



Changes in Consumer Knowledge, Behavior, and Confidence Since the 1996 PR/HACCP Final Rule

Presented at **Thinking Globally — Working Locally: A Conference on Food Safety Education**

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**Orlando, FL
September 18, 2002**

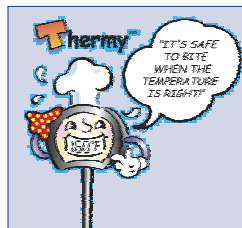


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Purpose

- **USDA, FSIS PR/HACCP Final Rule Evaluation Study:** Measure changes in consumer knowledge, safe food handling practices, and confidence in the safety of meat and poultry since the PR/HACCP farm-to-table initiatives were implemented.





Existing Data Sources

Sponsor	Study	Year(s) of Data Collection
ADA & ConAgra	Home Food Safety Refrigeration Survey	2001
Audits International	Home Food Safety Study	1997, 1999, 2000
CDC, FoodNet	Population Survey	1996/97, 1998/99, 2000/01
FDA & FSIS	Food Safety Survey	1993, 1998, 2001
FDA	Utah State University Study	1999
Penn State University	Food Safety Survey	1998, 1999, 2001

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FSIS-Sponsored Consumer Focus Groups

Study	Population	Year
Food Safety Messages and Delivery Mechanisms http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/research/fsmessages.pdf	General & High Risk	2000
Listeriosis Food Safety Messages and Delivery Mechanisms http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/research/lmfocus.pdf	Pregnant Women	2001
Thermometer Usage Messages and Delivery Mechanisms http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/research/rti_thermy.pdf	Parents of Young Children	2002
Changes in Consumer Knowledge, Behavior, and Confidence	General & High Risk	2002

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Reported vs. Actual Behavior

- In surveys and focus groups, consumers report that they are more knowledgeable about food safety and have improved certain safe handling practices
- However, observation studies show that actual practices often differ from reported practices

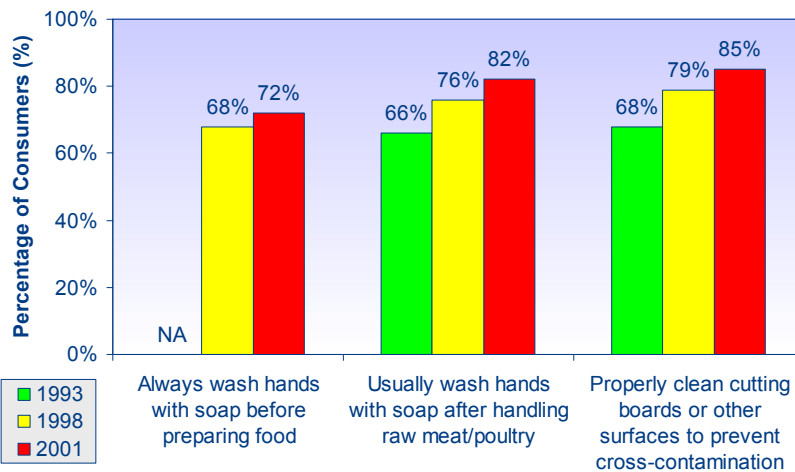
Utah State University Study (1999)

	Reported	Actual
Wash hands all or most of the time before food preparation	87%	45%

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Reported Safe Handling Practices: Clean and Separate (FDA/FSIS Food Safety Survey)

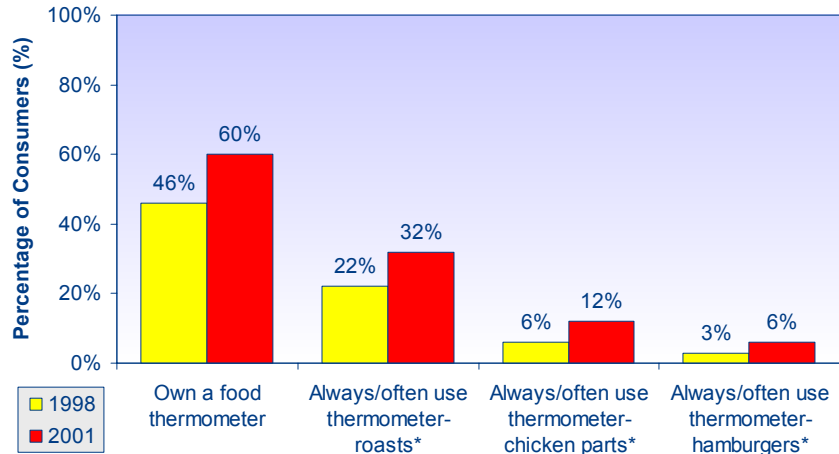


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Reported Safe Handling Practices: Cook (FDA/FSIS Food Safety Survey)



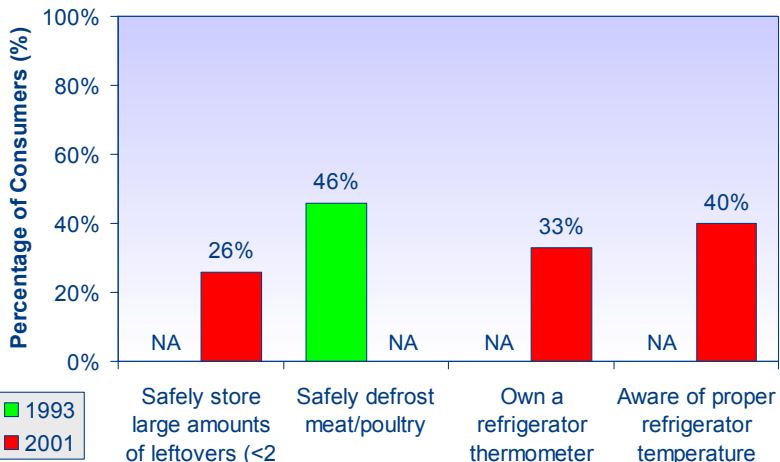
*Includes non-thermometer owners.



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Safe Handling Practices: Chill (FDA/FSIS Food Safety Survey & ADA/ConAgra Home Refrigeration Survey)



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Knowledge of “High-Risk” Foods, High-Risk Populations, and Pathogens

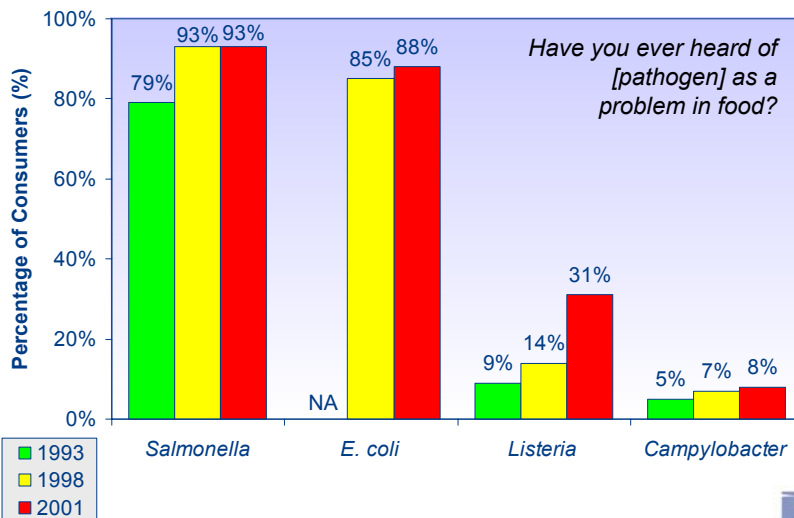
- Perception of meat and poultry as “high-risk” foods has increased
- Limited knowledge of high-risk populations
- Awareness of pathogens has increased; however, consumers do not always follow practices to minimize pathogens



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Awareness of Foodborne Pathogens (FDA/FSIS Food Safety Survey)



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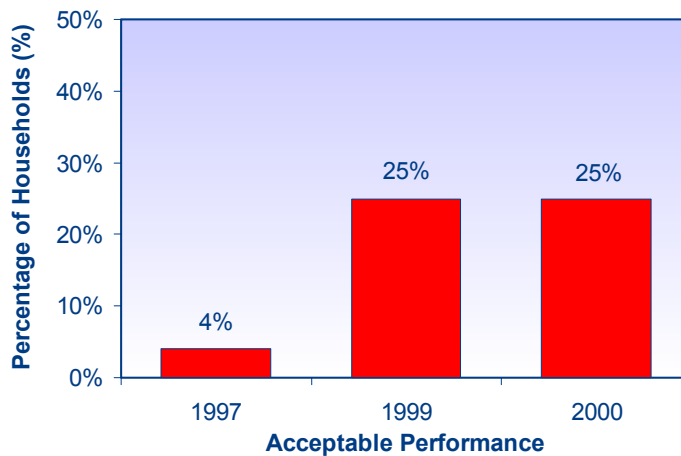
Focus Group Findings on Changes in Consumer Knowledge and Behavior

- Reported changes
 - Switch from wood to plastic cutting boards
 - Defrost foods in refrigerator
 - More conscientious about hand washing
 - Overcook meat and poultry
 - Use food thermometer
- Participants attribute behavioral changes to media coverage of food safety
- Many participants rely on food labels for food safety information

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Audits International Home Food Safety Study



Acceptable Performance = no critical violations and no more than four major violations

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Focus Group Findings on Changes in Consumer Confidence

- Participants' confidence in the safety of meat and poultry has increased or remained about the same
- Participants attribute their increased confidence to media coverage of food safety
- Participants think the government is doing an adequate job keeping meat and poultry safe
- Most participants think the government has not improved its performance in the past 5 years

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Consumer Confidence in the Safety of Meat and Poultry

- Most consumers willingly accept responsibility for ensuring that the food they eat is safe
- Most consumers are confident that the meat and poultry they prepare at home is safe to eat
- Consumers worry more about how meat and poultry are handled prior to purchase than about how they handle it at home
 - Believe foodborne illness originates in food processing plants and restaurants, not their homes
 - Concerns about antibiotic residues
 - Concerns about food transportation

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Conclusions (I)

- Consumers' reported knowledge and use of safe handling practices have increased; however, when observed consumers do not always follow safe practices
- Although the self-reported use of some practices has increased, additional improvements are warranted
 - Food thermometer use
 - Safely storing leftovers
 - Safely thawing meat/poultry



Conclusions (II)

- Consumers have some knowledge about foodborne pathogens, "high-risk" foods, and high-risk populations, but their knowledge is sometimes wrong or incomplete
- Consumer confidence in the safety of meat and poultry has increased or remained about the same
- Consumers are satisfied with the government's performance at ensuring the safety of meat and poultry

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