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People living with obesity in Canada understand the health risks, but few are seeking medical help

New findings from 14-country study released by Ipsos on World Obesity Day 2026

Toronto, March 4, 2026 – [Ipsos](https://www.ipsos.com), one of the world's leading market research companies, reveals a striking disconnect in Canada regarding the management of obesity. Despite people living with obesity demonstrating high awareness of the associated health risks, few have consulted with a doctor about their weight.

The syndicated Global Perceptions of Obesity Study*, which compared perceptions of people living with obesity (3,094) and people not living with obesity (11,406) in 14 countries, highlights for Canada:

A gap between knowing and doing

- Those living with obesity in Canada are highly aware of the condition's links to type 2 diabetes (72%), and to heart disease (76%) – far exceeding the 14-country average (53% and 52%, respectively). Yet only one in five (21%) had consulted a doctor about their weight in the past year.

A complex view on responsibility and medical science

- The narrative that obesity can be solved simply by "eating less and moving more" is less prevalent in Canada than in many other countries surveyed. Only 42% of those living with obesity agreed that "diet and exercise alone can solve obesity for most people," versus a global average of 63%.
- However, the study reveals an internal conflict, also seen at the global level, that may act as a barrier to seeking medical care. While 63% of those living with obesity in Canada acknowledge that it is "a medical condition requiring ongoing management," a similar number (64%) simultaneously believe the condition is "preventable through personal choices".

Healthcare interactions reinforce old beliefs

- However, people living with obesity in Canada who had consulted a doctor about their weight reported receiving recommendations typically focused on lifestyle changes: exercising more (63%), eating healthier (60%), and eating smaller portions (33%). This reinforces the idea that obesity is a matter of personal discipline rather than a disease requiring long-term management, also a prominent theme at the 14-country average level.



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A different conversation around stigma in Canada

- While the burden of obesity is present in Canada, the experience of stigma is lower compared to the global picture. 20% of those living with obesity report frequently feeling judged based on how they look due to their weight, versus a global average of 35%. They are also less likely to feel perceived as lacking self-control or willpower (19% vs. 32% globally).

The hidden toll on health and wellbeing

- However, the physical burden of obesity is profound. The gap in satisfaction with physical health between people living with obesity (31%) and people not living with obesity (56%) is a stark 25 percentage points – 6 points wider than the global average gap.
- The negative impact is deeply felt in personal areas too. Nearly three-quarters (73%) say their weight has negatively impacted their confidence and self-esteem, and 69% say it has affected their emotional and mental wellbeing.

Roberto Cortese, Head of Ipsos' Obesity & Cardiometabolic Disease Monitors, commented:

“The findings in Canada present a paradox. Those living with obesity are among the most knowledgeable about the health risks, yet they are among the least likely to seek medical help. The conversation here needs to shift from building awareness to breaking down the barriers that prevent action. World Obesity Day is an opportunity to address the internalised belief that obesity is a condition to be managed alone, not a complex chronic disease that requires empathy and support like any other.”

The Ipsos Global Perceptions of Obesity Study report, which includes supporting charts for these findings, can be viewed [here](#).

Other study data, available at an additional cost, can be viewed [here](#).

*About the research

The Ipsos Global Perceptions of Obesity Study surveyed 14,500 adults across 14 countries: Austria (n=1,000), Brazil (n=1,000), Canada (n=1,000), India (n=2,000), Italy (n=1,000), Mexico (n=1,000), Poland (n=1,000), Romania (n=1,000), Saudi Arabia (n=1,000), South Korea (n=1,000), Spain (n=1,000), Turkey (n=1,000), UAE (n=500) and UK (n=1,000). All findings are based on a 14-country average.

A total of 1,000 respondents were surveyed in the UK. The sample in the UK comprised 204 people living with obesity and 796 people not living with obesity.



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Fieldwork was conducted online by Ipsos from December 2025 to January 2026. The general population sample was structured using quotas for age, gender and region. In most countries, quotas mirror the national population; in some markets, samples may skew slightly toward certain demographics (e.g., younger, urban populations). The sample enables analysis by weight status, with obesity prevalence in each market considered to ensure sufficient base sizes for comparison between people living with obesity and people not living with obesity. Ipsos used height and weight provided by each respondent to analyse the data by those living with obesity and those not living with obesity. The following definitions were used: Living with obesity = BMI 30+ [25+ India, South Korea]; Not living with obesity = BMI <30 [<25 India, South Korea]. Data were not weighted. Please note that obesity prevalence rates within this sample are derived from self-reported data and are intended for comparative analysis of perceptions, not as a substitute for official national epidemiological statistics.

Life dimensions referred to are: Physical Health; Emotional & Mental Well-Being; Confidence & Self-Esteem; Social Relationships; Romantic Life; Physical Activity/Fitness; Healthcare Access & Support; Personal Growth; Work/Daily Role; Nutrition & Eating Habits; Everyday Environment; Financial security. All data are copyright Ipsos 2026.

****Definition of Obesity – World Health Organisation**

Obesity is classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a chronic, relapsing disease arising from complex interactions between genetics, neurobiology, eating behaviours, access to healthy diet, market forces, and the broader environment.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>

About World Obesity Day

World Obesity Day is observed annually on 4 March, uniting people worldwide to raise awareness of obesity as a complex, chronic disease and to advocate for improved prevention, treatment and support.

www.worldobesityday.org.

Founding Client Disclosure

Eli Lilly is the founding subscriber to the Ipsos Global Perceptions of Obesity Study, an Ipsos syndicated study, and provided funding for the project. As founding subscriber, Eli Lilly had input into the study's overall direction. Ipsos designed and executed the research and analysis independently and retained full editorial control over all final communications. All data is wholly owned by Ipsos and available to multiple clients.

Ipsos' Obesity Research

Ipsos is committed to advancing understanding of obesity as a global health priority and supports organisations working to improve outcomes for people living with obesity. Global obesity research capabilities include syndicated monitors tracking perceptions and real-world treatment, custom research, market access and advisory services, and custom real-world evidence generation.



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About Ipsos

Ipsos is one of the largest market research and polling companies globally, operating in 90 markets and employing nearly 20,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. Our 75 business solutions are based on primary data from our surveys, social media monitoring, and qualitative or observational techniques.

“Game Changers” – our tagline – summarizes our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence in our rapidly changing world.

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

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