

Serving Up the Truth: Poll Shows Strong Support for Added Sugars Info at Chain Restaurants

Most U.S. consumers are trying to limit their added sugar consumption, but chain restaurants are not currently required to disclose the amount of added sugar in their menu items.

In October 2024, CSPI commissioned a national survey to assess how many consumers look for nutrition information (such as added sugars) when ordering from restaurants and how many consumers would support a policy to require sodium and added sugars warnings on chain restaurant menus. Big Village's CARAVAN U.S. Online Omnibus Survey was administered to a nationally representative sample of 2,025 U.S. adults, demographically balanced to the U.S. Census on age, sex, region, race, and ethnicity. Almost all respondents (1,994/2,025, 98%) reported ever ordering food or drinks from chain restaurants, and we analyzed responses to the subsequent questions from these 1,994 respondents.

Our findings show that a majority of U.S. consumers across the political spectrum support nutrient warning labels on restaurant menus. Most consumers have seen calorie information on menus and have looked for additional nutrition information beyond calories, such as added sugars. People trying to reduce their intake of salt, added sugar, or saturated fat were particularly likely to report looking for additional nutrition information at restaurants. These findings support the importance of policies to ensure consumers have access to information about the amount of added sugar in their foods.

Widespread Support for Added Sugar Warning Labels

- 70% of respondents strongly or somewhat support requiring warning labels on menu items with more than half a day's worth of sodium or added sugar, including:
 - 78% of those trying to reduce their intake of salt, added sugar, or saturated fat support this policy, compared to 47% of those who are not
 - 72% of those who have a chronic health condition, compared to 67% of those who do not
 - 79% of Democrats, 67% of Republicans, and 57% of Independents

Consumers Look for Nutrition Information Other than Calories

- 71% of respondents have noticed calorie counts on menus
- 68% of respondents look for nutrition information other than calories when ordering from restaurants, including:
 - 77% of those trying to reduce their intake of salt, added sugar, or saturated fat, compared to 43% who are not

People Are Trying to Cut Back on Added Sugars

- 73% of respondents are trying to reduce their intake of salt, added sugar, or saturated fat, including 53% who are specifically trying to reduce added sugars

FDA must act to promote transparency and empower consumers to make healthy choices by requiring chain restaurants to disclose the amount of added sugars in their menu items.

Appendix: Survey Questions

The following questions were added to Big Village's CARAVAN U.S. Online Omnibus Survey in October 2024.

1. About how often do you order food and drink for yourself or others from each of the following places? Include orders of breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks that you place in-person or online for eat-in, take-out, or delivery.

	Once a day or more	3 to 6 times a week	Once or twice a week	1 to 3 times per month	Less than once a month	Just tried it once or twice	Never
Fast food restaurants such as McDonald's, Taco Bell, or Subway							
Fast casual restaurants such as Panera, Blaze Pizza, Qdoba, or Chipotle							
Coffee shops or bakeries such as Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts							
Sit down, full service restaurants with waitstaff or servers such as Chili's or Applebee's							

2. In general, when you order from any restaurant, how often do you do the following?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Never order from restaurants
See calorie information listed on menus or menu boards (in-person or online)					
Look for nutritional information (other than calories)					

3. Restaurant foods and beverages often contain high amounts of sodium and added sugar. Americans in general consume more sodium and added sugar than is recommended by health authorities, increasing our risk of chronic disease.

How much would you support or oppose a policy requiring warning labels next to menu items with more than half a day's worth of sodium or added sugar at chain restaurants in the United States?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

4. Are you currently trying to reduce your intake of any of the following? Select all that apply.

- Salt/sodium
- Added sugar
- Saturated fat
- None of the above

5. Have you ever been told by a doctor or other healthcare professional that you have any of the following conditions? Select all that apply.

- High blood pressure
- Pre-diabetes
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- None of the above