

# Supermarket survey

## Which online food store?

Ocado trounces Asda and Tesco in our survey of more than 2,000 online supermarket shoppers

**S**pare a thought for the Which? member who ordered vanilla ice-cream and got vanilla air freshener instead. Or the customer who wanted a pack of chocolate flakes and was sent broad beans. These are among the barmier substitutions we found in our online supermarket survey.

We asked 2,255 Which? members who had bought groceries online about their experiences including whether items ordered were substituted, how easy it was to order, quality of fruit and vegetables, and whether they got value for money.

We also asked 10 families who had never tried online shopping to rate the online version of the supermarket they normally shop at. Results were mixed.

### High substitutions

In our survey, 45% of members had at least one item substituted in their last order. We found that 57% of shoppers using Sainsbury's.co.uk and 56% using Asda.co.uk had at least one substitution, compared with 26% for Ocado.com.

Sainsbury's gave slightly more acceptable substitutions than most, with 53% of shoppers saying they were excellent or good. Only Waitrose.com did better: 68% rating them highly. Tesco.com and Asda performed least well.

All the supermarkets except Ocado allow you to say at the point of ordering that you don't want an item substituted.

### Where's my shopping?

15% of members had something missing from their last order and 8% received at least one damaged item. Asda shoppers

had the most missing items – 18% in their last order – but Sainsbury's, Waitrose and Tesco were just behind. Perhaps it's no surprise that only 18% of you bought groceries online in the past year.

### Top of the shops

Members like the convenience of shopping online. Ocado is the favourite, scoring 82%. Members like the easy-to-use website and good-quality fruit and vegetables. It also has the least number of orders with wrong items in our survey.

However, one in ten Ocado shoppers had a damaged item in their last order, the same as for Asda and higher than other supermarkets. Asda and Tesco are your least favourite online stores overall.

### Fresh food

The quality of fresh fruit and veg at Asda and Tesco is less well regarded than their rivals, with 61% of customers saying it was good or excellent in their last order.

Best-before dates are disappointing at Sainsbury's, Tesco and Asda. Just 47% of Asda customers who check the dates say they're as good as they would choose. This compares with 68% of Waitrose customers and 66% for Ocado.

### Value for money

Ocado has recently begun competing hard on price, for example launching its Everyday range and price-matching Tesco on 5,000 branded products. It has also cut prices on 4,000 Waitrose own-label lines. It's still rated lowest for value in our survey along with Tesco, though no store does badly. Asda is rated best for value.



### Timely delivery

Waitrose, which only delivers orders costing £50 or more, has scrapped delivery charges. It is rated highest for timely deliveries – 82% say their last delivery turned up when it was due. Asda and Tesco also score highly. Ocado's delivery slots are rated most convenient, but it does less well than other supermarkets for delivering orders on time.

For more information see [www.which.co.uk/online supermarkets](http://www.which.co.uk/online supermarkets).

#### TAKE ACTION!

Find out which supermarkets used the most plastic bags to deliver shopping. See next month's investigation into plastic bag policy.

## Your rights

### Don't get caught out by the small print

#### Price may not be right

The price that you see when ordering may not be what you pay, eg special offers may expire. Online stores can charge the price of goods on the day they pick them – this may not be the same as the price shown when you ordered.

You can reject items if prices rise.

**Right to return** If your food turns up damaged or out of date, you can refuse it and ask for an exchange or full refund. If you just change your mind about your order, you won't be able to return perishable items.



82%

Ocado.com

Which? customer score  
Sample size: 682 customers

75%

Waitrose.com

Which? customer score  
Sample size: 214 customers

66%

Sainsburys.co.uk

Which? customer score  
Sample size: 485 customers

59%

Asda.co.uk

Which? customer score  
Sample size: 210 customers

58%

Tesco.com

Which? customer score  
Sample size: 1,224 customers

## OUR RESEARCH

In March 2009, we asked 2,255 Which? online panel members how satisfied they were and how likely to recommend online supermarkets they've used in the past year. We combined and weighted answers to give an overall customer score out of 100. We also asked them to rate their satisfaction with aspects of shopping such as placing an order, which includes logging on to and locating items on the website, site crashing and items being in stock; accuracy, which includes substituted, missing, damaged or wrong items; delivery, including time slots, punctuality and driver service; product quality, which includes best-before dates, quality of fruit and vegetables and other goods; and value for money.

We also surveyed 1,932 Which? online panel members to find how many shop online for groceries.

We then asked 10 volunteers – two for each store – who had never tried online shopping to do three shops at the website of their usual supermarket.

## 82% Ocado.com



## MEMBERS' RATING

Placing your order ★★★★★

Accuracy ★★★★★ Delivery ★★★★★

Quality of products ★★★★★

Value for money ★★★★

Members like the quality of fruit and vegetables and find the website easy to use. There are a couple of issues with delivering on time, but driver service is highly rated and delivery slots are convenient.

**FIRST-TIME USERS** Jason Sinclair, left, said that Ocado was 'very efficient, and the website was easy to navigate'.

On two occasions, the drivers were earlier than their scheduled time – but they called ahead about this.

Jason found most items on his regular shopping list were of good quality. He would use Ocado again and recommend it to friends. However, he found its chicken and lamb joints

weren't the ones he'd pick if he had the choice, so he won't buy meat or fish online in future.

Colin Loth and his wife, Which? researcher Shefalee, were impressed with the quality of their groceries, though bananas they ordered were so green each time it took four or five days for them to ripen.

The couple thought the website was difficult to use to begin with. Colin said: 'It wasn't specific enough in terms of categories and it took a long time to get to where I wanted to but, after the first time, it was much easier. Also, there wasn't always the choice you'd get in Waitrose – there were a few items we couldn't find on Ocado.'

The delivery drivers helped Shefalee carry shopping inside. Ocado scored the highest for driver service across our survey – with 94% of members rating this excellent or good. All the supermarkets performed well for this.



## 75% Waitrose.com

Waitrose



### MEMBERS' RATING

Placing your order ★★★★★  
Accuracy ★★★ Delivery ★★★★★  
Quality of products ★★★★★  
Value for money ★★★★★

**Best-before dates are rated well as are the quality of fruit and vegetables. Drivers usually point out substituted items and these are mostly good.**

**FIRST-TIME USERS** Marian Cooke, left, found Waitrose's website easy to use. On her first order, she accidentally ticked the option to collect her groceries rather than have them delivered, but a call to the helpline sorted this and the order came on time.

Marian had one late delivery, but the driver rang ahead to warn her.

There were a few substitutions and when she rang the helpline about a missing item, she found the service helpful. 'I could have said that I was

missing the Crown Jewels – they couldn't have been more apologetic.'

Marian would consider shopping online again – and found the delivery charge worthwhile for the convenience.

Our other first-time user, Paul Philo, has decided not to switch to online shopping. He said the quality of groceries was good, but registering on the site was 'difficult' and there was little information about countries of origin or nutritional content.

'You haven't directly chosen items, so you're not as acquainted with your shopping and don't get much chance to look at the goods when they are delivered.'

He found substitutions inconvenient and had to send back butter that contained cow's milk – he is allergic to this and had ordered a goat's milk butter. Paul found the drivers helpful and he got through the registration and ordering after phoning the helpline.

## 66% Sainsburys.co.uk

Sainsbury's

### MEMBERS' RATING

Placing your order ★★★★★  
Accuracy ★★★ Delivery ★★★  
Quality of products ★★★  
Value for money ★★★★★

**Members find the site easy to use and substitutions are better than most. Fresh food is a bit disappointing and best-before dates are not as good as some rivals.**

**FIRST-TIME USERS** Which? member Maureen Garrett liked Sainsbury's quick tips, such as typing the desired item directly into the site's search box. 'This meant I didn't have to reel down pages of items and I got through my shopping list much more quickly.'

Maureen also praised the drivers, who would point out items that had a shorter shelf life than expected.

Shopping online meant that Maureen tended to stick to her shopping list, but she won't be shopping online for

groceries regularly: 'There's a need for online shopping, but we're both capable and have the transport and I like to have a personal input into choosing my groceries.'

Judith Judd (right) in contrast, is a bit of a convert. 'It was much quicker and easier to focus than going to the supermarket,' she said.

In our survey, 81% of members who had shopped at online supermarkets finished their last order in 45 minutes or less.

Judith felt it was sometimes difficult to judge the size of products and found herself with a few smaller versions of tinned goods than she thought she'd ordered.

She felt the shopping came in more plastic bags than she'd use, but liked that Sainsbury's would take them back. Like Maureen, she was impressed that drivers pointed out shorter shelf lives of products and found the dates were 'as good, if not better' than when in store.



PHOTOGRAPHY: SVNS, SIMON WRIGHT

## 59% Asda.co.uk

**ASDA**

### MEMBERS' RATING

Placing your order ★★★ Accuracy ★★★

Delivery ★★★ Quality of products ★★★

Value for money ★★★★★

**Value for money and on-time deliveries are good. Members are less impressed with best-before dates, and the quality of fruit and vegetables.**

**FIRST-TIME USERS** Becky Vernon and partner Jamie (right) have switched to online shopping since trying Asda. Becky said: 'It's easy and less time-consuming than going to the supermarket.'

She believes shopping online has also saved them money, despite the delivery charge, because 'you tend to stick to your list when ordering online.'

Becky was pleased with the service of Asda's drivers. She said it was difficult to check every item before signing the delivery note but, when two deodorants

were missing from her first order, her money was quickly refunded.

She felt it could have been easier to search online: 'Typing in specific items only gives a couple of options when you know there's more online.'

Our members agree: 76% of those who used Asda's website say it's easy to find products – less than all the other stores in our survey.

Barry Keating and his partner Natalie weren't won over by the convenience. Their first delivery didn't turn up after Natalie had changed her original order without redoing the checkout process.

Asda cancelled the order, but didn't tell them. Natalie said: 'It says you have to redo the checkout on the email you get when you register, but it's quite far down the email and I didn't realise. It would've felt unnatural to pay again.'

A lot of the items in the first order they received had short use-by dates, but the next was better.



## 58% Tesco.com

**TESCO**


### MEMBERS' RATING

Placing your order ★★★

Accuracy ★★★ Delivery ★★★

Quality of products ★★★

Value for money ★★★★★

**Members find the site easy to use and like the driver service. However, the quality of fruit and vegetables and the availability of convenient delivery slots receive lower ratings than its rivals.**

**FIRST-TIME USERS** Mandi Martin finds going to her local Tesco more convenient than shopping online.

She said the website was easy to use and liked the fact that it recorded previous orders. However, she didn't like the substituted burgers and sausages in her first order, so she ticked the box asking for no substitutes next time. Mandi found broad delivery slots inconvenient. Only Sainsbury's scores lower than Tesco for convenient delivery slots.

Graeme Rothwell thought that shopping at Tesco online was going to be a pain, but found it easy and convenient. He liked being able to keep track of his budget with the running total and the grouped presentation of special offers. However, he found it frustrating to have to keep clicking through items to compare similar products, rather than being able to cast his eye over shelves.

Graeme found it wasn't obvious whether he was ordering individual fruit and vegetables or ordering by weight. 'I felt dissuaded from ordering loose items and went more for pre-packed.'

Product sizes weren't always clear. A delivery of what Graeme thought was going to be a full-sized quiche turned out to be one 'with the circumference of a tea cup'.

Graeme also got a pie with a short shelf life and a substituted Easter egg, but it didn't put him off using Tesco's online shop in the future.