Volume 4, Issue 11: November 2025

CONSUMER FOOD INSIGHTS

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer Food Insights (CFI) is a monthly survey of more than 1,200 American adults from across the country. Since January 2022, the Center for Food Demand Analysis and Sustainability (CFDAS) at Purdue University has used this survey to track trends and changes in consumer food demand and food sustainability behaviors.[1] Visit purdue.ag/CFDAS or contact cfdas@purdue.edu for more details.

This edition of the CFI survey disaggregates key findings by household Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) use.[2] New questions dive into food bank use by asking consumers who have utilized these resources over the past month how often they used them and what most accurately describes their situation regarding food bank use.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM NOVEMBER

- Food values remain stable in the face of economic changes, though affordability takes priority among SNAP consumers.
- The household food insecurity rate rose by 3 percentage points since October and by 3.3 percentage points since November 2024.
- The food insecurity rate among SNAP households rose by 8.6 percentage points since October and 7.8 points since November 2024.
- Approximately 1 in 6 households received free food from a food bank or pantry in the last 30 days.
- Primary care physicians remain the most trusted source of info about healthy foods.
- Trust in government organizations (FDA & USDA) has declined slightly in recent months, though they remain widely trusted.

CPI FOOD INFLATION	FOOD INSECURITY	FOOD SPENDING	GROCERY STOCKOUTS
-0*	+3	+11	-0
2.7%	16%	$203/WEEK	10%

*+/- in upper right corner tracks the unit change in the statistic from the previous month or quarter, depending on data collection frequency

FOOD VALUES

What attributes do consumers value most when purchasing food?

Respondents were asked to allocate 100 points to six food attributes based on their importance when grocery shopping.[3] This provides insight into the key motivators behind consumers' food purchasing decisions. **Figure 1** shows little change in the overall distribution of food values, with taste leading the way, followed by affordability and nutrition.

When comparing priorities between SNAP and non-SNAP participants, subtle differences emerge (**Figure 2**). Affordability ranks highest for SNAP consumers (24%), slightly ahead of taste (22%) and nutrition (18%). This suggests that cost considerations strongly influence food choices among SNAP participants. In contrast, non-SNAP respondents place the greatest emphasis on taste (26%) and nutrition (22%), with affordability (23%) close behind — indicating a more balanced trade-off between price and quality.

Figure 1. Share of 100 points allocated to food attributes, Nov. 2025

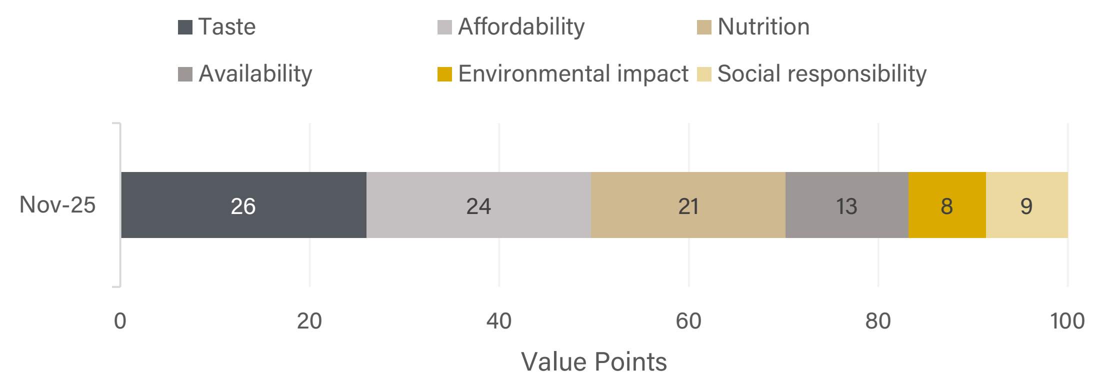
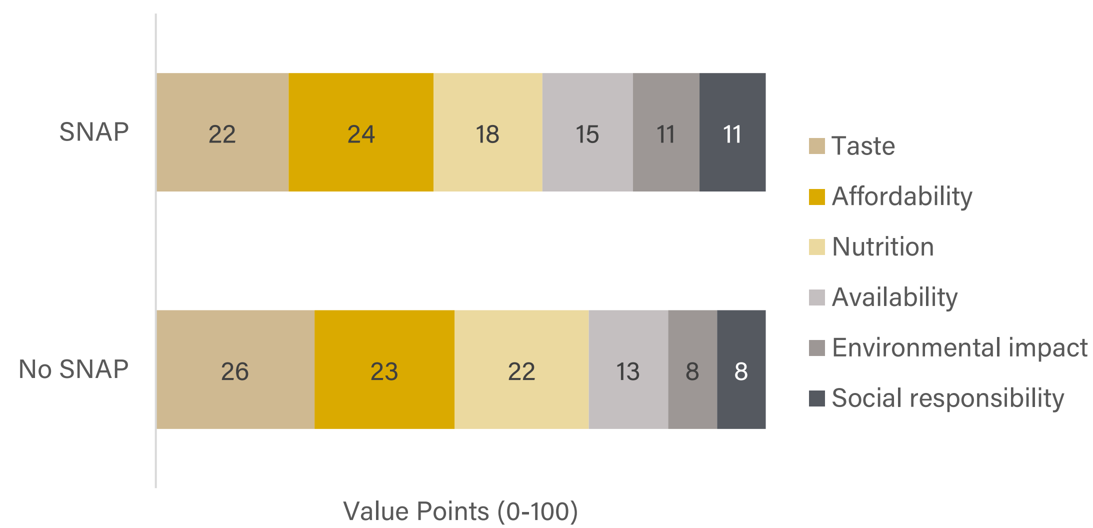


Figure 2. Share of 100 points allocated to food attributes by SNAP use, Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025



FOOD BANK USE

How are consumers interacting with free food resources?

New questions this month examine food bank use in greater detail. 17% of this month's sample indicated that they received free food from a food bank, pantry, or other such place in the last 30 days. **Figure 3** shows that the majority of these consumers utilized free food resources up to three times over the 30-day reference period (81%).

Figure 4 further explores the situation of those who said they utilized a free food resource over the past month. Overall, approximately 59% of food bank users say they either regularly or occasionally supplement their diets with food from a food bank. However, a sizable share of consumers (27%) say that they recently began using these resources due to either a change in their household's financial situation (18%) or concerns about changes to SNAP benefits (9%). These findings suggest that while food banks remain a consistent resource for many households, recent economic pressures and uncertainty around SNAP benefits are driving new reliance on charitable food systems for some.

Figure 3. *"How many times did your household receive free groceries from a food pantry, food bank, church, or other place that provides free food in the LAST 30 DAYS?",* Nov. 2025

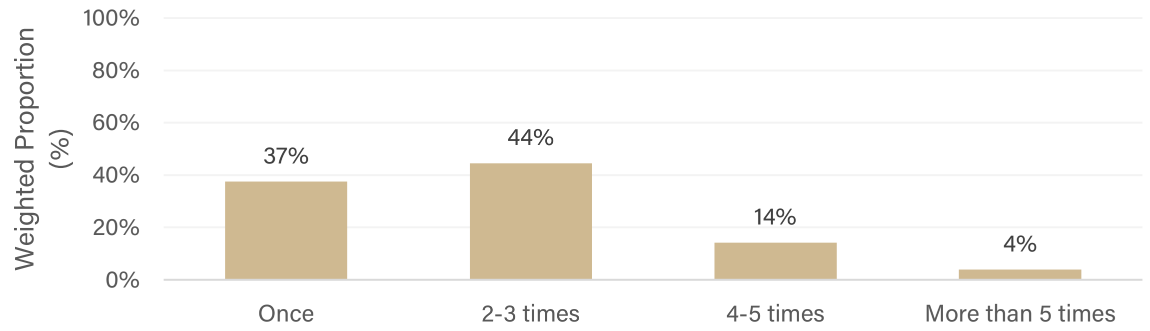
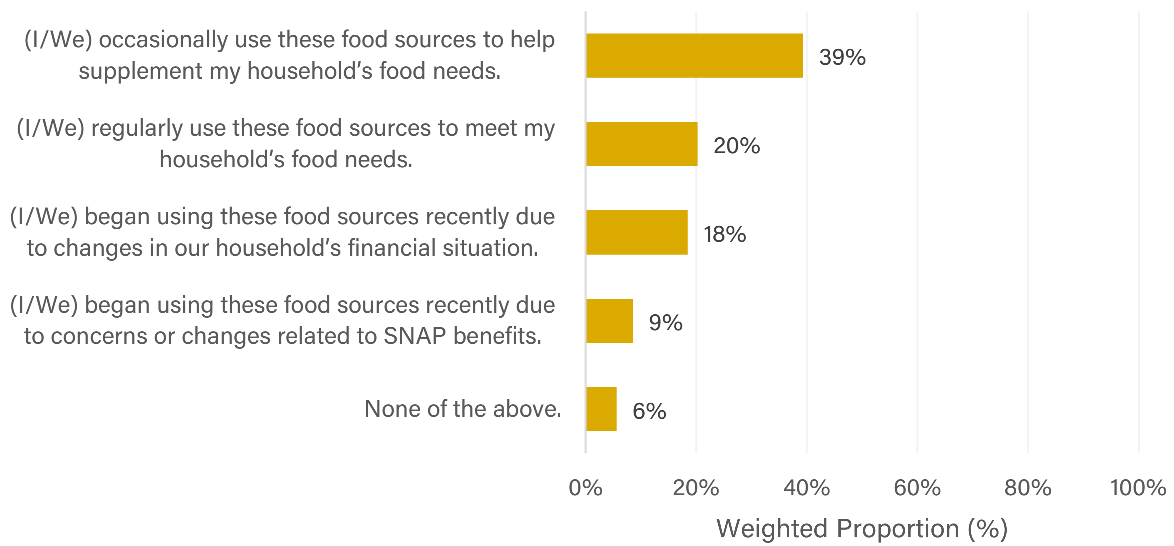


Figure 4. *"Which of the following statements best describes your situation regarding receiving free groceries from a food pantry, food bank, or other such place that provides free food?",* Nov. 2025



FOOD SECURITY

Which Americans are having trouble buying food for their families?

Based on a set of six standard questions about food purchased and eaten in the past 30 days, we estimate national food insecurity to be 16.0% in November (**Figure 5**).[4] This represents a 3-point increase from last month, the largest month-to-month increase we have observed since tracking food insecurity in the CFI. It is also the highest food insecurity rate we have estimated in 2025. The timing of this increase coincides with the recent, now-concluded federal government shutdown, which temporarily halted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and disrupted food assistance for millions of Americans.[5]

Figure 6 dives further into the data by showing the average annual food insecurity rate among SNAP recipients in our sample from 2022 to 2025 compared to the most recent month of data. As one might expect, households that rely on food assistance to supplement their diets are more likely to experience adverse effects of disruptions to such benefits.

Figure 5. Rate of household food insecurity in the last 30 days, Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025

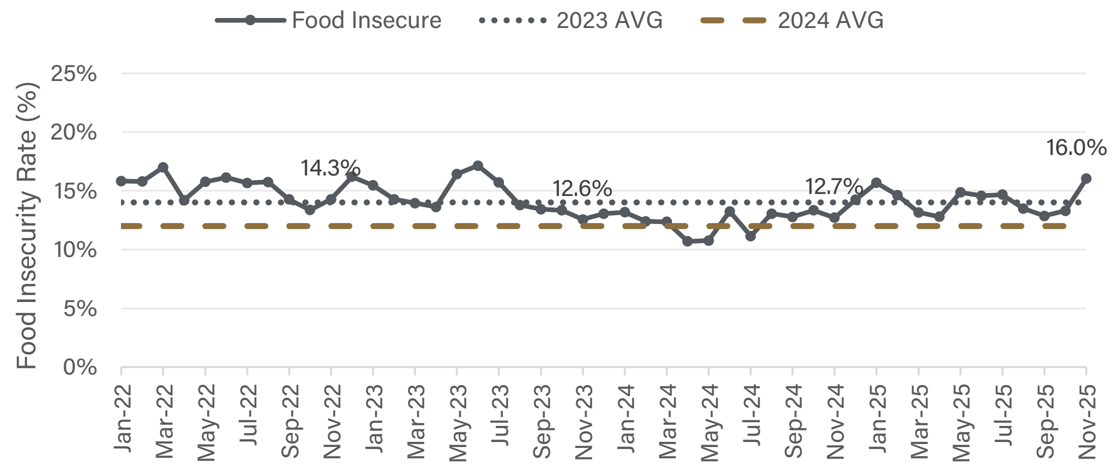
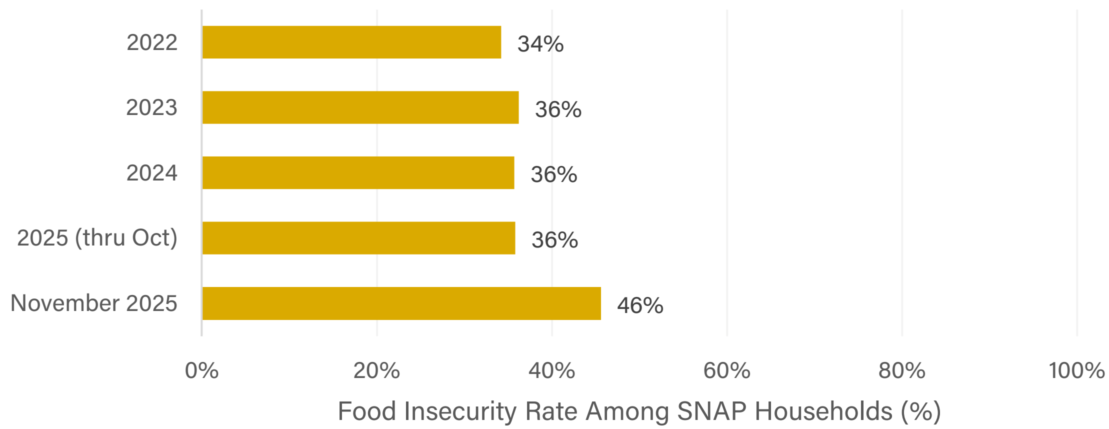


Figure 6. Rate of household food insecurity in the last 30 days among households receiving SNAP, Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025



DIET QUALITY

What is the quality of the American adult diet?

Utilizing a nine-item questionnaire known as the Mini-EAT Tool[6], we estimate consumers' self-reported diet quality in the last 30 days.

Figure 7 summarizes average Mini-EAT scores since February 2024. Diets are classified as unhealthy (<61), intermediate (61-69) and healthy (69<). American adults score an average of 62.0 on this scale. This average is unchanged from last month. In November, 17%, 37% and 46% are classified as "healthy", "intermediate", and "unhealthy", respectively.

Average diet quality score among SNAP consumers compared to non-SNAP consumers is comparable, though SNAP consumers score slightly lower (60.8) versus non-SNAP consumers (62.7). However, looking into the details of this score reveals a sizable difference between the two groups in the share of consumers classified as healthy and unhealthy (**Figure 8**).

Figure 7. Purdue's American Diet Quality Index (PADQI), Feb. 2024 - Nov. 2025

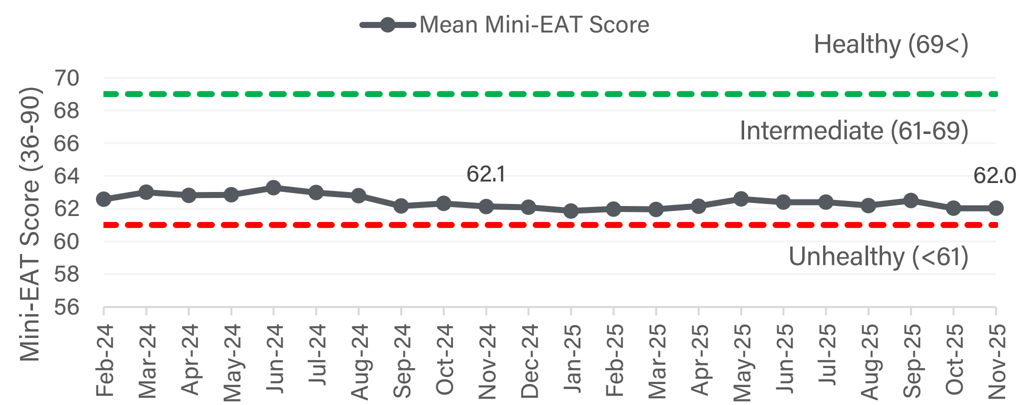
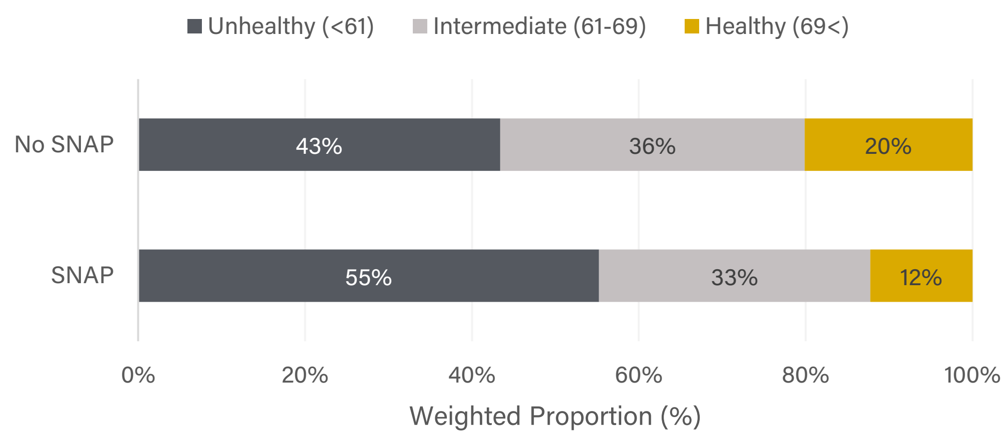


Figure 8. Mini-EAT diet quality classification by SNAP use, Feb. 2024 - Nov. 2025



FOOD EXPENDITURES

How much are American households spending on food?

Each month, consumers report their household's weekly spending on food from the last 30 days (**Figure 9**). On average, consumers reported spending about $131/week on groceries (food at home — FAH) and $72/week on restaurants and other carryout (food away from home — FAFH) in November.[7]

Consumer estimates of and expectations for past and future grocery prices both increase from October to November (**Figure 10**).[8] Consumers estimate groceries have increased 5.4% over the past year, higher than the rate estimated by the BLS. Note, the most recent CPI estimate of 2.7% is from September since the October data were delayed by the recent shutdown. Consumers predict grocery prices to go up by 3.9%, a slight increase from last month (3.7%).

Figure 9. Weekly household food expenditures, Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025

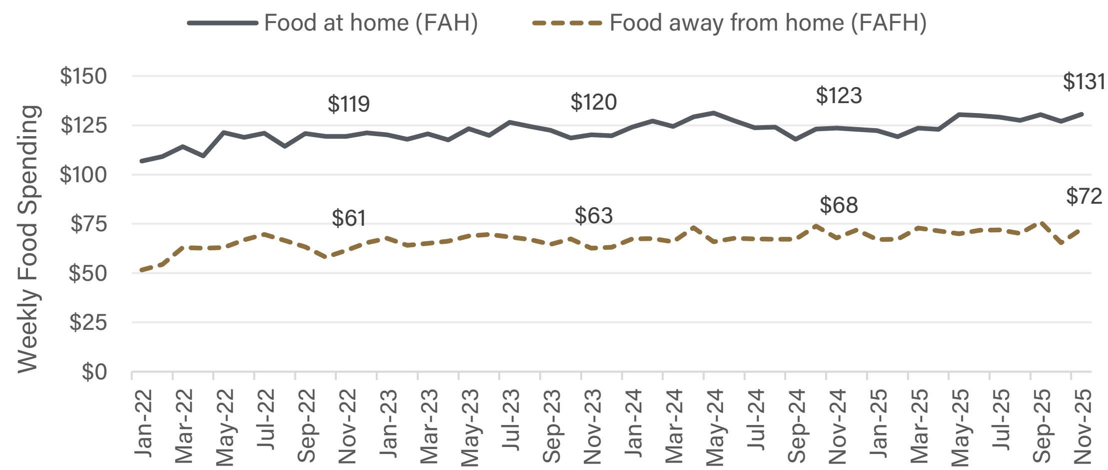
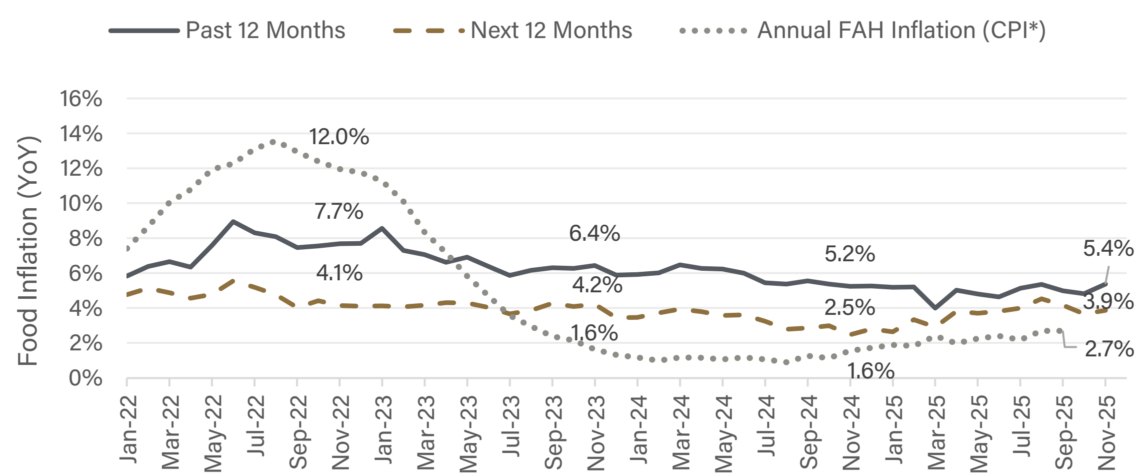


Figure 10. Consumer estimates of grocery price inflation compared to gov. estimate, Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025



*The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of inflation computed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

CONSUMER BEHAVIORS

How are consumers navigating their food environment?

Consumers are asked to report the frequency at which they chose certain foods, checked labels and performed at-home food behaviors (**Figure 11**).

SNAP participants report purchasing generic products more often than brand-name items compared to non-SNAP consumers. Since generic brands are generally more affordable, they are an attractive option for shoppers with limited budgets. However, SNAP users also indicate that they frequently select products that are typically considered premium, which adds complexity to this trend. Interestingly, SNAP participants are more likely than non-SNAP consumers to check food labels and discard items past their expiration date. These patterns suggest that cost is not the only factor influencing SNAP consumers' choices, highlighting the need to examine other drivers such as quality perceptions and health considerations.

Figure 11. Frequency of consumer shopping and eating habits by SNAP use, Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025

	SNAP	No SNAP
Chose generic foods over brand-name foods	3.6	3.2
Chose local foods over non-local foods	3.3	3.0
Chose wild-caught fish over farm-raised fish	3.1	2.9
Chose grass-fed beef over conventional beef	3.1	2.8
Chose cage-free eggs over conventional eggs	3.1	2.8
Chose organic foods over non-organic foods	3.0	2.7
Chose plant-based proteins over animal proteins	2.8	2.3
Checked the use-by/sell-by date at the store	4.0	4.1
Checked the nutrition label before buying new foods	3.4	3.4
Checked for natural or clean labels	3.2	2.9
Checked where my food originated	3.1	2.8
Checked for food recalls	3.3	2.8
Checked for GMO ingredients	3.1	2.7
Checked how my food was produced	3.1	2.7
Took steps to reduce food waste at home	3.8	3.8
Recycled food packaging	3.4	3.5
Threw away food past the use-by date	3.6	3.2
Composted food scraps	2.8	2.3
Ate fruits and vegetables without washing them	2.8	2.1
Ate rare or undercooked meat	2.5	1.8
Ate raw dough or batter	2.5	1.8

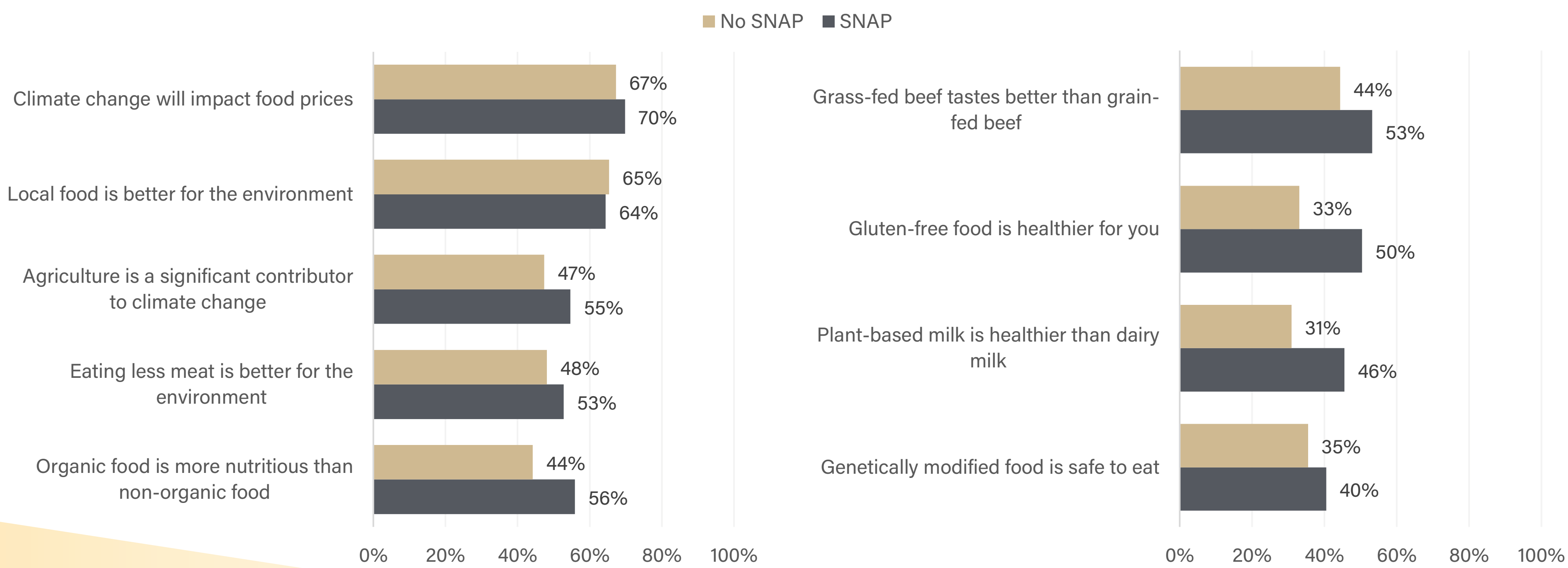
Mean Score	
5	Always
4	Often
3	Sometimes
2	Rarely
1	Never

CONSUMER BELIEFS

What do Americans believe about their food and food system?

Figure 12 summarizes consumer agreement with various statements about the food system. Compared to non-participants, SNAP recipients are more likely to agree with a variety of food and environmental statements — ranging from evidence-based claims to common misconceptions. Further digging shows that 43% of SNAP respondents are under 35, while only 27% of non-SNAP respondents fall into this age group, suggesting that age may play a role in shaping these views. Younger consumers often engage more with food trends and sustainability issues, which could explain their stronger alignment with ideas related to organic nutrition, plant-based diets, and agriculture's environmental impact.

Figure 12. Share of consumers who "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with claims about food by SNAP use, Mar. 2022 - Nov. 2025



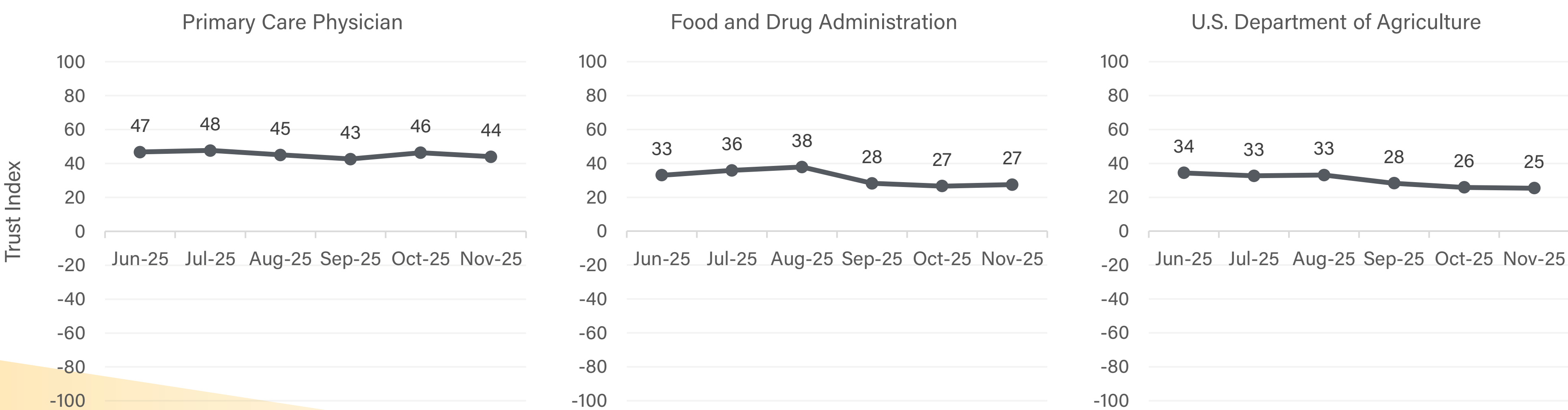
CONSUMER TRUST

Who do Americans trust on topics of food?

Respondents select their most-trusted and least-trusted sources of information about healthy and sustainable food from a list that includes a variety of information sources, such as news networks, government agencies, food companies, personal networks and higher education institutions. Responses are scored and converted to a Trust Index from -100 (least trusted) to 100 (most trusted).[9]

In June 2025, we began allowing respondents to select up to rather than forcing 5 most and least trusted sources to account for respondents who may have neutral opinions of many of these organization. **Figure 13** reveals a shift in the level of trust in government organizations while trust in primary care providers remains relatively stable. While organizations such as the FDA and USDA remain widely trusted by the majority of Americans as sources of information regarding the health and sustainability of our food, recent responses to this question reveal a slight decrease in level of trust in recent months. The slight decline in trust toward government agencies may reflect broader uncertainty during recent federal disruptions, suggesting that external events can influence perceptions of institutional reliability.

Figure 13. Trust index of food-related information, Jun. 2025 - Nov. 2025



ENDNOTES

1 Data were collected from an online opt-in panel maintained by the company Dynata over a four-day period from November 17-20, 2025. The eligible population included U.S. adults ages 18+. A weighting method called iterative proportional fitting (or raking) was applied to ensure a demographically balanced sample by age, sex, race, census region, income, and SNAP participation. Population proportions reflect the most recent complete year of ACS census data (2024). Every respondent from the previous month was recontacted and asked to take the survey again. About 46% of October's sample participated this month, thus the rest of the sample was filled in with a new pool of respondents. Data collection for every survey begins on the third Monday of each month, unless otherwise dictated by holidays or extenuating circumstances. This report is released on the second Wednesday of the following month.

2 Sample size Nov. 2025: SNAP (n=229); No SNAP (n=1,004)
Sample size Jan. 2022 - Nov. 2025: SNAP (n= 12,146); No SNAP (n= 46,194)

3 Descriptions of each attribute:

Nutrition (amount and type of fat, protein, vitamins, etc., are healthy and nourishing)
Environmental impact (production and consumption improve rather than damage environment)
Social responsibility (farmers, processors, retailers, workers, animals and consumers all benefit)
Affordability (food prices are reasonable, fit within your budget, and allow you lots of choices)
Availability (enough safe and desirable food is easy to find and physically accessible)
Taste (flavor and texture in your mouth are pleasing and high quality)

4 High or marginal food security (i.e., food secure): 0-1 reported indications of food-access problems; little indication of change in diet or food intake. Respondents who reported an income above 185% of the federal poverty line were also screened as having high food security. This determination was made according to research by Ahn et al. (2020), which shows that using a modified income-based screening procedure for internet surveys better approximates government estimates of food insecurity. Low food security (i.e., food

ENDNOTES

insecure): 2-4 reported indications of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet; little indication of reduced food intake. Very low food security (i.e., food insecure): 5-6 reported indications of disrupted eating patterns, changes in diet, and reduced food intake.

5 Diaz, J. (2025, October 28). SNAP benefits at risk as government shutdown looms. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2025/10/28/g-s1-95189/snap-food-stamps-government-shutdown-november

6 Lara-Breitinger KM et al. Validation of a Brief Dietary Questionnaire for Use in Clinical Practice: Mini-EAT (Eating Assessment Tool). J Am Heart Assoc. 2023 Jan 3;12(1):e025064. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.121.025064. Epub 2022 Dec 30. PMID: 36583423; PMCID: PMC9973598.

7 Food at home (FAH) refers to food sales meant for home or off-site consumption and the value of donations and non-market acquisitions, which is acquired from outlets such as grocery stores, convenience stores, direct sales, etc. Food away from home (FAFH) refers to food sales meant for immediate consumption, federal food programs, and food furnished as an ancillary activity, which is acquired from outlets such as restaurants, bars, schools, etc.

8 The CFI question associated with this response summary specifically asks about future and past grocery prices. The BLS CPI estimate of inflation therefore reflects food-at-home (FAH).

9 Trust questions were not fielded in the Consumer Food Insights survey from October 2022 - December 2022. Starting June 2025, respondents were allowed to select up to 5 options for "most" and "least" trusted.