

# Diet and Healthy Eating: A Canadian Perspective

## About the Survey

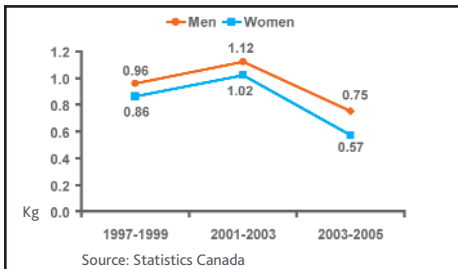
The Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey was conducted in November 2008 among 28,000 internet users in 51 markets. The largest half-yearly survey of its kind, it provides insight into current confidence levels, spending habits/intentions and the major concerns of consumers across the globe.

## Diet and Healthy Eating

The Canadian government has dedicated considerable resources to increasing awareness of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Obesity has been an increasing health concern in Canada in the past 30 years. Between 1979 and 2004, the percentage of Canadians considered obese rose from 14% to 23%. This represents a concerning increase in the risk of weight related health issues affecting a large portion of the population.

There is good news in recent years, however, the average weight gain of Canadian adults is slowing, as the chart below demonstrates:

### Average weight gain men vs woman Canada



As well, according to Statistics Canada, Canadians are, on average, eating fairly balanced diets, although there is room for improvement in increased fruits and vegetable consumption and in lowering the percentage of calorie intake obtained from fats. The recent Nielsen Global



Online Consumer Survey compiled information on attitudes towards personal body weight, diet, exercise and healthy eating among consumers in 52 countries. The results highlight that there is a global appetite for improving health through diet and exercise and Canadians are certainly keeping pace with this trend.

**At the moment, would you consider yourself: (overweight, underweight, neither)**

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Underweight (5)	3%	4%	10%
About the right weight (4)	40%	36%	40%
A little overweight (3)	38%	36%	32%
Somewhat overweight (2)	13%	17%	14%
Very overweight (1)	5%	7%	4%

Canadians are more likely than Americans to consider themselves about the right weight. However, the majority of Canadians surveyed (56%) considered themselves at least a little overweight. This percentage was higher than the global consumer response of 50%, but lower than the American response of 60% reporting that they are at least a little overweight.

### Are you currently trying to lose weight?

	Yes	No
Canada	44%	56%
United States	49%	51%
Global	50%	50%

In the U.S. and globally, about half of consumers surveyed were trying to lose weight. In Canada the percentage is slightly lower with 44% of respondents indicating that they were currently trying to lose weight.

### Which of the following actions are you taking to lose weight?

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Doing physical exercise	71%	74%	69%
Changing my diet	85%	83%	78%
Taking diet pills/bars/shakes	6%	5%	8%
Taking medicine prescribed by my doctor	3%	2%	3%
Other	3%	1%	5%

Of those Canadians trying to lose weight the vast majority are doing so through exercise and diet – with diet being the more popular of these two methods. North Americans are slightly less likely than their global counterparts to take diet pills, bars or shakes.

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## In what ways are you changing your diet to lose weight?

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Cutting down on chocolates, sugar, etc.	59%	64%	64%
Cutting down on fats	67%	68%	69%
Eating the same, but having smaller portions	47%	52%	46%
Eating less processed foods	33%	39%	29%
Eating more natural, fresh foods	41%	52%	53%
Following the Atkins Diet (low carbohydrate, high fat)	2%	6%	7%
Following another diet plan	6%	6%	9%
Using Weight Watchers or other slimming programmes	4%	6%	5%
Other	4%	5%	5%

Of those consumers changing their diet to lose weight, the most common method among Canadians, Americans and global respondents was cutting down on fats. Cutting down on sweets was less common in Canada than in the U.S. or globally, as was eating more natural, fresh foods.

## What do you think is the most credible source of information on healthy eating?

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Doctors/medical professionals	68%	69%	69%
TV programs & documentaries	40%	24%	34%
Magazines	13%	12%	14%
Books	23%	23%	30%
Newspapers	8%	8%	13%
Internet	30%	38%	36%
Friends	7%	8%	10%
Information and flyers/brochures in supermarkets	8%	8%	5%
Family	10%	13%	17%
Nutritional information on packaging of products marketed by food and beverage manufacturers	34%	38%	25%

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While consumers on both sides of the Canada – U.S. border, and globally, agree that medical professionals are the most credible sources of information on healthy eating. Canadians are much more likely to regard TV programs and documentaries as credible sources than U.S. consumers. This has important implications for advertising of healthy food products to Canadian consumers.

## How often do you exercise?

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Never	10%	14%	15%
Less often than once a week	18%	19%	25%
Once or twice a week	33%	25%	30%
3 to 6 times a week	25%	32%	20%
Daily	15%	9%	10%

Canadians are far more likely to exercise at least once a week (73% do) than either Americans (66%) or global consumers (60%).

## On days that you exercise, how long on average do you exercise for?

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Less than 30 minutes	28%	32%	32%
30 minutes to less than 1 hour	54%	55%	50%
More than 1 hour	19%	13%	18%

Canadians were also more likely than Americans or global consumers to exercise for 30 minutes or more.

## What kind of exercise do you do most often?

	Canada	U.S.	Global
Team sports (e.g., soccer, volleyball, netball)	6%	5%	8%
Racquet sports (e.g., tennis, badminton)	2%	1%	6%
Gym activities	10%	11%	10%
Walking	53%	45%	38%
Running/Jogging	4%	11%	13%
Swimming	3%	2%	4%
Golf	3%	1%	1%
Aerobics	3%	6%	4%
Martial Arts	1%	1%	1%
Yoga/Pilates	3%	3%	4%
Other	12%	13%	11%

Perhaps due to our inclement winter weather, running/jogging is substantially less popular here than in the U.S. or globally. Indoor weightlifting, treadmill and other activities are perhaps more accessible year round to the majority of Canadians.

## Conclusion

Diet and exercise is clearly a major concern for many Canadians although we are not quite as worried about our weight as our U.S. counterparts. Canadians are more likely to exercise frequently and less likely to change their diet by increasing the amount of natural and fresh foods. Also of importance to advertisers, Canadians are much more likely to regard TV programs and documentaries as credible sources of dietary advice.