
Sweet Potatoes Research

August 2019



Methodology

2 part research, involving quantitative and qualitative elements

Online survey

- 13-15 minute questionnaire
- Fieldwork timings 26th - 31st July 2019

Online forum

- 13 tasks
- Fieldwork timings 9th - 13th August 2019



Sample

Quantitative research

A sample of **n=1200** recruited from the Edentify panel, Cafestudy.

Sample profile:

- All grocery buyers
- Non-rejectors of sweet potatoes
- All Australia, age 18+

Qualitative research

32 forum participants recruited from the Edentify panel, Cafestudy.

Sample profile:

- All to be grocery buyers
- Must do at least some of the cooking in household
- Must have bought sweet potatoes in the past month

**To understand the current position of sweet potatoes,
in terms of usage and attitudes**

**To identify consumer segments to drive growth in
sweet potato consumption**

**To evaluate the effectiveness of sweet potato
marketing and communications**





Agenda

1

Shopping and Cooking

2

**Usage, Perceptions, and
Attitudes**

3

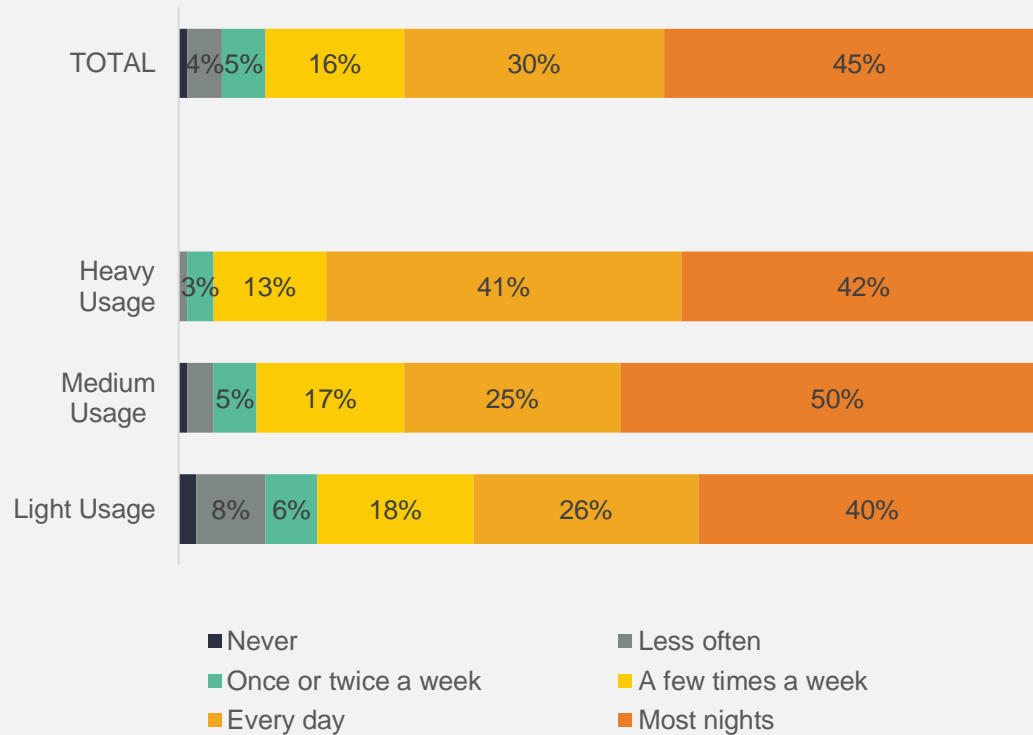
**Advertising and
Communications**



Shopping and Cooking

The majority cook at least a few times a week

FREQUENCY OF COOKING



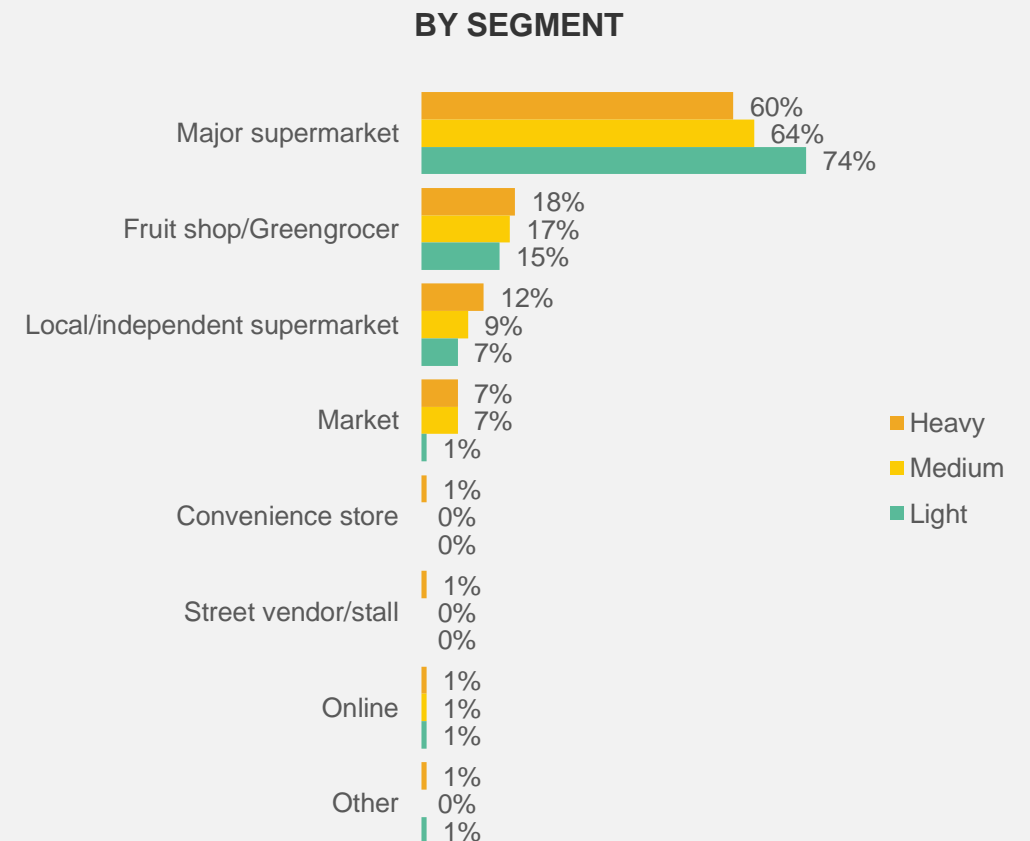
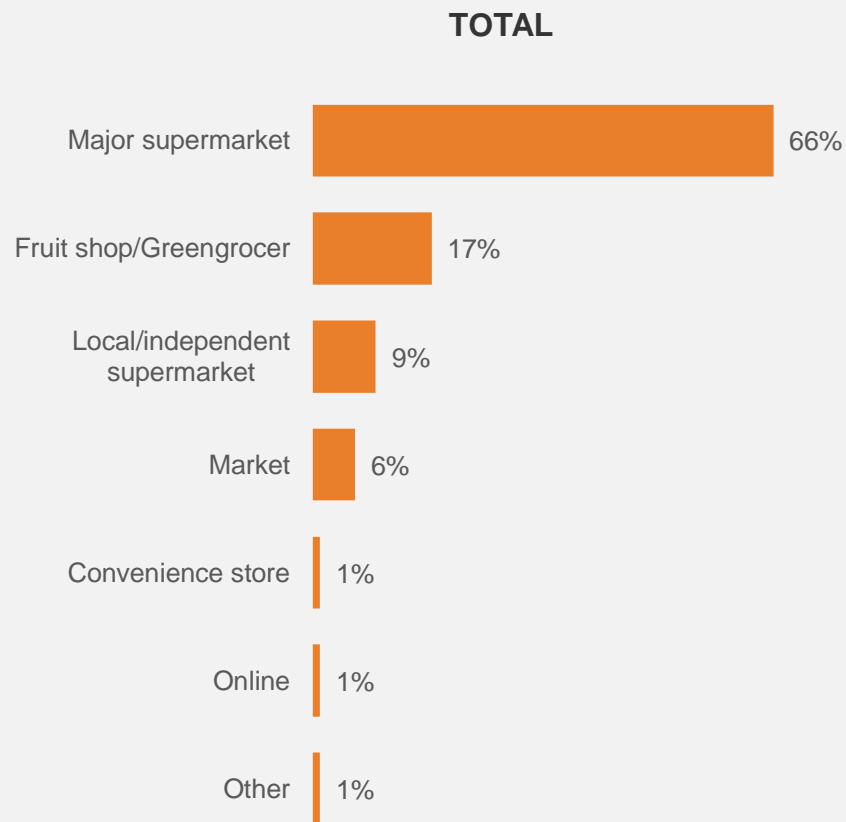
WHO DOES MOST OF THE COOKING



Q1. How often do you cook dinner in your household? Q2. Who does most of the cooking in your household?
 Base: total n=1200, heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

Major supermarkets are the main source of fruit and vegetables

Heavier users of sweet potato are more likely to shop at smaller outlets



For some, cooking is a pleasure, almost a personal interest

For others, it's a chore and they are stuck on the same old recipes

KEEN COOKS

“

I'm an **experimental cook** as I will try various different menu types any time I see or hear of a new idea that appeals to me.

“

Cooking is something I enjoy and I am **not afraid to experiment** without always following what is in the recipe book.

“

I **consider myself a great cook**, not Masterchef level but nearly. Cooking is never a chore for me. It's done out of love of food and company that eats it. To me, cooking is relaxing, a chance to show off my creativity.

UNINSPIRED COOKS

“

I cook because we have to eat. I **don't hate it** but as long as it doesn't kill us I'm happy.

“

I would say I have about a dozen meals that I routinely cook for my family and several of them are cooked for dinner on the same night each week.

“

I am a **mediocre** cook. I like certain foods and I tend to cook them over and over again.

Both groups need cooking inspiration, but in different ways

Good cooks need stretching, reluctant cooks, limited by time and skill level, need ideas for making life easier

Most meals are simple, everyday cooking



vettsies

Pork balls, sweet potato, potato and broccoli



doc46

I like to cook a nice Steak!



Ursula 31654600

I make a lot of pasta bakes because it is so simple and you can really switch up the ingredients and sauces. It is al very delicious and a great comfort food in winter.



Jenny88

Chicken and sweet potato curry. This a little different than our usual as it's got chicken in it but we do cook it quite often.



Beth31655080

I make stir-fry regularly. It's delicious, quick and relatively healthy. Inside are Tofu, veggies and noodles. I also substitute noodles for rice. The sauce is made with garlic, ginger, chilli, soy sauce and oyster sauce

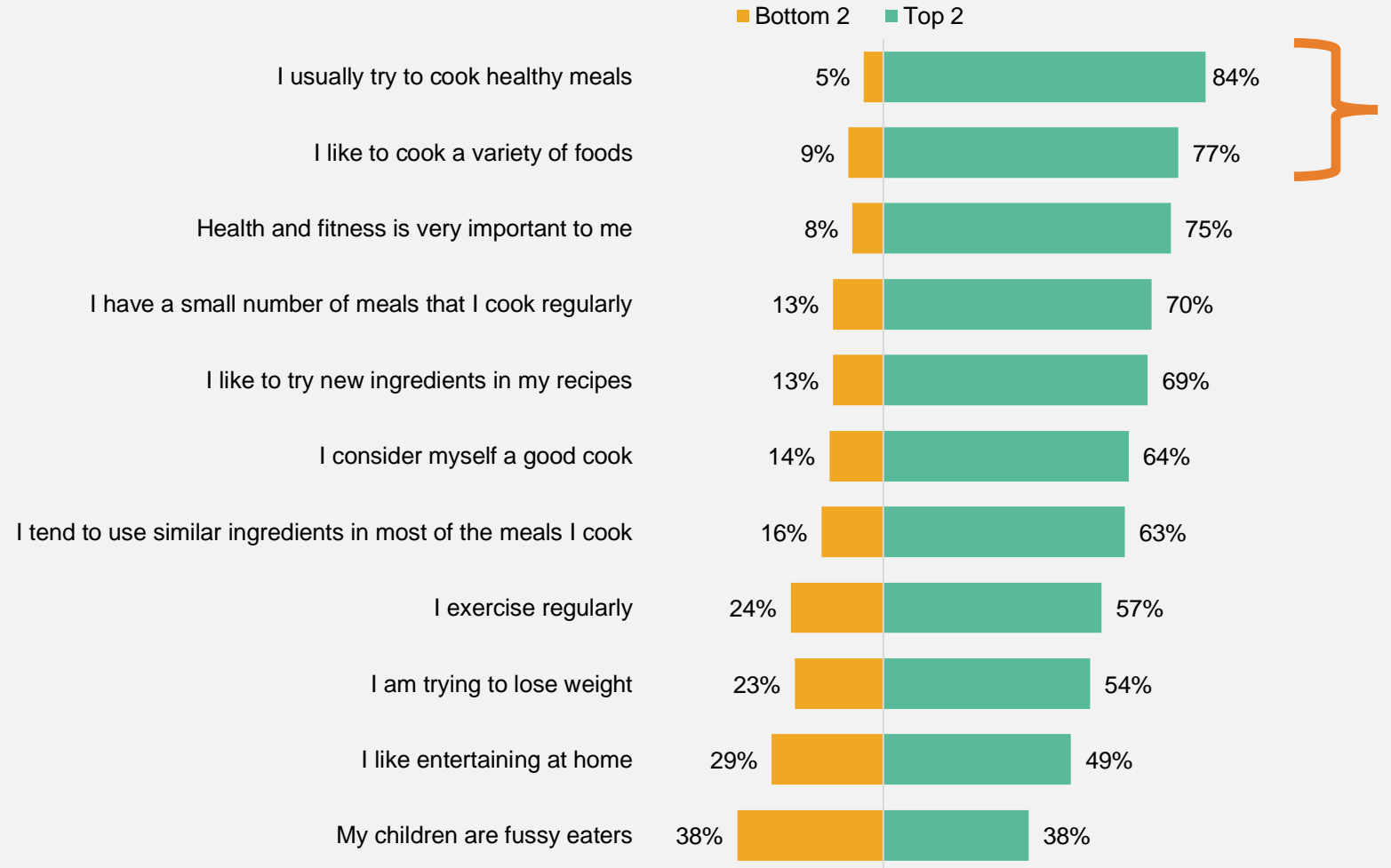


There are lots of opportunities to incorporate sweet potato!

The two most important attitudes are **healthy foods,** and a **variety of meals**

Doing both can be a real challenge for many

ATTITUDES TO COOKING



Planning and routine play a big role in deciding what to cook



What's already in the fridge?

What do my family want?

What's on special at the supermarket?

What's in season?

**Dinner is not a spur of the moment decision -
most people plan ahead**

Particularly during the week, busy people need to make sure they have the ingredients they need in advance

Meal planning is an important step towards managing this

“

I plan several days of meals ahead of time then buy fresh produce twice a week. Sweet potatoes will be part of this shop.

“

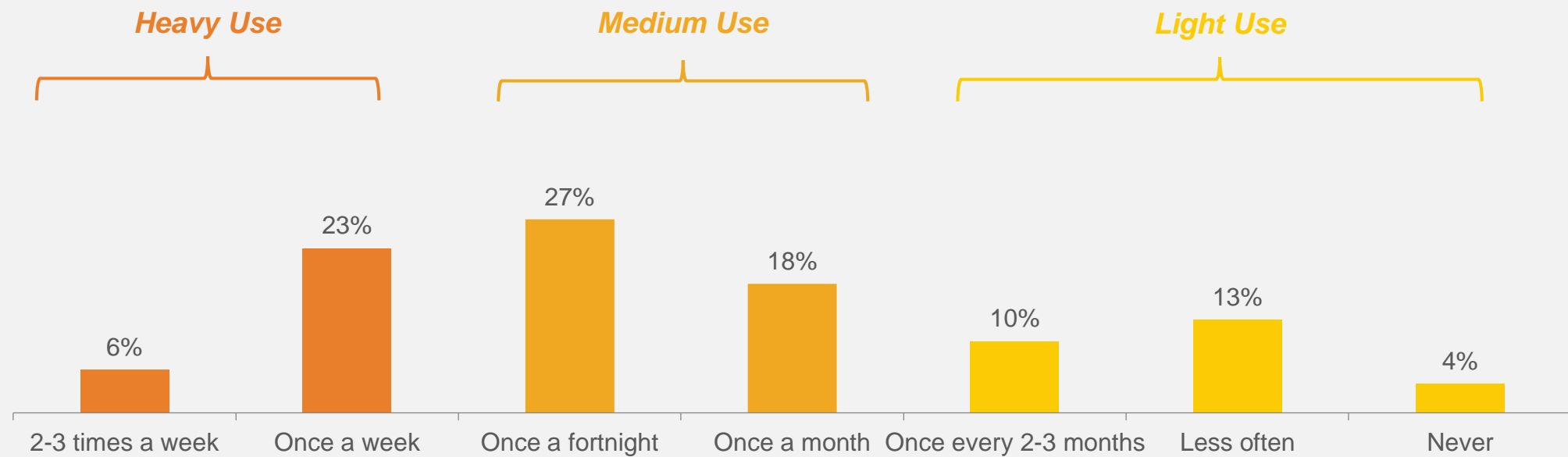
I enjoy the process of planning the menu for the week, creating a shopping list and going to the supermarket to shop and also obtain inspiration.

“

I decide on what to cook usually a few days in advance and make sure I have the ingredients at home.

Sweet potatoes need to be on the shopping list at the beginning of the week
This is when purchase decisions are made

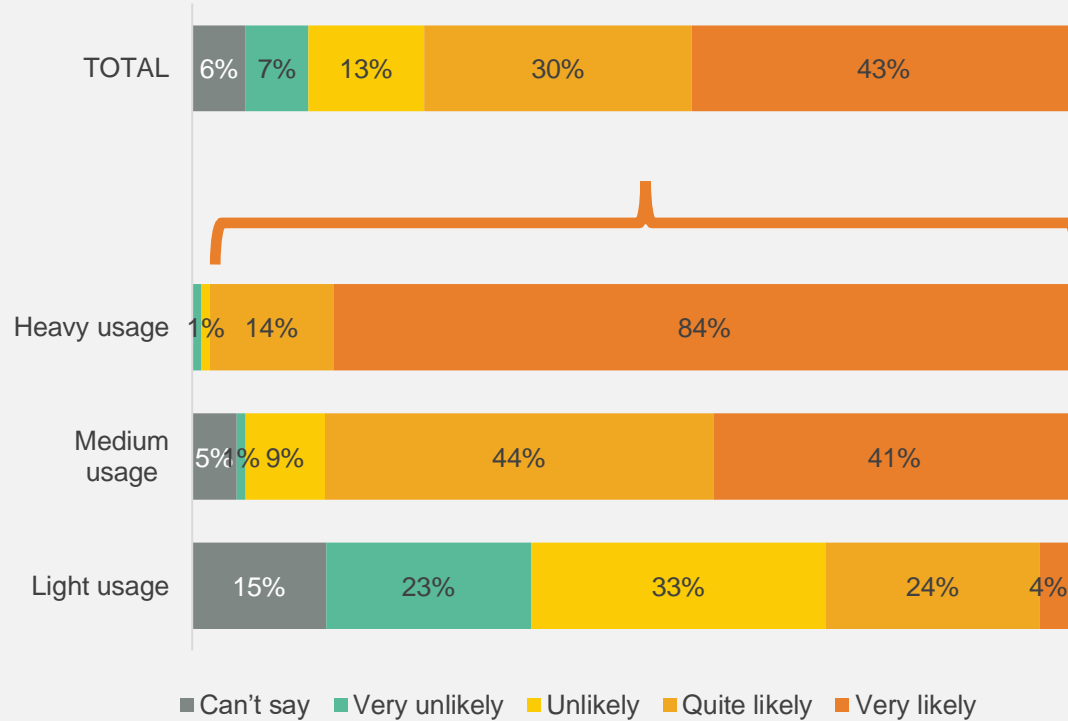
The best opportunity lies with increasing purchase and usage among light users



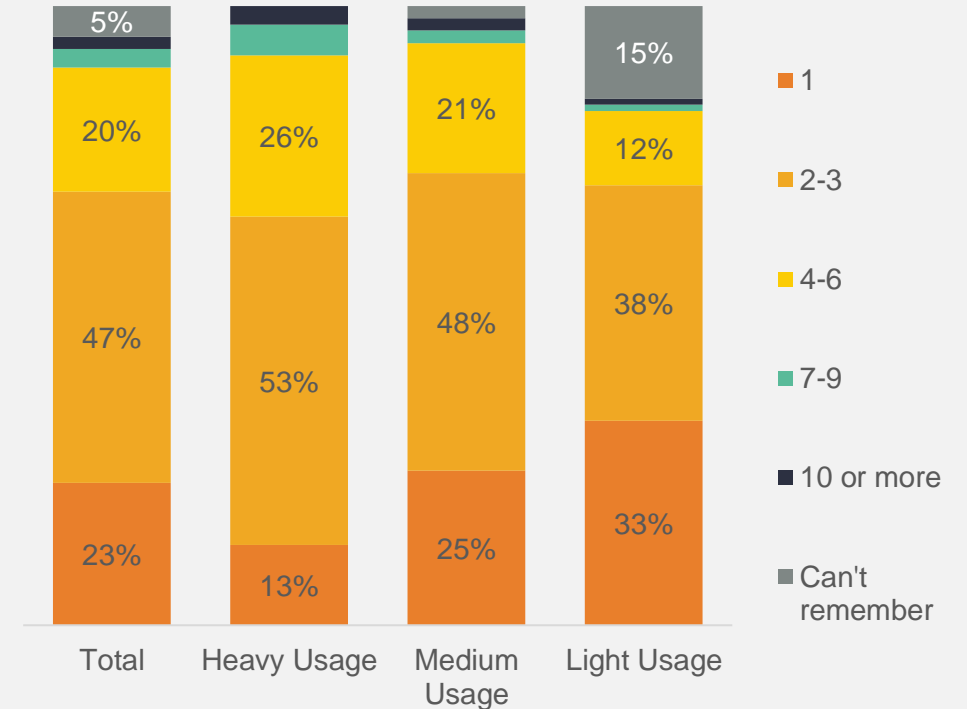
There is little scope to increase purchase amongst heavy users

Potential to drive growth among light and medium users

LIKELIHOOD OF BUYING IN NEXT 2 WEEKS



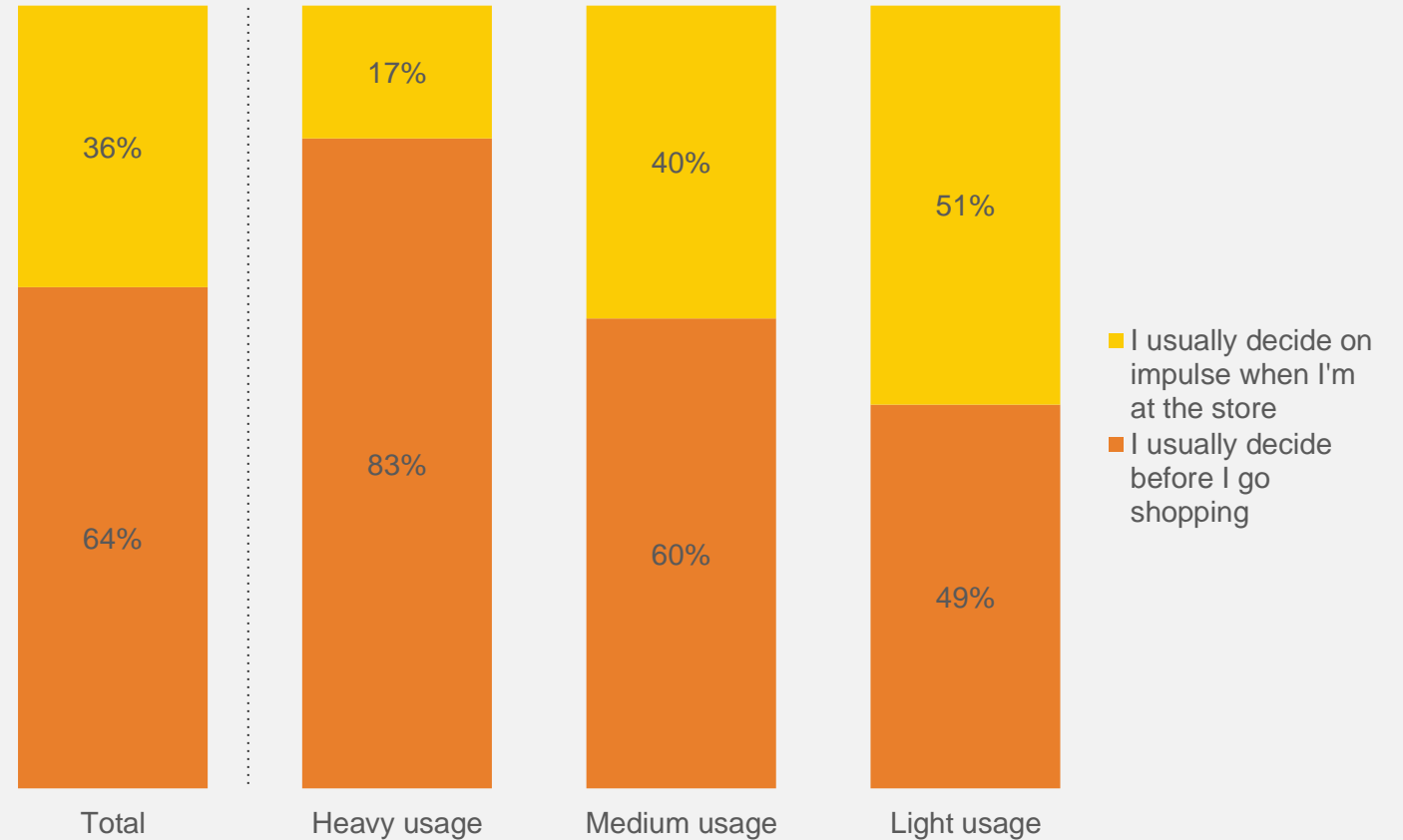
NUMBER PURCHASED



Sweet potatoes are a staple, planned purchase for regular users

Getting onto the shopping list is critical to encourage lighter users to buy more regularly

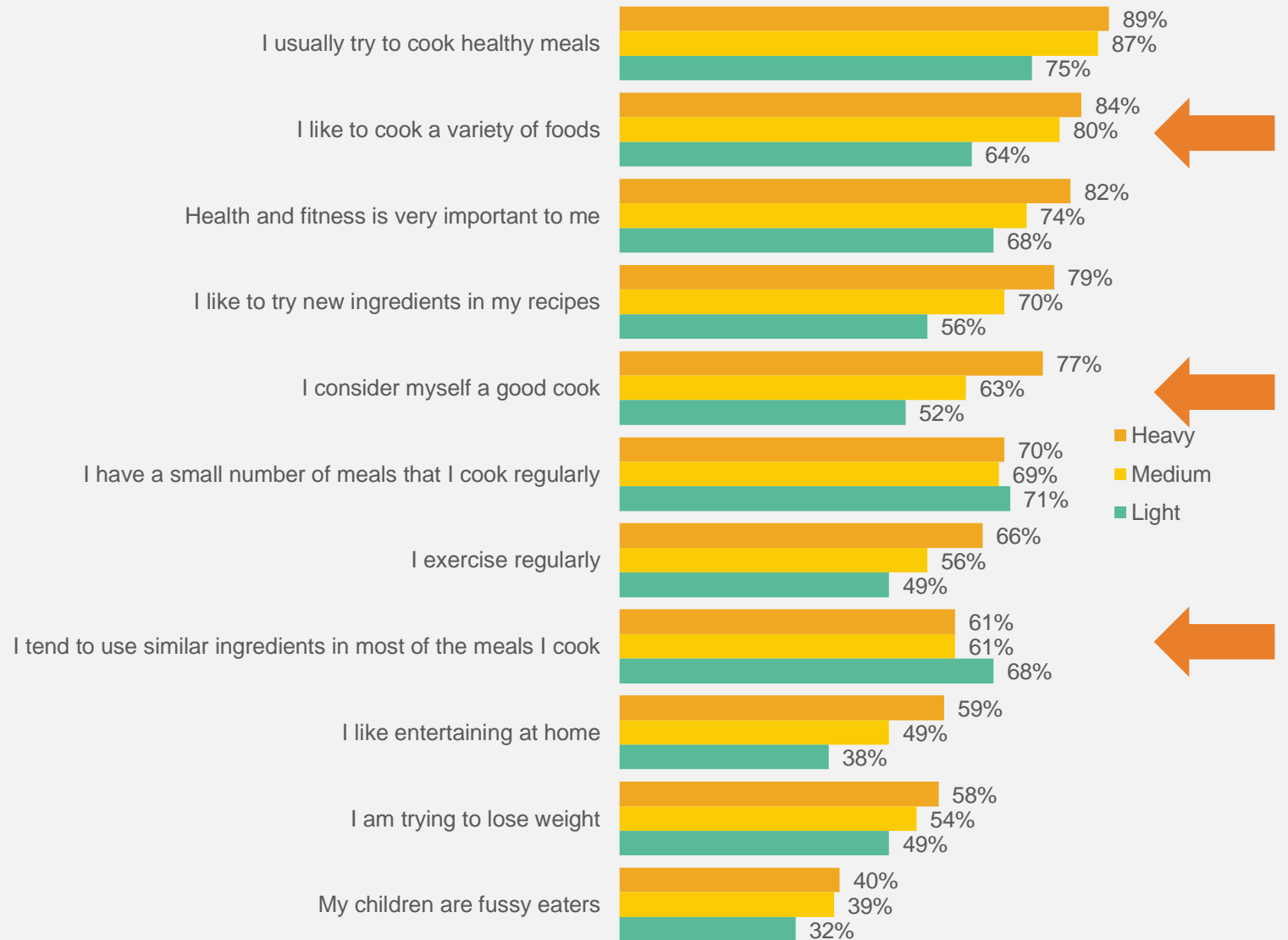
PLANNED VS IMPULSE PURCHASE



Light users are less confident cooks

An opportunity to show them how sweet potatoes can help them produce better meals, without needing to be an expert chef

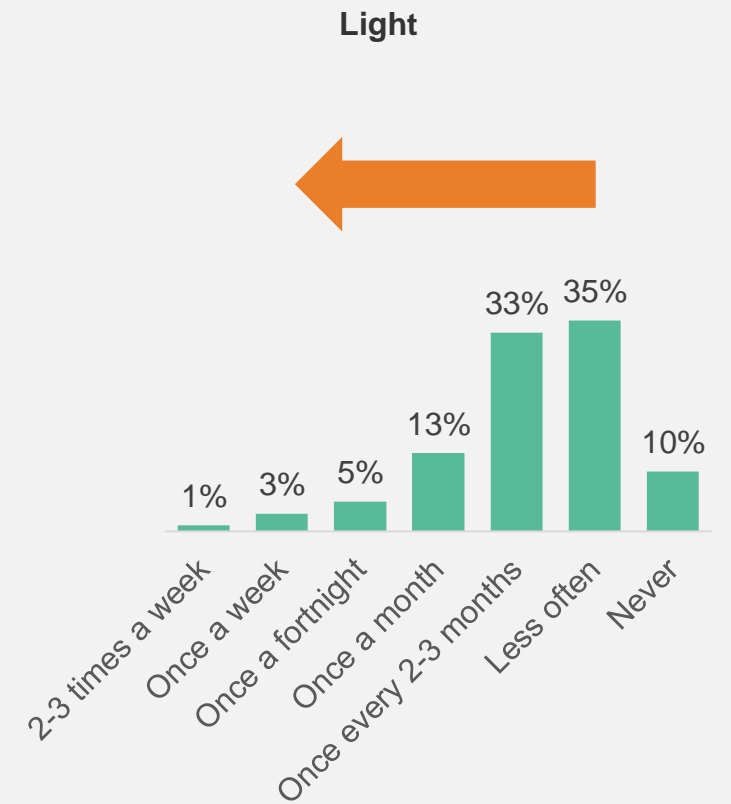
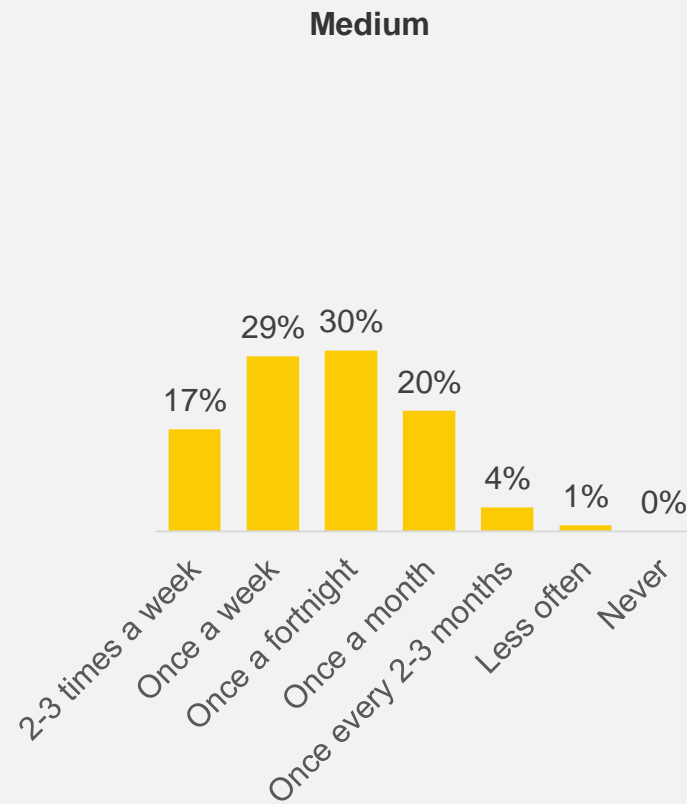
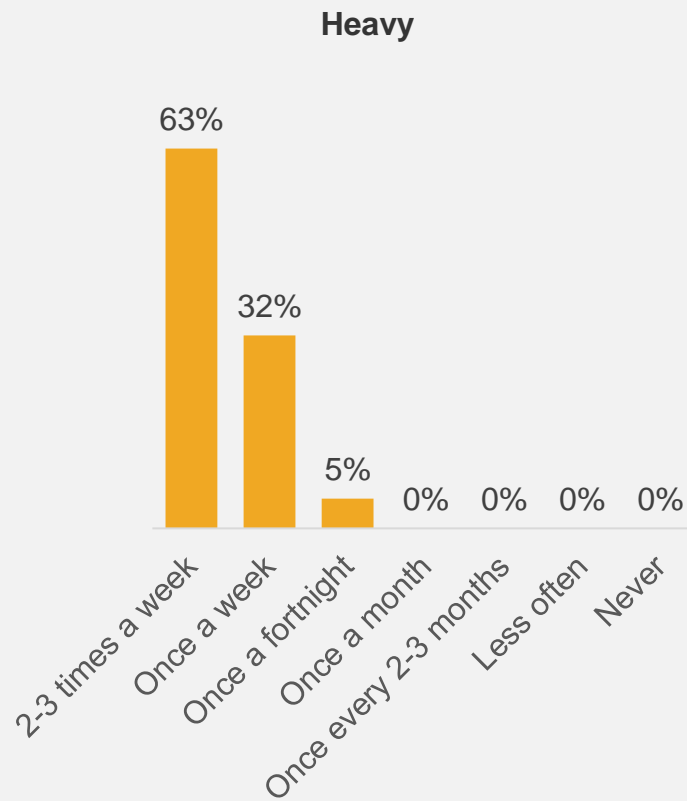
ATTITUDES TO COOKING - TOP 2 BOX BY SEGMENT



Q3. How much do you agree with each of the following statements? Base: heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

A small increase in frequency among lighter users will lead to a significant increase in sales

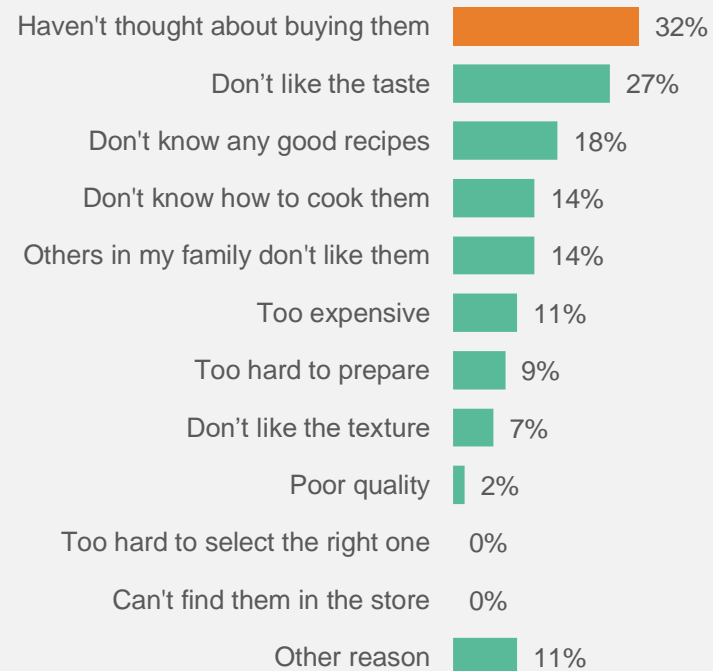
FREQUENCY OF COOKING OR EATING SWEET POTATOES



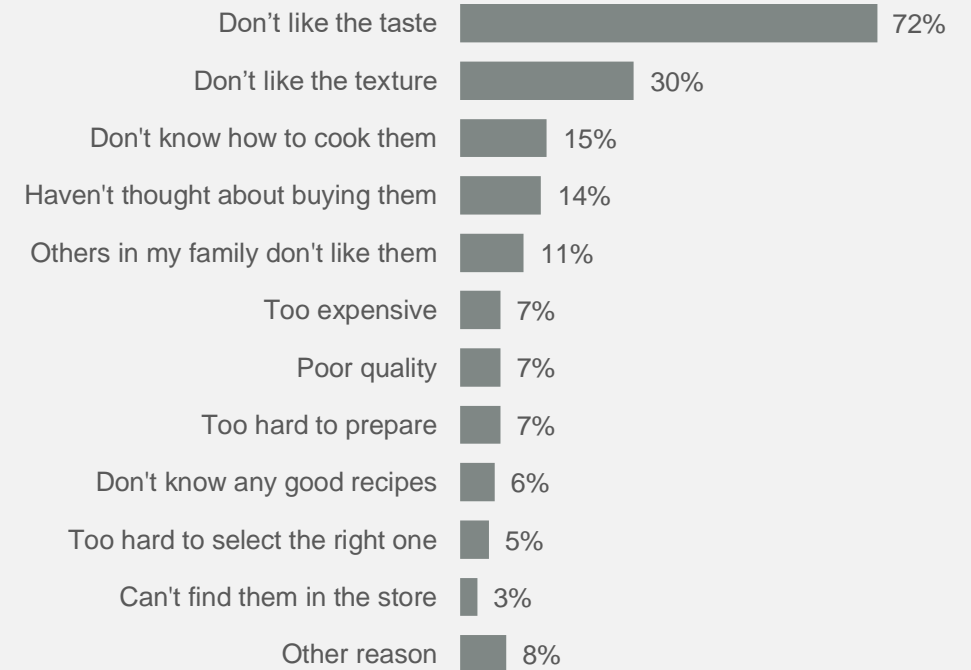
For many who don't buy often, sweet potatoes are simply not **salient**

While rejectors have a genuine dislike, non-rejectors can be brought in simply by bringing sweet potatoes to the top of mind

NON-PURCHASERS



OUTRIGHT REJECTORS

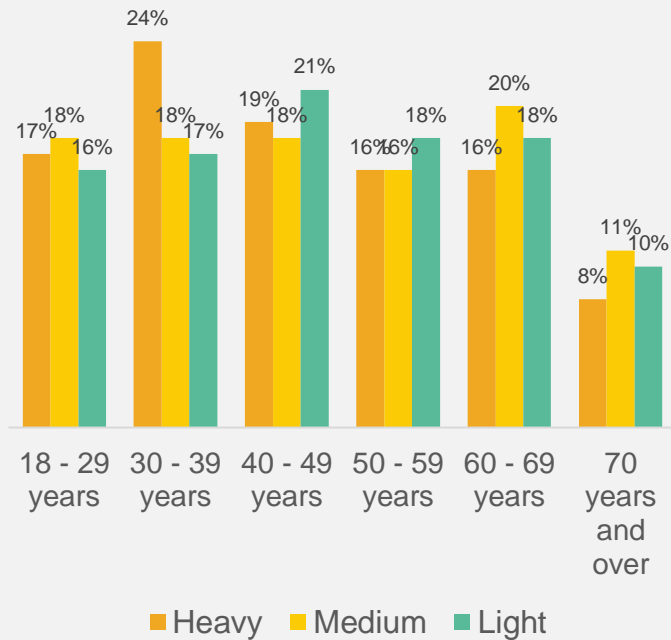


Sweet potatoes aren't
top of mind

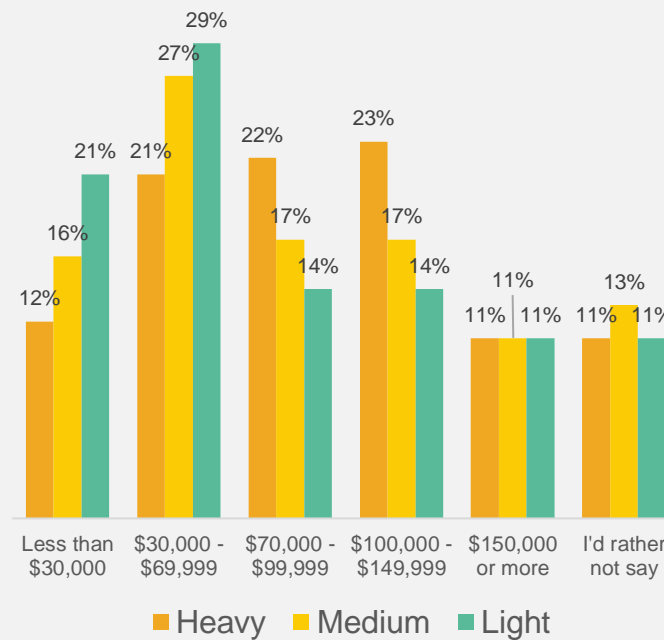
We need to get them onto the shopping
list of **medium** and **light** users

Light users are more likely to be single and low-middle income

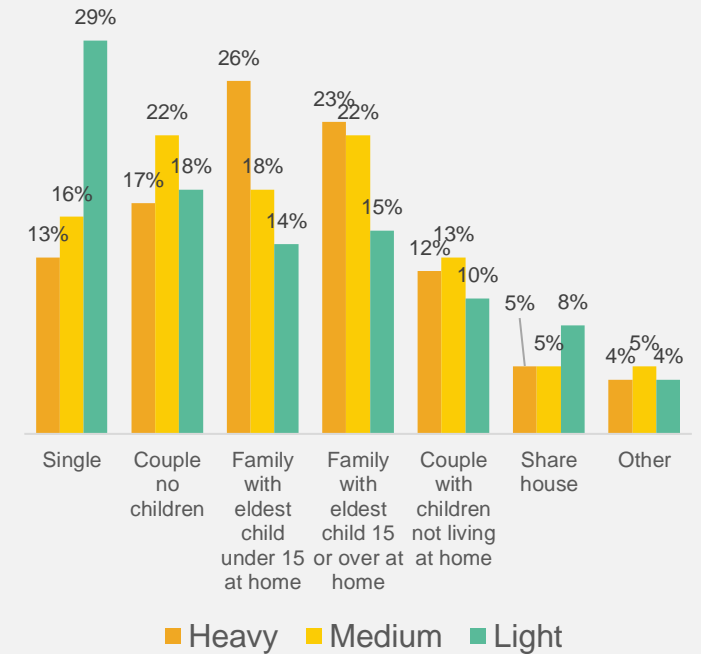
AGE



HH INCOME



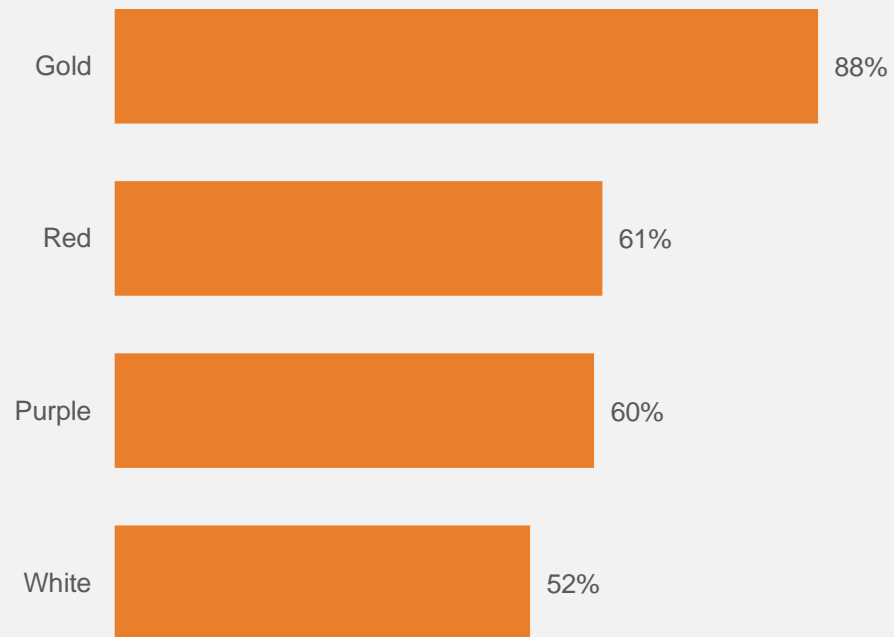
HH STRUCTURE



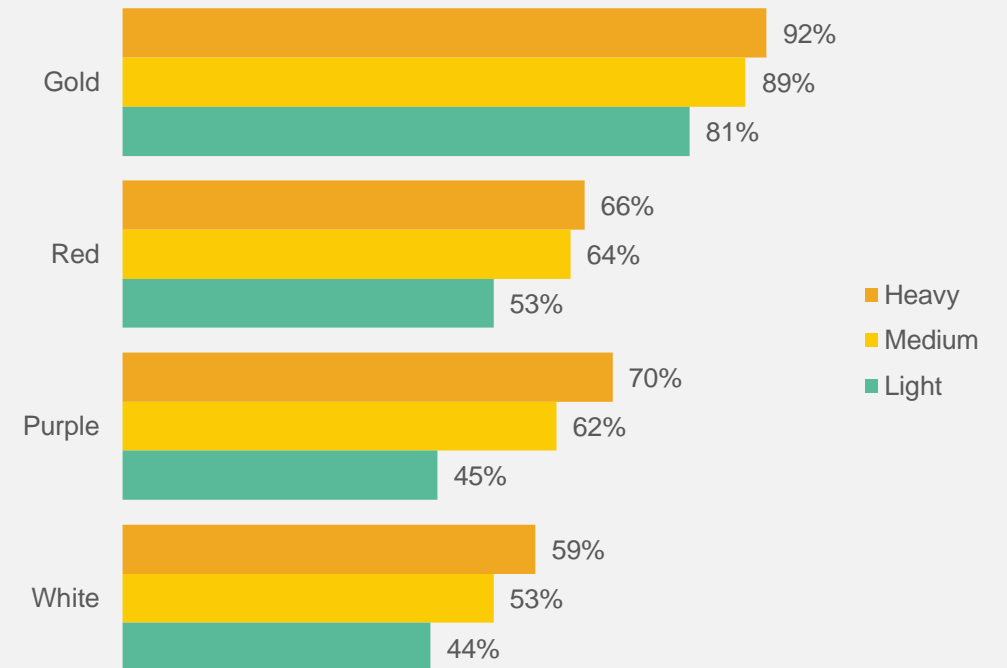
While gold dominates, there is some recognition of all varieties



TOTAL



BY SEGMENT



Lesser known varieties are not as popular

Many who do know these, do not like them – better to keep the focus on **gold**



“

I only buy gold sweet potato, I **don't really like the flavor of white or purple.**

“

To be totally honest I have never had any problems with sweet potato except **when I cooked the purple one it was extremely bland** so I have never used this one since. Love my orange sweet potato and I have never tried the white sweet potato

“

I once bought a sweet potato that did not have orange flesh (I think it was a paler variety) and **I did not love the flavor.** Missed the sweetness.

“

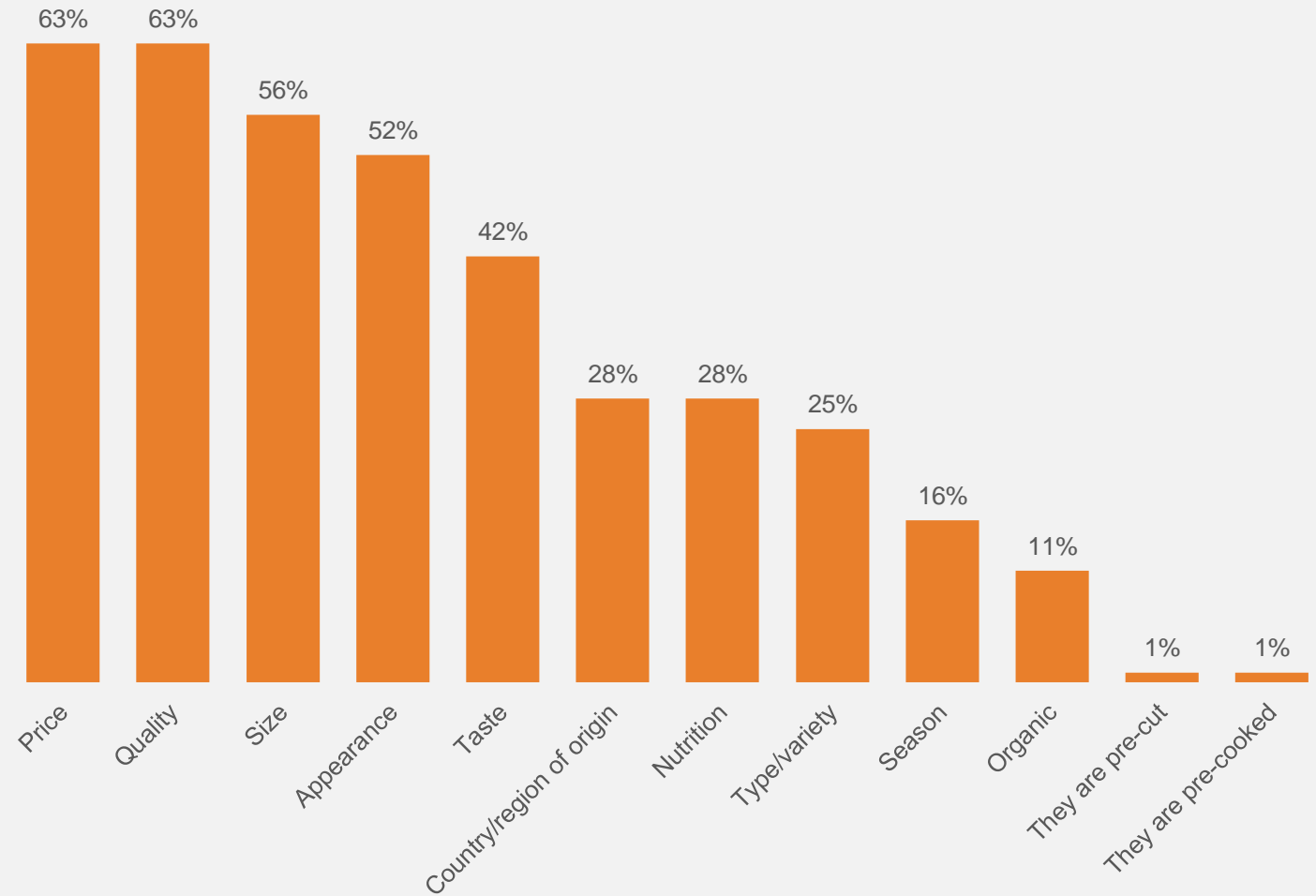
I only buy the orange ones, not keen on the taste of the others

When it comes to choosing sweet potatoes, most are really just after the basics

Good quality at a reasonable price

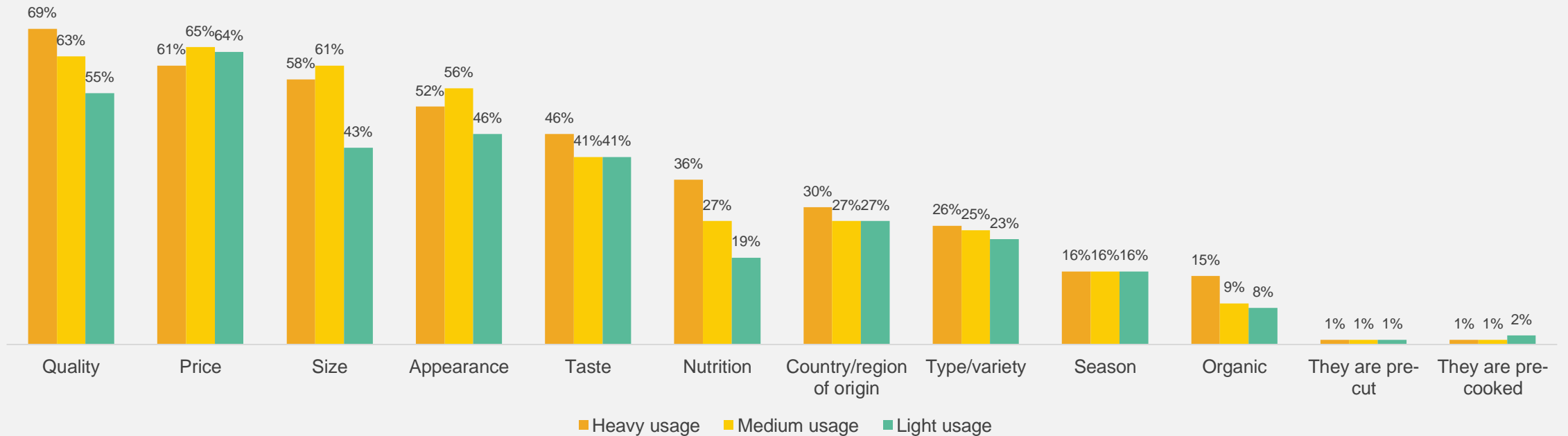
There is little demand for pre-prepared.

IMPORTANT FEATURES WHEN PURCHASEING SWEET POTATOES



Price is more of an issue for non-regular users

IMPORTANT FEATURES - BY SEGMENT

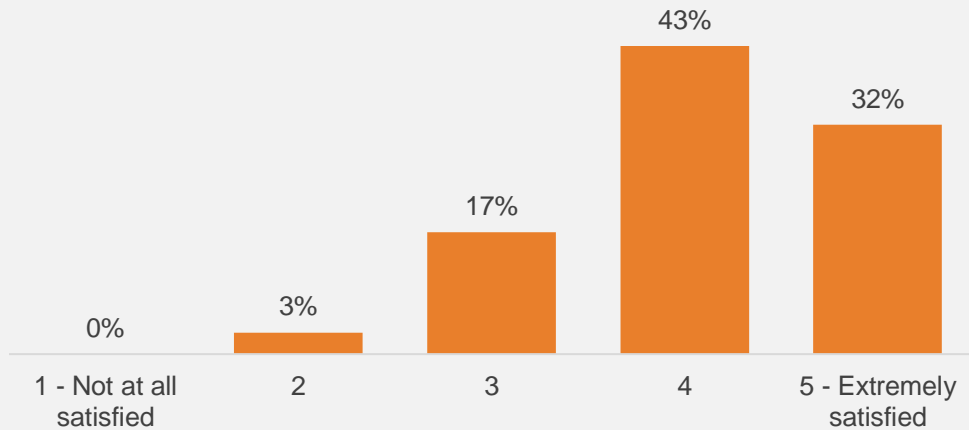


Q12. When purchasing sweet potatoes, which of the following are most important to you? Base: heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

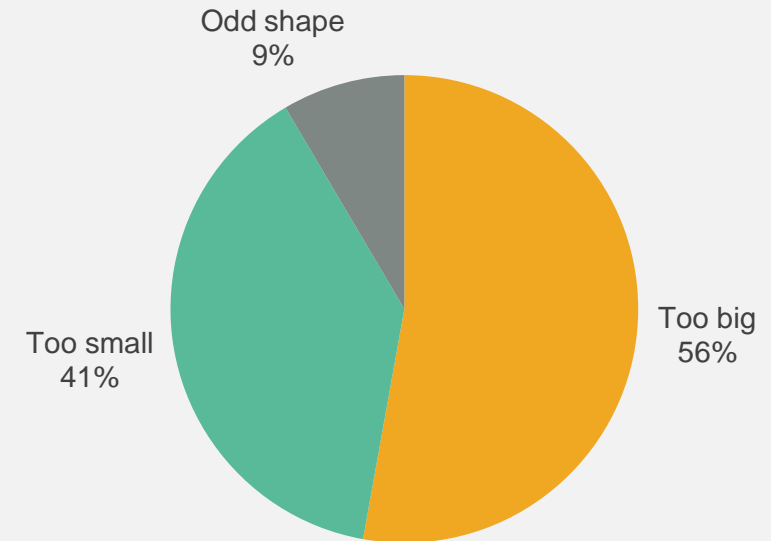
Satisfaction with sweet potato size is good

The few dissatisfied consumers are split between too large and too small; offering a **range of sizes** would accommodate all preferences

SATISFACTION WITH SIZE OF SWEET POTATOES



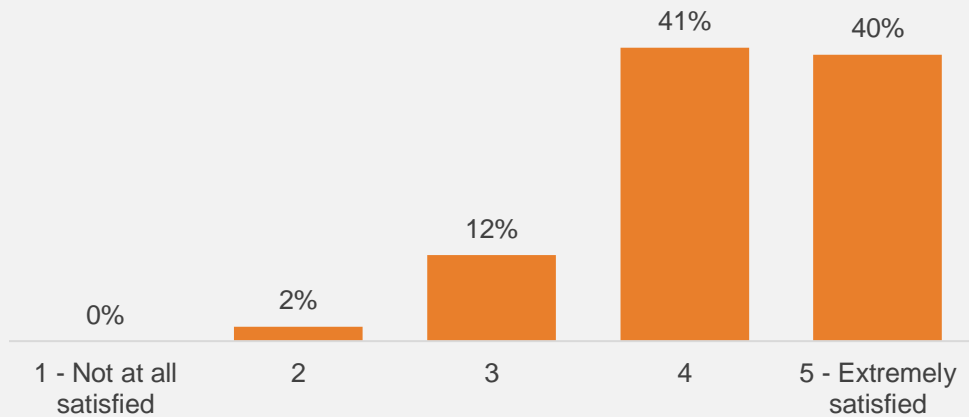
WHY UNSATISFACTORY



Satisfaction with texture is also good

The small number of complaints were mostly that they were mushy, or stringy

SATISFACTION WITH TEXTURE OF SWEET POTATOES



WHY UNSATISFACTORY

“

It's very **stringy**, maybe because I'm not sure how to choose them

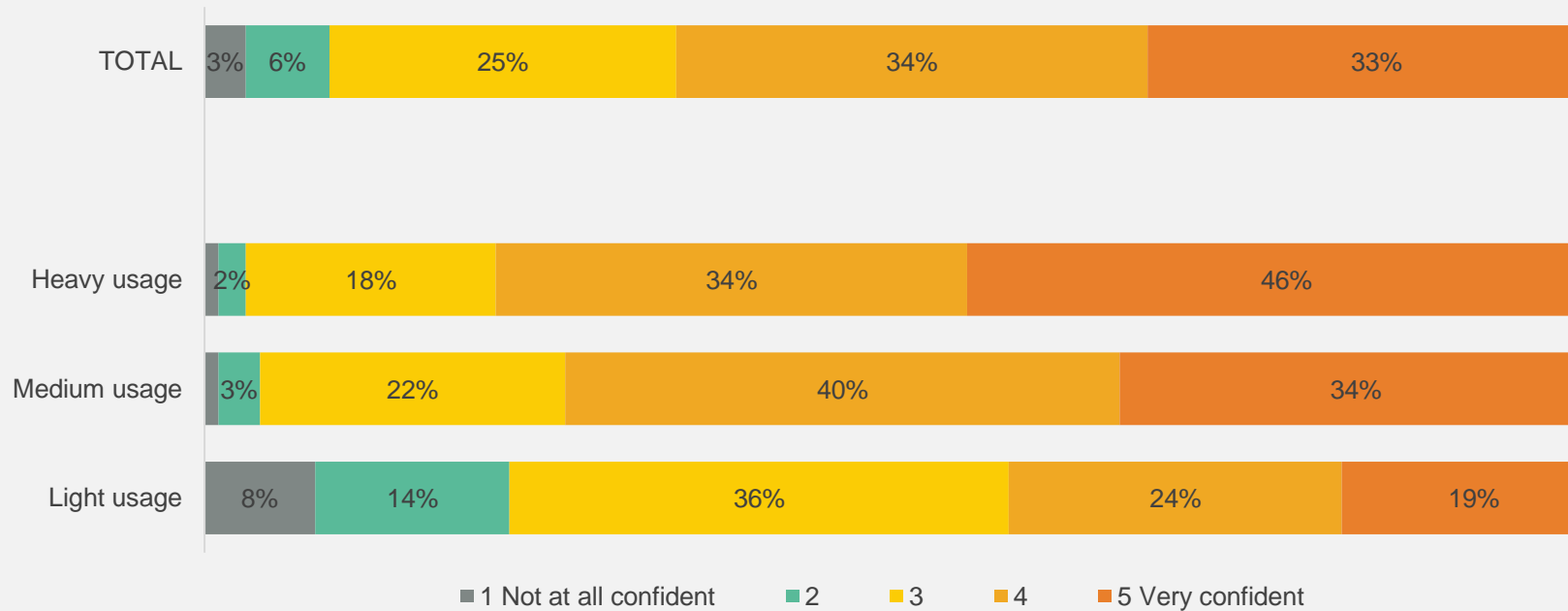
“

Too **soft** and less tasty than years gone by

“

Mushy

Most think they know how to choose a good sweet potato



Light users are less sure – they would benefit from some basic guidelines

However there is no consistency in what they are looking for

Consumers are not really sure what they are supposed to be looking for, and all have their own theories on what makes a 'good' sweet potato

“

Bright colour. Not too large in case they are tough. No obvious large black marks in the skin.

“

I will not buy them if they are bendy and if they are black in any part. They must be hard and of a decent size.

“

I don't know how to tell a 'good' one, I just look at the whole potato and as long as it hasn't got any soft or rotten spots I assume it's ok.

“

I just **pick one that is the right size** and appears firm. Not too sure how to select or store.

“

I tend to **buy the larger potatoes** as they store well and they never really go off in the time between shops.

“

I **usually pick the slim ones** when I buy them, because they taste sweeter than usual.

“

I go for a plump sweet potato that tends to be free of marks. The skinny ones do not taste as sweet to me.

“

I don't know exactly what to look for, but I usually go for colour and size.

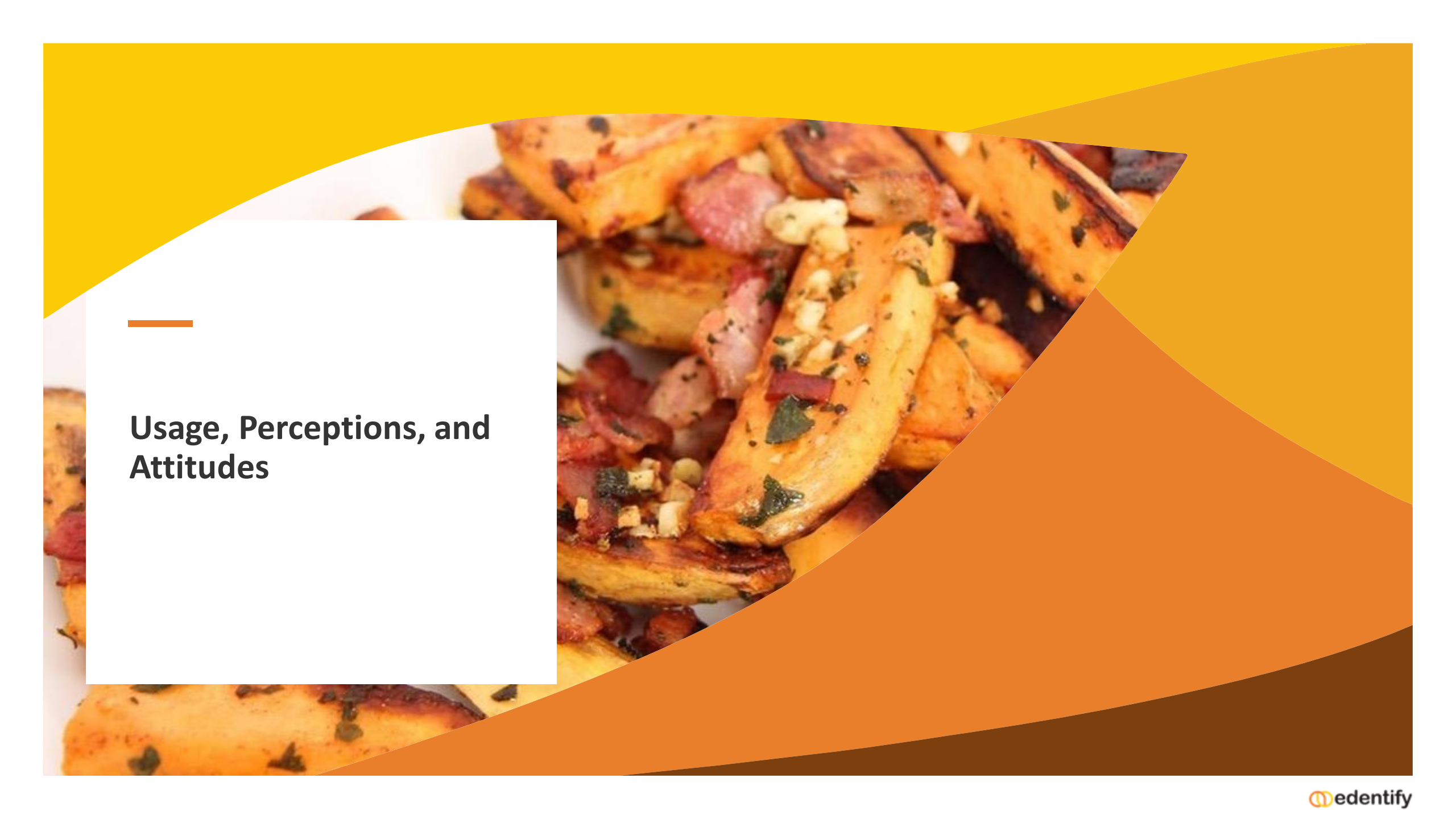
Communicating some basics would help to remove any potential barriers.

**Sweet potatoes aren't
top of mind**

We need to get them onto the shopping
list of medium and light users

**People don't know how to
choose a good one**

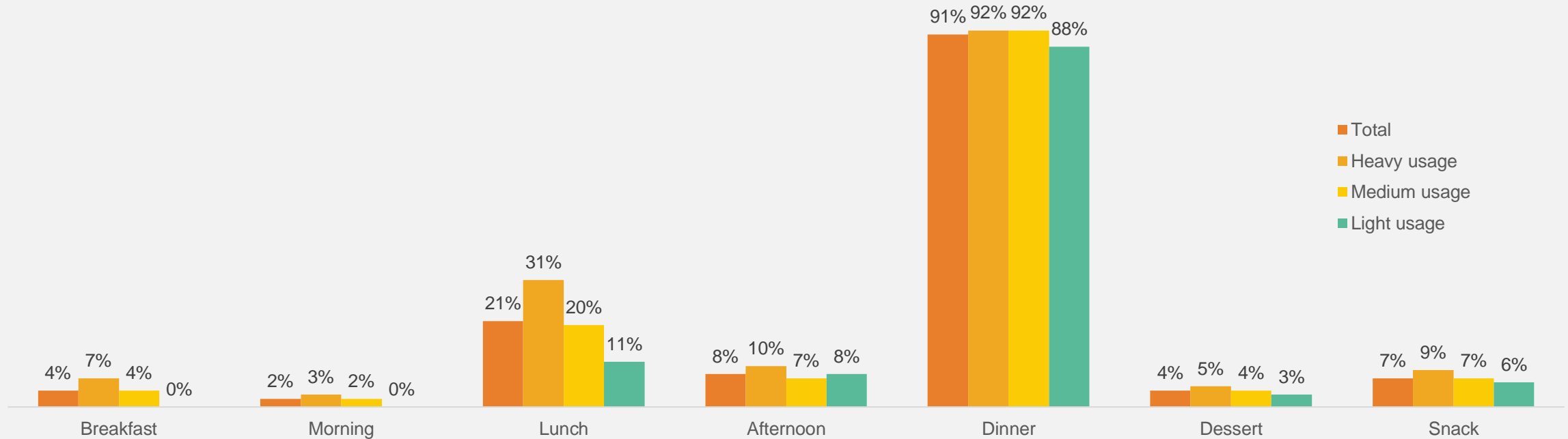
Educate on how to choose



Usage, Perceptions, and Attitudes

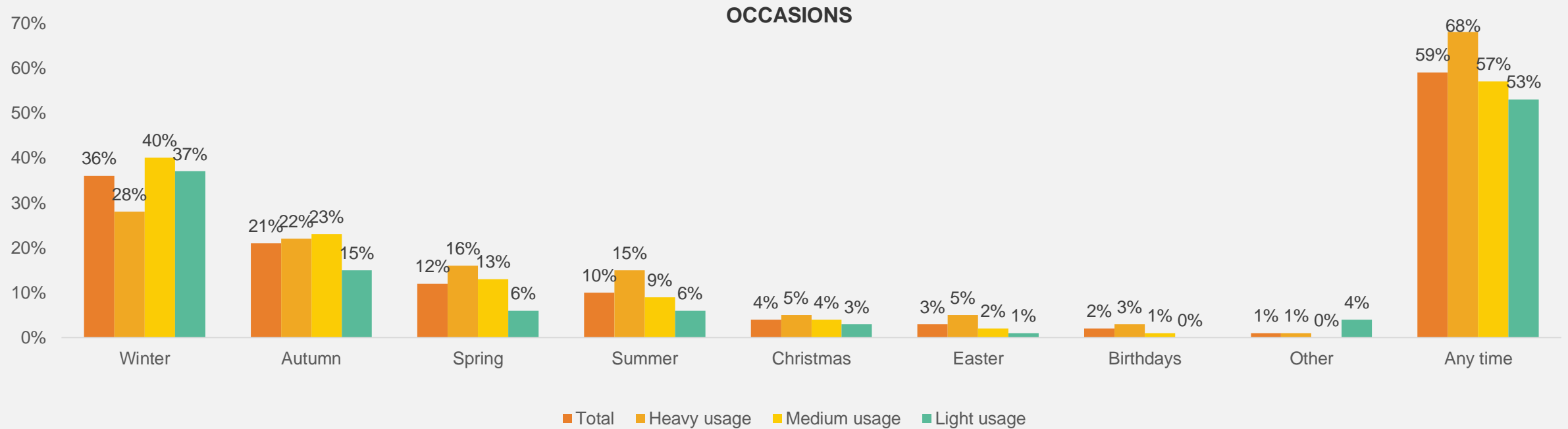
Nearly all eat sweet potatoes at dinner time

WHEN SWEET POTATOES ARE EATEN



Heavy users more likely to incorporate them into lunch as well

Sweet potatoes are more strongly associated with winter



Reinforcing sweet potatoes as an “any time” food can help to encourage year-round consumption

Sweet potatoes are predominantly used as a side dish

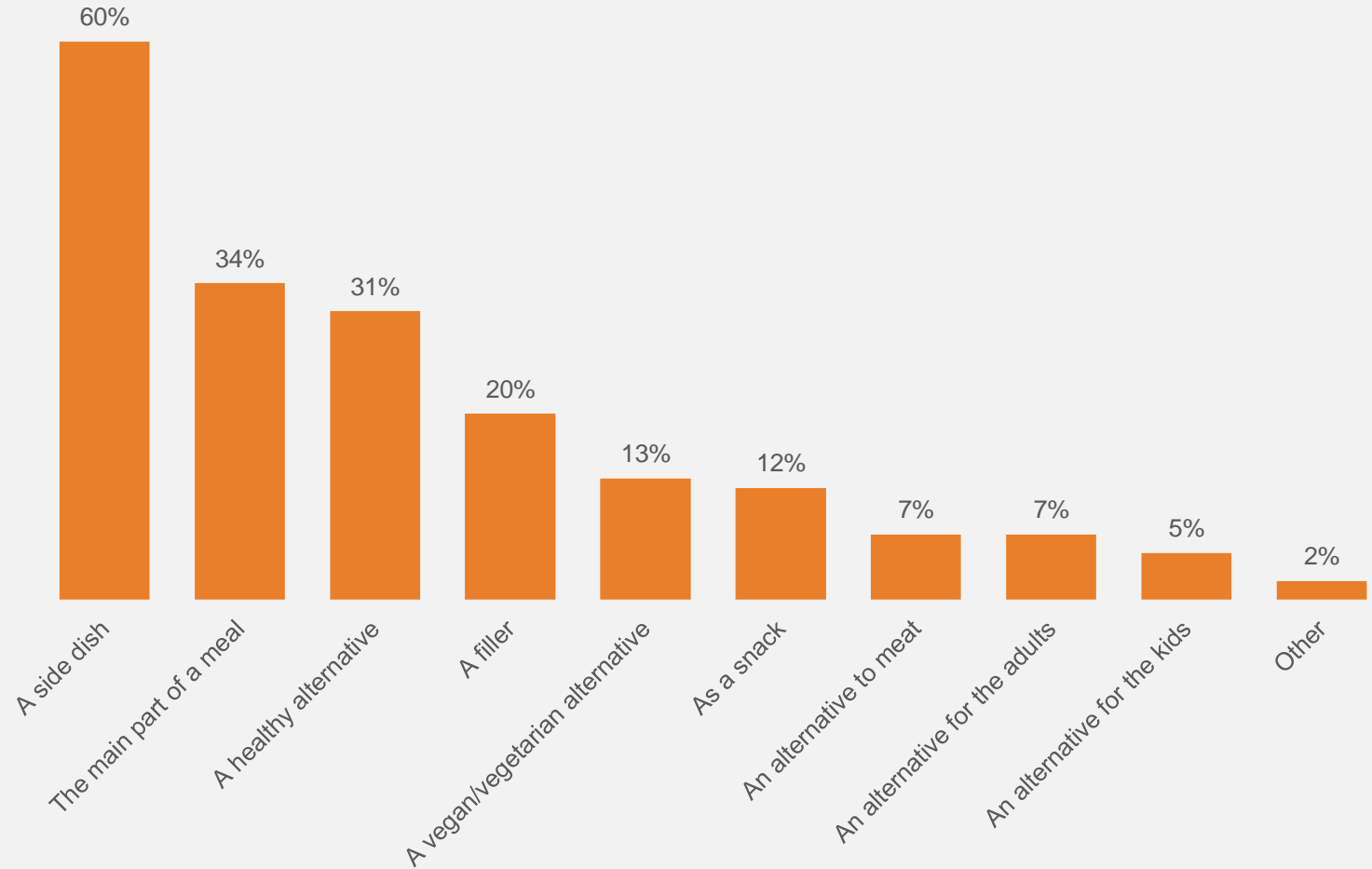
Changing this perception will be difficult.

Instead, work with it and focus on sweet potatoes as a complement to meals

Explore partnerships with other foods:

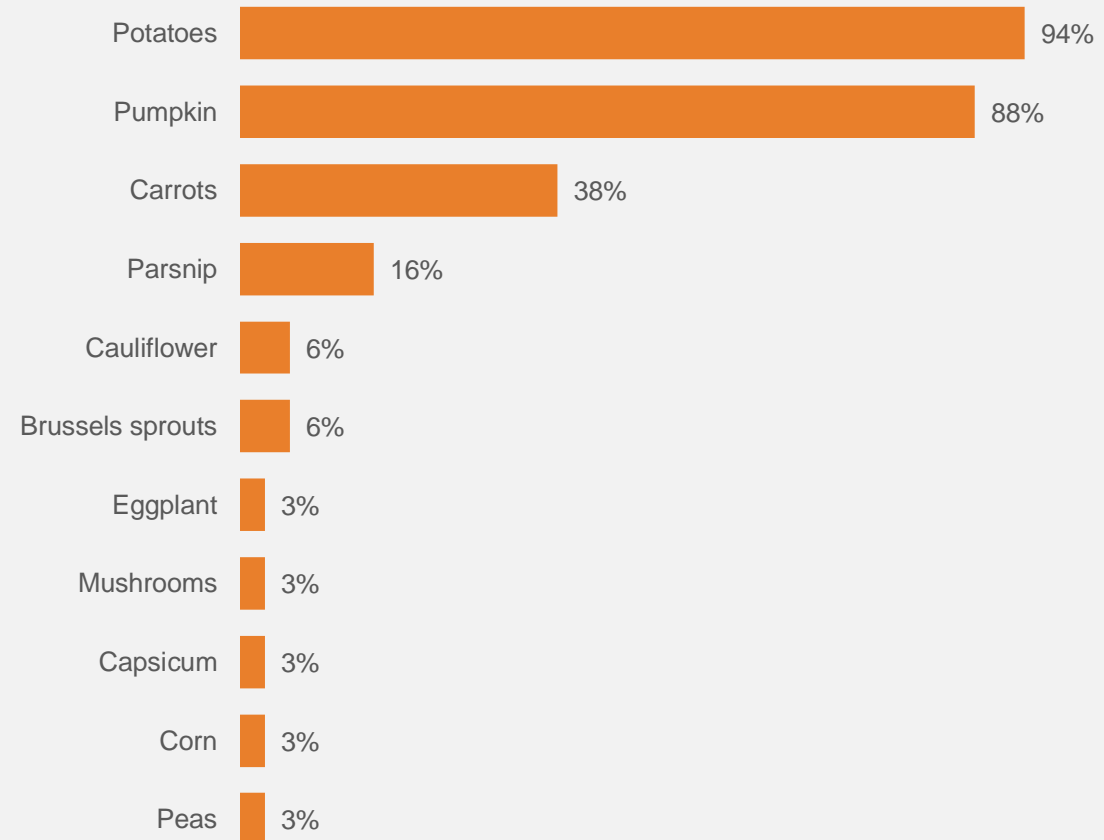
- roast meat
- pies
- what else?

SWEET POTATOES AS PART OF A MEAL



**Potatoes and
pumpkin are
thought to be the
most similar to
sweet potato**

SIMILAR VEGETABLES



Like a potato... but better

A place for both - can
be used as *well as* not
just *instead of*

“

I love that they are **better for you than normal potatoes** and take less time to cook.

“

I always buy regular potatoes with sweet potato as I **mash these together**.

“

Sweet potato has **more flavor naturally than a normal potato** but sometimes you need the normal potato as it is firmer and has more consistency.

“

I like them as **an alternative to using white/red potatoes** all the time. I find they add texture to my special potato mash.

“

I will also mash them **combined with pumpkin or normal potatoes** with milk and butter.

“

Sometimes I would like to eat sweet potatoes because of the sweet taste, other times I would prefer to eat potatoes because they lack the sweetness and you can add cheese that makes it more savoury.

Even more importantly, they complement, rather than replace, other vegetables

They can be paired with a number of other vegetables, and used in a variety of side dish options.

Cross-promote with other vegetables:

- potatoes
- carrots

“

They aren't the main part of the meal, but one of the vegetables I use to accompany the main protein source. **I pair them with any type of meat, and sometimes in a roast vegetable salad.**

“

I made a potato bake and for something different I **layered it with half sweet potato and half white potato.**

“

I always buy regular potatoes with sweet potato as I **mash these together.**

“

They are different in their own right when it comes to their use in a particular dish. Hence rather than it being a question of it being one over the other, **what characteristics each one of these add to enhance the dish is what matters.**

“

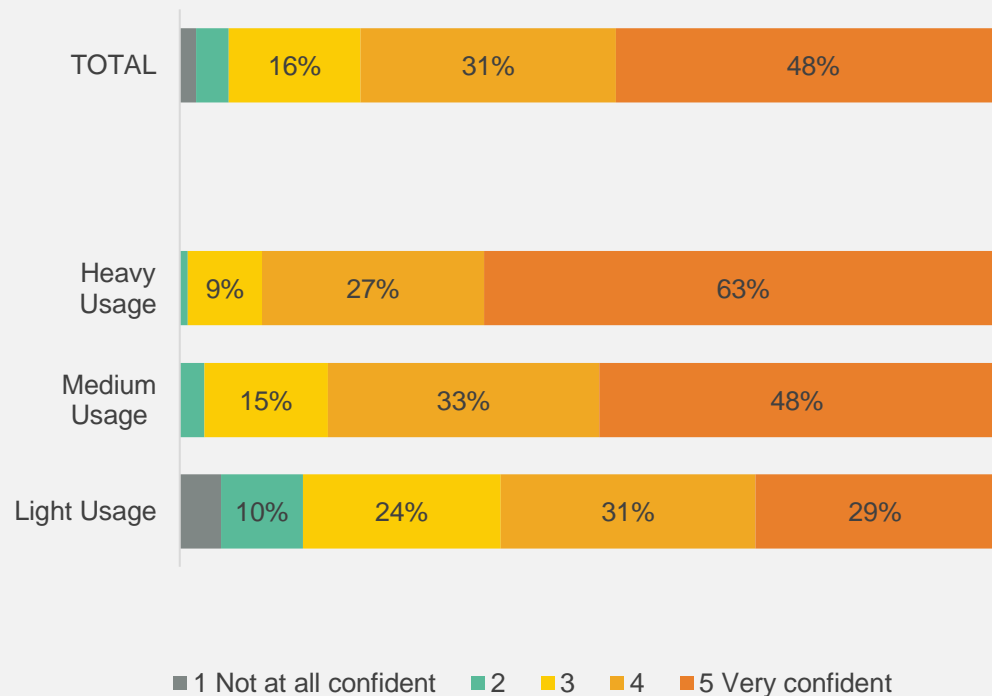
I would not use the other vegetables instead of sweet potato but I do use all of them in various formats depending on what I am cooking. So instead of using them as a substitute, **I tend to use them to complement the sweet potato.**



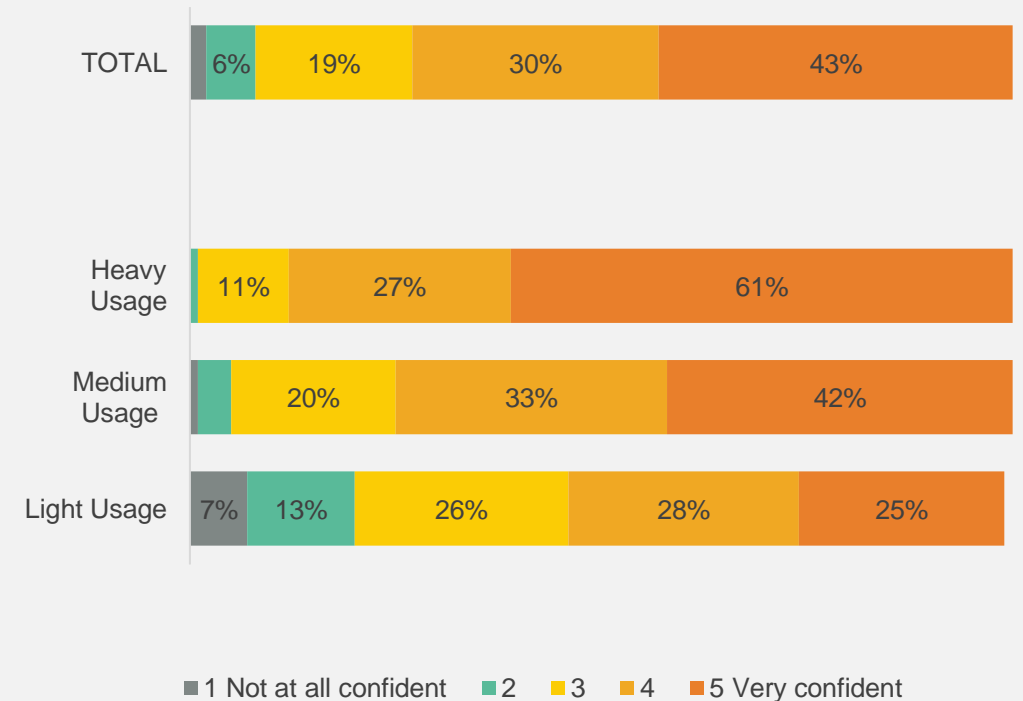
Confidence in cooking and using sweet potatoes is high; particularly among heavy users

This is likely to be because sweet potatoes are mainly being used in tried and trusted ways (e.g. roasted as a side dish)

CONFIDENCE - COOKING SWEET POTATO

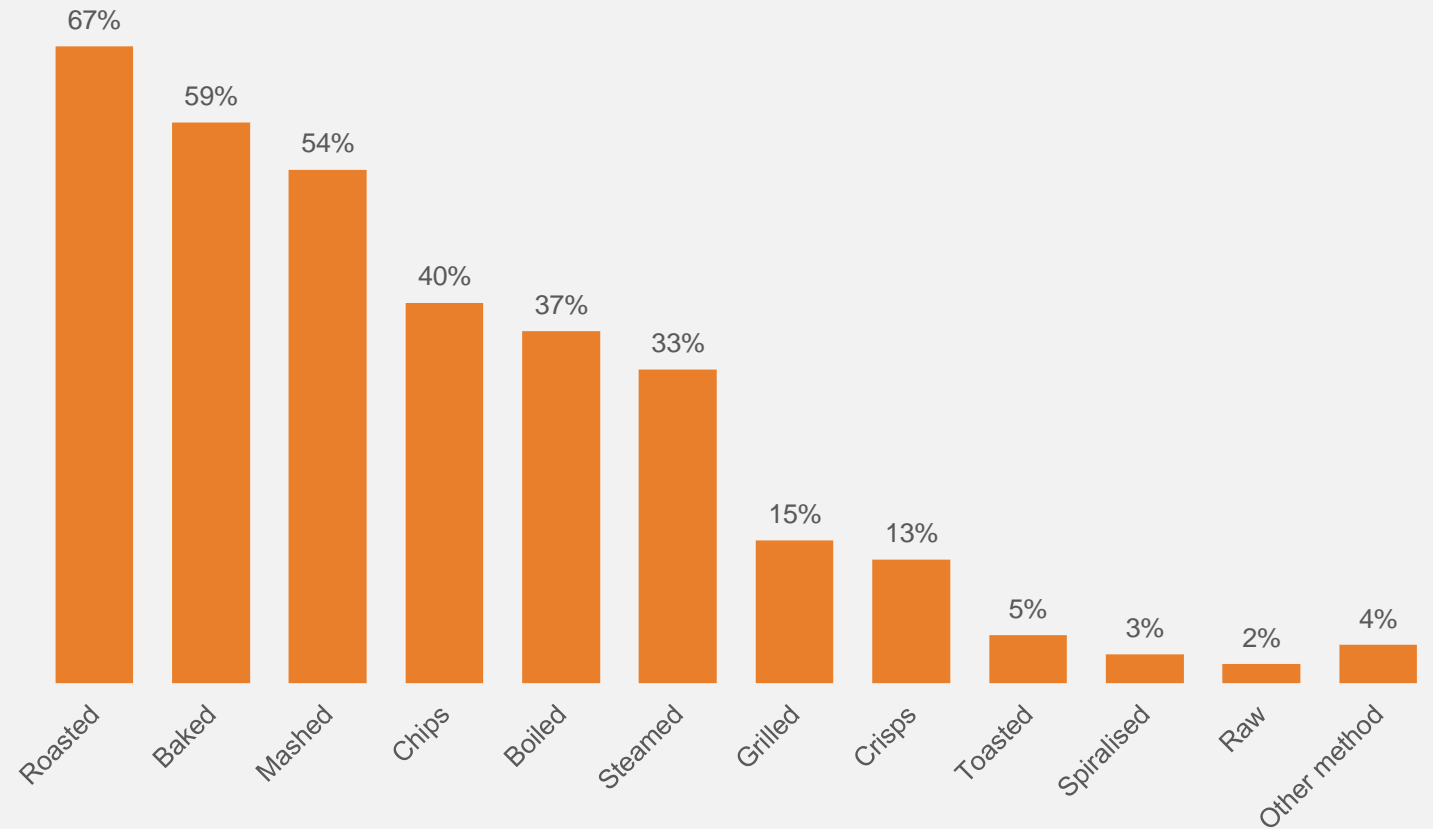


CONFIDENCE - USING SWEET POTATO IN MEALS



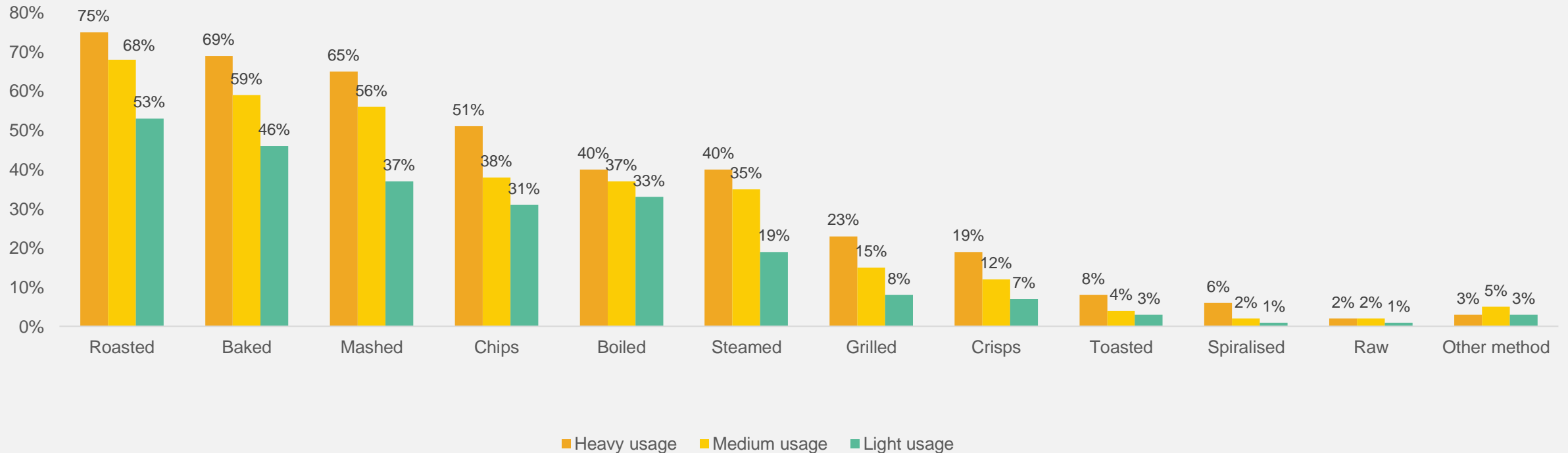
Roasting, baking and mashing are the most popular methods of cooking sweet potato

SWEET POTATO COOKING METHODS



Light users have a much smaller repertoire of cooking methods for sweet potatoes

SWEET POTATO COOKING METHODS - BY SEGMENT



Educating on the range of uses is important to close this gap

Versatility is one of the key strengths of sweet potatoes

It's easy to cook them a number of different ways

“

I like to **roast** them until soft and **mash** them, or else cook them as **thick-cut chips**.

“

My main way of using sweet potatoes is in the form of **oven-baked chips** to have as a side with fish every Friday night.

“

Baking them is a favourite, also **mashing** them with potato.

“

Once I had cold mashed sweet potato blended with a bit of almond butter and coconut oil with fresh blueberries for **breakfast** and that was amazing.

“

I made a **potato bake** and for something different I layered it with half sweet potato and half white potato.

“

I usually make a **stew** with lentils and sweet potato as the base.

“

Mashed on their own
Mashed **with regular potato**
Roasted and served **either hot or cold**
I sometimes make **wedges** with them and serve in place of oven chips or on their own with mayonnaise

“

I **put them in the slow-cooker** making Mediterranean chicken, and sometimes mash them and have them as a side.

**Sweet potatoes aren't
top of mind**

We need to get them onto the shopping
list of medium and light users

**People don't know how to
choose a good one**

Educate on how to choose

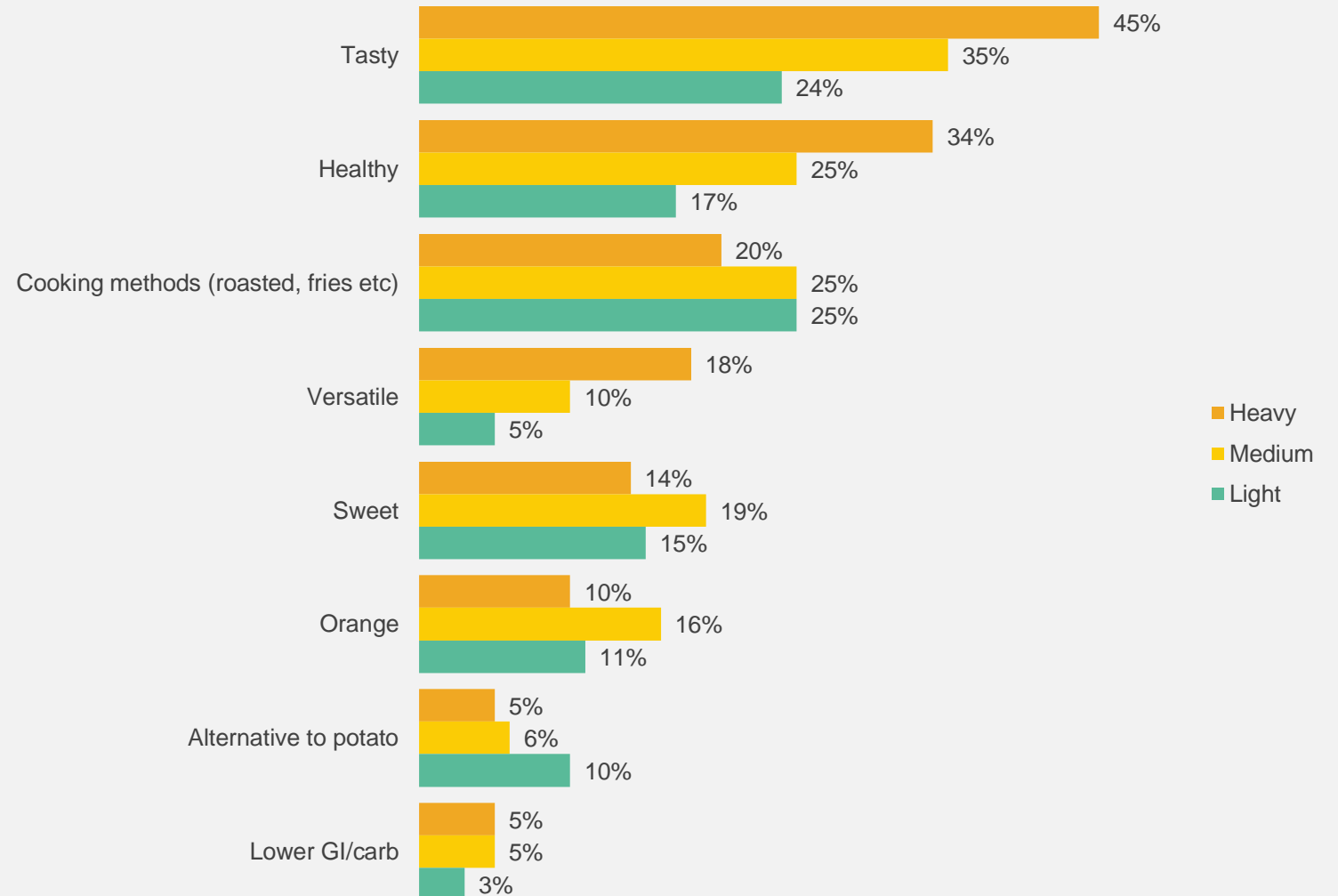
**They don't know all the
ways to cook**

Use versatility as a purchase driver

Light users don't think of them the same way

Much lower spontaneous recall of the key characteristics suggests room to improve

ASSOCIATIONS WITH SWEET POTATOES - BY SEGMENT



The colour of sweet potatoes is its most distinctive attribute

It is used to distinguish a 'good' sweet potato when making the purchase decision

A focus on gold sweet potatoes will allow this to become a distinctive asset



“

When choosing sweet potato I **would first look at the overall colour**, and then check to see if there are any bad bits.

“

I like the orange colour, it is **fun and vibrant**.

“

I think sweet potatoes do have a nicer taste compared to white potatoes and are good for **adding that deep orange colour** to a meal.

“

I pretty much like everything about sweet potatoes, particularly the orange variety. Apart from the taste they **add a great colour** to any dish.

“

I **usually look for nice colour**, texture, smooth skin and nice looking at a good price

“

I **like the colour** and texture of sweet potatoes.

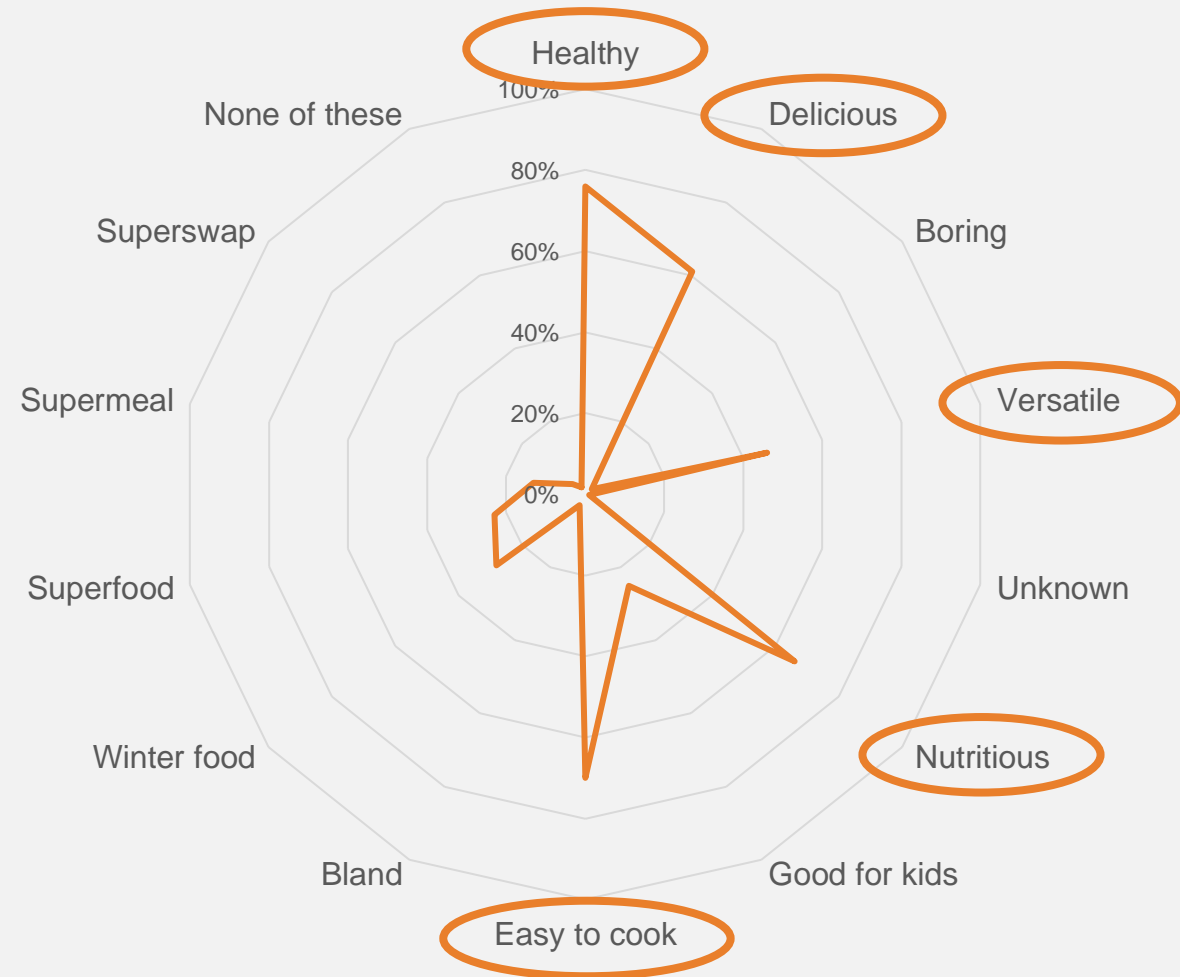
Prompted perceptions are positive

The key characteristics of sweet potatoes are:

Taste
Nutrition
Versatility

These need to be the focus of the brand's positioning

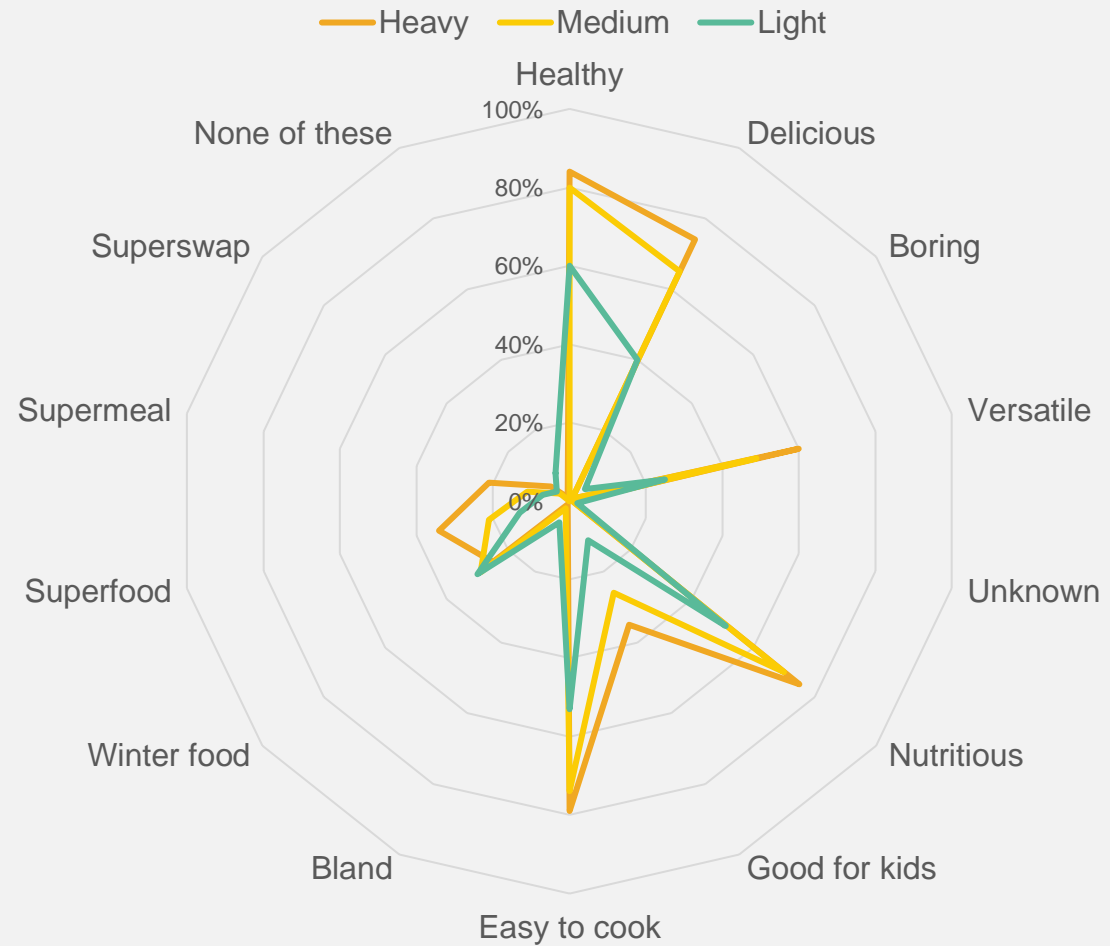
ASSOCIATIONS WITH SWEET POTATOES



Similar profile by segment, although weaker among lighter users

There is a need to reinforce and grow perceptions, rather than develop new ones

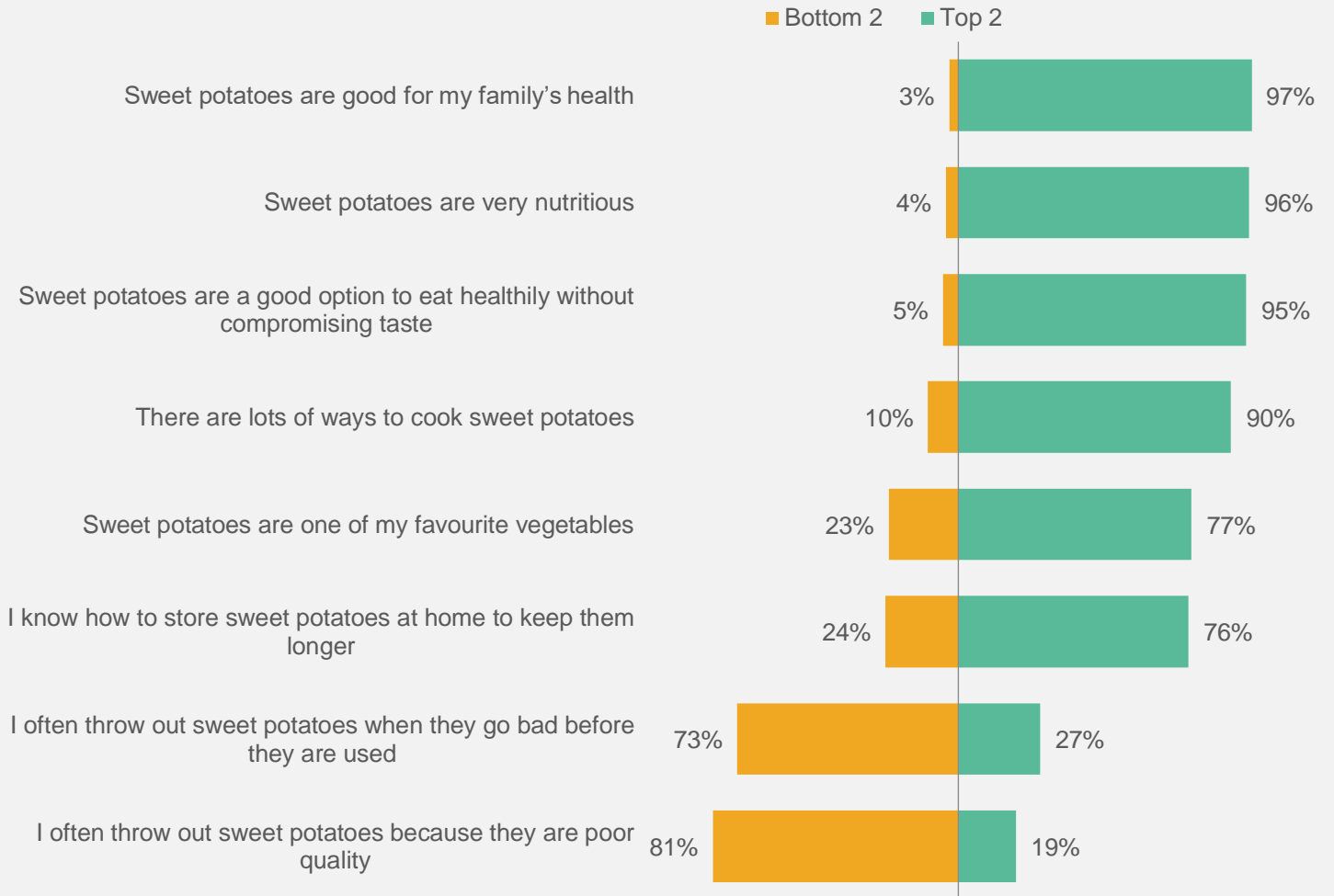
ASSOCIATIONS WITH SWEET POTATOES - BY SEGMENT



Universal agreement that sweet potatoes are healthy while also being tasty

This is a good position to be in; many healthy foods are not considered tasty at the same time

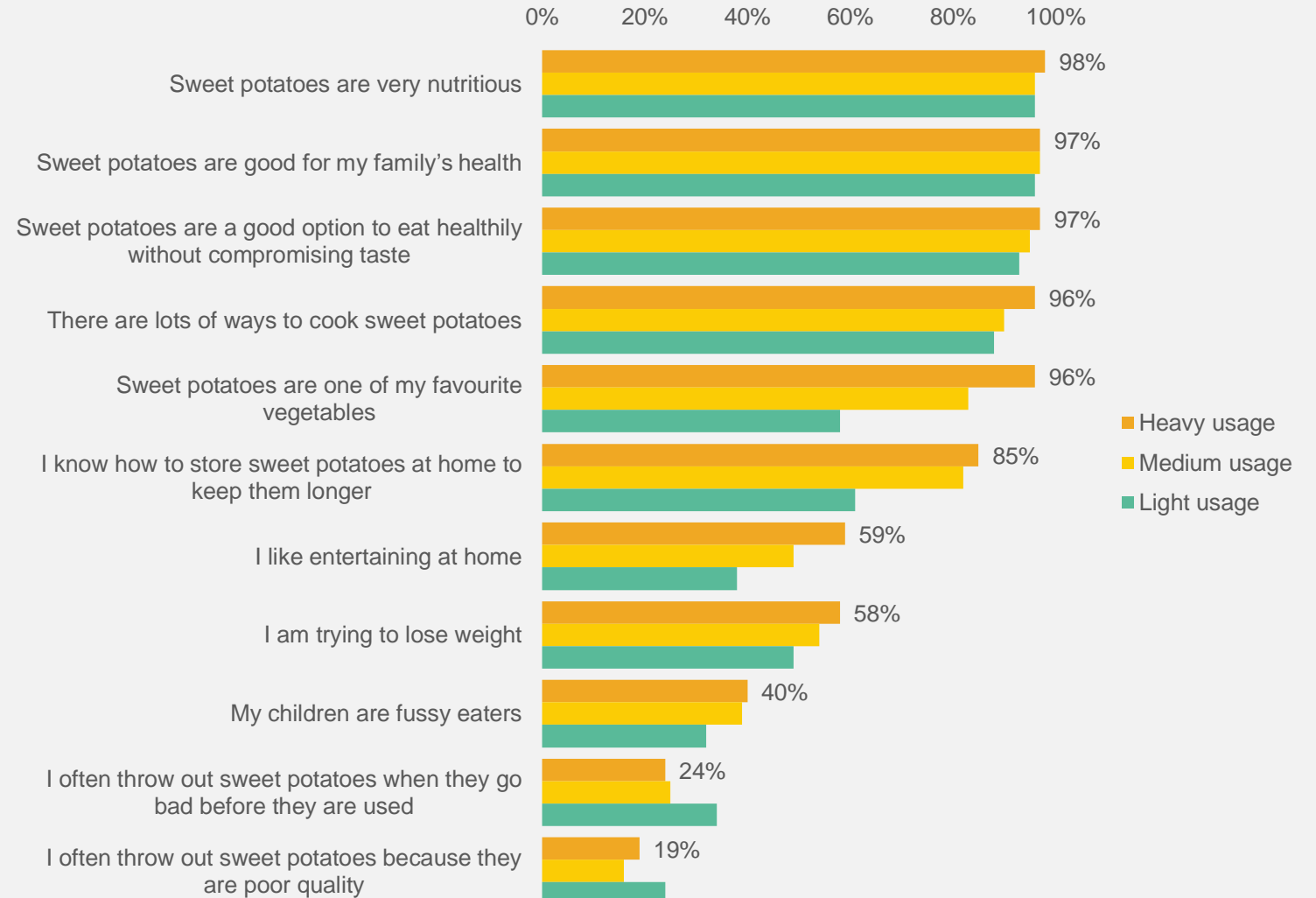
AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS



Lighter users could benefit from more information

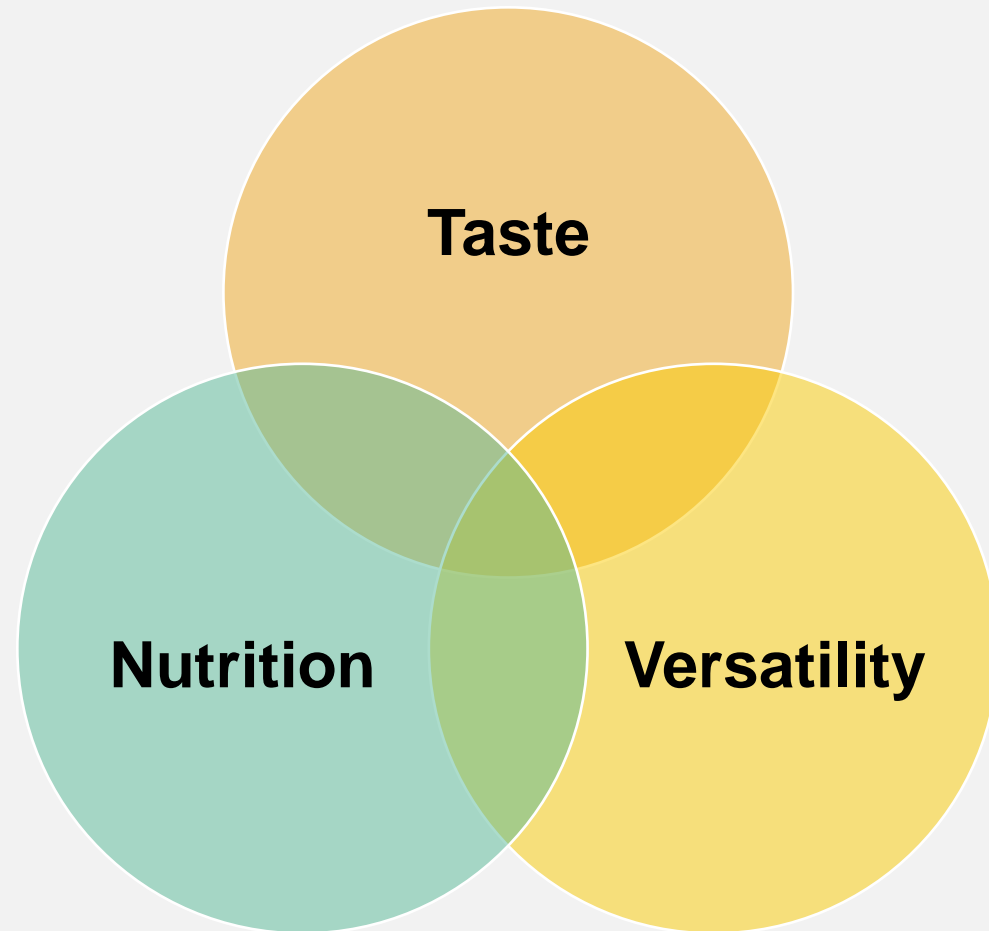
Least likely to know how to store them, and most likely to throw them out unnecessarily

AGREEMENT STATEMENTS - TOP 2 BOX BY SEGMENT



Q3. How much do you agree with each of the following statements? Base: heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

**This combination
provides a strong
proposition**



The unique and widely liked **taste** should be emphasised

Far from having to compromise on taste, sweet potatoes **enhance** meals

“

I like them because they are **a little more interesting** and can add an extra sweetness compared to a regular potato.

“

They are the **tastiest and best superfood** ever.

“

I like the taste - nothing I dislike about them.

“

I like their **sweet and earthy flavour**. They recall autumn and winter meals to me, and I like mixing them with strong spices.

The **healthy** nature of sweet potatoes is an important characteristic



“

I like sweet potatoes because it tastes a little bit sweet but **low in sugar** which is suitable for my healthy meal every day.

“

I like that my family will eat them and **I know they are being fed a healthy product.**

“

Sweet potatoes are likeable for all the nutritional benefits that it offers as it is **a rich source of fibre and contains essential vitamins and minerals.** Also it is low in fat.

“

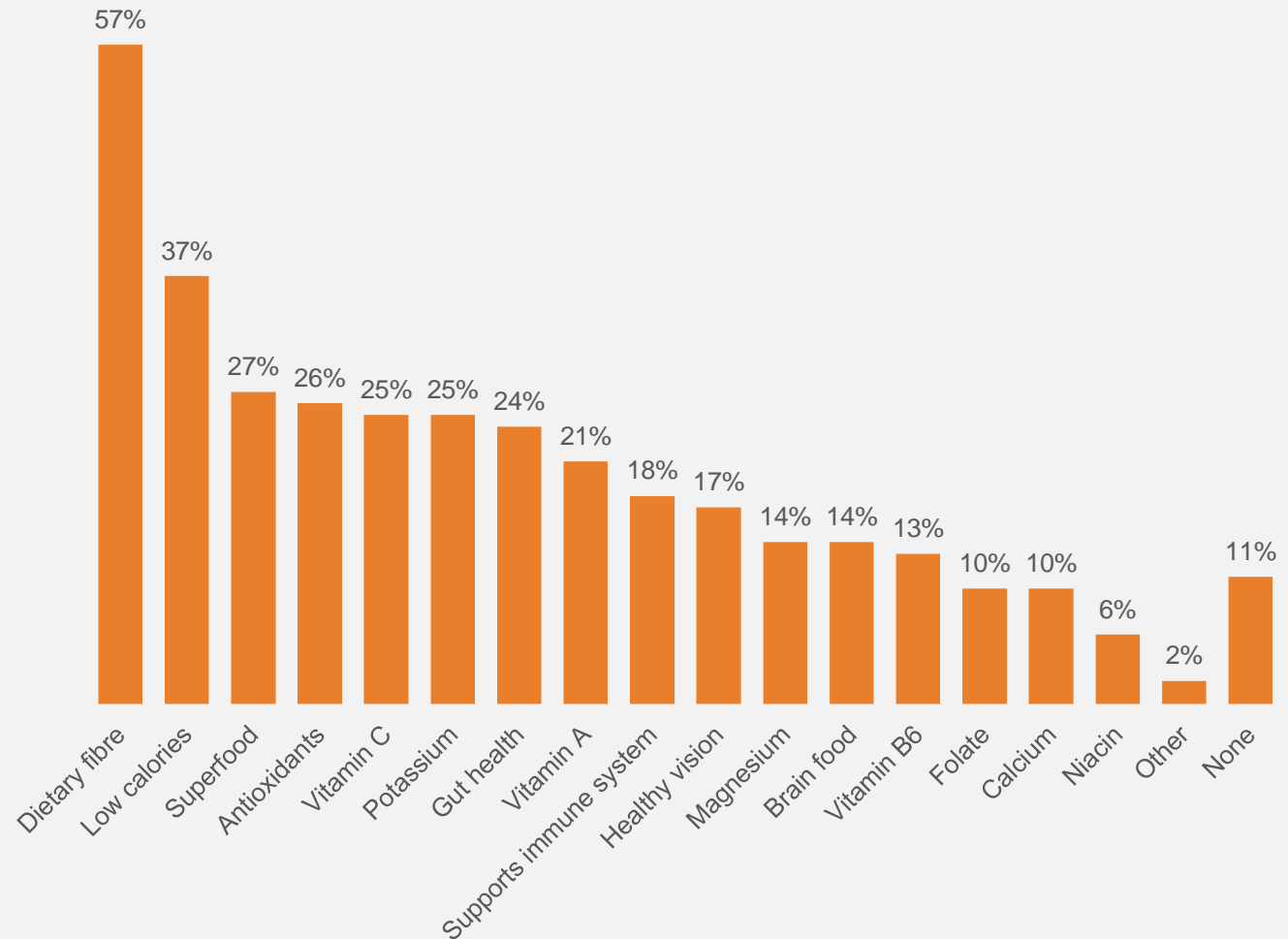
I love sweet potatoes. It is their texture, and the fact they are **a little healthier than potatoes.**

Despite acknowledging they are healthy in general, there is little consensus on **specific health benefits**

Sweet potatoes are not claiming any single health benefit

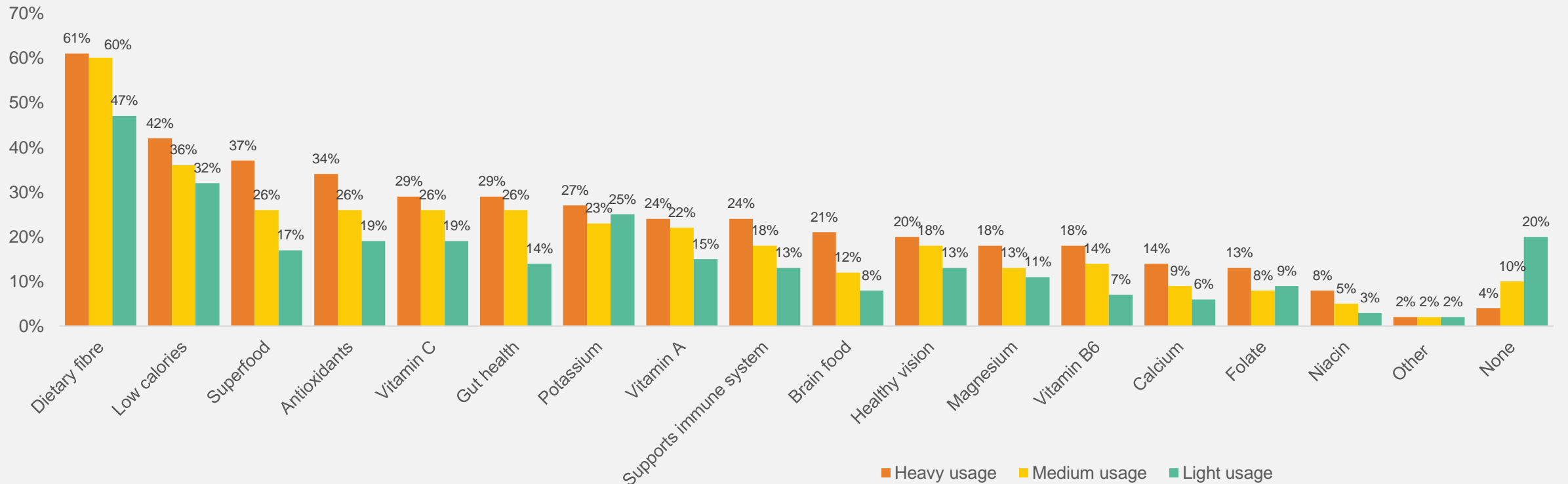
This makes it difficult for people to rationalise the nutritional value of sweet potatoes

AWARENESS OF HEALTH BENEFITS



Awareness of specific health benefits is even lower among light and medium users

AWARENESS OF HEALTH BENEFITS - BY SEGMENT



Poorer knowledge of health benefits among lighter users highlights the need to promote these

Q16. Which of the following health and nutritional benefits do you associate with sweet potatoes? Base: heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

Versatility is a reason to put sweet potatoes in the shopping list

Sweet potatoes are *easy to use*

Easy to cook

Liked by children, for their sweet taste

Sweet potatoes can be used in *lots of different ways*

Pair them with different foods

Can be combined with or eaten alongside lots of different vegetables

Make it easy for consumers to fit sweet potatoes into their existing meal plans

HOW to use them

Cooking methods
Recipes

WHEN to use them

Which foods do they pair with best?
When are they in season?

“

If I was selling sweet potatoes I think I might **set up a cooking demonstration** to show people how easy they are to incorporate into a meal. I would also **make up a small recipe book** with some easy recipes in it, so people could try them out for themselves. It would also be good to point out just how healthy sweet potatoes are, and that they are really easy to cook.

“

Show people easy recipes for sweet potatoes. I think people don't eat potatoes because they don't know how to cook them. Need to show it is easy or similar to other foods they like.

“

I would **set up tastings around the supermarket** and give examples on how they could be incorporated into everyday meals.

Give them ideas on *how* and *when* to use sweet potatoes

There are 4 pillars to positioning sweet potatoes

Think orange

A key distinctive asset that makes sweet potatoes stand out

Emphasise versatility and “easy to cook”

Remove barriers

- how to choose
- what to cook
- how to cook

Communicate specific health benefits

Health benefits that sweet potatoes can “own” to give them a place in people’s minds

Reinforce taste

Underpins all other attributes: sweet potatoes genuinely have it all



Communications

They look to the internet, TV shows, and magazines for inspiration

“

I look for inspiration and ideas about cooking on the food channel and the internet. I like the shows by Gordon Ramsay and Chopped. I like the Taste website.

“

I also try to throw a new recipe in the mix every fortnight and get ideas from the local supermarket recipe books and love to try them.

“

I use sweet potato around once or twice a week. I steam, roast, I haven't ventured out of the basic. **I'd like some new ideas and recipes how to use sweet potato more.**

“

I usually watch YouTube cooking channels for more recipes and I get very much inspired by them. I think most of my cooking I have learned from YouTube.

“

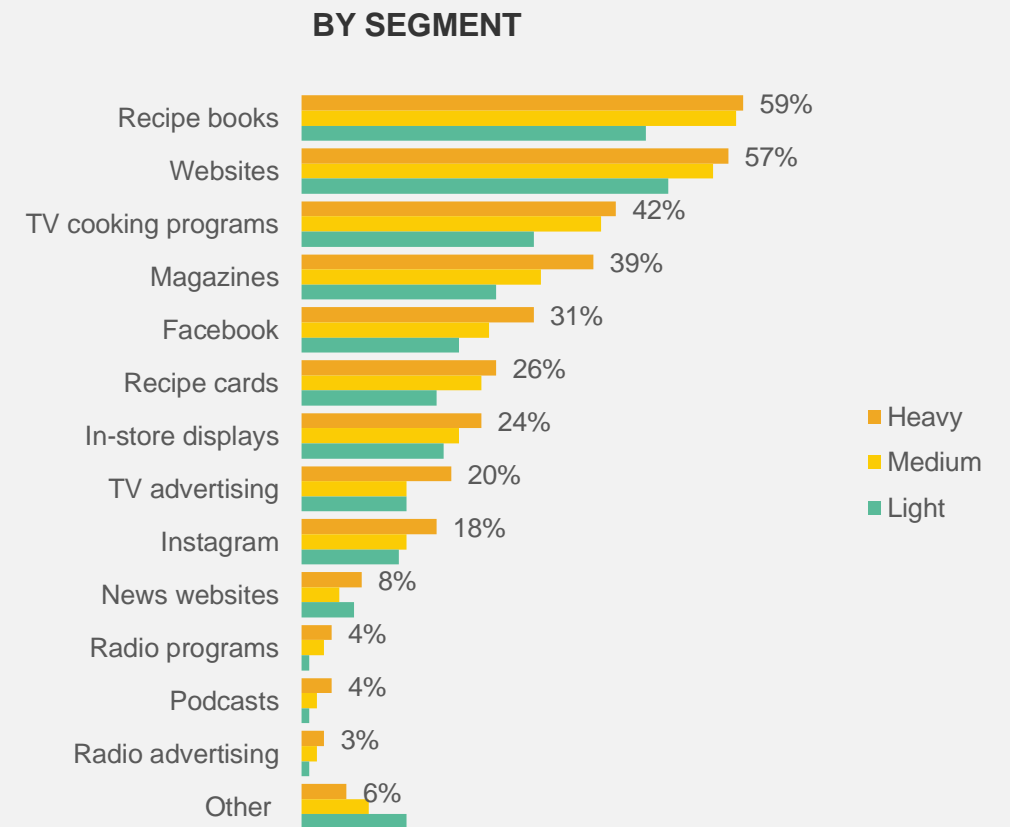
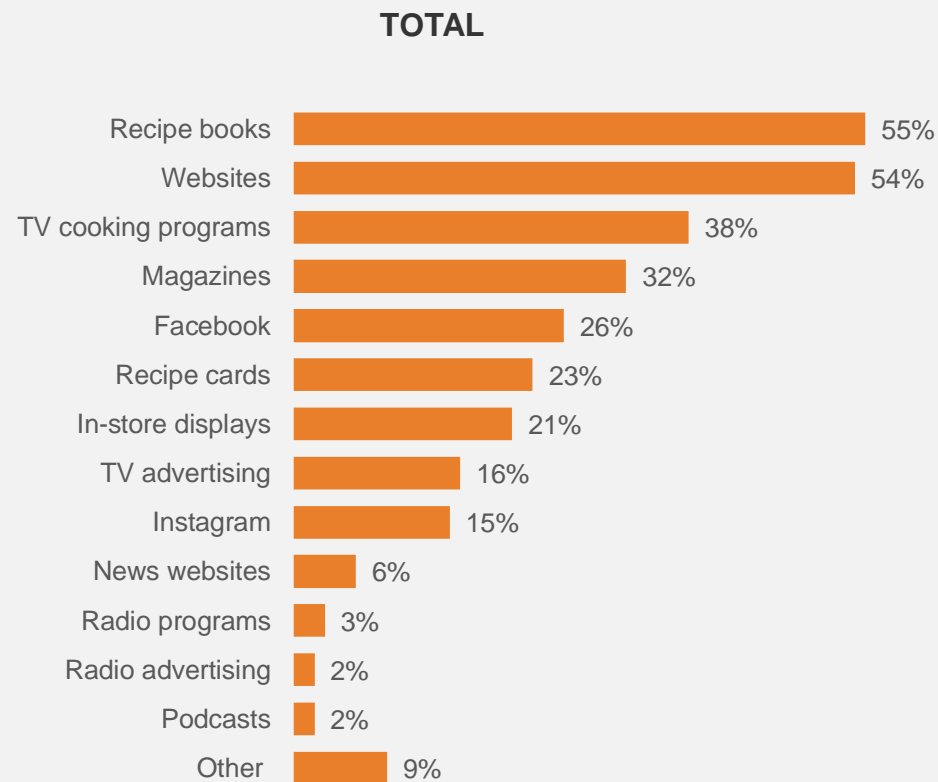
I go into the supermarket, pick a cut of meat and Google an easy recipe.

“

I love to add them to slow cooked meals or as a side dish along with other vegetables. **I would like to find new ways of using them.**

Recipe books and the internet are the top sources of cooking information

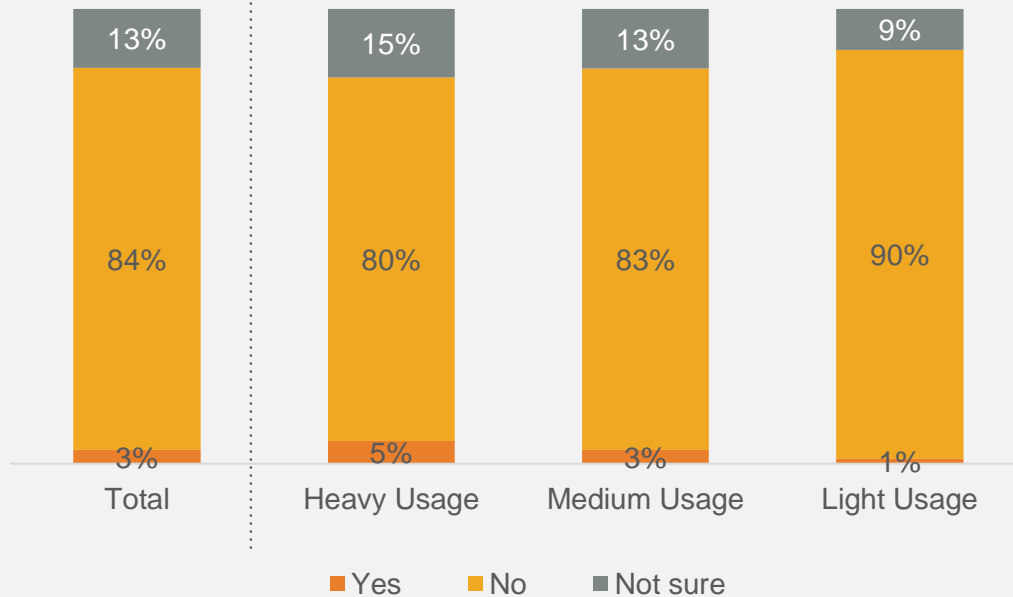
Family and friends, Youtube and Pinterest also mentioned in 'other'



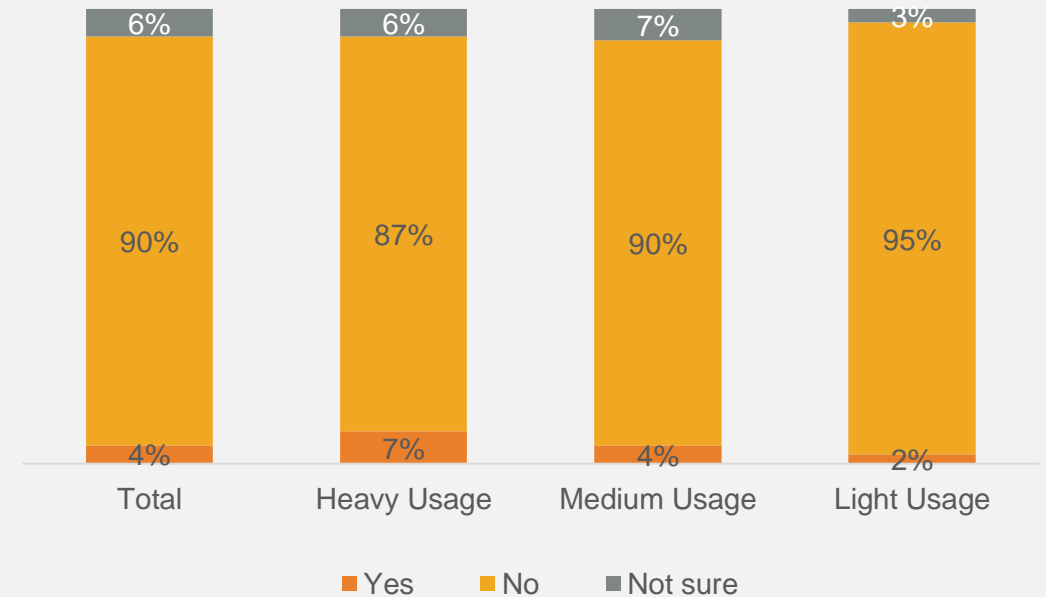
Communications have been invisible



SPONTANEOUS ADVERTISING RECALL



PROMPTED ADVERTISING RECALL



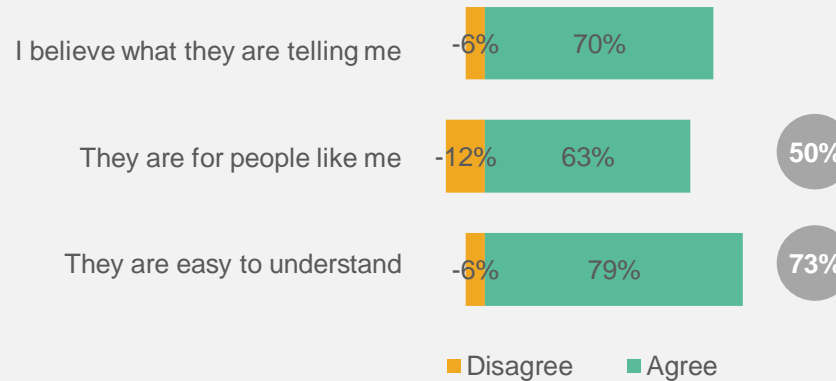
Q27. Can you remember seeing or hearing any information or advertising relating to sweet potatoes Recently? Q29. Do you remember seeing any of these images for sweet potatoes before?
 Base: total n=1200, heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

The images are relatable and easily attributable to sweet potatoes

However they lack distinctiveness from other food advertising

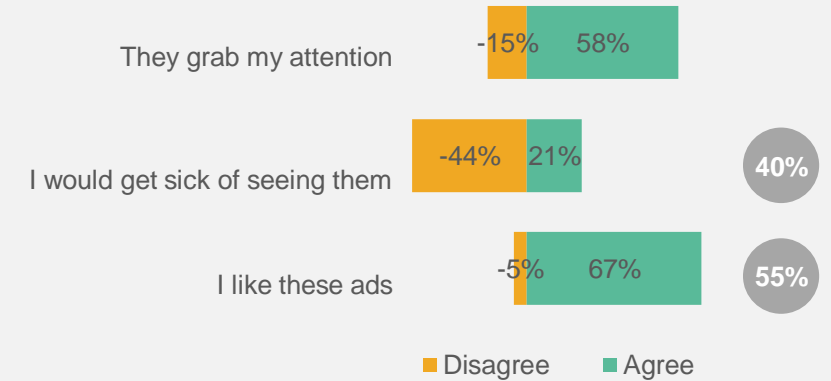
CONNECTION

Ad evaluation benchmark
'Total agree'

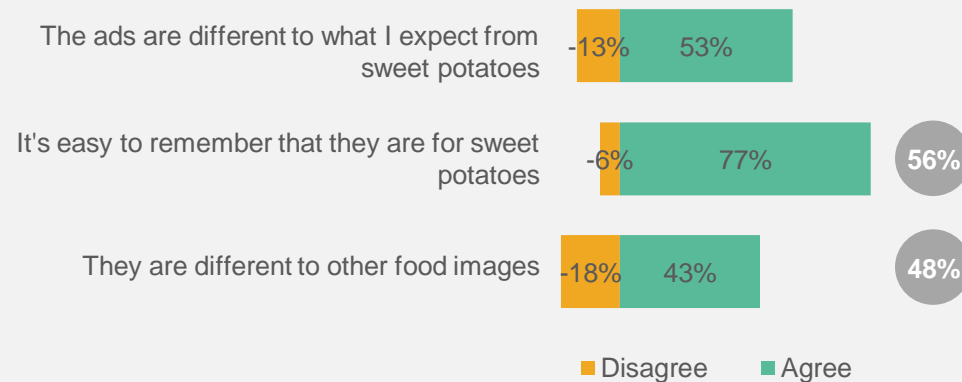


ENJOYMENT

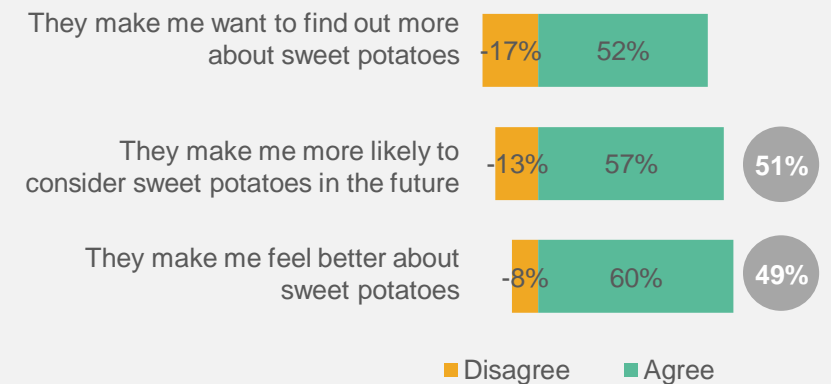
Ad evaluation benchmark
'Total agree'



ATTRIBUTION



IMPACT



The ads were liked for being informative and colourful

However some thought the imagery was not particularly appealing

LIKES

“

Colourful, **good information**.

“

Lots of positive information about sweet potatoes. A lot of **information I didn't know** about them.

“

I like them as they offer **a lot of information**, and it's brightly coloured and eye catching.

DISLIKES

“

The **image of the engine inside the potato** doesn't make me feel like eating one, however I appreciate the information of the health benefits.

“

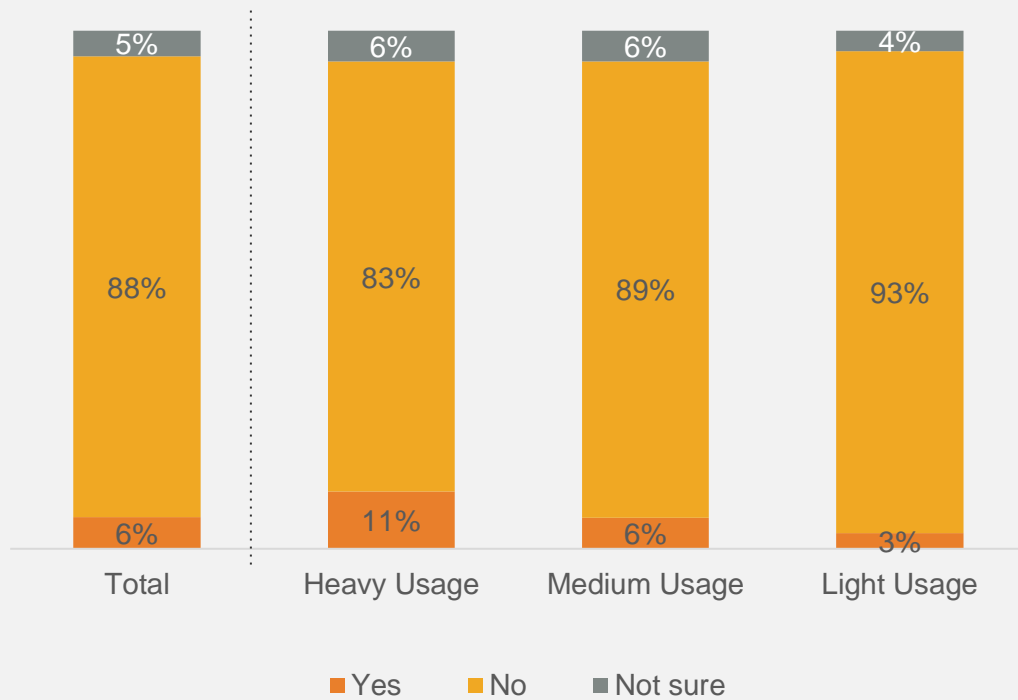
We rarely eat a raw sweet potato but most of the ads feature a raw sweet potato - **too organic in appearance and kind of dull** as an advert.

“

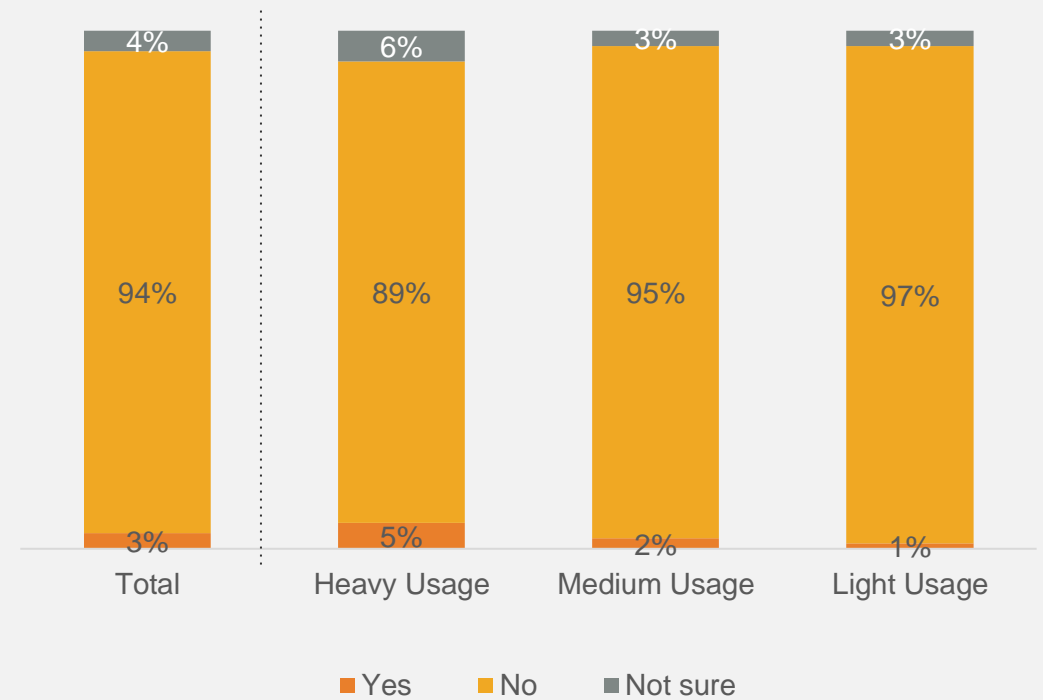
Lots of words, so not the easiest to take in at a glance.

Recall of “Supercharge your meal” and “Superswap” is extremely low

SUPERCHARGE YOUR MEAL



SUPERSWAP

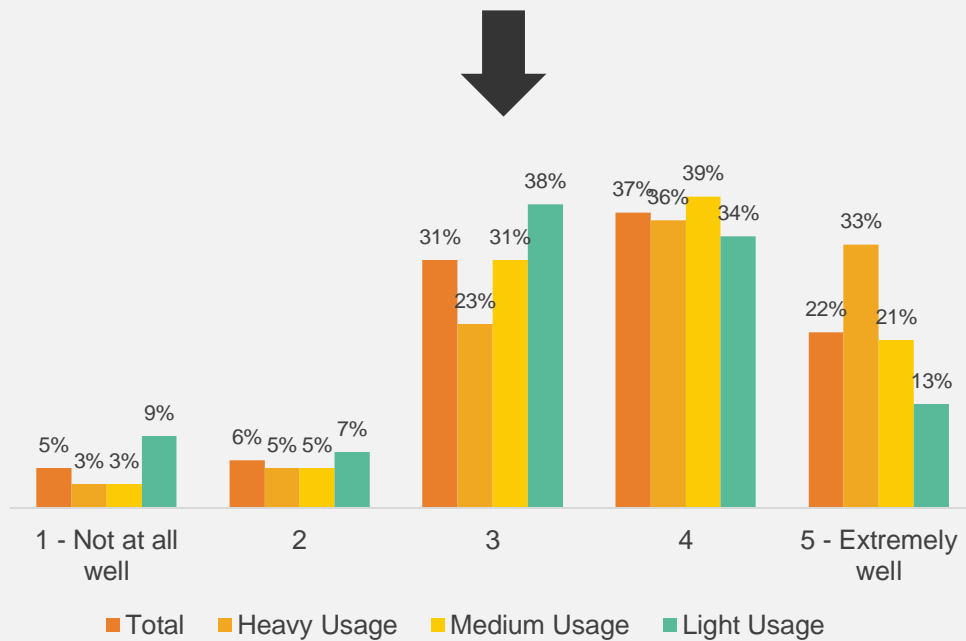


Q33. Have you heard the term Supercharge Your Meal relating to sweet potatoes before today? Q36. Have you heard the term Superswap relating to sweet potatoes before today? Base: total n=1200, heavy purchasers n=346, medium n=535, light n=319

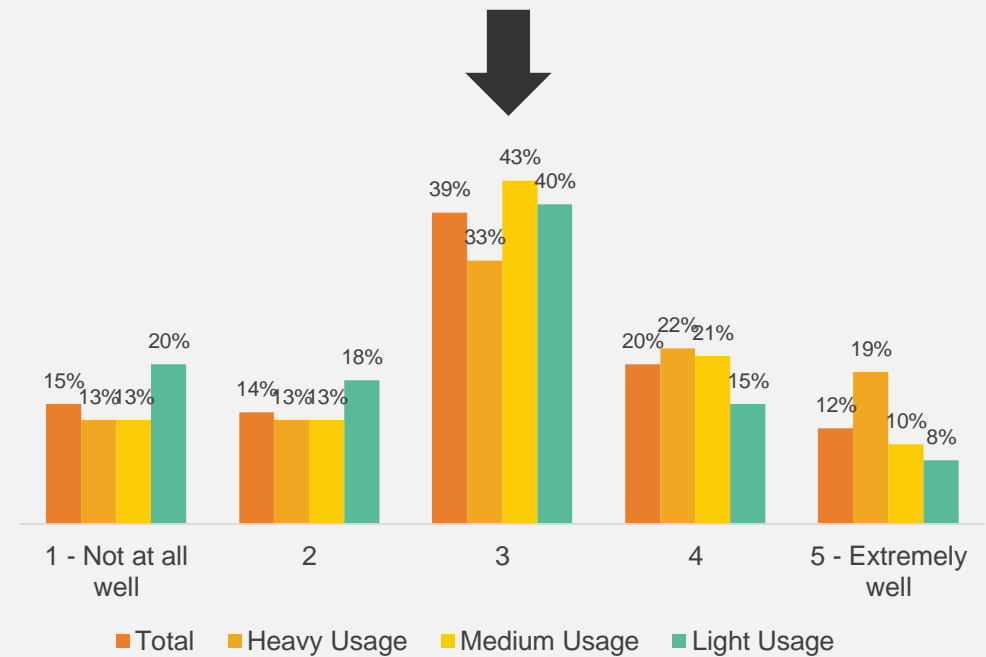
Supercharge resonates best, but not overwhelmingly

There is room for improvement with these

SUPERCHARGE YOUR MEAL - FIT



SUPERSWAP - FIT



Of the two taglines, **Supercharge** resonates best

Easier to understand, but tends to be generic

SUPERCHARGE YOUR MEAL

- The message is clear and understood well
- However it is not seen as anything new or distinctive from other healthy food advertising

“

It makes your meal more nutrient dense

“

Get extra health benefits by using sweet potatoes in your meals

SUPERSWAP

- The message is not specific – swap in sweet potatoes for what?
- Doesn't really mean anything on its own

“

Swap unhealthier items for sweet potato

“

Maybe it means to swap regular potatoes with sweet potatoes

“

Not sure, perhaps using sweet potatoes in place of other vegetables?

The sentiment of Supercharge and Superswap is in the right ballpark, however the execution could be improved

SUPERCHARGE YOUR MEAL

Supercharging meals is as easy as adding Australian Sweet Potatoes. Not only are sweet potatoes full of goodness, they're also incredibly versatile and delicious. Roasted, mashed, steamed, barbequed, baked, or fried, Australian Sweet Potatoes are the easy, tasty way to **supercharge your next meal**.

Superswap

Not specifically linking to sweet potatoes

How can this link be strengthened?

Needs explanation

Only part of the sweet potato appeal – it's not just about swapping, they also **complement**

Both deliver to 3 key needs of "regular" cooks

1. Adds variety
2. Healthy
3. Easy to cook

—
Ensure “sweet potato” is linked to this



Consistent imagery

Make the most of the distinctive colour and shape

Explicitly link with sweet potatoes

“Supercharge with sweet potato”

Consistent communications

Maximise a limited budget by staying focused



Insights summary

The fundamentals are positive

The product is strong

Ticks all the boxes for both advanced and reluctant cooks:

- tastes good
- healthy
- versatile
- easy to cook

An opportunity to increase purchase among light users

The key characteristics of sweet potatoes are appealing – they just need to know more about them

Educate and Inform

Specific health benefits

The range of uses

How to cook

Boosting salience is critical

Make sure that these attributes are known and come to mind when people are making decisions



Use the distinctive colour and shape

These assets help to build memory structures to facilitate recall

Build associations with other meals

Q: "What am I going to cook with this?"

A: "Sweet potato"

Communication needs to be efficient

No recall of current communications

Reflects a limited budget

Current messaging is on the right track

Limited reach means sweet potato assets and imagery need to reinforce every communication

Focus and consistency

Keep messaging simple
Reinforce current perceptions
Partner where possible

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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