fish
3. Bagged salads
4. Cheese
5. Milk

COLUMNS

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

ASK ALL

Q16 In the last month, how often, if at all, have you done any of the following?

Please select one answer for each statement.

RANDOMISE ROWS 1-10. PROGRESSIVE GRID. SINGLE CODE PER ROW. FORWARD/REVERSE COLUMNS 1-5

ROWS

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

COLUMNS

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

ASK ALL

Q18 How often, if at all, do you do each of the following?

Please select one answer for each statement.

SINGLE CODE PER ROW. RANDOMISE ROWS. PROGRESSIVE GRID.

ROWS

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

COLUMNS

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

Appendix B: Sample profile (November 2020)

Demographic category	**Number**	**%**
All respondents	2023	100%
Male	996	49%
Female	1008	50%
16-24-year olds	316	16%
25-34-year olds	367	18%
35-44-year olds	343	17%
45-54-year olds	368	18%
55-75-year olds	630	31%
Social grade AB	544	27%
Social grade C1	668	33%
Social grade C2	355	18%
Social grade DE	456	23%
Households with a child present	557	28%
Households with no child present	1466	72%
Household size 1	405	20%
Household size 2	710	35%
Household size 3	444	22%
Household size 4+	465	23%
Urban	1713	85%
Rural	310	15%
Married / living as married	1,093	54%
Single	699	34%
Widowed / divorced / separated	231	12%

Further data on sample profile (i.e. region, income, employment status, education) can be found within the data tables for each wave or the datasets, which are available upon application.