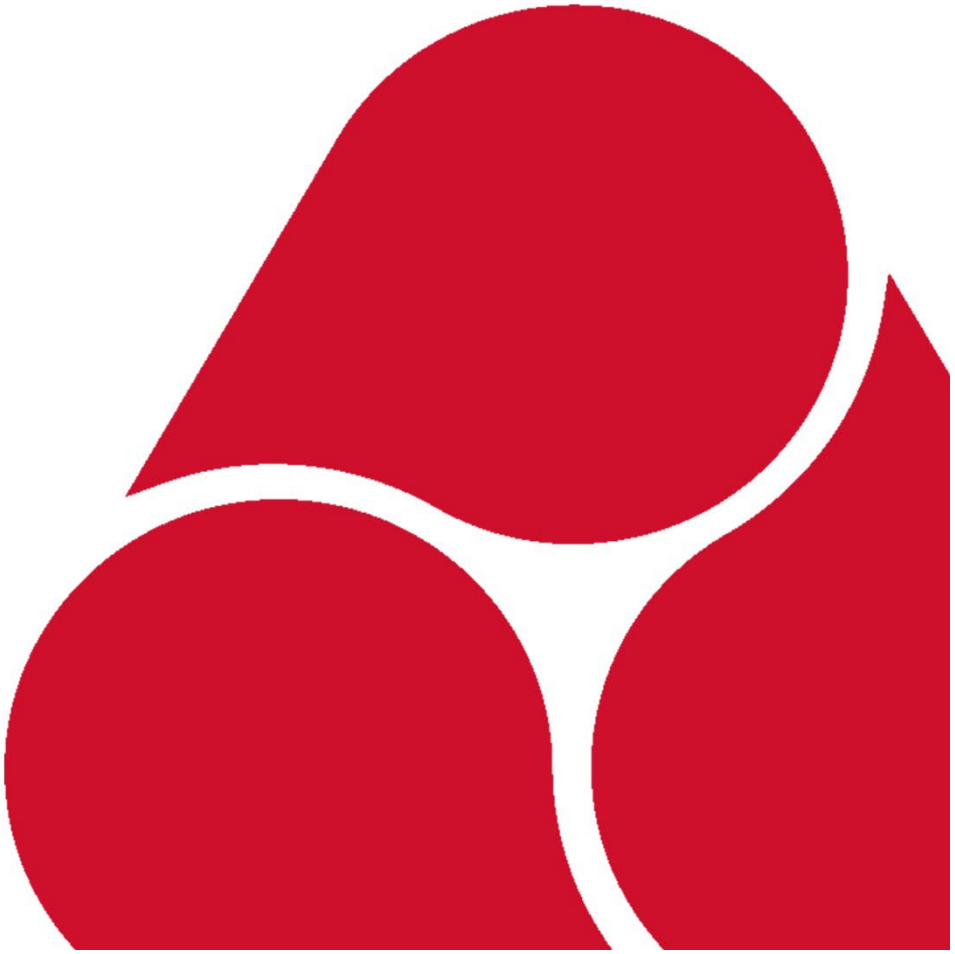
Office for Product Safety & Standards

OPSS Product Safety and Consumers: Wave 9 – Harms and Detriment

DBT Research Paper

July 2025



This report was commissioned by the Office for Product Safety and Standards and prepared by YouGov.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) or the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), nor do they necessarily reflect government policy.

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Project background and methodology

The information presented in this report is based on self -reported data from survey and focus group participants. References to product safety issues, causes, impacts, and behaviours reflect individual perceptions and have not been independently verified.

Quotations are anecdotal and intended to illustrate the types of views expressed. Mentions of specific brands, online platforms, or product categories do not constitute endorsement or regulatory findings.

OPSS does not adopt or validate the views expressed and remains committed to impartial evidence-based engagement with all sectors in the market.

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT)[1] has policy responsibility for consumer product safety. To that end, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) was established by the previous Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in January 2018.

As the national regulator for all consumer products (excluding vehicles, medicines, food), construction products, and legal metrology, OPSS protects people and places from product-related harm, ensuring consumers and businesses can buy and sell products with confidence.

As OPSS's Product Regulation Strategy 2022-2025 notes, product regulation must align with changing technology, evolving markets, and shifts in the needs of society. It should be informed by an understanding of the real world and real people to reflect differences of need and vulnerability.

Researching consumer attitudes and awareness is key in developing reactive regulation. This survey provides insight on consumer awareness and behaviour, alongside attitudes to policy areas and awareness of policy changes. It also investigates how vulnerable consumers' experiences could differ to identify how consumer vulnerability could be better addressed in matters of product safety. This study works to inform and evidence OPSS's objectives outlined in the OPSS's Product Regulation Strategy 2022-2025.

Aims and objectives

This project aims to help OPSS understand more about the data and evidence gaps in harms and detriments research, more relevant detailed information will help make effective policy design and regulatory decisions. The research will provide information on harms and detriment that will support the growing evidence base on harms and detriment and will be utilised for multiple different teams and purposes. The research will investigate:

- Understanding more about 5 emerging technologically driven changes identified by the Technology Team as key areas (social commerce, 3D Printing, Extended Reality Headsets (Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality), Home Robots, Internet of Things and Smart Appliances). The research will strengthen the already commissioned literature review by providing data and evidence.
- Future potential detriment to consumers.

[1] The Department for Business and Trade was established in February 2023, absorbing the OPSS from the former Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

- Current harms people are experiencing (or have experienced within the last 3 years).
- Physical and financial harms.
- How do individuals define and experience harm (i.e. from the product itself or indirect accident).
- Risk, hazard, and harm development (i.e. being able to implicitly find out about hazards and risk by understanding how the harm occurred).
- Behaviour - purchasing habits around safety, cost and other factors, recall and refund experiences (i.e. Is detriment experienced when refunds are unavailable).

Previous studies in this programme have included understanding and monitoring consumers' awareness and attitudes of product safety, their attitudes towards the product safety regulatory system, and their understanding of different organisations concerned with product safety.

Approach

The findings are based upon a large-scale representative sample of 10,037 people from across the United Kingdom (UK) collected through online research methods during wave nine. Fieldwork was carried out between 14th April to 2nd May 2025. A supporting survey of 251 people who are low or non-internet users ("offline adults") was conducted via telephone between 30th April to 16th May 2025.

Where appropriate, comparisons have been made with survey data from previous research in the Public Attitudes Tracker. Not all sections or questions are asked in every survey. The technical report contains details of questionnaire design and topic inclusion.

The sample sizes and fieldwork dates for all waves of the Public Attitudes Tracker are listed below:

	Online survey	Offline survey
Wave 1	10,230 UK adults, 17th to 30th November 2020	512 offline adults, 23rd November to 12th December 2020
Wave 2	10,296 UK adults, 17th May to 15th June 2021	251 offline adults, 3rd to 28th June 2021
Wave 3	10,187 UK adults, 23rd November to 14th December 2021	251 offline adults, 25th November 2021 to 5th January 2022
Wave 4	10,156 UK adults, 22nd June to 5th July 2022	252 offline adults, 6th July to 28th July 2022
Wave 5	10,182 UK adults 23rd November to 11th December 2022	250 offline adults, 24th November 2022 to 3rd January 2023
Wave 6	10,216 UK adults 16th June to 3rd July 2023	252 offline adults 29th June to 19th July 2023
Wave 7	10,023 UK adults 13th December to 13th January 2024	251 offline adults 3rd to 17th January 2024

Wave 8	10,060 UK adults 1st to 19th July 2024	261 offline adults 11th July to 3rd August 2024
Wave 9	10,037 UK adults 14th April to 2nd May 2025	251 offline adults 30th April to 16th May 2025

Qualitative methodology

After the close of the online survey, four text-based online focus groups were conducted with survey participants. Groups were split by the type of products they owned, experiences of safety issues and health condition.

- **Group 1: 10 participants** – owners or users of AI-enabled goods or smart devices who experienced a safety issue with such product
- **Group 2: 11 participants** – those who experienced a safety issue with a product purchased from an online retailer (e.g. John Lewis, M&S)
- **Group 3: 8 participants** – those who experienced a safety issue with a product purchased from an online marketplace (e.g. Facebook marketplace, Vinted)
- **Group 4: 9 participants** – consumers with a physical health condition who experienced a safety issue with a product

A mix of demographics (age, social grade, genders, ethnicities, and locations) were included across groups. There were between 8 to 11 participants per group and each group lasted 90 minutes.

Participants were asked to respond to an open-ended question as part of the recruitment criteria to ensure they were able to participate in text-based research. Participants were incentivised via retail vouchers, in line with the MRS Code of Conduct.

Focus groups were conducted in May 2025.

Guidance on analysis

Blue boxes have been included throughout to highlight findings from the offline sample or demographic analysis from the online survey which particularly involved minority groups. This analysis may be highly correlated with other findings in the data (for example, LGB+ or ethnic minority respondents are more prevalent in younger age groups). More detail on these groups is provided in Appendix A.

Unless otherwise stated, figures and data presented are from the online survey. Where two or more groups are discussed, only statistically significant differences to the 95% confidence interval are mentioned. Significance testing is not applied for figures based on fewer than 50 respondents. Where included, figures based on fewer than 50 respondents are noted and should be treated with caution. Figures based on fewer than 30 respondents are not included or reported upon.

All analysis is conducted to two decimal places. Figures in charts/ images may not sum to 100% due to rounding or due to the question allowing multiple selections.

Findings from the low/non-internet users are noted as “the offline survey” or “offline adults.” Findings are only presented where offline adults report disparate behaviours or notable divergences when compared with the online survey data. These are presented as indicative comparisons only; due to the difference in methodology from the online survey, comparisons are not statistically reliable.

Findings from the qualitative research are noted as “the qualitative research” or “focus group participants.” Due to the nature of the qualitative research, no findings are statistically significant.

Throughout the research, participants were presented with examples of organisations or products, definitions of terms, and visual stimuli where appropriate. Full methodological details and the full survey materials can be found in the accompanying technical report.

Key findings

Perceptions of safety

- The majority (71%) of consumers surveyed agree that products sold in the UK are generally safe due to regulations, and half (50%) think retailers would not risk their reputations by selling unsafe products.
- That said, there is consideration of where people buy from to ensure safety – two-thirds (68%) only buy from trusted retailers to ensure safe products. People are more wary about products purchased online with 39% saying products online are riskier than in-store purchases.
- The main factors influencing whether a product is trusted as 'safe' include previous experiences of buying a product (33%), online reviews/ recommendations (29%) and recommendations from friends and family (24%).
- Over half of UK adults say that, when buying a new product, consumers should check how sellers are complying with UK safety laws (58%) and 45% say they usually look for product safety labels and markings when making a purchase.
- UK adults recognise that safety issues can be caused by design faults or misuse of a product and recognise that safety issues can cause physical harm as well as other forms of detriment.

Individual's experiences of safety issues

- Overall, one in three (29%) said they have ever experienced a product safety issue with a listed product category. Among those who have ever experienced a safety issue, the product category people are most likely to report issues with is electrical appliances (60%).
- Two-fifths (41%) of those who experienced a product safety issue had purchased their product in-store from a retailer.
- Most of the focus group participants stated that even though they can identify between products being sold by online marketplaces and third-party sellers, these platforms could do more to help people easily identify when a product comes from a third-party.
- Half (49%) of those who experienced a safety issue say the cause was due to the product or its instructions. Some (16%) believe that the product was worn out when it experienced the safety issue, while only 10% say the issue was due to misuse/ mishandling.
- The most common harms experienced as a result of a safety issue are stress/ distress (30%) or physical harm (25%). Of those experiencing harm, 47% needed first aid, 32% needed no healthcare, but some did require further medical attention.

Household experiences of safety issues

- Fourteen per cent recall someone else in their household experiencing a safety issue with a listed product category. As with personal experiences, the most common product category was electrical appliances (62%).
- Consistent with individual experiences of a safety issue, the most common cause of a safety issue experienced by someone else in the household was the product itself or its instructions

- Also in-line with personal experiences of safety issues, the most common impact from a household safety issue is distress/ increased stress (28%), followed by physical harm (21%).
- Most commonly, the person affected by the household issue was a partner/ spouse (31%).

Key topical insights

Consumers with physical disabilities

- Most participants with physical disabilities said that the safety issue was not directly related to their health condition, but they do note that their health condition/ disability influences the types of product they purchase.
- Some expressed concerns that safety information can be complex and stressed the need for straightforward instructions and details such as how heavy the item is.
- Consumers with physical disabilities felt that support could be better, particularly at involving people with disabilities in product user surveys or trials. They also felt that government has a role to hold companies accountable through legislation or penalties for non-compliance.

Emerging technologies

- It is most common for AI-enabled (45%) or smart-enabled label (47%) to reportedly have no impact on consumers' desire to buy a product.
- From the consumers who said the label would impact their purchasing behaviour; 30% would be less likely to purchase a product with an 'AI-enabled' label, compared with 14% who would be more likely to do so.

Personal Light Electric Vehicles

- Six per cent of UK adults currently own or have access to a Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV), with younger adults more likely to do so.
- The proportion who have experienced a safety issue with the battery/ charger of their Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV) has fallen to 14% of all PLEV owners.
- As with safety issues caused by other products, the most common impacts are physical harm (40%) or distress (33%).
- Just over one in ten (12%) PLEV owners say that someone else in their household had a safety issue with a PLEV. With household issues, the most common impacts are damage to property/ other household items or distress (both 38%).

Perceptions of safety

In wave nine, questions on perceptions of product safety were initially shown to all respondents (n=10,037). For the final question in this section, respondents were randomly assigned to different types of products and asked which safety issues they personally consider to be a harm caused by the product. Exact base sizes for specific questions are shown below each chart.

Key findings

- The majority (71%) of consumers surveyed agree that products sold in the UK are generally safe due to regulations, and half (50%) think retailers would not risk their reputations by selling unsafe products.
- That said, there is consideration of where people buy from to ensure safety – two-thirds (68%) only buy from trusted retailers to ensure safe products. People are more wary about products purchased online with 39% saying products online are less safe than in-store purchases.
- The main factors influencing whether a product is trusted as 'safe' include previous experiences of buying a product (33%), online reviews/ recommendations (29%) and recommendations from friends and family (24%).
- Over half of UK adults say that, when buying a new product, consumers should check how sellers are complying with UK safety laws (58%) and 45% say they usually look for product safety labels and markings when making a purchase.
- UK adults recognise that safety issues can be caused by design faults or misuse of a product and recognise that safety issues can cause physical harm as well as other forms of detriment .

Context around product safety considerations

Consumers generally trust product regulation to keep their products safe and free from potential harm.

However, they tend to consider online purchases are riskier than in-store purchases and have more trust in familiar brands than online marketplaces.

Focus group participants described 'product safety' as a situation when there is no risk of harm or injury when products are used correctly, according to the manufacturer's instructions. They expect safe products to meet safety standards, having been tested rigorously, and having clear instructions and risk indicators. Additionally, product safety can relate to both physical safety and data security for smart and AI-enabled devices.

"A product that does not cause injury or harm when operated correctly as per the manufacturer's instructions." (Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"It meets safety standards and that it has been tested rigorously to meet those standards." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"It being tested before use. Clear instructions. Meets guidelines. Has clear risk indicators." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

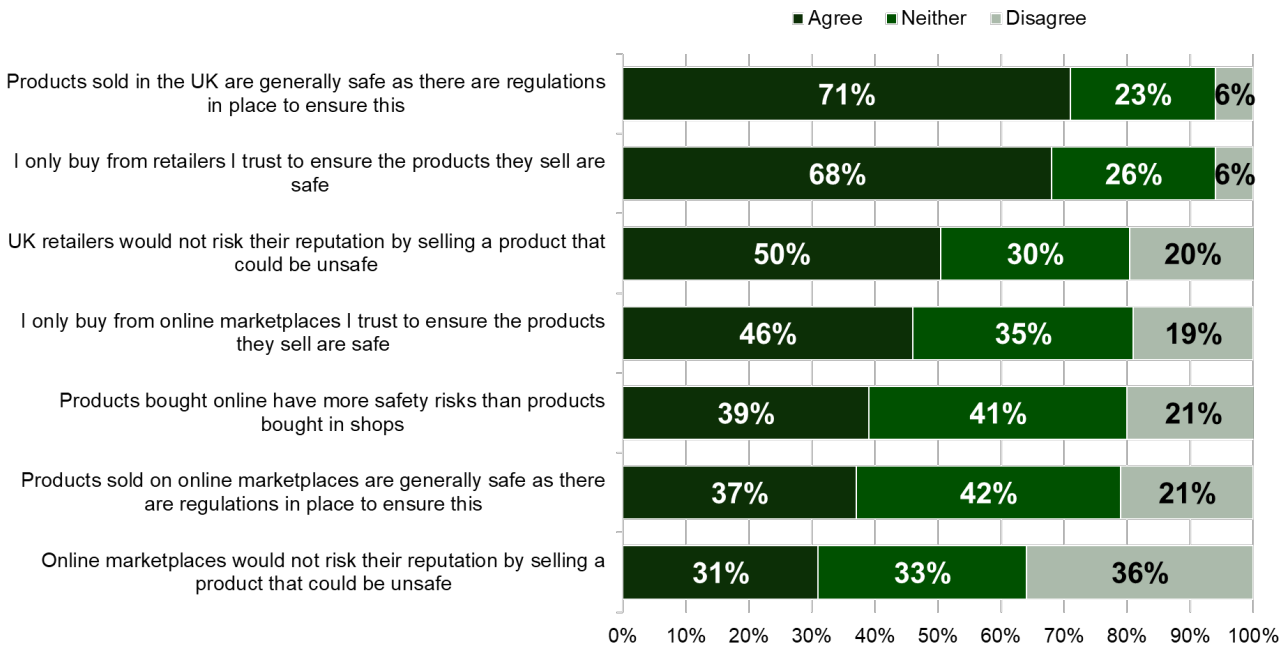
In general, the UK public tends to assume the products they buy are safe. The majority of (71%) think that products sold in the UK are safe as there are regulations in place to ensure this. Half of UK adults also tend to think retailers would not risk their reputation by selling unsafe products (50%). These general perceptions around product safety tend not to change dramatically over time – in previous data, around seven in 10 usually think that regulations ensure the safety of products sold in the UK.

Nearly all offline adults (97%) agree that products sold in the UK are generally safe as there are regulations in place to ensure this.[2]

UK adults do consider where they buy products from to ensure safety, with the majority (68%) only buy from retailers they trust to ensure the products they sell are safe. However, there is a perception of risk surrounding online purchases – two in five (39%) think that products bought online have more safety risks than products bought in shops. Younger adults are more likely than average to think products bought online have more safety risks (48% of those aged 18 to 29).

In particular, people have mixed views around online marketplaces. While three in 10 (31%) believe online marketplaces would not risk their reputation by selling unsafe products, a larger proportion disagree with this (36%). Just under half (46%) of UK adults say they only buy from online marketplaces they trust to ensure the products sold are safe.

Figure 1. Agreement statements around product safety and retailers/ marketplaces



Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All (W9=10,037)

[2] Findings from the offline sample or minority groups such as people from ethnic minorities, LGB+ adults etc. may be highly correlated with other demographics in the data. More detail is provided in Appendix A.

In the qualitative focus groups, many said that purchasing products online can make it more difficult to assess how safe a product is than if purchased in-store - they think it is easier to do so when evaluating a product in-person. However, this also depends on the websites used – they have more trust in established online retailers that they are familiar with rather than unknown websites or online marketplaces. It was mentioned that when purchasing products online it is easier to access product reviews, even though some can be biased or incentivised, but many appreciate speaking to shop assistants and having product demonstrations in stores to assess a product's safety more easily.

"Online can definitely be more of a gamble - there are a lot of items for sale in the UK that don't meet trading standards." (Male, 34, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"Fake stuff sometimes gets sold online and doesn't have the quality or testing. Most proper stores with a brand name to defend are ok." (Male, 51, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"[I] would have more trust in a product I can see in person from a reputable seller with a store member who can talk me through it and how safe it is instead of buying something online." (Male, 27, online retailer group)

"I'd be more wary buying online from an unknown retailer, too much risk that it's counterfeit." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

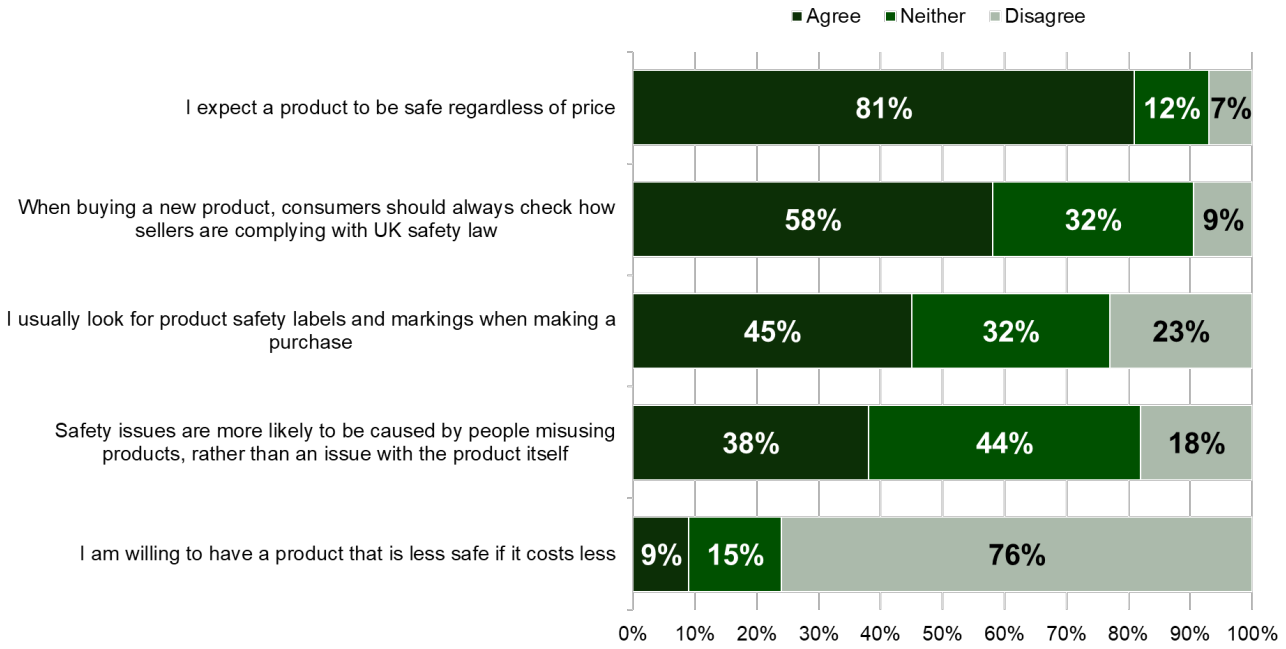
In line with the agreement that products sold in the UK are safe due to regulation, the majority (81%) of UK adults also expect a product to be safe regardless of price. Most (76%) disagree that they would be willing to have a cheaper product that is less safe. Younger age groups are more likely than average to compromise on safety for a cheaper cost, with just over one in five (22%) of those aged 18 to 29 who agree to this.

Despite UK consumers generally believing the products they are sold are safe, over half agree that when buying a new product consumers should always check how sellers are complying with UK safety laws (58%). In particular, 45% usually look for product safety labels and markings when making a purchase. However, men are less likely than women to look for product safety labels (42% of men, compared with 47% of women). Older age groups are also more likely than average to agree that they look for product safety labels (56% of those aged 65+) or that consumers should check how sellers are complying with safety laws (67% of those aged 65+).

Just under two in five (38%) agree that safety issues are more likely to be caused by people misusing products, rather than an issue with the product itself, however, 44% neither agree nor disagree with this. Men are more likely than women to believe that safety issues are caused by people misusing products rather than the products themselves (44% of men, compared with 32% of women).

Two-thirds (64%) of offline adults think that safety issues are more likely to be caused by people misusing products rather than an issue with the product itself.

Figure 2. Agreement statements around product safety and consumers



Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All (W9=10,037)

Factors that influence perceptions of product safety

Previous experience of a product is a key factor in determining whether consumers trust a product to be safe. Looking at online reviews/ recommendations is also common, particularly amongst younger consumers.

While some UK adults reported preferring to shop with trusted retailers, when thinking about specific product safety, they indicate that the manufacturers' brand is more important than the retailers'.

UK adults were asked to consider what influences their trust that a specific product is 'safe'. Generally, the most common factors are previous experiences of buying a product (33%), online reviews/recommendations (29%) and recommendations from friends/ family (24%) are most likely to lead to trust in a product being safe. These are all broadly unchanged from the top factors identified in previous data.

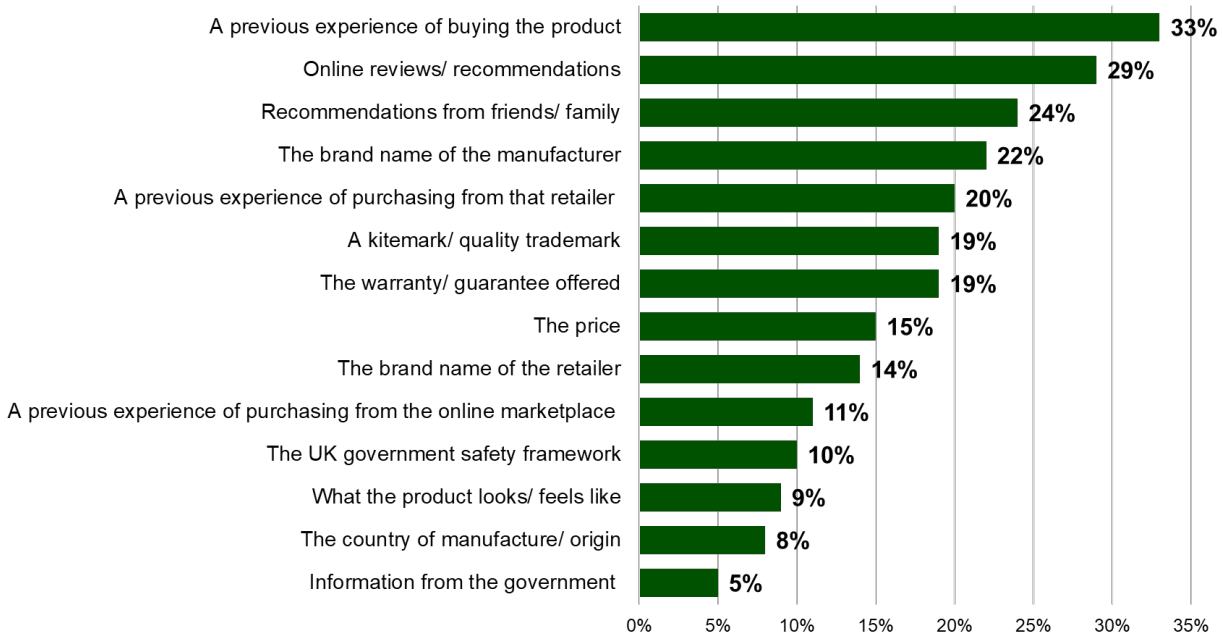
While some UK adults report only shopping with trusted retailers (Figure 1), the brand of the manufacturer is more likely to influence their trust in a particular product than the retailer (22%, compared with 14%). Around one in five (19%) say a kitemark or warranty/ guarantee affects their perception of product safety.

There are demographic differences in the factors which influence perceptions of product safety. Women are more likely to report online reviews/recommendations of the product (32% of women, compared with 26% of men) and recommendations from friends/family (29% of women, compared with 19% men) as influencing trust in the safety of a product.

Similarly, younger age groups are more likely than average to be influenced by online reviews/recommendations (38% of those aged 18 to 29) and recommendations from family/friends (29%). While those who are older are more likely than average to report a previous experience of the product (39% of those aged 65+), the brand name of the

manufacturer (27% of those aged 65+), previous experience of purchasing from that retailer (25% of those aged 65+), or a kitemark/quality trademark (24% of those aged 65+).

Figure 3. Factors which influence trust in a product being safe



Q: Which, if any, of the following most influence you having trust in a product being safe? (Please select up to three options)
Base: All (W9=10,037)

The above is also in-line with the qualitative findings around how consumers evaluate a product as safe. Buying a product from a reputable company, or one that they have purchased a product from in the past, was often mentioned as a good indicator of product safety. Quality and standard marks such as BSI, CE or UL were frequently mentioned as indicating a product meeting safety standards, increasing participants' trust towards products with such labels.

Reviews are also helpful in evaluating product safety, particularly when purchasing goods online, although it was noted by some that reviews can be biased or incentivised and should be carefully examined. Additionally, quality materials and price were mentioned by a few as good indicators of product safety as they would expect products which are more expensive or made of quality materials to be safer and to last longer.

"Knowing the brand, knowing that the item has been tested, build quality, even the retailer I think has an impact." (Male, 34, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"Rigorous and numerous test trials as others have mentioned above - if it has not been tested for potential harm or damage enough, this would not be safe or viable to sell." (Female, 22, online retailer group)

"Certifications of standards by independent bodies plus manufacturer's rep, and online reviews." (Male, 36, online marketplaces group)

Understanding of possible safety issues and harms

UK adults recognise that safety issues can be caused by inherent flaws in a product or by misuse/ mishandling the item.

Although they think the manufacturer cannot be held responsible if the issue was due to misuse, they also think products should be designed to account for common mistakes.

Focus groups participants described a safety issue as a situation when a product causes harm or has the potential to cause harm. For participants, a safety issue is mainly associated with health risks as a result of faulty parts, lack of safety features, inadequate instructions, and risks associated with incorrect use.

Participants believe that they could experience safety issues caused by a product itself or when a product is involved, but they feel that it is important to distinguish between mishandling a product versus product malfunctioning due to e.g. its design. Participants describe safety issues occurring in both situations, but how the product is being used impacts who is perceived as accountable for the issue that occurs. Some participants discussed being injured by a product as a direct result of a product's fault or defect, while being injured involving a product may be due to user error or misuse. In the latter, the manufacturer cannot be responsible for the safety issue occurred in that situation. However, it was also mentioned that products should be designed to account for common mistakes e.g. using the wrong power connection.

"Not at all. A careless usage of a product wouldn't count as a safety issue from the company. This is where accountability comes in."
(Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"The product has harmed someone or has the potential to."
(Female, 43, online marketplaces group)

"Products need to be robust and account for common misuse such as wrong power connection." (Male, 58, online marketplaces group)

Safety is very important to the focus group participants as they do not want to be exposed to health risks or hazards from products. Some mentioned that safety is particularly important when it comes to electronic, mechanical, and children's products.

"It feels more important for anything electrical. Because I don't want to risk electrical fires." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

"It's important because there are young children in my home and an unsafe product could seriously harm them." (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

Participants had mixed feelings about the impact of age of a product on its safety. Many think that wear and tear impact products' durability and safety, but some think that manufacturers should design products to last longer than their warranty period

"Yes, wear and tear could make the product unsafe over time." (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

"Yes, as most things have a life expectancy, but that could vary depending on wear and tear." (Male, 51, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

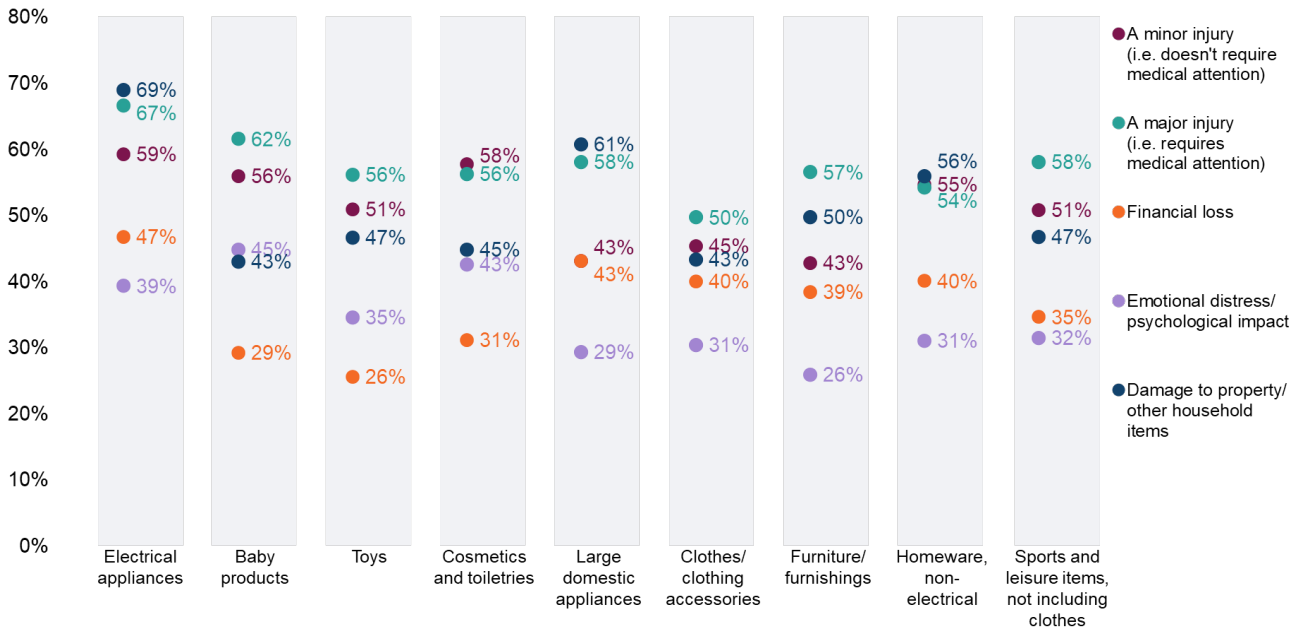
Survey respondents were also asked what they would consider to be a ‘harm’ caused by various product categories.

In general, major injuries which require medical attention are seen as a potential harm from a safety issue – it is consistently in the top two potential types of harm across all product categories. For example, 67% of UK adults say that a major injury is a potential type of harm from a safety issue with electrical item. This is second only to damage to property/ household items (69%) as a potential harm caused by safety issues with electrical appliances. Major injuries and damage to property/ other household items are also the top two types of harm which could be faced from a safety issue with a large domestic appliance (61% damage to property, 58% major injury) – both far more likely to be identified than other potential harms (43% identify financial loss or minor injuries as a potential harm from large domestic appliances).

For baby products, toys, or cosmetics/ toiletries, physical injuries are the most-commonly identified forms of harm, whether major or minor. For example, 62% identify major injuries as a potential harm from baby products, followed by 56% who identify minor injuries as a harm. Fewer identify emotional distress (45%) or damage to property/ household items (43%) as a potential harm from baby products.

Overall, financial loss and emotional distress or psychological impacts are less likely to be considered harms for product types. Financial loss is more likely than average to be reported as a harm among electrical appliances (47% compared with 37% overall) and large domestic appliances (43% compared with 37%). Emotional distress is most likely to be reported as a harm among baby products (45% compared with 35% overall) and cosmetics and toiletries (43% compared with 35%).

Figure 4. Potential types of ‘harm’ caused by different product categories



Q: Thinking about safety issues that may occur related to products people buy… Which, if any, of the following do you personally consider to be a 'harm' caused by this type of product? Please select all that apply.
Base: All (W9=10,037)

Individual's experiences of safety issues

In wave nine, questions on experiences of safety issues were initially shown to all respondents (n=10,037), and then subsequently to those who experienced a safety issue (n=2,468). Exact base sizes for specific questions are shown below each chart.

The approach used in this section has been updated for wave nine. As a result, caution should be taken when comparing results from wave nine with previous waves.

Key findings

- Overall, one in three (29%) say they have ever experienced a product safety issue with a listed product category. Among those who have ever experienced a safety issue, the product category people are most likely to report issues with is electrical appliances (60%).
- Two-fifths (41%) of those who experienced a product safety issue had purchased their product in-store from a retailer.
- Most of the focus group participants stated that even though they can identify between products being sold by online marketplaces and third-party sellers, these platforms could do more to help people easily identify when a product comes from a third-party.
- Half (49%) of those who experienced a safety issue say the cause was due to the product or its instructions. Some (16%) believe that the product was worn out when it experienced the safety issue, while only 10% say the issue was due to misuse/ mishandling.
- The most common harms experienced as a result of a safety issue are stress/ distress (30%) or physical harm (25%). Of those experiencing harm, 47% needed first aid, 32% needed no healthcare, but one in ten needed non-urgent medical attention and 7% needed urgent healthcare.

Prevalence of safety issues

Three in ten UK adults have experienced a safety issue with a listed product, with young people more likely to say they have experienced this.

The majority of safety issues experienced are with electrical appliances (such as chargers or small kitchen appliances).

Overall, across all the product categories listed, nearly one in three (29%) have ever experienced a safety issue. Safety issues were described in the survey as issues that may have occurred during normal use of the product, due to the product being poorly designed, manufactured or otherwise not being fit for purpose.

Young people are substantially more likely to say they ever experienced a safety issue – 38% of those aged 18 to 29 saying this, decreasing to 30% of those aged 30 to 49, 27% of those aged 50 to 64, and 20% of those aged 65 and over.

Those from an ethnic minority background are more likely to report having ever experienced a safety issue (40%, compared with 27% for white adults).[3]

Those with children in the household are also much more likely to say they have experienced a safety issue (37%, compared with 26% for those without children).

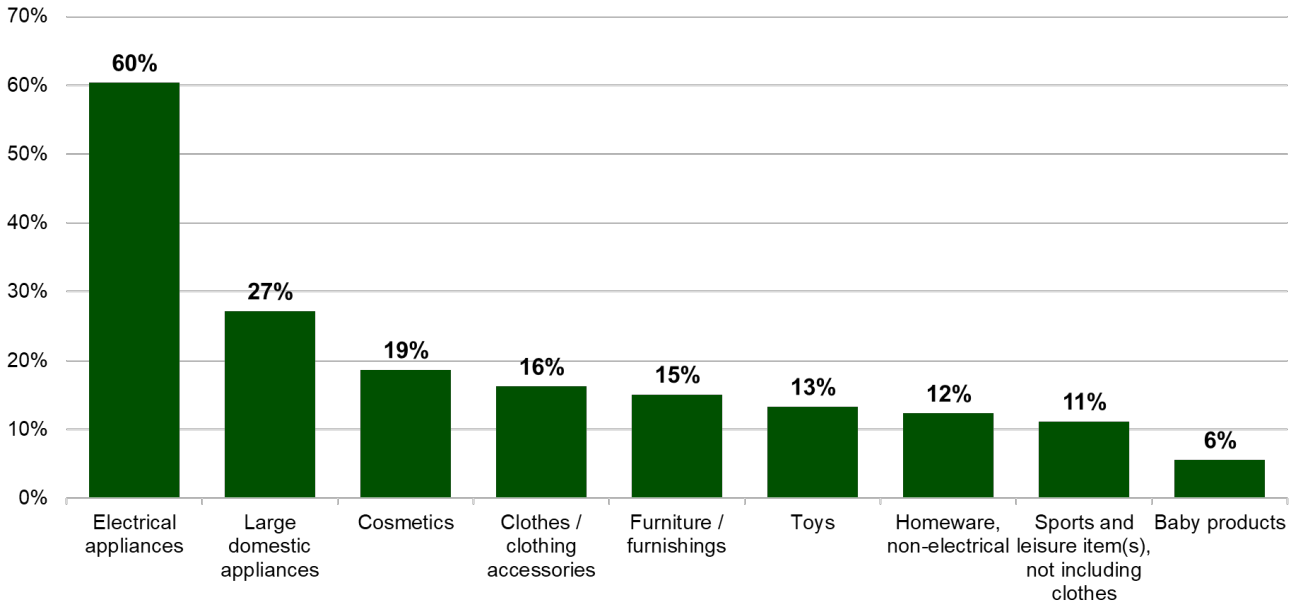
Among those who have ever experienced a safety issue, people are most likely to report issues with electrical appliances (60%). Within this product category, people most report having experienced safety issues with small kitchen appliances (44%) and chargers (29%).

"A faulty interlock switch on an air fryer. The switch burnt out and caught fire. No damage to anything else, the burning stopped as soon as the appliance was disconnected." (Survey respondent)

"A fire hazard, would see sparks when plugging it in" (Survey respondent)

Just over one in four (27%) of those who have experienced a safety issue say it was a large domestic appliance. Within this group the most common types of product are a washing machine or combined washer-dryer (40%) or a refrigerator or freezer (25%). These were also among the most common large domestic appliances to be reported as smart or AI-enabled. For example, 29% of those who reported experiencing a safety issue with a refrigerator or freezer said this was smart or AI-enabled, whilst 25% of those who reported experiencing a safety issue with a washing machine or combined washer-dryer said the same.

Figure 5. Product safety issues by category (among those who had an issue)



Q: Thinking about any time in the past... Which, if any, of the following types of products have you personally experienced a safety issue with? Please select all that apply.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

[3] Findings from the offline sample or minority groups such as people from ethnic minorities, LGB+ adults etc. may be highly correlated with other demographics in the data. More detail is provided in Appendix A.

In the focus groups, participants elaborated on their experiences of safety issues. The severity of the safety issues varied. Some experienced no harm or damage, while others sustained mild personal injuries or among their family members. In some cases, participants attended the hospital or A&E for treatment following a safety issue.

"Poorly designed kettle which poured water out too widely. Got rid before anyone got hurt." (Male, 36, online marketplaces group)

"It exploded firing coffee grounds at high speed up my neck and face, leaving me with burns that had to be treated in hospital." (Female, 50, online marketplaces group)

"An espresso coffee machine. The pressure built so high that it forced the coffee filter away from the machine at speed, smashed the ceramic cup underneath and coffee grinds everywhere." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"My washing machine stopped working mid-cycle, it ruined all the clothes and I later found out it was a manufacturing fault." (Female, 43, group with physical disabilities)

"My freezer slowly lost temperature so it was defrosting food without my noticing and making me sick." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"I brought a children's toy that had faulty loose parts that caused a scratch." (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

Frequency of safety issues

Of those who have ever experienced a safety issue, most say they experience an issue less than once a year, although younger adults experience safety issues more frequently.

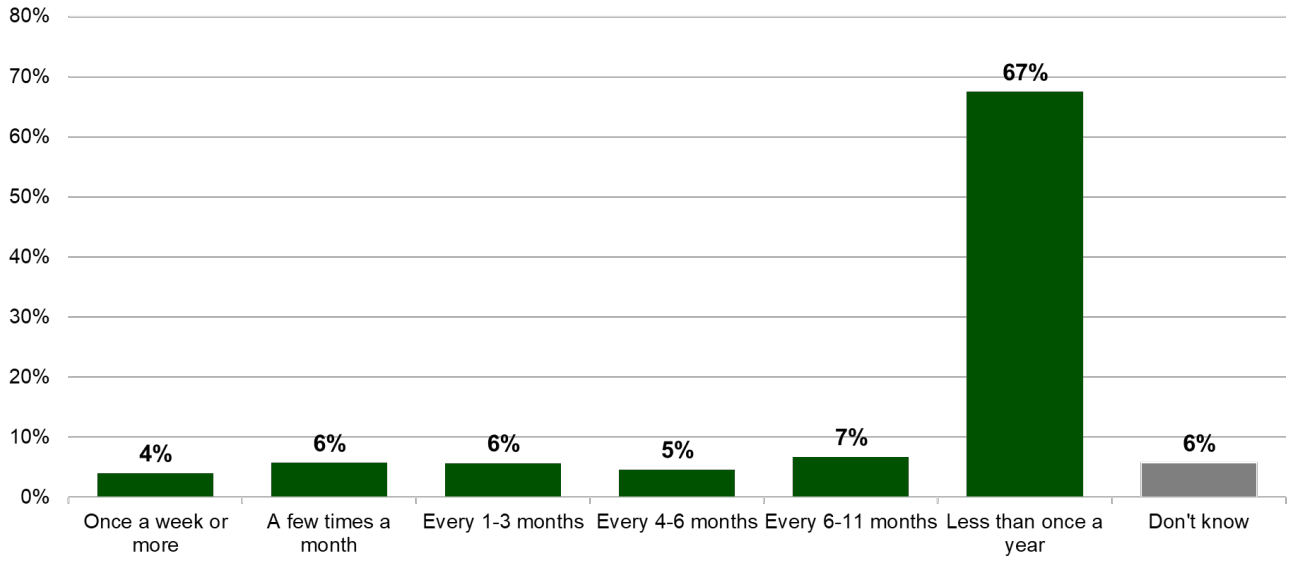
Those who have ever experienced safety issues were asked how often they experience issues with products they own or use. Two-thirds (67%) say that they experience safety issues less than once a year. Of the 27% who experience safety issues more regularly than this, 10% report experiencing issues more than once a month, and 4% once a week or more.

Younger people are more likely to experience safety issues more frequently than older age groups. For example, 15% of those aged 18 to 29 who experienced a safety issue say they experience these more than once a month, decreasing to 11% of those aged 30 to 49, 6% of those aged 50 to 64, and 4% of those aged 65 and over. Conversely, 63% of those aged 18 to 29 who experienced a safety issue say this happens less than once a year, rising to 71% of those aged 30 to 49, 84% of those aged 50 to 64, and 86% of those aged 65 and over.

Those from an ethnic minority background are more likely to report experiencing product safety issues more regularly than those from white ethnic backgrounds. For example, 15% of those from an ethnic minority background report experiencing safety issues more than once a month (compared with 8% white), whilst 52% report experiencing safety issues less than once a year (compared with 71% white).

Those with children in the household are also more likely to report experiencing safety issues more regularly than those without; 16% of those with children in their household report experiencing product safety issues more than once a month, compared with 6% of those without children in their household.

Figure 6. Frequency experienced safety issues



Q: You said you had experienced a safety issue with one or more of the products listed in the previous questions. How often do you experience safety issues with products you own/use? Please give your best estimate.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Half (50%) of those who mentioned ever experiencing a product safety issue said the most recent safety incident was more than one year ago, including 19% who said it was more than five years ago. The 45% who experienced a product safety issue in the past year included 12% who said they experienced a product safety issue in the past month, and 4% in the past week.

The groups who experience product safety issues more frequently also tend to have experienced a safety issue more recently. For example, younger people are more likely to have most recently experienced a product safety issue in the past month (15% of those aged 18 to 29, compared with 10% of those aged 65+), but are less likely to report having experienced a product safety issue more than five years ago (9% of those aged 18 to 29, compared with 31% of those aged 65+).

Those from an ethnic minority background are less likely than those from white backgrounds to say their most recent safety issue was more than five years ago (10% of those from an ethnic minority, compared with 20% of white adults).

Similarly, those with children in the household are less likely than those without children to say their safety issue was more than five years ago (14% experienced the incident more than five years ago, compared with 21% of those without children in their household).

Details of a specific product safety issue

Thinking about a specific safety issue, half say that it occurred more than a year ago while almost half say the product in question was less than a year old.

Those who say they experienced a product safety issue were asked to provide further details of one specific product safety incident, including the age of the product involved.

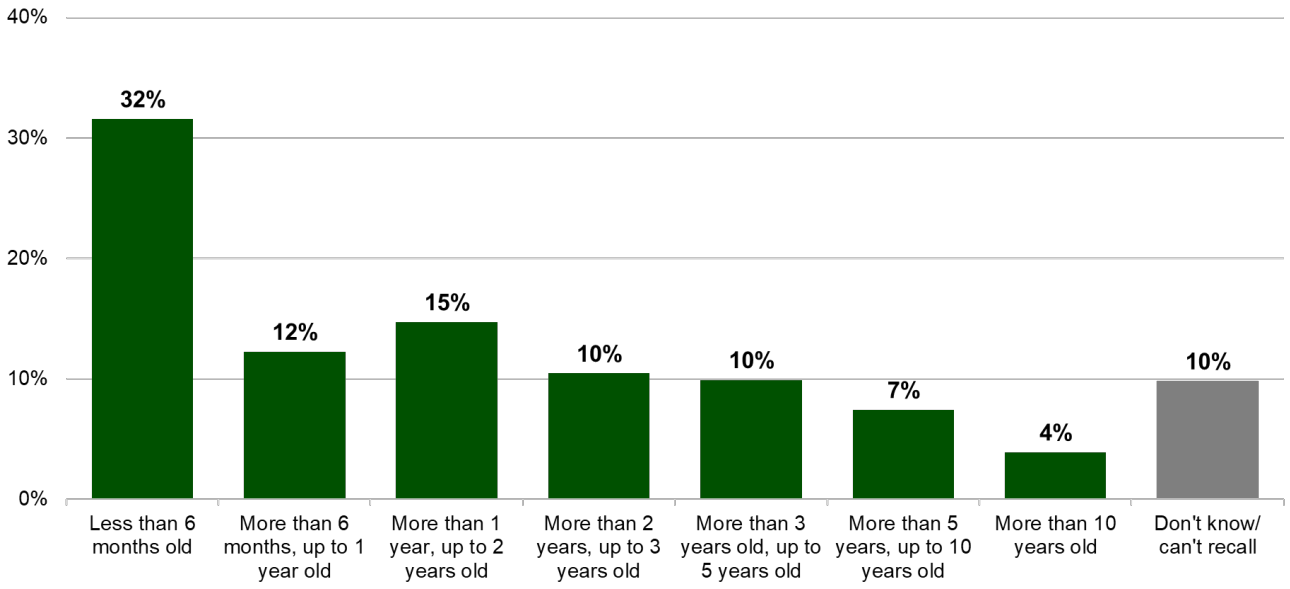
Almost half (44%) of the products which caused a safety issue were less than a year old when the issue occurred, including 32% that are reported to have been less than six months old. A quarter (25%) are reported to have been between one and three years old, and a fifth (21%) are reported to have been more than three years old, including 4% that were more than 10 years old.

"This was an old kettle provided as part of the furnishings of my flat. It had just got old and needed replacing. After being used, a spring popped out of the kettle base, causing sparks to fly around the kitchen and a loud bang." (Survey respondent)

"Probably old age. Washing machine broke and flooded through to the living room below" (Survey respondent)

Those thinking about a large domestic appliance are the most likely to say the item was more than three years old at the time of the safety issue (42%), while those referring to an electrical issue are the most likely to say their item was between one to three years old (34%).

Figure 7. Age of product experienced safety issue with



Q: And how old was the product when you experienced the safety issue? Please select the option that best applies.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Of those who experienced a safety issue with an AI/smart product (see technical report for details), 7% said the issue was related to or caused by the AI/ smart features. This is more prevalent among those who experienced a safety issue with an AI/smart electrical

appliance (17%) than those who experienced a safety issue with an AI/smart large domestic appliance (4%).

Some participants in the focus groups who owned AI-enabled goods and smart devices reported experiencing safety issues with these devices. In some cases, the issues were attributed to the smart features themselves, while in others, the problems appeared to be caused from the device hardware, such as overheating or electrical faults.

"It is bad enough having a smart TV and internet that do not work when the sun is in the wrong place or the military are using the local relay station. Nothing works and do not want to be any more reliant on products needed the internet."
(Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"Smart appliances have by far been one of the innovations of AI. But I had recently experienced a delay in functioning with one of my appliances at home... My dishwasher operated outside the instructions it was given, thereby causing a serious outage." (Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"Smart fridge alert overload – too many notifications about items you already used but it wasn't mine." (Male, 24, online retailer group)

"I had a smart plug that kept tripping my earth leakage breaker to the whole house. It would turn off at night, so I bought an alarm that would sound when the power went out. I finally got to the bottom of it by turning off everything and then turning it all back on one by one, but this went on for weeks - turning off my alarm, my fish tank, my fridge and freezer." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"My smart watch burned the back of my hand, and I had issues with the skin for weeks after." (Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"It was my smart glasses, and it made my eyes start itching me, which lasted for days." (Female, 29, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

Source of product experienced a safety issue with

People who experienced a product safety issue tended to say they had purchased the item in-store, with price and quality as their key considerations.

People like shopping in store as it provides good customer service and clear refund/ return policies. In contrast, some avoided purchasing products from third-party sellers on online marketplaces and felt more could be done to distinguish them from the platform's/ retailer's own products.

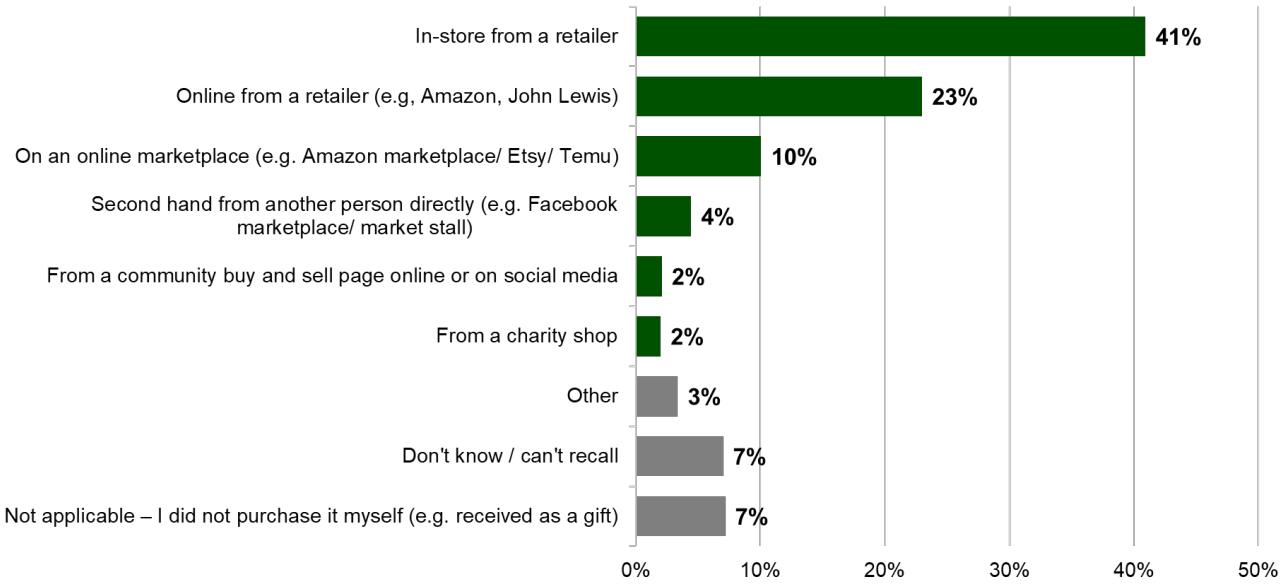
Given that UK adults tend to believe that products sold online may be riskier (Figure 1), people who experienced safety issues were asked details about where they had purchased their product from and their reasons for making the purchase.

The most common purchase sources are direct from a retailer, either in-store (41%) or online (23%). One in ten (10%) purchased the product from an online marketplace, and 4% purchased it second hand from another person directly (e.g. Facebook Marketplace/market stall). Overall, 43% purchased the product in person, and 35% purchased the product online.

Older adults are more likely to have purchased the product in person than younger people (53% of those aged over 65, compared with 39% of those aged 18 to 29). There are few other differences when looking at other demographic subgroups.

Those with children in their household are more likely than those without to have purchased the product online (42%, compared with 32% without).

Figure 8. Place of purchase for product experienced safety issue with



Q: Which of the following best describes where you purchased the [product] from?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Those who experienced a product safety issue were also asked why they had purchased the item – most who had bought the product intended it for their own use (75%), while 16% bought the product for someone else to use.

Older age groups are more likely to have purchased the product for use themselves (82% of those aged 65 and over, compared with 69% of those aged 18 to 29), as were those without any children living in their household (80%, compared with 67% of those living with children).

Among those who experienced a product safety issue with an item they did not personally buy, the most common source was a gift (36%) while 17% experienced an issue with a product that someone else bought but which was not a gift. Some (13%) experienced a safety issue with a product that had been loaned to them.

The vast majority of products that people experienced a safety issue with were purchased new (84%). In comparison, one in ten (10%) say that the item was second-hand. Women are more likely to have experienced a product safety issue with a product purchased new (87%, compared with 81% men), as are older respondents (94% of those aged over 65, compared with 73% of those aged 18 to 29).

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to have experienced a safety issue with a product purchased as new, compared with those from a white ethnic background (77%, compared with 86% white).

Those who are LGB+ are less likely to have experienced a safety issue with a product purchased new, compared with those who are heterosexual (78%, compared with 85% heterosexual).

Purchasing products online or in-store

Participants in the focus groups elaborated on their experience of safety issues with items purchased from both online and in-store. Those in the focus groups who purchased products from online retailers expressed a preference for shopping with well-known British brands, referencing a greater trust in their ability to provide good customer service and safe products. They also felt reassured by these retailers' clear refund and returns policies, as well as the availability of warranties in the event of safety concerns.

"[Online retailers] are trustworthy, tested and sustainable. Their customer service is also outstanding." (Male, 45, online retailer group)

"Yes, I prefer buying from online retailers as I trust the products that they sell more, I like that I get some warranty or protection, and refunds are less hassle." (Female, 40, online retailer group)

"Easier to get customer protection and refunds if necessary - more official." (Female, 22, online retailer group)

"John Lewis offered me additional warranty on top of standard manufacturer's warranty." (Male, 49, online retailer group)

When using online marketplaces such as Amazon Marketplace, many participants across the groups said they researched the sellers when using such platforms. They reported being able to distinguish between the platform itself and independent third-party sellers by examining seller information, platform branding, and carefully reading customer reviews and ratings to assess the trustworthiness of the seller.

Although most participants felt it was relatively easy to identify independent or third-party sellers, they remained sceptical of these sellers and often actively avoided purchasing products from them. This distrust stemmed from previous negative experiences and a belief that such sellers do not always comply with safety regulations. This concern was particularly highlighted among participants in the group of consumers with physical disabilities.

"I make a point of being aware on Amazon whether it is marketplace or Amazon as the warranty and return policies vary. I did not always realise this[,] but [I] do now." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I always look at who is selling the item and the reviews from other customers." (Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"It's easy to notice the difference by looking at the seller's information and the platform's branding." (Male, 45, online retailer group)

"I bought this on Amazon and the experience made me very [wary] of buying unbranded goods in the future." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I notice them [third party sellers] a lot on Amazon, and I find I'm looking into them more and trust them less." (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

"I don't trust people not to try and make a quick buck instead of adhering to rules and regulations." (Male, 34, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

Some stated that third-party sellers are not always clearly identifiable, they suggested that online marketplaces could improve clarity by including dedicated backgrounds for independent sellers or by making seller information more prominent and visually distinct on product pages.

"[To help distinguish third-party sellers] change the background colour or have the sellers name in bold or easy to see." (Female, 49, smart/AI-enabled products group)

"On Amazon it does say [who third-party sellers are] but I guess it could be bolder, more prominent." (Female, 61, smart/AI-enabled products group)

Factors influencing product purchase

When reflecting on the factors which influenced their original purchase. Two-fifths (39%) of those who experienced a safety issue say that purchase price was one of their top considerations. This is followed by a third (34%) who prioritised quality and a quarter (24%) who were influenced by the brand of the item.

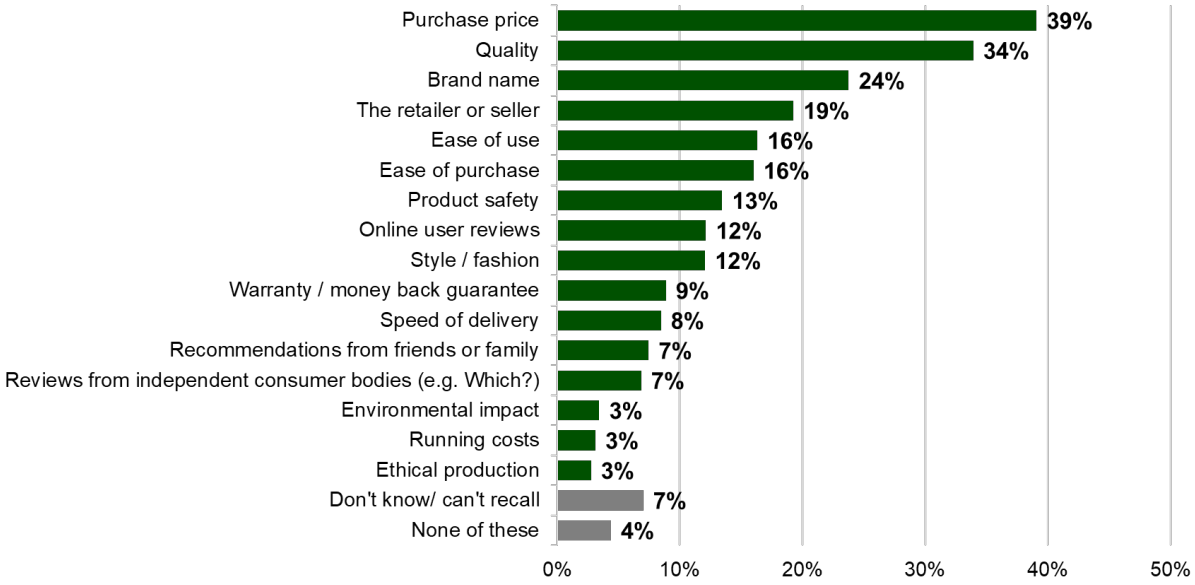
Those who had a safety issue with an electrical appliance are the most likely to cite purchase price as a key factor (45%), compared to only a fifth (21%) who say the same for baby products. Those with an electrical appliance issue are also the most likely to say they had prioritised ease of purchase (19%) and second-most likely to refer to online user reviews (16%). Those who had a safety issue with a sports/leisure item are the most likely to say they had prioritised online user reviews (21%) and are also the most likely to refer to recommendations from friends/family (15%).

Older adults are more likely to say the brand name was a key factor in their purchase (18% of those aged 18 to 29, 19% of those aged 30 to 49, 31% of those aged 50 to 64, and 32% of those aged 65+) or the retailer/seller (15% of those aged 18 to 29, 16% of those aged 30 to 49, 25% of those aged 50 to 64, and 26% of those aged 65+).

Those with a household income of under £25,000 are less likely than average to consider the brand name (21%), but no more likely than average to consider purchase price (38%).

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to consider the quality of the item (41%, compared with 32% white) and product safety (20%, compared with 12% white).

Figure 9. Factors taken into account for product purchase



Q: Which, if any, of the following did you take into account when you were considering buying the [product]? (Please select the THREE most important factors)
Base: All who experienced a safety issue with an item they purchased (W9=2,278)

Consistent with the quantitative findings, price was a major consideration for focus group participants when purchasing products. This was particularly evident among those who shopped on online marketplaces; they use these marketplaces for the competitive pricing, product variety, and perceived environmental benefits.

"Total cost matters at the end of the day. So, if same/similar product is available at lower cost, you tend to go for that." (Male, 58, online marketplaces group)

"I find the variety good. I love a good browse. eBay has more smaller sellers which I like." (Male, 45, online marketplaces group)

However, some participants noted that their purchasing decisions depended on the type of product. For example, when it came to electrical items or unbranded goods, they were more cautious and often avoided purchasing via online marketplaces due to concerns over product safety and quality.

"Depends on the product. I have had good experiences buying from these sites. Good deals and good for the environment too."
(Female, 43, online marketplaces group)

"I buy from Vinted because it´s better to reuse clothing etc and use less fast fashion. I will buy from some Facebook ads but not without investigating the company away from Facebook. I like to buy 2nd hand where I can as the planet is dying."
(Female, 50, online marketplaces group)

"I look for brand names mostly. I'm not buying a Samsung product if it's not sold by Samsung or other trusted retailer (Argos, John Lewis)."
(Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

Causes of safety issues

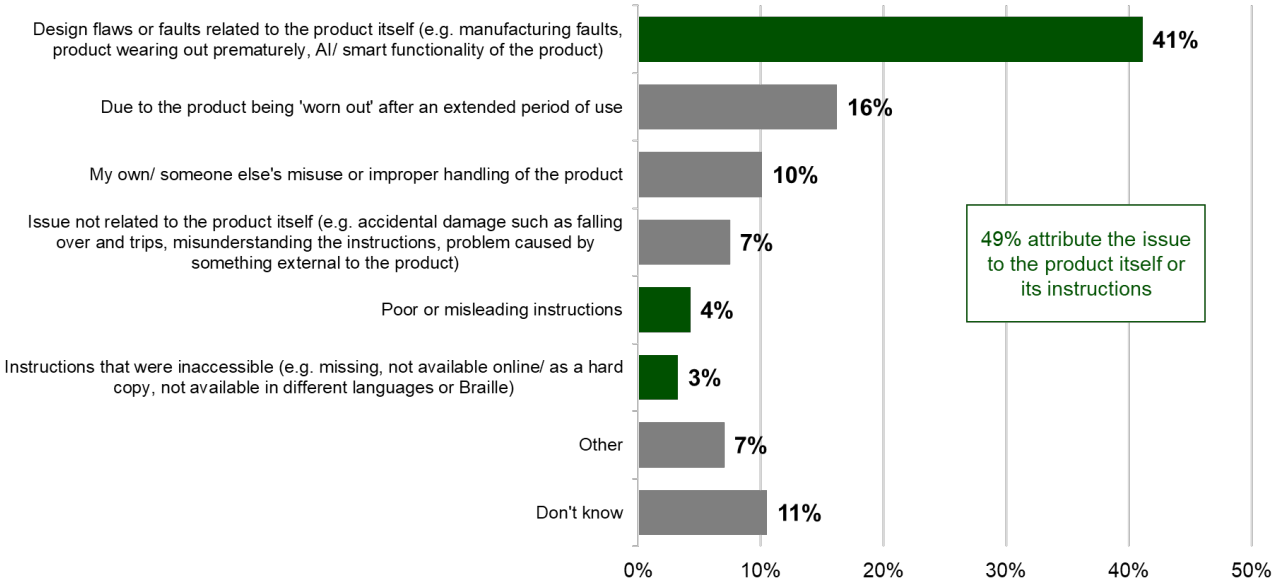
The main perceived cause of product safety issues is design flaws/ faults with the product itself. A few mention poor or inaccessible instructions, although others note that they did not read the instructions as they did not feel the need to do so.

Some participants believe that the product may have 'worn out', particularly those who said their product was more than three years old at the point the safety issue occurred.

Survey participants were asked what they believe caused their product's safety issue. Overall, half (49%) of those who experienced a product safety issue attribute fault to either the product itself or its instructions. Two-fifths (41%) specifically say that there were design flaws or faults, while 4% say instructions were poor and 3% say instructions were inaccessible.

Those who had a safety issue with toys are the most likely to say there was a design flaw/ fault (38%), while 14% of those who had a safety issue with a baby product say the instructions were inaccessible. Those who had a safety issue with an electrical appliance are the most likely to say the product was 'worn out' after extended use; a quarter (25%) report that an electrical item was worn out, compared to 4% who say the same for toys and 1% who say the same about a cosmetics safety issue.

Figure 10. Main cause of safety issue



Q: On balance, which of the following do you think was the main cause of this safety issue?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Among those who had their item for more than three years at the point when the safety issue occurred, two-fifths (39%) say the product was worn out, compared to 4% of those who had owned the product for less than a year. However, a quarter (26%) of those who had owned their product for more than three years say the main cause was design flaws/faults related to the product itself.

Half (51%) of those who said their electrical appliance was more than three years old at the time of experiencing a safety issue say the main cause was the product being worn

out. In contrast, 62% of those who say their electrical item was less than a year old blame design faults/ flaws.

In the focus groups, participants commonly mentioned manufacturing faults and/or poor product quality. Some believed that the passage of time contributed to product deterioration, while others attributed the issues to purchasing unbranded items. A few participants felt that the safety problems arose from human error, such as improper use or failure to read the instructions thoroughly.

"Possibly age of product. Also, poor manufacturing." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

"Ignorance on our part and the product being almost worn out, it was fine when we got it but developed issue some weeks later." (Male, 31, online marketplaces group)

"The main cause of the safety incident I experiences was buying an unbranded product that claimed to meet the standards as it was being sold on Amazon, but most likely did not." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I think mine was a dupe. A fake product to look the same as Lakeland version... though I do remember only skimming the instructions, so I can't be 100% sure." (Male, 45, online marketplaces group)

Reading product instructions

Given that some report the cause of the safety issue was due to poor or inaccessible instructions (Figure 8), people who experienced a safety issue were asked to what extent they had engaged with these instructions.

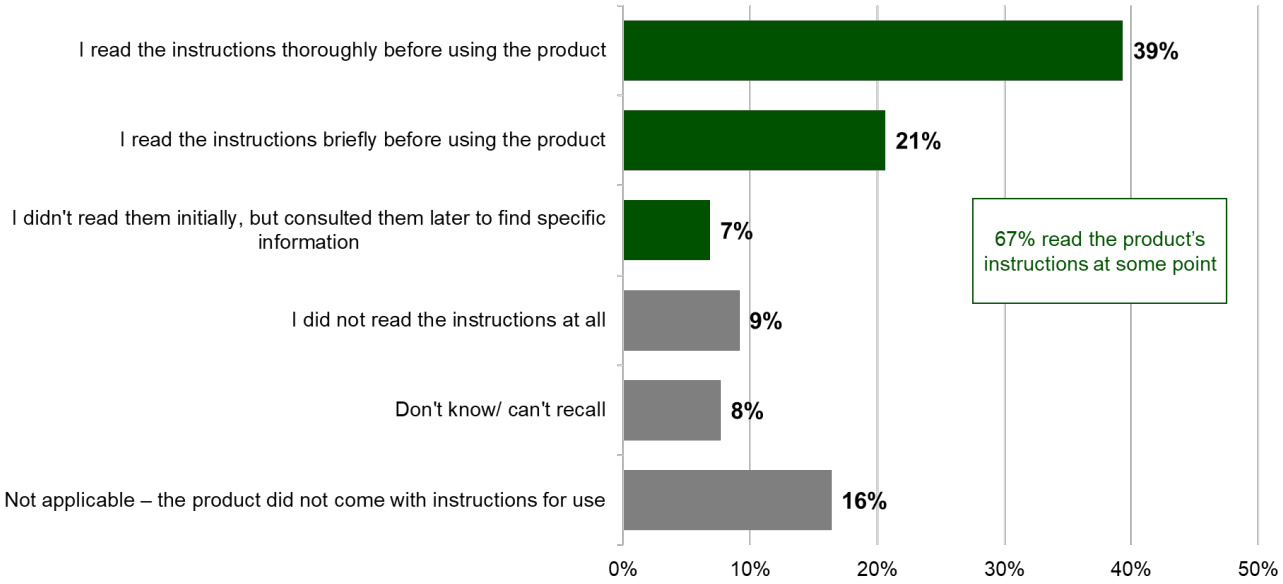
Overall, two-thirds (67%) of those who experienced a safety issue read the product's instructions at some point. Two fifths (39%) report reading the instructions thoroughly before using the product, 21% briefly reading before use, and 7% not initially reading but returning to find specific information.

"plugging the charger in and using as per instructions […] charger overheated and was painful to touch. there was also a hissing noise." (Survey respondent)

Those who experienced a safety issue with a baby product are the most likely to read instructions thoroughly before use (53%), followed by those who experienced a safety issue with a large domestic appliance (50%).

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to have read the instructions for their product, with three-quarters having done so at some point (75%, compared with 65% white).

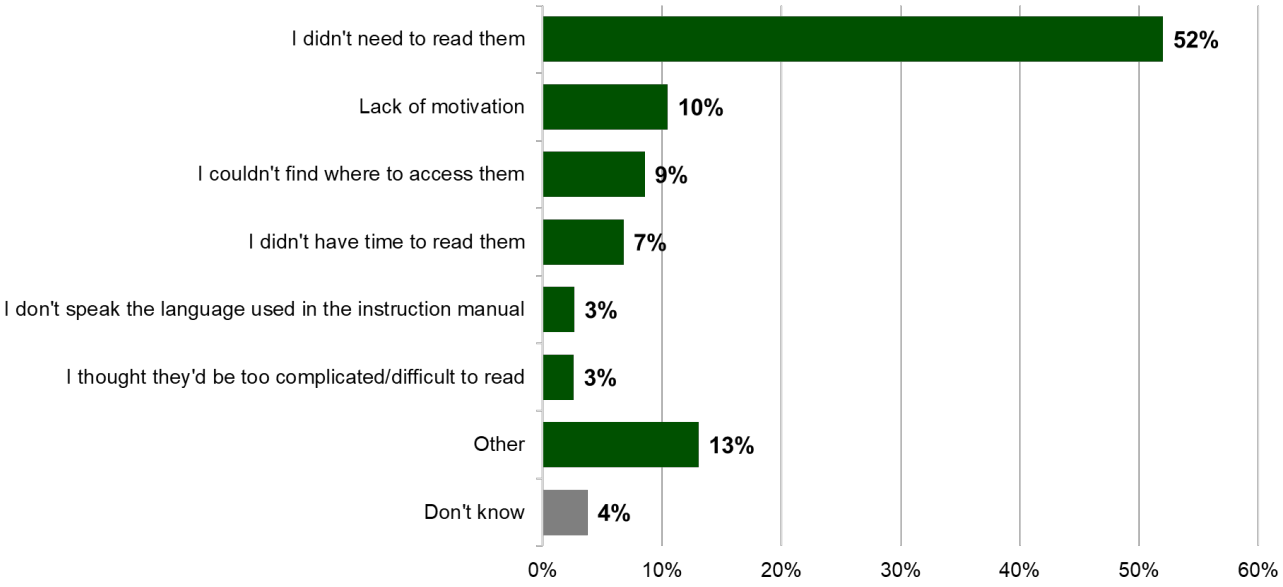
Figure 11. Read product instructions



Q: Thinking about the safety issue you experienced with the [product], which of the following best applies to you?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Those who did not read the instructions for the product they had a safety issue with were asked why they had not done so. By far, the most common answer is that the respondent did not feel the need to read them (52%). One in ten say that they lacked motivation (10%) or could not find where to access them (9%).

Figure 12. Reasons for not reading instructions



Q: For which, if any, of the following reasons did you not read the instructions for the [product]? Please select all that apply.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue and did not read the instructions for the product (W9=234)

Similarly, participants in the focus groups felt they only need to check for safety information or read the instructions if the product was a large electrical item they had never used before or if it was a product their children would use.

"[I would check for safety information] if it has technology I don't understand. No if I've used it or similar before." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

"If it's a big/important purchase. Depends on the item really. Wouldn't bother for a pen." (Female, 59, group with physical disabilities)

"Depending on what. If something electrical I will check safety information more thoroughly." (Male, 27, online retailer group)

"Yes, I think I would check with electrical products more often." (Female, 22, online retailer group)

Impacts of a safety issue

Safety issues cause a range of harms, most-commonly stress or physical harm. Most physical harm did not require any healthcare, but some needed first aid as a result of their issue and a minority needed more involved medical treatment.

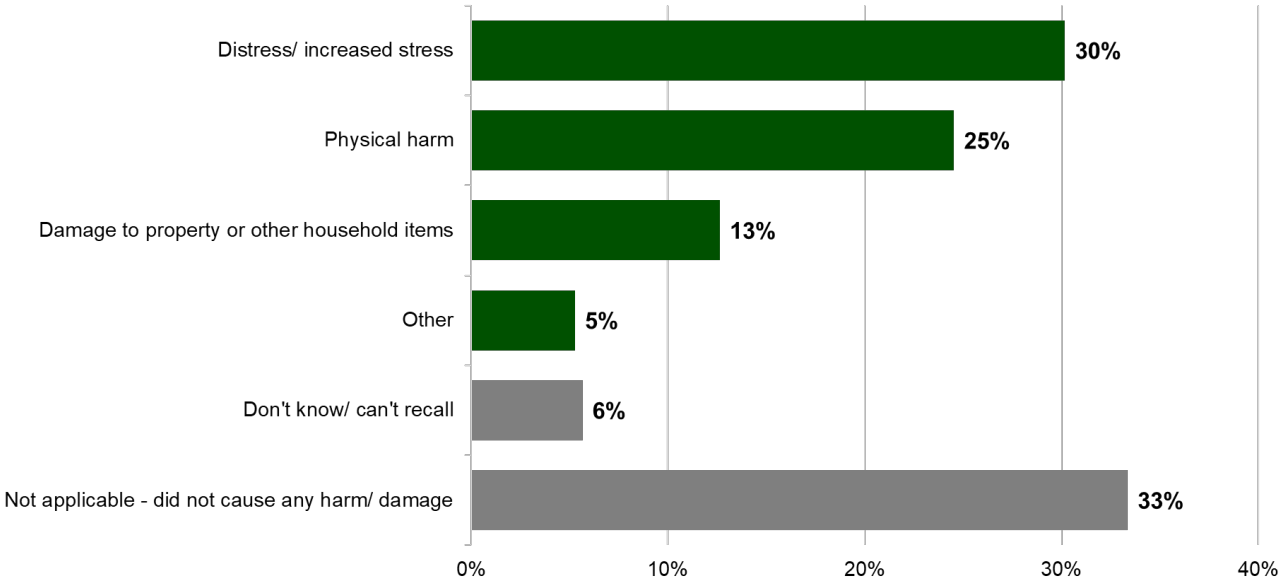
Some experienced financial impacts as a result of the safety issue; most commonly the cost of repairing/ replacing the product but some also mention indirect costs such as medical needs

The most common impact of a safety issue is distress/ increased stress, consistent with a similar question asked about recent safety issues in previous waves. This may include stress related to the direct impacts of the safety issue (e.g. physical harm) as well as more general stresses (e.g. sourcing a replacement product). A quarter of those who have experienced a safety issue (25%) say that it caused physical harm, and 13% say that it damaged their property or other household items.

Those who experienced a safety issue with furniture (36%) or a large domestic appliance (38%) are the most likely to say that it caused increased stress. Those who had a safety issue with cosmetics (58%) or clothes (41%) are the most likely to say it caused them physical harm.

Respondents who said the main cause of their safety issue was the product being 'worn out' are more likely than average to say that they did not experience any of the listed harms (47%). In contrast, those who say the issue was caused by misuse or improper handling are more likely than average to report experiencing physical harm as a result (39%).

Figure 13. Impacts of the safety issue



Q. You said you experienced a safety issue with the following product: product … Did that safety issue cause any of the following?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Among those who say their safety issue caused damage, the most common type is electrical damage (37%). A quarter (25%) of those who experienced a safety issue which caused damage say that it caused dents/ scratches and a fifth (20%) say that there was fire damage.

These outcomes are in contrast to previous waves where, when discussing recent safety issues, dents/ scratches to property were consistently the most-common type of damage. For example, when asked only about safety issues in the past year in wave eight, 35% said their issue had caused dents/ scratches to property.

For those who reported experiencing physical harm as a result of a safety issue, the pattern is also distinct from previous waves' data around recent safety issues. In wave nine, a third (32%) say that no healthcare was needed while nearly half needed some kind of first aid such as a plaster (47%). A minority needed urgent medical attention such as Accident and Emergency (7%), while one in ten (10%) needed non-urgent medical attention, and 1% needed tertiary medical attention such as specialist or prolonged healthcare.

Consistent with the quantitative findings, many focus groups participants reported experiencing short-term emotional impacts following the safety incident – describing feelings of distress from the shock of the event. Some expressed frustration and annoyance at having to arrange refunds or replacements, or at simply being unable to use their product.

Some focus group participants noted difficulties from the damage of essential household appliances, such as washing machines or ovens which affected their daily routines, including their ability to wash clothing for themselves and their children, or to prepare meals. One participant experienced a complete loss of power in their home, which had a substantial impact on their wellbeing. A few participants also reported experiencing anxiety and heart palpitations in the aftermath of the incident.

“Short term [impacts] would mostly be frustration as I needed the item for whatever use and now have to go through a whole process of getting a replacement.” (Male, 53, group with physical disabilities)

“Physical [impacts] could have been serious, but I stopped using the kettle quickly. Financial not a big hit as it's not the most expensive item. Emotional annoyed to have made a mistake buying it, having to go return the fault item and research another kettle was frustrating.” (Male, 36, online marketplaces group)

“In the short-term my issue was dreadful. Waking up to no power, coming home to no power. And never knowing when it was going to happen.” (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

“[I] was unable to cook food in the oven for around a week while we waited for a replacement. It actually caused [having] glass in the food that was cooked so was unable to eat that night. It led to some financial [losses] needing to purchase different food options.” (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

“It gave me trauma when using any sort of mower to clear my grass.” (Female, 29, online marketplaces group)

Some of the participants who took part in the qualitative phase reported experiencing physical harm from the incident such as scratches and burn marks. In certain cases, children were also affected, which led to feelings of awkwardness and increased concern for the child’s safety.

“My wrist was sore and the skin broke down. This was a problem for my job as I was nursing at the time…I have been wearing my old watch for the last 7 years and the smart one went in the bin.” (Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

“It caused me major discomfort, that I had to use an eye drop for about a week.” (Female, 29, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

“Short term - felt embarrassed and like I had let the child down.” (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

A few focus group participants experienced longer-term effects, including becoming unwell due to consuming spoiled food from a malfunctioning freezer or being left with scarring from their injuries. Most participants indicated that they had not suffered any long-term impacts, but many reported changes in their buying behaviour by becoming more cautious when purchasing products online. This included avoiding manufacturers/ brands who they purchased the products from and those who experienced safety issues with smart devices mentioned an increased scepticism about buying such items in the future.

“[It] left an almost permanent scar for my wife from the Ikea cabinet.” (Male, 49, online retailer group)

“Long term [it] makes me more cautious around buying toys.” (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

“Short-term is a physical injury and damage to kitchen, and shock of it happening. Longer term I think being more cautious when buying things and staying with trusted brands.” (Male, 45, online marketplaces group)

"Short-term it made me jump, then angry. Longer term, I would never buy anything from that manufacturer again." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"I haven't bought from the brand again, I avoid them." (Female, 43, group with physical disabilities)

"It only made me to be more cautious and careful before purchasing any smart based products. I am also very [wary] of the commands that I give to smart appliances." (Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"It only made me more attentive, cautious and careful." (Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

Financial impacts of safety issues

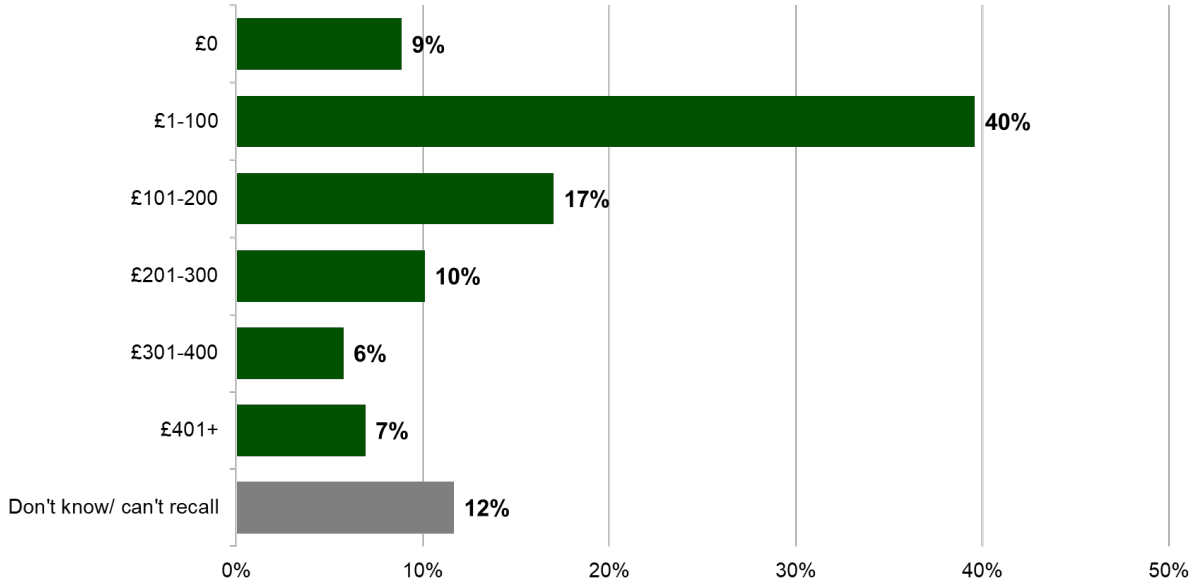
Among those who say their safety issue with a product caused damage to property or other household items, one in ten (9%) said there was no financial value of the damage or repairs needed. Two in five (40%) say that the monetary value of the damage caused, and repairs needed was up to £100 while around one in six (17%) put the value between £101 to £200.

"No idea [of the cause] but it cost £300 NEW. Completely stopped suction and smelt of burning" (Survey respondent)

Those who had a safety issue with a large domestic appliance are more likely to say the monetary value was between £300 to 400 (13%) or over £400 (21%).

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to report the damage/ repairs are valued between £1 to £100 (47%, compared with 38% white adults).

Figure 14. Monetary value of the damage/ repairs needed

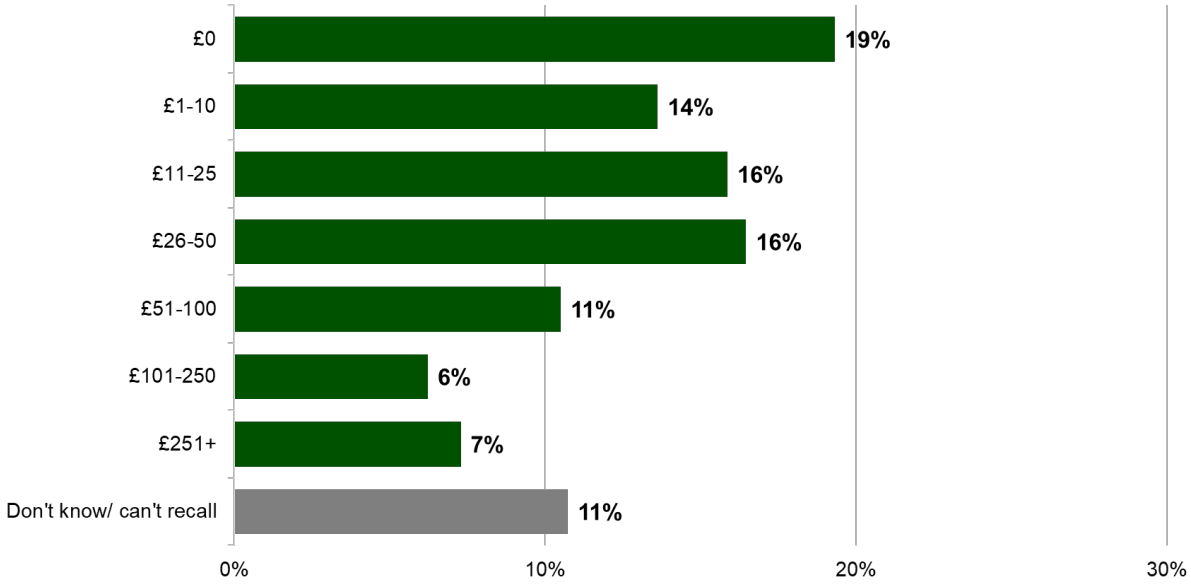


Q. You said you experienced a safety issue with the following product: product, which resulted in damage… What was the monetary value of the damage and any repairs needed?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue which caused damage to property or other household items (W9=307)

People who experienced a safety issue within the last year were asked to estimate the total financial impact, with a fifth (19%) reporting no financial impact. Those who did see a financial impact as a result of a safety issue are split around the costs, with 14% reporting it cost them up to £10, and around one in six reporting it cost them either £11 to £25 (16%) or £26 to £50 (16%). A quarter say that the safety issue led to a financial impact of £51 or more (24%)

As with the monetary value of damage, those who had a recent safety issue with a large domestic appliance are more likely to say there was a high financial impact; 46% say that it cost them over £100 overall.

Figure 15. Financial impact of safety issue

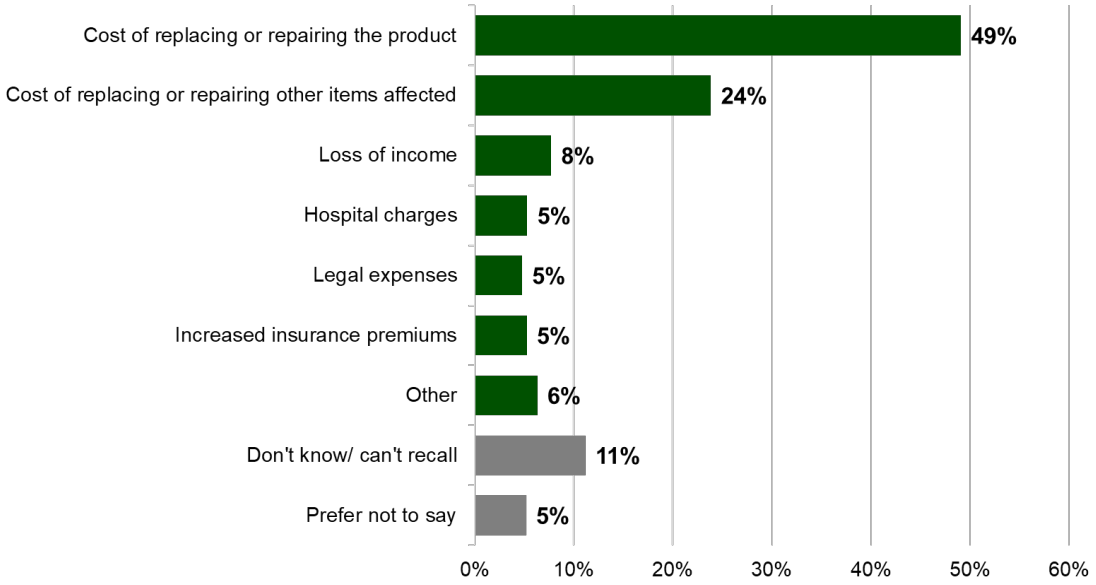


Q. You said you experienced a safety issue with the following product: product within the last year… What was the total financial impact of this safety issue on you (e.g. cost of replacing or repairing the product, cost of replacing or repairing other items that were affected by it, hospital charges etc.)?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue in the past 12 months (W9=1080)

The most common financial impact incurred is the cost of replacing/ repairing the product (49%), while a quarter (24%) report having to pay for replacing/ repairing other items which had been affected by the safety issue. Of those who said there were costs associated with repairing or replacing the product, the median financial impact of this was £40. The median cost of repairing or replacing other products affected by the safety issue is reported as £50.

The majority of those who experienced a recent safety issue with a large domestic appliance (59%) or electrical appliance (56%) say that they had to pay to replace or repair the product itself.

Figure 16. Types of financial impact of safety issue



Q. You said you experienced a safety issue with the following product: product within the last year… Which, if any, of the following types of financial impacts did you experience as a result? Please select all that apply. Base: All who experienced a safety issue in the past 12 months and experienced a financial impact (W9=744)

Some participants in the focus groups felt their money had been wasted on an item that proved to be unreliable, which in some cases led to a reluctance to engage with that kind of product in the future.

Additional financial burdens included the costs associated with attending medical appointments, such as parking fees, petrol expenses, and the ongoing cost of treating the injury in the period following the incident.

"I felt my money had been wasted and it put me off tech watches."
(Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I replaced my handset - short term small financial loss. It didn't get to the point of catching alight or causing physical harm."
(Male, 34, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"Physical pain and the cost of medical appointments (driving, parking etc) and the cost of wound dressings for week and weeks."
(Female, 50, online marketplaces group)

Actions taken after a safety issue

Most products are no longer a safety issue, with many throwing away the product or stopping using it.

Those who did not take any action as a result of a safety issue tend to not think it was worth doing so – either that the issue was not important enough or that taking action would not have changed anything.

Most of those who ever experienced a safety issue say it is not an issue anymore, or that they do not have the item anymore (74%). Of those who are still experiencing the safety issue, one in ten (9%) say that they have given up trying to resolve it, whilst 5% say that they are still trying to resolve or fix the issue.

Those who are older are more likely to say that there is no longer a safety issue, or that they no longer have the product (80% of those over 65, compared with 65% of those aged 18 to 29).

People from an ethnic minority background are more likely than those from white backgrounds to say that they are still experiencing a safety issue (19%, compared with 13% white).

Similarly, those with children in the household are more likely to report continuing to experience the safety issue than those without; (20%, compared with 11% of those without children in their household).

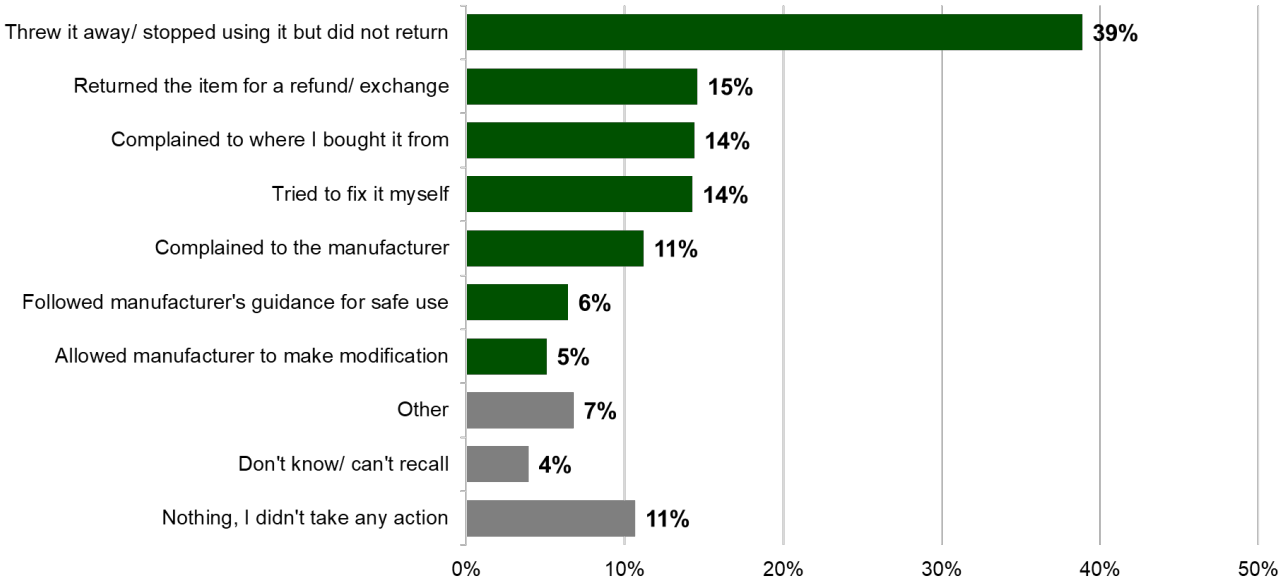
The high proportion who say the safety issue is not an issue/ they do not have the item any more, is likely affected by the actions taken as a result of a safety issue. The most common action is to throw the product away or stopping using it without returning it (39%). This is followed by returning the item for a refund or exchange (15%) and complaining to where the product was bought and trying to fix the product themselves (both 14%). One in ten (11%) report not taking any action as a result of the safety issue.

Women and men are equally likely to take any listed action (both 85%), but women are more likely to throw away the product or stop using it without returning it (43%, compared with 34% men), whilst men are more likely to try to fix it themselves (17%, compared with 12% women).

Younger people are more likely than older people to not take any action (14% of those aged 18 to 29, compared with 9% of those over 65). When they do take action, younger people are more likely to try to fix the product themselves (21% of those aged 18 to 29, compared with 10% of those over 65).

Those with high levels of educational attainment are also more likely to try to fix the product themselves (18%, compared with 10% low levels), as are those living with children in their household (17%, compared with 13% without children).

Figure 17. Actions taken as a result of the product safety issue



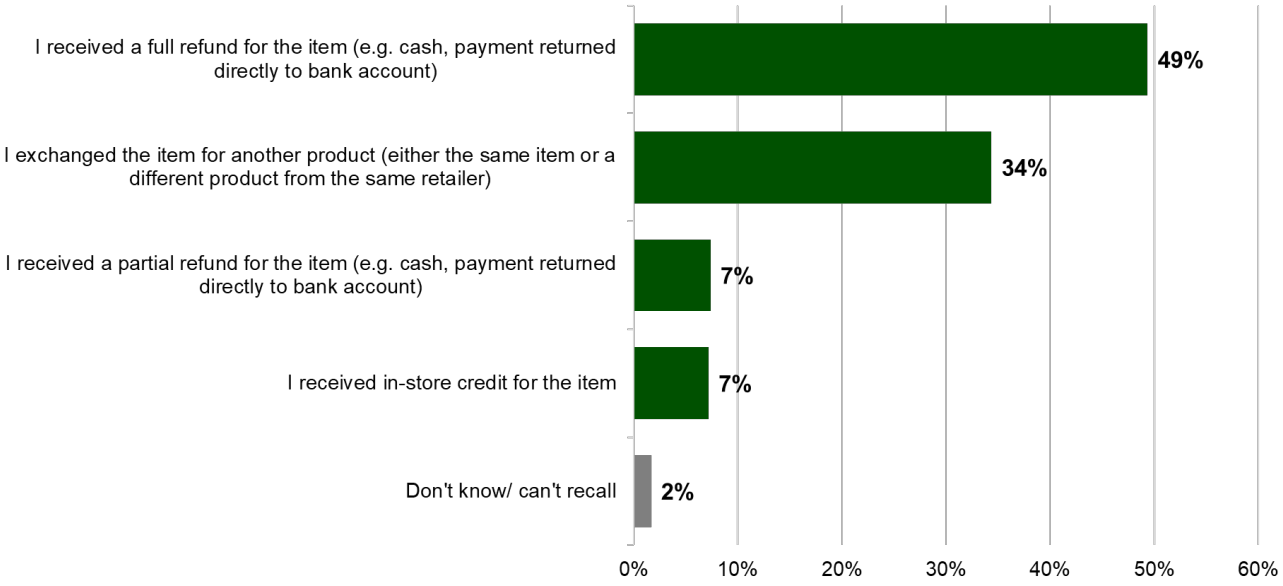
Q: Which of the following actions did you take after becoming aware of the safety issue with the following product: [product]? Please select all that apply.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Half (49%) of those who returned the product for a refund or exchange received a full refund for the item. A third (34%) exchanged the product for another item, whilst 7% received a partial refund for the product, and the same proportion (7%) received in-store credit for the product.

Of those who did not receive a full refund for the product, half (48%) were offered this, but chose to take in-store credit or an exchange instead. A third (32%) were not offered a full refund, even if they asked, and a fifth (20%) do not recall.

Older people are more likely to have exchanged the product (48% of those aged over 65, compared with 24% of those aged 18 to 29), whilst young people are more likely to have received a partial refund (18% of those aged 18 to 29, compared with 0% of those over 65).

Figure 18. Refund received for product



Q: You said you returned the item for a refund/exchange... Which of these statements best applies?
Base: All who experience a safety issue and then returned the item for a refund/ exchange (W9=344)

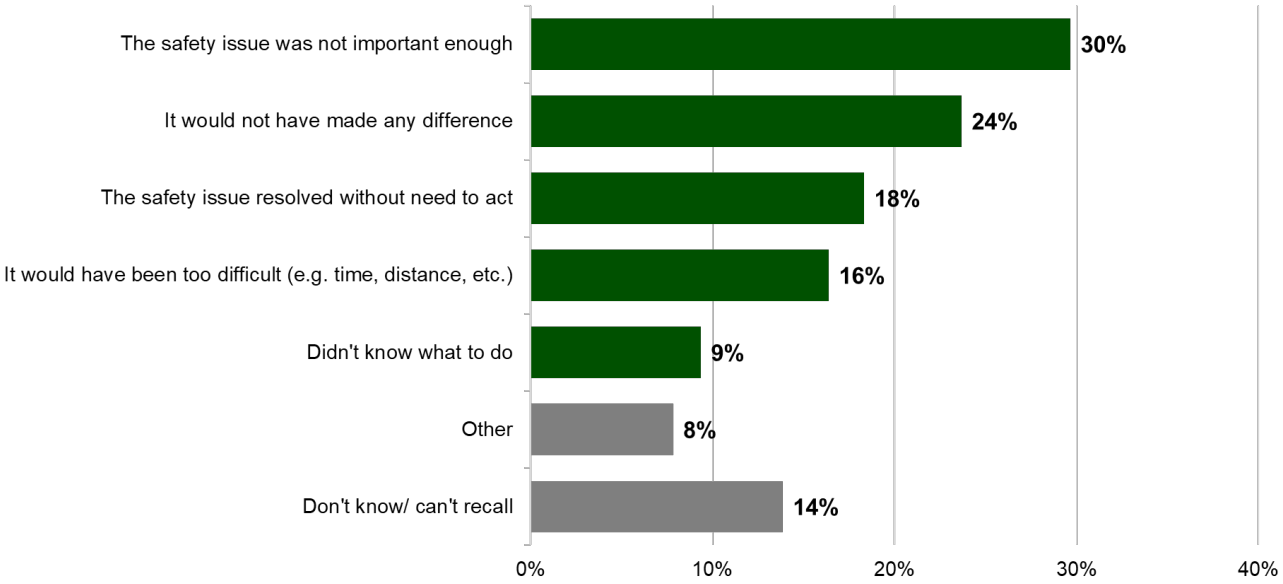
Reasons for not taking action

Those who did not take any action after experiencing their product safety issue were asked why. The most common reason is that they do not think the safety issue was important enough (30%), followed by the perception that taking action would not have made any difference (24%). A fifth (18%) said that the safety issue was resolved without them having to act. Sixteen percent said it would have been too difficult, and 9% said they did not know what to do.

These reasons broadly align with findings from previous studies; the safety issue not being seen as important or not thinking action would make a difference are generally the top-two most common reasons for not taking action.

Those finding it difficult to cope on their current income are also more likely to say they did not know what to do (15%, compared with 6% who are coping on their current income).

Figure 19. Reasons for not taking action



Q: Which, if any, of the following best explain why you decided not to take any action?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue and didn't take any action (W9=268)

Similar to the quantitative findings, many participants in the focus groups either disposed of or returned/exchanged the product associated with the safety issue. Several felt the issue was not serious enough or was too common to need further action. Some reported that returning the product was 'more trouble than it's worth' and, as a result, chose to dispose of the product, stop using it, or avoid purchasing from the same retailer or platform.

"I just threw the toy out, didn't feel like going through the hassle of returning it." (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

"I did not contact anyone. But I stopped using the product and also took note of the seller not to buy from them again." (Female, 29, online marketplaces group)

"I took it back to the store quite quickly, explained and demonstrated the fault. Refund was issued immediately." (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

"I didn't contact any person, just stopped shopping from that site." (Male, 31, online marketplaces group)

Others felt personally responsible for the safety issue, or knew that the product warranty had expired, leading them to believe they were not entitled to a refund or replacement. However, participants who purchased their item from a recognised retailer generally found the return, exchange, or replacement process straightforward, often receiving a refund or replacement promptly and with little difficulty.

"Overheating batteries are relatively common occurrences, and it was outside of warranty period." (Male, 34, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"John Lewis let me replace with brand of my choice." (Female, 77, online retailer group)

"It's quite easy, if you purchase from a reputable brand."
(Male, 45, online retailer group)

"I didn't get a refund, but I got a replacement with no hassle."
(Female, 43, group with physical disabilities)

"I didn't contact any person, just stopped shopping from that site."
(Male, 31, online marketplaces group)

While most participants in the focus groups were satisfied with how they handled the situation, a few expressed regrets or questioned whether they should have taken additional steps to highlight the issue with the retailer to prevent further safety issues to others which could cause serious harm.

"I wish I had pursued them." (Male, 49, online retailer group)

"It was very easy to get a refund, but I thought that Argos could have done more, like recall the product/stop selling it so that no one else faced the same risk… I wonder how many times it had happened before, or after, and whether a proper investigation would have found the nub of the issue." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"I was happy but in retrospect [I] wonder if I let them get off easy."
(Female, 40, online retailer group)

Future behaviour

People do not see safety issues as isolated events, with many saying something similar could occur with that brand/ model of product in future. However, some said they would be likely to purchase that specific brand/ model of a product again regardless.

Those who reported ever having a product safety issue were asked about the likelihood of a similar safety issue occurring with the product in the future. Among these respondents, 44% said this was likely, including 16% who said it was very likely. Conversely, 23% said this was unlikely, including 10% who said it was very unlikely.

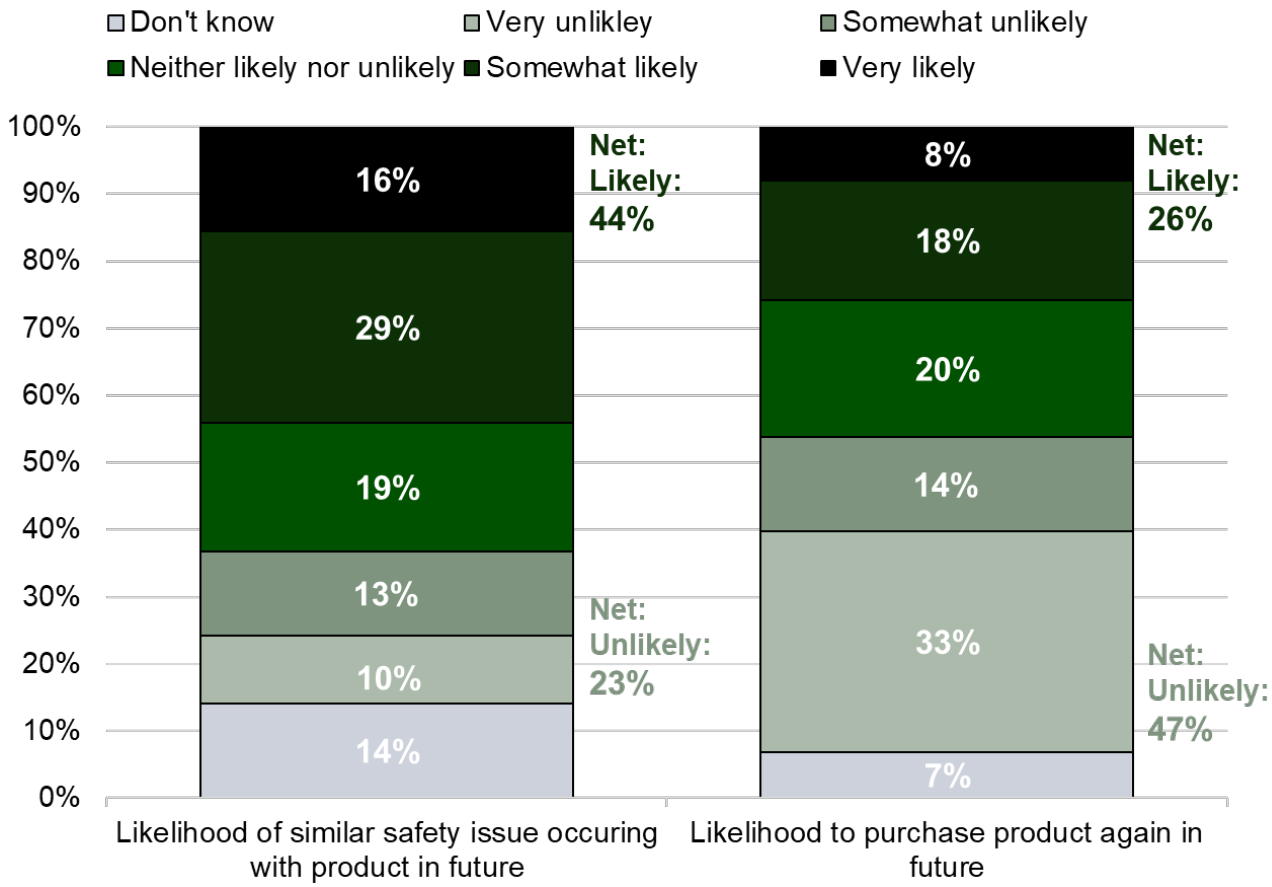
With 44% saying it is likely that a similar product safety issue would occur in the future, it follows that a similar percentage (47%) say that they would be unlikely to purchase the product again, including 33% who said they were very unlikely to do so. Conversely, a quarter (26%) said they were likely to do so, including 8% who said there were very likely to do so. While 20% said they were neither likely nor unlikely to do so, and 7% said they were unsure.

Women are more likely than men to say it is likely that a similar product safety issue occurs in the future (46%, compared with 42% men), as well as being more likely to say they are unlikely to purchase the product in the future (51%, compared with 43% men).

Similarly, younger people are more likely than older people to say that a similar product safety issue could occur in the future (46% 18 to 29, compared with 34% over 65). However, they are also more likely to say that they are likely to purchase the product again (34% 18 to 29, compared with 17% over 65).

Those living with children in their household are more likely to say that it is likely that a similar product safety issue occurs in the future (48%, compared with 42% without children). They are also more likely to say they are likely to purchase the product again (32%, compared with 23% without children).

Figure 20. Likelihood of future events



Q: Thinking about the specific brand/model of the [product] you experienced a safety issue with… How likely or unlikely do you think it is that a similar type of safety issue could occur with this product in future?
Q: Thinking about the specific brand/model of the [product] you experienced a safety issue with… How likely or unlikely are you to purchase this product in future?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Reporting safety issues

Most do not report the safety issue to any organisation, with uncertainty about where to do so/ who to report it to, as well as uncertainty about warranty periods or whether they had been responsible for the fault.

Around four in five (78%) respondents have never reported a product safety issue. Among the 13% who have who have, they most commonly reported a safety issue to the seller (6%), followed by the manufacturer (5%), and their local authority or district council (2%). One percent of the public have ever reported a safety issue to OPSS.

These findings are broadly comparable with similar, previous studies. For example, in wave eight of the OPSS Consumer Tracker, the same proportion (78%) said they had

never reported a product safety issue. Similarly, in wave eight, people most commonly reported this to the seller (8%), the manufacturer (6%), or their local authority or district council (2%).

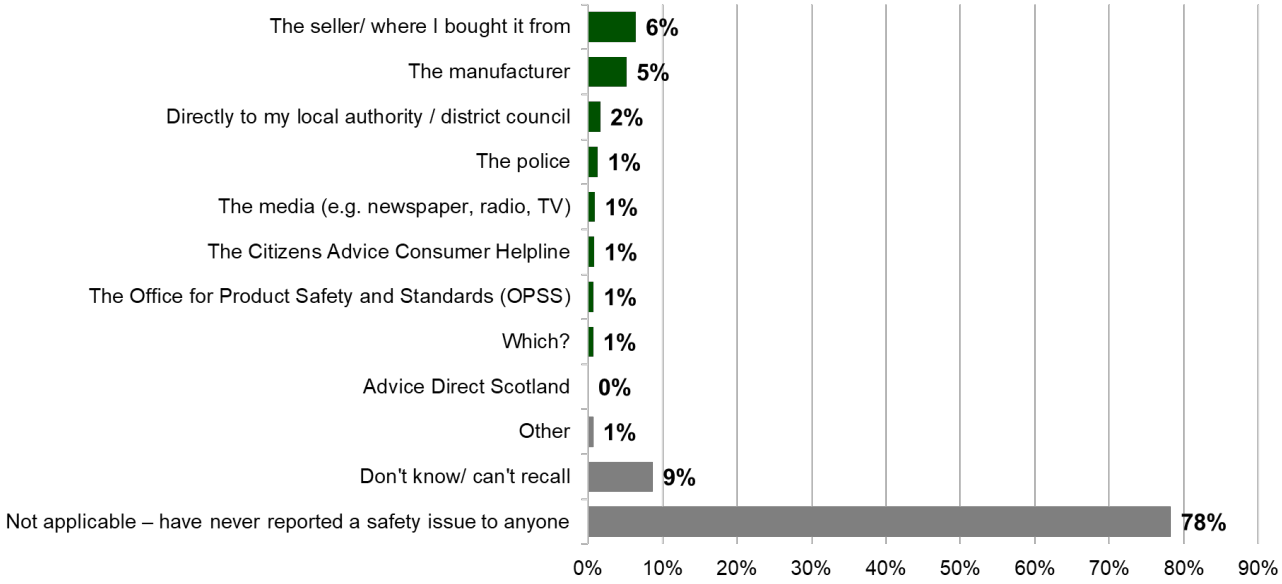
Younger people are more likely than older age groups to have reported a safety issue to any listed organisation (18% 18 to 29, compared with 10% over 65).

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are also more likely to have reported a safety issue (19%, compared with 12% white).

Similarly, those living in households with children are more likely to have reported a safety issue (18%, compared with 11% without children).

These findings align with demographic trends from wave eight of the OPSS Consumer Tracker.

Figure 21. Reporting product safety issues



Q: Have you ever reported a safety issue to any of the following organisations? Please select all that apply.
Base: All (W9=10,037)

Many of the qualitative participants chose not to report the incident due to various barriers: the product being out of warranty, uncertainty about where or how to report the issue, or the belief that too much time had passed to make a return. Others felt that the price of the product did not justify the effort involved in reporting it. Some participants believed they were responsible for the fault or feared they would be blamed and therefore decided not to report the safety issue. Those who had purchased the item from an online marketplace often refrained from formal reporting as they felt the reporting process would require too much effort or felt the injury was not serious enough to justify a report but did leave reviews on the seller's site to share their experience.

"If something is relatively cheap it is more trouble than it is worth to report problems. You rarely get anywhere." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"[I] think I would have been told it was my problem anyway. So, [I] fixed it myself." (Male, 27, online retailer group)

“I felt it was more of my fault for not checking if the product was in properly good condition before the purchase.” (Male, 31, online marketplaces group)

“No, I didn't report it; I just left a bad review of the product rating it 1 star.” (Male, 31, online marketplaces group)

“I don't know [who] to report a safety issue to. I would have to Google it.” (Male, 45, online marketplaces group)

Participants suggested they would be more inclined to report a safety issue if it had caused greater harm, if there were clear and accessible reporting guidelines, or if the consequences of the issue were perceived to be life-threatening.

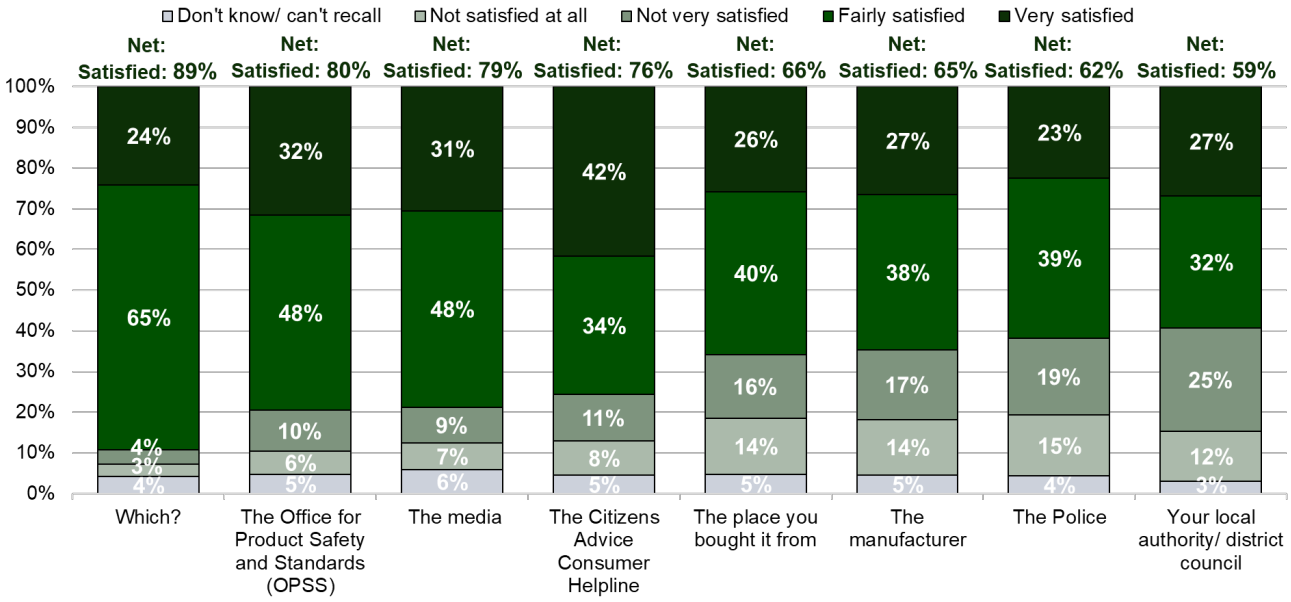
“I was aware of the route, but I felt it would be much of a border going back and forth. In my case, I wasn't hurt, maybe if I was, I would have gone all the way to report the incident.” (Female, 29, online marketplaces group)

Those who have ever reported a product safety issue to a listed organisation were asked how satisfied they are with the response received or actions taken as a result of their most recent report. Respondents express the highest levels of satisfaction for Which?, with nine in ten (89%) reporting satisfaction, including 24% who are very satisfied. This is followed by OPSS, which four in five (80%) report satisfaction for, including 32% who are very satisfied. Respondents also express relatively high levels of satisfaction for the response received or actions taken by the media (79%), the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline (76%), the place they bought the product from (66%), the manufacturer (65%), and the police (62%). Lowest levels of satisfaction are reported for local authorities and district councils, at three in five (59%).

The broad trend of these findings align with the previous wave eight survey of the OPSS Consumer Tracker, when OPSS was ranked top (90% satisfaction), the media second (84%), Which? third (83%), and local authorities and district councils last (68%).

In wave nine, younger people are more likely than older people to report satisfaction having reported a product safety issue to the manufacturer (79% 18 to 29, compared with 64% 30 to 49, 57% 50 to 64, and 56% over 65). Conversely, older respondents are more likely to report dissatisfaction (18% 18 to 29, compared with 29% 30 to 49, 42% 50 to 64, and 38% over 65).

Figure 22. Satisfaction with the response from reporting product safety issue



Q: You said you reported a safety issue to the following people/ organisations. Thinking about the most recent occasion...How satisfied, if at all, with their response or the actions they took?
Base: All who complained/ reported to a valid organisation or the retailer/ manufacturer (W9: Which?=67; OPSS=72; Media=80; The Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline=80; Place bought from=659; Manufacturer=534; Police=119; Local authority/district council=158)

Perceptions around information provision

People's perceptions change as they deal with a safety issue – before they had experienced one, they thought it would be easy to deal with. After dealing with the issue, they are less likely to say the safety issue was easy to deal with, but more likely to say they know where to get good information or that they understand their legal rights/ responsibilities.

When asked to think back to when their specified product safety issue first started, almost two thirds (64%) of respondents agree that they thought it would be easy to deal with the issue on their own. Just over one in ten (12%) disagree, and a similar proportion (11%) felt neutrally. Around half of respondents agree that at the time their product safety issue first started they knew where to get good information, help and advice (50%), understood their legal rights and responsibilities (49%), and thought it would be easy to get help to deal with the issue (44%).

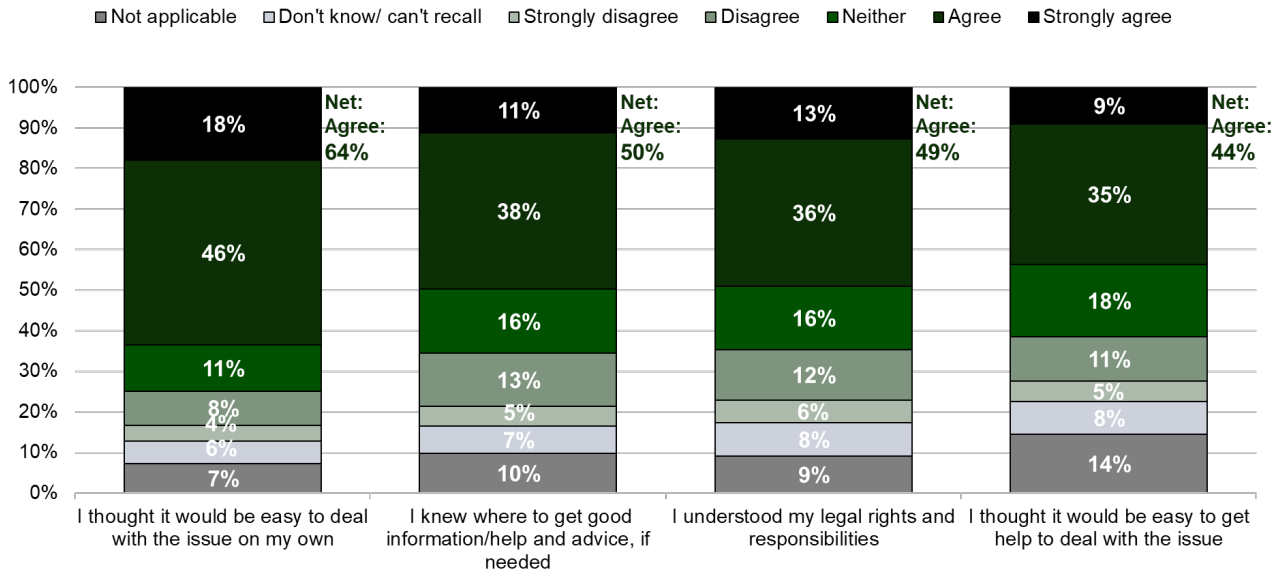
These findings align broadly with those from wave eight of the OPSS Consumer Tracker survey, when the highest level of agreement was that they thought it would be easy to deal with the issue on their own when the product safety issue first started (65%).

Men are more likely to agree with most listed statements around accessibility of information, including that they knew where to get good information (53%, compared with 47% women), understood their legal rights and responsibilities (53%, compared with 46% women), and thought it would be easy to get help (47%, compared with 40% women). For all statements, this difference is driven by a higher proportion of women saying they do not know.

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than those from a white ethnic background to agree with every listed statement about accessibility of information, including that they knew where to get good information (57%, compared with 48% white).

Those living with disabilities are also less likely than those without disabilities to agree with every listed statement, including that they knew where to get good information (46%, compared with 52% without).

Figure 23. Perceptions at the time the product safety issue first started



Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the safety issue you had with the following product: [product]? At the time the issue first started.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

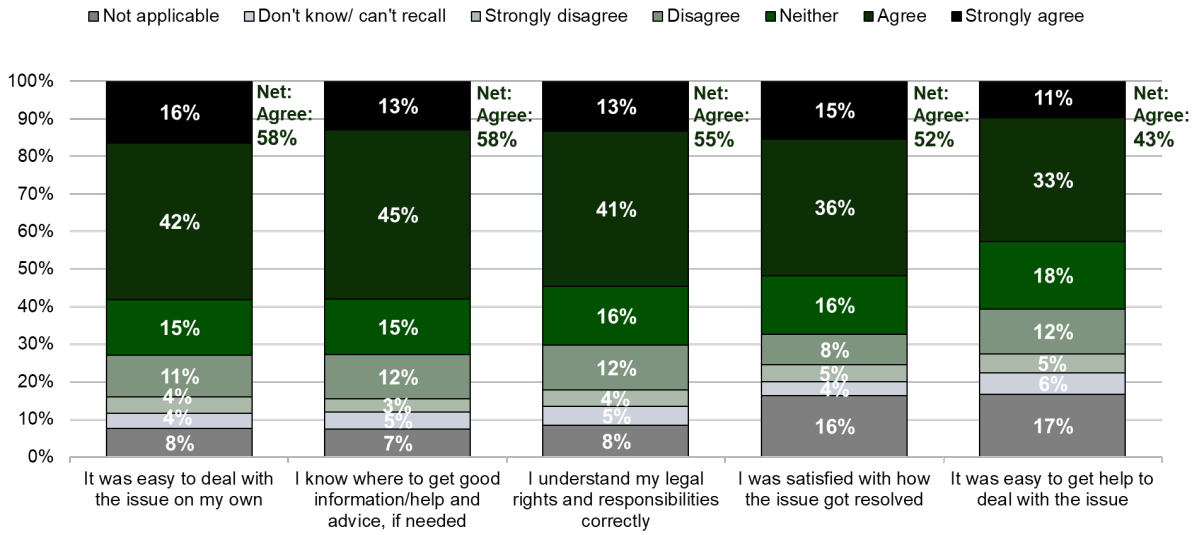
When asked how far they agreed with these same statements in the present moment, respondents most commonly agree that it was easy to deal with the issue on their own (58%), followed by knowing where to get good information (58%), understanding their legal rights and responsibilities (55%), and it being easy to get help (43%). Approximately half (52%) agree that they are satisfied with how the issue got resolved.

Although the overall pattern of agreement across these statements appears consistent, there are key changes when reflecting on before and after experiencing a safety issue. For example, people say that when the issue first started, they are less likely to know where to get good information/ help (58% presently, compared with 50% when the issue first started), or that they understand their legal rights and responsibilities (55% present, compared with 49% when the issue first started). However, are now less likely to believe that it was easy to deal with the issue on their own (58% presently, compared with 64% when the issue first started).

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are also more likely than those from a white ethnic background to agree that it was easy to get help (49%, compared with 42% white), and that they were satisfied with how the issue got resolved (60%, compared with 50% white).

Those finding it difficult to cope on their current income are less likely than those who are coping to agree with most listed statements about accessing information, as are those living with disabilities compared with those without disabilities.

Figure 24. Perceptions at present



Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the safety issue you had with the following product: [product]? And today.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue (W9=2,468)

Household experiences of safety issues

In wave nine, questions on experiences of safety issues were initially shown to all respondents (n=10,037), and then subsequently to those where someone in their household experienced a safety issue (n=1,171). Exact base sizes for specific questions are shown below each chart.

Key findings

- Fourteen per cent recall someone else in their household experiencing a safety issue with a listed product category. As with personal experiences, the most common product category was electrical appliances (62%).
- Consistent with individual experiences of a safety issue, the most common cause of a safety issue experienced by someone else in the household was the product itself or its instructions
- Also in-line with personal experiences of safety issues, the most common impact from a household safety issue is distress/ increased stress (28%), followed by physical harm (21%).
- Most commonly, the person affected by the household issue was a partner/ spouse (31%).

Overall, 14% of people say that someone in their household has ever experienced a product safety issue, most commonly reported by younger adults and those with children in their household.

The most common household safety issues experienced are with electrical appliances (small kitchen appliances or chargers) and large domestic appliances (washing machines or combined washer-dryers).

In wave nine, people were also asked whether anyone else in their household has ever experienced a product safety issue. Overall, 14% recall someone else in their household experiencing a safety issue with a listed product category.

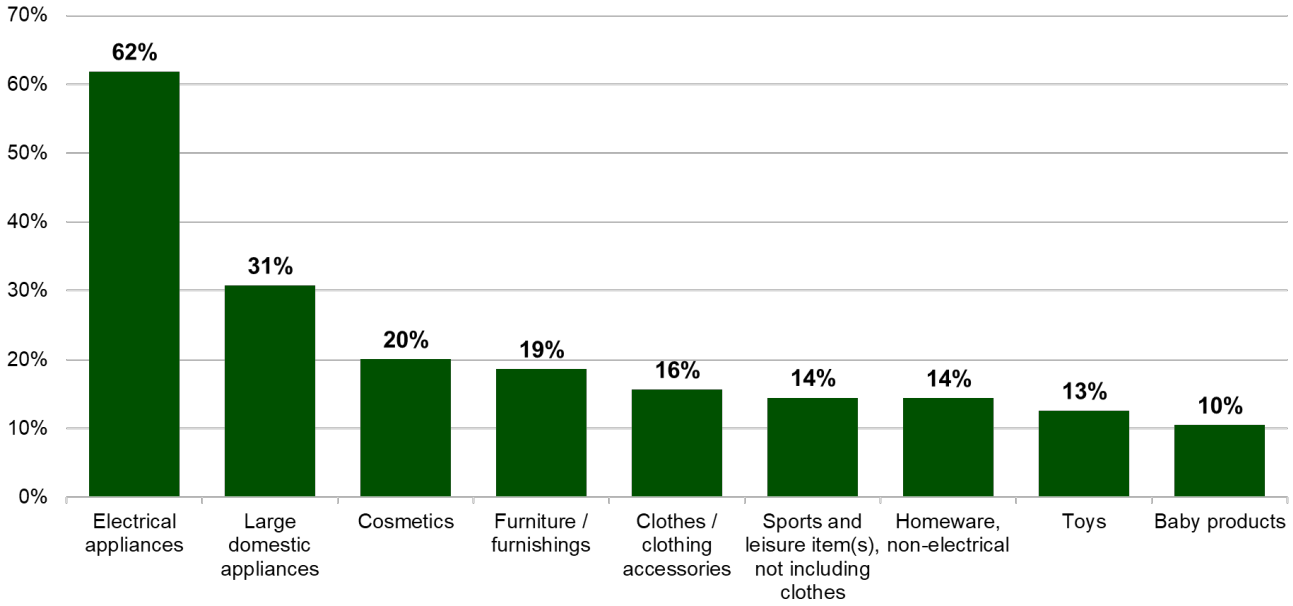
Younger adults are more likely to say someone in their household has ever experienced a product safety issue; 22% of those aged 18 to 29 report this, compared with 10% of those aged 65 and over.

Those with children in the household are also more likely to say that someone else has experienced a safety issue (21%, compared with 12% of those without children). They are consistently more likely to report issues across all product types listed, including 10% who say the issue was with an electrical appliance (compared with 6% of those without children) and 5% who say the issue was with a large domestic appliance (compared with 3% of those without children).

Those from an ethnic minority background are more likely than white adults to say that someone else in the household has experienced a safety issue (22%, compared with 13% white background).[4]

Among those whose household has ever experienced a safety issue, the most common categories are consistent with personal safety issues; electrical appliances (62%) and large domestic appliances (31%). Within electrical appliances, people most-commonly say that someone in their household had a safety issue with a small kitchen appliance (40%) or a charger (24%). For large domestic appliances, the most common cause of a household safety issue was a washing machine/ combined washer-dryer (41%). One in ten (11%) of those whose household experienced a safety issue with a large domestic appliance say that their washing machine was smart/ AI-enabled.

Figure 25. Household product safety issues by category (among those who had an issue)



Q: Thinking about any time in the past... Which, if any, of the following types of products has someone in your current household experienced a safety issue with? Please select all that apply. Include anyone who currently or previously lived in your household, excluding yourself. If multiple people have experienced safety issues with the products listed, please select all that apply.
Base: All who experienced a safety issue in their household (W9=1,171)

Three in ten say that the person affected by the household issue was their partner/ spouse (31%), but just over one in ten say that it affected their mother (12%). Similar proportions say that their daughter (8%) or son (7%) experienced the safety issue.

Those with children in the household are more likely than those without children to say that their son (11%, compared with 5% without children) or daughter (13%, compared with 6% without children). There is no significant difference by the ages of children in household.

[4] Findings from the offline sample or minority groups such as people from ethnic minorities, LGB+ adults etc. may be highly correlated with other demographics in the data. More detail is provided in Appendix A.

Considerations around household safety issues

The most commonly reported cause of household safety issues was the product itself or the instructions that came with it, followed by design flaws or faults with the product.

Just over one in ten say that the main cause of the household product safety issue was not related to the product itself, for example involving accidental damage by falls and trips.

Just over two-fifths (43%) say the main cause of the household safety issue was the product itself or its instructions, a third (33%) say there were design flaws/ faults with the product itself, while 7% say the instructions were poor/ misleading, and 3% say the instructions were inaccessible.

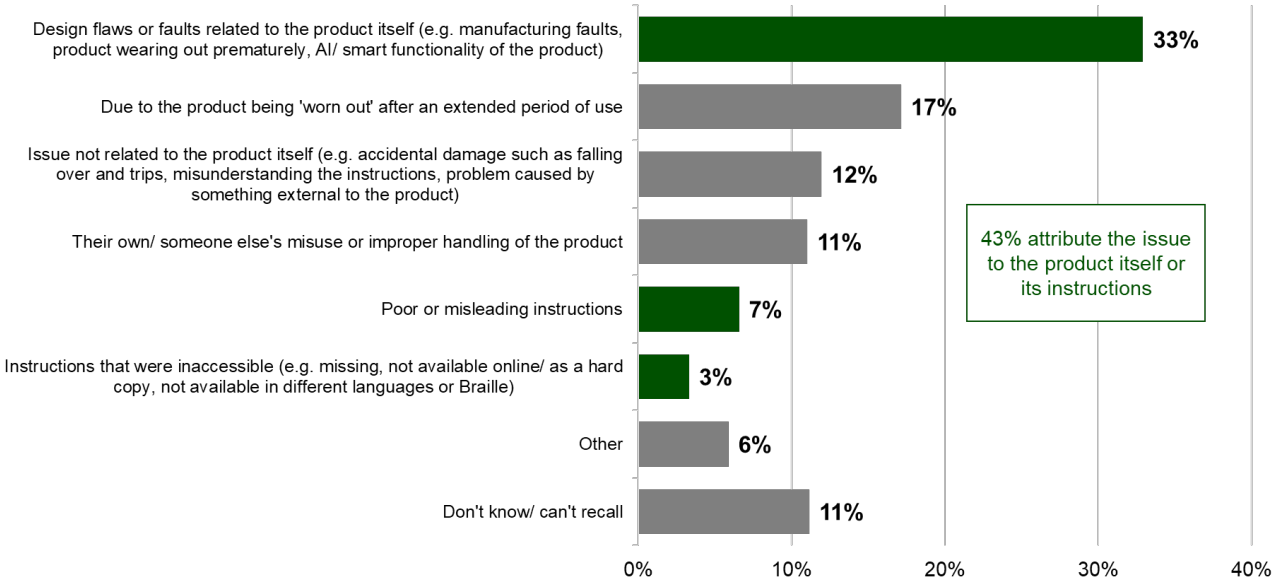
Among those who say the main cause of safety issues was poor or misleading instructions, this is more likely among baby products (16%), with a similar pattern for the cause of the issue was not related to the product itself (19%). The product being 'worn out' is most commonly reported for large domestic appliances (25%), closely followed by electrical appliances (24%).

Those who said their parent (mother or father) was affected by the product safety issue are more likely to say the main cause was due to the product being 'worn out' after extended use (23%); joint most-likely with those who say a sibling (brother or sister) was affected (23%). Those whose sibling was affected by the household safety issue are more likely to say it was due to misuse or improper handling of the product (23%).

LGB+ adults are less likely than heterosexual adults to say the household product safety issue was related to design flaws (28%, compared with 35% heterosexual adults). However, they are more likely to say the safety issue was caused by misuse (15%, compared with 11% of heterosexual adults) or poor instructions (10%, compared with 6% of heterosexual adults).

Just over one in ten (12%) say that the main cause of the household product safety issue was not related to the product itself, for example involving accidental damage by falls and trips. Those who said someone in their household experienced physical harm as a result of the product safety issue were more likely to say this was due to issues not related to the product itself (20%).

Figure 26. Main cause of household product safety issue



Q: On balance, which of the following do you think was the main cause of this safety issue?
Base: All who experienced a safety issue in their household (W9=1,171)

Impacts of household safety issues

The most commonly cited impact from a household product safety issue is increased stress or distress, followed by physical harm.

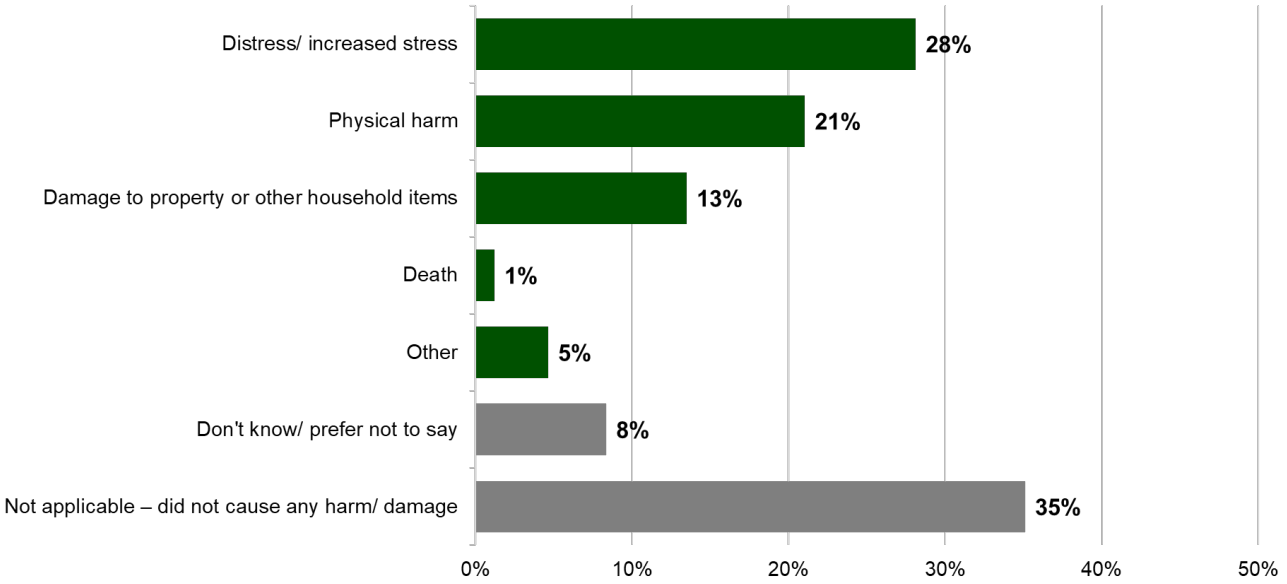
Among those who say the household safety issue caused damage to property/ other household items, the most common type of damage is electrical damage, followed by dents/ scratches to property.

Consistent with personal experience of a safety issue, the most common impact from a household safety issue is distress/ increased stress (28%), followed by physical harm (21%). One in seven (13%) say that there was damage to property or other household items. One per cent of those who say someone in their household has experienced a safety issue say that it resulted in death – this would be equivalent to 0.1% of UK adults reporting the same[5].

Those whose household experienced a safety issue with cosmetics are the most likely to say it caused physical harm (39%) or distress (35%). In contrast, those who experienced a safety issue with an electrical appliance are the most likely to say there was no harm or damage as a result (46%).

[5] Extrapolating survey findings to population-level estimates is subject to error and means the true figure in the population may be a lot higher or lower than the given figures. More detail about extrapolating figures up to population-level is provided in the technical report.

Figure 27. Impacts of the household safety issue



You said someone in your household experienced a safety issue with the following product: product. Did that safety issue cause any of the following? (Please select all that apply)
Base: All who experienced a safety issue in their household (W9=1,171)

Consistent with personal safety issues, among those who say the household safety issue caused damage to property/ other household items, the most common type of damage is electrical damage (32%). This is followed by three in ten (30%) reporting dents/ scratches to property. A fifth say that the household safety issue resulted in smoke damage (19%) or fire damage (18%). Just over one in ten (12%) say that there was flood damage as a result.

The pattern of physical harm severity is also similar to personal safety issues, with three in ten (30%) reporting no healthcare was needed, while two-fifths needed first aid (41%). Around one in ten required either urgent (9%) or non-urgent (11%) medical attention, while 5% needed prolonged healthcare. When asked to describe the specific type of physical harm experienced, the most common were cuts/ lacerations or bruising.

While most participants in the focus groups reported no wider impacts on their household or other family members, consumers with physical disabilities highlighted wider effects from the incidents. These included emotional distress experienced by spouses or children, as well as practical challenges such as arranging alternative childcare. For example, a participant had to seek alternative means of washing their clothes, which added further strain to themselves, children and their families' daily lives.

"The children were upset they couldn't have their toy." (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

"[I was] unable to eat as usual. [It] caused my husband stress." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

"My kids [were impacted]. When I went to the launderette, I had to ask family to babysit." (Female, 43, group with physical disabilities)

Key topical insights

Attitudes and experiences of consumers with physical disabilities

Key findings

- Most participants with physical disabilities said that the safety issue was not directly related to their health condition, but they do note that their health condition/ disability influences the types of product they purchase.
- Some expressed concerns that safety information can be complex and stressed the need for straightforward instructions and details such as how heavy the item is.
- Consumers with physical disabilities felt that support could be better, particularly at involving people with disabilities in product user surveys or trials. They also felt that government has a role to hold companies accountable through legislation or penalties for non-compliance.

Consumers with physical disabilities reported shopping more cautiously for their products. They placed importance on evaluating products through user-friendliness, (including the product's weight and ease of use), as well as the relevance of the product to their daily needs.

Consumers with physical disabilities believe that both companies and the government should better support consumers with physical disabilities such as enforcing stricter legislation and standards to hold companies accountable or introducing penalties for non-compliance.

Most participants in the group with physical disabilities reported that the safety issue they experienced was not directly related to their health condition. However, they emphasised that their condition or situation influences the types of products they choose to use or purchase. For some, mobility issues cause them to avoid products that involve actions such as tying knots or bending over. Instead, they seek products designed to support daily activities — such as extended grippers, jar openers, or kick stools.

These participants also prefer products that are lightweight, easy to assemble, and user-friendly, enabling them to avoid physical discomfort and ensure the product is practical and usable for their needs. A few individuals noted that their health conditions contribute to heightened anxiety, which affects their shopping behaviour. They described themselves as 'overthinking' purchases or being particularly 'cautious' buyers, often prioritising trustworthy brands and reliable products. Additionally, they reported experiencing increased stress when a product breaks or becomes unusable, as this can directly hinder their ability to carry out everyday tasks.

"I have sight and mobility issues[;] I have to buy based on these conditions." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"My condition makes me overthink and be more anxious about the products I buy."(Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

"[My condition affects me] a lot [due to] mobility issues. I am unable to bend to tie laces etc." (Male, 68, group with physical disabilities)

“I tend to buy products that help me with day-to-day stuff. I 've bought the extendable gripper things as I have movability issues.” (Male, 53, group with physical disabilities)

“I buy things that are light to handle - to reduce pain. Things that are easy to open - there's nobody to open things for me. I have to be concerned about food safety because of infection risk.” (Female, 59, group with physical disabilities)

“I do get stressed and anxious when something breaks for no reason that I can fathom.” (Male, 53, group with physical disabilities)

Despite their cautious shopping behaviours, those living with a disability are more likely to say that the product they experienced a safety issue with was less than a year old at the time of the incident than those without a disability (50%, compared with 41% without).

Most participants felt that in their experience, products took consideration for their specific health condition, although some expressed concerns that safety instructions can be overly complex and overwhelming, and others felt misled by products marketed as ‘useful,’ only to find them impractical.

“Some products write overly complicated instructions or don't come with them that can be overwhelming for my condition.” (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

“The problem is mostly things being pushed as useful that aren't.” (Female, 59, group with physical disabilities)

Participants with physical disabilities highlighted the need for straightforward instructions, honest details about ease of assembly, an indication of how user-friendly and how heavy a product is as this would impact their ability to use the product. Some also had concerns about the higher cost of items designed to support individuals with disabilities, which many felt was unfair.

When shopping in-store, participants suggested that having access to a dedicated disability assistant would be highly beneficial in answering product queries and concerns which were tailored to their specific needs. They also felt the availability of an easily accessible helpline in the event of a safety issue was considered essential for ensuring confidence and support when purchasing products.

“Easier to read instructions and product detail. Honest information about assembly time.” (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

“[Disclose] ease of use, clear instructions, with a troubleshooting guide.” (Male, 53, group with physical disabilities)

“Clear instructions and maybe a helpline.” (Male, 61, online retailer group)

“Clear labelling and instructions. If online, an indication of how heavy things are.” (Female, 59, group with physical disabilities)

“Items for disabled are always more expensive.” (Male, 68, group with physical disabilities)

“Dedicated disability assistants in store.” (Male, 61, online retailer group)

“Guaranteed quick response to troubleshooting if needed when a use or safety issue arises.” (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

Consumers with physical disabilities felt that companies could offer better support for them in various ways. These included involving consumers with physical disabilities in product user surveys or trials to provide feedback and improving the accessibility of customer service helplines so they can easily reach out for support when needed. They also suggested providing straightforward and easy-to-understand product manuals, and the option of audio instructions would be helpful for them. They highlighted the importance of instructions being concise and would appreciate the option to speak to a 'real person' to ask for support. This is especially key in light of findings that those with a disability or long-term health condition who experienced a household safety issue were more likely than those without a disability to say the issue caused distress (36%, compared with 24% of those without a disability).

Participants felt that if companies demonstrate genuine care and understanding through having staff invest time to understand what can happen to vulnerable customers if they do not have access to these products and/or their personal situation would make them feel they are being listened to and valued.

"Product user surveys, product trials for feedback, connections with support associations." (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

"By being more open about what the products are like and what options are available if they need support with a product." (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

"Accessibility if people have issues understanding manuals, they could do voice manuals etc." (Female, 38, group with physical disabilities)

"More staff that understand the issues, but that again impacts price." (Male, 68, group with physical disabilities)

"Better helplines, or ways to get things fixed locally far sooner than having to get it sent off." (Male, 53, group with physical disabilities)

"Being able to talk to a "real person" having the chance to ask questions and if in person, write things down without feeling rushed." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

These participants believed the government could do more to protect and support consumers with physical disabilities. Their suggestions on how to do this included enforcing stricter legislation and standards to hold companies accountable and introducing penalties for non-compliance. They also highlighted the importance of ensuring people with disabilities are all recognised and treated equally such as offering fair pricing for assistive products.

"Make companies accountable, more legislation and standards." (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

"Protection of vulnerable people, higher and more applicable safety standards to be met." (Female, 49, group with physical disabilities)

"I know we have the equality act, but that doesn't really cover these things." (Male, 53, group with physical disabilities)

"Large fines for breaches." (Male, 61, online retailer group)

"People with disabilities like to be included and treated the same so use the same as everyone else." (Female, 38, group with physical disabilities)

"Making invisible disabilities just as important." (Female, 43, group with physical disabilities)

Overall, participants in the group with consumers with physical disabilities implemented more cautious shopping behaviours for their products. They placed importance on evaluating products through user-friendliness, weight, and relevance to their daily needs. They believe that both companies and the government have a role to play in better supporting consumers with physical disabilities by ensuring that instructions are clear and accessible, and that safety regulations are upheld to protect their interests and wellbeing.

Emerging technologies

In wave nine, questions on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and smart products were initially shown to all respondents (n=10,037) and then shown to those that used AI (n=1,758) or smart goods (n=5,995). Exact base sizes for specific questions are shown below each chart.

Respondents were asked about their perceptions concerning AI-enabled devices and smart products. The definitions of AI-enabled devices and smart devices provided to participants were:

- **AI-enabled devices**: This includes any product labelled or advertised as AI-enabled. It does not include large-language models such as Chat-GPT.
- **Smart products**: Everyday objects that connect to the Internet and communicate with each other, often collecting and sharing data.

Key findings

- It is most common for AI-enabled (45%) or smart-enabled label (47%) to reportedly have no impact on consumers' desire to buy a product. However, 30% would be less likely to purchase a product with an 'AI-enabled' label, compared with 14% who would be more likely to do so.
- Out of all items listed it was most common for smart appliances/ Internet of Things devices to be used/owned within the past year, with approximately six in ten (59%) reporting this.

Likelihood to purchase smart/ AI-enabled products

Consumers have varying levels of familiarity with smart/ Internet of Things devices or AI-enabled products, with particularly low familiarity among consumers with disabilities.

Labelling products as smart or AI-enabled is unlikely to impact the likelihood of purchase for most consumers.

Awareness of smart appliances and Internet of Things devices, varied among focus group participants. Some, particularly those who own or have used some of them, are familiar with these types of products and use e.g. smart thermostats, lightbulbs and home assistants. On the other hand, those who have not used these types of technologies, have

limited familiarity based on what they have heard about such devices or seen about them in advertisements.

"Slightly familiar, I have seen adverts about them but don't own any myself or know anyone who does." (Female, 22, online retailer group)

Similarly, during the focus groups it was noted that the familiarity with AI-enabled consumer goods varied among participants. Some, particularly those who own or use smart devices, are familiar with AI-enabled products, such as smart watches, smartphones and home assistants. However, others, especially those in the group with physical disabilities, have limited or no familiarity with AI-enabled products. This supports survey findings that those living with disabilities are less likely to say they have some understanding of AI-enabled consumer goods (38%, compared with 43% not disabled).

"[I] would say quite familiar with AI use on smartphone just using Siri for simple things like setting an alarm or calling someone for me. Also, use of Amazon Alexa in the house." (Male, 27, online retailer group)

"Heard of them but don't know anything about them." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

When asked specifically about their likelihood to buy a product with the addition of AI-enabled or smart labels on the device, 45% say that an AI-enabled device would have no impact on their desire to buy the product, similar level to the 47% that reported the same thing when asked about smart devices.

Three in ten (31%) are more likely to buy a product with a smart-enabled label, while 15% are less likely. The opposite is true concerning products with AI-enabled labels (14% more likely compared with 30% of those who would be less likely).

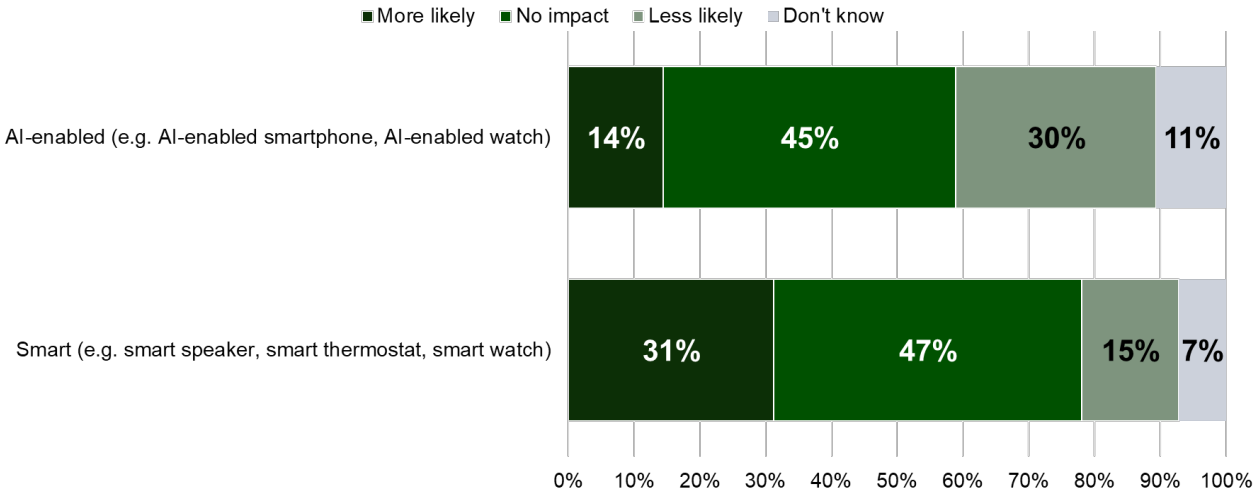
Likelihood to buy a product decreased by age, with those aged 18 to 29 more likely than any other age group to say that they would be willing to buy a product if it had an AI-enabled label (25% of those aged 18 to 29, 16% of those aged 30 to 49, 11% of those aged 50 to 64, and 8% of those aged 65+) or a smart related label (46% of those aged 18 to 29, 33% of those aged 30 to 49, 25% of those aged 50-64, and 23% of those aged 65+).

Men are more likely than women to say that labelling a product as AI-enabled would make them more likely to purchase it (18%, compared with 11% women). Conversely, women are more likely than men to say that labelling a product as AI-enabled would make them *less* likely to purchase it (34%, compared with 26% men). There is no difference by gender as to whether labelling a product as 'smart' would affect the likelihood of them purchasing it.

Those from an ethnic minority background are much more likely to say that they would be more likely to buy a product if it was labelled smart (44% compared with 29% white) or labelled AI-enabled (30% compared with 12% white).

55% of offline adults would be less likely to buy a product labelled as 'smart' while 49% would be less likely to buy an AI-enabled product.

Figure 28. Likelihood to purchase an AI-enabled or smart-related labelled product



Q: To what extent, if at all, does labelling a product with each of the following terms influence your likelihood of purchasing it, compared to a product without this label?
Base: All (W9=10,037)

Some focus group participants are more likely to purchase AI-enabled products because they find them exciting, useful, and believe they will make life easier to e.g. conduct searches, simplifying daily activities through voice command and automation. On the other hand, those who are less likely to purchase such products mentioned their concerns about privacy and data security. There are also worried that this type of technology leads to increasing energy consumption, mental laziness, and over-reliance on such devices. Some also fear that AI may not always work correctly, leading to errors or malfunctions that could cause inconvenience or additional costs for e.g. fixing an issue or paying a higher price for a product because it is labelled as 'smart' or 'AI-enabled'

"I would not consider it in the future. I think it could be dangerous, how would the information gathered be stored, what would be done with the information and how would the AI be monitored for malfunctions? [Too] many unanswered questions." (Female, 49, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I love every form of technological advancements and innovations, so yes! I will definitely try out AI enabled products and explore as much as I can lay my hands on." (Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"Probably less likely to purchase it because I'm worried the information it gets/gives could be wrong." (Male, 21, group with physical disabilities)

Similarly, some focus group participants would be likely to purchase such smart devices/ Internet of Things devices if they would make tasks easier and more efficient to complete e.g. by monitoring and controlling their home appliances remotely, improve home security or energy efficiency. However, for others, the label does not significantly impact their decision, as they may view it as 'gimmicky' or have concerns about price and complexity of use. Additionally, participants are also worried about those devices being hacked, data breaches, privacy violations as smart devices often collect and transmit personal information. Some also have concerns about these devices malfunctioning e.g. overheating or failing to operate correctly which could lead to safety hazards.

"I will definitely go for any labelled smart product, because somehow it gives off this impression of easy and excellent operation overtime."
(Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"My smartwatch has a lot of benefits. It allows me to track my fitness goals and allows me receive notifications. I can easily access important information without going through my smartphones." (Male, 45, online retailer group)

"Devices are not secure. They can be hacked from remote locations. And built in cameras and microphones are then providing a feed to them."
(Male, 58, online marketplaces group)

"[I am concerned about] stolen data. Possibly not working (in the case when it's relied on for health). Incorrect information." (Female, 33, group with physical disabilities)

Ownership of smart/ AI devices

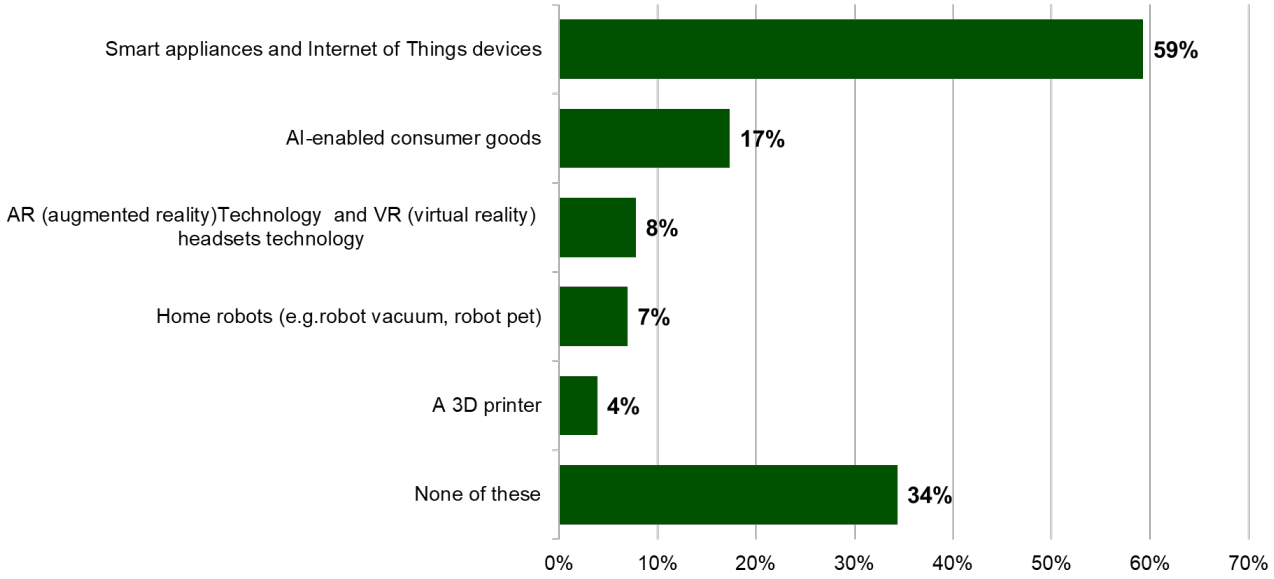
Most consumers own a smart appliance/ Internet of Things device, with younger consumers more likely than older consumers to own any of the emerging technologies.

Focus group participants mentioned that it is not always clear from the product instructions what are the potential risks of using such technology, and said they would welcome more rigorous safety standards for smart and AI-enabled products.

Out of all items listed it is most common for smart appliances/ Internet of Things devices to be used/owned within the past year, with approximately six in ten (59%) reporting this. This is followed by AI-enabled goods with 17% reporting to have owned/used the product. While AR technology (8%), home robots (7%) and 3D printers (4%) were reported to be owned or used much less frequently.

Ownership/usage also differs by age, with those aged 18 to 29 substantially more likely than those aged 65+ to own/use each of the products listed (73% compared with 53%). While men are much more likely than women to say they use/ own AI-enabled consumed goods (22% compared with 13%).

Figure 29. Types of products owned or used in the past year



Q: Which, if any, of the following types of products and services do you currently own or have used in the past year? Please select all that apply.
Base: All (W9=10,037)

Those who report to having owned or used an AI-enabled product or smart device in the past year were also asked further details about the type of product they used the technology on. It is most common for AI-enabled products or smart devices to be used for phones, with approximately eight in ten (78%) who report this, rising to 87% among smart devices.

Products related to entertainment are also frequently selected as types of devices used by AI-enabled or smart product owners/users. The second most frequently used item by AI users, are AI-enabled speakers (41%); while the second and third most cited services for smart owners/users are smart TVs (66%) and smart speakers (56%).

Fitness is also commonly indicated, with a quarter (25%) of AI users/owners having tried an AI-enabled watch/ fitness tracker, while 46% of smart owners/users report having used smart watches/ fitness trackers.

Conversely, reported usage of smart devices or AI-enabled technology are far less frequently used/owned for products relating to children, including for AI-enabled toys (3%), AI-enabled baby products (3%), smart baby products (3%) and smart toys (2%).

Those aged under 30 are less likely to say that they owned/used an AI-enabled smartphone (70% of those aged 18 to 29 compared with those aged 65+).

Those with children are more likely to own/use AI-enabled toys (6% compared with 2% of those without children) and AI-enabled baby products (6% compared with 1% of those without children).

Likewise, those with children are also more likely to have owned/used smart baby products (8% compared with 1% of those without children) and smart toys (5% compared with 1% of those without children).

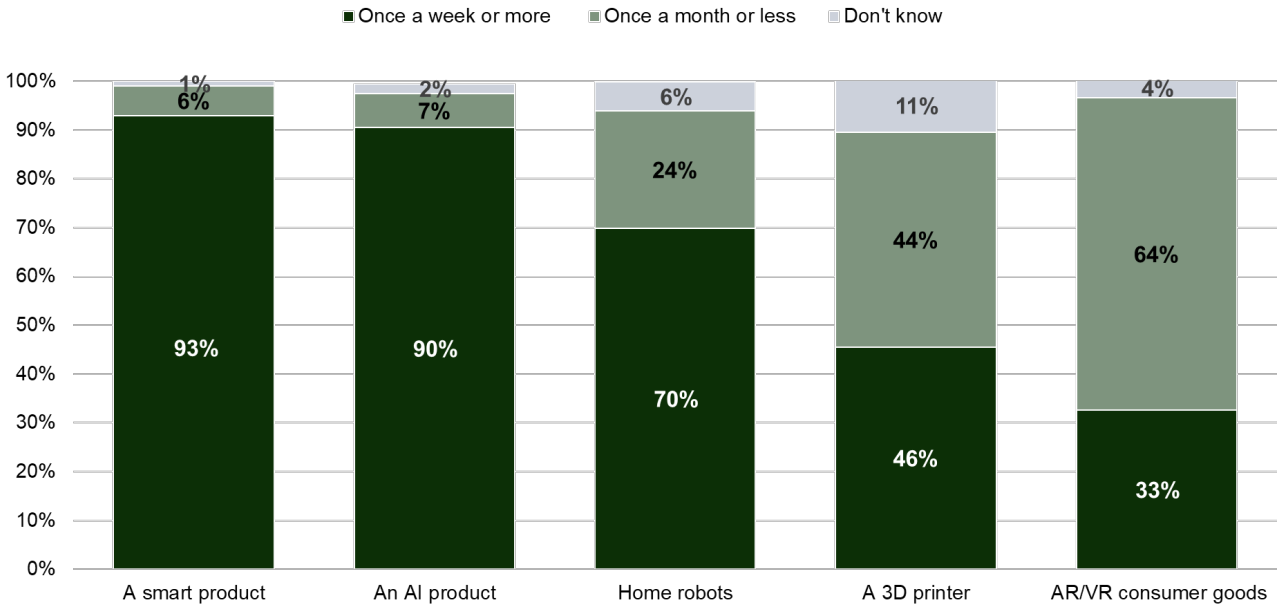
Those who report using smart devices or AI-enabled goods were also asked how often they used each item over the past year. Out of the items listed, smart products are most frequently used, with 93% saying that they use them once a week or more, this is closely followed by nine in ten (90%) who often use AI products.

Meanwhile, a smaller percentage, although still a majority (70%) report using home robots once a week or more. 3D printers are less frequently used, with a split between those who use 3D printers once a week or more and once a month or less (46% compared with 44% that use it monthly or less). It is more common for AR/VR users to say they use it less frequently, with 64% reporting to use it monthly (64%) or less compared with once a week or more (33%).

Low-income household (earning £25,000 or less per annum) are less likely to say that they use their AI-enabled device once a week or more (88% compared with 92% for those earning over £25,000).

While men are more likely than women to say that they use AI-enabled products once a week or more (92% compared with 88% of women).

Figure 30. Frequency of using a smart product, AI product, home robots, a 3D printer, and AR/VR consumer goods



Q: You said you currently own, or have used this product in the past year… In the past year, how often did you use this product? If you own/use more than one of these types of products, please think about the one you bought most recently. Base: Smart product users (W9=5,989), AI-enabled product users (W9=1,698), Home robot users (W9=709), 3D printer users (W9=383), AR/VR consumer goods users (W9=770)

During the focus group with those who own/use AI-enabled and smart devices, participants mentioned that the frequency of using smart or AI features varied. Some use these features daily for e.g. setting reminders, controlling home environment (e.g. thermostat, security) and accessing information quickly. Others use them less frequently depending on their needs and familiarity with the technology.

"I have Amazon Echos, a number of them. I use them for basic stuff like the weather, traffic and the time as well as for listening to audiobooks." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I have a few smart devices, lightbulbs and a Hive thermostat." (Male, 34, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"I am a big fan of smart plugs and have quite a few of them that switch on and off under different schemes. In the winter I have a light that comes on at sunset for example, so a different time every day." (Female, 61, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

Some of these participants experienced safety issues related to smart/ AI functionality. For example, one person reported having their skin burned from their smart watch, another one mentioned a smart plug failure which turned everything off unexpectedly.

Participants in this group mentioned that it is not always clear from the product instructions what are the potential risks of using such technology. Therefore, they would welcome more rigorous safety standards for smart and AI-enabled products. They also mentioned that more regulation is needed for such devices in relation to data privacy, security standards, and transparency about how information is collected, stored and used, to ensure that companies meet basic cybersecurity requirements, as well as to monitor the market for counterfeit products. It was also mentioned that these regulations need to keep up with technological developments to ensure that they are up to date and relevant.

"AI products should always undergo some form of regulation so it doesn't replace the human prowess and viability." (Male, 26, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"AI technology should have an industry standard that is followed and applied to all." (Female, 59, smart/ AI-enabled products group)

"There should be rules on how our data is collected and used—like clearer privacy policies and limits on what companies can track. Also, some safety checks to make sure AI doesn't make risky decisions on its own." (Male, 24, online retailer group)

"They [AI enabled and smart products] should have to pass some kind of security testing set by industry standards etc. A bit like the Kite safety mark but for data etc." (Female, 50, online marketplaces group)

Personal light electric vehicles

In wave nine, questions on Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs) were shown to all respondents (n=10,037) and then to those who own/ have access to a PLEV (n=608). Exact base sizes for specific questions are shown below each chart.

Key findings

- Six per cent of UK adults currently own or have access to a Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV), with younger adults more likely to do so.
- The proportion who have experienced a safety issue with the battery/ charger of their Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV) has fallen to 14% of all PLEV owners.
- As with safety issues caused by other products, the most common impacts are physical harm (40%) or distress (33%).

- Just over one in ten (12%) PLEV owners report that someone in their household had a safety issue with a PLEV. With household issues, the most common impacts are damage to property/ other household items or distress (both 38%).

Ownership of Personal Light Electric Vehicles

The level of ownership of Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs) remains steady, with 6% owning/ having access to at least one.

Younger adults are more likely to report owning a PLEV, as well as a conversion kit for their PLEV.

In wave nine, 6% of the UK public currently own or have access to a Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV). This is broadly in line with previous data.

The shift in ownership has been driven by a fall in the proportion who report ownership of eScooters (3% W8, 2% W7) or hoverboards (2% W8, 1% W9). The proportion who report owning an Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle (EAPC) remains higher than other PLEVs (4%).

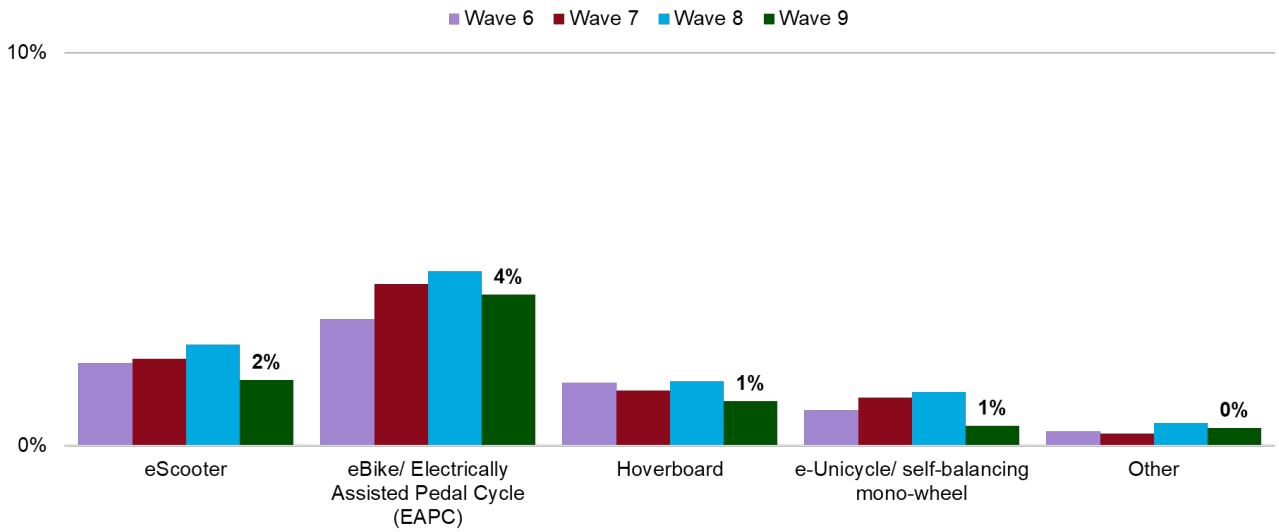
Younger adults remain more likely to report ownership of a PLEV, with 9% of those aged 18 to 29 owning one, compared with 5% of those aged 65 and over. However, ownership has dropped since last wave among 18 to 29 year olds (13% W8 to 9% W9) while for 65 and over (5%, W8 and W9), ownership has remained steady. This was particularly evident for ownership of eScooters (18 to 29s: 6% W8, 4% W9) and e-unicycles (18 to 29s: 3% W8, 1% W9).

Consistent with previous waves, respondents from an ethnic minority background are more likely to own a PLEV than those from a white background (9%, compared with 6% white adults). [6]

No offline adults (0%) own or have access to a PLEV.

[6] Findings from the offline sample or minority groups such as people from ethnic minorities, LGB+ adults etc. may be highly correlated with other demographics in the data. More detail is provided in Appendix A.

Figure 31. Ownership of Personal Light Electric Vehicles



Q: Which, if any, of the following Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEV) do you have access to / own?
Base: All (W9=10,037)

In wave nine, owners of PLEVs were asked if they owned/ have access to a conversion kit for their PLEV; a fifth (19%) report having this. Young PLEV owners are the most likely to report having a conversion kit for their PLEV (29% of those aged 18 to 29, 21% of those aged 30 to 49, 11% of those aged 50 to 64, 8% of those aged 65+).

Experiences of safety issues with Personal Light Electric Vehicles

The proportion who have experienced a safety issue with the battery or charger of their PLEV has fallen to 14% of PLEV owners.

The most common impact from a PLEV safety issue is physical harm, and around seven in ten of those experiencing physical harm requiring at least some form of first aid.

The proportion who have experienced a safety issue with the battery/ charger of their Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV) has fallen to its lowest-ever level; less than half of the proportion who reported an issue in wave eight (22% W5, 21% W6, 23% W7, 37% W8, 14% W9).

The decline in safety issues between wave eight and wave nine is seen across all age groups, with 29% of those aged 18 to 29 reporting a safety issue in wave nine (down from 59% in W8) and 0% of those aged 65 and over reporting the same in wave nine (down from 7% in W8).

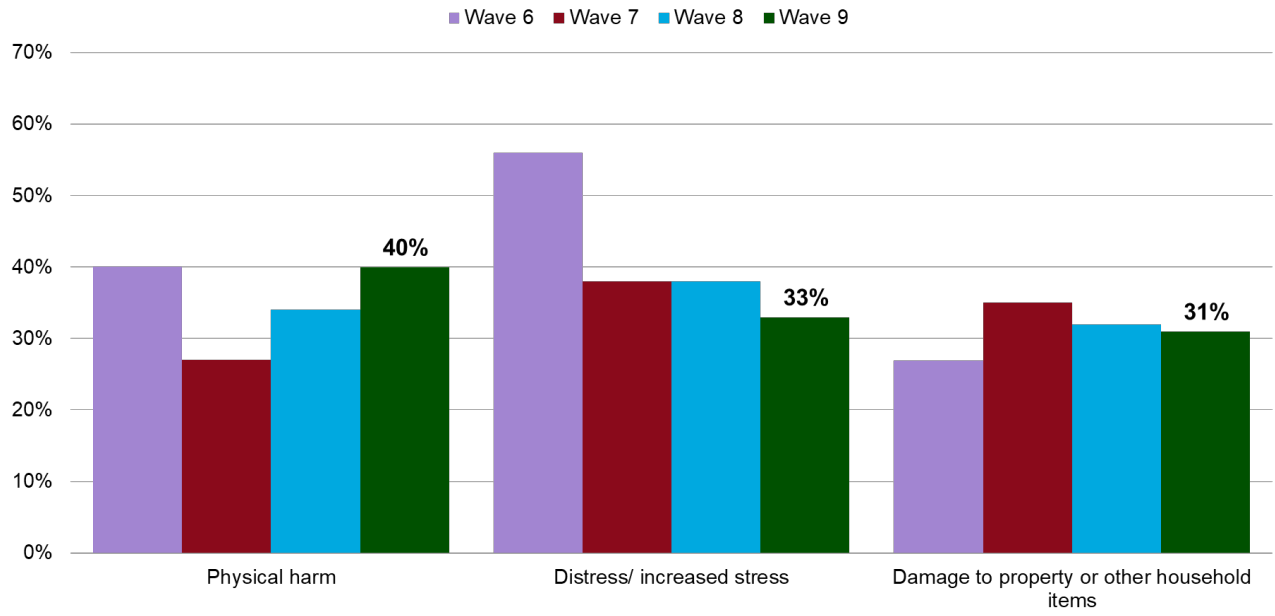
Respondents from an ethnic minority background (24%) are twice as likely to report having experienced a safety issue with their PLEV's battery/charger than white respondents (12%).

Those with children in their household are more likely to report PLEV safety issues than those without children (24%, compared with 5% of those without children).

While the proportion reporting a safety issue with the battery/ charger of a PLEV has fallen, the specific type of issues experienced remained broadly consistent. In wave nine, electrical issues such as electric shocks and mechanical issues such as sharp edges are the most common safety issues (both 50%). This is followed by a third who report fire/ explosion such as signs of smoke (34%) and one in ten who report a chemical issue such as corrosion or irritation (10%).

Among the 31% who say that there was damage to property/ other household items as a result of the PLEV safety issue, two-thirds (65%) say that there was smoke damage – significantly higher than have reported this in previous waves (36% W7, 44% W8). However, here has been a fall in the proportion reporting dents/ scratches (68% W7, 54% W8, 43% W9).

Figure 32. Outcome of PLEV battery/ charger safety issue



Q. Did that safety issue cause any of the following? (Please select all that apply)
Base: All who had a safety issue with a PLEV (W6=117; W7=153; W8=284; W9=77)

Household experiences of safety issues with Personal Light Electric Vehicles

Just over one in ten PLEV owners say that someone in their household has experienced a safety issue with a PLEV, most commonly younger adults.

The most common impacts as a result of a household PLEV safety issue are damage to property/ other household items or distress.

In wave nine, people were also asked whether anyone in their household has had safety issues with a Personal Light Electric Vehicle (PLEV); just over one in ten (12%) say that someone in their household had an issue.

Consistent with personal experience of PLEV safety issues, younger adults are more likely to say that someone in their household had a PLEV safety issue (26% of those aged 18 to 29, 14% of those aged 30 to 49, 2% of those aged 50 to 64, 0% of those aged 65+).

Also consistent with personal PLEV issues, those with children in the household are more likely to report a household PLEV safety issue (19%, compared with 6% of those without children).

Similarly, the most common types of household PLEV safety issues are an electrical issue (46%) or a mechanical issue (43%), followed by fire/ smoke (32%) and chemical issues (14%).

The most common impacts as a result of a household PLEV safety issue are damage to property/ other household items or distress (both 38%). A third (33%) report there was physical harm while approximately a fifth (18%) report there was no harm or damage as a result.

Conclusions

This report presents findings from a large scale survey investigating the UK's perceptions and experiences of product safety harms. This provides valuable evidence on harms and detriment which supports multiple teams' policy design and regulatory decisions.

Overall, there has and continues to be a trust in the UK's regulatory system to keep products safe. People do not think that retailers will risk their reputation by selling unsafe products, although this view is moderated somewhat when thinking about online marketplaces. In general, people feel that purchasing products online is riskier than shopping in-store where they can evaluate the physical item or speak to a shop assistant.

However, having purchased a product in-store does not appear to affect whether that item then goes on to have a product safety issue. Three in ten UK adults have ever experienced a product safety issue and, of these, the most common source of the product from a retailer's store rather than online.

Considerations made around product safety do vary with the type of product being purchased with people particularly prioritising safety when it comes to electrical products or an item for a child. However, when asked to reflect on their key priorities when purchasing an electrical item which later experienced a safety issue, price is the top factor, with a minority saying product safety was a chief consideration. That said, most UK adults do expect a product to be safe regardless of price.

UK adults do recognise that product safety issues can be caused by design faults or user error – but among those who have experienced a safety issue, they mostly blame design flaws or the product's instructions. People are also more likely to attribute the safety issues to the product being 'worn out' than misuse or mishandling. This is consistent whether being asked about a safety issue they had personally experienced, or a safety issue experienced by another member of the household.

The most common impacts of a safety issue, whether personally experienced or not, are distress/ stress or physical harm. Those who experienced harm mostly needed first aid or no healthcare, but some did need more involved medical attention.

Most say the safety issue is no longer a problem, partly as the main action as a result is to stop using the product or throw it away. Some took no action at all, particularly if they felt it was more effort than the product was worth. While some participants said the experience put them off purchasing the same type of product/ from that brand, others said they were likely to repurchase the same brand/ model in future.

People with physical disabilities generally report being more cautious when shopping for their products, evaluating the product's ease of use and relevance to their needs. They also felt that government and companies could do more to better support consumers with additional needs.

Similar sentiments are echoed around emerging technologies, with participants mentioning that it is not always clear what potential risks could be and there should be more rigorous safety standards. While many UK adults own a smart device, AI-enabled goods are less popular, and a product being labelled as "AI-enabled" is more likely to discourage rather than encourage purchase.

Appendix A: key demographic groups and trends

Throughout the report, findings from particular groups are highlighted in blue boxes, to indicate findings which particularly involve minority groups. Due to the nature of these groups, findings are likely to be highly correlated with other findings in the data (for example, LGB+ respondents are more prevalent in younger age groups). This section provides more detail on these findings in particular, and how they compare to groups they likely correlate with.

Offline adults

All offline adults surveyed were aged 55 and over, so there may be a high degree of correlation between older age groups in the online survey and offline adults. The report findings focused on key areas that offline adults differed from online adults aged 65 and over.

For example, offline adults exhibit higher trust in regulations around product safety and associate product safety issues with product misuse rather than design flaws/ faults. They are also more likely to avoid emerging technologies such as 'smart' or AI-enabled products.

- Nearly all offline adults (97%) agree that products sold in the UK are generally safe as there are products in place to ensure this. This is higher than the proportion of those aged 65+ who said the same in the online survey (72%)
- Two-thirds (64%) of offline adults think that safety issues are more likely to be caused by people misusing products rather than an issue with the product itself. This is higher than the proportion of those aged 65+ who said the same in the online survey (36%)
- 55% of offline adults would be less likely to buy a product labelled as 'smart' while 49% would be less likely to buy an AI-enabled product. This is higher than the proportion of those aged 65+ who said the same in the online survey (16% would be less likely to purchase a smart product, 31% would be less likely to purchase an AI-enabled product).

LGB+ adults

LGB+ adults tend to skew to younger age groups, with 39% of LGB+ adults aged 18 to 29 and 42% aged 30 to 49. This means that their findings tend to correlate with findings for the younger age groups.

For example, LGB+ adults are more likely to attribute product safety issues to misuse rather than product faults. They are also less likely to have experienced a product safety issue with a product purchased new. These trends align with those seen across age.

- Those who are LGB+ are less likely to have experienced a safety issue with a product purchased new, compared with those who are heterosexual (78%, compared with 85% heterosexual). This is in line with younger adults; 73% of those aged 18 to 29 say the product they experienced a safety issue was purchased new, compared to 94% of those aged 65+.
- LGB+ adults are less likely than heterosexual adults to say the household product safety issue was related to design flaws (28%, compared with 35% heterosexual

adults). This is in line with younger adults; 28% report the issue was related to design flaws, compared to 46% of those aged 65+.

- LGB+ adults are more likely to say the safety issue was caused by misuse (15%, compared with 11% of heterosexual adults). This is in line with younger adults, where 17% say the issue was due to misuse, compared to 8% of those aged 65+ who say the same.

Adults from ethnic minority backgrounds

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds also tend to be among the younger age groups, with 30% aged 18 to 29 and 46% aged 30 to 49. This means that their findings also tend to correlate with the younger age groups.

For example, ethnic minority adults are more likely than white adults to have experienced a product safety issue but less likely to say that the product affected was purchased new. They are more likely to purchase a product if it is labelled as 'smart' or 'AI-enabled' These trends are consistent with the overall younger age groups seen in the survey data.

- Those from an ethnic minority background are more likely to report having ever experienced a safety issue (40%, compared with 27% for white adults). This is consistent with younger adults in the survey data, with 38% of those aged 18 to 29 having ever experienced a safety issue, compared to 20% of those aged 65+.
- Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to have experienced a safety issue with a product purchased as new, compared with those from a white ethnic background (77%, compared with 86% white). This is in line with younger adults; 73% of those aged 18 to 29 say the product they experienced a safety issue was purchased new, compared to 94% of those aged 65+.
- Those from an ethnic minority background are much more likely to say that they would be more likely to buy a product if it was labelled smart (44% compared with 29% white) or labelled AI-enabled (30% compared with 12% white). This is consistent with younger age groups – 46% of those aged 18 to 29 would be more likely to purchase a 'smart' product and 25% would be more likely to purchase an 'AI-enabled' product.
- Adults from an ethnic minority background are more likely to own a PLEV than those from a white background (9%, compared with 6% white adults). This is consistent with the main trend across age, with 9% of those aged 18 to 29 owning/ having access to a PLEV while 5% of those aged 65+ said the same.

However, not all differences by ethnicity are correlated with age. Adults from an ethnic minority are more likely than white adults to have read the instructions for a product they had a safety issue with.

- Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to have read the instructions for their product, with three-quarters having done so at some point (75%, compared with 65% white). This is different from the overall age trend, where younger adults are no more likely than older adults to have read the instructions (64% aged 18 to 29, compared with 69% aged 65+)

People with children in the household

People living with children in their household also tend to be younger, with 18% aged 18 to 29 and 65% aged 30 to 49. This means that their findings also tend to correlate with the younger age groups.

For example,

- Those with children in the household are much more likely than those without to say they have experienced a safety issue (37%, compared with 26% for those without children). This is similar to younger adults in the survey data, with 38% of those aged 18 to 29 and 30% of those aged 30 to 49 having ever experienced a safety issue, compared to 20% of those aged 65+.
- Those with children in their household are more likely than those without to have purchased the product online (42%, compared with 32% without). This is consistent with the 30 to 49 year olds within the data; 41% say they purchased the product they had a safety issue with online.
- They are also more likely to say they are likely to purchase the product again (32%, compared with 23% without children). This is consistent with the younger age groups – 34% of those aged 18 to 29 and 27% of those aged 30 to 49 would purchase the product again in future, compared to 17% of those aged 65+
- Those with children in their household are more likely to report PLEV safety issues than those without children (24%, compared with 5% of those without children). This is similar to the younger age groups in the survey data – 29% of those aged 18 to 29 and 16% of those aged 30 to 49 had a safety issue with a PLEV battery or charger, while 1% or less of those aged over 50 report the same

Appendix B: intersections of physical harm and distress

Throughout this programme of research, the most common impacts of a safety issue have been distress/ increased stress and physical harm (figure 5). This appendix provides more detail about the intersection of the two; those who experienced only distress or physical harm, and those who experienced both as a result of a safety issue.

Individual's experiences of safety issues.

Among those who have ever personally experienced a safety issue, three in 10 (30%) say it caused distress/ or increased stress while a quarter (25%) say that it caused physical harm. The reference to 'distress/ increased stress' in the survey was general and may include stress related to the direct impacts of the safety issue (e.g. physical harm, damage to household items) as well as more general stresses (e.g. sourcing a replacement product).

When looking at the combination of the two, 6% of those who experienced a safety issue said they experienced both distress and physical harm. A fifth of respondents (20%) who have ever experienced a safety issue said they experienced distress but no other impacts (no physical harm, no damage to other property) while slightly fewer only experienced physical harm (17%).

Household experiences of safety issues

For those who said that someone else in their household has experienced a product safety issue, the most common impacts are consistent with personal safety issues. Over a quarter (28%) of respondents with someone else in their household who experienced a product safety issue say it caused distress/ increased stress. A fifth (21%) say it caused physical harm.

The pattern of combined impacts is also similar to personal experiences of safety issues – 5% of those who say someone else experienced a safety issue report that caused both distress and physical harm. A fifth (19%) said that the safety issue only caused distress and no other impacts while slightly less said the only impact was physical harm (15%).

Contact us if you have any enquiries about this publication, including requests for alternative formats, at: OPSS.enquiries@businessandtrade.gov.uk

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