



A study by Food Safety Works
2023

Reading Between the Lines:

A Survey on Indian Consumers' Understanding of Food Labels



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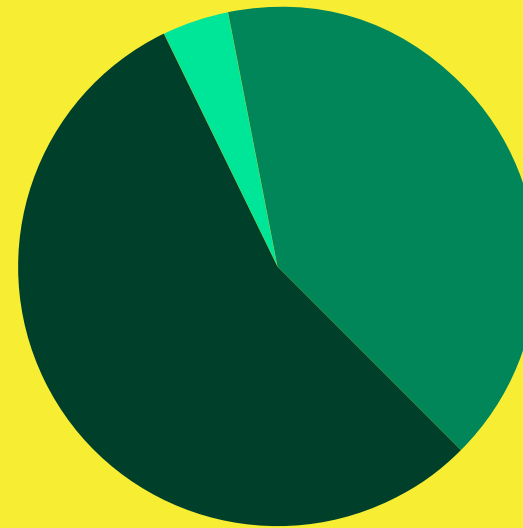
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Introduction

As consumers, we rely on food labels to make informed decisions about the products we purchase and consume. The Food Safety and Standard Regulations, 2011 requires all pre-packaged food items to comply with the labelling regulations in India. The primary role of food labels involves informing consumers about the characteristics of labelled foods and helping in selling the product. However, with an abundance of information and technical terms, interpreting food labels can be a daunting task. With this in mind, we conducted a survey to gain a better understanding of the level of food label awareness and understanding among Indian consumers. The survey was conducted online and targeted a diverse group of participants, including individuals from different age groups, genders, and regions. The survey included a range of questions designed to gauge participants' level of knowledge about food labelling, as well as their attitudes and behaviours towards food labels.

The results of this survey provide valuable insights into the current state of food label awareness and understanding among Indian consumers. The data collected will help identify any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge that may exist, and will serve as a valuable tool for industry leaders and consumer groups as they work to improve the overall food labelling system in India.

Respondent Demographics

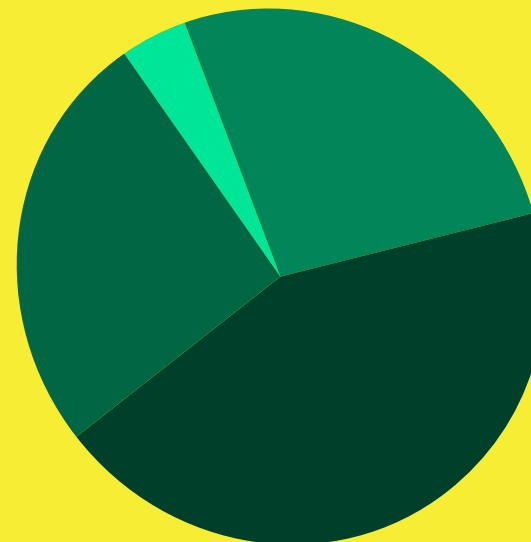


Gender Distribution

- Male (55.3%)
- Female (40.8%)
- Prefer not to say (3.9%)

Majority of the respondents were male (55.3%) and female (40.8%) out of the sample size of 836 participants who took part in the survey study.

Large proportion of participants (43.5%) belonged to the age group of 31-50 years while a small fraction of respondents (4.1%) belonged to the age group of 15-20 years.

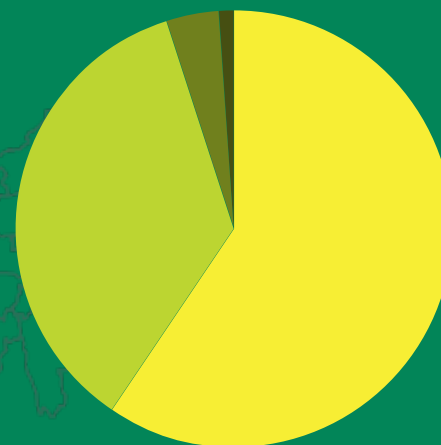


Age Distribution (in years)

- 31-50 (43.5%)
- 50+ (26.4%)
- 15-20 (4.1%)
- 21-30 (26%)

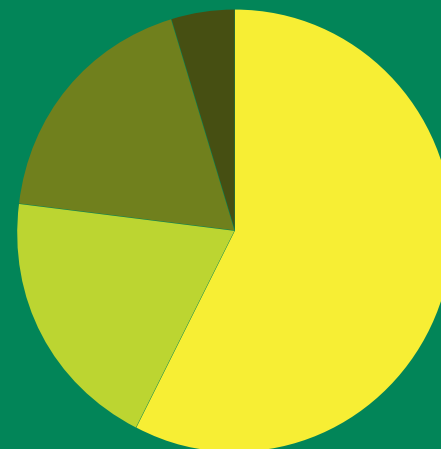
Majority of the consumers had a post-graduation level of education (59.7%) while high school students (1%) were the least in number.

Majority of the consumers belonged to tier 1 cities (57.5%) while a smaller proportion of respondents were from tier-3 cities (4.5%).



Education Level

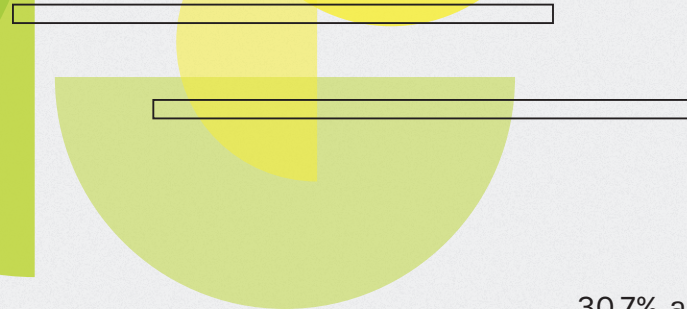
- Post-Graduate (59.7%)
- Under-Graduate (35.5%)
- Pre-University/Intermediate (3.8%)
- High-School (1%)



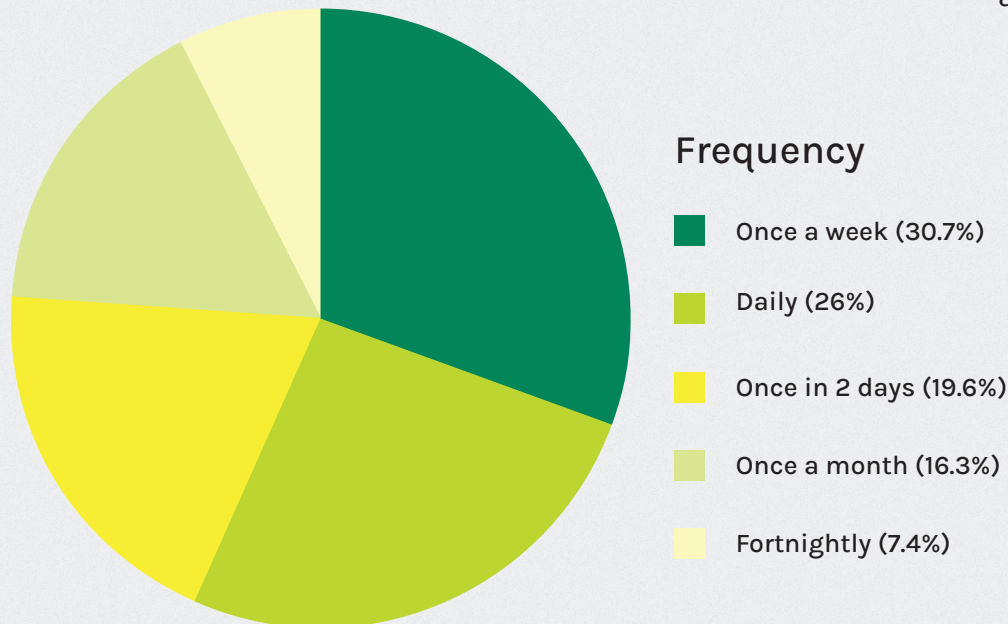
City Distribution

- Tier-1 (57.5%)
- Tier 2 (19.6%)
- Other (18.3%)
- Tier 3 (4.5%)

Buying Frequency



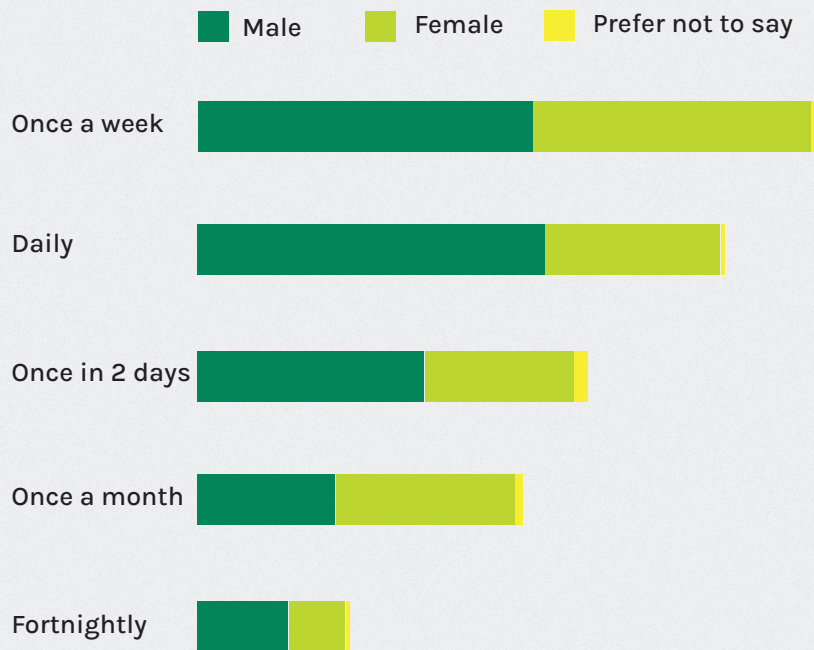
30.7% and 26% of the respondents preferred purchasing pre-packed food items once a week and on a daily basis respectively. This data highlights the intrusion and usage of packed food products in the everyday life.



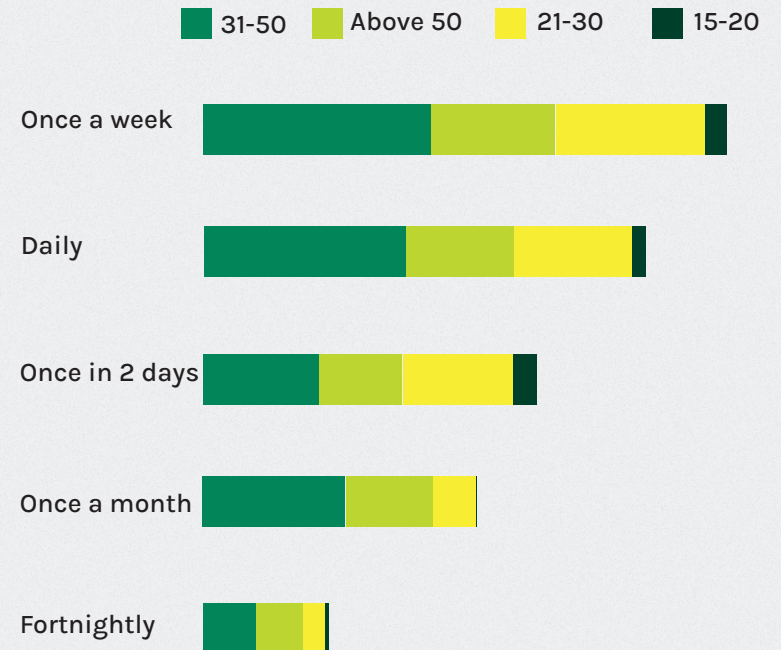
Overall, 64.98% of men purchase pre-packed food items on a daily basis whereas 43.97% of female respondents prefer buying packaged food products once a week.

Majority of the consumers (43.58%) who bought pre-packed food items once a week belong to the age group of 31-50 years.

Gender Distribution



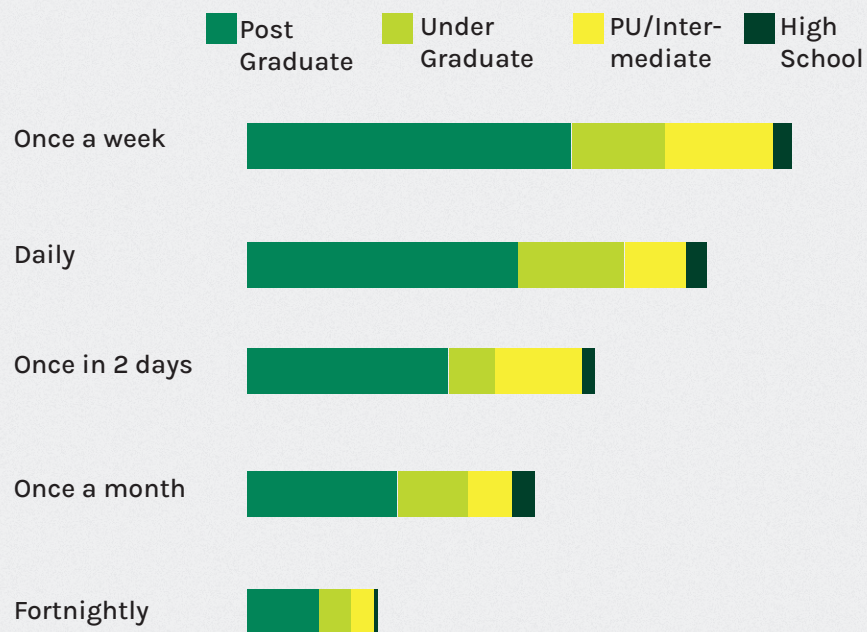
Age Distribution (in years)



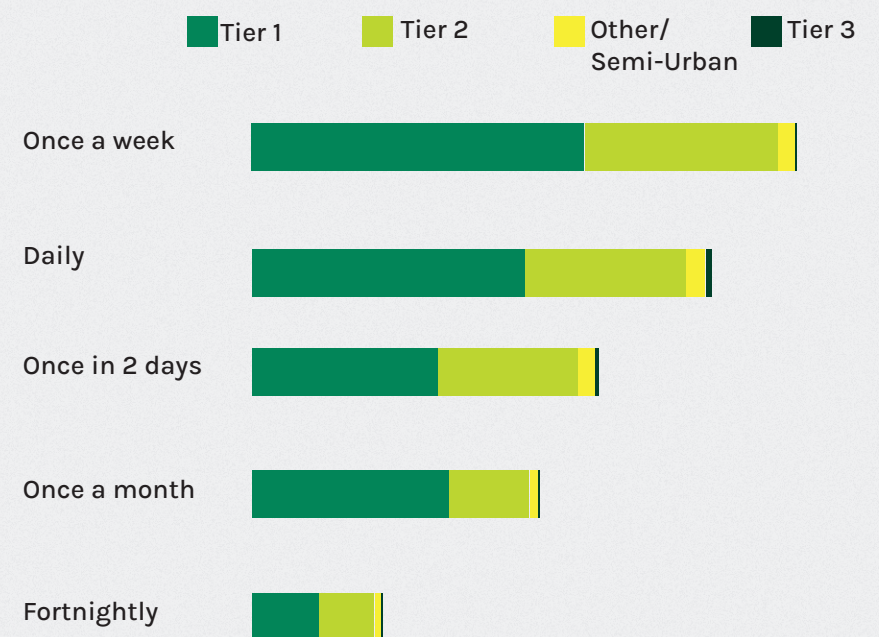
Majority of the participants (61.09%) with post-graduate level of education preferred to buy packaged food products once a week.

Large proportion of respondents (59.53%) who bought pre-packed food items once a week belonged to tier 1 cities.

Education Level

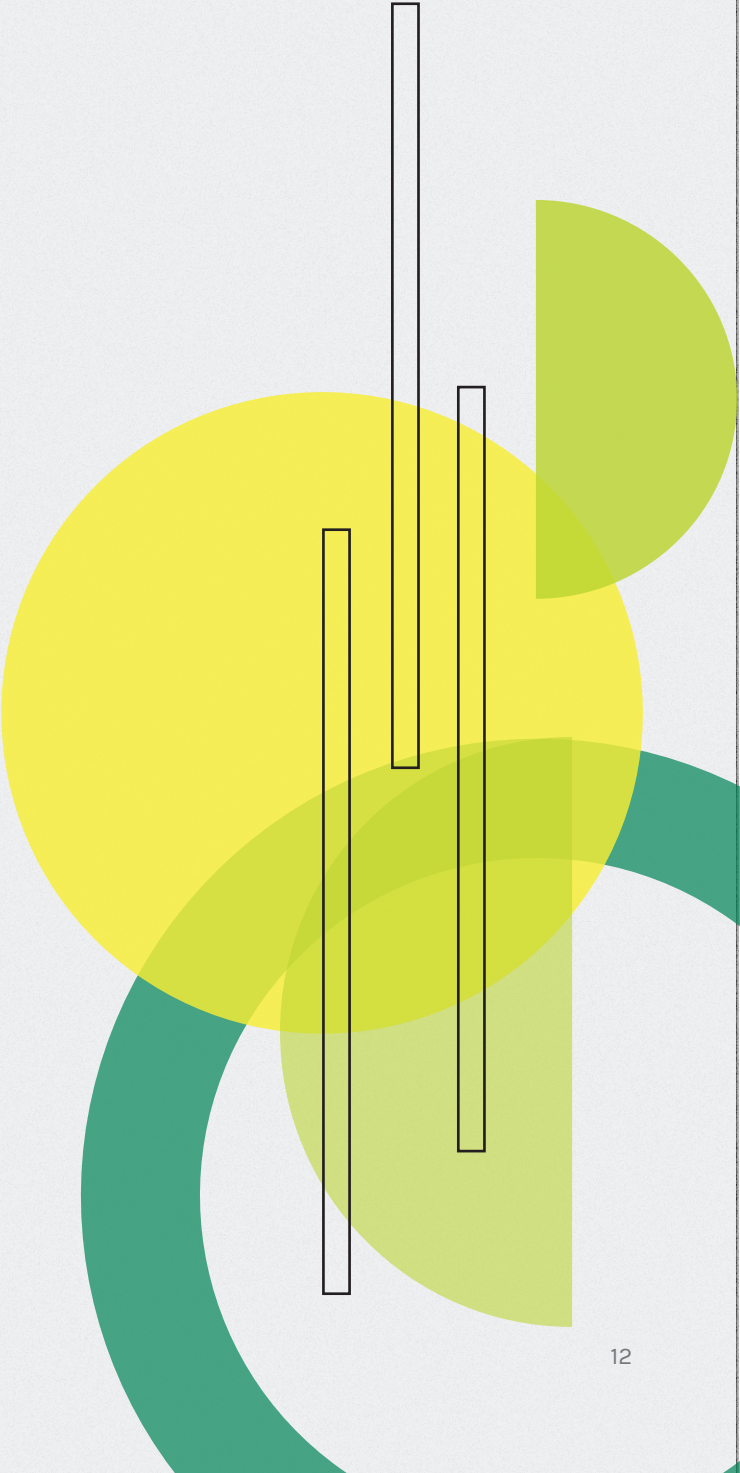
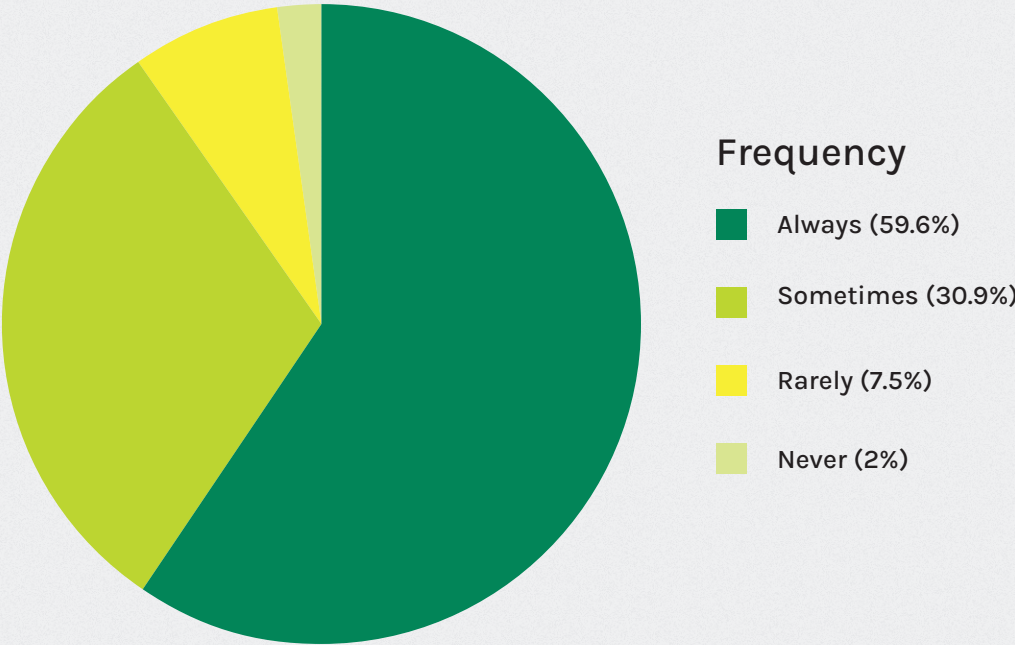


City Distribution



Checking food labels

Overall, majority of the respondents (59.6%) were aware of food label information and always checked for food label before buying a pre-packed food item.





INGREDIENTS: SUGAR, ENRICHED BLEACHED FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMIN MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), SEMI-SWEET CHOCOLATE CHIPS (SUGAR, CHOCOLATE LIQUOR, COCOA BUTTER, SOY LECITHIN [EMULSIFIER], VANILLA), COCOA (PROCESSED WITH ALKALI), CANOLA OR SOYBEAN OIL, BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE CHIPS (CHOCOLATE LIQUOR, SUGAR, COCOA BUTTER, MILK FAT, SOY LECITHIN [EMULSIFIER], VANILLA), MILK CHOCOLATE CHIPS (SUGAR, WHOLE MILK POWDER, CHOCOLATE LIQUOR, COCOA BUTTER, SOY LECITHIN [EMULSIFIER], VANILLA), SALT, ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, SODIUM BICARBONATE.



Jaivik Bharat



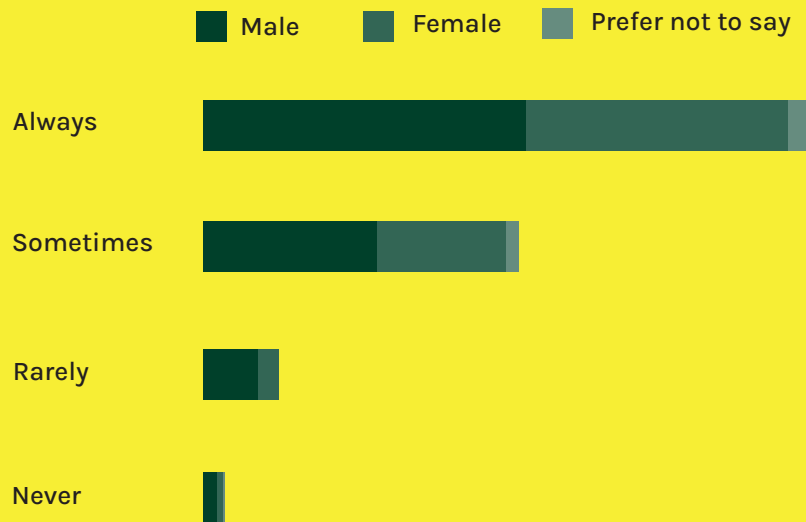
Different food labels include-

- Nutrition information
- Food logos
- Ingredients list
- Claims
- Storage instructions
- Expiry date

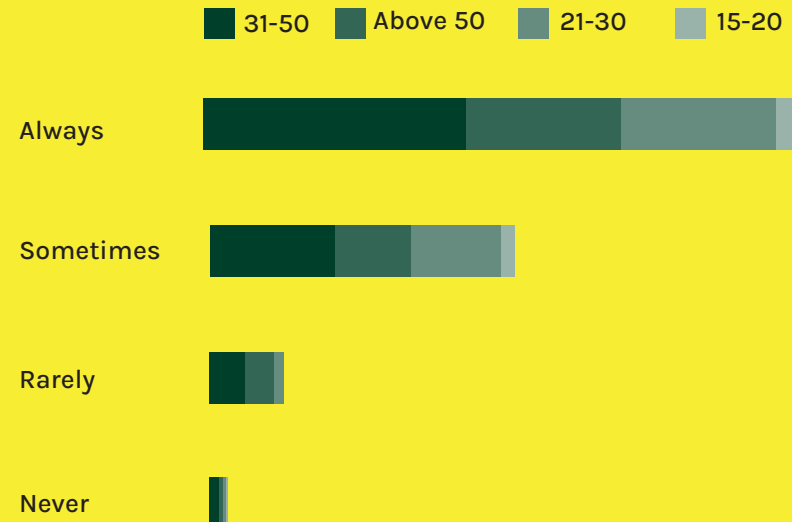
Overall, 53.01% of men and 42.97% of women always checked food label when purchasing a pre-packed food item.

Majority of participants (44.38%) who always check for food label when buying a packaged food product belonged to the age group of 31-50 years.

Gender Distribution



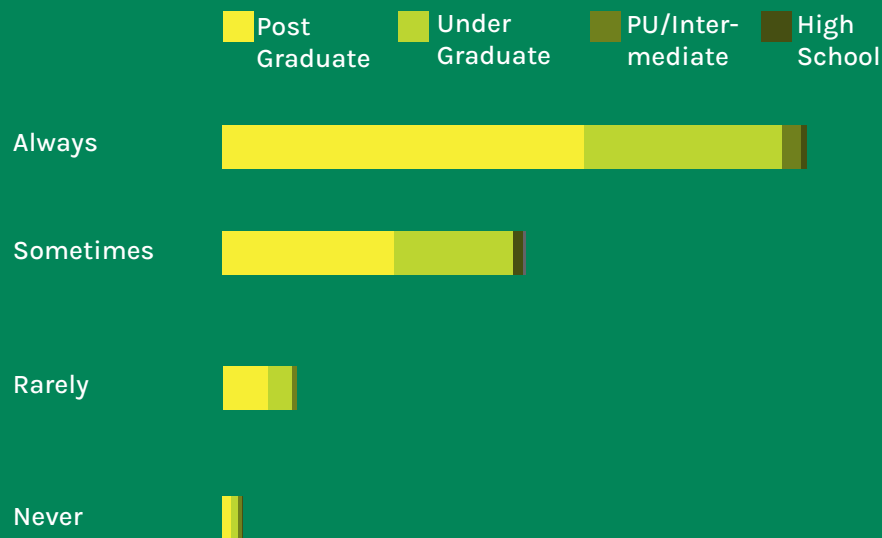
Age Distribution (in years)



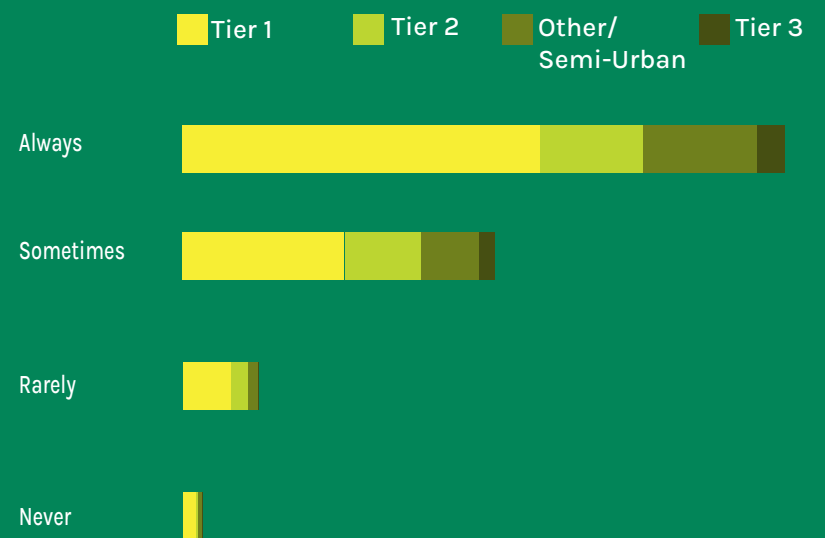
Large proportion of respondents (61.85%) upto post-graduate level of education always checked for food label when purchasing a packaged food product.

Large proportion of consumers (59.4%) coming in from tier 1 cities always checked for food label on packaged food products.

Education Level



City Distribution

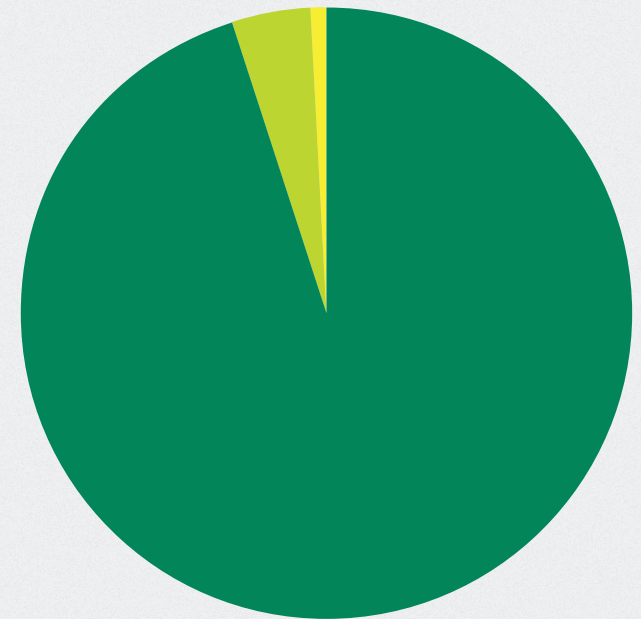


Checking important logos on the labels

Majority of the respondents (95.1%) were aware of FS-SAI logo on food labelled pre- packed food items.

Frequency

- FSSAI (95.1%)
- ISI (4.1%)
- Others (Agmark, Organic - Jaivik Bharat and Fortified) - (0.8%)



ISI- Indian Standard Institution, which shows that the product has been certified and tested as per prescribed acceptance. This logo is specifically for packaged drinking water and certain processed foods.

FSSAI - Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, which is a statutory body relating to food safety and regulation in India.

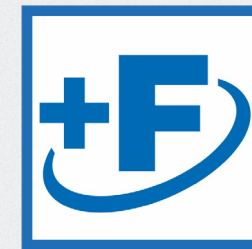
Agmark- Agriculture Marketing, which is a certification mark for agricultural produce.

Jaivik Bharat- It is to help customers identify authentic organic food.

Fortified- Fortified food means certain essential vitamins and minerals have been added to the food.



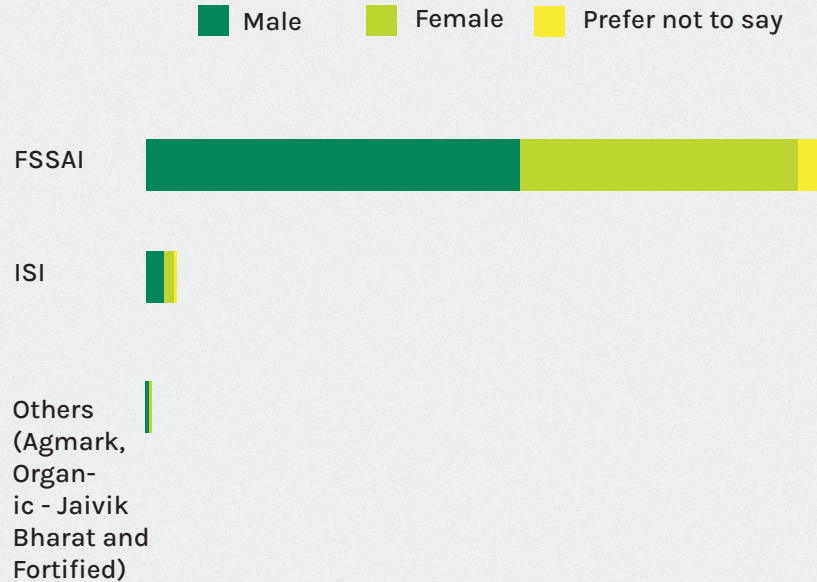
Jaivik Bharat



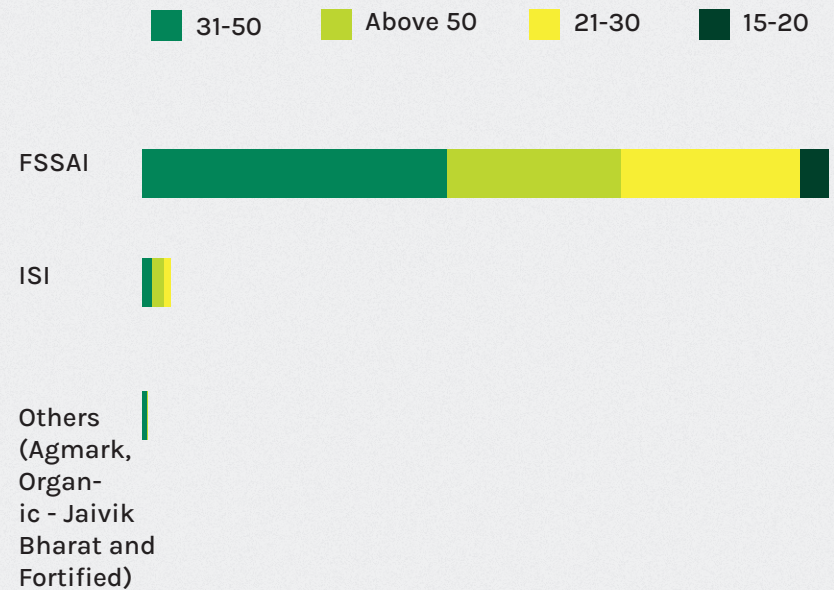
Overall, 54.97% of men and 41.01% of women recognised FSSAI logo on food label of packaged food products when compared to other food logos.

Large proportion of consumers (44.4%) who were aware of FSSAI logo belonged to the age group of 31-50 years.

Gender Distribution



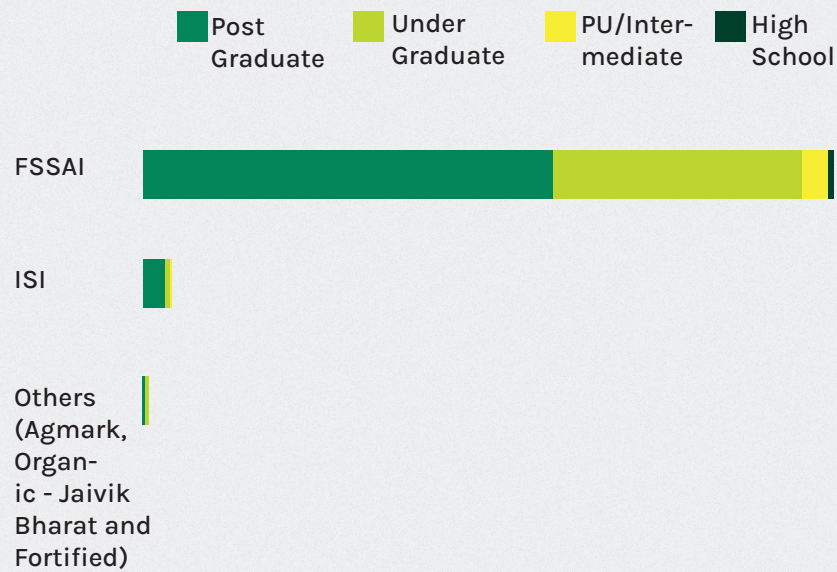
Age Distribution (in years)



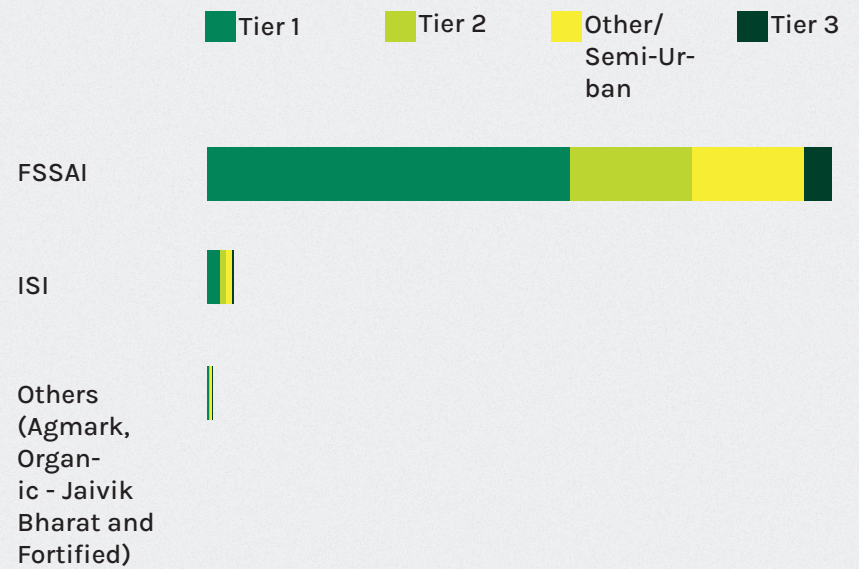
Large proportion of consumers (59.25%) with post-graduate level of education recognised FSSAI logo on food label of packaged products.

Majority of the respondents (58.11%) who were aware of FSSAI logo on food label of pre-packed food items belonged to tier 1 cities.

Education Level



City Distribution

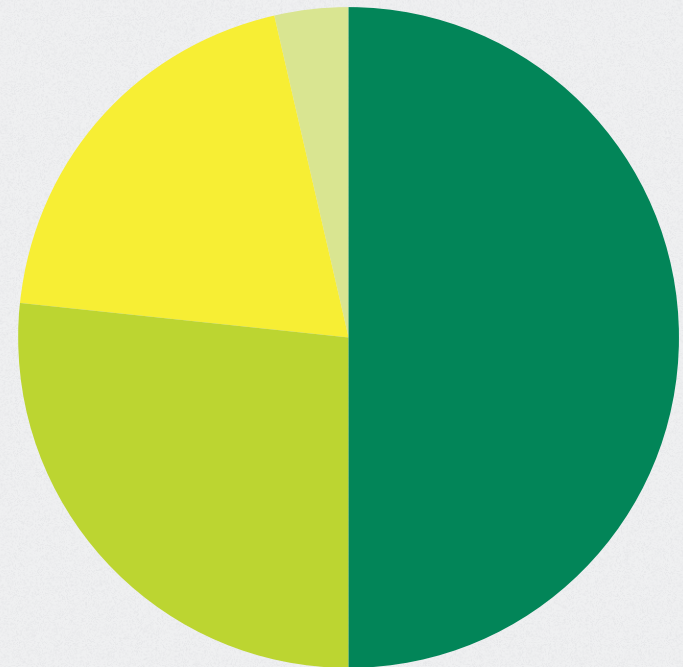


Checking list of ingredients

Overall, 50% of participants only sometimes checked list of ingredients food label while 26.9% of participants always checked for the ingredients list label on a pre-packed food item.

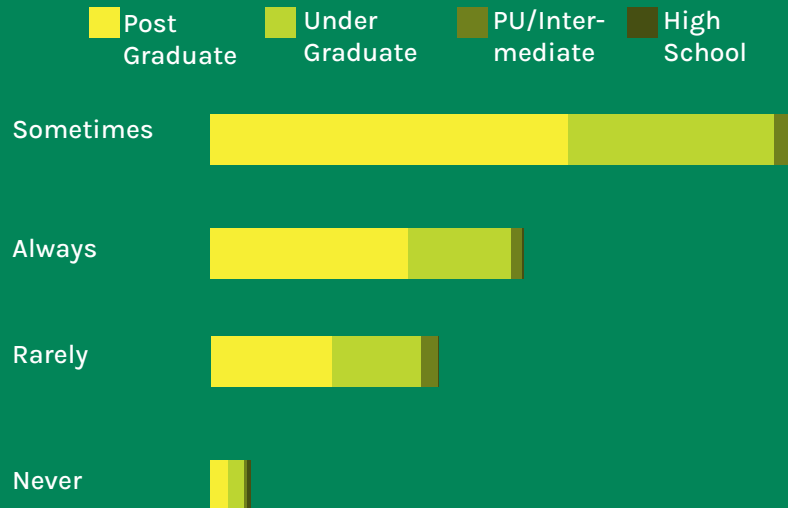
Frequency

- Sometimes (50%)
- Always (26.9%)
- Rarely (19.6%)
- Never (3.5%)



INGREDIENTS: WATER (75%), **SUGARS (12%)** (GLUCOSE (48%), FRUCTOSE (40%), SUCROSE (2%), MALTOSE (<1%)), STARCH (5%), FIBRE E460 (3%), **AMINO ACIDS (<1%)** (GLUTAMIC ACID (19%), ASPARTIC ACID (16%), HISTIDINE (11%), LEUCINE (7%), LYSINE (5%), PHENYLALANINE (4%), ARGININE (4%), VALINE (4%), ALANINE (4%), SERINE (4%), GLYCINE (3%), THREONINE (3%), ISOLEUCINE (3%), PROLINE (3%), TRYPTOPHAN (1%), CYSTINE (1%), TYROSINE (1%), METHIONINE (1%)), **FATTY ACIDS (1%)** (PALMITIC ACID (30%), OMEGA-6 FATTY ACID: LINOLEIC ACID (14%), OMEGA-3 FATTY ACID: LINOLENIC ACID (8%), OLEIC ACID (7%), PALMITOLEIC ACID (3%), STEARIC ACID (2%), LAURIC ACID (1%), MYRISTIC ACID (1%), CAPRIC ACID (<1%)), ASH (<1%), PHYTOSTEROLS, E515, OXALIC ACID, E300, E306 (TOCOPHEROL), PHYLLLOQUINONE, THIAMIN, **COLOURS** (YELLOW-ORANGE E101 (RIBOFLAVIN), YELLOW-BROWN E160a), **FLAVOURS** (3-METHYLBUT-1-YL ETHANOATE, 2-METHYLBUTYL ETHANOATE, 2-METHYLPROPAN-1-OL, 3-METHYLBUTYL-1-OL, 2-HYDROXY-3-METHYLETHYL BUTANOATE, 3-METHYLBUTANAL, ETHYL HEXANOATE, ETHYL BUTANOATE, PENTYL ACETATE), 1510, NATURAL RIPENING AGENT (ETHENE GAS).

Ingredients are listed on products in descending order by weight. Food manufacturers are required to list all the ingredients on the food label.

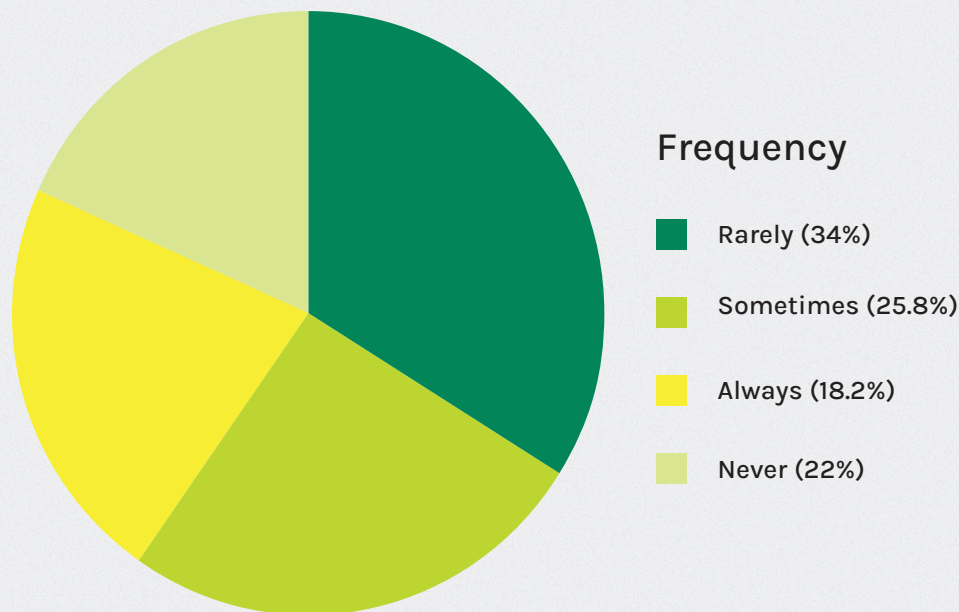


Education Level

Large proportion of consumers (61.48%) with post-graduate level of education only sometimes checked for list of ingredients label on a packaged food product.

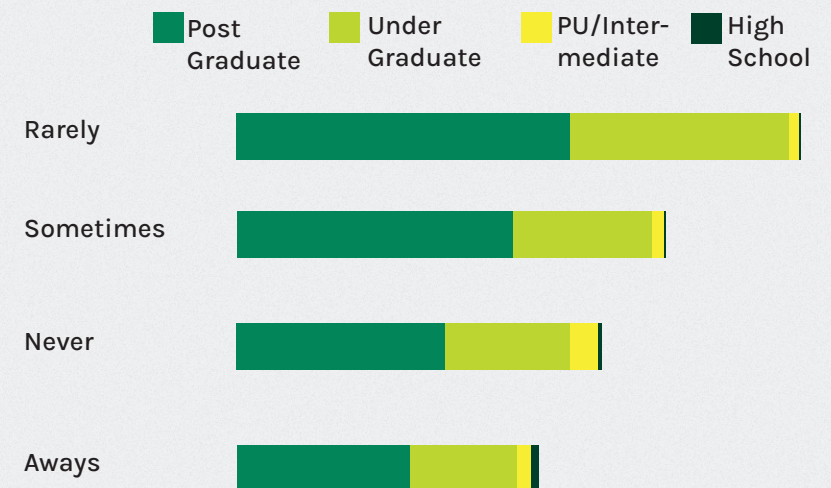
Checking allergen label

Overall, 34% of respondents rarely checked allergen or warning labels on packed food items while only 18.2% of respondents always checked for allergen label when purchasing a packaged food product.



Major proportion of participants (59.15%) up to post-graduate level of education rarely checked for allergen label on packed food products whereas high school students are the least aware of allergen label.

Education Level





FSSAI has made it mandatory to declare the 8 major ingredients that trigger food allergies.

These are-

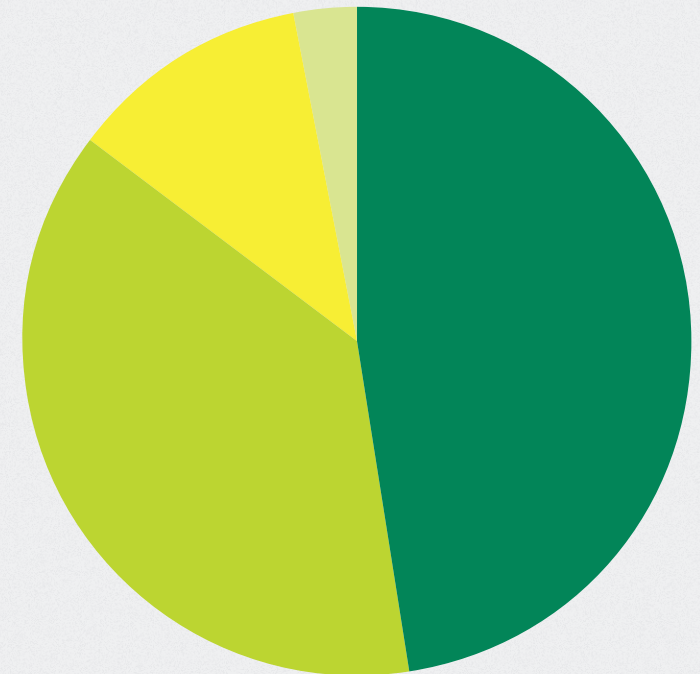
- Cereals containing gluten
- Crustacean
- Milk
- Egg
- Fish
- Peanuts and tree-nuts
- Soyabean and sulphite.

Checking storage in- struction

Overall, majority of the respondents (47.7%) always read storage instruction label on pre-packed food items.

Frequency

- Always (47.7%)
- Sometimes (37.7%)
- Rarely (11.6%)
- Never (3%)



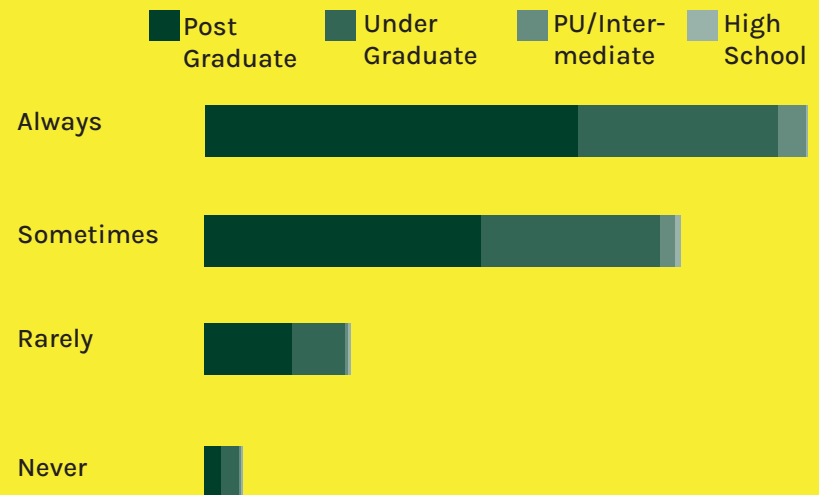


Storage:

Store this product in a cool, dry place, away from sunlight.
 Do not buy if product is puffed or seal is broken.
 Avoid using a wet spoon. Keep air-tight.

The food label needs to contain the instructions and directions about how a product should be used or prepared to be consumed by the consumer.

Education Level



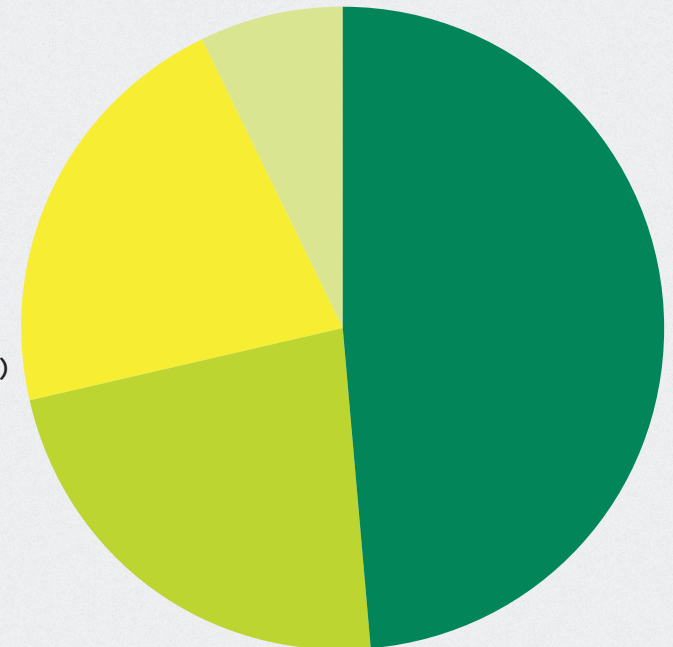
Large proportion of consumers (61.9%) up to post-graduate level of education always checked storage instruction label on a packaged food product compared to high school students who were the least aware of the label.

Checking nutritional facts label

Majority of the participants (48.7%) only sometimes checked for nutrition facts label on pre-packed food items while only 23% of consumers always checked for the nutrition facts label.

Frequency

- Sometimes (48.7%)
- Always (23%)
- Rarely (21.3%)
- Never (7.1%)



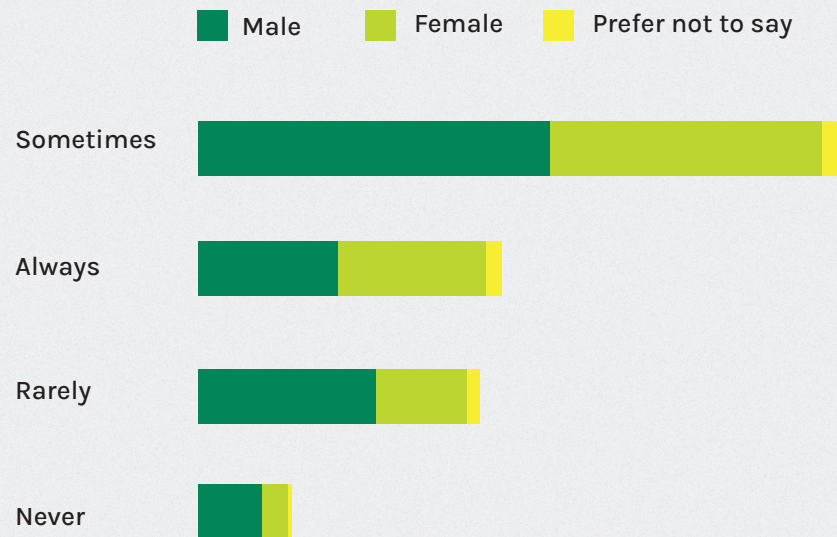


Nutritional information labels can help you choose between products and keep a check on the amount of macro-nutrients and micro-nutrients in the food being consumed.

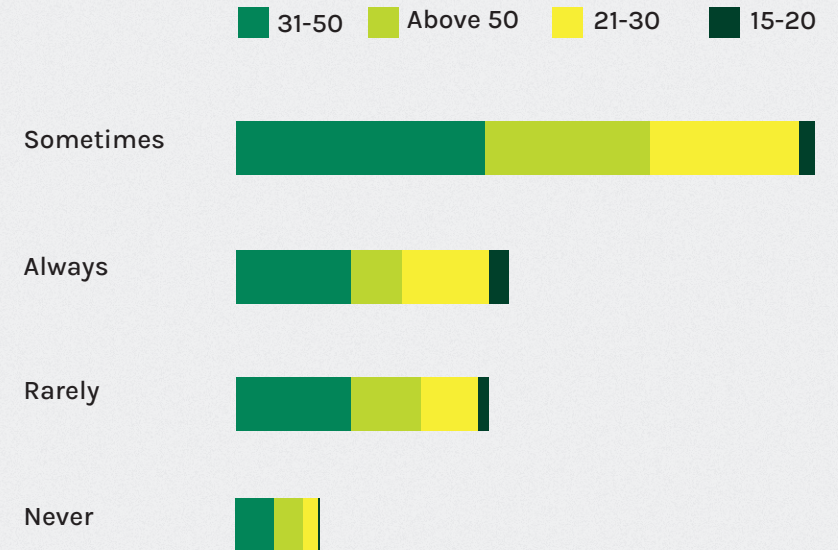
Large proportion of men (54.55%) and women (42.26%) only sometimes checked for nutrition facts label on packaged food products.

Majority of consumers (43%) who only sometimes checked nutrition facts label on pre- packed food items belonged to the age group 31-50 years.

Gender Distribution



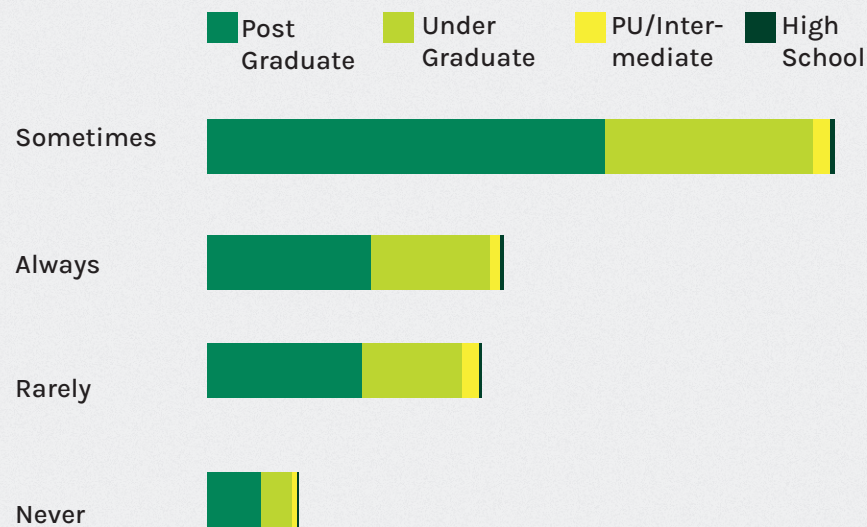
Age Distribution (in years)



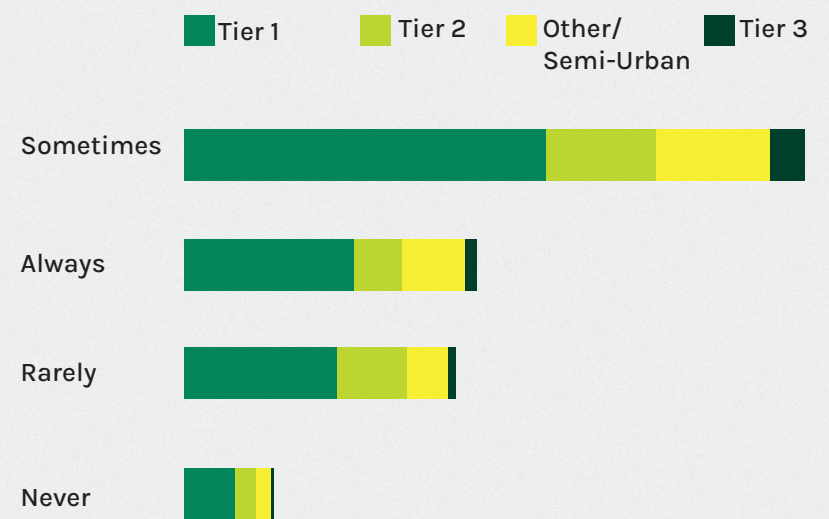
Majority of the consumers (63.39%) up to post-graduate level of education only sometimes checked for nutrition facts label on pre-packed food items.

58.23% of respondents coming from tier-1 cities only sometimes checked for nutrition facts label on packaged food products.

Education Level



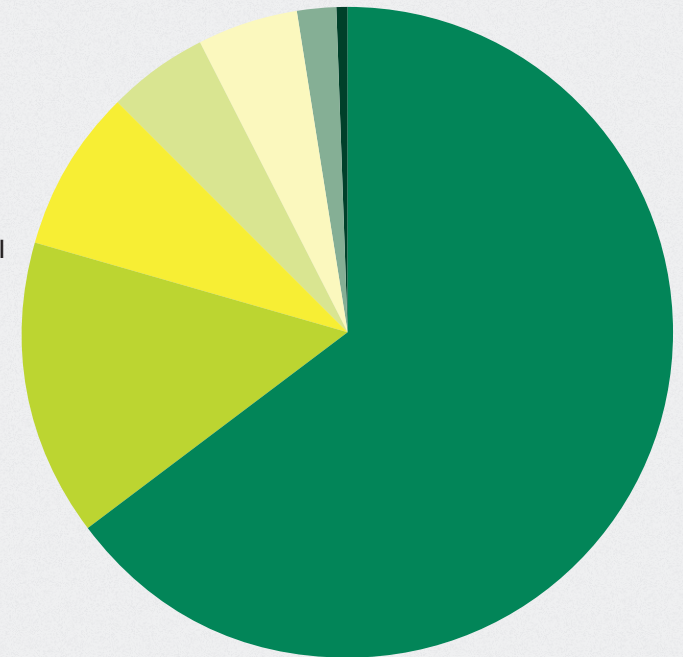
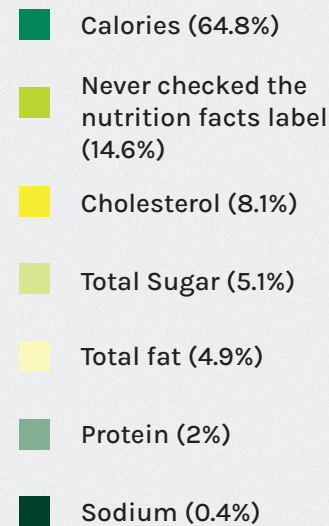
City Distribution



Checking nutritional facts information

Overall, majority of the consumers chose 'calories' (64.8%) to be the most important nutritional item on the nutrition facts label.

Frequency



Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	240
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 4g	5%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	8%
<i>Trans Fat</i> 0g	
Cholesterol 5mg	2%
Sodium 430mg	19%
Total Carbohydrate 46g	17%
Dietary Fiber 7g	25%
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	4%
Protein 11g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	35%
Potassium 240mg	6%

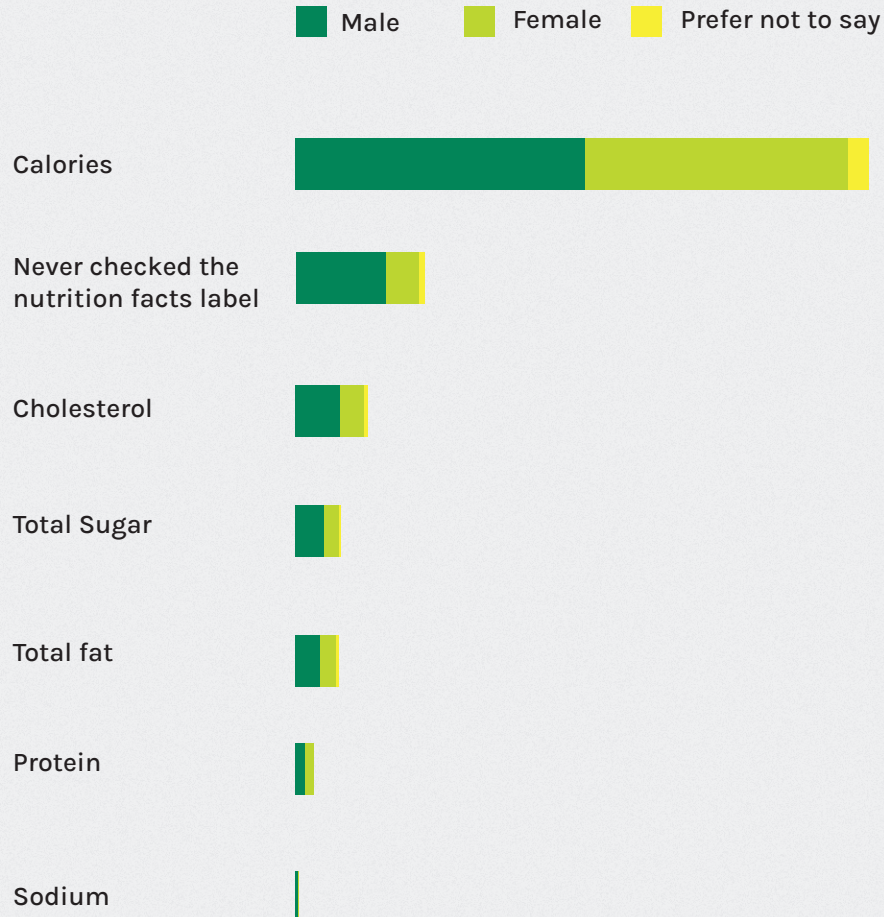
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

The nutritional information panels on food labels list energy, total fat, carbohydrates, protein, sodium, vitamins and minerals.

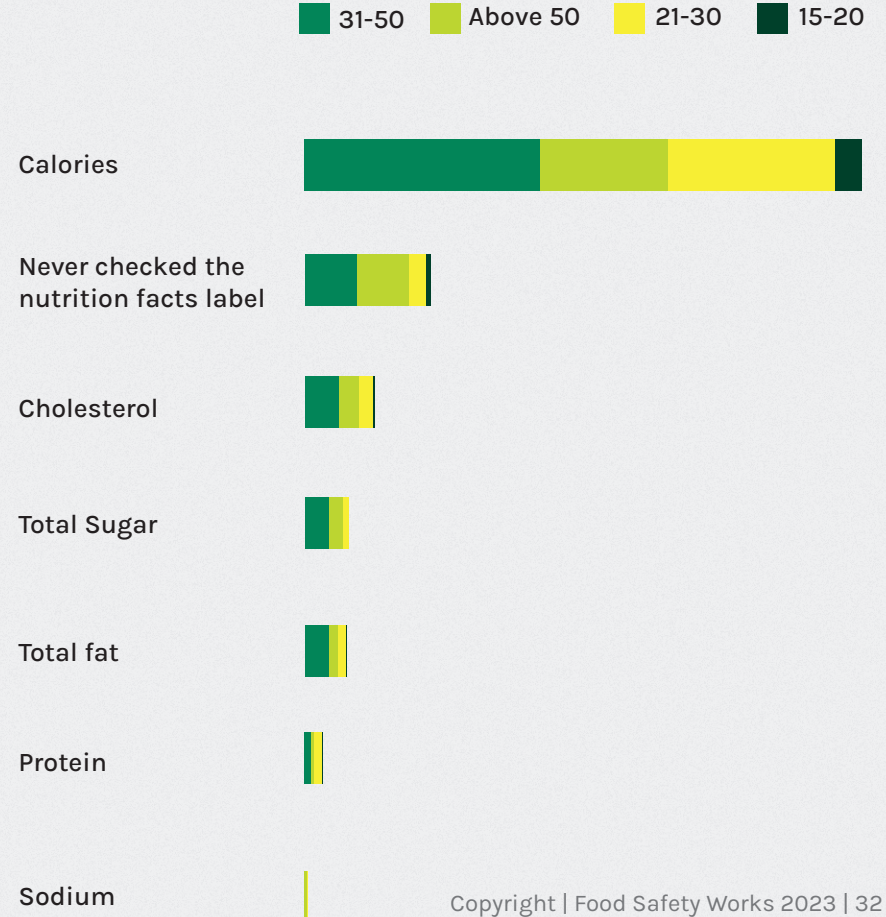
Both men (50.55%) and women (45.94%) considered calories as the most important nutritional item being checked on the nutrition facts label.

Large proportion of consumers (42.25%) who considered calories to be the most important nutrition item to be looked on a nutrition fact label belonged to the age group 31-50 years.

Gender Distribution



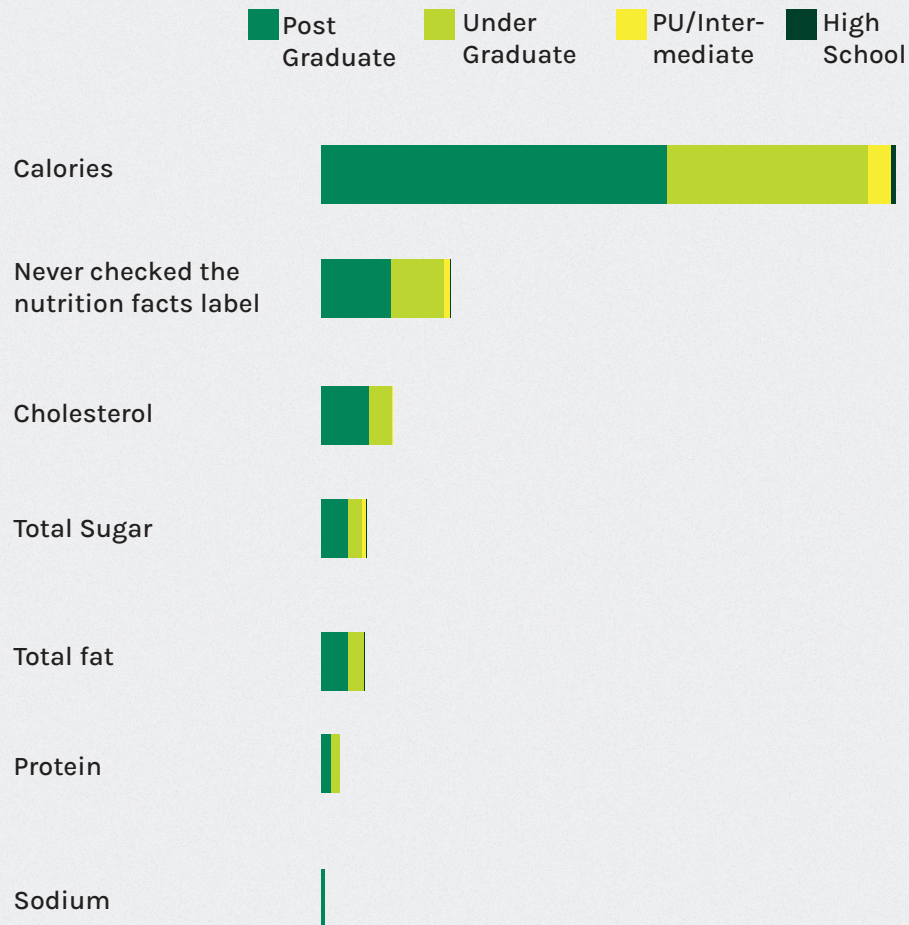
Age Distribution (in years)



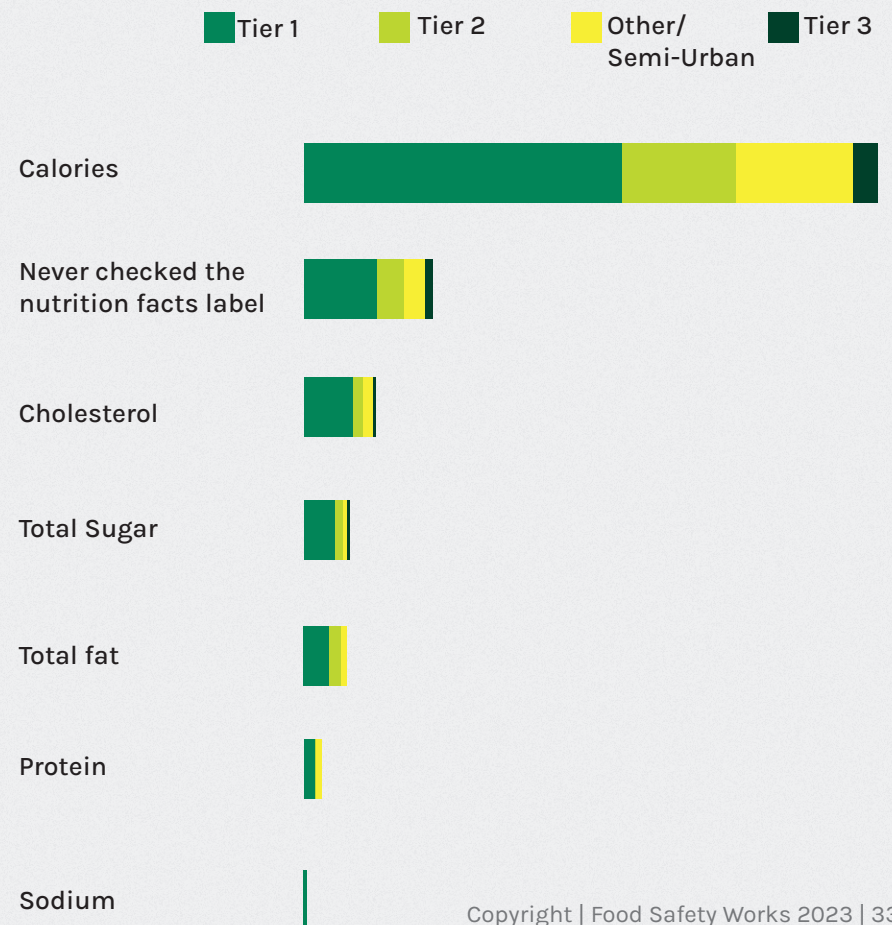
60.15% of consumers up to post-graduate level of education gave the most importance calories on nutrition facts label of a food product.

Majority of participants (55.35%) who checked for calories on a nutritional fact label of pre-packed food item belonged to tier-1 cities.

Education Level



City Distribution

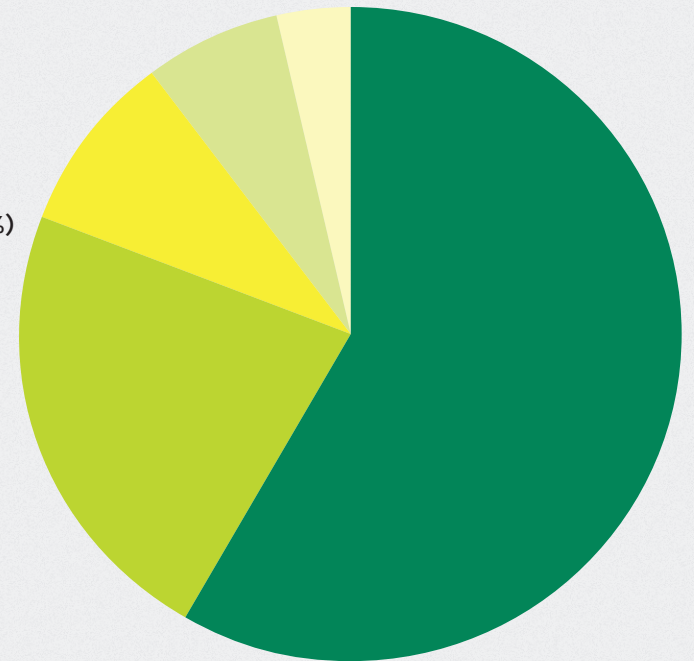


Claims mentioned on the label

Overall, majority of consumers (58.4%) gave most importance to 'organic' as health claim label on a pre-packed food item.

Frequency

- Organic (58.4%)
- All of the above (22.7%)
- Others (Cholesterol free, natural, real, pure, no artificial colours, no preservatives. (8.9%)
- Gluten free (6.6%)
- Trans-fat free (3.5%)





Jaivik Bharat- It is to help customers identify authentic organic food.

Trans-fat free- All food products in which edible oils and fats are used as an ingredient should not contain industrial trans fatty acids more than 2 per cent by mass of the total oils/fats present in the product.

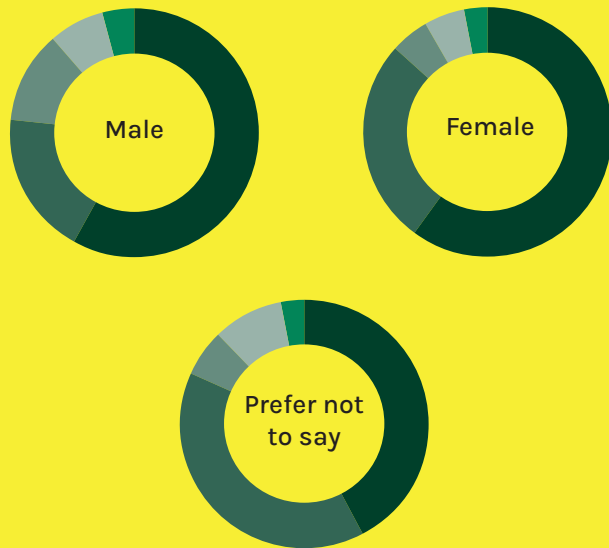
Gluten free- Only foods that contain 20 mg gluten/kg or less can be labelled as gluten-free.

Large proportion of men (58.23%) and women (60.12%) considered organic to be the most important health claim label on a packaged food product.

Majority of the consumers (45.49%) who gave most importance to organic health claim label on a pre-packed food item belonged to the age group 31-50 years.

Gender Distribution

■ Organic
 ■ All of the above
 ■ Others
 ■ Gluten-free
 ■ Trans-fat free



Age Distribution (in years)

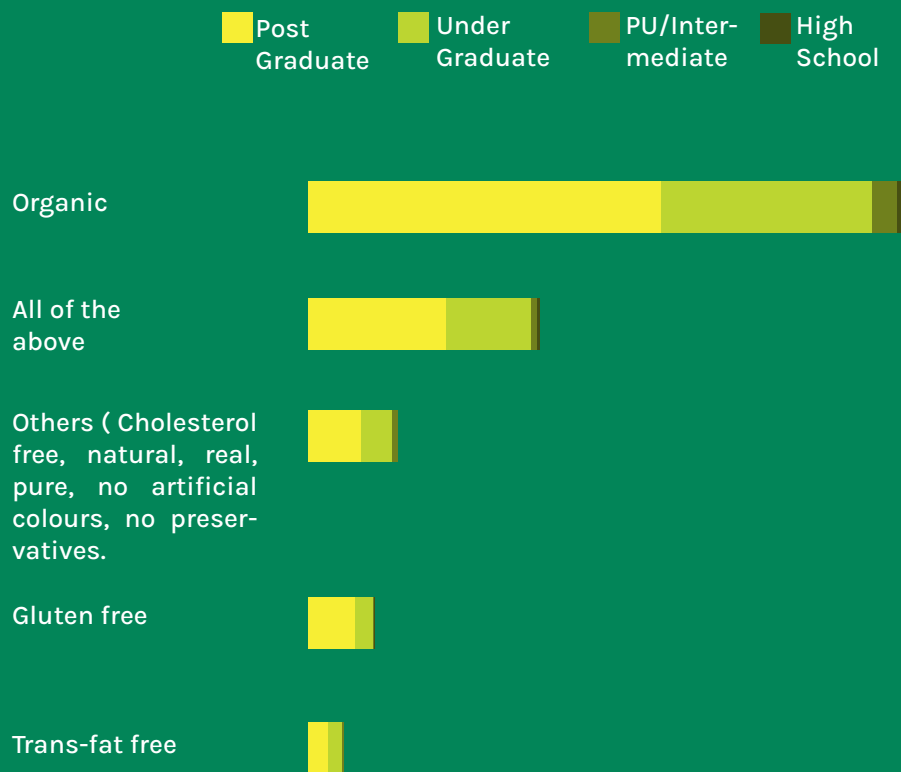
■ 31-50
 ■ Above 50
 ■ 21-30
 ■ 15-20



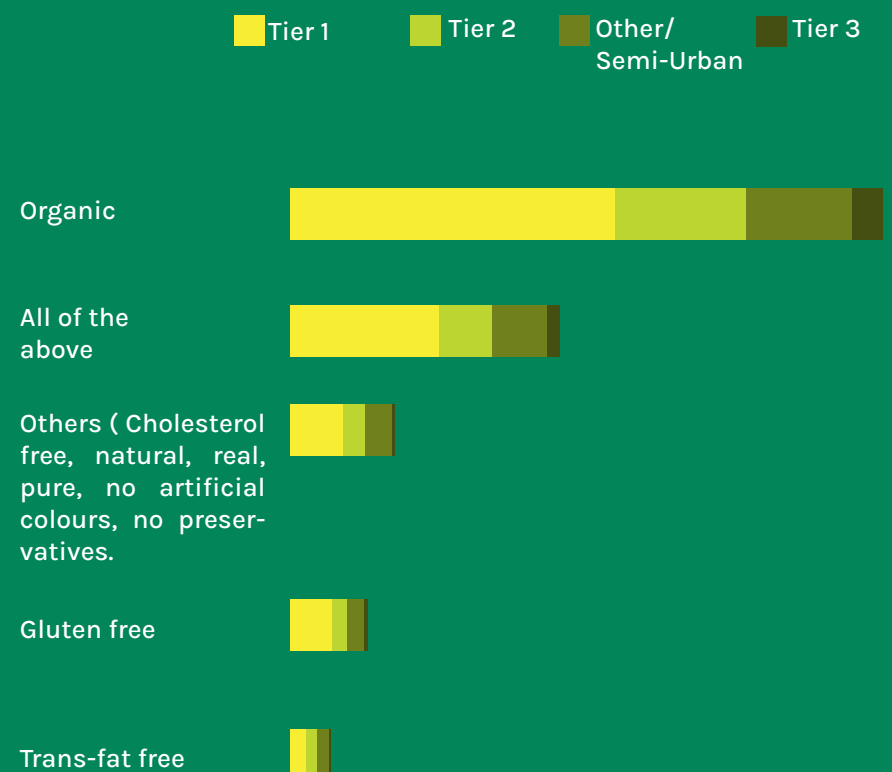
Large proportion of participants (59.22%) up to post-graduate level of education preferring organic to be the most important health claim label on a pre-packed food product.

Majority of respondents (61.27%) who considered organic to be the most significant health claim label on a packaged food item belonged to tier 1 cities.

Education Level



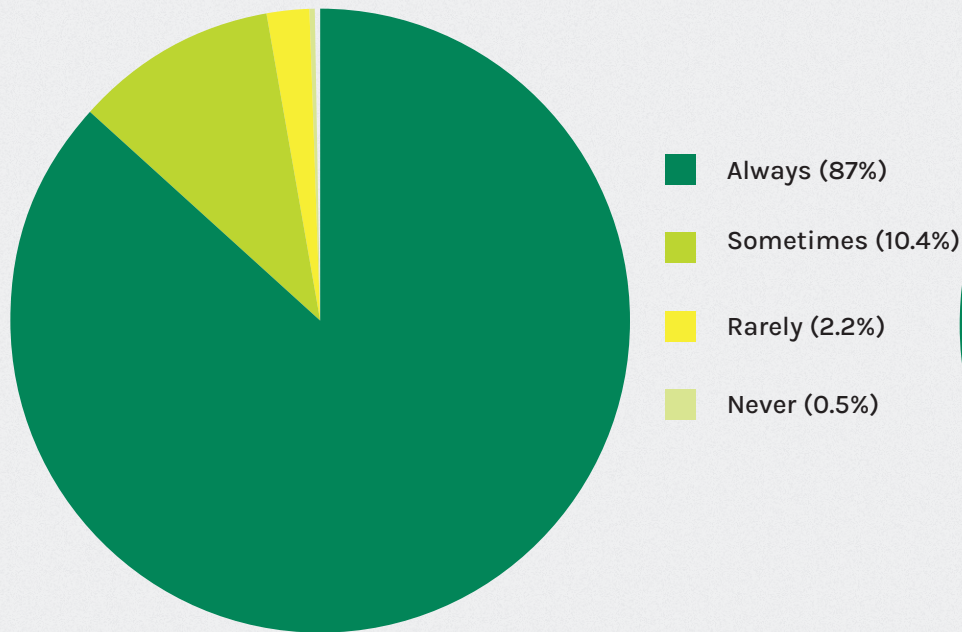
City Distribution



Checking expiry date before consumption

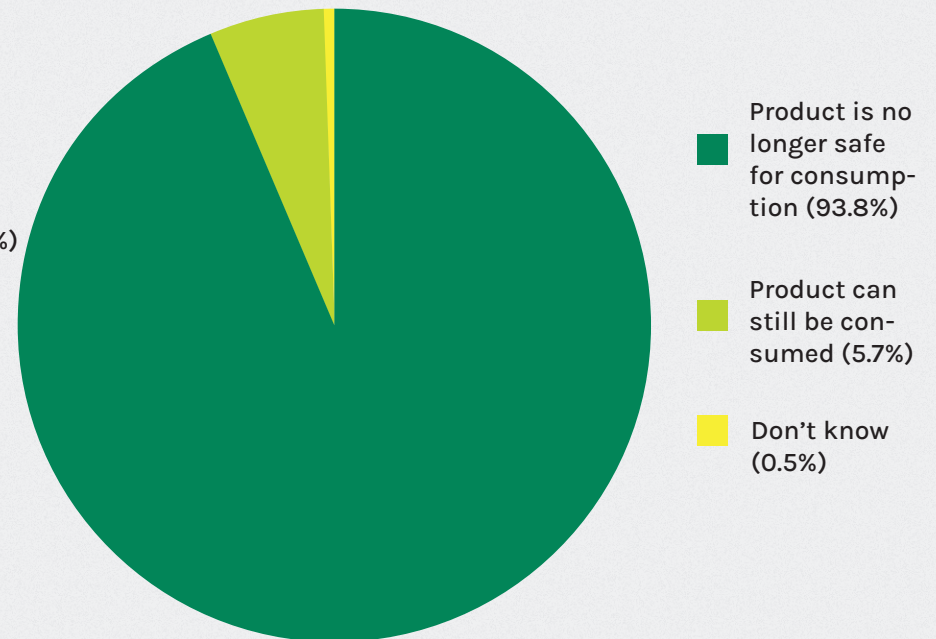
Overall, majority of the consumers (87%) always looked at expiry date label before consuming a pre-packed food item.

Frequency



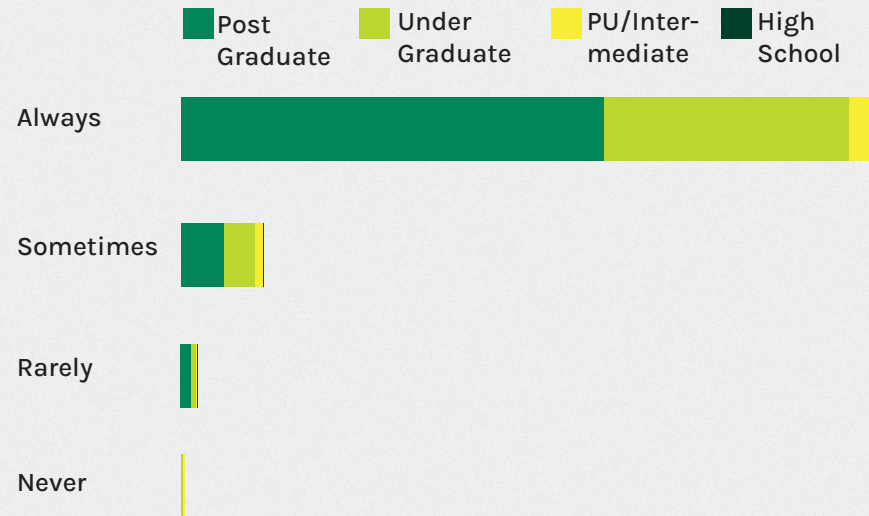
Majority of the consumers (93.8%) understood what expiry date really means when mentioned on a pre-packed food item.

Understanding



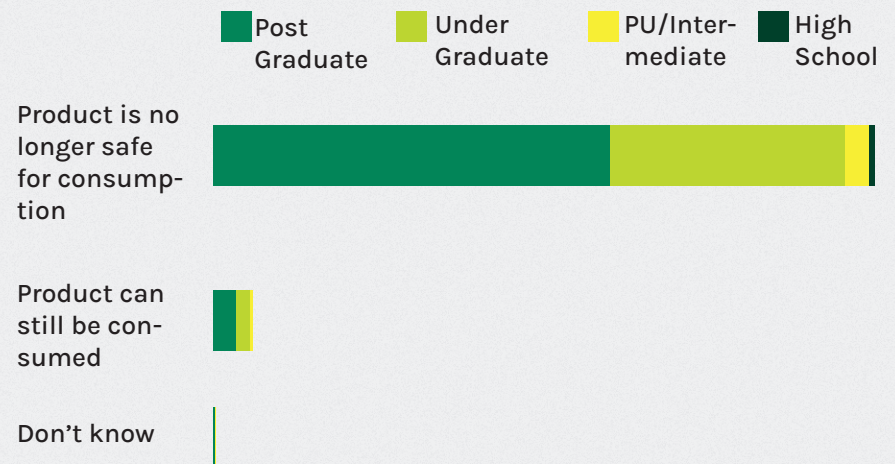
Large proportion of respondents (60.94%) up to post-graduate level of education always checked for expiry date label before consuming a packaged food product.

Education Level



Large proportion of participants (60.94%) up to post-graduate level of education understand what expiry date actually means which is displayed on a packaged food product.

Education Level

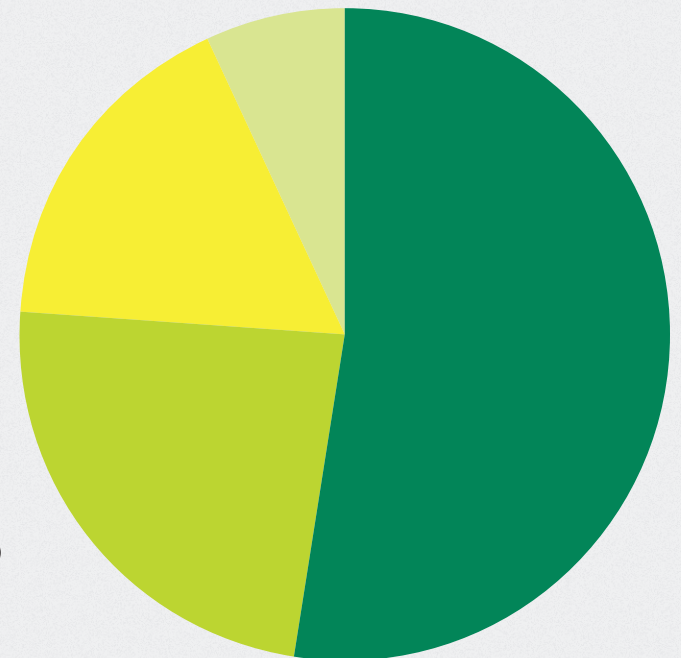


Using customer care information on the label

Overall, majority of the respondents (52.5%) have never utilised the customer care information label to register a complaint regarding safety and quality of a food product.

Frequency

- Never (52.5%)
- Rarely (23.8%)
- Sometimes (17%)
- Always (6.7%)

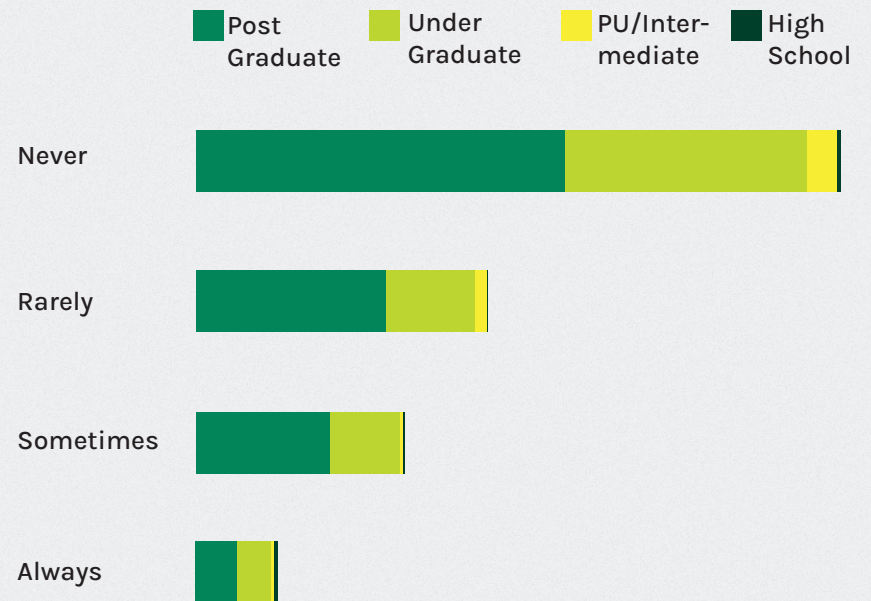


Customer care information- contact details of the customer support centre must be on the label.

For feedback - Contact: Executive, Consumer Care Cell.
 ☎ 1-800-00111 / 1-800-00022 (Toll Free)
 ✉ Food Industries Ltd., Agarwal Brothers and Co., Tower B,
 Whitefield, Bangalore, Karnataka - 560000
 @ feedback@food.com

57.18% of consumers up to post-graduate level of education have never used the customer care information label to register a complaint regarding the safety and quality of a food product.

Education Level



Conclusion

Findings of the study revealed that 30.7% of the consumers preferred purchasing pre-packed food items once a week. Similarly, the frequency of checking food labels before buying a packaged food product was reported to be 59.6%. The study also reported that 23% of the participants always checked for nutrition facts label while 48% only sometimes looked for nutrition facts label on pre-packed food items. Overall, 87% of the consumers always looked at the expiry date label before consuming a pre-packed food item and also 93.8% of the respondents understood the definition of expiry date.

The inferences drawn from the study has revealed a medium level of awareness of food labels and proclivity of the food products with the food labels among the study cohort of respondents. Findings have shown that study participants had high awareness on food labelling among participants with post-graduation level of education. Age and education level of respondents were found to be significantly correlated with overall knowledge, attitude, awareness and pre-packaged food label information. Majority of the respondents frequently referred to the expiry date label before consuming a packed food item. The study has also shown that there is limited usage and understanding of nutrition contents of food labelling among consumers.

Disclaimer

This food label awareness survey report is based on the responses of a sample of individuals who participated in the survey. The results of the survey are intended to provide general insights into the level of food label awareness and understanding among Indian consumers and should not be considered representative of the entire Indian population. Additionally, the report is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice or judgment. Food Safety Works and the authors of the report assume no responsibility for any errors or omissions, or for any actions taken in reliance on the information contained in this report.

About Food Safety Works

Food Safety Works is a trusted partner in ensuring food safety and quality in the Indian market. Based in Bangalore, with branch offices in Mumbai and Delhi, India, we are a team of food safety experts with a passion for protecting consumers and promoting public health. We understand the complexities of the food industry and the importance of maintaining high standards of food safety and quality. Our services include food safety consulting, auditing, training, new product development, and laboratory testing, all of which are tailored to meet the unique needs of your business.

Whether you are a small food business just starting out, or a large corporation looking to improve your food safety systems, we have the expertise and resources to help you achieve your goals. Our team of certified food safety professionals has a wealth of experience in a variety of food sectors, and we are committed to staying up-to-date on the latest regulations and industry best practices.

At Food Safety Works, we believe that food safety is a shared responsibility, and we are dedicated to working closely with our clients to create customized solutions that will help them meet their food safety and quality objectives. With our help, you can have the confidence and peace of mind that comes from knowing your products are safe and compliant.

Standards
Implementation



Audits and
Inspections



Learning and
Development



Regulatory and
Compliance Services



New Product
Development



Factory Layout and
Design



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