

Statement of Statistical Sources for FSA biannual public attitudes tracker

Statistical end-product.

Title of the statistical product derived from an administrative/management source
FSA biannual public attitudes tracker

Name of the organisation responsible for this statistical end-product
Food Standards Agency

Name/email address of contact point for this product
attitudestracker@food.gov.uk

Periodicity of release

Twice a year: (In recent years, attitudes measured in May were published in August, and attitudes measured in November and published in February. However, the process is being reviewed with the aim of more prompt publication.)

Underlying survey.

Name/title of the original data source

FSA biannual public attitudes tracker survey questions within the Kantar TNS consumer omnibus survey.

The purpose of the survey

The Public Attitudes Tracker is primarily used by FSA Communications staff to monitor changes in consumer attitudes towards the FSA and food-related issues. It is used to improve the FSA's knowledge and understanding of consumer attitudes in those areas for which it has responsibility; to develop effective communication strategies and to gauge public confidence and understanding of national food safety and standards arrangements. Furthermore, the FSA uses Tracker results as indicators of its performance, particularly the reported level of trust and awareness of the FSA.

The questions cover a number of topics of interest for the Agency, including: concern about specific food safety issues, awareness of hygiene standards in eating establishments, awareness of the FSA and its responsibilities, trust in the FSA and food industry, confidence in labelling, attitudes towards production and sale, food poisoning and allergens/allergies. Data is also collected on the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Survey Description

The FSA Public Attitudes Tracker is a repeated cross-sectional study. The data are collected by adding a suite of questions to the Kantar TNS face-to-face consumer omnibus survey. The Omnibus survey selects respondents using multi-stage stratified random location sampling. Currently, a sample of about 2,000 adults in England, Wales and NI is interviewed face-to-face in each wave.

Name of the organisation responsible for the survey

Food Standards Agency (FSA)

Data supplier

The research is conducted through the Kantar TNS consumer omnibus survey.

Unit of inquiry (for example, households, individuals, product)

Individuals

Intended coverage of survey

Adults aged 16 years and over, resident in England, Wales and NI.

Completeness that is actual coverage (for example, take-up rate)

Kantar TNS do not publish the contact and refusal rates. However, they aim for an overall response rate of about 5%.

Geographical coverage of the statistical product

Currently England, Wales and N Ireland (was United Kingdom).

Lowest level of geographical coverage

ISBA ITV regions, Government Office Region

Previous arrangements no longer in place of the current survey

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has conducted the Public Attitudes Tracker survey since 2001 to monitor key Agency issues. After a review in 2010, the Tracker was redeveloped in full and has run twice a year since then.

Data definitions used

'Total' concern refers to combined 'spontaneous and prompted' responses.

'Agree' refers to the net proportion of 'strongly agree' and 'slightly agree'.

'Disagree' refers to the net proportion of respondents who 'strongly disagree' or 'slightly disagree'.

Classification systems used

NRS Social grade (A; B; C1; C2; D; E)

Arrangements to publish underlying data and metadata

Data is published on food.gov alongside the report

Data collection process

Periodicity/ timing of fieldwork

Fieldwork currently commences about 3 months prior to publication (attitudes measured in May are published in August, and attitudes measured in November and published in February). However, the process is being reviewed with the aim of more prompt publication.

Quality assurance checks and validation

The original suite of questions added to the Kantar TNS underwent cognitive testing. This found the questions to provide broad but good measures of public concern over food safety issues, its awareness of and trust in the FSA. Not all of the more recent questions have been cognitively tested.

All interviews are conducted by the Kantar TNS field team and in accordance with strict quality control procedures. Assignments are conducted over two days of fieldwork and are carried out weekday 2pm-8pm and at the weekend. All interviewers must leave 3 doors between each successful interview. Quotas are set using gender, working status and the presence of children to ensure a balanced sample of adults.

The Kantar TNS Omnibus uses Computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) to control the selection of addresses, and to administer the questionnaires and to transmit the results. This automation reduces the chance of interviewer error.

Access arrangements prior to publication

During the collection process, Kantar TNS are responsible for ensuring that security and confidentiality is maintained on an ongoing basis.

Addresses and other identifiers are removed before the results are sent to the FSA via secure file transfer. Consequently, the FSA only possess the Tracker data in anonymised form with insufficient information to identify individuals.

Dissemination procedures (and publication procedures where appropriate)

The underlying data tables and earlier Tracker reports are available from food.gov and on request from attitudetracker@food.gov.uk. This is also the contact to discuss access to the original data in SPSS format.

Nature of changes to the survey which can impact on the statistics

Before Wave 11, fieldwork covered the whole of the UK sample boosts undertaken in Scotland. Following the establishment of Food Standards Scotland in April 2015, fieldwork is now restricted to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Change Process (Procedures for changing definitions, scope, etc)

The process for varying the questions, scope and classifications arise depending on the nature of the change and the user demand. All changes follow liaison between FSA analysts and Kantar TNS.

The subsequent statistical production process

Level of quality required

The level of quality is determined by the underlying commercial omnibus survey. This was assessed as being sufficient to meet the needs for a measure of trends over time.

Validation procedures (who does what and when to ensure quality)

Kantar TNS's in-house, trained validators verify a minimum of 10% of the assignments. All aspects of the interview are checked, and the interviewer is graded on several measures. Survey information for each interviewer is analysed by a specialist team of quality control experts. Data quality checks, as detailed in ISO20252/9001, are made on both tables and electronic output by data processing executives and researchers.

Any sample profile imbalances in age, gender, social grade and area were corrected at the analysis stage through weighting against the national distribution. No further validation is performed by FSA Analysis other than a check of the completeness of the data.

Quality assessment

Other organisations have used a "design factor" of 1.25 to 1.5 to inflate the standard errors drawn from the Kantar TNS Omnibus survey.

Potential impact of changes to the survey on the statistics

As fieldwork is no longer undertaken in Scotland, it is no longer possible to draw conclusions about Scottish respondents or the UK as a whole.

Furthermore, the responsibilities of the Food Standards Agency vary between the UK countries and over time. These differences are likely to affect public awareness of who has these responsibilities, and possibly the reported awareness of the FSA.

Procedures for mitigating such discontinuities

From Wave 11 onward, the report will only present findings for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To enable consistent comparisons over time, the results for previous waves have been recalculated on a similar basis (i.e. removing Scottish responses). Other discontinuities are highlighted in the report when they are known.

User needs and other engagement and collaboration

Identification of users, and uses and decisions that the statistics are used for
Internet activity related to the release is monitored to identify the uses that it is put to.

Methods of user engagement

FSA policy teams are invited to request bespoke analysis of the Tracker dataset as needed. Other key users such as devolved teams, Defra, DH and WRAP are sent briefing papers on each release that are tailored to their interests. Social media is used to advertise the release and encourage interest in it.

Outreach and Involvement of policy, methodological & area experts

No unique activity but it may be included as part of the wider outreach around FSA Social Science research.

Arrangements to meet disability needs

No specific measures