

**Managing a Healthy Weight:
Canadian Women Speak Out**
*Largest Study of Women's Attitudes on Managing their Weight
Ever Released in Canada*

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Ipsos Reid

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Managing a Healthy Weight: Canadian Women Speak Out

Largest Study Of Women's Attitudes On Managing Their Weight Ever Released In Canada

Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos Reid survey conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the Dairy Farmers of Canada has helped to increase knowledge and awareness of how Canadian women are managing their weight and dealing with societal pressures relating to weight loss. The survey of nearly 3000 Canadian women is the largest study ever released in Canada that deals with this issue.

The data show that eight in ten (80%) women in Canada want to lose weight. But what is particularly striking is that a majority (56%) of women who are at a healthy weight according to their calculated body mass index want to lose weight, and three in ten (30%) women who are underweight still want to lose weight. Stated plainly, a majority of women (56%) think they're fat.

However, there exists a gap in perception and reality, meaning that many women think they're overweight when in fact this is not the case. While 62% of respondents are classified as at least slightly overweight according to their reported height and weight (body mass index), three quarters (76%) of those studied consider themselves to be at least slightly overweight. Furthermore, 45% of women who are at a healthy weight according to their BMI classify themselves as 'slightly overweight', and fewer than one half (49%) of women who are at a healthy weight consider their weight to be 'ideal'.

Delving further into their thoughts on managing their weight, two thirds (67%) report that they think about their weight regularly, while a majority (56%) also say that worrying about

their weight causes them to stress, and three in ten (28%) women agree that managing their weight ‘dominates’ their life.

It appears that women are also feeling pressure from society in general to lose weight, with six in ten (58%) indicating that this is the case. But it appears that general media consumption is not helping these women manage their weight, with a majority (52%) agreeing that ‘they feel bombarded by seemingly contradictory news reports on healthy living and eating habits’.

Ultimately, though, the motivation for losing weight appears to be internally-driven. Four in ten (42%) women cited ‘improving their health’ as the primary reason for wanting to lose weight, while ‘improved self-esteem’ was mentioned almost as often as the primary reason for wanting to lose weight. However, when women were given the opportunity to provide supplementary reasons, the aggregate of those responses placed ‘improved self-esteem’ (86%) significantly ahead of ‘improved health’ (76%).

The data also speak volumes about how women perceive their weight to be affecting their personal relationships. Nearly three in ten (27%) Canadian women indicate that their partners are ‘not supportive’ in helping them deal with their weight, and one quarter (22%) of women feel that weight and weight loss ‘alters the dynamics’ of their family member’s relationships with each other.

But when it comes down to it, the relationship that is most negatively affected is the relationship that women have with themselves. A majority (54%) of women agree that their weight negatively affects their self-image, and that proportion goes up among those women who self-identify as ‘very overweight’ (78%). In fact, those who think they are ‘very overweight’ are struggling the most with these issues, with a majority (52%) of these women



believing that their weight negatively affects how others view their abilities. Furthermore, a similar proportion (51%) agrees that their weight negatively affects how people see them as a person.

Turning to the health aspect of being overweight, six in ten (58%) are of the opinion that their current weight is negatively affecting their health, the proportion of which rises to 91% among those who think they are 'very overweight'. And while 58% of women associate the term 'pleasure' when they think about eating or food, others think of less positive terms including 'guilt' (13%), 'loss of control' (13%), and 'stress' (13%).

In order to deal with their weight, women report a wide-variety of tactics including 'eating smaller portions' (61%), 'counting calories and fat' (37%), 'eating the same healthy foods all the time' (35%) and even 'skipping meals' (25%).

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Dairy Farmers of Canada from December 10 to December 13, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 2943 adult Canadians was interviewed via the Ipsos I-Say Online Panel. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Canada been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

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