



**SPOTLIGHT
SURVEY**

Americans' Perceptions Of Seed Oils

February 2025



METHODOLOGY



The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about seed oils, more commonly known as vegetable oils. One thousand adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from November 15-19, 2024, and were weighted to ensure proportional results. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The Bayesian confidence level for the survey sample (n=1000) is 3.5, which is roughly equivalent to a margin of error of ± 3.1 at the 95% confidence level. Callouts of statistically significant results are included where appropriate on slides displaying results. Something is statistically significant if the result cannot be attributed to random chance. Statistical significance in this report is only compared within each demographic group (e.g. age, race, gender, etc.).

SUGGESTED CITATION:

International Food Information Council (IFIC). IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Seed Oils. February 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research highlights the health benefits of vegetable oils, such as [canola oil](#) and other sources of [unsaturated fats](#). While consuming these oils may improve cardiometabolic risk factors, consumer perceptions of oils, especially those referred to as "seed oils," reveal a growing divide between scientific findings and public opinion.

Seed oils are oils that are derived from plant seeds. The term "seed oils" has been used more recently by some to identify certain vegetable oils, and to position them as uniquely detrimental to health and inferior to other oils.

More than half of Americans (56%) say olive oil is the fat source they use most often when cooking or consuming food. This preference is followed by vegetable oil (41%) and butter (38%). In contrast, fewer consumers say they most often use sesame (4%), soybean (3%), and walnut (2%) oils. These reported preferences highlight potential differences in health perception associated with various cooking mediums. Barriers such as access and price also likely influence cooking oil preference.

When shopping for food and beverages, 41% of Americans report not looking for the source of fat in a product before purchasing it, while about half as many say they look for olive oil (21%) and/or vegetable oils (21%). Despite their widespread use and healthfulness, seed oils face skepticism among some consumers. More than one-quarter of Americans (28%) say they actively avoid seed oils.

This emerging sentiment underscores a shift in consumer priorities and/or concern for the types of foods where seed oils are commonly found. As debates over the healthfulness of seed oils intensify, science communicators may face increasing demands for clarity as consumer expectations evolve. Addressing consumer concerns head-on can help bridge the gap between scientific evidence and public perception.

IFIC commissioned this *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Seed Oils* to study U.S. consumer mindsets related to seed oils.



KEY FINDINGS

More than half of Americans say they most often use olive oil when cooking or consuming food, followed by vegetable oil and butter.

When asked which fats and oils they use most often when cooking or consuming food, 56% of Americans said olive oil, followed by vegetable oil (41%), and then butter (38%). The least-used oils for cooking and consumption were sesame oil (4%), soybean oil (3%), and walnut oil (2%).

4 in 10 Americans say they do not look for information on the type of fat a product contains before making a purchase.

When grocery shopping, 2 in 10 Americans say they look to see if a product contains olive oil (21%) and/or vegetable oil (21%) before purchasing it. Slightly fewer (17%) survey participants say they look to see if a product contains butter. However, 4 in 10 (41%) say they do not look for this type of information when grocery shopping.

Americans believe avocado oil and olive oil are the healthiest types of fat or oil.

When presented with a range of fats and oils, 38% of Americans selected avocado oil as the healthiest type. Just behind avocado oil, 29% of Americans said olive oil is the healthiest, and 8% said butter. In total, 67% of those surveyed selected avocado oil in their top three healthiest, followed by olive oil (56%) and butter (42%). Only 3% ranked margarine, pork fat, or palm oil in their top three healthiest type of fat or oil.

3 in 4 Americans are at least somewhat familiar with the term “seed oils.”

Given the increasing public use of the term “seed oils,” Americans were asked about their level of familiarity with the term. While 1 in 4 (25%) reported that they have never heard “seed oils,” almost 1 in 5 (19%) reported that they see the term often. A similar percentage (18%) indicated that they sometimes see the term “seed oils.” The majority (38%) reported that they have seen the term, but do not see it often.

KEY FINDINGS

Nearly half of Americans believe seed oils are healthy.

American opinions about the healthfulness of consuming seed oils lean positive. Although 13% believe seed oils are unhealthy to consume, 25% do not have an opinion, and 17% believe seed oils are neither healthy nor unhealthy. The remaining 46% of survey takers believe seed oils are healthy to consume.

The two most cited sources of information about seed oils are friends and family and social media.

Consumers get food and health information from a variety of sources. Regarding seed oils, 24% of survey takers say they have encountered information about seed oils from their friends and family. A similar percentage (22%) say they have encountered information about seed oils from social media. However, almost one-third (32%) of Americans say they have not encountered information about seed oils.

Most Americans say what they have heard about seed oils is positive.

When asked to describe what they have heard about seed oils as positive or negative, more than 4 in 10 survey takers (44%) say it has been mostly positive (26%) or all positive (18%). While 2 in 10 (19%) say what they have heard about seed oils is equally positive and negative, 1 in 10 (9%) say that what they have heard is mostly or all negative. More than 1 in 4 (27%) have not heard about seed oils.

Sunflower oil and sesame oil are the cooking oils that most Americans consider to be a seed oil.

Survey takers were given a list of several cooking oils and asked to identify those that they consider to be seed oils. More than half selected sunflower oil (59%) and sesame oil (53%). About 1 in 3 consider safflower (34%), peanut (33%), soybean (33%), and walnut (29%) oils to be seed oils, while fewer consider ricebran (8%), palm (11%), coconut (12%), and vegetable (13%) oils to be seed oils.

KEY FINDINGS

More than 7 in 10 Americans do not actively avoid seed oils.

When consumers considered their diets and whether they actively avoid consuming seed oils, 72% say they do not practice avoidance. Alternatively, just over one-quarter of Americans (28%) say they avoid seed oils.

Among those who avoid consuming seed oils, more than 6 in 10 believe seed oils are more processed, more genetically modified, and cause more weight gain than other oils.

Among the 28% of survey takers who reported they actively avoid consuming seed oils, a majority believe seed oils are more processed (63%), more genetically modified (62%), as well as cause more weight gain/obesity (61%), heart disease (58%), and inflammation (57%) than other oils.



IMPLICATIONS

In today's information-saturated world, distinguishing fact from fiction in food, nutrition, and health is increasingly challenging. This is especially true for contentious sources of dietary fat. Vegetable oils are common ingredients used in home kitchens, commercial foodservice operations, fine dining restaurants, and in packaged food. Many cooking oils such as canola, soybean, and corn, are also known as seed oils because they are derived from the seeds of plants.

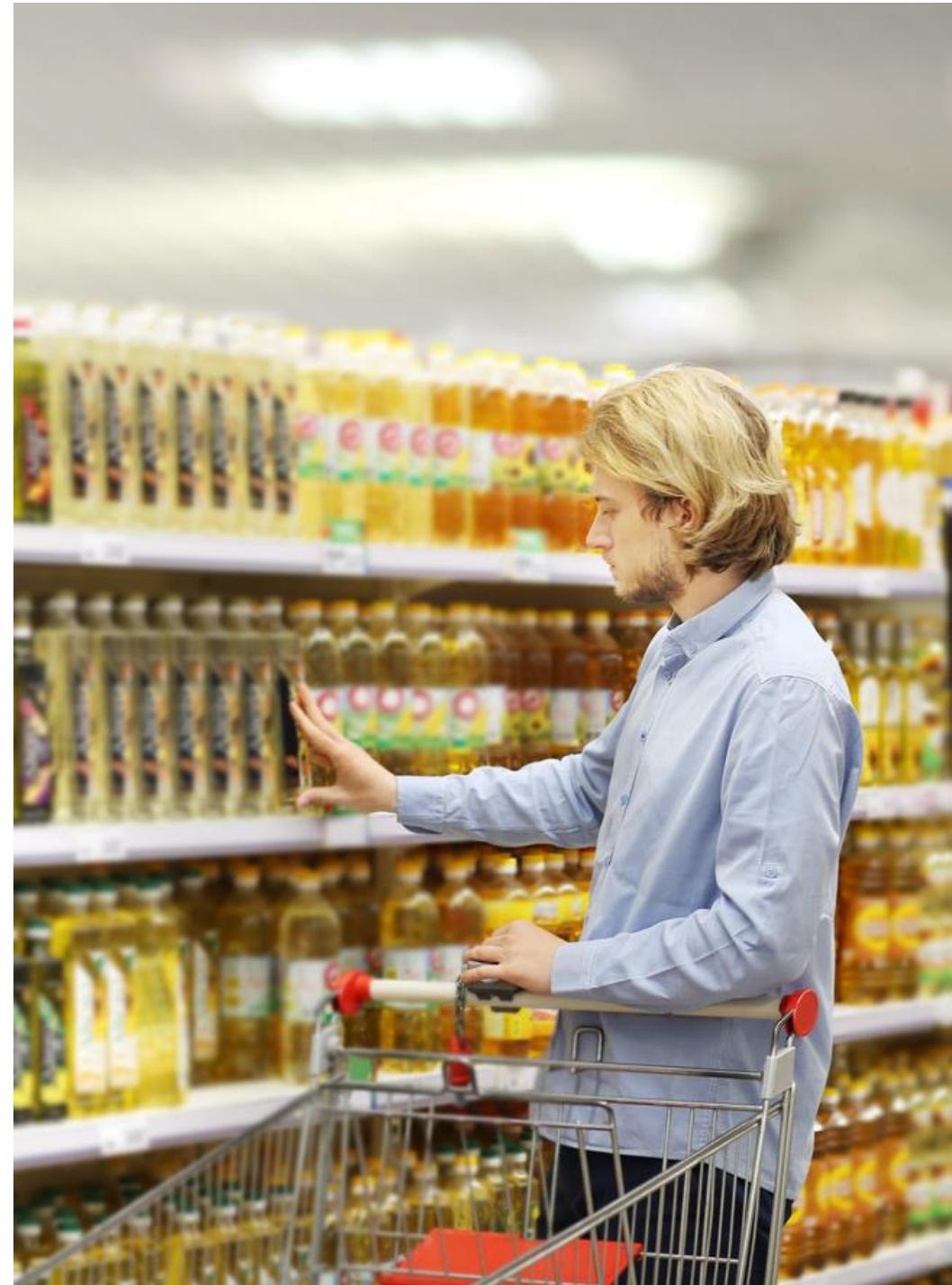
Fats, such as oil, comprise a blend of fatty acids. While olive oil is known for its high monounsaturated fatty acid (MUFA) content, canola oil is rich in MUFA as well. Providing a good source of vitamin E, canola oil has the least saturated fat and the most alpha-linolenic acid ((ALA), an essential fatty acid) among common oils, including olive oil. Canola also contains linoleic acid, an omega-6 fatty acid.

ALA is converted in the body to form eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), two important fatty acids that our bodies need. EPA and DHA are usually found in marine foods like cold-water fatty fish, such as herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines.

While [The American Heart Association](#) considers vegetable oils a healthy choice, debate exists about whether inflammation causes cardiovascular disease, and some have suggested that seed oils, because of their linoleic acid content, are pro-inflammatory. Such statements have planted seeds of doubt among consumers about whether they should consume or avoid certain oils. Many food and nutrition experts agree that vegetable oils are an important tool for improving diet quality while contributing to heart health and overall wellness.

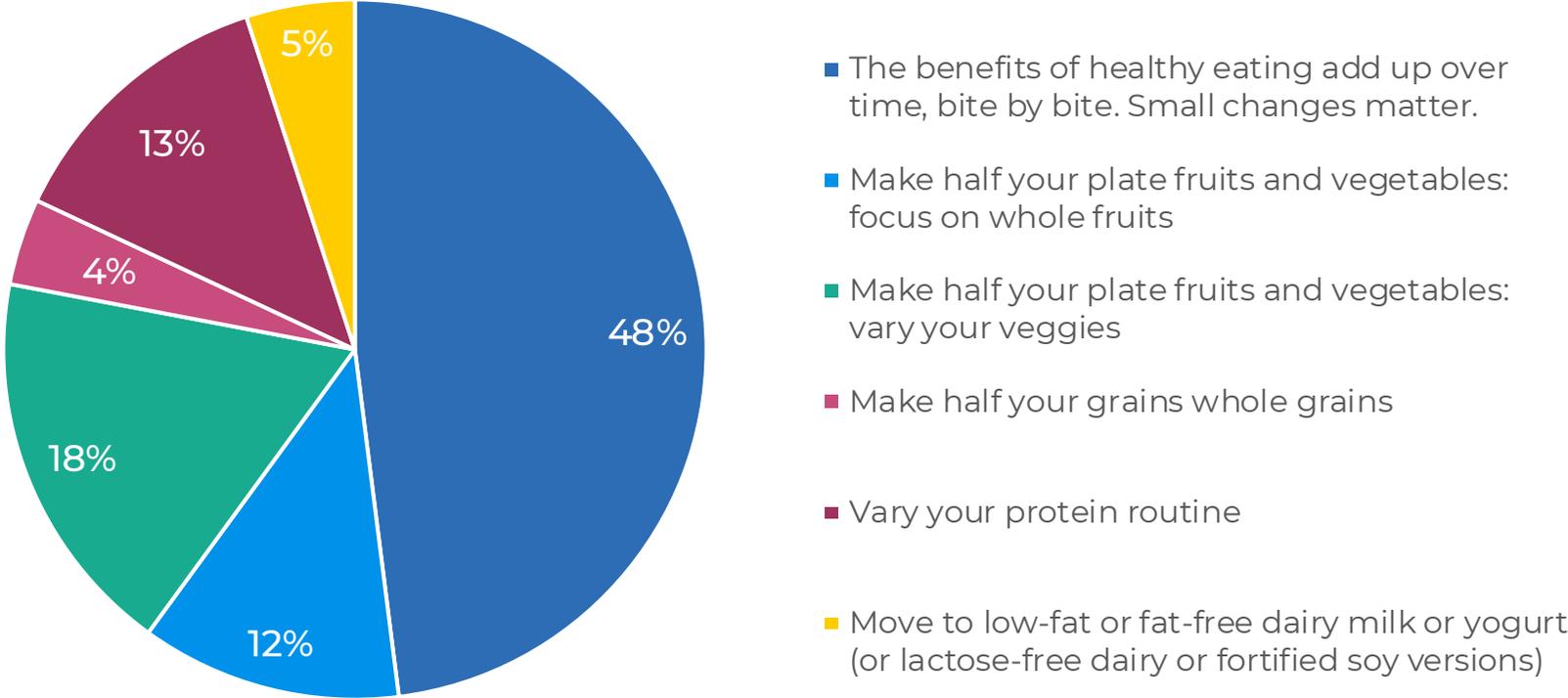
As debates over seed oil healthfulness intensify, science communicators may face increasing demands for clarity. Addressing consumer concerns head-on can help bridge the gap between scientific evidence and public perception.

Source: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Seed Oils. February 2025.



Making small, incremental dietary improvements over time is viewed as most important food advice for good health.

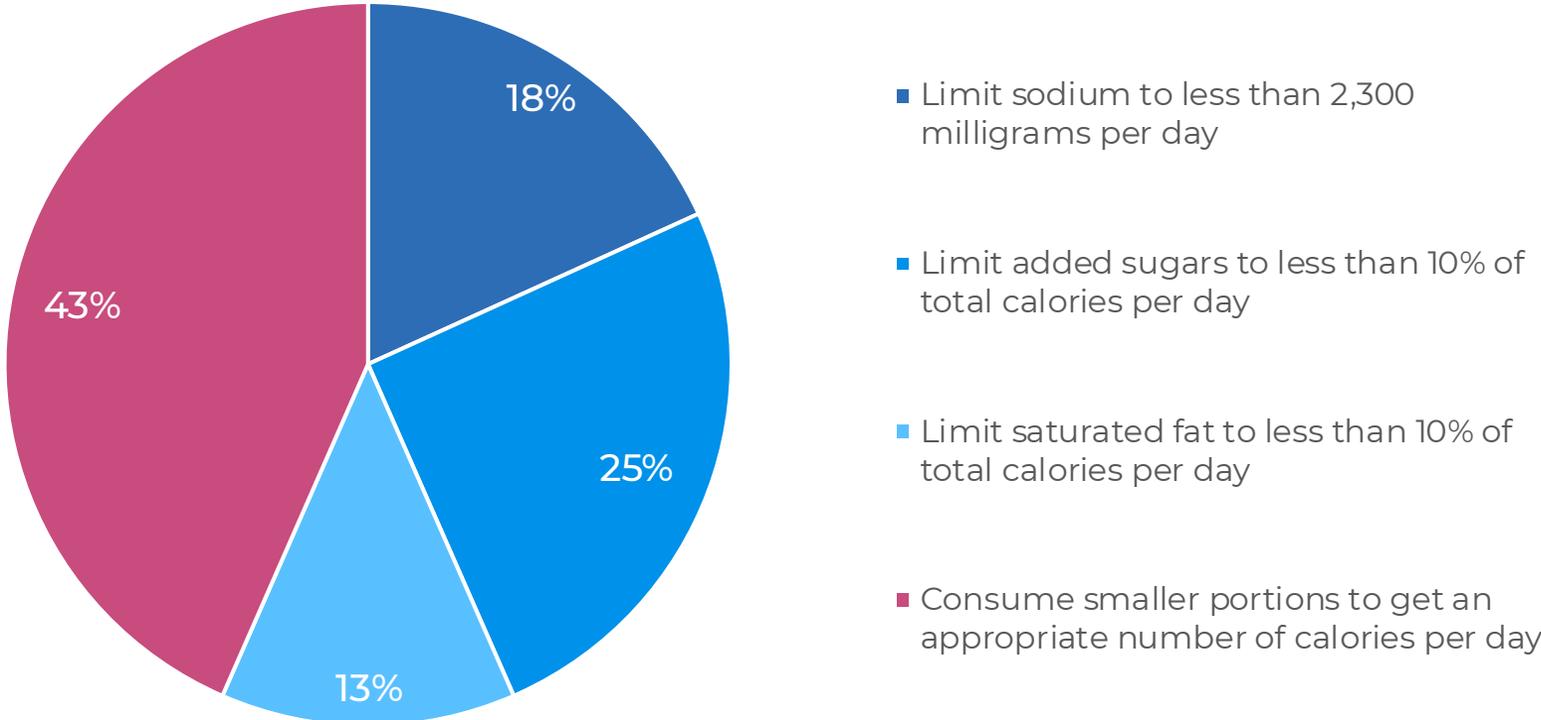
Less importance is placed on following advice about consuming specific food groups despite underconsumption.



Q1. Which piece of food advice do you believe is the most important to follow for good health? (n=1000)

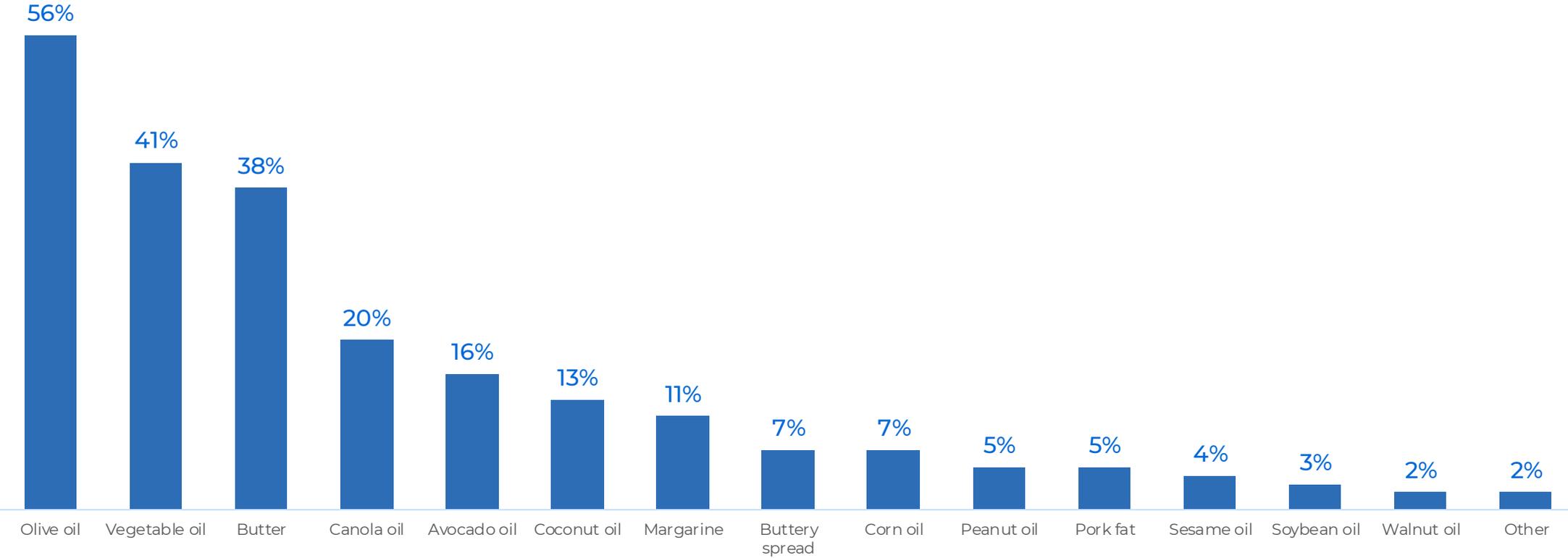
More Americans say that consuming smaller portions to manage calorie intake is more important for good health than following recommendations to limit specific nutrients.

Less importance is placed on recommendations for added sugars (25%), sodium (18%), and saturated fat (13%).



More than half of Americans say they use olive oil most often when cooking or consuming food, followed by vegetable oil and butter.

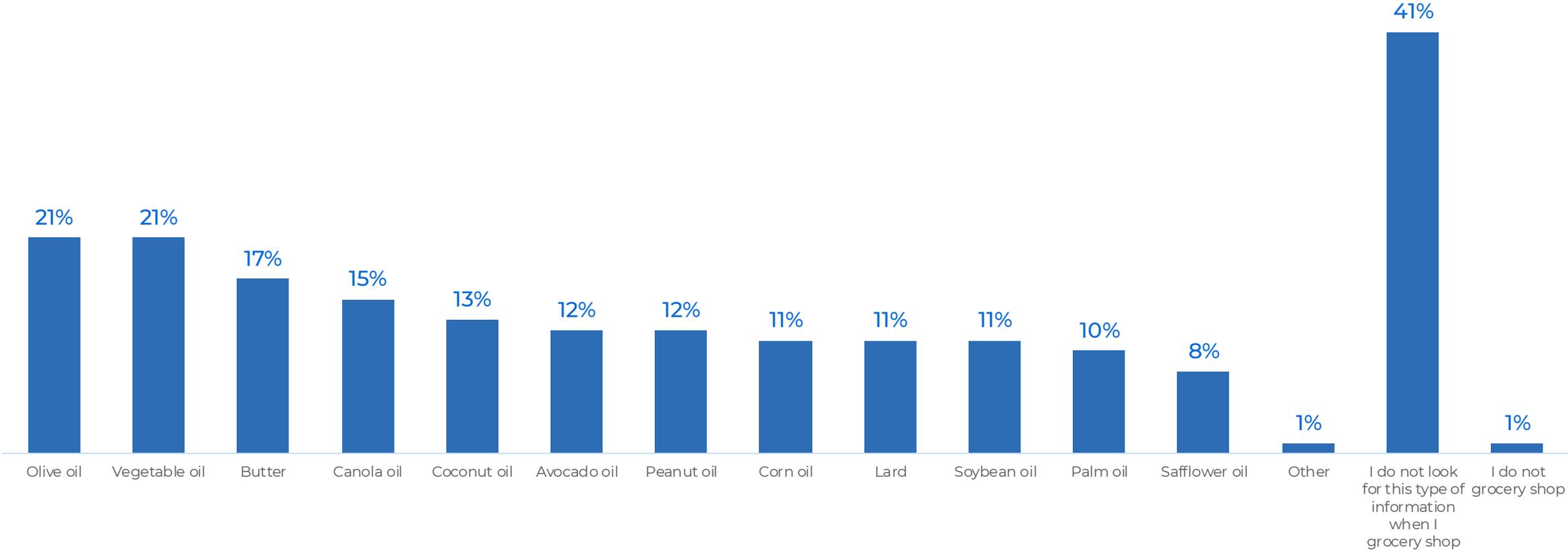
Sesame (4%), soybean (3%), and walnut (2%) oils are reportedly used much less frequently.



Q3. Which of the following do you use most often when cooking or consuming food? Choose your top three. (n=1000)

Four in 10 Americans say they do not look for information on the type of fat a product contains before making a purchase.

Two in 10 look to see if olive oil (21%) and/or vegetable oil (21%) are in foods or beverages before purchasing.

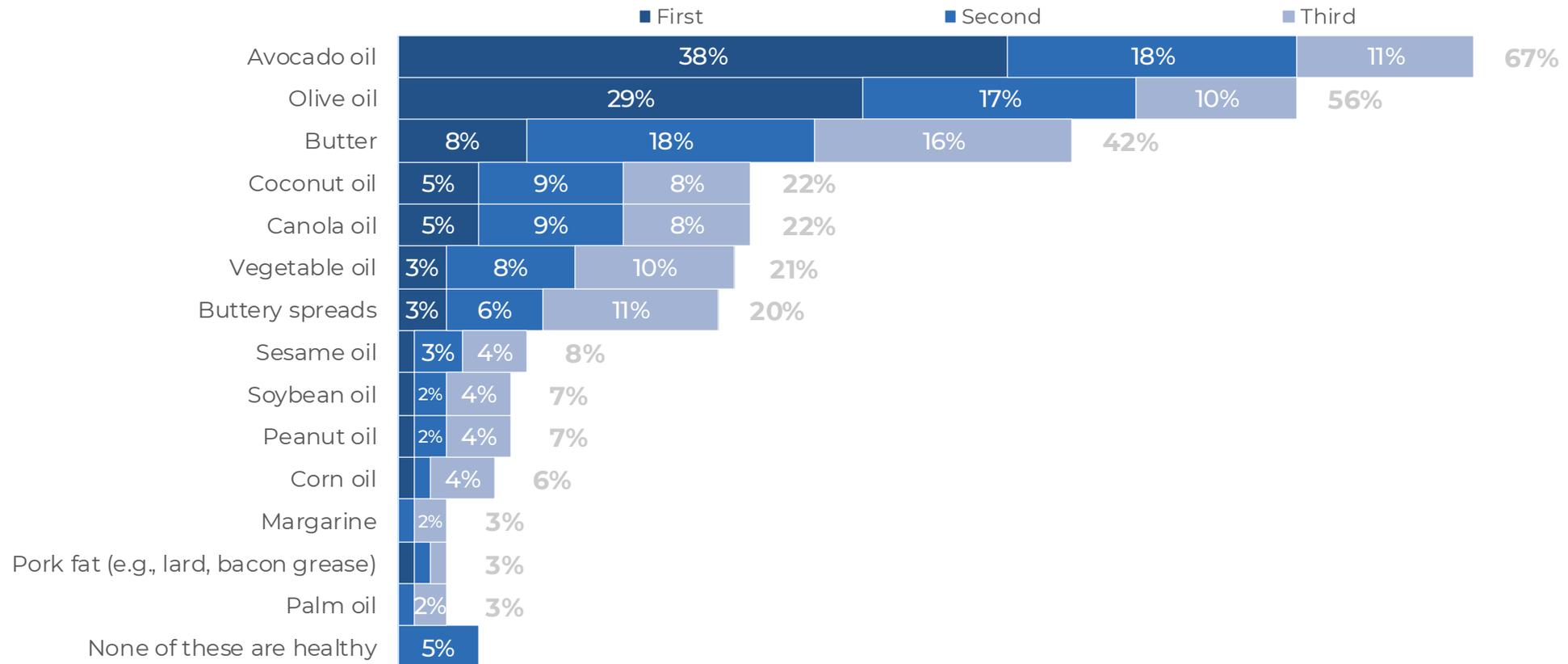


Q4. When you are grocery shopping, do you look to see if foods or beverages contain any of the following before purchasing them? Select all that apply. (n=1000)

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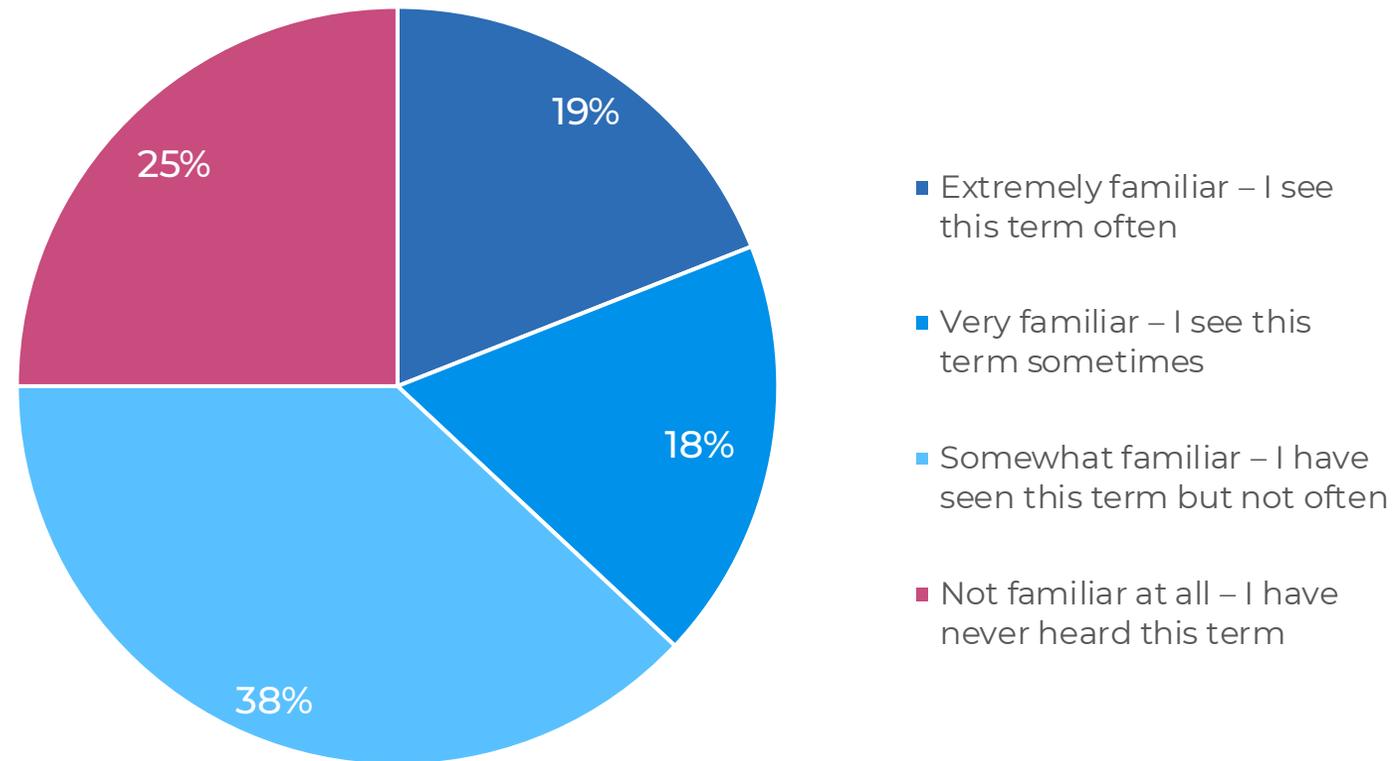
Americans believe avocado oil and olive oil are the healthiest types of fat or oil.

Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) rank avocado oil as the healthiest type of fat or oil, followed by olive oil (29%) and butter (8%). Conversely, only 3% rank margarine, pork fat, or palm oil in their top three healthiest type of fat or oil.



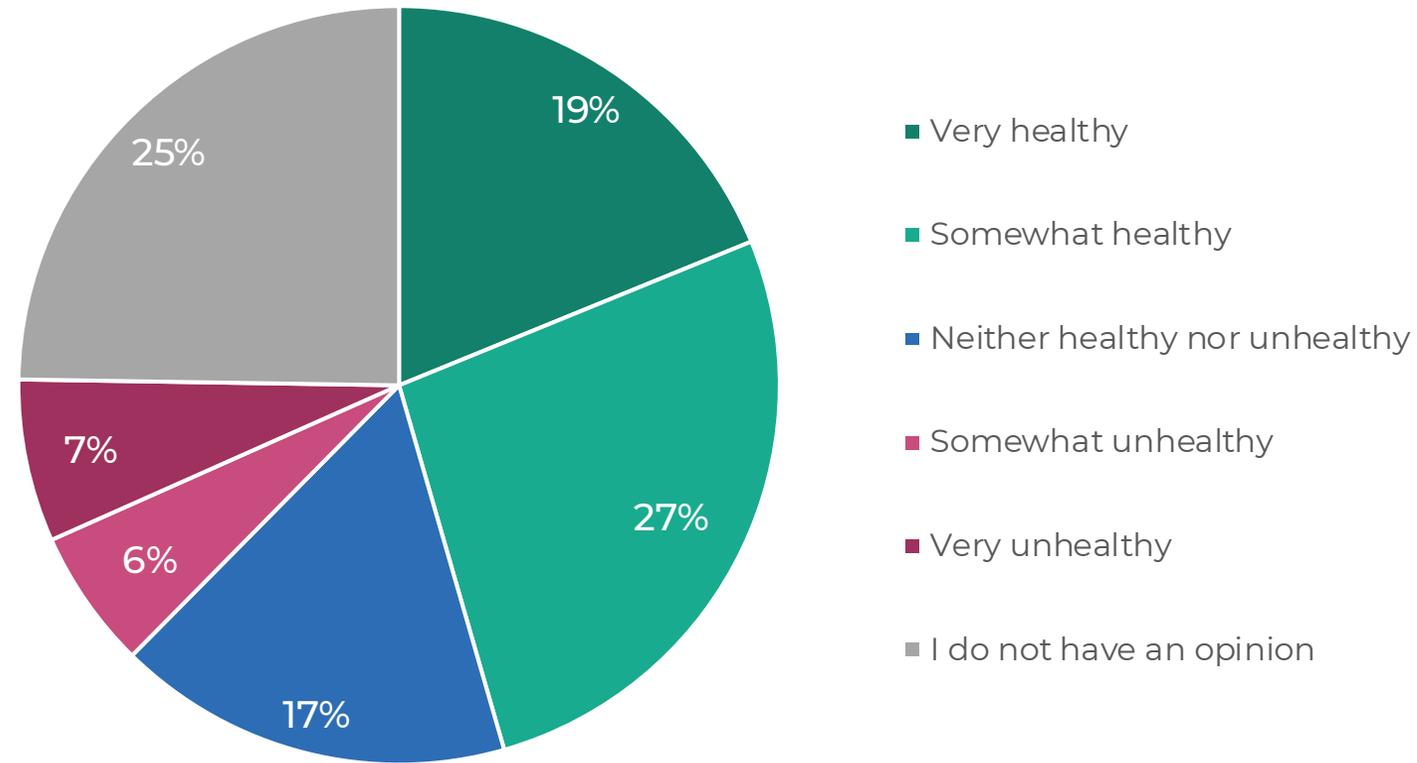
3 in 4 Americans are at least somewhat familiar with the term “seed oils.”

While 2 in 10 (19%) say they often see the term “seed oils,” one-quarter (25%) say they have never heard it.



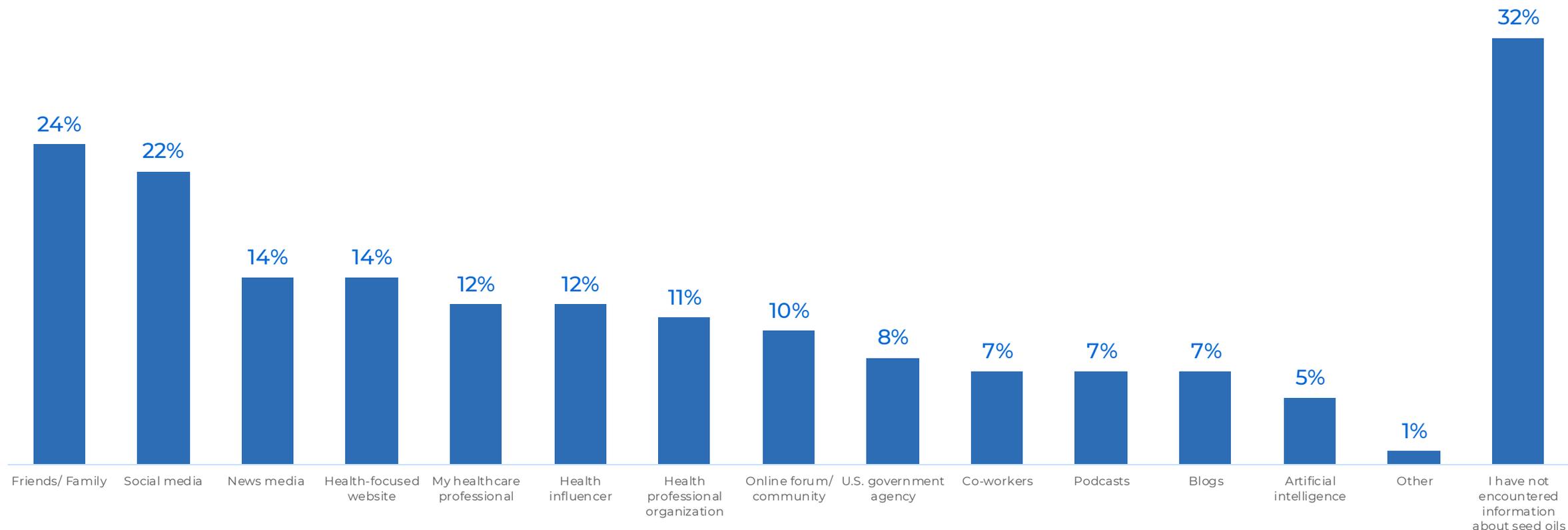
Nearly half of Americans believe seed oils are healthy.

More than 1 in 10 (13%) believe seed oils are unhealthy to consumer, and 1 in 4 (25%) do not have an opinion.



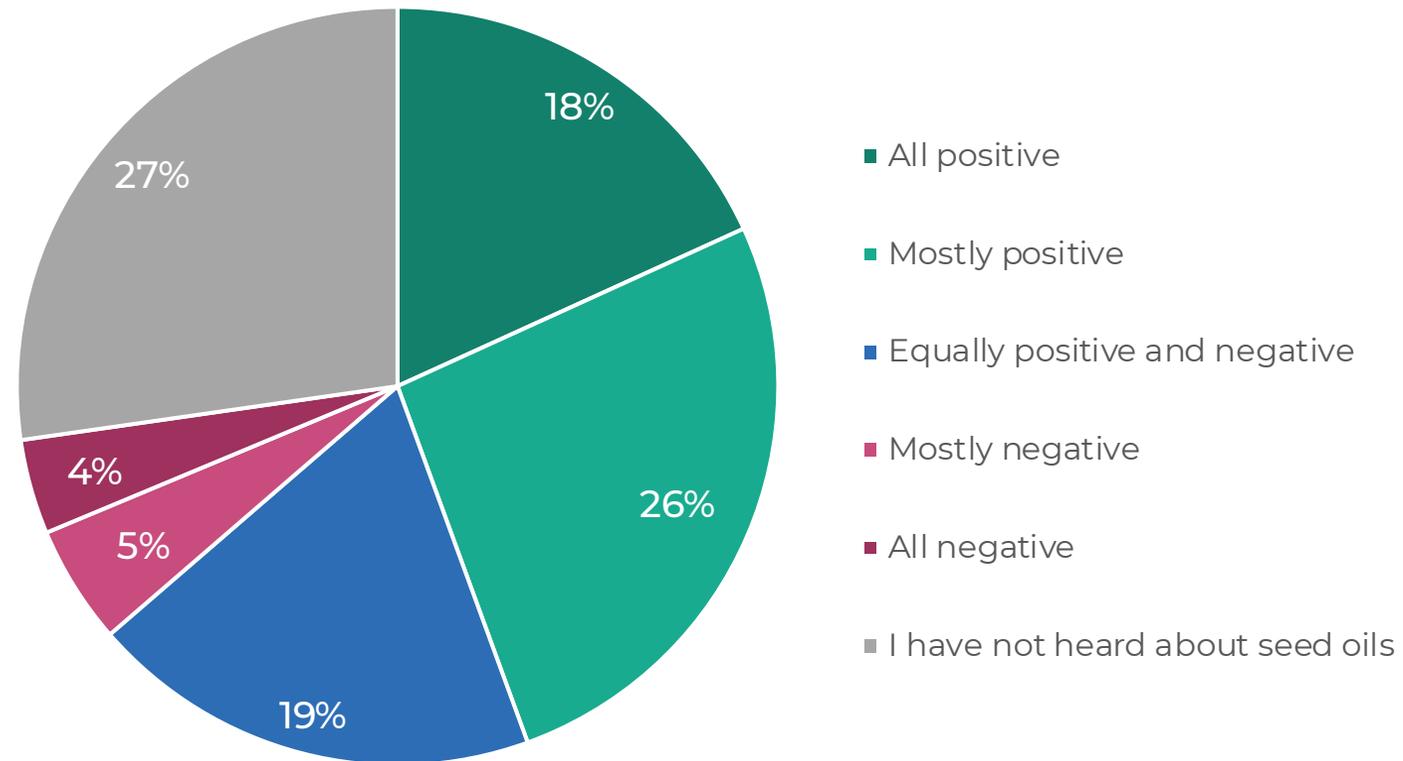
The two most cited sources of information about seed oils are friends and family and social media.

Approximately one-third (32%) of Americans have not encountered information about seed oils.



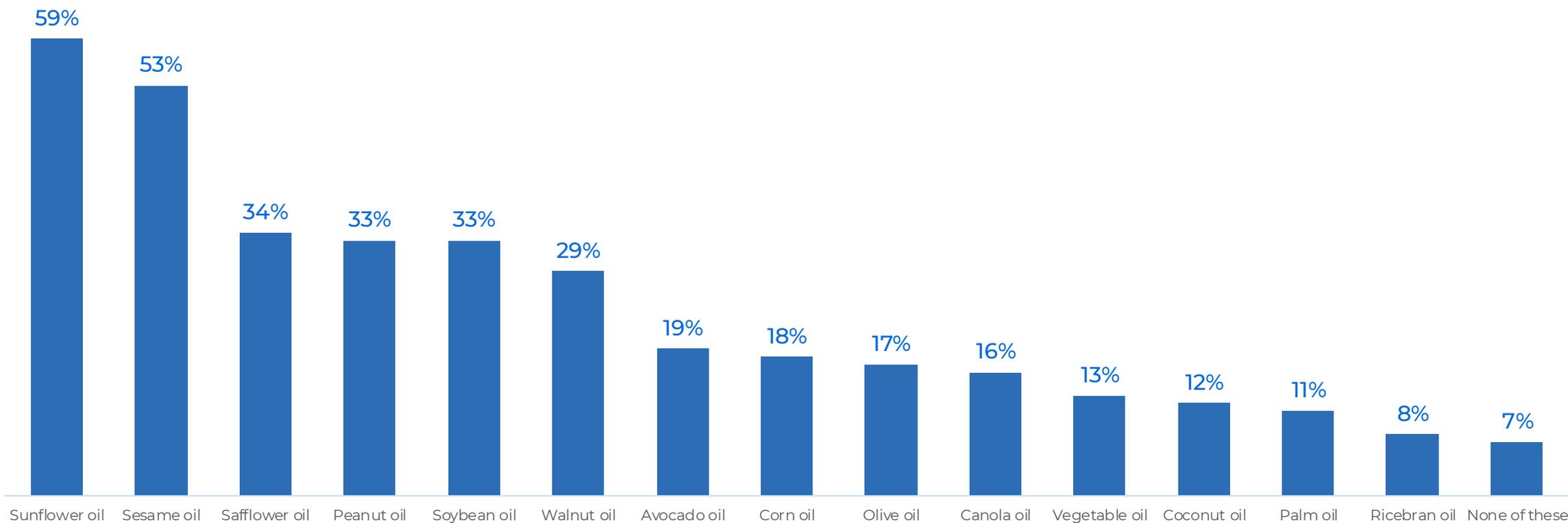
Most Americans say what they have heard about seed oils is positive.

While 2 in 10 (19%) say what they have heard about seed oils is equally positive and negative, 1 in 10 (9%) say that what they have heard is mostly or all negative. More than 1 in 4 (27%) have not heard about seed oils.



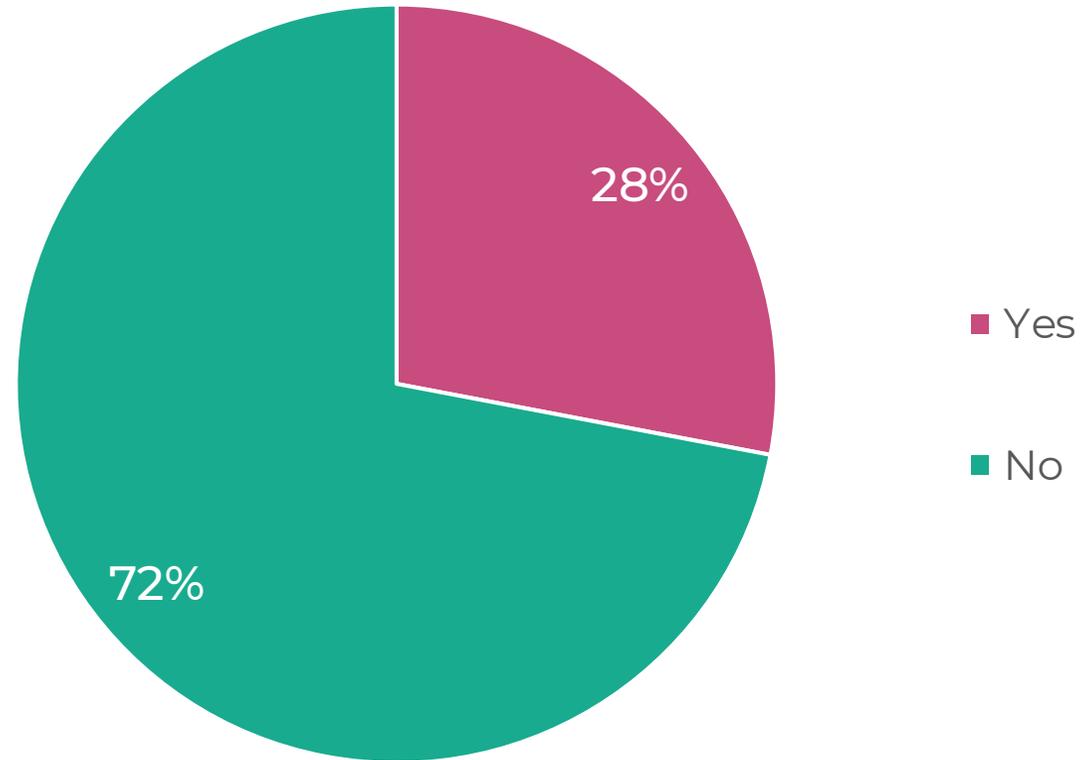
Sunflower oil and sesame oil are the cooking oils that most Americans consider to be a seed oil.

About 1 in 3 consider safflower (34%), peanut (33%), soybean (33%), and walnut (29%) oils to be seed oils. Fewer Americans consider ricebran (8%), palm (11%), coconut (12%), and vegetable (13%) oils to be seed oils.



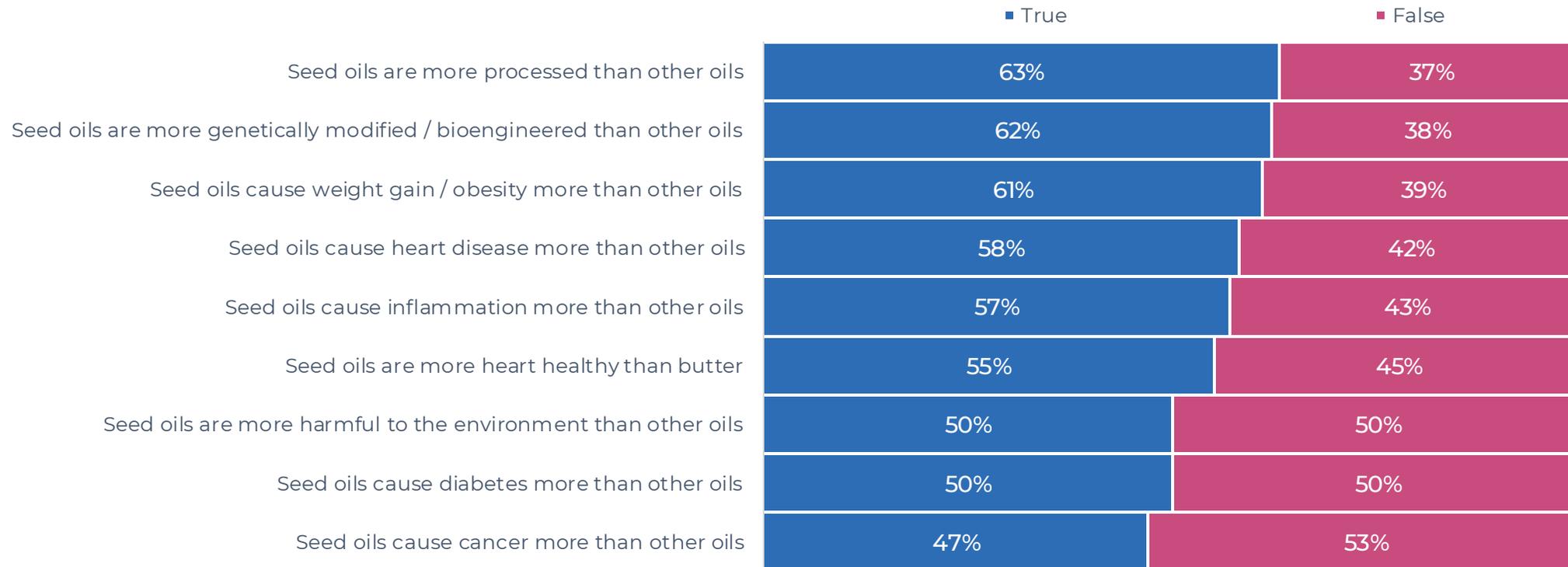
More than 7 in 10 Americans do not actively avoid seed oils.

Alternatively, almost 3 in 10 (28%) say they avoid consuming seed oils.



Among those who avoid consuming seed oils, more than 6 in 10 believe seed oils are more processed, more genetically modified, and cause more weight gain than other oils.

A majority of seed oil avoiders also believe seed oils cause more heart disease (58%) and inflammation (57%) than other oils. Interestingly, 55% of seed oil avoiders believe seed oils are more heart healthy than butter.





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