

Nutrition Labelling: A Canadian Perspective

About the Survey

The Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey was conducted in May 2008 among 28,253 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.

Health Canada estimates that the cost of a poor diet among Canadians to be \$6.3 billion annually, which includes direct health care costs of \$1.8 billion. In recent years, Canadians have been increasingly interested in the nutrition, safety and health benefits of the foods they are eating. In order to help Canadians make informed choices towards eating a healthy diet, nutrition labelling became mandatory on all pre-packaged food products sold in Canada in December 2007. The nutritional information is displayed in a consistent format on packages as an easy to read "Nutritional Facts" table.

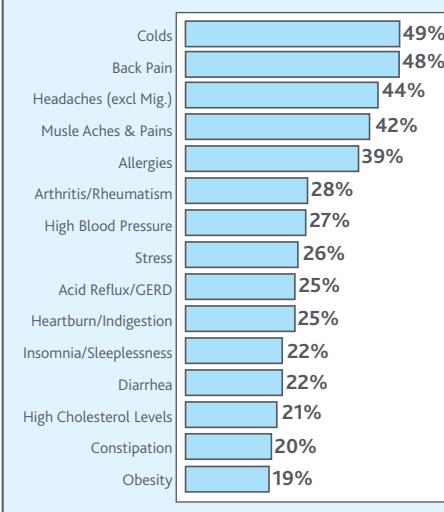
A recent Nielsen survey reported that the Nutritional Facts table was one of the top sources of information for Canadians looking to make healthy diet choices.

Many Canadians experience health ailments which have a link to diet. The new mandatory labelling is providing these individuals with an additional tool in the management of their condition.

As well, the new regulations also allow the following health claims to be made on food labels and in advertising (from the Health Canada website: www.hc-sc.gc.ca):



Which health conditions/ailments have Canadians experienced within the past 12 months?



- a healthy diet with adequate calcium and vitamin D, and regular physical activity, helps to achieve strong bones and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis;
- a healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats may reduce the risk of heart disease;
- a healthy diet rich in vegetables and fruit may help reduce the risk of some types of cancer; and,
- a healthy diet containing foods low in sodium and high in potassium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure, a risk factor for stroke and heart disease.

As part of the Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey, participants from 42 countries including Canada were asked about their understanding and use of nutritional labels on food products.

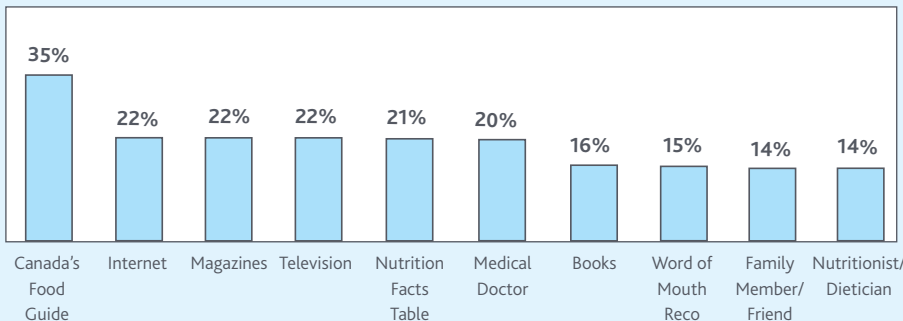
Understanding of Nutritional Information:

North American consumers are much more confident in their understanding of nutritional labelling on food packages than consumers in other parts of the world.

How well do consumers understand the nutritional information panels in food packaging?

	Mostly
Canada	68%
United States	67%
Global	45%

For Canadians, what are the top sources of information on the topic of healthy eating?

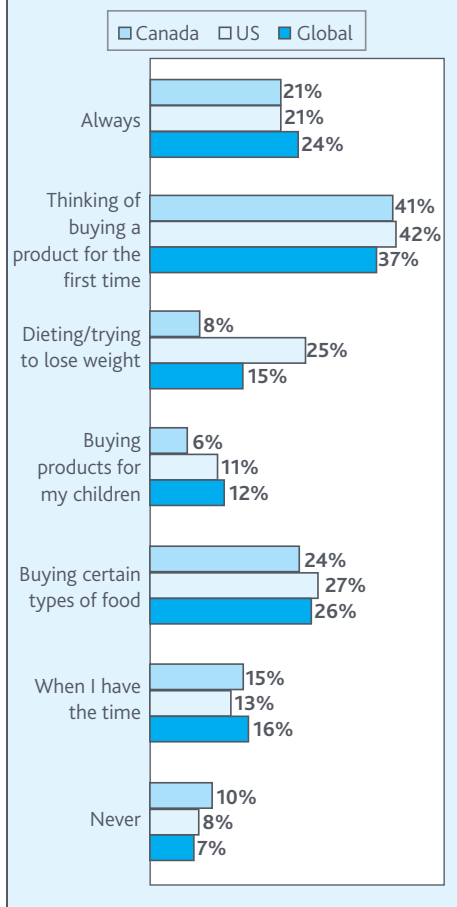


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Use of Nutritional Information:

Canadians and Americans have similar patterns of nutritional label use. Just over one fifth of Canadian and US consumers always check the labels, slightly lower than the global average of 24%. The most likely reason to read a label, both in North America and globally, is the consumer making a decision to purchase for the first time. Relatively few Canadians read the labels because they are dieting. In contrast, 25% of American consumers surveyed read the labels for this reason.

When buying packaged food, when do shoppers check the nutritional information on the package?



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Seven out of ten Canadian consumers report that they are noticing the nutritional labels more now than they did two years ago. This is a higher percentage than either global or US consumers. A key reason for heightened Canadian awareness is the new information table introduced to all packaged food products in December 2007. As well, as our population ages and becomes more aware of the link between diet and health, our consumers are more interested in looking for nutrient information on food labels.

Do consumers take more notice of nutritional information packaging than they did two years ago?

	Yes
Canada	71%
United States	65%
Global	66%

Seven out of ten Canadian consumers also claim to understand the difference between saturated and unsaturated fat. This is a higher reported level than either their US or global counterparts.

Do consumers understand the difference between saturated and unsaturated fat?

	Yes
Canada	71%
United States	67%
Global	61%

Canadians are most likely to always check a nutritional label for Trans Fat content. In general, Canadians are more interested in Trans Fats, Sugar or Glycemic Index and Fibre content than are US consumers.

Conclusion

Overall, Canadians are becoming more aware of nutritional labelling of pre-packaged foods and are fairly confident in their level of understanding of this information. Hopefully the new mandatory labelling system in Canada will heighten this interest and knowledge even further and lead to increasing health benefits for all Canadian consumers.

What percentage of consumers always check the nutrition label for the content or amount of the following:

