

FY2 Wave 3-4 NI: Chapter 8 Healthy eating

The FSA is responsible for some areas of [nutrition policy in Northern Ireland](#) along with the [Department of Health](#). The FSA provides information to consumers in Northern Ireland on how to achieve a healthier diet and supports food businesses to provide and promote healthier food and drink. The [Eatwell Guide \(footnote\)](#) provides information to consumers on how they can get a balanced, healthier and more sustainable diet. The Eatwell Guide does this by providing a summary of the five main food groups, the proportions of different types of food consumers are recommended to eat, and information on fluid intake.

How healthy respondents think their diet is

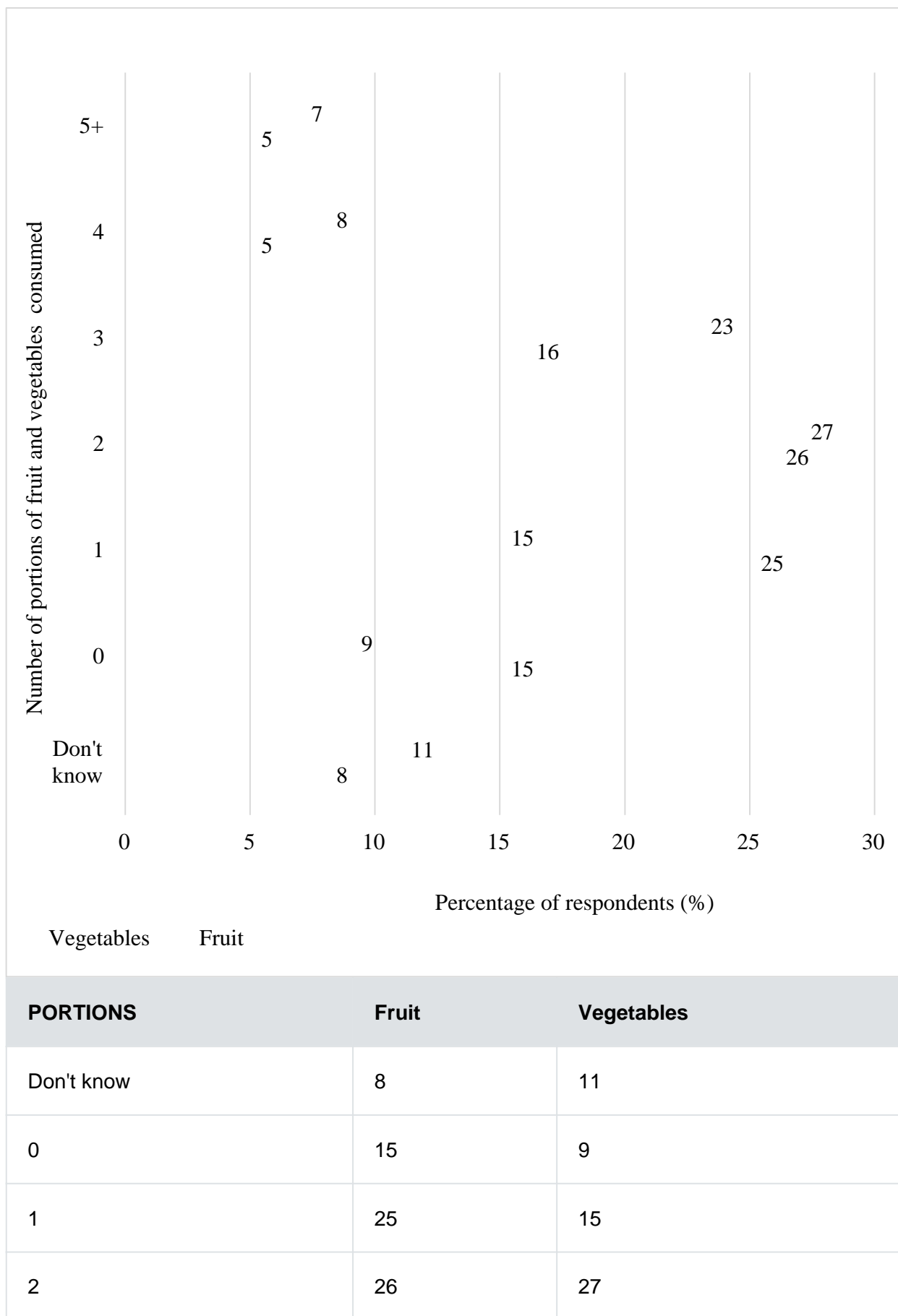
When asked how healthy they thought their usual diet was, most respondents reported that what they usually eat is fairly healthy (67%), with a further 20% reporting that what they eat is neither healthy or unhealthy. A minority reported that their diet was very healthy (8%), fairly unhealthy (5%), or very unhealthy (1%) [\(footnote\)](#)

What types of foods do respondents eat?

Figure 21 Number of portions of fruit and vegetables consumed during the previous day.

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PORTIONS	Fruit	Vegetables
3	16	23
4	5	8
5+	5	7

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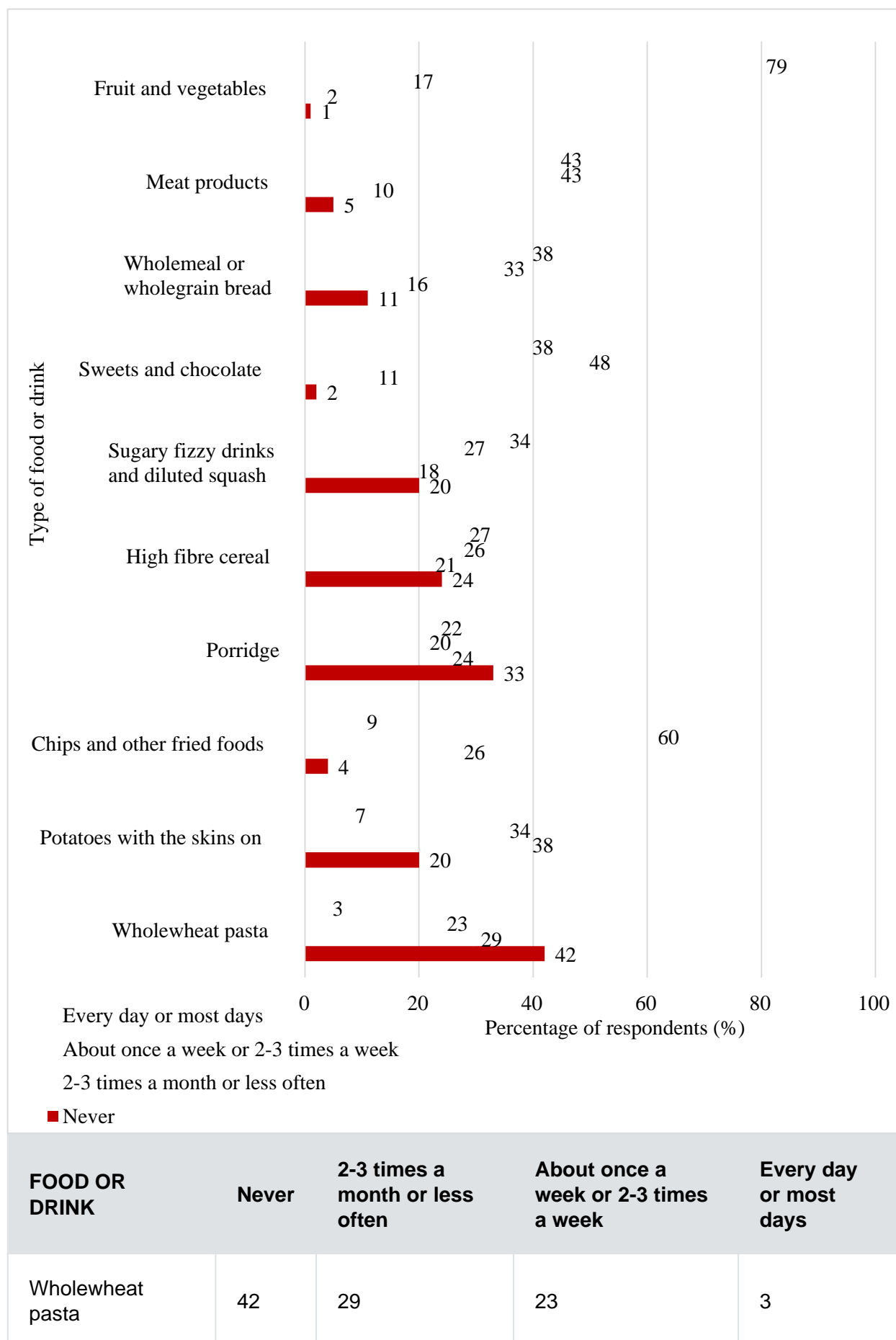
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

Respondents were asked how many portions of vegetables and fruit, not including fruit juice or smoothies, they had eaten or drunk the previous day. The majority of respondents had eaten either one (25%) or two (26%) portions of fruit the previous day, whilst 15% of respondents had not eaten any. Approximately a quarter of respondents had eaten two (27%) or three (23%) portions of vegetables, whereas 9% respondents had not eaten any portions of vegetables the previous day. Around 1 in 10 respondents reported that they did not know how many portions of fruit (8%) and vegetables (8%) they had eaten (Figure 21) [\(footnote\)](#). In addition, respondents were asked if they had drunk some fruit juice or smoothie the previous day, around a third (34%) of respondents had drunk at least a small sized glass of fruit juice or smoothie [\(footnote\)](#).

Figure 22 How often respondents consumed certain types of food and drink.

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FOOD OR DRINK	Never	2-3 times a month or less often	About once a week or 2-3 times a week	Every day or most days
Potatoes with the skins on	20	38	34	7
Chips and other fried foods	4	26	60	9
Porridge	33	24	20	22
High fibre cereal	24	21	26	27
Sugary fizzy drinks				
and diluted squash"	20	18	27	34
Sweets and chocolate	2	11	48	38
Wholemeal or				
wholegrain bread"	11	16	33	38
Meat products	5	10	43	43
Fruit and vegetables	1	2	17	79

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

Respondents were asked how often they consumed certain types of food or drink. Most respondents (79%) reported that they ate fruit and vegetables every day or most days. Around 4 in 10 respondents reported that they ate meat products (43%), wholemeal or wholegrain bread (38%) or sweets and chocolate (38%) every day or most days. Of the listed foods, respondents

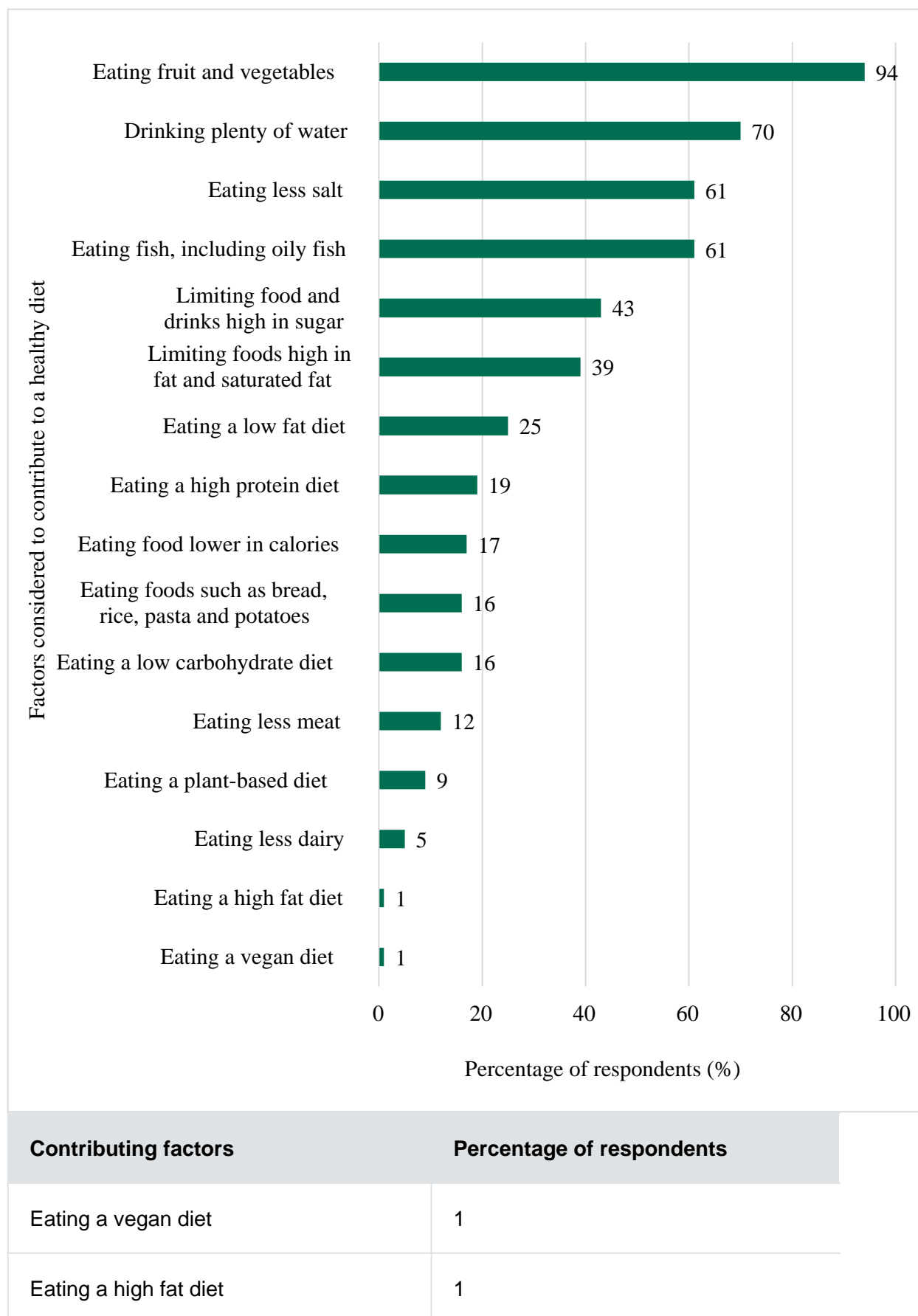
were least like to report eating wholewheat pasta (42%) and porridge (33%) (Figure 22) [\(footnote\)](#).

Perceptions of what contributes to a healthy diet

Figure 23 Factors which respondents considered as most important for a healthy diet.

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Contributing factors		Percentage of respondents
Eating less dairy	5	
Eating a plant-based diet	9	
Eating less meat	12	
Eating a low carbohydrate diet	16	
Eating foods such as bread,		
rice	pasta and potatoes"	16
Eating food lower in calories	17	
Eating a high protein diet	19	
Eating a low fat diet	25	
Limiting foods high in		
fat and saturated fat"	39	
Limiting food and		
drinks high in sugar"	43	
Eating fish, including oily fish	61	
Eating less salt	61	
Drinking plenty of water	70	
Eating fruit and vegetables	94	

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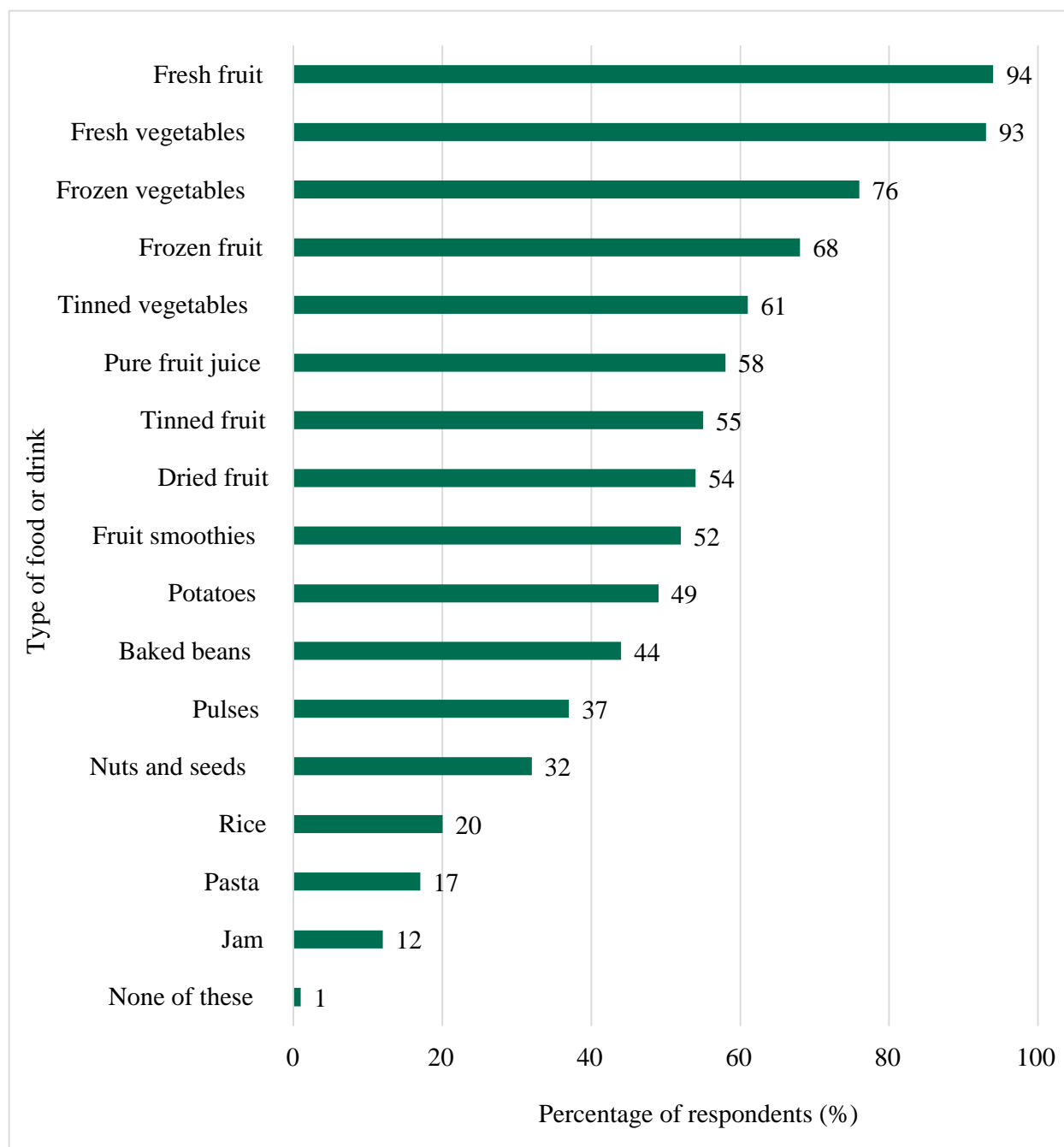
Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

Respondents were asked what factors, from a given list, are the most important for people to do to have a healthy diet. Eating fruit and vegetables (94%), drinking plenty of water (70%), eating less salt (61%) and eating fish (61%) were considered the most important factors for people to have a healthy diet. Eating a vegan diet (1%), high fat diet (1%) and eating less dairy (5%) were considered the least important factors for people to have a healthy diet (Figure 23) [\(footnote\)](#).

Figure 24 Types of food or drink thought to count towards daily fruit and vegetable intake.

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Type of food or drink	Percentage of respondents
None of these	1
Jam	12
Pasta	17
Rice	20

Type of food or drink	Percentage of respondents
Nuts and seeds	32
Pulses	37
Baked beans	44
Potatoes	49
Fruit smoothies	52
Dried fruit	54
Tinned fruit	55
Pure fruit juice	58
Tinned vegetables	61
Frozen fruit	68
Frozen vegetables	76
Fresh vegetables	93
Fresh fruit	94

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

Respondents were asked which types of food or drink, from a given list, can count toward someone's daily fruit and vegetable intake. In line with advice, most respondents reported that fresh fruit (94%), fresh vegetables (93%), frozen vegetables (76%), and frozen fruit (68%) count towards someone's daily fruit and vegetable intake. Many respondents reported that tinned vegetables (61%), pure fruit juice (58%), tinned fruit (55%), dried fruit (54%), fruit smoothies (52%), baked beans (44%) and pulses (37%) count towards someone's daily fruit and vegetable intake. However, some respondents reported some types of food can count towards someone's daily fruit and vegetable intake which do not, such as, potatoes (49%), nuts and seeds (32%), rice (20%), pasta (17%) and jam (12%) (Figure 24) ([footnote](#)).

Knowledge of UK Government recommendations

Proportions of different types of foods

The [UK Government recommends](#) that potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates, and fruit and vegetables should make up the largest parts of a diet. It is recommended that foods high in fat, sugar and salt, and oils and spreads should make up the smallest parts of a diet.

Respondents were asked which two food groups they thought the UK Government recommends should make up the largest part and smallest part of a diet. Most respondents reported that fruit and vegetables (85%) or meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses and other proteins (72%) should make up the largest part of a diet. However, fewer respondents (17%) identified both food groups correctly ([footnote](#)). Most respondents reported that foods high in fat, sugar and salt (84%) or oils and spreads (55%) should make up the smallest part of a diet. However, fewer respondents (3%) identified both food groups correctly ([footnote](#)).

Fruit and vegetables

The [UK Government recommends](#) that people should eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.

Respondents were asked how many portions of fruit and vegetables they thought the UK Government recommend that people should eat every day. Most respondents (80%) reported that the UK Government recommend that people should eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day and 5% of respondents reported 6 portions, however 13% of respondents reported that people should eat between 1 and 4 portions ([footnote](#)).

Calories

The [UK Government recommends](#) that most adult females require on average 2000 calories a day and that most adult males require on average 2500 calories a day.

Respondents were asked how many calories they thought the UK Government recommend that an average adult female and average adult male should eat every day. In line with recommendations, 45% of respondents reported that an adult female should eat 2000 calories every day. However, 1% reported that an adult female should eat 500 calories a day, 6% reported 1000 calories a day, 35% reported 1500 calories a day, 3% reported 2500 calories a day, and 10% reported that they did not know ([footnote](#)). In line with UK Government recommendations, 48% of respondents reported that an adult male should eat 2500 calories. However, 1% reported that an adult male should eat 500 calories a day, 1% reported 1000 calories a day, 29% reported 2000 calories, 6% reported 3000 calories a day and 10% reported that they did not know ([footnote](#)).

Salt

The [UK government recommends](#) that adults should have no more than 6 grams of salt per day. Respondents were asked how much salt they thought the UK Government recommend that an adult should not exceed each day. In line with recommendations, 16% of respondents reported that adults should not exceed 6 grams of salt a day. However, 35% of respondents reported that adults should not exceed 2 grams of salt a day, 24% of respondents reported that adults should not exceed 4 grams of salt a day, 1% of respondents reported that adults should not exceed 8 grams of salt a day, and 24% of respondents reported that they did not know ([footnote](#)).

Fibre

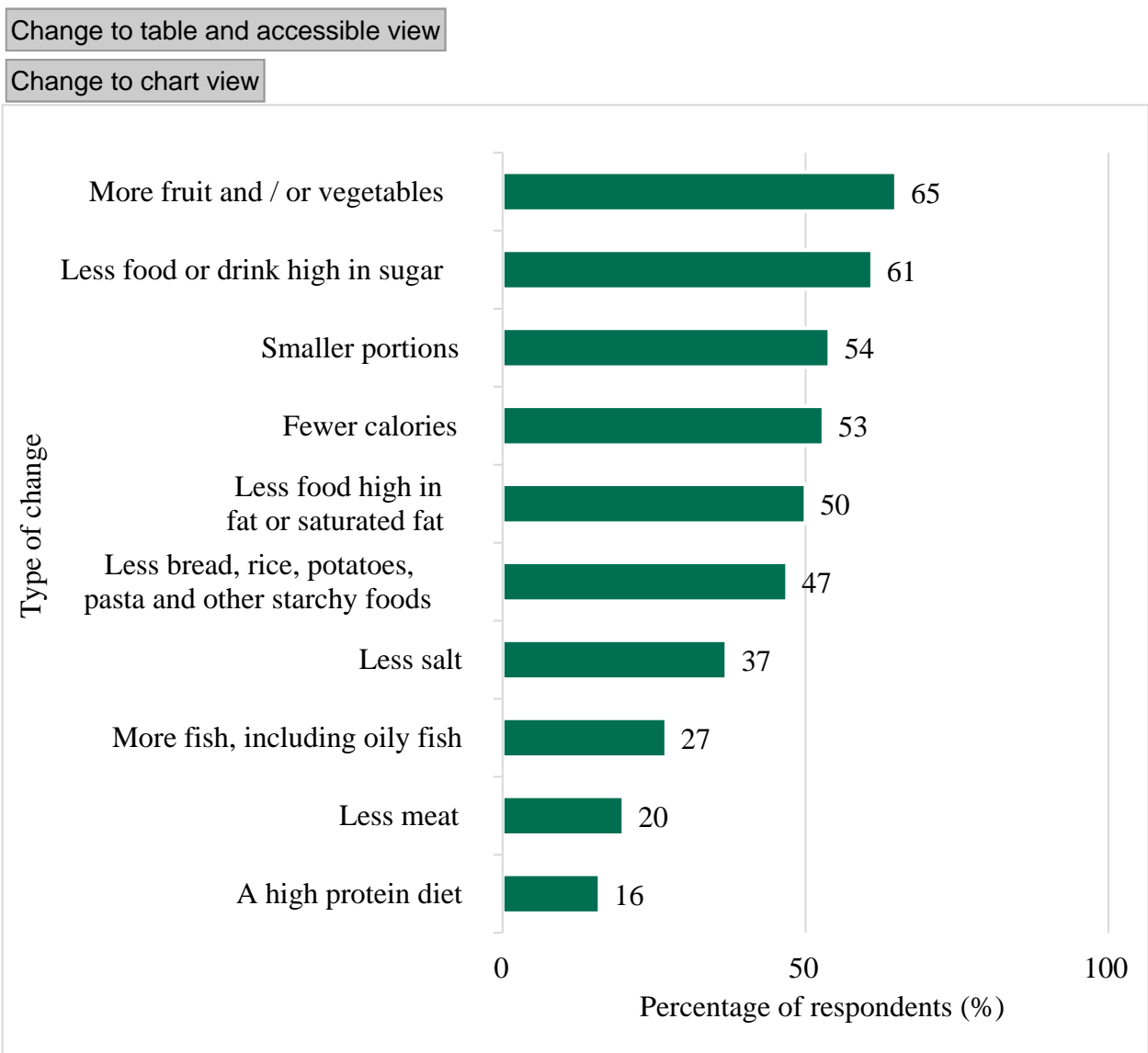
The UK Government recommend that an adult should eat 30 grams of fibre each day.

Respondents were asked how much fibre they thought the UK Government recommend that an adult should eat each day. In line with recommendations, 29% of respondents reported that adults should eat 30 grams of fibre each day. However, 36% reported other levels of fibre, and 35% of respondents reported that they did not know [\(footnote\)](#).

Changes in eating habits

Respondents were asked if they had made (or attempted to make) any changes to what they ate or drank in the previous 12 months. Over half (57%) of respondents reported that they had done this [\(footnote\)](#).

Figure 25 Ten most common changes or attempted changes to what respondents ate or drank in the previous 12 months.



Changes	Percentage of respondents
A high protein diet	16
Less meat	20
More fish, including oily fish	27
Less salt	37
Less bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods	47
Less food high in	
fat or saturated fat "	50
Fewer calories	53
Smaller portions	54
Less food or drink high in sugar	61
More fruit and / or vegetables	65

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Source: Food and You 2: Wave 3

Respondents who had made or attempted to make any changes, from a given list, to what they ate or drank in the previous 12 months, were asked what changes they had made or attempted to make. The most common changes respondents reported were consuming: more fruit and / or vegetables (65%); less food or drink high in sugar (61%); smaller portions (54%); and fewer calories (53%) (Figure 25) ([footnote](#)).

Respondents who had made or attempted to make any changes to what they ate or drank in the previous 12 months were asked why they had made or attempted to make these changes. The most common reasons given were to be more healthy or to have a healthier lifestyle (83%) and to lose weight (75%) ([footnote](#)).

Eating healthy outside the home

Respondents were asked how healthy they thought that the food they eat out or take out is compared to the food they eat at home. The majority (84%) of respondents thought that the food they eat outside the home is less healthy (i.e. a bit less healthy or a lot less healthy). Only 3% stated that the food they eat out or take out is healthier than the food they eat at home ([footnote](#)).

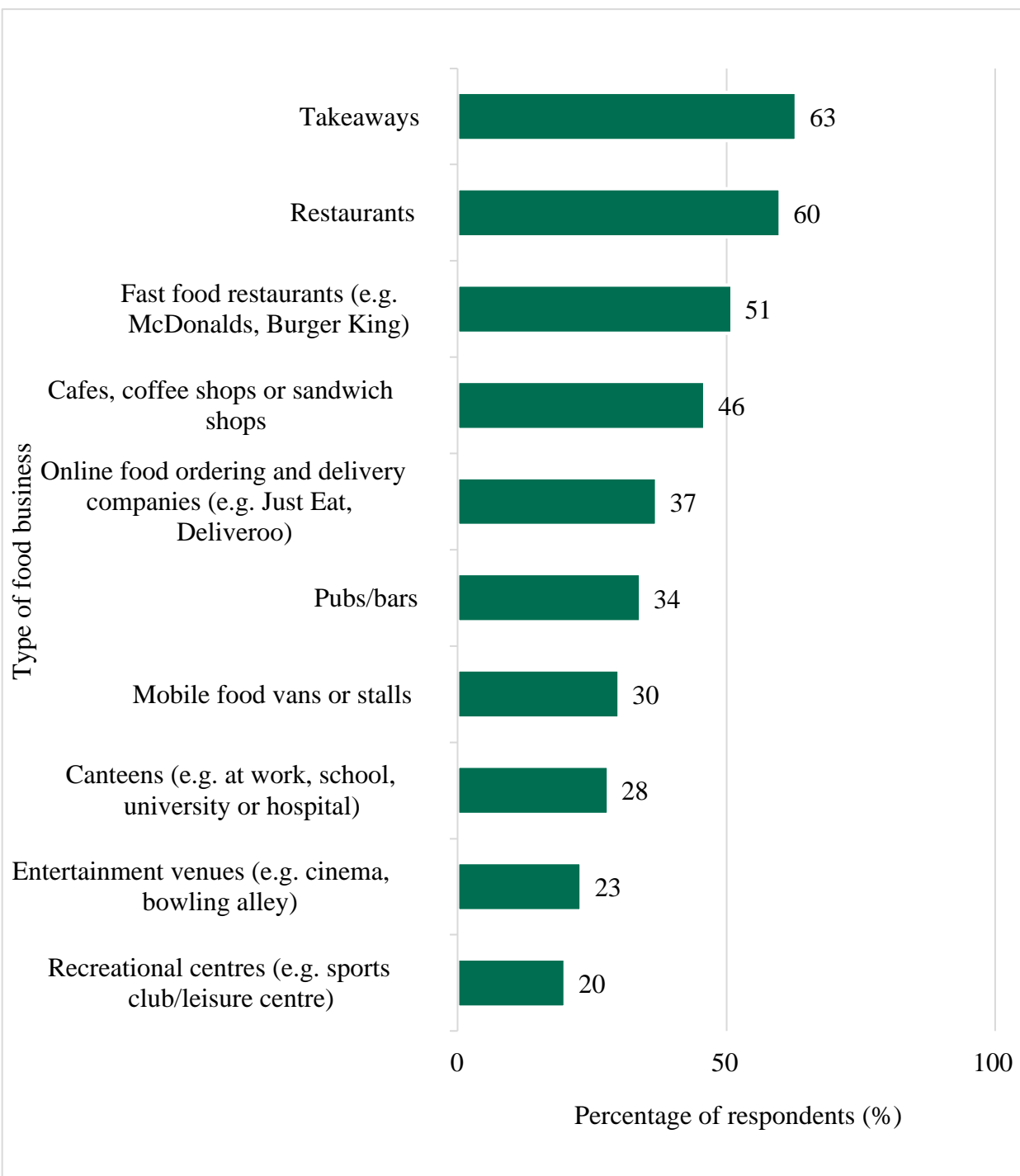
The prevalence of respondents reporting that the food they eat out or take out is less healthy compared to the food they eat at home varied in the following ways:

- Gender: Women (89%) were more likely to report that the food they eat out or take out is less healthy than the food they eat at home compared to men (79%).
- Annual household income: Respondents with a household income of £32,000-£63,999 (90%) were more likely to report that the food they eat out or take out is less healthy than the food they eat at home compared to respondents with an income below £19,000 (77%).
- NS-SEC: respondents in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (87%) and intermediate occupations (87%) were more likely to report that the food they eat out or take out is less healthy than the food they eat at home compared to those in semi-routine and routine occupations (74%).
- Responsibility for cooking: respondents who were responsible for cooking (85%) were more likely to report that the food they eat out or take out is less healthy than the food they eat at home compared to those who do not cook (75%).
- NIMDM: respondents who lived in the least deprived areas (NIMDM 5) (89%) were more likely to report that the food they eat out or take out is less healthy than the food they eat at home compared to respondents who lived in the most deprived areas (NIMDM 1) (78%).

Figure 26 Where respondents would like to see more information about how healthy different food and drink options are.

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Business Type	Percentage of respondents
Recreational centres (e.g. sports club/leisure centre)	20
Entertainment venues (e.g. cinema, bowling alley)	23
Canteens (e.g. at work, school, university or hospital)	28

Business Type	Percentage of respondents
Mobile food vans or stalls	30
Pubs/bars	34
Online food ordering and delivery companies (e.g. Just Eat, Deliveroo)	37
Cafes, coffee shops or sandwich shops	46
Fast food restaurants (e.g. McDonalds, Burger King)	51
Restaurants	60
Takeaways	63

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Respondents were asked to select from a given list in which places they would like to see more information displayed about how healthy different food and drink options are. Most commonly, respondents reported that they would like takeaways (63%) and restaurants (60%) to display more information about how healthy different options are. Around half (51%) reported that they would like fast food restaurants (e.g. McDonalds, Burger King) to display this information ([footnote](#)).

Respondents were asked what nutritional information they would find useful on the menu to help inform their choices when eating out. Over half (55%) of respondents reported that they would find it useful if menus showed calorie information, 49% of respondents reported information about fat content would be useful, 46% reported information about sugar content would be useful and 43% reported information about salt content would be useful. Only 16% reported that none of these would be useful.