

Quarterly public tracker - December 2008

Food Standards Agency

30th January 2009

Background

- ❑ The Food Standards Agency (FSA) places five questions on the RSGB face to face omnibus on a quarterly basis.
- ❑ The fieldwork period for this wave of the research was the 3rd to the 7th December 2008. A representative sample of 2097 adults in the UK were interviewed.
- ❑ This is wave 40 of this tracking research
 - ❑ April 01 – December 01: research was conducted every three months
 - ❑ October 01 – September 02: research was conducted every month
 - ❑ December 02 – present: research has been conducted every three months
 - ❑ From April 01 to June 06 research was conducted among a nationally representative sample of adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. From September 2006 the sample was extended to be representative of the United Kingdom.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ An additional question was asked during the September wave and again this wave to measure trust in the FSA, this question has previously been asked in the FSA annual Consumer Attitudes Survey (CAS) which is being reviewed and so was not run in 2008.

Summary of results

Awareness of the FSA and Meat Hygiene Service

- Awareness of the FSA had remained stable since 2006 at around 85%, following a gradual increase from 72% when tracking began in 2001.
- This wave however, there was a significant decrease in awareness from 85% to 82%. Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service also decreased from 35% to 27%.
- It should be noted that claimed awareness of most other organisations shown to respondents also decreased, respondents were generally choosing less options than in previous waves. This will be closely monitored in future waves.

Confidence in food safety measures and trust in the FSA

- Confidence in all organisations and in the FSA specifically in protecting health with regard to food safety has increased this wave (from 56-60% and from 61-64% respectively) to the highest levels since tracking began. The biggest increase was seen in those aged 50-65.
- Trust in the FSA also increased from 50% to 53%, although this figure is still lower than that seen in the annual Consumer Attitudes Survey (60% in 2007), which could be an effect of question order/context. We will continue to monitor this.

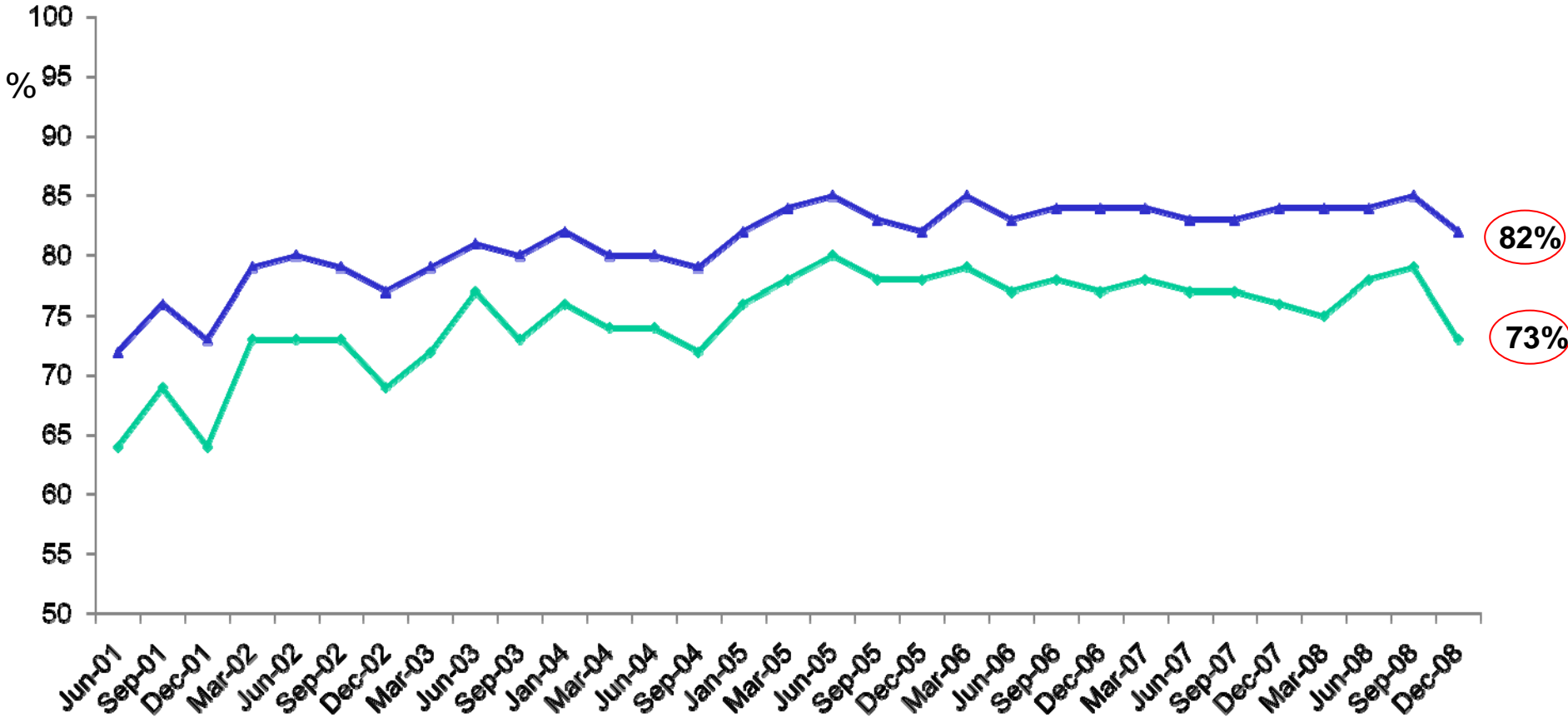
Summary of results cont.

Concern about Food Safety Issues

- ❑ Concern about food safety issues in general has been gradually decreasing since March this year, 68% were concerned or very concerned. There were quite a few significant declines in the % of people concerned about specific food issues this wave, in particular in the healthy eating area, *perhaps* due to the time of year of tracking or *possibly* as people have other concerns (e.g. economic downturn).
- ❑ The main food issues of concern were food poisoning (53%), food prices (40%) and the amount of fat, salt and sugar in food (40%, 43% and 41% respectively). Concern about salt and fat has been gradually declining over recent waves and both are at the lowest levels since tracking began.
- ❑ Concern about food prices (measured for the first time in Sept 08) also declined this wave from 48% to 40%.

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

There was a decrease in awareness of the FSA this wave, however, claimed awareness for the majority of other organisations also decreased this wave, so people were generally giving less answers* . There has been a gradual increase over time in awareness (from 72% at the start of tracking) which had stabilised since 2006 up until this wave.

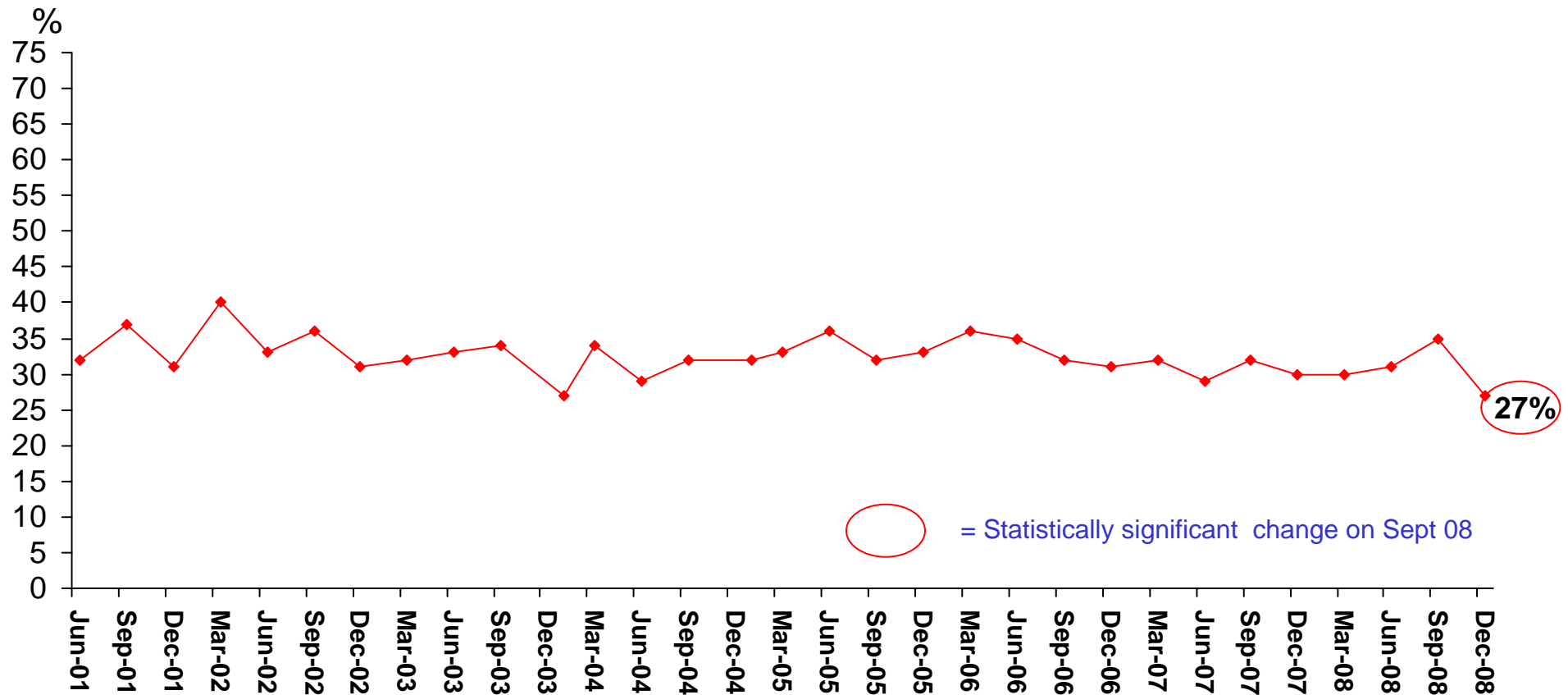


*Respondents are first asked awareness of a range of organisations prompted by a list and then asked specifically if they have heard of the FSA

— Initial awareness
 — Total awareness

Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?; Q1b. Can I just check, have you heard of the Food Standards Agency? Base : All respondents

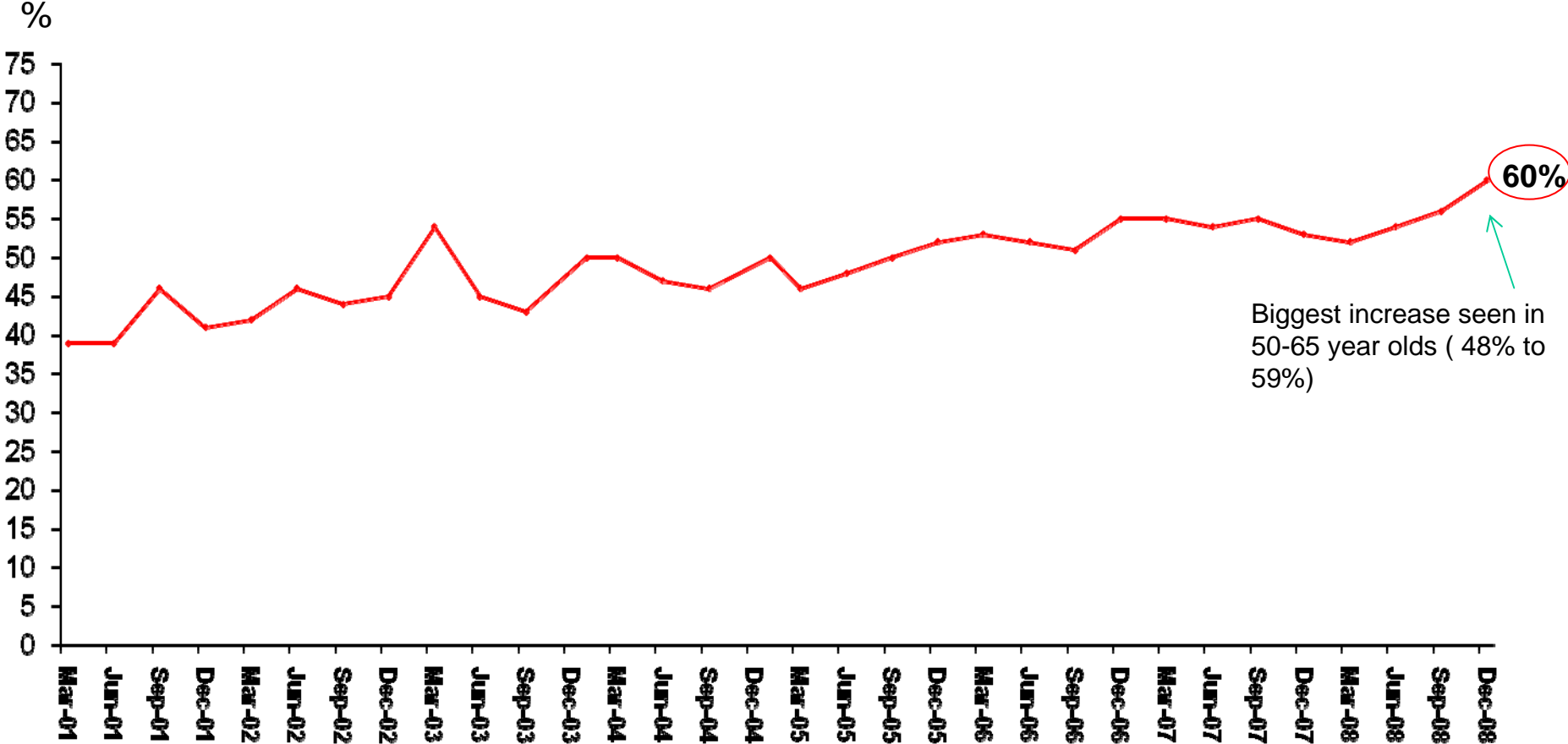
As was seen with the Food Standards Agency, awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service decreased this wave (from 35% to 27%), but as noted, claimed awareness of the majority of other organisations also decreased.



Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of? Base : All respondents

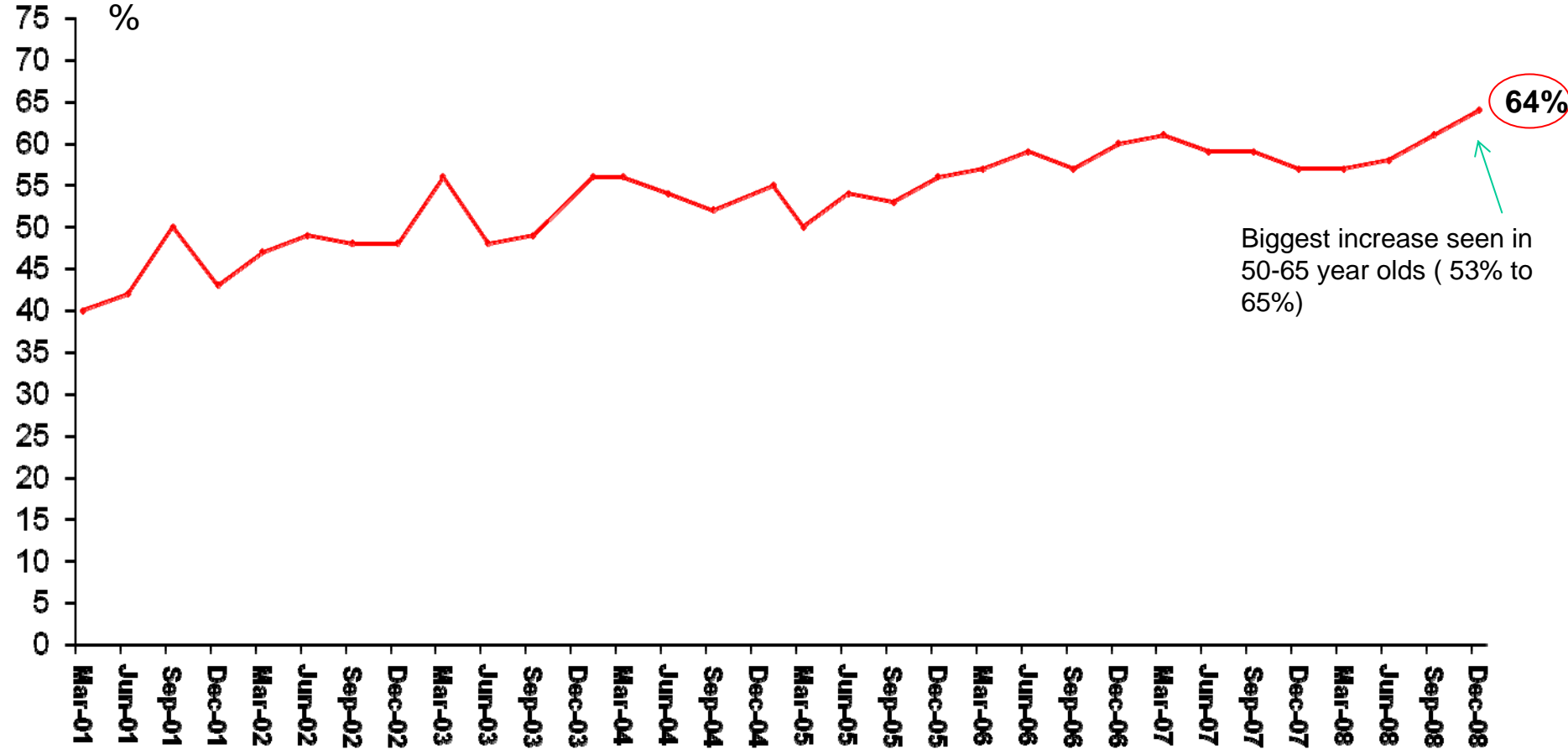
Section 2: Confidence in food safety measures and trust in the FSA

Confidence in the food safety measures of **all** organisations significantly increased this wave from 56% to 60% to its highest level seen since tracking began (in March 2001 39% of respondents felt confident).



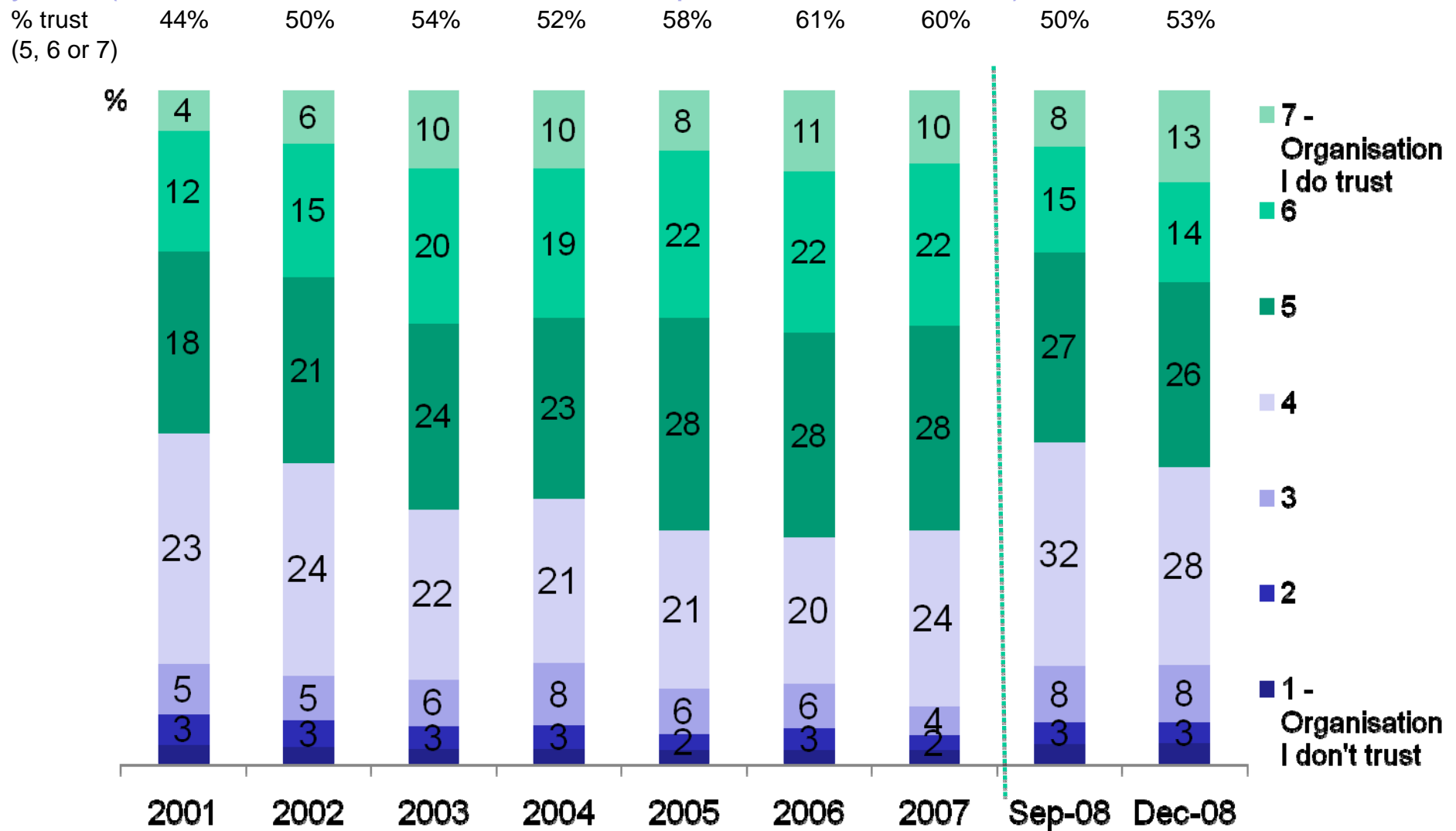
Q4. How confident are you about the current measures taken by all organisations involved in protecting your health with regards to food safety? Base : All respondents (% confident / very confident)

Confidence in role played by Food Standards Agency in protecting health is at its highest level since the start of tracking (although there have only been very gradual changes over the last 2 years this wave there was a significant increase from 61% to 64%). In March 2001 40% were confident in comparison to 64% this wave.



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 (%confident/very confident)

Just over half of respondents rated the Agency as an organisation they can trust. This figure is slightly higher than seen in Sept 08 but also lower than seen in the annual CAS in recent years (which could be due to the different question order/context)

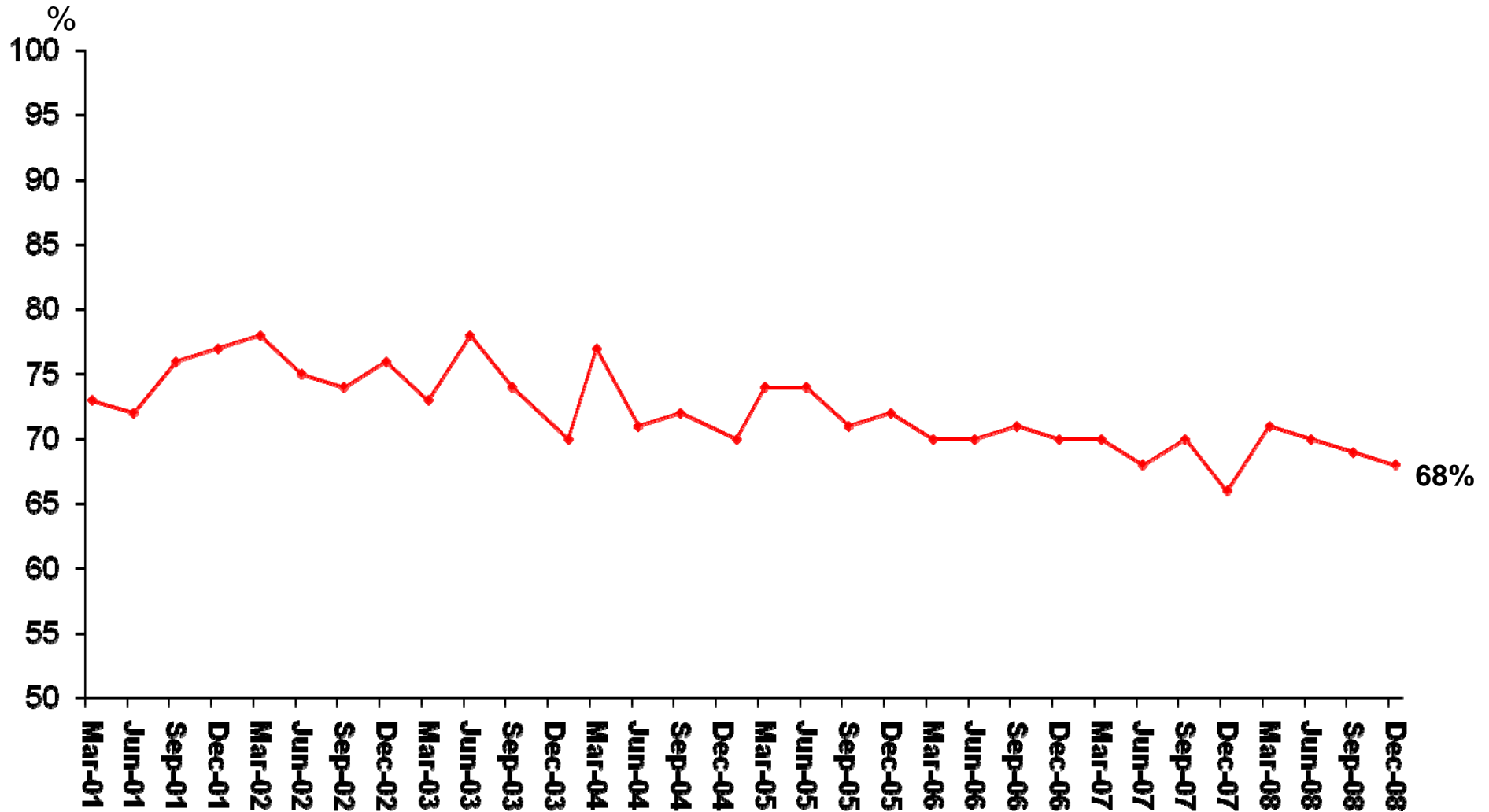


NB Asked previously in CAS. Different sample size and question order so answers not directly comparable

Q6: How would you rate the Food Standards Agency on a scale of 1 to 7 where 7 is 'an organisation I trust' and 1 is 'an organisation I don't trust? Base: All respondents aware of the FSA

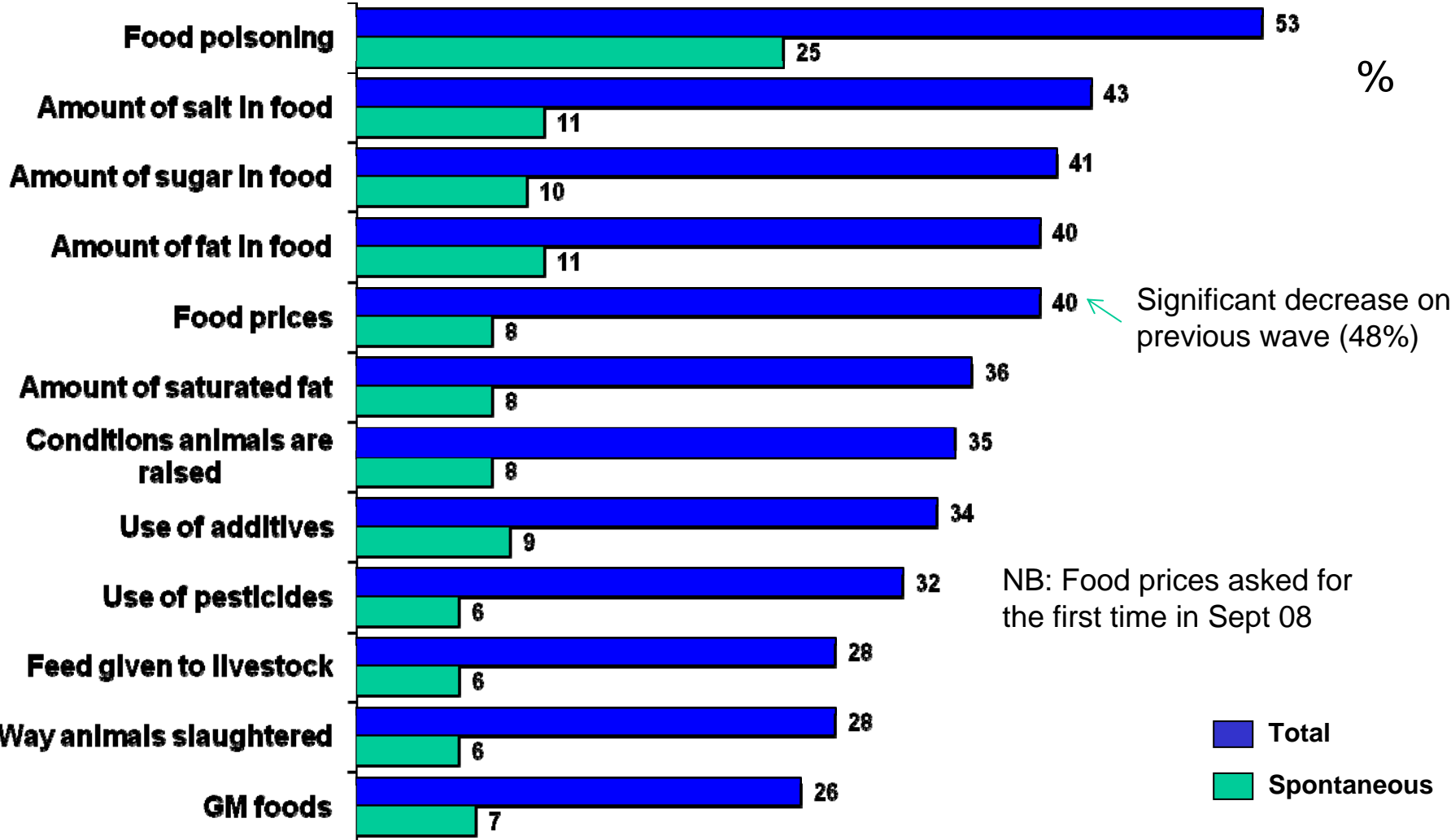
Section 3: Concern about food issues

Concern about food safety issues in general remained stable this wave at 68%. There has been a gradual decrease since March 08 from 71% (levels of concern often increase between the December and March waves). Concern peaked at 78% in March 2002 and June 2003.



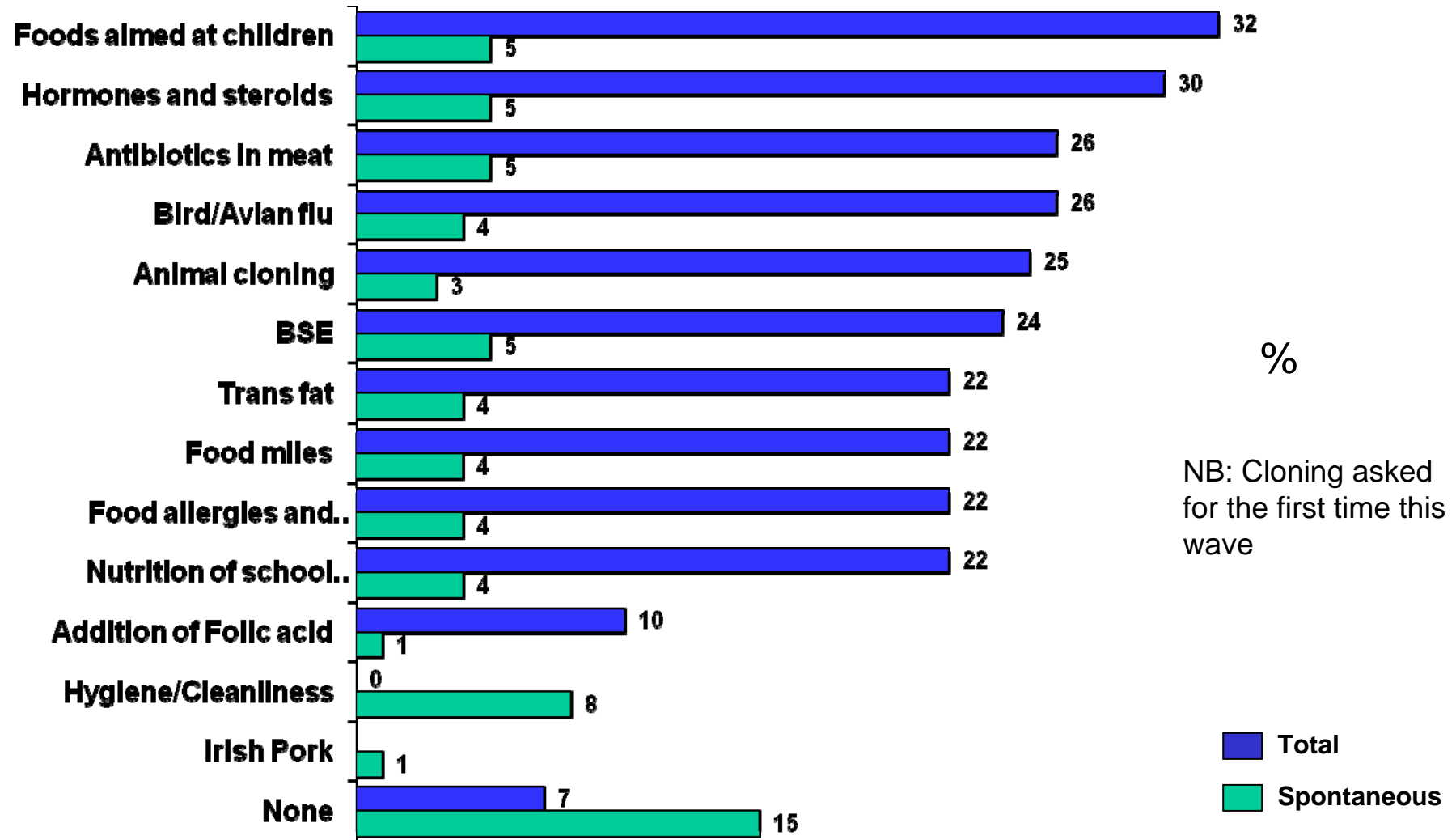
Q2. Generally speaking, which of these statements best describes your attitude to food safety issues? (% Very concerned or fairly concerned). Base : All respondents

The main food issues of concern to respondents were food poisoning, the amount of salt, fat and sugar in food and food prices.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents (Spontaneous answers over 5%)

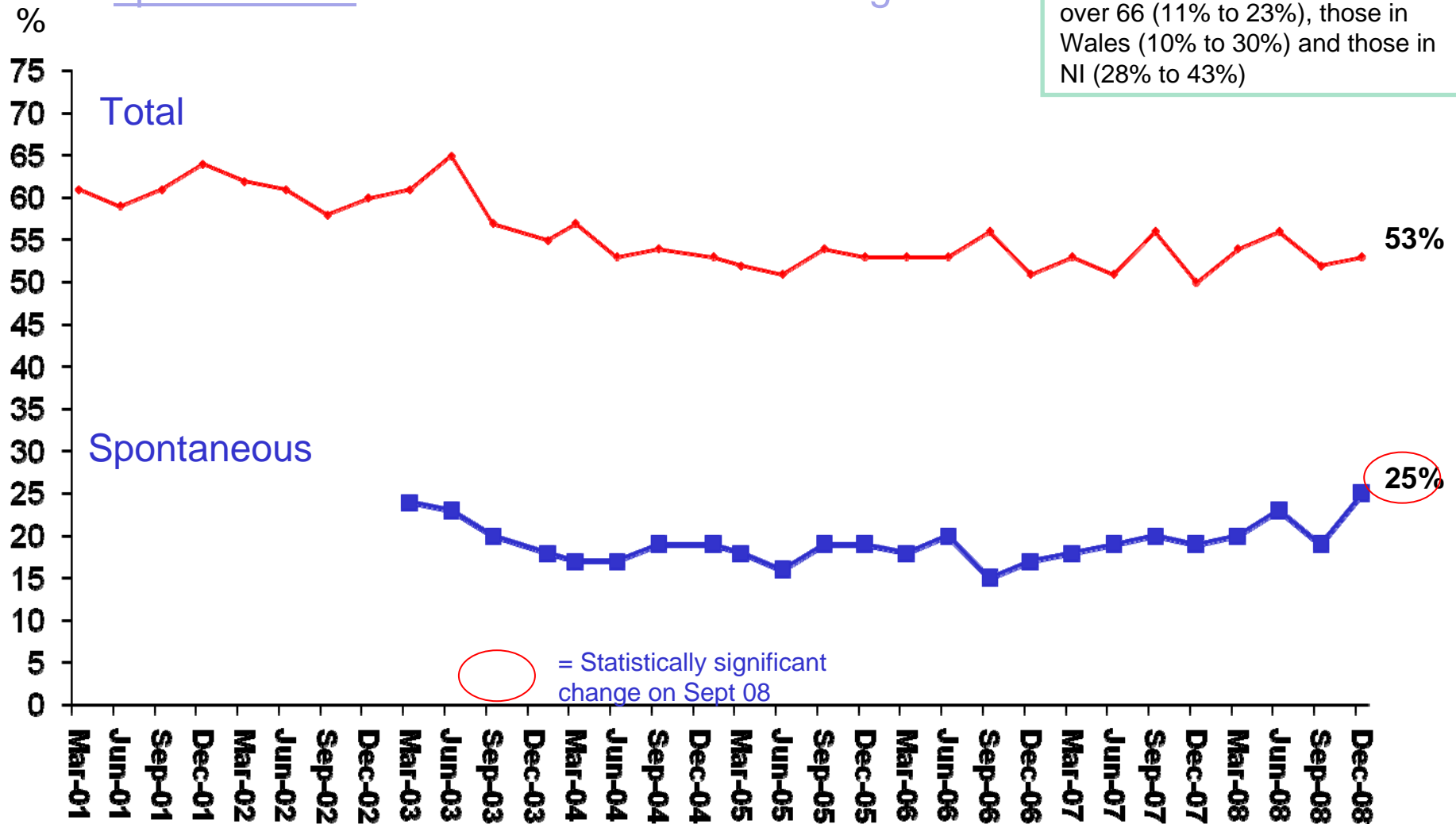
Other food issues had lower spontaneous concern.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

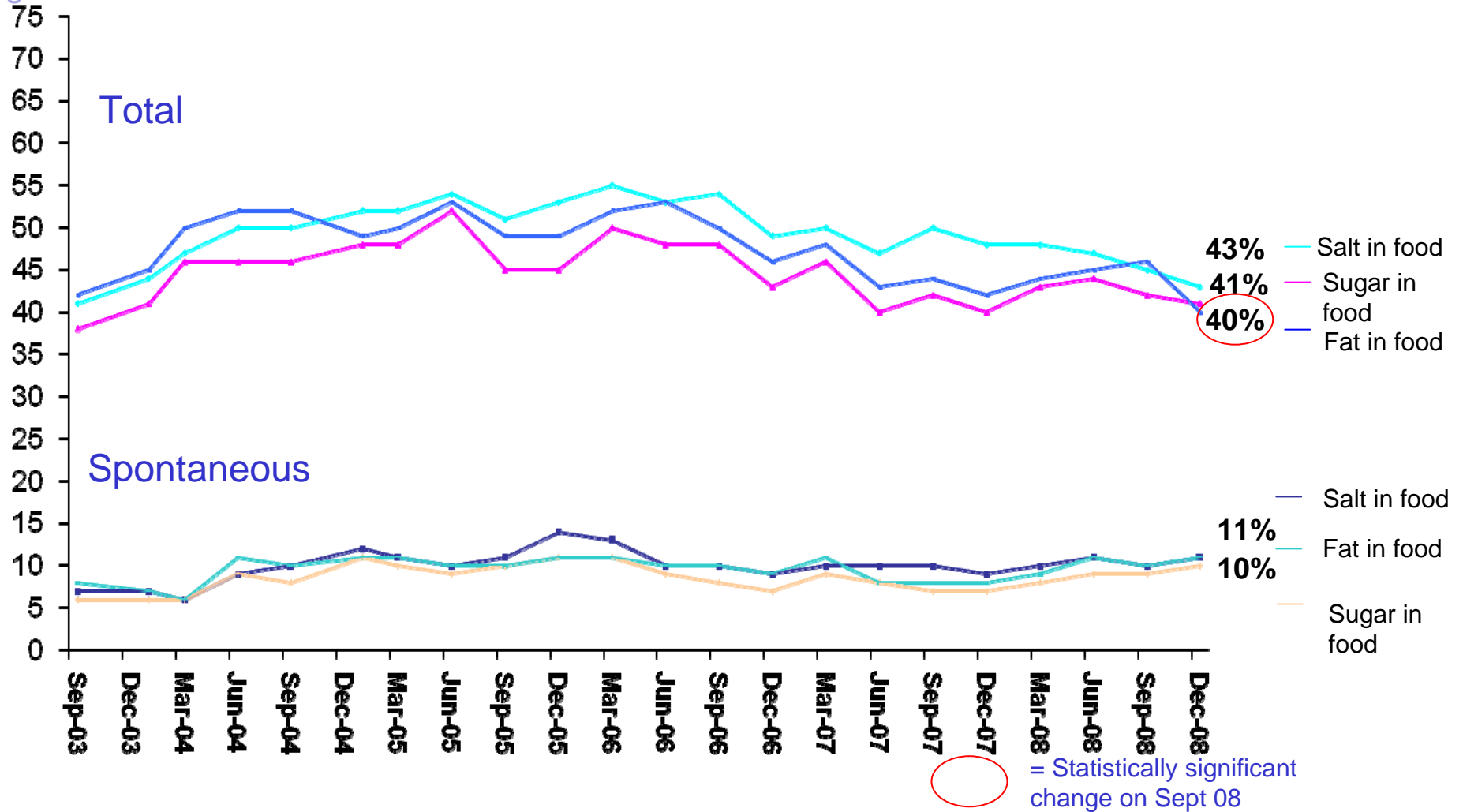
Whilst spontaneous concern about food poisoning increased this wave (from 19% to 25%) prompted concern remained stable at 53%. This is the highest level of spontaneous concern seen since tracking started.

Biggest increases in those aged over 66 (11% to 23%), those in Wales (10% to 30%) and those in NI (28% to 43%)



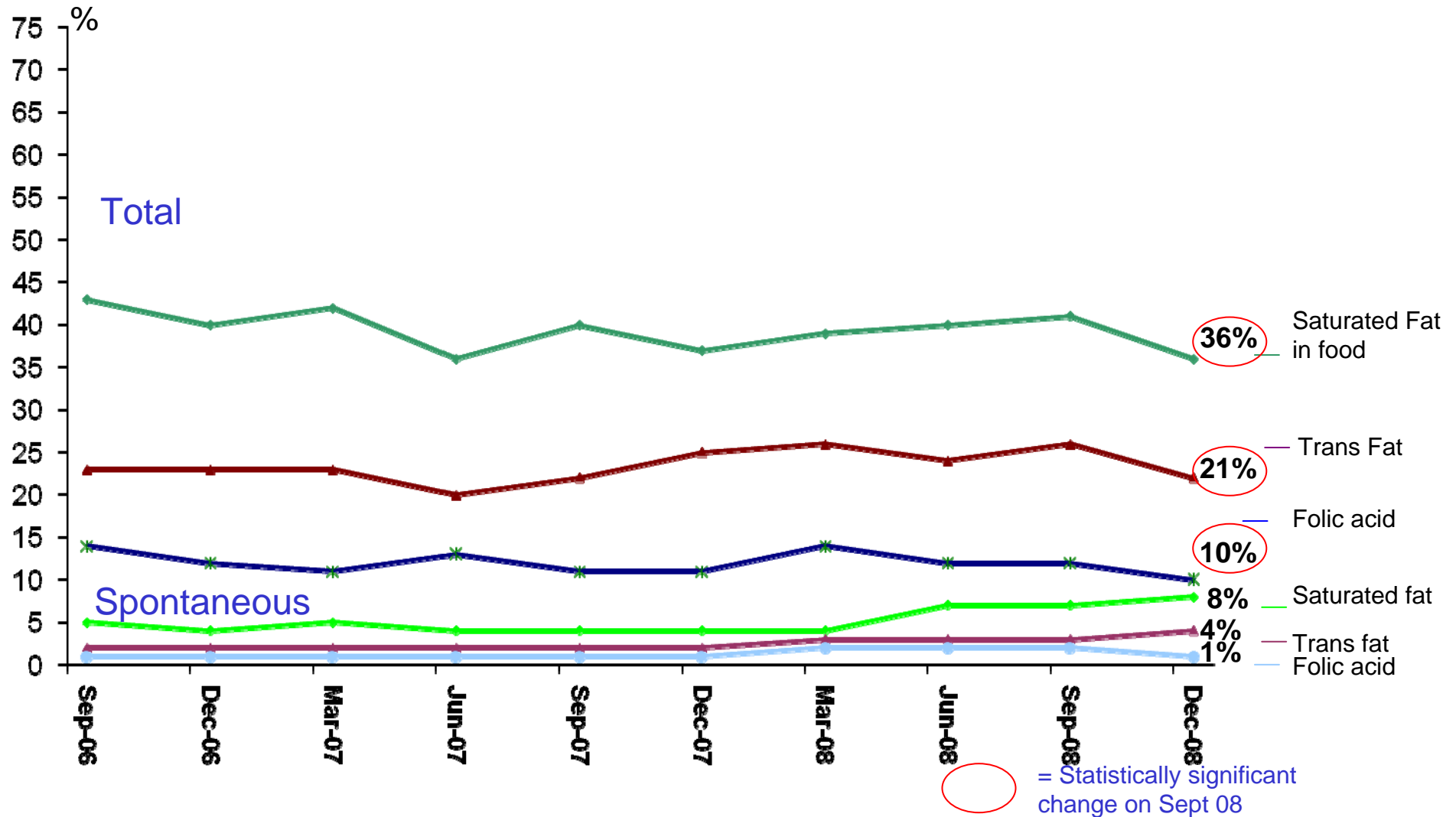
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concern about salt and sugar has remained stable this wave, however there has been a significant decrease in concern about salt between September 07 and December 08 from 50% to 43% (this has decreased gradually at each wave in between). This is the lowest level seen since the first wave of tracking when 41% were concerned. There was a significant decrease this wave in concern about fat in food (from 46% to 40%), again this is the lowest level seen since tracking began.



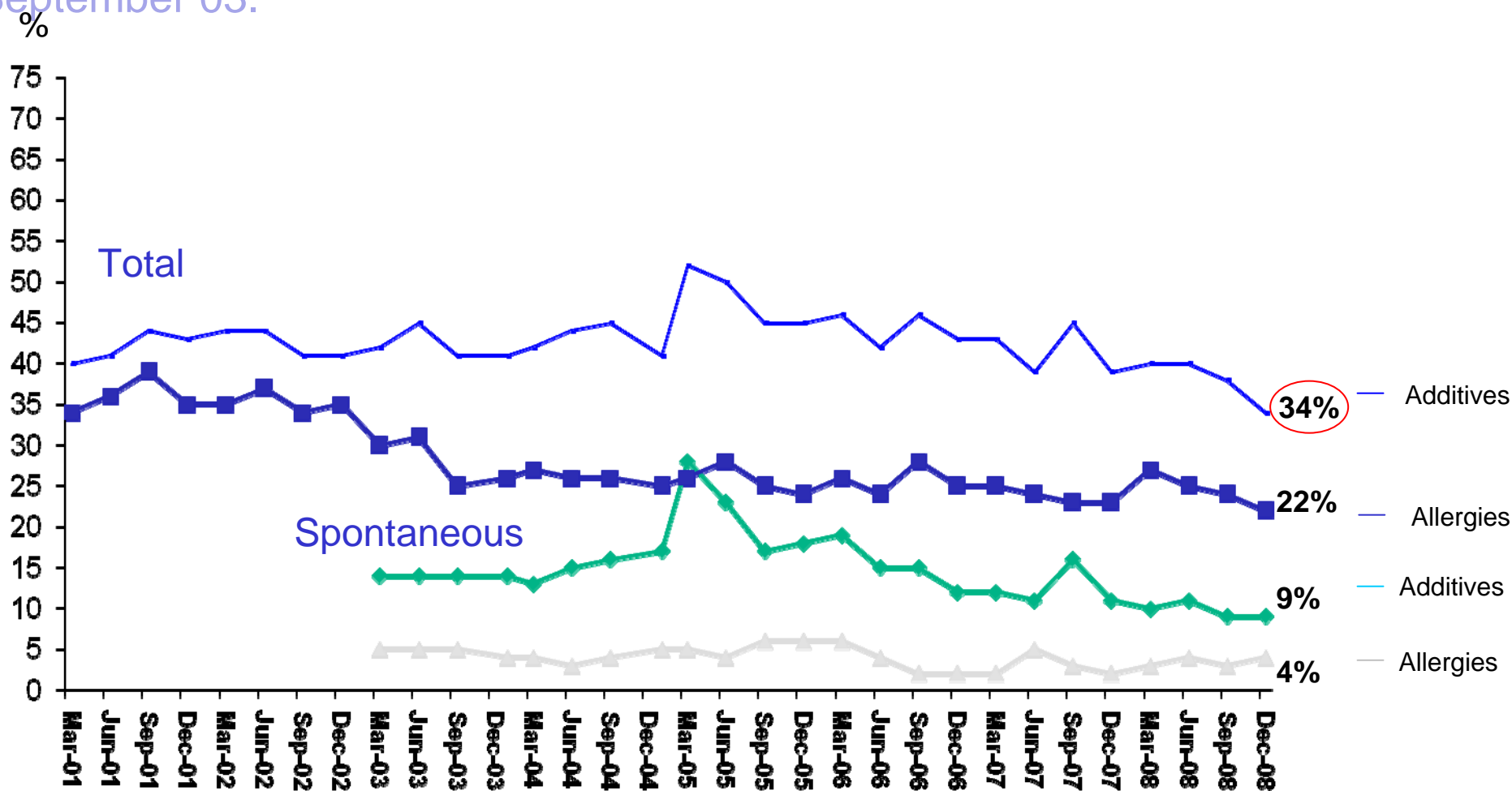
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents


Concern about saturated and trans fats and folic acid fortification has not changed very much over time, although there has been a significant decline in the proportion concerned this wave about all three issues on prompting.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

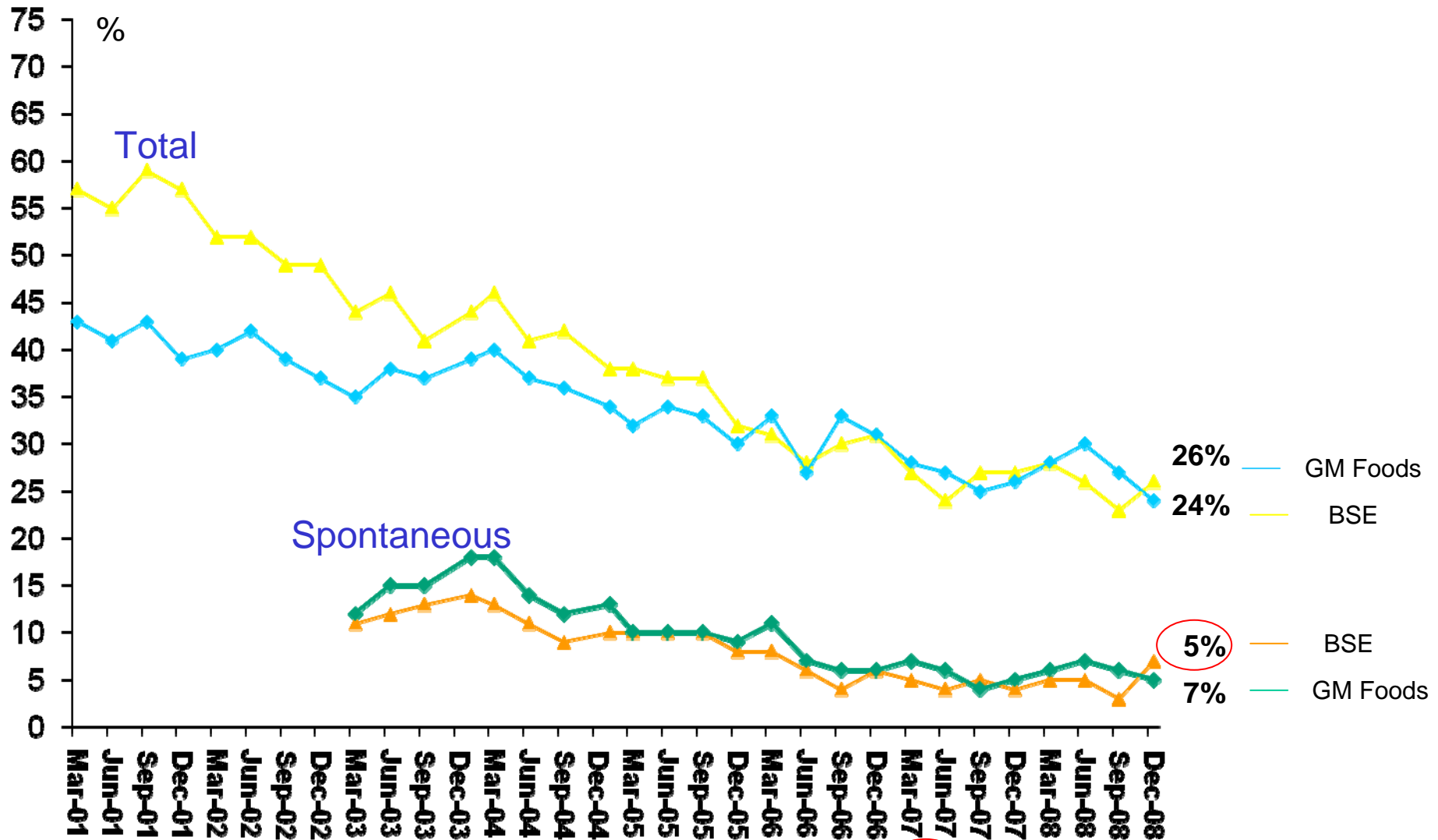
The proportion of respondents concerned about additives continues to decrease since September last year (when the Southampton study was published). Concern has gone down 11 percentage points. Around one in five are concerned about allergies and this has remained fairly stable since September 03.



 = Statistically significant change on Sept 08

Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

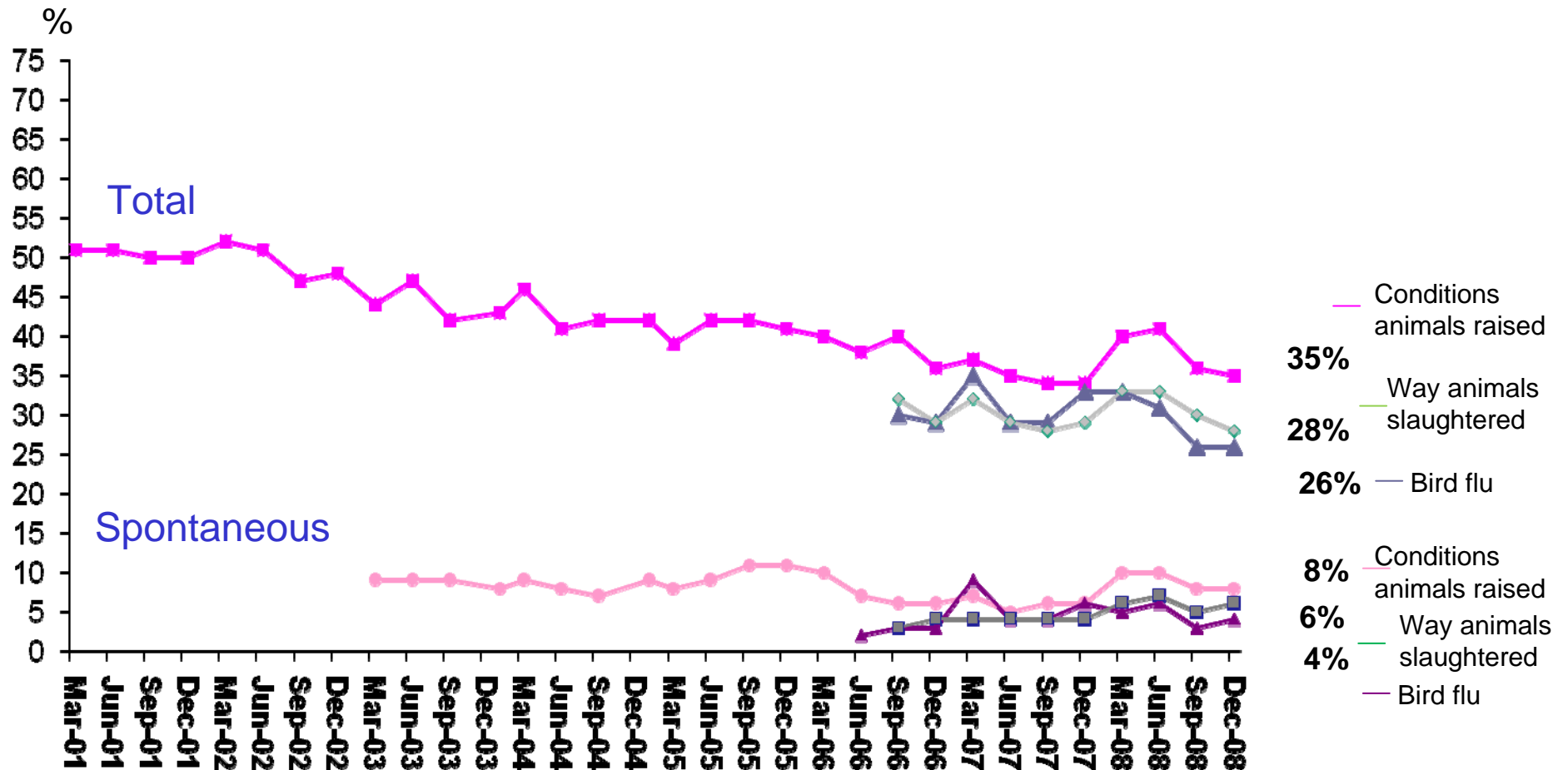
Concern about BSE has declined over time from 57% at the beginning of tracking to under a quarter (24%). Concern about GM has decreased since June 08 (from 30%) following gradual increases in the previous three waves.



5% = Statistically significant change on Sept 08

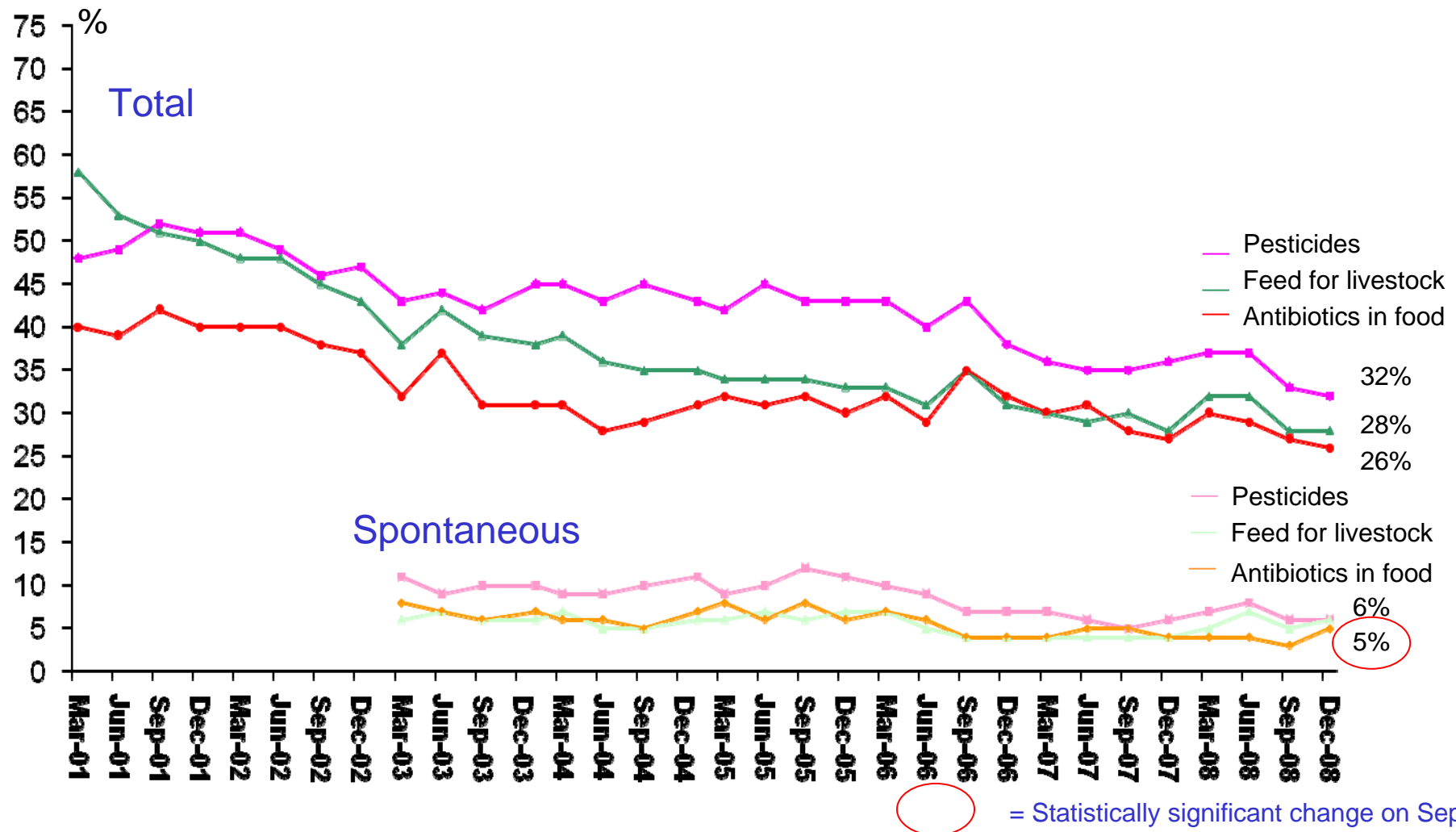
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

The proportion of respondents concerned about the conditions in which animals are raised has decreased since March 08 (40%) to a similar level seen in Dec 07 (35%). Concern about bird flu also declined and is now at its lowest level. The % mentioning the way animals are slaughtered has not changed significantly over time



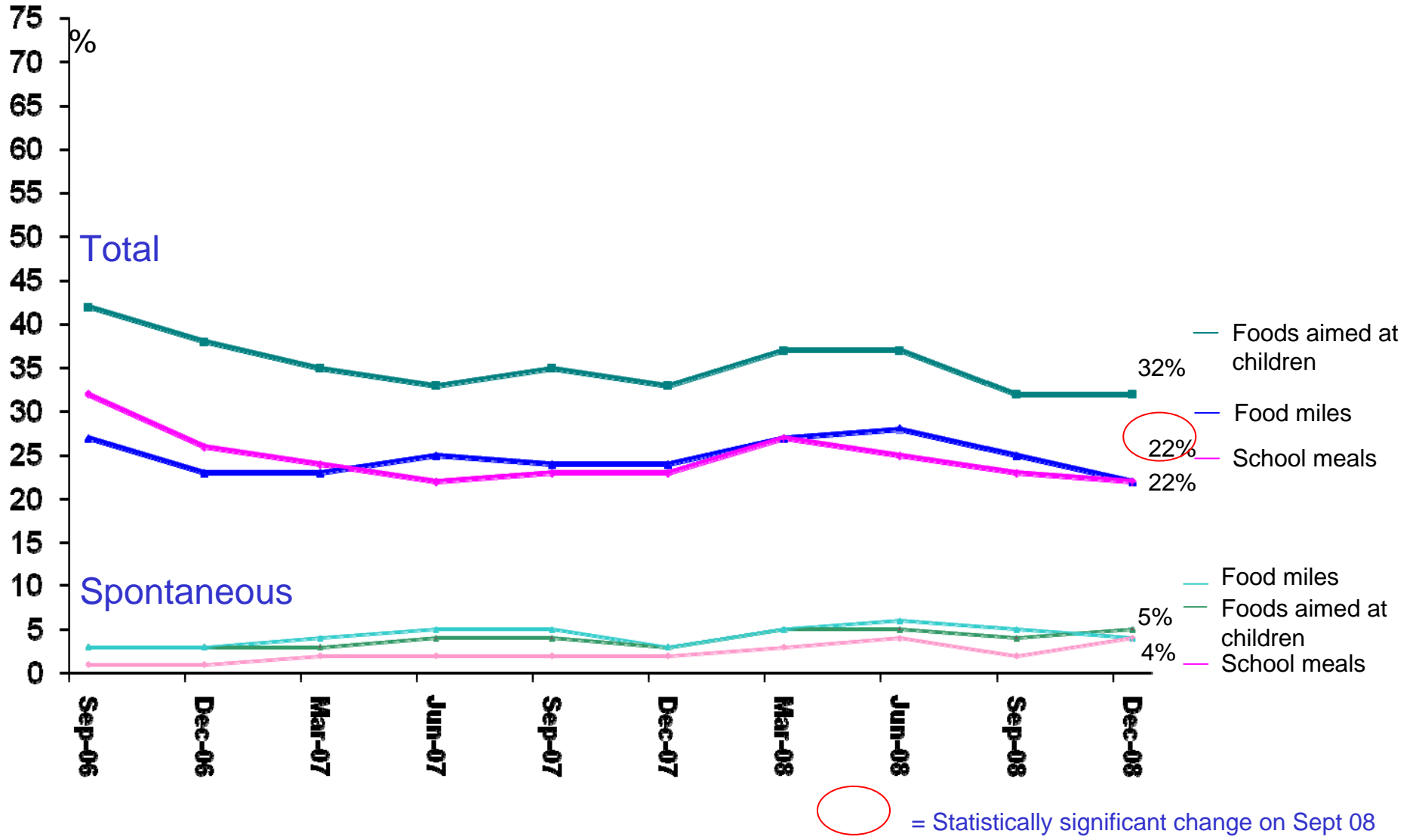
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concern about pesticides, feed for livestock and antibiotics/animal medicines in food have all decreased over time, particularly in the case of livestock feed (from 58% to 28% at the current wave). Concern about pesticides is at its lowest level since tracking began.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concern about foods aimed at children and about the school meals has fluctuated over time. Concern about food miles has remained fairly consistent, although has decreased between June and Dec 08 (from 28% to 22%)



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Appendix: Sub group differences

Total awareness of Food Standards Agency – Dec 08

Differences in Key Subgroups

		%
TOTAL		82
Sex	Male	83
	Female	81
Age	16-25	67
	26-35	82
	36-49	87
	50-65	91
	66+	78
Social class	AB	96
	C1C2	83
	DE	72
Working status	Working full time	87
	Working part time	86
	Other	77
Marital status	Married	86
	Single	76
	Separated/widowed	79
Principal Shopper	Yes	84
	No	79




= Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other subgroup within category

Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?; Q1b. Can I just check, have you heard of the Food Standards Agency?

Concern about food safety issues (very/quite concerned) – Dec 08. Differences in Key Subgroups


		%
TOTAL		68
Sex	Male	62
	Female	73
Age	16-25	55
	26-35	70
	36-49	69
	50-65	73
	66+	69
Social class	AB	72
	C1C2	68
	DE	65
Working status	Working full time	67
	Working part time	74
	Other	68
Marital status	Married	72
	Single	60
	Separated/widowed	68
Principal Shopper	Yes	70
	No	62

 = Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other subgroup within category

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

Confidence in measures taken by all organisations (very/fairly confident) – Sept 08. Differences in Key Subgroups


		%
TOTAL		56
Sex	Male	59
	Female	53
Age	16-25	64
	26-35	56
	36-49	56
	50-65	48
	66+	61
Principle shopper	Yes	54
	No	61

 = Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other sub-group within category

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

Confidence in Food Standards Agency (very/fairly confident) – Sept 08. Differences in Key Subgroups

		%
TOTAL		61
Age	16-25	72
	26-35	63
	36-49	61
	50-65	53
	66+	59
Working status	Full time	64
	Part time	60
	Other	59

 = Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other sub-group within category

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