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# Nearly 4 in 10 Singaporeans report gaining weight since the pandemic, more so among young adults.

Key findings from the latest Ipsos report

**Singapore, 4 February 2022** - Following the [first survey conducted in October 2020](#), Ipsos conducted a new survey among Singaporeans to understand the impact of living in the pandemic on the maintenance of their health. The survey was conducted online from 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 among a nationally representative sample of 500 adult Singaporeans aged 18 years and above.

The latest Ipsos report reveals that **39% of Singaporeans say they have gained weight** since the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase of 9% who say so from the 2020 survey (30%). The average weight gain being 5.7kg, up from 4.8kg reported in the previous survey. The most significant weight gain was reported among 18 – 24-year-olds with 59% of them saying they have gained weight.

The COVID-19 pandemic had naturally brought about changes in lifestyle and related behaviours. **22% of Singaporeans say they have done less exercise** since the pandemic. This is reported more so among the younger adults (18 – 24 years old), 34% of whom say they are exercising less.

At the same time, **nearly a quarter of Singaporeans (24%) say they have lost weight**, with the average weight loss being 4.9 kg. 41% of Singaporeans say they have taken on more exercise, more so among those above the age of 45 years with about half of them saying they are exercising more.

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**43% of Singaporeans believe that there is a link between obesity and more severe symptoms of COVID-19 among those infected.** This is a 10% increase from when Singaporeans were asked in 2020. To reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms if infected with the disease, 60% of Singaporeans say taking regular exercise is most likely to help. This is followed by 28% of Singaporeans who say taking Vitamin D supplements, 19% say giving up smoking and 13% say losing weight.

More than half of Singaporeans (54%) say they are trying to lose weight. 39% of whom say the weight that was gained during the pandemic, and 62% who say they are trying to lose weight in general and is not related to the pandemic. For these Singaporeans, 61% intend to do so by exercising more and 55% by eating more healthily but not dieting.

**7 in 10 (71%) Singaporeans say they are using a fitness tracker.** The most significant usage is in tracking their daily step count, as reported by 63% of fitness tracker users. Their daily step count averaged at about 7,300 in the past 3 months. Users also use their trackers to monitor their heart rates (42%) and track exercise activity (30%).

Of various possible initiatives that companies and governments could do to help people to lose weight, **nearly half (46%) of Singaporeans who are trying to lose weight, said cheaper healthy food would be the most helpful.** This response was significantly ahead of any of the other proposed initiatives. A fifth (21%) would like easier access to healthy foods and a same proportion would like to see more green public spaces available for exercise.

**Melanie Ng, Director of Market Strategy and Understanding at Ipsos in Singapore** said, "As the pandemic drew on, the social restrictions and a slow economy had perpetuated the stress that many Singaporeans feel. In another recent Ipsos study, mental health is seen by Singaporeans as the second biggest health problem (after COVID19) faced by

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Singaporeans today. They feel this is a bigger problem than even cancer or heart disease which are the current biggest causes of death in Singapore! Perhaps between keeping safe from COVID, maintaining an income and managing the children's home-based learning, weight management is not of top priority.

The pandemic had also quickly brought on the onset of new behaviours especially purchasing food and groceries online and a general reduction in physical activity. With a prolonged pandemic, these behaviours are becoming the new norm for many. It will take specific effort to get into new healthier habits. But for such efforts to be sustainable, an eco-system is needed. This could be food companies innovating to provide cheaper healthy foods, and employers allowing continued flexible work arrangements so that employees can incorporate exercise into their daily routines.”

**Anvaya Sharma, Director of Qualitative Research at Ipsos in Singapore** adds, “More than half of younger adults said that they have gained weight and this is higher than that claimed by other life-stages. This perception can be attributed to the lack of triggers for watching their weight such as lesser social interactions; or their belief that outdoor exercises and participation in active sports keep their weight low but these are now constrained due to COVID; or a shift in the role of food which now tends to be instant gratification as seen with emotional eating, binge watching and binge eating.

For brands, this implies heightened vulnerability of our younger people when it comes to their appearance, greater consciousness of their health and an amplified need for healthier yet sensorially gratifying food items. This could have an implication for fashion brands, insurance brands and of course the fitness and wellness apps.

Organizations can look to keeping their younger workforce engaged by facilitating health/exercise tribes and sponsoring initiatives.”

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### Key Data Points

#### 1. Weight Gain/Loss since the COVID-19 pandemic

- 39% of Singaporeans say they have gained weight
- 62% of whom gained between 1 – 5kg; 21% between 6 – 10kg; Average weight gain: 5.67kg
- Most significant among 18 – 24-year-olds with 59% saying they have gained weight
- 24% of Singaporeans say they have lost weight
- 62% of whom gained between 1 – 5kg; 17% between 6 – 10kg; Average weight loss: 4.92kg

#### 2. Exercised more/less since the COVID-19 pandemic

- 22% of Singaporeans say they have done less exercise since the pandemic
- More so among 18 – 24-year-olds with 34% saying they are exercising less
- 41% of Singaporeans say they have taken on more exercise
- More so among those above the age of 45 years with about half of them saying they are exercising more

#### 3. Factors thought to reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms if infected with the disease

- 60% of Singaporeans say taking regular exercise
- 28% of Singaporeans say taking Vitamin D supplements
- 19% of Singaporeans say giving up smoking

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- 13% of Singaporeans say losing weight
- 43% of Singaporeans think that there is a link between obesity and more severe symptoms of COVID19 among those infected

#### 4. 54% of Singaporeans say they are trying to lose weight

- 39% of whom say the weight that was gained during the pandemic, and 62% who say they are trying to lose weight in general and is not related to the pandemic
- 61% intend to do so by exercising more
- 55% by eating more healthily but not dieting
- 50% by dieting/reducing food intake
- 47% by drinking fewer sugary drinks
- 61% by reducing/eliminating sugar
- 48% by reducing/eliminating carbohydrates
- 46% by reducing calories
- 31% by reducing/eliminating processed foods
- 46% say companies/government can help with their weight loss goal with cheaper healthy foods
- 21% say companies/government can help by providing easier access to healthy foods
- 21% say companies/government can help by providing more green public spaces for exercising

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### 5. 71% use a fitness tracker (about half of them use one regularly)

- 63% use the tracker to track daily step count (Mean step count: 7,343.71)
- 42% to monitor heart rate
- 30% to track exercise activity
- 27% to track sleep
- 24% to track calories burnt

### About the study

- The survey was conducted online between 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022, among a nationally representative sample of n=500 Singaporean Citizens and Permanent Residents aged 18 and above.
- Quotas on age, gender and ethnicity were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects the overall population distribution, based on Singapore Department of Statistics population estimates.
- The precision of online surveys is measured using a credible interval. In this case, the results reported are accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points of the views and perspectives of all Singaporeans aged 18 and above (at 95% confidence interval). Credible intervals are wider among subsets of the population.

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Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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