

Community food safety awareness survey results 2025

Introduction

In 2025 the Food Authority launched a quiz to better understand food safety awareness in the community. The survey was designed to help inform education activities and to compare results with previous behavioural research undertaken in 2020. The survey also gauged food safety awareness in children, who were not included in the 2020 research.

Two surveys promoted as quizzes were available for completion on iPads at the Food Authority's Sydney Royal Easter Show stand.

The surveys returned a combined 1,502 responses:

- Kids survey (5-17 years) = 910
- Adult survey = 592.

Key findings - adults

On most foundational hygiene and storage topics, community awareness in the 2025 cohort was stronger than what NSW consumers reported doing in 2020.

Hand hygiene

- 93% always washed their hands with soap before preparing or handling food (70% in 2020)
- 85% always washed their hands with soap before eating

Separate / clean cutting boards

- 85% used different chopping boards for meat and fish, and fruit and vegetables (66% in 2020)
- 10% used different chopping boards most of the time

Raw meat storage

- 98% stored raw meat covered in the fridge (33% in 2020)

Washing raw meat

- 74% answered they did not wash raw meat because it could spread harmful bacteria. In 2020, 33% reported washing chicken and 20% washed red meat.
- While the 2025 results are a slight improvement, 26% of people overall indicated they washed raw meat:
 - to remove bacteria or dirt – 16%
 - because they believe it makes meat safer – 6%

- because their family has always done it – 2%
- to remove chemicals – 1%

Egg storage

- 63% stored eggs in their carton in the fridge (60% in 2020)
- 9% kept eggs out of the fridge.

Egg handling

- 72% discarded eggs with dirty or cracked shells (57% in 2020)
- 17% washed eggs before use

Safe defrosting

- 76% answered frozen meals and raw meat should be defrosted in the fridge
- 31% answered they should be defrosted in the microwave
- 22% on the bench.

In 2020, 36% said they always defrosted safely.

Reading labels for storage and use directions

- 46% usually checked both storage and use directions (37% always read labels in 2020).
- 35% usually checked storage instructions
- 8% usually checked directions for use
- 10% did not usually check.

Use by and best before date knowledge

- 73% correctly identified that use by means the food must be eaten or discarded by the date
- 71% correctly identified that best before means the food is still safe to eat after the date if it doesn't look or smell bad
- 16% identified both dates mean the food is unsafe after the date.

In 2020, 15% ate seafood, 29% meat, and 33% dairy past date marks.

Taking action on a food recall

- 85% said they would throw the product out or return it to the store
- 8% said their action would depend on the type of recall
- 4% did not know what a recall was
- 2% said they would ignore it

In 2020, 89% took action; 48% threw the product out, 46% returned it, 10% ignored the recall.

Key findings - children

The standout strength for the children's survey was 96.7% correct answer (yes) to 'Should you wash your hands after touching raw meat?'

The biggest gap was “use by” vs “best before” — only 17.4% identified usage correctly.

Hand hygiene

- 97% agreed you should wash your hands with soap after touching raw meat
- 81% washed their hands with soap before eating or helping to cook
- 15% sometimes washed their hands with soap before eating or helping to cook
- 3% did not wash their hands with soap before eating or helping to cook

Egg safety

- 79% answered you should never use an egg if it looked cracked
- 82% answered eggs should be kept in their carton in the fridge
- 28% answered you should wash eggs before using.

Refrigerating food

- 68% correctly answered that some foods need to go in the fridge to stop bacteria growing
- 27% answered some food went in the fridge to keep it fresher for longer

What is one thing you can do to stop food poisoning?

- 67% answered ‘wash my hands with soap before eating or cooking’
- 20% answered ‘smell food check if it’s bad’
- 12% ‘look at food to check if it’s bad’

What do ‘use by and ‘best before’ dates on food labels mean?

- 85% answered ‘use by dates show the last day a food is safe to eat’
- 75% answered ‘best before means the food is still safe to eat after the date, as long as it doesn’t look or smell bad’
- 27% answered ‘they are for the shops to know how long they can sell food for’
- 15% answered ‘best before and use by dates tell you when the food has the best flavour’.

More information

- Visit [foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- Email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au
- Phone 1300 552 406