



SPOTLIGHT
SURVEY

Americans' Perceptions of Added Sugars & Sweeteners

December 2025



METHODOLOGY



The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about added sugars. One thousand and two adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey on September 25, 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=1002) 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.).

SUGGESTED CITATION:

International Food Information Council (IFIC). IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Added Sugars & Sweeteners. December 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Americans today are navigating a modern sweet-taste paradox made more difficult by a confusing and polarized information landscape. We are born liking sweet taste, and most people carry this preference into adulthood. According to the [May 2025 IFIC Spotlight Survey](#), 8 in 10 (78%) Americans believe it is important to reduce the overall sweetness of their diet. Yet, most Americans continue to consume more added sugars than the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend.

In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, 28% of respondents report not knowing what the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend for daily added sugar consumption, and only 16% can accurately identify the recommendation. Still, nearly eight in ten (79%) report they have control over the amount of sugar they consume (20% report complete control, 25% report a lot of control, and 34% report having some control).

Complicating matters is the polarization surrounding sugars as well as low- and no-calorie sweeteners. Public narratives often use inflammatory language when discussing sweeteners, casting doubt on their safety. Such extreme viewpoints can create confusion, erode trust, and pose real barriers to sharing evidence-based guidance. Demonstrating this tension, 57% of Americans believe it is acceptable to consume foods or beverages with added sugar every day, and 82% believe it is acceptable during celebrations or special occasions, while the [2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey](#) found that 27% of Americans have a positive opinion of low- and no-calorie sweeteners compared to 41% who hold a negative view.

This environment underscores the need for consistent, evidence-driven communication. While fear-based messages may attract attention, the *2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey* also found that Americans prefer to hear more about what and how to eat rather than what not to eat. By addressing misconceptions, improving nutrition literacy and label comprehension, and offering balanced discussions regarding sugar and sweetener options, communicators can help Americans make choices grounded in understanding rather than uncertainty.



KEY FINDINGS

Nearly three in ten Americans say they do not know the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation for daily added sugar intake.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 (DGA)*, recommends limiting added sugars to less than 10% of total daily calories, or less than 50 grams per 2,000 calories. Although this guideline was put in place in 2015, nearly three in ten (28%) survey respondents said they do not know what the limit is. Only one in seven Americans (16%) correctly identified the DGA recommendation, while a similar share (15%) believes the limit is either zero grams (7%) or that no recommendation exists at all (8%).

Americans say they identify foods and beverages with added sugars by looking at the ingredients list and the Nutrition Facts label.

Survey respondents were asked how they identify foods and beverages with added sugars. Fifty-six percent said they look at the ingredient list on food packaging and 52% said they look at the Nutrition Facts label. While nearly two in ten (18%) said they just know by looking at the item, one in ten (12%) said they do not know how to identify foods or beverages with added sugars.

More Americans consider high fructose corn syrup an added sugar than sucrose, maple syrup, or honey.

Survey respondents were given a list of ingredients and asked which they consider to be added sugars. Seventy percent identified high fructose corn syrup as an added sugar, followed by sucrose (52%), maple syrup (50%), honey (46%), and 100% fruit juice concentrate (36%). Thirty percent also incorrectly classified aspartame as an added sugar. Seven percent do not consider any of the listed ingredients to be added sugars.

The likelihood of consuming specific sweeteners remains largely unchanged from 2023, with the top nine holding the same rank order.

Survey respondents rated their likelihood of consuming foods and beverages containing each of 15 types of sweeteners on a scale of 1 to 10, just as they were listed in IFIC surveys in 2021 and 2023. The results closely mirrored previous findings, with the top nine sweeteners appearing in the same order: honey, brown sugar, sucrose (sugar), stevia sweeteners, agave syrup, high fructose corn syrup, monk fruit sweeteners, sucralose, and aspartame.

KEY FINDINGS

Nearly six in ten Americans believe it is acceptable to consume foods or beverages that contain added sugar every day.

Survey respondents were asked whether they believe it is acceptable to consume added sugar in different contexts. Forty-three percent feel it is not acceptable to consume foods and beverages that contain added sugar every day, while 57% feel daily consumption is acceptable. When asked about celebrations or special occasions, 18% feel consuming added sugar is not acceptable, whereas 82% feel it is acceptable in those moments.

Foods and beverages with added sugars are more desirable as after dinner treats or desserts, and snacks, than at breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

When survey respondents were asked during which eating occasions they typically desire foods or beverages with added sugars, the most often cited occasions were after-dinner treats or desserts (46%) and snacks (45%). Many also want something sweet with coffee or tea (41%) or as a small treat between meals (38%). Fewer desire sweetness with main meals: 28% at breakfast, 25% at dinner, and 24% at lunch. Only 1% said they do not typically desire something sweet.

When Americans want something sweet, chocolate, ice cream, and fruit are top choices.

When survey respondents were asked what they choose to satisfy their desire for something sweet, they most often selected chocolate (55%) and ice cream (53%), followed by fruit (46%), desserts and sweet snacks (41%), and/or candy (39%). Other choices included coffee or tea beverages (33%), 100% juice (31%), flavored yogurts (30%), breakfast cereals or bars (25%), and/or sugar-sweetened beverages (21%). Fewer reach for diet beverages (15%), chewing gum (15%), and/or sweeteners added to foods and drinks (12%).

When it comes to sweet treats, portion size and frequency matter. Eight in ten (79%) enjoy a small, bite-sized portion either daily or weekly.

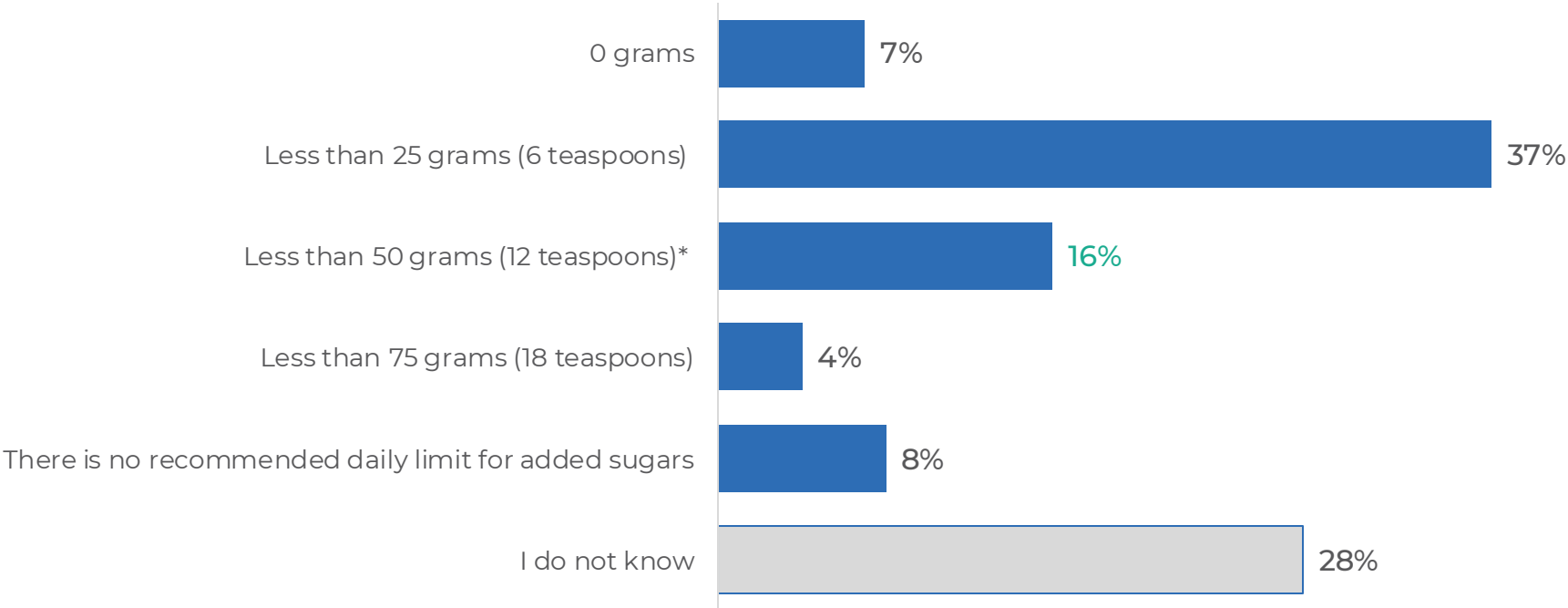
Eight in ten Americans feel they have some to complete control over the amount of added sugar in their diet.

When asked how much control they feel they have over the amount of added sugar in their diet, 20% of Americans say they have complete control, 25% report having a lot of control, and 34% feel they have some control. Smaller shares say they have only a little control (16%) or no control at all (6%).

Nearly three in ten Americans say they do not know the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation for daily added sugar intake.

Only one in seven Americans (16%) correctly identified the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommended daily limit for added sugars (less than 50 grams). A similar share (15%) believes the limit is zero grams (7%) or that no recommendation exists (8%).

Knowledge Of U.S. Dietary Guidelines For Americans Recommendation For Added Sugars Per Day

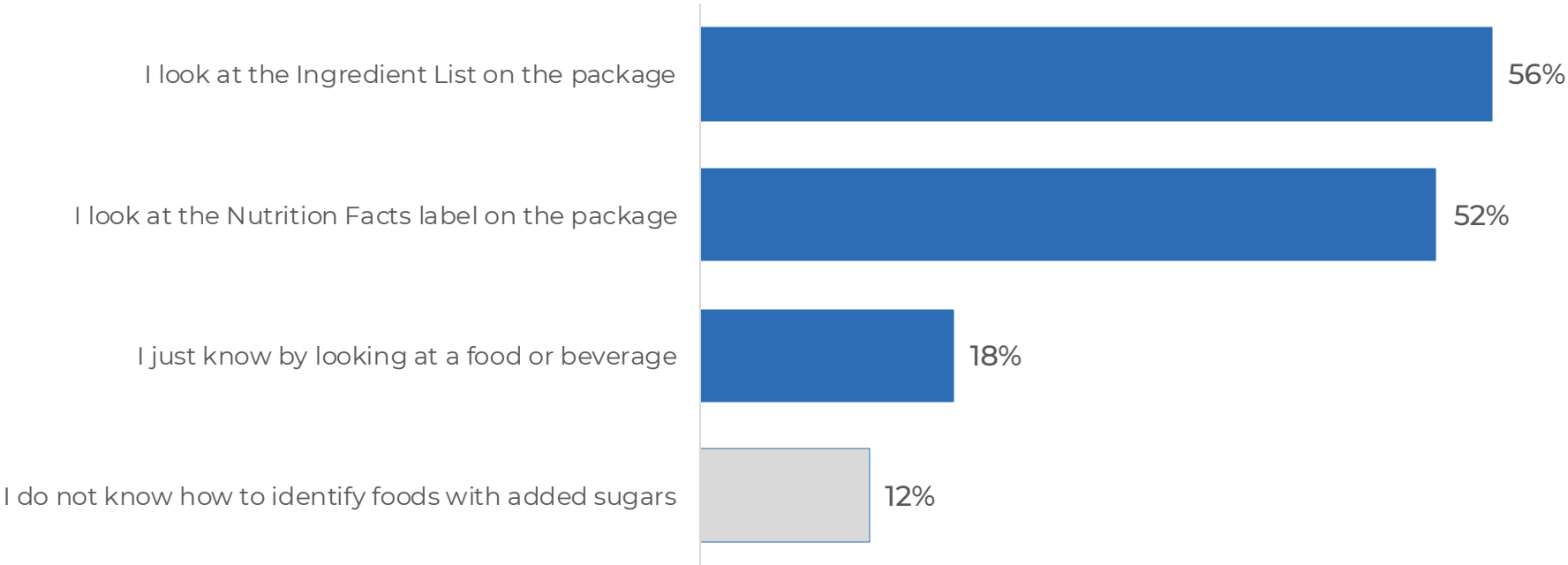


**The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 recommend <10% of daily calories from added sugars (i.e., <50 grams (12 teaspoons) per 2000 calories)*

Americans say they identify foods and beverages with added sugars by looking at the ingredients list and the Nutrition Facts label.

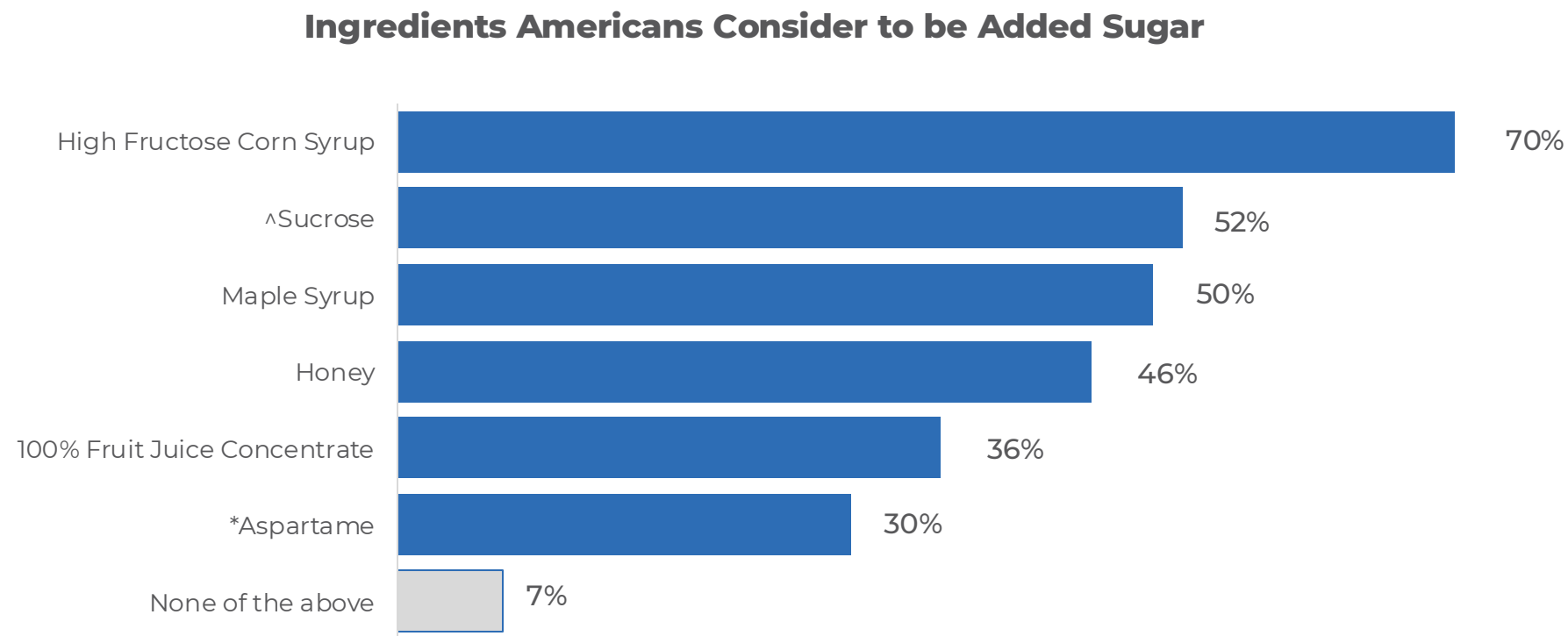
Nearly two in ten Americans (18%) say they can tell if a food or beverage contains added sugars just by looking at it, while 12% say they do not know how to identify foods with added sugar.

How Americans Identify Foods & Beverages With Added Sugars



More Americans consider high fructose corn syrup an added sugar than sucrose, maple syrup, or honey.

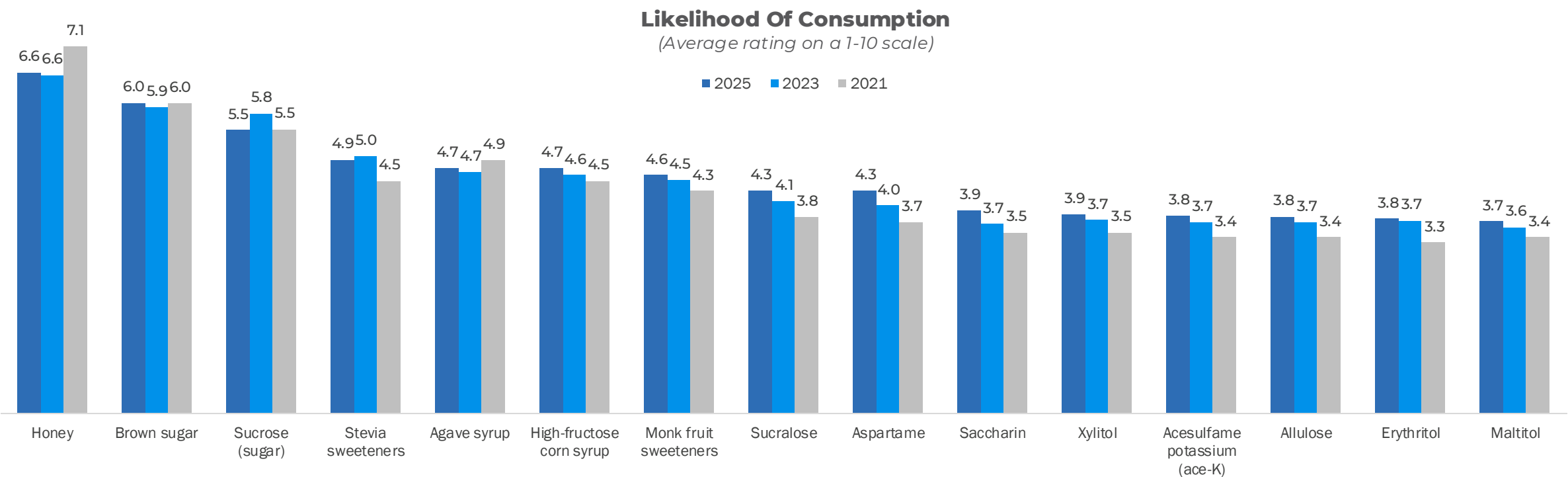
Three in ten Americans (30%) believe aspartame is an added sugar. Nearly one in ten (7%) do not consider any of the listed options to be an added sugar.



** Aspartame is not considered an added sugar.*
^ Sucrose is considered an added sugar when found in the ingredient list of a food or beverage.

The likelihood of consuming specific sweeteners remains largely unchanged from 2023, with the top nine holding the same rank order.

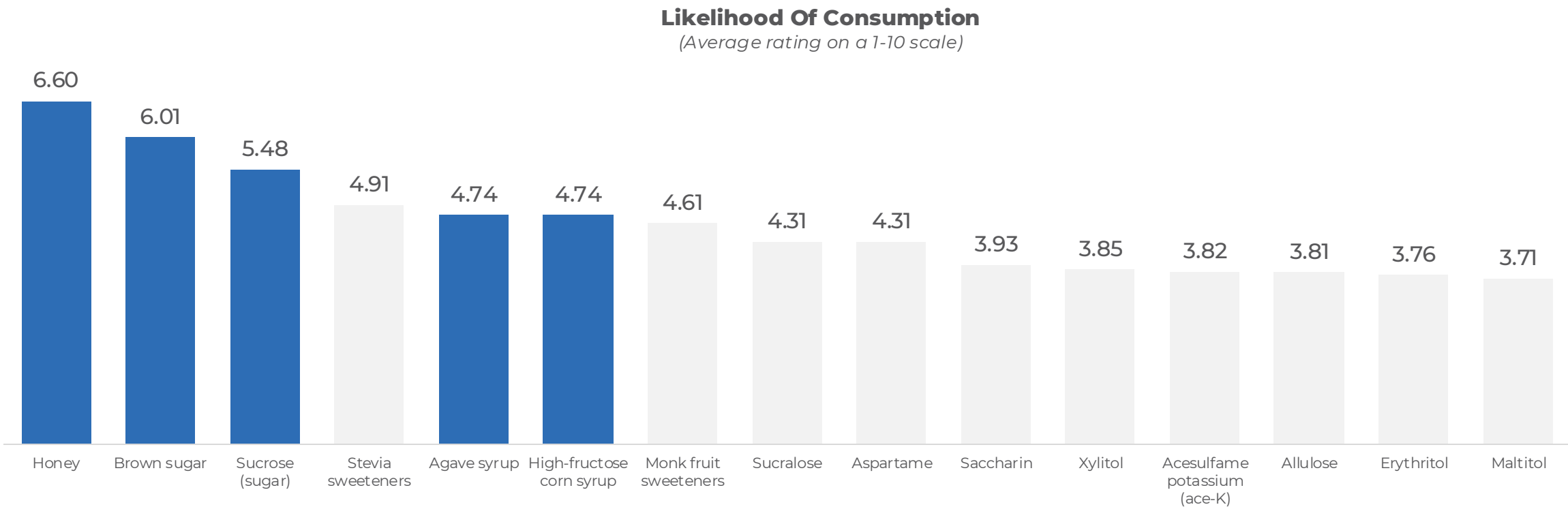
Since 2023, saccharin climbed four spots, while erythritol and xylitol fell three and one spots, respectively. Despite these shifts, only sucrose (sugar) and stevia sweeteners saw a decline in average reported consumption likelihood. Compared to 2021, average reported consumption likelihood has decreased for honey, agave syrup, and sucrose (sugar) only.



Q4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = Not at all likely, and 10 = Extremely likely, please indicate how likely you are to consume foods and beverages that include the following ingredients. (n=1002)

Likelihood of consuming foods and beverages with caloric sweeteners is higher than those with low- and no-calorie sweeteners, sugar alcohols, or allulose.

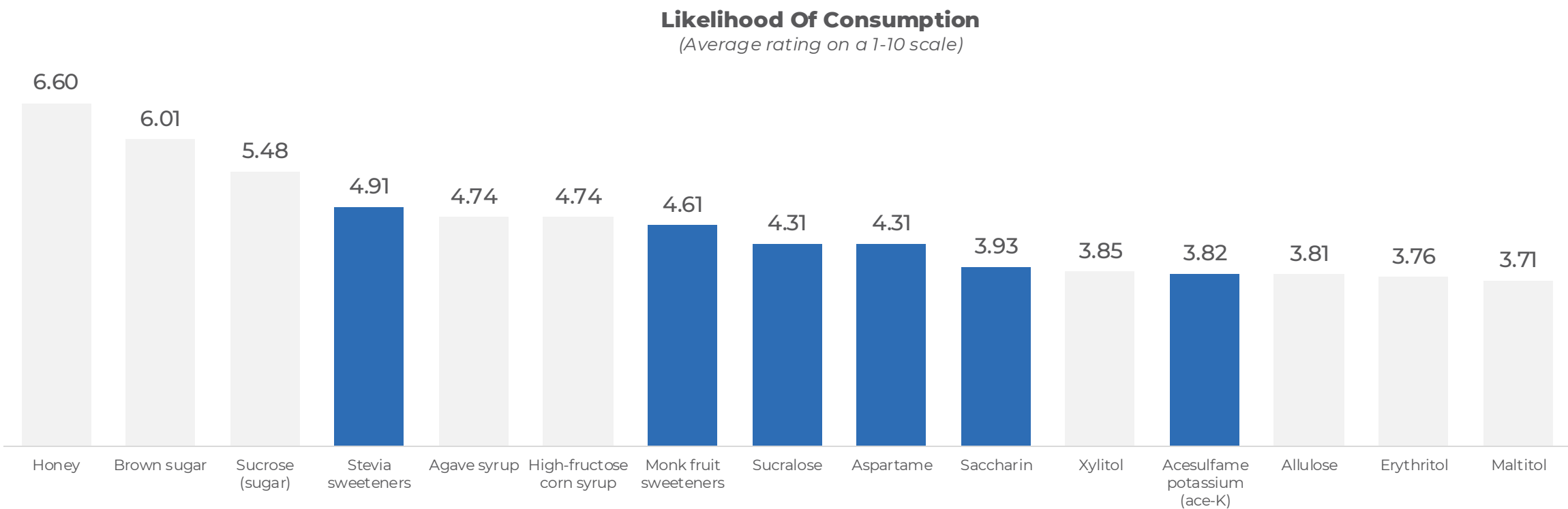
Among caloric sweeteners, likelihood of consuming products with honey is highest, consistent with 2023 and 2021. The rank order of all five caloric sweeteners has also stayed the same.



Q4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = Not at all likely, and 10 = Extremely likely, please indicate how likely you are to consume foods and beverages that include the following ingredients. (n=1002)

Likelihood of consuming foods and beverages with low- and no-calorie sweeteners is higher than those with sugar alcohols or allulose.

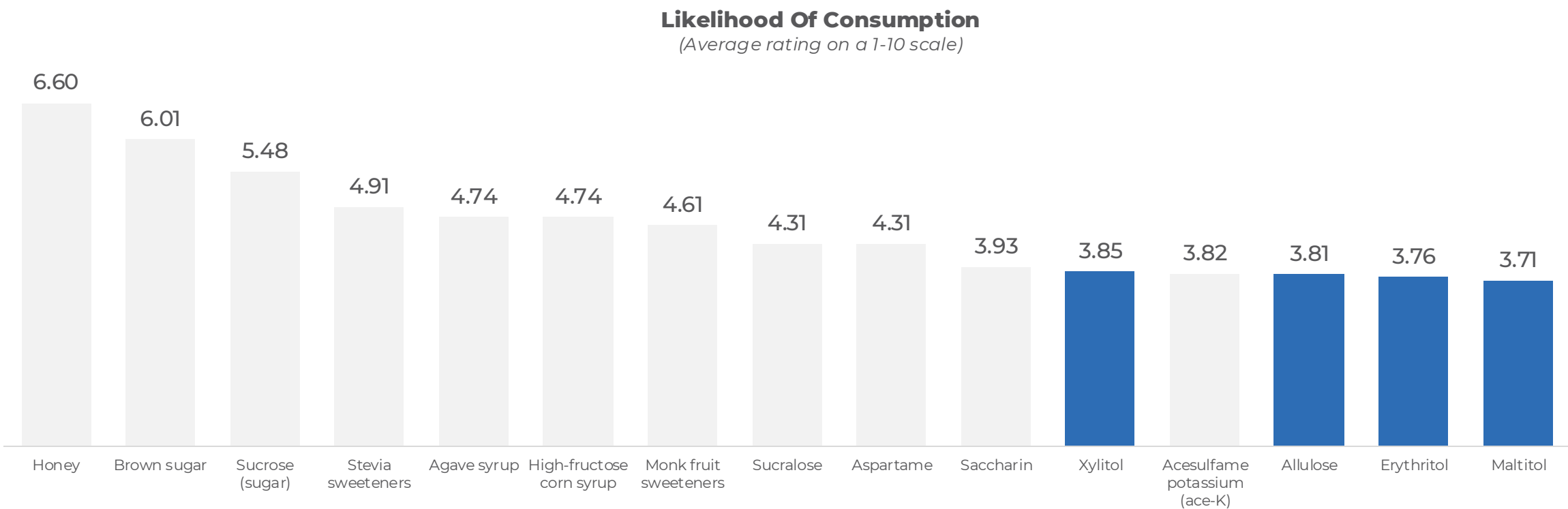
Among low- and no-calorie sweeteners, likelihood of consuming products with stevia is highest, consistent with 2023 and 2021. Since 2023, consumption likelihood has risen for each low- and no-calorie sweetener, with aspartame, saccharin, and sucralose showing larger gains than any other caloric or non-caloric sweetener.



Q4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = Not at all likely, and 10 = Extremely likely, please indicate how likely you are to consume foods and beverages that include the following ingredients. (n=1002)

Likelihood of consuming foods and beverages with sugar alcohols or allulose is lower than those with caloric sweeteners or low- and no-calorie sweeteners.

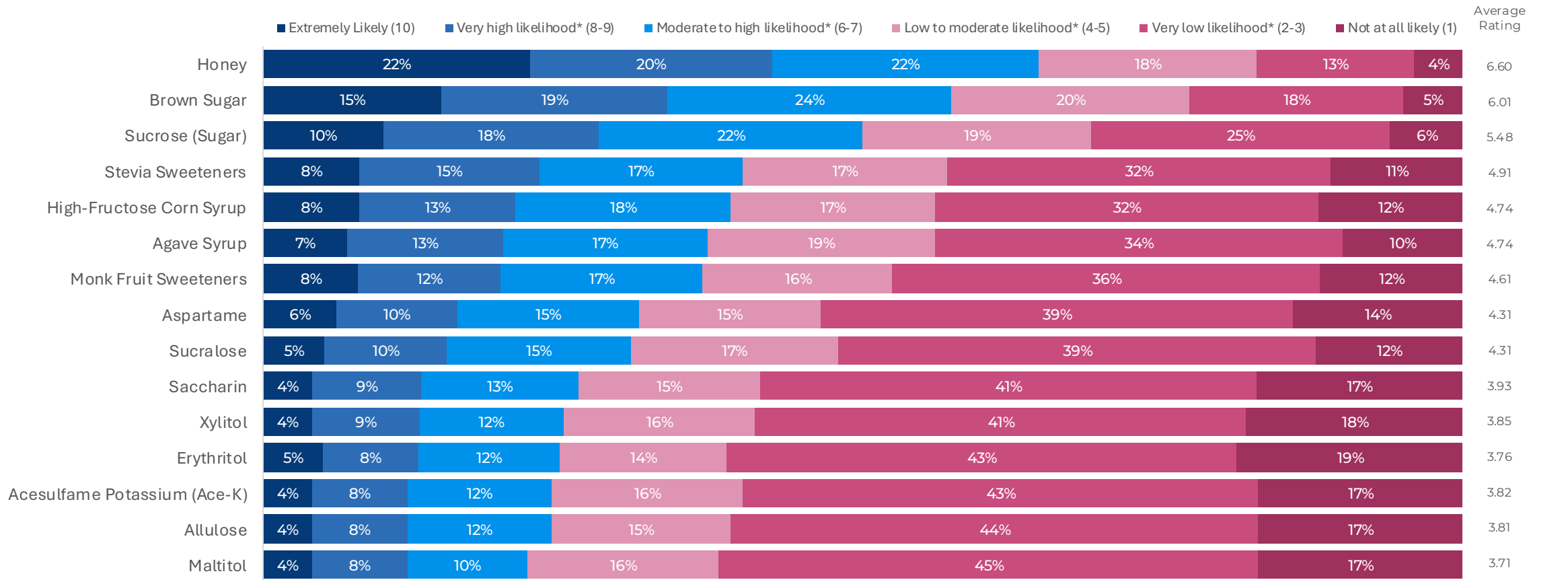
Among sugar alcohols and allulose, likelihood of consuming products with xylitol is highest, consistent with 2023 and 2021.



Q4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = Not at all likely, and 10 = Extremely likely, please indicate how likely you are to consume foods and beverages that include the following ingredients. (n=1002)

More than half of Americans report they are likely to consume a product that contains honey, brown sugar, or sucrose.

More than two in ten Americans (22%) said they were extremely likely to consume products containing honey, 15% said the same for brown sugar, and 10% for sucrose (sugar).



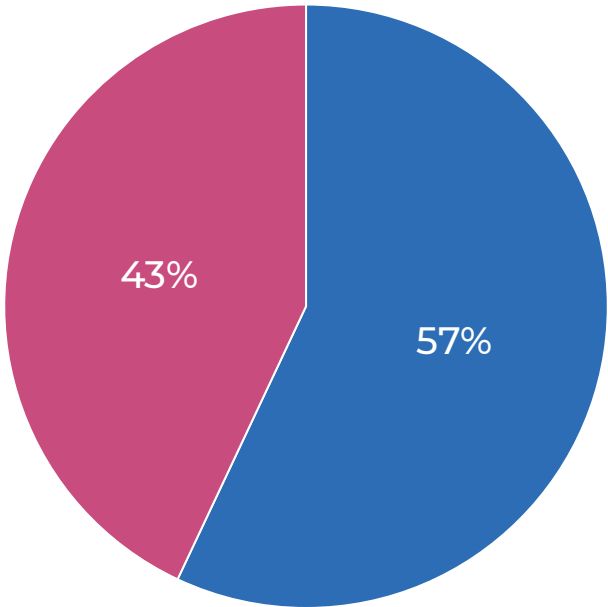
**Scale point descriptions and groupings (2 thru 8) were added to help explain the results and were not shown to participants.
Note: Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

Q4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = Not at all likely, and 10 = Extremely likely, please indicate how likely you are to consume foods and beverages that include the following ingredients. (n=1002).

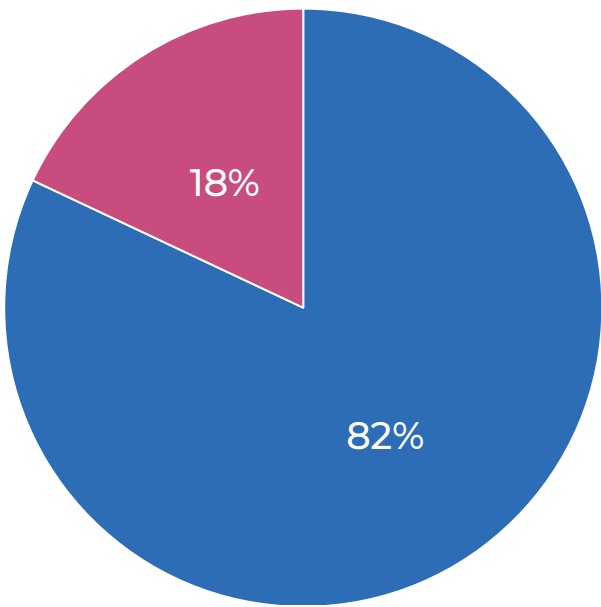
Nearly six in ten Americans believe it is acceptable to consume foods or beverages that contain added sugar every day.

Eight in ten Americans (82%) believe it is acceptable to consume foods or beverages that contain added sugar during celebrations or special occasions.

On a Typical Day / Every Day



During Celebrations Or Special Occasions

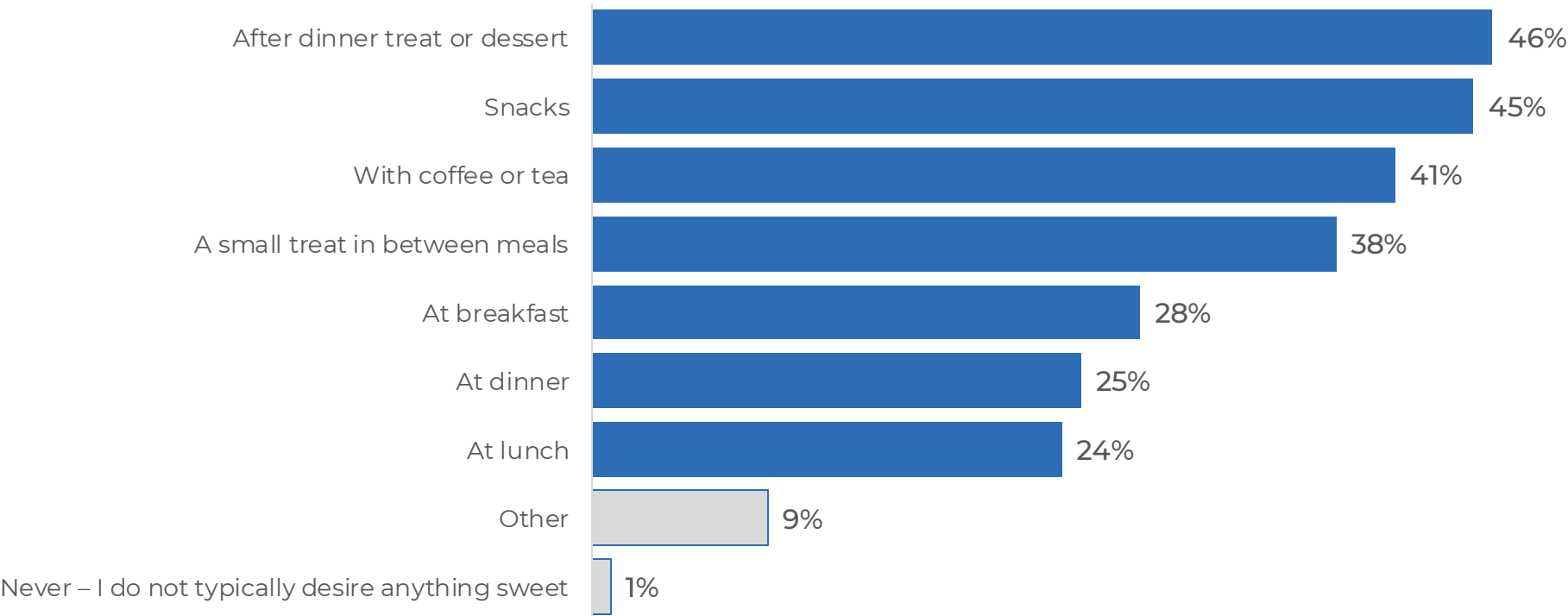


■ Yes, Acceptable
■ No, Not acceptable

Foods and beverages with added sugars are more desirable as after dinner treats or desserts, and snacks, than at breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

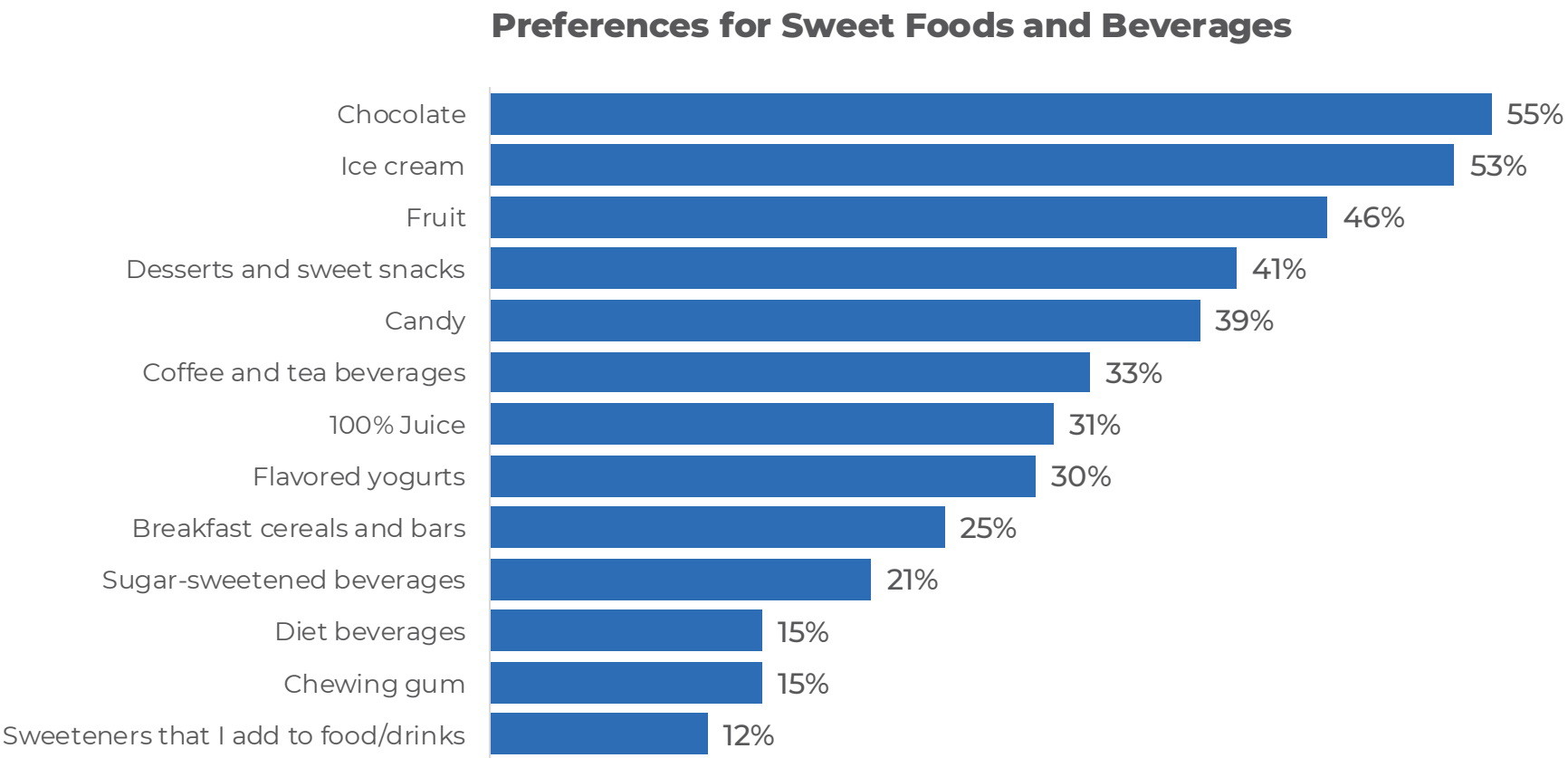
Americans are nearly twice as likely to want sugary foods and/or beverages as an after-dinner treat or dessert (46%), and/or snack (45%), compared to at breakfast (38%), lunch (24%), and/or dinner (25%).

Desired Eating Occasions For Sweet Foods & Beverages



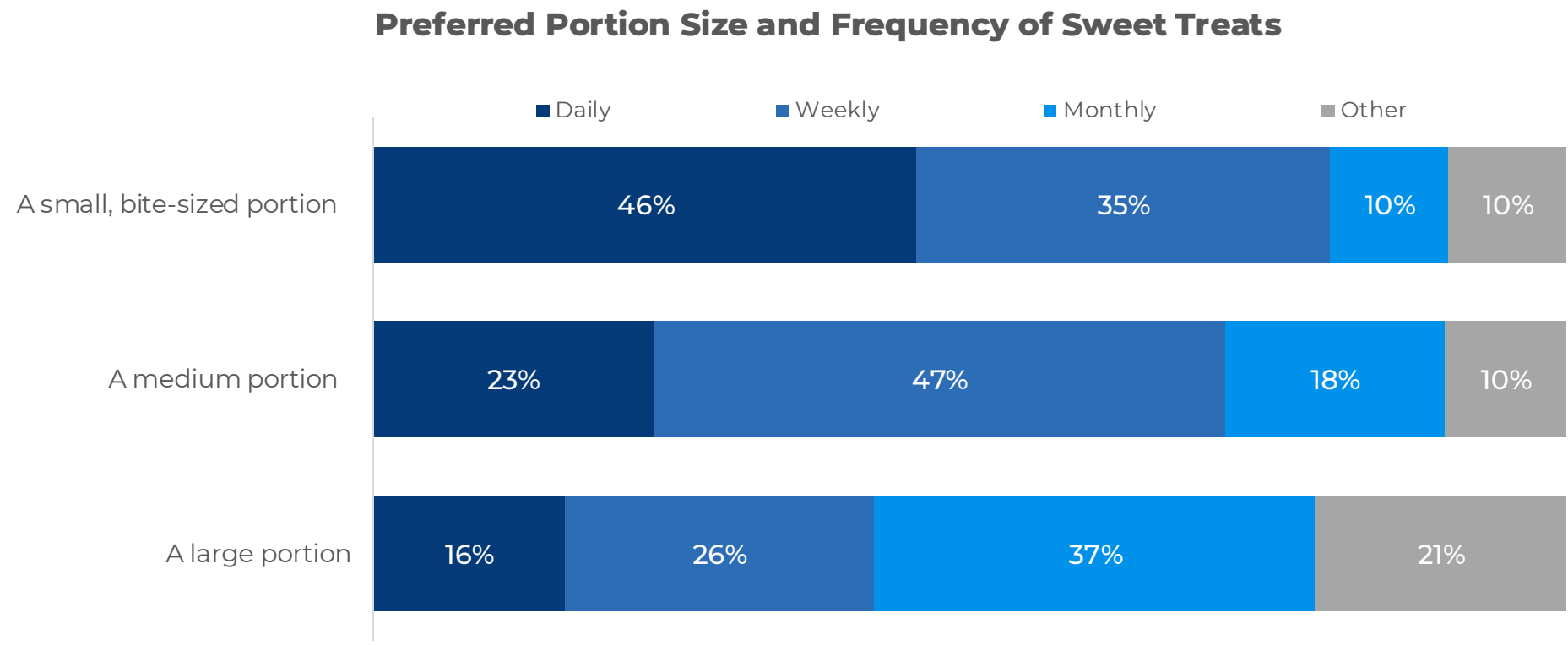
When Americans want something sweet, chocolate, ice cream, and fruit are top choices.

Among beverages, more Americans prefer coffee and tea (33%) and/or 100% juice (31%) than sugar-sweetened (21%) and/or diet beverages (15%).



When it comes to sweet treats, portion size and frequency matter. Eight in ten enjoy a small, bite-sized portion either daily or weekly.

Americans report enjoying medium and large portions of their favorite sweet treats less often. Seven in ten (70%) say they enjoy a medium portion daily (23%) or weekly (47%), while four in ten (42%) enjoy a large portion daily (16%) or weekly (26%).

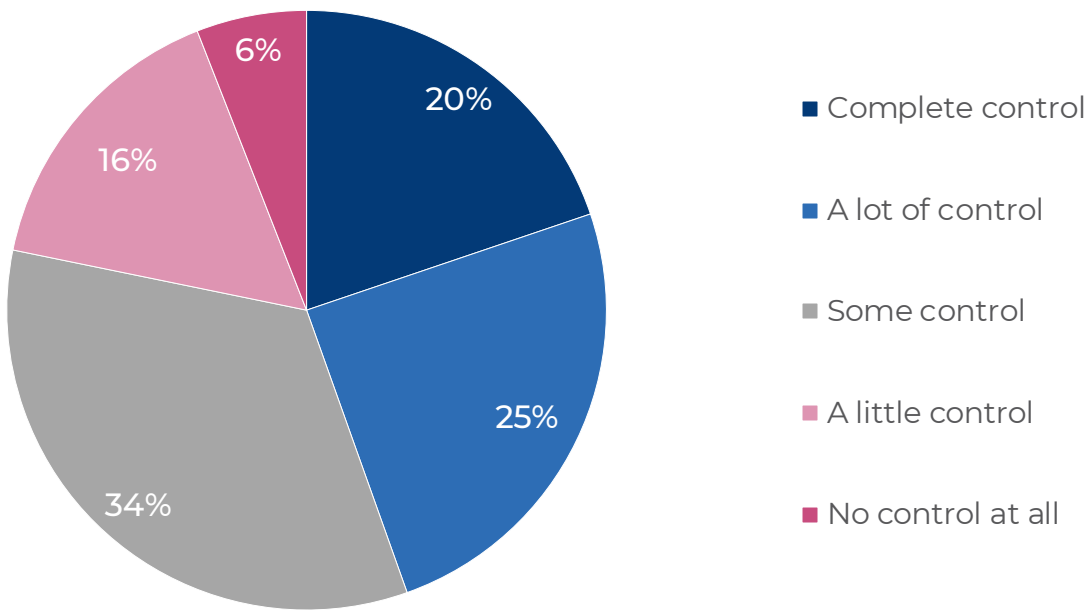


Note: Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Eight in ten Americans feel they have some to complete control over the amount of added sugar in their diet.

Two in ten Americans (20%) feel they personally have complete control, 25% have a lot, 34% have some, 16% have a little, and 6% feel they have no control over the amount of added sugars in their diet.

Perceived Control Over The Amount Of Added Sugar Consumed



Note: Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



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