



# Tomato Trends: Summarizing Eight Years of Consumer Research on Greenhouse Tomatoes

**Amy Jenkins, Amy Blake and Amy Bowen**  
 Consumer Insights, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre  
 Contact: amy.bowen@vinelandresearch.com

## Introduction

Understanding consumer trends is essential for predicting market needs. Vineland Research and Innovation Centre has been conducting consumer research on greenhouse tomatoes for over eight years. This poster presents a snapshot of consumer trends in purchase behaviour, tomato consumption and perception from 2017 to 2019.

## Method

In 2017 (n= 269), 2018 (n=221) and 2019 (n=115) consumers completed an end questionnaire asking about their purchase and consumption habits as part of a larger study assessing liking for new tomato varieties bred at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. Consumers were screened for tomato consumption (at least once per year) and were either the primary grocery shopper in their household or shared the responsibility equally. A roughly equal split was observed between gender. Age was slightly skewed to those under 50 in 2017 and 2018, while 2019 had more participants over the age of 50.

## Results

### Supporting farmers

Between 2018 and 2019 the number of consumers choosing to buy local produce to support local farmers almost doubled, surpassing flavour and freshness as a reason for purchase.

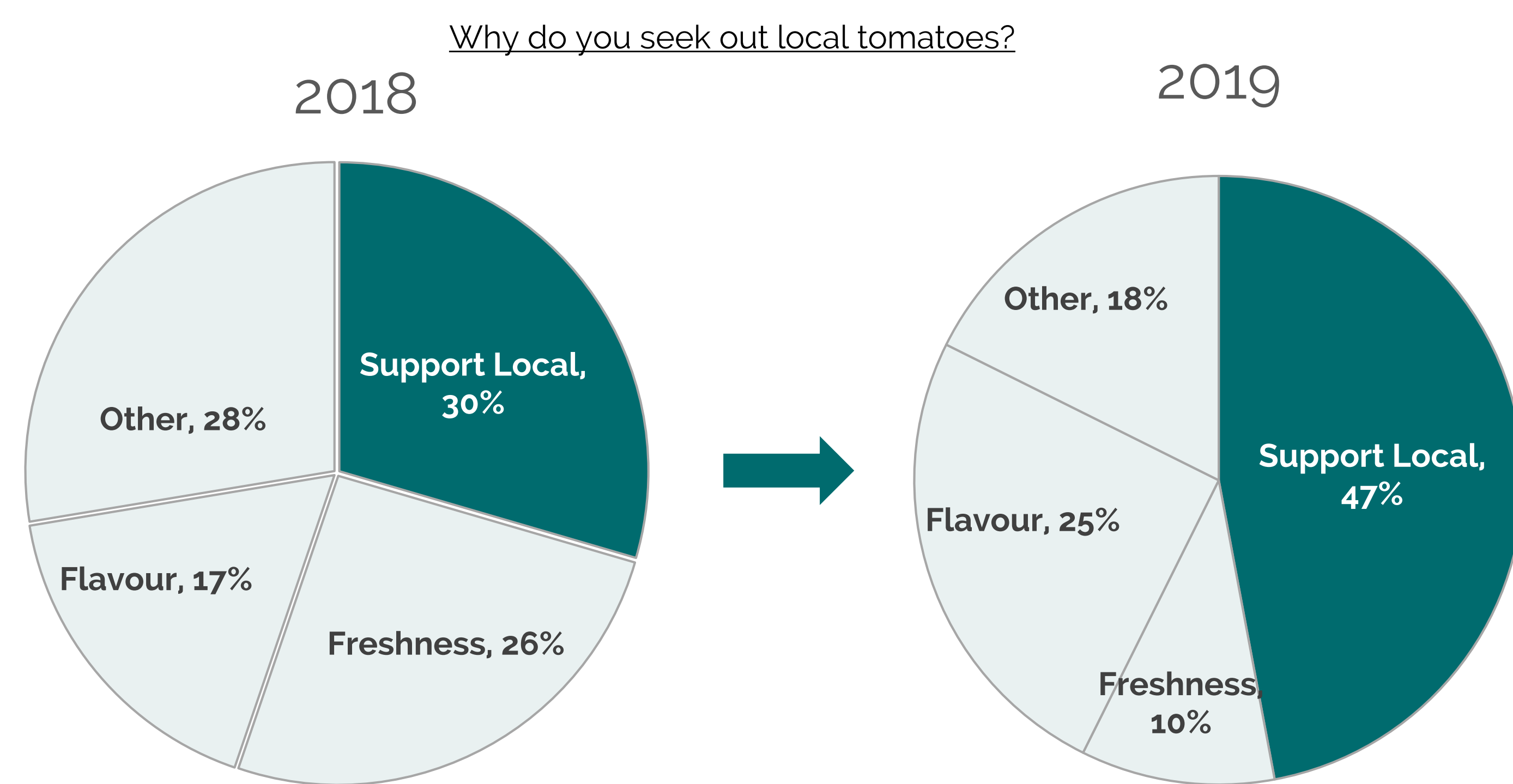


Figure 1. Responses to the question "Why do you seek out local tomatoes" by percent of total consumers. An increase in the number of consumers who responded "to support local farmers" was observed between 2018 and 2019.

### Awareness of growing practices

Between 2017 and 2019 consumers who noticed whether their tomatoes were grown in a field or greenhouse increased from 38% to 85%.

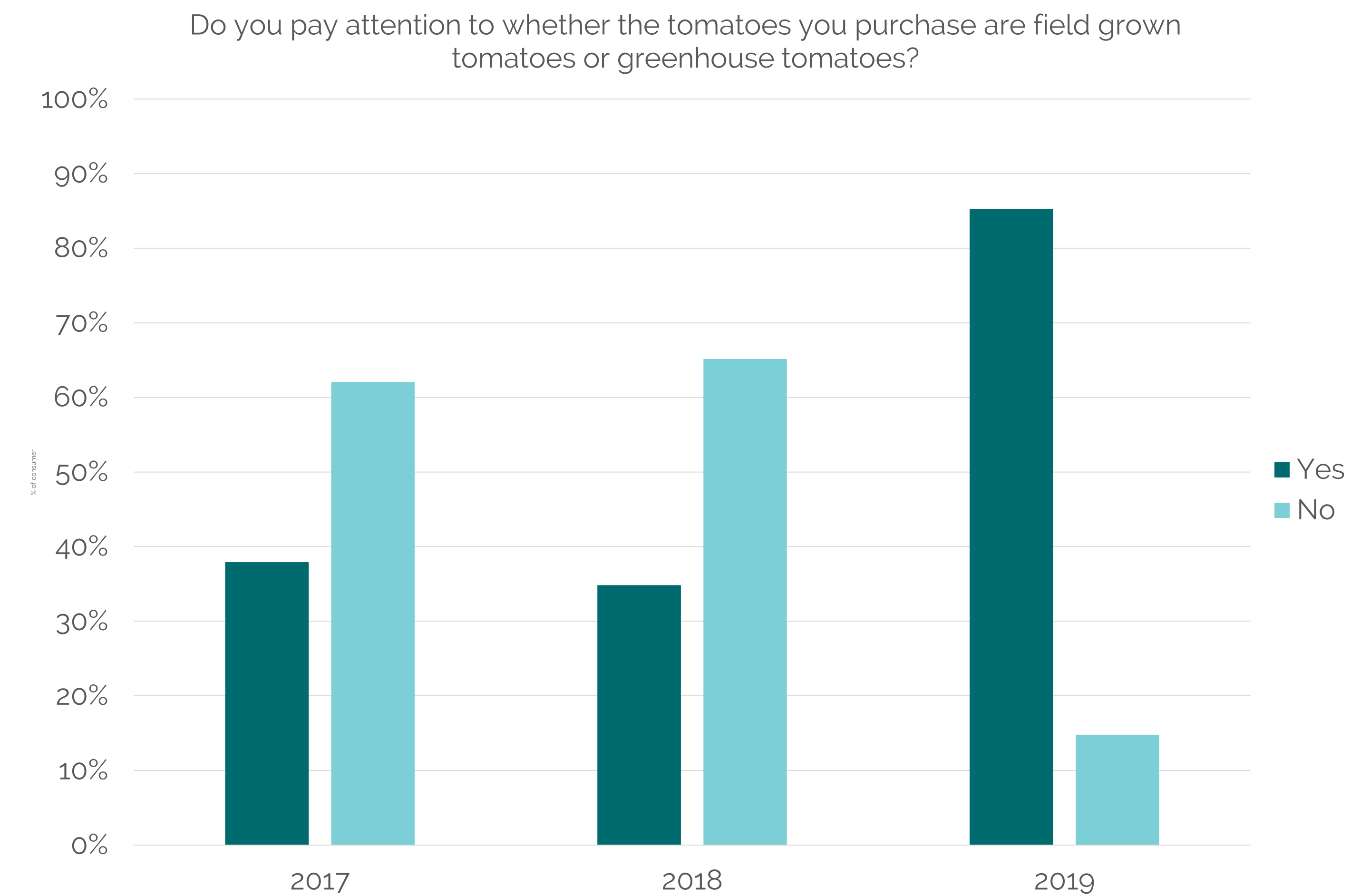


Figure 2. Responses to the question "Do you pay attention to whether the tomatoes you purchase are field grown tomatoes or greenhouse tomatoes?" by total percent of consumers. The number of consumers who responded "yes" between 2017 and 2019 increased by almost 50%.

### Consumption of tomato by type

Type has remained stable over time. Tomatoes-on-the-vine are the most consumed tomato type followed closely by cherry tomatoes and beefsteak being less frequently consumed than either.

Table 1. Responses to the question "Which of the following types of tomatoes do you eat?" by percent of total responses. Note consumers were able to select more than one option.

2018	2019
1. Tomatoes on the vine (22%)	1. Tomatoes on the vine (18%)
2. Cherry tomatoes (20%)	2. Cherry tomatoes (16%)
3. Beefsteak tomatoes (10%)	3. Beefsteak tomatoes (13%)

### Importance of Flavour

While almost half of consumers enjoy tomatoes in a salad, 17% of consumers will eat them plain, highlighting the importance of tomato flavour, a key target in Vineland's tomato breeding pipeline.

Please indicate the main way you consume fresh whole tomatoes

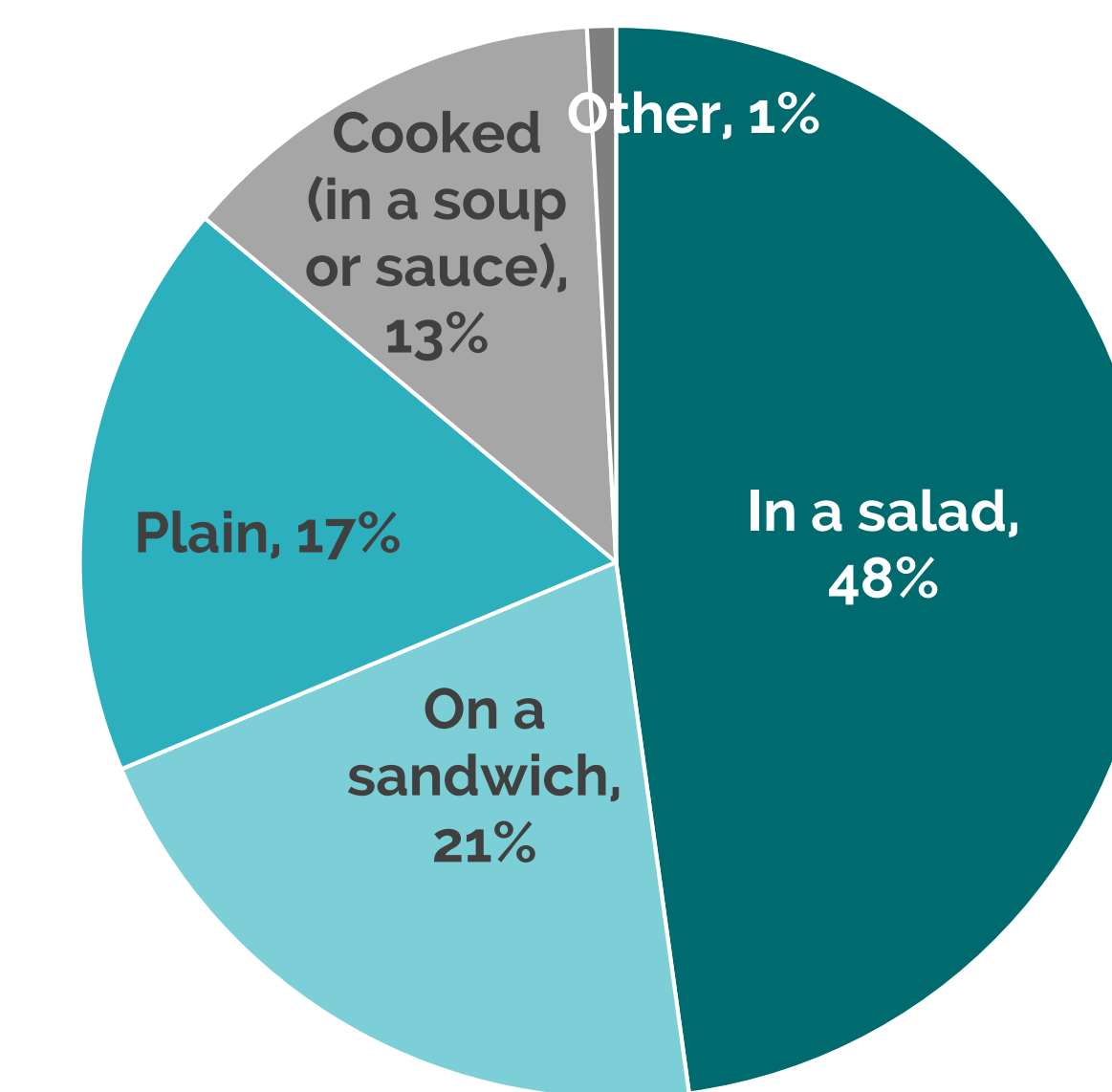


Figure 3. Responses to the question "Please indicate the main way you consume fresh whole tomatoes" as a percent of total consumers. The majority of consumers indicated "in a salad".

### Spending

Since 2017, the percent of consumers who pay \$30 or more per week on fresh whole vegetables or fruit has been steadily decreasing, dropping from 40% to 20%. The reason for the drop is unknown but may demonstrate a shift in consumer awareness and values.

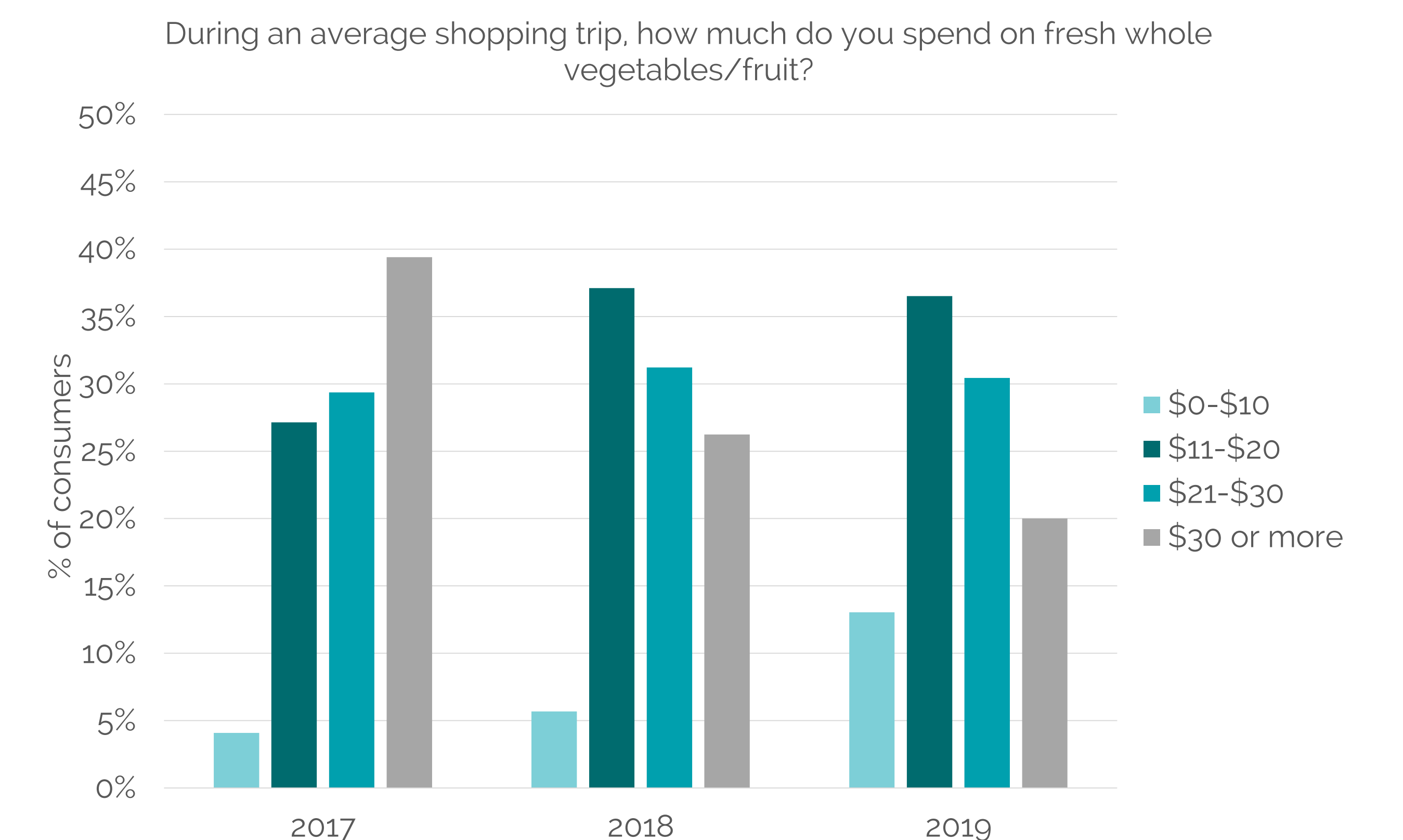


Figure 4. Responses to the question "During an average shopping trip, how much do you spend on fresh whole fruits/vegetables?" as a percent of total consumers.

### Conclusions

Consumer research is an important tool to understand preference and behaviour over time in order to forecast trends and ensure the market can adapt accordingly.