

Q-Step Internship: Public Attitudes Tracker Survey at the Food Standards Agency

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The Food Standards Agency conducts a bi-annual survey to track public attitudes towards food safety, including concern about issues of food safety and to monitor the public's attitudes towards the Agency. My

work at the Agency was to analyse the data from the latest wave of the survey alongside previous ones and identify key trends to obtain a general picture of the public's views on issues key to the Agency.

Objectives

The aim of the project was to look into the results from the 12th wave of the survey and put them in perspective with data from previous waves. The final report was geared at providing an understanding the public's general views towards food safety and the FSA

Results from the latest wave of the survey had to be merged with data from the previous waves of the survey and analysed together to get a picture of the public's attitudes regarding issues of food safety, their view of the Food Standards Agency and their behaviour regarding food safety.

The merged data was analysed to identify key trends and patterns of behaviour among different socio-demographic groups and how people's answers to questions varied with their inherent characteristics.

Method

Data from all 12 waves of the survey was merged to create one data set with a sample size of 27,753 respondents. The final report highlighted main differences in responses among socio-demographic groups. The project also tested whether respondents' answers to some questions had an effect on their answers to others. The report did not look at changing trends over time, but instead considered attitudes of the public in general over all waves.

Some questions present on the survey were left out of the analysis because in merging the data from all 12 waves, responses to these questions could not be coded into one variable across all waves and this data was lost. Differences that emerged among various socio-demographic groups were then identified using SPSS Software and highlighted in the report. Only those differences between groups which had a less than 5% chance of occurring accidentally (i.e. were statistically significant) were mentioned in the report.

Key Findings

- Levels of concern about safety of food in outlets were the highest among ethnic minority groups, women and older (aged 36 and above) respondents.
- Concern about food sold in outlets, awareness of hygiene standards at food outlets, as well as awareness of the FSA rose with age then fell after the age of 65.
- Levels of concern about safety of food in food outlets, awareness of hygiene standards at these outlets as well as awareness of the FSA were lowest

- amongst respondents aged 16-25, compared to all other demographics.
- Internet access for a person correlated positively with awareness of the FSA and hygiene standards at food outlets as well as with concern over food safety issues. However, access to the internet did not correlate with trust in the agency.
- Contrary to what might be expected, respondents with young children (i.e. 0-7 years) in the household, were no more likely to report concern over food safety issues or be aware of hygiene standards at food outlets than those without any children.

Fig 4.1 Awareness of the FSA among age groups

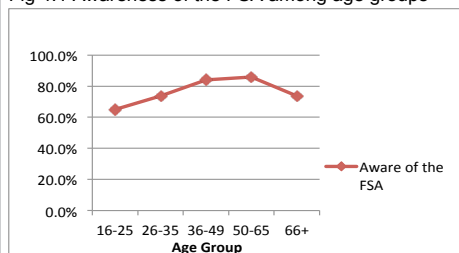


Fig 3.2 Awareness of hygiene standards at food outlets among age groups

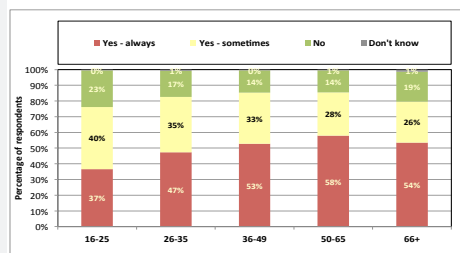
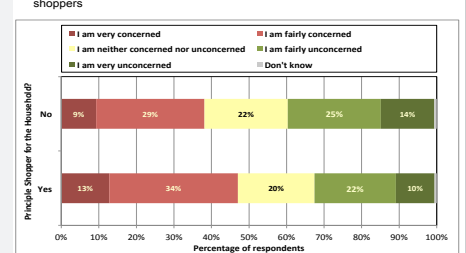


Fig 2.5 Concern over food sold in shops among principal and non-principal shoppers



Conclusion

Socio-demographic differences among respondents had an effect on their responses to some questions on the survey but not all

Respondents' answers to questions also varied by availability of access to

the internet, type of area they lived in and region of the UK. Regression analysis was used to determine whether respondents' answers to certain questions had an effect on their answers to other questions, but no such link was discovered.