

# Canadian Families Making Healthier Choices

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Research undertaken by H+K Perspectives on  
behalf of Advertising Standards Canada.



Advertising Standards Canada  
Les normes canadiennes de la publicité

# Methodology

Hill+Knowlton Strategies research practice, H+K Perspectives, conducted this national survey with their online panel from July 3 to 8, 2014. In total 1021 Canadians were interviewed, with an associated margin of error of +/- 3.06% 19 times out of 20.

H+K Perspectives is a panel of approximately 20,000 members from all across Canada. The methodology used to recruit and maintain this panel has been developed by leading panel experts in H+K's Public Engagement and Research group.



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# Research Objective

Obtain a better understanding of Canadians' views about making nutrition choices for their children and families.



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# Key Findings

## The past and present - things are improving

- ❑ Of those surveyed, most identify themselves as the primary decision maker of the food and beverages that enter their house (76%). This is significantly higher among women (86%) as compared to men (66%).
- ❑ 8 in 10 Canadians indicate they make healthier food and beverage choices now, when compared to 5 years ago.
- ❑ Those who choose healthier options tend to be more aware of the increase in options available to them. Overall the majority (72%) think that healthier options have increased over the past 5 years.
- ❑ The majority of Canadians are increasingly aware of children's dietary needs (81%). This numbers climbs to nearly 9 in 10 when looking at those who actively choose healthier options for their family.
- ❑ Families with children display an increased likelihood of selecting healthier food products.



# Key Findings

## What factors are responsible for childhood obesity?

- ❑ There is no one factor that Canadians attribute for childhood obesity to, however, people agree that some factors are more pressing than others.
- ❑ Approximately 1 in 3 Canadians (32%) feel that too much TV/video game time is the major contributor to childhood obesity. Nearly another third (31%) of Canadians feel that parents and caregivers are not providing the proper education about healthy dietary and or physical activity habits.
- ❑ The statement “Parents have the ultimate responsibility to make the right nutrition choices for their children”, received the greatest agreement (88%) of all the issues respondents were asked to look at. This was reinforced when an overwhelming 9 in 10 respondents identified parents and caregivers as the ones ultimately responsible for guiding children's eating habits.
- ❑ Overall, Canadians feel that they are responsible, as parents and caregivers, for making children choose the healthy eating option.



# Key Findings

## What factors are responsible for childhood obesity? (cont'd)

- ❑ One common trend throughout the survey was the difference of opinions between those who identify themselves as having already made efforts to make healthier food and beverage choices now compared to 5 years ago, and those who have not.
- ❑ Typically respondents choosing to make healthier choices show a higher propensity to take ownership of children's eating habits. They see parents and caregivers as having the ultimate responsibility rather than alternatives like government, the food and beverage industry or schools.
- ❑ These respondents also tend to find making healthy choices for their families easier.
- ❑ Those not making efforts to choose healthier options also primarily identify parents and caregivers, however, they have a higher tendency to identify government, the food and beverage industry, and schools as being responsible.



# Key Findings

## The future of combating childhood obesity – everyone can help

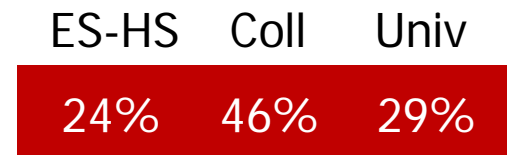
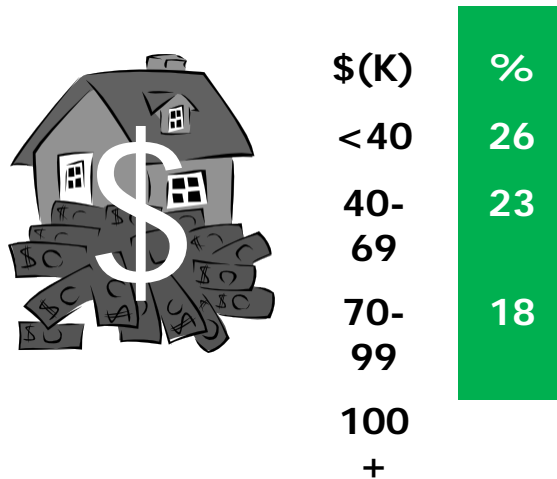
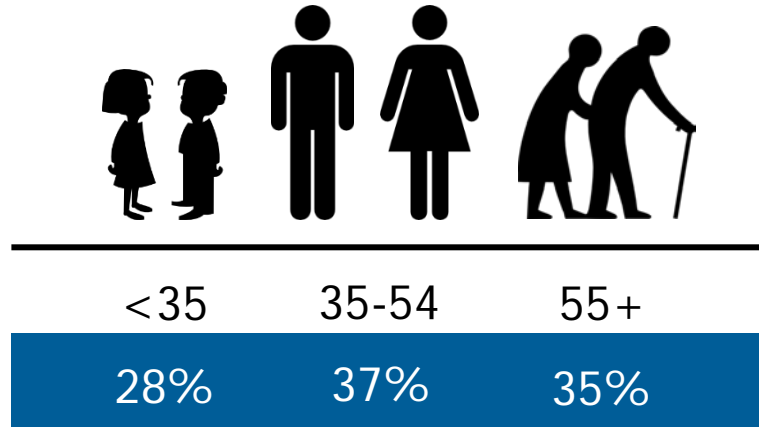
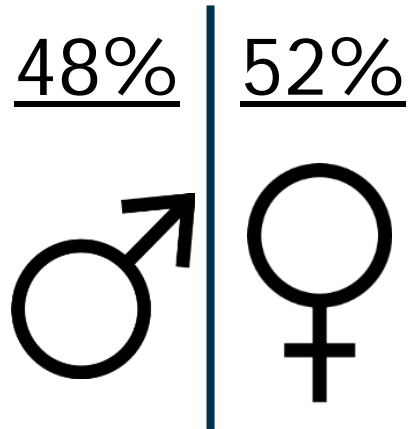
- ❑ Over half of Canadians (60%) agree that the government should be doing more to help fight childhood obesity.
- ❑ Nearly 9 in 10 (85%) agree that the food and beverage industry has a role to play in combating childhood obesity. This is even more well-defined among those who have already made efforts to choose healthier options (88%).
- ❑ When asked how the food and beverage industry can help make the 'healthy choice the easy choice', respondents were receptive to all the given options. This further reinforces the fact that Canadians are aware of the need to make healthier food choices for children.
- ❑ Overall, helping parents better understand nutritional information about the food they choose was ranked highest in terms of effectiveness in helping make 'the healthy choice the easy choice' (66%). Just over half (52%) ranked advertising healthier products to children as "very effective".



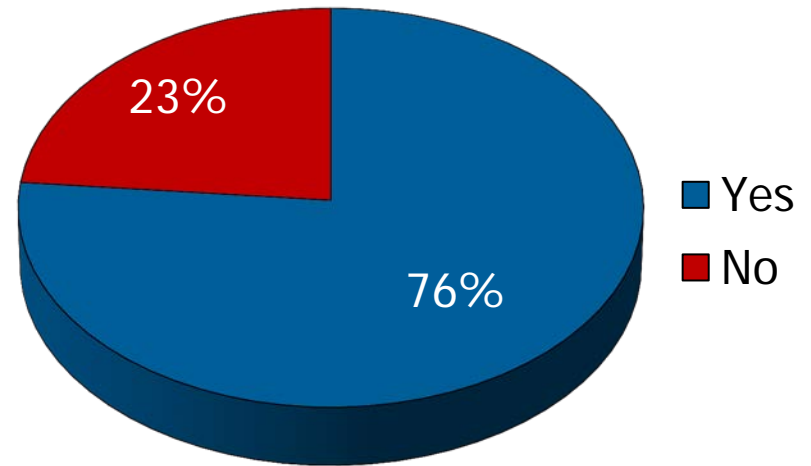
# Analysis



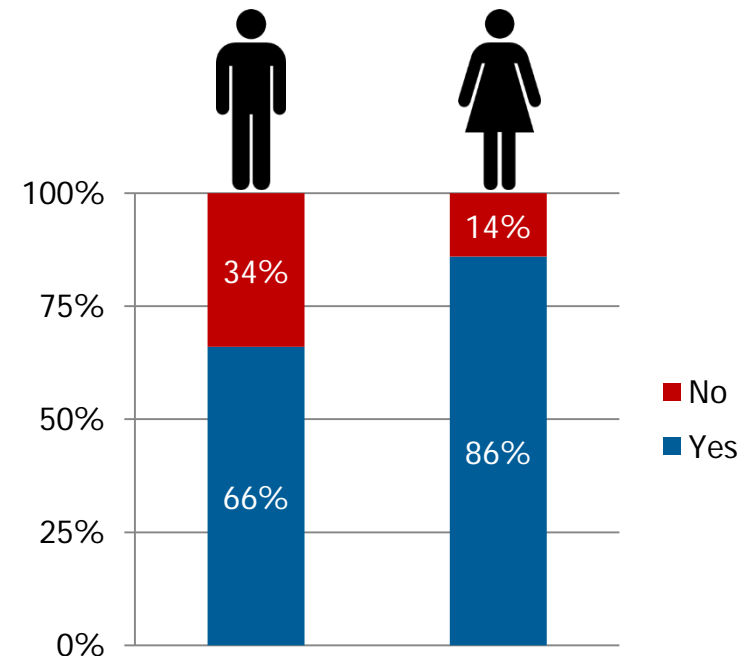
# Respondent Profile



Are you the primary decision maker concerning what food and beverages your family buys?



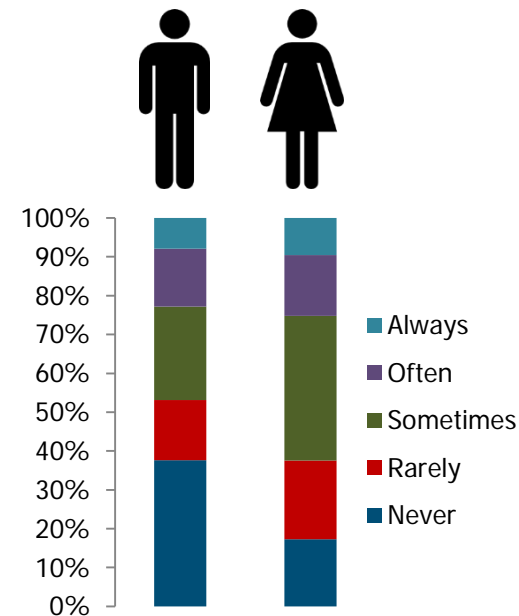
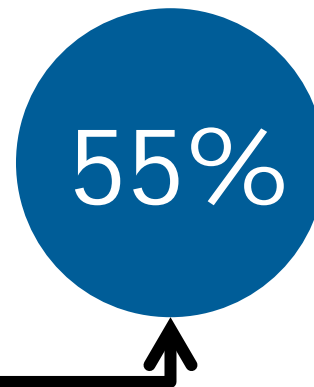
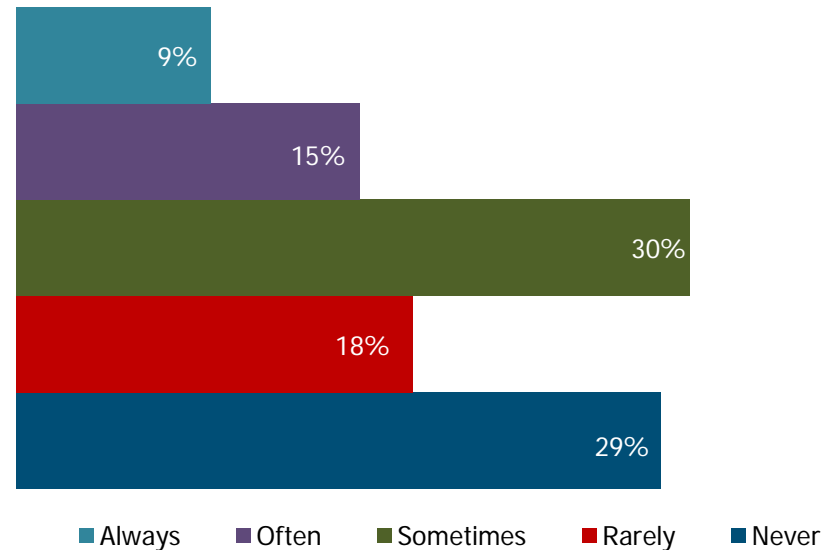
- Over three quarters of survey respondents claimed to be the primary decision maker over food and beverages in their household.
- Women are significantly more likely than men to be the primary decision making.



# How often do your children accompany you when you shop for groceries?

- Among those with children, most will be accompanied by their children while shopping at least some of the time.
- Frequency of accompaniment is higher among women as compared to men.
- Younger families (<35) are the most frequent to respond that they are "often" or "always" attended by their kids.

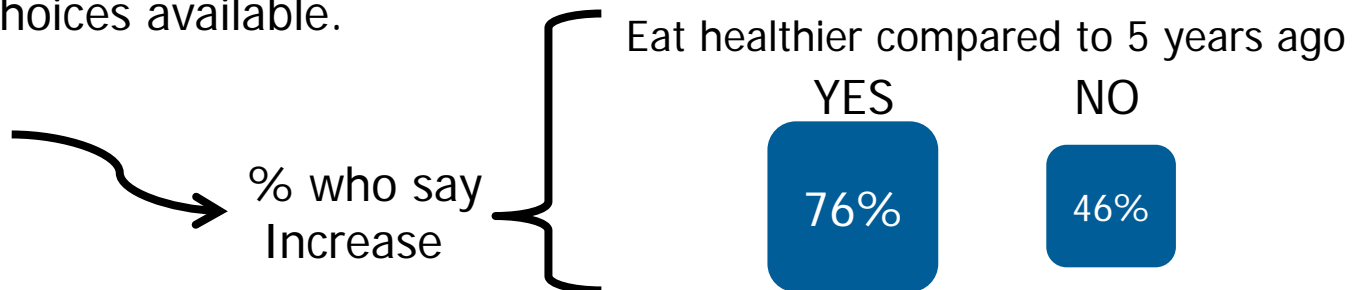
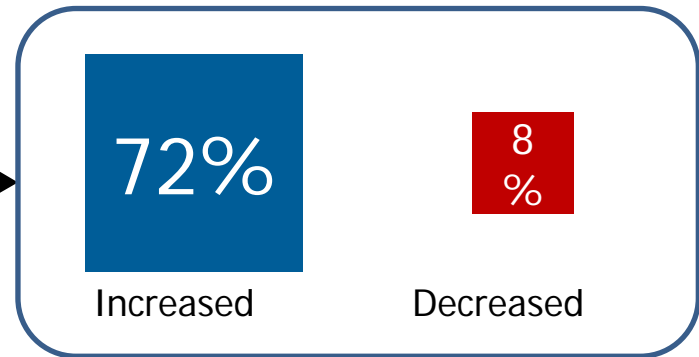
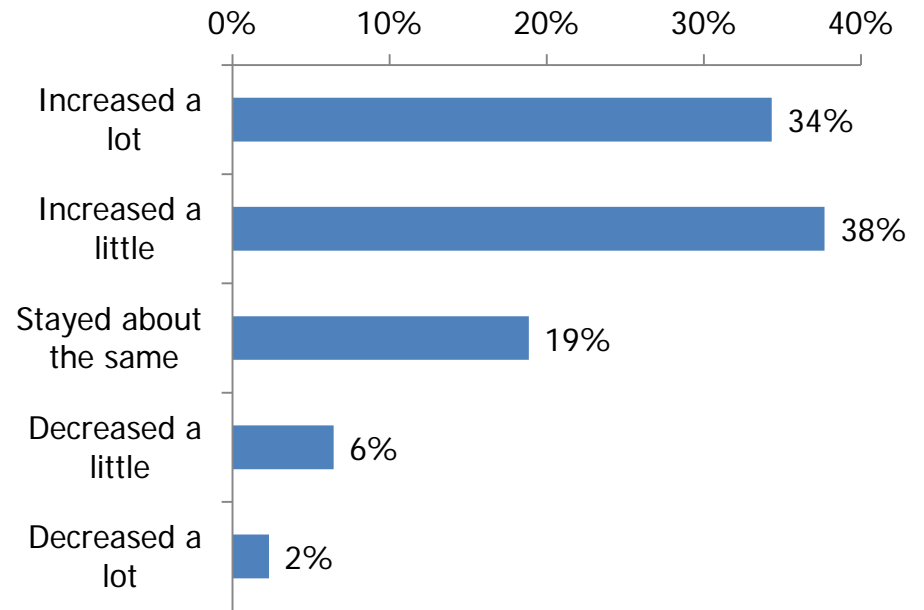
Frequency amongst those with children



\*Data displayed excludes those without children

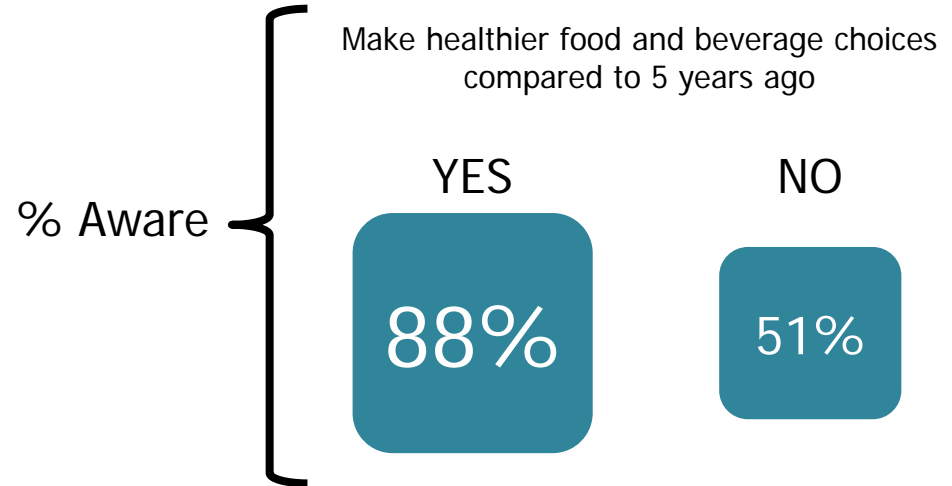
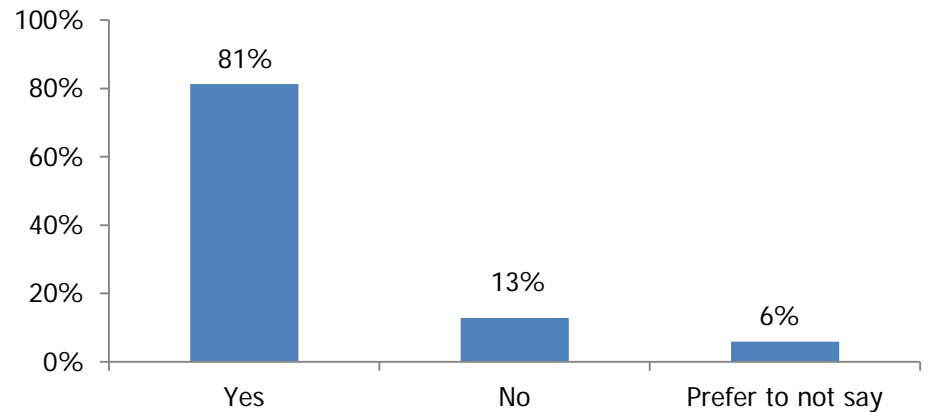
Over the last 5 years would you say the number of healthy food choices available to you as a consumer has increased or decreased?

- Just under three quarters of respondents feel that the amount of healthy food choices have increased over the past 5 years.
- Those who feel they make healthier food choices now compared to 5 years ago are much more likely to believe there are more choices available.



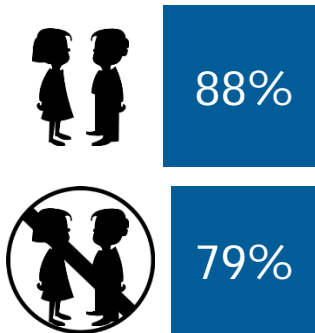
Over the last 5 years would you say that you are more aware about the need to make healthier food choices for children?

- Over three quarters of respondents have become more aware of the need to make healthier food choices for their children.
- Once again, those who are already making healthier food choices for their family are significantly more likely to agree that they have become more aware of the need to make healthier choices for children.
- Younger individuals (<35) tend to show a slightly higher frequency of agreement.

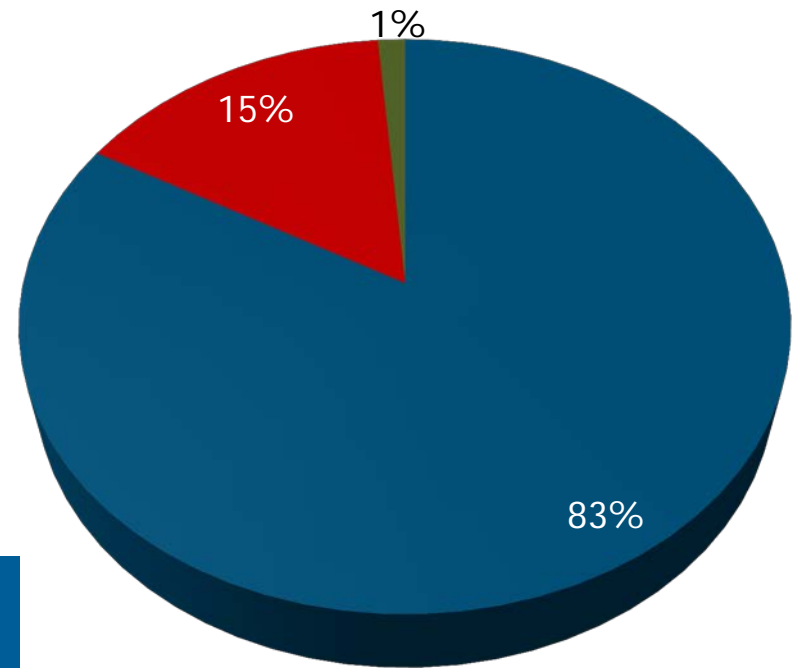


# Do you make healthier food and beverage choices for your family today as compared to 5 years ago?

- Four out of five respondents say they make healthier food choices for their family as compared to 5 years ago.
- Those families with children tend to agree with this slightly more than those without.
- As we'll see in upcoming slides, those who believe the food and beverage industry has a role to play in combatting childhood obesity are much more likely to have responded affirmatively to this question.



% Making healthy Choices

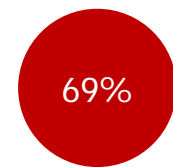
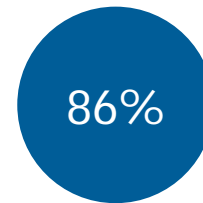


■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer to not say

Industry has a role to play

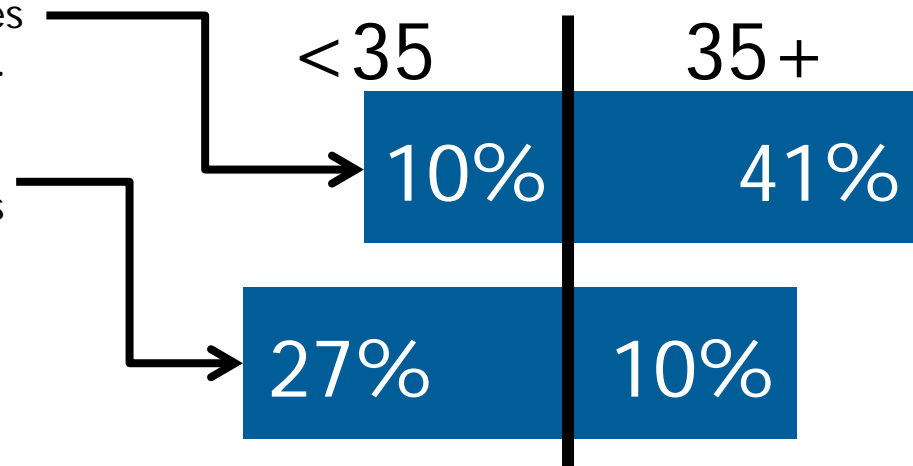
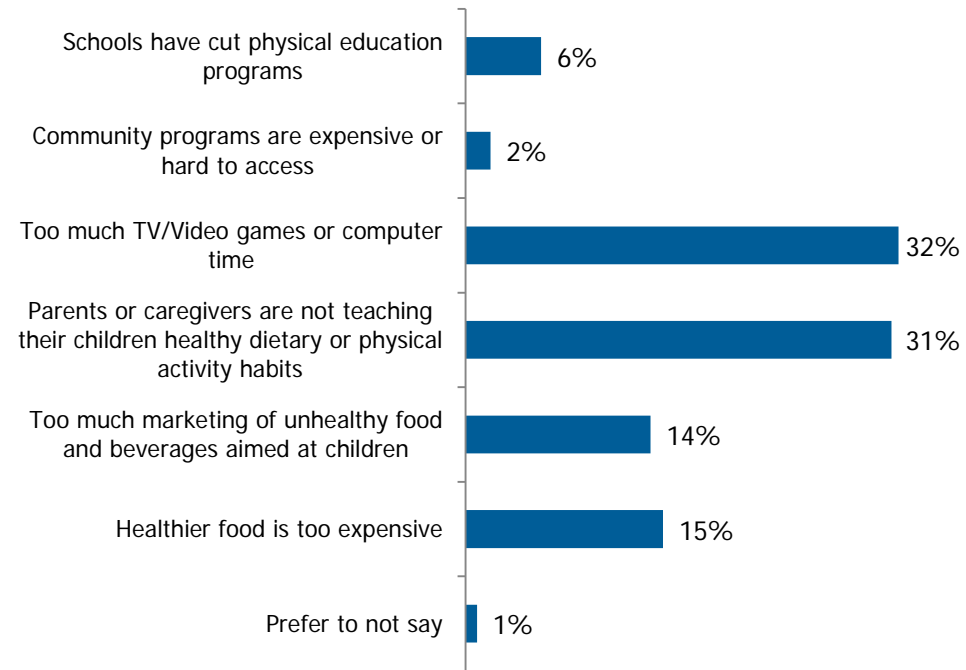
Yes

No

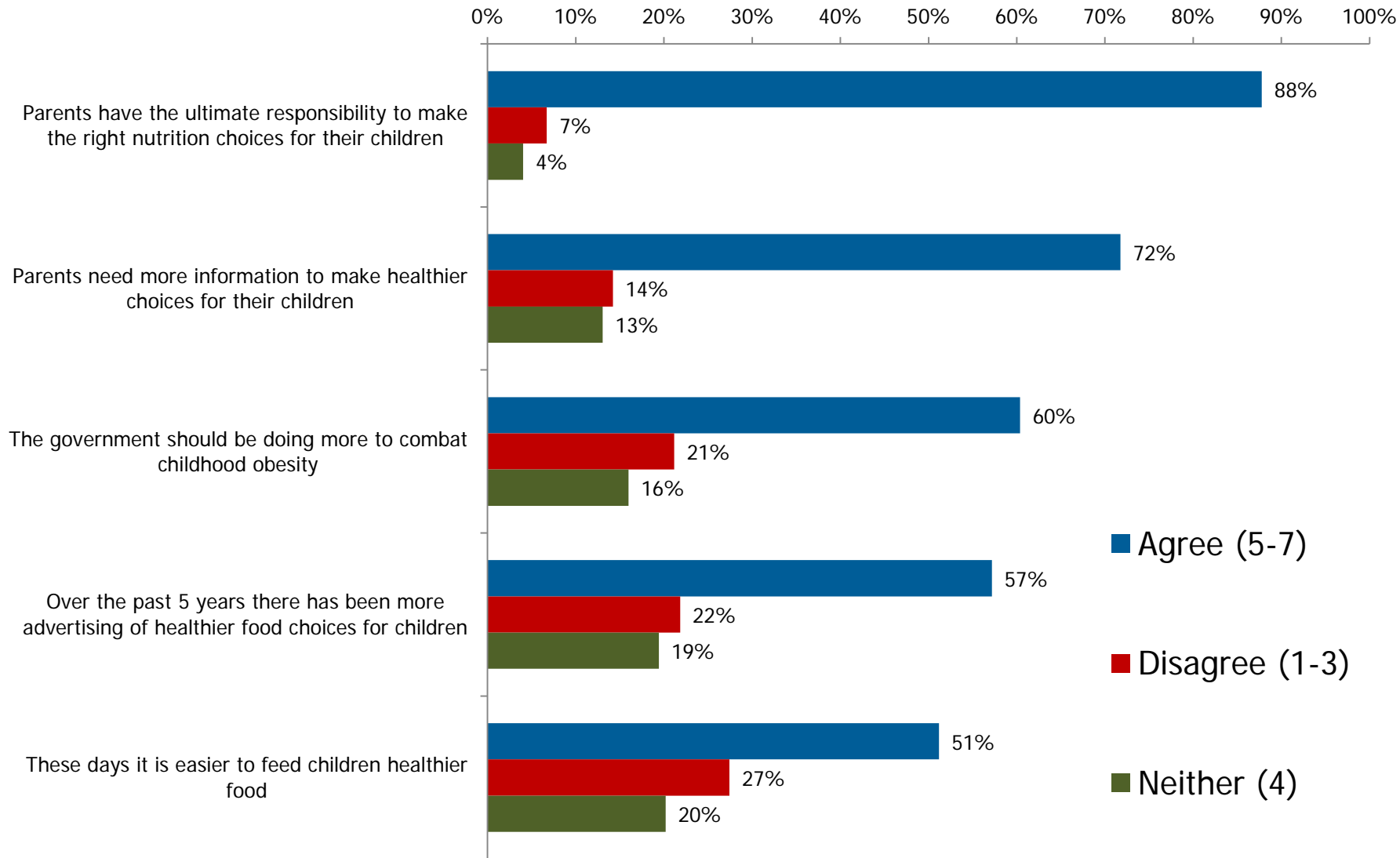


## What do you think is the major cause of childhood obesity?

- ❑ Nearly one third of respondents believe too much TV/Video game time is the major cause of childhood obesity.
- ❑ Almost the same number believe it is the product of parents and caregivers not teaching children healthy dietary or physical activity habits.
- ❑ Those 35 and older are much more likely to say too much TV/Video games as compared to younger respondents.
- ❑ Younger respondents (<35) are more likely to respond that healthier food is too expensive.



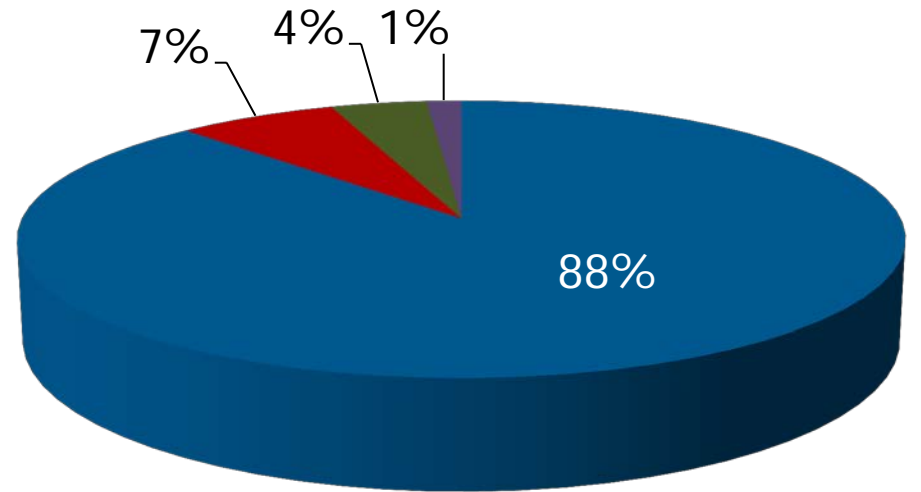
# Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



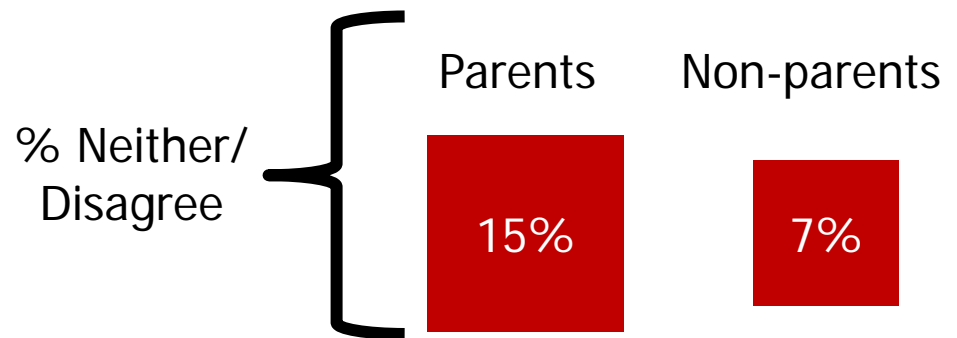


**Agree/Disagree with:**  
 Parents have the ultimate  
 responsibility to make the right  
 nutrition choices for their children

- ❑ This question had the strongest overall agreement from all respondents.
- ❑ The vast majority of respondents agree that ultimately it is the responsibility of parents to make the right nutrition choices for their children.
- ❑ Interestingly, it is those who have children who are the most likely to either disagree or take a neutral stance on this question.

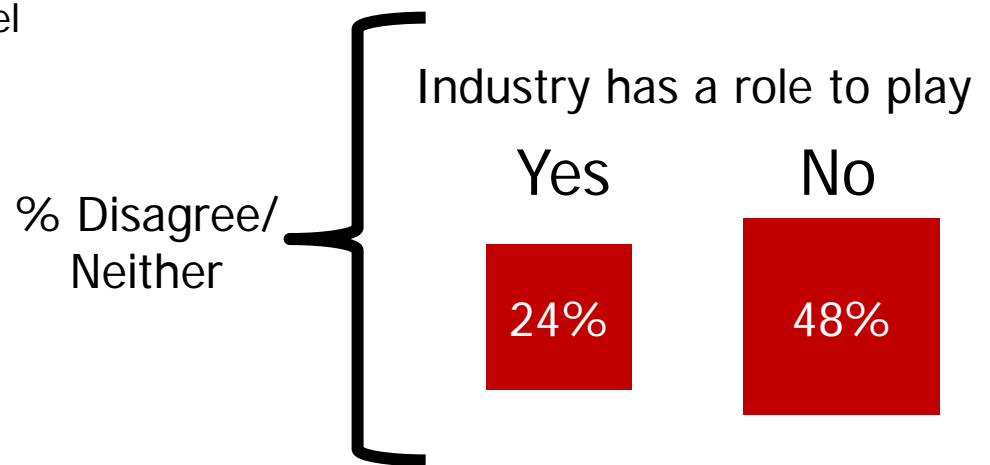
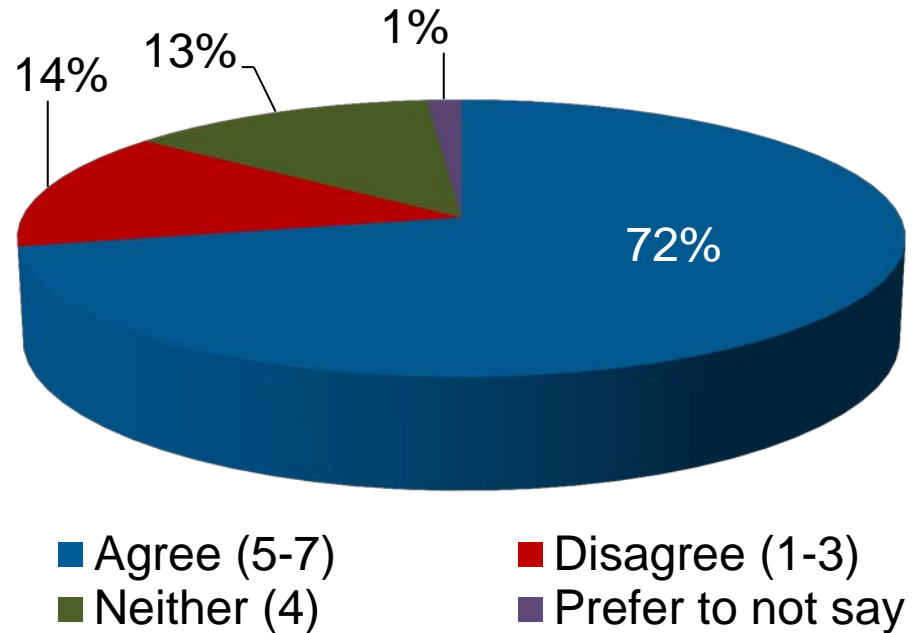


■ Agree (5-7)      ■ Disagree (1-3)  
 ■ Neither (4)      ■ Prefer to not say



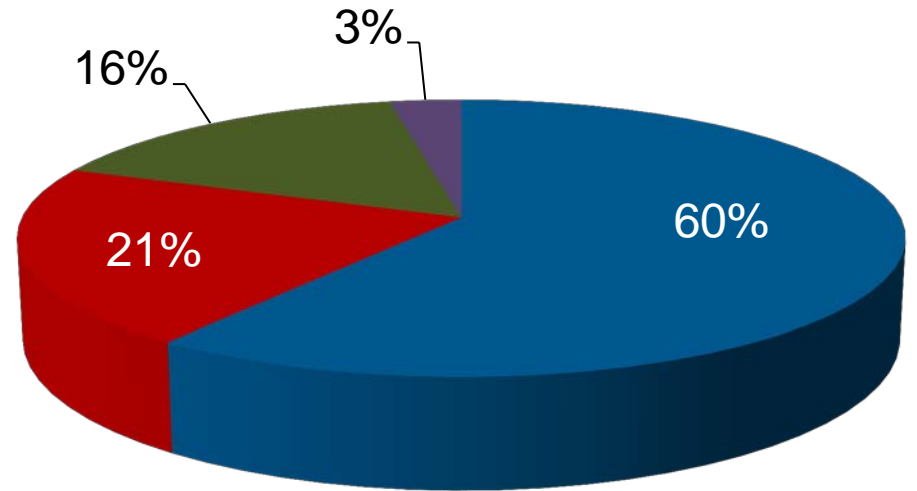
**Agree/Disagree with:**  
Parents need more information to make healthier choices for their children

- Next in order of strongest agreement, nearly three quarters of respondents agree that parents need more information to make healthier choices for their children.
- Those who do **not** feel the food and beverage industry have a role to play in childhood obesity show the highest level of disagreement.

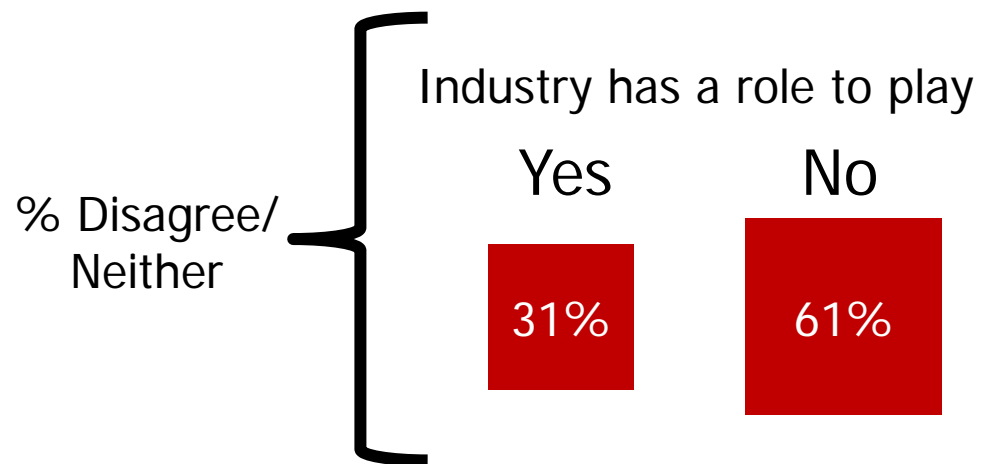


**Agree/Disagree with:**  
The government should be doing more to combat childhood obesity

- Most agree that the government should be doing more to help combat childhood obesity.
- Once again, those who disagree with the food and beverage industry having a role in combating childhood obesity are also the those who disagree the strongest that the government should be doing more.



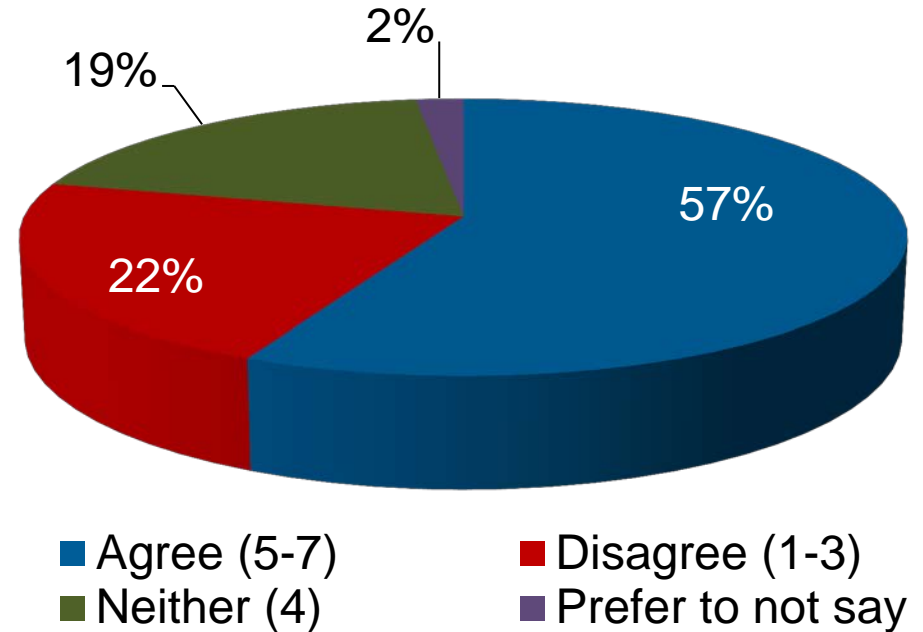
■ Agree (5-7)      ■ Disagree (1-3)  
■ Neither (4)      ■ Prefer to not say



## Agree/Disagree with:

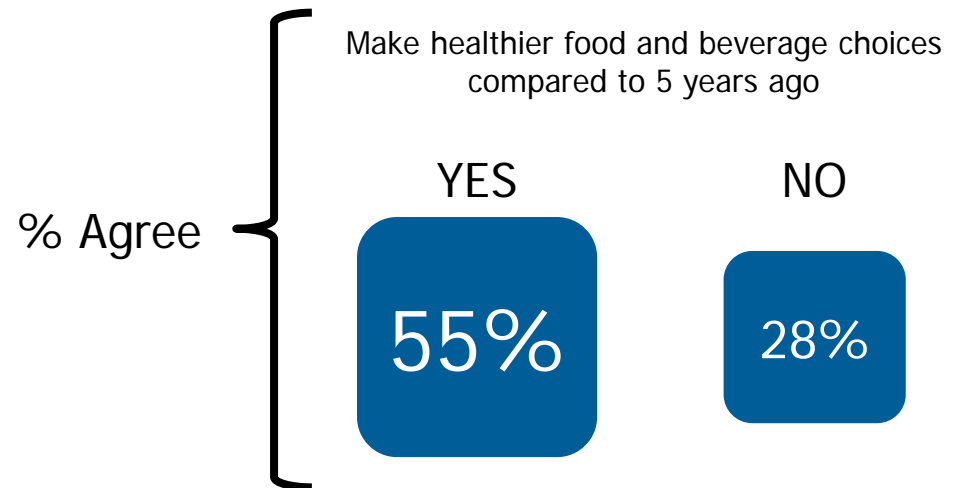
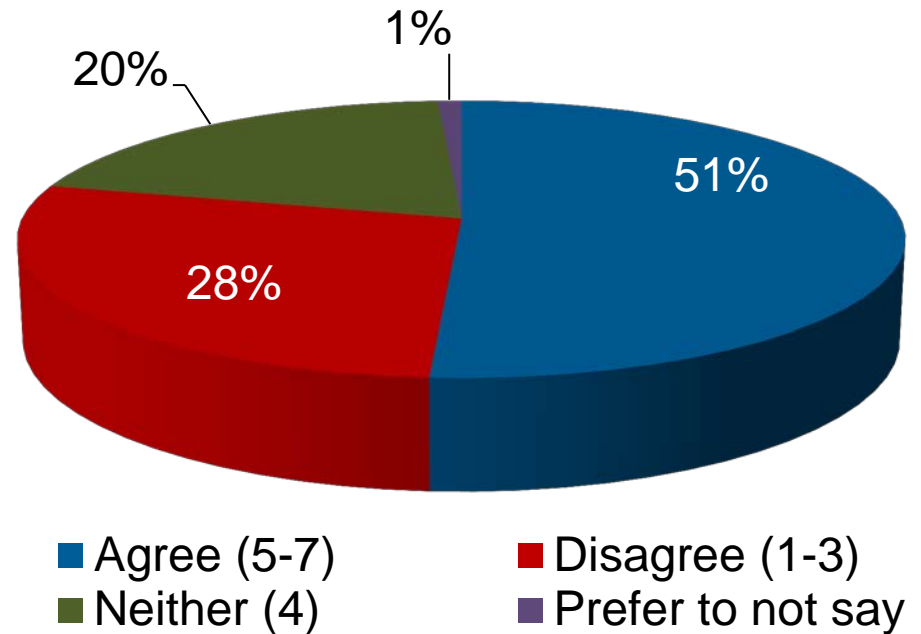
Over the past 5 years there has been more advertising of healthier food choices for children

- ☐ Slightly more than half of respondents agree that there has been more advertising of healthier food choices in the past 5 years.
- ☐ These perceptions are fairly consistent across all demographic and attitudinal indicators.



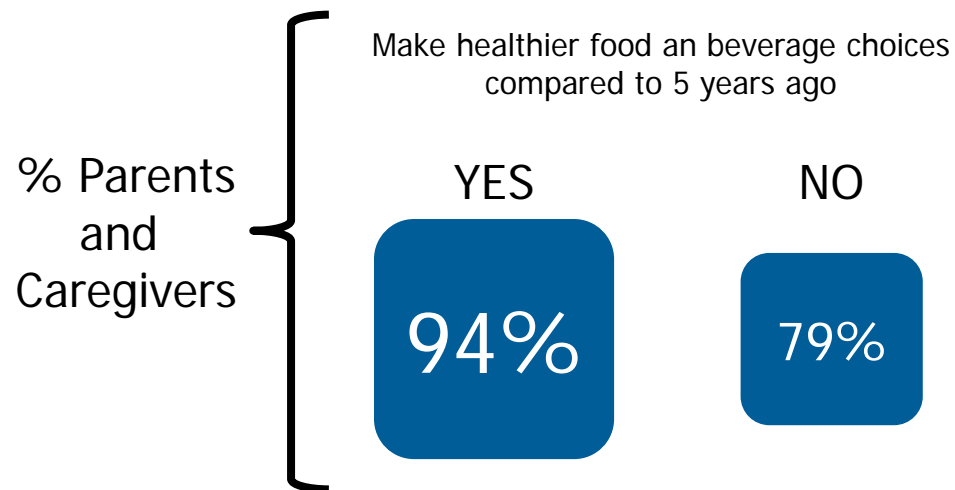
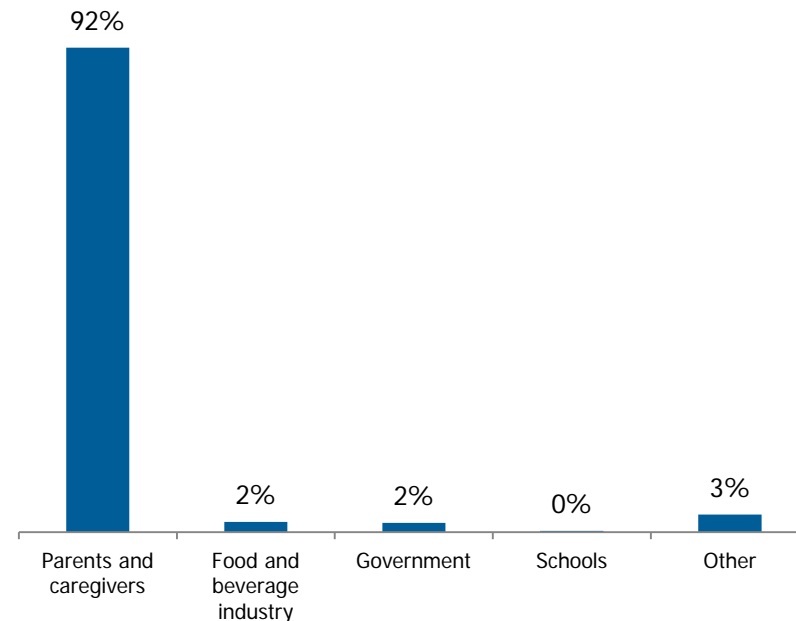
## Agree/Disagree with: These days it is easier to feed children healthier food

- ❑ The most divided of all the issues, just over half of all respondents agree it is easier to feed children healthier food these days.
- ❑ Those who have made an effort to feed their family healthier food and beverage choices, show much stronger agreement with this question as compared to those who have not.



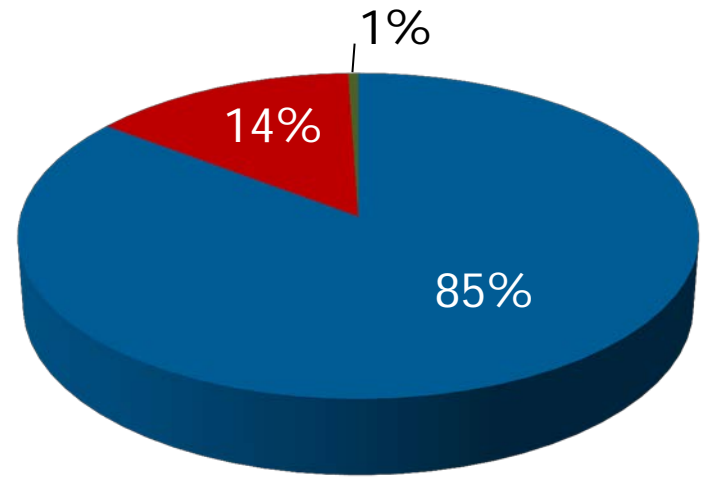
## When it comes right down to it, who has the ultimate responsibility to guide your child's eating choices?

- ❑ Nine in ten agree that ultimately the responsibility of guiding a child's eating choices is up to parents and caregivers.
- ❑ Those who have made efforts to choose healthier food and beverages for their families, were significantly more likely to choose parents and caregivers when compared to those who have not chosen healthier options.

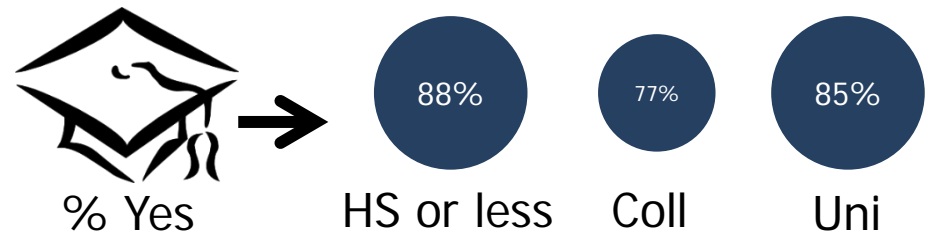
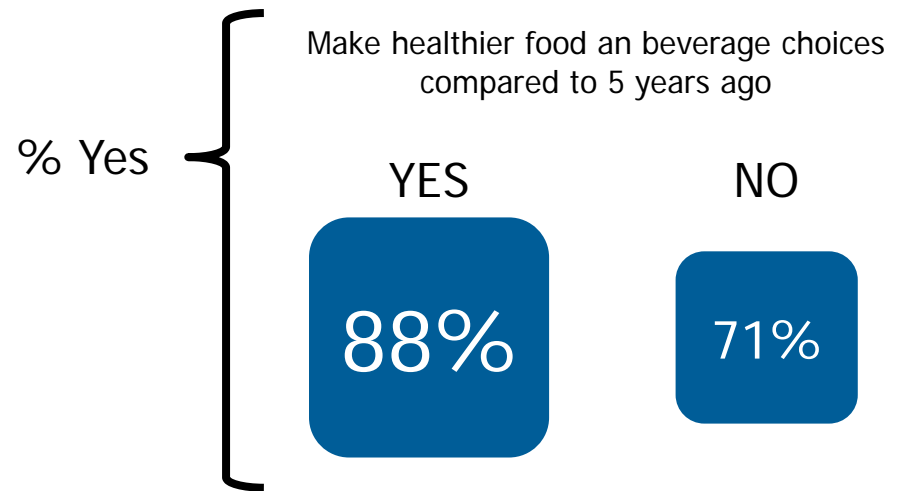


Do you think the food and beverage industry has a role to play in combatting childhood obesity?

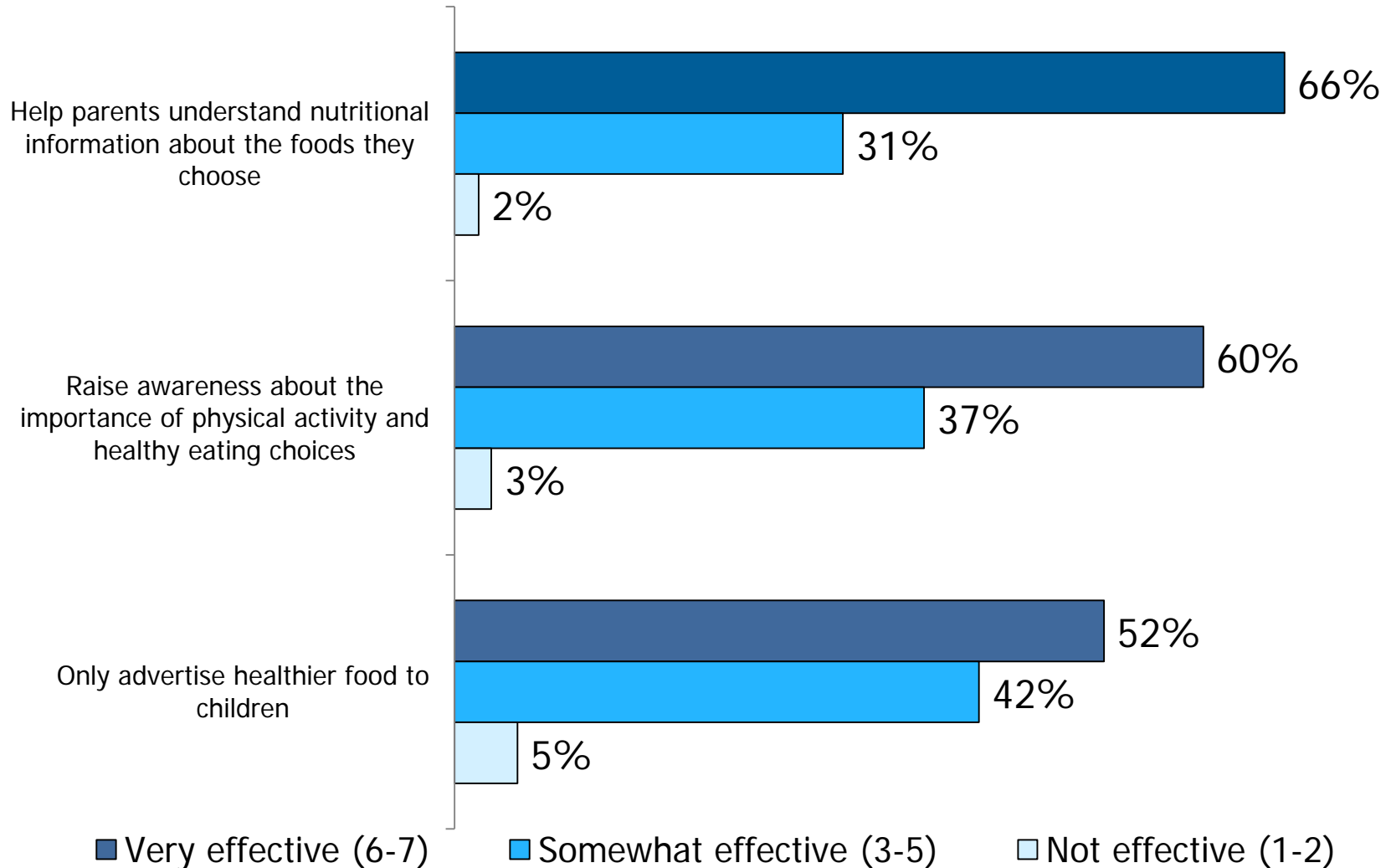
- Despite such a small portion of respondents selecting the food and beverage industry as being responsible for guiding children's eating choices, there is a strong sense that the industry has a role to play.
- Once again, those who make healthier food choices agree more frequently.
- There are interesting and significant difference in opinion based on level of education.



■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer to not say



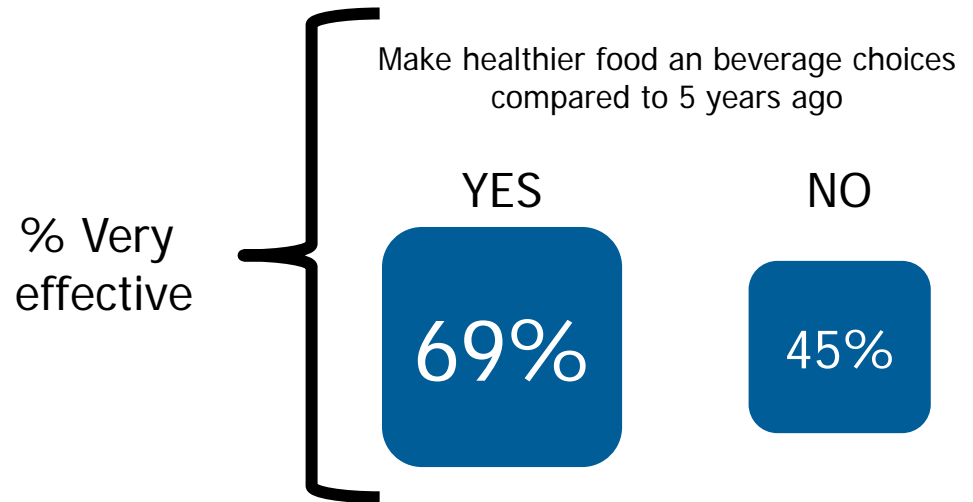
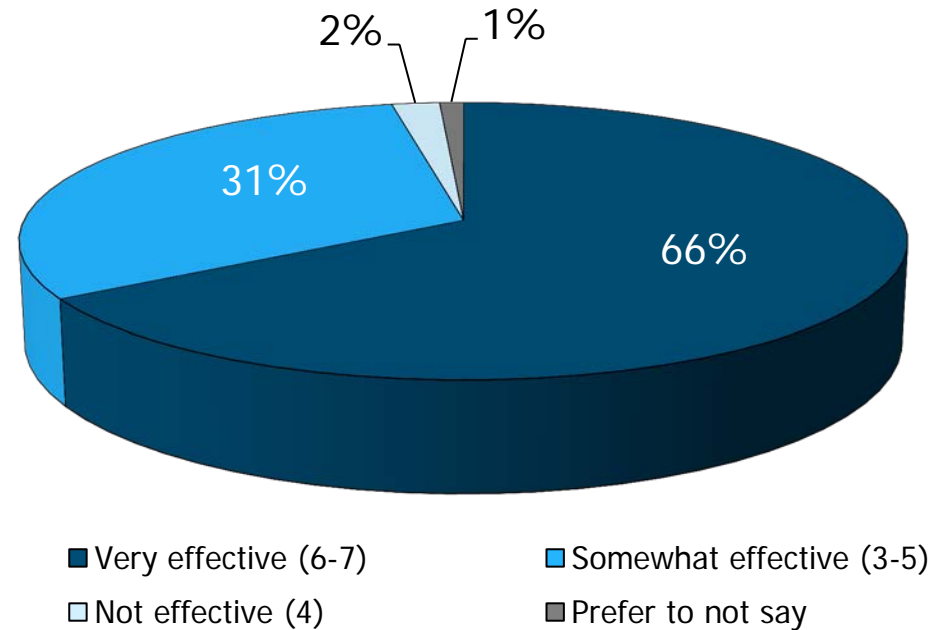
# How effective are each of the following measures the food and beverage industry can take to make the healthier choice the easy choice?





**How effective is:**  
 Help parents understand  
 nutritional information about the  
 foods they choose

- ❑ Considered the most effective option by two thirds of the respondents.
- ❑ Those who do not make healthier food choices are the least enthusiastic when ranking the effectiveness of helping parents understand nutritional information.

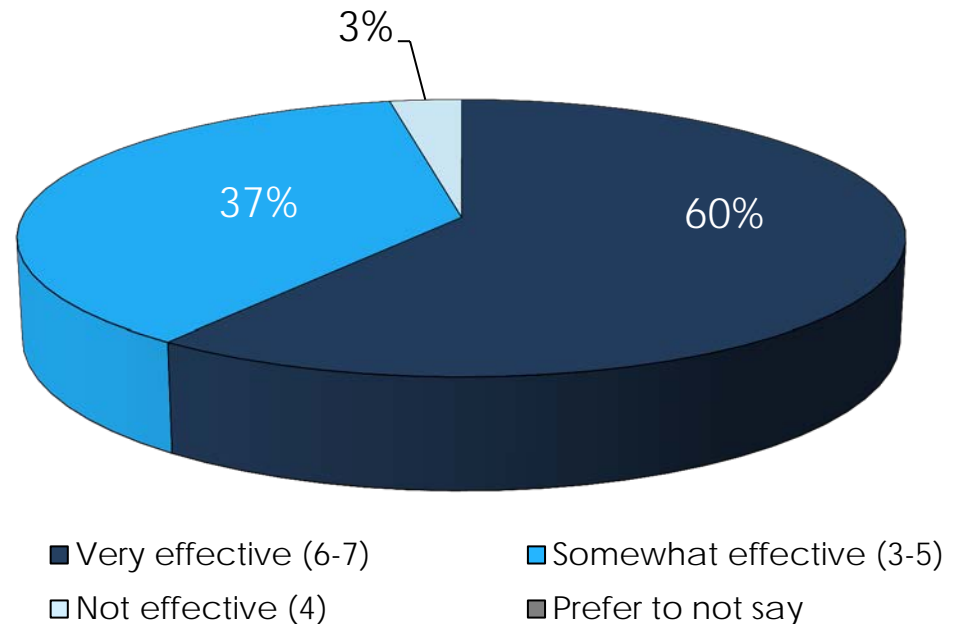


\*Only those who said "yes – the food and beverage industry as a role"

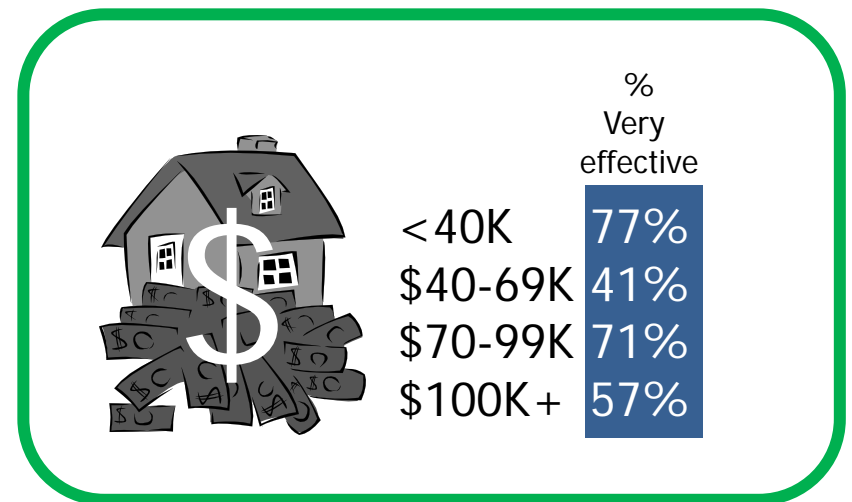
## How effective is:

Raise awareness about the importance of physical activity and healthy eating choices

- ❑ Six in ten respondents believe this is a very effective method.
- ❑ Respondents with a low household income (<\$40K) showed the most support for this initiative.



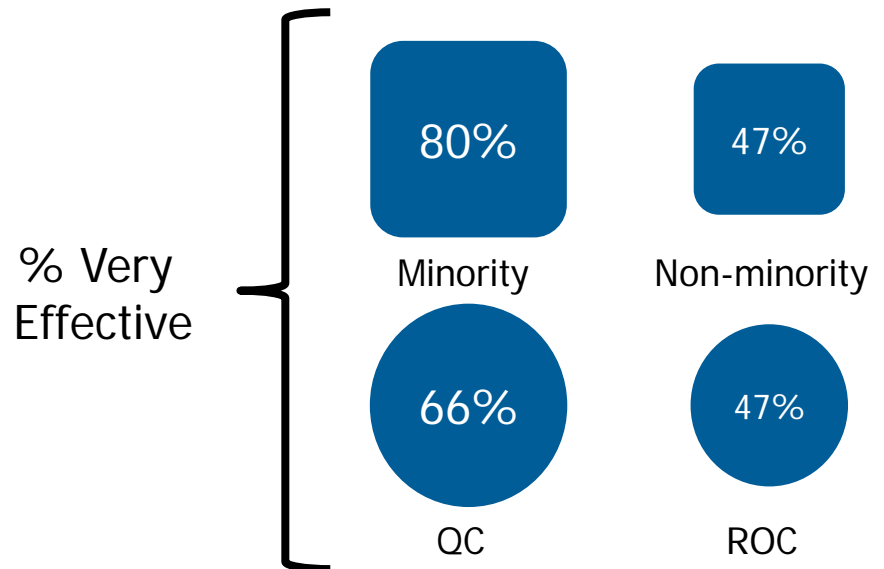
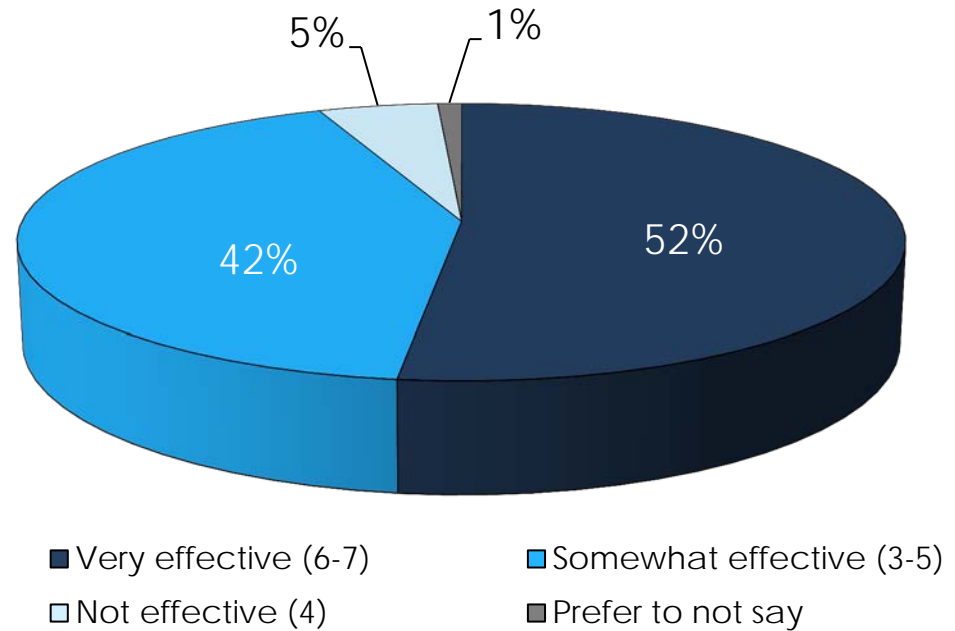
■ Very effective (6-7)      ■ Somewhat effective (3-5)  
□ Not effective (4)      ■ Prefer to not say



\*Only those who said "yes – the food and beverage industry as a role"

**How effective is:  
Only advertise healthier food to children.**

- While this is the option respondents were least enthusiastic about, it is notable that over half of rated this initiative as very effective.
- Those who identified themselves as being part of a minority group felt much more strongly that this would be very effective.
- Quebec respondents felt markedly stronger that this would be an effective method as compared to the rest of Canada (ROC).



\*Only those who said "yes – the food and beverage industry as a role"

# Conclusions

- ❑ Canadians' awareness of the need to purchase healthier food and beverages for their family is increasing over time.
- ❑ Those already making efforts find eating healthier easier.
- ❑ Canadians believe it is the responsibility of parents and caregivers first and foremost to choose healthy eating options for children, however, there is broad consensus that many factors have a role to play.
- ❑ Information is king. Canadians feel the better informed they are about nutritional information the easier it is to make healthier choices.

