

Younger consumers are taking more supplements, overall use slips back to pre-Pandemic levels

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Martin Last
HFMA Director General

Younger consumers are taking more food supplements while overall supplement use has slipped back to pre-Pandemic levels, a new survey by the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) has found.

The *Health of the Nation Survey* is conducted by the 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, 64% of adults report taking a supplement daily – closer to previous surveys and showing that the pandemic and health concerns fuelled increased use of supplements.

Generational divide

The latest findings shows supplement users in younger age brackets have increased their use of supplements, with the survey finding that younger generations are more open to supplementation generally. This, says the HFMA, is something that the health food trade could capitalise on as in the past the average age of supplement consumers typically sat at 35+. However, these younger groups are also increasingly relying on unregulated online sources of advice. Older adults are more sceptical and less likely to use supplements, even though they are most vulnerable to deficiencies.

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



Awareness of how healthy respondents feel their lifestyle is creates an interesting picture of how respondents believe they receive adequate nutrition. 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 (5 portions) and 21% are eating the recommended daily intake of fibre (30g).

Closing the knowledge gap

The survey suggests that a 'knowledge gap' – consumers unaware that their dietary and lifestyle choices may be creating unintentional nutritional shortfalls – “presents an urgent opportunity for intervention – through clearer public guidance, stronger support from professionals, and greater access to food supplements to close nutritional gaps and support good”.

'Scrolls over science'

Younger generations increasingly turn first to social media sources for information about health and wellness. This trend reflects the power and reach of digital content – but also carries real risk, says the Health of the Nation Survey. Misinformation, unqualified advice, and viral trends can all lead to poor decision-making, or even harm. The survey notes steps taken in the Netherlands to combat health misinformation on social platforms. Under the Dutch Media Act, professional influencers with over 500,000 followers and at least 24 video uploads annually are legally required to make clear disclosure of advertising, sponsorships, and product placements, especially concerning health-related content. The HFMA says the “solution isn't to dismiss these channels – it's to meet people where they are, and raise the standard of information they're receiving”.

Probiotic challenge

In light of current regulations around the use of the term probiotics, the HFMA asked respondents what their perception was. Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) reported that a healthcare professional had recommended they take a probiotic product as part of a treatment. This is particularly prevalent in 25–34-year-olds – of those who have been recommended taking a probiotic, 44% fall into this age bracket. However, due to current advertising restrictions, says the HFMA, these people are currently unable to walk into a health food store and pick up a clearly labelled 'probiotic' product.

Martin Last, HFMA Director General commented: “*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.”

He added: “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.”

Political engagement

The HFMA says feedback in the survey around supplement use and awareness of nutrition will help shape future activity for its 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.”

She added: “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' from their health professional.”



• Survey details: The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 2000 UK Respondents (Nat Rep 16+). The data was collected between 07.04.2025 – 10.04.2025. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

