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Vegan labelling: use and understanding by consumers with food hypersensitivities

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Executive Summary

In December 2023, the Food Standards Agency commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct an online omnibus survey with individuals who have, or buy for, those with food hypersensitivities (FHS) to allergens of animal origin (milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans or molluscs)¹.

The purpose of the survey was to help inform an FSA communications campaign to raise awareness that vegan labelling on its own should not be used as a proxy for allergen labelling and that people should check for cross-contamination risks (e.g. by checking precautionary allergen labelling).

The research questions were:

¹ In this report we define a consumer with a food hypersensitivity to allergens of animal origin as anyone who experiences a bad or unpleasant physical reaction to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters) or molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters). This would include people with allergies and intolerances to these foods.

- Do people with FHS to allergens of animal origin and those who purchase food for others with these FHS use vegan labelling as proxy for allergen labelling?
- Do people know what vegan labelling means regarding allergens of animal origin?
- What campaign message would be most effective in raising awareness that vegan labelling should not be used as a proxy for allergen labelling?

The survey was conducted online via i:Omnibus between 15th and 20th December 2023. A representative sample of 4,085 adults, aged 16-75, living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were surveyed. The data are weighted to best reflect the demographic profile of the adult population sampled.

Respondents were screened based on reporting experiencing bad or unpleasant reactions to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans or molluscs, or regularly shopping for someone who experiences this. This resulted in a total sample of 821 respondents who either reported experiencing reactions to allergens of animal origin (n=563) and/or regularly shopping for someone who reports this (n=330).

Key findings

- Many respondents did not know that vegan products might not be suitable for those with FHS to allergens of animal origin and that they need to check for precautionary allergen labelling on vegan products.
 - Only 53% of those with a FHS, and 50% and of those who shop for someone with FHS, were aware before taking the survey that vegan products might not be suitable for someone with FHS due to a risk of cross-contamination.
 - 58% of those with FHS and 59% of those who shop for someone with FHS said were previously aware they should check for precautionary allergen labelling (such as may contain) on vegan products to inform whether it's safe to eat.
- There is misplaced confidence that the term 'vegan' means a product is safe for those with FHS to allergens of animal origin. This includes respondents dealing with the risk of severe reactions.

- 62% of all respondents are confident that the term 'vegan' means a food is safe for those with FHS to allergens of animal origin. This is despite it not necessarily indicating that the food is safe.
- 57% of those who have, or shop for someone with severe reactions were confident the term 'vegan' means it is safe.
- There is evidence of a wider misunderstanding about what different labels, such as 'free from', 'vegan' or 'plant based', mean regarding their safety for those with FHS.
 - There are similar levels of confidence across terms. 68% of all respondents are confident that 'free from' (the relevant animal ingredient) means a product is safe, 63% are confident in 'plant based', and 62% confident in 'vegan'. Of the three, 'Free from' (the relevant animal ingredient) is the only safe descriptor. This suggests a lack of clarity about which terms mean a product is safe.
 - Furthermore, most respondents cannot accurately pick which out of 'vegan' or 'free from' (the relevant animal ingredient) is most suitable for those with FHS to allergens of animal origin. 20% said the 'vegan' product would be most suitable for themselves or the person they buy for, 30% said the 'free from' (the relevant animal ingredient) product, and 40% said they would be equally suitable.
- Vegan labelling is being used by some people who have or buy for someone with FHS as a proxy for allergen labelling. Only around half (47%) of respondents who said they at least sometimes use vegan labelling in this way also check for cross-contamination risks.
 - When buying packaged food 54% of those with FHS and 53% who buy for someone with FHS said they have at least sometimes used vegan labelling to decide whether a food is safe to eat. When buying non-packaged food 45% with FHS, and 42% who shop for someone with FHS report doing this.
 - 47% of respondents who used vegan labelling at least sometimes said that they also checked for cross-contamination risks (for example

through checking ‘may contain’ statements) to check the suitability of the vegan product.

- Only 55% of those who used vegan labelling at least sometimes were aware that vegan products may not be suitable for those with FHS to allergens of animal origins due to cross-contamination risks.
- People respond well to different messages informing them about the potential for cross-contamination in vegan products and the need to check for information on cross-contamination risks.
 - Respondents were split into three groups and each group presented with a version of a message communicating that relying on vegan labelling is not safe behaviour and that they need to check for cross-contamination risks. Across all three messages around 6 in 10 respondents agreed that the message told them something worth knowing (message one 59%; message two 57%; message three 59%).
 - 47% said they would check vegan foods for ‘free from’ or precautionary allergen labelling after seeing messages two and three. 40% said they would take this action after seeing message one.

Introduction and background

In December 2023, the Food Standards Agency commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct an online survey to provide insight on the knowledge and behaviour of (i) individuals with food hypersensitivities (FHS) to allergens of animal origin², and (ii) those who purchase food for others with these sensitivities, to vegan labelling. The survey aimed to understand their knowledge and use of vegan labelling to inform food purchasing decisions and how they respond to messages intended to raise awareness that solely relying on vegan labelling is not safe behaviour.

Previous research has indicated that people with FHS may be using the term ‘vegan’ as a proxy indicator for what is safe for them to eat. For example, FSA’s research into

² In this report we define a consumer with a food hypersensitivity to allergens of animal origin as anyone who experiences a bad or unpleasant physical reaction to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters) or molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters). This would include people with allergies and intolerances to these foods.

purchasing decisions of individuals with FHS includes anecdotal accounts of people using vegan labelling as a proxy for milk allergen labelling (BritainThinks, 2022). There is separate evidence to indicate that people are not aware that there may be risks in doing this. The Chartered Trading Standards Institute conducted research with members of the general public and found that three quarters (76%) of those surveyed believed that food products that are labelled as vegan do not contain any animal products, even in very small amounts (Chartered Trading Standards Institute, 2023).

There is, however, a lack of evidence which has specially explored the use of vegan labelling as a proxy for allergen labelling by those who have a FHS, or buy for those with a FHS, to allergens of animal origin. Specifically, who is using vegan labelling as a proxy for allergen labelling, to what extent they are using it, and are they are taking other actions alongside this to inform their decision on safety of consuming the product (e.g. checking information on cross-contamination).

The purpose of this survey was to address these evidence gaps and help inform a communications campaign to raise awareness that vegan labelling should not be used as a proxy for allergen labelling without checking for cross-contamination risks (e.g. precautionary allergen labelling).

The research questions were:

- Do people with FHS to allergens of animal origin and those who purchase food for others with these FHS use vegan labelling as proxy for allergen labelling?
- Do people know what vegan labelling means regarding allergens of animal origin?
- What campaign message would be most effective in raising awareness that vegan labelling should not be used as a proxy for allergen labelling?

The survey was conducted online using the Ipsos i:Omnibus service, an online platform that provides a nationally representative online sample of respondents from Ipsos panels. A representative sample of 4,085 adults, aged 16-75, living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, took part in the survey between 15th and 20th December 2023. The data are weighted on the variables of age, gender, and working status to ensure

the sample is representative of the population aged 16-75 years on these demographics.

Respondents were screened based on whether they, or the people who they regularly shop for, experience bad or unpleasant reactions to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, or molluscs (i.e. allergens of animal origin). The findings presented in this report are based on this group. 821 respondents either reported experiencing reactions to allergens of animal origin (n=563) and/or regularly shop for someone who reports this (n=330). This sample included 157 respondents who said they have or shop for someone with a mild reaction; 465 a moderate reaction and; 218 a severe reaction.

For the message testing the sample of respondents was randomly split into three groups. Each group saw a different message and answered questions on it. Message one was seen by 274 respondents, message two by 273 respondents and message three by 274 respondents.

Note on interpreting the data

Results presented in this report should be interpreted with care. All surveys are subject to a range of potential sources of error including sample imbalances which are not easily identified and corrected through weighting and errors in respondents' interpretation of survey questions and response options.

Additionally, online survey panels are not fully representative of the population. For instance, those who do not have internet access are excluded. Online panellists sign up and opt-in to take online surveys, and this means they can be more engaged in certain issues. This can make precise measures for some attitudes and behaviours difficult to obtain. Furthermore, a mixed methods approach including qualitative aspects would have provided deeper insight into respondents' behaviour and understanding of the campaign messages.

The base size for some demographic variables is small. A smaller base size increases uncertainty when extrapolating findings to the population in question. During analysis weighted base sizes under 30 were considered ineligible for significance testing. Throughout the report, when reporting on a weighted base size less than 100 this has been indicated in a footnote.

The data reported within this report relies on respondents' self-reported behaviours. Errors could occur due to imperfect recollection, or respondents' tendency to overreport behaviours which are perceived as being desirable and underreport undesirable behaviours.

Note on terminology

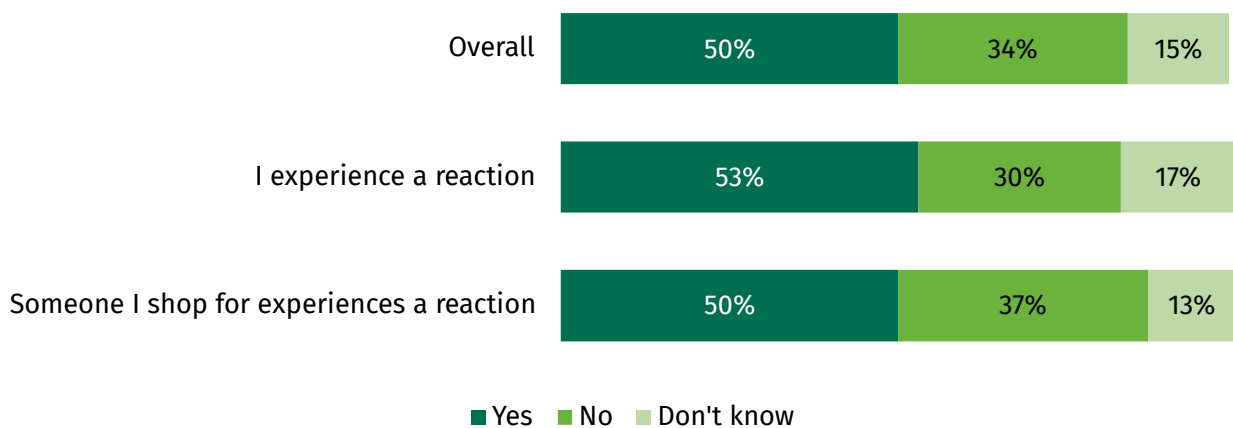
In the report we refer to the combined group of respondents who personally experience reactions to allergens of animal origin or who regularly shop for someone who reports this as "respondents dealing with FHS".

Findings

Knowledge of what vegan labelling means regarding allergens of animal origins

In general, there appears to be a lack of awareness among respondents dealing with FHS that vegan products may not be suitable for them or the person they shop for. Only around half of respondents dealing with FHS were aware before taking the survey that vegan products may not be suitable: 53% of those who experience a reaction and 50% and of those that shop for someone with a reaction were previously aware. This can be seen in Figure 1. There are no significant differences in awareness between those who have or shop for someone with a moderate or severe reaction (50%) versus a mild reaction (54%).

Figure 1: Proportion of respondents who reported being aware that vegan products may not be suitable for people who have an allergy to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, molluscs due to manufacturing processes



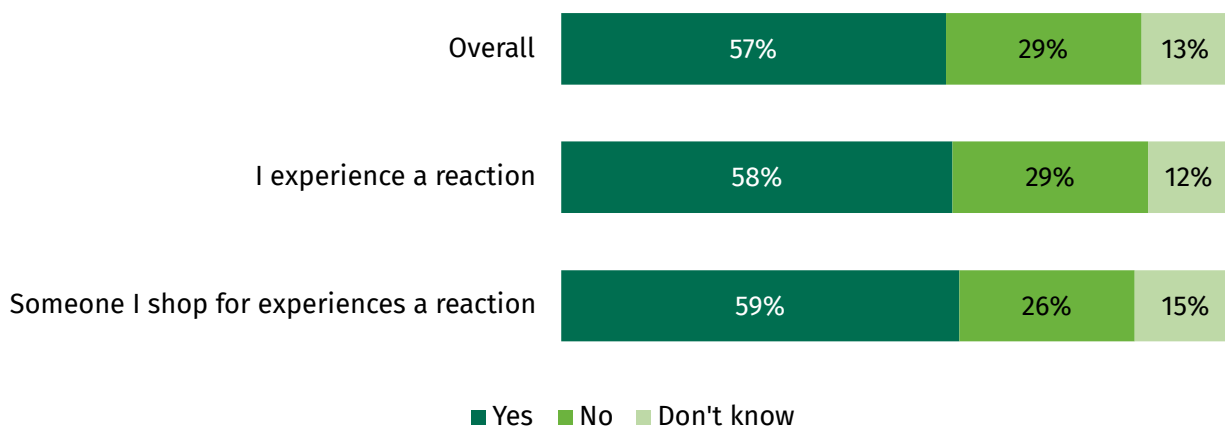
Note: This question was asked at the end of the questionnaire after exposure to the campaign messages. This was to minimize order effects; respondents were not told about the risks of cross-contamination until after seeing the messages.

Q5_1. Before today were you aware that: vegan products may not be suitable for people who have an allergy to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, molluscs due to manufacturing processes?

Base: All Adults aged 16-75 in England, Wales, Northern Ireland who have experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (563), shop for someone who has experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (330) or experience/shop for someone who has experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain food (821).

Around 6 in 10 respondents dealing with FHS were aware that they should check for precautionary allergen labelling (such as may contain) on vegan products. Overall, 58% of those who have a FHS and 59% of those who shop for someone with FHS said they were previously aware they should do this. This can be seen in Figure 2. Again, there was not a significant difference in awareness among those who have or shop for someone with a moderate or severe reaction (57%) versus a mild reaction (62%).

Figure 2: Proportion of respondents who reported being aware that they should check for precautionary allergen statements/ labels on vegan food/drink to check to inform a decision on whether it's safe



Note: This question was asked at the end of the questionnaire after exposure to the campaign messages. This was to minimize order effects; respondents were not told about the risks of cross-contamination until after seeing the messages.

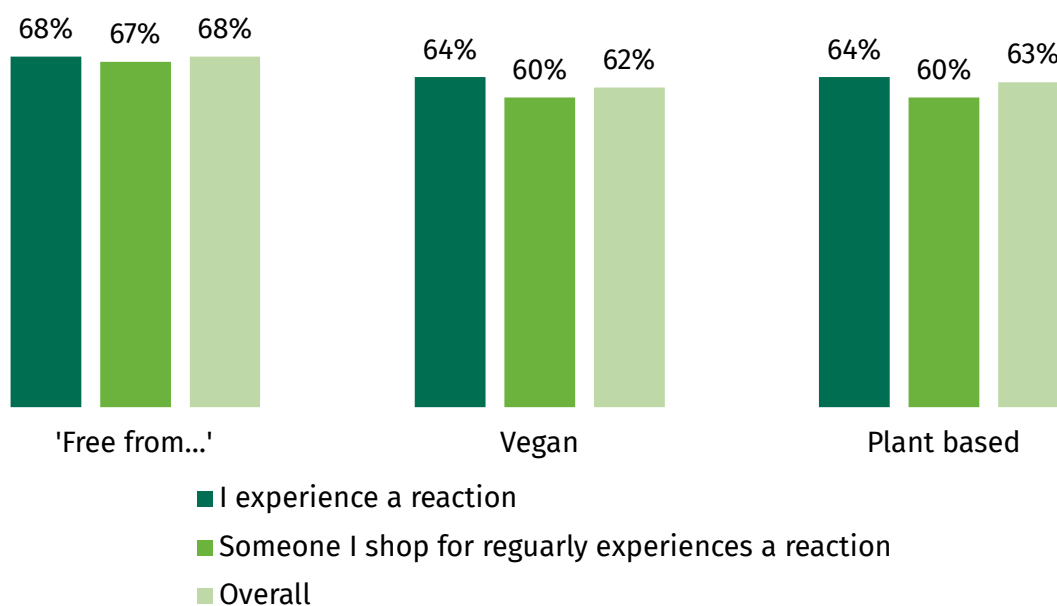
Q5_2. Before today were you aware that: you should check for precautionary allergen statements/ labels on vegan food/drink to check to inform a decision on whether it's safe for people who have an allergy to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, molluscs to eat?

Base: All Adults aged 16-75 in England, Wales, Northern Ireland who have experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (563), shop for someone who has experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (330) or experience/shop for someone who has experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain food (821)

Reflecting this mixed awareness, many dealing with FHS have misplaced confidence that the term 'vegan' indicates that a product is safe for some with FHS to allergens of animal origin to consume. 6 in 10 (62%) were either very or quite confident that the term 'vegan' indicates a food is safe; a quarter (25%) were very confident. Levels of confidence are consistent across both those who personally experience a FHS (64%) and those who shop for someone with FHS (60%).

It may be there is a wider issue around labelling, and a general misunderstanding about the differences between the terms 'vegan', 'free from' (the relevant animal ingredient) and 'plant based'. Respondents have similar levels of confidence across all three terms, despite there being both safe ('free from...') and unsafe ('vegan' and 'plant based') terms. As outlined above, 62% are confident 'vegan' means a food is safe, compared to 68% confident in 'free from...' and 63% confident in the term 'plant based'. This can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents confident that ‘vegan’, ‘free from...’ or ‘plant based’ means it is safe for someone with FHS to allergens of animal origin to eat



Q2A. For each of the terms below, please say how confident you are that the term indicates that the food is safe for you or someone with food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients to eat? By certain animal ingredients we mean milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters) or molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters). 1. Vegan, 2. Free from... (the relevant animal ingredient), 3. Plant based.

Base: All Adults aged 16-75 in England, Wales, Northern Ireland who have experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (563) or shop for someone who have experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (330). Figures shown are the proportion ‘very confident’ or ‘quite confident’.

Of these three descriptors, ‘free from...’ is the only safe descriptor. Confidence in ‘free from...’ is statistically significantly higher, however, the percentage point difference is small, and it arguably still has low levels of confidence considering it does indicate the food is safe. Around a quarter (27%) were either not very confident or not confident at all that ‘free from...’ means a food is safe.

Furthermore, most respondents cannot accurately pick which out of a product labelled ‘vegan’ or ‘free from...’ is most suitable for those with FHS to allergens of animal origin. Out of a product labelled ‘free-from...’ and a product labelled ‘vegan’, 20% said the ‘vegan’ product would be most suitable for themselves or the person they buy for, 30% said the ‘free from...’ product would be most suitable, and 40% said they would be

equally suitable. This further suggests there is confusion about what these labels mean regarding their safety for those with FHS.

There is some evidence that those who have, or shop for someone with, severe reactions are more cautious about the safety of products with any of these terms when compared to those who have or shop for someone with mild reactions. Those dealing with the risks of severe reactions are less confident in each term when compared to those dealing with mild reactions. For the term 'vegan', 36% of those dealing with severe reactions are not confident this means it is safe, compared to 20% dealing with mild reactions. For 'free from' (the relevant animal ingredient) 35% dealing with severe reactions are not confident vs. 20% of those dealing with mild reactions, and for 'plant based' this difference is 36% vs. 25%. This likely reflects a more risk-averse approach in general when making decisions about what is safe to eat.

However, it is worth noting that although this group may be more risk averse, the misplaced confidence in unsafe descriptors, such as 'vegan', does still include many who have, or shop for someone with severe reactions. 57% of this group were confident the term 'vegan' indicates a food is safe and 57% were confident in 'plant based'.

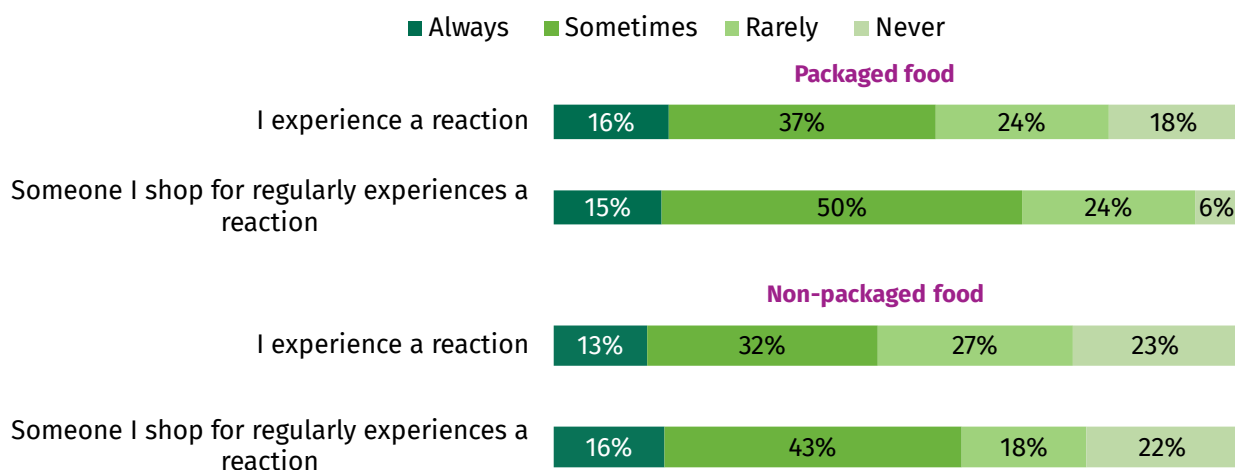
There are also consistent age and gender trends across all terms, with the youngest age group (16-24 years) consistently less likely to be confident in all three terms than those aged 45-54 years³. For instance, for 'vegan' 54% of those aged 16-24 were confident compared to 73% of those aged 45-54 years; for 'free from...' 62% of 16-24-year-olds are confident versus 75% of 45-54-year-olds and for 'plant based' 55% of 16-24-year-olds are confident versus 77% of 45-54-year-olds. Women are consistently more likely to be confident compared to men. For 'vegan' 68% of women were confident versus 58% of men; for 'plant-based' 71% of women were confident versus 56% of men; and the correct 'free from...' labelling 74% of women were confident versus 62% of men.

³ Small base size (99)

Use of vegan labelling for as a proxy for allergen labelling

Some respondents are using vegan labelling as a proxy for allergen labelling when buying packed and non-packaged food. When buying packaged food, around half of those with a FHS to allergens of animal origin (54%) and who buy for someone with FHS (53%) said they have at least sometimes used vegan labelling to decide whether a food is safe to eat. When buying non-packaged food 45% with FHS, and 42% who shop for someone with FHS report doing this. This can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Proportion of respondents who report using vegan labelling to help decide whether a food is safe to eat



Q3A How often, if at all, do you use the vegan labelling or descriptions (e.g. vegan burger) to decide whether a food is safe for you to eat? 1. Packaged food, 2. Non packaged food.

Q3B_2. How often, if at all, do you use the vegan labelling or descriptions (e.g. 'vegan burger') to decide whether a food is safe for the person you shop for who has food sensitivities...? 1. Packaged food, 2. Non packaged food.

Base: All Adults aged 16-75 in England, Wales, Northern Ireland who have experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (563) or shop for someone who have experienced unpleasant physical reaction to certain foods (330).

Those who have or shop for those with severe reactions are slightly less likely than average to use vegan labelling in this way. However, the differences are not large and not always significant. For non-packaged food 39% with severe reactions themselves used vegan labelling compared to 45% overall (significant, but still small in terms of

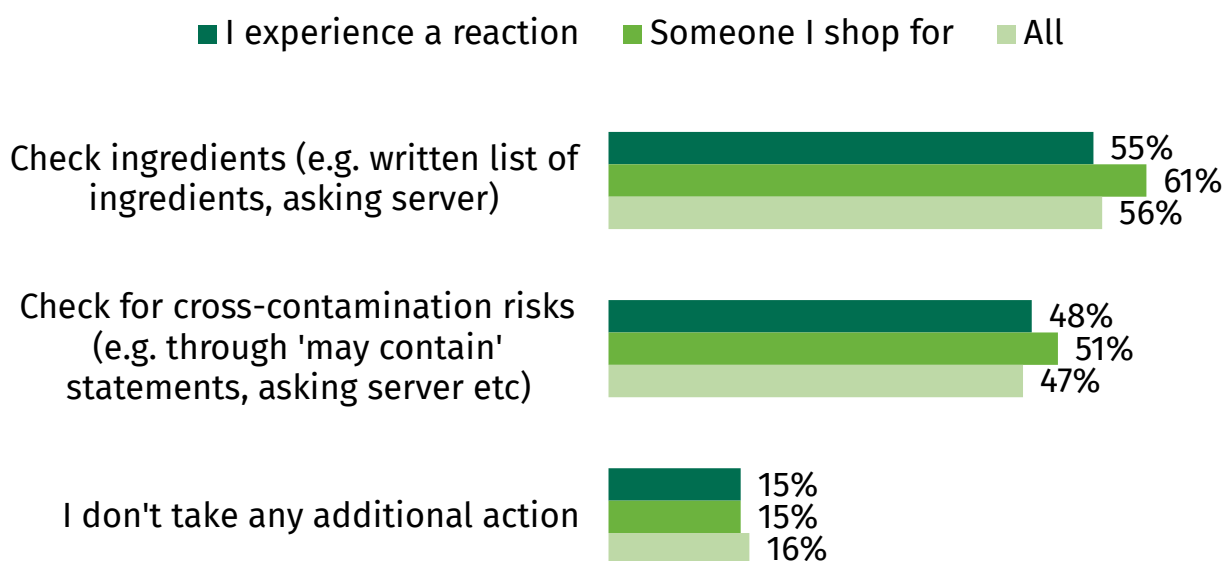
percentage point difference). For packaged food, 44% of those shopping for individuals with severe reactions used vegan labelling at least sometimes compared to 53% overall. The other differences were not significant.

The next set of findings look in more detail at respondents who said they at least sometimes use vegan labelling to decide whether a food is safe, whether for themselves or the person they buy for (n=520).

Of this group 72% of those who personally experience FHS and 68% of those who shop for individuals with FHS report they are concerned about cross-contamination when making decisions in general about what is safe for them or the person they shop for.

However, when it comes to self-reported behaviour, only around half (47%) of those who report at least sometimes using vegan labelling are also reported checking for cross-contamination risks (for example through checking 'may contain' statements). 56% said they check ingredients, for instance by looking at the written list of ingredients. This can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Proportion of respondents using vegan labelling at least sometimes who report taking additional action to ensure the food is safe



Q3C. You've said you use vegan labelling/ descriptions to inform your decision as to whether a food/ drink is safe to eat for you or the person you shop for. When you have used vegan labelling what, if any, additional actions have you usually taken to check the suitability of the product considering food sensitivities?

Base: All Adults aged 16-75 in England, Wales, Northern Ireland who said they used vegan labelling to consider foods are safe at least sometimes (520). I experience a reaction (357), someone I shop for experiences a reaction (213).

Not checking for cross-contamination risks could in part be explained by a lack of awareness that there is a risk of cross-contamination in 'vegan' products, and that there is a need to check precautionary allergen labelling. For example, only 55% of those who used vegan labelling at least sometimes were aware that they may not be suitable for those with FHS to allergens of animal origins due to cross-contamination risks. A greater proportion (64%) said they were aware they need to check for precautionary allergen labelling, however 25% were not aware.

As outlined in Figure 5, 16% who at least sometimes use vegan labelling to indicate what is safe to eat said they do not take any additional action to check the suitability of the product, suggesting they sometimes rely solely on vegan labelling to indicate whether a food is safe.

Looking more widely at respondents who said they have ever used vegan labelling to decide what is safe to eat (n=678), those who have or shop for someone with a severe reaction are more likely to also check for cross-contamination risks compared to those who have or shop for someone with a mild reaction (50% v 38%). They are also less likely not to take any additional action to check the suitability of the product (14% severe reactions v 26% mild reactions). This again points to a more risk-averse approach among those dealing with the risk of severe reactions.

Effectiveness of campaign messages

Three messages were tested with all respondents dealing with FHS to allergens of animal origin to see how well they were received, and actions respondents would take as a result. Respondents saw one message each: 274 respondents saw message one, 273 respondents message two and 274 respondents message three. The three messages are presented below:

Message one (informative & neutral)

Vegan food is made without ingredients from animals. However, it could be made in an environment alongside dishes which include milk, fish, eggs, molluscs or crustaceans. This means there is a chance of cross-contamination. If there's a risk, a precautionary allergy statement (for example 'may contain') will be shown on the label

Message two (stronger message, call to action- loss framing)

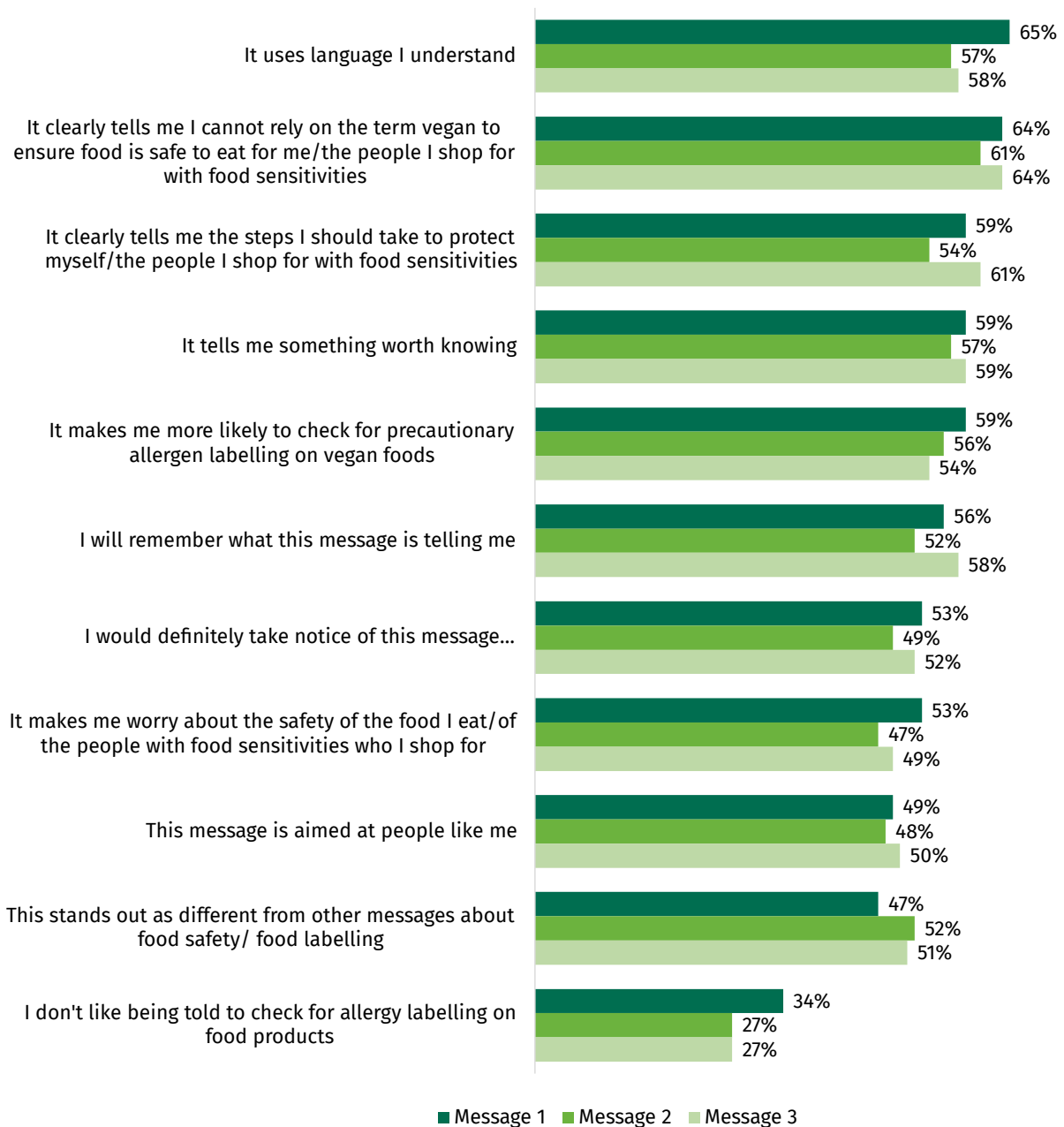
When was the last time you checked that the vegan product you eat is safe? Never assume a vegan label is considered safe for people with certain food allergies. Always check for precautionary allergen labelling, otherwise you could be putting yourself at risk of a reaction. Due to a risk of cross-contamination, vegan food may not always be free from certain allergens; precautionary allergen labelling (for example 'may contain') will tell you if there is a risk.

Message three (stronger message, call to action- gain framing)

Do you have an allergy to milk, fish, eggs, molluscs or crustaceans? Do you eat vegan food to help manage your allergies? Vegan food is not an absolute guarantee to be safe for people with certain food allergies because of possible cross-contamination with other foods. Make sure you check vegan food for a precautionary allergen label such as "may contain" to ensure it is safe for you to eat. Don't take the risk.

All three messages tested well both in terms of how they were received, and actions people would take as a result, with no consistent significant differences between the messages. For instance, around 6 in 10 respondents who saw each message agreed that it told them something worth knowing (59% either agreed or strongly agreed that message one told them something worth knowing, 57% for message two and 59% for message three). Around 6 in 10 said each message clearly told them they cannot rely on the term vegan to ensure food is safe to eat for them or the people they shop for (64% agreed that message one clearly told them this, 61% for message two and 64% for message three).

Figure 6: Proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement after seeing one of the messages



Q4A. Thinking specifically about this message, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following things about it?

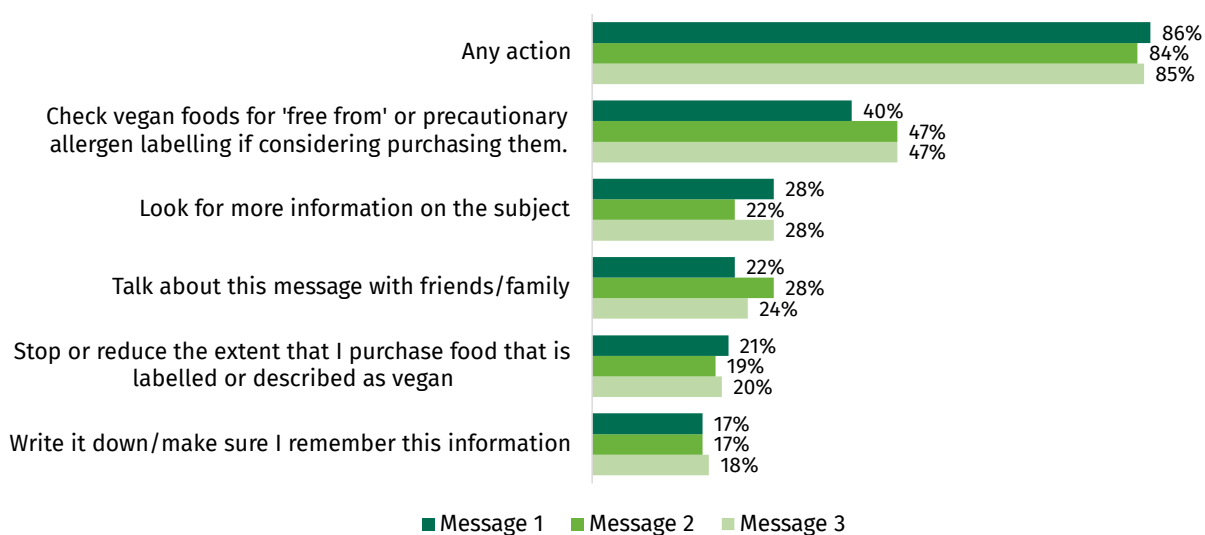
Base: Message 1: 274, Message 2: 273, Message 3: 274. Each respondent only saw one message.

There was not a particularly negative reaction to being told to check for allergy labelling, with around 3 in 10 agreeing they did not like being told to do this after seeing each message. 34% said they don't like being told to check for allergy labelling after seeing message one, 27% after seeing message two, and 27% after message three.

The intention of the campaign is to encourage people to check for precautionary allergen statements on vegan foods. Around half of respondents (47%) said that they

would check vegan foods for 'free from' or precautionary allergen labelling as a result of seeing message two and three. 40% said they would take this action as a result of seeing message one.

Figure 7: Proportion of respondents who reported they would take additional action as a result of seeing the messages



Q4B. Having read this message which, if any, of these things are you likely to do as a result? Each participant saw one message

Base: Message 1: 274, Message 2: 273, Message 3: 274. Each respondent only saw one message.

Discussion

This report presents findings from an online survey of 823 respondents either personally experiencing reactions to allergens of animal origin and/or who regularly shop for someone with these sensitivities. Findings should be contextualised within the limitations of this methodology (as outlined in the 'Note on interpreting the data').

There are several key findings from this survey that warrant attention, and which corroborate some of the limited previous research in this area (for example, BritainThinks, 2022; Chartered Trading Standards Institute, 2023).

Firstly, there appears to be a knowledge-gap around what vegan labelling means regarding allergens of animal origin. Many are not aware that vegan products may not be suitable for those with FHS due to the risk of cross-contamination. Reflecting this,

many are also not aware that they need to check for precautionary allergen labelling on vegan products. There is also misplaced confidence that the label 'vegan' means a product is safe for someone with FHS. Taken together, this provides support for an educational campaign to raise awareness about what vegan labelling does and does not mean, and the additional steps people dealing with FHS need to take when deciding if vegan products are safe.

There is also evidence of potential wider misunderstanding about what different types of labels mean regarding allergens. There appears to be broadly similar level of confidence that the labels 'vegan', 'free from...' and 'plant based' mean a food is safe and does not contain certain allergens of animal origin. This is despite both 'vegan' and 'plant based' not necessarily indicating the product is safe. Additionally, in this survey many of those with FHS could not accurately pick which out of 'vegan' and 'free from...' would be the most suitable product for those with FHS. This suggests the misunderstanding of different labels is not limited to 'vegan' labelling, and there may be a need for further educational campaigns especially around other unsafe labels such as 'plant based'.

This lack of understanding is an issue as some people are using vegan labelling as an indication of what is safe to eat. Around half of respondents reported that they at least sometimes use vegan labelling to decide whether a food is safe. Individuals who reported doing this were not always checking for precautionary allergen labelling or checking the list of ingredients.

Encouragingly, the three messages tested in this survey all performed well in terms of how they were received, and actions individuals would take as a result. There were not any consistent significant differences between the messages, suggesting that a range of messaging might be effective in raising awareness and changing behaviour. Further research, or analysis of this survey data, could look to see if there are any differences in how different types of messages are received among key target groups, such as those at risk of severe reactions or those who solely rely on vegan labelling as a proxy for allergen labelling.

References

BritainThinks. (2022). Provision of Allergen Information in the Out of Home Food Sector. <https://doi.org/10.46756/sci.fsa.fbo151>

Chartered Trading Standards Institute. (2023). [Vegan and Plant-based Food](#).

Appendix A: Online survey

Base: All participants

A 1

Multi code

The next few questions are about food and the things you eat. In answering them, I'd like you to think about food for yourself, and also for other people you shop for. By this we mean children, your partner or spouse (if you have one), or anyone else in the household for whom you regularly shop.

Do you, or someone you shop for regularly, avoid consuming any of the following foods due to experiencing a bad or unpleasant physical reaction to it? This may include symptoms associated with food allergies and food intolerances, such as difficulties breathing and swallowing, skin rash, itching and swelling on the face or in the mouth, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, bloating or diarrhoea.

Please think about: milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters) or molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters)

Please select all that apply

1. Yes, I personally experience a bad or unpleasant physical reaction to at least one of these foods
2. Yes, someone I shop for regularly experiences a bad or unpleasant physical reaction to at least one of these foods
3. No [EXCLUSIVE]
4. Don't know [EXCLUSIVE]
5. PREFER NOT TO SAY [EXCLUSIVE]

Base: All who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 2 Grid

How would you describe [INSERT 'your' IF A 1=1; INSERT 'their' IF A 1=2; INSERT 'your and their' IF A 1=1 AND 2] bad or unpleasant physical reaction?

If more than one food is reacted to (out of milk, eggs, fish/ crustaceans/ molluscs) please think about the most severe one.

use progressive grid.

rotate order of rows. alternate columns for every second interview

ROWS

1. [INSERT 'I would describe my reaction as ...' IF A 1=1]
2. [INSERT 'They would describe their reaction as...' IF A 1=2]

COLUMNS

1. Mild
2. Moderate
3. Severe
4. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
5. Prefer not to say [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: All who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 3 Grid

Thinking back to when you have made decisions about what is safe for [INSERT 'you' IF A 1=1; INSERT 'them' IF A 1=2; INSERT 'you and them' IF A 1=1 AND 2] to eat, to what extent, if at all, were you concerned about cross-contamination (considering food sensitivities)? If more than one food is reacted to (out of milk, eggs, fish/ crustaceans/ molluscs) please think about the most severe one.

Cross-contamination is the accidental presence of another substance in a product. In the context of allergens, it usually refers to trace amounts of allergenic foods present in a final product and which may be problematic for those allergic to that food.

use progressive grid.

rotate order of rows. alternate columns

ROWS

1. [IF A 1=1 INSERT 'When making decisions about food for myself I am...']

2. [IF A 1=2 INSERT 'When making decisions about food for the person I shop for who has sensitivities, I am...']

COLUMNS

1. Very concerned
2. Fairly concerned
3. Not very concerned
4. Not at all concerned
5. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
6. Prefer not to say [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
7. Not at all, I hadn't thought about cross-contamination before today [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: All who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 4 Grid

Next, we'd like you to think about different terms which may be used on food labelling.

For each of the terms below, **please say how confident you are that the term indicates that the food is safe** for [INSERT 'you' IF A 1=1; INSERT 'someone with food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients' IF A 1=2 ; INSERT 'you or someone with food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients' IF A 1=1 AND 2] to eat?

By certain animal ingredients we mean milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters) or molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters).

use progressive grid.

rotate order of rows. alternate columns

ROWS

1. Vegan
2. 'Free from' (the relevant animal ingredient)
3. Plant based

COLUMNS

1. Very confident
2. Quite confident
3. Not very confident
4. Not confident at all
5. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
6. Prefer not to say [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: All who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 5 Single code

Which of these two products do you think would be **most suitable** for [INSERT 'you' IF A 1=1; INSERT 'the person you shop for who has food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients' IF A 1=2; INSERT 'you or the person you shop for who has food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients' IF A 1=1 AND 2] to eat?

Alternate answers

1. The product labelled 'vegan'
2. The product labelled 'free from' (the relevant animal ingredient)
3. Both equally [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
4. Neither [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
5. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: All who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 6 Open end

Imagine that you are looking at food packaging on food for [INSERT 'yourself' IF A 1=1; INSERT 'the person you shop for who has food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients' IF A 1=2 ; INSERT 'yourself or the person you shop for who has food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients' IF =1 AND 2]. You are looking at two

products. One is labelled as 'vegan' and the other one is labelled as 'free from' the ingredients to which [INSERT 'you' IF A 1=1; INSERT 'they' IF A 1=2 ; INSERT 'you/they' IF =1 AND 2\]](#) have sensitivities.

What is the difference between the labelling terms on these two products?

Please type your answer in the box below. Please write in as much detail as you can.

By certain animal ingredients we mean milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters) or molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters).

1. [OPEN ENDED]
2. There is no difference
3. Don't know

Base: All who code 1 or 2 at A 1

Now we want you to think specifically about food or drink that is labelled or described as vegan.

[IF CODES 1 AND 2 AT A 1, ROTATE ORDER OF ASKING C1 AND C2](#)

Base: All who code 1 at A 1

A7 Grid

How often, if at all, do you use the vegan labelling or descriptions (e.g. 'vegan burger') to decide whether a food is safe for you to eat (considering your food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients)?

use progressive grid.

rotate order of rows. alternate columns

ROWS

1. Packaged food/ drink: food/drink that is in packaging at the point that you select it. (e.g. packaged sandwiches/ salads, items on a supermarket shelf)
2. Non packaged food/ drink: food/drink that is not in packaging when you select it (e.g. meals at a café, foods from delis, drinks made while you wait)

COLUMNS

1. Always
2. Sometimes
3. Rarely
4. Never
5. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
6. Prefer not to say [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: All who code 2 at A 1

A 8 Grid

How often, if at all, do you use the vegan labelling or descriptions (e.g. 'vegan burger') to decide whether a food is safe for you or the person you shop for who has food sensitivities (considering their food sensitivities to certain animal ingredients)?

use progressive grid.

rotate order of rows. alternate columns

ROWS

1. Packaged food/ drink: food that is in packaging at the point that you select it. (e.g. packaged sandwiches/ salads, items on a supermarket shelf)
2. Non packaged food/ drink: food that is not in packaging when you select it (e.g. meals at a café, foods from delis, drinks made while you wait)

COLUMNS

1. Always
2. Sometimes
3. Rarely
4. Never
5. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
6. Prefer not to say [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: all who said used vegan labelling to consider whether foods are safe (code always/sometimes/rarely to any iteration at C 1 or C 2)

A 9 Multi code

You've said you use vegan labelling/ descriptions to inform your decision as to whether a food/ drink is safe to eat for you or the person you shop for.

When you have used vegan labelling what, if any, additional actions have you **usually** taken to check the suitability of the product considering food sensitivities?

Please select all that apply.

rotate

1. I don't take any additional action [SINGLE CODE, ANCHOR TOP]
2. Check ingredients (e.g. written list of ingredients, asking server)
3. Check for cross-contamination risks (e.g. through 'may contain' statements, warnings about cross-contamination due to other ingredients being used at the same premises, or by asking server etc)
4. Other [SPECIFY BOX, ANCHOR BOTTOM]
5. Don't know [SINGLE CODE, ANCHOR BOTTOM]
6. Prefer not to say [SINGLE CODE, ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: Show to all who code 1 or 2 at A 1

Next, we'd like you to look at a statement about food labelling. This might appear as a message in advertising or publicity. Please take the time to read it before moving on to the next question.

[SELECT MESSAGE USING LEAST FILL: ALL TO SEE ONE MESSAGE]
[SHOW MESSAGE 1: INFORMATIVE MESSAGE – NEUTRAL]

Message 1

Vegan food is made without ingredients from animals. However, it could be made in an environment alongside dishes which include milk, fish, eggs, molluscs or crustaceans. This means there is a chance of cross-contamination. If there's a risk, a precautionary allergy statement (for example 'may contain') will be shown on the label.

[SHOW MESSAGE 2 INFORMATIVE BUT STRONGER, PLUS BEHAVIOUR LOSS FRAMING]

Message 2

When was the last time you checked that the vegan product you eat is safe? Never assume a vegan label is considered safe for people with certain food allergies. Always check for precautionary allergen labelling, otherwise you could be putting yourself at risk of a reaction.

Due to a risk of cross-contamination, vegan food may not always be free from certain allergens; precautionary allergen labelling (for example 'may contain') will tell you if there is a risk.

[MESSAGE 3 INFORMATIVE BUT STRONGER, PLUS BEHAVIOUR GAIN FRAMING]

Message 3

Do you have an allergy to milk, fish, eggs, molluscs or crustaceans? Do you eat vegan food to help manage your allergies?

Vegan food is not an absolute guarantee to be safe for people with certain food allergies because of possible cross-contamination with other foods.

Make sure you check vegan food for a precautionary allergen label such as "may contain" to ensure it is safe for you to eat. Don't take the risk.

Base: all who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 10 Grid

Thinking specifically about this message, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following things about it?

use progressive grid.

rotate order of rows. alternate columns

ROWS

1. This message is aimed at people like me
2. It tells me something worth knowing
3. I will remember what this message is telling me
4. It uses language I understand

5. This stands out as different from other messages about food safety/food labelling
6. It clearly tells me the steps I should take to protect myself/the people I shop for with food sensitivities
7. It makes me more likely to check for precautionary allergen labelling on vegan foods
8. I would definitely take notice of this message if it appeared on an advertisement (e.g. on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter/X)
9. It clearly tells me that I cannot rely on the term 'vegan' to ensure that food is safe to eat for me/the people I shop for with food sensitivities
10. I don't like being told to check for allergy labelling on food products
11. It makes me worry about the safety of the food I eat/of the people with food sensitivities who I shop for

COLUMNS

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
7. Prefer not to say [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: all who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 11 Multi code

Having read this message which, if any, of these things are you likely to do as a result?

Please select all that apply

rotate

1. Look for more information on the subject
2. Write it down/make sure I remember this information
3. Talk about this message with friends/family
4. Check vegan foods for 'free from' or precautionary allergen labelling (e.g. 'may contain') if considering purchasing them.
5. Stop or reduce the extent that I purchase food that is labelled or described as vegan
6. Other [specify]
7. Nothing [ANCHOR BOTTOM]
8. Don't know [ANCHOR BOTTOM]

Base: all who code 1 or 2 at A 1

A 12 Grid

Food labelled as 'vegan' should not be made with animals or animal products. However, in certain cases, a vegan product may be unsuitable for consumers who react to certain animal ingredients (e.g. milk). This is because of manufacturing or preparation processes which may lead to cross-contamination. If there is a risk of cross-contamination, vegan products will include a precautionary allergen labelling statement (e.g. 'may contain' or warnings about cross-contamination due to other ingredients being used at the same premises).

Before today were you aware that:

ROWS

1. vegan products may not be suitable for people who have an allergy to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, molluscs due to manufacturing processes?
 2. you should check for precautionary allergen statements/ labels on vegan food/drink to check to inform a decision on whether it's safe for people who have an allergy to milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, molluscs to eat
-
1. Yes
 2. No

3. Don't know

4. Prefer not to say

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