



SPOTLIGHT
SURVEY

Americans' Perceptions Of Gut Health

August 2026



METHODOLOGY



The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about gut health. One thousand nineteen adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from May 20 to May 25, 2026, and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

The Bayesian confidence level for the survey sample (n=1019) 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 Gut Health. August 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interest in gut health has increased substantially in recent years, making it one of the most discussed topics in nutrition and wellness today. According to the [2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey](#), 37% of Americans now report seeking gut health or digestive health benefits from the foods and beverages they consume, a 7% increase since 2022.

The growing attention to gut health is also reflected in nutrition guidance and scientific consensus. For the first time, the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030](#) explicitly reference the gut microbiome and recommend fermented foods as part of healthy dietary patterns. The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) also recently published the [first international consensus statement](#) defining gut health as a state of normal gastrointestinal function without active gastrointestinal disease or gut-related symptoms that affect quality of life. The ISAPP consensus statement also identifies six domains that encompass gut health: the gut microbiome, gut barrier, gastrointestinal physiology, the gut-brain axis, immune function, and metabolism.

Although these developments provide researchers and healthcare professionals with a common framework to address gut health, consumers may define and interpret the term very differently based on exposure to media, wellness influencers, and their personal health experiences.

This *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Gut Health* examines public perceptions of gut health, including factors and behaviors they believe have the greatest impact. These findings provide insights that can help food and nutrition professionals better understand consumer perspectives and communicate about gut health more effectively.

SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Gut Health. August 2026.



KEY FINDINGS

Americans define gut health through both digestive function and broader health and wellness outcomes.

Although Americans associate gut health with several concepts, digestive function remains central to how they define it. Proper digestion and absorption of nutrients is the most frequently selected definition, with more than one-third (36%) ranking it among their top two choices. Roughly one-quarter also associate gut health with having few digestive problems (27%), supporting overall health and wellness (27%), maintaining the right mix of bacteria in the gut (26%), and regular, comfortable bowel movements (25%). Fewer connect gut health with immune function (21%), maintaining a strong gut lining (15%), or reducing disease risk (13%).

Overall, the findings suggest that while many Americans recognize gut health extends beyond digestion alone, their understanding remains rooted primarily in digestive function and everyday gastrointestinal well-being.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans say their gut health is a high priority.

Gut health has become an important health consideration for many Americans. Nearly two-thirds (64%) describe it as a high (25%) or extremely high priority (25%). Another 27% of Americans consider it a moderate priority, leaving fewer than one in ten (8%) who report that gut health is of low (5%) or no priority (3%).

The high level of reported importance provides context for Americans' interest in dietary changes, food choices, and other behaviors intended to support gut health.

Most Americans rate their recent gut health positively.

In addition to gut health being a high priority, most Americans are positive about their recent gut health. More than eight in ten (84%) rate their gut health over the past 30 days as good (36%), very good (32%), or excellent (16%), while just 17% describe it as fair (13%) or poor (4%). These results suggest that Americans believe gut health is important and relatively few report recent gut health issues.

KEY FINDINGS

Americans rank digestive outcomes as most affected by gut health.

Americans most strongly associate gut health with digestive outcomes, particularly those experienced on a day-to-day basis. Nearly half (48%) rank digestive comfort among the three areas most affected by gut health, followed by regular bowel movements (38%), and nutrient absorption (33%).

Other potential impacts of gut health receive substantially less recognition, including reduced disease risk (26%), inflammation (21%), immune function (20%), and mental or emotional health (20%). Connections between gut health and brain function (12%) and skin health (10%) are less common.

While research continues to explore the relationship between the gut and many aspects of health, Americans appear to most readily recognize the impact of gut health on the digestive system.

In the past year, Americans most often supported their gut health through diet, fiber, and physical activity.

When seeking to support their gut health, Americans most often report making lifestyle changes rather than relying on specific products or medical interventions.

About three in ten say they improved their overall diet (31%), increased fiber intake through foods (30%), or became more physically active (29%) during the past year. About one in five also report managing stress (21%), improving sleep habits (20%), and/or increasing consumption of probiotic foods such as yogurt, kefir, or other fermented foods (19%). Fewer report using digestive aids (13%), functional foods or beverages marketed for gut health (13%), consulting a healthcare professional (12%), or using testing kits (5%).

Overall, to improve gut health Americans appear more likely to have improved diet and exercise habits than taken more specialized approaches.

KEY FINDINGS

More than half of Americans say they limit or avoid certain foods or beverages to improve their gut health.

Dietary restriction is a common strategy Americans report using to support gut health. More than half (54%) report limiting or avoiding foods or beverages to improve their gut health, while 46% do not.

Together with the reported actions taken to support gut health in the past year, the results suggest that many Americans approach gut health through dietary modification, either by adding foods they perceive as beneficial or reducing those they deem detrimental.

Among Americans who limit or avoid foods and beverages to improve gut health, highly processed foods, fatty foods, alcohol, and sugary foods or beverages are most commonly cited.

Among Americans who limit foods or beverages for gut health, the most commonly avoided items are highly processed foods (45%), fatty foods (42%), alcohol (42%), and sugary foods and beverages (40%). About one-third say they also avoid spicy foods (35%) or sugar alcohols and low- or no-calorie sweeteners (31%).

Fewer report limiting caffeine (23%), red and processed meats (22%), dairy products (19%), seed oils or vegetable oils (14%), gluten (12%), certain fruits, vegetables, or beans (12%), or foods high in fiber (10%).

Americans rank poor diet and stress as most detrimental to gut health.

Americans generally view everyday lifestyle habits as having the greatest influence on gut health. Poor diet is most frequently ranked among the top three negative influences (50%), followed by stress (37%), lack of physical activity (30%), and dehydration (29%). Fewer identify alcohol consumption (24%), antibiotics or medications (19%), lack of sleep (18%), and aging (17%) are top contributors, while caffeine (14%), hormonal changes (13%), gluten (12%), and environmental exposures (10%) are least likely to be viewed as harmful to gut health.

The findings suggest that Americans primarily see gut health as shaped by modifiable behaviors.

KEY FINDINGS

Healthcare professionals, scientific studies, and health websites are Americans' most trusted sources of gut health information.

Americans place the greatest confidence in sources with scientific or clinical expertise for information about gut health. Nearly three-quarters trust healthcare professionals (74%), followed by scientific studies (65%) and health-focused websites (63%). Slightly fewer report trust in nonprofit organizations and professional associations (55%), friends or family (51%), the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (50%), and U.S. government agencies (46%).

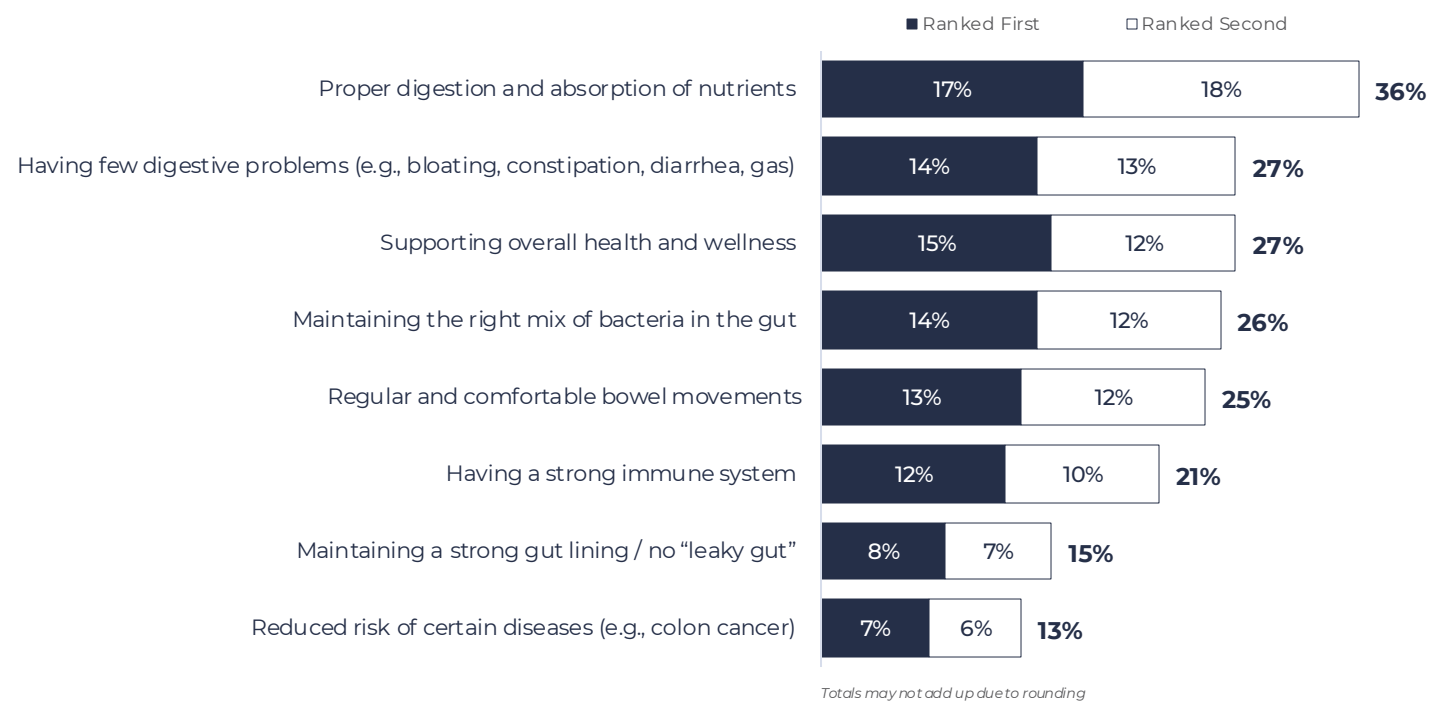
At the other end of the spectrum, food and beverage brands (34%), Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots (34%), and non-expert influencers (25%) receive the lowest levels of trust and highest levels of distrust.

Overall, Americans appear to have greater trust in information they perceive as evidence-based and professionally informed than commercial, social, or emerging technology sources.

Americans define gut health through both digestive function and broader health and wellness outcomes.

Proper digestion and nutrient absorption is the most common definition of gut health (36%), while about one in four also associate it with having few digestive problems (27%), overall health and wellness (27%), the right mix of gut bacteria (26%), and regular and comfortable bowel movements (25%).

How Americans Define Gut Health

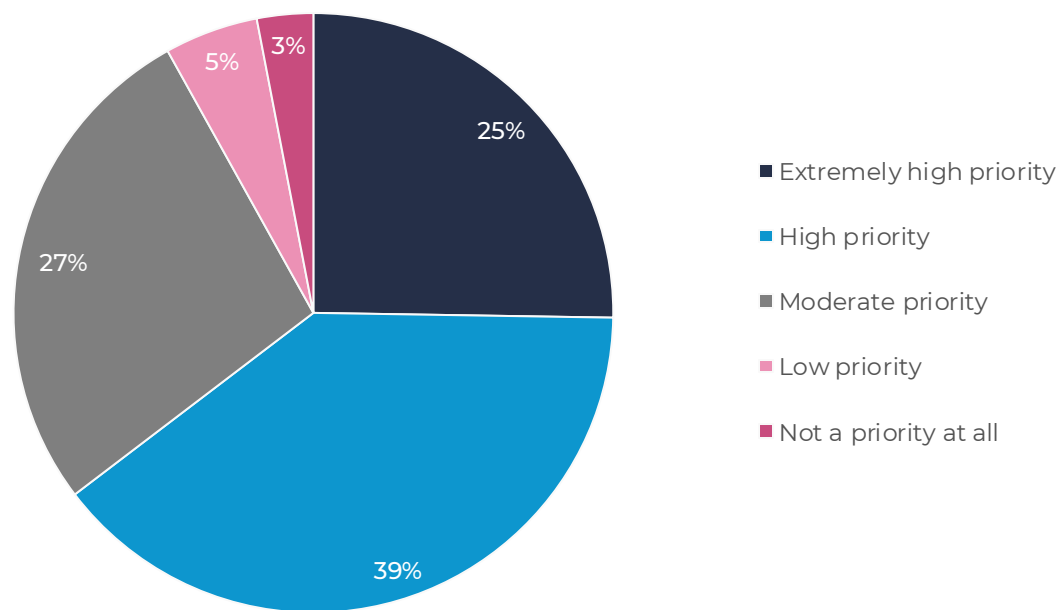


Q1. Which two of the following best describes what "gut health" means to you? (n=1019)
Please rank your top two choices with number one being closest to what "gut health" means to you.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans say their gut health is a high priority.

While 64% describe gut health as either an extremely high (25%) or high (39%) priority, just 8% say it is a low priority (5%) or not a priority at all (3%).

Priority Placed On Personal Gut Health

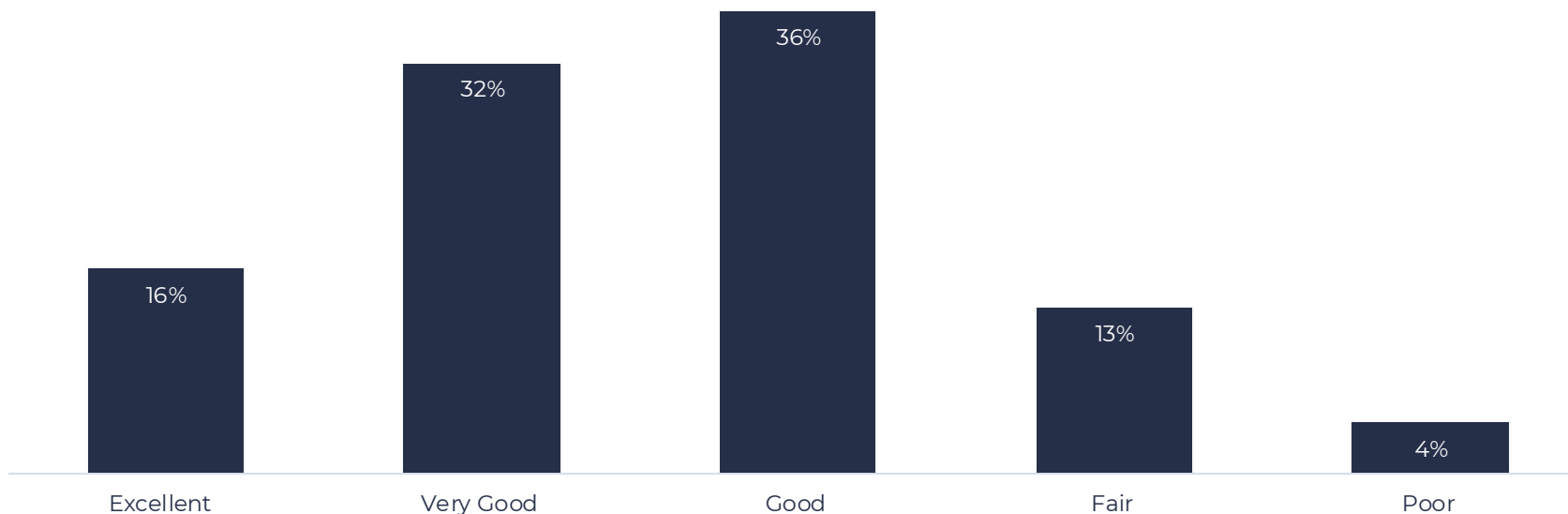


Total does not equal 100% due to rounding

Most Americans rate their recent gut health positively.

More than eight in ten (84%) describe their gut health over the past 30 days as excellent (16%), very good (32%), or good (36%), while just 17% rate it as fair (13%) or poor (4%).

Rating Of Personal Gut Health In The Past Month

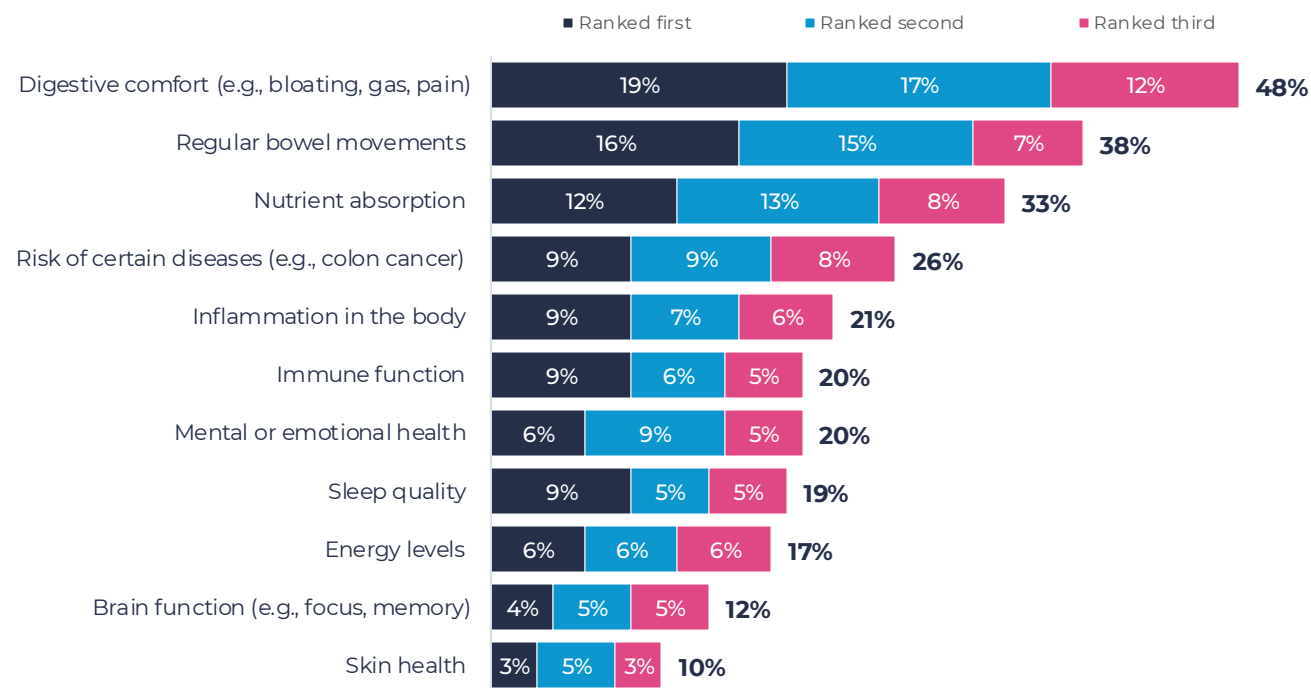


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Americans rank digestive outcomes as most affected by gut health.

Americans believe digestive comfort (48%), regular bowel movements (38%), and nutrient absorption (33%) are most affected by gut health, while relatively few associate it with brain function (12%) and skin health (10%).

Beliefs About What Gut Health Affects Most

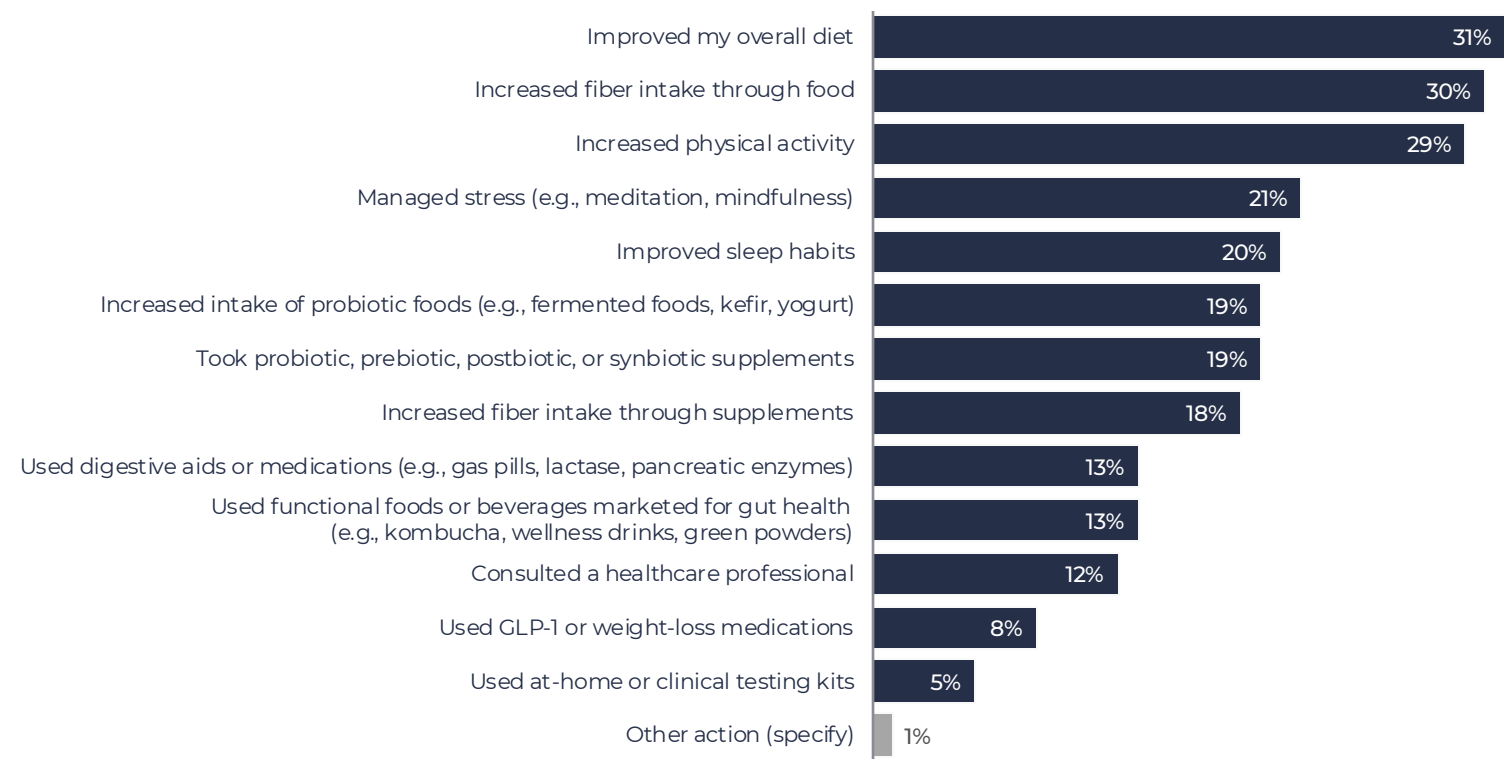


Totals may not add up or equal 100% due to rounding

In the past year, Americans most often supported their gut health through diet, fiber, and physical activity.

About three in ten Americans report improving their overall diet (31%), increasing fiber intake from food (30%), and/or being more physically active (29%) to support gut health in the past year, while only 12% say they consulted a healthcare professional.

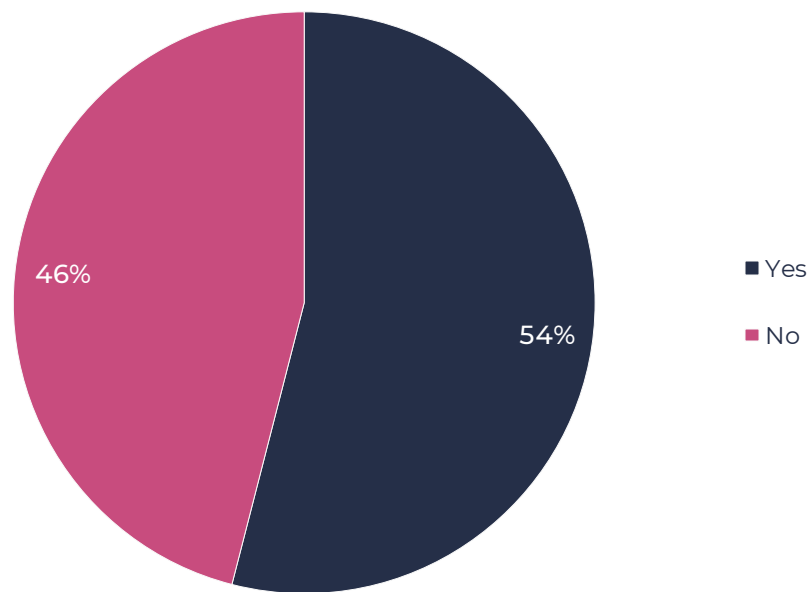
Actions Taken To Support Gut Health In The Past Year



More than half of Americans say they limit or avoid certain foods or beverages to improve their gut health.

While 54% report restricting their diet to improve gut health, 46% do not.

Percentage Of Americans Who Restrict Their Diet To Improve Gut Health

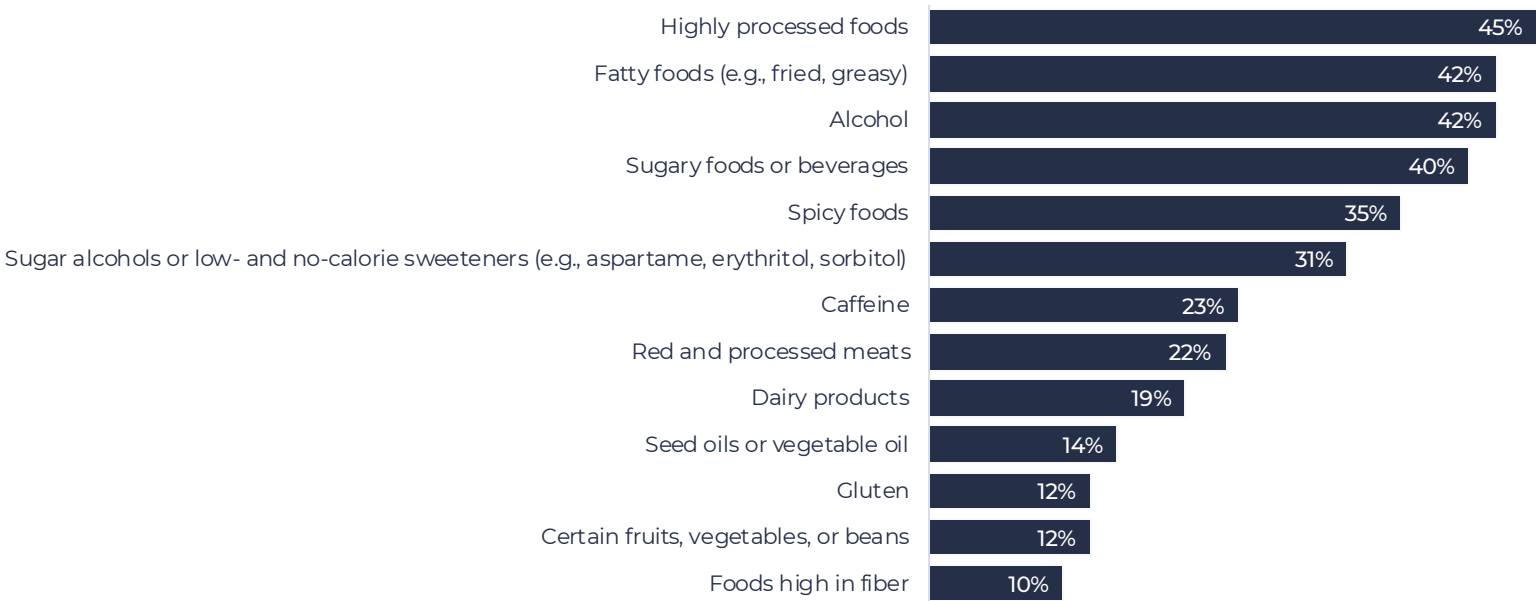


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Among Americans who limit or avoid foods and beverages to improve gut health, highly processed foods, fatty foods, alcohol, and sugary foods or beverages are most commonly cited.

While highly processed foods (45%), fatty foods (42%), alcohol (42%), and/or sugary foods or beverages (40%) are the most commonly restricted items to improve their gut health, far fewer cite seed or vegetable oils (14%), gluten (12%), certain fruits, vegetables, or beans (12%), and/or high-fiber foods (10%)

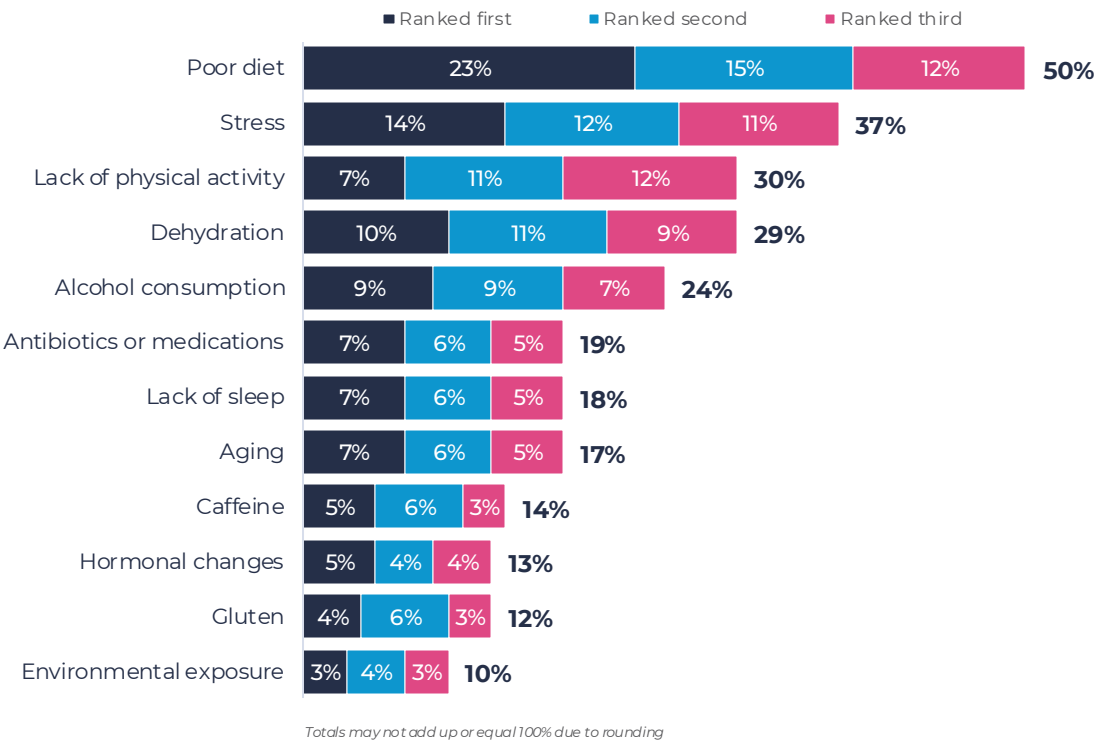
Dietary Restrictions By Americans To Improve Gut Health
Of those who limit or avoid foods or beverages to improve gut health



Americans rank poor diet and stress as most detrimental to gut health.

After poor diet (50%) and stress (37%), Americans say lack of physical activity (30%), dehydration (29%), and alcohol (24%) most negatively affect gut health. Far fewer cite caffeine (14%), hormonal changes (13%), gluten (12%), or environmental exposure (10%).

Beliefs About What Most Negatively Affects Gut Health

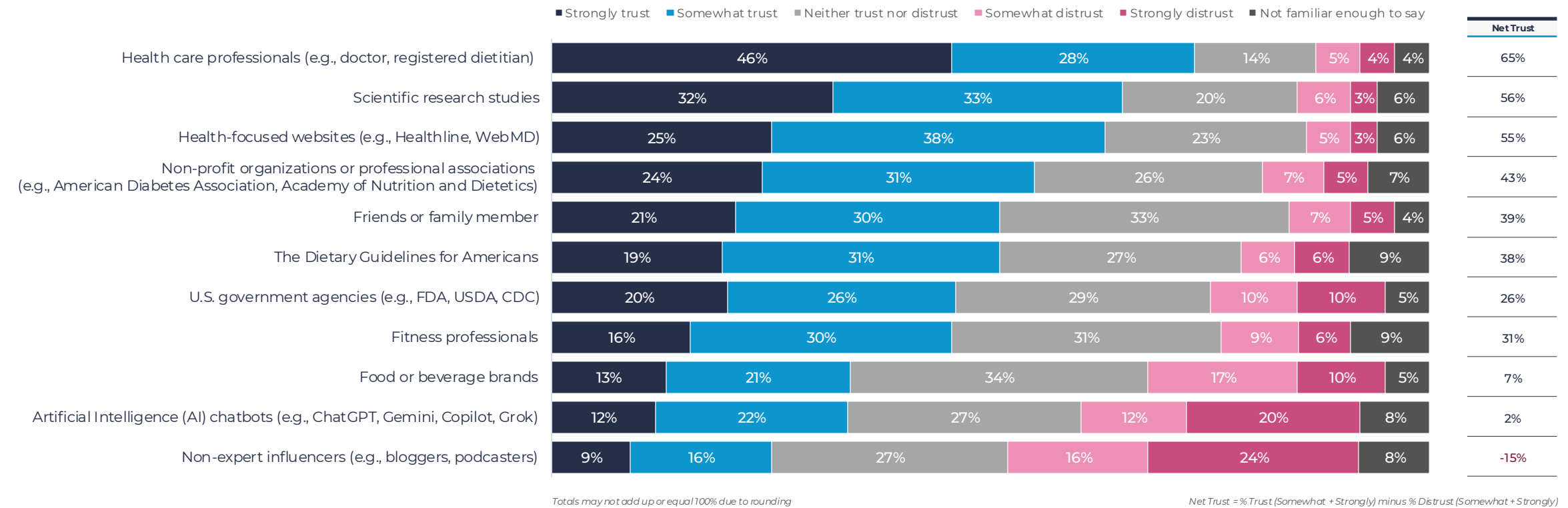


Q8. Which three of the following do you believe most negatively affects gut health? (n=1019)
Please rank your top three choices with number one being closest to what you believe most negatively affects gut health.

Healthcare professionals, scientific studies, and health websites are Americans' most trusted sources of gut health information.

Healthcare professionals (74%), scientific studies (65%), and health-focused websites (63%) earn the highest levels of trust, while food and beverage brands (34%), AI chatbots (34%), and non-expert influencers (25%) are trusted by fewer Americans.

Trust In Information Sources About Gut Health





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