

## Quarterly Public Attitudes Tracker: December 2009

Food Standards Agency

22 December 2009

For further information contact:

Danielle De Feo, Social Science Research Unit

Email: [danielle.defeo@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:danielle.defeo@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Summary of Results:

- Both prompted and total awareness of the Food Standards Agency remained constant this wave, at 79% and 86% respectively.
- During this wave of the Tracker, awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service also remained stable, at 30%.
- Confidence in all organisations involved in protecting health with regards food safety remained constant with the previous wave (September 2009) at 59%.
- Confidence in the Food Standards Agency specifically is also at a similar level to the previous wave (currently at 62%).
- Trust in the FSA showed a statistically significant decrease this wave, with 44% respondents rating the Agency as an organisation they can trust (48% in September 2009).
- Concern about food safety issues demonstrated a statistically significant increase this wave, from 64% to 70%.
- The main food issues of total concern during this wave were food poisoning (49%), the amount of salt in food (48%) and food hygiene when eating out (47%). The amount of fat, sugar and saturated fat in food (43%, 40%, and 38% respectively) were also highlighted as an area of concern.
- Two additional questions were asked this wave around awareness of hygiene in eating establishments:
  - 83% of respondents reported being aware of the hygiene standards of places they eat out or buy food from;
  - The main ways respondents reported being aware of the hygiene standards of eating establishments were from general appearance of the premises (74%), appearance of staff (59%) and reputation (50%).

## Background

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) places six questions on the TNS consumer face to face omnibus survey on a quarterly basis in order to monitor key Agency issues. Tracking began in 2001.

This is wave 44 of the tracker. The fieldwork period for this wave of research was 27 November to 6 December 2009. A representative sample of 2099 adults in the UK were interviewed.

The questions tracked cover awareness of the FSA, attitude towards food safety issues, concern about specific food issues (spontaneous and prompted), confidence in all organisations, and in the Food Standards Agency specifically, with regard to food safety, and trust in the FSA. Please see Appendix C for the questionnaire.

Additional questions were asked during this wave to measure awareness of the hygiene standards in the establishments consumers eat out at or buy food from.

Where the term 'total' is used to report the research findings (question 1a, 1b, 3a and 3b), it refers to all responses from parts 'a' and 'b' of each question combined.

The following report shows top-line findings from in-house analysis. Statistically significant changes wave-on-wave and between key sub-groups are reported at the 95% confidence level<sup>1</sup>. Full results are available on request in table format.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is where we can be 95% confident that the results did not come about by chance.

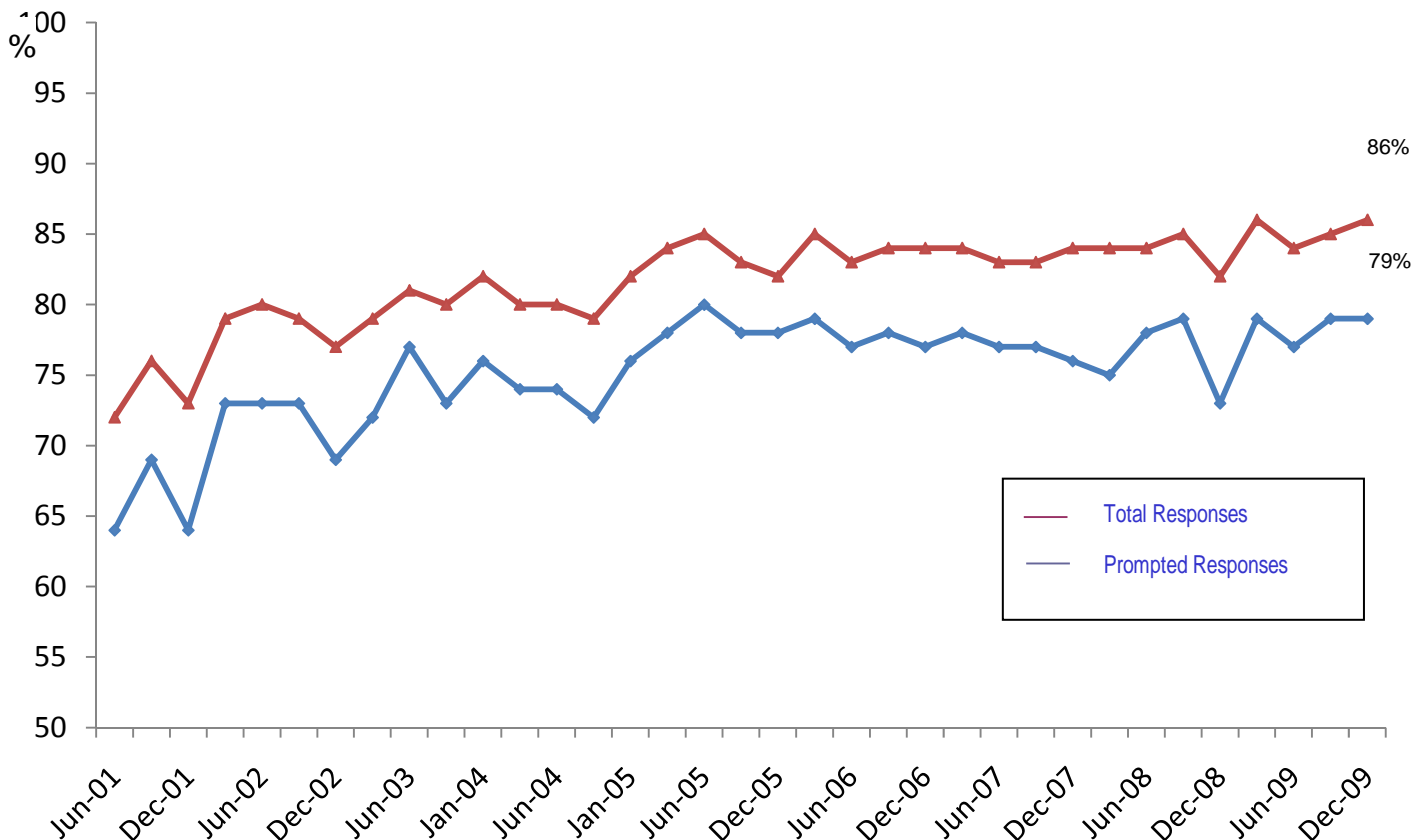
## Section 1: Awareness of the Food Standards Agency and Meat Hygiene Service

Both prompted and total awareness of the Food Standards Agency remained stable when compared to September 2009 (79%-79% and 85%-86% respectively).

Awareness has shown a relatively steady and gradual increase since tracking began in 2001 (see Figure 1).

Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service also remained stable this wave, from 31% to 30%. Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service has stayed relatively stable since tracking began in 2001.

Figure 1: Awareness of the Food Standards Agency



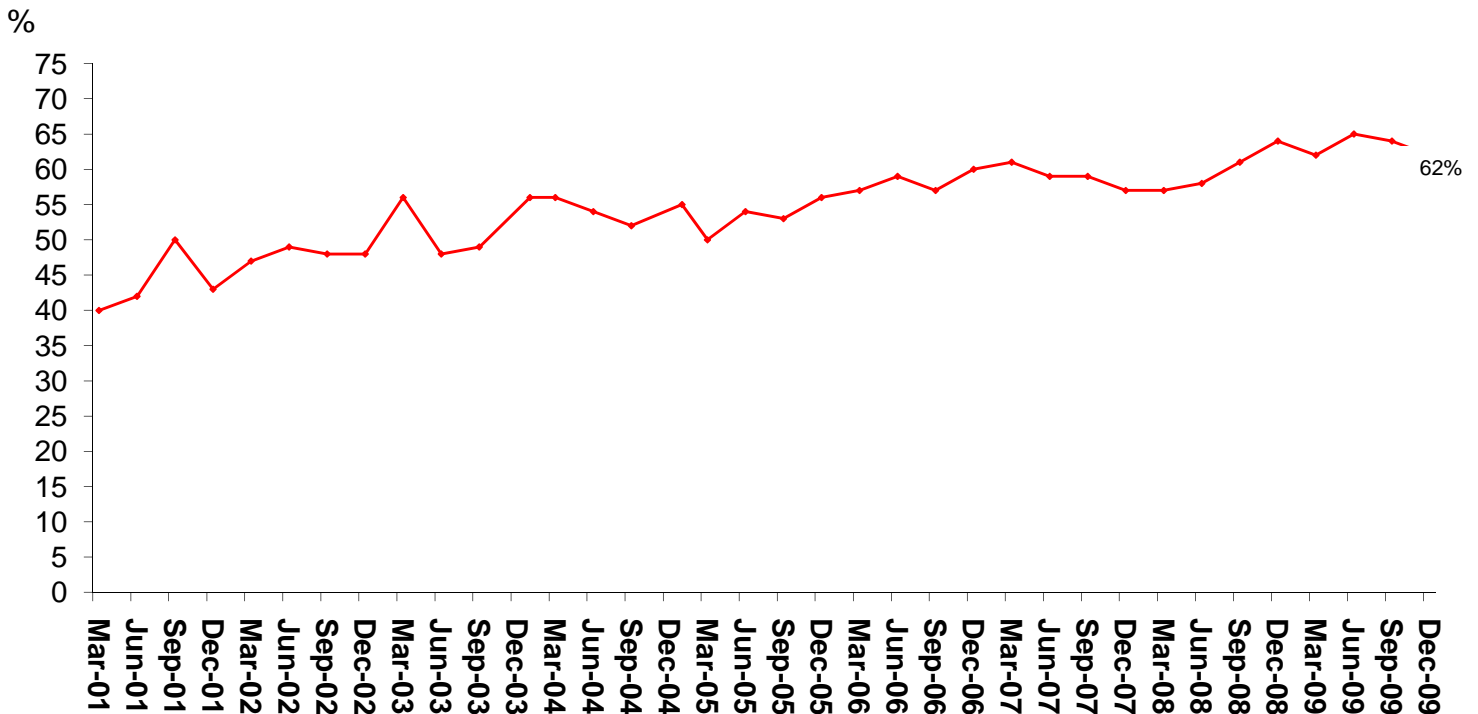
Q1a, Q1b. Base: All respondents

## Section 2: Confidence in Food Safety Measures and Trust in the FSA

**Confidence in all organisations** involved in protecting health with regards to food safety **was at a similar level** to the previous wave, currently at **59%** (61% in September wave). Confidence in all organisations has shown a relatively steady increase over time.

**Confidence in the role played by the Food Standards Agency** specifically in protecting health also **remained stable** since September 2009, **currently at 62%** (64% in previous wave). Figure 2 demonstrates consumer confidence in the role played by FSA since 2001. During this wave, males were statistically significantly less confident in the role played by the FSA than in the previous wave (67% compared to 63%).

**Figure 2: Confidence in role played by the Food Standards Agency**



Q5. Base: All respondents (% very confident/fairly confident)

**44% of respondents rated the Food Standards Agency as an organisation they can trust.** This figure is **statistically significantly lower** when compared to the September wave of the tracker (**44% compared to 48%**).

Trust in the FSA has been stable throughout the previous 5 waves of the tracker (50%, 53%, 51%, 51% and 48% respectively). Please see Appendix B for further detail on this question.

### Section 3: Concern About Food Issues

**Concern about food safety issues showed a statistically significant increase** this wave, **from 64% to 70%**. During this wave, females were statistically significantly more concerned about food safety issues than males (73% compared to 66%), and those aged 36-49 were statistically significantly more concerned than respondents aged 16-25, 26-35 and 66 and over (75% compared to 65%, 68% and 65% respectively).

The main food issues of total concern for respondents were **food poisoning (49%)**, **the amount of salt in food (48%)**, **food hygiene when eating out (47%)**. The **amount of fat (43%)**, **sugar (40%)** and **saturated fat in food (38%)** were also issues of concern (see Figure 3 for a full breakdown). Respondents aged 16-25 showed a statistically significantly higher spontaneous concern about food poisoning than every other age group (29% compared to 22% (aged 26-35), 20% (aged 36-49), 21% (aged 50-65) and 14% (aged 66 and over)).

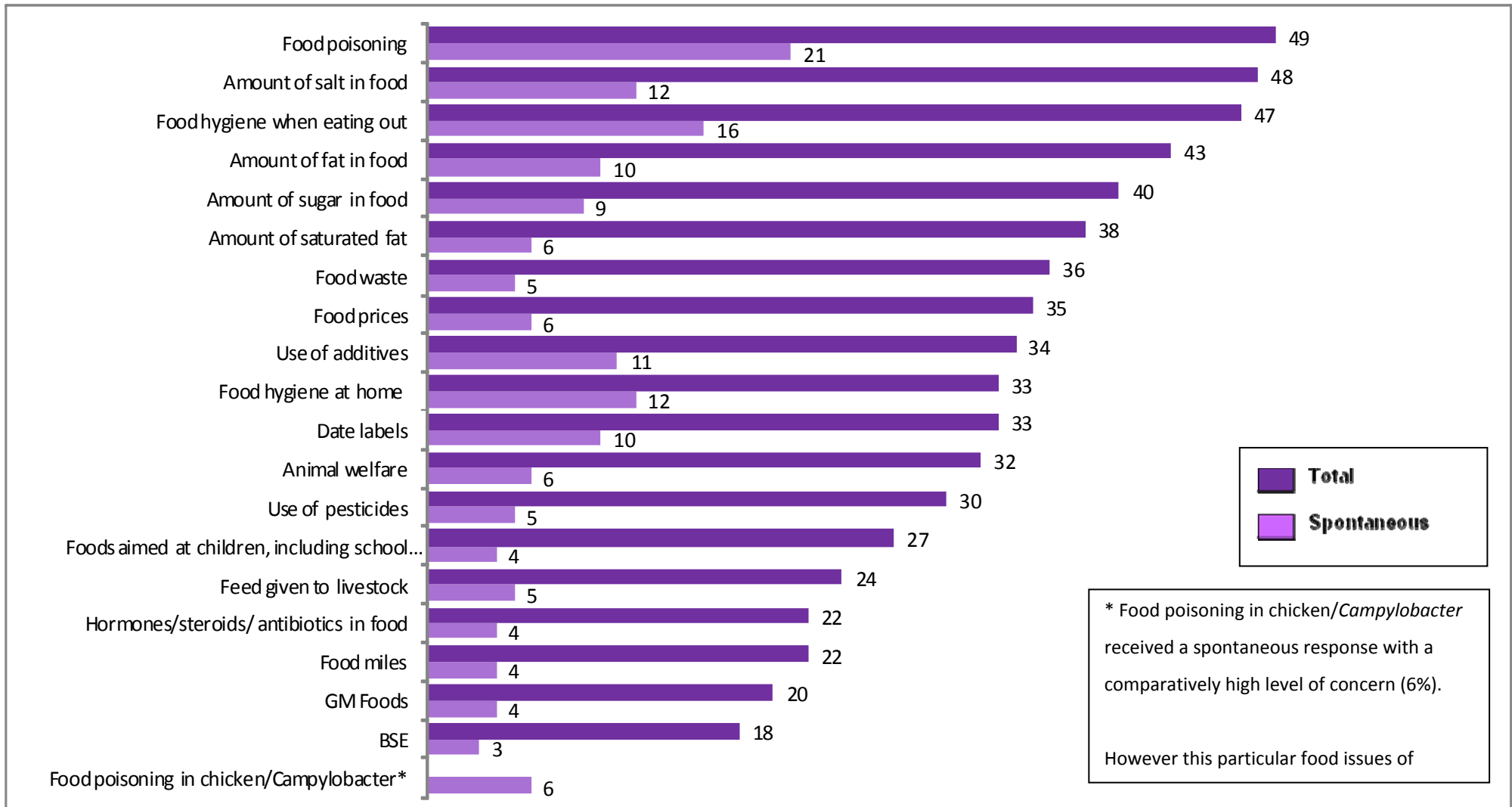
Main issues of spontaneous concern for respondents were **food poisoning (21%)**, **food hygiene when eating out (16%)**, **the amount of salt in food** and **food hygiene in the home (both at 12%)**, and the **use of additives (11%)**. The **amount of fat in food** and **date labels** were also issues of concern for respondents (**both at 10%**). See Figure 3 for more detail). Respondents aged 16-35 demonstrated a statistically significant lower total concerned than those aged 36-65 for the following food issues: amount of sugar in food; use of additives; animal welfare; use of pesticides; feed given to livestock; hormones/steroids/antibiotics in food; food miles; GM foods and BSE (see Table 1 for more detail).

**Table 1: Age differences in concern about food issues**

	All	16-25	26-35	36-49	50-65	66+
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2099	327	334	473	506	459
Amount of sugar in food	40%	29%	33%	43%*	47%*	43%
Use of additives	34%	17%	29%	38%*	43%*	36%
Animal welfare	32%	21%	25%	35%*	42%*	32%
Use of pesticides	30%	17%	21%	32%*	40%*	34%
Feed given to livestock	24%	13%	18%	27%*	32%*	26%
Hormones/steroids/antibiotics in food	22%	12%	15%	24%*	28%*	23%
Food miles	22%	9%	14%	23%*	32%*	24%
GM foods	20%	11%	15%	24%*	26%*	20%
BSE	18%	7%	12%	20%*	26%*	21%

\* shows a statistically significant change when compared to the previous wave

**Figure 3: Food issues of concern**



Q3a. Base: All respondents concerned about food safety issues

Q3b. Base: All respondents

**Total concern** for food poisoning and the amount of salt in food showed a statistically significant increase this wave when compared to September 2009 wave (46%-49% and 42%-48% respectively). This wave also saw a statistically significant increase in concern around food hygiene when eating out (44%-47%), in addition to food hygiene in the home (30-33%). All other food issues of total concern were stable when compared to September 2009 wave.

**Spontaneous concern** around date labels, the amount of saturated fat in food, and use of pesticides demonstrated a statistically significant decrease this wave (from 13%-10%, 8%-6%, and 7%-5% respectively). All other food issues spontaneously mentioned were at a similar level to those reported in the previous wave (September 2009) and demonstrated no statistically significant differences.

Table 2 shows a comparison of food issues of concern between the present wave and September 2009 wave. Full trend charts for individual food issues are available upon request.

**Table 2: Food issues of concern**

Food Safety Issue	Spontaneous Response		Total Response	
	Previous Wave	Present Wave	Previous Wave	Present Wave
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1006	1932	2081	2099
Food poisoning	18%	21%	46%	49%*
Amount of salt in food	12%	12%	42%	48%*
Food hygiene when eating out	16%	16%	44%	47%*
Amount of fat in food	10%	10%	41%	43%
Amount of sugar in food	10%	9%	40%	40%
Amount of saturated fat in food	8%	6%*	38%	38%
Food waste	6%	5%	35%	36%
Food prices	6%	6%	38%	35%
Use of additives	11%	11%	34%	34%
Food hygiene in the home	12%	12%	30%	33%*
Date labels	13%	10%*	33%	33%
Animal welfare	5%	6%	35%	32%
Use of pesticides	7%	5%*	30%	30%
Foods aimed at children including school meals	4%	4%	26%	27%
Feed given to livestock	5%	5%	24%	24%
Hormones/steroids/antibiotics in food	3%	4%	22%	22%
Food miles	5%	4%	20%	22%
GM food	4%	4%	21%	20%
BSE	2%	3%	16%	18%

Q3a. Base: All respondents concerned about food safety

Q3b. Base: All respondents

\* shows a statistically significant change when compared to the previous wave

## Section 4: Awareness of Hygiene Standards in Eating Establishments

Two additional questions were asked this wave (as per the September 2009 wave) to monitor consumer awareness of the hygiene standards of establishments that sell food.

- **83% respondents reported being aware** of the hygiene standards of places they eat out at or buy food from. This is the same figure as reported in the previous wave;
- Those who reported being aware of hygiene standards in eating establishments were asked *how* they were aware of these standards. The main ways respondents reported being aware were from **general appearance of premises (74%), appearance of staff (59%)** and **reputation (50%)**. These figures are similar to the previous wave as the order has not been altered, however *general appearance of premises* showed a statistically significant increase when compared to September 2009 (70%-74%). Full explanations are shown in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: How respondents are aware of hygiene standards**

	Previous Wave	Present Wave
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1722	1732
General appearance of premises	70%	74%*
Appearance of staff	56%	59%
Reputation	47%	50%
Word of mouth	39%	42%
Hygiene certificate	32%	31%
Hygiene sticker	12%	12%
Website	5%	4%

Q8. Base: All respondents aware of standards of hygiene in places they eat out at

\* shows a statistically significant change when compared to the previous wave

## Appendix A: Sub-group Differences

\* - The result is statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other sub-group.

### Total Awareness of the Food Standards Agency:

Total: 86%		
Age	16-25	78
	26-35	87*
	36-49	89*
	50-65	91*
	66+	78
Social Class	AB	95*
	C1C2	88*
	DE	75
Marital Status	Married	89*
	Single	80
	Separated/widowed	83
Working Status	Working full time	89*
	Working part time	92*
	Other	81

**Concern About Food Safety Issues (% very/quite concerned):**

Total: 70%		
Sex	Male	66%
	Female	73%*
Age	16-25	65%
	26-35	68%
	36-49	75%*
	50-65	71%
	66+	65%
Marital Status	Married	72%*
	Single	68%
	Separated/widowed	65%
Principle Shopper	Yes	71%*
	No	64%

**Confidence in Measures Taken by All Organisations (% very/fairly confident):**

Total: 59%	
No statistically significant differences between sub-groups	

**Confidence in Food Standards Agency (% very/fairly confident):**

Total: 62%		
Working Status	Working full time	62%
	Working part time	68%*
	Other	61%

## Appendix B: Technical Summary

Fieldwork is conducted every three months, however the frequency has changed over the history of the Tracker:

- *April 2001-December 2001*: research conducted every three months;
- *October 2001-September 2002*: research conducted every month;
- *December 2002-present*: research conducted every three months.

From April 2001 to June 2006 research was conducted via face-to-face interviews amongst a random location sample in order to gain a nationally representative sample of adults aged 16 and over in Great Britain. From September 2006 the sample was extended to be representative of the United Kingdom.

An additional question has been asked each wave since September 2008, and again this wave, to measure trust in the FSA. This question had previously been asked in the FSA annual Consumer Attitudes Survey (CAS) which is currently being reviewed, therefore has not been conducted in 2009. Due to differences in question order and sampling, results from the Tracker are not directly comparable to the CAS.

The full data set in table format is available upon request.

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

The following questions were asked in this wave of the Tracker:

Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?

*Base: All respondents*

Q1b. Can I just check, have you heard of the Food Standards Agency?

*Base: All respondents*

Q2. Generally speaking, which of these statements best describe your attitude to food safety issues?

*Base: All respondents (% very concerned/fairly concerned)*

Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?

*Base: All adults concerned about food safety*

Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues?

*Base: All respondents*

Q4. How confident are you about the current measures taken by all organisations involved in protecting your health with regards to food safety?

*Base: All respondents (% very confident/fairly confident)*

Q5. How confident are you about the role played by the Food Standards Agency in protecting your health with regard to food safety?

*Base: All respondents (% very confident/fairly confident)*

Q6. And how would you rate the Food Standards Agency on a scale of 1-7 where 7 is 'an organisation I can trust' and 1 is 'an organisation I don't trust'?

*Base: All respondents aware of FSA*

Q7. When you eat out at places such as restaurants, cafes, pubs and takeaways, or buy food to take home to eat from supermarkets or shops, do you tend to be aware of the standards of hygiene of these places? (% yes, always or yes, sometimes)

*Base: All respondents*

Q8. How do you know the hygiene standards of the places you eat out at or buy food from?

*Base: All respondents aware of standards of hygiene in places they eat out at*