



Office for Product
Safety & Standards

Attitudes to Product Safety among Small Businesses- Technical Report

July 2025



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1. Technical report

1.1 Introduction

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is the UK's national product regulator within the Department for Business and Trade (DBT). OPSS has an aim of strengthening the evidence base for the development of product safety policy, delivery, and enforcement. In 2018 OPSS launched its Strategic Research Programme and strategy for strengthening product safety,¹ which was subsequently updated in 2022.² Central to these initiatives are research projects designed to build upon the OPSS's understanding of the actors within the system, their attitudes, current behaviours and how Government may seek to impact on those behaviours.

It is within this context that OPSS commissioned IFF Research to conduct a qualitative research project exploring how small businesses prioritise and treat product safety. This was identified as an area of interest following findings from research on non-consumer attitudes towards product safety conducted in 2022³ and 2020⁴. These research projects found that smaller businesses were less aware than medium and large sized businesses of their product safety responsibilities and where to find information on matters of product safety.

Fieldwork was commissioned by the Department for Business and Trade and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and conducted by IFF Research, an independent research agency. The research was qualitative and comprised 105 depth interviews stratified by sector, size, type and whether they import. Interviews were carried out between October 2023 and February 2024.

1.2 Research aims

This research was seeking to answer the following questions:

1. How does product safety fit within business priorities?
2. To what extent are risk assessments carried out?
3. To what extent are businesses aware of relevant regulations?
4. What sources of information are used?
5. What interaction do they have with LAs, GOV.UK, PAS, Standards?
6. If they import, how does product safety factor into the process?

1.3 Research design

The research was designed for 105 qualitative depth interviews to be conducted using two sample sources. The first sample source was the Product Safety Database (PSD). The PSD is the secure, restricted website maintained by OPSS to enable Market Surveillance Authorities to report and share product safety information and manage any resulting investigations.

¹ [Strengthening national capacity for product safety: Strategy 2018-2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684442/strategy-2018-2020.pdf)

² [OPSS Product Regulation Strategy 2022-2025](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144442/opss-product-regulation-strategy-2022-2025.pdf)

³ [Product Safety and Industry Wave 2: Main Report](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144442/opss-product-regulation-strategy-2022-2025.pdf)

⁴ [Product Safety and Industry: Main Report](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144442/opss-product-regulation-strategy-2022-2025.pdf)

These businesses were targeted because they had been subject to an intervention from OPSS as having committed some form of infringement related to the safety of their products. This sample was selected so businesses would be able to provide feedback on their experience of OPSS intervention and how their behaviours had changed since.

The remaining 35 were originally designed to come from Market Location a commercial business database.⁵ These businesses would likely not have faced intervention from OPSS and would be able to provide a different perspective on attitudes towards product safety.

As well as focusing on small businesses, the research was designed so that different types of business were targeted. The original targets are shown in table 1. It is worth noting that these targets were not intended to be quotas but instead were created to monitor and ensure that a spread of business types were interviewed. The targets by sector include 15 multi sector businesses, these targets are double counted and were intended to come from businesses which also sold products from the other listed sectors.

Table 1: Original targets

Sector	Product Safety Database	Market location	Total
Furniture	10	5	15
Toys/baby products	10	5	15
Cosmetics	10	5	15
Electronics	10	5	15
Sport/leisure	10	5	15
Clothing/textiles	10	5	15
Other	10	5	15
Multi-sector	10	5	15
Type			
Manufacturer	10	5	15
Retailer/wholesaler – bricks and mortar	20	10	30
Retailer/wholesaler - online own website	20	10	30
Retailer/wholesaler - online 3rd party	20	10	30
Import status			
Yes	15	15	30
No	40	20	60
Size			
Sole traders (0)	10	20	30
Micro (1-9)	10	20	30
Small (10-49)	10	20	30
Medium (50-249)	5	10	15

⁵ Market Location is the market leading database of UK businesses, using AI and its own call centre to keep contacts up to date.

1.4 Sampling

The PSD sample was sent to IFF directly from OPSS, while the Market Location sample was purchased by IFF.

There were some difficulties with the PSD sample which meant that a revised plan was made during the sampling stage. The starting PSD sample contained all the organisations that had faced enforcement action from OPSS in the previous 12 months prior to August 2023 (562 records).

This sample included a number of duplicates, larger, and internationally based businesses. Furthermore, OPSS were only able to send publicly available information and therefore could not share the contact details of the organisations they had been in touch with.

IFF initially cleaned the data, removing multiples of the same business, large businesses, and non-UK businesses. Following this, IFF conducted a sample building exercise, which included an online search for phone numbers and using Market Location to conduct telephone matching on the businesses that did not have a phone number. After this exercise, 106 useable records remained.

Consequently, it was agreed to increase the window of intervention by another year, meaning that an extra sample of businesses that had had some intervention between August 2021 and August 2022 was sent to IFF. After a similar data clean and sample building process was conducted with the additional sample, the final number of contactable businesses was 186.

As a result of this, and before fieldwork began, it was agreed that it was unlikely that the target number of interviews from the PSD sample was going to be achieved. This was due to the smaller than expected number of contactable businesses. A decision was made to prioritise the PSD records to maximise the number of possible interviews, by exhausting the sample, but to make up any shortfall with businesses coming from the Market Location sample. In total 1,800 records were ordered from Market Location, delivered in two batches.

Market Location sample was ordered with the following variables requested:

- Size (sole trader; micro; small; medium).
- Products sold (furniture; toys / baby products; cosmetics; electronics; clothing / textiles)
- Major sector (retailer; wholesaler; manufacturer)
- Import status.

1.5 Fieldwork

Interviews were carried out between October 2023 and February 2024. All interviews were carried out by members of the IFF research teams of IFF senior interviewers, experienced in carrying out interviews among business audiences. Each interview took between 30 minutes and 1 hour to complete. Despite sampling by business type, businesses were asked to self-report their size, type, sector and whether they imported in the screening process. The final breakdown of completed interviews is shown in Table 2. Businesses were able to self-report selling products from multiple sectors and in multiple ways, this means that the totals in sector and type sum to more than 105. IFF sent weekly progress updates to OPSS throughout fieldwork.

Table 2: Completed interviews split by size⁶ and sector

Business type	Sole (0)	Micro (1-9)	Small (10-49)	Medium (50-249)	Total businesses
Manufacturer	4	18	9	15	46
Retailer ⁷ / wholesaler- bricks and mortar	10	31	9	8	58
Retailer / wholesaler- online own website	14	30	10	10	64
Retailer / wholesaler – online third party	7	18	7	7	39
Sector	Sole (0)	Micro (1-9)	Small (10-49)	Medium (50-249)	Total businesses
Furniture	2	6	2	6	16
Toys / baby products	4	3	1	0	8
Cosmetics	3	5	1	2	11
Electronics	1	6	2	1	10
Sports / Leisure	2	4	2	0	8
Clothing / textiles	4	4	3	0	11
Multi	4	11	7	7	29
Other	0	5	4	3	12
Import status	Sole (0)	Micro (1-9)	Small (10-49)	Medium (50-249)	Total businesses
At least some imports	14	37	18	18	87
Total number of interviews (by size)	20	44	22	19	105

PSD recruitment

From the 186 clean records from the PSD sample that IFF used for their recruitment, a total of 8 were converted into interviews. A further 3 were recruited but did not turn up to their booking and attempts to recontact were unsuccessful. The call outcomes of the PSD sample are shown in table 2.

Part of the difficulty of recruiting businesses from this sample was that OPSS were only able to send publicly available information and could not pass on the contact details they had used to intervene with the business.

⁶ Business size is determined by number of employees

⁷ Some businesses self-defined as retailers

It is also worth noting that due to the nature of the PSD sample there may be an element of non-response bias in the responses from the businesses that did take part. Businesses within this sample had been contacted previously by OPSS regarding concerns about the safety of their products, and in some cases OPSS will have delivered enforcement action. This may have left some businesses unhappy or unwilling to take part in the research.

Table 3: PSD sample call outcomes

Call outcome	Number of records	Proportion of records
Completed interviews	8	4%
Booked but interview not complete	3	2%
Voicemail	58	31%
Refused	35	19%
Unreachable ⁸	82	44%

1.6 Screening process

A screening process was included as part of the process of booking interviews. This screening process checked for confirmation from businesses that IFF were speaking to the person responsible for product safety. Additionally, the screener checked eligibility for the survey by checking the status of the business, including size; business type; sector; and import status.

Following this, interviewers confirmed contact details and determine the best time to conduct the interview. The screener can be seen in Appendix A.

1.7 Topic guide

The topic guide was developed in collaboration with OPSS, the final version is shown in Appendix B. The main topic areas from the guide were:

- **Introduction and reassurances** (2 mins) – including reassurances about confidentiality
- **Respondent background** (3 mins) – an overview of the respondent’s business and role within it.
- **Sources of information** (5 mins) – the sources businesses used to information on product safety.
- **Interaction with public bodies** (5 mins) – Interaction with public bodies in relation to product safety.
- **Product safety regulations** (5 mins) – Awareness of regulations including GPSR; PAS7050: 2022; MSAs; and the relevance of these regulations to their business.
- **Direct interaction with OPSS:** (10 minutes: only asked to PSD sample) – Experience of OPSS intervention, how this has changed the business in relation to product safety.
- **Wider impact of OPSS:** (10 mins: only asked to ML sample) – Awareness of, and interaction with OPSS.

⁸ Unreachable records include those where the correct contact could not be reached. This includes numbers being rejected, wrong numbers, nobody at site, businesses not available during fieldwork, closed companies, residential numbers, non-UK based companies and large companies.

- **Importing:** (10 mins) – Extent to which product safety is considered when importing.
- **Manufacturing** (12 mins, only asked to manufacturers) – Extent to which safety is considered when manufacturing products; use of risk assessments; product safety in industry
- **Retailing** (5 mins, only asked to retailers) – Actions taken in told a product was unsafe, use of third-party marketplaces).

1.8 Incentive

Businesses were offered an incentive of £50 if they agreed to take part. Businesses from the Market Location sample were offered this incentive in the form of a voucher payable to the respondent or a charity donation.

For the PSD sample, originally only a charity donation was offered. This was because of the risk of OPSS remunerating businesses that had fallen short of meeting regulatory requirements.

In an attempt to boost recruitment of the PSD sample in January 2024, OPSS and IFF agreed to change the incentive options offered to the PSD sample. Instead of only offering charity donations, IFF introduced an additional option of a £50 incentive paid to the respondent. At this point all the sample had been called and 6 interviews were completed with 2 more booked in. The remaining PSD sample was called again following the introduction of this offer, but no more bookings were achieved, meaning no more businesses took this offer up.

1.9 Analysis framework

Each interview was summarised in an Excel analysis framework. The analysis framework was structured around the topic guide content, with each row corresponding to a participant.

All framework entries were reviewed by the Research Manager to ensure level of detail and quality of the summaries, as well as to maintain anonymity of participants.

1.10 Reassurances

All interviews were conducted with the person in the business responsible for product safety. Reassurances were provided to respondents prior to the survey, including confirmation that data would be reported in a way that would not allow them or their organisation to be identifiable.

If after the first contact the respondent or gatekeeper wanted more information about the survey, a reassurance email was sent. This reassurance email included contact details for individuals working on the project at IFF Research, where respondents could direct any queries or verify the authenticity of the research. A copy of the reassurance email can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A: Screener

S Screener

ASK TELEPHONIST

S1 **Good morning / afternoon. My name is NAME and I'm calling from IFF Research on behalf of the Government Department for Business and Trade.**

[IF SOLE TRADER] **Please could I speak to [NAME FROM SAMPLE]?**

[IF SOLE TRADER BUT NO NAME ON SAMPLE OR NOT SOLE TRADER] **Please can I speak to the person who has responsibility for making product and product safety decisions.**

[IF NOT SOLE TRADER] IF NECESSARY: this may be a managing director, operations director or quality assurance manager rather than anyone from your legal department.

Transferred	1	CONTINUE
Hard appointment	2	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Soft Appointment	3	
Engaged	4	CALL BACK
Refusal	5	CLOSE
Refusal – company policy	6	
Refusal – Taken part in recent survey	7	
Nobody at site able to answer questions	8	
Not available in deadline	9	
Fax Line	10	
No reply / Answer phone	11	
Residential Number	12	
Dead line	13	
Company closed	14	
Does not qualify- Business not in scope	15	Close
Does not qualify- (distributor/retailer/wholesaler that says they don't have any product safety responsibilities)	16	Go to s2a

Request reassurance email		COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS THEN CONTINUE OR MAKE APPOINTMENT (SEE APPENDIX FOR EMAIL TEXT)
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ASK ALL

S2 **Good morning / afternoon, my name is NAME, calling from IFF Research, an independent market research company. We'd like to invite you to take part in some important research that we are conducting for the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and the Office for Product Safety & Standards (OPSS).**

[IF Market Location Sample] **The research concerns industry awareness, and attitudes towards product safety protocols and regulations and will help the Department for Business and Trade develop their understanding of business attitudes and tailor their communication accordingly.**

IF OPSS SAMPLE: We believe that you had some communication, an email or a phone call, about one or more of your products around DATE? [IF HAS PRODUCT CATEGORY] According to our records, the specific product OPSS inquired about was [product sub-cat.]

IF NECESSARY: [IF HAS PRODUCT_BRAND: The brand was [product_brand]

IF NECESSARY: The product was [product_name]

IF NECESSARY: [IF HAS PRODUCT DESCRIPTION The description of the product was given to us as being [product_description]]

IF NECESSARY: The OPSS indicated the action that was taken was [corrective action]

By taking part in this research you will be helping OPSS improve the way they interact with businesses regarding product safety, as well as helping them understand business attitudes towards, and awareness of, product safety and the regulations surrounding it

ASK ALL

The conversation would last around 45 minutes and can be arranged at a time that is convenient to you. As a thank to those who take part, we would offer £50 in the form of a voucher payable to you or charity donation.

Taking part in the research would involve one of IFF's interviewers conducting an interview with you via Microsoft Teams, or by telephone. The interview would explore your thoughts on product safety regulations, where you would find information and support as well as where product safety falls within your business's priorities.

Participation in the research is completely confidential and will not have any impact on any current or future dealings with Department for Business and Trade or OPSS.

Results from the interviews will be reported to DBT in an anonymised and aggregated format so they cannot be linked to you. IFF will not disclose who has taken part in the survey and responses will be used for research purposes only. Your personal details will be stored securely separately to your interview responses and destroyed within 3 months of taking part.

Our research adheres to GDPR legislation, and this call as well as the interview will be conducted in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. If you were to take part you would have the right to have a copy of your data, change your data or withdraw from the research at any point.

Based on this information, would you be willing to take part in an interview?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE
Does not qualify- Business not in scope	6	THANK AND CLOSE
Does not qualify- (distributor/retailer/wholesaler that says they don't have any product safety responsibilities)	7	Go to S2a
Request reassurance email	5	COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS THEN CONTINUE OR MAKE AN APPOINTMENT (SEE APPENDIX FOR EMAIL TEXT)

ASK IF SAY NOT QUALIFIED BUT IS A RETAILER / DISTRIBUTOR OR WHOLESALER (S1=16 OR S2=7)

S2a Government guidance states that retailers, distributors and wholesalers have some responsibility to ensure compliance to safety standards. Such as labelling or marking products in line with regulations. Can I check whether you do anything like this?

DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.

Yes	1	Loop back to S2
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE.

ASK ALL

S3 And can I just double check, do you have responsibility for making product and product safety decisions and are you aware of your business's interactions with DBT / OPSS?

DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	ASK FOR THE NAME OF A MORE SUITABLE INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR CONTACT DETAILS AND RE-INTRODUCE AT S2.
Don't know	3	IF REFUSE TO REFER, THANK AND CLOSE.

THANK AND CLOSE: Thank you for your time but unfortunately we are looking to speak to the person who is responsible for making product and product safety decisions within the business.

S4 This call will be recorded for quality and training purposes only.

REASSURANCES TO USE IF NECESSARY

The interview will take around 45 minutes to complete.

Please note that all data will be reported in aggregate form and your answers will not be reported to our client in any way that would allow you to be identified.

If respondent wishes to confirm validity of survey or get more information about aims and objectives, they can call:

- **MRS: Market Research Society on 0800 975 9596**
- **IFF: Joseph Charsley or Shannon Earl at ProductSafety@IFFResearch.com or on 0207 250 3035**
- **DBT: Hannah Lockley at Hannah.Lockley@businessandtrade.gov.uk**

READ OUT TO ALL

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research. I just need to check a couple of things to confirm that you are eligible to take part.

Main screening questions

ASK TO OPSS SAMPLE

- A1 **The Department for Business and Trade passed your details onto us because their records indicate that your business has undertaken some corrective action on one of your products. Can you confirm that is the case?**

ADD IF NECESSARY: The corrective action occurred around [corrective_action_date_decided] [IF HAS PRODUCT SUBCATEGORY: and was taken on (a) [product subcategory]].

DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE
Don't know	3	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL

- A2 **How many people does your business employ?**

DO NOT READ OUT. RECRUITER TO FILL IN.

0 - I am a sole trader	1	CONTINUE
1-9	2	CONTINUE
10-49	3	CONTINUE
50-249	4	CONTINUE
250+	5	THANK AND CLOSE

Refuse	6	THANK AND CLOSE
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Thank and close text: thank you for your interest but we are only looking to speak to businesses that have fewer than 250 employees.

ASK ALL

A3 Which of the following describes your business?

READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

A manufacturer of products	1	CONTINUE
A retailer or wholesaler that distributes its products through a physical presence / a brick-and-mortar business <i>IF NECESSARY: you sell your products in an establishment with a physical presence in a building or other structure.</i>	2	CONTINUE
A retailer or wholesaler that distributes its products online through its own website	3	CONTINUE
A retailer or wholesaler that distributes its products online through 3rd party websites e.g. Ebay / Amazon	4	CONTINUE
Refuse	5	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE OPTION SELECTED

A3a And of these, what would you consider to be your primary activity?

ADD IF NECESSARY: *This may be the one that takes up the most of the business' time or contributes to the largest portion of your business's revenue.*

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE. DS PIPE IN RESPONSES FROM A3

A manufacturer of products	1	
A retailer or wholesaler that distributes its products through a physical presence / a brick-and-mortar business <i>IF NECESSARY: you sell your products in an establishment with a physical presence in a building or other structure.</i>	2	
A retailer or wholesaler that distributes its products online through its own website	3	
A retailer or wholesaler that distributes its products online through 3rd party websites e.g. Ebay / Amazon	4	
Refuse	5	

ASK ALL

A4 Which of the following products do you [IFA3=1: manufacture?] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell?]

READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Furniture	1	CONTINUE
Toys or baby clothes	2	CONTINUE
Cosmetics	3	CONTINUE
Electronics	4	CONTINUE
Sport / Leisure	5	CONTINUE
Clothing / Textiles	6	CONTINUE
Other (Specify)	7	CONTINUE
Refuse	5	THANK AND CLOSE

A4Dum **DUMMY VARIABLE, DO NOT ASK**

Multi-sector?

Yes	1	A4>1
No	2	1 of A4 selected

ASK IF A4=1

A5 You mentioned that you [IFA3=1: manufacture] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell] furniture, do you specialise in any of the following?

READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Sofa	1
Bed	2
Curtains	3
Carpets / Rugs	4
Tables / side tables	5
Chest of drawers / wardrobes	6

Office furniture	7
Home office furniture	8
Other (please specify)	9
Refuse	10

ASK IF A4=2

- A6 **You mentioned that you [IFA3=1: manufacture] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell] Toys or baby clothes, do you specialise in any of the following?**
READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Baby toys	1
Sports toys	2
Board games	3
Dolls / action figures	4
Construction toys	5
Building blocks	6
Craft toys (e.g, painting, necklace kits etc.)	7
Other (please specify)	9
Prefer not to say	10

ASK IF A4=3

- A7 **You mentioned that you [IFA3=1: manufacture] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell] cosmetics, do you specialise in any of the following?**
READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Make-up	1
Toothpaste	2
Moisturiser	3
Shampoo / shower gel	4
Hair dye	5
Hand wash	6

Other (please specify)	7
Prefer not to say	8

ASK IF A4=4

- A8 **You mentioned that you [IFA3=1: manufacture] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell] electronics, do you specialise in any of the following?**
READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Laptops / tablets / mobile phones	1
Chargers	2
Speakers / Headphones	3
Small kitchen appliances (e.g. toasters, kettles, blenders, microwaves)	4
Electronics games / consoles	5
Vacuum cleaners	6
Smart home devices (e.g. Smart speakers / assistants / smart thermostats)	7
Other (please specify)	8
Prefer not to say	9

ASK IF A4=5

- A9 **You mentioned that you [IFA3=1: manufacture] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell] sport / leisure items, do you specialise in any of the following?**
READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Indoor exercise equipment (e.g. treadmills, stationary bikes, weights, yoga mats etc.)	1
Bikes and accessories	2
Sports equipment (e.g. tennis rackets, golf clubs, footballs etc.)	3
Musical instruments	4
Books	5
Gardening tools equipment	6
Camping equipment	7

Arts and crafts supplies	8
Other (please specify)	9
Prefer not to say	10

ASK IF A4=6

A10 **You mentioned that you [IFA3=1: manufacture] [IF A3=2,3,4: sell] clothing and / or textiles, do you specialise in any of the following?**

READ OUT. MULTI CODE.

Footwear	1
Sportswear / leisurewear	2
Bags	3
Jewellery	4
Clothing	5
Other (please specify)	8
Prefer not to say	9

ASK IF A3=2,3,4

A11 **Which of the following best describes how you obtain the products you sell?**

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.

All the products we sell are imported	1	CONTINUE
Some of the products we sell are imported	2	CONTINUE
None of the products we sell are imported	3	CONTINUE
Don't know	4	CONTINUE
Refuse	5	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK IF A3=1

A11a **Which of the following best describes how you source the materials that you use to manufacture your products?**

READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.

All the materials we use are imported	1	CONTINUE
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Some of the materials we use are imported	2	CONTINUE
None of the materials we use are imported	3	CONTINUE
Don't know	4	CONTINUE
Refuse	5	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL

A12 **Thank you very much. Interviews will be taking place between now and 28th February**

When in the next week or so would be most convenient for you to complete the interview? As mentioned earlier, it will last around 45 minutes.

Full Name of Participant [MANDATORY FIELD]	WRITE IN
Participant Job Title	WRITE IN
Appointment Time	WRITE IN
Appointment Date	WRITE IN
Type of interview	Teams / Zoom / Telephone
Contact number EITHER NUMBER OR EMAIL MANDATORY, REQUIRE ONE BUT NOT BOTH	WRITE IN
Contact email address EITHER NUMBER OR EMAIL MANDATORY, REQUIRE ONE BUT NOT BOTH	WRITE IN
ANY OTHER INSTRUCTIONS	WRITE IN

ASK IF PROVIDED AN APPOINTMENT DATE AND TIME AT A12

A13 **We will send you an email and calendar invite to confirm the agreed date and time for this interview. Please look out for these in your inbox.**

Just to confirm, we'll be keeping your anonymised responses to the interview for analysis purposes and if you'd like a copy of your data, to change your data or for your data to be deleted then please go to <http://www.iffresearch.com/gdpr/> for more information.

You can withdraw from the research at any point. If you would like to withdraw from the research, if you would like to rearrange your appointment or have any other questions about the research you can get in touch with Shannon Earl (shannon.earl@iffresearch.com), or Joe Charsley (joseph.charsley@iffresearch.com) or call 020 7250 3035.

IF NEEDED: You also have a right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and you can do so by calling their helpline on 0303 123 1113.

Appendix B: Topic guide

A Introduction (2 mins)

Introduction

Good morning / afternoon. My name is [NAME] and I work for IFF Research, an independent research company. As was outlined in the call you had with us previously, we've been commissioned by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) to conduct research into industry attitudes towards product safety protocols. Thank you for taking the time to speak to us today.

Purpose of the research

The project aims to identify businesses' awareness of product safety regulations, how product safety fits within their businesses' priorities, whether risk assessments are carried out, their engagement with public bodies on product safety issues and the sources of information they use.

The interview should last up to 45 minutes.

IFF Research is an independent market research company, operating under the strict guidelines of the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. We will not pass any of your details on to the Office for Product Safety and Standards, The Department for Business and Trade or any other companies. It will not be possible to identify any individual or individual company in the results and the answers you give will not be traced back to you.

Findings from the interviews will be reported to the OPSS and DBT in an anonymised and aggregated format so they cannot be linked to you. IFF will not disclose who has taken part in the survey and responses will be used for research purposes only. Your personal details will be stored securely separately to your interview responses and destroyed within 3 months of the end of the research expected to be March 2024.

Additionally, under data protection law (GDPR), you have the right to have a copy of your data, to change your data, or withdraw from the research at any point. Further information about this can be found on our website at: www.iffresearch.com/gdpr/

Check permission to record – just so I don't have to rely solely on taking notes.

- ADD IF NECESSARY: The recording will be stored on an encrypted area of our server at IFF and only the IFF researchers and IFF's in-house quality assurers will have access to it.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Respondent background (3 mins)

A1 **First of all, please could you tell me a little about your business?**

From your discussion with my colleague you discussed your business being a [TYPE], operating in [SECTOR], employing approximately [EMPLOYEE SIZE].

Do you agree with this summary?

IF NOT: PROBE FOR CORRECT SECTOR, SIZE AND TYPE.

A2 **Could you tell me a bit about your role within it?**

Product safety (5 mins)

A3 **Currently what are the biggest challenges facing your business?**

A4 **What are the businesses' main priorities?**

A5 **Where does product safety fit within those priorities?**

- **Why do you say that?**

A6 **Can you describe how your business typically manages product safety?**

How do the different players / organisations in your supply chain interact to ensure product safety?

Sources of information (5 mins)

Thanks for that. I'd now like to find out a bit more about the sources your business uses to find information on product safety.

A7 **If you wanted to know more about the safety rules of one of your products, where would you search for information?**

A8 **Do you feel like your business has the resources and support to ensure that high standards of product safety are upheld?**

- IF YES: What resources/support is most useful?
- IF NO: What additional resource/support is needed?
- Is there any additional guidance or guidelines that would be useful?

A9 **Are you aware of any business support organisations? Do you interact with any?**

A9a **IF NOT MENTIONED: Such as incubators, accelerators, growth hubs?**

- IF YES: Have you ever interacted with them.
 - IF NO: EXPLANATION OF EACH Now that you are aware, would you use these to help support you ensure that high standards of product safety are upheld.
- **Incubator:** Business incubators provide start-ups and early-stage businesses with the support and resources those young companies find difficult to access. Their support might involve access to networks, investors and mentors, or co-working space alongside other businesses and experienced professionals.
 - **Accelerator:** Gives developing companies access to mentorship, investors and other support that help them become stable, self-sufficient businesses.
 - **Growth hubs:** Work across the country with local and national, public and private sector partners - co-ordinating local business support and connecting businesses to the right help for their needs.

Interaction with public bodies (5 mins)

Thanks for that. I'd now like to discuss your businesses interaction with public bodies.

A10 **Have you had interactions with any of the following regarding your products:**

- **Your local authority**
 - IF YES: For what reason have you interacted with them?
 - Have you ever discussed product safety?

- **Gov.uk or other central government information sources**
 - IF YES: For what reason have you interacted with them?
 - Have you ever discussed product safety?

- **Trade associations, citizens advice or other business groups**
 - IF YES: For what reason have you interacted with them?
 - Have you ever discussed product safety?

A11 **Does your business have a Primary Authority partnership?**

IF NECESSARY: Primary authority is a means for businesses to receive assured and tailored advice (primary authority advice) on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact. Primary authority is based on legal partnerships between businesses and individual local authorities and / or fire and rescue authorities. Businesses can set up their own partnership or belong to a trade association (or other type of group) with an existing partnership.

- IF YES: Have you ever discussed product safety with your partnership? And how was the advice?

A12 **Are you aware of the following institutions...**

- **British Standards Institution**

- **The UK Accreditation System (UKAS)**
 - FOR EACH YES Have you interacted or engaged with them?
 - IF YES How well is your business able to uphold the standards they set?
 - What about other businesses within your industry?

Product safety regulations (5 mins)

A13 **To what extent are you aware of product safety regulations that are relevant to your products?**

- Are there any specific ones that come to mind?
- IF NOT MENTIONED: Are you aware of the GPSR- General Product Safety Regulations 2005?

A14 **Are you aware of PAS 7050:2022 Bringing safe products to the market code of practice?**

- IF NECESSARY: PAS 7050 is a code of practice published by the British Standards Institution and gives practical guidance on systems and processes to enable the production and delivery of safe consumer products.
- IF YES: Is this useful? How could this be improved?

A15 **Are you familiar with your obligations to notify the Market Surveillance Authority should you be notified or identify that one of your products is unsafe? This could be a product that you manufactured, imported, or distributed.**

- IF YES: Have you ever had to do this? How did you feel about doing this?
- IF NO: What would be your businesses current protocol be if this happened?

A16 **To what extent has your business found product safety regulations accessible and understandable?**

A17 **To what extent has your business found product safety regulations easy to implement?**

- To what extent does your business rely on external organisations for product safety testing?

IF NOT ALREADY EMERGED:

A18 **How did you reach the decision that product safety regulations are not relevant to your business? Was it easy to reach this decision?**

- Why?
- Do you have any concerns that you may be unaware of regulations that are applicable to your business?

SECTION ONLY TO BE ASKED TO THE OPSS SAMPLE

Direct interactions with the OPSS (10 mins)

Just to remind you, participation in the research is completely confidential and will not have any impact on any current or future dealings with HMRC or the OPSS.

- A19 **Can you talk through your businesses experience of your interaction with the OPSS?**
- What was it regarding?
 - Was enforcement action taken against you?
 - IF YES: What was the enforcement action?
- A20 **Aside from the outcome, how could your businesses' interaction with the OPSS have been improved?**
- A21 **How did product safety fit within business priorities before interaction with the OPSS?**
- What protocols were in place?
 - Were risk assessments carried out?
 - To what extent were you aware of relevant product safety regulations before interaction with the OPSS?
 - To what extent were you aware of product safety information sources before interaction with the OPSS?
- A22 **KEY QUESTION: How has this changed since your interaction with the OPSS?**
- KEY PROMPT: What has been introduced within the business since then?
 - KEY PROMPT: How has awareness of regulations changed?
 - IF MORE AWARE: How has this awareness around product safety impacted your business and your products.
 - Have you engaged with business support groups since your interaction with the OPSS?
 - IF CHANGES IMPLEMENTED: What have been the benefits of implementing these changes?
 - What have been the challenges?

Wider impact of the OPSS (10 mins)

- A23 **Has your businesses interacted with the OPSS / Department for Business and Trade?**
- IF SO: What was it regarding?
 - IF SO: How could your businesses' interaction with the OPSS have been improved?
- A24 **How, if at all, does the OPSS influence the prioritisation of product safety in your business?**
- Has it impacted any protocols that in place?
 - Are risk assessments carried out?
 - To what extent are you aware of relevant product safety regulations because of the OPSS?
 - To what extent were you aware of product safety information sources because of the OPSS?
- A25 **How, if at all, has the introduction of new product safety Codes of Practice, such as PAS7100 and 7050, impacted your business?**
- What has been introduced within the business since then?
 - How has awareness of regulations changed?
 - IF MORE AWARE: How has this awareness around product safety impacted your business and your products.
 - IF CHANGES IMPLEMENTED: What have been the benefits of implementing these changes?
 - What have been the challenges

SECTION NOW ASKED TO ALL BUT SKIP IF H1=NO

Importing (10 mins)

A26 **Do you import any of your products or materials to the UK?**

A27 **Can you please talk me through how you import your products?**

A28 **Do you use UK ports to import your products? IF YES: Which port do you use most frequently when importing your products?**

- Can you talk me through your decision to utilise that port
- Have you ever had your products stopped by customs control?

A29 **What factors does your business considers when deciding to import a product?**

PROBE ON:

- Price
- Quality
- Speed
- Suitability

A30 **To what extent is product safety considered importing products?**

- Is it a priority?

A31 **Where would you look if you wanted to understand the regulations on importing products?**

A32 **What do you think the implications are for businesses that do not abide by the regulations when importing products?**

A33 **If a business was not meeting regulations how likely do you think it would be that they would be identified by authorities?**

SECTION ONLY TO BE ASKED TO MANUFACTURERS

Manufacturing (12 mins)

A34 **What are the main materials your businesses sources to manufacture your products?**

PROBE ON:

- Materials that are ordered in the highest quantity.
- Materials that have the most cost spent on them.
- Any materials are to be considered a product safety risk?

A35 **When sourcing your materials what are the main things that you consider?**

PROBE ON:

- Price
- Quality
- Speed
- Suitability

A36 **To what extent is product safety considered when sourcing materials?**
IF THEY SOURCE THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS PROBE ABOUT THEM SPECIFICALLY

- Timber
- Recycled materials
-

A37 **To what extent is it a challenge to ensure high product safety standards when sourcing your materials?**

A38 **Whan manufacturing your materials what are the most important considerations?**

PROBE ON:

- Price
- Quality
- Speed

A39 **To what extent is product safety considered when manufacturing your products?**

A40 **To what extent is it a challenge to manufacture products that adhere to product safety standards?**

A41 **To what extent is it a challenge *within your industry* to manufacture products that adhere to product safety standards?**

A42 **How does your business typically manage product safety risk looking across the whole product life cycle?**

- How is product safety considered in the design process within your industry?

- What other processes are typically in place to manage/mitigate product safety risks?

A43 **Do you or your organisation undertake formal risk assessments?**

- IF YES: what is your process for undertaking risk assessments? What do your risk assessments include?
- IF NOT MENTIONED Does your organisation consider risks looking across the whole product lifecycle?
- How much, would you estimate, does this risk assessment cost to complete [on average e.g. for your main product line]?
- IF YES: do you face any barriers to undertaking risk assessments effectively? If so, what are these barriers?

SECTION ONLY TO BE ASKED TO RETAILERS

Retailing (5 mins)

A44 **What actions does / would your business take if a manufacturer informed you that a product was unsafe?**

A45 **Do you sell any products through third party online marketplaces?**

- If so, do you recall any product safety policies and procedures that were provided?
- IF YES What were they?
- IF YES Do you think these policies / procedures were easy or difficult to follow?

Wrap-up (2 mins)

A46 **We have just one final question. What could regulators do to provide you with more information and support in regards to product safety?**

- At what point in the lifecycle of your product would it be best for regulators to provide your business with support?
- In what format would you like this support?
- Where do you think this support should be coming from?

A47 **[IF OPSS SAMPLE]: As mentioned previously, as a thank you for taking part we would like to make a £50 charity donation on your behalf. Which of the following charities would you like it to go to?**

Great Ormond Street Hospital	
British Heart Foundation	
Macmillan Cancer Support	
Shelter	
Celia Hammond Animal Trust	
Mind	

[IF MARKET LOCATION SAMPLE]: We would like to offer you a £50 payment to say thank you for taking part. Would you prefer this via PayPal, Wise Transfer or through a charity donation from a pre-selected list of charities?

[IF SELECTED WISE OR PAYPAL]: Please can you confirm your email address for us to send the payment,

Explain that the processing of incentives is done through the IFF accounts team and it can take a couple of weeks for their payments to arrive.

IF NEEDED: Wise Transfer - A payment is sent through Wise using respondent's full name and email address. They will then receive an email from Wise notifying them that we have sent them the payment with the instruction to give their bank details so Wise can securely transfer the payment to their bank account. Respondents need to claim their payment within one week of receiving the email from Wise.

WRITE IN RELEVANT DETAILS (RESPONDENT NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS, SELECTED CHARITY)

A48 **Thank you very much for taking the time to speak to us today. Would you be willing for us to call you back regarding:**

This particular study – if we need to clarify any of the information	1	
Other research studies which may be relevant to you	2	
Neither of these	3	

IF CONSENT TO RECONTACT

A49 **And could I just check, is [NUMBER] the best number to call you on?**

Yes	1	
No - write in number	2	

ASK ALL

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

Finally I would just like to confirm that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct. Thank you very much for your help today.

Appendix C: Reassurance email

SUBJECT LINE: More information from IFF Research about research study for the Department for Business and Trade

Reference: [ID]

Dear Sir / Madam,

We recently contacted you about a research study being conducted by IFF Research for the Department for Business and Trade.

The research is looking to gain insight into industry awareness, and attitudes towards product safety and regulations and will help the Department for Business and Trade develop their understanding of business attitudes and tailor their communication accordingly.

The conversation would last around 45 minutes and can be arranged at a time that is convenient to you. As a thank you to those who take part, we would offer £50 in the form of a [IF MARKET LOCATION: voucher payable to you or] charity donation.

Taking part in the research would involve one of IFF's interviewers conducting an interview with you via Microsoft Teams, or by telephone. The interview would explore your thoughts on product safety regulations, where you would find information and support as well as where product safety falls within your business's priorities.

Participation in the research is completely confidential and will not have any impact on any current or future dealings with Department for Trade.

IFF Research is an independent research agency, operating within the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society, the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This means that anything you say during the course of the interview will be in strict confidence and will not be attributed to you personally.

If you would like to find out any further information, please contact Joe Charsley or Shannon Earl at ProductSafety@IFFResearch.com or on 0207 250 3035.

To verify the authenticity of this research with the Department for Business and Trade, please contact Hannah Lockley at Hannah.Lockley@businessandtrade.gov.uk.

We hope you will take part in this research as your views and experiences are very important to us. Many thanks for your time and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Barnes
Director, IFF Research



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