



Current Attitudes About Sweetener Use



With overweight and obesity now considered a national “epidemic,” many Americans are working to reduce extra calories in their diets in a variety of ways. The Calorie Control Council (CCC)ⁱ found that dieting is a “constant concern” for more than 95 million Americans. About 80% of dieters use low calorie foods and beverages as a tool for managing weight. Several recent surveys shed light on how consumers view sugar and low calorie sweeteners.

Sugar

While Americans clearly love the taste of sugar, according to the International Food Information Council (IFIC), 70% of consumers are either somewhat or extremely concerned about the amount they eat – up from 63% in 2006. More than 7 out of 10 Americans (71%), when asked, report they are trying to consume less sugar.ⁱⁱ A separate surveyⁱⁱⁱ conducted in 2007 finds that sugar is the number one ingredient offered by consumers (43%, unaided) as “bad for you.” Thirty two percent (unaided) in that study say that they are trying to cut back on or avoid sugar, while 51% of those with children say they are trying to have their children reduce their intake. Most individuals identify health, weight or diabetes as the primary motivation for the change. Consistent with these findings, CCC found that cutting down on foods high in sugar is the most common tactic used by dieters as a weight control strategy.

Low Calorie Sweeteners

Surveys indicate that the acceptability and comfort level with low calorie sweeteners is improving among

Americans. Top of mind views about low calorie sweeteners are more favorable than those of sugar, with about 3% of individuals offering (without prompting) that they are trying to increase their intake of foods and beverages sweetened with these ingredients. Only 4% of individuals mention on an unaided basis “sweeteners/high intensity sweeteners” as “bad for you,” with another 4% mentioning specific sweeteners by name. Fewer than 4% overall say they are trying to cut back on low calorie sweeteners in their diets.

The IFIC survey finds that about 43% of respondents agree that low calorie sweeteners can play a role in helping individuals maintain or lose weight. Among those specifically working to lose weight, almost a quarter (23%) are increasing their use of low calorie sweeteners or foods/beverages that include these ingredients. Among those trying to maintain their weight, a similar percentage (22%) say that they are using “more” low calorie sweeteners and products as a tool in that effort.

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Low Calorie Sweetener Use in the United States, 2006^{iv}

A different type of analysis, based on low calorie sweetener sales (including aspartame, acesulfame potassium, saccharin and sucralose) to the processed food and beverage industry, provides interesting information on how these ingredients are being used in U.S. products.^{iv} Beverages top the list, with tabletop sweeteners in far second.

Application	% of Total by Weight
Beverages	57.7
Tabletop sweeteners	12.1
Personal care products	11.8
Food	9.1
Other	9.3

Use of Low Calorie Sweeteners in the United States, 2006^{iv}

The same survey analyzed the market share of various low calorie sweeteners used in the United States. Aspartame continues to lead the low calorie sweetener market as a percentage of metric tons sold.

Application	% of Total by Weight
Aspartame	59.1
Saccharin	30.8
Acesulfame K	4.4
Sucralose	2.3
Cyclamate	1.8
Other	1.6

Summary

For decades, low calorie sweeteners have played an important role in the American diet. Current survey research indicates that consumers continue to enjoy having the option to choose good tasting beverages and foods without the extra calories of nutritive sweeteners. This trend does not seem to be one that is likely to reverse.

ⁱ Calorie Control Council, Booth Research Services, 1200 individuals 18 years or older, 2007.

ⁱⁱ IFIC survey conducted first quarter 2007, nationally representative sample, 1000 individuals, carried out via Internet. See <http://www.ific.org/research/foodandhealthsurvey.cfm> for more information.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fallon Currie survey conducted May 2007, three nationally representative samples of 1000 individuals each, carried out via telephone.

^{iv} SRI Consulting, Chemical Economics Handbook, 2007.