



International  
**Food Information**  
Council

# “From Science to Skepticism: American Perceptions on Food Safety”

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President & CEO

International Food Information Council  
(IFIC)

Association of Food and Drug Officials  
(AFDO)

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## OUR VISION

A global environment where science informs food decisions.

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## OUR MISSION

To effectively communicate science-based information about food safety, nutrition and sustainable food systems, serving the public good.

## IFIC PROGRAM PLATFORMS

To demonstrate IFIC's thought leadership in action, we:

- **Deliver best-in-class research and consumer insights** to inform food, nutrition, and health stakeholders.
- **Promote science communication** to positively impact consumer behavior and public health.
- **Convene critical thought leaders** to advance the food systems dialogue and science-based decision-making.

## **DISCLOSURES**

IFIC is a 501c3 science communication organization, focused on consumer research with a mission to effectively communicate science-based information about food safety, nutrition, and sustainable food systems, serving the public good.

## **IFIC GOVERNANCE**

IFIC is governed by a Board of Trustees, the majority of whom are from public academic institutions, along with an Assembly that includes government liaisons.

## **IFIC SUPPORTED BY**

IFIC is supported primarily through grants and contributions from the broad-based food, beverage, and agricultural industry. IFIC does not lobby or represent any product, company, or industry.

# Annual *IFIC Food & Health Survey*



Since 2006, IFIC has surveyed Americans about their food behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions.

2025 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of the *IFIC Food & Health Survey*, making it one of the most influential and widely referenced annual consumer surveys in the U.S. for academic researchers, healthcare professionals, industry stakeholders, media, and policymakers.

**DOWNLOAD THE SURVEYS**  
on [foodinsight.org](https://foodinsight.org)

In 2024, we tripled our study population to perform more robust analyses of demographic groups.



## 2024 IFIC Food & Health SURVEY

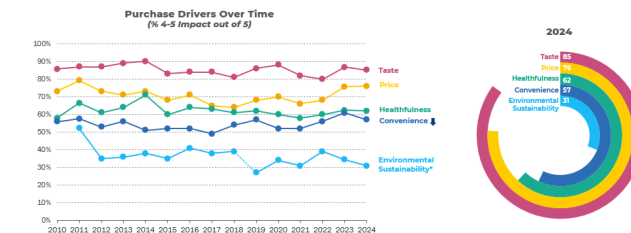
IFIC's annual survey American consumers to understand perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding food and food-purchasing decisions.



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### Taste remains the top purchase driver, followed by price. The impact of convenience is down from 2023.

Boomers, those with higher incomes, and Asian Americans are most likely to find healthfulness impactful.



© 2024 IFIC Food & Health SURVEY. IFIC's annual survey American consumers to understand perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding food and food-purchasing decisions.

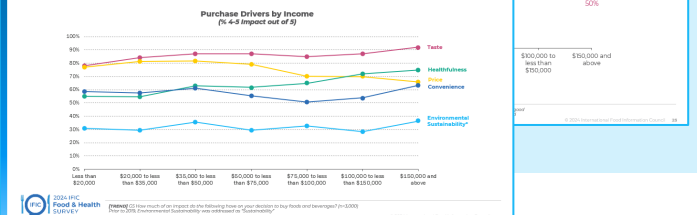
### Happiness, stress, and health status vary widely by income.

Only a third of those with household income less than \$20K describe their health as excellent or very good, among those with income over \$150K, it is twice that number (70%).

Happiness, Stress, and Health by Income

### Healthfulness surpasses price as a purchase driver at the threshold of \$100K+ in household income.

Price decreases in importance among those with higher income (>\$75K+), while taste and healthfulness increase dramatically in importance.

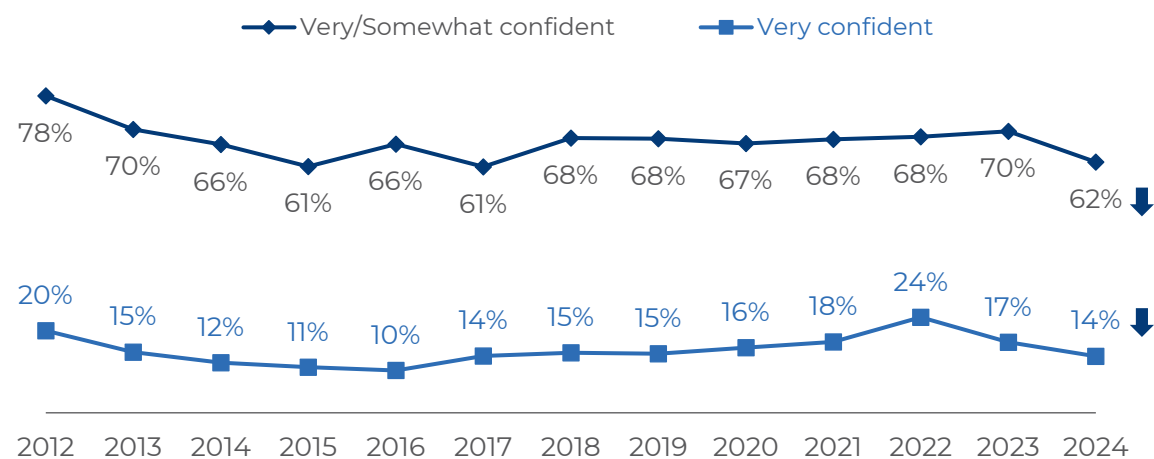
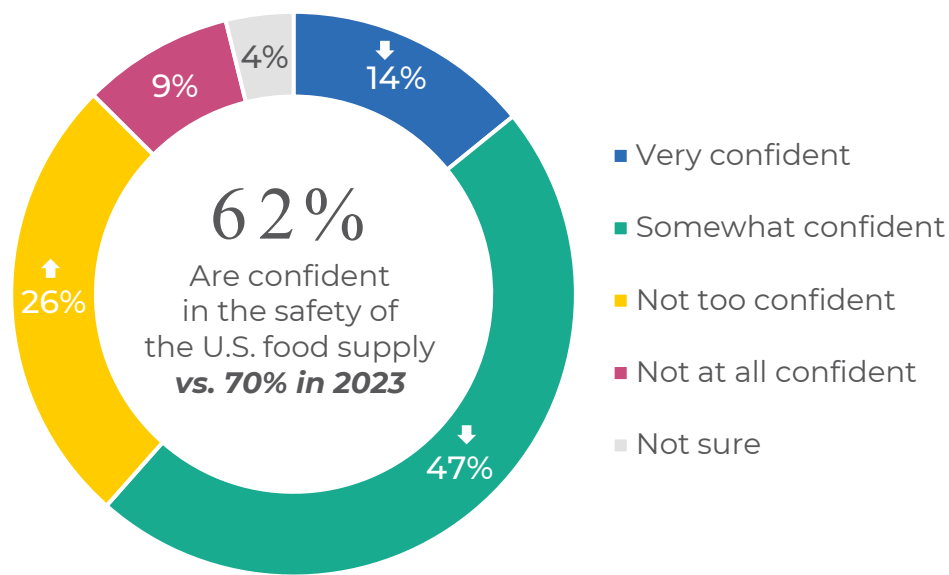


© 2024 IFIC Food & Health SURVEY. IFIC's annual survey American consumers to understand perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding food and food-purchasing decisions.

# Overall confidence in the safety of the U.S. food supply is down significantly in 2024.

Older generations, those with higher household income, and men are more confident in the safety of the U.S. food supply.

Confidence in the Safety of the U.S. Food Supply

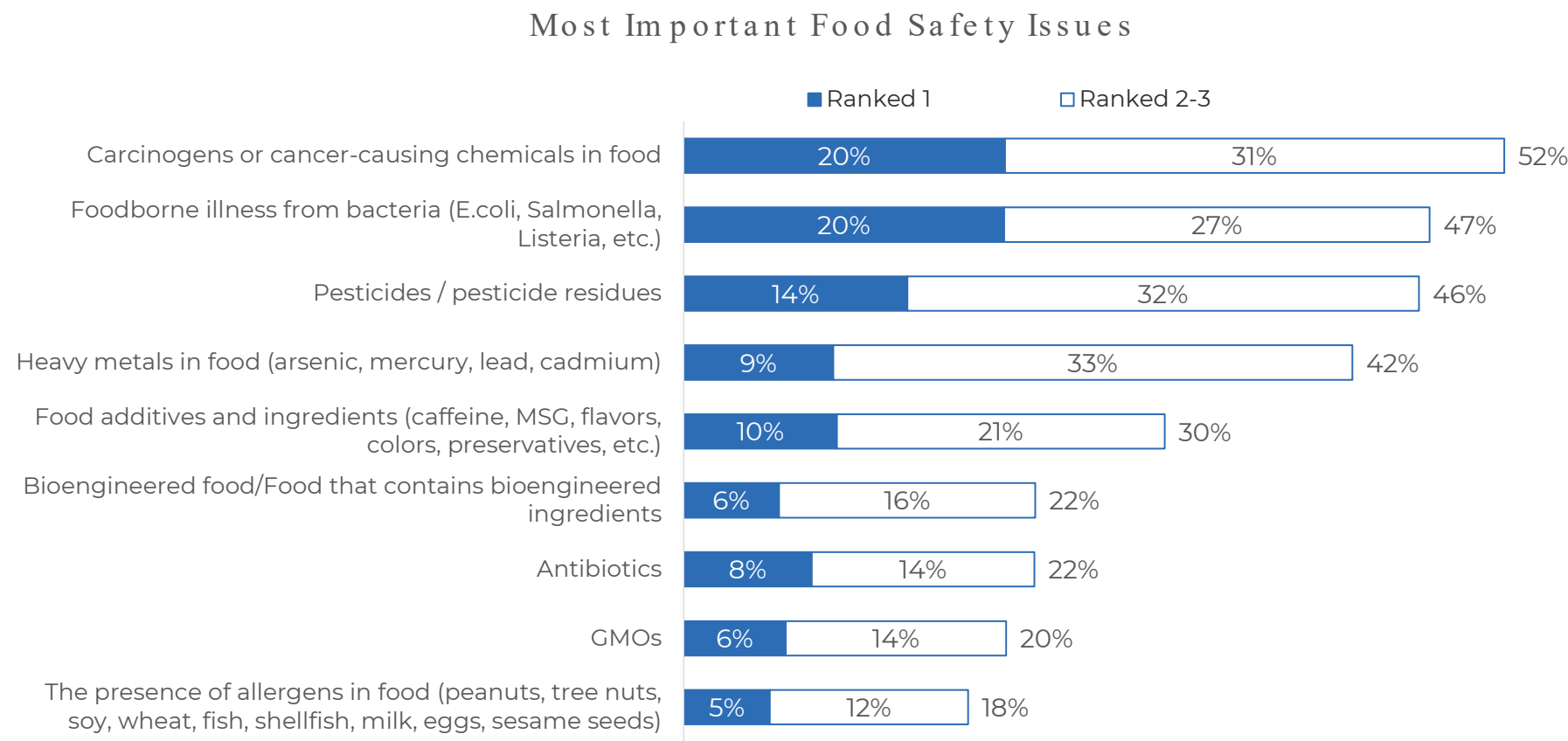


**10-Year Trend**  
**62%**  
Confident in 2024  
vs. 66% in 2014



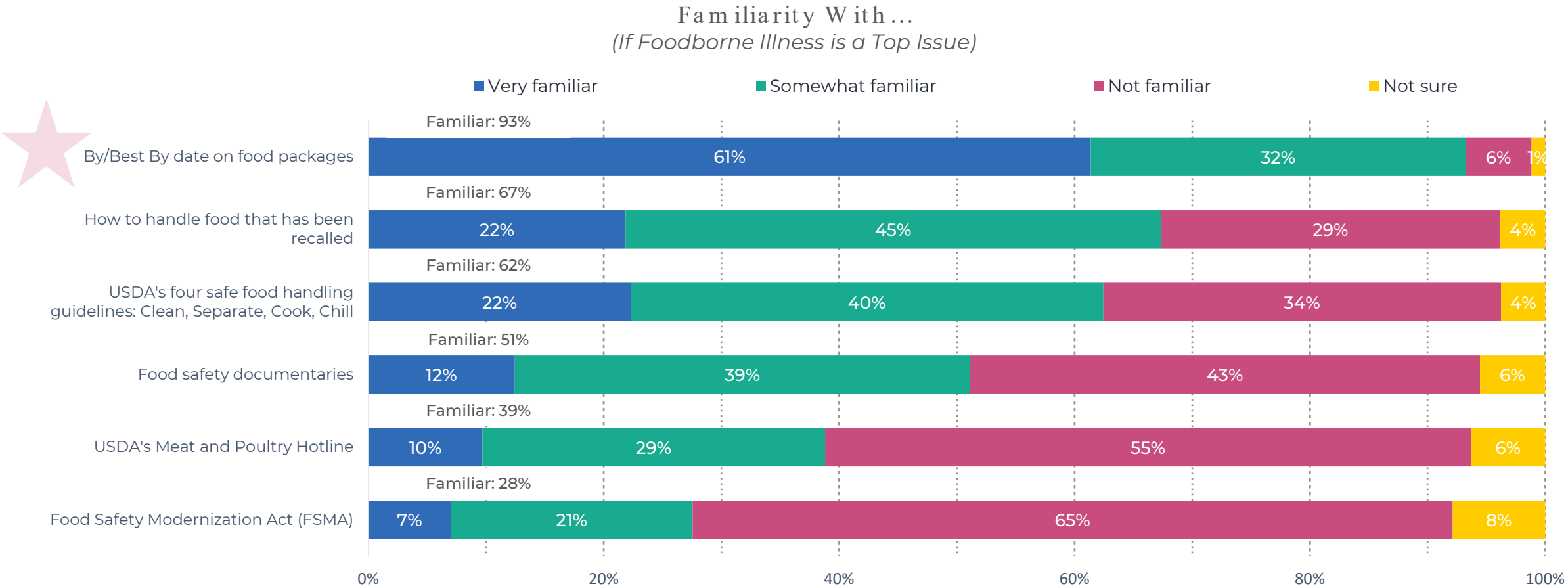
# Americans say carcinogens, foodborne illness from bacteria, and pesticides are the most important food safety issues.

Younger generations are more likely than older generations to say GMOs and allergens are most important.



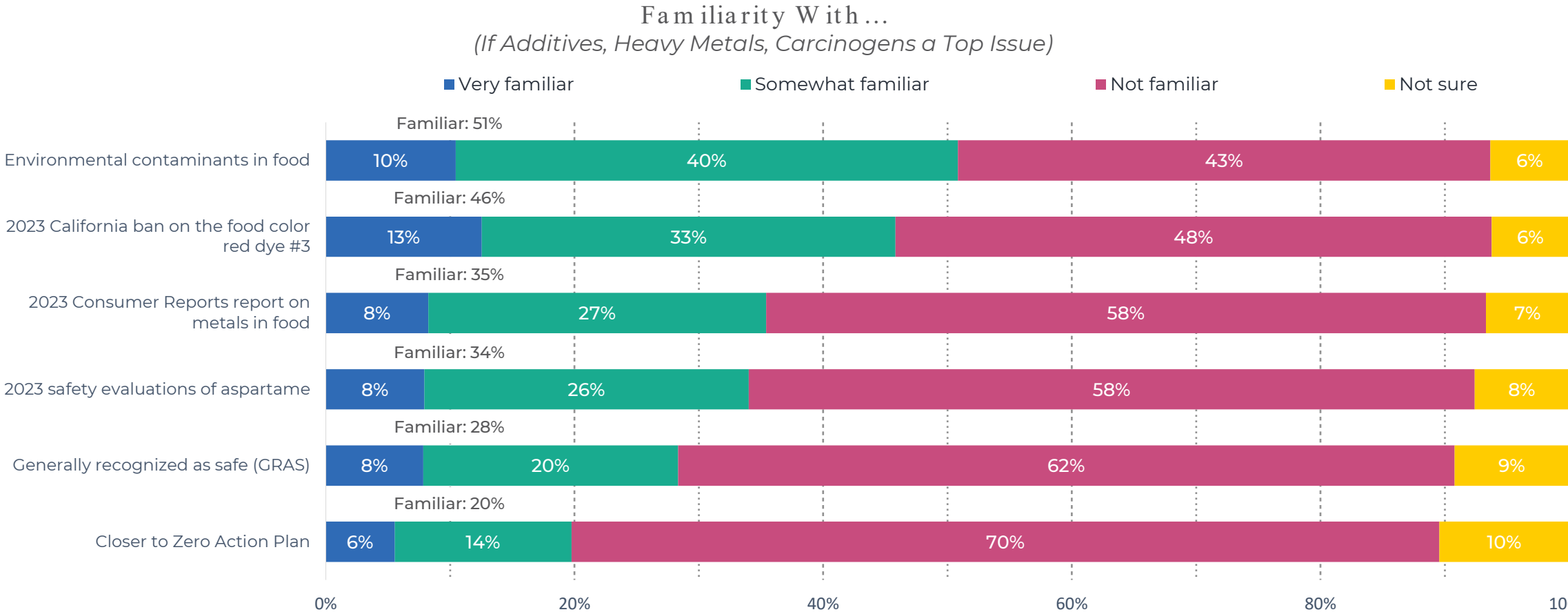
# Nearly all Americans concerned about foodborne illness are familiar with “Best By” dates on food packages.

2 in 3 say they are familiar with how to handle food that has been recalled and 4 in 10 are familiar with the USDA’s Meat and Poultry Hotline.



# If concerned about additives, heavy metals, and carcinogens in food, nearly half are familiar with environmental contaminants in food and California’s red dye #3 ban.

Younger generations, men, and Black Americans are the most familiar with all these topics.

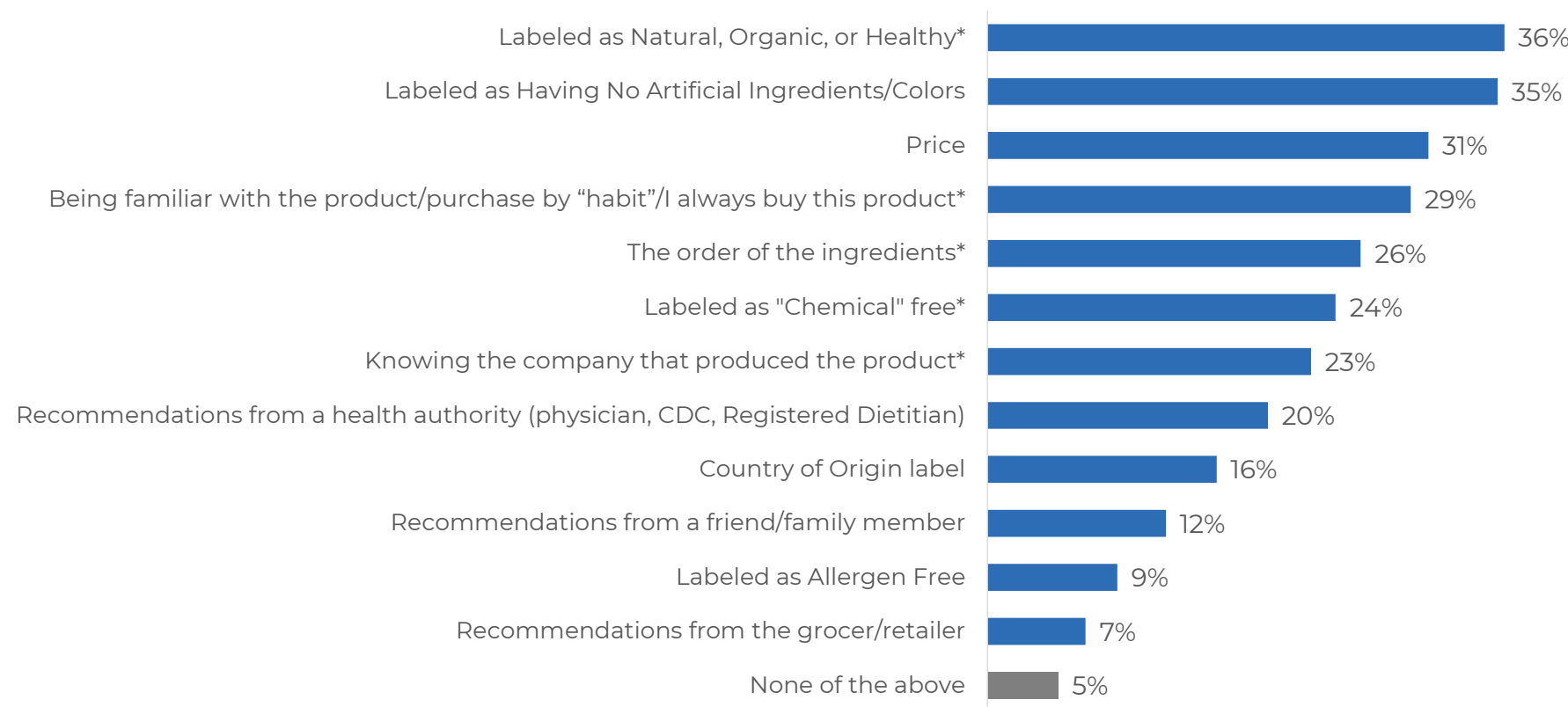




# Foods labeled as “Natural,” “Organic,” or “Healthy,” or “No Artificial Ingredients/Colors” are top in-store safety signals.

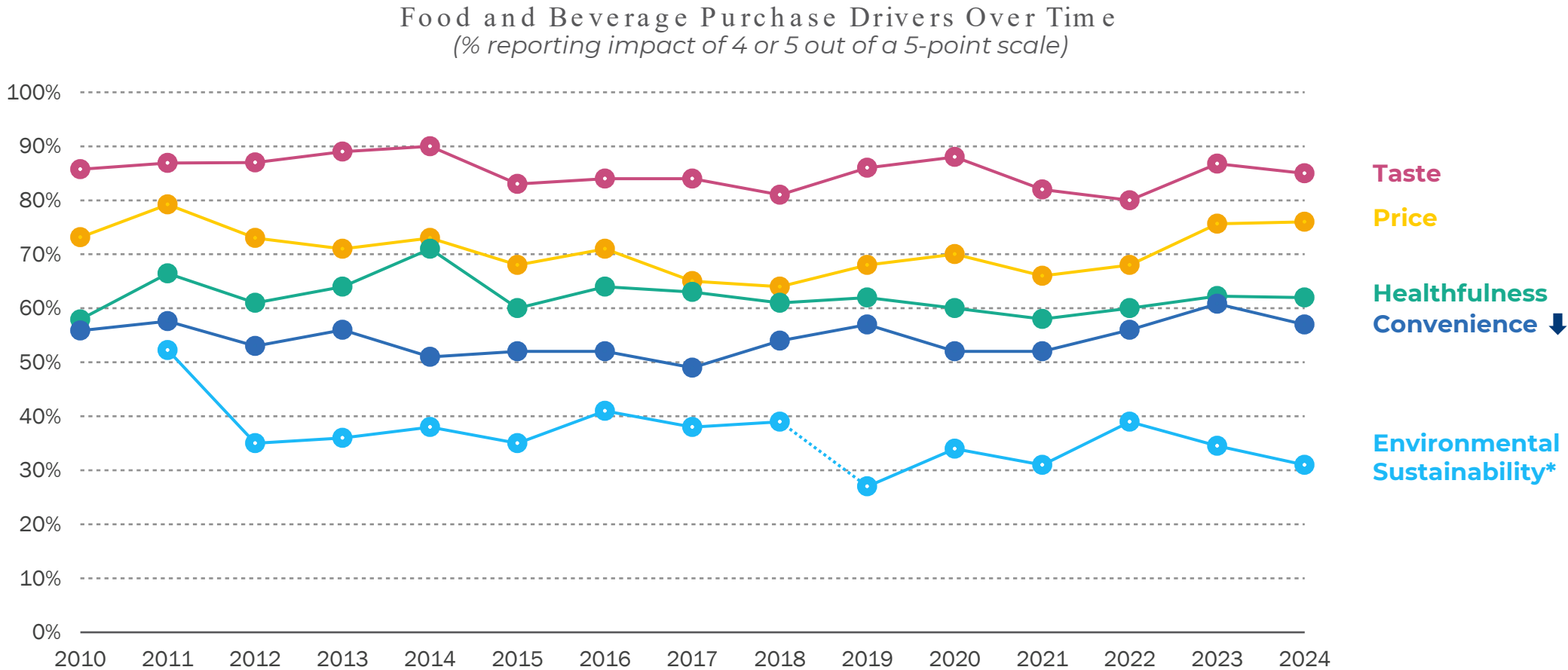
Older generations and those with higher household income are most likely to use labels indicating a food has no artificial ingredients or colors to inform their belief about a food’s safety while shopping.

Contributing Factors Towards Confidence in Safety of Food\*



# Taste remains the top purchase driver, followed by price. The impact of convenience is down from 2023.

Baby Boomers, those with higher household incomes, and Asian Americans are most likely to find healthfulness impactful.



# Monthly IFIC Spotlight Surveys



IFIC generates monthly consumer insights through our Spotlight Surveys.

Each month, we engage 1,000 Americans to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about timely and relevant topics in food. Our Spotlight Surveys align with the topics of our monthly expert webinar series, educational resources, messaging, and content development.



DOWNLOAD THE SURVEYS  
on [foodinsight.org](https://foodinsight.org)



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of Americans (56%) replace traditional meals with snacking or by eating smaller meals, according to the [2024 IFIC Food & Health Survey](#). Emerging as its own eating pattern, snacking has become increasingly popular among consumers, especially Gen Z, Millennials, women, and those whose relationship status is single.

While [nutrition scholars](#) have struggled to formally define the word snack, nearly all Americans tell us that when they eat or drink something between meals, to them, it is a snack. A rarity that widespread agreement emerges around food and nutrition, this noteworthy finding is one of many eye-opening takeaways from the [IFIC Spotlight Survey on snacking](#).

As consumers make food decisions, [nothing outcompetes taste and price](#); they want to enjoy the food they eat, and they require affordability—the foundational elements consumers need before considering healthfulness. To the matter of taste, most consumers favor sweet and salty flavors in their snacks, followed by the sensation of crunch, and the inclusion of beverages.

Likewise, consumers tend to snack spontaneously, and very few emphasize nutrition. Half (51%) say they have calorie goals for their snacks, and only one in ten consumers confirm they leverage their typical snacks as a moment to add nutrition.

Whether a result of busy schedules or on-the-go lifestyles, data from this IFIC Spotlight Survey show that opportunities exist to help consumers get more from their snacks—more nutrition without sacrificing taste. Snacking is poised to be one eating occasion to meet multiple goals, and understanding the heterogeneity of consumer desires and their associated snacking [profiles](#) is an important element to meet the challenges associated with snacking and to fully realize the health and nutrition opportunities. IFIC commissioned this IFIC Spotlight Survey: American Consumer Perceptions of Snacking to study U.S. consumer mindset related to snacking.

Source: 2024 IFIC Spotlight Survey: American Consumer Perceptions of Snacking



### IMPLICATIONS

Americans' diet quality rating, as measured by the [Healthy Eating Index](#), is 58 out of 100. Often described as a failing score, health professionals and nutrition scientists agree that improving diet quality is a priority to advance health and well-being of Americans. Specifically, resources like the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) provide advice on "what promotes health, and help prevent chronic disease."

The emergence of snacking as its own eating pattern presents an opportunity to enhance overall health. In this survey, consumers agree that improving diet quality is a priority to advance health and well-being of Americans. Specifically, resources like the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) provide advice on "what promotes health, and help prevent chronic disease."

Incorporating foods and beverages rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins into snacking can improve diet quality. While most consumers agree that snacking is a priority to advance health and well-being of Americans, many still struggle to find time to snack healthfully. In other words, it will take more work to help consumers and help them incorporate healthy snacking into their lives.

Source: 2024 IFIC Spotlight Survey: American Consumer Perceptions of Snacking

### More Americans say they snack in the afternoon and evening, but morning snacks get highest net healthy rating.

Net healthy rating of snacks steadily declines throughout the day from Morning (+34%) to Late-Night (-16%).

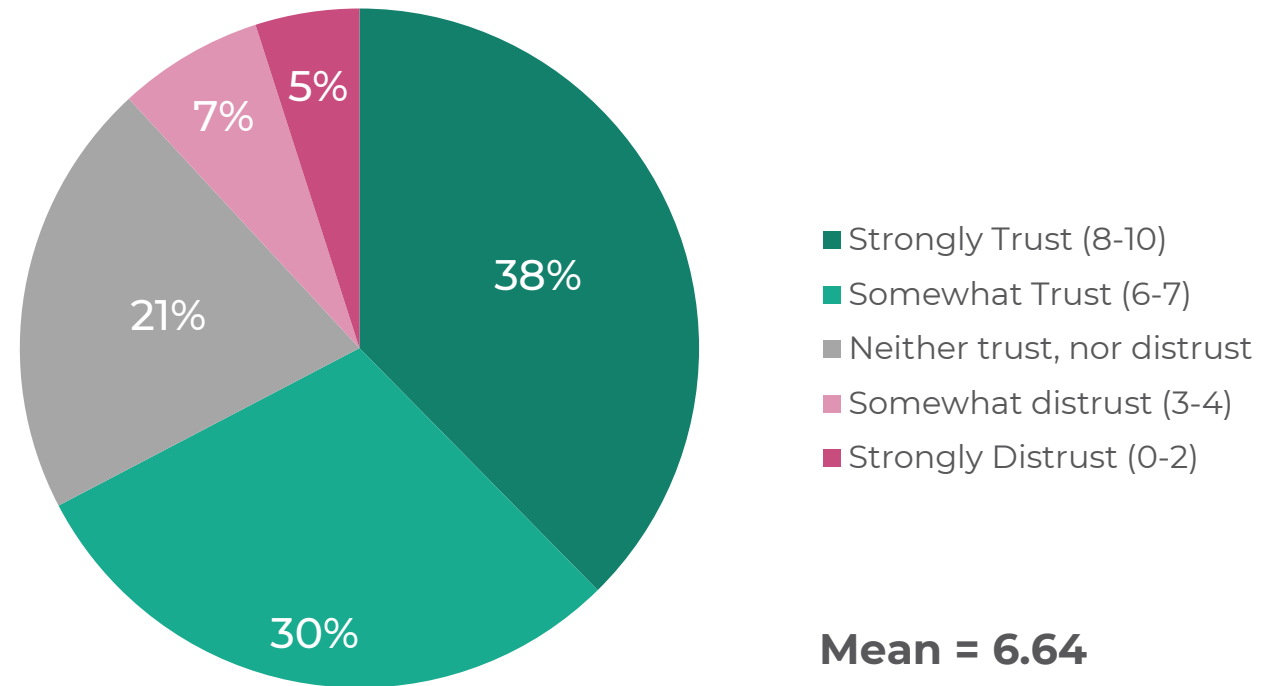
| Time of Day              | Healthy 41% | Unhealthy 59% | Net Healthy Rating |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Typical morning snack    | 34%         | 29%           | +34%               |
| Typical afternoon snack  | 18%         | 38%           | +27%               |
| Typical evening snack    | 1%          | 28%           | +17%               |
| Typical late-night snack | 3%          | 22%           | -16%               |

Net healthy rating of snacks steadily declines throughout the day from Morning (+34%) to Late-Night (-16%).

Source: 2024 IFIC Spotlight Survey: American Consumer Perceptions of Snacking

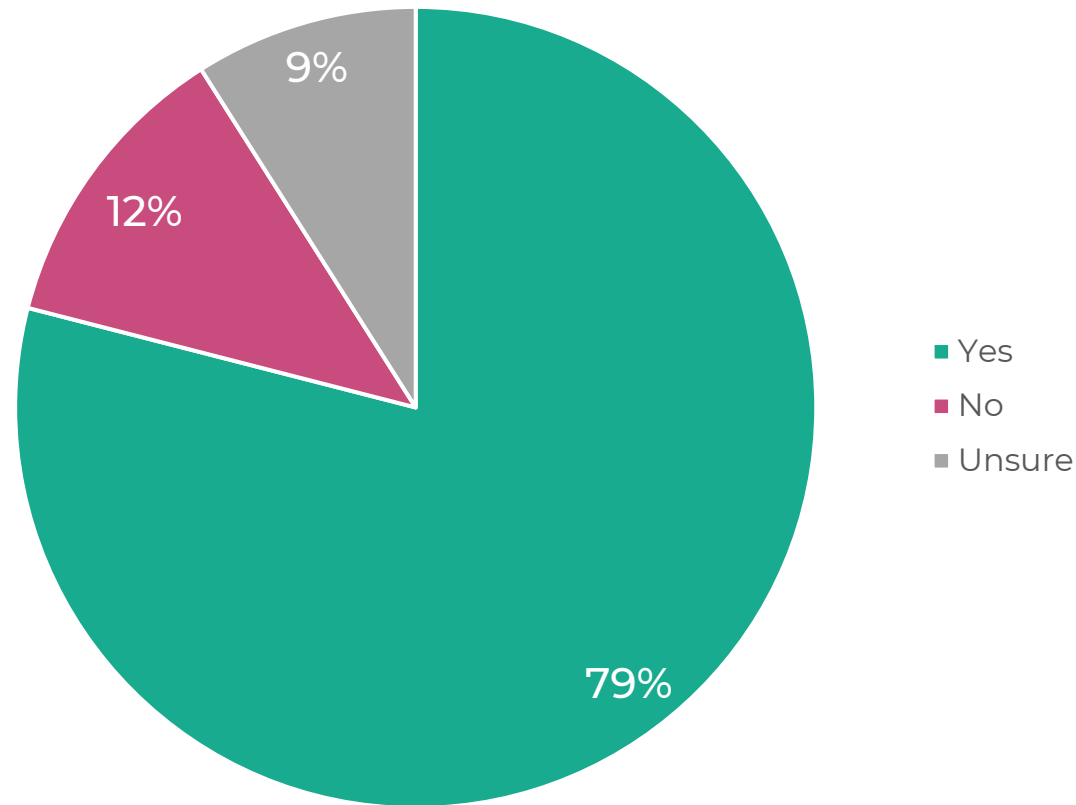
# Less than 4 in 10 Americans strongly trust science about food, nutrition, and/or diet.

1 in 5 (21%) are neither trusting nor distrusting, while more than 1 in 10 (12%) are at least somewhat distrusting.



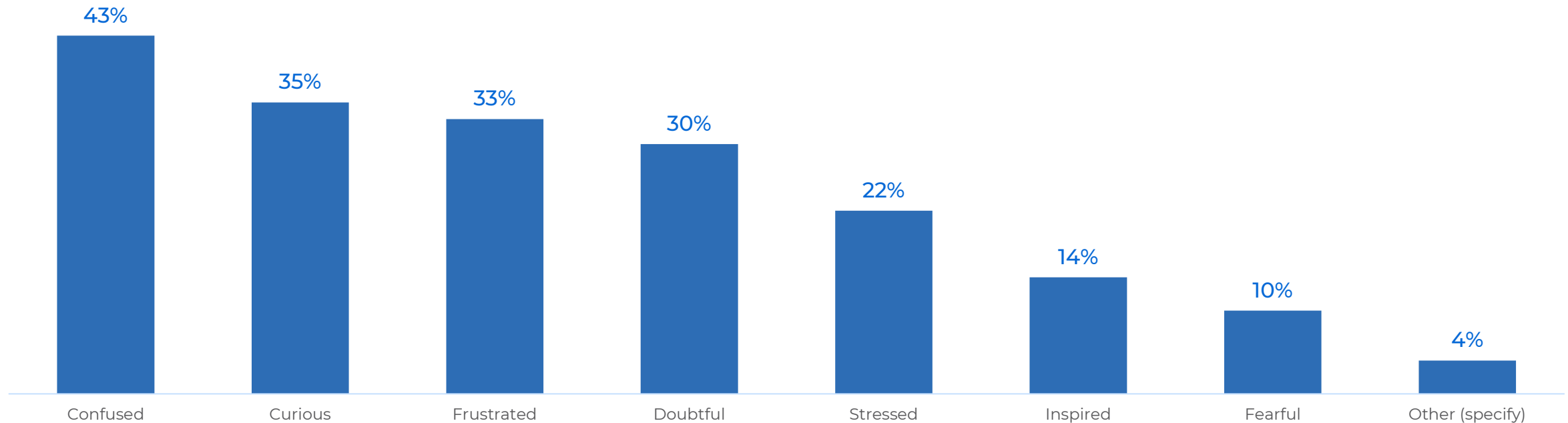
# 8 in 10 Americans say it seems like recommendations about what to eat and drink are always changing.

Just over 1 in 10 (12%) do not feel like food recommendations are always changing.



# Among those who say dietary recommendations seem like they are always changing, over 40% say it makes them feel confused about their food choices.

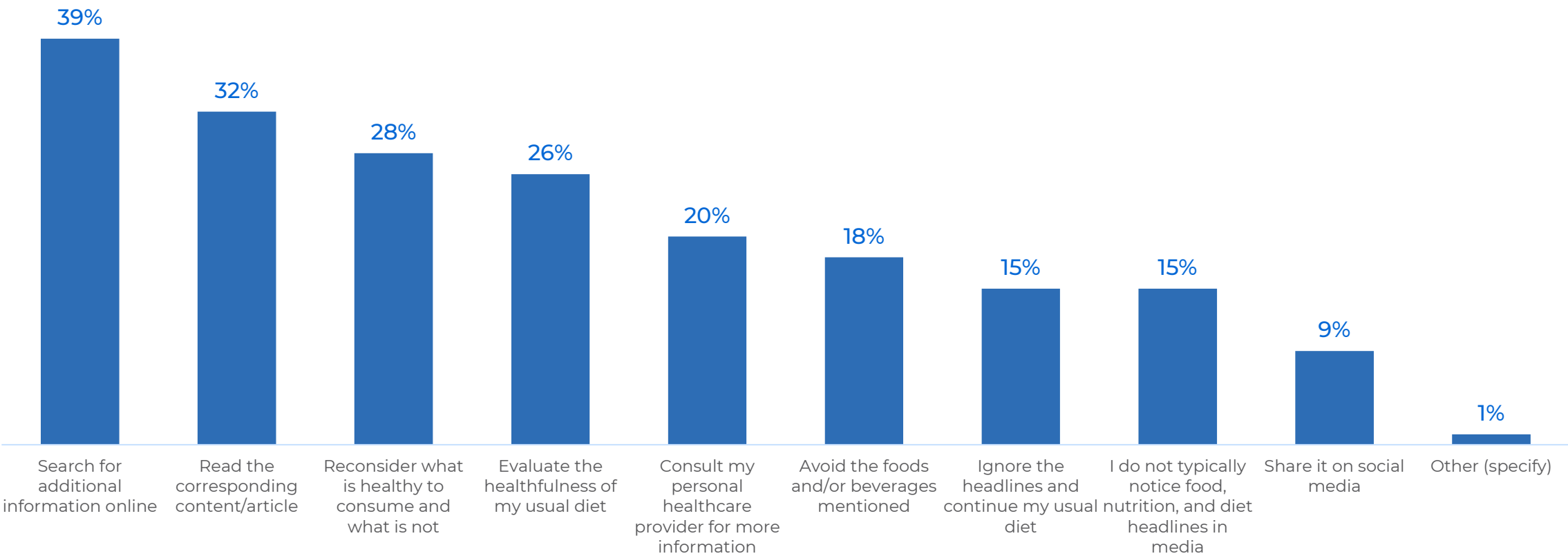
30% of Americans feel doubtful and 10% report being fearful due to always-changing dietary recommendations.





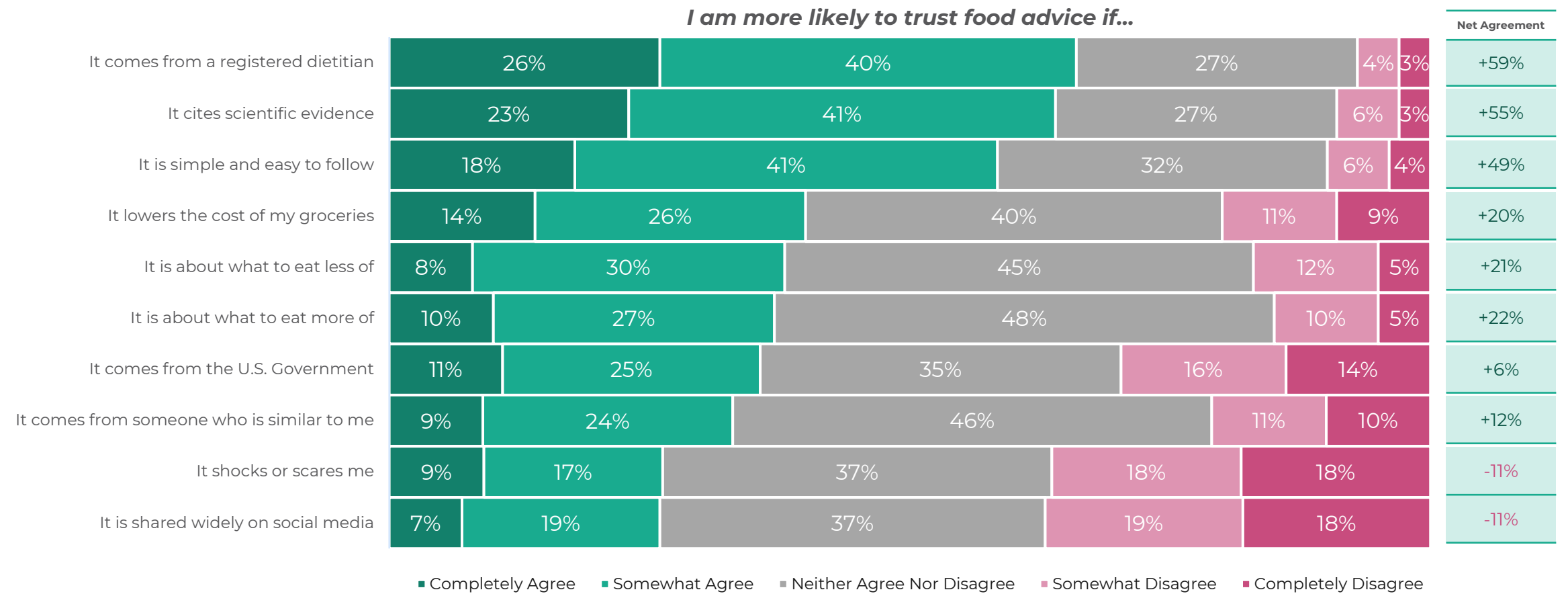
# 4 in 10 Americans search for additional information online when they notice food, nutrition, and diet headlines.

While nearly 1 in 5 (18%) react by avoiding the foods and/or beverages mentioned, a similar percentage (15%) ignore such headlines and continue their usual diets.



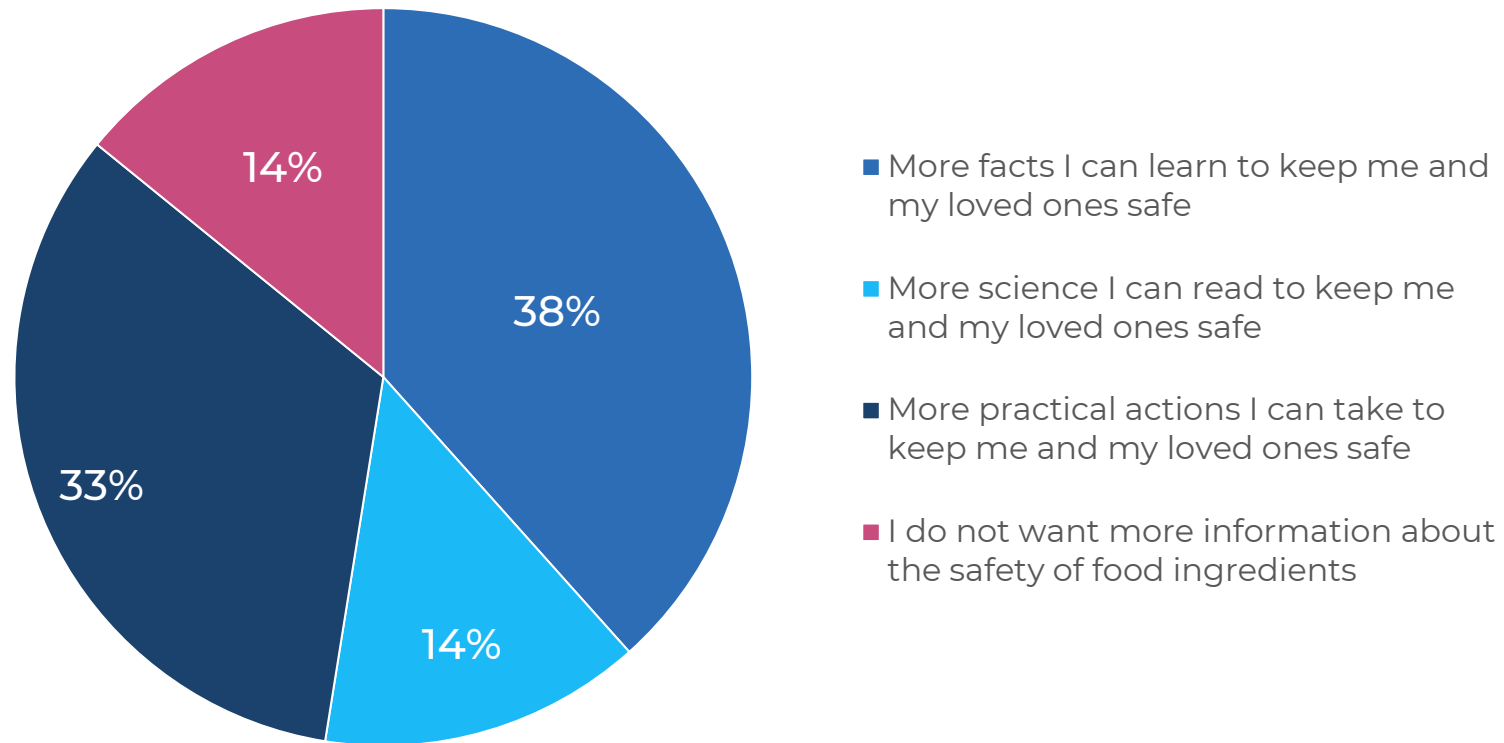
# Two-thirds of Americans say they are more likely to trust food advice if it comes from a registered dietitian.

Food advice is also more like to be trusted if it cites scientific evidence or is simple and easy to follow.



# When it comes to the type of information about the safety of food ingredients that Americans want more of, facts and practical actions are more desired than science.

One in seven (14%) do not want more information about the safety of food ingredients.



## ENGAGE

- ASK ME ANYTHING
- LISTEN FOR MORE, INCLUDING UNDERLYING EMOTION
- ASK PERMISSION

## EQUIP

- UTILIZE THE FEEL-KNOW-DO FRAMEWORK
- LEAD WITH “THE FEELS”
- FOLLOW WITH FACTS & ACTIONS

## EMPOWER & BE EMPOWERED

# What's Ahead?

## June 26, 2025

- IFIC Expert Webinar, “The Food Waste Dilemma: Behavioral Drivers and Everyday Solutions”, Meredith Carouthers, USDA/FSIS; Britany Saunier, *PFSE*

## July 28, 2025

- 2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey, *Food Safety Release and Education Session*, 2025 IAFP Annual Meeting, Cleveland OH

## September 18, 2025

- Food Safety Month - IFIC Spotlight Survey on Food Recalls and corresponding IFIC Expert Webinar
- Safe Food Handling Toolkit

# Questions?



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SERVING YOU FROM THE CENTER OF  
SCIENCE, FOOD & THE CONSUMER

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THANK  
YOU

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