

Background & Objectives

In January 2008, the European Commission proposed new Regulations on Food Information to Consumers (Food Labelling), which have been considered and debated for adoption by Member States with a final vote by Parliament in July 2011. The debate has been marked by controversy over several elements, particularly Front of Pack Labelling.

This research was commissioned by the Irish Heart Foundation, Irish Cancer Society and National Youth Council of Ireland and conducted by RED C Research & Marketing Ltd. in September 2010.

The survey aimed to test Monochrome Percentage Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) proposed by industry against GDA with colour proposed by consumer and health and to determine which is easier for consumers to use and to understand correctly.



The GDA system provides numerical information on actual amounts of key nutrients as a percentage of GDA.

GDA with colour food label system displays key nutrient levels of food products with the aid of a colour coded system and the inclusion of the words **high** (red) for a high level of nutrient, medium for **(orange/amber)** and low for **green**.

Methodology

Face to face research was conducted among a representative sample of grocery shoppers on exit of grocery stores in a selection of locations.

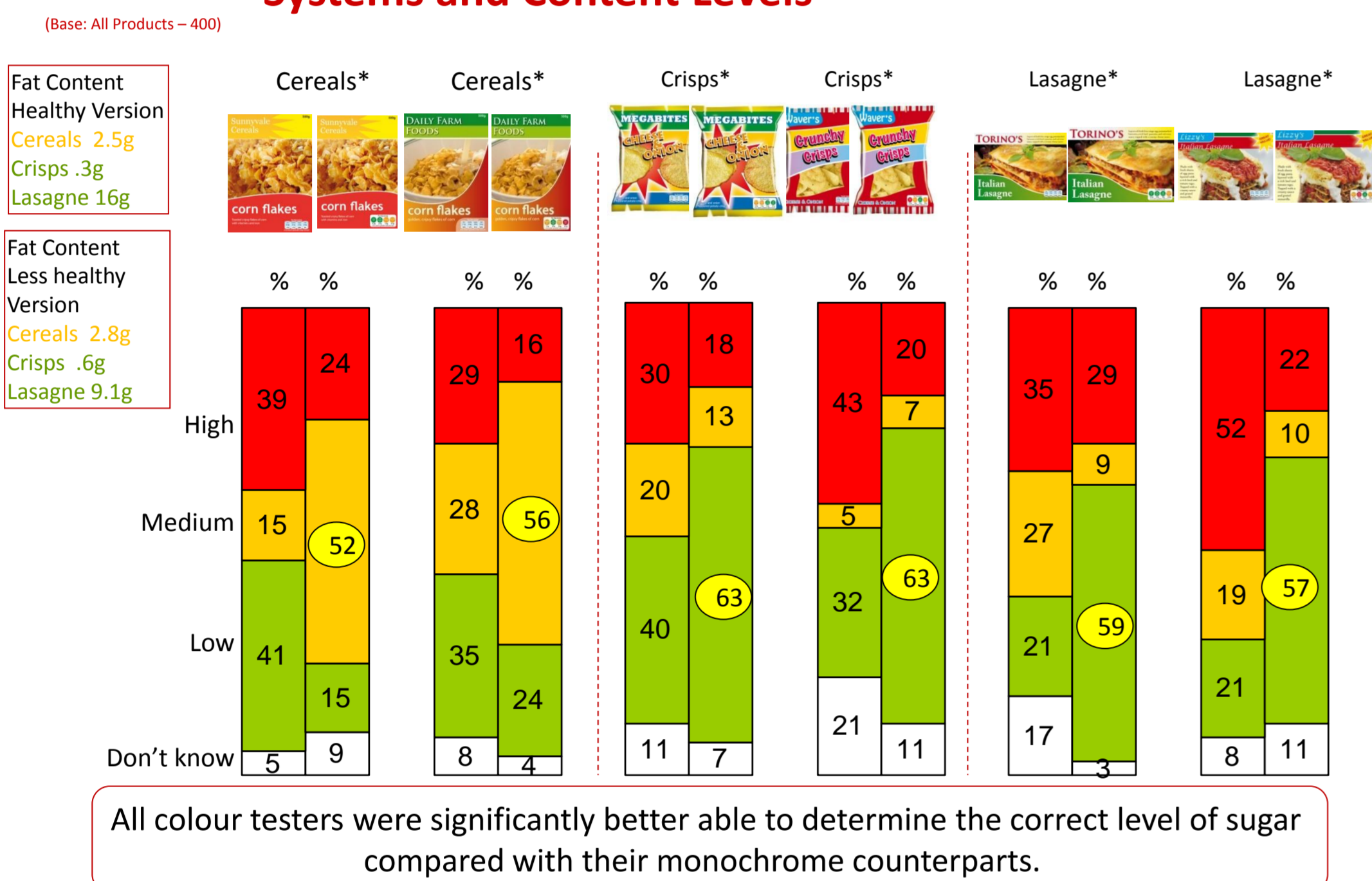
400 interviews were conducted in total

3 product categories were tested – crisps, cereals, lasagne

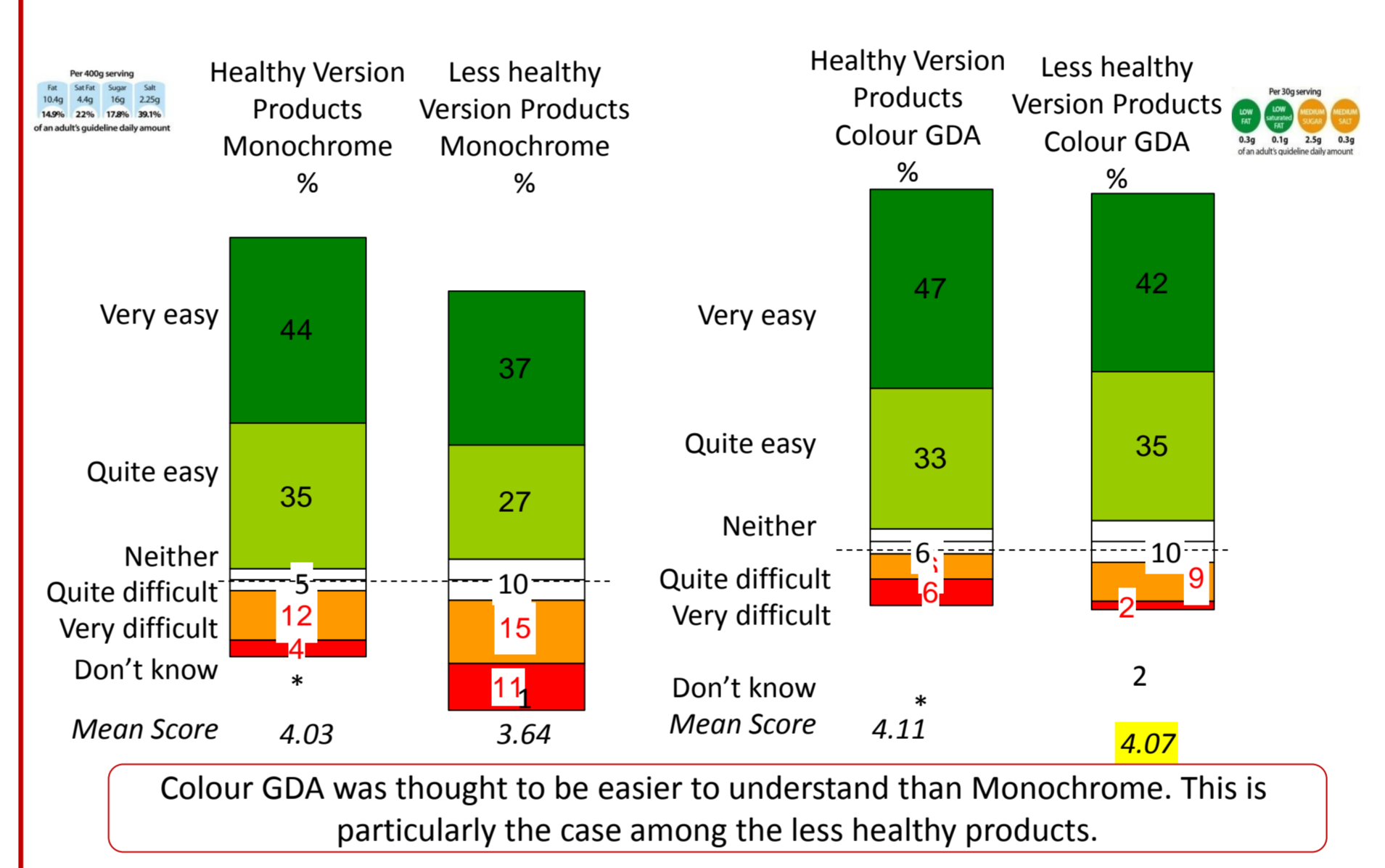
Each response tested one label system, across two categories, consisting of four products, two of which were healthy and two less healthy.

Results

Determining Sugar Content by Different Product Types, Label Systems and Content Levels



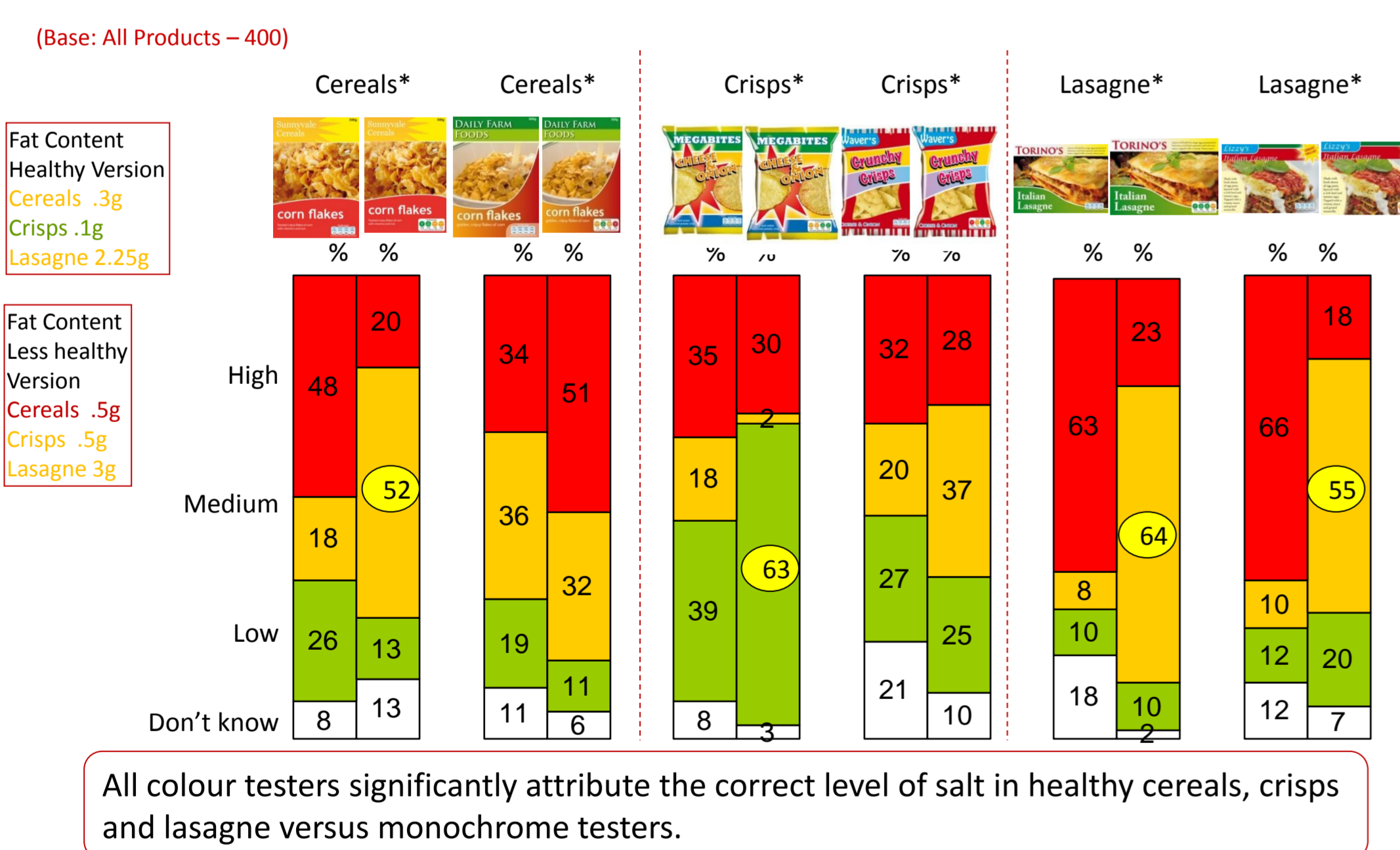
Ease of understanding information on food labelling systems



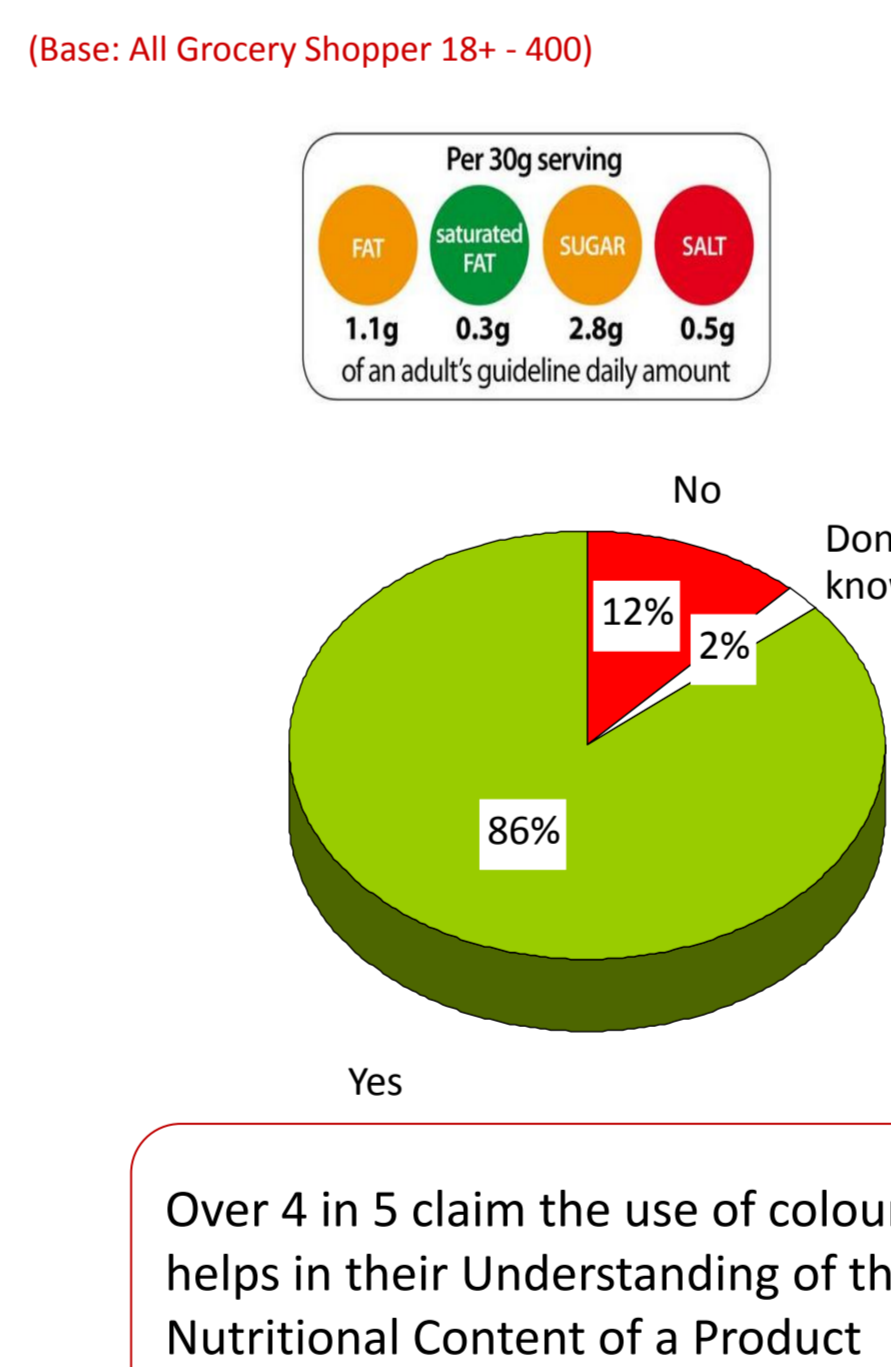
Comparative Testing of Crisps to Determine Healthier Option



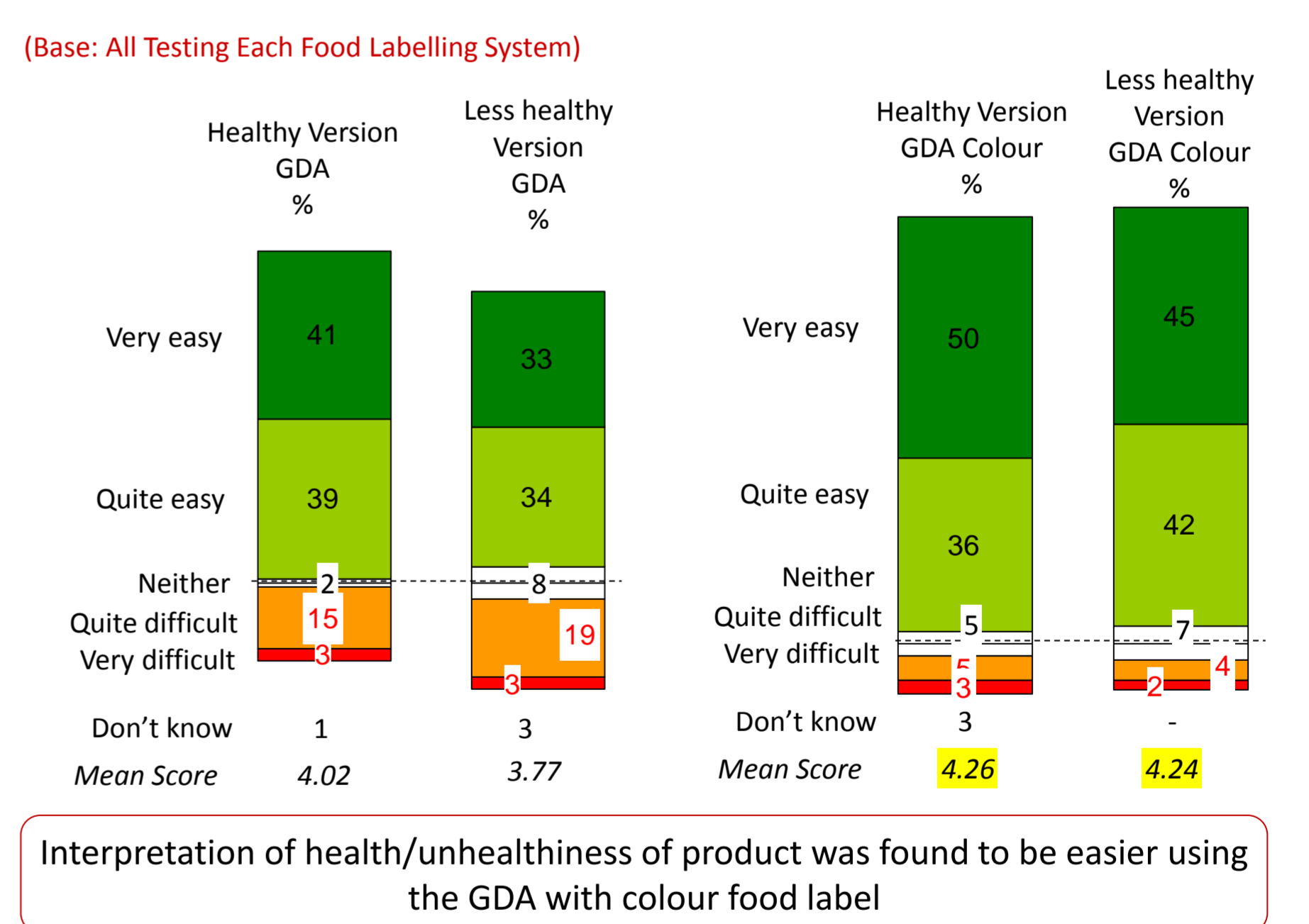
Determining Salt Content by Different Product Types, Label Systems and Content Levels



Do the colours used on this label help in your understanding of the nutritional content of a food product?



Ease of comparison of health when using different food labelling systems



Key Conclusions

Shoppers were:

- more likely to correctly interpret the level of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt in the majority of products tested using the Colour Coded GDA system than the monochrome GDA label.
- significantly more likely to find the Colour Coded GDA label more informative, easier to use in the comparison of health, easier to determine health at a glance and more likely to use in the future than the monochrome food label.
- likely to claim the use of colour helps in their understanding of the nutritional content of a product - over 4 in 5 respondents claimed this.

Acknowledgements

The Irish Heart Foundation led and commissioned the research, which was jointly funded by the Irish Heart Foundation, Irish Cancer Society and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

RED C Research & Marketing Ltd. conducted the field work and analysis for this research.

Thanks to Jane Landon, National Heart Forum, UK and to Collette Kelly, National University of Ireland, Galway both of whom provided insightful comments and suggestions on the research.

The Cancer Council, New South Wales, the Prevention Research Centres at the University of Sydney and CHOICE, in New South Wales, Australia allowed us to use their questionnaire and project brief as a basis and reference for our research:
http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/html/prevention/healthyeating/downloads/fodlabelling_frontofpack_surveyreport.pdf

Thanks to Mairead O'Callaghan for assembling this poster.

For more information email Maureen Mulvihill: mmulvihill@irishheart.ie
 Full report available at http://www.irishheart.ie/media/pub/red_c_final_report_4_16_11_10.pdf