

Food and You secondary data analysis to understand domestic food safety practices

Area of research interest: [Food and You](#)

Study duration: 2013-11-01

Project code: FS409012

Conducted by: NatCen

[Back to top](#)

Background

Food and You is a biennial, random probability survey providing information on reported behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge relating to food safety. Two Waves of the survey have been completed (in 2010 and 2012), and Wave 3 results are due to be reported in October 2014. A composite measure of domestic food safety practice – the Index of Recommended Practice (IRP) – was developed at Wave 2. This was redeveloped internally as a tool for tracking FSA progress against its 2010 to 2015 strategy. This project involves conducting further analysis of Food and You data, to provide further understanding of domestic food safety practices and extend the results reported in the original Food and You publications, and peer review (both quantitative and qualitative) of the redeveloped IRP.

[Back to top](#)

Research Approach

The specific research objectives for this project were as follows:

- Conduct secondary data analysis to improve understanding of the diversity of food safety behaviours and inform FSA as to where, and how, to focus efforts to improve food hygiene practices.
- To peer review the FSA's redeveloped composite measure as a tool to track progress towards the FSA's strategic objective to 'improve public awareness and use of messages about good food hygiene practices at home', and also as a tool for increasing the FSA's understanding of domestic food safety practices in order to inform policy and communications strategies.

The secondary data analysis component of the project consisted of in-depth analysis of the Food and You data to explore domestic food safety practices, expanding on the analysis reported in the original Food and You publications. These analyses considered variation in food safety practices by socio-demographic variables, socio-economic variables and other consumer classifications, explored relationships between reported food safety practices, and explored relationships between reported food safety behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge.

The peer review of the redeveloped IRP consisted of both quantitative and qualitative review. The quantitative review considered the technical construction of the IRP, whether the construction was

fit for purpose, and considered how weighting of different variables would affect the IRP, and the conclusions which can be drawn from analysis using this tool. The qualitative review considered whether the questions included in the composite were the most relevant questions, and also whether questions should be weighted in terms of food safety 'importance'.

Recommendations were made on whether the IRP was fit for purpose, and changes which could be made to the IRP to improve it.

[Back to top](#)

Results

Social and economic predictors of domestic food safety practices

People most likely to report food safety practices in line with FSA recommendations are:

- women
- people aged under 65 years
- people living in Northern Ireland
- people of white ethnicity
- those who are married or cohabiting

People in households with young children (under the age of five) are more likely to report behaviours in line with recommended food safety practice than those with older or no children.

The results suggest that the extent to which reported behaviours are in line with recommended practice is related to social-demographic variables (such as age, gender and ethnicity), but not socio-economic variables (such as income, education, and housing tenure).

Current and future sources of information on domestic food safety practices

Half of those who currently access information on preparing and cooking food safely, receive this information from retailers and food producers, with slightly fewer citing TV and radio, friends and family, or books and newspapers. Men and those in the oldest age group (65 years or older) are most likely to say they do not currently look for food safety information. It is likely that the internet will be an increasing source of information on food safety, particularly for those aged 16-34 years.

Knowledge and attitudes towards food safety practices

There is little evidence of an association between attitudes and reported behaviour. A link is proposed between knowledge and behaviour, which could be implicated by social desirability bias, where people might report behaviour in line with their knowledge of recommended practice, rather than their actual behaviour.

Food hygiene rating schemes

A good food hygiene rating is considered important by about a quarter of people across gender, age and county of residence. However, active use of a food hygiene rating scheme is much lower, apart from in Northern Ireland. Use of food hygiene rating schemes declines with age – only 4% of those aged 65 years and over use schemes compared with 14% of 16-34 year olds, and 10% of 35-64 year olds. This age related pattern was the same for those who did and did not report eating out in the past seven days.

Domestic food safety practices and eating outside the home

People who used a food hygiene rating scheme to check a catering outlet's hygiene standards were more likely to report behaviours which were in line with recommended food safety practice at home.

[Back to top](#)

Additional Info

The revised dataset, including syntax for constructing the revised Index of Recommended Practice (IRP) will be archived on the [Essex Data Archive](#).

Please note that an amended version of the research report was published in July 2015. The amended version contains corrections for errors on pages 9 and 31 in the original version, where mean and median values were mislabelled.

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

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