

Quarterly Public Attitudes Tracker: September 2009

Food Standards Agency

30st September 2009

Danielle De Feo

Social Science Research Unit

Summary of Results:

- Both prompted and total awareness of the Food Standards Agency remained constant this wave, at 79% and 85% respectively.
- This wave of the Tracker demonstrated a statistically significant increase in awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service (from 27%-31%).
- Confidence in all organisations involved in protecting health with regards food safety remained constant with the previous wave (June 2009) at 61%.
- Confidence in the Food Standards Agency specifically is at a similar level to the previous wave (currently at 64%).
- Trust in the FSA was at a similar level to previous waves of the Tracker; nearly half of respondents (48%) rated the Agency as an organisation they can trust.
- Concern about food safety issues remained stable, at 64%.
- The main food issues of total concern during this wave were food poisoning (46%), food hygiene when eating out (44%), and the amount of salt, fat and sugar in food (42%, 41%, 40% respectively). Food prices and the amount of saturated fat in food were also highlighted as an area of concern (both at 38%).
- 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 (70%), appearance of staff (56%) and reputation (47%).

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 43 of the tracker. The fieldwork period for this wave of research was 2nd to the 6th September 2009. A representative sample of 2081 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 level¹. Full results are available on request in table format.

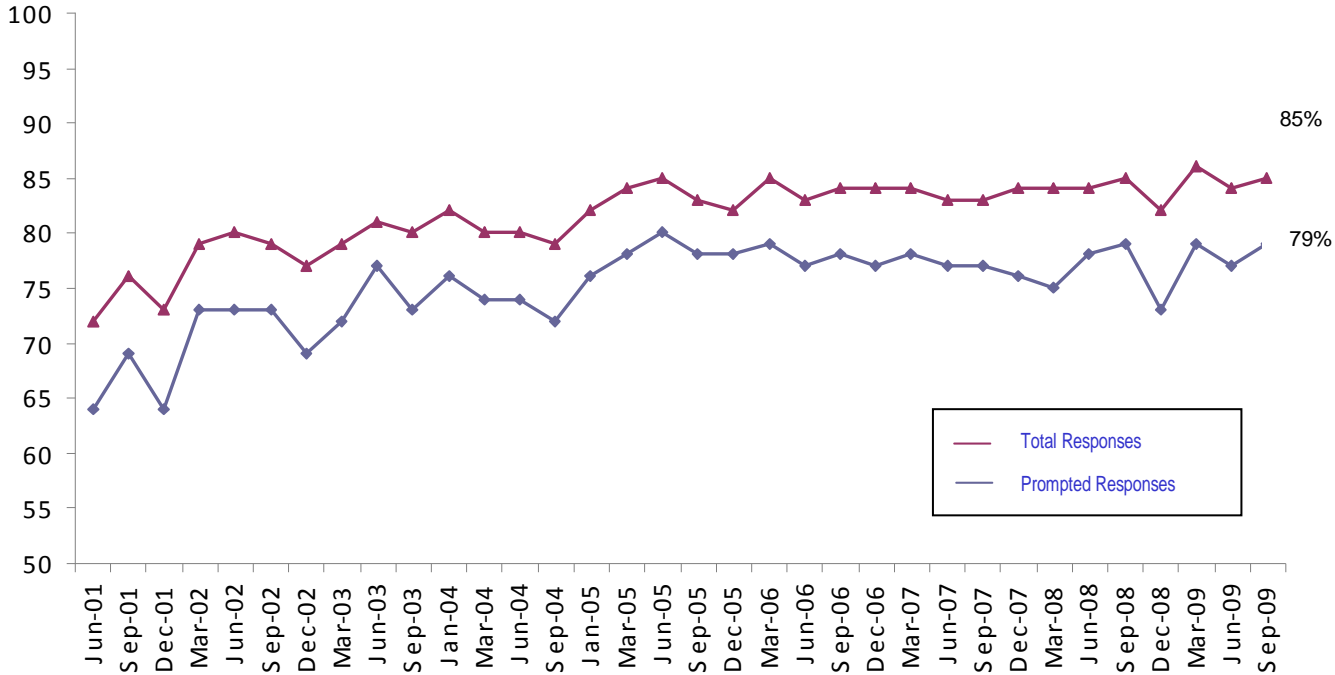
¹ This is where we can be 95% confident that the results did not come about by chance.

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 June 2009 (77%-79% and 84%-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 showed a statistically significant increase this wave, from 27% to 31%. Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service has stayed relatively stable since tracking began in 2001.

Figure 1: Awareness of the Food Standards Agency



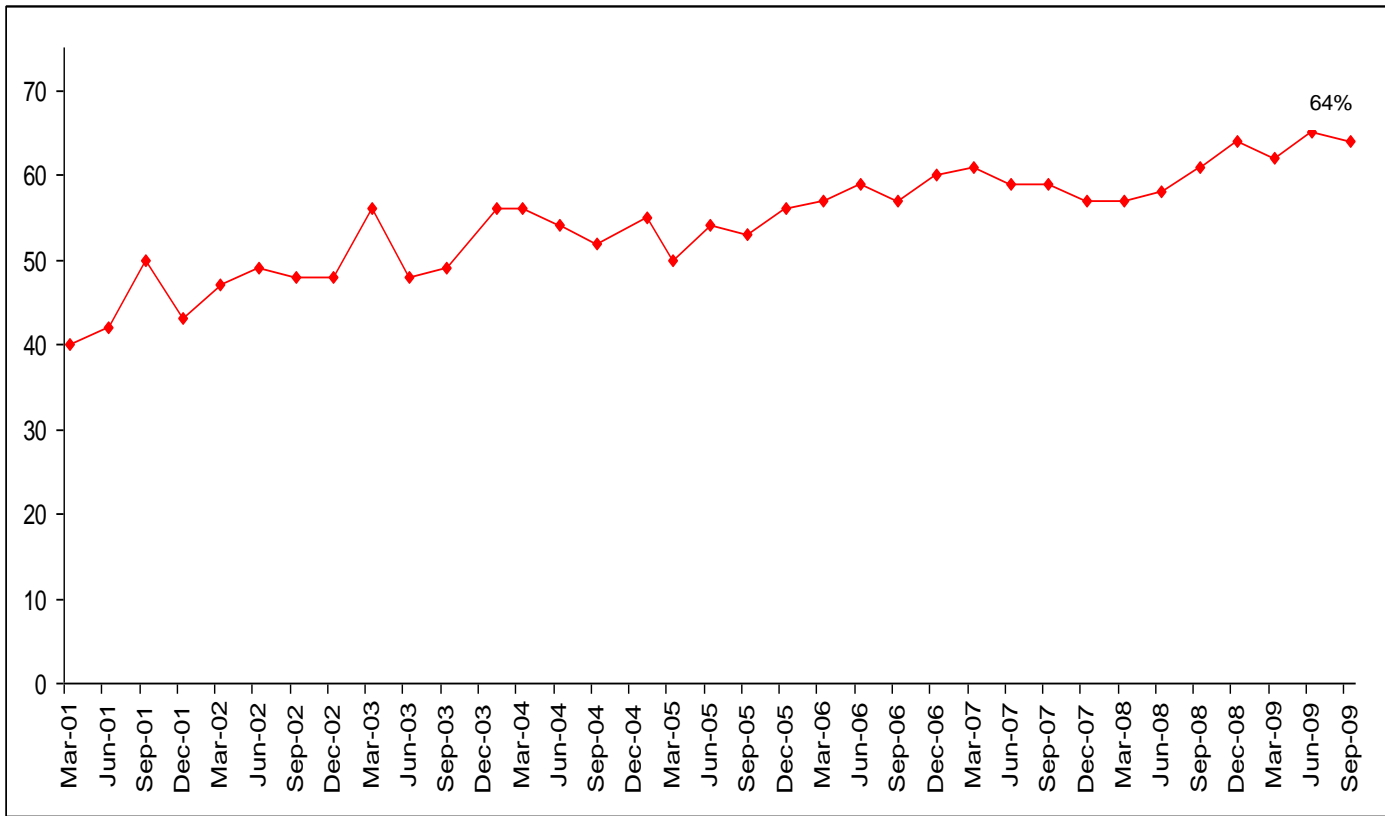
Q1a, Q1b. Base: All respondents

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 **61%** (59% in June wave). Confidence in all organisations is currently at its highest since tracking began.

Confidence in the role played by the Food Standards Agency specifically in protecting health **remained stable** since June 2009 (**currently 64%**). Confidence in the Food Standards Agency has gradually increased over time (see Figure 2). During this wave, males were statistically significantly more confident in the role played by the FSA than females (67% compared to 62%). This demographic difference was also observed in the June 2009 wave.

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



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

Nearly half of respondents rated the Food Standards Agency as an organisation they can trust (48%). This figure is stable when compared to the previous four waves of the tracker (50%, 53%, 51% and 51% respectively). Please see Appendix B for further detail on this question.

The figure for rating the FSA as an organisation they can trust is slightly lower than the figure for confidence in the FSA (48% compared to 64%). Further analysis into these questions indicated that, overall, those who were confident in the role played by the Food Standards Agency rated the Agency as an organisation they could trust. There were only a minority of cases that indicated high confidence and low trust, or low confidence and high trust. It is also interesting to note that significantly more respondents answered 'Don't know' to the question about trust than the question about confidence (7% compared to 4%).

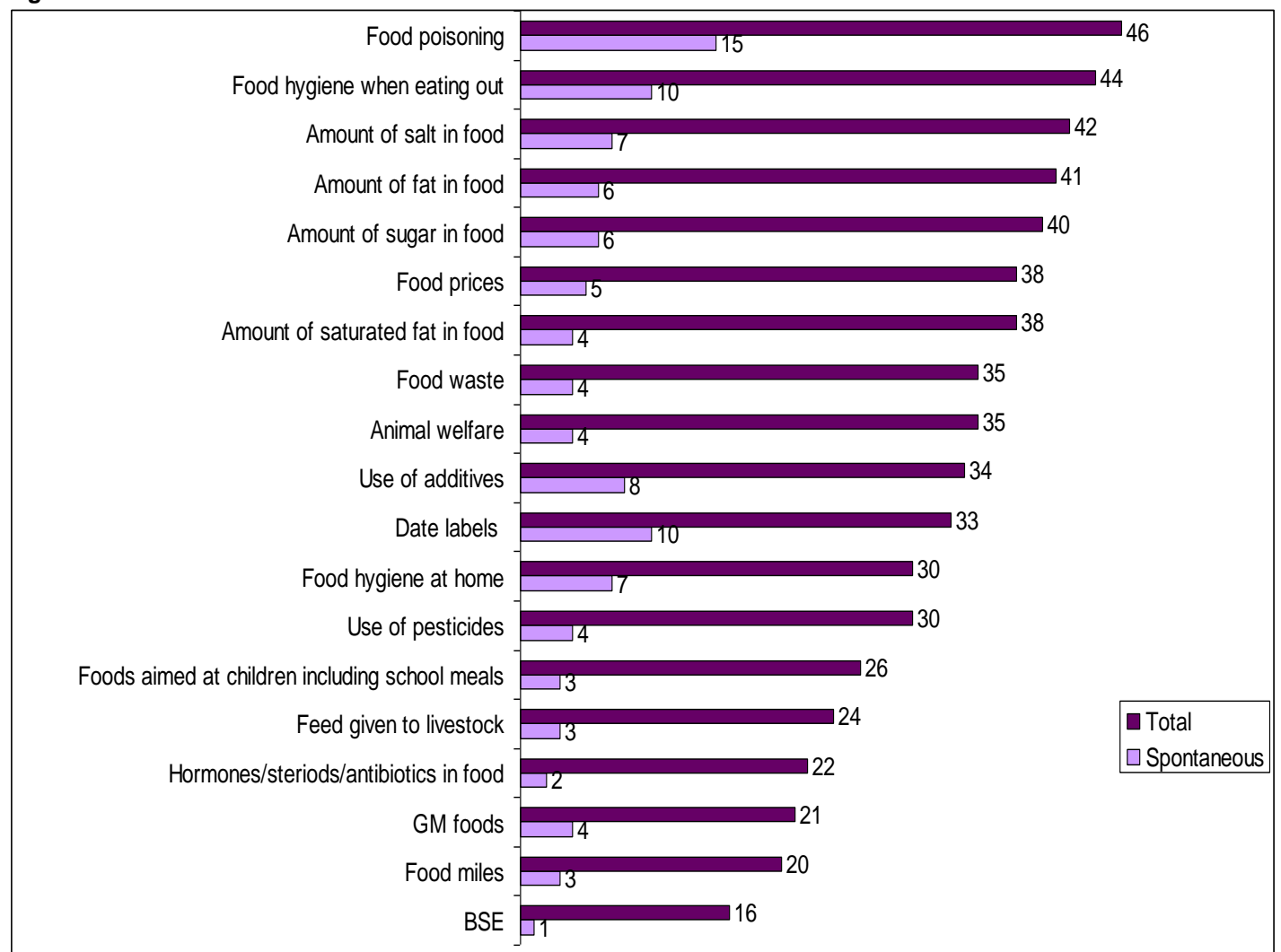
There are a number of potential reasons for these discrepancies: it could be related to question wording (i.e., it requires respondents to differentiate between confidence and trust); the difference could be a result of question order (i.e., the question about trust is asked following the question about confidence); or the difference may be due to the questions being scored on difference scales (i.e., the confidence question is scored on a 5-point scale and the trust question is scored on a 7-point scale).

Section 3: Concern About Food Issues

Concern about food safety issues remained stable this wave, at **64%** (61% in previous wave). During this wave, females were significantly more concerned about food safety issues than males (67% compared to 61%), and the biggest increased in concern was seen in the 26-35 age group (67% this wave compared to 58% in the previous wave).

The main food issues of total concern for respondents were **food poisoning (46%)**, **food hygiene when eating out (44%)**, and **the amount of salt (42%), fat (41%)** and **sugar (40%) in food** (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Food issues of concern



Q3a. Base: All respondents concerned about food safety issues

Q3b. Base: All respondents

Total concern for the majority of food issues were similar to the previous wave, however there was a statistically significant increase in concern around the amount of sugar in food (from 36%-40%) and food prices (from 33%-38%). This wave also saw a statistically significant decrease in concern for BSE (from 21%-16%).

Spontaneous concern for food poisoning and BSE decreased significantly this wave (from 18%-15% and 3%-1% respectively). All other food issues spontaneously mentioned were at a similar level to those reported in the previous wave (June 2009) and demonstrated no statistically significant differences.

Table 1 shows a break-down of food issues of concern between participants whose answers were pre-coded in this wave and the previous wave. It should be noted that this question was reviewed in the previous wave, and the revisions were tested during this wave to see if they were appropriate. Please see Additional Notes about the Data (Appendix B) for further detail on this.

Table 1: Food issues of concern

Food Safety Issue	Spontaneous Response		Total Response	
	Previous Wave (n=912)	Present Wave (using revised pre-codes, n=977)	Previous Wave	Present Wave
Food poisoning	26%	18%*	47%	46%
Food hygiene when eating out	-	16%	-	44%
Amount of salt in food	9%	12%*	40%	42%
Amount of fat in food	10%	10%	41%	41%
Amount of sugar in food	8%	10%	36%	40%*
Food prices	6%	6%	33%	38%*
Amount of saturated fat in food	7%	8%	36%	38%
Food waste	-	6%	-	35%
Animal welfare	-	5%	-	35%
Use of additives	8%	11%*	32%	34%
Date labels	-	13%	-	33%
Food hygiene in the home	-	12%	-	30%
Use of pesticides	6%	7%	31%	30%
Foods aimed at children including school meals	-	4%	-	26%
Feed given to livestock	6%	5%	24%	24%
Hormones/steroids/antibiotics in food	-	3%	-	22%
GM food	4%	4%	21%	21%
Food miles	5%	5%	20%	20%
BSE	4%	2%*	21%	16%*

Q3a. Base: All respondents concerned about food safety

Q3b. Base: All respondents

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

- indicates that this was a new pre-code devised as a result of reviewing the question in the previous wave

Section 4: Awareness of Hygiene Standards in Eating Establishments

Two additional questions were asked this 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;
- 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 (70%)**, **appearance of staff (56%)** and **reputation (47%)**. Full explanations are shown in the table below:

Table 2: How respondents are aware of hygiene standards

	%
General appearance of premises	70
Appearance of staff	56
Reputation	47
Word of mouth	39
Hygiene certificate	32
Hygiene sticker	12
Website	5

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

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	86%
	Female	85%
Age	16-25	78%
	26-35	83%
	36-49	90%*
	50-65	92%*
	66+	78%
Social Class	AB	94%*
	C1C2	89%*
	DE	73%
Marital Status	Married	90%*
	Single	79%
	Separated/widowed	81%
Working Status	Working full time	92%*
	Working part time	90%*
	Other	79%
Principle Shopper	Yes	86%
	No	83%

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

Total: 64%		
Sex	Male	61%
	Female	67%*
Age	16-25	56%
	26-35	67%*
	36-49	65%*
	50-65	67%*
	66+	61%
Social Class	AB	63%
	C1C2	66%*
	DE	61%
Marital Status	Married	66%*
	Single	59%
	Separated/widowed	64%
Working Status	Working full time	66%*
	Working part time	68%*
	Other	61%
Principle Shopper	Yes	65%*
	No	60%

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

Total: 61%		
Age	16-25	67%*
	26-35	62%
	36-49	61%
	50-65	57%
	66+	61%
Marital Status	Married	61%
	Single	65%*
	Separated/widowed	56%

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

Total: 64%		
Sex	Male	67%*
	Female	62%
Age	16-25	70%*
	26-35	71%*
	36-49	66%*
	50-65	60%
	66+	57%
Social Class	AB	60%
	C1C2	66%*
	DE	64%
Marital Status	Married	64%*
	Single	70%*
	Separated/widowed	57%
Working Status	Working full time	68%*
	Working part time	63%
	Other	62%
Principle Shopper	Yes	63%
	No	68%*

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.

Additional notes about the data:

As per the previous wave, it should be noted that question 3 has continued to be reviewed. Results from the previous wave allowed us to refine the pre-codes² used in this question to codes that are more appropriate and more closely match respondents' answers, thereby gaining the most accurate figures from the data.

During this wave, question 3a was asked in a similar format as the previous wave, whereby half of respondents' answers were coded as per the refined

² Pre-coding is where the interviewer places respondents' spontaneous answers into a set of pre-defined codes

pre-codes, and half of respondents' answers were left completely open and therefore coded accordingly. This was done in order to validate the refined pre-codes, and findings from this wave were then checked against un-coded responses to ensure the pre-codes sufficiently reflected respondents' answers. This was found to be the case and the refined pre-codes are appropriate for future use. Comparison of results of spontaneous and total food safety issues of concern where pre-codes are used are shown in Table 1 (page 8).

The full data set, including open responses, 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