



CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT: FOOD SAFETY IN DA NANG

In Da Nang, Vietnam, the Building Healthy Cities (BHC) project works closely with the Food Safety Management Authority (FSMA) to improve food safety in this tourist hub. In preparation for the creation of a new smart phone application (app) dedicated to food safety information sharing and tracking, BHC conducted a market research survey.

BHC is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and is implemented in Da Nang by East Meets West Foundation and JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. BHC engages with sectors that contribute, directly or indirectly, to citizens' health and quality of life, including food safety. This multi-sector engagement, the first core value of BHC, aims to provide all municipal sectors a common understanding of how they contribute to health. The second BHC core value is to strengthen community engagement in municipal decision-making. BHC's third core value is supporting use of data for planning and decision-making. Informed by these three core values, the project is working to improve healthy urban planning in Da Nang, with a particular focus on the interactions between food safety, waste management, and environmental health.



The purpose of this study was to gain feedback from citizens to inform BHC and city partners (including FSMA) of potential user's needs, concerns, and expectations for a food safety communication channel, including how existing citizen reporting systems (CRSs) were already servicing this need. The target demographic for this survey was broad: anyone with access to a smartphone or other mobile device who would be interested in using an app to gain a better understanding of the food safety situation in Da Nang.

Methods

This market research survey was designed to gather citizen feedback on existing food safety knowledge and attitudes as well as the use and acceptability of CRSs for reporting food safety concerns. BHC used Google Forms to create the survey which contained nearly 40 questions. The BHC team shared the survey widely through professional networks including participants in previous BHC events, city stakeholders, and personal contacts. The survey was launched on September 23, 2020 and closed on October 6, 2020. Two-hundred responses were received, distributed across all districts of Da Nang. Of the respondents, 90 percent were 50 years old or younger. Respondents were also generally well-educated, with over 80 percent reporting having a University or advanced degree or vocational/technical training.

Results

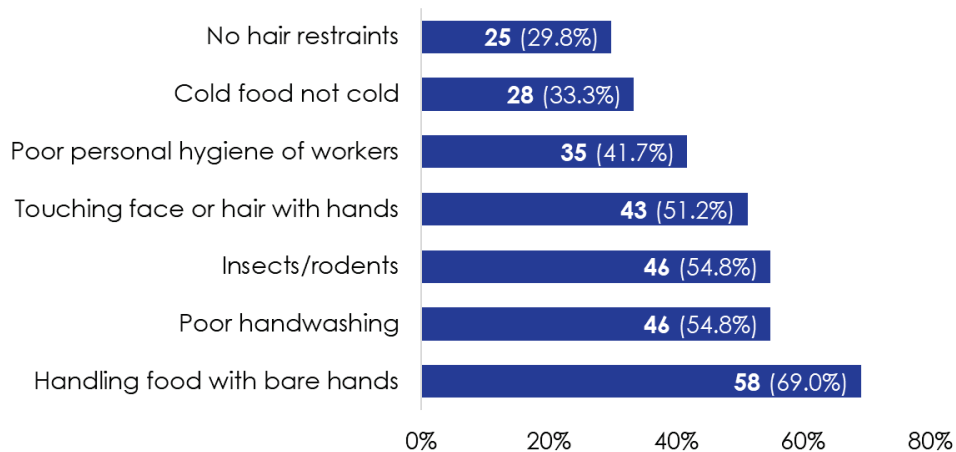
Respondents demonstrated a willingness to engage on food safety issues and concerns, and a high baseline understanding of unsafe behaviors for food handling. Respondents overwhelmingly reported interest in reporting cases of food-borne illness; however, they also noted little/no engagement with current CRSs in the city.

Concern about Food Safety

50 percent of respondents had observed food safety problems in food markets, and **76 percent** felt food markets could be doing more to provide safe food.

What sorts of food safety problems have you seen [at food markets]?

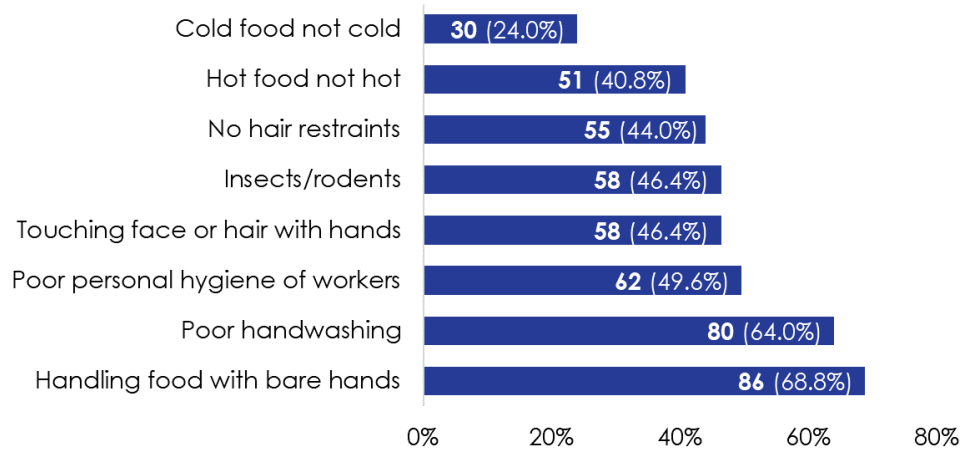
84 responses



Meanwhile, when asked the same questions about restaurants and food service establishments, **81 percent** reported food safety problems, and **60 percent** would like those establishments to do more on food safety.

What sorts of food safety problems have you seen [at restaurants and food service establishments]?

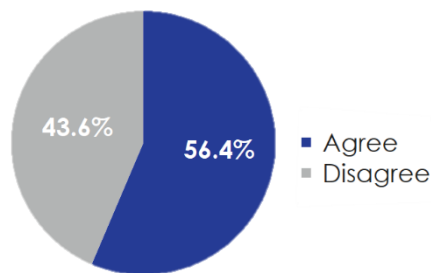
125 responses



56 percent said they would eat out more often if food safety were not a concern. **68 percent** have grown more concerned since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

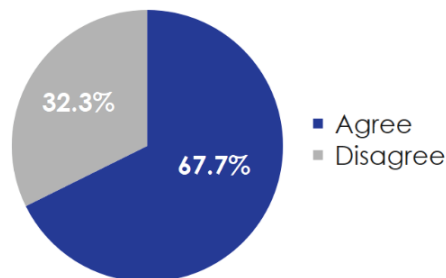
If food safety were not a concern, I would eat out more often.

133 responses



I have become more concerned about food safety since COVID-19 became an issue.

133 response

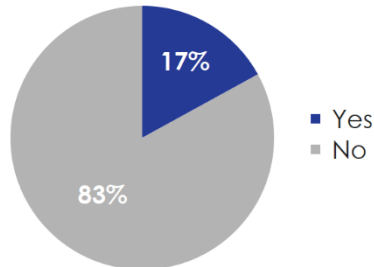


Health and Food Safety

Almost **90 percent** of respondents knew the health risks associated with unsafe food, and **17 percent** said they had had a food related illness in their household in the last month.

Have you or anyone in your household had food poisoning or food related illness in the last month?

200 responses

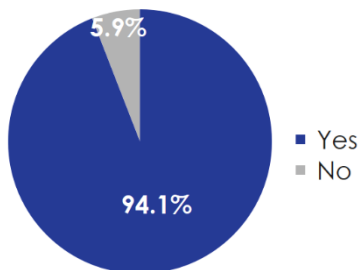


Reporting Food Safety Concerns

Of those who had a case of food related illness in the last month, **90 percent** were willing to report that illness to the city, but only **21 percent** knew how to submit that report.

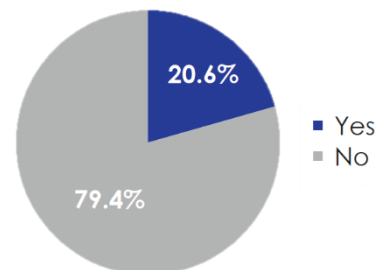
Would you be willing to report cases of food related illness?

34 responses



Are you aware of how you can report cases of food related illness?

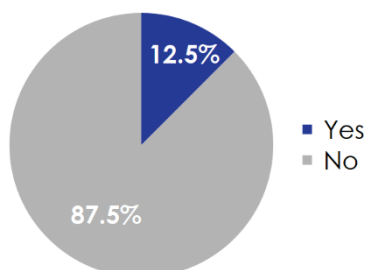
34 responses



88 percent of respondents had never used any Da Nang City app to report issues, regarding food safety or any other topic. The most often reported issues were related to infrastructure, education, and environment. Only one complaint was lodged for food safety, and that was through Hotline 1022. Further user experience data will be needed to understand those who answered "other" as the reason for why they have not reported a complaint via CRS.

Have you ever used a Da Nang City app to report any issues, whether regarding food safety or any other topic?

11 responses



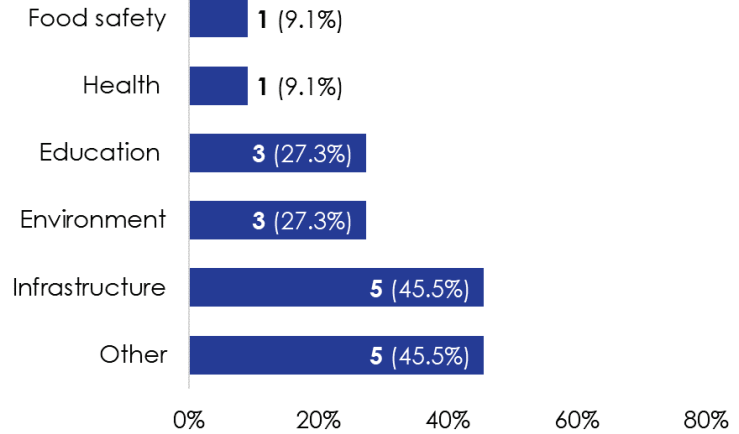
Which app did you use?

11 responses

- gopy.danang.gov.vn
- Facebook
- Kuuho app
- Hotline 1022
- Da Nang Urban Management website
- Other

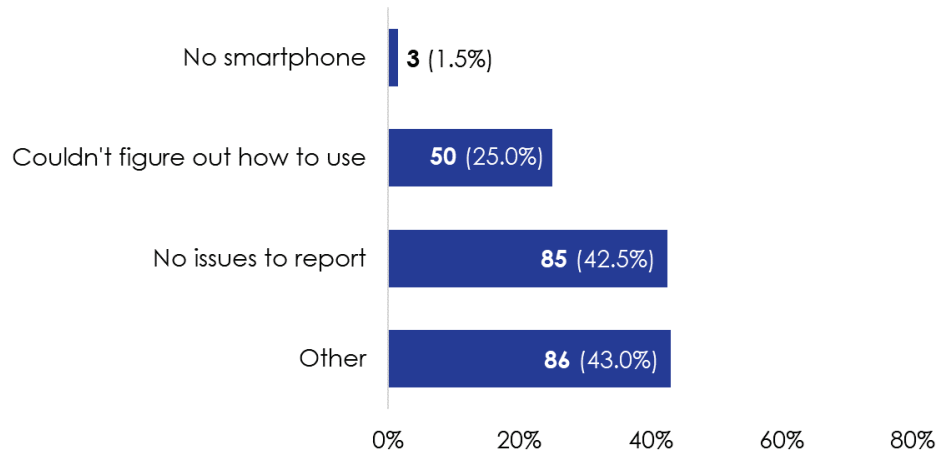
What issue did you report?

11 responses



[If you have not reported a complaint via CRS], why not?

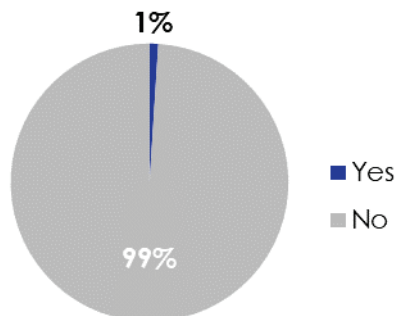
200 responses



Even fewer respondents lodged food safety complaints outside of CRSs (**1 percent**).

Have you reported an issue on food safety to the city through some other channel?

200 responses

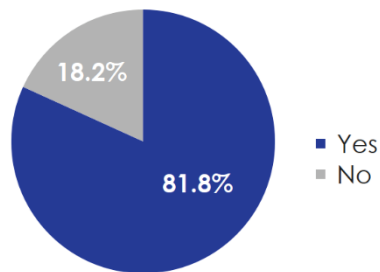


Satisfaction with CRSs

Of those few who had lodged complaints via CRS, most (**82 percent**) were satisfied with the response. The main reason provided for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction was appropriateness of reply.

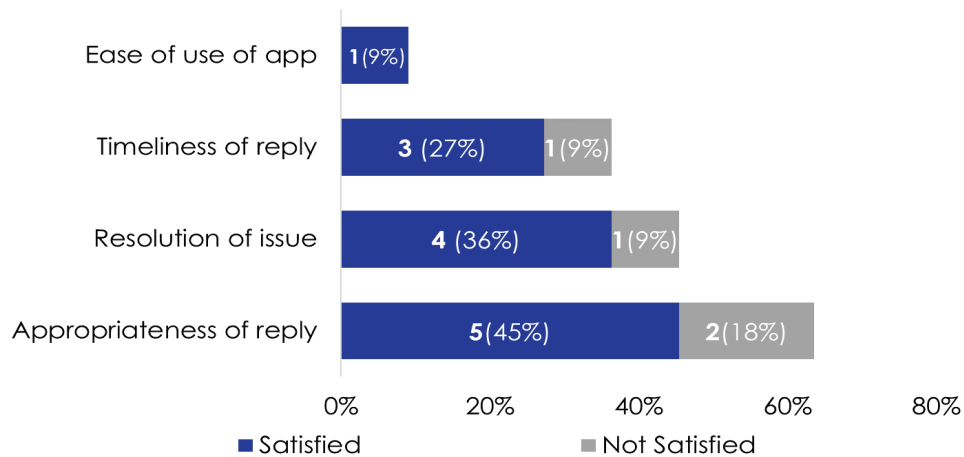
Were you satisfied with the response [to your complaint]?

11 responses



Please choose a reason for your response

11 responses

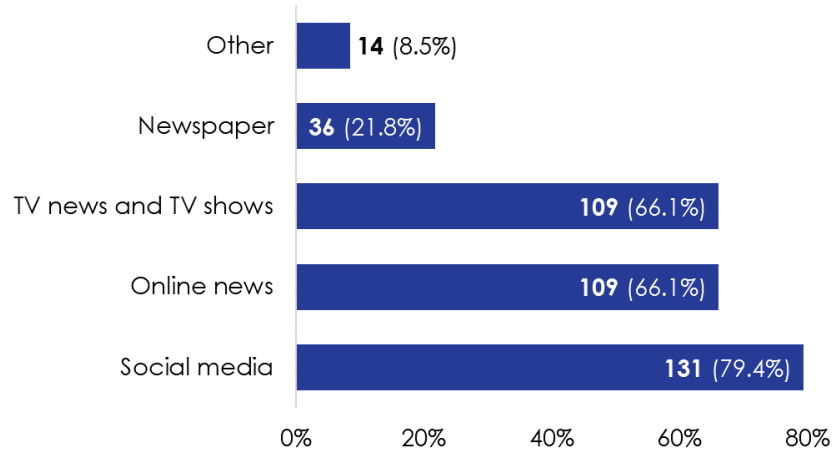


Willingness to Engage on Food Safety

83 percent wanted to know more about food safety issues. Most got their food safety information from social media, and online and TV news, but **47 percent** reported that they would like more information than what they currently received. That desired information included tracing food origin, maps of food related providers, and other topics.

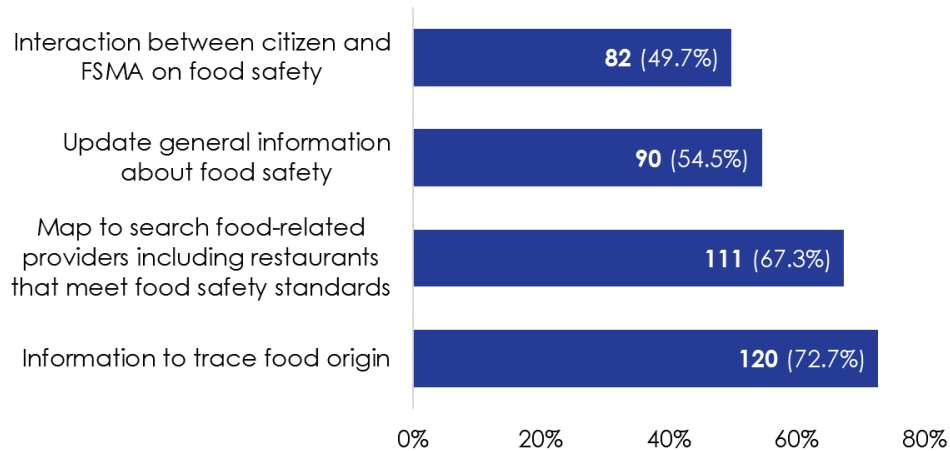
Where do you go to get information on food related concerns such as food poisoning and food safety in Da Nang?

165 responses



What other information would you like to be able to access?

165 responses

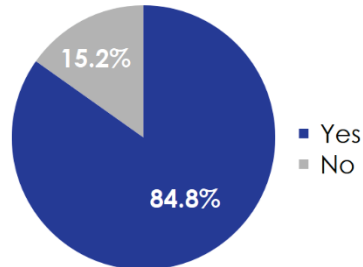


While **85 percent** said they would be willing to download a new, free mobile app on food safety, **67 percent** still said they most preferred receiving food safety information via social media, suggesting a need to link any new app to social media feeds.

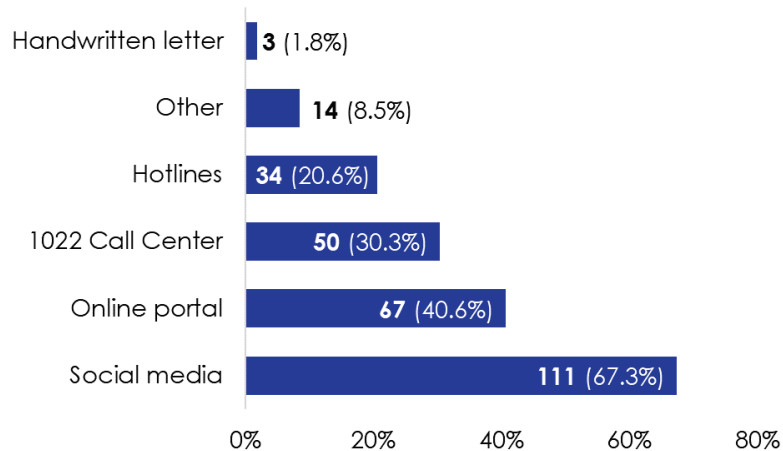


Are you willing to download a new, free mobile app on food safety where you can access updated information on food safety, and interact with the Food Safety Management Agency about food origin tracing and your complaints to them relating to food safety issues?

165 responses



What communication channel would you most prefer to use to get this food safety information?
165 responses



Discussion

Acknowledging the limitations of this self-selected sample which skews toward younger and well educated residents, this survey has identified a clear appetite for more food safety information targeted at consumers.

Respondents demonstrated a good baseline understanding of knowledge of unsafe food behaviors and noted their concern about ensuring food safety in the current pandemic climate. Despite this knowledge and a high willingness to report issues, few respondents had previously reported cases of food-borne illness to the city, and few knew how to make such reports in the future. There is interest in more information sharing on this topic, and most respondents are both willing to download a new app for this purpose and report issues. Any new information or app will need to use existing social media channels to support its launch and continue to engage citizens, especially for the first phase of rollout.



Next Steps

Based on these results, BHC is advising that FSMA do the following to customize their information sharing efforts:

1. Triangulate these data with existing city data on citizens with lower education and income levels, as well as older residents, to ensure complete information on potential users.
2. Tailor development of a new food safety app to respondents' requests for information.
3. Learn from the issues respondents have had using other city reporting apps so that the same mistakes are not made here. A user design session may be a useful exercise to tailor the app to user needs.
4. If content will be phased in, focus on tracing food origin and mapping safe food outlets first, as they appear to be most in demand.
5. Support app rollout on social media channels.

BHC will support FSMA in rolling out these changes to their citizen outreach efforts. BHC and FSMA will continue to seek citizen feedback as the app is developed, particularly from older residents and those with lower education levels, to ensure the final product is usable for all citizens.

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