
MANY CANADIANS ARE GAINING WEIGHT, EATING MORE AND EXERCISING LESS SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF THE PANDEMIC

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INTRODUCTION

The existence of a global pandemic creates psychological stress and feelings of anxiety might be exacerbated by worsening socioeconomic conditions. Distancing risks undercutting personal comfort and diminished interaction augment feelings of isolation.

As such, the COVID-19 pandemic offers a 'perfect storm' for declining mental health and result in negative outcomes on eating. Stress has been found to increase energy intake, and persons with limited social interactions are at higher risk for obesity. Confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic may challenge restraint and increasing impulsive eating.

Eating can be seen as a means to remedy negative feelings and thus increase under current conditions. The reduction of social dining might lead to poor eating habits and badly influence nutrition. And with gyms and fitness facilities increasingly closed, a severe reduction of group sports and the greater degree of social distancing will make for challenging lifestyle changes particularly as winter approaches. In the groundbreaking survey research that follows we document the extent to which Canadians report having gained weight since COVID-19, whether they re eating more and whether they re exercising less. We look at the extent to which this is case for people with anxiety about COVID-19 and based on their mental health self assessments.

WEIGHT GAINERS OUTNUMBER WEIGHT LOSERS TWO TO ONE SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC; WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO REPORT GAINING WEIGHT

Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have...									
	Total	Man	Woman	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
Gained Weight	32%	27%	38%	38%	31%	37%	35%	32%	25%
Lost Weight	15%	16%	15%	16%	16%	19%	14%	15%	12%
Neither Gained nor Lost Weight	51%	56%	46%	46%	49%	42%	50%	52%	61%
I don't know	2%	2%	2%	0%	4%	2%	1%	2%	2%

PEOPLE EATING MORE SINCE THE PANDEMIC OUTWEIGH THOSE EATING LESS BY TWO TO ONE WITH WOMEN AND THE YOUNGEST COHORT MOST LIKELY TO DO SO

Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have been...									
	Total	Man	Woman	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
Eating more than usual	28%	23%	32%	36%	28%	33%	32%	23%	19%
Eating less than usual	14%	16%	12%	26%	15%	13%	11%	12%	13%
Eating about the same as always	58%	61%	56%	38%	57%	54%	57%	65%	69%

THOSE EXERCISING LESS OUTNUMBER THOSE EXERCISING MORE BY A TWO TO ONE MARGIN

Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have been...									
	Total	Man	Woman	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
Exercising more than usual	16%	15%	16%	29%	16%	14%	18%	13%	10%
Exercising less than usual	33%	33%	32%	45%	34%	38%	29%	28%	31%
Exercising the same as always	39%	41%	38%	23%	36%	34%	44%	46%	44%
I don't do any exercise	12%	11%	13%	4%	15%	13%	9%	13%	15%

THOSE MOST AFRAID OF GETTING COVID-19 WERE BY FAR MOST LIKELY TO SAY THAT THEY'VE GAINED WEIGHT

Are you personally afraid of contracting the COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?	Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have...				Total
	Gained Weight	Lost Weight	Neither Gained nor Lost Weight	I don't know	
Very afraid	46.3%	15.6%	36.1%	2.0%	100.0%
Somewhat afraid	32.1%	15.9%	50.4%	1.7%	100.0%
Not very afraid	29.1%	13.4%	56.6%	1.0%	100.0%
Not afraid at all	21.3%	17.2%	59.8%	1.8%	100.0%
I already have or have been exposed to the virus	40.0%	30.0%	30.0%		100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	25.0%	10.0%	35.0%	30.0%	100.0%
Total	32.3%	15.3%	50.5%	1.9%	100.0%

THOSE MOST AFRAID OF GETTING COVID-19 WERE BY FAR MOST LIKELY TO SAY THAT THEY'VE BEEN EATING MORE

Are you personally afraid of contracting the COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?	Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have been...			Total
	Eating more than usual	Eating less than usual	Eating about the same as always	
Very afraid	45.7%	16.0%	38.3%	100.0%
Somewhat afraid	28.3%	14.2%	57.5%	100.0%
Not very afraid	23.4%	12.6%	64.0%	100.0%
Not afraid at all	12.4%	13.6%	74.0%	100.0%
I already have or have been exposed to the virus	44.4%	11.1%	44.4%	100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	15.0%	10.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Total	27.9%	13.9%	58.2%	100.0%

THOSE MOST AFRAID OF GETTING COVID-19 WERE BY FAR LEAST LIKELY TO EXERCISE

Are you personally afraid of contracting the COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?	Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have been...				Total
	Exercising more than usual	Exercising less than usual	Exercising the same as always	I don't do any exercise	
Very afraid	13.5%	43.9%	27.9%	14.8%	100.0%
Somewhat afraid	17.7%	33.8%	39.6%	8.8%	100.0%
Not very afraid	14.8%	28.4%	43.0%	13.8%	100.0%
Not afraid at all	14.8%	23.1%	45.6%	16.6%	100.0%
I already have or have been exposed to the virus		55.6%	44.4%		100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	10.0%	40.0%	30.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	15.7%	33.0%	39.2%	12.1%	100.0%

THOSE REPORTING BAD MENTAL HEALTH SINCE COVID-19 WERE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THEY'VE GAINED WEIGHT

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, how would you rate your mental health?	Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have...				Total
	Gained Weight	Lost Weight	Neither Gained nor Lost Weight	I don't know	
Excellent	22.3%	14.3%	62.9%	0.6%	100.0%
Very good	30.4%	18.1%	50.7%	0.8%	100.0%
Good	32.9%	11.7%	53.4%	2.1%	100.0%
Bad	39.1%	26.6%	34.2%		100.0%
Very bad	44.4%	18.5%	33.3%	3.7%	100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	39.4%		39.4%	21.2%	100.0%
Total	32.4%	15.3%	50.5%	1.8%	100.0%

THOSE REPORTING BAD MENTAL HEALTH SINCE COVID-19 WERE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THEY'RE EATING MORE THAN USUAL

: Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, how would you rate your mental health?	Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have been...			Total
	Eating more than usual	Eating less than usual	Eating about the same as always	
Excellent	13.1%	12.0%	74.9%	100.0%
Very good	26.9%	12.8%	60.3%	100.0%
Good	30.7%	11.7%	57.7%	100.0%
Bad	27.7%	24.5%	47.8%	100.0%
Very bad	42.6%	29.6%	27.8%	100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	30.3%	6.1%	63.6%	100.0%
Total	27.8%	14.0%	58.1%	100.0%

THOSE REPORTING BAD MENTAL HEALTH SINCE COVID-19 WERE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THEY'VE BEEN EXERCISING LESS THAN USUAL

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, how would you rate your mental health?	Since the start of the pandemic would you say that you have been...				Total
	Exercising more than usual	Exercising less than usual	Exercising the same as always	I don't do any exercise	
Excellent	20.7%	21.3%	50.0%	8.0%	100.0%
Very good	19.5%	29.5%	40.7%	10.3%	100.0%
Good	12.8%	34.7%	39.1%	13.4%	100.0%
Bad	13.7%	39.9%	32.8%	13.7%	100.0%
Very bad	20.4%	48.1%	20.4%	11.1%	100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	11.8%	29.4%	38.2%	20.6%	100.0%
Total	15.6%	32.9%	39.3%	12.1%	100.0%

METHODOLOGY

Web survey using computer-assisted Web interviewing (CAWI) technology.

From October 29 to 31, 2020, 1516 Canadians were surveyed via web panel by Leger marketing in partnership with the Association for Canadian Studies. Using data from the 2016 Census, results were weighted according to gender, age, mother tongue, region, education level and presence of children in the household in order to ensure a representative sample of the population. No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample (Web panel in this case). However for comparative purposes, a probability sample of 1500 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.52\%$, 19 times out of 20

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