



**SPOTLIGHT
SURVEY**

Americans' Perceptions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

May 2026



METHODOLOGY



The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. One thousand eight adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from January 20-27, 2026, and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

The Bayesian confidence level for the survey sample (n=1008) 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.

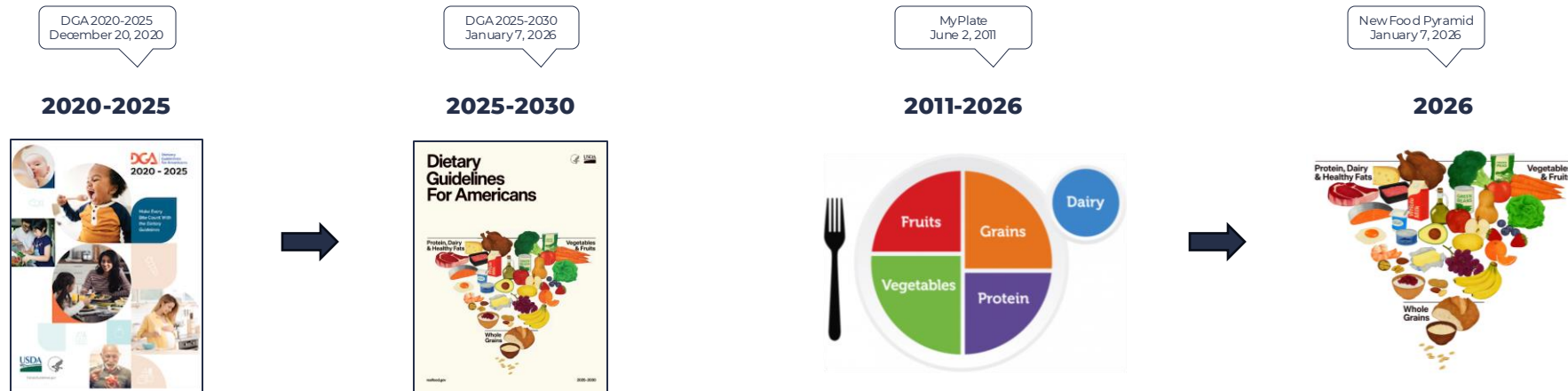
SUGGESTED CITATION:

International Food Information Council (IFIC). IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. May 2026.

METHODOLOGY

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030*, were released on January 7, 2026. Concurrently, a new Food Pyramid was introduced, replacing MyPlate as the primary visual representation of U.S. dietary guidance after nearly 15 years.

This IFIC Spotlight Survey, *Americans' Perceptions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, was conducted January 20-27, 2026.



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International Food Information Council (IFIC). IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. May 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2026 ushered in new federal dietary guidance and a new companion visual. With the release of the [*Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030*](#) on January 7, 2026, and the introduction of a new Food Pyramid to replace MyPlate after nearly 15 years, this *IFIC Spotlight Survey, “Americans’ Perceptions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans,”* provides an early look at how Americans are receiving and interpreting these updates.

Fielded just weeks after the release, the survey captures a critical window of time when awareness was forming and first impressions taking shape. While nearly half of Americans (47%) report hearing about the new guidelines within three weeks, familiarity, confidence, and understanding vary widely. Broad concepts like balance, variety, and moderation are widely recognized in theory, while a focus on individual nutrients or food groups often resonate in practice.

This is also an important time as policymakers and stakeholders begin to implement updated dietary guidance, including a reimaged, inverted Food Pyramid. As the foundation for nutrition policy, education, and federal programs, it is mandated that the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* be based on rigorous scientific review to promote health and reduce chronic disease risk. Public confidence in the strength of the science supporting the guidelines, however, remains mixed.

Ensuring that Americans not only see but understand and trust official dietary guidance is essential to support food choices that are nutritious, affordable, convenient, sustainable, and enjoyable, all key ingredients for long-term health and well-being.



KEY FINDINGS

Most Americans say consuming more fruits and vegetables would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier.

Eating healthier often involves eating more of some foods and less of others. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, respondents were asked to select the single action they believe would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier. More than one-quarter (27%) chose consuming more fruits and vegetables, making it the clear top priority and far exceeding any other approach to building a healthy dietary pattern.

After fruits and vegetables, the next most frequently selected actions reflect a focus on reducing perceived negatives in the diet, with consuming less highly processed food (16%) and less added sugar (12%). Together, these two reduction-oriented behaviors approach about equal the share who prioritized fruits and vegetables.

About one in ten Americans selected more inclusive approaches, including consuming more “real food” (11%) or more protein (10%). Fewer respondents chose other actions, such as consuming less saturated fat (6%) or sodium (5%), or increasing intake of fiber (4%), whole grains (3%), or dairy (3%), suggesting a broader but less concentrated set of priorities that Americans believe would improve their diet.

More than half of Americans say it would be easy for them to consistently take the action they believe would make the biggest difference in eating healthier.

Perceptions of difficulty suggest that many Americans see their top dietary change as achievable. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, more than half (56%) say it would be very (25%) or somewhat (31%) easy to consistently take the action they believe would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, indicating confidence in their ability to follow through.

At the same time, a notable share express uncertainty or potential barriers. Nearly one-quarter (23%) say it would be neither easy nor difficult, while 21% anticipate challenges, including 17% who say it would be somewhat difficult and 4% who say it would be very difficult.

Perceived ease varies by type of food and behavior. Actions that involve adding foods are more often seen as achievable: 79% say consuming more dairy would be easy to do consistently, followed by fiber (75%), fruits and vegetables (68%), whole grains (64%), protein (63%), and “real food” (48%). In contrast, fewer view reduction strategies as easy to do consistently, including consuming less saturated fat (50%), sodium (49%), added sugar (49%), and highly processed foods (42%).

KEY FINDINGS

Within three weeks of its release, nearly half of Americans reported hearing about the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030.

Awareness of the [*Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030*](#) reached a substantial share of the public within weeks of their release. Published on January 7, 2026, the guidelines were followed shortly by this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, fielded January 20–27, 2026, enabling an early assessment of public awareness. By late January, 47% of Americans reported having heard about the updated guidelines, 43% had not, and 9% were unsure.

Within three weeks of its debut, nearly half of Americans reported seeing the new Food Pyramid.

The image of the new Food Pyramid reached a substantial share of the U.S. public within weeks of its debut. Released alongside the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030* on January 7, 2026, it achieved broad early exposure. By late January, 47% of Americans reported having seen the image, 44% had not, and 9% were unsure.

These findings indicate that early exposure to the new Food Pyramid was considerable but not universal within the first three weeks of its release, mirroring initial awareness observed for the updated guidelines.

Most Americans say the new Food Pyramid graphic communicates to eat more of the foods at the top and less of the foods at the bottom.

With the new Food Pyramid replacing MyPlate as the visual representation of U.S. dietary guidance, this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* examined how Americans interpret new graphic. More than one-third (36%) view it as conveying a top-to-bottom hierarchy of food choices, aligning with the most common takeaway: “eat more of the foods at the top and less of those at the bottom.” Notably, this interpretation is not an official message from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030*, but was included as an addition response option.

Other takeaways are more dispersed. About three in ten Americans say the new Food Pyramid communicates eating fruits and vegetables throughout the day (31%), while roughly one-quarter associate it with eating the right amount for you (26%), prioritizing protein at every meal (26%, and/or limiting highly processed foods, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates (24%).

Far fewer interpret the new Food Pyramid as conveying guidance to focus on whole grains (15%), incorporate healthy fats (14%), consume dairy (12%), eat more of the foods at the bottom and less of the foods at the top (11%), and/or limit alcoholic beverages (9%).

All response options, except the top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top interpretations, were drawn directly from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030*.

KEY FINDINGS

More than three in four Americans have seen the MyPlate graphic.

Familiarity with the MyPlate graphic is widespread, with most Americans recognizing it at a basic level. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, 77% say they have seen the graphic, while 18% have not and 5% are unsure. These findings closely mirror recent *IFIC Food & Health Survey* results (76% in 2024 and 77% in 2025), which marked a notable increase from levels observed over the previous decade.

At the same time, depth of understanding varies. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, more than half of Americans (54%) report knowing at least a fair amount about MyPlate, including 35% who know a fair amount and 19% who know a lot, nearly identical results to 2024 (54%) and 2025 (53%) findings from the *IFIC Food & Health Survey*.

These findings show that while MyPlate has achieved broad and sustained visibility, familiarity does not always translate into deeper understanding, leaving a meaningful share of Americans with only surface-level awareness of its guidance.

Most Americans say the MyPlate graphic communicates striving for balance, variety, and moderation.

With the Food Pyramid replacing MyPlate as the new visual representation of U.S. dietary guidance, this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* examined how Americans interpret these graphics. About half of Americans (51%) say the MyPlate graphic communicates striving for balance, variety, and moderation, making it the most commonly recognized message. Notably, this top takeaway was not an official MyPlate message but was included as an additional response option.

In contrast, fewer Americans associate the graphic with its official messages. Just over one-third (36%) say it conveys making half the plate fruits and vegetables, and fewer (29%) link it to the idea that healthy eating adds up over time. Far fewer identify more specific guidance, such as varying protein choices (15%), making at least half of grains whole (14%), or choosing low-fat dairy (12%).

All response options, except “balance, variety, and moderation,” were drawn directly from [official MyPlate materials](#).

KEY FINDINGS

Six in ten Americans say they are at least somewhat familiar with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Familiarity with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is moderate, with most Americans reporting at least some awareness. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, 61% say they are very (19%) or somewhat (42%) familiar, indicating that a majority recognize Dietary Guidelines at a basic level.

At the same time, a sizable minority report limited familiarity. Nearly four in ten (39%) say they are not very (27%) or not at all (12%) familiar, suggesting that a substantial share of the public may lack exposure to or engagement with federal dietary guidance.

The distribution points to broad but shallow awareness. While visibility of dietary guidance materials is relatively high in the U.S. (47% report hearing about the latest guidelines within weeks of release, 47% say they have seen the new Food Pyramid within the same timeframe, and 77% say they have seen the MyPlate graphic), only 19% report strong familiarity with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* overall.

These findings suggest that while the U.S. Dietary Guidelines have reach, deeper understanding and sustained engagement remain more limited across the population.

Among those familiar with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, confidence is mixed about the strength of the supporting science.

Among Americans (61%) who report being at least somewhat familiar with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, confidence in the strength of the supporting science is mixed. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, 30% express high confidence, including 11% who are extremely confident and 19% who are very confident.

The largest share (36%) report moderate confidence, while a similar portion (35%) express lower confidence, including 24% who are slightly confident and 11% who are not at all confident. Notably, the share at each end of the spectrum is identical, with 11% reporting being extremely confident and 11% not at all confident.

This symmetry, combined with the sizeable middle group, underscores the absence of a clear consensus among the American public. Overall, the findings suggest that familiarity with the Dietary Guidelines does not necessarily translate into strong confidence in their scientific foundation, with views distributed across the spectrum and many Americans remaining in the middle.

KEY FINDINGS

Most Americans agree that eating more protein makes a diet healthier, that eating healthier costs more, and that a healthy diet can include both whole and refined grains.

Americans' beliefs about healthy eating reflect a mix of widely held views and areas of uncertainty. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, most Americans agree that eating more protein makes a diet healthier (63%), that eating healthier costs more than eating less healthy foods (63%), and that a healthy diet can include both whole and refined grains (57%). Notably, the cost of healthy eating elicits the strongest conviction, with the highest share of “strongly agree” responses (31%) among all response options.

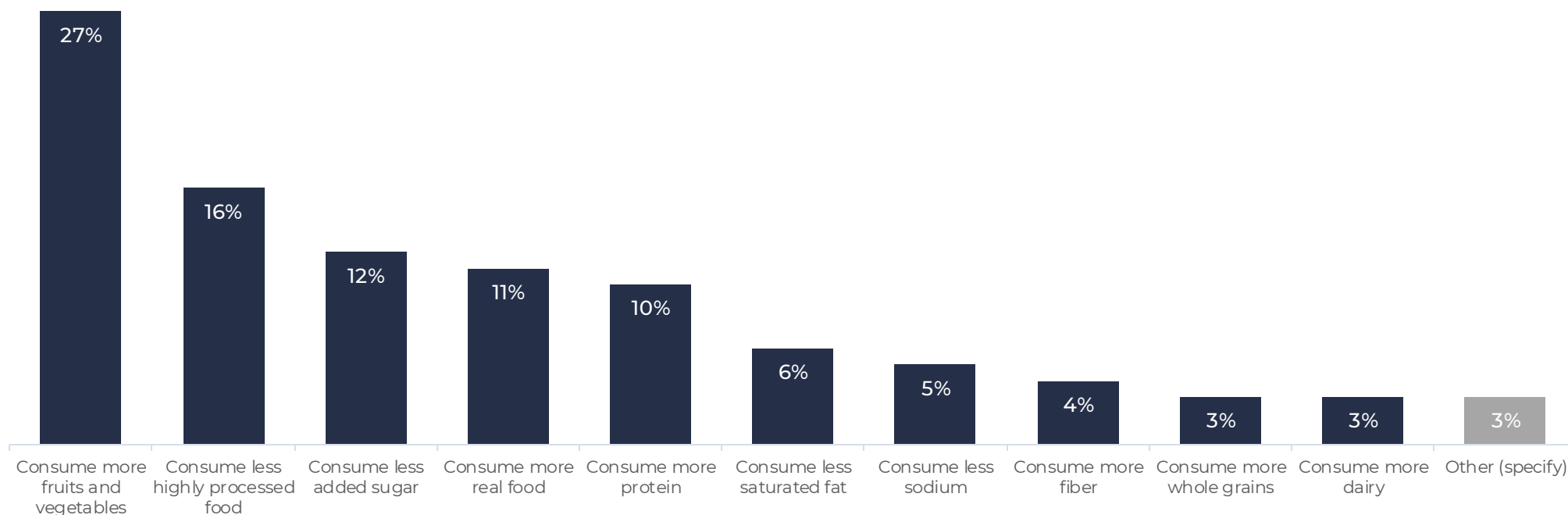
At the same time, far fewer Americans agree with statements suggesting that eating fewer processed foods removes the need to monitor intake of nutrients that are often overconsumed by Americans. More than one in four agree that eating fewer processed foods eliminates the need to worry about added sugar (28%), sodium (28%) or saturated fat (28%), indicating broad recognition that these nutrients remain important regardless of food choices.

Uncertainty is most evident around a recent nutrition trend: beef tallow. Nearly half of Americans (48%) either are ambivalent (30%) or say they do not know enough (18%) to assess whether beef tallow is a healthy type of fat.

Most Americans say consuming more fruits and vegetables would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier.

While increasing fruit and vegetable intake (27%) far outpaces other actions, at least one in ten Americans say eating less highly processed food (16%), less added sugar (12%), more real food (11%), or more protein (10%) would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier.

Top Action Americans Say Would Help Them Eat Healthier



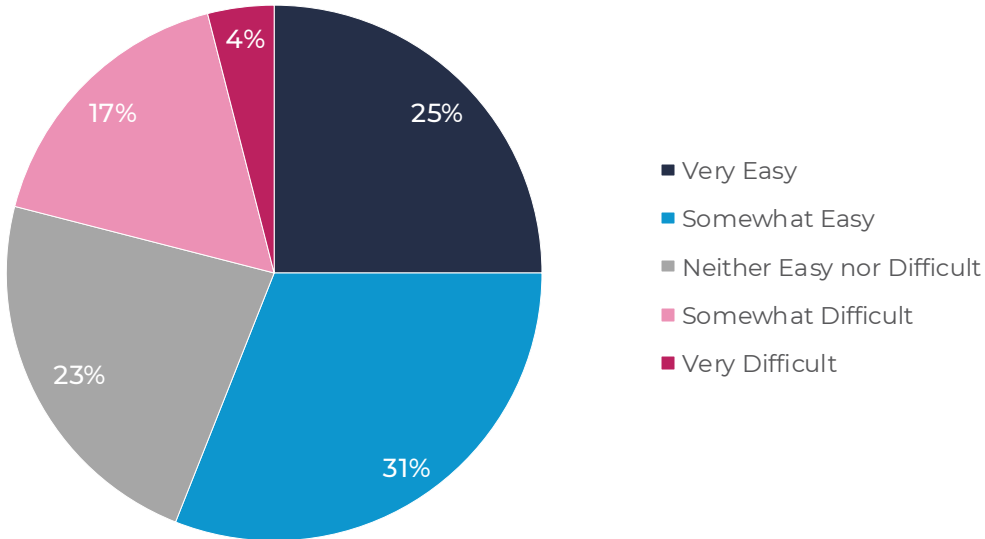
More than half of Americans say it would be easy for them to consistently take the action they believe would make the biggest difference in eating healthier.

While 56% say it would be very (25%) or somewhat (31%) easy to consistently take the action they believe would make the biggest difference in eating healthier, 23% say it would neither be easy nor difficult, and 21% say it would be somewhat (17%) or very (4%) difficult.

Action Americans Say Would Help Them Eat Healthier

1. Consume more fruits and vegetables (27%, n=272)
2. Consume less highly processed food (16%, n=163)
3. Consume less added sugar (12%, n=119)
4. Consume more real food (11%, n=113)
5. Consume more protein (10%, n=101)
6. Consume less saturated fat (6%, n=56)
7. Consume less sodium (5%, n=52)
8. Consume more fiber (4%, n=39)
9. Consume more whole grains (3%, n=30)
10. Consume more dairy (3%, n=27)
11. Other (3%, n=28)

Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Taking The Action

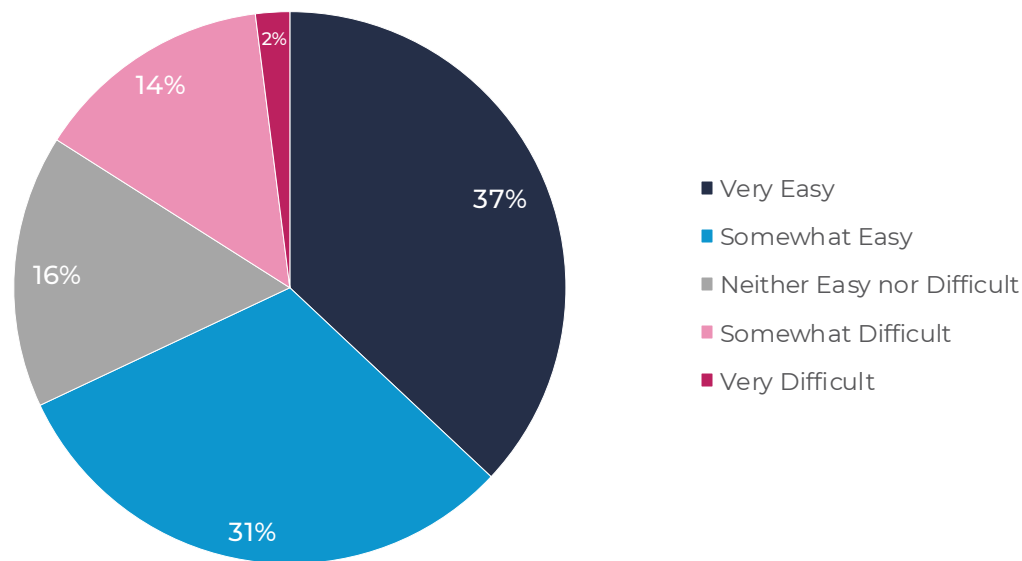


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently... (n=1008)

Among those who say consuming more fruits and vegetables would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, nearly seven in ten say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 68% say it would be very (37%) or somewhat (31%) easy to consistently eat more fruits and vegetables, 16% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 16% say it would be somewhat (14%) or very (2%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming More Fruits & Vegetables

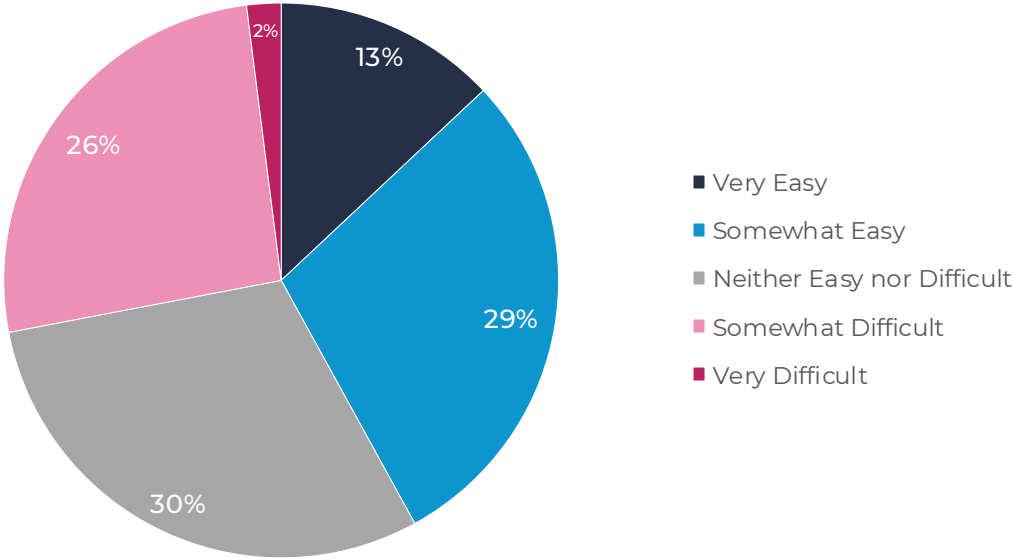


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume more fruits and vegetables?
(n=272; FILTER: Consuming more fruits and vegetables would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming less highly processed food would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, four in ten say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 42% say it would be very (13%) or somewhat (29%) easy for them to consistently consume less highly processed food, 30% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 28% say it would be somewhat (26%) or very (2%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming Less Highly Processed Food

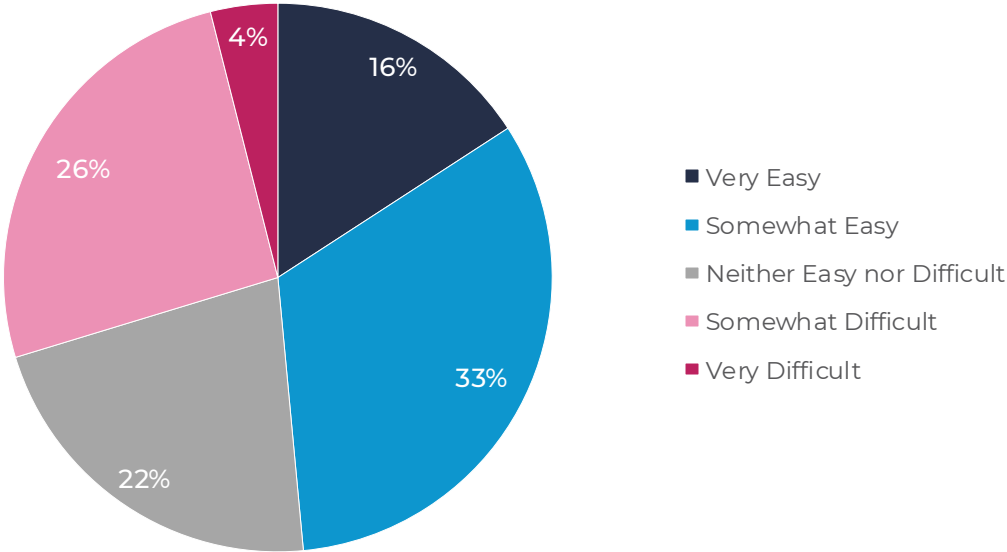


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume less highly processed food?
(n=163; FILTER: Consuming less highly processed foods would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming less added sugar would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, half say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 49% say it would be very (16%) or somewhat (33%) easy for them to consistently consume less added sugar, 22% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 30% say it would be somewhat (26%) or very (4%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming Less Added Sugar



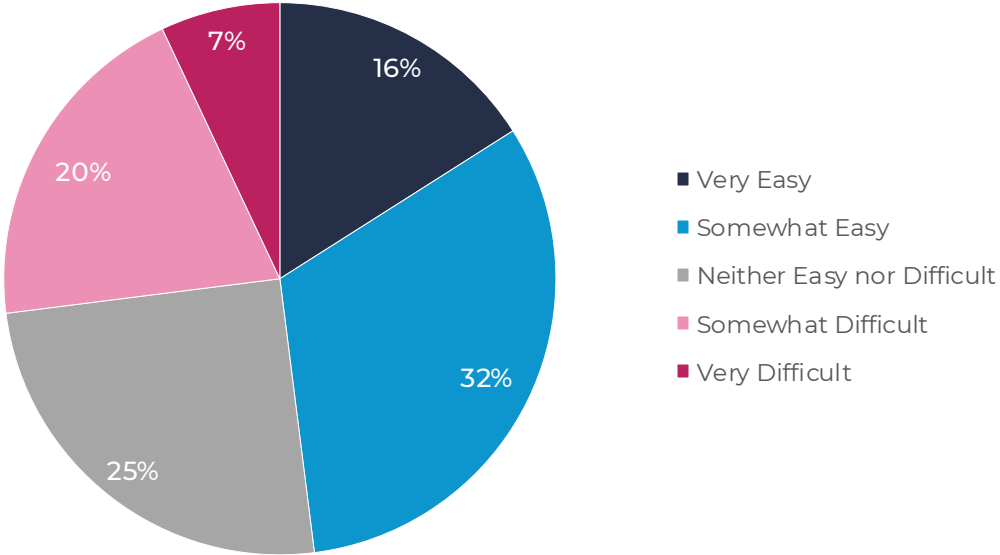
Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding

Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume less added sugar?
(n=119; FILTER: Consuming less added sugar would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming more real food would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, half say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 48% say it would be very (16%) or somewhat (32%) easy for them to consistently consume more real food, 25% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 27% say it would be somewhat (20%) or very (7%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming More Real Food

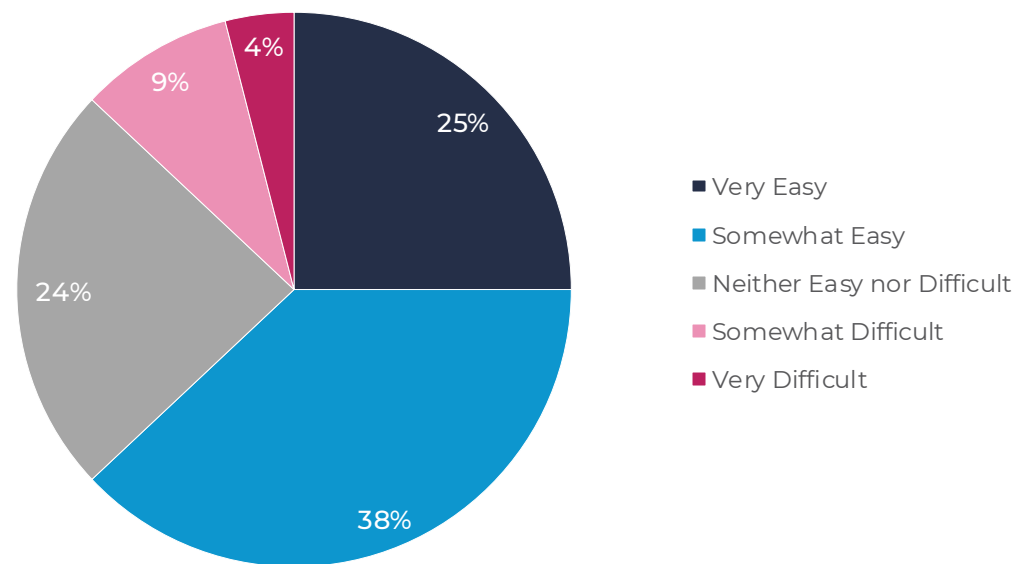


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume more real food?
(n=113; FILTER: Consuming more real food would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming more protein would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, two in three say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 63% say it would be very (25%) or somewhat (38%) easy for them to consistently consume more protein, 24% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 13% say it would be somewhat (9%) or very (4%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming More Protein

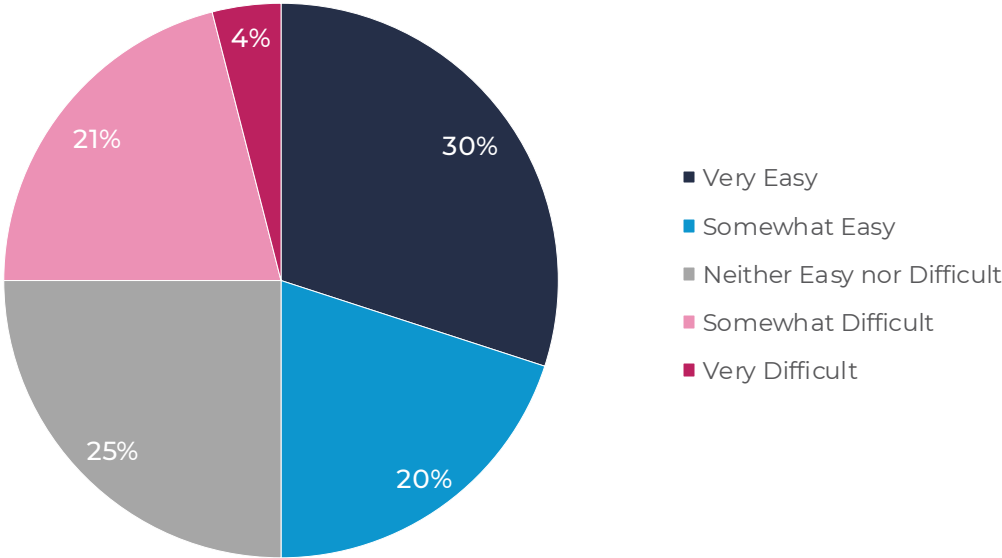


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume more protein?
(n=101; FILTER: Consuming more protein would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming less saturated fat would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, half say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 50% say it would be very (30%) or somewhat (20%) easy for them to consistently consume less saturated fat, 25% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 25% say it would be somewhat (21%) or very (4%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming Less Saturated Fat

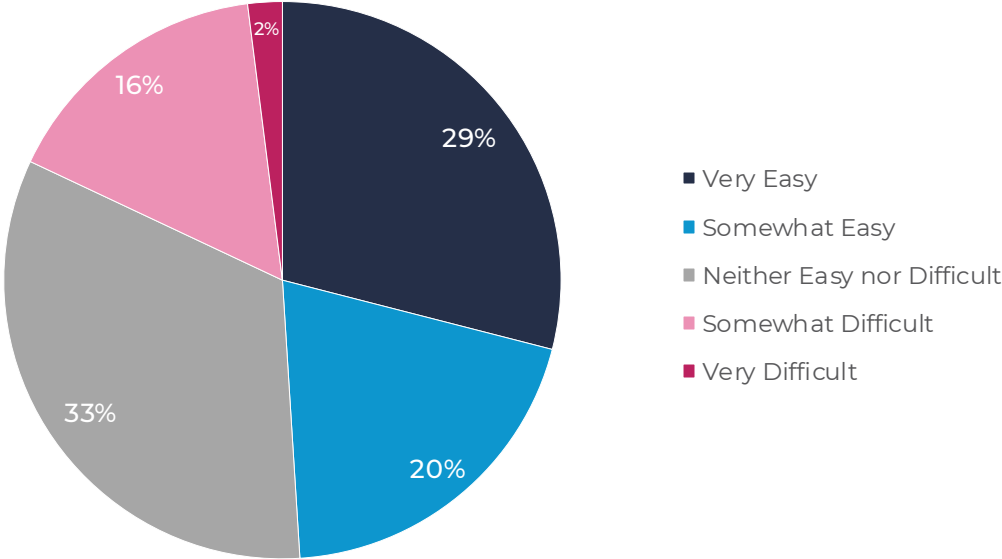


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume less saturated fat?
(n=56; FILTER: Consuming less saturated fat would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming less sodium would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, half say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 49% say it would be very (29%) or somewhat (20%) easy for them to consistently consume less sodium, 33% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 18% say it would be somewhat (16%) or very (2%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming Less Sodium

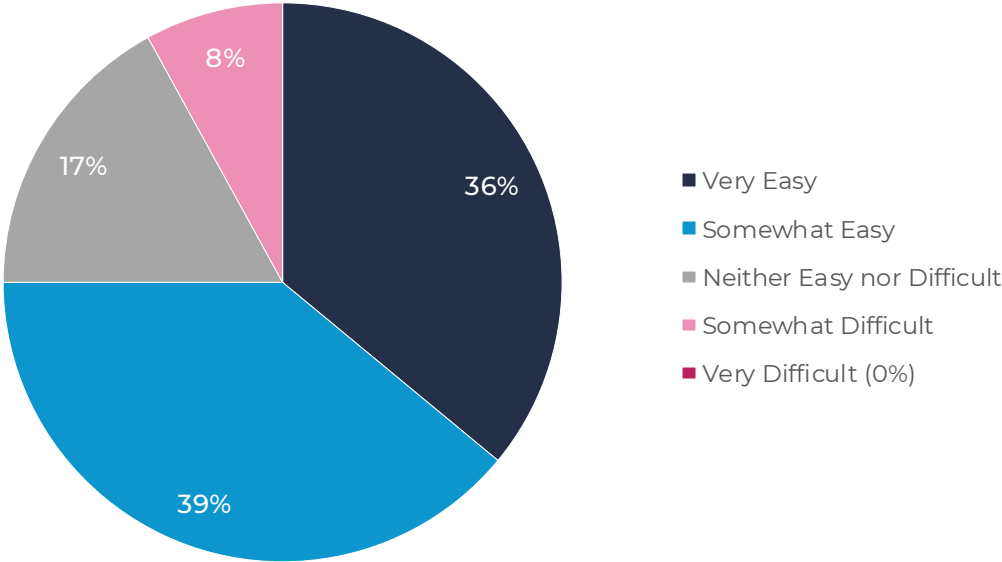


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume less sodium?
(n=52; FILTER: Consuming less sodium would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming more fiber would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, three in four say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 75% say it would be very (36%) or somewhat (39%) easy for them to consistently consume more fiber, 17% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 8% say it would be somewhat (8%) or very (0%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming More Fiber

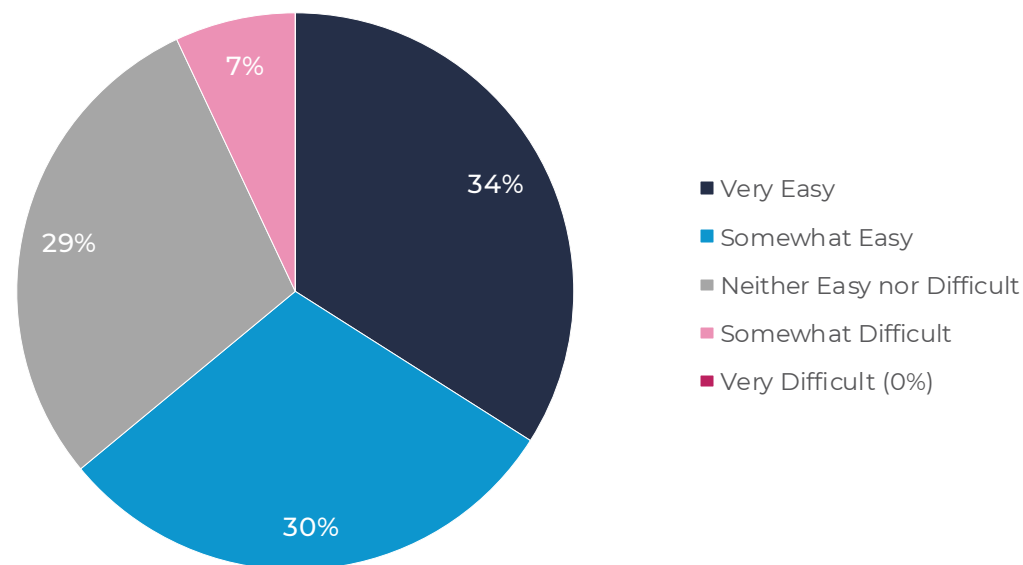


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume more fiber?
(n=39; FILTER: Consuming more fiber would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming more whole grains would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, two in three say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 64% say it would be very (34%) or somewhat (30%) easy for them to consistently consume more whole grains, 29% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 7% say it would be somewhat (7%) or very (0%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming More Whole Grains

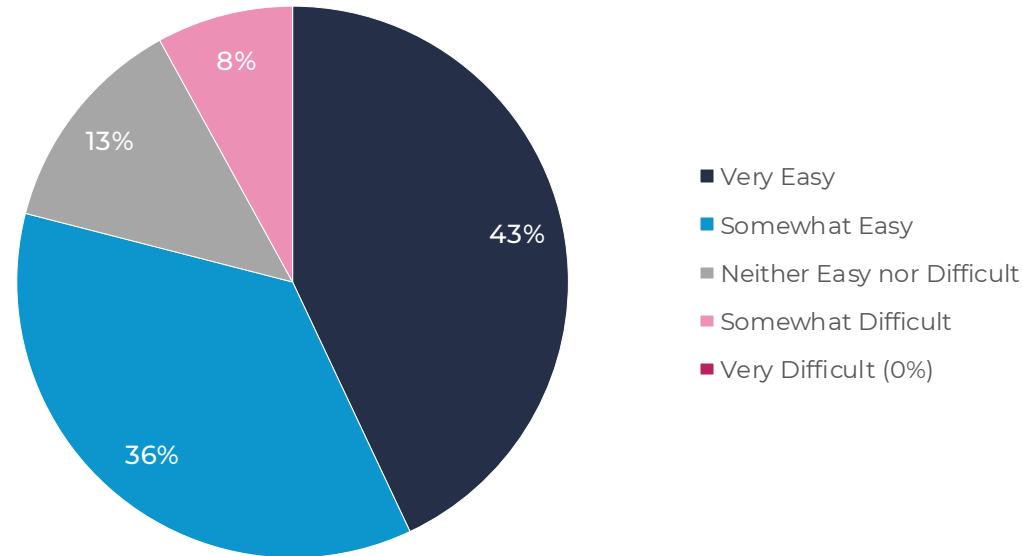


Q2. How easy or difficult would it be for you to consistently consume more whole grains?
(n=30; FILTER: Consuming more whole grains would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier)

Among those who say consuming more dairy would make the biggest difference in helping them eat healthier, nearly eight in ten say it would be easy to do consistently.

While 79% say it would be very (43%) or somewhat (36%) easy for them to consistently consume more dairy, 13% say it would be neither easy nor difficult, and 8% say it would be somewhat (8%) or very (0%) difficult.

Perceived Ease Or Difficulty Of Consistently Consuming More Dairy



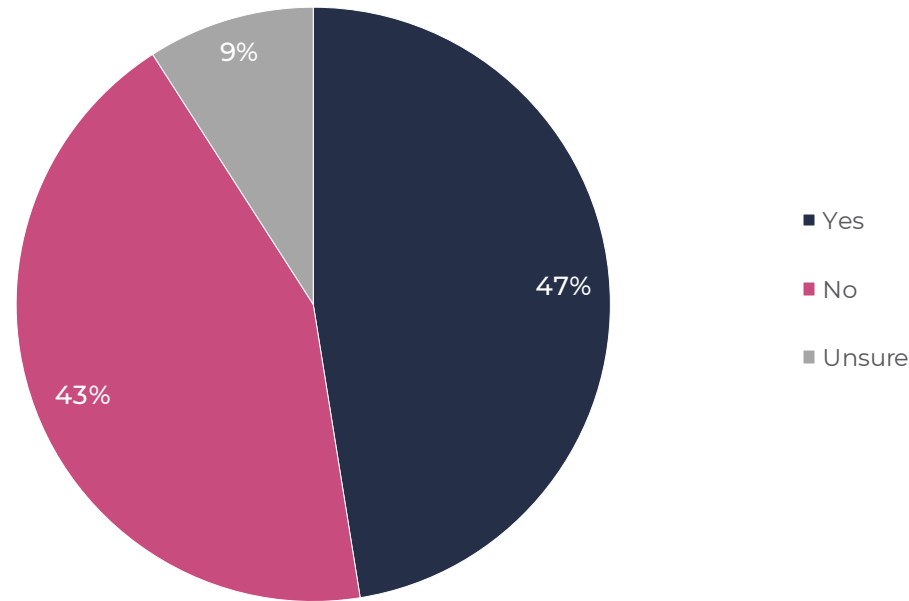
Within three weeks of its release, nearly half of Americans reported hearing about the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030.

By late January 2026, 47% of Americans reported hearing about the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030, while 43% reported they had not.

Awareness Of The Newly Released Dietary Guidelines For Americans, 2025-2030

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030 were released on January 7, 2026.

This IFIC Spotlight Survey was fielded January 20-27, 2026.

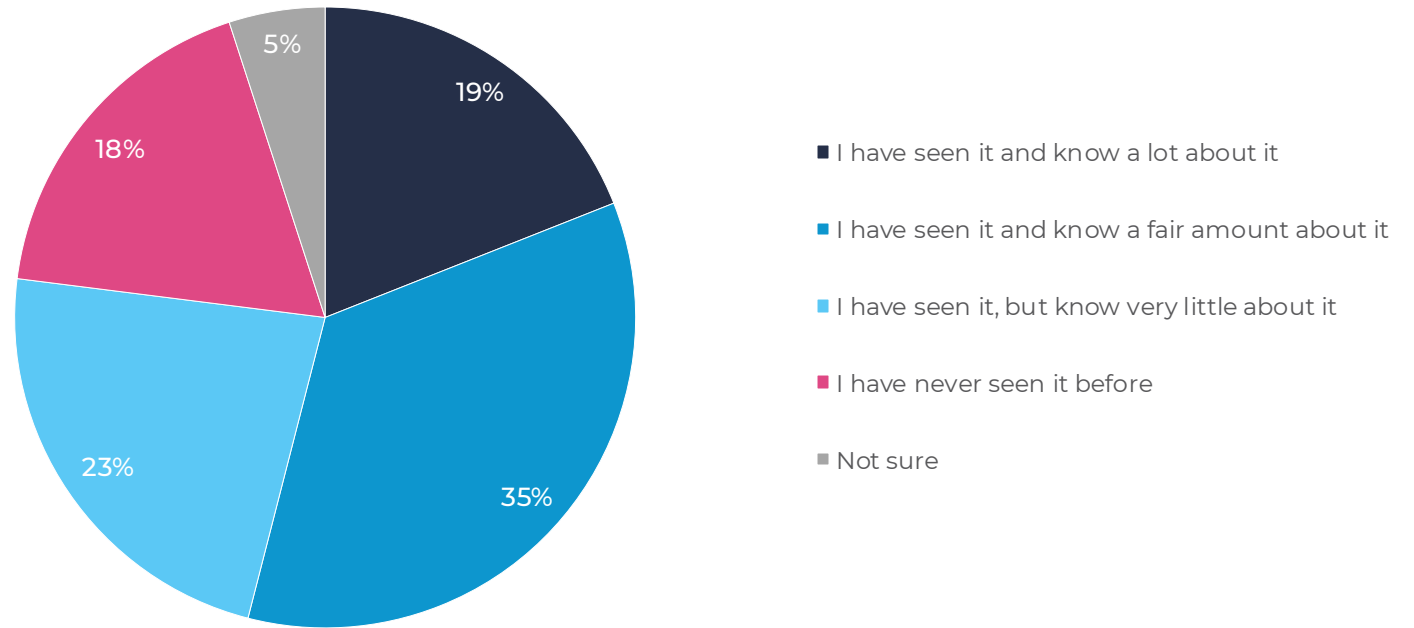


Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding

More than three in four Americans have seen the MyPlate graphic.

Most Americans (77%) say they have seen the MyPlate graphic, while 18% have not and 5% are unsure. More than half (54%) report knowing at least a fair amount about it, including 35% who say they know a fair amount and 19% who know a lot.

Awareness Of The MyPlate Graphic



The [IFIC Food & Health Survey](#) found similar levels of familiarity with MyPlate in 2024 and 2025.

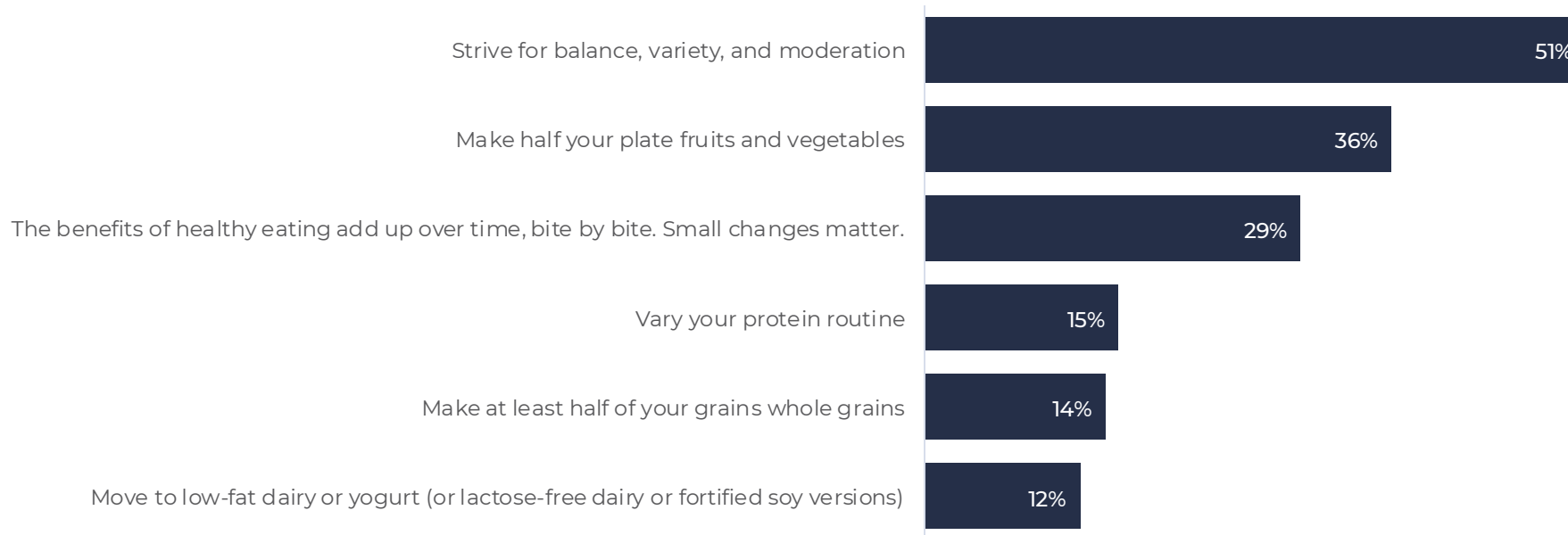
2024: [76%](#) reported having seen the MyPlate graphic
2024: [54%](#) reported knowing a lot/a fair amount about MyPlate

2025: [77%](#) reported having seen the MyPlate graphic
2025: [53%](#) reported knowing a lot/a fair amount about MyPlate

Most Americans say the MyPlate graphic communicates striving for balance, variety, and moderation.

While 51% of Americans say the MyPlate graphic communicates striving for a balanced diet, fewer say it conveys a goal to make half your plate fruits and vegetables (36%) and/or the benefits of healthy eating through small changes that add up over time, bite by bite (29%). Far fewer associate it with specific guidance on protein (15%), grains (14%), and/or dairy (12%).

Top Takeaways From The MyPlate Graphic



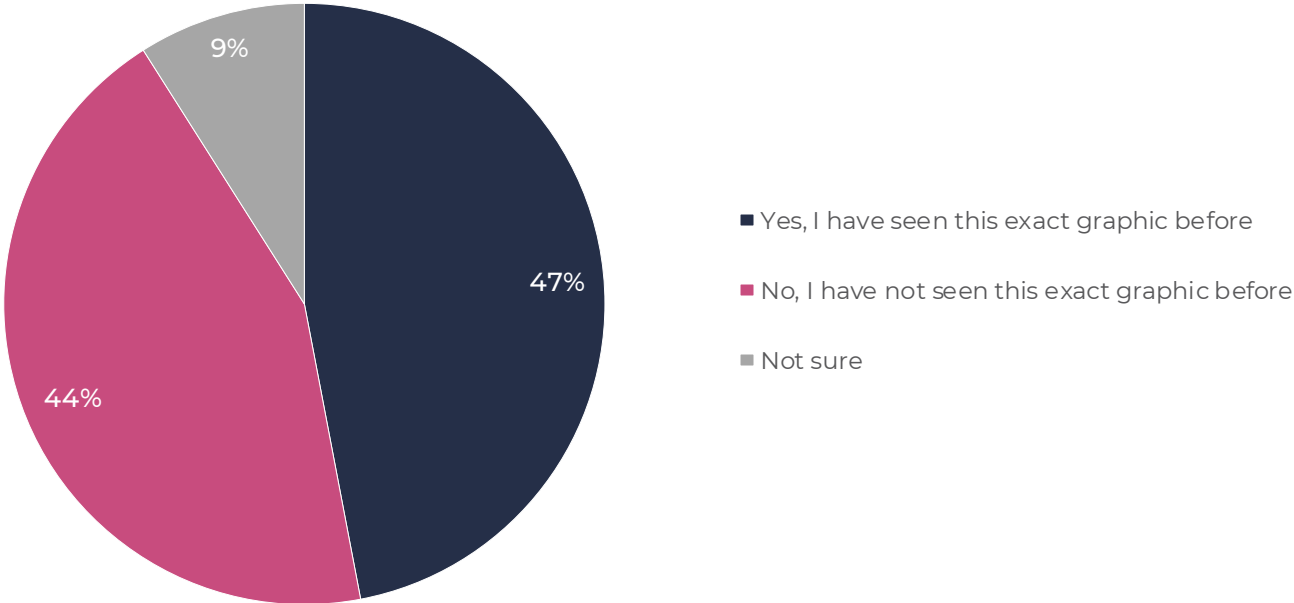
Within three weeks of its debut, nearly half of Americans reported seeing the new Food Pyramid.

By late January 2026, 47% said they had seen the new Food Pyramid graphic, while 44% had not and 9% were unsure.

Americans Who Had Seen The New Food Pyramid Graphic By Late January 2026

The New Food Pyramid was released January 7, 2026.

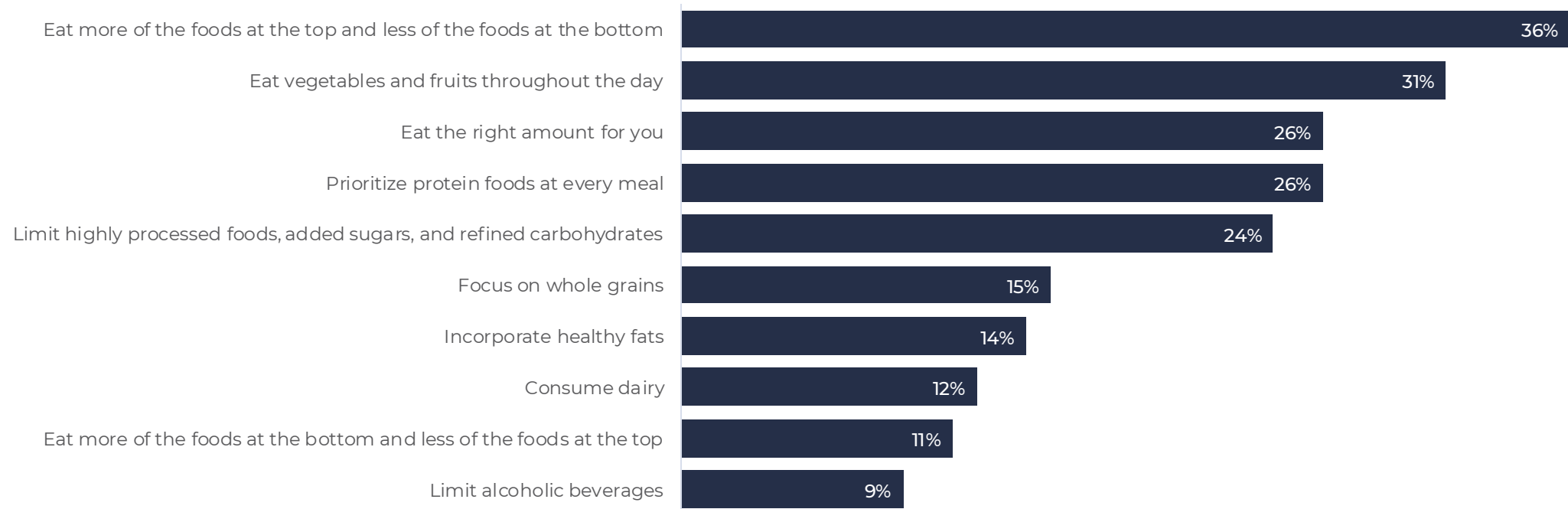
This IFIC Spotlight Survey was fielded January 20-27, 2026.



Most Americans say the new Food Pyramid graphic communicates to eat more of the foods at the top and less of the foods at the bottom.

More than one-third of Americans (36%) interpret the new Food Pyramid graphic as a top-to-bottom hierarchy of food choices. Other common takeaways include to eat fruits and vegetables throughout the day (31%), eat the right amount for you (26%), prioritize protein at every meal (26%), and limit highly processed foods, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates (24%).

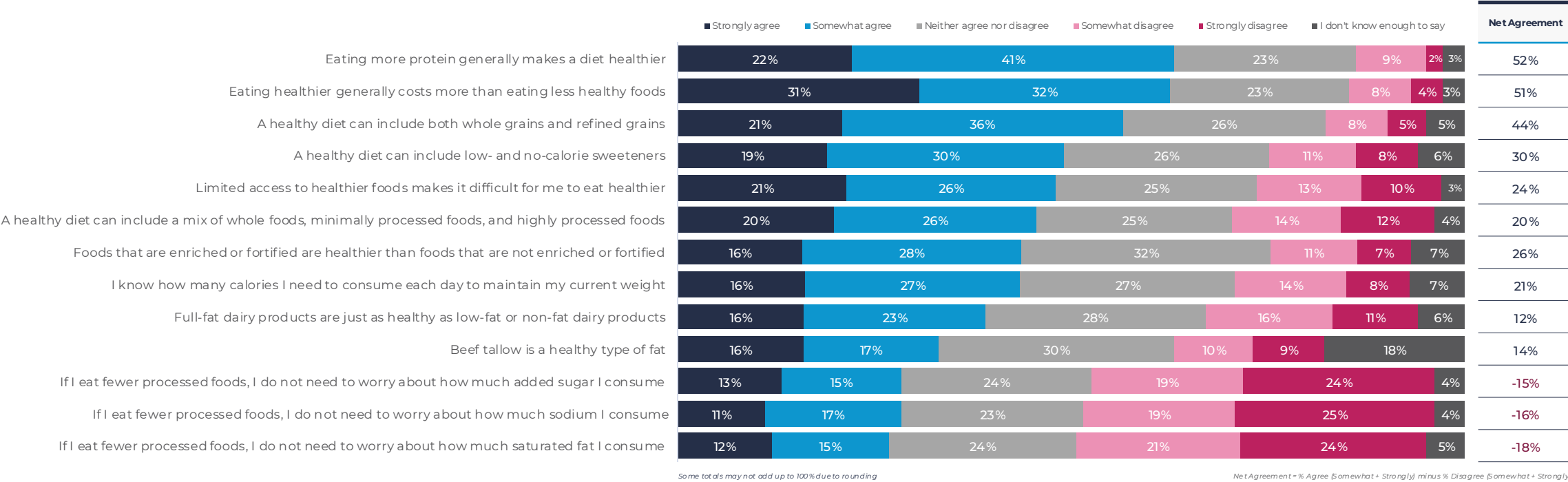
Top Takeaways From The New Food Pyramid Graphic



Most Americans agree that eating more protein makes a diet healthier, that eating healthier costs more, and that a healthy diet can include both whole and refined grains.

Few Americans agree that eating fewer processed foods eliminates the need to worry about intake of added sugar (28%), sodium (28%), and saturated fat (27%). Meanwhile, nearly half (48%) neither agree nor disagree (30%) or do not know enough to say (18%) whether beef tallow is a healthy type of fat.

Beliefs About Healthy Eating



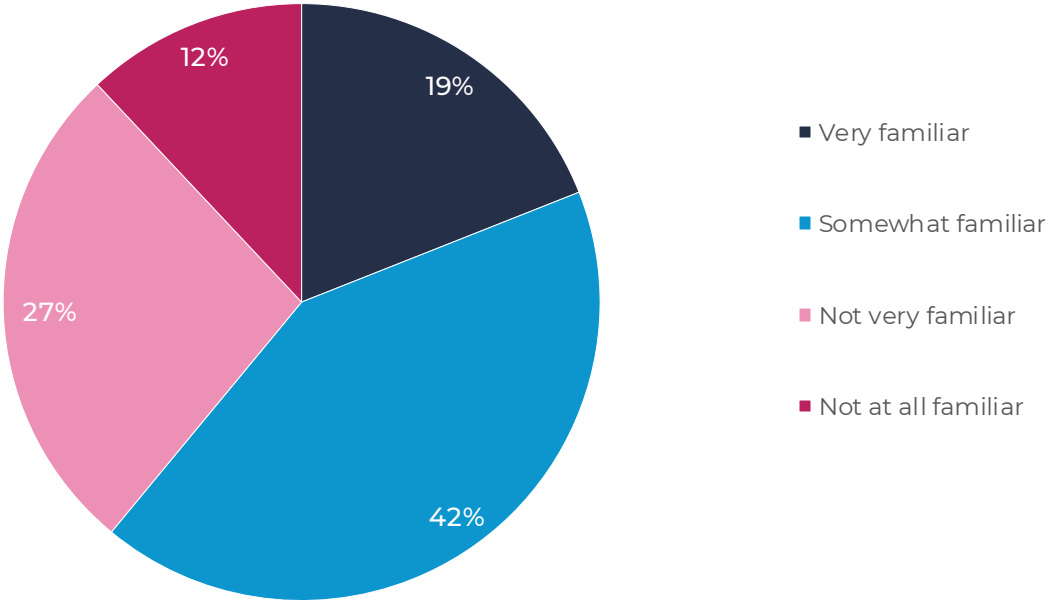
Q8. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements based on what you currently believe. (n=1008)

Six in ten Americans say they are at least somewhat familiar with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

While 61% of Americans report being very (19%) or somewhat (42%) familiar with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 39% say they are not very (27%) or not at all (12%) familiar.

Overall Familiarity With The Dietary Guidelines For Americans

Not specific to the DGA 2025-2030

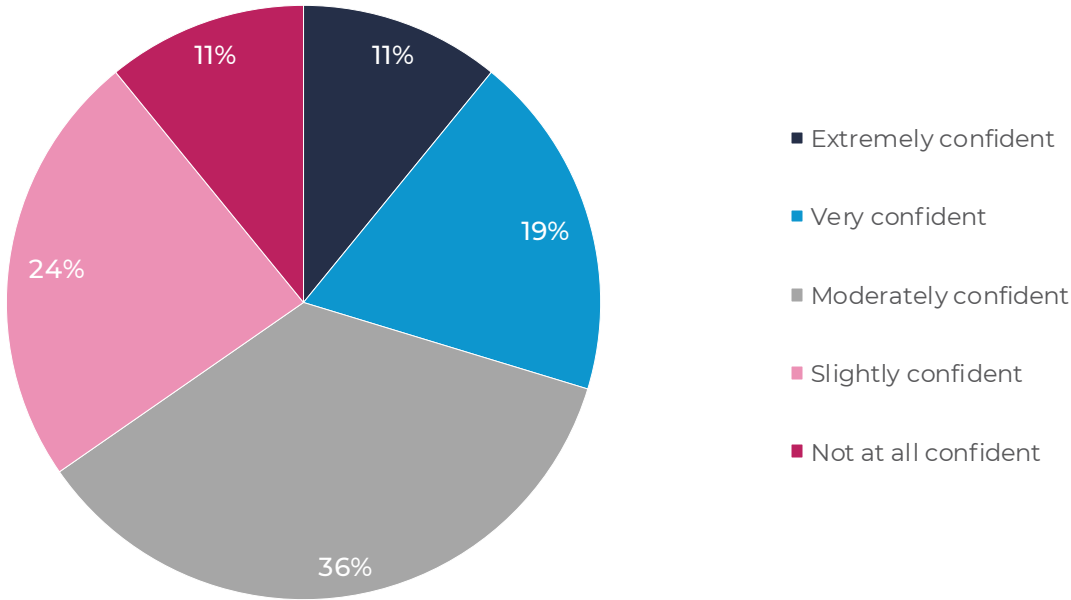


Among those familiar with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, confidence is mixed about the strength of the supporting science.

Most Americans fall in the middle, with 36% reporting moderate confidence, while similar shares lean more confident (30%) or less confident (35%), and identical shares (11%) fall at each extreme.

Confidence In The Science Supporting The Dietary Guidelines For Americans

Of those who report being familiar with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans overall



Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding

Q10. Based on what you know or have heard about the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* overall, how confident are you that they are supported by strong scientific evidence? (n=612; FILTER: Those who report being very or somewhat familiar with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* overall)





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