IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

20



A Focus On
Sugars & Sweeteners

26

An annual survey of American consumers to understand perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding food and food-purchasing decisions. 2026 marks the 21st consecutive year that the International Food Information Council (IFIC) has commissioned the *IFIC Food & Health Survey*.

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IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY OVERVIEW

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

For more than two decades, the International Food Information Council's Food & Health Survey has tracked how Americans think about food, nutrition, health, and the role these factors play in food decisions. Now in its 21st consecutive year, the *2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey* continues that legacy while expanding its reach, with a Canadian sample (n=1006) included for the first time to enable cross-border comparisons between U.S. and Canada consumers.

Key findings from this year's online survey of **3,005 Americans** focus on:

- Familiarity with U.S. Dietary Guidelines and the new Food Pyramid
- "Ultraprocessed foods," including familiarity with the term and criteria used to identify them
- Criteria used to define "healthy" food
- Personal eating patterns, diet scores, and the ease of maintaining dietary habits
- Trust in food information sources, including exposure, use, and impact of social media and artificial intelligence (AI)
- Approaches to sugar consumption and opinions of low- and no-calorie sweeteners
- Food and beverage purchase-drivers, including by income
- Food cost and affordability
- Prescription weight-loss medications, including usage, personal experiences, and perceptions of safety and efficacy
- Confidence in the safety of the food supply, including the top food safety issues and perceived safety of imported and domestic foods
- Safe food-handling practices
- Awareness of state-level food regulation efforts
- Beliefs about agriculture, climate change, environmental sustainability, food production, food technologies, and pesticides

In this report, findings are presented for all U.S. survey respondents (n=3005).

Note: Significant changes in trend vs. 2025 (and/or in some cases, prior years) are indicated using up-and-down arrows and/or call-out boxes.
Note: Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding.

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IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY OVERVIEW

- An online survey of **3,005 Americans**.
- The survey was fielded from **March 22 – April 8, 2026**.
- On average, the survey took **~20 minutes** to complete.
- The survey was conducted via **Dynata's consumer panel**.



SUGGESTED CITATION:
International Food Information Council. 2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Sugars & Sweeteners. November 2026. https://ific.org/research/2026-ific-food-health-survey-a-focus-on-sugars-sweeteners/

WEIGHTING
The results were weighted to ensure that they are reflective of the American population ages 18 to 80 years, as seen in the 2025 Current Population Survey. Specifically, results were weighted by age, education, gender, race/ethnicity, and region.

RESEARCH PARTNER
IFIC commissions Greenwald Research to conduct its annual *Food & Health Survey*.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Focus On Sugars & Sweeteners

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

A FOCUS ON SUGARS & SWEETENERS

Six in ten Americans are concerned about the amount of sugar they consume, while more than half are concerned about the type of sugar.

The *IFIC Food & Health Survey* has measured Americans' concern about the amount and type of sugar they consume in four of its 21 annual editions: the inaugural survey in 2006, then again in 2015, 2025, and 2026.

In 2026, six in ten Americans (60%) say they are concerned about the amount of sugar they consume, down significantly from 63% in 2025. Concern about sugar type remains similar to 2025 (55% vs. 56%).

Concern about both amount and type of sugar consumed peaked in 2015 (71% and 64%, respectively), significantly higher than in the other three years measured. In 2026, concern is close to 2006 levels for both amount (60% vs. 62%) and type (55% vs. 52%).

The share of Americans trying to avoid sugars entirely has risen for a second consecutive year, reaching a ten-year high.

The *IFIC Food & Health Survey* has tracked Americans' efforts to limit or avoid sugars in their diet for 10 consecutive years, beginning in 2017.

In 2026, 76% of Americans say they are trying to limit sugars or avoid them entirely, similar to 75% in 2025. Seventeen percent say they are trying to avoid sugars entirely, up significantly from 14% in 2025, while 59% are trying to limit sugars (vs. 61% in 2025).

The share trying to avoid sugars entirely (17%) reaches its highest level in the decade-long trend, exceeding the 11%–14% range recorded from 2017 through 2025. This marks the first instance of two consecutive significant annual increases. The share trying to limit sugars (59%) is significantly lower than in 2017–2019 (65%–67%) and 2024 (66%). Despite these shifts in consumption approach, the overall share trying to limit or avoid sugars has remained between 72% and 80% since 2017.

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A FOCUS ON SUGARS & SWEETENERS

Americans limiting or avoiding sugars are more likely to target added sugars than naturally occurring sugars.

In each of its four annual editions since 2023, the *IFIC Food & Health Survey* has asked Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars in their diet which types they target.

In 2026, among the 76% of Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars, 62% target added sugars, 23% target all types, and 15% target naturally occurring sugars. Results are similar to 2025 (63%, 24%, and 13%, respectively).

Compared with 2023, the share targeting all types of sugars is significantly lower in 2026 (23% vs. 27%). The shares targeting added sugars (62% vs. 59%) and naturally occurring sugars (15% vs. 14%) are similar to 2023.

Drinking water instead of caloric beverages is the most common action taken among Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars in their diet.

The *2017 IFIC Food & Health Survey* first asked Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars what actions they take. This follow-up question was repeated annually through 2021 and again in 2025 and 2026.

In 2026, among the 76% of Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars, drinking water instead of caloric beverages is the most common action taken (51%), followed by limiting certain foods and beverages (38%). Compared with 2025, significantly fewer eliminate certain foods and beverages (32% vs. 36%) and/or use the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods lower in total sugars (25% vs. 28%).

Eliminating certain foods and beverages shows the largest decline from the early years of the trend: 32% in 2026 vs. 44%–49% in 2017–2019. The current share is similar to 2020 (32%) and 2021 (31%). Drinking water instead of caloric beverages is also less common than in 2017–2019 (51% vs. 60%–64%). The share reducing carbohydrate intake falls from 37% when first measured in 2019 to 27% in 2026, while the share no longer adding table sugar declines from 37% in 2017 to 31% in 2026.

In contrast, compared with 2020, more use the Nutrition Facts label to choose products lower in added sugars (28% vs. 23%) or choose “sugar-free” options when available (27% vs. 21%).

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A FOCUS ON SUGARS & SWEETENERS

Opinions of low- and no-calorie sweeteners are evenly split among positive, negative, and neutral.

The *IFIC Food & Health Survey* has measured Americans' opinions of low- and no-calorie sweeteners in four annual editions: 2017 and 2018, then again in 2025 and 2026.

In 2026, positive and negative opinions are equally common (32% each), while 31% are neutral. Compared with 2025, positive opinions are significantly more common (32% vs. 27%), while negative opinions are significantly less common (32% vs. 41%), including very negative opinions (15% vs. 22%). Neutral opinions remain similar (31% vs. 28%).

Across the four years measured, positive opinions increased from 20% in 2017 to 23% in 2018, 27% in 2025, and 32% in 2026. Negative opinions declined from 45% in both 2017 and 2018 to 41% in 2025 and 32% in 2026. Neutral opinions remain relatively steady over the same period (29% in 2017, 27% in 2018, 28% in 2025, and 31% in 2026).

One in three Americans say the U.S. government is responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in the U.S.

The *IFIC Food & Health Survey* has asked Americans who they believe is responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in U.S. foods and beverages for six consecutive years, beginning in 2021.

In 2026, the U.S. government is the most commonly identified authority (32%), down significantly from 35% in 2025. Companies that manufacture sweeteners rank next (18%), up significantly from 16% in 2025, followed by companies that sell products containing them (13%). Nine percent identify independent scientists, 9% say no U.S. authority is responsible, and 19% are not sure.

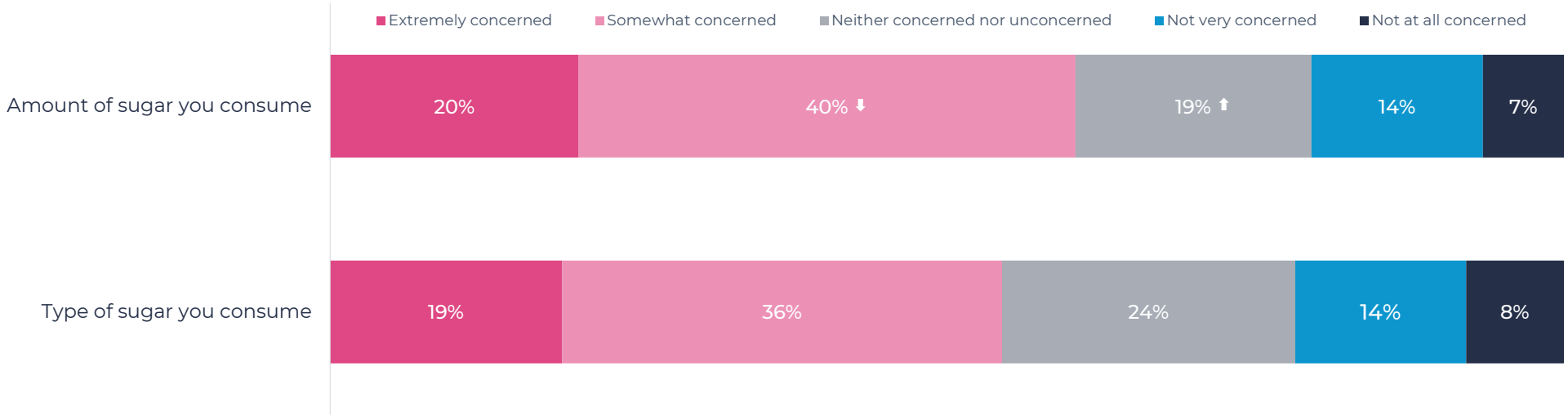
Across the six-year trend (2021–2026), the U.S. government remains the most commonly identified authority (29%–35%). Uncertainty is significantly lower than in 2021 (19% vs. 25%) and similar to 2025 (18%), with no significant change seen between consecutive years. The share identifying independent scientists is significantly higher than in 2021 (9% vs. 7%) and similar to 2025 (7%).

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Six in ten Americans are concerned about the amount of sugar they consume, while more than half are concerned about the type of sugar.

Concern about the amount and type of sugar consumed peaked in 2015 (71% and 64%, respectively). In 2026, concern is near 2006 levels for both amount (60% vs. 62%) and type (55% vs. 52%). Compared with 2025, concern about the amount of sugar consumed is lower (60% vs. 63%), while concern about type remains similar (55% vs. 56%).

Concern With The Amount & Type Of Sugar Consumed



60% ⬇
Are concerned about the amount of sugar they consume
63% in 2025 ⬇
71% in 2015 ⬆
62% in 2006

55%
Are concerned about the type of sugar they consume
56% in 2025 ⬇
64% in 2015 ⬆
52% in 2006

Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

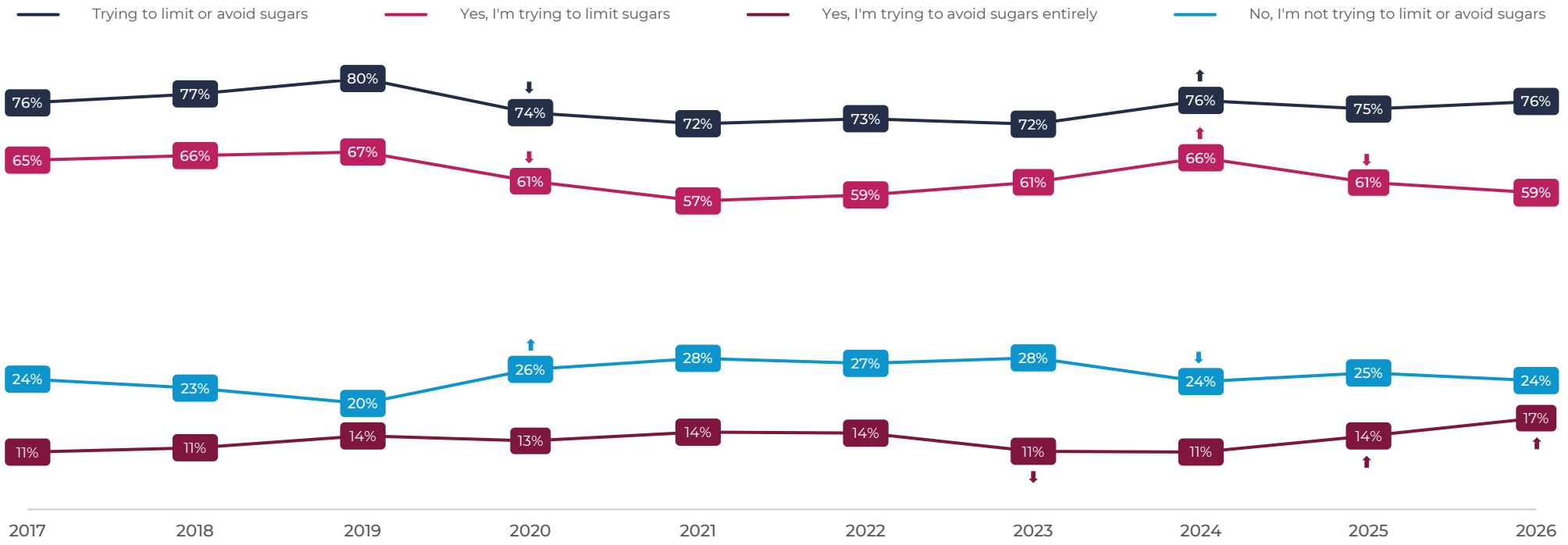
[TREND 2006/2015/2025-2026] *How concerned are you, if at all, with the...? (n=3005)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. the previous measurement.

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The share of Americans trying to avoid sugars entirely has risen for a second consecutive year, reaching a ten-year high.

In 2026, 17% say they are trying to avoid sugars entirely, up for a second consecutive year (11% in 2024, 14% in 2025). Overall, 76% are trying to limit or avoid sugars, consistent with the 72%–80% range recorded over the 10-year trend.

Approach To Consuming Sugars



Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

***[TREND 2017-2026]** Are you trying to limit or avoid sugars in your diet? (n=3005)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. the previous year.

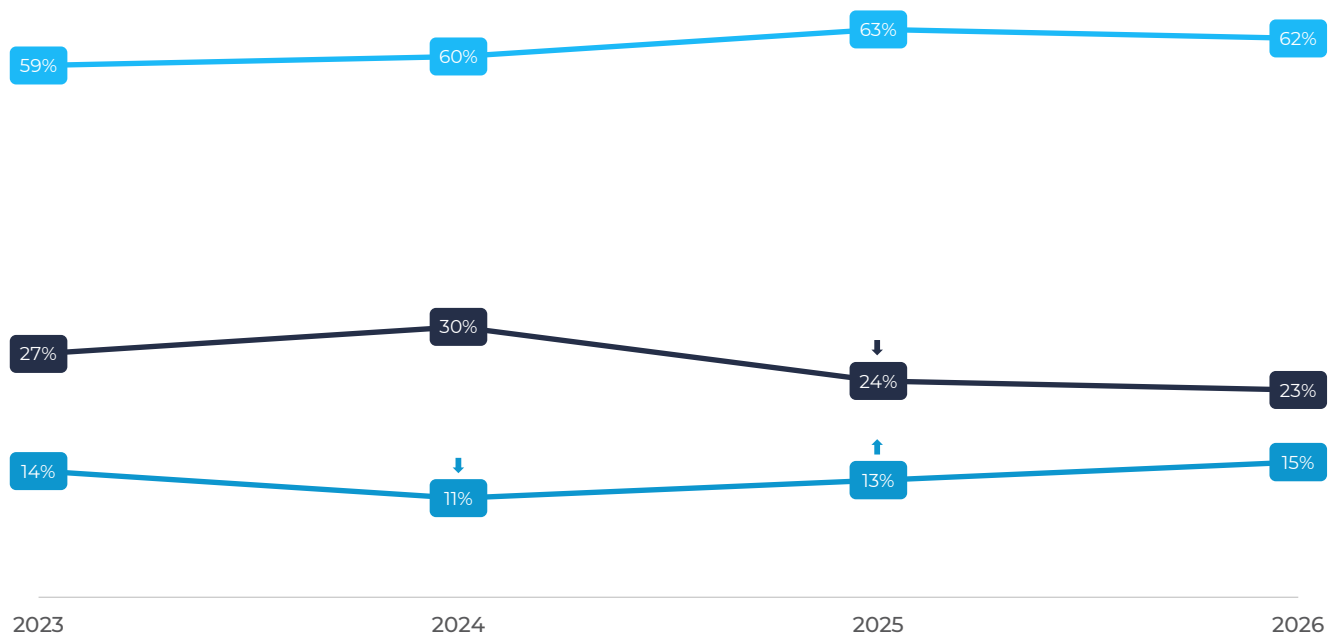
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Americans limiting or avoiding sugars are more likely to target added sugars than naturally occurring sugars.

Among the 76% of Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars in their diet, 62% target added sugars, 15% natural sugars, and 23% all types of sugars. The share targeting all types is lower in 2026 than in 2023 (23% vs. 27%).

Types Of Sugars Limited Or Avoided

Among those who limit or avoid sugars in their diet



23%
Are trying to limit or avoid all sugars
24% in 2025 ⬇
30% in 2024
27% in 2023

15%
Are trying to limit or avoid natural sugars
13% in 2025 ⬆
11% in 2024 ⬇
14% in 2023

Added sugars
(e.g., sugars added to packaged foods and beverages)

All types of sugars,
both added sugars and sugars naturally present in foods

Sugars naturally present in foods
(e.g., sugars in whole fruit and plain dairy products)

Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

***[TREND 2023-2026]** What type of sugars are you trying to limit or avoid? (n=2263; FILTER: Trying to limit or avoid sugars in their diet)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. the previous year.

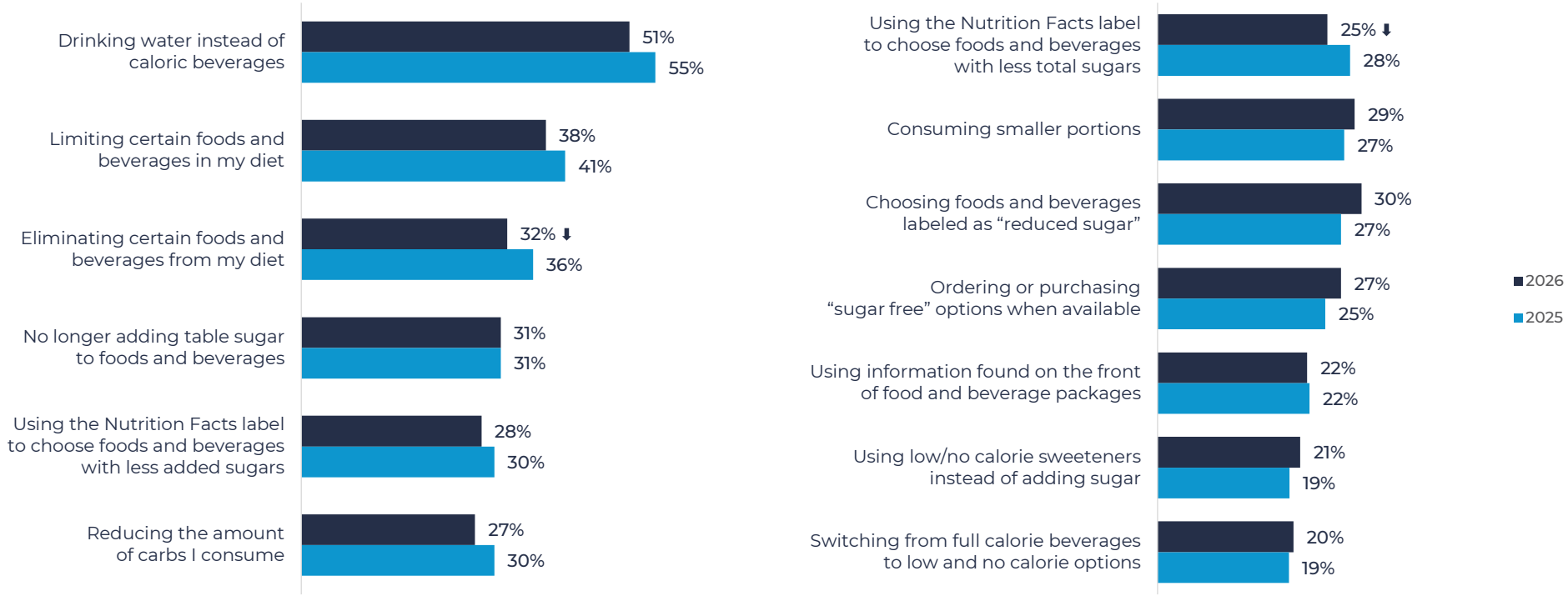
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Drinking water instead of caloric beverages is the most common action taken among Americans to limit or avoid sugars in their diet.

Among Americans trying to limit or avoid sugars, fewer in 2026 than in 2025 eliminate certain foods and beverages (32% vs. 36%) and/or use the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods lower in total sugars (25% vs. 28%).

Actions Taken To Limit Or Avoid Sugars

Among those who limit or avoid sugars in their diet



IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

[TREND 2017-2021/2025-2026] *What action(s) are you taking to limit or avoid sugars? Select all that apply. (n=2263; FILTER: Trying to limit or avoid sugars in their diet)*
Note: Results for 2017–2021 are not shown because not all items were measured each year.
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. 2025.

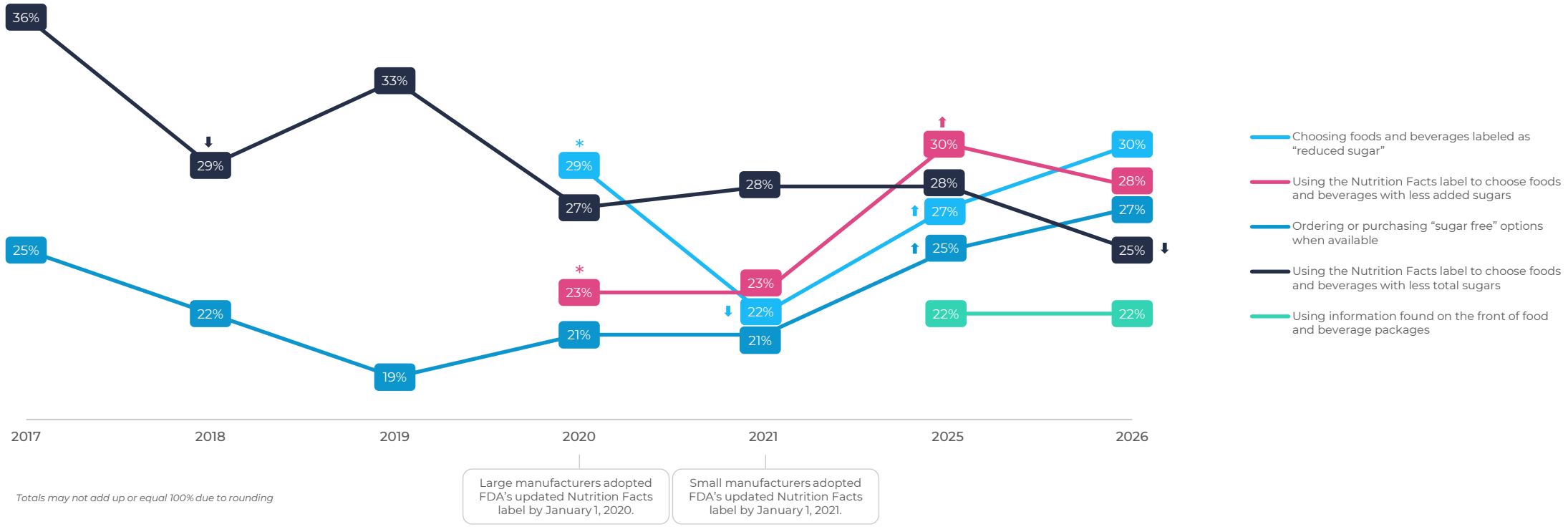
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Among Americans limiting or avoiding sugars, choosing “reduced sugar” foods and beverages is the most common label-reading action.

In 2026, use of the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods with less total sugars declined from 2025 (−4 percentage points). Compared with 2020, more Americans choose “sugar-free” options when available (+6 points) and use the label to choose products with less added sugars (+5 points).

Actions Taken To Limit Or Avoid Sugars

Label-reading actions



Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

[TREND 2017-2021/2025-2026] *What action(s) are you taking to limit or avoid sugars? Select all that apply. (n=2263; FILTER: Trying to limit or avoid sugars in their diet)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. the previous measurement.
**New item added*

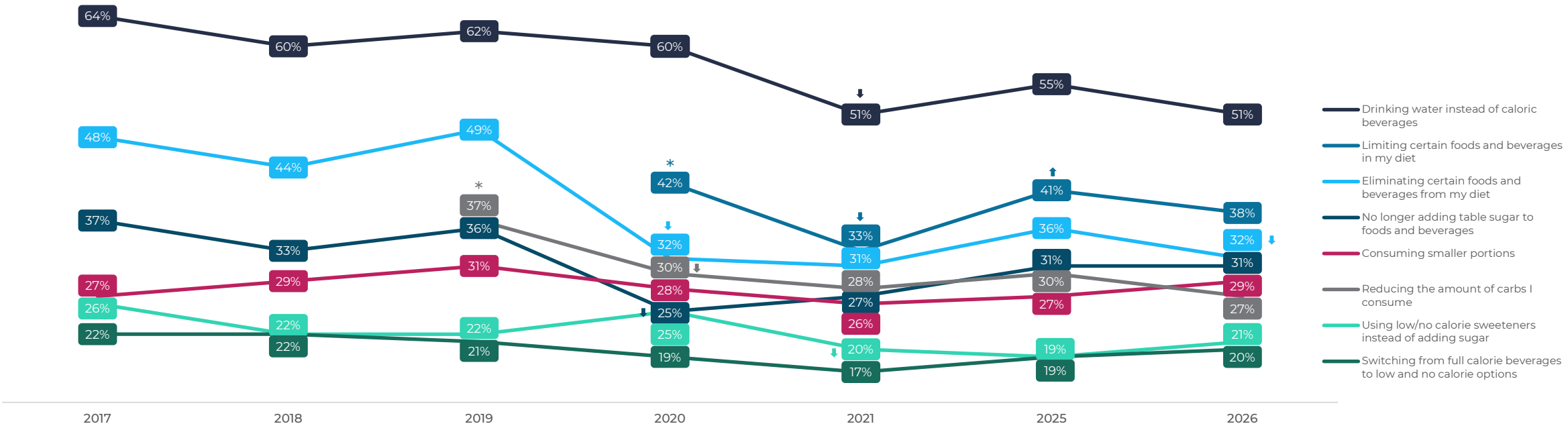
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Among Americans limiting or avoiding sugars, drinking water instead of caloric beverages is the most common consumption-related action.

In 2026, the share eliminating certain foods and beverages is lower than in 2025 (−4 percentage points). The 2026 share eliminating these foods and beverages (32%) is below the 44%–49% recorded in 2017–2019. The share of drinking water instead of caloric beverages is also lower in 2026 (51%) than in 2017–2019 (60%–64%). Reducing carbohydrate intake is less common than when first measured in 2019 (27% vs. 37%), and no longer adding table sugar is less common than in 2017 (31% vs. 37%).

Actions Taken To Limit Or Avoid Sugars

Consumption actions



Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

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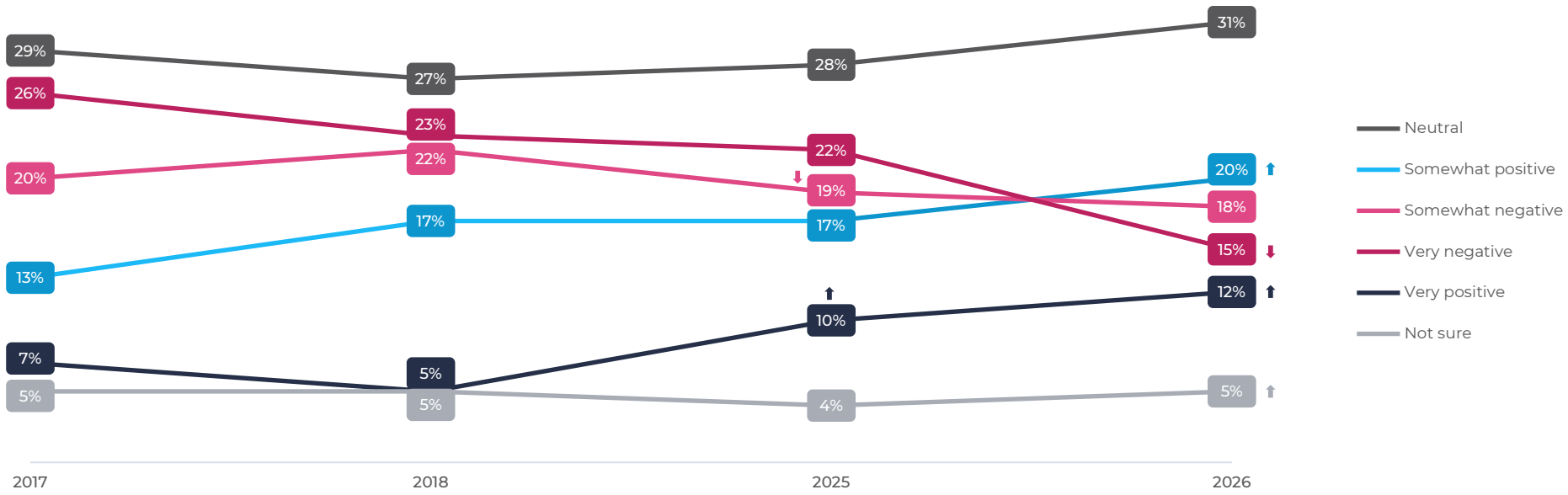
[TREND 2017-2021/2025-2026] *What action(s) are you taking to limit or avoid sugars? Select all that apply. (n=2263; FILTER: Trying to limit or avoid sugars)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. the previous measurement.
**New item added*

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Opinions of low- and no-calorie sweeteners are evenly split among positive, negative, and neutral.

In 2026, similar shares of Americans hold positive (32%), negative (32%), or neutral (31%) opinions of low- and no-calorie sweeteners. Compared with 2025, positive opinions are up 5 percentage points (32% vs. 27%), while negative opinions are down nine (32% vs. 41%), including a seven-point decline in very negative opinions (15% vs. 22%).

Opinions Of Low- & No-Calorie Sweeteners



32% ⬇
Have a negative opinion of low- and no-calorie sweeteners
45% in 2017 *45% in 2018* *⬇ 41% in 2025*

31%
Have a neutral opinion of low- and no-calorie sweeteners
29% in 2017 *27% in 2018* *28% in 2025*

32% ⬆
Have a positive opinion of low- and no-calorie sweeteners
20% in 2017 *23% in 2018* *⬆ 27% in 2025*

Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

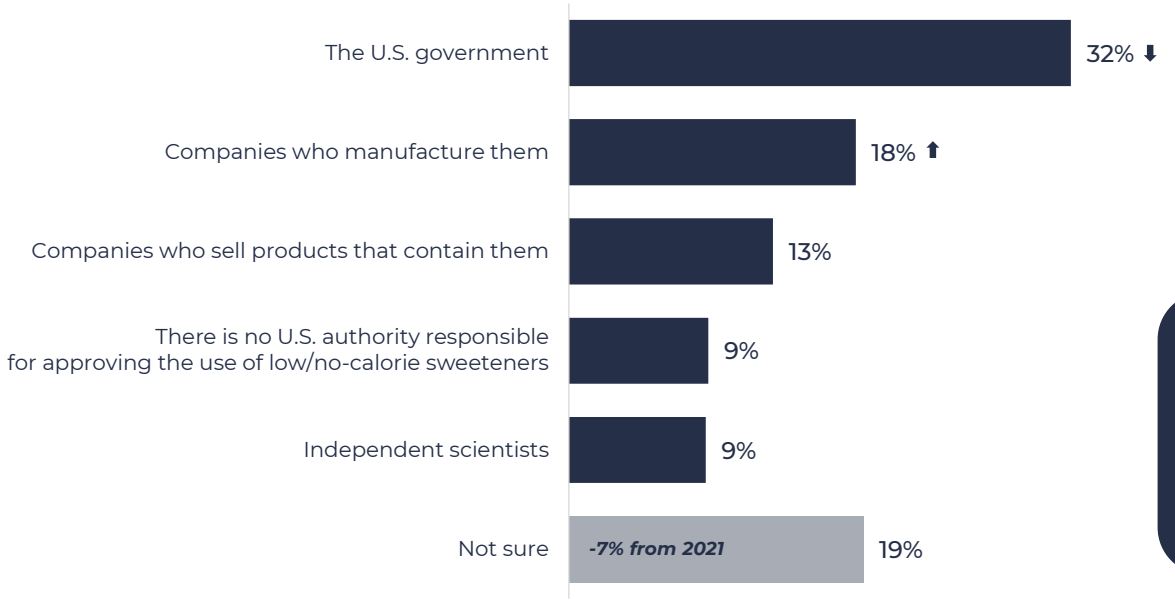
***[TREND 2017-2018/2025-2026]** What is your opinion of low/no-calorie sweeteners? (e.g., Sucralose, Aspartame, Stevia leaf extract) (n=3005)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. the previous measurement.

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One in three Americans say the U.S. government is responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in the U.S.

In 2026, 32% identify the U.S. government as responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in the U.S., down from 35% in 2025. Eighteen percent say the companies that manufacture them are responsible, up from 16% in 2025. The share who are not sure declined from 25% in 2021 to 19% in 2026, the largest shift among responses over this period.

Who Americans Believe Approves Low- & No-Calorie Sweeteners In The U.S.



19%
Are not sure who is responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in the U.S.

18% in 2025
18% in 2024
20% in 2023
22% in 2022
25% in 2021

Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

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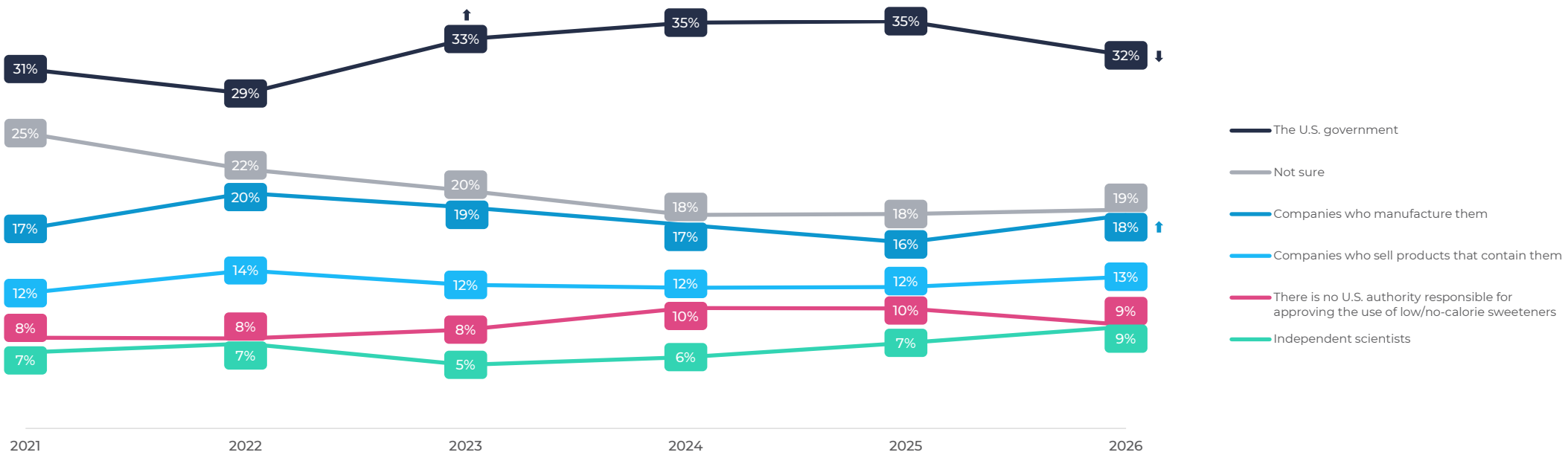
[TREND 2021-2026] *Who do you believe is responsible for approving the use of low/no-calorie sweeteners in foods and beverages in the U.S.? (n=3005)*
Note: The decline in "Not sure" responses from 2021 to 2026 is statistically significant.
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. 2025.

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One in three Americans say the U.S. government is responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in the U.S.

Across the six-year trend, the U.S. government remains the authority most often cited as responsible for approving low- and no-calorie sweeteners in the U.S. (29%–35%). The largest shift is the decline in “Not sure” responses, from 25% to 19%.

Who Americans Believe Approves Low- & No-Calorie Sweeteners In The U.S.



Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

[TREND 2021-2026] *Who do you believe is responsible for approving the use of low/no-calorie sweeteners in foods and beverages in the U.S.? (n=3005)*
Note: Arrows indicate statistical significance vs. 2025.

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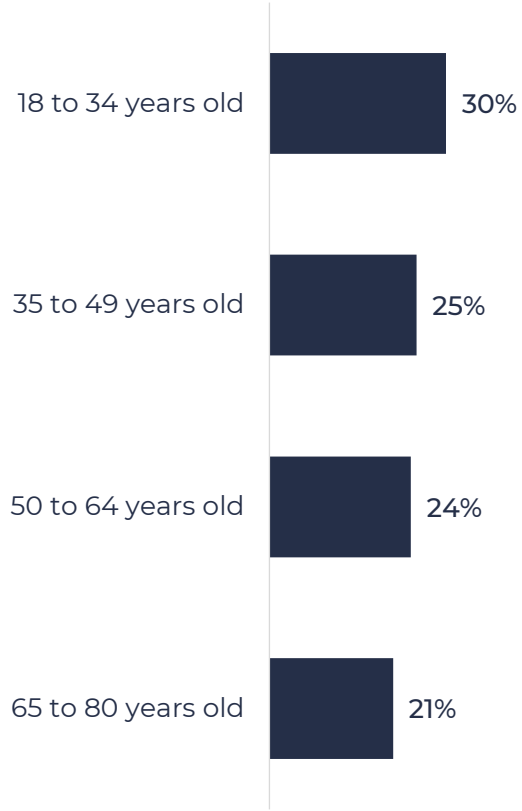
DEMOGRAPHICS

IFIC FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

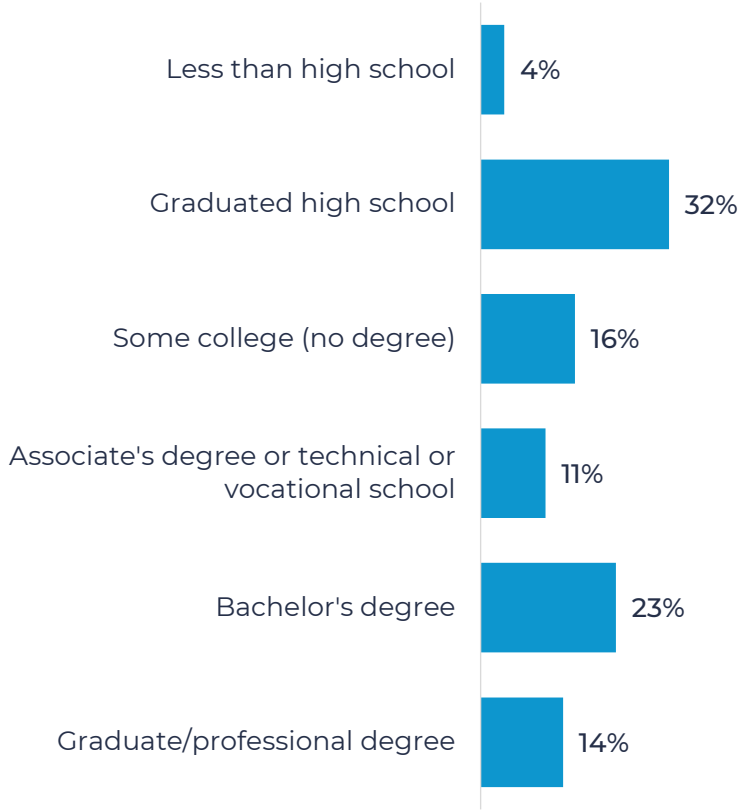
2026

DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE



EDUCATION



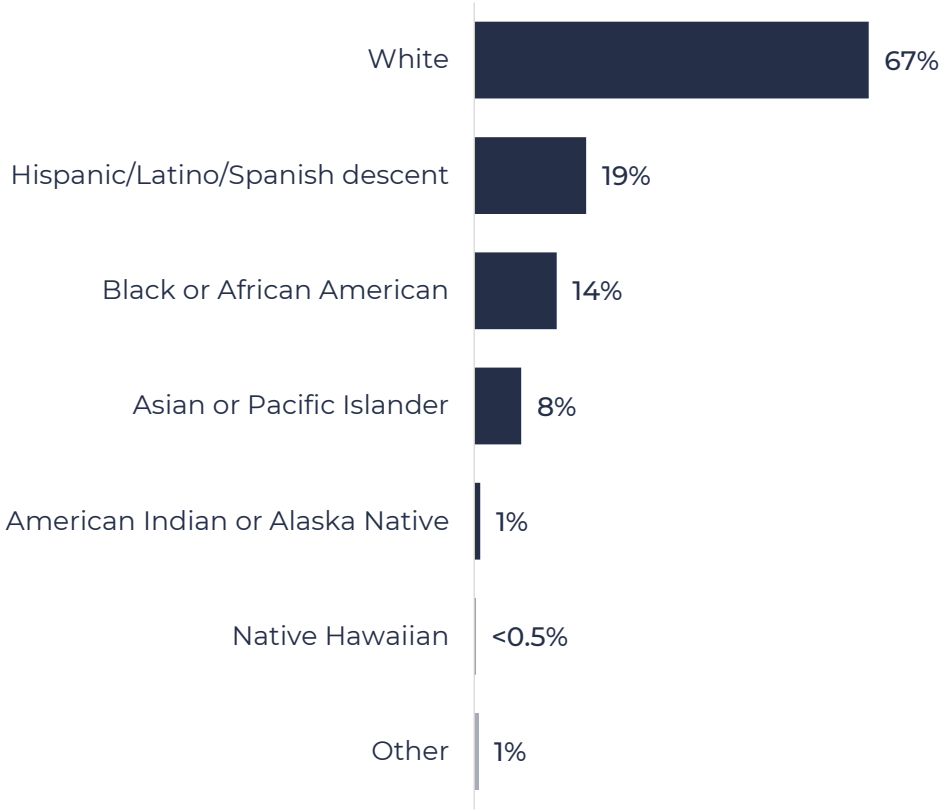
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What is your age? (n=3005)
What is the highest level of education you have completed? (n=3005)

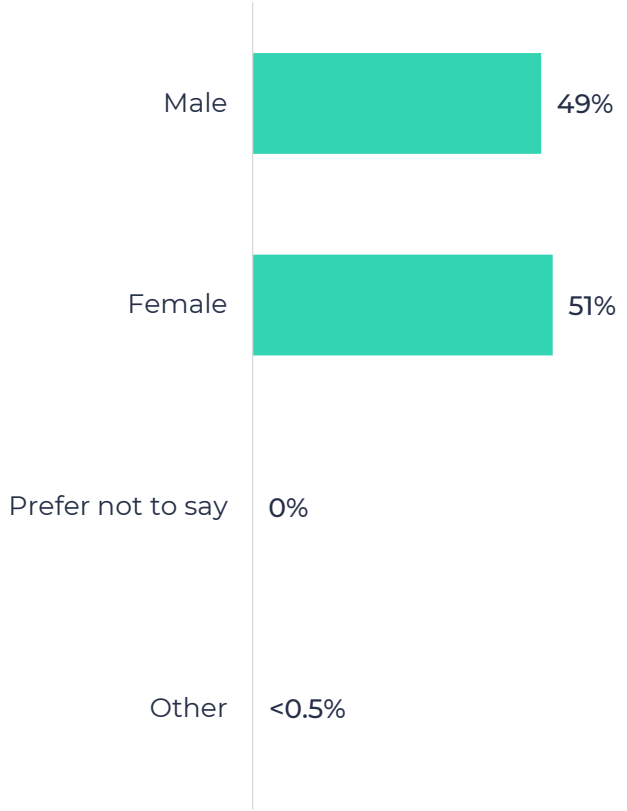
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DEMOGRAPHICS

RACE/ETHNICITY



GENDER



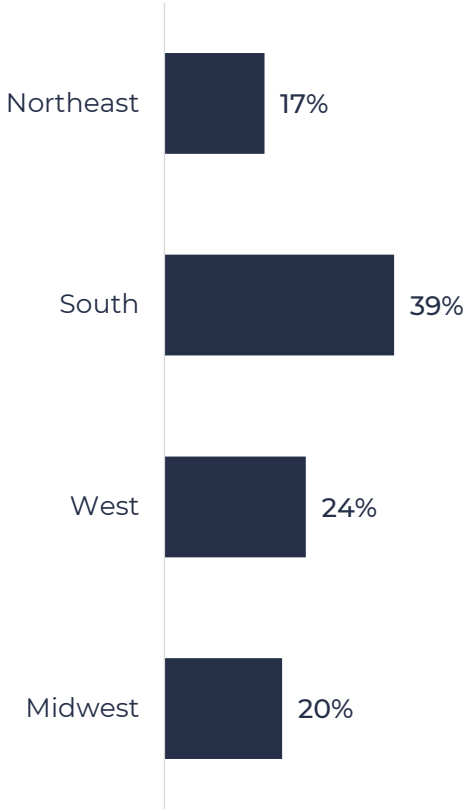
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Which of the following best describe(s) your race or ethnicity? (Select all that apply) (n=3005)
What is your gender? (n=3005)

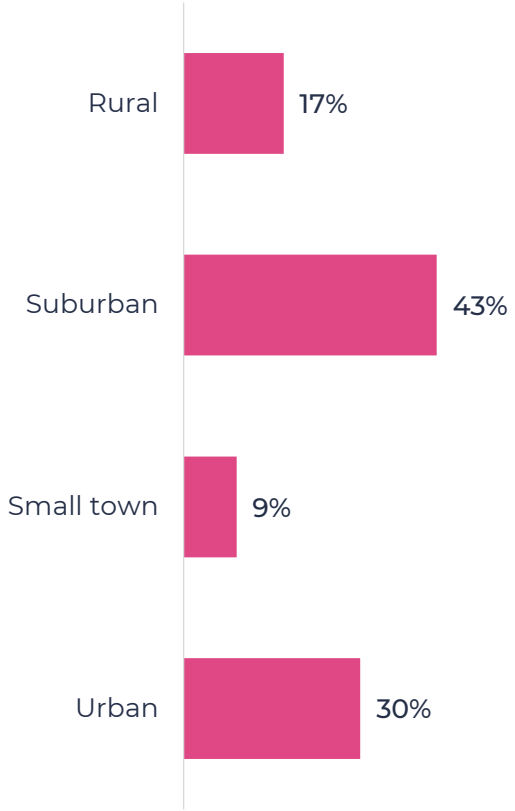
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REGION



COMMUNITY



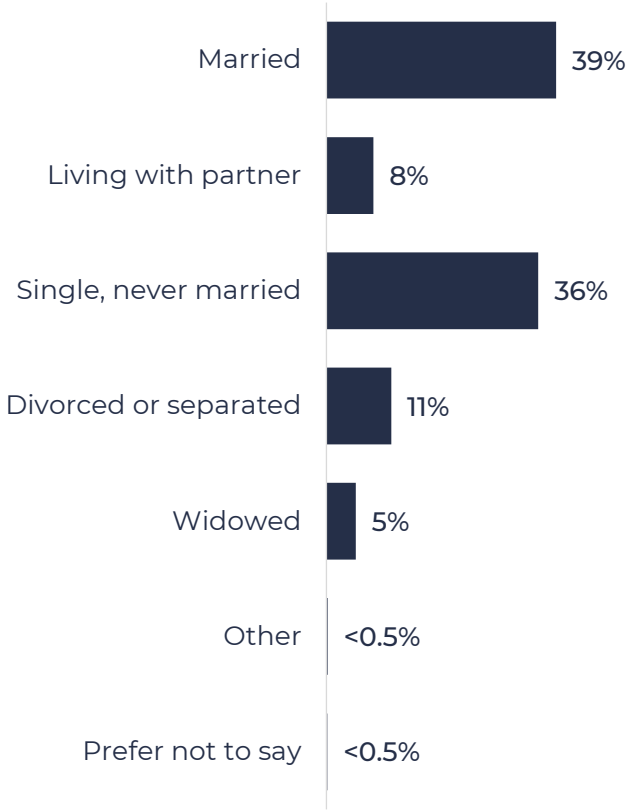
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In which state do you currently live? (n=3005)
Which of the following best describes the area in which you live? (n=3005)

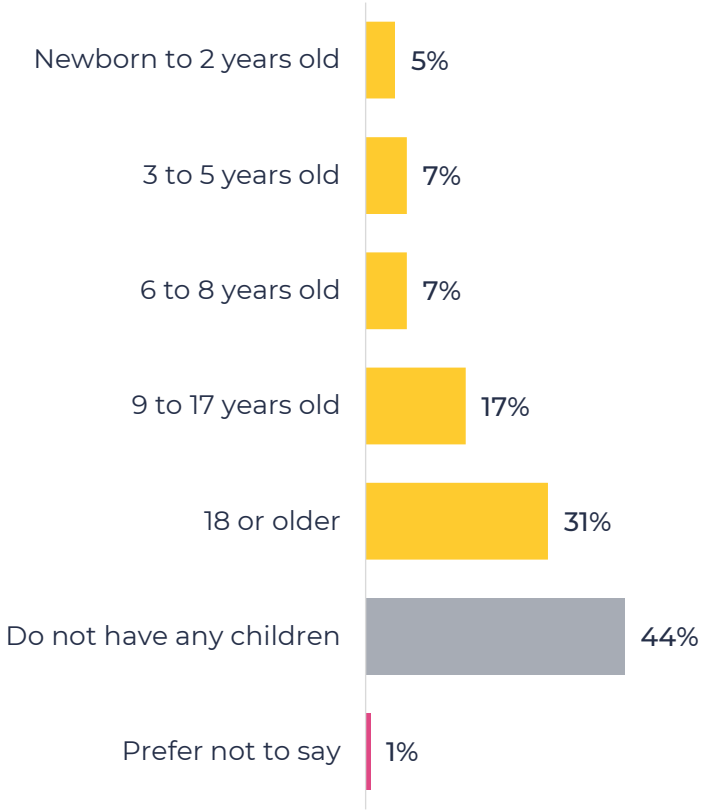
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DEMOGRAPHICS

MARITAL STATUS



CHILDREN



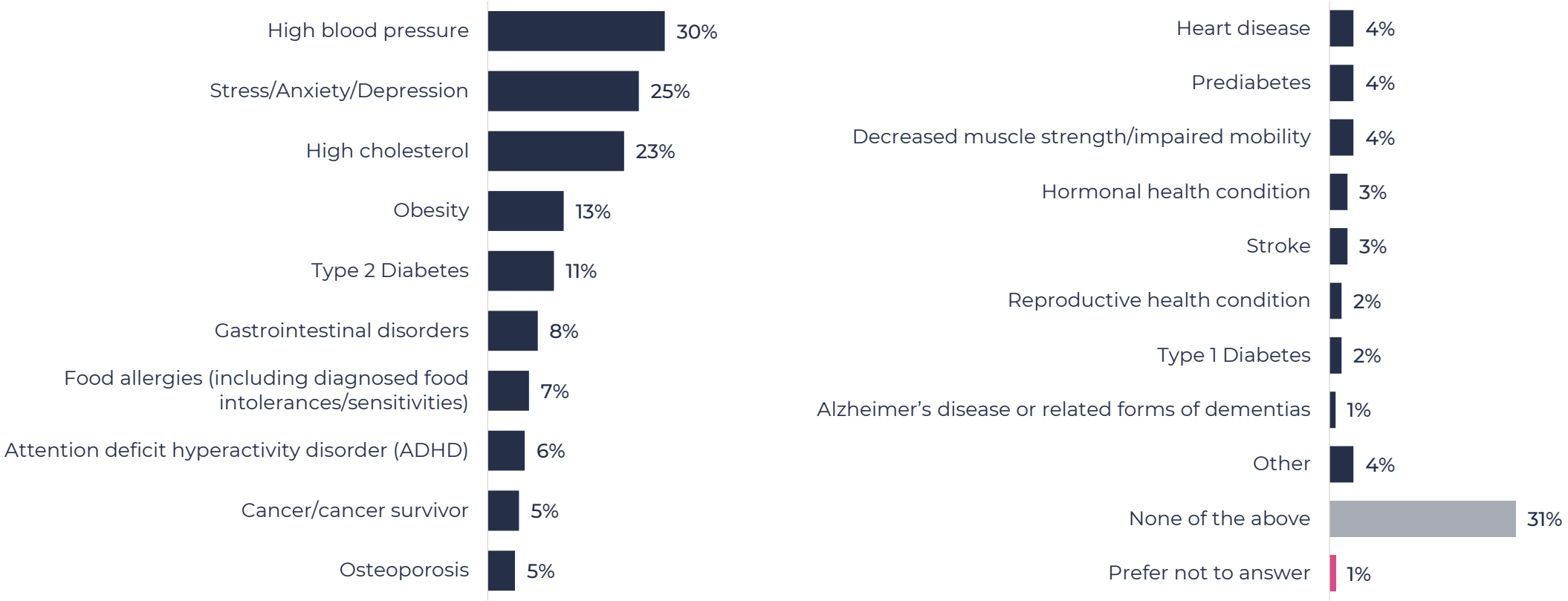
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What is your marital status? (n=3005)
Do you have any children between the ages of...? (Select all that apply.) (n=3005)

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MEDICAL CONDITIONS



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Which of the following medical conditions, if any, have you been diagnosed with having? (Select all that apply.) (n=3005)

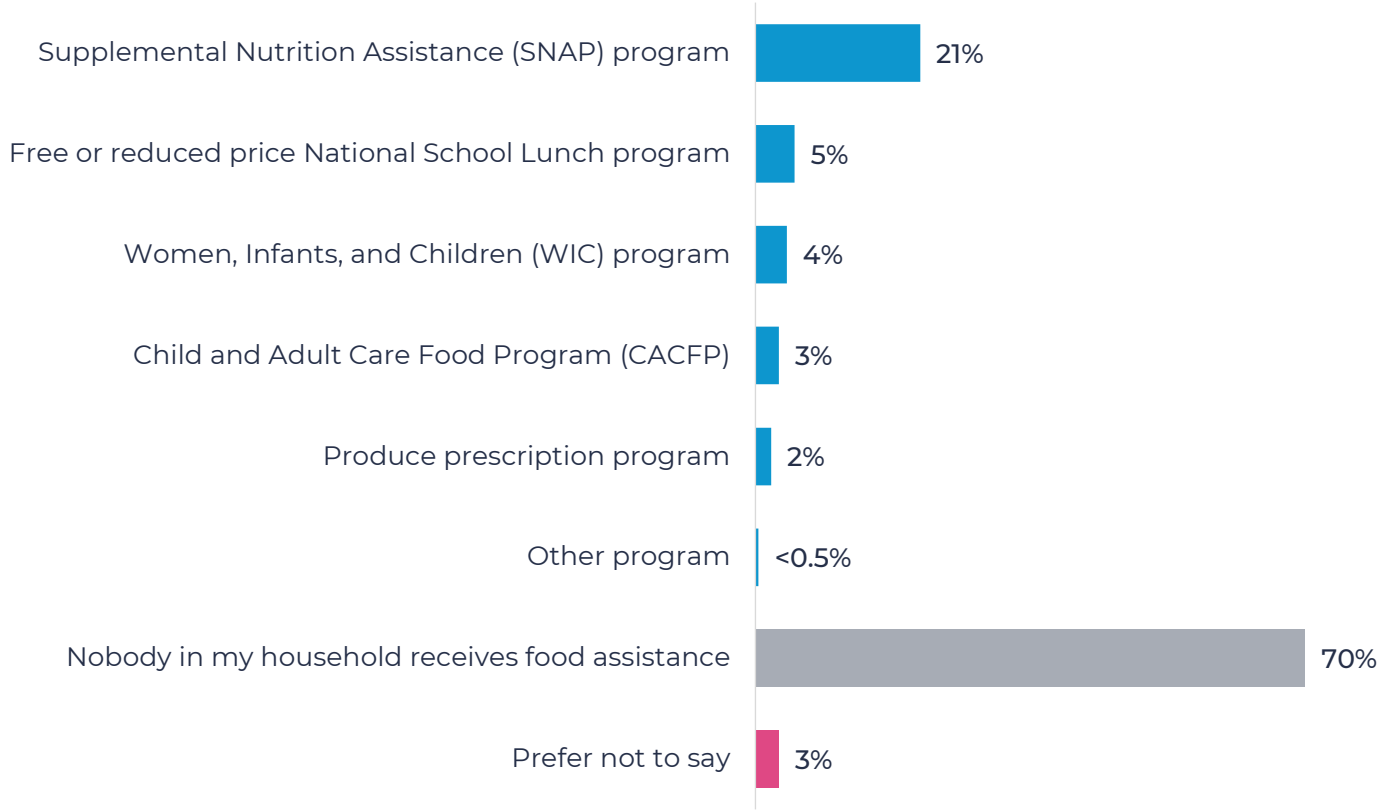
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HOUSEHOLD INCOME



GOVERNMENT FOOD ASSISTANCE



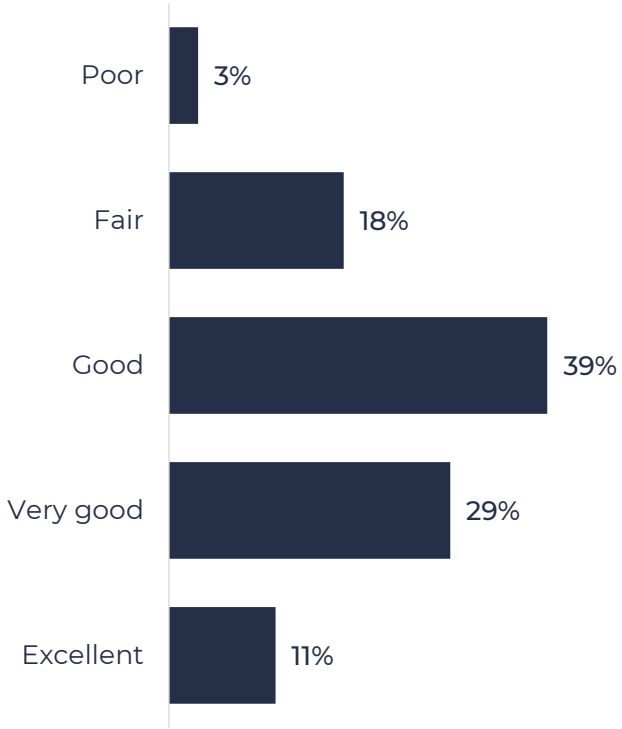
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How much is your total annual household income? (n=3005)
Does anyone in your household receive food assistance through any of the following government programs? (n=3005)

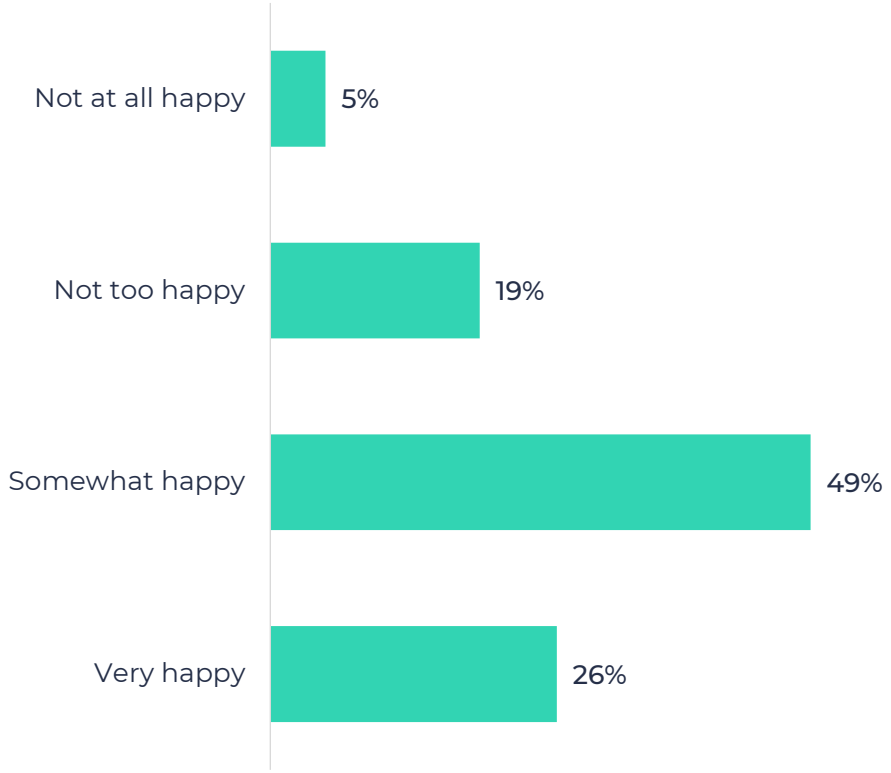
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DEMOGRAPHICS

HEALTH STATUS



HAPPINESS



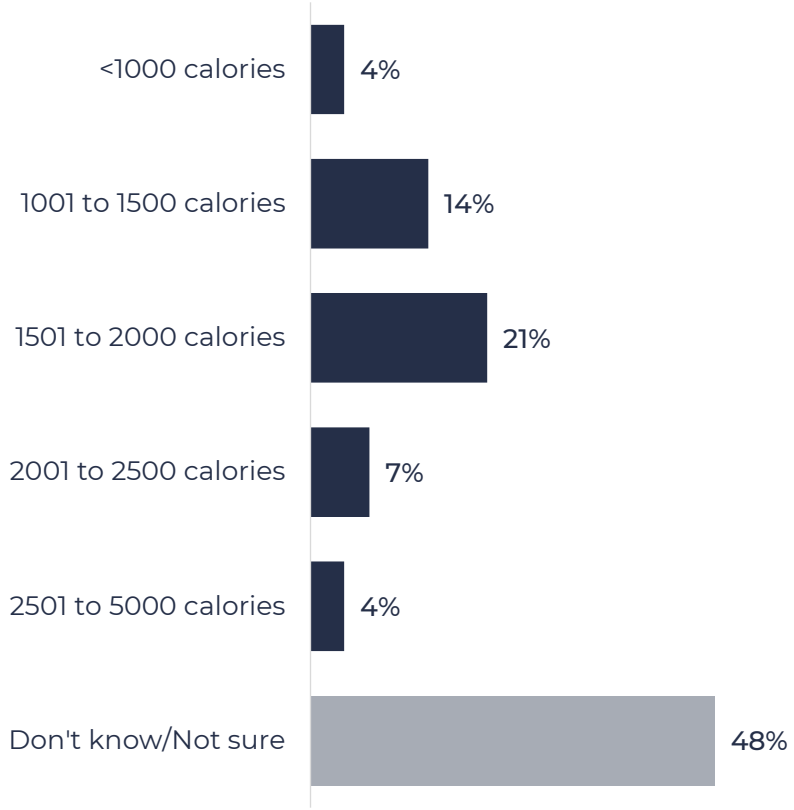
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How would you describe your own health, in general? (n=3005)
How happy have you been in the past six months? (n=3005)

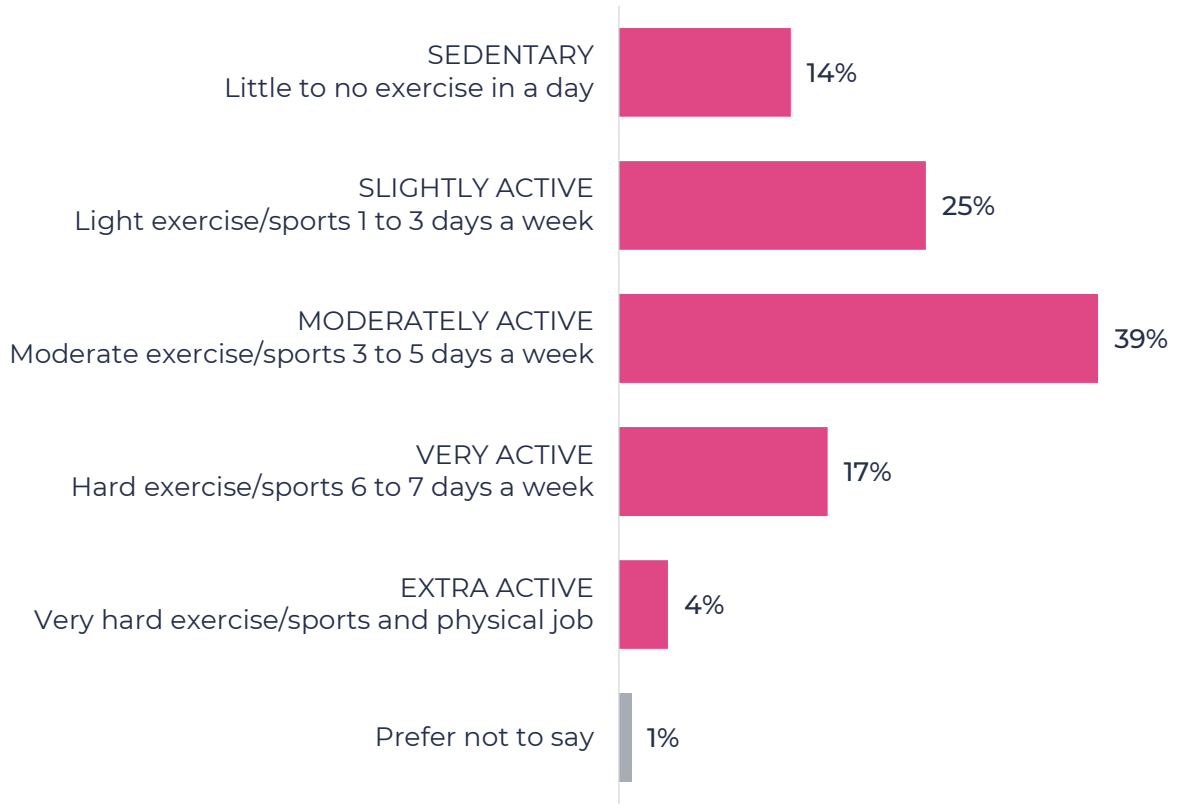
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DEMOGRAPHICS

ESTIMATED DAILY CALORIE NEEDS FOR WEIGHT MAINTENANCE



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL



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As far as you know, how many calories should you consume per day to maintain your current weight, given your age, height, and physical activity? (n=2796)
How would you describe your level of physical activity? (n=3005)

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