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**PUBLIC  
ATTITUDES  
TRACKER**

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**WAVE 19**  
**November 2019**  
(Published February 2020)

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# SUMMARY



## Introduction

This report presents findings from Wave 19 of the biannual Public Attitudes Tracker.

The Public Attitudes Tracker is a robust source of evidence on consumers' food related attitudes. The survey has been running on a biannual basis since 2010.

These findings are based on 2,101 interviews from a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Fieldwork was carried out between 4<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019, as part of the regular TNS Kantar face-to-face-omnibus survey<sup>1</sup>.

Questions cover several topics of interest for the Agency including concern about food safety issues, awareness of food hygiene standards, awareness of the FSA and its responsibilities, trust in the FSA and the food industry, and confidence in food labelling. At wave 18, a new set of questions were added to monitor trust in the FSA and wider food system.

Only statistically significant differences at the 5% level are reported. Differences as large as those reported have no more than a five per cent probability of occurring by chance.

Percentages are based on all respondents, unless otherwise stated. Because of rounding, some column percentages may not add exactly to 100%. For questions where respondents could give more than one response, the percentages will add up to more than 100%.

The data used in the report have been weighted to match the population of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Weights were applied to correct for non-response and other features of the sampling approach.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tnsglobal.com/>

# Official Statistics

The Food Standards Agency's Head of Statistics, Clifton Gay, has approved that the statistics presented in this report meet the requirements of the UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Further information and guidance on Official Statistics can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

# WAVE 19

## KEY FINDINGS

### FOOD ISSUES OF CONCERN



The top food safety issues of concern were:

- 1 Chemicals from the environment, such as lead, in food (32%)
- 2 Food hygiene when eating out (31%)
- 3 The use of pesticides to grow food (31%)
- 4 Food poisoning (28%)

The top wider food issues of concern were:

- 1 Food waste (57%)
- 2 The amount of sugar in food (53%)
- 3 Animal welfare (50%)
- 4 Food prices (44%)
- 5 The amount of salt in food (42%)

### FOOD POISONING



Salmonella and E. Coli were the most commonly known type of food poisoning (92% and 86% respectively), followed by Listeria (61%) and Norovirus (60%).

81% of respondents thought that they were most likely to get food poisoning from raw chicken and turkey, followed by shellfish (57%) and reheated takeaway (50%).

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FOOD SYSTEM



- 80% were either always confident or confident most of the time that food is what it says it is and accurately labelled
- 65% said that they thought that the food system was regulated fairly
- 83% reported that they have enough information about what food contains to make their food choices
- 62% agreed that the authorities are effectively preventing and detecting food fraud
- 61% agreed that the people who produce and supply food make sure it is safe, honest and ethically approved.

## ALLERGENS



**12%** of respondents reported having a food allergy and / or intolerance.

When asked about awareness of rules around allergens 8% reported that allergens must be displayed on menus/ labels

## AWARENESS AND TRUST IN FSA



**78%** of respondents had heard of the Food Standards Agency (77% in England, 83% in Wales and 84% in Northern Ireland).

**Of those aware of the FSA, 67% reported knowing some, or a lot of, information about the FSA.**

**73% of those aware of the FSA trusted the FSA to do its job.**

This has increased by **7** percentage points since the previous wave.



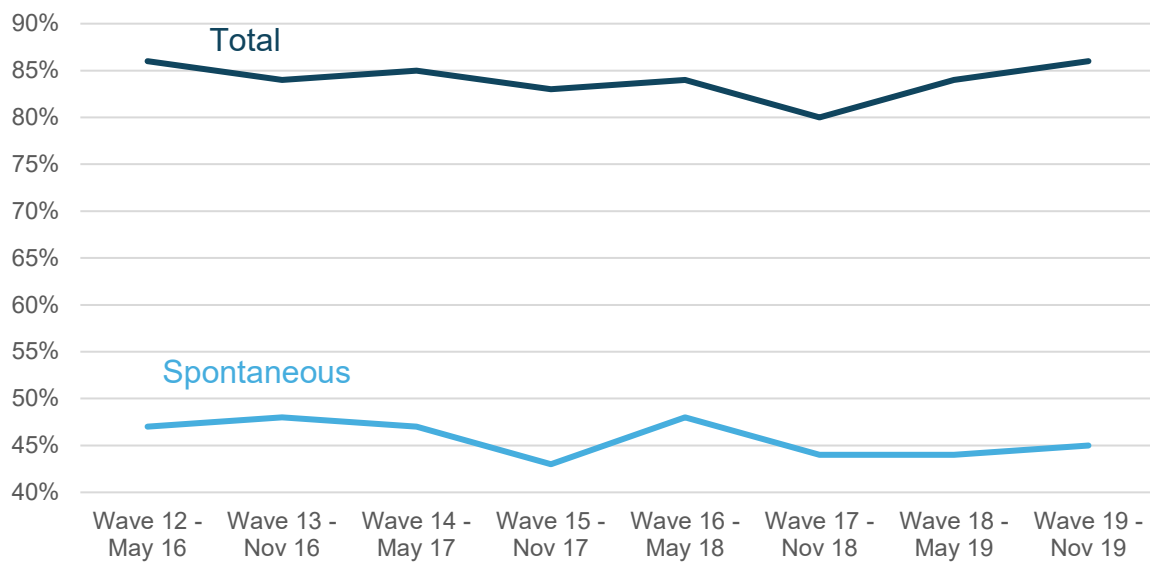
The average score of a new composite measure of trust in FSA was **7 out of 10**.

# CONCERN ABOUT FOOD ISSUES

## Overall concern

At wave 19, 86% of respondents reported concern about at least one food issue. This is a significant increase versus wave 18 (84%), but comparable to earlier waves.

**Figure 1-1 Total level of concern for all food issues over time**





# Food safety issues

To help the FSA monitor public perceptions of food safety issues, respondents are first asked to state spontaneously which food issues they are concerned about<sup>3</sup>, and then asked to select food issues of concern from prompted lists<sup>4</sup>.

At wave 19, the most frequently reported issues of concern relating to food safety were chemicals from the environment in food (32%), food hygiene when eating out (31%) and the use of pesticides to grow food (31%).

**Table 1-1 Food safety issues of concern (total concern) <sup>5</sup>**

Food issue	Wave 19 (Nov 19)
Chemicals from the environment, such as lead, in food	32%
Food hygiene when eating out	31%
The use of pesticides to grow food	31%
Food poisoning such as Salmonella and E.Coli	28%
The use of additives (such as preservatives and colouring) in food	28%
Hormones, steroids, antibiotics in food	27%
Genetically Modified (GM) foods	25%
Food not being what the label says it is	21%
Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels	21%
How meat is produced in the UK	21%
Radioactivity in food	19%
The feed given to livestock	18%
Availability of food allergen information	16%
Food hygiene at home	16%
BSE ('mad cow disease')	12%

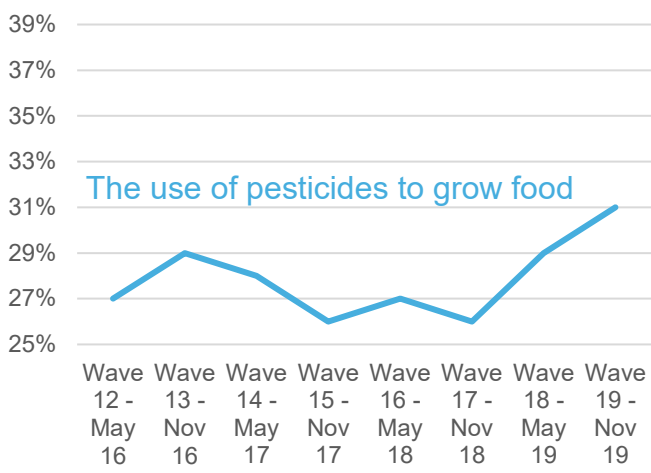
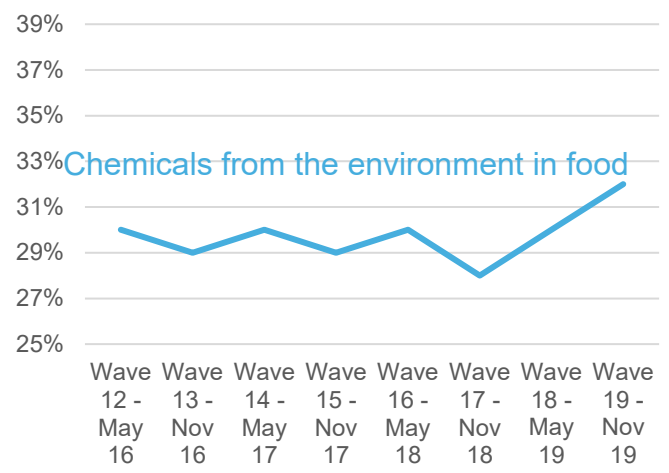
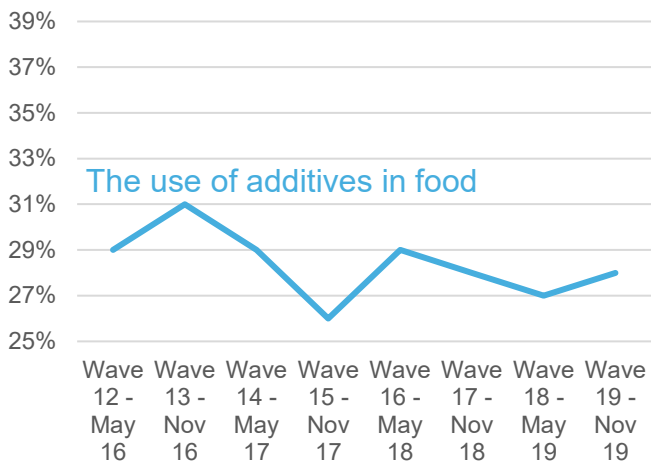
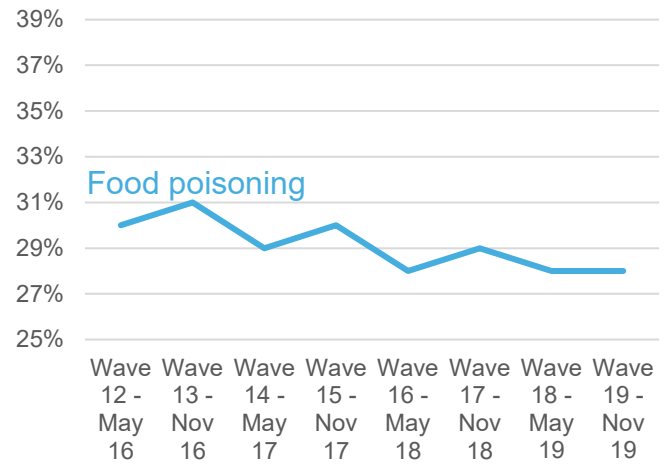
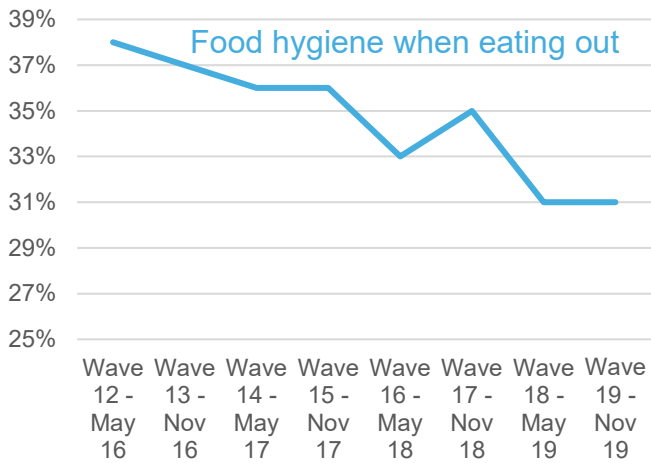
Concern about the availability of food allergen information has increased since the previous wave (by 13 percentage points). The graph below represents changes over time for the top five food safety issues of concern.

<sup>3</sup> Q1a. What issues, if any, are you concerned about? Which others?

<sup>4</sup> Q1b. And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this report, 'total' concern refers to combined 'spontaneous' and 'prompted' responses

**Figure 1-2 Food safety issues of concern (over time)**



# Wider food issues

In order to understand the wider context of food issues of concern, respondents were prompted to consider their concern about a number of topics<sup>6</sup>.

At wave 19 respondents were most concerned about food waste (57%), the amount of sugar in food (53%), animal welfare (50%), and food prices (44%).

**Table 1-2 Wider food issues of concern**

<b>Food issue</b>	<b>Wave 19 – Nov 19</b>
Food waste	57%
The amount of sugar in food	53%
Animal welfare	50%
Food prices	44%
The amount of salt in food	42%
The amount of fat in food	36%
The amount of saturated fat in food	34%
Foods aimed at children including school meals	28%
Food miles	27%

Up until Wave 18 concern on most issues remained relevantly stable with trends indicating a gradual decline in concern. However, between wave 18 and 19 there have been some sharp increases in concerns with almost all areas showing an upward trend. Concern around food waste increased during this period by six percentage points, whilst concern around the amount of sugar in food rose by four percentage points, and concern about animal welfare issues rose by seven percentage points. The chart below shows concern over time for the top four issues at wave 19.

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<sup>6</sup> Q1c. And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply / Q1d. And, finally in this section, which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply.

**Figure 1-3 Wider food issues of concern (over time)**

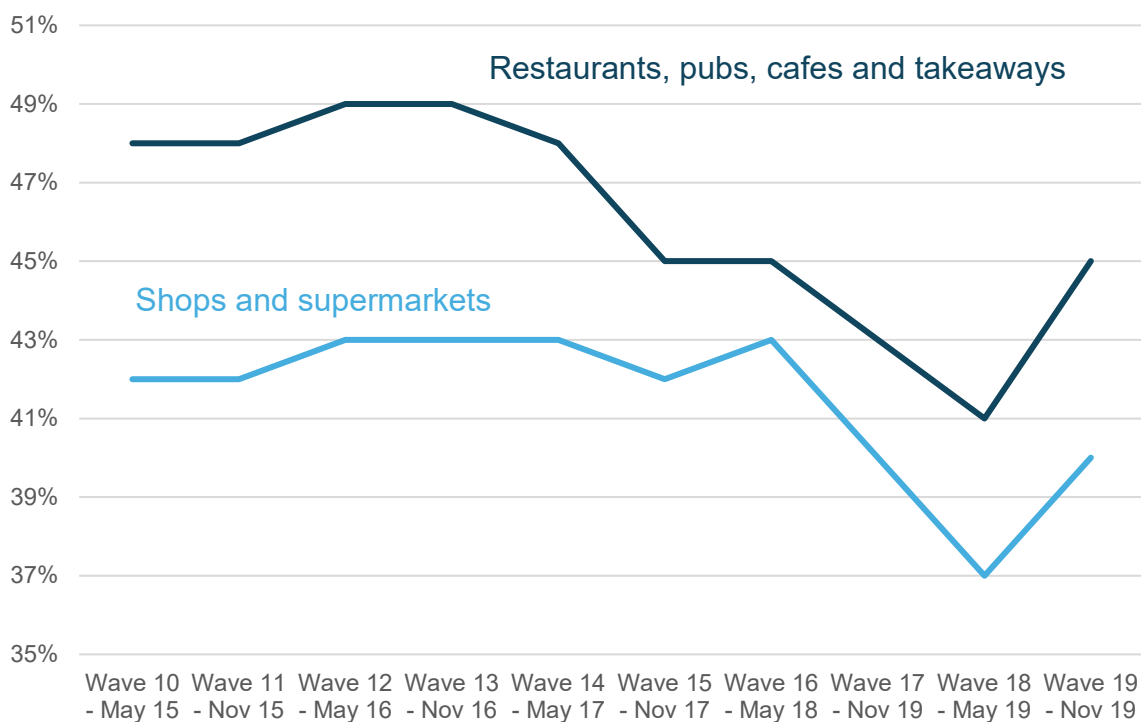


# Food safety in food outlets

At wave 19, 45% of respondents reported concern about food safety in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways<sup>7</sup>, and 40% reported concern about safety in UK shops and supermarkets<sup>8</sup>.

Reported concern has continued to decrease slightly over time, indicating a general decline in concern about food safety in UK food outlets.

**Figure 1-4 Concern about food safety in UK food outlets (over time)**



<sup>7</sup> Q2a. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of all food that is sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways?

<sup>8</sup> Q2b. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK shops and supermarkets?

# AWARENESS OF FOOD HYGIENE STANDARDS

One of the FSA’s strategic objectives is to ensure consumers have the information and understanding to make informed choices about where and what they eat.

To help monitor performance against this objective, respondents were asked about their awareness of hygiene standards when buying food or eating out.

At wave 19, 50% of respondents reported always being aware of the hygiene standards in places they eat out at or buy food from, and a further 34% said they were sometimes aware<sup>9</sup>.



Respondents who reported being aware of hygiene standards in the places they eat out at or buy food from were then asked how they know about hygiene standards<sup>10</sup>. The most commonly mentioned ways respondents reported being aware were through hygiene stickers/certificates (64%) and the general appearance of premises (60%).

**Table 2-1 Ways of knowing about food hygiene standards<sup>11</sup>**

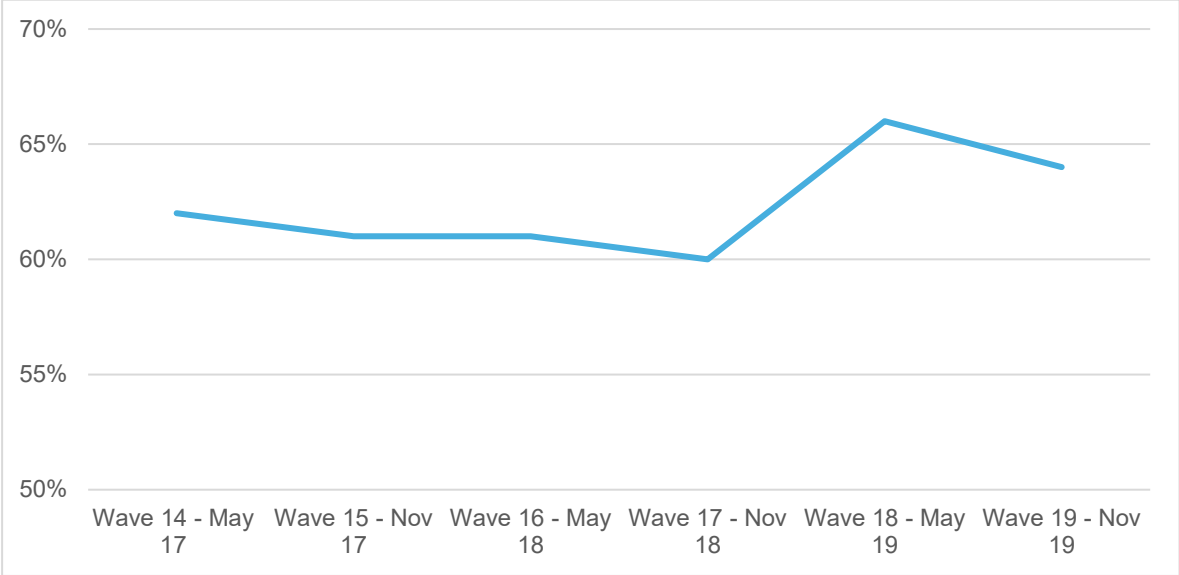
Ways of knowing about food hygiene standards	Wave 19 (Nov 2019)
Hygiene stickers and certificates displayed at the premises	64%
General appearance of premises	60%
Appearance of people working there	42%
Reputation	37%
Word of mouth	34%
Websites	17%

<sup>9</sup> Q3. When you buy food in shops or supermarkets, or eat at restaurants, cafes, pubs and takeaways, do you tend to be aware of the standards of hygiene of these places?

<sup>10</sup> Q3b. How do you know about the hygiene standards of the places you buy food from or eat out at? Please select all that apply. How else?

The use of hygiene stickers has remained fairly constant within a range of between 60% and 66% across the waves.

**Figure 2-1 Use of hygiene stickers**

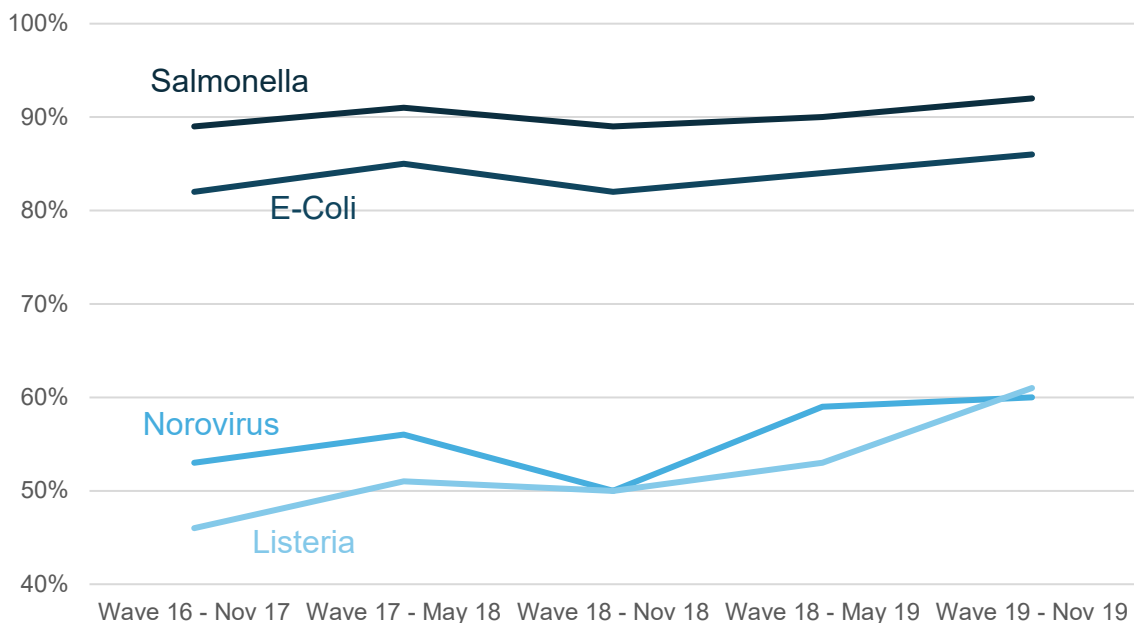


# FOODBORNE DISEASE

## Awareness of types of food poisoning

Respondents were asked to state which types of food poisoning they were aware of<sup>12</sup>. Salmonella and E-coli were the most commonly known types of food poisoning (total awareness of 92% and 86% respectively). Awareness of norovirus has been consolidated since Wave 18 (59%) and has increased by ten percentage points since Wave 17 - November 2018 (from 50% to 60%). Awareness of listeria continues to increase over the last two years (from 51% to 61%).

**Figure 3-1 Awareness of types of food poisoning**



## Sources of food poisoning

In order to understand awareness of food poisoning, respondents were asked to indicate which foods they believed could be a source of food poisoning.

81% of respondents reported being most likely to get food poisoning from raw chicken or turkey<sup>13</sup>. 57% reported shellfish being a possible source of food poisoning

<sup>12</sup> Q8Aii And which of the following types of food poisoning, if any, have you heard of?

<sup>13</sup> Q8B In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you are MOST LIKELY to get food poisoning from?



and 50% reported reheated takeaway food as a source. Other suspected sources included eggs (42%), unwashed vegetables or salad (34%), cooked sliced meats (26%) and pre-prepared sandwiches<sup>14</sup> (28%). 18% of respondents reported bread and frozen vegetables as a possible source of food poisoning<sup>15</sup>.

Awareness of sources of food poisoning has remained stable throughout previous waves, with little change between waves. The majority of respondents (93%) reported that no one in their household consumes raw milk, with 7% reporting consumption by someone in the household<sup>16</sup>. 4% of respondents reported that they consume raw milk themselves, and 1% reported that children in the household consume it.

## Avoiding food poisoning

The majority of respondents (79%) indicated that cooking food thoroughly would help them avoid food poisoning<sup>17</sup> and almost two thirds of respondents (66%) indicated that preparing different food types on different surfaces/ chopping boards would help them avoid food poisoning.

**Table 3-1 Perceived activities to avoid food poisoning**

Avoiding food poisoning	Wave 19 – Nov 2019
Cooking food thoroughly	79%
Preparing different food types on different/chopping boards	66%
Washing fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly	64%
Following storage instructions on food labels	61%
Eating food by the use-by date	60%
Storing food at 5 degrees C or below	59%
Avoid re-heating food	57%
Heating leftovers until they are steaming hot	54%
Eating food by the best before date	52%
Following instructions when using frozen fruit or vegetables	51%
Not washing raw chicken	51%

New questions were added at wave 17 to understand preparation behaviours when using frozen fruit and vegetables. 50% of respondents reported not always following instructions on the packaging of frozen vegetables<sup>18</sup> and 27% of respondents

<sup>14</sup> A full list of results can be found in the published data tables at [food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk)

<sup>15</sup> Q8Bi In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you can get food poisoning?

<sup>16</sup> Q.8e Does anyone in your household consume raw milk? By raw milk I mean milk that has not been pasteurised.

<sup>17</sup> Q.8c Which of these activities, if any, do you think will help you avoid food poisoning?

<sup>18</sup> Q.8d When preparing frozen vegetables, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

reported rarely or never doing this (16% selected 'does not apply'). When preparing frozen fruit<sup>19</sup>, 38% of respondents reported not always following instructions and 22% reported rarely or never doing this (35% selected 'does not apply').

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<sup>19</sup> Q.8di When preparing frozen fruit, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

# ALLERGENS

Respondents were asked about their awareness of rules around allergens, whether they have any allergies or intolerances, and how they feel about asking for allergen information when eating out.

## Awareness of rules

When asked about rules and regulations, 8% of respondents spontaneously mentioned that allergens must be displayed on menus / labels. However, less than 1% could state the next most well-known existing regulation. 42% of respondents reported not being aware of any rules, regulations or legislations around allergens and 34% were not sure.

## Incidence of allergies and intolerances

A total of 12% of respondents reported having a food allergy and/or intolerance<sup>20</sup> (7% food intolerance, 4% food allergy and 1% both), 8% reported that another adult in their household had a food allergy and/or intolerance<sup>21</sup> and 4% reported that a child in their household had a food allergy and/or intolerance<sup>22</sup>.

Trends indicate that incidence of allergies has remained stable with little change between waves.

## Asking for allergen information

Compared to previous waves, Wave 19 saw a decrease in respondents reporting that they feel confident in asking for allergen information in a variety of food outlets. This has decreased by two percentage points in Wave 19 to close to earlier levels<sup>23</sup>. 79% of respondents reported feeling confident<sup>24</sup> in asking for allergen information in restaurants.

<sup>20</sup> Q.9b\_01 Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below... Myself



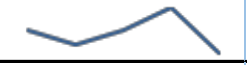


<sup>21</sup> Q.9b\_02 Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below... Another adult in my household

<sup>22</sup> Q.9b\_03 Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below... A child/children in my household

<sup>23</sup> Q.9c\_01-9\_05 Thinking specifically about eating out and buying food to eat, for example, from a coffee shop, restaurant, café, sandwich place, takeaway outlet etc., how confident would you feel in asking a member of staff for information about the ingredients in the foods they are selling, because of a concern about possible allergens/food intolerances?...

<sup>24</sup> Refers to the net proportion of respondents who reported feeling either 'somewhat confident' or 'very confident'.

**Table 4-1 Confidence in asking for allergen information**

Confidence in asking for allergen information	Wave 15 (Nov 17)	Wave 16 (May 18)	Wave 17 (Nov 18)	Wave 18 (May 19)	Wave 19 (Nov 19)	Trend
In a coffee shop	74%	75%	75%	79%	76%	
In a café	75%	75%	75%	79%	76%	
In sandwich shop	73%	73%	73%	77%	74%	
In a takeaway outlet	70%	71%	70%	75%	71%	
In a restaurant	77%	78%	77%	81%	79%	



# ATTITUDES TOWARDS FSA

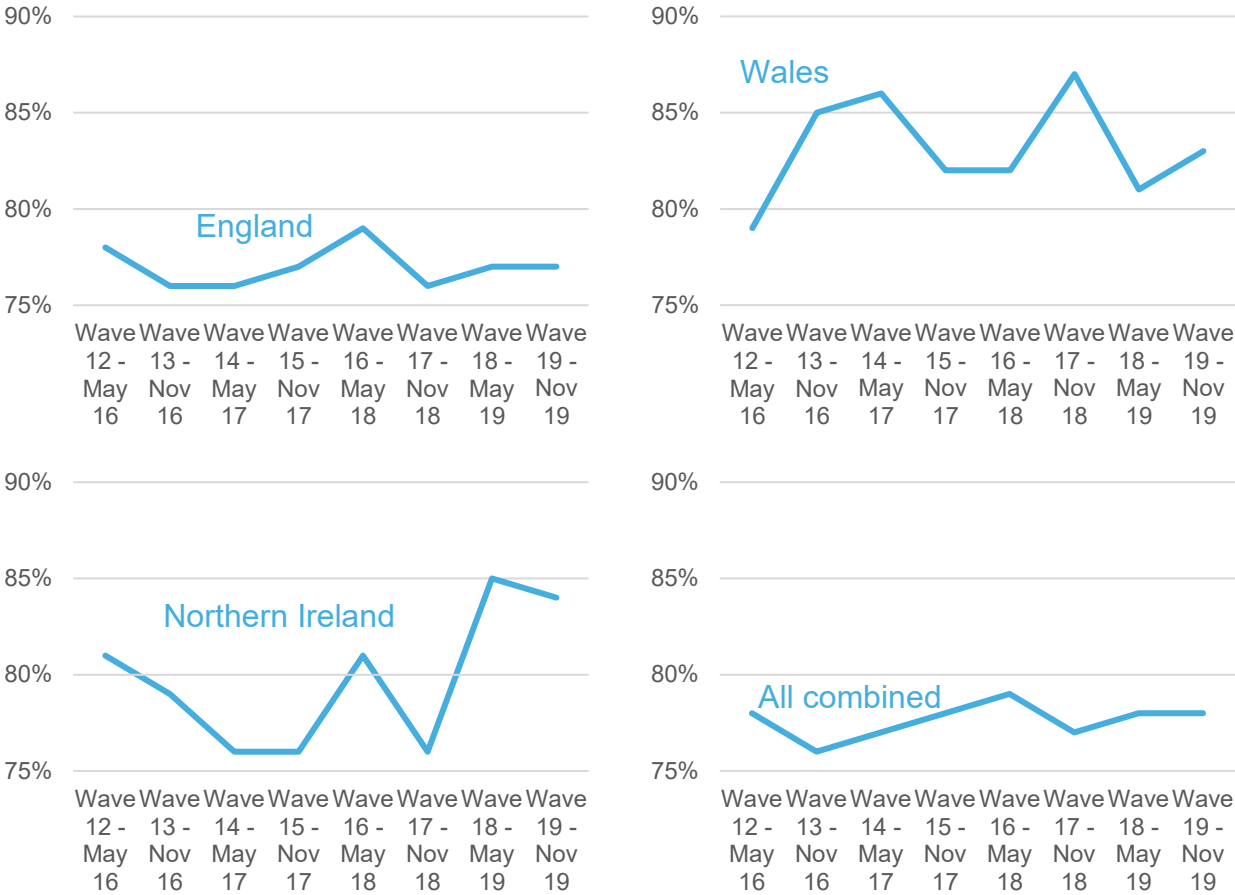


Respondents were asked a range of questions about their awareness of, familiarity with and attitudes towards the Food Standards Agency.

## Awareness and familiarity

At wave 19, 78% of all respondents reported being aware of the FSA<sup>25</sup>. 84% of respondents in Northern Ireland reported awareness of the FSA compared to 83% of those in Wales and 77% of respondents in England.

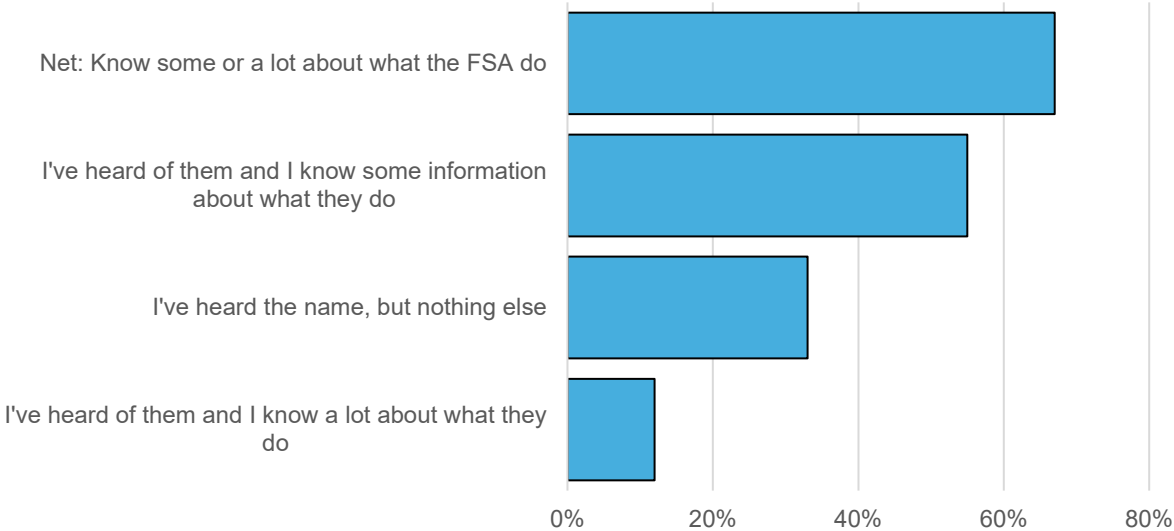
**Figure 5-1 Awareness of FSA**



<sup>25</sup> Q.4 Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?

When asked about familiarity with what the FSA do, 67% of respondents reported knowing some or a lot about what the FSA do<sup>26</sup> and 33% reported having heard the name, but nothing else. The proportion knowing some or a lot about what the FSA do remained relatively constant across the previous waves.

**Figure 5-2 Familiarity with FSA<sup>27</sup>**



Respondents that were aware of the FSA were asked which statement they believed to best describe the FSA<sup>28</sup>. 46% of respondents reported the FSA being best described as a 'government department', 31% 'independent regulator' and 10% 'an arm's length government body'. The proportion of respondents describing the FSA as 'an independent regulator' has increased by five percentage points since Wave 15.

In addition to many other responsibilities, in terms of food labelling the FSA is responsible for food safety and allergy labelling in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It also holds responsibility for wider food labelling in Wales and Northern Ireland, including nutrition in Northern Ireland only. When asked which issues they think FSA is responsible for, 90% of respondents stated that one of the FSA's responsibilities is to ensure that the food you buy is safe to eat. The next most popular answer was date labels (63%)<sup>29</sup>.

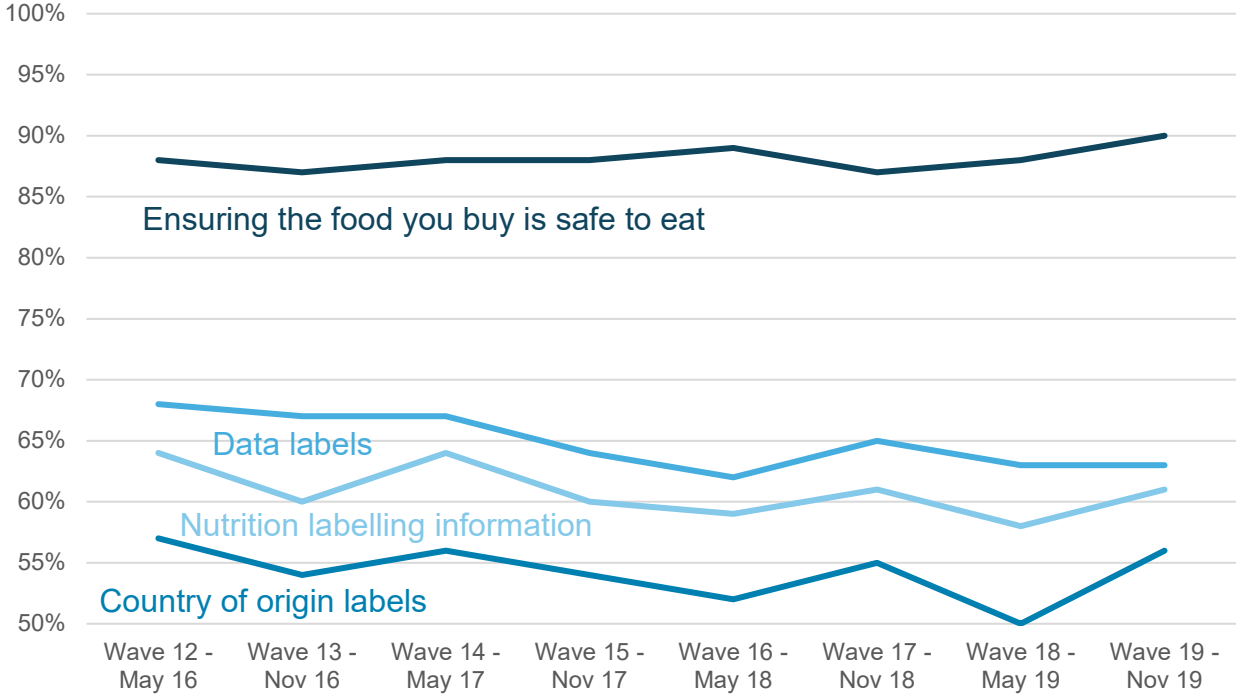
<sup>26</sup> Q.4b How much do you know about the Food Standards Agency, also known as the FSA? Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1,606)  
<sup>27</sup> Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1,606)  
<sup>28</sup> Q.4c To the best of your knowledge, which of the following do you think best describes the FSA?  
<sup>29</sup> Q.5b And which of these issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for? Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1,606)

**Table 5-1 Total awareness of FSA responsibilities**

Awareness of responsibility	Wave 19 – Nov 19
Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat	90%
Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels	63%
Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling	61%
Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from	56%
Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles	43%
Ensuring the food is sustainable	39%
Promoting food safety in the home	37%

Awareness of the FSA’s responsibilities has remained relatively stable over the waves, with a slight increase in respondents reporting country of origin labelling as an FSA responsibility (50% at wave 18 up to 56% at wave 19). Figure 5-3 depicts the top four responsibilities respondents were aware of.

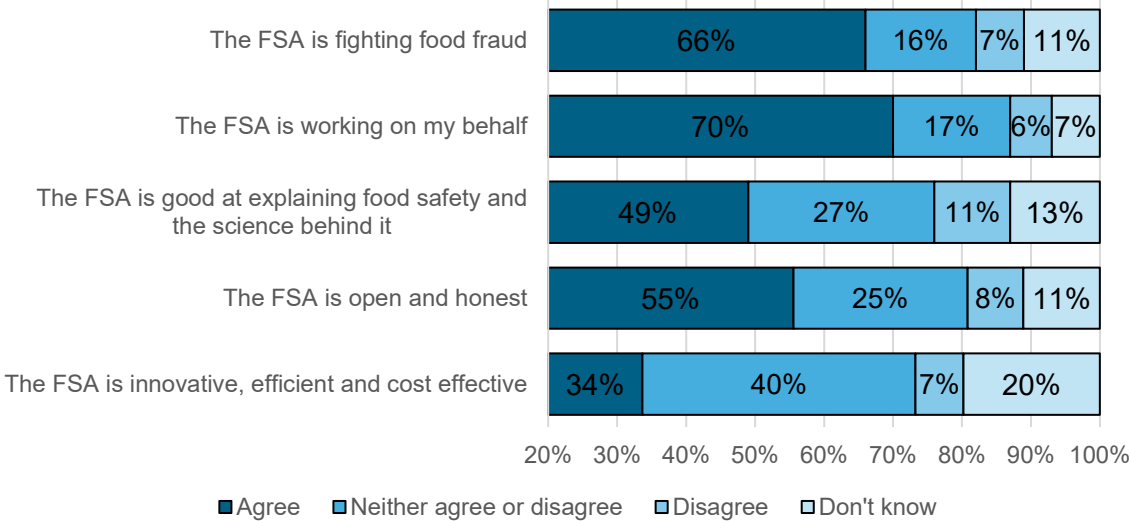
**Figure 5-3 Awareness of FSA responsibilities**



# Perceptions of FSA

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with a variety of statements regarding the FSA<sup>30</sup>. Of those aware of FSA, 70% of respondents agreed<sup>31</sup> that the FSA is working on their behalf, and 66% agreed that the FSA is fighting food fraud. 34% of respondents agreed that the FSA is innovative, efficient and cost effective.

**Figure 5-4 Perceptions of FSA**



<sup>30</sup> Q.4d To what extent do you agree or disagree that the FSA is the following... Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1606)

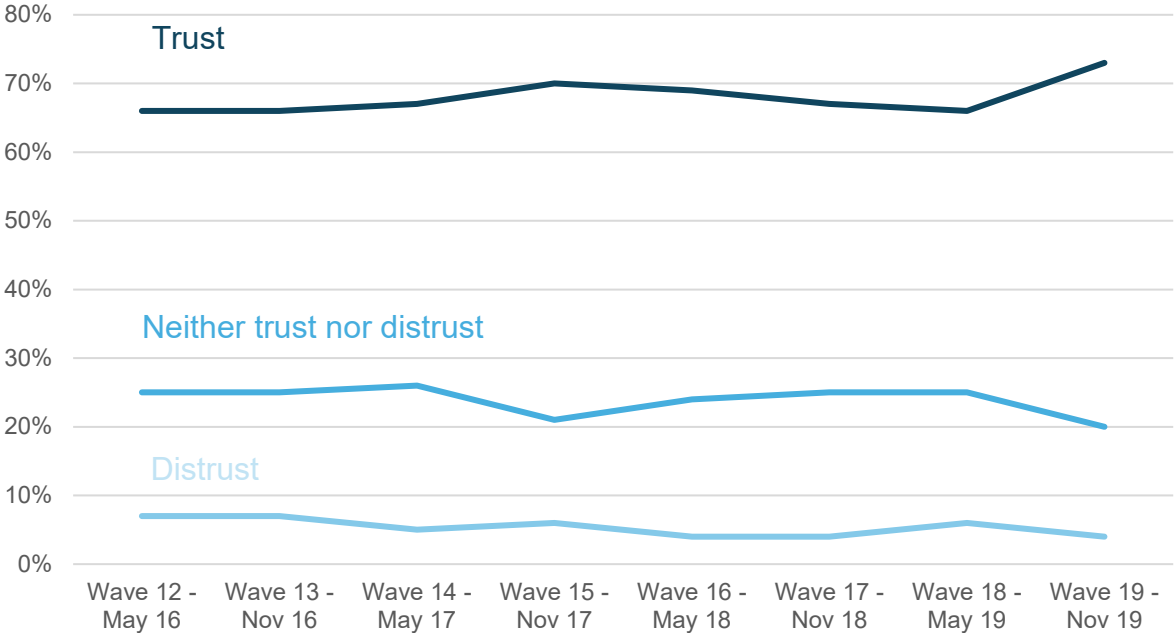
<sup>31</sup> Net 'strongly agree' and 'slightly agree'



# Trust in FSA

At wave 19, 73% of respondents (who were aware of FSA) reported trusting<sup>32</sup> the FSA to do its job<sup>33</sup>. There has been a significant change versus the previous wave by an increase of 7 percentage points.

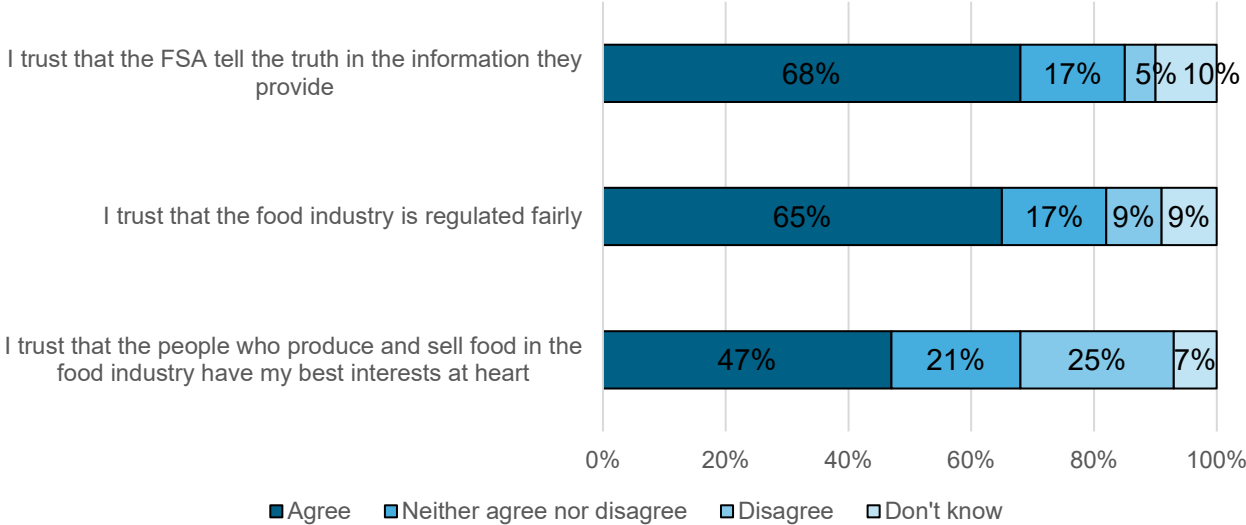
**Figure 5-5 Trust in the FSA over time**



Respondents were also asked to indicate if, and to what extent, they agreed with a variety of statements outlining their level of trust in the FSA and the wider food system<sup>34</sup>. 68% respondents reported that they trust the FSA to tell the truth in the information they provide (75% among those aware of FSA). 65% of respondents agreed that the food industry is regulated fairly and 47% agreed that they trust that the people who produce and sell food have their best interests at heart (both measures increased since the previous wave by 3 percentage points respectively).

<sup>32</sup> Net 'I trust the FSA a lot' and 'I trust the FSA'  
<sup>33</sup> Q.6a How much do you trust or distrust Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is, trust it to make sure the food sold in shops. Base: all respondents aware of FSA (n=1606)  
<sup>34</sup> Q.6b To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

**Figure 5-6 Trust in FSA and food system**



At wave 18, questions relating to trust that were previously included in the FSA’s flagship survey Food and You<sup>35</sup> were moved to the Public Attitudes Tracker in order to observe levels of trust more regularly.

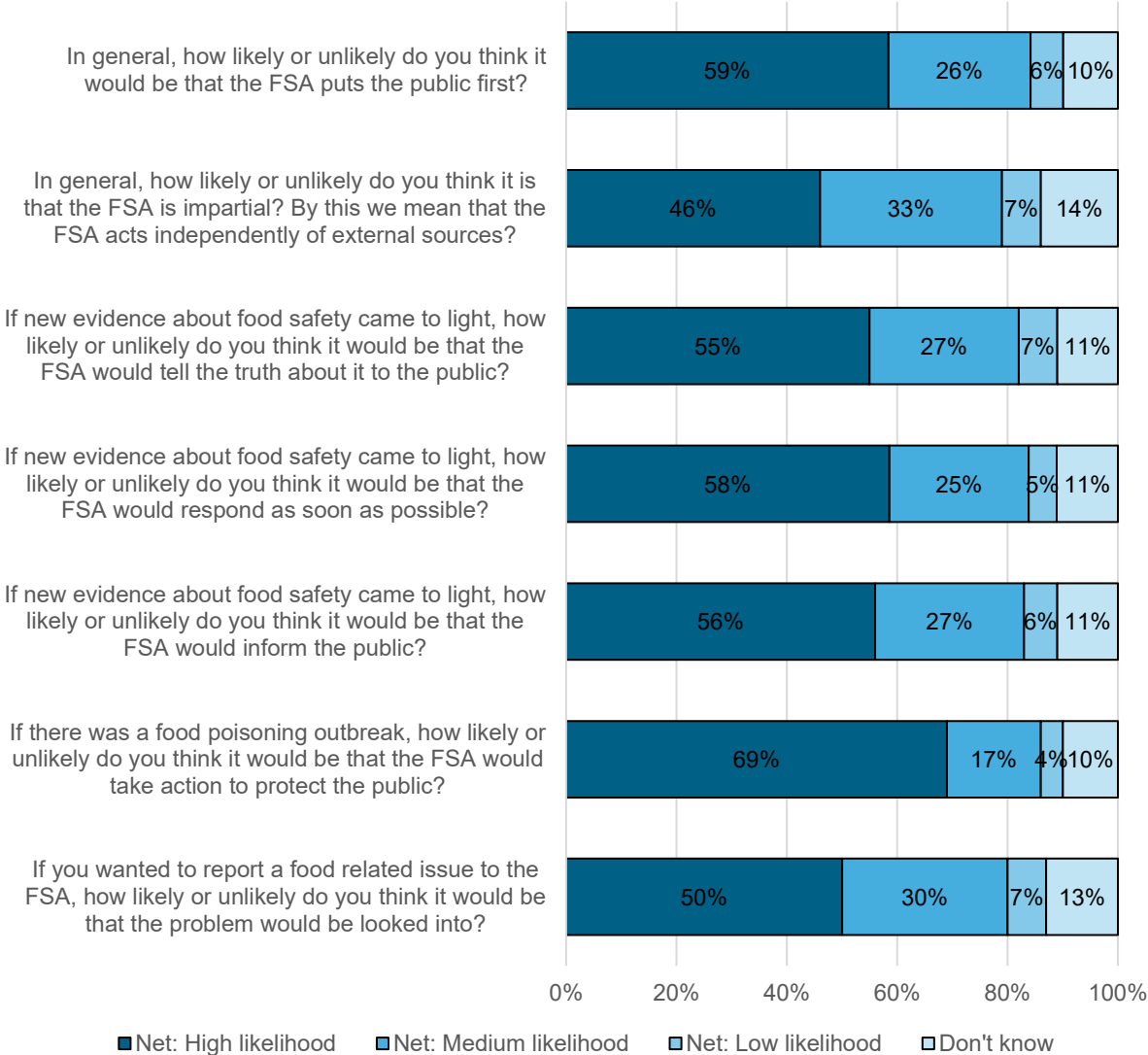
Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of FSA acting in a certain way across seven statements, as reported below<sup>36</sup>. Each statement used the same 10-point scale, from very unlikely to very likely. 69% of respondents agreed that there is a high likelihood<sup>37</sup> of the FSA taking action to protect the public if there was a food poisoning outbreak, and 59% of respondents reported a high likelihood of the FSA putting the public first.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you>

<sup>36</sup> C01-07. Seven statements

<sup>37</sup> High likelihood defined as 7-10

**Figure 5-7 Trust and confidence in FSA**



Using these statements, a composite measure of trust in the FSA was developed as part of Food and You wave five analysis. The composite score was computed using a mean: each of the seven questions was asked on a 10-point scale; therefore, the total score is a mean score based on the number of questions answered by each respondent. All respondents who answered five, six or seven questions had their responses included in the composite measure and received a corresponding score. In total 1,842 cases were included in the composite measure. Further information about the methodology can be found in the Food and You Wave Five secondary analysis paper: Trust in Food and the UK Food System<sup>38</sup>. The average score of the composite measure of trust in the FSA was 7.0 out of 10.

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/foodandyou\\_wave5\\_trust-paper\\_v8-final\\_0.pdf](https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/foodandyou_wave5_trust-paper_v8-final_0.pdf)

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# ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FOOD SYSTEM

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## Food choices

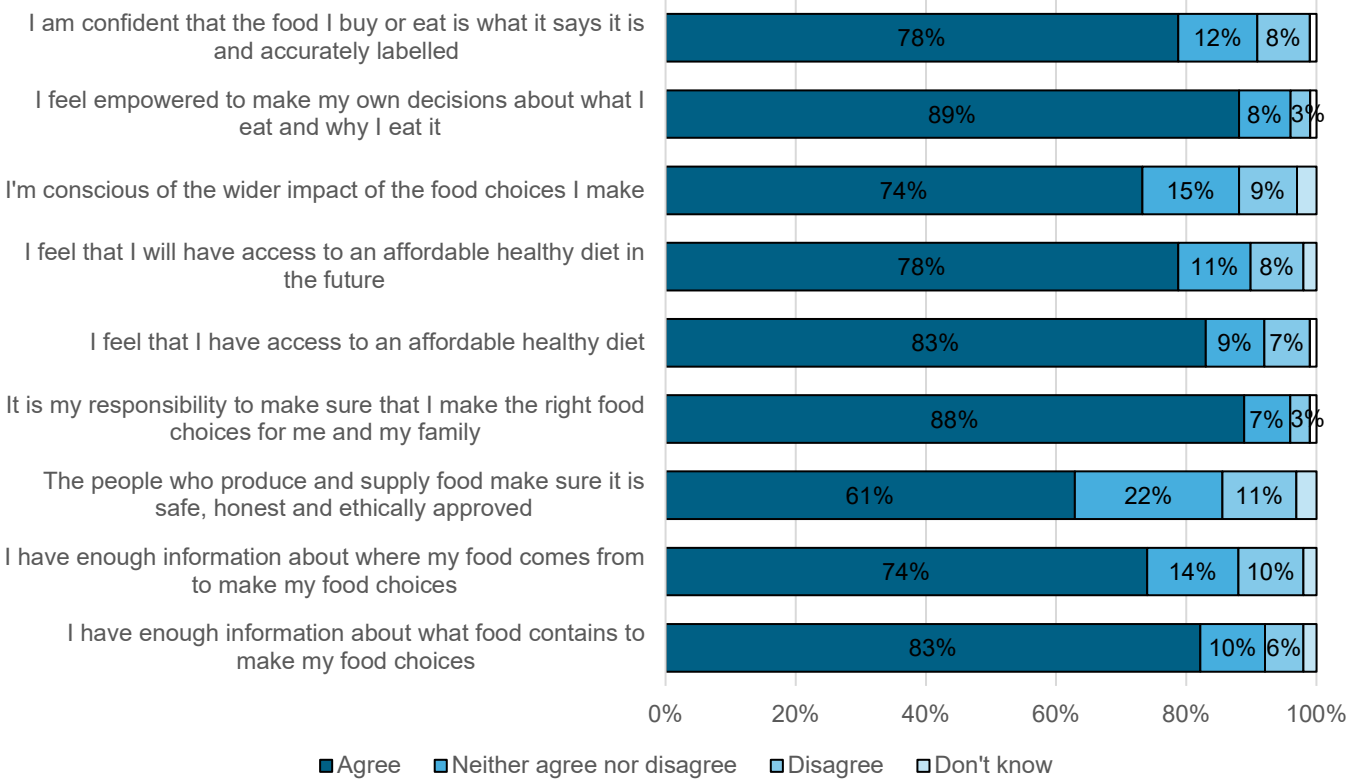
Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements about attitudes towards food production, sale and labelling<sup>39</sup>. There were high levels of agreement for all statements, particularly around responsibility and empowerment. A new statement was added at wave 18 to gauge levels of concern about the environmental impact of food choices; at wave 19, 68% of respondents agreed that this is something they are concerned about. Also, throughout the survey respondents were also asked a range of other questions about their attitudes around trust in the food system (see figure 6-1).

86% of respondents agreed that it is their responsibility to make the right food choices for themselves and their families and 76% of respondents reported they trust the authenticity of the ingredients, origin or quality of the food they buy or eat.

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<sup>39</sup> Q33. We are interested in your views about how food is produced, sold and labelled; basically everything that happens to food on the way to your table. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements....

**Figure 6-1 Attitudes towards food production, sale and labelling**



## Trust in food labelling

Since wave 15, several questions have been asked around trust in food labelling. At wave 19, 68% of respondents reported not always feeling confident in that food is what it says it is on the label or the menu<sup>40</sup>, with 32% of respondents always feeling confident.

Respondents who indicated that they do not always feel confident that food is what it says it is were asked to outline any specific reasons for this<sup>41</sup>. The most commonly reported issues were not believing the ingredient information on labels / menus as correct (11%), not knowing or being sure (6%) and the horse meat scandal (6%).

Additionally, respondents who indicated that they do not always feel confident were then asked if they had ever done any of the following<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Q.7a In general, when buying or eating food, how often do you feel confident that it is what it says it is on the label or the menu?

<sup>41</sup> Q.7b You indicated that you are not always confident that food is what it says it is on the label or menu. What specific issues were you thinking of, if any? Base: all respondents not always confident (n=1,401)

<sup>42</sup> Q.7c Over the past year, have you ever done any of the following because you were not confident that food was what it says it was on the label or menu? Base: all respondents not always confident (n=1,401)

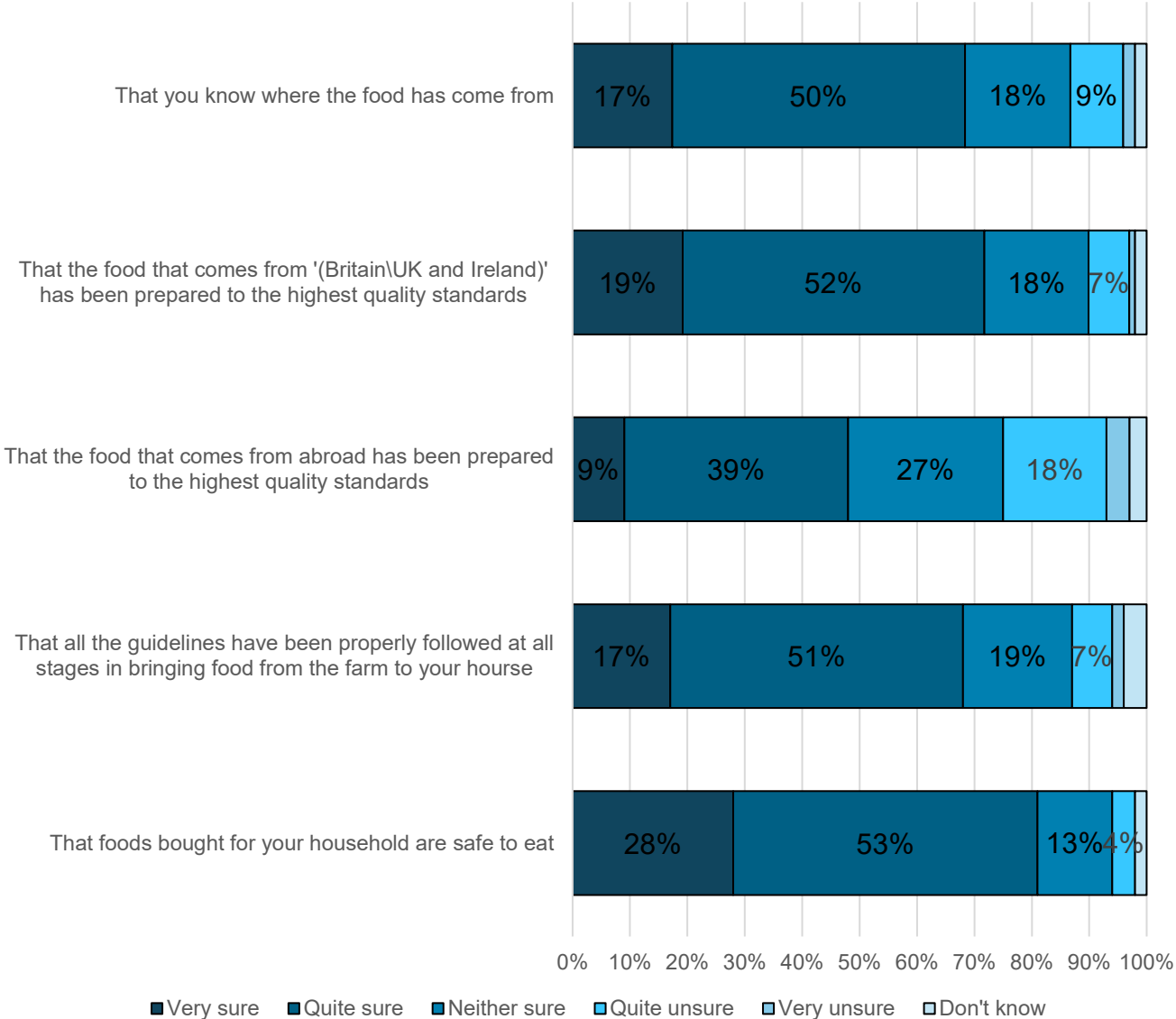
**Table 6-1 Behaviours surrounding lack of confidence in food labelling**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Wave 19 – Nov 19</b>
Read food labels more	28%
Stopped shopping for food at certain places	15%
Changed the way you cook food	10%
Tried to get more information about the issue	10%
Change the way you prepare food	9%
Read about the issue when you saw it but did not seek out information	6%
Other	2%
Took no action	54%

# Trust in the food system

At wave 18, questions relating to trust in the food system that were previously included in the FSA’s flagship survey Food and You<sup>43</sup> were moved to the Public Attitudes Tracker in order to observe levels of trust in the food system on a more regular basis. Respondents were asked to rate five statements, as reported below. 81% of respondents reported that they were sure<sup>44</sup> that the foods bought for their household are safe to eat.

**Figure 6-2 Trust in the food system**



<sup>43</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you>

<sup>44</sup> Net 'very sure' and 'quite sure'

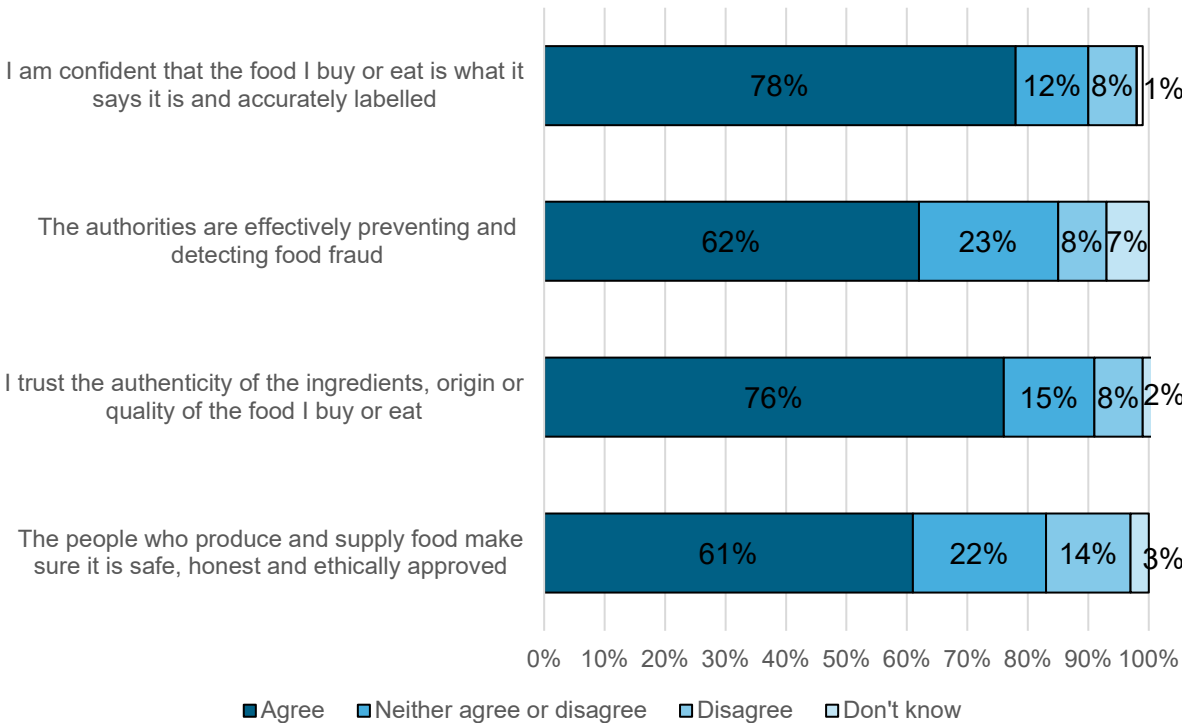
As with trust in the FSA (Section 5.3), a composite measure for trust in the food system was developed as part of Food and You wave five analysis<sup>45</sup>. The score was computed using a mean: each of the five questions was asked on a 5-point scale; therefore, the total score is a mean score based on the number of questions answered by each respondent.

All respondents who answered four or five questions had their responses included in the composite measure and received a corresponding score. In total 2,040 cases were included the composite measure.

The average score of the composite measure of trust in the food system was 3.7 out of 5.

Throughout the survey, respondents were also asked a range of other questions about their attitudes towards and trust in the food system, as reported in the chart below:

**Figure 6-3 Trust in the food system**



When asked about attitudes towards UK meat products, 75% of respondents reported that they were very or somewhat confident in the safety of UK meat products<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> [https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/foodandyou\\_wave5\\_trust-paper\\_v8-final\\_0.pdf](https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/foodandyou_wave5_trust-paper_v8-final_0.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Q.33a How confident are you in the safety of UK meat products





# FOOD RECALLS



At wave 17 a range of questions were added to investigate consumer awareness of food recalls. At wave 19, 20% of respondents reported ever checking for a food recall alerts<sup>47</sup>, and 25% reported being aware of a food recall alert in the past 12 months<sup>48</sup>. There has been an increase by eight percentage points from the previous wave.

Of those aware of a food recall in the past 12 months, 26% noticed it in store, 16% had heard it on TV/radio and 27% through social media<sup>49</sup>. 53% of respondents that had seen a food recall alert in store noted that they had seen it at the entrance/exit, followed by at the checkout (31%)<sup>50</sup>.

35% of respondents who had noticed a food recall reported that food companies had issued the alert<sup>51</sup>, and 90% reported the information being very/quite clear<sup>52</sup>. This has decreased from 94% at the previous wave.

67% of respondents reported taking no action when they noticed a food recall alert, whilst 17% checked to see if they had the product, 13% passed the information on to others and 8% avoided buying the product in the future<sup>53</sup>.

97% of respondents reported that they are not currently signed up to receive food recall information<sup>54</sup> however 20% reported that they would sign up to food recall information in the future<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup>Q.34a In general, how often do you check for food recall alerts?

<sup>48</sup> Q.34b Are you aware of any food recall alerts in the past 12 months?

<sup>49</sup> Q.35a Thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, what was the source of information?  
Base: all respondents aware of a food recall in past 12 months (n=504)

<sup>50</sup> Q.35d You mentioned that you had seen a food recall alert in store. Where did you see it? Base: all respondents who had seen a food recall alert in store (n=126)

<sup>51</sup> Q.35b To the best of your knowledge, who issued the recall? Base: all respondents who can remember the source of the recall information (n=459)

<sup>52</sup> Q.35c How clear was the information on the food recall? Base: all respondents who can remember the source of the recall information (n=459)

<sup>53</sup> Q.36a Again, still thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, which of these actions did you take? Base: all respondents who are aware of any food recall alerts in the past 12 months (n=504)

<sup>54</sup> Q.37 Are you currently signed up to receive food recall information from any organisation?

<sup>55</sup> Q.39 Would you sign up to receive food recall information in the future? Base: all respondents who are not currently signed up to receive food recall information (n=2,067)

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# Annex B: Methodology

This is Wave 19 of the redeveloped Public Attitudes Tracker, which has been running since 2010. Fieldwork for this wave took place from 4<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2019 with a representative sample of 2,101 adults interviewed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The research was conducted through the regular TNS Omnibus survey which uses face-to-face interviews, employing face-to-face Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), and selects respondents using a random location sampling method.

From wave 14 onwards, no research was undertaken in Scotland, which has a separate Tracker. Consequently, this report only presents findings for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To ensure that comparisons from the current wave to previous waves are valid, Scottish responses have been removed from the previous waves – ensuring that findings from England, Wales and Northern Ireland are being compared with findings from the same countries. This means that figures presented in the current report may differ from ones presented previously.

The Omnibus uses a Random Location Quota sample. The sample design involves dividing Great Britain into 600 sampling points, using the 2001 Census small area statistics and Postcode Address File (PAF). The sample is drawn in two stages: at the first stage sample points (Primary Sample units) are selected probability proportionate to size; at the second stage, blocks of addresses are selected at random within the sampled PSU. The number of sampling points issued varies between 143 – 208 each week, depending upon the length of the questionnaire. Interviewing is conducted by professional interviewers who work exclusively for Kantar TNS. 10 – 15 interviews are conducted in each area, depending upon the questionnaire length. All interviewers must leave 3 doors between each successful interview. The Random Location Quota sampling method means that response rates are not calculated for the survey. However, weighting is applied to weight the sample back to the population.

## History

The Tracker survey has been conducted since 2001. The frequency of fieldwork for the Tracker has changed since 2001:

- *April 2001 – December 2001*: quarterly;
- *October 2001 – September 2002*: monthly;

- *December 2002 – March 2010*: quarterly;
- *November 2010 – November 2019 (this report)*: biannually.

At wave 18 the sample size for Wales and Northern Ireland was boosted to increase accuracy and robustness. The tracker report was redesigned in order to reduce the size of the report. Only topline findings have been reported, and bespoke analysis is provided upon request. Questions relating to trust that were previously included in the Food and You report were added to this wave of the tracker.

# Annex C: Wave 19 questionnaire

1a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about? Which others? (Spontaneous)

1b. And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others?

- Food poisoning such as Salmonella and *E. coli*
- Genetically Modified (GM) foods
- BSE ('mad cow disease')
- The feed given to livestock
- The use of pesticides to grow food
- The use of additives (such as preservatives and colouring) in food products
- Hormones\steroids\antibiotics in food
- Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels
- Food hygiene when eating out
- Food hygiene at home
- Chemicals from the environment, such as lead, in food
- Food not being what the label says it is
- None of these

1c. And which of THESE food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others?

- The amount of salt in food
- The amount of sugar in food
- The amount of fat in food
- The amount of saturated fat in food
- Foods aimed at children including school meals
- None of these

1d. And, finally in this section, which of THESE food issues are you concerned about, if any?  
Please select all that apply. Which others?

- Animal welfare
- Food prices
- Food waste
- Food miles (e.g. the distance food travels)
- None of these

2a. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways?

- I am very concerned
- I am fairly concerned
- I am neither concerned nor unconcerned
- I am fairly unconcerned
- I am very unconcerned

2b. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK shops and supermarkets?

- I am very concerned
- I am fairly concerned
- I am neither concerned nor unconcerned
- I am fairly unconcerned
- I am very unconcerned

3a When you buy food in shops or supermarkets, or eat at restaurants, cafes, pubs and takeaways, do you tend to be aware of the standards of hygiene of these places?

- Yes – always
- Yes – sometimes
- No

3b How do you know about the hygiene standards of the places you buy food from or eat out at? Please select all that apply. How else?

- Word of mouth
- Reputation
- Appearance of people working there
- General appearance of shop\restaurant\cafe\pub\takeaway
- Hygiene sticker / certificate
- Websites
- Other (specify)

4. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of? Please select all that apply.

- Department of Health (*only show if England*)
- Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (*only show if NI*)
- Public Health Agency (PHA) (*only show if NI*)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA) (*only show if England, Wales or NI*)
- Safefood (*only show if NI*)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (*only show if England*)
- Department for Rural Affairs (*only show if Wales*)
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) (*only show if NI*)
- Health & Safety Executive
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

4b. How much do you know about the Food Standards Agency, also known as the FSA?

- I've heard the name, but nothing else
- I've heard of them and I know some information about what they do
- I've heard of them and I know a lot about what they do

4c. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following do you think best describes the FSA?

- A government department
- An independent regulator
- A charity
- Arm's length government body
- Private company
- Other (Please specify)

5a. And please can I check, which issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for?

- Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat
- Promoting food safety in the home
- Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles
- Ensuring food is sustainable - such as reducing green house emissions and reducing waste when producing food
- Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling
- Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels
- Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from
- Other

5b. And which of these issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for?  
Please select all that apply

- Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat
- Promoting food safety in the home
- Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles
- Ensuring food is sustainable - such as reducing green house emissions and reducing waste when producing food
- Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling
- Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels
- Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from
- Other



4d. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the FSA is the following...

- 1) ...*Fighting food fraud, such as selling food which isn't what it says it is*
- 2) ...*Working on my behalf*
- 3) ...*Good at explaining food safety and the science behind it*
- 4) ...*Open and honest*
- 5) ...*Innovative, efficient and cost effective*

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

6a. How much do you trust or distrust the Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is, trust it to make sure the food sold in shops and restaurants is safe, and to provide advice on food safety in the home.

- I trust it a lot
- I trust it
- I neither trust nor distrust it
- I distrust it
- I distrust it a lot

6b. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

- 1) ... *I trust that the FSA tell the truth in the information they provide.*
- 2) ... *I trust that the food industry is regulated fairly.*
- 3) ... *I trust that the people who produce and sell food in the food industry have my best interests at heart.*

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

6c. 1) If you wanted to report a food related issue to the FSA, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the problem would be looked into?

2) *If there was a food poisoning outbreak, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would take action to protect the public?*

3) *If new evidence about food safety came to light, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would inform the public?*

4) *If new evidence about food safety came to light, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would respond as soon as possible?*

5) *If new evidence about food safety came to light, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA would tell the truth about it to the public?*

6) In general, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that the FSA is impartial? By this we mean that the FSA acts independently of external sources?

7). *In general, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that the FSA puts the public first?*

- 0 - Very Unlikely
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 - Very likely

7a. In general, when buying or eating food, how often do you feel confident that it is what it says it is on the label or the menu?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never

7b. You indicated that you are not always confident that food is what it says it is on the label or menu. What specific issues were you thinking of, if any? (Spontaneous)

7c. Over the past year, have you ever done any of the following because you were not confident that food was what it says it was on the label or menu?

- Tried to get more information about the issue
- Read about the issue when you saw it but did not seek out information
- Read food labels more labels
- Changed the way you cook food
- Changed the way you prepare food
- Stopped shopping for food at certain places
- Other (Please specify)
- Took no action

8a. Do you cook and/or prepare food for any of the following? Please select all that apply

- Myself
- Children under 5 years old
- Children aged 5-15
- Adults aged 16-24
- Adults 65 years old and over
- Other (Please specify)
- No, I don't cook or prepare food at all

8ai. What types of food poisoning, if any, have you heard of?

- Bacillus Cereus
- Botulism
- Campylobacter
- Clostridium Perfringes
- E-coli
- Listeria
- Norovirus
- Salmonella
- None of these

Q.8b In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you are MOST LIKELY to get food poisoning from?

- Cereal
- Eggs
- Raw chicken or turkey
- Reheated takeaway food
- Shellfish
- Unwashed vegetables or salad
- Water
- Yoghurt
- Cooked sliced meats
- Smoked fish
- Soft mould-ripened and soft cheeses
- Pre-prepared sandwiches
- Pre-prepared salads
- Pate

8BI. In the UK, from which of the following foods do you think you can get food poisoning?

- Frozen fruit
- Frozen vegetables
- Tinned vegetables
- Dried pasta
- Tinned fruit
- Bread
- Potatoes
- None of these

8c. Which of these activities, if any, do you think will help you avoid food poisoning? Please select all that you think apply

- Preparing different food types on different surfaces chopping boards
- Cooking food thoroughly
- Storing food at 5 degrees C or below
- Avoid re-heating food
- Not washing raw chicken
- Washing fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly
- Following storage instructions on food labels

- Eating food by the use-by date
- Eating food by the best-before date
- Heating leftovers until they are steaming hot before eating them

8d. When preparing frozen vegetables, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never
- Does not apply

8DI. When preparing frozen fruit, how often do you follow instructions on the packaging?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never
- Does not apply

8E. Does anyone in your household consume raw milk? By raw milk I mean milk that has not been pasteurised. Please select all that apply

- Yes - myself
- Yes - other adult(s) in household (over 18)
- Yes - child(ren) aged 0-5
- Yes - child(ren) aged 6-15
- Yes - child(ren) aged 16+
- Yes - other (please specify)
- No, none of the above

9A. Are you aware of the rules about allergens? By rules we mean any information rule, regulation or legislation introduced relevant to this subject.

- Yes (please specify the rule(s) you are aware of)
- No

- Not sure

9b. Do you or anyone that you regularly eat out with or buy food/drink for, have food allergies or intolerances, based on the definitions below...

*...Myself*

*...Another adult in my household*

*...A child/children in my household*

*...A child/children not in your household e.g. if your children live elsewhere*

*...Another adult not in your household e.g. if you care for an adult who lives elsewhere, or a partner who doesn't live with you*

*...A friend*

- Food intolerance (People with food intolerance experience symptoms such as diarrhoea and stomach cramps caused by difficulties in digesting certain substances. However, no allergic reaction takes place)
- Food allergy that has been medically diagnosed by a doctor (A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Allergic reactions are often mild, but they can sometimes be very serious)
- Both a food allergy and a food intolerance
- None of these

9c. Thinking specifically about eating out and buying food to eat, for example, from a coffee shop, restaurant, café, sandwich place, takeaway outlet etc., how confident would you feel in asking a member of staff for information about the ingredients in the foods they are selling, because of a concern about possible allergens/food intolerances?...

1) *...In a coffee shop*

2) *...In a café*

3) *...In a sandwich place*

4) *...In a takeaway outlet*

5) *...In a restaurant*

- Not at all confident
- Not very confident
- Neither confident nor unconfident
- Somewhat confident
- Very confident

10. We are interested in your views about how food is produced, sold and labelled; basically everything that happens to food on the way to your table. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements....

1) *...I have enough information about what food contains to make my food choices*

2) ...I have enough information about where my food comes from to make my food choices  
3) ...The people who produce and supply food make sure it is safe, honest and ethically approved

4) ...It is my responsibility to make sure that I make the right food choices for me and my family

5) ...I feel that I have access to an affordable healthy diet

6) ...I feel that I will have access to an affordable healthy diet in the future

7) ...I'm conscious of the wider impact of the food choices I make

8) ...I feel empowered to make my own decisions about what I eat and why I eat it

9) ...I am confident that the food I buy or eat is what it says it is and accurately labelled

10) ...The authorities are effectively preventing and detecting food fraud (By that we mean any dishonest misdescription of products, or selling of unfit or harmful food)

11) I trust the authenticity of the ingredients, origin or quality of the food I buy or eat.

12) I am concerned about the environmental impact of my food choices

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

11.1) If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be ...that you know where the food has come from?

2) If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....that the food that comes from <?> has been prepared to the highest quality standards?

3) If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....

4) ...that the food that comes from abroad has been prepared to the highest quality standards?

5) If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....

6) ...that all the guidelines have been properly followed at all stages in bringing food from the farm to your house?

7) If you were buying food and groceries in <?> how sure or unsure would you be....

8) ...that foods bought for your household are safe to eat?

- Very sure
- Quite sure
- Neither sure nor unsure
- Quite unsure
- Very unsure

12a. How confident are you in the safety of UK meat products?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neither confident nor unconfident
- Not very confident
- Not at all confident

12b. And how confident are you in the authenticity of UK meat products?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neither confident nor unconfident
- Not very confident
- Not at all confident

13a. In general, how often do you check for food recall alerts?

- At least once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Less than once a month
- I do not check for food recall alerts

13b. Are you aware of any food recall alerts in the past 12 months?

- Yes
- No



14a. Thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, what was the source of information?

- Notice(s)\alert(s) in store
- TV\radio
- Newspaper(s)
- Online news or news apps
- Social media – Twitter / Facebook
- Text message(s)
- Email(s)
- Website(s) (other than news websites)
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

14b. To the best of your knowledge, who issued the recall?

- Food Standards Agency
- Government or regulatory organisation(s)
- Consumer groups (e.g. Which?, Allergy UK, Anaphylaxis Campaign, Coeliac UK)
- Food companies (e.g. Nestlé, Mars, Cadbury, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Lidl etc.
- News / media organisation(s)
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

14c. How clear was the information on the food recall?

- Very clear
- Quite clear
- Not very clear
- Not at all clear

14d. You mentioned that you had seen a food recall alert in store. Where did you see it?

- At the entrance / exit to store
- At the checkout
- At the customer services area
- On the food aisle
- Other (please specify)

17a. Again, still thinking about the most recent food recall alert you are aware of, which of these actions did you take?

- Took no action
- Passed the information on to others
- Checked to see if I had the product
- Returned to the store to return the product / get a refund
- Found out more information on the food recall
- Threw the product away
- I, or someone else, ate the product
- Avoided buying the product in the future
- Other (please specify)

17b. Was the product eaten before, or after, you became aware of the food recall?

- Eaten before became aware
- Eaten after became aware as it did not apply
- Eaten after became aware as the risk was low
- Other (please specify)

18. Are you currently signed up to receive food recall information from any organisation?

- Yes
- No

19. Which organisations are you signed up with, to receive food recall information?

- Food Standards Agency
- Government or regulatory organisation(s)
- Consumer groups (e.g. Which?, Allergy UK, Anaphylaxis Campaign, Coeliac UK)
- Food companies (e.g. Nestlé, Mars, Cadbury, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Lidl etc.
- News / media organisation(s)
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

20. Would you sign up to receive food recall information in the future?

- Yes
- No