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CONSUMER FOOD INSIGHTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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.

In this issue, we break down the CFI results according to Body Mass Index (BMI) groups using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) classification of overweight (BMI ≥25) and non-overweight (BMI <25).[2] Additional questions included in the report describe consumers' diet-related plans and changes in food consumption in 2026.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM JANUARY

- Most American consumers report high diet satisfaction, with 85% reporting they are "very happy" or "rather happy" with their diets.
- Consumers self-classified as overweight are more satisfied with their diets than consumers that are not overweight.
- Consumers self-classified as overweight (BMI ≥ 25) tend to be less food secure.
- Food at Home (FAH) inflation was 2.4% over the last 12 months, although consumers perceive food inflation near 2 points higher.
- Average diet quality remains well below the healthy diet thresholds.
- 29% of adults are planning to diet in 2026, with most of those (61%) planning to reduce consumption of processed foods.

CPI FOOD +0.5*
2.4%

FOOD INSECURITY +1*
15%

FOOD SPENDING -4
$201/WEEK

GROCERY STOCKOUTS +1
9%

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

2026 DIET & NUTRITION

What plans do people have for their diet in the new year?

This month, we asked respondents if they had any 2026 New Year's resolutions related to food or nutrition. Of the 1,210 respondents, 29% (n=347) responded "yes". Breaking the responses down, we see that 29% of consumers self-classified as "overweight" have a food or nutrition related resolution compared to 28% who are self-classified as "non-overweight" (**Figures 1 and 2**). Of the share of consumers with a New Year's resolution related to food or nutrition, the top resolutions provided in an open-ended response largely concerned eating healthier – e.g., reducing or increasing the consumption of certain foods like sugar or vegetables – and eating healthy (**Figure 3**). Words like "weight" and "lose" occured more frequently in the resolutions of consumers self-classified as overweight. [Similar diet and nutrition questions can be found in Volume 3 Issue 1 for comparison.]

Figure 1. Share of Consumers Who Have Food or Nutrition-related New Year's Resolutions: Aggregated, Jan. 2026

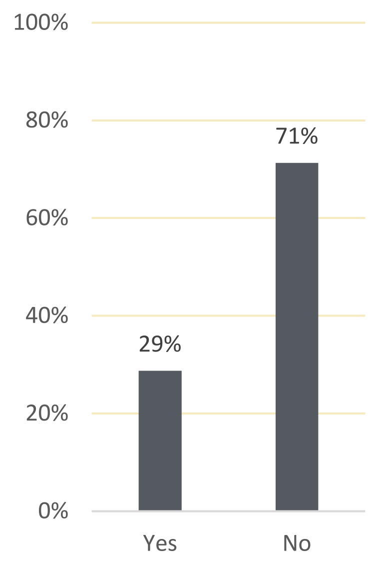
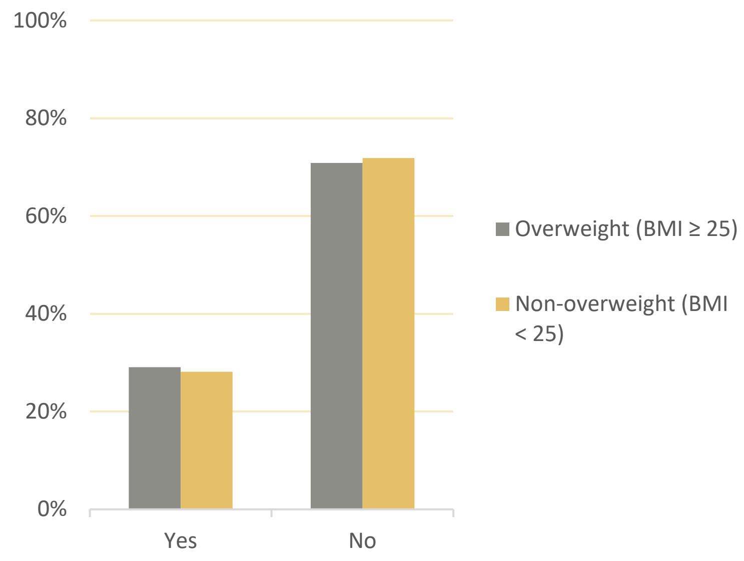


Figure 2. Share of Consumers Who Have Food or Nutrition-related New Year's Resolutions: by BMI Group, Jan. 2026



2026 DIET & NUTRITION

Figure 3. Top Words Included in Food-related New Year's Resolutions for 2026 by BMI Group (5+ occurances), Jan. 2026

Overweight (BMI ≥ 25)

Non-overweight (BMI < 25)

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2026 DIET & NUTRITION

What plans do people have for their diet in the new year?

Additionally, we asked respondents to indicate what the primary motivations behind their food or nutrition-related New Year's resolutions are, asking the respondent to select up to three. The top three motivations include improving current and long-term health and losing weight (**Figure 4**). We further break down the response distribution by BMI group (**Figure 5**). Looking at the biggest differences betwee the groups, we see that the majority of overweight consumers are motivated to lose weight (49%) while more non-overweight consumers will use muscle building as a primary motivator (37%).

Figure 4. Share of Consumers with Resolutions who Selected the Following Motivations, Jan. 2026

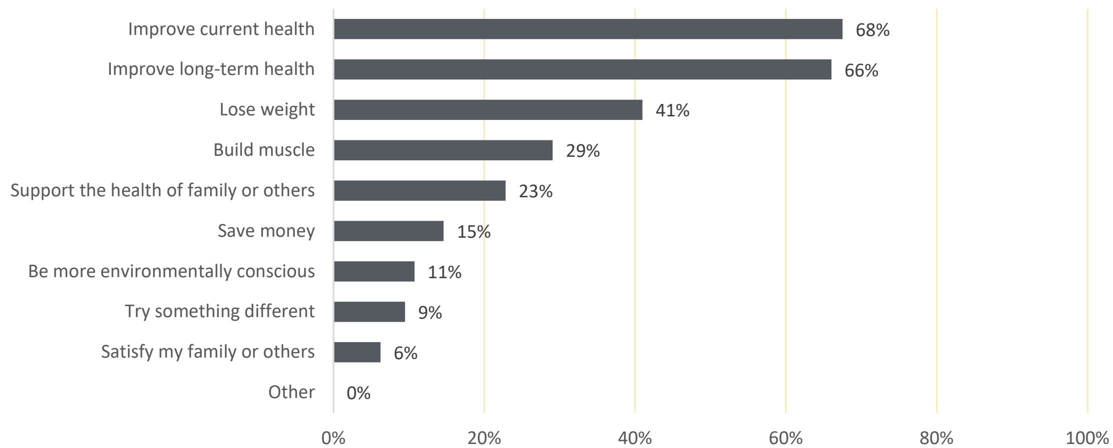
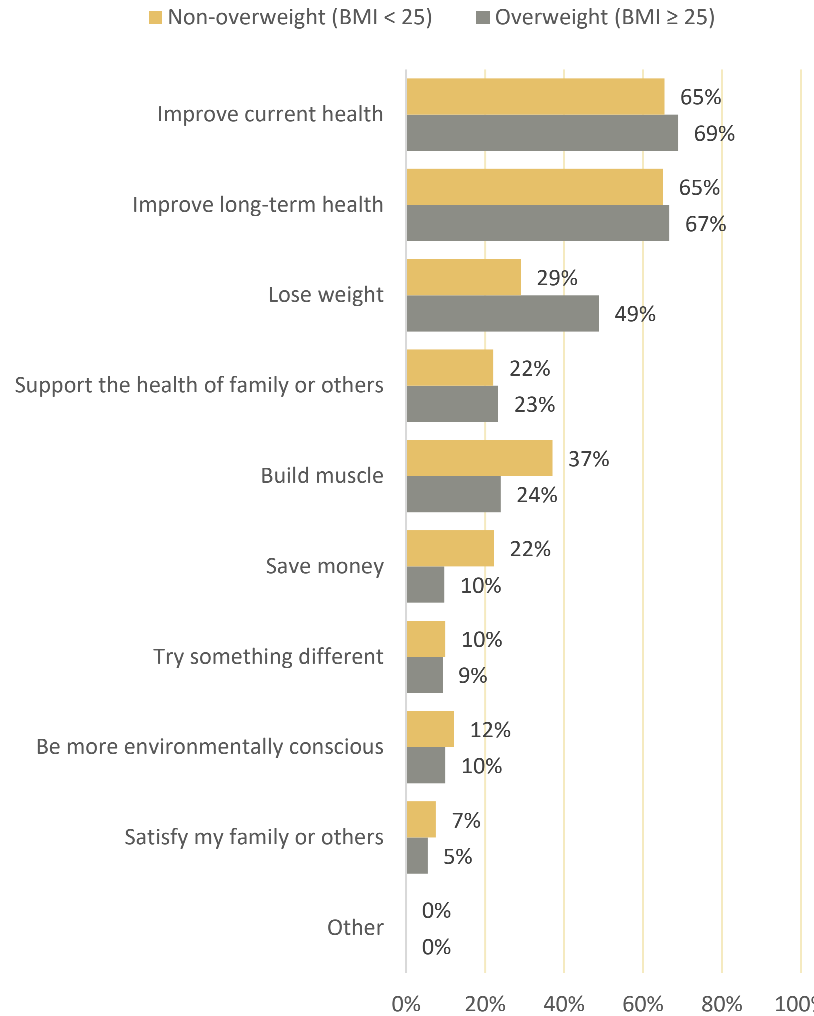


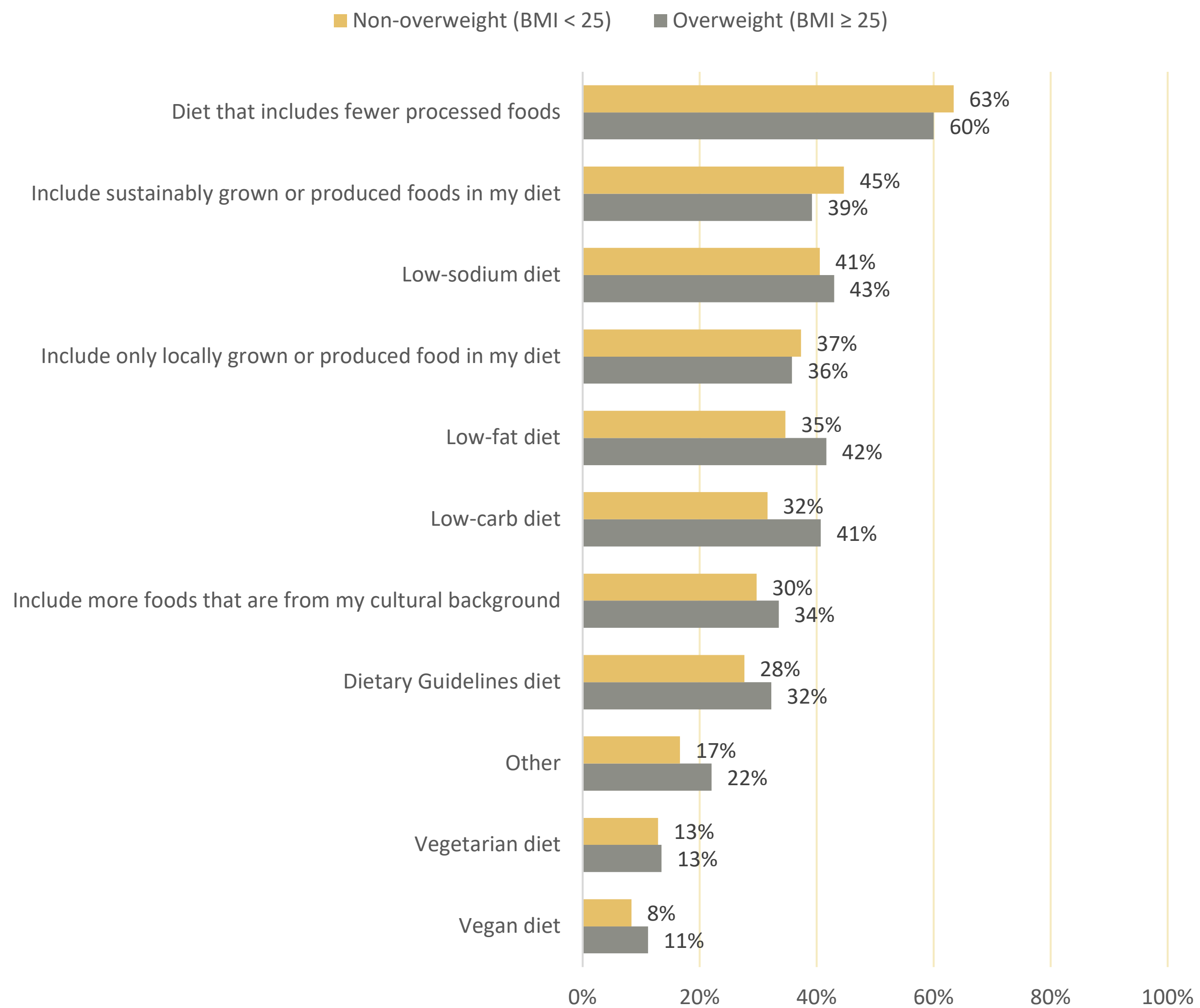
Figure 5. Share of Consumers with Resolutions who Selected the Following Motivations by BMI Group, Jan. 2026



What specific diets do people plan to follow in the new year?

Figure 6 summarizes the proportion of consumers who plan to follow a specific diet in the new year by BMI group (**Figure 6**). The response summary focuses on those who had indicated they plan to make changes to their diet and health in the new year. We see that the majority of consumers plan to limit processed foods in their diets while fewer plan to follow more alternative diets, such as vegetarian and vegan. A larger share of overweight consumers plan on following a low-carb or low-fat diet compared to non-overweight consumers.

Figure 6. Share of Consumers who Plan to Follow a Specific Diet in 2026 by BMI Group, Jan. 2026



2026 DIET & NUTRITION

What obstacles do consumers anticipate facing when changing consumption?

Finally, we ask consumers to assess how healthy their overall diet is on a simple 5-point Likert scale from "poor" to "excellent". This response summary reflects the entire January sample. Overall, we see that most consumers believe their diet is "good" or better (**Figure 7**). We see an interesting correlation when separating consumers based on whether or not they have a 2026 food-related resolution (**Figure 8)**. Consumers who have "excellent" (45%) and oppositely "poor" (35%) diets are more likely to have set a resolution for 2026. Notably, we see a positive correlation between awareness of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and diet perception, potentially showing the importance of the public promotion of this guidance to the health of American consumers (**Figure 9**). Specifically, we asked consumers about their awareness of the new USDA DGAs just released in January 2026.

Figure 7. "In general, how healthy is your overall diet? Would you say it is..." , Jan. 2026

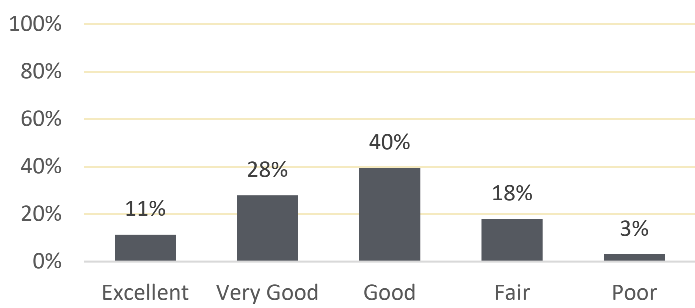


Figure 8. New Year Dietary Resolution by Self-assessed Diet Health, Jan. 2026

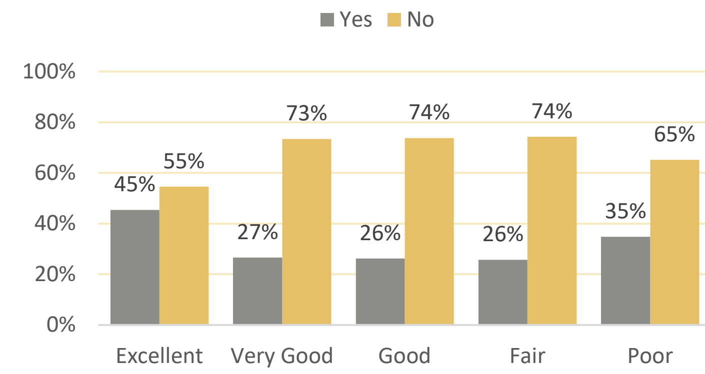
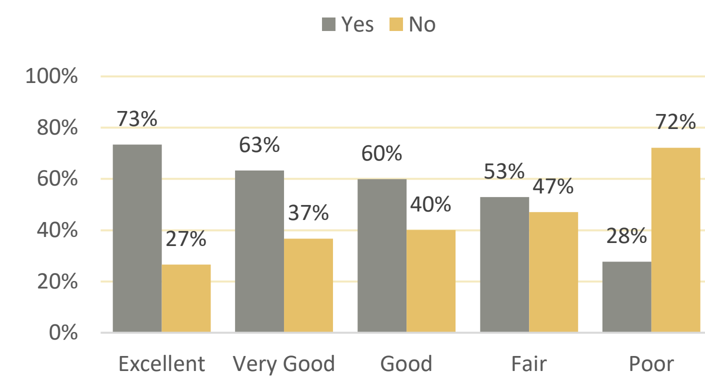


Figure 9. DGA Awareness by Self-assessed Diet Health, Jan. 2026



2026 DIET & NUTRITION

What do consumers think has changed from myPlate to the new USDA food pyramid?

As a follow-up to the previous questions, we asked respondents look at the old myPlate DGAs and the new pyramid released in January 2026 and respond with what has changed from one guideline to the next (**Figure 10).** Consumers note words like "grains," "protein," "vegetables," and "fruits", with an emphasis on "changed," "better," "new," and "less" as highly repeated words.

Figure 10. Top Words Included When Asked Differences in myPlate and new DGA, Jan. 2026

FOOD SATISFACTION

Are Americans satisfied with their diets?

Respondents score their own diet on a 0-10 scale, with the top of that scale (10) representing their ideal diet.[3] Scores are categorized as thriving (7-10), struggling (5-6) or suffering (0-4). A majority of Americans (68%) give themselves a score in the "thriving" range of this well-being index (**Figure 11**). The rate of consumer diet happiness also remains high, with 85% of American adults reporting being either "rather happy" or "very happy" with their diets (**Figure 12**). The share of consumers who are unhappy with their diets (14%) is similar to the food insecurity rate.

We observe a surprising correlation between BMI group and diet-well being (**Figure 13**). Of those consumers who are self-classified overweight, 65% are "suffering" when it comes to their ideal diet, compared to 73% of respondents who are non-overweight. Of those consumers who self-classified as non-overweight, 9% are "thriving" in their ideal diet, compared to 15% of respondents who are overweight. Though consumers self-classified as being overweight, many are more happy with their diets than those consumers who self-classified as non-overweight.

Figure 11. Diet Well-being Index (0-10 Scale), Jan. 2022 - Jan. 2026

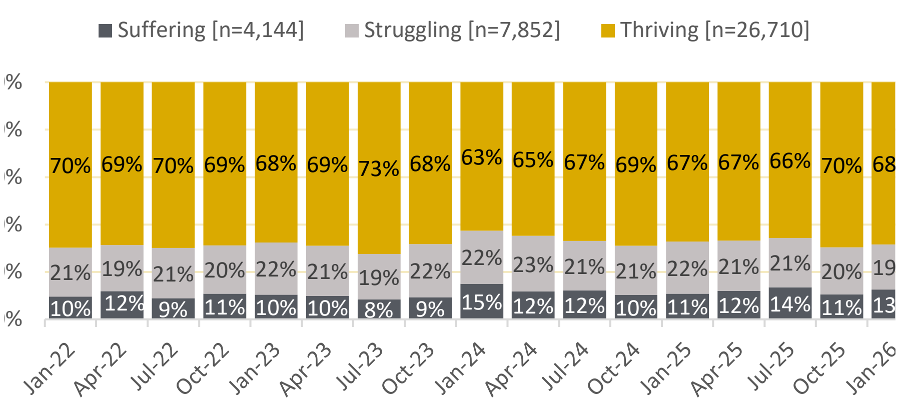
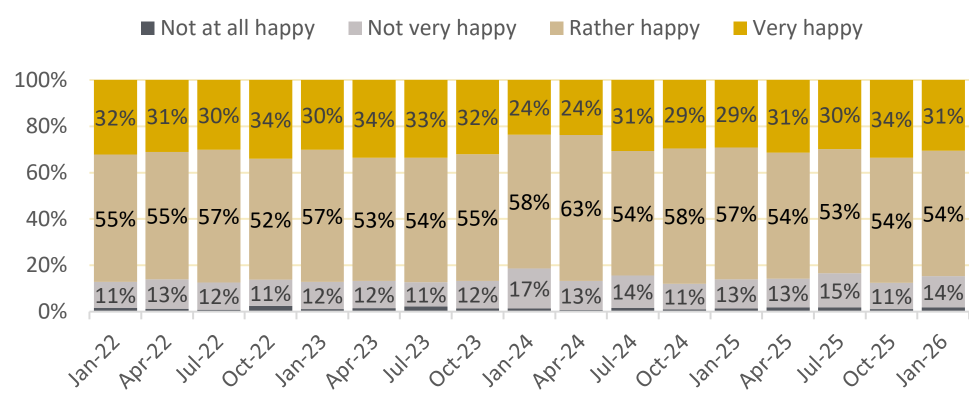


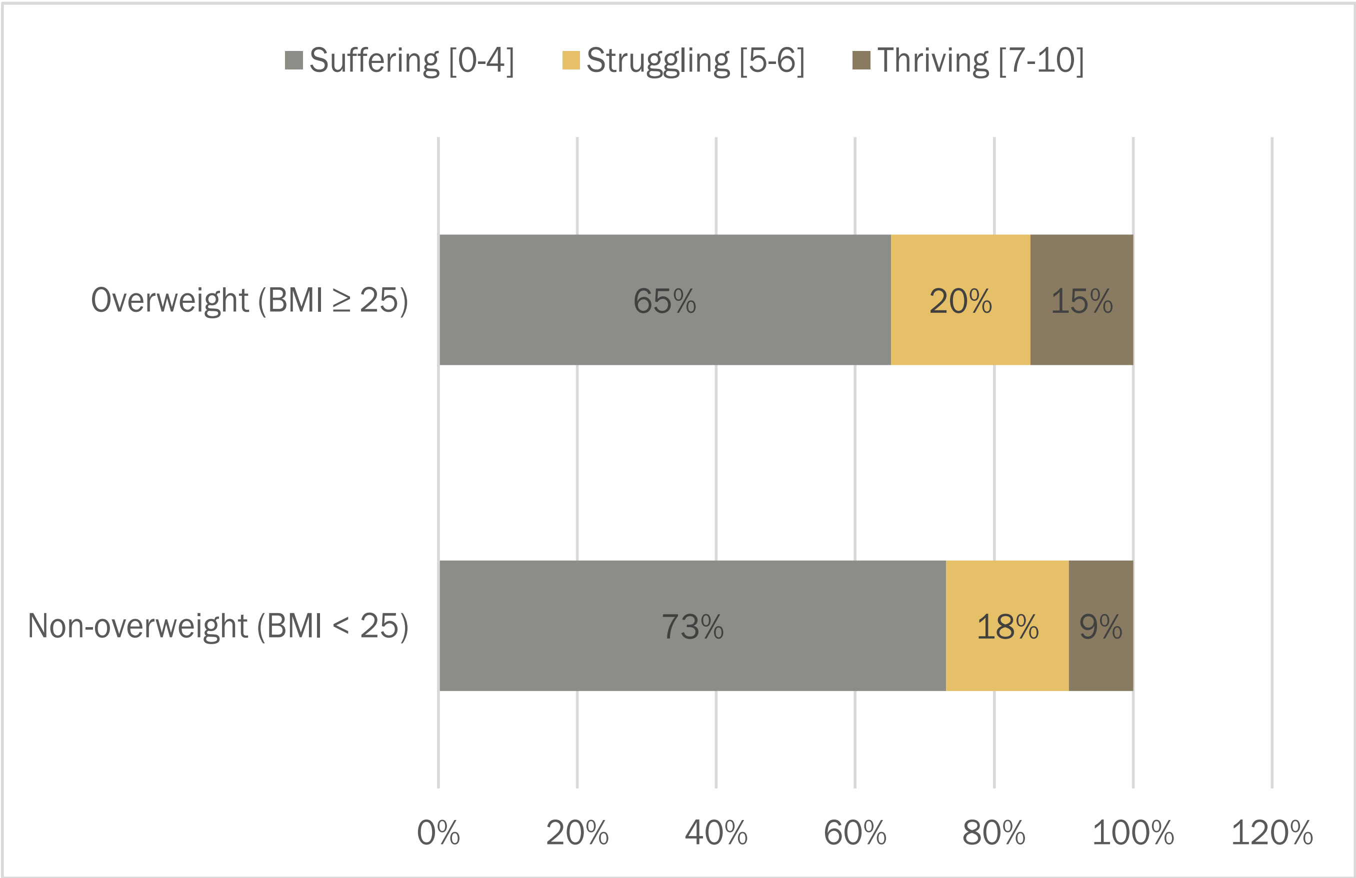
Figure 12. Rate of Consumer Diet Happiness, Jan. 2022 - Jan. 2026



FOOD SATISFACTION

How does food satisfaction differ between overweight and non-overweight consumers?

Figure 13. Diet Well-being Index (0-10 Scale) by BMI group, Jan. 2026



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 14**). On average, consumers reported spending about $131/week on groceries (food at home — FAH) and $70/week on restaurants and other carryout (food away from home — FAFH) in January.[4]

Consumer estimates of and expectations for past and future grocery prices both decreased again slightly from December to January (**Figure 15**).[5] The official CPI estimate of year-over-year food inflation inreased slightly this month (2.4%), up 0.5 percentage points from last month. Consumers' perception of food inflation is near two times the CPI, suggesting a continued consistent perception gap between consumer sentiment regarding food prices and official estimates.

Figure 14. Weekly household food expenditures, Jan. 2022 - Jan. 2026

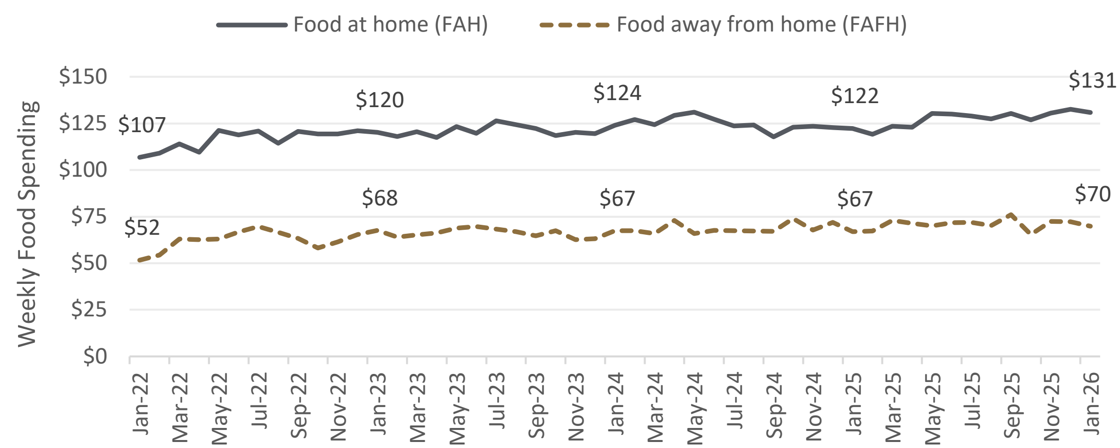
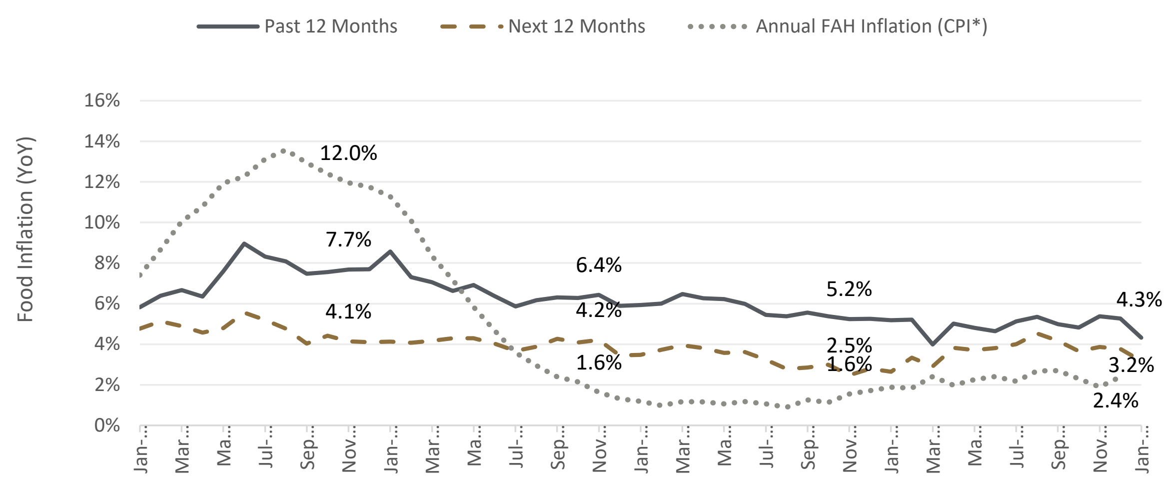


Figure 15. Consumer estimates of grocery price inflation compared to gov. estimate, Jan. 2022 - Jan. 2026



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

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 15.0% in January (**Figure 16**).[6] This represents a 1-point increase from last month and 1-point decrease from November 2025. The food insecurity rate in January 2026 is 0.7 percentage points higher than it was in January 2025.

Figure 17 dives further into the data by showing the average annual food insecurity rate by body mass index (BMI) for January 2026. Those who self-classified under the CDC's definition of "overweight" tend to be more food insecure (16%) than those who are not (13%). This relationship between food insecurity and obesity has been demonstrated in our past surveys (see January 2024) and other studies and represents a complex situation that is not fully understood.[7]

Figure 16. Rate of household food insecurity in the last 30 days, Jan. 2022 - Jan. 2026

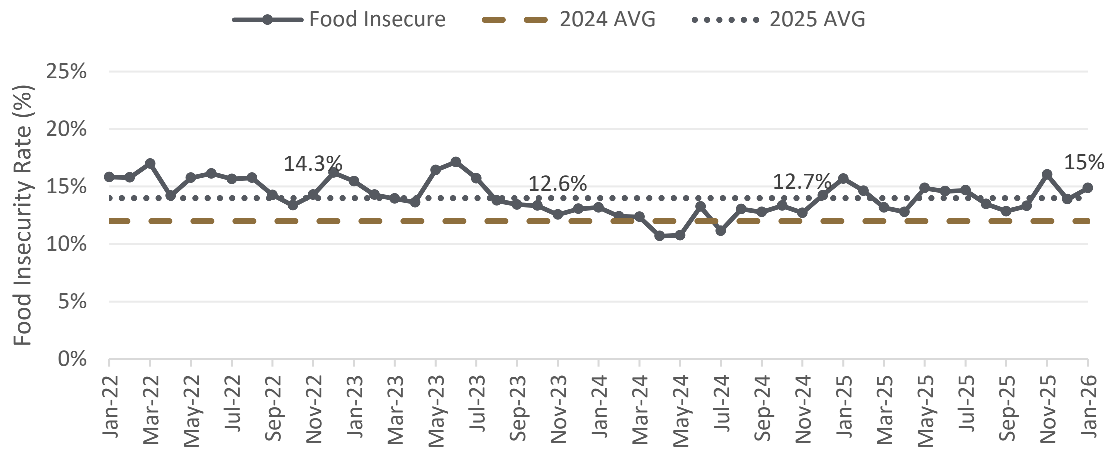
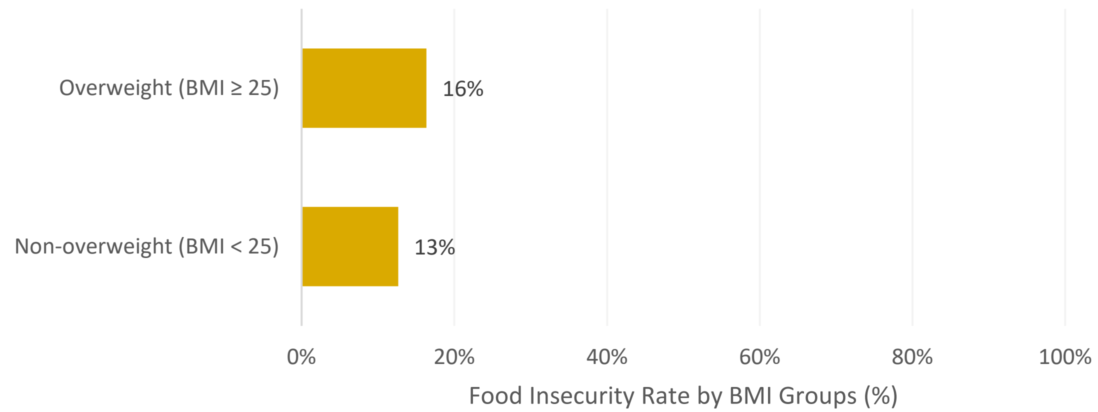


Figure 17. Rate of household food insecurity in the last 30 days by BMI, Jan. 2026



DIET QUALITY

What is the quality of the American adult diet?

Utilizing a nine-item questionnaire known as the Mini-EAT Tool[8], we estimate consumers' self-reported diet quality in the last 30 days.

Figure 18 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 61.9 on this scale. This average is down just slighly from December (62.3). In January, 15.08%, 38.39% and 46.54% are classified as "healthy", "intermediate", and "unhealthy", respectively.

Interestingly, those who self-classified as overweight and those who self-classified non-overweight have less than 1 point higher Mini-EAT score (62.3 and 61.5) (**Figure 19**). Therefore, overweight and non-overweight individuals still fall well below the healthy diet threshold of 69. This suggests that other factors are at play when it comes to the relationship between diet and weight.

Figure 18. Purdue's American Diet Quality Index (PADQI), Feb. 2024 - Jan. 2026

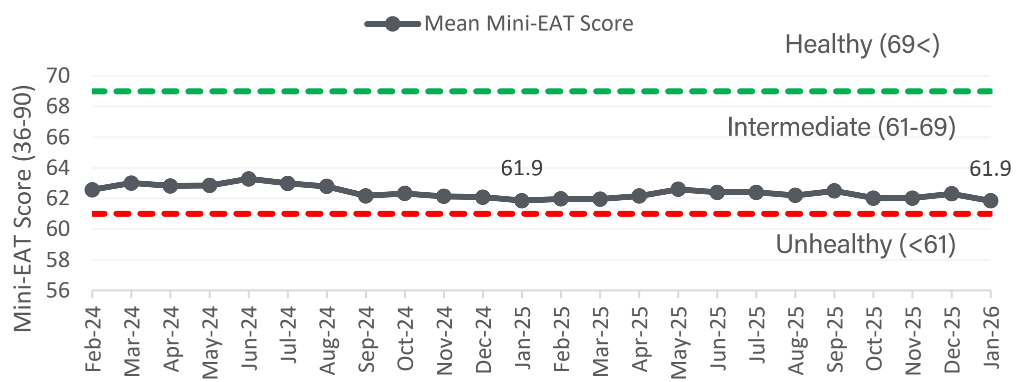
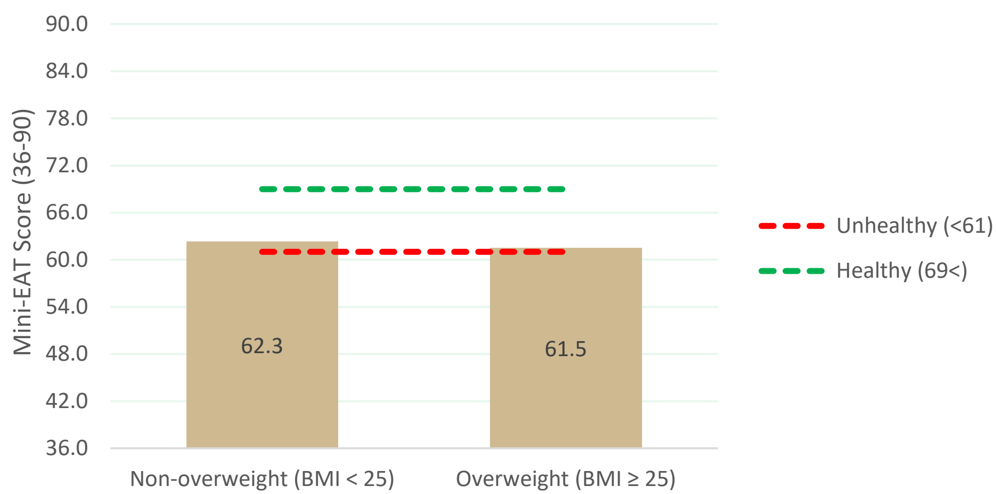


Figure 19. Mini-EAT diet quality classification by BMI, Jan. 2026



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 20**). We see subtle differences in food behaviors between overweight and non-overweight consumers.

Non-overweight consumers report checking nutrition labels before buying new foods and buying organic foods over non-organic foods slightly more than overweight consumers. However, largely, there is not much variation between consumer shopping and eating habits in non-overweight and overweight populations.

Figure 20. Frequency of consumer shopping and eating habits by BMI, Jan. 2026

	Non-Overweight	Overweight
Chose generic foods over brand-name foods	3.2	3.3
Chose local foods over non-local foods	3.1	3.1
Chose wild-caught fish over farm-raised fish	3.0	3.0
Chose grass-fed beef over conventional beef	2.9	2.9
Chose cage-free eggs over conventional eggs	2.9	2.9
Chose organic foods over non-organic foods	2.8	2.6
Chose plant-based proteins over animal proteins	2.4	2.4
Checked the use-by/sell-by date at the store	4.0	4.0
Checked the nutrition label before buying new foods	3.4	3.3
Checked for natural or clean labels	3.0	3.0
Checked where my food originated	2.9	2.8
Checked for food recalls	2.9	2.9
Checked for GMO ingredients	2.8	2.7
Checked how my food was produced	2.7	2.7
Took steps to reduce food waste at home	3.9	3.7
Recycled food packaging	3.5	3.6
Threw away food past the use-by date	3.3	3.3
Composted food scraps	2.4	2.5
Ate fruits and vegetables without washing them	2.2	2.3
Ate rare or undercooked meat	1.8	2.0
Ate raw dough or batter	1.8	1.9

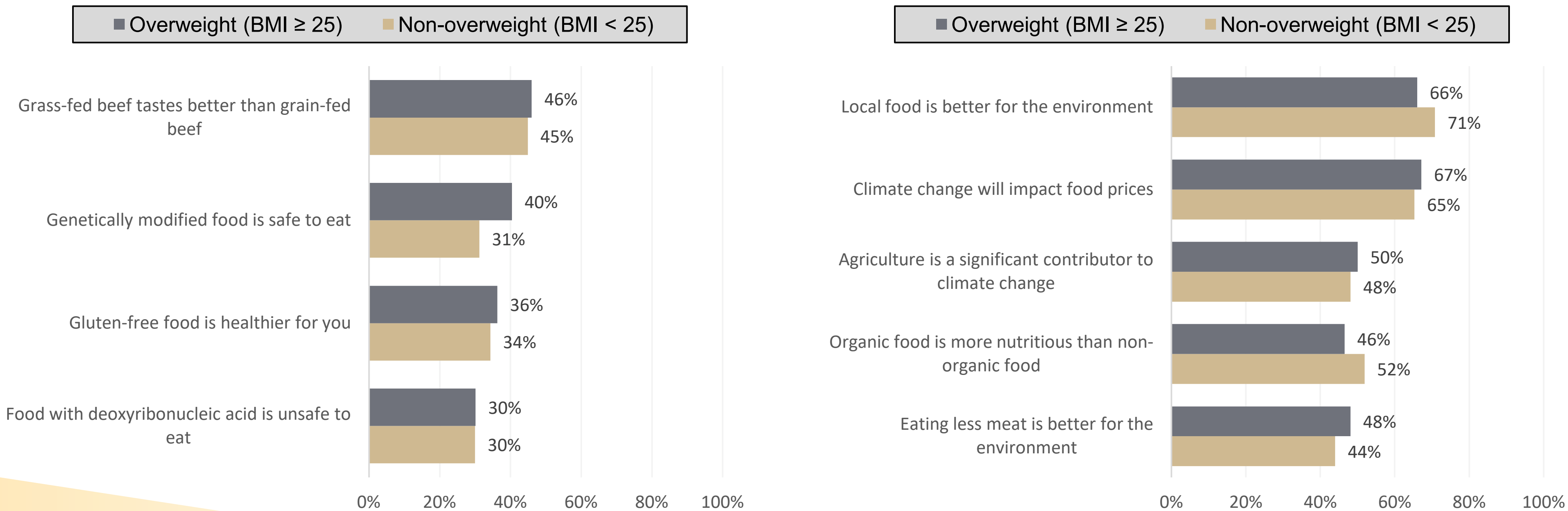
Mean Score	
5	Always
4	Often
3	Sometimes
2	Rarely
1	Never

CONSUMER BELIEFS

What do Americans believe about their food and food system?

Figure 21 summarizes consumer agreement with various statements about the food system by overweight and non-overweight consumers. Agreement varies between non-overweight and overweight consumers on topics like genetically modified foods being safe to eat, local food being better for the environment, and organic food being more nutritious. On topics like the healthfulness of gluten-free products, grass-fed beef and the role of agriculture in climate change, overweight and non-overweight consumers are more aligned.

Figure 21. Share of consumers who "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with claims about food by BMI, Jan. 2026



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]

Figures 22 and **23** reveal distinct patterns in consumer trust across food-related information sources, by self-classified BMI. Consumers self-classified as non-overweight have more trust in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (32.0) than those who are overweight (16.9). Similarly, consumers self-classified as non-overweight have more trust in the American Medical Association (AMA) (41) than those who are overweight (32.6). Likewise, both overweight and non-overweight consumers have similar distrust for CNN, Joe Rogan and Fox News.

Figure 22. Positive Trust index of food-related information, Dec. 2025

ENDNOTES

1 Data were collected from an online opt-in panel maintained by the company Dynata over a five-day period from January 19-23, 2026. 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 48% of December'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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Defining Adult Overweight & Obesity. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/basics/adult-defining.html

Consumers self-report their height (in.) and weight (lbs.) which is used to calculate BMI: [weight / (height^2)] * 703

Sample size Jan. 2026: Total Respondents(n=1,210); Overweight Respondents(n=722); Non-overweight Respondents(n=488)

3 This scale is based on the Cantril Scale used in Gallup's World Poll to assess well-being and happiness around the world. Thus, we use the same validated conceptual labels — thriving, struggling, and suffering — to group responses.

4 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.

5 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).

6 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 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.

7 Franklin B, Jones A, Love D, Puckett S, Macklin J, White-Means S. Exploring mediators of food insecurity and obesity: a review of recent

ENDNOTES

literature. J Community Health. 2012 Feb;37(1):253-64. doi: 10.1007/s10900-011-9420-4. PMID: 216
8 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.
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.