

Supplement use in younger people rises, although data reveals drop in overall consumption

New data has revealed a slight decrease in supplement use since the pandemic, but a positive uplift in supplement use among the younger generation.

The Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) has published the results of its *Health of the Nation* survey, which is conducted every few years to gain insight into how the UK adult population sees its level of health and nutritional awareness. The previous survey carried out in 2021 was a snapshot of supplement use during the pandemic and showed 71 per cent of adults regularly took a supplement. The latest research has revealed that 64 per cent of adults report taking a supplement daily. The HFMA says this is closer to previous surveys and shows the pandemic and health concerns fuelled the use of supplements.

The report also found that a third of Brits (37 per cent) take at least one type of food supplement every day, with multivitamins and minerals the most widely used category, with one in three (33 per cent) reporting use. While reasons for taking supplements vary, the top three motivators are general health and wellbeing (49 per cent), normal immune function (35 per cent), and dietary gaps (such as not getting sufficient amounts of a specific nutrient (19 per cent) or covering occasional lapses (19 per cent). Some 28 per cent of users were prompted to take supplements following advice from an expert, for example, a doctor, highlighting the critical role that doctors and other medical experts play in boosting uptake and guiding better nutritional decisions.

In the foreword, Martin Last, HFMA Director General, commented: "In short: the UK is not as healthy as it thinks it is. But the solutions – and the public



appetite for them – are there. This report provides a blueprint for action."

The latest survey, conducted by Censuswide among a sample of 2,000 UK respondents and collected in April, also demonstrates that the younger age bracket has increased its use of supplements; while 44 per cent of over-55s don't take any supplements, for 25-34s, that drops to just 13 per cent.

Martin advised: "The Health of the Nation Survey has always been something that we take very seriously. It 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. It is 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."

Among other findings, it was found there was a healthy confidence gap, with Brits being more confident in their health than the data justifies; around two-thirds (67 per cent) of respondents describe themselves as 'healthy', however, just 22 per



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cent are eating the Government's recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables (five portions) and 21 per cent are eating the recommended daily intake of fibre (30g).

In light of current regulations around the use of the term probiotics, the HFMA asked respondents what their perception was. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) reported that a healthcare professional had recommended they take a probiotic product as part of a treatment. This is particularly prevalent among those aged 25-34; of those who have been recommend a probiotic, 44 per cent 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.

The survey feedback will be used to help shape future activity for the HFMA Comms team.

Theresa Cutts, HFMA PR and

Marketing Consultant, advised: "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."

In other HFMA news, it has been announced that Clasado has been appointed to the council.

Clasado Biosciences, a global leader in the development of scientifically proven prebiotic ingredients and product solutions for the gut microbiome, has joined the HFMA Council, being represented by General Counsel, Lucie Nagy.

Lucie brings extensive expertise in scientific and regulatory affairs within the nutrition and health sectors, and her appointment further strengthens Clasado's commitment to advocating for science and supporting the natural health products industry.

Lucie commented: "The role presents an exciting opportunity for Clasado to engage in strategic discussion for the natural health products industry. As the health and nutrition category continues to grow and new innovations come to the forefront, it's a real opportunity to be part of that constructive discussion."