

Quarterly public tracker - March 2009

Food Standards Agency

6th April 2009

Danielle De Feo
Social Science Research Unit

Background

- ❑ The Food Standards Agency (FSA) places five questions on the TNS consumer face to face omnibus on a quarterly basis in order to monitor key Agency issues.
- ❑ The fieldwork period for this wave of the research was the 4th to the 8th March 2009. A representative sample of 2066 adults in the UK were interviewed.
- ❑ This is wave 41 of this tracking research.
- ❑ The questions tracked cover awareness of the FSA, attitude towards food safety issues, concern about specific food issues (spontaneous and prompted), confidence in all organisations, and in the Food Standards Agency specifically, with regard to food safety, and trust in the FSA.
- ❑ The following slides show top-line findings from in-house analysis. Statistically significant changes wave-on-wave and between key sub-groups are reported at the 95% confidence level. Full results are available on request in table format.

Summary of results

Awareness of the FSA and Meat Hygiene Service

- ❑ Following a significant decrease in awareness of the FSA in the previous wave, levels of awareness have returned to September 2008 levels. Reported total awareness of the Food Standards Agency is at its highest since tracking began in 2001 at 86%.
- ❑ There was also a significant increase in both total and spontaneous awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service (from 27%-31%).

Confidence in food safety measures and trust in the FSA

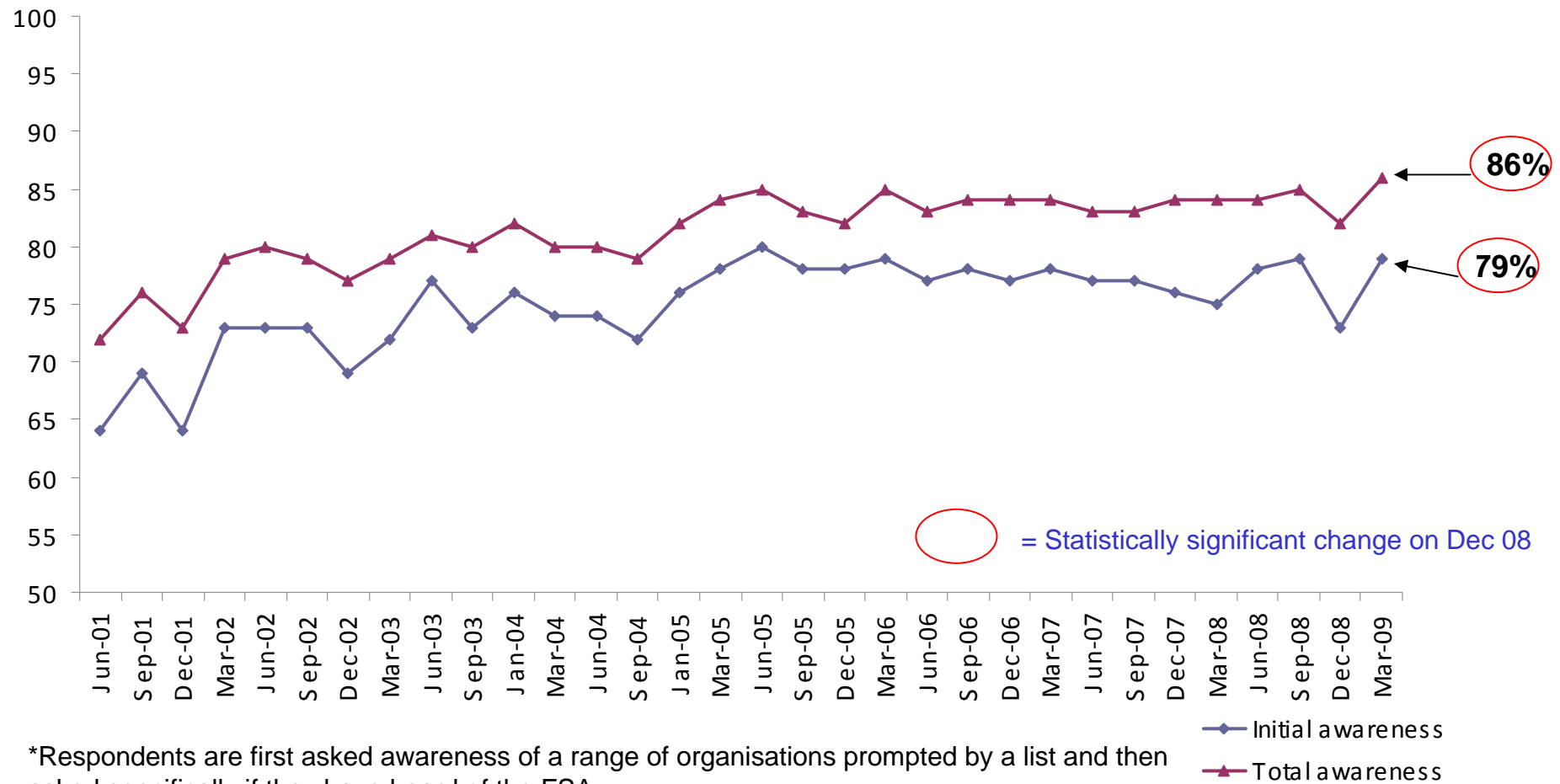
- ❑ Confidence in all organisations in protecting health with regards to food safety fell significantly this wave, from 60% to 56%. Confidence in the FSA specifically was similar to the previous wave (62%), however there was a significant increase across 16-25 year old age group and a significant decrease across 50-65 year old age group.
- ❑ Trust in the FSA was at a similar level to previous waves of the tracker: half of respondents rated the Agency as an organisation they could trust. These findings are similar to those of previous waves of the tracker but lower than findings of the Consumer Attitudes Survey (last carried out in 2007).

Concern about Food Safety Issues

- ❑ Concern about food safety issues continued to fall this wave (from 68% to 64%) and is now at the lowest since tracking began.
- ❑ The main issues of concern during this wave were food poisoning (52%), the amount of salt, fat and sugar in food (47%, 45% and 43% respectively). Food prices and the amount of saturated fat in food were also areas for concern (both 41%).

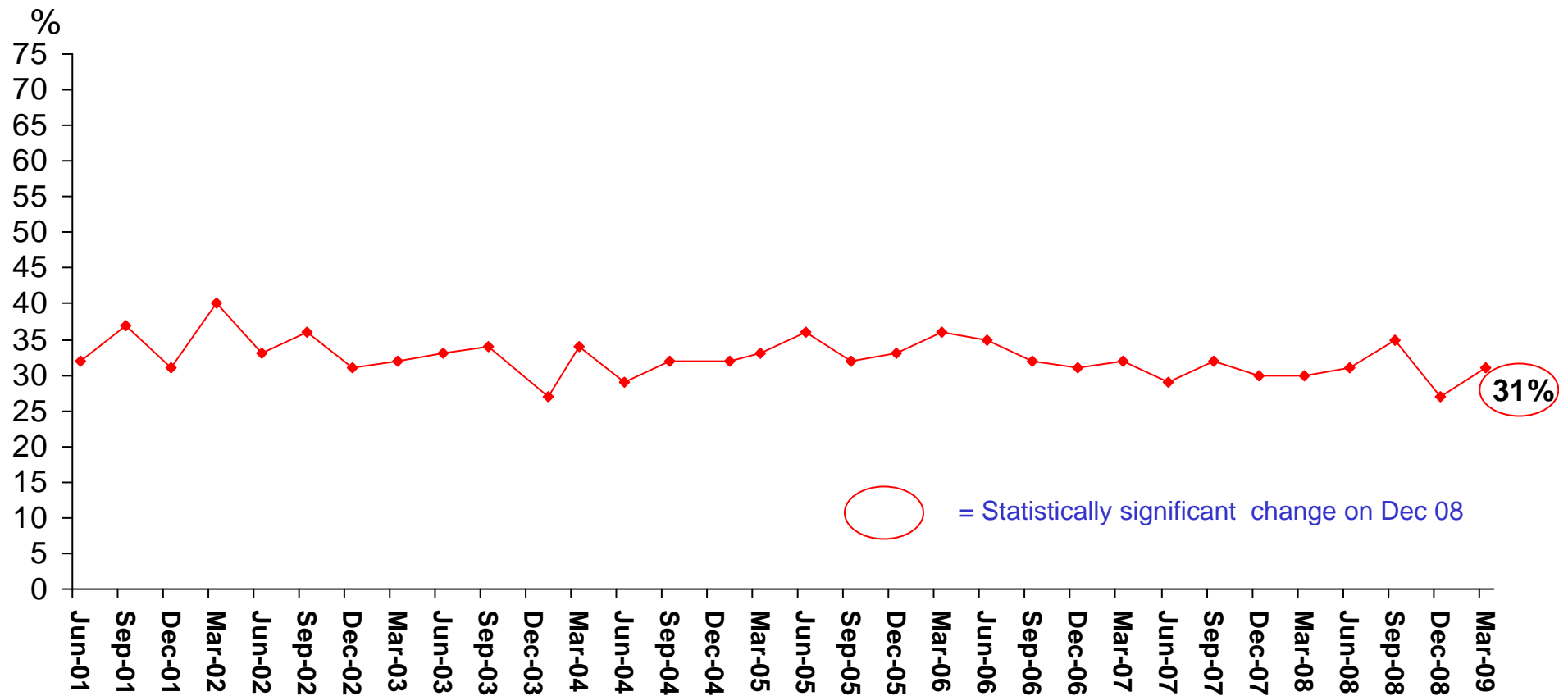
Section 1: Awareness of the Food Standards Agency and the Meat Hygiene Service

There was a significant increase in both spontaneous and total awareness of the Food Standards Agency from the previous wave, however this follows a significant decrease in awareness of a number of organisations in December 2008. Claimed awareness of all organisations is now what it was in September 2008. Total awareness of FSA is presently the highest it has been since tracking began (86%).



Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?; Q1b. Can I just check, have you heard of the Food Standards Agency? Base : All respondents

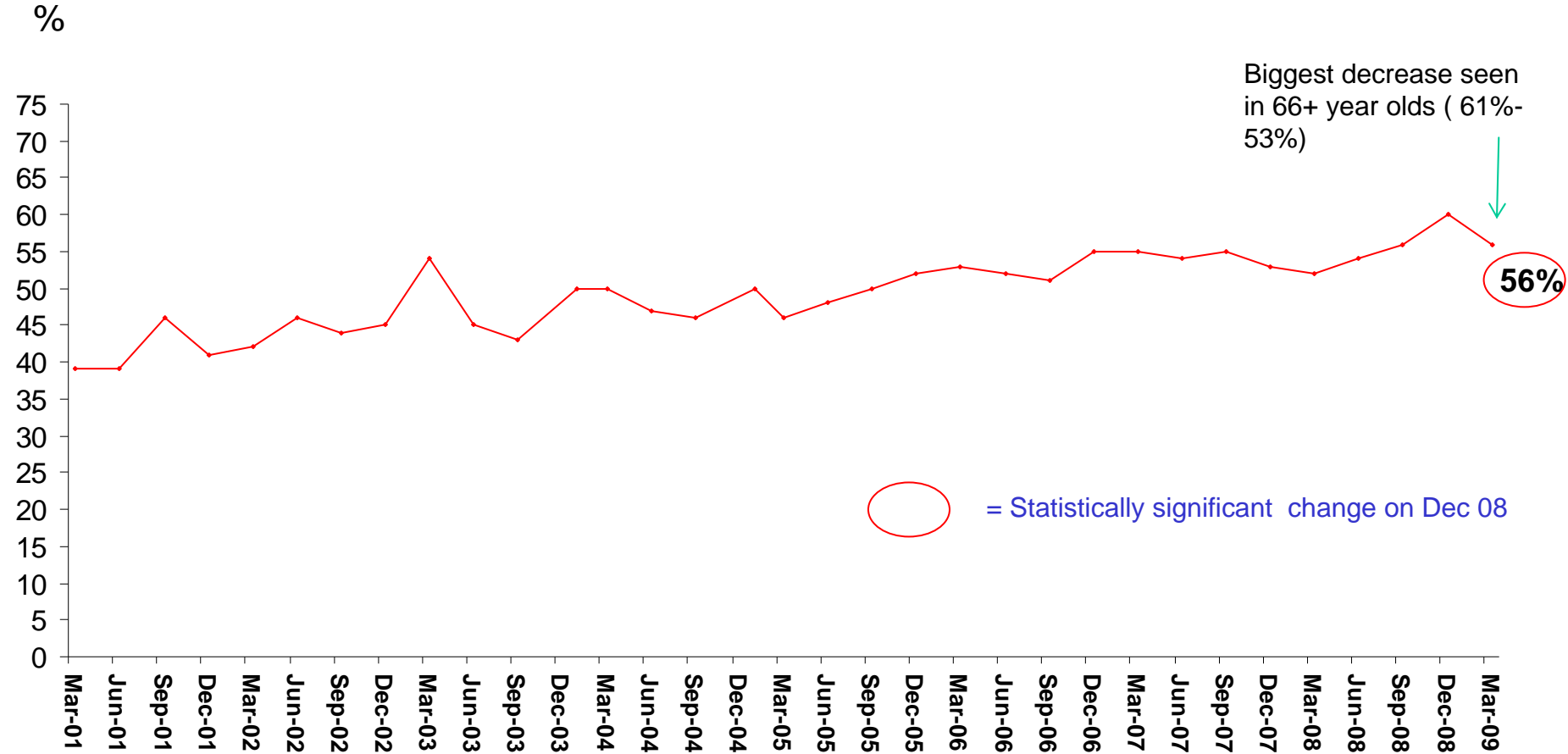
Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service follows a similar pattern to FSA, although rates are lower. Awareness of the Meat Hygiene Service increased this wave (from 27% to 31%) and is now similar to what it was prior to the dip in December 2008.



Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of? Base : All respondents

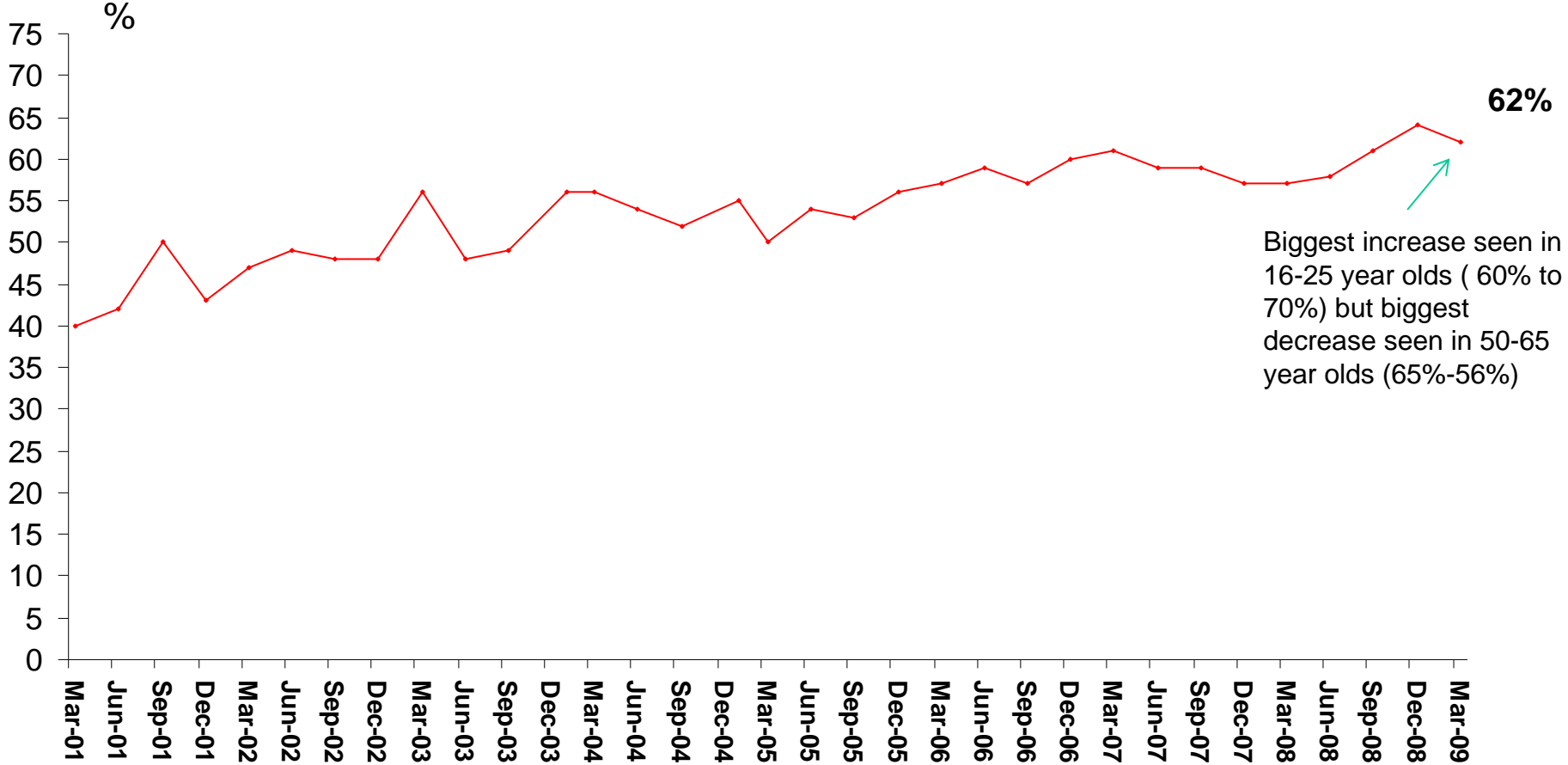
Section 2: Confidence in food safety measures and trust in the FSA

Confidence in the food safety measures of **all** organisations decreased significantly this wave from 60% to 56%, with the biggest decrease in the 66+ age group. However, confidence of food safety measures in this wave are now similar to those in September 2008 and other previous waves.



Q4. How confident are you about the current measures taken by all organisations involved in protecting your health with regards to food safety? Base : All respondents (% confident / very confident)

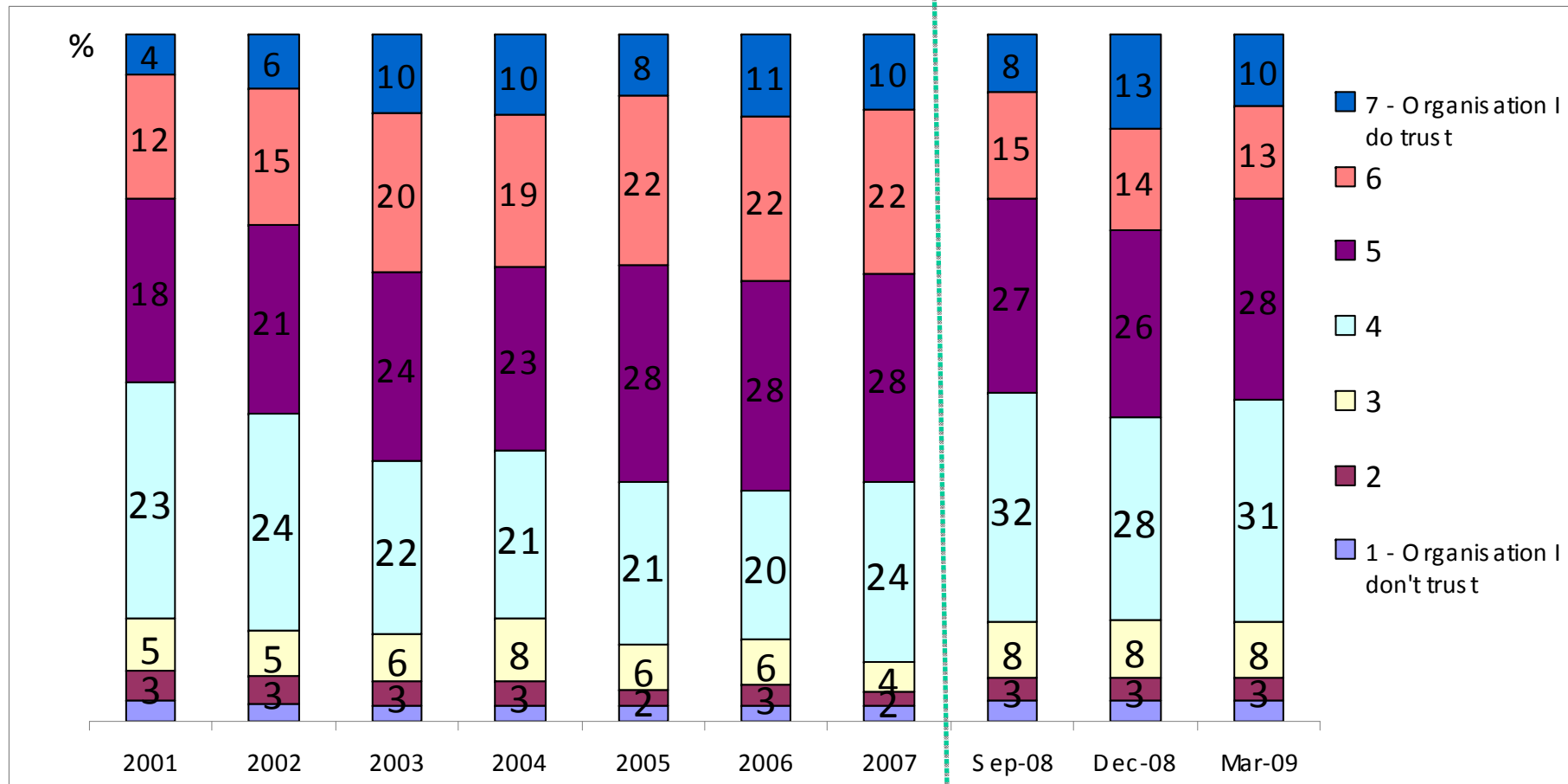
Confidence in the role played by the Food Standards Agency in protecting health fell slightly compared to the December 2008 wave. However, there has been a gradual increase in confidence since tracking began (40% confidence in March 2001 compared to 62% confidence this wave).



Q5. How confident are you about the role played by the Food Standards Agency in protecting your health with regard to food safety?
 Base : All respondents (%confident/very confident)

Half of respondents rated the Agency as an organisation they trust. This figure is stable when compared to previous waves of the tracker but slightly lower than seen in the Consumer Attitudes Survey*.

% trust (5, 6 or 7) 44% 50% 54% 52% 58% 61% 60% 50% 53% 51%



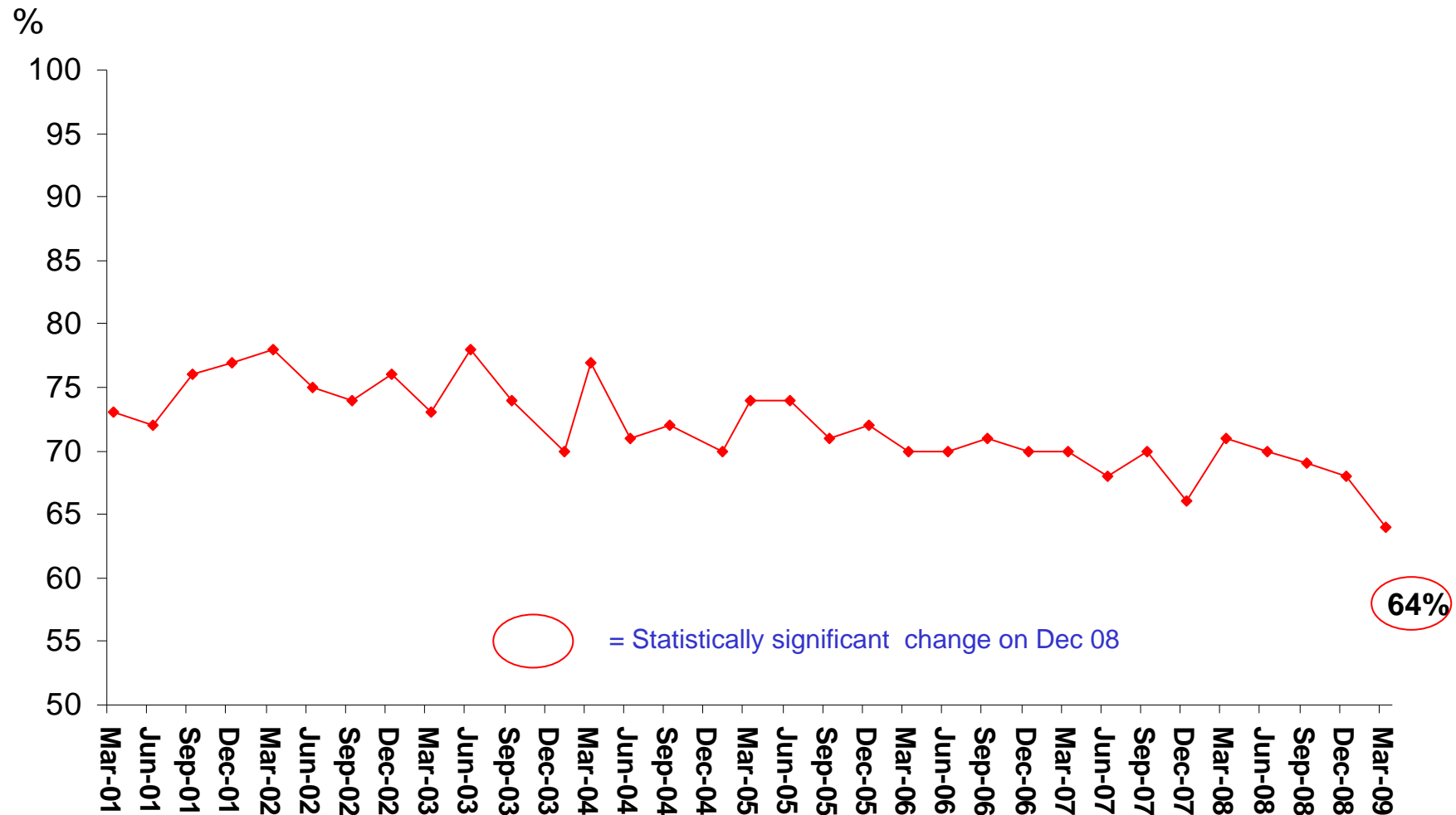
*Please refer to 'Additional Notes' slide for more information on this (final slide)

NB Asked previously in CAS. Different sample size and question order so answers not directly comparable

Q6: How would you rate the Food Standards Agency on a scale of 1 to 7 where 7 is 'an organisation I trust' and 1 is 'an organisation I don't trust? Base: All respondents aware of the FSA

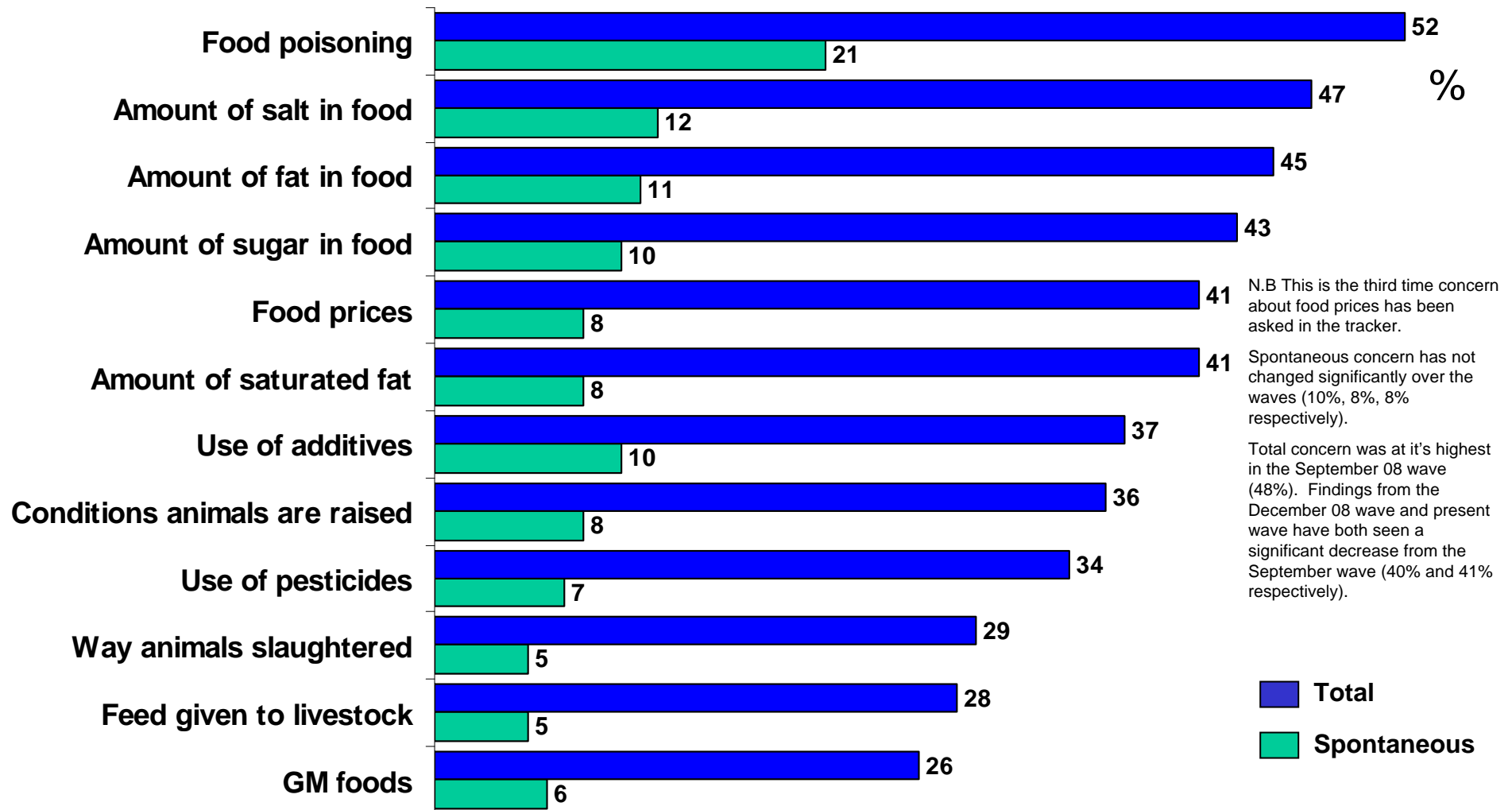
Section 3: Concern about food issues

Concern about food safety issues fell significantly this wave from 68% to 64%, following a gradual decrease from the previous four waves. This is now the lowest it has been since tracking began.



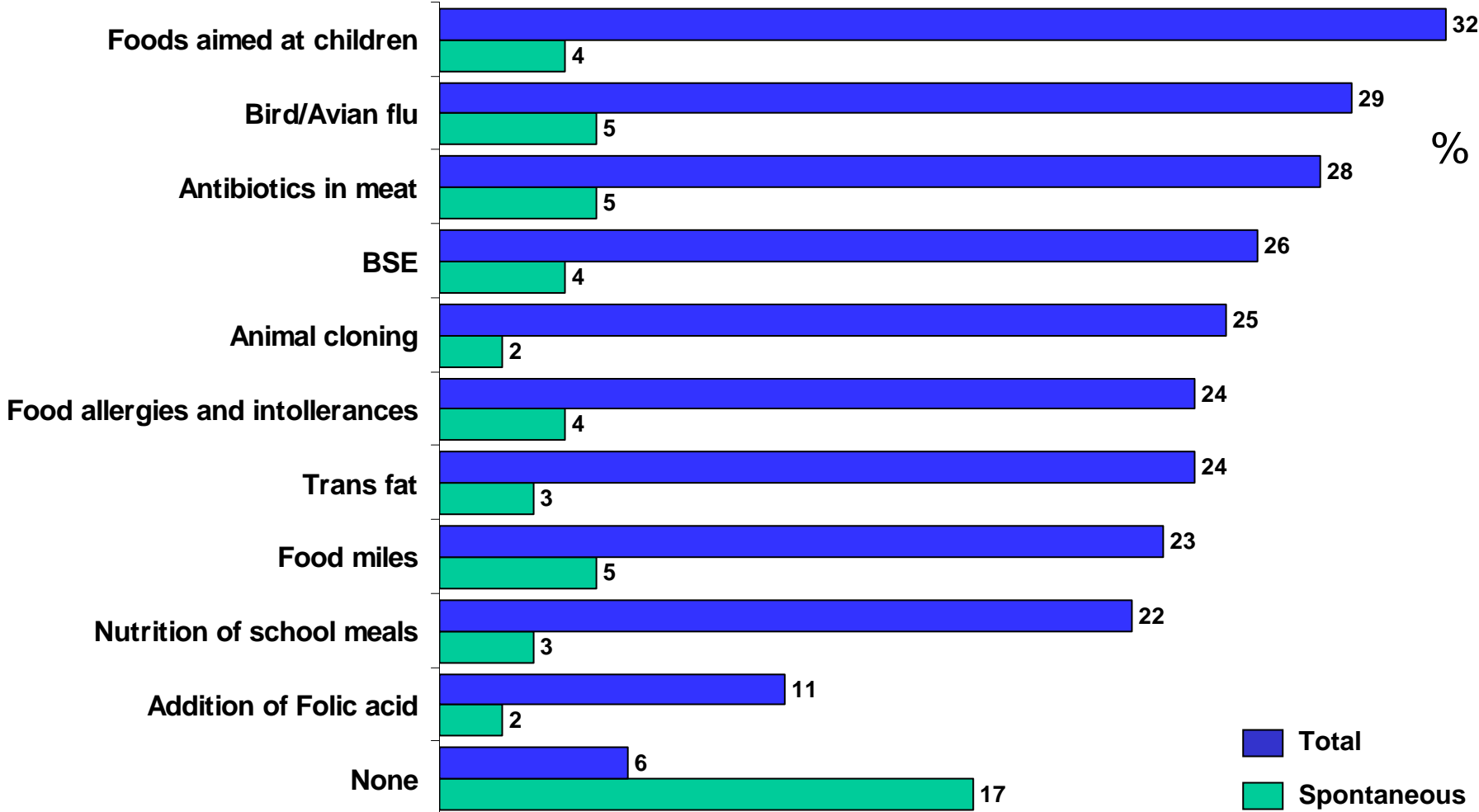
Q2. Generally speaking, which of these statements best describes your attitude to food safety issues? (% Very concerned or fairly concerned). Base : All respondents

The main food issues of concern to respondents were food poisoning (52%), the amount of salt (47%), fat (45%), sugar (43%), and saturated fat (41%) in food and food prices (41%). Results showed significant increases in the amount of fat, saturated fat and salt in food, when compared to the previous wave.



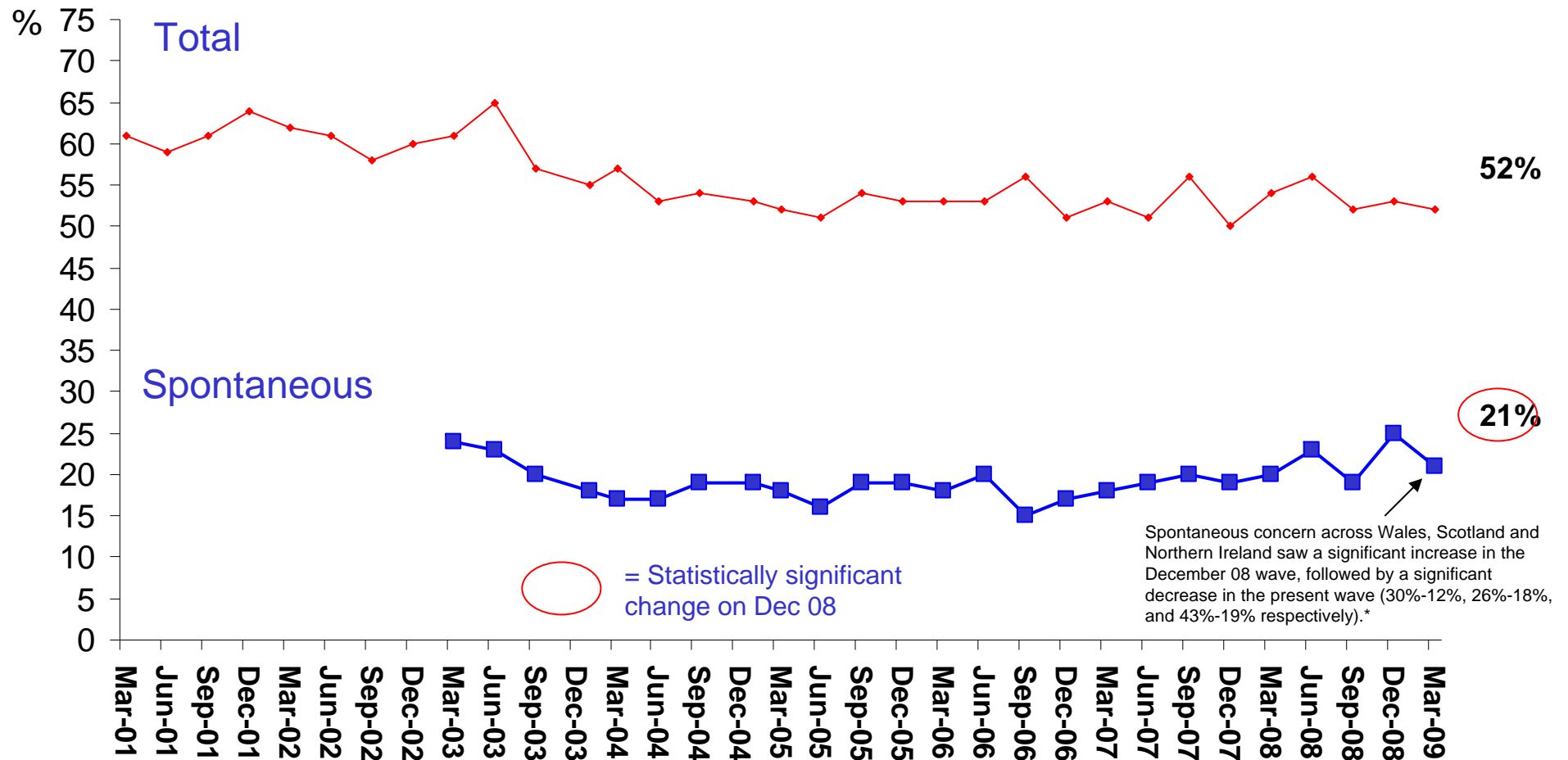
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents (Spontaneous answers over 5%)

Other food issues of concern.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

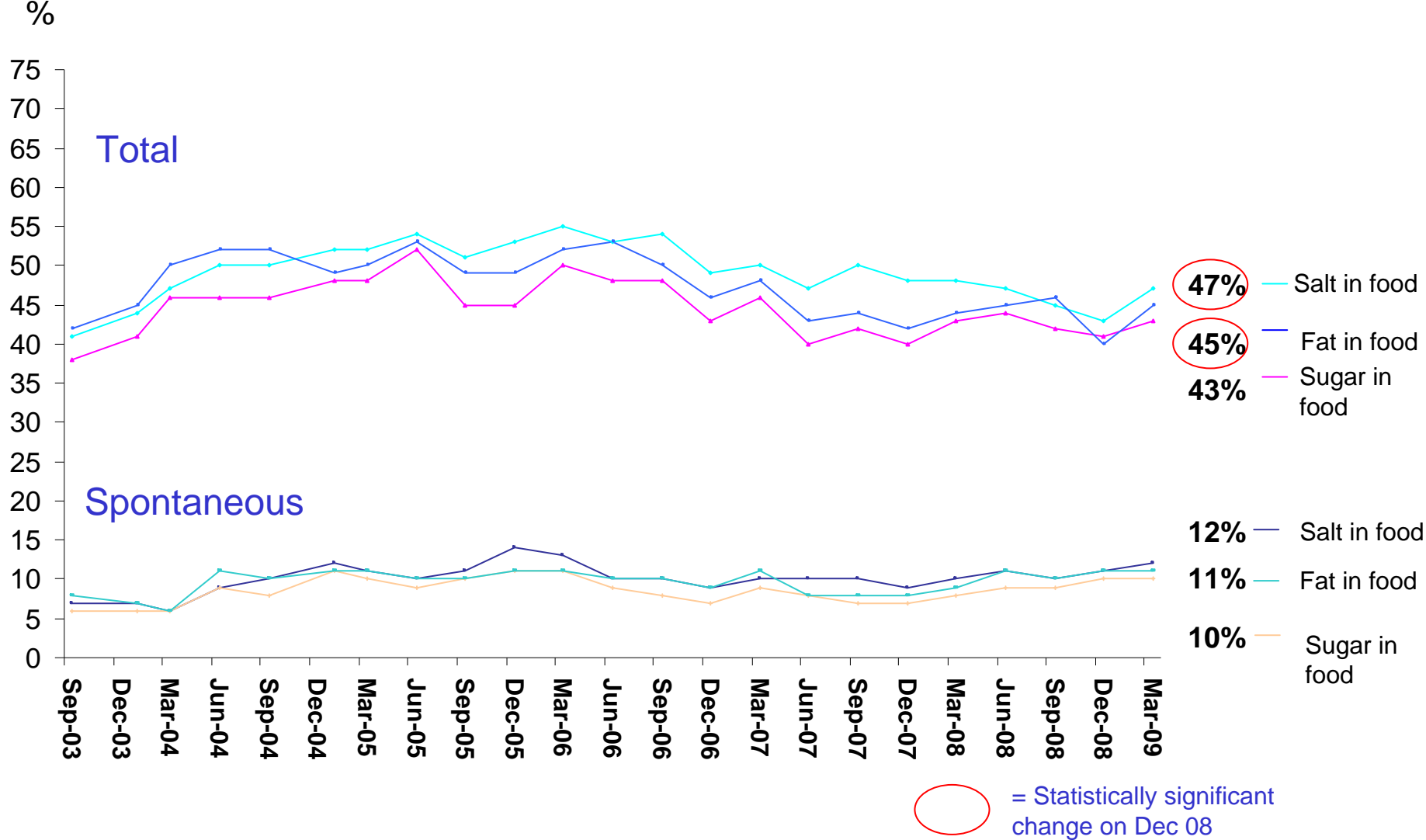
Whilst spontaneous concern about food poisoning decreased this wave (from 25% to 21%) prompted concern remained stable at 52%.



* It should be noted that the sample sizes for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are small.

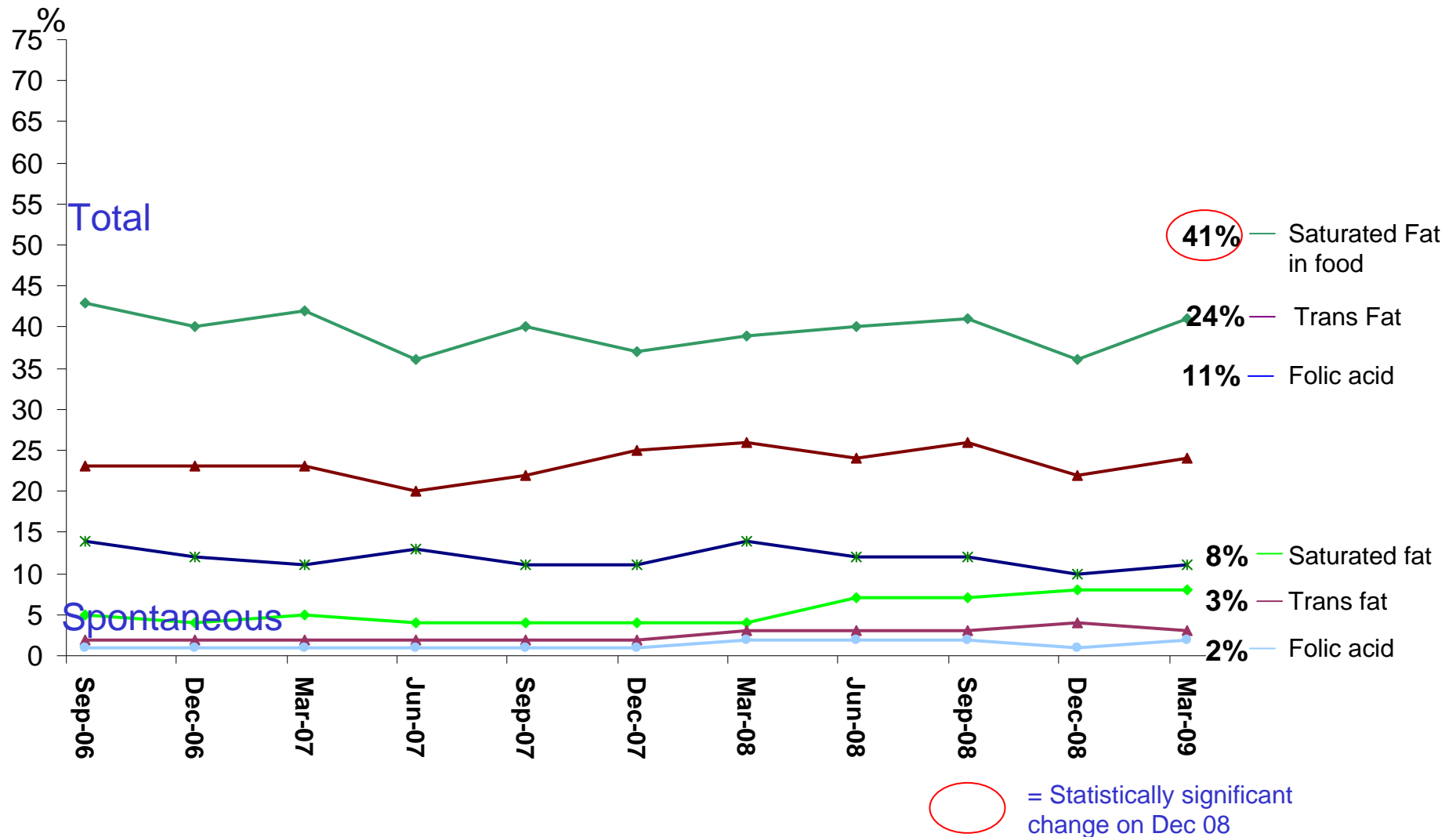
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Total concern about sugar in food remained stable this wave, however there has been a significant increase in concern about salt and fat (increased from 43%-47% and 40%-45% respectively). Spontaneous concern about salt, fat and sugar in food all remained stable when compared to previous waves.



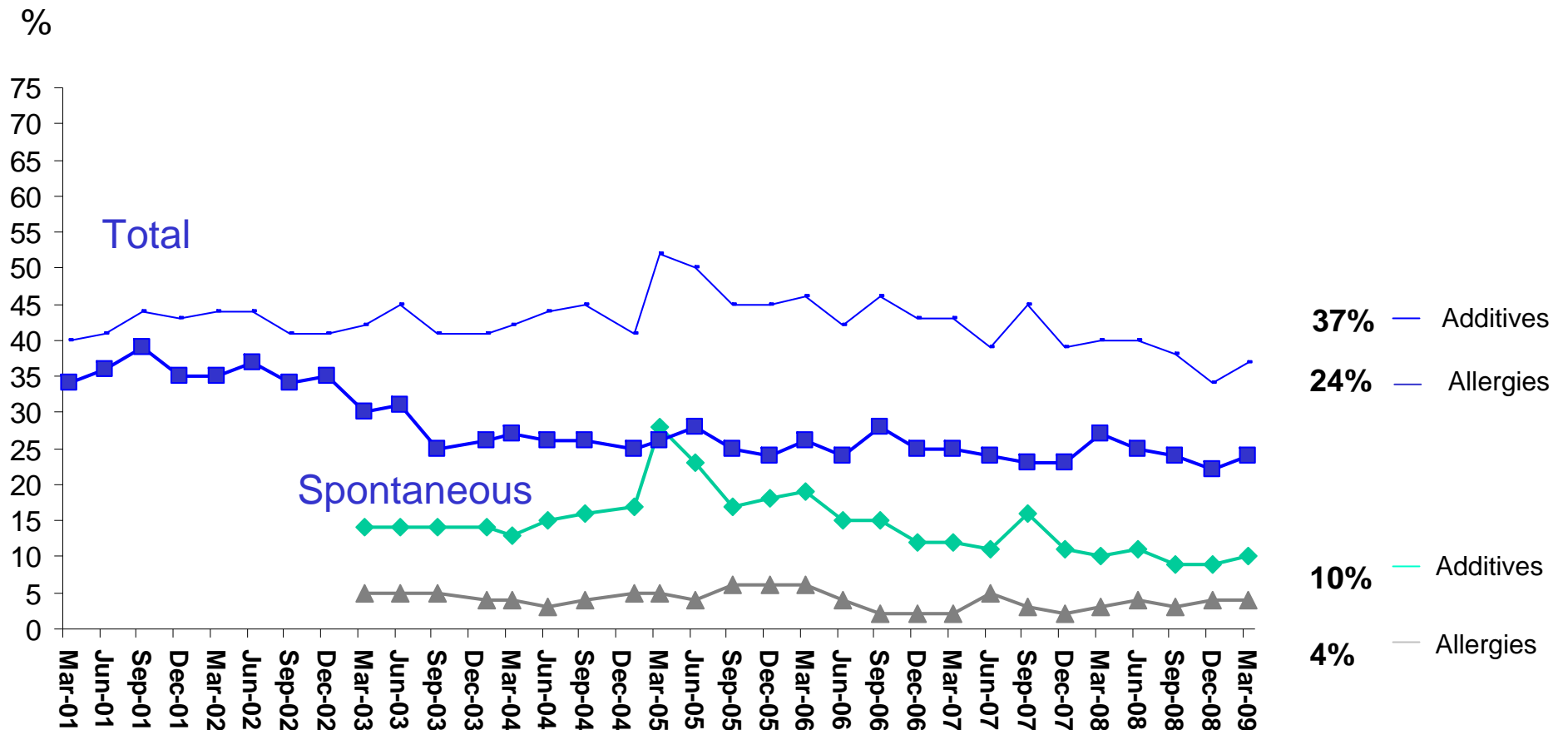
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concern about trans fats and folic acid fortification has not changed very much over time, however there has been a significant increase in the proportion of people concerned about saturated fat in this wave (from 36% to 41%).



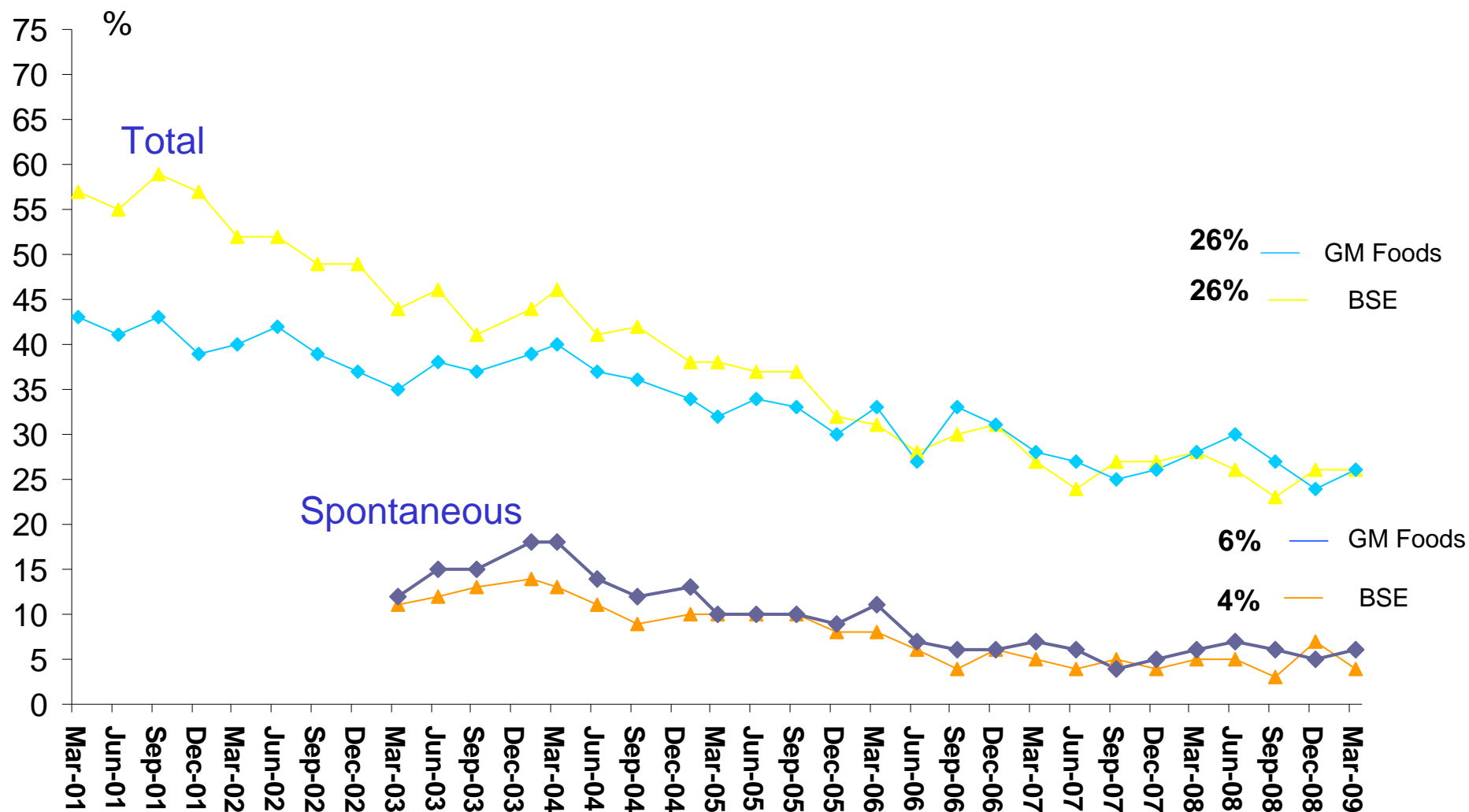
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

There were no significant changes surrounding attitudes towards additives in food and food allergies. The proportion of respondents concerned about allergies has remained fairly stable since March 2003.



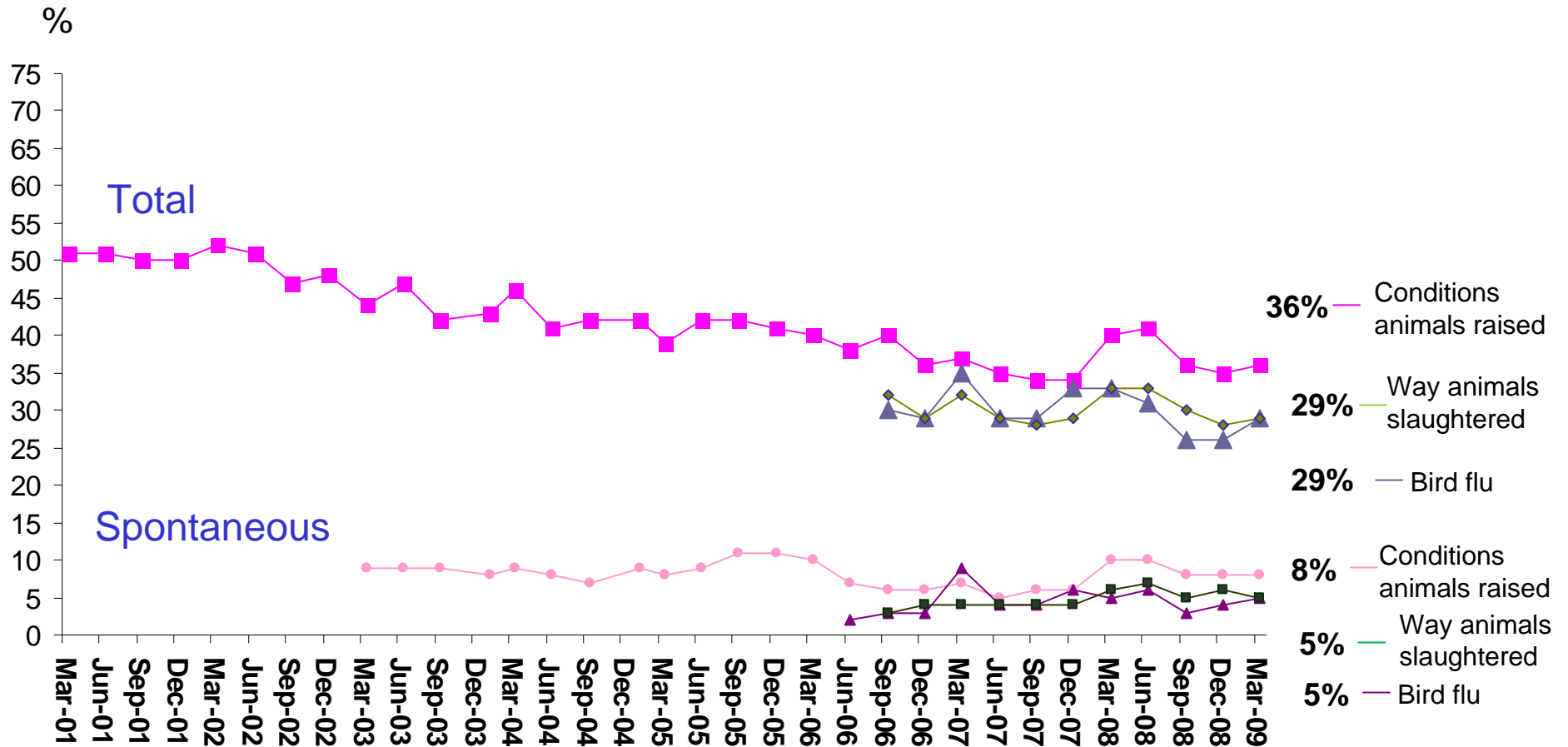
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concern about BSE has declined over time from 57% at the beginning of tracking in 2001 to more than a quarter (26%) in the present wave. Concern about GM foods has remained stable over the last few waves (currently 26%).



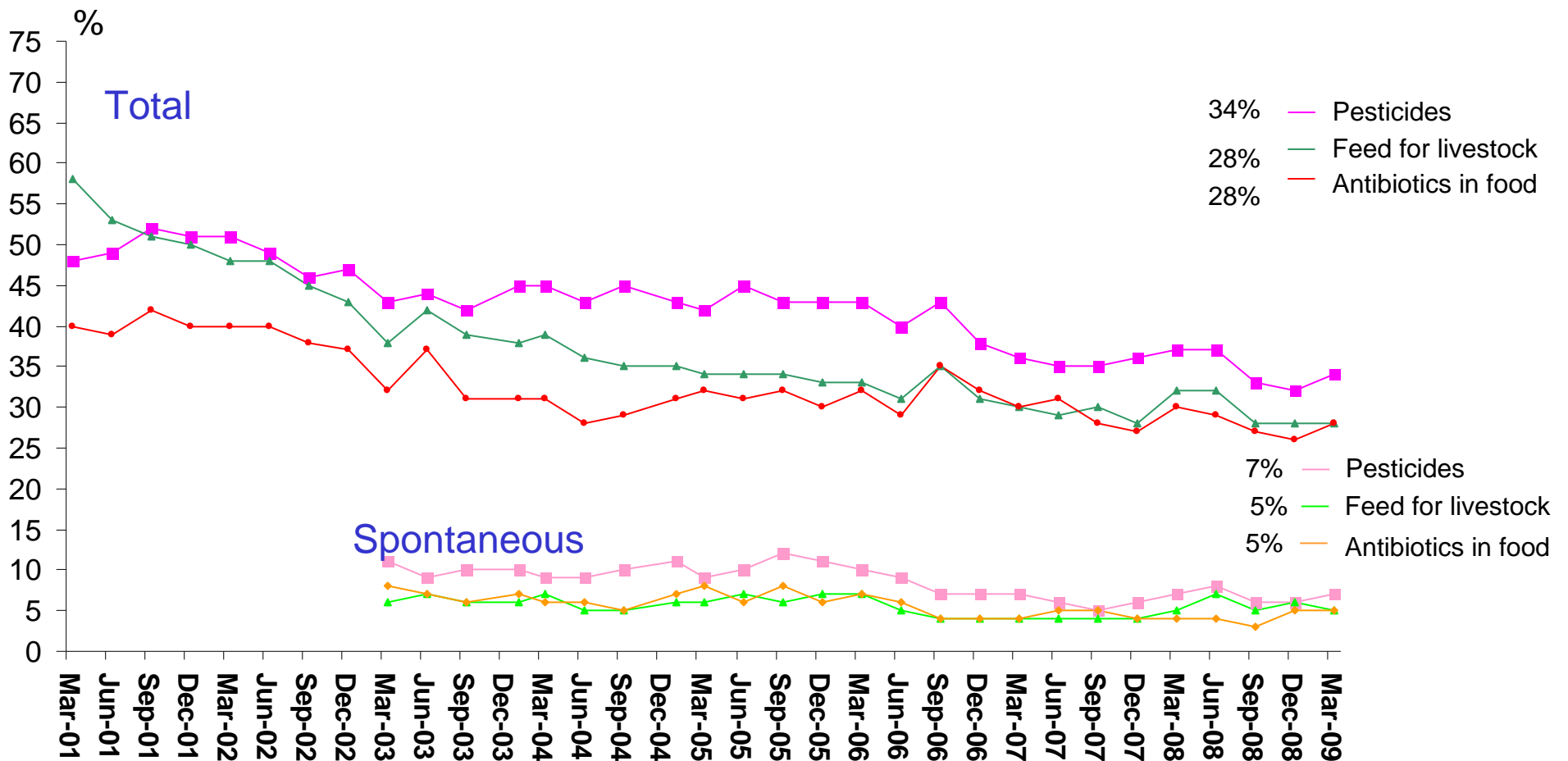
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concerns about the conditions in which animals are raised, the way animals are slaughtered and bird flu have not changed significantly since the last wave (currently 36%, 29%, and 29% respectively). Spontaneous concern around the way animals are slaughtered has remained fairly stable since tracking began (currently 5%).



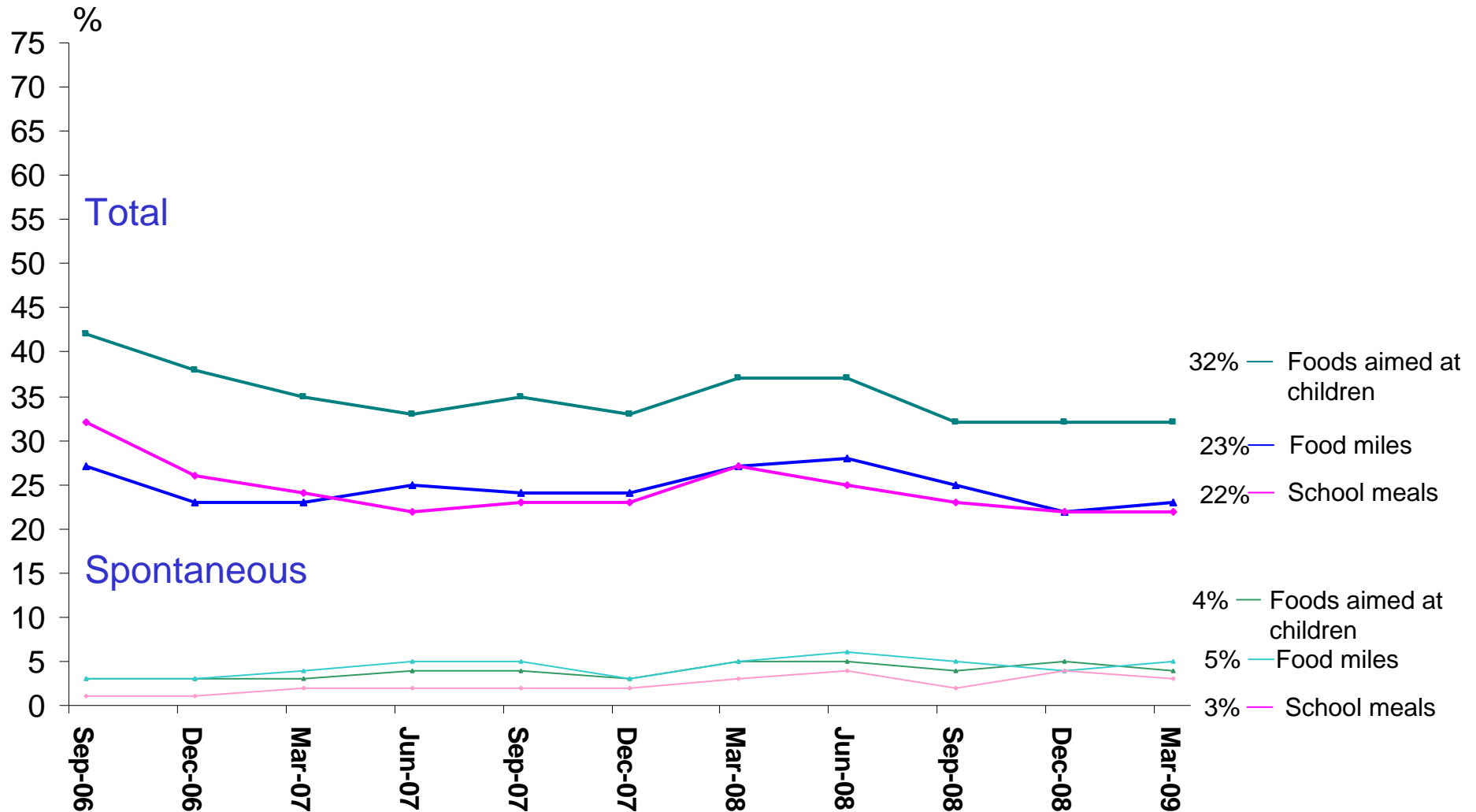
Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Concern about pesticides, feed for livestock and antibiotics/animal medicines in food have all decreased over time (currently 34%, 28% and 28% respectively), and there have been no significant changes since the last wave.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Total concern about foods aimed at children, food miles and school meals have fluctuated over time, however have remained consistent with the previous wave (currently 32%, 23%, 22%). Spontaneous concerns about food aimed at children, food miles and school meals have not fluctuated greatly over time.



Q3a. What food issues, if any, are you concerned about?; Q3b. Are you concerned about any of the following food issues? Base : All respondents

Appendix: Sub group differences

Total awareness of Food Standards Agency – March 2009

Differences in Key Subgroups

		%
TOTAL		86
Sex	Male	86
	Female	86
Age	16-25	76
	26-35	86
	36-49	90
	50-65	91
	66+	79
Social class	AB	93
	C1C2	88
	DE	77
Working status	Working full time	91
	Working part time	90
	Other	81
Marital status	Married	89
	Single	80
	Separated/widowed	82
Principal Shopper	Yes	86
	No	84




= Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other sub-group within category

Q1a. Which of the following, if any, have you heard of?; Q1b. Can I just check, have you heard of the Food Standards Agency?

Concern about food safety issues (very/quite concerned) – March 09. Differences in Key Subgroups


		%
TOTAL		64
Age	16-25	56
	26-35	61
	36-49	66
	50-65	69
	66+	63
Social class	AB	65
	C1C2	66
	DE	60
Working status	Working full time	63
	Working part time	71
	Other	63
Marital status	Married	68
	Single	56
	Separated/widowed	60

 = Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other subgroup within category

Q2. Generally speaking, which of these statements best describes your attitude to food safety issues?

Confidence in measures taken by all organisations (very/fairly confident) – March 09. Differences in Key Subgroups


		%
TOTAL		56
Age	16-25	64
	26-35	55
	36-49	55
	50-65	54
	66+	53
Marital Status	Married	56
	Single	59
	Separated/widowed	50
Principle Shopper	Yes	54
	No	61

 = Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other sub-group within category

Q4. How confident are you about the current measures taken by all organisations involved in protecting your health with regards to food safety?

Confidence in Food Standards Agency (very/fairly confident) – March 09. Differences in Key Subgroups

		%
TOTAL		62
Age	16-25	70
	26-35	64
	36-49	62
	50-65	56
	66+	59
Marital status	Married	62
	Single	65
	Separated/widowed	56
Presence of children	Yes	65
	No	60
Principle shopper	Yes	59
	No	68

 = Statistically significantly higher compared to at least one other sub-group within category

Q5. How confident are you about the role played by the Food Standards Agency in protecting your health with regard to food safety?

Additional notes about the data

- ❑ Fieldwork is conducted every three months, however the frequency has changed over the history of the tracker:
 - ❑ April 01 – December 01: research was conducted every three months
 - ❑ October 01 – September 02: research was conducted every month
 - ❑ December 02 – present: research has been conducted every three months

- ❑ From April 01 to June 06 research was conducted among a nationally representative sample of adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. From September 2006 the sample was extended to be representative of the United Kingdom.

- ❑ An additional question was asked during the September wave, December wave, and again this wave to measure trust in the FSA. This question has previously been asked in the FSA annual Consumer Attitudes Survey (CAS) which is being reviewed and so has not been run in 2009. Due to differences in question wording and sampling, results from the tracker are not directly comparable to the CAS.