

# NUTRITION SURVEY REPORT

# CONTENTS

**01**

Are we really what we eat?

**02**

Nutrition literacy

**03**

Research methodology

**04**

How Singaporeans perceive their diets and health

**05**

Knowledge of healthy eating versus actual eating habits

**06**

Prevalence of snacking in Singapore

**07-08**

Increasing snacking trend post-pandemic

**09-10**

Reading health labels and nutrition facts

**11**

Attitudes and behaviours towards product expiry dates

**12**

Sources of nutrition information

**13**

Making well-informed food choices

**14**

Conclusion



## Are we really what we eat?

We have all heard the phrase “You are what you eat” – the notion that to be fit and healthy, you need to have a balanced and nutritious diet. In a literal sense, we can all agree that it’s true.

The food we eat is essential to our overall health and wellbeing. A healthy diet helps to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It also regulates our sleeping patterns and energy levels, as well as boosts our general health.

To find out the level of nutrition literacy among Singaporeans, Etiqa Singapore has commissioned a study to find out about Singaporeans' eating habits and their attitudes towards nutrition.





# Nutrition literacy

Nutrition literacy is the ability to acquire and understand information about food and nutrition in order to make appropriate nutritional decisions<sup>1</sup>.

A high level of nutrition literacy determines beneficial dietary choices and may play an important role in the prevention of socially significant diseases. Low levels of nutrition and food literacy may be related to purchasing unhealthy foods, lack of knowledge on health labels, and succumbence to snacking.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6827561/>

# Research methodology

In a bid to better understand the level of nutritional awareness among Singaporeans, Etiqa Singapore surveyed 1,000 individuals aged 18 to 64 years in Singapore in May 2022. Conducted in collaboration with Kantar, the online survey focused on Singaporeans' eating habits pre and post Covid-19 and level of nutrition literacy.



## How Singaporeans perceive their diets and health

**54%**

of the respondents perceive that they are eating a healthy diet most of the time

**45%**

of the respondents subscribed strongly to the statement that they are aware their present diets impact their health in the future

**76%**

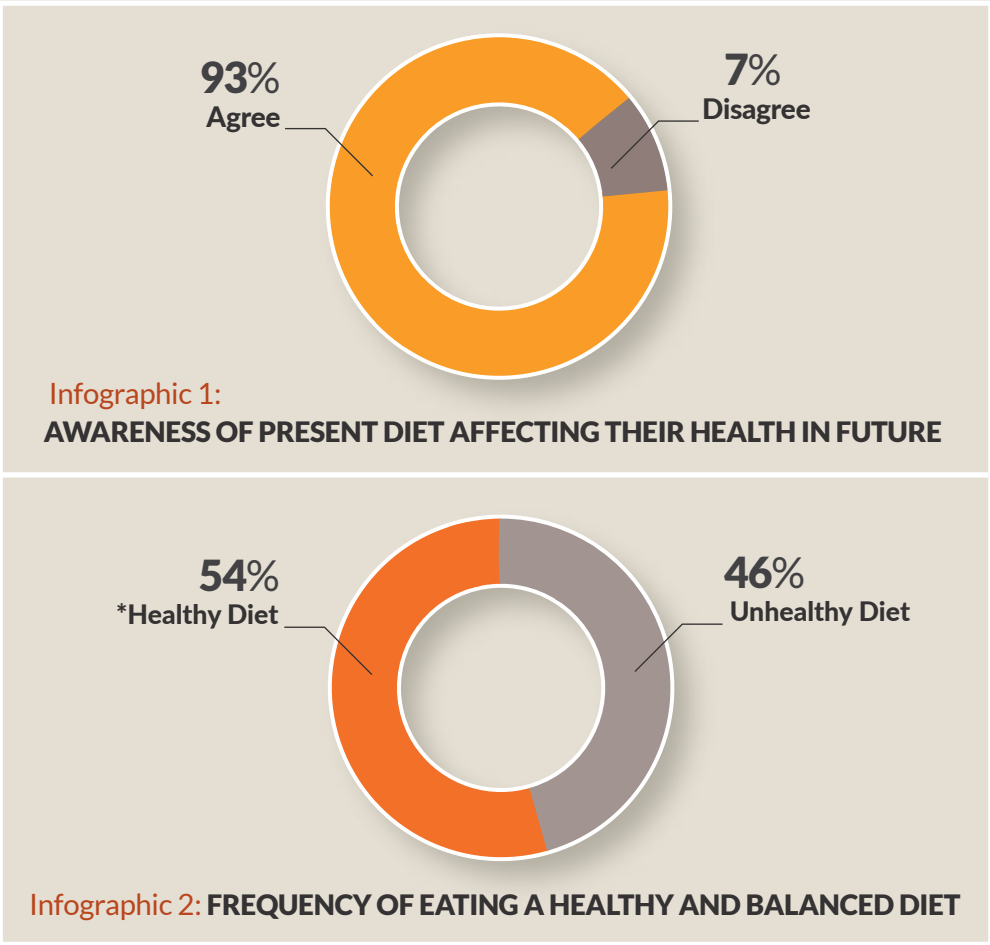
of the respondents are more diet-conscious post-pandemic

**67%**

of the respondents are actively consuming foods for disease prevention and protection

# Knowledge of healthy eating versus actual eating habits

While 93% (infographic 1) are conscious that their present eating habits will impact their health in the future, almost half of the survey respondents (46%) do not actually eat a \*healthy diet most of the time (infographic 2).



\*A healthy diet means eating a healthy diet at least 50% of the time.

To understand their diets further, we also looked into their specific eating habits. Results show that a sizeable share of the respondents do not actively seek to monitor or reduce their intake of food that is high in sugar or sodium (34%), or cholesterol (43%), which puts them at risk of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Hence, it appears that awareness of healthy eating does not necessarily translate to adherence to a diet that will prevent chronic illnesses.

Infographic 3: EATING HABITS		
	All or most of the time	Seldom or never
Avoiding high cholesterol foods	57%	43%
Avoiding high sugar or sodium content	66%	34%
Eating a balanced meal	58%	42%
Eating a variety of foods in moderation	72%	28%

# Prevalence of snacking in Singapore

Bubble tea, cakes and other sweet treats are for many people, staples of everyday life.

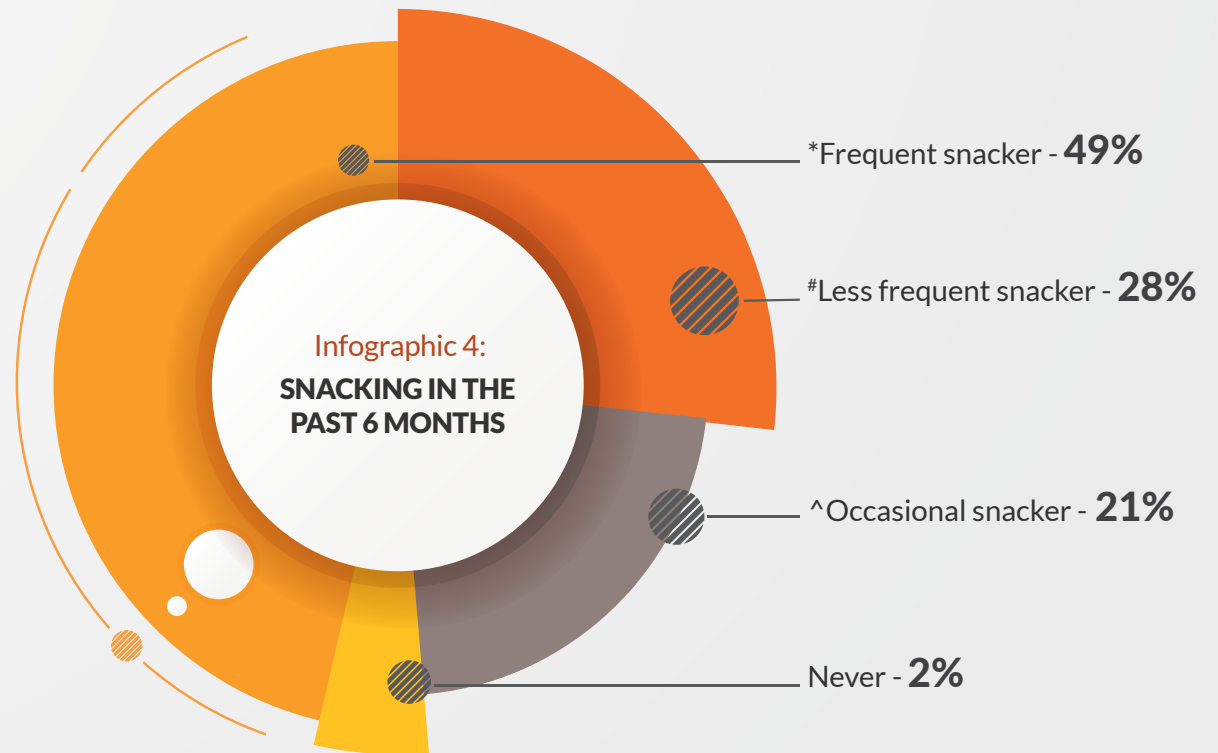
There are many reasons why people snack. Common reasons could be due to hunger, habitual snacking, like popcorn at the movies, or distracted snacking, such as while playing a game or watching TV.

Unsurprisingly, 98% of the respondents snack and 1 in 2 are frequent snackers (infographic 4).

\***Frequent snacker** refers to snacking 3 times or more a week.

#**Less frequent snacker** refers to snacking 1- 2 times a week.

^**Occasional snacker** refers to snacking less than once a week.



## 3 MOST COMMON SNACK TYPES



Chips & Crackers - **59%**



Chocolates, Cakes & Sweets - **51%**



Nuts - **45%**






Across all age groups, we see a significantly higher percentage of frequent snackers (49%) as compared to less frequent (28%) or occasional snackers (21%) as seen in infographic 5. Amongst the different age groups, those below 35 have the tendency to snack more compared to their older counterparts.

The oldest group (55+ years old) is the only age group that exhibits a greater preference for healthy snacks (63%) as compared to those aged 18-24 (20%) as seen in infographic 6.



It is encouraging to know that the seniors are more conscious about what they eat and show better dietary discipline by choosing not to snack as often, and selecting more healthy foods when they do snack.

Youngsters on the other hand, are more prone to habitual snacking. The younger the snacker, the higher the chance of snacking on unhealthy foods.

**Infographic 5: SNACKING HABITS BY AGE GROUPS**

	AGE	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	TOTAL
	Frequent Snacker	56%	59%	49%	40%	41%	49%
	Less Frequent Snacker	23%	24%	29%	31%	29%	28%
	Occasional Snacker	18%	15%	21%	25%	26%	21%

**Infographic 6: TYPES OF SNACKS CONSUMED BY THE VARIOUS AGE GROUPS**

	AGE	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	TOTAL
	*Healthy Snacks	20%	39%	36%	47%	63%	40%
	**Unhealthy Snacks	80%	61%	64%	53%	37%	60%



\*Healthy snacks include those that have significant vitamins, are low in saturated fat and added sugars and have a low sodium content.

\*\*Unhealthy snacks can be described as snacks that have low nutritional value and are high in fat, sugar, and calories.

# Increasing snacking trend post-pandemic

Comparing pre and post Covid-19 period, 25% of survey respondents claimed that they are snacking more (infographic 7). The 25-34 years old group has more respondents (11%) indicating that they have "increased a lot" in their snacking habits as compared to the other age groups.

Infographic 7: POST-PANDEMIC SNACKING

AGE	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	TOTAL
 Increased a lot	5%	11%	5%	2%	1%	5%
 Somewhat increased	20%	24%	24%	20%	8%	20%





# Reading health labels and nutrition facts

To better understand the level of nutrition literacy among Singaporeans, we have also surveyed the respondents on whether they read health labels or nutrition facts when shopping in the supermarket.



## FINDINGS

Close to half of the respondents will read either the health labels or the nutrition facts when food shopping, while 30% of the respondents will read neither. For those who do not read both, the 18-24 years group has the most number of respondents at 42%.



Infographic 8: READING HEALTH LABELS OR NUTRITION FACTS

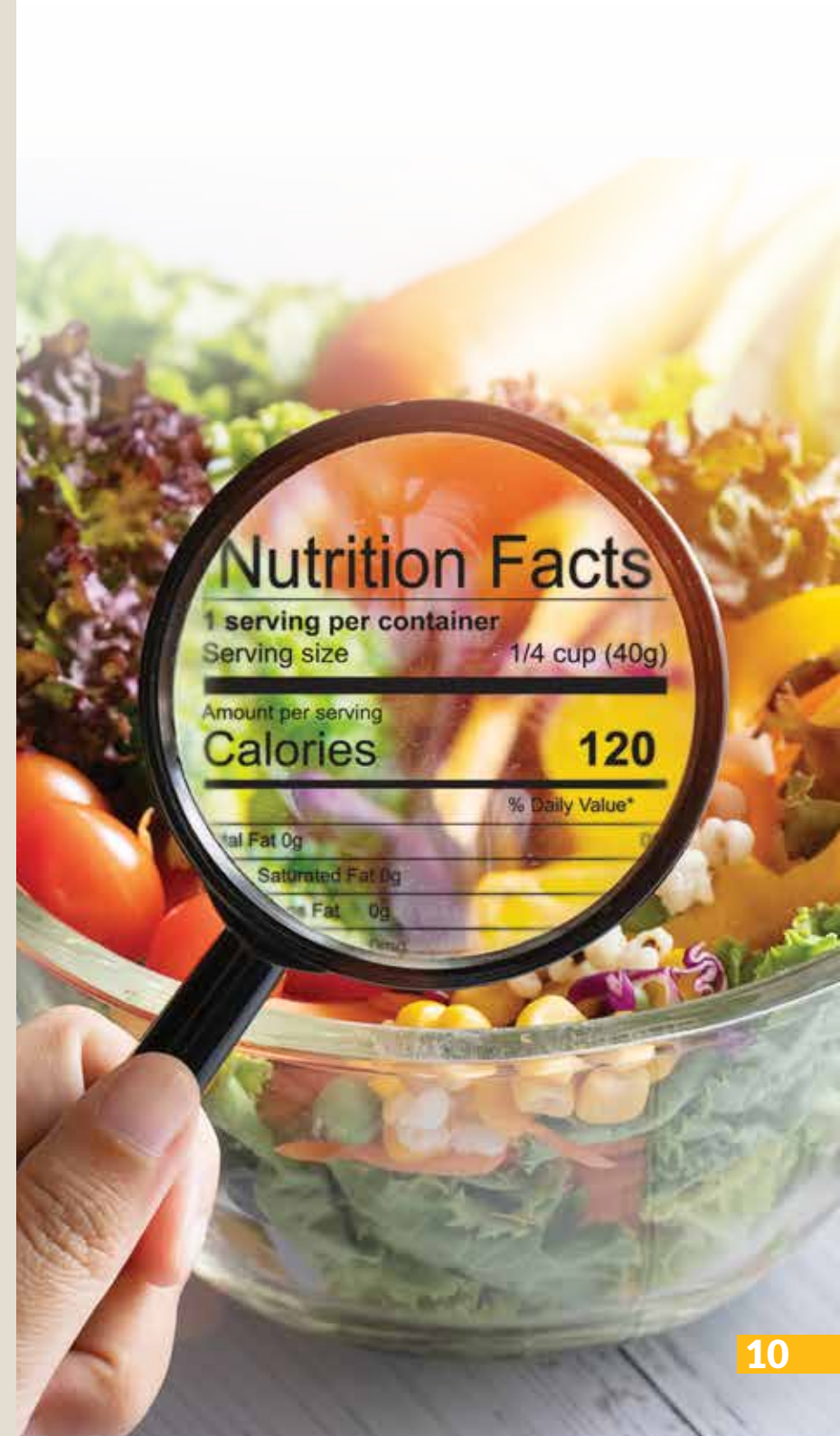
AGE	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	TOTAL
I look out for Health Labels printed on the package (i.e. Reduced Sugar, 100% Wholegrain, Healthy Pyramid Logo, etc)	33%	47%	46%	44%	50%	44%
I read the Nutrition Facts	39%	58%	47%	44%	54%	48%
I don't bother reading Health Labels or Nutrition Facts	42%	22%	28%	34%	22%	30%

Reading of health labels is now a relatively common practice in Singapore. The existing education initiatives have been effective and should continue. However, the conversion of knowledge to action can be boosted to achieve better outcomes, such as making the programmes more targeted by age.

For example, the youngest age group has the highest number of people who do not read health labels. This could be due to them being too young to do much grocery shopping, especially for the family. To encourage action, programmes should remind them to check labels for items that they do buy, and offer alternatives to ingredients that are less desirable.

For the older age groups, the issue could be the hassle of bringing along reading glasses when they grocery shop, which means they may not be able to read the fine print on the product packaging. If that is the case, programmes should encourage action where it matters, like clearly showing labels on food products.

We also wanted to find out how many of the respondents who look out for health labels actually read the nutrition facts. This is because health labels, like those for reduced sugar/sodium, might not make sense without referencing the nutrition facts. Hence, it is important to be able to discern the claims and investigate how to use these claims effectively to ensure a healthy diet.



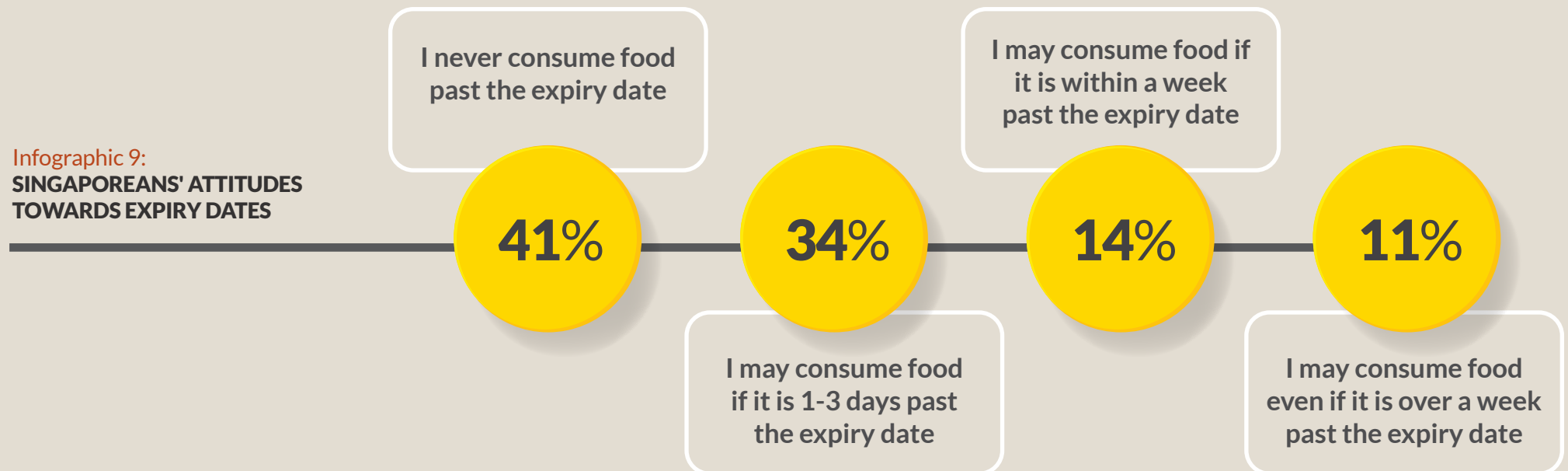


# Attitudes and behaviours towards product expiry dates

While 41% of Singaporeans will not consume food past the expiry date, 34% of them may consume if it is 1-3 days past the expiry while 14% will consume if it is 1 week past the expiry date. In general, most of the respondents pay attention to the expiry dates indicated on the product packaging and avoid consuming foods past their expiry dates. This finding is consistent across all the age groups, including the older generation. However, the finding that 59% of the respondents are willing to consume expired food, with a quarter of them willing to do so for food that has expired for a month or more, is worrying.

Hence, there is a need to educate the public about the difference between “Expiry Date”, which indicates when the food is safe to consume by and “Best Before Date”, which indicates the quality of the food and the importance of adhering to food expiry dates for food safety.

Infographic 9:  
SINGAPOREANS' ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS EXPIRY DATES



# Sources of nutrition information

Word of mouth is a powerful source, with more than half (58%) of Singaporeans relying on it for their information on food nutrition, followed by sources obtained from the government and medical experts (47%).

Word of mouth refers to actual conversations as well as information from social media and magazines. Government and medical experts on the other hand, refer to government bodies, the medical community and international bodies promoting healthy eating.

It appears that government bodies have quite a substantial influence over the public in this matter and is regarded as a source of truth for information about nutrition. This is an avenue worth exploring for partnership, collaboration or participation in activities that promote healthy eating and lifestyle.



Infographic 10: SOURCES OF NUTRITION INFORMATION

# Making well-informed food choices

We see that Singaporeans are generally skeptical about food nutrition claims, with only 13% strongly agreeing to the statement “I trust the nutritional benefits that food companies advertise.”

In fact, most of the 44% of respondents (infographic 8) who indicated they look out for health labels also indicated that they are still skeptical of these claims. This may be due to the easy accessibility of information from sources like social media, the Internet, TV and magazines to verify facts, rather than to trust the advertisements blindly.

However, only 14% strongly agree to the statement “I am able to critically judge advertisements, promotions, marketing and other information relating to food and health.” This shows that a gap in nutrition knowledge can affect the confidence to make well-informed food choices and reaffirms the need to have targeted activities that encourage habitual reading of food labels.



Infographic 11: MAKING WELL-INFORMED FOOD CHOICES



# Conclusion

The study has shown that Singaporeans have keen awareness of the importance of nutrition and health. However, more can be done to educate and empower them to live well by adopting healthier eating habits.

Etiqua Singapore recognises the importance of nutrition literacy, especially for the less privileged. As such, we have incorporated this into our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to support giveback activities to the community.

This recently completed project is part of this CSR community giveback initiative, where insights gleaned from the survey are used to improve the average Singaporean's nutrition literacy, as well as to help augment or participate in nutrition-related programmes organised by our adopted charities.





[www.etiqa.com.sg](http://www.etiqa.com.sg)

One Raffles Quay, #22-01 North Tower, Singapore 048583

If you would like to talk to us about the insights in this research, we are keen to hear from you. Please contact us at [marketing@etiqa.com.sg](mailto:marketing@etiqa.com.sg).

Etiqua Insurance Pte. Ltd 2022. All rights reserved. Excerpts may be used or quoted and attributed to  
\*Reproduced with permission from The Nutrition Survey Report, published in 2022 by Etiqua Insurance Pte. Ltd.