



# Consumer perception of SUPERFOODS

Online population survey in Germany

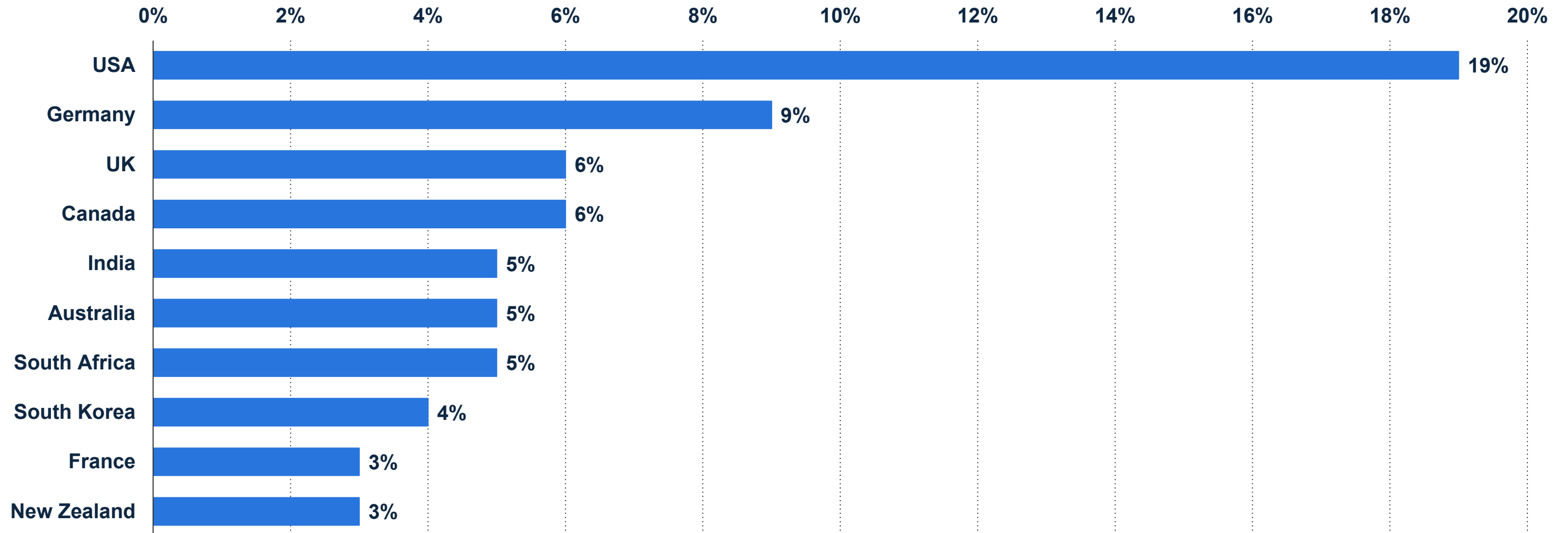
Mark Lohmann

Department Risk Communication

Unit Sociology of Risk and Risk Benefit Appraisal

# Most important country markets worldwide for superfoods by share of total launches in the period from July 2016 to June 2017

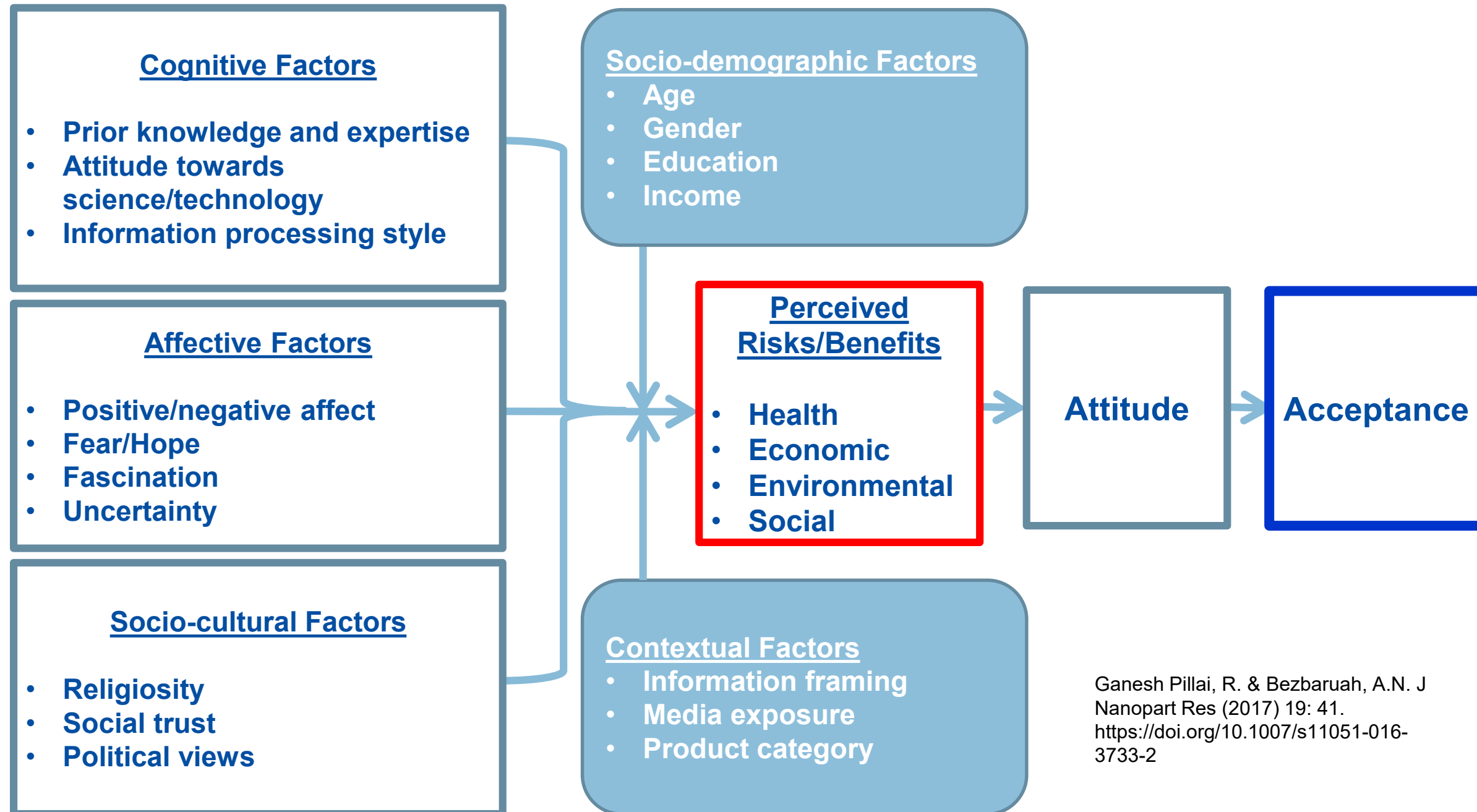
Share of market launches



Source: mintel.com

statista

# Perception-Attitude-Acceptance Framework



Ganesh Pillai, R. & Bezbaruah, A.N. J  
Nanopart Res (2017) 19: 41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11051-016-3733-2>

# The myth of benign nature

## Perception

- Nature is good; “Natural” means safe
- Interventions in nature are perceived as problematic
- Health risks related to deviations of nature are perceived as particularly problematic

## Consequences

**People overestimate the risk of cancer from pesticides and underestimate the risk of cancer of natural carcinogens.** Flynn *et al.* 2001

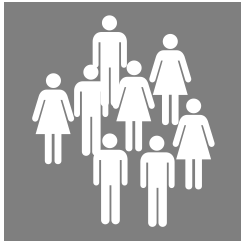
**Most people believe that natural chemicals are safer than synthetic (= intuitive toxicology).** Slovic, 2000

Source: Flynn, Slovic, & Kunreuther (2001): Risk, Media and Stigma. Understanding Public Challenges to Modern Science and Technology. London: Earthscan.  
Slovic (2000): The Perception of Risk. London: Earthscan.

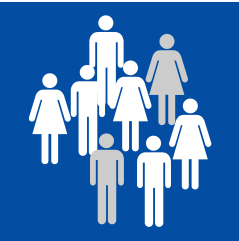
# Study Profile



**Survey area**  
Federal Republic of Germany



**Population**  
Kantar Online Access Panel  
participants in Germany  
aged 14 years and over



**Number of respondents**  
1.006



**Sampling**  
Random sample of panel  
participants with  
representative quota control  
according to gender, age,  
education and region

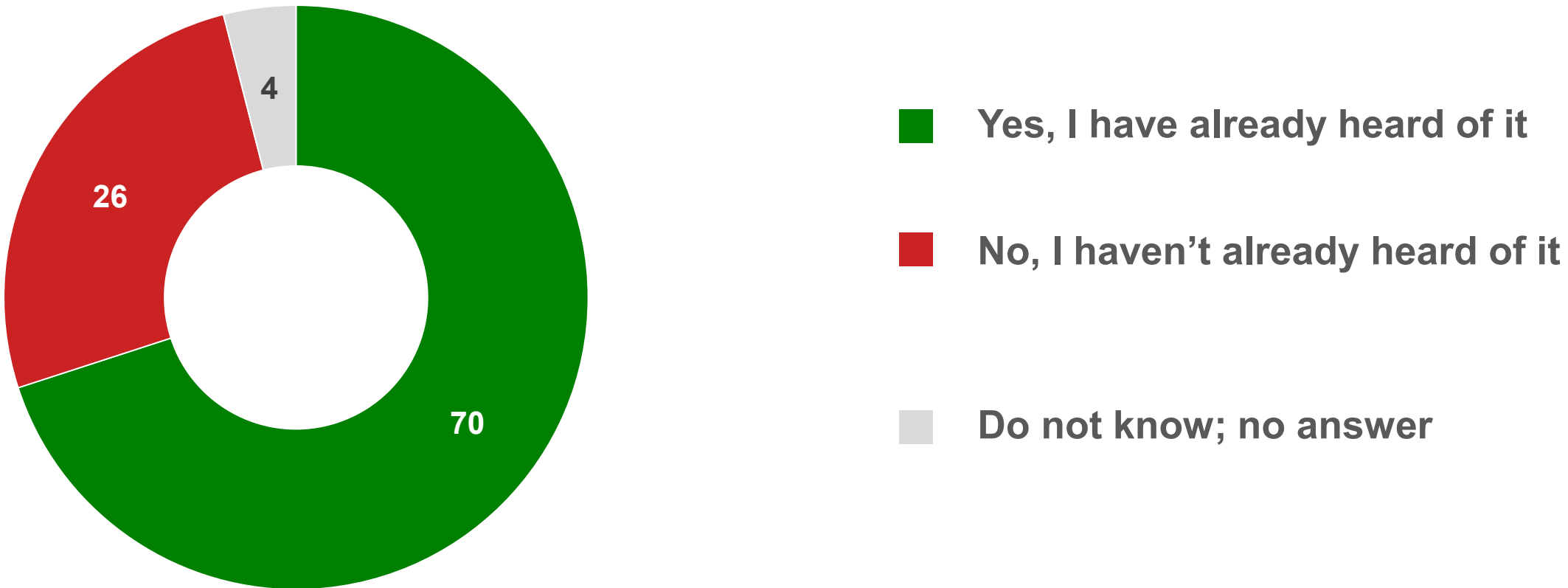


**Method**  
Online Survey  
(CAWI)



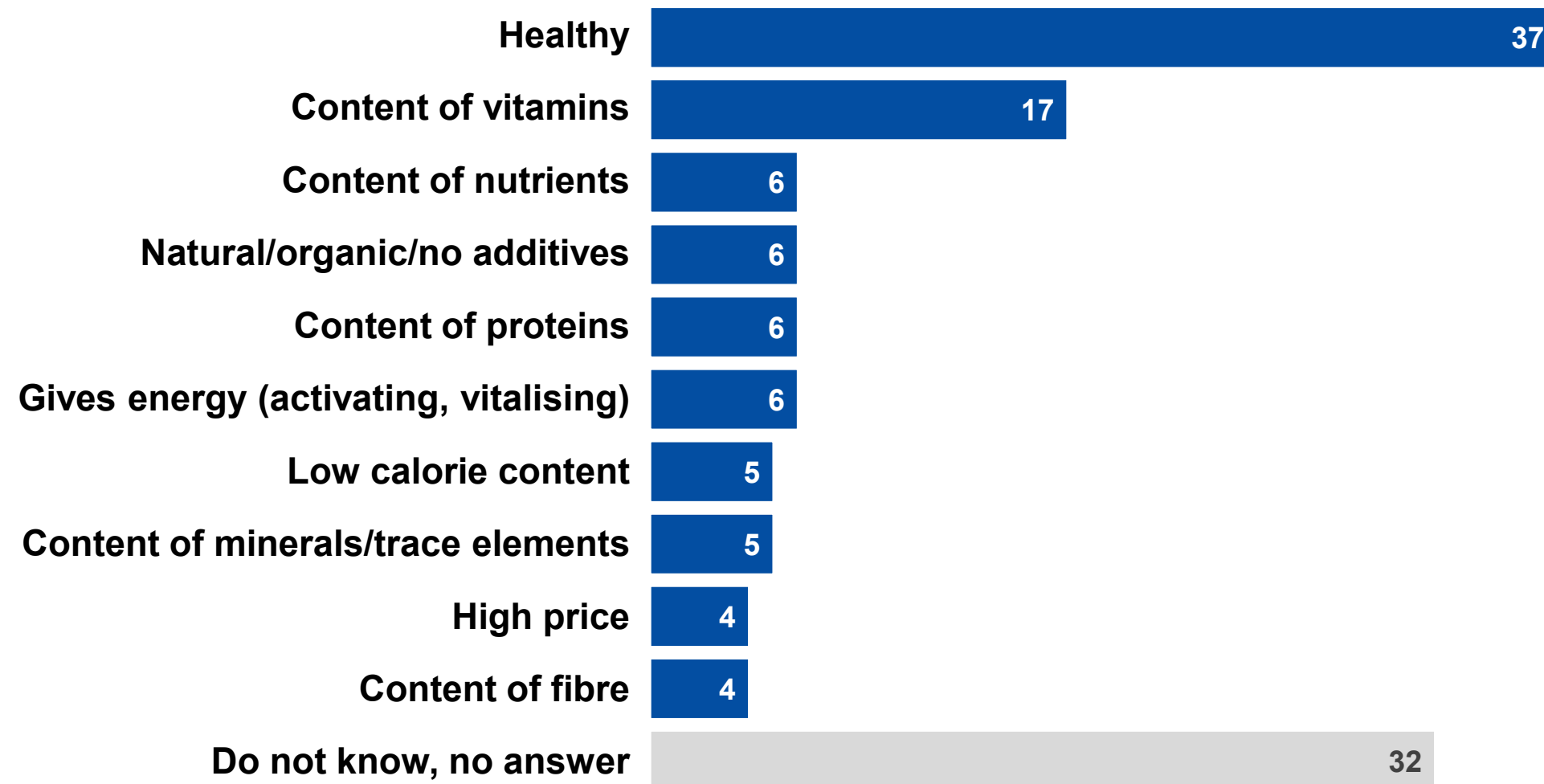
**Survey Period**  
31 July to 8 August 2020

# Have you already heard of certain foods being referred to as “superfood” or have you never heard of this?



Basis: 1,006 respondents; Figures given in percentages

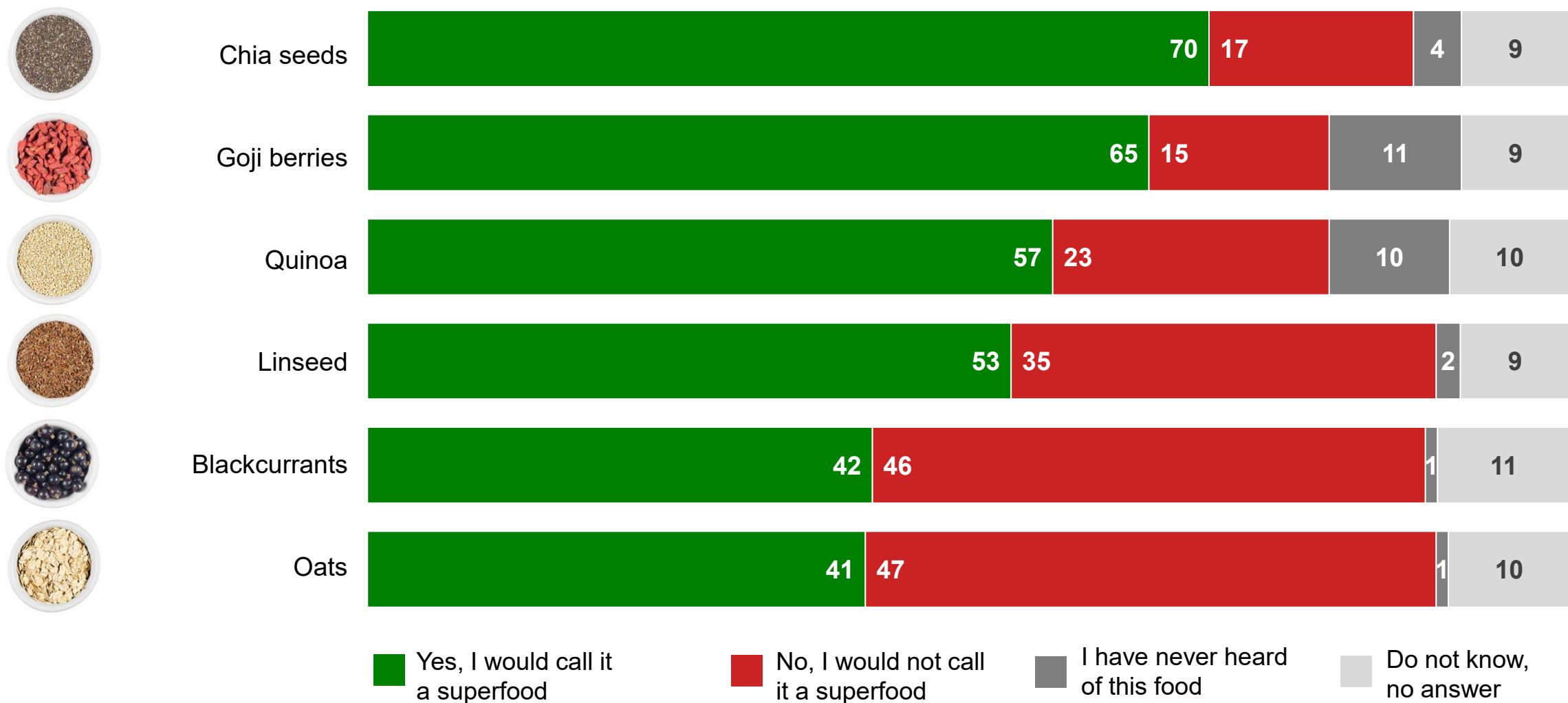
# What do you think are typical properties of foods that are also referred to as superfood?



Shown: the ten properties most frequently mentioned spontaneously

Basis: 707 respondents who are aware of the term superfood; Figures given in percentage

# Would you or would you not call the following foods a “superfood”?

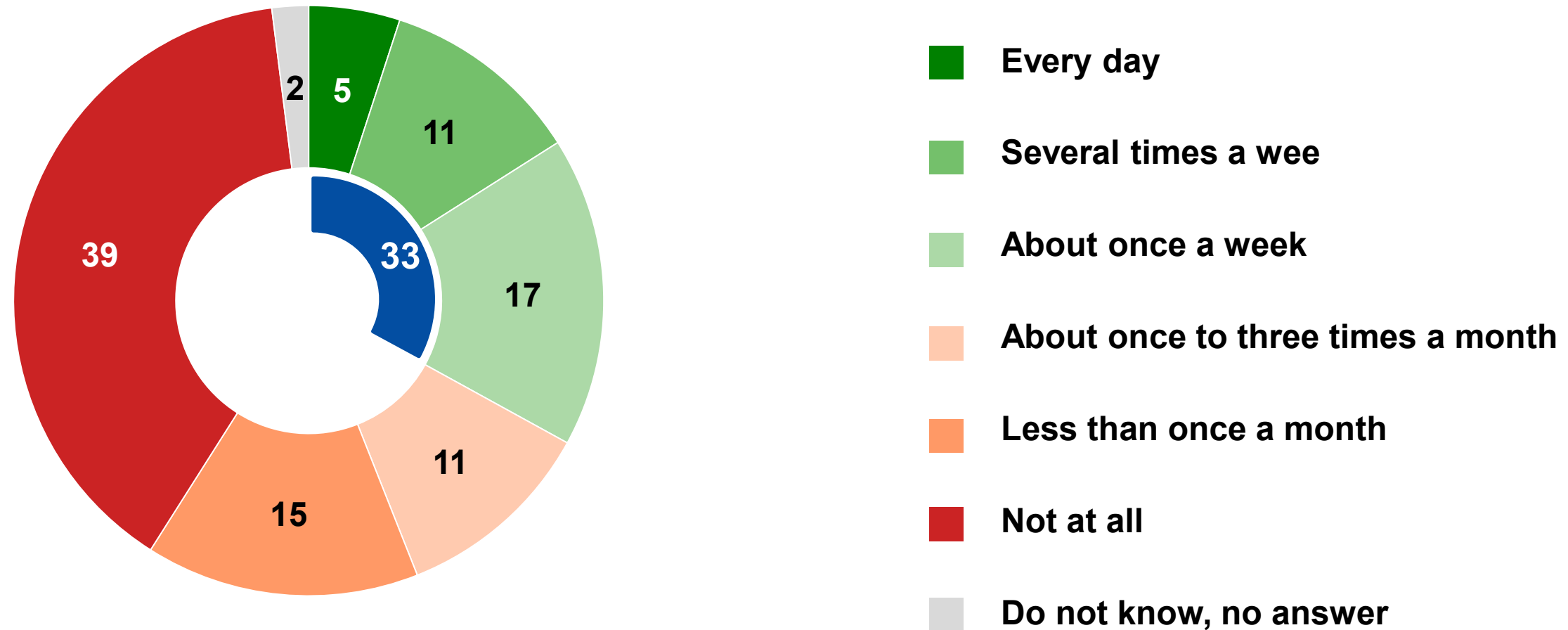


Basis: 707 respondents who are aware of the term superfood; Figures given in percentages



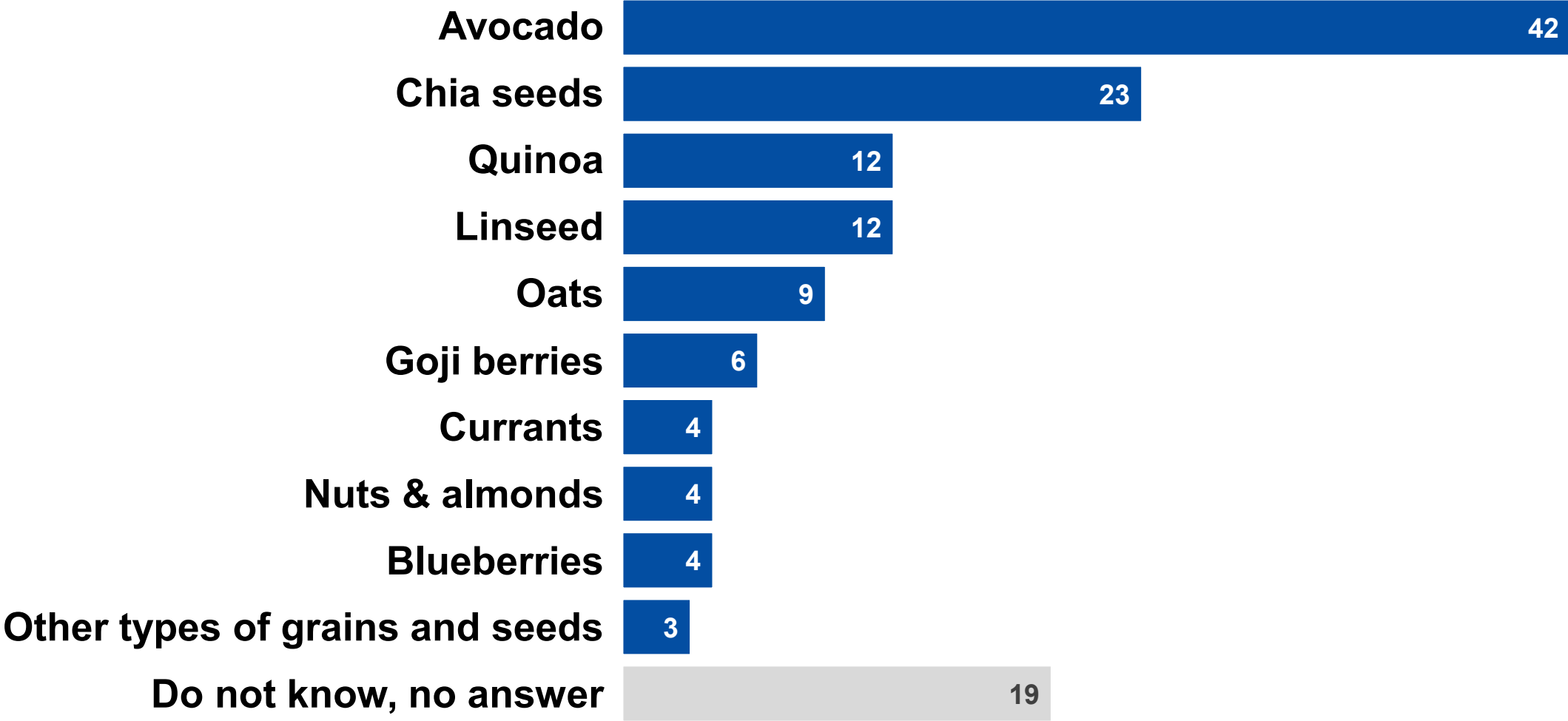
## How often have you recently eaten food also referred to as superfood?

The term “superfood” is often used to describe **foods that are considered to be particularly beneficial to human health** because they are said to **contain high contents of nutrients** – for example, a high content of vitamins, antioxidants, proteins, minerals or fibre. Exotic foods in particular are referred to as superfoods. Typical examples of superfood are: chia seeds, quinoa, goji berries, matcha tea, avocado.



Basis: 1,006 respondents; Figures given in percentages

# What specific foods, also referred to as superfood, have you eaten recently?



Basis: 590 respondents who have recently eaten food also referred to as superfood; Figures given in percentages;  
Shown: the ten foods most frequently mentioned spontaneously

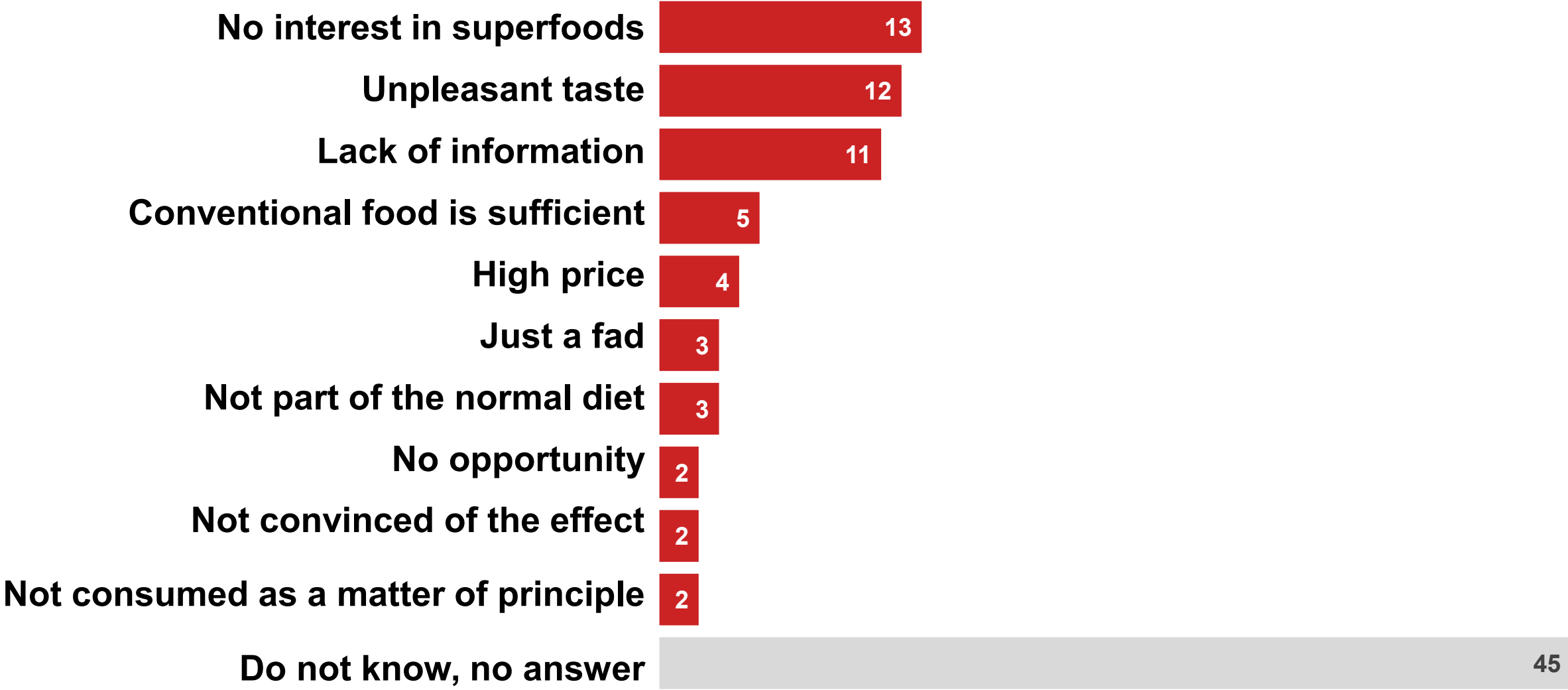
# For what reasons have you recently eaten food also referred to as superfood?



Basis: 590 respondents who have recently eaten food also referred to as superfood; Figures given in percentages

Shown: the ten reasons most frequently mentioned spontaneously

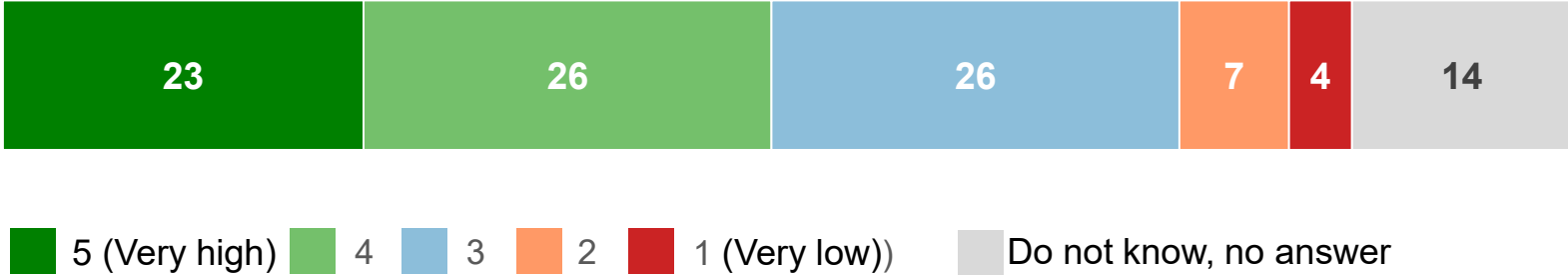
# For what reasons have you recently not eaten food also referred to as superfood?



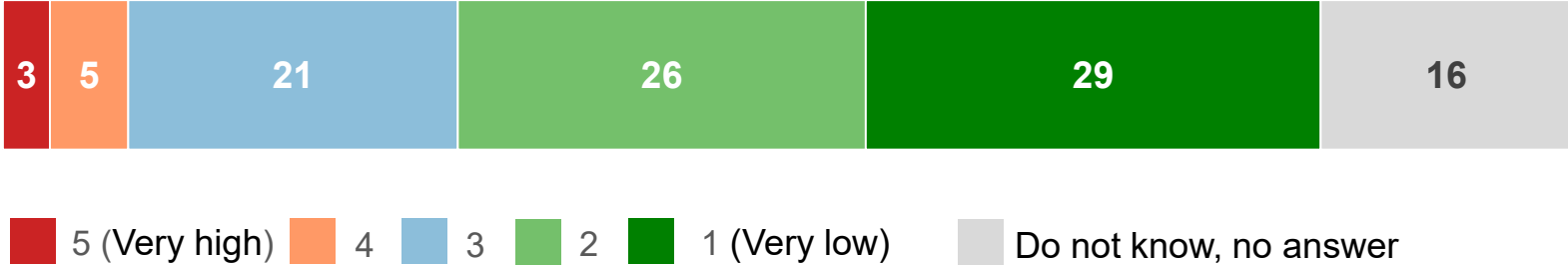
Basis: 395 respondents who have not recently eaten food also referred to as superfood; Figures given in percentages  
Shown: the ten reasons most frequently mentioned spontaneously

# How do you rate the health risks and health benefits of foods that are also referred to as superfood?

## Health benefits

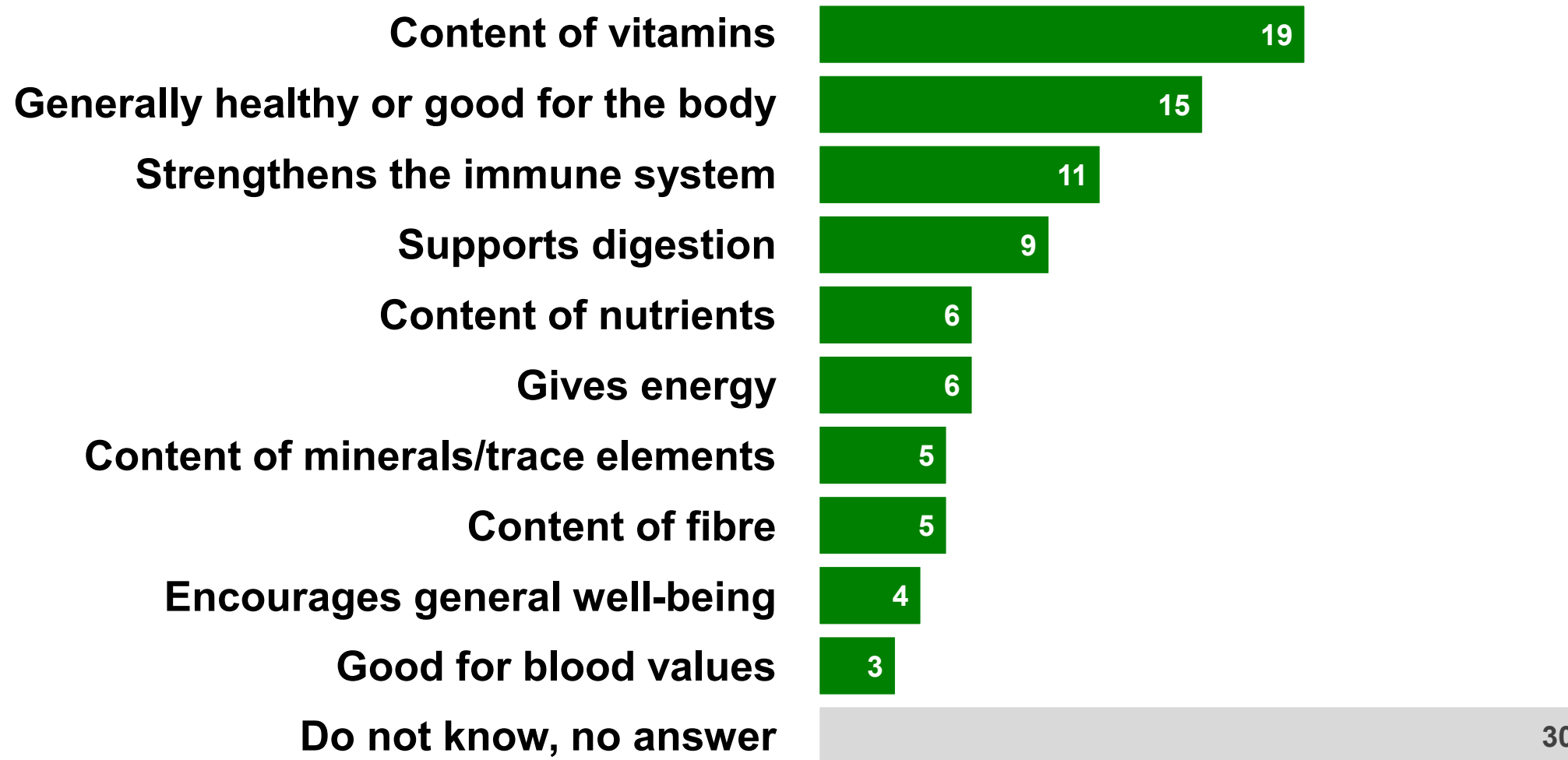


## Health risks



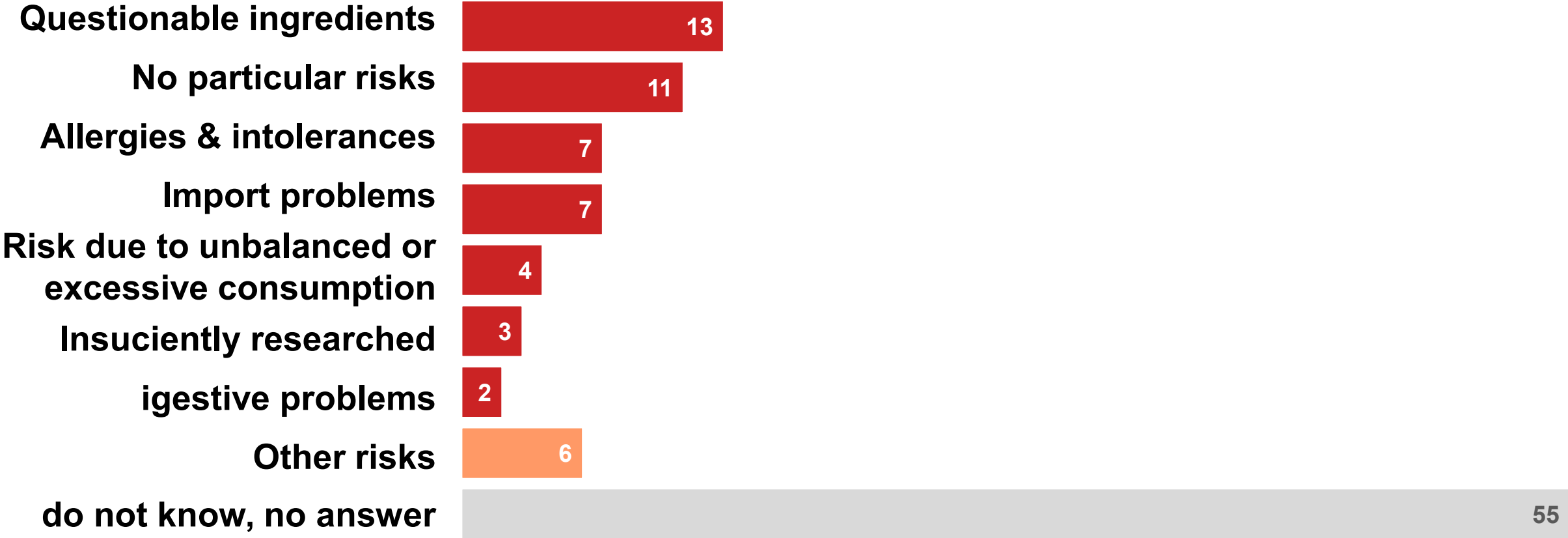
Basis: 1,006 respondents; Figures given in percentages

# Which health benefits do you see in foods also referred to as superfood?



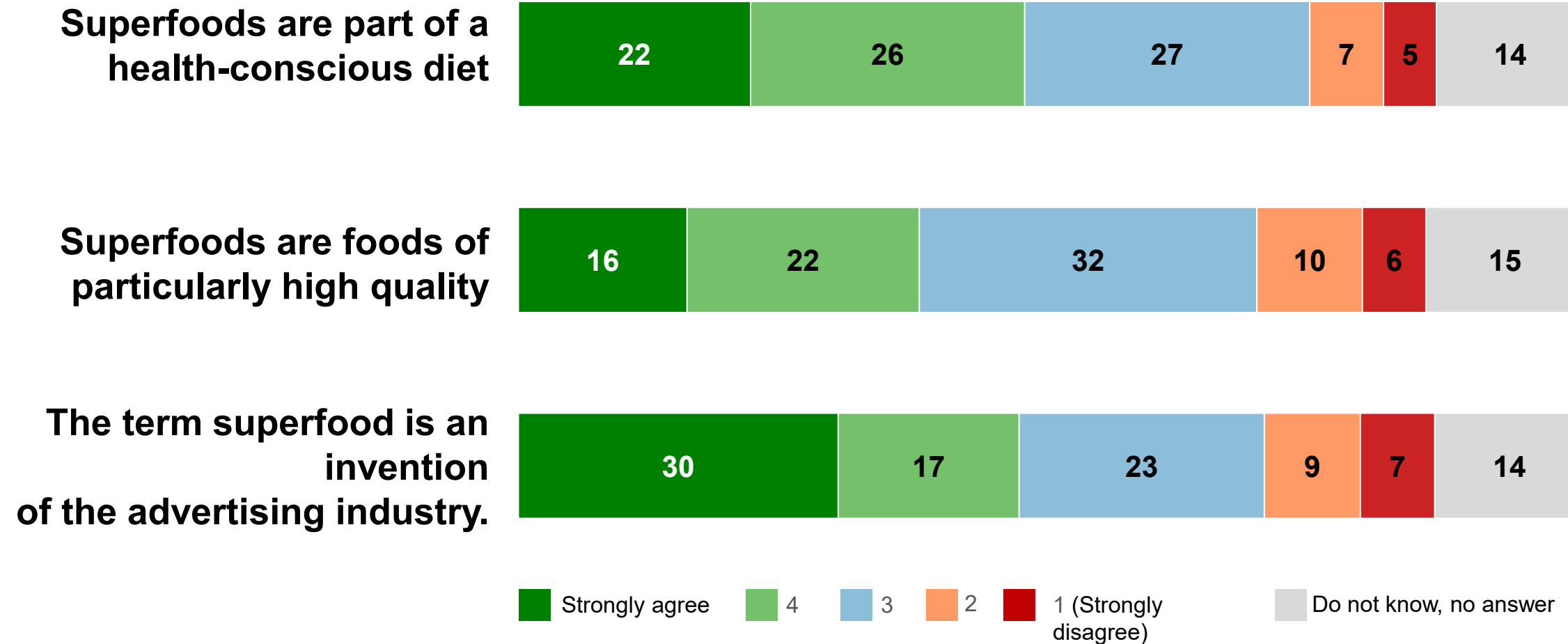
Basis: 493 respondents who rate the health benefits of superfoods as high or very high; Figures given in percentages  
Shown: the ten benefits most frequently mentioned spontaneously

# Which health risks do you see in foods also referred to as superfood?



Basis: 83 respondents who rate the health risks of superfoods as high or very high; Figures given in percentage

# To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on superfoods?

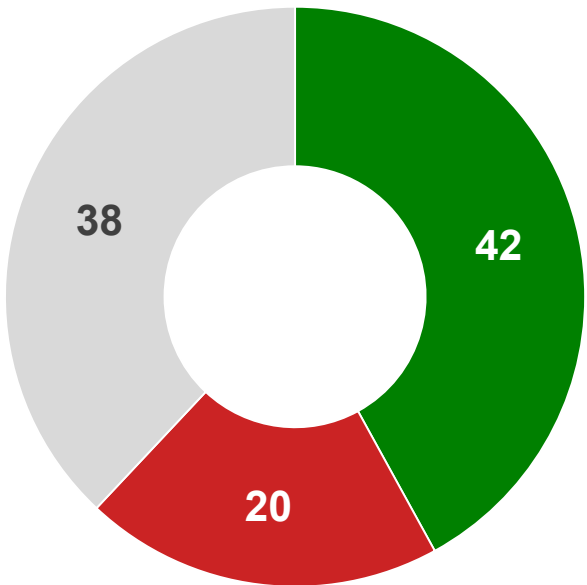


Basis: 1,006 respondents; Figures given in percentage

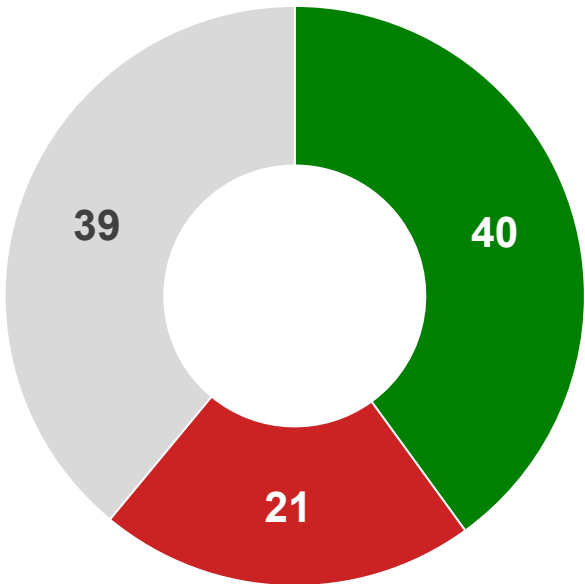


# In your opinion, are the following statements about superfoods true or false?

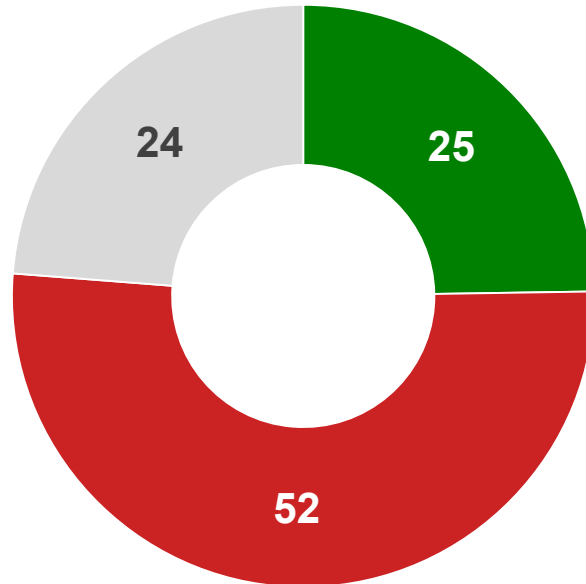
The health properties of superfoods have been scientifically proven



Superfood products are tested for health safety before they enter the German market



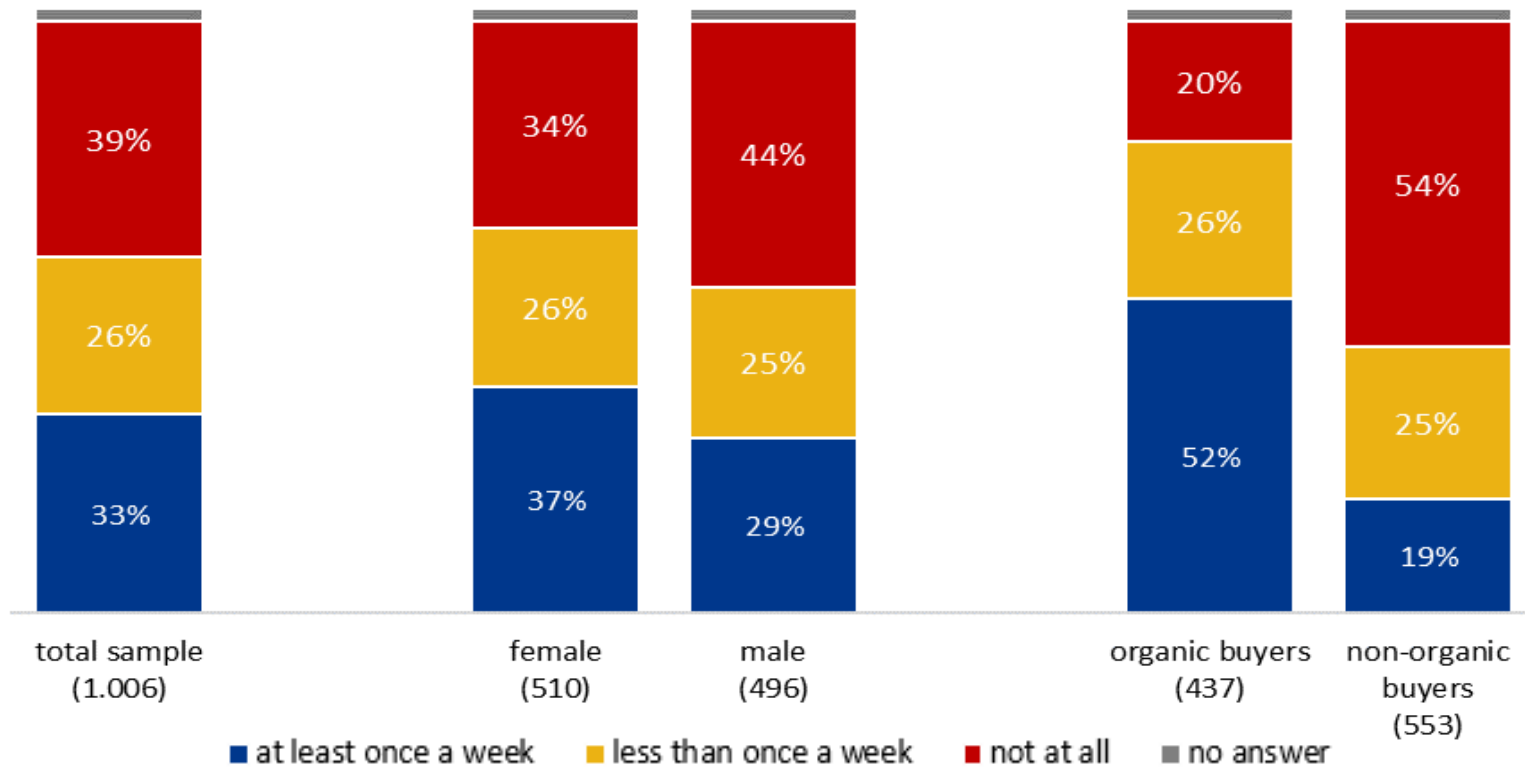
People can get certain nutrients only by consuming superfoods



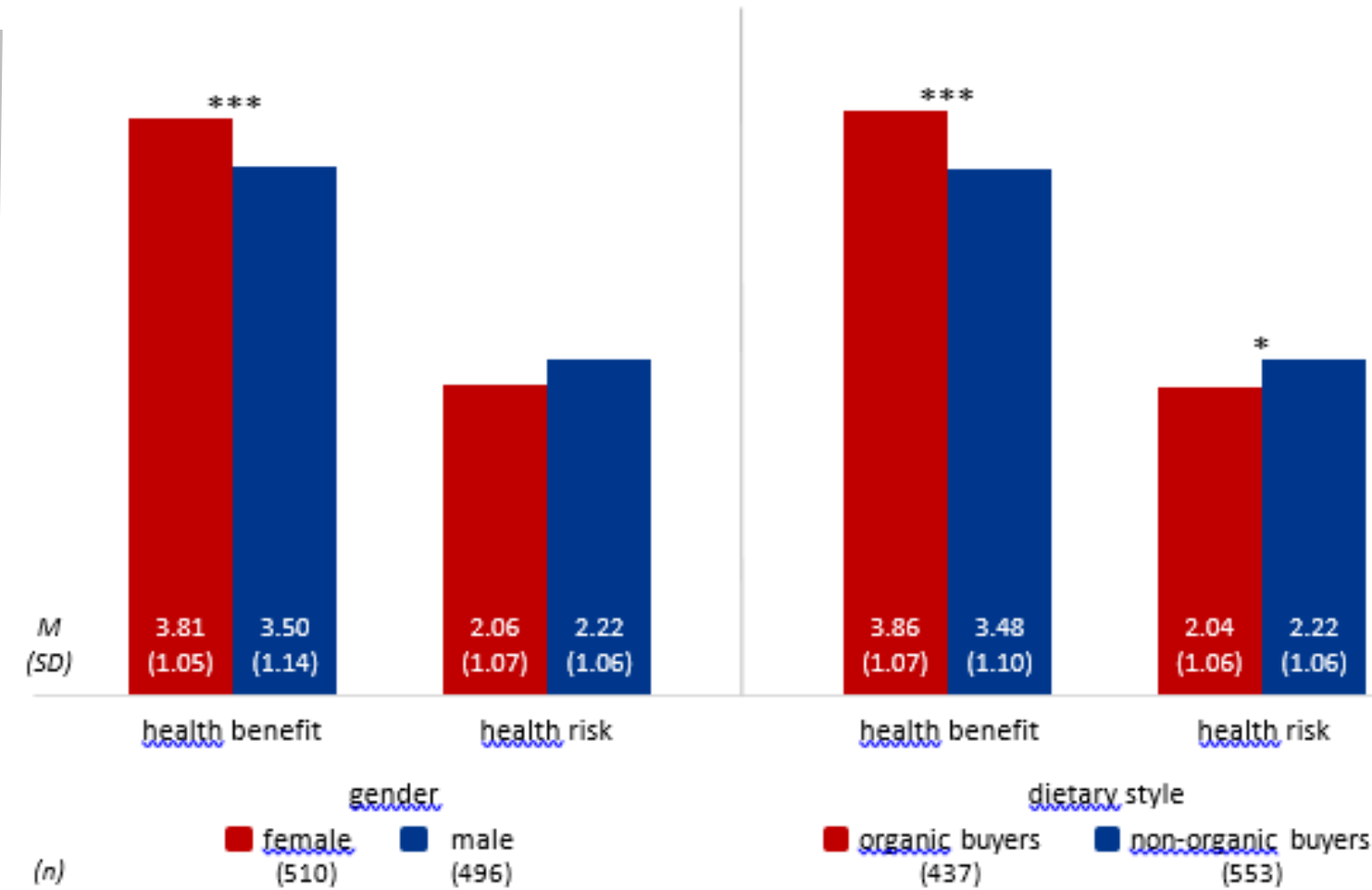
■ True    ■ False    ■ Do not know, no answer

Basis: 1,006 respondents; Figures given in percentages

# Characterisation of possible target groups



\*\*\* p < .001, \*\* p < .01; significance test refers to “at least once a week”



\*\*\* p < .001, \* p < .05; response scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high)

# Summary

- 70% of the population in Germany is **aware of the term “superfood”**
- One-third reported **consuming superfoods at least once a week.**
- The term is mainly associated with **positive food properties**, such as “healthy” and “contains vitamins”
- **Health benefits** are rated to be much higher than potential health risks
- **Imported foods were more likely to be labelled as superfoods**, compared to domestic equivalents.
- One quarter of the population considers superfoods to be an **indispensable source for meeting nutritional needs**
- 40% believe that the health effects of superfoods have been **scientifically proven** and the safety of superfoods has been **tested** before they enter the market
- About half of the population considers the terminology "superfood" to be an **invention of the advertising industry**
- **Women, younger people, and organic buyers** have significant more positive impression

The Public's Understanding of Superfoods. Kirsch, F.; Lohmann, M.; Böhl, G.-F. Sustainability 2022, 14, 3916. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14073916>

# Acknowledgement

## Department Risk Communication

Wiebke Berndt  
Gaby-Fleur Böl  
Dan Borzekowski  
Suzan Fiack  
Günter Friedmann-Marohn  
Sara Grätz  
Anne-Katrin Hermann  
Fabian Kirsch  
Ann-Kathrin Lindemann  
Jürgen Thier-Kundke

Members of the BfR Commission on  
Risk Research and Risk Perception

## Department Food Safety

Karen Ildico Hirsch-Ernst  
Anke Weißenborn



**KANTAR**

# Thank you for your attention



Identify Risks –  
Protect Health

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment

Max-Dohrn-Straße 8-10 • 10589 Berlin, GERMANY

Phone +49 30 - 184 12 - 0 • Fax +49 30 - 184 12 – 99 0 99

[bfr@bfr.bund.de](mailto:bfr@bfr.bund.de) • [www.bfr.bund.de/en](http://www.bfr.bund.de/en)