VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2:
SPRING 2026

CANADIAN FOOD SENTIMENT INDEX

BI-ANNUAL INSIGHT REPORT

**Agri-Food Analytics Lab,
Dalhousie University**

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SUPPORTED BY: CADDLE

This comprehensive report measures Canadians' **perceptions and sentiments** on a wide range of food-related issues and highlights evolving trends.

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2: SPRING 2026

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Food Sentiment Index: Bi-Annual Insight Report is a flagship initiative by Dalhousie University's Agri-Food Analytics Lab, supported by Caddle Insights. This comprehensive report measures Canadians' perceptions and sentiments on a wide range of food-related issues, gathering insights from approximately 3,000 respondents every six months *(for details, see page 33)*. By asking the same questions across each cycle, the report tracks trends and shifts in consumer sentiment, providing consistent and meaningful data.

Inspired by Purdue University's Consumer Insight Report, the index covers key themes, including:

Food Price Experiences, Food Expenditures, Food Values,

Consumer Behaviours, Consumer Beliefs & Consumer Trust.

This report provides critical insights into how Canadians feel about food affordability, quality, security, and trust, offering valuable guidance for industry stakeholders, policymakers, and the public. This fourth issue includes comparison analysis with previous reports' results, highlighting emerging trends.

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Latest CPI Food Inflation in Restaurants[1]:

3.2%

(March 2025: 3.2%)

Latest CPI Food Inflation in Stores[1]:

4.4%

(March 2025: 3.2%)

Canada's Food Insecurity[2]:

25.5%

YoY: (+ 2.6%)[3]

Food Spending (Retail) per month, per Canadian[4, 5]:

$319.75

YoY: (+ 3.1%)[3]

Food Spending (Service) per month, per Canadian[5, 6]:

$186.11

YoY: (+ 5.7%)

% of Expenditure on Food (Retail) to Overall Expenditure (Excluding Restaurant and Housing)[7]:

18.8%

YoY: (+ 0.3%)

Current Food Retail/Food Service Ratio:

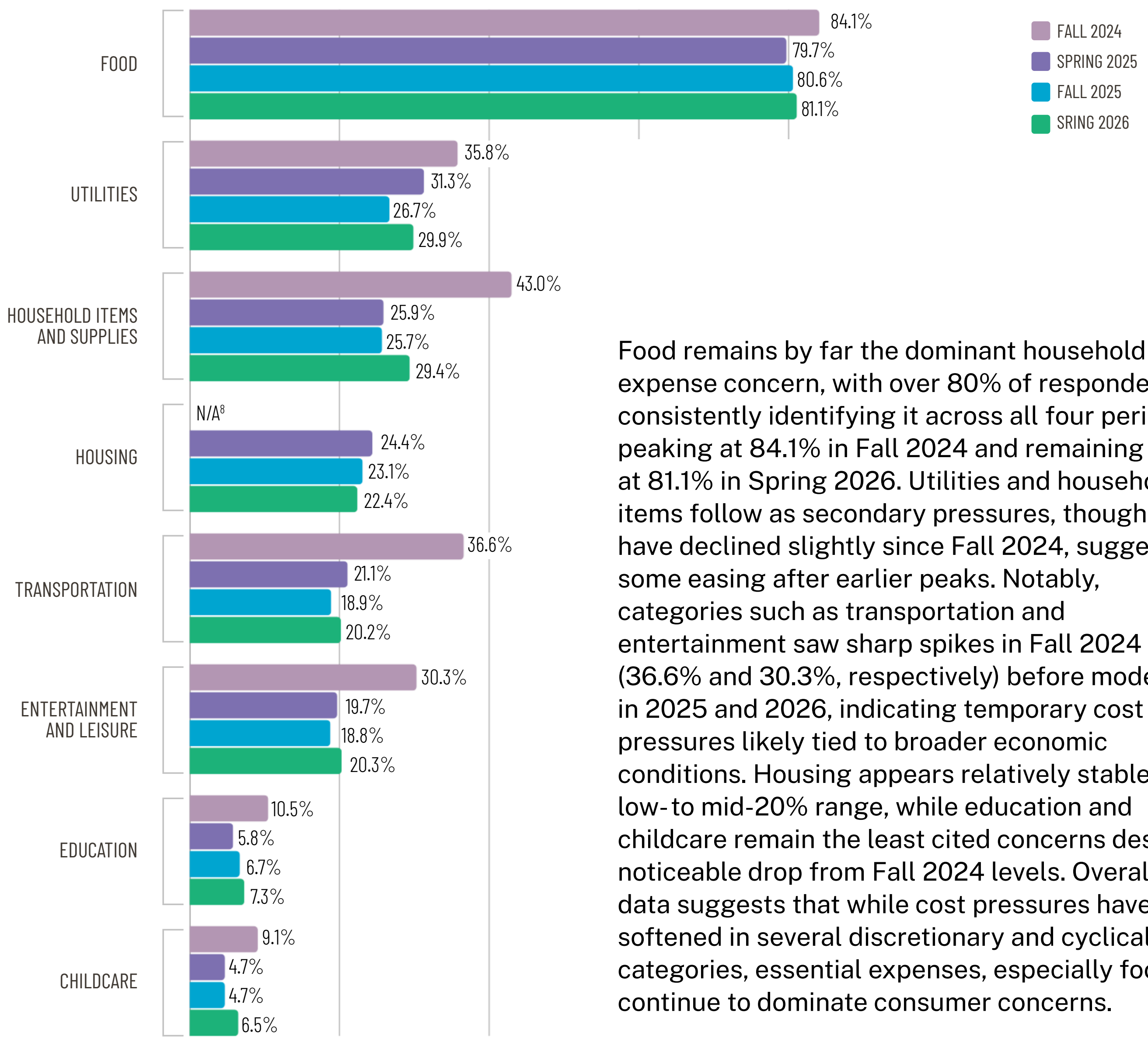
63.2% / 36.8%

YoY: (Retail Food down 0.6%)

1: Statistics Canada, March 2026
2: PROOF Research Program, uToronto
3: Numbers in parenthesis denote the Year-over-Year variation.
4: Statistics Canada. Table 20-10-0056-01 Monthly retail trade sales by province and territory (x 1,000), Food and Beverage Retailers [445], up to January 2026
5: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0009-01 Population estimates, quarterly, up to Q1 2026
6: Statistics Canada. Table 21-10-0019-01 Monthly survey of food services and drinking places (x 1,000), up to January 2026
7: Statistics Canada. Table 20-10-0056-01 Monthly retail trade sales by province and territory (x 1,000), NAICF Retail trade [44-45] up to January 2026

FOOD PRICE EXPERIENCES

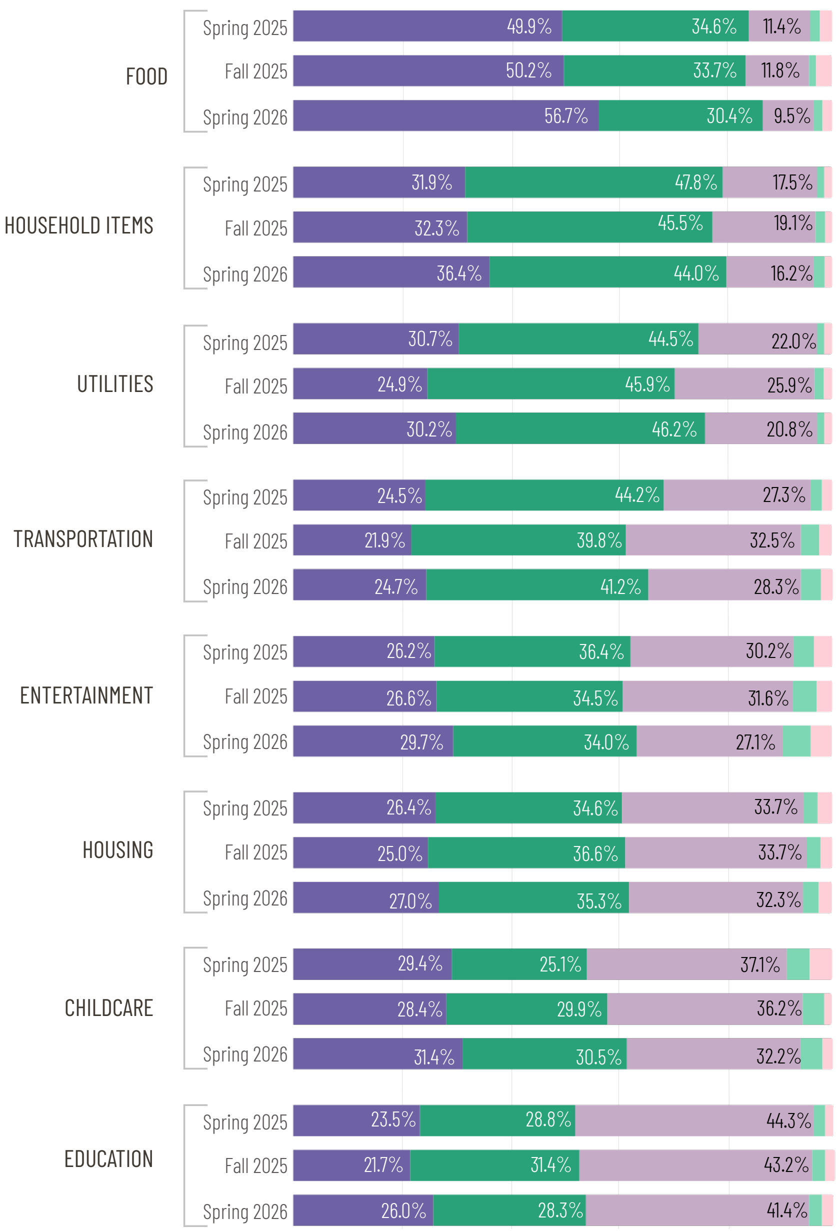
FIGURE 1:
For which of the following expenses have prices increased the MOST in the past 12 months? (Please select all that apply)



Food remains by far the dominant household expense concern, with over 80% of respondents consistently identifying it across all four periods, peaking at 84.1% in Fall 2024 and remaining high at 81.1% in Spring 2026. Utilities and household items follow as secondary pressures, though both have declined slightly since Fall 2024, suggesting some easing after earlier peaks. Notably, categories such as transportation and entertainment saw sharp spikes in Fall 2024 (36.6% and 30.3%, respectively) before moderating in 2025 and 2026, indicating temporary cost pressures likely tied to broader economic conditions. Housing appears relatively stable in the low- to mid-20% range, while education and childcare remain the least cited concerns despite a noticeable drop from Fall 2024 levels. Overall, the data suggests that while cost pressures have softened in several discretionary and cyclical categories, essential expenses, especially food, continue to dominate consumer concerns.

8. 'Housing' was omitted in the Fall 2024 Survey

FIGURE 2:
Change of Household Expenses Over the Last 12 Months?[9]

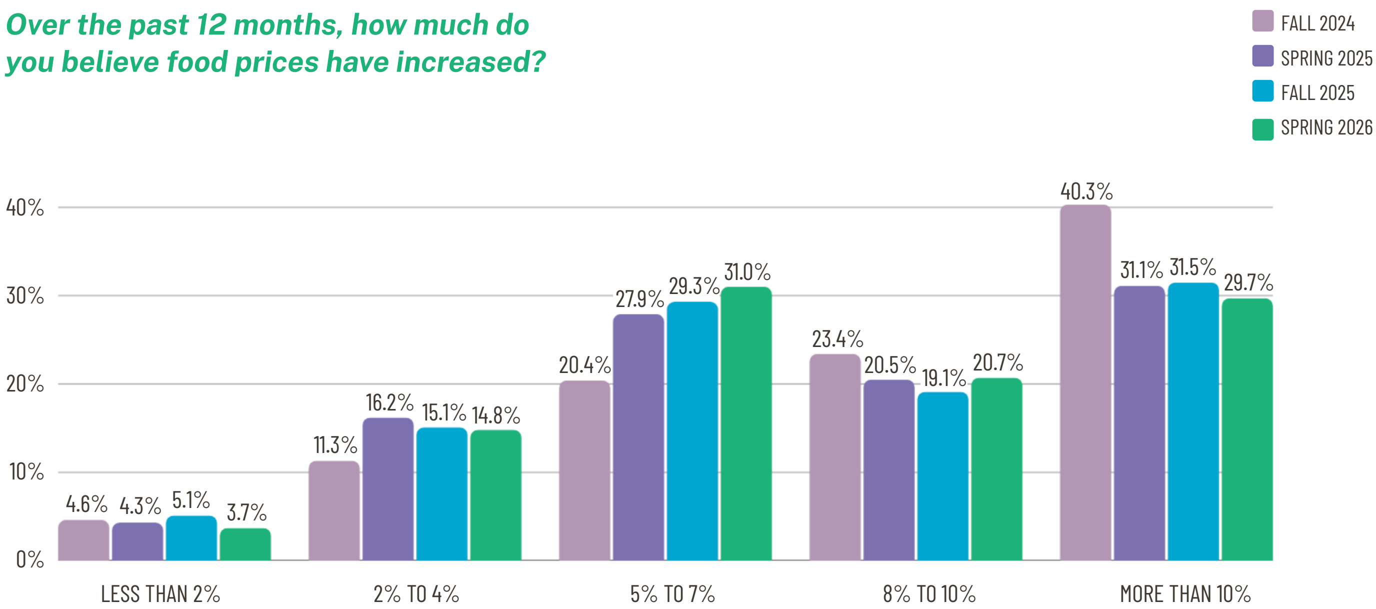


INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY
INCREASED SLIGHTLY
STAYED THE SAME
DECREASED SLIGHTLY
DECREASED SIGNIFICANTLY

Food remains the most consistently impacted category, with the share of respondents reporting a significant increase going up from about 49.9% in Spring 2025 to 50.2% in Fall 2025 and further to 56.7% in Spring 2026. Fewer households now report stable or even decreasing costs. Interestingly, all categories show a notably higher share of respondents reporting significant increases compared to last Fall, with some essential categories other than food, including household items (36.4%) and utilities (30.2%), each exceeding 30% of respondents. In contrast, discretionary categories such as entertainment and transportation are more likely to reflect slight rather than significant increases. Housing stands out as relatively persistent, with a steady share still experiencing increases, reflecting structural pressures in that sector. Reports of price decreases remain minimal across all categories. Overall, the data suggests that inflationary pressures are still present across many spending categories and cost increases remain widespread, particularly for essential goods and services.

9. Figure 2 excludes 'does not apply' answers to reflect the distribution of results only among households for which the expense category is relevant.

FIGURE 3:
Over the past 12 months, how much do you believe food prices have increased?



In Fall 2024, Figure 3 shows that a large share of respondents (40.3%) believed prices had risen by more than 10%, but this perception has steadily declined, with the share falling to 29.7% by Spring 2026. At the same time, more respondents now estimate moderate increases, particularly in the 5% to 7% range, which has grown from 20.4% to 31.0%. Overall, the data suggests that while food inflation is still widely felt, Canadians increasingly believe price increases are moderating.

FIGURE 4:
What do you expect the rate of food price inflation to be over the next 12 months?

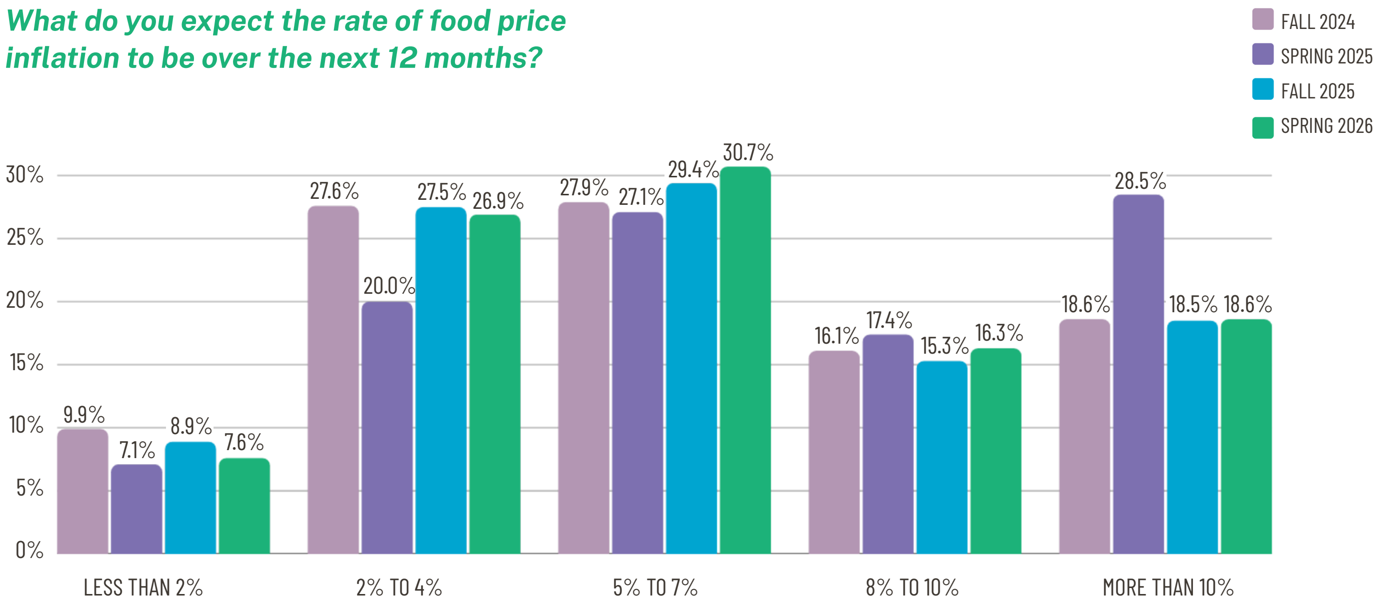
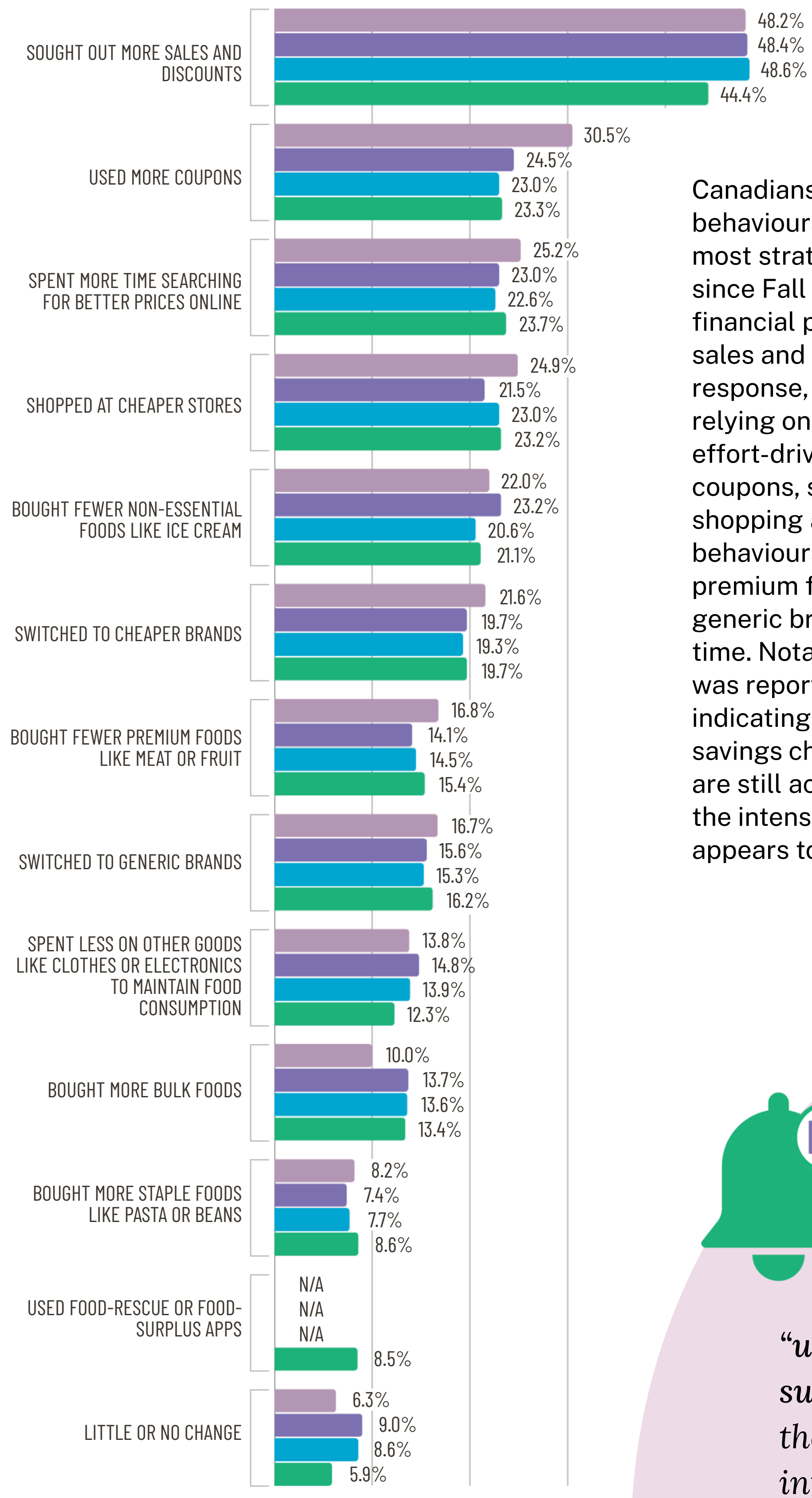


Figure 4 suggests that expectations for food inflation are stabilizing, with most respondents now anticipating moderate increases. The 5% to 7% range has become the most common expectation, rising to 30.7% by Spring 2026, while expectations of very high inflation (above 10%) have declined significantly from 28.5% in Spring 2025 to 18.6% in Spring 2026. Lower ranges (below 4%) remain relatively stable but less dominant. Overall, consumers appear more confident that food inflation will remain contained, though still elevated.

“Canadians are no longer bracing for runaway food inflation—they’re recalibrating. Expectations have shifted decisively toward the 5% to 7% range, signaling cautious optimism that price pressures are stabilizing, even if affordability remains a concern.”

FIGURE 5:
Change in Grocery Habits Due to Food Price Inflation[10]



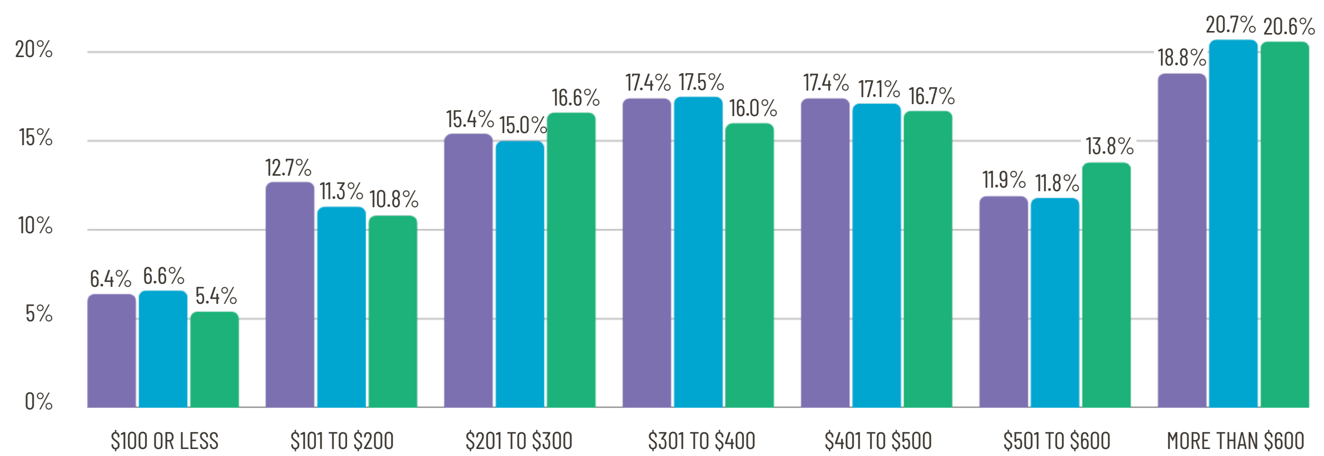
Canadians continue to adapt their shopping behaviours in response to food prices, though most strategies have become less intense since Fall 2024, suggesting some easing of financial pressure. Nevertheless, seeking sales and discounts remains the dominant response, with just below 45% of respondents relying on promotions. It is followed by more effort-driven behaviours, such as using coupons, searching online for deals, and shopping at cheaper stores. Trade-down behaviours like buying fewer non-essential or premium foods and switching to cheaper or generic brands remain relatively stable over time. Notably, the use of food-rescue apps was reported at 8.5% in Spring 2026, indicating growing awareness of alternative savings channels. Overall, while consumers are still actively managing their grocery bills, the intensity of cost-cutting behaviours appears to be moderating.

NEW

*This **Spring 2026** issue offered a new option to participants, allowing them to select **"used food-rescue or food-surplus apps"** as a way to adapt their shopping in response to inflation.*

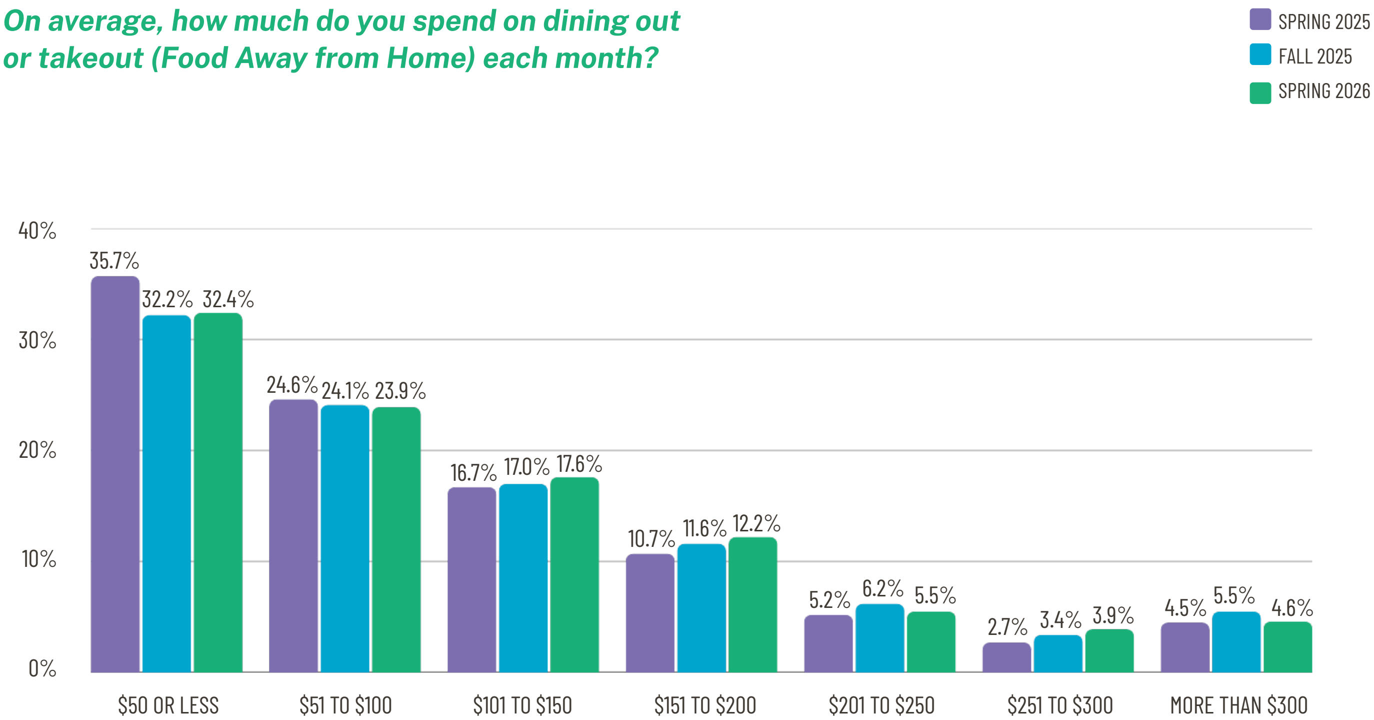
10. *Sums up to more than 100% as respondents were allowed to choose up to 3 options*

FIGURE 6:
On average, how much do you spend on groceries (Food at Home) each month?



There is a gradual shift toward higher monthly grocery spending over time, with more households reporting spending above $600, rising from 18.8% in Spring 2025 to 20.6% in Spring 2026. Mid-range spending categories ($201 to $500) remain the most common, though their shares are relatively stable or slightly declining, suggesting upward pressure on budgets. Lower spending brackets ($200 or less) continue to represent a smaller portion of households and show modest declines overall. Notably, the $501 to $600 range has grown, reinforcing the trend of consumers being pushed into higher spending tiers. Overall, the data indicates that while spending distribution remains relatively balanced, grocery bills are steadily increasing for many Canadians.

FIGURE 7:
On average, how much do you spend on dining out or takeout (Food Away from Home) each month?



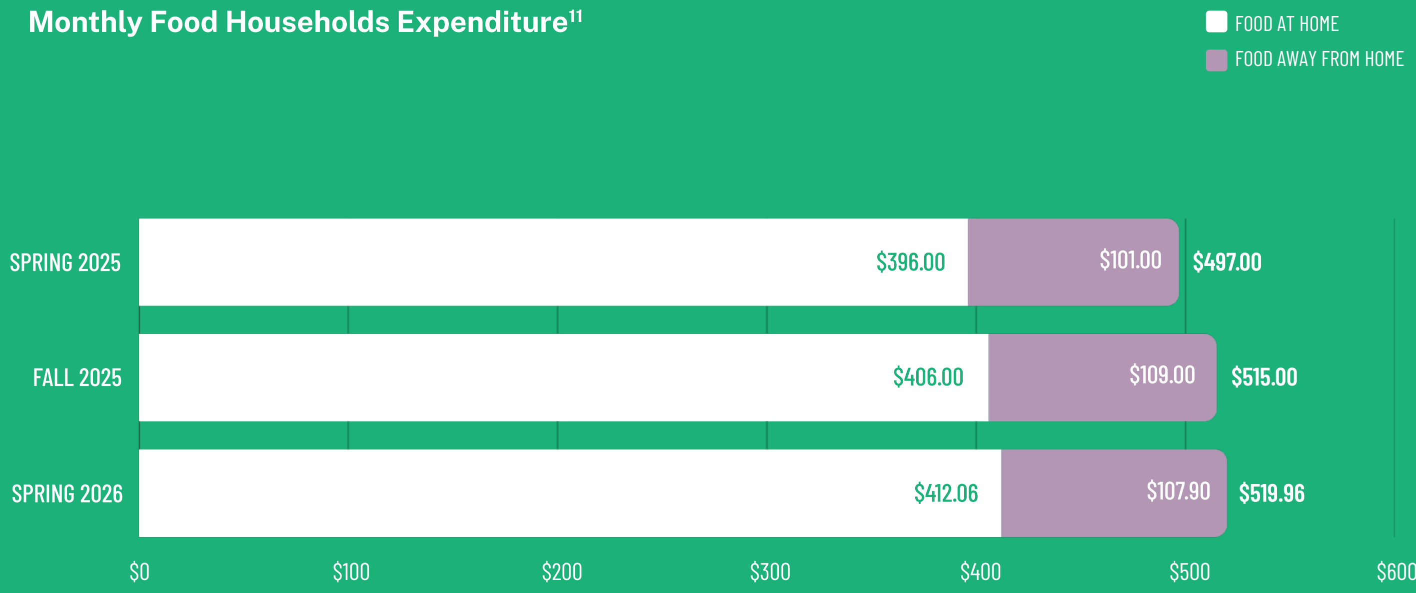
Most Canadians continue to limit spending on dining out, with the largest share consistently spending $50 or less per month, though this has declined slightly from 35.7% in Spring 2025 to 32.4% in Spring 2026. Mid-range spending categories ($51 to $200) remain relatively stable, with modest increases in the $151 to $200 range, suggesting some gradual normalization in discretionary spending. Higher spending levels (above $250) are still relatively uncommon but have edged up slightly over time. Overall, while there are signs of a mild rebound in food-away-from-home spending, Canadians remain cautious, keeping dining-out budgets relatively constrained.

Canadians are reporting paying

$22.96 more

in food per month than one year ago, a 4.6% increase.

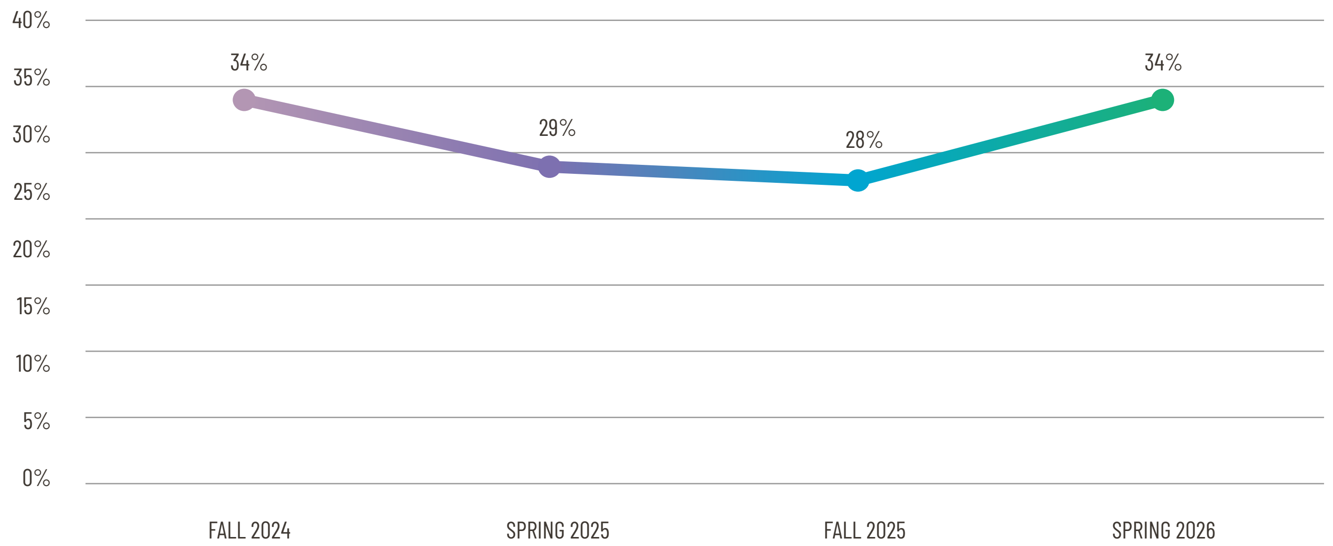
FIGURE 8:
Monthly Food Households Expenditure[11]



*11. Mean calculated using midpoints, assigning a value of **$700** for the "More than $600" category (FAH) and **$325** for the "More than $300" category (FAFH).*

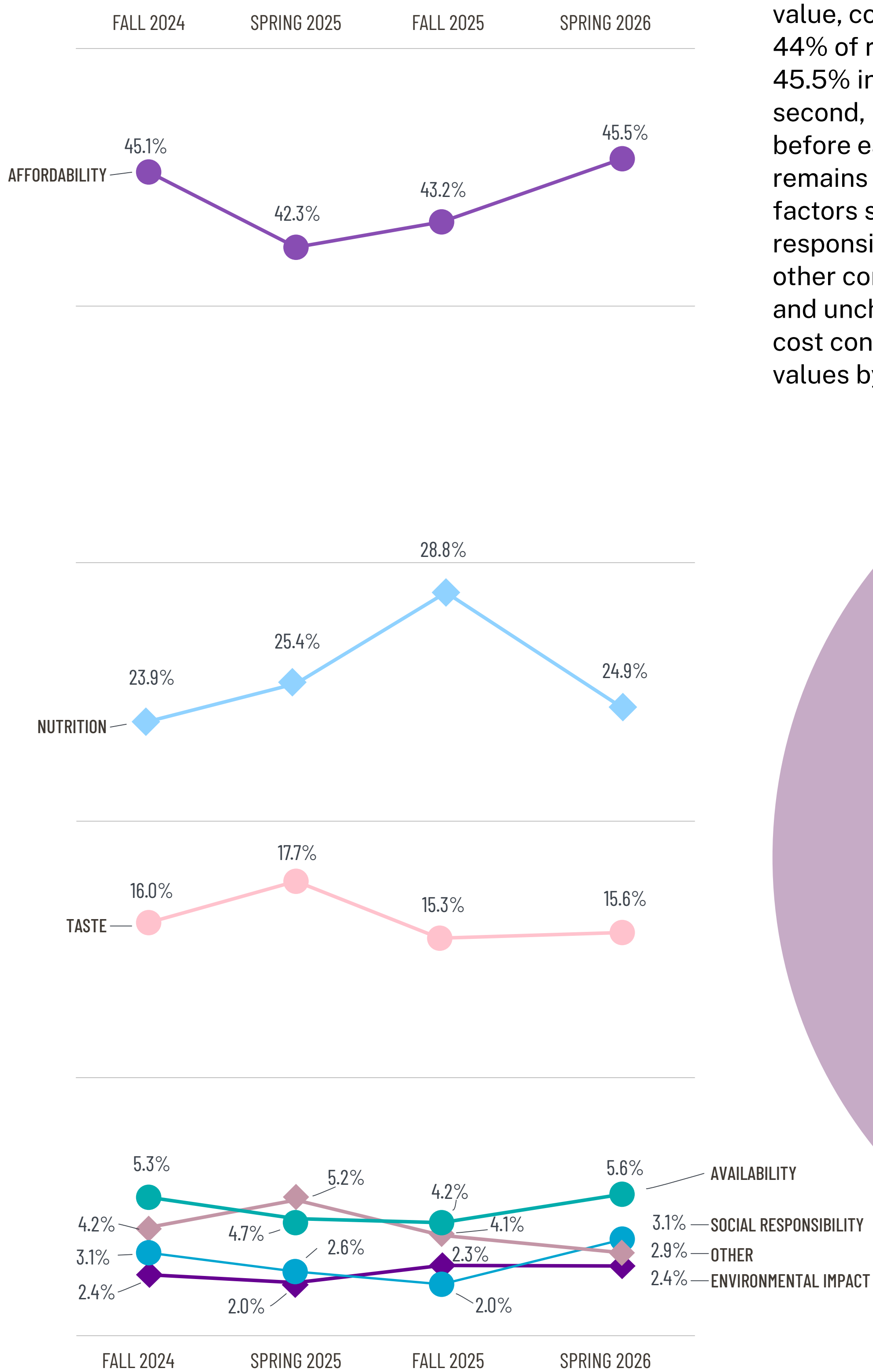
Figure 8 shows a steady increase in spending on food at home, rising from $396 in Spring 2025 to $412 in Spring 2026, reinforcing the continued pressure on grocery budgets. This increase is consistent with the estimated food inflation (~4%). In contrast, spending on food away from home remains relatively stable, fluctuating slightly around the $100–$109 range. This suggests that while Canadians are forced to increase their food at home budgets, despite the cost-cutting behaviors, to absorb higher grocery bills, they are keeping discretionary spending on dining out largely in check. Overall, the data points to a continued prioritization of food at home amid ongoing affordability concerns.

FIGURE 9:
Need to Draw from Savings or Borrowing Money to Purchase Food in the past 12 months



The percentage of respondents who reported needing to draw on savings or borrow money to pay for food has increased to 34%, returning to the same level observed in Fall 2024. These data indicate ongoing financial vulnerability among some households, for whom food has now become a critical budgetary concern.

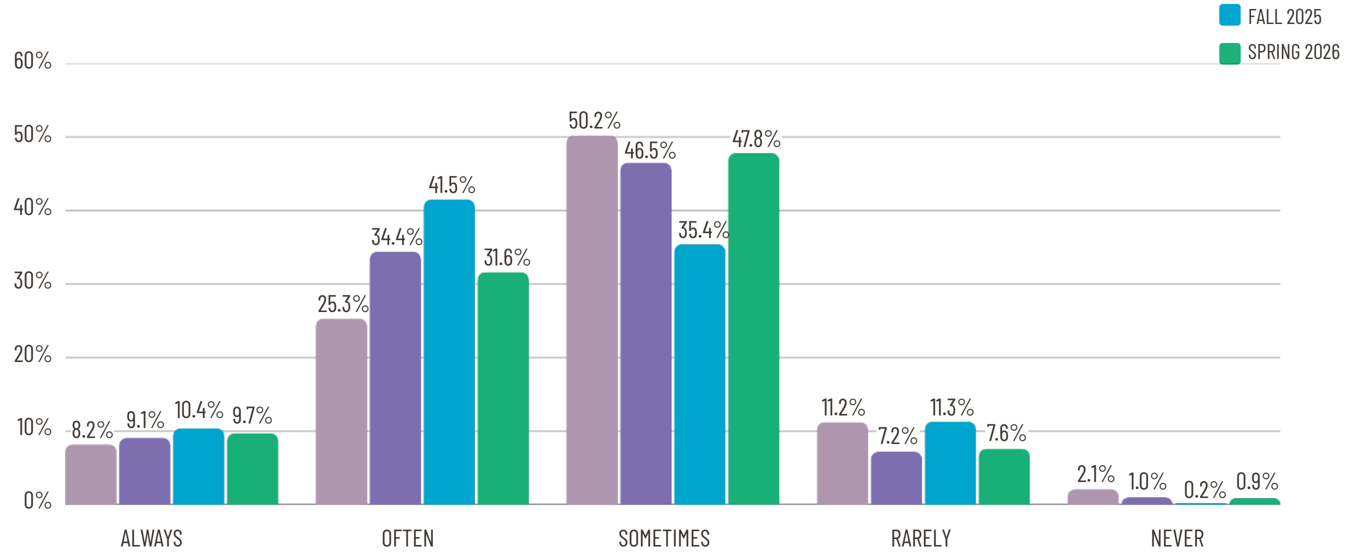
FIGURE 10:
Food Values Evolution



Affordability remains the dominant food value, consistently cited by an average of 44% of respondents and rising again to 45.5% in Spring 2026. Nutrition ranks second, peaking at 28.8% in Fall 2025 before easing to 24.9%, while taste remains stable around 15%–18%. Other factors such as availability, social responsibility, environmental impact, and other considerations remain relatively low and unchanged, each below 6%. Overall, cost continues to outweigh all other food values by a wide margin.

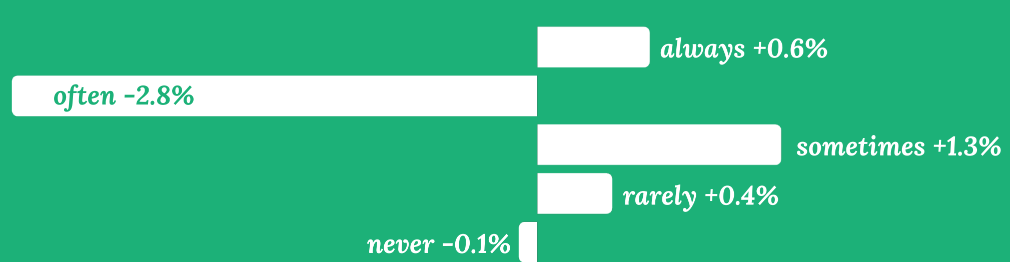
"Affordability continues to dominate how Canadians think about food—far outweighing nutrition, taste, or sustainability—underscoring that cost remains the defining factor in today's food economy."

FIGURE 11:
How often do you choose local foods over non-local foods?[12]



12. The total is less than 100% as answers "I do not buy local food" are excluded from the graph.

Year Over Year Variation (Spring 2026 vs Spring 2025)



Most Canadians buy local food "sometimes," though this share declined from 50.2% in Fall 2024 to 47.8% in Spring 2026, suggesting slightly less consistent engagement. The "often" category rose sharply with the emergence of the "Buy Canadian" movement in Spring 2025 (34.4%) and peaked in Fall 2025 (41.5%), before easing to 31.6% in Spring 2026. Meanwhile, the "always" group has grown modestly over time, reaching 9.7%, indicating a small but committed segment. Overall, the data suggests that while the "Buy Canadian" movement initially boosted local purchasing habits, its momentum may be softening, with affordability and convenience likely reasserting themselves as primary drivers.

TABLE 1:
Value-Based Behaviours[13]

	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	YoY Variation Spring 2026 vs Spring 2025
Check nutrition label on products before buying new foods	3.47	3.47	3.56	3.63	0.16
Choose local foods over non-local foods	3.27	3.38	3.35	3.43	0.05
Choose generic or store brand foods over brand-name foods	2.91	3.50	3.50	3.55	0.05
Choose wild-caught fish over farm-raised fish	3.19	3.29	2.59	3.29	0.00
Choose organic foods over non-organic foods	2.52	2.54	2.70	2.76	0.22
Choose cage-free eggs over conventional eggs	2.57	2.72	2.70	2.58	-0.14
Choose grass-fed beef over conventional beef	2.69	2.85	2.93	2.97	0.12
Choose plant-based proteins over animal proteins	2.43	2.34	2.34	2.41	0.07

13. Tables 1 to 3 show weighted mean score, excluding answers other than Always to Never (e.g.: I do not eat..., I am not sure)

MEAN SCORES
Never: 1
Rarely: 2
Sometimes: 3
Often: 4
Always: 5

This table shows a gradual strengthening of value-based food behaviours among Canadians, with most indicators trending upward between Fall 2024 and Spring 2026. Checking nutrition labels remains the most common behaviour and continues to rise, while choosing local foods and opting for generic or store brands also show steady gains. Notably, interest in organic foods has increased the most (+0.22), reflecting growing attention to perceived quality and health. In contrast, choosing cage-free eggs is the only behaviour to decline, suggesting price sensitivity may be limiting uptake. Overall, the data indicates that while consumers are becoming more value-conscious, affordability continues to shape how these preferences are expressed.

Interesting Fact:

10% said: I do not buy beef

TABLE 2:
Risk-Based Behaviours[13]

MEAN SCORES
Never: 1
Rarely: 2
Sometimes: 3
Often: 4
Always: 5

	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	YoY Variation Spring 2026 vs Spring 2025
Check the use-by / sell-by date on products at the store	4.02	4.09	4.08	4.13	0.04
Throw away food when it is past the "Use-By" date	3.02	3.02	2.84	3.07	0.05
Eat fresh fruits and vegetables without washing them	2.34	2.32	2.38	2.40	0.08

The table shows that risk-based behaviours remain relatively stable, with a slight increase in vigilance over time. Checking use-by or sell-by dates is the most common behaviour and continues to rise modestly, reaching 4.13 in Spring 2026. Discarding food past its use-by date has also increased slightly, suggesting continued caution around food safety. Meanwhile, the practice of eating fruits and vegetables without washing them has edged up, indicating a small but notable persistence of riskier habits. Overall, while food safety awareness remains high, some behaviours suggest room for improved consumer education.

TABLE 3:
Sustainability-Based Behaviours[13]

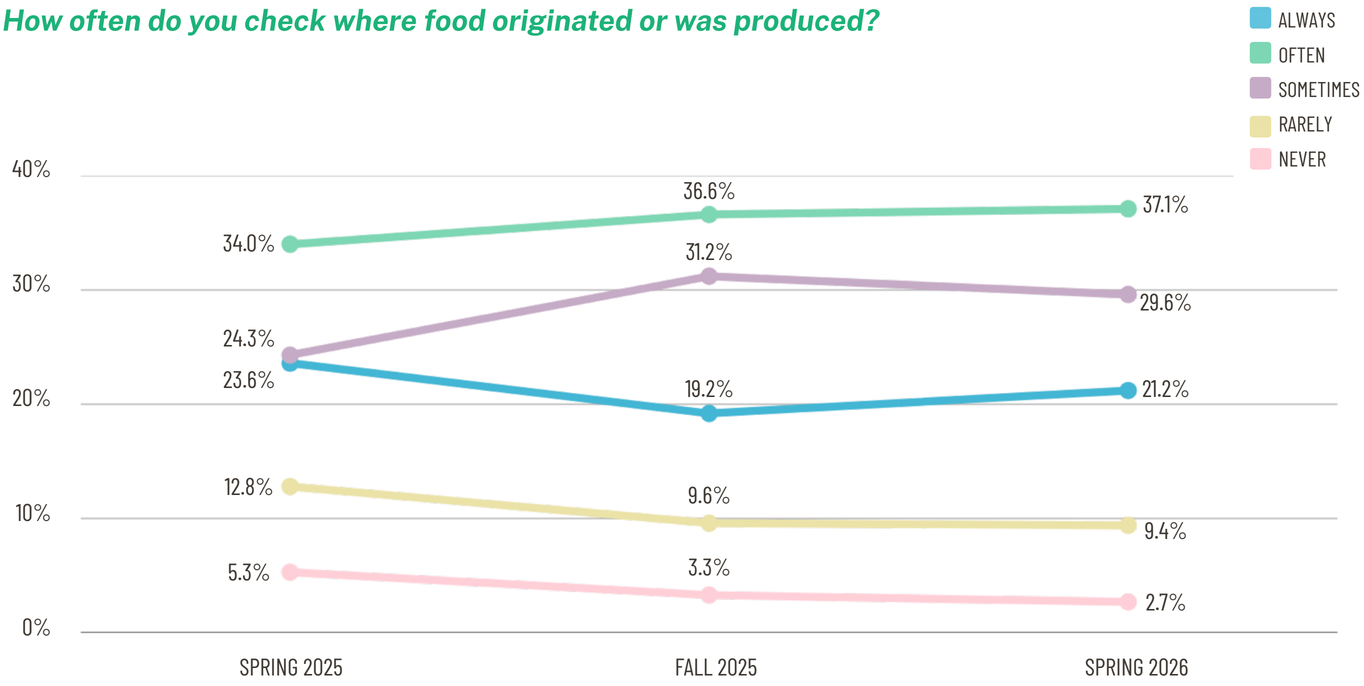
MEAN SCORES
Never: 1
Rarely: 2
Sometimes: 3
Often: 4
Always: 5

	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	YoY Variation Spring 2026 vs Spring 2025
Recycle food packaging	4.25	4.34	4.34	4.37	0.03
Take steps to reduce food waste at home	4.08	4.16	4.13	4.18	0.02
Compost food scraps	3.49	3.48	3.57	3.61	0.13

Table 3 shows that sustainability-based behaviours are well established and continue to strengthen slightly over time. Recycling food packaging remains the most common practice, with consistently high scores and a modest increase to 4.37 in Spring 2026. Efforts to reduce food waste at home also remain strong and stable, while composting food scraps shows the most notable growth (+0.13), indicating increasing adoption. Overall, Canadians appear highly engaged in everyday sustainability practices, with gradual but steady improvements across all measures.

13. Tables 1 to 3 show weighted mean score, excluding answers other than Always to Never (e.g.: I do not eat..., I am not sure)

FIGURE 12a:
How often do you check where food originated or was produced?



Canadians are increasingly attentive to where their food comes from, with the share of respondents who "often" check rising from 34.0% in Spring 2025 to 37.1% in Spring 2026. The "sometimes" category remains significant but has eased slightly after peaking in Fall 2025, while "always" checking has recovered modestly to 21.2%. Meanwhile, the proportion who "rarely" or "never" check continues to decline. Overall, the data suggests a growing and more consistent interest in food origin among consumers.

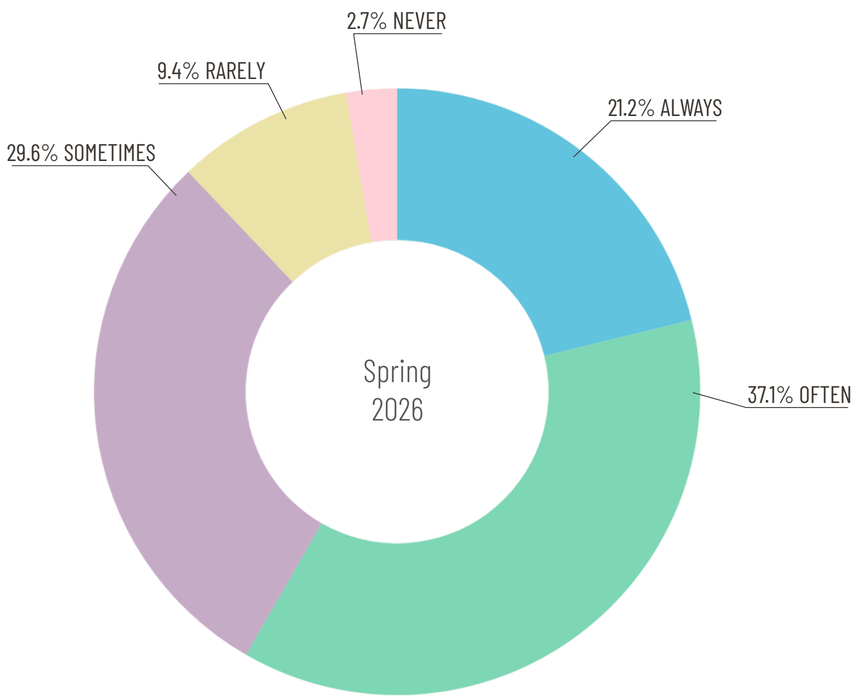
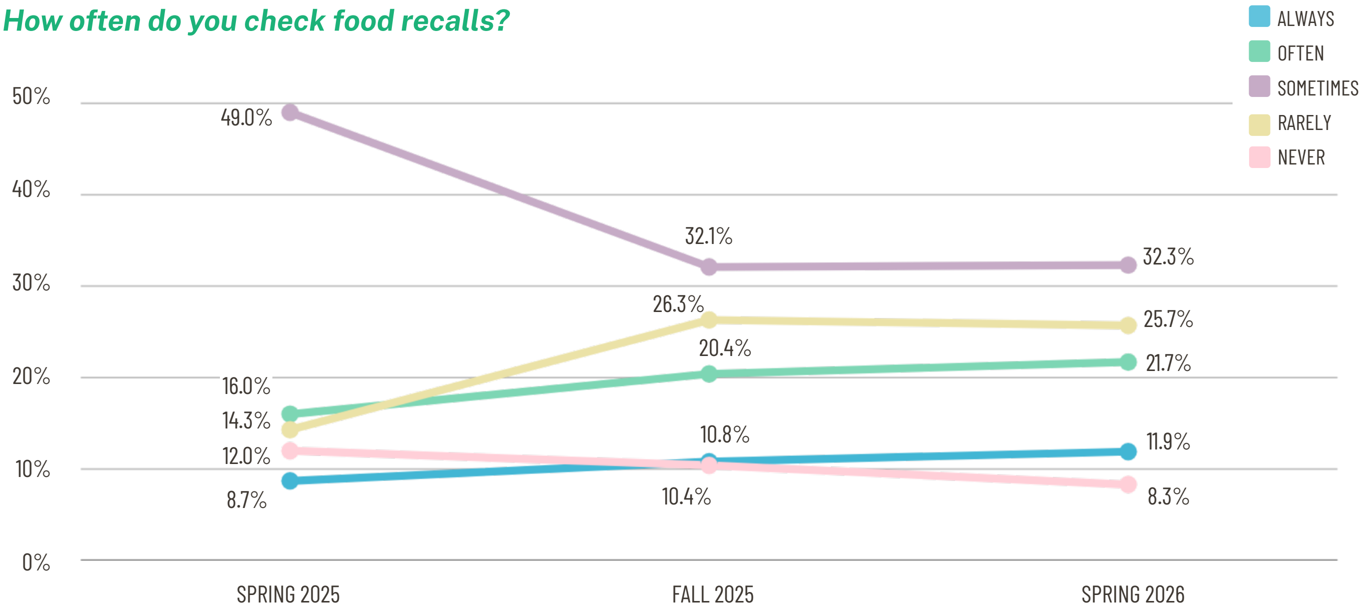


FIGURE 12b:
How often do you check food recalls?



Checking food recalls remains an occasional behaviour for most Canadians, though patterns are shifting. The share of respondents who "sometimes" check recalls dropped sharply from 49.0% in Spring 2025 to about 32% thereafter, while "often" checking has increased steadily to 21.7% in Spring 2026. At the same time, the proportion who "rarely" check rose and remains relatively high at 25.7%, suggesting uneven engagement. "Always" checking remains limited but has edged up slightly. Overall, awareness appears to be becoming more polarized, with some consumers more engaged while many still check recalls infrequently.

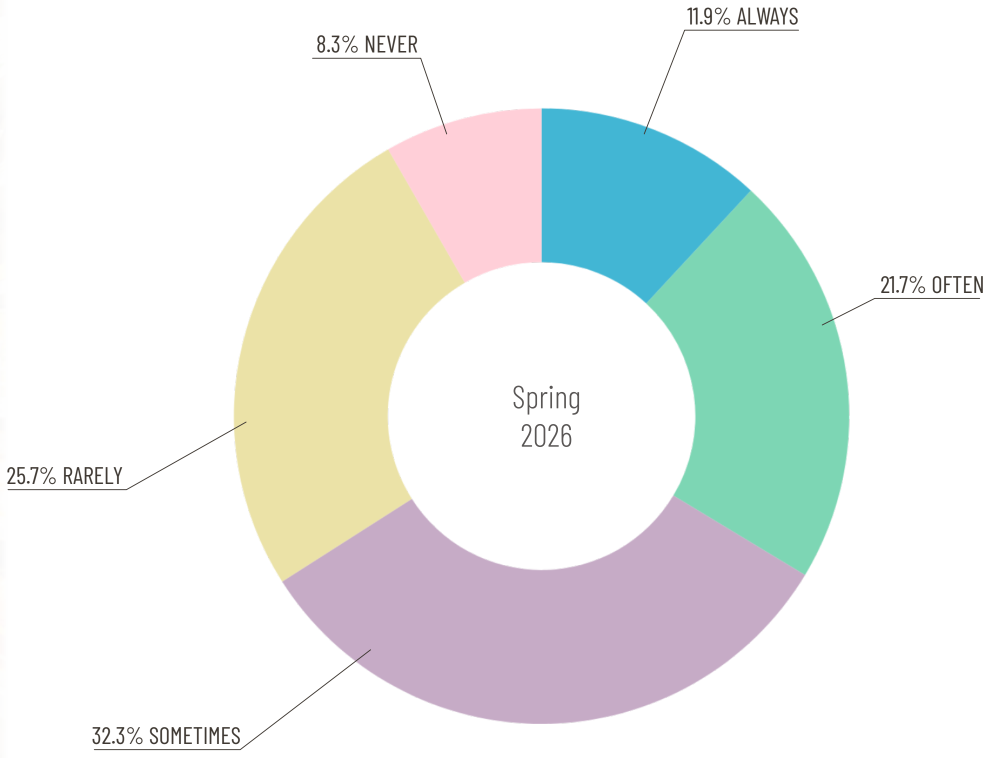
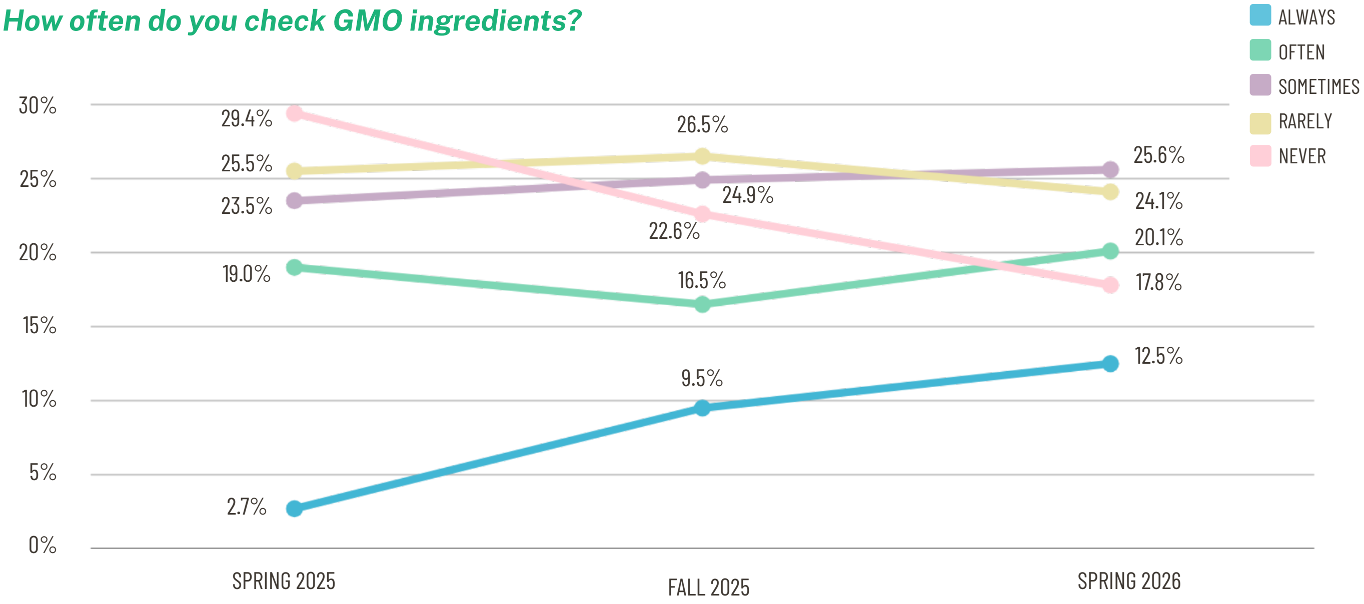


FIGURE 12c:
How often do you check GMO ingredients?



Results show a gradual increase in attention to GMO ingredients, though overall engagement remains moderate. The share of respondents who "always" check has risen notably from 2.7% in Spring 2025 to 12.5% in Spring 2026, while checking "often" has also increased after a dip. At the same time, the proportion who "never" check has declined significantly, indicating growing awareness. However, most Canadians still fall into the "sometimes" or "rarely" categories, suggesting that checking for GMO ingredients is becoming more common but not yet a consistent habit.

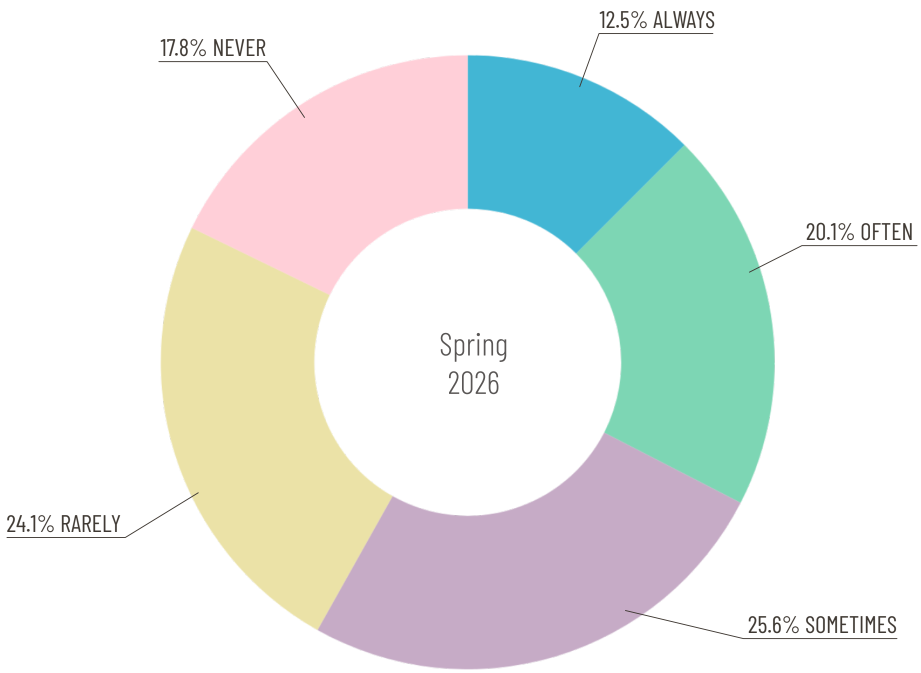
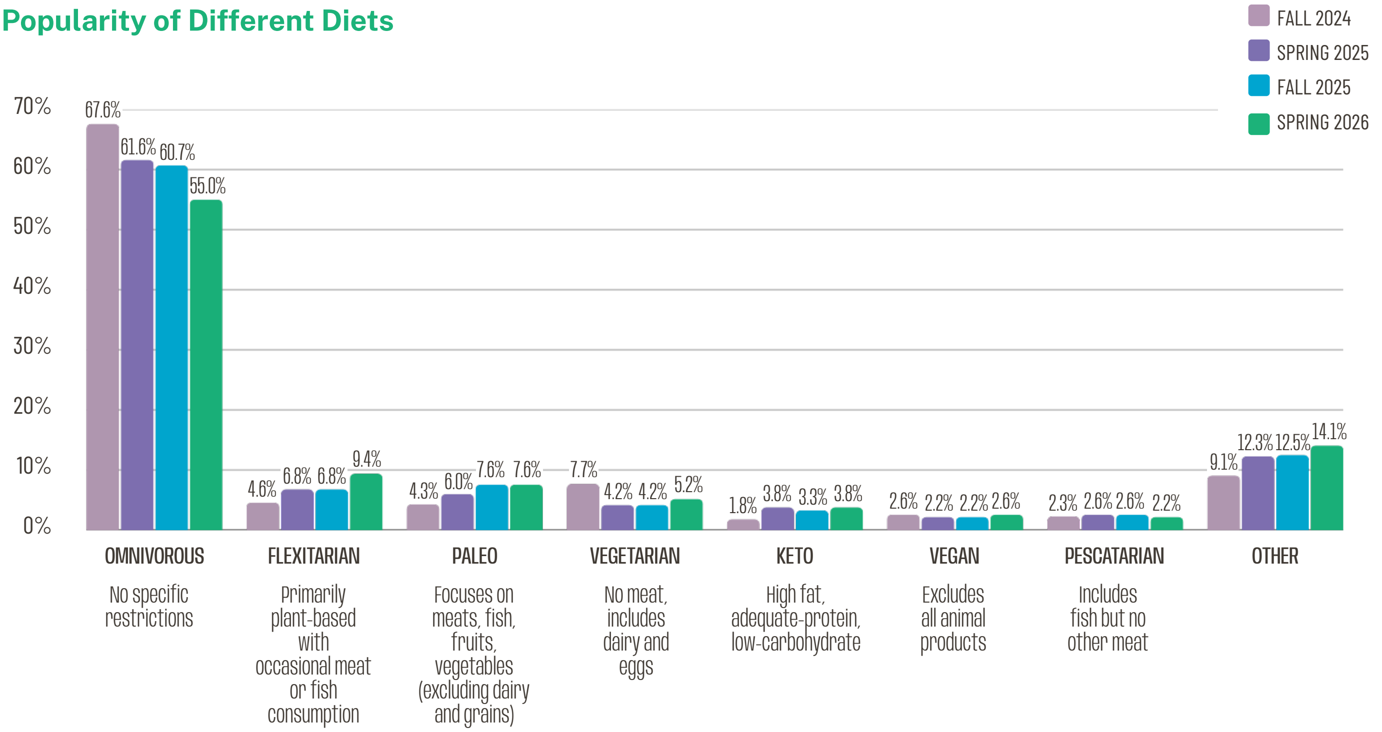
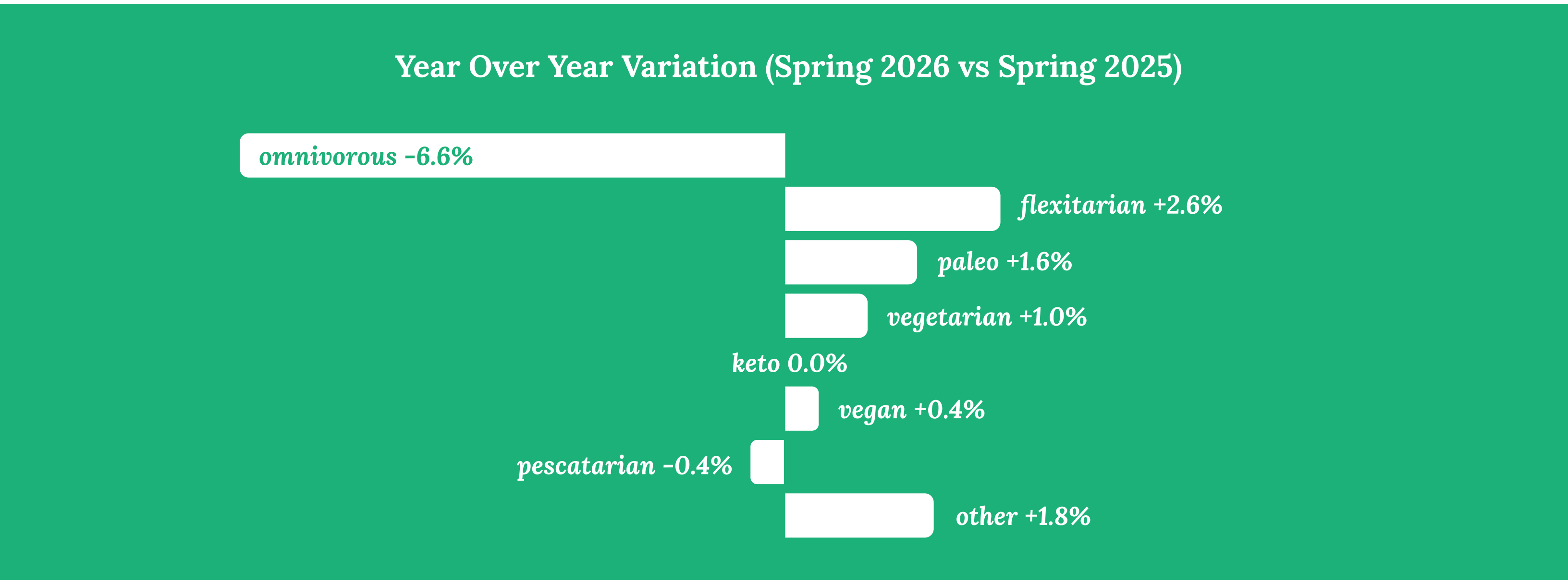


FIGURE 13:
Popularity of Different Diets

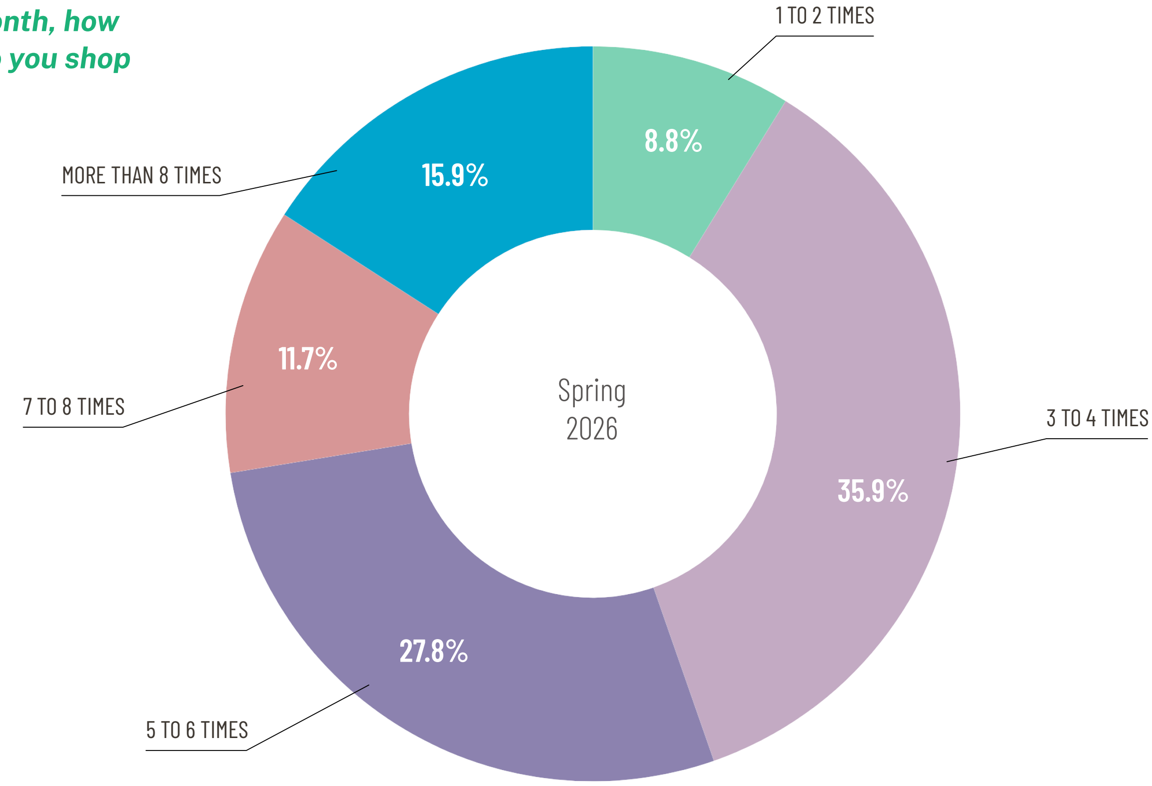




The omnivorous diet remains dominant, though its share has declined notably from 67.6% in Fall 2024 to 55.0% in Spring 2026. Increasing meat prices may be a cause of this shift. At the same time, more flexible and niche diets are gaining traction, particularly flexitarian, which has risen to 9.4%, along with modest increases in paleo and “other” diets. Vegetarian and vegan diets remain relatively stable and represent a small share of the population. Overall, the data suggests a gradual diversification of dietary preferences, with Canadians moving slightly away from omnivorous habits toward more varied and flexible eating patterns.

New Spring 2026!

FIGURE 14a:
In a typical month, how many times do you shop for groceries?



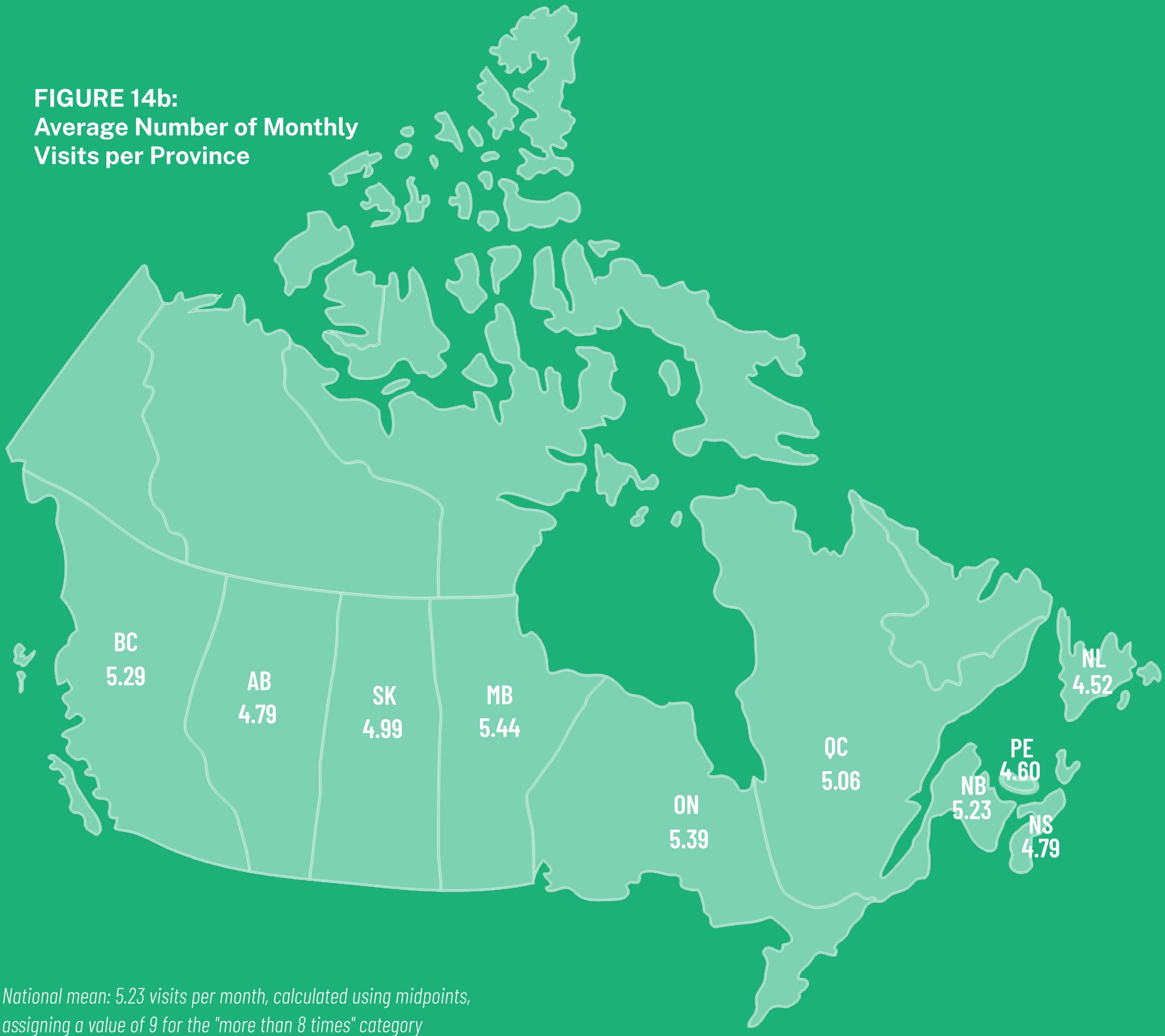
Canadians shop for groceries frequently, with the largest share visiting stores 3 to 4 times per month, followed by 5 to 6 times. Smaller but notable segments shop either less often (1 to 2 times) or much more frequently (7 or more times), indicating a mix of planned and more frequent, smaller trips. The provincial data reinforces this trend, with a national average of 5.23 visits per month and relatively modest variation across regions — Manitoba and Ontario slightly above average, while Atlantic provinces and Alberta are somewhat lower. Overall, the data suggests that Canadians are making regular, repeat visits to grocery stores, consistent with more deliberate and price-conscious shopping habits.

Canadians shop for groceries on average of

5.23

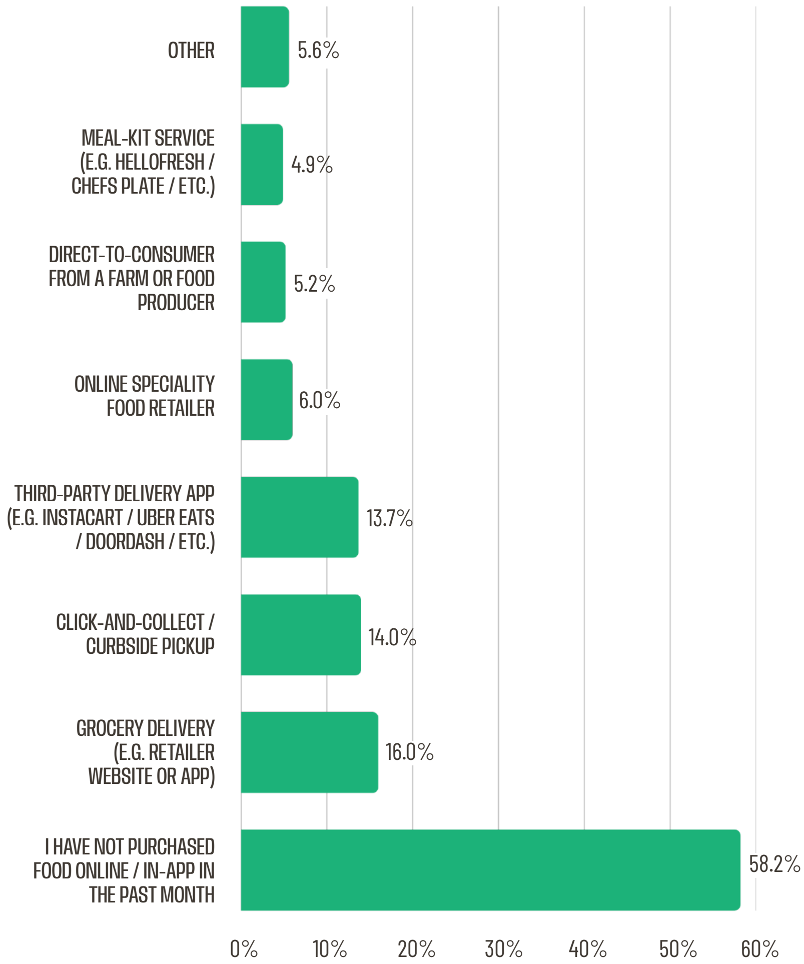
visits per month

FIGURE 14b:
Average Number of Monthly Visits per Province



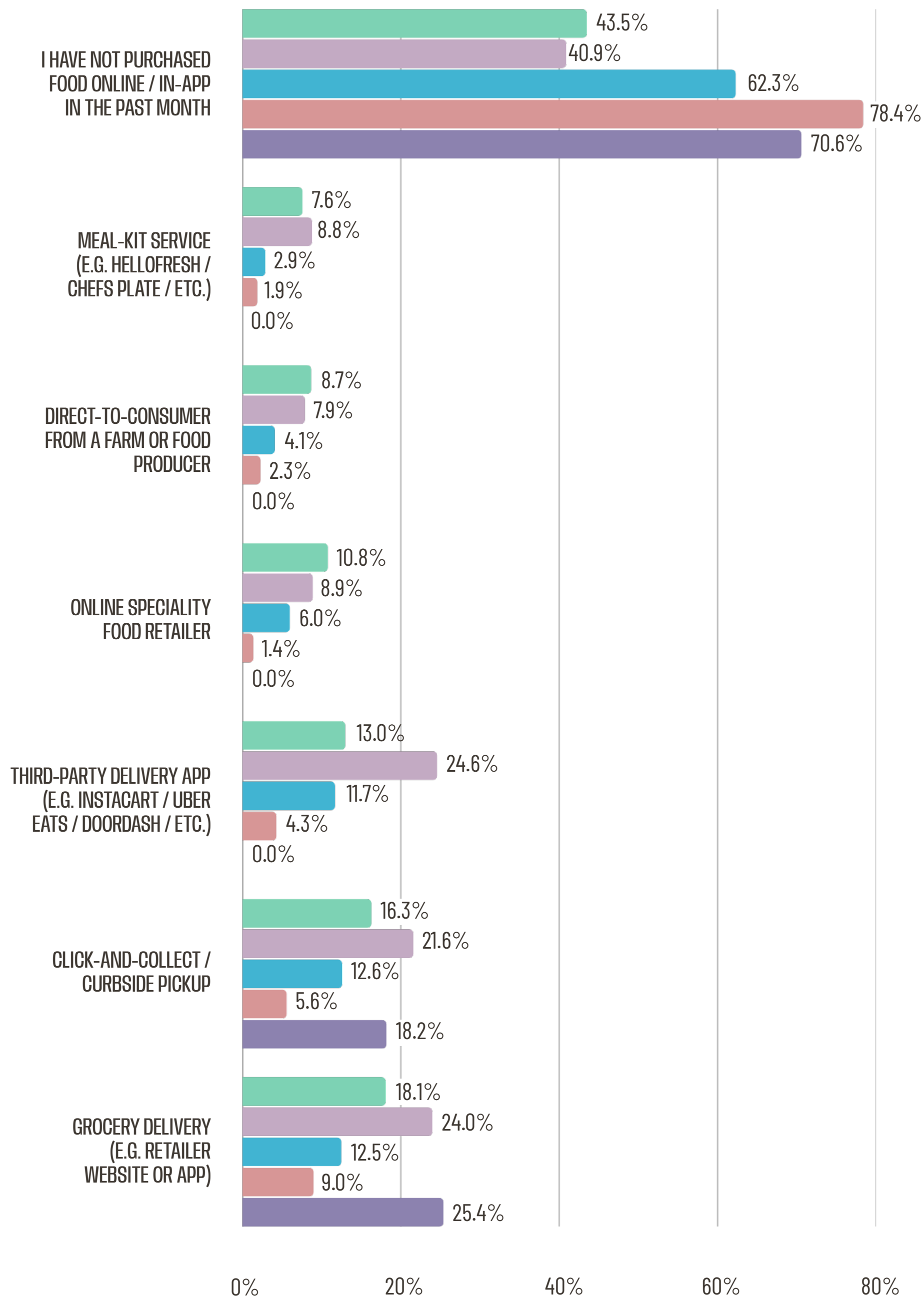
National mean: 5.23 visits per month, calculated using midpoints, assigning a value of 9 for the "more than 8 times" category

FIGURE 15a:
Which online / in-app food purchasing formats have you used in the past month? (Please select all that apply)



Online food purchasing remains limited in Canada, with a majority of respondents (58.2%) reporting no use of online or in-app food services in the past month. Among users, grocery delivery (16.0%), click-and-collect (14.0%), and third-party delivery apps (13.7%) are the most commonly used formats, while meal kits, direct-to-consumer options, and specialty retailers remain niche. Importantly, these channels represent distinct markets: restaurant delivery is a large and mature segment, while online grocery remains relatively small and still developing. Overall, the data suggests that while digital food purchasing is growing, adoption remains uneven and far from universal.

FIGURE 15b:
Online / In-App Food Use in the Last Month, by Generation



Results highlight pronounced generational differences in online food purchasing, with younger Canadians leading adoption. Gen Z and Millennials are far more engaged across all digital formats — especially grocery delivery, click-and-collect, and third-party apps — while Baby Boomers remain largely offline, with 78.4% reporting no online purchases in the past month. Gen X shows moderate usage, sitting between younger and older cohorts. Niche channels like meal kits, direct-to-consumer, and specialty retailers attract limited interest across all groups. Overall, the data suggests that the growth of digital food purchasing in Canada will be driven primarily by younger generations.

A new question was added to this edition of the survey, where participants were showed the following symbol:

They were then asked: When you see the Health Canada front-of-package nutrition symbol on a food product, what is your immediate reaction?

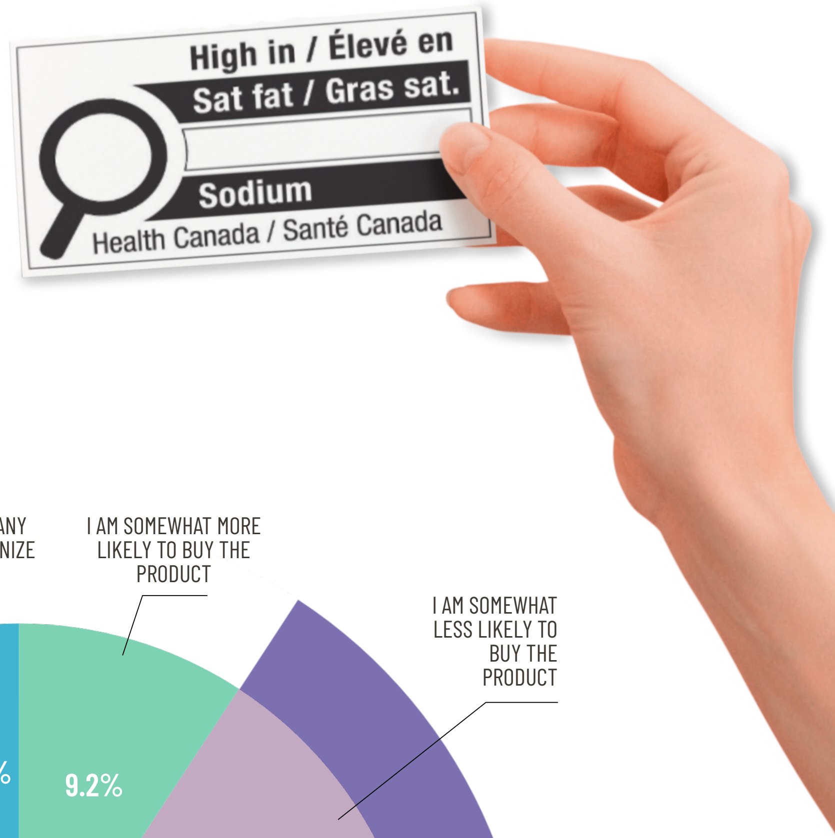
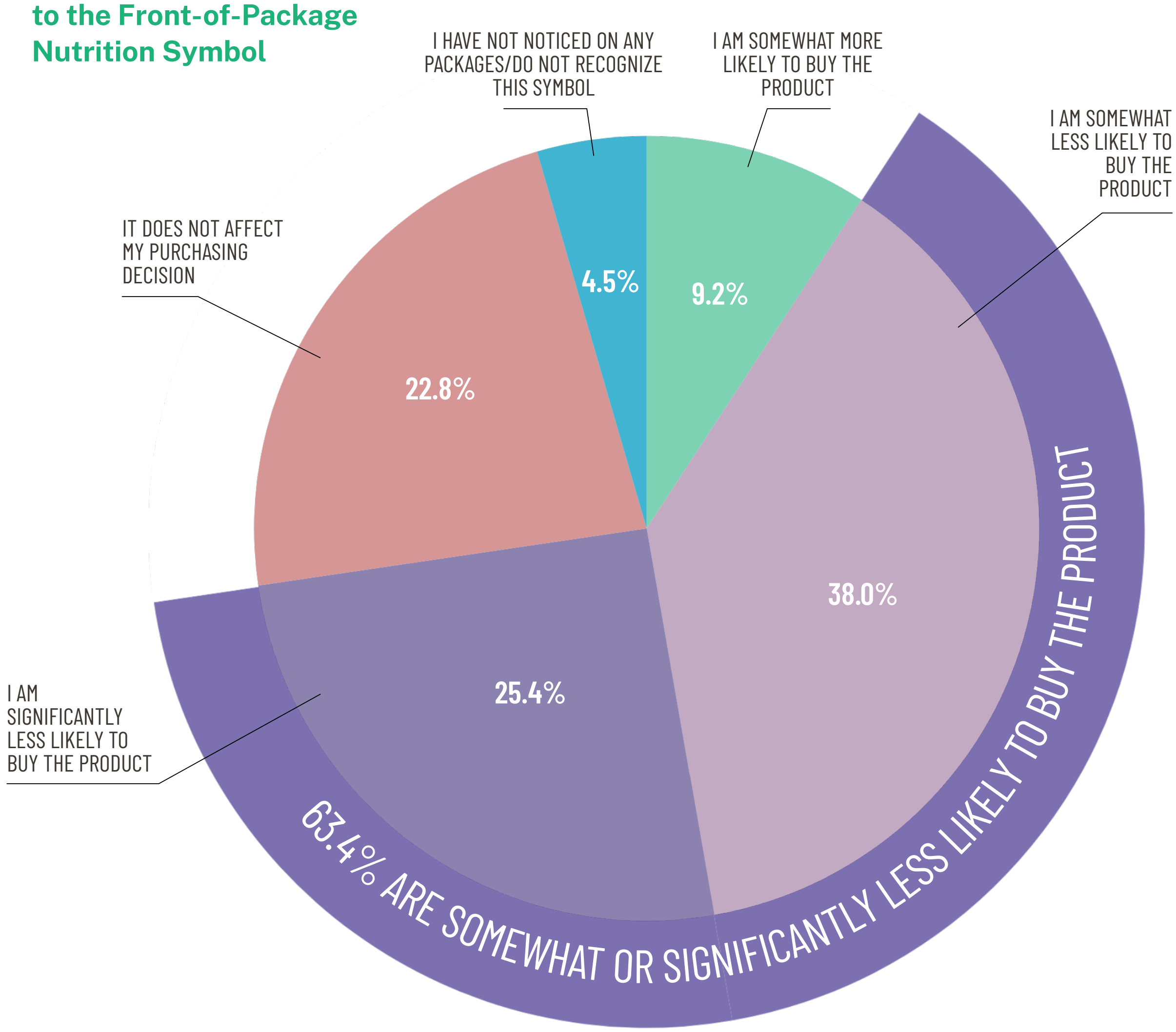


FIGURE 16: Purchase Decision Related to the Front-of-Package Nutrition Symbol



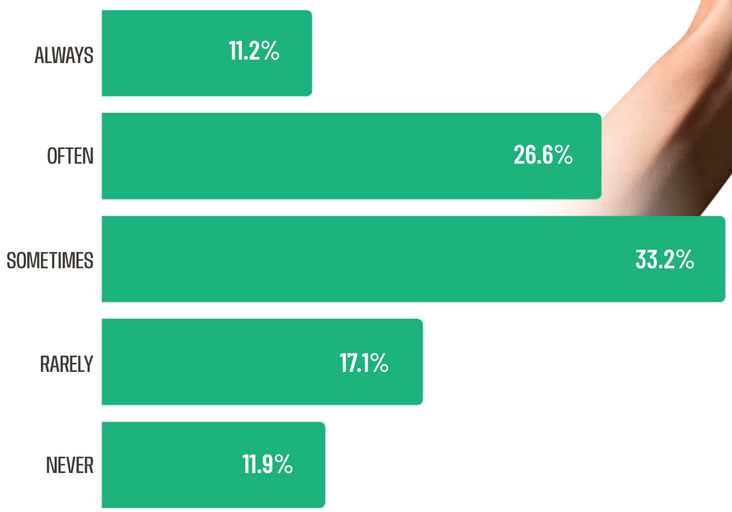
Health Canada front-of-package nutrition symbol tends to discourage purchases rather than encourage them. A majority of respondents indicate they are less likely to buy a product when they see the symbol, with 38.0% somewhat less likely and 25.4% significantly less likely. Only a small share (9.2%) report being more likely to purchase, while 22.8% say it does not affect their decision. A small portion (4.5%) have not noticed or do not recognize the symbol. Overall, the symbol appears to be influencing consumer behaviour primarily as a deterrent.

FIGURE 17:
How has your alcohol consumption changed in the last 12 months?

The chart shows that most Canadians report no change in their alcohol consumption, with a majority (56.5%) indicating their habits have stayed the same over the past 12 months. However, more respondents report decreasing consumption (11.0% slightly, 16.9% significantly) than increasing it (9.0% slightly, 6.6% significantly), suggesting a net downward trend. Overall, while stability dominates, the data points to a gradual shift toward reduced alcohol consumption.

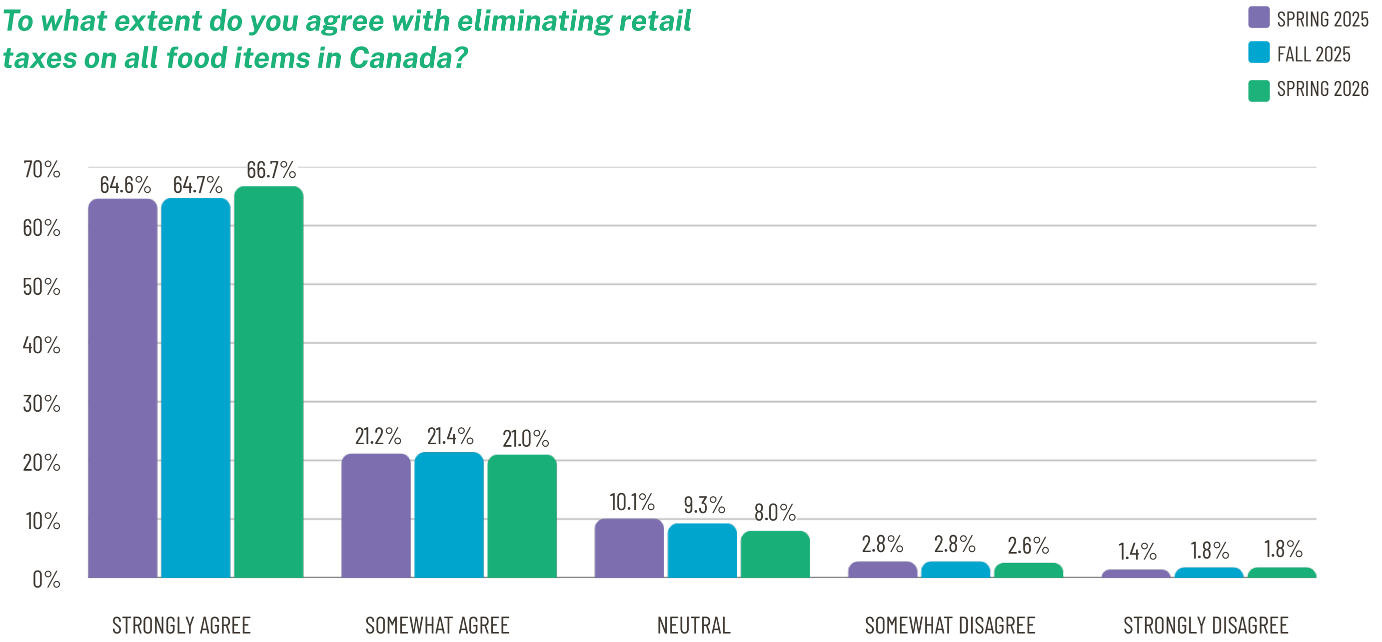
NEW

FIGURE 18:
To what extent do you agree with the statement: "I actively try to base my meals on the principles outlined in Canada's Food Guide"?



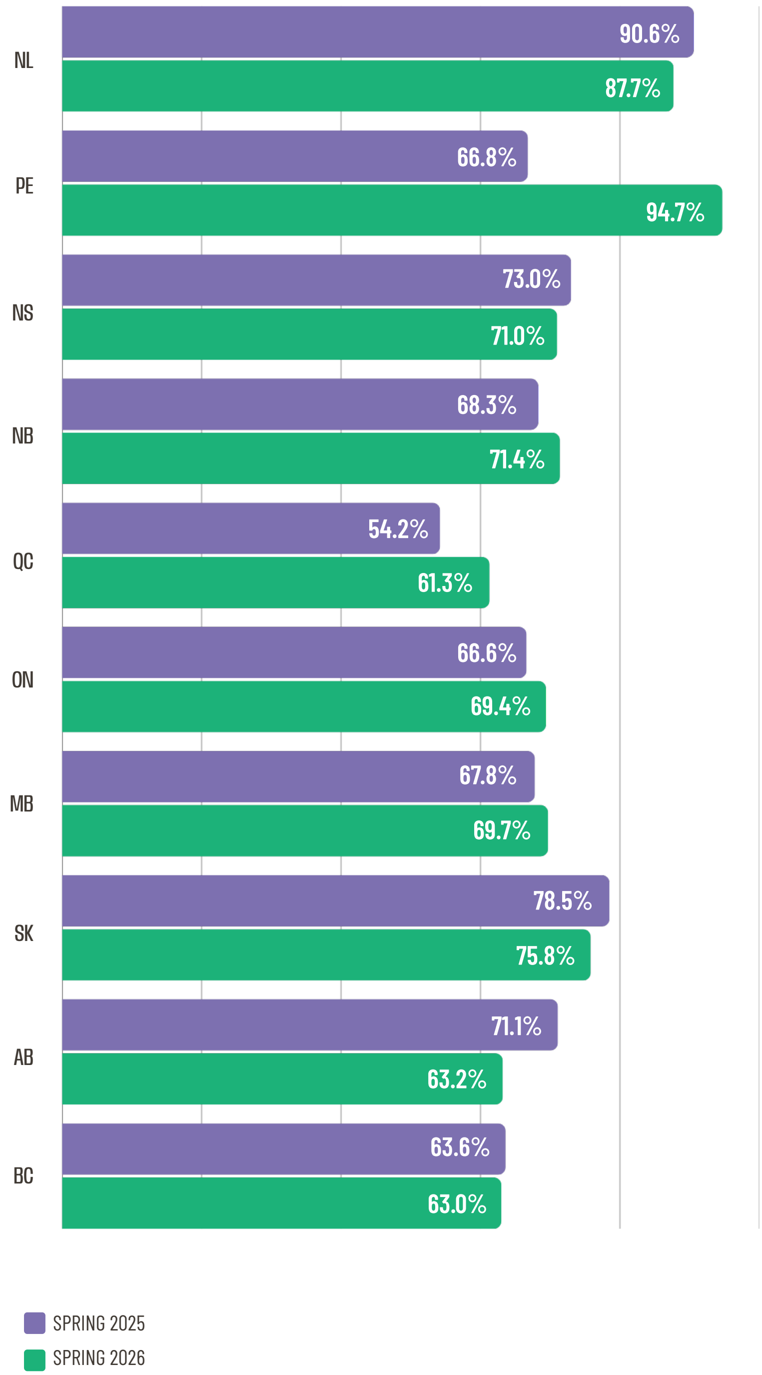
Most Canadians engage with Canada's Food Guide principles at least occasionally, though consistent adherence remains limited. The largest share of respondents (33.2%) report following the guidelines "sometimes," followed by 26.6% who do so "often." Only a small proportion (11.2%) say they "always" base their meals on the guide, while nearly 29% report rarely or never doing so. Overall, the data suggests broad awareness and intermittent use, but not strong or consistent integration into daily eating habits.

FIGURE 19:
To what extent do you agree with eliminating retail taxes on all food items in Canada?



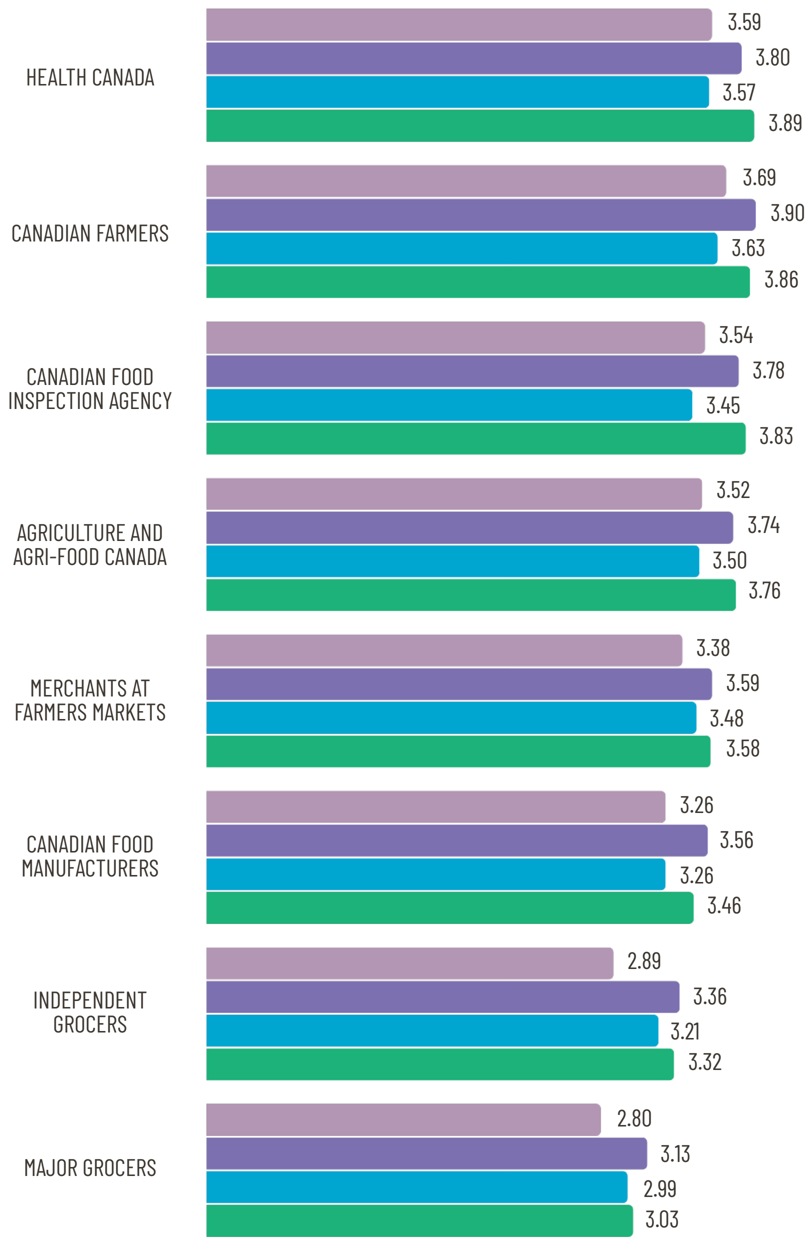
There is overwhelming support among Canadians for eliminating retail taxes on food, with about two-thirds (66.7% in Spring 2026) strongly agreeing with the idea. When combined with those who somewhat agree (21.0%), nearly 88% of respondents are in favour. Neutral responses remain limited, while opposition is minimal, with fewer than 5% expressing any level of disagreement. Overall, the data suggests a broad and consistent consensus in favour of removing food-related retail taxes.

FIGURE 20:
Strongly Agree to Eliminate Retail Taxes on All Food Items in Canada, by Provinces, Spring 2025 vs Spring 2026



Spring 2026 results show strong support across all provinces for eliminating retail taxes on food, though levels vary regionally and have shifted slightly over time. Atlantic Canada continues to lead, with particularly high support in Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island. The Middle of the country - Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario - also show strong backing, while Quebec remains the least supportive, though still with a majority in favour and nearly catching up with the other provinces' support. Compared to Spring 2025, some provinces — notably Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Quebec — have recorded notable increases, while others, such as Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, have seen slight declines. Alberta, for its part, experienced a more pronounced drop, with support falling from 71.1% to 63.2%. Overall, support remains widespread and robust across the country.

Figure 21:
Comparison of Trust in Food Institution[14]



FALL 2024
SPRING 2025
FALL 2025
SPRING 2026

14. Weighted means adjusted to exclude 'I am not sure' answers

Trust in food institutions remains relatively stable, with modest shifts between Fall 2024 and Spring 2026. **Health Canada now ranks highest** (3.89), slightly ahead of Canadian farmers (3.86), who previously held the top position. Regulatory bodies such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada continue to score strongly, reflecting sustained confidence in public institutions. Since Fall 2025, the largest gains in trust are observed for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, followed by Health Canada, indicating a **strengthening of confidence in government oversight.** In contrast, major grocers remain the least trusted group despite a slight improvement, while independent grocers and food manufacturers sit in the mid-range. Overall, trust levels are broadly steady, with public institutions maintaining an edge over private-sector actors.

METHODOLOGY

This survey, conducted on **February 23 and 24, 2026** aimed to assess Canadians' perceptions of food-related trust factors, price increases, and behaviours regarding food purchasing and consumption.

SAMPLE SIZE AND POPULATION:

The survey consisted of **3,000 respondents** from across Canada.

The sample was designed to be representative of the general Canadian population in terms of demographics such as age, gender, and region.

Respondents were recruited through an online panel, ensuring a diverse cross-section of participants from urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Quotas were applied to ensure appropriate representation across provinces and territories, ensuring that the data accurately reflects the Canadian population.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT:

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire inspired largely by Purdue University's Consumer Food Insights Report, which is regularly released by the University.

Respondents were asked a series of closed-ended questions, including Likert scales and multiple-choice formats, to gauge their trust in various entities, their food purchasing habits, and their perceptions of price changes.

DATA COLLECTION:

Data collection was facilitated by Caddle Canada, the data provider, via an online survey platform over two days.

The online mode ensured that respondents had access to clear instructions, anonymity, and time to reflect on their answers, reducing potential response bias.

WEIGHTING:

The data was weighted based on the latest Canadian census figures to adjust for over-or under-representation in key demographic variables such as gender, age, region, and education level. This weighting ensures that the results are nationally representative.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN:

The questionnaire covered several key areas:

Food Trust Factors: Respondents rated their trust in various organizations and entities (e.g., Canadian farmers, major grocers, government bodies like Health Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly distrust, 5 = Strongly trust).

Food Price Perception: Questions assessed respondents' perceptions of food price changes over the past 12 months and their expectations for the next 12 months. Respondents were also asked how closely they monitored food-related Consumer Price Index (CPI) reports.

Consumer Behavior: Questions explored how often respondents purchase specific types of foods (e.g., organic, grass-fed, wild-caught) and their environmental behaviors (e.g., composting, reducing food waste).

Perception of Government Estimates: Respondents compared their perceived food inflation with official government estimates.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the distribution of responses, and average trust scores were calculated for each food trust factor based on the 5-point scale.

Further cross-tabulations and inferential statistical analyses were conducted to explore potential relationships between demographic variables and responses.

MARGIN OF ERROR:

The margin of error for this survey is +/-1.8%, 19 times out of 20. However, as the survey was conducted online with non-probability sampling, the margin of error is less applicable.

LIMITATIONS:

As this was an online survey, certain population segments, such as Canadians without reliable internet access, may not be fully represented. Self-reporting bias may have affected some responses, particularly those regarding behaviors like food waste and recycling.

This methodology ensures that the findings provide a reliable reflection of Canadian attitudes and behaviors related to food trust, pricing, and consumption as of February 2026.

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