

Fewer U.S. Adults are Making New Year's Resolutions, According to the Latest WSJ.com/Harris Interactive Study

A new Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll shows that fewer U.S. adults made New Year's resolutions for 2008 than they did for 2007. More than one-third (39%) of U.S. adults say they made at least one New Year's resolution for 2008, compared to 44 percent who did so for 2007 and 48 percent for 2006. The study also shows that both men and women were just as likely to make New Year's resolutions, with 39 percent of men and 40 percent of women indicating that they made a resolution for 2008.

These are some of the results of an online survey of 3,071 U.S. adults conducted by Harris Interactive between January 24 and 28, 2008 for the Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition.

The most common 2008 New Year's resolutions appear to have been made for the benefit of one's physical fitness. About one-quarter of adults made resolutions to exercise more frequently (23%), lose weight (22%) and eat a healthier diet or less food (21%). Fewer adults made resolutions to get more sleep (12%), stop smoking (5%), participate in stress-relief activities (5%), take medications as prescribed (3%) and consume less alcohol (2%).

Some resolutions proved to be harder than others to achieve. While many who resolved to take their medications as prescribed (68%), consume less alcohol (60%) and eat healthier or less food (55%) were successful, only twenty nine percent of those who resolved to stop smoking were successful, and only about one quarter (27%) of those who vowed to get more sleep did so. Men are more likely than women to say that they were successful in taking their medications as prescribed (70% vs. 65%), eating a healthier diet or less food (68% vs. 44%), exercising more frequently (54% vs. 38%), participating in stress-relief activities (51% vs. 37%), losing weight (52% vs. 38%) and getting more sleep (31% vs. 23%). Women are more likely than men (31% vs. 27%) to say that they were successful in quitting smoking.

Katherine Binns, President of the Health Care Division at Harris Interactive, said "It is interesting to note that the time honored tradition of making New Year's resolutions that target health related concerns seems to be falling to the wayside, even though many adults indicated that they needed to lose weight, didn't get enough sleep, or ate an unhealthy diet in 2007. But those who did make that resolution indicated some degree of success, which is encouraging in the age of fast food."

Health-Care Poll

Table 1
People's Health Habits in 2007

"Thinking about 2007, did any of the following items describe you personally at that time? Please select all that apply."

Base: All adults

	2006			2007		
	All Adults	Males	Females	All Adults	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Needed to lose weight	60	52	67	56	49	62
Didn't get enough sleep	56	54	58	52	49	55
Ate an unhealthy diet or ate too much food	50	49	51	42	37	47
Exercised strenuously fewer than 4 days per week	39	40	38	43	45	41
Didn't relax enough or take enough time off work	29	27	30	31	29	32
Smoked on a regular basis	19	18	20	21	16	26
Consumed more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day	11	14	8	10	11	10
Failed to take medications as instructed by my doctor	10	8	12	10	8	11
None of these	10	12	8	12	14	10

Note: Multiple-response question.

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Table 2

Prior Experience Making New Year's Resolutions

"Did you make any New Year's resolutions *last year* to be accomplished in (2005/2006/2007)?"

Base: All adults

	Resolutions for 2005			Resolutions for 2006			Resolutions for 2007		
	All Adults	Males	Females	All Adults	Males	Females	All Adults	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Made a New Year's Resolution in the prior year (NET)	41	36	46	37	31	43	36	36	36
Exercise more frequently	26	23	29	21	17	24	20	21	18
Lose weight	25	18	32	21	16	26	21	18	23
Eat a healthier diet or eat less food	24	20	28	19	13	24	18	18	18
Get more sleep	11	11	11	9	8	11	8	10	7
Stop smoking	6	6	6	5	5	4	5	4	6
Participate in stress-relief activities such as yoga or meditation	5	3	7	4	3	5	4	3	4
Take my medications as prescribed by my doctor	4	4	5	3	3	3	2	2	1
Consume less alcohol	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	2
Other	4	4	3	6	5	7	4	5	4
I did not make any New Year's resolutions for prior year	59	64	54	63	69	57	64	64	64

Note: Multiple-response question.

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Table 3

New Year's Resolutions for This Year

"What New Year's resolutions, if any, have you made for (2006/2007/2008)?"

Base: All adults

	Resolutions for 2006			Resolutions for 2007			Resolutions for 2008		
	All Adults	Males	Females	All Adults	Males	Females	All Adults	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Made a New Year's Resolution for this year (NET)	48	43	52	44	38	50	39	39	40
Exercise more frequently	30	28	32	26	21	31	23	24	23
Lose weight	29	22	35	27	22	32	22	21	23
Eat a healthier diet or eat less food	29	24	33	26	22	30	21	21	21
Get more sleep	15	13	17	15	11	18	12	14	11
Stop smoking	6	7	6	5	5	6	5	5	6
Participate in stress-relief activities such as yoga or meditation	6	4	8	5	3	8	5	5	4
Take my medications as prescribed by my doctor	5	4	5	5	4	5	3	3	2
Consume less alcohol	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	1
Other	7	6	8	8	7	8	6	4	7
I have not made any New Year's resolutions for this year	52	57	48	56	62	50	61	61	60

Note: Multiple-response question.

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Table 4
Success With Prior New Year's Resolutions
"Which resolutions for 2005/2006/2007 would you say you succeeded in?"

Base: Made a particular New Year's resolution for the prior year [variable base]

	2005			2006			2007		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Take my medications as prescribed by my doctor	52	59	48	60	67	56	68	70	65
Eat a healthier diet or eat less food	50	55	46	48	40	52	55	68	44
Exercise more frequently	43	47	40	39	46	35	46	54	38
Participate in stress-relief activities such as yoga or meditation	42	54	37	36	55	27	42	51	37
Consume less alcohol	42	42	41	56	47	65	60	71	43
Lose weight	36	36	36	34	31	36	44	52	38
Get more sleep	32	36	28	23	26	20	27	31	23
Stop smoking	24	27	22	37	44	29	29	27	31
Other	68	80	53	56	49	61	55	63	47
None	32	27	36	36	38	35	18	14	21

Note: Multiple-response question.

Health-Care Poll

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp.

Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted this online survey within the United States between January 24 and 28, 2008 among a national cross section of 3,071 adults age 18 and over. Figures for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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