

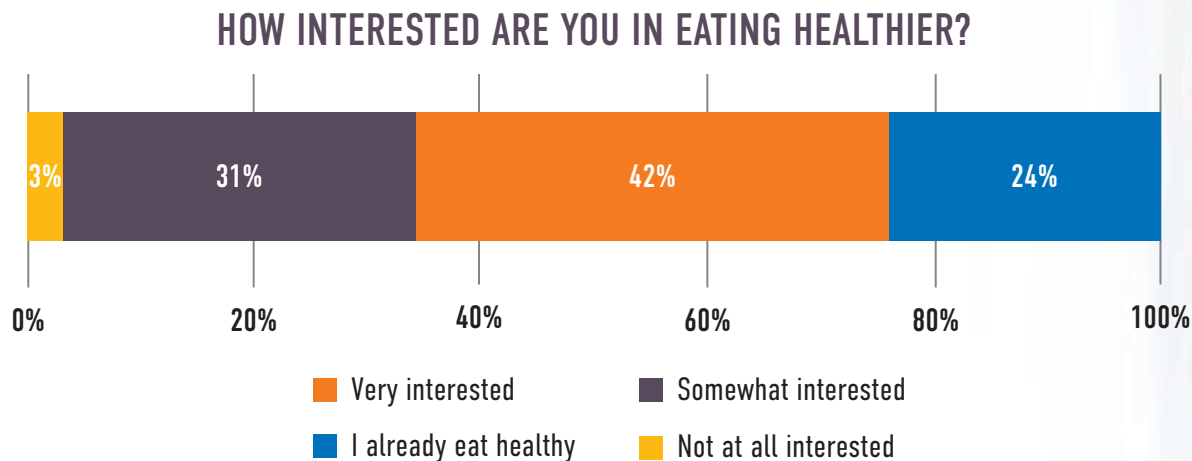
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Older Adults' Views
on Healthy Eating

 *Mather*
institute

A survey of 688 people aged 55 and better by Mather Institute reveals that, while motivations to eat healthier are high, there are opportunities to transform these good intentions into real-life changes.

Overall, nearly three-quarters of respondents were somewhat (31%) or very (42%) interested in eating healthier, and most others reported they already eat healthy (24%).

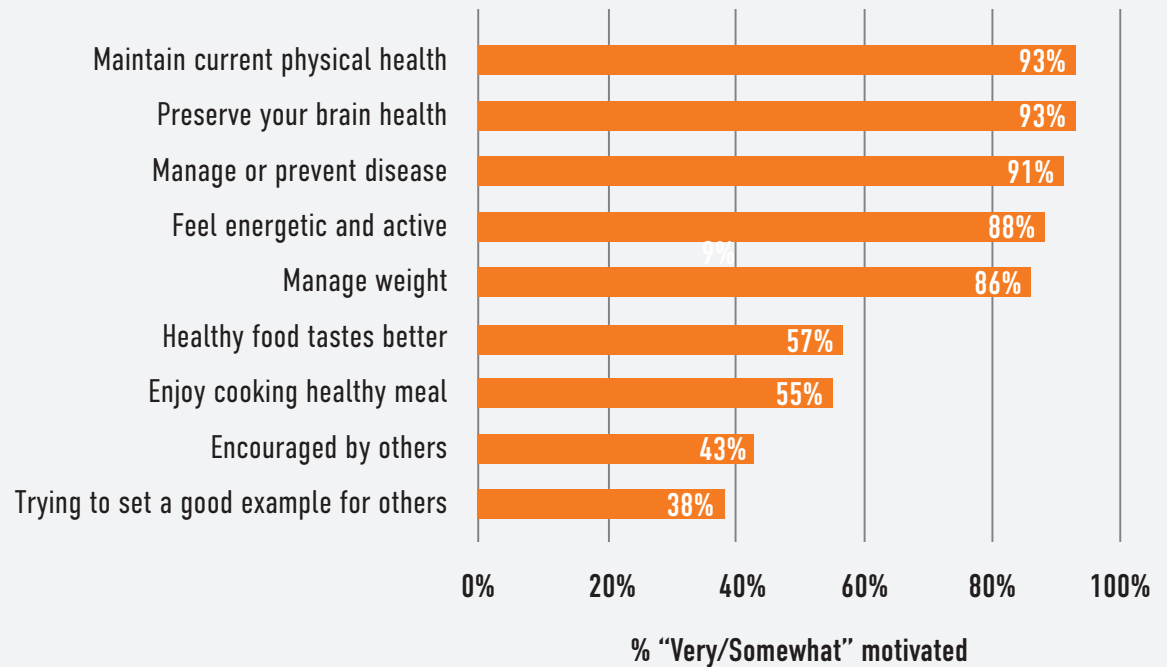


Brain health was a similarly strong motivator for healthy eating. This suggests that labels that identify specific foods and menu items as “brain healthy” may encourage people to make healthier choices. Many of the nutrition and lifestyle factors that contribute to heart health also promote brain health.

MOST ARE MOTIVATED TO IMPROVE THEIR DIET

Nearly all (93%) respondents were somewhat or very motivated to eat healthy to maintain their current physical health.

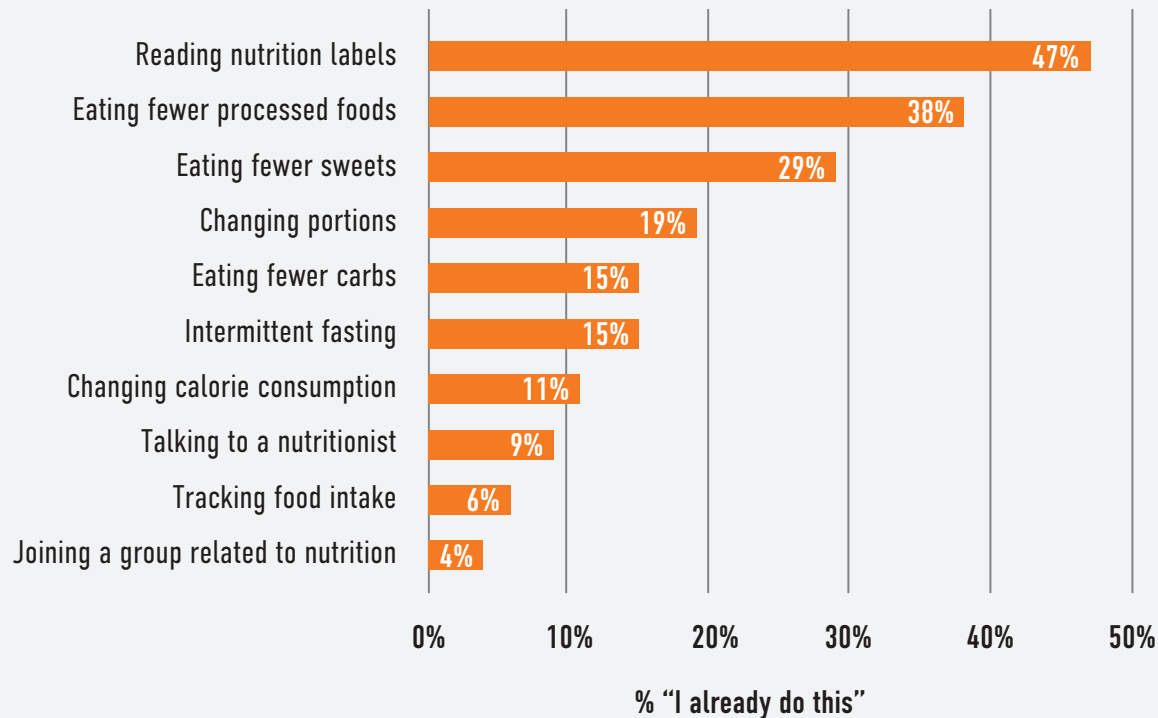
MOTIVATIONS FOR HEALTHY EATING



ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTHY EATING BEHAVIORS

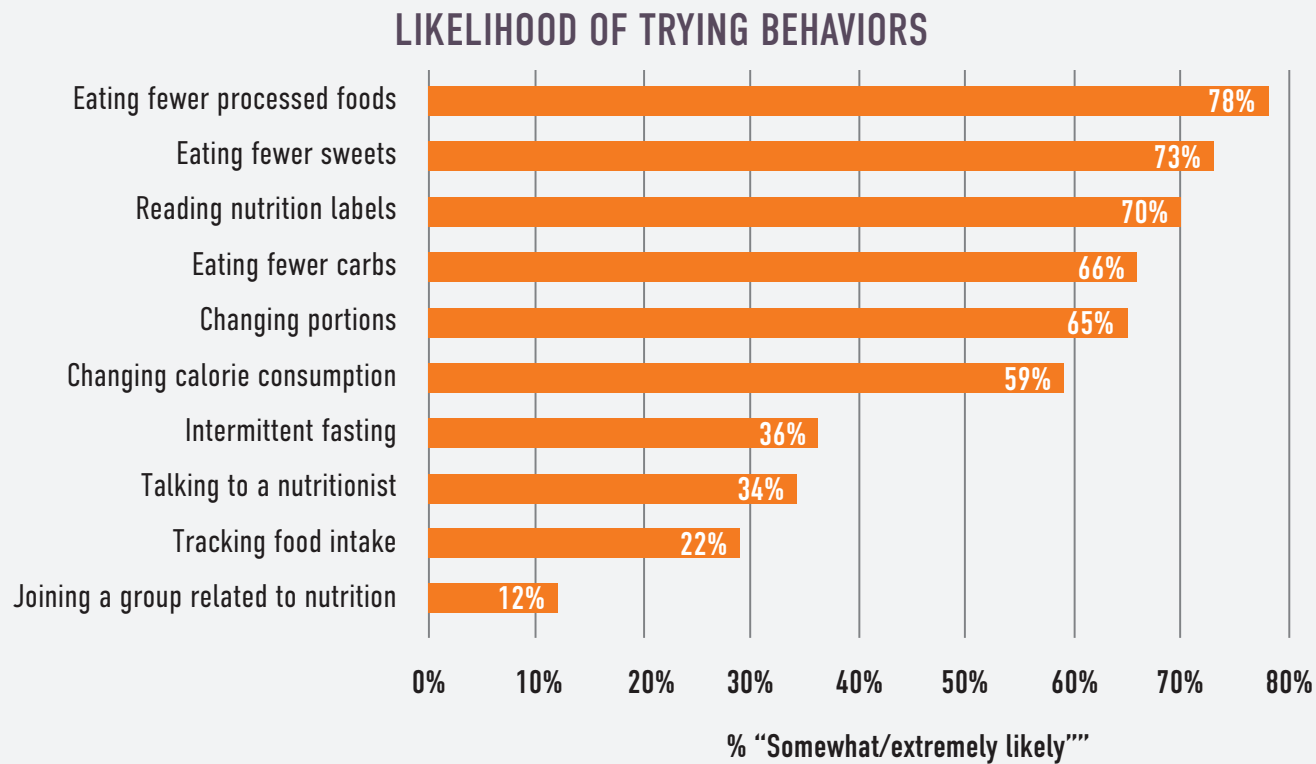
Respondents viewed a list of different nutritional behaviors and indicated if it's something they already do or, if not, how likely they would be to engage in healthy eating behaviors. The most common behavior was reading nutrition labels (47%). In addition, minimizing consumption of processed foods (38%) and sweets (29%) were reported by approximately a third of respondents. These actions are consistent with motivations to maintain one's physical health and brain health.

NUTRITIONAL BEHAVIOR ENGAGEMENT



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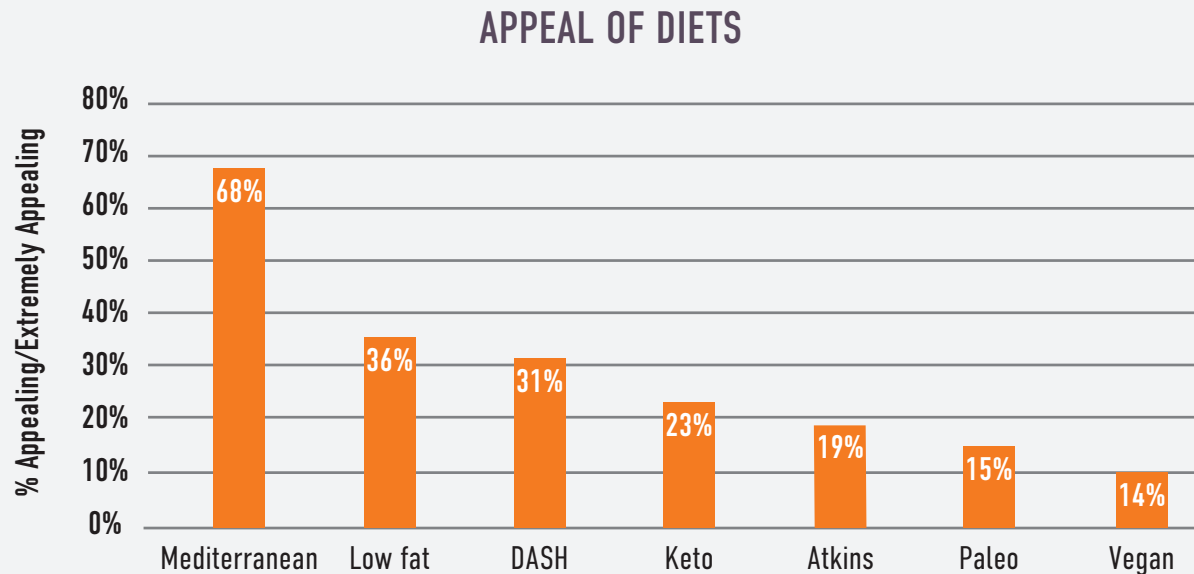
Respondents who did not already engage in healthy eating behaviors indicated they were likely to try some of them. In particular, **most respondents said they were likely to limit the amount of processed foods (78% somewhat/extremely likely) and sweets (73%) they eat and to begin reading nutrition labels (70%).** Over half of respondents were likely to try **changing their portions (65%), minimizing carbohydrates (66%), and changing calorie consumption (59%).** In contrast, only 34% of respondents said they would consider speaking to a physician or nutritionist to develop a personalized dietary plan.



THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET MAINTAINS POPULARITY

Respondents were shown a list of common, health-focused diets and asked to report their appeal or to indicate if they were unfamiliar with the diet.

In terms of appeal, over two-thirds of respondents rated the Mediterranean diet high, a diet which involves consuming foods that are traditionally common within Mediterranean countries (68% appealing/extremely appealing). The Mediterranean diet emphasizes eating primarily plant-based foods (such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds), coupled with a moderate amount of protein and olive oil. Half as many people found low fat (36%) and DASH (31%) diets appealing, and appeal was lower for the other diet types.

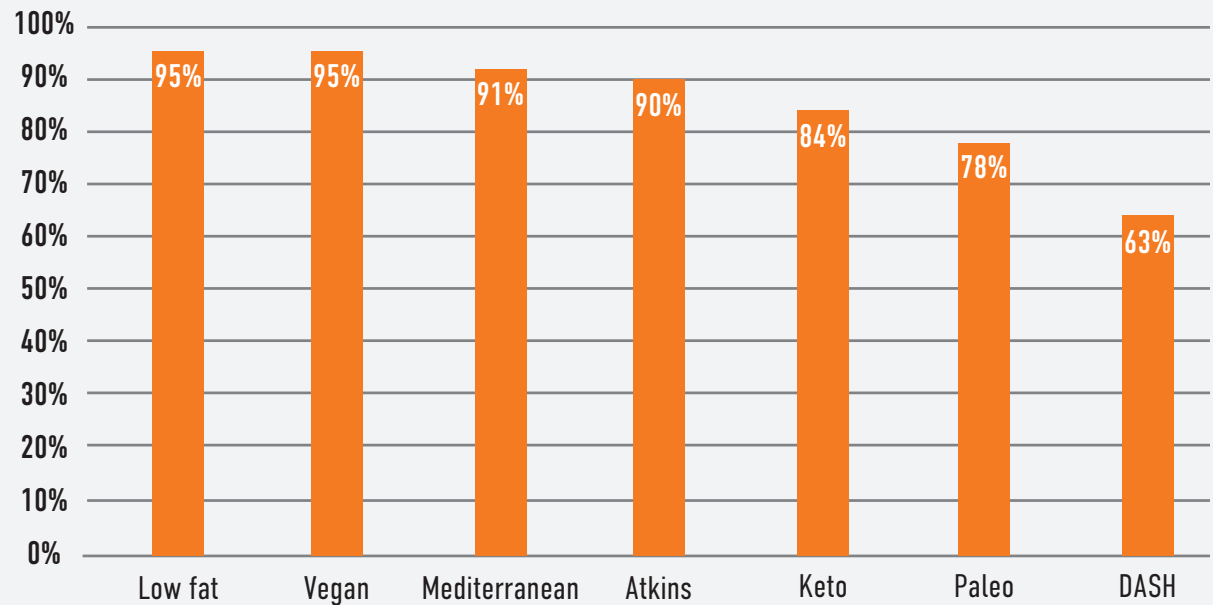


Only 63% of respondents were familiar with the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet—a dietary approach to reducing or preventing high blood pressure by limiting sodium intake and other nutritional recommendations. This is in spite of the fact that 74.5% of adults 60+ have hypertension, according to a 2017–2018 survey by the National Center for Health Statistics.

Respondents were also less familiar with the Paleo diet (i.e., eating the same foods as your hunter/gatherer ancestors; 78%) and the Keto diet (i.e., low carb, high protein and fat; 84%); however, at least 90% were familiar with the other types of diets.



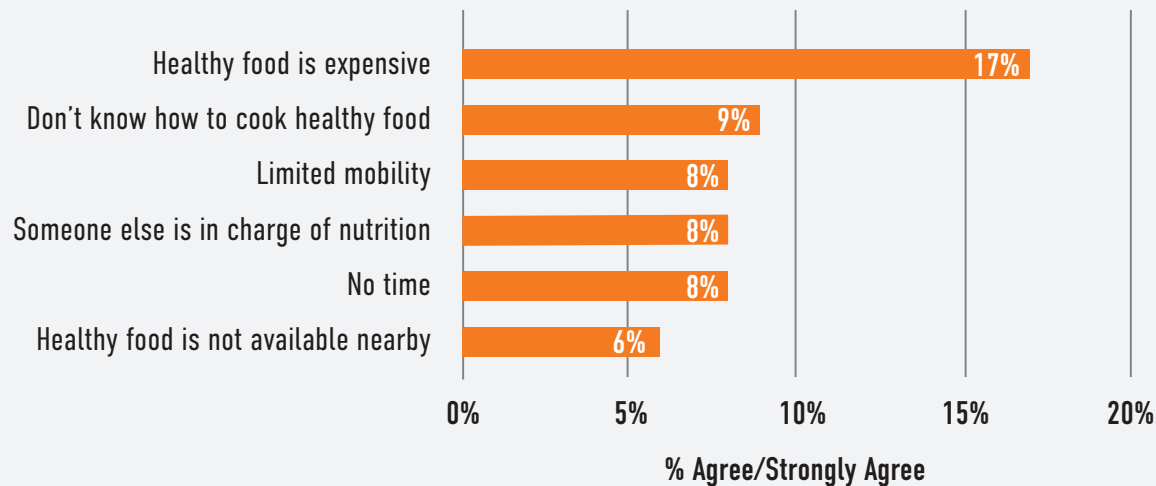
FAMILIARITY WITH DIETS



BARRIERS TO HEALTHY EATING

It is important to keep in mind that people may experience challenges to healthy eating, despite a desire to do so. Food cost is one barrier. Almost 1 out of 5 respondents agreed that they cannot afford healthy food because it is expensive (17% agree/strongly agree). Fewer respondents agreed that other factors, such as access to healthy food (6%) and time constraints (8%), were barriers to their healthy eating.

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY

All respondents were ages 55+ (average is 70 years), and most were White/Caucasian (82%), female (59%), and married (60%). More than two-thirds of respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher education (70%), and 49% reported an annual household income of \$79,999 or less.

The study was conducted by Mather Institute between September 12 and September 26, 2022, using a SurveyMonkey research panel and a panel of respondents maintained by Mather Institute.

Staffed by a multidisciplinary team of researchers, Mather Institute is an award-winning resource for research and information about wellness, aging, trends in senior living, and successful industry innovations. In order to support senior living communities and others that serve older adults, the Institute shares its cutting-edge research in areas including effective approaches to brain health, ways to enhance resilience, and successful employee wellness programs. Mather Institute is part of Mather, an 80+-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating Ways to Age Well.SM

(888) 722.6468 | institute@mather.com | matherinstitute.com

