



**SPOTLIGHT  
SURVEY**

# Americans' Perceptions Of Food Recalls

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September 2025



# METHODOLOGY

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The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about food recalls. One thousand adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from June 7-13, 2025, and were weighted to ensure proportional results. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The Bayesian confidence level for the survey sample (n=1001) is 3.5, which is roughly equivalent to a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1$  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 Food Recalls. September 2025.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food recalls are a critical component of the U.S. food system, protecting consumers from products that could cause harm. Thousands occur each year, with [76%](#) due to potential biological contamination or allergens. While the majority are voluntary and precautionary, recalls can still undermine confidence in the food supply. In fact, the [2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey](#) found that 43% of Americans who lack confidence in the safety of the U.S. food supply cite “too many recalls” as a reason.

This *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Food Recalls* reveals new insights on consumer awareness, beliefs, and expectations on this essential safeguard. Three in four (75%) remember hearing about a food recall recently, and a similar share (74%) believes recalls are happening more frequently. Yet, according to [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) and [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) data, there were more food recalls annually from 2015-2019 than from 2020-2023.

According to data from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), some of the foods that are recommended in a healthy diet (e.g., lean meats, fruits, and vegetables) also carry some of the highest food safety risks. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, these foods are also perceived to be most involved in recalls (26% said meats, poultry, seafood, and 22% said fresh fruits and vegetables).

Media plays a prominent role in recall awareness: nearly half (48%) first learned of a recent recall through news articles or television, while far fewer heard about it first from food companies (7%), retailers (6%), or federal government agencies (6%). Still, nearly half of Americans (46%) believe federal agencies are responsible for informing the public.

Looking forward, consumers favor the modernization of food recall alert protocols. Nearly three in four (73%) support using grocery loyalty card data to directly alert them if they purchased recalled food, and two in three (67%) are interested in signing up for text message alerts whenever a food recall is issued.



# KEY FINDINGS

## Americans expect to hear first from the media about recalls of foods they regularly buy.

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Nearly four in ten (38%) expect to first learn about a food recall from traditional media sources, and 14% expect to hear first through their personal social media feed. About one in ten anticipate learning first from federal government agencies (10%), local retailers (9%), or a food company or manufacturer (8%).

## Three in four Americans believe that food recalls are on the rise.

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Most Americans (74%) believe food recalls are becoming more frequent: 39% say this is true and 35% say it is likely true. In contrast, 14% believe it is false (6%) or likely false (8%), while 13% are unsure.

## Three in four Americans have recently heard about a food recall.

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More Americans remember recent food recalls for ground beef (29%) and/or romaine lettuce (28%) than for other foods, while 25% do not remember hearing about any food recalls recently.

## Among those who recently heard about a food recall, more than six in ten first heard about it from traditional or social media.

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Nearly half of Americans (48%) first learned of a recent food recall through news articles or television, while 15% heard through personal social media. One in ten (10%) first heard from a friend or family member, and fewer than one in ten from a food company (7%), local retailer (6%), federal agency (6%), or healthcare professional (3%).

## Americans think fresh meats, poultry, seafood, fruits, and vegetables are the foods most often involved in recalls.

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Most Americans think food recalls most often involve fresh meats, poultry, and seafood (50%) and/or fresh fruits and vegetables (41%). Smaller shares cite processed foods (24%), dairy (22%), and/or deli meats (21%), while even fewer point to frozen fruits and vegetables (17%), canned foods (15%), and/or frozen entrées (11%).

**Source:** IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Food Recalls. September 2025.

# KEY FINDINGS

## Nearly half of Americans believe that federal government agencies are responsible for informing the public about food recalls.

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Nearly half of Americans (46%) believe a federal agency is responsible for informing the public about food recalls. Far fewer point to food companies (16%), consumer food safety organizations (10%), the media (9%), retailers (5%), or local health departments (5%). Nearly one in ten (8%) are unsure.

## When shown a hypothetical food recall notice, the affected company or products ranked as the most important information.

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Half of Americans (50%) ranked the affected company or products among the top three most important details in a hypothetical food recall notice. One in four (24%) identified it as the single most important detail, while 14% prioritized whether the food should be consumed, and 13% cited the lot code number of the recalled food. One in ten mentioned the company's (10%) or federal government's (10%) response, while fewer prioritized where to find the lot code on food packaging (8%), where the issue was discovered (8%), how to get a refund (7%), or where to find more recall information (6%).

**Source:** IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Food Recalls. September 2025.

## Nearly three in four Americans agree that private information provided for grocery shopper loyalty cards should be used to alert individuals if they purchased recalled food.

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Most Americans (73%) support using grocery loyalty card information to notify them if a purchased food is recalled. While more than two in ten (22%) are undecided, very few Americans somewhat (2%) or strongly (2%) disagree that private grocery shopper loyalty card information should be used for food recall alerts.

## Two in three Americans are interested in signing up for text message alerts that would let them know when a food recall has been issued.

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A majority of Americans (67%) report interest in enrolling to receive food recall text message alerts, whereas approximately three in ten are either unsure (15%) or report no interest (16%).



# IMPLICATIONS

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## Perception Is Reality

This *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Food Recalls* underscores the power of public perception. Three in four Americans (74%) believe food recalls are increasing—a belief that directly shapes confidence in the U.S. food supply. In the [2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey](#), 41% of Americans reported lacking confidence in food safety, and among them, 43% pointed to “too many recalls” as the reason. Although the number of recalls is not tied to their severity, many recalls are voluntary and precautionary. The public’s tendency to equate frequency with seriousness poses a critical risk communication challenge.

## Rethinking Recall Communications

Whether recalls are becoming more common or more severe are important questions, but equally pressing is *how* recall information reaches consumers. Three in four Americans (75%) remember hearing about a recent food recall. Only 7% first heard about it from a food company or manufacturer, 6% from a local retailer, and 6% from the federal government. By contrast, 63% first heard through the media (48% via news, 15% via social media).

Expectations may be misaligned. Nearly half of Americans (46%) believe the government bears responsibility for informing the public about recalls, yet only 10% expect to hear from them first. Conversely, 38% expect initial news regarding a food recall to come from media sources, yet just 9% believe the media should be responsible for providing this service.

## Moving Toward Solutions

This disconnect raises an urgent question: how can food recall communication better reach Americans? Results from this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* show strong support for retailers to leverage private loyalty card data to send targeted text message alerts when purchased products are recalled (73% support the idea, compared with just 4% opposed). While 15% express hesitancy about enrolling to receive text message alerts about food recalls, two-thirds (67%) say they would be interested in signing up if the option were available. These findings point to both an urgent need and a clear opportunity to sync and strengthen food recall communication to build public trust in the U.S. food system.

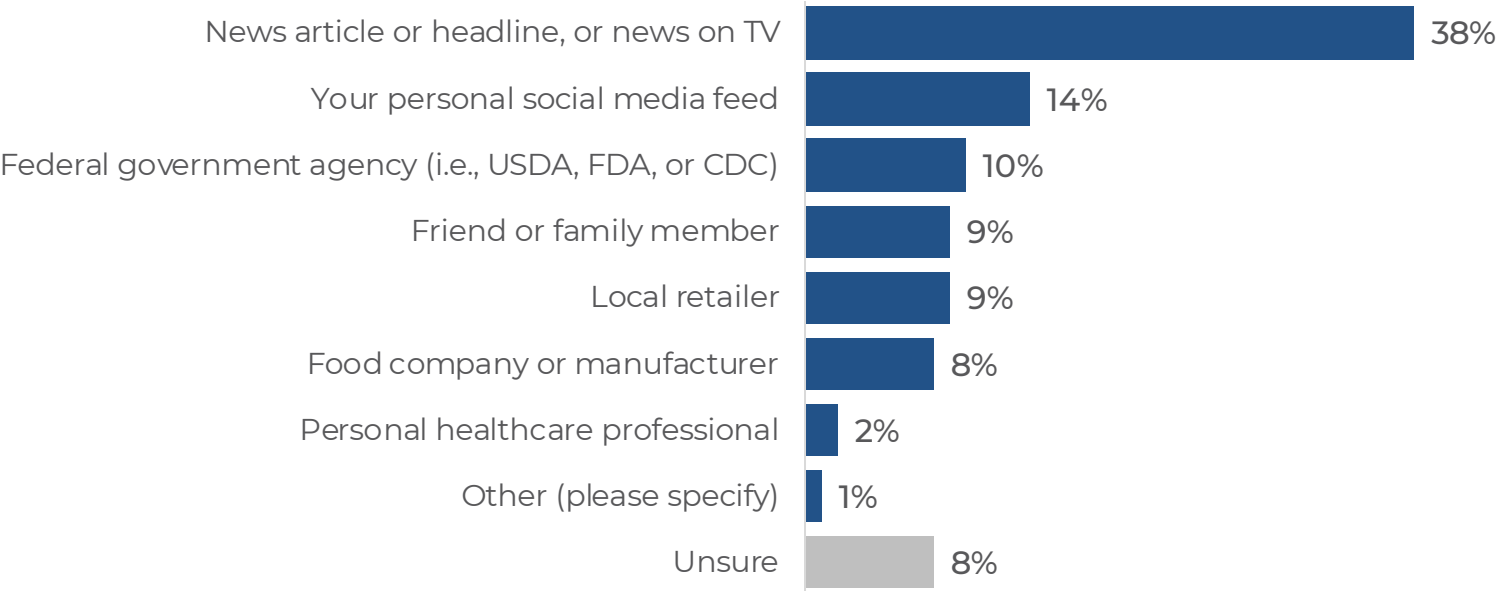
**Source:** IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Food Recalls. September 2025.



# Americans expect to hear first from the media about recalls of food they regularly buy.

Nearly four in ten Americans (38%) expect to first learn about a food recall from traditional media sources, and 14% expect to hear first through their personal social media feed. About one in ten anticipate learning first from federal government agencies (10%), local retailers (9%), or a food company or manufacturer (8%).

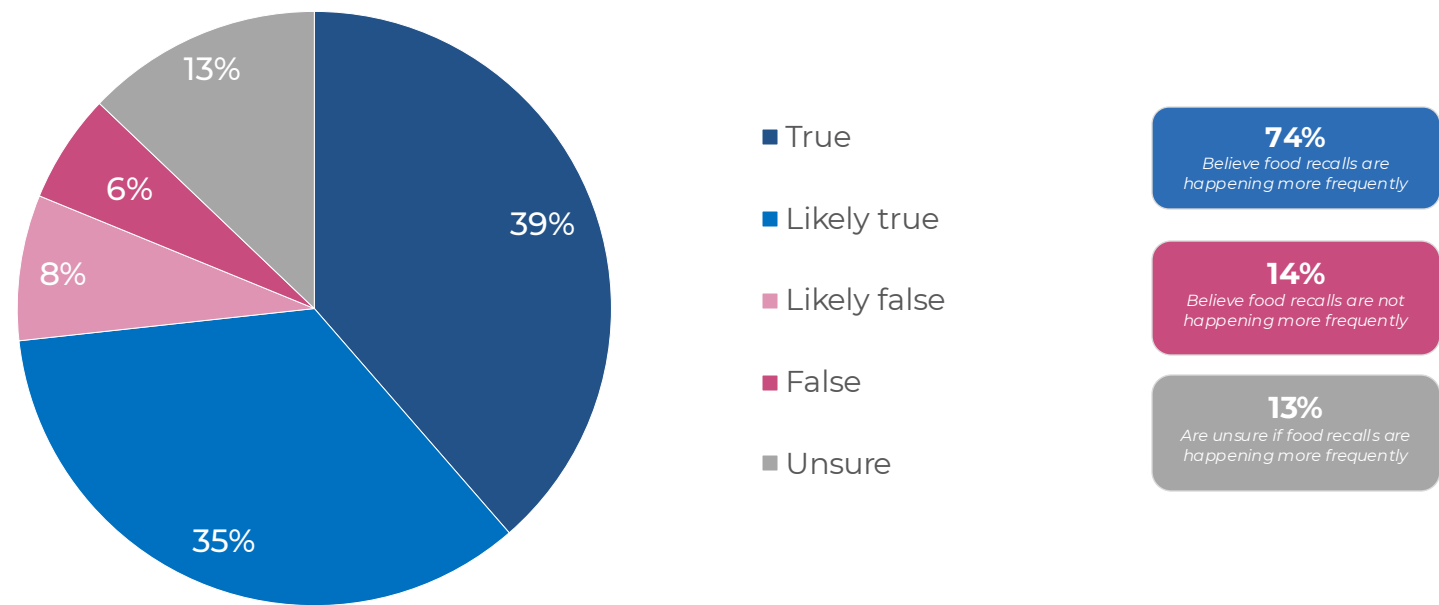
**Expected First Source Of Information About A Food Recall**



# Three in four Americans believe that food recalls are on the rise.

Fourteen percent of Americans do not believe that food recalls are happening more frequently, and 13% are unsure.

Belief In Whether Food Recalls Are Increasing In Frequency

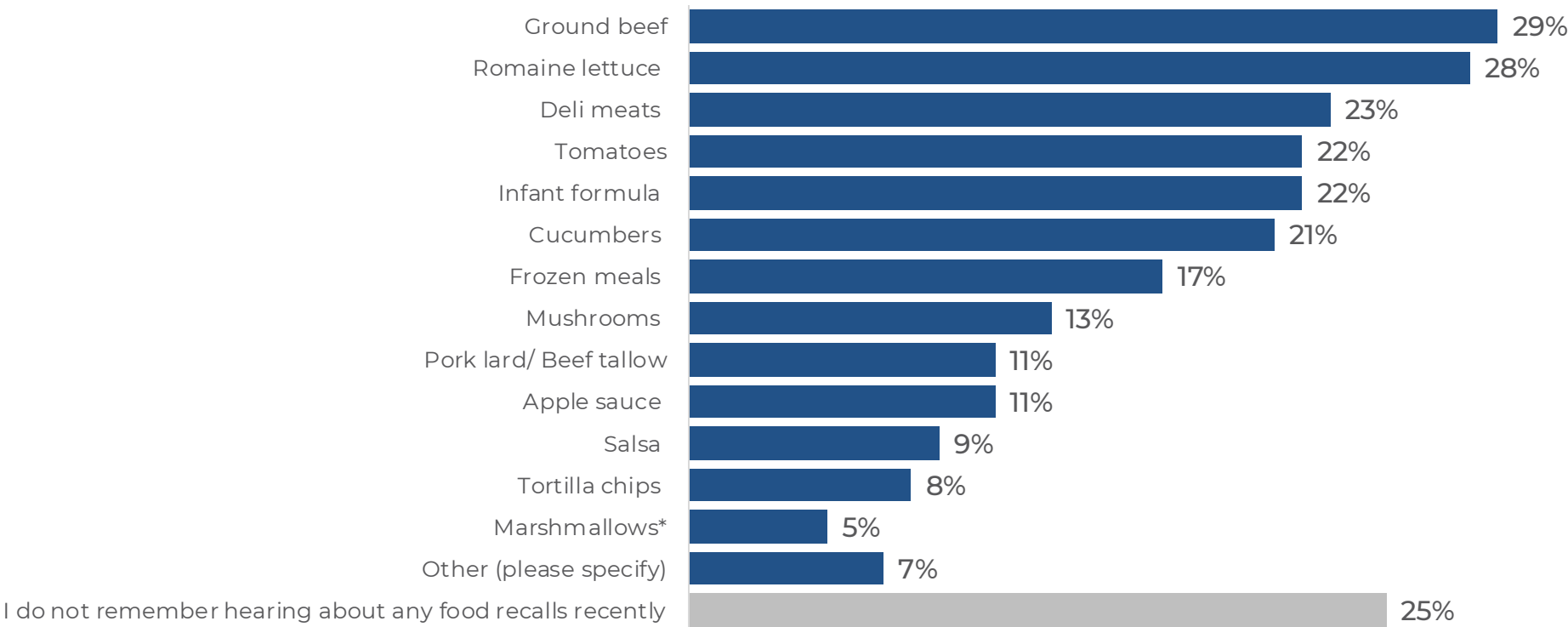




# Three in four Americans have recently heard about a food recall.

More Americans remember a recent food recall involving ground beef (29%) and/or romaine lettuce (28%) than other foods, while 25% do not recall hearing about any food recalls recently.

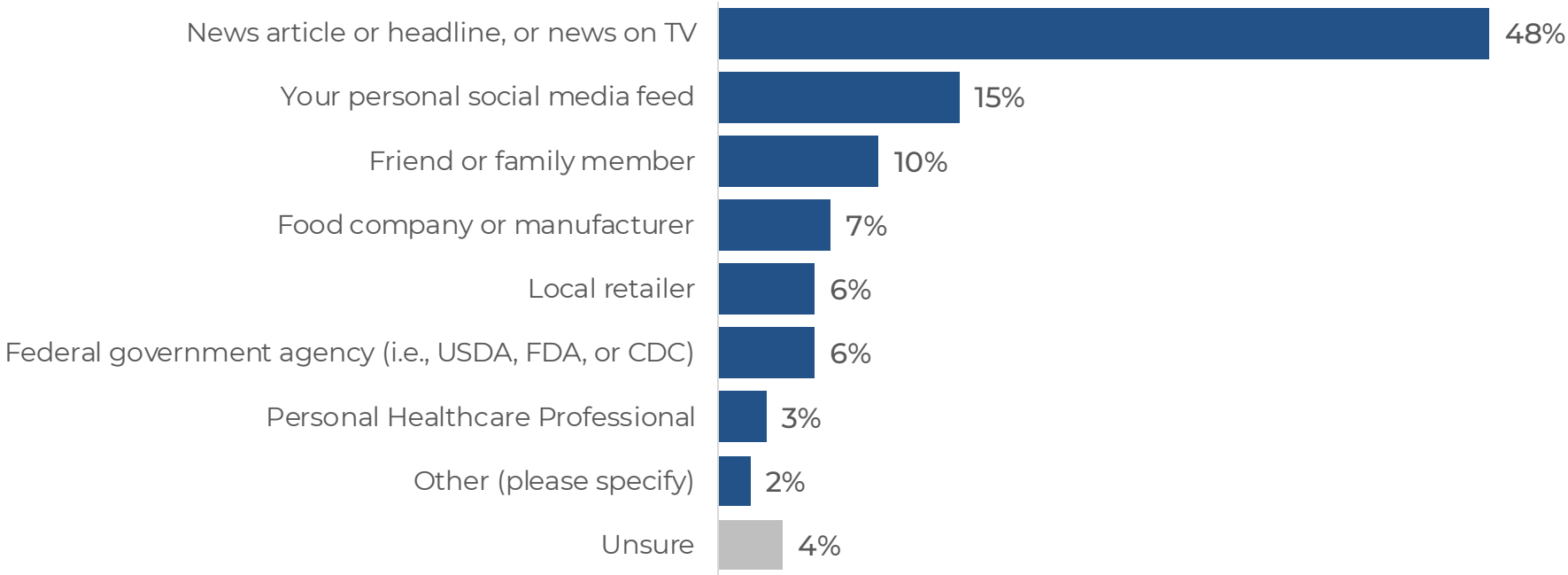
Remembrance Of Foods Involved In Recent Food Recalls



# Among those who recently heard about a food recall, more than six in ten first heard about it from traditional or social media.

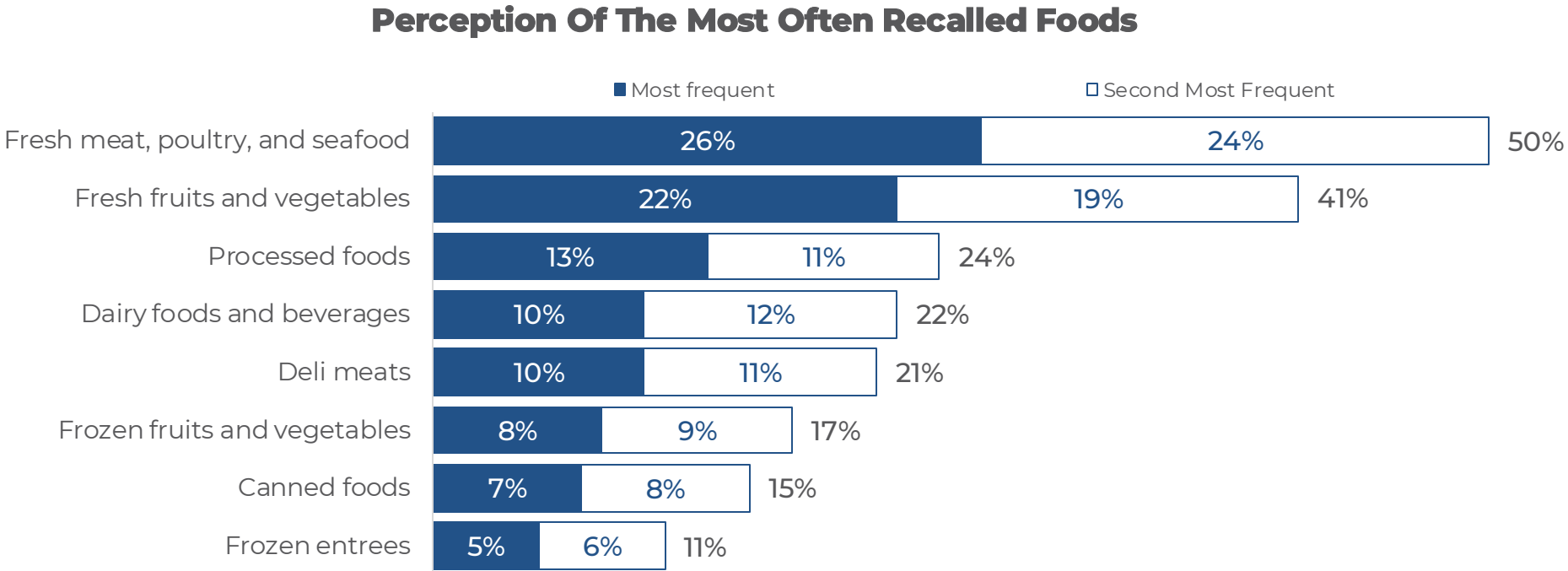
Nearly half of Americans (48%) first learned about a recent food recall from a news article or television and 15% heard about it first through personal social media. Fewer than one in ten first learned from a food company (7%), local retailer (6%), or federal agency (6%).

First Source Of Information About A Recent Food Recall



# Americans think fresh meats, poultry, seafood, fruits, and vegetables are the foods most often involved in recalls.

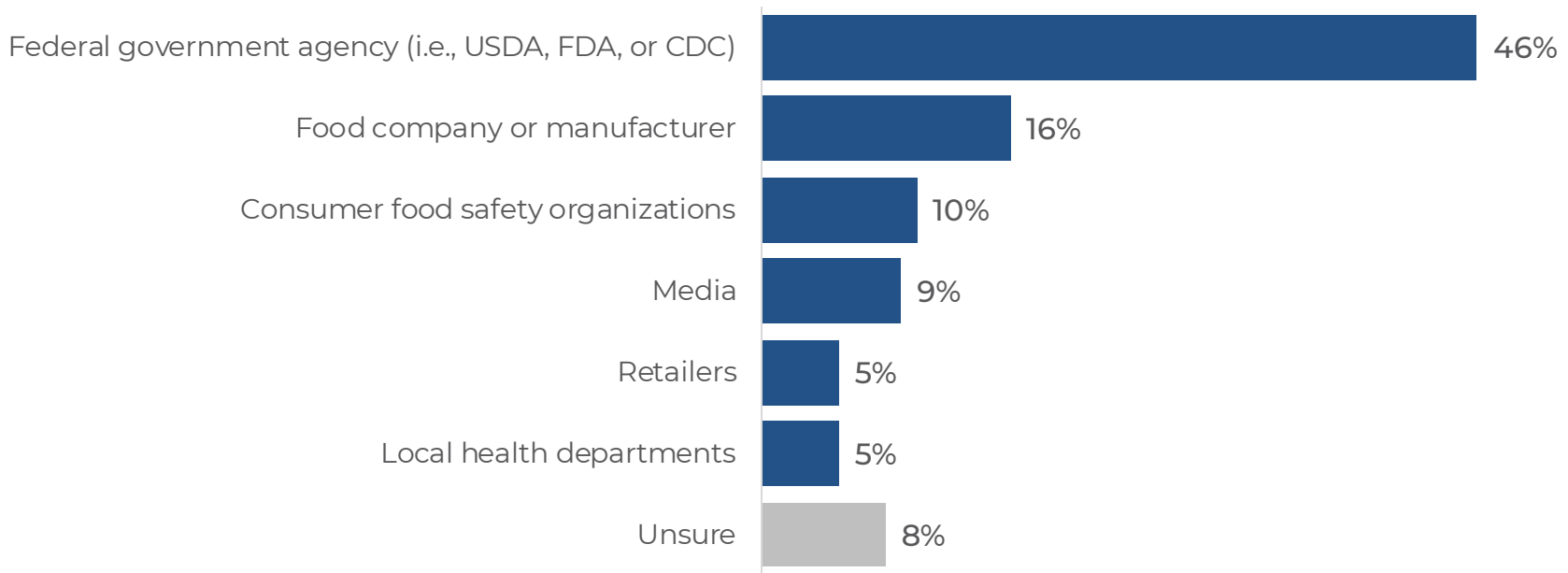
Most Americans think fresh meats, poultry, and seafood (50%) and/or fresh fruits and vegetables (41%) are recalled most often. Far fewer think the same for frozen fruits and vegetables (17%), canned foods (15%), and/or frozen entrées (11%).



# Nearly half of Americans believe that federal government agencies are responsible for informing the public about food recalls.

Only 9% of Americans say the media is responsible for informing the public about food recalls, yet 38% expect to hear about food recalls first from the media.

Perceived Responsibility For Informing The Public About Food Recalls





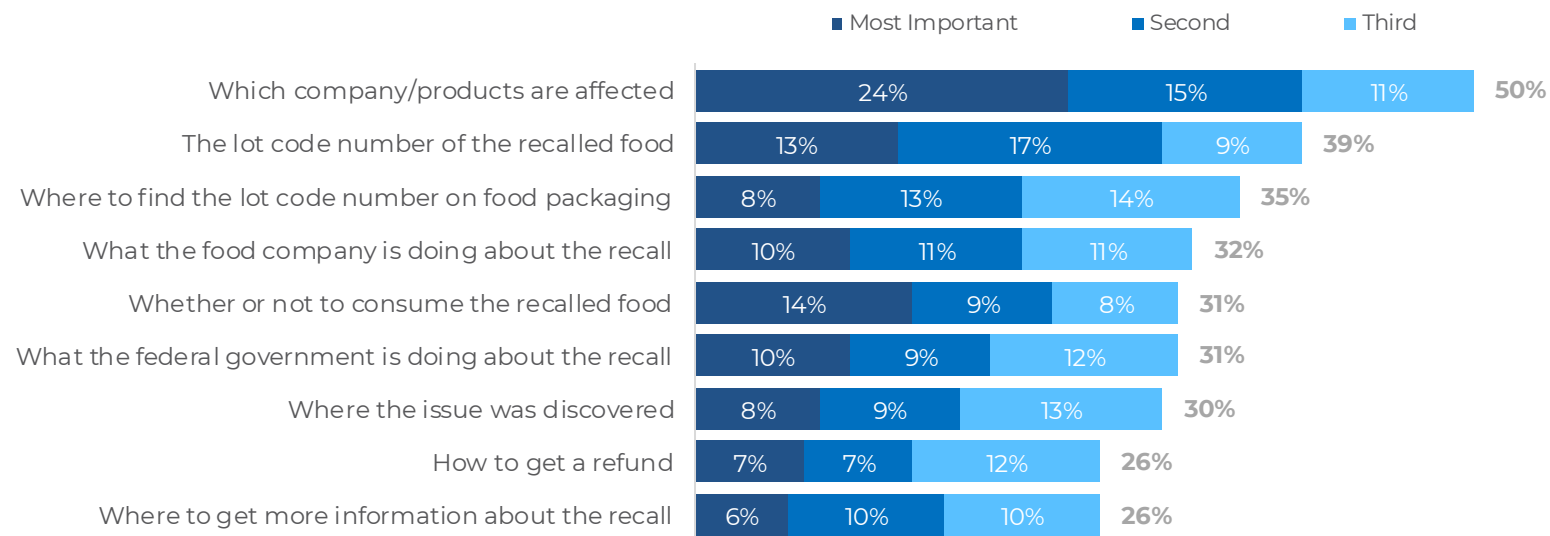
# When shown a hypothetical food recall notice, the affected company or products ranked as the most important information.

One in four (24%) identified the affected company or products as the most important detail in a hypothetical recall notice, followed by whether to consume the food (14%). Lot codes also drew attention, with 13% citing the lot number and 8% noting its location on the package. Fewer considered refund information important (7%).

## Hypothetical Food Recall Notice

Food Product A is part of a recall from Food Company X due to potential contamination discovered in our Southwestern U.S. facility in June 2025. Federal authorities are currently investigating the cause. Do not consume Food Product A if it is from lot code 101. Lot code information can be found on the bottom of Food Company X packaging. You may return Food Product A from lot code 101 for a full refund at the place of purchase without a receipt. For more information, call our recall hotline or visit our website.

## Importance Of Recall Information

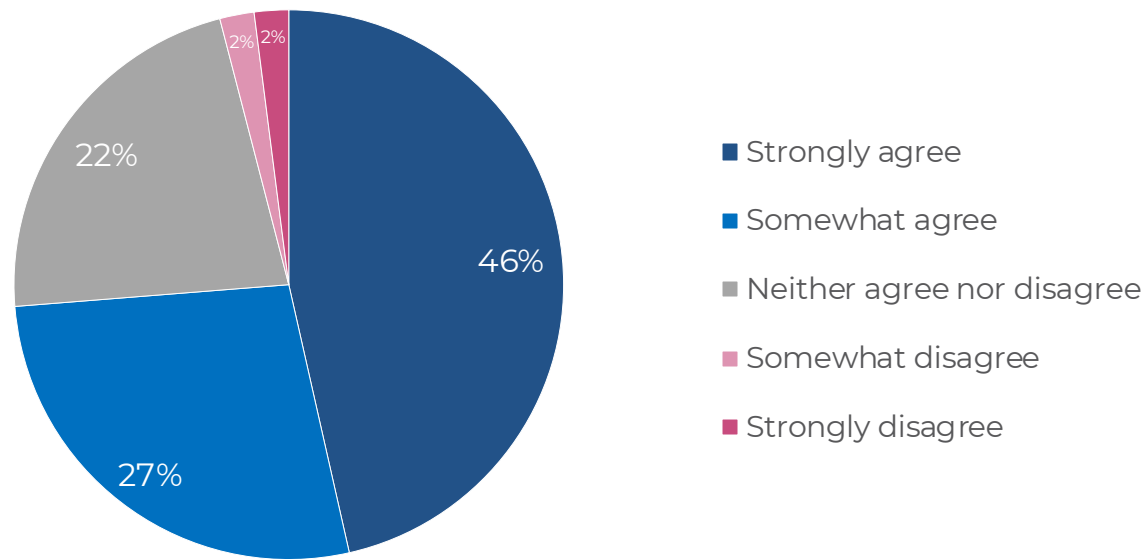


**Q7.** Which pieces of information in the recall notice are the most important to you?  
Please rank the top three pieces of information in order of importance, with 1 being the most important. (n=1001)

# Nearly three in four Americans agree that private information provided for grocery shopper loyalty cards should be used to alert individuals if they purchased recalled food.

While more than two in ten (22%) are undecided about whether private grocery shopper loyalty card information should be used for food recall alerts, very few Americans somewhat (2%) or strongly (2%) disagree.

Agreement On Using Private Loyalty Card Information For Recall Alerts

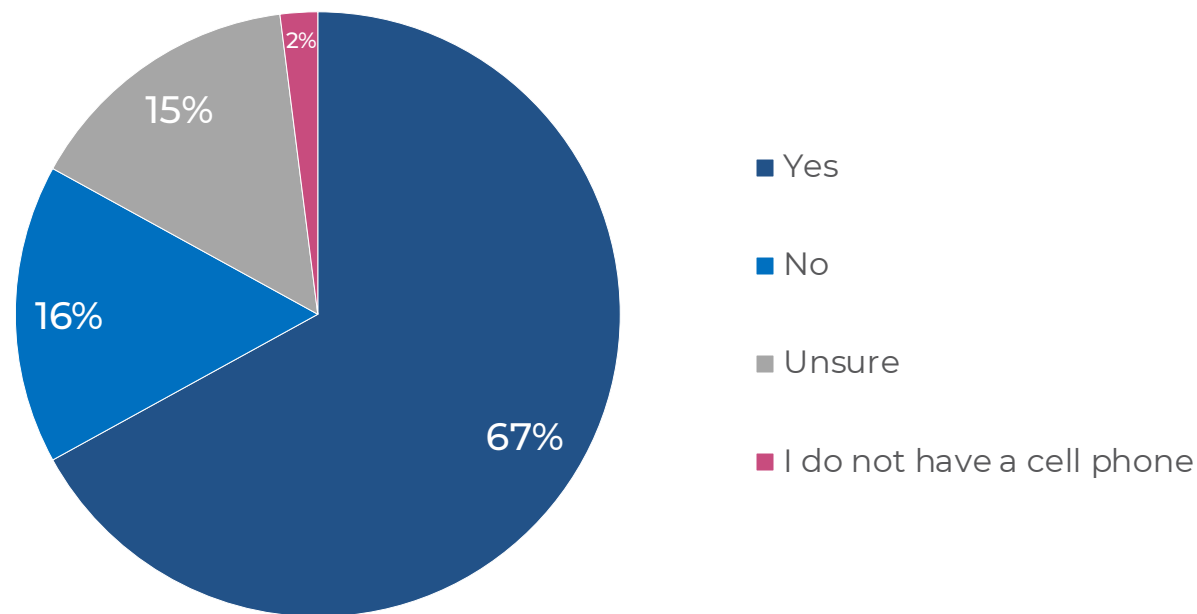


Q8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Private information provided by individuals for their grocery shopper loyalty cards should be used to alert them if they purchased food that has been recalled." (n=1001)

# Two in three Americans are interested in signing up for text message alerts that would let them know when a food recall has been issued.

Three in ten are either unsure (15%) or uninterested (16%) in signing up for food recall text message alerts.

## Interest in Signing Up for Food Recall Text Message Alerts





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