# Allergy Search Trends and Prevalence Report – 2025

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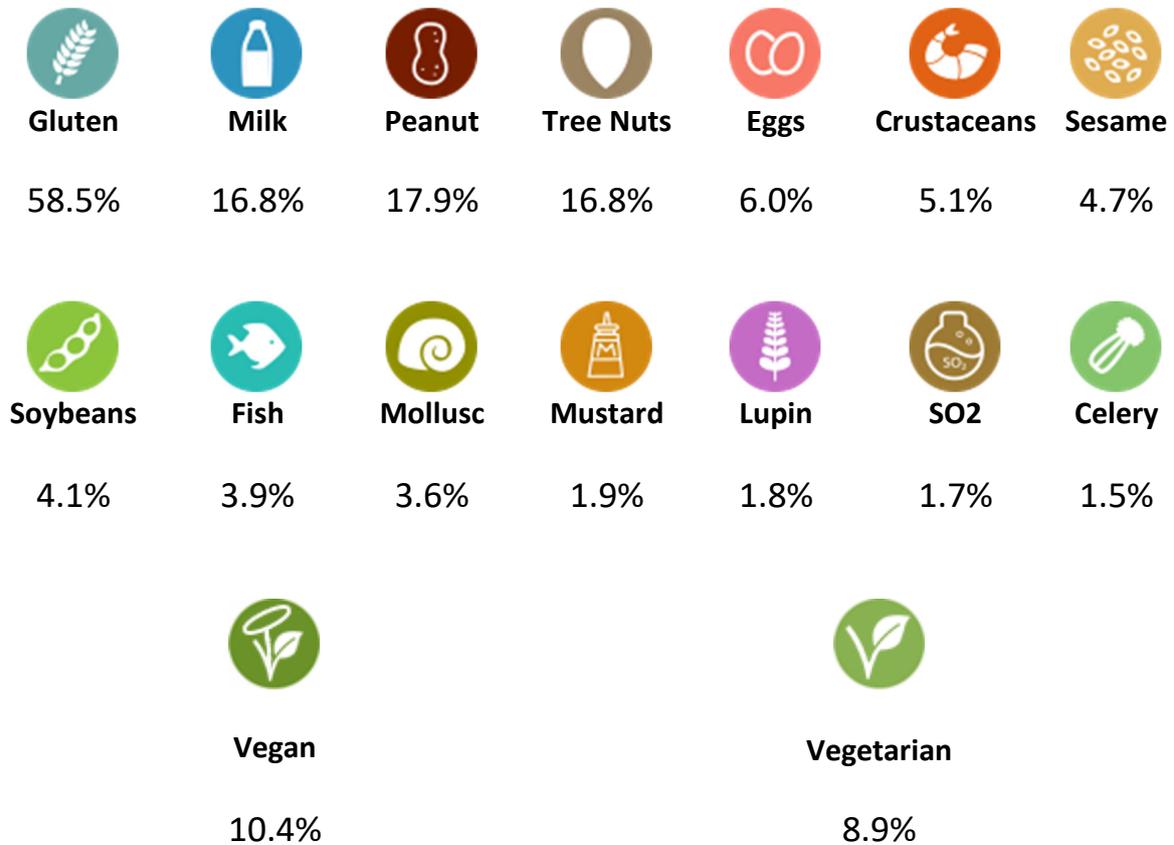
# 1. Executive Summary

This report is intended to assist the food and hospitality industry in developing a clearer understanding of current consumer behaviour in relation to food allergies and intolerances. As awareness of food-related health risks continues to grow, consumers are increasingly seeking clear, accurate, and accessible information to support safe and informed dining decisions.

Digital tools now play a central role in how allergy-aware consumers research food options, assess risk, and choose where to eat. Allergy search behaviour provides valuable insight into the concerns, expectations, and priorities of individuals managing food allergies, particularly at the point of decision-making. Analysing this behaviour helps to bridge the gap between regulatory requirements and real-world consumer needs.

By examining allergy search data captured through AllergyMenu.app, this report offers a practical perspective on which allergens are most frequently considered, how often multiple allergies are managed simultaneously, and how these patterns reflect broader trends in allergy prevalence and awareness. While search behaviour does not equate to clinical diagnosis, it serves as a meaningful indicator of consumer caution, perceived risk, and demand for transparency.

The findings presented aim to support food businesses and industry bodies in improving allergen communication, enhancing customer confidence, and reducing the risk of avoidable incidents. Ultimately, this report seeks to contribute to a more informed, inclusive, and safety-focused food environment for both consumers and operators.

## 2025 Average Percentages of Searches

| Gluten | Milk | Peanut | Tree Nuts | Eggs | Crustaceans | Sesame |
|--------|------|--------|-----------|------|-------------|--------|
| 58.5% | 16.8% | 17.9% | 16.8% | 6.0% | 5.1% | 4.7% |

| Soybeans | Fish | Mollusc | Mustard | Lupin | SO2 | Celery |
|----------|------|---------|---------|-------|-----|--------|
| 4.1% | 3.9% | 3.6% | 1.9% | 1.8% | 1.7% | 1.5% |

| Vegan | Vegetarian |
|-------|------------|
| 10.4% | 8.9% |

Searches for the 14 legally required allergens, such as gluten, nuts, and dairy, dominate user activity. This aligns with national data on allergy incidence and highlights the ongoing need for transparency around these ingredients in food outlets.

The analysis of allergy search behaviour on AllergyMenu.app highlights several important implications for food businesses, consumers, and the wider hospitality sector.

Firstly, the volume and consistency of allergy-related searches reinforces the position that food allergies and intolerances are not a niche concern. They represent a mainstream consideration for a significant proportion of customers when choosing where and what to eat. This has clear implications for hospitality operators, who can no longer treat allergen information as a compliance exercise alone, but must recognise it as a core part of the customer experience.

Secondly, allergy search behaviour indicates a strong demand for clarity, reassurance, and immediacy. Users engaging with allergy searches are typically doing so at the point of decision-making, often before entering a venue or placing an order. This suggests that accessible, easy-to-understand allergy information can directly influence footfall, dwell time, and conversion, while unclear or missing information may act as a deterrent.

Thirdly, the prominence of searches relating to multiple allergens highlights the complexity faced by many consumers. A growing number of individuals are managing more than one allergy or intolerance simultaneously, increasing the risk of error and anxiety when eating out. For businesses, this underscores the importance of accurate ingredient data and systems that support nuanced allergen filtering rather than binary menus such as a specific Gluten Free menu.

There are also implications for risk management, duty of care, and operational efficiencies. High engagement with allergy search tools reflects an expectation that food providers will proactively support informed choice. Digital platforms that service allergen information transparently can help reduce misunderstandings, improve staff confidence, and lower the risk of serious incidents, errors by staff, complaints, or reputational damage and ensure that communication regarding allergens is efficient.

Finally, these trends point to a broader shift in consumer expectations. Allergy-aware customers increasingly expect the same level of digital convenience and transparency for food safety information as they do for pricing, menus, or opening hours. Platforms such as AllergyMenu.app play a key role in bridging this gap, enabling businesses to meet regulatory obligations while also building trust, inclusivity, and long-term customer loyalty.

## 2. Background

In 2026, food allergy prevalence remains a critical public health challenge in the UK, with roughly one in four people (over 20 million individuals) reporting an allergy or intolerance. Recent data from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) indicates that approximately 6% of the adult population has a clinically confirmed food allergy, while

hospital admissions for anaphylaxis continue to trend upward annually. This "allergy epidemic" is particularly acute among younger generations, with nearly 40% of children now diagnosed with an allergic condition, creating an environment where clear and accurate food information is not just a preference, but a life-saving necessity.

The legislative landscape has tightened significantly to address these risks, primarily through the Food Information Regulations 2014, which mandate the clear declaration of 14 specific allergens, including gluten, milk, and nuts, across all food services. This framework was strengthened by *Natasha's Law* in 2021, requiring full ingredient and allergen labelling on all foods pre-packaged for direct sale (PPDS). As of early 2026, the industry is increasingly aligning with the standards proposed by *Owen's Law*, which advocates for mandatory written allergen information on all menus and has been recommended to government by the Food Standards Agency. These legal shifts emphasise that the responsibility for food safety has moved from the consumer to the operator, requiring robust digital and physical systems to ensure transparency at the point of choice.

Allergy Menu Ltd was established to assist the restaurant industry in making it easier for them to meeting allergy legislation while improving customer experience and assisting in removing the communication risk within the sector which had resulted in cases of illness and death.

Last year, Allergy Menu made the decision to start collecting allergy search data to track the searches over time, and this report covers a full year of data collection. The hope is that over the years, trends will become clear from the published data regarding allergens and food preferences and this can help the industry adapt and keep in line with these changes.

## 3. Data Source & Methodology

The data from 136,685 searches were analysed using the Allergy Menu website and the downloadable Allergy Menu app from both Android and Apple stores. No identifiable personal consumer data is collected by the platform, and for the purpose of this review, the business data was anonymised.

Allergy Menu is available worldwide, though the significant majority of customers are based in the UK and range from small restaurants to large chains, such as Bannatyne Group and Esquires Coffee. There are currently 243 venues on the platform.

In reviewing the data collected from the Allergymenu.app platform, the following data analysis decisions were made:

1. The review excluded instances where consumers used the platform but did not select any allergen or food preference. This is because it is recognised that some customers use the platform as a digital menu option, and therefore there are many consumers that use the platform without the need to refine based on allergen preferences.

2. The AllergenMenu.app allows consumers to also define their choices by the preferences "Vegan" and "Vegetarian". As those consumer choices automatically also include certain allergens - for example fish to be identified and removed as a dietary option - those overall searches were excluded from this analysis. It is accepted that this data decision reduces the data set available, but ensures greater confidence in the overall data analysis.

3. Data was further reviewed to remove duplicate entries by the same user on the same day. However, it is recognised that consumers are likely to return to venues they preference and therefore the data may include entries by the same consumers on different days.

4. All searches on the demo system were excluded.

# 4. Data & Results

During the period of analysis, 134,644 unique searches were completed by consumers on the platform. Of those searches, there were 49,183 allergen types, or food preferences (vegan or vegetarian) selected and included in this report.

Some consumers selected more than one allergen type.

These results are summarised in the table below and show the total number of selections of each allergen type, alongside the percentage of the total searches for that allergen type.

Ordered by number of selections from greatest to smallest:

| Food Preference or Allergen | No. of selections | Percentage of the 49,183 searches |
|---|---|---|
| Gluten | 28778 | 58.5% |
| Milk | 8270 | 16.8% |
| Peanut | 8804 | 17.9% |
| Tree Nuts | 8276 | 16.8% |
| Vegan | 5121 | 10.4% |
| Vegetarian | 4364 | 8.9% |
| Eggs | 2973 | 6.0% |
| Crustaceans | 2499 | 5.1% |
| Sesame | 2327 | 4.7% |
| Soybeans | 2021 | 4.1% |
| Fish | 1923 | 3.9% |
| Mollusc | 1770 | 3.6% |
| Mustard | 923 | 1.9% |
| Lupin | 877 | 1.8% |
| SO2 | 832 | 1.7% |
| Celery | 758 | 1.5% |

## 4.1   Most Commonly Searched Allergens

Gluten was by far the most extensively searched allergen/preference.

| Food Preference or Allergen | No. of selections | Percentage of the 49,183 searches |
|---|---|---|
| Gluten | 28778 | 58.5% |
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The top 4 allergens selected by consumers, represented 76.2% of all searches, highlighting the need for food businesses to give additional consideration in providing alternative options for those customers on a commercial level, not just for compliance.

## 4.2 Peanuts & Tree Nuts

The number of searches for Peanuts and Tree Nuts appeared similar, so the data was further analysed to see if the same people were choosing both Peanuts and Tree Nuts at the same time.

| Peanuts | Tree Nuts | Both Peanuts & Tree Nuts |
|---|---|---|
| 8804 | 8276 | 6400 |

This represents 60% of those searches consumers were choosing both at the same time, suggesting that customers with a Peanut allergy are more likely to also exclude Tree Nuts. It is not possible to know from the data whether this is as a result of dual allergy concerns, or to address perceived weaknesses in quality control and ensure that the relevant allergen of concern is correctly highlighted.

## 4.3 Crustaceans and Molluscs

On the same basis as Peanuts and Tree nuts, searches for the allergens "Crustaceans" and "Molluscs" were reviewed to see if they are mostly the same people.

| Crustaceans | Mollusc | Both Crustaceans & Mollusc |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2499 | 1770 | 1518 |

This represents 55% of those searches consumers were choosing both at the same time.

## 4.4 Vegans and Vegetarians

The volume of searches for Vegetarian dishes is noted as being lower than that for Vegan dishes. This may appear to be contrary to industry expectations given that statistics indicate a greater proportion of consumers follow a meat-free vegetarian diet than are strictly vegan.

However, it is suggested that many Vegetarians do not need to use the app to determine which dishes contain meat products and rely on the dish description to determine their choice. However, for Vegans who are also concerned about animal-based ingredients that may not feature on the description such as diary are more likely to need a filtered menu to fully check that the dish meets their dietary requirements.

| Food Preference | Search | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vegan | 5121 | 10.4% |
| Vegetarian | 4364 | 8.9% |

## 4.5 Multiple Allergen Searches

During the review period, the data shows that 12908 (26 %) of searches undertaken were for more than one allergen or preference (excluding Vegan/Vegetarian). Considering this, and the data presented in 4.2 and 4.3 above, it indicates a complex picture where a significant proportion of users require greater granularity in their food choices. This report highlights the need for further research in this area to determine whether the current list of allergens meets consumer needs or whether action to combine allergens may improve consumer confidence in the catering industry by reducing the risk of error.

## 4.6. Average Searches Per Venue

The average number of searches per venue is 202 per year. Data is not collected on the size of the venue, so this number can vary significantly between different venue types and businesses.

## 4.7 Website Referrals

The top 10 websites of companies that utilise Allergy Menu and link their webpage to the platform showed 4706 referrals over the period. This indicates that consumers often look at the restaurant's menu and its allergens before arrival at the venue. Consumers now make choices in advance, ensuring they attend only venues that cater for their needs

## 4.8 Monthly Variation

The data was reviewed to determine if there was any significant variation in search behaviour over the annual period. The graph below indicates that there is marginal variation in search behaviour on a month by month basis but no significant changes over the calendar year that would suggest changes in consumer requests.

Allergy & Dietary Preference Searches – 2025
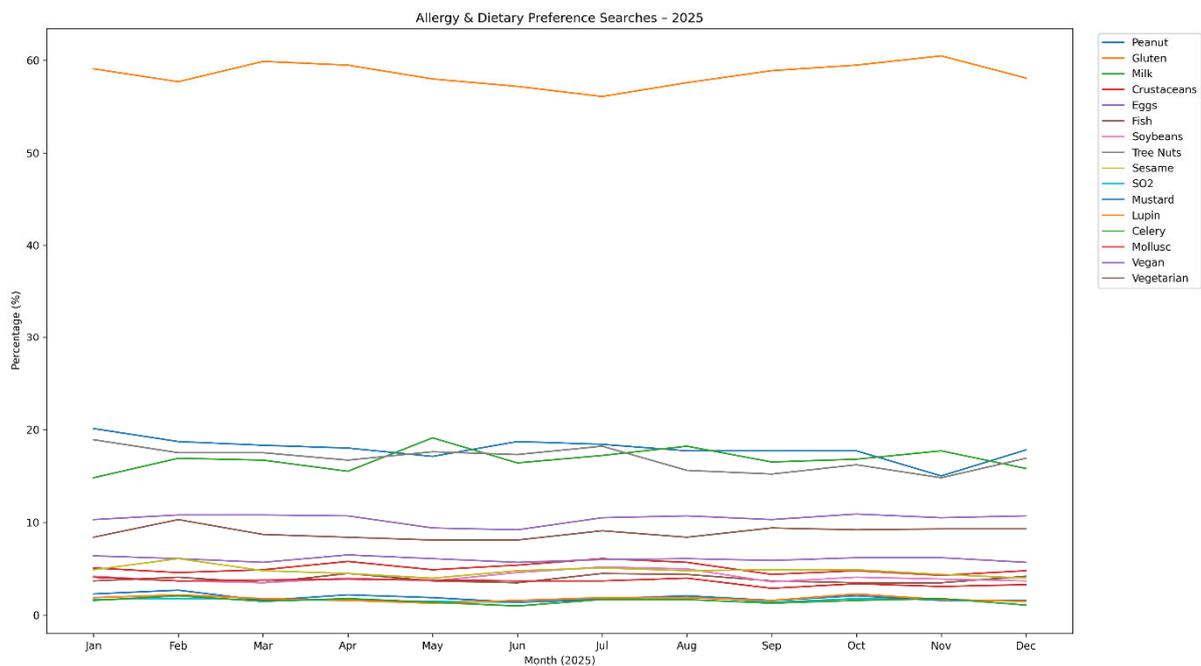
## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of allergy search behaviour on AllergyMenu.app provides clear evidence that food allergies, intolerances, and dietary preferences are now a central consideration for a substantial proportion of consumers within the UK hospitality sector. The volume of searches recorded across 2025, combined with the dominance of the 14 legally recognised allergens, demonstrates that allergen awareness is no longer peripheral but embedded in everyday dining decisions.

The prominence of gluten, milk, peanuts, and tree nuts, accounting for over three quarters of all searches, highlights where consumer concern is most concentrated. This reinforces the need for food businesses to prioritise accurate, detailed, and easily accessible information for these allergens, not only to meet legislative requirements but also to remain commercially competitive. Providing gluten free alternatives is now a vital part of menu decision making. The data further illustrates that many consumers are managing multiple allergens simultaneously, adding complexity to decision-making and increasing the importance of robust allergen management systems.

The findings also underline the role of digital tools at the point of choice. Many of the allergy searches are made during a visit to the customer's website, which shows in the website referral data. This indicates that transparent allergen information can directly influence customer confidence, venue selection, and overall dining experience. In this context, allergen information functions not simply as a safety mechanism, but as a key component of customer service and trust-building.

From a risk management perspective, high engagement with allergy search functionality reflects a clear expectation that food operators will actively support informed decision-making. Systems that reduce ambiguity, standardise allergen communication, and minimise reliance on verbal explanations can help lower the risk of serious incidents while supporting staff and protecting business reputation.

Finally, this first full year of data collection establishes a valuable baseline for understanding consumer behaviour over time. As Allergy Menu continues to gather and publish search data, emerging trends will offer the industry an evidence-based view of changing allergy prevalence, dietary preferences, and consumer expectations. Used effectively, these insights can support safer practices, more inclusive menus, and a hospitality environment that meets both regulatory obligations and the real-world needs of allergy-aware consumers.

Key Takeaways for Food Businesses

- **Allergen-aware customers are mainstream, not niche**
  Allergy and intolerance considerations now influence a significant proportion of dining decisions. Clear allergen information should be treated as a core part of the customer experience, not just a regulatory requirement.
- **Focus on the most searched allergens**
  Gluten, milk, peanuts, and tree nuts account for the majority of allergy searches. Ensuring accuracy, visibility, and suitable alternatives for these allergens delivers the greatest impact for both safety and commercial outcomes.
- **Support multiple-allergen filtering**
  Many consumers manage more than one allergy at the same time. Menus and

systems that allow nuanced filtering reduce confusion, anxiety, and the risk of error compared to single-allergen or static "free-from" menus.

- **Digital clarity influences choice and conversion**
  Allergy searches typically occur at the point of decision-making. Accessible, easy-to-understand digital allergen information can directly affect venue selection, dwell time, and customer confidence.

- **Strong allergen systems reduce risk, build trust, and improve efficiency**
  Proactive allergen communication supports staff, lowers the likelihood of incidents, and protects brand reputation while demonstrating a clear duty of care to customers.

- **Data-led insights enable future readiness**
  Tracking allergy and preference behaviour over time helps businesses adapt menus, processes, and communication in line with changing consumer expectations and evolving legislation.

# 6. References

Natasha's Law: https://www.narf.org.uk/what-is-natashas-law

Owne's Law: https://owens-law.co.uk/

Food Standards Agency: https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/updated-industry-guidance-issued-for-food-allergen-information-in-the-out-of-home-sector/

IPSOS: https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/one-four-britons-impacted-food-allergies-or-intolerances-ipsos-poll-highlights-prevalence-and-self