
Biannual Public Attitudes Tracker

November 2010
Food Standards Agency

Social Science Research Unit

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Summary

The Food Standards Agency places seven questions on the TNS consumer face to face omnibus survey on a biannual basis in order to monitor key Agency issues.

Fieldwork for this wave of research was 10th November to 14th November 2010 and a representative sample of 2,105 adults in the UK was interviewed.

The following report shows top-line findings from in-house analysis. All sub group differences and wave on wave changes cited are statistically significant and reported at the 95% confidence level¹.

- The main food issues of total² concern for respondents were food prices (54%), the amount of salt in food (45%) and food waste (42%). Food safety issues were reported by fewer respondents to be issues of concern.
- The main food safety issues of total² concern for respondents were food hygiene when eating out (36%) and food poisoning such as Salmonella and E. Coli (29%). Respondents were also concerned about the use of additives in food products (27%).
- Respondents aged 16-25 demonstrated a lower total² concern than every other age group for the main food issues of total concern.
- Amongst the sample, slightly fewer people reported being concerned about the safety of food sold in UK shops and supermarkets compared to UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways (45% compared to 51% respectively).

¹ This is where we can be 95% confident that the results did not come about by chance.

² Where the term 'total' is used to report the research findings it refers to all responses for parts 'a' and 'b', 'c' and/ or 'd' of each question combined (prompted and spontaneous responses).

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- Males were less concerned about the safety of food sold overall than females, as were respondents who were not the principal shopper compared to respondents who were the principal shopper.
 - 80%³ of respondents reported being aware of the hygiene standards of places they eat out at or buy food from. The main ways these respondents reported being aware were from general appearance of premises (65%), appearance of staff (51%) and reputation (42%).
 - 79% of respondents in the UK reported being aware of the Food Standards Agency.
 - Those who were aware of the FSA were asked what issues they thought the FSA was responsible for. The main issue that respondents reported to fall within the Agency's remit was ensuring food bought is safe to eat (82%⁴).
 - Half⁵ of the respondents who reported being aware of the Food Standards Agency were asked how much they trust or distrust the FSA to do its job. 62%⁶ of these respondents reported that they trusted the Agency to do its job.

³ Figure based on net of respondents who reported 'yes – always' or 'yes – sometimes'

⁴ Total awareness figure²

⁵ See Annex A and page 16 for further detail on this question

⁶ Figure based on net of respondents who reported 'I trust the FSA a lot' or 'I trust the FSA'

Background

The Food Standards Agency (FSA or Agency) has traditionally placed six questions on the TNS consumer face to face omnibus survey on a quarterly basis in order to monitor key Agency issues. Tracking began in 2001.

These questions were recently redeveloped and the Agency now places seven questions on the TNS consumer face to face omnibus survey on a biannual basis. Please see Annex A for further detail on the changes made to the Tracker.

This is wave 1 of the new tracker. The fieldwork period for this wave of research was 10th November to 14th November 2010. A representative sample of 2,105 adults in the UK was interviewed.

The questions cover concern about specific food issues (spontaneous and prompted), attitudes towards particular food safety issues, awareness of hygiene standards in eating establishments, awareness of the Food Standards Agency and the Agency's responsibilities (spontaneous and prompted), and trust in the FSA. Please see Annex B for the questionnaire.

Where the term 'total' is used to report the research findings (questions 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 5a and 5b), it refers to all responses for parts 'a' and 'b', 'c' and/ or 'd' of each question combined (prompted and spontaneous responses).

The following report shows top-line findings from in-house analysis. All sub group differences and wave on wave changes cited are statistically significant and reported at the 95% confidence level⁷. Full results, including wave on wave figures for question 3a and b, are available on request in table format. Please contact helen.atkinson@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

⁷ This is where we can be 95% confident that the results did not come about by chance.

1. Concern about Food Issues

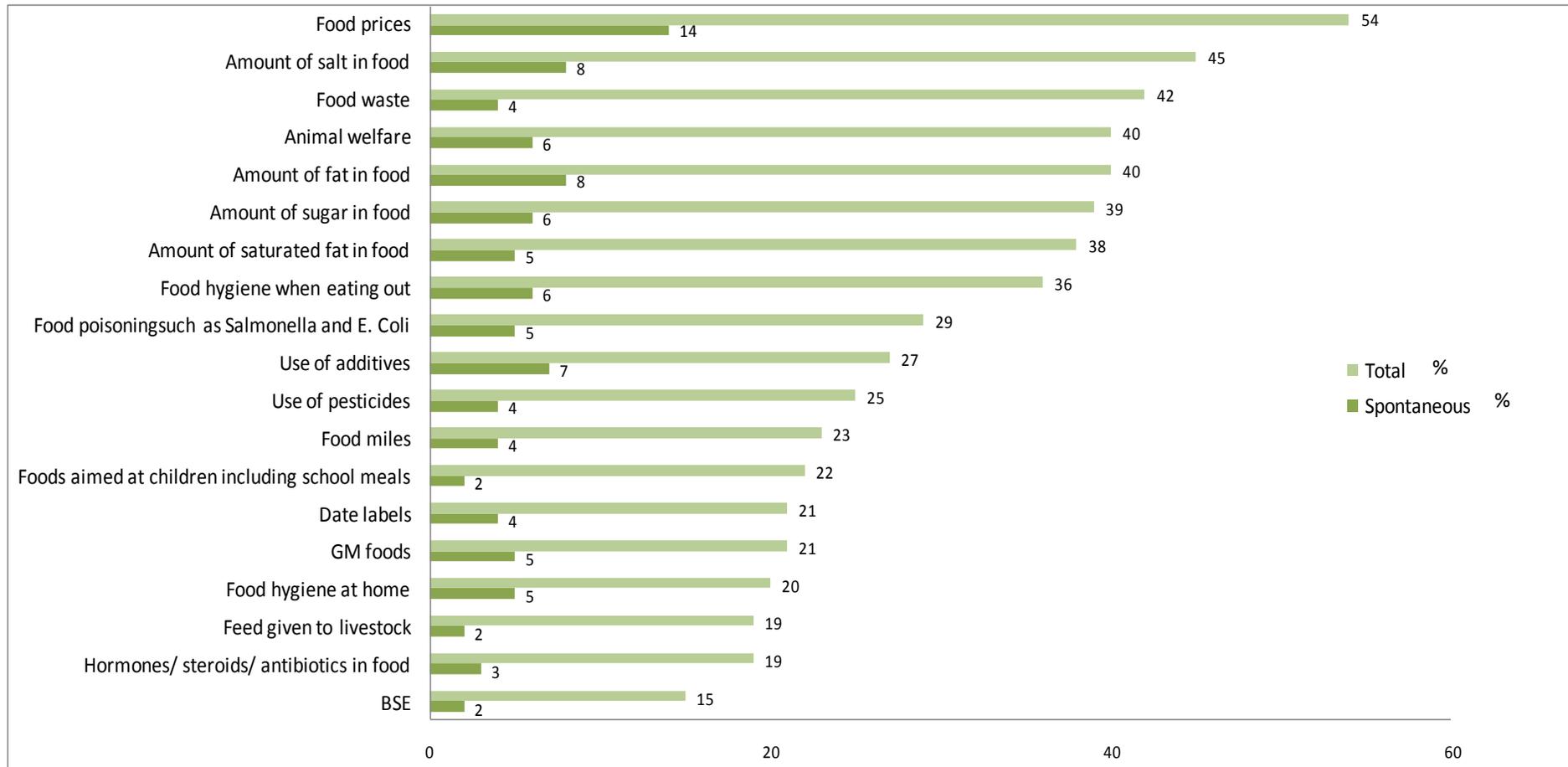
The main food issues of total concern for respondents were **food prices (54%)**, **the amount of salt in food (45%)** and **food waste (42%)**. Food safety issues were reported by fewer respondents to be issues of concern. The main food safety issues of total concern for respondents were **food hygiene when eating out (36%)** and **food poisoning such as Salmonella and E. Coli (29%)**. Respondents were also concerned about **the use of additives in food products (27%)** (see Figure 1 for a full breakdown).

Respondents aged 16-25 demonstrated a lower total concern than every other age group for the main food issues of total concern. This age group also demonstrated a lower total concern than every other age group for the following food issues: the amount of fat in food (25%), the amount of sugar in food (20%), food miles (12%), the use of pesticides to grow food (11%), GM foods (10%), the use of additives in food products (9%), hormones/ steroids/ antibiotics in food (7%) and BSE (7%) (see Table 1 for more detail).

The main food issues of spontaneous concern for respondents were **food prices (14%)**, **the amount of salt in food** and **the amount of fat in food (both at 8%)**. These issues are slightly different to the main food issues of total concern (see Figure 1 for a full breakdown).

Respondents aged 16-25 again demonstrated a lower spontaneous concern about several food issues including: the amount of salt in food (3%), the use of additives in food products (1%) and the feed given to livestock (0%) (see Table 2 for more detail).

Figure 1. Food issues of concern (November 2010)



Base: All respondents, UK

Table 1. Age differences in total concern about food issues (November 2010)

	All	16-25yr	26-35yr	36-49yr	50-65yr	66+yr
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2105	316	325	465	501	498
Food prices	54%	42%*	52%	62%	54%	55%
Amount of salt in food	45%	27%*	37%	49%	57%	46%
Food waste	42%	24%*	37%	43%	55%	43%
Amount of fat in food	40%	25%*	35%	42%	51%	40%
Amount of sugar in food	39%	20%*	35%	41%	47%	43%
Food miles	23%	12%*	18%	25%	30%	25%
Use of pesticides	25%	11%*	19%	24%	34%	30%
GM foods	21%	10%*	19%	23%	27%	21%
Use of additives	27%	9%*	25%	32%	37%	26%
Hormones/ steroids/ antibiotics in food	19%	7%*	13%	23%	27%	20%
BSE	15%	7%*	13%	17%	19%	16%

Base: All respondents, UK

* shows a statistically significant difference when compared to every other age group

Table 2. Age differences in spontaneous concern about food issues (November 2010)

	All	16-25yr	26-35yr	36-49yr	50-65yr	66+yr
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2105	316	325	465	501	498
Amount of salt in food	8%	3%*	7%	10%	9%	9%
Use of additives	7%	1%*	8%	9%	10%	6%
Feed given to livestock	2%	0%*	2%	3%	4%	2%

Base: All respondents, UK

* shows a statistically significant difference when compared to every other age group

2. Concern about Food Safety

45%⁸ of respondents reported being **concerned about the safety of food sold in UK shops and supermarkets** while 33% of respondents reported being unconcerned. In contrast, 51%⁸ of respondents reported being **concerned about the safety of food sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways** in this wave of the tracker and 27% reported being unconcerned.

Males were less concerned about the safety of food sold than females, and respondents who were not the principal shopper were also less concerned about the safety of food sold than respondents who were the principal shopper. Please see Table 3 for more detail.

Table 3. Gender and shopper differences in concern about food safety (November 2010)

	All	Male	Female	None principal shopper	Principal shopper
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2105	969	1136	504	1601
Food sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways	51%	49%*	54%	47%*	53%
Food sold in shops and supermarkets	45%	41%*	49%	37%*	48%

Net concerned figures⁷. Base: All respondents, UK.

* shows a result that is statistically significantly lower compared to one other sub-group.

⁸ Figure based on net of respondents who reported being 'very concerned' or 'fairly concerned'

3. Awareness of Hygiene Standards

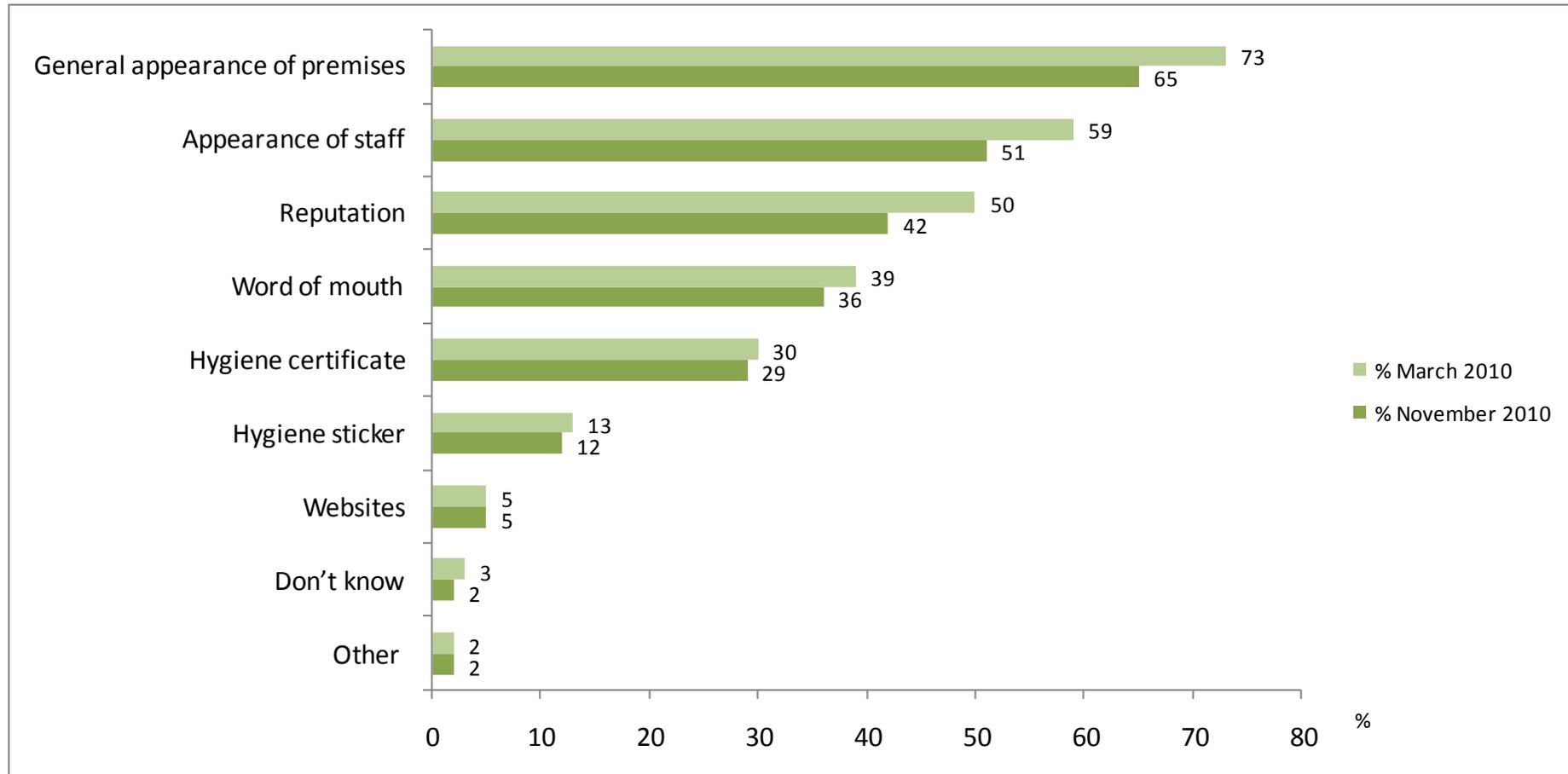
80%⁹ of respondents reported being aware of the hygiene standards of places they eat out at or buy food from. This figure is statistically significantly lower than the figure reported in the March 2010 tracker (83% in March 2010)¹⁰.

Those who reported being aware of hygiene standards in eating establishments were asked *how* they were aware of these standards. The main ways respondents reported being aware were from **general appearance of premises (65%), appearance of staff (51%)** and **reputation (42%)**. These figures are lower than the figures reported in the March 2010 tracker¹⁰ (see Figure 2 for more detail).

⁹ Figure based on net of respondents who reported 'yes – always' or 'yes – sometimes'

¹⁰ Within this chapter comparisons are made to the previous wave of the Tracker (March 2010). These comparisons are for information only and should be treated with caution. The results are not directly comparable due to changes made in November 2010 to the question positioning and the wording of two of the response options.

Figure 2. Awareness of hygiene standards (March 2010 and November 2010)



Base: all respondents who reported being aware of the hygiene standards of places they eat out at or buy food from

4. Awareness of the Food Standards Agency and its Responsibilities

In this wave, **79%** of respondents in the UK reported being **aware of the Food Standards Agency**.

Respondents aged 26 years and over were more aware of the FSA than those aged between 16-25 years. Similarly, respondents in social grades AB, C1 and C2 were more aware of the FSA than those in social grade DE¹¹. In contrast, minority ethnic respondents were less aware of the FSA than white respondents (see table 4 for more detail).

¹¹ Please see Annex C for an explanation of the social grades

Table 4. Subgroup differences in awareness of the FSA (November 2010)

	All	16-25 yr	26-35 yr	36-49 yr	50-65 yr	66+ yr	AB	C1	C2	DE	White	Minority Ethnic
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2105	316	325	465	501	498	412	533	449	711	1869	227
Aware of FSA	79%	65%	74%*	85%*	89%*	73%*	88%*	84%*	77%*	68%	82%*	54%

Base: All respondents, UK

* shows a result that is statistically significantly difference compared to one other sub-group.

Those who were aware of the FSA were asked **what issues they thought the FSA was responsible for**. The main issue that respondents reported to fall within the Agency’s remit was **ensuring food bought is safe to eat (82%)**¹² (see table 5 for more detail).

On 1 October 2010 responsibilities for nutrition policy in England transferred to the Department of Health and in Wales to the Welsh Assembly Government. The FSA continues to advise and support Ministers in Scotland and Northern Ireland on Nutrition policy. In England, Defra have responsibility for country of origin labelling and lead on food sustainability issues.

Table 5. Total awareness of FSA responsibilities (November 2010)

	Total
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1639
Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat	82%
Date labels	63%
Nutrition labelling	55%
Country of Origin Labelling	47%
Promoting and enabling healthy eating/ lifestyles	43%
Promoting food safety in the home	38%
Food sustainability	35%

Base: All respondents aware of the FSA, UK

¹² Total awareness figure

5. Trust in the Food Standards Agency

In autumn 2010 the Tracker was redeveloped in full due to observed fluctuations in responses to the question on Trust. These fluctuations were thought to be likely to be due to methodological reasons (question wording, ordering and response scale). For the purpose of monitoring the impact of the questionnaire changes, wave 1 and 2 of the redeveloped Tracker will run both the old question monitoring trust and the redeveloped question using a split run (50:50) of respondents. We intend to remove the old question on Trust in wave 3.

Half of the respondents who reported being aware of the Food Standards Agency were asked how much they trust or distrust the FSA to do its job¹³. **62%**¹⁴ of these respondents reported that they **trusted the Agency to do its job**; only **6%**¹⁵ of these respondents reported that they distrusted it. Please see Annex A for further detail on this question.¹⁶

¹³ Using the redeveloped question monitoring trust.

¹⁴ Figure based on net of respondents who reported 'I trust the FSA a lot' or 'I trust the FSA'

¹⁵ Figure based on net of respondents who reported 'I distrust the FSA a lot' or 'I distrust the FSA'

¹⁶ Of the 50% of respondents who were asked the old question on Trust, 54% reported that they trusted the Agency; 9% of these respondents reported that they distrusted it.

Annex A. Technical summary

Fieldwork for the Tracker is conducted every six months; however the frequency has changed over the history of the survey:

- *April 2001-December 2001*: research conducted every three months;
- *October 2001-September 2002*: research conducted every month;
- *December 2002-March 2010*: research conducted every three months;
- *November 2010 – Onwards*: research conducted every six months.

From April 2001 to June 2006 research was conducted via face-to-face interviews amongst a random location sample in order to gain a nationally representative sample of adults aged 16 and over in Great Britain. From September 2006 the sample was extended to be representative of the United Kingdom.

An additional question was asked each wave between September 2008 and March 2010 to measure trust in the FSA. This question had previously been asked in the FSA annual Consumer Attitudes Survey (CAS) which was last conducted in 2008. Due to differences in question order and sampling, results from the Tracker were not directly comparable to the CAS. During this time both questions; the original trust question and a new trust question were run for several waves of the Tracker, and the original trust question was phased out over time.

In autumn 2010 the Tracker was redeveloped in full due to observed fluctuations in responses to the question on Trust. Trust in the FSA remained stable from the time of its introduction (50% in September 2008) until September 2009 (48%). However, there was a statistically significant decrease in trust to 44% in December and a statistically significant increase to 50% in March 2010. These fluctuations were thought to be likely to be due to methodological reasons (question wording, ordering and response scale). This prompted the FSA to commission a review of the Tracker as a whole and to redevelop the survey

questionnaire. The new questionnaire can be viewed in Annex B. The reports on the redevelopment of the Tracker can be viewed at www.food.gov.uk.

For the purpose of monitoring the impact of the questionnaire changes, wave 1 and 2 of the redeveloped Tracker will run both the old question monitoring trust (that had previously been asked in the FSA annual Consumer Attitudes Survey) and the redeveloped question using a split run (50:50) of respondents. We aim to phase out the old question on trust in wave 3.

The full data set in table format is available upon request. Please contact helen.atkinson@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Annex B. Questionnaire

Q.1a What food issues, if any, are you concerned about? Which others? (Base: All adults UK)

(Spontaneous)

Q.1b And which of these food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults UK)

07: Food poisoning such as Salmonella and E.Coli

11: Genetically Modified (GM) foods

02: BSE ('mad cow disease')

17: The feed given to livestock

19: The use of pesticides to grow food

18: The use of additives (such as preservatives and colouring) in food products

12: Hormones\steroids\antibiotics in food

03: Date labels, such as "best before" and "use by" labels

05: Food hygiene when eating out

04: Food hygiene at home

21: None of these

(DK)

Q.1c And which of THESE food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults UK)

14: The amount of salt in food

16: The amount of sugar in food

13: The amount of fat in food

15: The amount of saturated fat in food

09: Foods aimed at children including school meals

21: None of these

(DK)

Q.1d And, finally in this section, which of THESE food issues are you concerned about, if any? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults UK)

01: Animal welfare

08: Food prices

10: Food waste

06: Food miles (e.g. the distance food travels)

21: None of these

(DK)

Q.2a How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways? (Base: All adults UK)

- 01: I am very concerned
- 02: I am fairly concerned
- 03: I am neither concerned nor unconcerned
- 04: I am fairly unconcerned
- 05: I am very unconcerned
- (DK)

Q.2b How concerned or unconcerned are you about the safety of ALL food that is sold in UK shops and supermarkets? (Base: All adults UK)

- 01: I am very concerned
- 02: I am fairly concerned
- 03: I am neither concerned nor unconcerned
- 04: I am fairly unconcerned
- 05: I am very unconcerned
- (DK)

Q.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? (Base: All adults UK)

- 01: Yes – always
- 02: Yes – sometimes
- 03: No
- (DK)

Q.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? (Base: All adults who are at all aware of the standards of hygiene when they buy food UK)

- 01: Word of mouth
- 02: Reputation
- 03: Appearance of people working there
- 04: General appearance of shop\restaurant\cafe\pub\takeaway
- 05: Hygiene sticker
- 06: Hygiene certificate
- 07: Websites
- 08: Other (specify)
- (DK)

Q.4 Which of the following, if any, have you heard of? Please select all that apply. Which others? (Base: All adults UK)

- 01: Department of Health (only show if England)
- 02: Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (only show if NI)
- 03: Public Health Agency (PHA) (only show if NI)
- 04: Scottish Government Health Improvement Directorate (only show if Scotland)
- 05: Department for Public Health and Health Professions (only show if Wales)
- 06: Food Standards Agency
- 07: Safefood (only show if NI)
- 08: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- 09: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (only show if England)
- 10: Department for Rural Affairs (only show if Wales)
- 11: Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) (only show if NI)
- 12: The Environment Agency (only show if England or Wales)
- 13: Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) (only show if Scotland)
- 14: Scottish Government Rural Directorate (only show if Scotland)
- 15: The British Medical Association
- 16: Office of Communications (OFCOM)
- 17: Audit Scotland (only show if Scotland)
- 18: Health & Safety Executive
- 19: Office of Fair Trading
- 20: World Health Organisation (WHO)
- 21: British Dietetic Association (BDA)
- (N)
- (DK)

Q.5a And please can I check, which issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for? Which other issues? (Base: All adults aware of the Food Standards Agency UK)

(Spontaneous)

Q.5b And which of these issues do you think the Food Standards Agency is responsible for? (Please select all that apply. Which others? Base: All adults aware of the Food Standards Agency UK)

- 01: Ensuring the food you buy is safe to eat
- 02: Promoting food safety in the home
- 03: Promoting and enabling healthy eating and healthy lifestyles
- 04: Ensuring food is sustainable – such as reducing green house emissions and reducing waste when producing food
- 05: Nutrition labelling information, such as traffic light labelling

06: Date labels, such as “best before” and “use by” labels

07: Country of origin labels, which identify where food comes from

08: Other (specify)

(DK)

Q.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. (Base: 50% adults aware of the Food Standards Agency UK)

01: I trust it a lot

02: I trust it

03: I neither trust nor distrust it

04: I distrust it

05: I distrust it a lot

(DK)

Q.6b How would you rate the Food Standards Agency? Please give me your answer on a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 means that it is an “organisation you trust completely” and 1 means it is an “organisation you do not trust at all”, or you may use any number in between. (Base: 50% adults aware of the Food Standards Agency UK)

01: -1- An organisation I do not trust at all

02: -2-

03: -3-

04: -4-

05: -5-

06: -6-

07: -7- An organisation I trust completely

(DK)

Q.7 These questions have been asked on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA or Agency). If the FSA or a social research organisation working for the Agency wished to contact you to see if you would be willing to take part in another social research study or a follow-up to the current research study would you be happy to be contacted? (Base: All adults UK)

01: Yes

02: No

(DK)

Annex C. Social Grading/ Occupational Groupings¹⁷

Prior to 1993 the standard means of social grading was based on the occupation of the head of the household. It is assumed that the family environment will affect the individual's attitude and behaviour and that the status of the head of household is the most convenient means of defining it.

Since 1993 Market Research Companies have begun to base social grading on the occupation of the Chief Income Earner in the household i.e. the person in the household with the largest income, whether from employment, pensions, state benefits, investments or any other source.

More detail on the individual groupings below.

¹⁷ Source: Market Research Society, 2011

Occupational Groupings

- A**
- Approximately 3% of the total population
 - These are professional people, or are very senior in business or commerce or are top level civil servants
 - Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows
- B**
- Approximately 18% of the total population
 - Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
 - Top management or owners of small business
 - Retired people, previously grade B, and their widows.
- C1**
- Approximately 28% of the total population
 - Junior management owners of small establishments: and all others in non-manual Positions
 - Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational needs
 - Retired people preciously grade C1 and their widows.
- C2**
- Approximately 22% of the total population
 - All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers with responsibility for other people
 - Retired people previously grade C2 with a pension from their job
 - Widow's if receiving pensions from their late husbands job
- D**
- Approximately 18% of the total population
 - All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
 - Retired people previously grade D with a pension from their job
 - Widows if receiving pensions from their late husbands job
- E**
- Approximately 11% of the total population
 - All those entirely dependant on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons. Those unemployed for a period exceeding 6 months (otherwise classify on previous occupation)
 - Casual workers and those without a regular income
 - Only households without a chief wage earner will be coded in this group