Nutrient Density: Consumer Understanding, Perceptions and Behaviors

IFIC FOUNDATION NOVEMBER 2019

INTERNATIONAL
FOOD INFORMATION
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BACKGROUND

Survey Methodology

One thousand interviews were conducted among adults ages 18+ from September 26-27, 2019 and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

The Bayesian confidence level for 1,000 interviews is 3.5, which is roughly equivalent to a margin of error ±3.1 at the 95% confidence level.
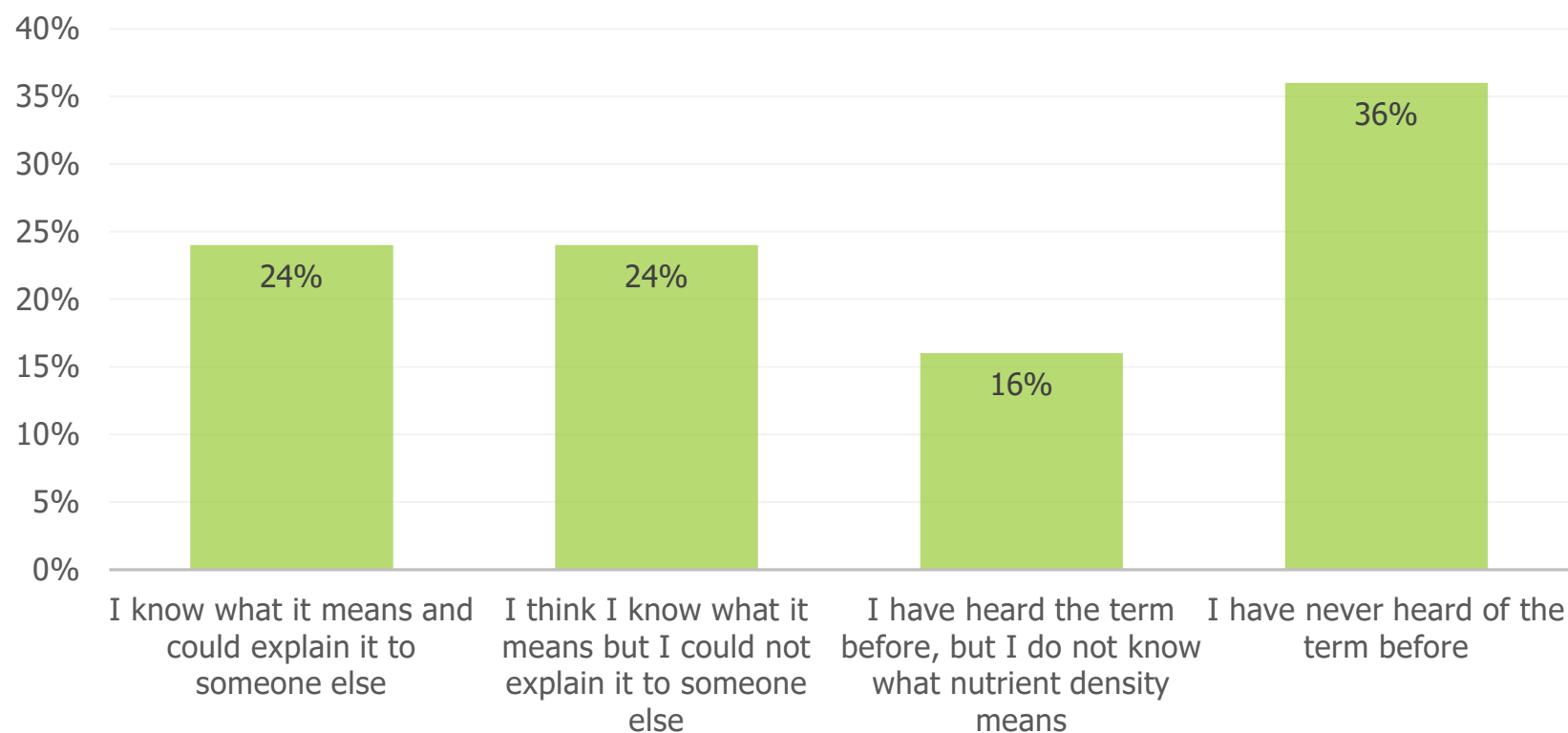
Statistical Significance

Something is statistically significant if the result cannot be attributed to random chance. Statistical significance in this presentation should be compared within each demographic (e.g. age, race, gender, etc.).

For example, if the responses from female respondents is significant, it is in relation to male respondents and not necessarily other demographic groups.
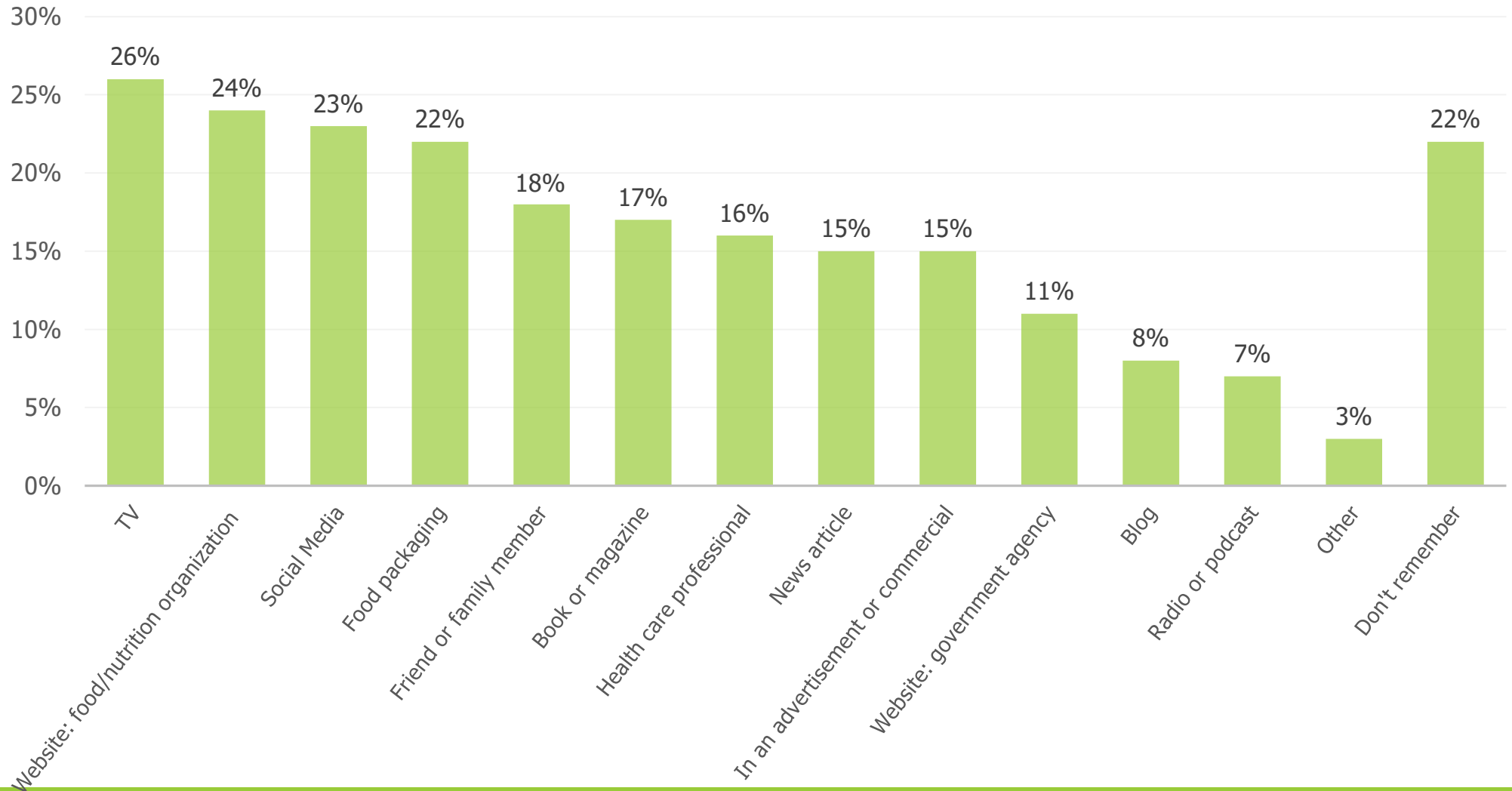
Nutrient Density: Consumer Understanding, Perceptions and Behaviors

NEARLY 2 OUT OF 3 PEOPLE HAVE HEARD OF NUTRIENT DENSITY

Q1. Starting out, how familiar are you with the concept of nutrient density of food?

Chart values:
- I know what it means and could explain it to someone else: 24%
- I think I know what it means but I could not explain it to someone else: 24%
- I have heard the term before, but I do not know what nutrient density means: 16%
- I have never heard of the term before: 36%

# PEOPLE GET INFORMATION ABOUT NUTRIENT DENSITY FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES

Q2*. Where have you heard or seen the terms "nutrient density" or "nutrient-dense"? Please select all that apply.

*Asked only to respondents stating that they know about/had heard of nutrient density in Q1

Source	%
TV	26%
Website: food/nutrition organization	24%
Social Media	23%
Food packaging	22%
Friend or family member	18%
Book or magazine	17%
Health care professional	16%
News article	15%
In an advertisement or commercial	15%
Website: government agency	11%
Blog	8%
Radio or podcast	7%
Other	3%
Don't remember	22%

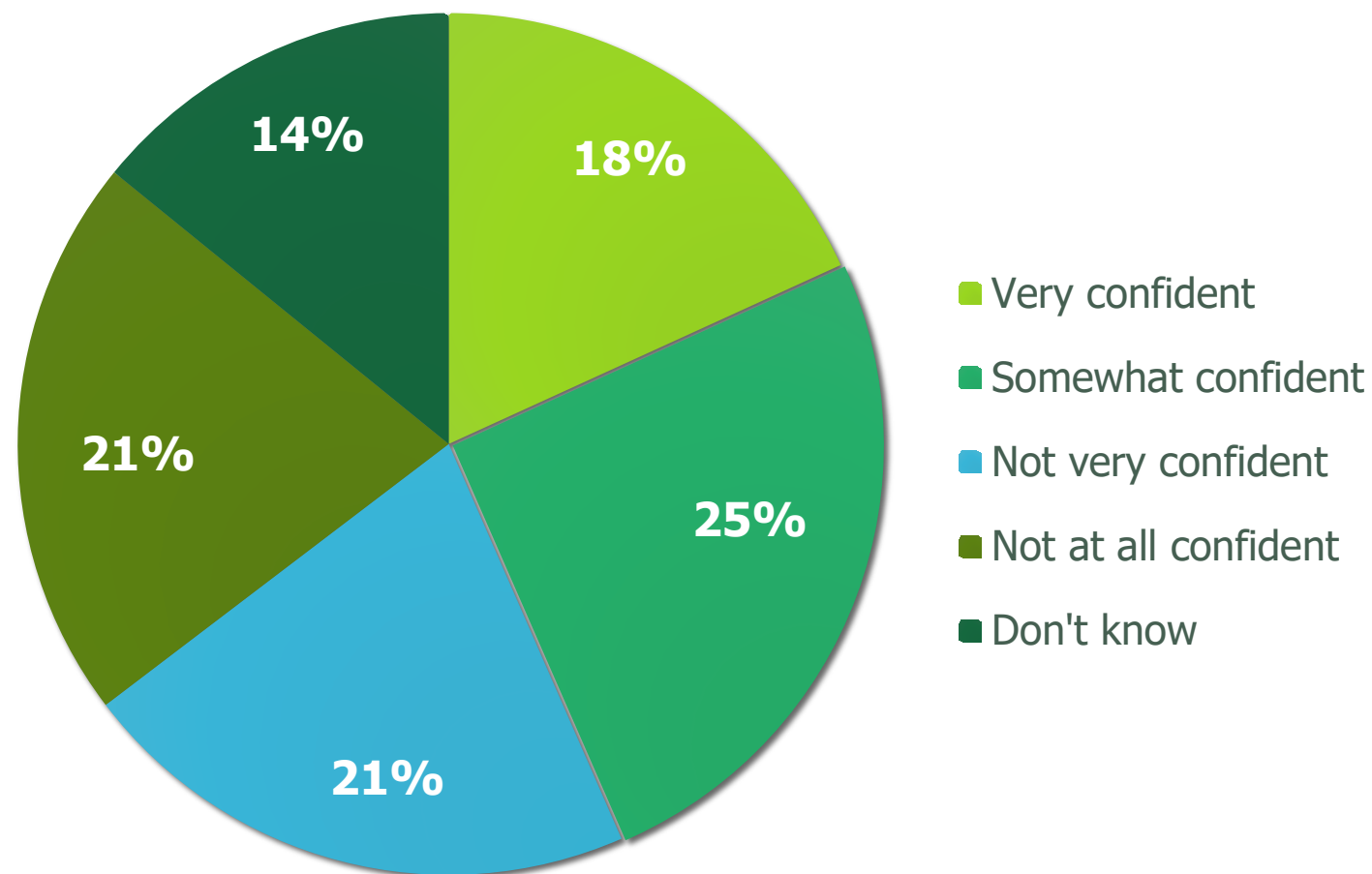# TASTE AND PRICE ARE PRIMARY FACTORS DRIVING FOOD PURCHASING; NUTRIENT DENSITY RANKS LOWER

Q3. Please rank the following based on how much of an impact they have on your decision to buy specific foods.

% ranked 1 or 2
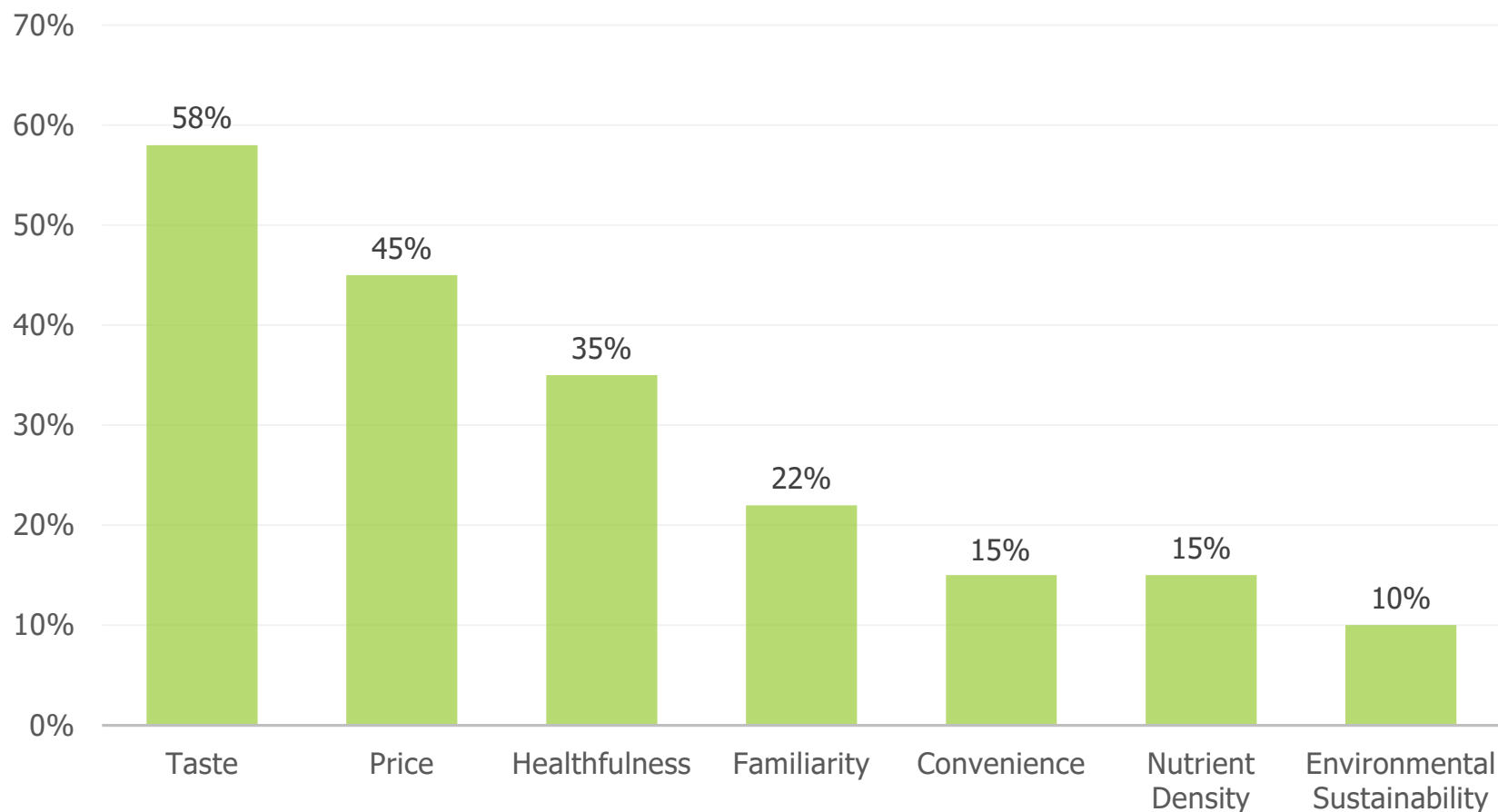
CONSUMERS ARE SPLIT ON THEIR CONFIDENCE IN IDENTIFYING NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

Q4. How confident do you feel in your ability to identify nutrient-dense foods?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not very confident
- Not at all confident
- Don't know

18%
25%
21%
21%
14%

AFTER QUESTION 4, THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION OF "NUTRIENT-DENSE" WAS PROVIDED TO SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

The term "nutrient-dense" indicates that there are more beneficial nutrients in a food (e.g., vitamins, minerals, lean protein, healthy fats, complex carbohydrates) compared to nutrients to limit (e.g., saturated fat, sodium, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates). Examples of nutrient-dense foods include packaged or unpackaged versions of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free milk products, seafood, lean meats, eggs, peas, beans and nuts that have been prepared with little or no added fats, sodium, sugars or refined carbohydrates.

NUTRIENT DENSITY IS MOST TOP-OF-MIND AT BREAKFAST; LESS SO FOR SNACKS AND DESSERTS

Q5: Rank the following meal/eating occasions based on your likelihood to seek out nutrient-dense foods. Please use a 1 to identify the meal where you are most likely to seek out nutrient-dense foods, and a 5 to identify the meal where you are least likely to seek out nutrient-dense foods. Please rank all 5 meals/eating occasions.*

% ranked 1 or 2
*Question abridged
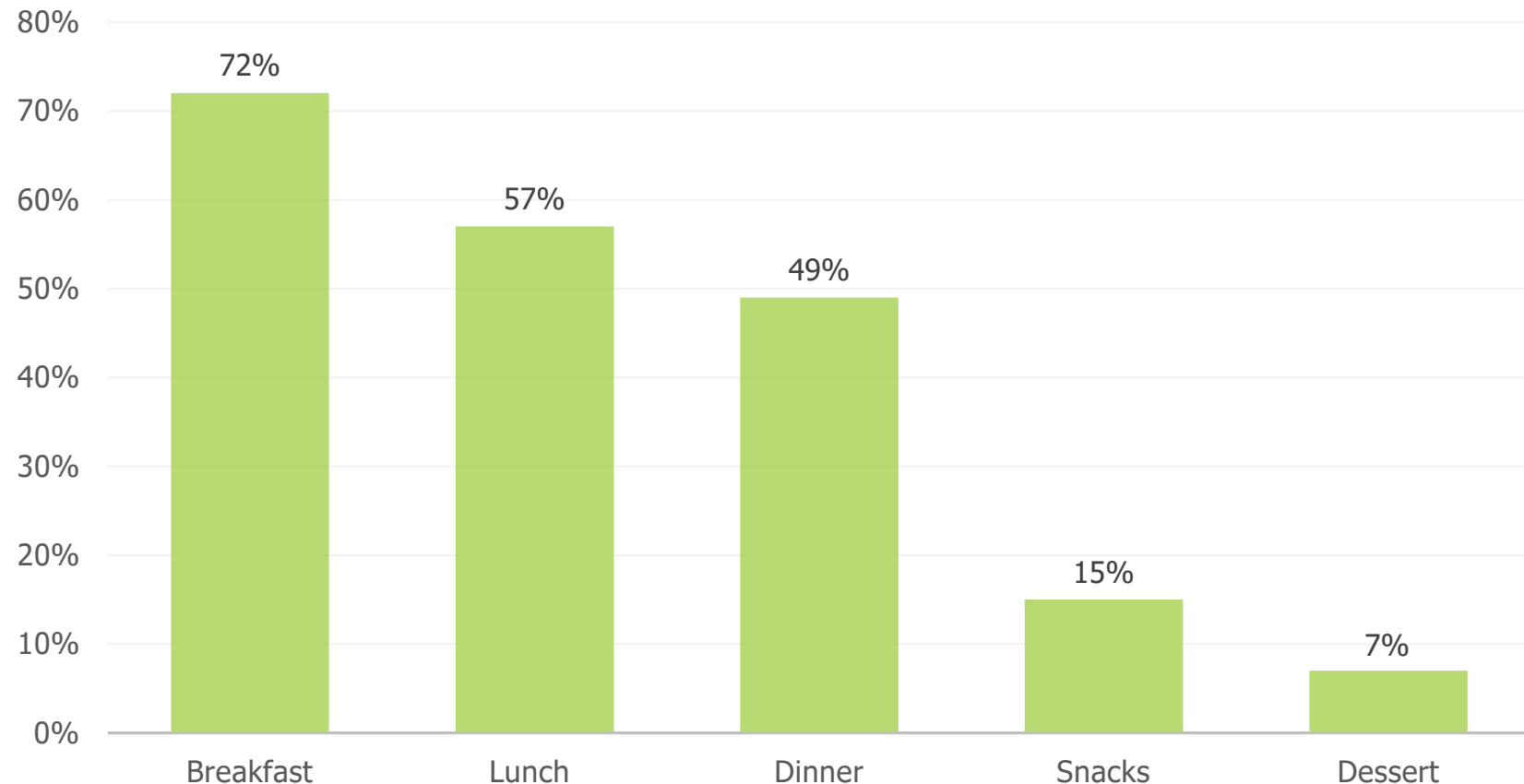
WHEN SEEKING NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS, PEOPLE LOOK TO BENEFICIAL NUTRIENTS MORE THAN NUTRIENTS TO LIMIT

Q6. Thinking about the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods, which of the following do you feel would best help identify nutrient-dense foods? Please select up to 3 answers.

Category	Percentage
Amounts of vitamins and minerals	45%
Amount of protein	44%
Amount of fiber	31%
Amount of sugar added	25%
Number of calories	21%
Amount of total fat	20%
Amount of saturated fat	16%
Amount of sodium	14%
Not sure	18%
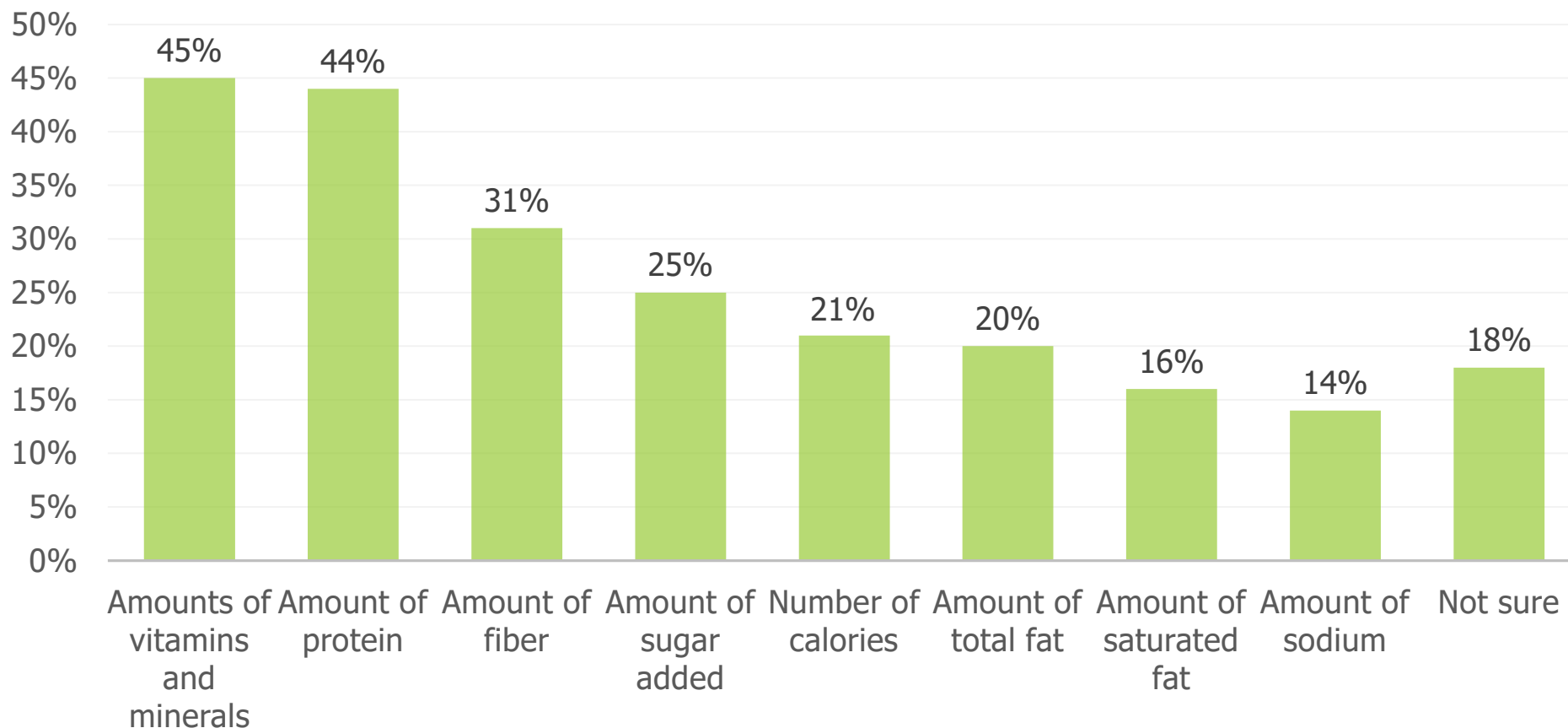
PEOPLE LOOK AT THE INGREDIENTS LIST, CLAIMS AND LABELS ON FOOD PACKAGING FOR INFO ON NUTRIENT DENSITY

Q7. In addition to what's listed on the Nutrition Facts label, what are some other factors that could help you identify nutrient-dense foods? Please select up to 3 answers.

Bar chart values:
- The ingredients list: 54%
- Nutrient content or health claims on the package: 43%
- Labels on food packaging: 38%
- Statements about the absence of certain ingredients: 24%
- Section of the grocery store: 15%
- Organic certification: 15%
- The product or brand name: 12%
- Not sure: 15%
- None of these: 4%
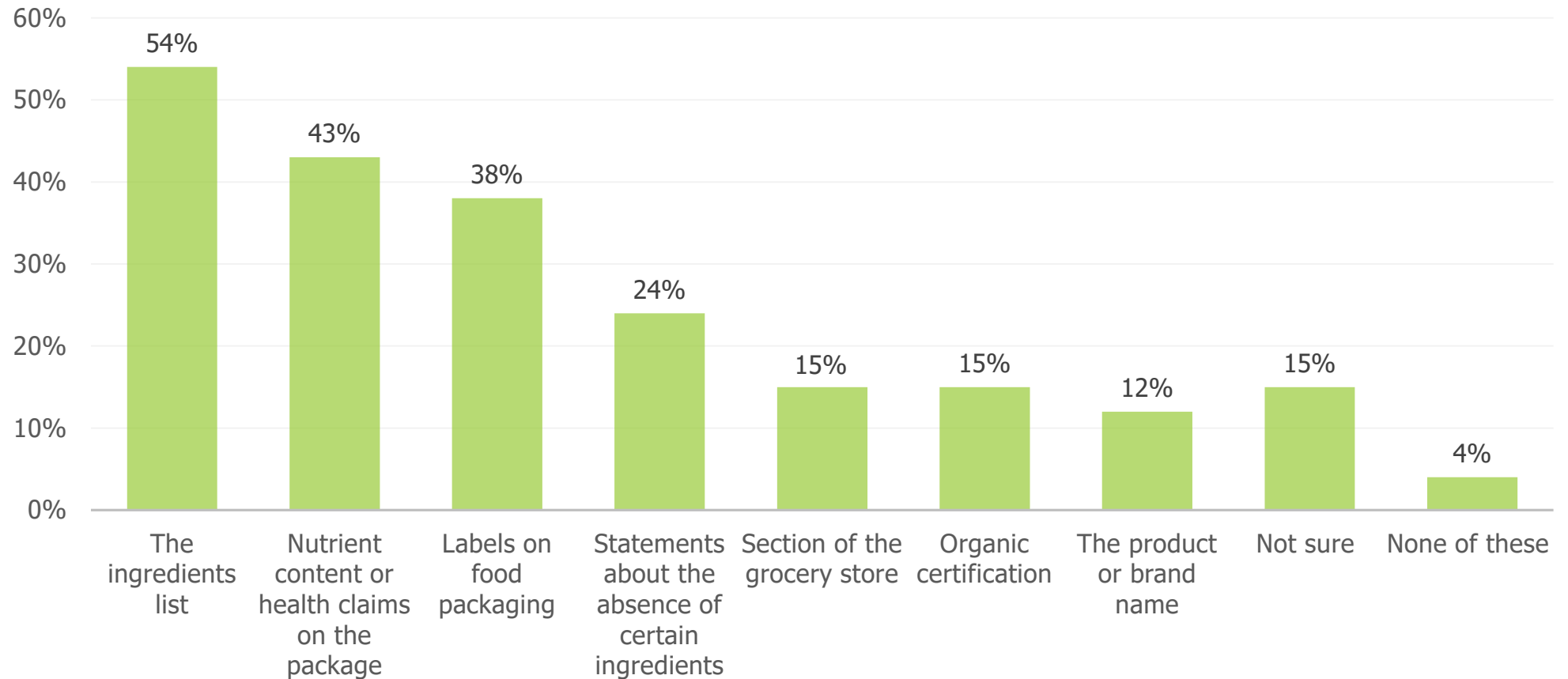
BUDGET-FRIENDLINESS AND EASE OF IDENTIFICATION ARE TOP CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCREASING NUTRIENT-DENSE FOOD INTAKE

Q8. Which of the following would help you personally eat more nutrient-dense foods? Please select up to 2 answers.

Category	Percentage
If they were more budget-friendly	33%
If it was easier to identify them	29%
If they tasted better	26%
If I knew more about nutrient density	23%
If my family members liked them	13%
If they were more available where I shop	12%
I already eat a lot of nutrient-dense foods	9%
I'm not interested in purchasing nutrient-dense foods	14%
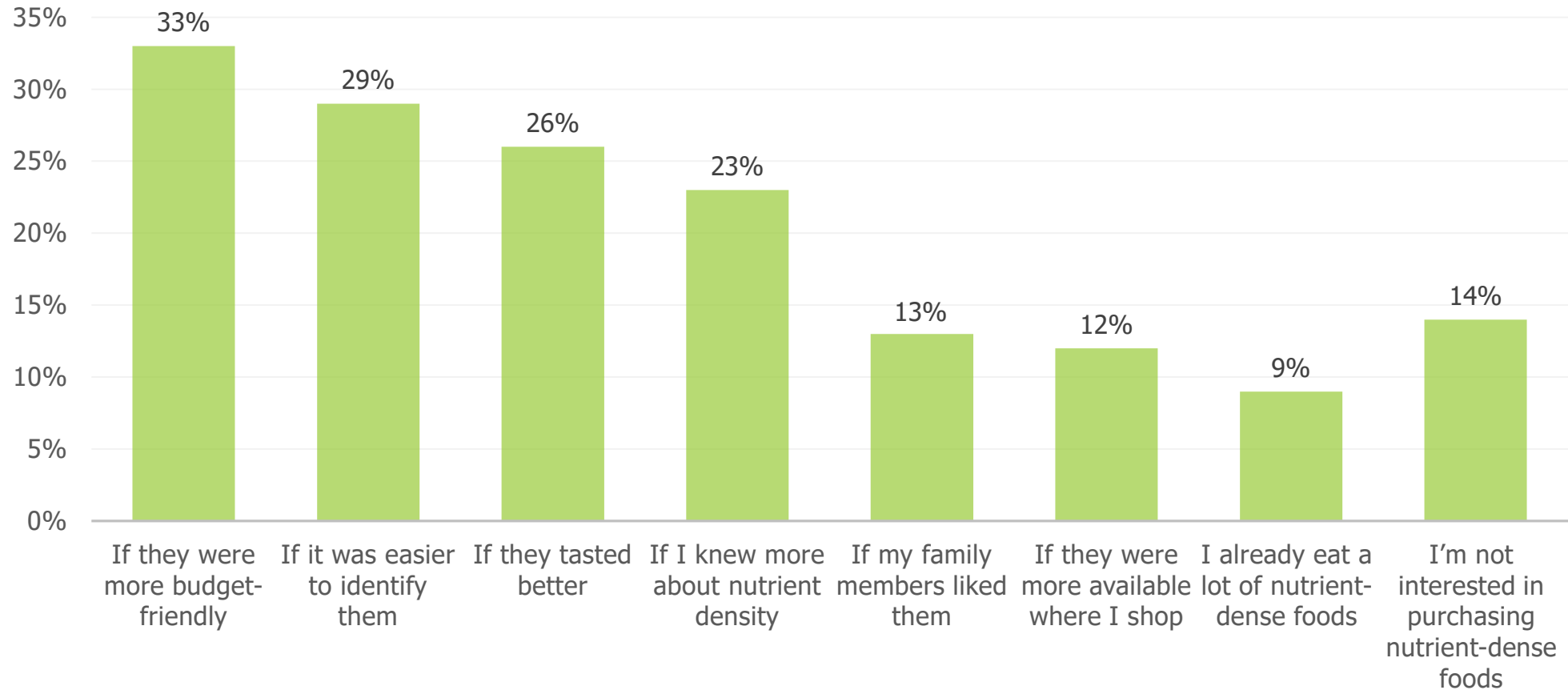
PERCEPTIONS OF NUTRIENT DENSITY ARE INFLUENCED BY A FOOD'S FORM

Q9. Based on what you know, please identify which types of the following apple products you believe are nutrient-dense. Please select all that apply.

Bar chart:
- Whole or sliced fresh apple: 62%
- 100% apple juice: 41%
- Unsweetened dried apple slices: 36%
- Unsweetened apple sauce: 32%
- 100% apple juice made from concentrate: 22%
- Apple butter: 17%
- Apple-flavored fruit snacks: 11%
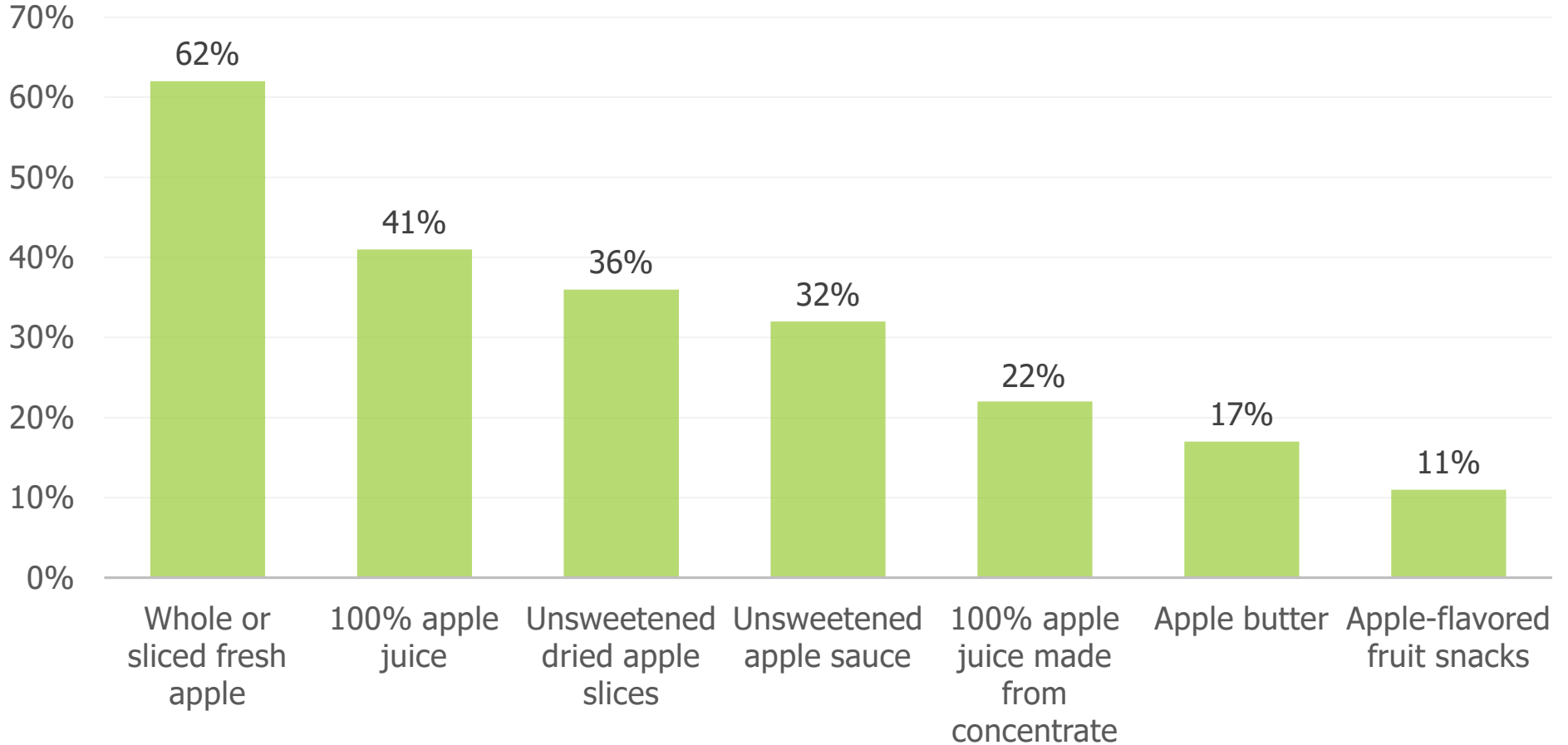
OVER ONE-THIRD OF CONSUMERS BELIEVE FOODS WITH ADDED VITAMINS AND MINERALS CAN BE NUTRIENT-DENSE.

Q10. Based on what you know, do you believe that foods with added vitamins and minerals can be nutrient-dense?

- Yes, foods with added vitamins and minerals can be nutrient-dense.
- Sometimes, it depends on the food.
- No, nutrient density should only be based on what occurs naturally in a food.
- Not sure

37%
30%
9%
25%
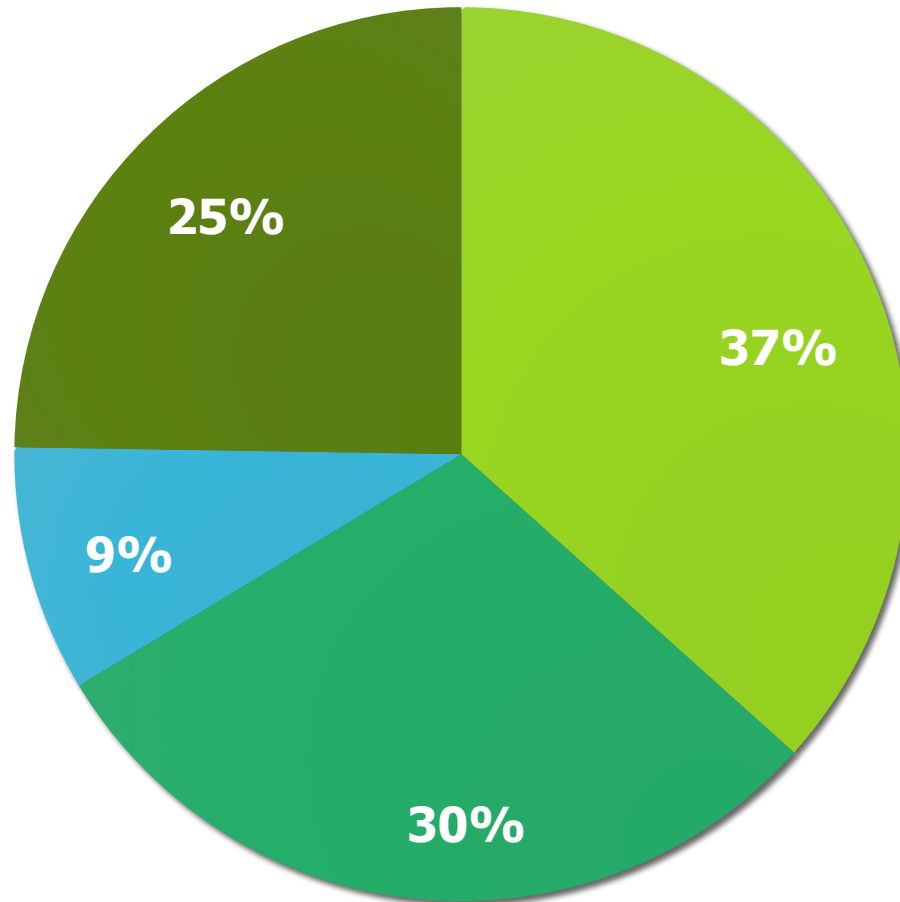
APPENDICES

BREAKOUT: FAMILIARITY WITH NUTRIENT DENSITY

Q1. Starting out, how familiar are you with the concept of nutrient density of food?

	I know what it means and could explain it to someone else	I think I know what it means but I could not explain it to someone else	I have heard the term before, but I do not know what nutrient density means	I have never heard of the term before
Total	24%	24%	16%	36%
Men	28%↑	20%↓	14%	39%
Women	20%↓	27%↑	19%	34%
White	20%↓	24%	16%	39%↑
African American	19%	26%	20%	34%
Hispanic/Latinx	40%↑	18%	17%	25%↓
Northeast	23%	20%	18%	39%
Midwest	19%	25%	19%	36%
South	22%	25%	16%	37%
West	31%↑	24%	12%	33%
Under 45	34%↑	26%	14%	26%↓
45–64	17%↓	23%	20%	40%
65 and over	10%↓	20%	15%	55%↑
Non-college	18%↓	25%	16%	41%↑
College	33%↑	23%	16%	28%↓

BREAKOUT: HEARD OR SEEN "NUTRIENT DENSITY"

	Food packaging	News article	Book or magazine	Blog	Website for a food/nutrition organization	Website for a government agency	In an advertisement or commercial
Total	22%	15%	17%	8%	24%	11%	15%
Men	25%	17%	18%	14%↑	25%	15%	18%
Women	20%	12%	15%	3%↓	23%	8%	12%
White	21%	13%	15%	6%	22%	11%	15%
African American	18%	16%	14%	10%	30%	12%	9%
Hispanic/Latinx	21%	18%	19%	15%	26%	15%	16%
Northeast	23%	9%	18%	7%	23%	15%	15%
Midwest	19%	12%	12%	5%	17%	6%	14%
South	22%	18%	19%	7%	22%	13%	10%
West	26%	19%	19%	13%↑	32%↑	12%	19%
Under 45	26%	18%	18%	13%↑	32%↑	15%↑	15%
45–64	19%	12%	17%	3%↓	16%↓	8%	15%
65 and over	17%	8%	8%	1%	7%↓	3%	12%
Non-college	23%	13%	16%	7%	25%	9%	13%
College	21%	17%	18%	9%	22%	14%	17%

BREAKOUT: HEARD OR SEEN "NUTRIENT DENSITY"

Q2. And where have you heard or seen the terms "nutrient density" or "nutrient-dense"? Please select all that apply.

	TV	Radio or podcast	Social media	Friend or family member	Health care professional	Other	Don't remember
Total	26%	7%	23%	18%	16%	3%	22%
Men	33%↑	11%↑	29%↑	21%	22%↑	4%	19%
Women	20%↓	3%↓	17%↓	15%	10%↓	2%	24%
White	25%	7%	20%	17%	14%	2%	27%↑
African American	25%	4%	19%	16%	16%	10%↑	16%
Hispanic/Latinx	29%	8%	39%↑	23%	23%	1%	14%
Northeast	25%	3%	22%	10%	14%	2%	22%
Midwest	23%	8%	16%	19%	12%	2%	29%
South	25%	6%	23%	18%	13%	4%	23%
West	30%	10%	29%	22%	22%	4%	13%↓
Under 45	28%	10%↑	33%↑	24%↑	24%↑	5%	13%↓
45–64	26%	4%	13%↓	11%	6%↓	1%	26%
65 and over	17%	2%	4%↓	9%	4%	0%	49%↑
Non-college	27%	7%	22%	18%	16%	4%	22%
College	25%	8%	23%	18%	14%	2%	21%

BREAKOUT: IMPACTS ON BUYING FOOD

Q3. Please rank the following based on how much of an impact they have on your decision to buy specific foods.

% ranked 1 or 2

	Taste	Price	Healthfulness	Convenience	Nutrient density	Familiarity	Environmental Sustainability
Total	58%	45%	35%	15%	15%	22%	10%
Men	58%	44%	30%	17%	15%	24%	11%
Women	57%	46%	39%	13%	15%	20%	10%
White	60%	46%	35%	14%	12%	23%	10%
African American	56%	35%	40%	16%	27%	16%	10%
Hispanic/Latinx	53%	51%	26%	19%	15%	25%	10%
Northeast	57%	49%	33%	17%	14%	22%	9%
Midwest	63%	45%	34%	15%	12%	21%	10%
South	58%	46%	34%	15%	16%	20%	11%
West	53%	40%	38%	13%	19%	25%	12%
Under 45	49%↓	45%	32%	18%	19%	21%	16%↑
45–64	65%	46%	37%	12%	13%	20%	7%
65 and over	65%	43%	37%	12%	10%	29%	3%
Non-college	60%	49%	32%	14%	14%	22%	10%
College	55%	39%	38%	17%	17%	23%	11%

BREAKOUT: ABILITY TO IDENTIFY NUTRIENT-DENSE FOOD

Q4. And how confident do you feel in your ability to identify nutrient-dense foods?

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know
Total	18%	25%	21%	21%	14%
Men	23%↑	22%	18%	22%	14%
Women	14%↓	28%	23%	21%	15%
White	15%↓	24%	20%	25%↑	15%
African American	18%	29%	18%	17%	19%
Hispanic/Latinx	31%↑	24%	25%	14%	6%
Northeast	17%	23%	17%	24%	19%
Midwest	11%↓	25%	24%	26%	14%
South	19%	29%	21%	19%	13%
West	26%↑	25%	20%	16%	12%
Under 45	26%↑	30%↑	20%	14%↓	10%↓
45–64	13%↓	23%	22%	21%	20%↑
65 and over	8%↓	17%↓	18%	42%↑	15%
Non-college	13%↓	24%	22%	23%	18%↑
College	26%↑	27%	18%	18%	10%↓

BREAKOUT: SEEKING NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS BY MEAL

Q5. Rank the following meal/eating occasions based on your likelihood to seek out nutrient-dense foods. Please use a 1 to identify the meal where you are most likely to seek out nutrient-dense foods, and a 5 to identify the meal where you are least likely to seek out nutrient-dense foods. Please rank all 5 meals/eating occasions.

% ranked 1 or 2

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks	Dessert
Total	72%	57%	49%	15%	7%
Men	74%	59%	47%	13%	7%
Women	70%	54%	52%	17%	7%
White	71%	55%	52%	16%	7%
African American	80%	54%	43%	15%	7%
Hispanic/Latinx	78%	62%	35%	17%	8%
Northeast	76%	54%	52%	12%	6%
Midwest	67%	51%	56%	18%	9%
South	73%	56%	46%	18%	7%
West	72%	64%	43%	14%	6%
Under 45	75%	61%	41%↓	15%	7%
45–64	68%	53%	56%	16%	6%
65 and over	70%	51%	59%	14%	7%
Non-college	73%	56%	48%	16%	8%
College	70%	58%	52%	15%	6%

BREAKOUT: FOOD LABELS AND IDENTIFICATION OF NUTRINT-DENSE FOODS

Q6. Thinking about the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods, which of the following do you feel would best help identify nutrient-dense foods? Please select up to 3 answers.

	Amount of sugar added	Amount of sodium	Amount of saturated fat	Amount of total fat	Number of calories	Amount of fiber	Amount of protein	Amounts of vitamins and minerals	Not sure
Total	25%	14%	16%	20%	21%	31%	44%	45%	18%
Men	26%	17%	15%	21%	25%	29%	40%	40%	19%
Women	23%	11%	16%	20%	18%	34%	48%	50%	17%
White	25%	14%	16%	20%	18%	35%	47%	49%	18%
African American	23%	17%	15%	22%	28%	22%	38%	38%	23%
Hispanic/Latinx	25%	11%	15%	22%	29%	25%	35%	37%	16%
Northeast	22%	13%	12%	19%	18%	32%	48%	49%	20%
Midwest	25%	13%	16%	21%	18%	33%	41%	46%	20%
South	28%	18%	18%	20%	24%	32%	45%	45%	15%
West	25%	11%	16%	21%	25%	29%	43%	43%	16%
Under 45	25%	15%	15%	21%	27%	30%	40%	42%	15%
45–64	21%	9%	16%	17%	19%	31%	48%	48%	23%
65 and over	32%	20%	17%	26%	12%	35%	46%	49%	15%
Non-college	25%	13%	16%	22%	21%	29%	42%	43%	21%
College	25%	14%	15%	18%	22%	35%	47%	48%	14%

BREAKOUT: OTHER FACTORS TO HELP IDENTIFY NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

Q7. In addition to what's listed on the Nutrition Facts label, what are some other factors that could help identify nutrient-dense foods? Please select up to 3 answers.

	Section of the grocery store	The ingredients list	Nutrient content or health claims on the package	Statements about the absence of certain ingredients	The product or brand name	Organic certification	Labels on food packaging	None of these	Not sure
Total	15%	54%	43%	24%	12%	15%	38%	4%	15%
Men	16%	47%↓	38%↓	24%	15%	19%	35%	5%	16%
Women	15%	60%↑	48%↑	24%	9%	13%	41%	2%	15%
White	15%	56%	42%	24%	10%	16%	39%	4%	16%
African American	21%	45%	40%	22%	16%	8%	40%	4%	20%
Hispanic/Latinx	16%	47%	46%	24%	16%	18%	37%	3%	12%
Northeast	16%	55%	38%	27%	12%	11%	32%	2%	18%
Midwest	15%	55%	44%	23%	11%	13%	42%	4%	16%
South	15%	57%	47%	21%	15%	19%	39%	5%	14%
West	15%	48%	44%	25%	10%	19%	39%	4%	14%
Under 45	21%↑	49%	42%	22%	15%↑	21%↑	42%	4%	11%↓
45–64	11%	54%	43%	20%	9%	13%	34%	5%	21%↑
65 and over	7%↓	64%↑	46%	36%↑	9%	6%↓	38%	2%	16%
Non-college	12%	53%	44%	22%	10%	15%	42%↑	4%	18%
College	19%	55%	41%	27%	15%	16%	33%↓	3%	12%

BREAKOUT: EATING MORE NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

Q8. Which of the following would help you personally eat more nutrient-dense foods? Please select up to 2 answers.

	If I knew more about nutrient density	If they tasted better	If it was easier to identify them	If they were more budget-friendly	If they were more available where I shop	If my family members liked them	I already eat a lot of nutrient-dense foods	I'm not interested in purchasing/eating nutrient-dense
Total	23%	26%	29%	33%	12%	13%	9%	14%
Men	22%	29%	28%	29%	14%	12%	8%	16%
Women	23%	23%	29%	36%	10%	14%	11%	12%
White	23%	24%	29%	33%	12%	13%	10%	14%
African American	23%	26%	31%	29%	15%	7%	8%	18%
Hispanic/Latinx	25%	28%	27%	32%	15%	19%	4%	9%
Northeast	26%	19%	28%	25%	7%	18%	14%	15%
Midwest	21%	25%	30%	35%	15%	15%	6%	14%
South	23%	28%	32%	37%	11%	11%	7%	13%
West	23%	31%	25%	33%	15%	8%	11%	12%
Under 45	24%	29%↓	28%	34%	15%	17%	6%↓	11%
45–64	20%	24%	26%	31%	10%	10%	12%	19%↑
65 and over	26%	22%	37%	31%	7%	9%	15%	12%
Non-college	23%	25%	27%	31%	12%	13%	8%	17%↑
College	22%	27%	31%	34%	13%	14%	11%	9%↓

BREAKOUT: APPLE PRODUCTS AND NUTRIENT DENSITY

Q9. Based on what you know, please identify which types of the following apple products you believe are nutrient-dense. Please select all that apply.

	Whole or sliced fresh apple	Unsweetened apple sauce	Unsweetened dried apple slices	Apple butter	Apple-flavored fruit snacks	100% apple juice	100% apple juice made from concentrate
Total	62%	32%	36%	17%	11%	41%	22%
Men	59%	27%↓	33%	20%	14%	43%	25%
Women	65%	36%↑	38%	14%	9%	40%	19%
White	67%↑	34%	38%	17%	10%	40%	21%
African American	55%	25%	31%	21%	16%	46%	29%
Hispanic/Latinx	49%↓	32%	33%	18%	13%	41%	25%
Northeast	60%	31%	35%	19%	8%	44%	17%
Midwest	67%	32%	39%	11%	9%	43%	27%
South	62%	38%	37%	17%	14%	39%	25%
West	59%	27%	33%	22%	14%	39%	19%
Under 45	55%↓	31%	32%	21%↑	13%	43%	25%
45–64	63%	32%	36%	16%	13%	42%	23%
65 and over	81%↑	36%	46%↑	7%↓	2%↓	36%	10%↓
Non-college	60%	33%	35%	17%	12%	41%	24%
College	65%	31%	37%	16%	10%	42%	19%

BREAKOUT: VITAMINS, MINERALS, AND NUTRIENT DENSITY

Q10. Based on what you know, do you believe that foods with added vitamins and minerals can be nutrient-dense?

	Yes, foods with added vitamins and minerals can be nutrient-dense.	Sometimes, it depends on the food.	No, nutrient density should only be based on what occurs naturally in a food.	Not sure
Total	37%	30%	9%	25%
Men	41%	28%	8%	23%
Women	33%	31%	10%	27%
White	34%	30%	10%	26%
African American	37%	27%	3%	34%
Hispanic/Latinx	43%	33%	7%	17%
Northeast	36%	29%	9%	25%
Midwest	30%	29%	10%	31%
South	38%	31%	8%	23%
West	42%	29%	8%	21%
Under 45	44%↑	27%	9%	20%↓
45–64	31%	30%	7%	32%↑
65 and over	27%	37%	11%	26%
Non-college	35%	27%	10%	28%
College	39%	32%	7%	21%

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