



**SPOTLIGHT
SURVEY**

Americans' Trust In Food & Nutrition Science

March 2026



METHODOLOGY



The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and trust in food and nutrition science. One thousand eighteen adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from December 9-15, 2025, and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

The Bayesian confidence level for the survey sample (n=1018) 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.).

Totals of survey results presented in this report may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding. Arrows in the charts denote statistical significance compared with October 2024 results.

NOTE: This *2026 IFIC Spotlight Survey* re-examines similar questions from the [*2024 IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Trust In Food & Nutrition Science*](#), which was similarly fielded from July 11-13, 2024.

SUGGESTED CITATION:

International Food Information Council (IFIC). IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Trust In Food & Nutrition Science. March 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The March 2026 *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Trust In Food & Nutrition Science*, underscores that trust is a critical prerequisite for effectively communicating sound, sensible, and science-based food advice to Americans.

While trust in food and nutrition science is relatively strong overall, it is not universal. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Americans express at least some trust, yet one in five (20%) remain uncertain, neither trusting nor distrusting the science. This sizable ambivalent group represents a key opportunity. In addition, among individuals with lower trust in food and nutrition science, nearly half (48%) say they would be more willing to change their diet if their trust increased, indicating that skepticism does not necessarily equate to resistance.

At the same time, persistent perceptions that dietary recommendations are constantly changing continue to shape attitudes and emotions around food choices. More than seven in ten Americans (72%) hold this view, often reporting confusion, frustration, doubt, and/or curiosity as a result.

The findings from this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* also clarify what builds trust. Americans are most likely to trust food advice that is evidence-based, simple, and delivered by registered dietitians. By contrast, advice driven by shock tactics or social media popularity is far less trusted.

Together, these results highlight that improving dietary behaviors is not solely a matter of providing information. Building and sustaining trust through clear, credible, and consistent communication is essential to ensuring that food guidance resonates.



KEY FINDINGS

Two-thirds of Americans express trust in food and nutrition science.

Results from this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* underscore that while trust in food and nutrition science remains relatively strong, it is not uniform and has shifted modestly over time. In this March 2026 *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Americans express at least some trust in food and nutrition science, including 36% who strongly trust it and 28% who somewhat trust it. One in five (20%) remain neutral, while overall distrust is relatively limited (16%: 10% somewhat distrustful and 6% strongly distrustful).

Compared with the [October 2024 IFIC Spotlight Survey](#), which found slightly higher trust levels (38% strongly trust and 30% somewhat trust), the March 2026 results indicate a modest softening of confidence. Overall distrust has increased from 12% in October 2024 to 16% in March 2026, while the share reporting neutrality has remained relatively stable. Notably, the average trust score (on a 0-10 scale) is nearly unchanged between October 2024 (6.46) and March 2026 (6.48), indicating that overall sentiment has remained stable despite shifts within individual response categories.

Among those with lower levels of trust in food and nutrition science, nearly half report that they would be willing to change their diet if their trust in that science increased.

Increased trust in food and nutrition science has the potential to influence dietary behavior for many Americans. In the March 2026 survey, among those with lower levels of trust in food and nutrition science, early half (48%) report that they would be more willing to change their diet if their trust in food and nutrition science increased. At the same time, ambivalence remains common: more than one-third (38%) neither agree nor disagree, indicating uncertainty about whether greater trust would translate into action. A smaller share (15%) report resistance to dietary change even if their trust in food and nutrition science improved.

Compared with results from the October 2024 *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, willingness to change has softened modestly. Among those with lower levels of trust in food and nutrition science, agreement that increased trust would lead to dietary change declined by five percentage points (from 53% to 48%), while disagreement increased by four points (from 11% to 15%). Overall, these findings suggest that while strengthening trust in food and nutrition science may help support dietary change for many, trust in science alone may be insufficient to overcome ambivalence or resistance to such changes.

KEY FINDINGS

More than seven in ten Americans say it seems like recommendations about what to eat and drink are always changing.

Public perception that dietary recommendations are constantly changing remains widespread, though it has moderated over time. Results from the March 2026 *IFIC Spotlight Survey* indicate that more than seven in ten Americans (72%) say guidance on what to eat and drink seems to be always changing. Far fewer (17%) do not perceive recommendations as constantly shifting, while one in ten (10%) report being unsure.

By comparison, nearly eight in ten Americans (79%) expressed this view in the October 2024 *IFIC Spotlight Survey*. Since that time, the proportion who do not view dietary recommendations as always changing has increased modestly, rising from 12% in October 2024 survey to 17% in March 2026 survey, while uncertainty has remained relatively stable (9% in the October 2024 survey and 10% in March 2026 survey).

Many Americans feel confused, frustrated, doubtful, and/or stressed about their food choices due to their perception that dietary recommendations seem like they are always changing.

Among those who believe dietary recommendations are constantly changing, reactions vary but skew negative. Confusion is the most commonly reported response, with 41% saying they feel perplexed about their food choices. Frustration follows at 33%, while slightly fewer report feeling doubtful and/or curious (29% each). Nearly one in five (18%) say the shifting guidance make them feel stressed, and fewer report feeling inspired (16%) and/or fearful (9%).

Although negative reactions predominate, a meaningful minority express neutral or positive responses. About one in three (29%) say the changing recommendations spark curiosity, and one in six (16%) feel inspired. These findings suggest that while variability in guidance often generates confusion and frustration, it can also foster engagement and active inquiry for some individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

More than half of Americans say they are more likely to trust food advice if it cites scientific evidence, if it is simple and easy to follow, and if it comes from a registered dietitian.

Americans' willingness to trust food advice varies by both message characteristics and source. A majority report greater trust when guidance cites scientific evidence (58%), is simple and easy to follow (58%), or comes from a registered dietitian (57%). In each case, more than half agree that these attributes increase their trust.

Other factors generate more mixed reactions. Less than half of Americans say they are more likely to trust food advice if it lowers grocery costs (45%), is about eating more (40%) or less (39%) of specific foods, or comes from someone similar to themselves in age, culture, ethnicity, and/or sex/gender (37%). Substantial shares are neutral about these advice attributes (35%, 43%, 42%, and 43%, respectively), indicating ambivalence rather than strong endorsement. Trust in food advice from the U.S. government is evenly distributed across agreement (32%), neutrality (36%), and disagreement (33%).

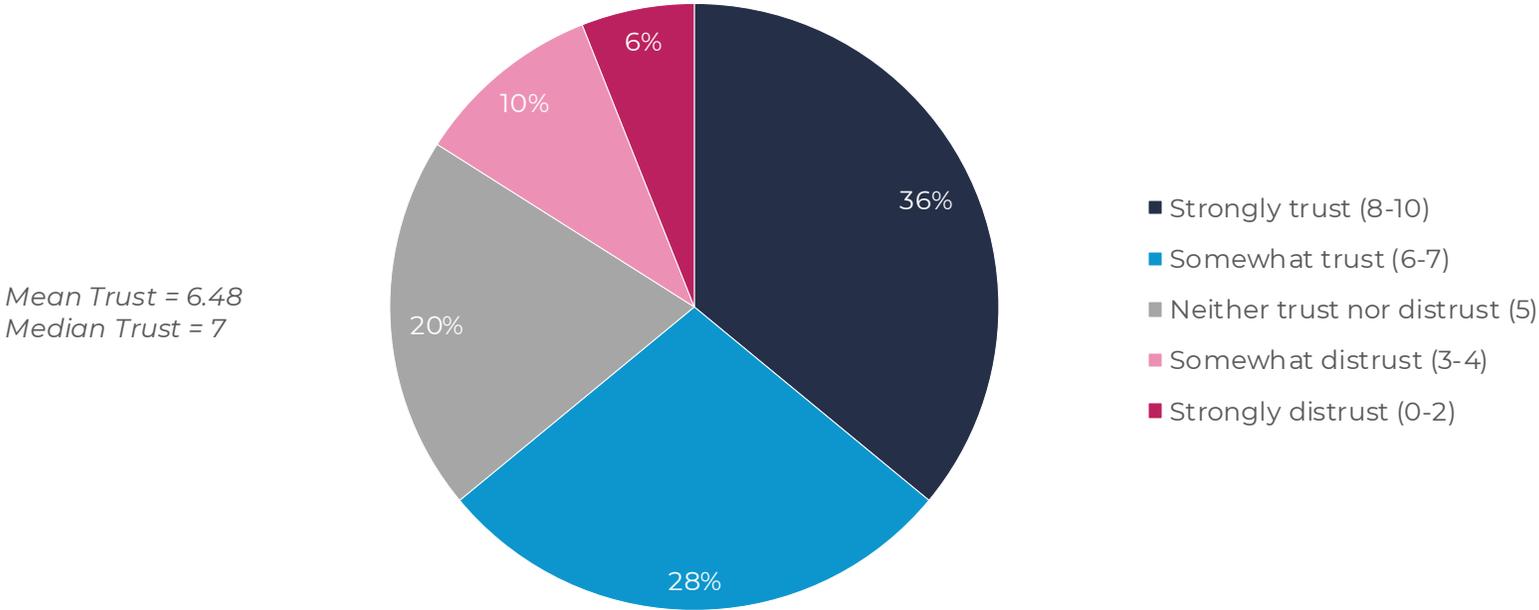
Food guidance that relies on shock, fear, or social media visibility is less likely to be trusted. Fewer than one-third say they are more likely to trust food advice that is widely shared on social media (29%) or that shocks or scares them (26%), while substantial shares disagree that these approaches would increase their trust (41% and 45%, respectively). Overall, Americans place the greatest trust in food guidance that is evidence-based, clearly communicated, and delivered by credible food and nutrition professionals, rather than advice driven by fear, popularity, or authority alone.



Two-thirds of Americans express trust in food and nutrition science.

Americans are four times more likely to trust than distrust food and nutrition science (64% vs. 16%), though 20% remain neutral.

Level of Trust in Food and Nutrition Science

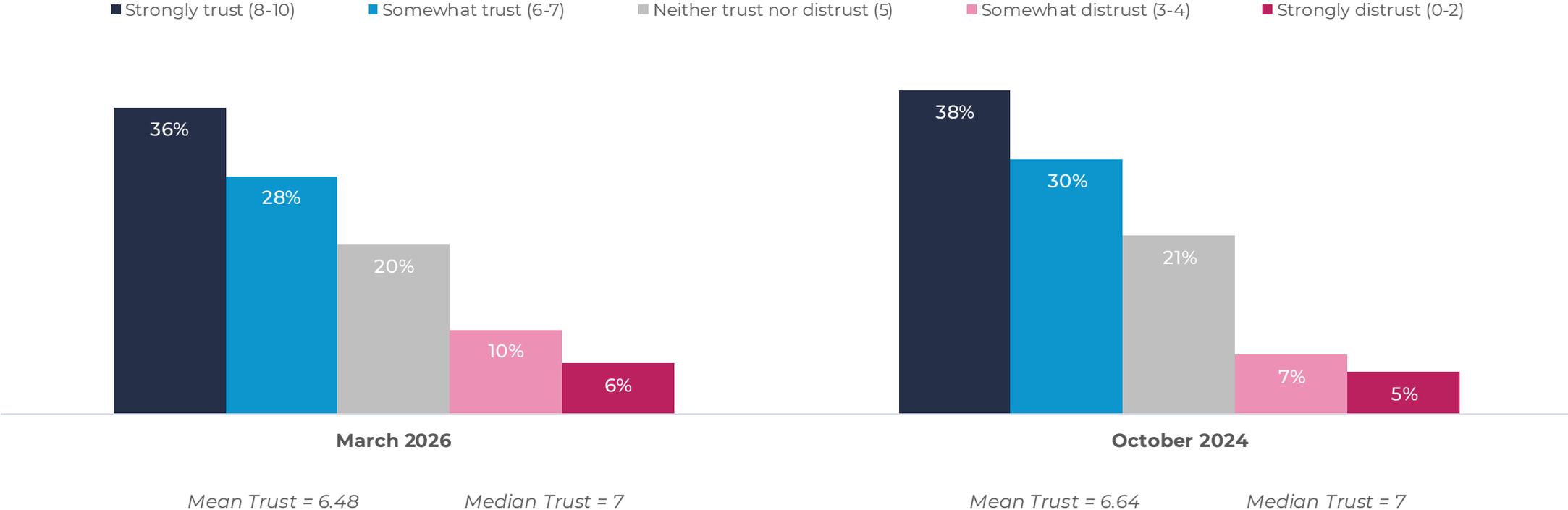


Q1. How much do you trust science about food, nutrition, and/or diet? Please rate your trust on a scale of 0-10. (n=1000)
*Scale anchors provided to survey takers were as follows: 0 = Complete Distrust; 5 = Neither Trust, nor Distrust; 10 = Complete Trust

Two-thirds of Americans express trust in food and nutrition science.

Americans are four times more likely to trust (64%) than distrust (16%) food and nutrition science, though 20% are neutral. Trust is down 4 points (68% to 64%) and distrust is up 4 points (12% to 16%) from the October 2024 *IFIC Spotlight Survey*.

Level of Trust in Food and Nutrition Science

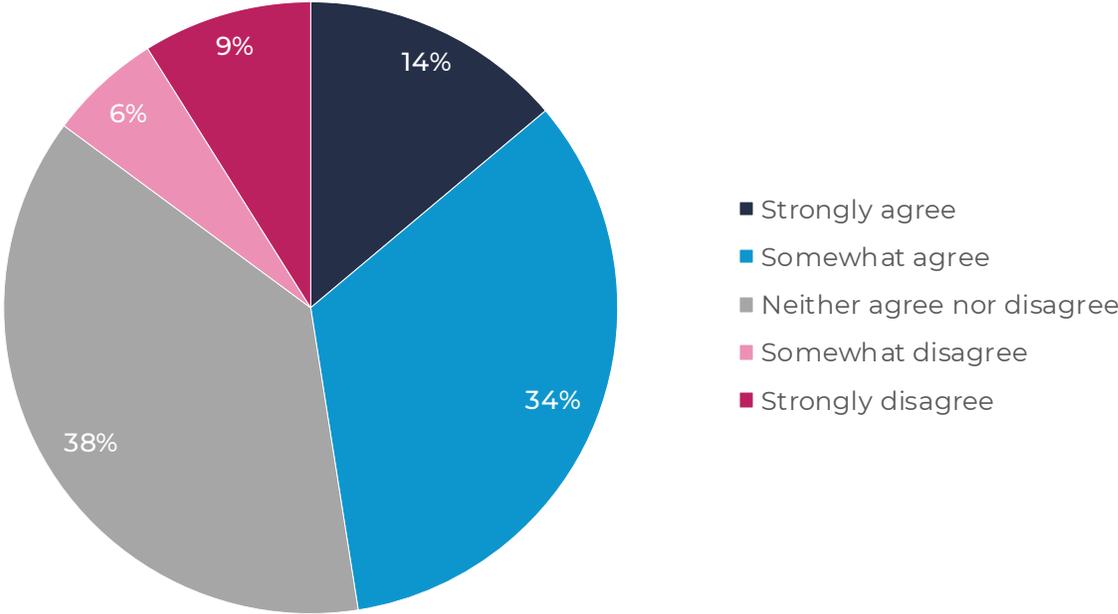


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Among those with lower levels of trust in food and nutrition science, nearly half report that they would be willing to change their diet if their trust in that science increased.

The remainder are either ambivalent (38%) or would not be more willing (15%) to change their diet if they had more trust in food and nutrition science.

“I would be willing to change my diet if I had more trust in food and nutrition science.”



48% ↓
Would be willing to change their diet if they had more trust in food and nutrition science
53% in October 2024

Arrows denote statistical significance versus October 2024

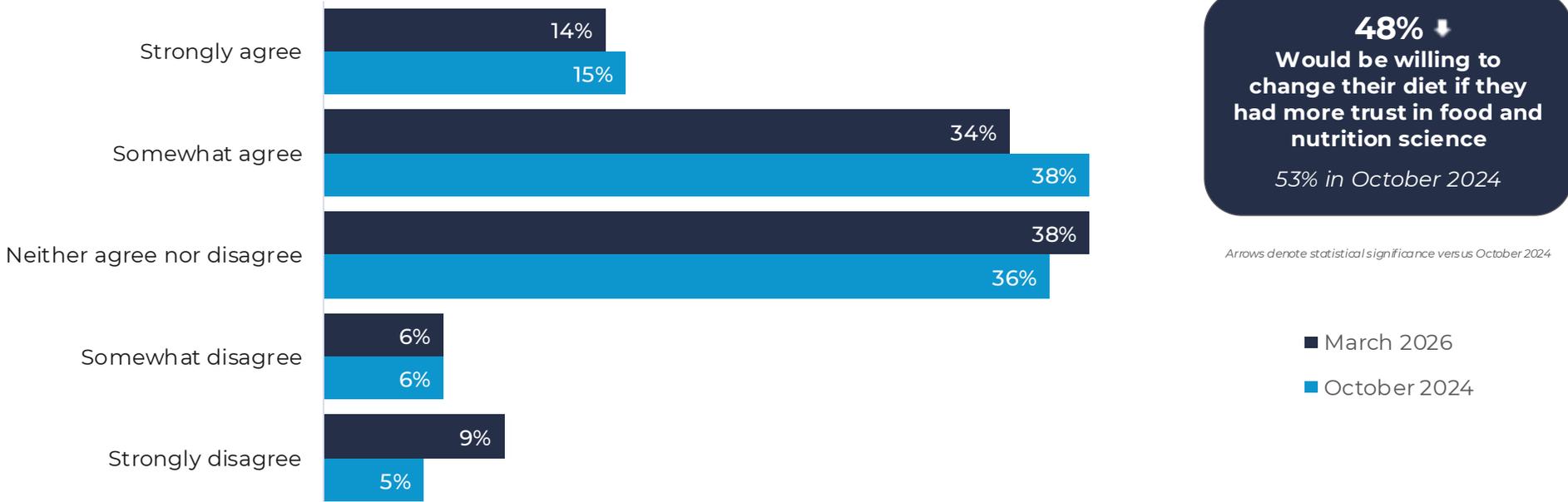


Q2. Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: I would be more willing to change my diet if I had more trust in food and nutrition science. (n=494; FILTER: Rated trust in food and nutrition science as 6 or lower out of 10)

Among those with lower levels of trust in food and nutrition science, nearly half report that they would be willing to change their diet if their trust in that science increased.

From October 2024 to March 2026, agreement fell 5 points (53% to 48%) while disagreement rose 4 points (11% to 15%).

“I would be willing to change my diet if I had more trust in food and nutrition science.”

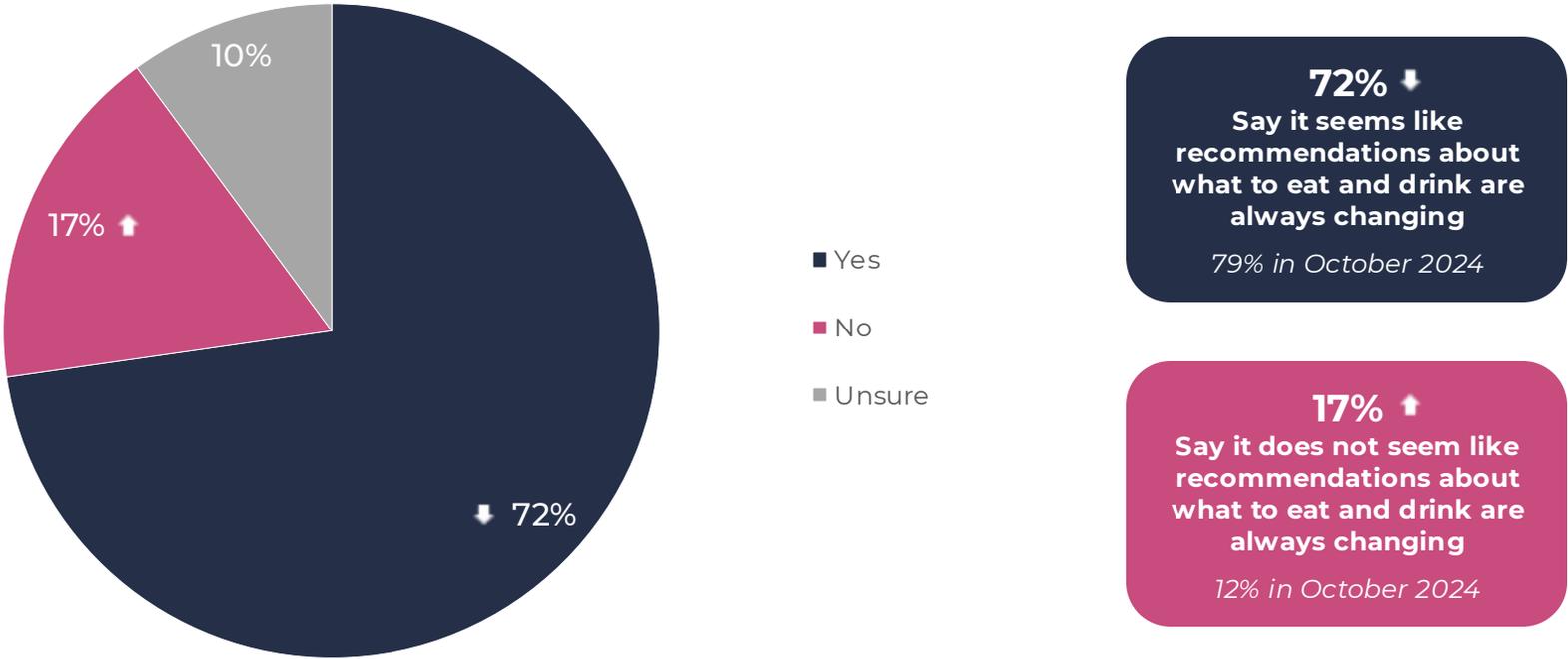


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More than seven in ten Americans say it seems like recommendations about what to eat and drink are always changing.

Nearly two in ten (17%) do not feel like food recommendations are always changing. One in ten (10%) are unsure.

“Does it seem like recommendations about what to eat and drink are always changing?”

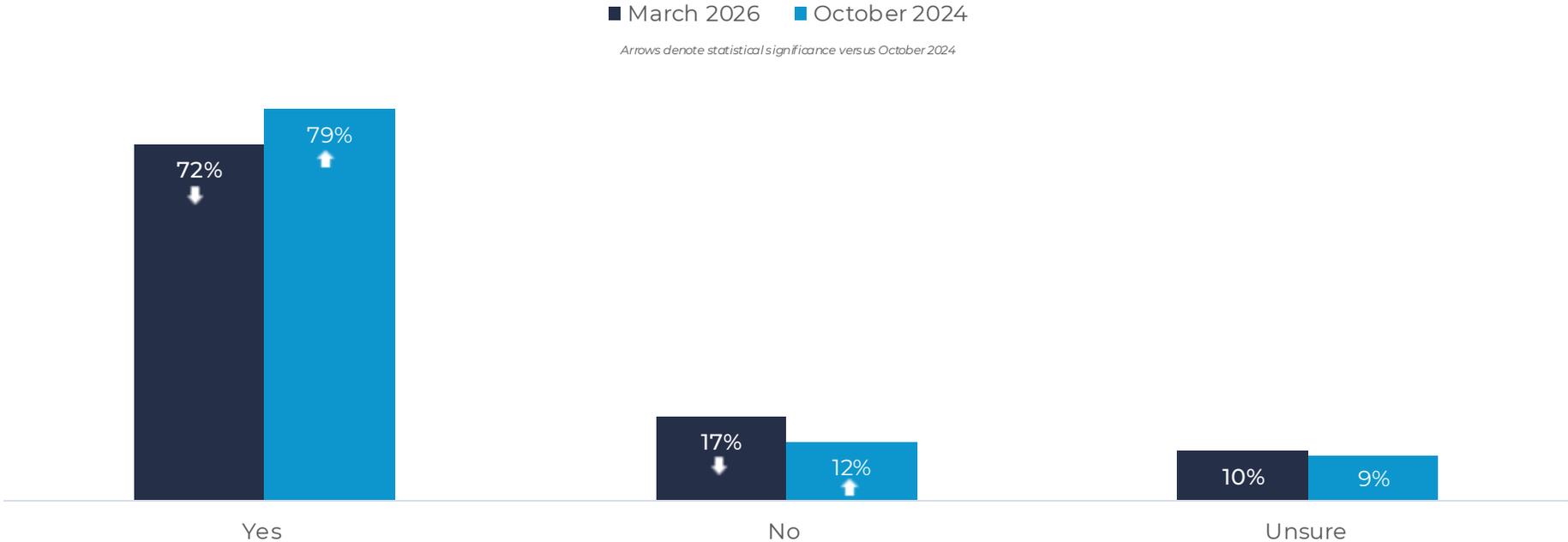


Arrows denote statistical significance versus October 2024

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In October 2024, nearly eight in ten (79%) said it seemed like food recommendations are always changing.

“Does it seem like recommendations about what to eat and drink are always changing?”



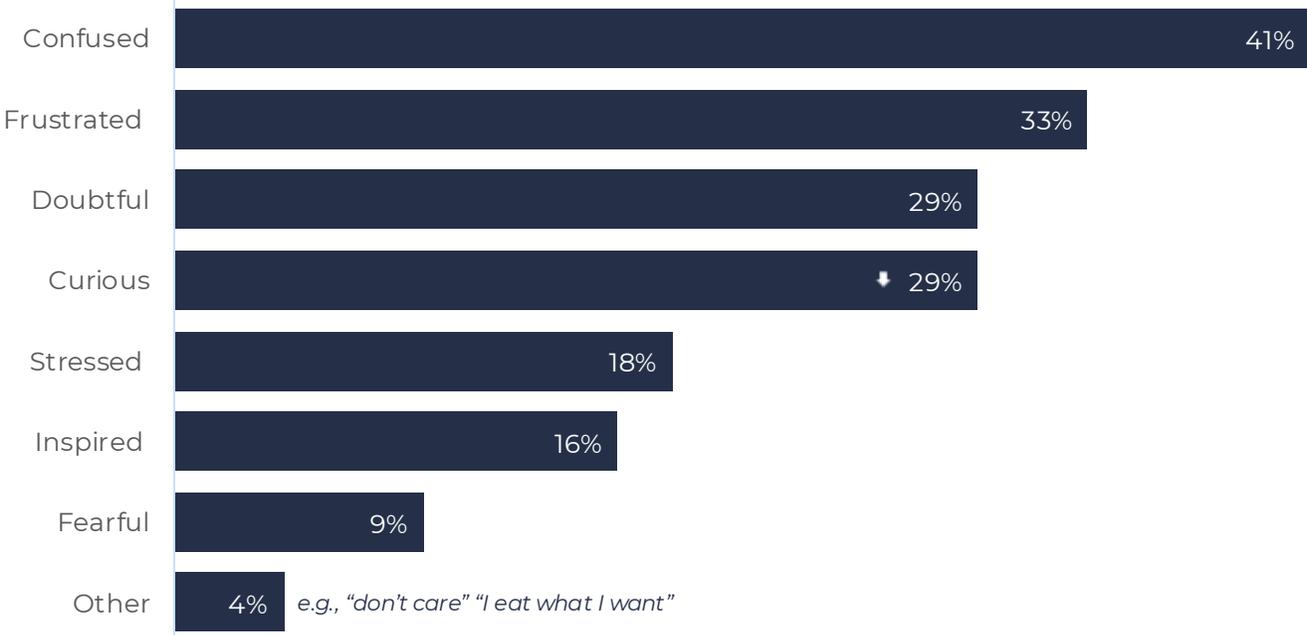
Q3. Does it seem like recommendations about what to eat and drink are always changing? (n=1018 in March 2026, n=1000 in October 2024)

IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions In Food & Nutrition Science. March 2026.

Many Americans feel confused, frustrated, doubtful, and/or stressed about their food choices due to their perception that dietary recommendations seem like they are always changing.

Still, one in three (29%) feel curious and 16% feel inspired.

Feelings About Food Choices Amid Changing Dietary Recommendations



Arrows denote statistical significance versus October 2024

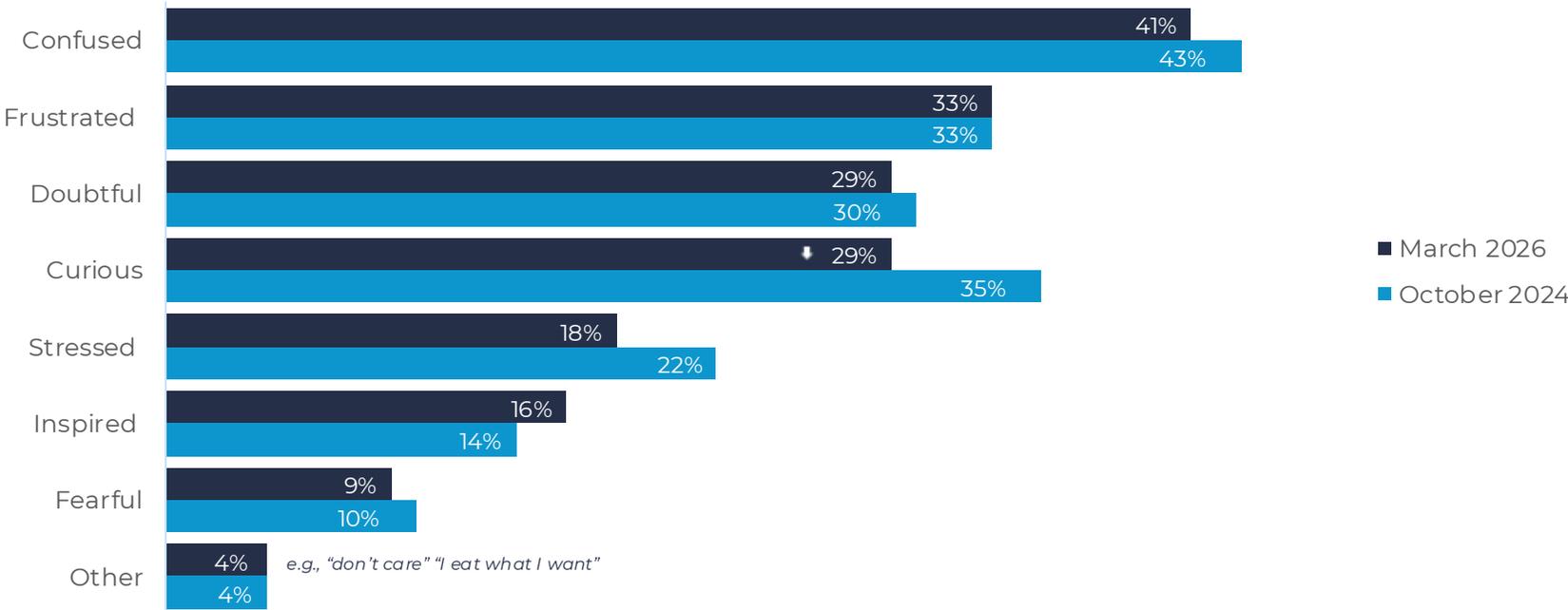
Q4. You indicated that dietary recommendations seem like they are always changing. How does this make you feel about your food choices? Please select all that apply. (n=728; FILTER: Those who say it seems like recommendations for what to eat and drink are always changing)



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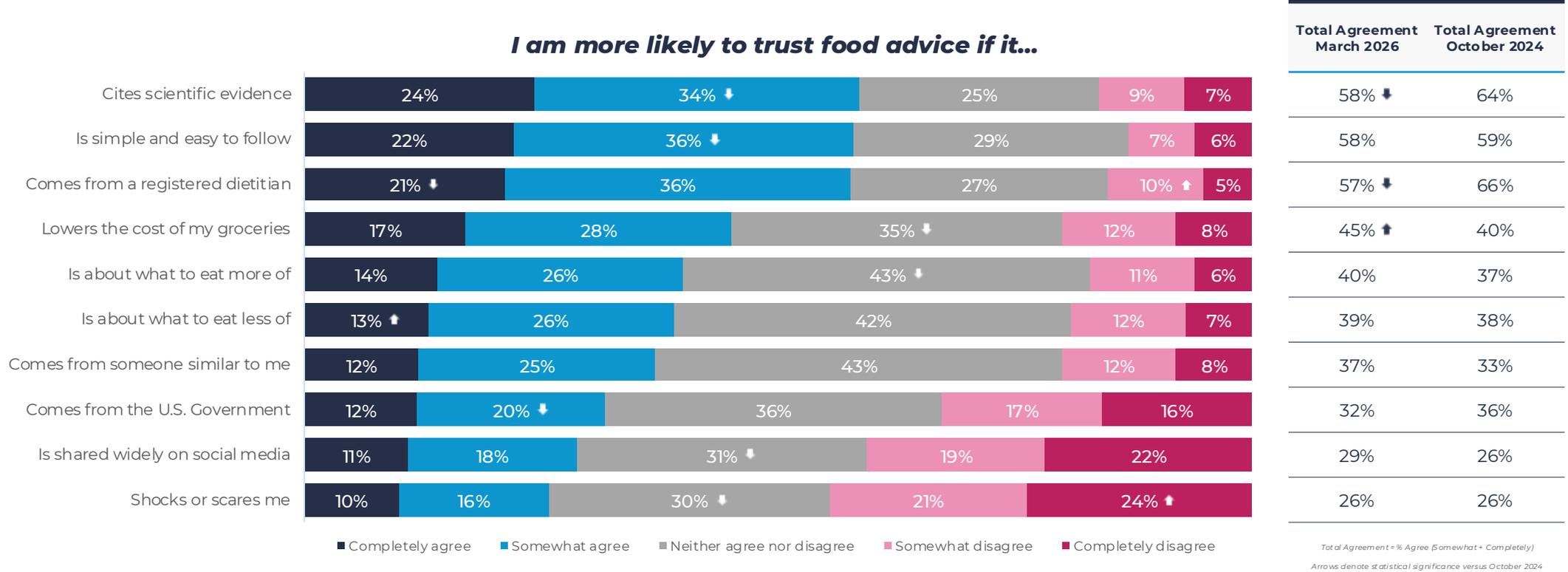
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More than half of Americans say they are more likely to trust food advice if it cites scientific evidence, if it is simple and easy to follow, and if it comes from a registered dietitian.

Americans are more likely to distrust food advice if it shocks or scares them (45%), is shared widely on social media (41%), or if it comes from the U.S. government (33%)

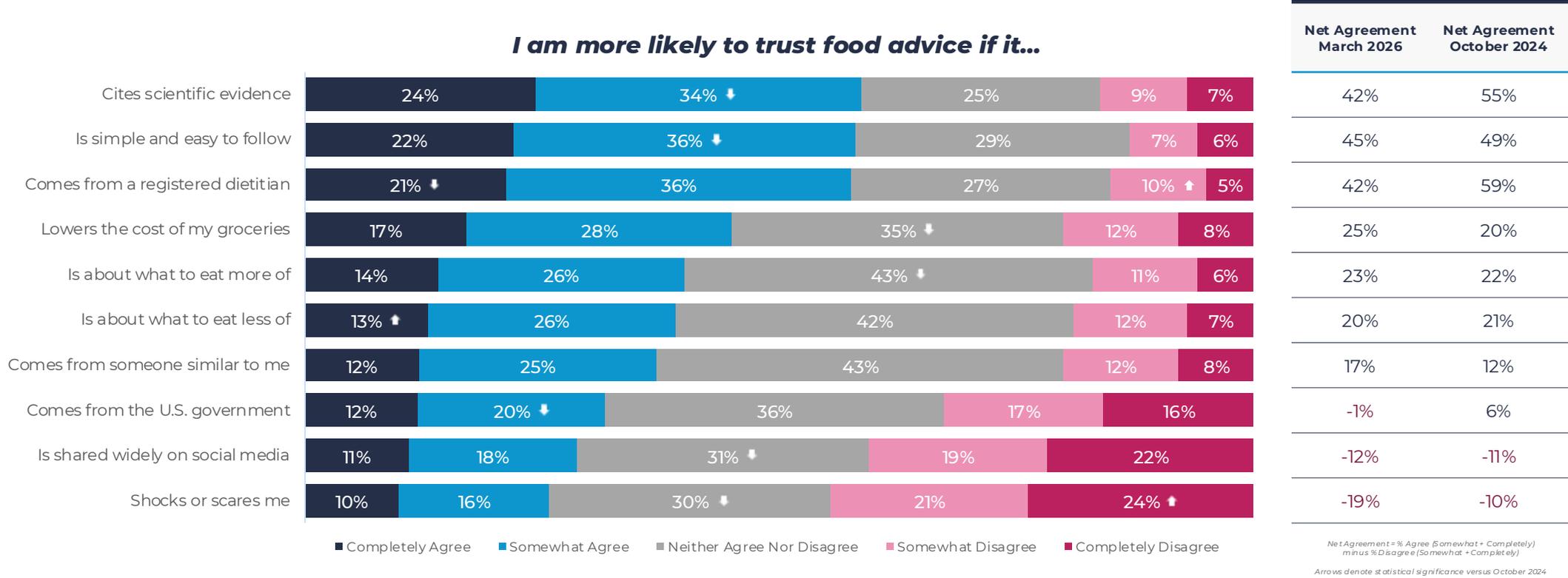


Q5. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=1018)

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