CHEESE: WHAT’S DRIVING GROWTH

Webinar September 24th, 2026

AGENDA

- Recent Cheese Trends
    - Retail Trends
    - Foodservice Trends
    - Consumer Perceptions
- Protein Focused Consumer & Cheese
- Recommendations

INSIGHTS TOOLBOX

DATASSENTIAL

MORNING CONSULT

Hartman GROUP

Circana.

NewNutrition Business

WGSN

Technomic

INNOVA MARKET INSIGHTS

MINTEL

BLACK SWAN DATA

International Food Information Council

MIDWEST Dairy

CHEESE RETAIL SALES UPDATE

Grocery Stores & Other Outlets

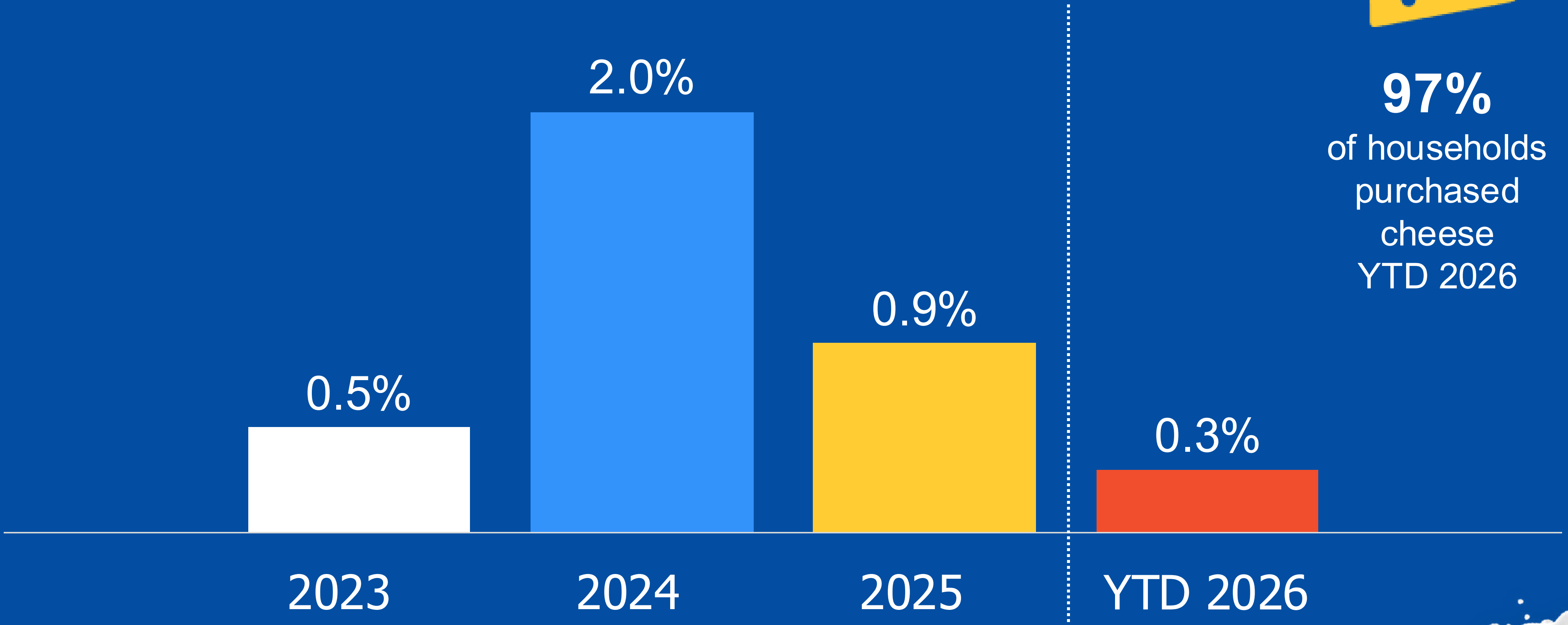
CHEESE IS THE MOST POPULAR DAIRY CATEGORY

Cheese ranks #1 based on dollar sales at retail outlets.

Source: Based on Volume Circana Retail Sales Total U.S. Year Ending 2025

CHEESE VOLUME GROWTH SLOWED IN 2025 AND INTO THIS YEAR

Total U.S. Retail: Cheese
% Change Volume Sales vs. Year Ago



97%
of households purchased cheese YTD 2026

Source: Cicana Total U.S. Retail Cheese Sales July 2026

NATURAL CHEESE MOMENTUM CONTINUES

	52 Wks Volume (M lbs)	52 Wks Vol Share	Latest 52 Wks	2026YTD (6/14)
Total Cheese	**5,528.5**	**100.0%**	**0.6%**	**0.3%**
Total Natural	**4,825.2**	**87.3%**	**1.2%**	**0.8%**
Cheddar	1,117.3	20.2%	-1.2%	-1.8%
Mozzarella	894.1	16.2%	2.1%	1.8%
Cream Cheese	557.2	10.1%	0.4%	0.8%
Blend	488.4	8.8%	-0.4%	-0.7%
Colby Jack	367.8	6.7%	3.9%	3.7%
Hispanic	206.3	3.7%	7.2%	5.3%
Parmesan	202.4	3.7%	2.1%	2.5%
Swiss	137.2	2.5%	-0.8%	-0.3%
Pepper Jack	107.5	1.9%	1.3%	2.8%
Ricotta	103.5	1.9%	0.2%	-1.9%
Provolone	92.8	1.7%	2.8%	3.1%
Monterey Jack	89.1	1.6%	0.0%	-0.4%
Feta	63.1	1.1%	2.0%	0.9%
Gouda	51.2	0.9%	7.8%	8.1%
Muenster	49.4	0.9%	0.8%	0.2%
Havarti	29.6	0.5%	-7.9%	-12.4%
Goat	21.5	0.4%	0.5%	-1.5%
Brie	17.0	0.3%	-1.3%	1.8%
Colby	11.9	0.2%	-7.8%	-10.3%
Total Processed	**680.2**	**12.3%**	**-3.1%**	**-3.0%**
American	472.3	8.5%	-2.2%	-2.5%
Total Imitation/Plant	**21.2**	**0.4%**	**-8.1%**	**-7.4%**

Volume Trends by Top Cheese Forms

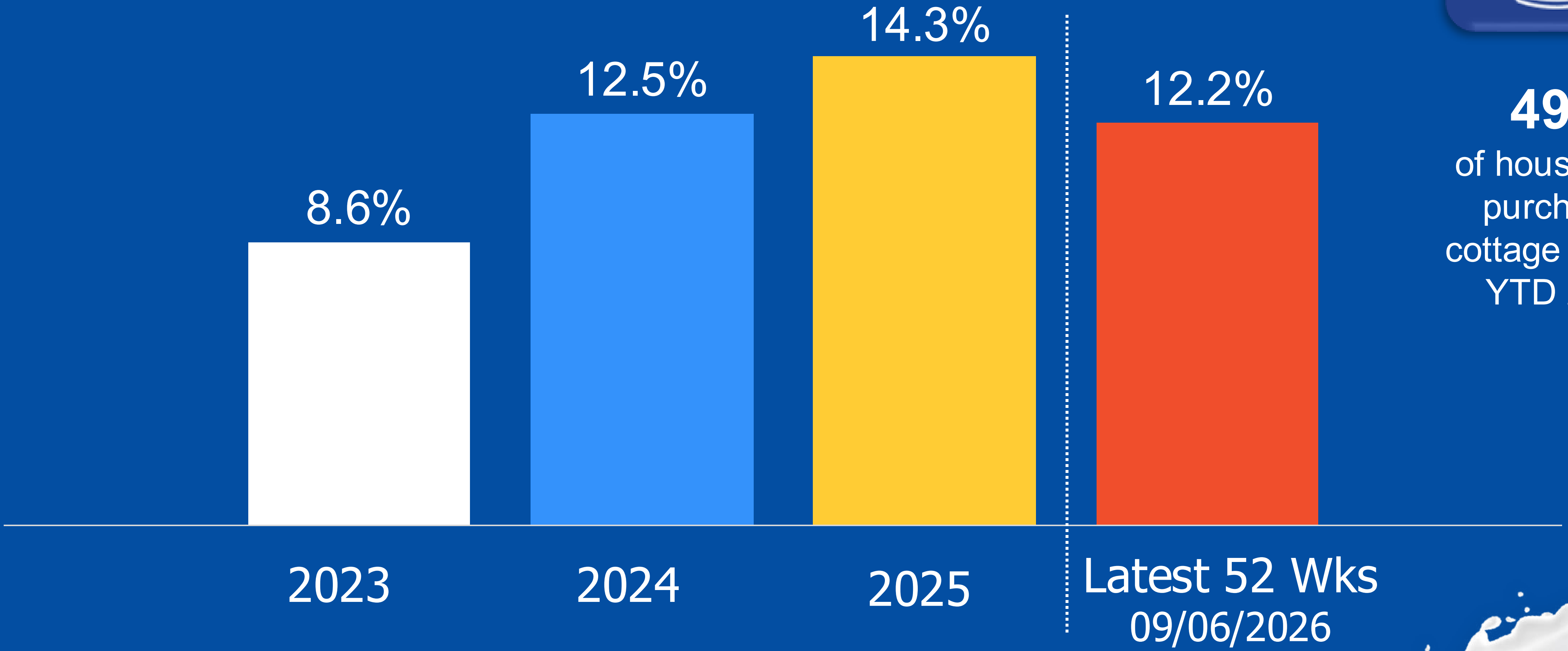
	Volume % Chg vs Yago			Volume Share
	Latest 52 Wks	2026YTD (6/14)	Latest 4 Wks	
Total Cheese	**0.6%**	**0.3%**	**-1.3%**	100.0%
Shredded	-0.7%	-1.5%	-3.2%	29.6%
Sliced	-1.7%	-2.2%	-3.9%	19.5%
Chunk	4.4%	4.0%	2.3%	15.7%
Cream Chs	0.4%	0.8%	-0.3%	10.1%
String/Stick	3.3%	4.3%	3.6%	5.9%
Loaf	-3.0%	-2.9%	-8.6%	2.2%
Grated	-1.4%	-0.4%	0.5%	2.0%
Grab & Go*	12.9%	17.2%	21.0%	2.0%
Ricotta	0.2%	-1.8%	-4.2%	1.9%
Round	4.0%	2.4%	1.0%	1.7%
Crumbled	1.7%	1.3%	-1.4%	1.4%
Spread	-3.1%	-3.7%	-8.2%	1.2%
Ball	8.3%	4.7%	5.0%	0.7%
Cube	6.6%	4.9%	7.6%	0.6%

** pre-sliced deli cheese*

Source: Circana Retail Sales & Mintel

COTTAGE CHEESE CONTINUES TO SHOW STRENGTH

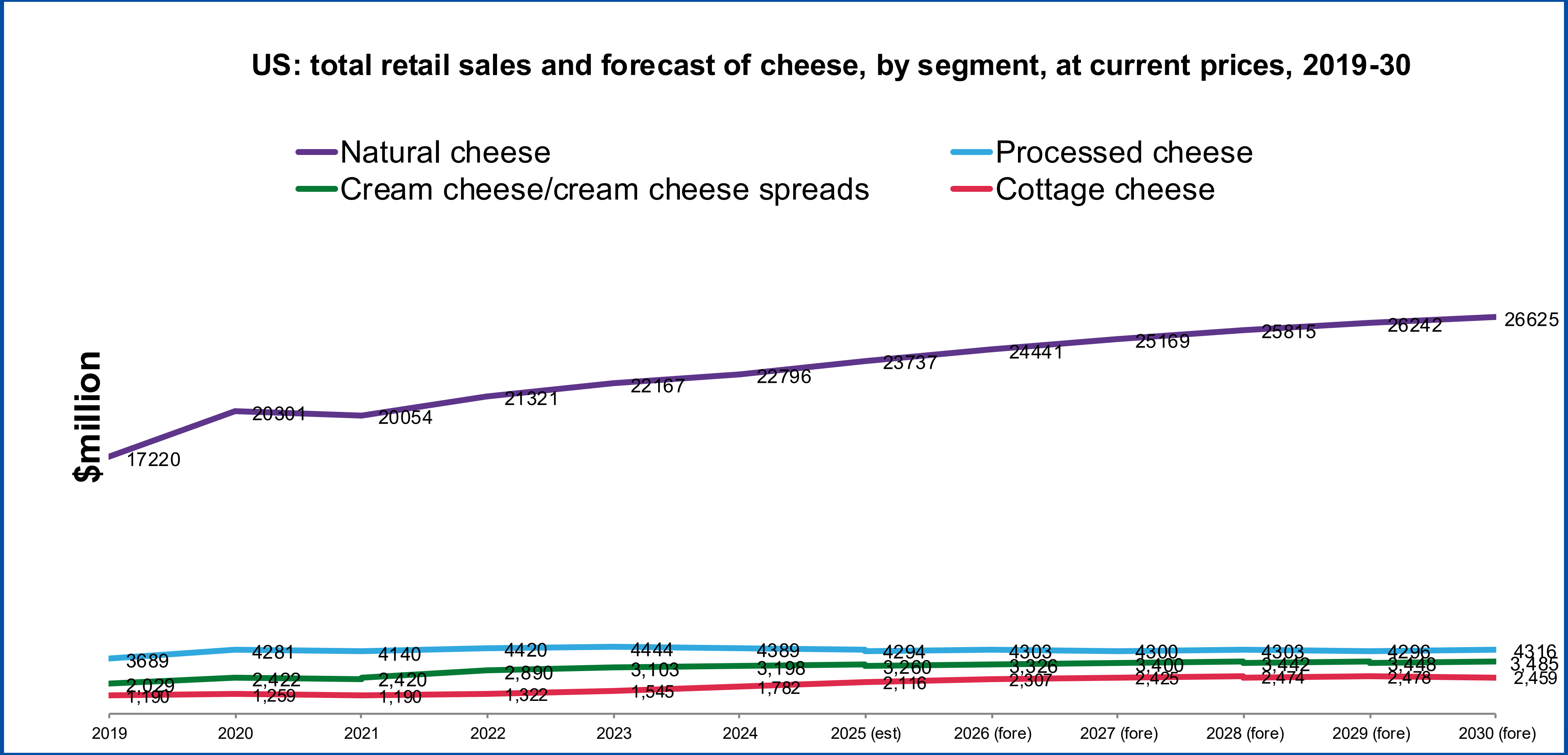
Total U.S. Retail: Cottage Cheese
% Change Volume Sales vs. Year Ago



49%
of households
purchased
cottage cheese
YTD 2026

Source: Cicana Total U.S. Retail Cheese Sales July 2026

CHEESE FORECAST: U.S. RETAIL SALES



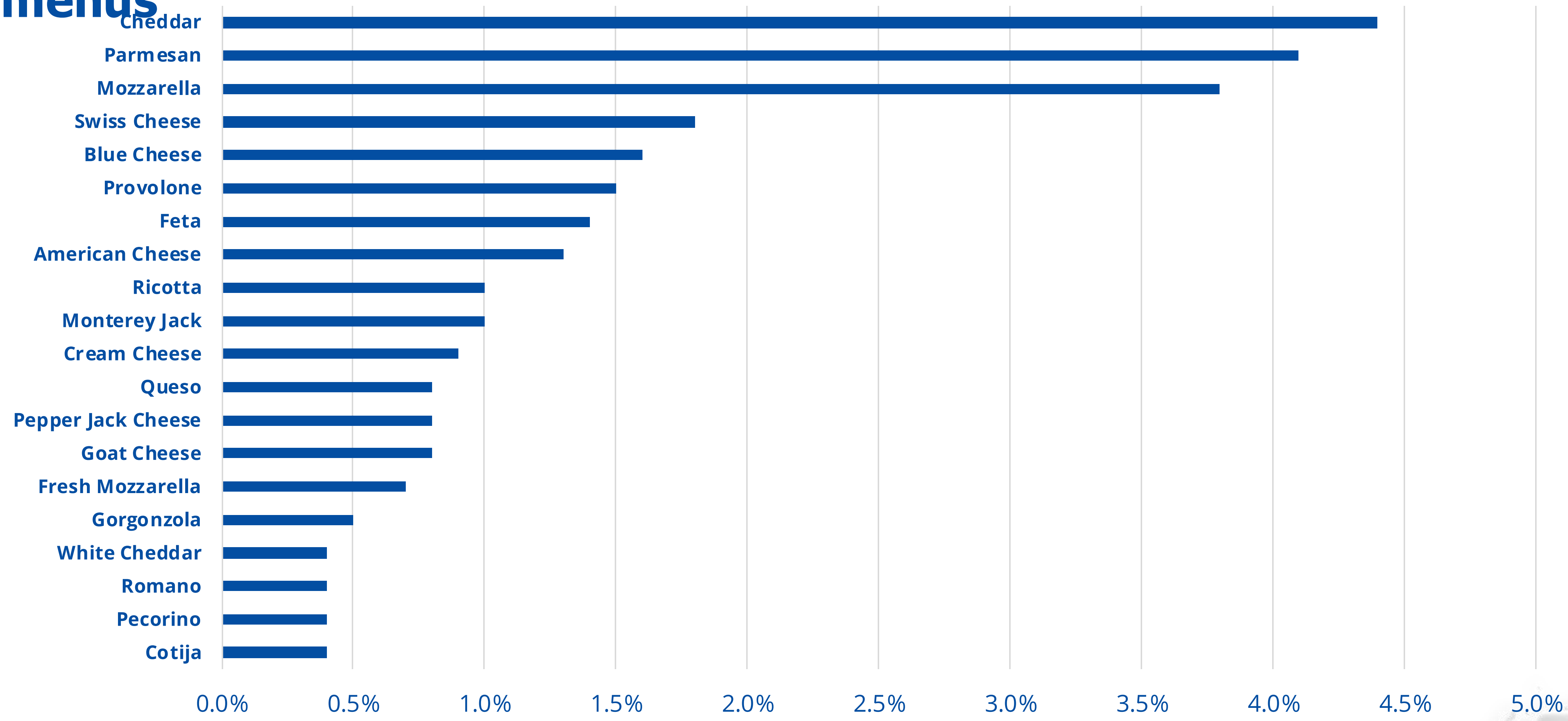
Source: Mintel Cheese Report

CHEESE & FOODSERVICE

Menu Trends

CHEESE APPEARS ON 21% OF MENUS

Cheddar & Parmesan are the most popular cheese called out on menus



Source: Technomic Menu Insights September 2026

RECENT LIMITED TIME OFFERS WITH HIGH CONSUMER APPEAL ON MENUS

Brisket Queso Fries
Aug 2026 Limited Time Offer

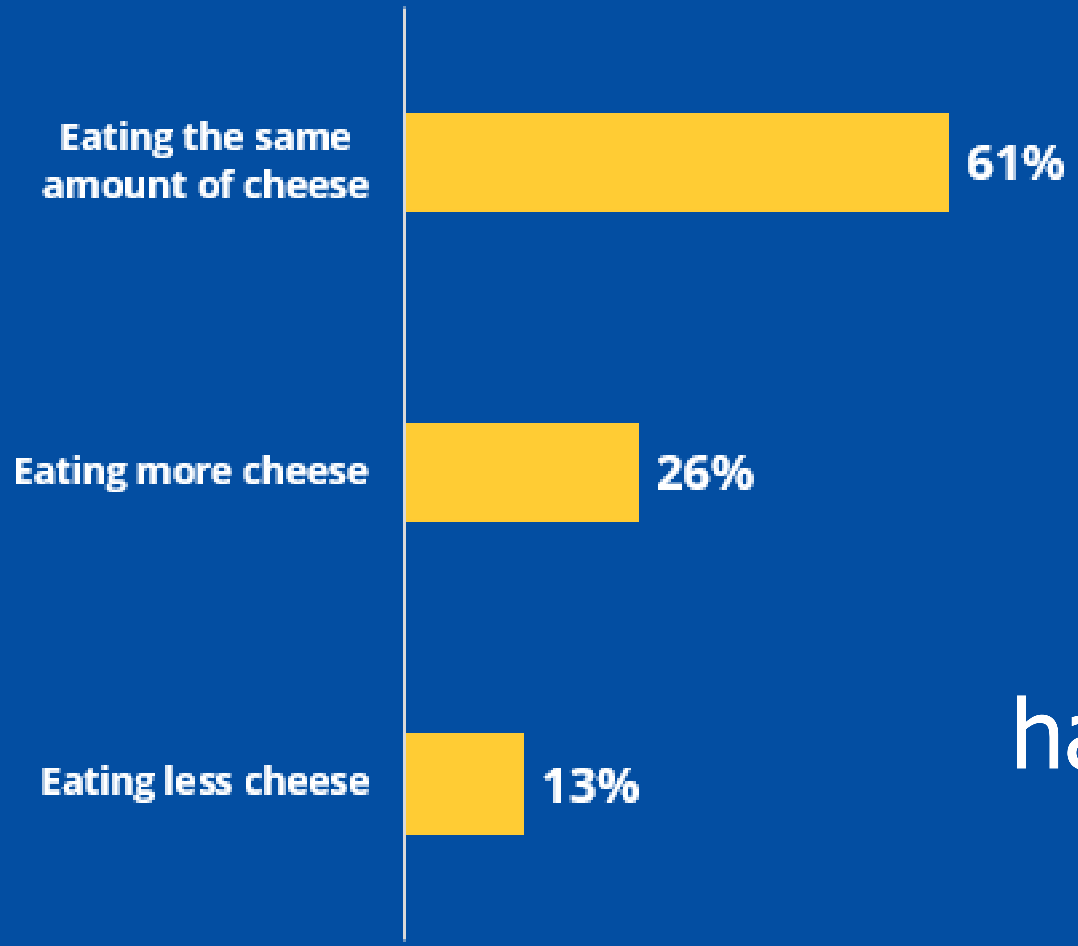
Baked Fettuccine
topped with mozzarella and provolone cheese
Limited Time Offer April 2026

Sources: Consumer Tested by Technomic 2026

WHAT'S DRIVING CHEESE CONSUMPTION

CHEESE CONSUMPTION ROUTINE & GROWING

% of U.S. consumers agreeing



77% say cheese is a favorite snack.

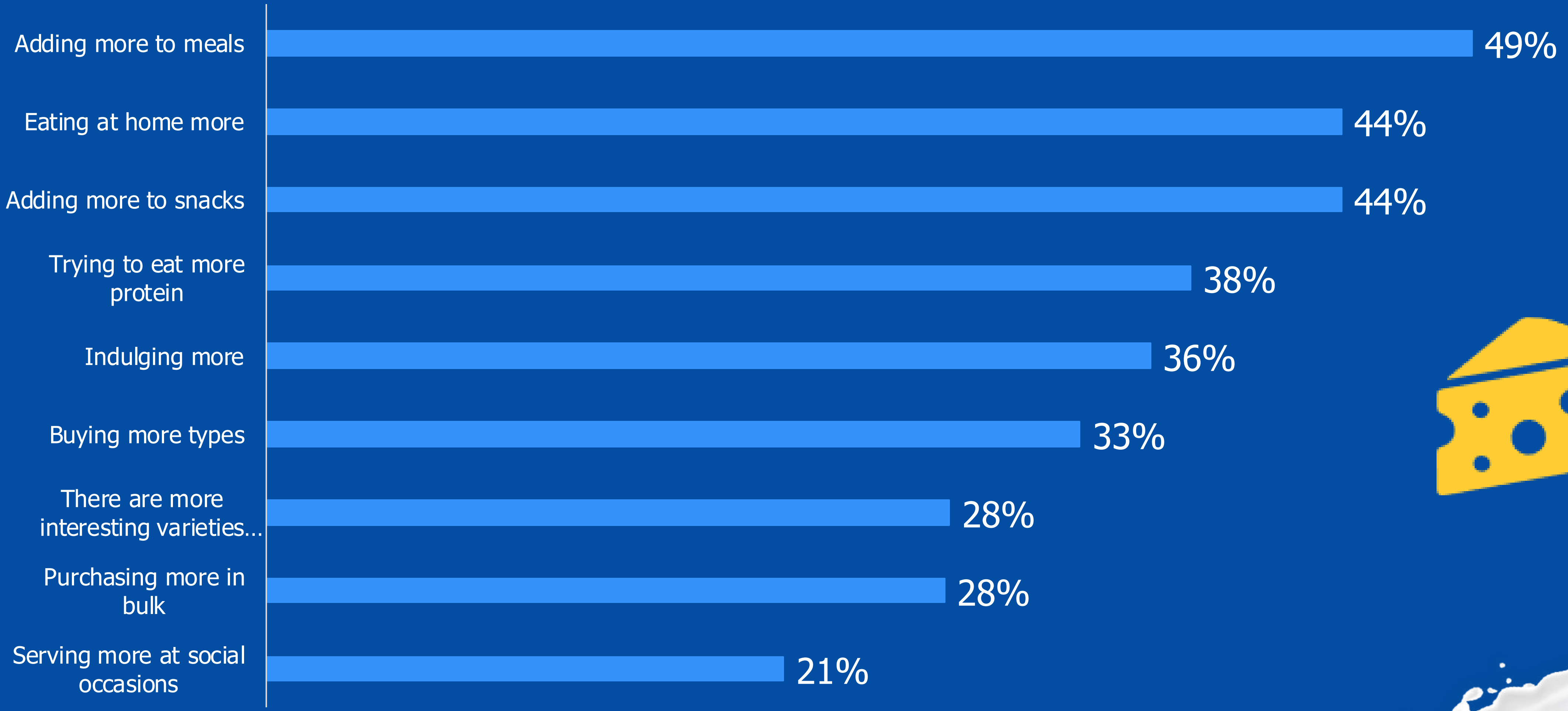
74% purchase cheese every time they shop.

57% agree cheese has a place in their daily diet.

Source: Mintel Cheese Report 2026

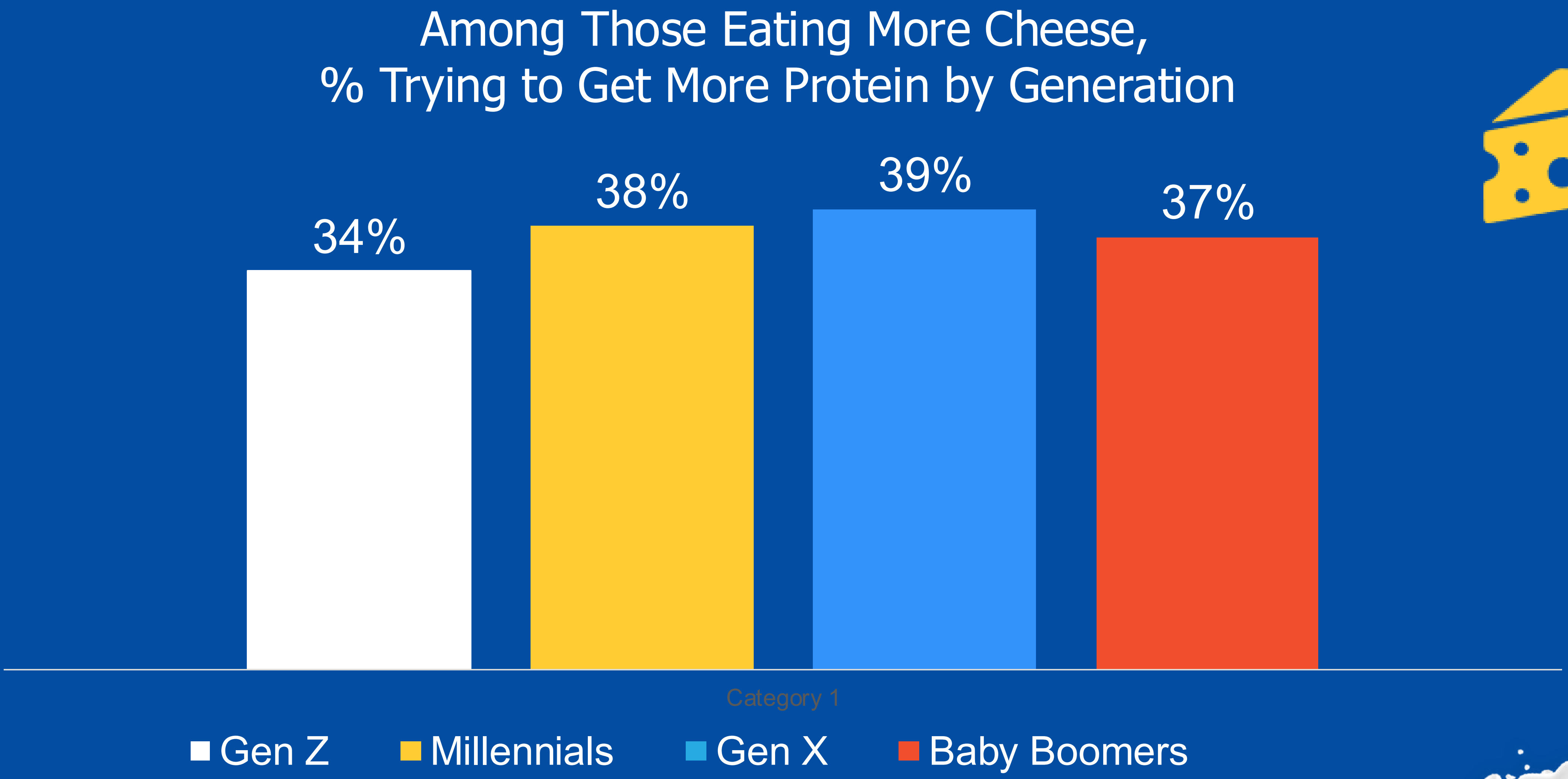
ADDING MORE TO MEALS/SNACKS AND EATING MORE AT HOME DRIVES CONSUMPTIO

Top Reasons for Eating More Cheese (% of U.S. Consumers)



Source: Miintel Consumer Cheese Report

ALL GENERATIONS CITE EATING MORE CHEESE FOR IT'S PROTEIN



Source: Mintel Cheese Report 2026

RETAIL: NEW PROTEIN FOCUSED CHEESE

Each stick delivers 17 grams of protein per serving and contains 50% less fat than Kraft Natural Cheese's traditional Mild Cheddar and Pepper Jack Cheese varieties.

Source: Company Website

MIDWEST Dairy

RETAIL: NEW PROTEIN FOCUSED CHEESE

Babybel PRO combines 5g of protein and 1 billion live & active LGG probiotics in a convenient, 50-calorie snack made with 100% real cheese and four real ingredients.

Source: Company Website

RETAIL: PROTEIN FOCUSED CHEESE

- Lactose Intolerance Friendly
- Live and Active Probiotic Cultures
- 15g of Protein per serving
- Made with Reduced Fat Milk
- High in Calcium
- Gluten-Free
- No Added Salt or Sugar
- Non-GMO Ingredients

Source: Company Website

NEW PROTEIN FOCUSED MENU ITEMS WITH CHEESE

DOUBLE HIGH PROTEIN BOWL

81g Protein | 760 Cal

Double Adobo Chicken, Light White Rice, Black Beans, Fajita Veggies, Fresh Tomato Salsa, Monterey Jack Cheese, and Extra Lettuce

81g
PROTEIN

DOUBLE HIGH PROTEIN BURRITO

79g Protein | 840 Cal

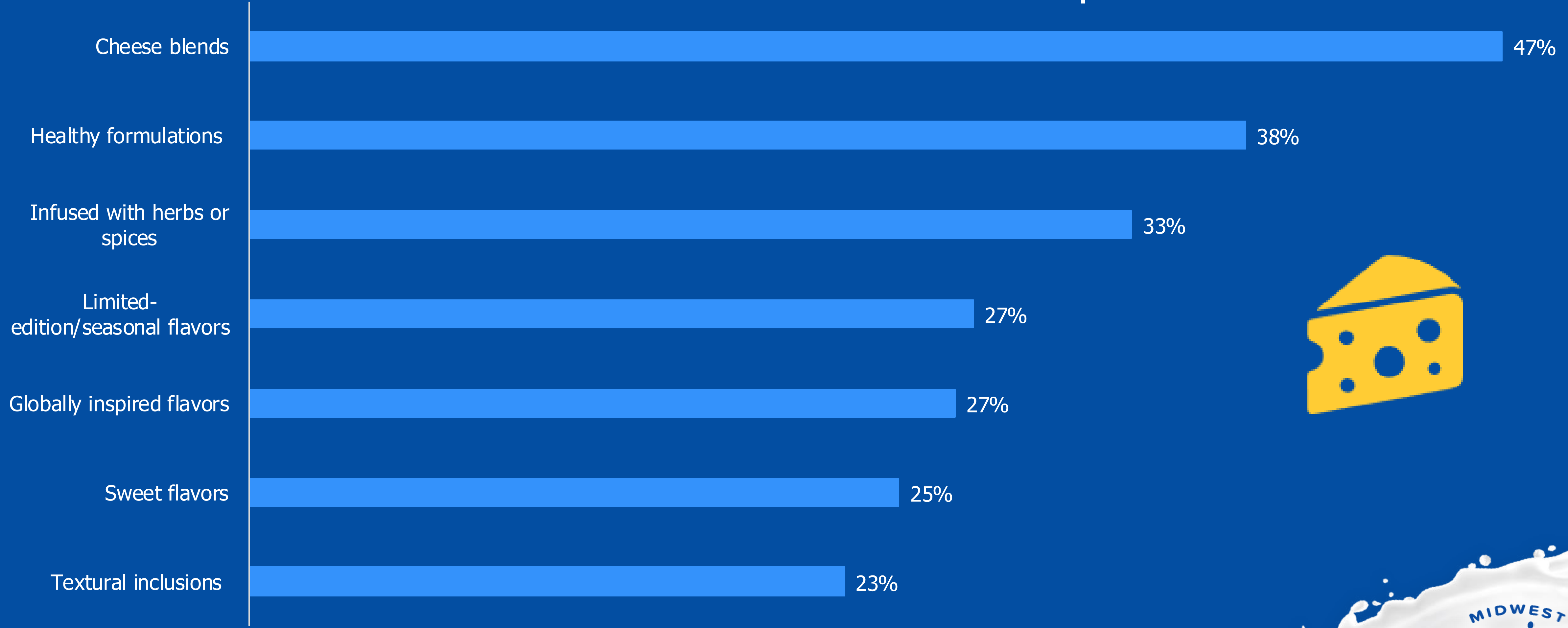
Double Adobo Chicken, Fajita Veggies, Fresh Tomato Salsa, Monterey Jack Cheese, and Lettuce

79g
PROTEIN

Source: Company Website

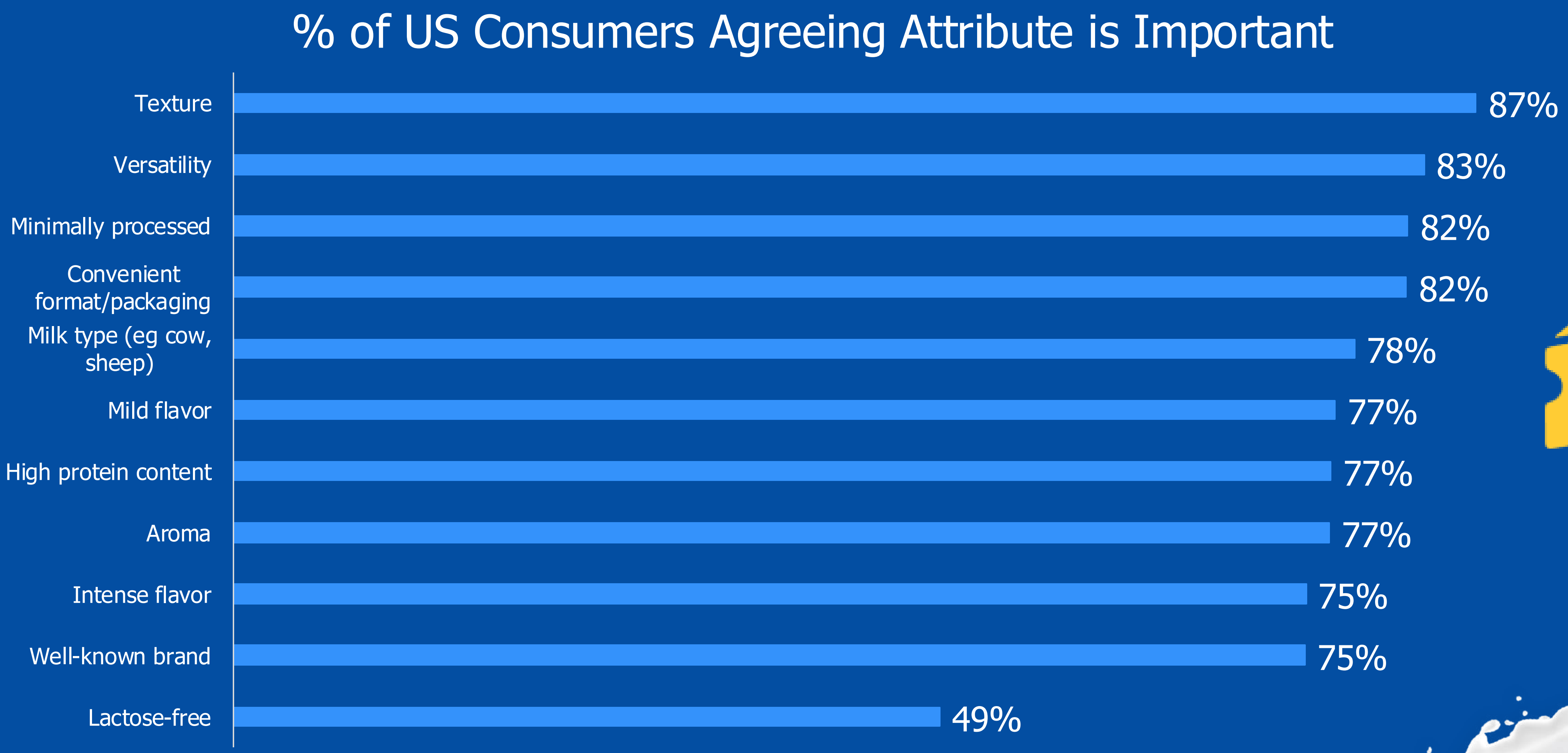
NEARLY HALF OF CONSUMERS SAY CHEESE BLENDS INTEREST THEM

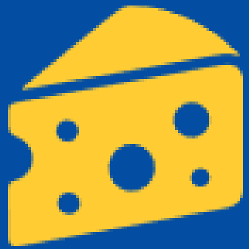
% of U.S. Consumers Interest in Concept



Source: Miintel Consumer Cheese Report 2026

CHEESE TEXTURE IS VERY IMPORTANT

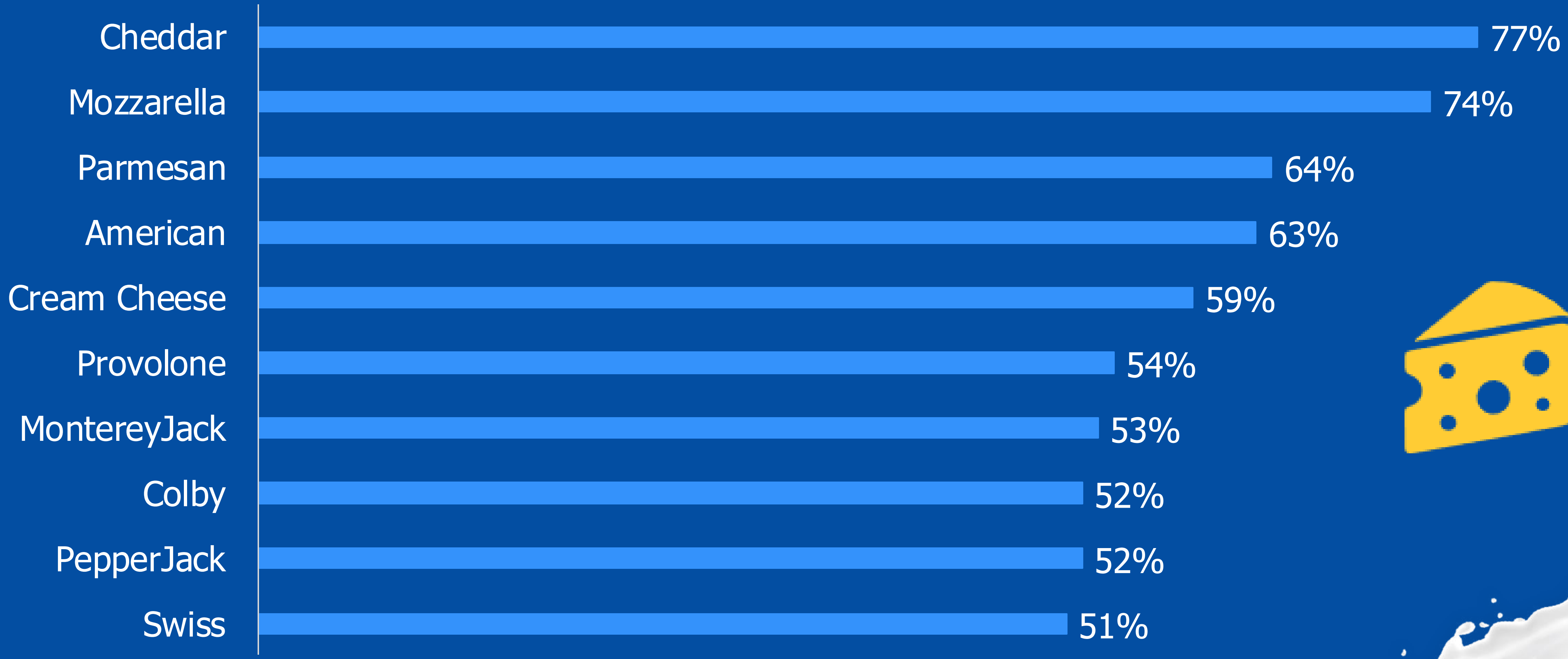




Source: Miintel Consumer Cheese Report 2026

CHEDDAR AND MOZZARELLA APPEAL MOST TO CONSUMERS

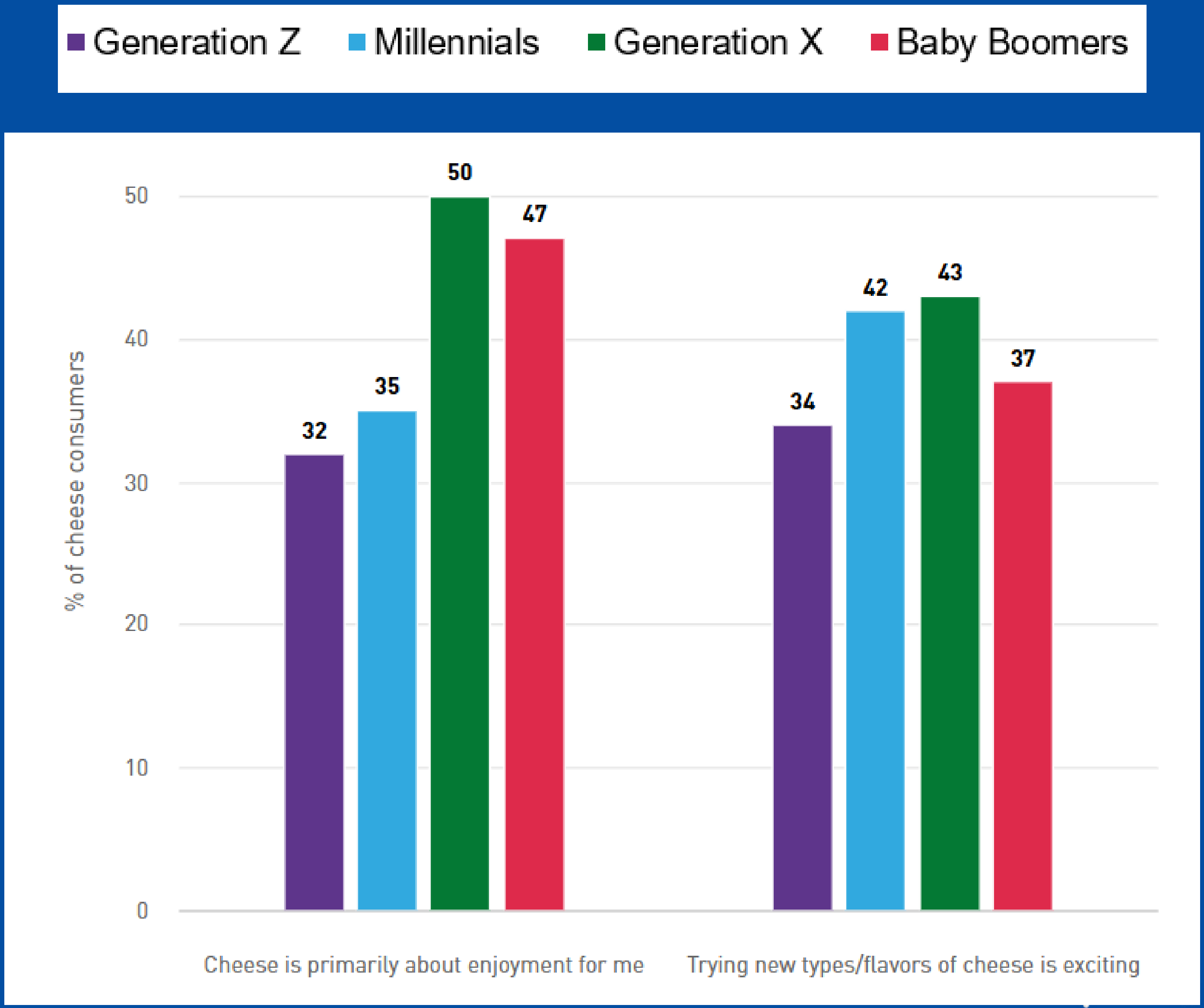
% of U.S. Consumers Saying Cheese Variety is "Favorite"

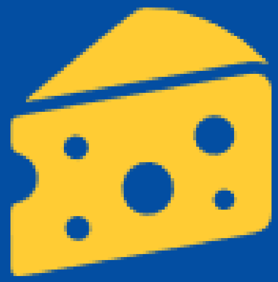


Source: DMI Proprietary Research based on 5,000 consumers

GEN X IS THE SWEET SPOT FOR FLAVOR EXPLORATION

US: Cheese Flavor/Enjoyment by Generation

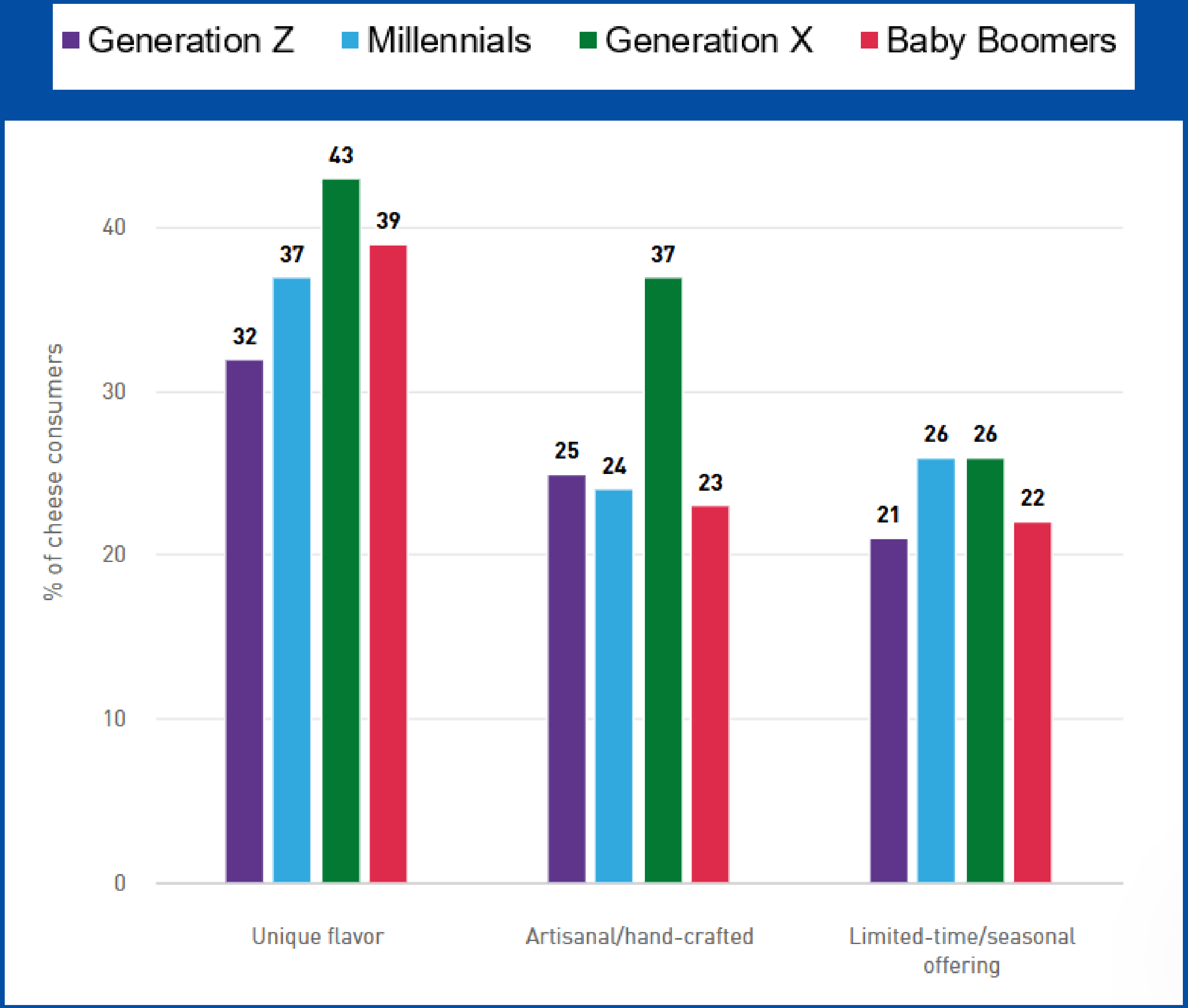




Source: Mintel Cheese Report 2026

GEN X IS ALSO MOST WILLING TO PAY MORE PREMIUM

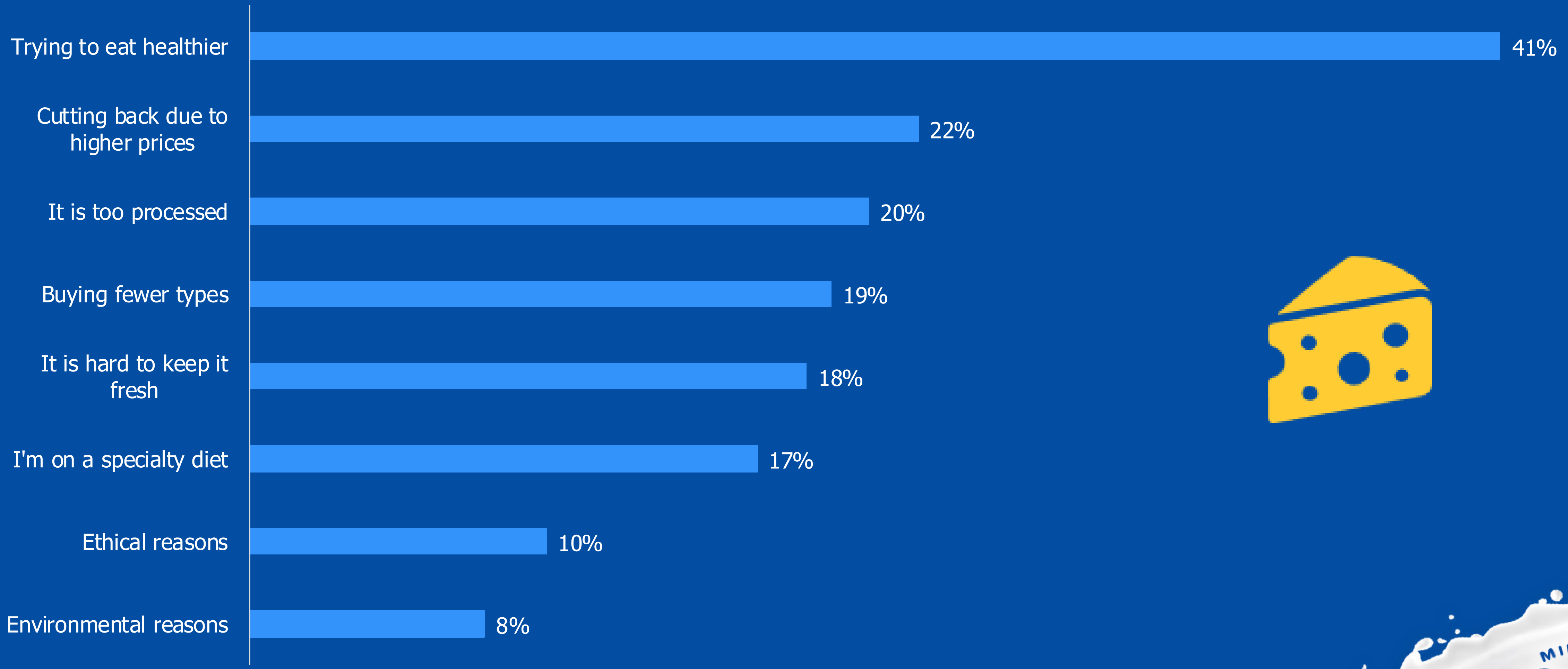
US: Cheese Willingness to Pay More by Generation



Source: Mintel Cheese Report 2026

HEALTH CONCERNS AND HIGHER PRICES HOLD BACK CONSUMPTION

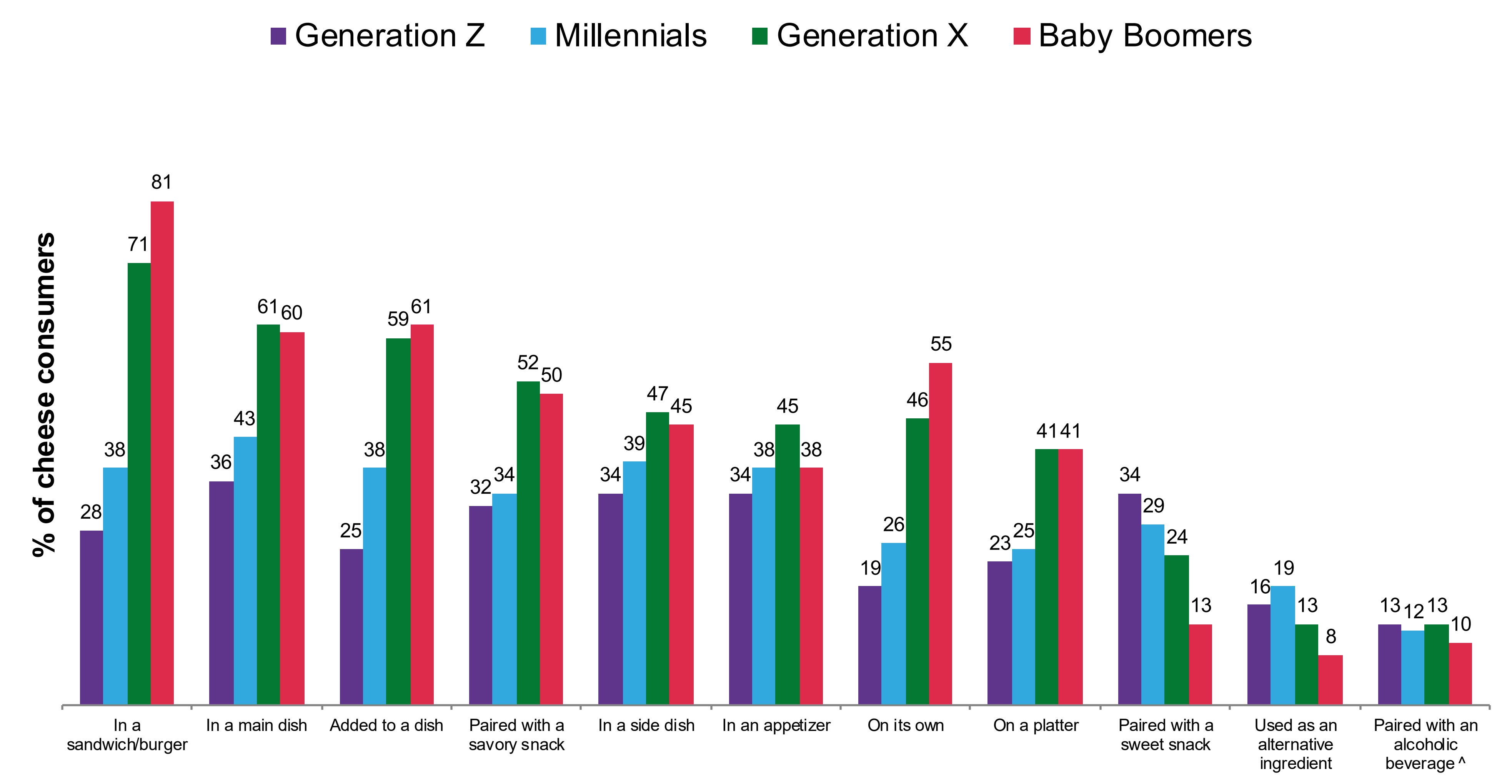
Top Reasons for Eating Less Cheese (% of US Consumers)



Source: Miintel Consumer Cheese Report 2026

YOUNGER GENERATIONS CITE LOWER CONSUMPTION AND UNDER UTILIZATION ACROSS OCCASIONS, PRESENTING A CHALLENGE

US: % Cheese Using by Generation



Source: Mintel Cheese Report 2026

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The use of brands and images of branded products are intended only to provide examples of concepts being discussed, and do not imply endorsement of any brand or product.

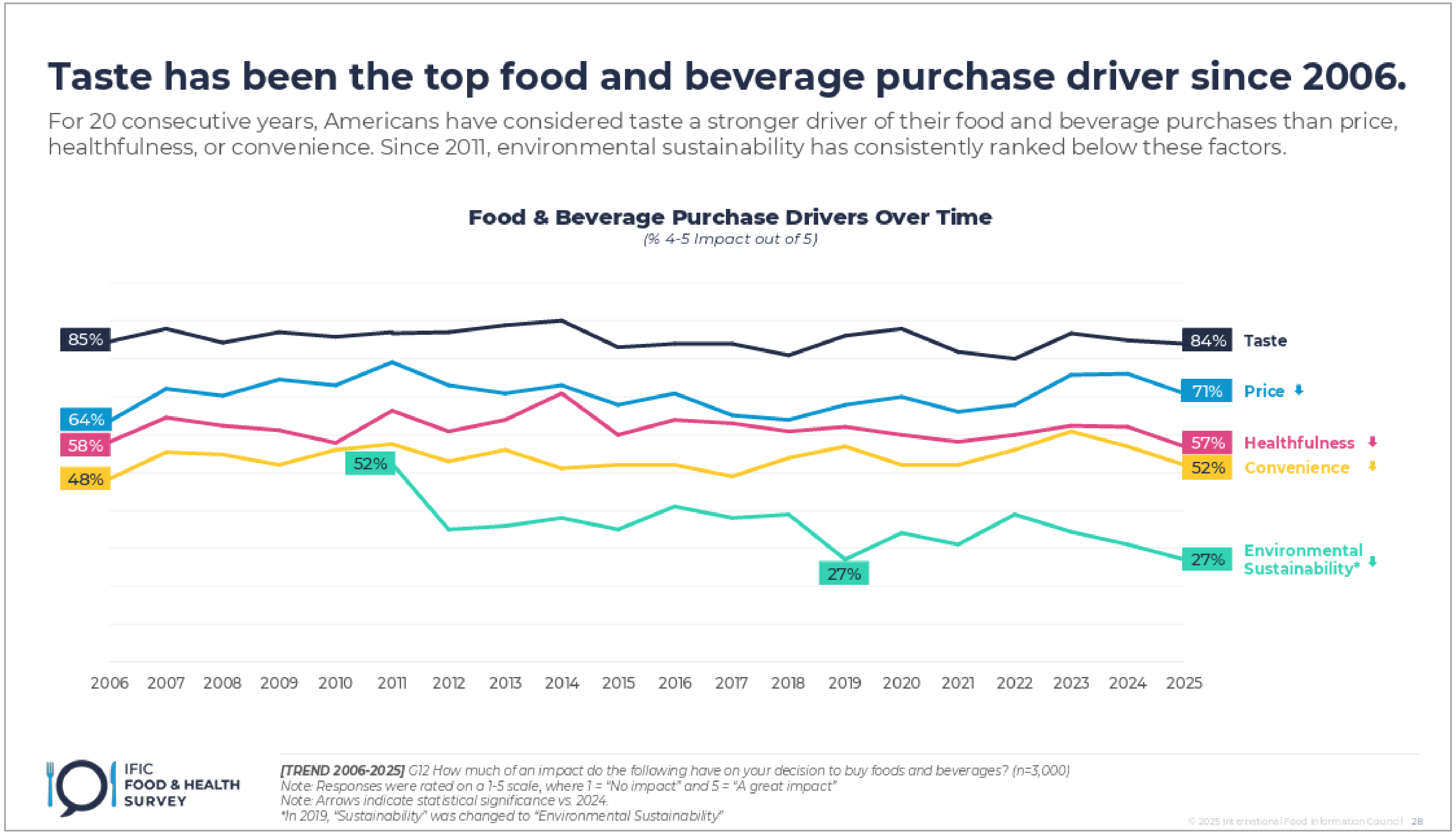
DMI DAIRY MANAGEMENT INC.

2026

Protein Spotlight: Learnings From DMI Custom Research

Strategic Intelligence by Dairy Management Inc. | Private & Confidential

Taste (and price) continue to be the top purchase drivers when making food and beverage choices



But balancing taste with health & wellness is a continuous challenge

The recent Protein Deep Dive showed us that protein is a way consumers are getting the best of both worlds

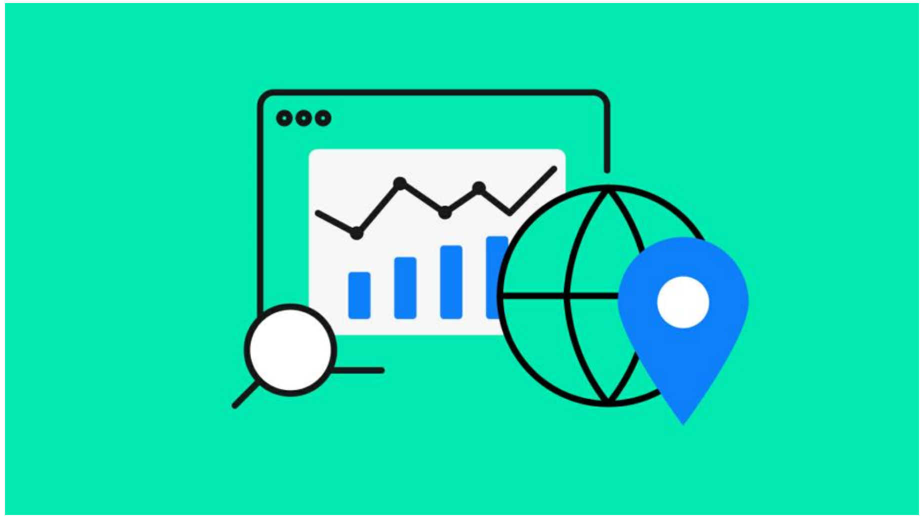
We learned

- That the demand for protein is strong and growing (in both retail and foodservice)
- Consumers are increasingly associating protein with a health halo
- One of the next biggest opportunities is about protein quality

For as much protein data that exists, there are still outstanding questions we needed to explore…

- What is a motivating amount/level of protein per product (by dairy category)?
- What do consumers know about protein quality? How to best communicate that?
- What do consumers know about nutrient density? How to best communicate that?

…so we did custom research.



Research Q&A

1

What do consumers know about protein quality? Very little

43% of consumers say they are familiar with "high-quality protein" while only 36% select the right definition when asked.
Plant-Based consumers are most familiar with the term (55%) and can identify the correct definition.

2

What do consumers know about complete protein? Very little

37% say they are familiar with "complete protein" while only 8% correctly define it as containing essential amino acids.
Many adults confuse complete protein with hitting their daily protein quota.

3

What do consumers know about nutrient density? Very little

33% say they are familiar with "nutrient density" though few correctly identify the definition.
Many adults reference "lots of nutrients" when asked what the term means. More adults believe dairy is nutrient dense (52%) compared to plant-based protein (43%).

Research Q&A

4 What is the right amount of protein per product? It depends

Preferred protein amount varies by product category.

- One-in-five consumers want protein shakes (19%) and whey (18%) to deliver 30g+ per serving.
- For dairy staples like Greek yogurt (51%), cottage cheese (50%), regular yogurt (53%), whole milk (49%), half of adults look for 6–20 grams per serving.

5 Do consumers count protein grams? Yes

Half of protein-minded adults (51%) say they track their protein intake precisely or loosely and 22% have a specific daily gram target. Specific protein targets fall between 50 and 124 grams of protein daily for nearly three-quarters of adults with protein goals (71%). One-third (36%) find specific gram amounts the most compelling on packaging.

6 Do consumers want all of their protein from a snack or meal? No

Most adults want their protein spread out throughout the day. Two-in-five (37%) protein-minded adults include protein in every meal, 28% spread it evenly, 22% load up on active days. Dinner (74%), breakfast (69%), and lunch (60%) are the focal points.

7 Do consumers look for “good” or “high” protein claims? No

Half of consumers (50%) check Nutrition Facts labels on packages, while just 35% look for front-of-package claims. When asked what stands out on packaging, most adults call out specific protein amounts. One-third (36%) find a specific protein number on pack most compelling (e.g., "30g of protein"), vs. 20% for general claims like "high in protein." The preference holds across key groups and is strongest among Boomers (44%) and loose protein trackers (44%).

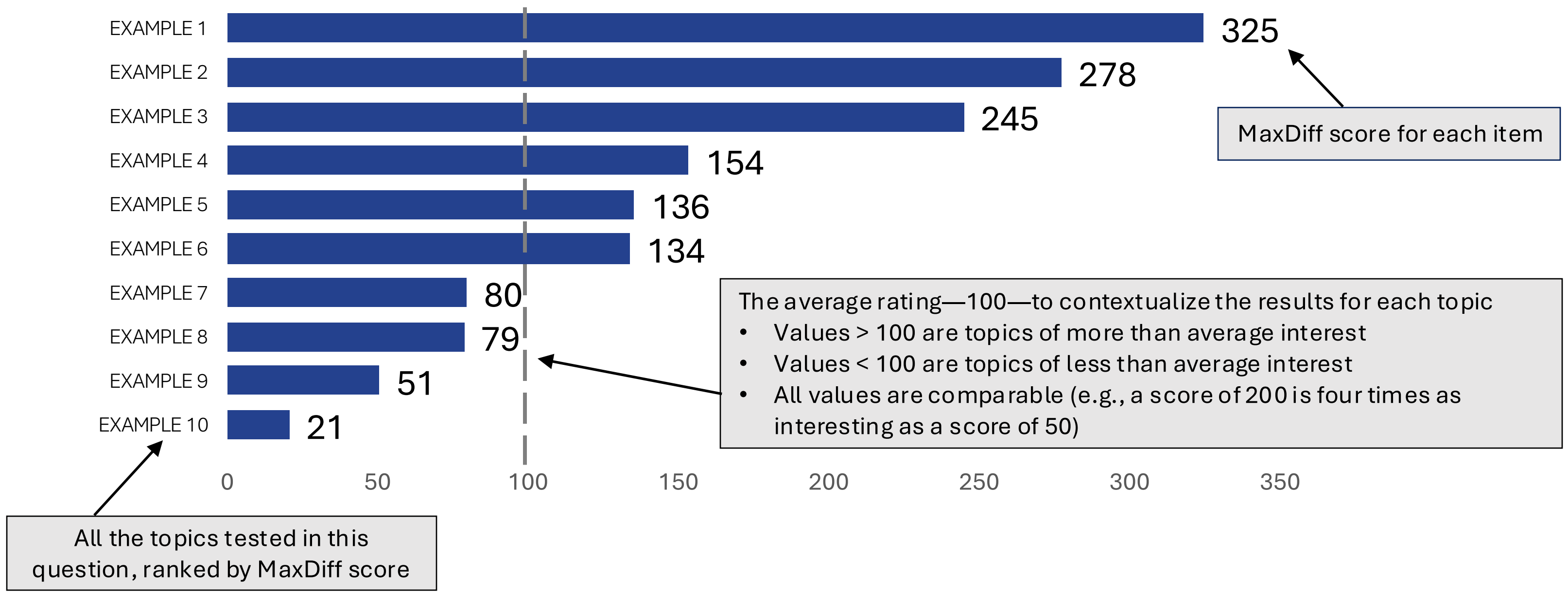
MaxDiff Methodology

Survey conducted June 10-14, 2026

Sample:

- 405 Milk consumers
- 402 Yogurt consumers
- 400 Cheese consumers
- 400 Cottage cheese consumers
- 400 Nutritional beverage consumers

How to read MaxDiff Results



Claims Tested

To understand which on-package protein messaging motivates dairy consumers to purchase products in each category, we tested a comprehensive set of claims across five product categories. Claims were developed based on existing in-market protein claims and results from the first survey to reflect what consumers look for, what they value, and what they think about when shopping.

5 CATEGORIES

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cottage Cheese
- Cheese
- Nutritional Beverages

7 CATEGORIZATIONS

Quantity

Specific gram amounts (e.g., '8g of protein') based on the actual protein gram amounts in each product

Quality

Messaging focused on protein type

Content Claims

Broad descriptor language conveying protein presence

Functional Benefit

Health outcome language

Comparative

Comparisons to protein benchmark foods. Each category saw 3 comparative claims, comparisons varied across product category

Quantity + Quality

Gram amounts paired with "complete protein" language

Bioavailability

Language about protein's absorption in the body

Claims Tested Per Dairy Product Category

	Cottage Cheese	Cheese
Quantity	12 grams of protein per serving 18 grams of protein per serving 25 grams of protein per serving	8 grams of protein per serving 12 grams of protein per serving 25 grams of protein per serving
Quantity + Quality	12 grams of complete protein 18 grams of complete protein	8 grams of complete protein 12 grams of complete protein
Content Claim	Excellent source of protein Protein rich Natural source of protein Protein packed High in protein	Excellent source of protein Protein rich Natural source of protein Protein packed High in protein
Quality	Complete protein High-quality protein Protein enriched Added protein Contains all essential amino acids	Complete protein High-quality protein Protein enriched Added protein Contains all essential amino acids
Functional Benefit	Dairy protein supports overall health Dairy protein supports muscle health Dairy protein supports healthy aging Dairy protein helps support sustained energy Dairy protein helps you feel full and satisfied Dairy protein supports heart health	Dairy protein supports overall health Dairy protein supports muscle health Dairy protein supports healthy aging Dairy protein helps support sustained energy Dairy protein helps you feel full and satisfied Dairy protein supports heart health
Bioavailability	Easily absorbed protein	Easily absorbed protein
Comparative	50% more protein than other cottage cheese 2x the protein of other cottage cheese As much protein as a protein shake	50% more protein than other cheese 2x the protein of other cheese As much protein as an egg

Claims Tested Per Dairy Product Category

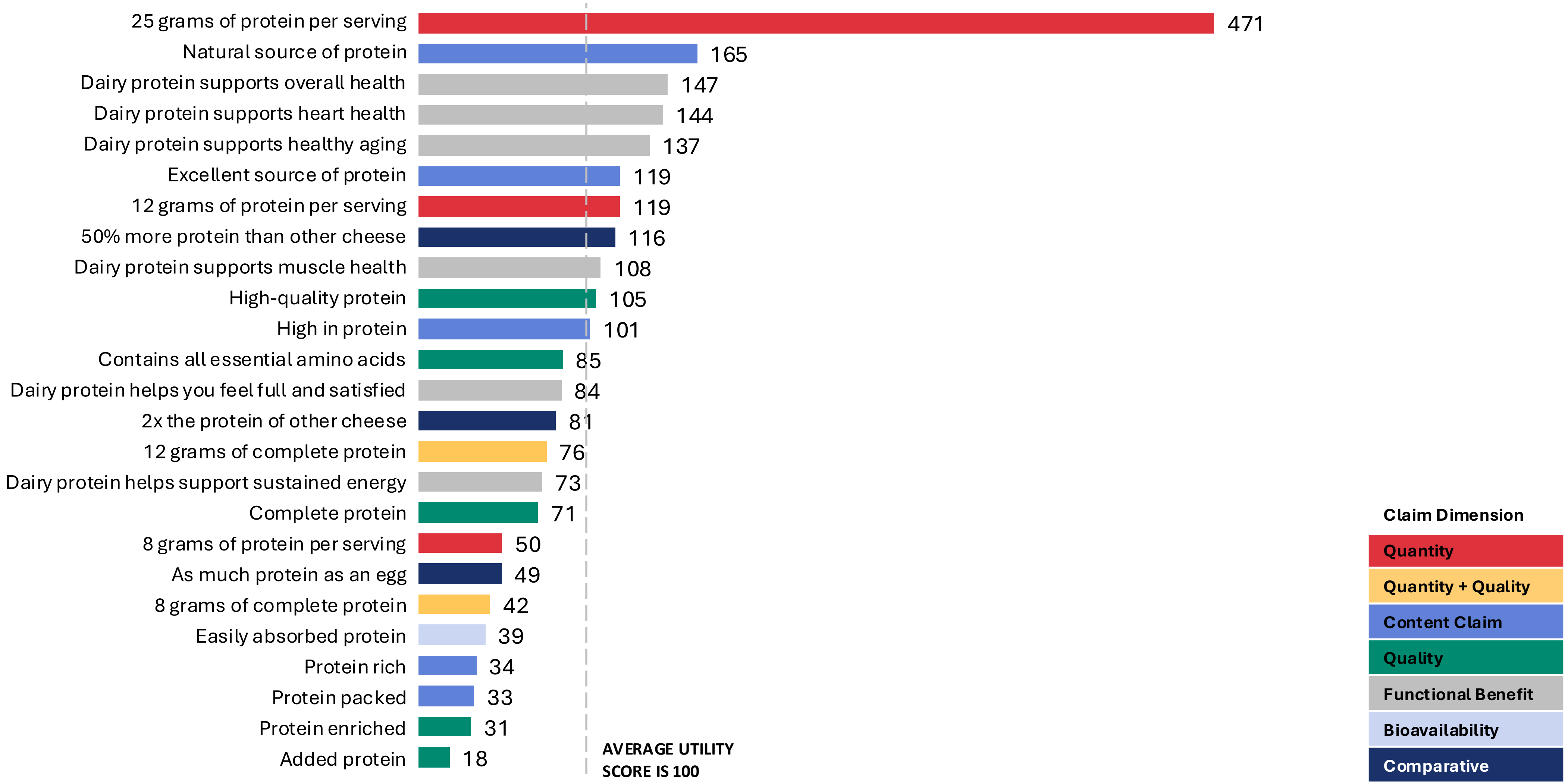
	Cottage Cheese	Cheese
Complete Protein	12 grams of complete protein 18 grams of complete protein	8 grams of complete protein 12 grams of complete protein
Nutrient Density	Excellent source of protein	Excellent source of protein
Nutrient Density	Protein rich	Protein rich
Protein Quality	Natural source of protein	Natural source of protein
Nutrient Density	Protein packed	Protein packed
Nutrient Density	High in protein	High in protein
Complete Protein	Complete protein	Complete protein
Protein Quality	High-quality protein	High-quality protein
Nutrient Density	Protein enriched	Protein enriched
Nutrient Density	Added protein	Added protein
Complete Protein	Contains all essential amino acids	Contains all essential amino acids
Protein Quality / Complete Protein	Easily absorbed protein	Easily absorbed protein
Nutrient Density	50% more protein than other cottage cheese 2x the protein of other cottage cheese As much protein as a protein shake	50% more protein than other cheese 2x the protein of other cheese As much protein as an egg

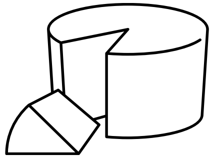
*Functional benefits and quantity claims excluded from this chart as they do not fall into a protein quality type bucket.

Cheese Claims

Quantity claims lead for cheese, but “natural source of protein” and functional benefits fill the top tier

“50% more protein than other cheese” is the strongest comparative claim for cheese.



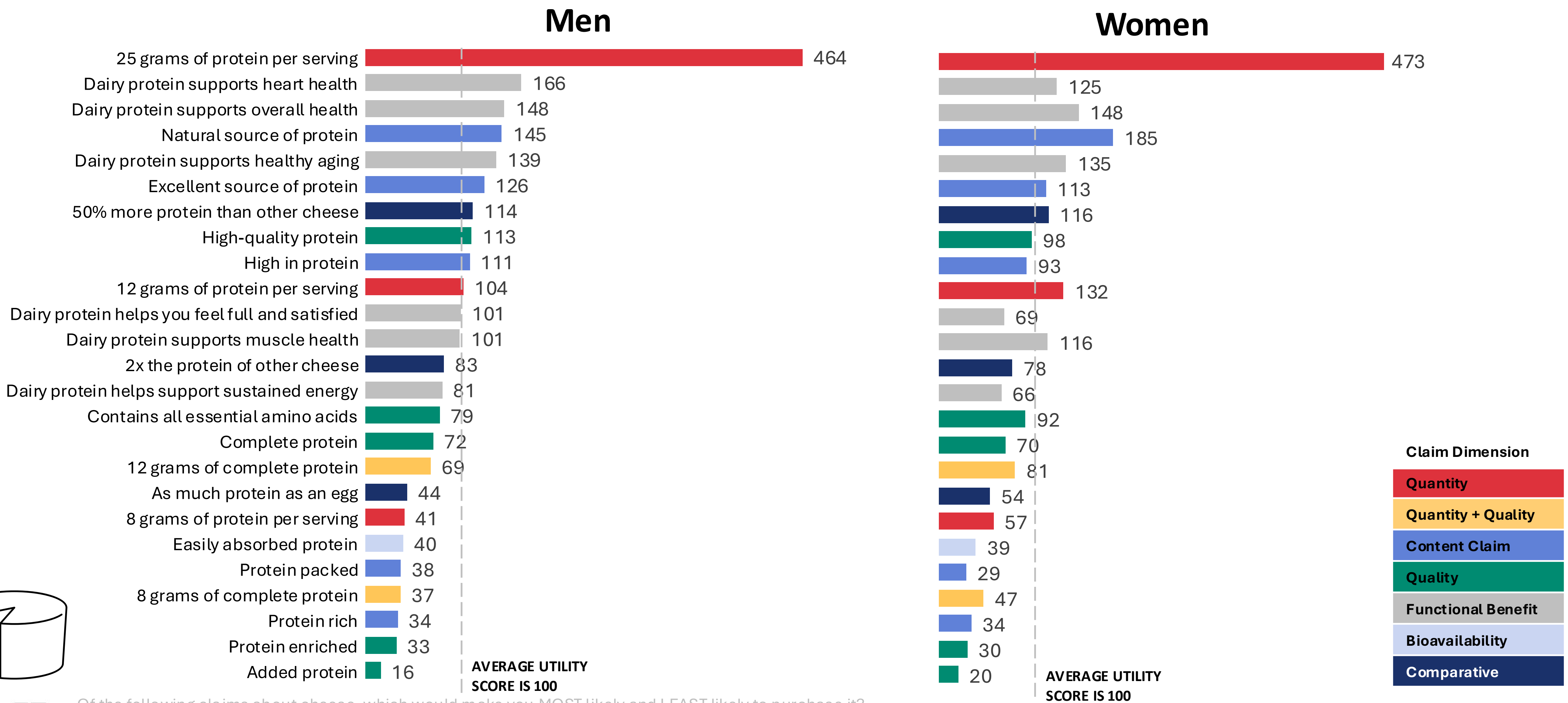


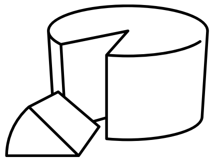
Of the following claims about cheese, which would make you MOST likely and LEAST likely to purchase it?

Base: Cheese Consumers (n=400)

High gram count drives demand for both genders, but men prefer maximum protein grams while women also say “12g per serving” motivates

Women also respond more to “natural source of protein” while men respond more to “heart health” claims.





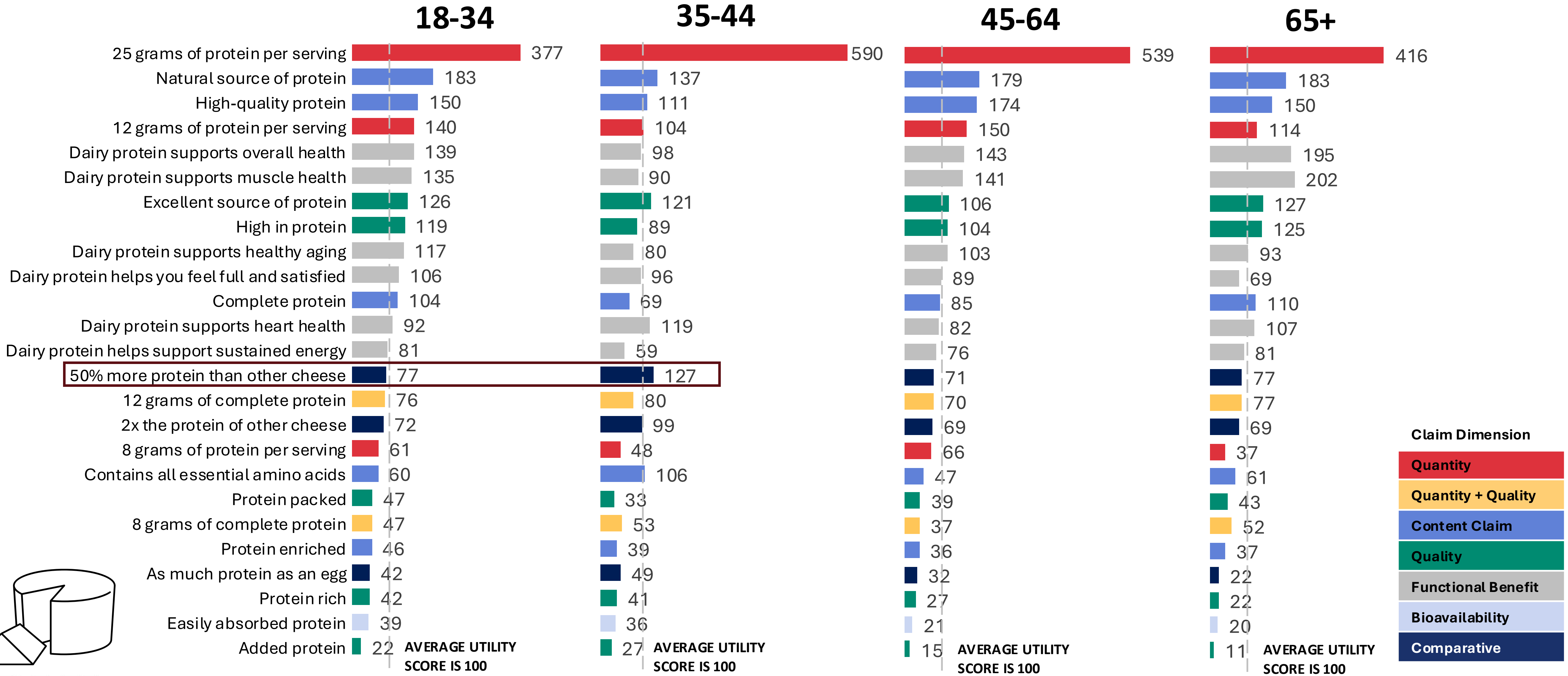
Of the following claims about cheese, which would make you MOST likely and LEAST likely to purchase it?

DMI
DAIRY MANAGEMENT INC.

Base: Men (n=195); Women (n=203)

Quantity and content claims rise to the top for consumers under 35 and 45 to 64. “50% more protein” stands out for 35–44 year-old consumers

Functional benefit claims motivate 65+ consumers but also compel 18-34 and 45-64 groups more than other claims.



Of the following claims about cheese, which would make you MOST likely and LEAST likely to purchase it?

Base: Age: 18-34 (n=117); Age: 35-44 (n=68); Age: 45-64 (n=120); Age: 65+ (n=94)

Cheese Claims: Key Findings

Quantity and Health Claims Prevail

Quantity claims lead, but other broad claims also surface. Consumers resonate with "natural source of protein" along with other functional-benefit claims.

Naturalness matters - "natural source of protein" claim outranks nearly every numeric or comparative claim, except the "25g per serving," signaling cheese buyers reward wholesomeness, not just amount.

Implication: Cheese consumers are not quantity-monolithic. Protein content matters, but so does naturalness and health benefits.

Gender Differences

Neither gender leans purely quantity when looking to purchase cheese, though "25g per serving" dominates all claims.

Women are also driven by "natural source of protein" claims.

Heart-health and overall health messaging resonates more than many quantity claims for men.

Implication: In addition to calling out high protein quantity, tailor by claim type: "natural source" for women and "heart health" for men.

Age Differences

Quantity claims matter across ages, but peaks among 35-64 consumers.

65+ consumers are focused on functional benefits, with claims about dairy benefits related to "overall health," "healthy aging," and "heart health" resonating.

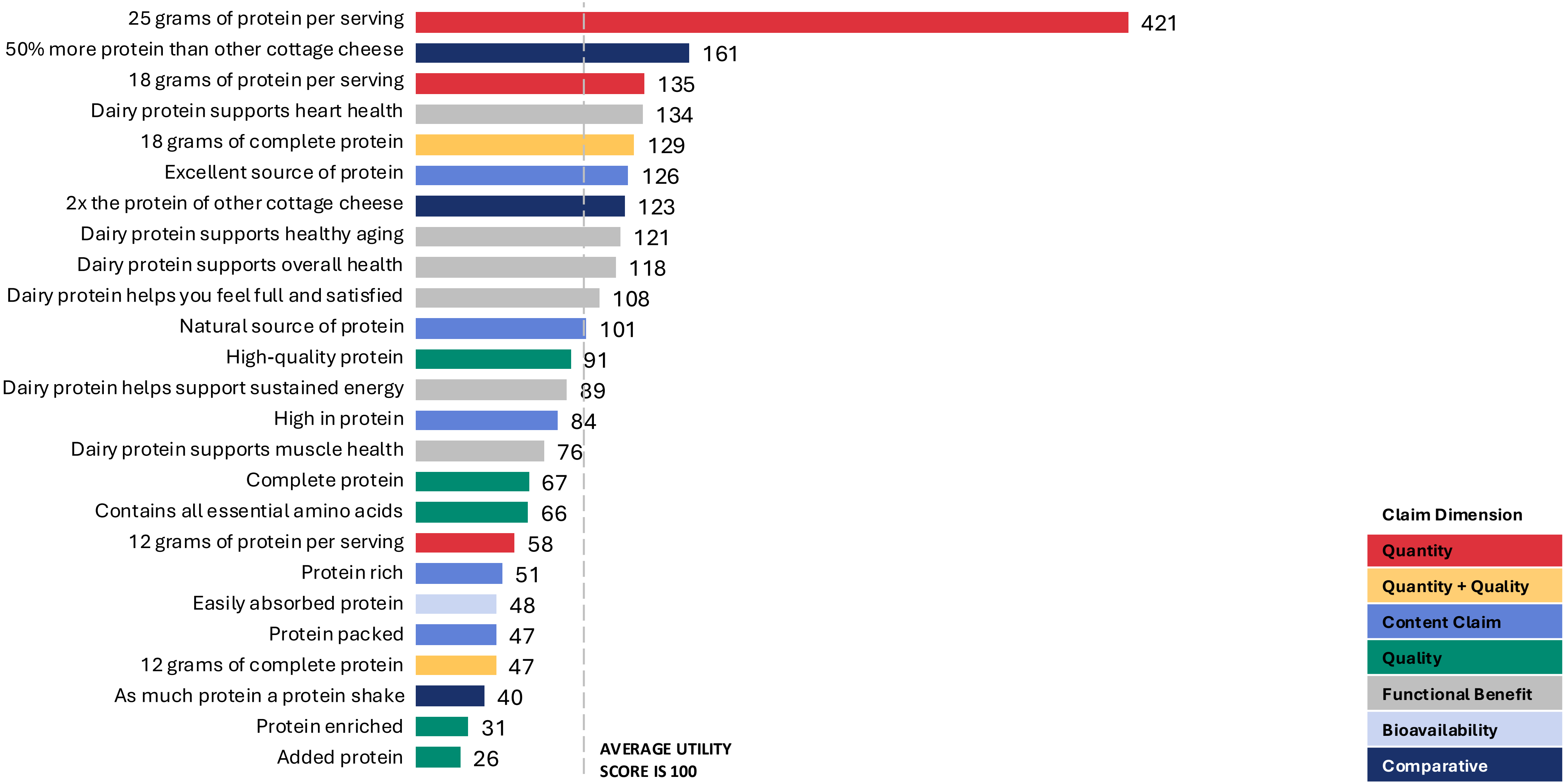
"High quality protein" stands out among adults 18-34 and less so for adults over age 35.

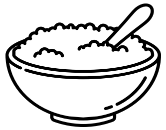
Implication: Lead with quantity claims but adopt general high-quality claims to appeal to younger consumers and functional benefit focused claims for older groups.

Cottage Cheese Claims

“25 grams of protein per serving” leads for cottage cheese, with “50% more protein” and “18 grams per serving” rounding out the top tier

Complete protein language works when tied to higher gram counts.

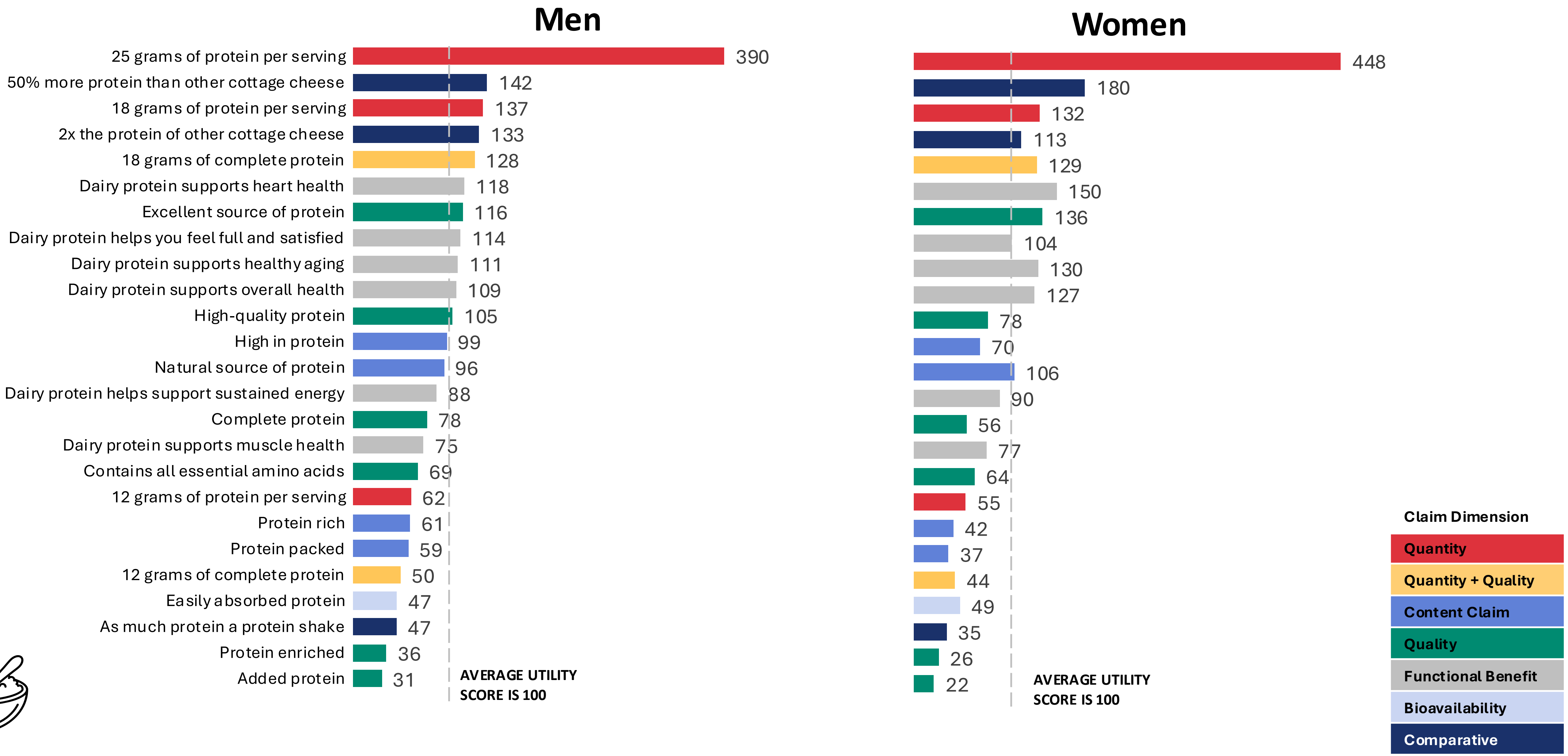




Of the following claims about cottage cheese, which would make you MOST likely and LEAST likely to purchase it?

Base: Cottage Cheese Consumers (n=400)

Both genders align on quantity and quantity/quality claims being most impactful

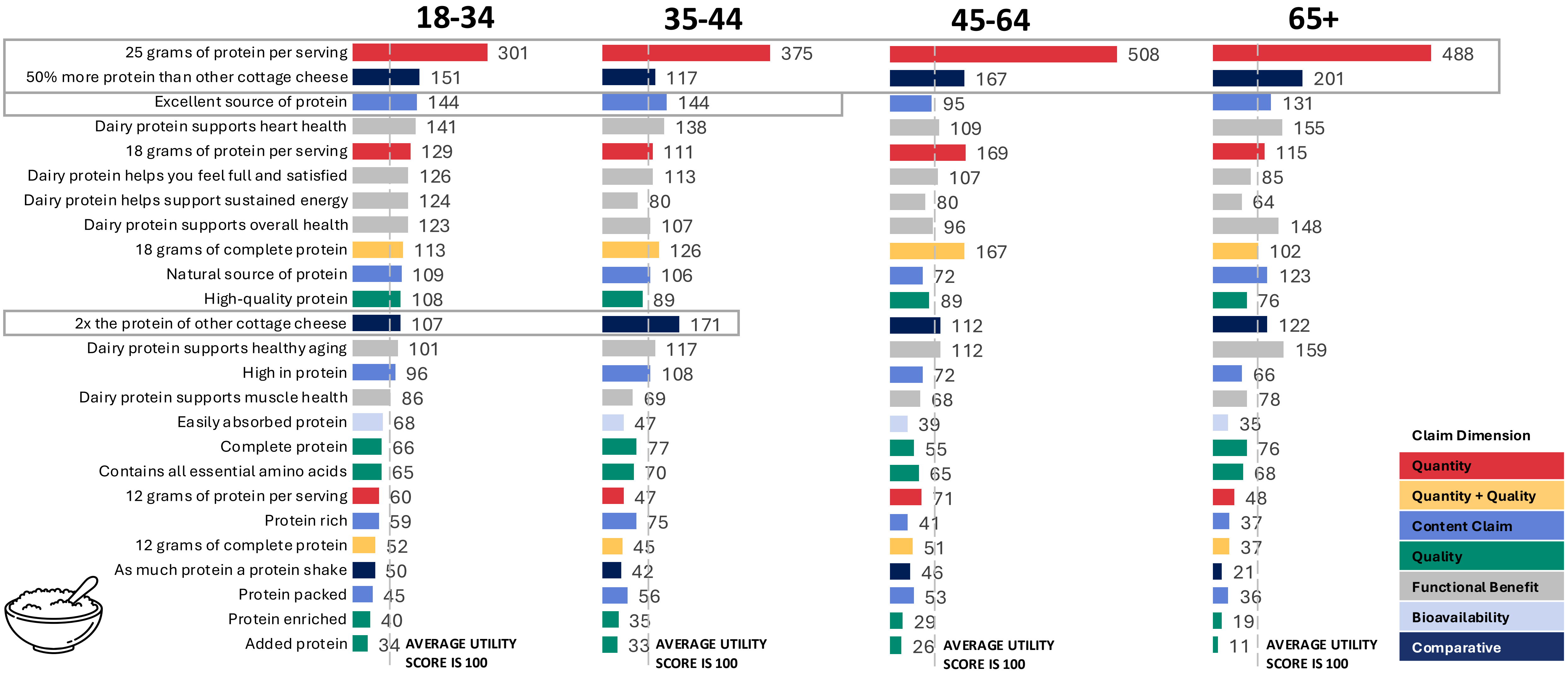


Of the following claims about cottage cheese, which would make you MOST likely and LEAST likely to purchase it?

Base: Men (n=195); Women (n=204)

Gram count and “50% more protein” works well across age groups

“Excellent source of protein” is strong for consumers under 45. “2x the protein” stands out for 35–44 year-olds.



Of the following claims about cottage cheese, which would make you MOST likely and LEAST likely to purchase it?

Base: Age: 18-34 (n=116); Age: 35-44 (n=69); Age: 45-64 (n=123); Age: 65+ (n=93)

Cottage Cheese Claims: Key Findings

Quantity and Comparative Claims Have Impact

Consumers reward larger gram counts, but comparative framing also resonates. “50% more protein than other cottage cheese” ranks #2 and “2x the protein” #7.

Functional-benefit claims also resonate. “Supports heart health” falls in the top 5 claims driving purchase.

Buzzwords do not perform well. Claims like “protein enriched” and “added protein” fall to the bottom.

Implications: Lead with gram quantity for cottage cheese and embrace protein comparisons.

Gender Differences

Women are more responsive to functional benefit claims for cottage cheese.

Women elevate “excellent source of protein” and “50% more protein” claims, and men resonate with “2x the protein of other cottage cheese.”

Men are more selective, concentrating on fewer top claims. Quantity claims lead.

Implication: While men seek quantity claims, comparative language and “excellent source” claims can broaden reach among women. Health-benefit claims also drive women to purchase more than men.

Age Differences

Quantity and comparative claims lead across age groups. Satiety language drives purchasing among adults under 35 more than any other age cohort.

Functional-benefit claims resonate more with adults 65+, particularly supporting healthy aging. “Support for overall health” is strongest among adults under 35 and adults 65+.

Implication: Protein gram counts matter across age groups for cottage cheese. Embracing health-focused appeal more to adults over 65, while satiety claims appeal to consumers under 35.

To wrap up…

Across all dairy categories tested, the maximum protein grams offered is most motivating...

	Milk	Yogurt	Cheese	Cottage Cheese	Dairy Based Nutritional Beverages
Top Claim amongst consumers of that category	25g of protein per serving	25g of protein per serving	25g of protein per serving	25g of protein per serving	40g of protein per serving
Top Claim Type	Quantity	Quantity	Quantity	Quantity	Quantity

...with category and demographic nuances.

[And remember, taste is still king!]

Overall Findings

Lead with the highest credible protein gram count

High protein gram-count claims are the strongest purchase drivers across every dairy category tested.

Functional benefits strengthen appeal for cheese

- Functional benefit claims (heart health, overall health, and healthy aging) are top tier for cheese consumers.
- Functional claims also resonate with cottage cheese consumers but fall behind comparative messaging.

Compare within the dairy category, not to other foods

- Within-category comparisons outperform cross-food comparisons. Messages such as "50% more protein than regular" resonate broadly across dairy products.
- In contrast, comparisons to foods like chicken, eggs, or protein bars consistently rank among the weakest-performing claims.

Key Findings by Claim Type

When gram counts aren't available, percentage comparisons outperform other nutrient density claims

- Percentage-based comparisons (e.g., "50% more protein than regular [product]") consistently outperform multiplier claims ("2x the protein of...") and comparisons to other foods.
- For cheese and cottage cheese, percentage comparisons are the strongest alternative when specific gram counts cannot be featured.

"Natural source of protein" leads quality claims for cheese and cottage cheese

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QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU

APPENDIX

Generations

World War II/Swing Generation	Born 1928 or earlier (WWII) and 1929-45 (Swing), members of these generations are aged 80+ in 2025.
Baby Boomers	Born 1946-64. In 2025, Baby Boomers are between the ages of 61 and 79.
Generation X	Born 1965-79. In 2025, Gen Xers are between the ages of 46 and 60.
Millennials	Born 1980-96. In 2025, Millennials are between the ages of 29 and 45.
Generation Z	Born 1997-2010. In 2025, members of Gen Z are between the ages of 15 and 28.
Generation Alpha	The newest generation began in 2011. In 2025, members of Gen Alpha are aged 14 and under.

In 2021, Mintel made minor adjustments to generational definitions; the size and age of each group may not match previous Reports

RETAIL: NEW PROTEIN FOCUSED CHEESE

18 grams of complete protein per half-cup serving (whey-and-casein blend)

Available in 2% low-fat and whole milk 16-ounce cartons

Source: Company Website

MIDWEST Dairy