

# 2023 CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Food Standards  
Australia New Zealand



# ABOUT FSANZ

## Our vision

**World-leading standards, safe food for life**

## Our strategic outcomes



An independent and trusted leader



Deeply engaged with stakeholders



Stewardship of bi-national food standards in a robust and agile food regulation system

## Our mission

We develop world leading food standards for Australia and New Zealand the enable a wide variety of safe foods to be available to consumers. We achieve this by applying the talent of our highly skilled subject matter experts, in collaboration with stakeholders, to make informed decisions on food safety, public health and science that ensure consumers can trust the foods they choose.

# METHODOLOGY



Online survey of approx. 1,200 Australians and 800 New Zealanders aged 18+ years, undertaken in April 2023.



The sample was nationally representative by interlocked age, gender, and location.



The survey took approximately 12 minutes to complete.



The survey was cognitively tested with a sample of diverse consumers prior to launch.



The sample was sourced using PureProfile's Australian and New Zealand consumer panels.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 was the first year of Food Standards Australia New Zealand's (FSANZ's) annual Consumer Insights Tracker (CIT). The CIT surveys Australian and New Zealand consumers to understand their trust, use, and understanding of food regulation and food labelling.

The findings from this year's survey of 1,237 Australians and 810 New Zealanders focus on:

- Trust and confidence in the food system
- Trust, use and understanding of food labelling
- Health and dietary factors affecting food choices
- Food safety knowledge and behaviours
- New and emerging foods and food technologies

All findings in this report are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

For further details, please see the technical report.

# KEY FINDINGS

People generally have confidence in the safety of the food supply.

- 72% of people reported having confidence in the safety of the food supply.
- Those who trust the people involved in our food system, like farmers, supermarkets or government food authorities, are more likely to be confident in the safety of the food supply.
- All groups involved in the food system were trusted by most people.
- Most trusted were farmers and producers (trusted by 83%).
- Least trusted were food manufacturers and processors (trusted by 57%).
- 63% of respondents trusted government food authorities.



# KEY FINDINGS

## Consumers trust back-of-pack labelling information more than front-of-pack labelling.

- 65% of people trusted food labelling overall, however some labelling elements were trusted more than others.
- Most trusted were back-of-pack labelling information, like the Nutrition Information Panel and ingredients list (trusted by approximately 70%).
- Least trusted were front-of-pack labelling information, like claims about health benefits (40%), claims about nutrition/ingredient content (53%), and the Health Star Rating (55%).
- People who trusted government and food scientists were more likely to trust back-of-pack labelling information.
- People who trusted food manufacturers/processors and supermarkets were more likely to trust front-of-pack labelling information.



# KEY FINDINGS

Nutrition is one of the most valued food attributes, and people look for food labels that can help to identify nutritious food.

- Nearly three-quarters of consumers (73%) reported putting effort into maintaining a healthy diet.
- Nutrition was the most selected food value (by 66%) and the most commonly first-rated food value, excluding taste and price.
- Nutrition-related labelling elements were the most important to consumers when deciding whether to buy a food for the first time.
- The Nutrition Information Panel and the ingredients list were both the most important and among the most trusted.
- However, nutrient/ingredient content claims and the Health Star Rating were among the most important but the least trusted.



# KEY FINDINGS

**Foodborne illness was consumers' key food safety concern, but there may be a gap in knowledge.**

- Foodborne illness was the most commonly selected top 3 food safety issue (by 59%) and, by a large margin, the most commonly selected #1 issue.
- However, consumers did not perceive eggs to be one of the riskiest foods, despite being one of the most common sources of foodborne illness.
- Consumers generally reported relatively high levels of engagement in food safety behaviours.
- However, they were more likely to engage in food safety behaviours concerning raw animal products than general hygiene behaviours.
- Product labels were by far the most preferred source of information on how to store and prepare food safely (by 52% of respondents).





# KEY FINDINGS

Some sports food consumers may be consuming them in a manner inconsistent with their intended purpose.

- Less than half (48%) of sports food consumers reported only using sports foods within a physical-activity related context.
- While not all sports foods are meant to be used around physical activity, this suggests some consumers may be using them contrary to their intended purpose.

Most consumers would not be confident in the safety of cell-based meat if it became available for sale.

- 62% of consumers said they would not be confident in the safety of cell-based meat if it became available for sale in Australia and New Zealand.
- Only 24% of respondents said they would eat cell-based meat. However, a further 29% were unsure, perhaps suggesting they may be open to trying it.



# FULL REPORT FINDINGS

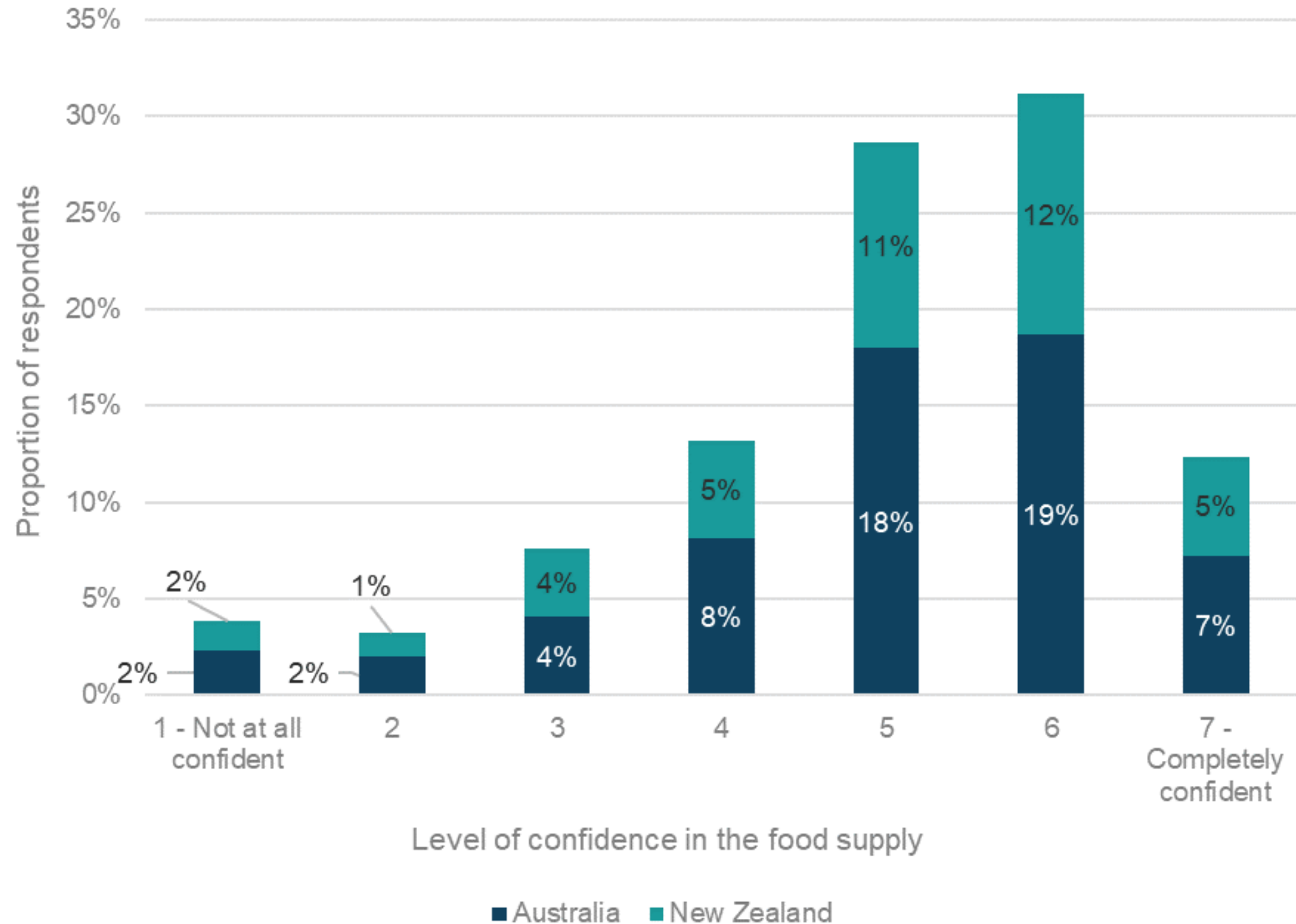




# TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM

# Most consumers (72%) are confident in the safety of the food supply.

People who trust the groups of people who make up our food system (e.g. farmers and producers, supermarkets, government food authorities) are more likely to feel confident.



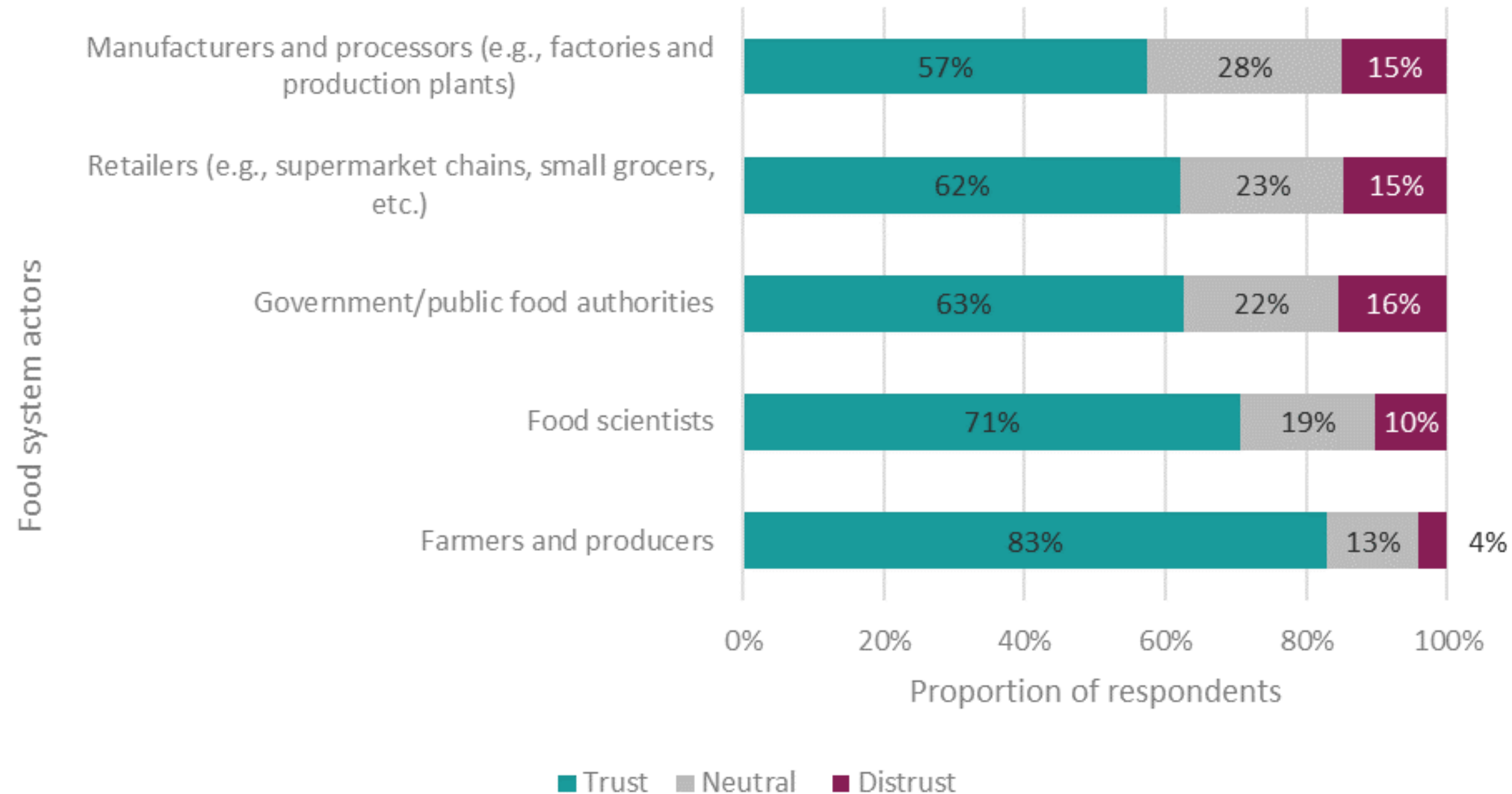
Demographic factors (e.g. age, gender, education) were not strongly associated with level of confidence.

There was no difference in level of confidence between Australia and New Zealand.

Q: How confident are you that all food (including drinks) sold in Australian/New Zealand shops and supermarkets is safe to eat? (1 = "Not at all confident") and 7 = "Completely confident")  
Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# A majority of consumers trust each of the different groups in our food system.

Farmers and producers were most trusted, while food manufacturers and processors were least trusted.

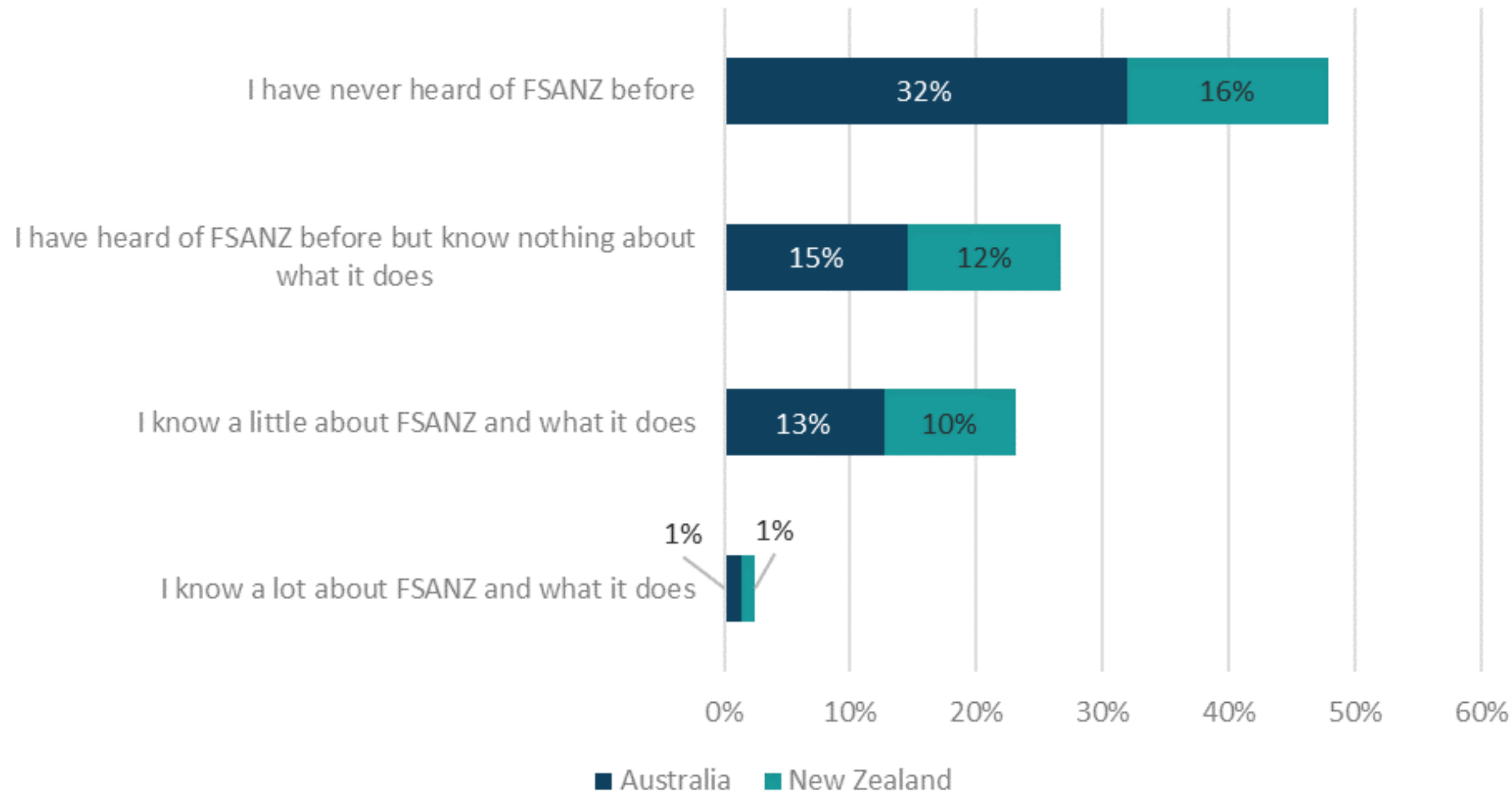


There were no differences in level of trust for any groups between Australia and New Zealand.

Q: How much do you trust the following people or groups to do their part to ensure that all food (including drinks) sold in Australia/New Zealand shops and supermarkets is safe to eat? (Proportion of respondents who rated their trust above 4 on a scale from 1 = "Not at all" to 7 = "Completely")

Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# 52% of consumers had heard of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)



People were more likely to know something about what FSANZ does if they:

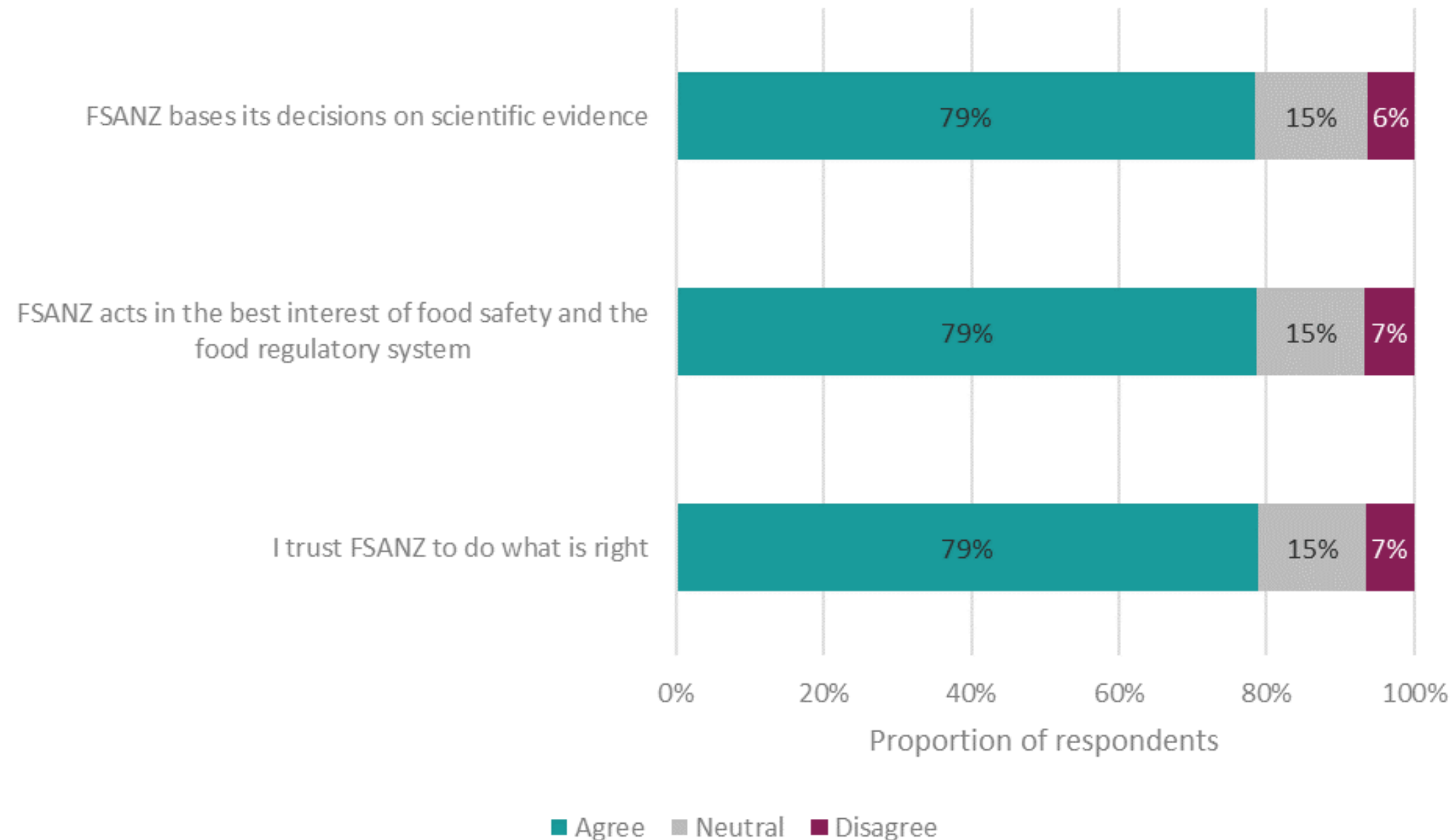
- had a university-level education
- could remember a food recall
- had food industry experience
- identified as female
- were from New Zealand
- were more health conscious, and/or
- selected a lifestyle-related factor (e.g. looking to lose weight) as affecting their food choices.

Q: How much, if anything, do you know about Food Standards Australia New Zealand, also known as FSANZ?

Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Among the people who know something about what FSANZ does, 79% trust FSANZ

People who were more trusting of professions and institutions in general were more likely to trust FSANZ.



No demographic factors measured in the CIT, such as age, gender, country, or level of education, were found to predict trust in FSANZ.

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (In these statements, FSANZ means Food Standards Australia New Zealand) (1 = "Strongly disagree" and 7 = "Strongly agree")  
Base: Respondents who said that they at least knew a little about FSANZ (n = 286 Australia, n = 235 New Zealand)

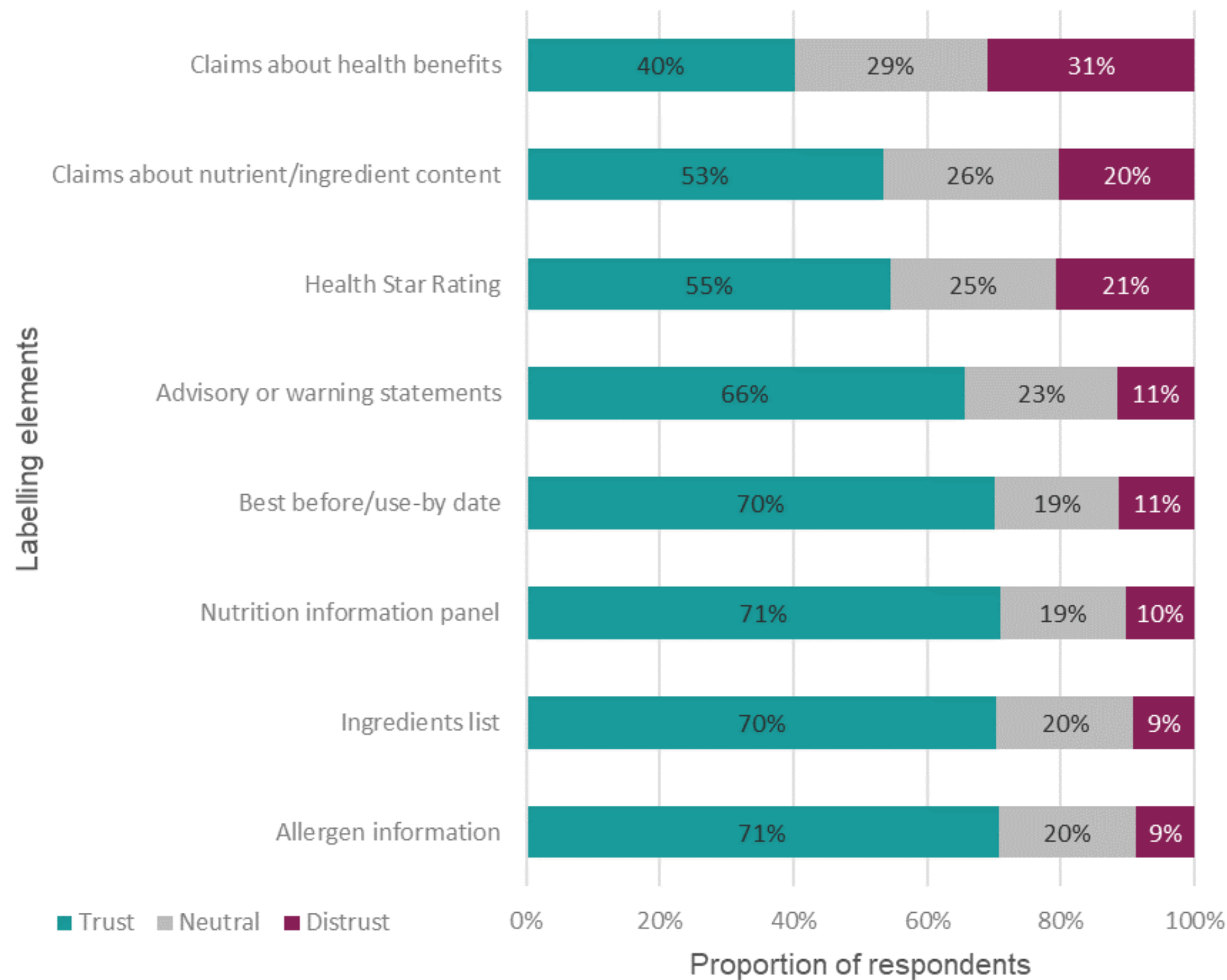
# TRUST, USE AND UNDERSTANDING OF FOOD LABELLING



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# 65% of people trust food labelling overall, but back-of-pack labelling information is more trusted than front-of-pack information.

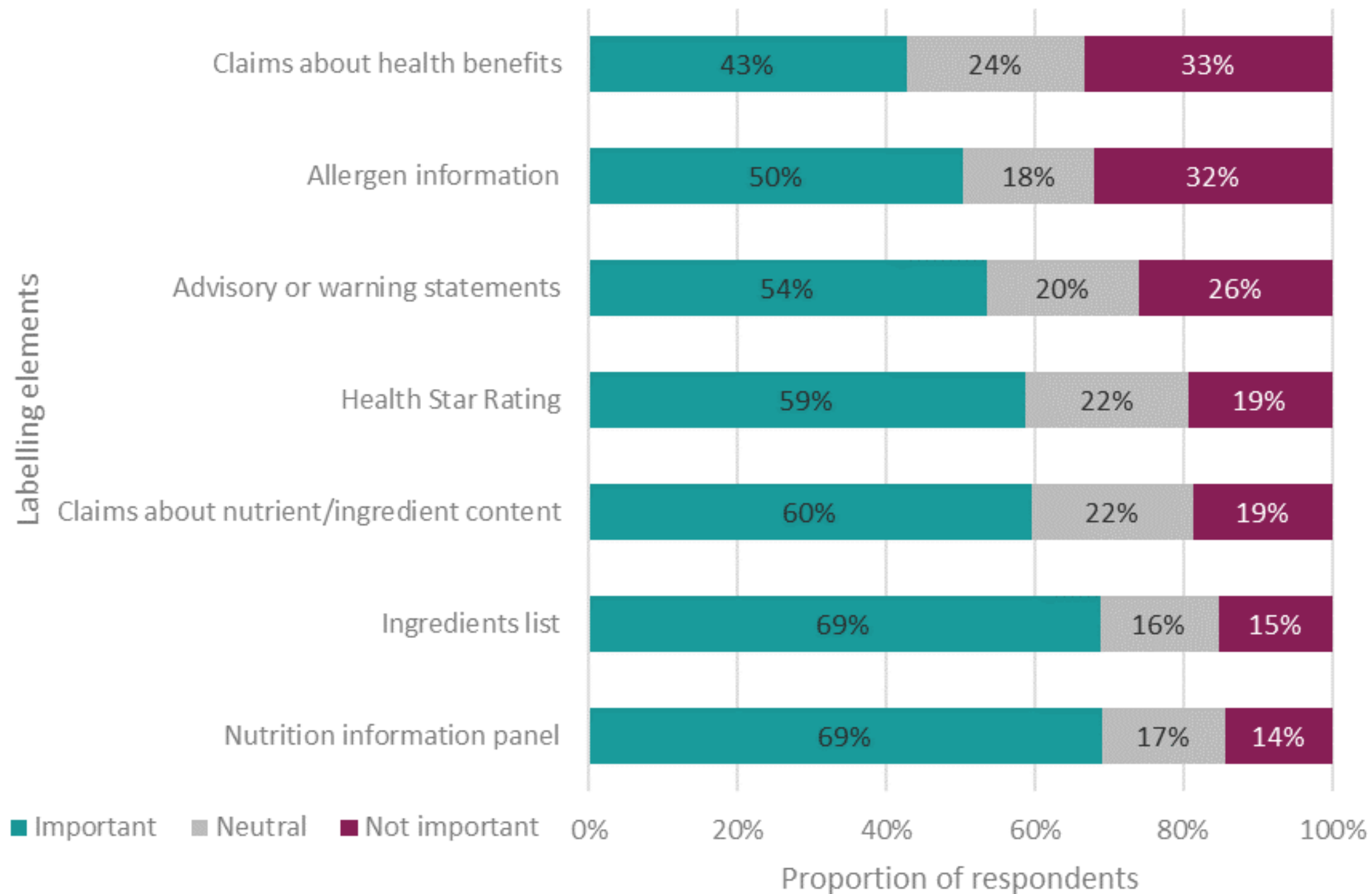


People who trusted government and food scientists were more likely to trust back-of-pack labelling information like the Nutrition Information Panel and ingredients list.

People who trusted food manufacturers/processors and/or retailers were more likely to trust front-of-pack labelling information like health claims, nutrient content claims and the Health Star Rating.

Q: How much do you feel you can trust the following information on packaged foods and drink? (1 = "Cannot trust at all" and 7 = "Can trust completely")  
 Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Nutrition-related labelling information was the most important when making the decision to buy a packaged food or drink for the first time.

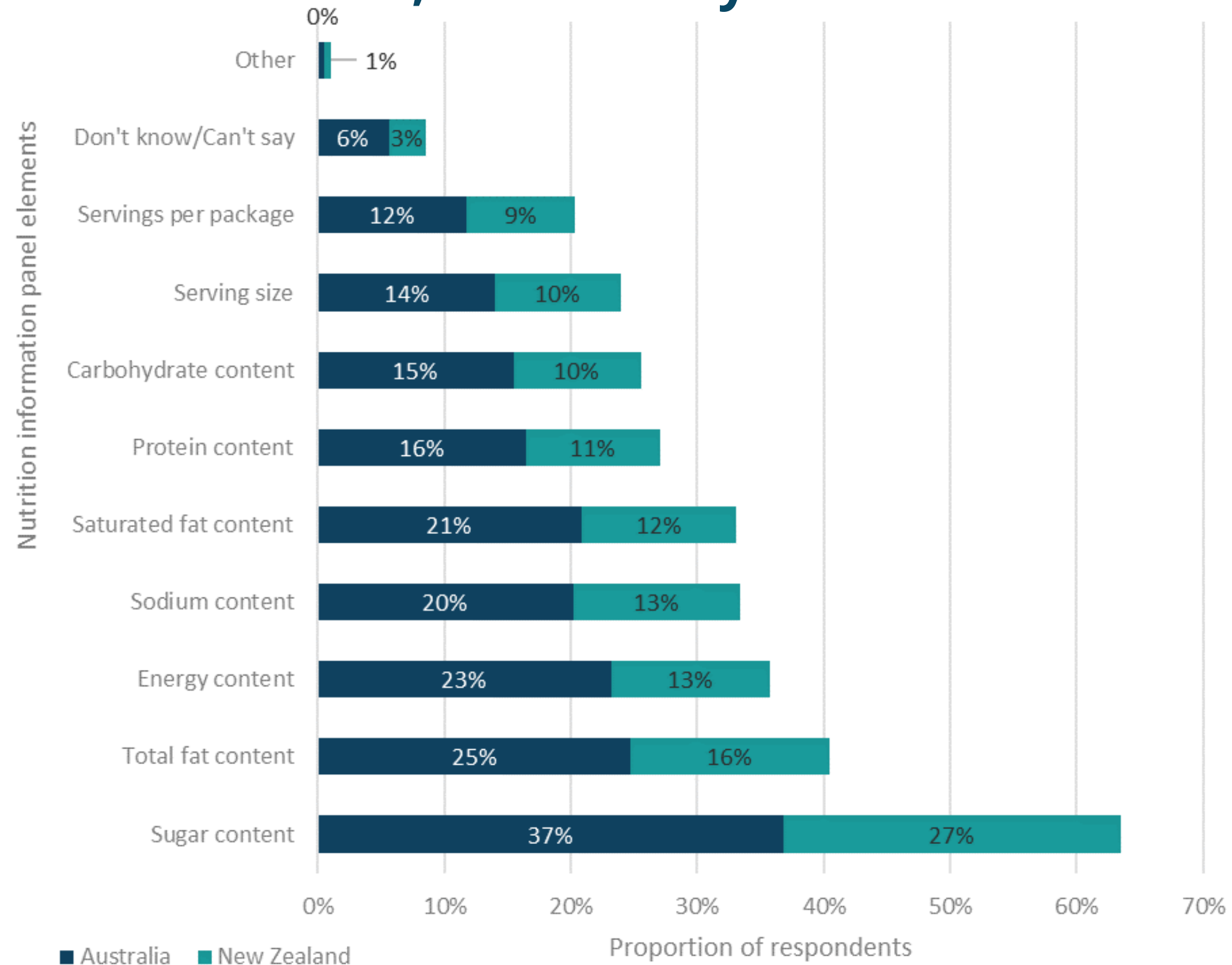


The Nutrition Information Panel and ingredients list were both the most important and among the most trusted.

Nutrient/ingredient content claims and the Health Star Rating were among the most important but least trusted.

Q: Think about when you are making the decision to buy a packaged food or drink for the first time. How important is the following labelling information when deciding what to buy? (1 = "Not important at all" and 7 = "Extremely important")  
 Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Consumers identified sugar content as the most important element on the Nutrition Information Panel, followed by fat content and energy content.



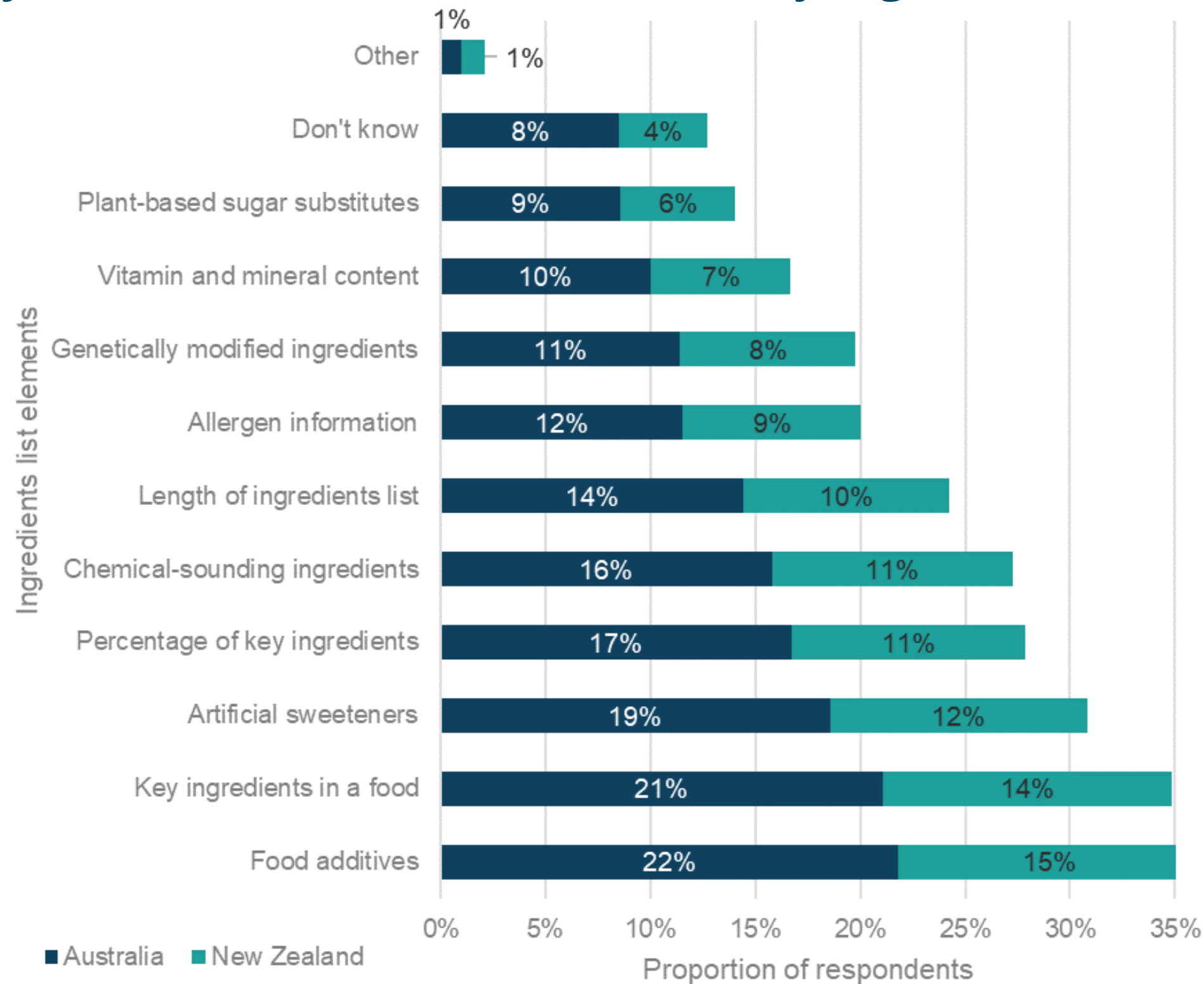
People were more likely to rate the Nutrition Information Panel as important if they:

- identified as female
- did not have a child < 15 years in the household
- had a greater level of health consciousness, and/or
- had a medical- or lifestyle-related factor affecting their food choices.

Q: When buying products for the first time, what parts of the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) do you usually look for? (Please select all that apply)  
 Base: Respondents who provided a rating of at least 4 on the scale of importance of the NIP (1 = not important at all; 7 = extremely important) (n = 1078 Australia, n = 675 New Zealand)

# People looked for a variety of different things on the ingredients list.

Most commonly selected were food additives, key ingredients, and artificial sweeteners.



People were more likely to rate the ingredients list as important if they:

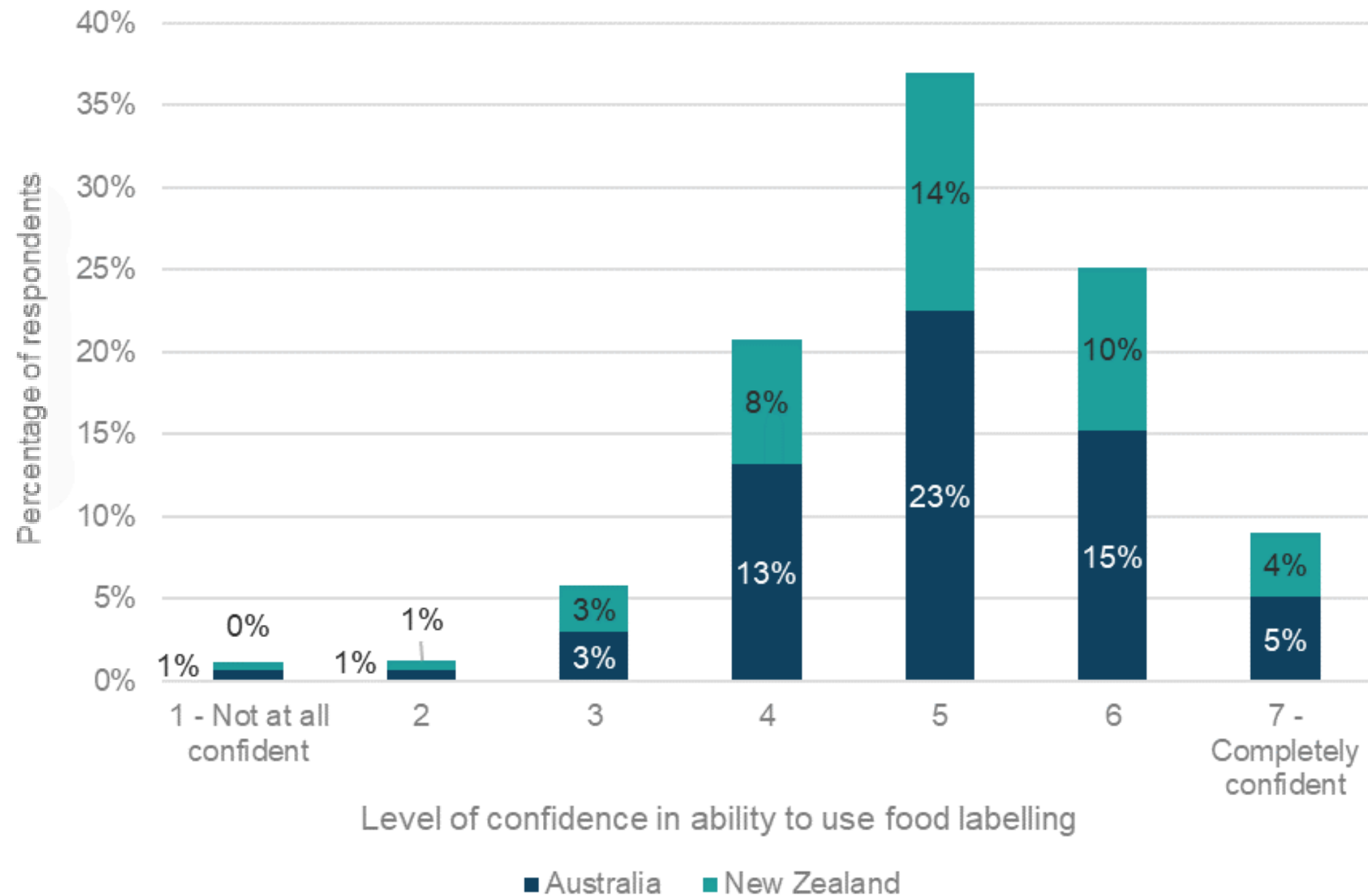
- identified as female
- had a university education
- had a greater level of health consciousness
- had a medical-related factor affecting their food choices.

Q: What information do you usually look for in the ingredients list when buying products for the first time? (Please select all that apply)

Base: Respondents who provided a rating of at least 4 on the scale of importance of the ingredients list (1 = not important at all; 7 = extremely important) (n = 1,063 Australia, n = 673 New Zealand)

# Most people (71%) felt confident in their ability to use food labelling .

People were **more likely to be confident** if they had a **higher level of health consciousness** and a higher level of confidence in the safety of the food supply.



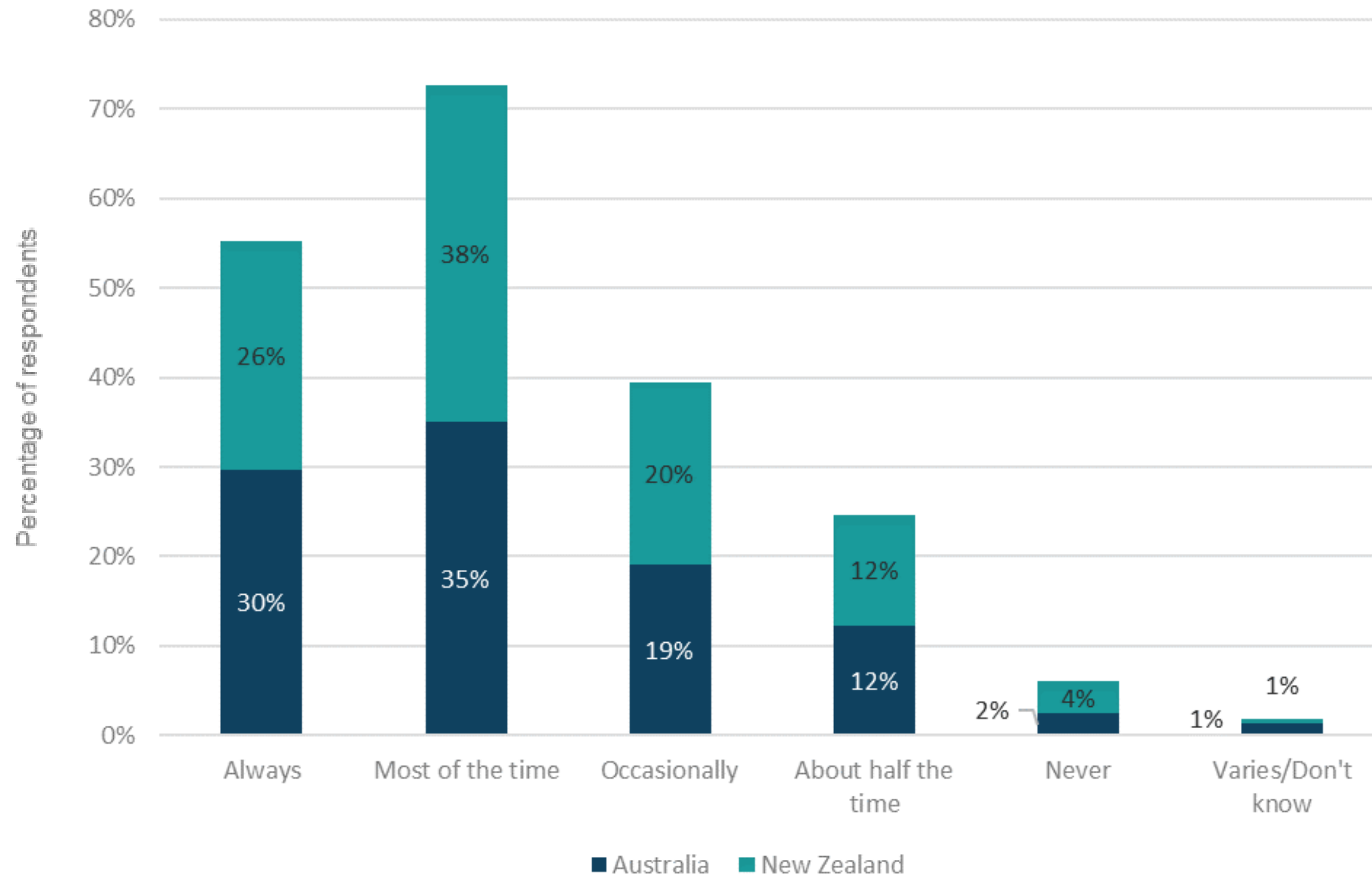
People who were not confident most often said:

- They don't understand what the information means
- The information is too small to read
- They're not sure if they can trust the information
- They don't have the time to read food labels.

Q: How confident are you in your ability to make informed choices about foods from the information on food labels? (1 = "Not at all confident" and 7 = "Completely confident")

Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

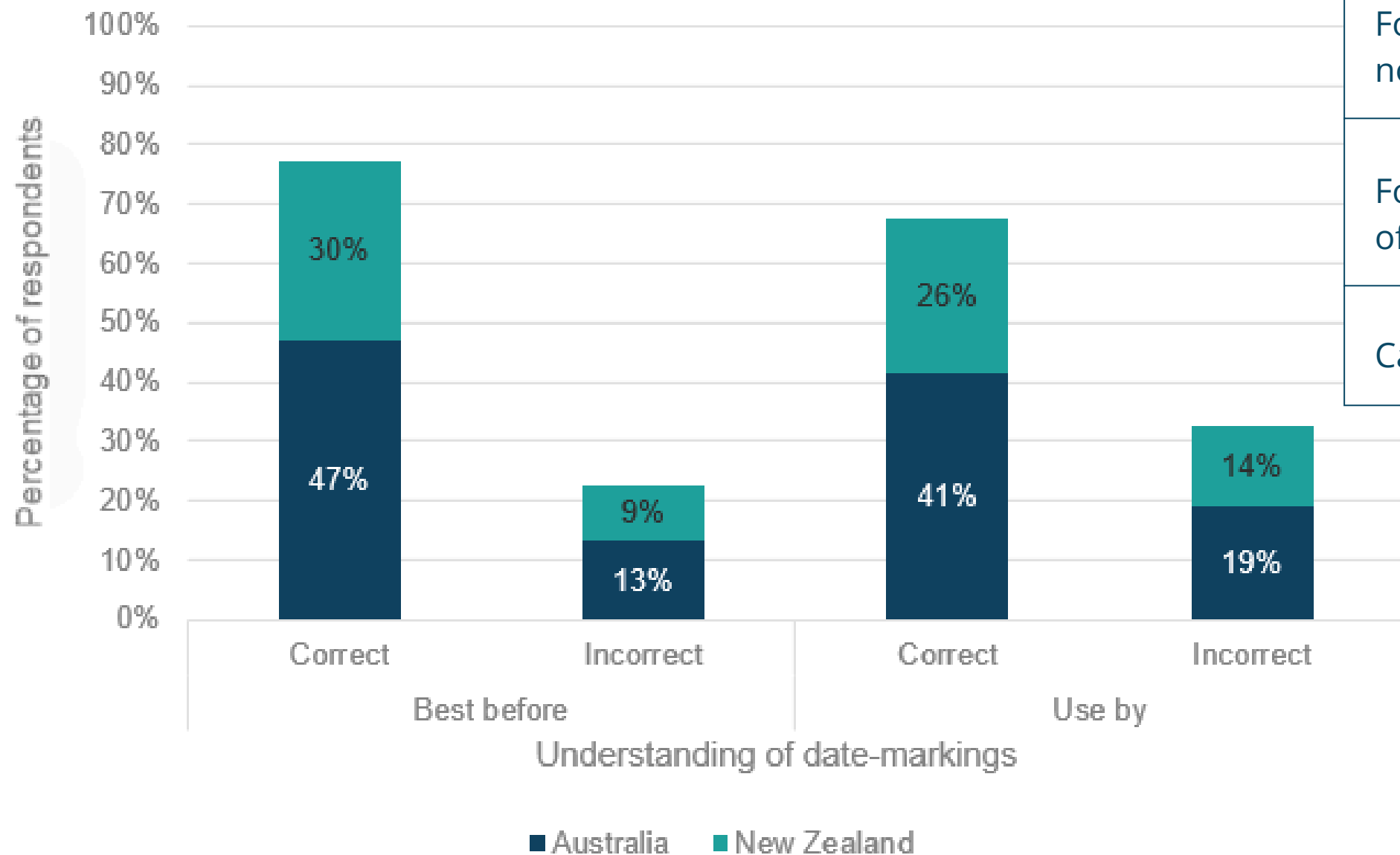
# 64% of people reported looking at best before and use-by dates 'Always' or 'Most of the time'.



There were no significant differences between Australia and New Zealand.

Q: How often, if at all, do you look at best before or use-by / expiry dates when you are about to cook, prepare or consume packaged food? (Single response)  
Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Most people correctly understood best before and use-by dates, but up to a third expressed an incorrect understanding.



	Best Before	Use-by
Food should not be eaten after this date as it may be unsafe.	Incorrect	Correct
Food is still safe to eat after this date as long as it is not damaged, deteriorated, or perished.	Correct	Incorrect
Food is still safe to eat after this date, but the quality of the food may not be as good.	Correct	Incorrect
Can't say/don't know	Incorrect	Incorrect

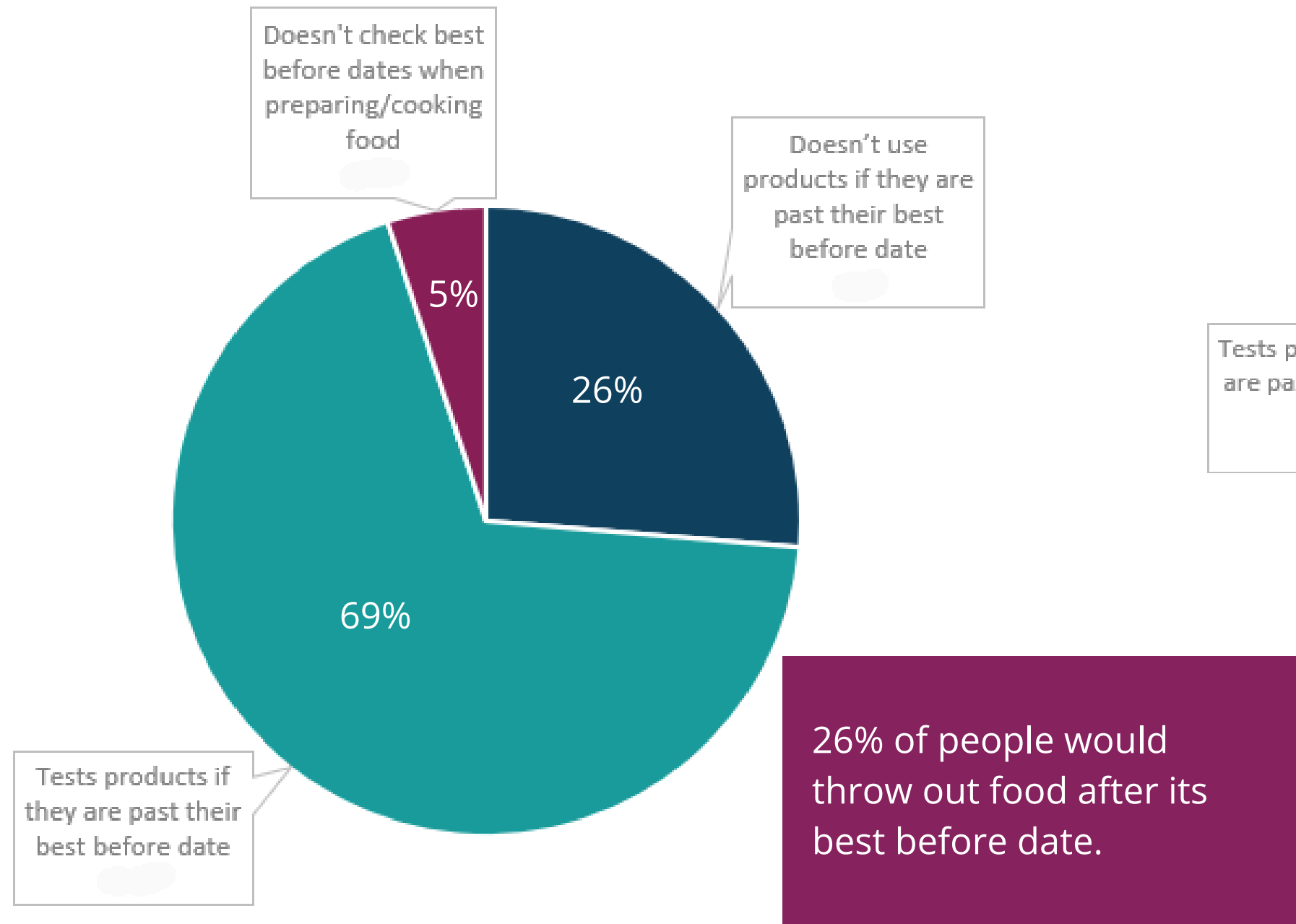
People were less likely to understand best before dates if they were: younger, identified as male, had a child < 15 years in the household, had a lower equivalised household income, or did not have an AU/NZ or European background.

Men were less likely to understand use-by dates.

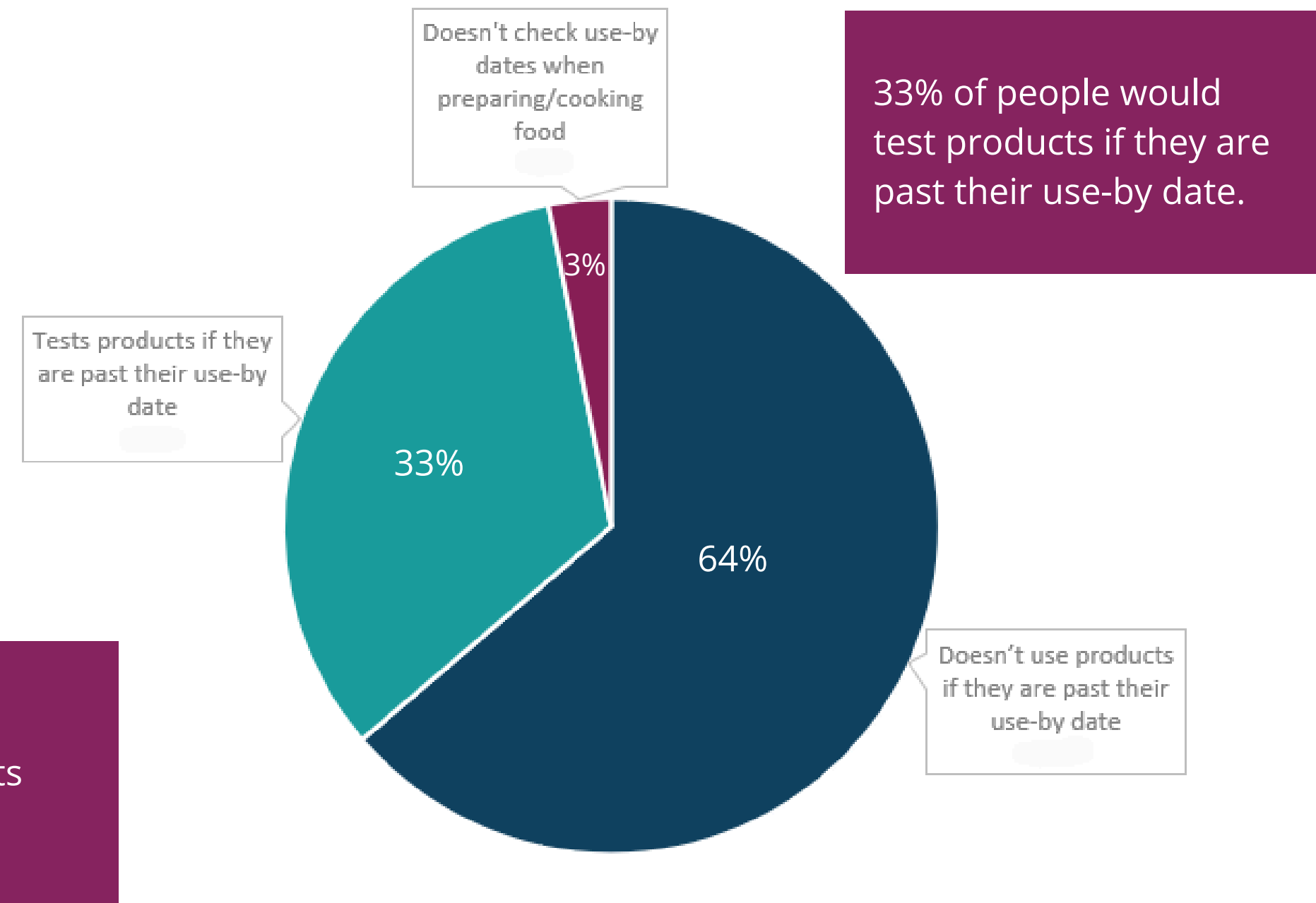
Q: To the best of your knowledge, what does the term 'best before'/'use-by' mean on food or drink labels? (Please select all that apply)  
 Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Among people with a correct understanding of date marking, up to a third reported behaviour inconsistent with their understanding.

Reported behaviours among those with a correct understanding of best before dates



Reported behaviours among those with a correct understanding of use-by dates



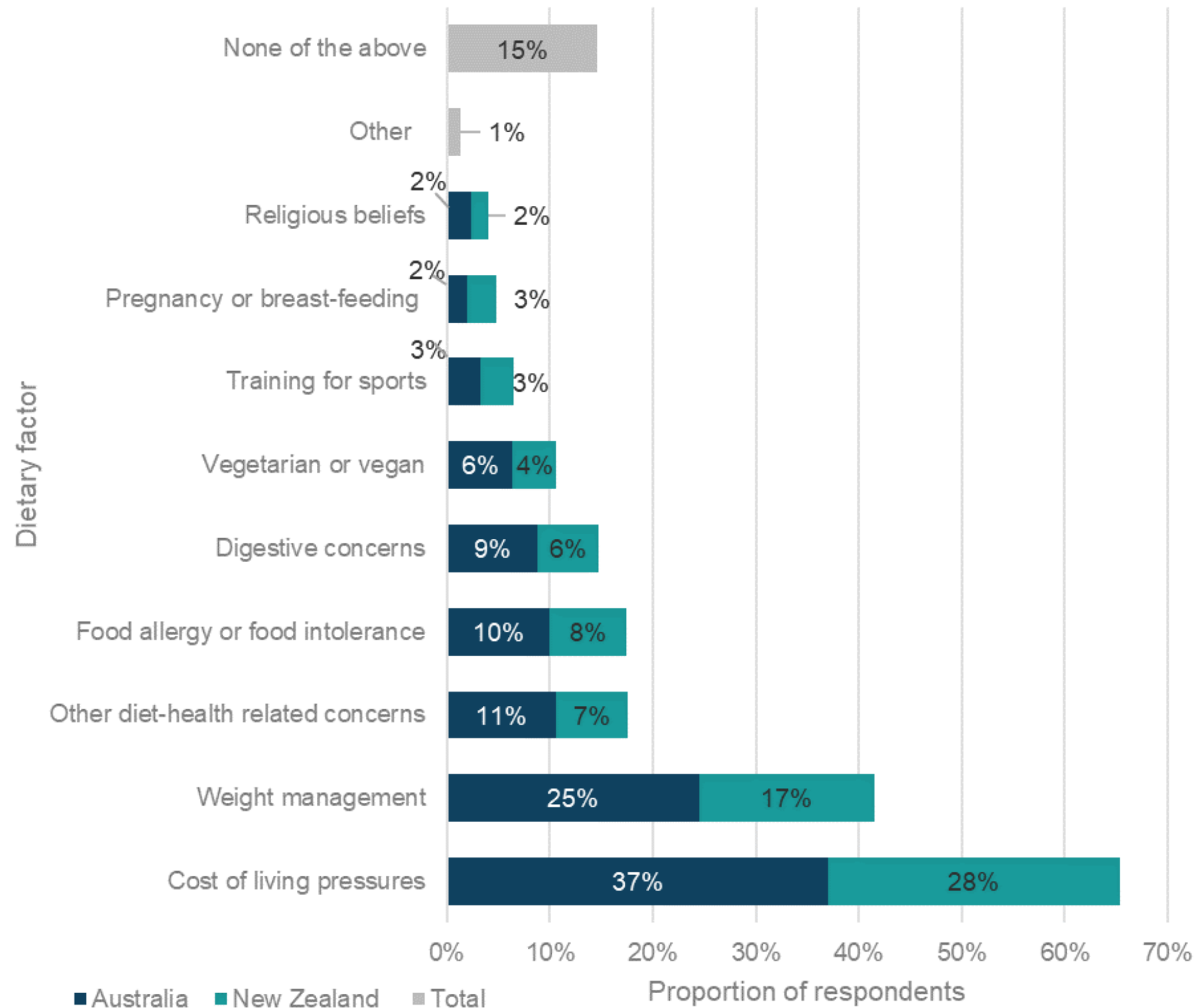
Q: Thinking about best before/use-by dates on packaged food products, how do you use them? (Please select all that apply)  
 Base: Respondents who had a correct understanding of best before dates (n = 1,590) and use-by dates (n = 1,395)





# HEALTH AND DIETARY BEHAVIOURS

# Cost of living pressures was the most common factor affecting dietary choices, chosen by 65% of people, followed by weight management (41%).



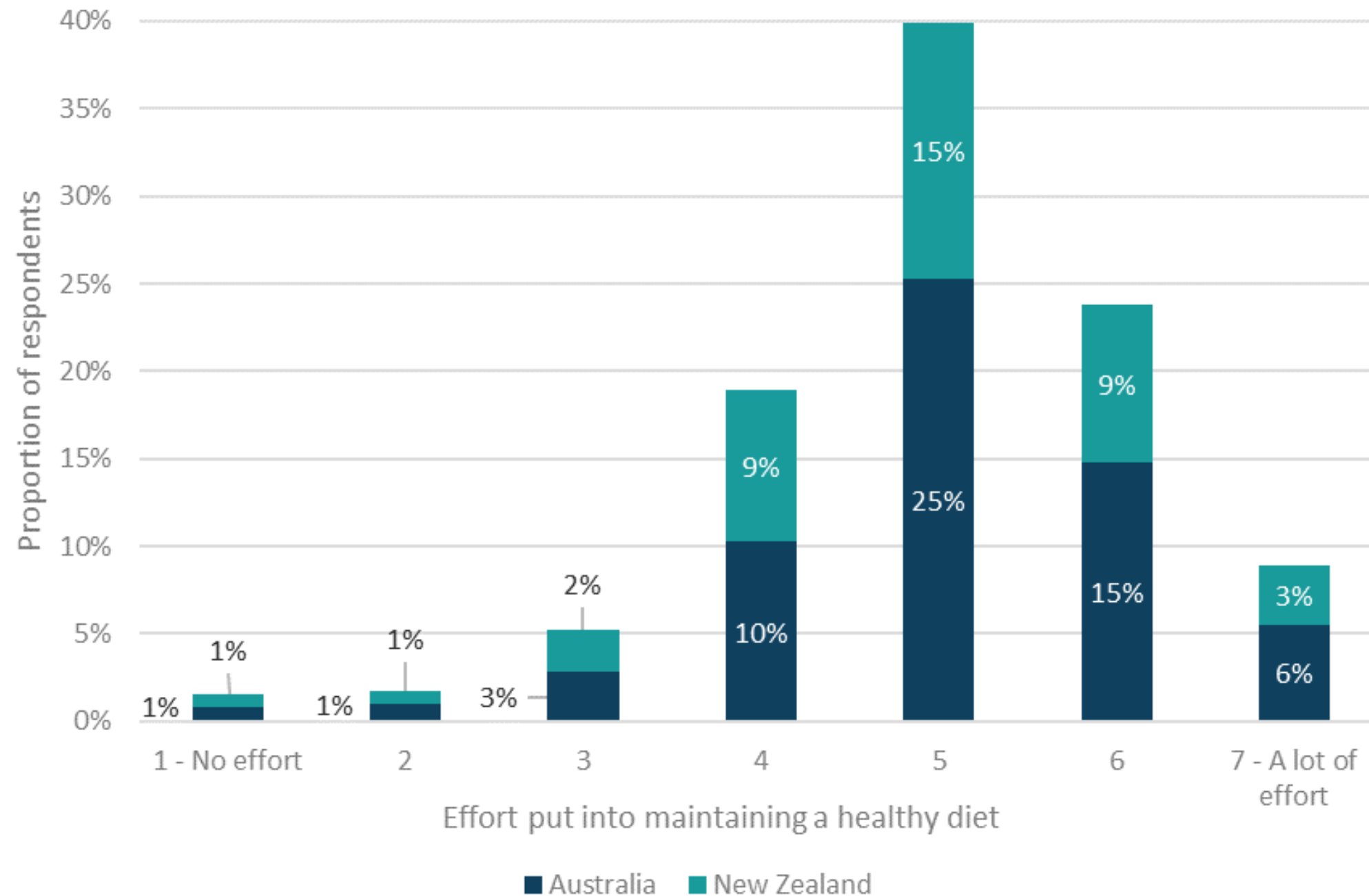
People were more likely to select 'cost of living pressures' if they:

- Were aged 18-34 years
- Identified as female
- Were not university educated
- Lived in New Zealand
- Had a child < 15 years in the household
- Did not have an AU/NZ or European background

Q: Do any of the following currently affect the food choices you make for you or your household? (Please select all that apply)  
 Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Most people (73%) reported putting effort into maintaining a healthy diet.

People who selected a lifestyle-related factor as affecting food choices (e.g. weight management) or were older were more likely to report putting in greater effort.



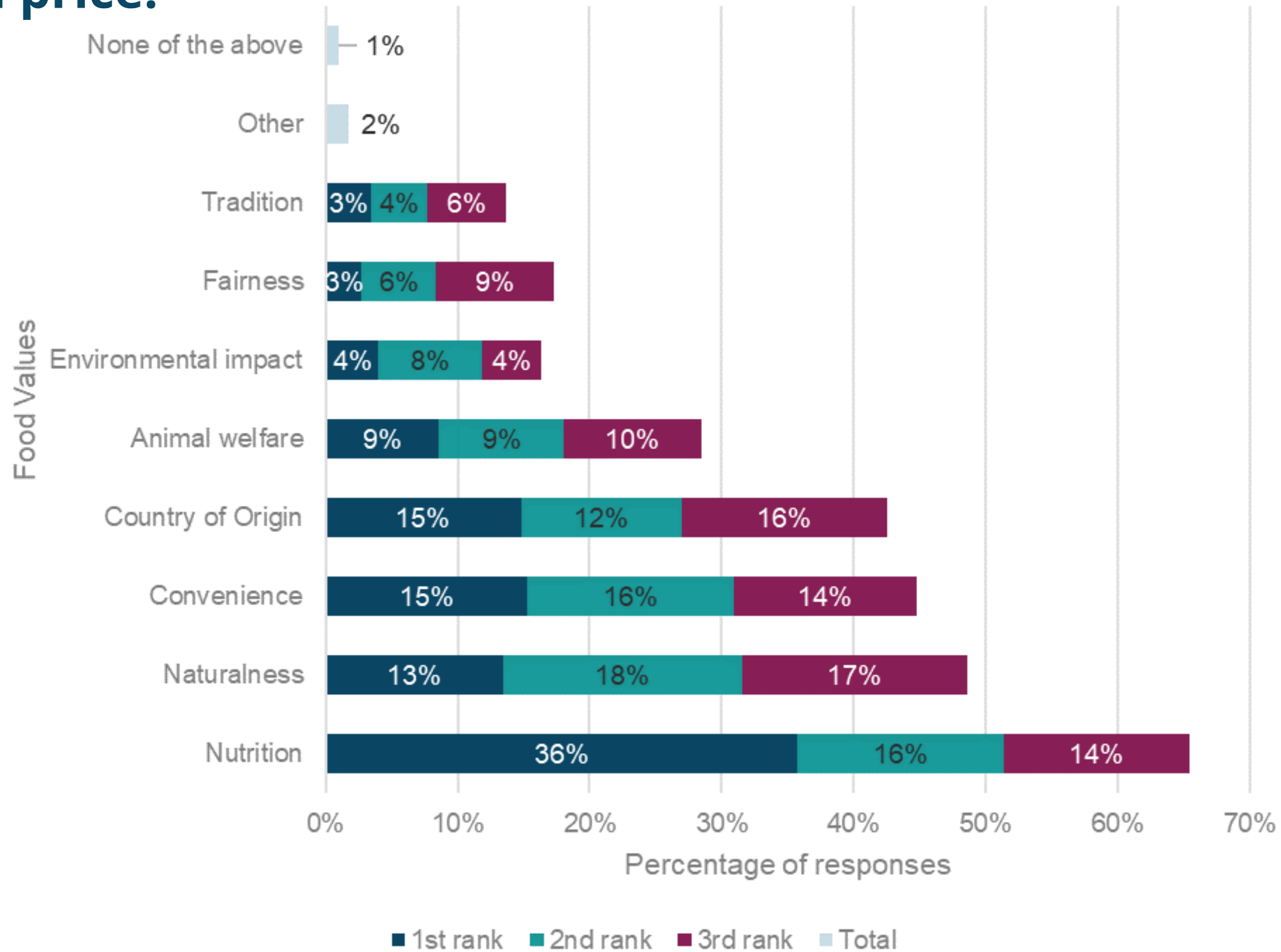
People were also more likely to report putting effort into maintaining a healthy diet if they:

- Were university educated
- Shared the shopping responsibility with someone else
- Had a higher level of confidence in the safety of the food supply
- Selected a medical-related factor as affecting their food choices.

Q: How much effort do you generally put into maintaining a healthy diet for you and / or your household? (1 = "No effort" and 7 = "A lot of effort")

Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Nutrition was the most commonly selected food value (selected by 75%), excluding taste and price.



People were more likely to select nutrition as a top food value if they:

- Were university-educated
- Were born outside of AU/NZ in a non-English speaking country
- Had a high equivalised household income
- Shared responsibility for the food shopping
- Had a medical- or lifestyle-related factor affecting food choices
- Had a high level of health consciousness.

Q: Excluding taste and price, what is most important to you out of the following when choosing which foods to buy?  
 1 = "Most important", 2 = "Second most important" and 3 = "Third most important"  
 Base: All respondents (n = 1,237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

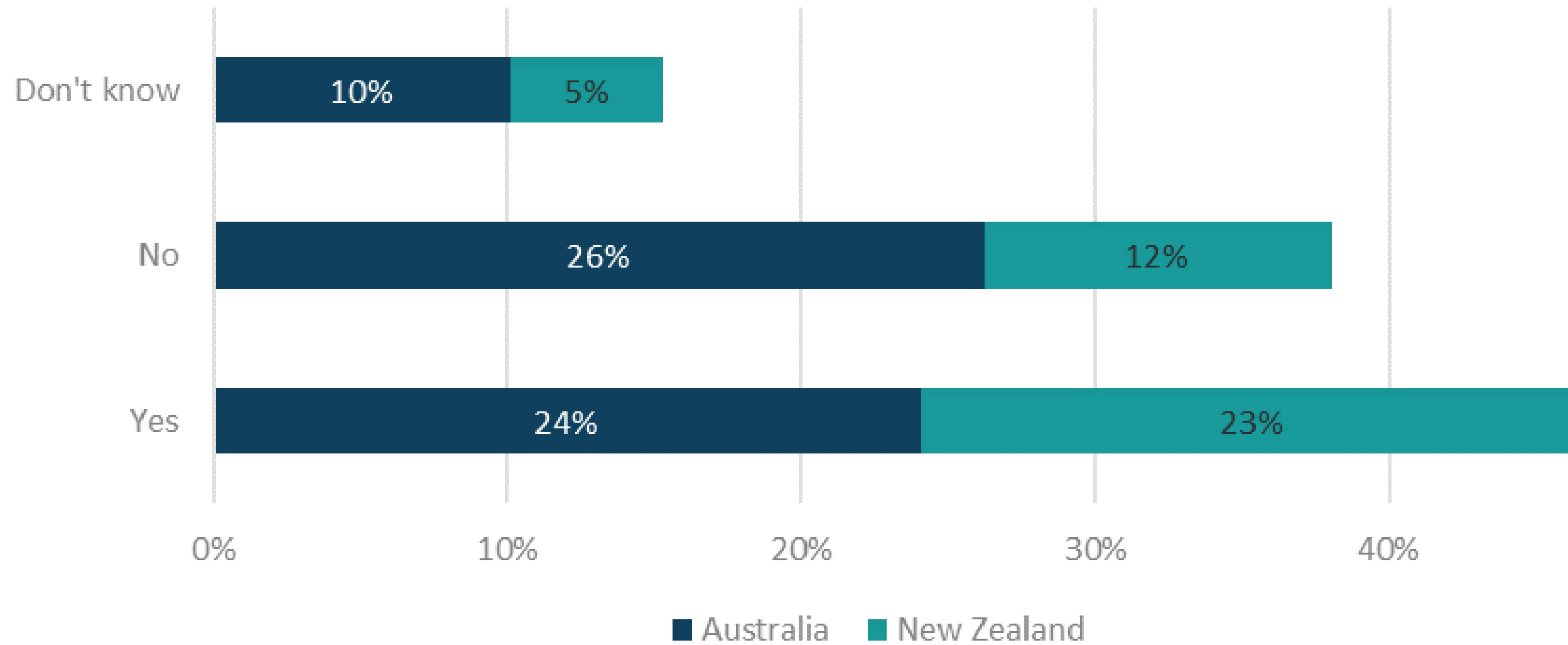


# FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIOURS



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# 47% of people remembered a food recall, while 15% were not sure.

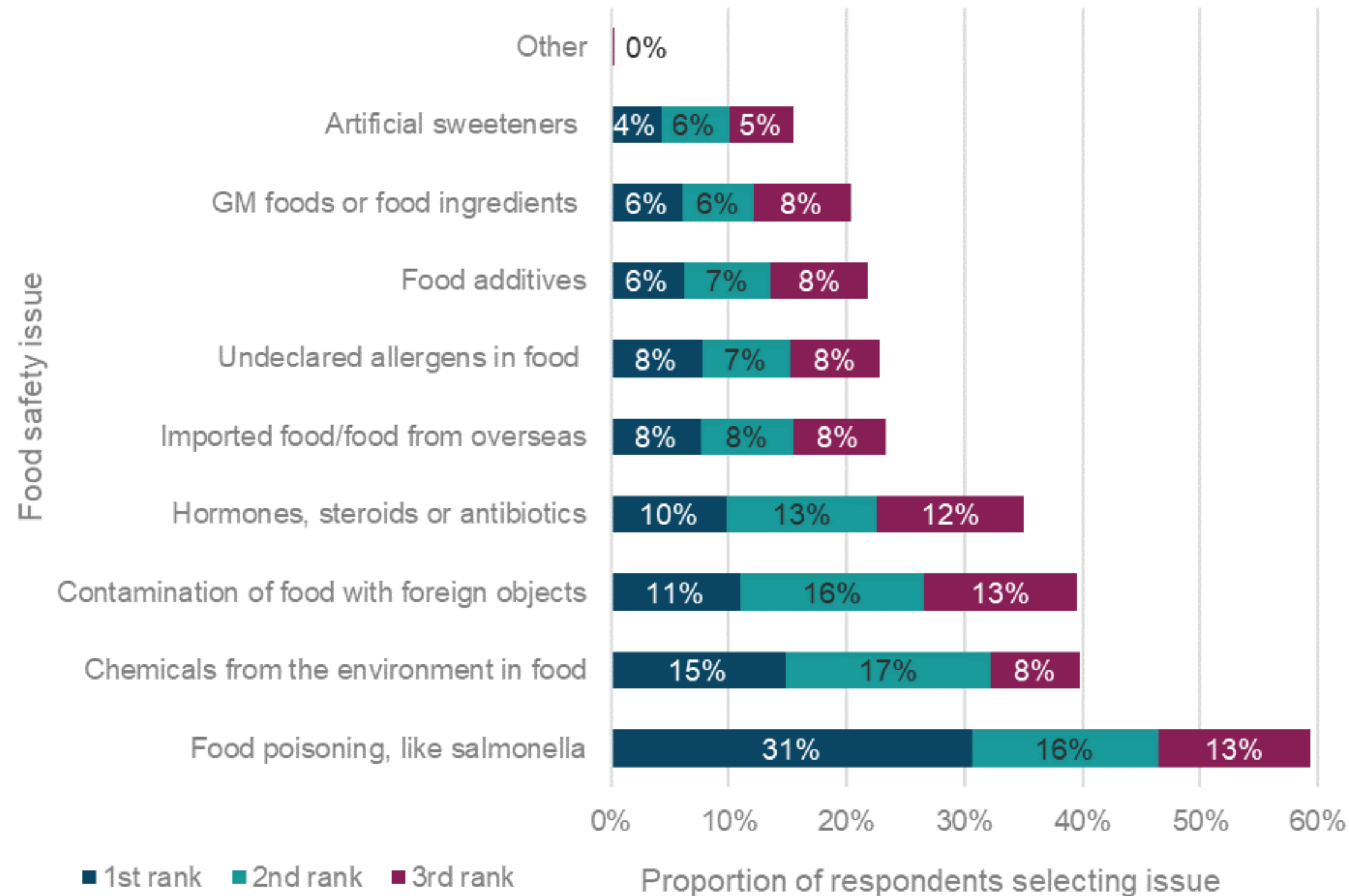


People were more likely to report remembering a food recall if they:

- Lived in New Zealand (rather than Australia)
- Were pregnant or breastfeeding
- Reported that they knew something about what FSANZ does
- Were older
- Identified as female
- Shared the food shopping
- Were more health conscious.

Q: Do you remember hearing about any food being recalled in the past 12 months?  
Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Foodborne illness was the most common top food safety issue, and the most common #1 food safety issue.



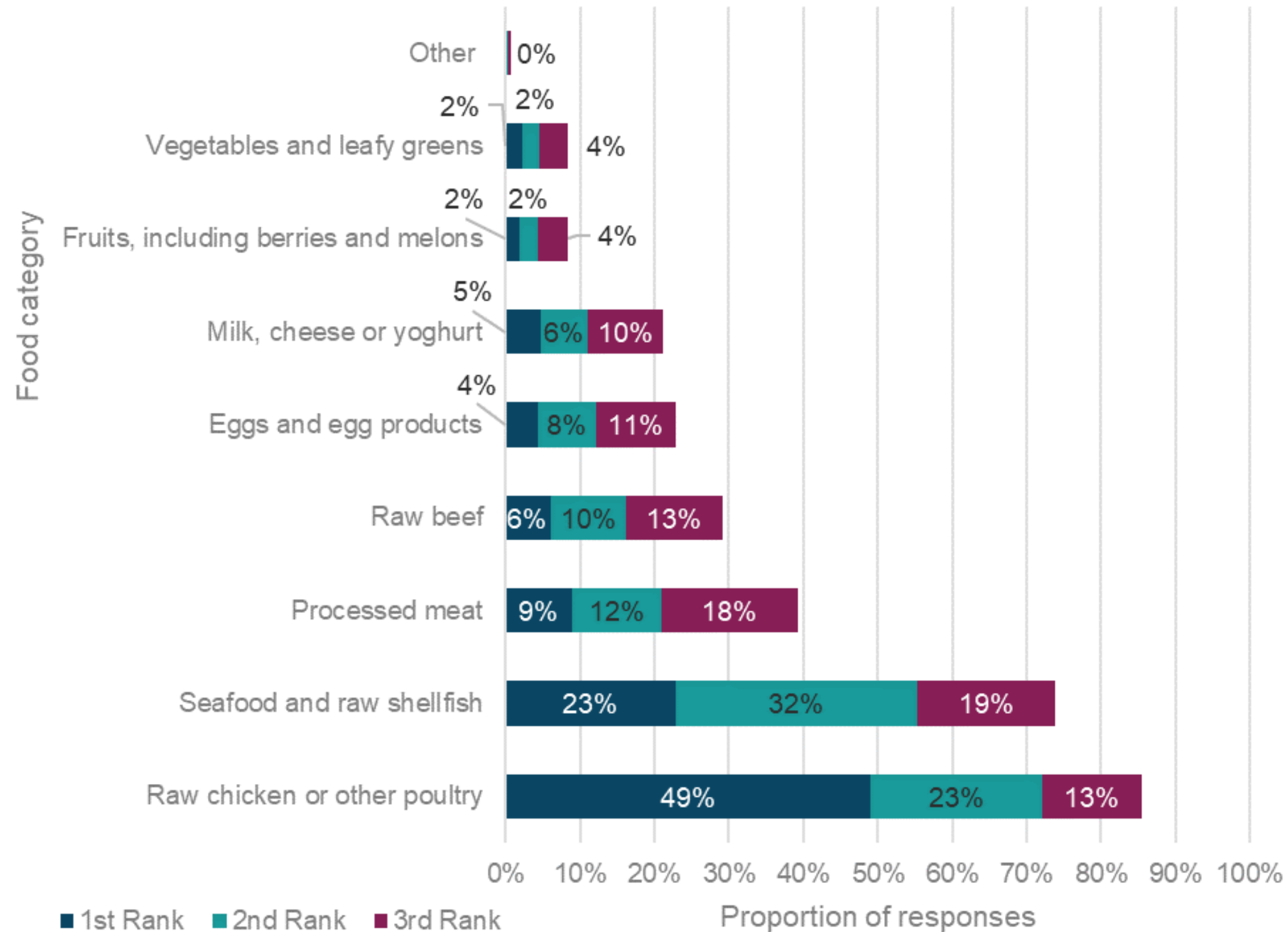
People were more likely to select food poisoning as a top food safety issue if they:

- Were aged 55+ years
- Identified as female
- Had an AU/NZ or European background
- Did not have a child < 15 years in the household
- Had a high level of confidence in the safety of the food supply
- Remembered a food recall in the last 12 months.

Q: In your opinion, what are the most important food safety issues today? (1 = "Most important", 2 = "Second-most important" and 3 = "Third-most important")

Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Eggs was not seen as a top food safety risk by most consumers (selected by 23%), despite being one of the most common sources of foodborne illness.



People were more likely to select egg as a top food safety risk if they:

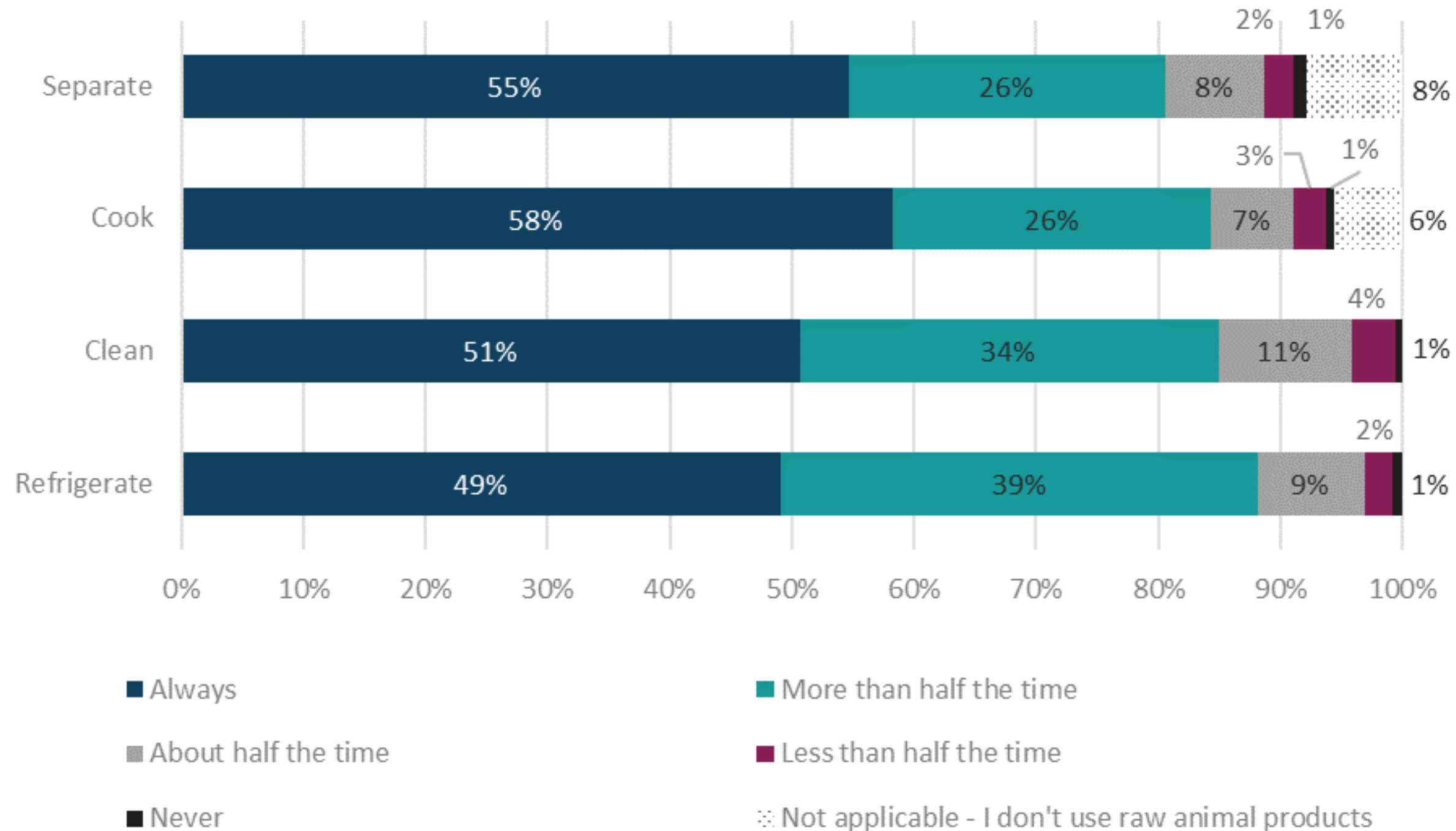
- Were aged 35-54 years
- Lived in Australia
- Had a child < 15 years in the household.

Q: In your opinion, what are the categories of foods that are the most likely to cause illness? (1 = Most likely to cause illness, 2 = Second-most likely, 3 = Third-most likely)

Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)



# Consumers were significantly more likely to report engaging in food safety behaviours that concerned raw animal products (i.e. separate and cook).



Older consumers were less likely to report engagement with 'Separate' and 'Cook'.

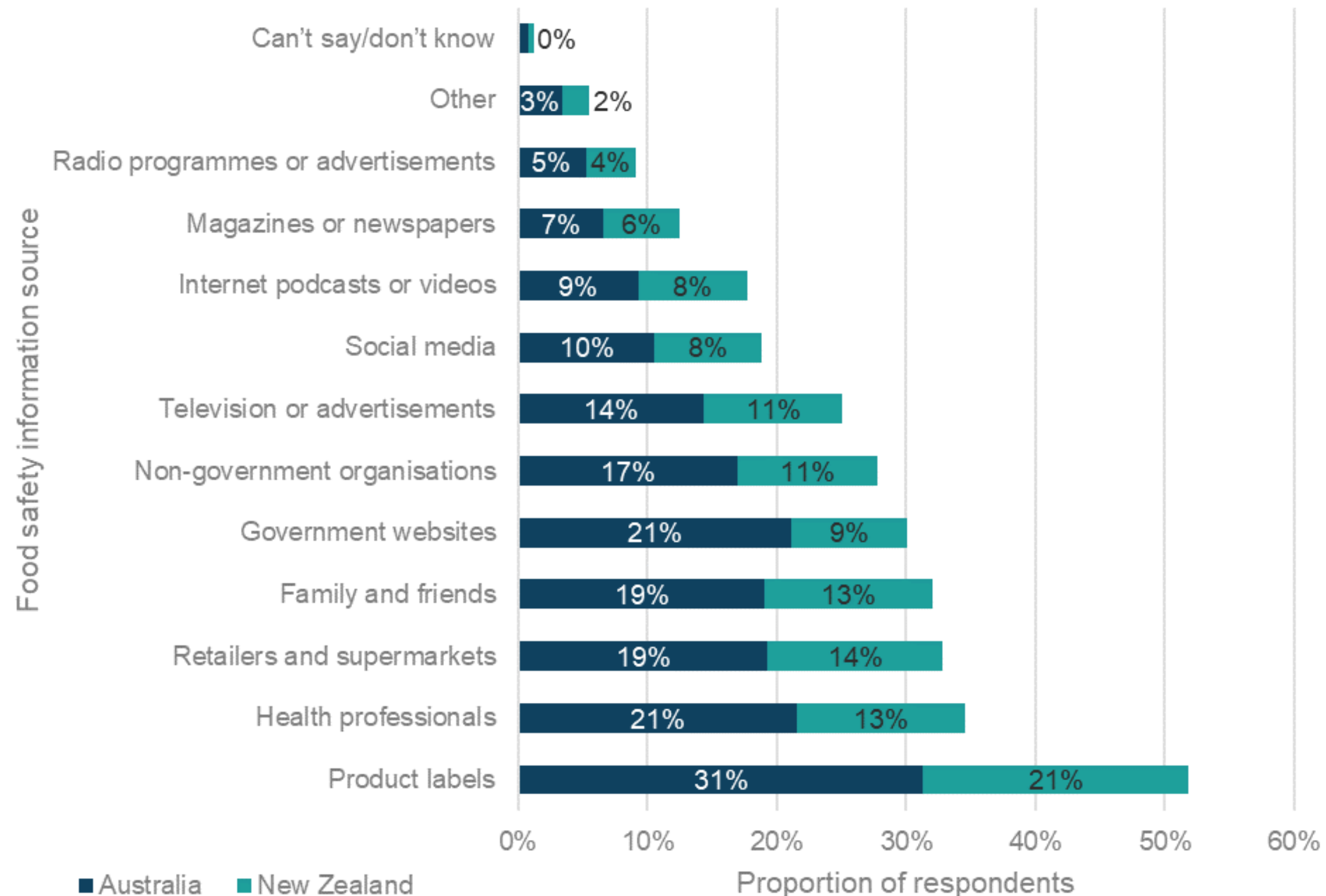
Younger consumers were less likely to report engagement with 'Clean' and 'Refrigerate'.

Men were less likely to engage with all food safety behaviours measured.

Q: How often do you do the following when preparing food at home? 'Refrigerating leftovers shortly after finishing with them' (Refrigerate), 'Cleaning hands and work surfaces' (Clean), 'Cooking raw animal products thoroughly' (Cook) and 'Keeping raw animal products separate from ready-to-eat foods' (Separate).

Base: Respondents who indicated they had some involvement in meal preparation at home (n = 804 Australia, n = 485 New Zealand)

# Product labels were the preferred source of information on how to store and prepare food safely.



The most preferred sources of information were those that focused on professions or institutions which they could trust - such as health professionals, supermarkets, and government - as well as personally trusted relationships among family and friends.

Q: What are your preferred sources of information about how to store and prepare food safely? (Please select all that apply)  
 Base: Respondents who selected that they were interested in more food safety information or weren't sure (n = 804 Australia, n = 485 New Zealand)



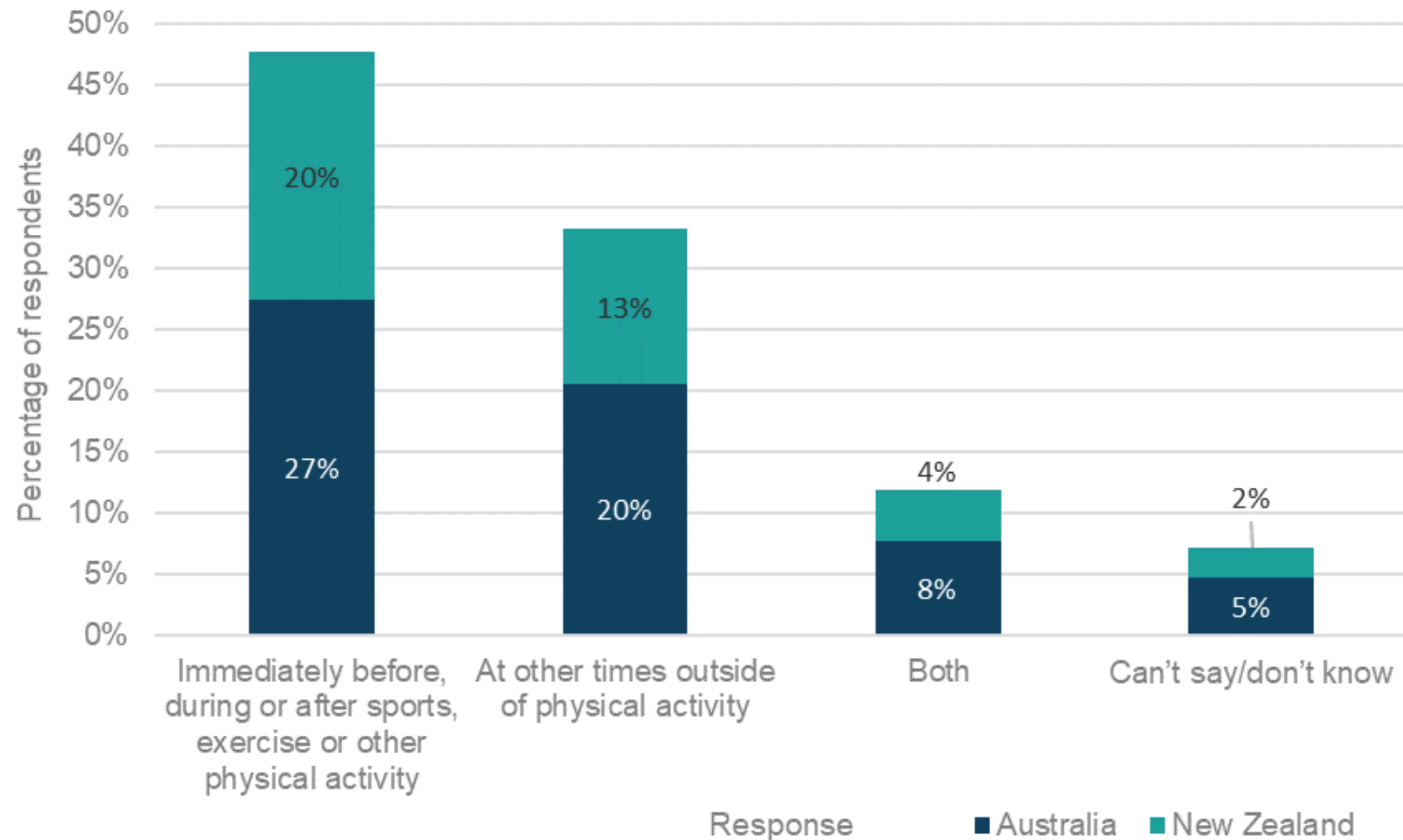
# NEW AND EMERGING FOODS AND FOOD TECHNOLOGIES

## Plant-based milk alternatives and sports foods were the most consumed of the newer foods, with around half of people reporting consumption of them.

Foods	Every day	Every few days	Every week	Every month	Less than monthly	Don't consume	Don't know
Plant-based meat alternatives (e.g. plant-based burger patties)	1%	4%	8%	10%	15%	58%	3%
Plant-based milk alternatives (e.g. soy milk, oat milk, almond milk)	11%	6%	10%	10%	13%	48%	2%
Artificial sugar substitutes (e.g. aspartame, sucralose)	5%	5%	7%	5%	9%	63%	4%
Plant-based sugar substitutes (e.g. Stevia, Monk fruit)	5%	5%	6%	8%	10%	63%	4%
Sports foods (e.g. protein powders, pre-workout drinks, energy gels or gummies, gainers, sports bars, creatine powder)	6%	8%	10%	10%	12%	52%	2%
Hemp seed-based foods (e.g. hemp seeds, hemp protein, hemp seed oil)	1%	3%	5%	6%	11%	70%	4%

## Some sports foods consumers may be using them in a manner inconsistent with their intended purpose.

Not all sports foods are intended to be consumed immediately around physical activity, but at least some consumers may be using them contrary to their intended purpose.



People were more likely to consume sports foods at least monthly if they:

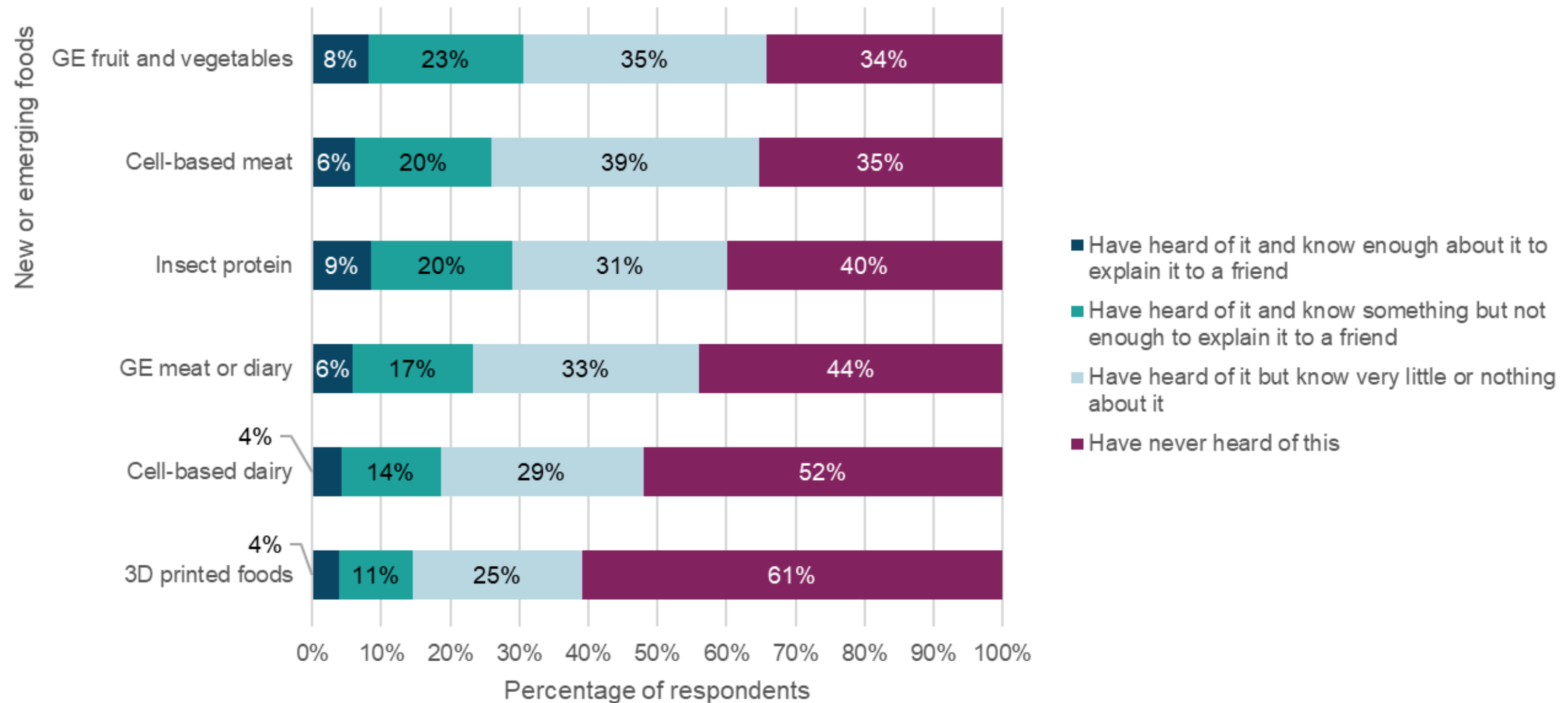
- Were younger
- Identified as male
- Had a higher equivalised household income
- Had a non-European background
- Were more health conscious
- Selected training for sports as a factor currently affecting food choices.

Q: When do you typically consume sports foods? (Please select all that apply)

Base: Respondents indicating that they consume sports foods at least monthly (n = 411 Australia, n = 272 New Zealand)

# More than half of consumers had either never heard of most of the new and emerging foods or food technologies measured, or knew very little about it.

The most well-known were gene-edited fruits and vegetables, cell-based meat, and insect protein.

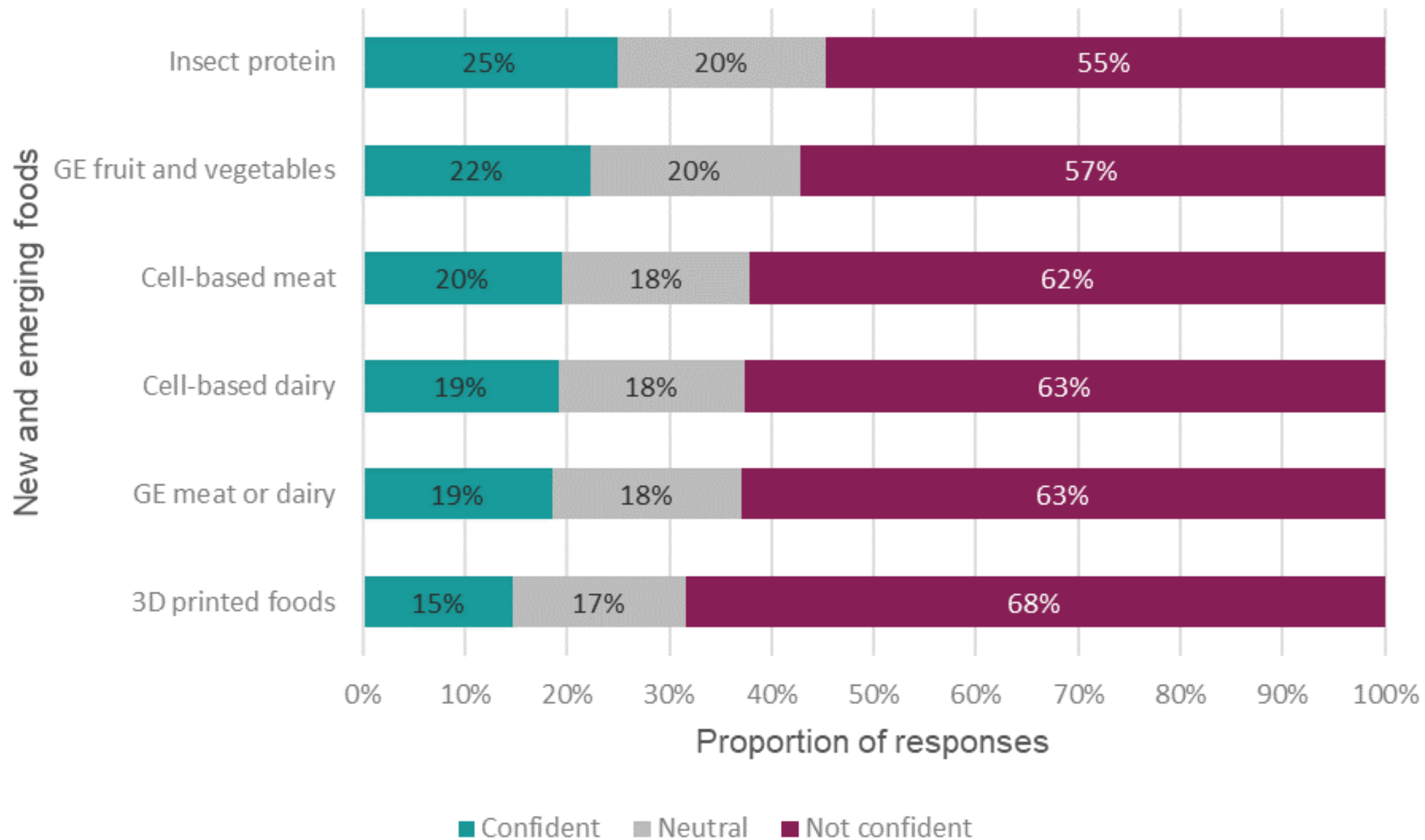


Q: Have you heard of any of the following new or emerging foods? (Single response option)

Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Most consumers would not be confident in the safety of the new or emerging foods and food technologies measured if they became available for sale.

People were most confident in insect protein and gene-edited fruits and vegetables.

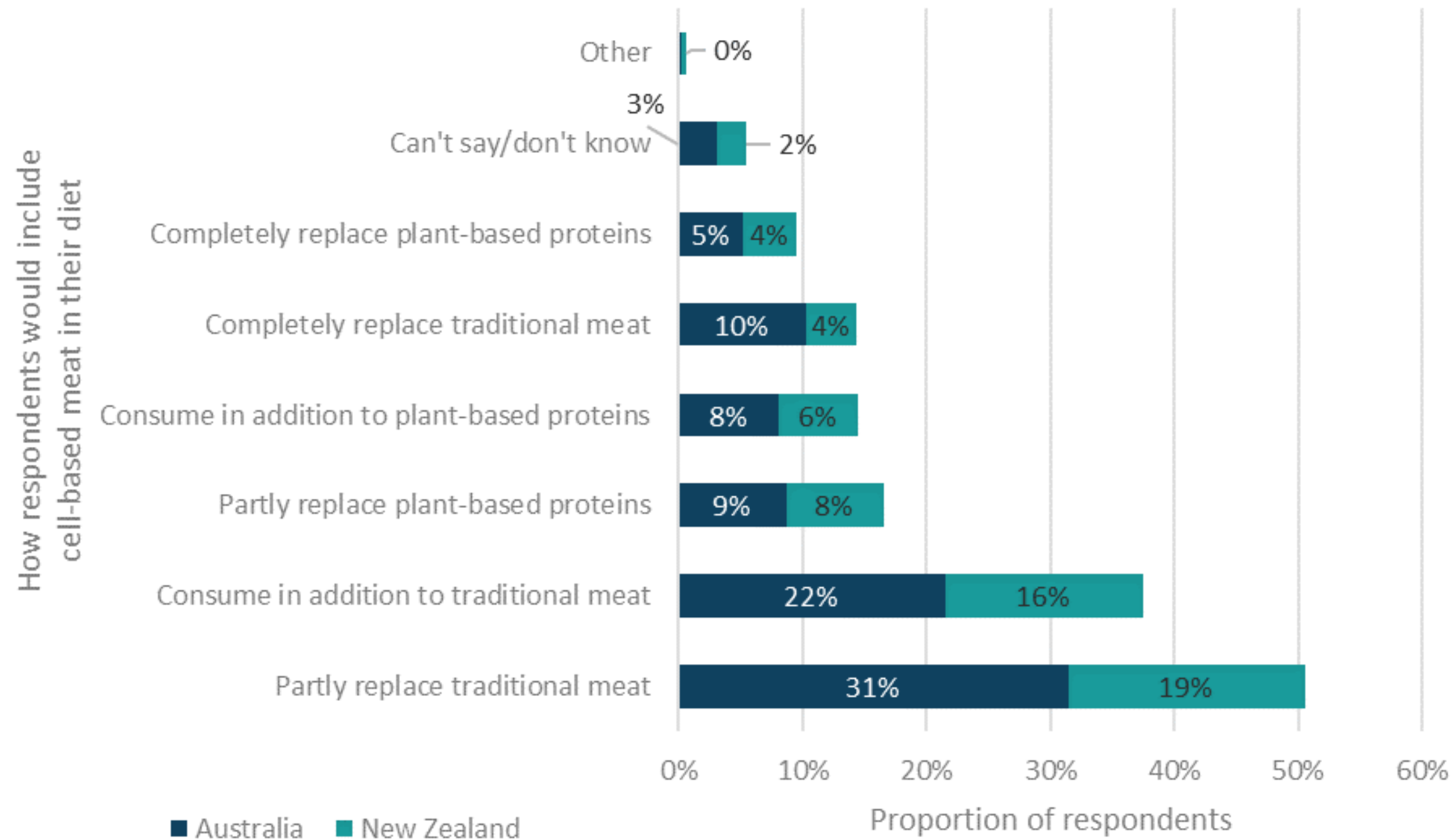


Q: How confident would you be in the safety of the following foods if you saw new or emerging foods for sale in Australian/New Zealand shops and supermarkets? (1 = "Not confident at all" and 7 = "Completely confident")

Base: All respondents (n = 1237 Australia, n = 810 New Zealand)

# Only 24% said they would include cell-based meat in their diet, but a further 29% said they were unsure, which may suggest they are open to being convinced.

Of those who said they would consume cell-based meat, most said it would partly replace traditional meat and/or be consumed in addition to traditional meat.

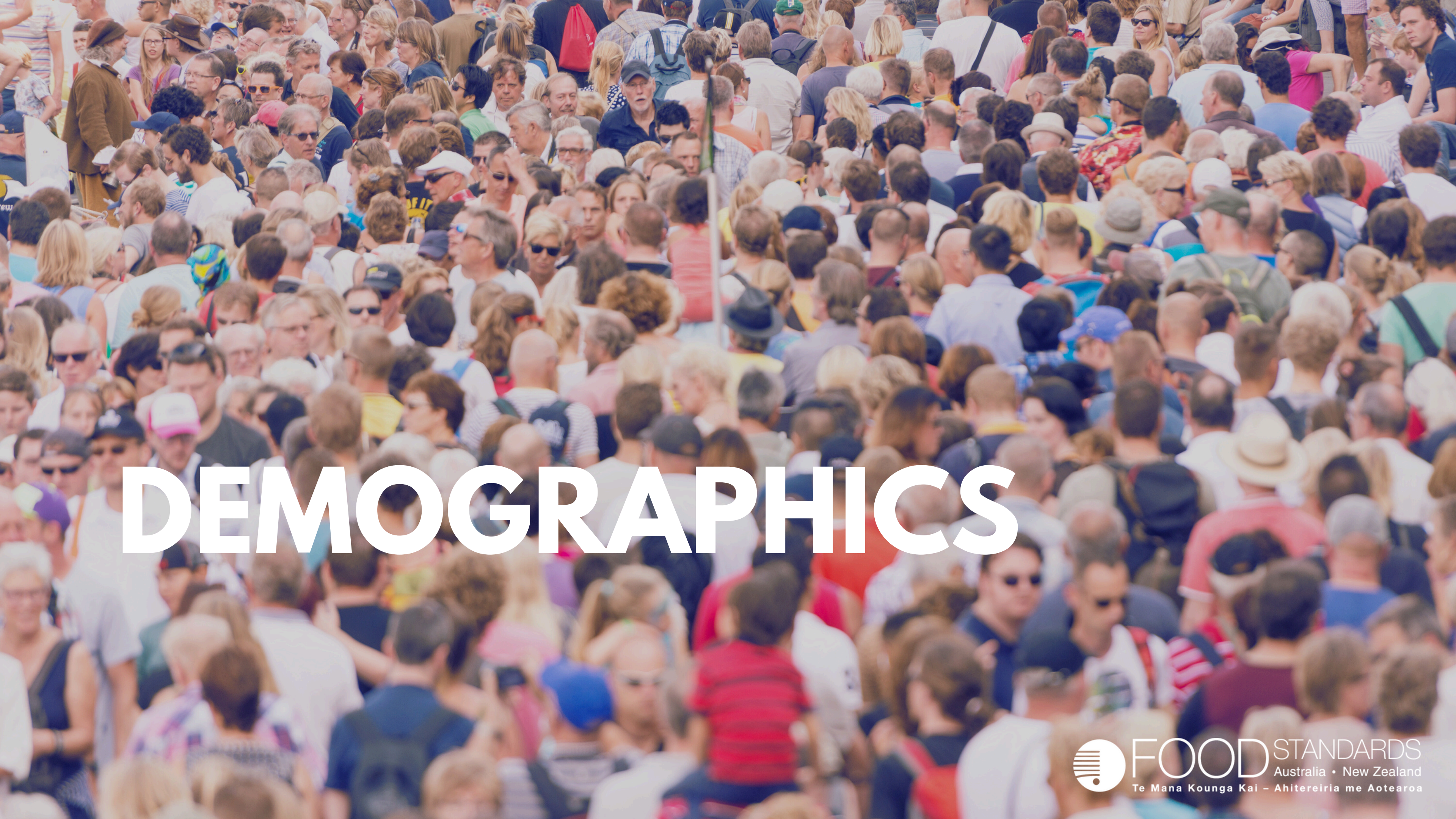


People were more likely to say they would consume cell-based meat if they:

- Were younger
- Identified as male
- Reported consuming plant-based meat at least once a month
- Felt that they knew at least something about cell-based meat
- Were more confident in the safety of cell-based meat

Q: How do you think you would include cell-based meat in your diet? (Please select all that apply)  
 Base: Respondents who intended to include cell-based meat in their diets (n = 295 Australia, n = 188 New Zealand)





# DEMOGRAPHICS

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender

Male	48%
Female	52%
Other	0.1%
Prefer not to say	0.1%



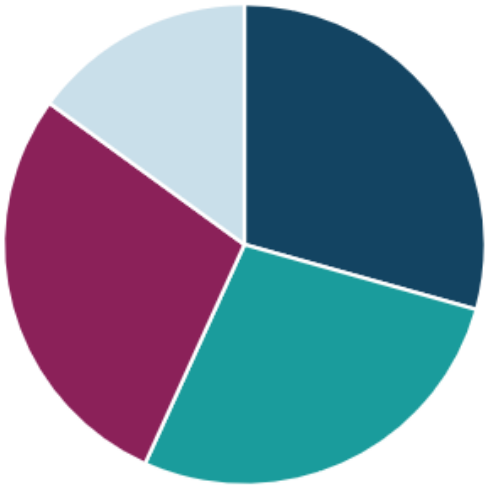
## Age

18-34 years	9%
25-34 years	22%
35-44 years	19%
45-54 years	17%
55-64 years	14%
65+ years	20%



## Education

High school or below	29%
Vocational/trade	27%
Undergraduate	28%
Postgraduate	15%



## Equivalised household income\*

Low income ( $\leq$ \$41,599)	35%
Middle income (\$41,600-\$77,999)	32%
High income ( $\geq$ \$78,000)	26%
Prefer not to say	7%



## Household composition

Children < 15 years in household	32%
No children < 15 years in household	68%



\* Equivalised annual household income was calculated according to the OECD-modified equivalence scale

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Cultural Background

Australian	31%
New Zealand European	28%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	5% (AU)
Māori	18% (NZ)
Pacific Islander	5% (NZ)
European	28%
Asian	11%
African and Middle Eastern	1%
People of the Americas	1%
Prefer not to say	1%

## Birth Country

Australia or New Zealand	76%
Other English-speaking country	13%
Non-English speaking country	10%
Prefer not to say	1%

## European/Non-European

Some AU/NZ or European background	80%
No AU/NZ or European background	19%
Prefer not to say	1%

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Australian State or Territory

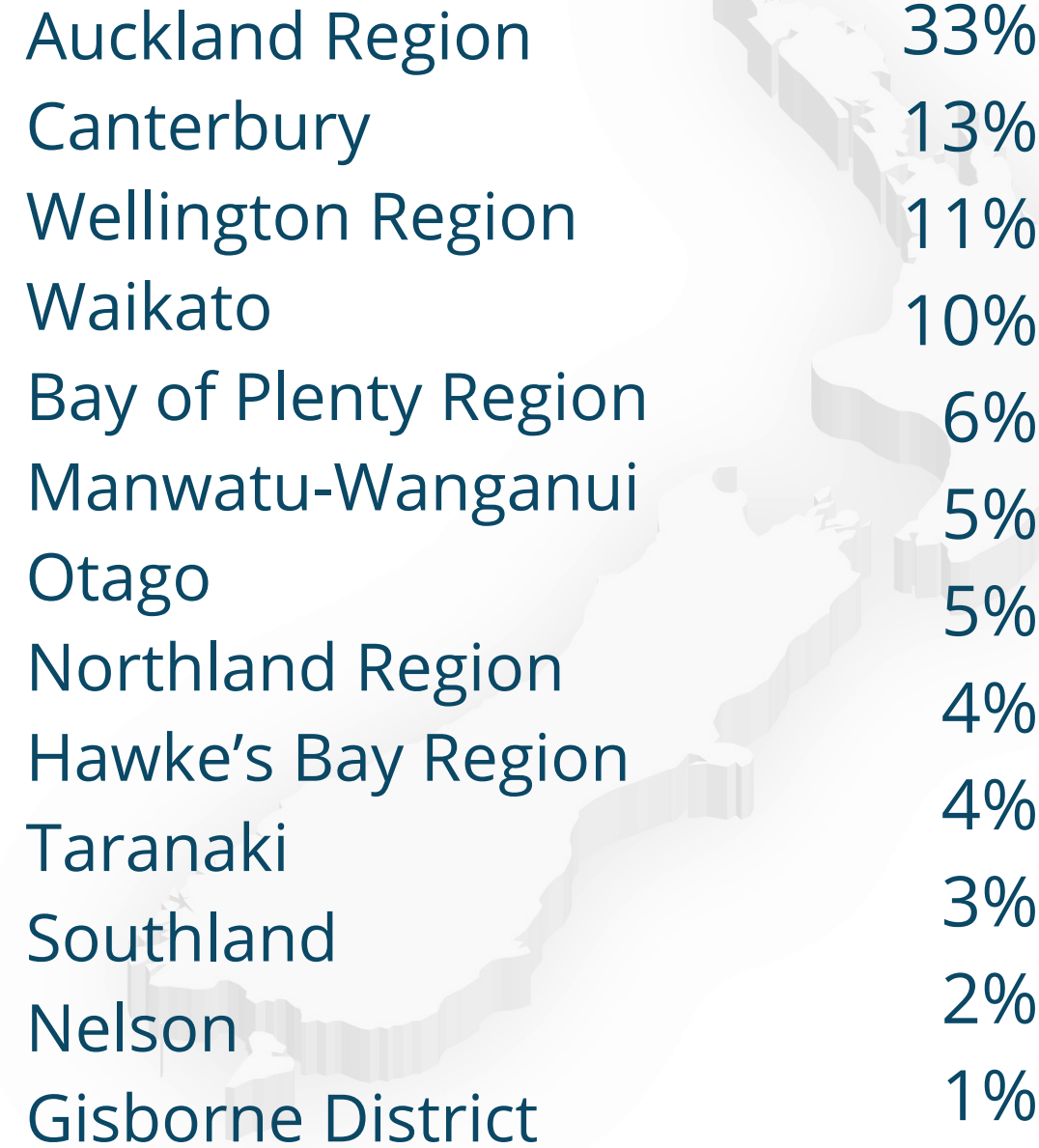


New South Wales	32%
Victoria	26%
Queensland	20%
Western Australia	10%
South Australia	7%
Tasmania	2%
Northern Territory	2%
Australian Capital Territory	1%

## Metro/Regional Australia

Metro	69%
Regional	31%

## New Zealand Region



Auckland Region	33%
Canterbury	13%
Wellington Region	11%
Waikato	10%
Bay of Plenty Region	6%
Manwatu-Wanganui	5%
Otago	5%
Northland Region	4%
Hawke's Bay Region	4%
Taranaki	4%
Southland	3%
Nelson	2%
Gisborne District	1%
Tasman District	1%
Marlborough Region	1%
West Coast	0.3%

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