



Modern Indulgence

Craft Final Research Project
Cliff, Eva, Zeke, Nathan, Divyya

Research Methodologies

Primary Research

Quantitative

Survey

To learn about motivations of indulgence and what appear as indulgence

Qualitative / Non Traditional

*In-depth Interviews
Confessional
Booth*

To explore in depth people's reasons for indulging.

Qualitative

*Focus
Group*

To explore in depth people's reasons for indulging.

Qualitative

*Vendor
Interview*

To gather vendor observations regarding when people seek indulgence.

Non Traditional

*Indulgence
Journal*

To get a sense of indulgence

Secondary Research

Deck Research

*Behavioral
Research*

To get us started in understanding snack trends

The Agenda

- 📍 Little Debbie's Heritage & Problem
- 📍 Setting the Scene: Consumers & Context
- 📍 Re-defining Indulgence
- 📍 Research Findings & Insights
- 📍 Strategic Reframing & Little Debbie's Advantage
- 📍 Conclusion

Born in Hardship, *Built on Comfort*



A family-owned legacy founded in the Great Depression
built on *resilience, affordability, and comfort.*

All-American *Sweetheart*

- ♥ Iconic products: Oatmeal Creme Pies, Swiss Rolls, Nutty Buddy
- ♥ 157B+ snacks sold to date
- ♥ Holds 34% market share in the snack cake category



The Challenge

Despite strong recognition and nostalgic equity, Little Debbie *struggles to stand out* in today's evolving snack market.

Little Debbie Needs to Ask

What is Modern Indulgence?

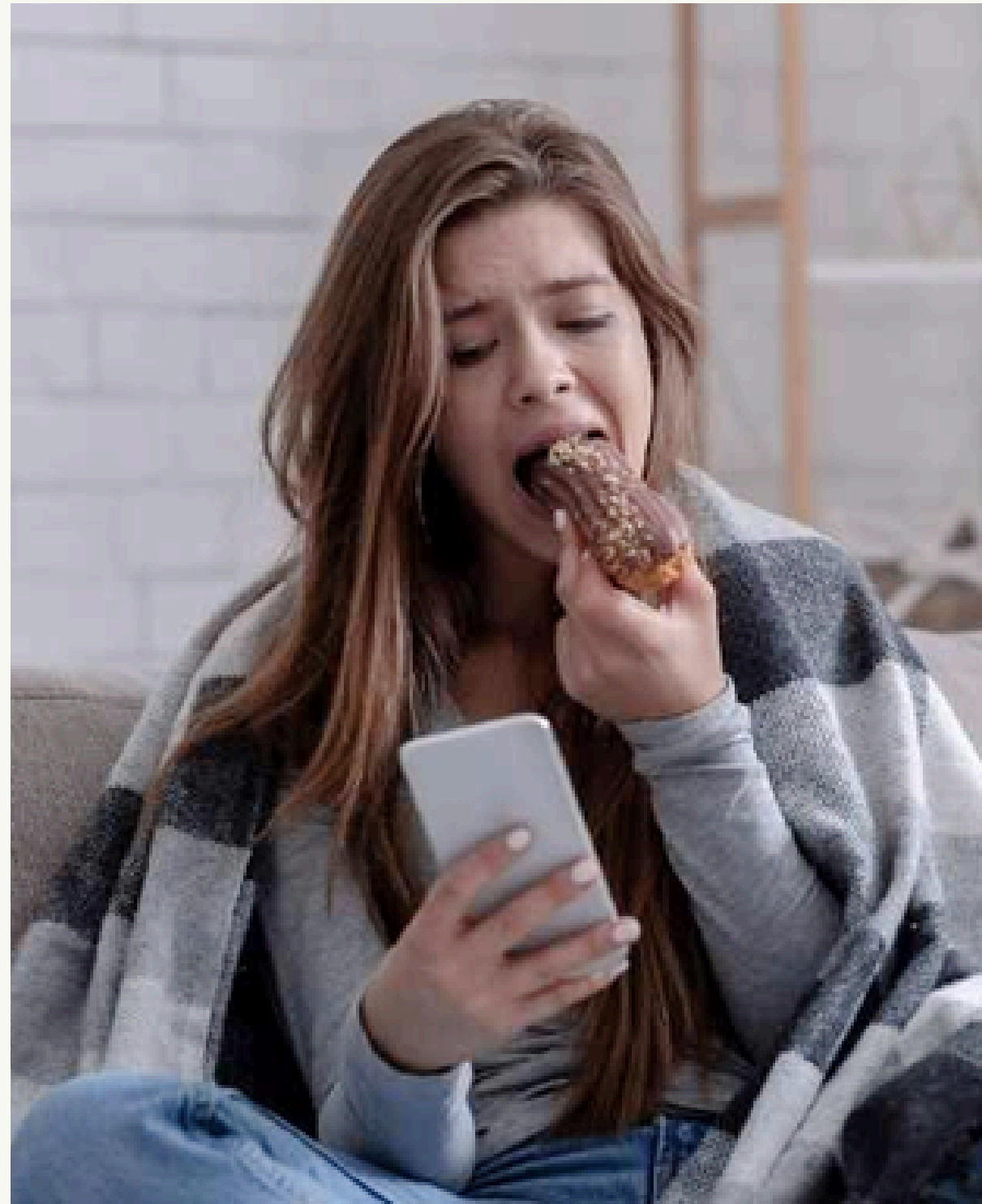
The Opportunity

Just as Little Debbie offered solace
in an era of hardship, *she can once
again be a source of comfort.*

Setting the Scene

Who is today's consumer?





The Indulgence Burn-Out

- ❖ Students & Young Professionals (*Gen Z & Millennials*)
- ❖ Constantly toggling between *high ambition* and *high exhaustion*.
- ❖ Managing *stress*, tight *budgets*, and the *pressure* to keep up.
- ❖ Food is one of the few outlets that can provide *comfort without overthinking*.

Because young adults are *the engine of modern indulgence.*

77%

of 18-34 year olds say they
give in to their favorite cravings.

Key Traits

67% Stressed Out

of 18-34 year olds say they're so busy they can't finish everything they need to in a day

68% Seeking Joy

of 18-34 year olds believe life should be as much fun as possible

Culture & Context

What shapes indulgence today?

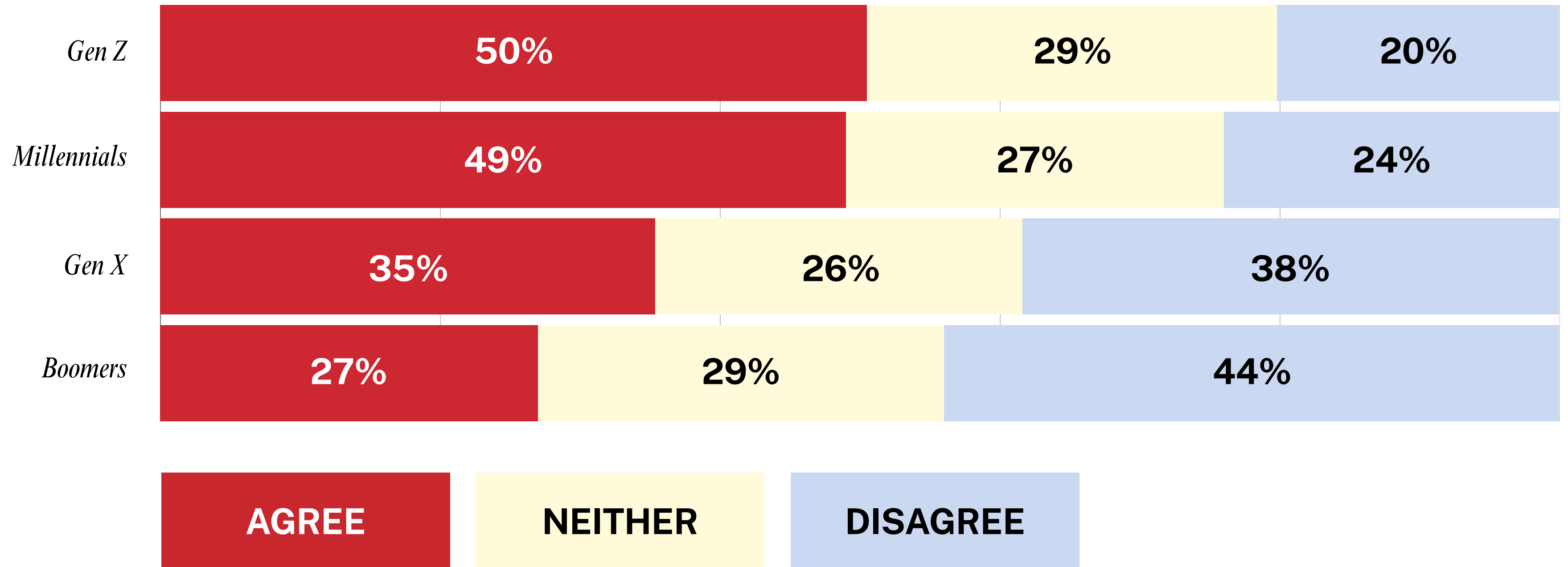


People are Worried

Gen Z & Millennials are *more stressed* than older generations about *financial instability, the future, and mental health*

APA, MRI Simmons, Mintel

*Is recent **global uncertainty** impacting **your mental well-being**?*



Gen Z is Going Through It

More likely to report feeling *overwhelmed*



91%

feel their mental health is challenged *at least occasionally*

74%

report moderate to *severe stress*

What are they worried about and why?

Inflation and rising food costs disproportionately affect younger generations.

Gen Z is anxious about grades, careers, and the environment.

Millennials are stressed about work performance and career stability, and feel pressure to be constantly productive & compare achievements online.

Understanding Triggers

So how do people cope?



Indulgence Journals

Cliff

10/27, 6PM

Beer on the couch after a long day at Brandcenter

10/28, 9 PM

A beer and some popcorn during the Hannah Montana movie

11/1, 6:30 PM

I had a margarita, some enchiladas and a Jarritos soda
some friends after a stressful morning and afternoon

11/2, 6:30 PM

Carryout pizza, felt too tired to cook but had a great day

Zeke

Indulgence Journal

Monday: I enjoyed a chic-fil-a breakfast today.
I would consider this a slight indulgence cause
I know it'll keep me full for long enough. Ended
up eating at Farkay & Piggie out on cinnamon
chicken bones.

Tuesday: No indulging for me, mainly sustenance for
class. thing was breakfast at night

Wednesday: Early payday led me to snacking on
Kettle Corn as a reward for getting through the
week. Also had extra time to enjoy 4/no classes

Tuesday

Wednesday

Went for Vietnamese
food after Bob presentation

★ Finished more than
half of the ice cream box
after a horrible date

Eva

10/27 Luthéal Phase
• Stella's
chocolate
cake

10/29 Halloween candy
• 5 kit kats

11/4 Movie Night
• ice cream
in a mug

10/27 10:15 PM

* considered having a glass of wine after
a LOOOONG day of class + meetings +
chores + HW

↳ 10:22 PM cracking open raspberry
surfside LOL

10/28 9:54 PM

* craving sweet treats... nibbling on
TruFru

div

Maslow's Heirarchy

Food has *always* been a source
of emotional comfort & safety
at the most basic human level.

Emotions and Food Consumption: Emotional Eating Behavior (NIH)

Re-defining Indulgence

Guilty Pleasure

Comfort must be earned. Indulgence is shameful and tied to moral failings.

Unapologetic Comfort

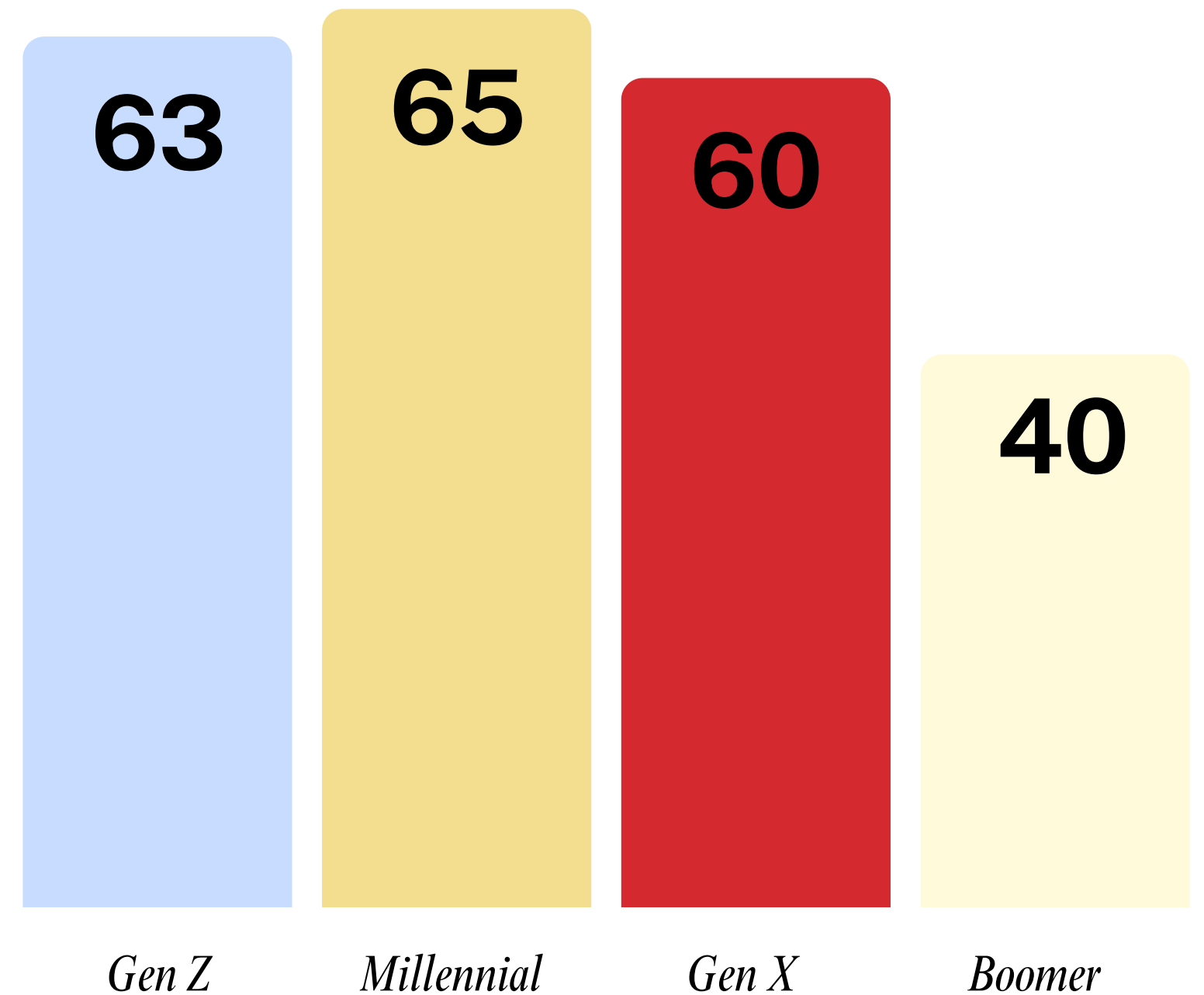
Indulgence is *necessary and deserved*. Feeling comfortable is *self-preservation*.

62% buy snacks as a way to
“treat themselves.”

42% of Gen Z said they snack
to relieve stress

59% of Gen Z said they snack
to take a break

Stress Relief Snacking



Guilt-Free Pleasure

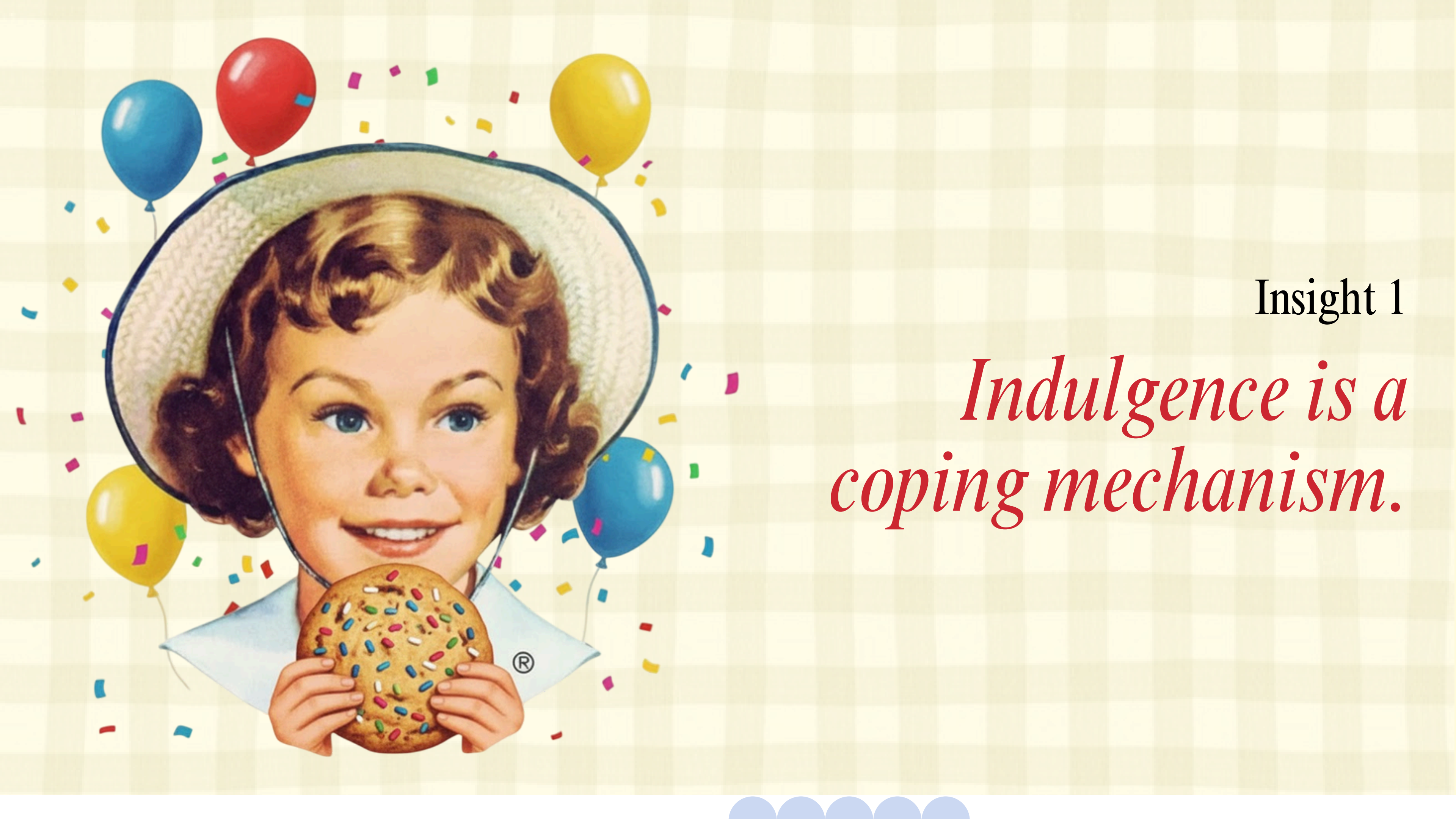
Indulgence is deserved.

Indulgence is self-care.

Indulgence is resilience.

Research Findings & Insights





Insight 1

*Indulgence is a
coping mechanism.*



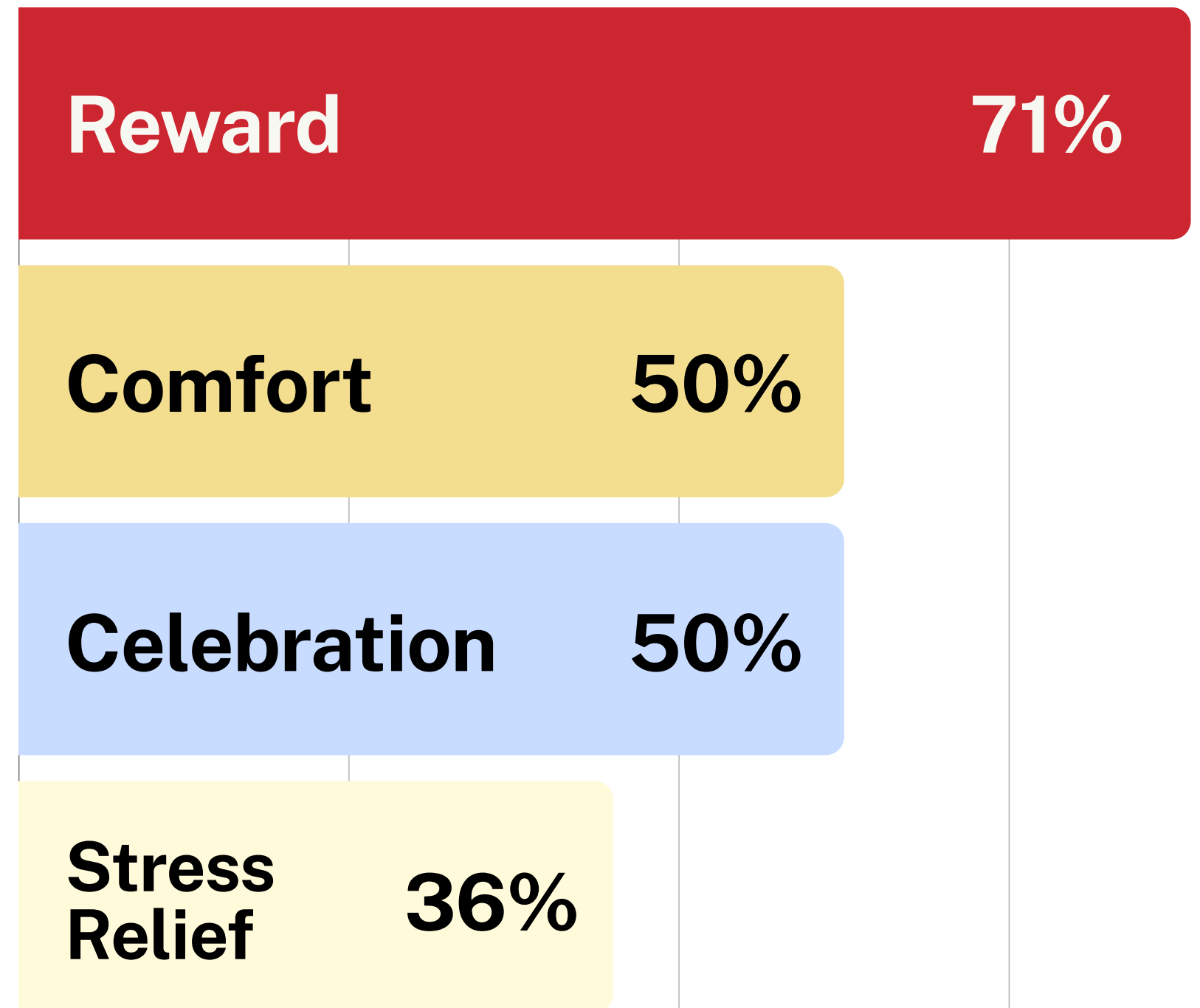
Survey Findings

Why do you indulge?

48% snack to reward themselves, de-stress, or for pleasure.

41% say indulgence feels extra special when it's a reward.

43% crave something sweet when stressed.



How Do You Define Indulgence?



I'd say salty snacks are more popular in the evening, and sweet ones in the morning. *Work hours in general.*

People lean on snacks to cope, especially to bring order to their days and ease stress.



The busiest times are the morning crowd and when everyone's heading home from *work. The peak hours.*



“If I’ve had a long week,
I just want to bed rot,
watch something stupid,
and eat a bad snack —
it’s like a reward.”

- Focus group member on the role indulgence plays in their daily life.



Insight 2

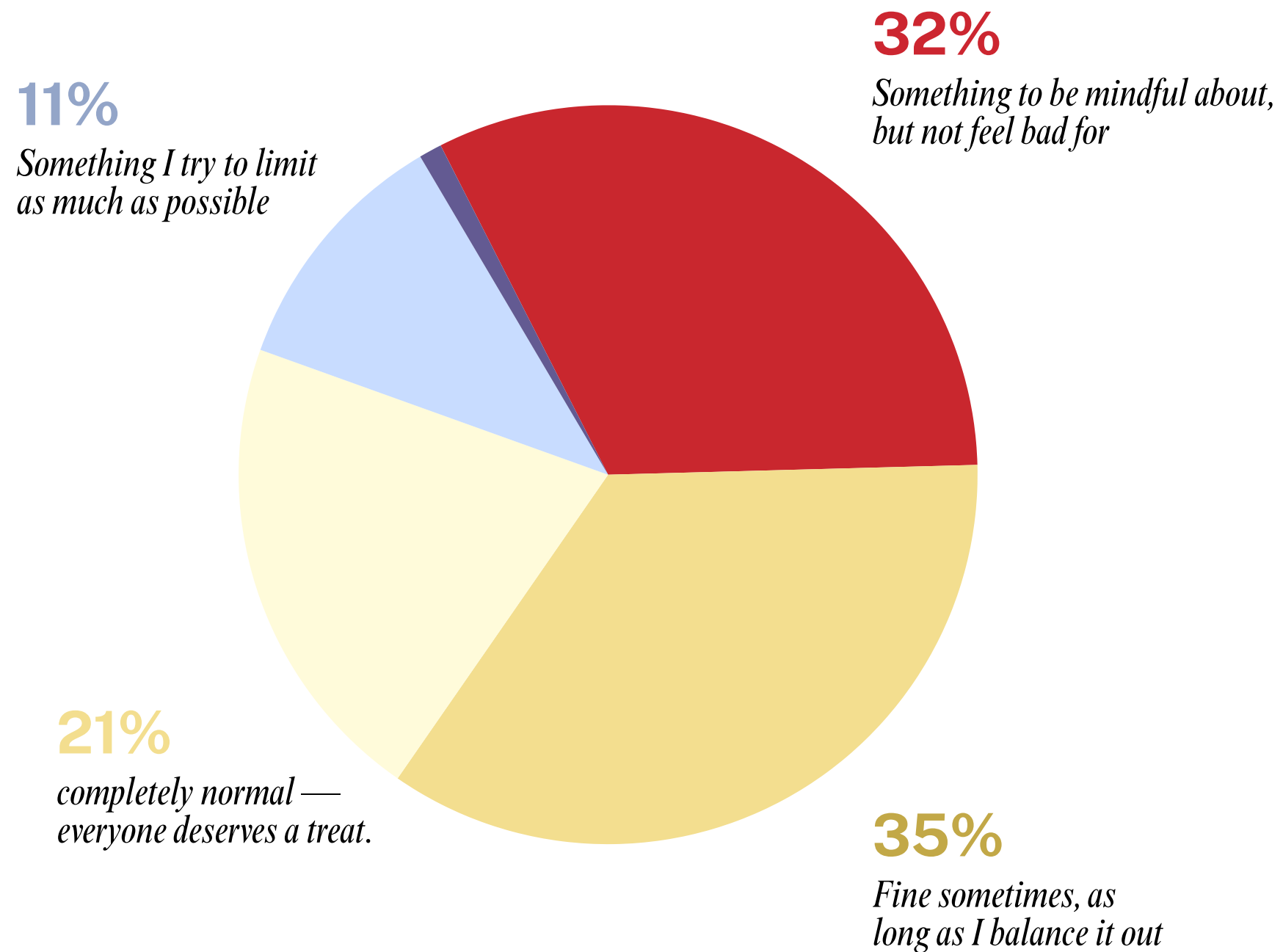
*People desire
full-fat indulgence.*

Flavor Matters

*Functional foods won't replace comfort meals. **Flavor matters more** than health when they're indulging.*

Survey Findings

How they feel about indulgence



82%

say flavor is what makes
a snack feel ‘worth it.’

38%

agree indulgence is about
enjoyment, not health



“If it’s something you
love? Oh, *100%.*”

Focus group member responding to the question, “When you’re snacking, is it worth the stomach ache?”



Insight 3

*Nostalgia is the
shortcut to indulgence.*

Gen Z actively seeks low-pressure, predictable experiences

*In uncertain times, nostalgia marketing thrives. When stressed, consumers don't just want sweetness; **they want familiarity.***



*“What makes me reach for a new flavor? Honestly, if it’s **tied to a brand I already trust**, or if **a friend** lets me try it first.”*

*“All of the snacks I like are the **same ones I liked as a kid**.”*

Interviews and focus groups revealed: when younger consumers do choose Little Debbie, it’s often because it makes them feel nostalgic, like a kid again.

Overarching Insights

Modern indulgence is something people feel they should *not need to justify to anyone but themselves.*

*Guilty
Pleasure*



*Necessary
Comfort*

The Strategy

*Little Debbie makes indulgence
easy, no justification required.*

Little Debbie's *Unique Advantage*

Nostalgia

Tied to childhood routines, lunchboxes, after-school treats, family traditions.

Accessibility & Affordability

Sold in all 50 states, countless retail stores, and over 75 product varieties.

Taste

Consumers will never sacrifice flavor for health. "Little Debbie's is the ultimate sweet treat."

Conclusion

*Little Debbie is uniquely positioned to own
indulgence as a symbol of resilience and
transform from a guilty pleasure into a
necessary comfort.*

Conclusion

*In a volatile world, Little
Debbie isn't guilty.
She's comfort, unwrapped.*



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