

# Understanding Portion and Serving Sizes

January 2022

One thousand interviews were conducted among adults ages 18+ from November 4 to November 9, 2021 and were weighted to ensure proportional results.

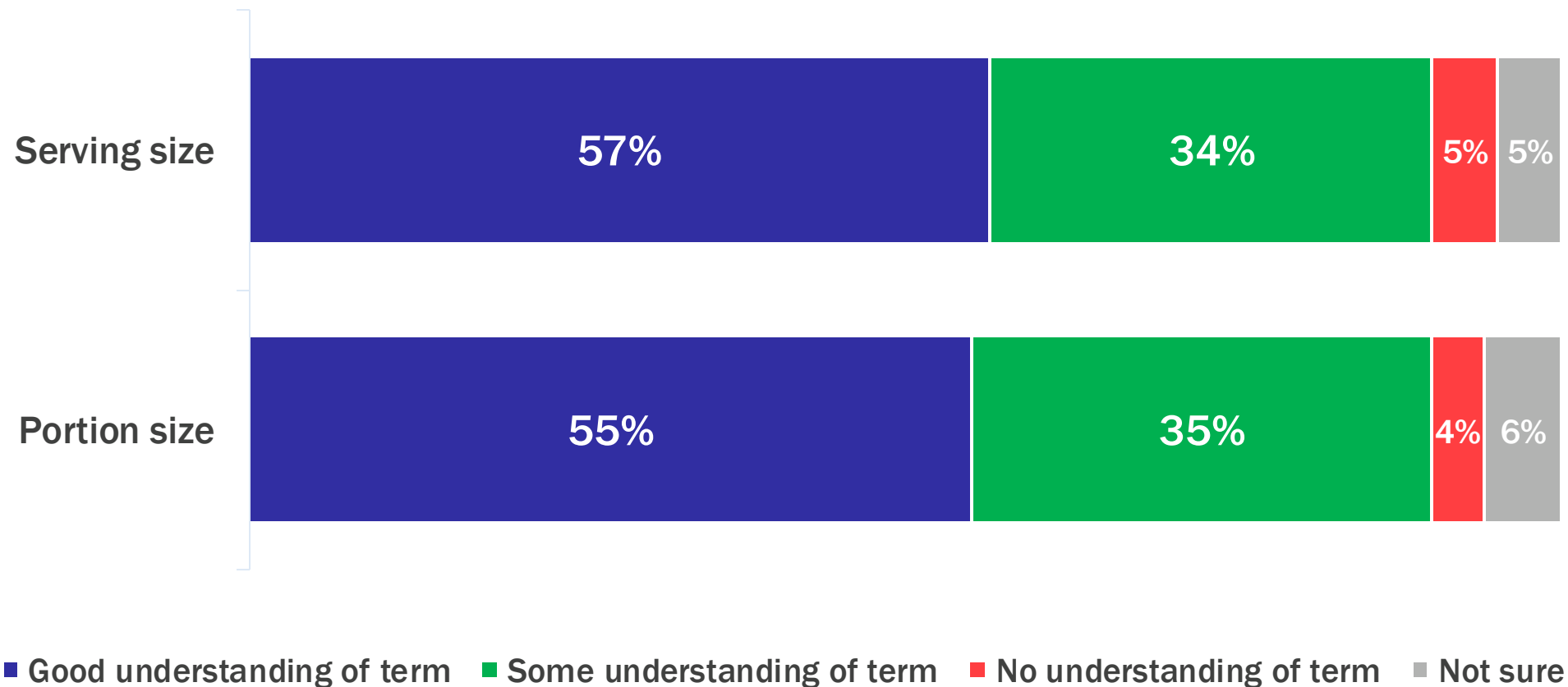
The Bayesian confidence level for 1,000 interviews is 3.5, which is roughly equivalent to a margin of error  $\pm 3.1$  at the 95% confidence level.

## Statistical Significance

Something is statistically significant if the result cannot be attributed to random chance. Statistical significance in this presentation should be compared within each demographic (e.g. age, race, gender, etc.).

For example, if the responses from female respondents is considered to be significant, it is in relation to male respondents and not necessarily other demographic groups.

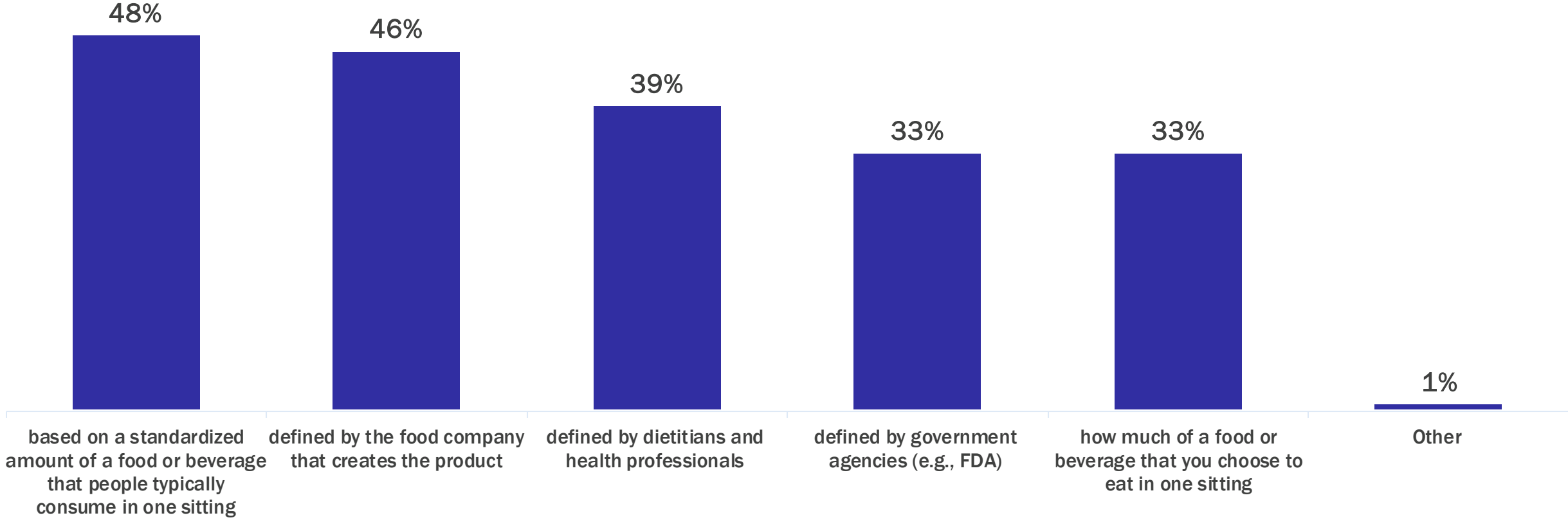
# Nine in 10 report having at least some understanding of “serving size” and “portion size”



Please rank your level of understanding of the following terms. n=1000

# There is considerable overlap in how consumers define serving size and portion size.

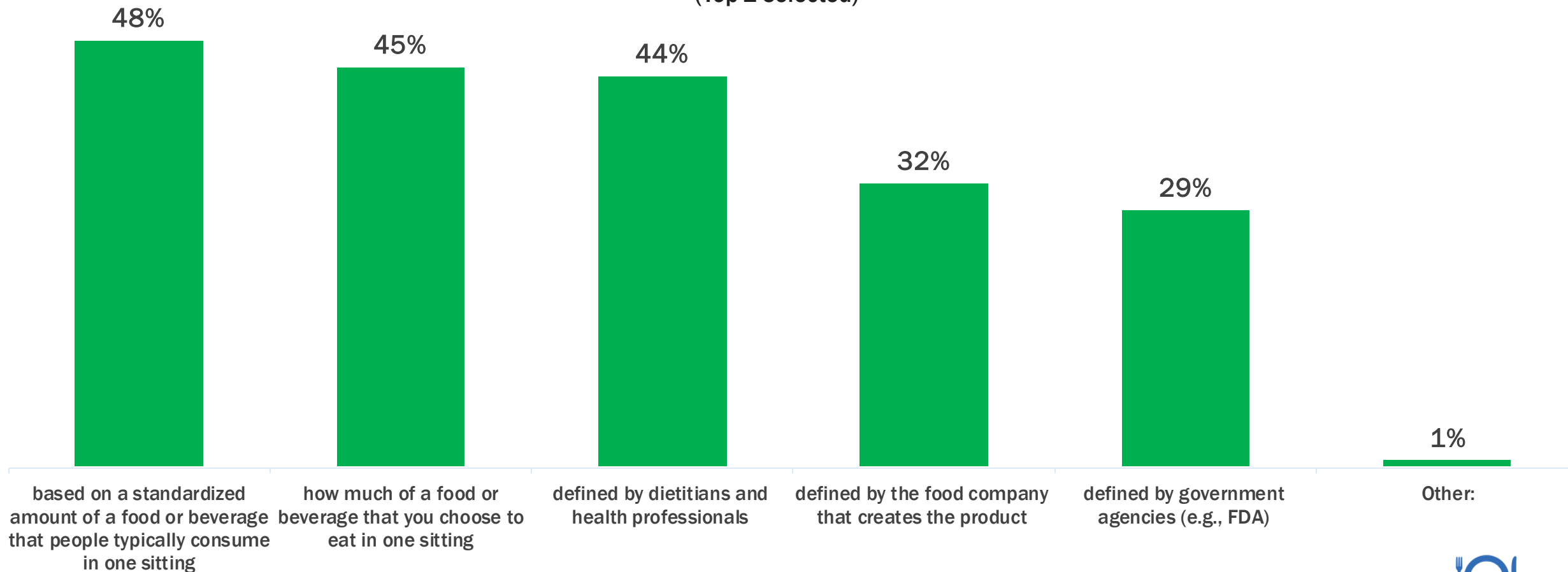
Which statements best align with your understanding of serving size? Serving size is \_\_\_\_\_:  
(Top 2 selected)



[If at least some understanding for Serving Size] n=909

# There is considerable overlap in how consumers define serving size and portion size.

Which statements best align with your understanding of portion size? Portion size is \_\_\_\_\_:  
(Top 2 selected)



[If at least some understanding for Portion Size] n=906

# After these questions, respondents were provided with the following definitions of serving size and portion size:

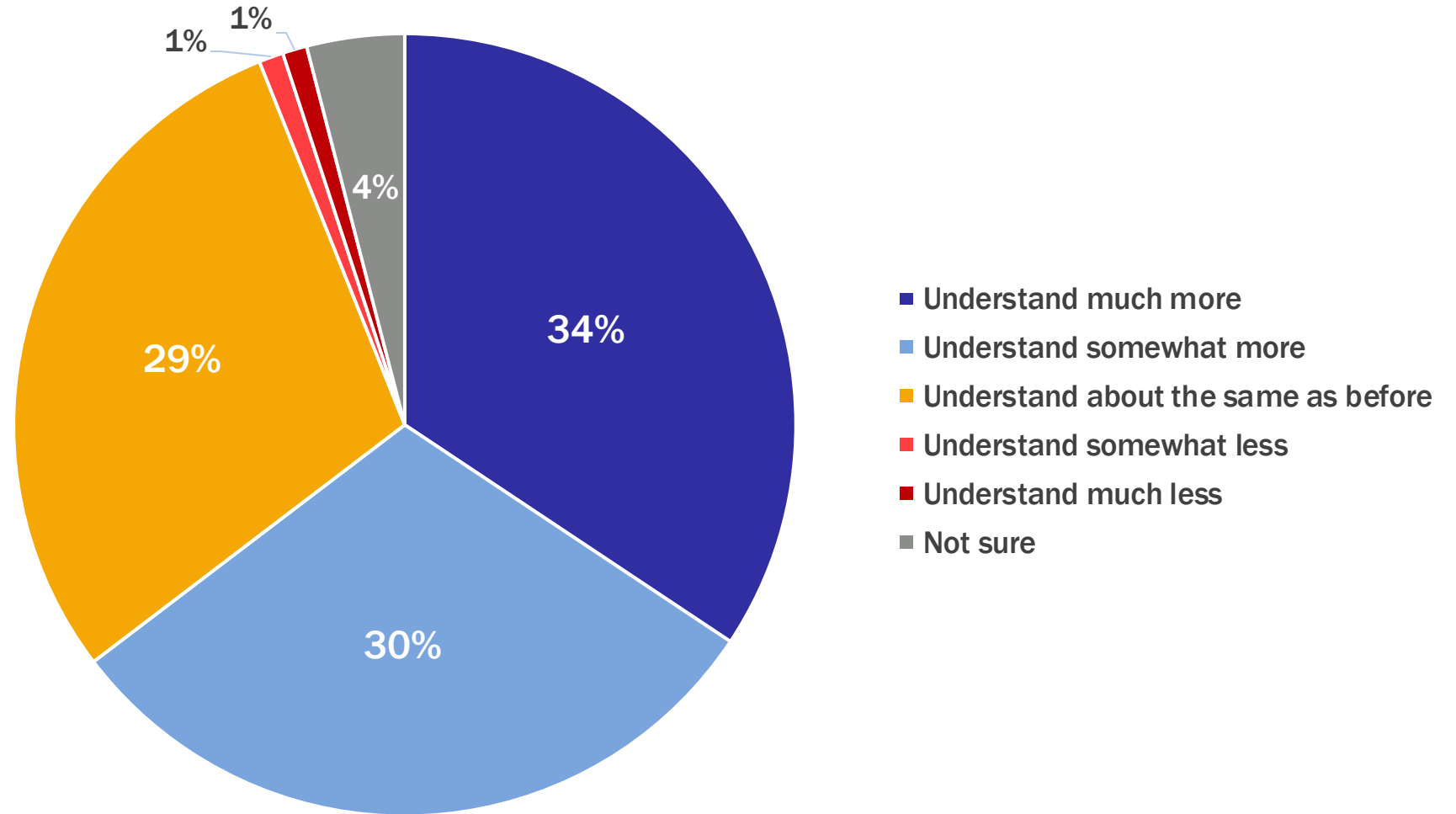
**Serving size:** based on a standardized amount of a food or beverage that people typically consume in one sitting. They are defined by the FDA, a government agency, and are based on studies of the eating habits of adults and children. Serving sizes appear on the Nutrition Facts label and sometimes on the front of food packaging, and they are used to calculate the nutrient information displayed on the label (such as calories, total fat or dietary fiber per serving). Refer to this image of a Nutrition Facts label as an example.

**Portion size:** the amount of a food or beverage that you choose to eat in one sitting. Portion sizes can be unique to every person and may be more or less than the serving size listed on Nutrition Facts labels.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Sugar Alcohol 0g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

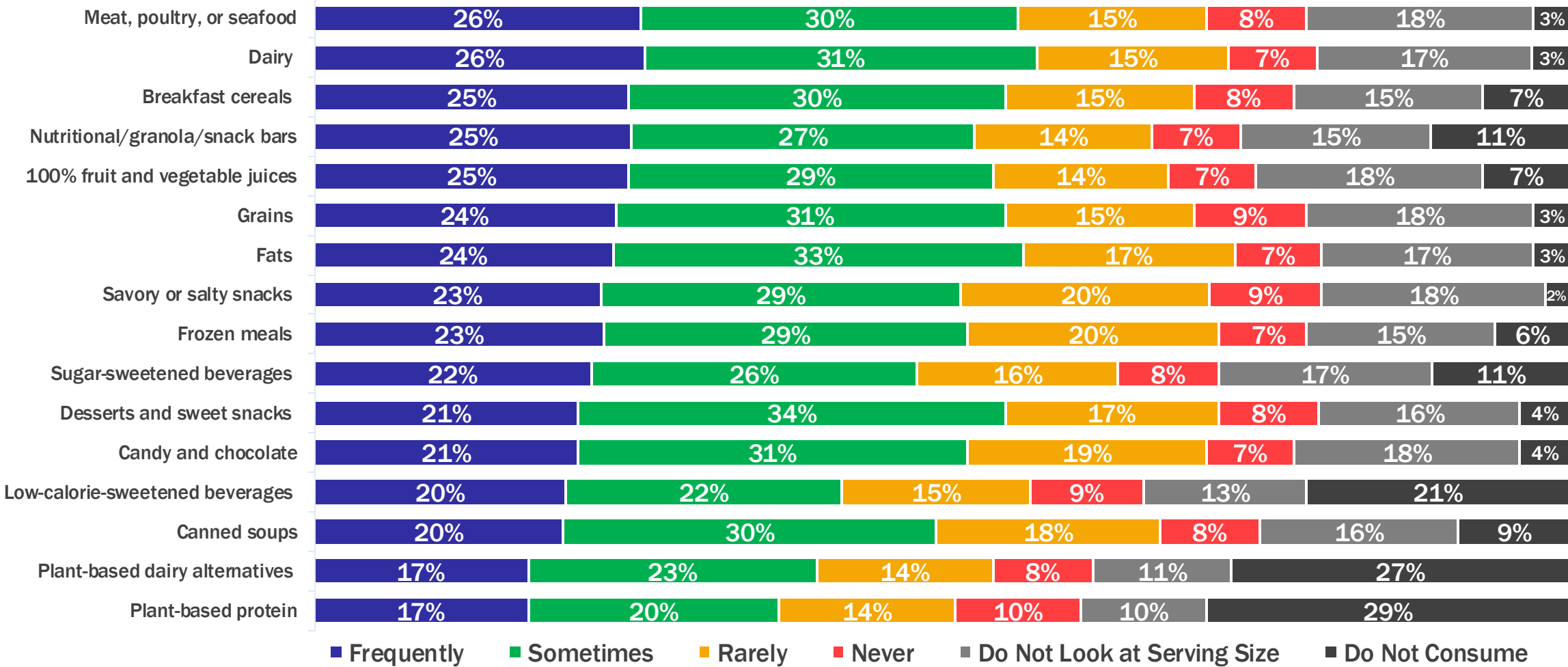
# After reading the provided definitions, almost two in 3 gained a better understanding of portion and/or serving size



After reading this information, how has your understanding of portion sizes and/or serving sizes changed, if at all? n=1000



# Regardless of food/beverage category, about half say they try to eat close to the serving size listed on packaging

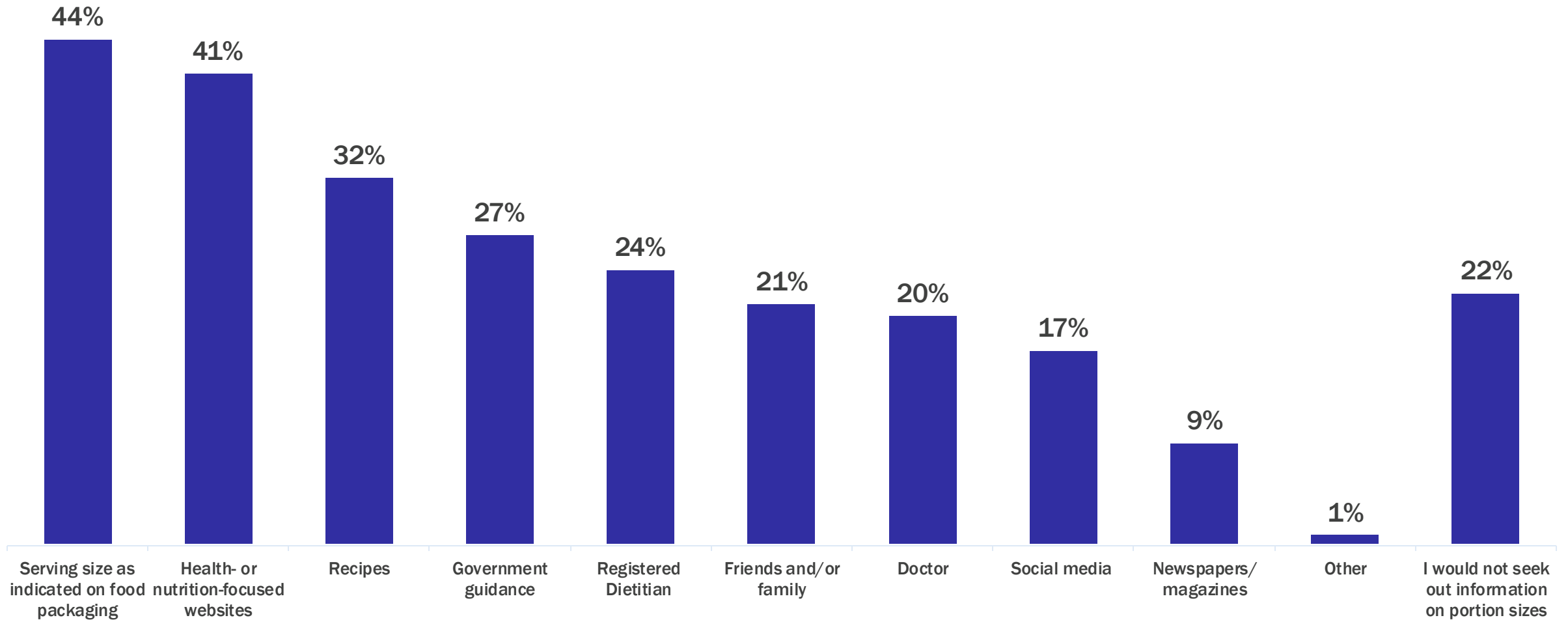


For each of these types of packaged foods, how often do you purposefully try to eat close to the serving size listed on the package? Recall that the serving size is the amount listed on the Nutrition Facts label. n=1000



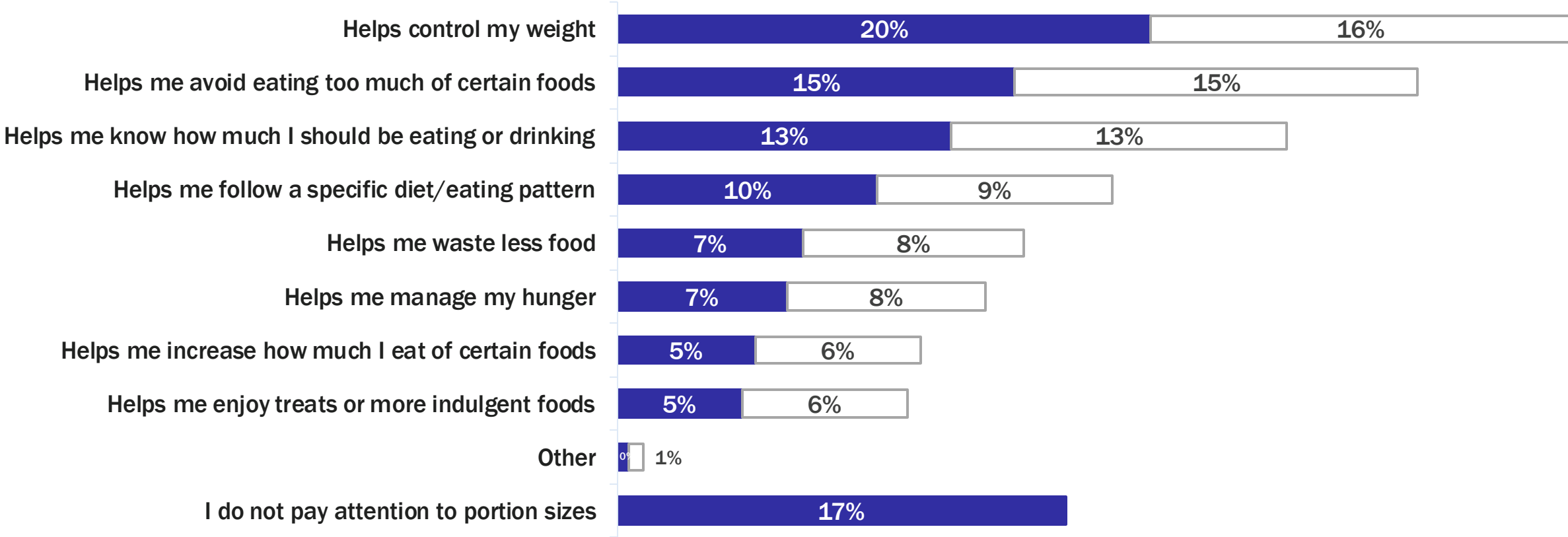


# When seeking information on portion size, the most common place to look is the serving size on packaging



Where would you most commonly seek out information on portion sizes? Recall that portion size is the amount of a food or beverage that you choose to eat in one sitting. Select your top 3. n=1000

# Weight control is the most common reason for paying attention to portion sizes

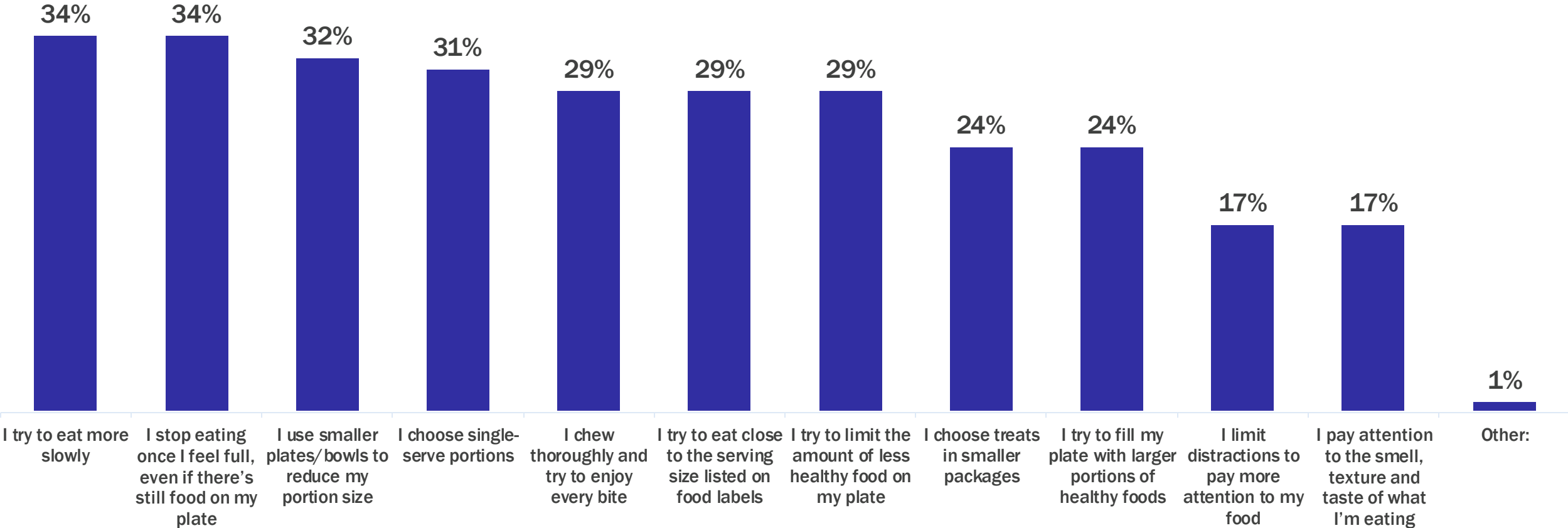


For you personally, what does paying attention to portion sizes help you do? Rank your top 2. If you do not pay attention to portion sizes, select the last option in this list. % Ranked 1, 2 n=1000

■ Ranked 1 □ Ranked 2

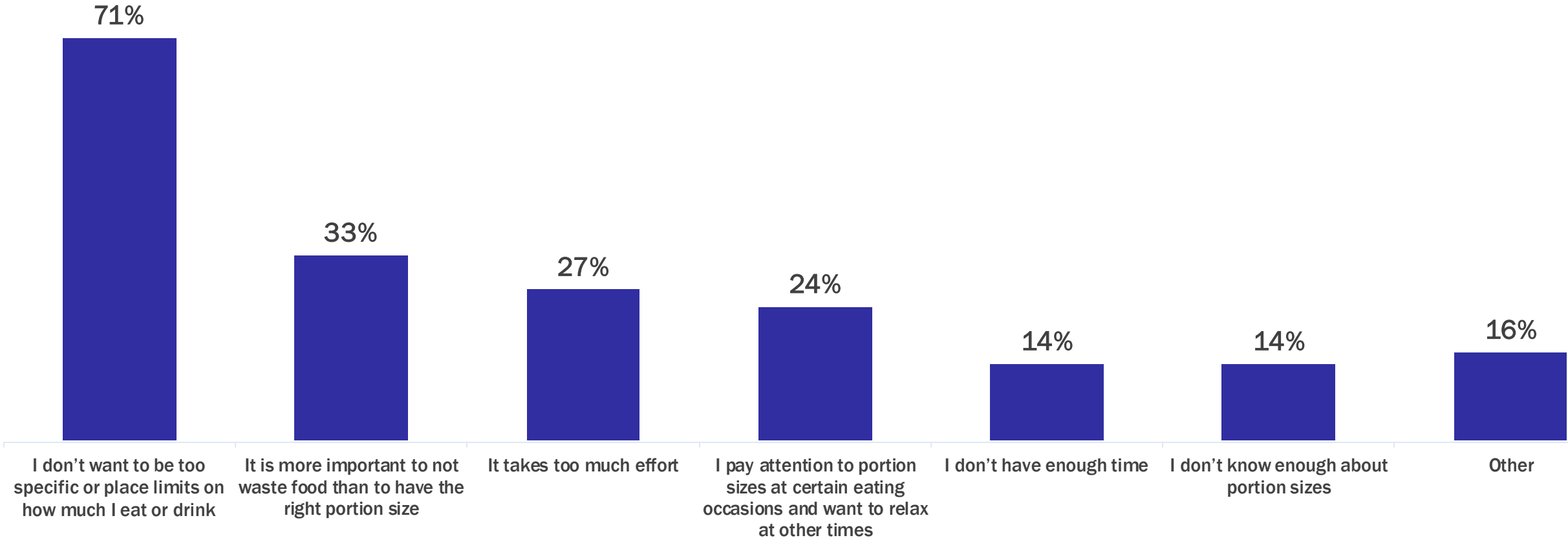


# People use a variety of methods to manage portion sizes



[If not “I do not pay attention to portion sizes” Q7] What helps you manage your portion sizes? Select all that apply. n=836

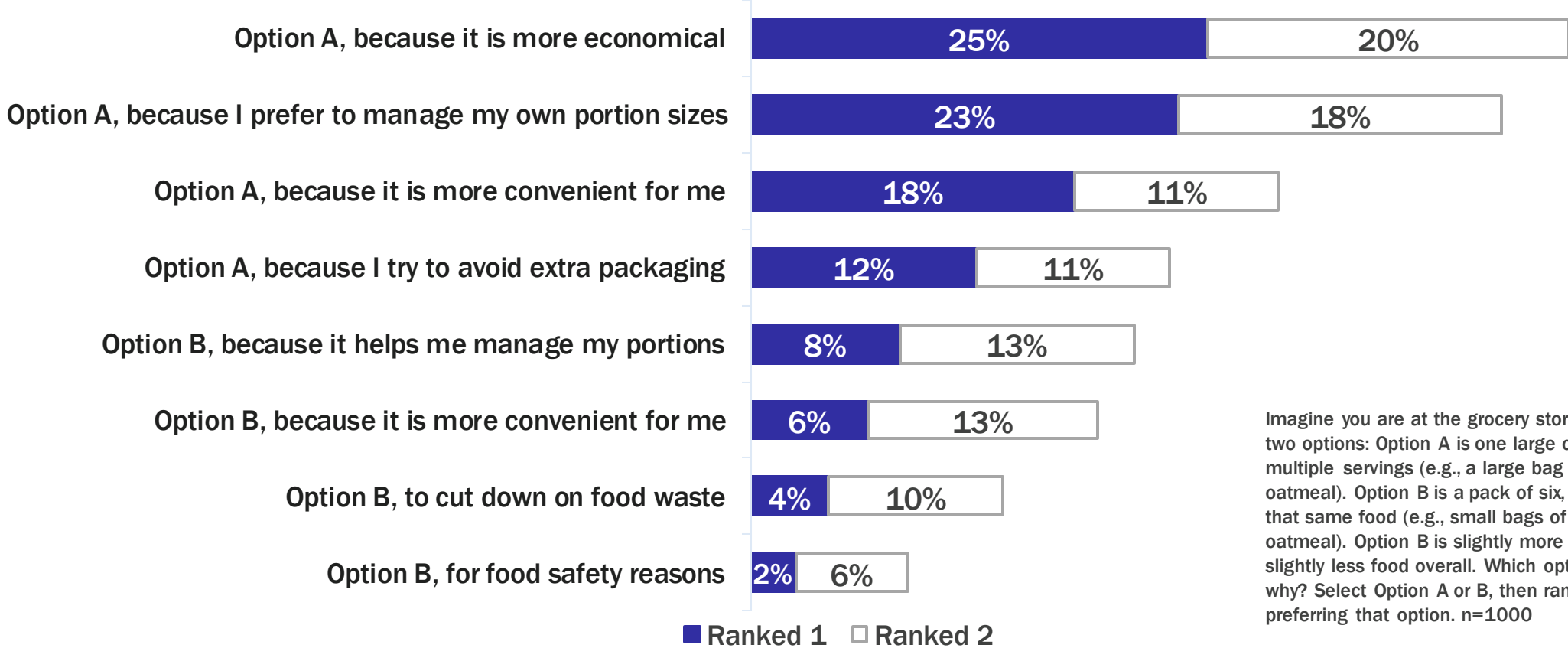
# Among those who don't pay attention to portion sizes, the vast majority say it's because they don't want to be too strict about how much they consume



[If "I do not pay attention to portion sizes"] You indicated that you do not pay attention to portion sizes. Why not? Select your top 2. n=174



# When given the choice between a large container of food (Option A) and a less cost-effective option of a pack of single-serving containers (Option B), most would opt for the large container



Imagine you are at the grocery store and are deciding between two options: Option A is one large container of food holding multiple servings (e.g., a large bag of chips or a canister of oatmeal). Option B is a pack of six, single-serving containers of that same food (e.g., small bags of chips, packages of oatmeal). Option B is slightly more expensive and contains slightly less food overall. Which option would you choose, and why? Select Option A or B, then rank your top 2 reasons for preferring that option. n=1000

# Appendix

Please rank your level of understanding of the following terms.

	Serving Size				Portion Size			
	Good understanding of term	Some understanding of term	No understanding of term	Not sure	Good understanding of term	Some understanding of term	No understanding of term	Not sure
<b>Total</b>	57%	34%	5%	5%	55%	35%	4%	6%
<b>Men</b>	57%	34%	4%	4%	56%	36%	2%	5%
<b>Women</b>	56%	33%	5%	6%	54%	34%	5%	7%
<b>Less than \$40K</b>	52%	37%	5%	6%	50%	37%	5%	8%
<b>\$40K-\$79K</b>	61%	27%	7%	4%	56%	36%	3%	5%
<b>\$80K+</b>	59%	35%	2% ↓	5%	60%	34%	2%	4%
<b>White</b>	60%	32%	4%	4%	59%	33%	2%	6%
<b>African American</b>	57%	29%	7%	7%	52%	36%	7%	5%
<b>Hispanic/ Latinx</b>	46%	42%	7%	5%	47%	40%	6%	7%
<b>Under 45</b>	56%	32%	7% ↑	6%	55%	34%	5%	6%
<b>45-64</b>	59%	35%	2%	4%	56%	36%	2%	6%
<b>65+</b>	54%	36%	4%	6%	52%	36%	4%	9%
<b>Non-college</b>	55%	31%	6%	8% ↑	55%	32%	4%	8%
<b>College</b>	58%	37%	3%	2% ↓	55%	38%	3%	4%



[If at least some understanding for Serving Size] Which statements best align with your understanding of serving size?  
 Serving size is \_\_\_\_\_: Select your top 2.

	based on a standardized amount of a food or beverage that people typically consume in one sitting	defined by the food company that creates the product	defined by dietitians and health professionals	defined by government agencies (e.g., FDA)	how much of a food or beverage that you choose to eat in one sitting	Other
Total	48%	46%	39%	33%	33%	1%
Men	50%	47%	37%	31%	36%	1%
Women	47%	45%	40%	36%	31%	1%
Less than \$40K	51%	42%	39%	33%	33%	1%
\$40K-\$79K	48%	47%	40%	30%	34%	1%
\$80K+	46%	49%	37%	36%	32%	0%
White	48%	45%	40%	36%	30%	1%
African American	47%	47%	37%	34%	34%	0%
Hispanic/ Latinx	49%	49%	31%	27%	44%	0%
Under 45	46%	45%	36%	34%	38% ↑	0%
45-64	48%	46%	41%	36%	27% ↓	2%
65+	54%	46%	40%	25% ↓	34%	1%
Non-college	46%	44%	41%	33%	36%	0% ↓
College	50%	47%	37%	34%	31%	2% ↑

[If at least some understanding for Portion Size] Which statements best align with your understanding of portion size?

Portion size is \_\_\_\_\_: Select your top 2.

	based on a standardized amount of a food or beverage that people typically consume in one sitting	how much of a food or beverage that you choose to eat in one sitting	defined by dietitians and health professionals	defined by the food company that creates the product	defined by government agencies (e.g., FDA)	Other
Total	48%	45%	44%	32%	29%	1%
Men	49%	42%	42%	34%	34%	1%
Women	48%	47%	47%	31%	25%	2%
Less than \$40K	45%	46%	45%	33%	29%	2%
\$40K-\$79K	55%	42%	45%	29%	26%	2%
\$80K+	46%	45%	42%	35%	31%	1%
White	48%	43%	45%	33%	30%	1%
African American	53%	53%	39%	30%	25%	0%
Hispanic/ Latinx	49%	44%	44%	32%	29%	1%
Under 45	47%	47%	44%	32%	29%	1%
45-64	50%	44%	43%	32%	29%	2%
65+	47%	38%	48%	33%	31%	2%
Non-college	47%	46%	44%	34%	29%	1%
College	50%	43%	45%	31%	29%	2%

After reading this information, how has your understanding of portion sizes and/or serving sizes changed, if at all?

	Understand much more	Understand somewhat more	Understand about the same as before	Understand somewhat less	Understand much less	Not sure
Total	34%	30%	29%	1%	1%	4%
Men	41% ↑	32%	22% ↓	1%	1%	4%
Women	27% ↓	29%	36% ↑	2%	1%	5%
Less than \$40K	26% ↓	30%	36% ↑	1%	1%	5%
\$40K-\$79K	31%	29%	34%	2%	0%	5%
\$80K+	47% ↑	32%	16% ↓	1%	1%	2%
White	35%	30%	29%	1%	1%	4%
African American	36%	31%	26%	2%	0%	4%
Hispanic/ Latinx	34%	27%	31%	2%	2%	4%
Under 45	43% ↑	28%	22% ↓	2%	1%	3%
45-64	26% ↓	32%	35% ↑	1%	2%	5%
65+	25% ↓	32%	36%	1%	0%	6%
Non-college	28% ↓	27%	35% ↑	2%	2%	6%
College	40% ↑	33%	24% ↓	1%	0%	3%

For each of these types of packaged foods, how often do you purposefully try to eat close to the serving size listed on the package?  
 Recall that the serving size is the amount listed on the Nutrition Facts label. % Frequently

	Meat, poultry, or seafood	Dairy	Breakfast cereals	Nutritional/ granola/snack bars	100% fruit and vegetable juices	Grains	Fats	Savory or salty snacks
Total	26%	26%	25%	25%	25%	24%	24%	23%
Men	27%	27%	27%	28%	29%	26%	23%	24%
Women	25%	26%	23%	23%	22%	23%	24%	22%
Less than \$40K	18% ↓	20% ↓	17% ↓	18% ↓	19% ↓	16% ↓	19%	18%
\$40K-\$79K	23%	21%	22%	21%	22%	22%	20%	19%
\$80K+	34% ↑	35% ↑	35% ↑	36% ↑	35% ↑	33% ↑	30% ↑	30% ↑
White	26%	27%	26%	27%	25%	25%	23%	24%
African American	24%	23%	23%	22%	28%	19%	20%	20%
Hispanic/ Latinx	28%	28%	23%	25%	25%	29%	31%	20%
Under 45	30% ↑	32% ↑	33% ↑	32% ↑	32% ↑	30% ↑	26%	28% ↑
45-64	21%	21%	16% ↓	17% ↓	19% ↓	19% ↓	22%	19%
65+	22%	22%	23%	22%	23%	20%	20%	17%
Non-college	21% ↓	22% ↓	19% ↓	19% ↓	20% ↓	20% ↓	20%	20%
College	30% ↑	31% ↑	31% ↑	31% ↑	30% ↑	28% ↑	26%	26%

For each of these types of packaged foods, how often do you purposefully try to eat close to the serving size listed on the package?  
Recall that the serving size is the amount listed on the Nutrition Facts label. % Frequently

	Frozen meals	Sugar-sweetened beverages	Desserts and sweet snacks	Candy and chocolate	Low-calorie-sweetened beverages	Canned soups	Plant-based dairy alternatives	Plant-based protein
Total	23%	22%	21%	21%	20%	20%	17%	17%
Men	23%	22%	22%	23%	23%	20%	19%	21% ↑
Women	22%	21%	21%	20%	17%	20%	14%	13% ↓
Less than \$40K	18%	17% ↓	15% ↓	16% ↓	15% ↓	15% ↓	11% ↓	10% ↓
\$40K-\$79K	17%	20%	21%	17%	16%	18%	11% ↓	12%
\$80K+	31% ↑	29% ↑	28% ↑	31% ↑	28% ↑	28% ↑	27% ↑	27% ↑
White	24%	22%	22%	22%	22%	21%	17%	18%
African American	20%	19%	25%	23%	17%	17%	19%	17%
Hispanic/ Latinx	23%	27%	21%	20%	19%	21%	15%	15%
Under 45	28% ↑	27% ↑	26% ↑	28% ↑	26% ↑	25% ↑	23% ↑	24% ↑
45-64	18%	18%	16% ↓	17%	15% ↓	16%	12% ↓	10% ↓
65+	16%	15%	19%	13% ↓	18%	15%	9% ↓	10% ↓
Non-college	21%	21%	18%	19%	16% ↓	18%	11% ↓	11% ↓
College	24%	22%	24%	24%	24% ↑	22%	22% ↑	22% ↑

Where would you most commonly seek out information on portion sizes? Recall that portion size is the amount of a food or beverage that you choose to eat in one sitting. Select your top 3.

	Serving size as indicated on food packaging	Health- or nutrition-focused websites	Recipes	Government guidance	Registered Dietitian	Friends and/or family	Doctor	Social media	Newspapers/magazines	Other	I would not seek out information
Total	44%	41%	32%	27%	24%	21%	20%	17%	9%	1%	22%
Men	40%	39%	26% ↓	27%	25%	23%	21%	24% ↑	13% ↑	0%	20%
Women	47%	42%	37% ↑	26%	22%	18%	19%	10% ↓	4% ↓	1%	24%
Less than \$40K	49%	41%	38% ↑	22%	19%	20%	16%	8% ↓	6%	1%	26% ↑
\$40K-\$79K	46%	38%	37%	29%	26%	14% ↓	21%	10% ↓	5%	1%	25%
\$80K+	38% ↓	44%	23% ↓	29%	26%	28% ↑	26%	31% ↑	15% ↑	0%	13% ↓
White	41%	40%	27%	27%	23%	22%	19%	17%	8%	1%	25%
African American	47%	40%	41%	31%	21%	17%	24%	22%	16%	0%	14%
Hispanic/Latinx	51%	44%	43%	25%	29%	19%	25%	12%	6%	0%	15%
Under 45	41%	45%	32%	27%	28% ↑	29% ↑	24%	30% ↑	15% ↑	0%	9% ↓
45-64	42%	39%	29%	26%	20%	15% ↓	18%	6% ↓	3% ↓	1%	34% ↑
65+	53% ↑	34%	36%	27%	20%	8% ↓	15%	1% ↓	3% ↓	2%	33% ↑
Non-college	47%	38%	37% ↑	23%	19% ↓	18%	19%	12% ↓	7%	1%	27% ↑
College	41%	44%	27% ↓	30%	28% ↑	23%	21%	21% ↑	10%	1%	18% ↓

For you personally, what does paying attention to portion sizes help you do? Rank your top 2. If you do not pay attention to portion sizes, select the last option in this list. % Ranked 1

	Helps control my weight	Helps me avoid eating too much of certain foods	Helps me know how much I should be eating or drinking	Helps me follow a specific diet/eating pattern	Helps me waste less food	Helps me manage my hunger	Helps me increase how much I eat of certain foods	Helps me enjoy treats or more indulgent foods	I do not pay attention to portion sizes
Total	20%	15%	13%	10%	7%	7%	5%	5%	17%
Men	17%	14%	12%	11%	7%	8%	7%	5%	17%
Women	24%	16%	13%	9%	7%	5%	3%	4%	17%
Less than \$40K	22%	15%	9%	5% ↓	10% ↑	8%	5%	3%	22% ↑
\$40K-\$79K	21%	13%	18% ↑	13%	5%	5%	4%	7%	14%
\$80K+	20%	18%	12%	14%	5%	7%	7%	5%	11% ↓
White	21%	16%	13%	10%	5%	6%	5%	4%	19%
African American	18%	11%	9%	11%	12%	9%	6%	8%	15%
Hispanic/ Latinx	22%	13%	9%	9%	11%	4%	8%	6%	18%
Under 45	21%	16%	11%	11%	11% ↑	9% ↑	8% ↑	6%	8% ↓
45-64	21%	14%	13%	9%	4% ↓	4%	3%	4%	26% ↑
65+	19%	14%	15%	9%	5%	5%	2%	4%	25% ↑
Non-college	20%	14%	13%	9%	8%	6%	5%	4%	21%
College	21%	16%	13%	11%	6%	7%	5%	6%	14%



If not “I do not pay attention to portion sizes” Q7] What helps you manage your portion sizes? Select all that apply.

	I try to eat more slowly	I stop eating once I feel full, even if there's still food on my plate	I use smaller plates/bowls to reduce my portion size	I choose single-serve portions	I chew thoroughly and try to enjoy every bite	I try to eat close to the serving size listed on food labels	I try to limit the amount of less healthy food on my plate	I choose treats in smaller packages	I try to fill my plate with larger portions of healthy foods	I limit distractions to pay more attention to my food	I pay attention to the smell, texture and taste of what I'm eating	Other
<b>Total</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Less than \$40K</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>17% ↓</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12% ↓</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>\$40K-\$79K</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>40% ↑</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>\$80K+</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32% ↑</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>African American</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Hispanic/Latinx</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Under 45</b>	<b>28% ↓</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29% ↑</b>	<b>22% ↑</b>	<b>21% ↑</b>	<b>0% ↓</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>18% ↓</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>4% ↑</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>47% ↑</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Non-college</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>18% ↓</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>College</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>29% ↑</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>1%</b>

[If " I do not pay attention to portion sizes" in Q7] You indicated that you do not pay attention to portion sizes. Why not?

Select your top 2

	I don't want to be too specific or place limits on how much I eat or drink	It is more important to not waste food than to have the right portion size	It takes too much effort	I pay attention to portion sizes at certain eating occasions and want to relax at other times	I don't have enough time	I don't know enough about portion sizes	Other
Total	71%	33%	27%	24%	14%	14%	16%
Men	68%	35%	22%	21%	11%	18%	25%
Women	73%	31%	32%	27%	18%	10%	9%
Less than \$40K	74%	40%	24%	29%	9%	11%	12%
\$40K-\$79K	74%	28%	37%	14%	9%	10%	27%
\$80K+	62%	13%	22%	28%	30% ↑	25%	20%
White	72%	38%	26%	26%	13%	8%	16%
African American	67%	17%	36%	20%	13%	26%	21%
Hispanic/ Latinx	65%	26%	26%	17%	27%	29%	11%
Under 45	59%	31%	31%	26%	25%	21%	7%
45-64	74%	36%	28%	17%	15%	9%	21%
65+	74%	30%	23%	38%	5%	18%	13%
Non-college	71%	38%	23%	24%	17%	13%	14%
College	72%	27%	31%	25%	11%	13%	21%

Imagine you are at the grocery store and are deciding between two options: Option A is one large container of food holding multiple servings. Option B is a pack of six, single-serving containers of that same food. Option B is slightly more expensive and contains slightly less food overall. Which option would you choose, and why? Select Option A or B, then rank your top 2 reasons for preferring that option.

% Ranked 1

	Option A, because it is more economical	Option A, because I prefer to manage my own portion sizes	Option A, because it is more convenient for me	Option A, because I try to avoid extra packaging	Option B, because it helps me manage my portions	Option B, because it is more convenient for me	Option B, to cut down on food waste	Option B, for food safety reasons
Total	25%	23%	18%	12%	8%	6%	4%	2%
Men	22%	27%	21%	13%	5% ↓	5%	3%	3%
Women	28%	20%	15%	12%	11% ↑	7%	5%	2%
Less than \$40K	29%	25%	16%	10%	8%	7%	4%	1% ↓
\$40K-\$79K	28%	23%	13%	10%	10%	7%	6%	4%
\$80K+	17% ↓	23%	24% ↑	18% ↑	7%	5%	2%	3%
White	27%	22%	18%	13%	8%	6%	4%	2%
African American	19%	23%	16%	15%	11%	7%	6%	3%
Hispanic/ Latinx	21%	25%	18%	10%	9%	7%	5%	5%
Under 45	19% ↓	22%	21% ↑	17% ↑	7%	5%	5%	3%
45-64	31% ↑	25%	15%	9%	7%	7%	3%	2%
65+	30%	23%	13%	7% ↓	12%	9%	5%	2%
Non-college	27%	23%	17%	10%	9%	7%	5%	1%
College	23%	24%	19%	15%	7%	5%	4%	3%



International  
**Food  
Information**  
Council



[info@ific.org](mailto:info@ific.org)

[ific.org](http://ific.org) | [foodinsight.org](http://foodinsight.org)



[@FoodInsight](https://www.facebook.com/FoodInsight)



[@FoodInsight](https://twitter.com/FoodInsight)



[@foodinsight](https://www.instagram.com/foodinsight)



[@foodinsight](https://www.pinterest.com/foodinsight)



[@FoodInsightTV](https://www.youtube.com/@FoodInsightTV)



International Food  
Information Council