FOOD STANDARDS
Australia • New Zealand
Te Mana Kounga Kai - Ahitereiria me Aotearoa

2026 Consumer Insights Tracker

Food labelling

October 2026

Acknowledgement of country

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past and present. FSANZ also acknowledges and respects ngā iwi Māori as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

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Introduction

The Consumer Insights Tracker (CIT) is an annual online survey of approximately 1,200 Australian and 800 New Zealand consumers aged 18 years and over. The sample is nationally representative based on interlocked quotas of age, gender and location. The survey includes proportionate representation across educational levels, and of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia and Māori in New Zealand.

This report presents the results pertaining to consumers' trust in, use, understanding and importance of food labelling. Full details on the methodology and sample can be found in the module *'Methods, sample and survey instrument'*.

This document reports 2026 results unless otherwise specified. Due to rounding, figures may not add up to 100%. Statistically significant changes between the multi-year trend and the 2026 results, or by country in 2026 (Australia compared to New Zealand), are indicated where appropriate. Significance throughout this report refers to statistical significance at the .05 level unless otherwise noted.

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Key Results

- **Trust in food labels has remained strong and stable** (since 2023), with highest trust in date marking (78%), the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) (76%), allergen information (75%), ingredients lists (73%), and advisory statements (71%).
- **Importance ratings have remained largely unchanged** since 2023, with date marking consistently rated as the most important label element.
- **Ingredients lists and the NIP remain highly valued** by consumers.
- **Trust in and importance of the Health Star Rating (HSR) have remained stable** since 2023.
- **Most consumers are confident using food labels**, with 80% reporting they can use labels to make informed food choices.
- Among those lacking confidence (n = 438), key barriers were:
  - -small or difficult-to-read text
  - -lack of trust in food label information
  - -difficulty understanding label information
- Food additives are the **most common type of information** consumers looked for in the ingredients lists (41%), followed by key ingredients (37%) and artificial sweeteners (34%).

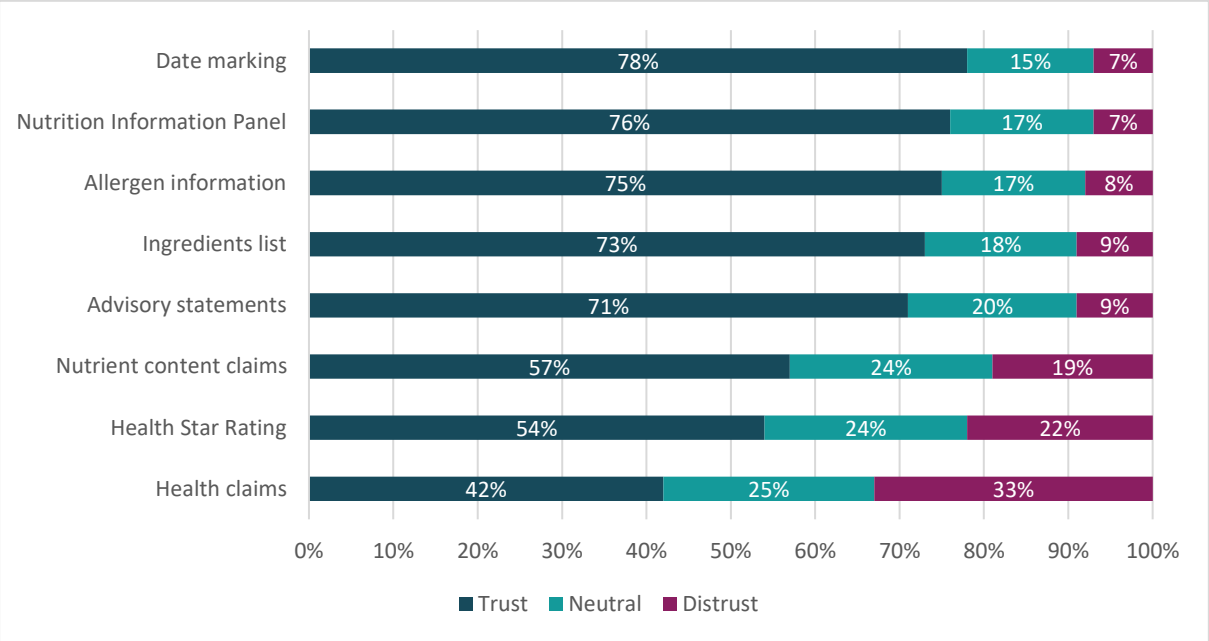
Results

Trust, use and understanding of food labelling

Trust in food labelling

In 2026, the most highly trusted food labelling elements, trusted by 71 to 78% of consumers, were date marking (best before/use by dates), the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP), allergen information, ingredients list and advisory statements (Figure 1). In comparison, health claims, the Health Star Rating (HSR) system and nutrient content claims were the least trusted elements, trusted by only 42 to 57% of consumers.

Figure 1: Trust in labelling elements



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")

Trust = Score of 5, 6 or 7 on the seven-point scale, Neutral – Score of 4, Distrust – Score of 1,2 or 3

Consumer trust in food labelling elements has remained generally moderate to high and stable between 2023 and 2026 (Figure 2 and Table 1). While several elements recorded slightly higher trust scores in 2025 and 2026 than in earlier years, the overall pattern of trust remained largely unchanged. Trust in the HSR remained unchanged across the four years.

Figure 2: Trust in labelling elements by year, 2023 – 2026

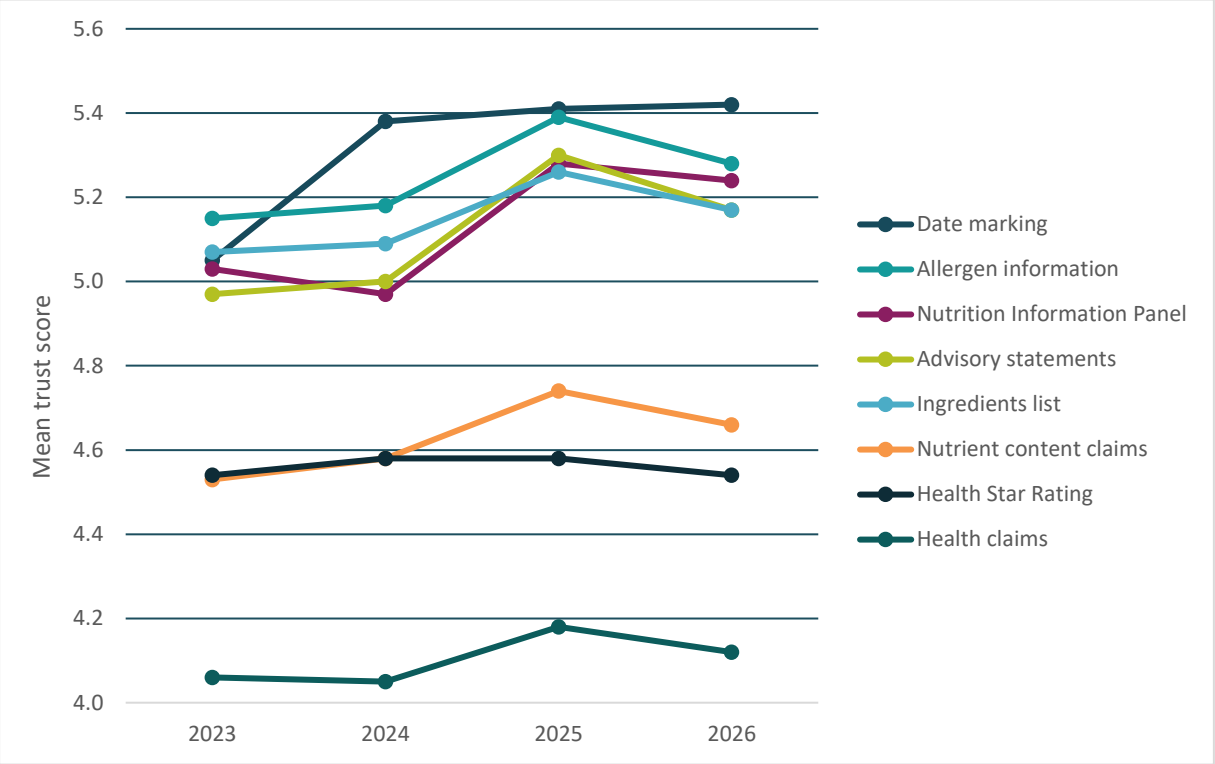


Table 1: Consumer trust for food labelling elements by year, 2023 - 2026

	2023 Mean (±*SD*)	2024 Mean (±*SD*)	2025 Mean (±*SD*)	2026 Mean (±*SD*)
Date marking (best before/use by dates)	5.1$^{\wedge *\#}$ (1.4)	5.4$^{\wedge}$ (1.3)	5.4* (1.3)	5.4$^{\#}$ (1.3)
Allergen information	5.2$^{\wedge \#}$ (1.3)	5.2^{*+} (1.3)	5.4$^{\wedge *-}$ (1.3)	5.3$^{\#+-}$ (1.3)
Nutrition information panel	5.0$^{\wedge \#}$ (1.3)	5.0^{*+} (1.3)	5.3$^{\wedge *}$ (1.2)	5.2$^{\#+}$ (1.2)
Ingredients list	5.1$^{\wedge *}$ (1.3)	5.1$^{\#}$ (1.3)	5.3$^{\wedge \#}$ (1.3)	5.2* (1.3)
Advisory or warning statements (e.g., 'contains caffeine', 'not recommended for children')	5.0$^{\wedge *}$ (1.3)	5.0$^{\#}$ (1.4)	5.3$^{\wedge \#+}$ (1.3)	5.2^{*+} (1.3)
Claims about nutrient or ingredient content (e.g., 'low in sugar', 'reduced fat')	4.5$^{\wedge *}$ (1.4)	4.6$^{\#}$ (1.5)	4.7$^{\wedge \#}$ (1.5)	4.7* (1.5)
Health Star Rating	4.5 (1.5)	4.6 (1.5)	4.6 (1.6)	4.5 (1.6)
Claims about health benefits (e.g., 'calcium for healthy bones')	4.1 (1.5)	4.1$^{\wedge}$ (1.5)	4.2$^{\wedge}$ (1.6)	4.1 (1.6)

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")

^*#+Years with the same symbols are significantly different

As seen in Figure 3, 71.6% of consumers trusted FSANZ regulated food labelling[1] (all elements except for the HSR). This is similar to the 73.8% in 2025. Trust in FSANZ regulated food labelling was stable with a mean (M) of 5.0 (see Table 2). There was no significant difference between the mean level of trust in FSANZ regulated food labelling between Australia (M = 5.0) and New Zealand (M = 5.1) (Table 3).

Figure 3: Trust in FSANZ regulated food labelling elements

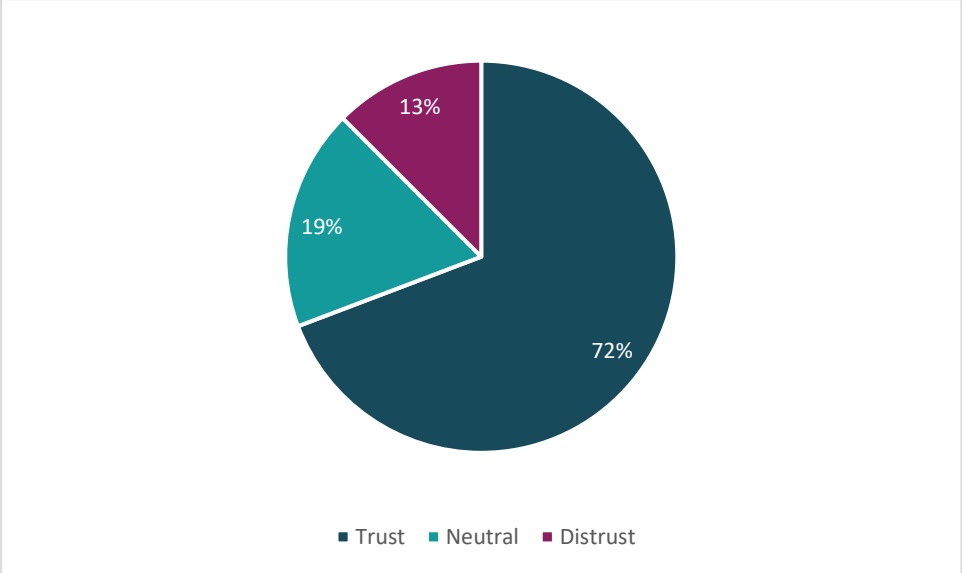


Table 2: Trust in FSANZ-regulated labelling elements by year, 2023 - 2026

Measure	2023 Mean (±*SD*)	2024 Mean (±*SD*)	2025 Mean (±*SD*)	2026 Mean (±*SD*)
Overall trust in FSANZ-regulated labelling elements	4.8^* (1.0)	4.9#+ (1.0)	5.1^# (1.0)	5.0*+ (1.0)

^*#+Years with the same symbols are significantly different

[1] An overall measure of trust in FSANZ-regulated labelling (under the code) was calculated by averaging the trust ratings across the different labelling elements (except for the Health Star Rating, as this is not regulated by FSANZ). Trust = score of 5, 6, 7 on the seven-point scale; Distrust = score of 1, 2, 3; Neutral = score of 4

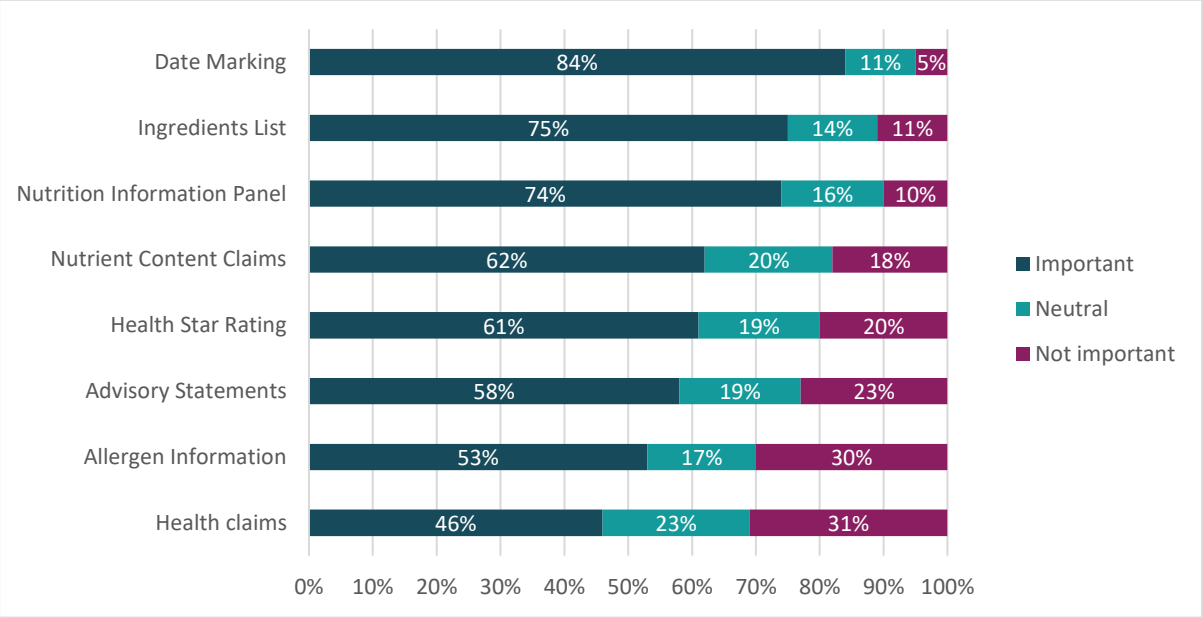
Table 3: Trust in FSANZ regulated labelling elements by country

	Australia Mean (±*SD*)	New Zealand Mean (±*SD*)
Trust in FSANZ regulated labelling elements	5.0 (1.1)	5.1 (1.0)

Importance of food labelling

Date marking, the ingredients list and the NIP were the 3 most important food labelling elements when consumers were deciding whether to buy a packaged food for the first time. Health claims were rated the least important (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Importance of labelling elements to initial food purchasing decisions

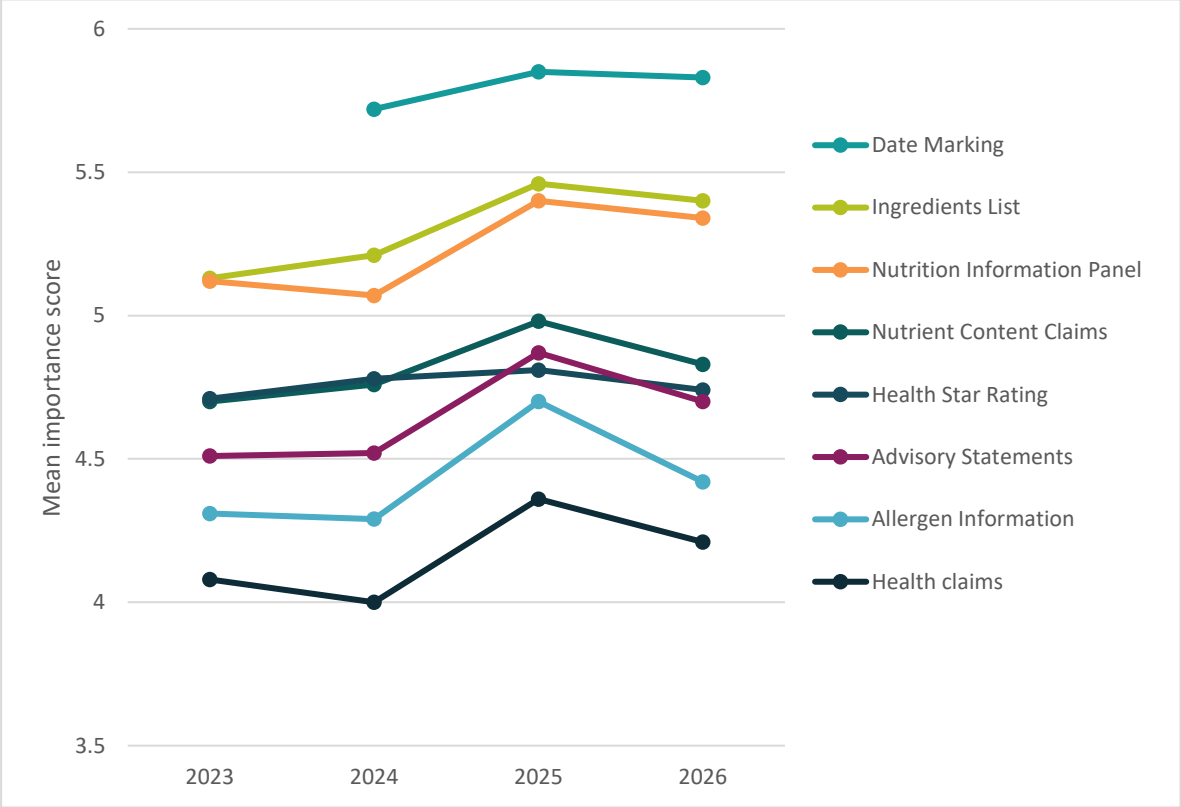


Q: Think about when you are making the decision to buy a packaged food or drink for the first time. How important is the following labelling information when deciding what to buy?

Important = score of 5, 6, 7 on seven-point scale; neutral = score of 4; Not important = score of 1, 2, 3.

The importance consumers placed on food labelling elements generally increased in 2025 compared to earlier years, then slightly dropped in 2026 (Figure 5 and Table 4). The perceived importance of the HSR and the overall rankings of the labelling elements remained largely unchanged across all four years.

Figure 5: Importance of labelling elements by year, 2023 – 2026



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").

Note: Level of importance in date markings was not assessed in 2023

Table 4: Importance of food labelling elements by year, 2023 - 2026

Food label element	2023 Mean (±*SD*)	2024 Mean (±*SD*)	2025 Mean (±*SD*)	2026 Mean (±*SD*)
Date marking (best before/use by date)†	–	5.7^[^*] (1.5)	5.9^[^] (1.3)	5.8^[*] (1.3)
Ingredients List	5.1^[^*] (1.6)	5.2^[#+] (1.6)	5.5^[^#] (1.5)	5.4^[*+] (1.5)
Nutrition information panel (e.g. amount of energy, carbohydrates, sugar, sodium, or fat)	5.1^[^*] (1.6)	5.1^[#+] (1.7)	5.4^[^#] (1.5)	5.3^[*+] (1.5)
Claims about nutrient or ingredient content (e.g., 'low in sugar', 'reduced fat')	4.7^[^] (1.6)	4.8^[*] (1.6)	5.0^[^*#] (1.6)	4.8^[#] (1.6)
Health Star Rating	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.7

Food label element	2023 Mean (±*SD*)	2024 Mean (±*SD*)	2025 Mean (±*SD*)	2026 Mean (±*SD*)
	(1.7)	(1.6)	(1.6)	(1.6)
Advisory or warning statements (e.g., 'contains caffeine', 'not recommended for children')	4.5$^{\wedge\#}$ (1.8)	4.5^{*+} (1.8)	4.9$^{\wedge*-}$ (1.8)	4.7$^{\#+-}$ (1.8)
Allergen Information	4.3$^{\wedge}$ (2.0)	4.3* (2.1)	4.7$^{\wedge*\#}$ (2.0)	4.4$^{\#}$ (2.0)
Claims about health benefits (e.g. 'Calcium is good for healthy bones')	4.1$^{\wedge\#}$ (1.7)	4.0^{*+} (1.7)	4.4$^{\wedge*-}$ (1.7)	4.2$^{\#+-}$ (1.7)

†: Level of importance in date markings was not assessed in 2023

$^{\wedge*\#+-}$Years with the same symbols are significantly different

Confidence in ability to use food labelling

Most consumers continue to feel confident using food labels to make informed choices. In 2026, 80.5% were confident, while only 5.2% were not confident and 14.2% neutral. There were no significant differences between scores reported in 2026 and those reported in 2025 (Table 5). Responses in both years were concentrated toward the higher end of the scale (Figure 6).

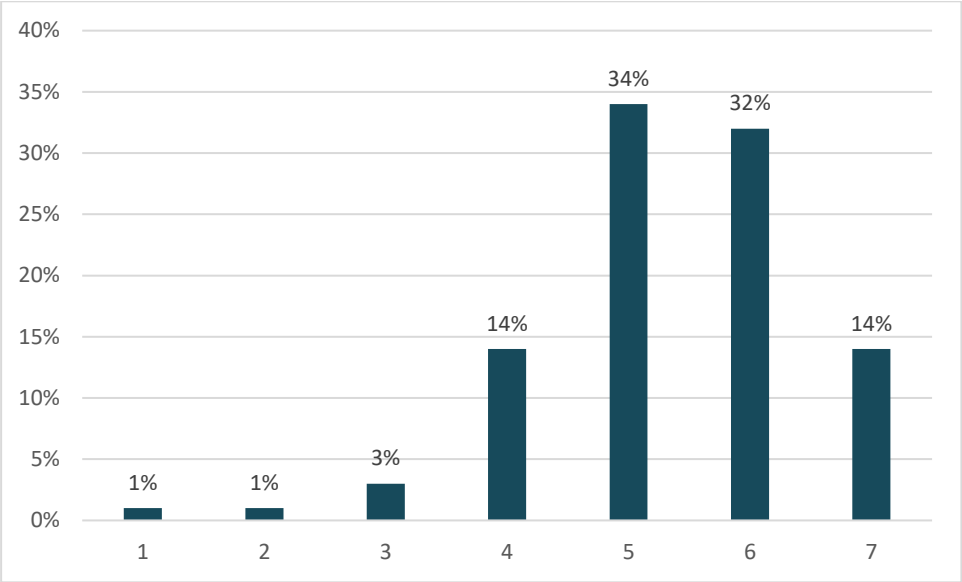
Table 5: Perceived ability to use food labelling by year, 2023 – 2026

	2023 Mean (±*SD*)	2024 Mean (±*SD*)	2025 Mean (±*SD*)	2026 Mean (±*SD*)
Confidence in ability to use food labels to make informed choices	5.0$^{\wedge\#}$ (1.2)	5.0^{*+} (1.2)	5.3$^{\wedge*}$ (1.2)	5.3$^{\#+}$ (1.1)

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")

$^{\wedge*\#+}$Years with the same symbols are significantly different

Figure 6: Perceived ability to use food labelling to make informed choices



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")

There was no difference in this measure between countries in 2026 (Table 6). It is important to note that this question only measured respondents perceived ability to use food labelling to make informed choices, which may differ from their actual ability.

Table 6: Perceived ability to use food labelling by country

	Australia Mean (±*SD*)	New Zealand Mean (±*SD*)
Confidence in ability to use food labels to make informed choices	5.3 (1.1)	5.4 (1.1)

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")

Reasons for lack of confidence in ability to use food labelling

Those who indicated a lack of confidence in their ability to use food labelling (i.e. selected a rating of 1-4; n = 456) were asked, "What makes it difficult to use food labelling to make informed choices about foods?". The most frequently selected reasons were 'The information on food labels is too small/illegible to easily read' (41%), 'I'm not sure if I can trust the information on food labels' (40%) and 'I often don't understand what the information on food labels mean' (35%) (Table 7). The small number of participants selecting 'other' (n = 9) highlighted concerns around the accuracy or potential misleading nature of the information provided.

Table 7: Reasons for lack of confidence in ability to use food labelling to make informed choices by year, 2023 – 2026

	2023 (*n* = 592) *n* (%)	2024 (*n* = 616) *n* (%)	2025 (*n* = 438) *n* (%)	2026 (*n* = 456) *n* (%)
The information on food labels is too small/illegible to easily read	219 (37.0)	253 (41.1)	179 (40.9)	188 (41.2)
I often don't understand what the information on food labels means	224 (37.8)	224 (36.4)	171 (39.0)	161 (35.3)
I'm not sure if I can trust the information on food labels	216 (36.5)	211 (34.3)	188 (42.9)	180 (39.5)
I don't have enough time to read food labels when I'm shopping	181 (30.6)	198 (32.1)	156 (35.6)	148 (32.5)
I don't find the information on food labels useful or relevant to me	82 (13.9)	85 (13.8)	76 (17.4)	103 (22.6)
I can't find the information I need to make food choices that reflect my values	45 (7.6)	48 (7.8)	45 (10.3)	33 (7.2)
Other	2 (0.3)	8 (1.3)	7 (1.6)	9 (2.0)
Can't say/Don't know	56 (9.5)	47 (7.6)	40 (9.1)	41 (9.0)

*Percentages do not add up to 100% as multiple responses could be selected

Those who selected that they 'I often don't understand what the information on food labels means' (n = 171) were asked: 'What information on the label do you find difficult to understand, and why?'. The most common concerns related to unfamiliar scientific terminology and ingredient names, difficulty interpreting nutrition information such as serving sizes and percentage daily intakes, and challenges understanding the health implications of label information. Many respondents also reported that labels contain too much information or use print that is difficult to read. A smaller number questioned the accuracy or trustworthiness of information provided on labels.

Ingredients list

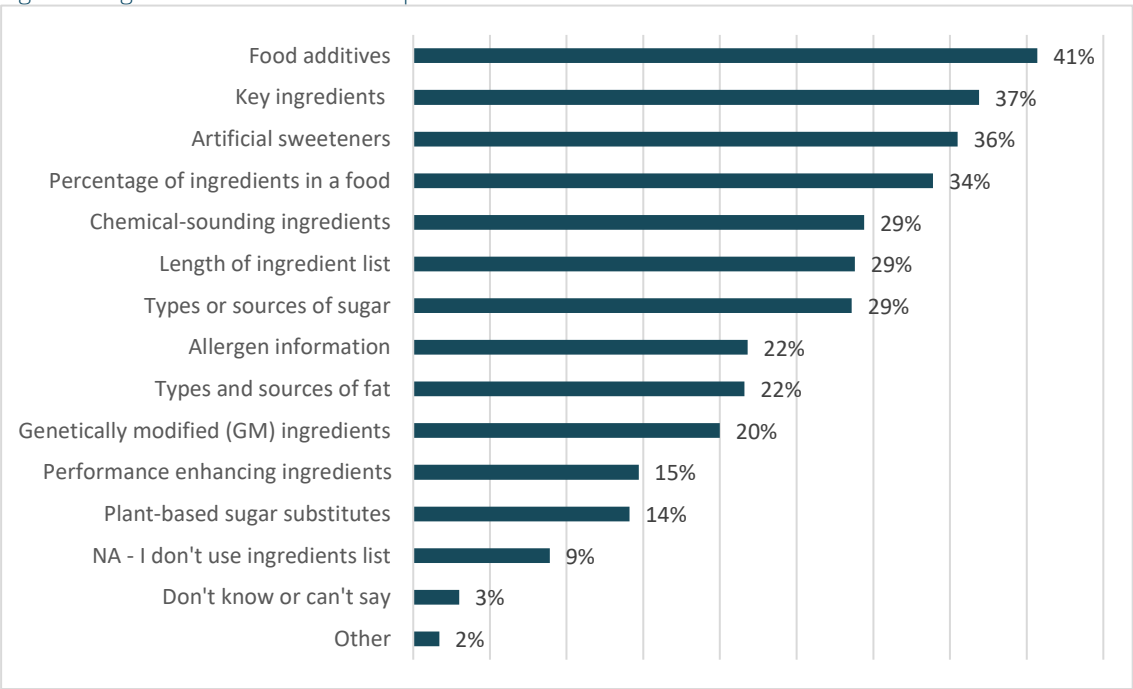
Elements within the ingredients list

Those who indicated that the ingredient list was somewhat important to their food purchasing decisions (rated at least 4 on the scale of importance) were asked what information they usually look for in the ingredients list when buying products for the first time. Participants could select as many options as they liked or provide an open-ended response. The types of information respondents looked for in the ingredients list were broadly similar in 2026 and 2025. In 2026, food additives

remained the most commonly selected information, followed by key ingredients and presence of artificial sweeteners (Figure 7).

Responses to 'other' (n = 35)[2] in 2026 included checking for animal products or suitability for vegan or vegetarian diets, country of origin, and specific ingredients or composition components including fat, sugar, carbohydrates, dairy, salt and sugar. A small number of consumers noted looking for ingredients with E numbers or that were vaguely described e.g. thickeners. Checking the protein source/type or checking where sugar fell in the order of the ingredients were other pieces of information consumers reported looking out for.

Figure 7: Ingredients list elements respondents look for



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

[2] 4 responses to 'other' were reclassified to relevant responses. Those that responded 'I don't use the ingredients list' were excluded from the total count.