

# SPOTLIGHT ON THE HEALTH OF THE NATION

New HFMA survey confirms young people are getting the message about supplements, although it raises concerns about social media

The 2025 Health Food Manufacturers' Association survey, just published, demonstrates that supplement use in younger age brackets has increased.

This is something that the health food trade could capitalise on, says the HFMA, as in the past we have often seen the average consumer age to be 35+. There is potentially a new and younger audience to be tapped into with the right tools.

Younger people get their information from social media and online sources with its glut of inaccurate or unqualified advice. This presents another opportunity for brands and stores to maximise their social presence in a professional, legal and accurate manner.

Key takeaways from the 'Health of the Nation' report include:

- Around two-thirds (67%) of respondents describe themselves as 'healthy'. However, just 22% are eating the Government's recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables (five portions) and 21% are eating the recommended daily intake of fibre (30g).
- Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) reported that a healthcare professional had recommended they take a probiotic as part of their treatment.

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The Health of the Nation Survey provides a valuable insight into how the public perceive their level of health and gives a picture of their supplement use. This can help us and our members plan for future activity and messaging.”

**Martin Last,**  
HFMA Director General

## THE YOUTH MARKET

For 16-24-year-olds who take food supplements, one of the most influential sources of advice (second only to 'friends and family') about supplements is social media platforms and online influencers. Over one in three (36%) of respondents in this age group said either of these channels shaped their choices.

This trend reflects the power and reach of digital content, but it also carries real risk. Misinformation, unqualified advice, and viral trends can all lead to poor decision-making or even harm.

## SUPPLEMENT USE

More than a third of Brits (37%) say they take at least one type of food supplement daily because they understand this helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Multivitamins and minerals are the most widely used supplement category with one in three people buying them. Of those, almost two-thirds (64%) use them daily.

The main reasons given for taking supplements are:

- General health and wellbeing (49%)
- Normal immune function (35%)
- Dietary gaps or occasional lapses (19%)

However, 44% of over-55s don't take any supplements. Among 25-34s, that drops to just 13%.



## A BLUEPRINT FOR PROGRESS

The feedback in the survey around supplement use and awareness of nutrition will help shape future activity for the HFMA Comms team for the rest of the year and into 2026.

Theresa Cutts, HFMA PR and Marketing Consultant, commented, "The survey helps inform our activity over the coming months in a number of ways. It gives source material for consumer press releases and also supports our political engagement in aiming to get MPs to understand that supplementation can be an important and valued part of the health of the UK population.

"The awareness around the use of the term probiotic is also important as it helps us demonstrate to the authorities and relevant departments that the consumer understands the term and is being recommended to look for 'probiotics' by their health professional."

■ [hfma.co.uk](https://hfma.co.uk)



**MARTIN LAST**



**THERESA CUTTS**

## PROBIOTIC LABELLING

As awareness of gut health continues to grow, so too does the demand for clear labelling – especially for probiotics.

More than six in ten respondents (64%) said they would find it helpful if products containing probiotics were clearly marked on packaging. For an industry grounded in trust, this is a call to action – not least because 23% of respondents said a healthcare professional had recommended a probiotic.

This is particularly prevalent in those aged between 25 and 34. Of those who have been recommended to take a probiotic, 44% fall into this age bracket. However, due to current advertising restrictions, these people are currently unable to walk into a health food store and pick up a clearly labelled 'probiotic' product.

"Transparent labelling empowers consumers and demystifies a rapidly expanding sector," the report says. "With probiotics potentially linked to digestive health and normal immune function, clarity is essential to help

the consumer make a more informed choice when it comes to their health and wellbeing."

## DIETING AND WEIGHTLOSS

Well over half of respondents believe that supplements play an even more important role during diet or weight management regimes. When calorie intake is reduced or food groups are restricted, many individuals see supplements as a practical way to ensure they still meet their body's essential needs.

"This demand isn't driven solely by weight management or aesthetic goals," says the report, "it's also shaped by cultural practices. During periods of fasting such as Ramadan, when meal timing and frequency change significantly, supplementation can provide vital nutritional support. For many, it's a way of maintaining energy, focus, and immune health during periods when their typical diet is temporarily altered."

The report concludes that the nation's health is at a crossroads. "It's time to bridge the gap between awareness and action and utilise the potential of food supplements in supporting a healthier future."

## Key Findings



### The nation's diet is need of support

While many people describe themselves as healthy, the data shows widespread nutritional variation. Most are not meeting recommended intake levels for essential nutrients – even though they believe they are.



### A generational divide

Age is a defining factor in how people approach supplementation. Older adults are more sceptical and less likely to use supplements, even though they are most vulnerable to deficiencies. Meanwhile, younger generations are more open – but are increasingly relying on unregulated online sources of advice.



### Doc knows best

Health professionals remain among the most trusted voices. Among supplement users, one of the most common triggers to start taking them is advice from a doctor, GP or other medical expert – especially for women aged 25-34.



### More information needed

Across all demographics, people are calling for clearer labelling, especially for probiotics. There is also widespread agreement that supplements are an important tool for weight management and restrictive diets.

## A SNAPSHOT OF OUR MARKET



The Health of the Nation Survey is conducted by the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) every few years to gain insight into how the UK adult population sees its level of health and nutritional awareness.

The previous survey was carried out in 2021 as a snapshot of supplement use during the pandemic and showed that 71% of adults were regularly taking a supplement. In the latest research, carried out by Censuswide among more than 2,000 adults in April, 64% report taking a supplement daily. This is closer to previous surveys and shows that the pandemic and health concerns fuelled the use of supplements.

HFMA Director General Martin Last said, "It's encouraging to see that younger generations are increasing their use and awareness of supplements and that it is not the domain of the 'older' sections of the population, and it demonstrates that there are opportunities for the trade to look at using social media as a way of conveying their message."