



**Findings of An Online Survey on
Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of
Dietary Guidelines in Southeast Asia Countries**

Introduction

- Food-based dietary guidelines (FBDG) is a useful tool to encourage healthy food choices among public, decrease the risk of diet-related chronic diseases and improve public health.
- Evaluation on the awareness and usage of the FBDG messages by the public is important, as a good level of public awareness is a crucial step in getting people to implement them, and understanding their usage will also help to identify any necessary changes to be made to the FBDG or their implementation.
- In SEA countries, there has been minimal research into whether consumers are aware/familiar with the FBDG messages, and whether FBDG are utilised by the public.
- In view of lack of such local data in several countries in SEA, a multicountry online survey was conducted by the SEA-PHN Network with the aim to understand the awareness and usage of the key messages by the public.

Methodology

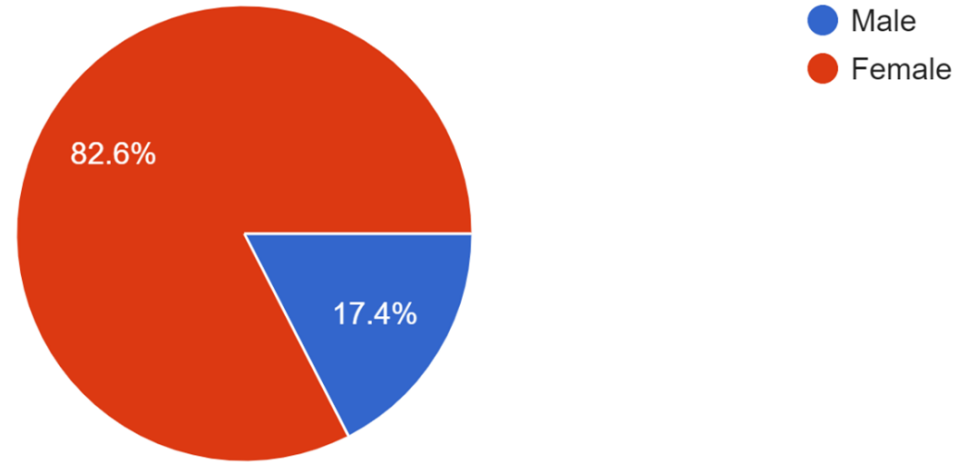
- The data for this survey was collected online through Google form from 17 October to 7 November 2022 in Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.
- The target respondents for this survey were adults aged 18 years and above living in the three countries.
- A common questionnaire that had been developed and reviewed by the three nutrition societies/associations in SEA (Nutrition Society of Malaysia, Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines and Nutrition Association of Thailand) was used for this online survey. The questionnaire was translated into respective language.
- The questionnaire covered short and simple questions on identifying FBDG messages of respective country (awareness), usage of FBDGs messages and pictorial food guides, and common sources of healthy eating information.

Results:

Survey of Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in Malaysia

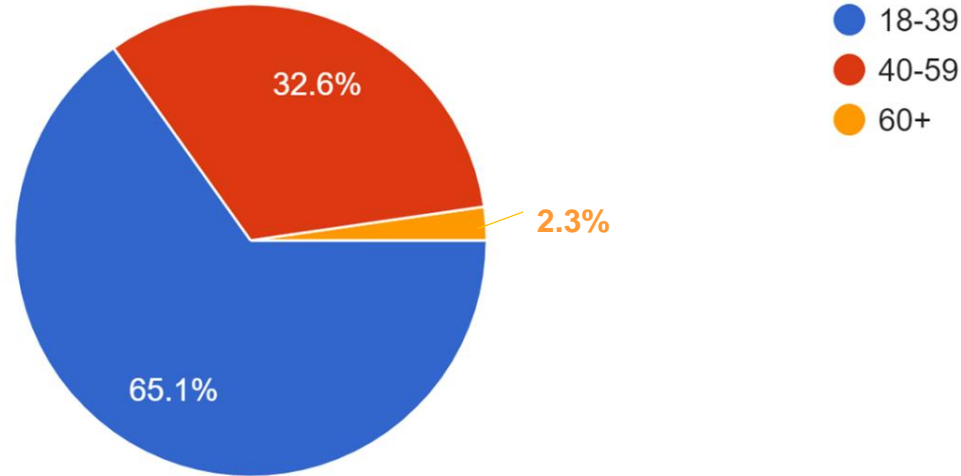
Nutrition Society of Malaysia

Respondents' characteristics: Gender (N = 218)



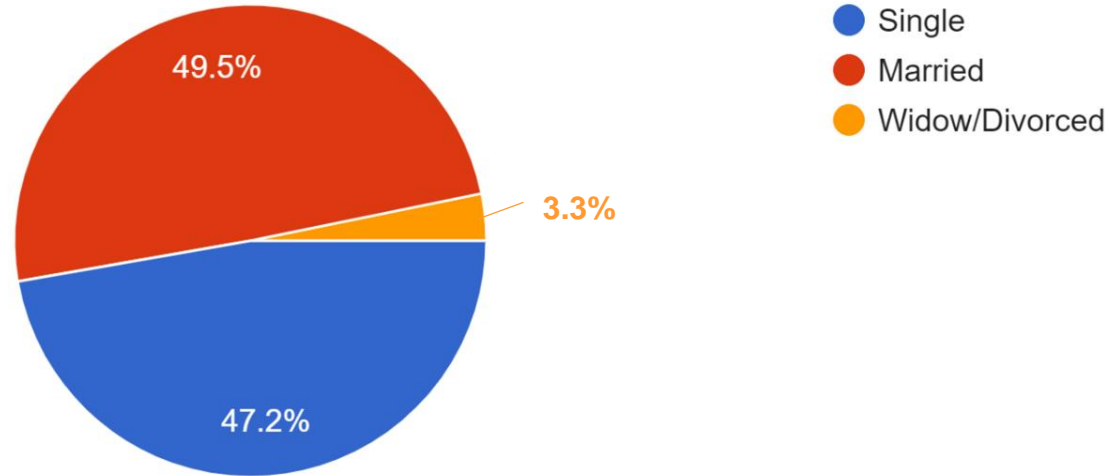
Majority (82.6%) of respondents were female.

Respondents' characteristics: Age (N = 218)



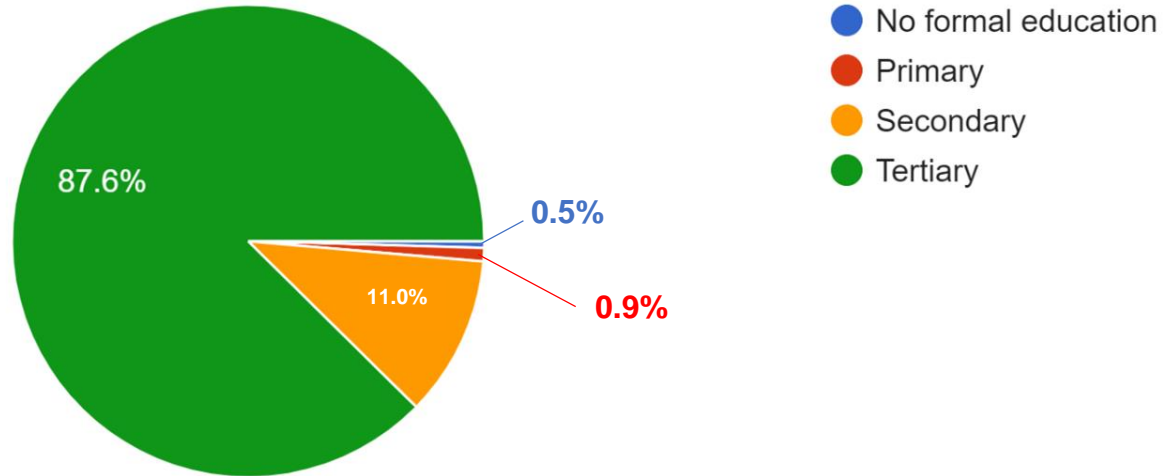
More than half (65.1%) of the respondents were young adults aged 18-39 years old.

Respondents' characteristics: Marital status (N = 218)



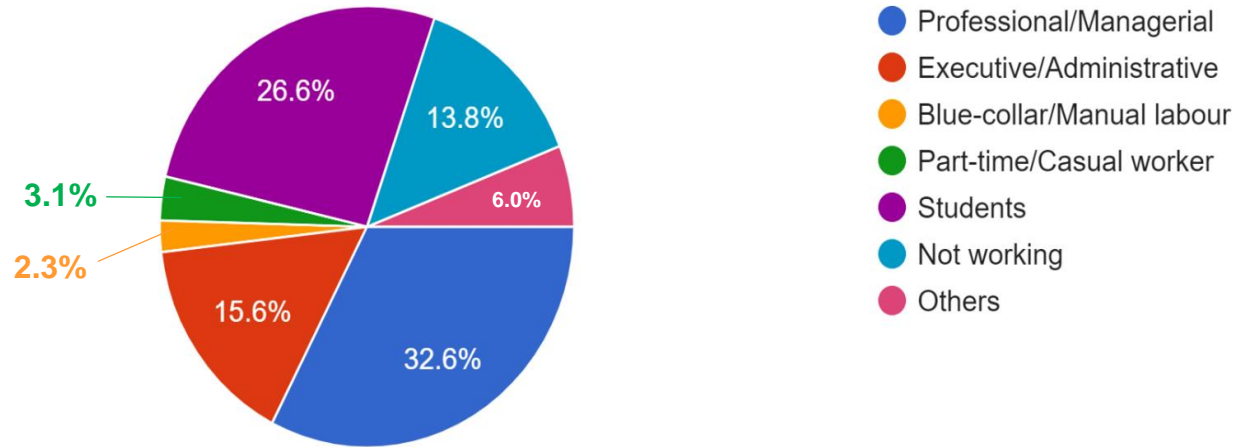
About half of the respondents were married (49.5%).

Respondents' characteristics: Educational level (N = 218)



Majority (87.6%) of the respondents have tertiary education level.

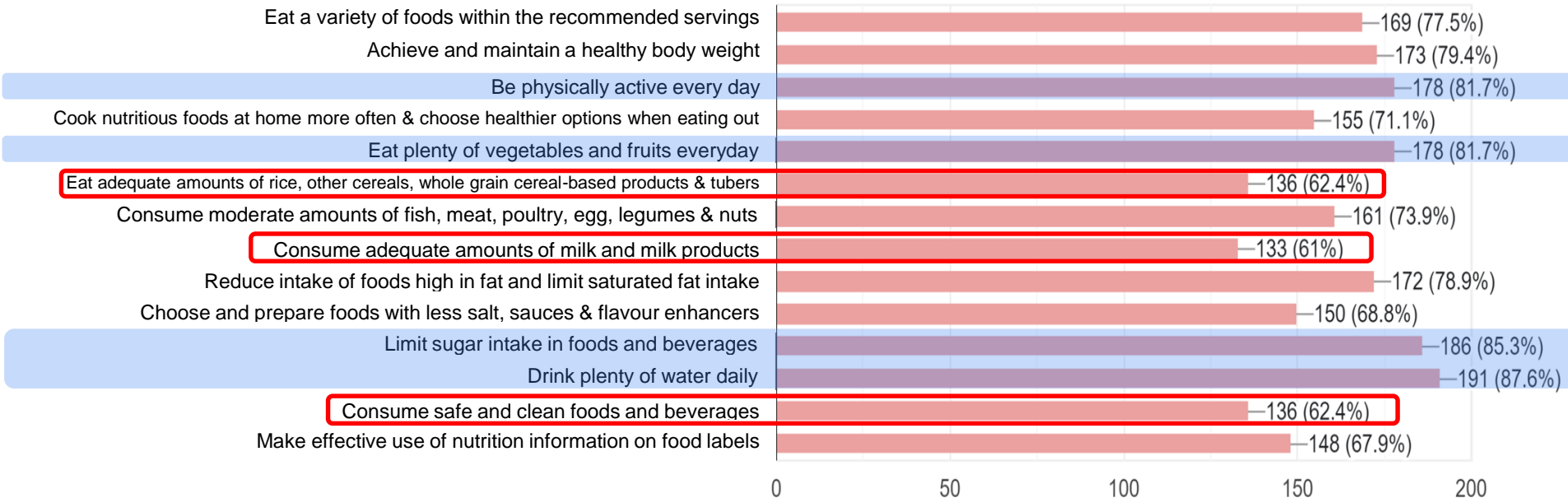
Respondents' characteristics: Occupation level (N = 218)



About one third (32.6%) of the respondents were from professional/managerial background, followed by students (26.6%) and not working individuals (13.8%).

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

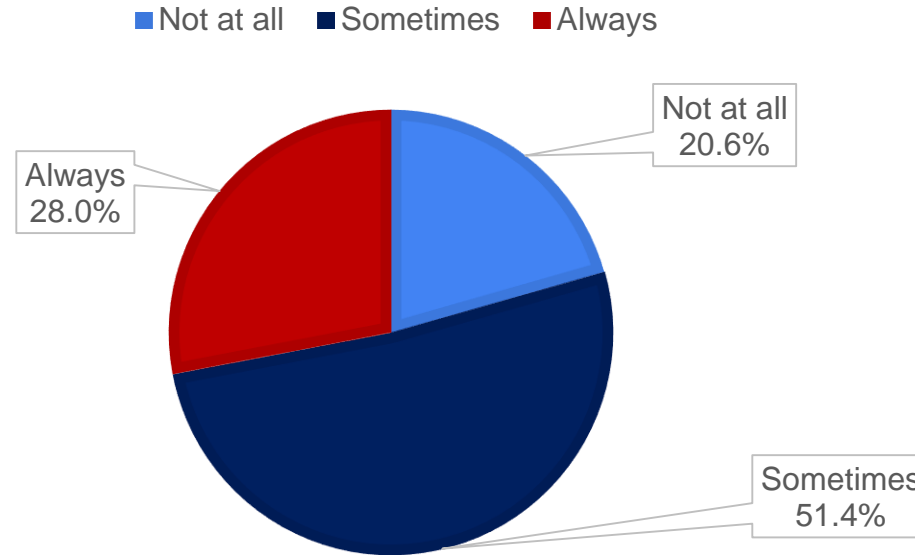
1. Which of the following are the recommendations of the Malaysian Dietary Guidelines? Please tick, multiple answers are acceptable (N = 218)



The most common correctly identified key messages were: 'drink plenty of water' (87.6% respondents able to identify), followed by 'limit sugar intake in foods and beverages (85.3% respondents able to identify correctly), and 'be physically active every day' & 'eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day' (81.7% respondents able to identify correctly).

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

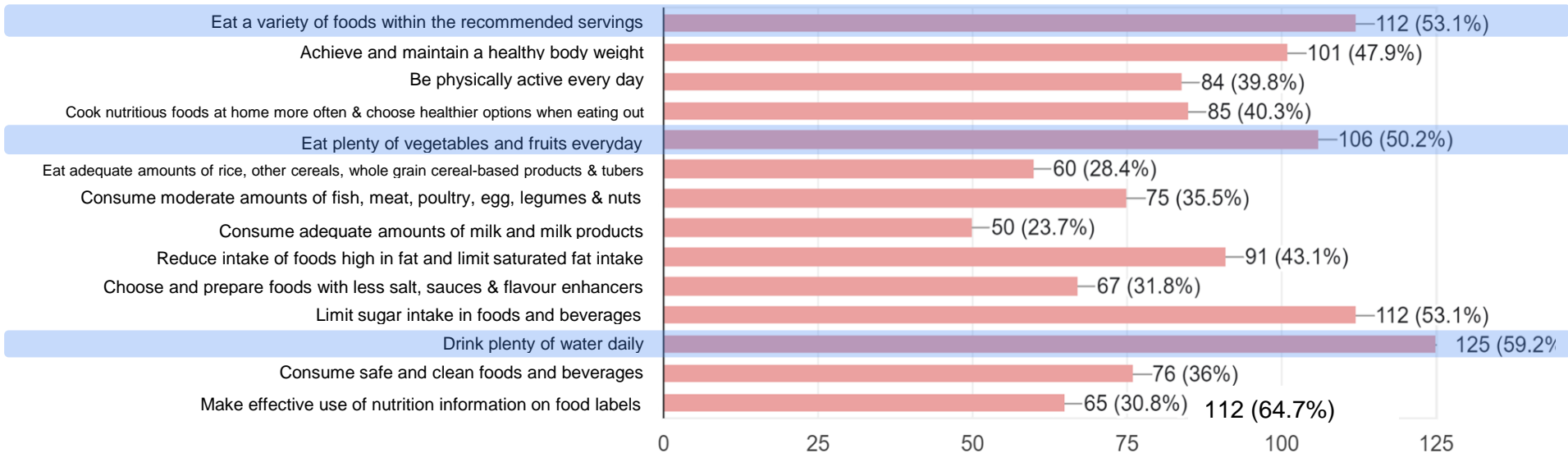
2. Have you tried following/practising any of the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines? (N = 218)



Half of the respondents (51.4%) followed/practiced any of the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines 'sometimes', while 28% claimed they 'always' follow the guidelines.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

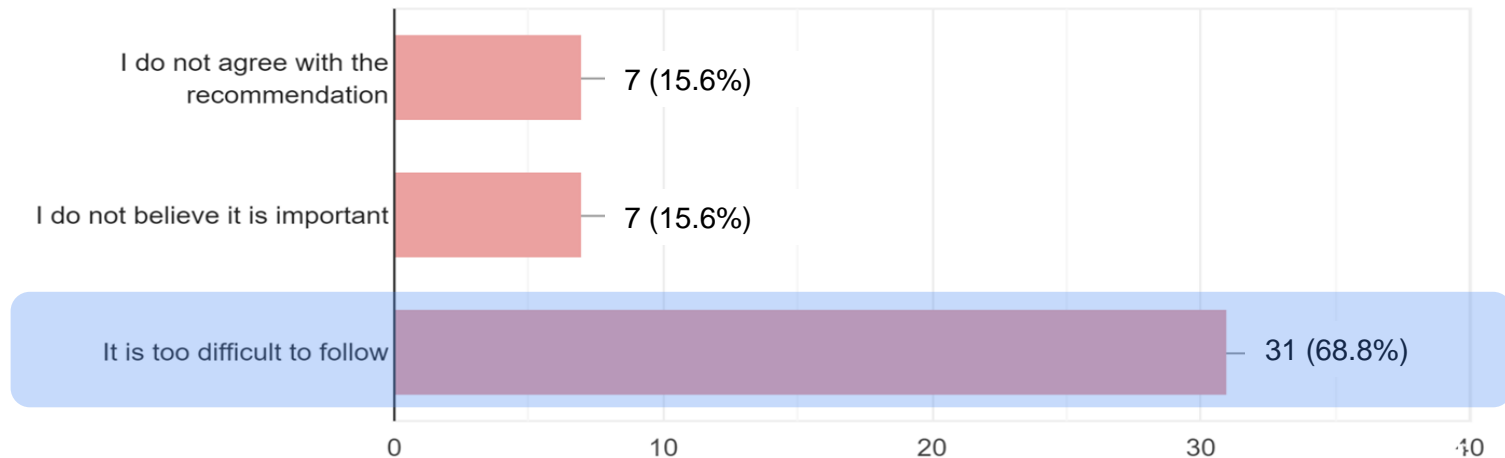
If your answer for question 2 is 'sometimes/always', which of the recommendations that you follow/practise most often? Choose 3



The highest percentage of respondents answered 'drink plenty of water daily' (59.2%), followed by 'eat a variety of foods within the recommended servings' (53.1%) and 'eat plenty of vegetables and fruits everyday' (50.2%).

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

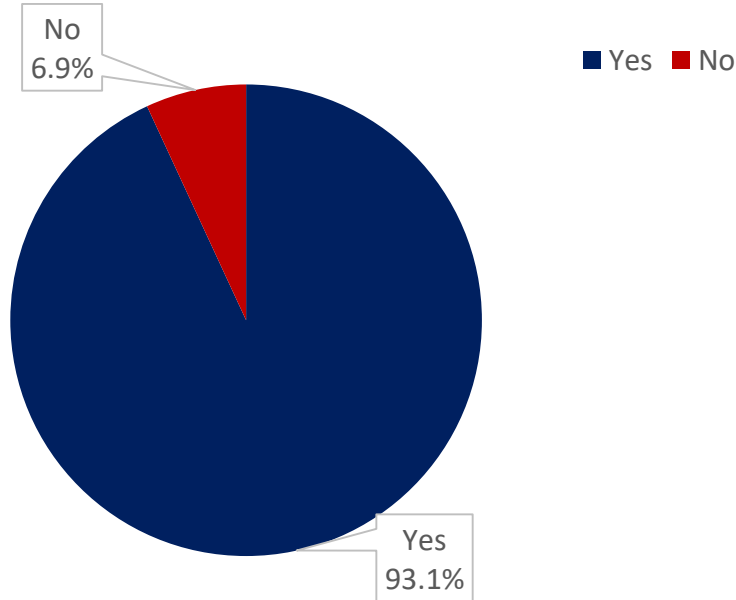
If your answer for question 2 is 'not at all', why do you NOT FOLLOW some or all of the recommendations? (N = 45)



Most respondents claimed that the key messages are 'too difficult to follow' as barrier in practising the recommendations of the dietary guidelines.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

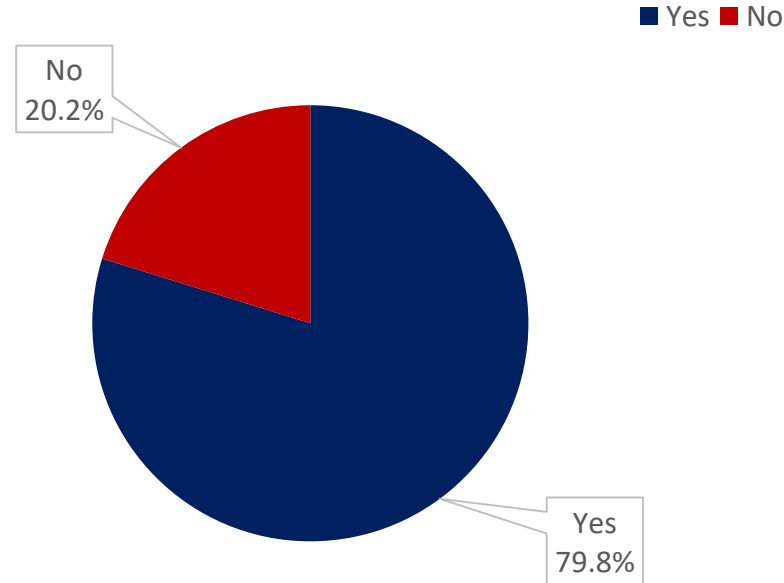
3. Have you ever heard of Malaysian Food Pyramid? (N = 218)



Majority of the respondents (93.1%) were aware of Malaysian Food Pyramid.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

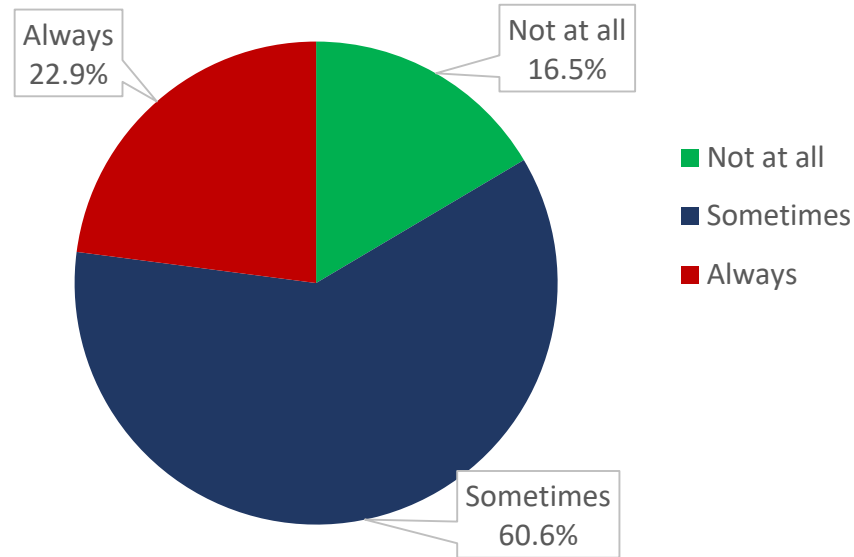
4. Have you ever heard of Malaysian Healthy Plate? (N = 218)



Majority of the respondents (79.8%) were aware of Malaysian Healthy Plate.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

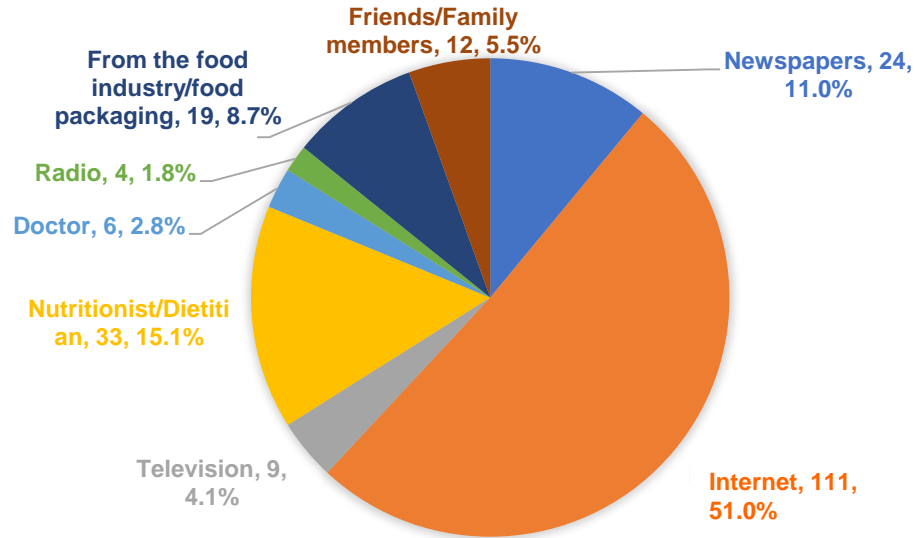
5. Do you use the food pyramid and/or healthy plate in guiding you in food purchases and preparation of meals? (N = 218)



However, only less than 1/3 of them (22.9%) 'always' use food pyramid/healthy plate as a guide in food purchases/meals preparation.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

6. What are your most common sources of healthy eating information (N = 218)



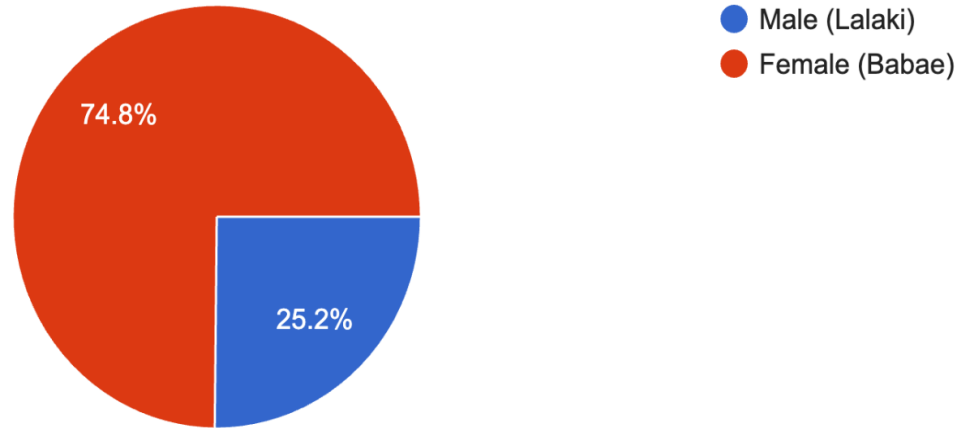
Of the 218 respondents, half (51.0%) rated internet as their most common sources of healthy eating information, while only 15.1% of the respondents referred to nutritionists/dietitians as most common sources of healthy eating info.

Results:

Survey of Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in Philippines

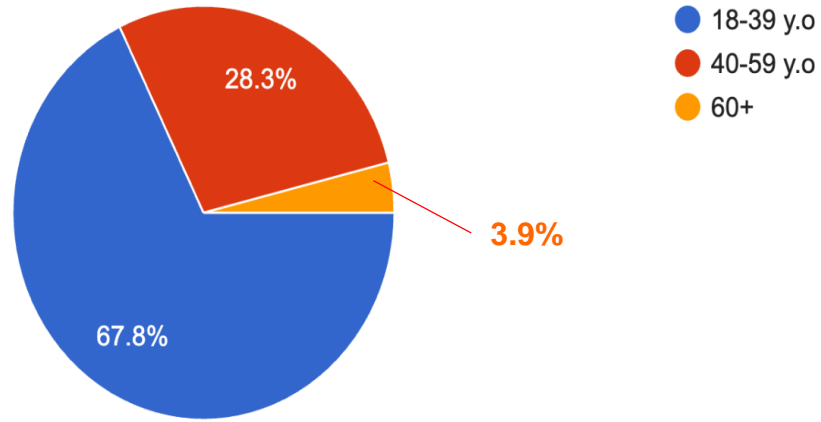
Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines, Inc

Respondents' characteristics: Gender (N = 1101)



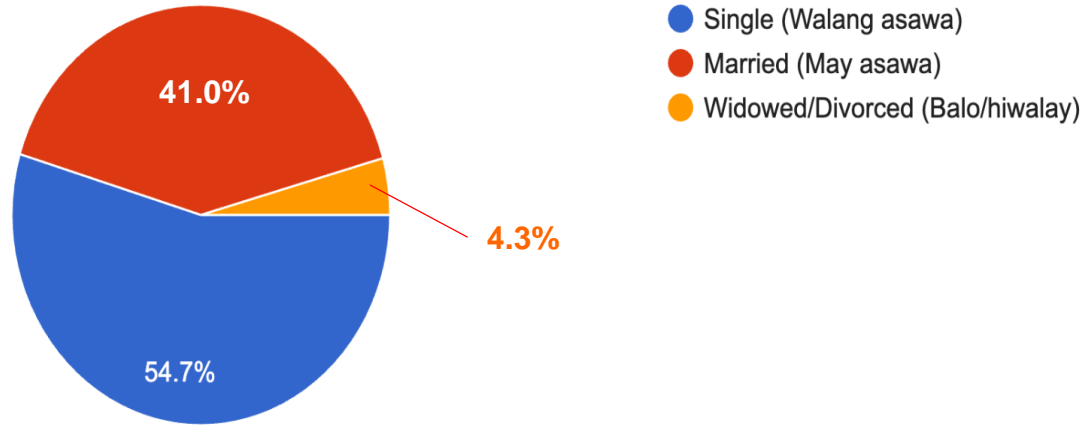
Majority of the respondents (74.8%) were female.

Respondents' characteristics: Age (N = 1101)



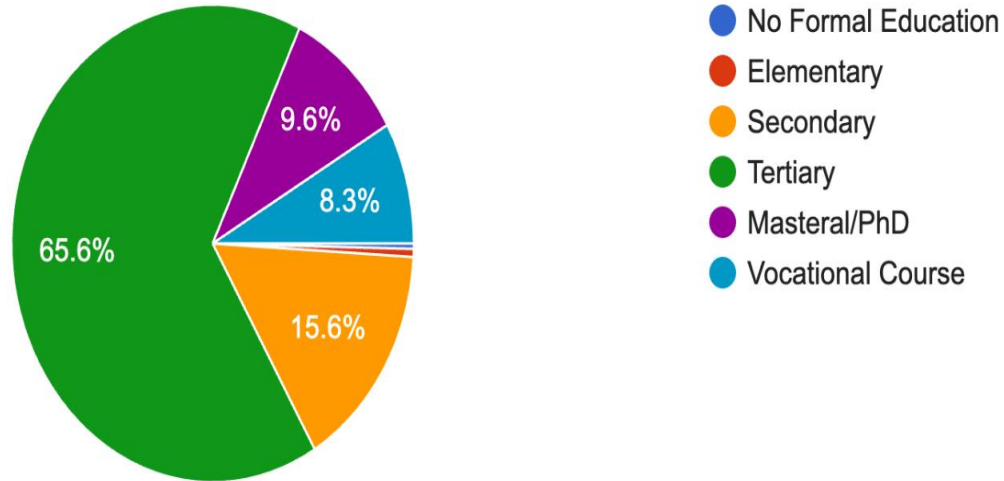
Two-thirds (67.8%) of the respondents were young adults aged 18-39 years old.

Respondents' characteristics: Marital status (N = 1101)



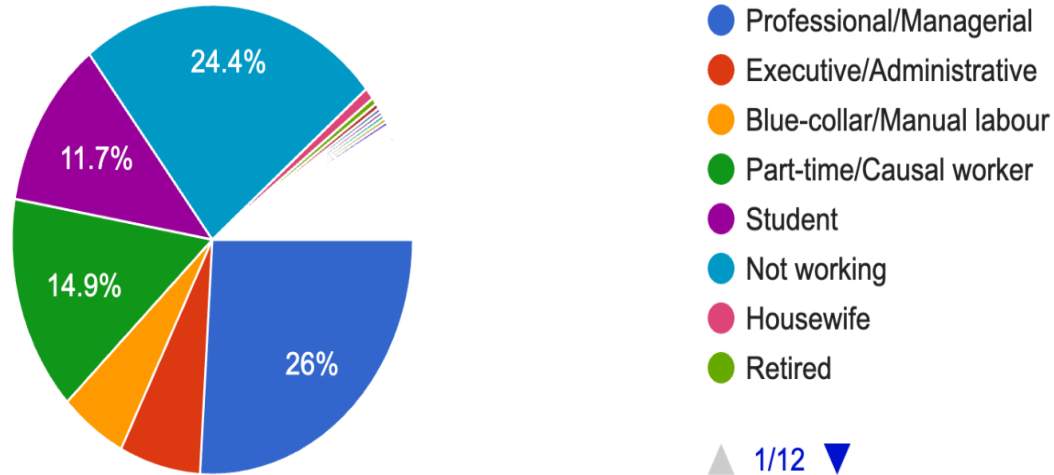
More than half of the respondents were single.

Respondents' characteristics: Education status (N = 1101)



Majority of the respondents have tertiary or higher education level.

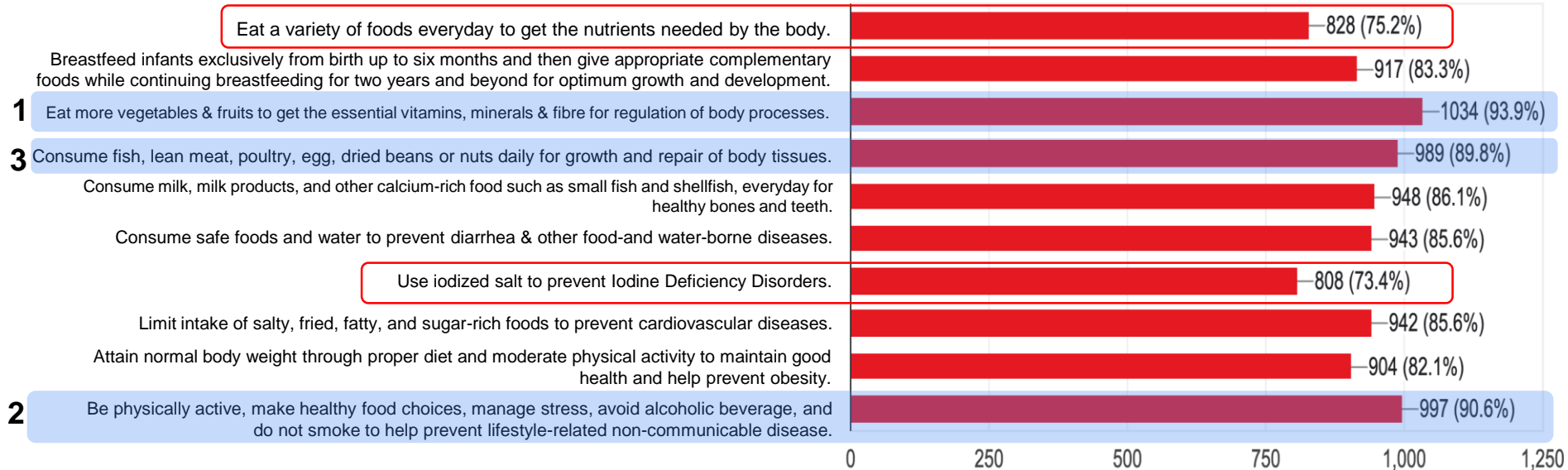
Respondents' characteristics: Occupation (N = 1101)



About $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents held professional or managerial positions. About the same proportion are not working.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

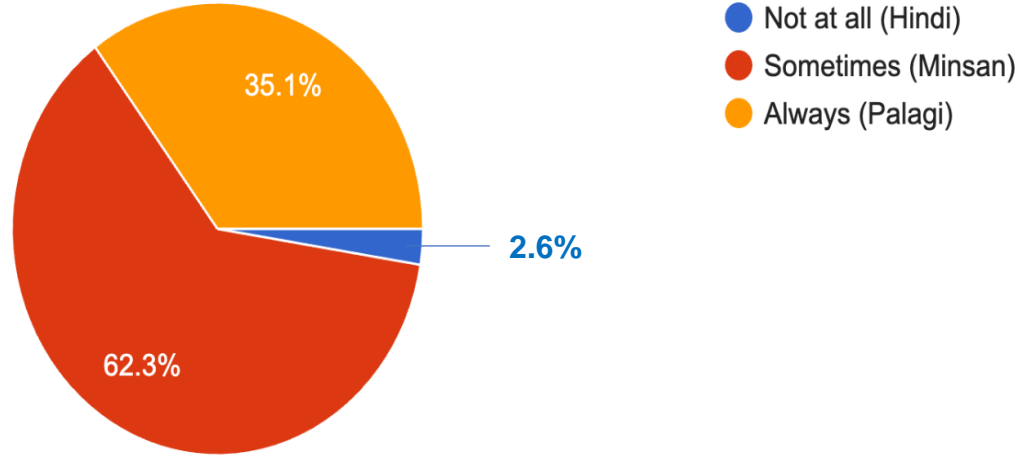
1. Which of the following are the recommendations of the National Guidelines for Filipino? Please tick, multiple answers are acceptable (N = 1101)



The most common correctly identified key messages were: on eating more fruits and vegetables, on healthy lifestyle that include engaging in physical activity, managing stress, avoiding alcohol and not smoking, and on consuming protein-rich foods. The least correctly identified message was on iodized salt and eating a variety of foods every day.

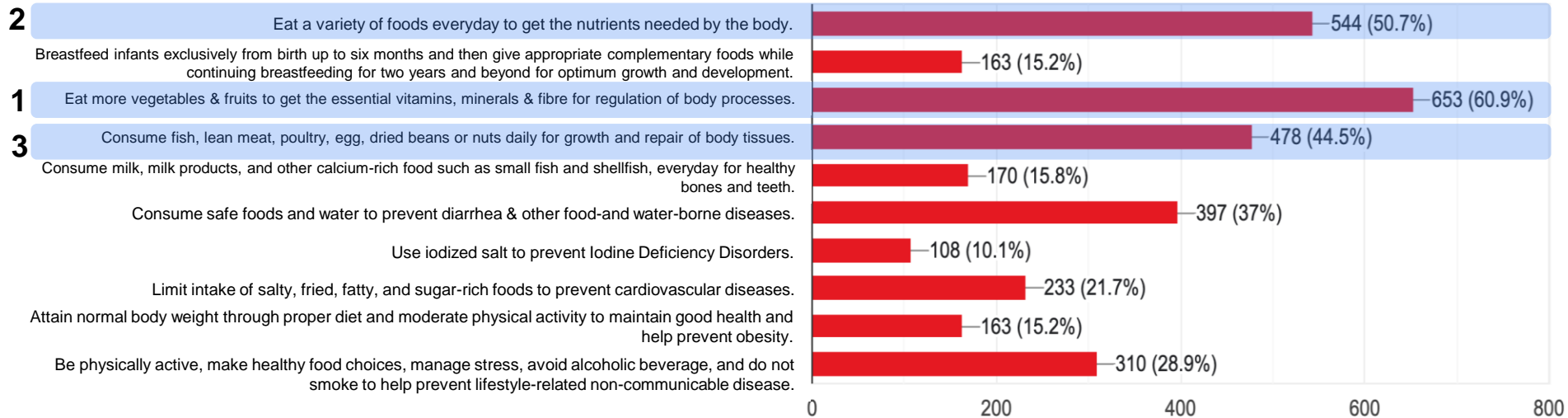
Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

2. Have you tried following/practicing any of the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines? (N = 1101)



Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

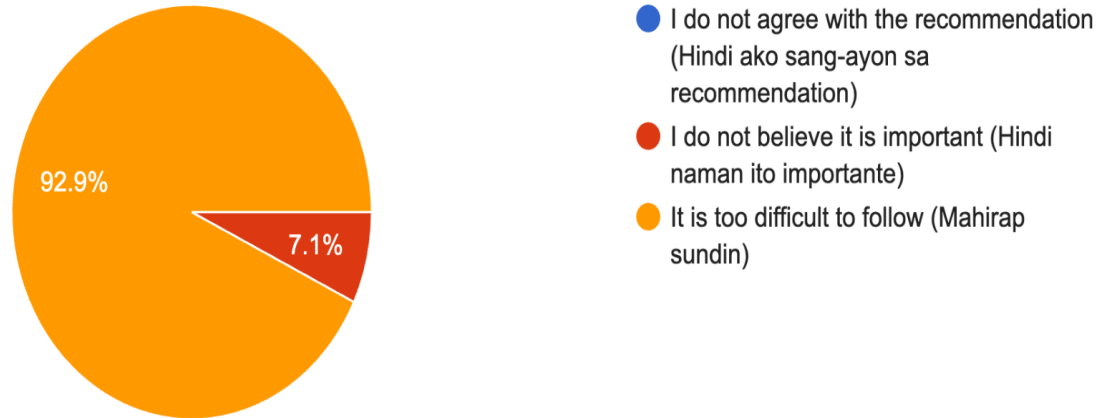
If your answer for question 2 is 'sometimes/always', which of the recommendations that you follow/practise most often? Choose 3 (N = 1073)



Most commonly practiced recommendation is on eating vegetables, eating a variety of foods every day, and on consuming protein-rich foods. However, the levels of practice are relatively low.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

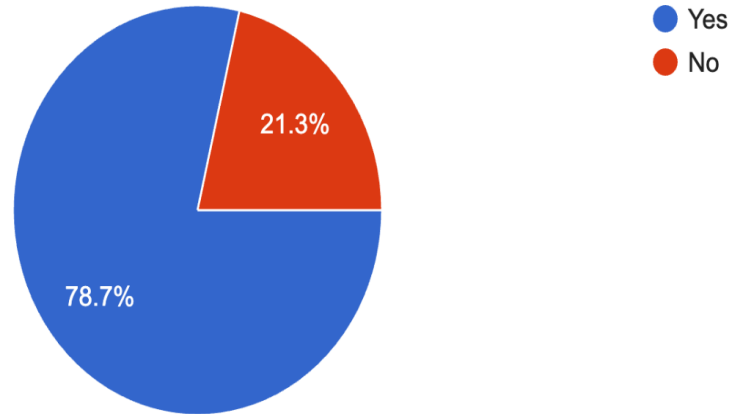
If your answer for question 2 is 'not at all', why do you **NOT FOLLOW** some or all of the recommendations? (N = 28)



Reasons for NOT following dietary guidelines: Majority (92.9%) said that it is too difficult to follow

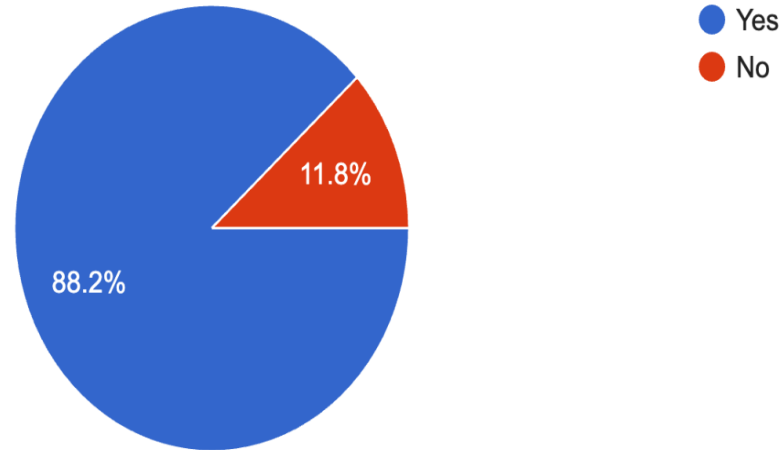
Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

3. Have you ever heard of Daily Nutritional Guide Pyramid for Filipinos? (N = 1101)



Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

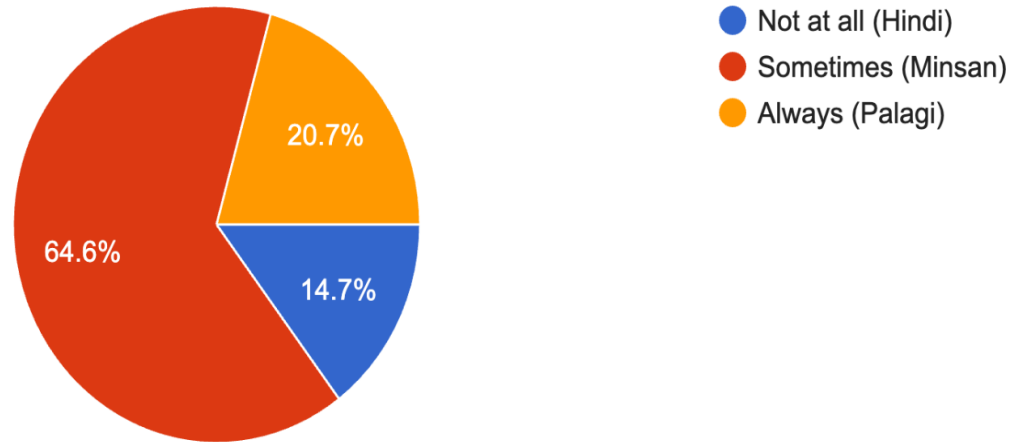
4. Have you ever heard of Pinggang Pinoy? (N = 1101)



Majority of the Filipinos respondents aware of both Daily Nutritional Guide Pyramid and Pinggang Pinoy

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

5. Do you use the food pyramid and/or Pinggang Pinoy in guiding you in food purchases and preparation of meals? (N = 1101)

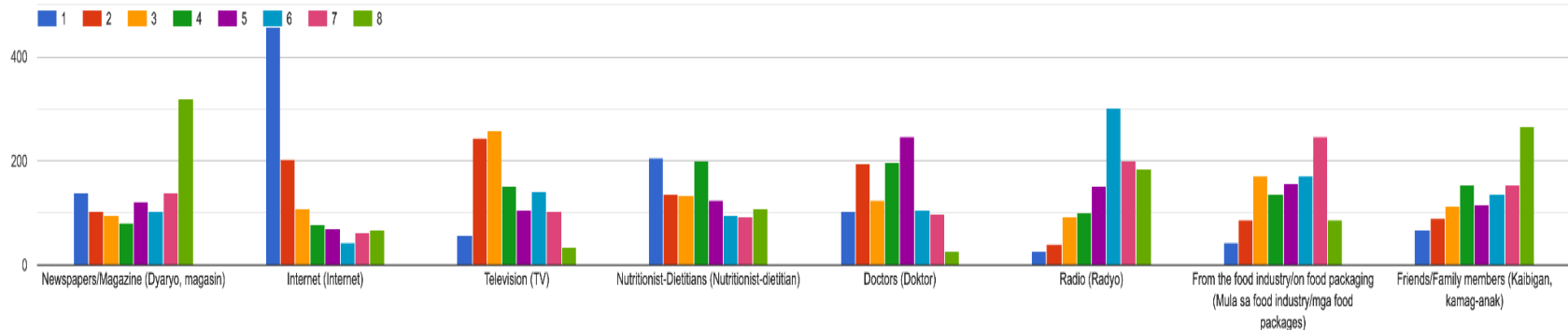


In terms of frequency of usage of food pyramid/Pinggang Pinoy, most respondents (64.6%) use them 'sometimes' and 20.7% 'always' use them as guide.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

6. What are your most common sources of healthy eating information?

What are your most common sources of healthy eating information? Rank: 1 = most common source of information 2 = second most common source of information, until 8 = least common source of information Saan ka kumukuha ng kaalaman tungkol sa malusog na pagkain o healthy eating? I-rank ang pinaka common na source na 1 at ang least common source na 8.



Ranked as number 1 common source of information on healthy eating were the internet for 462 respondents, nutritionist-dietitian for 207 respondents, Ranked as number 8 or least common source of information was print materials for 322 respondents, and friends and relatives for 266 respondents.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

6. What are your most common sources of healthy eating information?

Source of information	Number giving rank of 1, 2 or 3	% (n=1101)
Internet	777	70.6
TV	561	50.9
Nutritionist-dietitian	478	43.4
Doctor	424	38.5

Results:

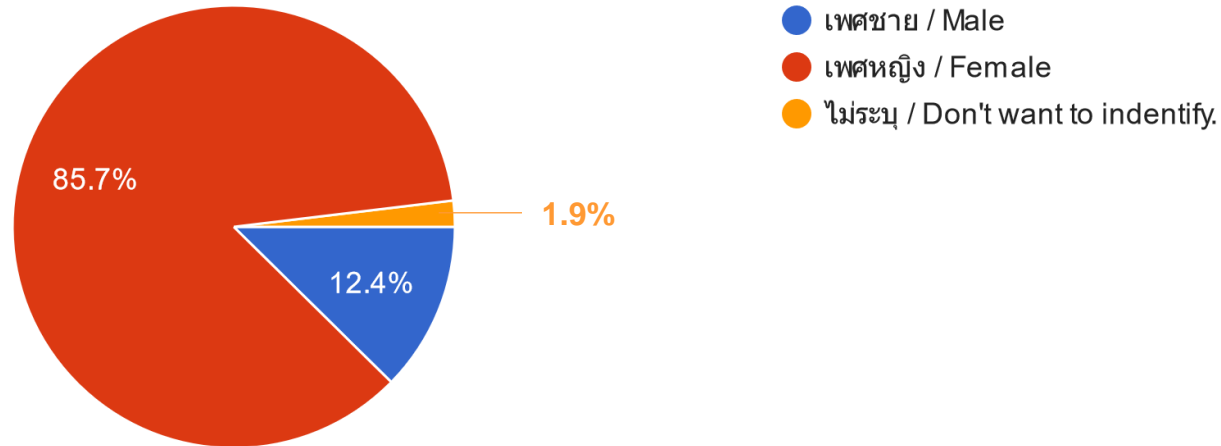
Survey of Consumer Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines in Thailand

Nutrition Association of Thailand

Under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness
Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

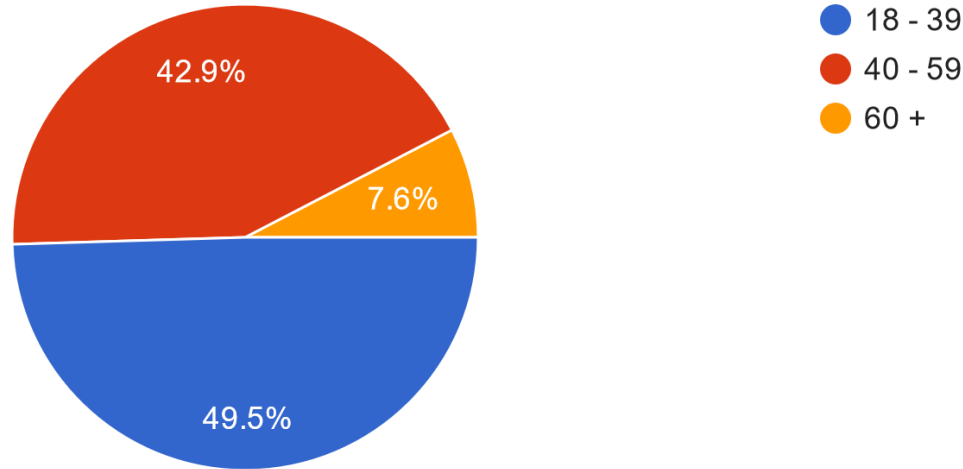


Respondents' characteristics: Gender (N = 105)



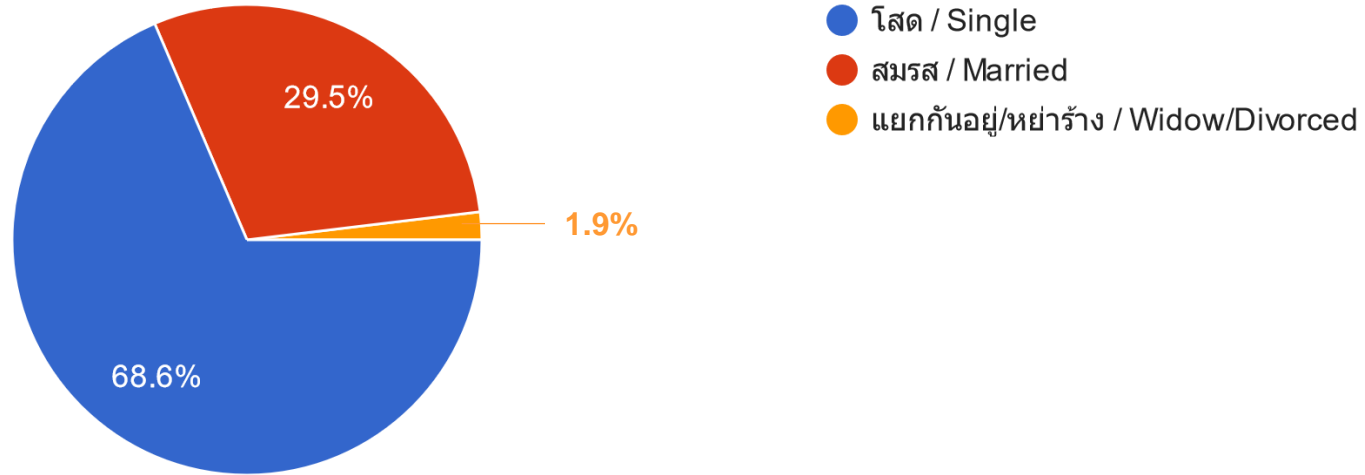
The results show that 85.7% of respondents were female, followed by 12.4% male and another 1.9%.

Respondents' characteristics: Age (N = 105)



Most respondents were aged 18-39 (49.5%), followed by those aged 40-59 (42.9%), and the fewest respondents were aged 60 and over (7.6%).

Respondents' characteristics: Marital status (N = 105)



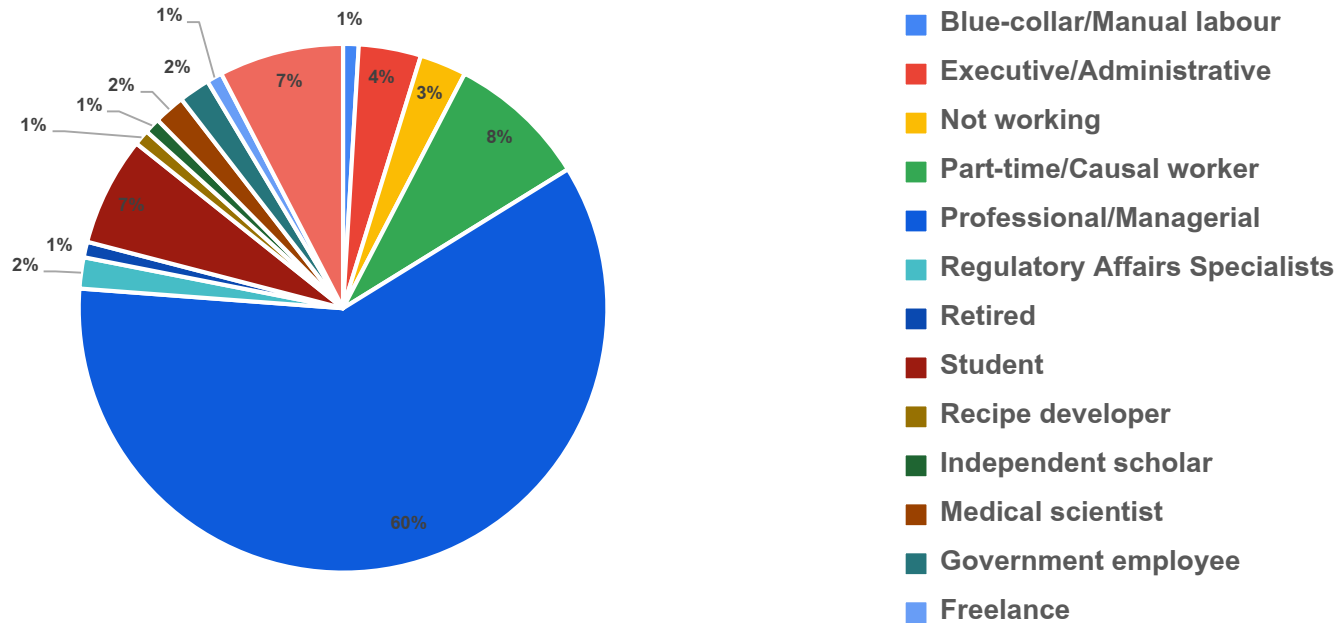
Most respondents were single (68.6%), followed by married (29.5%) and separated/divorced (1.9%)

Respondents' characteristics: Education level (N = 105)



Most respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher (90%),
4% of respondents have a high school diploma and 2% have a doctorate.

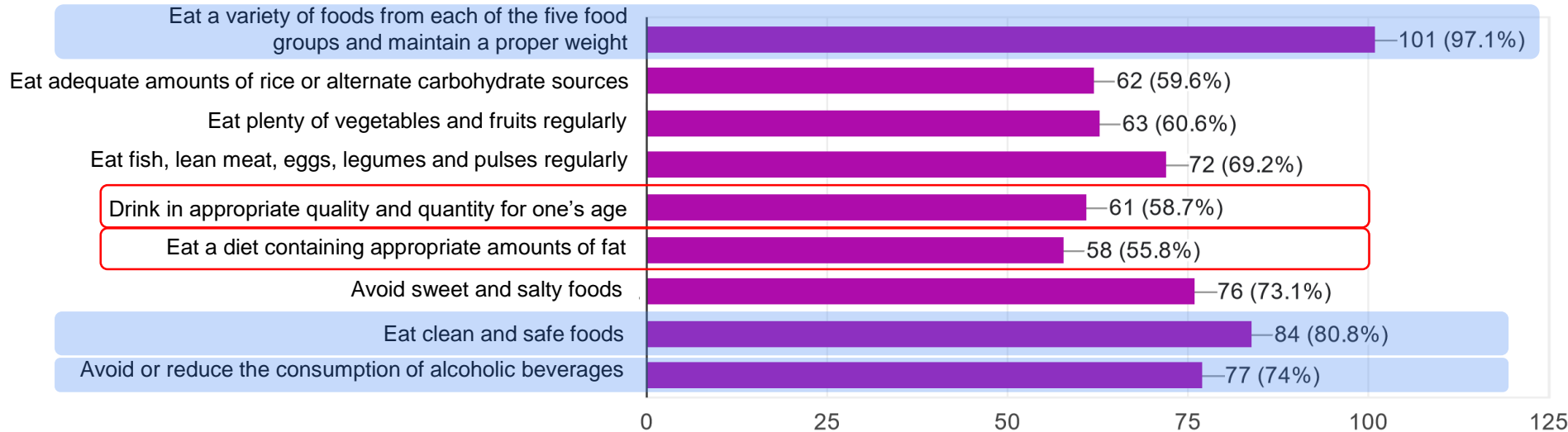
Respondents' characteristics: Occupation (N = 105)



Most respondents of the online survey were professionals or multidisciplinary professionals, researchers, teachers and lecturers (60%), followed by part-time/occasional workers (8%), government employee (7%), students (7%), managers/administrators (4%), non-employed (3%), medical researchers (2%), government employees (2%), regulatory affairs specialists (2%) and others (1% each).

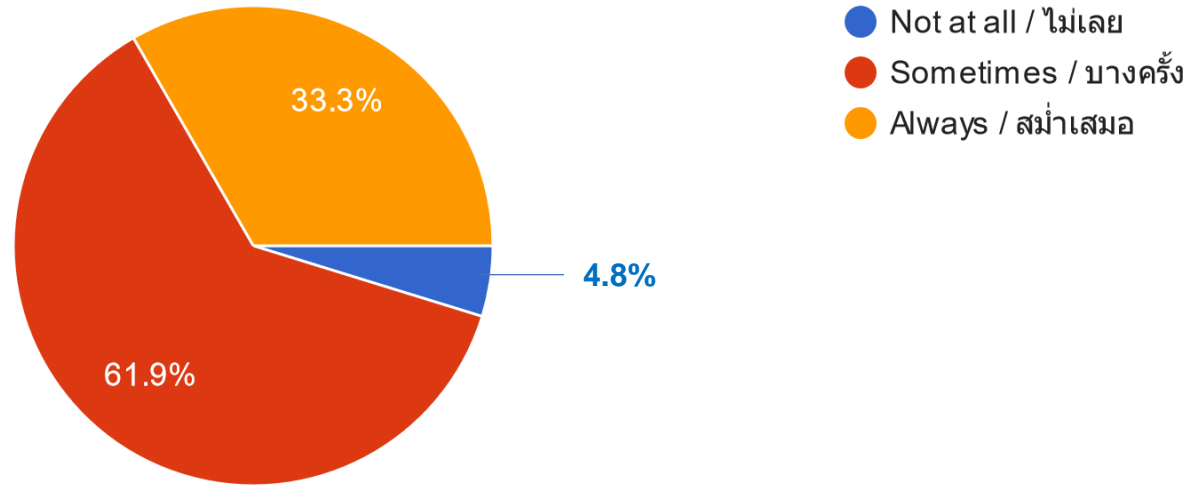
Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

1. Which of the following are the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Thai? Please tick, multiple answers are acceptable (N = 105)



Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

2. Have you tried following/practising any of the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines? (N = 105)



The highest percentage of respondents who answered "sometimes/occasionally" was 61.9%, followed by those who answered "always/permanently" with 33.3%, and the lowest percentage of those who answered "not at all" with 4.8%.

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

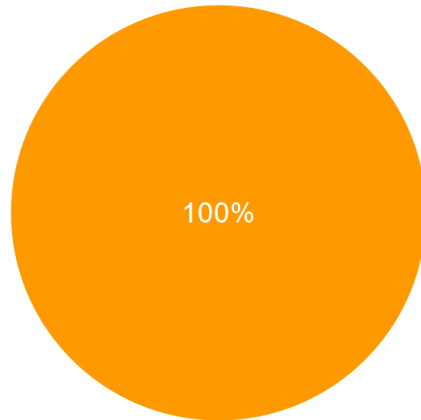
3.1 If your answer for question 2 is 'sometimes/always', which of the recommendations that you follow/practise most often? (N = 98)



The highest percentage of respondents answered, "Eat a variety of foods..." (39.8%), followed by the answer "Avoid or reduce consumption of alcoholic beverages" (22.4%), the answer "Eat clean and safe foods" (13.3%), the answer "Avoid sweet and salty foods" (8.2%), the answer "Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits..." (5.1%), the answer "Eat enough rice..." (5.1%) and others (2% each).

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

3.2 If your answer for question 2 is 'not at all', why do you NOT FOLLOW some or all of the recommendations? (N = 5)

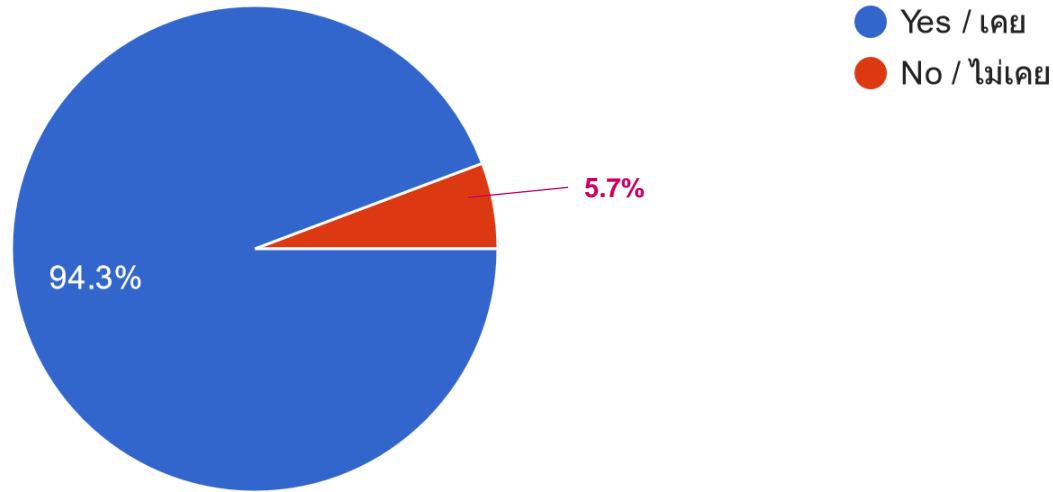


- I do not agree with the recommendation / ฉันไม่เห็นด้วยกับคำแนะนำ
- I do not believe it is important / ฉันไม่เชื่อว่ามันสำคัญ
- It is too difficult to follow / มันยากเกินจะทำตาม

All respondents answered that "It is too difficult to follow" (100%).

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

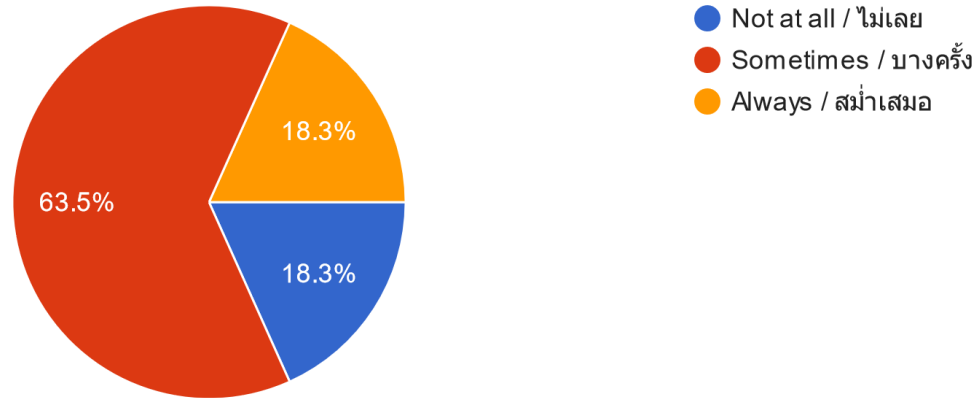
4. Have you ever heard of Nutrition Flag Healthy Eating for Thais? (N = 105)



Of the 105 respondents, 94.3% answered "YES" and 5.7% answered "NO".

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

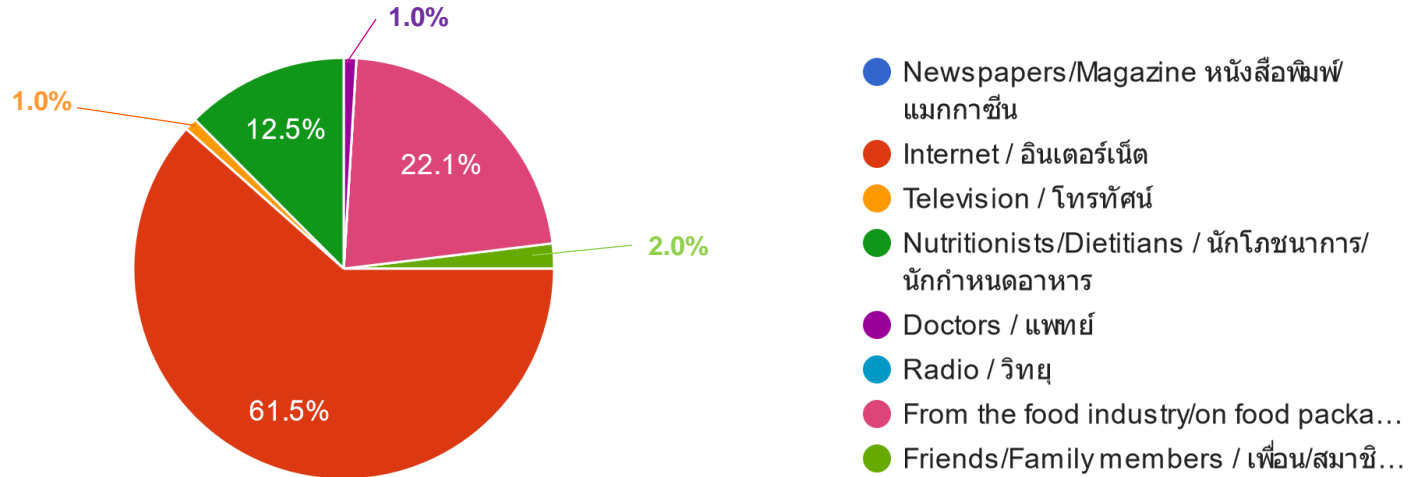
5. Do you use the Nutrition Flag Healthy Eating for Thais in guiding you in food purchases and preparation of meals? (N = 104)



Of the 104 respondents, 63.5% answered "Sometimes", 18.3% answered "Always" and 18.3% answered "Not at all".

Awareness, Understanding and Use of Dietary Guidelines

6. What are your most common sources of healthy eating information (N = 105)



Of the 105 respondents, 61.5% answered "Internet", 22.1% answered "From the food industry/on food packaging", 12.5% answered "Nutritionists/Dietitians", 2% answered "Friends/Family members" and 1% each answered "Television" and "Doctors".

Discussion & Conclusion

- **Awareness of FBDG messages**

- Majority of the respondents in the 3 countries were able to identify some of the key messages of Dietary Guidelines of respective country.
- The most recognised messages
 - Malaysia
 - Drink plenty of water daily
 - Limit sugar intake in foods and beverages
 - Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits everyday
 - Be physically active everyday
 - Philippines
 - Eat more vegetables & fruits to get the essential vitamins, minerals & fibre for regulation of body processes
 - Be physically active, make healthy food choices, manage stress, avoid alcoholic beverage, and do not smoke to help prevent lifestyle-related non-communicable disease
 - Consume fish, lean meat, poultry, egg, dried beans or nuts daily for growth and repair of body tissues
 - Thailand
 - Eat a variety of foods from each of the five food groups and maintain a proper weight
 - Eat clean and safe foods
 - Avoid or reduce the consumption of alcoholic beverages

Discussion & Conclusion

- **Awareness of FBDG messages**

- The least recognised messages

- Malaysia

- Consume adequate amounts of milk and milk products
- Eat adequate amounts of rice, other cereals, whole grain cereal-based products & tubers
- Consume safe and clean foods and beverages

- Philippines

- Eat a variety of foods everyday to get the nutrients needed by the body
- Use iodized salt to prevent iodine deficiency disorders

- Thailand

- Eat a diet containing appropriate amounts of fat
- Drink in appropriate quality and quantity for one's age

- Majority (more than 80%) of the respondents were aware of the pictorial food guides e.g. food guide pyramid/healthy plate of the country.
- Generally, higher proportion of the Philippines respondents (73-94%) were aware of the FBDG messages, followed by Malaysia (61-88%) and Thailand (56-97%).
- Overall, the most well known nutrition recommendations for all the three countries were “eat more/plenty of vegetables and fruits” and “be physically active”.

Discussion & Conclusion

- **Usage of FBDG and pictorial food guides**

- While being able to identify the key messages of the FBDGs, only 1/3 of the respondents in the three countries responded that they 'always' follow the FBDG recommendations.
- Reasons for NOT following dietary guidelines: Majority said that the FBDG messages are too difficult to follow
- Similarly, the high awareness rate on food pyramid and healthy plate does not translate into actual implementation by the respondents, in which less than 1/3 of them (Malaysia 22.9%, Philippines 20.7% and Thailand 18.3%) 'always' use food pyramid and healthy plate as guide in food purchases/meal preparation.
- The need for FBDG messages to be further simplified in the future

Discussion & Conclusion

- **Consumers' main sources of healthy eating information**
 - Similar trend in 3 countries: Internet as main sources of info
 - Low rate of referring to nutritionist/dietitian as main source of healthy eating information
 - There is a need for communication of FBDG information to consumers, should be increasingly communicated via internet
 - Also need to improve the visibility of nutritionists and dietitians as reliable sources of nutrition information.