

Peanut Contamination of Mustard Ingredients: Awareness and Actions Taken by Those With a Peanut Allergy

Food Standards Agency

Keywords: Chemical Risks and Hypersensitivity, Food hypersensitivity

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FSA Research and Evidence

1. Key findings

- Just under half (45%) of those with a peanut allergy said they were aware that certain food products containing mustard ingredients sold in the UK may have been contaminated with peanuts.
- It was most common for respondents to have heard about the incident in the news (44%), followed by word of mouth (25%) and social media (24%). 21% had heard about the incident from the Food Standards Agency's allergy alert service.
- 65% of those aware of the incident said they had taken at least one of the actions asked about in response to the incident, while 35% had taken no action.
- The most common action was checking the label of a food product they had purchased in a shop to see if mustard was listed as an allergen (36%).
- Those with a moderate/severe allergic reaction were more likely than average to say they had taken at least one of the actions asked about (76%).

2. Background and Methodology

2.1. Background

In September 2024, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) released urgent precautionary allergy advice to those who have a peanut allergy to avoid consuming foods that contain or may contain mustard, mustard powder or mustard flour because they may have been contaminated with peanuts. In October 2024, the FSA commissioned YouGov to conduct a short rapid survey about this incident. The aim of the survey was to understand the

extent to which those who have an allergy to peanuts were aware of the recent incident, where they had heard about it, and their actions in response to the incident.

2.2. Method

The research was conducted online and was administered to YouGov panel members. The total sample size was 506 adults aged 18+ with an allergy to peanuts, and fieldwork was conducted between 7th - 22nd October 2024. 179 reported they had a mild allergic reaction, 159 a moderate reaction, and 121 a severe reaction. The remainder said they 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'. Quotas and weighting were used to ensure broad representativeness of adults aged 18+ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with a peanut allergy by age, gender and region.

2.3. Notes for interpretation

This was a rapid online survey, with a relatively modest sample size. Findings should be interpreted in this context. Although the survey achieved a good spread of demographics, and quotas/ weighting were used to increase representativeness, findings may not be fully representative of those with a peanut allergy.

The sample size for some questions and subgroups is relatively small. We have not reported findings for an overall base size of less than 100 in this report.

Figures may not add up to 100% on graphs due to rounding, or in some questions, respondents were able to select multiple answers.

Online survey panels are not fully representative of the population. For instance, they do not tend to include those who do not have internet access. This kind of sample imbalance cannot be corrected through weighting.

Online panellists sign up and opt-in to take online surveys, and this means they can be more engaged in certain issues. This can make precise measures for some attitudes and behaviours difficult to obtain.

The data relies on respondents' self-reported behaviours. Errors could occur due to imperfect recollection, or respondents' tendency to overreport behaviours which are perceived as being desirable and underreport undesirable behaviours.

3. Results

3.1. Awareness of the incident

As shown in [Figure 1](#), 45% of those with a peanut allergy said they were aware that certain food products containing mustard ingredients sold in the UK may have been contaminated with peanuts.

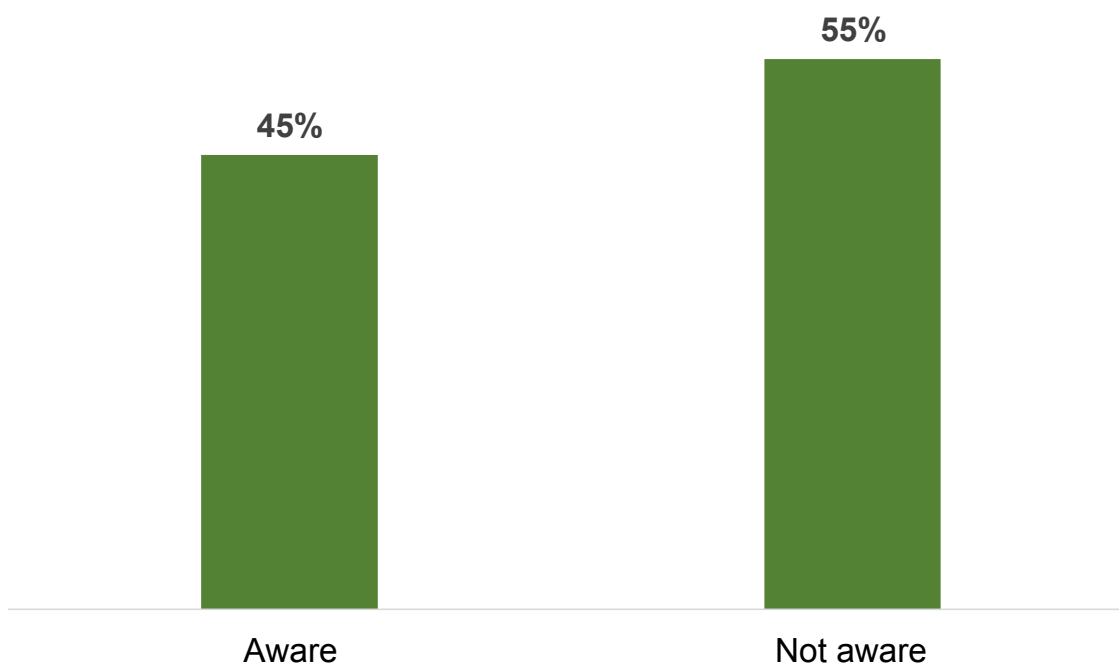


Figure 1. Proportion aware that certain food products containing mustard ingredients sold in the UK may have been contaminated with peanuts

Q1. Before taking this survey, were you aware that certain food products containing mustard ingredients sold in the UK may have been contaminated with peanuts? Base: All (n=506)

3.2. Where respondents heard about the incident

Among those who had heard about the incident, most had heard about it in the news (44%), followed by word of mouth (25%) and social media (24%). 21% had heard about it from the FSA's allergy alert service (see [Figure 2](#)).

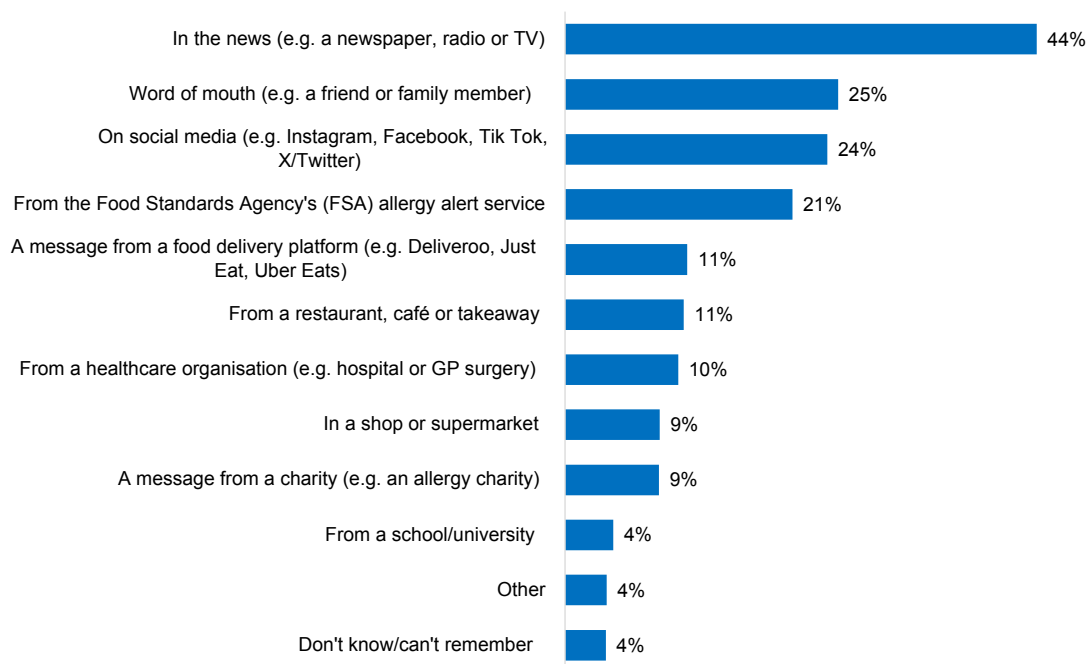


Figure 2. Where respondents had heard about the possible peanut contamination (among those who were aware of the incident)

Note: Q2. Where did you hear about this? Select all that apply. Base: All who are aware of the possible peanut contamination (n=228). Figures do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple answers.

3.3. Actions taken as a result of the incident

Overall, 65% of those aware of the incident said they had taken at least one of the actions asked about in response to the incident, while 35% had taken no action (see [Figure 3.1](#)). Those with a moderate/severe reaction (n=138) were more likely than average to say they had taken at least one of the actions asked about (76%).

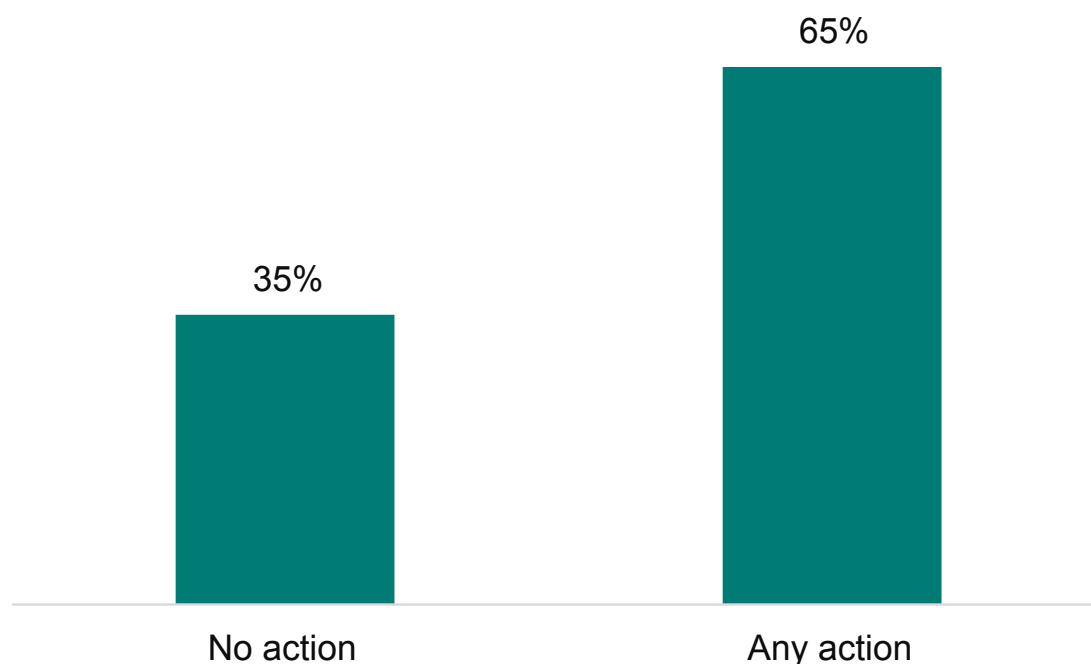


Figure 3.1. Proportion who reported taking action because of possible peanut contamination (among those who were aware of the incident)

Note: Q3. Have you done any of the following recently because of the potential contamination of food products containing mustard ingredients with peanuts? Select all that apply. Base: All who are aware of the possible peanut contamination (n=228). 'No action' is the % who selected 'I haven't taken any action'. 'Any action' is the % who selected at least one of the response options in [Figure 3.2](#).

As shown in [Figure 3.2](#), the most common action was checking the label of a food product they had purchased in a shop to see if mustard was listed as an allergen (36%), followed by not eating something because they were not sure if it contained mustard or mustard ingredients (33%). 21% said they had checked the list of recalled products on the FSA's website.

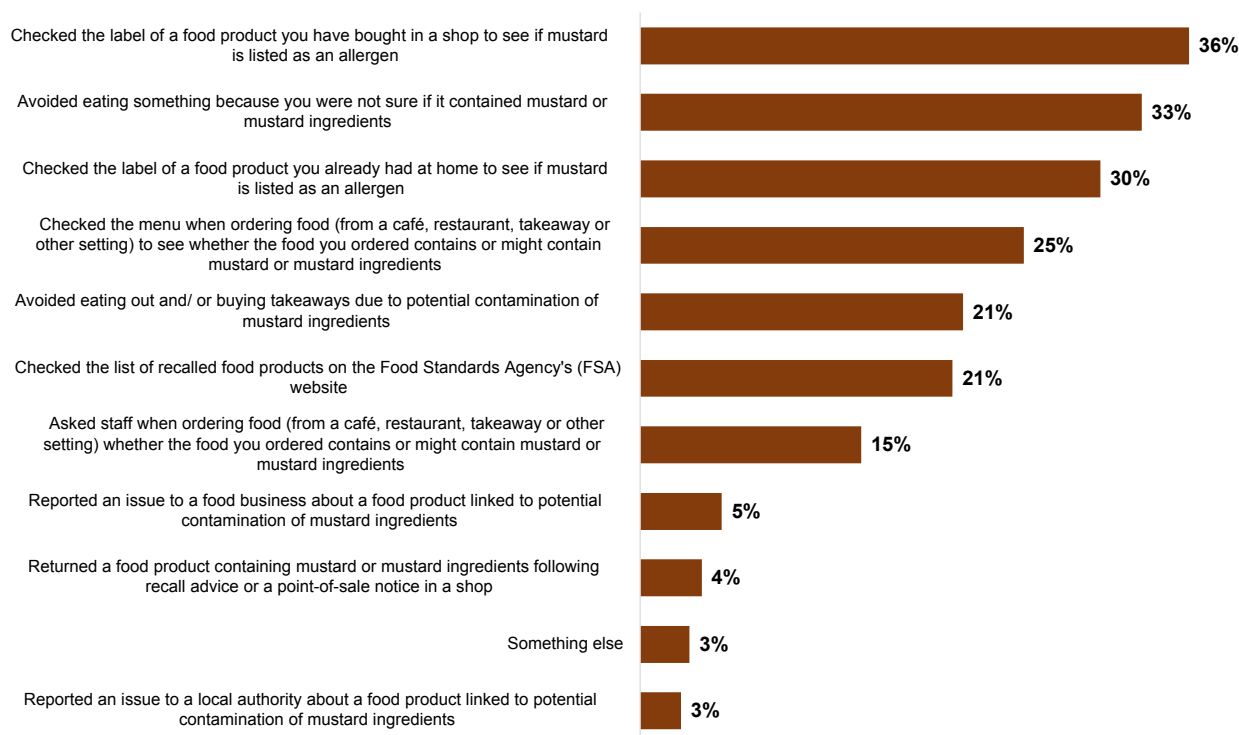


Figure 3.2. Actions taken because of the possible peanut contamination (among those who were aware of the incident)

Note: Q3. Have you done any of the following recently because of the potential contamination of food products containing mustard ingredients with peanuts? Select all that apply. Base: All who are aware of the possible peanut contamination (n=228). Figures do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple answers.

4. Further information

Please contact the [FSA Analytics Unit](#)

Acknowledgements

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Supplementary Materials

Survey data tables

Download: <https://science.food.gov.uk/article/126419-peanut-contamination-of-mustard-ingredients-awareness-and-actions-taken-by-those-with-a-peanut-allergy/attachment/255315.xlsx>
