



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

AN EXPLORATION OF FOOD
INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITIES

HEALTHY EATING & DIET

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Food for Thought: An exploration of Food Industry opportunities

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Healthy Eating & Diet

In this report, we'll delve into how consumers are preparing their meals and how this has been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We'll uncover what trends are shaping the food and beverage industry, and how consumers are reacting to ensure companies can make the most of these growing opportunities.

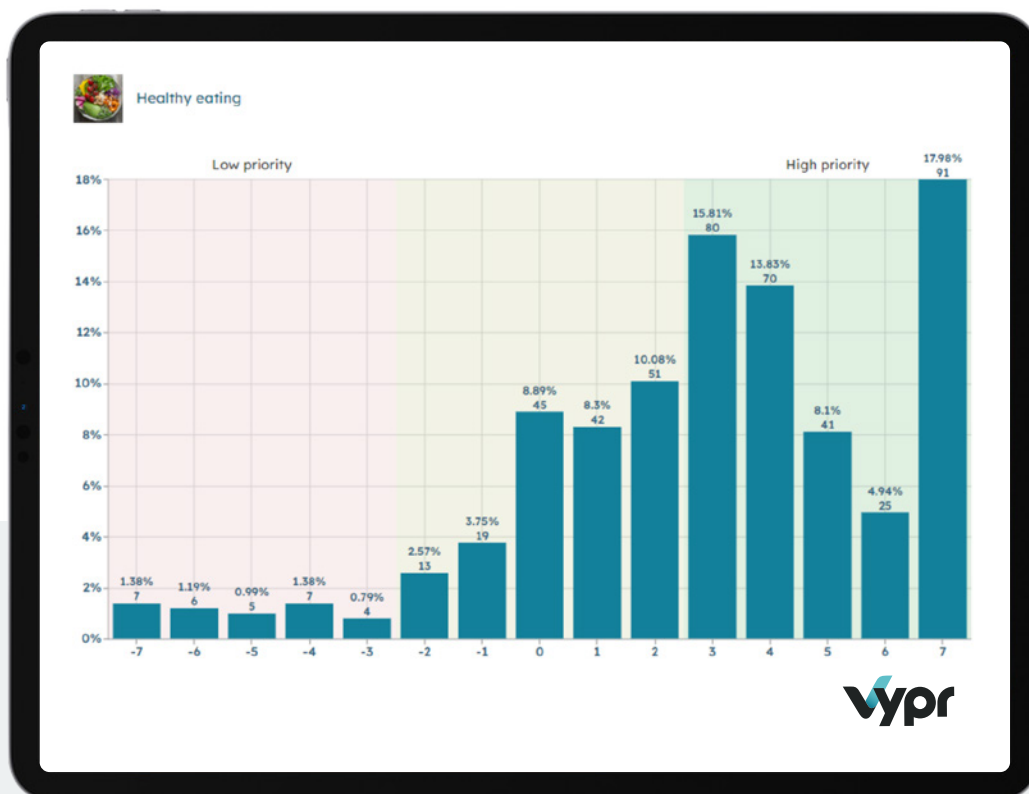
Health-Conscious Consumers

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of healthy eating.

As seen on the Vykert graph below, about 61% of UK consumers place healthy eating as a high priority in their lives, and very few as a low priority.

Grocery Trader Report

How much of a priority is healthy eating in your daily life?



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Healthy Eating & Diet

When looking at the main priorities for consumers right now, value for money comes out on top quite predictably, but it's evident that most of the population is trying to eat somewhat healthily.

What are your MAIN priorities when it comes to food shopping for you / your family?

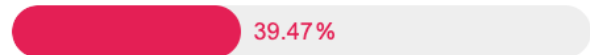
Value for money



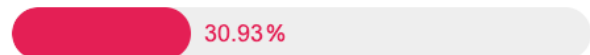
Taste



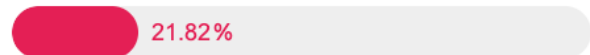
Best quality



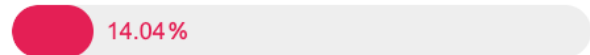
Healthy eating / nutrition / low fat sugar salt



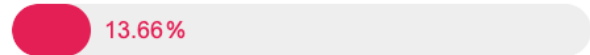
Convenience / familiar products



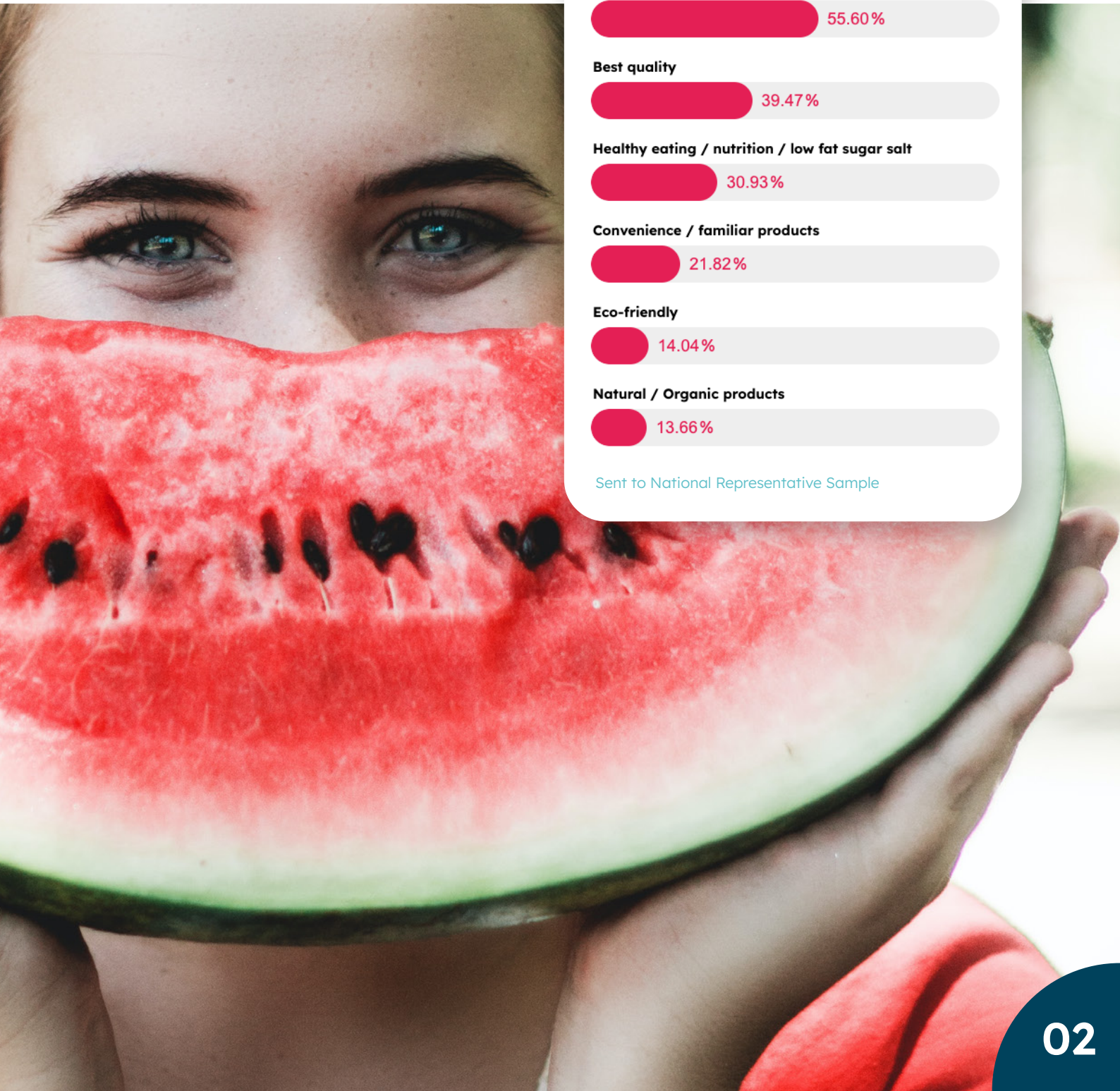
Eco-friendly



Natural / Organic products



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Healthy Eating & Diet

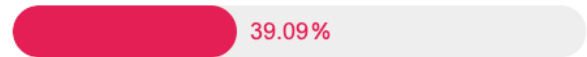
Though consumers are interested in healthy eating, more than half say they are not eating healthily enough at the moment, creating concerns for many.

Would you currently say you eat healthily enough?

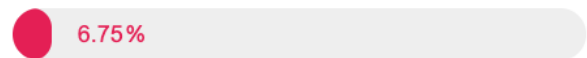
No - I would like to more



Yes I do



No - I don't care about healthy eating



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As consumers begin caring more about their diets, not only due to personal values but also campaign pushes by external forces like the Government and local media, it's essential to step up and take hold of this opportunity.

To start, companies can help by addressing consumer concerns. Looking at the barriers below will help form a picture of what currently prevents consumers from eating more healthily.



Barriers to Healthy-eating

Consumers that find eating more healthy challenging say they're struggling mostly because of the cost of this (as 45% voted).

They also don't enjoy the taste of healthier products. This is especially difficult for those with families that find it hard to appease everyone in the household with what one comically described as 'rabbit food'. Here, as an example, companies can help solve this problem by developing innovative and creative products that generate positive sentiments, to win favour with not just individuals, but families too.

See more barriers to healthy-eating voted for in the graphic on this page.



“The costs have extortionately increased which now limits the foods I can afford. I am trying to lose weight and keep to a healthy eating plan, but I don't know how when the processed and fatty foods are cheaper. To eat healthy I have to cut back on other essentials such as heat and lighting”

- Female aged 45-54

“We can't all agree on a choice and as most meals are family meals it's hard to find something everyone likes and can agree on, so we default to ready meals which are generally less healthy or unaffordable at the top end”

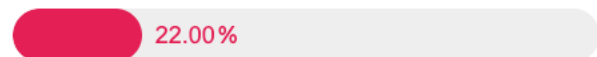
- Female aged 55-64

What might be stopping you from eating more healthy? (select all that apply)

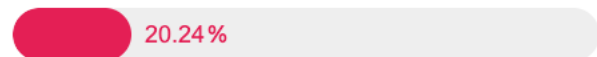
The cost of healthy food



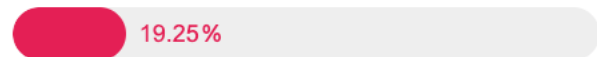
I already eat healthily



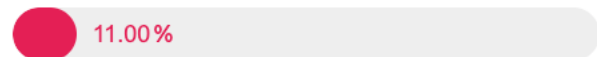
The taste of healthy food



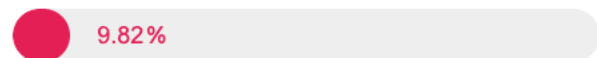
Busy lifestyle / convenience of alternatives



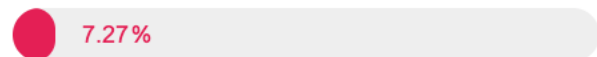
Lack of access to healthy options



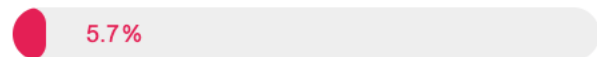
Lack of knowledge



Medical conditions that restrict diet



I'm not concerned about eating healthy



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Barriers to Healthy-eating

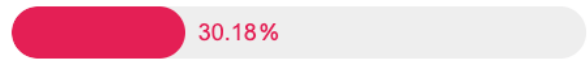
Though many struggle with healthy eating, one way most manage to add nutrients to their diets is through fruit and vegetables. Popular and eaten frequently by most, let's explore some purchasing behaviours below.

How often do you buy fruits / vegetables?

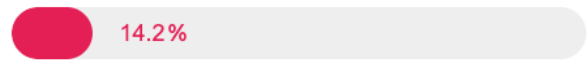
Very often



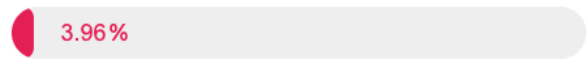
Often



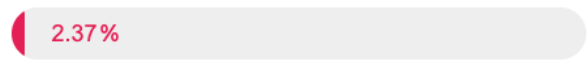
Sometimes



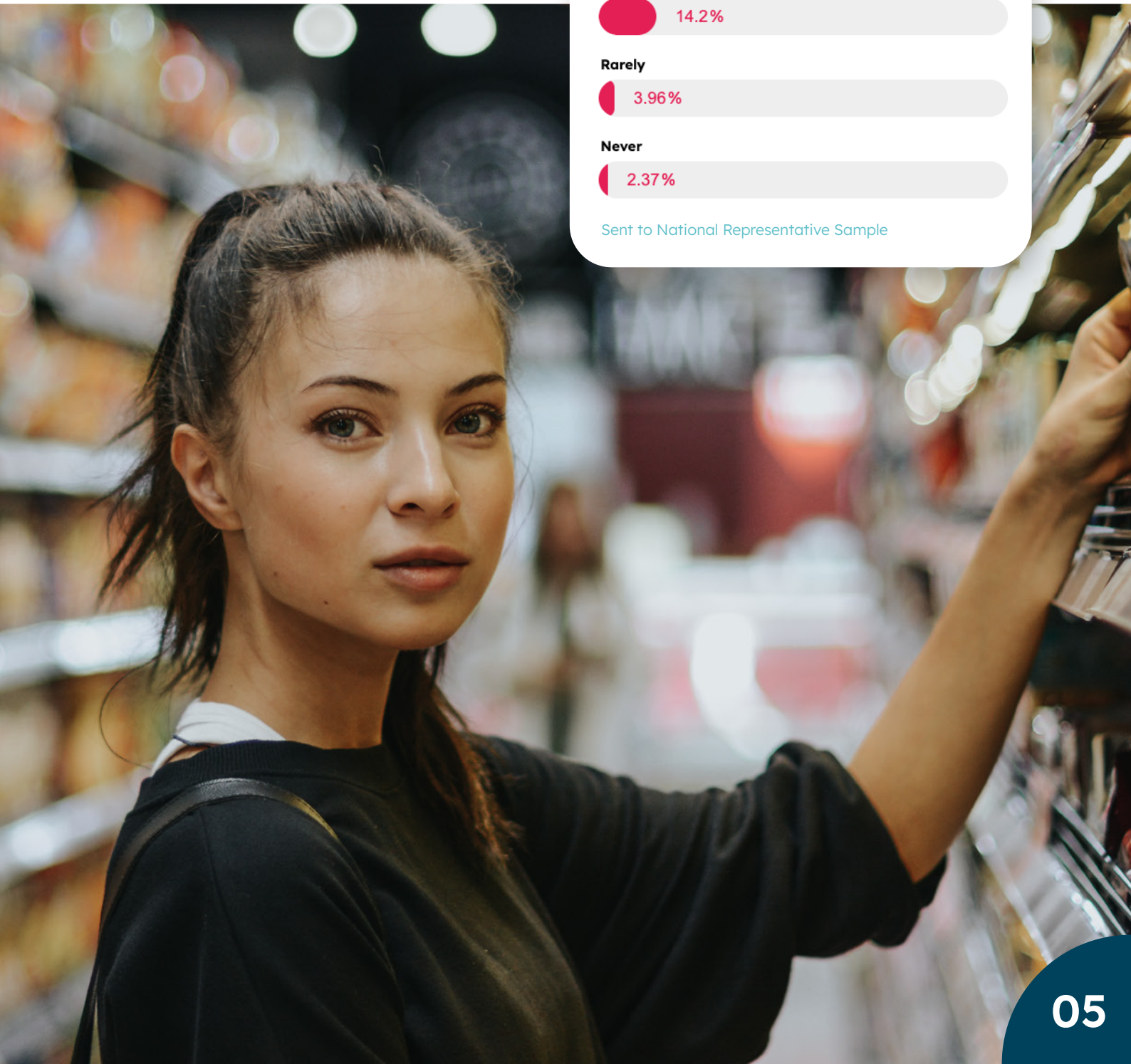
Rarely



Never



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Quality Matters Most

When we asked consumers for the **single** most important factor to them when purchasing fruit and veg, we saw that quality / freshness won by quite a bit, even more than cost.

What is MOST important to you when deciding what fruit and veg to purchase?

Freshness / quality

37.13%

Price - best value

24.75%

Taste

14.75%

Habits - stick to what I always buy

5.89%

Organic / natural produce

5.11%

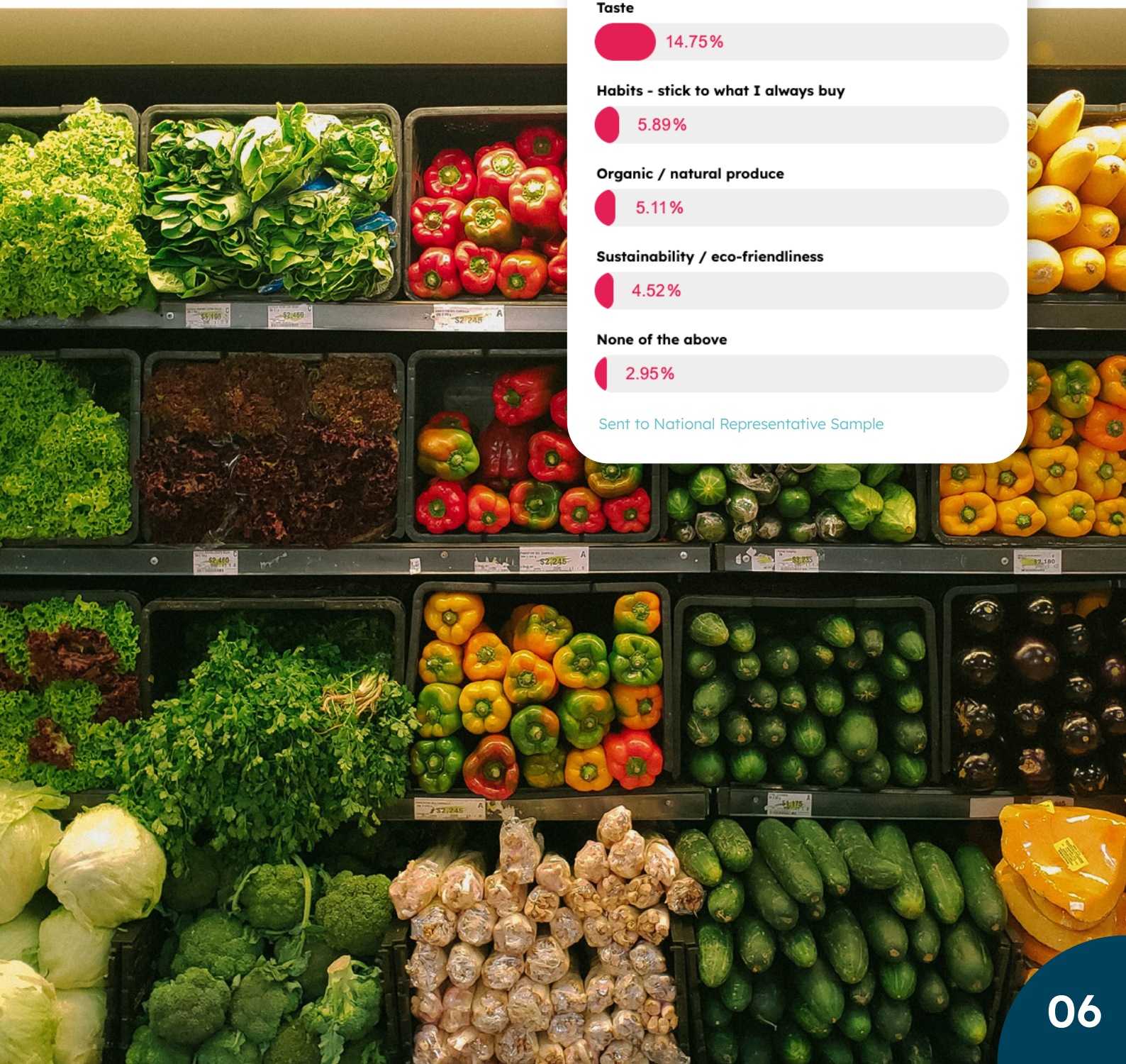
Sustainability / eco-friendliness

4.52%

None of the above

2.95%

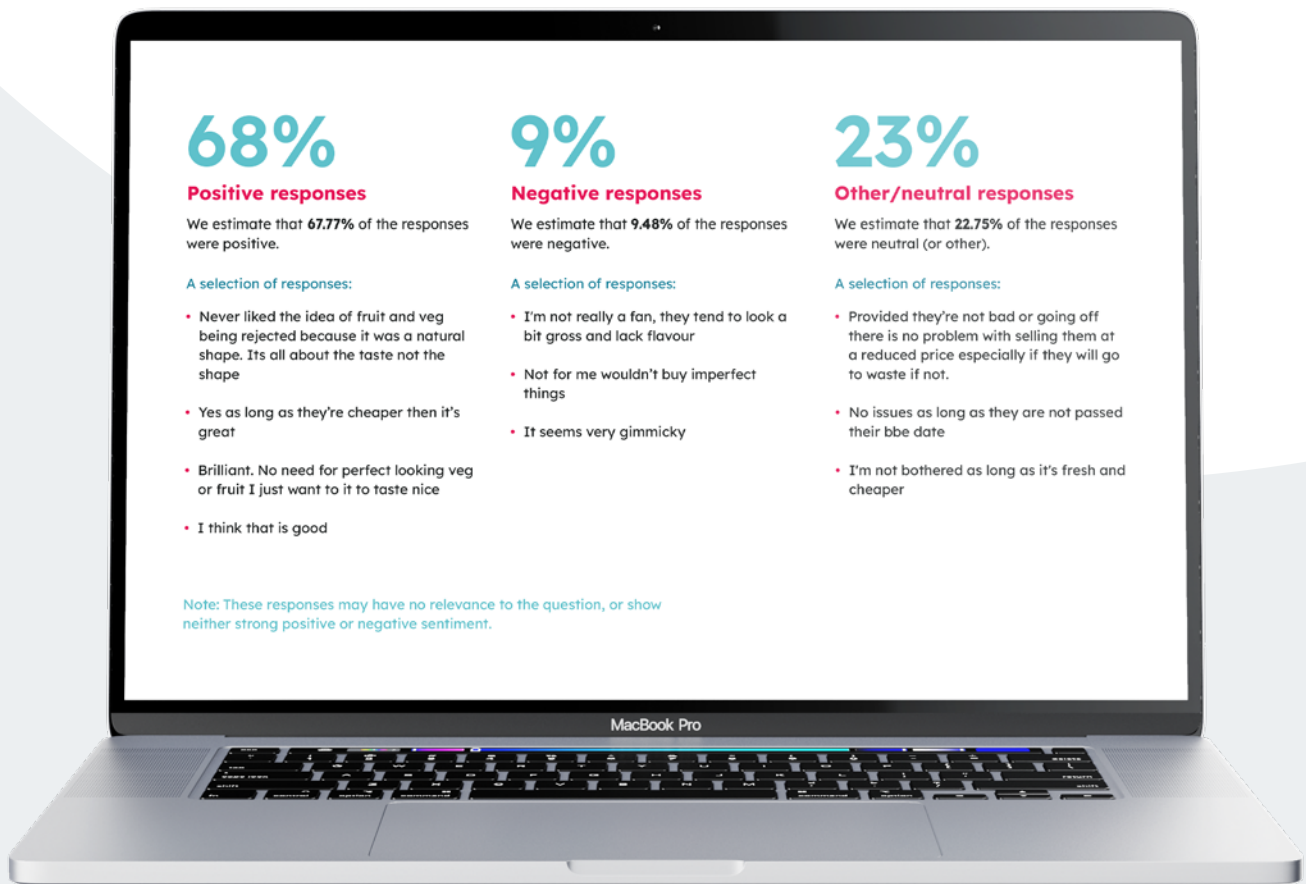
[Sent to National Representative Sample](#)



Quality Matters Most

Despite the increasing demand for quality, nearly 70% of consumers are happy to buy 'imperfect' fruit and veg from supermarkets, as long as they still taste good – but they do want to see reduced/adjusted prices for them accordingly.

What are your thoughts on supermarkets selling imperfect fruits and vegetables?



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Local Produce Difficult to Obtain

Consumers say they're becoming more concerned around the origin of their produce, but as we saw above, only 5% of people selected this as a priority when shopping.

Therefore, though at the moment 20% would like to buy more local produce, and find it important to do this, quality matters most.

This is because consumers believe local produce tends to be more expensive and less convenient to find, as shown in the quotes below.



“Mainly budget, if I could afford to buy at local greengrocer I would, but I do look at location on supermarket veg and do to buy from overseas” -

- Female aged 35-44

“The cost of finding a supplier outweighs the time and effort of going to the local grocery store”

- Male aged 55-64

“We have no greengrocer where I live and the supermarket doesn't do local fruit/veg and I don't drive so am limited in my options”

- Female aged 55-64

All in all, most consumers can eat fruit and veg and do so frequently, prioritising quality and cost to give them the most value for their money. They mostly buy loose / packaged fruit over other formats.

Local Produce Difficult to Obtain

Concerns here exist around consumption of the products – when we asked if consumers had any challenges trying to incorporate more fruit / veg into their diet, some households said they're finding it trickier to get their children to eat them more – bringing an opportunity for retailers and manufacturers to invest in more innovation here to make them more appealing to their younger target audiences.



“Yes, my children won't eat it and I struggle to think of meals to put veg with”

- Female aged 35-44

“Making sure fruit and veg stay in date and reducing overeating and overconsumption”

- Male aged 25-34

“Veg and fruit often seems to go bad very quickly”

- Female aged 55-64

“It can be hard to add them into meals that I think go together and the other family members will eat”

- Female aged 25-34

Other households had concerns around food waste and prefer to buy tinned fruit instead, to make it last longer. In fact, we've seen that this act of purchasing longer-lasting items as a common behaviour during periods of inflation.



“I think they are convenient and tasty, cost effective as they don't go off like fresh fruit”

- Male aged 45-54

Local Produce Difficult to Obtain

Tinned fruit is popular but most consumers believe it is not an adequate replacement for fresh fruit, and better as a quick tasty snack, evidencing their interest in quality produce.



“As long as they are tinned in fruit juice instead of syrup I think they’re a good thing. They still constitute one of your five a day. The only problems are that most of the fibre and nutrients stored in or under the skin are missing and that preservatives could have an effect on further nutrients. However, tinned fruit is quick and easy to use in cooking.”

- Female aged 55-64

Another way consumers are looking to improve their health is by supplementing their diet with nutrients to help their digestion as well as their mind – read more on this below.



The Two Brains

Due to more research being spoken about recently, consumers are becoming more aware of the connection between our gut and our brain. This is contributing to an increasing interest in improving the health of both. We'll explore these respectively below.

Cognitive Products (Nutraceutical)



The Gut – our Second Brain

A healthy gut is a healthy body, a message media has begun pushing frequently recently. Nearly 37% of consumers are very aware of this connection, with another 53% having heard the hype but not knowing enough to be sure.

With more fermented products like Kimchi and Kombucha popping up in convenient bottles, and gaining favour with the masses, it's no surprise that only 10% of consumers say they haven't heard anything about this recent health trend.

As of February 2023, we found that nearly 84% of consumers are interested in improving their gut health.

Are you currently interested in improving your gut health?

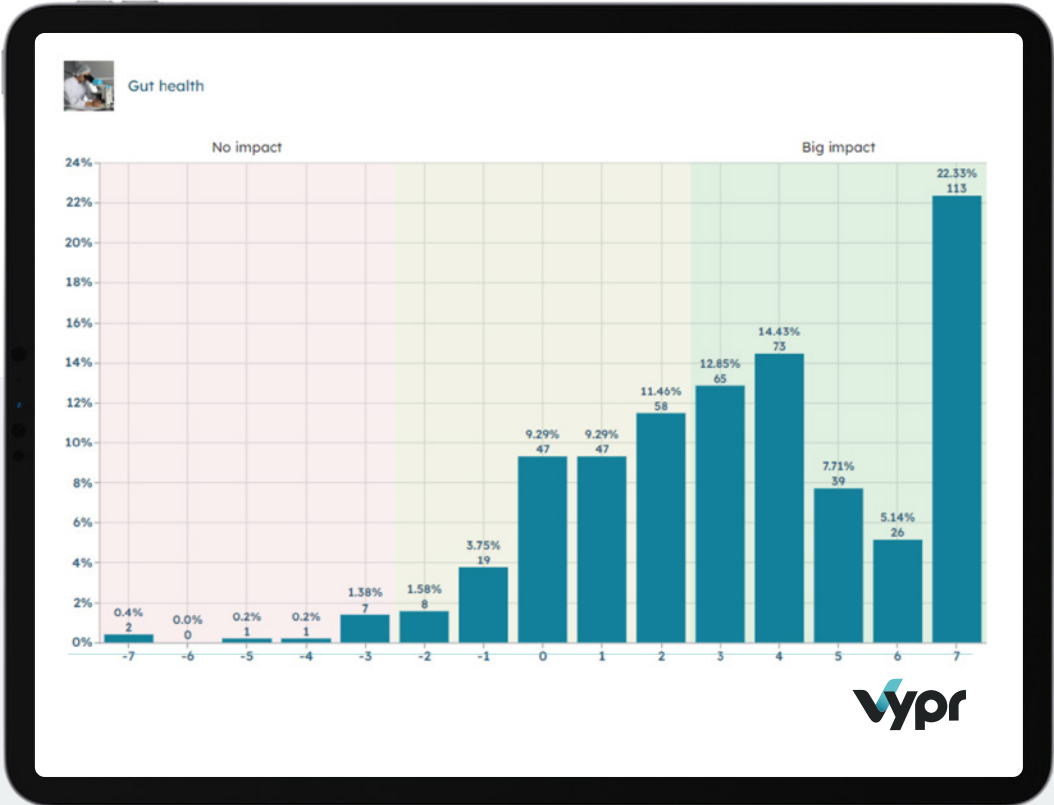


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The Gut – our Second Brain

Interest in gut health has indeed spread, as visible on the Vykert graph below, as most consumers (62%) believe it has a major impact on general health, and 35% think it has a moderate impact. Very few believe it is not important at all.

To what extent do you believe that gut health affects overall health and well being?



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The Gut – our Second Brain

Furthermore, most are interested in trying new food and drink products that specifically claim to improve gut health.

Would you be interested in trying food / drink products that aim to improve your gut health?

Slightly interested



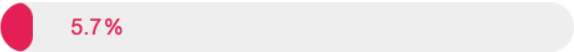
Very interested



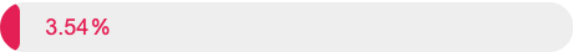
Not interested



I already buy these products



I already buy these products, but open to more

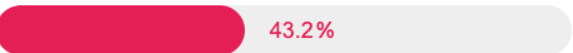


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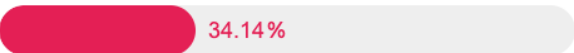
We asked a sample that have consumed gut health products before whether they've noticed any benefit – and 43% said they've definitely noticed some, but many (34%) are waiting to see long-term results.

You said you've consumed gut health products before. How satisfied were you with the results?

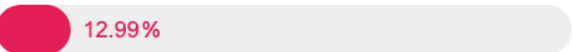
Somewhat satisfied - notices some benefits



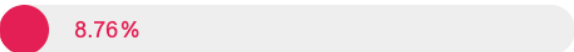
Neutral - nothing yet



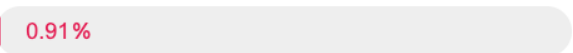
Unsatisfied - noticed no benefits



Very satisfied - noticed a lot of benefits



Very unsatisfied - noticed some side-effects



Consumers Looking for ‘Natural’ Products

When selecting a product to buy for the purpose of improving gut health, consumers are looking for a range of features such as the below, quoted directly:

- Low sugar and natural ingredients only
- Good taste, low calories and added vitamins
- Natural and organic
- Good value for money and easy to use

As visible above, consumers want products that are as natural as possible, however needs change depending on the type of consumer in question. It’s essential to run research with a company’s specific target audience demographics on platforms like Vypr, to optimise for their specific needs.

Let’s now look at the growing interest in Brain health.



Cognitive Health in Focus

A focus on improving brain health and subsequent cognitive performance has always existed, and now interest is growing as more supplements become available for this purpose.

We wanted to find out if consumers are interested in food and drink products that help cognition too, that utilise 'smart drugs' - otherwise known as 'Nootropics' - to provide their consumers with these benefits.

Nootropics Growth & Trends [2022-2029]

Firstly, we asked if consumers know what Nootropics are. Though most have not heard of this term, some have been using them.

How familiar are you with Nootropics (i.e. cognitive-enhancing supplements)

Never heard of 'Nootropics'

64.97%

I know about them, but don't use them

19.77%

I have such supplements, didn't know they had a name

9.98%

I know about them, and use them

5.28%

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Cognitive Health in Focus

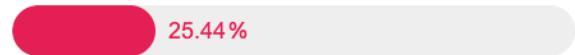
Though most don't actively use these, more than 50% of consumers take supplements for their brain health.

Do you take any supplements to boost your brain ability (e.g. improve focus, memory, general brain health)

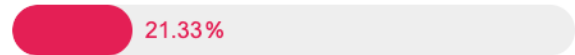
No



Yes - sometimes



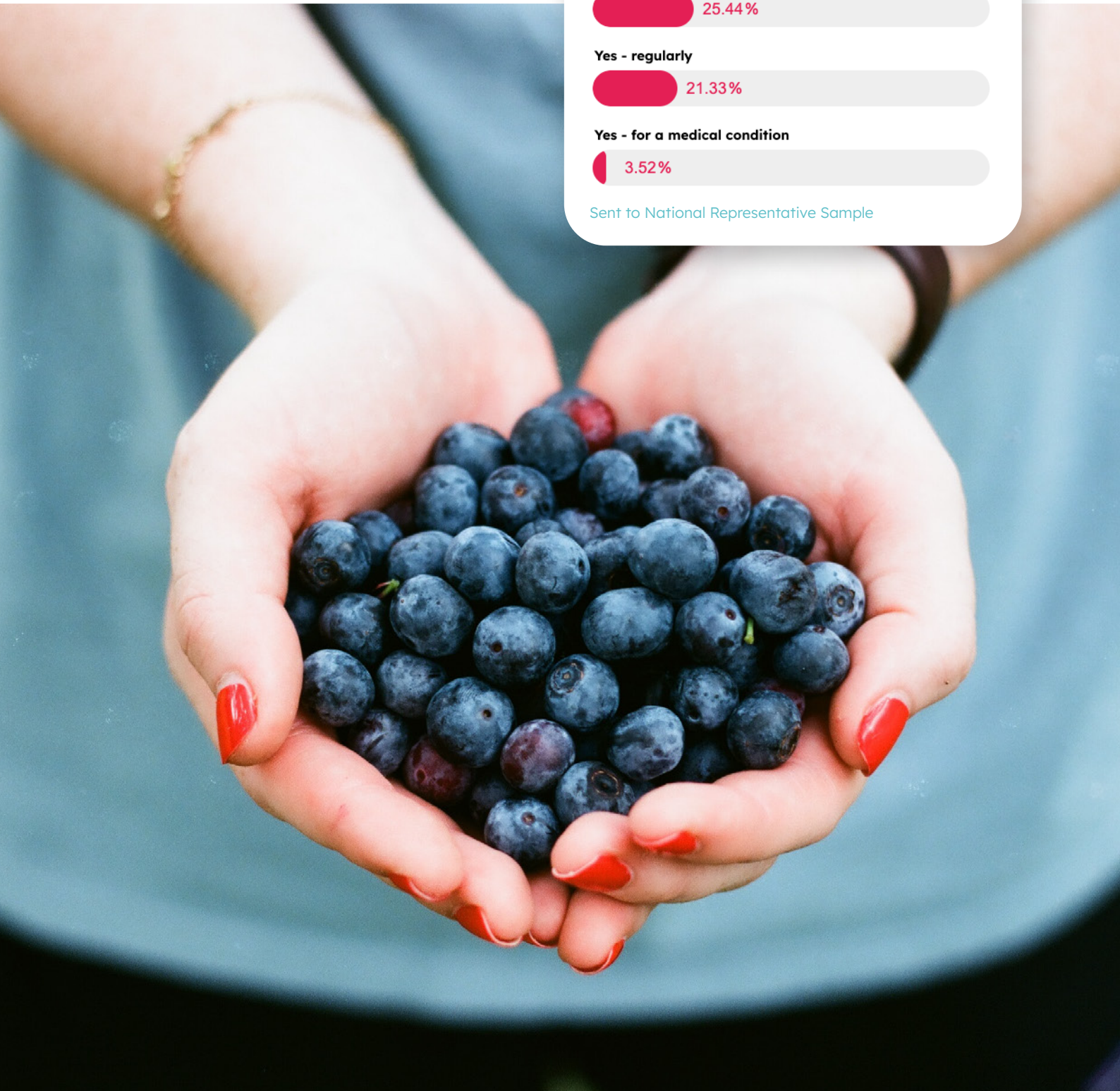
Yes - regularly



Yes - for a medical condition



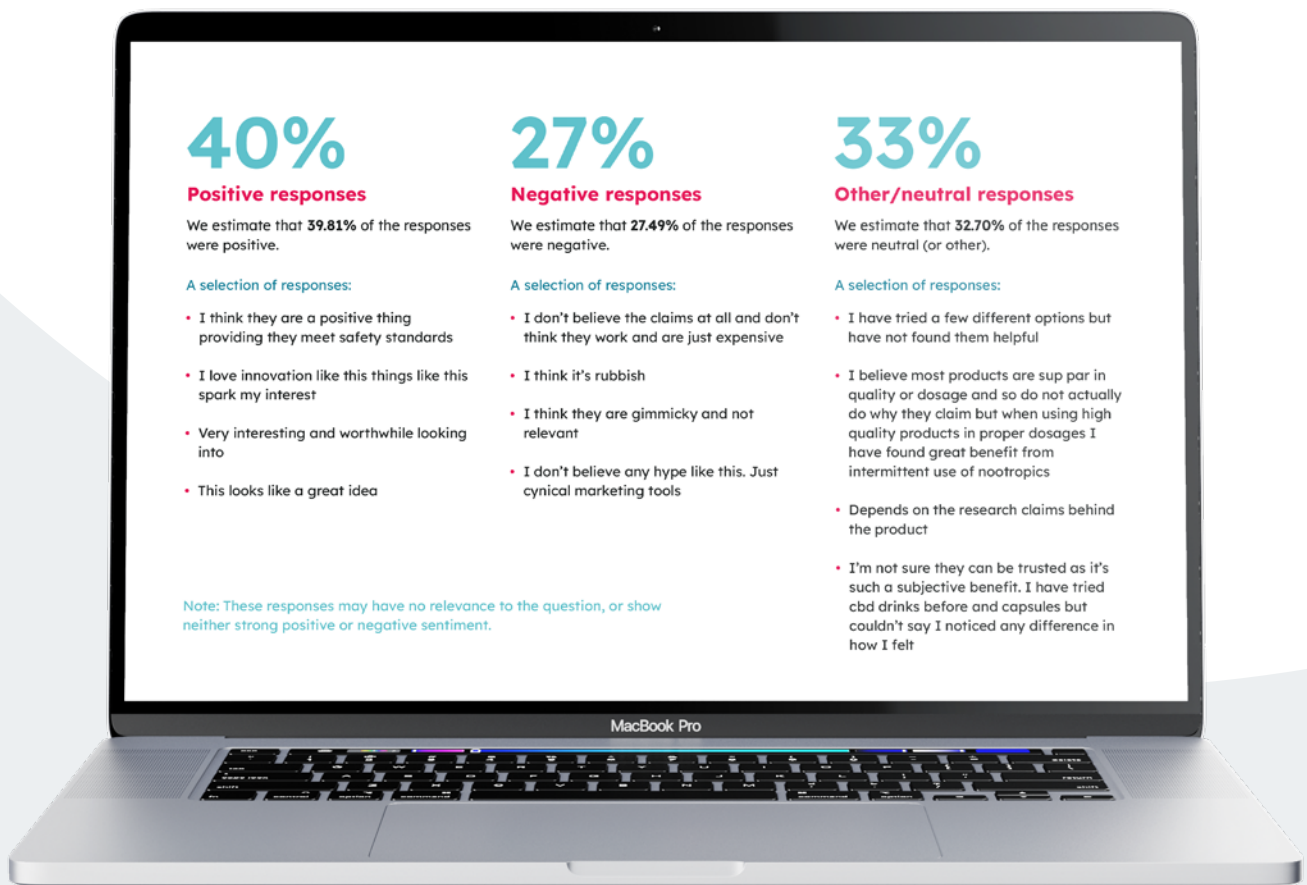
Sent to National Representative Sample



Cognitive Health in Focus

However, when it comes to products with Nootropics in them that claim to improve cognition (such as memory, brain power and focus), most consumers don't believe the claims that tend to be made, as visible in the sentiment analysis below, showing that more work must be done here to improve perceptions.

What are your thoughts on products that claim to enhance cognition e.g. memory, focus?



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Mood-boosting Benefits

Not only do nootropics claim to improve cognition, some also promote better mental health. One such Nootropic supplement growing in popularity is CBD, available in many forms, such as oils or drinks.

We asked what consumers thought of such mood-boosting products and found only around 34% felt positively about products such as CBD-infused drinks. Many consumers in our sample were sceptical of the idea, as they didn't believe it would have much of an impact and prefer natural methods to help with their mood. However, 35% were neutral / undecided meaning there exists an audience that could be open to trying this, if marketing used an evidence-based approach.

Looking at the feedback in the quotes below, there is work to be done here around perceptions as many view such innovations with caution. Thorough testing of individual ideas before they are launched will help companies make optimised product decisions that address the concerns of these individuals.

The demand for health exists and is translatable into such innovative products, as even though some consumers were hesitant, many were still willing to try and are on board with the idea.



“Not really interested in these. Very wary of anything that has a chemical effect on me. It would not be on my radar to purchase anything like this at all. I would rather go for a long walk to sort my mood.”

- Female aged 55-64

“Don't really like the idea of it. It sounds a bit like illegal drugs”

- Male aged 18-24

“I'm not sure I really believe the claims but I would be willing to try them out but I'm pretty sure it is just a marketing ploy and a gimmick but would be happy to be proven wrong”

- Female aged 35-44

“I have never tried these types of drinks. It sounds more positive than drinking or recreational drugs. I guess if the drink is used and promoted in the right format”

- Male aged 35-44

Mood-boosting Benefits

Overall, consumers prefer natural methods to improve their health, but many are interested in the convenience of these products. Companies with such offerings will need to evidence their claims, as our consumers clearly stated in our research.



“I would consider trying this if there was scientific research and evidence that the product was safe and effective.”

- Male aged 45-54

“I think they sound appealing but I would probably be a bit sceptical if there wasn't some scientific research to proof the claims were legitimate.”

- Male aged 35-44

“Would expect the claims to have the truth and research to back up the statement.”

- Female aged 45-54

So far, we've talked about consumers being more health-conscious, but companies must take care to not extend this trend too far into every product in every category. We'll explore an example next.

Indulgence is Still In

Though quite a few consumers are looking to improve their health, there's no denying the human need for sweet treats and desserts which continue to sell (like hotcakes), however people understand the importance of moderation here.

For example, chocolate confectionary remains a popular product for treat-times, and sales here continue to grow.

In this category of primarily non-essential products, taste tends to matter more than cost - when we asked what the most important consideration for consumers is when choosing a chocolate to buy, we found taste is the key, with cost coming second here.

This goes to show that consumers still want tasty products occasionally, meaning not all items will need to be made health-friendly. With recent legislation aiming to push highly indulgent products away from key sales locations (like gondola ends), companies need to test this before making any drastic changes.

What is important to you when buying chocolate (select all that apply)

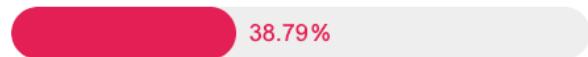
Taste



Cost



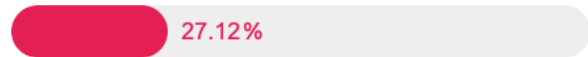
Brand of chocolate



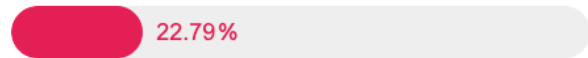
Quality of ingredients



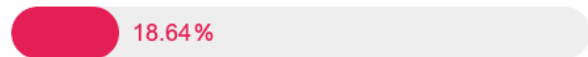
Size / weight



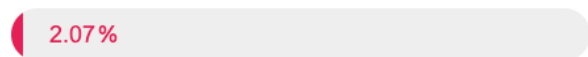
Cocoa content



Fairtrade / ethical



None of the above



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HFSS vs Taste

The legislation we mention above is that around high fat salt and sugar (HFSS) products. As we've discovered in other reports, consumers don't want to see taste affected because of such regulation. The need for indulgence remains, and so consumers are not likely to stop buying confectionary due to a change of location on shelves, for example.

For this reason, companies mustn't find shortcuts to adapt – for example, we found that many consumers have been unhappy with the smaller portions they're seeing in some sweet products, which some companies have chosen as their primary method to try to bypass restrictions.

Instead, companies must work with their consumers to develop products that meet their needs.

Want to find out more about the impact of HFSS legislation? Download our report here:

[Download our Report](#)



“Sugar should be reduced because of the effects on the body with excess consumption, but not so much that it affects the final product. When buying sweets, it's expected there will be some degree of sugar.”

- Female aged 25-34

“[Reducing sugar] is a good thing to do but it definitely tastes different, you can usually tell it's a reduced sugar product unfortunately”

- Female aged 55-64

Innovation is Desired

Though consumers don't really want reductions in sugar that affect taste, this doesn't mean they're not open to new products.

Instead of trying to reformulate everything – which might backfire – **innovation** in areas like confectionary is also important, as consumers like to try new things. For example, using other natural ingredients like dates to replicate an indulgent experience, like one consumer mentions below.



“I would not be interested or consider buying reduced sugar confectionary if the sugar was replaced with artificial sweeteners as I totally avoid them. I would be happy to try confectionary that was solely reduced in sugar without sweeteners as I don't like things that are very sweet anyway. I buy a porridge that is sweetened with dates and no sugar and it's plenty sweet enough for us.”

- Female aged 55-64

“I like to try new and unusual brands I haven't tried before”

- Female aged 25-34

Interest in Premium Products

The last area we'll discuss is the interest in premium confectionary. For example, we found that even at this time of economic difficulty, 82% of consumers buy premium chocolate.

When looking at the reasons for this, as we see once again, in confectionary/desserts taste is king. Consumers buy such chocolates as treats and for their taste. See more reasons in the graphic on this page.

You said you buy premium chocolate. Why is this (select all that apply)

As a treat



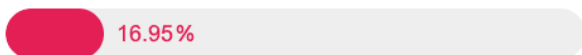
Taste



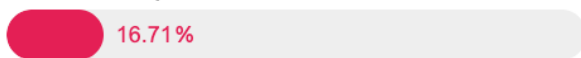
Makes a good gift



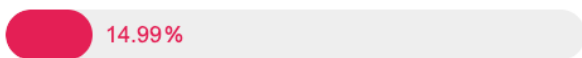
Packaging looks nice



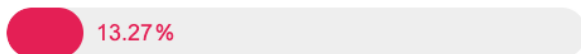
Value for money



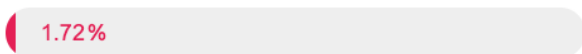
More ethical / brand values



Health benefits



None of the above



All in all, more consumers are trying to eat healthily, through increased focus on this not only in internal lives but also from the external media. Though at this time costs and value for money come first for many, as society begins rewarding more healthy behaviours, the interest in products that'll help them conveniently and easily add them to their daily lives will increase. It's important to remember that health should not rule every product decision made, as the need for tasty indulgence remains.

Our product intelligence platform makes it easy to get these insights.



Vypr is an online self-service platform that allows you to run research with consumers, whenever you need it.

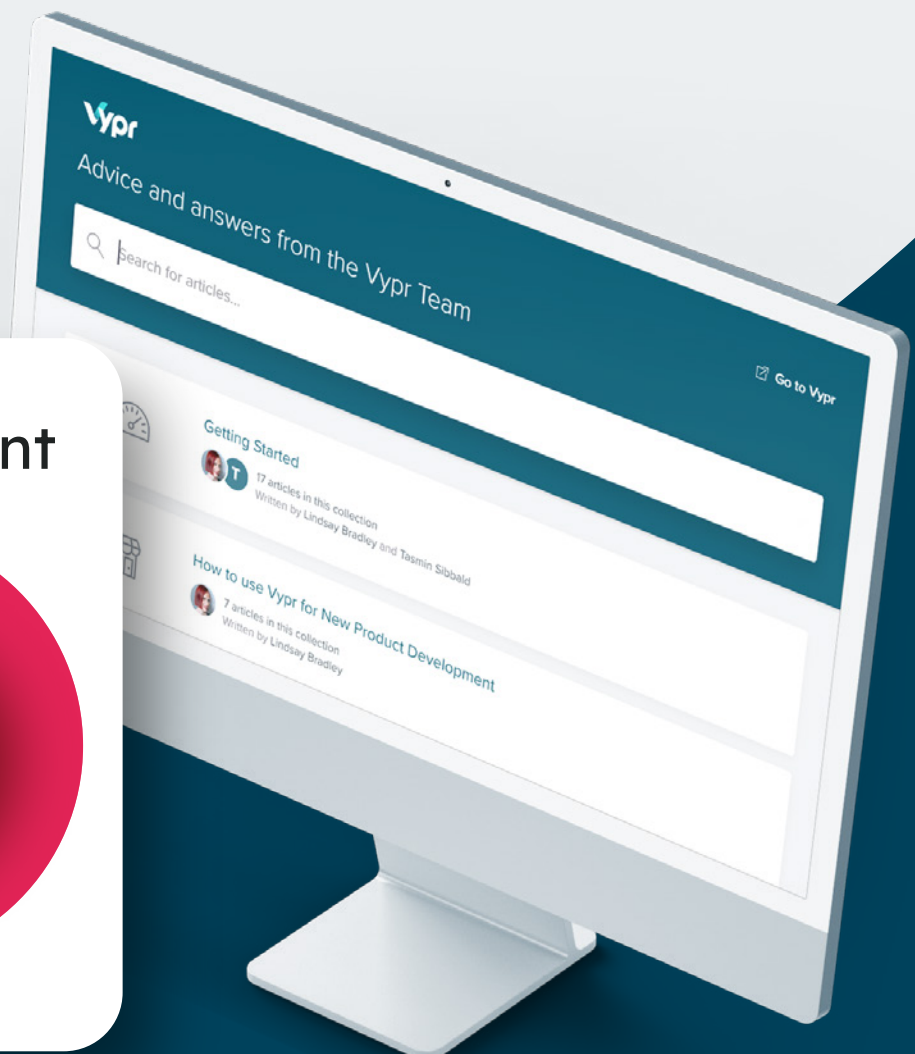
With Vypr, you get the consumer voice at your fingertips, meaning decision-making is rapid, robust and precise resulting in **better decisions, for winning products.**

Our service integrates effortlessly with current product processes, and our Steers (what we call research questions) take an average of 90 minutes to complete, so you can say goodbye to waiting for long-winded research reports, and **get insights when you need them, quickly and efficiently.**

Improvement

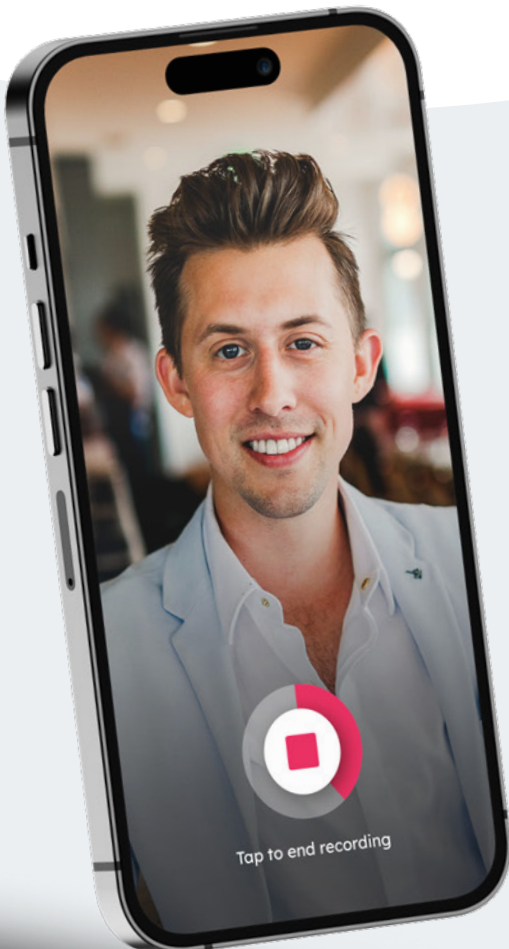
A graphic showing a 97% improvement. It features a white circle with a red border, and the number "97%" is written in red inside the circle.

97%



Understand Consumers with Powerful Text Insights...

Our platform offers a variety of question types, a blend of Qual and Quant in 1 tool. You can find out consumer sentiment on any topic, figure out what they'd pay for a product, split-test concepts/adverts, and more.



...AND Video Insights!

With our latest feature, VyPops, you can now also get video answers directly from your consumers – **the most powerful visual proof of consumer sentiment.**

Don't get left behind – Vypr makes it easy to get robust and reliable intelligence, and we're always here to help. Our team have years of experience in your roles, and know how to help you, whether you work in Category, Marketing, Brand, Commercial, or NPD functions.

It's time to feed robust consumer intelligence into your product process to power decisions, wow stakeholders, and create engaging presentations that are sure to guarantee success.

The possibilities and benefits are endless

BETTER DECISIONS, WINNING PRODUCTS.

Ready to get robust consumer intelligence to power your product strategy? Get started with some free research!

Get FREE Consumer Research

