

Wider Consumer Interests Working Group

About

This working group looks at consumers interests in relation to food, beyond our food safety and regulatory remit. This includes themes such as health and nutrition, food affordability and food insecurity, and environmental sustainability. The group informs the identification of topics and appropriate methodologies to help the FSA build its evidence base on this topic.

Substantive work to date includes an external review of the FSA Consumer Insights Tracker. The review is now complete (see outputs) and made recommendations, which have, and will continue to, inform the CIT as an established product.

The group are currently exploring research questions around consumer understanding of ultra process foods, to support potential FSA work on this topic.

Members

- [Spencer Henson \(Chair\)](#)
- [Julie Hill](#)
- [Julie Barnett](#)
- [George Gaskell](#)
- [Seda Erdem](#)
- [Hannah Lambie-Mumford](#)
- [Fiona Gillison](#)
- [Charlotte Hardman](#)

Terms of Reference

[Wider Consumer Interest Working Group - Terms of Reference](#)

Papers

[ACSS: Working Group Proposition Paper Wider Consumer Interests](#)

The group last updated the wider committee at the 12th ACSS plenary meeting. Please see [Paper 12.6 of the 12th Open ACSS meeting](#)

Outputs

In July 2022, the FSA's Consumer Insights Tracker was presented to the Wider Consumer Interests (WCI) Working Group of the FSA's Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS). The WCI Working Group was asked to undertake a review of the Consumer Insights Tracker, with the following objectives:

- To determine whether the Consumer Insights Tracker should become a permanent FSA project, by assessing whether it is needed by internal and external stakeholders.
- To review the Consumer Insights Tracker as a product (including the purpose, aims, scope, content, outputs, and methodology) and report actionable recommendations to the FSA and ACSS.
- To review and comment on the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the supplier contract (should it be recommended that it becomes a permanent project).
- To advise on the extent to which questions within the Consumer Insights Tracker and the FSA's flagship Food and You 2 (F&Y2) survey should be aligned, and to advise on the best ways to communicate the differences between these research projects with FSA stakeholders.

Subsequently, Dr. Spencer Henson, the Chair of the WCI Working Group, substantively undertook this review over the period October 2022 to March 2023. Please note that all information on the methodology and project management of the Consumer Insights Tracker was correct at the time of writing, but that certain aspects of the project may now have changed.

The review process commenced with a review of documentation provided by the FSA. The review included documents describing the Consumer Insights Tracker, focus of the review and planned action plan for the continuation of the Tracker. Also, copies of past surveys implemented using the Consumer Insights Tracker and examples of reports on analysis of the Tracker data.

A series of in-depth interviews was undertaken through virtual meetings. These interviews followed a standard written script (Appendix 1). A total of 22 individuals were interviewed, including 17 within the FSA (including individuals with responsibility for strategy, communications and policy, and other members of the Social Science Team) and three five other government departments (OGDs). The interviews included individuals that are directly involved in the day-to-day implementation of the Consumer Insights Tracker, communication of the findings of the Tracker, and primary users of the data.

This report presents the findings and recommendations from the review which were presented to the FSA in March 2023 ahead of the project being re-tendered in April 2023.

To view/print the report in its entirety, please press the view/print guide button.

[Review of the FSA's Consumer Insights Tracker](#)

Consumer Insights Tracker Review: FSA Social Science Team Response

This is the FSA Social Science team response to the recommendations from the ACSS independent review of the Consumer Insights Tracker, including changes that have been made as a result of the review.

[Consumer Insights Tracker Review: FSA Social Science Team response](#)

Consumer Understanding and Concerns About Ultra-Processed Foods: A Rapid Scoping Review of Current Evidence

The Food Standards Agency's role and current position on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) is set out on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website^[1]. As stated, the FSA's main remit in relation to UPFs is to regulate additives, as well as having a role, alongside other government departments, in protecting consumer interests in relation to food. The agency tracks consumer perceptions in relation to food through regular research such as the Food and You 2 survey, and the Consumer Insights Tracker. The FSA's scope covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with Scotland covered by Food Standards Scotland (FSS).

The FSA has a statutory remit to act in the interests of consumers, and provide clear, evidence-based information, and therefore seeks to identify the most effective way of doing this.

The FSA accordingly commissioned the Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS) working group on Wider Consumer Interests to scope and undertake a rapid evidence review. The report is available [here](#).

[1] Food Standards Agency website - Ultra-processed foods (2024)

<https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/ultra-processed-foods>