Estimates of household food expenditure and consumption, 1960

National Food Survey

The National Food Survey is a continuous enquiry, based on stratified random samples, which obtains information on domestic food consumption and expenditure of all classes of private households in Great Britain. The present article, which reviews changes up to the end of 1960, is one of a series presenting some of the most recent results of the Survey in advance of the more detailed annual reports of the National Food Survey Committee, the latest of which, *Domestic Food Consumption and Expenditure: 1959* was published in June 1961. Recent quarterly figures are also published in the *Monthly Digest of Statistics*. The main tables accompanying this article give estimates of average expenditure and consumption per person per week in 1960 for the main foods or groups of foods by households of different class and composition, together with comparable estimates for each year from 1955 to 1960 for all households included in the sample. The estimates of consumption given in the tables include garden and allotment produce and other food obtained free of cost.

A total of 8,891 households, containing 27,731 persons, participated in the Survey in 1960. The distribution of the sample by social class, based on the declared net weekly income of the head of the household or principal earner, is given in Table 1, and that by household composition in Table 2. A detailed record of each household's expenditure on food and the quantities obtained for consumption in the home was provided by the housewife for one week; expenditure on sweets, soft and alcoholic drinks, meals and other food consumed outside the home were not recorded. The field-work was continuous throughout the year except for the four days after the Christmas holiday, but in order to retain comparability with the results for previous years in which the field-work did not extend over Christmas, the averages presented in the tables do not take into account purchases made in the week up to and including Christmas Day. If these purchases had been included in the annual averages, the estimate of total household food expenditure for the sample as a whole would have been a little more than 1 per cent. greater, but the averages for some foods, notably poultry, would have shown relatively larger increases.

The total household expenditure on food recorded by the Survey increased from an average of 29s. 3d. per head per week in 1959 to 29s. 8d. in 1960, an increase of 1·2 per cent. compared with a rise of 3·2 per cent. in the previous year. (The Survey samples are sufficiently consistent for valid year to year comparisons to be made.) The slackening in the rate of increase is associated with a fall in the food component of the official index of retail prices from an average level of 108·2 in 1959 (taking 17th January 1956 = 100) to 107·4 in 1960. This fall was mainly attributable to lower prices for potatoes, butter and cheese, but there were also decreases of less importance in the average prices of poultry, bacon, cooked meats, fresh peas and beans, citrus fruit and canned fruit, with offsetting increases in the prices of eggs, carcase meat, apples and bread.

The increase of 1·2 per cent. in household food expenditure in 1960 and the accompanying fall of 0·7 per cent. in the general level of retail food prices together imply a rise of nearly 2 per cent. in the quantity or quality of household food purchases per head. Very little of this rise, however, was attributable to an increase in the quantity of food consumed. The energy value of food obtained for consumption in the home increased by less than one half per cent.—an insignificant change—and most of the increase in food expenditure was due to a continued shift in demand from staple foods to the more expensive highly processed foods, and to foods of better quality. Expenditure on what may be termed convenience foods(1), in which the manufacturer has relieved the housewife of much of the labour of preparation for the table, accounted for 18·7 per cent. of total household expenditure on food in 1960. Between 1955 and 1960, expenditure on these foods rose from 4s. 3d. per person per week to 5s. 6d., an increase of 31 per cent.; over the same period, expenditure on all other foods increased by only 12·5 per cent. Moreover, a Fisher-type index of average values indicates that the general level of prices of these convenience foods was only 4 per cent. higher in 1960 than in 1955, compared with a rise of 11 per cent. in the average price level of all other foods.

Average expenditure per head on convenience foods varies quite widely between households of different social class and between families of different composition. In 1960, the averages ranged from 6s. per person per week for households in the highest income group to 3s. 11d. per head for old age pensioners mainly dependent on their pensions. The proportion of total food expenditure devoted to these foods was greatest (19·1 per cent.) in households whose head had an income of between £8 and £20 a week, and slightly less (18·2 per cent.) in other groups containing earners; the proportion was least (14·2 per cent.) for the old age pensioner group, and only a little higher (14·9 per cent.) for the other non-earning, low income households most of which also consisted of elderly adults. In the Survey classification by family composition, the range in average weekly expenditure on convenience foods was from 8s. 1d. per head by younger childless couples to 3s. 11d. per head in families with four or more children, but the proportion of total food expenditure devoted to these foods did not vary significantly from 20 per cent. as the size of family increased. The proportion fell to a little under 19 per cent. in households containing adolescents, and was least (15·5 per cent.) in households of one man and one woman, one or both of whom were aged 55 or over.

Turning to trends in the consumption of separate commodities, changes in the level of consumption of butter and of margarine are of special interest in view of the wide variation in supplies and average prices of butter over recent years during which the price of margarine has scarcely varied. These changes are illustrated in Table A.

(1) Cooked and canned meats, meat products (other than sausages), cooked and canned fish, quick-frozen peas and beans, canned vegetables, canned fruit, fruit juices, cakes and pastries, biscuits, puddings, other cereal preparations (mainly breakfast cereals) and canned and dehydrated soups.

TABLE A

	Consumption			Average price of butter 1955 = 100	Ratio of the average price of butter to that of margarine	Index of retail prices All items 17 January 1956 = 100
	Butter	Margarine	Butter and margarine			
	ounces per head per week					
1955	4·47	4·68	9·15	100	2·24	—
1956	4·70	4·48	9·18	96	2·07	102
1957	5·37	4·02	9·39	82	1·68	106
1958	6·10	3·46	9·56	70	1·48	109
1959 January–March	5·92	3·52	9·44	85	1·80	110
April–June	5·82	3·60	9·42	84	1·77	109
July–September	5·96	3·68	9·64	102	2·13	109
October–December	5·27	4·14	9·41	117	2·41	110
1960 January–March	5·24	3·92	9·16	102	2·10	110
April–June	5·71	3·66	9·37	82	1·67	111
July–September	5·87	3·46	9·33	84	1·76	111
October–December	5·90	3·62	9·52	83	1·74	112

Between 1955 and 1958 there was a general (though not uniform) downward trend in butter prices, which was sharply reversed in 1959, when the 'real'(1) price of butter rose to a level comparable with that immediately after derationing; prices subsequently declined during the first half of 1960, but remained within a comparatively narrow range throughout the remainder of the year at about the same level as in 1957. Consumption of butter increased from 4·5 ounces per head per week in 1955 to 6·5 ounces in the third quarter of 1958; this increase was not entirely at the expense of margarine, consumption of which fell from 4·7 ounces to 3·1 ounces over the same period. Although butter consumption declined when the average price rose in 1959, it was maintained at a higher level, and that of margarine at a lower level, than in periods of comparable real butter prices between 1955 and 1958. The demand curves for butter and margarine thus shifted their position after the price of butter reached its lowest point in mid-1958, butter gaining some ground over margarine; however, soon after the price of butter reached its highest point late in 1959, the demand curves shifted back towards, but not to, their original position, so that in 1960 butter lost some of the ground which it had gained over margarine in 1958-59. An analysis of monthly Survey data of butter prices and purchases from January 1955 to December 1960 yields an estimate of −0·34 for the elasticity of demand for butter with respect to its own price after the effects of seasonality and annual shifts in the demand curve have been eliminated. This estimate provides a satisfactory measure of the relationship between changes in the real price and changes in consumption in the short run, but experience has shown that wide fluctuations in the real price may generate new conditions of demand.

Table B shows changes in consumption and average prices of carcase and other meat between 1956 and 1960. Total consumption of meat has shown very little change over this period, but purchases of beef and mutton have declined while consumption of poultry, cooked and canned meats and meat products has increased. In 1956, beef and veal accounted for 28·3 per cent. of the total weight of meat consumed, mutton and lamb 20·3 per cent., uncooked poultry 1·7 per cent. and cooked and canned meats and meat products (other than sausages) 14·3 per cent.; in 1960 the corresponding percentages were 24·4, 18·5, 4·7 and 16·6. In 1956 the average price paid for carcase meat was 3s. 4d. per pound and that for poultry 5s. per pound; by 1960 the former had increased to 3s. 10d. and the latter had decreased to 3s. 11d. per pound. Over this period the average price of mutton and lamb increased much less than that of beef and of pork.

A demand analysis of the monthly Survey data for the period January 1955 to December 1960 indicates that in 1960 the level of consumption of beef and of pork was no less, and that of mutton and lamb very little less, than could be expected from changes in prices and incomes over this period. The decline in the consumption of carcase meat after 1956 was in fact very largely due to lower imports of beef; this decline was offset by an increase in the consumption of poultry and processed meats. The increase in poultry purchases was much greater than might have been expected from the decrease in its relative price and the rise in real incomes. These factors alone would explain an increase in purchases of about two-thirds between 1956 and 1960; in the event, purchases actually trebled. It appears that during this period the market for poultry was widening, possibly to some extent at the expense of carcase meat. If the demand for poultry meat continues to expand, or the production costs of poultry continue to fall, consumer preferences for carcase meat may well be weakened in the longer run.

(1) That is, the average price of butter deflated by the index of retail prices for all items.

TABLE B

	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
	ounces per head per week				
Consumption					
Beef and veal	10·00	10·54	9·57	8·51	8·74
Mutton and lamb	7·16	6·28	6·04	6·92	6·63
Pork	1·90	1·98	2·13	1·98	2·02
Total carcase meat	19·06	18·80	17·74	17·41	17·39
Poultry(1)	0·59	0·80	0·97	1·19	1·68
"Convenience" meats(2)	5·06	5·19	5·70	5·64	5·94
Other meats(3)	10·64	10·65	10·76	10·57	10·88
Total meat	35·35	35·44	35·17	34·81	35·89
	Consumption expressed as a percentage of total meat consumption				
Beef and veal	28·3	29·7	27·2	24·4	24·4
Mutton and lamb	20·3	17·7	17·2	19·9	18·5
Pork	5·4	5·6	6·1	5·7	5·6
Total carcase meat	53·9	53·0	50·4	50·0	48·5
Poultry(1)	1·7	2·2	2·8	3·4	4·7
"Convenience" meats(2)	14·3	14·6	16·2	16·2	16·6
Other meats(3)	30·1	30·1	30·6	30·4	30·3
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Average prices paid			*per pound*		
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Beef and veal	3 6	3 7	3 10	4 1	4 2
Mutton and lamb	3 1	3 4	3 4	3 3	3 5
Pork	3 8	3 9	3 9	4 0	4 2
All carcase meat	3 4	3 6	3 8	3 9	3 10
Poultry(1)	5 0	4 8	4 7	4 1	3 11

(1) Excluding cooked poultry.

(2) Cooked meats, canned meats and meat products other than sausages.

(3) Bacon and ham (uncooked), offals, sausages, rabbit, game, etc.

Although household consumption of potatoes increased from 55·0 ounces per head per week in 1959 to 57·2 ounces in 1960, this is not necessarily indicative of a reversal of the long-term tendency for demand to decline with rising incomes; supplies were better and average prices lower in the latter year than in the former. Downward trends have also long been apparent for bread and for preserves. Purchases of bread declined from 55·1 ounces per head per week in 1955 to 45·5 ounces in 1960, and consumption of preserves fell from 4·1 ounces to 3·2 ounces; in contrast, purchases of cakes and biscuits increased by 12 per cent. over this period to an average of 12·0 ounces per head per week.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Estimates of household food expenditure and consumption in Great Britain(1)

Analysis by income of head of household(2), 1960 and averages for all households 1955-59

TABLE I

	Weekly income of head of household(2)						All households				
	£20 and over	£12 and under £20	£8 and under £12	Less than £8							
				With earners	Without earners	Old age pensioners	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
	1960										
Number of households surveyed	889	3,419	2,879	569	264	871	10,453	9,617	8,937	8,611	9,326
Number of persons surveyed	3,060	11,827	9,574	1,501	483	1,286	33,381	31,063	28,213	27,442	29,585
Expenditure											
Total (*per head per week*)	s. d. 33 2	s. d. 30 0	s. d. 28 9	s. d. 26 9	s. d. 29 8	s. d. 27 10	s. d. 25 8	s. d. 27 3	s. d. 28 1	s. d. 28 5	s. d. 29 3
	Pence per head per week										
Milk and cream	41·94	37·44	34·73	32·54	41·41	39·67	30·79	32·40	35·96	35·59	36·07
Cheese	9·25	7·53	7·86	6·81	8·82	8·26	5·87	7·16	6·36	6·15	8·06
Fats	23·95	23·05	21·88	20·69	23·95	23·50	22·70	22·48	21·96	20·43	24·31
Eggs	20·54	18·84	17·75	17·12	18·17	17·07	17·35	17·88	15·80	16·91	16·20
Carcase meat	58·65	50·16	48·68	43·82	52·88	49·66	44·57	47·95	49·64	48·65	48·72
Bacon and ham, uncooked	16·77	15·99	15·71	13·51	14·44	15·97	14·30	15·00	14·55	15·13	15·41
All other meat	38·81	35·39	35·32	31·95	28·47	25·64	25·84	28·11	29·11	31·19	32·81
Fish	19·10	15·68	14·72	14·60	16·42	14·94	11·31	13·02	13·30	14·04	15·56
Fresh fruit	26·87	19·96	16·72	14·91	18·83	15·67	16·69	18·25	19·68	18·12	19·19
Other fruit	12·81	9·29	8·34	5·86	6·73	5·55	8·22	8·83	9·23	9·20	9·32
Potatoes	10·44	12·77	12·25	12·40	10·43	9·36	11·38	12·59	11·66	14·59	14·03
Fresh green and other vegetables	22·36	19·66	17·90	16·07	17·72	14·42	15·56	16·89	16·76	17·44	18·24
Bread	18·69	21·36	23·28	24·56	21·90	23·03	17·65	19·14	21·91	21·72	22·06
Cereals, other than bread	35·35	33·12	32·20	27·94	30·98	28·21	28·35	29·74	31·51	32·02	31·98
Sugar and preserves	12·85	12·64	12·39	12·65	14·07	14·42	12·85	13·36	14·02	13·28	13·22
Tea	11·59	13·40	13·55	14·70	16·46	16·87	14·58	13·73	14·03	13·92	13·54
Other beverages and miscellaneous	18·35	13·52	12·12	10·85	13·97	12·00	9·96	10·94	11·91	12·29	12·75
			Ounces per head per week (unless otherwise stated)								
Consumption(3)											
Liquid milk (*pints*)	5·58	4·90	4·60	4·28	4·99	4·82	4·81	4·83	4·84	4·80	4·76
Milk, processed and cream (*pints or eq. pints*)	0·28	0·32	0·31	0·28	0·22	0·16	0·28	0·28	0·26	0·30	0·31
Cheese	3·42	2·92	3·09	2·67	3·52	3·24	2·83	2·85	2·89	2·98	2·92
Butter	6·52	5·86	5·16	4·90	6·57	6·52	4·47	4·70	5·37	6·10	5·74
Margarine	2·90	3·57	4·06	4·06	3·44	3·06	4·68	4·48	4·02	2·46	3·74
Other fats	2·48	2·67	2·70	2·34	2·26	2·42	2·73	2·66	2·57	2·68	2·55
Eggs (*number*)	5·28	4·66	4·54	4·24	4·64	4·20	4·19	4·35	4·41	4·42	4·54
Carcase meat	18·81	17·31	17·02	15·91	19·33	18·31	18·23	19·06	18·80	17·74	17·53
Bacon and ham, uncooked	5·51	5·35	5·28	4·56	5·25	5·68	5·35	5·11	5·08	5·16	5·14
All other meat	14·12	13·14	13·72	12·34	11·05	9·65	10·84	11·18	11·56	12·27	12·51
Fish	6·42	5·73	5·66	5·71	7·28	6·38	5·95	6·13	5·94	5·70	5·93
Fresh fruit	32·89	23·60	19·82	17·51	26·54	19·75	20·65	20·56	21·22	19·42	23·29
Other fruit	9·20	7·16	6·46	4·76	5·07	4·46	6·49	6·51	6·74	6·66	6·86
Potatoes	47·92	57·96	59·90	61·30	57·70	47·15	61·17	58·43	58·47	55·39	55·05
Fresh green vegetables	18·02	15·92	15·28	12·58	18·55	16·36	14·79	14·34	15·95	14·73	15·17
Other vegetables	17·44	17·47	17·30	17·22	18·14	15·05	15·87	16·89	16·13	16·97	16·36
Bread	37·01	44·54	48·52	51·34	44·19	45·40	55·13	51·08	48·00	47·21	47·29
Flour	6·52	6·57	6·94	6·01	7·83	8·47	8·57	7·89	7·81	7·75	6·74
Cakes and biscuits	11·72	11·95	12·29	11·26	11·65	11·34	10·68	10·97	11·33	11·40	11·59
Other cereals	7·39	6·60	5·94	5·16	6·58	5·53	5·66	5·89	5·98	6·14	6·16
Sugar	16·46	18·03	17·57	18·12	18·31	19·24	17·64	18·00	17·70	18·55	18·50
Preserves	3·50	3·10	3·10	3·09	4·29	4·13	4·09	3·69	3·59	3·49	3·30
Tea	2·28	2·76	2·84	3·19	3·34	3·52	2·79	2·88	2·81	2·84	2·80
Other beverages	1·12	0·75	0·70	0·65	0·95	0·96	0·75	0·79	0·80	0·80	0·74

(1) A description of the sampling methods used in obtaining these estimates was included in the September 1957 issue of *Economic Trends*.

(2) Ascertained or estimated gross income of head of household or of the principal earner if the income of the head was less than £8.

(3) Purchases plus free food including withdrawals from larder stocks of certain home-produced foods.

Estimates of household food expenditure and consumption in Great Britain(1)

All households and households of different composition, 1960

TABLE 2

	All households(2) 1960	Households with one man and one woman and							
		No other (one or both 55 years of age or over)	No other (both under 55 years of age)	One child	Two children	Three children	Four or more children	Adolescents only	Children and adolescents
Number of households surveyed	8,891	1,372	777	1,073	930	357	196	483	592
Number of persons surveyed	27,731	2,744	1,554	3,219	3,720	1,785	1,281	1,562	2,954
Expenditure	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Total (*per head per week*)	29 8	36 1	40 3	30 8	26 0	22 4	19 9	34 2	26 8
				Pence per head per week					
Milk and cream	36·91	44·70	44·99	38·07	35·11	31·46	25·63	38·96	32·77
Cheese	7·85	10·52	11·02	8·01	6·39	5·37	4·57	9·36	6·92
Fats	22·65	27·92	29·70	23·19	19·35	16·71	15·91	26·48	21·30
Eggs	18·46	21·51	23·50	19·40	17·13	15·18	13·32	20·34	17·02
Carcase meat	50·27	70·20	69·68	49·46	40·16	30·92	25·75	60·15	42·30
Bacon and ham, uncooked	15·82	21·61	24·04	15·96	12·64	10·58	8·96	18·26	14·09
All other meat	34·98	39·32	52·89	37·92	29·89	25·98	22·90	41·90	30·13
Fish	15·68	21·99	23·08	15·50	12·12	9·64	8·12	19·48	13·04
Fresh fruit	19·11	23·00	28·41	20·17	16·28	13·28	10·79	23·20	16·06
Other fruit	8·95	9·26	13·92	10·62	8·29	6·30	5·12	10·65	8·02
Potatoes	12·12	11·25	14·24	12·57	12·20	10·77	10·84	13·03	12·99
Fresh green and other vegetables	18·88	21·62	28·24	20·01	17·17	14·04	12·50	21·27	16·32
Bread	21·98	24·45	25·67	21·18	18·57	18·21	19·72	24·91	23·23
Cereals, other than bread	32·49	34·93	42·42	34·94	32·34	28·43	25·28	36·88	30·51
Sugar and preserves	12·67	16·02	15·00	12·78	11·04	10·98	10·73	14·08	12·48
Tea	13·54	19·12	17·88	13·26	10·62	9·78	8·38	15·76	11·73
Other beverages and miscellaneous	13·37	15·78	18·17	14·93	12·57	10·74	8·35	15·08	11·17
				Ounces per head per week (unless otherwise stated)					
Consumption(3)									
Liquid milk (*pints*)	4·84	5·23	5·19	5·01	5·02	4·86	4·24	4·74	4·50
Milk, processed and cream (*pints or eq. pints*)	0·30	0·24	0·25	0·40	0·38	0·41	0·40	0·20	0·23
Cheese	3·04	4·14	4·16	3·07	2·45	2·12	1·81	3·62	2·68
Butter	5·68	7·50	7·98	5·93	4·68	3·78	3·04	6·60	4·78
Margarine	3·66	3·53	3·43	3·46	3·35	3·51	4·41	4·15	4·66
Other fats	2·63	3·05	3·48	2·92	2·49	2·08	1·96	3·10	2·48
Eggs (*number*)	4·64	5·25	5·62	4·87	4·29	3·87	3·56	5·00	4·34
Carcase meat	17·39	24·52	22·50	17·00	14·25	11·04	9·53	20·46	14·84
Bacon and ham, uncooked	5·32	7·37	7·60	5·29	4·29	3·60	3·02	6·20	4·86
All other meat	13·18	14·22	17·91	14·48	11·45	10·67	9·76	15·96	11·95
Fish	5·86	8·36	7·39	5·61	4·55	3·79	3·23	7·18	5·12
Fresh fruit	22·91	27·73	33·25	23·61	20·21	16·24	13·30	27·30	19·75
Other fruit	6·84	7·34	10·34	7·91	6·27	4·84	4·18	8·24	6·22
Potatoes	57·20	55·42	62·82	57·89	57·16	52·84	54·97	63·29	60·76
Fresh green vegetables	15·81	22·18	21·73	15·87	13·22	10·03	9·08	18·64	12·51
Other vegetables	17·30	20·57	21·76	17·99	16·57	14·55	13·80	19·52	16·42
Bread	45·47	48·47	50·75	44·16	39·19	38·29	42·56	51·97	49·43
Flour	6·76	10·12	7·34	6·58	5·96	4·21	4·63	7·71	6·22
Cakes and biscuits	11·98	13·28	15·97	12·51	11·41	9·94	8·50	14·10	11·23
Other cereals	6·35	6·40	6·98	6·81	6·95	6·61	6·87	6·00	6·28
Sugar	17·76	20·88	21·16	18·15	16·04	15·67	14·80	19·86	17·24
Preserves	3·21	4·54	3·54	3·07	2·67	2·63	2·93	3·64	3·32
Tea	2·80	3·87	3·66	2·76	2·22	2·08	1·81	3·22	2·45
Other beverages	0·77	1·03	1·05	0·79	0·65	0·54	0·44	0·93	0·61

(1) A description of the sampling methods used in obtaining these estimates was included in the September 1957 issue of *Economic Trends*.
(2) Including households (about one third of the sample) in which the adult element was other than one man and one woman.
(3) Purchases plus free food including withdrawals from larder stocks of certain home-produced foods.