



Australian Public Perceptions of Nanotechnology

This short report summarises the results of research conducted by Essential Research on behalf of Friends of the Earth. Essential Research constructed the research questions in consultation with Friends of the Earth and the poll was conducted using the Your Source online omnibus. The omnibus was conducted online from the 13th-19th October 2008 and attracted 1010 responses.

The methodology used to carry out this research is available on page 4.



Background nanotechnology information

Please find below the nanotechnology information provided to participants in the online poll.

Nanotechnology is considered one of the leading technologies of the 21st century. It is used to manufacture extremely small 'nanoparticles' that measure less than 100 nanometres. One nanometre is one billionth of a metre. In the near future, the food industry plans to use nanotechnology to change the flavour and texture of foods, extend food shelf life, or add nutrients to foods. Along with potential beneficial applications, nanotechnology also carries possible health and environmental risks that scientists are investigating.

In 2004, the United Kingdom's Royal Society recommended that ingredients in the form of manufactured nanoparticles undergo a full safety assessment by the relevant scientific advisory body before they are permitted for use in products. They also recommended that the ingredients lists of consumer products should identify the fact that manufactured nanoparticulate material has been added.

To date the Australian government has not implemented these recommendations.

Food Product labeling and Nanoparticles

The bulk of respondents (68%) strongly agreed that food companies should be required to label food products that are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles. Only 3% disagreed with this premise. More females (73%) than males (63%) agreed with this concept and the older the respondent the more likely to agree.

The level of agreement with labeling food products that are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles didn't differ significantly across the various respondent locations.



	Total	Male	Female	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+
Strongly agree	68	63	73	0	60	54	73	75
Agree	24	27	21	0	24	36	19	20
Disagree	2	4	1	0	4	3	3	1
Strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
Don't know	5	5	5	0	12	5	5	4

Total: n=1010

Q. Do you agree or disagree that food companies should be required to label food or food packaging ingredients where these are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles?

	Total	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	Other
Strongly agree	68	68	69	68	62	67	74
Agree	24	24	18	27	34	25	10
Disagree	2	2	4	2	1	4	0
Strongly disagree	1	0	2	1	0	0	2
Don't know	5	6	7	2	3	4	13

Total: n=1010

Q. Do you agree or disagree that food companies should be required to label food or food packaging ingredients where these are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles?



Food Product Safety Testing and Nanoparticles

A high level of strong support existed for the testing of food products (75%) that are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles. With the level of support at 96%, only one percent of this sample rejected the idea of testing the food products.

Some states had no one disagree with the concept of testing of food products that are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles (Queensland, Victoria, South and Western Australia).

	Total	Male	Female	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+
Strongly agree	75	72	78	0	69	61	79	84
Agree	21	24	19	0	26	34	18	13
Disagree	1	2	0	0	2	2	1	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't know	3	2	3	0	3	3	2	2

Total: n=1010

Q. Do you agree or disagree that food companies should have to conduct safety testing on food or food packaging ingredients where these are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles, before using them commercially?

	Total	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	Other
Strongly agree	75	77	70	76	79	74	74
Agree	21	18	26	20	20	24	17
Disagree	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't know	3	4	3	1	1	2	9

Total: n=1010

Q. Do you agree or disagree that food companies should have to conduct safety testing on food or food packaging ingredients where these are in the form of manufactured nanoparticles, before using them commercially?



Purchasing Food that contains Ingredients in the form of Manufactured Nanoparticles

There were a reasonable proportion of respondents (43%) that were unsure if they would purchase food products that contained ingredients in the form of manufactured nanoparticles. Certainly more stated they would not purchase such products (40%) than would (15%).

There were a higher proportion of males that would purchase these types of food products than females (22% cf 10%). The Victorian respondents stood out (20%) as being the group more likely to purchase these food products more than the proportions from other states.

	Total	Male	Female	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+
Definitely purchase	1	2	1	0	0	3	1	1
Purchase	14	20	9	0	26	20	9	12
Not purchase	22	23	22	0	19	25	21	23
Definitely not purchase	18	14	23	0	6	12	20	26
Don't know	43	41	45	0	50	40	49	38

Total: n=1010

Q Would you purchase food that contains ingredients in the form of manufactured nanoparticles?

	Total	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	Other
Definitely purchase	1	2	2	0	2	0	6
Purchase	14	13	13	20	13	14	0
Not purchase	22	22	21	21	33	17	33
Definitely not purchase	18	17	20	16	20	25	12
Don't know	43	46	43	44	32	43	50

Total: n=1010

Q Would you purchase food that contains ingredients in the form of manufactured nanoparticles?



Appendix One – Methodology

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a weekly online omnibus conducted by Your Source. Your Source is an Australian social and market research company specializing in recruitment, field research, data gathering and data analysis. Your Source holds Interviewer Quality Control Australia (IQCA) accreditation, Association Market and Social Research Organisations (AMSRO) membership and World Association of Opinion and Marketing Research Professionals (ESOMAR) membership. Senior Your Source staff hold Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behavior.

Essential Research has been utilizing the Your Source online panel to conduct research on a week by week basis since the 19th of November 2007. Each Monday, the team at Essential Media Communications discusses issues that are topical. From there a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated each week (such as political preference and social perspective), while others are unique to each week and reflect prominent media and social issues that are present at the time.

Your Source has a self managed consumer online panel of 109 500. The majority of panel members have been recruited using off line methodologies, effectively ruling out concerns associated with online self selection. Your Source has validation methods in place that prevent panelist over use and ensure member authenticity. Your Source randomly selects 18+ males and females (with the aim of targeting 50/50 males/females) from its Australia wide panel. An invitation is sent out to approximately 7000 – 8000 of their panel members. The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1000 + responses. The Your Source online omnibus is live from the Wednesday of each week and closed on the following Tuesday. Incentives are offered to participants in the form of points (referred to as 'Zoints').

EMC uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the data. The data is weighted against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

