

# Diet & Health under COVID-19

**Pippa Bailey, Susan Purcell, Javier Calvar &  
Alex Baverstock**

January 2021



# **Diet & Health under COVID-19**



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# Q1. Personal changes since the COVID-19 pandemic began

**Globally, three-quarters of respondents reported changes to their weight, exercise, alcohol consumption or smoking since the pandemic began, with weight gain being more widely seen.**

- With the exception of Malaysia, Hong Kong and China, all countries showed a net reported weight gain (more people reporting gaining weight than losing weight). The biggest net weight gains are in Brazil and Chile.
- There is polarisation across the countries in terms of whether they have increased or decreased exercise overall. China and Hong Kong show the biggest net reported increase in exercise (more people reporting doing more exercise than doing less exercise), while Italy and Japan show the largest net reported decrease.

**Globally, similar proportions of people say that they have consumed more alcohol or less alcohol, and have taken up or given up smoking, since the COVID-19 pandemic began.**

- Australia and the United States had the greatest proportion of people who said they have increased their alcohol consumption since the COVID-19 pandemic began (21% and 20% respectively)
- The largest net reported decrease in alcohol consumption (more people reporting drinking more alcohol than drinking less alcohol) is in South Africa and China.
- India shows the largest net reported decrease of people smoking (more reporting giving up smoking than starting).

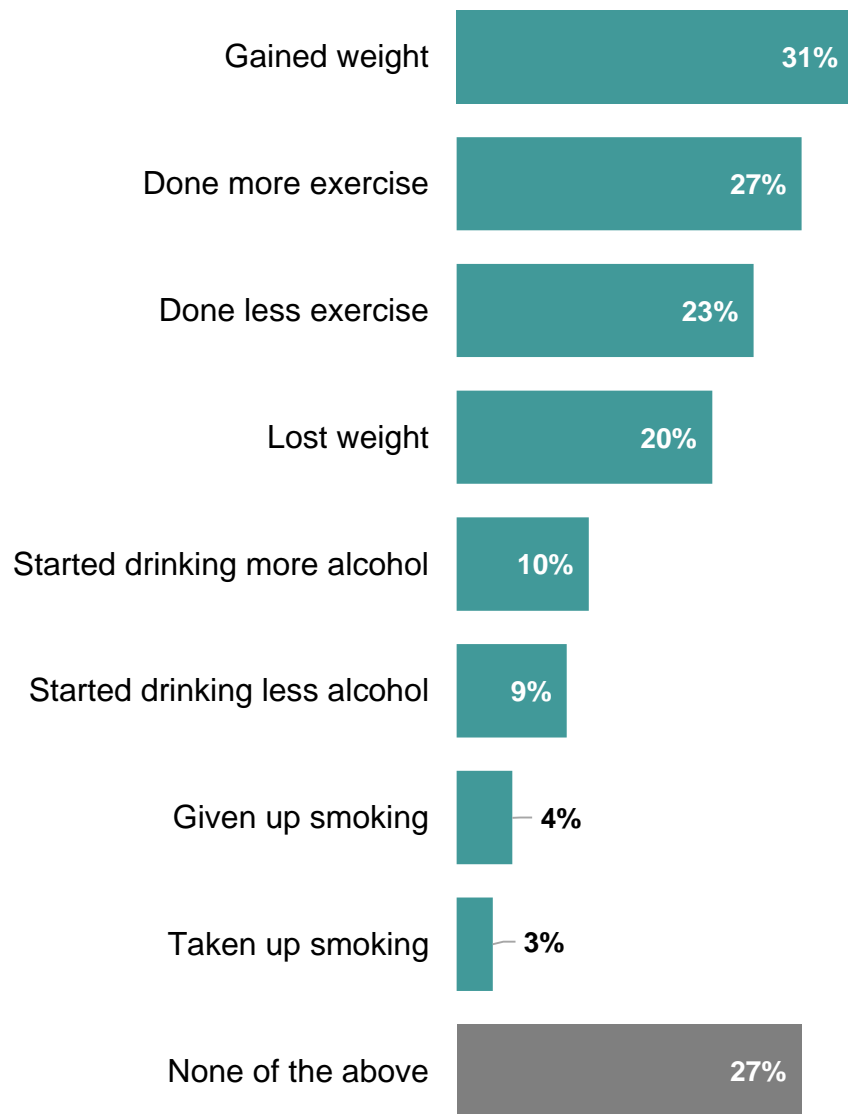
# Q1.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*Globally, three-quarters of adults reported changes to their weight, exercise, alcohol consumption and/or smoking since the pandemic began.*

*Around half reported a weight change since the beginning of the pandemic, more likely to be having gained weight than lost weight.*

## Global totals



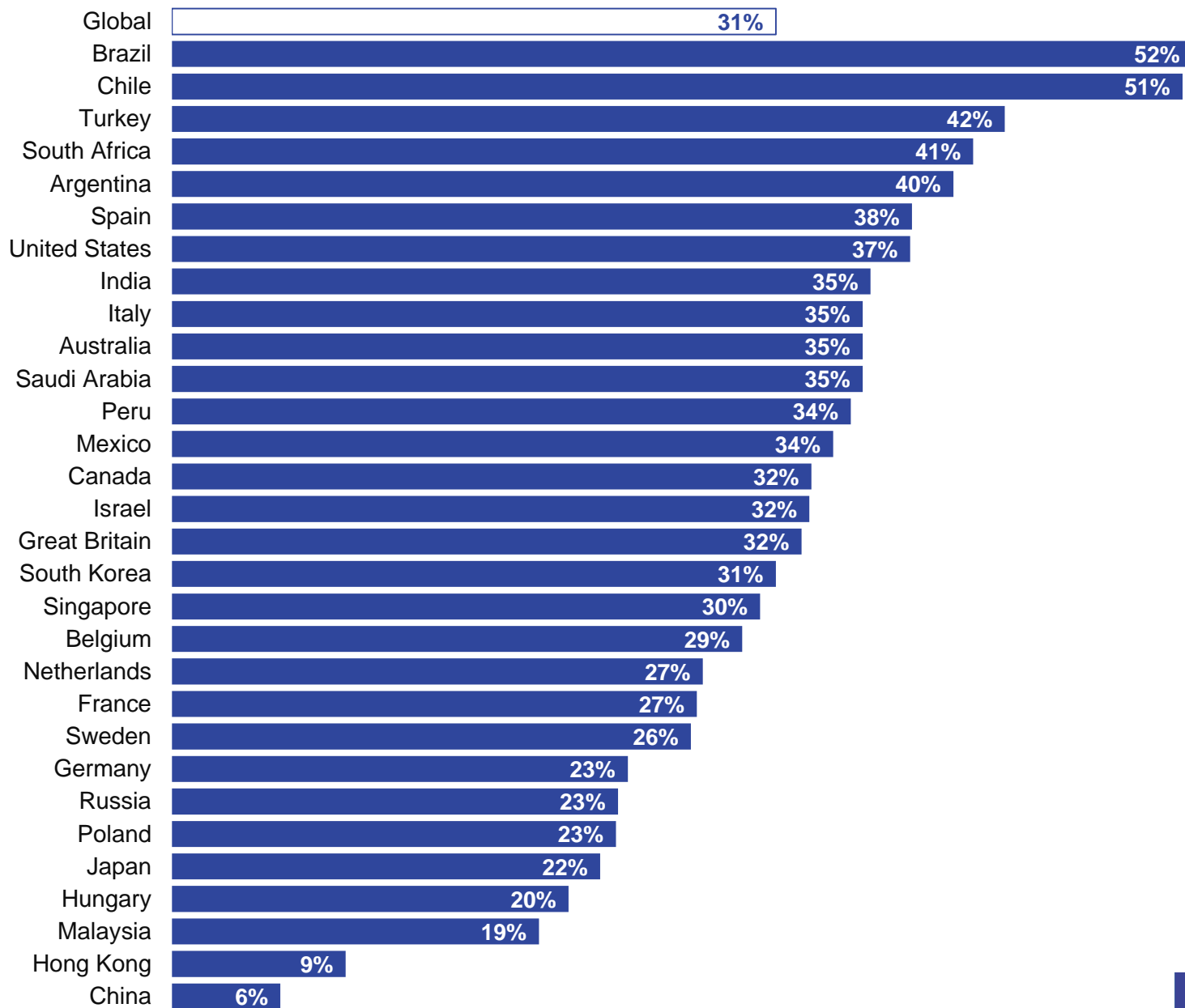
# Q1.

## WEIGHT GAIN

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*Those in South America (e.g. Brazil Chile) are the most likely to say they have gained weight since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Those in South East Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Hong Kong, China) are least likely to say they have gained weight since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

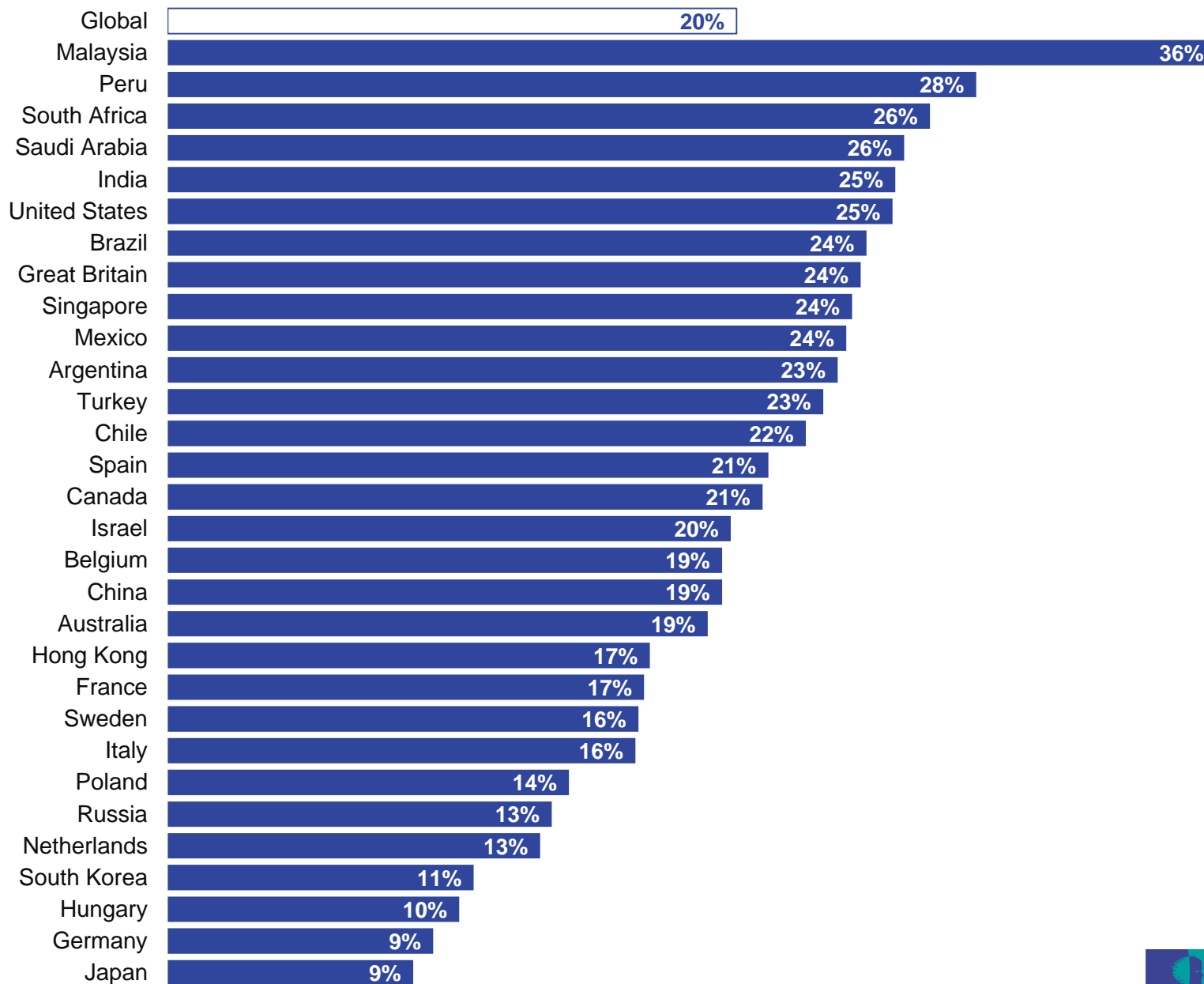


# Q1.

## WEIGHT LOSS

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

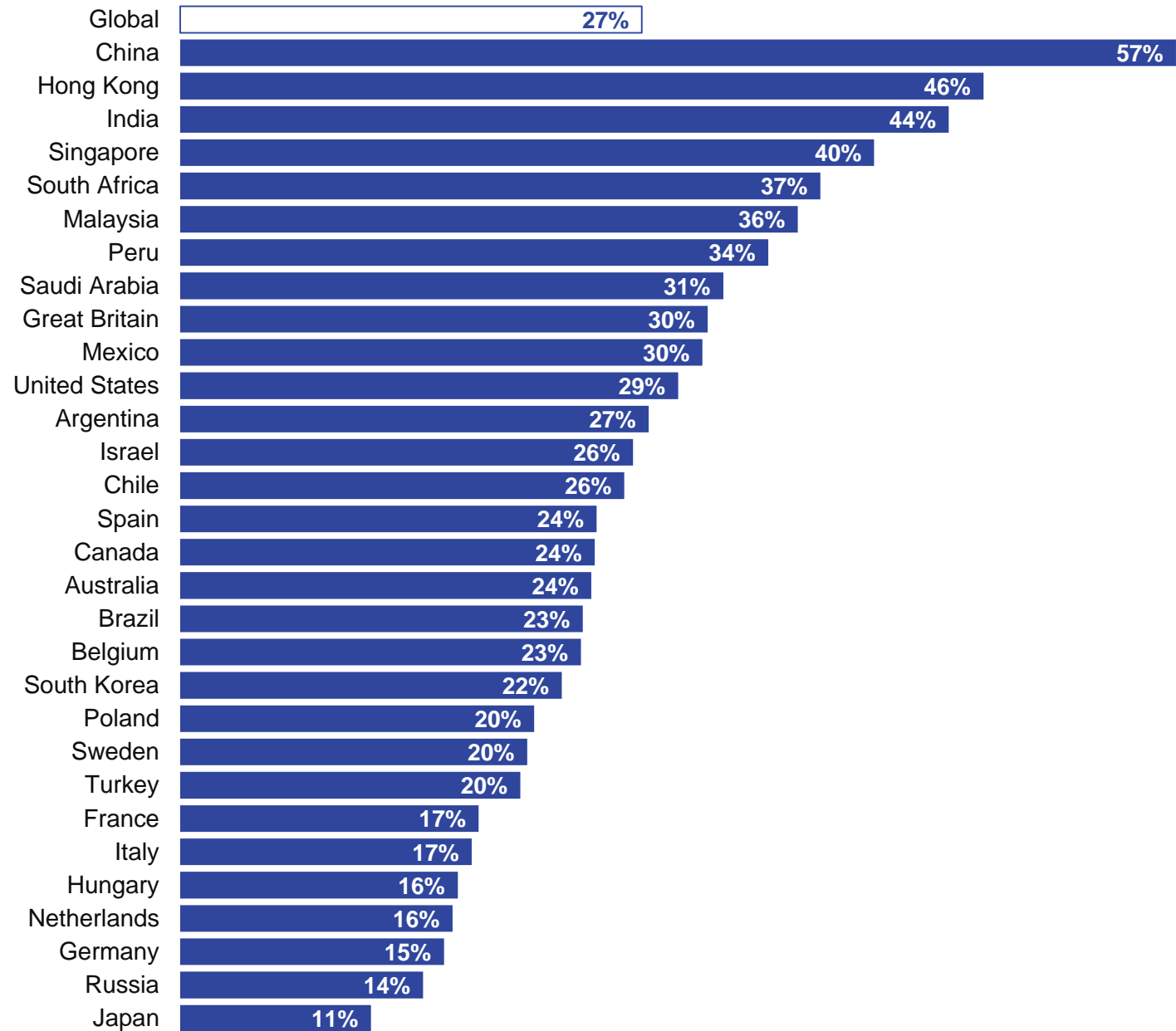
*Those in Malaysia are the most likely to report weight loss.*



## EXERCISE INCREASE

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

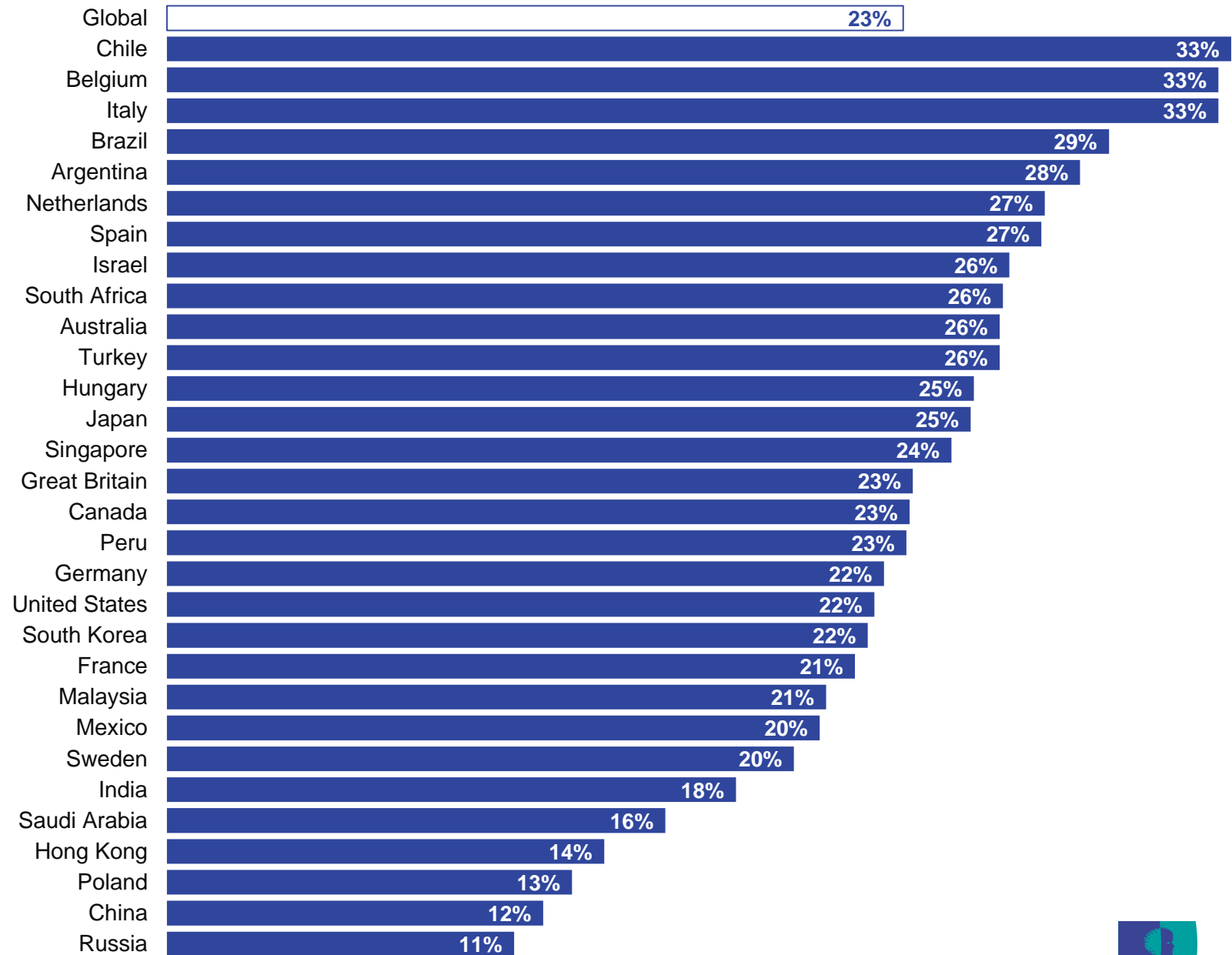
*Those in South / South East Asia (e.g. China, Hong Kong, India and Singapore) are more likely to say they have done more exercise since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



## EXERCISE DECREASE

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*Those in Chile, Belgium and Italy are more likely to say they have done less exercise since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



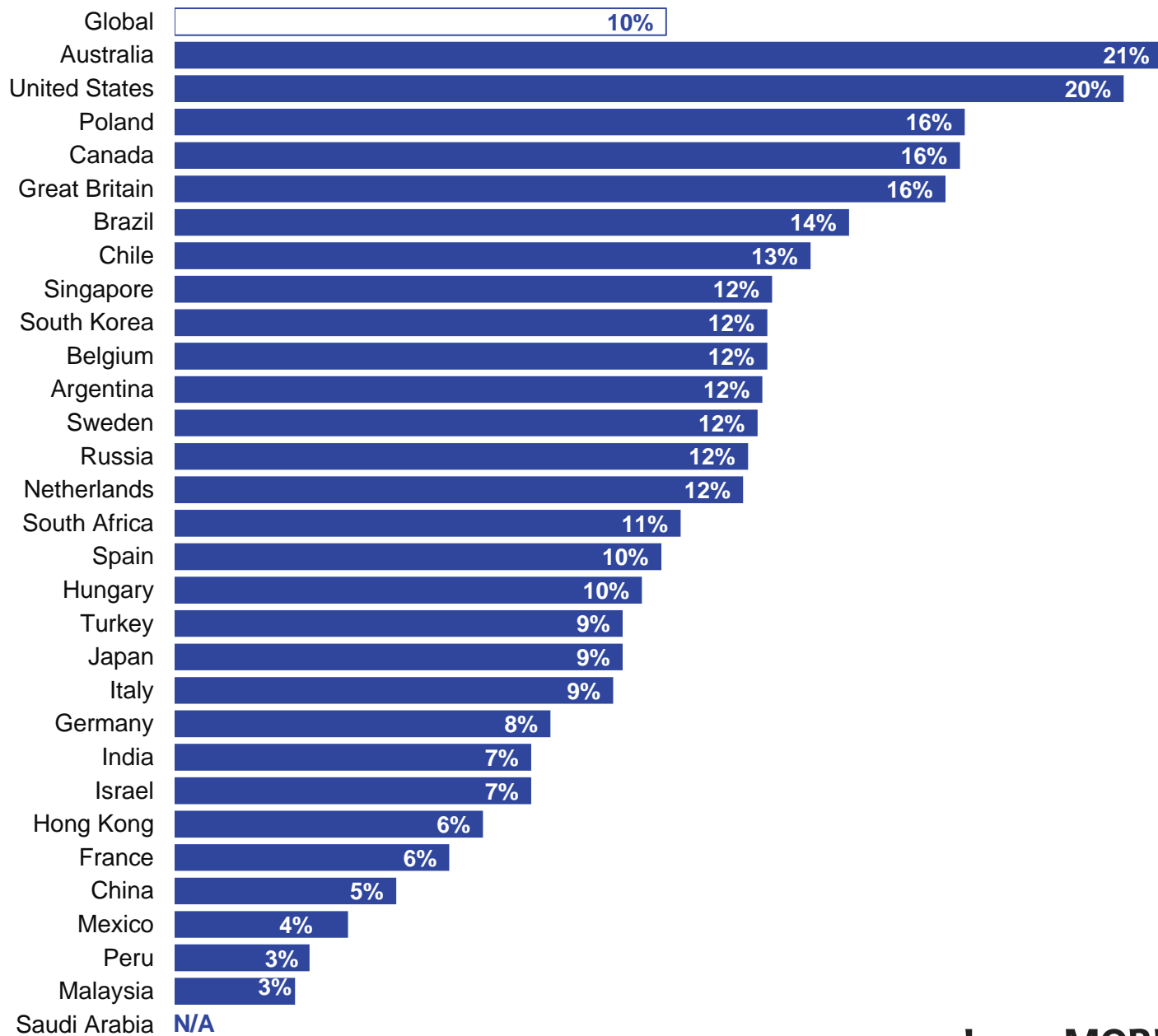


# Q1.

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION INCREASE

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*Australia and the United States have the greatest proportion of people who say they have increased their alcohol consumption since the COVID-19 pandemic began.*

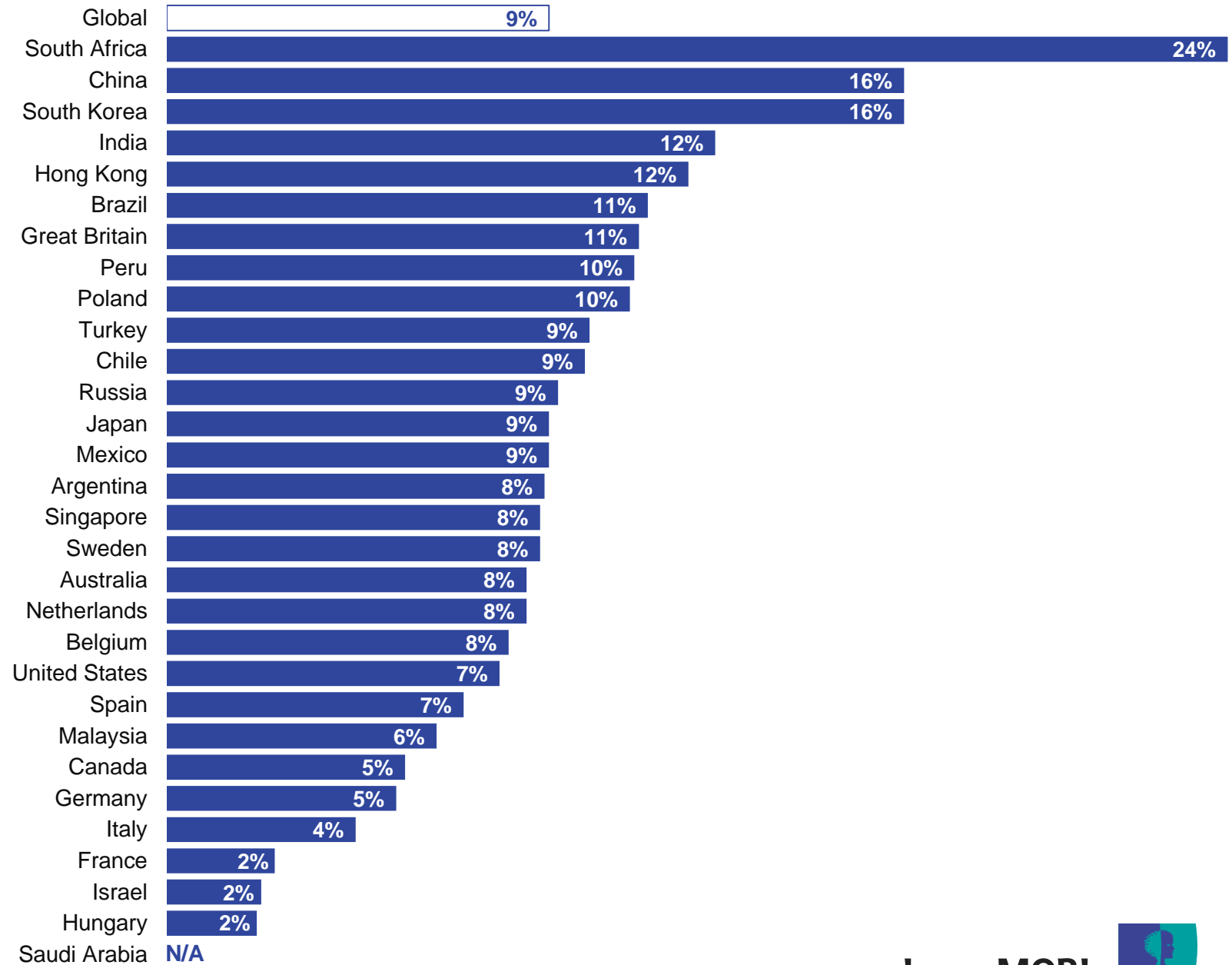


# Q1.

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DECREASE

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*People in South Africa are the most likely to say they have decreases their alcohol consumption since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting their lockdown restrictions on alcohol.*



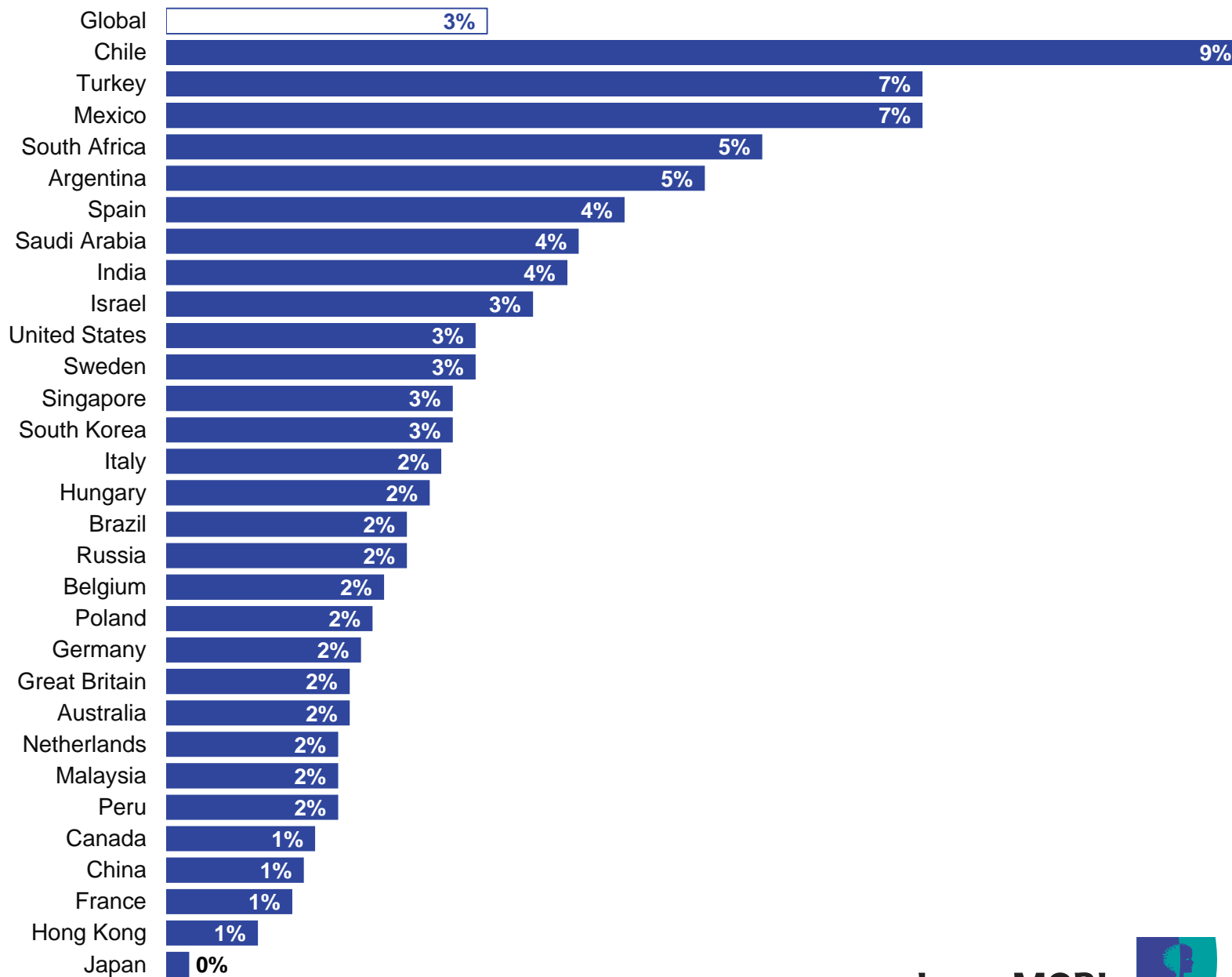
Base: 22,008 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23<sup>rd</sup>- November 6<sup>th</sup> 2020

# Q1.

## TAKEN UP SMOKING

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

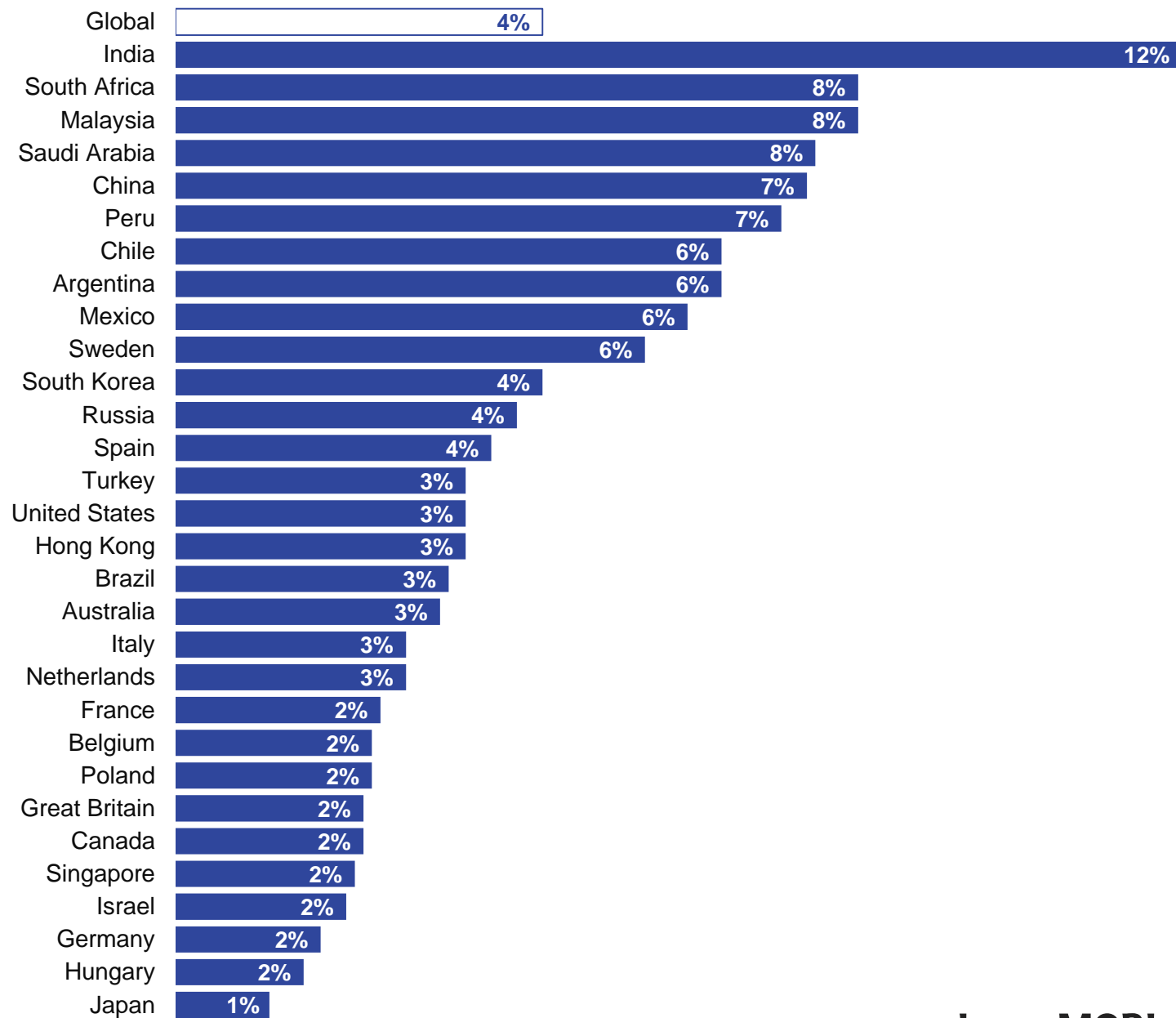
*Those in Chile are most likely to say they have taken up smoking since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



## GIVEN UP SMOKING

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*Those in India are most likely to say they have given up smoking since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



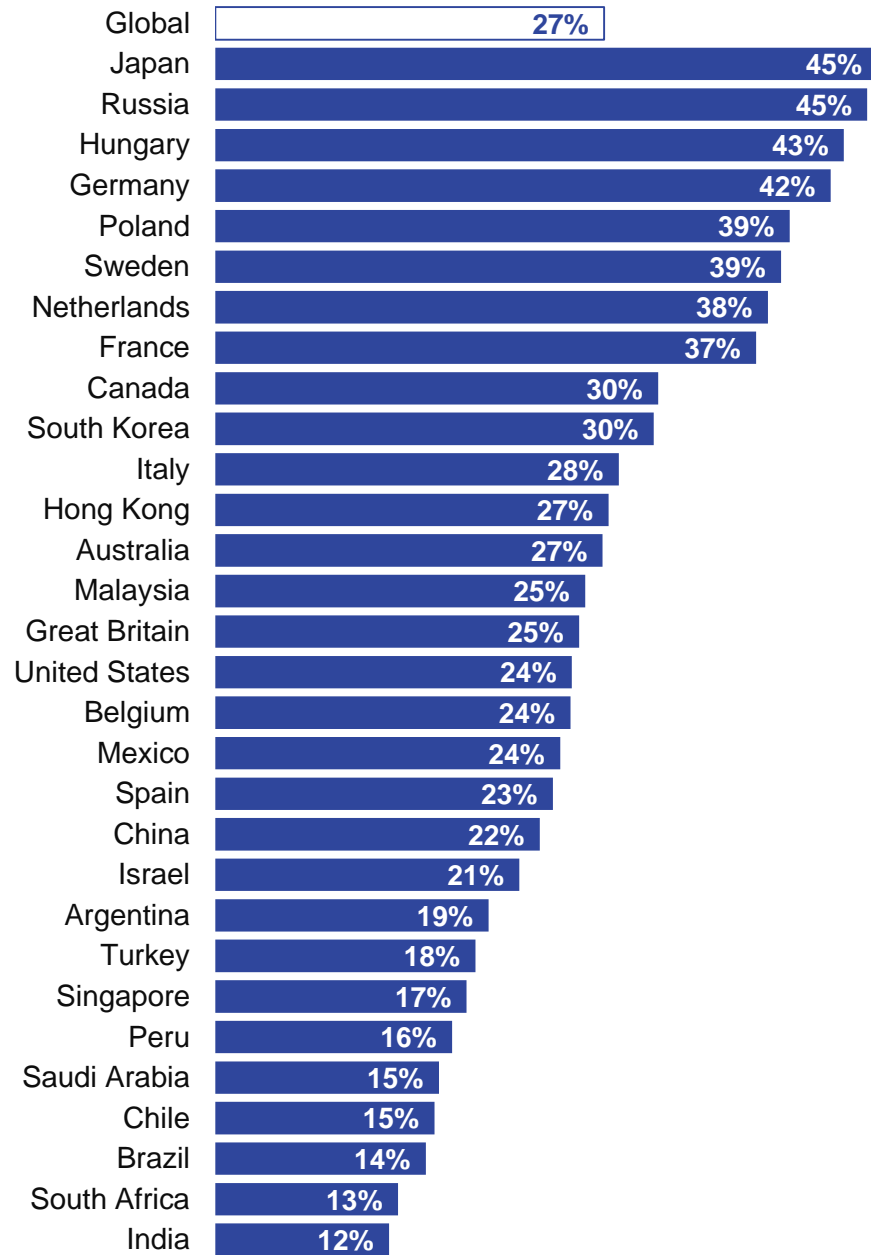
# Q1.

## NONE OF THE ABOVE

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which of the following, if any, have you personally done?

*The pandemic has impacted over half of people in terms of weight, exercise, drinking or smoking in all countries.*

*However, it has not affected all countries equally: India, South America, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Singapore have the highest levels of reported change(s); Japan, Russia, Hungary and Germany have the fewest reporting any change(s).*



# Q2. Reducing the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms

**Globally, of the options presented, increasing exercise is the activity most identified with being likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms, but there are huge differences among countries in terms of beliefs.**

- In China, regular exercise is considered key, far more so than in any other country, while people in China are less likely to mention losing weight as likely to reduce COVID-19 severity.

**Few countries consider losing weight to be the most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms.**

- In Great Britain, losing weight is considered key, far more so than any other market.

**Giving up smoking is seen as more effective in reducing the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms.**

- Across countries, giving up smoking is considered important, and in some is the most important factor.
- Globally, giving up alcohol is considered less likely than the other factors to reduce risk.

**Vitamin D supplements divide opinion.**

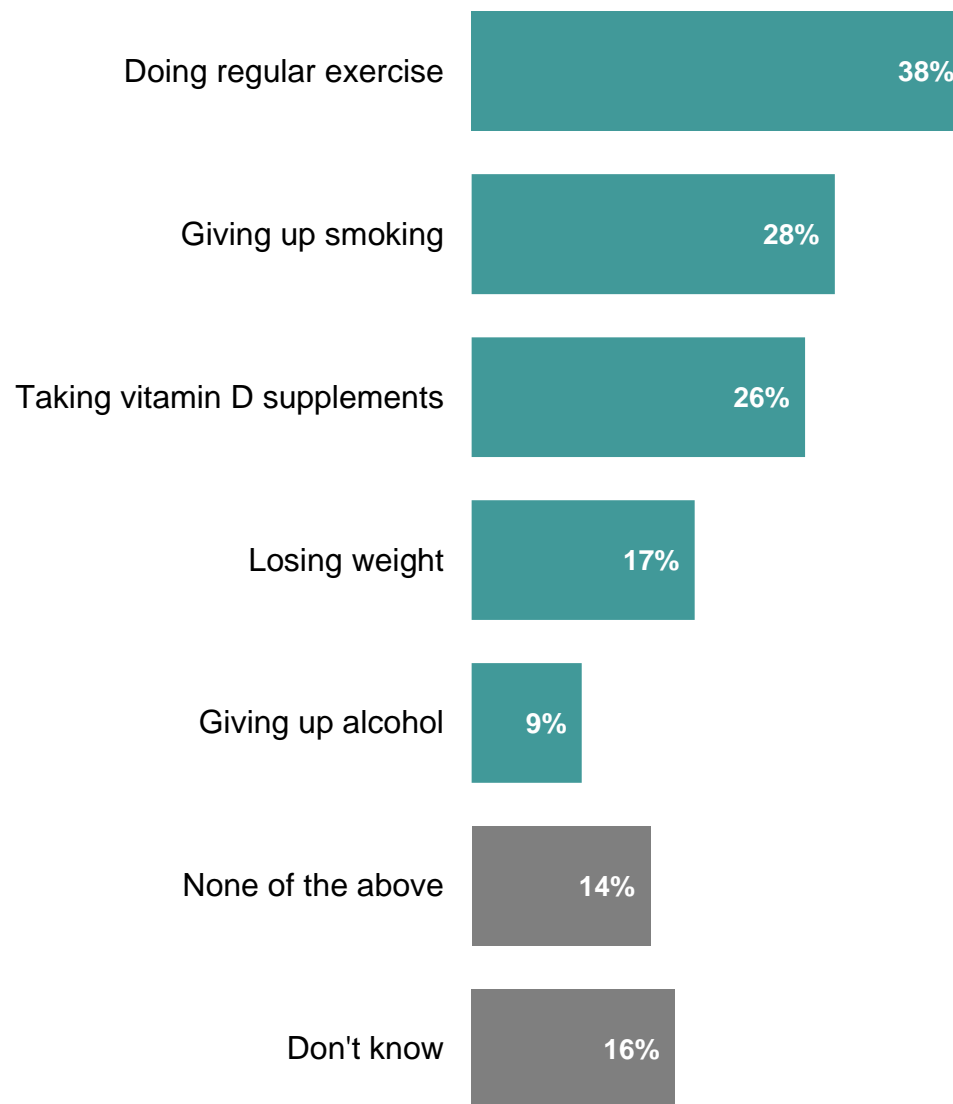
- Vitamin D supplements are far more likely to be viewed as one of the top ways to reduce risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms outside of Western Europe, Japan, Australia and Peru.
- It is the top answer given in Hungary and Poland.

# Q2.

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

*Globally, increasing exercise is the activity most identified as being most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms.*

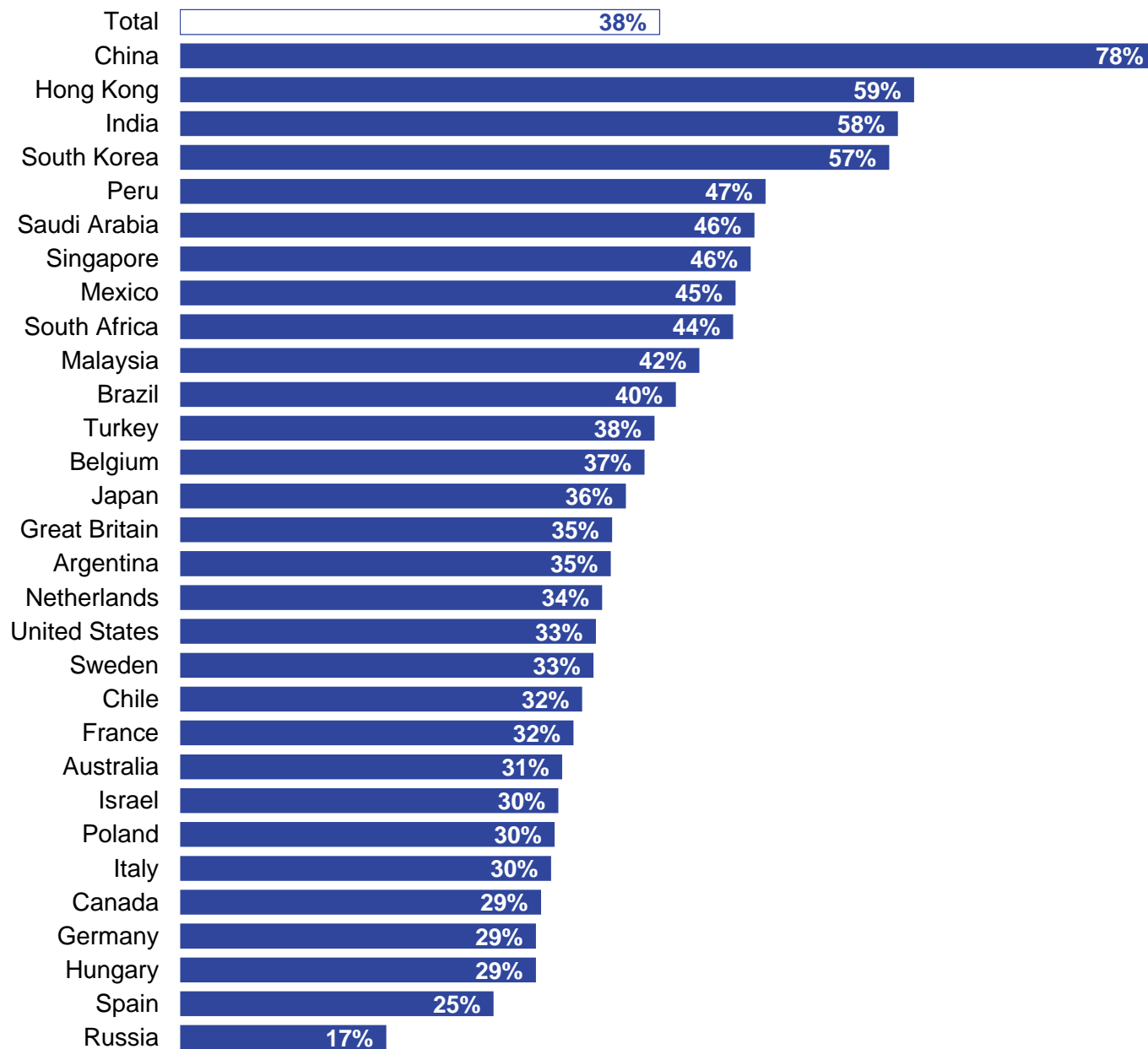
## Global totals



## REGULAR EXERCISE

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

*People in South / South East Asian countries (e.g. China, Hong Kong, India, South Korea), are considerably more likely to think doing regular exercise is most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms*

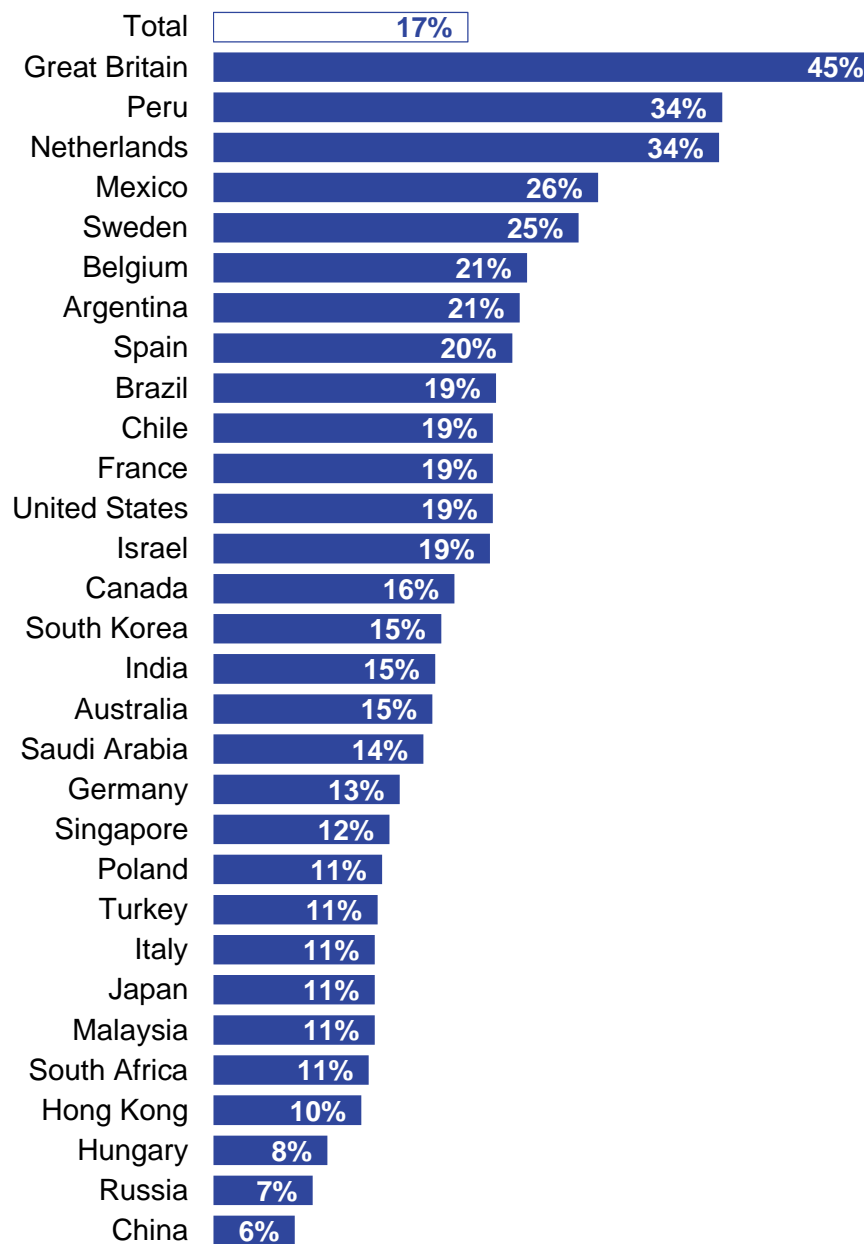




## LOSING WEIGHT

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

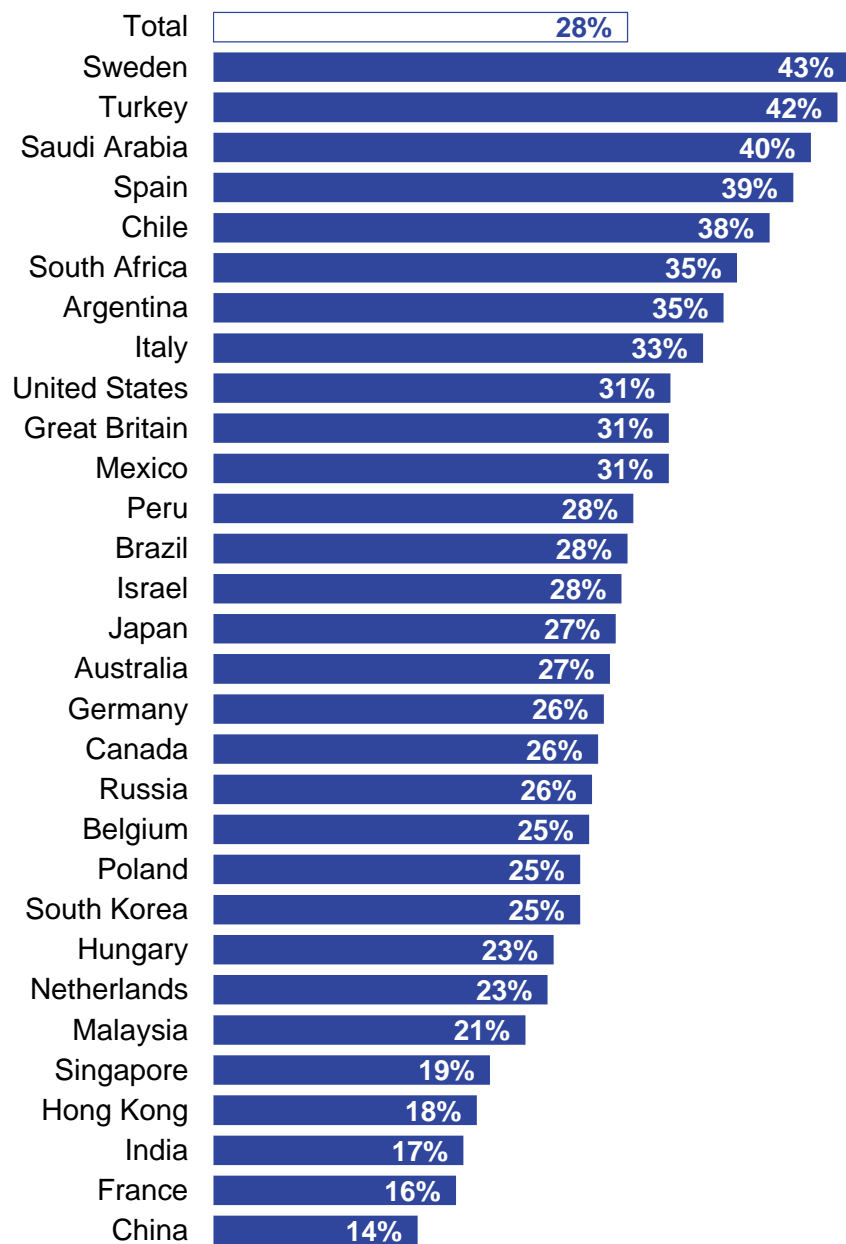
*People in Great Britain are most likely to consider losing weight as most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms. This view is much less prevalent in most other countries.*



## GIVING UP SMOKING

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

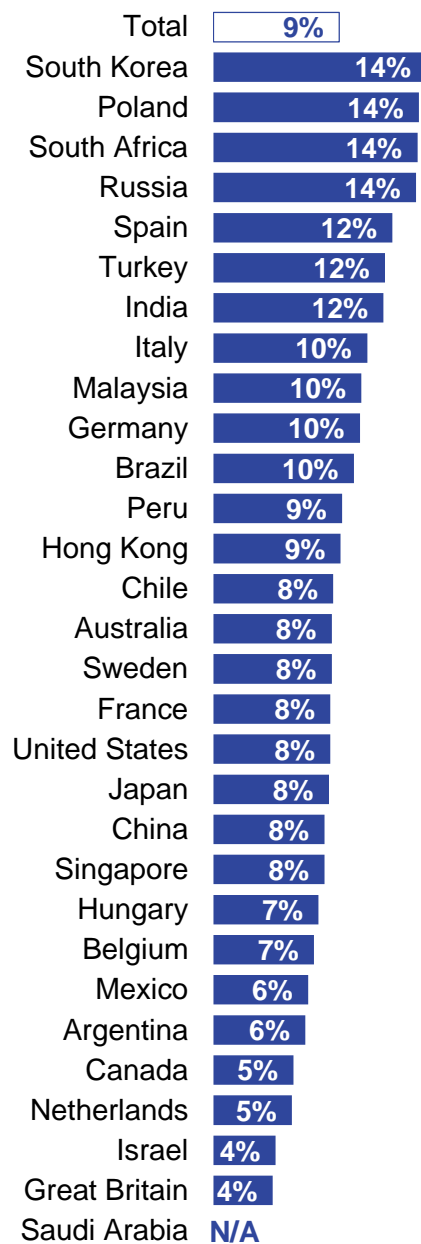
*Giving up smoking is least likely to be chosen as one of the top picks for reducing COVID-19 symptoms in South / South East Asian countries (e.g. China, India, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia), and is also least likely to be chosen in France.*



## GIVING UP ALCOHOL

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

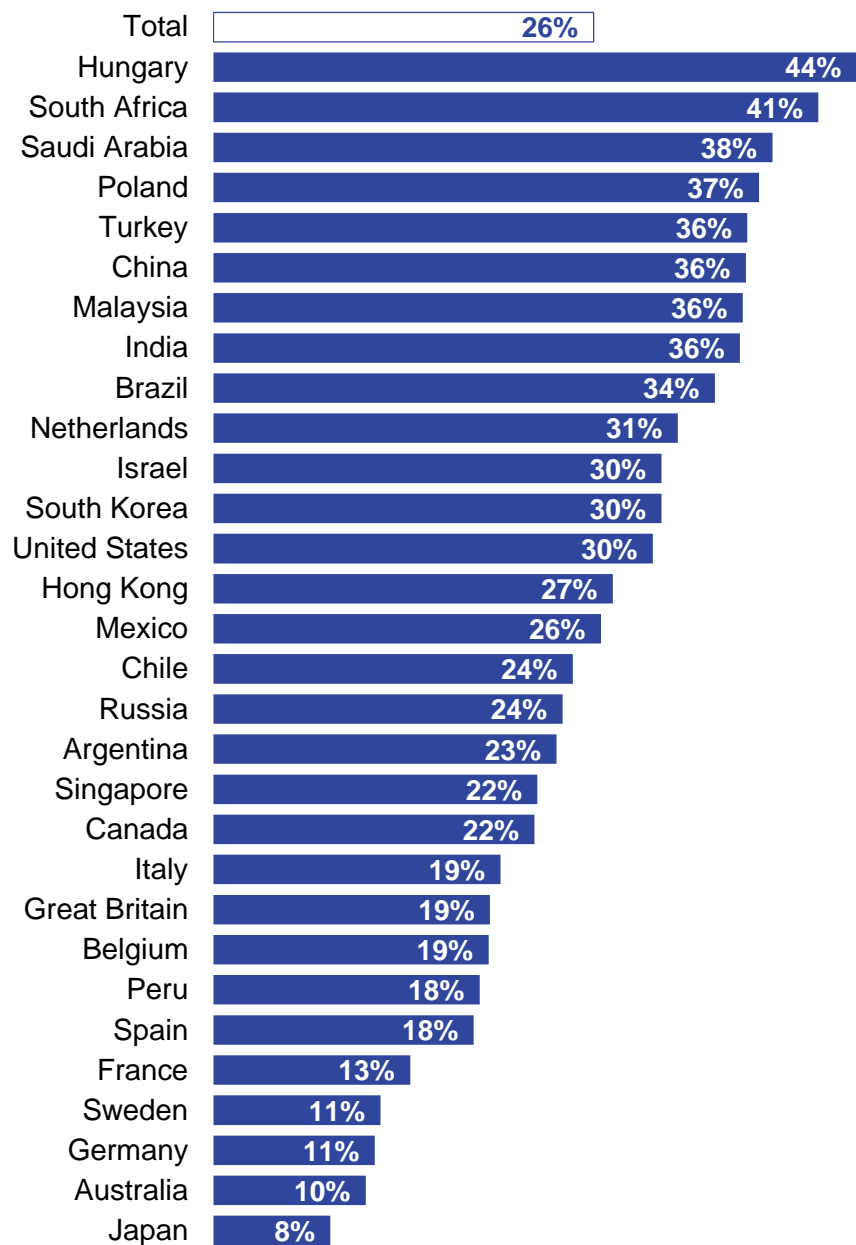
*Relatively few consider giving up alcohol to be most likely to reduce severe symptoms of COVID-19.*



## VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

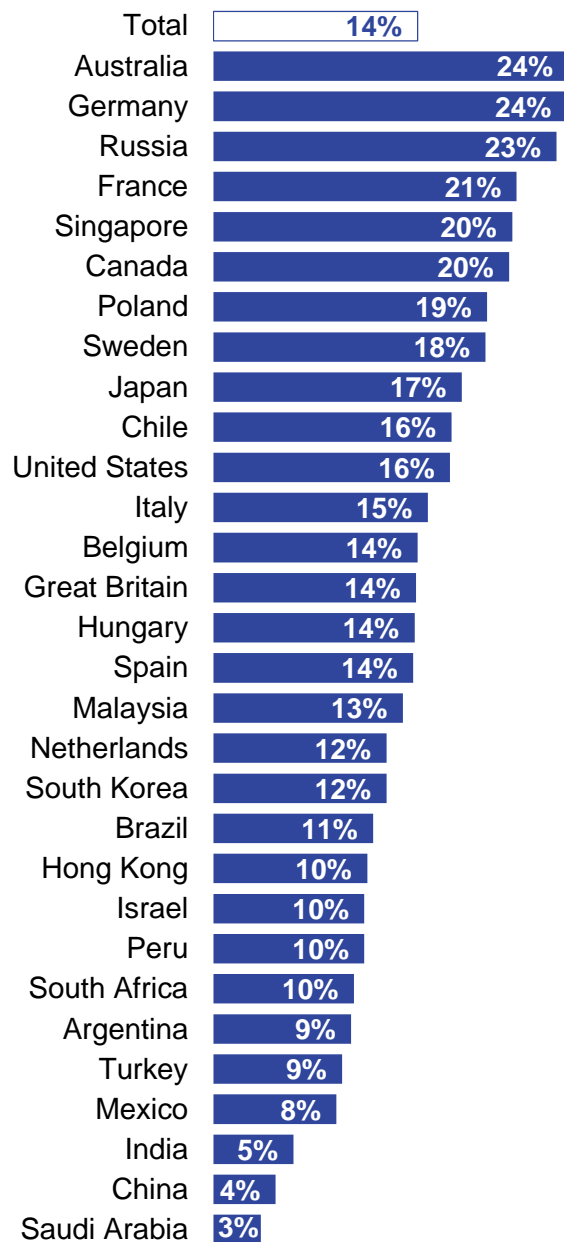
*Vitamin D supplements are more likely to be viewed as one of the actions most likely to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms outside of Western European countries, Japan, Australia and Peru.*



## NONE OF THE ABOVE

Which one or two of these do you think are most likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in those infected with the disease?

*People in Australia, Germany and Russia are most likely to say that none of the presented options (doing regular exercise, giving up smoking, taking vitamin D supplements, losing weight or giving up alcohol) are likely to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms.*



# Q3. Link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19

**Globally, 45% of people think there is a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19.**

- In Latin American markets (e.g. Peru, Mexico), where obesity is a national challenge, people are more likely to think there is a connection between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19 (82% and 61% respectively think there is a link).
- Among all countries, Great Britain is second most likely to think there is a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19 (64% think there is a link).

**Globally, 1 in 3 people do not think there is a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19.**

- In South East Asian markets (e.g. China, Malaysia, South Korea), people are more likely to say there is not a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19 (53%, 49% and 48% respectively think there is not a link).

**Globally, 1 in 4 people do not know if there is a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19.**

- People in Japan, Germany, Australia and Canada are most likely to say they don't know whether there is a link between obesity and severity symptoms of COVID-19.

# Q3.

Do you think there is, or is not, a link between obesity and more severe symptoms of COVID-19 among those infected?

*Globally, 45% of people think there is a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19.*

## Global totals

Yes, I do think there's a link

45%

No, I don't think there's a link

31%

I don't know

24%

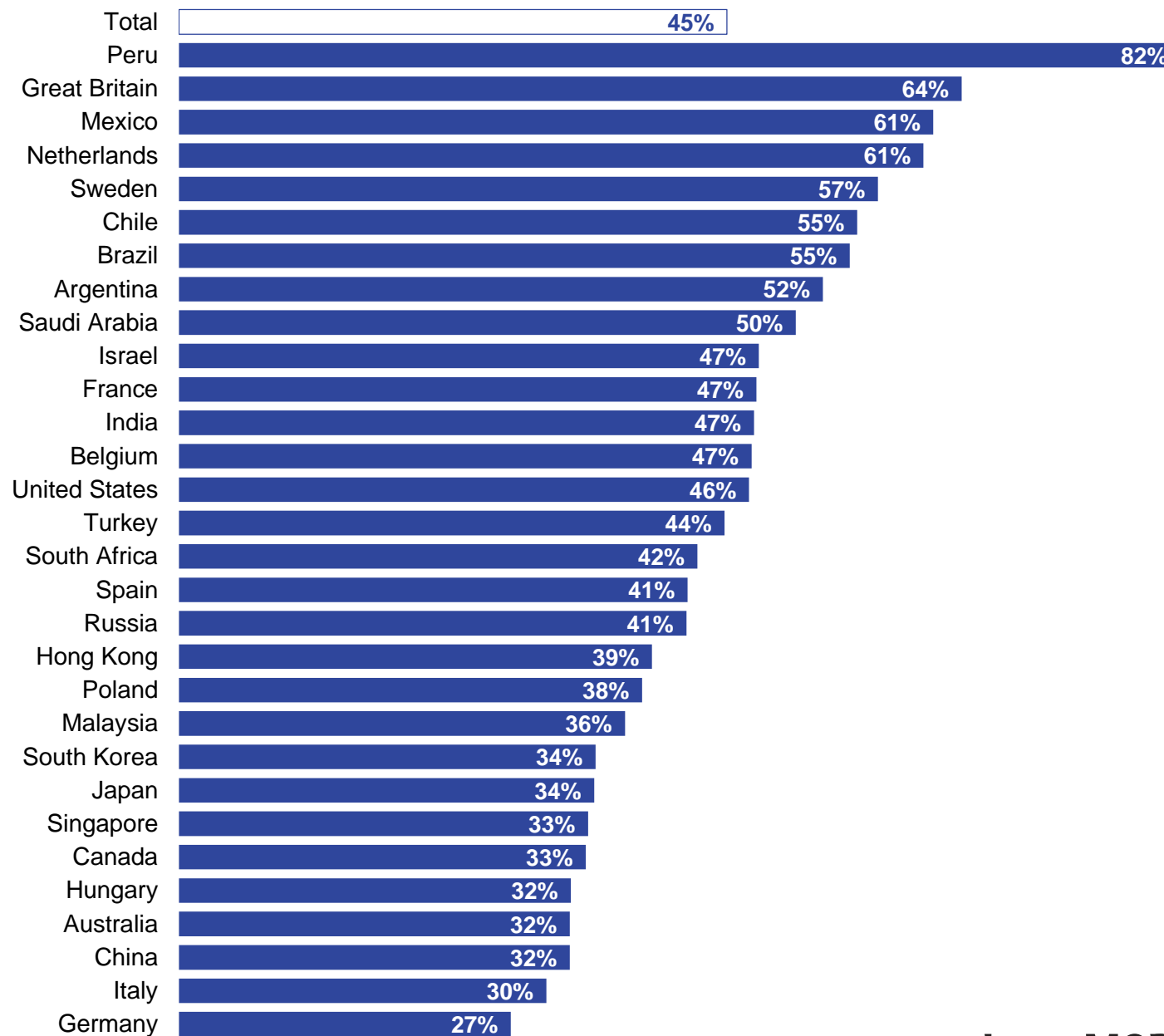
Base: 22,009 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23rd- November 6th 2020

## YES

Do you think there is, or is not, a link between obesity and more severe symptoms of COVID-19 among those infected?

*People in Peru are by far the most likely to link obesity and severity of COVID-19 symptoms.*

*A third or fewer in Hungary, Australia, China, Italy and Germany think there is a link.*



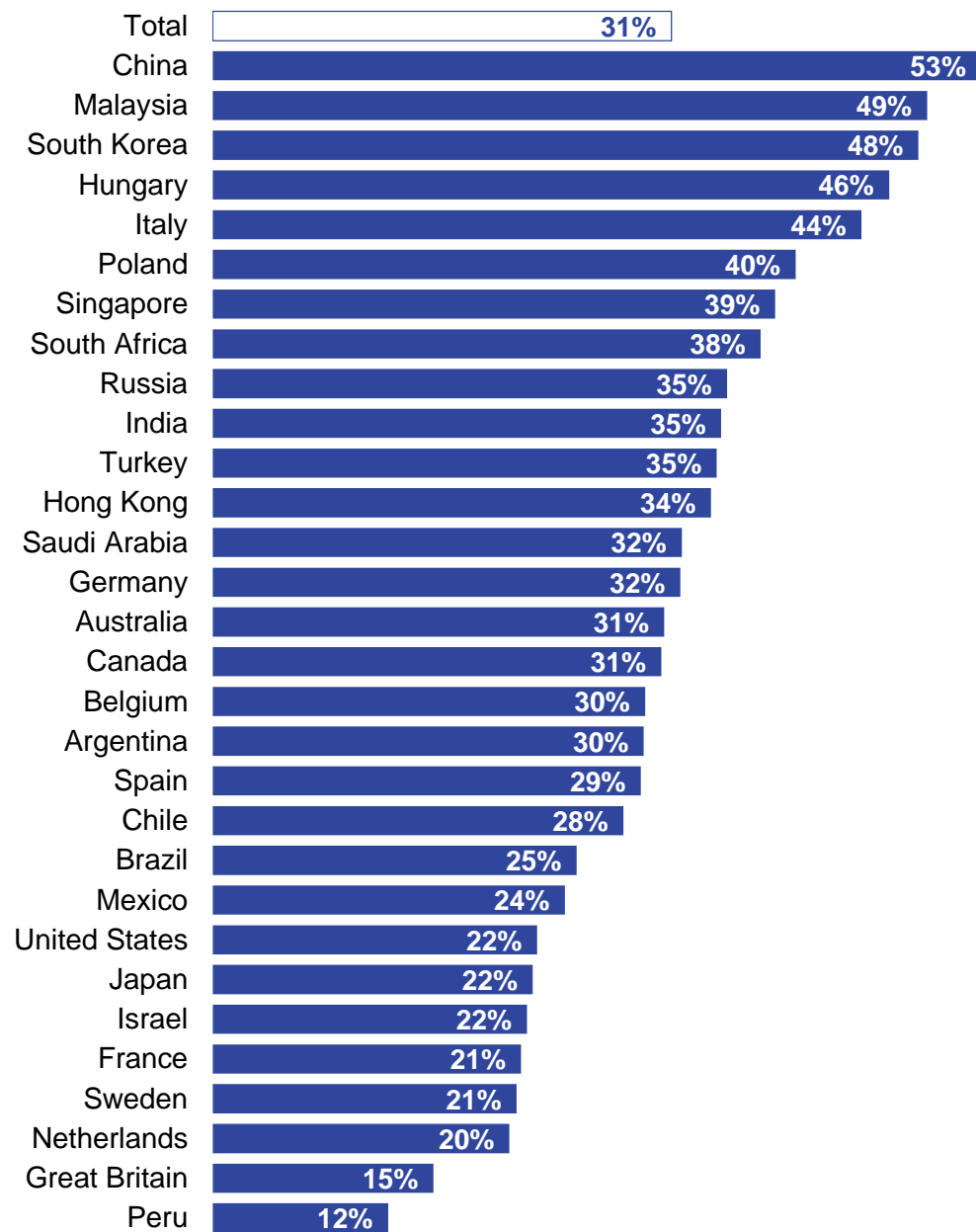
Base: 22,009 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23<sup>rd</sup>- November 6<sup>th</sup> 2020



## NO

Do you think there is, or is not, a link between obesity and more severe symptoms of COVID-19 among those infected?

*In South East Asian markets (e.g. China, Malaysia), people are more likely to say there is not a link between obesity and severe symptoms of COVID-19.*

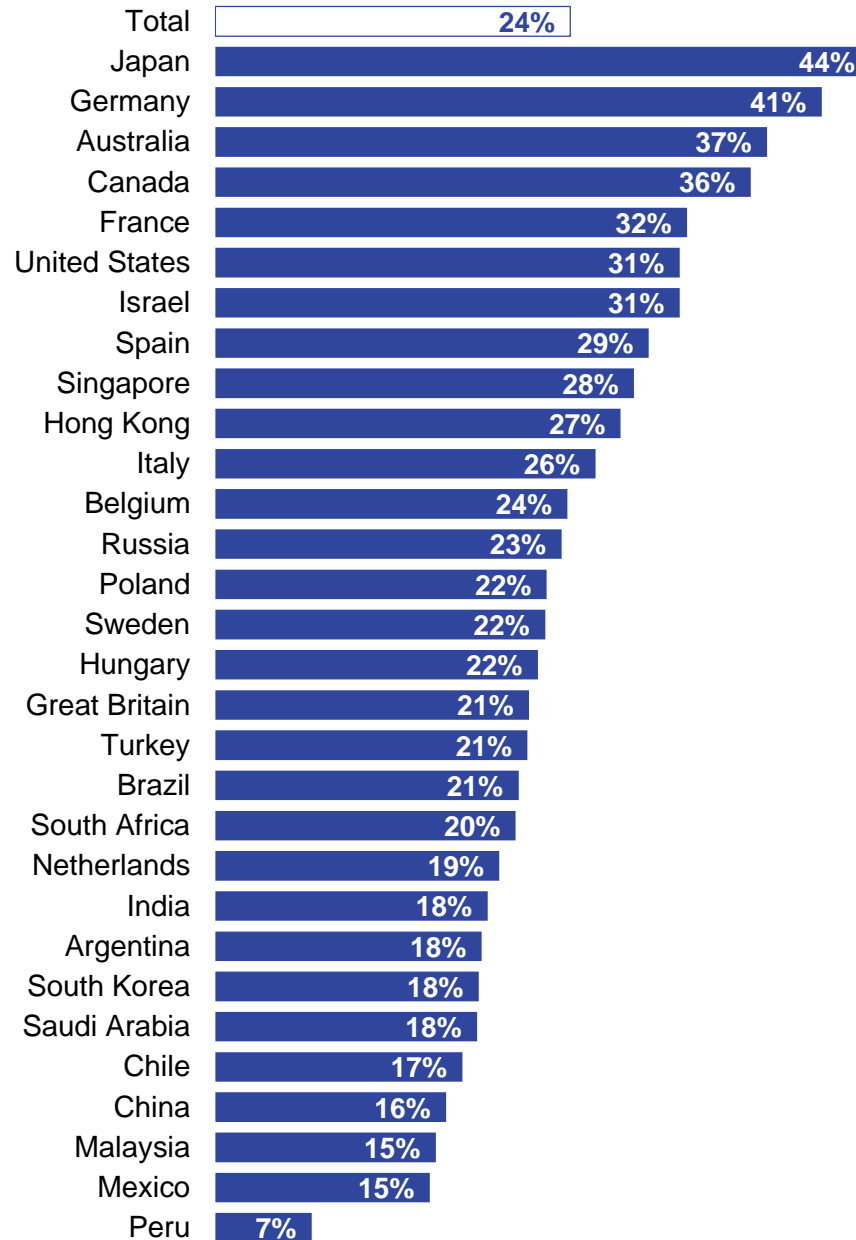


Base: 22,009 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23<sup>rd</sup>- November 6<sup>th</sup> 2020

## DO NOT KNOW

Do you think there is, or is not, a link between obesity and more severe symptoms of COVID-19 among those infected?

*People in Japan, Germany, Australia and Canada are most likely to say they don't know whether there is a link between obesity and severity symptoms of COVID-19.*



Base: 22,009 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23<sup>rd</sup>- November 6<sup>th</sup> 2020

# Q4. Personal weight loss link to COVID-19

**Globally, trying to lose weight is more prevalent than trying to gain weight, or not trying to change current weight.**

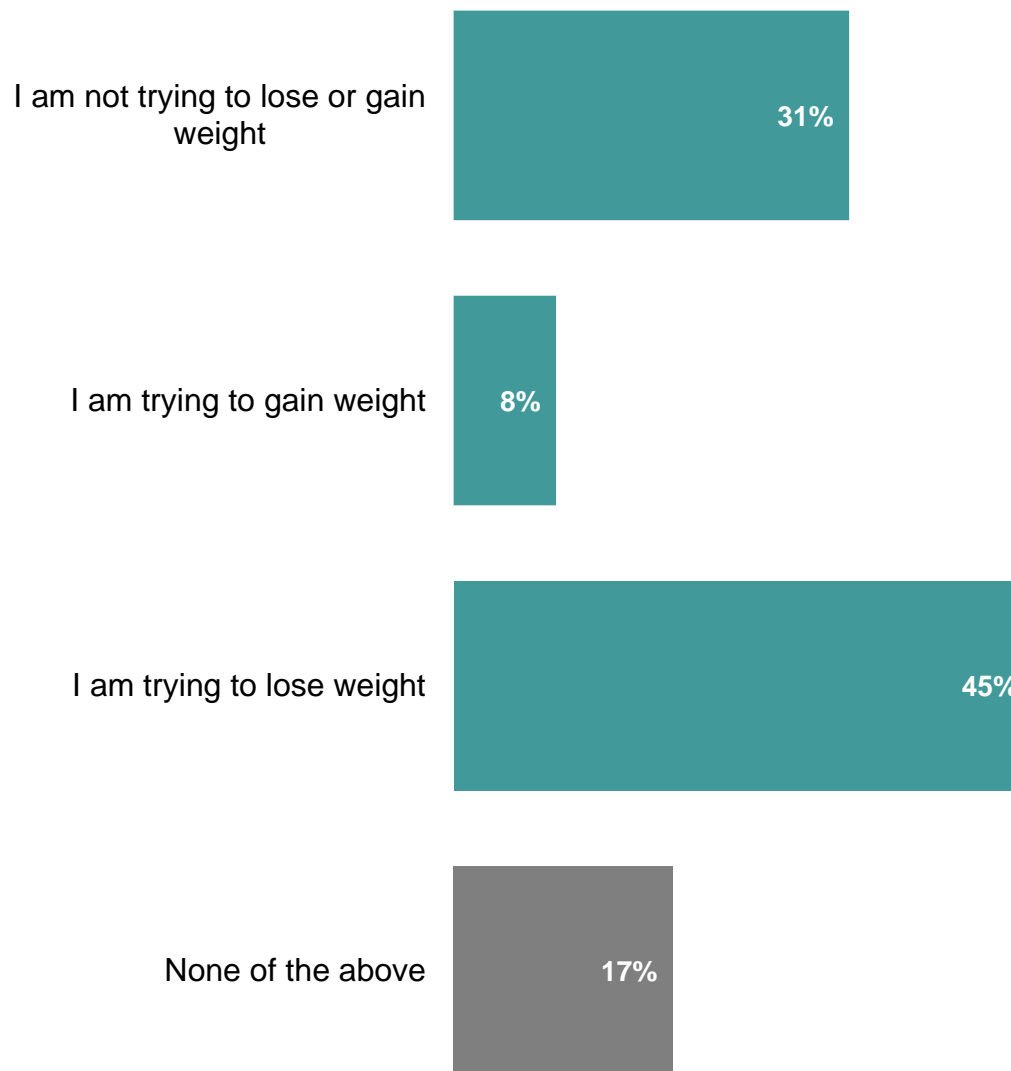
- Globally, two-fifths say they are currently trying to lose weight. This is most likely to be reported by people in Chile, Singapore, Peru and Saudi Arabia.
- Weight gain is most desired in India of all the countries surveyed, but is still less common than the desire to lose weight.

# Q4.

## Which of the following applies to your current situation?

*Globally, trying to lose weight is more prevalent than trying to gain weight, or not trying to change current weight.*

### Global totals

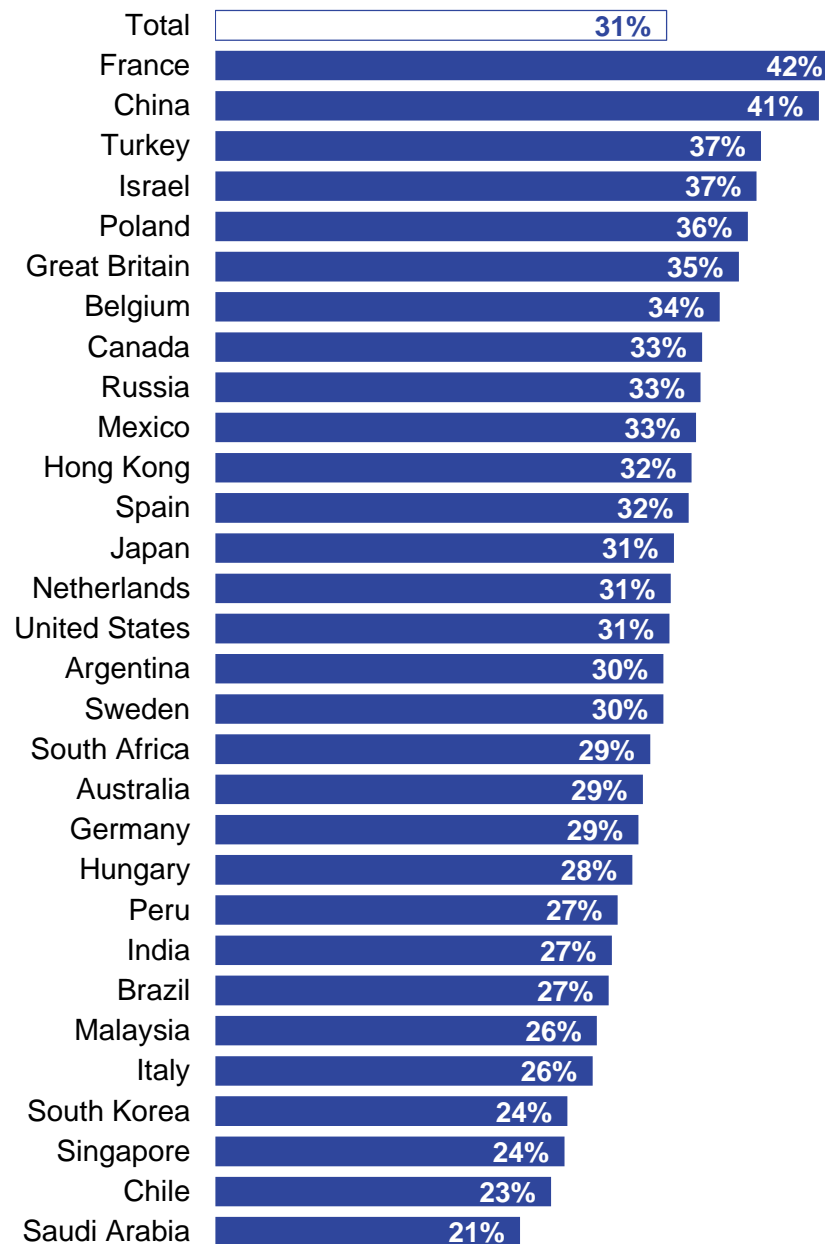


# Q4.

## I am not trying to gain or lose weight

Which of the following applies to your current situation?

*People in China and France are most likely to say that they are not trying to gain or lose weight.*

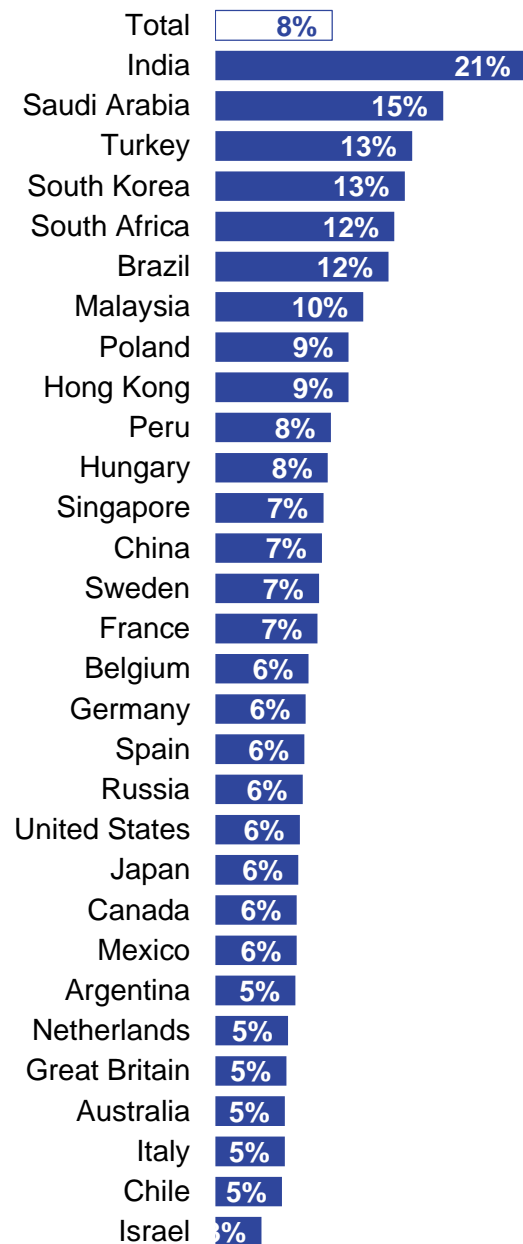


# Q4.

## I am trying to gain weight

Which of the following applies to your current situation?

*Weight gain is most desired in India of all the countries surveyed.*

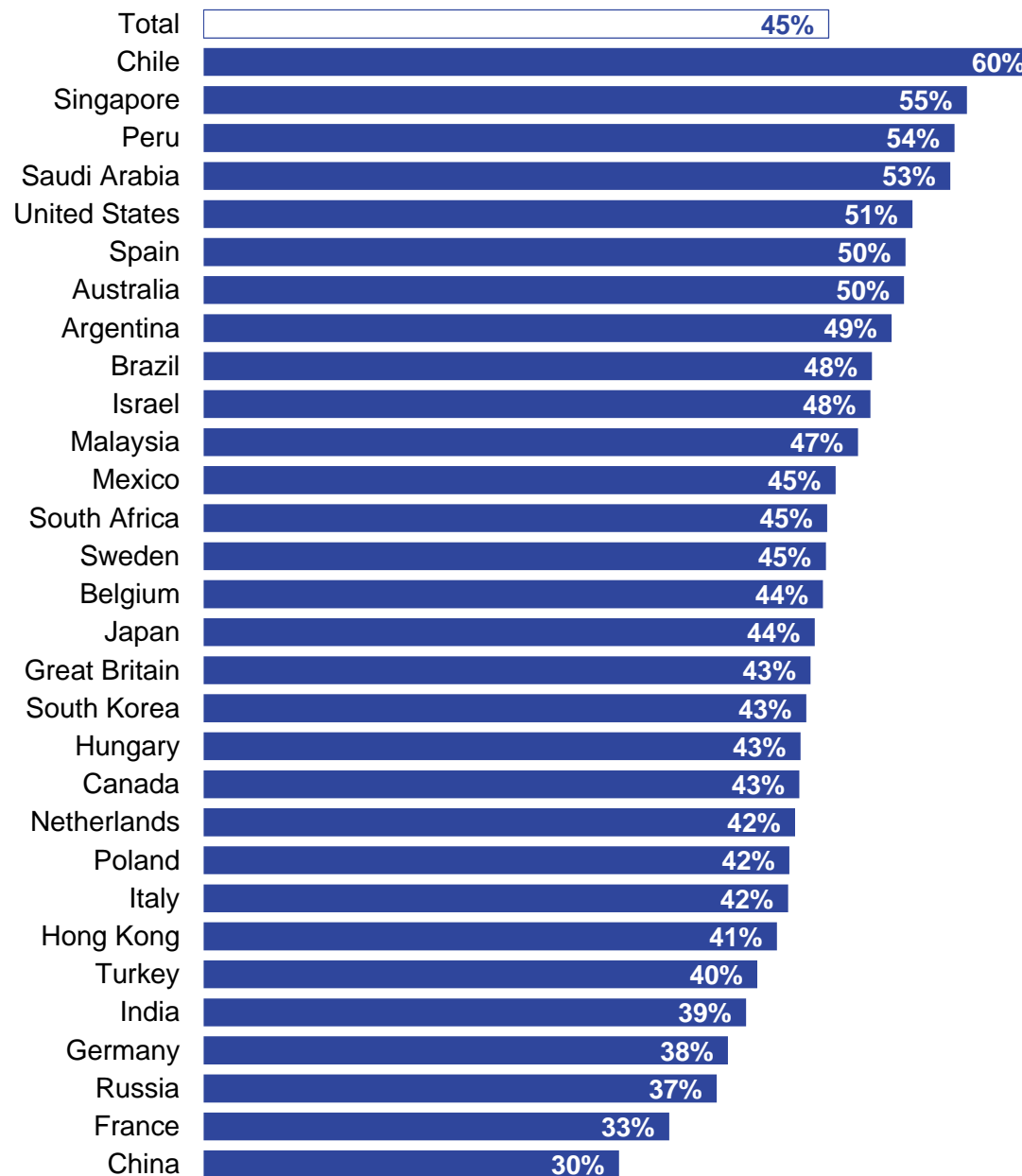


# Q4.

## I am trying to lose weight

Which of the following applies to your current situation?

*Trying to lose weight is most likely to be reported by people in Chile, Singapore, Peru and Saudi Arabia.*



# Q4b. Personal weight goals (of those trying to lose weight)

**COVID-19 has had an impact on people's weight gain and the desire to lose weight: one third of those trying to lose weight say they want to lose weight gained during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- The desire to lose weight gained during the pandemic is most mentioned in Turkey, Brazil and South Africa.
- People in Japan are least likely to say they want to lose weight gained during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**In addition, 15% want to lose weight to reduce their risk of COVID-19 severity.**

- Peru and Malaysia are the countries most likely to agree.

**However, for most trying to lose weight, this is not specifically weight gained as a result of the pandemic.**



# Q4b.

## Which, if any of these, apply to you?

*Of those saying they are trying to lose weight, a third want to lose weight gained during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

### Global totals

I want to lose weight gained during the COVID-19 pandemic

31%

I want to lose weight not related to the COVID-19 pandemic

62%

I want to lose weight to reduce my risk of suffering severe symptoms if I get COVID-19

15%

Base: those trying to lose weight - 9,947 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23rd- November 6th 2020

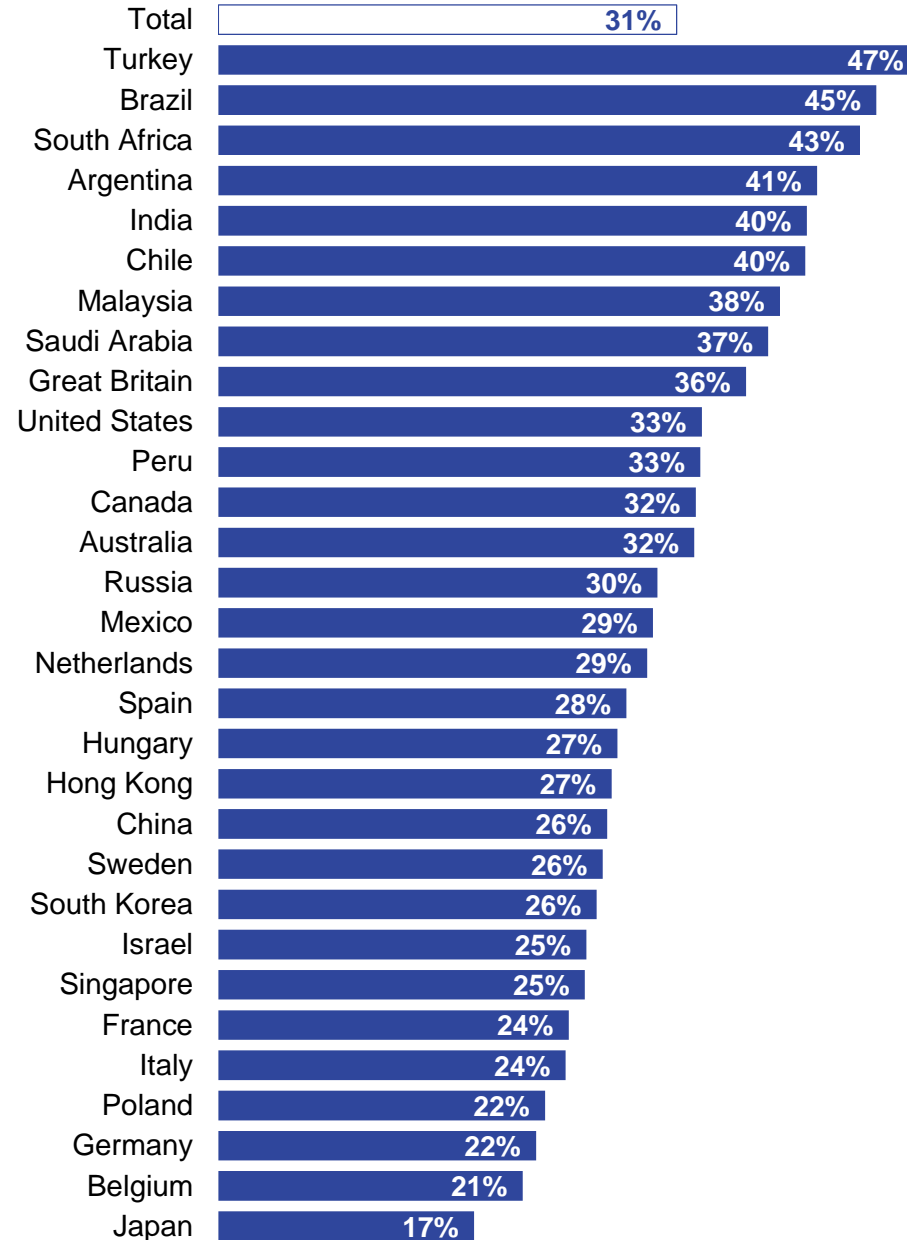
# Q4b.

## I want to lose weight gained during the COVID-19 pandemic

Which, if any of these, apply to you?

*The desire to lose weight gained during the pandemic is most mentioned in Turkey, Brazil and South Africa.*

*People in Japan are least likely to say they want to lose weight gained during the COVID-19 pandemic.*



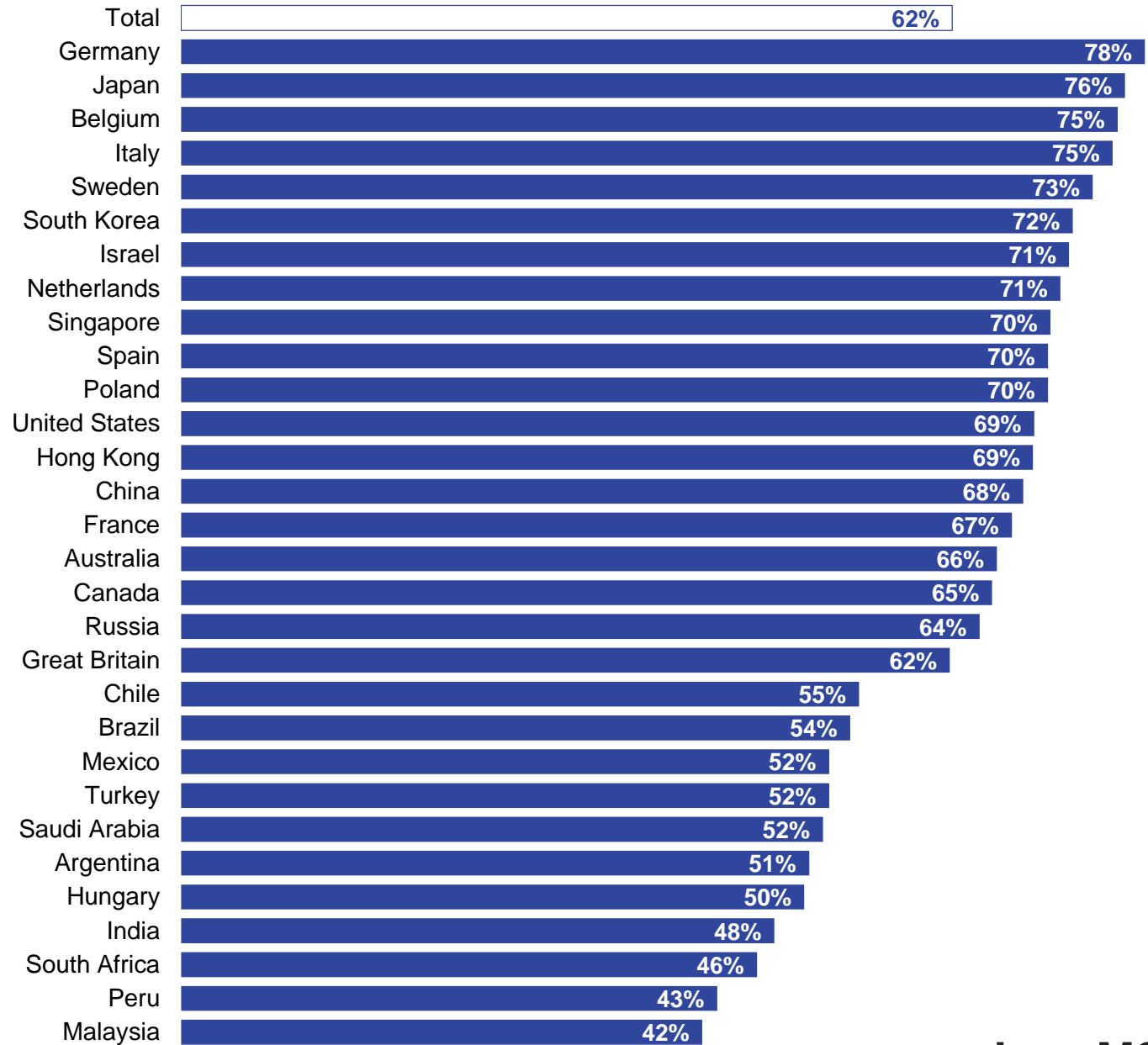
Base: those trying to lose weight - 9,947 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries, October 23rd- November 6th 2020

# Q4b.

## I want to lose weight not related to the COVID-19 pandemic

Which, if any of these, apply to you?

*In most countries, for those trying to lose weight, this is not specifically weight gained as a result of the pandemic.*

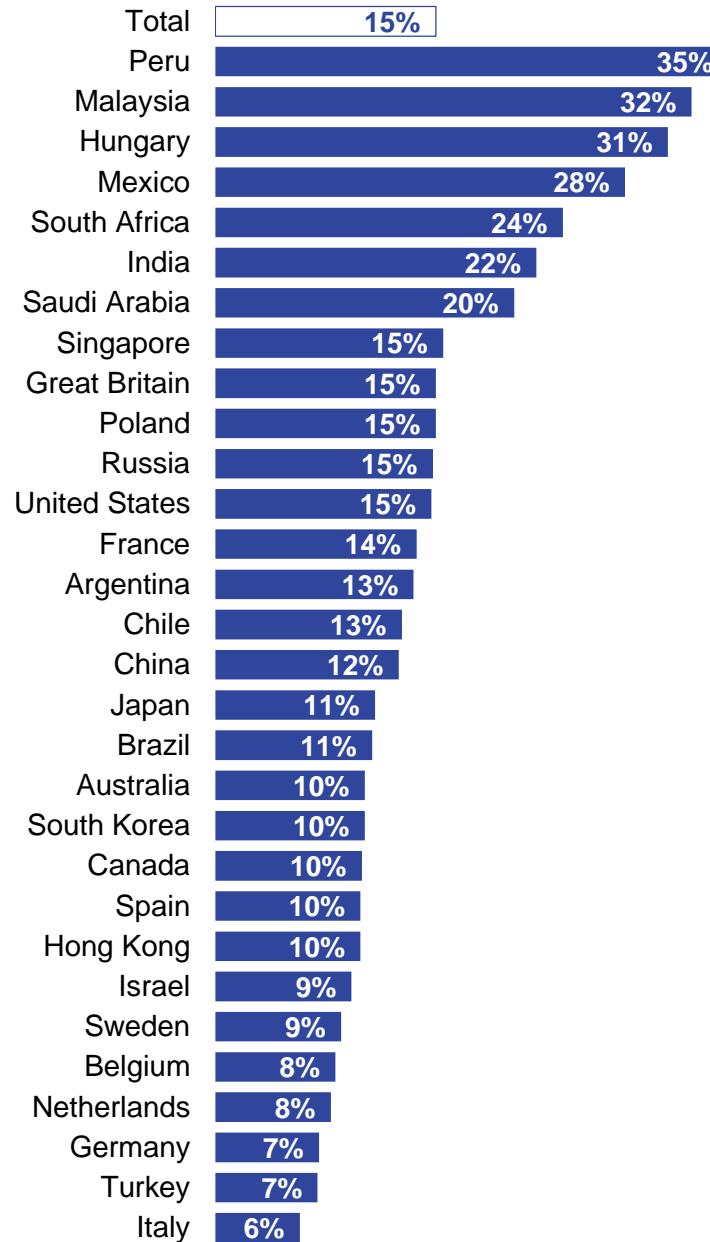


# Q4b.

## I want to lose weight to reduce my risk of suffering severe symptoms if I get COVID-19

Which, if any of these, apply to you?

*Reducing the severity of symptoms does not appear to be a popular motivator to lose weight. However, this varies significantly across countries. Peru and Malaysia are the countries most likely to agree.*



# **Q4c. Personal weight loss link to COVID-19 (of those trying to lose weight to reduce risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms)**

**More than 8 in 10 trying to lose weight to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms say the risk of COVID-19 is a factor in their motivation to lose weight. A fifth identify it as their primary reason for trying to lose weight.**

- The concern of COVID-19 seems to be motivating a higher proportion of those trying to lose weight in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

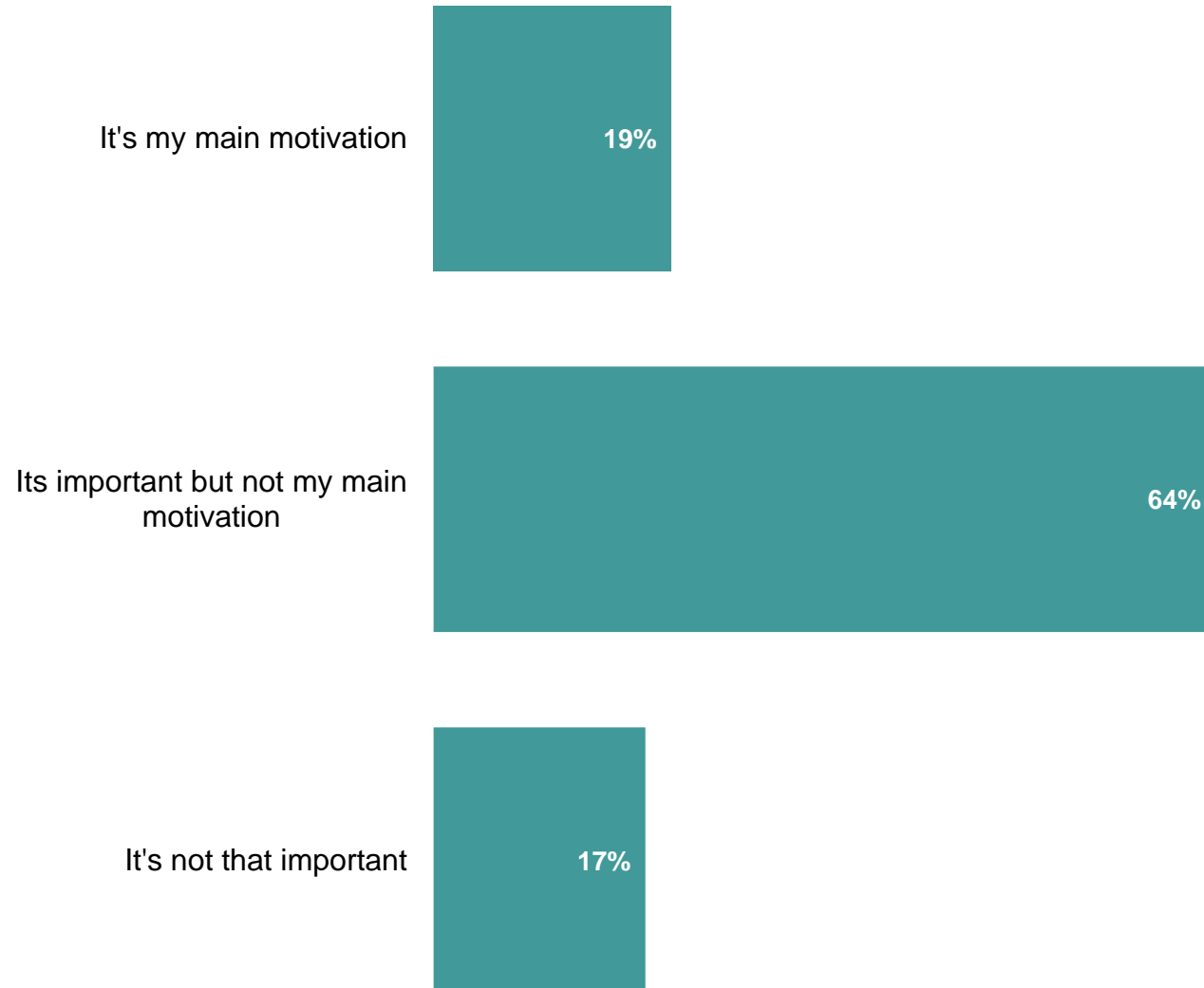
**However, in most countries, the risk of COVID-19 is not the primary motivation to lose weight.**

# Q4c.

## How important is the risk of COVID-19 in your motivation to lose weight?

*More than 8 in 10 trying to lose weight trying to lose weight to reduce risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms say the risk of COVID-19 is a factor in their motivation to lose weight. A fifth identify it as their primary reason for trying to lose weight.*

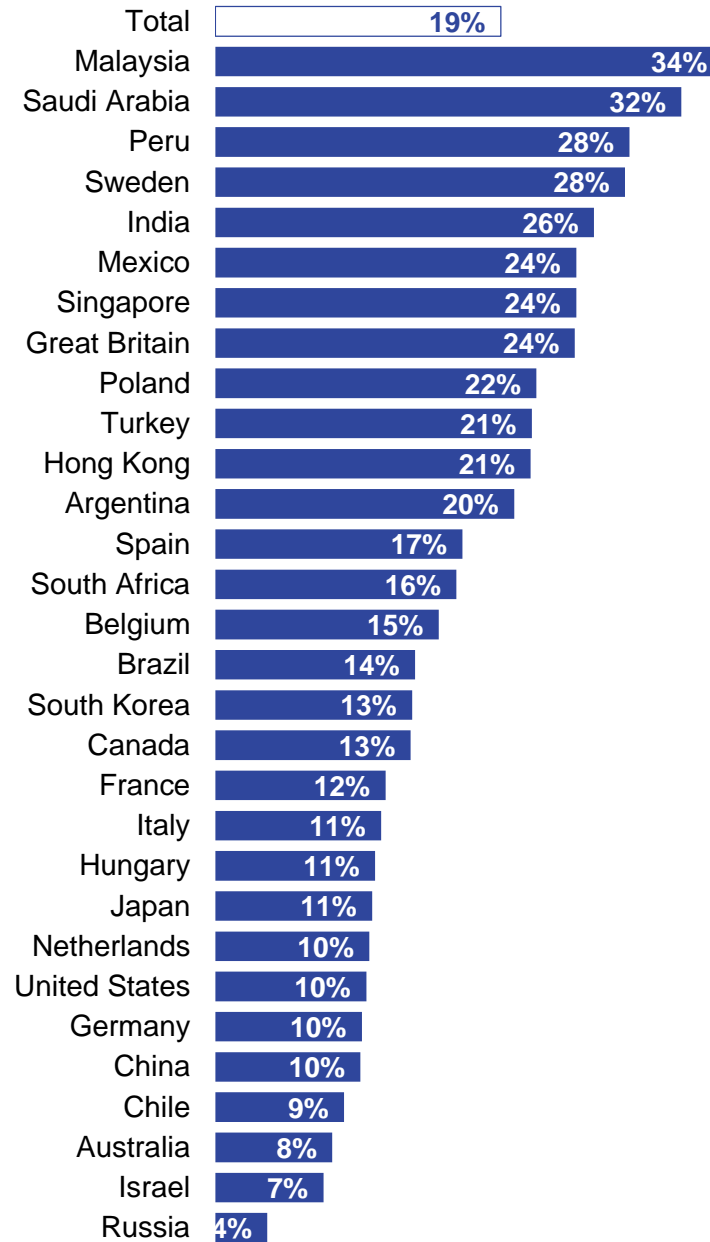
### Global totals



## It's my main motivation

How important is the risk of COVID-19 in your motivation to lose weight?

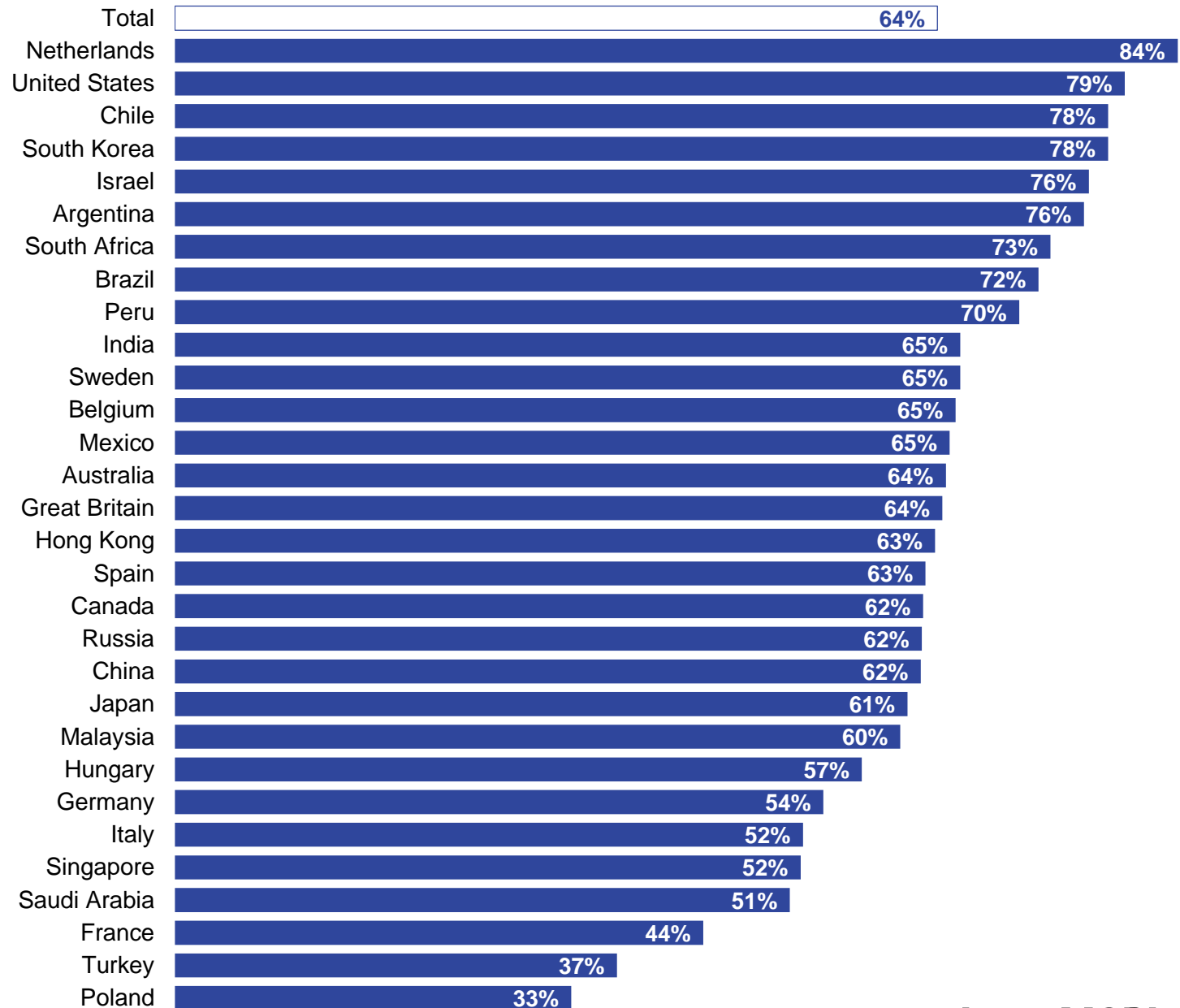
*The perceived risk of COVID-19 is motivating a higher proportion of those trying to lose weight to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.*



## Its important but not my main motivation

How important is the risk of COVID-19 in your motivation to lose weight?

*In most countries, the desire to lose weight is not primarily motivated by the risk of COVID-19, but the risk of COVID-19 is a factor.*

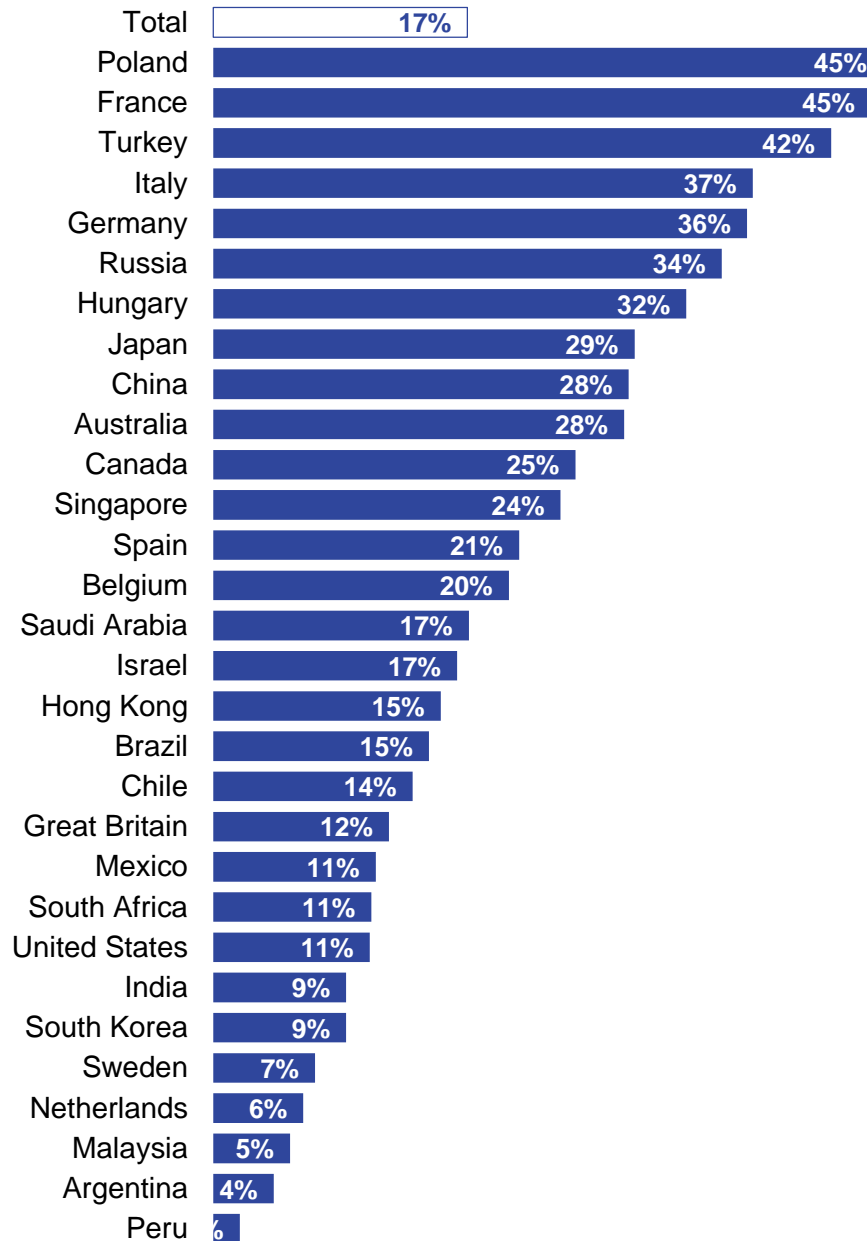




## It's not that important

How important is the risk of COVID-19 in your motivation to lose weight?

*People who are trying to lose to reduce risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms in Poland, France and Turkey are more likely to say that the risk of COVID-19 is not that important in their desire to lose weight, compared with those in other countries.*



# Technical note

- The data for this research was collected via Ipsos Global Advisor from October 23<sup>rd</sup> to November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In total 22,008 interviews were conducted between October 23<sup>rd</sup> and November 6<sup>th</sup> 2020 among adult consumers.
- The survey was conducted in 30 markets around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey and the United States.
- The samples in some markets (e.g., Brazil, mainland China or India) are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for such markets should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.
- The data is weighted so each country’s sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of its adult population according to the most recent census data, and to give each country an equal weight in the total “global” sample.
- Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.
- UK data for Q8 were subject to individual editing decisions