Introduction

The BfR Consumer Monitor is a major instrument of consumer health protection, providing answers every six months to the question of how the general public perceives topics from the field of consumer health protection on the basis of a representative population survey. Which topics are important in the view of the consumer? Which topics are they familiar with and what do they know less about? And above all – to what extent do differences exist between the public perception and the scientific estimation of health risks?

This first survey in 2020 showed that the topics climate/environmental pollution, unhealthy/wrong diet and smoking continue to top the list of the most commonly mentioned health risks for consumers. New in this survey were the more frequent spontaneous mentions of traffic, high quantities of plastics, and political and economic interests as health risks compared to previous years.

Awareness of most health and consumer topics rose slightly overall compared to the previous survey in August 2019. More respondents were concerned about the topic aluminium in food packaging, but less concerned about the topics mycotoxins in food as well as carbon monoxide. Overall, the topics microplastics in food and antimicrobial resistances continue to attract the highest levels of concern – in each case, more than 60% of respondents reported being concerned by these topics.

If you would like to find out more about the individual topics, you will find links to more detailed information on the BfR website on the last page of this booklet.
Which topics do you personally regard as the biggest health risks for consumers?

You can state a maximum of three topics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Compared to 08/2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate/environmental pollution</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(+2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy/wrong diet</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(–3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(–4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel/exhaust gases/particular matter pollution</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(+2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy/contaminated food</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(+3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollutants/additives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(+2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic(^1)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much plastic(^2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/economic interests(^3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(+5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(–4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know, no answer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(–4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shown: The ten most common spontaneously mentioned risks;\(^1\) Not among the ten most frequently mentioned risks in 08/2019

*Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)*
Have you already heard about the following health and consumer topics or have you never heard of them?
### Awareness of health and consumer topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Yes, I've already heard of it</th>
<th>No, I've never heard of it</th>
<th>Don't know, no answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pelmeni in food</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetically modified food</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antimicrobial resistance</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microplastics in food</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmonella in food</td>
<td>86.14%</td>
<td>13.86%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetically modified food</td>
<td>86.14%</td>
<td>13.86%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antimicrobial resistance</td>
<td>78.22%</td>
<td>21.78%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mycotoxins in food</td>
<td>75.23%</td>
<td>24.77%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon monoxide</td>
<td>75.23%</td>
<td>24.77%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glyphosate in food</td>
<td>50.49%</td>
<td>49.51%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listeria in food</td>
<td>26.73%</td>
<td>73.27%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campylobacter in food</td>
<td>14.84%</td>
<td>85.16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genome editing</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Compared to 08/2019**

- Salmonella in food: 1 (+1)
- Genetically modified food: 3 (+1)
- Antimicrobial resistance: 3 (+1)
- Microplastics in food: 2 (+3)
- Aluminium in food packaging materials or food containers: 2 (+2)
- Residues of plant protection products in food: 0 (-2)
- Mycotoxins in food: 1 (+1)
- Carbon monoxide: 1 (-2)
- Glyphosate in food: 3 (+3)
- Listeria in food: 1 (+2)
- Campylobacter in food: 1 (+1)

*Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019 refers to “already heard of it”: percentage points)*
To what extent are you personally concerned or unconcerned about the following health and consumer topics?

Please use a scale of 1 to 5 for your answer, with 1 representing “not concerned” and 5 representing “concerned”. You can graduate your opinion with the values in between.
Concern about health and consumer topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>5 Concerned</th>
<th>4 Concerned</th>
<th>3 Concerned</th>
<th>2 Concerned</th>
<th>1 Not concerned</th>
<th>Never heard of it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microplastics in food</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antimicrobial resistance</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residues of plant protection products in food</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmonella in food</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glyphosate in food</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetically modified food</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminium in food packaging materials or food containers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mycotoxins in food</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food hygiene in gastronomy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon monoxide</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listeria in food</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food hygiene at home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campylobacter in food</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genome editing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Concerned  (4) Concerned  (3) Concerned  (2) Concerned  (1) Not concerned  Never heard of it

Don't know, no answer

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages
(compared to 08/2019 the percentage for “concerned”4 + 5 on the scale: percentage points)
Which of the following three statements on consumer health protection would you tend to agree with most?
The state should provide **scientifically validated information** on the basis of which I can protect myself against health risks.

The state should take **more concrete measures** such as bans and restrictions to protect me as a consumer from health risks.

Don't know, no answer

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**Consumer health protection**

I assume that I can **assess health risks by myself** and do not need **any state institutions** for this.

**Basis:** 1,122; **Figures given in percentages** (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)

- **I assume that I can assess health risks by myself** and do not need **any state institutions** for this: (+4)
- **The state should provide scientifically validated information** on the basis of which I can protect myself against health risks: (+1)
- **The state should take more concrete measures** such as bans and restrictions to protect me as a consumer from health risks: (-4)
- Don't know, no answer: (±0)

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**Graph:**
- 51%: I assume that I can assess health risks by myself and do not need any state institutions for this.
- 36%: The state should provide scientifically validated information on the basis of which I can protect myself against health risks.
- 11%: The state should take more concrete measures such as bans and restrictions to protect me as a consumer from health risks.
- 2%: Don't know, no answer.
How do you estimate in general the safety of foods you can buy in Germany?

Would you say the foods are ...
Safety of foods offered for sale in Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More safe than unsafe</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More unsafe than safe</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know, no answer</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to 08/2019:
- Safe: -1%
- More safe than unsafe: +4%
- More unsafe than safe: -3%
- Unsafe: -1%
- Don't know, no answer: ±0%

Percentages “Safe” + “More safe than unsafe”:
(+3)

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)
And how do you estimate in general the safety of the following products which you can buy in Germany?
Safety of products offered for sale in Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>More safe than unsafe</th>
<th>More unsafe than safe</th>
<th>Unsafe</th>
<th>Don't know, no answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to 08/2019

-3
-1
-2

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)
Is the quality of our food tending to increase, decrease or stay the same, in your opinion?
Change in food quality

- Tending to increase: 15%
- Tending to stay the same: 38%
- Tending to decrease: 45%
- Don’t know, no answer: 2%

Compared to 08/2019:

- Tending to increase: (−1)
- Tending to stay the same: (±0)
- Tending to decrease: (+1)
- Don’t know, no answer: (±0)

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)
Is the safety of our food tending to increase, decrease or stay the same, in your opinion?
Change in food safety

- Tending to increase: 31%
- Tending to stay the same: 46%
- Tending to decrease: 21%
- Don’t know, no answer: 2%

Compared to 08/2019:
- (+4)
- (±0)
- (–3)
- (–1)

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)
To what extent do you trust that state authorities in Germany protect the health of consumers?
Trust in state authorities to protect health

- I trust them: 38% (+4)
- I tend to trust them: 54% (+1)
- I tend to distrust them: 7% (-3)
- I don't trust them: 20% (-2)
- Don't know, no answer: 34% (±0)

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)
How interested are you in consumer health topics?
Interest in consumer health topics

- I am very interested in them: 31%
- I am quite interested in them: 18%
- I am less interested in them: 48%
- I am not at all interested in them: 78%
- Don't know, no answer: 3%

Compared to 08/2019:
- (+3)
- (-1)
- (-2)
- (-1)
- (+1)

Percentages “I am very interested in them” + “I am quite interested in them”:

Basis: 1,122; Figures given in percentages (compared to 08/2019: percentage points)
How were the data collected?

Date of the survey: 29 January to 7 February 2020
Random sample: 1,122
Presentation of results: All figures in percent, rounding differences possible
Population: German-speaking population aged 14 years and over in private households in the Federal Republic of Germany
Sampling: Samples drawn at random from land line and mobile telephone numbers which can also include telephone numbers not listed in directories (in line with standards set by the Association of German Market Research Institutes – ADM)
Data weighting: Data was weighted according to gender, education, age, employment, size of city and German federal state to guarantee representativeness
Method: Telephone interview (CATI omnibus survey, Dual Frame)
Conducted by: Kantar
Previous study: BfR Consumer Monitor 08|2019
About the BfR

Do nanoparticles promote the occurrence of allergies? Does apple juice contain too much aluminium? The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, or BfR for short, is responsible for answering questions on all aspects of the health assessment of foods and feeds, consumer products and chemicals. Through its work, it makes a decisive contribution towards ensuring that food, products and the use of chemicals have become safer in Germany. The Institute’s main tasks comprise the assessment of existing health risks and identification of new ones, the development of recommendations to limit risks and the transparent communication of this process.

This work results in the scientific advice given to political decision makers. To help with the strategic alignment of its risk communication, the BfR conducts its own research in the field of risk perception. The Institute is independent in its scientific assessments, research and communication. The BfR belongs to the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL).
More information at: www.bfr.bund.de/en

Aluminium in food packagings or food containers:
> A-Z Index > A > aluminium

Antimicrobial resistance:
> A-Z Index > A > antimicrobial resistance

Campylobacter in food:
> A-Z Index > C > campylobacter

Carbon monoxide:
> A-Z Index > C > carbon monoxide

Food hygiene:
> A-Z Index > F > food hygiene

Genetically modified food:
> A-Z Index > G > genetically modified foods

Genome editing:
> A-Z Index > G > genome editing

Glyphosate in food:
> A-Z Index > G > glyphosate

Listeria in food:
> A-Z Index > L > listeria monocytogenes

Microplastics in food:
> A-Z Index > M > microplastic

Mycotoxins in food:
> A-Z Index > M > mycotoxins

Residues of plant protection products in food:
> A-Z Index > P > plant protection products

Salmonella in food:
> A-Z Index > S > salmonella
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