



Food
Standards
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Public attitudes tracker

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Wave 18

May 2019

(Published August 2019)

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Summary

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Introduction

This report presents findings from Wave 18 of the biannual Public Attitudes Tracker.

The Public Attitudes Tracker is a robust source of evidence on consumers' food related attitudes. The survey has been running on a biannual basis since 2010.

These findings are based on 2,150 interviews from a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Fieldwork was carried out between 8th and 26th May 2019, as part of the regular TNS Kantar face-to-face-omnibus survey¹.

Questions cover several topics of interest for the Agency, including: concern about food safety issues, awareness of food hygiene standards, awareness of the FSA and its responsibilities, trust in the FSA and the food industry, and confidence in food labelling. At wave 18, a new set of questions were added to monitor trust in the FSA and wider food system.

Only statistically significant differences at the 5% level are reported. Differences as large those reported have no more than a five per cent probability of occurring by chance.

Percentages are based on all respondents, unless otherwise stated. Because of rounding, some column percentages may not add exactly to 100%. For questions where respondents could give more than one response, the percentages will add up to more than 100%.

The data used in the report have been weighted to match the population of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Weights were applied to correct for non- response and other features of the sampling approach.

¹ <http://www.tnsglobal.com/>

Official Statistics

The Food Standards Agency's Head of Statistics, Clifton Gay, has approved that the statistics presented in this report meet the requirements of the UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Further information and guidance on Official Statistics can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website².

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

Public Attitudes Tracker

Food Issues Of Concern



31%

31% of respondents reported being concerned about food hygiene when eating out.

49%

49% were concerned about the amount of sugar in food

51%

51% reported feeling concerned about food waste

Trust in FSA

6.9 / 10

The average score of the composite measure of trust in the FSA was **6.9 out of 10**

3.8 / 5

The average score of the composite measure of trust in the food system was **3.8 out of 5**

Hygiene Awareness



85%

Reported being aware of the standard of hygiene when they eat at restaurants, café, pubs and takeaway

66%

Knew the standard of hygiene from hygiene stickers/certificates on the premises

Food Allergies



11% reported having a food allergy or intolerance



7% of Respondents reported being aware of the rules about allergens



45% were unaware of allergen rules

Wave 18

Key findings

Food issues of concern



The top food safety issues of concern were:

- 1 Food hygiene when eating out (31%)
- 2 Chemicals from the environment, such as lead, in food (30%)
- 3 The use of pesticides to grow food (29%)
- 4 Food poisoning (28%)

The top wider food issues of concern were:

- 1 Food waste (51%)
- 2 The amount of sugar in food (49%)
- 3 Animal welfare (43%)
- 4 Food prices (43%)
- 5 The amount of salt in food (39%)

Hygiene standards when eating out



37%

of people were concerned about food safety in UK shops and supermarkets (down three percentage points from the previous wave).

41%

were concerned about food safety in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways.

Food poisoning



Salmonella and Ecoli were by far the most commonly known type of food poisoning (90% and 84% respectively), followed by Norovirus (59%) and Listeria (53%).

79% of respondents thought that they were most likely to get food poisoning from raw chicken and turkey, followed by shellfish (56%) and reheated takeaway (49%).

Allergens



11% of respondents reported having a food allergy and / or intolerance.

When asked about awareness of rule around allergens, 7% reported that allergens must be displayed on menus / labels.

Awareness and trust in FSA



78% of respondents had heard of the Food Standards Agency (77% in England, 81% in Wales and 85% in Northern Ireland).

Of those aware of the FSA, **68%** reporting knowing some, or a lot of, information about the FSA. This has increased by four percentage points 4% since the previous wave.

66% of those aware of the FSA trusted the FSA to do its job.

The average score of a new composite measure of trust in FSA was **6.9 out of 10**.

Attitudes towards the food system



76% were confident that food is what it says it is and accurately labelled

62% said that they thought that the food system was regulated fairly

80% reported that they have enough information about what food contains to make their food choices

62% agreed that the authorities are effectively preventing and detecting food fraud

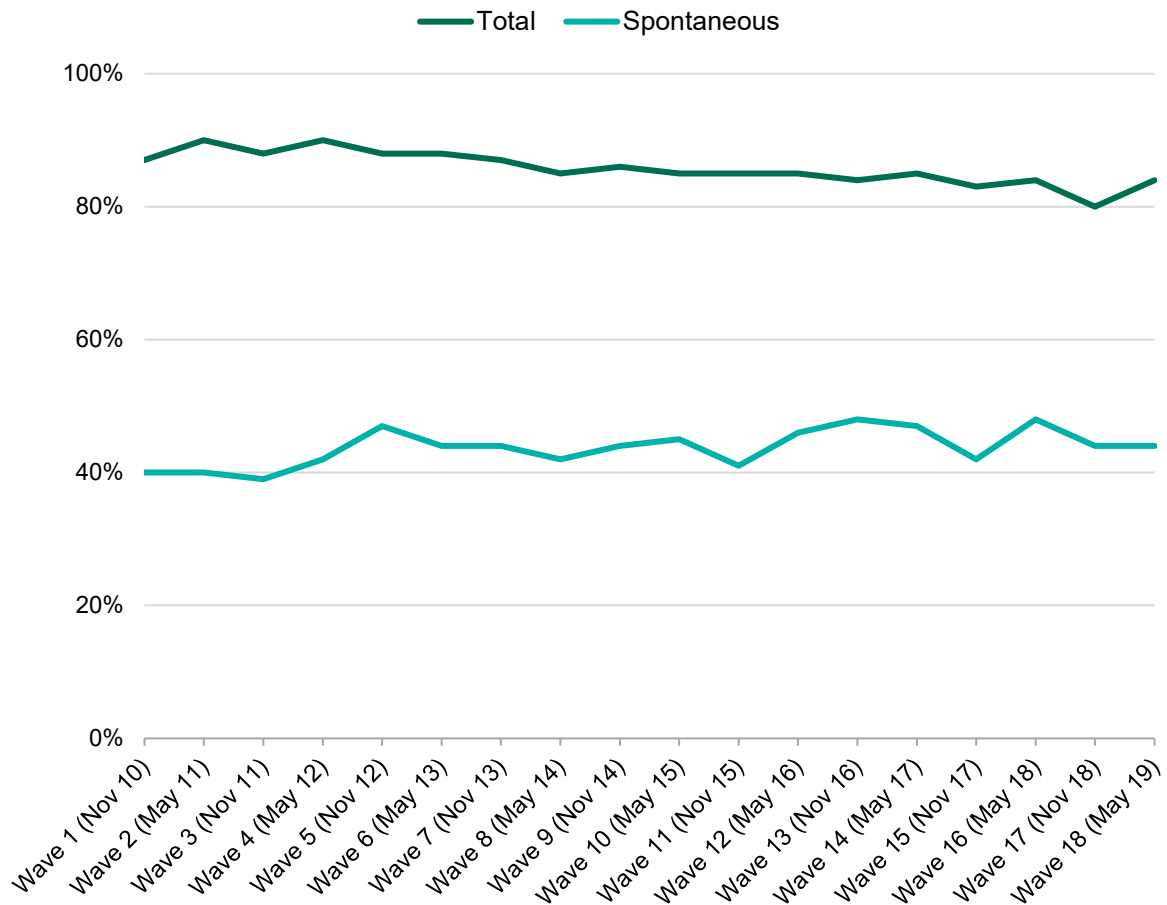
61% agreed that the people who produce and supply food make sure it is safe, honest and ethically approved.

1 Concern about food issues

1.1 Overall concern

At wave 18, 84% of respondents reported concern about at least one food issue. This is a significant increase versus wave 17 (80%), but comparable to earlier waves.

Figure 1-1 Total level of concern for all food issues over time



1.2 Food safety issues

To help the FSA monitor public perceptions of food safety issues, respondents are first asked to state spontaneously which food issues they are concerned about³, and then asked to select food issues of concern from prompted lists⁴.

At wave 18, the most frequently reported issues of concern relating to food safety were food hygiene when eating out (31%), chemicals from the environment in food (30%) and the use of pesticides to grow food (29%).

Table 1-1 Food safety issues of concern (total concern) ⁵

Food issue	Wave 18 (May 2019)
Food hygiene when eating out	31%
Chemicals from the environment, such as lead, in food	30%
The use of pesticides to grow food	29%
Food poisoning such as Salmonella and E.Coli	28%
The use of additives (such as preservatives and colouring) in food products	27%
Hormones\steroids \antibiotics in food	27%
Genetically Modified (GM) foods	25%
Food not being what the label says it is	23%
Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels	22%
How meat is produced in the UK	19%
The feed given to livestock	18%
Food hygiene at home	17%
BSE ('mad cow disease')	12%

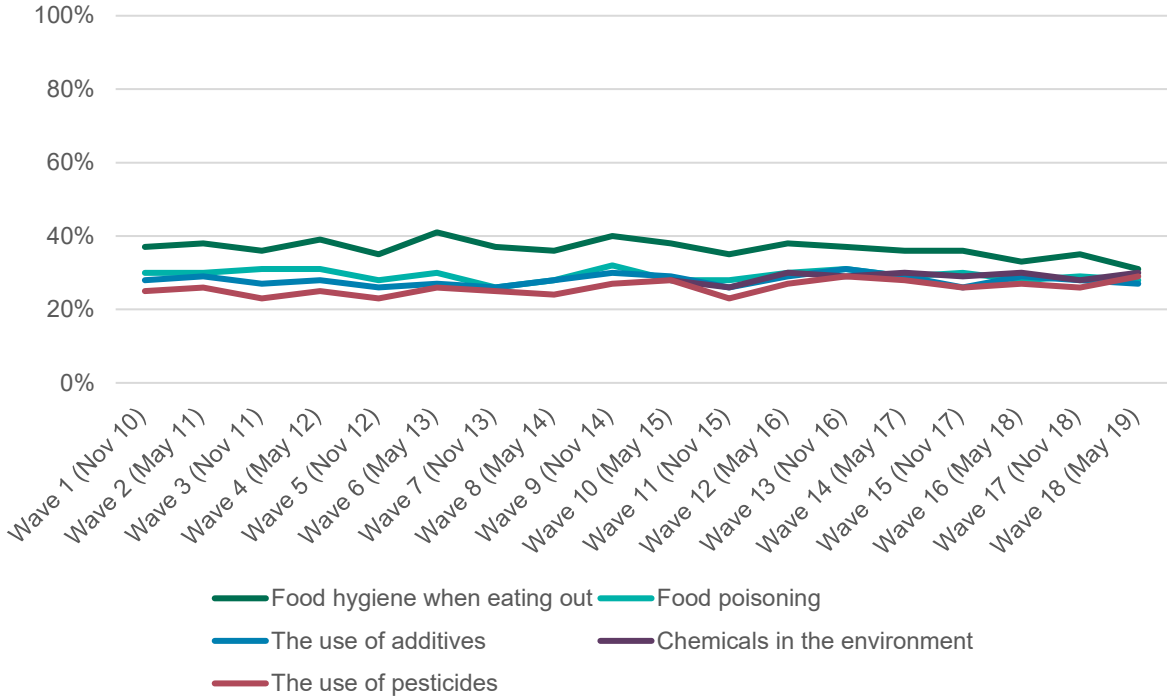
Concern about food hygiene when eating out and concern about date labels have both decreased since the previous wave (by four percentage points and three percentage points respectively). The graph below represents changes over time for the top five food safety issues of concern.

³ Q1a. What issues, if any, are you concerned about? Which others?

⁴ Q1b. And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply.

⁵ Throughout this report, 'total' concern refers to combined 'spontaneous' and 'prompted' responses

Figure 1-2 Food safety issues of concern (over time)



1.3 Wider food issues

In order to understand the wider context of food issues of concern, respondents were prompted to consider their concern about a number of topics⁶.

At wave 18 respondents were most concerned about food waste (51%), the amount of sugar in food (49%), animal welfare (43%), and food prices (43%).

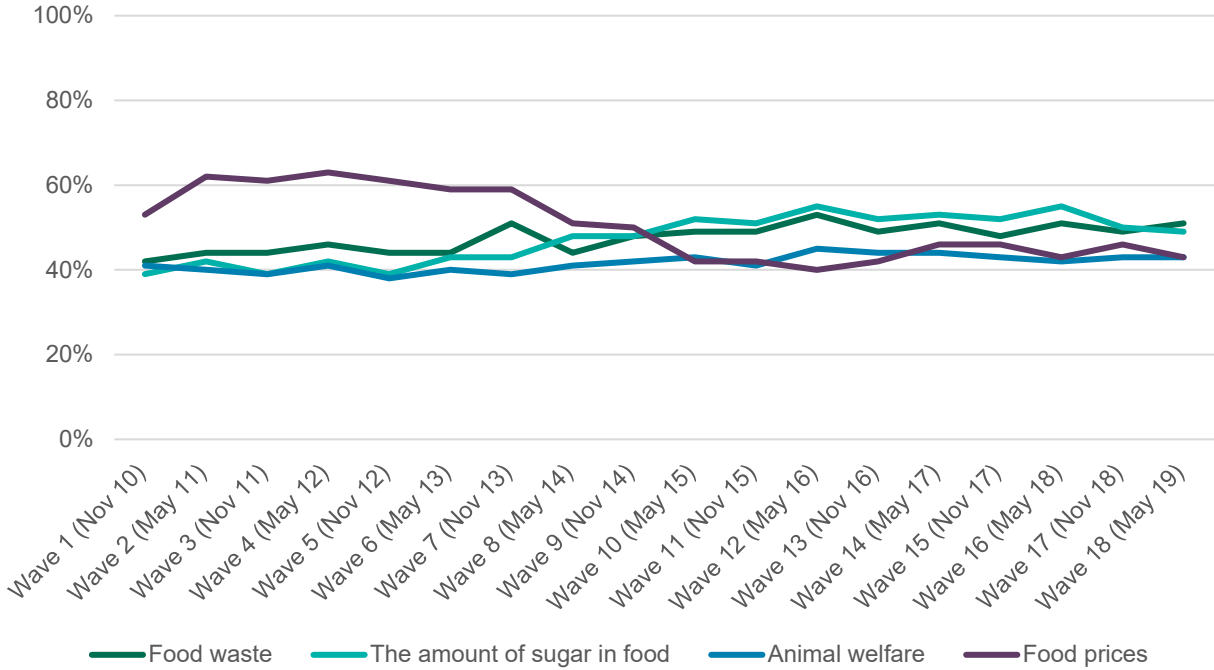
⁶ Q1c. And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply / Q1d. And, finally in this section, which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply.

Table 1-2 Wider food issues of concern

Food issue	Wave 18 (May 2019)
Food waste	51%
The amount of sugar in food	49%
Animal welfare	43%
Food prices	43%
The amount of salt in food	39%
The amount of fat in food	36%
The amount of saturated fat in food	35%
Foods aimed at children including school meals	26%
Food miles	24%

In recent waves, concern has remained relatively stable, with trends indicating a gradual decline in concern. Concern about food prices decreased by three percentage points since the previous wave, whereas concern about food miles has increased by three percentage points. Concern about sugar has declined since May 2018 when it peaked at 55%. The chart below shows concern over time for the top four issues at wave 18.

Figure 1-3 Wider food issues of concern (over time)

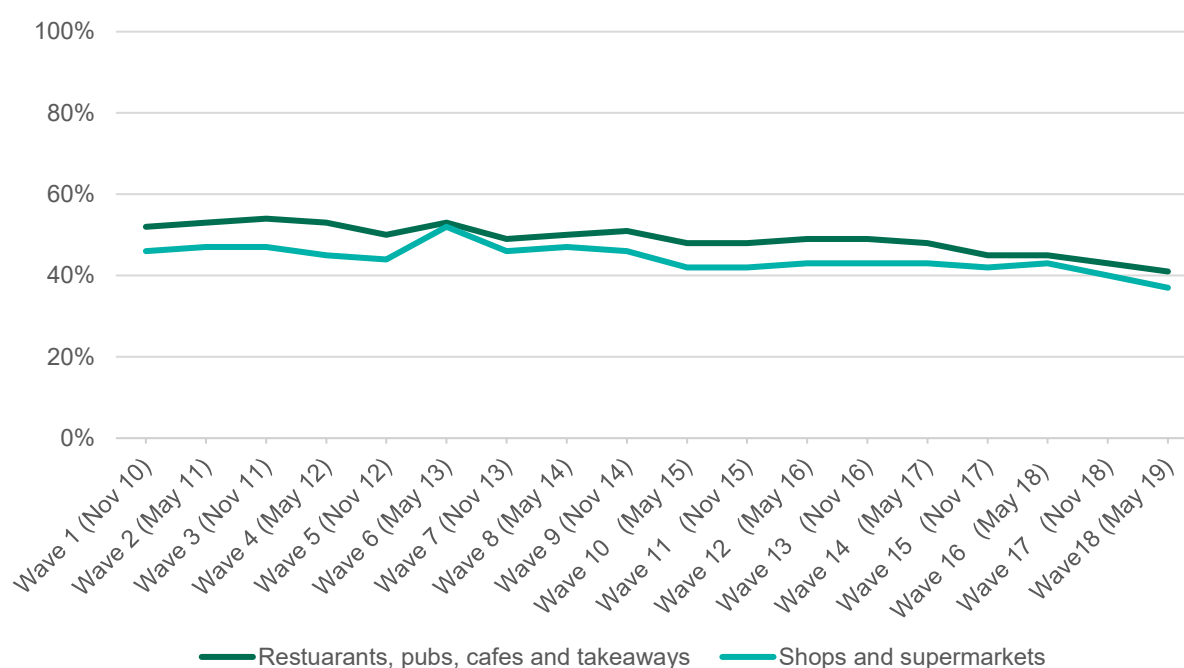


1.4 Food safety in food outlets

At wave 18 41% of respondents reported concern about food safety in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways⁷, and 37% reported concern about safety in UK shops and supermarkets⁸.

Reported concern has continued to decrease slightly over time, indicating a general decline in concern about food safety in UK food outlets.

Figure 1-4 Concern about food safety in UK food outlets (over time)



⁷ Q2a. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of all food that is sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways?

⁸ Q2b. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK shops and supermarkets?

2 Awareness of food hygiene standards

One of the FSA’s strategic objectives is to ensure consumers have the information and understanding to make informed choices about where and what they eat.

To help monitor performance against this objective, respondents were asked about their awareness of hygiene standards when buying food or eating out.

At wave 18, 52% of respondents reported always being aware of the hygiene standards in places they eat out at or buy food from, and a further 33% said they were sometimes aware⁹.



Respondents who reported being aware of hygiene standards in the places they eat out at or buy food from were then asked how they know about hygiene standards¹⁰. The most commonly mentioned ways respondents reported being aware were through hygiene stickers/certificates (66%) and the general appearance of premises (59%).

Table 2-1 Ways of knowing about food hygiene standards¹¹

Ways of knowing about food hygiene standards	Wave 18 (May 2019)
Hygiene stickers / certificates displayed at premises	66%
General appearance of shop / restaurant / café / pub / takeaway	59%
Appearance of people working there	46%
Reputation	40%
Word of mouth	35%
Websites	17%

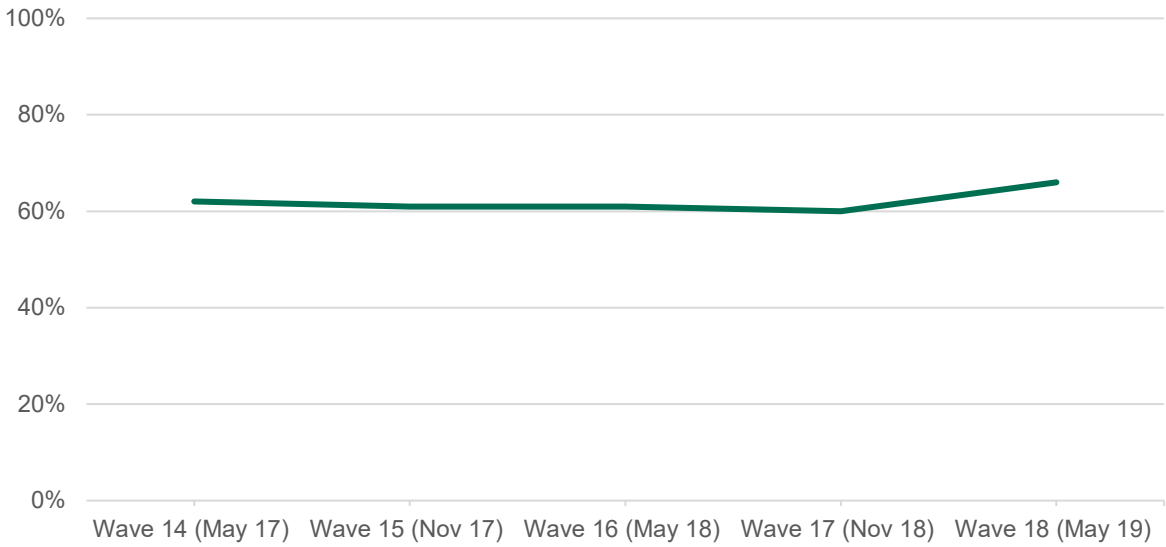
⁹ Q3. When you buy food in shops or supermarkets, or eat at restaurants, cafes, pubs and takeaways, do you tend to be aware of the standards of hygiene of these places?

¹⁰ Q3b. How do you know about the hygiene standards of the places you buy food from or eat out at? Please select all that apply. How else?

¹¹ Base: Respondents who reported being aware of the standards of hygiene when they buy food (n=1,800)

The use of hygiene stickers has increased notably since previous waves (from 60-62% at waves 14-17 up to 66% at wave 18).

Figure 2-1 Use of hygiene stickers



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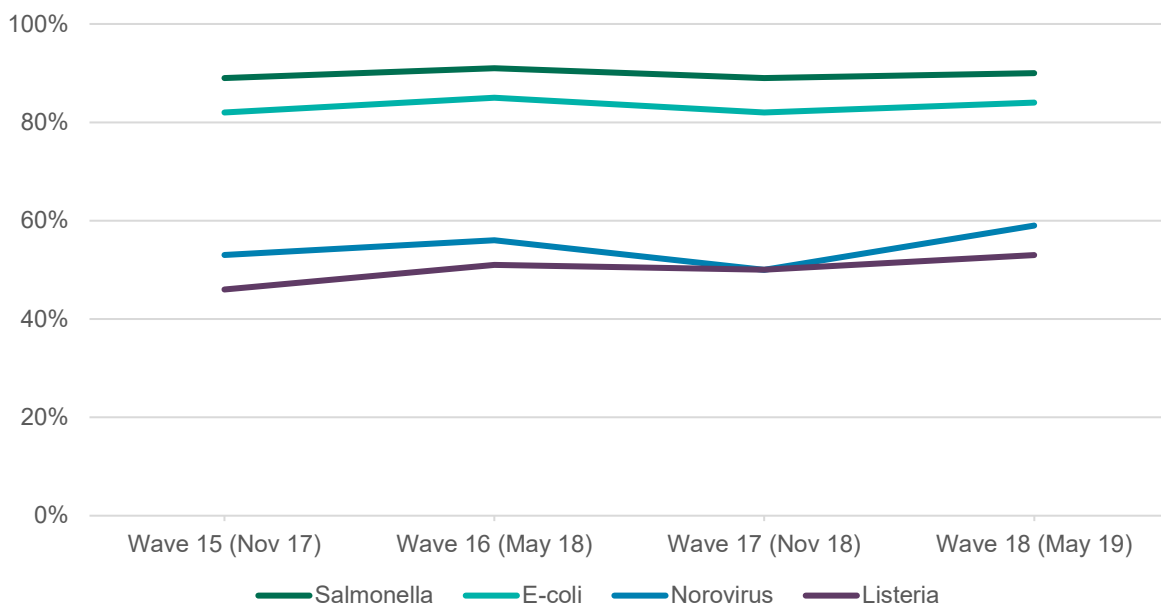
3 Foodborne disease

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3.1 Awareness of types of food poisoning

Respondents were asked to state which types of food poisoning they were aware of¹². Salmonella and E-coli were by far the most commonly known types of food poisoning (total awareness of 90% and 84% respectively). Awareness of norovirus increased by nine percentage points since the previous wave (from 50% to 59%).

Figure 3-1 Awareness of types of food poisoning



3.2 Sources of food poisoning

In order to understand awareness of food poisoning, respondents were asked to indicate which foods they believed could be a source of food poisoning.

79% of respondents reported being most likely to get food poisoning from raw chicken or turkey¹³. 56% reported shellfish being a possible source of food poisoning and 49% reported reheated takeaway food as a source. Other suspected sources included eggs (39%), unwashed vegetables or salad (34%), cooked sliced meats

¹² Q8Aii And which of the following types of food poisoning, if any, have you heard of?

¹³ Q8B In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you are MOST LIKELY to get food poisoning from?

(21%) and pre-prepared sandwiches¹⁴. 15% of respondents reported bread and frozen vegetables as a possible source of food poisoning¹⁵.

Awareness of sources of food poisoning has remained stable throughout previous waves, with little change between waves.

The majority of respondents (92%) reported that no one in their household consumes raw milk, with 7% reporting consumption by someone in the household¹⁶. 6% of respondents reported that they consume raw milk themselves, and 1% reported that children in the household consume it.

3.3 Avoiding food poisoning

The majority of respondents (76%) indicated that cooking food thoroughly would help them avoid food poisoning¹⁷ and almost two thirds of respondents (63%) indicated that washing fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly would help them avoid food poisoning.

Table 3-1 Perceived activities to avoid food poisoning

Avoiding food poisoning	Wave 18 (May 2019)
Cooking food thoroughly	76%
Washing fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly	63%
Preparing different food types on different surfaces/chopping boards	61%
Following storage instructions on food labels	58%
Eating food by the use by date	58%
Storing food at 5 degrees C or below	55%
Avoid re-heating food	55%
Eating food by the best before date	49%
Heating leftovers until they are steaming hot	48%
Following instructions when using frozen fruit or vegetables	47%
Not washing raw chicken	46%

New questions were added at wave 17 to understand preparation behaviours when using frozen fruit and vegetables. 51% of respondents reported not always following

¹⁴ A full list of results can be found in the published data tables at food.gov.uk

¹⁵ Q8Bi In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you can get food poisoning?

¹⁶ Q.8e Does anyone in your household consume raw milk? By raw milk I mean milk that has not been pasteurised.

¹⁷ Q.8c Which of these activities, if any, do you think will help you avoid food poisoning?

instructions on the packaging of frozen vegetables¹⁸ and 25% of respondents reported rarely or never doing this (18% selected 'does not apply'). When preparing frozen fruit¹⁹, 41% of respondents reported not always following instructions and 21% reported rarely or never doing this (35% selected 'does not apply').

¹⁸ Q.8d When preparing frozen vegetables, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

¹⁹ Q.8di When preparing frozen fruit, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

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4 Allergens

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Respondents were asked about their awareness of rules around allergens, whether they have any allergies or intolerances, and how they feel about asking for allergen information when eating out.

4.1 Awareness of rules

When asked about rules and regulations, 7% of respondents spontaneously mentioned that allergens must be displayed on menus / labels. However, less than 1% could state any other existing regulation. 45% of respondents reported not being aware of any rules, regulations or legislations around allergens and 33% were not sure.

4.2 Incidence of allergies and intolerances

11% of respondents reported having a food allergy and/or intolerance²⁰ (6% food intolerance, 4% food allergy and 2% both), 7% reported that another adult in their household had a food allergy and/or intolerance²¹ and 4% reported that a child in their household had a food allergy and/or intolerance²².

Trends indicate that incidence of allergies has remained stable with little change between waves.

4.3 Asking for allergen information

Wave 18 has seen an increase in respondents reporting that they feel confident in asking for allergen information in a variety of food outlets²³. 81% of respondents

²⁰ Q.9b_01 Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below... Myself

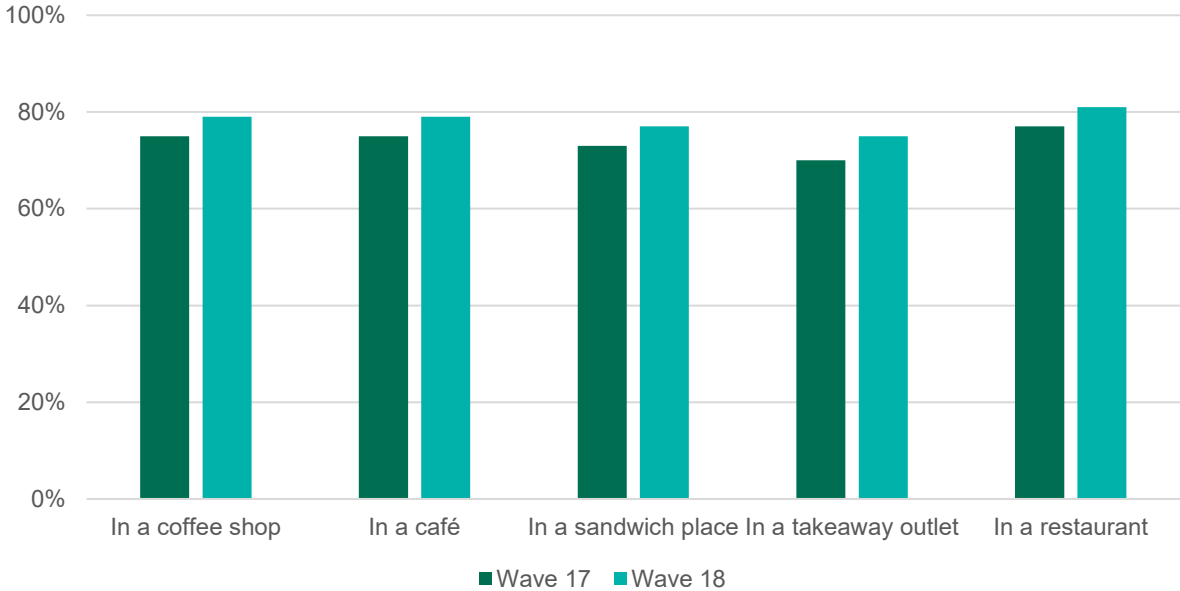
²¹ Q.9b_02 Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below... Another adult in my household

²² Q.9b_03 Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below... A child/children in my household

²³ Q.9c_01-9_05 Thinking specifically about eating out and buying food to eat, for example, from a coffee shop, restaurant, café, sandwich place, takeaway outlet etc., how confident would you feel in asking a member of staff for information about the ingredients in the foods they are selling, because of a concern about possible allergens/food intolerances?...

reported feeling confident²⁴ in asking for allergen information in restaurants (an increase of four percentage points versus the previous wave).

Figure 4-1 Confidence in asking for allergen information



²⁴ Refers to the net proportion of respondents who reported feeling either 'somewhat confident' or 'very confident'.



5 Attitudes towards FSA

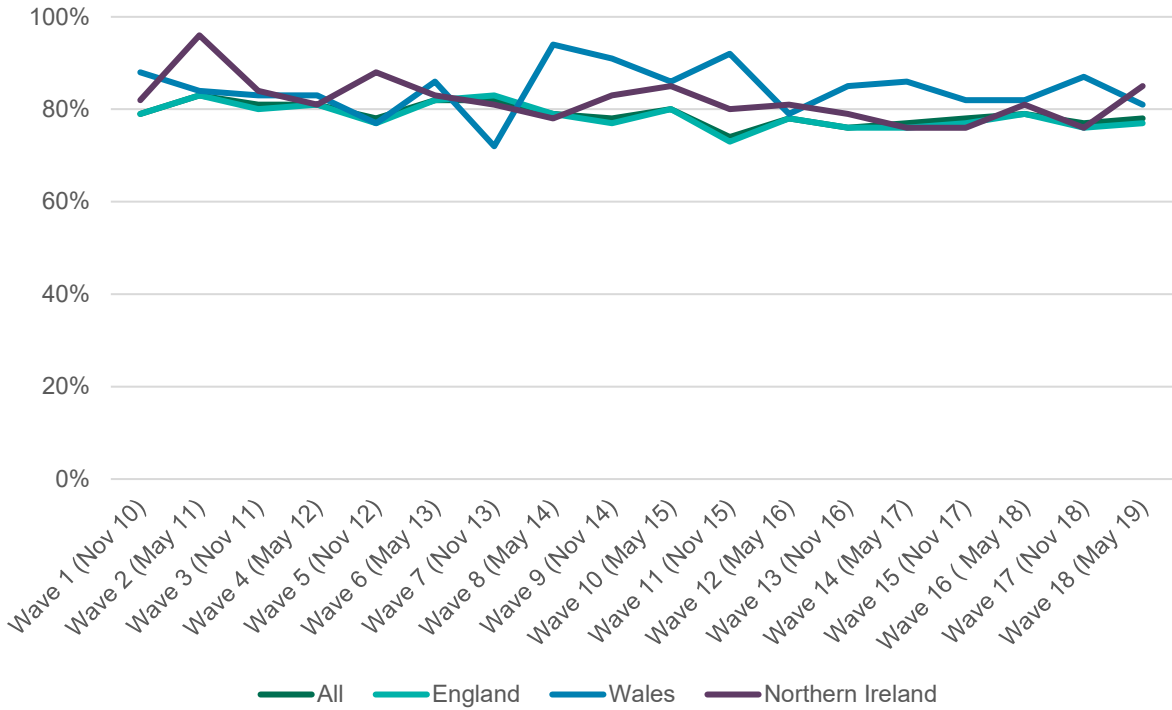


Respondents were asked a range of questions about their awareness of, familiarity with and attitudes towards the Food Standards Agency.

5.1 Awareness and familiarity

At wave 18, 78% of all respondents reported being aware of the FSA²⁵. 85% of respondents in Northern Ireland reported awareness of the FSA compared to 81% of those in Wales and 77% of respondents in England.

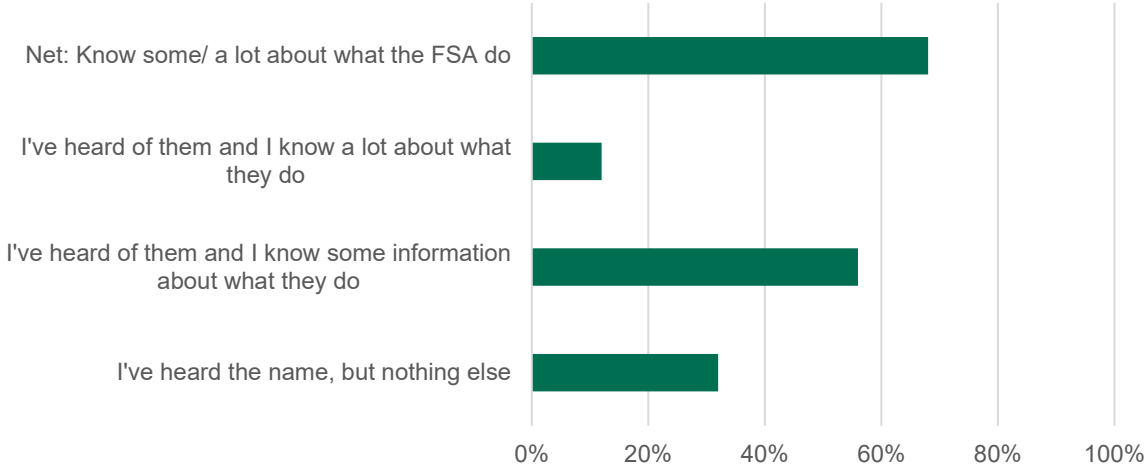
Figure 5-1 Awareness of FSA



²⁵ Q.4 Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?

When asked about familiarity with what the FSA do, 68% of respondents reported knowing some or a lot about what the FSA do²⁶ and 32% reported having heard the name, but nothing else. The proportion knowing some or a lot about what the FSA do increased by four percentage points versus the previous wave. However, a similar level of knowledge was also seen in May 2018 (67%).

Figure 5-2 Familiarity with FSA²⁷



Respondents that were aware of the FSA were asked which statement they believed to best describe the FSA²⁸. 47% of respondents reported the FSA being best described as a ‘government department’, 29% ‘independent regulator’ and 11% ‘an arm’s length government body’. There has been no significant change since this question was first asked at wave 15.

In addition to many other responsibilities, in terms of food labelling the FSA is responsible for food safety and allergy labelling in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It also holds responsibility for wider food labelling in Wales and Northern Ireland, including nutrition in Northern Ireland only. When asked which issues they think FSA is responsible for, 88% of respondents stated that one of the FSA’s responsibilities is to ensure that the food you buy is safe to eat. The next most popular answer was date labels (63%)²⁹.

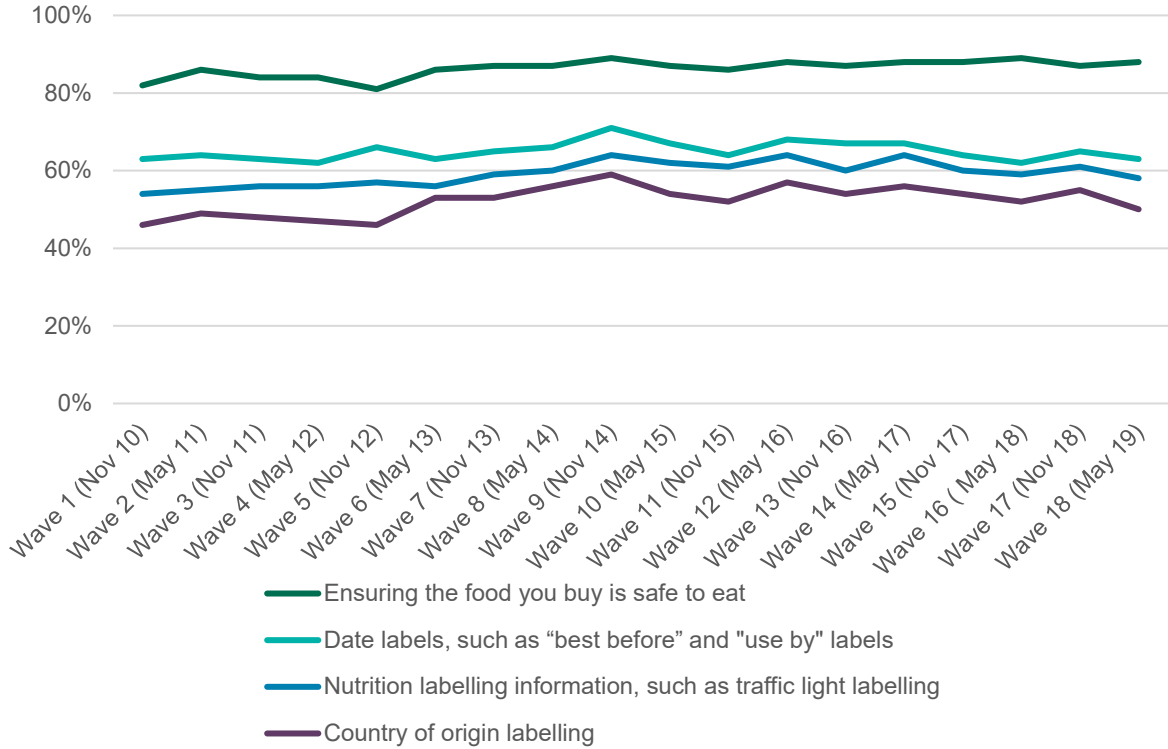
²⁶ Q.4b How much do you know about the Food Standards Agency, also known as the FSA? Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1,654)
²⁷ Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1,654)
²⁸ Q.4c To the best of your knowledge, which of the following do you think best describes the FSA?
²⁹ Q.5b And which of these issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for? Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=xxx)

Table 5-1 Total awareness of FSA responsibilities

Awareness of responsibilities	Wave 18 (May 2019)
Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat	88%
Date labels, such as “best before” and "use by" labels	63%
Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling	58%
Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from	50%
Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles	41%
Promoting food safety in the home	40%
Ensuring food is sustainable - such as reducing green house emissions and reducing waste when producing food	39%

Awareness of the FSA’s responsibilities has remained relatively stable over the waves, with a slight decrease in respondents reporting country of origin labelling as an FSA responsibility (55% at wave 17 down to 50% at wave 18). Figure 5-3 depicts the top four responsibilities respondents were aware of.

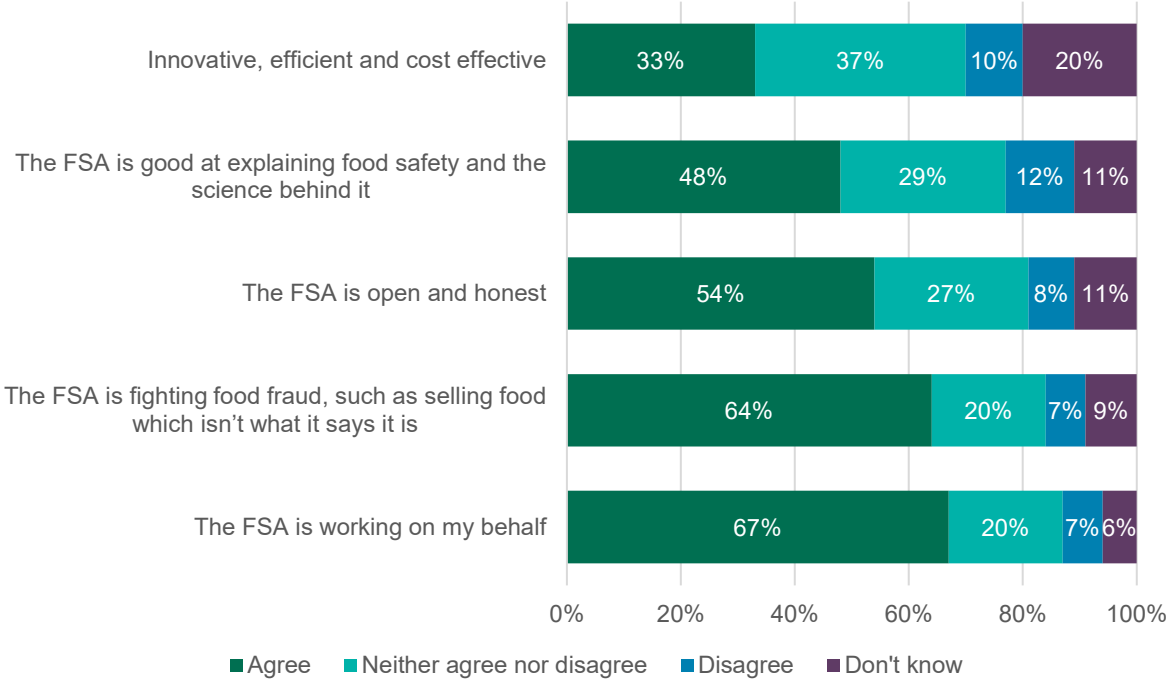
Figure 5-3 Awareness of FSA responsibilities



5.2 Perceptions of FSA

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with a variety of statements regarding the FSA³⁰. Of those aware of FSA, 67% of respondents agreed³¹ that the FSA is working on their behalf, and 64% agreed that the FSA is fighting food fraud. 33% of respondents agreed that the FSA is innovative, efficient and cost effective.

Figure 5-4 Perceptions of FSA



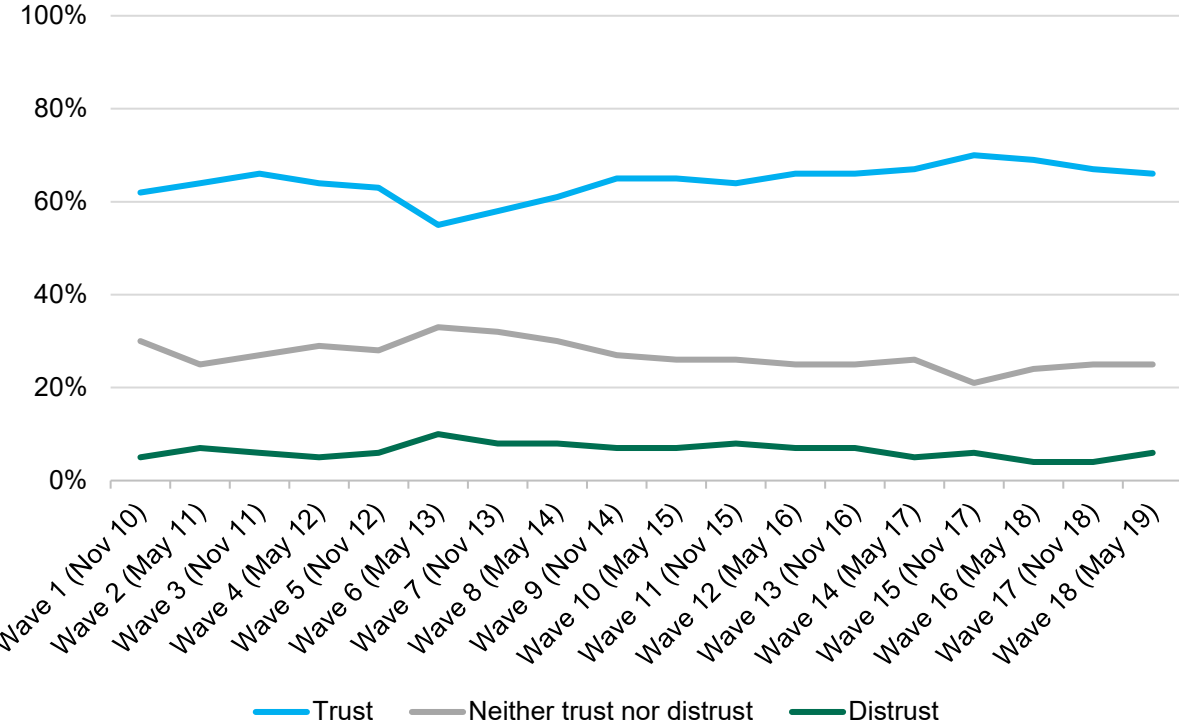
Agreement that FSA is fighting food fraud increased by four percentage points since the previous wave.

³⁰ Q.4d To what extent do you agree or disagree that the FSA is the following... Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1654)
³¹ Net 'strongly agree' and 'slightly agree'

5.3 Trust in FSA

At wave 18, 66% of respondents aware of FSA reported trusting³² the FSA to do its job³³. There has been no significant change versus the previous wave.

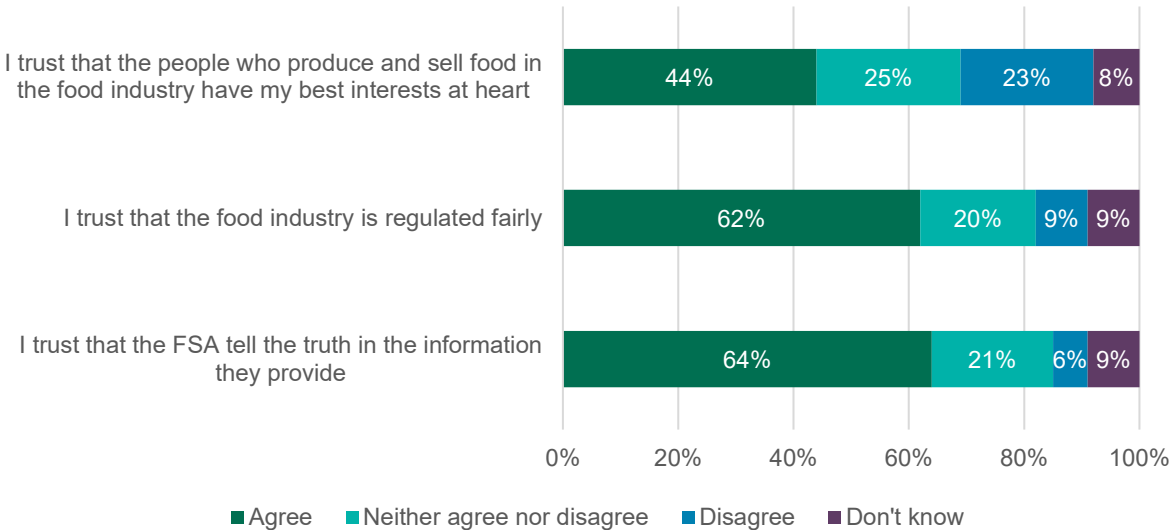
Figure 5-5 Trust in the FSA over time



Respondents were also asked to indicate if, and to what extent, they agreed with a variety of statements outlining their level of trust in the FSA and the wider food system³⁴. 64% of respondents reported that they trust the FSA to tell the truth in the information they provide (72% among those aware of FSA). 62% of respondents agreed that the food industry is regulated fairly and 44% agreed that they trust that the people who produce and sell food have their best interests at heart. There have been no notable changes versus previous waves.

³² Net 'I trust the FSA a lot' and 'I trust the FSA'
³³ Q.6a How much do you trust or distrust Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is, trust it to make sure the food sold in shops. Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1654)
³⁴ Q.6b To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements..

Figure 5-6 Trust in FSA and food system



At wave 18, questions relating to trust that were previously included in the FSA’s flagship survey Food and You³⁵ were moved to the Public Attitudes Tracker in order to observe levels of trust more regularly.

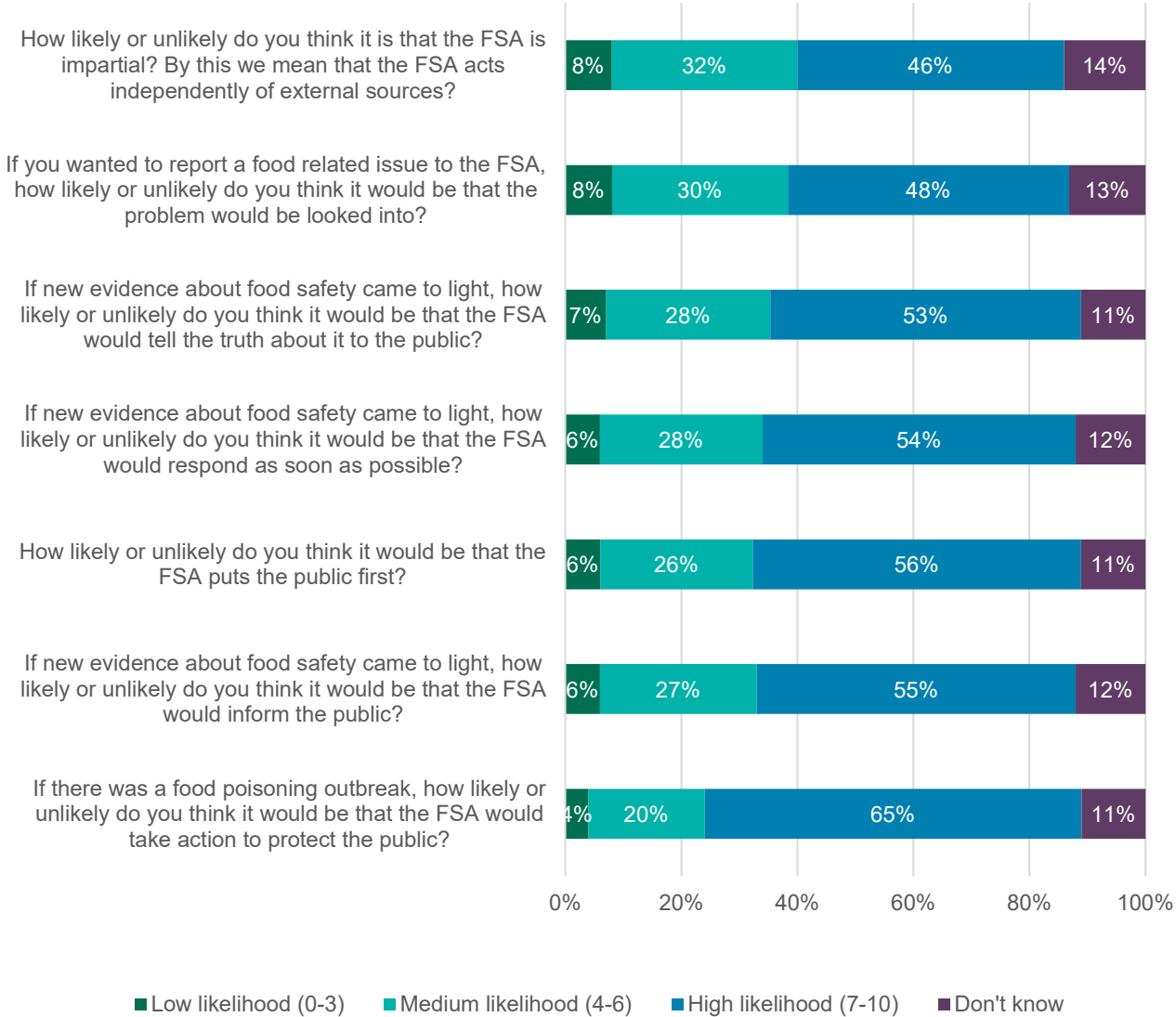
Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of FSA acting in a certain way across seven statements, as reported below³⁶. Each statement used the same 10 point scale, from very unlikely to very likely. 65% of respondents agreed that there is a high likelihood³⁷ of the FSA taking action to protect the public if there was a food poisoning outbreak, and 56% of respondents reported a high likelihood of the FSA putting the public first.

³⁵ <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you>

³⁶ C01-07. Seven statements

³⁷ High likelihood defined as 7-10

Figure 5-7 Trust and confidence in FSA



Using these statements, a composite measure of trust in the FSA was developed as part of Food and You wave five analysis. The composite score was computed using a mean: each of the seven questions was asked on a 10-point scale; therefore, the total score is a mean score based on the number of questions answered by each respondent. All respondents who answered five, six or seven questions had their responses included in the composite measure and received a corresponding score. In total 1,876 cases were included the composite measure. Further information about the methodology can be found in the Food and You Wav Five secondary analysis paper: Trust in Food and the UK Food System³⁸. The average score of the composite measure of trust in the FSA was 6.9 out of 10.

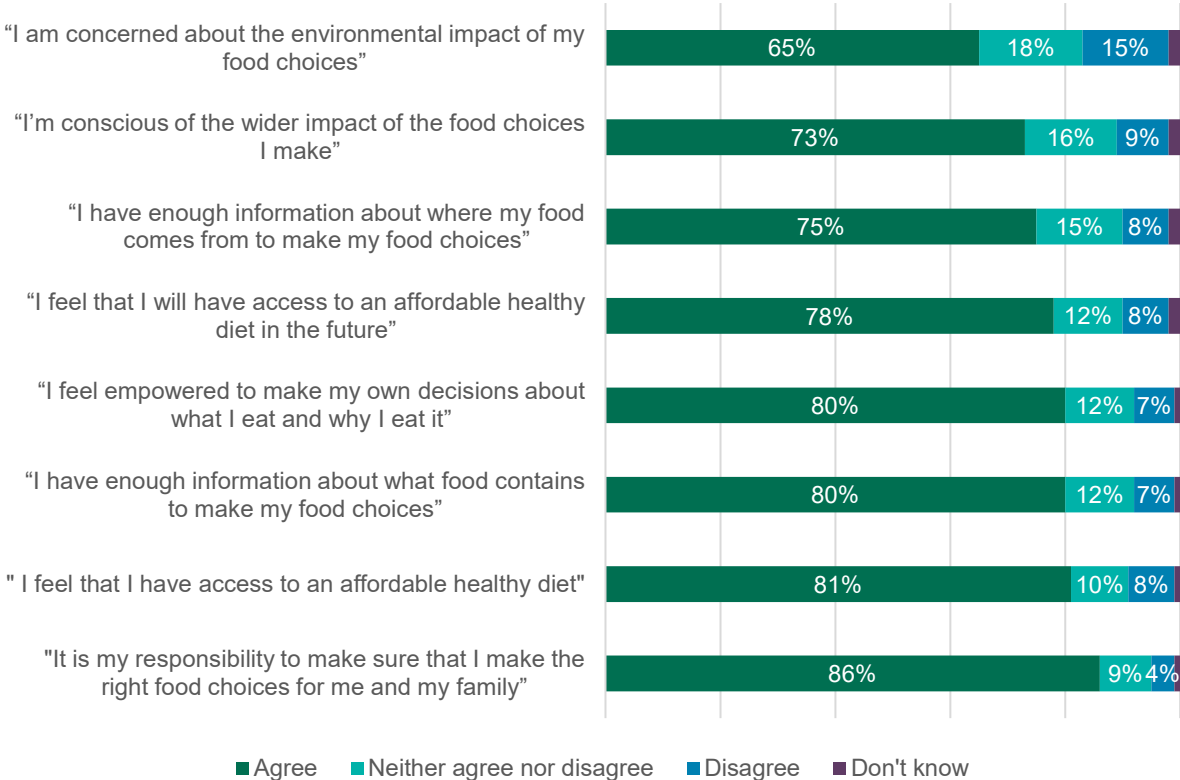
³⁸ https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/foodandyou_wave5_trust-paper_v8-final_0.pdf

6 Attitudes towards the food system

6.1 Food choices

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagree with a variety of statements about attitudes towards food production, sale and labelling³⁹. There were high levels of agreement for all statements, particularly around responsibility and empowerment. A new statement was added at wave 18 to gauge levels concern about the environmental impact of food choices; 65% of respondents agreed that this is something they are concerned about.

Figure 6-1 Attitudes towards food production, sale and labelling



86% of respondents agreed that it is their responsibility to make the right food choices for themselves and their families and 76% of respondents reported they trust

³⁹ Q33. We are interested in your views about how food is produced, sold and labelled; basically everything that happens to food on the way to your table. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements....

the authenticity of the ingredients, origin or quality of the food they buy or eat (this has increased by 4% from the previous wave).

6.2 Trust in food labelling

Since wave 15, several questions have been asked around trust in food labelling. At wave 18, 67% of respondents reported feeling not always feeling confident in that food is what it says it is on the label or the menu⁴⁰, with 33% of respondents always feeling confident. The proportion of respondents reporting ‘always’ feeling confidence increased by five percentage points since the previous wave.

Respondents who indicated that they do not always feel confident that food is what it says it is were asked to outline any specific reasons for this⁴¹. The most commonly reported issues were not believing the ingredient information on labels / menus as correct (9%) and the horse meat scandal (7%). There have been no notable changes over time.

Additionally, respondents who indicated that they do not always feel confident were then asked if they had ever done any of the following⁴² (again, there have been no notable changes over time):

Table 6-1 Behaviours surrounding lack of confidence in food labelling

Action	Wave 18 (May 2019)
Took no action	55%
Read food labels more labels	27%
Stopped shopping for food at certain places	16%
Changed the way you prepare food	9%
Changed the way you cook food	9%
Tried to get more information about the issue	9%
Read about the issue when you saw it but did not seek out information	7%

⁴⁰ Q.7a In general, when buying or eating food, how often do you feel confident that it is what it says it is on the label or the menu?

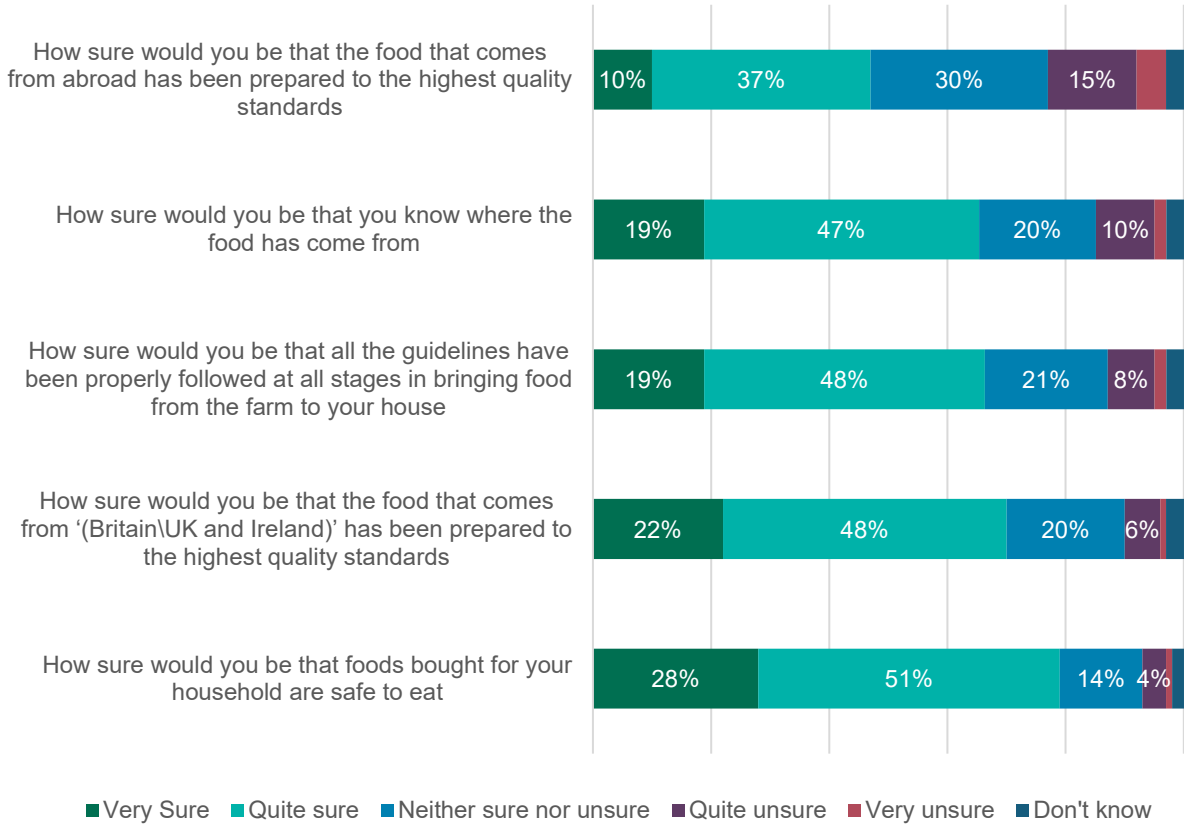
⁴¹ Q.7b You indicated that you are not always confident that food is what it says it is on the label or menu. What specific issues were you thinking of, if any? Base: all respondents not always confident (n=1,407)

⁴² Q.7c Over the past year, have you ever done any of the following because you were not confident that food was what it says it was on the label or menu? Base: all respondents not always confident (n=1,407)

6.3 Trust in the food system

At wave 18, questions relating to trust in the food system that were previously included in the FSA’s flagship survey Food and You⁴³ were moved to the Public Attitudes Tracker in order to observe levels of trust in the food system on a more regular basis. Respondents were asked to rate five statements, as reported below. 79% of respondents reported that they were sure⁴⁴ that the foods bought for their household are safe to eat.

Figure 6-2 Trust in the food system



As with trust in the FSA (Section 5.3), a composite measure for trust in the food system was developed as part of Food and You wave five analysis⁴⁵. The score was computed using a mean: each of the five questions was asked on a 5-point scale; therefore, the total score is a mean score based on the number of questions answered by each respondent. All respondents who answered four or five questions had their responses included in the composite measure and received a corresponding score. In total 2,072 cases were included the composite measure.

⁴³ <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you>
⁴⁴ Net 'very sure' and 'quite sure'
⁴⁵ https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/foodandyou_wave5_trust-paper_v8-final_0.pdf

The average score of the composite measure of trust in the food system was 3.8 out of 5.

Throughout the survey, respondents were also asked a range of other questions about their attitudes towards and trust in the food system, as reported in the chart below:

Figure 6-3 Attitudes towards food system



Agreement with ‘I trust the authenticity of the ingredients, origin or quality of the food I buy or eat’ increased by four percentage points since the previous wave (from 72% to 76%).

When asked about attitudes towards UK meat products, 72% of respondents reported that they were very or somewhat confident in the safety of UK meat products⁴⁶. 71% reported feeling very or somewhat confident in the authenticity of UK meat products⁴⁷ (his has increased slightly (+4%) from the previous wave).

⁴⁶ Q.33a How confident are you in the safety of UK meat products

⁴⁷ Q.33b And how confident are you in the authenticity of UK meat products?

7 Food recalls

At wave 17 a range of questions were added to investigate consumer awareness of food recalls. At wave 18, 18% of respondents reported ever⁴⁸ checking for a food recall alerts⁴⁹, and 17% reported being aware of a food recall alert in the past 12 months⁵⁰ (there has been no notable change since the previous wave).

Of those aware of a food recall in the past 12 months, 29% noticed it in store, 27% had heard it on TV/radio and 21% through social media⁵¹. 64% of respondents that had seen a food recall alert in store noted that they had seen it in the store window, followed by at the checkout (32%)⁵².

39% of respondents who had noticed a food recall reported that food companies had issued the alert⁵³, and 94% reported the information being very/quite clear⁵⁴. This has increased from 87% at the previous wave, the only significant difference at wave 18.

65% of respondents reported taking no action when they noticed a food recall alert, whilst 16% checked to see if they had the product, 11% passed the information on to others and 6% threw the product away⁵⁵. 1% of these respondents reported that they, or someone else, ate the product.

98% of respondents reported that they are not currently signed up to receive food recall information⁵⁶ however 18% reported that they would sign up to food recall information in the future⁵⁷.

⁴⁸ Net at least 'once a week', 'once or twice a month' and 'less than once a month'

⁴⁹ Q.34a In general, how often do you check for food recall alerts?

⁵⁰ Q.34b Are you aware of any food recall alerts in the past 12 months?

⁵¹ Q.35a Thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, what was the source of information? Base: all respondents aware of a food recall in past 12 months (n=351)

⁵² Q.35d You mentioned that you had seen a food recall alert in store. Where did you see it? Base: all respondents who had seen a food recall alert in store (n=98)

⁵³ Q.35b To the best of your knowledge, who issued the recall? Base: all respondents who can remember the source of the recall information (n=332)

⁵⁴ Q.35c How clear was the information on the food recall? Base: all respondents who can remember the source of the recall information (n=332)

⁵⁵ Q.36a Again, still thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, which of these actions did you take? Base: all respondents who are aware of any food recall alerts in the past 12 months (n=351)

⁵⁶ Q.37 Are you currently signed up to receive food recall information from any organisation?

⁵⁷ Q.39 Would you sign up to receive food recall information in the future? Base: all respondents who are not currently signed up to receive food recall information (n=2,125)

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Annex B: Methodology

This is Wave 18 of the redeveloped Public Attitudes Tracker, which has been running since 2010. Fieldwork for this wave took place from 8th – 26th of May 2019 with a representative sample of 2,080 adults interviewed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The research was conducted through the regular TNS Omnibus survey which uses face-to-face interviews, employing face-to-face Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), and selects respondents using a random location sampling method.

From wave 14 onwards, no research was undertaken in Scotland, which has a separate Tracker. Consequently, this report only presents findings for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To ensure that comparisons from the current wave to previous waves are valid, Scottish responses have been removed from the previous waves – ensuring that findings from England, Wales and Northern Ireland are being compared with findings from the same countries. This means that figures presented in the current report may differ from ones presented previously.

The Omnibus uses a Random Location Quota sample. The sample design involves dividing Great Britain into 600 sampling points, using the 2001 Census small area statistics and Postcode Address File (PAF). The sample is drawn in two stages: at the first stage sample points (Primary Sample units) are selected probability proportionate to size; at the second stage, blocks of addresses are selected at random within the sampled PSU. The number of sampling points issued varies between 143 – 208 each week, depending upon the length of the questionnaire. Interviewing is conducted by professional interviewers who work exclusively for Kantar TNS. 10 – 15 interviews are conducted in each area, depending upon the questionnaire length. All interviewers must leave 3 doors between each successful interview. The Random Location Quota sampling method means that response rates are not calculated for the survey. However, weighting is applied to weight the sample back to the population.

History

The Tracker survey has been conducted since 2001. The frequency of fieldwork for the Tracker has changed since 2001:

- April 2001 – December 2001: quarterly;
- October 2001 – September 2002: monthly;

- December 2002 – March 2010: quarterly;
- November 2010 – May 2019 (this report): biannually.

At wave 18 the sample size for Wales and Northern Ireland was boosted to increase accuracy and robustness.

At wave 18, the tracker report was redesigned in order to reduce the size of the report. Only topline findings have been reported, and bespoke analysis is provided upon request.

Questions relating to trust that were previously included in the Food and You report were added to this wave of the tracker.

Annex C: Wave 18 questionnaire

Q.1a What food issues, if any, are you concerned about? Which others? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

(Spontaneous)

Q.1b And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

Food poisoning such as Salmonella and E. coli

Genetically Modified (GM) foods

BSE ('mad cow disease')

The feed given to livestock

The use of pesticides to grow food

The use of additives (such as preservatives and colouring) in food products

Hormones\steroids\antibiotics in food

Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels

Food hygiene when eating out

Food hygiene at home

Chemicals from the environment, such as lead, in food

Food not being what the label says it is

None of these

(DK)

Q.1c And which of THESE food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

The amount of salt in food

The amount of sugar in food

The amount of fat in food

The amount of saturated fat in food

Foods aimed at children including school meals

None of these

(DK)

Q.1d And, finally in this section, which of THESE food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

Animal welfare

Food prices

Food waste

Food miles (e.g. the distance food travels)

None of these

(DK)

Q.2a How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

I am very concerned

I am fairly concerned

I am neither concerned nor unconcerned

I am fairly unconcerned

I am very unconcerned

(DK)

Q.2b How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK shops and supermarkets? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

I am very concerned

I am fairly concerned

I am neither concerned nor unconcerned

I am fairly unconcerned

I am very unconcerned

(DK)

Q.3a When you buy food in shops or supermarkets, or eat at restaurants, cafes, pubs and takeaways, do you tend to be aware of the standards of hygiene of these places? (Base: All adults England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

Yes – always

Yes – sometimes

No

(DK)

Q.3b How do you know about the hygiene standards of the places you buy food from or eat out at? Please select all that apply. How else? (Base: All adults who are at all aware of the standards of hygiene when they buy food UK)

Word of mouth

Reputation

Appearance of people working there

General appearance of shop\restaurant\cafe\pub\takeaway

Hygiene sticker / certificate

Websites

Other (specify)

(DK)

Q.4 Which of the following, if any, have you heard of? Please select all that apply.

Department of Health (only show if England)

Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (only show if NI)

Public Health Agency (PHA) (only show if NI)

Food Standards Agency (FSA) (only show if England, Wales or NI)

Safefood (only show if NI)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (only show if England)

Department for Rural Affairs (only show if Wales)

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) (only show if NI)

Health & Safety Executive

World Health Organisation (WHO)

Q.4b How much do you know about the Food Standards Agency, also known as the FSA?

I've heard the name, but nothing else

I've heard of them and I know some information about what they do

I've heard of them and I know a lot about what they do

Q.4c To the best of your knowledge, which of the following do you think best describes the FSA?

A government department

An independent regulator

A charity

Arm's length government body

Private company

Other [Please specify]

Q.5a And please can I check, which issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for?

Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat

Promoting food safety in the home

Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles

Ensuring food is sustainable - such as reducing green house emissions and reducing waste when producing food

Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling

Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels

Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from

Other

Q.5b And which of these issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for? Please select all that apply

Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat

Promoting food safety in the home

Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles

Ensuring food is sustainable - such as reducing green house emissions and reducing waste when producing food

Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling

Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels

Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from

Other

Q.4d To what extent do you agree or disagree that the FSA is the following...

Q.4d_01 ...Fighting food fraud, such as selling food which isn't what it says it is

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.4d_02 ...Working on my behalf

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.4d_03 ...Good at explaining food safety and the science behind it

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.4d_04 ...Open and honest

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.4d_05 ...Innovative, efficient and cost effective

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.6a How much do you trust or distrust the Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is, trust it to make sure the food sold in shops and restaurants is safe, and to provide advice on food safety in the home.

I trust it a lot

I trust it

I neither trust nor distrust it

I distrust it

I distrust it a lot

Q.6b To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Q.6b_01 ... I trust that the FSA tell the truth in the information they provide.

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.6b_02 ... I trust that the food industry is regulated fairly.

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.6b_03 ... I trust that the people who produce and sell food in the food industry have my best interests at heart.

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q7 If you wanted to report a food related issue to the FSA, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the problem would be looked into?

0 - Very Unlikely

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 - Very likely

Q7_02 . If there was a food poisoning outbreak, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would take action to protect the public?

0 - Very Unlikely

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 - Very likely

Q7_03 If new evidence about food safety came to light, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would inform the public?

0 - Very Unlikely

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 - Very likely

Q7_04 If new evidence about food safety came to light, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would respond as soon as possible?

0 - Very Unlikely

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

10 - Very likely

Q7_05 If new evidence about food safety came to light, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would tell the truth about it to the public?

0 - Very Unlikely

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

10 - Very likely

Q8 In general, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that the FSA is impartial? By this we mean that the FSA acts independently of external sources?

0 - Very Unlikely

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

10 - Very likely

Q9 In general, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA puts the public first?

0 - Very Unlikely

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 - Very likely

Q7a In general, when buying or eating food, how often do you feel confident that it is what it says it is on the label or the menu?

Always

Most of the time

Some of the time

Rarely

Never

Q.7b You indicated that you are not always confident that food is what it says it is on the label or menu. What specific issues were you thinking of, if any?
(Spontaneous)

Q.7c Over the past year, have you ever done any of the following because you were not confident that food was what it says it was on the label or menu?

Tried to get more information about the issue

Read about the issue when you saw it but did not seek out information

Read food labels more labels

Changed the way you cook food

Changed the way you prepare food

Stopped shopping for food at certain places

Other (Please specify)

Took no action

Q.8a Do you cook and/or prepare food for any of the following? Please select all that apply

Myself

Children under 5 years old

Children aged 5-15

Adults aged 16-24

Adults 65 years old and over

Other (Please specify)

No I don't cook or prepare food at all

Q.8ai What types of food poisoning, if any, have you heard of? DO NOT PROMPT

Bacillus Cereus

Botulism

Campylobacter

Clostridium Perfringes

E-coli

Listeria

Norovirus

Salmonella

None of these

Q.8aii And which of the following types of food poisoning, if any, have you heard of?

Bacillus Cereus

Botulism

Campylobacter

Clostridium Perfringes

E-coli

Listeria

Norovirus

Salmonella

Other (Please specify)

Q.8b In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you are MOST LIKELY to get food poisoning from?

Cereal

Eggs

Raw chicken or turkey

Reheated takeaway food

Shellfish

Unwashed vegetables or salad

Water

Yoghurt

Cooked sliced meats

Smoked fish

Soft mould-ripened and soft cheeses

Pre-prepared sandwiches

Pre-prepared salads

Pate

Q.8bi In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you can get food poisoning?

Frozen fruit

Frozen vegetables

Tinned vegetables

Dried pasta

Tinned fruit

Bread

Potatoes

None of these

Q.8c Which of these activities, if any, do you think will help you avoid food poisoning? Please select all that you think apply

Preparing different food types on different surfaces chopping boards

Cooking food thoroughly

Storing food at 5 degrees C or below

Avoid re-heating food

Not washing raw chicken

Washing fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly

Following storage instructions on food labels

Eating food by the use-by date

Eating food by the best-before date

Heating leftovers until they are steaming hot before eating them

Q.8d When preparing frozen vegetables, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

Always

Most of the time

Some of the time

Rarely

Never

Does not apply

Q.8di When preparing frozen fruit, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

Always

Most of the time

Some of the time

Rarely

Never

Does not apply

Q.8e Does anyone in your household consume raw milk? By raw milk I mean milk that has not been pasteurised.

Please select all that apply

Yes - myself

Yes - other adult(s) in household (over 18)

Yes - child(ren) aged 0-5

Yes - child(ren) aged 6-15

Yes - child(ren) aged 16+

Yes - other (please specify)

No, none of the above

Q.9a Are you aware of the rules about allergens? By rules we mean any information rule, regulation or legislation introduced relevant to this subject.

Yes (please specify the rule(s) you are aware of)

No

Not sure

Q.9b Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below...

...Myself

Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)

Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)

Both a food allergy and a food intolerance

None of these

...Another adult in my household

Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)

Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)

Both a food allergy and a food intolerance

None of these

...A child/children in my household

Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)

Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)

Both a food allergy and a food intolerance

None of these

...A child/children not in your household e.g. if your children live elsewhere

Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)

Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)

Both a food allergy and a food intolerance

None of these

...Another adult not in your household e.g. if you care for an adult who lives elsewhere, or a partner who doesn't live with you

Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)

Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)

Both a food allergy and a food intolerance

None of these

...A friend

Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)

Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)

Both a food allergy and a food intolerance

None of these

Q.9c Thinking specifically about eating out and buying food to eat, for example, from a coffee shop, restaurant, café, sandwich place, takeaway outlet etc., how confident would you feel in asking a member of staff for information about the ingredients in the foods they are selling, because of a concern about possible allergens/food intolerances?...

Q.9c_01 ...In a coffee shop

Not at all confident

Not very confident

Neither confident nor unconfident

Somewhat confident

Very confident

Q.9c_02 ...In a café

Not at all confident

Not very confident

Neither confident nor unconfident

Somewhat confident

Very confident

Q.9c_03 ...In a sandwich place

Not at all confident

Not very confident

Neither confident nor unconfident

Somewhat confident

Very confident

Q.9c_04 ...In a takeaway outlet

Not at all confident

Not very confident

Neither confident nor unconfident

Somewhat confident

Very confident

Q.9c_05 ...In a restaurant

Not at all confident

Not very confident

Neither confident nor unconfident

Somewhat confident

Very confident

Q33. We are interested in your views about how food is produced, sold and labelled; basically everything that happens to food on the way to your table. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements....

Q.33_01 ...I have enough information about what food contains to make my food choices

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_02 ...I have enough information about where my food comes from to make my food choices

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_03 ...The people who produce and supply food make sure it is safe, honest and ethically approved

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_04 ...It is my responsibility to make sure that I make the right food choices for me and my family

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_05 ...I feel that I have access to an affordable healthy diet

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_06 ...I feel that I will have access to an affordable healthy diet in the future

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_07 ...I'm conscious of the wider impact of the food choices I make

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_08 ...I feel empowered to make my own decisions about what I eat and why I eat it

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_09 ...I am confident that the food I buy or eat is what it says it is and accurately labelled

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_10 ...The authorities are effectively preventing and detecting food fraud (By that we mean any dishonest misdescription of products, or selling of unfit or harmful food)

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q.33_11 I trust the authenticity of the ingredients, origin or quality of the food I buy or eat.

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Q. 33_12 I am concerned about the environmental impact of my food choices

Strongly agree

Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree

Q7004_1 If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be ...that you know where the food has come from?

Very sure

Quite sure

Neither sure nor unsure

Quite unsure

Very unsure

Q7004_2 If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....that the food that comes from <?> has been prepared to the highest quality standards?

Very sure

Quite sure

Neither sure nor unsure

Quite unsure

Very unsure

Q7004_3 If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....

D3 ...that the food that comes from abroad has been prepared to the highest quality standards?

Very sure

Quite sure

Neither sure nor unsure

Quite unsure

Very unsure

Q7004_4 If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....

D4 ...that all the guidelines have been properly followed at all stages in bringing food from the farm to your house?

Very sure
Quite sure
Neither sure nor unsure
Quite unsure
Very unsure

Q7004_5 If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....

D5 ...that foods bought for your household are safe to eat?

Very sure
Quite sure
Neither sure nor unsure
Quite unsure
Very unsure

Question 7003

Food Hygiene Information Scheme
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
Scores on the Doors

Q.33a How confident are you in the safety of UK meat products?

Very confident
Somewhat confident
Neither confident nor unconfident
Not very confident
Not at all confident

Q.33b And how confident are you in the authenticity of UK meat products?

Very confident
Somewhat confident
Neither confident nor unconfident
Not very confident
Not at all confident

Q.34a In general, how often do you check for food recall alerts?

At least once a week
Once or twice a month
Less than once a month
I do not check for food recall alerts

Q.34b Are you aware of any food recall alerts in the past 12 months?

Yes

No

Q.35a Thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, what was the source of information?

DO NOT PROMPT

Notice(s)\alert(s) in store

TV\radio

Newspaper(s)

Online news or news apps

Social media – Twitter / Facebook

Text message(s)

Email(s)

Website(s) (other than news websites)

Word of mouth

Other (please specify)

Don't know

Q.35b To the best of your knowledge, who issued the recall? DO NOT PROMPT

Food Standards Agency

Government or regulatory organisation(s)

Consumer groups (e.g. Which?, Allergy UK, Anaphylaxis Campaign, Coeliac UK)

Food companies (e.g. Nestlé, Mars, Cadbury, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Lidl etc.

News / media organisation(s)

Other (please specify)

Don't know

Q.35c How clear was the information on the food recall?

Very clear

Quite clear

Not very clear

Not at all clear

Q.35d You mentioned that you had seen a food recall alert in store. Where did you see it?

At the entrance / exit to store

At the checkout

At the customer services area

On the food aisle

Other (please specify)

Q.36a Again, still thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, which of these actions did you take?

Please select all that apply.

Took no action

Passed the information on to others

Checked to see if I had the product

Returned to the store to return the product / get a refund

Found out more information on the food recall

Threw the product away

I, or someone else, ate the product

Avoided buying the product in the future

Other (please specify)

Q.36b Was the product eaten before, or after, you became aware of the food recall?

Eaten before became aware

Eaten after became aware as it did not apply

Eaten after became aware as the risk was low

Other (please specify)

Q.37 Are you currently signed up to receive food recall information from any organisation?

Yes

No

Q.38 Which organisations are you signed up with, to receive food recall information?

Food Standards Agency

Government or regulatory organisation(s)

Consumer groups (e.g. Which?, Allergy UK, Anaphylaxis Campaign, Coeliac UK)

Food companies (e.g. Nestlé, Mars, Cadbury, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Lidl etc.

News / media organisation(s)

Other (please specify)

Don't know

Q.39 Would you sign up to receive food recall information in the future?

Yes

No