

esbian Body Image Differs From That of Women Overall, New U.S. Survey Finds

Contributed by Harris Interactive
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Rochester, N.Y.â€” March 15, 2005â€” Over three-quarters of lesbian adults (77%) describe their body weight as overweight while 67% of all female adults surveyed describe their body weight as overweight. Surprisingly, however, when the body mass index (BMI) is applied to survey responses, the percentage of overweight adult women (80%) is much closer to the proportion of overweight lesbian women (84%). In this survey, lesbians more accurately perceived their body weight than women in general. In addition, lesbians and women describe themselves as fit or very fit in similar numbers â€” 19% of lesbians vs. 17% of all women surveyed.

These are highlights of a new survey of 2,209 U.S. adults aged 18 or older conducted online between January 11 and 16, 2005. In this study, 119 adults were self-reported GLB respondents and there was an additional over-sample of 341 self-reported lesbians. The survey was conducted by Harris Interactive?, a worldwide market research and consulting firm, in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, a strategic public relations and marketing communications firm with special expertise in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender market; it was also conducted in conjunction with National LGBT Health Awareness Week.

"Being overweight may be the most significant contributor to our nationâ€™s epidemic of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and a number of other chronic or life threatening illnesses. It is, without a doubt, one of our nationâ€™s top health concerns," said Colleen Dermody, Vice President of Witeck-Combs Communications. "These results enable us to gauge where lesbians may be found on the healthcare continuum."

Some key findings from the survey include:

- Of the total lesbians surveyed, 13% fall within the recommended range on the body mass index and of all women surveyed, 11% fall within the recommended range.
- Half of the lesbians (51%) surveyed say they exercise regularly, compared to 38% of all GLB adults, 43% of all women and 47% of adults overall.
- About the same percentages of lesbians and heterosexuals (42%) and all adults (43%) said that they overeat while just over half of GLB adults (53%) say they overeat.
- There is a higher incidence of smoking among lesbians (42%) and GLB adults overall (38%) compared to heterosexuals (24%) or all adults (25%).

Smoking and Diet Contribute to Lack of Fitness

Among all adults and heterosexuals who said they were somewhat or not fit, overeating (35%), eating fast food (25%), and smoking (16%) ranked as the top three factors that respondents felt contributed most to their lack of fitness. Among lesbians, smoking was the number one choice of contributors (29%) while overeating was the top contributor among GLB adults (45%) and all women (35%).

"It is encouraging that among lesbians there is some self-awareness about body weight," said Dr. Dawn Harbatkin, Medical Director of the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center in New York, a founding member of the National Coalition for LGBT Health. "What we don't yet know, and what we must establish, is whether lesbian adults understand the health risks of being over weight or obese. We feel that all public health awareness campaigns conducted by the CDC or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services should include messages specific to lesbians. Like every American, their health may depend on it."

Notes on reading tables:

The percentage of respondents has been included for each item. An asterisk (*) signifies a value of less than one-half percent. A dash represents a value of zero. Percentages may not always add up to 100% because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents answering that question.

TABLE 1
BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

Base: All U.S. adults 25 and older

?

Total

(n= 1,961)

GLB

(n=97)

Lesbian

(n=322)

Heterosexual

(n= 1,804)

All Women

(n=1,026)

Overweight

84

85

84

84

80

Within Recommended Range

10

13

13

10

11

Underweight

6

2

3

7

9

TABLE 2
DESCRIBE BODY WEIGHT
"How would you describe your body weight?"

Base: All U.S. adults

?

All Adults

(n= 2,209)

GLB

(n=119)

Lesbian

(n=341)

Heterosexual

(n= 2,024)

All Women

(n=1,165)

Overweight

63

61

77

64

67

Underweight

3

8

*

3

3

Average/Just right

30

29

23

30

27

Not sure

3

2

-

3

3

TABLE 3
LEVEL OF PHYSICAL FITNESS

"How would you describe your level of physical fitness?"

Base: All U.S. Adults

?

All Adults

(n= 2,209)

GLB

(n=119)

Lesbian

(n=341)

Heterosexual

(n= 2,024)

All Women

(n=1,165)

Very fit

3

1

3

3

2

Fit

18

21

16

18

15

Somewhat fit

46

39

45

47

44

Not fit

30

35

36

30

38

Not sure

2

4

-
1
1

TABLE 4
"Do youâ€™?"

Base: All U.S. Adults

?

All Adults
(n=2,209)

GLB
(n= 119)

Lesbian
(n=341)

Heterosexual
(n= 2,024)

All Women
(n=1,165)

?

?

?

?

?

Yes

92

89

94

92

93

No

8

11

6

8

7

Smoke

?

?

?

?

?

Yes

25

38

42

24

28

No

75

62

58

76

72

Exercise regularly

?

?

?

?

?

Yes

47

38

51

47

43

No

53

62

49

53

57

Overeat

?

?

?

?

?

Yes

43

53

42

42

43

No

57

47

58

58

57

TABLE 5
CONTRIBUTES MOST TO LACK OF FITNESS

"Which of the following do you feel contributes most to your lack of fitness?"

Base: Somewhat or Not Fit

?

Total

(n=1,812)

GLB

(n= 95)

Lesbian

(n=290)

Heterosexual

(n= 1,667)

All Women

(n=998)

Overeating

35

45

28

35

35

Eating fast food

25

16

18

25

26

Smoking

16

21

29

16

18

Exercising regularly

7

3

10

7

6

Eating meat

6

6

5

6

5

Consuming too much alcohol

3

8

6

3

2

Eating fruits and vegetables

3

1

2

3

2

Obtaining yearly medical checkups

2

1

*

2

3

Taking vitamins

2

-

1

2

3

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States between January 11 and January 16, 2005 among 2,209 adults. Of those adults surveyed, 119 were self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual (GLB). Among the overall sample 1,165 were women, and 2,024 heterosexual. An over-sample of 341 self-identified lesbians was also surveyed. Figures for age, sex, race, education and number of adults in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents'™ propensity to be online.

In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus two percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. The sampling

error for the GLB sample was plus or minus 9 percentage points, and sampling error for lesbians is plus or minus 6 percentage points. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online survey is not a probability sample.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. (www.witeckcombs.com) is the nation's premier strategic marketing communications firm, specializing in reaching the gay and lesbian consumer market. With over nine years experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications has developed respected relationships throughout the community and serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay and lesbian consumers. In April 2003, American Demographics magazine identified Bob Witeck and Wes Combs as two of 25 experts over the last 25 years who have made significant contributions to the fields of demographics, market research, media and trendspotting for their pathbreaking work on the gay and lesbian market.

About Harris Interactive?

Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com), the 15th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world, is a Rochester, N.Y.-based global research company that blends premier strategic consulting with innovative and efficient methods of investigation, analysis and application. Known for The Harris Poll? and for pioneering Internet-based research methods, Harris Interactive conducts proprietary and public research to help its clients achieve clear, material and enduring results.

Harris Interactive combines its intellectual capital, databases and technology to advance market leadership through U.S. offices and wholly owned subsidiaries: London-based HI Europe (www.hieurope.com), Paris-based Novatris (www.novatris.com), Tokyo-based Harris Interactive Japan, through newly acquired WirthlinWorldwide, a Reston, Virginia-based research and consultancy firm ranked 25th largest in the world, and through an independent global network of affiliate market research companies.
EOE M/F/D/V

To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit www.harrispollonline.com.

About Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center (www.callen-lorde.org) is New York City's only medical facility dedicated to meeting the health care needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities and people living with HIV/AIDS -- regardless of any patient's ability to pay.

Welcoming to all, regardless of sexual orientation or insurance coverage, Callen-Lorde offers primary and specialty medical services, including comprehensive health services for lesbians, a continuum of HIV/AIDS care; transgender health services, mental health services; case management; a health education resource center and HOTT (Health Outreach To Teens), New York State's only comprehensive program for the health and mental health care of LGBT, homeless and other street youth.

Callen-Lorde's commitment to the health and wellness of lesbians includes gynecological services and comprehensive women's health focused primary care. In addition to routine care, experienced medical staff also provide colposcopy, cryotherapy and LEEP, procedures designed to diagnose and treat pre-cancerous changes of the cervix.