

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

NASEM FOOD FORUM WORKSHOP



**NATIONAL
ACADEMIES** *Sciences
Engineering
Medicine*

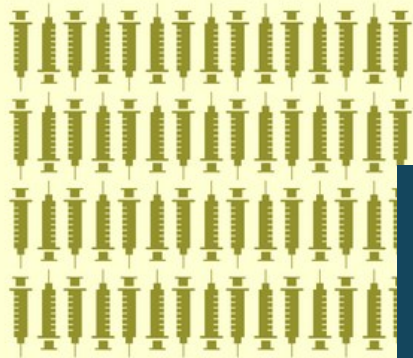
Jen Covich Bordenick
Health Communicator
Chief Strategy Officer, Unbiased Science

**UNBIASED
SCIENCE**

FACT:

There's about **60x** more formaldehyde by weight in a pear than in any vaccine.

Some vaccines contain *trace* amounts of formaldehyde, used in manufacturing to inactivate viruses or detoxify bacterial toxins. The very, very small amount in vaccines is safe based on extensive, rigorous research.



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TRUST IN SCIENCE?

WITH DR. KRISTEN PANTHAGANI

THE UNBIASED SCIENCE PODCAST



Saturday Morning Thoughts on the Tylenol-Autism News

The public health whiplash continues as we play another round of 'autism cause' roulette



THEUNBIASEDSCIPOD.SUBSTACK.COM

ABOUT UNBIASED SCIENCE

Unbiased Science fills a critical gap in the media ecosystem for nonpartisan, trustworthy health and science information.

Our multi-disciplinary team of scientists and clinicians uses creative, data-driven storytelling to combat misinformation on divisive health topics like vaccines, foods, and fluoride.

We meet people where they are—reaching 10 million monthly through social media, infographics, long-form content, major media op-eds, and our podcast, always leading with empathy to ensure evidence-based content reaches those who need it most.

DECEMBER 2025

IN THE NEXT 7 MINUTES, I'LL COVER...

The Agenda

1. The Trust Gap: Who People Trust
2. The Unbiased Approach
3. Right-Sizing Concern in a Fearless World
4. Empathize, Validate, Share Evidence & Engagement

UNBIASED
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Most Believe Societal Leaders Purposely Mislead Us on Health Matters

Percent who worry

GLOBAL 15

Business leaders

59%

Government leaders

57%

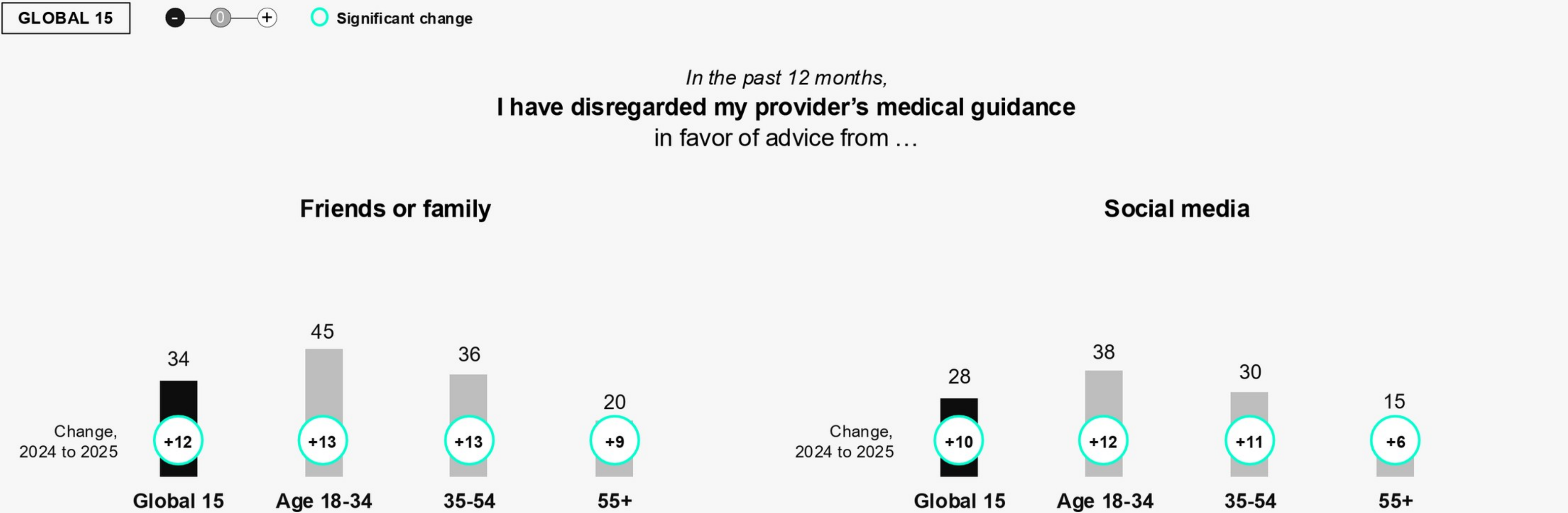
Journalists

57%

purposely mislead people on health matters
by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations

Double-Digit Surge in Peer-Driven Decisions That Disregard Provider Advice

Percent who say



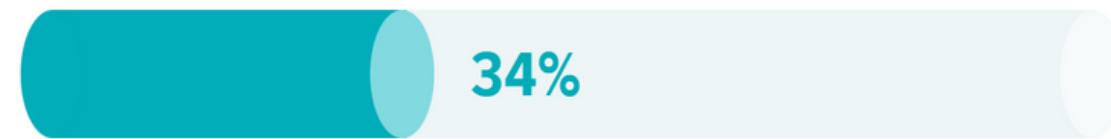
Where did Americans learn about health tactics* they've tried in the past year:



Social media



Search engine



Their doctor or other healthcare provider



A friend, family member, or colleague



Health information site

*health tactic defined as health and wellness tools, resources, trends, or products

healthline

52% of Americans who have tried a health trend, tool or approach in the past year say they found them on social media

New survey from Healthline and YouGov finds alarming trends in missed routine screenings and use of social media for sourcing health tactics



DOUBLE-EDGED
SWORD

“State of Consumer Health.” Healthline, 8 Oct. 2024,
<https://www.healthline.com/health/consumer-health-survey>.

Greater Confidence in Ability to Find the Right Health Information

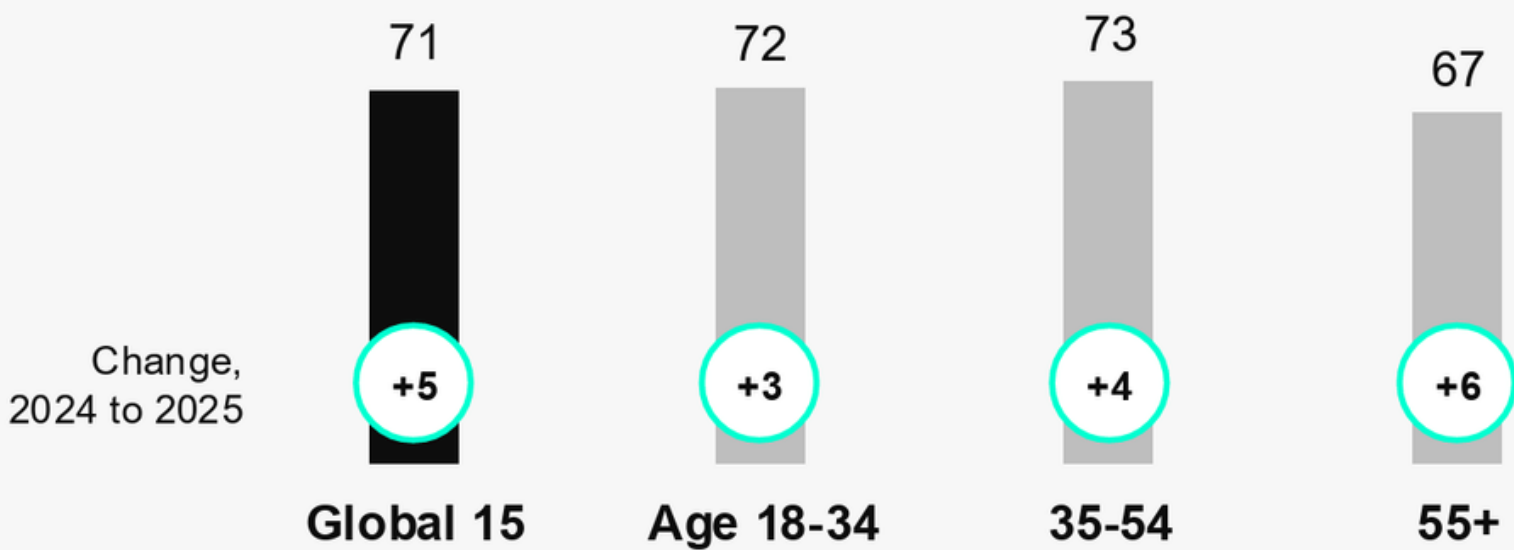
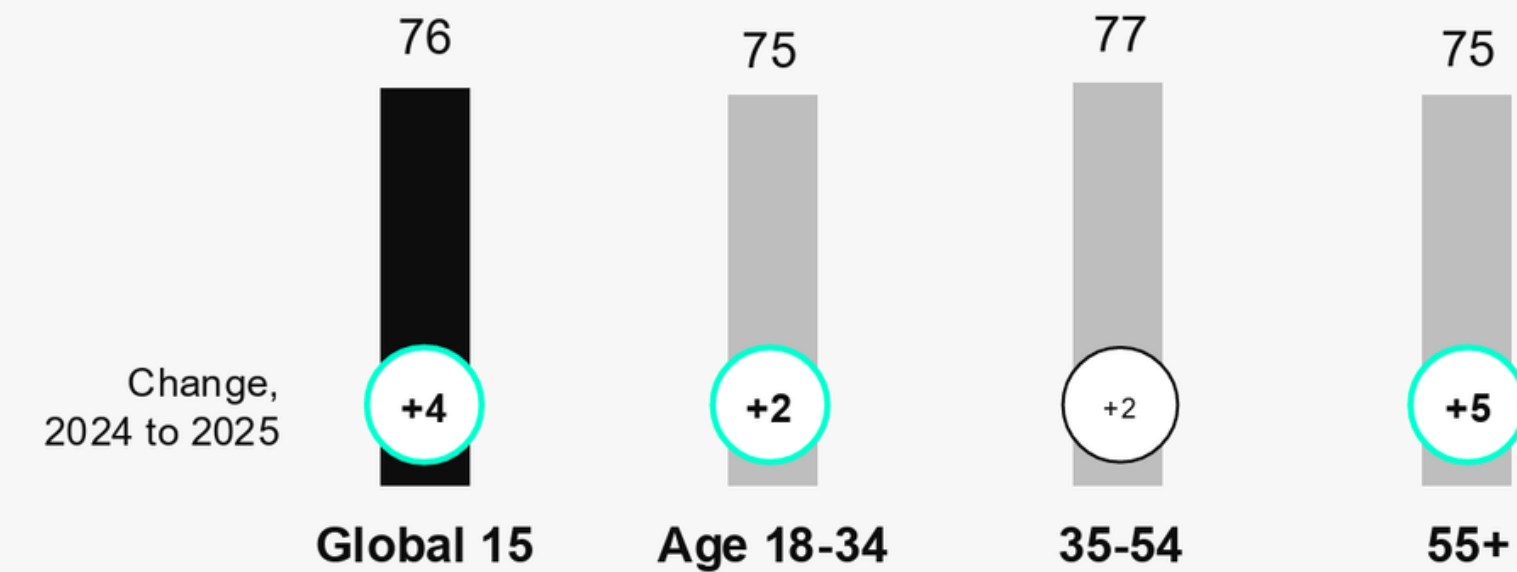
Percent who say



I am confident in my ability to ...

Find trustworthy **health information**

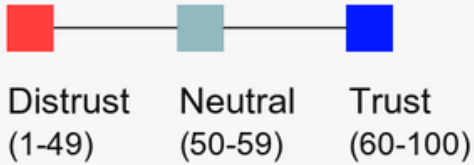
Tell **good medical advice from bad**



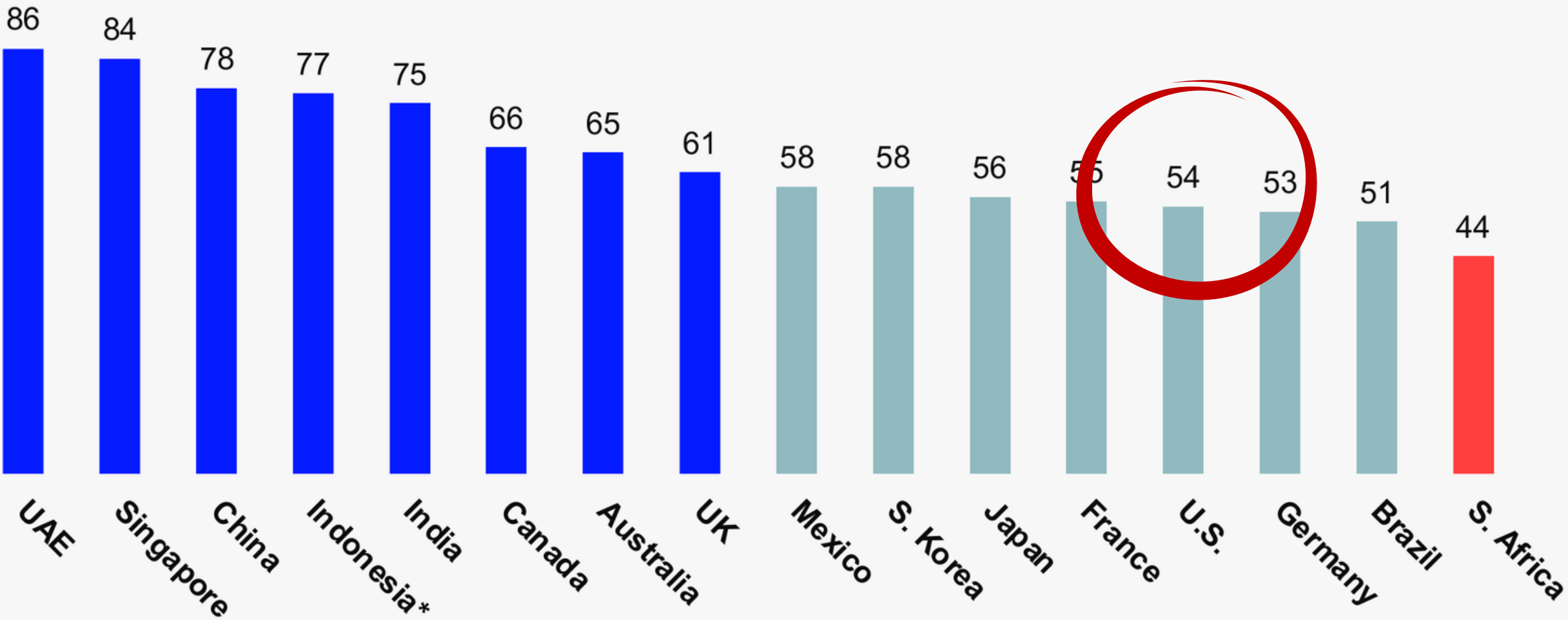
Government Agencies That Regulate Food Safety Trusted in 8 of 16 Countries

Percent who say

GLOBAL 15



I trust **government agencies**
that regulate food safety



2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust and Health. TRU_INS. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. Attribute asked of half the sample. General population, 15-mkt avg. *Indonesia is not included in the global average.



Food & Beverage Seen as More Competent and Ethical Than Business in General

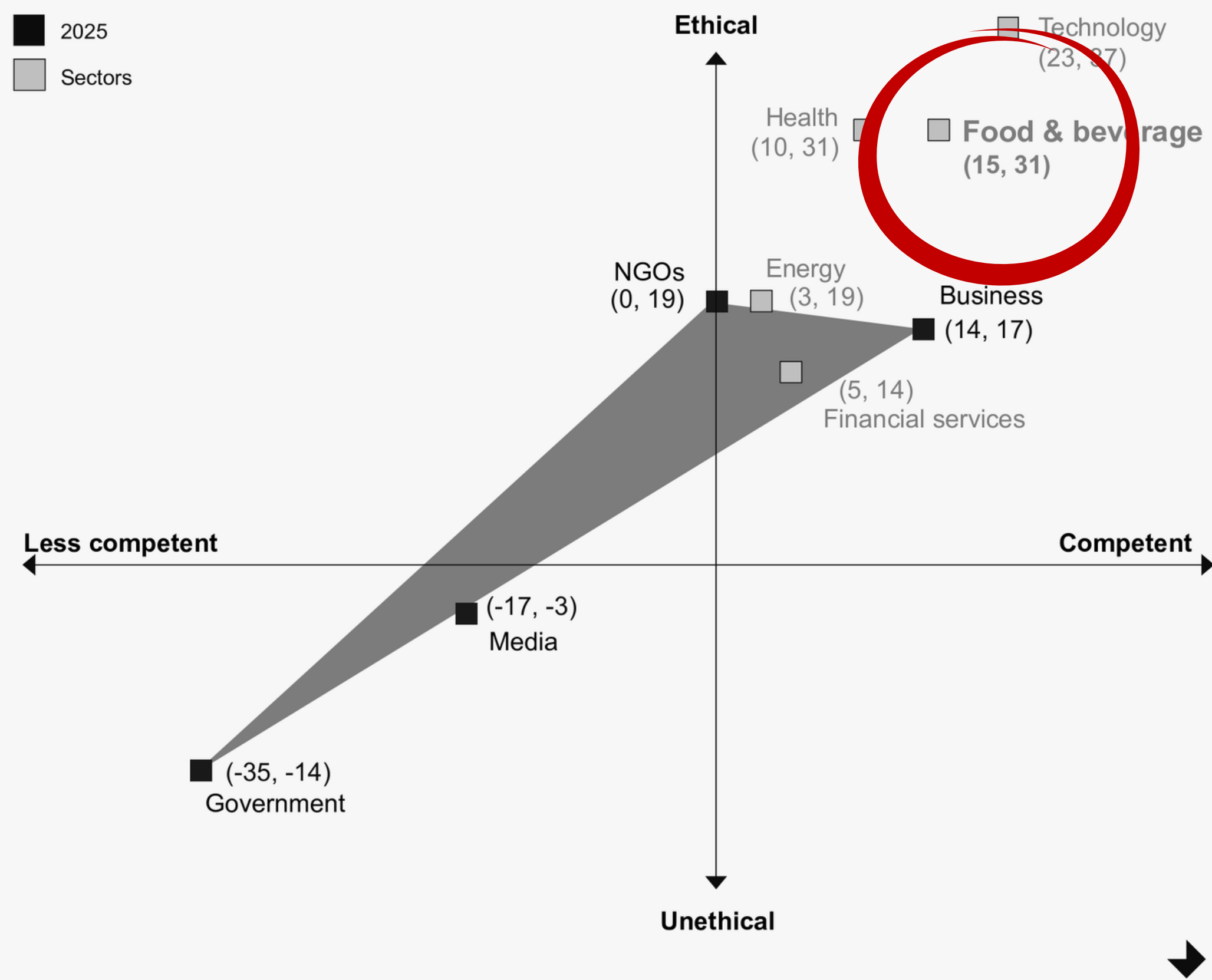
(Competence score, net ethical score)

GLOBAL 24 excl. China, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, UAE

2025 Edelman Trust Barometer. The ethical scores are averages of nets based on [INS]_PER_DIM/1-4. Media and NGOs were only asked of half the sample. The competence score is a net based on TRU_3D_[INS]/1. Media and NGOs were only asked of half the sample. General population, 24-mkt avg.

Data not collected in China and Thailand; Due to a translation inconsistency in Saudi Arabia and UAE, they have been excluded from this analysis. For full details regarding how this data was calculated and plotted, please see the Technical Appendix.

Respondents in Canada who took the survey in French were recontacted between December 12 and 17, 2024 to address a translation issue affecting this question. For more details, please see the Technical Appendix.



The Listen-First Approach

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

LISTEN

UNDERSTAND

CONNECT

COMMUNICATE

EVALUATE

ADAPT

LISTEN

Monitor Conversations*Where are discussions happening?*

- Social media comments
- DMs and questions
- Community forums
- News comment sections

Real example:

When the food dye controversy emerged, we spent 48 hours just monitoring conversations before responding.

UNDERSTAND

Identify Root Concerns*Common Patterns:*

- Fear for children's safety
- Distrust of "big food"
- Confusion about regulations
- Cost concerns
- Environmental worries

Real example:

Parents weren't just asking about food dyes - they were expressing deeper fears about long-term effects on their children's health.

CONNECT

Build Bridges*Effective Approaches:*

- Acknowledge concerns
- Share personal experiences
- Use relatable analogies
- Stay humble and human

Real example:

"As a parent and scientist, I understand the worry. Let's look at what the research actually tells us..."

HOW DO WE “RIGHT-SIZE” CONCERN?

ON ONE HAND: THE FEAR FACTOR

U.S. Version 	Canada Version 
 <p>Froot Loops: Corn Flour Blend (Whole Grain Yellow Corn Flour, Degerminated Yellow Corn Flour), Sugar, Wheat Flour, Whole Grain Oat Flour, Modified Food Starch, Contains 2% Or Less Of Vegetable Oil (Hydrogenated Coconut, Soybean And/Or Cottonseed), Oat Fiber, Maltodextrin, Salt, Soluble Corn Fiber, Natural Flavor, Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1, Yellow 6, BHT For Freshness. Vitamins And Minerals: Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid), Reduced Iron, Niacinamide, Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine Hydrochloride), Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin), Vitamin B1 (Thiamin Hydrochloride), Folic Acid, Vitamin D3, Vitamin B12.</p>	 <p>Froot Loops: Sugars (Sugar, Maltodextrin), Whole Grain Corn Flour, Wheat Flour, Whole Grain Oat Flour, Degerminated Corn Flour, Corn Bran, Oat Hull Fibre, Hydrogenated Coconut And Vegetable Oil, Salt, Concentrated Carrot Juice (For Colour), Anthocyanin, Annatto, Turmeric, Natural Flavour, Concentrated Watermelon Juice (For Colour), Concentrated Blueberry Juice (For Colour), Concentrated Huito Juice (For Colour), Stevia Leaf Extract, Vitamins And Minerals: Iron, Niacinamide, Zinc Oxide, Thiamine Hydrochloride, D-Calcium Pantothenate, Cholecalciferol (Vitamin D), Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Folic Acid.</p> <p>FOOD BABE Vani Hari</p>

CASE STUDY: FROOT LOOPS AND THE FOOD BABE EFFECT

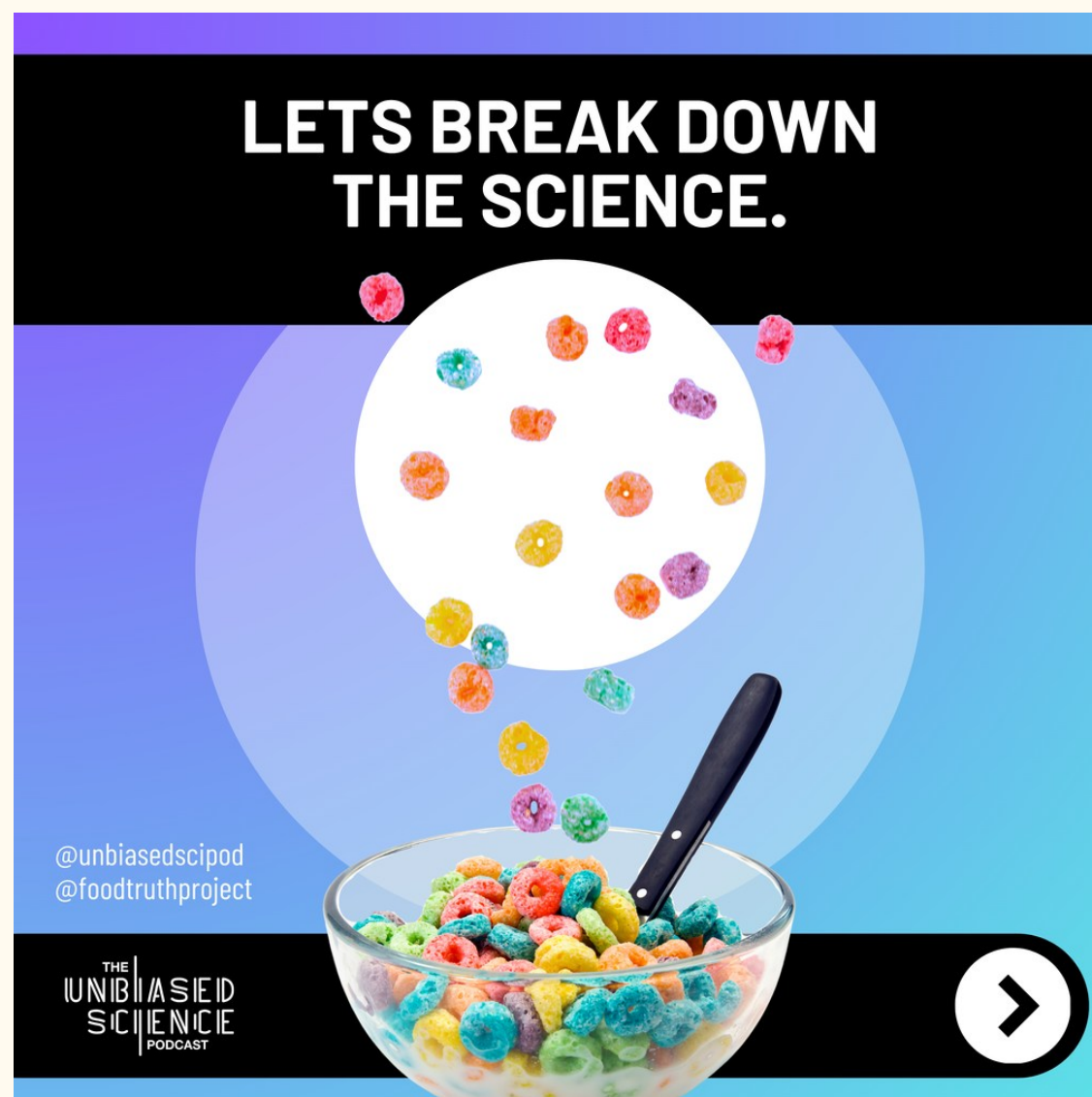


In January 2024, a viral post claimed food dyes in Froot Loops were 'banned in other countries' and 'linked to cancer

Within 48 hours: 2M+ shares, causing panic among parents

(In the distance...sirens.)





Artificial Dyes

(Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1, & Yellow 6)

THE SCIENCE

The issue of artificial food dyes and their varying presence in different countries is a hot topic. In simple terms, some color additives are permitted in some countries but not others.

Why? Because different countries have different regulatory frameworks. Decisions are influenced by a mix of risk and hazard assessments, public opinion, consumer preferences, and extensive research.

Artificial food dyes are **subjected to heavy regulation and batch testing in the U.S.**, meaning every single batch of artificial food color that is created, needs to be sampled and tested for quality and safety by the FDA.

Regarding claims that artificial dyes cause ADHD, know that the **studies linking artificial dyes to behavioral issues are mixed, and the evidence is far from conclusive or causal.** They are still classified as safe additives when used in their intended amounts and products by regulatory agencies like Health Canada and the FDA.

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Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT)

THE SCIENCE

BHT is an antioxidant **used to preserve freshness and extend the shelf life of certain packaged foods.**

As a food additive, **it is deemed safe for consumption in the U.S. and Canada**, though its usage is strictly regulated concerning the amounts permitted and the types of products in which it can be included.

While Vani Hari loves to talk about how BHT is banned in Japan, this is taking a seed of truth and blowing it out of proportion. **In Japan, BHT is also widely used in various food products.** However, certain food and beverage items from the U.S. have not obtained the necessary approvals to be sold there. This situation can be attributed to several factors, including concerns about food safety, variations in cultural preferences, and the country's regulatory standards.

Although there are environmental concerns related to BHT and some regulatory agencies, such as Health Canada, are conducting further evaluations, it is **still considered safe for human consumption in regulated amounts and products in the U.S. and Canada.**

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Dismissing concerns widens the gap.

Identify the information gaps. Listen to the questions. Build the bridge to science.

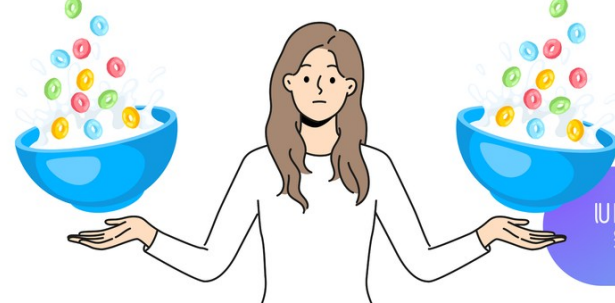
Different Formulations for Different Markets

Food companies like Kellogg's may use different formulations for the U.S. and other countries due to varying consumer preferences and regulatory environments.

The difference in formulations doesn't inherently mean that the U.S. version is less safe.

The ingredients used in both formulations have been strictly and consistently tested and tightly regulated in specific amounts and in which products by regulatory agencies.

The use of natural colors in Canada versus artificial dyes in the U.S. is more a reflection of consumer demand rather than a food safety issue.




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Safety of Food Additives

Food additives, such as colorings and BHT, are among the most thoroughly studied substances within the entire food supply chain.



Regulatory agencies like the FDA, EFSA, and Health Canada depend on extensive evidence-based safety testing, including risk assessments and toxicology studies, to establish the permissible levels of food additives and their approval for use in specific food products.

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Why do we turn to public figures for health and nutrition guidance?

While many celebrities and influencers are skilled in their fields, should we rely on them for information about food ingredient safety? We'd argue that's not good practice.

It's concerning when those with massive followings share unverified claims about health and nutrition, often unintentionally fueling misconceptions and public anxiety.



For accurate information on food and nutrition, it's wise to consult folks with relevant expertise.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Vani Hari, known as Foodbabe, continues to use fearmongering tactics regarding perfectly safe and accessible foods, which can make people anxious about food choices for themselves and their families.

Her claims lack evidence and are often based on pseudoscience, presenting her opinions as facts.

It's crucial to approach the statements of influencers who are not nutrition experts with a critical eye.

Go off queen, enjoy a bowl of American or Canadian Froot Loops!



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Public health & science need better PR.

If people only wanted to learn science, they could read a textbook.
 Social media has changed the game.
 We need to lean in to creative communication strategies.

Vani Hari, also known as "The Food Babe" has made a reputation for fearmongering about completely safe ingredients while propagating pseudoscientific claims.

She often discusses **artificial food dyes**, emphasizing differences in their presence in certain products between the U.S. and other countries.

evamendes

U.S. Version

Froot Loops: Corn Flour Blend (Whole Grain Yellow Corn Flour, Degerminated Yellow Corn Flour), Sugar, Wheat Flour, Whole Grain Oat Flour, Modified Food Starch, Contains 2% Or Less Of Vegetable Oil (Hydrogenated Coconut, Soybean And/Or Cottonseed), Oat Fiber, Maltodextrin, Salt, Soluble Corn Fiber, Natural Flavor, **Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1, Yellow 6, BHT For Freshness.** Vitamins And Minerals: Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid), Reduced Iron, Niacinamide, Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine Hydrochloride), Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin), Vitamin B1 (Thiamin Hydrochloride), Folic Acid, Vitamin D3, Vitamin B12.

Canada Version

Froot Loops: Sugars (Sugar, Maltodextrin), Whole Grain Corn Flour, Wheat Flour, Whole Grain Oat Flour, Degerminated Corn Flour, Corn Bran, Oat Hull Fibre, Hydrogenated Coconut And Vegetable Oil, Salt, Concentrated Carrot Juice (For Colour), Anthocyanin, Annatto, Turmeric, Natural Flavour, Concentrated Watermelon Juice (For Colour), Concentrated Blueberry Juice (For Colour), Concentrated Huito Juice (For Colour), Stevia Leaf Extract, Vitamins And Minerals: Iron, Niacinamide, Zinc Oxide, Thiamine Hydrochloride, D-Calcium Pantothenate, Cholecalciferol (Vitamin D), Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Folic Acid.

She engages in fearmongering surrounding these foods, making claims regarding their safety for children, which lack scientific backing.

Unfortunately, these posts are sometimes shared by others with large platforms – as was the case with a now-viral post about Froot Loops that was shared by the actress **Eva Mendes** to her millions of followers.

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READ ON... ➔

THE UNBIASED SCIENCE PODCAST

HERE, WE FIXED IT FOR YOU.

U.S. Version	Canada Version
<p>Safe and tightly regulated ingredients.</p>	<p>Safe and tightly regulated ingredients.</p>


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Brandolini's Law:
The amount of energy needed to refute misinformation is an order of magnitude bigger than that needed to produce it

ANATOMY OF VIRAL SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT


There is a HUGE difference between actual frozen fruit and one of these "Real Fruit" frozen pops.... See more

Real Food



VS

Processed Food



VS

✓ Only one ingredient: Organic Mango

✓ Minimally-processed: Chopped & Frozen

✓ Fiber and original nutrients intact

✗ Mango is pulverized and processed into a concentrate, killing nutrients, fiber, & flavor

✗ Sugar & flavors added to make it taste better than real food

✗ Gums added to create a smooth texture that makes it easier to eat more

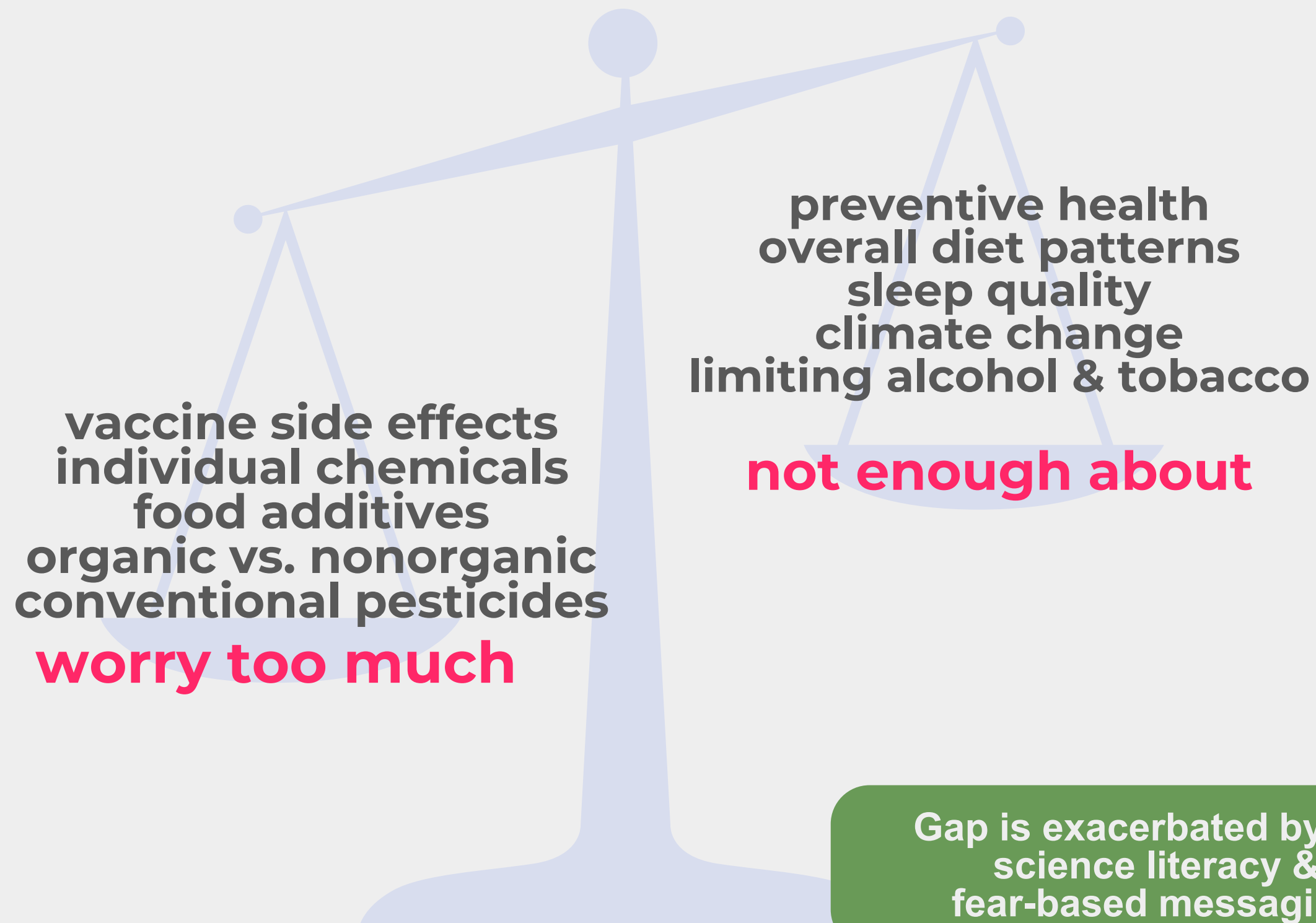
FOOD BABE
—Vani Hart

Elements that make content go viral:

- Emotional triggers (especially fear)
- Simple, absolute statements
- Appeal to parental instincts
- Appeal to desire for control
- Appeal to nature
- "Secret truth" narrative

THE RISK PERCEPTION

The PUBLIC IS OFTEN MORE AFRAID OF CERTAIN RISKS THEN EVIDENCE WARRANTS BUT LESS WORRIED ABOUT THINGS THAT POST MORE RISK



SAME DATA, DIFFERENT MESSAGES



Danger in the Dough: Unveiling the Toxic Contaminants in Girl Scout Cookies

Posted by Anne Temple 838.80GS on December 30, 2024
Article by Michelle Perro, MD, Stephanie Seneff, PhD, and Zen Honeycutt BFA



Danger in the Dough: Unveiling the Toxic Contaminants in Girl Scout Cookies

January 01, 2025 | Source: [GMO Science](#) | by Michelle Perro, MD, Stephanie Seneff, PhD, and Zen Honeycutt BFA



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TOXIC
GIRL SCOUT
COOKIES?

HANDS OFF OUR THIN MINTS

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DESPITE A SCARY-SOUNDING REPORT BY MOMS ACROSS AMERICA, YOU DON'T NEED TO TOSS YOUR COOKIES.

A CHILD WOULD HAVE TO EAT OVER 9,000 COOKIES DAILY TO REACH A POTENTIALLY HARMFUL DOSE OF GLYPHOSPHATE.

9,000

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PIP PIP!
Should we throw out our Cheerios?

A pilot study by activist organization, The Environmental Working Group, has been picked up by major media outlets and has caused a lot of unnecessary fear and concern.



Read on to learn more about this unnecessarily sensationalized food science story.

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Let's count our Cheerios & Oats


To summarize the data for adults and children:

	Product (pack size)	Units to reach PAD	
		Acute (one time)	Chronic (per day)
ADULTS	Oats (42oz canister)	202	10
	Cheerios (14 oz box)	1647	82
CHILDREN	Oats (42oz canister)	21.7	1.4
	Cheerios (14 oz box)	235	8.8

PAD=population adjusted dose=1 mg/kg (acute) or 0.05 mg/kg/day (chronic)

Note: For adults, an average weight of 70 kg (154 lbs) was used. For children, on average, oat consumption starts at 6 months of age (7.5 kg), while Cheerios start at 12 months of age (10 kg). Weights were adjusted to be as conservative as possible in illustrating risk.

For children, while the amount needing to be consumed is clearly less than adults, even the hungriest child could not consume the amount of oats or Cheerios required to exhibit toxicity levels that would be considered harmful in humans.



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PEOPLE APPRECIATE
CONTEXT AND REAL
WORLD APPLICATION

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Let's count our Cheerios

How many Cheerios must one consume to hit highest trace amounts identified by the EWG study?
For an average adult weighing 70 kg (154 pounds):



1647


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1647 boxes of Cheerios in a single sitting -or- 82 boxes per day for the rest of your life

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Let's count our Oats

How many Quaker oats must one consume to hit risk thresholds identified by the EWG study?
For an average adult weighing 70 kg (154 pounds):



202

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202 canisters of Quaker Oaks in a single sitting -or- 10 canisters per day for the rest of your life

PEOPLE ALSO APPRECIATE A DOSE OF COMEDY AND CLEVER PHRASING! “NOSTALGIA IS NOT A PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY”



DON'T RAW DOG IT

Pasteurization – *a simple heating technique* – has been a game-changer for public health, killing harmful pathogens like **Salmonella, E. coli, and Listeria** in milk and other foods. It also inactivates **H5N1** (bird flu) in milk. Before pasteurization became standard, diseases linked to raw milk—like tuberculosis—caused widespread illness and death, especially in children.

Pasteurization does not significantly impact nutritional value; milk retains essential nutrients like calcium, protein, and vitamin D, ensuring the same health benefits as raw milk but without the risks of dangerous pathogens.

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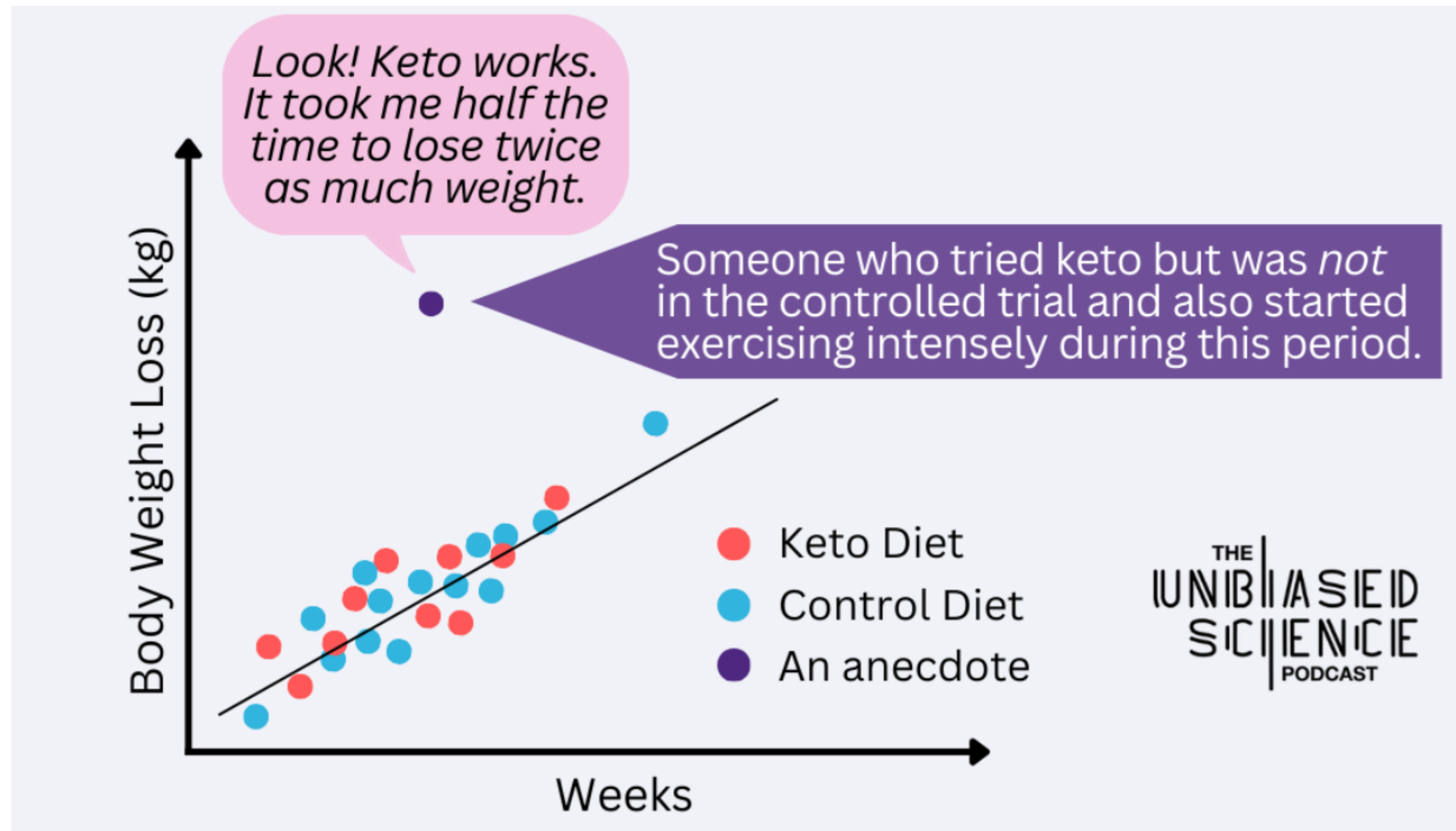
**H5N1 in raw milk:
UDDERLY UNPASTEURIZED
and udderly unsafe**

Over the past few months, there has been growing concern over the transmission of the H5N1 bird flu to humans via dairy cow populations. Recently, the FDA detected traces of the H5N1 virus in milk sold at grocery stores. **Should we be worried?**

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DON'T DISCOUNT ANECDOTES

IDENTIFY OTHER FACTORS, BUT ALWAYS VALIDATE EXPERIENCES, IGNORING THEM
CREATES DISTRUST



Meet Your Audience Where They Are:

THE PLATFORMS WE USE DICTATE OUR IMPACT



TIKTOK

Hook & Intrigue



INSTAGRAM

Educate & Explain

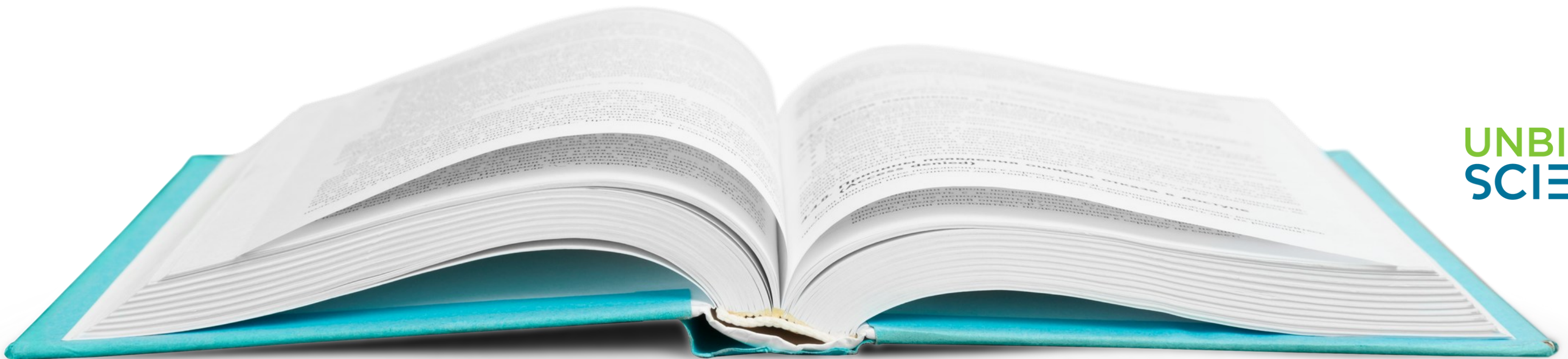


FACEBOOK

Deepen & Discuss

SCIENCE WITHOUT HUMANITY IS JUST A TEXTBOOK.

When we bring joy to the creation process, our audience feels it in every word. The most compelling scientific stories aren't just accurate—they're alive.



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**WE HAVE A LONG FIGHT AHEAD,
BUT WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER... IN SCIENCE.**

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