

Quarterly public attitudes tracker: March 2010

Food Standards Agency

July 2010

Helen Atkinson

Social Science Research Unit

Helen.Atkinson@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Summary of Results:

- Both prompted and total awareness of the Food Standards Agency remained stable this wave at 79% and 85% respectively (79% and 86% in December 2009).
- During this wave of the Tracker, awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service also remained stable at 28% (30% in December 2009).
- Confidence in all organisations involved in protecting health with regards to food safety remained constant with the previous wave (December 2009) at 59%.
- Confidence in the Food Standards Agency specifically is also at a similar level to the previous wave (currently at 63%).
- Trust in the FSA showed a statistically significant increase this wave, with 50% of respondents rating the Agency as an organisation they can trust (44% in December 2009). See Annex B for further details.
- Concern about food safety issues showed a statistically significant decrease this wave, from 70% to 59%.
- The main food issues of total concern for respondents were the amount of salt in food (44%), food poisoning (43%), the amount of fat in food (41%). Food hygiene when eating out (40%), the amount of sugar in food (38%) and the amount of saturated fat in food (38%) were also issues of concern. This was similar to the previous wave (see main report for more detail).
- Two additional questions were asked this wave (as per the September 2009 and December 2009 waves) 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 same figure as reported in December 2009;
 - The main ways respondents reported being aware of the hygiene standards of eating establishments were from general appearance of premises (73%), appearance of staff (59%) and reputation (50%). Similar responses were provided in the December 2009 (see main report for more detail).

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 46 of the tracker. The fieldwork period for this wave of research was 3rd March to 7th March 2010. A representative sample of 2,111 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 (prompted and spontaneous responses).

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 level¹. Full results are available on request in table format.

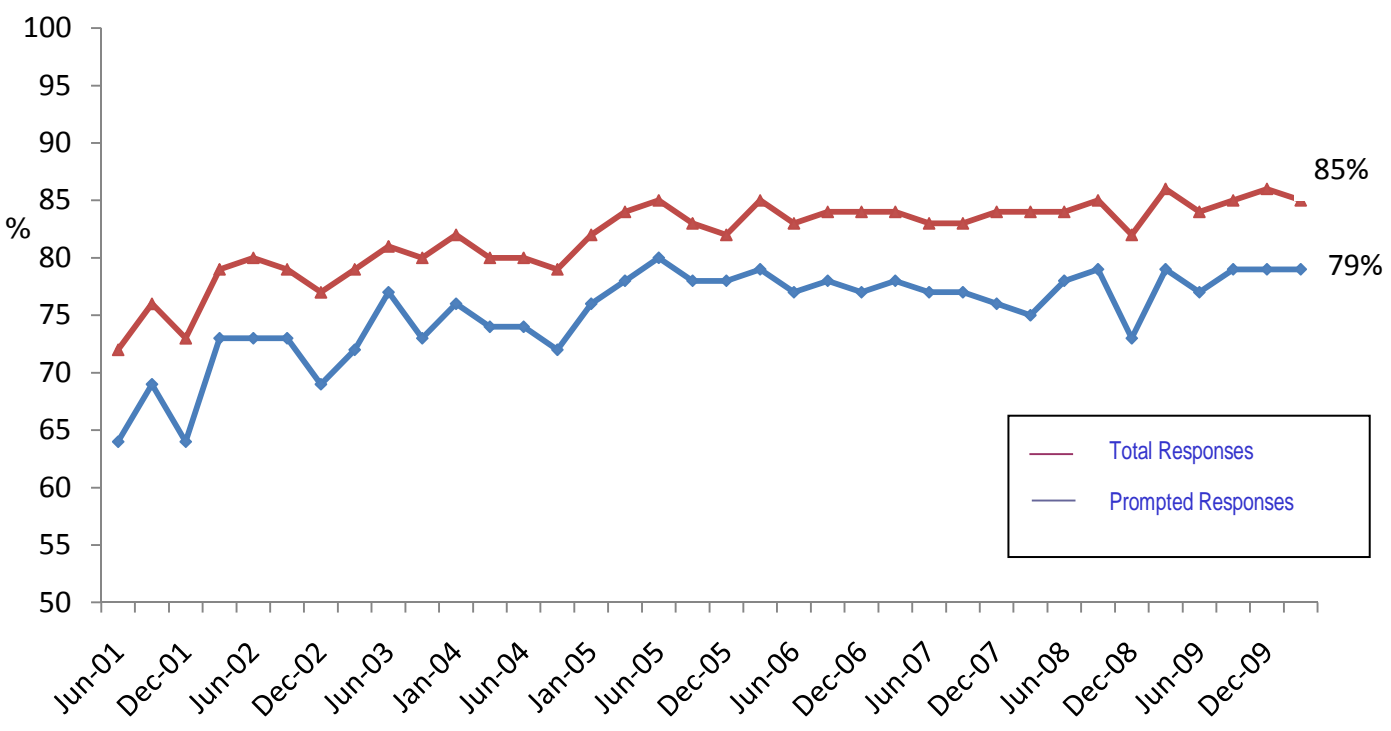
¹ This is where we can be 95% confident that the results did not come about by chance.

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 December 2009 (79%-79% and 86%-85% 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 30% to 28%. Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service has stayed relatively stable since tracking began in 2001.

Figure 1: Awareness of the Food Standards Agency



Q1b. Base: All respondents

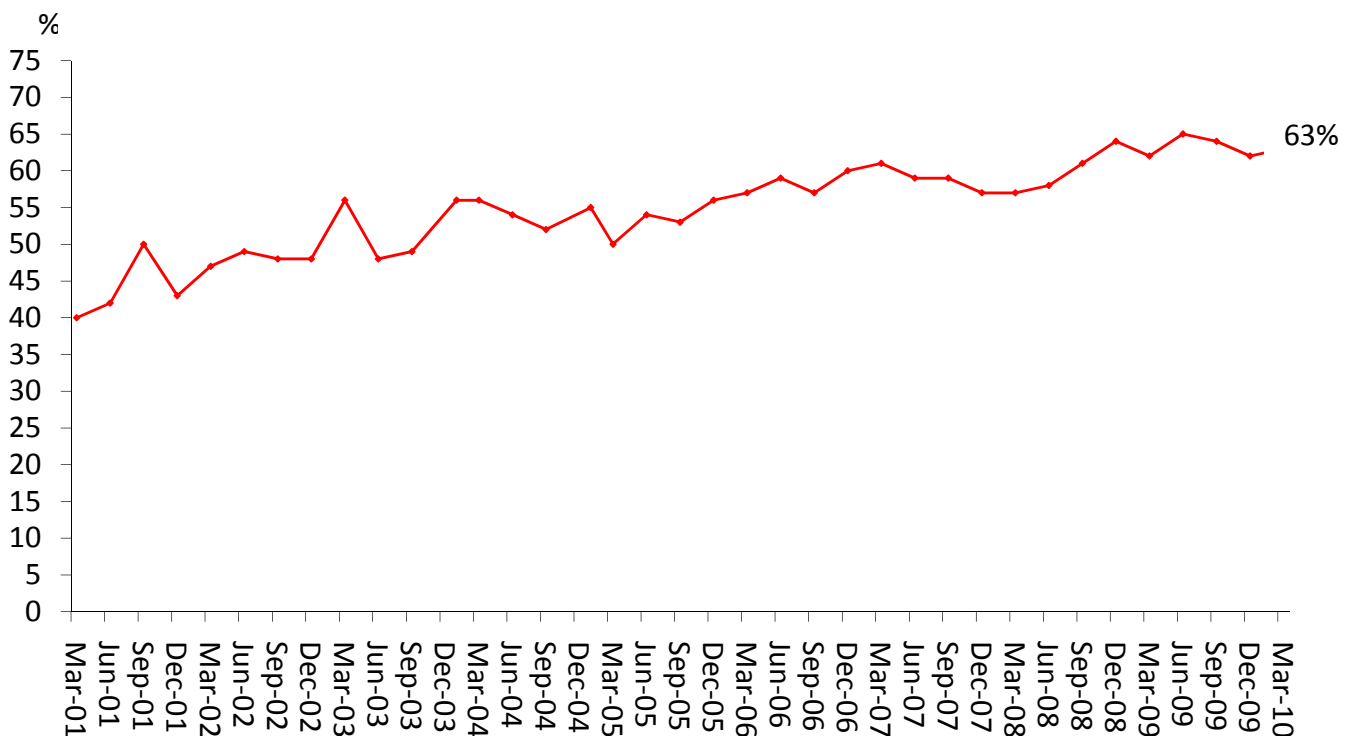
Q1a,

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 the same level** to the previous wave, currently at **59%** (59% in December 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 December 2009, **currently at 63%** (62% in previous wave). Figure 2 demonstrates consumer confidence in the role played by FSA since 2001. During this wave, people aged 16-25, 26-35 and 36-49 were statistically significantly more confident in the role played by the FSA than people who were aged 66 and over (65%, 67% and 67% compared to 57% compared respectively).

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



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

50% of respondents rated the Food Standards Agency as an organisation they can trust. This figure is **statistically significantly higher** when compared to the December wave of the tracker (**50% compared to 44%**) and is in line with previous 5 waves of the tracker (53%, 51%, 51%, 48% and 44% 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 decrease this wave, **from 70% in December 2009 to 59%**. During this wave, males were statistically significantly less concerned about food safety issues than females (55% compared to 63%) - this was the same in the December 2009 wave (66% compared to 73% respectively). Also, respondents aged 16-25, 36-49 and 66 and over were statistically significantly less concerned than respondents aged 26-35 (53%, 57% and 56% compared to 66% respectively). In the previous wave, respondents aged 16-25, 26-35 and 66 over were statistically significantly less concerned than respondents aged 36-49 (65%, 68% and 65% compared to 75% respectively).

The main food issues of total concern for respondents were **the amount of salt in food (44%), food poisoning (43%), the amount of fat in food (41%)**. **Food hygiene when eating out (40%), the amount of sugar in food (38%)** and **the amount of saturated fat in food (38%)** were also issues of concern (see Figure 3 for a full breakdown). Similar main food issues of total concern were reported in December 2009, including: 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.

Respondents aged 16-25 demonstrated a statistically significant lower total concern than every other age group for the following food issues: amount of fat in food; amount of salt in food; amount of saturated fat in food; food prices; amount of sugar in food; animal welfare; food waste; use of additives in food products; feed given to livestock; use of pesticides; hormones/steroids/antibiotics in food; food miles; GM foods and BSE (see Table 1 for more detail). In contrast, respondents aged 16-25 demonstrated a statistically significant lower total concern than every other age group for the following food issues in the previous wave: amount of salt; amount of saturated fat; use of additives; and BSE (see Table 2 for more detail).

Main issues of spontaneous concern for respondents were **food poisoning (17%)**, **food hygiene when eating out**, **the amount of salt in food**, **the amount of fat in food** and **date labels (all at 13%)**. The **amount of sugar in food (12%)** and **use of additives in food products (11%)** were also issues of concern for respondents. See Figure 3 for more detail). Respondents aged 66 and over were showed a statistically significantly lower spontaneous concern about food poisoning than every other age group (12% compared to 19% (aged 16-25), 20% (aged 26-35), 17% (aged 36-49) and 18% (aged 50-65)).

Table 1: Age differences in concern about food issues (March 2010)

	All	16-25	26-35	36-45	56-65	66+
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2111	267	312	485	562	485
Amount of fat in food	41%	28%*	41%	41%	48%	42%
Amount of salt in food	44%	26%*	41%	45%	54%	49%
Amount of saturated fat in food	38%	25%*	37%	37%	47%	40%
Food prices	32%	23%*	32%	34%	37%	31%
Amount of sugar in food	38%	19%*	36%	37%	46%	45%
Animal welfare	31%	19%*	29%	33%	39%	29%
Food waste	30%	17%*	28%	34%	35%	33%
Use of additives	33%	15%*	32%	35%	41%	33%
Feed given to livestock	24%	13%*	21%	24%	31%	27%
Use of pesticides	27%	10%*	22%	31%	36%	30%
Hormones/steroids/antibiotics in food	24%	9%*	18%	30%	31%	24%
Food miles	20%	8%*	16%	22%	26%	21%
GM foods	19%	7%*	15%	25%	26%	17%
BSE	16%	5%*	12%	19%	21%	16%

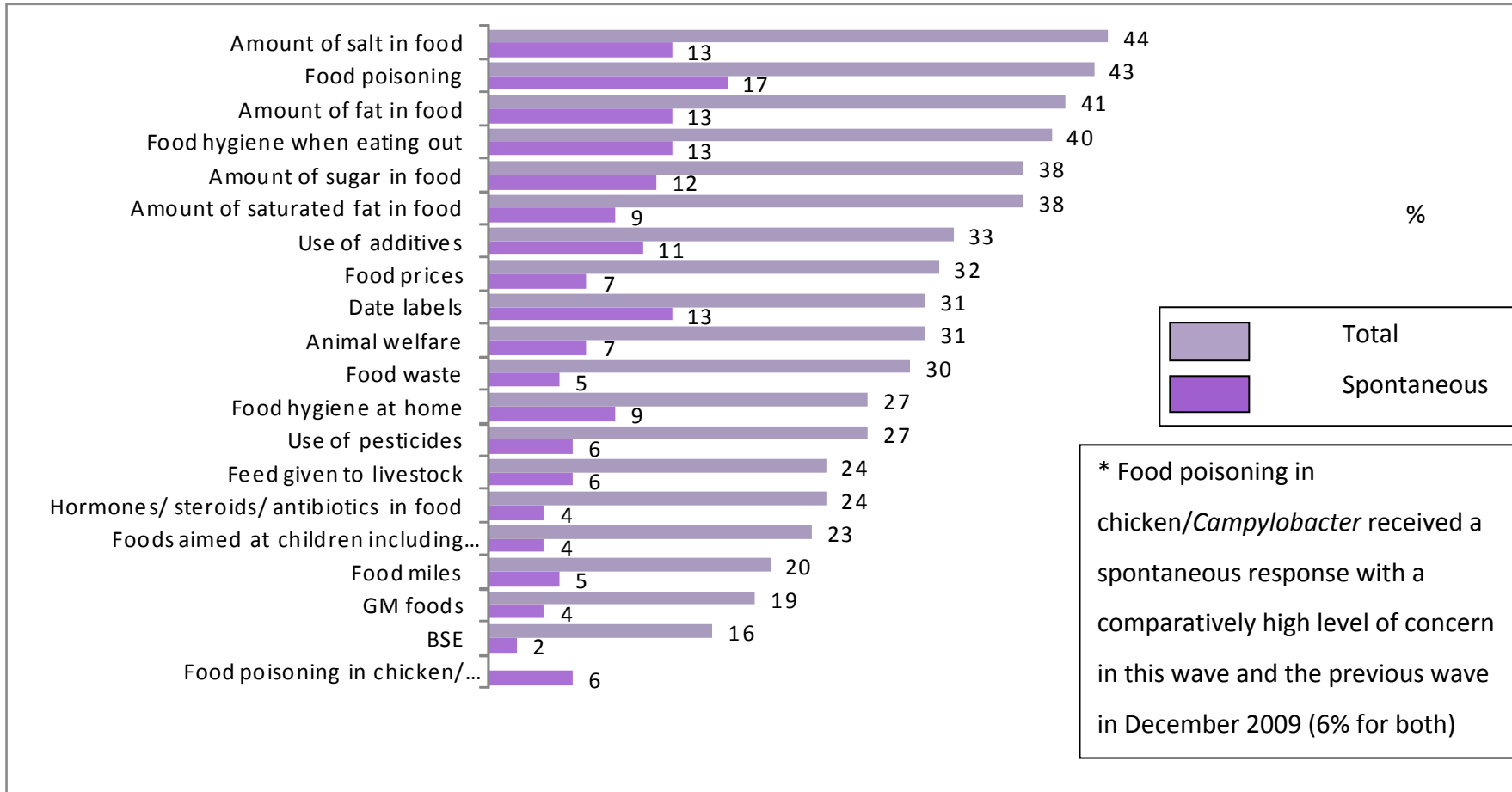
* shows a statistically significant difference when compared to every other age group

Table 2: Age differences in concern about food issues (December 2009)

	All	16-25	26-35	36-49	50-65	66+
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2099	327	334	473	506	459
Amount of salt in food	48%	35%*	43%	50%	55%	50%
Amount of saturated fat in food	38%	26%*	36%	38%	48%	37%
Use of additives	34%	17%*	29%	38%	43%	36%
BSE	18%	7%*	12%	20%	26%	21%

* shows a statistically significant difference when compared to every other age group

Figure 3: Food issues of concern



Q3a. Base: All respondents concerned about food safety issues

Q3b. Base: All respondents

Total concern for food poisoning, the amount of salt in food, food hygiene when eating out, food prices, food hygiene at home and BSE showed a statistically significant decrease this wave when compared to December 2009 wave (49%-43%, 48%-44%, 47%-40%, 35%-32%, 37%-27% and 18%-16% respectively). All other food issues of total concern were at a similar level when compared to the December 2009 wave and demonstrated no statistically significant differences.

Spontaneous concern around the amount of fat in food, date labels, the amount of sugar in food and the amount of saturated fat in food demonstrated a statistically significant increase this wave (from 10%-13%, 10%-13%, 9%-12%, and 6%-9% respectively). Food hygiene at home demonstrated a statistically significant decrease this wave (12%-9%). All other food issues spontaneously mentioned were at a similar level to those reported in the previous wave (December 2009) and demonstrated no statistically significant differences

Table 3 shows a comparison of food issues of concern between the present wave and December 2009 wave. Full trend charts for individual food issues are available upon request.

Table 3: Food issues of concern

Food Safety Issue	Spontaneous Response		Total Response	
	Previous Wave	Present Wave	Previous Wave	Present Wave
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1932	1873	2099	2111
Food poisoning	21%	17%*	49%	43%*
Amount of salt in food	12%	13%	48%	44%*
Amount of fat in food	10%	13%*	43%	41%
Food hygiene when eating out	16%	13%*	47%	40%*
Amount of sugar in food	9%	12%*	40%	38%
Amount of saturated fat in food	6%	9%*	38%	38%
Food waste	5%	5%	36%	30%*
Use of additives	11%	11%	34%	33%
Food prices	6%	7%	35%	32%*
Date labels	10%	13%*	33%	31%
Animal welfare	6%	7%	32%	31%
Food hygiene in the home	12%	9%*	33%	27%*
Use of pesticides	5%	6%	30%	27%
Feed given to livestock	5%	6%	24%	24%
Hormones/steroids/ antibiotics in food	4%	4%	22%	24%
Foods aimed at children including school meals	4%	4%	27%	23%*
Food miles	4%	5%	22%	20%
GM food	4%	4%	20%	19%
BSE	3%	2%	18%	16%*

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 and December 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 two waves;
- 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 (73%)**, **appearance of staff (59%)** and **reputation (50%)**. These figures are similar to the previous two waves as the ways respondents reported being aware are the same and the figures have demonstrated no statistically significant differences when compared to December 2009. Full explanations are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: How respondents are aware of hygiene standards

	Sept 2009	Dec 2009	March 2010
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1722	1732	1734
General appearance of premises	70%*	74%	73%
Appearance of staff	56%	59%	59%
Reputation	47%	50%	50%
Word of mouth	39%	42%	39%
Hygiene certificate	32%	31%	30%
Hygiene sticker	12%	12%	13%
Website	5%	4%	5%

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

* shows a statistically significant change when compared to the subsequent wave
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: 85%		
Sex	Male	87%*
	Female	84%
Age	16-25	77%
	26-35	88%*
	36-49	91%*
	50-65	90%*
	66+	76%
Social Class	AB	90%*
	C1C2	90%*
	DE	75%
Marital Status	Married	88%*
	Single	85%*
	Separated/widowed	78%
Working Status	Working full time	91%*
	Working part time	91%*
	Other	80%

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

Total: 59%		
Sex	Male	55%
	Female	63%*
Age	16-25	53%
	26-35	66%*
	36-49	57%
	50-65	62%*
	66+	56%
Social Class	AB	60%
	C1C2	62%*
	DE	54%
Marital Status	Married	62%*
	Single	55%
	Separated/widowed	56%
Principle Shopper	Yes	61%*
	No	54%

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

Total: 59%		
Marital Status	Married	61%*
	Single	59%
	Separated/widowed	53%
Working Status	Working full time	60%
	Working part time	65%*
	Other	57%

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

Total: 63%		
Age	16-25	65%*
	26-35	67%*
	36-49	67%*
	50-65	62%
	66+	57%
Marital Status	Married	64%
	Single	66%*
	Separated/widowed	58%
Working Status	Working full time	66%*
	Working part time	67%
	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 was last conducted in 2008. Due to differences in question order and sampling, results from the Tracker are not directly comparable to the CAS.

Trust in the FSA remained stable from the time of its introduction (50% in September 2008) until September 2009 (48%). However, there was a statistically significant decrease in trust to 44% in December and a statistically significant increase to 50% in March 2010. These fluctuations are thought to be likely to be due to methodological reasons (question wording, ordering and response scale). This has prompted the FSA to commission a review of the Tracker as a whole. This work is currently in progress and it is expected the revised Tracker will be conducted in autumn 2010.

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