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# IFPTI Fellowship Cohort VI: Research Presentation

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***Making the Grade:  
Do Current Restaurant Grading Systems  
Fulfill Stakeholder Expectations?***

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- 38% of local food regulatory agencies surveyed in 2012 reported having a restaurant grading system (NACCHO).
- Consumer demand for restaurant food safety and sanitation information continues to increase.
- To meet that demand, more local food regulatory agencies are creating restaurant grading systems.
- However, restaurant grading systems continue to be a topic of controversy among local food regulatory agencies and the public.

Stakeholder perceptions regarding restaurant grading system elements are largely unknown.

1. What are the common elements of existing restaurant grading systems?
2. To what extent do stakeholders think that these elements reflect the level of food safety at restaurants?
3. Are there any other elements that stakeholders believe should be included in a grading system?
4. How do stakeholders perceive the meaning of different types of restaurant grades?

- Review literature:
  - Identify existing restaurant grading systems and topics of controversy
- Survey stakeholders:
  - Identify perceptions about restaurant grading system elements

- Survey was sent to members of the following organizations:
  - Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)
  - Conference for Food Protection (CFP)
  - National Restaurant Association
  - Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)

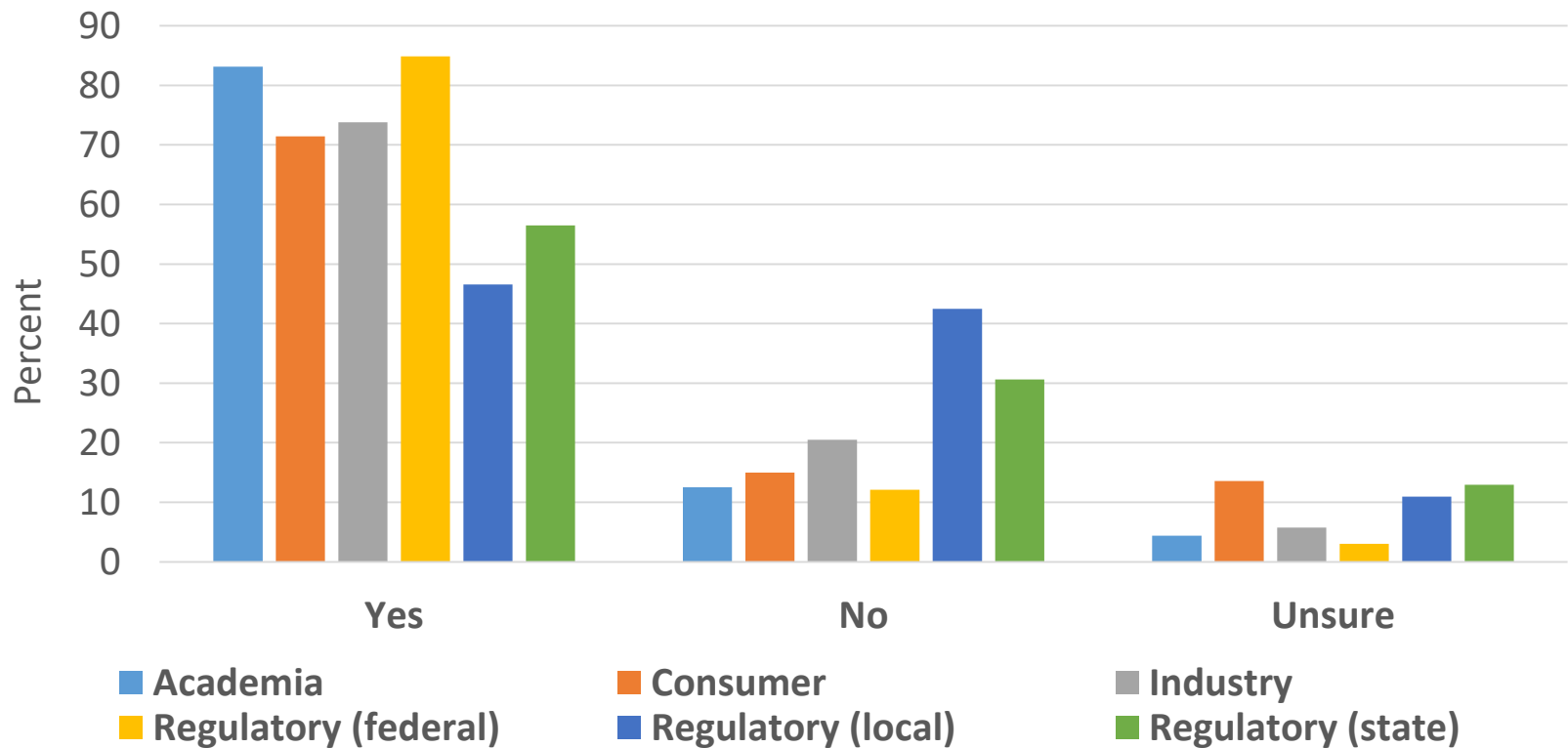
- Survey respondents self-identified as a member of one of the following groups:
  - Regulator (local, state, or federal)
  - Academic
  - Food industry
  - Consumer



## Respondents Self-Identification By Group

Group Affiliation	Number	Percent
Consumer	1681	71
Regulatory (local)	222	9
Academia	162	7
Regulatory (state)	149	6
Industry	122	5
Regulatory (federal)	34	1
Total	2370	

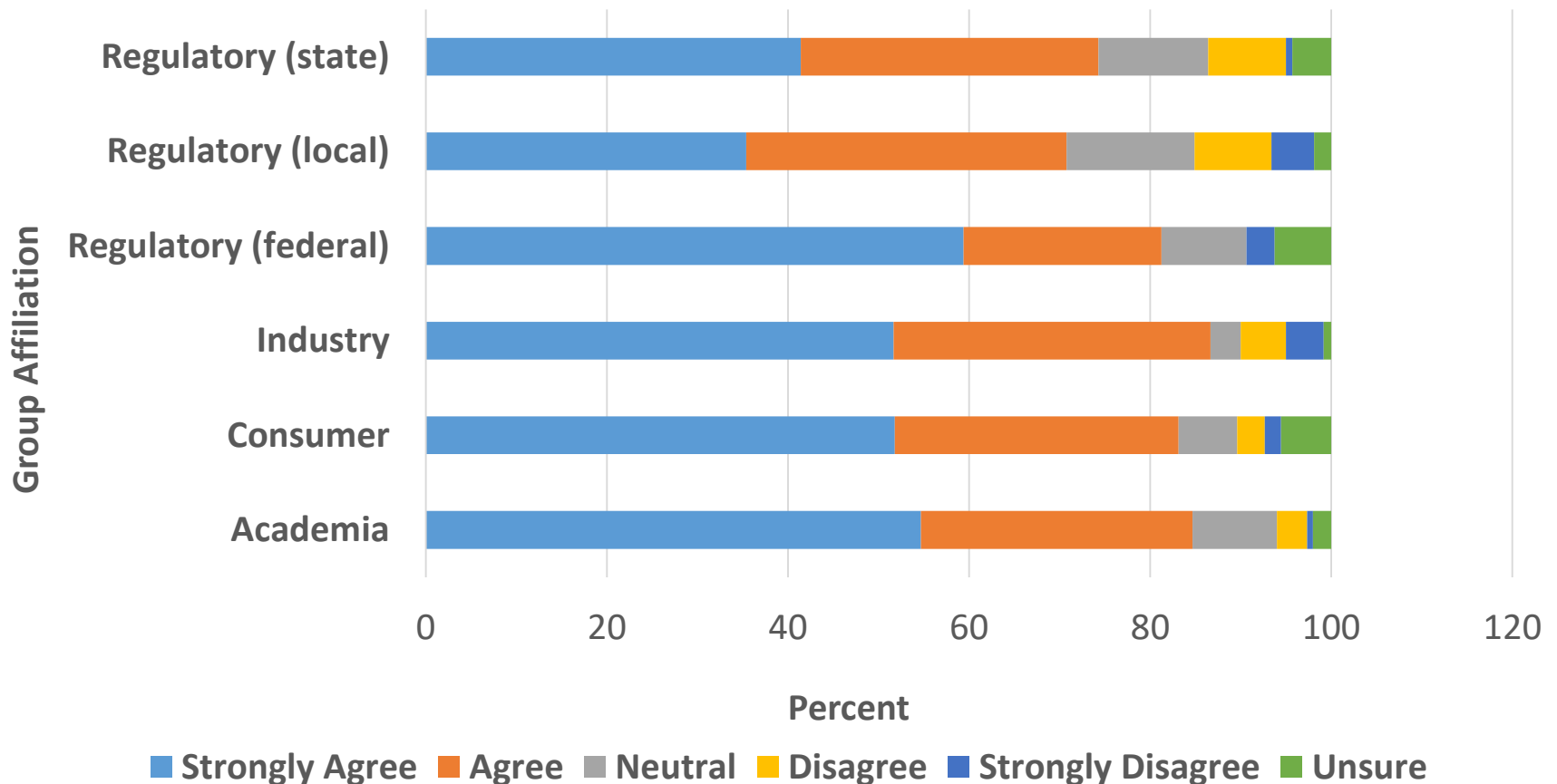
Should a restaurant's grade be based on the results of more than one inspection?



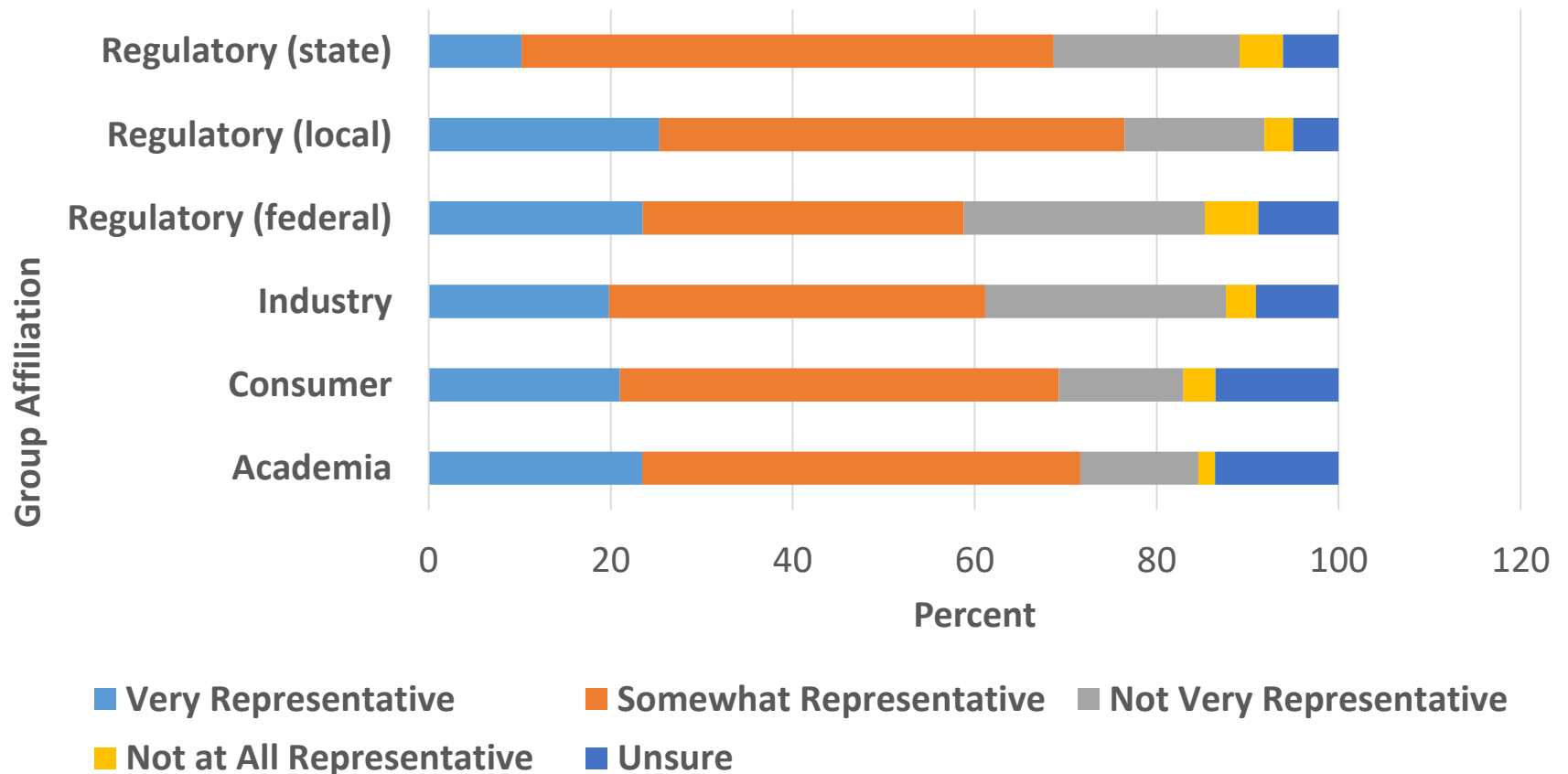
**82%** of respondents believe that restaurant grades should be based on the results of risk based inspections

**70%** of respondents believe that non-critical violations are very or somewhat representative of the level of food safety at a restaurant

## Should grades be based on risk based inspections?



How representative are non-critical violations of the level of food safety?



- **One quarter** of respondents were unsure what color grades represented in terms of the level of food safety
- This result held across all groups, including consumers

### Unsure of the meaning of the grade in terms of the level of food safety that grade represents

Color Grade	Academia	Consumer	Industry	Regulatory (federal)	Regulatory (local)	Regulatory (state)	Overall
Green	23%	24%	18%	14%	32%	31%	24%
Yellow	24%	25%	20%	21%	30%	30%	25%
Red	22%	22%	19%	21%	31%	27%	23%

- Gaps exist between what stakeholders think restaurant grades should be based on, and what most existing systems are based on
- Most stakeholders believe more than one inspection should be factored into a restaurant's grade
- The value of non-critical violations may be misunderstood
- Color alone can be confusing

1. Incorporate the results of more than one inspection into a restaurant's overall grade.
2. Use educational opportunities to demonstrate the relationship between violations and foodborne illness.
3. Use more than color alone to represent a restaurant's grade.
4. Develop future research projects addressing:
  - Possible models for calculating meaningful grades.
  - Possible methods for identifying appropriate time frames for inspections to be included in the grade.



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# Questions?

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- [Methodology—Survey Question 1](#)
- [Methodology—Survey Question 2](#)
- [Methodology—Survey Questions 4-7](#)
- [Methodology—Survey Question 8](#)