

Half (50%) of Canadians Have Been Exposed to Eating Disorders, Whether It's Someone They Know or Themselves
One in Three (35%) Canadians Admit They Wouldn't be able to Recognize the Signs of an Eating Disorder in a Friend or Family Member

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Half (50%) of Canadians Have Been Exposed to Eating Disorders, Whether It's Someone They Know or Themselves

*One in Three (35%) Canadians Admit They Wouldn't be able to Recognize the
Signs of an Eating Disorder in a Friend or Family Member*

Toronto, ON – According to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the National Eating Disorder Information Centre, one half (50%) of Canadians ‘agree’ (26% strongly/24% somewhat) that they know someone who, either currently or in the past, has had an eating disorder – and this person could include themselves. The other half (50%) of Canadians ‘disagree’ (30% strongly/20% somewhat) that they know someone who has struggled in this way.

Interestingly girls (56%) are more likely than boys (43%) to say this is the case, as are those aged 18 to 34 (60%) compared to those aged 35 to 54 (51%) or 55+ (40%).

While most Canadians think eating disorders are preventable (89%) and treatable (97%), one in three Canadians ‘disagree’ (35%) ‘4% strongly/32% somewhat) that they would be ‘able to recognize the signs of an eating disorder in a friend or family member’.

The data reveals that although many believe these disorders are an option, most consider them to be serious and threatening. Four in ten (40%) Canadians believe eating disorders are a choice, two in ten (21%) think they are genetic, while large majorities considers them to be a mental illness (76%) and potentially life-threatening (95%).



Self-esteem appears to play an important role in the eyes of many, particularly for children. Thinking about what children ages 6 to 18 struggle the most with, four in ten (41%) believe they struggle the most with body image and self-esteem, followed by bullying (33%). Others believe kids struggle the most with obesity (11%), academic stress (10%) or some other thing (3%). Only 2% indicate that children ages 6-18 struggle most with eating disorders.

Canadians think a significant source of blame lies with media pressures to have the “perfect body” driving individuals to develop eating disorders. Most (91%) ‘agree’ (43% strongly/48% somewhat) with this position, while just one in ten (9%) ‘disagree’ (2% strongly/7% somewhat) that media pressures are to blame.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between November 18 and 21, 2014 on behalf of National Eating Disorder Information Centre, Toronto General Hospital, University Health Network. For this survey, a sample of 1,005 Canadians from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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