



Weight management wisdom

**Understanding consumer attitudes & motivations
around weight management**

In today’s world of plant-based eating and keto diets, products that tout a weight-loss benefit might seem downright old-fashioned. But even as consumers experiment with new eating and diet strategies, research suggests that concerns about maintaining a healthy weight are still integral to many of the food choices they’re making.

While weight management is a dynamic category, it does present an opportunity for brands with a healthy, better-for-you proposition to gain the attention of health-conscious and weight-aware consumers.

No matter how you look at it, there is no doubt that weight management as a category remains significant. According to data from Research and Markets, the global weight management market reached \$470 billion in 2021 and is expected to hit \$684.5 billion by 2027, with a forecasted CAGR of 6.47% over that time period.¹

At the same time, there is an evolving discourse around weight and what defines a healthy body, as we start to see a shift away from preoccupation with weight and toward a portrayal of the ideal body as more diverse, according to recent research from The Hartman Group.² This has led to changes in consumer thinking about how to achieve healthy ideals through diet, exercise and weight management.

Fundamentally, weight wellness has landed on the map as a mega-trend that is a driver behind a number of food and beverage trends, including increased protein intake,

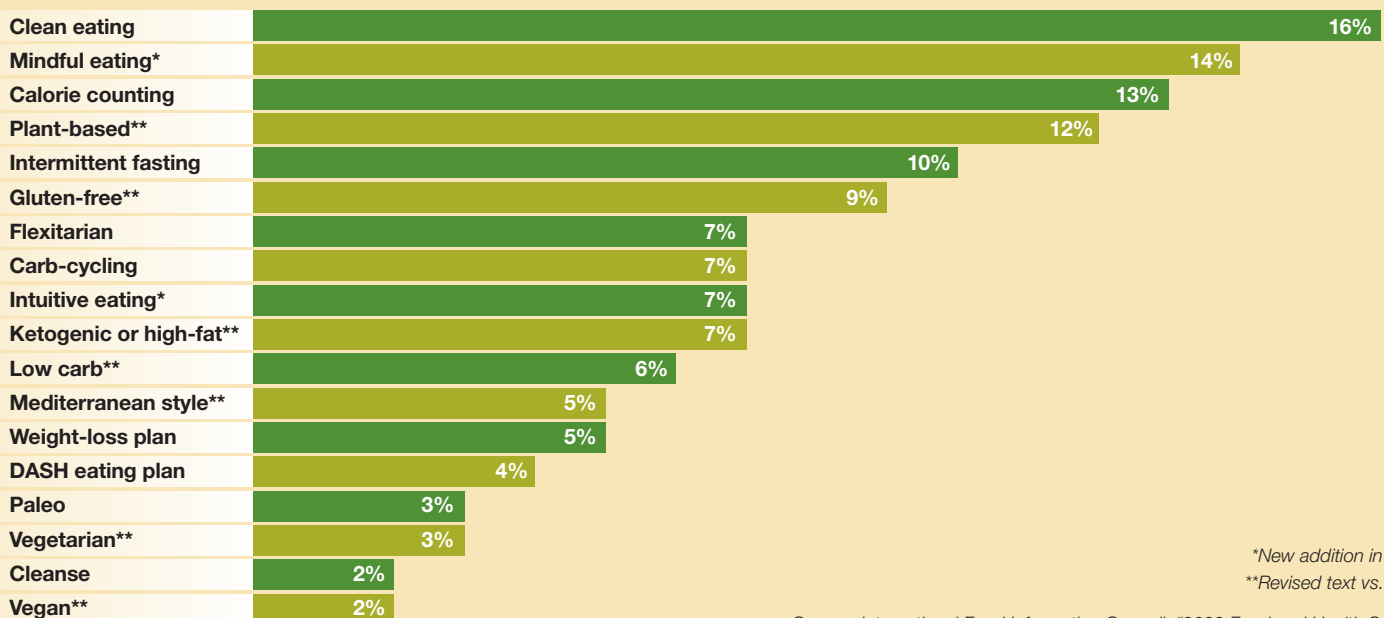
reduced sugar, and more healthy fats and carbohydrates.³ It’s a subtle shift, according to *New Nutrition Business’* report, “Ten Key Trends in Food Nutrition and Health 2022,” in which weight goes beyond a specific category and now means different things to different people. In turn, this translates into proliferation of various eating styles, from consuming less fat to eating a plant-centric diet.

Fragmented focus

Since consumers now understand that there is really no one-size-fits-all solution, they are becoming more experimental in approaches to their eating. In 2022, more than half of Americans reported that they followed a diet or eating pattern in the past year, which is a significant increase over those who said this in previous years.⁴

The tactics they are trying are varied, according to the International Food Information Council (IFIC) “2022 Food and Health Survey,” with no one diet or pattern seeing more than 20% participation. A number of diet strategies, however, are on the rise, including “clean” eating, plant-based and flexitarian.

FOLLOWED AN EATING PATTERN / DIET IN PAST YEAR



*New addition in 2022

**Revised text vs. 2021

Digging deeper into these choices, there are some common denominators, with weight management often central to consumer decision-making. For example, the IFIC survey noted that weight loss/weight management is still a top benefit sought from products and nutrients, and losing weight was still the second-most-common motivation for following a diet plan (34%), only behind protecting long-term health (35%). (See graph at bottom.)

It follows that dieting in general was on the rise in 2022, with more than half of Americans noting they adopted an eating pattern last year, a 13% lift from 2021. The dieting increase has occurred most prevalently among consumers under the age of 50, with those ages 18-34 showing the biggest jump since 2021.

Dieting increased among all demographic segments:⁵

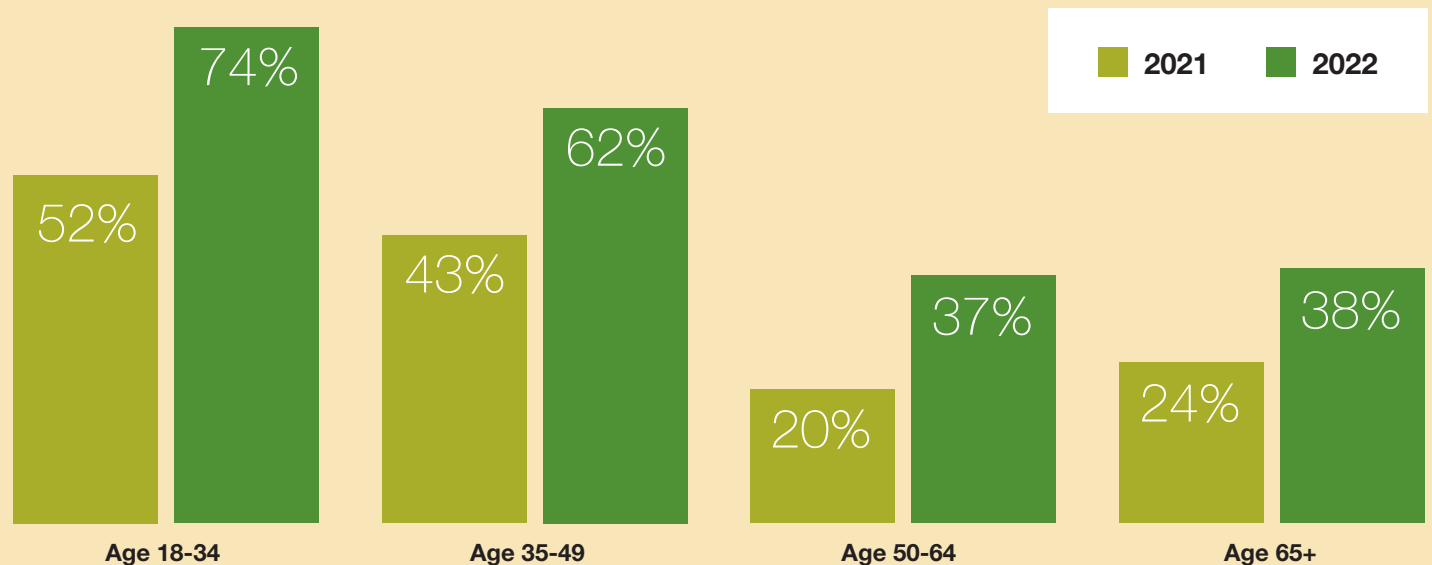
Men:	52% (+18%)
Adults with kids in HH:	70% (+17%)
African Americans:	61% (+17%)
Women:	53% (+10%)
Hispanics:	7% (+7%)

The Hartman research found that reasons for losing weight tend to differ by life stage. For example, baby boomers are more likely to over-index on weight-loss motivations, such as improving general health, healthy aging and supporting longevity; millennials are more likely motivated by appearance; Gen Z wants to stay fit for their regular activities, such as sports and hiking.⁶

Weight loss/weight management as a benefit from foods/beverages and nutrients seems to be most important among the millennial group, according to the IFIC data. But overall, among those who seek a weight-related benefit, vegetables, fruits, lean meats, supplements and fish are among the top foods they turn to for achieving their weight loss goals, the reported noted.

Diet specifics aside, there has been a cultural shift in how people think about dieting and managing their weight... with a greater emphasis on health. That said, nearly half of consumers in the Hartman research said they are still trying to lose weight. A majority of consumers do see themselves as primarily responsible for maintaining a healthy weight, but 14% also hold the food industry (manufacturers, restaurants, farmers and retailers) at least partially responsible for their weight issues.

FOLLOWED AN EATING PATTERN /DIET IN PAST YEAR



Source: International Food Information Council (IFIC). "2022 Food and Health Survey."

These realities may present both opportunities and challenges for brands as they work to navigate the complex weight-loss segment. Consumers now increasingly depend on product information like portion control, calories per serving, and individual-serving sizes, as well as RDA guidelines, to help them achieve their weight-management goals.

When they are considering a product’s healthfulness, consumers are also now looking closely at increasing specific nutrients they see as beneficial – such as fiber and protein – and avoiding those they see as less desirable, such as salt/sodium and sugar. Consumers see these ingredients (either the pursuit or avoidance of) as useful tools in their overall approaches to eating.

Plant-based eating is also increasingly central to the weight-management mindset. While plant-based eating has varied definitions among consumers, the Hartman research suggests that shoppers focused on eating more plants tend to be intentional about numerous dietary and values-based concerns, ranging from nutrition and weight-loss approaches to animal and environmental welfare.

Of course, limiting sugar is another prevalent dietary restriction among consumers that is increasingly linked to weight management and loss. About three out of four consumers consistently say they are limiting or avoiding sugars. Among those, nearly half are limiting or avoiding added sugar in packaged foods, while 31% say they are trying to limit both added sugars and those naturally occurring in foods. Among these same respondents, weight concerns are one of their top reasons for limiting/avoiding sugar.

Reasons for limiting or avoiding sugar

(of those who limit/avoid sugars)



Source: International Food Information Council (IFIC). “2022 Food and Health Survey.”

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As consumers maneuver in this changing framework for weight ideals, brands will have to consider new strategies in approaching weight-loss consumers. For example, Mellentin suggests that weight wellness is now part of many people’s daily lives (rather than a special category), so this also means that the attributes of weight-loss products will become progressively diverse. The fundamental target, Mellentin noted, may be to create products for weight-aware consumers that have as few negative attributes as possible.

Partner with Cargill to develop winning products that support weight wellness.

¹ Research and Markets. “Global Weight Management (2022-2027) – Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecasts.” July 18, 2022. <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20220718005454/en/Global-Weight-Management-Market-2022-to-2027---Industry-Trends-Share-Size-Growth-Opportunity-and-Forecasts---ResearchAndMarkets.com>

² The Hartman Group. “Modern Approaches to Eating Report” Webinar overview. August 10, 2022. https://www.hartman-group.com/webinars/1501236563/hartmans-modern-approaches-to-eating-report-highlights?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=%5BWebinar+Recording%5D+Modern+Approaches+to+Eating+Report+Highlights&utm_campaign=%5BWebinar+Recording%5D+Modern+Approaches+to+Eating+Report+Highlights

³ Mellentin, J. “Ten Key Trends in Food, Nutrition, and Health 2022.” *New Nutrition Business*. <https://www.new-nutrition.com/keytrend?id=226>

⁴ International Food Information Council (IFIC). “2022 Food and Health Survey.” May 18, 2022. <https://foodinsight.org/2022-food-and-health-survey/> ”

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. The Hartman Group.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. IFIC.

¹⁰ Ibid. *New Nutrition Business*.