IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet

November 2026



© 2026 International Food Information Council

METHODOLOGY

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners. One thousand adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from April 12 to April 21, 2026, and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

The Bayesian confidence level for the survey sample (n=1000) 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 Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Enjoying sweet foods and drinks while following dietary guidance can present a challenge for many Americans. Understanding how consumers view added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) can help food and nutrition professionals offer practical, relevant, and actionable advice.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends limiting free sugars to less than 10% of daily calories and suggests intake below 5% for additional benefits. Free sugars include added sugars and those in honey, syrups, and fruit juice. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030* discourage consumption of added sugars and LNCS, while advising no more than 10 grams of added sugars per meal.

WHO conditionally recommends against using LNCS for weight control or reducing noncommunicable disease risk, excluding people with pre-existing diabetes. The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) separately establishes acceptable daily intakes addressing the safety of individual sweeteners.

These various recommendations often leave consumers with questions about sugar and LNCS consumption. This *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet,* reveals the conundrum many face: four in ten Americans (40%) say LNCS help them reduce or limit added sugar intake, yet 43% agree LNCS should generally be avoided. At the same time, fewer than one in three (31%) say following a diet without added sugars would be enjoyable, while slightly more (37%) say the same about a diet without LNCS.

This *IFIC Spotlight Survey* explores how Americans approach added sugars and LNCS consumption, including their perceived benefits and safety, role in a healthy diet, and trusted sources of information. The findings can help professionals anticipate consumer questions and communicate scientific evidence with attention to taste preferences and practical barriers.

SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.



KEY FINDINGS

More Americans try to limit or avoid sodium, added and natural sugars, saturated fat, and low- and no-calorie sweeteners than try to consume them. The reverse is true for fiber and protein.

Americans take different approaches to the specific nutrients and sweeteners in their diets.

Sodium has the largest gap: 63% try to limit or avoid it, compared with 8% who try to consume it. The same pattern holds for added sugars (60% vs. 9%), saturated fat (58% vs. 9%), low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS)(51% vs. 16%), and sugars naturally present in whole foods (39% vs. 18%). Limiting is more common than avoidance for sodium and added sugars, while avoidance is more common for LNCS and saturated fat.

Fiber and protein show the opposite pattern. About half try to consume fiber (49%) and protein (50%), compared with 18% and 20%, respectively, who try to limit or avoid them. The differences are +31 percentage points for fiber and +30 for protein.

About one-third do not pay much attention to natural sugars (34%), compared with 21%–23% for the other six items measured. Across all seven items (protein, fiber, natural sugars, LNCS, saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium), 8%–10% are unsure of their consumption approach.

Nearly four in ten Americans do not pay much attention to calories.

When it comes to calorie consumption, Americans report a range of approaches. The most common individual response is not paying much attention to calories (39%). About one-third try to limit calories to a set amount each day (32%), while 16% try to consume a minimum number daily. Another 12% are unsure of their typical approach.

Together, nearly half (48%) report trying to follow a daily calorie limit or consume a minimum amount, reflecting two distinct approaches to managing calorie intake.

SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

KEY FINDINGS

Four in ten Americans say low- and no-calorie sweeteners help them reduce or limit added sugar intake.

Four in ten Americans say low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) help them reduce or limit their added sugar intake. This group is evenly divided between those who say LNCS help a great deal (20%) and somewhat (20%).

Fewer Americans report that LNCS do not make much difference or make reducing or limiting added sugar intake harder (23% combined). This includes 18% who say they do not make much difference and 5% who say they make it harder.

One in four Americans (25%) report not consuming LNCS, while 12% are unsure how much they help.

Americans express mixed views of low- and no-calorie sweeteners, with many taking a neutral position.

Americans hold mixed views of low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS), with 29%–42% neither agreeing nor disagreeing across the seven statements.

The largest gaps between agreement and disagreement concern safety and avoidance. Equal shares agree that LNCS are safe for most people and that they should generally be avoided (43% each), compared with 23% who disagree with each statement—a difference of 20 percentage points.

Agreement also exceeds disagreement that LNCS taste good (43% vs. 28%), help satisfy their desire for sweet foods and drinks (42% vs. 27%), and provide more benefits than risks (38% vs. 25%).

For weight management, 35% agree LNCS are effective, 23% disagree, and 42% neither agree nor disagree, the highest neutral response across the statements. Views are evenly split on whether LNCS are mainly for people with diabetes (32% agree and 32% disagree), while 37% neither agree nor disagree.

SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

KEY FINDINGS

Americans believe natural sugars, 100% fruit juice, and honey can be consumed more frequently as part of a healthy diet than other sweet-tasting drinks and ingredients.

Americans draw distinctions among sweet-tasting drinks and ingredients when considering how often they can be consumed as part of a healthy diet. Natural sugars, such as those in whole fruit and plain dairy, are most often viewed as fitting at least a few times per week (66%), followed by 100% fruit juice (60%) and honey (58%).

Fewer say the same about added sugars (43%), low- and no-calorie sweeteners (42%), zero-calorie soda/pop (42%), and high fructose corn syrup (33%). Daily consumption is also more widely viewed as compatible with a healthy diet for natural sugars (42%), 100% fruit juice (40%), and honey (34%) than for the other items (20%–25%).

High fructose corn syrup is most often identified as an ingredient that should not be consumed as part of a healthy diet (34%). Fewer say the same about added sugars (24%), zero-calorie soda/pop (23%), low- and no-calorie sweeteners (22%), 100% fruit juice (9%), honey (8%), and natural sugars (6%).

Across the items, 10%–15% select consumption less than once a week, and 17%–21% are unsure.

Most Americans believe added sugars can fit into a healthy diet, while one in five are unsure how much.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65%) believe some added sugar can be included in a healthy diet, yet their views on the daily amount vary.

The most commonly selected amount is less than 25 grams per day (29%), followed by 25–50 grams per day (21%). Together, these responses account for half of Americans (50%).

Another 15% say a healthy diet can include more than 50 grams per day. This includes 51–75 grams (9%), 76–100 grams (4%), and more than 100 grams (2%).

Thirteen percent believe no added sugar can be included in a healthy diet, while about one in five (21%) are unsure how much can fit.

SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

KEY FINDINGS

More Americans say it would be easy to follow a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners than a diet without added sugars.

Americans are more likely to say a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) would be easy to follow than one without added sugars (39% vs. 29%), a difference of 10 percentage points.

Similar shares say it would be easy to follow a diet without LNCS (39%) as say it would be difficult (37%). Easy responses include somewhat easy (20%) and very easy (19%), while difficult responses include somewhat difficult (20%) and very difficult (17%). Another 24% say it would be neither difficult nor easy.

For a diet without added sugars, more say it would be difficult to follow than say it would be easy (43% vs. 29%). These include somewhat difficult (23%) and very difficult (20%), compared with somewhat easy (15%) and very easy (14%). Another 28% say it would be neither difficult nor easy.

More Americans say it would be enjoyable to follow a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners than a diet without added sugars.

Americans are more likely to say a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) would be enjoyable to follow than one without added sugars (37% vs. 31%), a difference of 6 percentage points.

For a diet without LNCS, slightly more say it would be enjoyable (37%) than unenjoyable (33%) to follow. Enjoyable responses include somewhat enjoyable (19%) and very enjoyable (18%), while unenjoyable responses include somewhat unenjoyable (17%) and very unenjoyable (16%). Another 31% say it would be neither unenjoyable nor enjoyable.

For a diet without added sugars, more say it would be unenjoyable to follow than say it would be enjoyable (37% vs. 31%). These include somewhat unenjoyable (20%) and very unenjoyable (17%), compared with somewhat enjoyable (16%) and very enjoyable (15%). Another 32% say it would be neither unenjoyable nor enjoyable.

SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

KEY FINDINGS

Health professionals and scientific sources are the most trusted voices on added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners.

Americans report similar patterns of high trust ("quite a bit" or "a great deal") in sources of information about the health effects of consuming added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS). Percentages are presented for added sugars first, followed by LNCS.

Personal health care providers lead (50% each), followed by registered dietitians (45% and 44%). Nonprofit organizations or professional associations (41% and 36%), scientific research studies (40% and 43%), and health-focused websites (38% and 35%).

Other sources include U.S. government agencies (35% each), friends or family (32% and 31%), fitness professionals (32% and 29%), news articles or TV news (31% and 27%), brand websites or social media accounts (25% each), and non-expert influencers (23% and 24%).

Net trust (high trust minus little or no trust) is positive for the five leading sources and negative for all six remaining sources. Personal health care providers have the highest net trust (+28 percentage points for added sugars and +25 for LNCS), followed by registered dietitians (+18 for both) and scientific research studies (+14 for both). Government agencies are near zero (−1 point for added sugars and −2 for LNCS). Non-expert influencers rank lowest (−34 for added sugars and −33 for LNCS).

Half of Americans trust *the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* for information about added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners.

Just over half of Americans (51%) trust the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA) for information about added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners. This includes 31% who somewhat trust them and 20% who strongly trust them.

More than one-third (37%) neither trust nor distrust the DGA, making this the most common individual response. Fewer Americans distrust the DGA (12%), with equal shares saying they somewhat distrust them (6%) or strongly distrust them (6%).

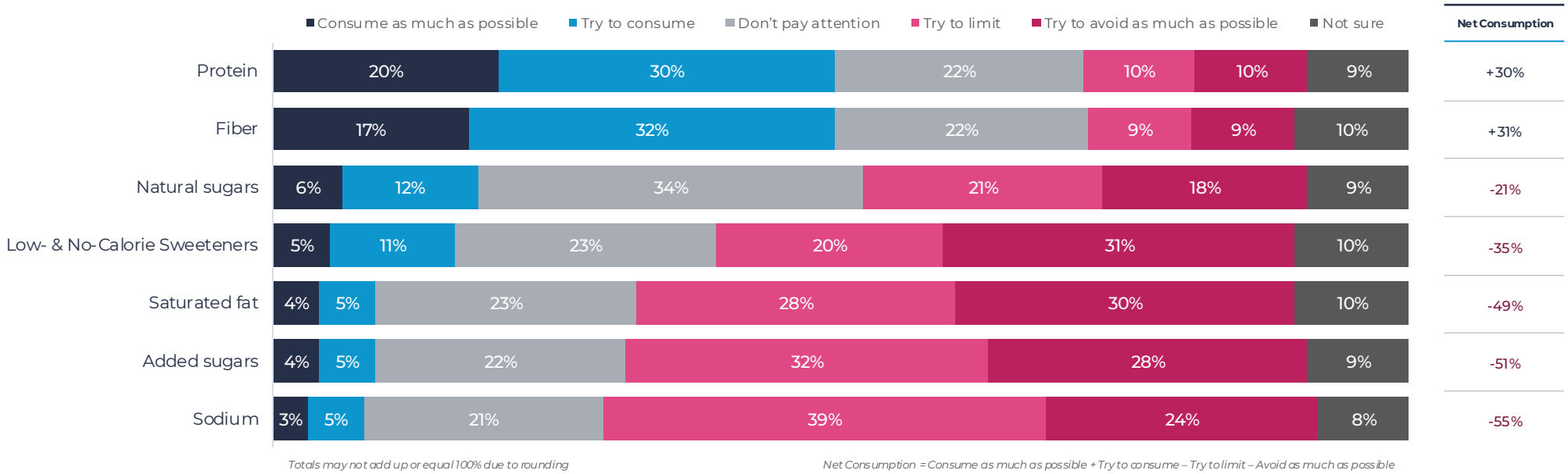
SOURCE: IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

More Americans try to limit or avoid sodium, added and natural sugars, saturated fat, and low- and no-calorie sweeteners than try to consume them. The reverse pattern is seen for fiber and protein.

More Americans try to limit or avoid sodium than try to consume it (a difference of -55 percentage points), followed by added sugars (-51), saturated fat (-49), low- and no-calorie sweeteners (-35), and natural sugars (-21). The reverse pattern holds for fiber and protein, with differences of +31 and +30 points, respectively. One in three (34%) do not pay attention to their consumption of natural sugars compared with two in ten (22%) who say the same about added sugars.

Approach To Consumption



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

Net Consumption = Consume as much as possible + Try to consume – Try to limit – Avoid as much as possible

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q1. For each of the following, how do you typically approach it in your diet? (n=1000)

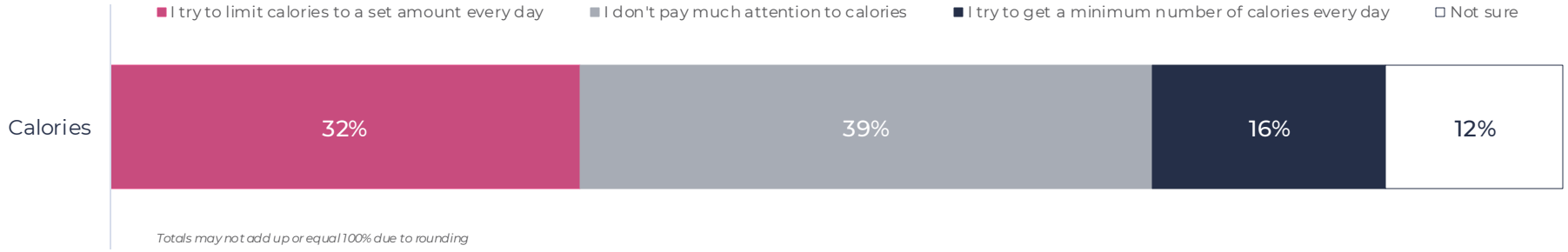
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Nearly four in ten Americans do not pay much attention to calories.

Nearly four in ten Americans (39%) say they do not pay much attention to calories, while 32% try to limit them to a set daily amount. Fewer try to consume a minimum number of calories each day (16%), and 12% are unsure of their typical approach to calorie intake.

Approach To Calorie Consumption



IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q1. For each of the following, how do you typically approach it in your diet? (n=1000)

IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Four in ten Americans say low- and no-calorie sweeteners help them reduce or limit added sugar intake.

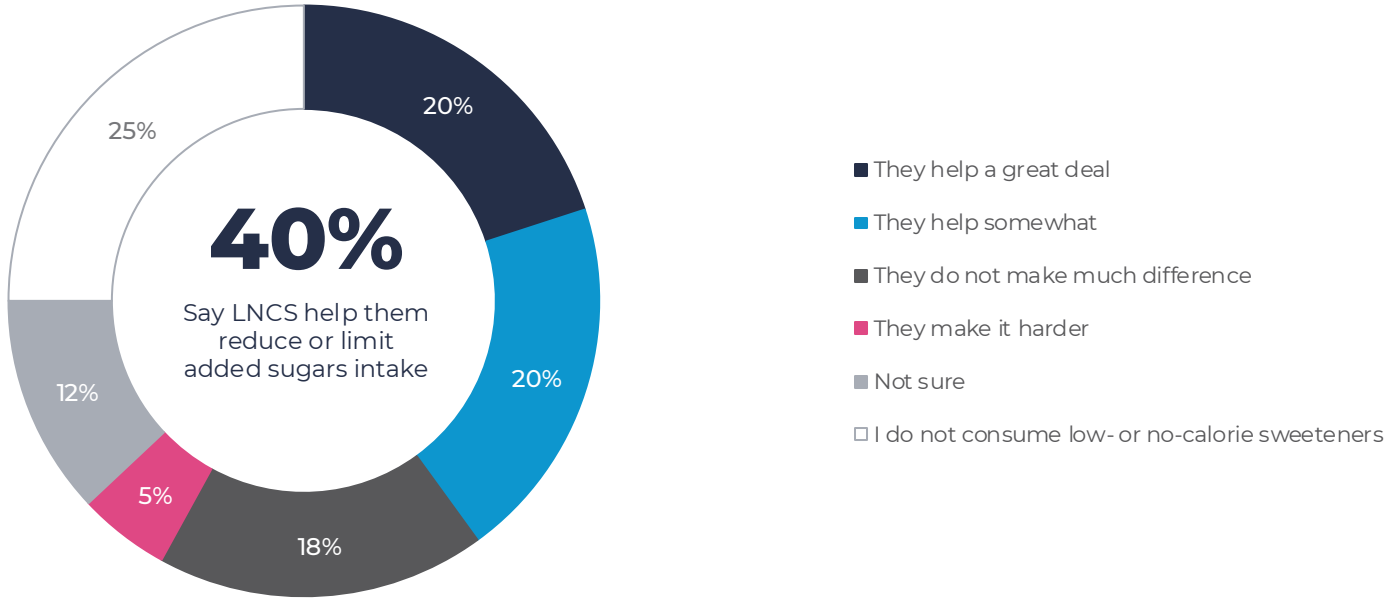
Equal shares say low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) help a great deal (20%) or somewhat (20%) with reducing or limiting their added sugar intake. Eighteen percent say LNCS do not make much difference, and 5% say they make it harder. One in four (25%) report not consuming LNCS, while 12% are unsure how much they help.

Perceived Helpfulness Of Low/No-Calorie Sweeteners In Reducing Added Sugar Intake

20%
Say LNCS help a great deal to reduce or limit their added sugars intake

5%
Say LNCS make it harder to reduce or limit their added sugars intake

12%
Are not sure if LNCS help to reduce or limit their added sugars intake



IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q2. How much do low- and no-calorie sweeteners (e.g., aspartame, stevia) help you reduce or limit your added sugar intake? (n=1000)

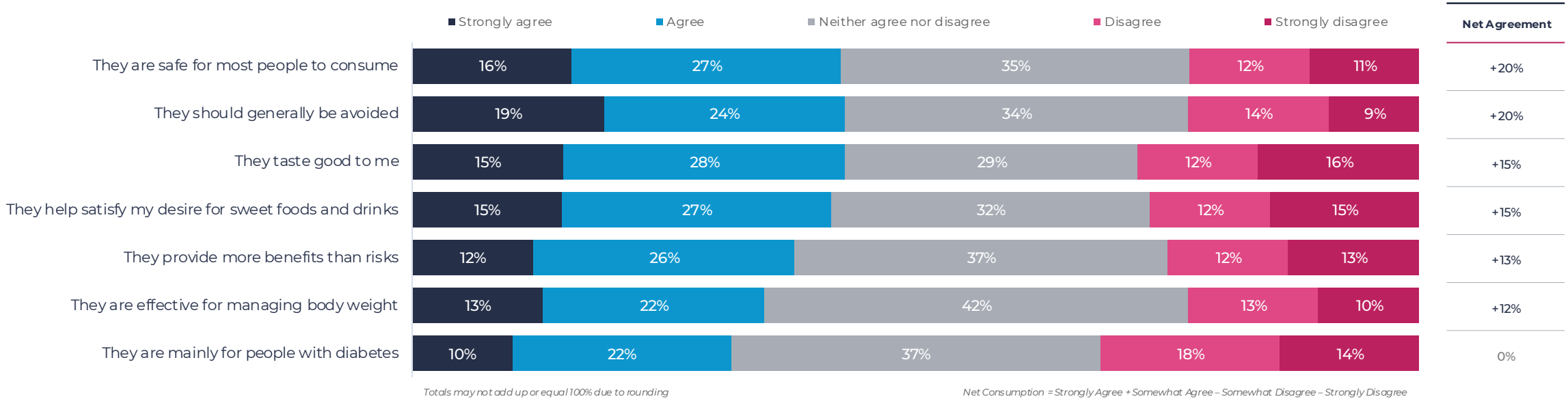
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Americans express mixed views of low- and no-calorie sweeteners, with many taking a neutral position.

Across selected statements about low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS), 29%–42% neither agree nor disagree, with the lowest share on whether LNCS taste good and the highest on their effectiveness for managing body weight. Views are most evenly distributed on whether LNCS are mainly for people with diabetes (32% agree, 32% disagree, and 37% neither agree nor disagree).

Agreement With Select Statements About Low/No-Calorie Sweeteners



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

Net Consumption = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about low- and no-calorie sweeteners (e.g., aspartame, stevia)? (n=1000)

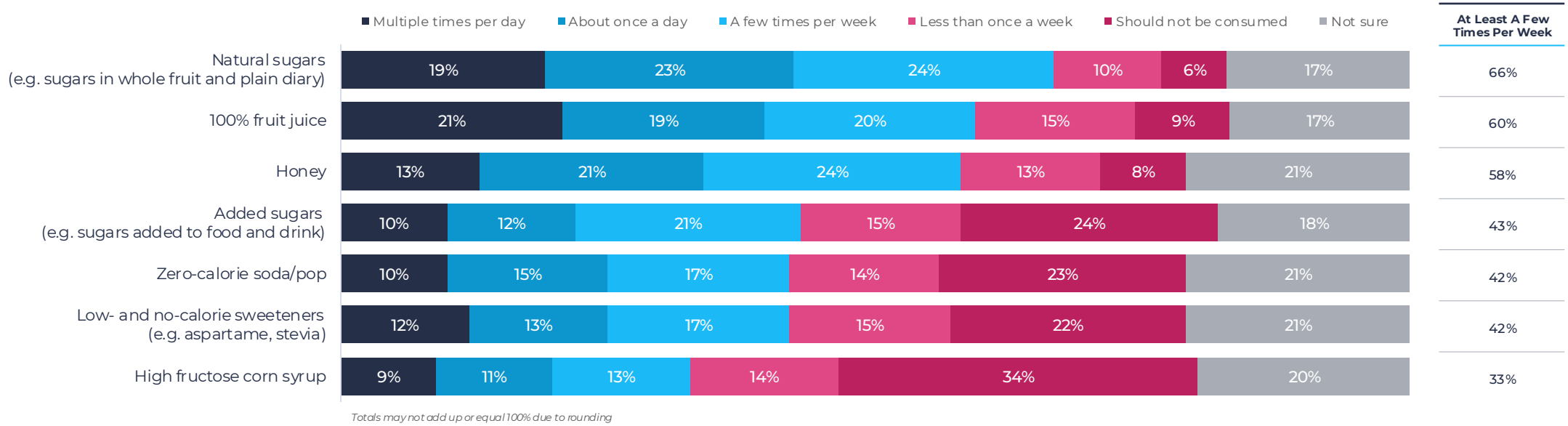
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Americans believe natural sugars, 100% fruit juice, and honey can be consumed more frequently as part of a healthy diet than other sweet-tasting drinks and ingredients.

About two-thirds of Americans (66%) say natural sugars can be consumed at least a few times per week as part of a healthy diet, followed by 100% fruit juice (60%) and honey (58%). One-third say the same about high fructose corn syrup (33%), half the share for natural sugars. For each item, about two in ten are unsure how often it fits into a healthy diet.

Perceived Consumption Frequency In A Healthy Diet



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

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q4. In your opinion, how often can each of the following be consumed as part of a healthy diet? (n=1000)

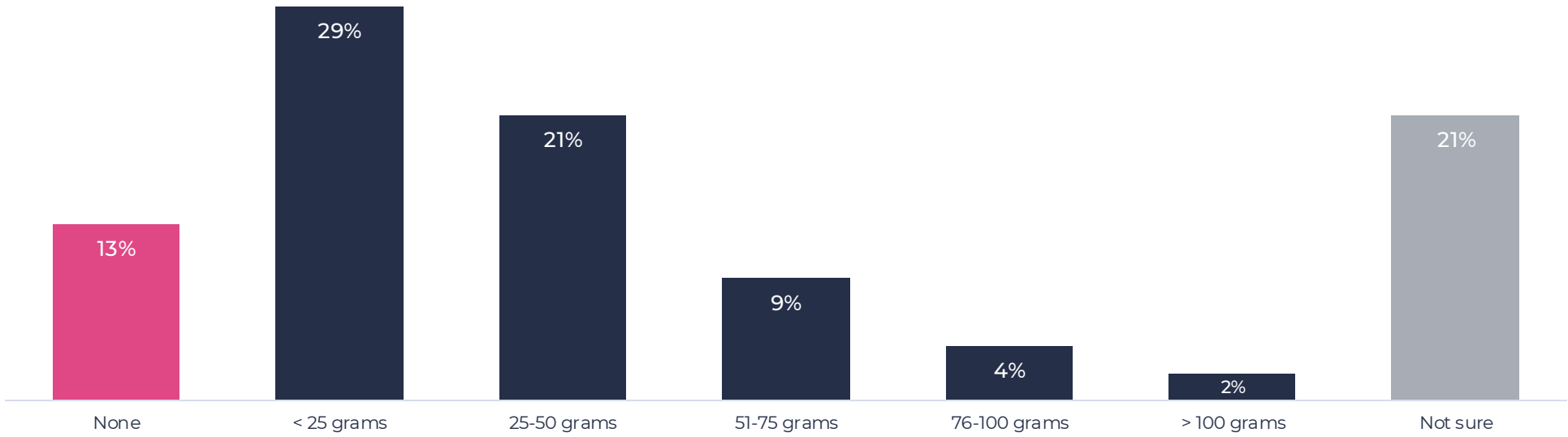
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Most Americans believe added sugars can fit into a healthy diet, while one in five are unsure how much.

Half of Americans (50%) say a healthy diet can include some added sugars in amounts up to 50 grams per day, while 15% say more than 50 grams can fit. Thirteen percent believe no added sugar can fit, and 21% are unsure.

Perceived Daily Amount Of Added Sugars That Can Be In A Healthy Diet



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

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q5. In your opinion, how much added sugar can be included each day in a healthy diet?
For reference, 25 grams of added sugar is about 6 teaspoons (or about 100 calories). (n=1000)

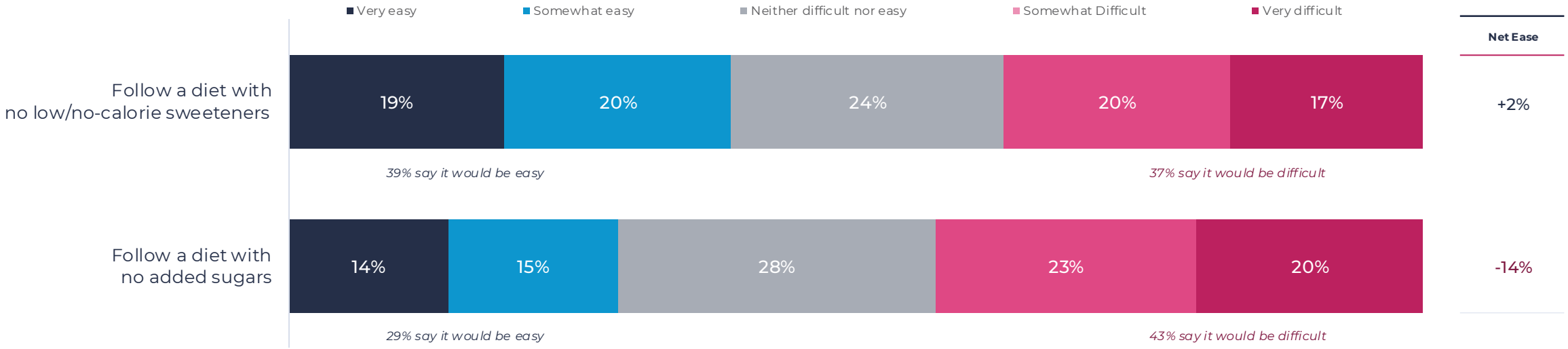
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

More Americans say it would be easy to follow a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners than a diet without added sugars.

Four in ten Americans (39%) say a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) would be easy to follow, compared with three in ten (29%) for a diet without added sugars. Thirty-nine percent say a diet without LNCS would be easy (39%) to follow and 37% say it would be difficult. For a diet without added sugars, more say it would be difficult (43%) than easy (29%) to follow.

Ease Of Following A Diet Without Low/No-Calorie Sweeteners Or Added Sugars



IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q6. How difficult or easy would it be for you to do each of the following? (n=1000)

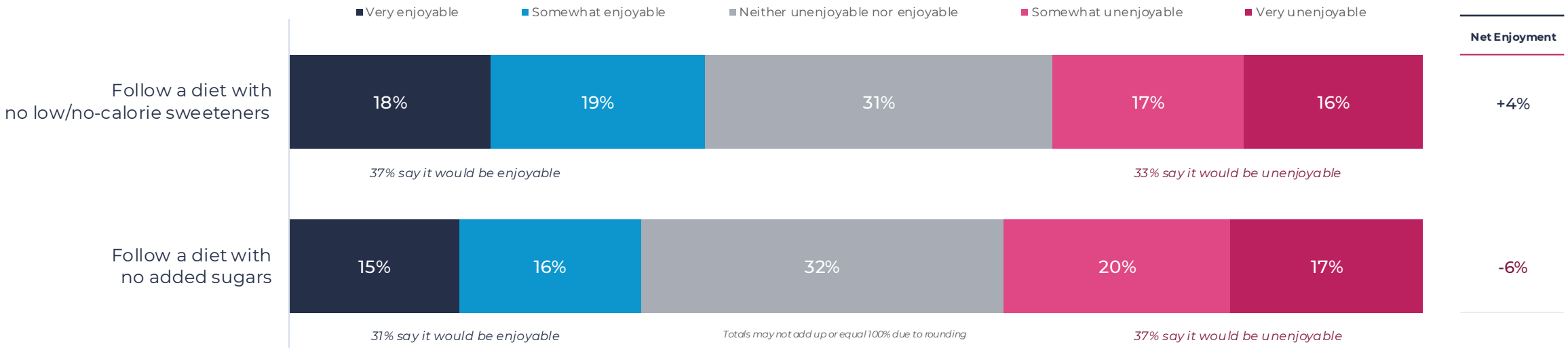
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

More Americans say it would be enjoyable to follow a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners than a diet without added sugars.

More Americans say a diet without low- and no-calorie sweeteners (LNCS) would be enjoyable than one without added sugars (37% vs. 31%). For a diet without LNCS, more anticipate enjoyment than unenjoyment (37% vs. 33%). For a diet without added sugars, more anticipate unenjoyment than enjoyment (37% vs. 31%).

Enjoyment Of Following A Diet Without Low/No-Calorie Sweeteners Or Added Sugars



IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q7. Regardless of how difficult you feel it would be, how enjoyable would it be for you to do each of the following? (n=1000)

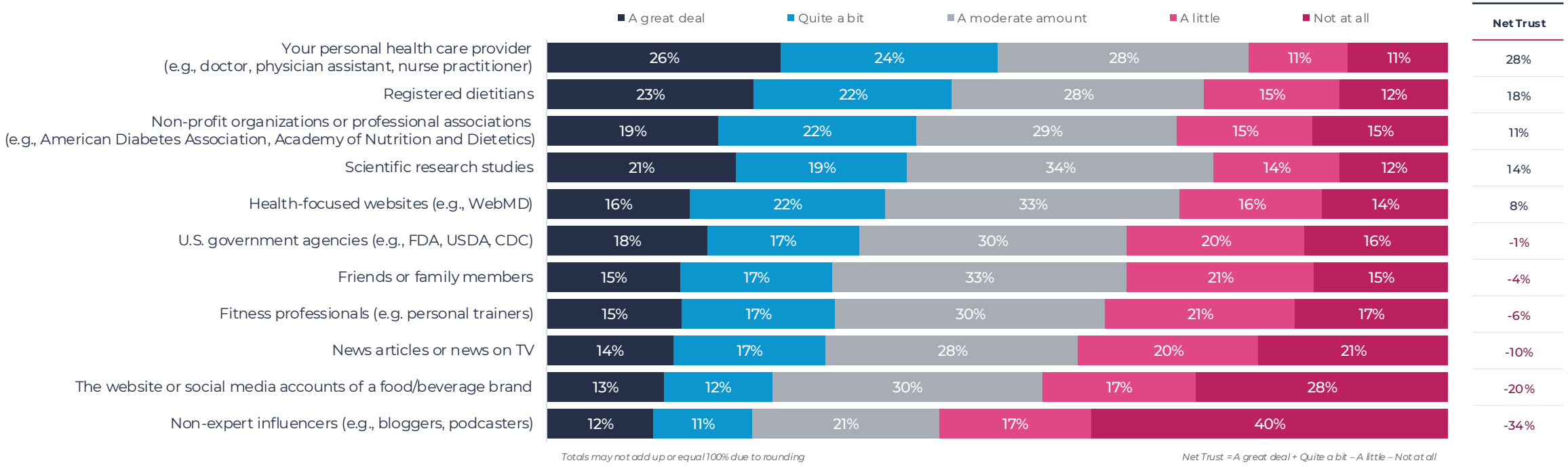
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Health professionals and scientific sources are the most trusted voices on added sugars.

Americans most often report high trust in personal health care providers (50%), registered dietitians (45%), nonprofit organizations or professional associations (41%), scientific research studies (40%), and health-focused websites (38%) on the health effects of added sugars. High trust exceeds little or no trust for these five sources, while the reverse holds for all others.

Trust In Information Sources About Health Effects Of Consuming Added Sugars



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

Net Trust = A great deal + Quite a bit – A little – Not at all

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q8. How much would you trust information from the following sources about the health effects of consuming added sugars? (n=1000)

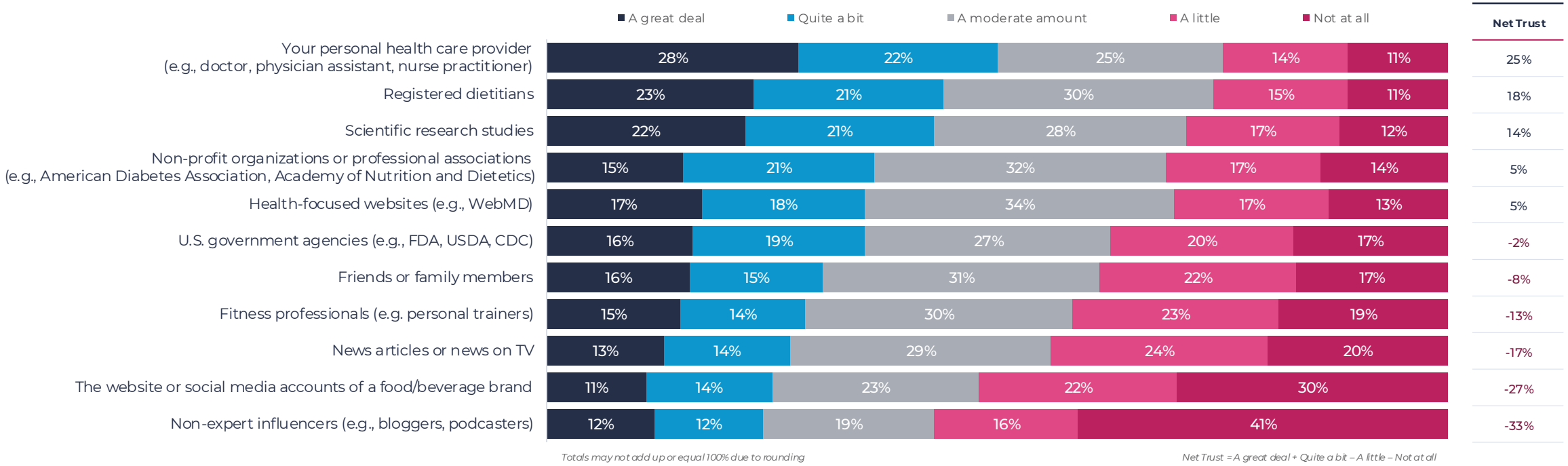
IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Health professionals and scientific sources are the most trusted voices on low- and no-calorie sweeteners.

Americans most often report high trust in personal health care providers (50%), registered dietitians (44%), scientific research studies (43%), nonprofit organizations or professional associations (36%), and health-focused websites (35%) on the health effects of low- and no-calorie sweeteners. High trust exceeds little or no trust for these five sources, while the reverse holds for all others.

Trust In Information Sources About Health Effects Of Consuming Low/No-Calorie Sweeteners



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

Net Trust = A great deal + Quite a bit – A little – Not at all

IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q8. How much would you trust information from the following sources about the health effects of consuming added sugars? (n=1000)

IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

Half of Americans trust the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* for information about added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners.

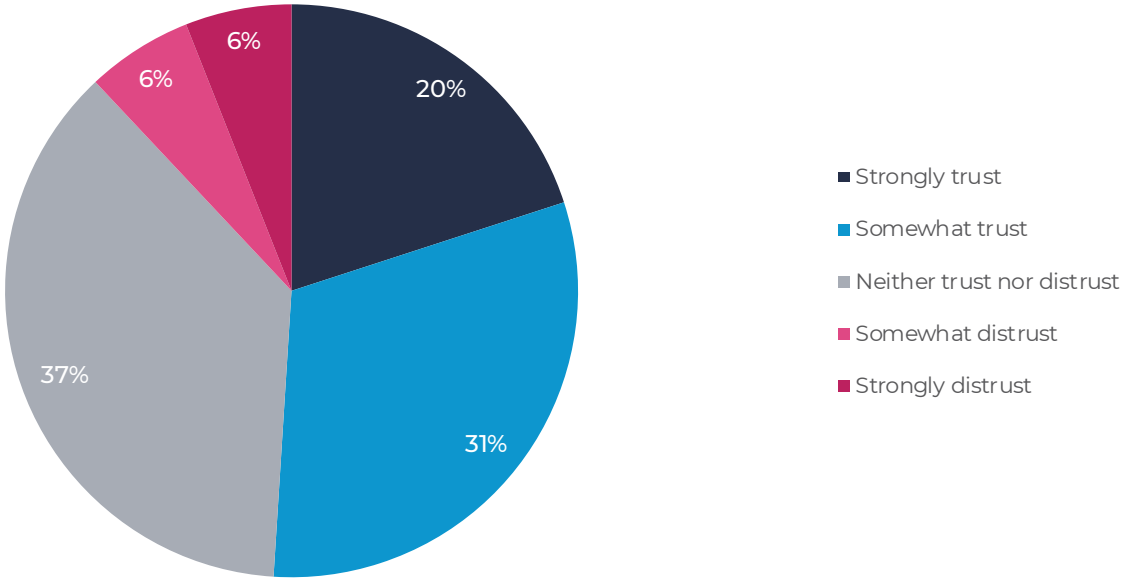
One in five Americans (20%) strongly trust the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA) for added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweetener information, while 31% somewhat trust them. Another 37% neither trust nor distrust the DGA, and 12% distrust them.

Trust In The *Dietary Guidelines For Americans* For Information About Added Sugars & Low/No-Calorie Sweeteners

51%
Of Americans trust the DGA for information about added sugars & low- and no-calorie sweeteners

12%
Of Americans distrust the DGA for information about added sugars & low- and no-calorie sweeteners

37%
Of Americans neither trust nor distrust the DGA for information about added sugars & low- and no-calorie sweeteners



IFIC SPOTLIGHT SURVEY

Q10. How much do you trust the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for information about added sugars and low- and no-calorie sweeteners? (n=1000)

IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions Of Sweeteners & Added Sugars In A Healthy Diet. November 2026.

© 2026 International Food Information Council

International
Food Information
Council

CONNECT WITH US!

IFIC

ific.org

@IFIC_insights

International Food Information Council

© 2026 International Food Information Council

