



**SPOTLIGHT
SURVEY**

Americans' Perceptions of Food Allergens, Intolerances & Sensitivities

April 2025



METHODOLOGY



The International Food Information Council (IFIC) commissioned an online survey among U.S. consumers to measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about food allergens, intolerances, and sensitivities. One thousand adults ages 18 years and older completed the online survey from January 18-22, 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=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.).

SUGGESTED CITATION:

International Food Information Council (IFIC). IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions of Food Allergens, Intolerances & Sensitivities. April 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food allergies, intolerances, and sensitivities affect millions of Americans and prevalence of these conditions is on the rise in recent decades. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [6.2%](#) of adults and [5.8%](#) of children in the U.S. have a diagnosed food allergy. Other research has estimated [5.1%](#) of U.S. adults have a physician-confirmed food allergy diagnosis, with total food allergy prevalence possibly exceeding [10.8%](#). The prevalence of food intolerance is more difficult to measure. In a 2021 online survey of more than 2,000 American adults, one-quarter ([24.8%](#)) reported having a food intolerance. Food sensitivities are even more challenging to measure, as there currently is no standard definition for a food sensitivity.

Many American households are impacted by adverse reactions to foods and beverages. In this *IFIC Spotlight Survey*, 24% of Americans reported that they or someone in their household have a food allergy, food intolerance, and/or food sensitivity. Nuts were the most common allergy reported, while dairy was the top intolerance and sensitivity. Among the 76% of survey takers who reported that neither they nor someone in their household have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity, nearly 4 in 10 (38%) know someone outside their household who does. In total, more than half of Americans (53%) in this survey either have someone in their household (including themselves) or know someone outside of their home who is affected by a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

When asked for their top three trusted sources for information on food allergens, intolerances, and sensitivities, primary care providers (68%), board-certified allergists (63%), and registered dietitians (56%) were selected most often. The top related concerns were “someone having a reaction to food that you prepared” (14%), “accidental exposure in public settings” (14%), “unclear labeling information on packaged foods and beverages” (13%), and “eating away from home at a restaurant” (12%).

Survey takers were also asked about their history of receiving medical attention because of a reaction to a food or beverage. One in seven Americans (16%) said they or someone in their household have received medical attention due to a reaction to food or beverage. The remaining 84% said neither they nor anyone in their household have experienced this.

With a growing number of Americans affected by food allergies, IFIC commissioned this *IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans’ Perceptions of Food Allergens, Intolerances & Sensitivities* to capture current consumer perspectives.



KEY FINDINGS

More than half of Americans say that either they or someone in their household have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—or that they know someone outside their household who does.

Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) survey takers report that they or someone in their household have a food allergy, food intolerance, and/or food sensitivity. Among the 76% of survey takers who report that neither they nor someone in their household have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity, nearly 4 in 10 (38%) say they know someone outside their household who does. In total, more than half of Americans (53%) in this survey either have someone in their household (including themselves) or know someone outside of their home who is affected by a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

One in four Americans report they or a member of their household have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

Among the 24% who reported that they or a member of their household have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity, nuts were the most mentioned allergy and dairy was the most mentioned food intolerance and food sensitivity. Following nuts and dairy were fruits and vegetables, grains, seafood and shellfish, eggs, and spicy foods.

Unclear labeling is a top concern among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

Survey takers who say they either have someone in their household (including themselves) or know someone outside of their home who is affected by an allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity to food, were asked to rank their top three concerns from a list of potential food-related issues. Forty-two percent (42%) selected “unclear labeling information on packaged foods and beverages” in their top three, making it the highest concern overall. The concerns most frequently ranked first were: “someone having a reaction to food that you prepared” (14%), “accidental exposure in public settings” (14%), “unclear labeling information on packaged foods and beverages” (13%), and “eating away from home at a restaurant” (12%).

KEY FINDINGS

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity, 70% report awareness of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase.

This subset of survey takers were asked to rate their awareness of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. Seven in 10 (70%) say they have a high (26%) or medium (44%) awareness of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. The remaining 30% report low (23%) or no (7%) awareness of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. Awareness of allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (84% vs. 70%).

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—and who are aware of allergen information on the packaged food they typically purchase—16% say they always use that information.

This subset of survey takers were asked how frequently they use allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. Sixteen percent (16%) say they *always* use allergen information, 26% say they use it *often*, and 29% say they use it *sometimes*. In total, about 7 in 10 (71%) report using allergen information at least sometimes. The remaining 29% say they *rarely* (21%) or *never* (8%) use allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. Frequent use (always/often) of allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (61% vs. 42%).

KEY FINDINGS

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—and who are aware of and use allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase—34% say they have a high level of understanding of that information.

This subset of survey takers were asked to rate their level of understanding of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. Thirty-four percent (34%) say their understanding of allergen information on food packaging is high, 49% say it is medium, and 16% say it is low. Only 1% said they have no understanding of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase. High understanding of allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (42% vs. 34%).

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—and who are aware of and use allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase—67% say they trust that information.

This subset of survey takers were asked to rate their level of trust in allergen information on food packaging. Two in three (67%) say they completely (17%) or somewhat (50%) trust allergen information, while nearly 1 in 4 (22%) neither trust nor distrust it. Conversely, eleven percent (11%) say they somewhat (10%) or completely (1%) distrust allergen information. Overall, six times as many say they trust allergen information on food packaging as distrust it (67% vs. 11%). Trust in allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (78% vs. 67%).

KEY FINDINGS

Americans place the most trust in primary health care providers for food allergen information, followed by board certified allergists and registered dietitians.

Survey takers were asked to select the top sources they would trust for information about food allergens, food intolerances, and food sensitivities. About two in three selected primary care providers (68%) and board-certified allergists (63%) in their top three. One in three (32%) selected primary care providers 22% selected board-certified allergists as their most trusted source. More than half (56%) selected registered dietitians among their top three most trusted sources, with 14% selecting them as their most trusted source. Surprisingly, much fewer trust was expressed for online support groups and school nurses.

Sixteen percent of Americans say that either they or a household member have sought medical care because of a reaction to a food or beverage.

Survey takers were asked about their history of receiving medical attention because of a reaction to a food or beverage. One in seven (16%) said that either they or someone in their household have received medical attention because of a reaction to a food or beverage. Nuts were the most commonly cited food causing a reaction that led them to seek medical care.

The majority of Americans (84%) said that neither they nor anyone in their household have ever received medical attention due to a reaction to a food or beverage.

IMPLICATIONS

The rising prevalence of food allergies, intolerances, and sensitivities in the U.S. carries significant public health, social, and economic implications. With research suggesting at least [10.8%](#) of U.S. adults may have a food allergy, and this *IFIC Spotlight Survey* found that nearly one in four Americans (24%) live in a household affected by a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity. These conditions are no longer isolated issues—they represent a growing national concern.

Despite challenges in accurately measuring prevalence—especially for intolerances and sensitivities—it is evident that a substantial portion of the U.S. population is affected by food allergies, intolerances, or sensitivities directly or indirectly. This *IFIC Spotlight Survey* reveals that over half of Americans (53%) either live with or know someone affected by food allergies, intolerances, and/or sensitivities. This widespread reach underscores the growing need for awareness, education, and clear labeling to facilitate safe, informed choices and reduced accidental exposures.

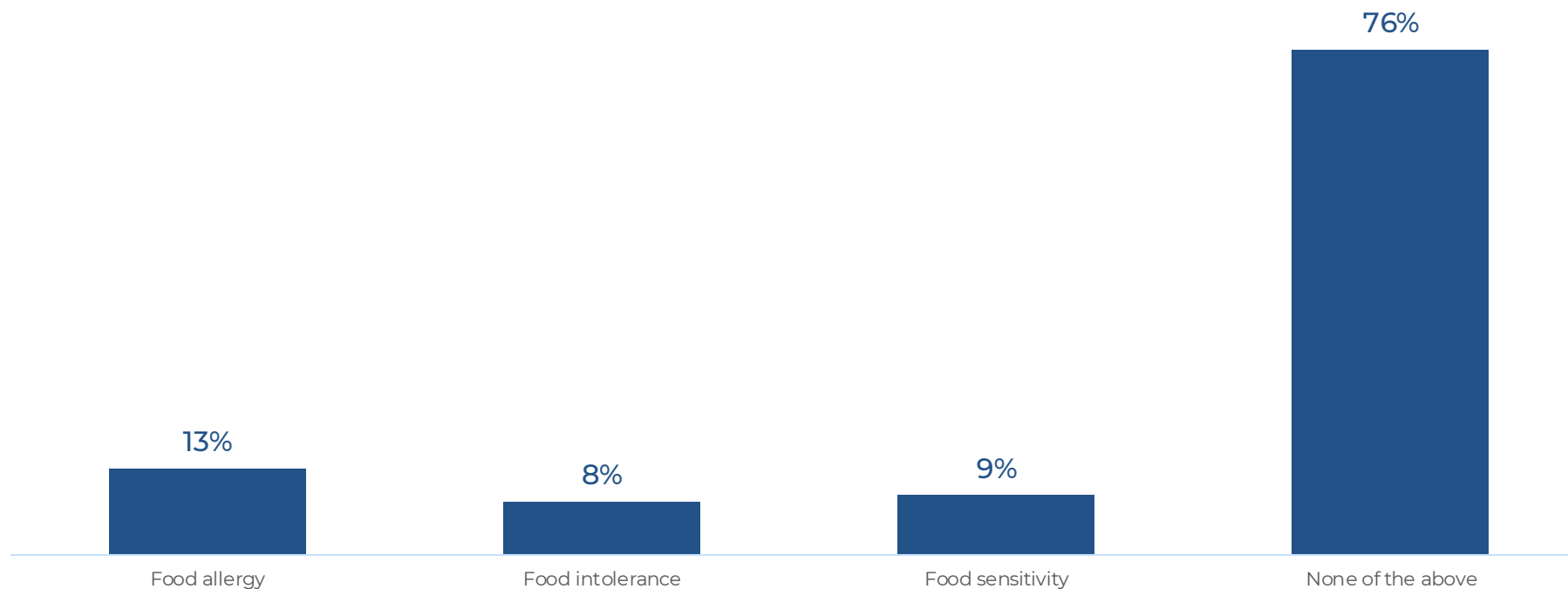
Healthcare professionals—particularly primary care providers, board-certified allergists, and registered dietitians—are among the most trusted sources for information on food allergies, intolerances, and/or sensitivities. With 24% of survey takers reporting a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity and 16% reporting that they or someone in their home have received medical attention because of a reaction to something they ate, this may indicate barriers in medical care for those who need it the most. [Disparities](#) in access to care, along with challenges related to individuals' ability or willingness to seek medical attention, are only a few examples of barriers that can prevent access to timely and essential medical services. In addition, many households may be uninformed and/or rely on misinformation to manage these conditions independently, possibly without accurate medical diagnoses or dietary guidance. This could potentially increase the risk of unnecessary avoidance of important foods and nutrients, and continued exposure, which can have negative long-term health consequences on the entire household.

While those who live with food allergies tend to be more engaged with allergen labeling—reporting higher awareness, usage, understanding, and trust—others may require additional support. As food allergies are becoming [more common](#) in adults, the need for action is clear. Coordinated public health efforts, transparent food labeling, and better education for both consumers and healthcare providers are critical to ensure that every Americans can make safe, informed, and nutritious food choices.

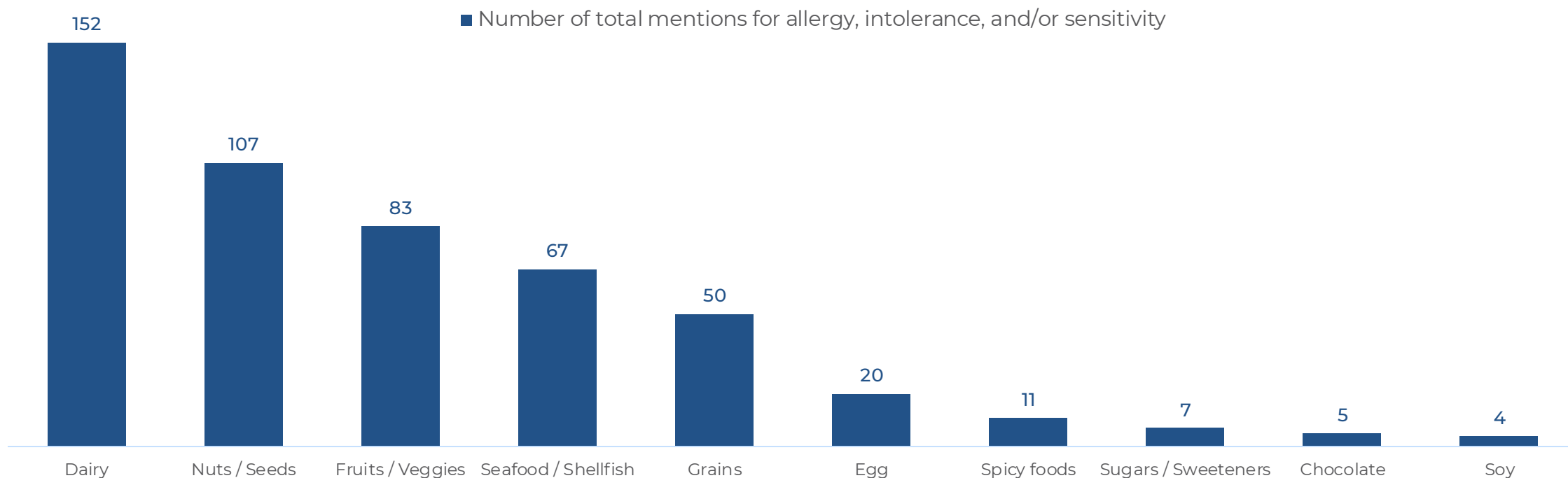


One in four Americans report they or a household member have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

More than 1 in 10 (13%) report they or someone in their household have a food allergy. Slightly fewer report a food sensitivity (9%). Eight percent report a food intolerance.

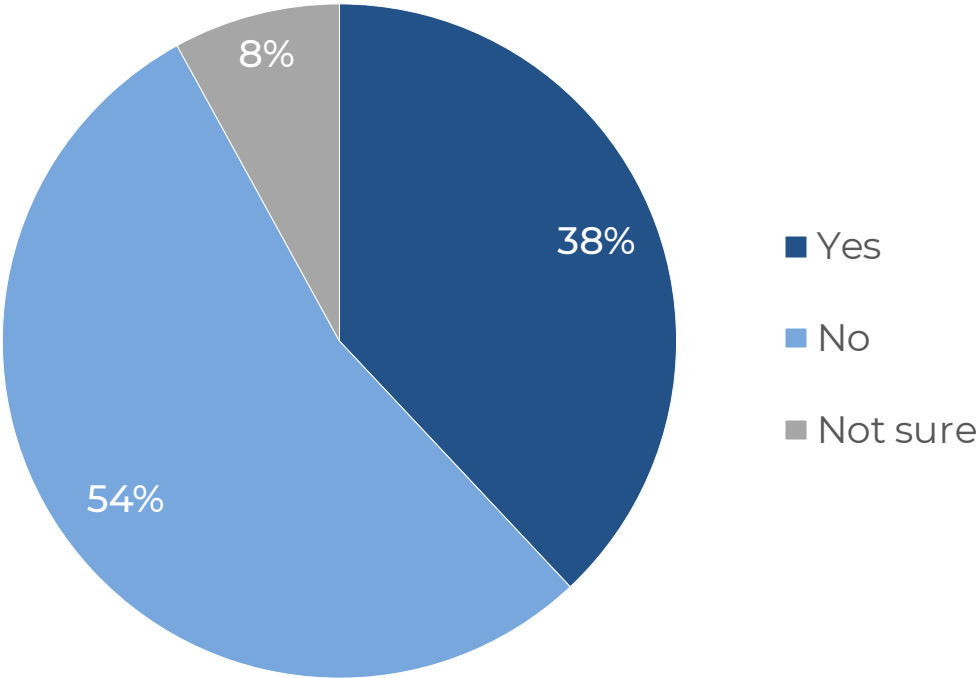


Among those who reported that they or a household member have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity, dairy was the most reported intolerance and sensitivity, and nuts were the most reported allergy.



4 in 10 Americans without a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in their household know someone outside their home who is affected.

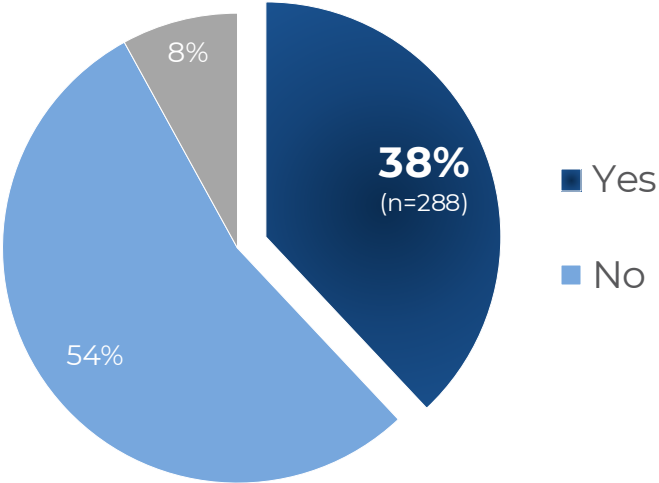
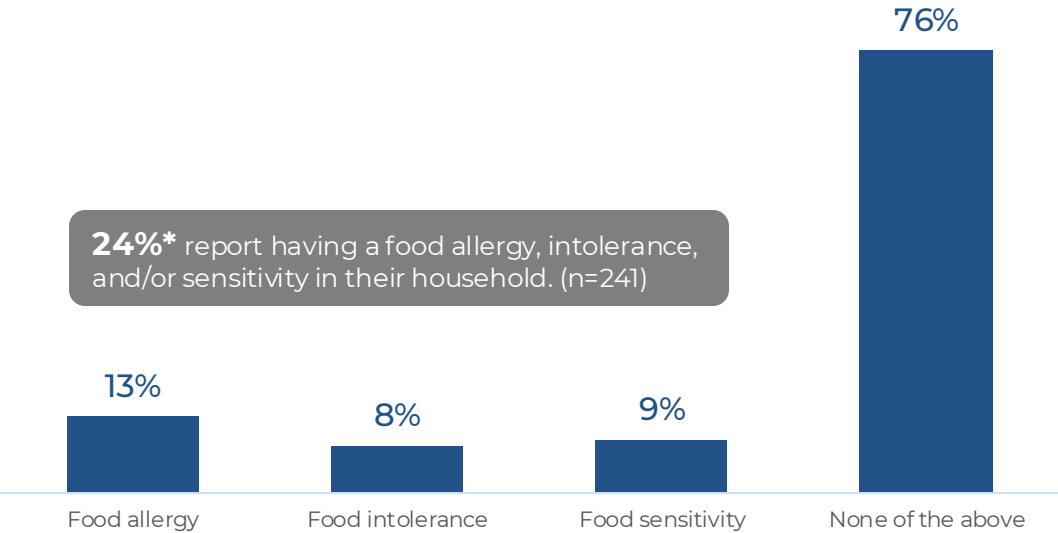
More than half (54%) of those without a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in their household do not know anyone outside of their home who is affected.



Q2. You indicated that neither you nor anyone in your household has a food allergy, food intolerance, or food sensitivity. Do you know anyone personally *outside of your household* that has a food allergy, food intolerance, or food sensitivity? (n=759; FLTER: No food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity in household)

More than half of Americans say that either they or someone in their household have a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—or that they know someone outside their household who does.

Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) report having a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in their household and 38% of unaffected households report knowing someone outside their home who is affected. In total, 529 out of 1,000 survey takers know someone who is affected by a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

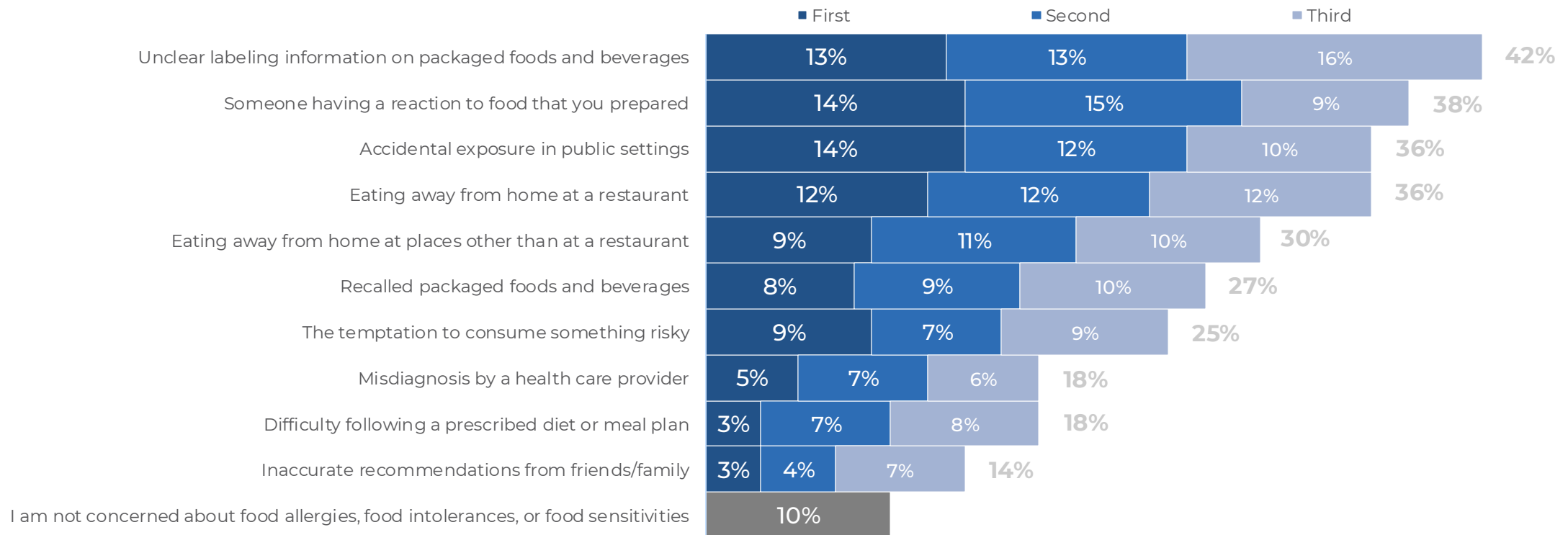


Q1. Do you or anyone in your household have any of the following? Select all that apply. (n=1000)
 *Selected at least one. Does not equal the sum of allergy, intolerance, and sensitivity.

Q2. You indicated that neither you nor anyone in your household has a food allergy, food intolerance, or food sensitivity. Do you know anyone personally outside of your household that has a food allergy, food intolerance, or food sensitivity? (n=759; FLTER: No food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity in household)

Unclear labeling is a top concern among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity.

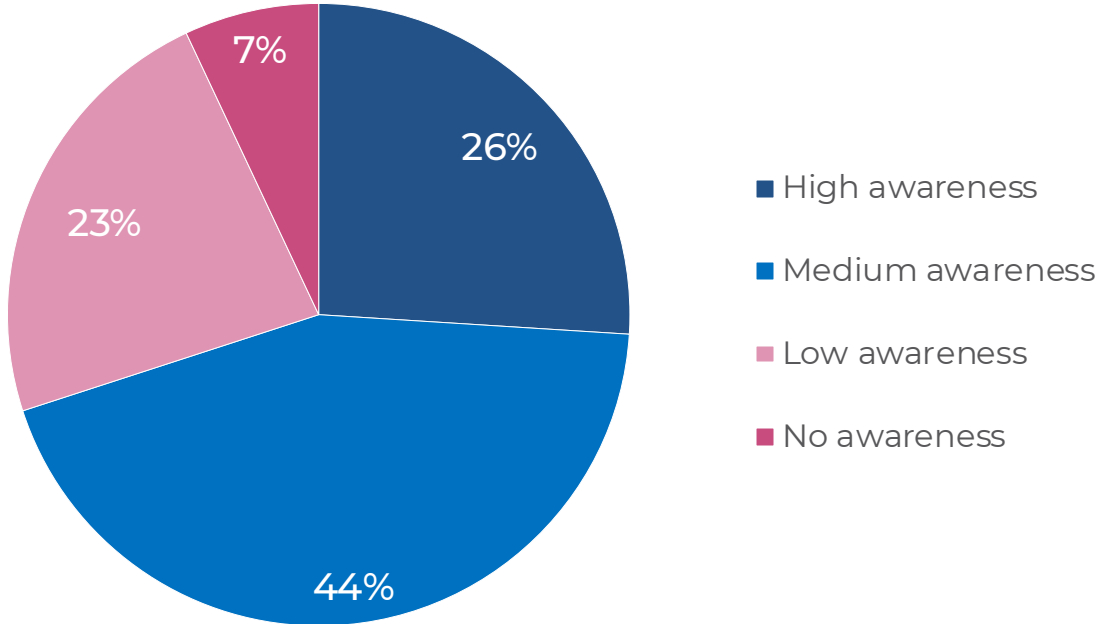
More than 1 in 3 are concerned about someone having a reaction to food they prepared (38%), accidental exposure in public settings (36%), and/or eating at a restaurant (36%).



Q3. When it comes to food allergies, food intolerances, and food sensitivities, which of the following are you most concerned about? Please rank your top 3 concerns, with 1 being the most concerning to you. (n=587; FILTER: Has food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in household + does not have in household but knows someone outside their home who has food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity)

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity, 70% report awareness of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase.

Seven in 10 report high (26%) or medium (44%) awareness of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase, while 3 in 10 report low (23%) or no (7%) awareness.

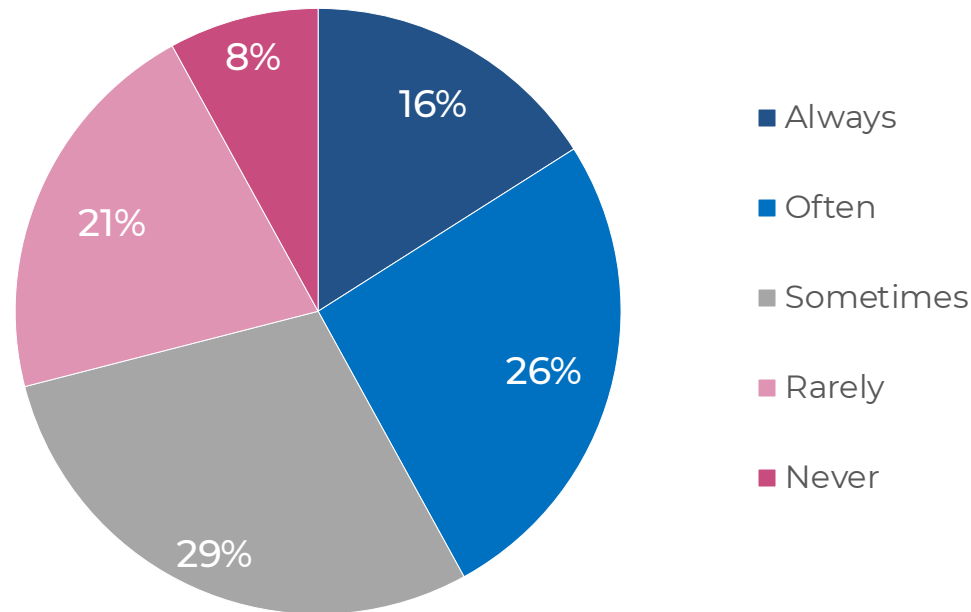


Awareness (high/medium) of allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (84% vs. 70%).

Q4. Please rate your level of awareness with allergen information on the packaged foods that you typically purchase. (n=587; FILTER: Has food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in household + does not have in household but knows someone outside their home who has food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity.)

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—and who are aware of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase—**16% say they always use that information.**

More than 4 in 10 (42%) use allergen information always (16%) or often (26%). Nearly 3 in 10 (29%) use it rarely (21%) or never (8%).



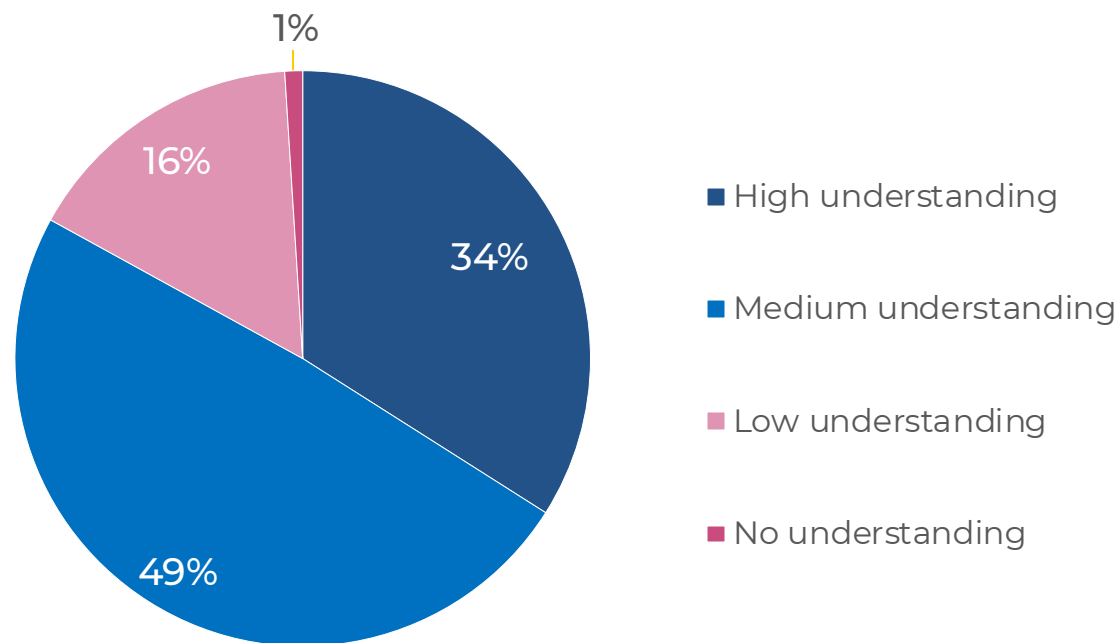
Frequent use (always/often) of allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (61% vs. 42%).

Q5. Please rate how frequently you use allergen information on the packaged foods that you typically purchase. (n=545; FILTER: Has food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in household + does not have in household but knows someone outside their home who has food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity + has awareness of allergen information on packaging of the foods they purchase)

IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions of Food Allergens, Intolerances & Sensitivities. April 2025.

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—and who are aware of and use allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase—34% say they have high understanding of that information.

More than 8 in 10 (83%) report a high (34%) or medium (49%) understanding of allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase, while 1 in 6 (17%) report low (16%) or no (1%) understanding.

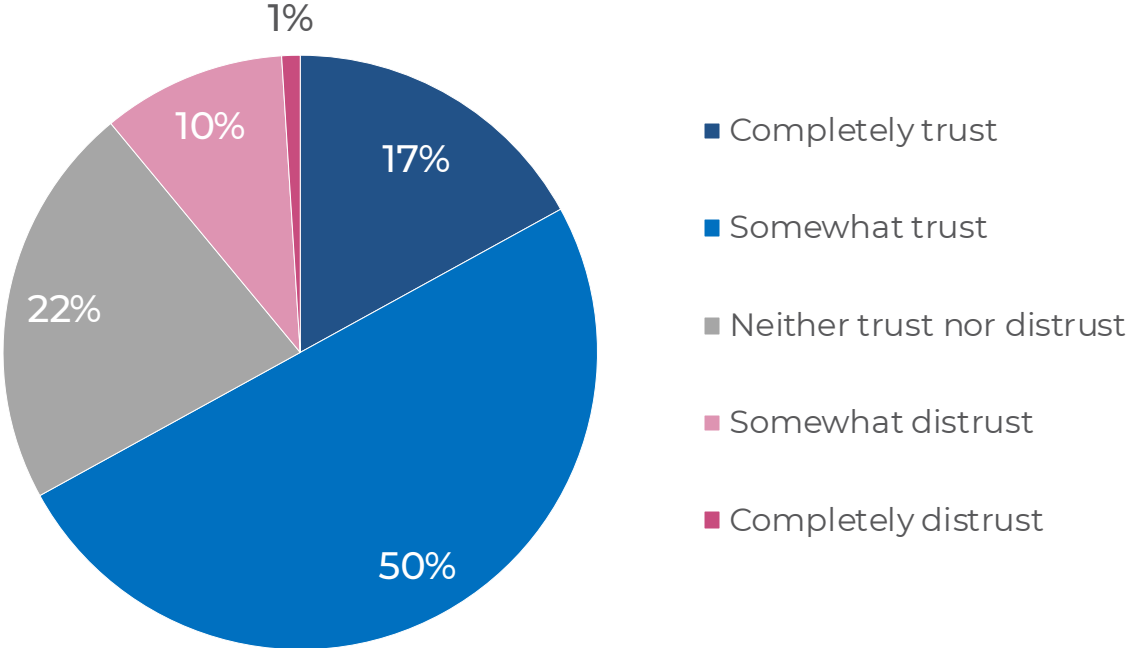


High understanding of allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (42% vs. 34%).

Q6. Please rate your understanding of allergen information on the packaged foods that you typically purchase. (n=499; FILTER: Has food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in household + does not have in household but knows someone outside their home who has food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity + has awareness of allergen information on packaging of the foods they purchase + uses allergen information on packaged foods typically purchased)

Among those who know someone (including themselves) with a food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity—and who are aware of and use allergen information on the packaged foods they typically purchase—67% say they trust that information.

Six times as many trust allergen information on food packaging as distrust it (67% vs. 11%).

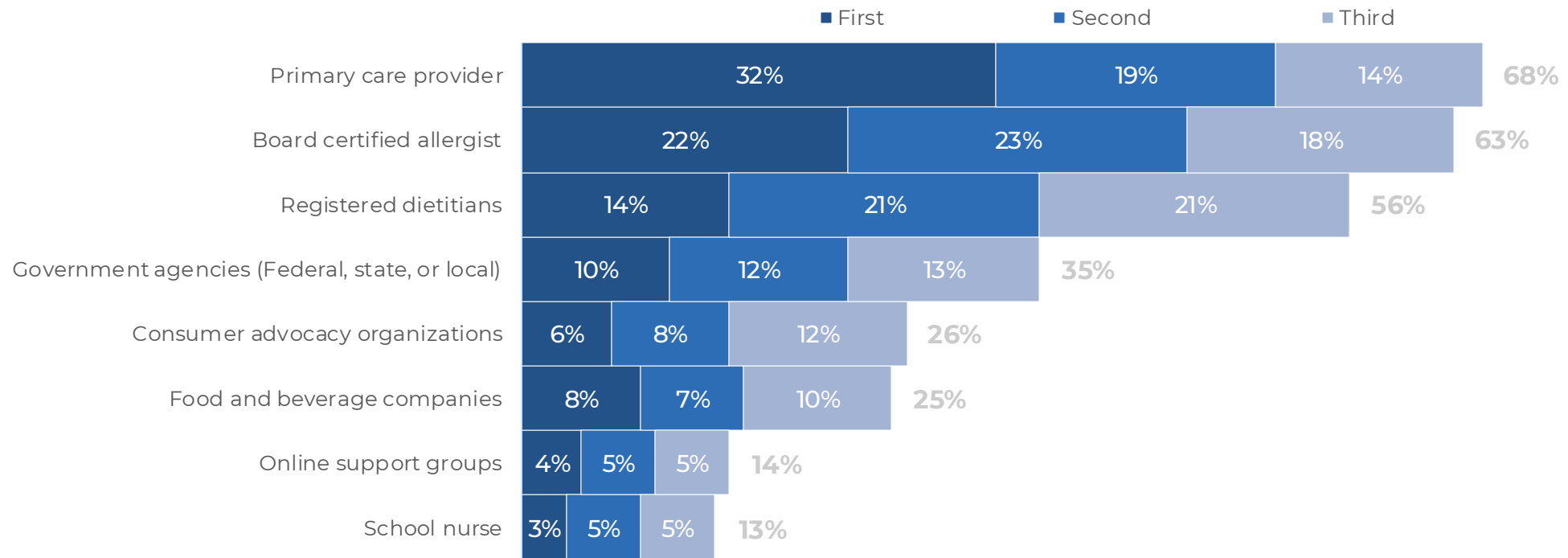


Trust in allergen labeling information on food packaging is higher among those with a food allergy in their home (78% vs. 67%).

Q7. Please rate your level of trust in allergen information on food packaging. (n=499; FILTER: Has food allergy, intolerance, and/or sensitivity in household + does not have in household but knows someone outside their home who has food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity + has awareness of allergen information on packaging of the foods they purchase + uses allergen information on packaged foods typically purchased)

Americans place the most trust in primary health care providers for food allergen information, followed by board certified allergists and registered dietitians.

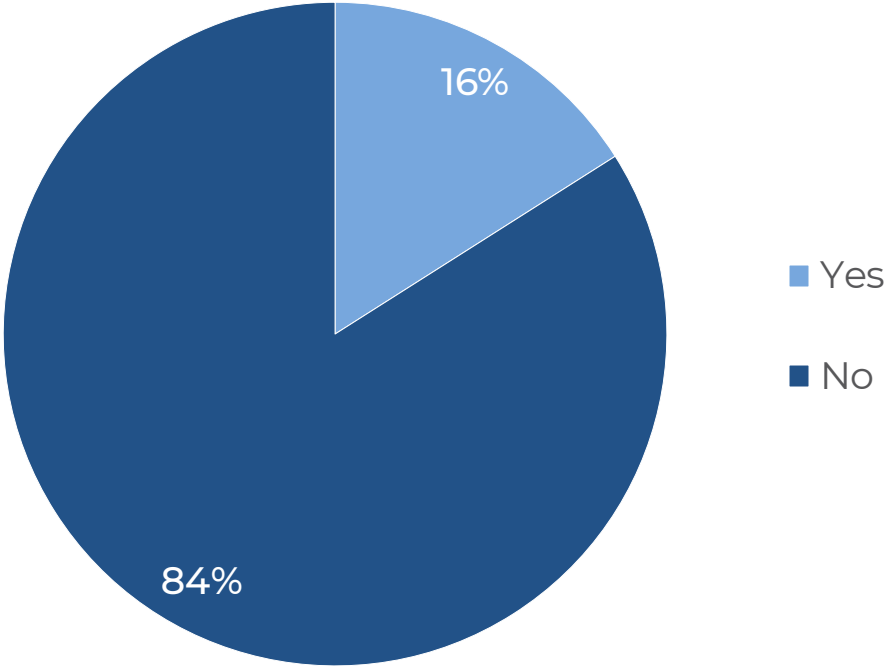
Americans report less trust in online support groups and school nurses.



Q8. Which of the following would you trust most for information about food allergens, food intolerances, and/or food sensitivities? Please rank your top 3 sources, with 1 being the most trusted. (n=1000)

Sixteen percent of Americans say they or a household member have sought medical care because of a reaction to a food or beverage.

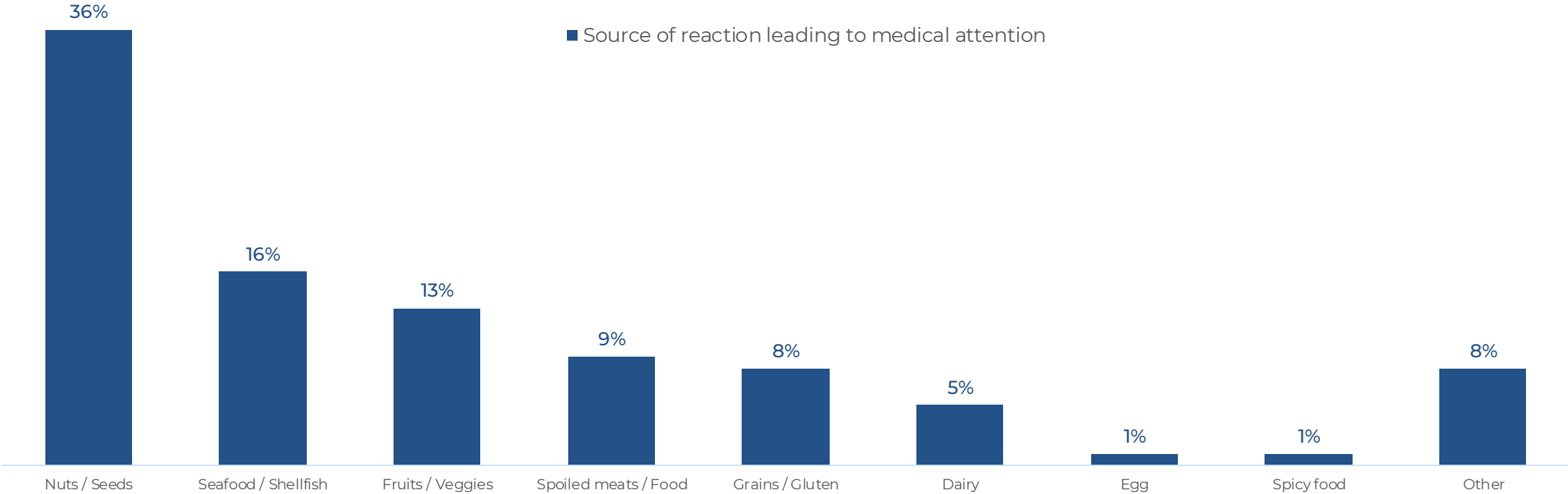
More than 8 in 10 (84%) say that neither they nor a member of their household has ever received medical attention for a reaction to a food or beverage.



Q9. Have you or anyone in your household ever received medical attention because of a reaction to a food or beverage? This can include going to the emergency room/urgent care or contacting a health care provider. (n=1000)

Among those who report that they or a member of their household have received medical attention for a reaction to a food or beverage, nuts are the most commonly cited cause.

Nuts (36%) are followed by seafood/shellfish (16%) and fruits/vegetables (13%).



Q9. Please specify the food or beverage that caused the reaction requiring medical attention for you or someone in your household. (n=142; FILTER: Legible responses among the n=161 who reported that they or someone in their household have received medical attention because of a reaction to a food or beverage)



International
Food Information
Council

CONNECT WITH US!



ific.org



foodinsight.org



@foodinsight



International Food
Information Council

