

What's in it for me? A survey of community knowledge and attitudes to the fortification of food with folic acid.

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Background

- To further reduce the incidence of birth defects, the Australian and New Zealand governments have approved the mandatory fortification of bread-making flour with folic acid.
- Monitoring has been identified as a key component of the mandatory fortification program and should include 'researching consumer attitudes and behaviours towards fortified foods' (FSANZ, 2006).

Objectives

- Awareness of/concern about current practices.
- Global assessment of 'should folate be added to foods?'
- Cognitive evaluations of benefits, risks, information and getting the RDI.
- Current and intentional purchasing behaviour.

1. Awareness & concerns about current fortification practices

	Aware	Concerned
	Weighted % (95%CI)	Weighted % (95%CI)
Calcium to milk products	90 (87-92)	13 (11-16)
Vitamin C to orange juice products	88 (85-90)	15 (12-19)
Thiamine, niacin & riboflavin to cereals	71 (67-75)	13 (10-16)
Iodine to salt products	68 (64-71)	24 (21-28)
Folate to bread products	53 (49-56)	13 (11-16)
Thiamine to bread products	43 (39-46)	14 (11-18)
Vitamin D to margarine	24 (21-27)	14 (12-18)

3. Uncertainty about benefits among those concerned and not concerned about fortifying foods with folate

	Concerned	Not concerned
	N=211 % (95%CI)	N=489 % (95%CI)
Unsure benefits will outweigh risks	55 (47-64)	41 (36-46)
Unsure contributes to a healthier personal diet	42 (34-61)	27 (22-32)
Unsure personal health benefits	51 (42-60)	31 (26-36)
Unsure health benefits for most Australians	52 (44-61)	26 (22-31)

Those concerned about fortifying foods with folate were more likely to be uncertain about the benefits of such a program.

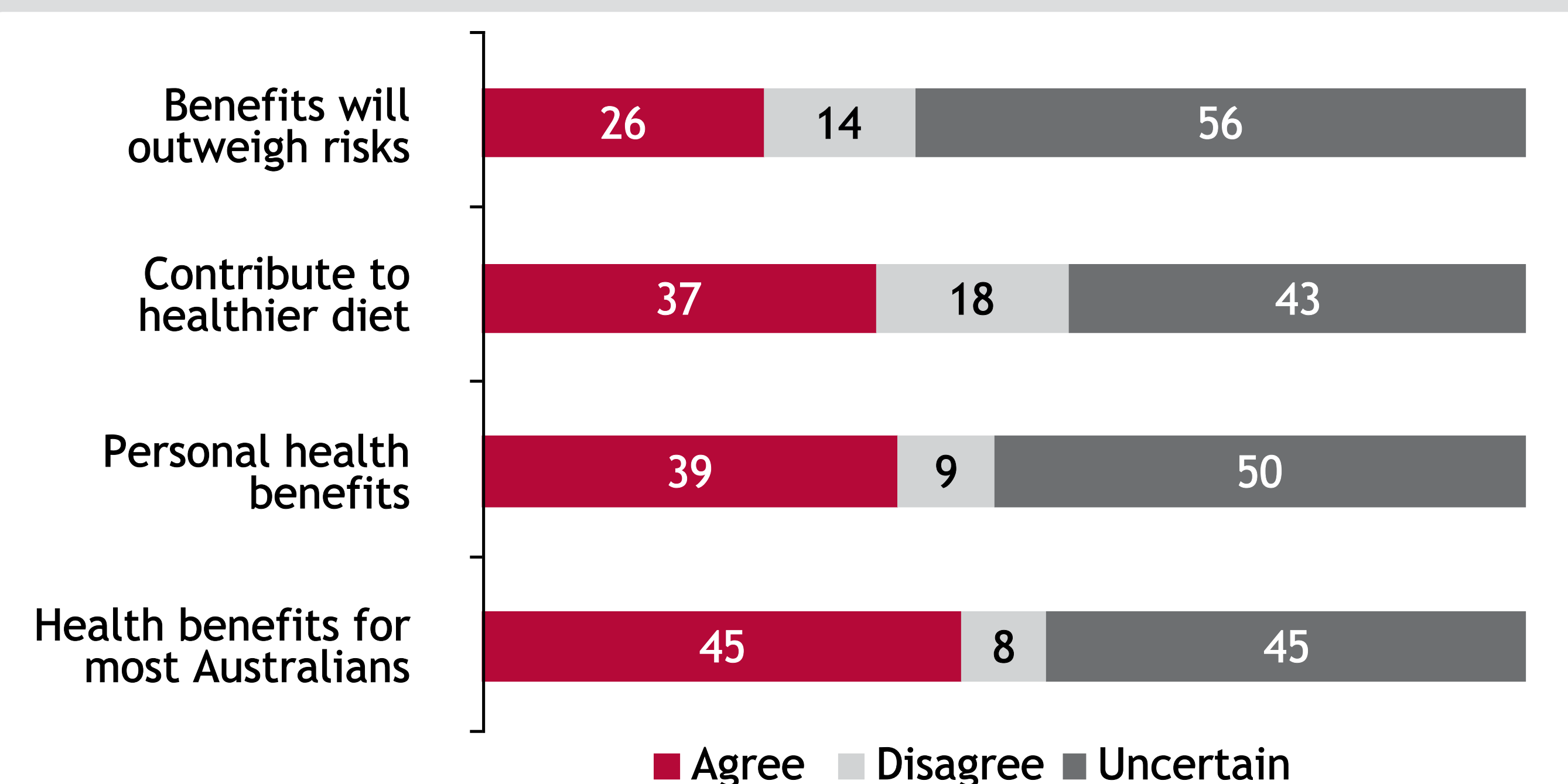
Implications of findings

- The community appears no more concerned about the fortification of bread with folate than they are about other existing fortification programs in Australia.
- Public information campaigns may profit from a focus on raising awareness of the benefits of folate and fortification.
- With a level of distrust in the community about fortification and health claims, careful attention must be given to the message and delivery of information campaigns.

Method

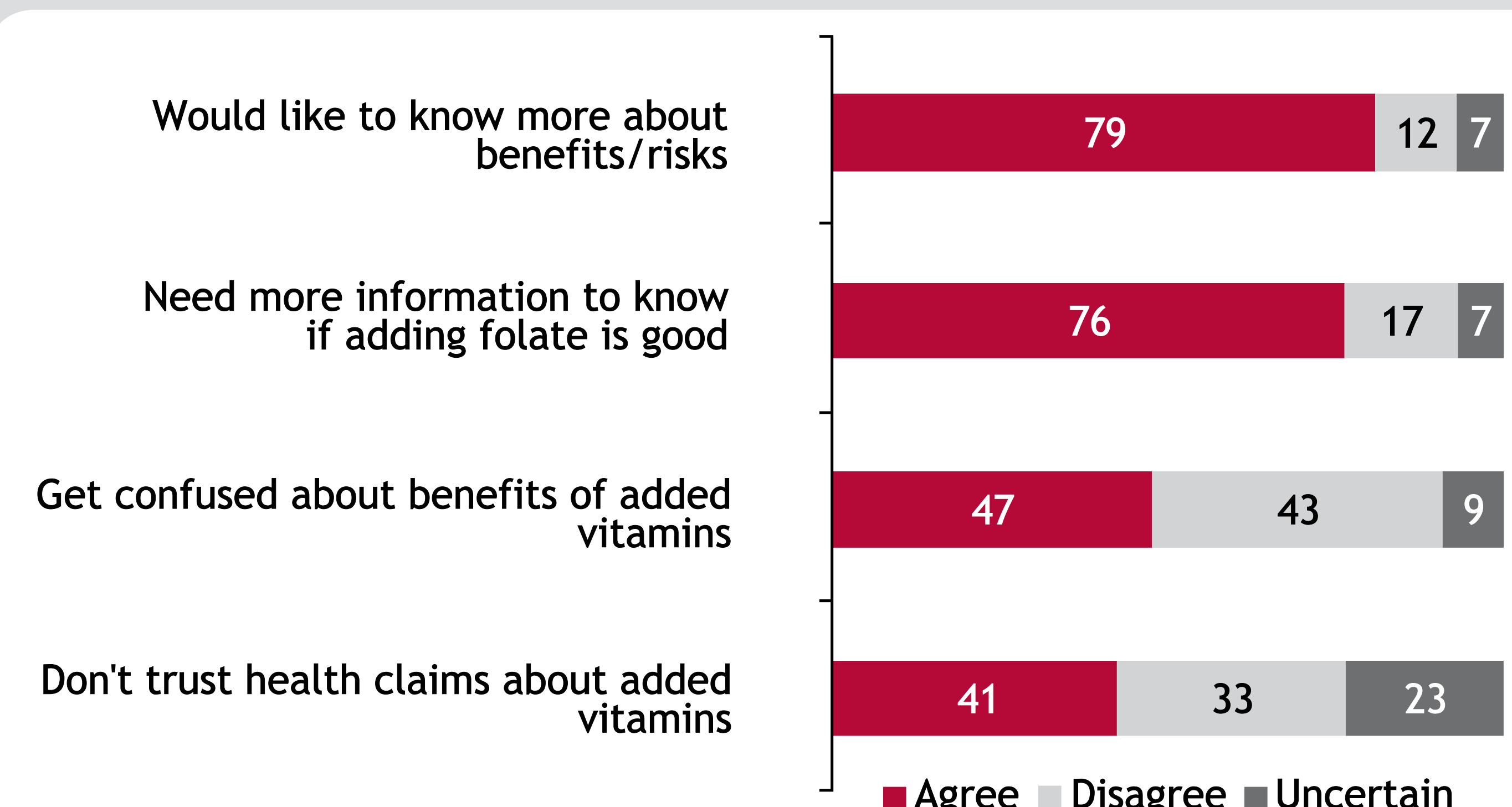
- Cross sectional, CATI survey September 2006.
- 1000 adults recruited randomly from the electronic version of telephone directory.
- Data weighted prior to analysis to ensure sample was representative of population in terms of age, sex and geographic area.

2. Perceived benefits of fortifying/eating foods with folate



Note: Does not add to 100% as graph does not show those who answered 'no opinion'

4. Perceptions of information on fortification



Note: Does not add to 100% as graph does not show those who answered 'no opinion'