



**SPOTLIGHT**  
SURVEY

# Americans' Perceptions of Fiber & Whole Grains

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February 2026



# 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 carbohydrates, including dietary fiber and whole grains. One thousand and six adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from October 22-30, 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=1006) 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 Fiber & Whole Grains. February 2026.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carbohydrates are a cornerstone of a healthy diet, supplying a primary source of energy and key nutrients. Two key indicators of carbohydrate quality—dietary fiber and whole grains—play critical roles in digestive health, metabolic function, and long-term chronic disease prevention. Yet despite decades of dietary guidance, fiber and whole grain intake in the United States remain chronically low. Most Americans consume only about [half](#) of the recommended daily fiber intake, a pattern that has persisted for [decades](#). Fewer than 10% of women and just 3% of men [meet fiber recommendations](#), largely due to inadequate consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Additionally, more than 95% of U.S. adults do not consume the recommended amount of whole grains.

This *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions of Fiber & Whole Grains*, illustrates the challenge of overcoming America's long-standing fiber gap. Nearly one in three Americans say they consume fewer than 20 grams of fiber per day, well below the recommended 14 grams per 1,000 calories. Overall, nearly three in ten (29%) report consuming under 20 grams of fiber per day while 37% are unsure of their daily intake. Importantly, zero percent say they do not want or need to increase fiber intake, indicating strong receptivity despite potential knowledge, action, and access challenges.

Encouragingly, awareness of the benefits of fiber and whole grains is high. About seven in ten Americans believe fiber and/or whole grains are good for their health, and they are twice as likely to say carbohydrate-rich foods can be part of a healthy diet than to say they cannot. While fruits and vegetables are most often identified as top fiber sources, grain foods and cereals also rank highly as top sources of fiber, underscoring the role that nutrient-dense versions can play in closing the fiber gap.

Barriers persist, including uncertainty about which foods contain fiber, concerns about the cost and taste of high-fiber foods, and which information on food packaging to look for. Together, data from this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* point to opportunities to provide clearer, more consistent messaging for carbohydrate foods, especially those with higher whole grain and fiber content, to address our decades-long nutrition shortfall while aligning with consumers' desire to eat healthier.



# KEY FINDINGS

## Nearly one in three Americans say they consume fewer than 20 grams of fiber per day, well under recommended amounts.

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Compared with established dietary guidance, a substantial share of Americans do not meet recommended fiber intake levels or lack awareness of their fiber consumption. Current guidance recommends 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories (about 21 to 38 grams per day depending on age and sex). In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, 29% report consuming less than 20 grams of fiber per day, while 37% report that they do not know how much fiber they consume daily, highlighting a significant gap in awareness in addition to inadequate intake.

## Nearly half of Americans say fruits and/or vegetables are the best source of fiber.

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Following fruits and vegetables, which are identified as the best sources of fiber by 46% and 48% of Americans, respectively, perceptions of fiber sources vary widely. Grain foods are cited by 41%, followed by nuts and seeds (39%) and cereals (38%). Notably, 34% identify fiber supplements as a top source, surpassing several whole-food options such as legumes (30%) and breads (26%). Misconceptions persist, with 24% selecting meat or seafood and 19% selecting dairy, neither of which are significant sources of fiber unless fortified or consumed with fiber-rich foods.

## Top barriers to increasing fiber intake include knowledge, cost, and taste of high-fiber foods.

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Survey results show both readiness and challenges related to increasing fiber intake. While one in three Americans (33%) report no barriers, others cite practical and knowledge-based obstacles. Not knowing which foods contain fiber is the most common barrier (30%), followed by cost (27%) and taste (26%) of high fiber foods. Additional challenges include cooking or preparation time (24%) and inconvenience (17%). Importantly, no respondents indicated that they do not want or need to increase their fiber intake, suggesting a broad willingness to improve despite these barriers.

## More than half of Americans say that at least some carbohydrate-rich foods can be part of a healthy diet.

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Survey results indicate generally favorable, though mixed, perceptions of carbohydrate-rich foods. One-quarter of Americans (25%) believe these foods can be part of a healthy diet, while 30% believe only some can, and 12% believe they cannot. Notably, Americans are twice as likely to view carbohydrate-rich foods as compatible with a healthy diet (25%) as to view them as incompatible (12%). However, uncertainty remains: one in three Americans are either unsure whether carbohydrate-rich foods can be part of a healthy diet (14%) or do not know which foods are considered carbohydrate-rich (19%), highlighting gaps in understanding that may affect dietary decisions.

# KEY FINDINGS

**One in four Americans believes that sugar-sweetened beverages, chocolate or candy, or flavored milk or dairy can rarely or never be part of a healthy diet.**

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Americans distinguish between foods they view as incompatible with a healthy diet and those they largely accept. About one-quarter believe sugar-sweetened beverages cannot be part of a healthy diet (27%), while 23% say the same about chocolate or candy and flavored milk or dairy products. In contrast, fewer Americans believe that fruits (6%), vegetables (8%), potatoes (10%), rice (11%), pasta (12%), plain milk or dairy products (13%), 100% juice (13%), cereal (15%), and oats and oatmeal (15%) can rarely or never be part of a healthy diet.

**Half or more of Americans believe vegetables, fruit, plain milk or dairy, and 100% juice can fit into a healthy diet at least twice per week.**

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Perceptions of foods that can be consumed frequently as part of a healthy diet extend beyond fruits and vegetables. In addition to vegetables (68%) and fruits (66%), just over half of Americans believe plain milk or dairy products (57%) and 100% juice (51%) can be consumed at least twice per week as part of a healthy diet. Nearly half extend this view to oats or oatmeal (48%), cereal (47%), potatoes (45%), and rice (44%), while fewer do so for flavored milk or dairy products (36%), pasta (35%), and sugar-sweetened beverages (32%).

**Americans are more likely to look for carbohydrate-related claims on food packaging than details on the Nutrition Facts label.**

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Attention to carbohydrate-related information on food packaging varies, with consumers relying more on front-of-package claims than on detailed information on the Nutrition Facts label. Nearly three in ten Americans say they look for claims such as “100% Whole Grain” (29%), “No Added Sugar” (29%), “Good or Excellent Source of Fiber” (28%), and/or “Heart Healthy” (27%). A similar percentage (26%) say they look at the ingredients list. In contrast, fewer than two in ten Americans say they check the Nutrition Facts label for total carbohydrates (19%), dietary fiber (17%), and/or added sugars (15%) information. Nearly one in four (23%) report not looking for any carbohydrate-related information on food packaging.

# KEY FINDINGS

## Seven in ten Americans believe fiber and/or whole grains are good for their health.

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Survey findings show strong alignment around the health value of fiber and whole grains, but more mixed views on refined carbohydrates. Nearly three-quarters of Americans consider fiber (73%) and whole grains (70%) beneficial to health, compared with fewer than half (41%) who view refined carbohydrates as beneficial. These perceptions are reflected in reported behaviors: six in ten Americans (61%) say they try to consume foods high in whole grains, while more than half (52%) report actively limiting foods high in refined carbohydrates.

## The top three reasons Americans consume whole grains are to eat healthy, get more fiber, and support gut health.

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Americans most often cite general wellness motivations for consuming whole grains rather than specific disease-related outcomes. Leading reasons include eating a healthy diet (37%), increasing fiber intake (30%), and supporting gut health (27%). Fewer Americans report consuming whole grains to address specific health conditions, such as reducing heart disease risk (20%), inflammation (19%), blood pressure (19%), total and LDL cholesterol (19%), and/or colon cancer risk (17%).

## The top three reasons Americans consume fiber are to eat healthy, get more fiber, and support gut health.

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Americans most often cite general wellness motivations for consuming fiber rather than to address specific disease-related outcomes. Leading reasons include eating a healthy diet (35%), increasing fiber intake (30%), and supporting gut health (28%). Fewer Americans report consuming fiber to address specific health conditions, such as reducing blood pressure (20%), total and LDL cholesterol (19%), heart disease risk (18%), inflammation (17%), and/or colon cancer risk (16%).

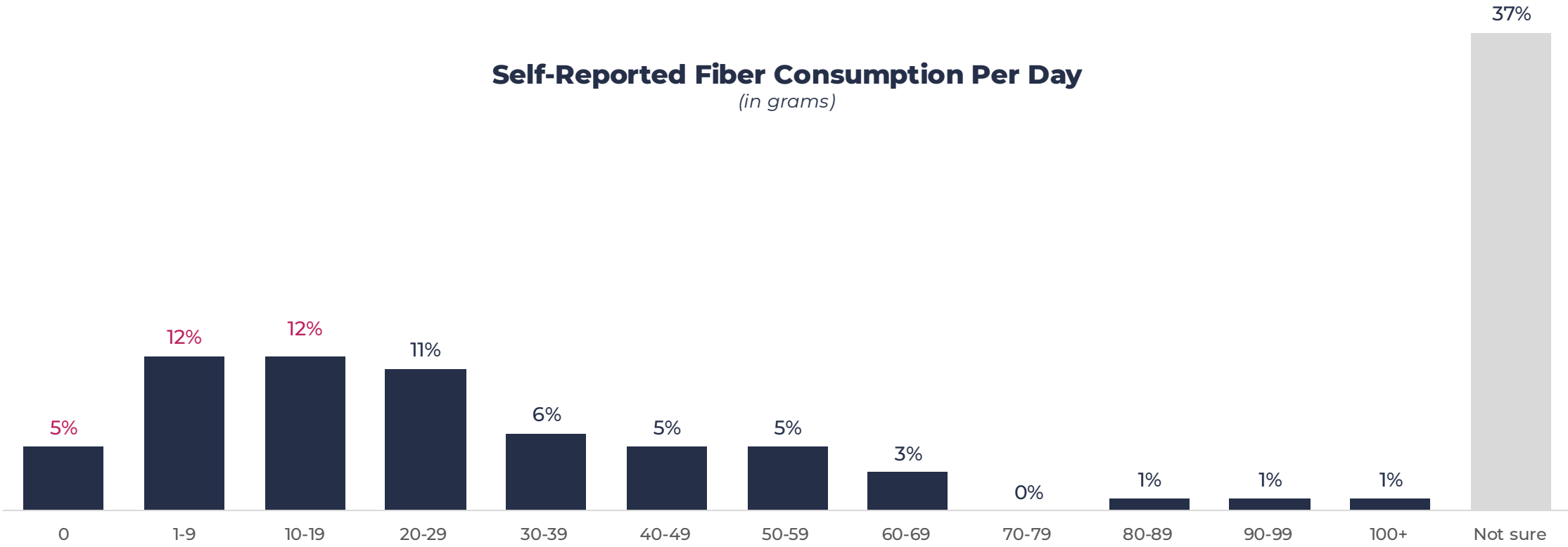
## Reasons for consuming whole grains and fiber are similar.

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Motivations for consuming whole grains and fiber are closely aligned and focus on general wellness rather than specific disease-related outcomes. For whole grains, leading reasons include eating a healthy diet (37%), increasing fiber intake (30%), and supporting gut health (27%). Similar motivations are reported for fiber consumption, with Americans citing eating a healthy diet (35%), increasing fiber intake (30%), and supporting gut health (28%). Fewer consumers report consuming either whole grains or fiber to address specific health conditions, suggesting both are viewed as important for overall well-being but are less strongly motivated by disease prevention.

# Nearly one in three Americans say they consume fewer than 20 grams of fiber per day, well under recommended amounts.

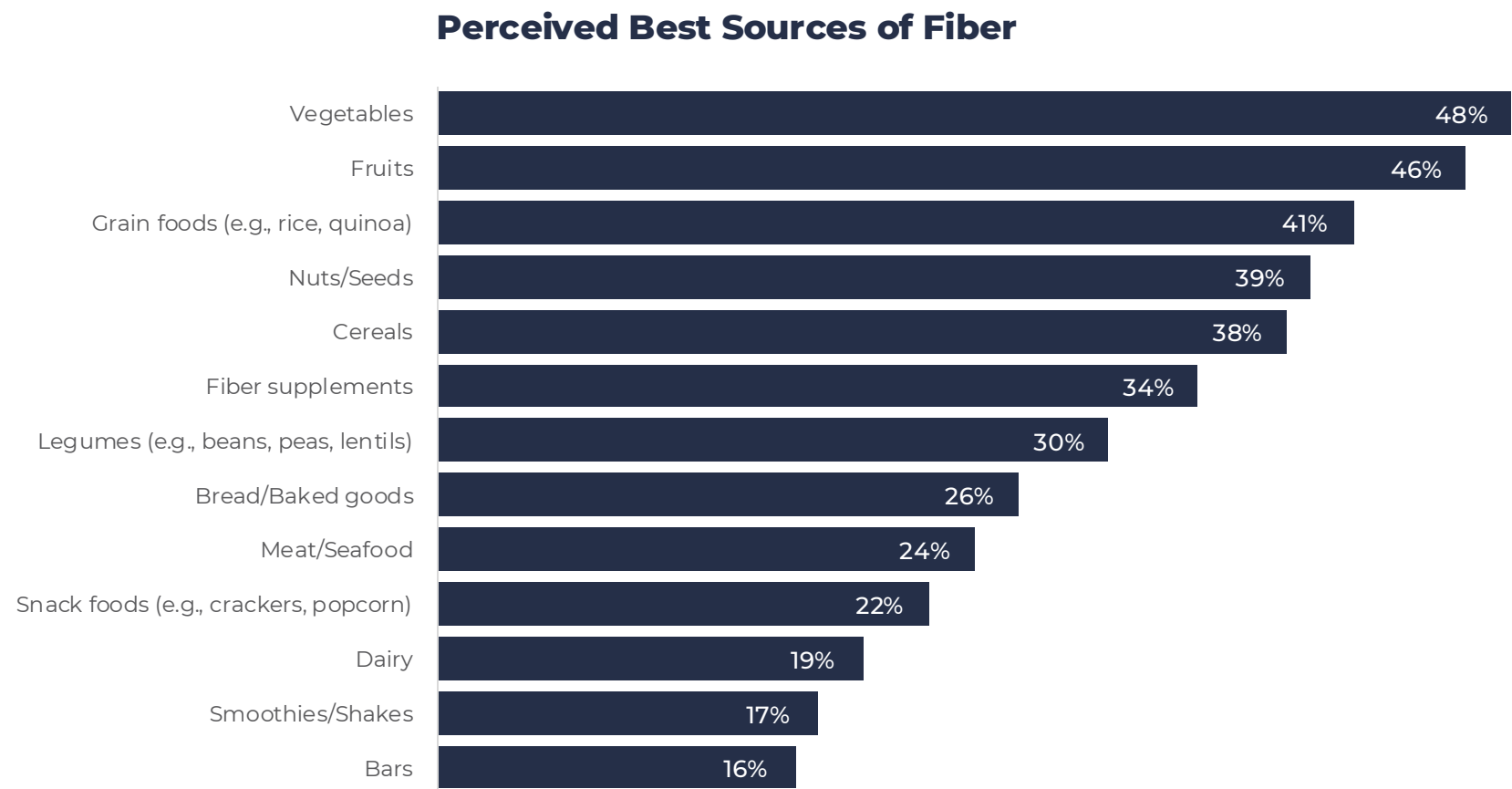
Overall, two in three Americans (66%) report consuming fewer than 20 grams of fiber per day (29%) or being unsure of their daily fiber intake (37%).



*\*Daily fiber recommendations for U.S. adults range from at least 21-38 grams depending on age and sex ([IOM, 2005](#))*

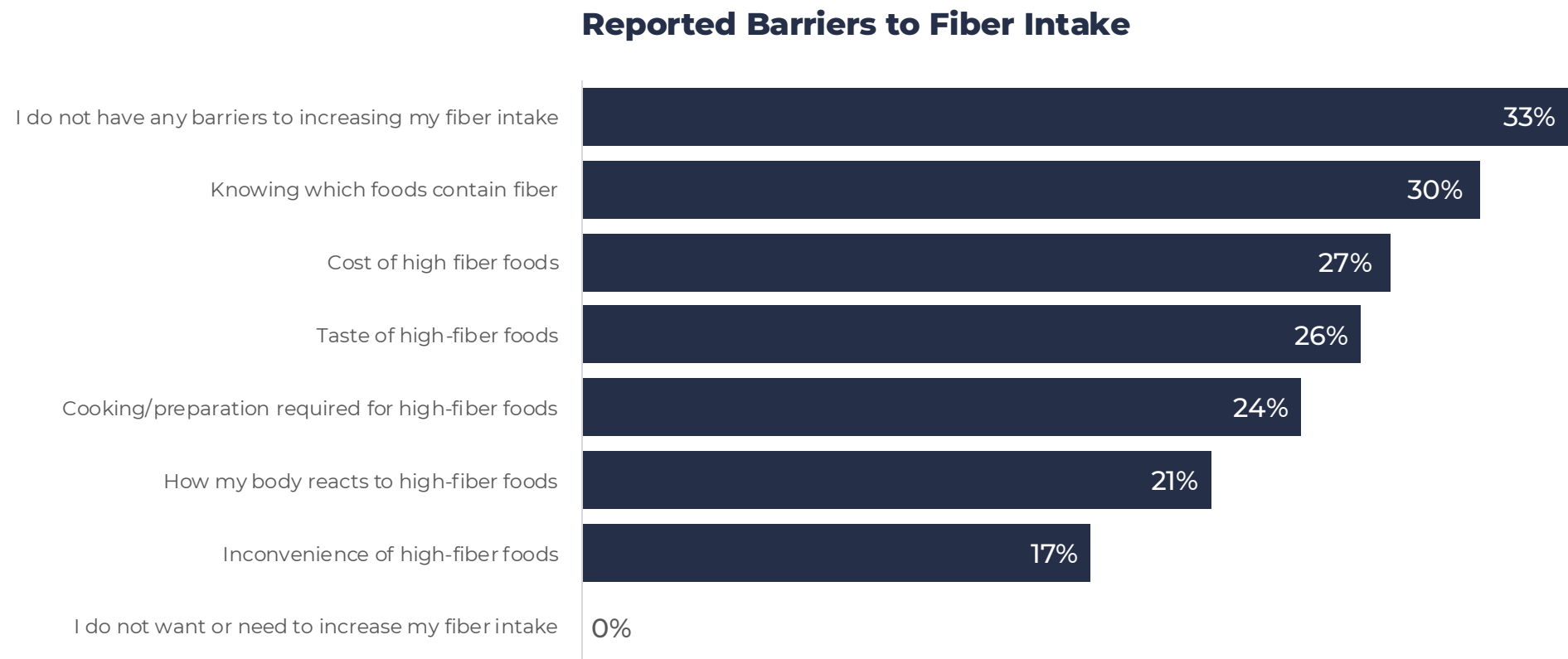
# Nearly half of Americans say fruits and/or vegetables are the best source of fiber.

Following fruits and vegetables, Americans say grain foods (41%), nuts/seeds (39%), and cereals (38%) are the best source of fiber.



# Top barriers to increasing fiber intake include knowledge, cost, and taste of high-fiber foods.

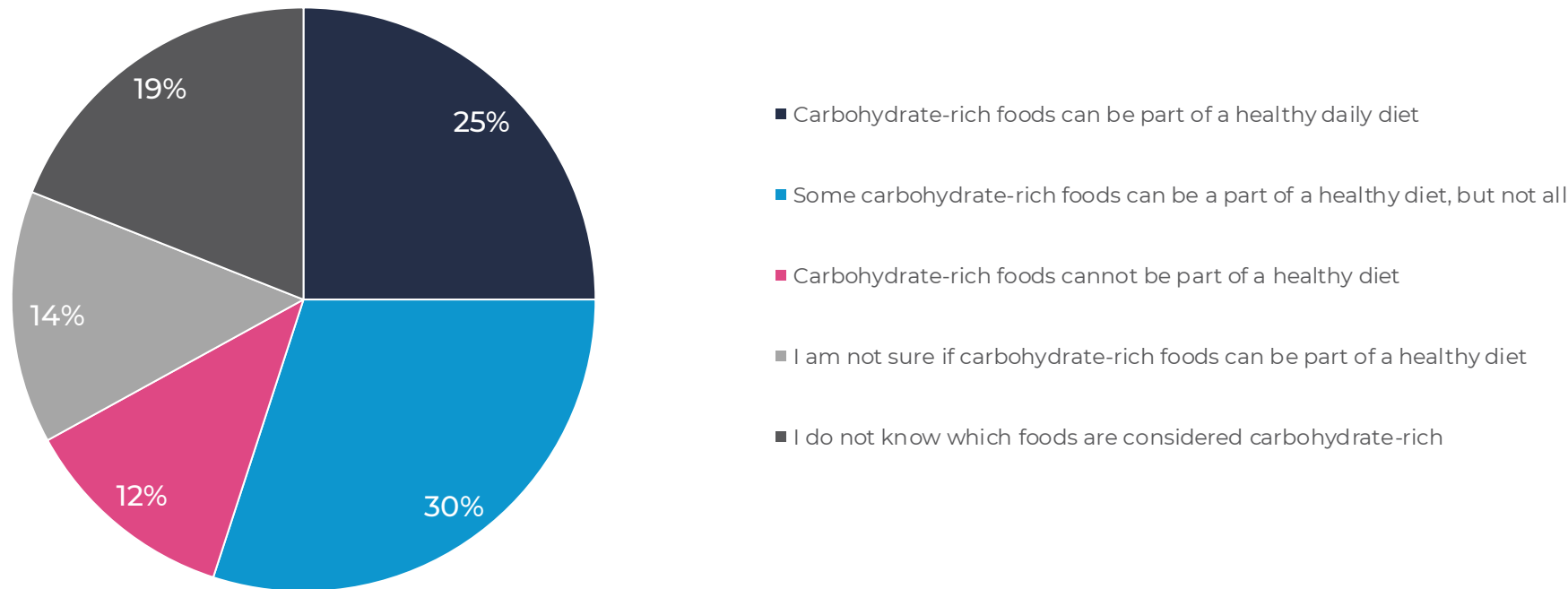
One in three (33%) report no barriers to increasing fiber intake. None indicated a lack of desire or need to increase fiber intake.



# More than half of Americans say that at least some carbohydrate-rich foods can be part of a healthy diet.

One-quarter of Americans (25%) believe carbohydrate-rich foods can be part of a healthy diet, 30% believe only some can, and 12% believe they cannot. One in three are unsure (14%) or do not know which foods are carbohydrate-rich (19%).

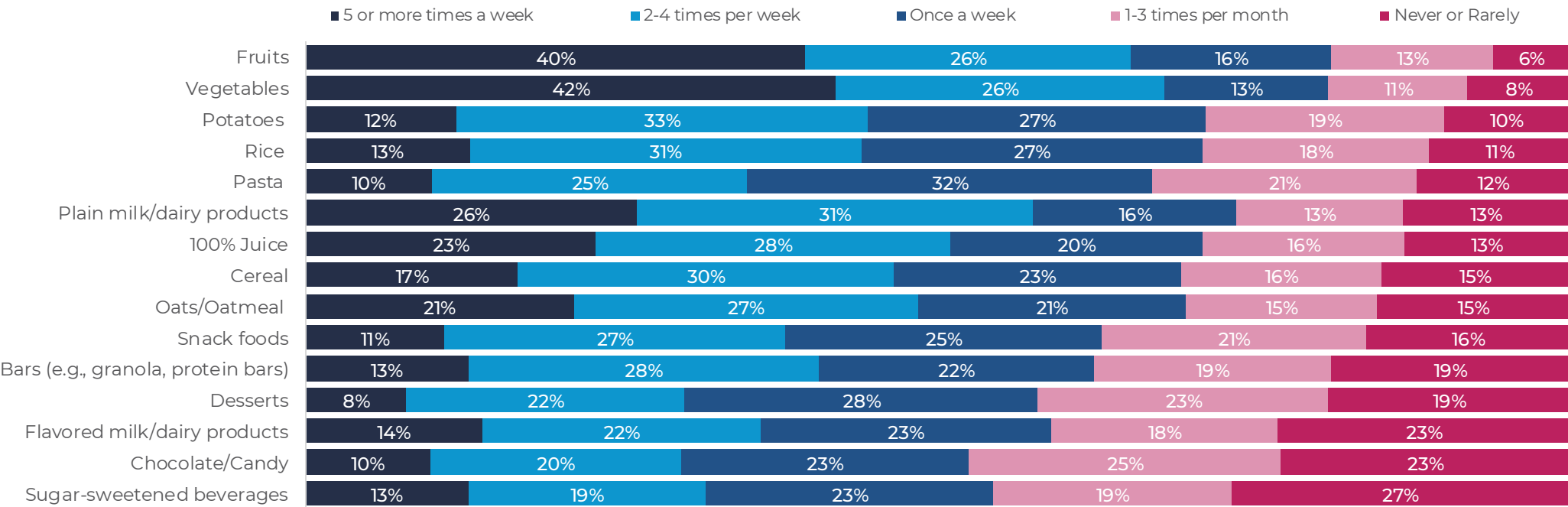
Perception of Carbohydrate-Rich Foods in a Healthy Diet



# One in four Americans believes that sugar-sweetened beverages, chocolate or candy, or flavored milk or dairy can rarely or never be part of a healthy diet.

One in ten or fewer Americans believe that fruits (6%), vegetables (8%), and potatoes (10%) can rarely or never be part of a healthy diet.

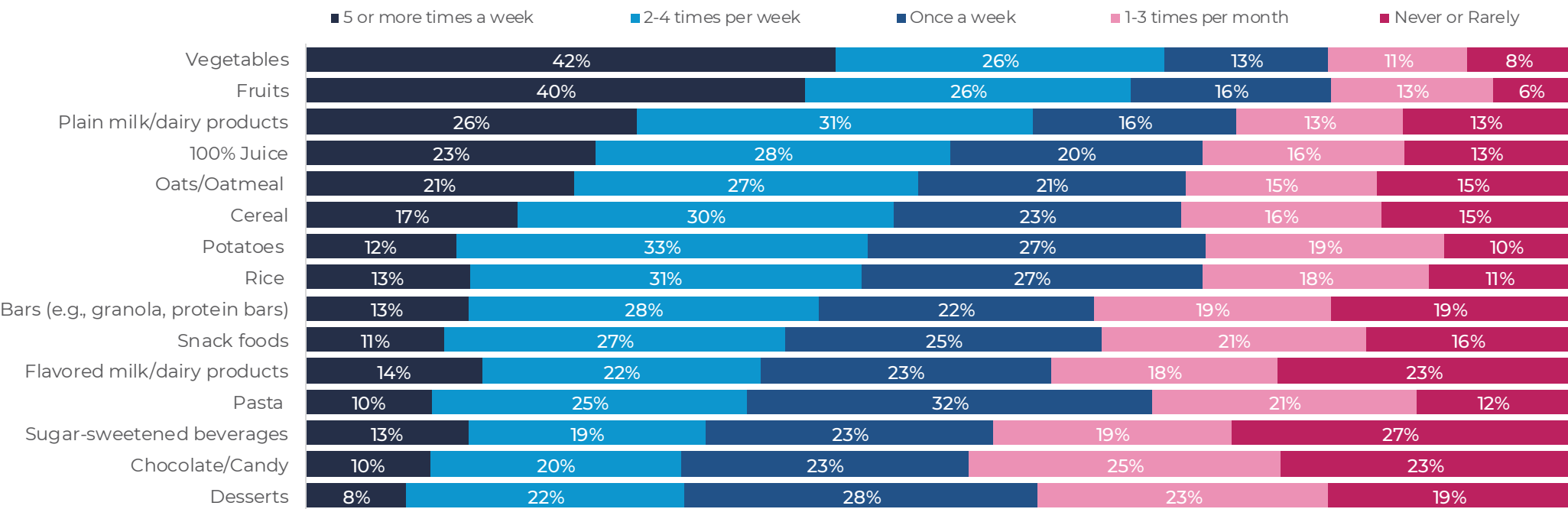
Beliefs About Frequency of Consuming Foods in a Healthy Diet



# Half or more of Americans believe vegetables, fruit, plain milk or dairy, and 100% juice can fit into a healthy diet at least twice per week.

Two in three Americans believe vegetables (68%) and fruits (66%) can be consumed at least twice per week as part of a healthy diet. In contrast, only about one in three say the same for desserts (30%), chocolate/candy (30%), and sugar-sweetened beverages (32%).

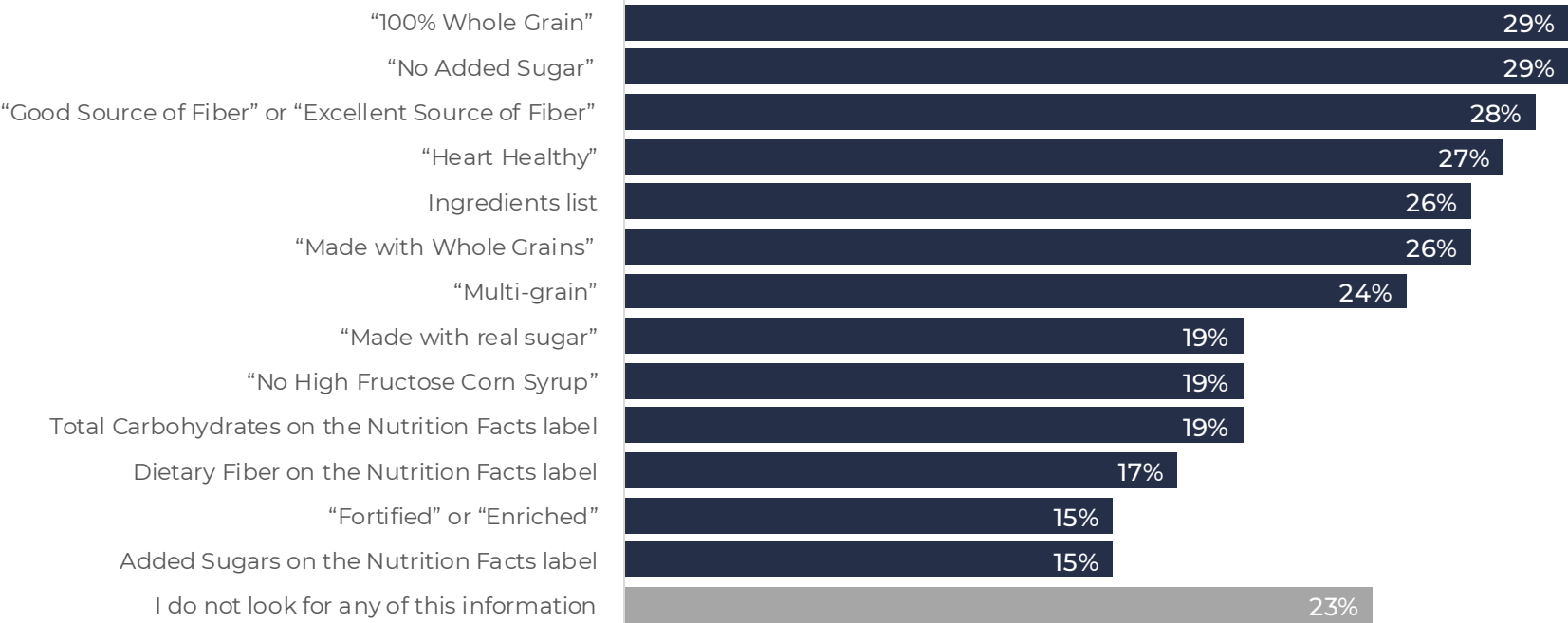
Beliefs About Frequency of Consuming Foods in a Healthy Diet



# Americans are more likely to look for carbohydrate-related claims on food packaging than details on the Nutrition Facts label.

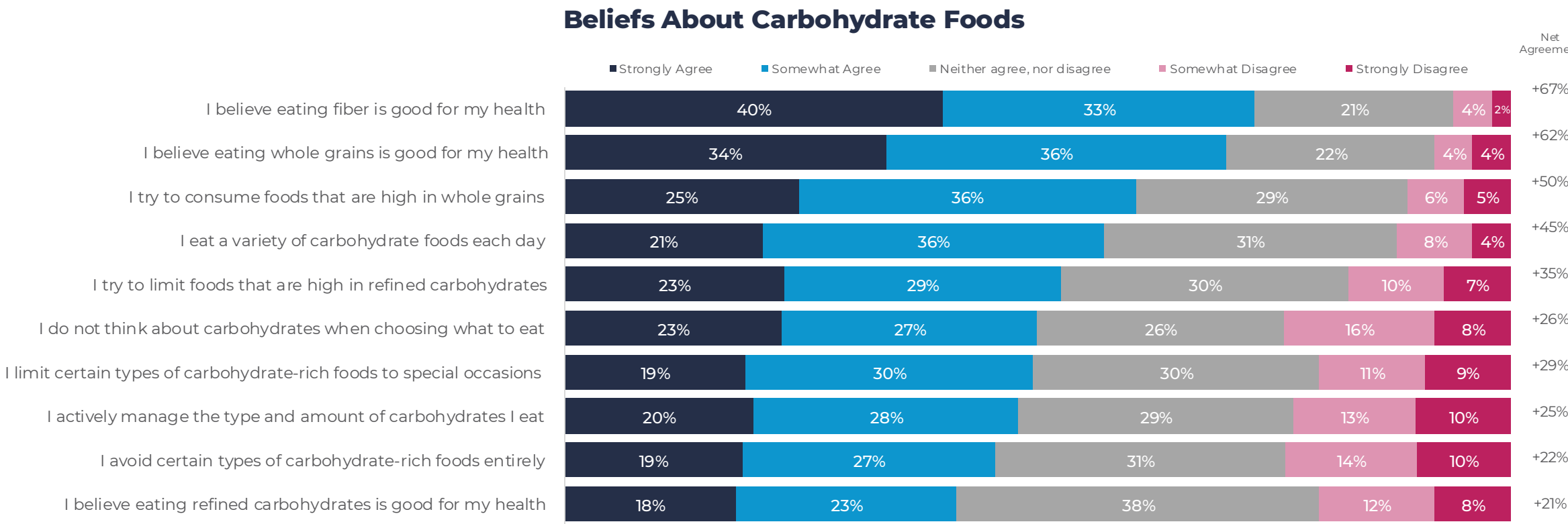
Nearly three in ten look for “100% Whole Grain” (29%), “No Added Sugar” (29%), “Good/Excellent Source of Fiber” (28%), and/or “Heart Healthy” (27%) statements on food packaging, while fewer than two in ten check Nutrition Facts information for Total Carbohydrates (19%), Dietary Fiber (17%), or Added Sugars (15%). Nearly one in four (23%) report not looking for any of the carbohydrate-related information on food packaging at all.

Carbohydrate Information Looked For on Food Packaging



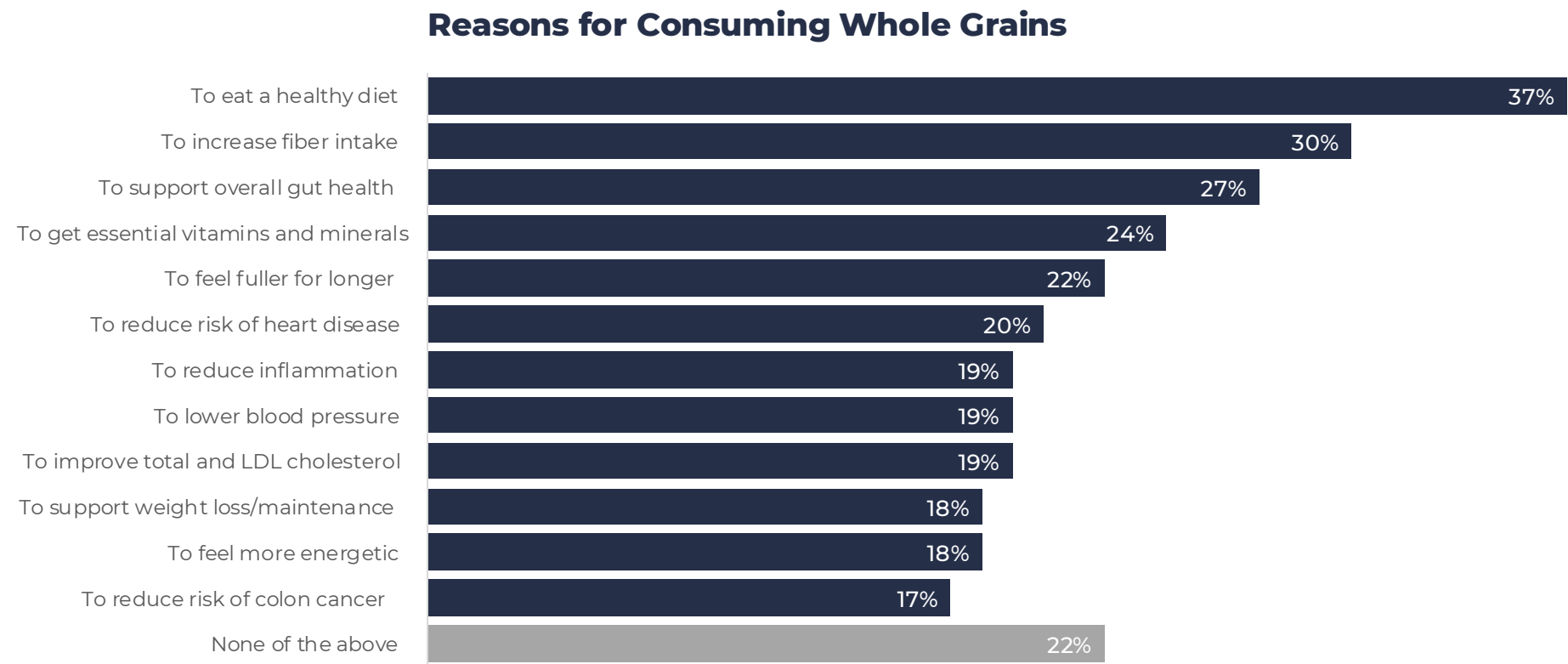
# Seven in ten Americans believe fiber and/or whole grains are good for their health.

Most Americans view fiber (73%) and whole grains (70%) as beneficial to health, while fewer than half (41%) say the same about refined carbohydrates. Consistent with these views, six in ten (61%) report trying to consume foods high in whole grains, whereas just over half (52%) say they try to limit foods high in refined carbohydrates.



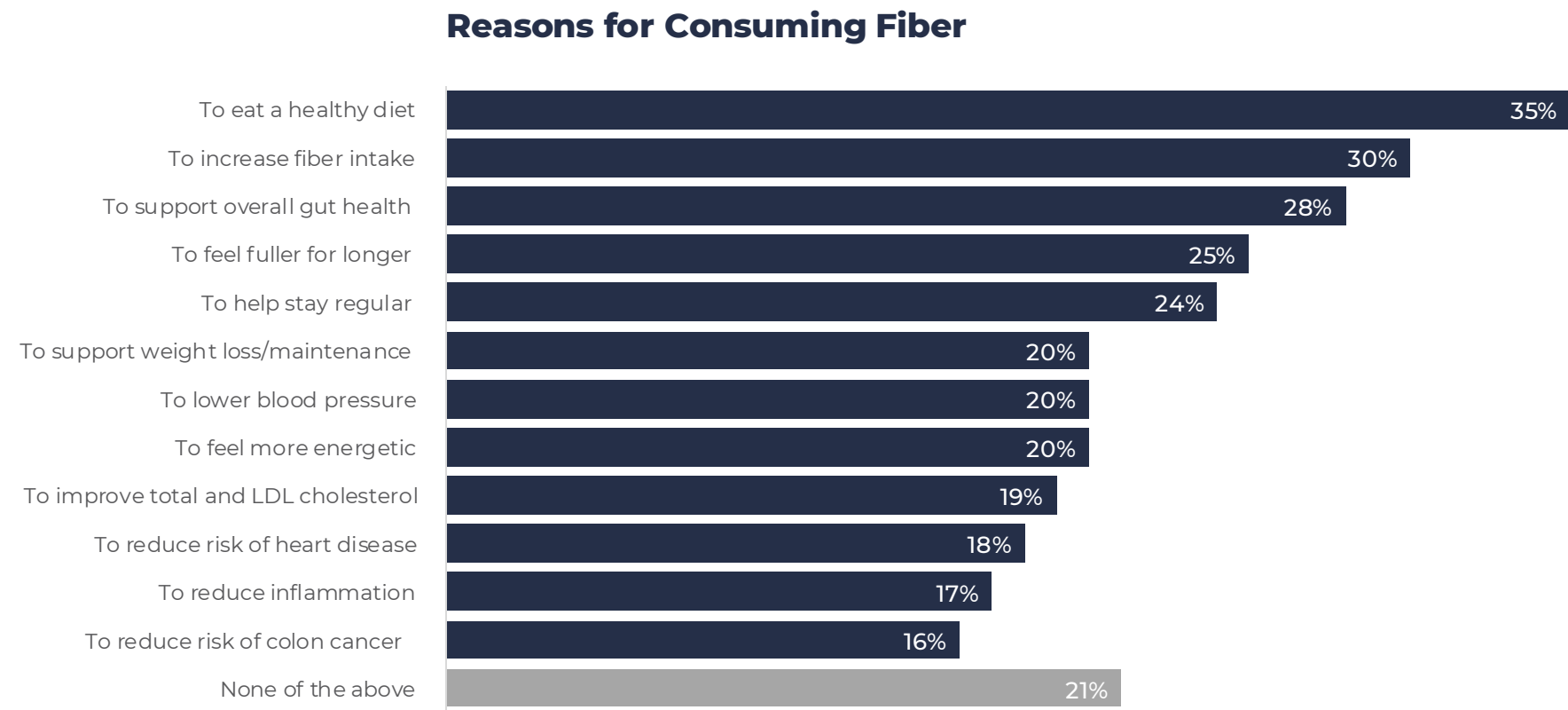
# The top three reasons Americans consume whole grains are to eat healthy, get more fiber, and support gut health.

The most common reasons Americans consume whole grains are to eat a healthy diet (37%), increase fiber intake (30%), and/or support gut health (27%), while fewer cite specific health outcomes. One in five (22%) report a reason for consuming whole grains that was not listed.



# The top three reasons Americans consume *fiber* are to eat healthy, get more fiber, and support gut health.

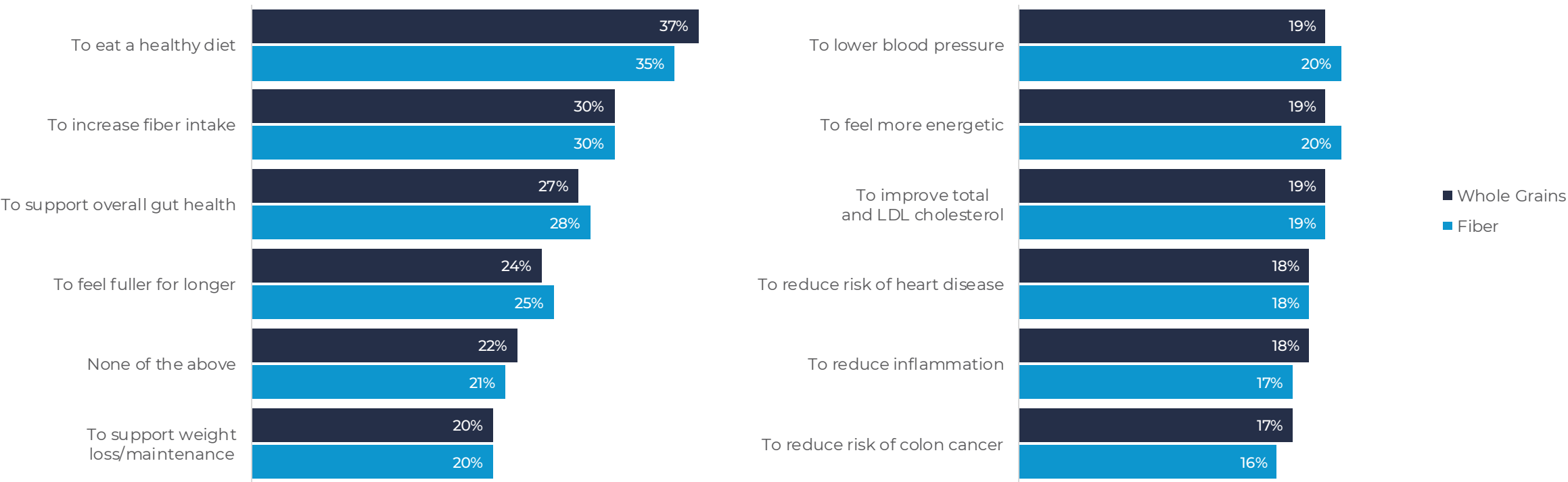
The most common reasons Americans consume fiber are to eat a healthy diet (35%), increase fiber intake (30%), and/or support gut health (28%), while fewer cite specific health outcomes. One in five (21%) report a reason for consuming fiber that was not listed.



# Reasons for consuming whole grains and fiber are similar.

The top three reasons for consuming whole grains and fiber are the same: to eat healthy, get more fiber, and support gut health. Fewer are motivated to consume whole grains or fiber to achieve specific health outcomes.

Reasons for Consuming Whole Grains & Fiber





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