

“Pill vs. Broccoli” – The Economics of Health Behavior and Vitamin Consumption

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The Economics of Health Behavior and Vitamin Consumption

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Introduction

- ❖ Public health challenges from aging and obesity boost diet-health issues and wellbeing
- ❖ Demand for foods with additional health benefits creates multi-billion opportunity for agri-food sector
- ❖ 71% of Canadians and 55% of Americans consume vitamin and mineral supplements (Balluz et al. 2000)
- ❖ Produce consumption has to increase by 138% to meet recommended intake of FDA 5-a-day program
 - ❖ This increase would raise domestic output by 124% (Buzby and Wells 2007)

Potential Increase in Produce Consumption



Objectives

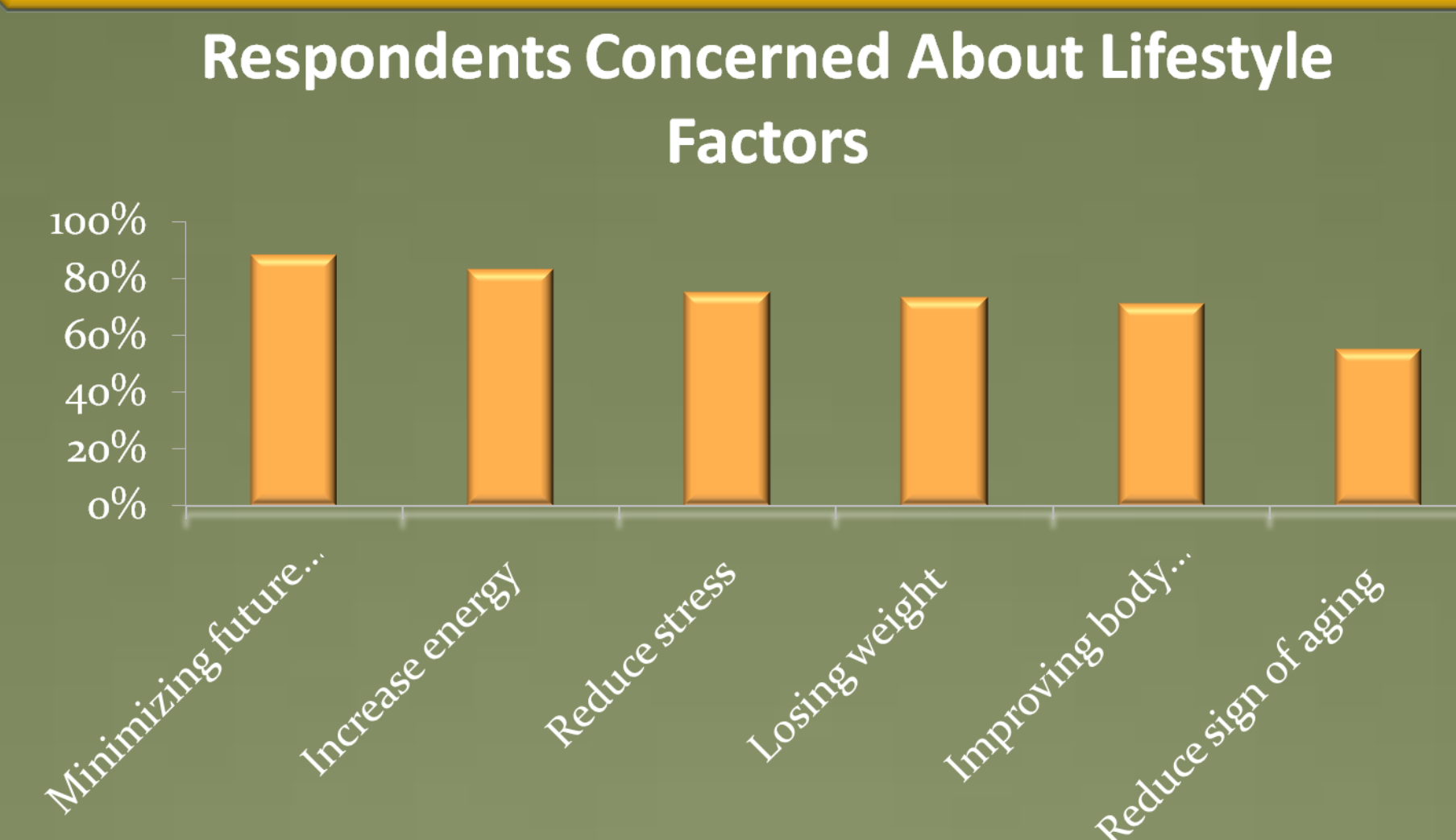
- ❖ To determine consumption patterns of dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals) as substitutes for fresh fruits & vegetables among U.S. and Canadian consumers
- ❖ To identify the economic and demographic factors that influence the consumption of supplements and food products
- ❖ To estimate consumer profiles' responsiveness to diet-health messaging and food marketing based on demographic and lifestyle characteristics

Results

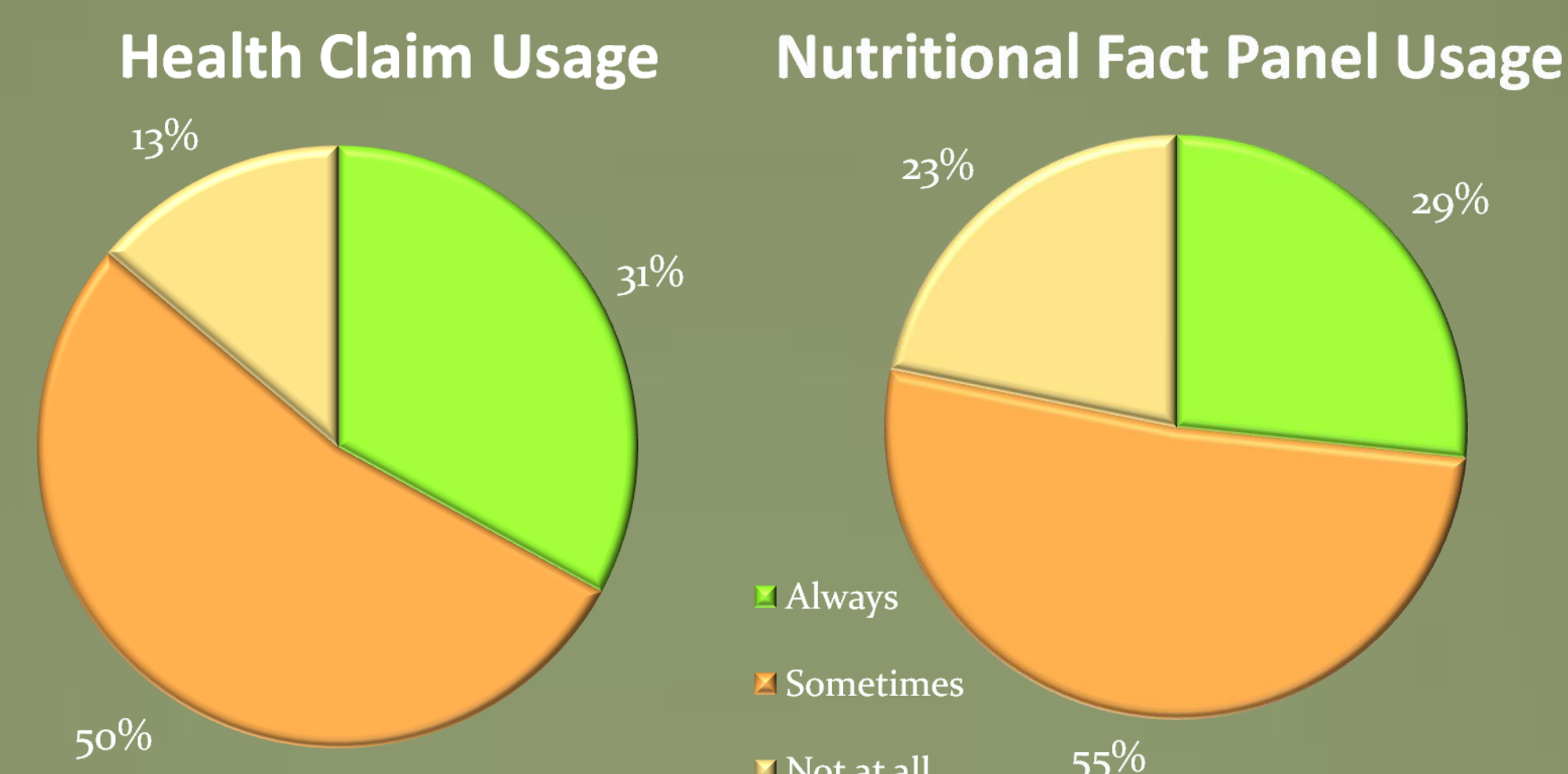
❖ Most Canadian consumers are concerned about dietary change regarding vitamin and produce consumption

Canadians having made conscious dietary changes in the past 3 months (%)	All (n=7630)	Low Income HH (<40k)	Female / Male	Exercise > 3 times / week
Increased Vitamin intake (A, B, D, E)	44.7	44.6	27.4 / 14.1	43.7
Increased fruit consumption	62.4	61.7	43.0 / 18.0	61.9
Increased vegetable consumption	58.8	58.2	41.1 / 17.7	58.2

❖ The majority of respondents is concerned about their future well-being and health status



❖ About one third of respondents always checks health claims and nutritional fact panels



Discussion

- ❖ Research present profiles of North American consumers
- ❖ Heterogeneity of Canadian population confirmed
- ❖ Differences in profiles of NFP vs. HC users regarding income, education, household size, and dietary knowledge
- ❖ Everybody looks for labels but does not read them
- ❖ Willingness to pay for "health foods" limited
- ❖ Conditions under which nutritional labels will achieve the desired objective of improving diet quality
- ❖ Short term lifestyle trends as important as "true" health concerns
- ❖ Implications for development of appropriate public policy approaches

Outlook

- ❖ Multiple avenues for analysis and to extract further information
- ❖ Further project findings will be helpful to inform
 - ❖ Potential niche markets for small and medium-sized fruit and vegetable producers
 - ❖ Marketers of imported fresh produce