



# **Food in Scotland Consumer Tracking Survey Wave 13**

Presentation of Results



# Background

- The Food in Scotland Consumer Tracking Survey monitors attitudes, knowledge and reported behaviours relating to food amongst a representative sample of Scotland's population, identifying changes over time.
- Established by Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in 2015, the survey is undertaken bi-annually.
- The questionnaire was designed around FSS' six strategic priorities and has been updated in line with the new strategic plan
- Each research wave comprises:
  - a set of core questions, replicated at each wave;
  - a key question module focusing on either **food safety and authenticity**, or **diet and nutrition**;
  - and topical question modules.
- The survey was set up by Kantar TNS who conducted Waves 1 – 6.
- JRS research consortium has been running the survey from Wave 7 onwards.
- This document outlines key findings from Wave 13 (food safety & authenticity).
- Statistically significant differences (at 95% confidence level) compared with the previous relevant wave are highlighted with



# Methodology



- The research methodology is consistent across research waves to ensure comparability



Online self completion survey



Representative sample of  
**1,029** Scottish adults



30mins questionnaire length



6th – 20th December 2021

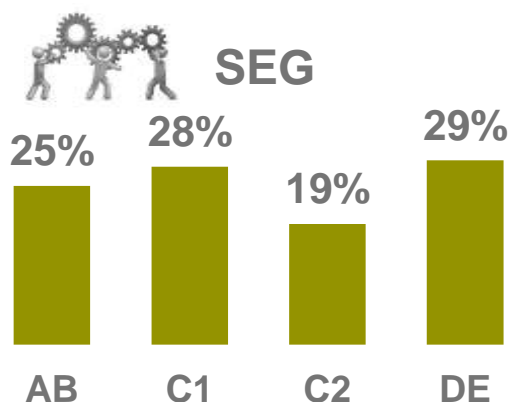
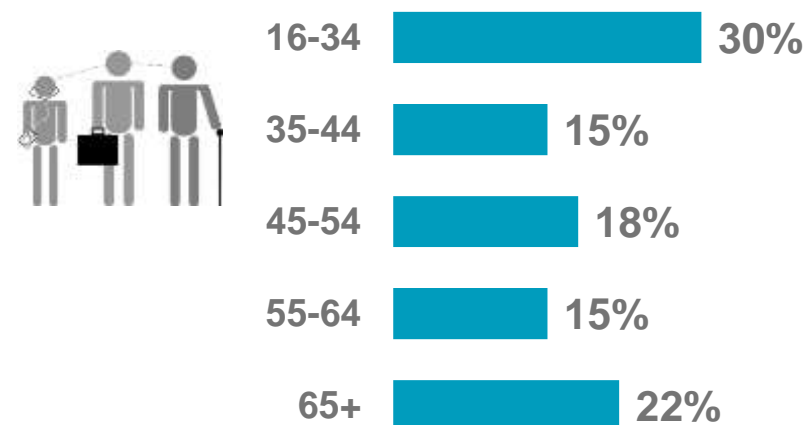
- All research was undertaken in strict accordance with MRS Code of Conduct and GDPR legislation

**Sample is representative of the Scottish population – data was weighted on key demographics to match previous waves.**

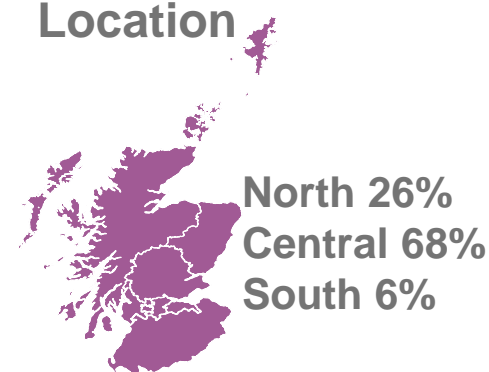
### Gender



### Age

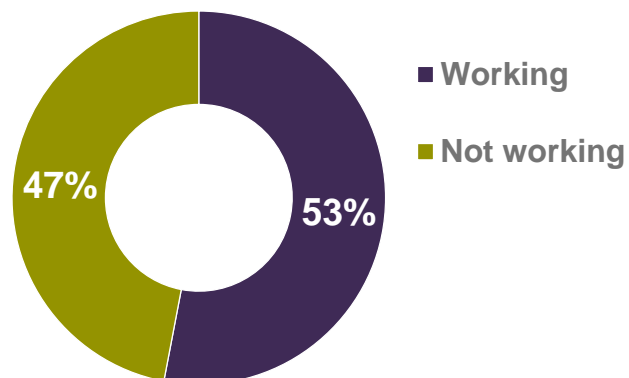


### Location

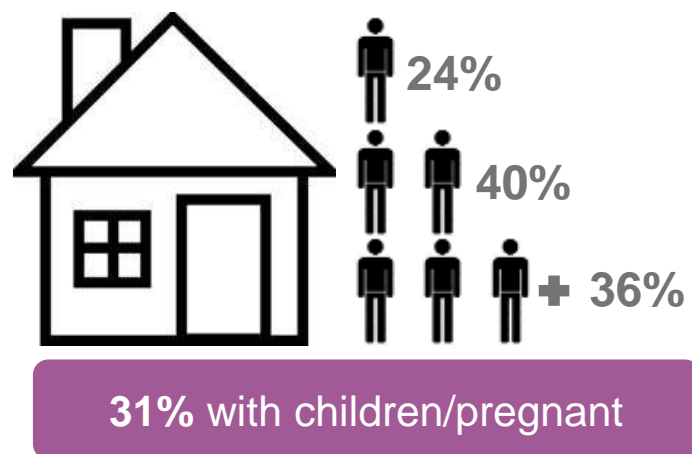


# Sample Profile

## Working status



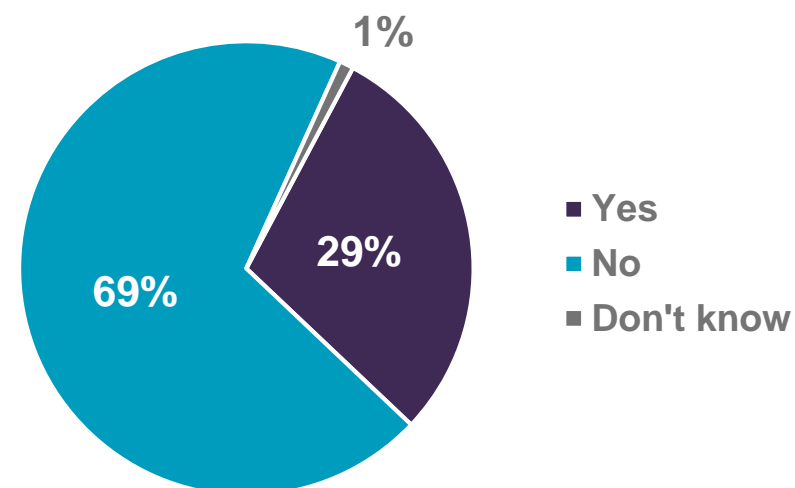
## Household composition



## Ethnic Group

Net: White	95%
Net: Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	3%
Net: Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	1%
Net: African	1%
Net: Caribbean or Black	0%
Net: Other ethnic group	0%
Would prefer not to say	1%

## Health issues



# Awareness, Knowledge & Visibility of FSS



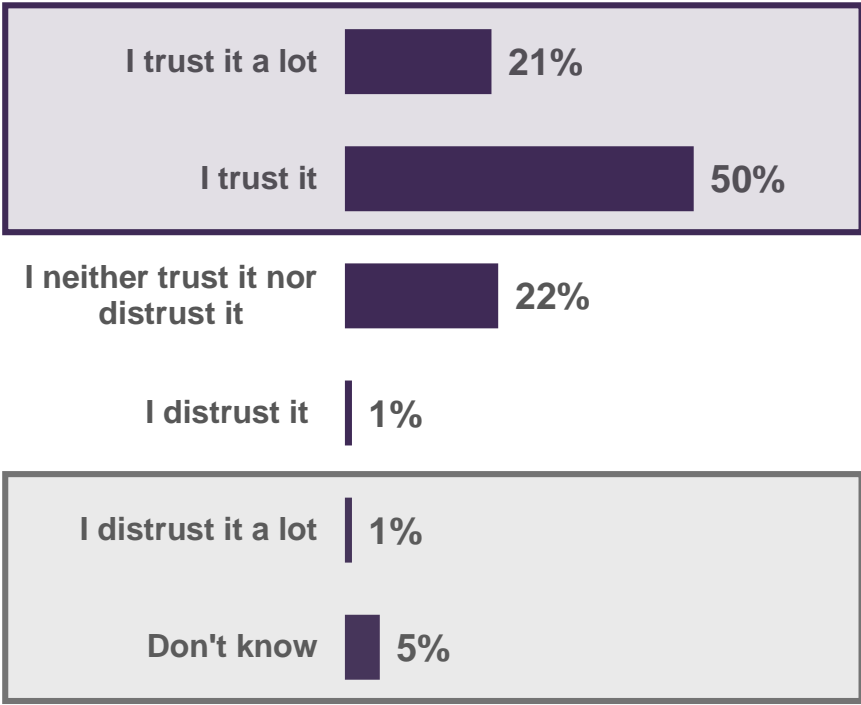
**84% of adults have heard of Food Standards Scotland – the highest awareness figure recorded on this survey. Levels of trust in the organisation remain consistently high. No significant differences in awareness or trust across demographic groups.**



**84% have heard of FSS**

↑79% Wave 12

**Levels of Trust in FSS**

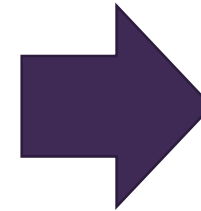
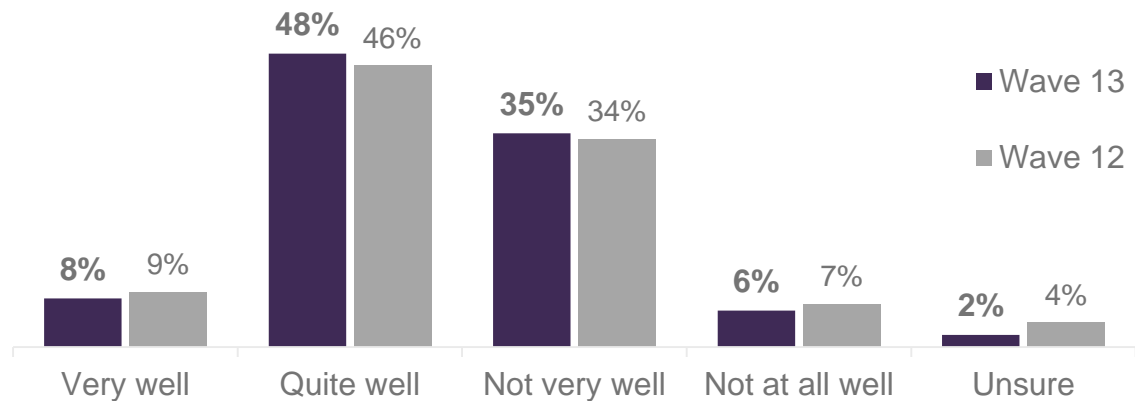


**Trust 71%**

**Distrust 2%**

**56% of those who are aware of FSS feel they understand the organisation's role / remit, equating to almost half (47%) of the whole adult population.**

**Understand FSS role/remit**  
(those aware of FSS)



**Amongst Scottish Public**



**Understand FSS' remit 47%**



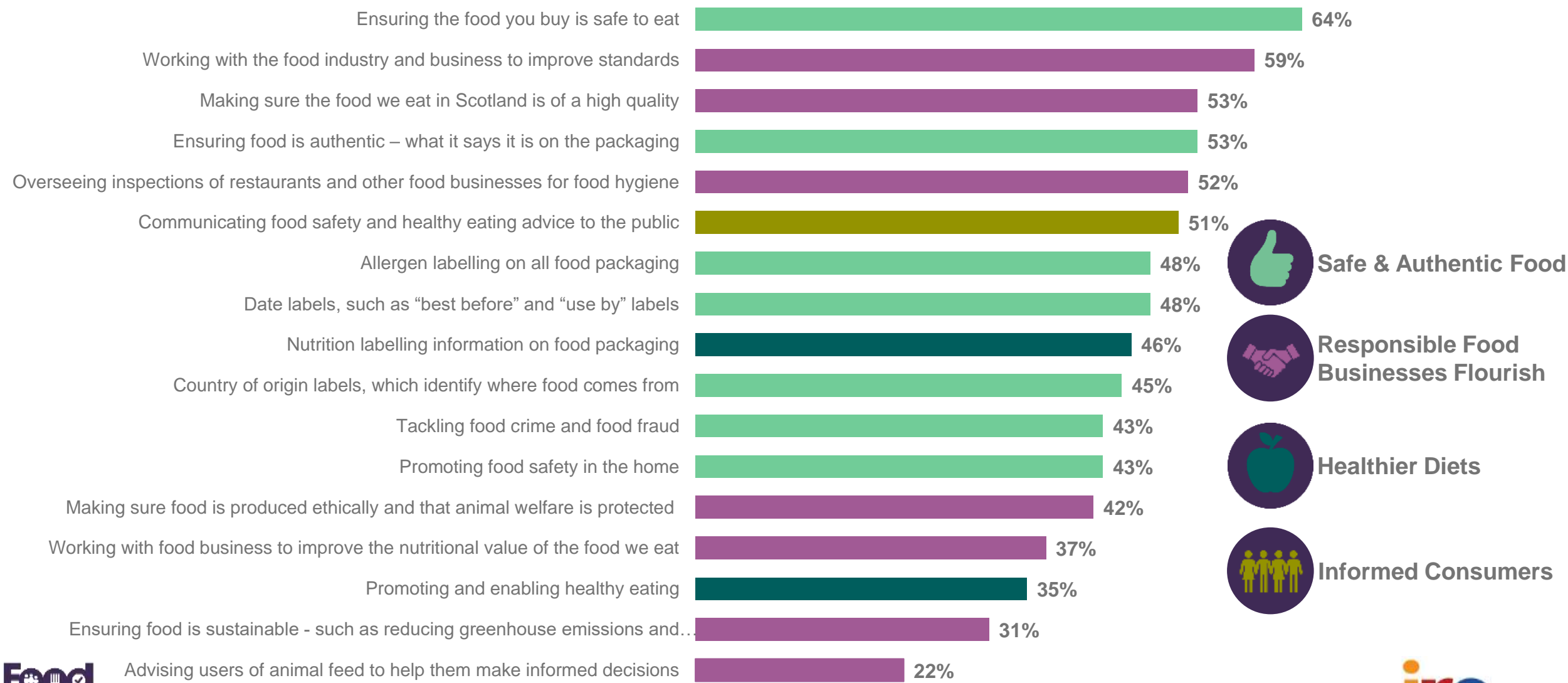
**Do not understand remit 36%**



**Unaware of FSS 16%**

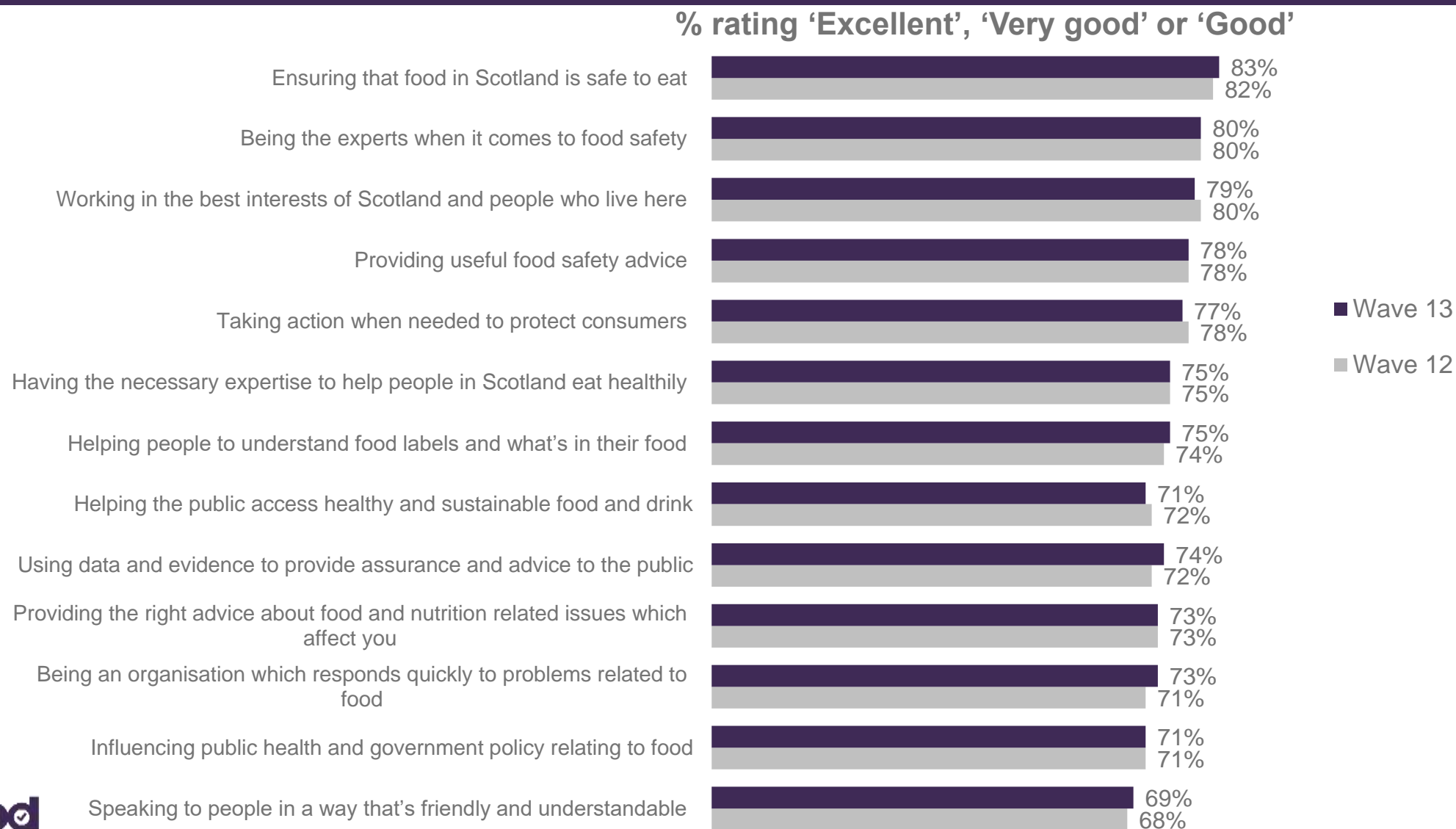
- The following demographic groups were more likely to feel they understand FSS' remit well:
  - Those with kids (65%); those with food allergies in h/h (64%); 16-34yr olds (63%)
- Over 65yr olds (51%) were most likely to **not** understand FSS' remit

**Food safety remains the most recognised element of FSS’ remit. Other aspects recognised by more than half include working to improve standards and oversee inspections, and maintaining quality and ensuring authenticity of food in Scotland. Data is consistent with previous waves.**

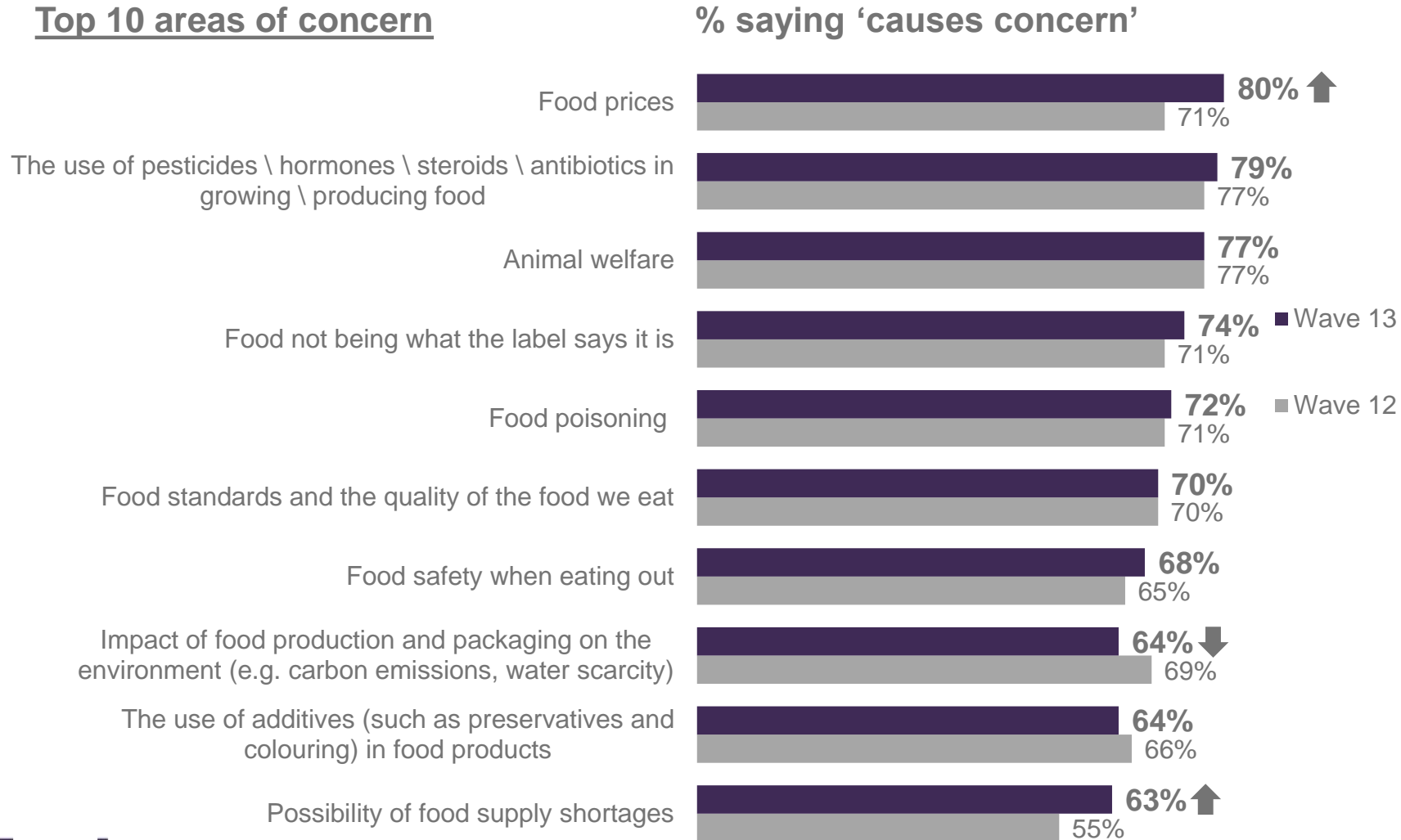




**FSS' performance is rated highly across all measures. The organisation is clearly viewed as being expert in the areas of food safety and healthy eating; and aspects relating consumer focus and advocacy are also praised. Data is very consistent with the previous wave.**



# Levels of concern about food prices and food supply shortages have significantly increased this wave. Consumers remain particularly concerned about food production and animal welfare.

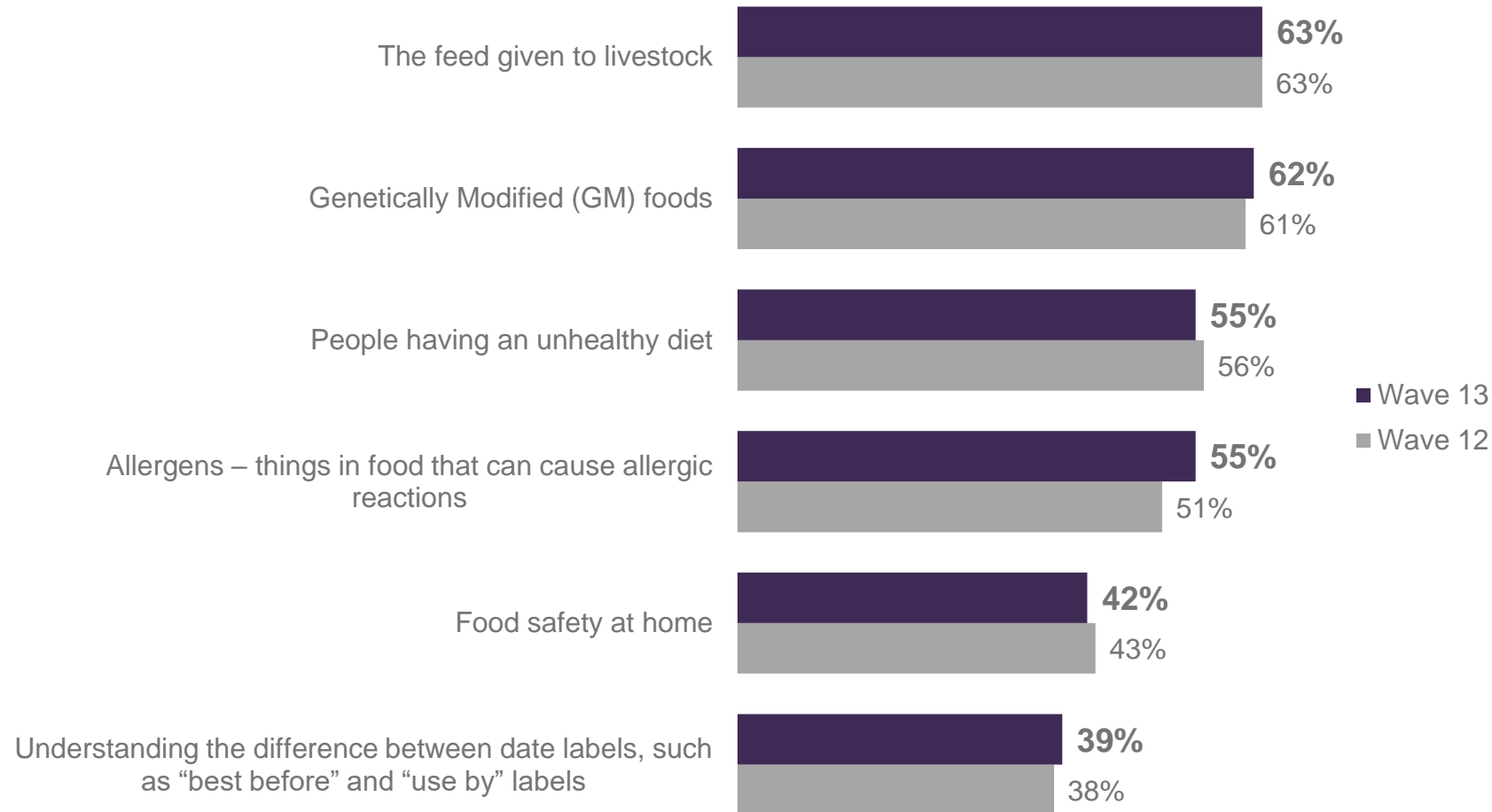


- Women are more likely to be concerned than men on most issues
- Older age groups (65+yrs) are more concerned than others about the use of pesticides, hormones etc in food production

**Lower levels of concern are recorded for other food related issues. Other than those in the youngest age group, relatively few are concerned about food safety at home or understanding the difference between date labels.**

## Other areas of concern

## % saying 'causes concern'



- Those in households with food allergies are more concerned about allergens
- Young people (16-34yrs) are more concerned about food safety at home and understanding date labels than other age groups

# The sustainable production and packaging of food is an important issue for consumers but less than half feel they have clear information about this.



**76%** consider it important that their food is produced in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way



**44%** feel they can access clear information to know if food has been produced in a sustainable way



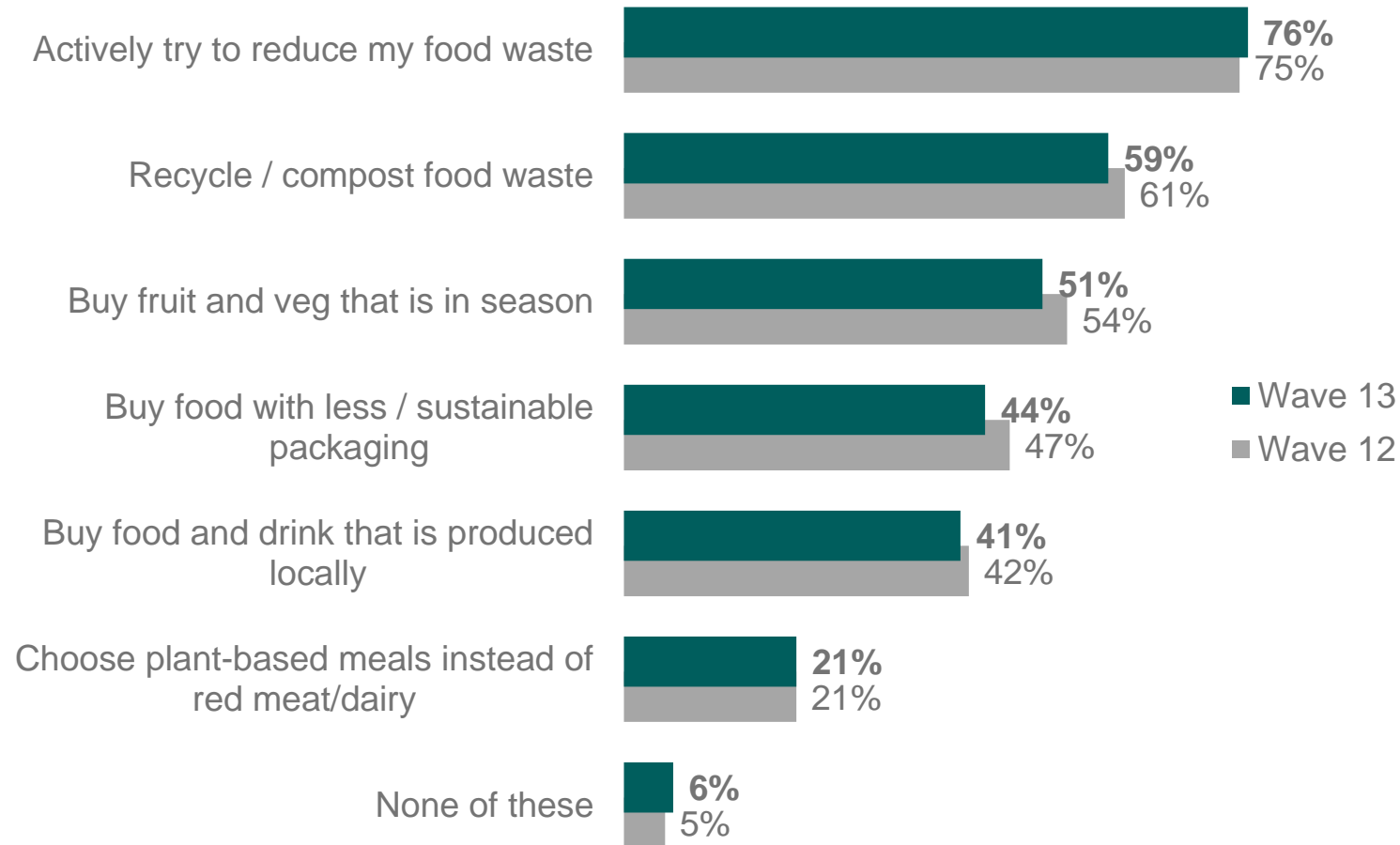
**64%** are concerned about the impact of food production and packaging on the environment



**31%** recognise sustainability to be part of FSS' remit

# Three-quarters of consumers say they always actively try to reduce food waste. Recycling food waste and buying in season are also fairly common. Data is very consistent with the previous wave.

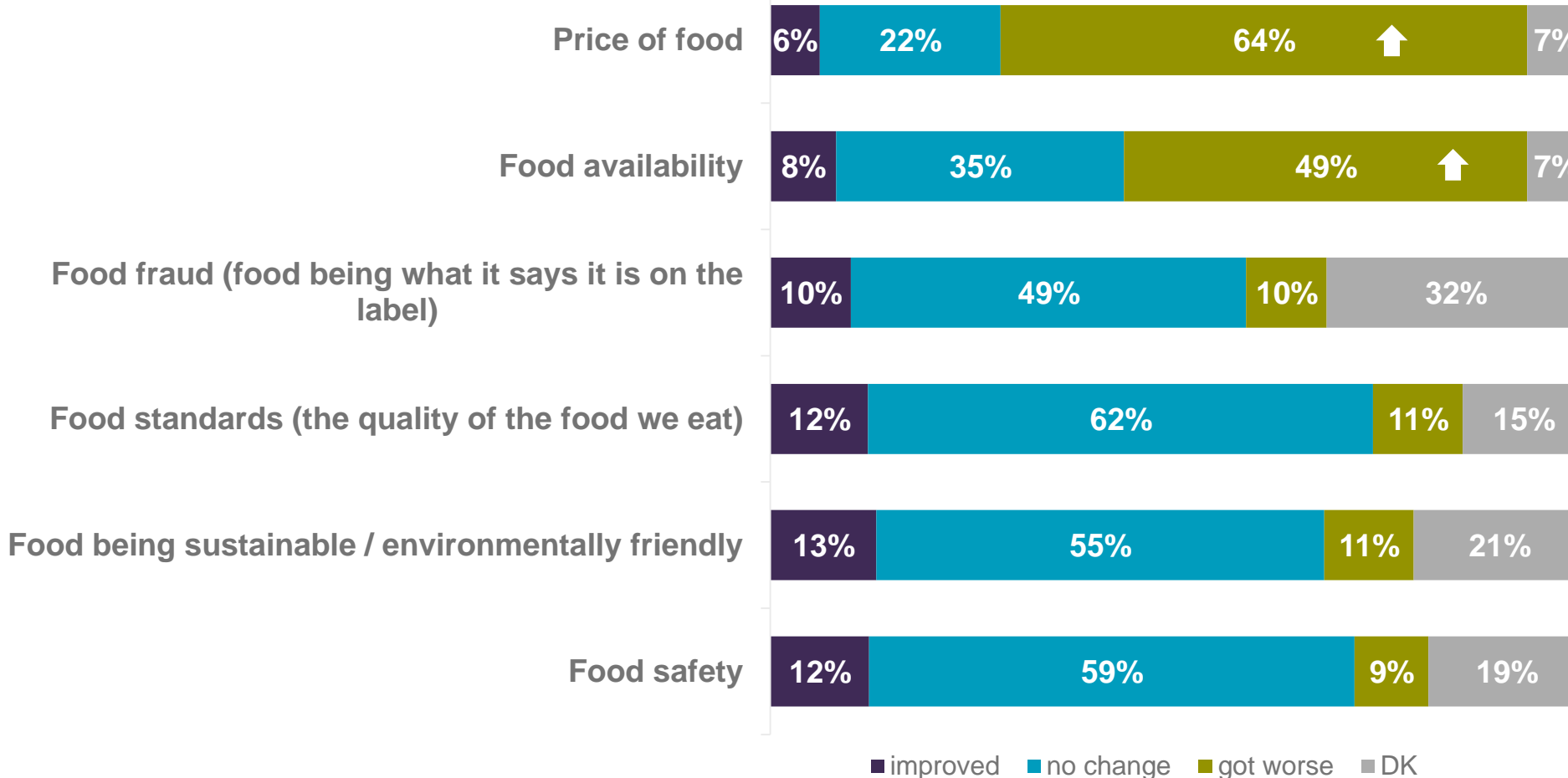
## Sustainable Actions Always Taken



- Those in older (65+yrs) age groups are more likely to engage in all of these actions except choosing plant based meals
- Higher socio-economic groups (AB) are more likely to reduce food waste, buy in season and buy locally while 1 in 10 DEs is doing none of these actions

**Whilst limited impact has been felt across most food related issues, a substantial number of consumers have experienced a negative impact on food pricing and availability as a result of Brexit. Both significantly increased since summer 2021.**

### Brexit Impact Experienced



Those in older age groups (55-64yrs & 65+yrs) were most likely to have experienced negative price impacts

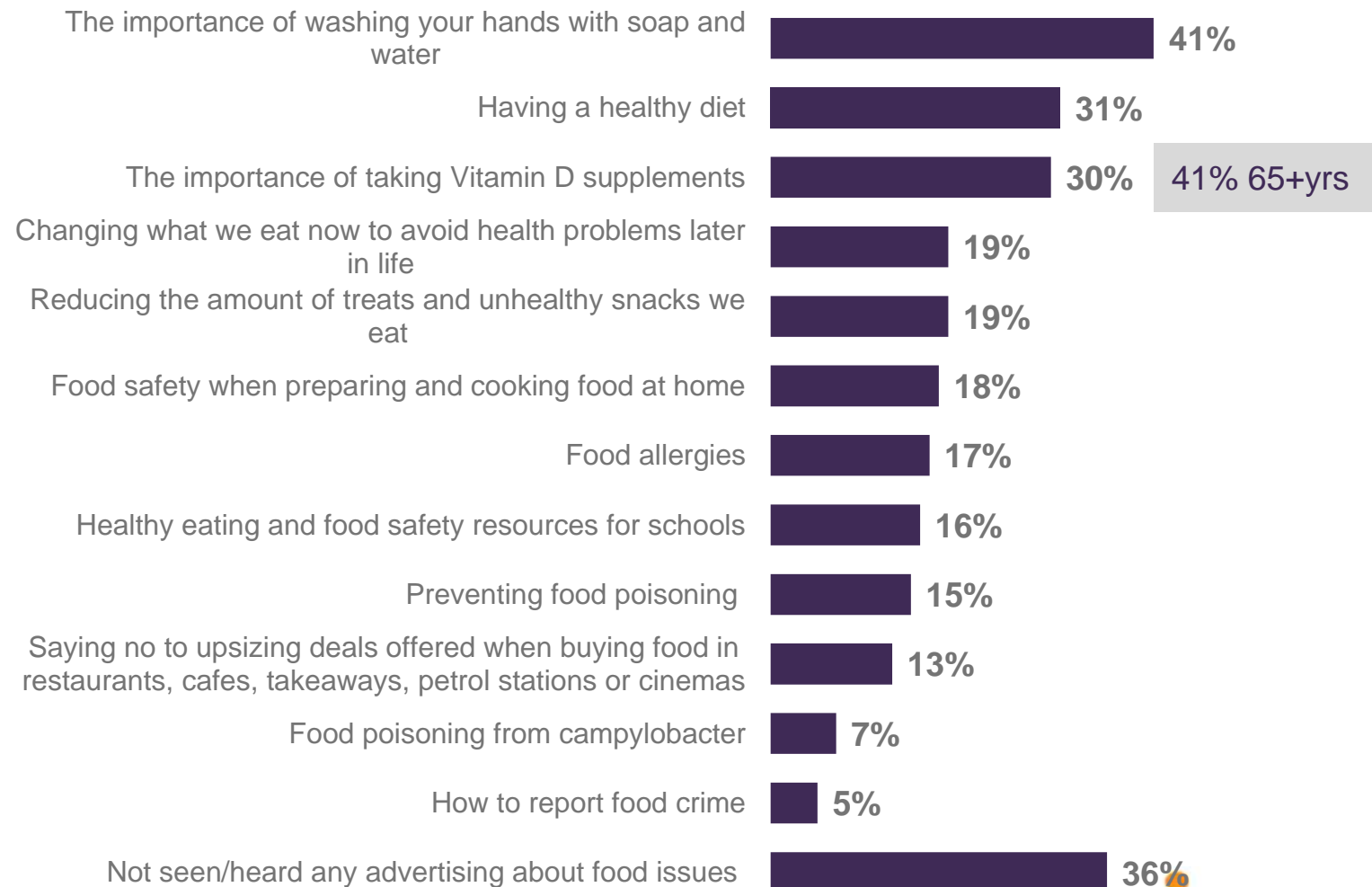
**More than 6 in 10 consumers recalled seeing advertising or publicity on food issues recently. The most commonly recalled topics related to hand hygiene, healthy diets and Vitamin D, in line with summer 2021 data.**



**64% were  
spontaneously aware  
of advertising**

**Note: Not designed to track ad awareness. Total awareness figure not directly comparable with previous waves**

### Aware of Advertising on Food Issues



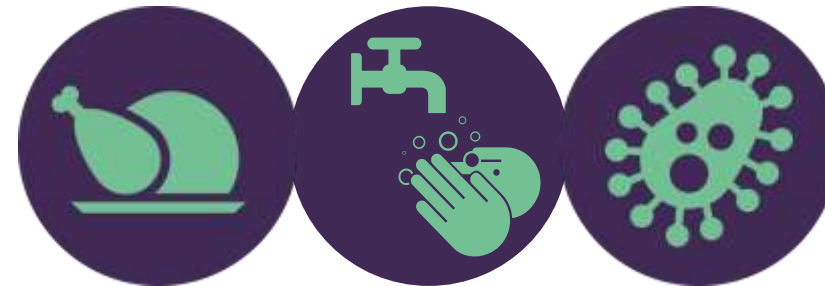
# Knowledge, Awareness & Visibility – Summary

- Record high awareness levels of Food Standards Scotland recorded at this wave, meaning around half of all adults in Scotland have heard of the organisation and understand its role / remit
- The organisation is trusted to do its job and FSS' expertise is recognised on food safety and healthy eating
- Consumers are concerned about a range of food related issues – from how food is produced, including animal welfare, to food prices and shortages
- Sustainability is also an area of concern but not an area currently recognised as being a responsibility of FSS
- Negative impacts have been experienced by many as a result of Brexit, notably in terms of food prices and availability

FSS is in a strong position as a known, trusted organisation with a credible voice → opportunities to connect with consumers on the topics they are most concerned about relating to food.

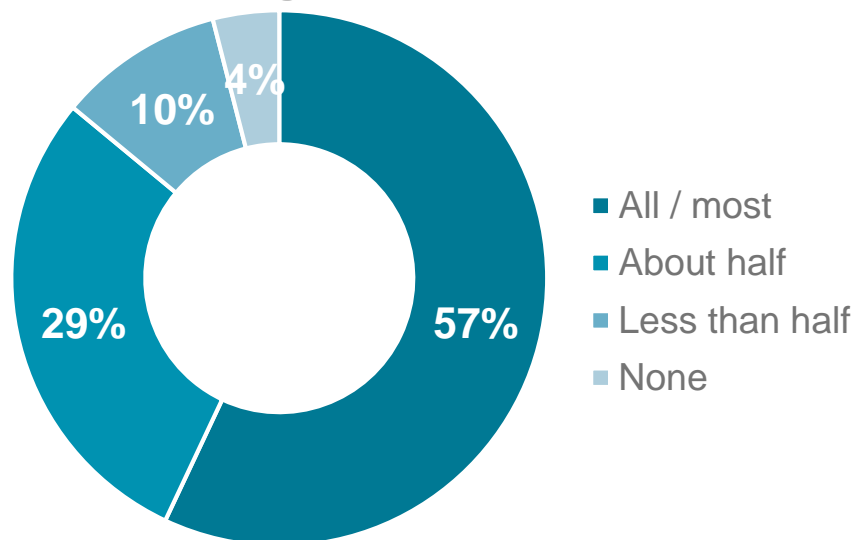


# Food Safety



**Most survey respondents had significant responsibility for cooking / preparation of food at home, and were confident in their cooking skills. Almost 9 in 10 felt they had clear information on cooking food safety at home.**

**Responsible for Cooking/  
Preparing Food**



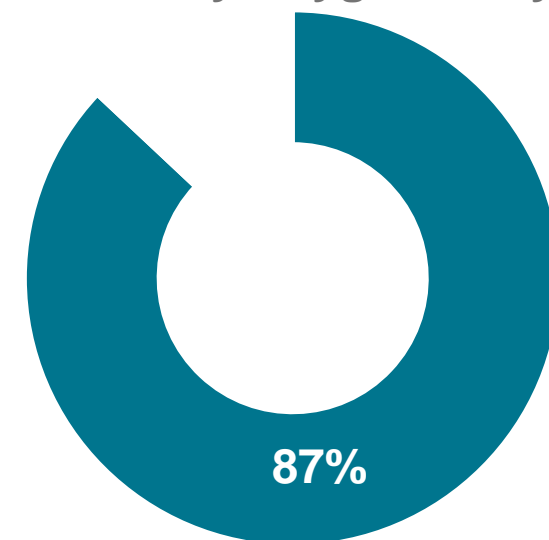
- Females more likely to be responsible for all/most cooking, while 20% of males were responsible for less than half / none.

**Cooking Confidence  
Scale: 1-10**



- Confidence levels were highest amongst older age groups (55-64yrs and 65+yrs) and higher SEGs (AB)

**Clear Information on Cooking  
Safely / Hygienically**



- Those in older groups (55-64yrs and 65+yrs) were most likely to feel they had clear food safety information (91%)

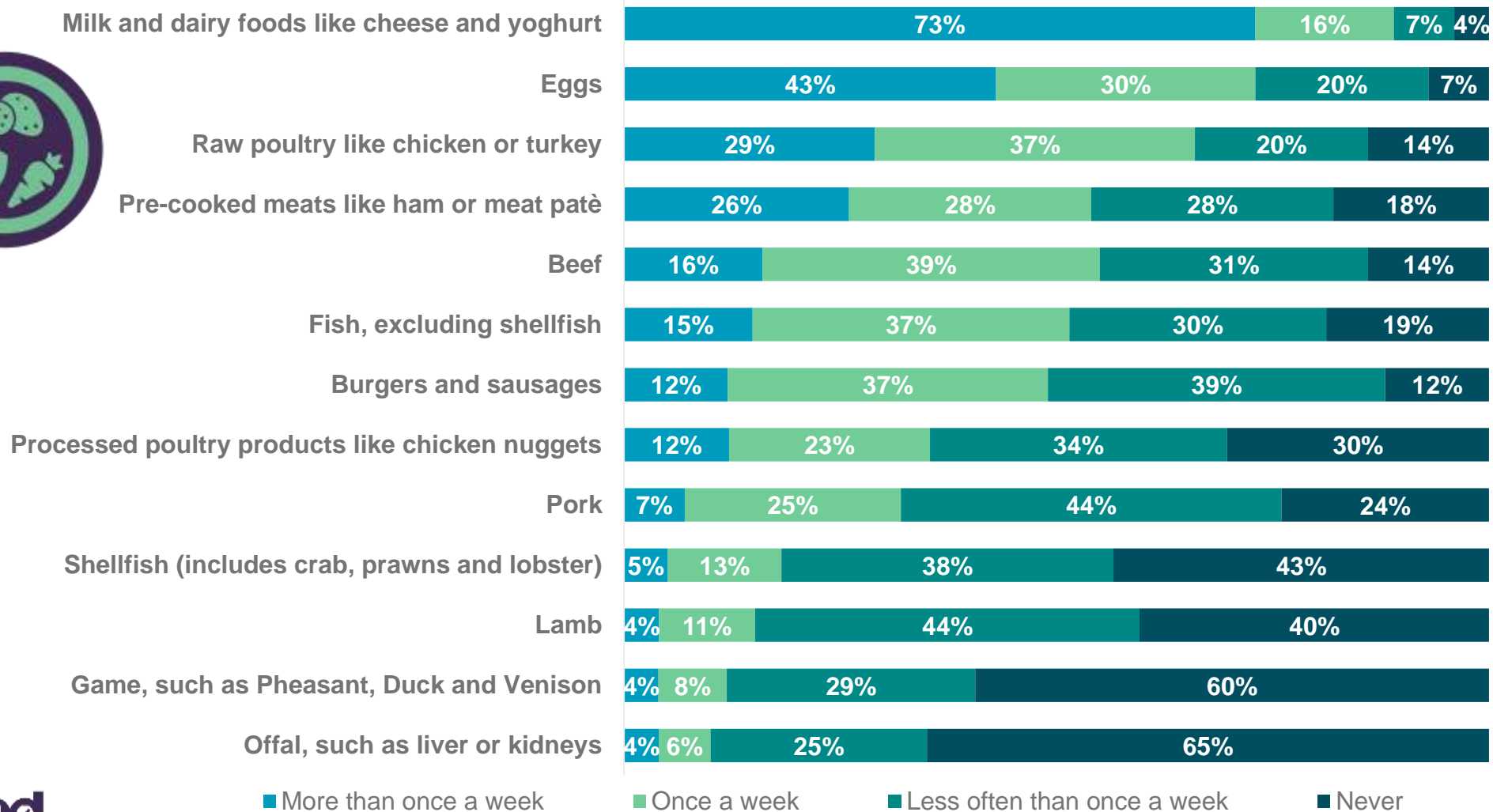
**Processed meat is the most common bought form of raw meat, followed by minced and skinless chicken. In contrast, just 3 in 10 purchase offal.**



97% of respondents are responsible for at least some shopping for the household

	Fresh	Frozen	Both	Do not buy
Offal (e.g. liver, kidneys)	20%	6%	5%	70%
Skin-on chicken portions	43%	9%	13%	36%
Breaded chicken portion	22%	28%	20%	29%
Joints (e.g. of beef, lamb, pork, etc.)	54%	7%	12%	27%
Whole chicken or other poultry	56%	8%	12%	24%
Meat portion (e.g. steak or chops)	61%	10%	12%	18%
Skinless chicken portions	58%	7%	19%	16%
Minced	66%	6%	12%	16%
Processed (e.g. sausages or bacon)	58%	9%	19%	13%

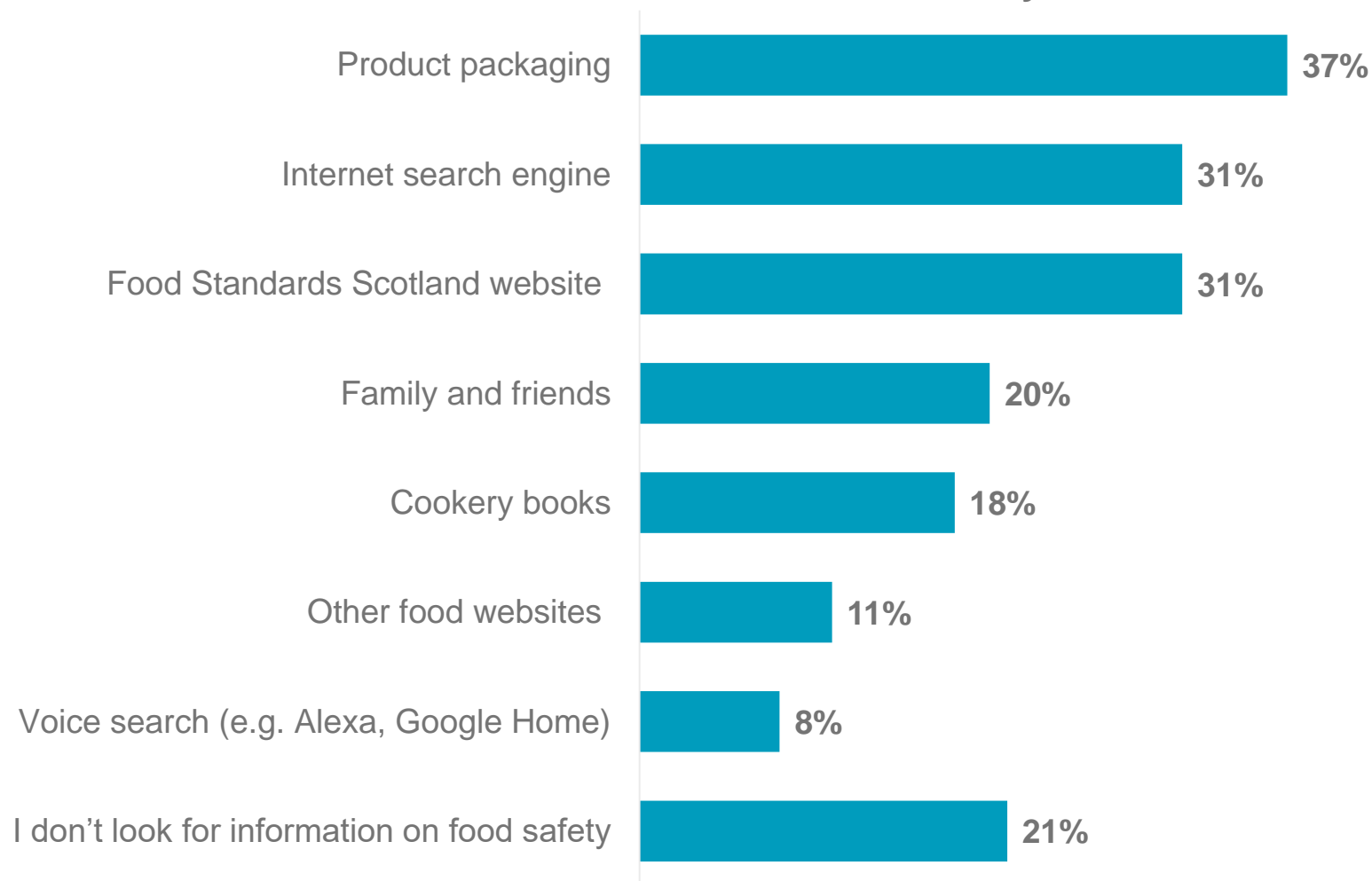
# Dairy and eggs are the most frequently prepared foods at home. Two-thirds cook raw poultry and over half cook beef at least once a week.



- Males, 16-34yr olds and those with kids were more likely to be eating beef, lamb, and pork at least once a week.
- Over 65yr olds were the most frequent consumers of eggs and fish
- Burgers and sausages were most likely to be consumed more than once a week by males, 16-34yrs, DEs and those with kids.

# A fifth of consumers do not look for information about food hygiene and safety at home. Those who do, look to a range of sources such as product packaging, online search and FSS website.<sup>22</sup>

## Sources of Information on Food Safety At Home

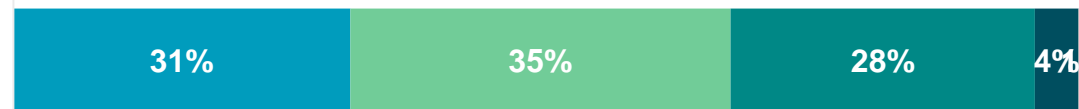


- Females were more likely than males to use online search or to visit FSS website
- 16-34yr olds were more likely to rely on family/friends, and voice search than other age groups

**Most consumers claim to cook food, including raw poultry and processed meats thoroughly, although few regularly use a food thermometer. Reading information on food labels is also fairly common, especially in households with food allergies.**



Read the information on food labels



h/h allergies 45%  
always

Cook food until it is steaming hot throughout



65+ yrs 89% always

Use a food thermometer to check food is cooked thoroughly



Eat chicken or turkey if the meat is pink or has pink or red juices



65+ yrs 88% never

Eat burgers or sausages if the meat is pink or has pink or red juices



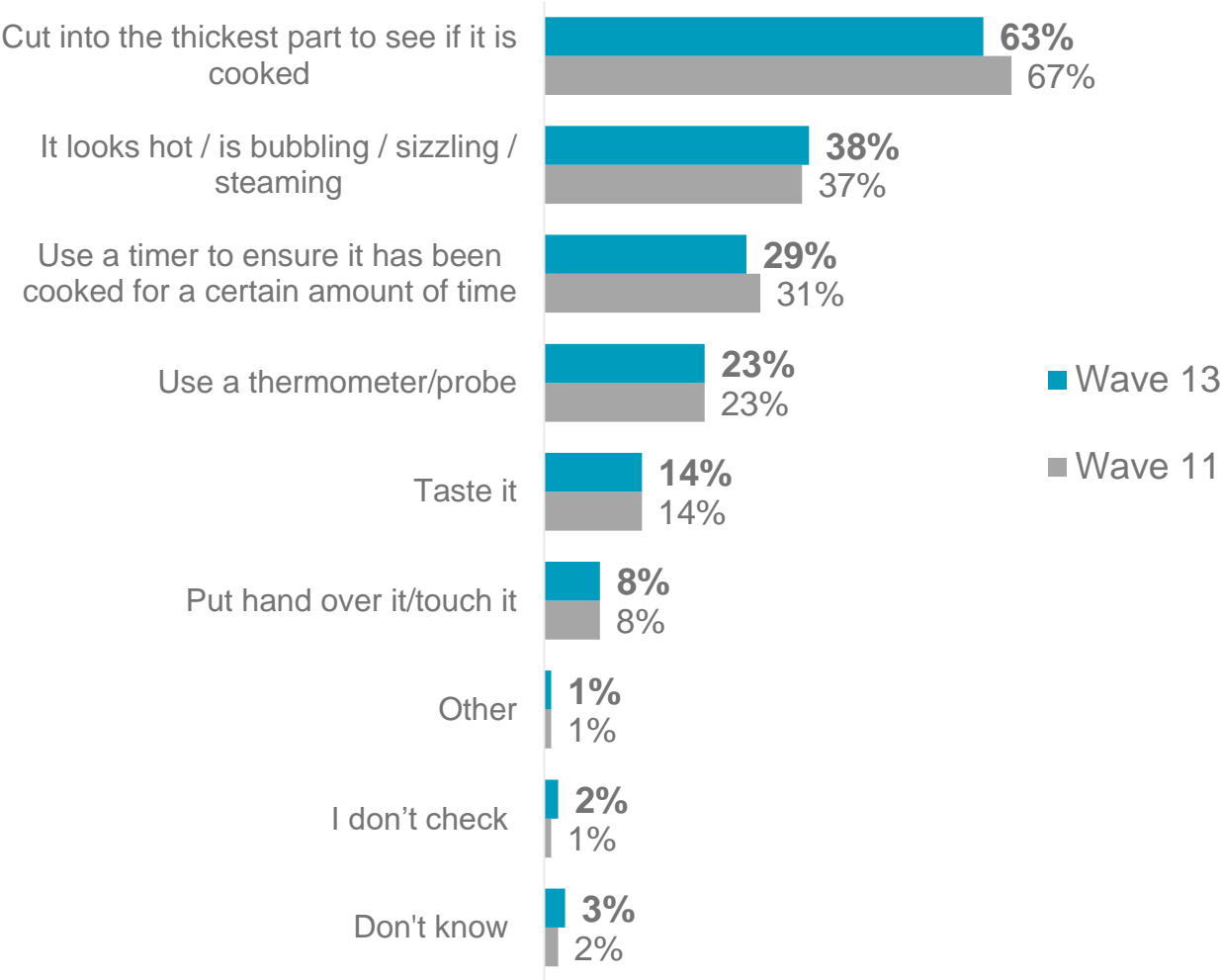
65+ yrs 83% never

Always Most of the time Sometimes Never N/A

**Most will cut into the thickest part of food to check it's properly cooked. Checking if food looks hot and using timers are also popular methods. Just under a quarter use a thermometer.** <sup>24</sup>



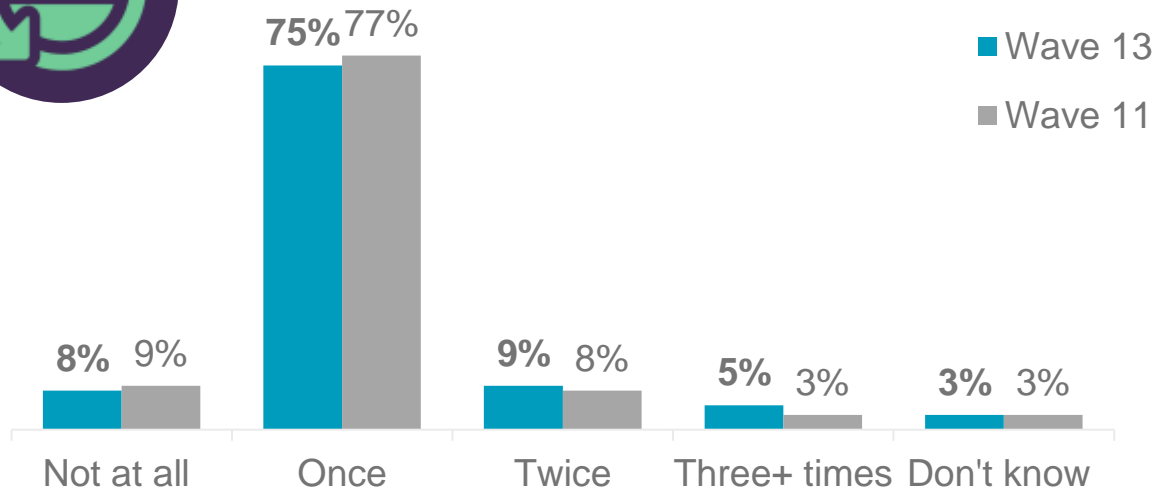
### Checking Food Is Cooked Properly



**Three-quarters of consumers would only consider reheating food once after it was cooked for the first time. To tell food has been reheated properly most use a visual check. Timers, tasting and thermometers are also used.**

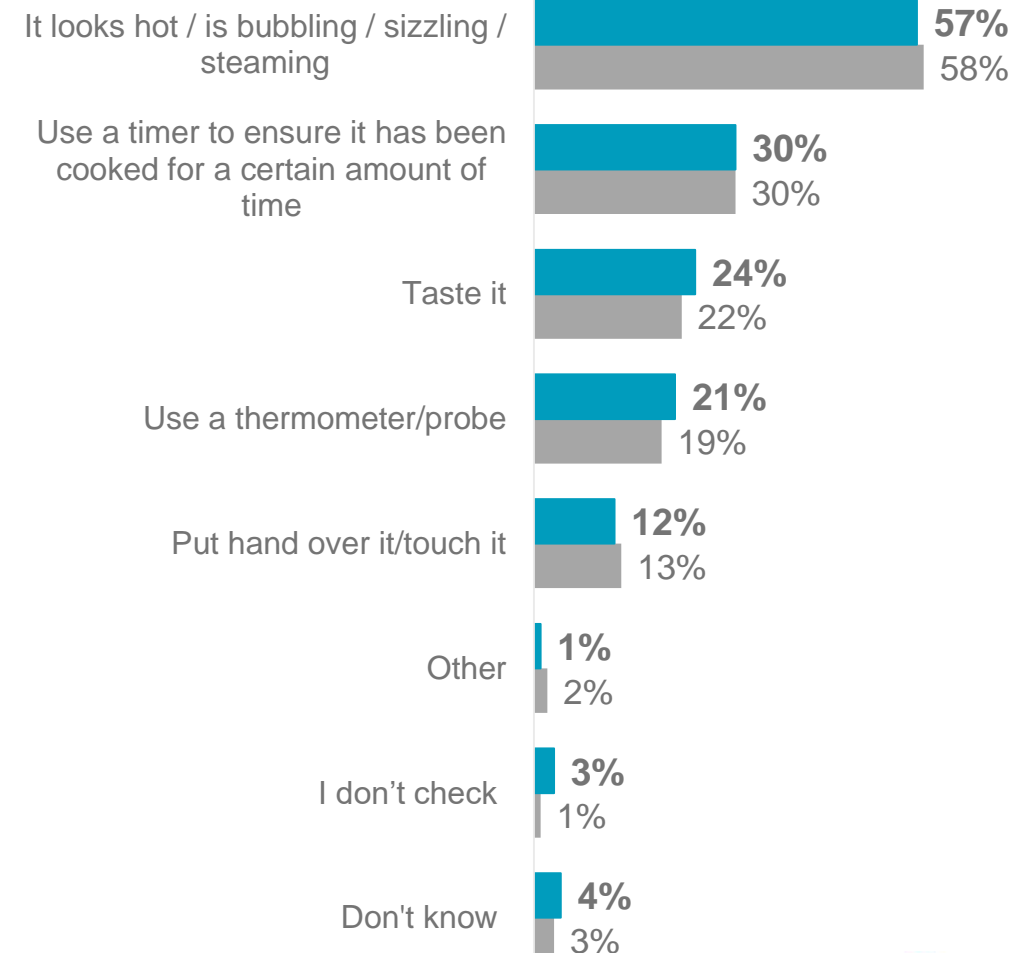


### # Times Reheat



- 16-34yr olds (9%) and those with kids at home (8%) were more likely than others to reheat three or more times

### Checking Food is Reheated Properly





# Most regularly follow positive hygiene practices when cooking and preparing food at home including cleaning worktops, regularly changing cloths and dish towels and using different chopping boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods.



Regularly change / wash dish cloths / tea towels



65+ yrs 78% always

Clean worktops before preparing food



65+ yrs 76% always

Allow pets on to kitchen surfaces



Use different chopping boards for raw & ready to eat foods or wash chopping board when switching



Use the same utensils for moving / cutting raw meat and for vegetables



Always Most of the time Sometimes Never N/A

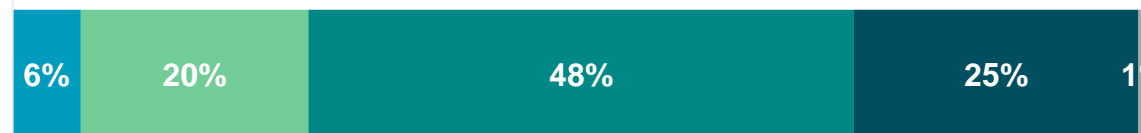
**Checking and adjusting fridge temperature are less frequent practices and a significant minority never turn down their fridge temperature when it is full. More than half defrost meat at room temperature with 42% of over 65s always doing this.**



Check the temperature of my fridge



Completely fill my fridge

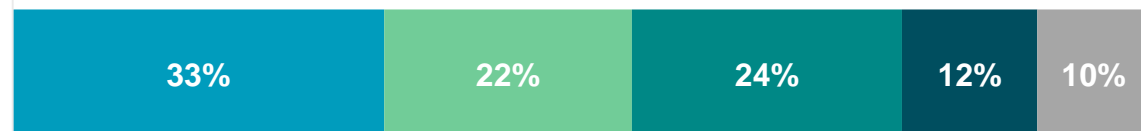


With kids 34%  
always/most of time

Turn down the temperature to make my fridge colder when it is full



Defrost meat at room temperature

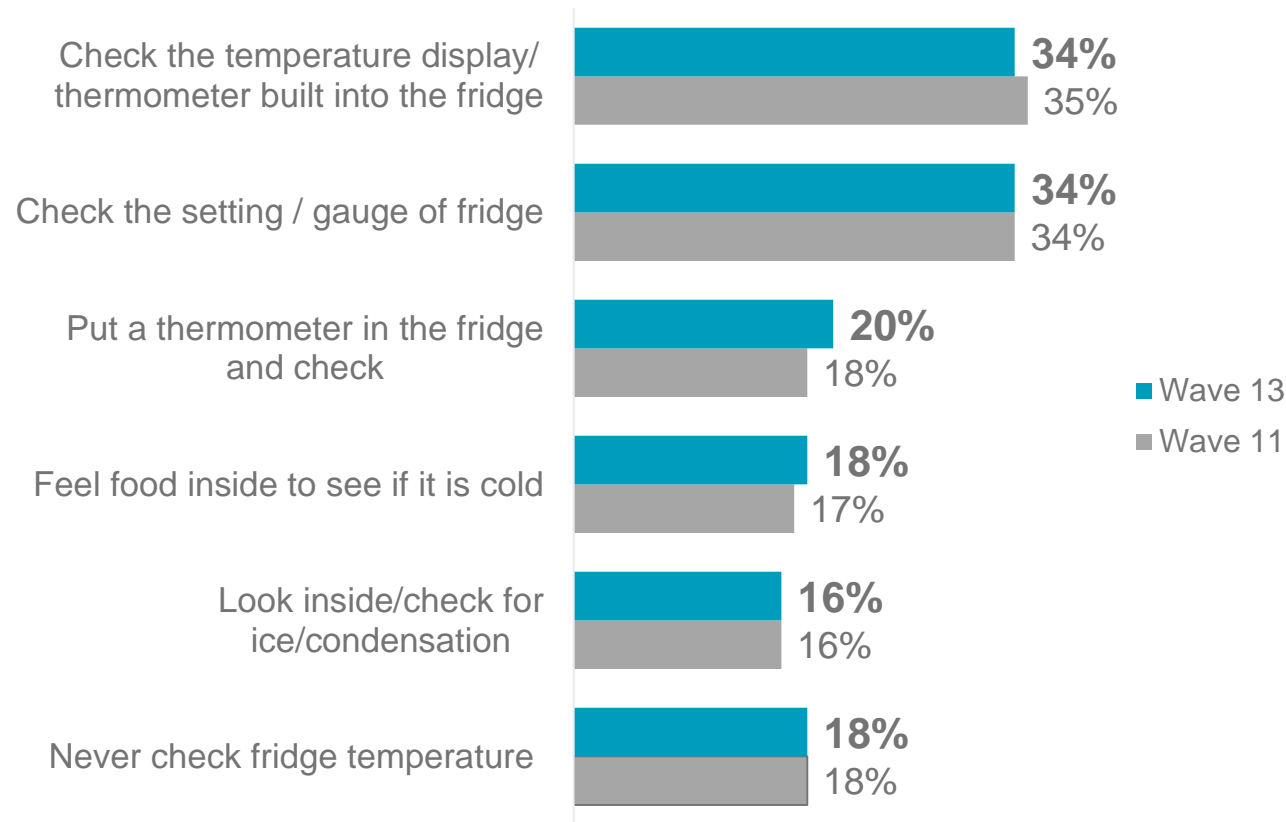


65+yrs 42% always

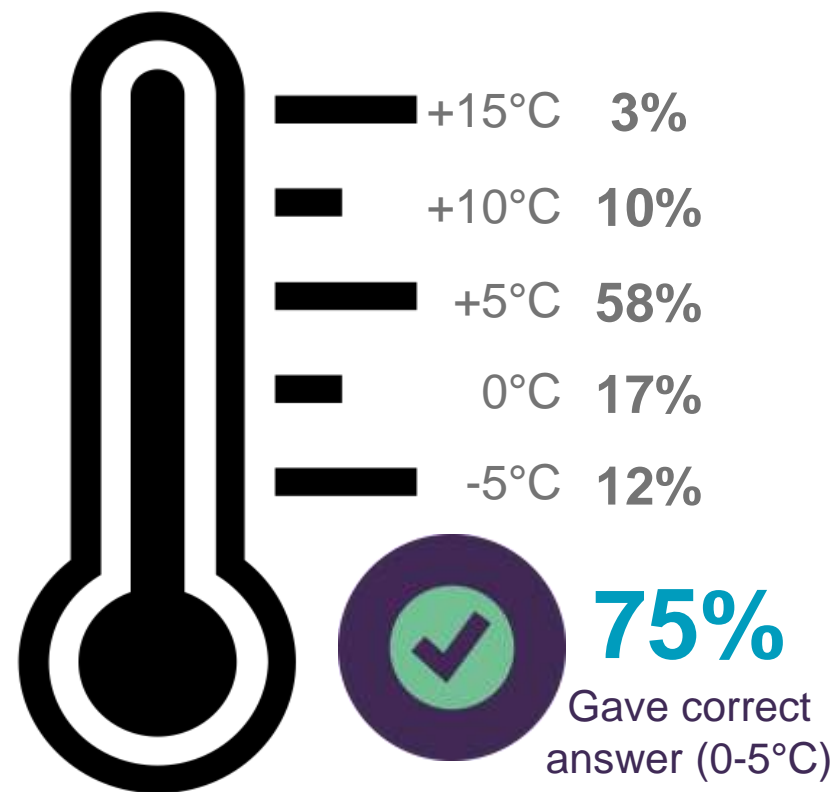
■ Always ■ Most of the time ■ Sometimes ■ Never ■ N/A

**Three-quarters of consumers know the correct temperature for their fridge, although almost a fifth never check. Those who do check the fridge temperature tend to either use the inbuilt display or setting. Data is consistent with previous waves.** <sup>28</sup>

Method for Checking Temperature

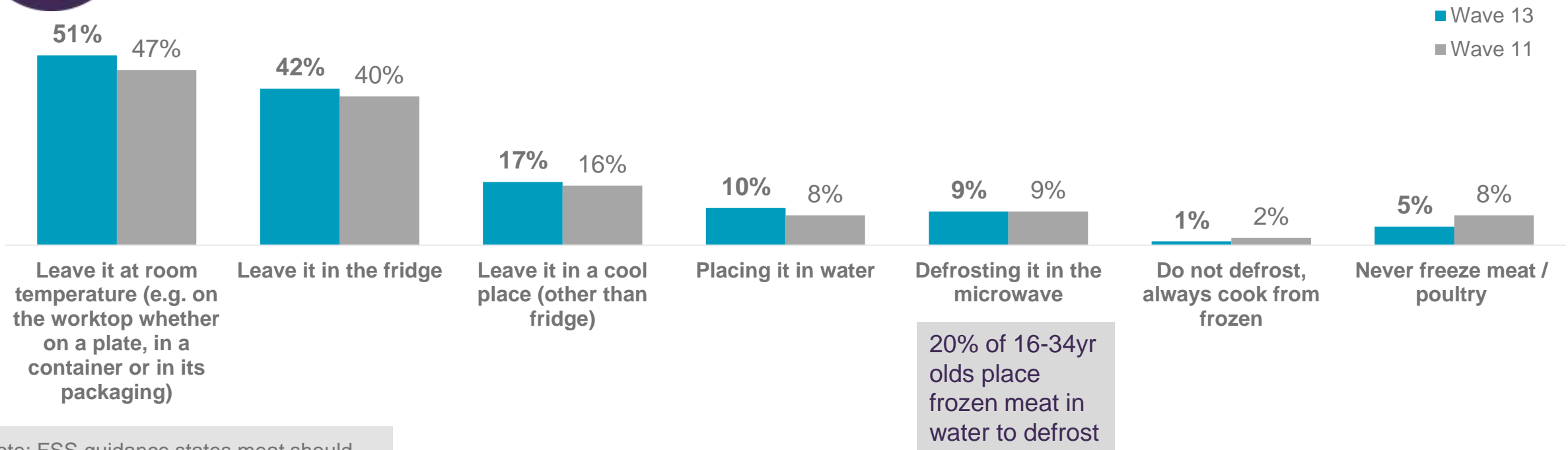


Correct Temperature



- 65+yrs were more likely than others to say -5°C (21%)
- Those with kids were more likely to say 10-15°C (20%)

# Two-fifths defrost meat in accordance with FSS guidance, in the fridge. Leaving meat at room temperature to defrost is a more common approach.



Note: FSS guidance states meat should be defrosted covered or in a sealed container on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

**Most consumers, particularly those in older age groups, always practice good hand hygiene in the kitchen. Most also store food safely within the fridge to avoid cross contamination. Washing raw poultry remains an issue with a third doing this most or all of the time.**



Wash hands before starting to prepare or cook food



65+yrs 84% always

Wash hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish



65+yrs 82% always

Store raw and cooked food separately in the fridge



Store raw meat / poultry uncovered in the fridge



Store open tins in the fridge



65+yrs 72% never

Wash raw chicken or poultry



Always    Most of the time    Sometimes    Never    N/A

Males (37%), 16-34yrs (36%) and 65+yrs (36%) more likely to wash raw poultry always/most of the time

**Just under half never wash raw poultry, as most of them understand the risks of spreading bacteria. The 45% who do wash raw poultry do so for a variety of reasons including to avoid eating germs, to remove chemicals and get dirt off. A substantial minority have always done it.**



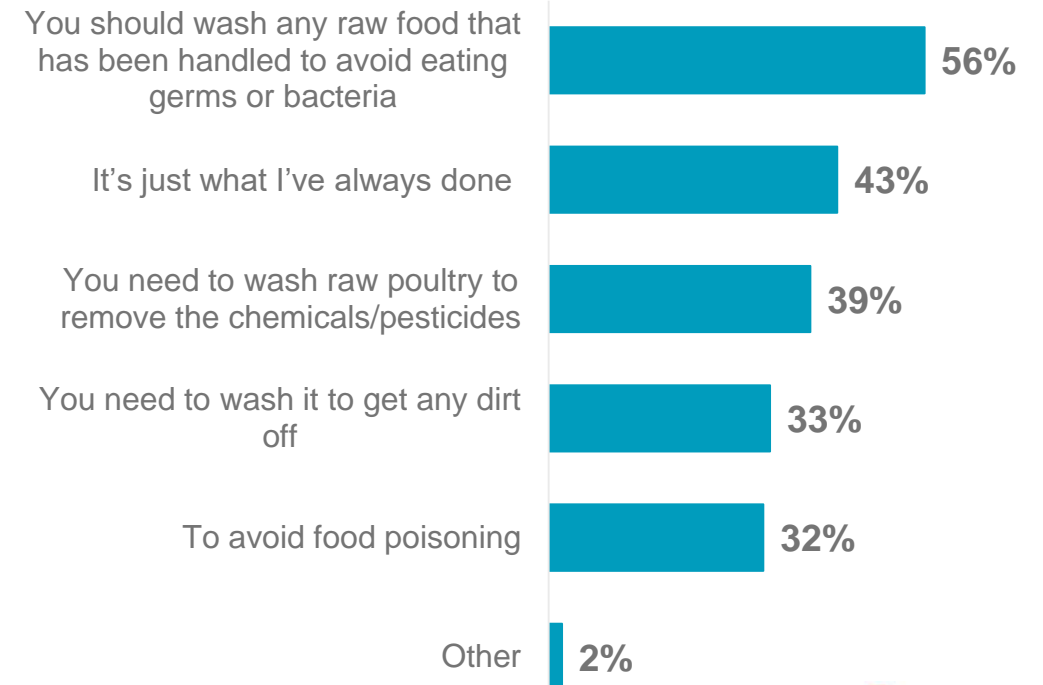
**45% NEVER wash raw poultry**

**45% wash raw poultry at least sometimes**

### Agreement with poultry washing statements



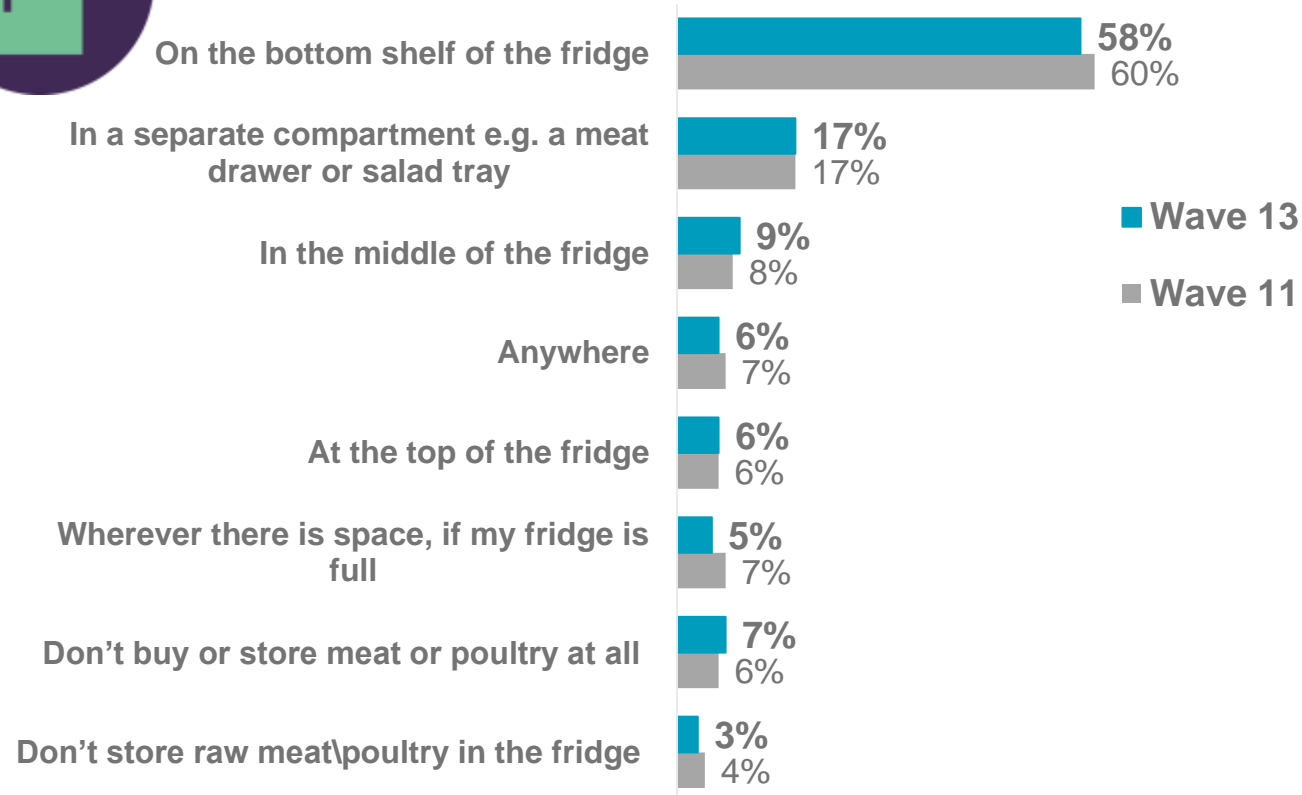
### Reasons for washing raw poultry



**Consistent with previous data, most store meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge either in its packaging, in a covered container or covered with foil / film.**

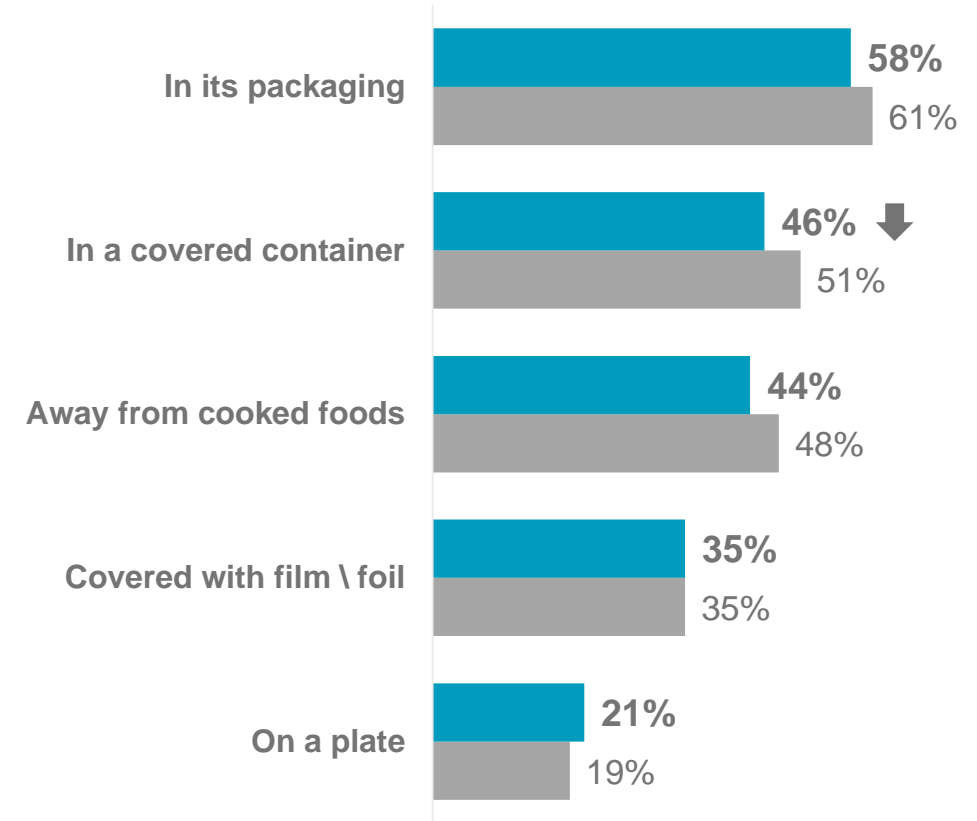


## Where Stored in Fridge



Note: FSS guidance states meat should be stored in a sealed container on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

## How Stored in Fridge



**Just over half always wash fruit and veg before eating raw, with over 65yr olds most likely to do this. A significant minority rely on smelling food to check if it's safe, and more than a quarter use the 5 second rule all / most of the time.**

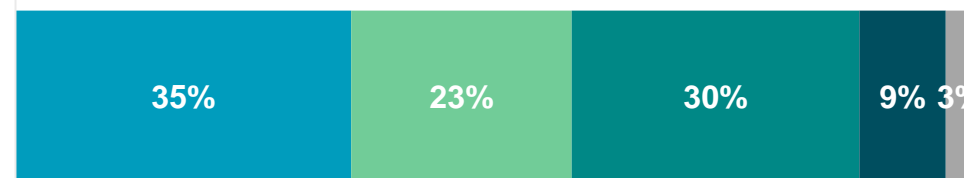


Wash fruit or vegetables (including salad) which are going to be eaten raw

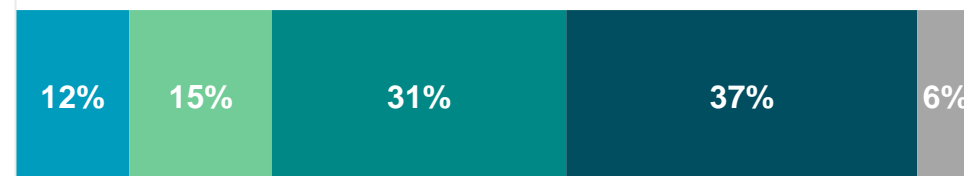


65+ yrs 67% always

Check if food is safe to eat by smelling it



Use the '5 second rule' to decide if something is safe to eat after being dropped on the floor



With kids 22% most of time

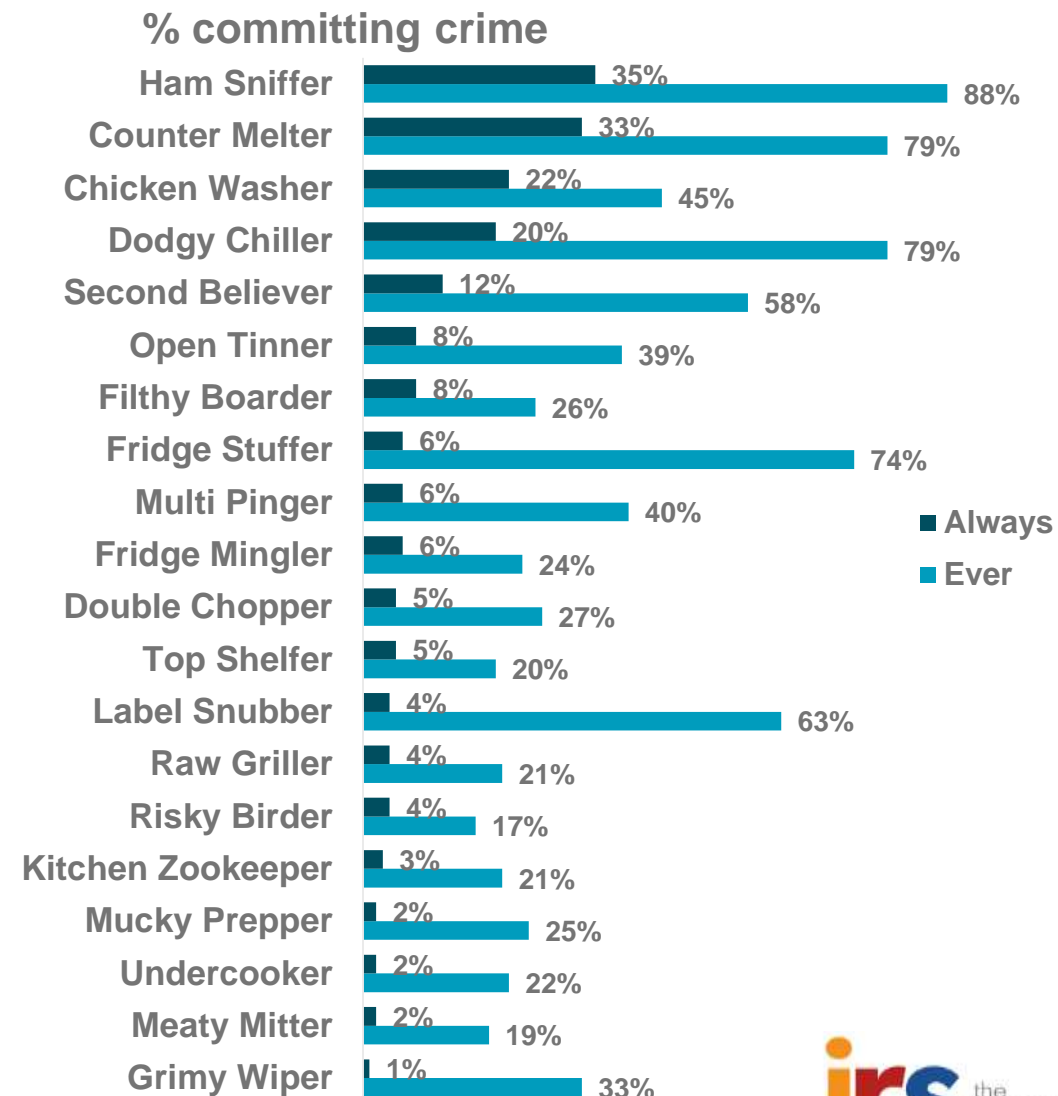
Always Most of the time Sometimes Never N/A



**On average consumers 'commit' just under 9 kitchen crimes out of the 20 measured. Smelling food to check if its safe to eat, defrosting meat at room temperature, washing chicken and not checking the fridge temperature remain the most persistent issues.**

Average number of kitchen crimes committed (out of 20)

8.7



**5% experienced food poisoning in the past year, mostly during summer. Around half of them went to the GP and in a quarter of cases food poisoning was confirmed. Most think the source was food from a restaurant or takeaway, either not cooked properly or from poor food hygiene.**

**5%** experienced food poisoning in the past year

Christmas	10%
Winter	17%
Spring	14%
<b>Summer</b>	<b>29%</b>
Autumn	10%
Can't remember	29%

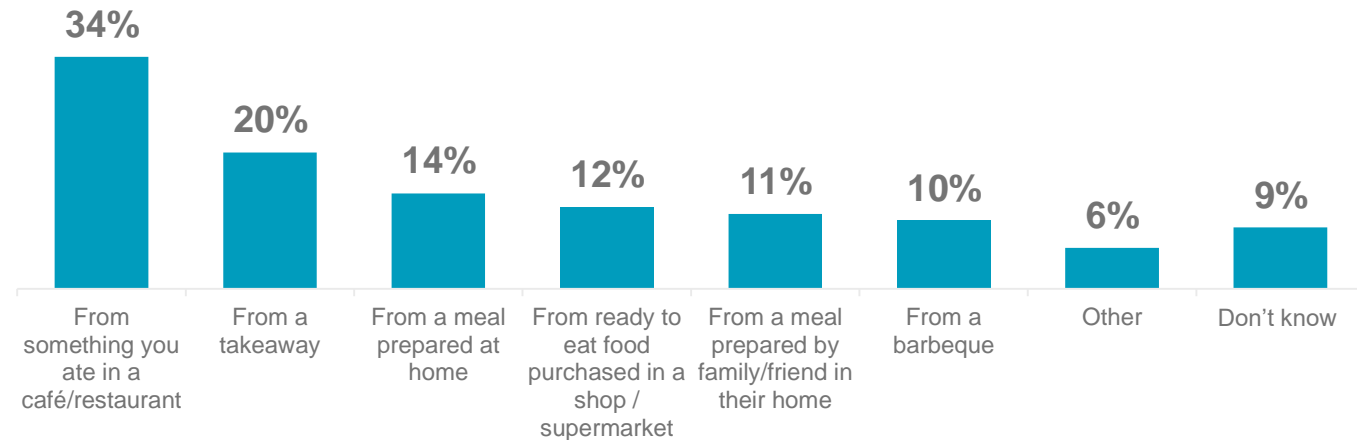
12% 16-34yrs

**49%** of them visited GP

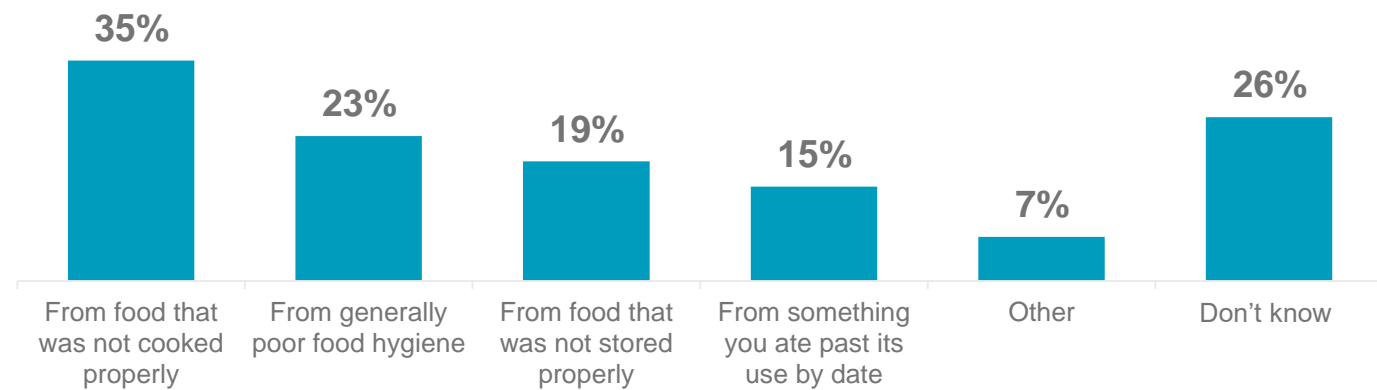
Food poisoning was confirmed in **25%** of cases



Source of Food Poisoning



Reason for Food Poisoning



24% 16-34yrs

Q37 Have you personally ever had food poisoning and if so when was the last occasion? Base: W13 (1029)

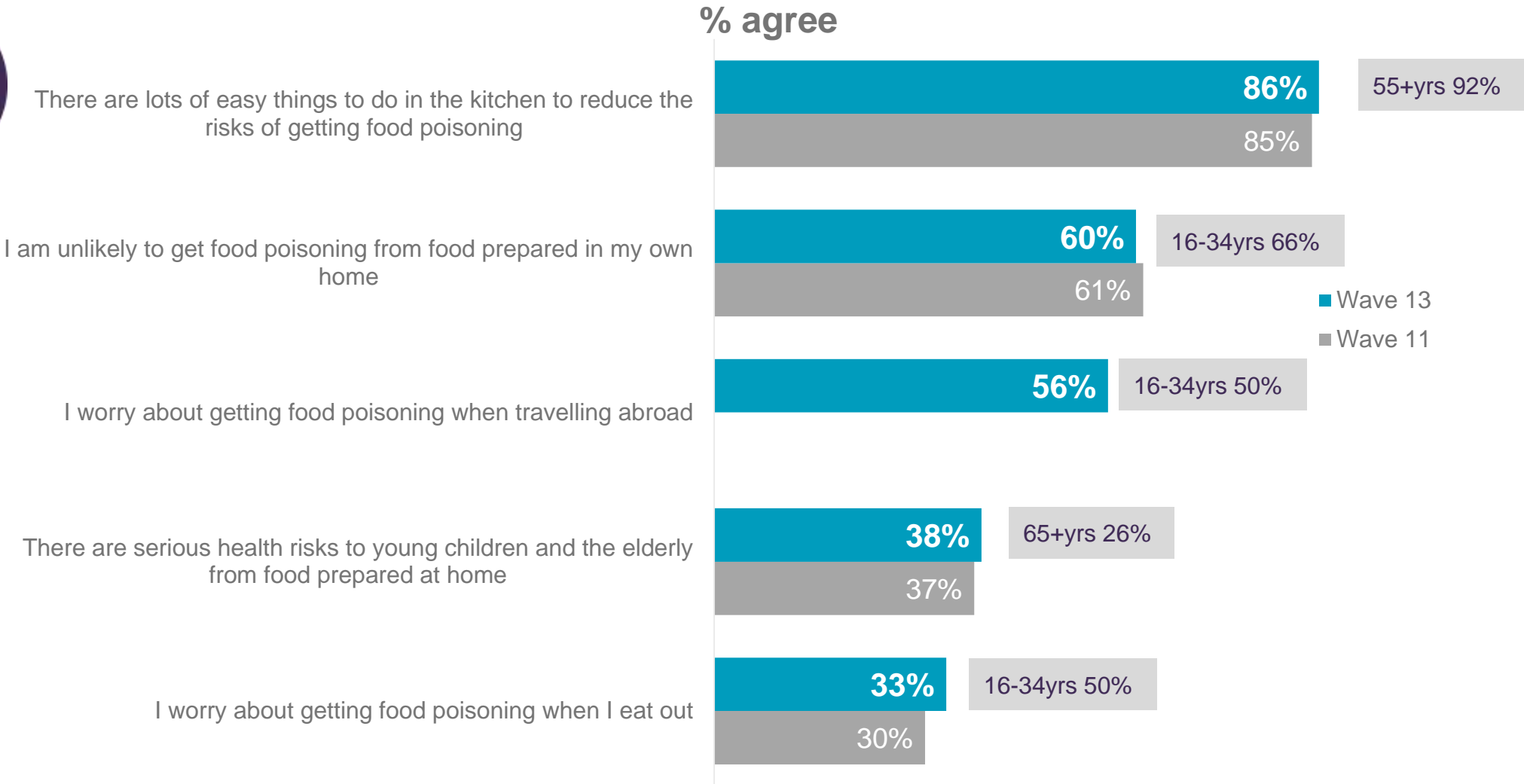
Q37b At what time of year did you have food poisoning? Base: W13 (407)

Q38 On the last occasion, where do you think you got food poisoning? Base: W13 (407)

Q39 On the last occasion, how do you think you got food poisoning? Base: W13 (407)

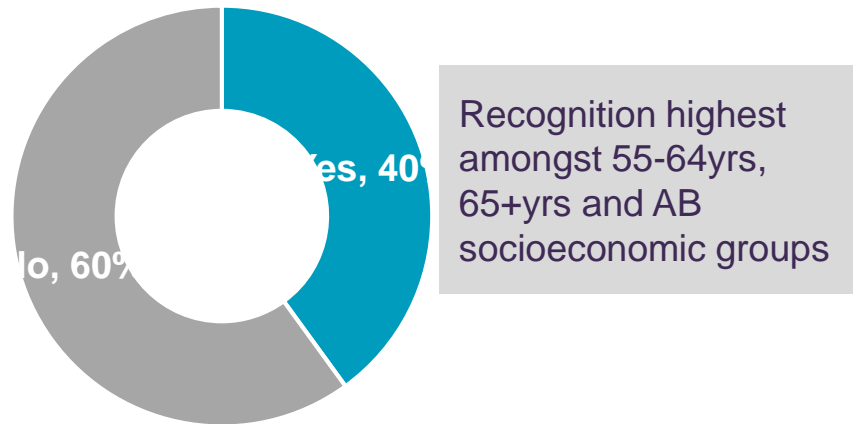
Q40 Did you confirm with your GP or local doctor's surgery that you had had food poisoning, and if so, did they tell you what type of food poisoning you had? Base: W13 (407)

# 6 in 10 consumers think they are unlikely to get food poisoning from food they prepare and just over a third recognise that food prepared at home can carry serious health risks for vulnerable groups. Most believe there are easy ways to reduce the risk of getting food poisoning at home.



**40% had heard of campylobacter, consistent with previous waves. Most were reasonably knowledgeable about what campy is, where it's commonly found and who is most seriously affected by infection.**

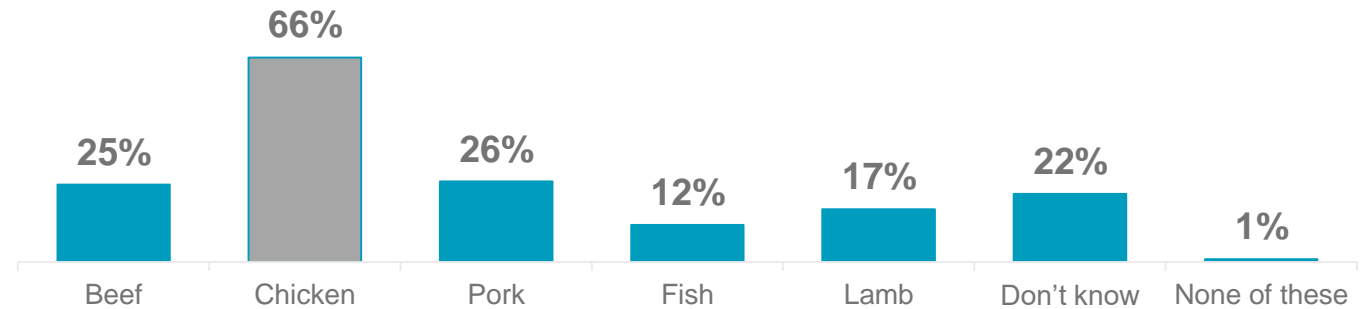
### Heard of campylobacter



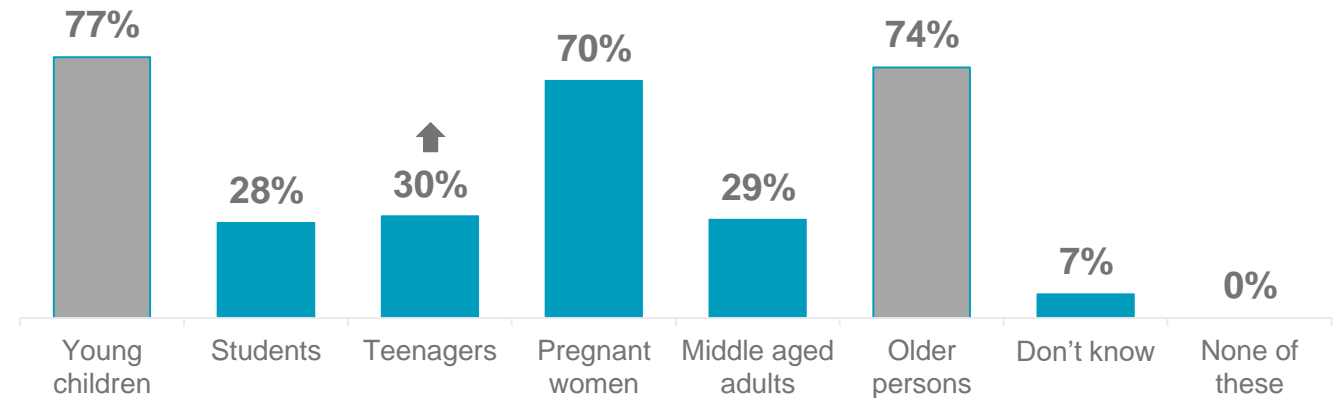
**86%** knew campylobacter was a bacteria

10% parasite  
8% virus  
4% fungi  
1% pesticide  
5% don't know

### Where commonly found



### Serious for whom



# Food Safety – Summary

- Consumers feel confident they can access information about cooking and preparing food safely at home, and use a variety of on and offline sources to do so
- In practice, most claim to adhere to safe cooking processes, cooking food until piping hot, ensuring meat is thoroughly cooked and only reheating leftovers once
- Kitchen hygiene practices are also followed with most claiming to change dishcloths and towels regularly, ensure surfaces are clean before preparing food and taking care regarding cross contamination
- Key areas where consumers consistently take risks relating to food safety at home are smelling food rather than following use-by dates, not checking or adjusting the temperature of their fridge, defrosting meat at room temperature and washing raw chicken or poultry
- Food poisoning is not necessarily something consumers are worried about, and some complacency remains around the risks of food poisoning from food cooked / prepared at home

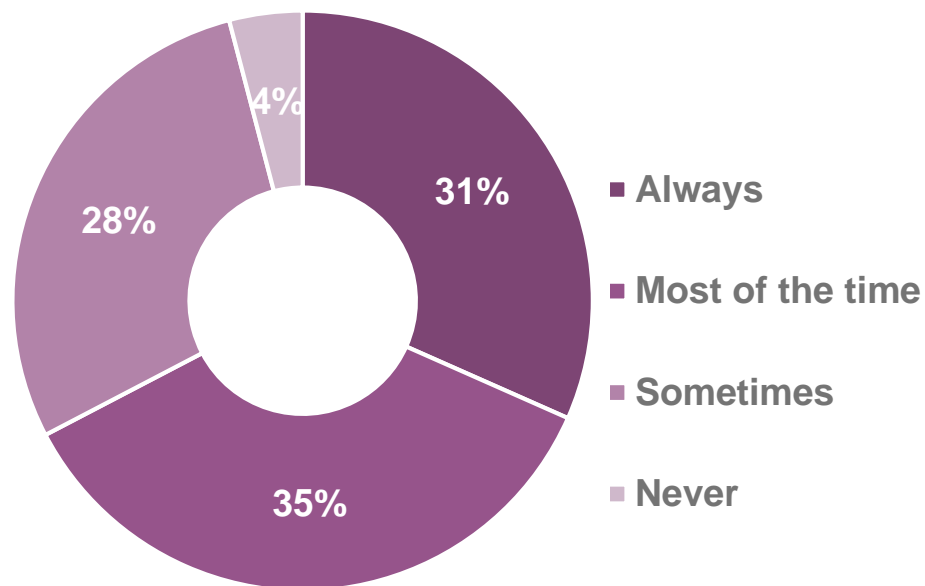
Although there is good evidence of positive food safety practices at home, some negative behaviour remains on specific key aspects, highlighting the need for continued reminders and ongoing advice from FSS.

# Food Labelling & Authenticity

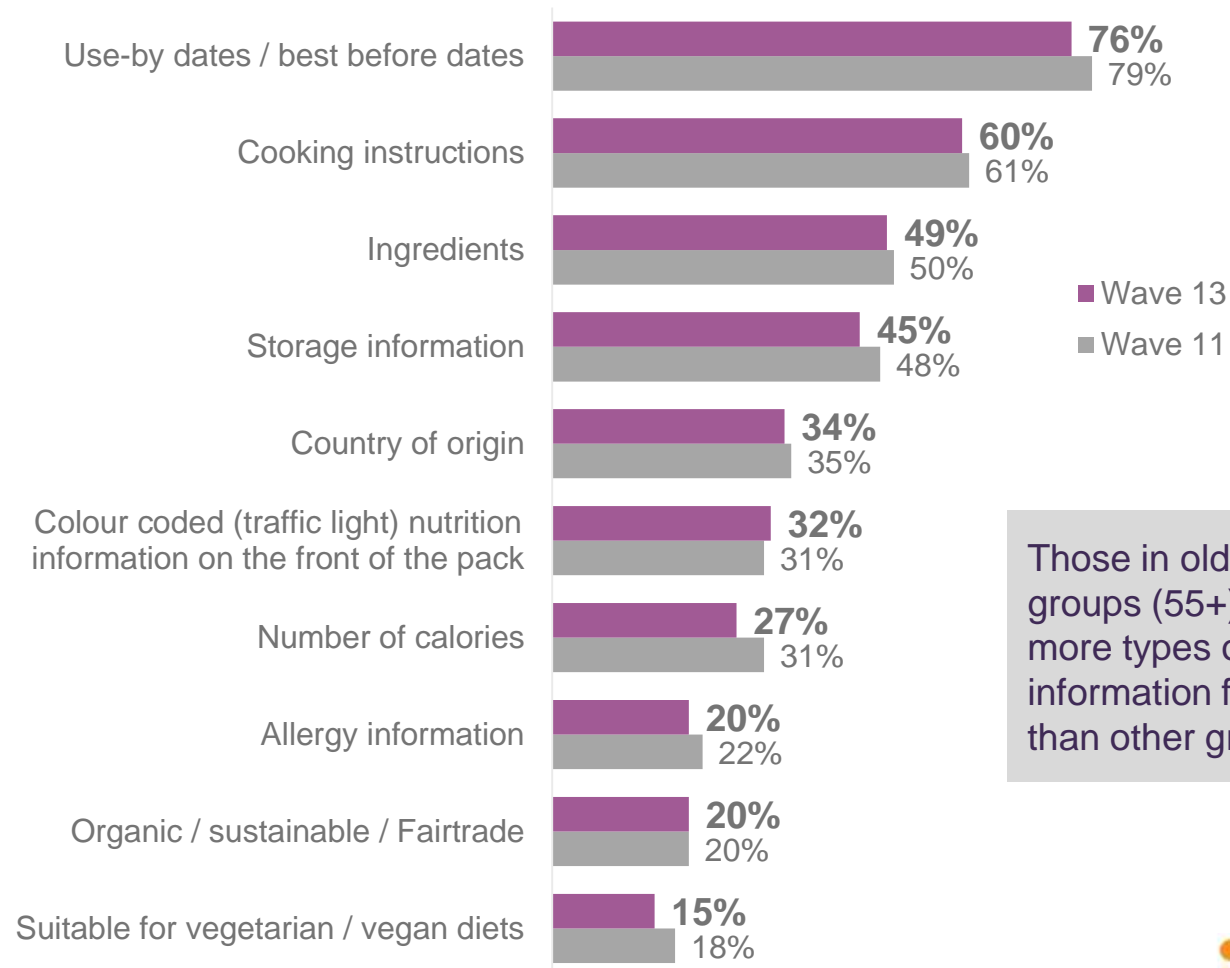


**Two-thirds claim to read food labels most or all of the time. Key information sought relates to use-by dates and cooking instructions, although information on ingredients, and storage are also important for many.**

## Read Food Labels

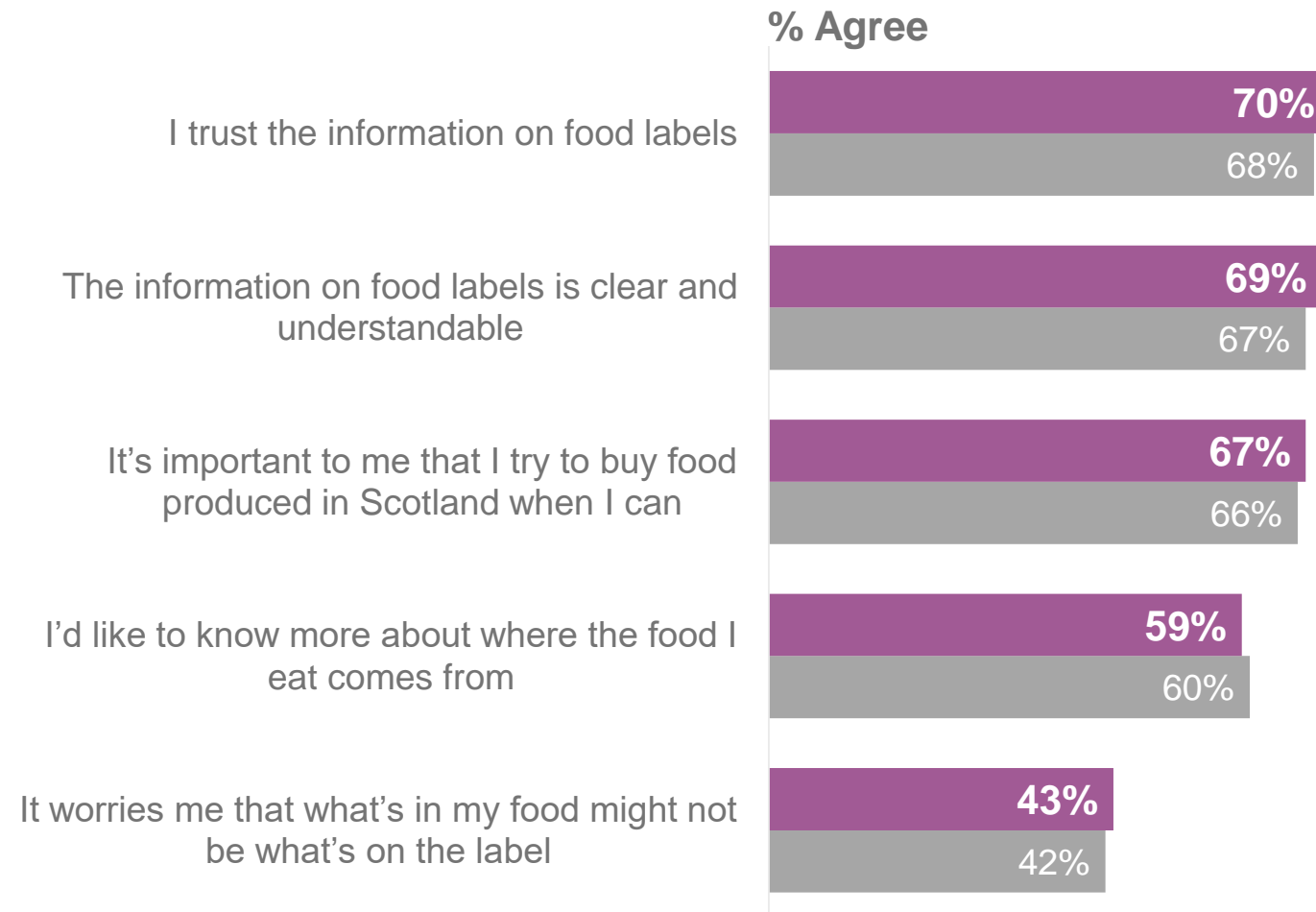


## Info Gained from Food labels



Those in older age groups (55+) seek more types of information from labels than other groups

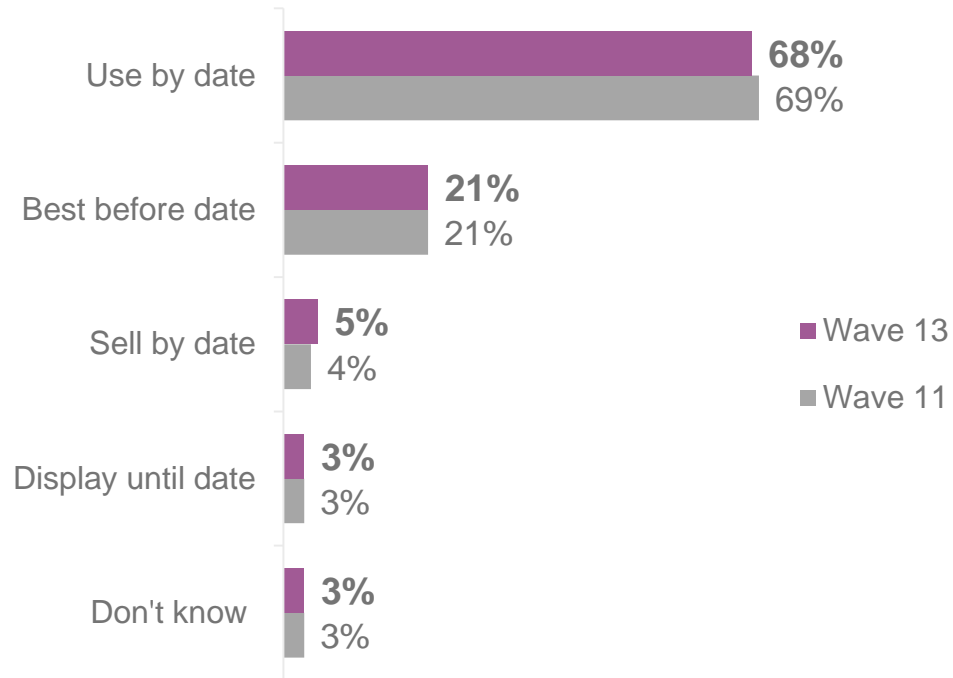
**Food labels are trusted by most and provide information that is considered clear and understandable. Many consumers are interested in understanding more about where their food comes from, and in buying food produced in Scotland.**



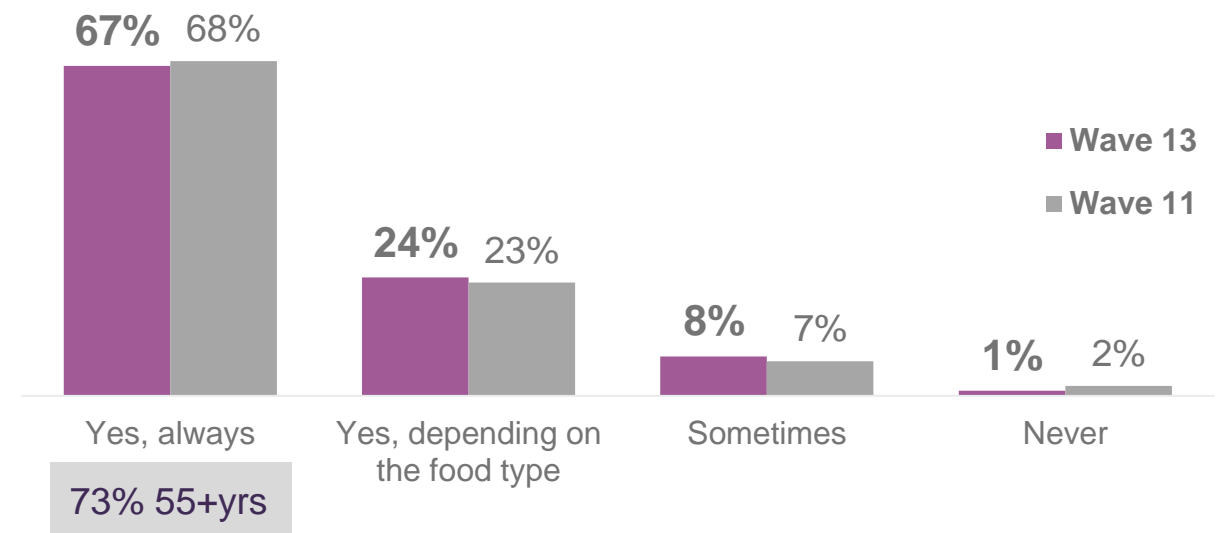


**Two-thirds of consumers know that use by dates are the best indicator of whether food is safe to eat, and a similar proportion always check these before cooking or preparing food.**

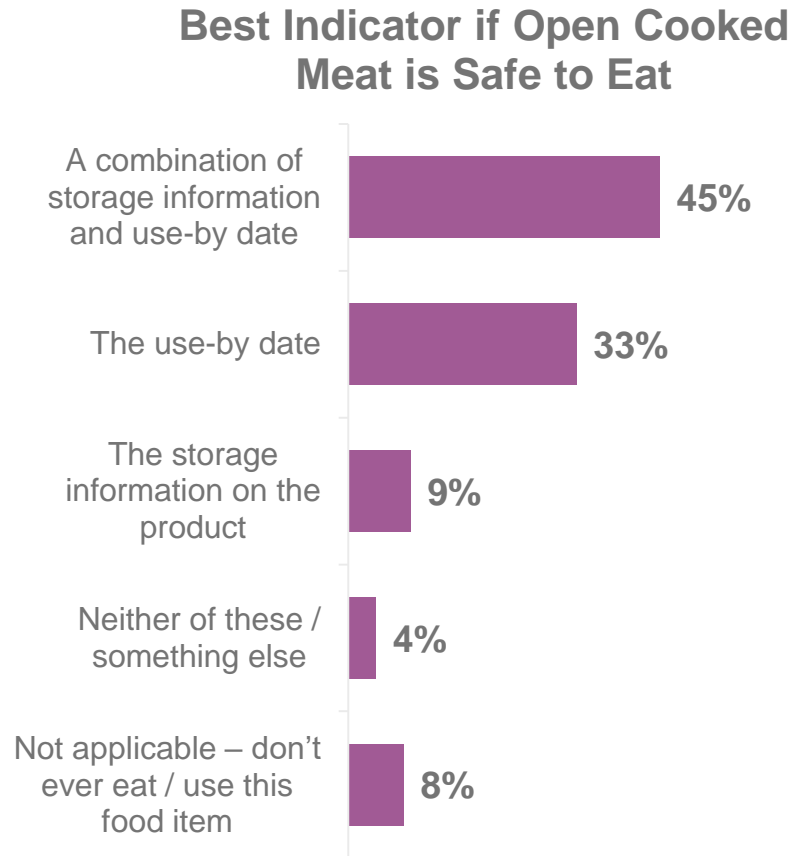
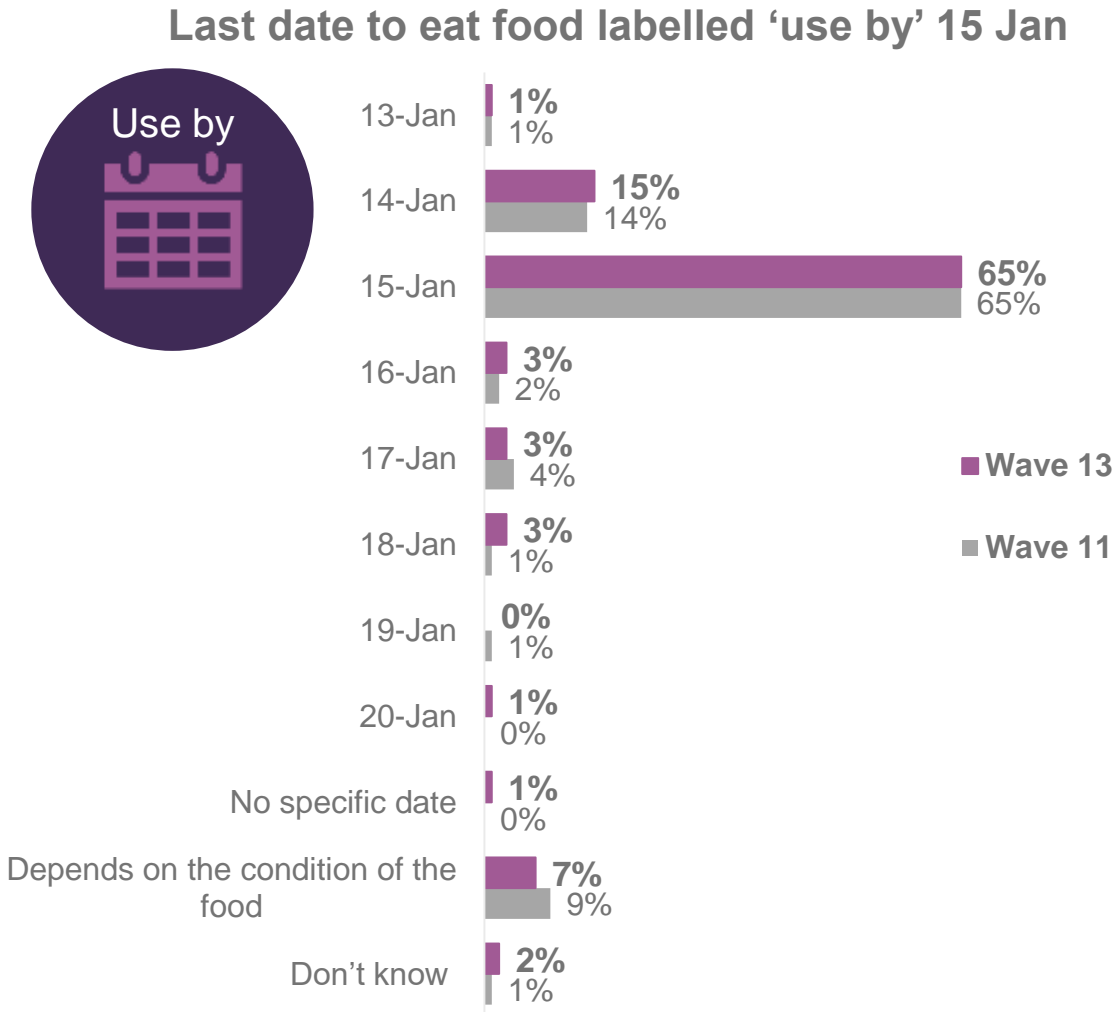
**Best indicator food is safe to eat**



**Check Use-by Dates When Cooking**

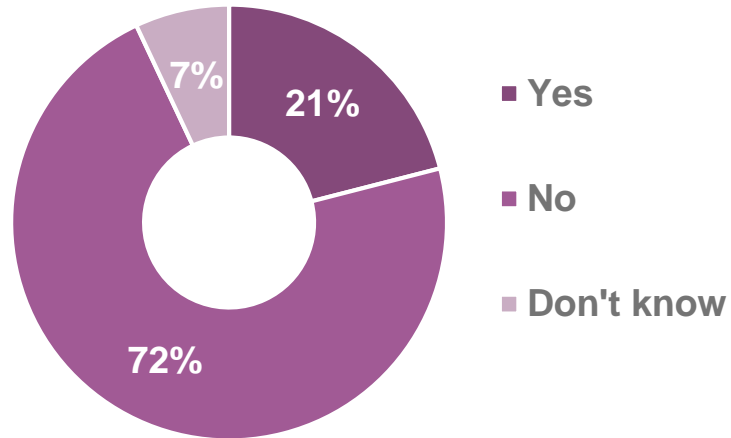


**For most consumers, the use by date on a food label is the last date they would eat the food. 1 in 10 would eat the food up to 3 days after that date and 7% decide depending on the condition of the food. Where storage information is provided, this is also used in decision making.**



**A fifth remember seeing a food recall alert in the past year, mostly via news media or in store, although a quarter mentioned FSS as the source. 20% are aware of the text alert system with 7% having already signed up to this service.**

### Remember any alerts about food recall



**20% aware of text alert system to notify consumers of products being recalled**



**7% aware & have signed up**

**50%**

**35%**

**25%**

**11%**

**13%**

**2%**

News outlet (e.g. BBC)

In-store

Food Standard Scotland website, FSS social media site or alert

Consumer or campaign group (e.g. Which?, Allergy UK)

Other

Don't know

# Food Labelling & Authenticity – Summary

- Two thirds claim to read food labels all or most of the time, primarily for information on use-by dates
- Food labels are largely trusted by consumers and are mostly considered clear and understandable
- Most claim to understand the importance of use-by dates and do check these before cooking or preparing food, however it will be interesting to monitor this in line with recent press around food waste to identify any sense of consumer confusion
- A fifth recalled seeing a food recall alert in the past year, with news outlets and in-store notices the most likely sources of this information
- A similar number were aware of the text alert system, but only 7% of consumers claimed to have signed up to this.

# Food Establishments & Eating Out



# 8 in 10 think out of home food establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene, and that they could do more to assure consumers that food eaten in out of home establishments is safe.



**43%** felt they had clear information on how to check if food eaten out of home is safe



↓ **47%** agreed that out of home food establishments provide enough information to check food is safe to eat

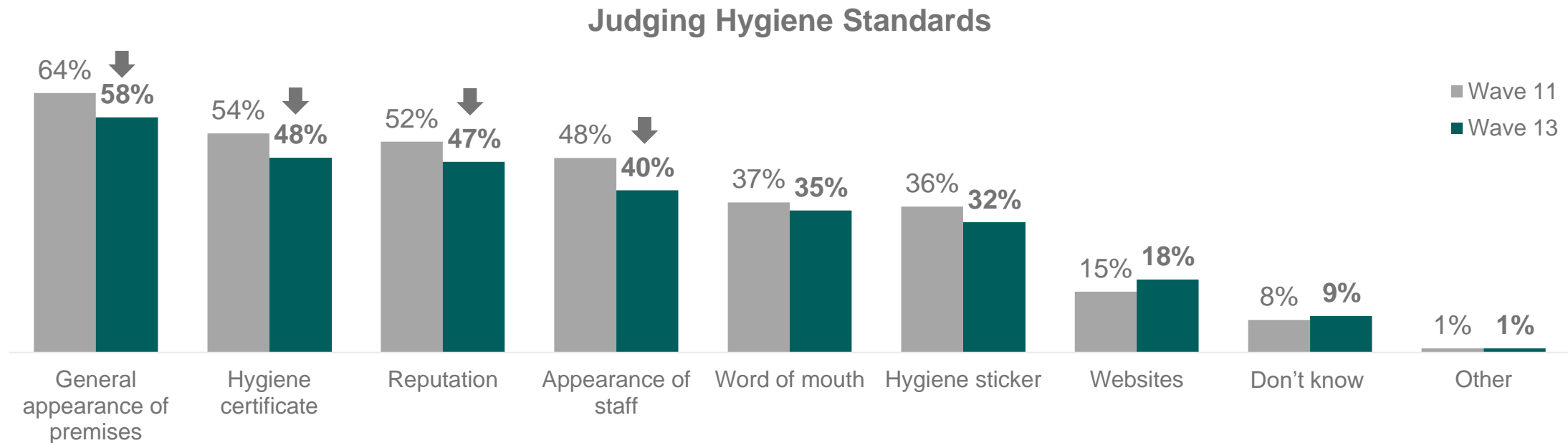


**33%** are concerned about getting food poisoning when eating out of home



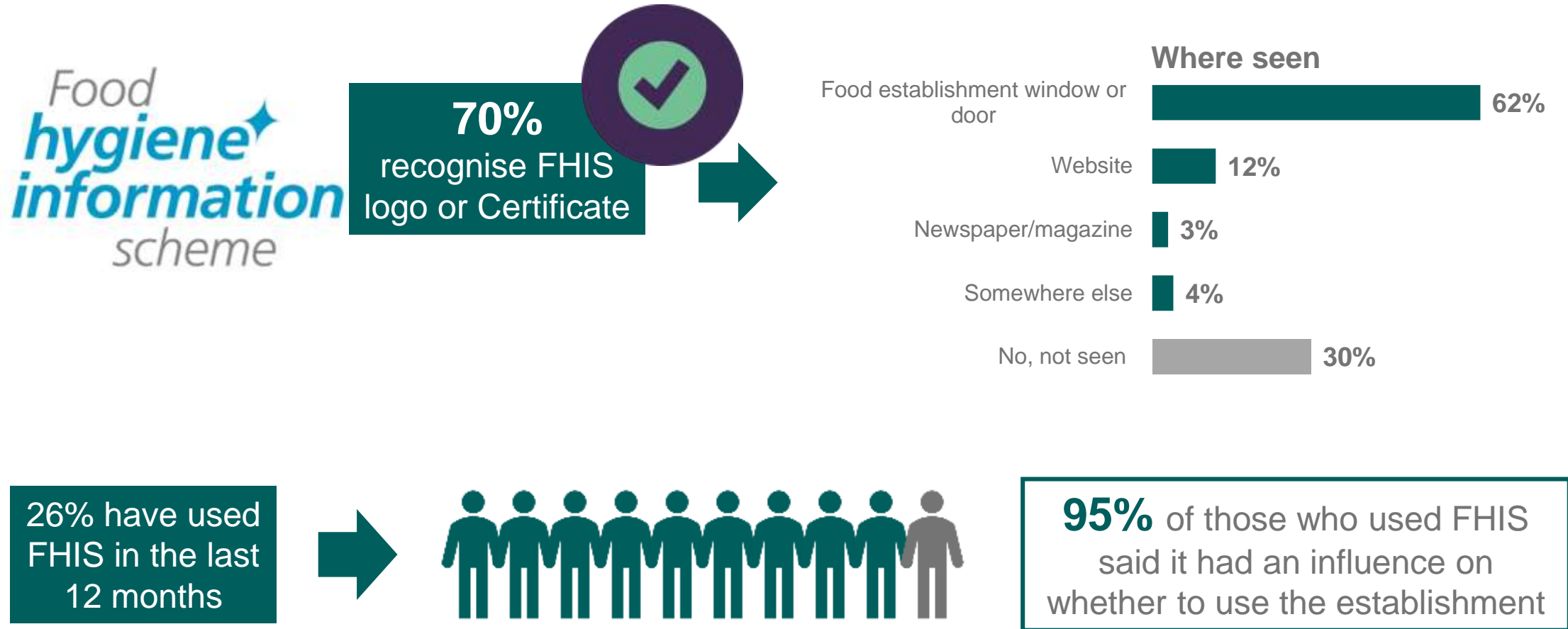
**80%** think restaurants / cafés / takeaways should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene

**Reliance on visual cues to judge the hygiene standards of eating establishments has decreased in the latest dataset, perhaps impacted by fewer eating out occasions in the pandemic. Hygiene certificates are used by almost half and stickers by a third.**



- Females were more likely to mention hygiene certificate (51%) or sticker (35%)
- Younger ages (16-34yrs) rely more on websites (27%)
- Over 55yr olds tend to rely more on reputation and appearance of premises and staff

**7 in 10 recognise the FHIS logo or certificate, mostly from having seen it in the windows of food establishments. A quarter said they had used the scheme to check hygiene standards, which influenced their decision of whether to use the food establishment.**

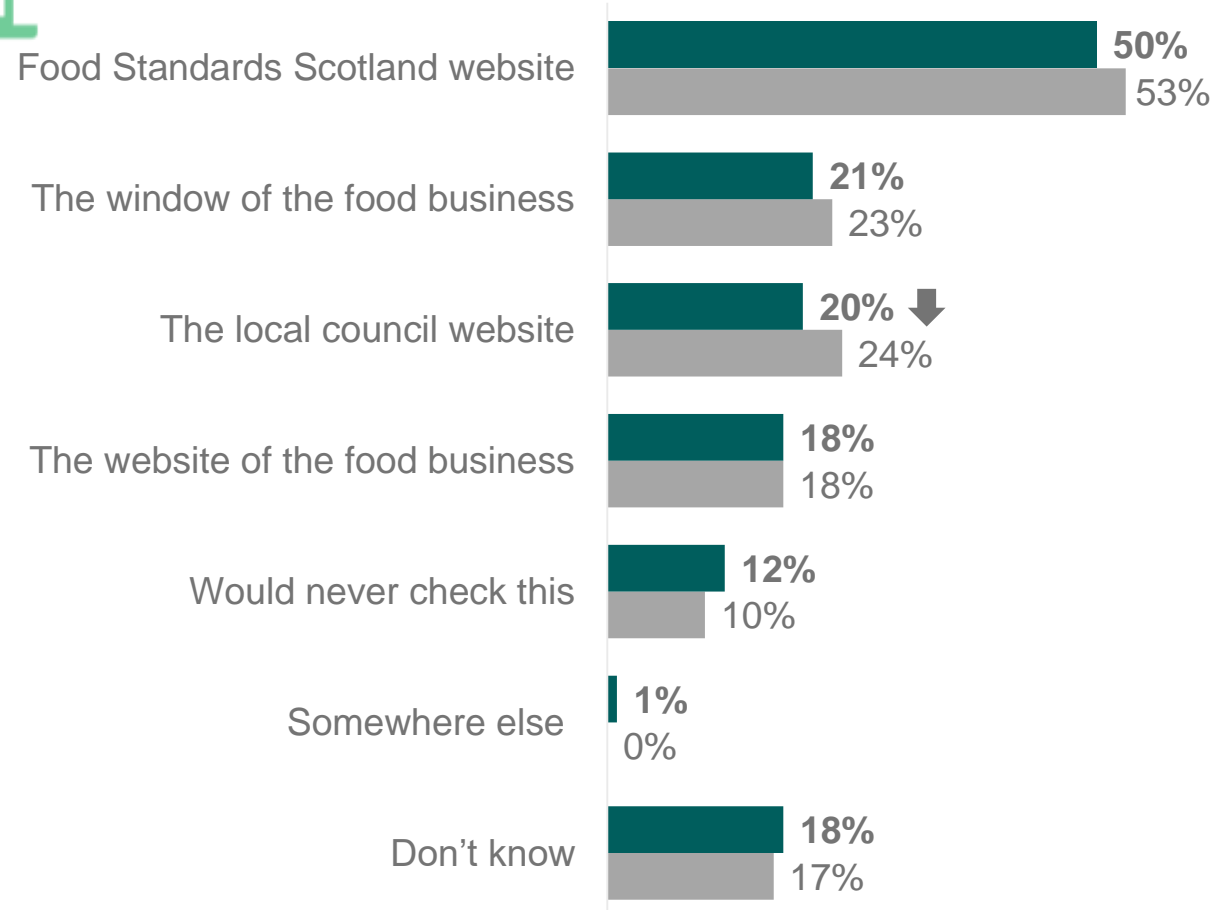




**Half of consumers would look to Food Standards Scotland's website to check a food establishment's hygiene inspection. Others would checking in the window or on the website of the food business, and a fifth mention the local council's website.**



### Source of Food Hygiene Inspection Info



# Food Establishments & Eating Out – Summary

- There appears to be room for improvement in terms of information provision by eating out establishments to enable consumers to check and have confidence in food safety when eating out
- While many still rely on visual checks – on establishment and staff appearance – as the way to ascertain the hygiene standards of places they eat out, this has changed recently, perhaps related to changing eating out habits during the pandemic
- When prompted, most recognise FHIS scheme and amongst those who have used it, the information provided has influenced their choice of food establishment
- FSS website is known / assumed to be a key source of food hygiene certification information.

# Allergens

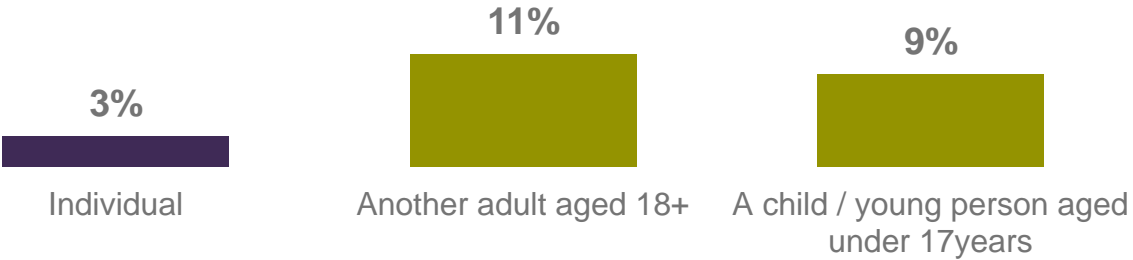


**A slightly higher proportion of households reported food allergies in this wave at 16%<sup>54</sup> across both adults and children. A range of allergies were mentioned with milk, gluten eggs, molluscs and crustaceans the most common.**



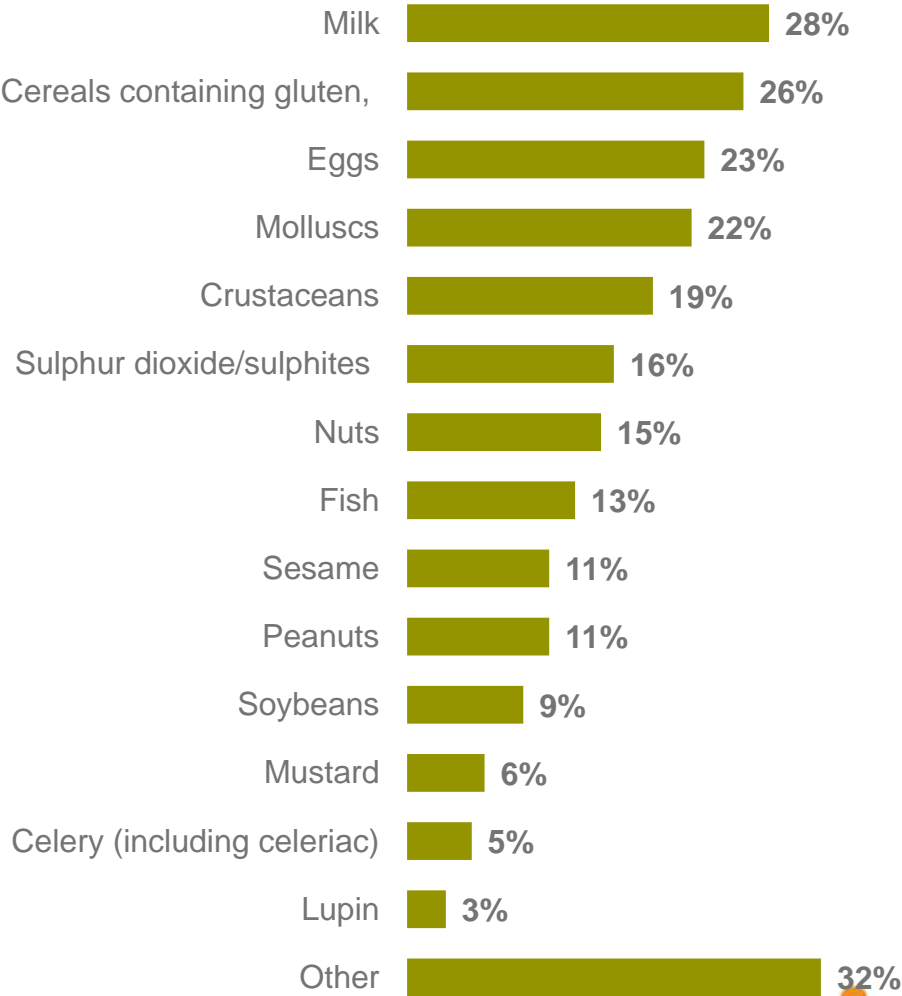
**16%** of Scottish households include at least one person with a food allergy

**Food Allergies in Household**



**71%** buy food for those with an allergy

**Type of Food Allergy**



**Almost half of those with household food allergies are aware of the allergen alert system and a quarter have signed up to this. Not all of those with allergies avoid eating food that may contain ingredients they are allergic to, and 3 in 10 never carry their auto injector.**



**45%** are aware of the allergen alert system



**26%** have signed up for alerts



**21%** would still eat food with a label saying 'may contain' something they are allergic to



**Frequency of carrying EpiPen / Auto injector**

**20%** always

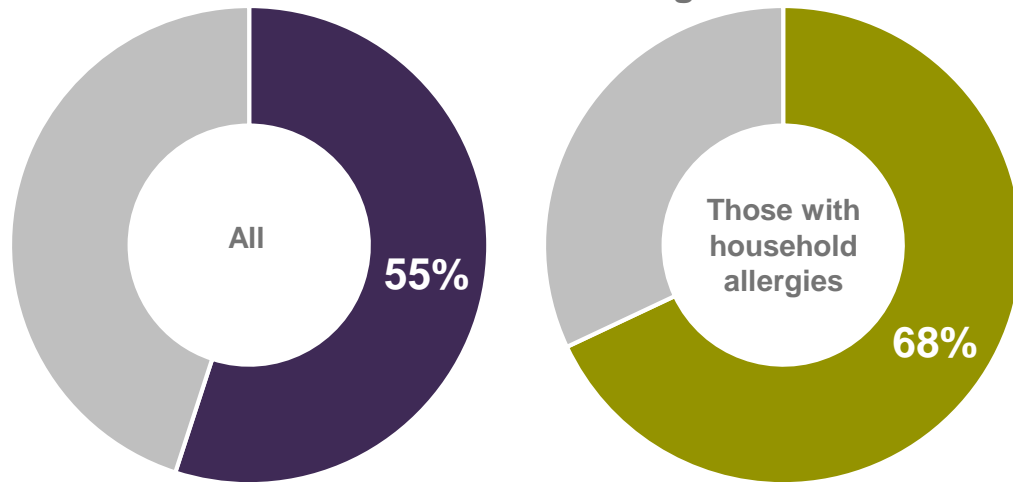
**24%** sometimes

**30%** never

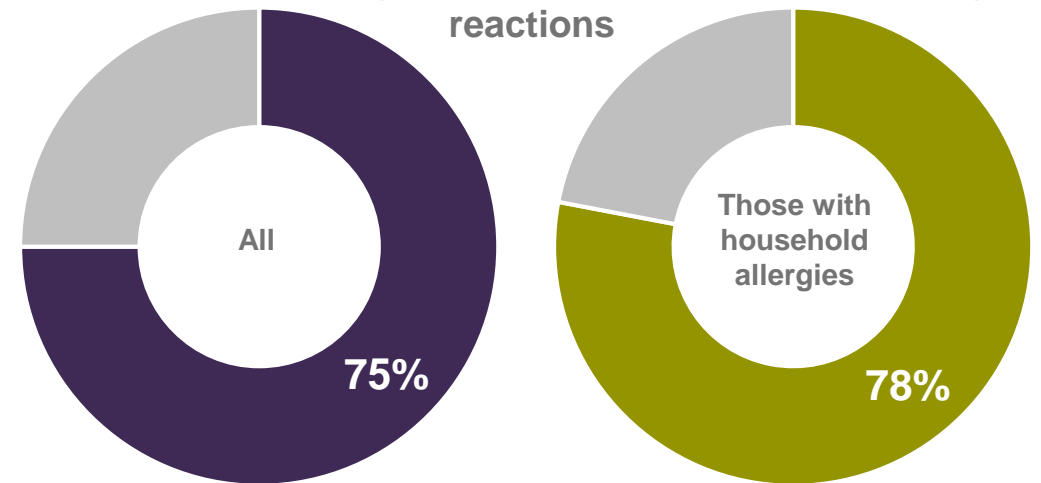
**27%** do not need one

**While those living with food allergies in the household are more concerned about allergens than the general population, they do feel they can access clear and sufficient information about allergens.**

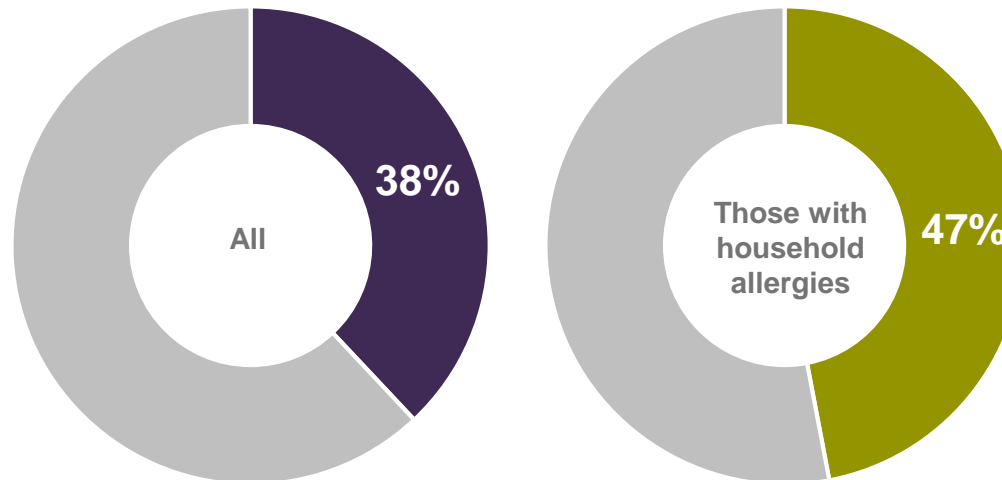
Concerned about allergens



Clear info about ingredients which could cause allergic reactions

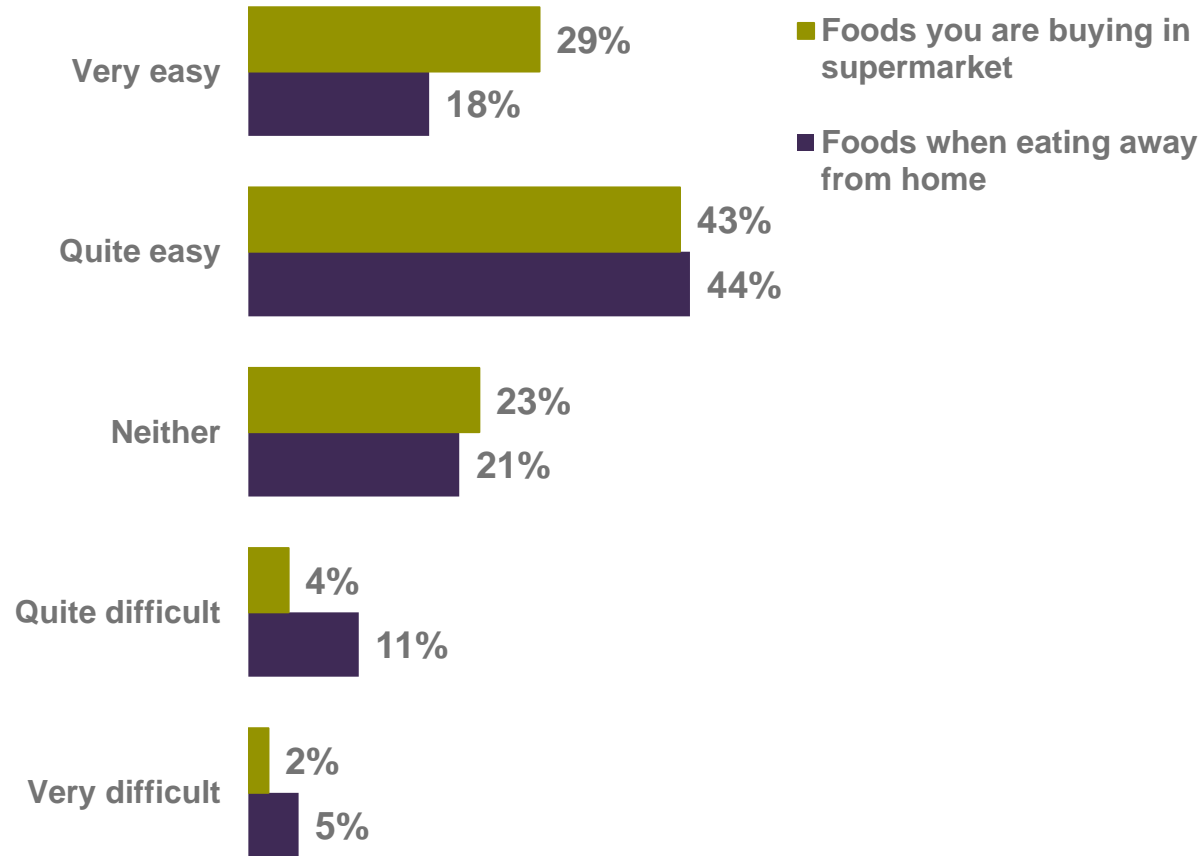


Enough information about allergens when eating out

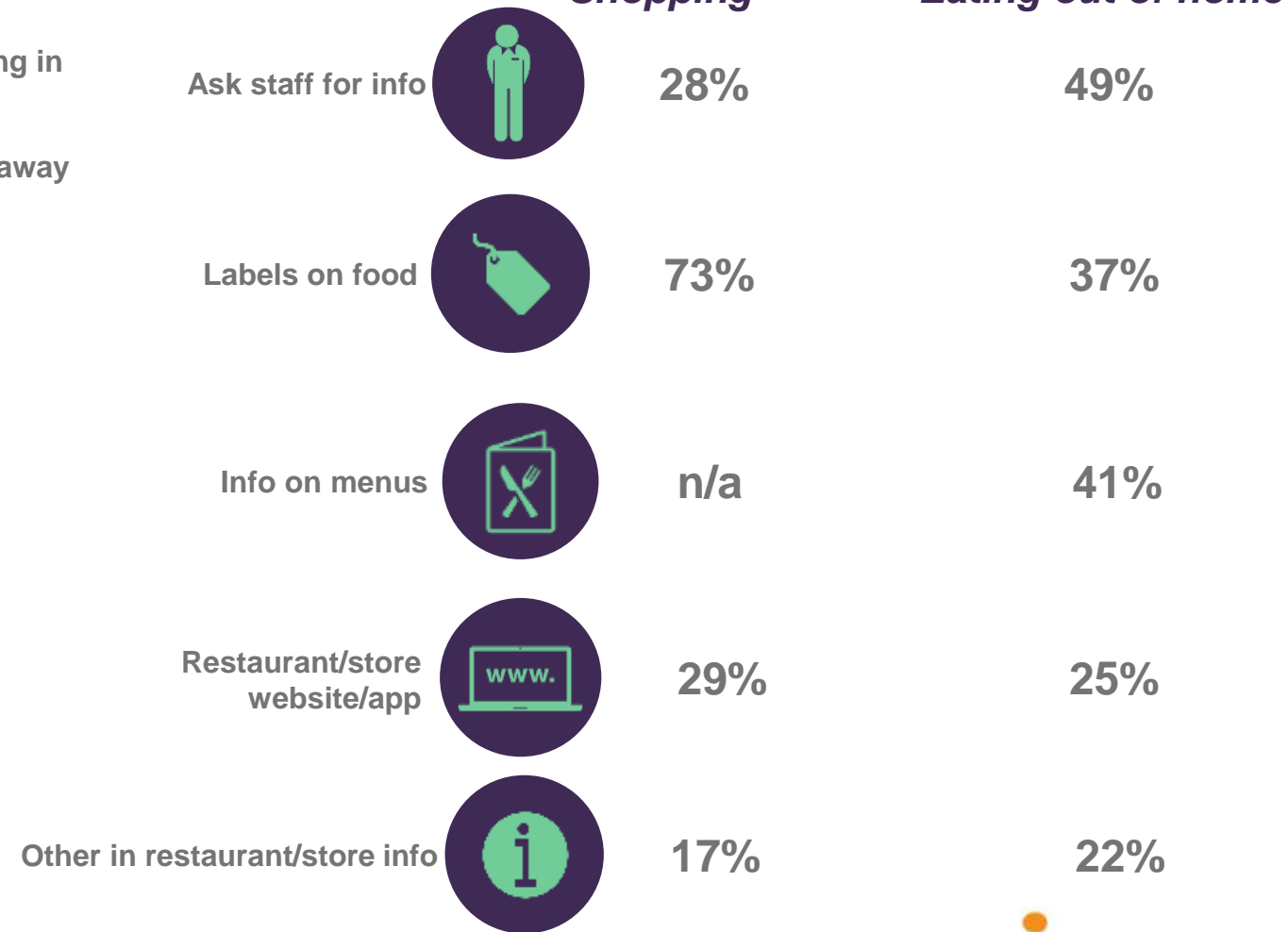


**It remains easier to find allergy information on foods purchased in supermarkets than when eating out of home. Food labels are the main source of this information when shopping, while a combination of asking staff, labels and menus are used when eating out.**

### Ease of Finding Allergy Info

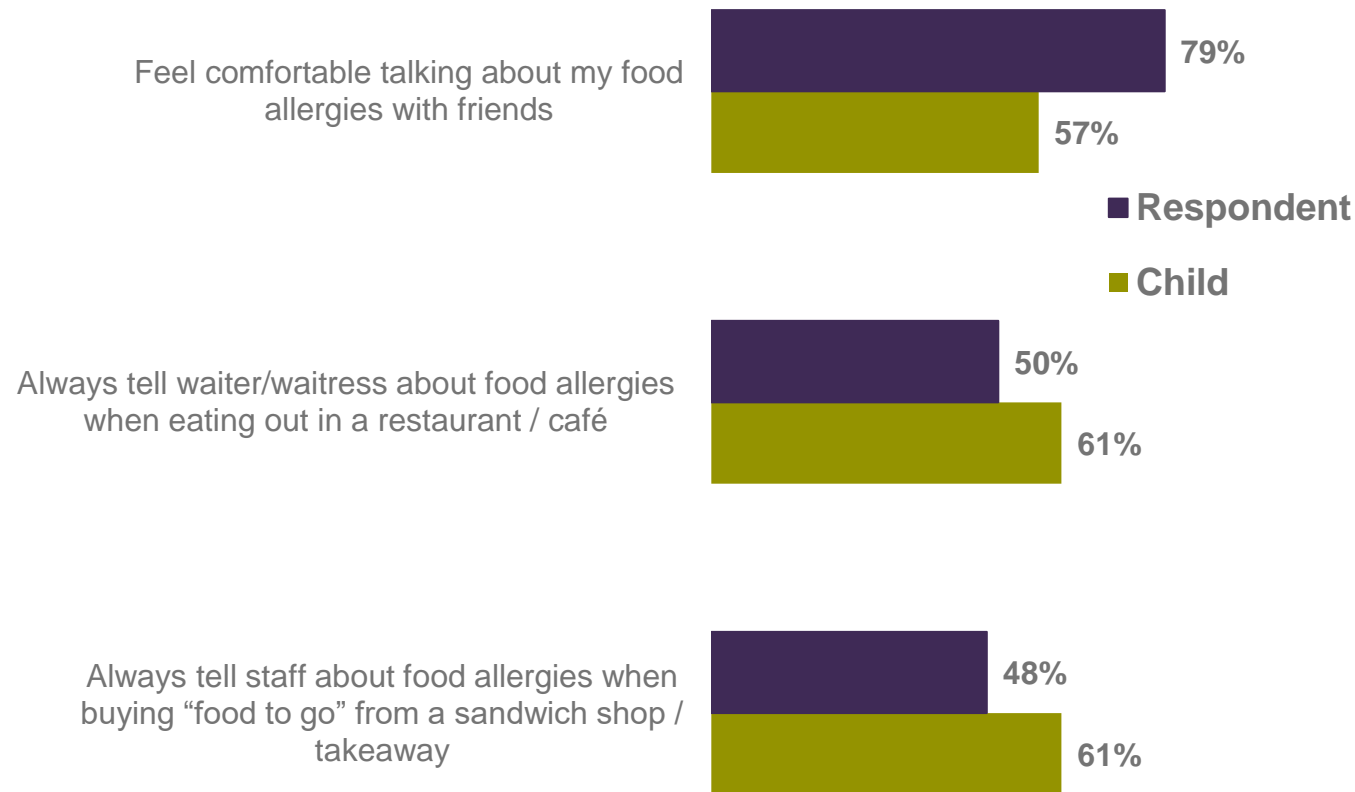


### Main Sources of Allergy Info



**Adults are largely comfortable discussing their food allergies with others, but children less so. However, children with food allergies are more likely than adults to always disclose their allergies when eating out or buying food to go.**

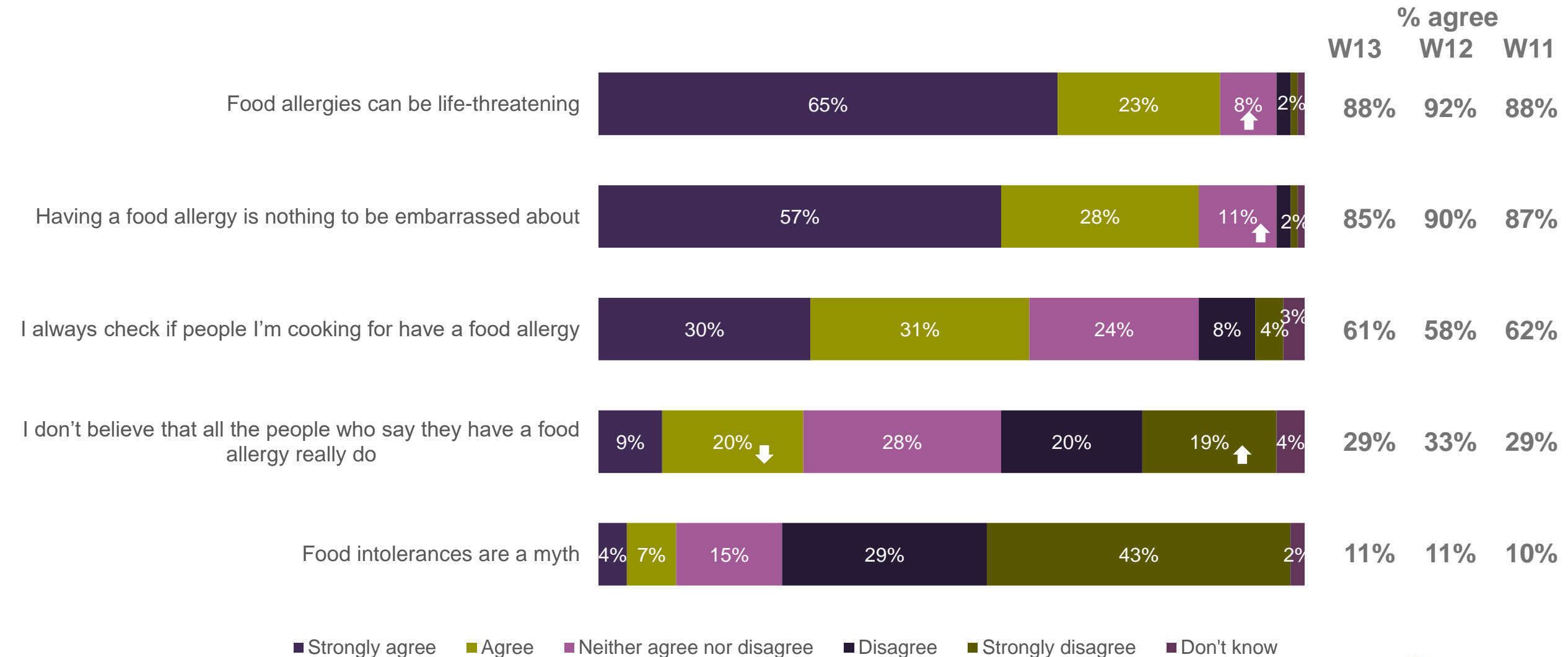
## Allergy Behaviours



**28%** of those who have food allergies think it's easy to avoid food allergens when ordering a take-away



**Attitudes towards food allergies have remained largely consistent over the past year. The public recognise the potentially serious consequences of food allergies and do not feel there is a stigma attached to having a food allergy.**



# Allergens – Summary

- Just over 1 in 10 households in Scotland contain someone with a food allergy
- The most commonly reported allergies in this wave were to milk, gluten, eggs and some seafood
- Those who have food allergies in the household are, not surprisingly, concerned about ingredients that can cause allergic reactions, however most feel they can access information about this
- Allergens information is easier to find on food purchased in supermarkets than when eating out of home
- And not all of those who have food allergies disclose these when eating out or buying food on the go
- Almost half are aware of the allergens text alert system and a quarter have signed up to this → potential to grow awareness and uptake
- Attitudes amongst the general public remain consistent with previous waves – with most understanding that food allergies can be life threatening, and believing there is / should be no stigma attached to having a food allergy.



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