CONSUMERS GIVE 'THUMBS UP' TO SUGAR IN LATEST SURVEY

In a 2021 survey, 1,500 U.S. consumers were asked about their understanding of and feelings towards sugar and sweeteners, with particular attention to how the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted them. Comparisons to previous surveys included where data are available.

MAJORITY OF CONSUMERS BELIEVE SUGAR IS NATURAL

80% OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS AGREE THAT "REAL SUGAR" IS NATURALLY OCCURRING.

The majority of respondents also agree with these statements:

- Sugar is easy to identify on ingredient lists
- Sugar comes from plants
- Sugar plays a role in a balanced diet
- Sugar is natural
- Sugar helps food taste good
- Food with sugar is a treat and makes me happy

In 2018, only 29% of consumers categorized "table sugar" as naturally occurring. This increased to 54% in 2021, suggesting people are more familiar with sugar's origin.

CONSUMERS ARE CONFUSED ABOUT HOW MUCH SUGAR CAN BE INCLUDED IN A BALANCED DIET

75% say it's important to know the dietary recommendations for daily sugar intake.

THE CURRENT DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS RECOMMENDS LIMITING ADDED SUGARS TO LESS THAN 10% OF TOTAL CALORIES PER DAY. FOR A 2000 CALORIE DIET THIS EQUALS 50 GRAMS OR 12 TEASPOONS.

Yet, 3 in 4 consumers think they can have fewer than 40 grams per day AND 40% of consumers are more confident about managing their sugar intake when they learn about the recommendations.

CONSUMERS ARE READING PACKAGES

80% of consumers report they regularly or sometimes read the nutrition information on the front or the back of packages.

- 80% use nutrition claims on the front of packages
- 80% use the Nutrition Facts label
- 79% use the ingredients list

CONSUMERS STRUGGLE TO IDENTIFY SWEETENERS

82% OF CONSUMERS avoid artificial sweeteners in children's cereal.

MORE THAN 70% OF CONSUMERS say it's a priority to avoid artificial sweeteners in these products:

- Yogurt
- Canned fruit
- Peanut butter
- Bread

53% are confident they can identify sweeteners within ingredient lists.

47% are confident they can identify if a sweetener is naturally occurring or if it's artificial.

However, when presented with a list of food additives, FEWER THAN 4 IN 10 correctly identified those that might be used as sweetening ingredients.

Consumer research conducted by the Sugar Association in March 2021. Visit sugar.org for more information on sugar.
Consumers rank sugar higher than artificial sweeteners for almost all of the attributes they identify as important for foods and beverages they purchase.

**CONSUMERS PREFER SUGAR TO ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS**

Consumers have plans to make changes to their diets post-COVID. Here are the diet elements consumers are prioritizing reducing:

- **Sugar**: 57%
- **Regular Soda**: 46%
- **Artificial Sweeteners**: 40%
- **Frozen Dinners**: 38%
- **Diet Soda**: 33%
- **Alcohol**: 32%
- **Meat**: 22%

**ABOUT HALF OF CONSUMERS MODERATE THEIR SUGAR INTAKE; ONE QUARTER LIMIT FULLY**

Majority of consumers describe their sugar intake as limited.

- **Limit fully; generally avoid**: 27%
- **Limit, but ok in moderation**: 18%
- **Don’t track closely unless I’m having a lot**: 13%
- **Don’t pay attention**: 7%

75% of respondents look to avoid one or more ingredients in their diet. Compared to our 2018 survey, sugar has moved from number 1 to number 8 on this list. Here is how other factors rank:

- **HFCS**: 42%
- **Sugar substitutes**: 39%
- **Alcohol**: 37%
- **Trans fat**: 33%
- **Added sugars**: 32%
- **Processed ingredients**: 29%
- **Saturated fat**: 28%
- **Sugar**: 27%
- **Salt/sodium**: 25%
- **Cholesterol**: 24%
- **Total fat**: 24%
- **Carbohydrates**: 22%
- **Calories**: 17%

**CONSUMERS USE VARIETY OF TACTICS TO REDUCE SUGAR**

NEARLY 3 IN 4 consumers monitor their intake of sugar or added sugars. When presented with four approaches to reducing sugar or added sugars intake, choosing to consume the regular product less often was the most popular among survey participants.

- **consume the products I want, just less often**: 61%
- **consume the products I want, just in smaller portion sizes**: 57%
- **look for alternatives with less sugar, but not necessarily zero sugar**: 58%
- **look for zero-sugar alternatives**: 46%

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