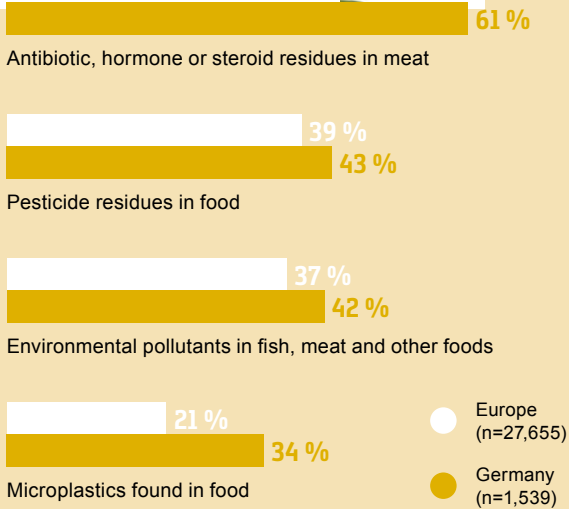


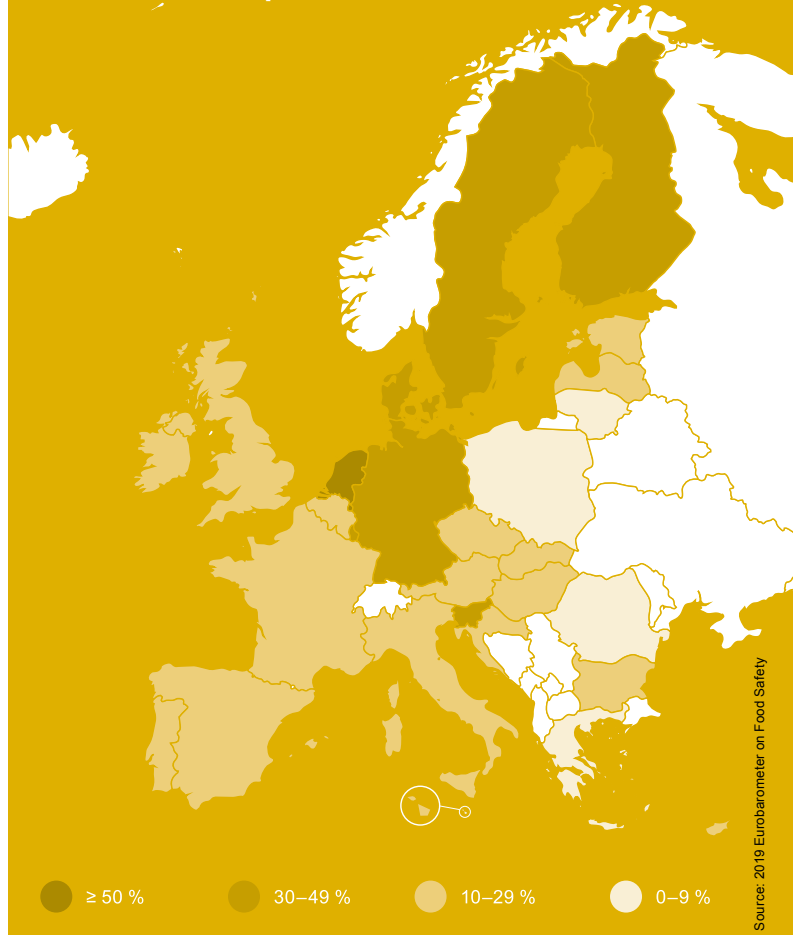
How many people are worried about these food-based issues?

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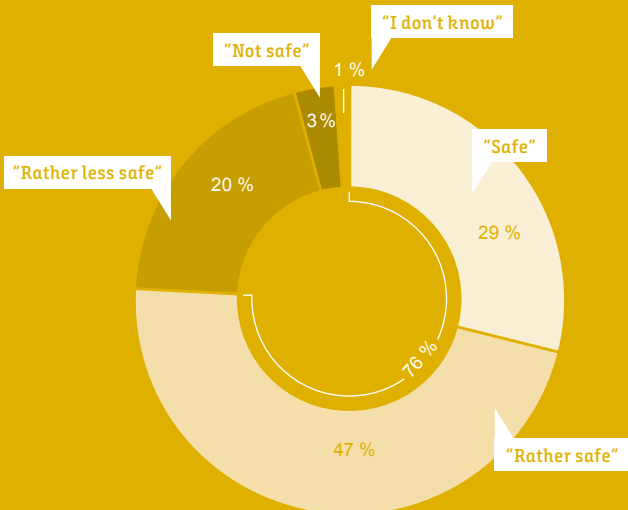
Source: 2019 Eurobarometer on Food Safety

How great is the concern in Europe about microplastics in food?



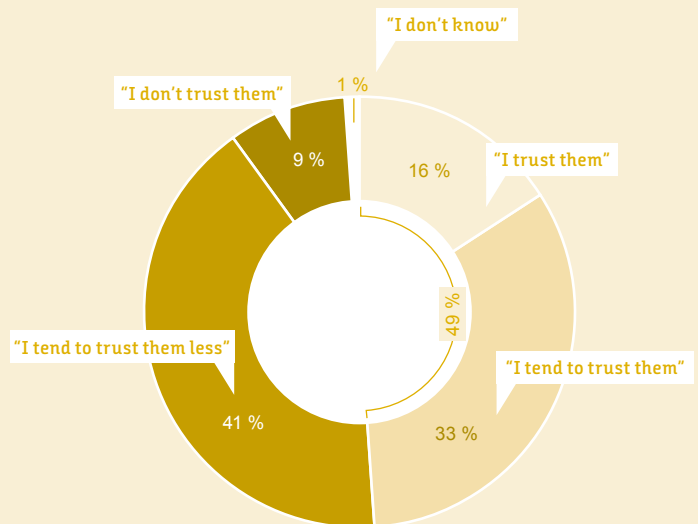
It's all a question of risk

How do you assess the safety of food on offer in Germany?



Source: BfR Consumer Monitor 8/2019

Do you trust state authorities in matters of health protection?



Source: BfR Consumer Monitor 8/2019

What are consumers afraid of? What health risks do they see? The BfR and other scientific institutions are researching risk perception across Europe to ensure that consumers are well-informed and consumer health protection is effective.

Antibiotic, hormone or steroid residues in meat. Artificial additives and questionable environmental substances in food. Substances that are transferred from packaging to food. The range of topics that make up the general term “food safety” is wide and complex. Following the BSE crisis, national authorities, such as the BfR and, at EU level, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), were set up in 2002 to deal with these issues. In addition to the scientific assessment of health risks, communication about these risks is one of the main tasks of these institutions. Their approach: in order to communicate effectively, they first explore the attitudes and perceptions of target groups.

No sign of “German angst”

On behalf of EFSA, the EU Commission conducted a representative population survey in the EU member states for the first time since 2010. A total of 27,655 EU citizens were interviewed in person in the spring of 2019; 1,539 of them in Germany. This resulted in the special barometer “Food Safety in the EU”.

The national analysis for Germany revealed that Germans are, on average, more interested and informed compared to the rest of Europe. Their greater openness runs through all levels of education and society. They are more familiar than the EU average – in some cases markedly so – with almost all the food risks mentioned in the survey. It is worth noting that the price is not the first thing that Germans pay attention to when shopping for food. The origin of the products is much more important to them. Whether food bears scrutiny of personal and ethical convictions, meaning whether the purchase is tenable in terms of animal welfare, environmental protection or religious aspects, is also a criterion of above-average relevance.

Resting on consumer information levels and quality control?

The German population is also more open to drawing personal conclusions from the information obtained. For example, 38 percent of the respondents stated that they had permanently changed their consumption be-

haviour (e.g. diet, cooking behaviour or the way they store food) at least once in their lives on the basis of information they obtain. They are more likely to find food safety information “very technical and complex”, but this does not mean a greater loss of confidence in the source of the information.

Compared to the EU average, Germans place a higher degree of trust in Europe-wide food safety monitoring. They are more often convinced that this is ensured by authorities taking into account scientific research. That is perhaps one reason why this issue is not regarded as the biggest concern when selecting food in this country. The German population even considers it a matter of course that food is safe.

Public perception as an indicator for communication

This development is also due to the successful risk communication of the institutions, and their research on perception. The BfR also researches the values, attitudes and knowledge about health risks of the German population in relation to specific topics in consumer health protection. The BfR Consumer Monitor has been published every six months since 2017. In addition to food safety, the BfR addresses other topics falling within its jurisdiction, such as the safety of consumer products like cosmetics, textiles and toys. Special editions have already focused on topics such as antimicrobial resistance, plant protection products, tattoos and microplastics. PD Dr. Gaby-Fleur Böl, Head of the Risk Communication Department at the BfR, emphasises the importance of regular data collection: “Our target group is almost 83 million citizens. An up-to-date understanding of their knowledge, interests and concerns about health risks is essential to our mandate of communication.” ■

More information:

www.efsa.europa.eu > About > Documents > Corporate Publications > EU-Food-Safety-Barometer (English)

www.bfr.bund.de > Publications > Brochures > BfR Consumer Monitor