



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD INFORMATION
COUNCIL FOUNDATION

2017 FOOD & HEALTH SURVEY

FOOD CONFUSION

Consumers rely on information they don't trust. Dietitians and healthcare professionals are among the most trusted sources, yet consumers are instead turning to friends and family to help guide food choices. This discrepancy - those trusted vs those relied on - adds to the confusing food information landscape consumers confront each day.

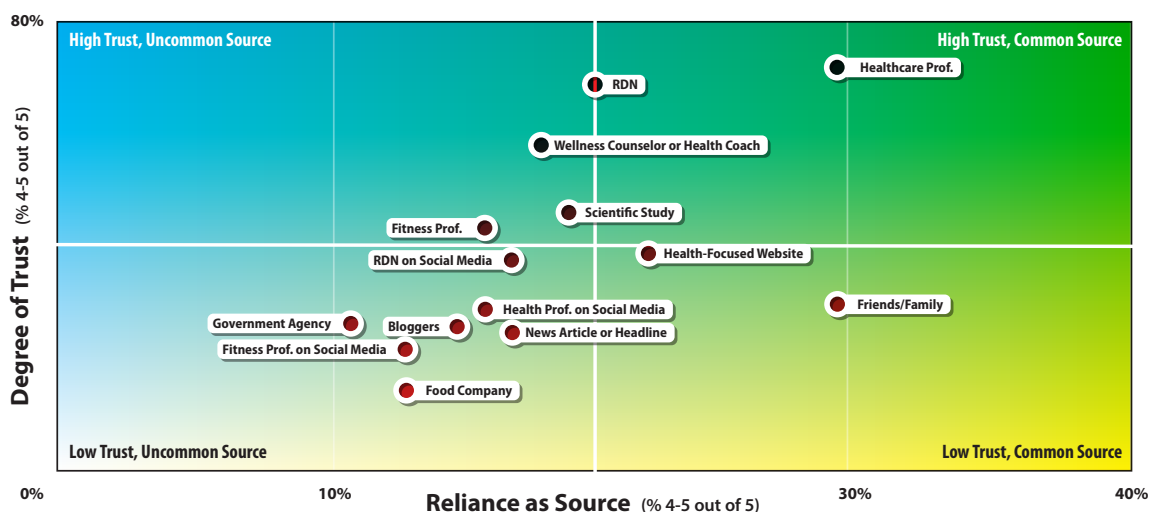


Trust v. Reliance

Conversations with registered dietitian nutritionists (68%) and personal healthcare professionals (65%) are the two most trusted sources of information on what foods to eat or avoid for Americans. About two-thirds of respondents cited that these individuals are at least "trusted somewhat."

How nutrition information is shared also seems to affect the degree to which the information is trusted. Overall, conversations with registered dietitians and health professionals were considered to be more trustworthy than information shared from these types of sources online.

Level of Trust vs. Reliance as a Source



Yet, these trusted sources aren't always the most common sources of information. Friends and family are the most

frequent sources of nutrition information, but are not regarded as highly trusted by most subgroups, especially boomers and older adults. This trend holds true even as individuals make personal decisions about their food choices. Friends and family are the most frequently cited source, more than even conversations with health professionals, that influence one's decision to follow a specific diet or eating pattern.

Consumer Doubt

One can likely assume that friends and family are dispensing nutrition advice that differs from the recommendations of dietitians or health care professionals. It's not surprising, then, that the majority of Americans (80%) report that there is a lot of conflicting information about which foods to eat and what to avoid.

This web of information leads many Americans to question their eating habits. Half of respondents say that conflicting information causes them to doubt the choices they make. This doubt is even higher for millennials - about 60% compared to 45% of older adults.

Dietary Disconnect

Many Americans want health benefits from the food they eat but struggle to understand which foods are associated with specific benefits. This disconnect may be

benefit. For example, of those interested in weight loss or management, only 40% could name a food or nutrient associated with it. Roughly half (49%) of consumers could name a food associated with cardiovascular benefits.

Even when consumers could highlight a specific food or nutrient, few were able to name those that are directly linked with the health benefit. Of those interested in cardiovascular benefits, only a quarter named sources of heart-healthy fats (like olive oil and salmon), while less than 5% mentioned whole grains.

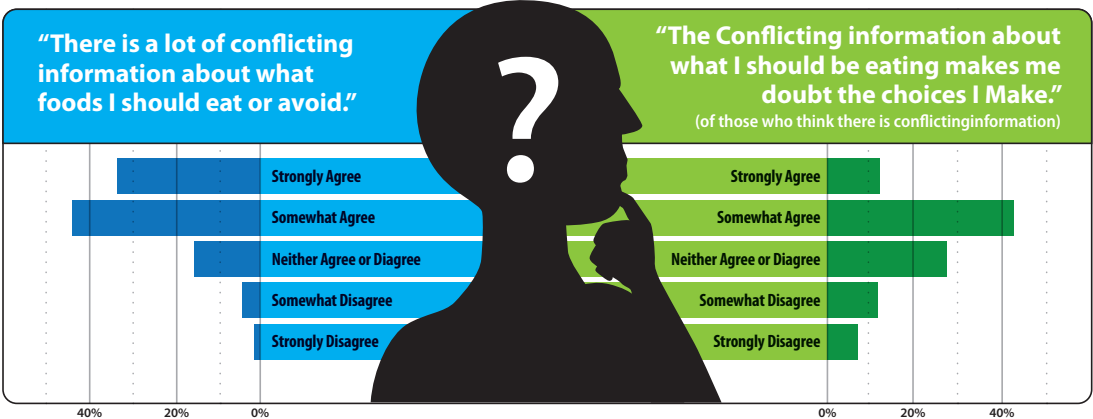
The data also shows an increased understanding of foods and associated benefits with age - on average, boomers and older adults were more able to name a food or nutrient associated with their desired health benefit (60%) compared to their younger counterparts (40%).

Split on Sweeteners

The abundance of conflicting nutrition information may also lead to the polarization in perceptions of sweeteners. Opinions on both low-calorie sweeteners and added sugars have become more divided in the past year, with friends and family driving these opinion changes. Overall, about one in seven (14%) report that they have developed a more positive opinion of low-calorie sweeteners over the past year. But out of those who have a very positive opinion on low-calorie sweeteners, nearly two thirds (59%) report that

their opinion of low-calorie sweeteners has become more even positive over the past year. Similarly, out of those who have a very negative perception of low-calorie sweeteners, nearly half (43%) report that their opinion has become more negative in the past year. There is

similar polarization in perceptions of added sugars. Out of those who currently have a very negative opinion of added sugars, over half report that their opinion has become more negative in the past year. The same is true for those who currently have a very positive opinion on added sugars, with nearly 60% stating that their opinion has become even more positive in the past year.



fueled, at least in part, by the abundance of conflicting nutrition information.

On average, fewer than half (45%) of respondents could name a food or nutrient associated with a desired health benefit. This percentage of consumers able to name a specific food or nutrient differed based on the health

