

Protecting consumers

Data supplement: Consumer awareness survey



Prepared for the Accounts Commission
January 2013

The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body which, through the audit process, requests local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has four main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit, including the audit of Best Value and Community Planning
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- carrying out national performance studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 45 joint boards and committees (including police and fire and rescue services).

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

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Background and methodology

Background

1. As part of our performance audit on consumer protection, Audit Scotland commissioned TNS BMRB to research consumer awareness among the Scottish population through its *Omnibus, Scottish Opinion Survey*. This report presents data not published in our main report.¹

Methodology

2. A sample of 1,006 adults was interviewed in 69 Scottish Parliament constituencies throughout Scotland between 25 July and 1 August 2012. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, in-home, using computer assisted personal interviewing and quota sampling. To ensure a representative sample of the adult Scottish population in terms of age, sex and socio-economic group, it was weighted to match population estimates from the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board Establishment Survey (2 years ending December 2008) and the 2001 Census. Exhibits in this report use the weighted sample.

Sample: 1,006		Unweighted %	Weighted %
Gender	Male	45	48
	Female	55	52
Age	Age 16-24	10	14
	Age 25-34	13	15
	Age 35-44	16	18
	Age 45-54	19	18
	Age 55-64	16	15
	Age 65+	26	20
Socio-economic group	AB	22	20
	C1	24	27
	C2	23	22
	DE	31	31

¹ Protecting consumers, Audit Scotland, 2013. www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

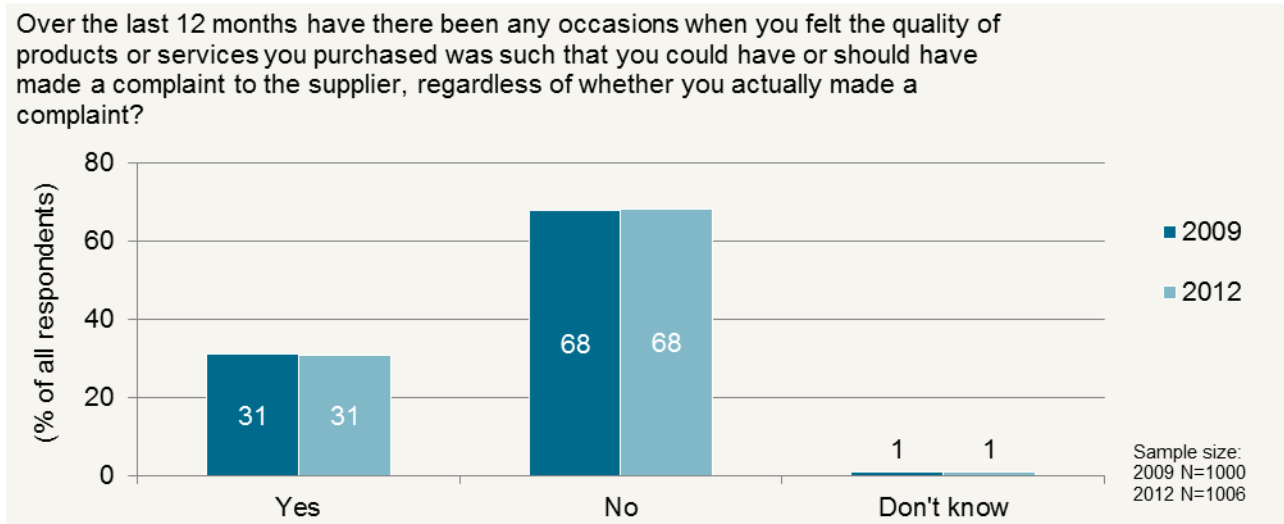
3. Some exhibits include results from a similar survey commissioned by Consumer Focus Scotland in 2009.² However, there are some slight differences in the methodology between the two surveys, so we need to be cautious about making direct comparisons. The 2009 survey was carried out by IPSOS MORI as part of its *Scotland's Public Service Monitor*. Its methodology was based on:
 - 1,000 telephone interviews
 - interviews conducted between 20 August and 31 August 2009
 - a quota sample which was weighted using national data on age, sex, working status and housing tenure
 - only half the sample being asked the scenario questions (ie, an average sample size of just under 500 for each scenario question)
 - in the scenario questions, no follow-up question to those who said they would contact the supplier first, about who they would contact after that, if the supplier failed to resolve the problem
 - no questions about problems with food.
4. In both the 2009 and 2012 surveys, respondents were not shown lists of possible answers to any questions.

² Cause for complaint? How consumers deal with problems with goods and services in Scotland, Consumer Focus Scotland, 2010.

Data

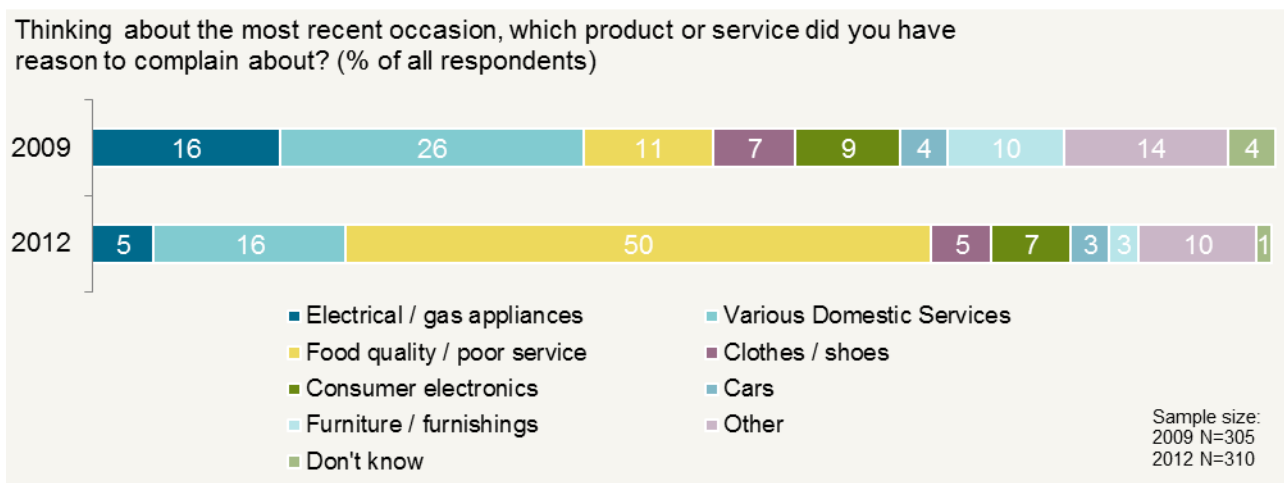
Percentage of consumers who had reason to complain

In both 2009 and 2012, nearly a third of respondents felt they had reason to complain about the quality of products or services they purchased in the last year.



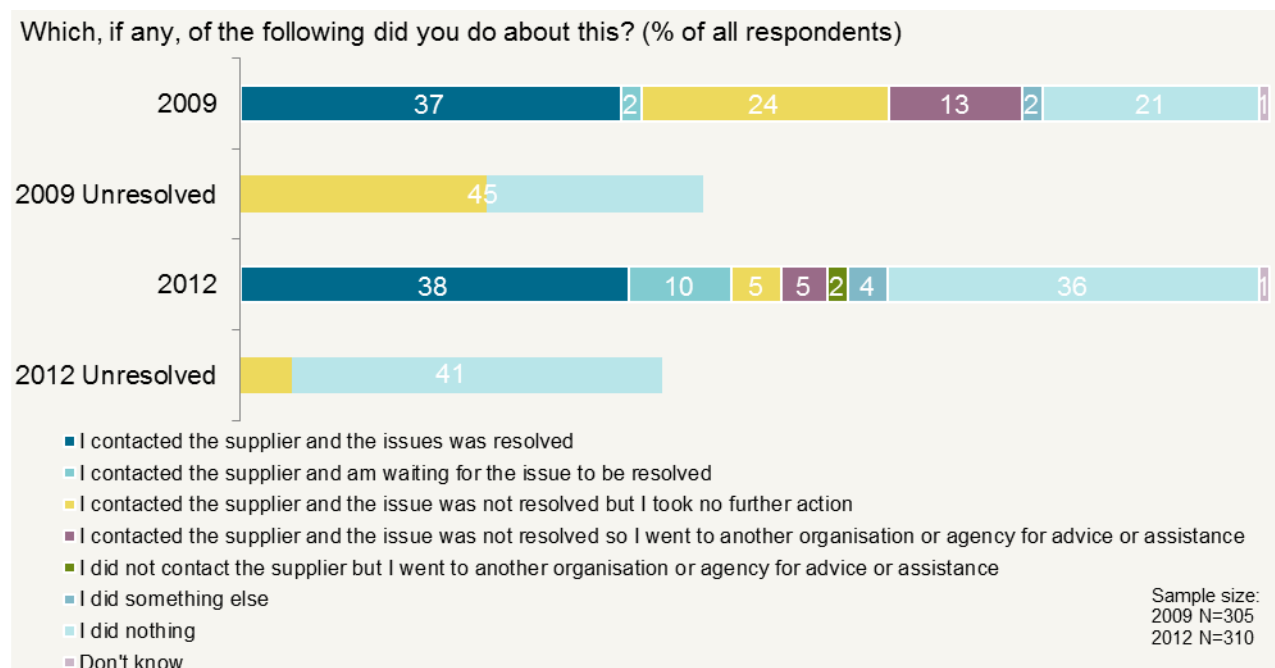
Product or service consumers had reason to complain about

The percentage of respondents with reason to complain about food quality or service was substantially higher in 2012 than in 2009: 50 per cent in 2012 compared to 11 per cent in 2009. We do not know why.



Action consumers took when they had reason to complain

In both surveys, nearly two-fifths of respondents contacted the supplier and the issue was resolved (37 per cent in 2009; 38 per cent in 2012). Forty-one per cent of respondents said their issue remained unresolved in 2012 compared to 45 per cent in the 2009 survey, either because they did nothing about it (36 per cent in 2012) or the supplier failed to resolve it (5 per cent in 2012). The number of people who did nothing about their complaint rose from 21 per cent in 2009 to 36 per cent in 2012.

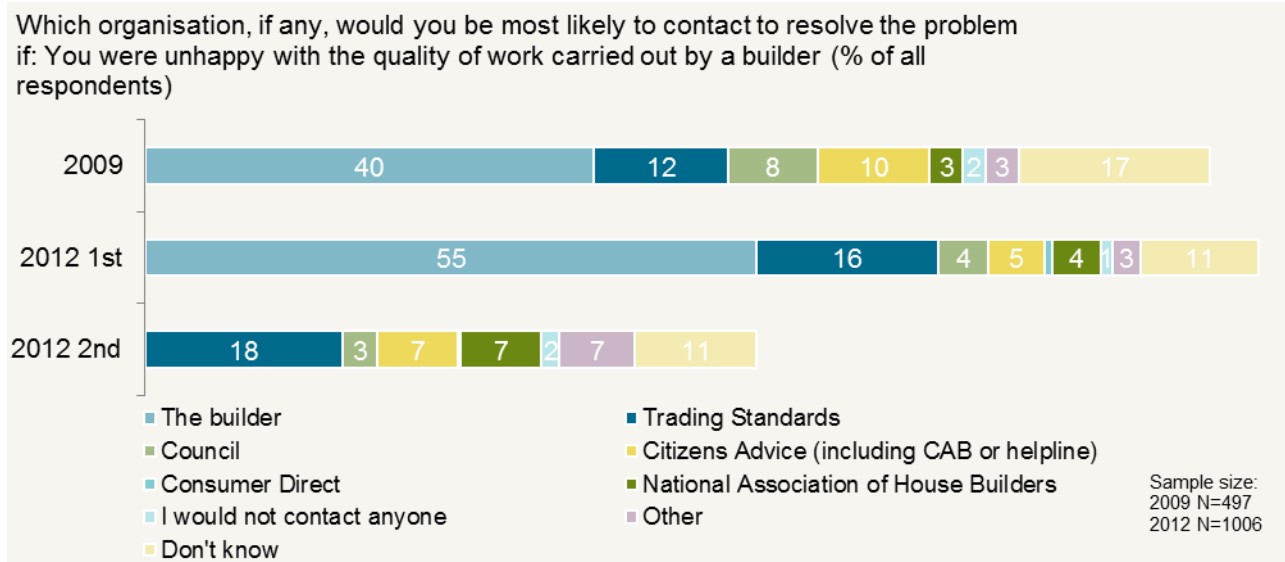


Who consumers would contact for different types of problems

- The following exhibits show which organisations respondents would contact in a number of scenarios. Respondents in 2012 who stated they were most likely to contact the supplier first (2012 1st), were also asked who they would contact second (2012 2nd) if the supplier failed to resolve the problem. Only four of the scenarios we used were also used in the 2009 survey.
- In all scenarios, people who contact Citizens Advice (or Consumer Direct) may be referred to trading standards or environmental health, depending on the issue. People who contact 'the council', or the wrong service within a council, are also likely to be passed on to trading standards or environmental health services, as appropriate.

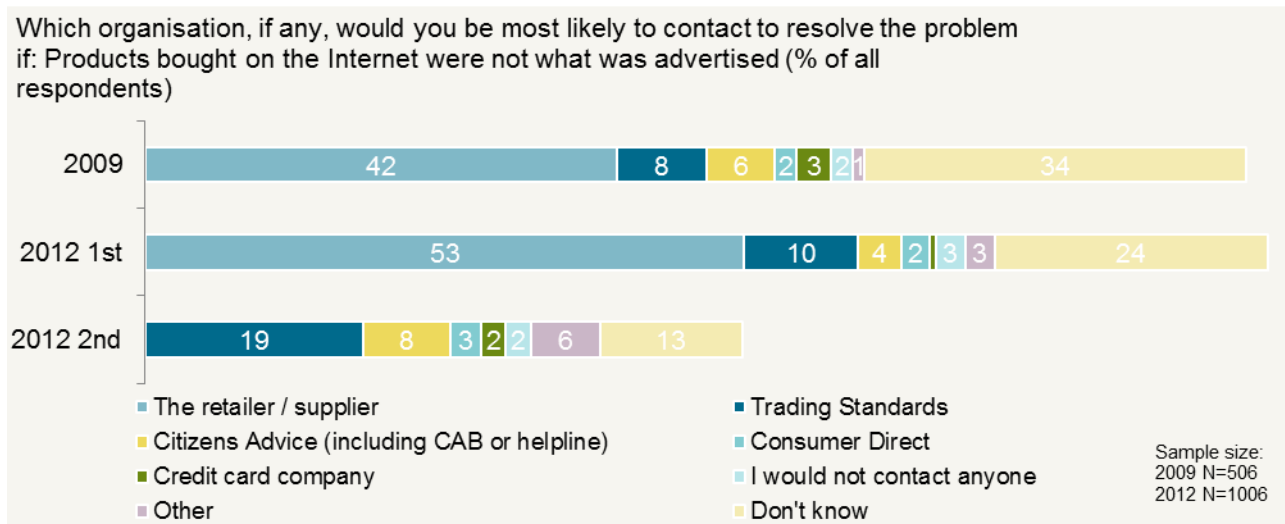
Scenario: quality of a builder's work

In the 2012 survey, 55 per cent of respondents would raise their complaint first with the builder. Twenty-one per cent would go to trading standards first (including those who would go to the council), and a further 21 per cent would do so if the builder failed to resolve their problem.



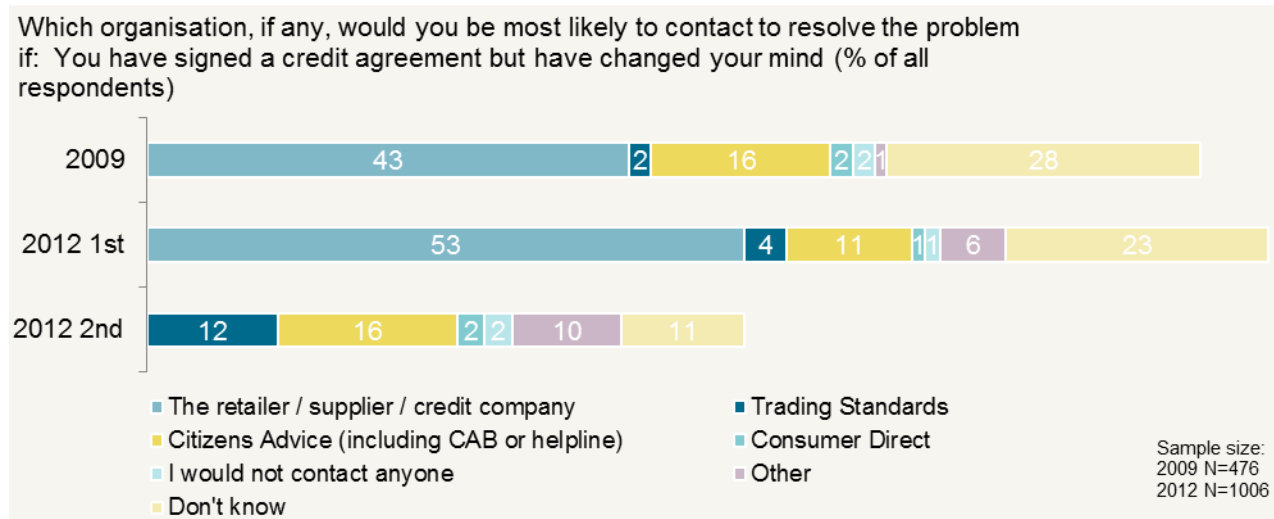
Scenario: products bought on the Internet

In the 2012 survey, 53 per cent of respondents would raise their complaint first with the retailer / supplier. Ten per cent would go to trading standards first, and a further 19 per cent would do so if the retailer / supplier failed to resolve their problem.



Scenario: signed credit agreement

In the 2012 survey, 53 per cent of respondents would raise their complaint first with the retailer / supplier / credit company. Four per cent would go to trading standards first, and a further 12 per cent would do so if the retailer / supplier / credit company failed to resolve their problem.



Scenario: car bought in a private sale

In the 2012 survey, 50 per cent of respondents would raise their complaint first with the retailer / supplier. Seven per cent would go to trading standards first, and a further 14 per cent would do so if the retailer / supplier failed to resolve their problem.



7. In the previous four scenarios, where comparative data is available from 2009, the percentage of respondents contacting the supplier first has increased between nine and fifteen per cent.

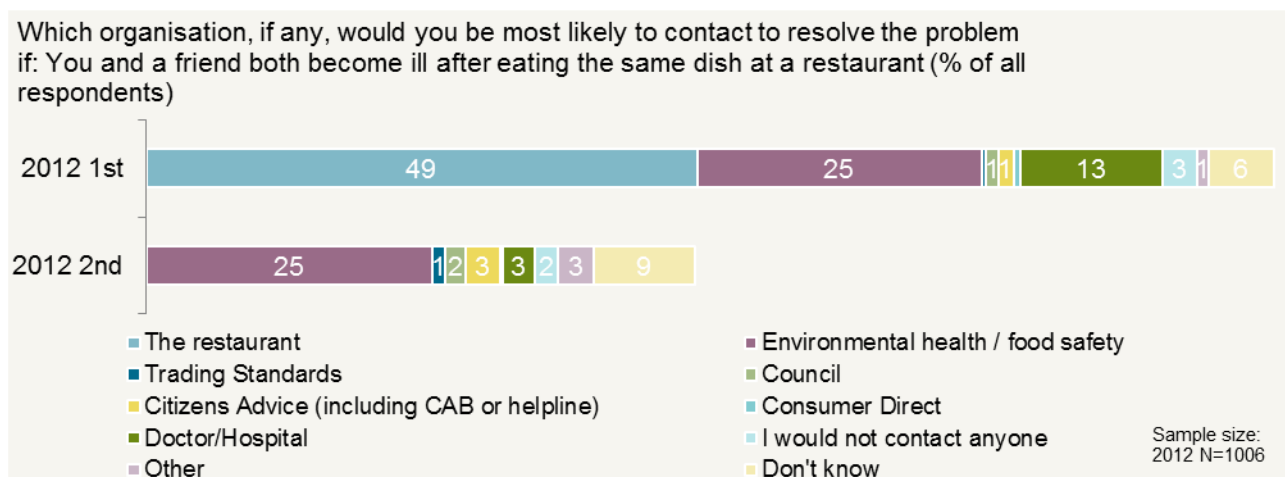
Scenario: glass in a loaf of bread

Over three quarters of respondents (77 per cent) would raise their complaint with the retailer / baker. Fifty-four per cent of respondents would contact environmental health (or the council, or trading standards) either first (15 per cent) or after the retailer / baker had failed to resolve it (39 per cent).



Scenario: becoming ill after eating at a restaurant

Nearly half of respondents (49 per cent) would raise their complaint with the restaurant. Fifty-five per cent of respondents would contact environmental health (or the council, or trading standards) either first (27 per cent) or after the restaurant had failed to resolve it (28 per cent).



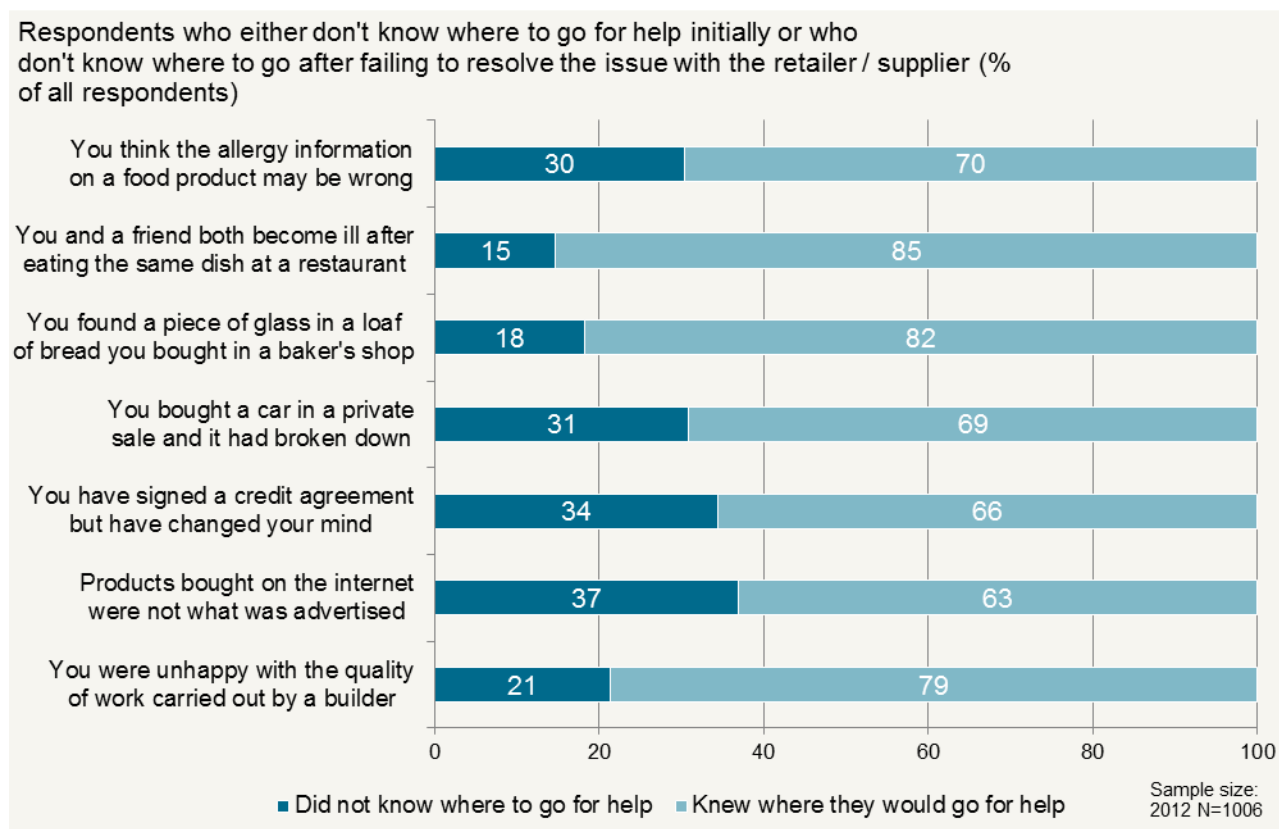
Scenario: allergy information on a food product

Nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) would raise their complaint with the retailer / supplier or manufacturer. Twenty-three per cent of respondents would contact environmental health (or the council, or trading standards) either first (15 per cent) or after the retailer / supplier had failed to resolve it (8 per cent).



Consumers who do not know where to go for help

Over a third of respondents did not know where they would go for help if they had a problem with an Internet purchase (37 per cent) or with changing their mind after signing a credit agreement (34 per cent).



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