



Public Perception of Food is Medicine in Healthcare

MAY 2025

There is demand for and interest in Food is Medicine Programs

Recent survey data commissioned by The Rockefeller Foundation shows that Americans of all demographics—including different political backgrounds—see Food is Medicine (FIM) programs as an effective, commonsense part of treating chronic illness. FIM programs treat and prevent diet-related conditions by offering patients better nutrition through access to, and funds for, healthy foods, cooking and nutrition education, and support for healthy eating habits.

The data revealed a clear appetite across demographic groups to integrate food and nutrition into the American healthcare system, not just as a preventative measure, but as an essential component of treatment.

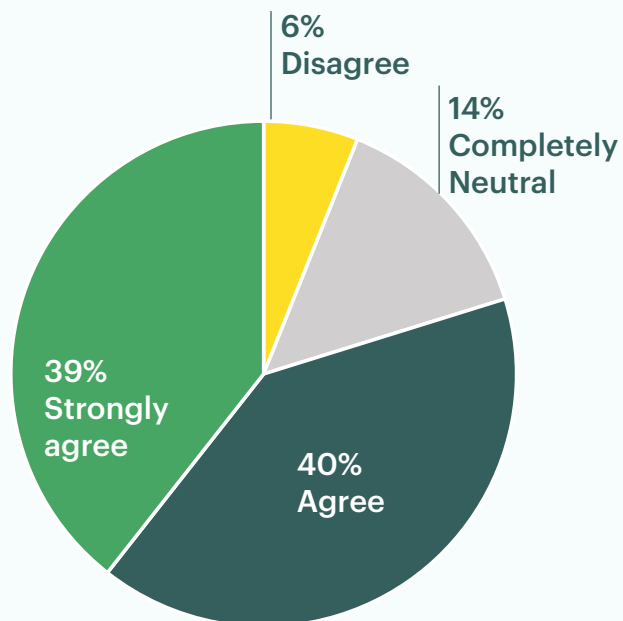
Americans Believe in the Power of Healthy Food and Nutrition to Treat and Manage Chronic Illness

More than 4 in 5 Americans believe healthcare should offer more food and nutrition programs to treat and manage illnesses.

Nearly 9 in 10 patients would prefer to rely more on healthy eating than on medications to manage their condition.

Nearly 4 in 5 Americans think that Food is Medicine programs should be covered by both public and private insurance—including 85% of Democrats and 78% of Republicans.

Food is Medicine programs should be covered by public and private insurance companies alongside other medical treatments





Low Awareness, High Enthusiasm

Less than a third of respondents had heard of FIM programs:

13% of the public and 32% of healthcare workers had heard of FIM programs prior to the survey.

Once presented with a definition, around four in five immediately saw the value of FIM:

85% of healthcare workers were eager to recommend FIM programs.

84% of the public believed it could help improve the quality of health in the U.S.

79% of the public believed it could help them personally eat better.

High Support for Food is Medicine Exists Across Party Lines

88% of Democrats and 83% of Republicans believed FIM programs could help improve the quality of health in the U.S.

86% of Democrats and 79% of Republicans believed FIM programs would help them personally eat better.

Definition of Food is Medicine Used in Survey:

Food is Medicine describes a way to treat and prevent diet-related medical conditions by providing patients with access to healthy foods, education around cooking and nutrition, and support for adopting healthy eating habits into their everyday lives.

Food is Medicine programs are an innovative approach to health care and a transformative way to consider holistic health.

Patients can be provided with meals tailored to their individual food preferences and medical needs, and prescriptions for accessing healthy groceries. They work with their doctor to create a plan that's right for them, which might include guidance for preparing nourishing meals for themselves and their families.

Food is Medicine programs prioritize giving people the foundation to make healthy choices in their everyday lives and access to the resources they need to thrive.

Food is Medicine Programs Are a Shared Responsibility

The momentum behind FIM depends on everyone playing their part:

Insurers must provide funding and coverage.

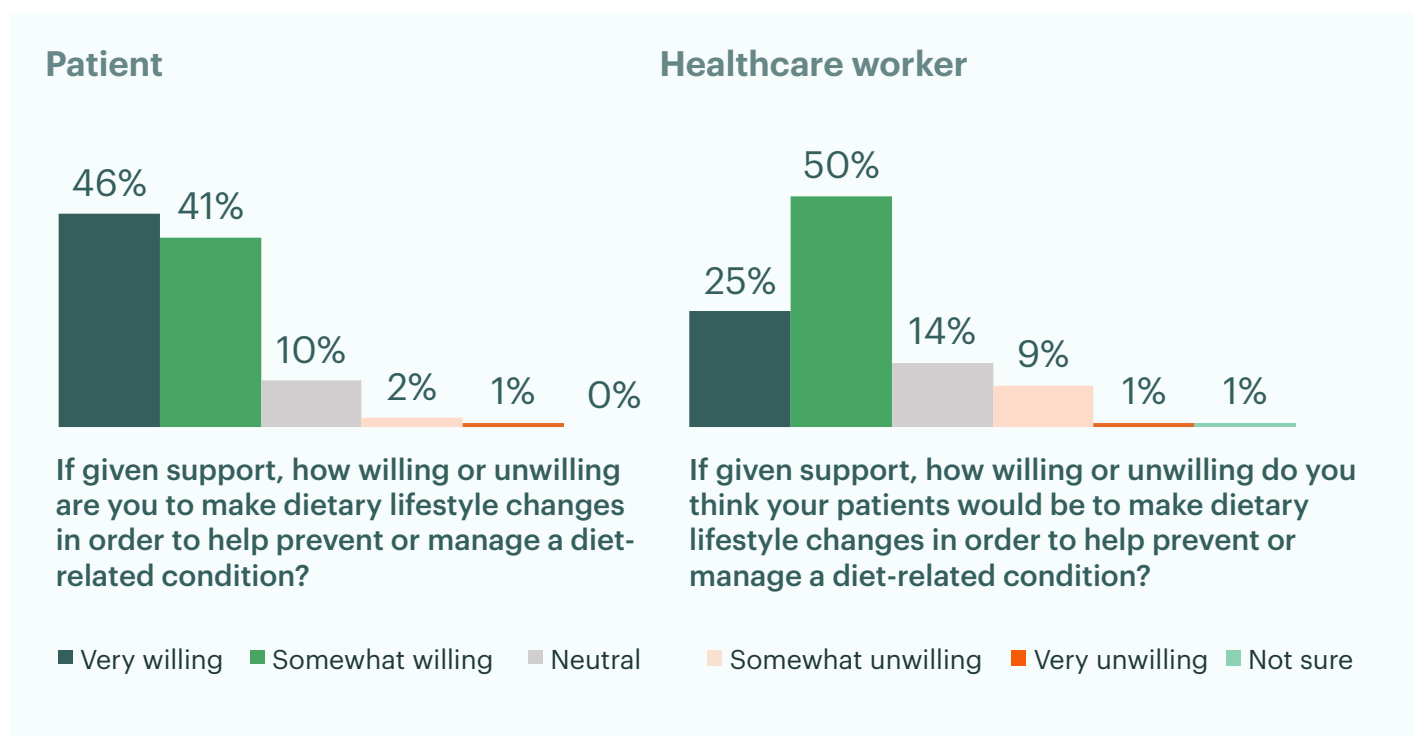
- Three-quarters of Americans think that public and private insurance companies should cover programs that help people eat better—including 82% of Democrats and 72% of Republicans.

Providers must prescribe FIM programs and guide patients through the process.

- 84% of the public believes that doctors should take an active role in helping patients improve their diets.

Patients must commit to change.

- Nearly half (46%) of patients say they're very willing to adjust their diets, but only 25% of providers believe their patients are very willing to follow through.



Patients Want to Feel Better—Not Just Hit Health Metrics

More than half of patients say feeling better (60%) and gaining more control over their health (55%) are the most important markers of a successful nutrition program.

Q. What would be the most important benefits if you were to successfully complete a nutrition or meal plan program? (Select up to three)

Patient



Everyone Agrees the Top Barrier to Eating Right is Cost

Half (49%) of the public and two thirds (67%) of healthcare workers see the high cost of food as the single biggest obstacle to eating well—the top barrier for both.

Methodology

The Rockefeller Foundation commissioned Hattaway Communications to conduct a nationally representative survey of American adults ages 18+ between February 28 and March 11, 2025. The survey sampled 2,271 respondents across all 50 states, including 1,135 patients and 399 healthcare workers. The sample was weighted by gender and education to align with the actual proportions within the population and is representative of racial demographics across the U.S.

The research aimed to assess public awareness of and attitudes toward nutrition-based treatments and Food is Medicine (FIM) programs. It also explored perceived opportunities and barriers to promoting and accessing these interventions, as well as effective strategies for engaging diverse audiences around FIM.

Cover and interior photos:

Kenny Joyner, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran and EatWell Participant © The Rockefeller Foundation

