



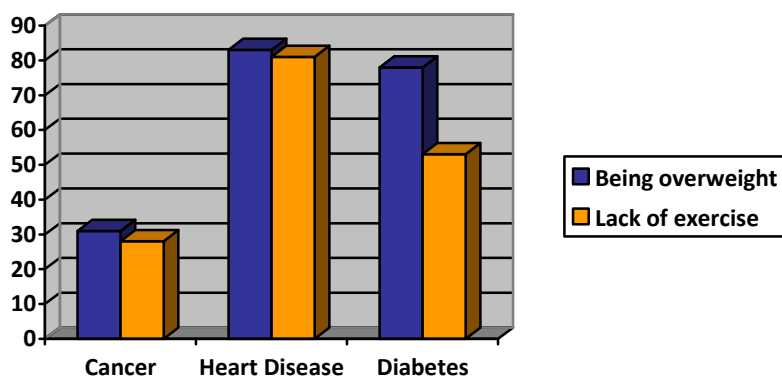
Cancer Prevention Poll Backgrounder

Canadians were surveyed by Environics Research Group to explore public perceptions related to the prevention of cancer, with a special emphasis on probing their attitudes and behaviours towards healthy lifestyles and the link to reducing their risk of cancer. The research also explored comparative attitudes to other chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.

A significant percentage of Canadians are not aware that many cancers can be prevented through healthy lifestyle choices. However, Canadians realize these same healthy lifestyle choices, such as regular exercise and a healthy diet, play a major role in preventing other chronic illness, such as heart disease and diabetes.

- The survey results indicate that most Canadians are not aware that many lifestyle choices are definitely linked to increased cancer risk. The poll showed that, when asked directly, nearly three-quarters of Canadians – 72 per cent – did not appear to be aware of a definite link between cancer and lack of exercise and more than two-thirds – 69 per cent – did not appear to be aware of a definite link between cancer and being overweight.
- In contrast, the majority of Canadians were able to identify a connection between these same risk factors and other chronic illnesses. Eighty-three and 78 per cent of people identified a definite link between being overweight and heart disease and diabetes respectively. Eighty-one and 53 per cent identified a definite link between a lack of exercise and heart disease and diabetes respectively.

Percentage of Canadians that link cancer and chronic disease to two modifiable risk factors



The fact is: Research shows many cancers are preventable.

- Recent international research from the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research shows that one-quarter to one-third of all cancers

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worldwide can be prevented through a healthy diet, regular physical activity and a healthy body weight.¹

- In Canada specifically, research indicates that approximately 50 per cent of cancers can be prevented, including those caused by tobacco use.²
- Global and Canadian research points to specific types of cancers that can be prevented through lifestyle changes:
 - Canadian research shows the estimated proportions of colon and breast cancer cases caused by a lack of physical activity are 18 and 14 per cent respectively.³
 - Global research demonstrates there is a probable decreased risk of developing several types of cancer related to eating fruits and vegetables, including stomach, mouth, esophageal and lung cancer.⁴
 - Global research also shows increased body fatness is linked to a convincing increased risk of developing several types of cancer, including colorectal, kidney, esophageal, pancreatic, endometrial and post-menopausal breast cancer.⁵

Canadians cite being too busy as the most common reason they are not exercising more or eating a healthier diet.

- Three in five Canadians (60 per cent) said they are too busy or don't have time to exercise. Twelve per cent said they are physically unable, and nine per cent admitted to a lack of self-discipline.
 - Newfoundlanders (75 per cent) were the most likely to say they were too busy to exercise more, while people in Saskatchewan (16 per cent) were the most likely to cite a lack of self-discipline as a barrier to exercise.
- Furthermore, nearly half of Canadians (47 per cent) say they are too busy to eat a healthier diet. Sixteen per cent reported they were unable to afford more healthy food, and nine per cent enjoy less healthy food options.
 - Quebeckers were least likely to say they are too busy to eat a healthy diet (39 per cent) and most likely to claim their diet is as healthy as it can be (19 per cent).
 - One in three people in Canada's Territories (32 per cent) and one in four people in Manitoba (25 per cent) and Atlantic Canada (27 per cent) said they cannot afford to eat healthily.

The fact is: Measures such as a healthy diet, physical activity and maintaining a healthy body weight can help dramatically reduce the risk for many cancers.

- Thirty-four per cent of men and 48 per cent of women in Canada aged 20 and over reported eating vegetables and fruit five or more times a day.⁶ The Canada Food Guide recommends eating more – 7 to 10 servings a day – for optimal nutrition.
- One in six Canadians is considered obese (BMI greater than 30), with the condition on the rise in Canada.⁷

Nearly half of Canadians believe luck of the draw is definitely linked to a person's chances of getting cancer.

- According to the survey, close to half of Canadians (43 per cent) believe being diagnosed with cancer is linked to the luck of the draw. The survey showed more Canadians see a link between cancer and luck, than between cancer and being overweight (31 per cent) and/or not getting enough exercise (28 per cent).
 - Quebeckers (49 per cent) and New Brunswickers (50 per cent) are more likely than others to link cancer to luck.
- When asked about heart disease and diabetes, 30 and 27 per cent of Canadians respectively connect luck to the risk of getting either disease.

The fact is: Reducing the risk for many cancers can be achieved through healthy lifestyle choices, such as physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight and eating a healthy diet.

Most Canadians are concerned about cancer and the majority believe they are at risk of developing it. Despite their concerns, Canadians are not seeking information about cancer prevention.

- Eight in 10 Canadians (80 per cent) said they are concerned about cancer.
- Seventy-two per cent of Canadians believe they are at least at some risk of developing cancer.
 - One in three Quebeckers (34 per cent) believe there is little or no risk of getting cancer, and are most likely to believe this compared to people in other provinces.
- Two-thirds of Canadians say they are interested in information on cancer prevention when they come across it (68 per cent): one in five (18 per cent) say they actively seek out cancer prevention information and the same proportion say they have spoken with a physician within the past two years about ways to prevent cancer.

The fact is: According to the survey, three-quarters (78 per cent) of Canadians have been directly touched by cancer and/or have a relative or close friend who has had cancer. Canadian policy experts will attend a first-of-its-kind meeting to discuss cancer and chronic disease prevention in Canada. The meeting follows a ground-breaking report released last month by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research, which found that between one quarter and one third of cancers worldwide can be prevented through actions such as diet, physical activity and weight management. The meeting will be hosted by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and Cancer Care Nova Scotia on March 30 and 31 in Halifax.

Methodology

Between August 7 and September 8, 2008, Environics Research Group conducted a national telephone survey of 3,307 residents of Canada, aged 18 or older on behalf of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. A sample of this size has a confidence level of +/- 1.7 percentage points, 19 times in 20. The margins of error for the regional subsamples are larger and can be provided upon request.

– 30 –

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¹ World Cancer Research Fund / American Institute for Cancer Research. Policy and Action for Cancer Prevention. Food, Nutrition, and Physical Activity: A Global Perspective. Washington DC: AICR, 2009

² Kruger H. An Overview of Selected Cancers and Modifiable Cancer Risk Factors in Canada 2007 Available at: http://www.partnershipagaincancer.ca/sites/default/files/prevention/Status%20Report%20on%20Cancer%20Prevention%20_modified%20Nov%2017%202008_E.pdf (Accessed March 19, 2009)

³ Katzmarzyk and Janssen. The economic costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity in Canada: an update. Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology. 2004. Feb;29(1):90-115

⁴ World Cancer Research Fund / American Institute for Cancer Research. *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective*. Washington DC: AICR, 2007

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Cancer Care Ontario. Prevention. Selected Modifiable Cancer Risk Factors – How does Ontario Compare? Available at: <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/english/csqi2008/csqiprevention/csqi-smcrf/> (Accessed Mar 10, 2009)

⁷ Katzmarzyk and Mason, Prevalence of class I, II and III obesity in Canada. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 2006 Jan 17;174(2):156-7