

# CANADIANS AWARE OF “GOOD” AND “BAD CARBOHYDRATES” BUT DO NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND THEM



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## CANADIANS AWARE OF “GOOD” AND “BAD CARBOHYDRATES” BUT DO NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND THEM

**Toronto, ONTARIO** – According to a new study conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of Effem Foods, 72 percent of Canadians are aware of the terms “good carbs” & “bad carbs”, used to describe the nutritional value of different carbohydrates. However, a significant proportion say they do not fully understand the difference between the types of carbohydrates. With 6-in-10 respondents agreeing that the difference between these types of carbohydrates are not understood well, or even at all, there is clearly a need for consumer education about these often used terms. Only 11 percent of Canadians interviewed believe they understand the distinction about “good carbs” and “bad carbs” very well.

Fewer (almost 4-in-10) are aware of another term associated with carbohydrate differentiation, the ‘Glycemic Index (“G.I.”).

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid on-line poll conducted on behalf of Effem Foods between January 21<sup>st</sup> and January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,500 Canadian adult main grocery shoppers (person primarily responsible for grocery shopping or one of the persons primarily responsible for grocery shopping), from the Ipsos-Reid panel. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 2.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian main grocery shoppers population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian grocery shoppers' population.*

Fully 72 percent of Canadians overall claim to have heard the terms “good carbs” and “bad carbs”.

- Those in all regions of English Canada are more likely to have heard these terms than their neighbours in Québec. Albertans are the most aware of this terminology, while Quebecois are the least aware of it (83% Albertans and 52% Quebecois, respectively).
- Women are more likely than men to know about this differentiation, with 79 percent of women aware of the terms, versus 64 percent of men.
- While older people are more concerned with nutrition overall, it is younger Canadians who are more likely to be aware of the “good carb” and “bad carb” differentiation. Significantly more 18 to 24 years old (72%) are aware of this than groups over 25 years old. Similarly, more of those 25 to 49 years old (61%) are aware than are those over 50 years old (53%).

While almost three-quarters (72%) have heard the terms “good” and “bad carbs”, just over one-half of Canadian grocery shoppers (59%) believe that some carbohydrates are different from others; in fact, close to one-third (31%) don’t know whether or not this is true.

The lack of awareness around the differences between carbohydrates and the benefits they offer the body is compounded by a lack of information regarding any health risks associated with cutting carbohydrates out of the diet. The majority of Canadians remain unaware that there may be risks associated with significant carbohydrate limiting and high protein consumption. Just over one-half (53%) say they are aware that this type of diet poses potential health risks; a further 32% did not know enough to answer the question.

- Albertans seemed to be the most aware of such health risks (65%), while Ontarians were somewhat aware (57%), in comparison with Quebecois (34 %).

60 per cent of Canadians accurately cited lack of sufficient energy for brain function and energy as an effect of low carb-high protein regimes.

- 69 per cent of Albertans attributed insufficient energy for brain function and energy as the main health risk associated with this type of diets; 57% of British Columbians, 62% Manitobans and residents of Saskatoon, 60% Quebecois, 59% of Ontarians, and 53% residents in the Atlantic Region mentioned this risk.

At a top-of-mind level in the context of concerns about food, people tend to be most concerned with the price/value for the money, with 4-in-10 people (39%) spontaneously mentioning this concern. Other things that are considered are the quality (27%) of the food and the overall nutritional value of the food (26%). On a more specific basis, they also are concerned with the level of fat in their food (21%).

- Value for money and food quality are mentioned as important by significantly more men than women (44% vs. 35% and 30% vs. 24%), while women are more likely to mention their concern with finding healthy food, and food with no/low fat content (30% vs. 21% and 23% vs. 18%).
- People living in Québec (40%) are more likely to mention a concern about the quality of their food, while more people in the Atlantic area (40%) are concerned about the nutritional value of the food they buy.
- Consistent with other research in this area, those 50 years and older are more likely to be concerned about nutritional value than are younger adults aged 18-24 (29% vs. 19%).

Virtually everybody agrees that they enjoy eating carbohydrates (71%). About one-half also agree that carbohydrates are healthy (49%) and satisfy hunger (57%).



- Canadian shoppers living in Québec are significantly less likely than those in other provinces to agree both that they enjoy eating carbohydrates (48% Quebecois vs. 85% Albertans, 81% British Columbians, 77% Manitobans and people in Saskatchewan, 76% residents in the Atlantic Region, and 75% Ontarians), and they satisfy hunger (28% Quebecois vs. 72% Albertans, 65% Ontarians, 64% Manitobans and people in Saskatchewan, 64% residents in the Atlantic Region, and 63% British Columbians).
- More women than man agree that they enjoy eating carbohydrates (75% and 66%, respectively).

When provided with a list of carbohydrate choices, only whole grain bread, lentils and brown rice are selected as “good carbs” by the majority of shoppers. Baked potato comes close, with 51% rating this carbohydrate as a “good carb”. While consumers seem to understand the nutritional value of grains, the majority are unaware of the nutritional value of other grains including converted rice (only 14% consider it a “good carb”).

After understanding the difference between carbs, many Canadians admit that is possible to change their diet, 46% of them trying to eat more of the “good carbs” and 31% of them would reduce or even eliminate the intake of “bad carbs”.

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