

The 2014

FOOD and YOU

Survey

Wales Bulletin 4
Experience of food poisoning
and attitudes towards food
safety and food production

The 2014

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Experience of food poisoning and attitudes towards food safety and food production

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Contents

Official Statistics	5
Foreword	6
Background and objectives	6
Role of the FSA.....	6
The Food and You survey.....	6
About this bulletin	7
Self-reported behaviours.....	7
Questionnaire changes between waves.....	7
Reporting conventions	8
Topics covered.....	8
1. Food poisoning.....	10
1.1 Experience of food poisoning.....	10
1.2 Variation in experience of food poisoning by different groups in the population	12
2. Attitudes towards food safety.....	13
2.1 Level of agreement with statements about food safety	13
2.2 Variation in attitudes towards food safety by different groups in the population	16
3. Concern about where food is produced.....	17
3.1 Levels of concern about where food is produced.....	17
3.2 Variation in concern about where food is produced by different groups in the population	20
4. Comparisons between Wales and the rest of the UK	21

Official Statistics

The statistics presented in this bulletin meet the requirements of the UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics.¹

Further information on Official Statistics can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website².

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/types-of-official-statistics/index.html>

Foreword

This bulletin presents a descriptive overview of selected findings for Wales from Wave 3 of the Food and You survey, commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA or the Agency). Much of the Agency's work with the public is concerned with informing and influencing the ways in which food is purchased, stored, prepared and consumed. Food and You provides data about the prevalence of different reported behaviours, attitudes and knowledge relating to these topics.

Waves 1 and 2 of the Food and You survey were carried out in 2010 and 2012 respectively. Wave 3 was conducted in 2014 and consisted of 3,453 interviews from a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over across the UK, including 503 interviews in Wales, on which this report is based. Wave 3 builds on and extends the previous findings.

The key findings for Wales from Wave 3 have been published in four separate bulletins, one for each of the following main topics:

- Eating, cooking and shopping
- Food safety in the home
- Eating outside the home
- Experience of food poisoning and attitudes towards food safety and food production

In addition to the bulletins, an executive summary has been published which presents key findings for Wales from across the entire survey.

This bulletin provides a descriptive overview of the key findings for Wales from Wave 3 in relation to experience of food poisoning and attitudes towards food safety and food production.

Background and objectives

Role of the FSA

The FSA was created in 2000 as a non-ministerial, independent government department governed by a Board whose members have extensive knowledge and experience in a wide range of sectors relevant to the FSA. The Agency was set up to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food, and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.

The FSA is responsible for food safety and hygiene across the UK, and is committed to ensuring the general public can have trust and confidence in the food they buy and eat. The FSA in Wales is additionally responsible for policy on general food labelling and food composition and standards.

In providing guidance on food safety to consumers, the Agency aims to minimise the risk of food poisoning. Advice generally relates to four aspects of food hygiene: cleaning, cooking, avoiding cross-contamination and chilling (collectively known as the '4 Cs'), with advice provided on each aspect. Guidance is also given on the use of date labels (such as 'use by' and 'best before' dates) and storage instructions on foods to help ensure the safety of food eaten at home.

The Food and You survey

In 2009, the FSA commissioned a consortium comprising TNS BMRB, the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and the University of Westminster to carry out Wave 1 of Food and You. The main aim of this survey was to collect quantitative information as a baseline on the UK public's reported behaviour, attitudes and knowledge relating to food issues (such as food safety and healthy eating). The results from this survey provided an extensive evidence base to support policy making at the FSA and across other government departments.

Waves 1 and 2 of the Food and You survey were conducted by the same consortium in 2010 and 2012 respectively. Reports of the findings and methodological details are available on the FSA website³. Specific examples of use of the findings include results from Wave 1 being used to determine the theme of the 2012 FSA Food Safety Week⁴ and findings from Wave 2 informing FSA public campaigns on food safety. Secondary analysis of the Waves 1 and 2 data has explored domestic food safety practices⁵ and the relationships between nutrition and food safety⁶. Wave 3 was carried out in 2014 by TNS BMRB.

Prior to 2010, the FSA was responsible for food safety and nutrition policy across the UK. Accordingly, Wave 1 of the Food and You survey contained questions covering both healthy eating and food safety, and the findings were reported together. During Wave 1, responsibility for nutrition policy (healthy eating) was transferred in England and Wales to the Department of Health (DH) and the Welsh Government respectively. Waves 2 and 3, therefore, focussed solely on food safety issues for respondents in England and Wales. This bulletin covers the UK wide food safety questions asked to respondents living in Wales. Separate bulletins have been published for each UK country, as well as a bulletin of the UK results as a whole⁷.

The objectives for Wave 3 of the Food and You survey were to collect quantitative information to enable the Agency to:

- Explore public understanding of, and engagement with, the Agency's aim of improving food safety
- Identify specific target groups for future interventions (e.g. those most at risk or those among whom FSA policies and initiatives are likely to have the greatest impact)
- Monitor changes over time (compared with data from Waves 1 and 2 or from other sources) in reported attitudes and behaviour
- Broaden the evidence base and develop indicators to assess progress in fulfilling the Agency's strategic plans, aims and targets.

About this bulletin

Self-reported behaviours

Interviews as a data collection method do not necessarily capture people's actual practices. What respondents say in interviews about what they do and think is necessarily *reported* for a number of reasons, including recall not being accurate, certain behaviours being habitual and therefore possibly difficult to recall, and desirability bias – described further below. Here self-reported behaviour is used as a proxy for actual behaviour. Where the report refers to behaviour, attitudes or knowledge, the fact that the data refer to reported behaviour must always be borne in mind.

When developing the Food and You questionnaire, it was apparent that the risk of social desirability bias was high i.e. respondents tended to answer questions based on what they thought they ought to say, rather than reflecting what they actually do, know or think. In particular, there were a number of topics in the questionnaire for which respondents might be reluctant to report behaviour which goes against a generally well known 'best practice' (for example, not washing their hands before cooking or preparing food). The Food and You questionnaire was carefully designed to limit this as far as possible by asking questions about behaviour in specific time periods (e.g. asking whether a respondent did something 'in the last seven days' rather than 'usually') and framing questions in a neutral way.

Questionnaire changes between waves

To reflect the changing responsibilities of the FSA, the focus of the survey content was changed between Wave 1 and Wave 2. To minimise any effects caused by changing the order of the questions

³ The Wave 1 report can be found at: http://www.foodbase.org.uk/admintools/reportdocuments/641-1-1079_Food_and_You_Report_Main_Report_FINAL.pdf and the Wave 2 report can be found at:

http://www.foodbase.org.uk/admintools/reportdocuments/805-1-1460_Wave_2_Main_Report.pdf

⁴ <http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/germwatch/>

⁵ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ssres/fs409012>

⁶ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ssres/crosscutss/fs307014>

⁷ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research-reports/ssresearch/foodandyou>

attempts were made to keep the structure of the questionnaire as similar as possible between the waves. Despite this, the removal of the healthy eating questions in England and Wales, and further revisions of the food safety questions introduced unavoidable differences between the two waves of the survey. As the context in which survey questions are asked is known to influence the way respondents reply we cannot rule out the possibility that differences in responses between Waves 1 and 2 may have been partly or wholly because of changes to the questions in general and to the changed context resulting from removing the 'healthy eating' questions in particular. Further changes were made to the questionnaire at Wave 3. Again, whilst efforts were made to keep the structure of the questionnaire as similar as possible to the Wave 2 questionnaire, unavoidable differences were introduced between these two waves of the survey. That observed differences could be an effect of changes to the questionnaire should be kept in mind when considering the findings.

Where questions have remained consistent across the waves of the survey, statistical analysis has been used to determine whether results have changed significantly over time. Although having three data points now means it is possible to see trends starting to emerge, doing so is inevitably still tentative, whereas further waves of data collection would allow greater confidence in identifying trends.

There are two other important differences to note between waves: -

- The sample boost applied in Wave 3 means that the sample size of those living in Wales is higher at Wave 3 (503 respondents) than at either Wave 1 (121 respondents) or Wave 2 (104 respondents).
- At Wave 1 of the survey, in order to cover additional topics without over-burdening respondents, three question modules (eating arrangements, eating out and shopping patterns) were each asked of a random third of respondents. At Waves 2 and 3, all question modules were asked of all respondents.

The net result of these differences is that some analyses for Waves 1 and 2 data are based on a sample of fewer than 50 respondents. This is particularly the case for some questions from Wave 1 which were only asked of a third of respondents. These findings are still included in this report to provide contextual information, but care should be taken not to over-interpret these findings. In some cases much larger differences are required, when comparing Wave 1 to either Waves 2 or 3, in order for statistical significance to be achieved.

The Food and You Technical Report⁸ provides a summary of questionnaire changes between Wave 2 and Wave 3.

Reporting conventions

Unless stated otherwise, where comparisons are made in the text between different population groups or variables, only those differences found to be statistically significant at the five per cent level are reported. In other words, differences as large as those reported have no more than a five per cent probability of occurring by chance.

Percentages may not add to 100% as a result of rounding.

Topics covered

The Food and You survey collected data on a wide range of topics. As a result it is not feasible for this series of bulletins to present detailed analysis of all of the questions. Only selected socio-demographic variables have been analysed to uncover statistically significant differences, particularly as the Wales sample size is lower than that compared with the UK as a whole. These variables were identified by the FSA as of key interest, providing the most useful information about sub-group variation at this initial stage of data analysis. The identified variables were: age, gender and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)⁹. Due to the small base numbers for Wales at Waves 1 and 2,

⁸ <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/food-and-you-2014-uk-bulletin-technical-report.pdf>

⁹ WIMD is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It considers deprivation across income, employment, health, education, geographical access to services, community safety, physical environment and housing. Areas are grouped into quintiles based on their 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score, with quintile 1 the most deprived areas across Wales and quintile 5 the least deprived areas.

variation by these variables was only examined for Wave 3 data. Full data are available in the UK Data Archive¹⁰ and at data.gov.uk¹¹ for further analysis.

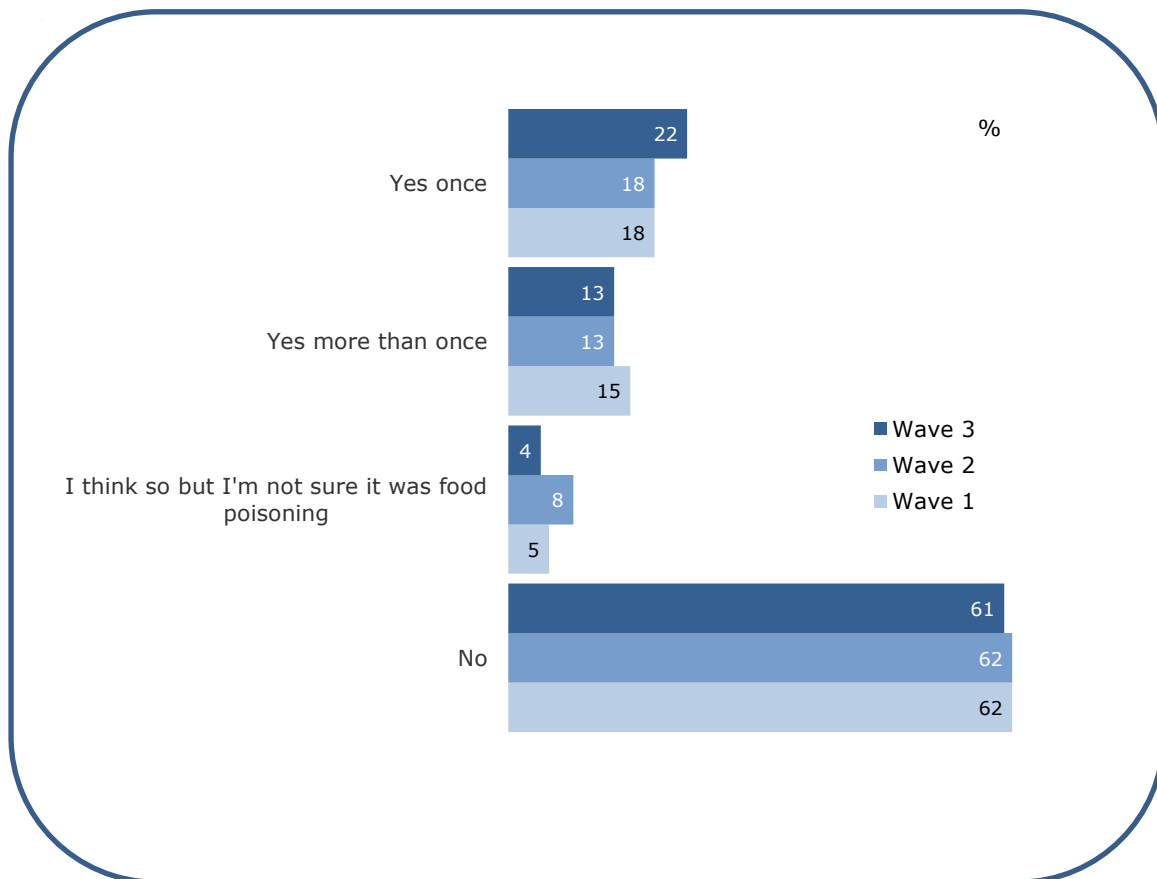
¹⁰ <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>

¹¹ <http://data.gov.uk/>

1. Food poisoning

1.1 Experience of food poisoning

Figure 1.1 Incidence of food poisoning (Waves 1, 2 and 3)



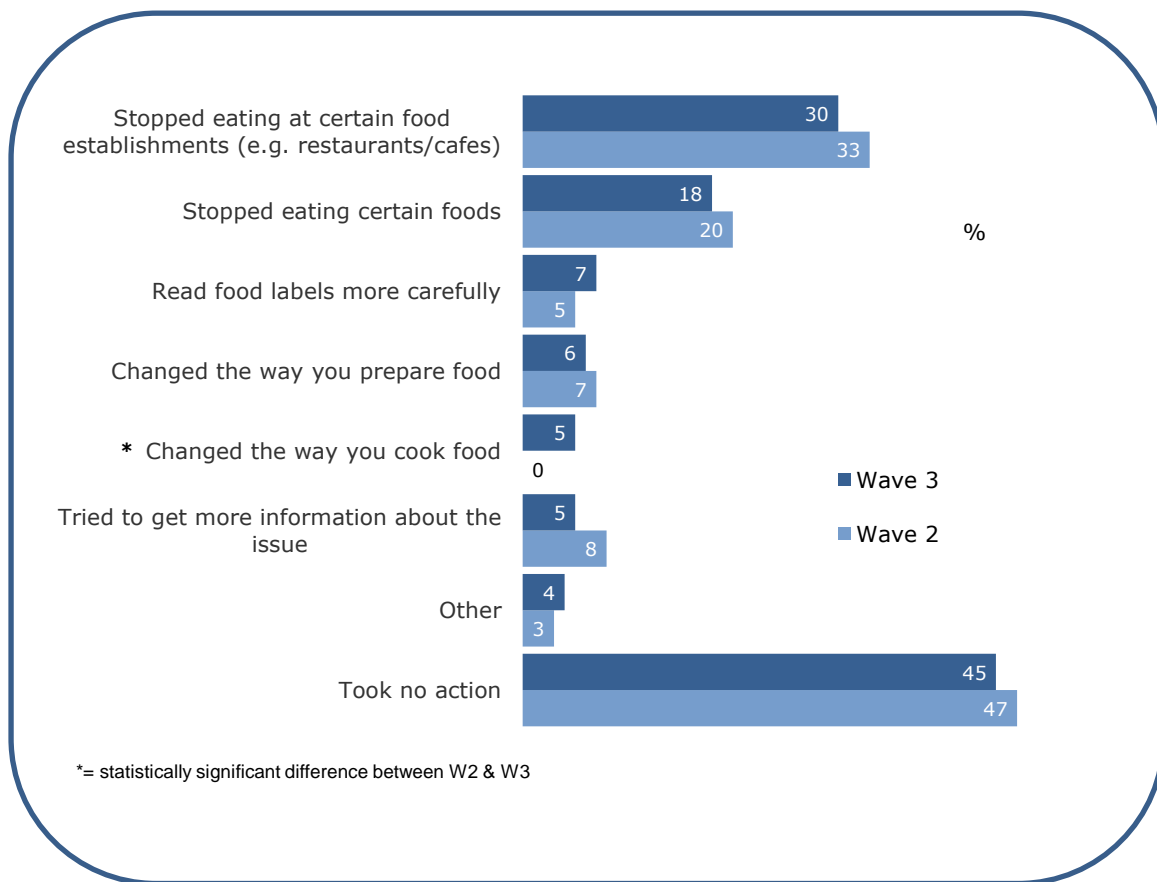
Source: Q4_28 Have you personally ever had food poisoning?

Base: Q4_28 All Wales respondents – Wave 1 (121); Wave 2 (104); Wave 3 (503);

- Overall, 35% of respondents reported that they had ever had food poisoning (22% once and 13% more than once).
- Sixty-one per cent of respondents reported they had never had food poisoning and four per cent said that they were not sure.
- The proportions reporting having had food poisoning were similar to Waves 1 and 2.
- Four per cent of respondents said they had experienced food poisoning in the last year¹², with one per cent reporting they had experienced it more than once during this time.

¹² In total, 26 respondents said that they had experienced food poisoning in the past year. These respondents were asked further questions about their food poisoning experience, but these findings are not reported here due to the small base.

Figure 1.2 Action taken as a result of having food poisoning on most recent occasion (Waves 2 and 3)



Source: Q4_28b In response to when you had food poisoning (most recently) have you done any of the following?

Note: respondents were able to give multiple answers

Base: All Wales respondents who have had food poisoning – Wave 2 (40 – small base¹³); Wave 3 (200) (Question not asked at Wave 1)

- As a consequence of having had food poisoning, 30% of respondents reported that they had stopped eating at certain food establishments and 18% reported that they had stopped eating certain foods. Seven per cent said that they had started reading food labels more carefully.
- Forty-five per cent of respondents who had experienced food poisoning reported that they had taken no action as a consequence.
- Five per cent of respondents at Wave 3 reported that they had changed the way they cook food in response to having had food poisoning compared with no mentions of this at Wave 2. This difference was statistically significant.

¹³ These findings are based on a small sample but are included to provide contextual information. Caution should be taken when interpreting these findings as the small base reduces the robustness of these data.

1.2 Variation in experience of food poisoning by different groups in the population¹⁴

Variation by gender, age and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) at Wave 3

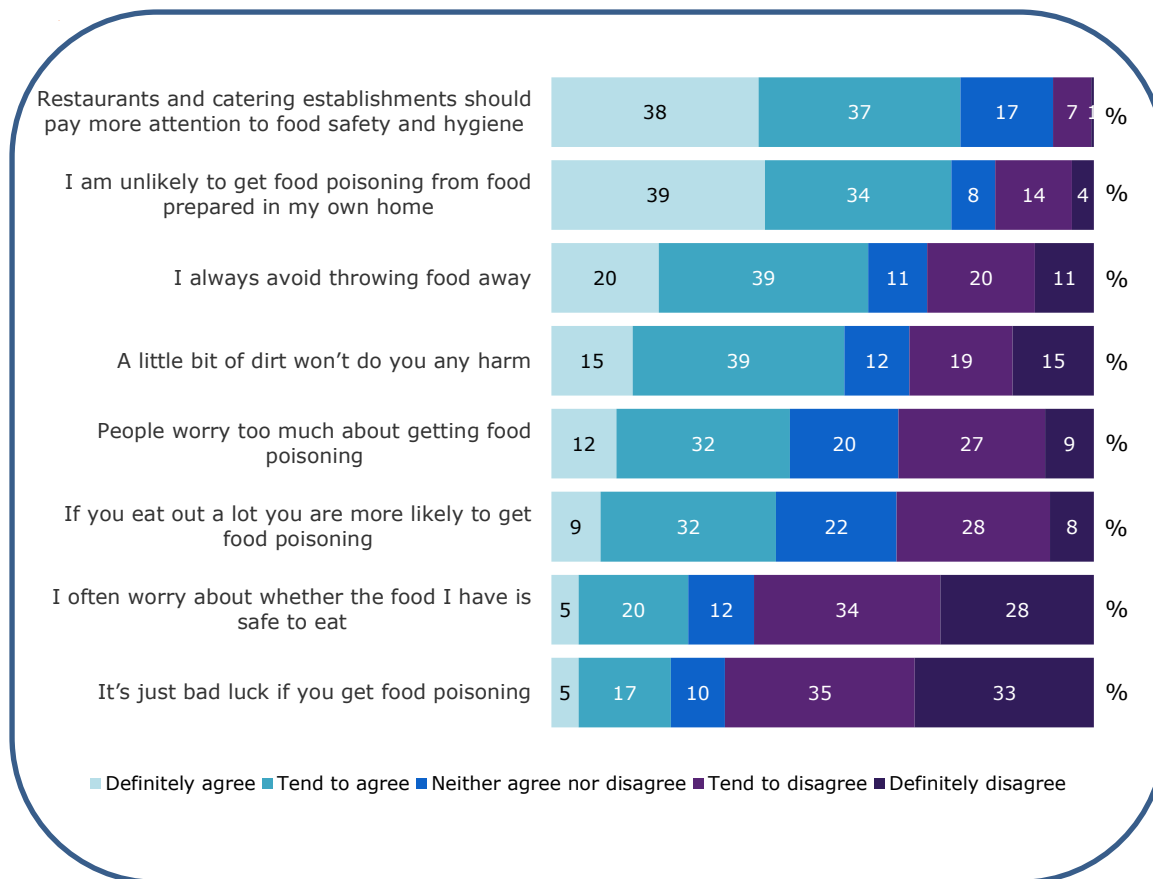
- Variation by **gender** in reported experience of food poisoning was apparent, with men more likely than women to report having had food poisoning more than once (19% compared with eight per cent).
- There was no statistically significant variation by **age** or **level of deprivation**.

¹⁴ The following variables were analysed to identify statistically significant differences: age, gender and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. There were no statistically significant differences identified for age and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

2. Attitudes towards food safety

2.1 Level of agreement with statements about food safety

Figure 2.1 Attitudes towards food safety (Wave 3)



Source: Q4_27 And now I will read out a few statements people have made and would like you to tell me whether or not you agree with them?

Base: All Wales respondents (503)

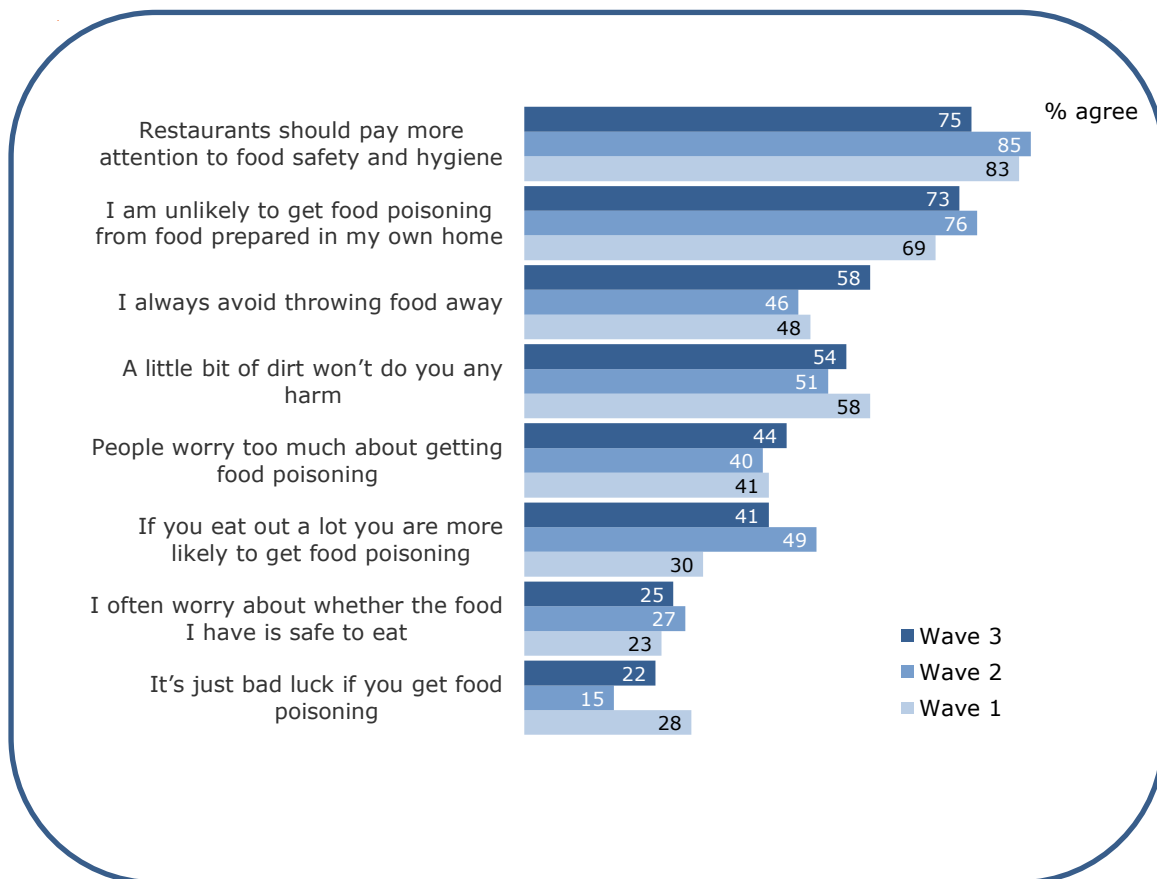
- Around four in ten respondents said they definitely agreed that restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene (38%) and that they were unlikely to get food poisoning from food prepared in their own home (39%). Around three in four agreed¹⁵ with each statement (75% and 73% respectively).
- A fifth of respondents said they definitely agreed that they always avoid throwing food away (20%) and 15% definitely agreed that a little bit of dirt will not do you any harm. Over half agreed with each of these statements (58% and 54% respectively).

¹⁵ 'Agreed' includes those who responded either 'Definitely agree' or 'Tend to agree'. This definition applies throughout this bulletin.

- Around one in ten (nine per cent) definitely agreed that if you eat out a lot you are more likely to get food poisoning. Forty one per cent of respondents agreed with this statement and 36% disagreed.¹⁶ Around one in five (22%) agreed that it is just bad luck if you get food poisoning while 68% disagreed.
- A quarter (25%) agreed that they often worry about whether the food they have is safe to eat, with five per cent saying that they definitely agreed. Respondents were more likely to agree that people worry too much about getting food poisoning (44%).

¹⁶ 'Disagreed' includes those who responded either 'Definitely disagree' or 'Tend to disagree'. This definition applies throughout this bulletin.

Figure 2.2 Attitudes towards food safety (Waves 1, 2 & 3)



Source: Q4_27 And now I will read out a few statements people have made and would like you to tell me whether or not you agree with them?

Base: All Wales respondents - Wave 1 (121), Wave 2 (104), Wave 3 (503)

- These statements were also included at Waves 1 and 2 of the Food and You survey, allowing changes in attitudes over time to be monitored.
- The proportion of respondents at Wave 3 agreeing that restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene was lower than that at Wave 2 (75% compared with 85%) but similar to that at Wave 1 (83%).
- Whilst there was a statistically significant difference between Wave 1 and Wave 2, the proportion of respondents at Wave 3 agreeing that if you eat out a lot you are more likely to get food poisoning was similar to that at both previous waves (41% at Wave 3, 49% at Wave 2 and 30% at Wave 1).

2.2 Variation in attitudes towards food safety by different groups in the population¹⁷

Variation by gender, age and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) at Wave 3

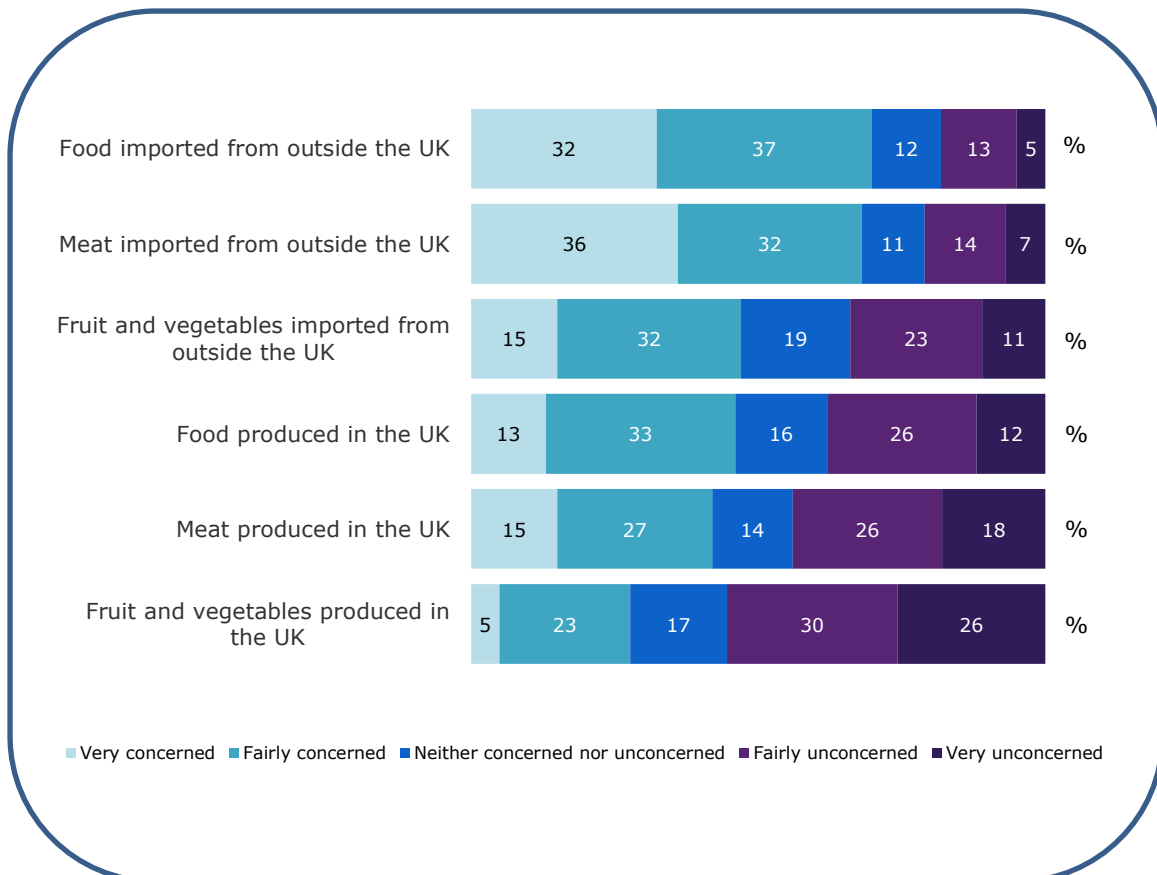
- There was variation in attitudes towards food safety by **gender**, with women more likely than men to agree that restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene (81% compared with 69%) and to definitely agree that a little bit of dirt won't do you any harm (20% compared with 10%).
- Men were more likely than women to definitely agree that they always try to avoid throwing food away (26% compared with 14%) and to disagree that they often worry about whether the food they have is safe to eat (69% compared with 57%).
- Attitudes varied by **age**. In general, older respondents were less likely than younger respondents to provide responses that could suggest they were concerned about food safety. In particular, 81% of those aged 35 and over agreed that you are unlikely to get food poisoning at home, compared with 55% of 16-34 year olds, and 21% of those aged 35 and over agreed they often worried about whether food is safe to eat compared with 34% of 16-34 year olds.
- Thirty-three per cent of respondents aged 65 and over agreed it is just bad luck if you get food poisoning, compared with 18% of 16-64 year olds, and 26% of those aged 65 and over disagreed that people worry too much about getting food poisoning compared with 39% of 16-64 year olds.
- There was also variation by age in the proportion of respondents agreeing that you are more likely to get food poisoning if you eat out a lot: 34% of 16-54 year olds agreed with this statement compared with 52% of those aged 55 and over. However, younger respondents were more likely to definitely agree that restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety (45% of 16-44 year olds compared with 33% of those aged 45 and over).
- Attitudes towards food safety varied by **level of deprivation**. Respondents in the most deprived areas (quintiles one and two) were more likely than those in less deprived areas (quintiles three to five) to agree that it's just bad luck if you get food poisoning (27% compared with 17%) and to definitely agree that restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene (47% compared with 30%). Respondents in the most deprived areas were less likely to agree that they were unlikely to get food poisoning in their own home (68% compared with 78% in less deprived areas) and that a little bit of dirt won't do you any harm (46% compared with 61%).
- Respondents in the most deprived areas (quintile one) were more likely than those in less deprived areas (quintiles two to five) to agree if you eat out a lot you are more likely to get food poisoning (54% compared with 37%).

¹⁷ The following variables were analysed to identify statistically significant differences: age, gender and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

3. Concern about where food is produced

3.1 Levels of concern about where food is produced

Figure 3.1 Concern about the safety of food produced in the UK and imported from outside the UK (Wave 3)



Source: Q9_2 Please tell me the extent to which you are concerned or unconcerned by each of the following issues...

Base: All Wales respondents (503)

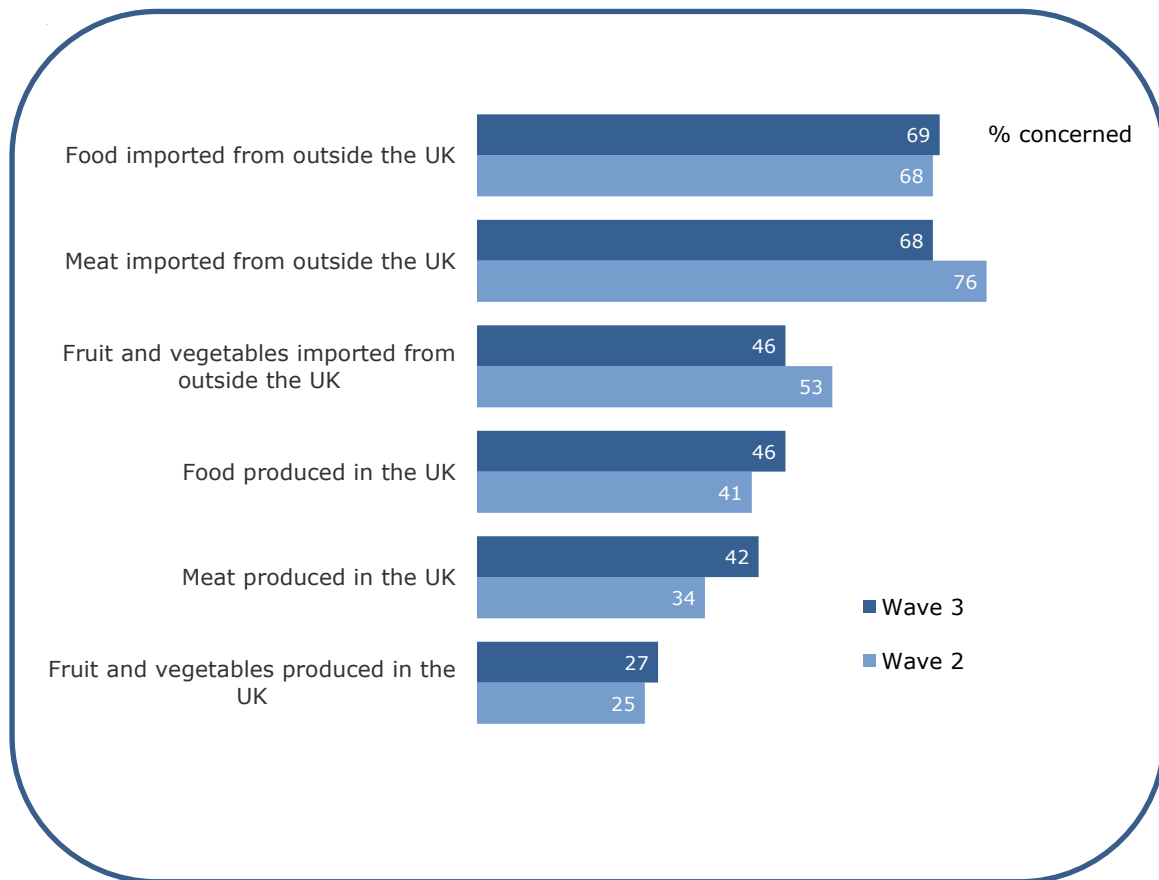
- Respondents were most likely to report concern about the safety of food imported from outside the UK, especially meat. Around seven in ten respondents were concerned¹⁸ about each type of import (69% about food, 68% about meat) and 36% were very concerned about the safety of imported meat. There was considerably less concern reported about the safety of imported fruit and vegetables (46%, with 15% very concerned).

¹⁸ 'Concerned' includes those who responded either 'Very concerned' or 'Fairly concerned'. This definition applies throughout this bulletin.

- Just under half of respondents were concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK (46%) with 13% reporting being very concerned. As with imported food, there was greater concern reported about the safety of meat produced in the UK (42%, with 15% very concerned) than about fruit and vegetables (27% concerned). Over half (56%) said they were unconcerned¹⁹ about the safety of fruit and vegetables produced in the UK.

¹⁹ 'Unconcerned' includes those who responded either 'Very unconcerned' or 'Fairly unconcerned'. This definition applies throughout this bulletin.

Figure 3.2 Concern about the safety of food produced in the UK and imported from outside the UK (Waves 2 and 3)



Source: Q9_2 Please tell me the extent to which you are concerned or unconcerned by each of the following issues...

Base: All Wales respondents - Wave 2 (104), Wave 3 (503) (Question not asked at Wave 1)

- Compared with Wave 2, there were similar patterns of concern about the safety of food both imported from outside the UK and produced within the UK at Wave 3.

3.2 Variation in concern about where food is produced by different groups in the population²⁰

Variation by gender, age and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) at Wave 3

- There was little variation by **gender**, although men were more likely than women to say they were very unconcerned about the safety of fruit and vegetables produced in the UK (32% compared with 20%), and meat produced in the UK (23% compared with 14%).
- There was also little variation in concern by **age**, although older respondents aged 75 and over were less likely than younger groups to say they were concerned about fruit and vegetables produced in the UK (14% compared with 29% of 16-74 year olds).
- Some variation in concern was observed by **level of deprivation**. Respondents from the least deprived areas (quintile five) were more likely than those from more deprived areas (quintiles two to four) to say that they were very unconcerned about the safety of food imported from outside the UK. Those in the most deprived areas were more likely than those in less deprived areas to be concerned about the safety of fruit and vegetables produced in the UK (39% of those in quintile one compared with 25% of those in quintiles two to five) and about the safety of fruit and vegetables imported from outside the UK (53% of those in quintiles one and two compared with 40% of those in quintiles three to five).

²⁰ The following variables were analysed to identify statistically significant differences: age, gender and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

4. Comparisons between Wales and the rest of the UK

Table 4.1 Incidence of food poisoning, by country (Wave 3)

Incidence of food poisoning	Wales	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Yes more than once	13%	17% ^{S NI}	11%	8%
Yes once	22%	23% ^{NI}	22%	17%
I think so but I'm not sure it was food poisoning	4%	6%	5%	4%
No	61% ^E	54%	62% ^E	71% ^{E W S}
Total Yes	35% ^{NI}	40% ^{S NI}	32%	25%
<i>Base</i>	<i>(503)</i>	<i>(1,951)</i>	<i>(475)</i>	<i>(524)</i>

Source: Q4_28 Have you personally ever had food poisoning?

Base: All respondents

NB. E / W / S / NI indicates that the result is statistically significantly higher than the result for the country indicated by the initial

- Respondents living in Wales were more likely than those living in Northern Ireland to report ever having experienced food poisoning (35% compared with 25%). They were also more likely than those living in England to report never having had food poisoning (61% compared with 54%).
- The small number of respondents within each country experiencing food poisoning within the last year means it is not feasible to conduct additional comparisons.

Table 4.2 Attitudes towards food safety, by country (Wave 3)

% agreeing that ...	Wales	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland
I am unlikely to get food poisoning from food prepared in my own home	73%	77%	78%	77%
Restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene	75%	75%	71%	82% ^{EWS}
I always avoid throwing food away	58%	58%	54%	64%
A little bit of dirt won't do you any harm	54%	56%	58%	53%
If you eat out a lot you are more likely to get food poisoning	41%	42%	38%	53% ^{EWS}
People worry too much about getting food poisoning	44%	40%	43%	44%
It's just bad luck if you get food poisoning	22%	23%	23%	19%
I often worry about whether the food I have is safe to eat	25%	23%	19%	24%
<i>Base</i>	<i>(503)</i>	<i>(1,951)</i>	<i>(475)</i>	<i>(524)</i>

Source: Q4_27 And now I will read out a few statements people have made and would like you to tell me whether or not you agree with them?

Base: All respondents

NB. E / W / S / NI indicates that the result is statistically significantly higher than the result for the country indicated by the initial

- Respondents living in Wales were less likely to agree that if you eat out a lot you are more likely to get food poisoning (41%) and to agree that restaurants and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene (75%) compared with those living in Northern Ireland (53% and 82% respectively).

Table 4.3 Concern about where food is produced, by country (Wave 3)

% concerned about safety of ...	Wales	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Meat imported from outside the UK	68%	66%	64%	74% ^{E S}
Food imported from outside the UK	69%	65%	64%	64%
Fruit and vegetables imported from outside the UK	46% ^{S NI}	42%	37%	36%
Food produced in the UK	46% ^S	43% ^S	34%	40%
Meat produced in the UK	42% ^S	39% ^S	31%	40% ^S
Fruit and vegetables produced in the UK	27% ^S	26% ^S	20%	25%
<i>Base</i>	<i>(503)</i>	<i>(1,951)</i>	<i>(475)</i>	<i>(524)</i>

Source: Q9_2 To what extent are you concerned or unconcerned by the safety of...?

Base: All respondents

NB. E / W / S / NI indicates that the result is statistically significantly higher than the result for the country indicated by the initial

- Respondents living in Wales were more likely than those living in Scotland and Northern Ireland to be concerned about the safety of fruit and vegetables imported from outside the UK (46% compared with 37% and 36% respectively).
- They were also more likely than respondents in Scotland to be concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK, including food overall (46% compared with 34%), meat (42% compared with 31%), and fruit and vegetables (27% compared with 20%).