

Food in Scotland Consumer Tracking Survey Wave 9 – Food Safety & Authenticity Module

Summary Report





1. Introduction

- 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:
 - Food is Safe
 - Food is Authentic
 - Consumers Have Healthier Diets
 - Responsible Food Businesses Flourish
 - FSS is a Trusted Organisation
 - FSS is Efficient and Effective
- 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 a topical question module.
- The survey was set up by Kantar TNS who conducted Waves 1 – 6. JRS research consortium has undertaken all subsequent waves.
- This document outlines key findings from Wave 9 (food safety and authenticity).

2. Methodology

- The research methodology was designed to be consistent with previous waves to ensure comparability.



Online survey



Representative sample of
1,079 Scottish adults



30mins questionnaire length



24th January – 2nd February 2020

*note this is later than usual due to research restrictions during the pre-election period.

- Where statistically significant differences exist compared with the previous wave, these are highlighted using arrows **↑** **↓**
- All research was undertaken in strict accordance with MRS Code of Conduct and GDPR legislation.

3. Key Findings



Awareness, Knowledge & Trust

- 63% of consumers are aware of FSS – a level that has been consistent for the past couple of years
 - Recent qualitative research undertaken by JRS suggests that whilst many are aware of the existence of FSS on prompting, the organisation is not front of mind
- The tracker data suggests that understanding of FSS' remit could be improved
 - Again, qualitative research showed that consumers expect there to be an agency dealing with food standards, but generally do not know much about what is involved
- For those who are aware of FSS, levels of trust in the organisation are high and performance is rated very highly
 - Giving FSS a strong platform from which to build
- Consumers are concerned about a range of food issues
 - Environment, food production, animal welfare, prices
 - FSS has a credible, trusted voice in the food environment, which can be used to inform and reassure consumers on the issues they are most concerned about.

Food Safety

- Consumers feel well informed about food hygiene and safety practices at home
- Behaviours are entrenched and consistent over time
 - Both positive and negative behaviours
- Most follow safe cooking and cleaning practices, however chilling, particularly relating to fridge temperatures could be improved
- A significant minority still wash chicken / poultry
 - Particularly males and older age groups
- And bad habits remain, such as:
 - smelling to check food is safe to eat
 - relying on visual checks that food is cooked/reheated
 - and using the 5 second rule if food drops
- Although consumers agree that there's lots they can do to prevent food poisoning at home, only half say they do everything they can to prevent it
- Food safety at home, and prevention of food poisoning, remains a relevant issue for FSS' communications.

Food Labelling, Authenticity & Food Crime

- Consumers tend to read food labels, and are increasingly looking for different types of information – use-by dates, country of origin, organic/fairtrade marks, cooking instructions
- Our recent qualitative research relating to the impact of Brexit on the food environment suggested this will only increase
- Although the information on food labels is largely viewed as understandable and trustworthy, there is room for improvement
- Consumers appear to check and understand use-by dates, and know the difference between these and best before dates
- Few feel they have a good understanding of food crime, but 4 in 10 are concerned about this
- Awareness of the food crime hotline has increased.

Allergens

- 1 in 10 households in Scotland contain at least one person with a food allergy
- Allergens are a particular concern for this audience, however most feel they have clear information about ingredients that can cause allergic reactions
- It remains easier to find information about allergies when buying food in supermarkets than when eating out of home
- Although most feel comfortable talking about their food allergies with friends, these are not always disclosed when eating out
- The general public understands that food allergies can be serious and that there shouldn't be a stigma around having an allergy
- However, a significant minority don't always believe people who have food allergies really do.

4. FSS Awareness, Knowledge & Trust

This question set is designed to measure performance on the following strategic priorities:

- FSS is a trusted organisation
- FSS is efficient and effective

This section also seeks to understand the wider context in which FSS is operating - looking at issues causing concern for consumers, including Brexit.



More than 6 in 10 Scottish consumers are aware of Food Standards Scotland, and over three-quarters of them trust the FSS to do its job.

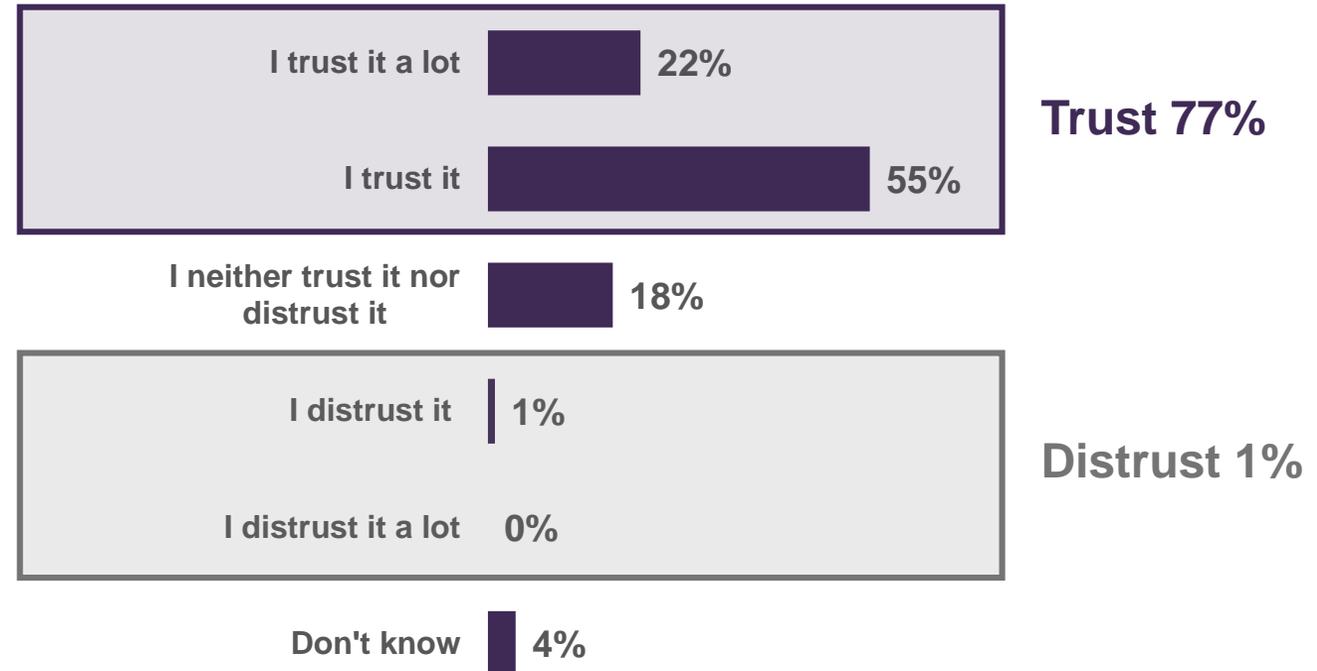


63% are aware of FSS

Awareness levels were highest amongst:

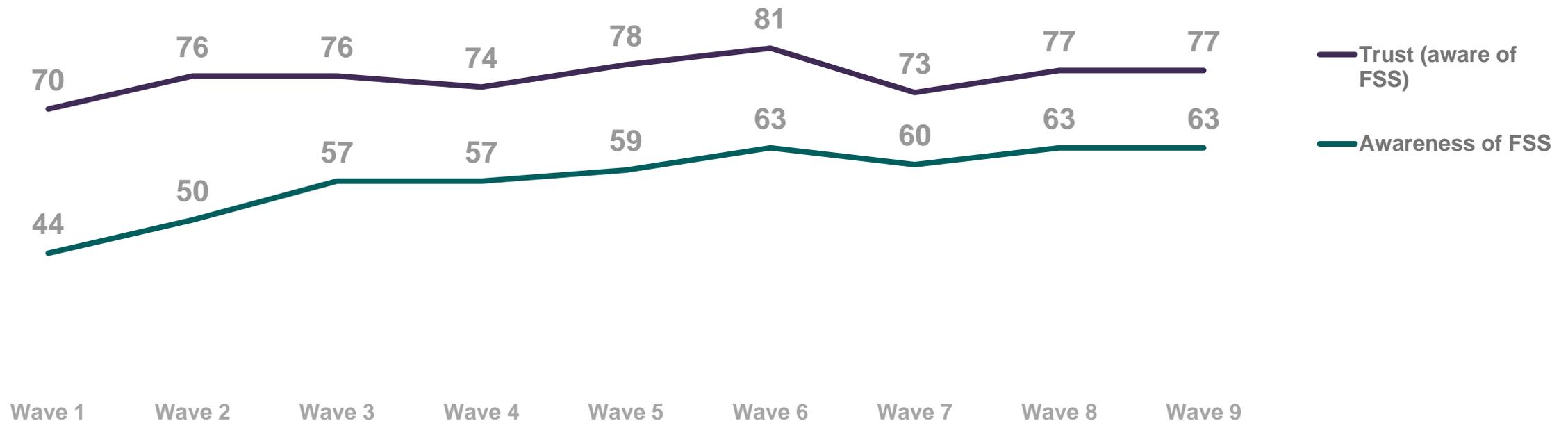
- Younger age groups
 - 16-34yrs (69%)
 - 35-44yrs (70%)
- Those who have children at home (74%)

Levels of Trust in FSS



- Levels of trust were consistent with Wave 8
- And consistent across demographic groups

Awareness of FSS has stabilised over the past two years (since Wave 6). Levels of trust have remained high throughout.



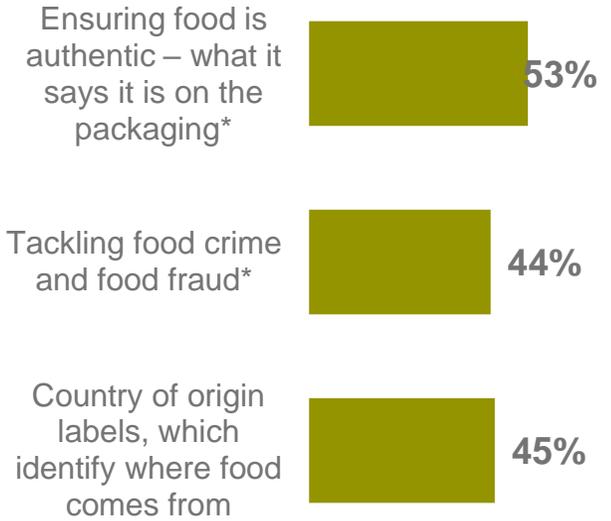
Ensuring food is safe to eat is the most widely known element of FSS' remit. Consumers are also aware that FSS works to improve and inspect standards in the food industry. Aspects relating to healthy eating, sustainability and safe cooking at home are less recognised.



Food is Safe



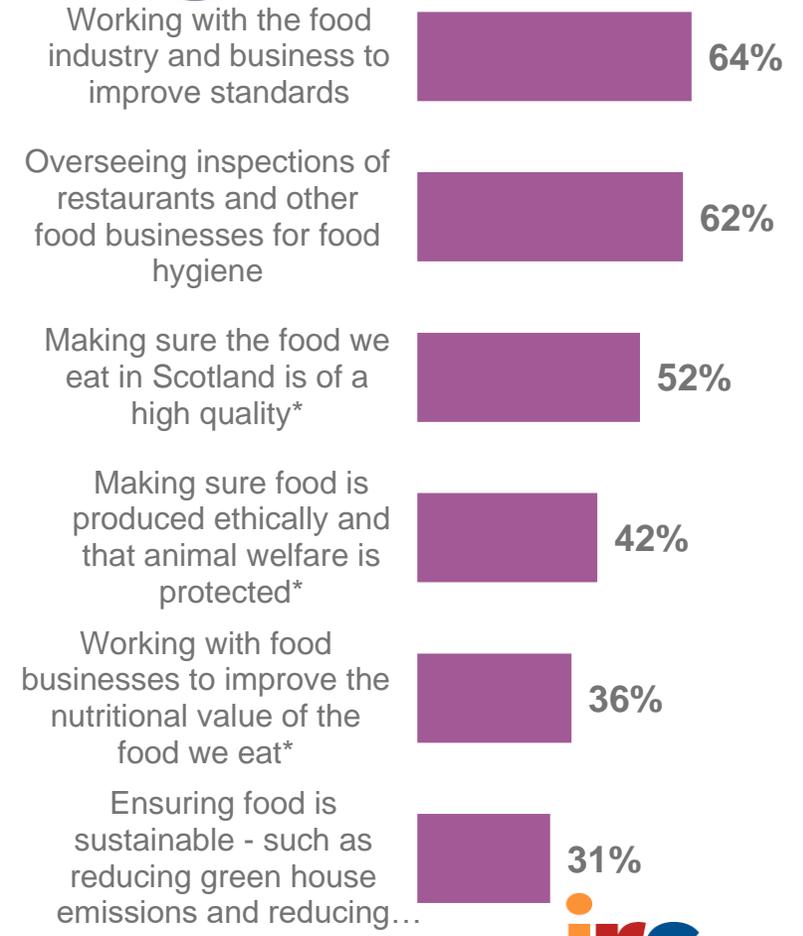
Food is Authentic



Healthier Diets



Responsible Food Businesses Flourish



• Females and those with children at home generally more knowledgeable

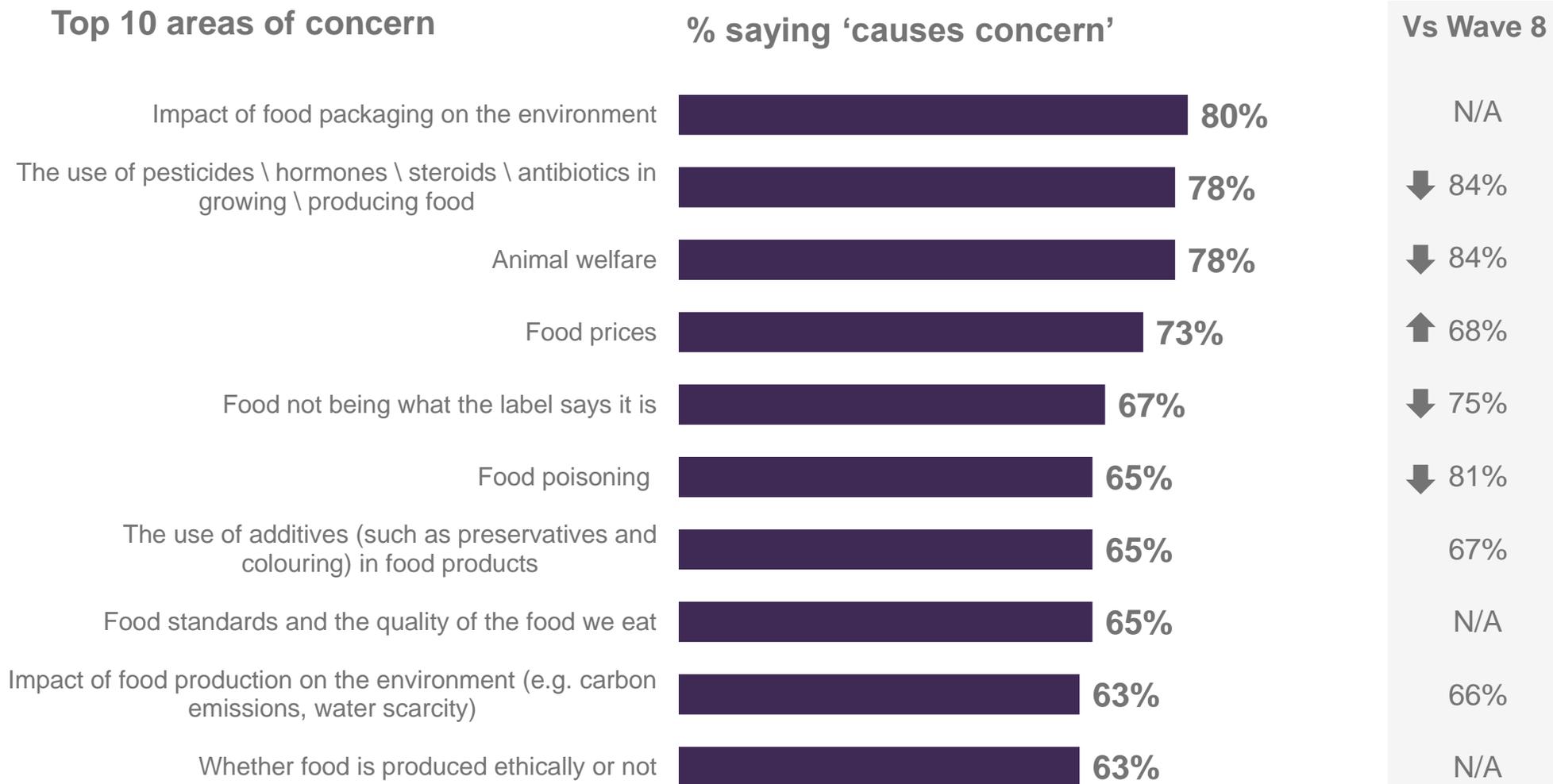
FSS' performance continues to be rated highly across all measures, particularly relating to food safety. Data is consistent across demographic groups, and consistent with Wave 8, consolidating the significant uplifts recorded then.

% rating 'Excellent' or 'Very good' or 'Good'



↑ ↓
Denotes significant difference vs previous wave (95% confidence level)

Environmental impact of food packaging is the number one concern at this wave, closely followed by animal welfare and the use of chemicals in food production. Data shows some fluctuation compared with Wave 8.



- Females significantly more concerned than males on all of these measures
- Older ages more concerned about food crime (labels)

Concern about food safety at home and understanding date labelling are low and show significant declines compared with Wave 8.

Other areas of concern

% saying 'causes concern'

Vs Wave 8



- Females were more concerned in general across the board
- Those living in households with allergens more concerned about allergens (63%)
- Younger ages (16-44yrs) most likely to be concerned about food safety at home (41%)

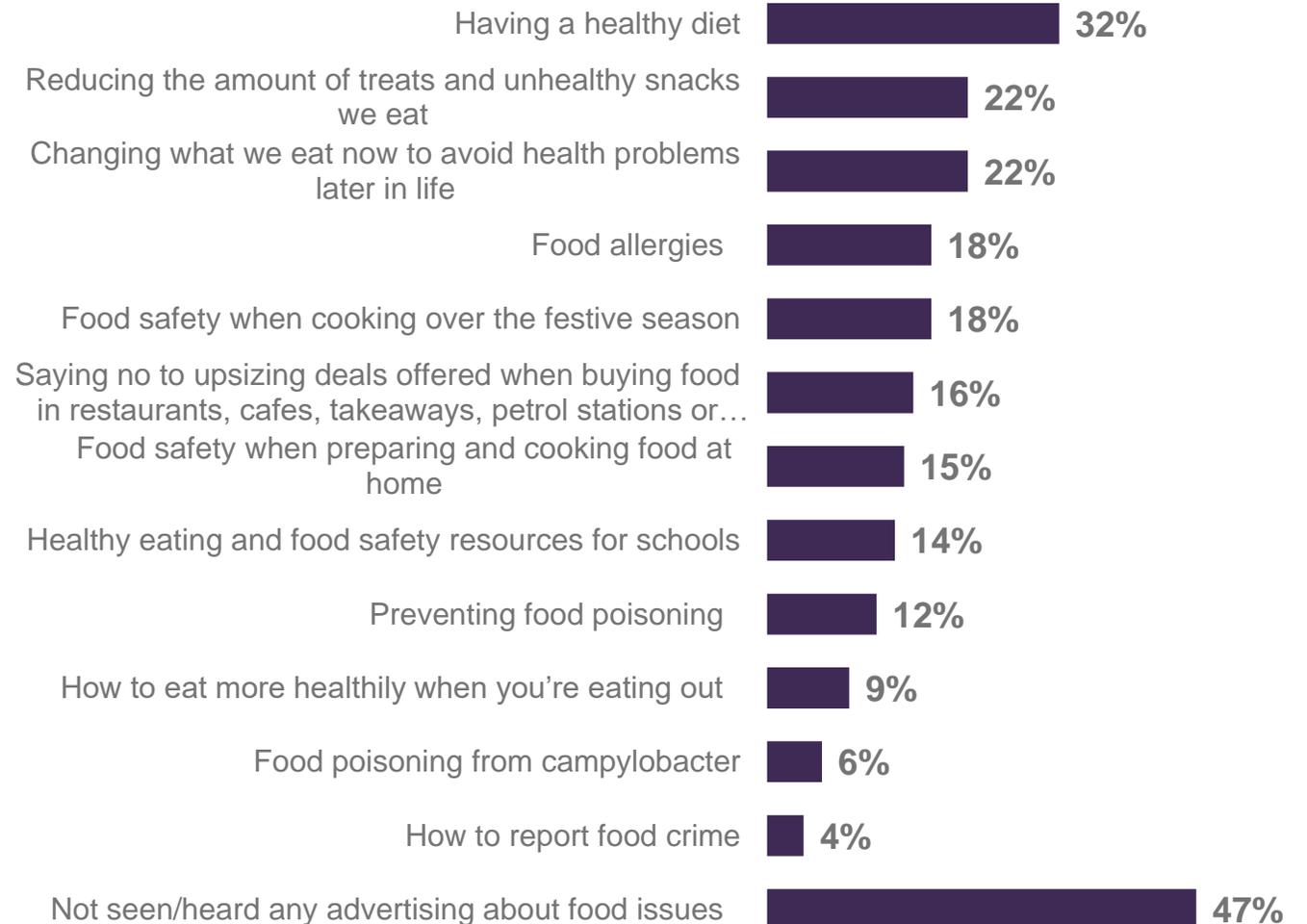
Half of consumers were aware of advertising or publicity on food issues. Most commonly recalled topics related to healthy diets.



53% were spontaneously aware of advertising on food issues

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

Aware of Advertising on Food Issues

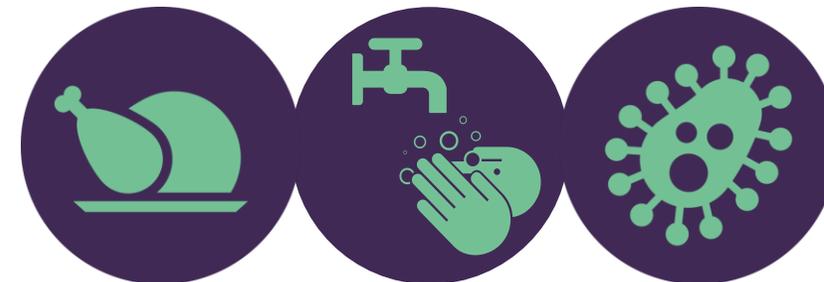


5. Food Safety

This question set is designed to measure performance on the following strategic priorities:

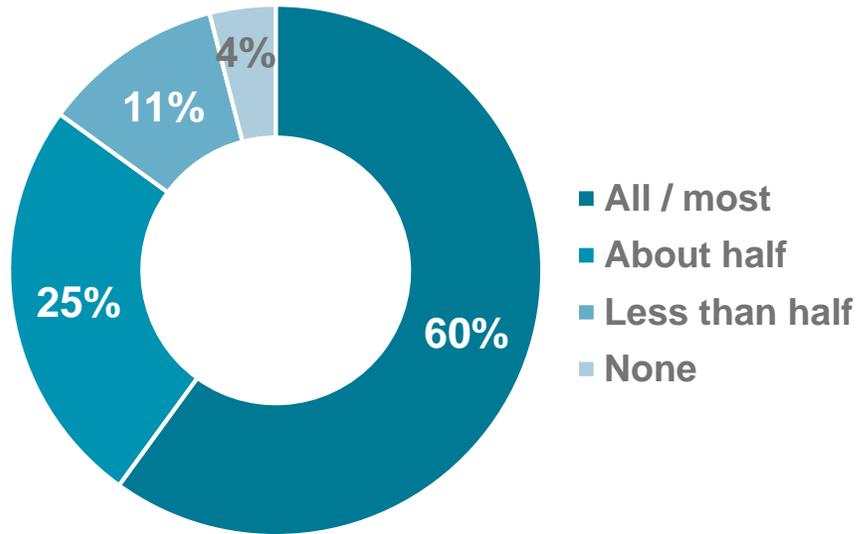
→ Food is safe

This incorporates food safety and hygiene behaviours when preparing and cooking food at home, as well as measuring incidence and suspected sources of food poisoning.



Almost all of the sample had at least some responsibility for cooking / food preparation in their household. Consumers claimed to have a fairly high level of confidence in cooking from scratch, and felt well informed about food safety and hygiene.

Responsible for Cooking/Prep



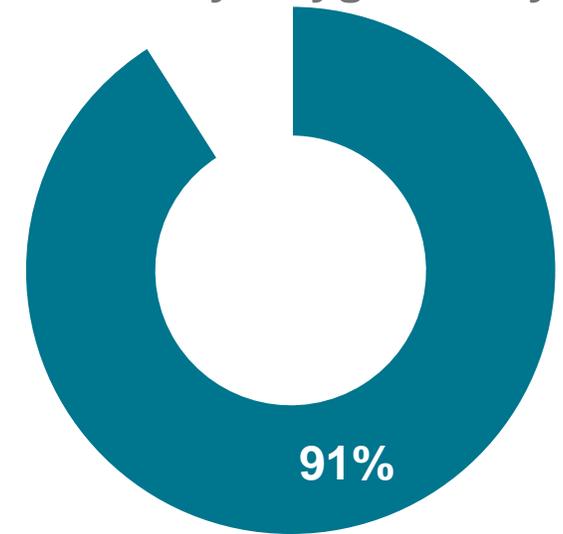
- Females more likely to do all/most of household cooking.

Cooking Confidence Scale: 1-10

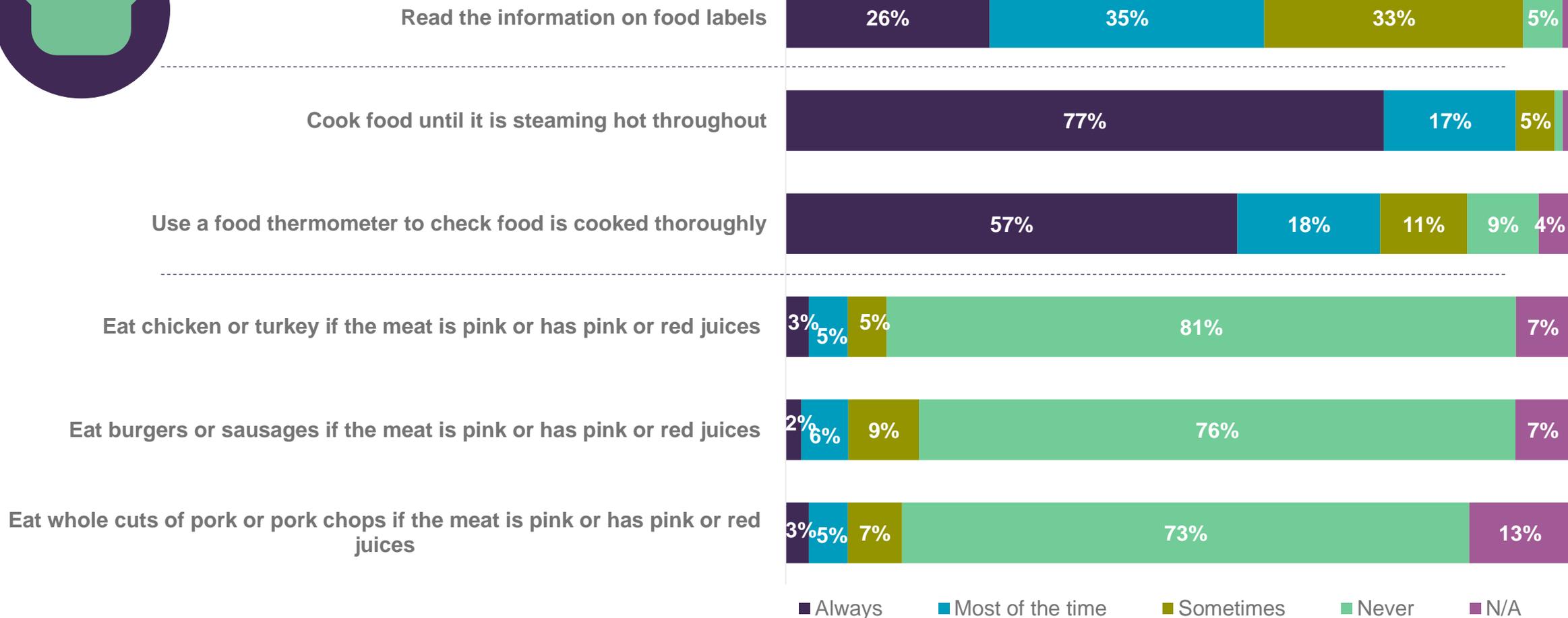


- Confidence highest among females, older age groups and higher socio-demographic groups.

Clear Information on Cooking Safely / Hygienically



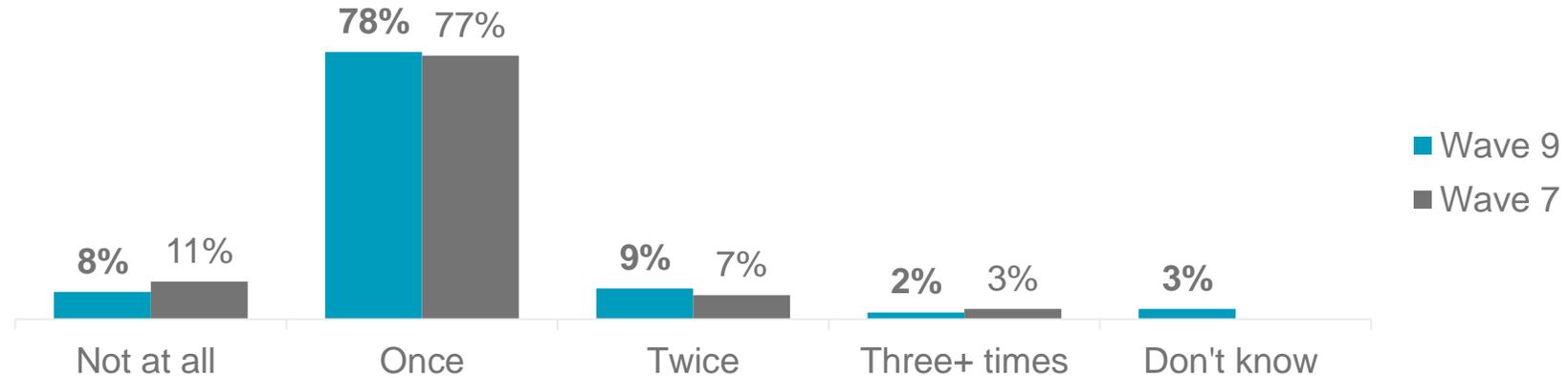
Cooking food is an area where consumers mostly adhere to safe practices – cooking meat and poultry thoroughly and cooking food until hot. Potential areas for improvement are reading food labels and use of food thermometers.



The vast majority will only reheat food once.

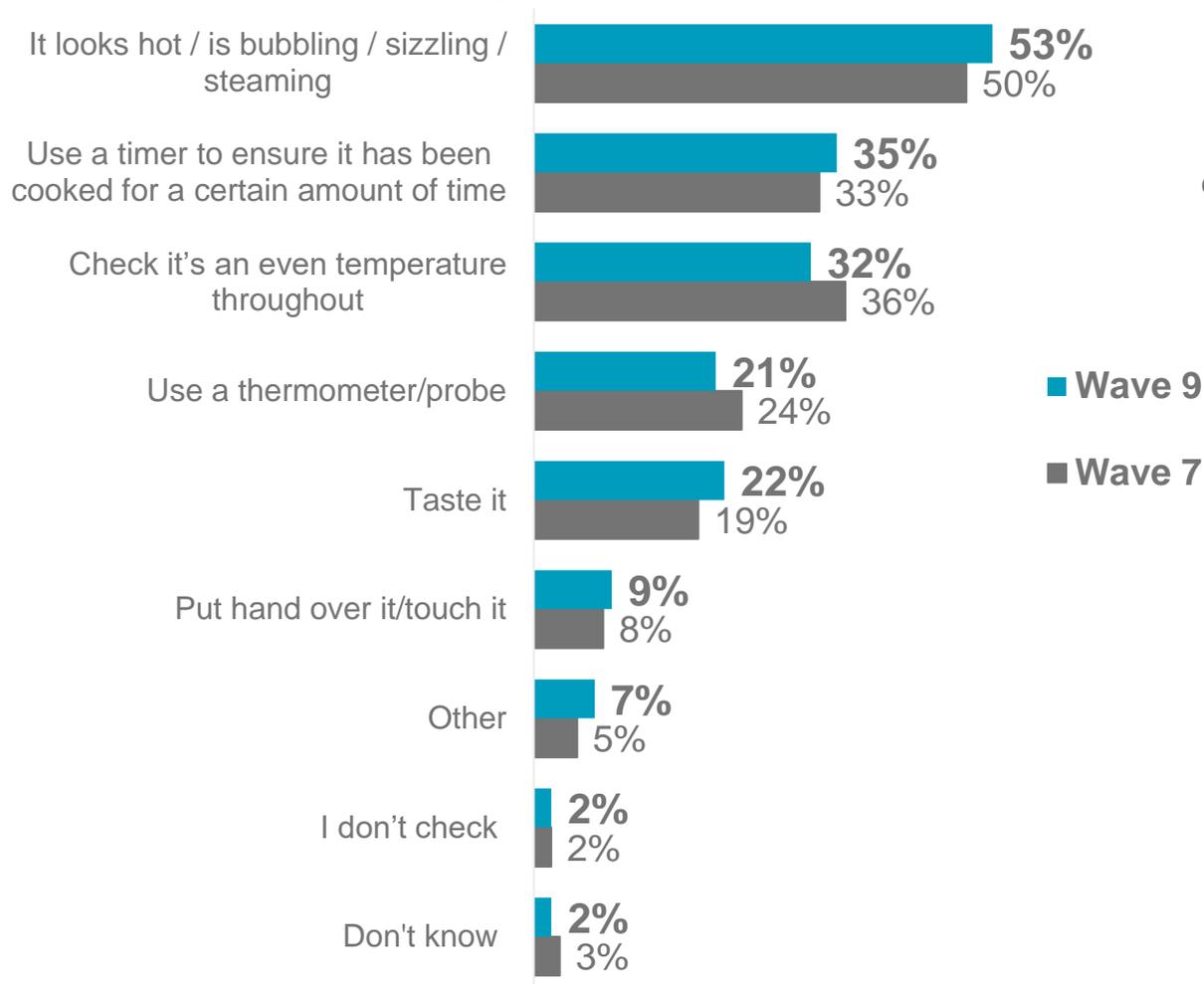


Number of Times Would Consider Reheating Food

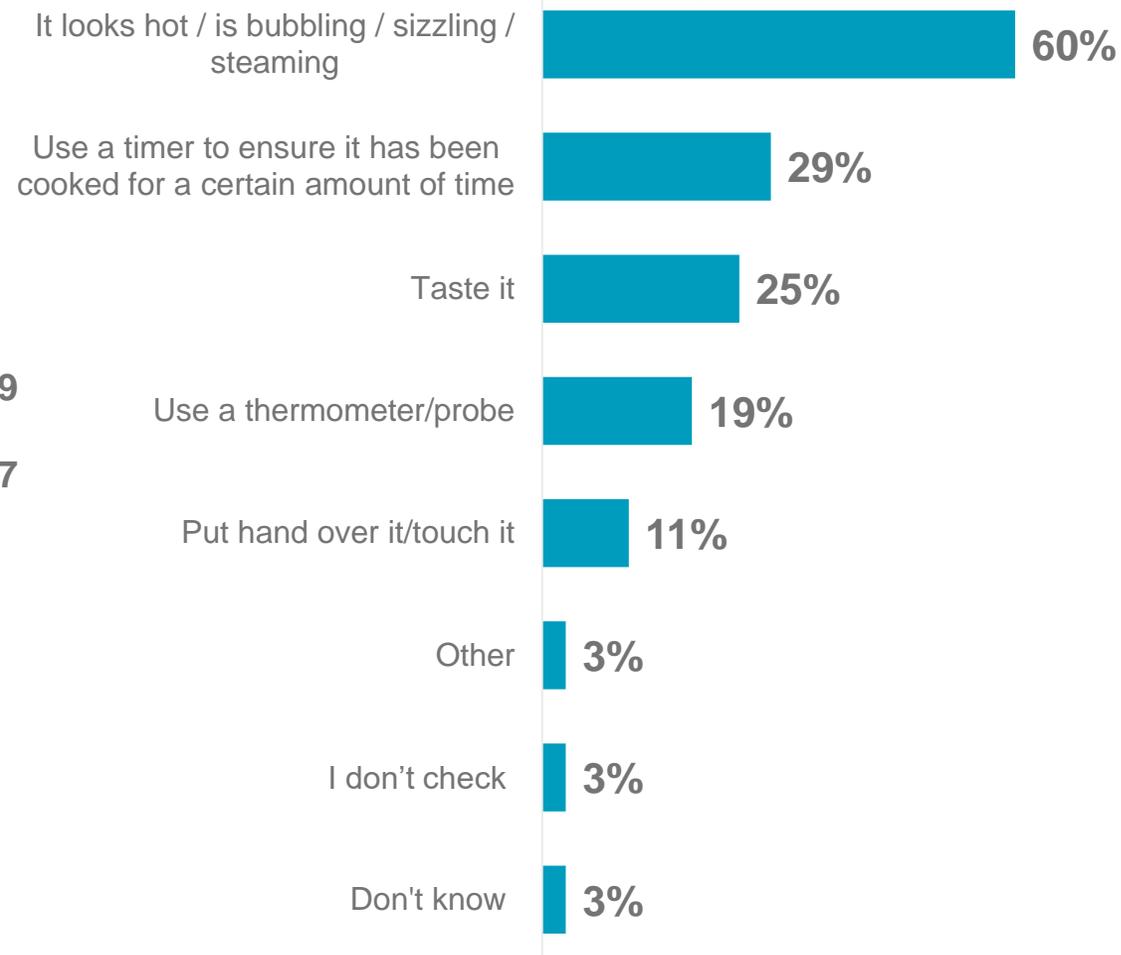


Consumers use a variety of ways to test if food is properly cooked / reheated, however most rely on a visual check.

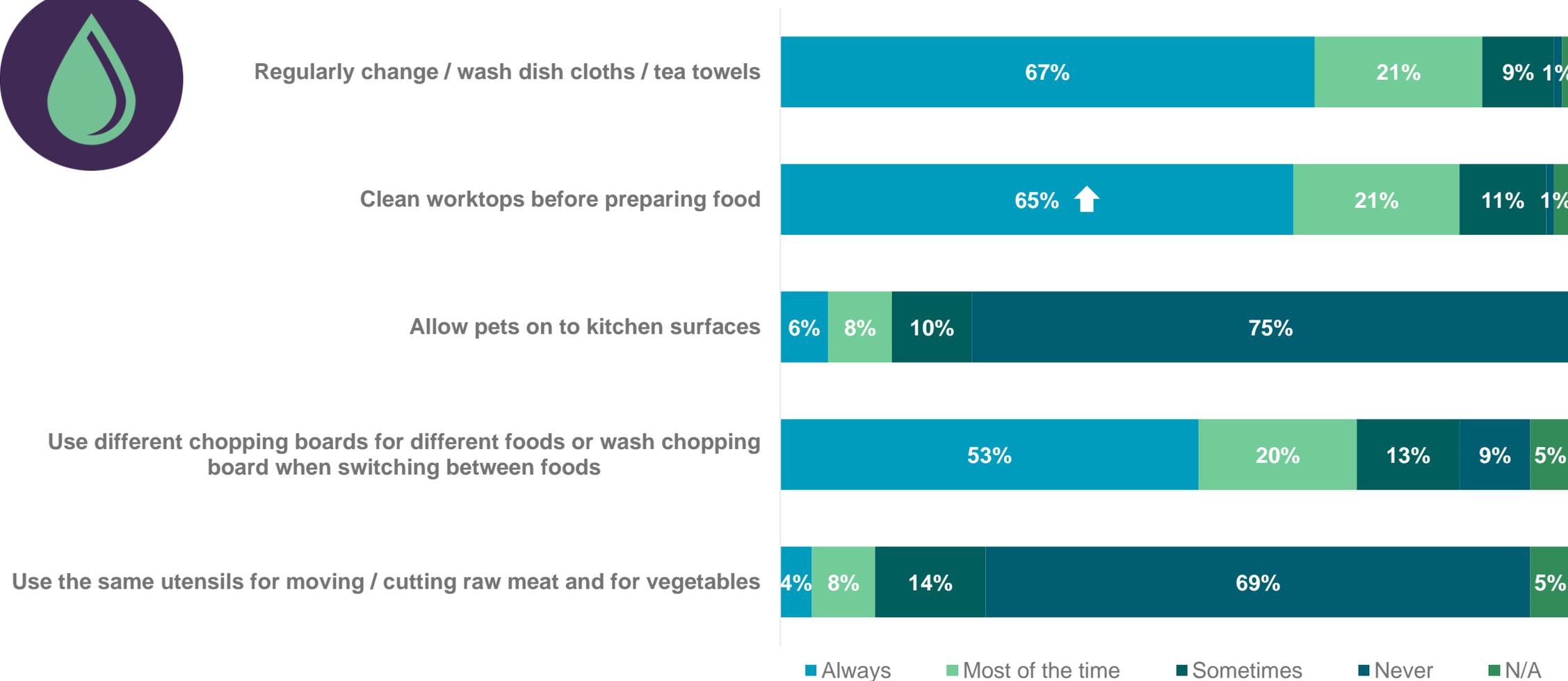
Cooked Properly



Reheated Properly



Consumers tend to keep worktops and cloths/towels clean, and most of those with pets do not allow them on kitchen surfaces. Most clean / change chopping boards and utensils for use with different foods.



Practices regarding chilling are less consistent. Checking and adjusting fridge temperatures is not often done, despite 75% having a completely full fridge at least some of the time. Half still defrost meat at room temperature.



Check the temperature of my fridge



Completely fill my fridge



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



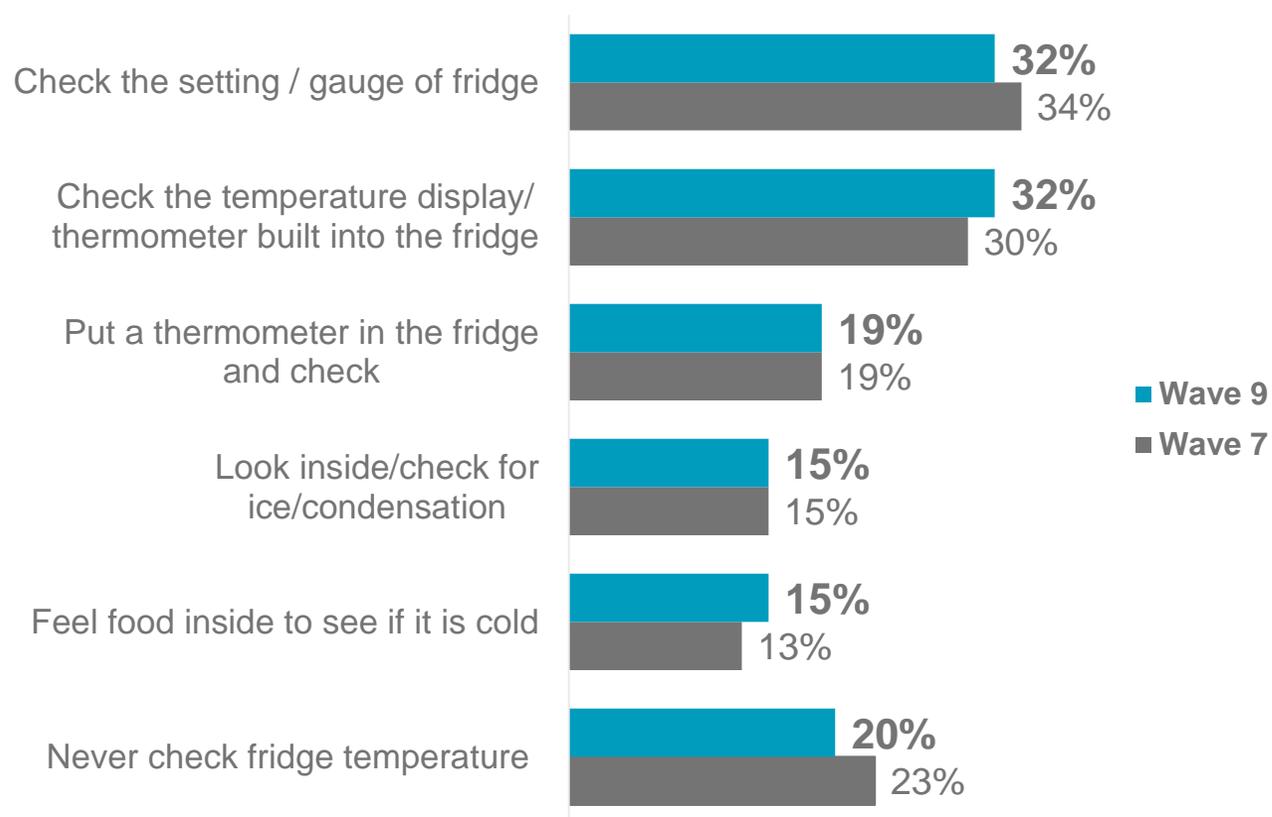
Defrost meat at room temperature



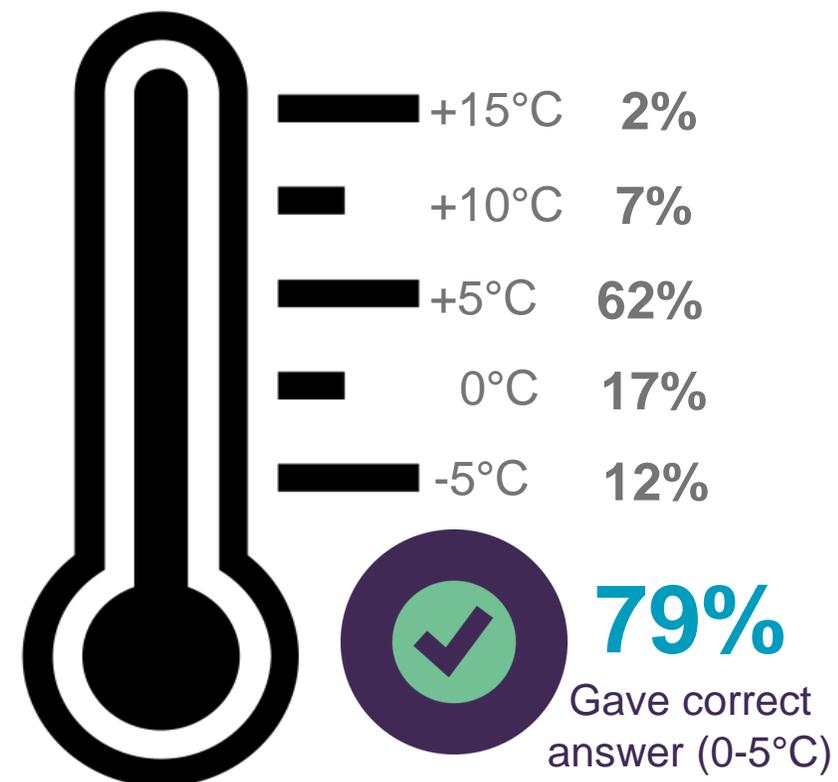
Always Most of the time Sometimes Never N/A

The majority of consumers know the correct temperature for their fridge; however a fifth of consumers never check. Consumers who do check the temperature use various methods.

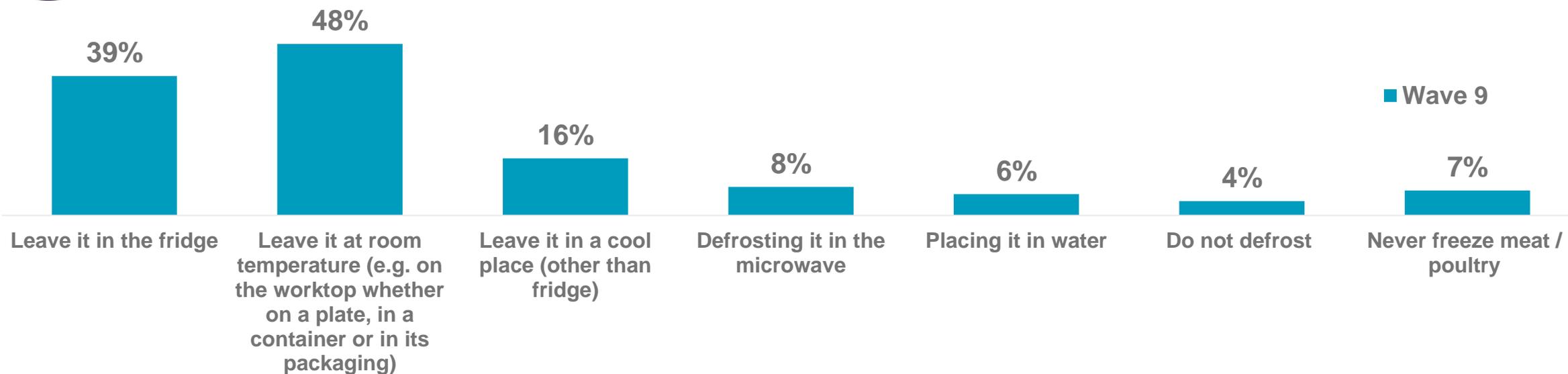
Method for Checking Temperature



Correct Temperature



Almost two-fifths of consumers defrost frozen meat correctly, by leaving it in the fridge. However, almost half say they defrost at room temperature.



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

- 34% of males and 38% of over 65yr olds always leave it at room temperature

Note: question wording changed meaning data not directly comparable with Wave 7

Q21 Which method do you usually use to defrost frozen meat? Those with responsibility for cooking/preparing food Base: W7 (997), W9 (1037)

Consumers generally adhere to good practice regarding cross contamination in terms of hand washing and storage. However around a quarter still wash raw chicken / poultry.



Wash hands before starting to prepare or cook food

71%

17%

10% 2%

Wash hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish

78% ↑

11%

5% 2% 4%

Store raw and cooked food separately in the fridge

67%

14%

9%

6% 4%

Store raw meat / poultry uncovered in the fridge

3%

5%

11%

76%

5%

Store open tins in the fridge

6%

7%

23%

62%

2%

Wash raw chicken or poultry

18%

9%

14%

51%

8%

Always

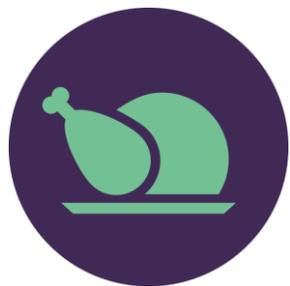
Most of the time

Sometimes

Never

N/A

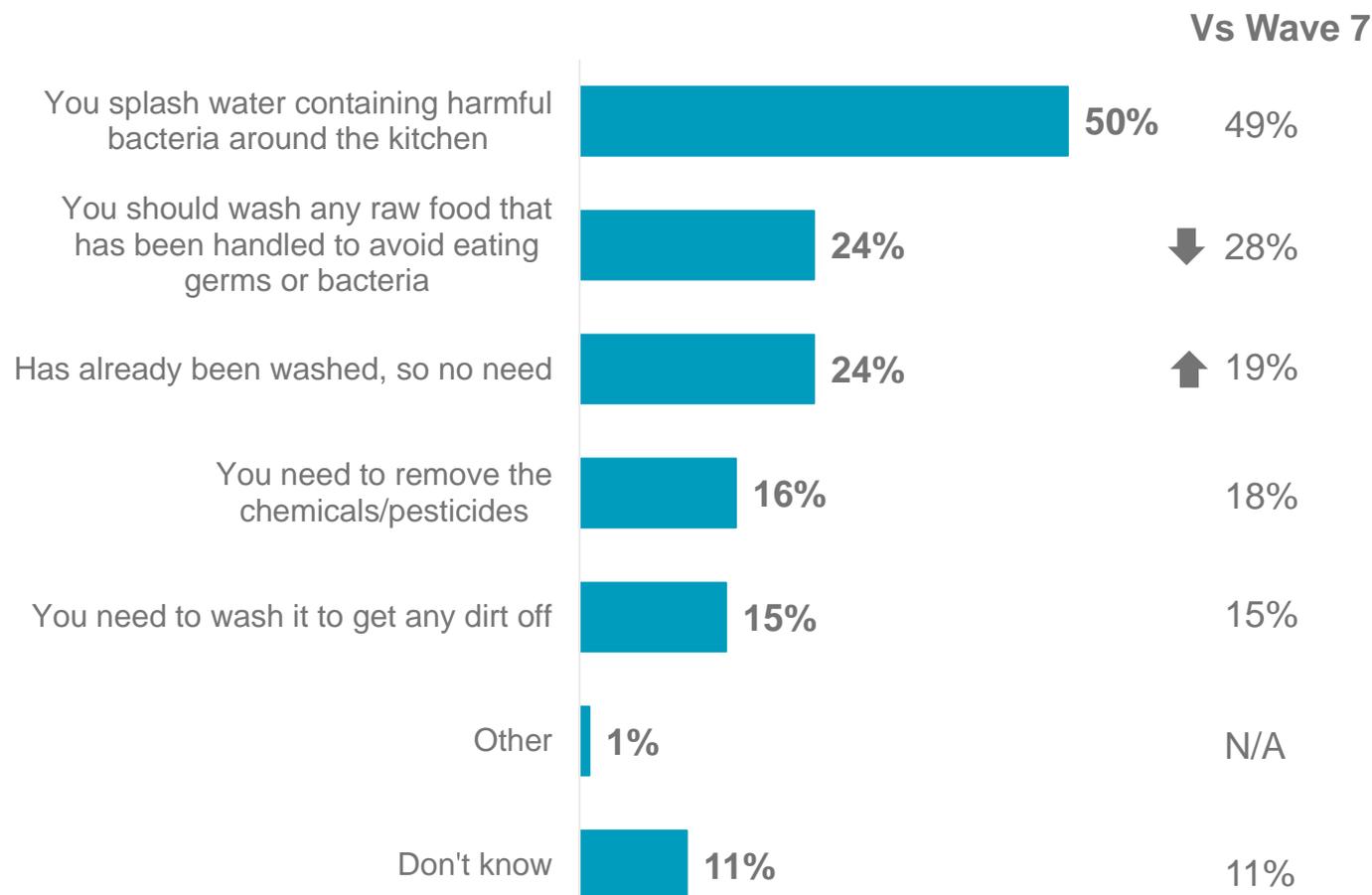
Half of consumers never wash raw poultry, and understand the dangers of splashing bacteria around. However, a significant minority believe it is necessary to wash off dirt, chemicals, germs or bacteria.



51% said they NEVER wash raw poultry



- A quarter of males and over 65yr olds always wash raw chicken

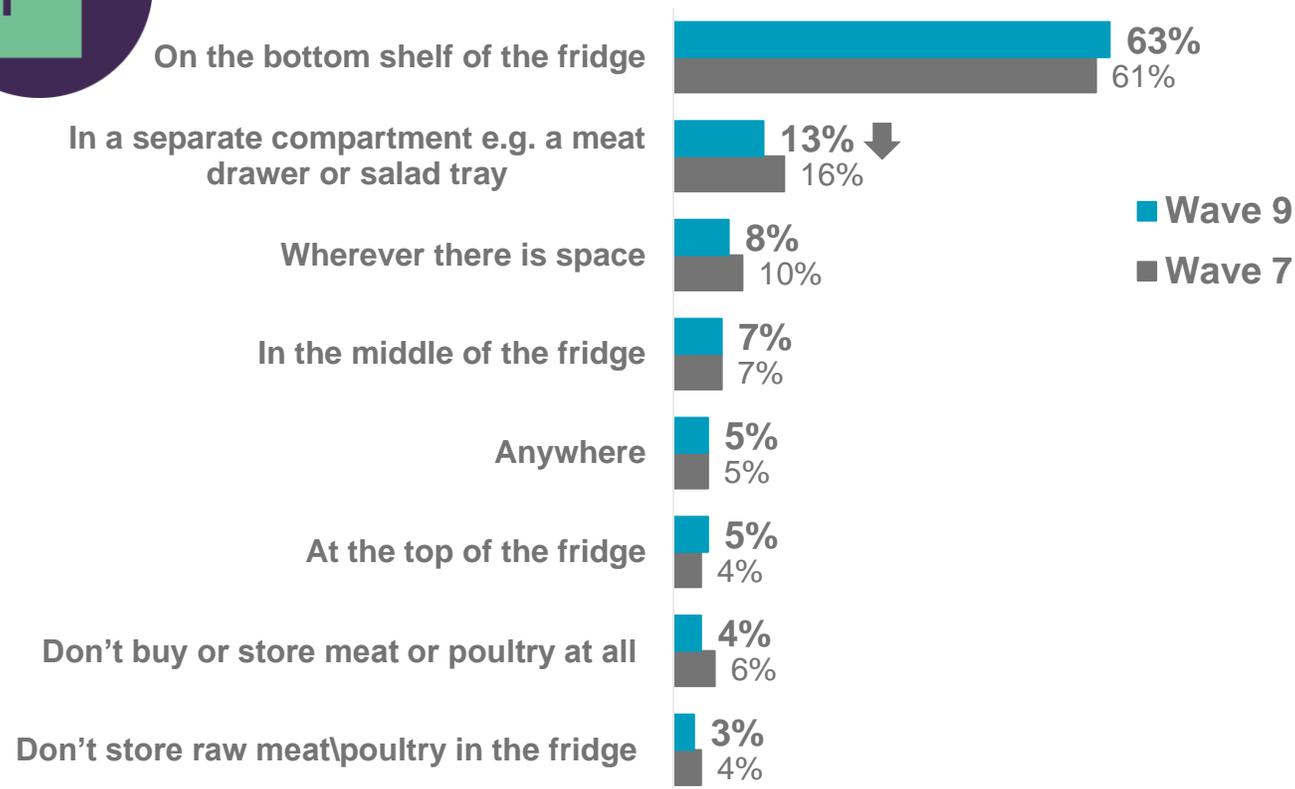


- A third of males and over 65yr olds think chicken needs washed to avoid eating germs/bacteria

6 in 10 store raw meat and poultry correctly, on the bottom shelf of the fridge. Raw meat is generally stored in its packaging, or in a covered container, and two-fifths say they keep it away from cooked foods.

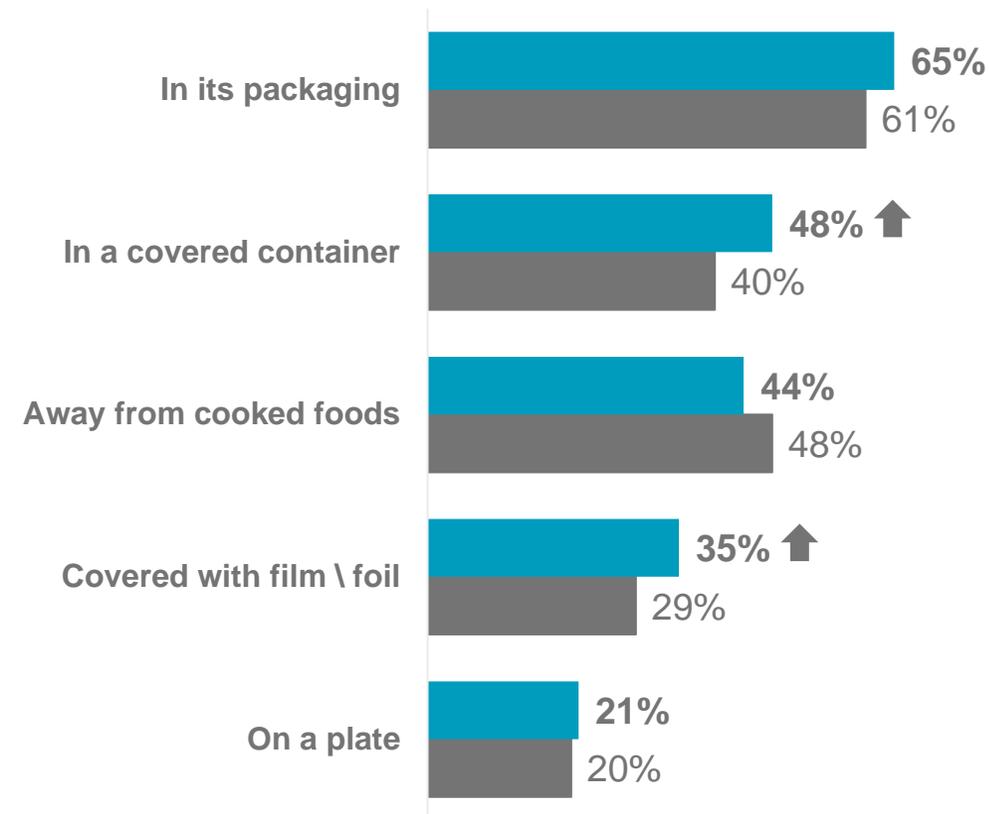


Where Stored in Fridge



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

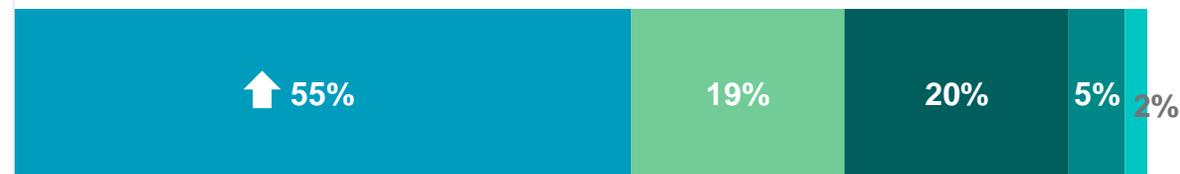
How Stored in Fridge



Consumer behaviour varies for other food safety practices, with a significant minority smelling food and using the '5 second rule' to decide if it is safe to eat. Most, but not all, wash fruit and vegetables to be eaten raw.



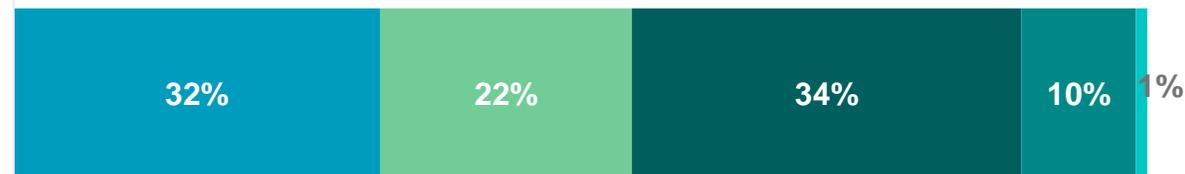
Wash fruit or vegetables (including salad) which are going to be eaten raw



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



Check if food is safe to eat by smelling it

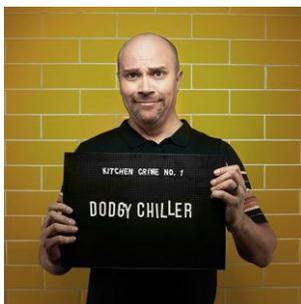


Always Most of the time Sometimes Never N/A

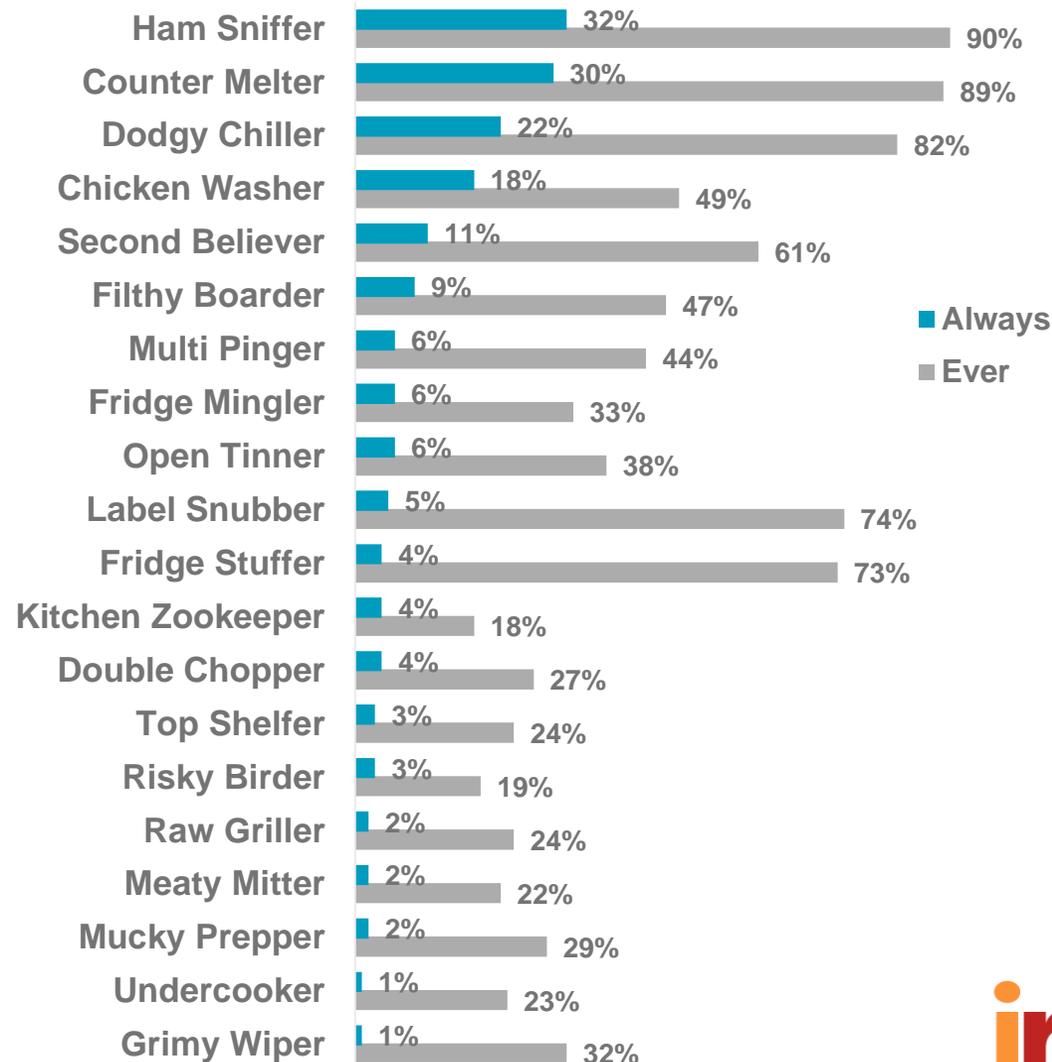
Consumers commit 9 'kitchen crimes' on average. Most common negative behaviours relate to smelling food rather than using use-by dates, defrosting meat outside the fridge and not checking fridge temperatures.

Average number of kitchen crimes committed (out of 20)

8.7



% committing kitchen crime



The numbers experiencing food poisoning and confirming this with GPs remain consistent with previous waves. Consumers tend to attribute food poisoning to incorrect cooking or poor hygiene in food purchased out of home.

3% had experienced food poisoning in the past year

v 4% Wave 7

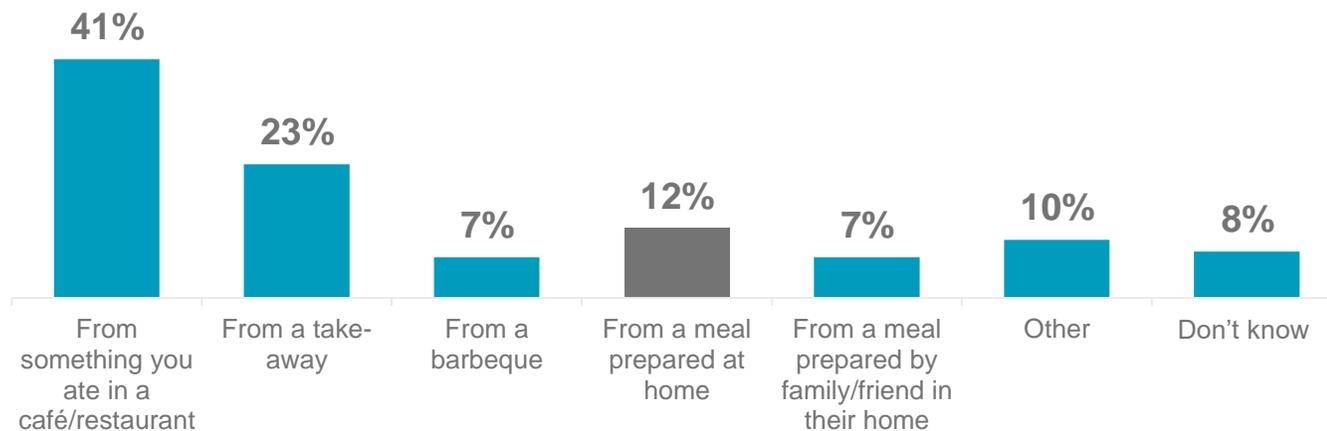


53% visited GP

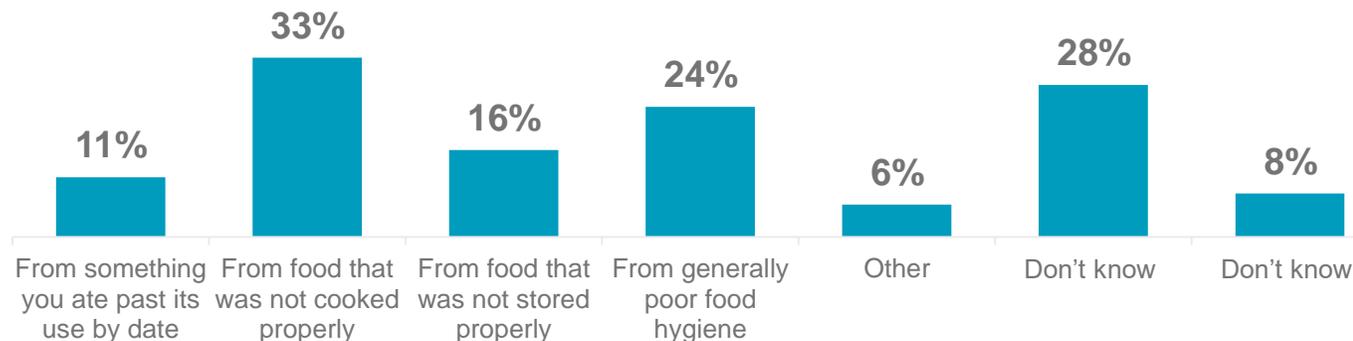


Food poisoning confirmed in **28%** of all cases

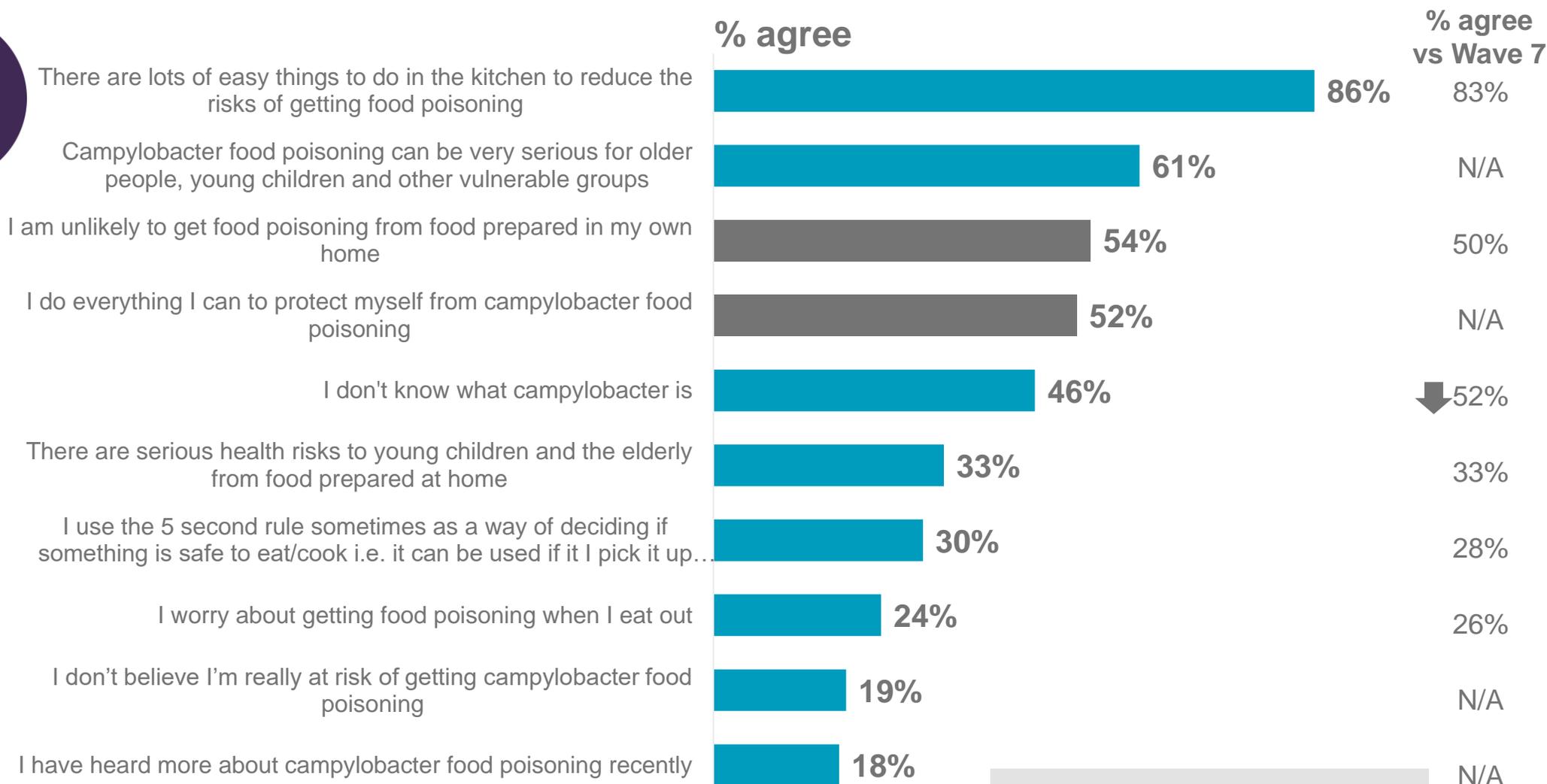
Location



Reason



Fewer consumers say they don't know what campylobacter is compared with Wave 7. Consumers believe they can reduce their risk of getting food poisoning but only half do everything possible to protect themselves.



NOTE: Campylobacter is the most common bacterial cause of food poisoning in the UK.

6. Food Labelling, Authenticity & Food Crime

This question set is designed to measure performance on the following strategic priorities:

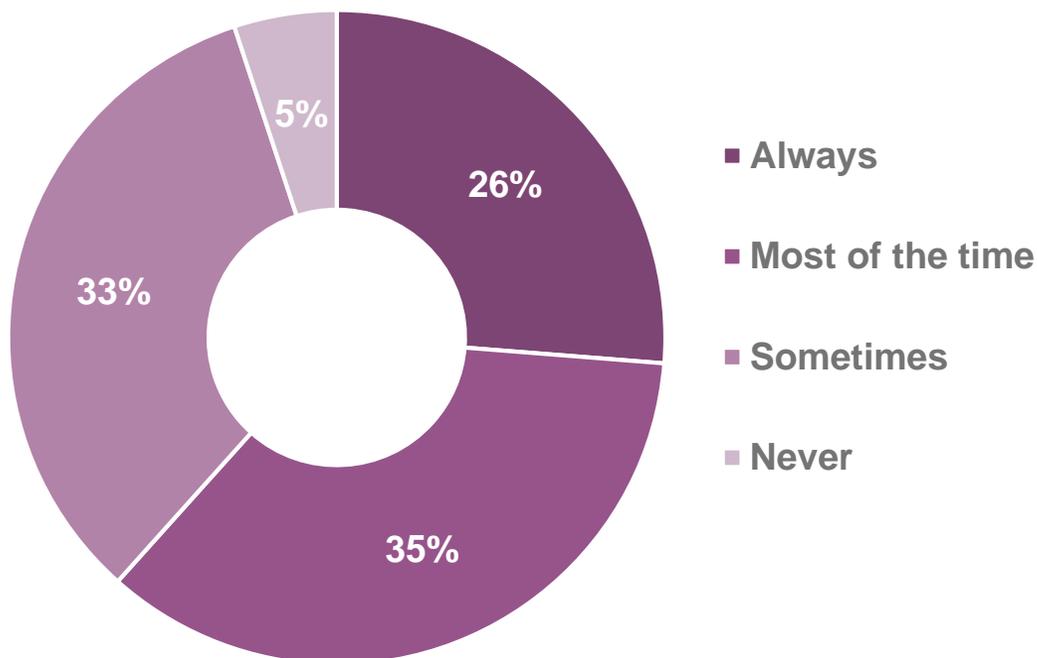
→ Food is authentic

This section focuses on food labelling and, for the first time, introduces questions about food crime.

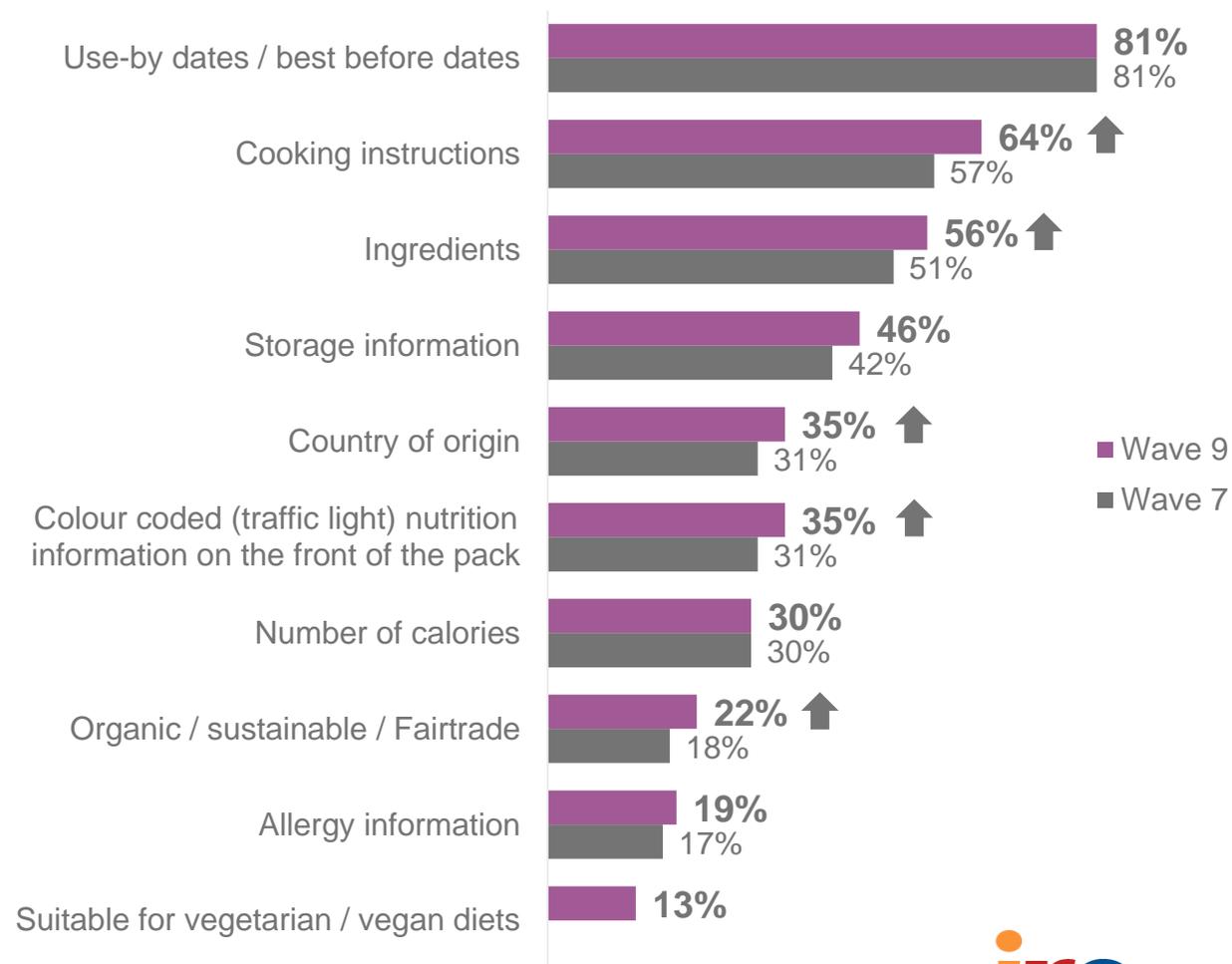


6 in 10 read food labels always or most of the time. Although most are looking for use-by dates, several elements have significantly increased since the previous year.

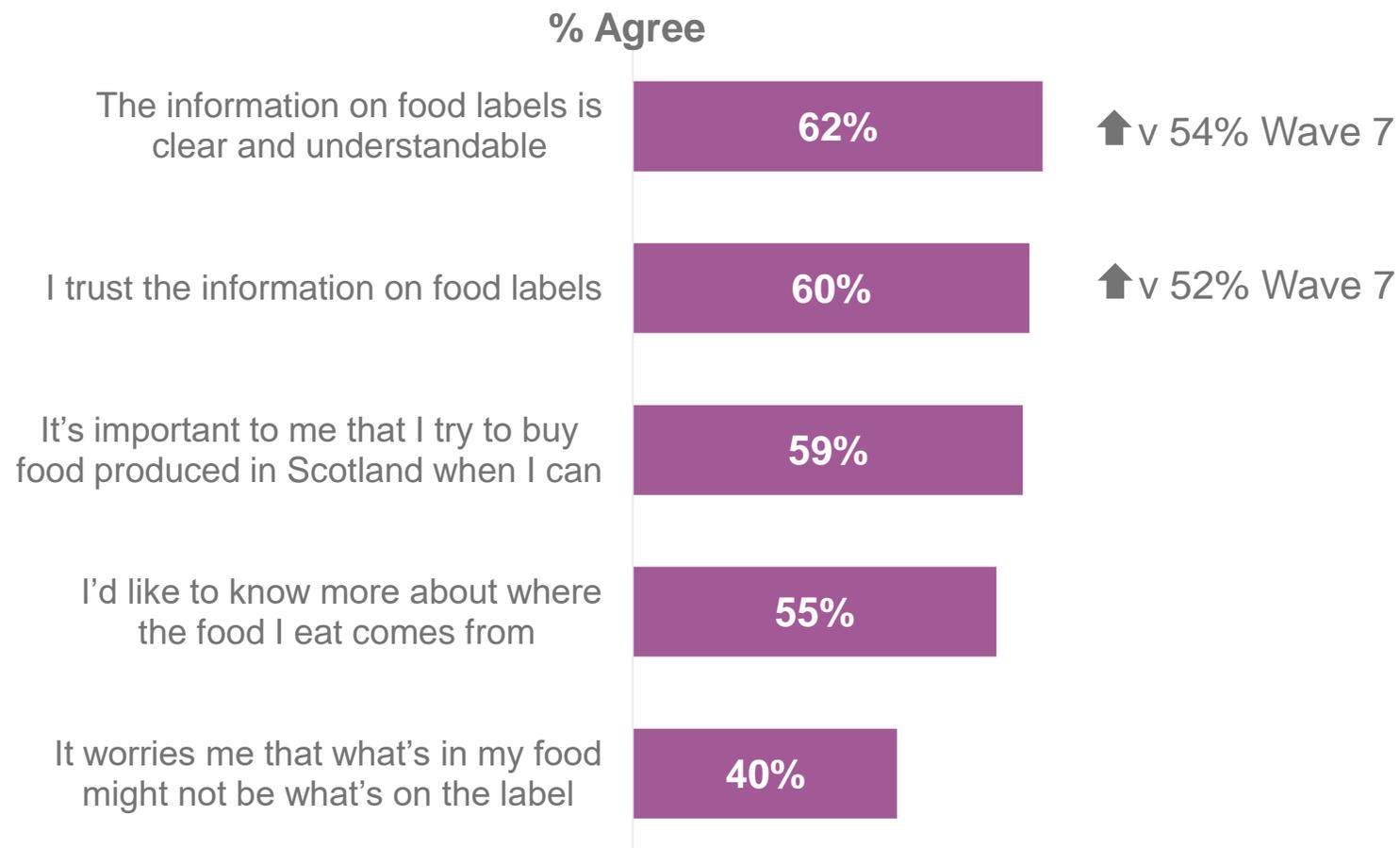
Read Food Labels



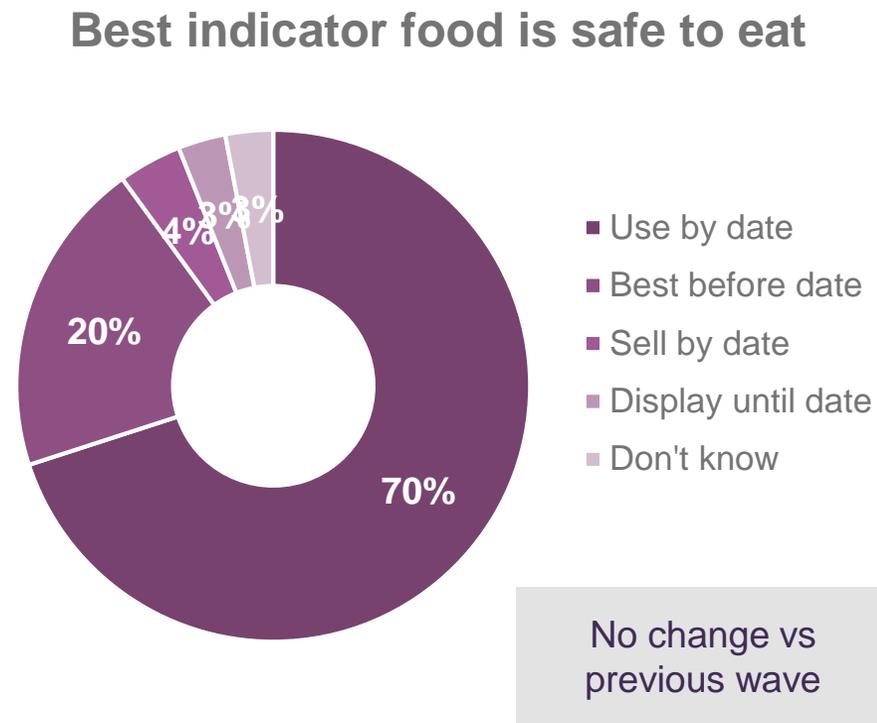
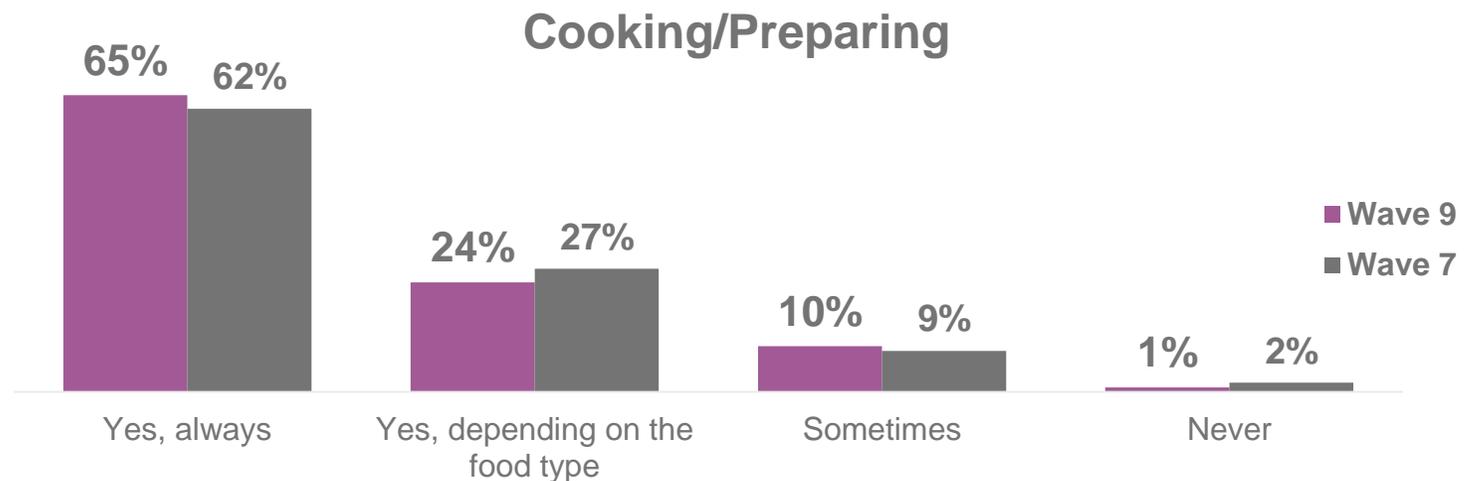
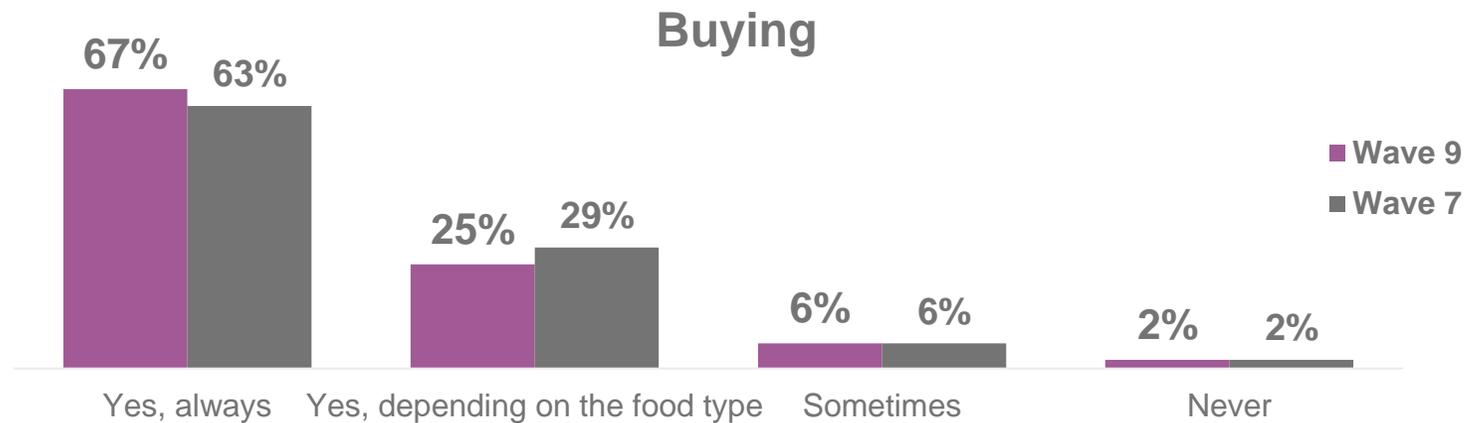
Info Gained from Food labels



6 in 10 think food label information is clear, and the same proportion trust that information. However, over half would like to know more about the source of the food they eat suggesting greater detail may be welcomed.

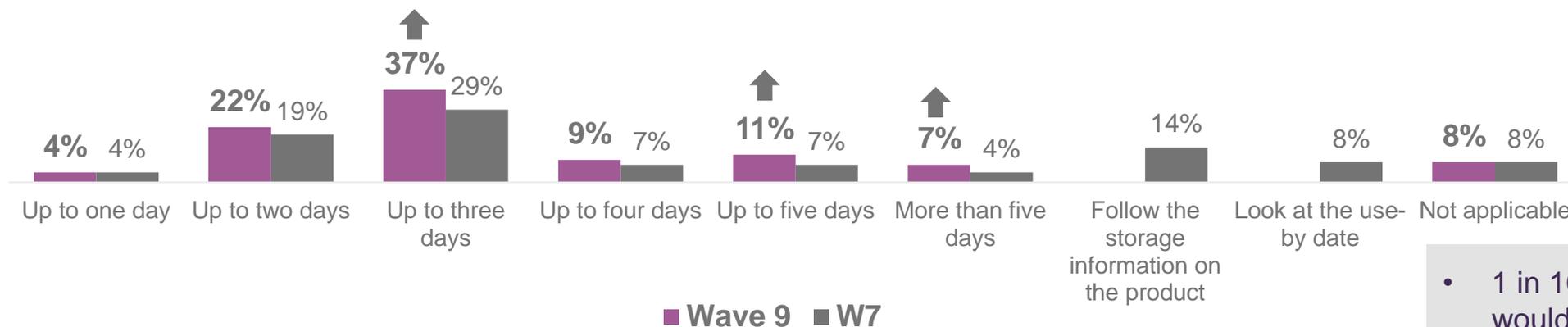


Two-thirds of consumers always check use-by dates when buying food, and a similar proportion check before cooking. 7 in 10 know the use-by date is the best indicator that food is safe to eat.



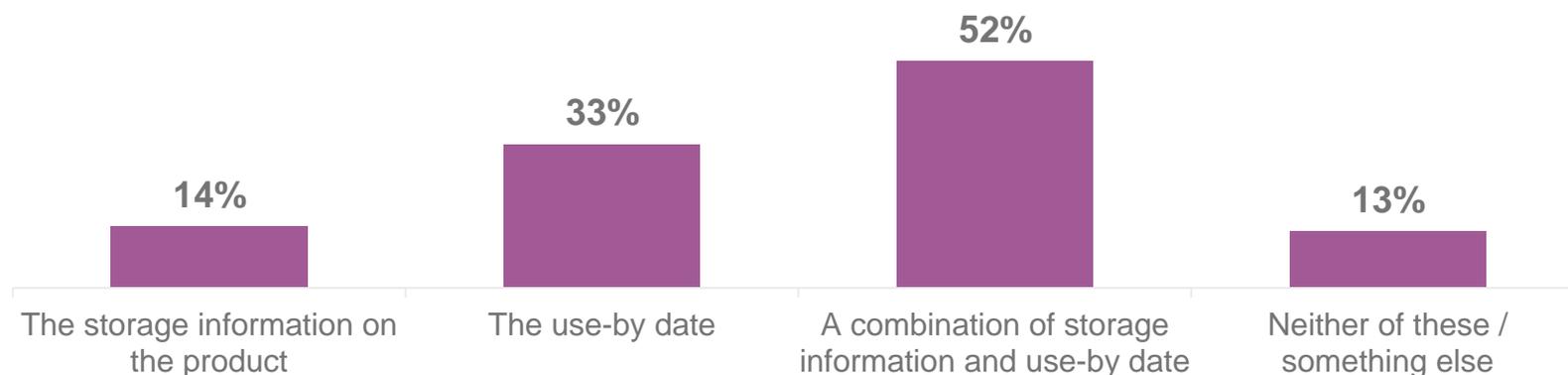
A quarter of consumers would keep an open pack of cooked meat for up to 2 days before deciding not to eat it. Increase in numbers willing to keep for 3 and 5 or more days. Half would decide based on both storage information and use-by date.

Max. Time Would Keep Open Pack of Cooked Meat



- 1 in 10 males would keep for more than 5 days

Best Indicator if Open Meat Safe to Eat

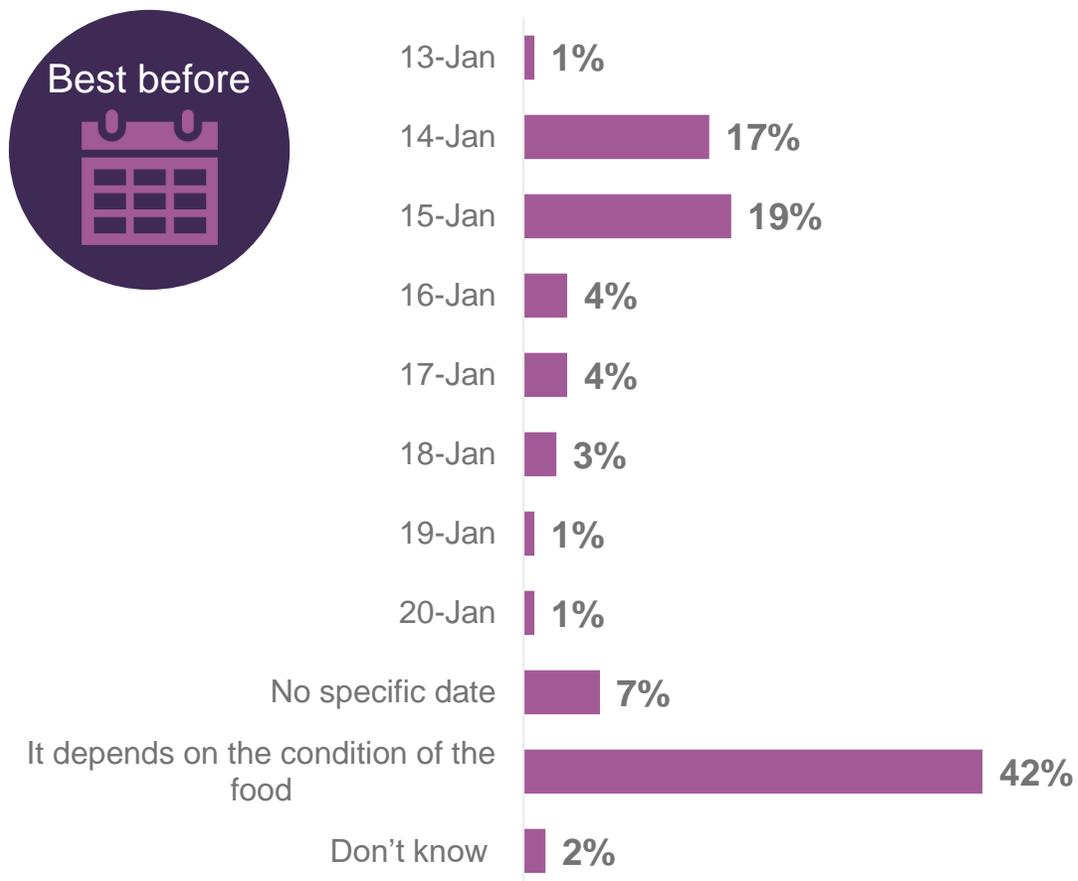


Q33 If you open a packet of sliced cooked or cured meat e.g. ham and keep it stored in the fridge, what is the maximum length of time you would keep it before deciding you would definitely not eat it? Base: W7 (1046), W9 (1079)

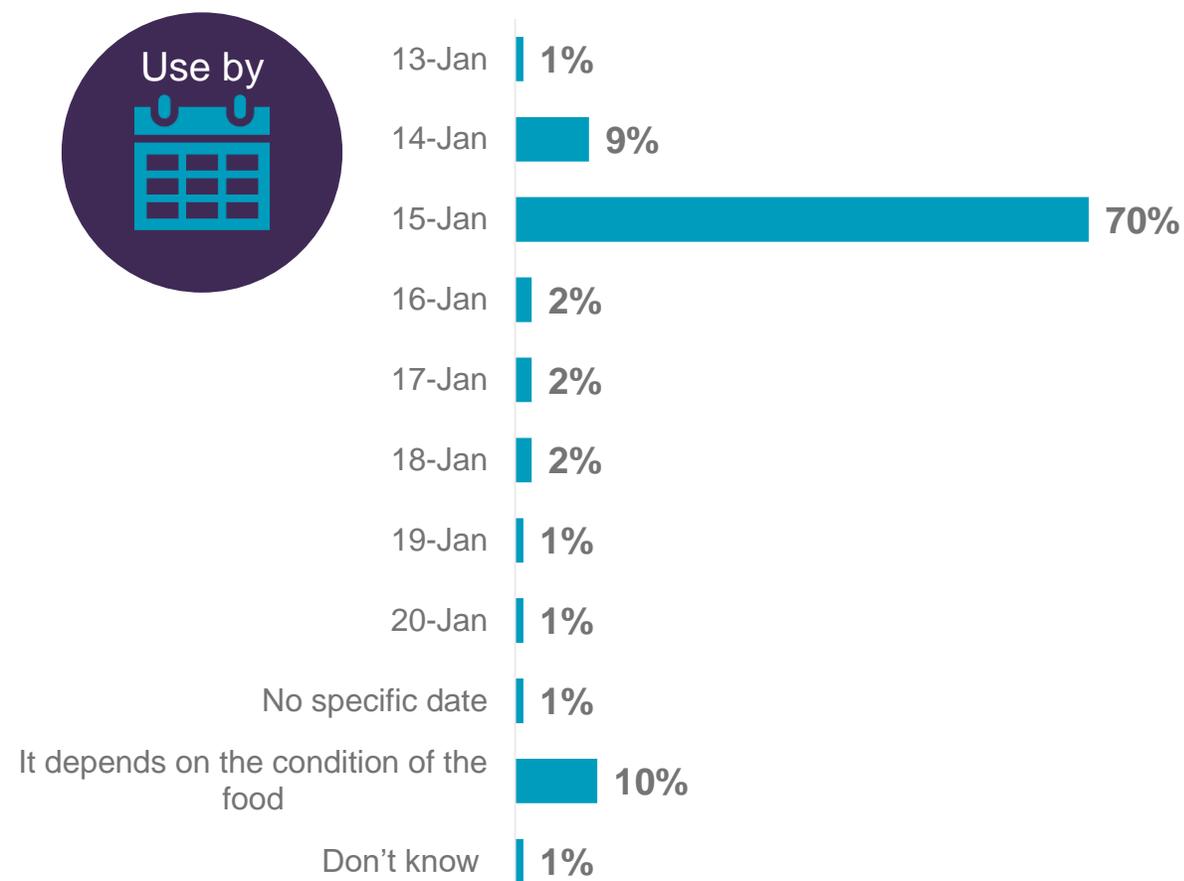
Q34 Still thinking about when you open a packet of sliced cooked or cured meat e.g. ham and keep it stored in the fridge, on what do you base your decision on whether it is safe to eat or not? Base: 989

Consumer behaviour regarding best-before and use-by dates remains consistent with previous waves. 8 in 10 would eat food on or before the use-by date. For best-before dates, the condition of the food is more of a consideration.

Last date to eat food labelled 'best before' 15 Jan

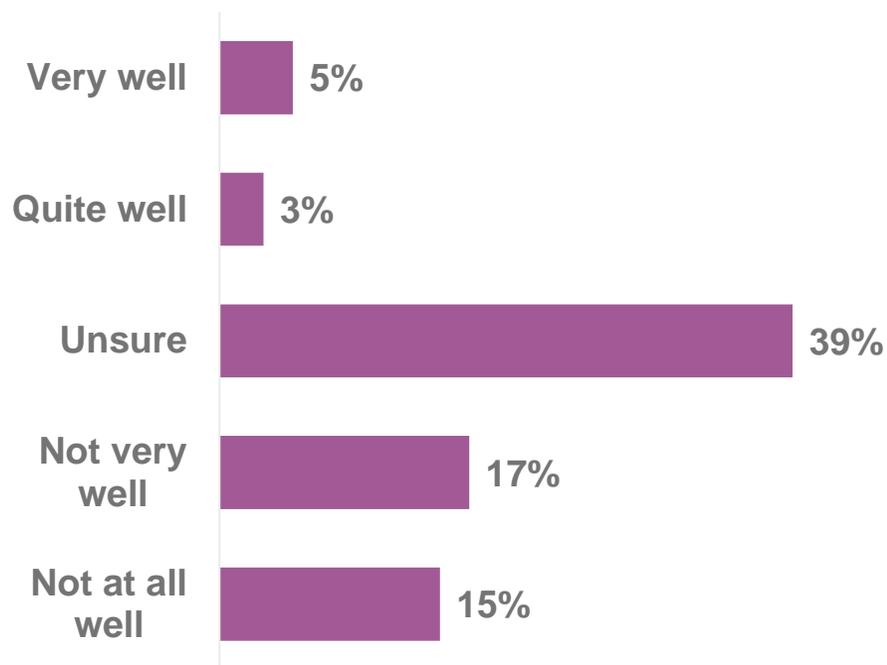


Last date to eat food labelled 'use by' 15 Jan

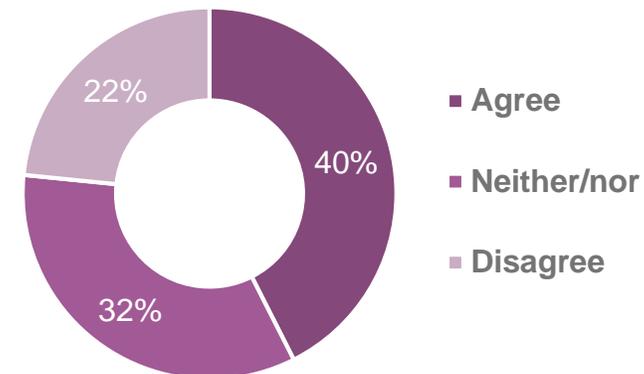


Two-fifths of consumers are concerned that the contents of food may not be as described on the label, and just over 1 in 10 suspect they have consumed something not on the label. However, most are unsure / don't understand what 'food crime' is.

Understanding of Food Crime



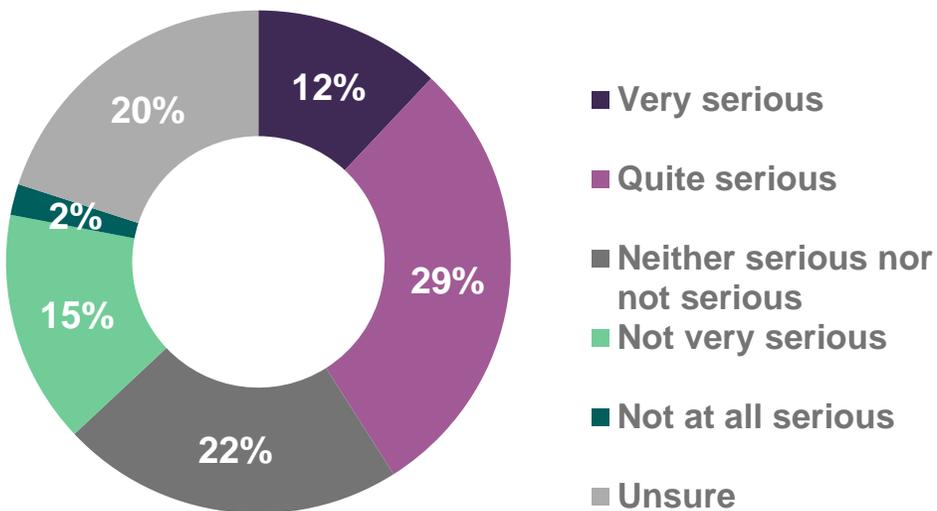
It worries me that what's in my food might not be what's on the label



13% of respondents suspected that they had eaten/drunk something that wasn't on the label.

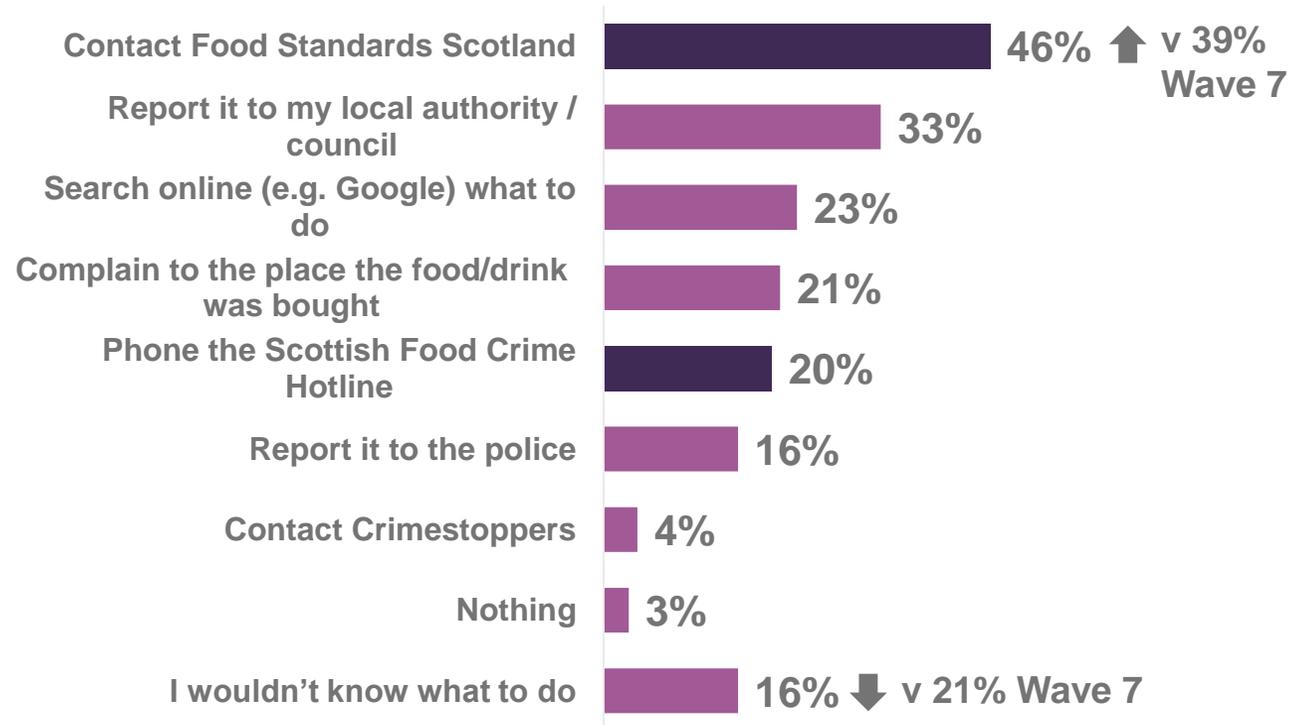
Almost a third of consumers consider food crime to be a serious problem in Scotland. FSS is increasingly cited as the first port of call for reporting food crimes. The food crime hotline is less well known.

How Serious a Problem is Food Crime?



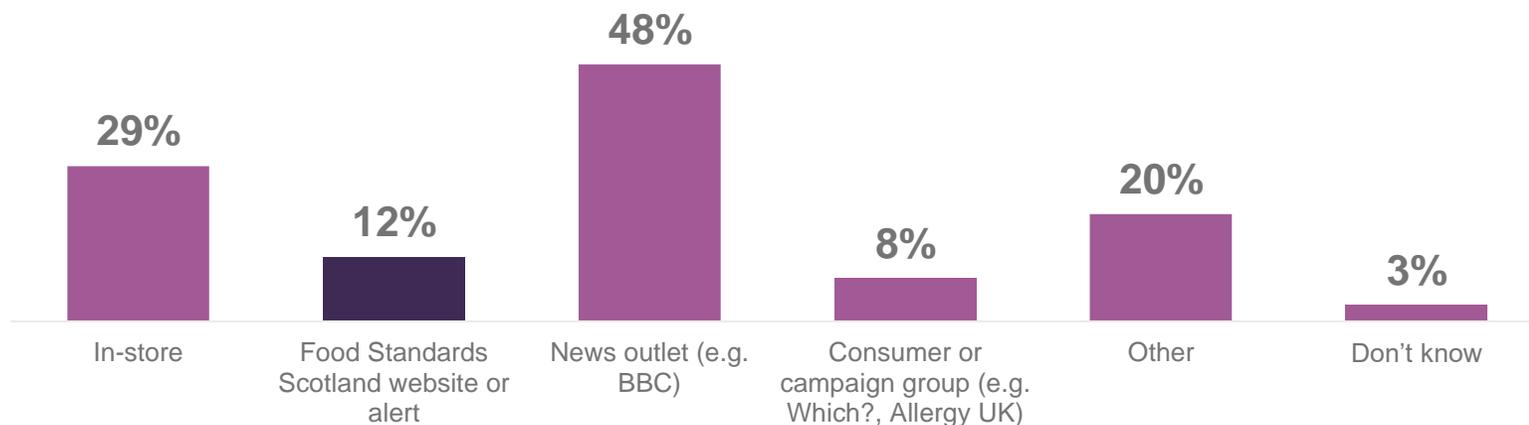
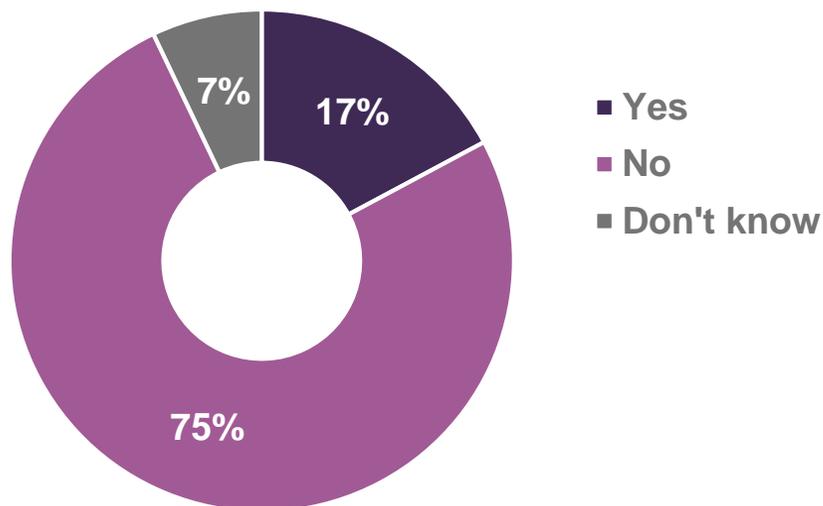
↑ Proportion saying 'very serious' increased since Wave 7 (+3%)

If aware of food crime



Almost 1 in 5 remembered seeing food recall alerts in the past year, half of whom attributed the information to news outlets. Consumers tended to remember the type of food recalled, but the reason for recall was less well remembered.

Remember any alerts about food recall



8% remembered the food and reason for recall
9% remembered the food but NOT the reason for recall

7. Food Establishments & Eating Out

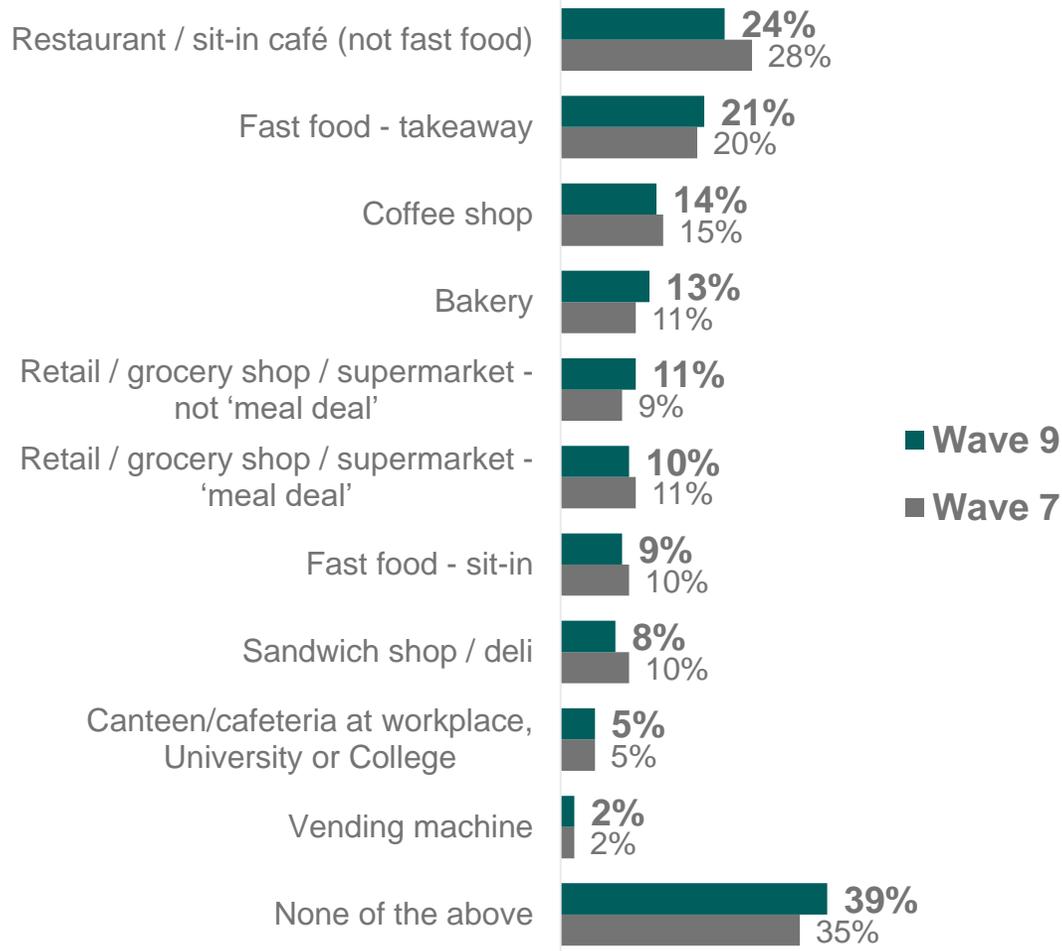
This question set is designed to measure a range of issues relating to eating out of home, including:

- Information provision
- Food hygiene certification



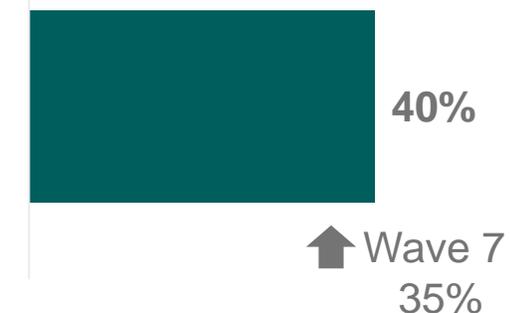
6 in 10 had eaten out of home in the previous week, mostly in restaurants and fast food takeaways. Two fifths feel they have enough information to check if food is safe out of home.

Past Week Eaten Out of Home



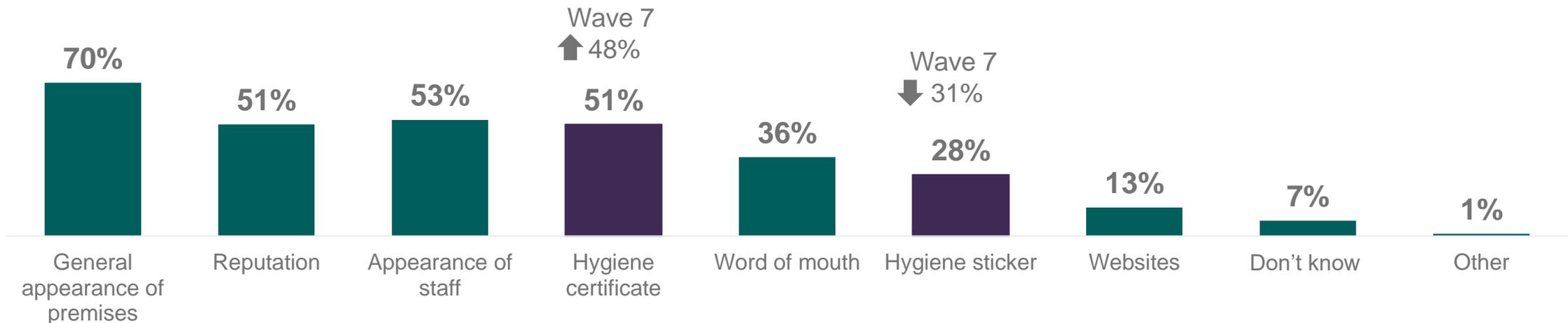
41% felt they had clear information on how to check if food eaten out of home is safe

Restaurants, bars and cafes usually provide enough information to allow me to check that the food I am eating is safe



A majority of consumers think out of home establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene, consistent with previous waves. Consumers continue to rely on informal methods to judge hygiene standards.

76% (+3% vs Wave 7) agree that 'restaurants cafés, takeaways and catering establishments should pay more attention to food safety and hygiene'



Females (75%) and 65+yr olds (81%) most likely to refer to appearance of premises

Q47 How do you judge the hygiene standards of the places you eat out at or buy food from? Base: 1079
Q53 How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? Base: 1079

The number recognising FHIS logo / certificate has significantly increased, to almost 7 in 10, with most having seen this displayed on premises. A quarter used the scheme and 9 in 10 of those said it influenced their choice of establishment.



24% have used FHIS in the last 12 months



91% of those who used FHIS said it had an influence on whether to use the establishment

Wave 7
86%

Half of consumers would go to the FSS website to check for hygiene inspection information, consistent with previous waves.

Source of food hygiene inspection info



8. Allergens

This question set includes a series of measures relating to allergens including:

- understanding the incidence of specific allergens within households
- gauging whether information provided on food labels and by out of home establishments is sufficiently clear regarding allergens.

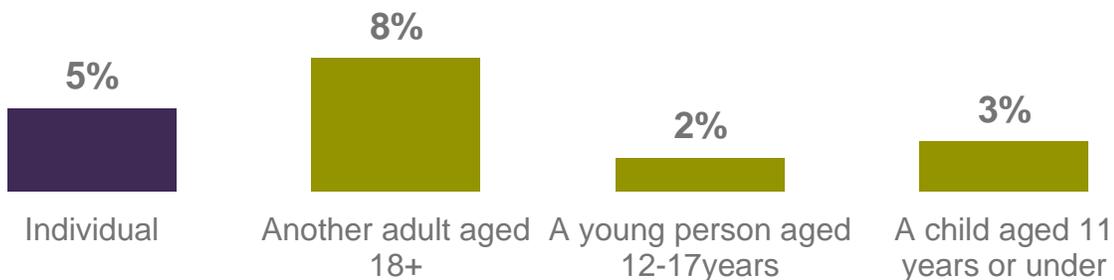


1 in 10 households in Scotland contain at least one person with a food allergy, with allergies spanning a range of types of food, but mostly found in adults.



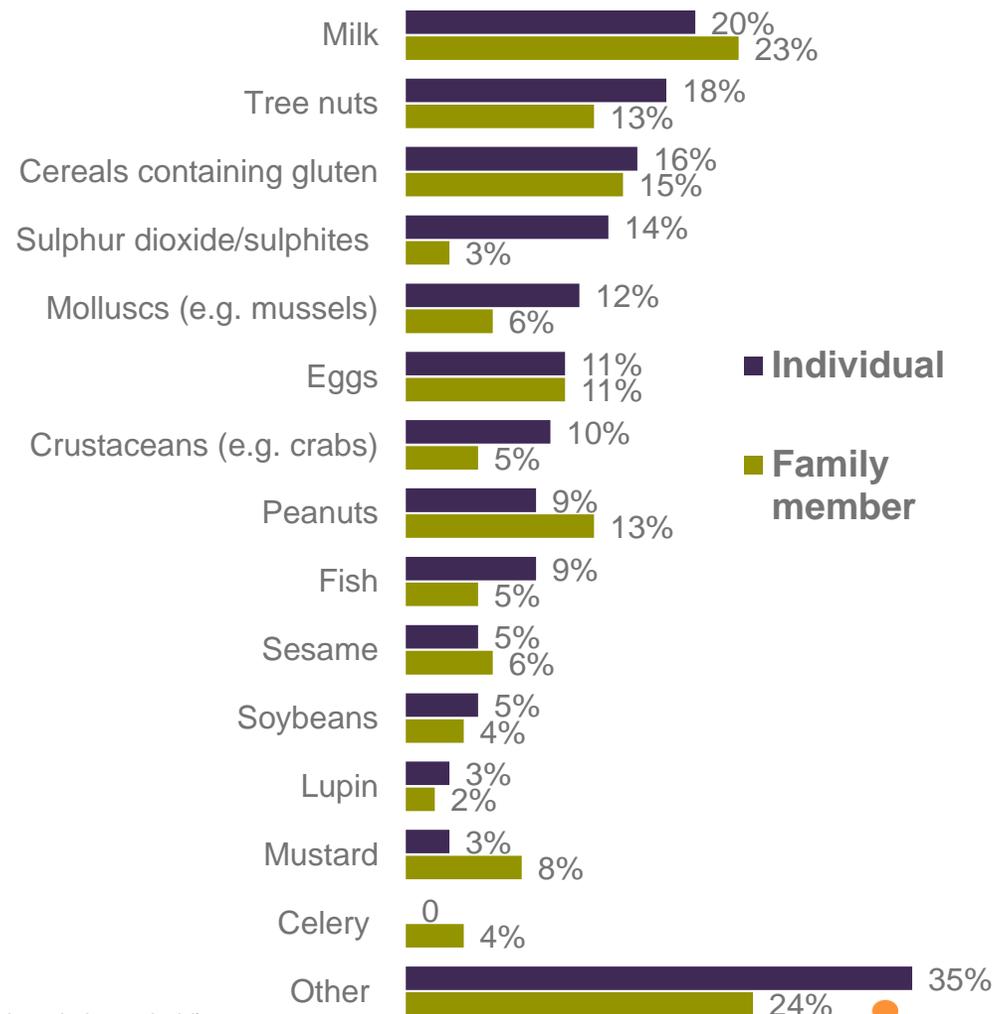
13% of Scottish households include at least one person with a food allergy

Food Allergies in Household



74% buy food for those with an allergy

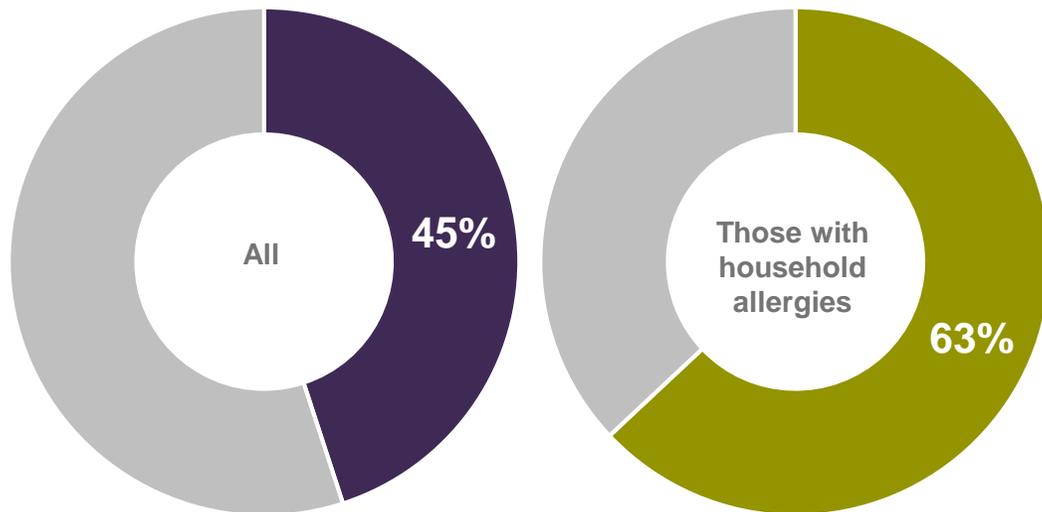
Type of Food Allergy



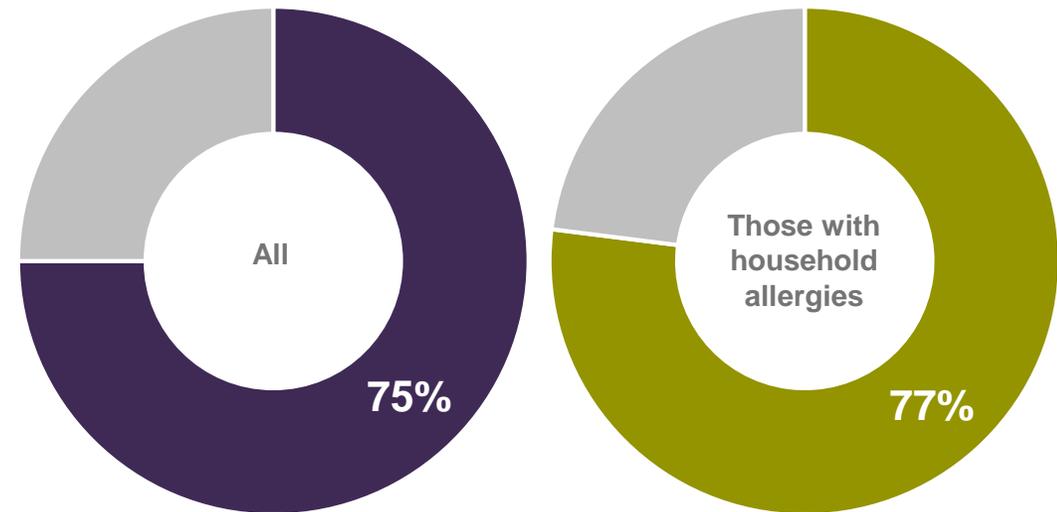
Q61 Does anyone in your household, other than you, have a food allergy? Base: W9 841 (those with others in household)
 Q62 And do you ever buy food for this person with the allergy? Base: 105
 Q60 What are you allergic to? Base: W9 59 (all with a food allergy)
 Q63 What is this person in your household allergic to? W9 105 (all with someone else in household with a food allergy)

Those living in households with food allergies have higher levels of concern about allergens than the general public. Most are confident that they can access clear information about allergens.

Concerned about allergens

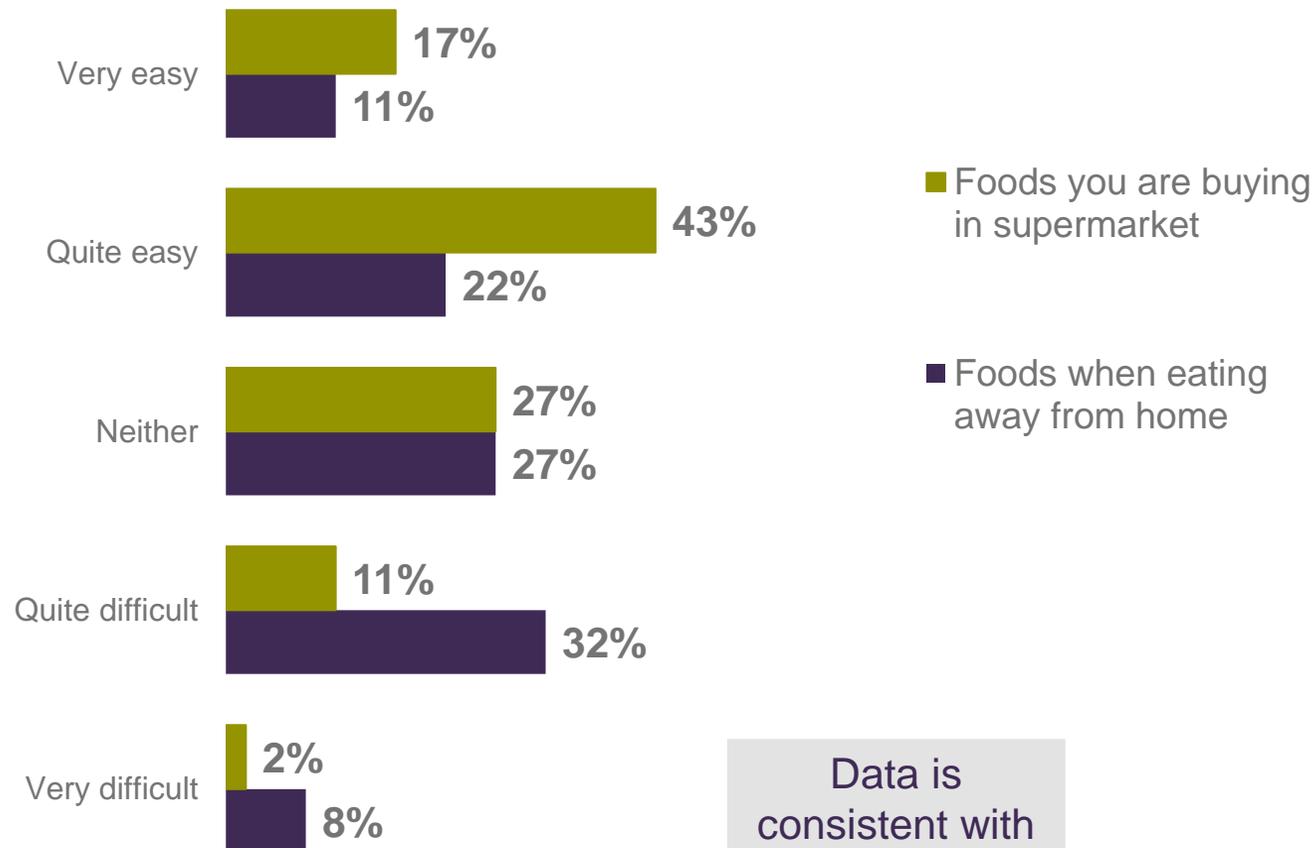


Clear info about ingredients that can cause allergic reactions



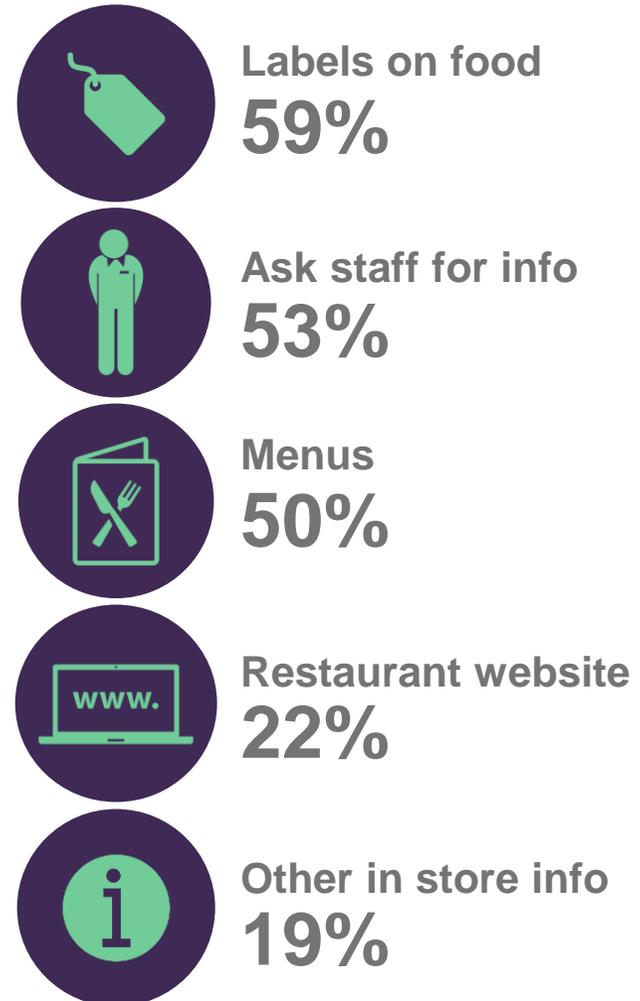
Most consumers with food allergies say it is quite easy to find allergy information about food purchased in supermarkets, but less easy when eating out of home – consistent with Wave 8. Food labels are the main source of allergen information.

Ease of Finding Allergy Information

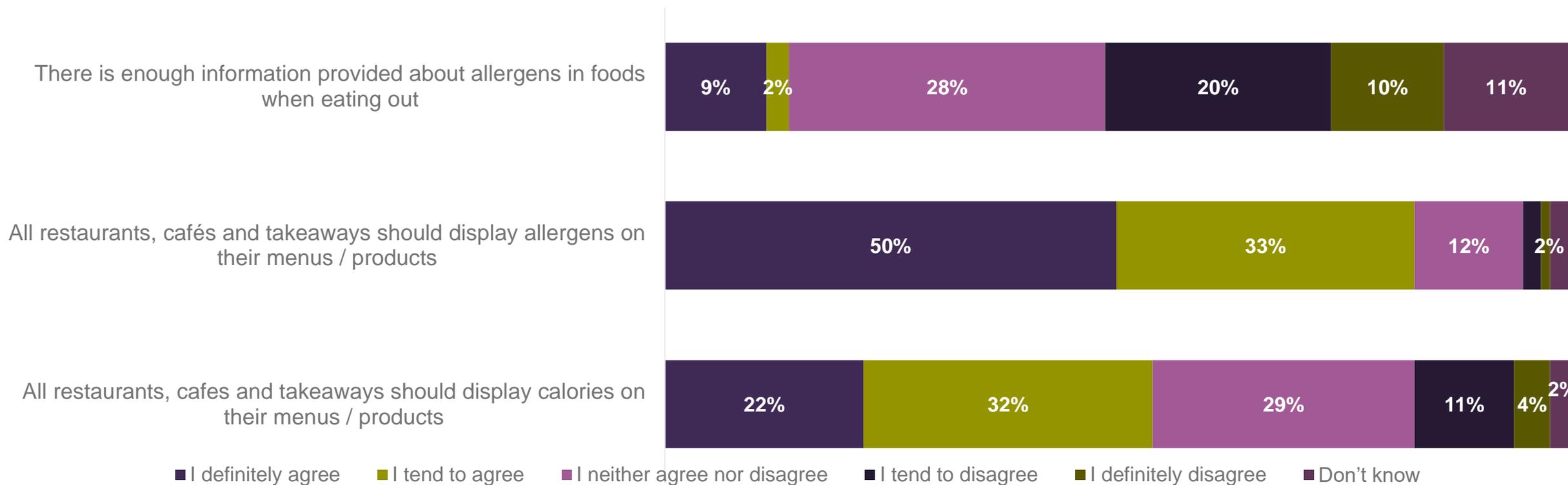


Data is consistent with Wave 8

Main Sources of Allergy Information Out of Home



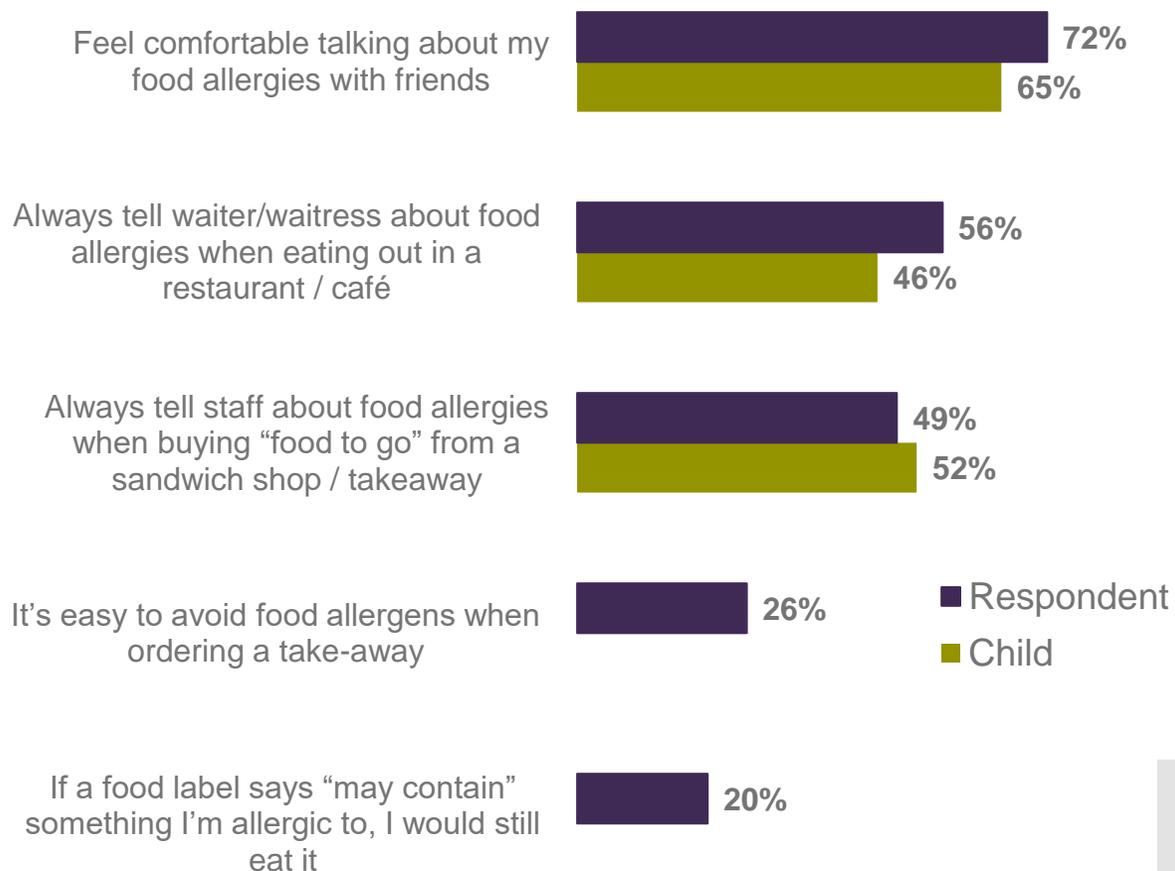
The public in general believe more information should be provided about allergens when eating out of home. Half support the display of calories on all menus and products.



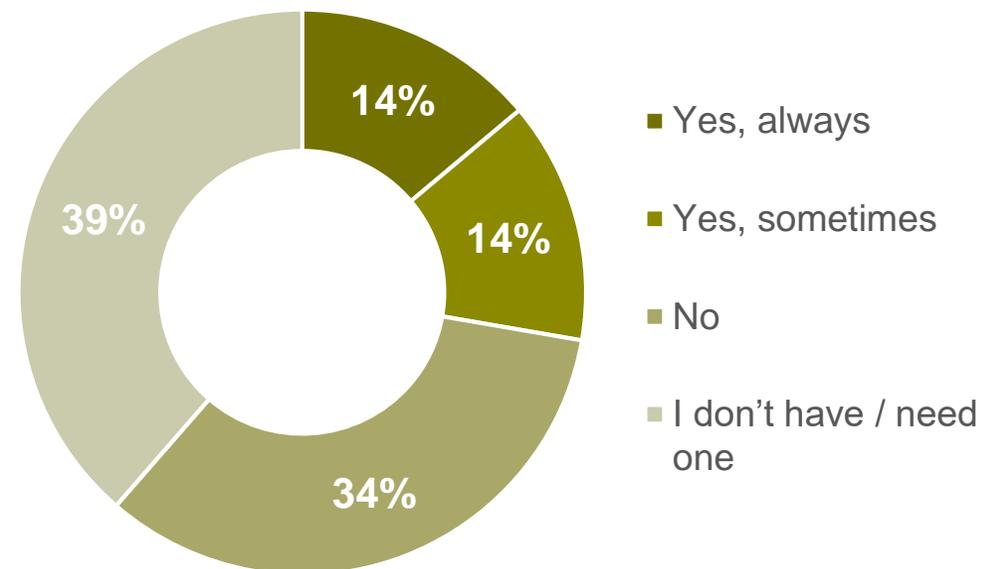
Data consistent with previous wave

Most say they are comfortable talking about food allergies with friends. Neither adults nor children are consistent in always telling staff about allergies when eating out of home. Auto injectors are not always carried by those who need them.

Allergy Behaviours

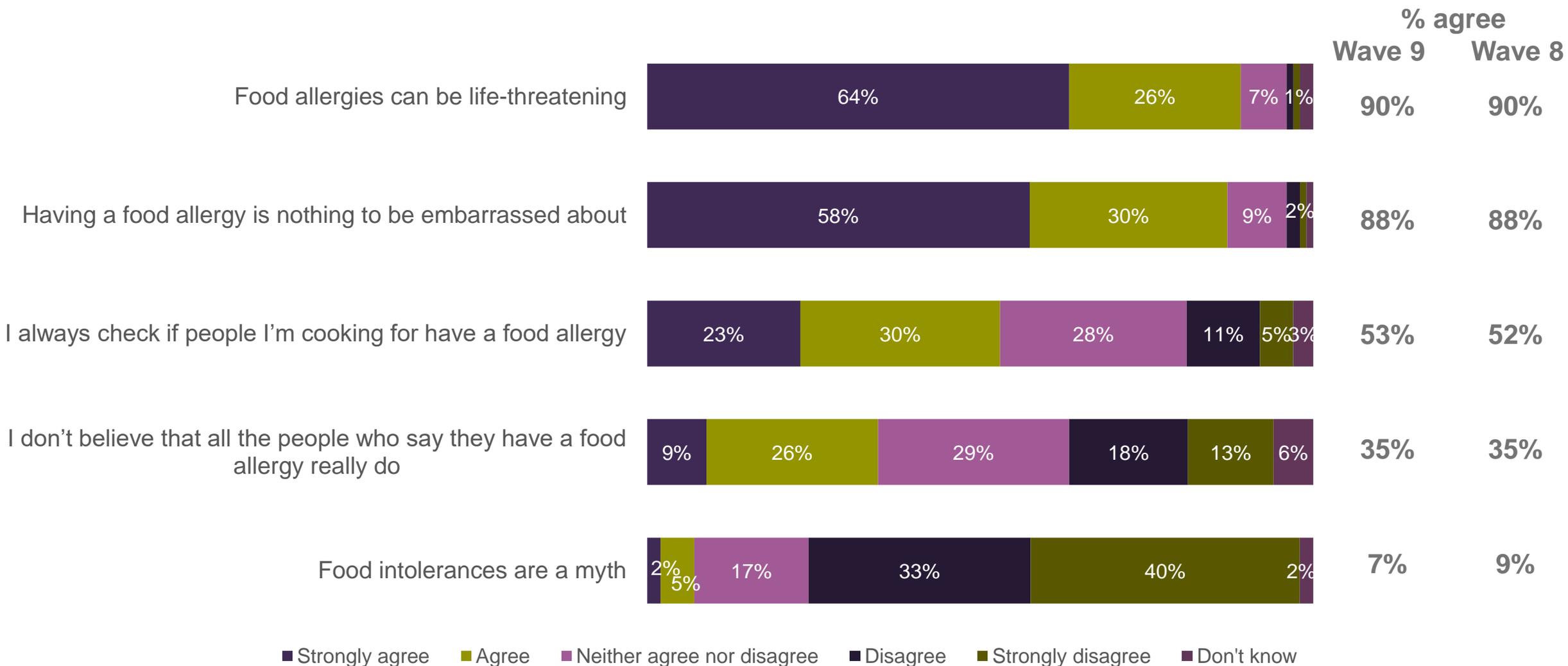


Carry Epipen / Auto Injector



Data is consistent with Wave 8

The general public recognise the severity of food allergies and do not believe there should be a stigma associated with them. However, a third doubt that everyone who says they have an allergy really does.



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

We hope you've found our Food Safety and Authenticity Report of interest. Here's a summary of the areas we've covered:



**Knowledge,
Awareness &
Visibility of FSS**



Food Safety



**Food Labelling,
Authenticity &
Food Crime**



Allergens



Food Standards Scotland
Pilgrim House
Aberdeen AB11 5RL

01224 285100

marketing@fss.scot

foodstandards.gov.scot



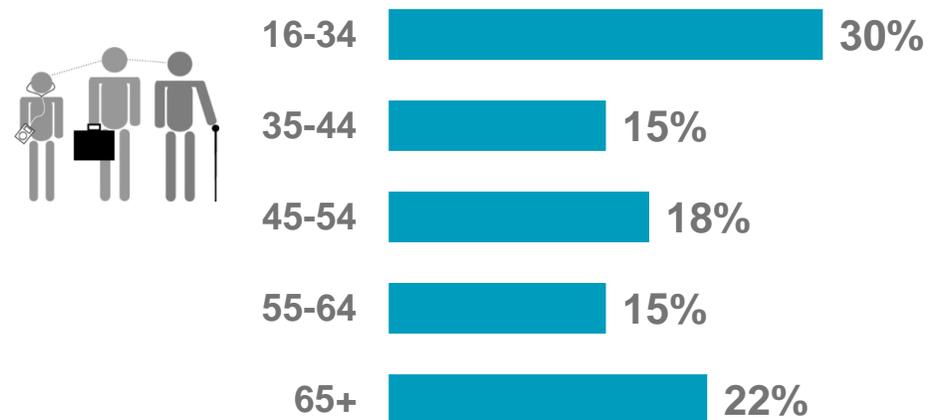
Sample Profile

Representative of Scottish population – data weighted on demographics to match previous waves.

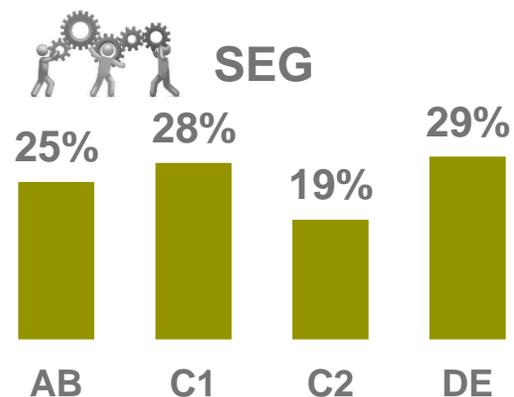
Gender



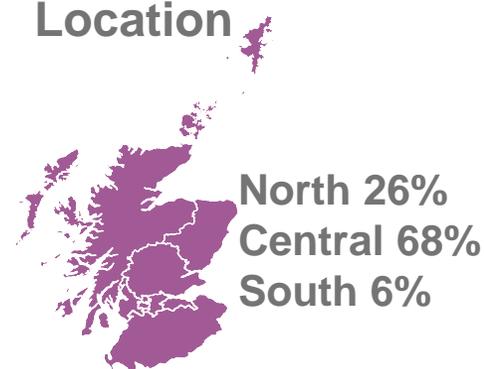
Age



SEG

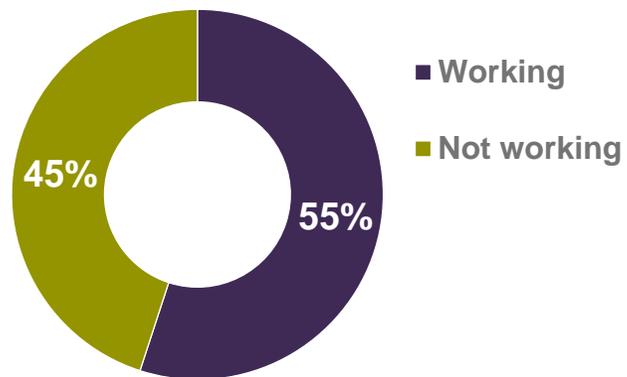


Location

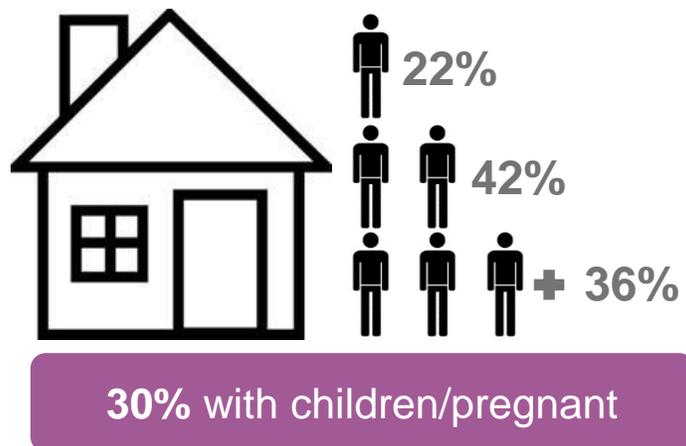


Sample Profile

Working status



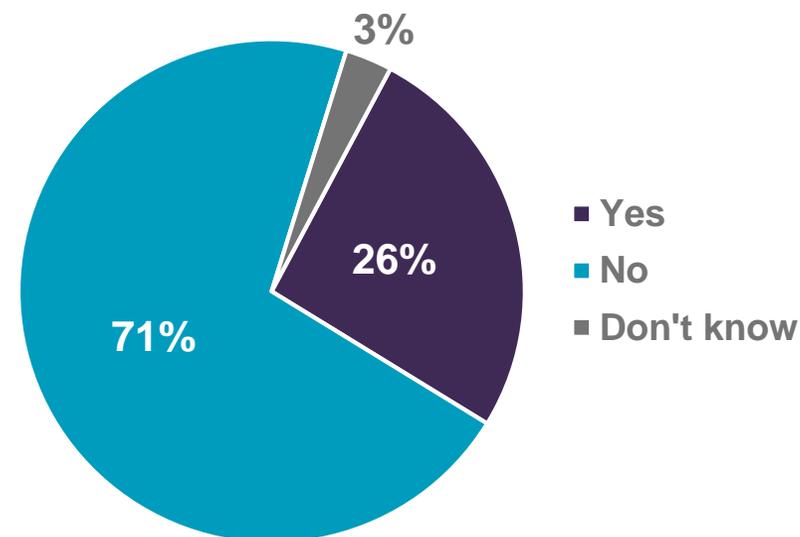
Household composition



Ethnic Group

Net: White	96%
Net: Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	1%
Net: Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	2%
Net: African	0%
Net: Caribbean or Black	0%
Net: Other ethnic group	0%
Would prefer not to say	1%

Health issues



Detailed Methodology

- The research methodology was designed to be consistent with previous waves to ensure comparability in terms of:
 - Data collection method and sampling approach
 - Online self-completion; sample drawn from multiple panel partners
 - Fieldwork dates
 - 24th January – 2nd February 2020
 - *note this is later than usual due to research restrictions during the pre-election period.
 - Questionnaire design and length
 - Module approach; 30 minutes.
- The final sample size at Wave 9 was 1,079.
 - Base sizes at previous waves : Wave 1 (1003); Wave 2 (1000); Wave 3 (1000); Wave 4 (1000); Wave 5 (1000); Wave 6 (1002); Wave 7 (1,046); Wave 8 (1,069).
- Weighting was applied to ensure the final dataset was representative of the Scottish adult population.
- Statistical testing was undertaken to identify significant differences between the latest dataset and that from previous waves, at the 95% confidence limit (research industry standard).
 - Where statistically significant differences exist, these are highlighted using bold up and down arrows.
- All research was undertaken in strict accordance with MRS Code of Conduct and GDPR legislation