

# Food Safety: Canadians' Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviours (2011-12)

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## Final Report

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## Introduction

The **Food Safety: Canadians' Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviours Study** was undertaken by Corporate Research Associates Inc., on behalf of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, to gather information about Canadians' opinion on the country's food safety system.

Specific objectives of the research include:

- *Probe Canadians' views on the government's food safety communications and provision of food safety information, including allergen information;*
- *Probe Canadians' understanding of food inspections and the role of a federal food inspector;*
- *Probe Canadians' understanding of the food safety system and the role of the CFIA;*
- *Probe Canadians' understanding of standards for imported foods and labelling;*
- *Probe Canadians' information needs and channel preferences; and*
- *Compare and contrast findings with previous research findings.*

To evaluate these objectives, telephone interviews were conducted with 1,008 Canadian adults aged 18 years and older from November 30, 2011 to January 4, 2012. Interviews completed with 1,008 Canadians aged 18 and older would be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The survey took approximately 16 minutes to administer, on average. A portion of the sample records utilized in this study were cell phone only, and the questionnaire included questions to ensure that any respondents completing the survey on a cell phone were in a safe place to talk.

In addition to the quantitative component, six focus groups were conducted, namely two groups in each of Toronto (ON), Sherbrooke (QC) and Halifax (NS). The groups included adult Canadian residents 18 years or older with responsibility for the household's grocery shopping and/or food preparation. Approximately 3-4 participants per group have children younger than 18 years of age living at home most of the time. Each group lasted approximately 2 hours. The focus groups were held from February 6 to 9, 2012.

Following the introduction is a description of the study methodology, the report's executive summary, a series of conclusions and recommendations derived from the study findings, and a detailed analysis of the telephone interviews and focus group discussions. Working documents are appended to the report, including one recruitment screener (Appendix A), one moderator's guide (Appendix B), messages tested (Appendix C), the telephone questionnaire (Appendix D), and data tables (Appendix E). Within this report, quantitative results include tables that are numbered according to the survey question represented, and are noted in the text and at the bottom right-hand corner of each graph for easy reference. Unless otherwise noted, all results in this report are expressed as a percentage. Where applicable, quantitative results are compared to studies conducted in Spring 2011, Fall 2010 and Spring 2010.



## Executive Summary

Corporate Research Associates Inc.  
Contract Number: 39903-120386/001/CY  
Contract Date: 2011-11-01

### Objectives

The CFIA develops and delivers programs and services designed to protect Canadians from preventable food safety hazards, ensure that food safety emergencies are effectively managed, and permit the public is aware of—and contributes to—food safety. In recent years the CFIA has implemented a number of initiatives designed to enhance the communication of food safety issues to Canadians. In an effort to measure the effectiveness of these initiatives, the CFIA tracks Canadians' views on food safety through public opinion research. The current research is required to continue to track Canadians' views on these issues and will specifically explore Canadians' views concerning food inspections as well as imported food.

Specific research objectives are to:

- Measure Canadians' confidence in Canada's food safety system including government, industry and consumer roles;
- Measure Canadians' awareness and perceptions of food recalls and as they relate to their confidence in Canada's food safety system;
- Probe Canadians' views on the government's food safety communications and provision of food safety information, including allergen information;
- Probe Canadians' understanding of food inspections and the role of a federal food inspector;
- Probe Canadians' understanding of standards for imported foods;
- Explore other food safety issues that may arise during the year; and
- Compare and contrast findings with previous research findings.

### Context and Methodology

The study consisted of 1,008 telephone interviews with adult Canadians, aged 18 years or older from November 30, 2011 to January 4, 2012. In addition, 6 focus groups were conducted in Toronto (ON), Sherbrooke (QC) and Halifax (NS) from February 6 to 9, 2012. The target audience for the focus groups were adult Canadian residents 18 years or older responsible for the household's grocery shopping and/or food preparation.

In this context, the CFIA commissioned Corporate Research Associates Inc. to undertake, at a total project cost of \$92,638.02 (includes HST), the **Food Safety: Canadians' Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviours (2011-12) study**.



## Findings

Findings from the **Food Safety: Canadians' Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviours** study indicate that there is a high level of confidence in the food safety within Canada, although there is limited knowledge of the food safety system and food inspection system in Canada, and how they operate. This is evident from both the quantitative research and qualitative research. Food labelling and how consumers can effectively assess food safety are other topics of interest.

Indeed, there are mixed opinions as to which organizations play the most critical role in food safety in Canada, with mentions including the government, industry, farmers, and consumers. Nonetheless, there is a perception that the system includes multiple players and entails many steps. Focus group participants identified the individual roles of each group, i.e., that government establishes legislation and enforces regulations, that farmers are responsible for producing and harvesting food in a safe manner, that processors have to ensure they follow regulations regarding sanitation, that transport and storage companies have to follow regulations in terms of sanitation, temperature, and length of time, and that retailers (including restaurants) undertake safe food handling.

Most Canadians have confidence in the various groups that are involved in food safety, including farmers, the government and the Canadian food production industry. Perceptions of imported food and foreign entities are somewhat more negative than their Canadian counterparts. There is only moderate agreement that all imported foods are inspected by Canadian officials, and there is low confidence in companies that import foods into Canada, in foreign farmers, foreign manufacturers, and foreign governments. It is believed that while the same rules and regulations apply to imported foods once they cross the Canadian borders in terms of safety, measures may be applied more strictly than for local food given the lack of control over foreign governments' food safety policies.

Given that there is limited knowledge of specific details of the food inspection system in Canada, and a small majority of Canadians indicate they would like to learn more about the food safety system in Canada, it may be necessary to increase communication on these topics. More specifically, providing an overview of the system, including steps involved, and listing the various participants and their respective roles and responsibilities would be warranted. At the same time, food recall information is top-of-mind, with consumers expressing interest in being personally notified of recalls. This finding suggests that the CFIA should increase awareness of its notification services.

Canadians do hold a high opinion of the food safety system, and are increasingly likely to feel more confident in the system when there is a food recall, because it shows the system is working. Confidence in food safety does, however, vary based on where the food is sold or where imported food originates.



Consumers do examine food labels at least some of the time, with a preference for listing of ingredients, nutritional facts, and expiry dates. While they have confidence in the information found, the increased level of complexity and extremely limited awareness of regulations in terms of organic labelling makes some consumers uneasy. In fact, finding a solution to this problem was most commonly identified as a means of increasing consumers' level of confidence in the food safety system in general.

Of the seven key messages tested during the focus groups, those that provided more detailed descriptions of the food safety system, its processes, and players' roles and responsibilities were preferred. Indeed, given consumers' awareness of the current system, they seek more detailed information. Furthermore, adopting a more positive tone in the messaging would promote prospects that consumer confidence remains high even when sharing information regarding the system's limitations.



## Sommaire

Corporate Research Associates Inc.

Numéro de contrat : 39903-120386/001/CY

Date du contrat : 2011-11-01

### Objectifs

L'ACIA élabore et met en œuvre des programmes et services conçus pour protéger les Canadiens des dangers évitables en matière de salubrité alimentaire, de s'assurer que les situations d'urgence relatives à la salubrité des aliments sont bien gérées et que la population est non seulement informée sur la salubrité des aliments, mais qu'elle y contribue. Au cours des dernières années, l'ACIA a instauré un certain nombre d'initiatives ayant pour but d'améliorer la communication des problèmes de salubrité alimentaire aux Canadiens et Canadiennes. En vue de quantifier l'efficacité de ces initiatives, l'ACIA emploie la recherche sur l'opinion publique pour faire le suivi des points de vue de la population canadienne sur la salubrité alimentaire. La recherche actuelle est nécessaire pour continuer à faire le suivi de l'opinion des Canadiens et Canadiennes sur ces questions et déterminer en particulier leur point de vue concernant les inspections des aliments et les aliments importés.

Parmi les objectifs précis de l'étude, nous retrouvons :

- Mesurer la confiance de la population canadienne envers le système de salubrité alimentaire au Canada, y compris pour ce qui est des rôles du gouvernement, de l'industrie et du consommateur;
- Mesurer les connaissances et les perceptions des Canadiens quant au rappel des aliments et en ce qui concerne leur confiance envers le système de salubrité alimentaire canadien;
- Mesurer l'opinion des Canadiens à l'égard des documents du gouvernement relatifs à la salubrité alimentaire et de la divulgation des renseignements sur la salubrité alimentaire, y compris les renseignements sur les allergies;
- Mesurer la compréhension des Canadiens à l'égard de l'inspection des aliments et du rôle d'un inspecteur des aliments sous responsabilité fédérale;
- Mesurer la compréhension des Canadiens à l'égard des normes sur les aliments importés;
- Discuter d'autres problèmes touchant la salubrité alimentaire qui peuvent survenir au cours de l'année; et
- Établir des comparaisons avec les résultats d'une recherche antérieure.



## Contexte et méthodologie

L'étude consistait à réaliser 1 008 entrevues téléphoniques auprès de Canadiens de 18 ans ou plus du 30 novembre 2011 au 4 janvier 2012. De plus, 6 groupes de discussion ont été organisés à Toronto (Ontario), Sherbrooke (Québec) et Halifax (Nouvelle-Écosse) du 6 au 9 février 2012. Le public cible pour former les groupes de discussion était des Canadiens âgés d'au moins 18 ans responsables des courses à l'épicerie de leur foyer ou de la préparation des aliments.

Dans ce contexte, l'ACIA a retenu les services de Corporate Research Associates Inc. pour réaliser, dans le cadre d'un contrat d'une valeur totale de 92,638.02 \$ (TVH incluse), l'étude **Salubrité des aliments : connaissances, attitudes et comportements des Canadiens et Canadiennes (2011-2012)**.

## Conclusions

Les résultats de l'étude **Salubrité des aliments : connaissances, attitudes et comportements des Canadiens et Canadiennes** indiquent que le niveau de confiance en la salubrité alimentaire au Canada est élevé, bien que les connaissances des systèmes de salubrité alimentaire et d'inspection des aliments et de leurs méthodes d'exploitation soient limitées. Cette constatation est le fruit de la recherche quantitative et qualitative. L'étiquetage alimentaire ainsi que la façon dont les consommateurs peuvent évaluer efficacement la salubrité des aliments sont d'autres sujets d'intérêt.

En effet, les opinions sont partagées à propos des organisations jouant les rôles les plus importants en matière de salubrité alimentaire au Canada, notamment le gouvernement, l'industrie, les agriculteurs et les consommateurs. Néanmoins, il existe une perception selon laquelle le système comprend de nombreux joueurs et beaucoup d'étapes. Les participants des groupes de discussion ont identifié les rôles individuels de chaque groupe. Par exemple, le gouvernement crée la législation et fait respecter la réglementation; les agriculteurs sont responsables de produire et de récolter des aliments de manière sécuritaire; les fabricants de produits alimentaires doivent s'assurer de respecter la réglementation quant à l'hygiène; les entreprises de transport et d'entreposage se doivent de suivre la réglementation en termes d'hygiène, de température, et de durée; et les détaillants (y compris les restaurants) doivent utiliser les méthodes de manipulation salubre des aliments.

La majorité des Canadiens ont confiance en les divers groupes œuvrant à la salubrité des aliments, notamment les agriculteurs, le gouvernement et l'industrie de la production alimentaire canadienne. Les perceptions quant aux aliments importés et aux entités étrangères sont quelque peu plus négatives par rapport à celles sur les produits canadiens. Un accord modéré a été exprimé face à l'affirmation voulant que tous les aliments importés soient inspectés par des agents du Canada et la confiance est faible en les entreprises qui importent des aliments au Canada, de même qu'en les agriculteurs, fabricants et gouvernements étrangers. La population croit que bien que les mêmes règles et règlements s'appliquent aux





aliments importés une fois qu'ils ont franchi la frontière canadienne en termes de salubrité, les mesures peuvent être appliquées plus strictement que pour les aliments locaux étant donné le manque de contrôle sur les politiques en matière de salubrité alimentaire des gouvernements étrangers.

Puisque les connaissances liées aux détails spécifiques du système d'inspection des aliments du Canada sont limitées et qu'une petite majorité des Canadiens a mentionné qu'elle souhaite en apprendre davantage sur le système de salubrité alimentaire du Canada, il peut s'avérer nécessaire d'accroître la communication sur ces sujets. Plus précisément, offrir un survol du système, y compris des différentes étapes, et une liste des divers participants ainsi que de leurs rôles et responsabilités respectifs serait justifié. Parallèlement, les renseignements reliés aux rappels d'aliments est au cœur des préoccupations de la population, les consommateurs ayant exprimé leur intérêt à être personnellement informés desdits rappels. Cette conclusion de l'étude illustre que l'ACIA doit faire connaître davantage ses services de notification.

Ayant une excellente opinion du système de la salubrité des aliments, les Canadiens ont de plus en plus tendance à avoir plus confiance dans le système lorsqu'un aliment fait l'objet d'un rappel, parce que cela démontre que le système fonctionne. Toutefois, la confiance dans la salubrité des aliments varie en fonction du point de vente des aliments ou du pays d'origine des aliments importés.

Les consommateurs examinent parfois les étiquettes des aliments, principalement la liste des ingrédients, l'information nutritionnelle et la date d'expiration. Bien qu'ils aient confiance en les renseignements fournis, le niveau de complexité accru et la connaissance très limitée des règlements en termes d'étiquetage des produits biologiques mettent les consommateurs mal à l'aise. En fait, trouver une solution à ce problème consistait en la suggestion la plus fréquente pour augmenter le niveau de confiance des consommateurs dans le système de salubrité alimentaire en général.

Des sept messages clés abordés dans le cadre des groupes de discussion, ceux offrant les descriptions les plus détaillées du système de salubrité alimentaire, de ses processus ainsi que des rôles et responsabilités des différents joueurs ont été préférés aux autres. En effet, étant donné les connaissances des consommateurs du système actuel, ils veulent plus de renseignements détaillés. En outre, l'adoption d'un ton plus positif dans le texte des messages favoriserait les perspectives que la confiance des consommateurs demeure élevée, et ce, même à l'occasion de partage de renseignements reliés aux limites du système.



## Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the detailed analysis of the study findings.

***Food safety ranks fairly low in terms of issues that are of concern to Canadians.***

When given a list of six issues, Canadians are most concerned with health care, followed by economic conditions, public education, and homelessness. Food safety in Canada is ranked fifth, followed by the quality of highways in Canada.

***Canada's Food Safety System is viewed as encompassing a variety of players, although specific steps to ensuring food safety are not well known.***

Findings from the qualitative component of the study suggest that overall, the food safety system is defined as the regulatory structure established to ensure food is safe to eat, with a few participants also associating an inspection component to it. Sherbrooke participants expressed more varied opinions, seeing a relationship with sanitation during production and processing, as well as food freshness and overall quality. In contrast, the food inspection system is primarily defined as the process involved in verifying that food safety legislation is followed and in some instances also includes an enforcement component. There is, however, minimal awareness of the process involved in performing food inspections.

Quantitative results indicate that government, industry and farmers are all believed to play a critical role in Canada's food safety system. In terms of confidence in the various groups involved in the food safety system, Canadians are most confident in Canadian farmers, followed by the federal government and the Canadian food production industry. There is limited confidence in foreign entities such as companies that import food, foreign farmers, foreign manufacturers and processors, and foreign governments.

Findings from the focus group discussions are consistent, with consumers identifying governments as having the most important role, namely legislation, enforcement, and consumer education. A variety of departments are named as playing a role in the process, including Health Canada, the CFIA, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Transport Canada, as well as a number of provincial government departments. Food producers play a role in ensuring food is produced and harvested in a safe manner. Processing facilities, transportation suppliers, storage facilities and retailers are all viewed as responsible to ensure foods is handled under sanitary conditions (cleanliness, temperature, storage time). The latter is also responsible for proper food rotation on store shelves. Finally, consumers are deemed responsible for safe food handling and storage, as well as holding some form of advocacy responsibility.

***There is high aided awareness of CFIA and most hold a favourable opinion of the organization.***

Most Canadians have heard of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and hold a favourable opinion of the organization. Indeed, no one offered a completely unfavourable opinion.



***Generally, Canadians understand that even with best efforts, food recalls happen.***

The majority of Canadians agree that even with best efforts to avoid them, food recalls happen. Additionally, there is a general opinion that the federal government has done a good job of keeping Canadians informed of relevant food safety issues, and that food recalls are addressed in a timely manner. Few Canadians feel they are at a higher risk of consuming contaminated foods today compared with two years ago. Most Canadians understand the labeling information currently found on food products. Finally, a small majority of Canadians wish they had more information about food safety and how to protect their family from foods that pose a risk.

***Canadians have confidence in the food safety system, unchanged from six months ago.***

The majority of Canadians are confident in Canada's food safety system. This level of confidence has remained relatively unchanged since the Spring 2010. There are a variety of reasons for this level of confidence, including that residents have not experienced an incident or been sick, or general feelings that Canada has high safety standards. Those who are not confident in the system believe there are too many recalls, are concerned with chemicals and additives in food, they do not know enough about food safety, or, in contrast, they work in the food industry or are familiar with food safety.

Qualitative findings are consistent with these quantitative findings. That said, consumers expressed varying levels of confidence based on retailers' or restaurants' cleanliness and food handling practices, or based on stories suggesting certain locations carry food of a lesser quality. Hesitations were also expressed with respect to fish and other foods originating from China, given the negative news stories heard over the past few years. Confidence in food close to its expiry date or in heavily discounted packaged foods is also lower. There is mixed confidence levels in packaged goods versus produce given perceived levels of handling and processing. Factors such as aging and becoming a parent have reportedly decreased consumers' level of confidence in food safety.

Very few suggestions were provided to improve consumer confidence in Canada's food safety system. More stringent food labelling legislation, better understanding of food labelling content, increased awareness of the food safety processes, direction on what consumers can do to self-assess the safety of food, and increased transparency when a crisis occurs were the most common recommendations.

***Canadians are likely to see or hear about food safety or food recalls, and are more likely to have confidence in the system because these recalls indicate the system is working.***

A small majority of Canadians have seen or heard something about food safety or food recalls in the last six months. Many heard about these food safety issues or food recalls through television, newspapers, radio, news media and the Internet. Notably, Canadians are increasingly likely to feel that these food recalls show the system is working, and hence they are more confident in the system. Indeed, this feeling of confidence has steadily increased over the past five iterations of this survey.

Findings from the focus group discussions are quite consistent with those from the quantitative survey. Additionally, when asked to specify the source of food safety information they recall, consumers mainly rely on news stories (in traditional media or online) as well as word-of-mouth (through Facebook,



Twitter, discussing with colleagues at work, or with friends or relatives) are the most common sources of food safety information. A few also rely on cooking or consumer affairs television shows and magazines to stay informed. Very few mentioned visiting the Government of Canada's website for food recall information.

There is widespread belief among focus group participants that the food safety system in Canada cannot ensure, 100 percent of the time, that all food consumed is safe. Consumers realize the complexity of the system and the resulting potential for human error.

***Consumers do consult food labels for specific information, and are generally confident with the information provided, with a few exceptions.***

Consumers generally look at the list of ingredients and the Nutritional Facts tables for some of the food they buy. Additionally, allergen information is most pertinent to those who personally suffer from allergies or care for such people, while most consumers report looking at expiry dates (for milk, bread, and meat), as well as an indication of where the food was produced (country or origin). The latter is often deemed difficult to find or is not clearly specified. Few people seek organic labelling information.

Consumers are generally confident in the information provided on labels although they question what processed food contains when they do not understand all of the ingredients listed. There is also a perception, fuelled by media stories, that manufacturers use alternate ingredient names to mislead consumers about harmful contents (e.g., nitrates vs. celery extract in processed meats). That said, consumers are not confident in the labeling of organic products given their extremely limited understanding of legislation in this regard.

***While there is confidence in the food safety system in Canada, there is an opportunity to further educate the public in this regard.***

Just one-half of Canadians feel that the food they purchase has been inspected to ensure it is safe to consume, or that all imported foods are inspected by Canadian officials before being sold in Canada. In addition, only a minority are generally familiar with the food safety system in Canada or the food inspection system. Given that there is only a moderate level of knowledge of the food safety system in Canada and how it works, there is an opportunity to further educate Canadians.

Qualitative findings indicate that consumers believe that the same food safety measures are applied to imported foods as are to local foods, although controls may be stricter. Indeed, it is believed that food safety measures vary in terms of how the food is produced, processed, stored, and transported, until it reaches the Canadian borders, thus requiring more stringent and frequent inspections when crossing our border.



***Food labelling is the food safety information that elicits the greatest interest. News media, email or Facebook are preferred sources of food safety information.***

Consumers generally look for food safety information only during a crisis with the exception of parents who continually seek information on foods safe for their children. Indeed, nutrition and general health information are more top-of-mind than food safety information. This is not surprising given consumers' level of confidence in Canada's food safety system. Awareness and subscription to food recall warning services is very low although the concept is highly appealing to consumers.

Food safety information that consumers would appreciate includes instructions on how to read food labels, including a glossary of terms. Most appealing food recall information includes product details and information regarding what happened and how it happened. Preferred ways to receive food safety information primarily include traditional media and email, while mixed opinions are expressed regarding the use of Facebook.

***Consumers seek specific messages that provide sufficient details and that they are stated in a positive and confident tone.***

Among the seven messages discussed in the qualitative phase of the research, those that provided detailed information regarding the food safety system in Canada and parties or processes involved were most preferred. This is not surprising given consumers' basic knowledge of the food safety system and their desire to learn more regarding the process. Additionally, the term 'system' is not fully understood and when used, should be more descriptive (i.e., using 'food safety system'). Similarly, when speaking of the Agency, the full name should be used in addition to the acronym, for added clarity.

Given that consumers do recognize that the system is not perfect, they were most attracted by statements with a reassuring tone, even if they presented aspects of the system's limitations. As such, using positive words and statements, as well as introducing what can be done rather than what is not possible were preferred approaches among consumers.



## Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the conclusions of this study and are offered for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's consideration.

### **1. CFIA should consider enhanced communication to Canadians about food safety.**

Many Canadians would like to learn more about the food safety system and food inspection system in Canada. In particular, it is recommended that the CFIA communicate about the food safety process, including who is responsible and who is involved. Also, it may be important to outline the steps involved with imported food and foreign entities, as there is less confidence in food that is imported into Canada. Finally, Canadians would like to learn more about how they can keep their household safe from foods that may pose a risk, therefore it is recommended that any communication address this need as well.

### **2. CFIA should consider providing consumers with specific food label information that would facilitate consistent and ready comprehension of food labels.**

Given some of the concerns that exist surrounding the accuracy and transparency in food labeling, there may be merit for the CFIA to provide consumers with an easily accessible glossary of terms they may most commonly find on food labels. This information could be made available on its website or via an external link to a reputation source.

### **3. CFIA should inform the public on organic labelling legislation and the implication it has on their food choices.**

Given consumers' expressed interest for labeling information on organic products and their lack of understanding of the current legislation, the CFIA should develop a communications strategy with the goal of informing and educating the public in this regard. Specifically, properly defining the terms being used by manufacturers to identify organic products within the context of the law may help align consumers' expectations of the food available as well as allowing them to make informed choices.

### **4. CFIA should consider promoting awareness of its website as a central location of food safety information, including food recall notices.**

Findings suggest there is a perceived lack of a centralized and trustworthy source of food safety and labeling information that provides easy to understand and unbiased opinions to help consumers make the right choices. As such, it is suggested that CFIA increase awareness of its website in all communications about food safety, positioning it as a source of additional information. Further, specifically promoting the various tools it offers to inform consumers – such as email notifications, RSS feed, and communication via Twitter would likely increase usage given consumers' expressed interest for such services and their current lack of knowledge of their existence.



**5. When designing key messages, CFIA should ensure it provides detailed and complete information, presented in a positive tone at all times.**

Given consumers' limited knowledge of the food safety system in Canada, there is merit in crafting key messages that provide a detailed account of how the system is structured and what it entails. At the same time, aligning consumers' expectations in terms of the system's limitations is warranted, although care must be taken in the tone used in these messages to minimize the negative impact on consumer confidence. At this time, consumers are highly confident in the system despite knowing that it cannot be effective 100 percent of the time. That said, they do expect that most if not all foods are currently being inspected, which is not aligned with reality. CFIA should therefore determine the validity of addressing those misperceptions, and if it decides to do so, that it be done in a positive and confident tone. It is most important to tell consumers what the system is achieving, rather than what is impossible to do.



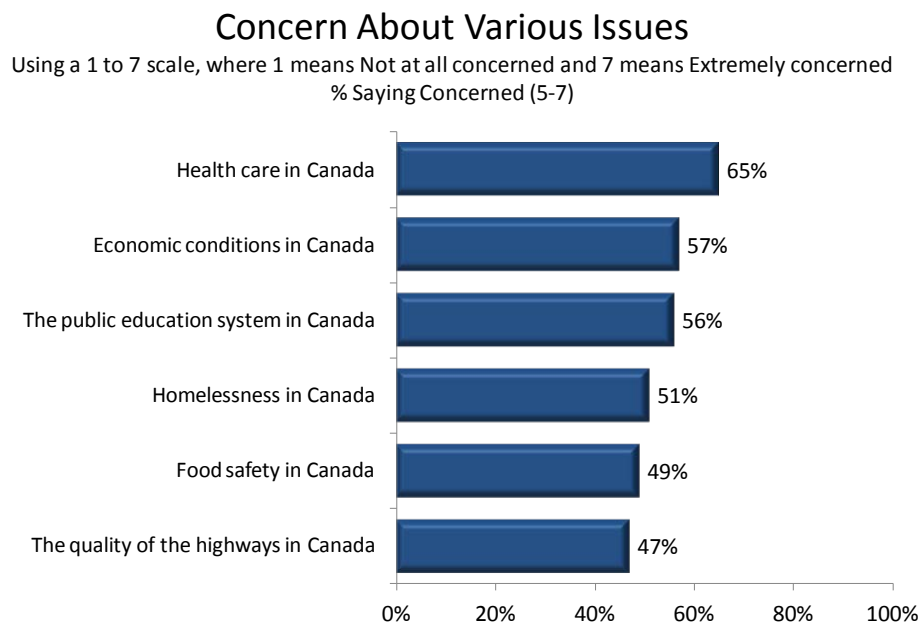
## Detailed Analysis

The following presents combined findings from the quantitative survey and the qualitative focus groups.

### Overview - Concern with Issues

***Food safety ranks fairly low in terms of issues that are of concern to Canadians.***

In the quantitative survey, respondents were given six issues and asked to rate their level of importance on a 7-point scale. Health care emerges as the top issue, followed by economic conditions in Canada, and public education. Homelessness, food safety, and the quality of highways are concerns for approximately one-half of Canadians. (Table 6a-f)



Q.6a-f: Now I would like to ask you how concerned you are generally about various issues. Please use a scale where 1 is not at all concerned, 7 is extremely concerned, and the midpoint 4 is moderately concerned? [To begin/Next], in general how concerned are you about? (n=1008)





## Awareness and Perceptions of the Food Safety System

**Canada's Food Safety System is viewed as encompassing a variety of players, although specific steps to ensuring food safety are not well known.**

### Definition of Food Safety System

Focus group participants were asked to define the 'food safety system'. Generally, the concept refers to the **regulatory structure** that has been established to ensure that food available for consumption in Canada is safe to eat. It implies the establishment of standards to follow, laws, guidelines, measures, best practices, checks and balances, procedures and traceability.

*"It is the rules and regulations in place to ensure the food is safe for public consumption."  
(18-34)*

*"Steps taken by a variety of organizations or individuals to ensure that food being brought or sold meets certain standards with regards to safety and sanitation." (18-34)*

*"Ce sont les mesures prises pour que ce que nous consommons soit bon à consommer."  
(Measures taken to ensure that food we eat is good to eat.) (35+)*

A few consumers were however under the impression that the Food Safety System referred to the process of ensuring food sanitation, specifically the steps involved in **food inspection and monitoring**.

*"Several departments who go around visiting establishments ensuring they are conforming with ensuring safety when it comes to manufacturing and processing foods for Canadians to eat." (35+)*

*"J'espère que les aliments sont inspectés pour répondre aux normes d'hygiène du gouvernement." (I hope food is inspected to meet the government's sanitation norms.) (18-34)*

Two consumers in the older age group were under the impression that the term 'system' described parties involved in the process, specifically the group of organizations involved in the process of ensuring food is handled in a safe manner.

*"Any person, organization, regulator who has a hand or makes decisions or inspections that keeps food safe." (35+)*

Another consumer believed the expression referred to products' shelf life.

*"How long the product has been in the stores, or on shelves. Check for dates when food expires." (35+)*

Opinions were generally more diverse in the French groups, with fewer similarities between consumers' understanding of the concept of food safety system (Système de salubrité des aliments). To some, it



referred to sanitation as an expected outcome, while others viewed it as ensuring that foods do not contain unhealthy products or additives.

*“C’est de s’assurer que les aliments qu’on mange ne sont pas contaminés par des éléments extérieurs.” (To ensure food we eat isn’t contaminated by external elements.) (18-34)*

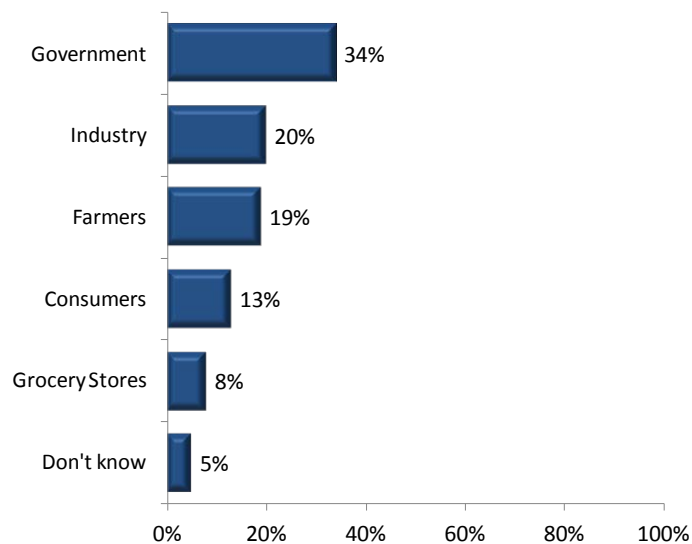
A number of participants also view the concept as related to sanitation and ensuring food production and transformation is done under sanitary conditions. Yet others see a relationship with the produce’s freshness and overall quality.

*“Fraîcheur : lapse de temps connu et testé pour l’ingestion de nourriture sans problème d’intoxication.” (Freshness: known and tested time during which foods can be consumed without a risk of poisoning.) (35+)*

### Involvement in the Food Safety System

Quantitative findings suggest that Canadians feel that the government plays the most critical role in food safety in Canada, followed by industry and farmers. (Table 21)

#### Plays Most Critical Role in Food Safety in Canada



Q.21: As you may know, many groups in Canada play a role in food safety. In your opinion, which one of the following plays the MOST critical role in food safety in Canada? (n=1008)

Similarly, when asked who is involved in Canada’s Food Safety System, focus group participants readily identified a number of players. Consistently, governments, farmers/fishers, retailers (grocers and restaurants), transportation and storage suppliers, as well as consumers are mentioned as playing an active role. There is widespread belief that the responsibilities are shared between a number of players, even among participant who are not able to identify many of the organizations involved.



*“Everyone [is involved] starting from the farmer, the transporter, the store where the food is being sold. This should be under the umbrella of the government. As well, the consumer might be part of the system.” (18-34)*

*“Le Gouvernement du Canada doit faire partie l’Agence des inspections des aliments. Les producteurs et les importateurs doivent s’assurer que les aliments respectent les normes établies par le gouvernement et l’Agence, puis les distributeurs et enfin les commerces où seront vendus les aliments.” (The Government of Canada and its Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Producers and importers must ensure that food follows the norms established by the government and the Agency, then distributors and finally, retailers where foods will be sold.) (35+)*

Focus group participants were asked to list the steps or measures involved in the food safety system in Canada and for each one identified, the party that was responsible for completing the task. Overall, there is limited knowledge of those steps, with most consumers identifying just 3 or 4 general measures taken. The following provides an overview of roles and responsibilities associated with each of the individual organizations considered part of the food safety system.

**Government:** Various levels of governments were mentioned in every group as playing a regulatory role. Specifically, it is believed that governments establish legislation that defines industry and consumer guidelines, rules and regulations. Its role also encompasses law enforcement, primarily via food inspection, as well as monitoring of food labeling and food production. Governments also have an education role, issuing warnings regarding potential issues, as well as informing the public regarding best practices.

*“The federal government is responsible for regulations regarding labeling, importing, storage, facilities for preparation, transport and so on.” (35+)*

While some consumers believed that the government as a whole is responsible for establishing the regulations, agencies or food inspectors employed by the government are viewed as specifically responsible for enforcement. A few consumers also mentioned that governments are responsible to order spoiled foods off store shelves when a recall is confirmed. Another less common role of government was identified as sponsoring research to improve food safety.

When asked to specify which departments or agencies were involved in the food safety system, a variety of responses were provided. Most importantly, consumers generally believe that this function is spread across a number of government areas rather than being centralized under one roof. Many identified Health Canada as the agency responsible to oversee this process. Other less common mentions included ‘agriculture departments’ both federally and provincially, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Transport Canada, MAPAQ (Ministère Agriculture, Pêcheries et Alimentation du Québec), and Canada Border Services Agency. Other departments each mentioned by one or two consumers across locations include, le ‘ministère de l’alimentation’ (food department), ‘inspection du Canada’ (Canada inspection), Natural Resources Canada, Statistics Canada, ‘hygiène department’, ‘ministère de la famille’ (family department), ‘ministère de la santé publique’ (public health department), and the education department. A few also mentioned the FDA, unsure if this was an American or Canadian agency.



**CFIA:** Interestingly, a number of consumers named the CFIA as a key player in the process, either using this acronym, the complete name (i.e., Canadian Food Inspection Agency) or by referring to it as 'food inspection agency' or 'inspection du Canada'. Its role is primarily viewed as enforcing regulations by conducting inspections of foods, facilities, processes, and equipment.

**Health Canada:** Many consumers, most notably among the older age group, named Health Canada as the federal department responsible for regulations on food safety.

**Inspectors:** For the most part, inspectors are viewed as part of the government or closely associated with it and the body responsible for ensuring that all parties, with the exception of consumers, do abide by the government's regulations. They are viewed as conducting testing either onsite at production and processing facilities, or in laboratories.

**Farmers/Fishers:** Most consumers believe that farmers and fishers play a role in ensuring that food is produced or harvested in a safe manner. Their role is primarily viewed as following the rules and regulations established by governments, ensuring the quality of animal feed, providing a healthy living environment for animals and soil for crops, and monitoring the use of chemicals and medication as part of their growth operation.

*"Les producteurs doivent s'assurer que les aliments respectent les normes établies par le gouvernement et ils doivent s'assurer de la fraîcheur des aliments." (Producers must ensure that food respects government-established norms and they must ensure that food is fresh.) (35+)*

**Processing Facility:** Processing facilities are mostly viewed as responsible to ensure they follow government regulations in terms of sanitation of the workplace, the equipment, as well as workers' health and physical conditions.

**Transportation/Storage Suppliers:** Transportation and storage facilities are considered responsible for ensuring that food is being moved or stored under safe conditions (temperature, length of time) in a clean environment.

**Retailers:** Sanitation, safe food handling, and rotation are viewed as primary responsibilities of grocers and restaurants as part of the food safety system. Indeed, consumers expect that retailers will ensure that food is properly stored (right conditions) and that their employees are dressed appropriately and use the right tools when handling foods. They also expect retailers to inspect foods on the shelves or in storage, disposing of spoiled foods or expired foods.

*"Ils doivent vérifier que c'est comestible lorsque la nourriture est mise en vente et aussi jeter lorsque c'est non vendu et plus bon à la consommation." (They must verify that food is still comestible when on sale and discard food that isn't sold and no longer edible.) (18-34)*

**Consumers:** Paying attention to how they handle, prepare, and store foods is considered the primary responsibility of consumers in this whole process. Additionally, just a few participants noted consumers'

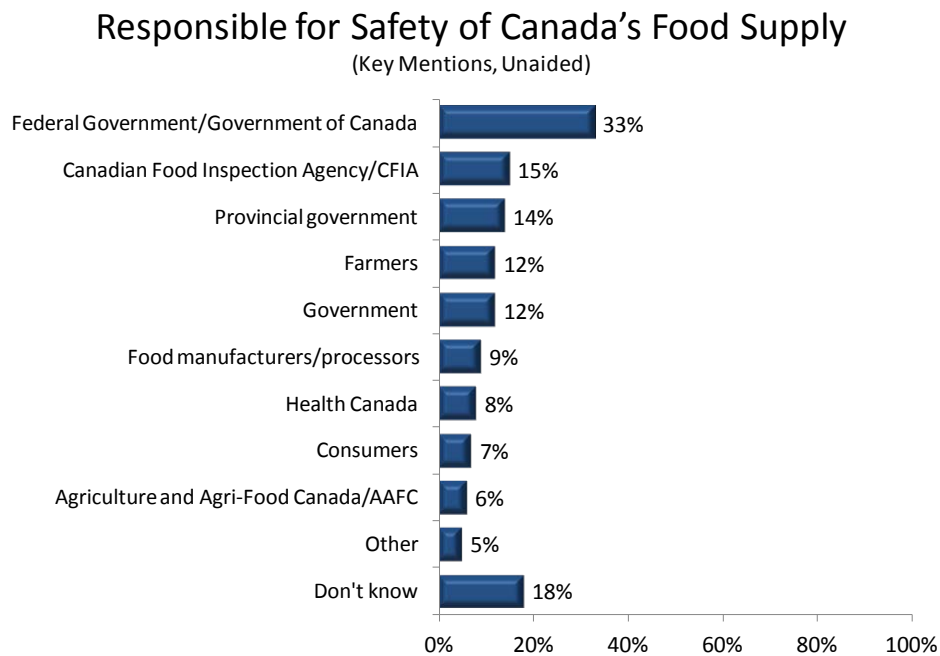


influence on government actions, suggesting an advocacy role. Even fewer see a role for consumer to report unsafe food situations.

## Awareness and Opinion of CFIA

***There is high aided awareness of CFIA and most hold a favourable opinion of the organization.***

Just fifteen percent of Canadians can name, unaided, that CFIA is responsible for the safety of Canada's food supply. One-third mention the federal government in general, while a small number believe the provincial government is responsible. (Table 25)

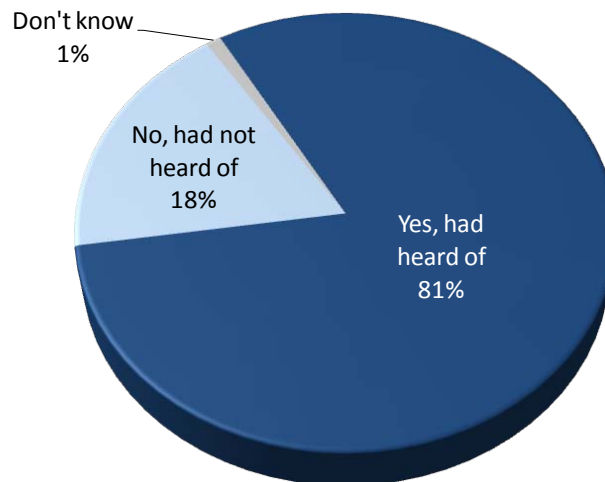


Q.25: Who in Canada is responsible for the safety of Canada's food supply? (n=1008)



Respondents who did not mention CFIA in the previous question were then asked if they had heard of the CFIA. Overall, when results from the two questions are combined, eight in ten Canadians indicate they have heard of the organization. (Combined 25 and 26)

### Heard of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency? (Prior to Today)

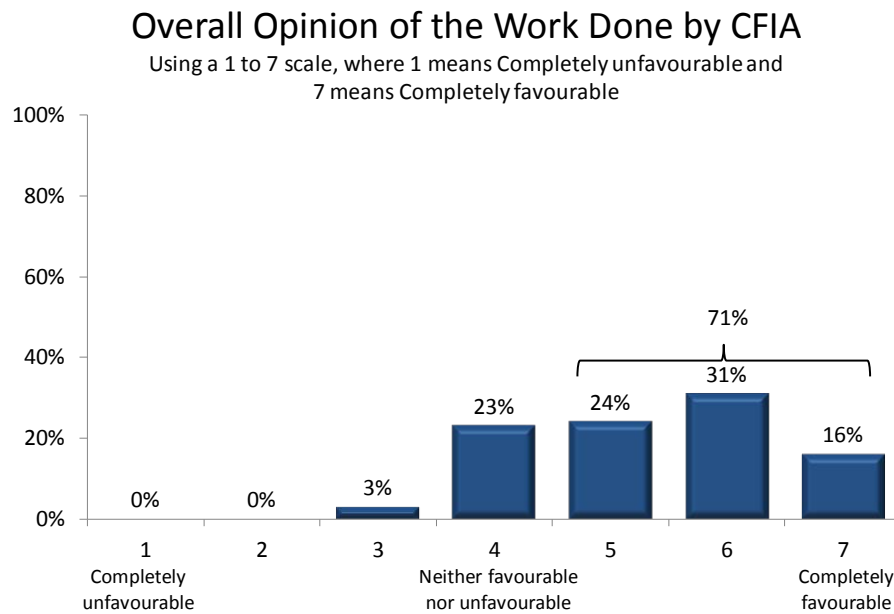


Q.26: [TOTAL AWARENESS: Combined CIFA from Q.25 and Yes from Q.26]. Prior to today, had you ever heard of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency? (n=1008)

Regionally, those in Quebec are less likely than those elsewhere to have heard of CFIA. Across the population, men, older residents, those with at least some college education, those with a household income of \$80,000 or more, those with children in the household and those with a serious health condition are more likely to be aware of the organization.



Most Canadians who are aware of the CFIA have a favourable opinion of the work done by the organization. Indeed, no one holds a completely unfavourable opinion (a rating of '1' or '2' on a 7-point scale). (Table 27)



Q.27: [POSE Q.27 ONLY IF CFIA/CODE 01 IN Q.25, OR IF "YES" IN Q.26] What is your overall opinion of the work done by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency on a scale where 1 is completely unfavourable, 7 is completely favourable, and the midpoint 4 is neither favourable nor unfavourable? (n=832)

Regionally, those in the Prairies are slightly less likely to have a favourable opinion of CFIA compared with those elsewhere. Across the population, younger Canadians, those with a university degree, those with confidence in the food safety system and residents in households with more than one person are more likely to have a favourable opinion.



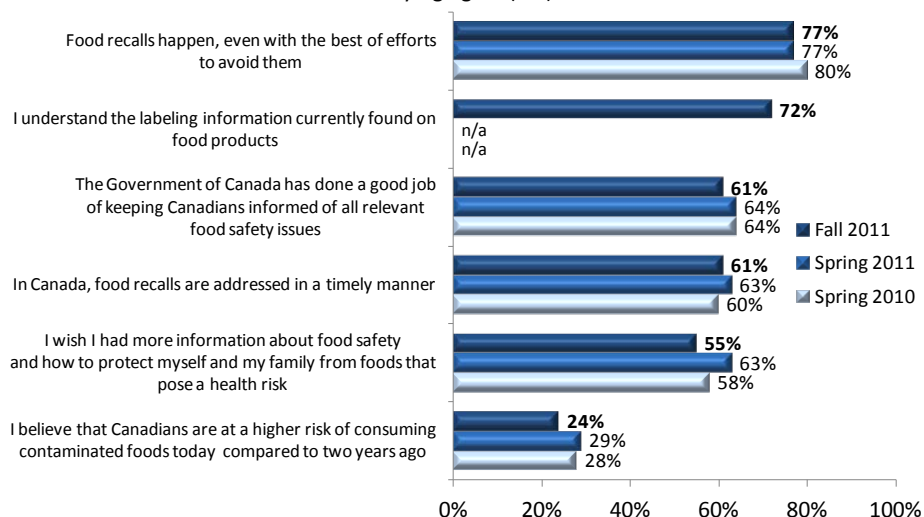
## Opinion of Canada's Food Safety System

**Generally, Canadians understand that even with best efforts, food recalls happen.**

The majority of Canadians agree that food recalls happen, even with the best efforts to avoid them. Specifically, over three-quarters of Canadians agree (a rating of '5', '6', or '7', on a 7-point scale where '1' is totally disagree and '7' is totally agree) that food recalls happen, which is consistent with findings from Spring 2011 and Spring 2010 results. Approximately seven in ten Canadians believe they understand the labeling information currently found on food products, while six in ten believe the Government of Canada has done a good job keeping Canadians informed of all relevant food safety issues, also consistent with previous findings. Six in ten Canadians believe food recalls are addressed in a timely manner, while over one-half wish they had more information about food safety and how to protect themselves and their family from foods that pose a health risk. This represents a decrease compared with Spring 2011 findings. Finally, just one-quarter believe Canadians are at a higher risk of consuming contaminated foods today compared with two years ago. (Table 16)

### Agreement with Statements Regarding Food Recalls

Using a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 means Totally disagree and 7 means Totally agree  
% Saying Agree (5-7)



Q.16a-f: Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding food recalls and other aspects of Canada's food safety system. Please respond on a 7 point scale where 1 means you totally disagree, 7 means you totally agree, and 4 means you neither agree nor disagree. (n=1008)

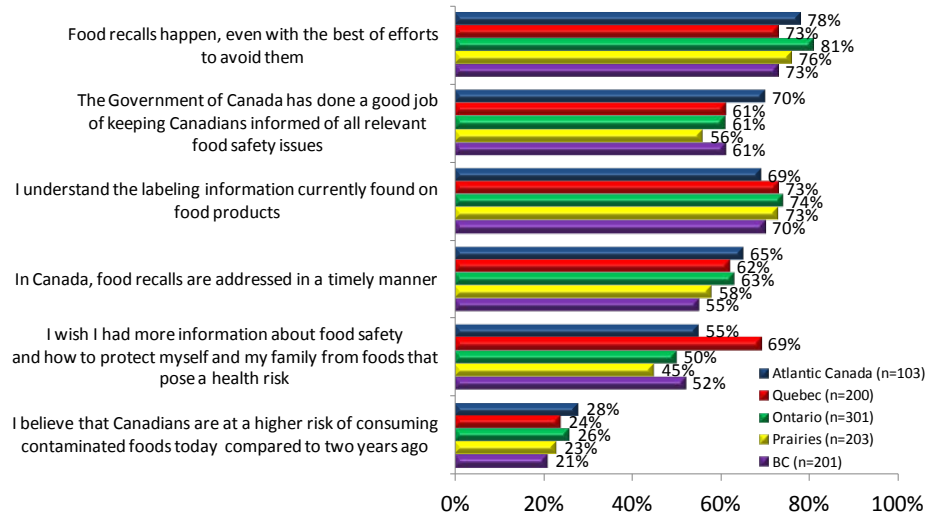




Regionally, there are small differences. Those in Atlantic Canada are more likely than others to feel that the Government of Canada is doing a good job keeping Canadians informed of food safety issues. Residents in Quebec are significantly more likely to want more information about foods safety. (Tables 16a-f – Region)

### Agreement with Statements Regarding Food Recalls

Using a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 means Totally disagree and 7 means Totally agree  
 % Saying Agree (5-7)



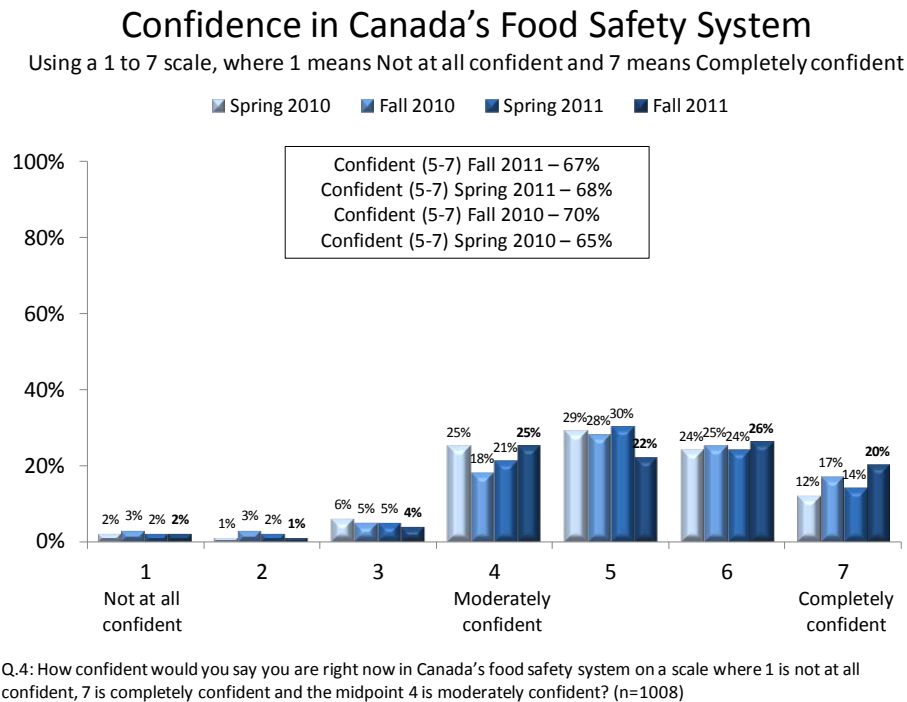
Q.16a-f: Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding food recalls and other aspects of Canada's food safety system. Please respond on a 7 point scale where 1 means you totally disagree, 7 means you totally agree, and 4 means you neither agree nor disagree.



## Confidence in Food Safety System

**Canadians have confidence in the food safety system, unchanged from six months ago.**

Quantitative findings show that two-thirds of Canadians are confident (that is, a rating of '5', '6', or '7', on a 7-point scale where '1' is not at all confident, and '7' is completely confident) in Canada's food safety system. This level of confidence is consistent with results from previous studies. (Table 4)

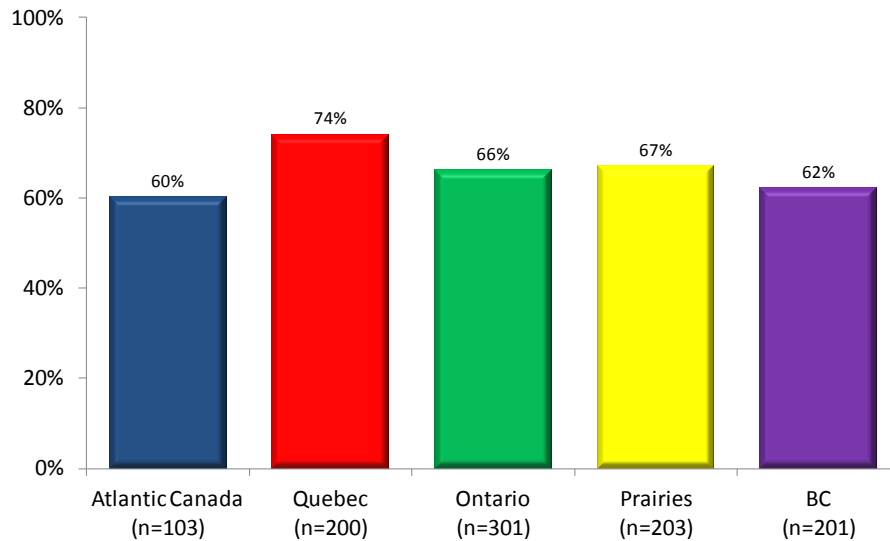


Regionally, confidence is highest in Quebec, and lowest in Atlantic Canada. (Table 4 – Region)



### Confidence in Canada's Food Safety System

Using a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 means Not at all confident and 7 means Completely confident



Q.4: How confident would you say you are right now in Canada's food safety system on a scale where 1 is not at all confident, 7 is completely confident and the midpoint 4 is moderately confident?

Across the population, those more likely to be confident include men, younger residents, those with higher levels of education, employed Canadians, those with a household income of \$80,000 or more, households with three or more people, and households with children.

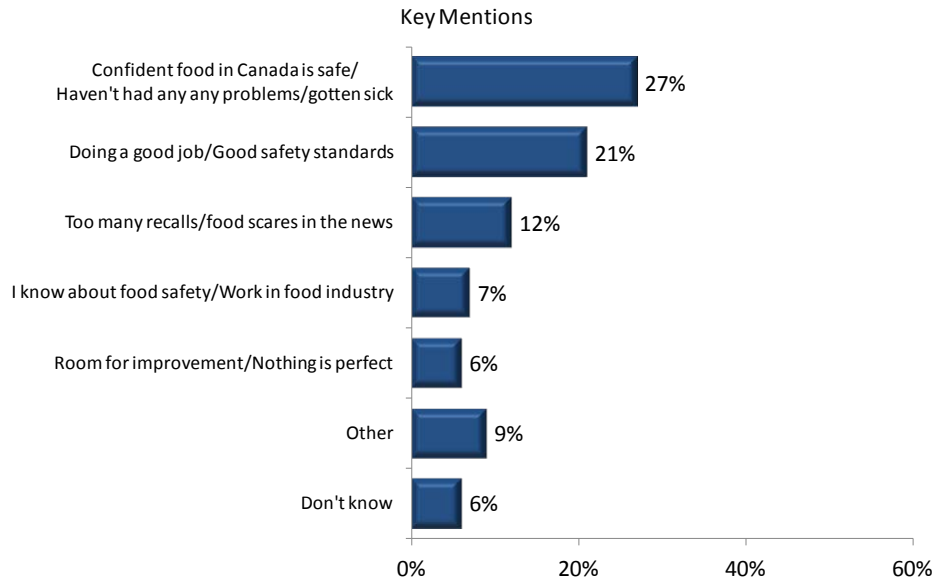
How confident are you right now in Canada's food safety system?	Gender		Age		
	Male	Female	18-34	34-54	55+
Confident (rating of 5-7)	71%	64%	70%	68%	64%

Those who are confident in Canada's food safety system are confident for a number of reasons. Under three in ten believe food in Canada is safe, or they have not had problems or been sick. Two in ten believe there are good safety standards. (Table 5, Ratings of 5-7)



### Reasons Confident in Canada's Food Safety System

(Unaided, Based on a Response of 5-7 Confident in Q.4)

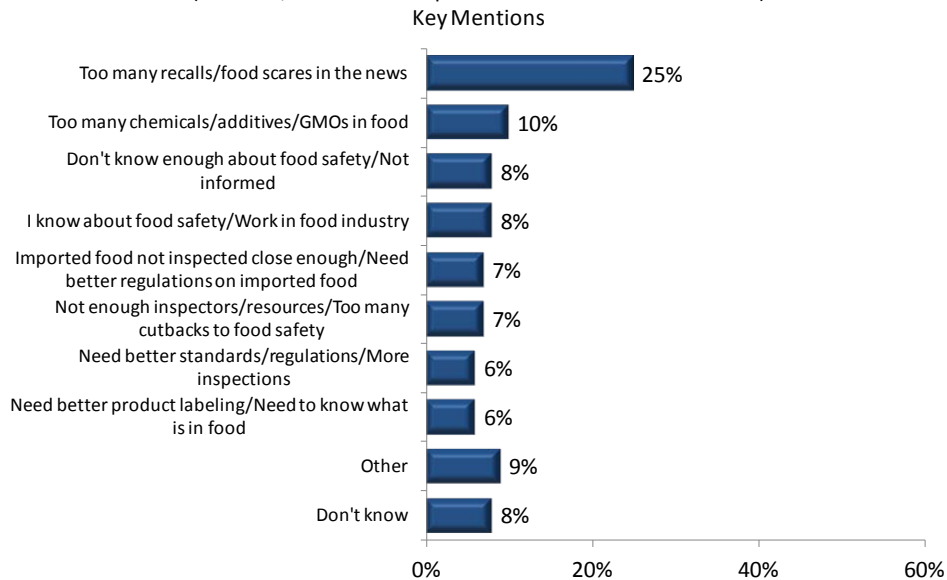


Q.5: Why do you say that? Scores 5-7 Confident (n=672)

Those who are not confident in Canada's food safety system report there are too many recalls or food scares in the news, too many chemicals added, they do not know enough about food safety, or they do know about food safety or work in the food industry. (Table 5 – Ratings of 1-4)

### Reasons Not Confident in Canada's Food Safety System

(Unaided, Based on a Response of 1-4 Not Confident in Q.4)



Q.5: Why do you say that? Scores 1-4 Not Confident (n=322)

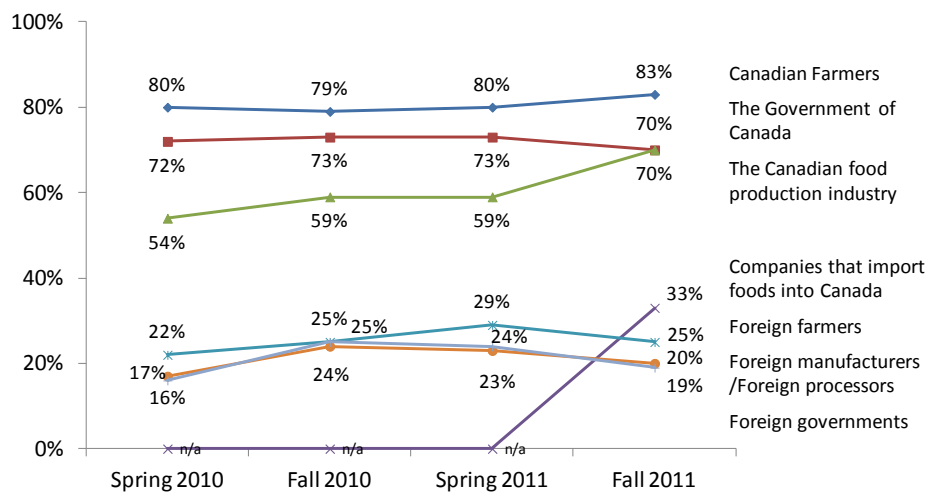


### Confidence in Various Players in the Food Safety System

Quantitative findings show that Canadians have the most confidence in Canadian farmers in terms of containing the spread of food products that may be harmful to Canadians. This is followed by the Government of Canada, the Canadian food production industry, and companies that import foods into Canada. Please note, the increase in the number of Canadians who have confidence in the Canadian food production industry compared with last year (an 11-point increase), may be due to a change in question wording. In previous studies, the question was worded 'food production industry', while this year, 'Canadian' was added. Finally, foreign entities such as foreign farmers, foreign manufacturers and processors, and foreign governments receive less confidence from Canadians. (Table 24)

### Confidence in Organizations

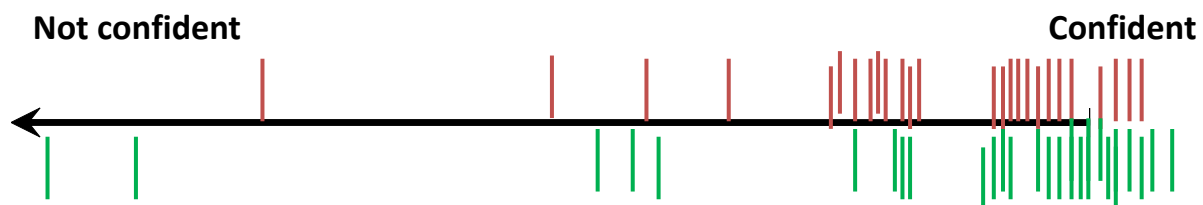
% Saying Confident (5-7)



Q.24a-g: How confident are you in each of the following organizations or institutions to contain the spread of food products that may be harmful to Canadians. Please rate your response on a 7-point scale where 1 means not at all confident, 7 means completely confident, and 4 means moderately confident. (n=1008)  
 \*Note question wording change. Previous studies stated "Food Production Industry", rather than "Canadian Food Production Industry".

### Level of Confidence

Confidence in the food safety system in Canada was also discussed in the focus groups. Prior to the group discussion, participants were asked to indicate how they personally felt, by drawing a line on the confidence continuum illustrated below. In general, opinions across age groups are favourable, with most expressing strong levels of confidence. Red lines represent responses from consumers 18 to 34 years old while green lines illustrate opinions of those 35 years of age or older.



As reported in the quantitative findings, most focus group participants believe in the quality of the system in place, evidenced by the fact that they have never been personally sick or know very few people who have had health issues resulting from spoiled foods.

*"I have never ever been sick with something that I ate." (35+)*

The level of confidence varies based on the location where food is sold, with a number of consumers identifying retailers where they had found spoiled foods, witnessed suspect sanitary conditions, or had heard news stories questioning the safety of the foods sold at these stores or restaurants. For example, a number of consumers mentioned that food sold at dollar stores were of lower quality than food sold in grocery stores. Similarly, some consumers do not trust imported foods based on the country of origin, with China being identified most often. Their hesitation is primarily based on negative news stories regarding the quality of the foods produced in this country. At times, a few consumers question the quality or safety of food close to the stated expiry date or those packaged goods that are heavily discounted.

In a few instances, consumers tend to trust certain brand names more so than others, although their perceptions are primarily related to food quality rather than safety. In other instances, consumers have lower levels of trust in their ability to assess the safety of perishable foods, thus expressing greater confidence in packaged foods. In contrast, others question the effect of longer shelf life on packaged goods, especially products without an expiry date, wondering how long these products remain safe and what harmful chemicals they might contain to prolong their shelf life.

For the most part, consumers indicated that their level of confidence has not changed within the past five years, primarily due to no obvious changes in the food safety system or in their own health condition and that of those around them. Life conditions, such as becoming a parent or simply aging, were most often mentioned as reasons for changing confidence among the few who felt less confident overall.

### **Recommendations to Improve Level of Confidence**

Very few suggestions were provided during the focus group discussions as to what would increase consumers' level of confidence in the safety of the food they consume in Canada. That said, more stringent food labelling legislation, especially in terms of addressing additives in processed foods, as well as clarifying food labelling contents were most often suggested to improve consumers' opinions regarding food safety.

Additionally, increased education on food safety processes and transparency when a crisis arises were also mentioned by a few participants as ways to positively impact their level of confidence in the food safety system. One suggestion provided in this regard entailed labeling grocery stores to indicate the last time they were inspected. Another consumer mentioned an interest to know the specific norms that apply as well as the inspection frequency. Finally, a few noted an interest for information on what consumers should look for to assess the safety of foods, empowering them to make more informed decisions. Consumers are unsure of what the role of government should be in increasing their level of



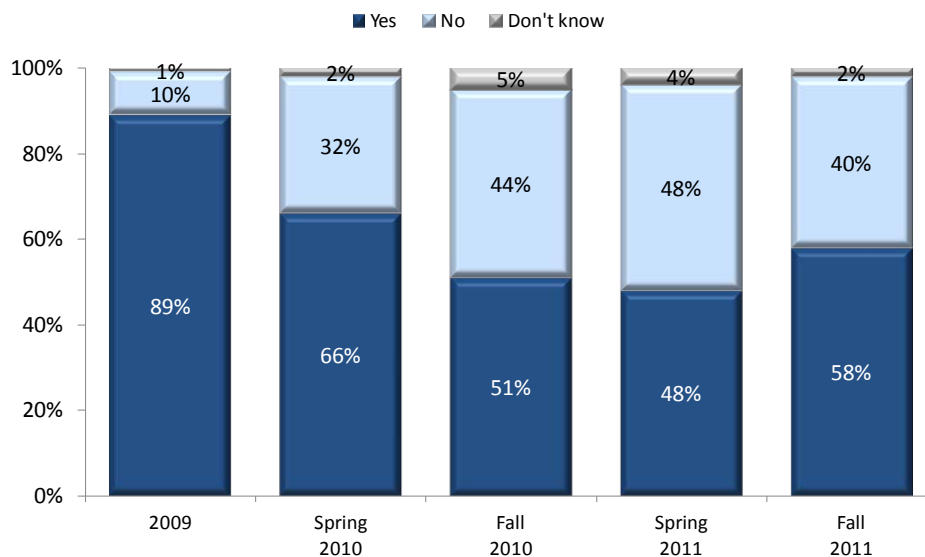
confidence in the food safety system. A few consumers suggested increased legislation or funding may be the role of government.

## Food Safety Recall Awareness

***Canadians are likely to see or hear about food safety or food recalls, and are more likely to have confidence in the system because these recalls indicate the system is working.***

Just under six in ten Canadians recall seeing or hearing something about food safety or the recall of food products in Canada. This number has fluctuated over the past few years, experiencing a high of 89 percent in 2009 at the height of the Maple Leaf food recall. (Table 7)

### Awareness of Food Safety or Recall of Food Products in Canada

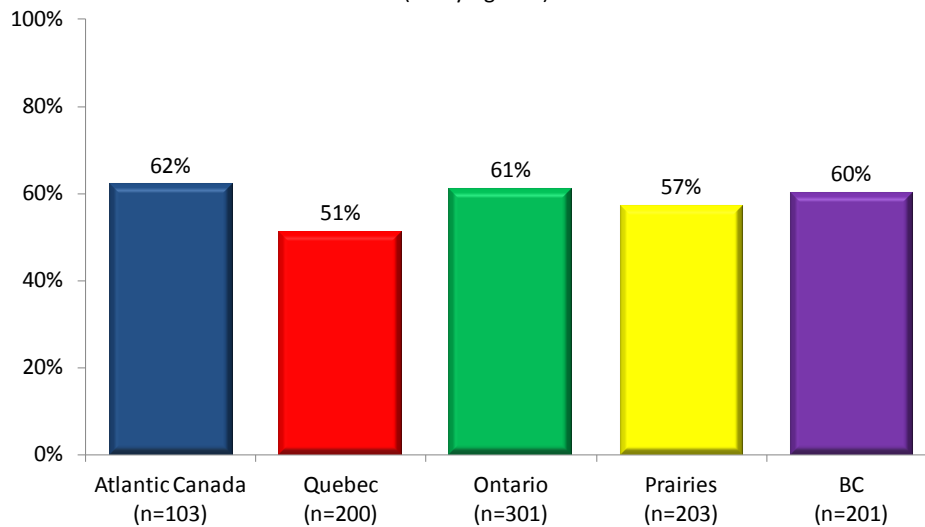


Q.7: In the past six months have you read, seen or heard anything about food safety or the recall of food products in Canada? (n=1008)

Regionally, those in Quebec are less likely than those elsewhere in the country to recall seeing or hearing something about food safety. (Table 7 – Region)



## Awareness of Food Safety or Recall of Food Products in Canada (% Saying 'Yes')



Q.7: In the past six months have you read, seen or heard anything about food safety or the recall of food products in Canada?

Across the population, those most likely to recall seeing or hearing something about food safety or the recall of food products include older residents, those with higher levels of education, those with a household income of at least \$40,000, those who do not have confidence in the food safety system in Canada, and residents in households with two or fewer people.

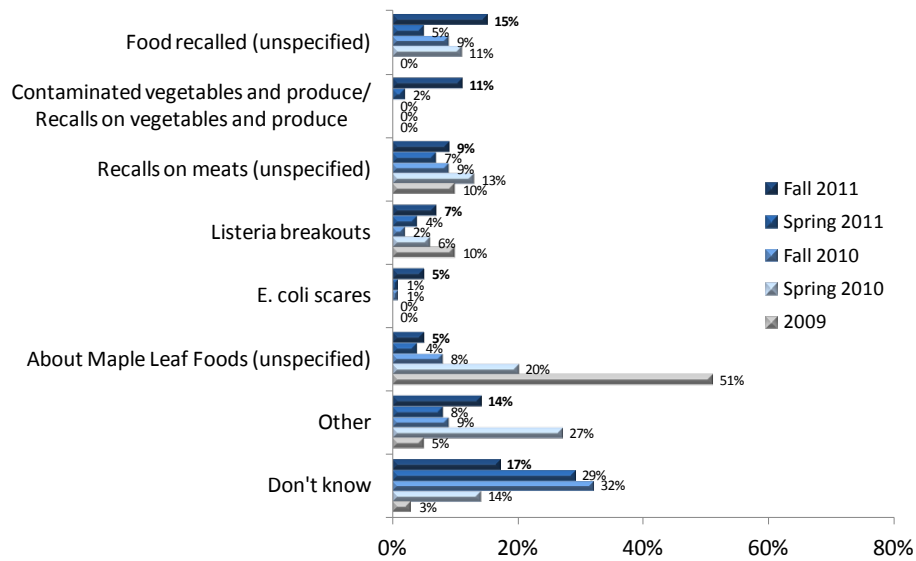
When asked specifically what they had heard, over one in ten mentioned a general food recall. One in ten recall contaminated vegetables or produce, or recall of meats. Less than one in ten mention specific contaminations such as Listeria or E. Coli. (Table 8)





### What Have You Heard

(Total Mentions, Unaided)

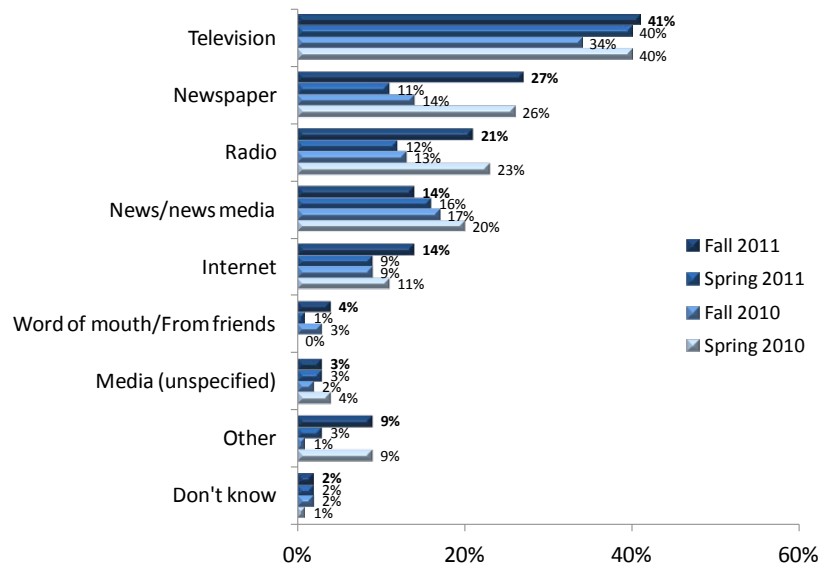


Q.8: [POSE Q.8 ONLY IF 'YES' IN Q.7] What have you heard? (n=595)

Television is the primary way Canadians are hearing food safety or recall information, followed by newspaper, radio, the news in general, and the Internet. (Table 9)

### Where Information was Heard

(Total Mentions)

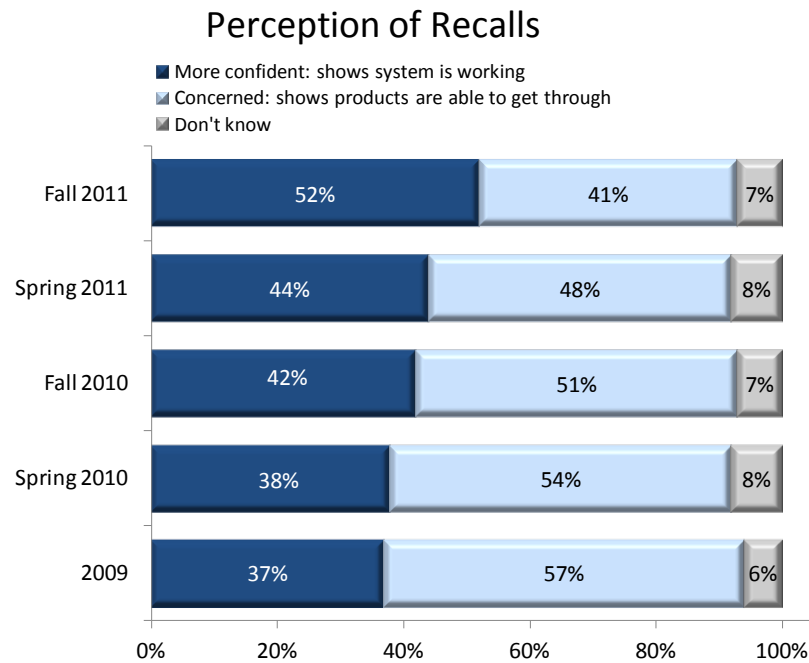


Q.9: [POSE Q.9 ONLY IF 'YES' IN Q.7] Where did you hear this information? (n=595)

There are mixed opinions in regards to how a food recall makes Canadians feel. Specifically, one-half feel more confident, because it shows that the system is working, while four in ten feel concerned, because it shows that products are able to get through the regulatory system in the first place. Notably, the



number of Canadians who feel more confident has been steadily increasing for the past few years. (Table 15)



Q.15: When you hear about certain food products being recalled, does that tend to make you feel? (n=1008)

Regionally, there are few differences in opinion in this regard. Across the population, those more likely to report they feel more confident in the food system when they hear about food products being recalled include men, those who had confidence in the food safety system, and residents with three or more people in their household.

### Information Recalled About Food Safety

Findings from the focus group discussions mirror those quantitative results. In fact, when asked what they recalled hearing, reading, or seeing about food safety in the past few years, consumers spontaneously mentioned products having been recalled. Other stories mentioned include sanitation problems at stores or restaurants, poor quality of foods imported from selected countries (e.g., fish imported from China, tainted baby formula from China), the composition of processed foods (e.g., chicken nuggets at McDonald's), and the method to properly cook ground meat.

*"A lot of times you don't know exactly what you are eating. A friend of mine sent me a video on how they process chicken McNuggets at McDonald's and it grossed me out." (35+)*

For the most part, consumers hear of food safety stories through news stories either on television, radio, or in the newspaper. Of note, many rely on the electronic version of news media rather than the more traditional version. Another popular source of food safety news is social media networks. Many have heard of foods being recalled via their friends or relatives with whom they keep in touch on Facebook or Twitter. Across age groups, but particularly among older consumers, word-of-mouth, either in person or over the telephone is also relied upon to communicate food recall information. Finally,



television shows (e.g., Kampai and Marketplace) and consumer magazines (Protégez-vous) were mentioned by a few, while one consumer actively looking for information about food recalls directly on the Government of Canada website.

### Reactions About Food Recalls

As shown in the quantitative survey, focus group participants generally view food recall as a success in the food safety system, as a sign the system is working. Indeed, if a food is recalled, it is because those involved in the verifications have done their job.

*“Somebody is making an attempt to make a corrective measure to remove a product from the shelves. It is a good thing.” (35+)*

When asked how they reacted or would react when hearing of a recall, most consumers would not consume the recalled food, throw out any they may have, and ensure they do not purchase the specified food until it has been established that the food is safe. In rare occasions, a few consumers mentioned not eating the type of foods recalled long after safety has been established. Another common reaction is to warn friends, colleagues, and relatives of the event as soon as one hears about it.

There is a widespread belief that it is not possible to have a food safety system that ensures, 100 percent of the time, that all food consumed in Canada is safe. Indeed, the sheer complexity of the system, including the number of players involved and the many steps taken, leaves too much room for human error.



## Food Product Labels

***Consumers do consult food labels for specific information, and are generally confident with the information provided, with a few exceptions.***

### Information Consulted

Qualitative findings suggest that most consumers across locations and age groups look at food labels at least some of the times when shopping. To some, this is primarily done for new products they wish to purchase.

For the most part, consumers consult the list of ingredients and the Nutritional Facts table. Those who have some form of allergies themselves or who care for someone with such conditions are prone to look for allergen information on package labels. Nut and wheat allergies were mentioned in this situation. One parent also noted the need to ensure foods her children bring to school are nut-free, thus explaining why she looks for such information on packages. Another consumer noted that because nut allergies vary, it would be useful to more specifically identify which nut a product contains.

*"I try not to buy anything that has too many ingredients. So I look at the list of ingredients." (35+)*

*"There was a point where my niece was going through celiac testing and I had to find products without gluten. Having to read labels for that was very hard." (35+)*

Another common information looked at is the expiry date and best before date, especially for milk, bread, and meat. Many also look for indications on where the food was produced and in what country produce originates. That said, it is recognized by some that at times, information on where foods was packaged is included but not where food originates. Finally, a few consumers mentioned looking for labelling of organic foods, though the lack information and understanding in this regard is highly frustrating.

### Confidence in Information Provided

Although consumers are generally confident with the information provided on labels, they questioned a number of elements. The multitude of ingredients found in some packaged goods, as well as the complexity of some of these ingredients do not provide consumers the confidence of knowing what the food they buy is made of.

*"It is more confusing rather than mislabelling. If you have gluten intolerance, the label must be clear for people who don't know the seven other words for wheat." (35+)*

Additionally, following a recent story on the television show Marketplace, a few consumers now question whether certain manufacturers simply use different ingredient name to mislead consumers about the content. Indeed, the story pertained to a brand of processed meat that used the word 'natural' in the product name and listed 'cultured celery extract', a source of nitrates and nitrites as an



ingredient. This left some consumers feeling 'cheated' and misled as they believed they were buying a product without harmful nitrates and nitrites. Another common concern is regarding labelling of organic foods. Many consumers are sceptical with the information provided given the lack of knowledge in regards to regulation and the increasing use of this type of labelling to appeal to consumers.

One consumer questioned the use of the term, 'grade A beef' by McDonald's as being somewhat misleading. Another consumer mentioned that the terms 'light' and 'diet' were misleading and not properly explained.

The rare consumers who discovered an erroneous or misleading label did not advise any authorities, but rather simply refrained from purchasing the product again in the future.

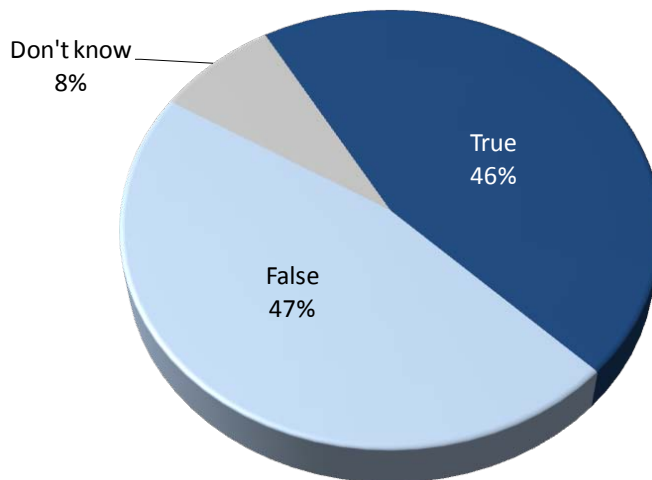


## Knowledge of Canada's Food Safety System

***While there is confidence in the food safety system in Canada, there is an opportunity to further educate the public in this regard.***

Just under one-half of Canadians believe that all foods they purchase have been inspected to ensure they are safe to consume. Those in BC and Quebec are less likely than those elsewhere to believe this to be the case. (Table 17)

### All Foods Purchased Have Been Inspected to Ensure They are Safe to Consume



Q.17: Is the following statement about food inspections true or false? All foods that I purchase have been inspected to ensure they are safe to consume. (n=1008)

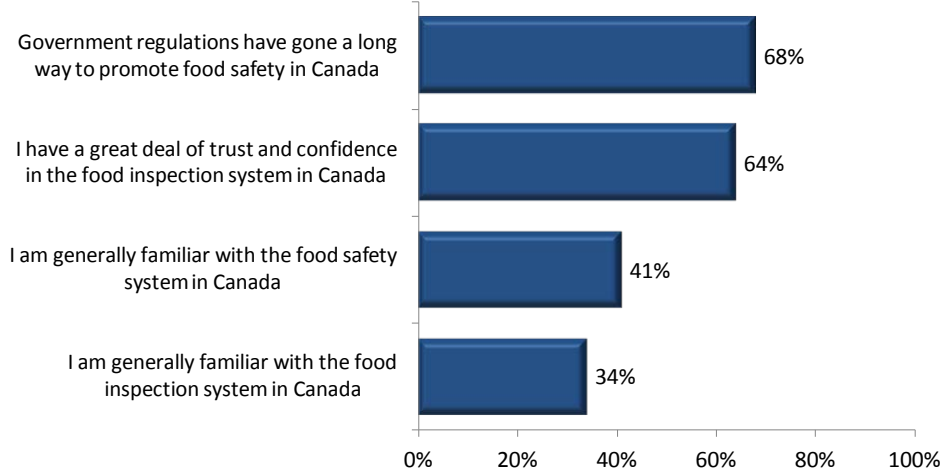
Across the population, those more likely to believe that all foods purchased have been inspected to ensure they are safe include younger Canadians, those with lower levels of education, those with lower income levels, and Canadians with at least three people in their household.



The majority of Canadians believe that government regulations have gone a long way to promote food safety in Canada, and that they have trust and confidence in the food inspection system in Canada. Just four in ten consider themselves to be familiar with the food safety system in Canada, while one-third are generally familiar with the food inspection system in Canada. (Table 18)

## Agreement With Statements About Food Safety and Inspections

Using a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 means Totally disagree and 7 means Totally agree  
% Saying Agree (5-7)



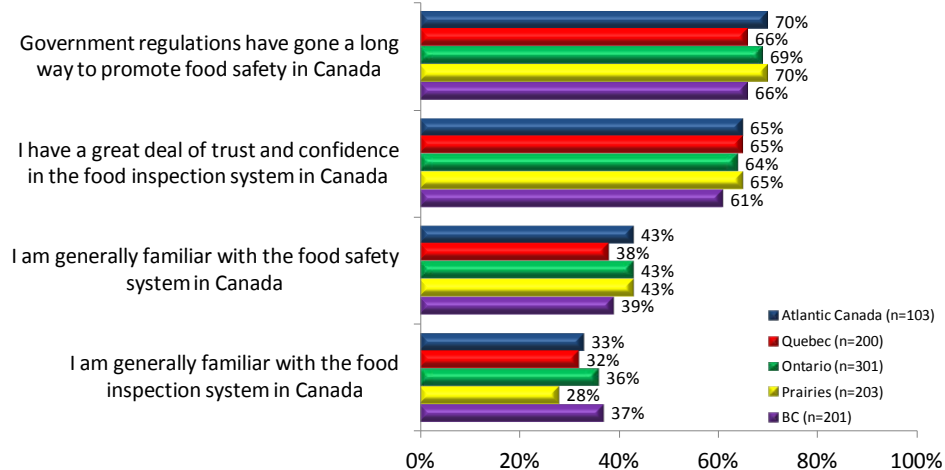
Q.18a-d: And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about food safety and inspections? Please respond on a 7 point scale where 1 means you totally disagree, 7 means you totally agree, and 4 means you neither agree nor disagree. (n=1008)

There are some regional differences for these four statements. Those in BC and Ontario are more likely than others to feel they are familiar with the food inspection system in Canada, while familiarity with the food safety system is generally consistent across the country.



## Agreement With Statements About Food Safety and Inspections

Using a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 means Totally disagree and 7 means Totally agree  
% Saying Agree (5-7)



Q.18a-d: And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about food safety and inspections? Please respond on a 7 point scale where 1 means you totally disagree, 7 means you totally agree, and 4 means you neither agree nor disagree.

### Definition of the Food Inspection System

When asked to define what the food inspection system entailed, focus group participants generally believed that it implied a process to verify that food safety rules were followed. Further, in some instances, it was believed that the food inspection system included an enforcement component.

*“It’s the system, including food inspectors, that checks that proper regulations and procedures are being implemented.” (35+)*

*“Vérifier les aliments aléatoirement et à diverses reprises [pour savoir] s’ils sont bons ou propres à la consommation.” (Randomly verify foods on many occasions to know if they are safe to eat.) (18-34)*

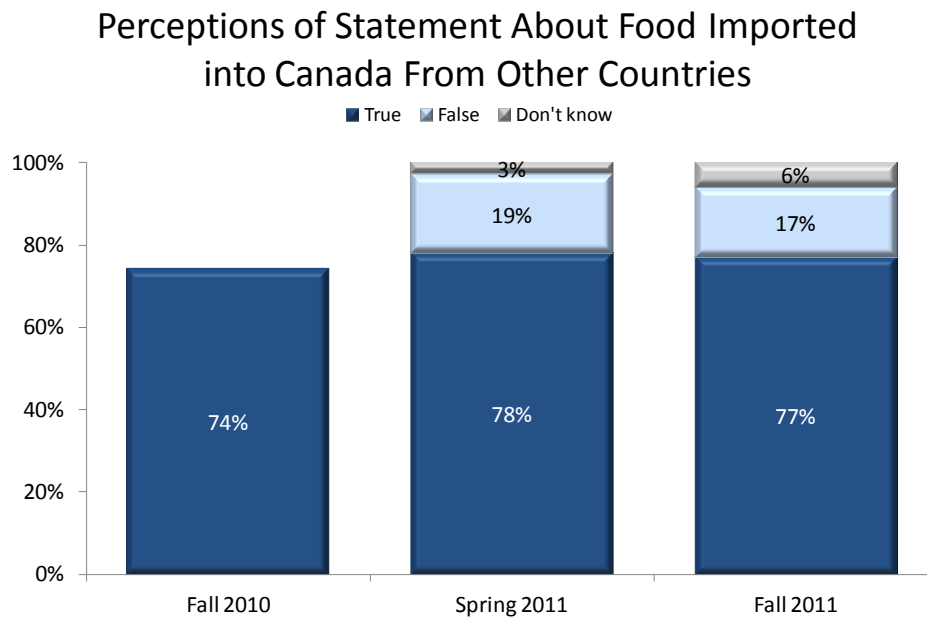
Interestingly, a few participants in each location mentioned that the purpose of the food inspection system was to assess foods' freshness and quality.

There is minimal knowledge of the process involved in performing food inspection in Canada, with consumers believing there are tests done on foods although they are not able to specify what they entail. The steps involved in inspecting foods in Canada includes verification of storage temperatures, checking the bacteria content in certain foods to ensure safe levels, assessing the cleanliness of processing facilities and tools, ensuring that workers wear the proper gear/clothing when handling foods, and ensuring workers are not sick when handling food. Further, a few believed there are chemical detectors involve, visual inspections performed at processing facilities, laboratory testing conducted, and sampling of food.





Over three-quarters of Canadians believe that imported foods must meet the same Canadian standards as domestic foods before they can be sold in Canada, which is consistent with findings from previous years. (Table 19a)



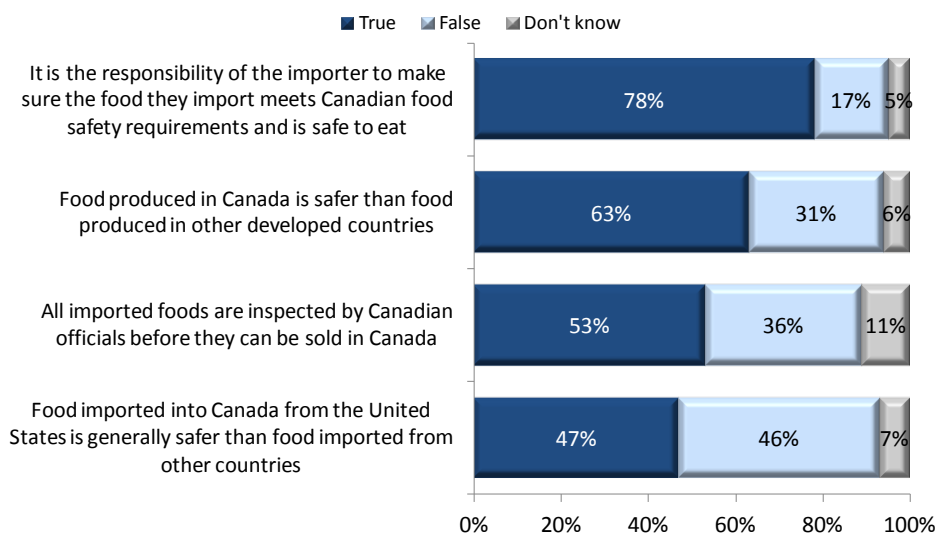
Q.19a: Please tell me if you believe the following statements are true or false about food that is imported into Canada from other countries. Imported foods must meet the same Canadian standards as Canadian domestic foods before they can be sold in Canada. (n=1008)

Regionally, those in Quebec are most likely to believe this statement to be true, while those in Atlantic Canada are least likely. Across the population, those more likely to believe this to be true include those aged 18 to 34, residents with lower levels of education, and those with confidence in the food safety system.



Eight in ten Canadians believe it is the responsibility of importers to make sure the food they import meets Canadian food safety requirements. Six in ten feel that the food produced in Canada is safer than food produced in other developed countries, while just over one-half believe all imported foods are inspected by Canadian officials before they can be sold in Canada. Finally, just under one-half feel that food imported into Canada from the United States is generally safer than food imported from other countries. (Tables 19b-e)

### Perceptions of Statements About Food Imported into Canada From Other Countries



Q.19b-e: Please tell me if you believe the following statements are true or false about food that is imported into Canada from other countries. (n=1008)

There are some regional differences, with those in BC less likely than those elsewhere in Canada to believe that all imported foods are inspected by Canadian officials, or that food produced in Canada is safer than food produced in other developed countries.

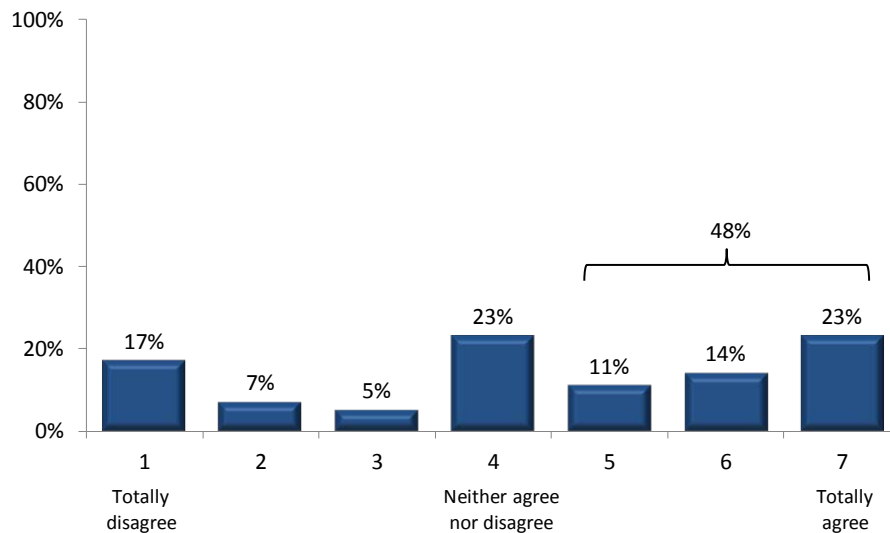
Perceptions of Statements about Food Imported into Canada from Other Countries					
% saying True					
	Atlantic Canada	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	BC
19b. All imported foods are inspected by Canadian officials	53%	54%	55%	54%	44%
19c. Food imported into Canada from the United States is generally safer	53%	40%	51%	45%	45%
19d. Food produced in Canada is safer than food produced in other developed countries	70%	60%	65%	63%	58%
19e. It is the responsibility of the importer to make sure the food they import meets Canadian food safety requirements	78%	86%	73%	78%	75%



One-half of Canadians agree that they buy their food based on where it comes from. (Table 20)

### I Buy my Food Based on Where it Comes From

Using a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 means Totally disagree and 7 means Totally agree



Q.20: Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Please respond on a 7 point scale where 1 means you totally disagree, 7 means you totally agree, and 4 means you neither agree nor disagree. I buy my food based on where it comes from? (n=1008)

Across Canada, those in BC and the Prairies are somewhat less likely to agree with this statement compared with those elsewhere. Across the population, older residents, those with lower levels of education, and those with a household income of \$40,000 or more are more likely to agree in this regard.

### Implications for Imported Foods

Findings from the focus group discussions reveal a general perception that imported food causes a greater risk potential to the safety of Canadians, given the lack of control with the operations of the producers and processors and the transportation and storage facilities outside of Canada. Overall, there is recognition that foreign policies may not be as stringent as Canada's in terms of food safety, further contributing to this risk.

*"It's got to be different because we don't have the same measure of control over something that is grown, produced and served elsewhere." (35+)*

The only exception mentioned is with the United States, although some consumers believed that it did not apply to all products. As a result, consumers believe that the inspection of imported foods is much more important than for locally produced foods, given the lack of accountability early on in the food production chain. As a result, it is believed that while the same food safety regulations may apply to imported foods, the controls may be stricter.



Once foods cross our borders, it is believed that the Canadian standards apply and that the same food safety measures apply as would be the case for local foods. Perhaps the only notable difference is the implication of the Canada Border Services Agency in the inspection process, which is not required for locally-produced foods.

## Information Needs and Channel Preference

***Food labelling is the food safety information that elicits the greatest interest. News media, email or Facebook are preferred sources of food safety information.***

## Information Received Regarding Food Safety

Most consumers do not proactively look for information on food safety from time to time but rather show an interest only during a crisis. Perhaps the most common exception to that is for parents who look for information on safe foods to feed their children. In general, when there is not a crisis, consumers tend to look for nutrition and general health information rather than food safety specific information.

*"I never think of it unless someone mentions it. I don't go looking for stories." (35+)*

Further, very few consumers currently subscribe to an information service that involves notices being sent to them on a regular basis. At this time, very few are registered with an information service that provides regular updates on food safety or recall. One participant receives the emailed newsletter from 'Protégez-vous', a consumers affairs magazine while another subscribes to a general health publication called 'Nutrition Action', delivered in the mail. Many others thought it would be a good idea and expressed interest in this kind of service.

*"There is so much information overload out there I would like to be able to customize the alerts and choose from categories rather than being bombarded by everything." (35+)*

## Preferred Type of Information

When asked what information on food safety is most important to consumers, participants were hard pressed to identify specific topics. Perhaps the most common request was for additional information on how to read food labels and understand the terms used on labels, including the ingredients featured. Other topics less often mentioned included freezing length of time, safety regarding the consumption of seafood, ingredients to avoid or that are harmful to one's health, a listing of unsanitary restaurants and grocers, summary of inspection reports, rumors regarding food safety and the actual facts, and new developments in food safety.

Information specific to food recall that is of interest to consumers include product details (e.g., batch number, where the product was sold, brand name), as well as event-related information (e.g., how it happened, what is the source and what contaminated the food).



## Preferred Sources of Information

Consumers expressed a variety of preferred sources for receiving food safety information. While they mainly rely on traditional news media, the Internet, and word-of-mouth, they believe that emailing notices on timely information, such as food recalls, would be useful to them. While a number of participants liked the idea of a formal Facebook source of food safety information, others expressed concerns with privacy.

Other information sources less often identified include RSS, news media, applications (perhaps enabling users to scan a food's bar code at the store to access product and origin information), a government website dedicated on food safety, television shows, and print materials available in various public places.

## Key Messaging

***Consumers seek specific messages that provide sufficient details and that are stated in a positive and confident tone.***

To finish the discussion, focus group participants were presented with seven short statements regarding the food safety system in Canada, for their reactions and top-of-mind comments. The purpose of this exercise was to quickly identify areas of concerns and elements that grabbed the reader's attention rather than undergo an in-depth assessment. The following sections present comments on each of the messages reviewed. The presentation order of the messages was rotated across groups to avoid order bias.

### Message 1

The Canadian food safety system is made up of many players and processes that work together to protect consumers from potentially dangerous foods.

Le système canadien de salubrité des aliments englobe de nombreux processus et un nombre considérable d'intervenants qui collaborent à la protection des consommateurs contre les risques associés aux aliments.

This statement clearly informs consumers of the existence of a food safety system in Canada, and that the system involves many organizations and entails many processes. It suggests there is more than one step to food safety and that there is a structure in place. While the statement is very positive and reassuring to consumers, it provides information that is deemed too general and unspecific to properly inform Canadians regarding food safety. Although it was deemed pertinent to share such information with the public, it requires additional context and explanations to be relevant and adequately educate consumers, especially in terms of who is involved and what steps are taken.

*"It's defining the Canadian food safety system; a lot of people have a part to play." (35+)*

*"Ça confirme ce qu'on pense qu'il se passe." (It confirms what we think is happening) (18-34)*



The concept of collaboration is well liked in this message, implying that many organizations are involved in the process of keeping foods safe in Canada. This information gives perceived strength to the food system and greater chance of succeeding.

The concept of 'players' ('intervenants') is deemed too vague, with consumers wishing to know who it includes. Additionally, the term 'players' is associated with gambling or in a few instances, the mafia, eliciting negative perceptions. Suggestions were made to change the term to 'partners' or 'participants', or even 'professionals'.

The term 'dangerous' also elicits worry and introduces a negative elements. Indeed, many consumers suggested to frame the statement in a positive manner, perhaps saying, '...that work together to ensure safe foods to Canadians.'

Of note, a few consumers in Toronto were under the impression that the 'Canadian food safety system' referred to the CFIA. The word 'system' may have contributed to this misperception.

## Message 2

The system starts on farms, continues through processing plants and ends in restaurants and our homes.

Le système s'amorce dans les exploitations agricoles, se poursuit dans les établissements de transformation et prend fin dans les restaurants et nos domiciles.

Mixed reactions were offered regarding this statement. While consumers believed it is providing a brief explanation of the general scope of the food safety system in Canada, suggesting that many parties are involved and that a 'system' is in place, the statement was deemed too vague to effectively communicate a strong message.

*"C'est la route de notre manger." (It's our foods' road map.) (18-35)*

To some, it is also placing some responsibility on consumers, as well as highlighting government's involvement. A few questioned the absence of storage and transportation suppliers, as well as grocery stores and markets, with the statement suggesting they do not have a responsibility in the process. This finding made some consumers uneasy regarding the safety of their foods. Most however felt reassured to know there is a process in place.

At the same time, a few noted that foods do not just end up at home or in restaurants, but can be found in hospitals, schools, and other institutions. Thus the statement is somewhat confusing from that perspective. A suggestion was made to change '...prend fin dans les restaurants et nos domiciles' ('...ends in restaurants and in our homes') for '...prend fin dans votre assiette' ('...ends in your plate').

Most consumers across locations questioned the use of the term, 'system', without further indication, as it is too vague and not spontaneously associated with food safety. It should therefore be stated as the 'food safety system' for added clarity.



Overall, this statement was deemed too vague to be communicated on its own, and the lack of clear and strong message makes it irrelevant for consumers. For many, it simply confirms something they already know, without providing insight or additional information.

### Message 3

At each of these points, there are food safety measures and procedures at work. While it's not possible to eliminate every possible risk, these measures help minimize food-related illness.

Des mesures et des procédures relatives à la salubrité des aliments sont appliquées à chacune de ses étapes. Bien qu'il soit impossible d'éliminer tous les risques, ces mesures contribuent à réduire au minimum le risque de maladies d'origine alimentaire.

Mixed reactions were offered regarding this statement though the general sentiment being one of uneasiness and lack of confidence in the system's ability to ensure that food remains safe.

*"It says some of you are going to get sick. You will get sick." (35+)*

*"Ça répète ce que l'on sait; ils ne peuvent pas tout faire." (It repeats what we know; they can't do everything) (18-35)*

For many however, it presents a cautious statement regarding the CFIA's limitations in preventing food-borne illnesses and the resulting impact on consumers if they are not found along the food production and processing chain. This sentiment is driven by the use of expressions such as, 'it's not possible' and 'minimize'. One consumer suggested changing the second sentence to begin with, 'While the CFIA is making every effort possible to minimize risks,...'.

*"Is this what their lawyers wrote? To prevent legal actions I think." (35+)*

Many consumers in every location were also confused by the beginning of the statement, making reference to 'these points' though not providing an indication of what points are referred to here. In French-speaking groups, participants questioned the use of the expression, 'maladies d'origine alimentaire' as it is not specific enough as well as introducing a 'scary' word – illness. It was suggested to change this word for 'intoxication' or 'empoisonnement' or even 'contamination' to reduce the 'fear factor'.

Though consumers generally believed that this type of statement is good to readjust expectations and as such should be included in formal government communications, they believed that the tone was too uncertain and negative to instil a certain level of confidence among the public. Rewording the statement while adding details where needed would certainly address this issue.



## Message 4

While safe food is the goal, no system is foolproof and recalls are a critical component of the food safety system. An active food recall system is proof that all efforts are being made to protect the food supply.

La salubrité des aliments est le but ultime, mais comme aucun système n'est infaillible, les rappels constituent une composante essentielle du système de salubrité des aliments. Un système actif de rappels d'aliments témoigne des efforts qui sont déployés pour protéger l'approvisionnement alimentaire.

This statement was viewed as one that manages expectations of consumers in terms of the extent to which the food safety system can prevent unsafe foods from affecting consumers. The manner in which the message is written however, leaves consumers with the impression that the writer does not want to take responsibility for any error that may occur. It was deemed 'just good enough' and 'no reason to brag about it'.

*"Ils sont pas parfait mais ils font de leur mieux." (They are not perfect but they do their best.) (35+)*

In many locations, it was suggested to remove the part about no system being foolproof, as it creates unneeded doubts in consumers' mind, as well as implying that it is acceptable if the system fails from time to time. A few consumers even saw this statement as a legal 'exit clause' or disclaimer in case of a crisis. To a few however, it suggests that the food safety system is working and it positions food recalls as a proof of success.

As a result, there are mixed opinions regarding how the statement makes consumers feel, with some being reassured regarding the realistic nature of the system, while other are a little more worried knowing of the increased risks associated with the process. A number of participants suggested reversing the sentences to introduce the positive message first, followed by the cautionary note.

Many participants also expressed issues with the description that 'all efforts are being made' and find this a little unrealistic and pretentious. Suggestions were made to change the term, 'all' to 'concerted', 'reasonable', or 'some' efforts for a more realistic account of what is being done. One consumer noted the contradiction in implying that 'no system if foolproof' and saying that 'an active food recall system is proof'.

## Message 5

The CFIA's role in the food safety system is to verify that industry is following federal food safety rules and taking the right actions to reduce risks, such as contamination.

En ce qui concerne le système de salubrité des aliments, l'Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments (ACIA) a pour rôle de vérifier que l'industrie respecte les règles du gouvernement fédéral en matière de salubrité des aliments et applique les mesures appropriées pour réduire les risques, notamment de contamination.

Reactions to this statement were mixed, with some liking the positive tone and the clear description of the CFIA's role while others felt it was too vague to provide additional insights beyond what they already knew. To some it is almost like the CFIA's 'vision statement' while to others, it says nothing.





*"It says they are trying to do what they can to stop or control cross contamination." (35+)*

Nonetheless, across English groups, suggestions were made to spell out the Agency's name rather than simply using the acronym, for added clarity. Many also liked the positive tone reinforced by the use of words such as, 'verify', 'right actions', and 'reduce risks'. That said, a few consumers would have liked to see more examples of risks mentioned, in addition to contamination. Further, just a few wondered what level of risk exists and how it is being reduced by the CFIA's actions.

## Message 6

Every day, there are close to 100 million meals eaten in this country. It would be impossible to inspect all the food that enters the marketplace or to have inspectors on every farm or in every food production facility. That's why the CFIA focuses on areas where risks are highest and where safety measures have the greatest impact.

Près de 100 millions de repas sont consommés chaque jour au pays. Il serait impossible d'inspecter tous les aliments qui se retrouvent sur le marché ou d'assurer la présence d'inspecteurs dans chaque exploitation agricole ou installation de production alimentaire. Voilà pourquoi l'ACIA met l'accent là où les risques sont les plus élevés et où l'application de mesures de salubrité a la plus grande incidence.

This statement made consumer uneasy regarding the effectiveness of the food system in place. In fact, many saw it as the ultimate disclaimer, suggesting that the risk of illnesses is high and that consumers are ultimately responsible for their own health.

*"C'est un peu flippant comme phrase. Ils disent que c'est impossible mais on va essayer de faire mieux." (It is a worrisome statement; they say that it is impossible but we will try to do better.) (18-34)*

*"It's saying what we are not doing; not what we are doing." (35+)*

To many consumers it highlights the gaps in the system and all the opportunities for the system to break down. As such, a number of consumers wanted to see more precise indications of the risk levels and where the risk may be greater (type of food, origin, etc). At the same time, questions were raised as to who determines the risk levels and where inspections are most warranted. It was also widely believed that the statement needed to be phrased in a more positive manner, trying to replace or avoid words such as, 'impossible'. Finally, one consumer suggested using the word 'Canada' instead of 'in this country' for better flow.

While this message does imply the system's limitations, which is deemed relevant to consumers, the way it is stated creates an unnecessary sense of worry and discomfort about the safety of foods available in Canada.



## Message 7

The CFIA checks that industry is meeting its food safety obligations by:

- testing and sampling products
- checking that industry has removed recalled products from store shelves
- verifying that information on labelling is accurate.

L'ACIA veille à ce que l'industrie s'acquitte de ses obligations en matière de salubrité des aliments. À cette fin, elle :

- échantillonne et analyse les produits;
- vérifie que l'industrie retire du marché les produits visés par les rappels;
- s'assure que les étiquettes présentent des renseignements exacts.

This statement was most appreciated for providing specific information on CFIA's roles and responsibilities, generally indicating that the Agency's obligation is to ensure the safety of foods. The message's tone was also viewed as positive and reassuring. That said, a number of participants in Toronto and Halifax would feel further reassured if the frequency of testing and sampling of products was indicated under the first bullet. Additionally, older consumers in Toronto and Sherbrooke would like to know that the CFIA's role is not only to verify that information on labelling is accurate as stated under the third bullet, but also that it is complete. Older participants in Halifax questioned if this part of the statement was true. Additionally, in Halifax, many mentioned a lack of information regarding how the tasks described were performed, noting that not enough details are provided on the process itself.

Many in Toronto and Halifax also questioned the use of the term, 'obligation', as it implies a forced action against one's will rather than a desire to achieve the stated objectives. This approach left some consumers questioning the quality of work performed by the CFIA. One consumer suggested the wording, 'The CFIA checks that industry is within its food safety obligation' as a more reassuring statement.

*"Obligations: it sounds like, 'I don't want to but I have to'." (35+)*

*"Obligation turns me off; it is forced." (35+)*

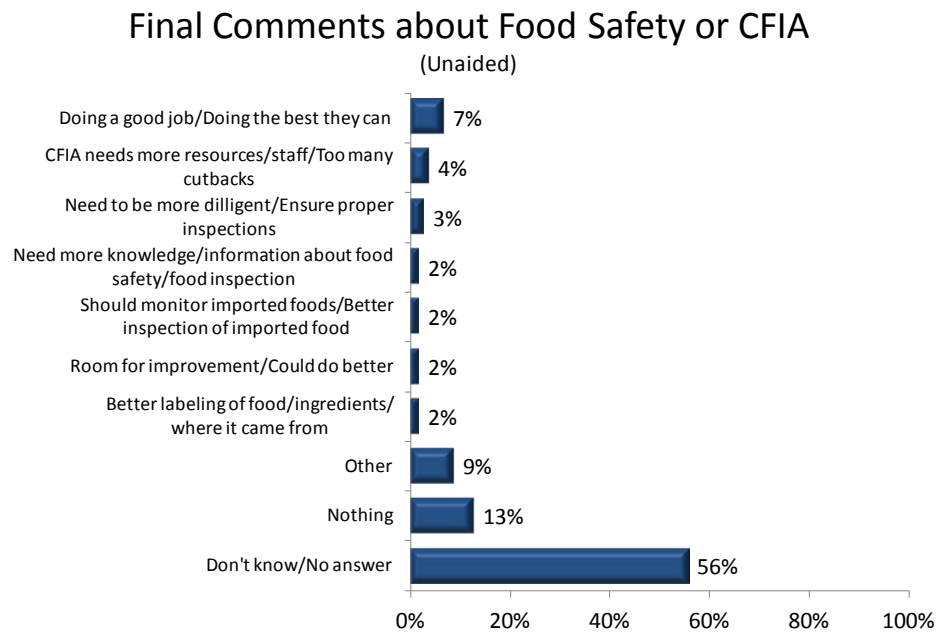
One consumer suggested changing the term, 'checking' under the second bullet point for 'ensuring', for better readability. In Sherbrooke, some questioned the use of 'des' in the last statement, suggesting that 'les' would be more appropriate. A few consumers in Toronto noted that adding the term 'laboratory' to the first bullet point would make it stronger. Finally, a few consumers mentioned the need to spell out the Agency's name at some point prior to showing this message, as not everyone is familiar with the Agency's acronym.

Overall, consumers believe there is merit in releasing this kind of messages to the public, as a means to educate them regarding the food safety system in Canada and the roles and responsibilities of the CFIA.



## Additional Comments

Over one-half of telephone survey respondents did not offer any additional comments about food safety or CFIA. A small number believe the organization is doing a good job, that CFIA needs more resources, or needs to be more diligent and ensure proper inspections. (Table 37)

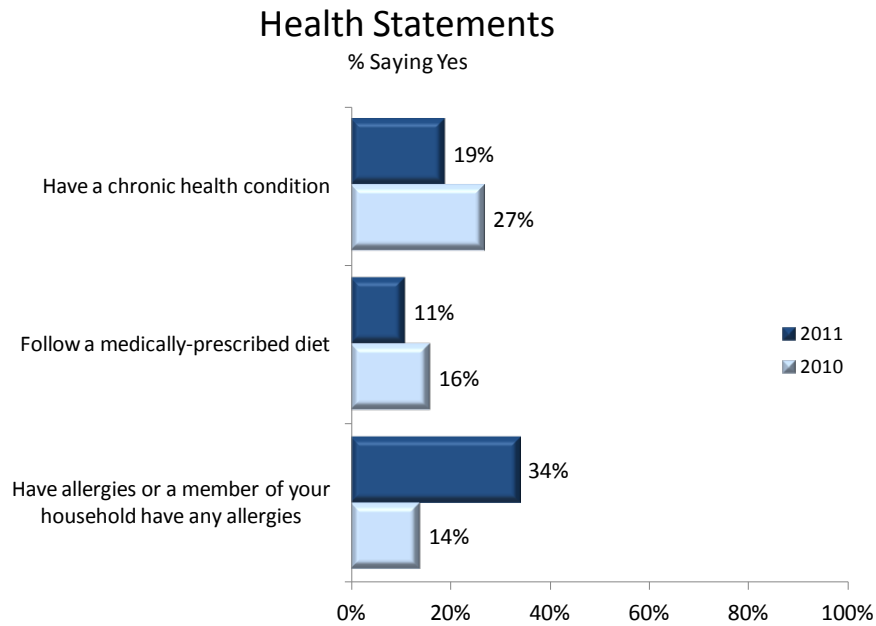


Q.37: In closing, do you have any final comments about food safety or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency? PROBE: Anything else? (n=1008)



## Health Statements

One-third of Canadians have allergies or a member of their household has allergies. Two in ten Canadians have a chronic health condition, while eleven percent follow a medically-prescribed diet. (Table 28a-c)



Q.28a-c: Do you....? [DO NOT POSE Q.28c IF "ALLERGIES" WAS VOLUNTEERED IN Q.28a](n=1008)

\* Note: 2010 question wording: Do you have a food allergy.



## Research Methodology

### Quantitative Component

#### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire used for this study was modified somewhat from the 2011 spring questionnaire. Questions used in the research were designed by staff members from the Canadian Food Inspection agency and Corporate Research Associates. Prior to being finalized, the survey was pre-tested on a small number of respondents to ensure the appropriateness of the questions and response categories.

#### Sample Design and Selection

The sample for this study was drawn using systematic sampling procedures from a list of randomly-selected households compiled from listed telephone numbers in each province, drawn from a database that is updated quarterly. The survey was designed to complete telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age and older. The sample was stratified by province to minimize the margin of sampling error across provincial sub-samples. In total, interviews were completed with 1,008 Canadians aged 18 and older, which would be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The data were subsequently weighted by region and age to ensure overall region-wide and provincial results reflect the true population distribution.

#### Survey Administration

The survey was conducted by telephone from November 30, 2011 to January 4, 2012 from data collection facilities in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Respondents could complete the survey in either of Canada's official languages. All interviewing was conducted by fully trained and supervised interviewers, and a minimum of 10 percent of all completed interviews were subsequently verified. The average length of time required to complete an interview was approximately 16 minutes.



Among all eligible respondents contacted, the rate of interview completion was 10 percent. Completion rate is calculated as the number of cooperative contacts (1 172), divided by the total of eligible numbers attempted (12 053). The final disposition of all telephone numbers called below is based on the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association's *Standard Record of Contact Format*.

<b>A. Total Numbers Attempted</b>	<b>11 673</b>
Discontinued Number/Not in Service/Blocked	3 138
Fax/Modem	260
Cell Phone	67
Non Residential Number/Wrong Number	647
<b>B. Eligible Numbers</b>	<b>12 053</b>
Busy Signal	97
Answering Machine	2 594
No Answer	799
Scheduled Call Back/Qualified not available	1 122
Illness/Language Problem	250
<b>C. Total Asked</b>	<b>7 191</b>
Gatekeeper Refusal	1 970
Mid-Terminate	41
Respondent Refusal	1 458
Never Call List/Hang Up	2 550
<b>D. Co-operative Contacts</b>	<b>1 172</b>
Quota Full/Not Qualified	164
Complete	1 008



## Non Response Bias

As per standard Government of Canada practices, a non-response bias analysis was conducted on the survey data. Since this was a survey of the general population of Canadians 18 years of age and older, the non-response bias analysis consisted of comparing three variables from the survey sample to the equivalent parameters of the population. The population parameters were compiled from data reported by Statistics Canada for the 2006 Census. The following table outlines the comparison of the survey sample with the population parameters.

Variables	Population (%)	Survey Sample (unweighted, %)	Survey Sample (weighted, %)
<b>Gender (among those 18+)</b>			
Males	48%	46%	48%
Females	52%	54%	52%
<b>Age Group (among those 18+)</b>			
18-34	28%	23%	28%
35-44	19%	20%	19%
45-54	20%	22%	20%
55-64	15%	17%	15%
65+	18%	18%	18%
<b>Mother Tongue (total population)</b>			
English	58%	69%	66%
French	22%	16%	19%
Other	20%	15%	15%

As demonstrated in the preceding table, the composition of the survey sample is relatively consistent with the population on all three dimensions. Results indicate the survey sample is slightly younger and more likely to have a mother tongue of English, relative to the population data. The resulting dataset was in fact weighted by age and gender within region to account for any difference in responses related to these two variables. However, there is possibility for modest non-response bias stemming from the difference between the survey sample and the population in terms of mother tongue.



## Qualitative Component

To meet the study objectives, a total of six focus groups were conducted, as detailed in the following table:

Location	Audience & Number of Groups	Date & Times	Language
Toronto, ON	Group 1: 18-34 years old Group 2: 35+ years old	February 6, 2012 6pm and 8pm	English
Sherbrooke, QC	Group 3: 18-34 years old Group 4: 35+ years old	February 7, 2012 5:30pm and 7:30pm	French
Halifax, NS	Group 5: 18-34 years old Group 6: 35+ years old	February 9, 2012 6pm and 8pm	English

In each group, participants included a mix of gender, age (within the specified range), education level and household income. All were personally involved in the household's grocery shopping and food preparation on a regular basis. In each group, at least 3 participants reported having children less than 18 years of age living at home most of the time. In total, 11 individuals were recruited per group to achieve 8-10 participants. Group discussions each lasted 2 hours and participants each received \$75 in appreciation for his or her time. As is normally the practice, federal government employees, those in advertising, communication, and marketing research industries, as well as media representatives were excluded from the study. Recruitment was conducted using a mix of telephone random calling and referrals.

## Context of Qualitative Research

Qualitative discussions are intended as moderator-directed, informal, non-threatening discussions with participants whose characteristics, habits and attitudes are considered relevant to the topic of discussion. The primary benefits of individual or group qualitative discussions are that they allow for in-depth probing with qualifying participants on behavioural habits, usage patterns, perceptions and attitudes related to the subject matter. This type of discussion allows for flexibility in exploring other areas that may be pertinent to the investigation. Qualitative research allows for more complete understanding of the segment in that the thoughts or feelings are expressed in the participants' "own language" and at their "own levels of passion." Qualitative techniques are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures.

